

Title: Delilah's Choice

Time: Irrelevant.

Setting: Initially unclear, but mostly open space.

### Cast

Peter – Hopefully at least late 30s but could be up to 80s.

Delilah – Hopefully at least late 40s but could be up to 80s. Would be interesting for her to have a French or other intriguing accent, but it's not necessary.

*Lights. Peter is at a table with a very big book open, reading, perhaps turning a page now and then. Perhaps pensive at moments. Occasionally jotting something in it.*

*Delilah enters, taking note of Peter. She walks about him, sizing him up a bit, even though she knows him. He either does not notice or chooses not to, staying focus on whatever he's reading and the occasional notation. She starts to speak and changes her mind twice before finally doing so:*

Delilah: There were children playing by the brook. A bunch of them. They were having such fun.  
*She awaits a response from Peter that does not come.*

Delilah: I...watched them. From afar, of course. They didn't know I was there.  
*No response.*

Delilah: I watched from behind a hay stack. It was itchy and got all over my dress. But it was worth it to get to be sort of close to them. I know they'd have left, if they knew I was there. And I didn't want to ruin it for them....just so I could be near that fun. It must have been hours or...what felt like hours anyway. Isn't it funny how timeless things are, yet we are so used to using time as a measurement?  
*No response.*

Delilah: Why IS there hay here? Doesn't that seem weird? I didn't think of it earlier, but hay is dead grass. Why IS there hay here?  
*No response.*

Delilah: Do you like this dress, by the way? I picked it up yesterday. I think it was yesterday. I'm never sure. No salesperson, of course, as usual, so I took it. Not like it matters. *(forces a smile)*  
*No response.*

Delilah: Oh! I just remembered. There was this green and yellow bird! It flew back and forth over the children, singing this sweet song, like it wanted to be part of the fun. *(she sings a bit of the song on la-la-la)* The children kept pointing at it and laughing, and shouting something, like they knew all what the bird meant. *(she sings the same la-la-la)* And the song *felt* familiar, like it was one that I'd sung at some point...but too long ago to place. Do you know what I mean?  
*No response.*

Delilah: No, I don't suppose you do. You've *always* been here.

Peter: *(not looking up)* I haven't always been here.

Delilah: *(mock shock)* Oh, my word. It speaks! Good **morning**, Peter.

Peter: *(looking at her)* Morning?

Delilah: Well, it's morning somewhere. It's just an expression, Peter. Like, "I watched the children for **hours**." It doesn't *mean* anything.

Peter: If there's no meaning, then there's no point in saying it. Like this phrase, Delilah: "Good day." *(back to his book)*

Delilah: Oh, come now, Peter. Talk with me. You must be lonely, too. There's no one in your boat, either. We're both on the outside looking in.

Peter: It is NOT the same!!!

Delilah: I didn't say it was the same. It just shares...a quality, that's all. A differentness.

Peter: I have...community.

Delilah: *(suddenly fascinated)* Do you? Where do you go when you're not here? Who are you with? *(No response)*. Crossed the line. Sorry. God forbid that I –

Peter: Delilah!!!

Delilah: Sorry! Sorry. An expression...again. *(long pause)* Peter, how long has it been?

Peter: Another of your expressions?

Delilah: *(chuckle)* Yes and no. I really meant it. How long in...their time?

Peter: Two days.

Delilah: What? No. Really!

Peter: Two days...and a couple of hours.

Delilah: No. It's been YEARS.

Peter: *(chuckle)* Everyone thinks that. Like the moon looking bigger when it's on the horizon. It's distortion. Michael thinks it's the lack of sleeping, so there's no point of reference.

Delilah: But we've met **so** many times. So many conversations we've had.

Peter: Everyone one of them in under a second...to them.

Delilah: This...whole conversation....?

Peter: ...The tiniest fraction of a second.

Delilah: So...it's Wednesday?

Peter: What?

Delilah: I came on a Monday. So it's Wednesday.

Peter: I...suppose. I don't really think in such terms.

Delilah: No, I don't suppose you would. Not when a "Wednesday" can feel like three years.

*Peter chuckles a little.*

Delilah: He laughs. Mark the day! On Wednesday, Peter laughed. See, you COULD like me.

Peter: *(sobering, then a pause)* It has nothing to do with liking you or not, Delilah. You know that.

Delilah: Yes, I know. But it would pass the time so much nicer...if we could be something like friends. After all, we're here.

Peter: You...

Unison: ....should not be here!

Delilah: I know, I know. You've told me. *(mocking his voice:)* **The sign says, "Enter, all who belong here, and know ye are welcome." But YOU should not be here!"** You've been telling me that for ye-- ... for two days, apparently.

Peter: And that isn't going to change. It's unforgiveable.

Delilah: I did what I had to do!

Peter: That's not how it works!

Delilah: I was smart.

Peter: You were rich.

Delilah: I was smart enough to know how to use my money well. I did what I had to do!

Peter: Smart enough to get here? Or smart enough to let Rhonda die?

Delilah: *(pausing, caught offguard)* I...

Peter: You knew what those men were going to do.

Delilah: No, not for sure, I didn't.

Peter: *(thrusting the book at her, angrily)* Do I need to read it to you? Your walk through the woods between your home and Rhonda's? Coming across the campfire of those men when you saw the smoke? Hearing them laughing, drinking, playing their drums and pipes and...

Delilah. *(confessing)* And whispering their plot to kill Rhonda...as I hid...looking and listening.

Peter: *(calming)* Yes. Well, at least we're past your denying it.

Delilah. And yes, I did nothing.

Peter: And we're back to denial.

Delilah. What? I'm admitting I didn't try to stop them.

Peter: *(laughs, scoffingly)* To stop them? Please! Have you already forgotten the note, Delilah?

Delilah. What?

Peter: The note you sent Rhonda. You wrote that you wanted to make a deal to work together, after so many bitter years of rivalry between you two.

Delilah. Well, I don't see what's wrong with that.

Peter: The **time** on the note, Delilah.

Delilah. I...

Peter: You told her you wanted to meet her at *her* home...at dusk -- the exact time that you heard the men say that they planned to kill her at home. What's stunning is that *they* never even knew that you were their accomplice, making sure she'd stay put for them...as she waited unwittingly for you. With tea and scones on her parlor table. Because you never planned to meet her at all.

*(Silence)*

Delilah. *(Coldly)* That's quite a book you've got there, Peter.

Peter: Isn't it, though?

Delilah. As you say, unforgiveable.

Peter: Yes.

Delilah. And we both know what becomes of the unforgiven.

Peter: Yes.

Delilah. Then how can you say I wasn't smart to find my way here?

Peter: You should not BE here!

Delilah. Your tired song, Peter! You can say that for all of eternity, but I wasn't stupid enough to go the other way when I found a way to get here.

Peter: You found the wrong way.

Delilah. For me, the only way. After all you just said.

Peter: And I still don't understand the deal you made. What does Lucifer need with gold?

Delilah. It's a toy for him. A tool to tempt others. And I offered him a lot of it.

Peter: And you even tricked him. I've never heard of any others who have tried that, let alone succeeded.

Delilah. *(slight smile)* I had an advantage. He didn't know my predicament. That I'd never get in here based on my history. So he fell for my lie. He just thought I was another soul with a wish.

Peter: What exactly did you say to him?

Delilah. That must be in your book, no?

Peter: No. We can't track his conversations.

Delilah. *(a breath)* I told him that I wanted, more than anything in the world, to speak with my mother Caroline again. That she died when I was seven and I felt a tremendous longing to connect with her, because I barely remembered her. And that she was so good that I knew she would be here in Heaven.

Peter: That much is true.

Delilah. The facts were. That's why it was believable. All data that he could verify.

Peter: But you weren't interested in seeing your mother?

Delilah. No, Everything else was factual enough that it made sense to him, but the reality that I had little interest in what she might have to say, *that* he couldn't read through my words. My mother was a foolish woman. That much I know of her. My father lived long enough to make that clear to me. And I'm more like him.

Peter: You are. Which is why HE'S not here.

Delilah. *(pause)* I...assumed so. Though I never knew that for sure...till just now.

Peter: Hmmm.

Delilah. There was something else...that caused him to be careless.

Peter: Hmm?

Delilah. He may be an angel, but he was still designed in the form of a man. He was clearly attracted to me. With my sweet face, and doe-eyed pleas to see my mother...he gave me *too* good of a deal.

Peter: Hmmm.

Delilah. He *wanted* my soul, of course, but I said, "Oh, no! I'm not willing to do that because then I would be separated from my dear mother for eternity, not just this lifetime." That logic was sound and he *knew* that he couldn't push me to make *that* deal. But I offered a lesser one. It wasn't even half my wealth, though I'd have given it all to avoid my father's fate.

Peter: And he did it just...for gold?

Delilah. Gold...and a kiss.

Peter: A kiss? You kissed him?

Delilah. I did.

Peter: That must have been horrible.

Delilah. I expected it *would* be. I was prepared to just endure. But...it wasn't horrible at all. It was actually...really good. *(pause and smile)* Really really good.

Peter: Reprehensible!

Delilah: Doesn't it make sense, though? The greatest tempter of all times...why wouldn't he be skilled in all aspects of seduction? But I couldn't let him know that it was working. I knew he needed to feel that *he* was more in control. And...I won't say how I know...but let's just say that I know quite well that HE enjoyed the kiss as well.

Peter: Stop!

Delilah. No more details, then. It's not my intention to repulse you. I'm just explaining why he agreed to provide a means for letting this little lamb see her long dead mother again. Gruesome a means as it was.

Peter: That staircase of bones.

Delilah. I had to try not to think about it. You may think me cold, but I had to act grateful and just not think about it. Even as voices whispered their pain to me as I stepped on their bodies, I strode on to the top.

Peter: And when you reached the top, did you see her?

Delilah. Who?

Peter: *Who???* Your mother! Caroline!

Delilah. You don't know?

Peter: I only track what happens on Earth. Not here.

Delilah. Oh, I see. Yes, that makes sense. Lucifer told me, when I got to the gate, to call out her name twice. Once to rouse you and once to summon her to pass you.

Peter: Rouse me? Why don't I remember that?

Delilah. *(laughing)* Because it never happened. Peter, I told you. I had no interest in seeing dear, sweet Caroline, though she might have had a few *interesting* words for me! Once I was at the gate, I just quickly opened it and shut it behind me.

Peter: Lucifer must have been furious!

Delilah. I think so. I've wondered about that, for sure. In fact, I thought for a moment as I opened the gate, I heard something like the start of a roar behind me, but the second the gate clicked shut, the sound ceased. Maybe I imagined it. Regardless, I haven't heard his voice since.

Peter: In here? No, you couldn't.

Delilah. The problem, of course, as you've pointed out to me so many times, is that (*mocking him*) "I should not BE here!" So it's been a less than heavenly experience. Others disappear when they see me. I crave and eat food to sustain myself, but I don't taste it. There are beautiful flowers, but they all smell like paper.

Peter: There was no record of your arrival, so nothing was set up for your experience here.

Delilah. I get that. And quite frankly, Peter...it sucks. Whether it's been years or two days, it's the ultimate mediocre existence. No interaction. No connection. No real pleasures.

Peter: You got a new dress.

Delilah. And I love it! It looks amazing on me. (*pause*) But It might as well be a smock. I've got no one to show it to.

Peter: Such vanity.

Delilah. No, it's not that. It's the not *sharing*. I don't get to *pay* a compliment, either, and would *love* to be able to do that. So that's not vanity.

Peter: If Rhonda were here in a beautiful dress, would you pay her a compliment?

Delilah. (*shocked*) Is Rhonda HERE???

Peter: (*pauses to consider whether to tell her before...*) nnnnnno. She's...not.

Delilah. I wouldn't think so.

Peter: That was just an example. But would you?

Delilah. After two whole earth days up here? If I saw Rhonda in a great dress up here and she could actually see me without disappearing? I'd tell her she looked gorgeous!

Peter: (*chuckles*) I want that for you, too, you know.

Delilah. Oh yeah, I'm sure.

Peter: You think it's fun for me to see you wandering aimlessly here? Interrupting me because, as your prison guard, I'm the only one you can talk to? Thoroughly resenting your corruption of our whole system and still, at times...having some empathy for you.

Delilah. You DO like me!

Peter: I wouldn't go that far! What you did on earth was terrible. And what you did to get here is unspeakable. But... both of those things can be remedied!

Delilah. (*shocked*) Excuse me?

Peter: You can still be redeemed, Delilah.

Delilah. What are you talking about?

Peter: I've never bothered to mention it, because you've never been this direct with me before, but yes. You could fix this still. Maybe.

Delilah. How?

Peter: As I said, it's only been two days back in Normandy [or other town/region to match accent].

Delilah. Yes?

Peter: You could still go back. Walk past the gate, through the whispering winds, and take your staircase back home. Such a short absence could easily be explained away and forgotten in a week.

Delilah. How would that redeem me?

Peter: It wouldn't. Not that alone. But it would give you the chance to make other better choices. There are few and far between within these gates who have led unblemished lives. It's not about being perfect. That would make grace unattainable. It's about achieving a level of goodness that is worthy.

Delilah. So 51% good gets you in.

Peter: *(gestures at the book)* It's not nearly as simplistic as that...but...if it helps you to think of it that way...it's along those lines.

Delilah. But what I did...by His standards, that was unforgivable.

Peter: Yes...and no. Not forgivable. But...think of it more like a balance scale. You put a big rock on one side. But if you put enough small rocks on the other side....

Delilah. ...it could tip back.

Peter: I'll say I've seen it happen. There are more than a few up here who have killed. And then compensated for it enough to be among us.

Delilah. What would it take?

Peter: I can't be sure. But I can think of one huge step.

Delilah. Tell me!

Peter: Adopt Rhonda's daughters.

Delilah. No!

Peter: No? Did they do anything to deserve to be orphaned? And left with little after the marauders pillaged their home?

Delilah. But...those girls are dreadful!

Peter:       *(smiling)* They are.

Delilah.     Rude!

Peter:       Unkempt.

Delilah.     Graceless!

Peter:       Malicious.

Delilah.     Even to each other!

Peter:       *(smiling)* What a sacrifice it would be to devote yourself to guiding such damaged youth toward becoming women worthy of...better descriptions?

*A long stare between them.*

Delilah.     And if I do this...if I go back and devote myself to their betterment, I will overcome the black mark on my name in your book? And come to live here, like the children who play with the bird?

*A long stare between them.*

Peter:       I...would *think* so.

Delilah.     What?

Peter:       Delilah, I'm not the arbitrator. I'm the bailiff.

Delilah.     You tell people if they get in or get sent down!

Peter:       I do. But I'm carrying out His will. The book just makes that clear for me.

Delilah.     And you can't tell me if what I'd go do would meet the mark?

Peter:       I can't know that yet. And you'd have many years left to be judged on. I just can't know.

Delilah.     You're telling me that I could do this and still end up...

Peter:       *(interrupts her)* ...yes. It's possible. But I don't think so. Just based on history. I think if you can do this, with good will and good intention for them, I think it will tip the scales.

Delilah.     Good intention.

Peter:       What?

Delilah.     Good intention. You said 'if I can do it with good intention.' But He would know if I were going back only to save my soul and not because of my sympathy for those girls.

Peter:       I.....I can't know that. But I think so. And it's a chance to put things right one way or the other. You should not *be* here!

*(long pause to stare into each others' eyes)*

Delilah. Thank you, Peter. I believe I'll pass.

Peter: Delilah...

Delilah. I may be missing out on the joys of Heaven, but the hell I know certainly beats the Hell that I don't.

Peter: So you'll just linger...forever...when there's a better option.

Delilah. Not an option. A coin toss. If you haven't noticed by now, I like a sure thing.

Peter: Wouldn't you –

Delilah. If you'll excuse me, I'm getting hungry. And while my dinner might not taste like much, it certainly beats maybe having to eat hot coals...or whatever.

Peter: You disappoint me.

Delilah. Par for the course, my friend. Why should today be different? I'll see you tomorrow, Peter.

Peter: There's no tomorrow, Delilah.

*Delilah gives a sad smile, touches his face (to his surprise) and slowly walks off. As soon as she's past him, we hear the song pick up at the first lyric*

*"There's a lady who's sure / All that glitters is gold / And she's buying a stairway to heaven..."*

23-½ minutes.