

DOTTED LINE

from the mind of...

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Characters

Star Anderson - female 26 - singer

Lizzie - female 52 - record executive

Location

Lizzie's office

A record executive's office. Several framed records and pictures hang on the wall.

STAR ANDERSON, a young attractive recording artist nervously enters. SHE admires the pictures and plaques on the walls.

LIZZIE, a powerful record executive closes the door behind STAR.

LIZZIE

Come in. Have a seat.

STAR

Well... thanks.

LIZZIE

Let's get right to it. We have watched you develop over the last year.

STAR

We?

LIZZIE notices a picture on the desk. It's Lizzie and Queen Elizabeth.

LIZZIE

Let's just say me. But there is a we. So... I've been watching and I must say, impressive for an independent artist.

STAR

Thank you... Is that a picture of the Queen?

LIZZIE

It is.

STAR

So you're friends with the Queen?

LIZZIE

Yes.

STAR

Wow... well like, how?

LIZZIE

We've shared some of the same bloodline.

STAR hears something. Jumps, SHE looks, but there's nothing.

STAR

I'm sorry. Please forgive me. But, did you say the two of you are related?

LIZZIE

No... And like I said, you ma'am, are impressive. I would like to offer you the opportunity of lifetimes.

We hear a HISSING sound from under the desk.

STAR

Did you hear something...

LIZZIE pulls out a GREY CAT. (can be a stuffed animal)

STAR

AHHHHHH!

LIZZIE

Don't be startled. It's just my kitty.

LIZZIE watches STAR for a beat as STAR tries to catch HER breath.

STAR

That cat scared the crap out of me. Excuse me, but I'm a little nervous.

LIZZIE

Don't be afraid. It's just the little sneaky reptilian side of her.

STAR

Who? Um, what are talking about?

LIZZIE

I'm talking about my cat's reptilian side.

STAR

What?

LIZZIE

You know little. To get a cat, someone had to put two sworn enemies in the same body. That was the lion and the serpent. It was an experiment that gave us this little kitty we love today.

STAR

Uh... yeah.

LIZZIE

Look in the cat's eyes. In certain light, their eyes are light a snake. The creature you call a lion has eyes like a dog, and they stay that way. But this kitty has the same eyes as a snake. Did you hear the kitty hiss at you?

STAR

Yes.

LIZZIE

Does a lion hiss?

STAR

Um... no I don't believe so.

LIZZIE

All of these little kitty cats hiss like a serpent. That's the reptilian DNA. Enough about creating earthly creatures. I'm prepared to offer you a one million dollar signing bonus. Right now.

STAR

One million dollars? Wow... This is why I needed my manager to come with me.

LIZZIE

I asked you to come alone because your management is inexperienced. I will place you with a new management team. If you want to keep your manager, there is no deal.

STAR hesitates, unsure, then...

STAR

Okay, um... please tell me more.

LIZZIE puts the cat down.

LIZZIE

The first thing is to put you with the best producers. I have writers with number one hits as we speak. These are song writers and major producers who will not put you on a back-burner for a bigger artist.

STAR

But I write all of my songs.

LIZZIE

That's good. But you never cracked Billboard.

STAR

Is Billboard still important today?

LIZZIE

Yes. And I will have you at number one. This is guaranteed.

STAR

You can guarantee that?

LIZZIE

Oh course. Do you know why you did not crack Billboard?

STAR

Nooo, not really.

LIZZIE

Because you did not have major radio influence. You indie artists can never obtain major slots in radio. The cost is too high.

STAR

I thought radio was free.

LIZZIE

See why you need me. I will get you on radio. After that, major tours. Think revenue from every source of entertainment.

STAR takes a moment and contemplates.

STAR

That's a big one. Don't know what your going to offer next, but it seems like I'm going to have to give up all creative control.

LIZZIE

Your are not giving up anything.

STAR

My independence. And my ownership, ain't I?

LIZZIE

Look at what your gaining.

STAR

A half million and three-sixty deal.

LIZZIE

One million.

STAR

After taxes and all, I'll get half.

LIZZIE

Nice. You see how much wiser you are than that manager you had.

STAR

The manager I had?

LIZZIE

He's gone. You'll never see him again. Trust me.

STAR

What happened to him?

LIZZIE

He left when you said, okay, please tell me more. Now, my focus is you.

STAR

This is weird. Plus, he didn't even answer this morning. I told him about this meeting last week and he didn't even fuss when I said I had to come by myself. He normally does.

LIZZIE

He's the first of many. The higher you climb, the more people will be left behind. Like I said, my focus is you.

STAR

Okay.

LIZZIE

Great. Take a look at this.

LIZZIE opens a drawer on HER desk. SHE pulls out a folder containing papers. SHE hands a paper to STAR.

LIZZIE

You sold over 100,000 downloads on just that one platform this year. That's good. But not great.

STAR

I'm on more platforms.

LIZZIE

Yes. But this one performed the best. And, you're not streaming on the main three.

STAR

We're still working on it.

LIZZIE

Today, it all can change. All you have to do is one thing.

STAR

What's that?

LIZZIE

You have to agree.

STAR

Agree to what?

LIZZIE

Agree to the contract.

STAR

Well, I think I'm going to agree to sign on the dotted line... If I can get two million up front instead of one.

LIZZIE

I'm not talking about the contract in that way.

STAR takes a moment. SHE looks around the room and contemplates.

STAR

Okay... I guess this is the part where it really gets creepy. Like... what do I have to do, sell my soul to you for the money?

LIZZIE

That's nonsense. You can't sell your soul to anyone.

STAR relax in the chair.

LIZZIE

But you can offer it.

Now SHE sits back up in the chair.

STAR

I knew it. You want me to offer you my soul?

LIZZIE

No. And not to me.

STAR

Then to who?

LIZZIE

To the all. Now before you ask me too many question, you must ask yourself, how bad do you want what you want?

STAR

I don't think I want it--

LIZZIE

--Hush. I said ask yourself.

LIZZIE holds HER index finger up as a gesture to stop talking.

The lights dim when HER finger went up.

STAR sits in the chair freaking out.

LIZZIE takes a moment and looks STAR right in the eyes.

LIZZIE

You have this all wrong. I will give you the money you ask for. But understand, what I'm going to do for you requires more from you than anybody. Do you understand the power of your starlight?

STAR

Umm... no.

LIZZIE

Listen to me. You are not a shining star, today. I am going to turn your inner light all the way up... full blast. Understand?

STAR

I think.

LIZZIE

When your light shines full blast, it's at the end of your life. It is never a good thing to turn your light all the way up so young. Your light will brighten naturally, little by little over the years. That way, you will be able to handle it and not burn out.

LIZZIE nods HER head and STAR nods back.

LIZZIE

Don't ask me how I'm going to do it. I'm just going to do it. If you agree. But also know, you have to pay this back. Understand?

STAR

No... No, I don't understand. You said you're paying me. Now how do I owe you back? And how do I pay?

LIZZIE

You pay it back with your soul. And sometimes the price you pay is larger than what you received.

STAR

SO YOU DO WANT MY SOUL?

LIZZIE

I told you no. But your soul is the currency.

STAR

But what the hell? I don't understand, if you say--

LIZZIE

--HUSH!

The finger goes up again.

The lights get brighter.

LIZZIE

The soul is the only thing that exist that can be used as current. And your soul does not belong to you. That is why you can not sell it.

STAR

Well, who does it belong--

LIZZIE

--It belongs to the all. The whole. Are you not listening? And you will pay with it... Forever.

STAR

Forever?

LIZZIE

It works like this. After you agree to this, a piece of your soul belongs to everybody who contributes. And you will owe each and every one of them.

STAR

Excuse me?

LIZZIE

You'll be paying for the rest of your life. And you will pay with your soul's energy.

STAR

Energy.

LIZZIE

Yes. Now a days, you pay with pictures and maybe a little more.

STAR

Pictures?

LIZZIE

Let's say you fall in love with a loser and he talks you out of your publishing and royalties. Twenty years later, you are flat broke, standing in the government assistance line asking for help. Some fucker recognizes you and ask for a picture.

STAR

That fucker want be getting a picture.

LIZZIE

You will give that fucker a picture because you owe him. Therefore, you take the picture and don't complain.

(MORE)

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

Remember I said the price you pay is larger than what you receive?

STAR

Yeah.

LIZZIE

The millions of people who adored you, listened to and purchased your music, you will owe them a piece of your soul forever.

STAR

Okay.

LIZZIE

Everybody who watched a video. Every mother who sang their child to sleep with your song. Every single DJ who played your song. All who danced to it. You owe everybody who contributed in turning your inner starlight all the up, at once.

STAR

I never looked at like this.

LIZZIE

Seems like nothing. But when you want the paparazzi to stop taking your picture, remember, that's what you owe. The people only want that one moment with you. They post the picture or whatever and it make their day. But if it's your worst day, you still owe.

STAR

What if I don't take the picture.

LIZZIE

If you don't, they will put you in hell.

STAR

Okay, so I will have to go to hell?

LIZZIE

Yes. But not the hell in religion. The people will put you in hell when they turn on you for not paying what you owe.

STAR

Ohhhh... I think I understand.

LIZZIE

And trust me. You don't want them to turn on you. My last artist. Her mother died. She went to a function to relieve some stress and escape her depression. They had a mic and a DJ at the function. She tried to explain she wasn't feeling well and couldn't sing because her mother died.

STAR

Understandable.

LIZZIE

Not when you owe. They cheered her on and stuck the mic in her face. She owed. And she performed. That's the price. You will never be able to pay it back in one giving lifetime, for the price is too high. UNDERSTAND!

STAR

Yes, I understand. Is that why you said you wanted to offer me the opportunity of lifetimes? Because I'd be paying people back forever.

LIZZIE

Yes. Now my question to you is... do you agree?

STAR

...Yes.

LIZZIE

Welcome to Occult Records. You can sign on the dotted line.