

“SALT”

CHARACTER LIST AND DESCRIPTION

FAITH – 30s. Dresses like a ranch hand, but too put-together to actually work outside. She has a cowboy hat on, and carries a discrete firearm holstered on her belt. Speaks with a soft southern accent with a slight drawl.

DIOR – 20s. Visually dressed like an off-hours stripper, but in a fun way. Does not have a notable accent of any kind—generic flat American.

SETTING

Entire scene takes place in one of those middle-of-nowhere desert ‘tourist’ towns that’s trying hard to be some sort of road trip destination worth going to rather than driving through. Think Area 51 kitsch but worse and somehow tackier. Time period hovers sometime around the early to mid 2000s.

SET

Exterior of a desert. Possibly some trash/weeds scattered about. Car that looks something like a Geotracker is pulled off to the side (whether this is a real car brought in by props or something they fabricated is irrelevant, it just needs to be similarly shaped and have a trunk that opens).

ACT ONE

Scene One

Lights up on the set. Two women stand outside in a ‘desert,’ indicated by a few rocks lying about and some sand. Screen projection of stars tells the audience it’s nighttime. We can hear faint sounds of crickets and other noises you’d expect in such a setting. On the ground is a human-shaped shroud made of towels and twine. Beside it is a pile of ‘dirt’ of approximately the same length. Dior and Faith are each holding shovels, but Dior looks more visibly tired and is still working on the ‘hole.’ Faith is standing on a slightly elevated formation and looks down at Dior.

DIOR

You know, you’re not doing much helping like that. Standing there.

FAITH

(While lighting a cigarette. She places it in her mouth and speaks around it for at least a few words before removing it.)

Sure I am. I’m keeping watch—that’s the important part, ain’t it?

DIOR

Please. We both know there’s no one else but us out here.

FAITH

Sure there is. You, me, the bugs. That's plenty.

DIOR

Can't you just put that thing out and help me dig? It'll go faster, and you won't have to keep standing watch.

FAITH

I already helped you dig—I did the first six inches. You can go ahead and take care of the rest. I deserve the break.

DIOR

He's a lot thicker than six inches.

FAITH

Don't I know it. You go out of your way to stab the heaviest motherfucker you could find at the club or something? Come on now—you were strong enough to bash his skull in, you're strong enough to dig that hole.

DIOR

Am I not worth getting your hands dirty for tonight?

FAITH

I am ever-so-*graciously* playing taxi driver for you, and I'm not even asking you to bleach out my trunk when all this is said and done. That's *more* than dirty enough.

DIOR

I thought you liked me more than that.

FAITH

I like you plenty. Just like I like the rest of the girls from the bar who come into the store and buy their lingerie from me. Wouldn't be getting you ladies out of trouble half as much as I did if I didn't care.

DIOR

You just don't want cops around here—

FAITH

No one wants any goddamn pigs sniffing around. It's not just me. I'm taking care of my community, and doing so without making myself a liability, may I add.

DIOR

FAITH

Thought you said you were 'done with this shit' after the last time.

DIOR

I did! I was!

FAITH

So what's this?

DIOR

A problem.

FAITH

Your problem, more like. What makes you think I have time for this? Maybe I just wanted to enjoy a nice, quiet evening at home and not think about anyone else's bullshit--yours included.

DIOR

You don't want cops sniffing around here any more than I do. Besides, you always know how to deal with this shit.

FAITH

Not exactly sure if that's supposed to be some sort of compliment.

Dior is becoming increasingly agitated, while Faith remains far more relaxed than she should be.

DIOR

Look, just--*help* me, dammit. I can't do all of this on my own, and I am certainly not taking the fall for someone who couldn't be bothered to take no for an answer when someone draws a line in the sand.

FAITH

And that person who drew that line was you, I assume.

DIOR

Obviously. I'm not a fucking hooker and I made that damn clear.

FAITH

Right. You just take a few extra dance clients after hours. If you were a *real* hooker, it'd be you in that trunk instead of him, is that it?

The audience gets the sense that, while Faith might have a somewhat teasing air about her words and body language, she genuinely isn't happy about this.

DIOR

The longer you talk, the more rotted this body gets in my backseat.

FAITH

You hate that car. Stench of death is a good reason to junk it.

DIOR

I hate corpses more.

Dior pops the trunk, and Faith leisurely walks over to have a look.

FAITH

You weren't kidding, huh? Dead as a goddamned doornail. You really did a number on him, Di. You sure you got all of the parts when you loaded him up?

DIOR

You're not funny. None of this is--it's a mess.

FAITH

Well, aren't you lucky that I'm the type of treasured confidante who knows how to clean 'em up good. Tell me, do I at least get to know how we got here before I start getting my hands dirty for you?

DIOR

Same as last time. Got too comfortable, things got heated, he threatened to call the cops on the whole club--

FAITH

--I told you, you're playing too loose with what happens in the private rooms--

DIOR

--and we were at my place, I didn't want it to escalate or piss him off more, and I couldn't figure out how to actually get myself out of there without getting killed--

FAITH

--So you swung first?

DIOR

Well, yeah. Survival instinct or whatever. Got 'im right in the eye with the back of a heel too, lucky shot. Of course, that didn't get him first time, so I had to go in again a few more just for good measure and--Jesus Christ, Faith. I'm gonna need so much bleach for all that.

FAITH

Nevermind the bleach. You need to burn those sheets.

DIOR

Fuck! I feel like I just replaced the last ones.

FAITH

Probably did. You've got yourself a messy habit, Di, and there's no amount of Clorox on this planet that can clean it out of you.

DIOR

I'll deal with that later, but right now we've got to get this man out of my trunk and... somewhere else. What's the plan?

FAITH

What do you think? Same as what we did for Micheal, and Steve, and the other ones too. Christ, there's too many at this point, I can't even bother to keep track. Feel like once you pass the third one, it's all the same, right? Go inside and upstairs, grab some towels. Old ones. Leave me the keys--I'm driving this time.

Black out.

Scene Two.

Lights up. We are now in a desert, indicated by a few rocks lying about and some sand. Screen projection of stars tells the audience it's nighttime. On the ground is a human-shaped shroud made of towels and twine. Beside it is a pile of 'dirt' of approximately the same length. Dior and Faith are each holding shovels, but Dior looks more visibly tired and is still working on the 'hole.' Faith is standing on a slightly elevated formation and looks down at Dior.

FAITH

You go out of your way to stab the heaviest motherfucker in the whole club or something?

DIOR

You're talking too much. You should be sweating.

FAITH

I *am* sweating. It's nearly one hundred degrees still, and watching you suffer for your mistakes is hard work.

DIOR

What makes you think it was a mistake? What makes you think I don't do it because I like hanging out with you?

FAITH

See, that joke'd be a whole lot more convincing if you weren't scowling at me the entire time. You look too pissed to pull it off. Think pretty thoughts, Di. I like it when you smile.

DIOR

You're a bastard, you know that? A smug bastard.

FAITH

Don't forget arrogant too. Getting away with shit like this will do that to a person.

DIOR

You're really not going to help me?

FAITH

What do you mean? I drove us here, didn't I? Marked out the grave and dug at least six inches?

DIOR

I could've done all that on my own.

FAITH

You didn't, though. You hauled ass to my back door without even bothering to throw a 'Hey, how are you?' in with your request for a favour, shaking in your boots and making a face like *you* were the one about to get killed.

DIOR

Only because I know that you know how to do this. I trust you and your judgment. That's all.

FAITH

Bull-*shit*. I'm calling it.

DIOR

It's not.

FAITH

Flattery don't work on me like that, and I'm not tossing you any dollars to hear it either. No, no, don't stop digging on my account. I can keep going just fine. I don't get you one bit sometimes--you can act out all you want, get mean and angry and violent. Kill a man over something you would've had no problems doing had he been just a bit prettier, or had a fatter wallet. But when I stand here and look at you, looking sick whenever I bring it up and ask you to do the work to fix it, I just can't quite put the face to the deed. You're quite the actress, Di. You should've tried Hollywood instead of this place.

DIOR

Do you get off on being mean to me or something? You said it--I'm a killer, I'm violent. *You* should be kissing *my* ass just to make sure I don't get it in my head that I'm the one in charge here. Maybe I should start talking to you the way I did with him right before it happened.

Dior stops digging, faces Faith, and holds the shovel almost like she's gripping the pole on stage.

DIOR

You wanna know how it happened? How he ended up with his guts spilled all over my bed?

Faith rises to her challenge and looks almost a little too pleased to see her friend biting back, like she wants to draw this side of her out.

FAITH

Well, why not? You seem plenty eager to put on a show, and I've never been one to say no to free entertainment. I want to see how far you take this shit, Di. Go on. Give me your best.

DIOR

It started off so sweet, you know, I knew he liked my body. That's the whole job, basically. Maybe not everything, but enough of it. I knew he wanted to *feel* it. And I wanted to see how far he would go, how far we could take it. So what, I can still see the tan lines from his wedding ring? He's not trying to spend anything on her. So I thought, fine, you know what? Let's ride this wave until we're done. Let's take it off-stage. Let's go on home and I'll find out just what he's willing to give, just for the chance to imagine that he could be looked at like he was *somebody* for one night only.

FAITH

And then?

DIOR

And then--well. He got greedy. They always do. Started looking at me like I was cheap.

Faith is obviously egging her on. Dior doesn't seem to pick up on this.

FAITH

Oh, and you never were, right? Trailer park circumstances of your birth notwithstanding?

DIOR

Of course not. I made that perfectly crystal clear the first night we met. But he didn't listen, and I knew it was gonna end badly for me. Disappointment or worse. So I had fun with it. That was the most he could give me by then. And are you happy? Are you fucking *happy* now that you know?

FAITH

Not really. That was just a historical rewrite--and your hole still ain't deep enough.

Faith is back to looking bored.

DIOR

You're not taking me seriously.

FAITH

Why would I? As far as I can tell, you turn into Bambi as soon as you take the shot. You get squeamish all the sudden, and then I come in to save you from yourself. Ever ask yourself why?

DIOR

No?

FAITH

Listen, I do like you. I do. Want you to remember that. But covering up these little accidents of yours--that's self serving. I do not want, and have never wanted, any goddamn cops sniffing around this town more than they already do. You said it yourself. Do you have any idea how many people would get fucked over if that happened? You're not the worst at covering up your tracks, you know, not by a mile.

DIOR

You're not serious.

FAITH

We are burying a man's body together. We have enough dirt on the other person to hurt each other real bad, if we wanted to. I have no reason to lie at this point about anything.

DIOR

What are you saying, Faith? That you've all the sudden started caring about risk and guilt-by-association? *Enough dirt on each other*--Christ, am I supposed to take that as some kind of threat?

FAITH

Take it how you like it.

Dior looks at Faith like she wants to continue to needle at her, but backs down at the last minute once she sees the way Faith looks at her, and begrudgingly goes back to work. Faith is solid and unblinking, and her expression is unnervingly unreadable. She's too-smooth when she talks again.

FAITH

And anyways, you don't really think I would tell you if I was about to do something, do you? Come on now, that's gotta be rule number one of committing any sort of crime. Keep your mouth shut--especially to future victims. I'm not personally in the business of setting myself up for failure like that.

DIOR

I've never known you to get preachy like this.

FAITH

You think this is some kind of girls' night?

DIOR

A version of it. Maybe.

FAITH

Now that might just be the first good joke I've heard from you since we got in that car.

DIOR

At least I'm not trying to teach you some kind of lesson--isn't that what this is?

FAITH

Well, God sure isn't coming down to bail you out. So far that seems to rest squarely on my shoulders and no one else's. Where do you think you'd be now if it wasn't for me, hm?

DIOR

Probably better off.

FAITH

You think?

DIOR

Not really.

FAITH

Another bad joke, I see.

DIOR

Yeah, I'm full of 'em.

FAITH

Oh, that we can agree on.

DIOR

Is that a compliment I'm hearing?

FAITH

If that's what you need to tell yourself to make this whole thing go faster.

DIOR

It would go faster if you'd actually get down here in the dirt with me.

FAITH

Who would watch the road if you and I were both down there?

DIOR

Is that what you're doing now?

FAITH

Sure. You never know who might be getting a bit too curious for their own good around here.

DIOR

It's a dead area, though--you said it yourself. *'What are the odds of anyone wandering down this way? Probably lost, or doing the same thing we are.'* That's what you said. Was that a lie?

FAITH

I am being *cautious*, Di. Something you clearly need a refresher on.

DIOR

I am cautious. No one knows we're here. Or that I've done anything.

FAITH

Don't go taking credit for the things you owe me.

DIOR

Or you'll do what?

FAITH

I'll start collecting interest.

DIOR

'Interest.' Is that another not-threat?

FAITH

Well, that's up to you, same as the last one. I've got no real plans for tonight. I could take a detour, if something pressing came across my path. Would just depend on what the something in question is.

DIOR

You love pretending like you don't take responsibility for these things, don't you?

Stage lighting becomes noticeably more menacing/uncomfortable. Any extra sound effects of a desert night (crickets etc) are silenced. The atmosphere is eerie.

FAITH

I'd tread lightly if I were you.

DIOR

You like pretending that you don't have your fingers in the rest of our business, but you do. Maybe you're right--I wouldn't be out here walking free if you didn't step in, but that's the point, isn't it? Left to my own devices, I would probably be in prison right about now. Or so far away that none of this would matter anymore. But instead, I get to stay here and repeat the same sin over and over and over again. All because *you* allow it.

FAITH

Oh, that's rich coming from you. As if I'm holding a gun to your head, making you do these things.

DIOR

You might as well be! You've certainly created the best conditions for this shit! Talking all about how I'm not the only one in town who runs to you--why do they run to you, Faith? What business does everyone have coming to you with these sort of problems? Making you clean up their messes?

FAITH

It's what I *deal* in, every goddamn day. Once you start getting to know which of your neighbours like to watch other men fuck their wives in their marriage beds, that privacy disappears. I don't ask for this shit--people leave it at my door like it's some type of sacrificial altar for their paper-thin guilt. And what do I do? I make it easier on myself. That's all. You benefit just as much as they do. I didn't just wake up one day and decide to be named messiah. That was *your* doing.

DIOR

Heavy is the head that wears the crown, right?

FAITH

Your customers pay you extra to keep your mouth shut while you give them a dance, or what?

DIOR

Why the Hell would they?

FAITH

Right. I forgot--you're a completely different person when cash is on the line. A changed woman, praise God!

DIOR

I should never have come to you. I should have never put myself in a position where I would owe someone like you shit. You're morally-fucking-bankrupt, Faith. No better than I am.

Faith's demeanor relaxes. She adopts a calmer stance and it appears to be very natural. Lighting on her shifts into something bright but cold (think hospital lighting). There's a long pause before she speaks again, broken by the sound of Dior's heavy breathing.

FAITH

Okay, now I think that's enough of that. Feel better now that it's all out of your system? I know I do.

DIOR

What?

FAITH

Just an exercise in honesty. And now we can get back to work.

Dior is clearly nervous, for the first time in the conversation, as if she just became aware of her prey-like position on the stage below Faith's eye level.

DIOR

What the Hell is the matter with you? That was a fucked up thing you just started, and now I'm supposed to drop it?

FAITH

I do believe that's what I just said.

DIOR

... You know what, whatever. Let's just finish here--I want a shower.

FAITH

Atta girl.

The two women work in silence for a few more minutes. Lighting is still unsettling, the desert is still quiet.

FAITH

Di?

DIOR
Hm?

FAITH

Do me a favour and grab a couple of those water bottles I tossed into the back seat? Help yourself to one too--this is thirsty work. Consider it a peace offering, from a friend.

DIOR

Sure, I guess.

Dior places the shovel down and walks towards the car. Then, in a quick movement, so fast you would think it wasn't the first time it happened, Faith drops her own shovel and grabs for the gun on her hip. An entry wound is seen through Dior's neck as she crumples to the ground. She's choking on her own blood and unable to make sounds past gurgling and gasps as her esophagus fills with liquid.

Faith approaches her coolly. Dior still has a few seconds of consciousness left, and she wants to make sure she knows why she is where she is.

FAITH

I would love to say you passed the test for me, Honey. I really would. But I just can't rely on people if they're gonna fly off the handle and get all unstable on me after a few minutes of light prodding. What would have happened in a real confrontation? What would you say if you were being interrogated in the police station? I think you would've sold us both out. I liked you and I still do, but the liability is too much. You don't last long around here acting like that. Gotta keep your cool. Maybe in another life, you and I could've made a go of it all. I'll pour one out for you when I get home, make up a nice story to tell your friends so they don't think ill of you. It'll be good, I promise--people like to spread happy stories about the dead. You'll practically be a saint by the time I'm through.

Faith pauses, looks at Dior, then at the hole they dug, before looking back at Dior again.

FAITH

It's a shame you'll have to share your plot with this man, but what can I say? I'm practical like that. At least you'll have some company. I'll tell you what, though--it's a real helpful thing you did here for me tonight, digging your own grave like that. I'll always remember that one fondly.

Back out.

END.

