

The Dule Tree

by

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**FADE IN:**

SUPER: DERBYSHIRE, ENGLAND, 1634.

**EXT. MEADOW - DAY**

A pair of feet, dirty and bare, race through long grass.

ROSE (7), a slip of freckles and innocence. She moves fast, her long smock threatening to upend her every step.

**EXT. MEADOW - PERIMETER - DAY**

Rose crawls on all fours alongside a low stone wall.

She stops and settles her head against the stone.

From the other side comes the CLANG of metal interspersed with the excited SHOUTS of children.

**LATER**

Bleak, wild moorland stretches to distant hills.

Rose scratches at the stonework. A faint metallic CREAKING drifts from the other side of the wall.

**EXT. CROSSROADS - DAY**

Drops of blood pepper the ground amid a scatter of rocks.

A rusted iron gibbet hangs from a tree. Its chains creaking under the strain.

A scabbed hand dangles through the bars. Blood beads and falls from the fingertips.

Rose watches through a gap in the wall's capstone -- her eyes peering out.

The fingers twitch.

Rose's eyes flicker with shock and disappear from view.

**EXT. MOORLAND - DAY**

A vista of swaying fern. The sky threatens rain.

**EXT. MEADOW - PERIMETER - DAY**

Rose crouches against the wall. Her appearance is cleaner. She listens to the gibbet CREAK and GROAN.

**EXT. CROSSROADS - DAY**

Hunched inside the gibbet is GALLE (40s), his face hidden beneath soiled blankets.

His voice comes weak, cracked with thirst.

GALLE

You smell sweet. Like rose water.

Rose blinks through the capstone.

GALLE (O.S.)

Don't you play with the others?

Distant RUMBLE of thunder.

**LATER**

Galle cups his hands through the bars collecting rainwater.

Thunder RUMBLES overhead.

Wet strands of hair streak Rose's face. She hunkers behind the tree, her clothes sodden.

GALLE (O.S.)

Where's your kin child?

Rose fidgets, nervous.

GALLE

You see me. I know yous' see me.

She puts a hand to her mouth, muting her breath.

GALLE

You see me then yous' hear me. Less  
your ears are full of dirt. What's  
it to be?

She considers this a moment -- withdraws her hand.

ROSE

Aye.

GALLE

Aye..? Home with you, your Ma'll  
be worried.

ROSE

My Ma's with fever.

GALLE

Then go, be with her. This  
here's no place for a bairn.

ROSE

She sleeps. Don't miss me.

Galle shifts, his curiosity piqued.

GALLE

Da'?

Rose draws her knees up to her chest and stares off into  
the distance -- resolute.

ROSE

I've no Da'.

**EXT. MEADOW - DAY**

First-light. Rose hurries towards the lane carrying a pail.

**EXT. CROSSROADS - DAY**

Rose kneels behind the tree. She takes a hunk of bread from  
the pail and wraps it in cloth.

The cloth parcel hangs from a stick, hobo style. Rose holds it up to the cage.

Galle's hand gingerly emerges to take it.

Her back to the tree, Rose hugs her knees and stares into the distance. Crows CAW.

GALLE (O.S.)

The Devil's near. D'you hear him  
Rose? Perhaps it pleases him to  
see me so.

He presses his head to the bars. He can just see her feet peek out from behind the tree.

GALLE

D'you go hungry for me? Shouldn't  
be so. There's other ways. Taking  
bread from the table goes so far.  
If you've to help me, bring me  
something else, something simple.  
Something that'd not be missed.

She steals a look to see his fingers inspect the lock securing the gibbet's door.

GALLE

A nail. Find me a nail child.

**EXT. CROSSROADS - DAY**

Rose, clothed in a fresh dress, holds another hobo parcel up to the cage. Galle snatches it free.

He tears open the package, taking the bread in his teeth as he shakes the cloth. His breath rises, agitated.

The cloth peeks from the cage. Slowly it feeds down...

Rose tiptoes below, reaching up to receive it.

In a flash Galle reaches down through the bars and grasps her by the hair. She squirms in panic. Her toes scuff at the dirt as she's lifted from the ground.

GALLE

Lord brung you here for a reason,  
d'you hear? Fetch me a nail child!

ROSE

I seen one, I knows where, promise.

He holds her there a moment before letting go. She scuttles back to the wall and watches as his fist clenches in rage.

GALLE

Forgive me Rose. I mean you no  
harm. I lose my way. Last night  
I heard the Devil call my name.

**EXT. CROSSROADS - DAY**

Rose angles a longer hobo stick-parcel up to the gibbet.

**MOMENTS LATER**

A hunk of bread explodes against the bars -- rejected.

GALLE (O.S.)

Rose!

**EXT. MEADOW - PERIMETER - DUSK**

A howling wind drives rain across the moors.

Rose scratches at the stone. She shivers with cold as Galle casts a raving, unintelligible plea to the heavens O.S.

**EXT. CROSSROADS - DAY**

Crows roam the sky.

Rose kneels in the shadow of the gibbet.

A pile of wildflowers rest in her lap from which she fashions a flower-chain. Galle WHIMPERS above.

GALLE (O.S.)

Lord's not comin' for me. He'll not  
take my hand. Take my hand Rose,  
take it, take it in his place.

He reaches a hand down in offering.

Rose fits the 'chain' around her neck -- then removes it  
and continues working, indifferent.

**EXT. MEADOW - DAY**

CLATTER of stone on metal. SHOUTS and JEERS of children as  
Rose tears towards the lane.

**EXT. CROSSROADS - DAY**

Three feral looking YOUTHS torment Galle. One beats on the  
cage with a stick while the others hurl mud and stones.

Rose rushes in and knocks a STONE THROWER (6) off balance.

She hurls a stone at the STICK WIELDER (9) -- he shrinks  
back as it connects.

The LEADER (10) pushes her to the ground. She curls into a  
ball as they barrage her with mud-clots.

LEADER

Get home with you. Have you lost  
your head?

Galle's bloodied hands grip the bars. His knuckles whiten  
as he shakes the cage.

GALLE

Leave her be, it's me you want. I  
killed him, cast yer stones at me!

**LATER**

Silence. The Youths gone.

Rose lies where she fell, limp and muddied.

Galle rests his head against the bars -- his hair matted with blood. He looks starved and haunted.

GALLE

Should let them have their way.

Rose turns to stare coldly at the gibbet.

**EXT. MEADOW - PERIMETER - DAY**

Rose scratches at the wall -- six lines etched into stone. She adds a seventh.

**EXT. CROSSROADS - DAY**

Rose gazes at the ground. Galle sits chastened above. His spirit broken.

**EXT. MEADOW - PERIMETER - DAY**

Eight lines etched in stone.

**EXT. CROSSROADS - DUSK**

Rose rests at the tree's base. She stares into nowhere.

Galle, his voice a broken whisper.

GALLE

The crows, d'you see them gather?

ROSE

Aye. There's magpies too.

GALLE

Promise me you'll not come  
after this night. You hear me?  
It's not for a bairn to see.

Her face hardens. He gives a sickly COUGH.

## GALLE

They bring the Devil on their wings.

She looks to his hand trailing limp through the bars.

Rose drags the pail from a bush. She sets it upside down beneath the gibbet and steps up.

She slips her hand into his.

Galle stirs but can't find the strength to raise his head.

Rose steps down from the pail and slips into the night.

His fingers tighten on a slender iron nail.

A soft, tremulous breath suggests he knows what it is.

**EXT. MOORS - NIGHT**

A simple wooden burial cross stands draped with a flower chain. The cross-piece rests askew --

one of the two nails that once held it in place missing.

FADE OUT