

Scene 1

A haunted house; a tourist trap. Cobwebs, electronic ghouls, the whole shebang.

An inexpensive western motif, perhaps best represented by a spooky, animatronic horse.

Lizzy enters, dressed like a spooky cowgirl, looking about with wide eyes. There's an intense blast of lightning, during which Elijah appears framed in the doorway. He is dressed like an office manager and holds a coffee. In this moment, he attempts to channel Lugosi or Karloff.

Elijah: Good evening..

Lizzy: Oh—

Elijah: Hope I didn't scare you...

Lizzy: You didn't.

Elijah: Oh.

An awkward silence.

Lizzy: You must be Elijah.

Elijah: And you must be Lizzy... *(reads)* Ga-dee-va?

Lizzy: Godiva. *(Stopping him)* I know, I know...

Elijah: What?

Lizzy: Oh... You know... Lady Godiva?

Elijah: I don't... *(Gets it)* Ohhh! Like, "Pa-pa-pa-poker face ma ma poke—"

Lizzy: No. Like, Lady Godiva? She was this English noblewoman who rode a horse naked through town to protest her husband's taxation laws.

A weird silence.

Elijah: Now I hate to be *that guy*, but we probably shouldn't be talking about this sort of thing. Not while we're on the clock. Okay? HR reasons. Yeah? Cheers.

He winks warmly.

Lizzy: Alright...

Elijah: Great! Phew! So tell me, why do you want to scare people?

Lizzy: To raise money for college?

Elijah: Oh...

Lizzy: And... um... *(reaching)* because I like being a part of a team?

Elijah: *(Elated)* Alright, now we're cooking! That's the answer I'm looking for!

Lizzy: Also I'm a perfectionist?

Elijah: Whoa, slow down, you already got the job! I'm glad the costume fits.

Lizzy: Yeah, it's just... Why am I a cowboy, exactly? This is a haunted house, yeah?

Elijah: Okie dokie, so first of all, you're not a cowboy: you're a *(spooky voice)* cow-girrrrrr!

Lizzy: Ah.

Elijah: Secondly, it's not just *any* haunted house: it's... *The Best Little HORROR House in Texas!*

Lizzy: I guess what I mean is that I'm just surprised that someone would run a whole business based on... that pun.

Elijah: What pun?

Lizzy: You know! (*Oh*) You don't know.

Elijah: Tell me!

Lizzy: Well it's clearly a pun on *The Best... Little... Whore-house in Texas?* Yeah?

Elijah looks at her for a good moment, thinking.

Lizzy: It's a musical! Dolly Parton? Burt—

Elijah: Hey, so totally not a big deal, but I feel like you've only worked here a couple of minutes? And already you've referenced pornography multiple times?

Lizzy: No! I—

Elijah: I have to write you up. I'm so sorry. Please forgive me.

Lizzy: But it's not like that—

Elijah: It's not really a big deal.

He chuckles convivially as he writes.

Elijah: Two more and you're fired, but don't worry. Everyone gets written up on their first day.

Lizzy: Coool. Good to be a part of the team I guess...

Elijah: That's the spirit! We have a very strict anti-jerk policy here.

Lizzy: Sorry, anti... ???

Elijah: Jerk, that's right. Are you a jerk, Lizzy?

Lizzy: I don't think so? I mean, I hope not?

Elijah: Great! That is a relief. Okay, so we're going to set you up here in... *the Haunted Saloooooooooon.*

Lizzy: I love it. Nice piano.

Elijah: It's a player piano.

Lizzy: Sweet!

Elijah: But it's broken.

Lizzy: Oh.

Elijah: Yup. Okie dokie, so you're going to hide here behind the bar, and when people show up you pop up and fire at them with these.

He reveals a pair of very realistic looking pistols.

Lizzy: Jeez!

Elijah: What's that?

Lizzy: Are those... They look very real!

Elijah: Yeah, it's supposed to look real. "Uncanny," as the Owner would say. Like the valley.

Lizzy: You mean Freud?

Elijah: Wolfville.

Lizzy: Ah. *(She takes the guns)* They're heavy.

Elijah: Well yeah, they're real.

Lizzy: Jesus!

Elijah: Decommissioned though. They won't fire.

Lizzy: Alright...

Elijah: So yeah, like I was saying, you go behind the bar, and when folks come through, you hop up and give them a good scare!

Lizzy: Okay.

Elijah: And have fun with it! What's the point of terrifying people if you don't enjoy it?

A weird silence. Elijah stares at Lizzy expectantly.

Elijah: Soooo...

Lizzy: OH! You want me to try it now!

Elijah! Yeah!

Lizzy: Got it. Sorry! *(As she goes)* Don't be too scared.

Elijah says nothing. She crouches. He waits. A moment passes. She jumps up, cackling and pretending to fire the pistols. Silently, he considers.

Elijah: Okay, great, couple notes.

Lizzy: Sure.

Elijah: First of all, you legally *can't* point those pistols in your customers' faces. They're real.

Lizzy: I thought you said they were decommissioned.

Elijah: That doesn't make them less real. Here, give me one.

She does. He points it directly in her face.

Elijah: (*Warmly*) How does this make you feel, Lizzy?

Lizzy: Like I've made a terrible mistake.

Elijah: Hey now! We all make terrible mistakes...

A weird silence.

Elijah: What were we talking about?

Lizzy: You were about to shoot me in the face?

Elijah: Right, thanks! (*He levels it again*) So what you want to do is aim slightly *above* the customer's head. Like this.

He demonstrates. There is nothing subtle about it. In no way does it look like the gun is pointed at her.

Elijah: Seeee?

Lizzy: Got it.

Elijah: And that laugh... Can you do it again?

Lizzy: Okay...

She does the spooky cackle once more.

Elijah: Okay, yeah, alright, I got it. See, you're doing more of a "witch laugh." Which is completely fine, except that it's... how can I put this... Wrong? Bad? What if you tried a cowgirl laugh, hmm?

Lizzy: I guess I don't know how cowgirls laugh...

Elijah: Like this!

He demonstrates. It is not spooky.

Lizzy: Great. So just to make sure I've got this right... This is what you want...

She goes behind the bar again. She pops up, aiming the guns well above Elijah's head and doing his un-spooky laugh. Elijah nods and points his pencil at her for emphasis.

Elijah: Yes. YES. Now *that* is scary. Great. Let's try again.

Lizzy lowers herself. Elijah exits. She pops up, doing the bit again, but Elijah is gone.

Lizzy: Of course.

Lizzy puts the pistols down and slumps over the bar. A nearby animatronic monster suddenly screeches to life, scaring the bejesus out of her. She looks around the room in exasperation. If she were to deliver a monologue here, it might begin with, "How did I get here?" Lizzy picks up one of the pistols, almost laughing at the ridiculousness of it. She rolls her eyes and brings it up as though she's going to shoot

herself with it. River appears, dressed like an old-timey pianist, complete with a bowler hat and those elastic things around her elbows. She looks unmoved.

River: Don't shoot.

Lizzy jumps.

River: Or shoot. I don't know you or your struggle.

Lizzy: I was just—

River: You must be new.

Lizzy: Yeah, I'm—

River exits.

Lizzy: Okay.

The animatronic monster lurches to life again. Lizzy turns and shakes it.

Lizzy: Fuck you!

She turns. Elijah is standing there.

Lizzy: Oh.

He continues to stare.

Lizzy: I'm sorry, I didn't know you were there.

Elijah continues to stare.

Lizzy: Elijah?

Elijah: *(Startled)* Oh! What? Sorry! I was miles away... We're going to open in a sec. Any questions?

Lizzy: Yeah, how do breaks work? Do we—

Elijah: No time!

He runs away. Lizzy grimly picks up the pistol and points it at the place where he had previously been standing. She makes a half-hearted gunshot sound. River enters again with Elijah's cup of coffee, spotting Lizzy pointing the pistol.

River: Do it.

Lizzy: Ah! Sorry! I was just— Wow, this whole thing has been an excellent reminder not to play with guns.

River: Big deal. What's the worst that could happen?

She sits herself at the busted player piano.

Lizzy: I'm Lizzy.

River: Just Lizzy? What, do you think you're like Cher? Or like Illinois-based musician, Lissie?

Lizzy: Uh... what? Sorry. Lizzy Godiva—

River spins around to face her.

River: Shut the fuck up.

Lizzy: Okay—

River: Your name's Godiva?

Lizzy: Yes.

River: Are you related to her?

Lizzy: Lady Godiva? I don't know... I mean, she lived like 900 AD so... we probably *all* are?

River: That is a sweet goddamn name.

Lizzy: Thank you.... What's yours?

River: River.

Lizzy: Well, River's a sweet name too! It makes you sound like a—

River: Stencil.

Lizzy: What? No, I was going to say—

River: I mean, that's my last name.

Lizzy: Your name is River Stencil?

River: Yep.

Lizzy: Oh.

River: But just for now. I'm going to change it someday.

Lizzy: Really? To what?

River: Well, I was thinking maybe Alighieri, like Dante Alighieri... or Crowley, like Aleister Crowley... or Houdini, like my first grade teacher Hazel Houdini... (*Reflectively*) She was great. She never wore a bra.

Lizzy: Uh huh.

River: But Godiva. Now you've got me thinking, Lisa...

Lizzy: It's Lizzy—

River: Exactly. River Godiva. Makes me sound like... a *lake*.

Lizzy: People might even think we're sisters!

River: Oh. Good point. Houdini it is.

She begins to play piano. Lizzy is struck by its beauty and depth.

Lizzy: It's so beautiful—

Elijah appears.

Elijah: I couldn't *dis*-agree more.

River: UGH. What do you want, Elijah?

Elijah: Well, River, last I checked this was a haunted saloon. Not a haunted conservatory for fancy classical music.

River: It's still a haunted saloon, *Elijah*.

Elijah: I've given you a list of approved, period-appropriate music.

River: You're telling me that from 1865 to 1895, not a *single* soul ever played "fancy classical music," ELIJAH?

Elijah: I just meant for our intensive purposes, it might be better—

River: I am playing a *role*. Clearly my character was a gifted concert pianist who failed to live up to her potential and was forced to play in a honky-tonk for years before succumbing to her demons and taking her own life. Or is that not *spooky* enough for you? You know what, you have no appreciation for the craft, or for nuance, so I don't know why I'm wasting my goddamn time.

Elijah: All I'm saying is that "Get Along Little Doggies" wouldn't go amiss... But by all means, play your...

River: Fancy classical music, thank you I shall.

Elijah exits.

Lizzy: Wow! I can't believe you said that to him.

River: What's he going to do, fire me?

Lizzy: Yes? Maybe?

River: He's not my boss.

Lizzy: What?

River: I've been here longer than him.

Lizzy: Holy crap! You mean that little twerp wrote me up for no good reason?

River: I'm sure he had a good reason.

She turns back to the keyboard and begins to play "Get Along Little Doggies." It is transcendent.

Scene 2

The break room. Lizzy realizes suddenly that she is being watched. A masked figure stands in the doorway.

Lizzy: Uh... hello?

The figure continues to stare. Then, as suddenly as they first appeared, they walk away. Lizzy goes to follow when River appears in the doorway, blocking her path.

Lizzy: Ah!

River: Excuse me.

River sits down. Her face is pale.

Lizzy: Did you see that? There was someone here, with a mask on—

River shakes her head vacantly.

Lizzy: Are you okay?

River: Elijah's dead.

Lizzy: What?!

River: I just found out.

Lizzy: Oh my god... What happened?

River: He was murdered.

Lizzy: Jesus! Seriously?

River: Do you think I'd *joke* about something like this, Lizzy?! What kind of psychopath do you take me for?

Lizzy: Sorry, I guess I... I'm just in shock... I've never known anyone who was murdered before.

River: Well aren't you lucky.

Lizzy: I don't know what to say? Does that mean we get to go home? Sorry, that's not important. Can I give you a hug?

River considers and then nods. The two embrace. As they hug, Elijah enters, humming "Poker Face."

Elijah: Aw, you're friends!

Lizzy: Elijah? You're alive!

Elijah: So are you!

Elijah puts his stuff away. Lizzy turns to River.

River: What?

Elijah: So Lizzy, how was your first day?

Lizzy: Kinda quiet...

Elijah: Yeah, January's our off season.

River: I'd say January makes up specifically 1/11th of our off season.

Lizzy: But the people who did come in... Say, is it normal to get punched in the face so much?

Elijah: Oh yeah. People love punching us in the face.

Lizzy: Aw man...

River: The majority of idiots who come through here are coked-out frat boys looking to impress whatever poor woman they've exhausted into dating them.

Lizzy: And the best way to do that is by punching spooky cowgirls in the face?

River: I mean, I guess *I'd* be into it...

Elijah: My goodness, it's almost 10! Time to get into costume.

River: Because nothing says haunted house like 10 AM on a Tuesday in January.

Lizzy: It's the witching hour somewhere.

River looks at Lizzy for a moment. Finally:

River: Nice.

Elijah reads off a clipboard.

Elijah: Alright, so today I'm playing the mad scientist/sheriff; River, you're the possessed prospector; and Lizzy, you're Vampire Miss Kitty.

Lizzy: Miss Kitty?

Elijah: She's the town entrepreneur. She runs a small business above the saloon.

Lizzy: Like... a yoga studio?

Elijah: Sort of....

River: What Elijah means to say, is that she runs the brothel.

Lizzy: Oh man... Elijah, isn't that... problematic?

Elijah: Totally, I totally hear you, but it's not like it sounds. Your working girls are mummies!
Plus, you have a heart of gold.

Lizzy: But just yesterday you said that the whole "house of ill repute" motif isn't appropriate.

Elijah: It's an archetype! People would be confused if they came here and there were a bunch
of mummified sex workers!

River: He's right: it'd be chaos.

Elijah: It's really fun. I'll show you the costume.

Lizzy: It's not about the costume—

She sees the costume.

Lizzy: It's not *just* about the costume.

Elijah: Hey, I get it. But sometimes we all have to play characters we don't want to play. Do
you think I want to be a werewolf sheriff?

Lizzy: Yes.

River: That sounds awesome.

Elijah: You say that now, but you have no idea how loud these spurs are. It's like...

He covers his ears and faux-screams as though deafened.

Lizzy: Can't I be, like, Annie Oakley or Nan Aspinwall or something?

Elijah: Who?

Lizzy: She was the first woman to ride horseback across North America.

River: Are you thinking of Lady Godiva?

Elijah: I know who Nan Aspinwall is. I meant, who's Annie Oakley?

Lizzy: Forget it.

River: She invented the oak tree.

Elijah: Look, we don't have time. If you're going to be weird about it, *you* just play the werewolf and *I'll* play Miss Kitty! AGAIN!

He takes the costume and exits to get changed.

River: I was hoping he'd offer to play Miss Kitty: he's actually really good at it. (*No response from Lizzy*) It's a lot less inappropriate here than it used to be, believe it or not. We used to have this Chinese-railroad-labourer-slash-Frankenstein-character, but a bunch of people complained, and now... well, we don't have a Frankenstein anymore.

Lizzy: Why did you say that Elijah was dead?

River: Wishful thinking?

Lizzy: It's not cool to joke about stuff like that. I thought you guys had an anti-jerk policy.

River: It's just some classic hazing. An hilarious way to start the day. Now come along,
Godiva: you and I have to get down to the coven-slash-granary—

Lizzy: No thanks. You haven't been very nice to me.

River: But that's where the prospector and the sheriff haunt.

Lizzy: Elijah! I'll play Miss Kitty.

Elijah: *(Off)* Dang it!

Lizzy: *(To River)* I hope you get punched in the face five times today.

She exits.