

## Duels and Détentes

### *Dramatis Personae*

SOARELE - a witch of sunshine and cuddly animals, summer incarnate. Big 'Glinda the Good Witch' energy. Never wants others to feel the insecurity she struggles with.

LUNA - a skilled witch who walks alone, and proud of that solitary nature. Confident in her abilities but easily frustrated when she meets her match.

RUTH - Luna's apprentice, a young witch with little innate talent. A little awkward, but well meaning. Wants everybody to be happy.

*(A clearing in a deep forest. A short figure appears in a dark cloak, with sounds of wind rustling in trees, windchimes, spooky noises building suspense. This stops almost immediately when the figure takes their cloak off – it is RUTH.)*

RUTH: Dear friends, welcome. We gather here, under cover of night and tempestuous storm to – *(noticing the sound change, whispering back to the trees)* Wait. There was sound a second ago. How does the breeze just stop? Can I get the ambiance back, please? No? *(trying to cast a spell)* Windus...spookius!

Okay, Luna hasn't taught me how to make a soundscape yet. I don't even know if that's a thing. Can you help me out a little, nature? I'm trying to make this fun for our guests.

Fine. Don't help. That's cool. I'm used to it.

Anyway! Where was I? Oh! We gather here under cover of night and ... a temperate climate to witness the confrontation of two master witches. I, *(with a flourish)* Rosaceous the Resplendent, the best magic apprentice that ever apprentice-d, will be your guide to this world of sorcery and mysteries untold. The clock has nearly struck on the moment in which we shall see our two witches alike in dignity, come to conquer the other once and for all. Hark! Here comes one now!

*(With a dramatic gust of wind and a change of light, SOARELE appears. She slowly becomes aware of RUTH's presentation, which is very confusing.)*

RUTH: The beautiful and luminous Soarele the Great, named for the sunshine that follows in her wake. Forest animals are at her command, and the flowers turn to bid her good morning.

SOARELE: Oh, you must be Luna's new apprentice. Ruth, right?

RUTH: *(again with a flourish)* Rosaceous the Resplendent.

SOARELE: Rosaceous, like the skin condition?

RUTH: Never mind. Ruth is fine. Call me whatever. Anyway –

SOARELE: But you are Luna's apprentice, aren't you? The one who turned her familiar into a statue?

RUTH: *(all one sentence)* How did you hear about that she promised she wouldn't tell.

SOARELE: Witches are a small community, honey. Word gets around.

RUTH: She's your arch nemesis. Why do you even care –

SOARELE: Listen, when I was starting out, I botched some spells, too.

RUTH: Oh, really? Like what?

SOARELE: ... Well, I can't think of any right this second, but I'm sure there were some...

*(Another gust of wind. The lights grow dark and a chill falls. LUNA appears, cloaked.)*

RUTH: Aha! The challenger arrives, and we can forget this conversation happened. Behold, the mistress of the moon herself, who deals in darkness and necromances at night, a formidable foe if ever there was one...

LUNA: Ruth, we talked about this. The alliteration needs to stop. You have a problem.

RUTH: But it's so fun...

LUNA: Just introduce me for my dramatic reveal.

RUTH: The one, the only – Luna.

*(LUNA pulls off her hood and shakes her voluminous hair free. SOARELE stares at this for a little too long. They circle each other around RUTH, who doesn't want to draw attention to herself as she sinks lower to avoid their gaze.)*

LUNA: Well, well, well. At long last. Soarele the great, in the flesh.

SOARELE: At your request, Luna. You are the one who issued this challenge.

LUNA: I did. I tire of this tiff of dominance, pretending we could ever share the same realm.

SOARELE: Pretending? I have tolerated your presence for years, despite my birthright.

LUNA: Your birthright? A pretty jest, Soarele.

SOARELE: Humor is not my greatest talent.

LUNA: Of which you have *so* many.

SOARELE: Was that sarcasm or a Freudian slip?

LUNA: *(after a death glare)* Regardless of your... “birthright,” resisting the natural order is futile. We are the witch of day and the witch of night. You and I both know our two elements can’t coexist.

SOARELE: Bold of you to assume I’d want to coexist with you.

*(They are within inches of each other, RUTH crouching between them, unable to escape.)*

LUNA: To think, I thought a civil conversation would be enough to reach an agreement. Some kind of détente, if you will.

SOARELE: If you truly thought that, you overestimated my patience.

LUNA: Has your patience finally worn thin? What a pretty sight that would be.

SOARELE: It would be my pleasure to finally put you in your place.

LUNA: I assure you, Soarele, the pleasure is all mine.

SOARELE: Let’s begin, then.

LUNA: Let’s begin. *(A tense pause.)* Ruth?

RUTH: *(from below)* Right here, your eminences.

SOARELE: Oh!

LUNA: Ruth, what the hell?

RUTH: I didn’t want to interrupt.

LUNA: Oh, never mind. Get the potion.

RUTH: Of course. *(awkward beat)* Do I have permission to rise –

SOARELE & LUNA: Yes!!

RUTH: Right. Sorry. The permission was implied.

*(A tense moment as SOARELE and LUNA stay still, trying to intimidate each other but also getting a little annoyed. RUTH kneels down center and pulls a vial from her bag.)*

RUTH: Observe, dear friends, the first phase of every witches' duel. The toast of temperance, during which the two witches drink potions of the other's making. The idea is to share a harmless drink together before the duel as a demonstration of honor... but rumor has it many underhanded witches have bent the rules before.

LUNA: Who are you even talking to right now?

RUTH: Nobody!

*(RUTH rushes over and hands LUNA the potion. SOARELE is holding another.)*

LUNA: My drink for you, Soarele. A toast to your many talents.

SOARELE: *(handing off her own potion)* May the best witch win.

*(They drink. LUNA watches SOARELE carefully, smirking when SOARELE coughs.)*

LUNA: Oh, I intend to be the winner today. The potion you have just sipped will hinder your ability to cast nature spells, which of course is your most common trick. I waited for this day for too long to allow you that advantage.

*(SOARELE falls to her knees, gasping for air and coughing.)*

Don't be afraid. The pain is only temporary. I'm sure this will only make you angrier, but I'll take my chances. Day *or* night, only one. That's how it's always been, and how it always will be.

*(SOARELE finally stops coughing and regains her breath.)*

What do you say, Soarele? Shall we begin the battle?

*(A tense moment as SOARELE rises slowly, then turns to lock eyes with LUNA. Suddenly, she rushes to her, kneeling at her feet and taking her hands.)*

SOARELE: My goddess!

LUNA: The fuck?

SOARELE: Divine Luna, luminous like the Moon that rises each night. If I could have the privilege but to kiss your hand, and forgive all animosity passed between us.

LUNA: Kiss my hand...?

SOARELE: (*not registering her confusion and taking that as a 'yes'*) Your generosity is more than I ever could have dreamed. (*kissing her hand feverishly*) Luna, Luna, the most melodic of names!

LUNA: (*hissing to the side*) Ruth... What the flying fuck did you do?

RUTH: I made the impairment potion like you said!

LUNA: Well, clearly, you fucked it up, because what's happening right now is the effect of a love potion. The literal opposite of what I asked for!

RUTH: I swear, I did everything exactly as you told me!

LUNA: What ingredients did you use?

RUTH: Eye of newt, plucked while still living; – that really sucked, by the way – 3 feathers from the wildest bald eagle in the forest; – (*gesturing to her scratched hands*) – and pulverized strawberries.

LUNA: Tell me you got the strawberries from the garden that hasn't been watered in a thousand years? (*No response.*) Ruth – I swear to God– were the strawberries from the garden that hasn't been watered in a thousand years?

RUTH: Well, you didn't say it was *that* important where they came from...

LUNA: You fool! You sent me into a witch's duel with a love potion!

RUTH: I didn't want to get the dusty desert strawberries! It's always better to have fresh ingredients!

LUNA: Not when you're trying to impair innate skills! All you did was give her a potion that inflamed her lust!

SOARELE: Oh, my dearest Luna, don't discard my feelings with such a pejorative as lust! My words come from the very depths of my heart, born of adoration and purest love.

LUNA: What does pejorative even mean?

RUTH: A pejorative is a word expressing disdain or contempt.

SOARELE: Thank you, Ruth.

LUNA: Oh, so *now* you decide to be helpful?

RUTH: Not sure what else you want me to do.

LUNA: Make me an antidote. Eye of newt, rue leaves, cocoa beans, and rotten pomegranate.

RUTH: ...Does the newt have to be alive again?

LUNA: Obviously. Hurry up! Before it's too late and the spell can't be undone.

SOARELE: Oh, let the heaven of your favor never shut its gates to me!

RUTH: I didn't even know that was possible!

*(RUTH dumps out her bag down center. It's a mix of herbs, vials, vaguely antique-y looking things, and random sight gags (have fun with it). RUTH takes the mortar and pestle, and examines a few of her vials/herb specimens.)*

Maybe this isn't so bad, your eminence. This is a great opportunity for that détente.

LUNA: The time for détente has long passed.

RUTH: But wouldn't you rather be at peace? You've said yourself that the good witch has so many excellent qualities.

LUNA: *Ruth, shut up!*

SOARELE: You said that about me?

LUNA: All I have ever said on the subject of you is that I admire your talents.

SOARELE & LUNA: Of which I/**you** have many.

SOARELE: I thought all this time that you loathed me. Now you speak of admiration.

LUNA: Well, you are an excellent witch. That is undeniable.

SOARELE: A high compliment coming from you.

LUNA: And, I'll concede... a reasonably good looking one. In the right light.

SOARELE: You really think so?

LUNA: You control the light, so.

SOARELE: Takes beauty to know beauty.

*(They look at each other for a moment. LUNA seems to be softening until...)*

RUTH: Oh, that was wayyyyy too many beans.

LUNA: Ruth, get me out of this!

RUTH: I'm doing my best!

SOARELE: Luna. I have no desire to fight with you. All I want is to watch over the townspeople, help them with their gardens and play with my animals. You may think it goes against the natural order, but... if you could see yourself in my world, I would love to share this realm with you. Lord knows you are a far better witch than I am.

LUNA: Magic is in the eye of the beholder.

SOARELE: Well, this beholder believes you are magic incarnate. And I've only ever matched your combat to prove I was even slightly worthy of your attention.

RUTH: *(as her potion starts to bubble, excitedly)* Yes! Okay, this is good. Let me get the newt!

*(RUTH runs off to find a newt. SOARELE and LUNA are left alone.)*

LUNA: I have trouble believing that.

SOARELE: Do you think I would lie to you?

LUNA: I always thought your heart was too pure to tolerate lies. But what you're saying... is this your way to beat me, once and for all? To destroy the darkness?

SOARELE: Maybe we can coexist. If you can trust me.

LUNA: How? This is a love potion talking, not the truth!



SOARELE: Why can't the truth be that I love you?

LUNA: Because you are light! You are the light. You are the brightest ray of sun in every morning sky. And I am a creature of the night. The night air of my soul is incompatible with your light. That is just nature, Soarele, and nature has no reasons. Maybe it is simple opposition. Maybe I hide in the night because I don't deserve the sun. Or maybe it is the fear that you will shine light onto the things I cover with darkness, and I will never be the same.

SOARELE: Darkness is a beautiful thing. You are beautiful for your command of it.

LUNA: *(after a beat)* No one's ever told me that before.

SOARELE: But without light, you will drown in it.

LUNA: I'm already drowning in your eyes.

SOARELE: Show me your darkness, Luna. Let us show each other the other side.

LUNA: I cannot let you love me under a spell.

SOARELE: You'd make me the happiest witch in the world.

LUNA: If only I could tolerate living a lie.

SOARELE: Not a lie. Magic.

*(Finally, RUTH comes running back in, squeezing a massive toad in her grip.)*

RUTH: Okay, time to squeeze this fucker's eye out. I'm coming, your eminence!

SOARELE: Ruth, wait! That's not a newt – it's a toad!

RUTH: ....what?

SOARELE: Did you make the first potion with that same kind of toad?

RUTH: ...how much trouble will I be in if I tell the truth?

SOARELE: None. None at all. Most apprentices don't know this, but some potions are sister concoctions. A love potion is made with a newt's eye, but the eye of a toad can turn the same ingredients into –

SOARELE & LUNA: A truth serum.

RUTH: Oh. *(realizing)* Oh! Oooooohhhhhh.

LUNA: Is there any left?

*(SOARELE hands her the flask she drank from earlier.)*

SOARELE: There is no going back, once you speak the truth.

*(LUNA knocks back the last of the flask. She sputters and coughs a bit before–)*

LUNA: Soarele, I love you more than light itself!

SOARELE: Kiss me in the dark of the night, from now until forever!

*(They kiss passionately. You can practically hear the string quartet. RUTH picks up a wand from the wreckage of her magic bag and moves center.)*

RUTH: And that, my dear friends, is how the day and the night reach a détente. With a little help from a 'foolish' apprentice, of course.

*(She winks and flicks her wand. With a flash of light, the stage comes to a blackout.  
END.)*