

Lenore

SCENE ONE

December 23, late 1800s.

The den in SIR WILLIAM PEYTON's country house, near Devon, England. There is a window with red/maroon velvet curtains. Books lined part of the walls. A wooden desk with executive chair has a pile of books and papers, an ink well and fountain pen lay about the desk. Two high back arm chairs sit to the right of the window with a standing lamp beside it. A small table sits in between the arm chairs; a phonograph to the left. Alternatively, there could be a simple set without the desk and book cases). There are Christmas decorations throughout the room.

LORD WILLIAM PEYTON, LORD SAMUEL BRIGHTSMITH stand with brandy snifters as LADY PENELOPE AINSWORTH sits in an armchair drinking sherry. With a pack of Tarot cards in her lap.

LORD SAMUEL

I sorely hate to get you in the thick of this, Penelope.

LADY PENELOPE

It is no bother, truly. If I can be of assistance--

LORD WILLIAM

Penny, you know the situation. Edmond and Lenore...

LADY PENELOPE

Yes, I know they have grown quite fond of each other. What I am unable to understand is why all the fuss? Especially from you Samuel, surely you can see how fond they are of each other.

SIR WILLIAM

Edmond has asked for her hand in marriage and Samuel has refused to give his blessing.

LORD SAMUEL

The situation, as noted, is not a favorable match, no offense to your boy, William.

LADY PENELOPE

(She places her glass on the table, begins to shuffle the cards.)

Whatever, could be unfavorable, Samuel. They are two young people, ready for their lives to begin. How can you deny them that chance?

LORD SAMUEL

I cannot allow it. Lenore is a sick child.

(LENORE stands just offstage, She overhears the conversation and rushes to her Father.)

LENORE

Papa, Edmond knows of my illness, he wants me anyway.

LORD SAMUEL

(through clenched teeth)

Lenore! You will not embarrass me or yourself in this way.

LENORE

(She pauses out of breath)

I am begging you papa, let us have a life, no matter how short lived it may well be. Why don't you want me to be happy? Ma'Mah would want me to be happy.

LORD SAMUEL

You know nothing of happiness.

LENORE

How can you say I know nothing? Everyday I am alive is happiness. Every minute I feel Edmond near me is pure joy!

(LENORE twirls around in a dance.)

LORD WILLIAM

My dear, you must not excite yourself. I am sure your Father is only thinking of your wellbeing.

LENORE

(holding onto the back of the chair)

No! No, he isn't. My father finds me and my illness a burden. All of this is about him and has absolutely nothing to do with me or Edmond. Every since MaMah got ill--

LORD SAMUEL

How dare you say those things to me. Don't bring your mother's illness...your birth brought on that illness which ripped her from me.

(LADY PENELOPE turns over a card-Death. SHE worriedly looks at LENORE)

LADY PENELOPE

(to LORD SAMUEL)

You cannot blame Lenore--

LORD SAMUEL

Stay out of this Penelope. You know...I refuse to discuss this any further.

LADY PENELOPE

William, surely you are not in agreement?

LORD WILLIAM

(crossing to LENORE)

I have always held a fondness in my heart for you child, but my hands are tied on this. Without your Father's permission...

(LADY PENELOPE draws another single card)

LADY PENELOPE

The tower...Samuel, think about what you are doing. What harm will--

LORD SAMUEL

Enough! I will not stand here listening to this debate.

LADY PENELOPE

(holds up the card)

Your pride...will...

(She draws three more)

Hanged man, Judgement...the Fool reversed. Please, Samuel, I beg you...do not--

LORD SAMUEL

I said enough! Lenore, come.