

Never Suck an Orange

written by

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INT. ELSIE'S BATHROOM - DAY

White tile encases the small room, sunlight liltng through green floral curtains above the bathtub. ELSIE sinks in the bubbles, eyes glued to the book clasped in her hands, smoke drifting from the cigarette in her mouth. A vintage yellow phone sits on the side of the tub.

A grainy voice, as if on the radio, narrates the book in her hands, as if the author himself were speaking from the heavens.

CLOSE UP OF ELSIE'S EYES

NARRATOR

What do you want?

CLOSE UP OF THE BOOK. THE TITLE READS 'THE KEY TO MAKING FRIENDS'.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Not many things, but the few things
that you do wish--

CLOSE UP OF THE CIGARETTE IN HER MOUTH

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

--you crave with an insistence that
will not be denied. Some of the
things people do want include
food...

CUT TO:

INT. ELSIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

ELSIE sits by herself at a wooden table. A plate sits in front of her - a piece of toast, cut into soldiers and two unopened boiled eggs in porcelain white egg cups.

ELSIE raises the knife and taps the side of one egg to open it.

CUT TO:

INT. ELSIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

ELSIE lies spread eagled and fast asleep on a double bed, the ugly floral bedspread lying crumpled at her feet.

NARRATOR

...sleep...

CUT TO:

INT. ELSIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

ELSIE sits on the floor, her back against the door, her face twisted in a mix of intent focus and pleasure. Her tongue peaks out of her mouth as she concentrates. A buzzing echoes from the vibrator (off-screen) between her legs.

NARRATOR

...sexual gratification...

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - DAY

ELSIE stands, holding a tray of take-away coffees, a hopeful smile on her face. The camera pulls back slowly as people swarm to snatch their drinks, not one of them taking notice or even thanking her. ELSIE'S expression doesn't flinch. No one talks to her.

NARRATOR

...and a feeling of importance.

CUT TO:

INT. ELSIE'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

ELSIE sits in the bathtub, reading the book. She is invested. Her cigarette sits between her fingers.

NARRATOR

Almost all these wants are usually gratified. All except one.

The yellow telephone on the side of the tub rings. ELSIE'S eyes snap towards it.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It is what Freud calls "the desire to be great".

The phone rings again. ELSIE snatches it and excitedly answers.

ELSIE
Hello?

NARRATOR
It is what Dewey calls "the desire
to be important".

A demanding woman's voice echoes over the telephone.

WOMAN
Elsie, what time is that thing
tonight? I can't bring anything.
And will you tell Mum to stop
calling me, it's bad for my skin.

ELSIE squeaks with excitement.

ELSIE
Celeste!

She clears her throat.

ELSIE (CALMLY) (CONT'D)
It'll start around 6 I think--

CELESTE
Fine, well I have to meet Patrick
beforehand so--

ELSIE snaps to attention.

ELSIE
Patricks coming ??

CELESTE
Don't interrupt me.

ELSIE blinks.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
As I was saying. I have to meet
Patrick before so we'll probably be
late.

ELSIE nods, trying to contain her glee.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Who else is even coming to this
fucking thing?

ELSIE

Eric and Fran said they'd be there.
And Tom said he's a maybe. And
Patrick...

(she basically swoons)
...and you of course.

CELESTE sighs. ELSIE can almost feel her breath through the receiver.

CELESTE

Fine. I guess it won't be terrible
then.

ELSIE nods, her head almost jumping off her shoulders with pure elation.

ELSIE

It'll be a fun night!

She pauses.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

Celeste, I know we haven't always
been on the best of terms but I
think tonight will be a really good
way for the group to accept me and-
-

CELESTE

Just make sure there's wine.

CELESTE hangs up.

WIDE SHOT

ELSIE slowly puts the phone back on the receiver and returns to the book.

CUT TO:

INT. ELSIE'S DINING ROOM - LATER

ELSIE stands at the head of the wooden table, its surface now covered in a pristine white tablecloth. In front of her sit a stack of plates, 6 wine glasses, and fabric napkins. She clutches a handful of dinner knives in her hand.

NARRATOR

A party is always a good
opportunity to show people the real
you.

A SHOT OF A TABLE PLACE FROM ABOVE

A formal table set. A porcelain plate with a fabric napkin neatly folded, an entree and main set of cutlery, a soup spoon, a dessert fork and spoon, a bread plate and butter knife, and a water glass.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The table should be set with dishes that shine.

ELSIE's hand comes into view, placing a wine glass above the water glass, slightly to the right. She takes her hand away before slightly adjusting it.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The wine glass should be placed on the right side, above the dinner knife and spoon.

She gently fluffs the napkin.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The napkin should be styled neatly on the plate.

CUT TO:

INT. ELSIE'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

WHACK! A cleaver comes down heavy. ELSIE stands in her kitchen, hair frayed, her back to the camera. Opened food packages and discarded dishes surround her on the bench as she furiously chops.

NARRATOR

A pleasant hostess will prepare the food before guests arrive, so as to allow more time to mingle.

The oven dings. She opens it and slides a casserole dish in.

INT. ELSIE'S DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The table is perfectly set. Four bottles of red wine lie in immaculate arrangement in the centre. Two vases of flowers sit outside them.

ELSIE can be heard muffled in the kitchen, her cleaver chopping with rhythmic force - WHACK! WHACK!

NARRATOR

That way, people can get to know
your glowing personality before the
meal.

CUT TO:

INT. ELSIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ELSIE stands straight in the middle of the room in front of the door, her hands clasped in front of her, waiting. Her dog, DALE, lies beside her. She wears an unflattering, vomit-green dress. Her frizzy hair is pinned back with a barrette. Her make-up is clumsy and smudged. She unclasps her hands for a moment to smooth her dress, before returning to her original position.

The clock reads 6:32pm.

NARRATOR

A hostess is always ready in
advance.

Disgruntled chatter can be heard outside the front door.

TOM (MUFFLED)

Come on man, let's just go to the
bars.

ERIC (MUFFLED)

Shut the fuck up, there's free beer
here.

The doorbell rings.

She holds herself back for a moment before walking forward and opening it.

Three people swarm into the house. TOM, a tall, brunette and devilishly good-looking man with a bachelor's confidence, ERIC, a blonde man with beady eyes and a puffy face, and FRAN, the human lookalike of a crow.

ELSIE stands, smiling hopefully and holding open the door, waiting for any one of them to acknowledge her.

TOM

'Sup Sasquatch

He throws his coat at her. It lands on her head.

TOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Cute dog.

ELSIE closes the door slowly before pulling the coat off her face. Her smile is now exaggerated, splitting her face in an expression of hopeful desperation.

NARRATOR

A genuine smile acts as a messenger
of goodwill.

TOM (LAUGHING)(O.S.)

What the fuck is this house, man?

The camera shows ERIC punching TOM in the shoulder. TOM picks up a terrifying porcelain doll on the shelf and pretends to chase him with it.

NARRATOR

It communicates, *"I like you. You
make me happy. I am glad to see
you."*

ELSIE clasps her hands together in excitement. Her face remains frozen in the same expression.

ELSIE

Welcome!

No one hears her. She clears her throat.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

Welcome!

Not even a look. Her smile slightly falters. She opens her mouth one more time. Her voice is a loud, high-pitched scream.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

WELCOME!

They all stop and look at her. Her face is back to the same hauntingly desperate smile.

They all look a little creeped out.

TOM

Yeah, hey, man. Thanks for, like,
having us?

ELSIE doesn't move.

ELSIE

My dear, dear friends. My birds of
a feather. My lovely counterparts.
I am just...

(she sighs wistfully)

(MORE)

ELSIE (CONT'D)
...so blessed to have you in my
home.

TOM guffaws.

TOM
What's your name again?

ERIC and FRAN giggle.

CLOSE UP OF ELSIE'S EYES

Her left eye twitches. She lets out a breath.

ELSIE
My name is Elsie, I'm Celeste's
sister.

Tom points at DALE.

TOM
What's the dog's name?

ELSIE beams.

ELSIE
His name is Dale.

Tom looks from ELSIE, to the dog, and back at ELSIE again.

TOM
That's a stupid name for a dog.

ELSIE looks slightly hurt for a moment, before returning to
her smiling expression.

She gestures.

ELSIE
The dining room is right through
here. Please follow me. The other
guests will join us shortly.

She begins to lead them through.

TOM (WHISPERING)
Yo, what's with the Hannibal
routine?

CUT TO:

INT. ELSIE'S DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

TOM, ERIC and FRAN sit at the perfectly set dining table. ERIC and FRAN still look a little weirded out. TOM looks bored. Their wine glasses are filled.

ELSIE stands in front of them, hands clasped, the same creepy, exaggerated smile on her face.

TOM runs his finger over the lip of the wine glass.

TOM
You got any beer?

ELSIE's eyes SNAP toward him.

TOM holds up his hands in surrender.

ERIC giggles.

The doorbell rings again.

ELSIE (CHIRPILY)
Excuse me!

She hurries out of the room. Three pairs of eyes follow her.

INT. ELSIE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ELSIE walks towards the front door, her smile sliding off her face.

FRAN (O.S.)
That'll be Celeste, thank god.

TOM (O.S.)
Yeah, maybe that'll get this
chick's knickers untied.

They all chortle.

ELSIE opens the door to CELESTE, a stunning brunette woman, and PATRICK, a tall, muscular man with striking blue eyes and a jaw chiseled by God.

CELESTE barges past her sister.

CELESTE
Sorry we're late, this fucking guy
on the road wouldn't get out of my
way.

She's clearly not sorry. She looks ELSIE up and down.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
What the fuck are you wearing?
(she rolls her eyes)
Whatever. Where's the wine?

She walks to the dining room.

ELSIE turns to stare at PATRICK, who remains invested in his phone. She flutters her eyelashes.

ELSIE (SWOONING)
Hi Patrick. May I take your coat?

PATRICK brushes past her, not glancing up once.

PATRICK
Yeah, hi, Emily.

He chucks his coat at her and she catches it.

She watches him walk into the dining room to be met with eager greetings, an expression of slight worry and contemplation her face.

NARRATOR
To a person, their name is the sweetest and most important sound in any language. Take the time to get names right and use them in conversation.

INT. ELSIE'S DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The five guests sit at the table, waiting.

TOM
Where did she go?

ERIC
Who cares?

TOM
I do. I'm hungry.

CELESTE
Guys, just get through dinner. Then we can go to the clubs.

TOM
She's your sister, dude. Why do we have to be here?

ERIC

Yeah, she's not friends with us.
She just kind of lurks around. It's
creepy.

CELESTE looks at PATRICK for help. He shrugs.

PATRICK

She is kinda weird, babe.

CELESTE rolls her eyes, but before she can speak again, ELSIE
emerges from the kitchen. Her back faces the camera.

The guests stop talking and look at her, their laughing
expressions falling into horror.

ELSIE

Please enjoy some appetisers.

Her hand slowly places down trays of canapés on the table.

The guests continue to stare at her in shock.

ELSIE stands, smiling, at the head of the table, her name
spelt in bloody slashes on her forehead. A trickle of blood
runs into her eyebrow.

TOM

WHA-

ERIC clamps his hand over TOM's mouth.

ELSIE

Tuck in!

She turns on her heel and walks out.

CUT TO:

INT. ELSIE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

ELSIE presses her ear to the wooden door, trying to decipher
the muffled sounds of her guests. Blood trickles from her
forehead.

TOM (WHISPERING)

WHAT THE FUCK ?!

CELESTE

Look, she's just a little troubled.

TOM
A little troubled? A LITTLE
TROUBLED ?! She's fucking Lizzie
Borden, man!

ERIC (CHEWING)
And she's a shit cook. What is
this, pork?

FRAN
How are you eating right now?

ERIC
We're at a fucking dinner party!
I'm just saying. I remember when I
was traveling, we ate DOG! Can you
believe it? DOG!

TOM
This is messed up. We're outta here
ASAP.

CELESTE
It's fine, she's not gonna do
anything else.

ELSIE looks hurt. Her food is not a hit so far.

NARRATOR
A well-cooked meal is a sure-fire
way to win affections.

A yip sounds from behind her.

ELSIE turns slowly to find DALE, sitting on the floor,
staring at her lovingly.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Don't be afraid to take risks with
your food.

The camera cuts back to ELSIE, staring at her dog, a slow
smile creeping across her face.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Guests love an exotic meal.

CUT TO:

INT. ELSIE'S DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The guests talk in hushed tones.

A muffled WHACK! sounds from the kitchen.

They all stop talking and look at the door.

CUT TO:

INT. ELSIE'S DINING ROOM - LATER

The guest and ELSIE sit at the table in silence. A plate of spaghetti and meatballs sits in front of each of them.

TOM pokes his with his fork.

TOM

Hey, what kind of meat is this?

NARRATOR

Entertaining another at dinner is a sign of good will.

ELSIE (PLAYFULLY)

Guess!

TOM

What? No.

ELSIE

Come onnnnnn

TOM

No, just tell me.

ELSIE

Guess.

TOM

No!

ELSIE

Guess!

TOM

No, you crazy bitch! Just fucking tell me!

ELSIE stands abruptly, her chair sliding back with a SCREECH. The guests fall silent, watching her intently.

ELSIE walks over to TOM and stands beside him. TOM looks at ERIC with an expression of amused bewilderment.

ELSIE (FLATLY)

Guess.

TOM
I don't wan--

SLAM!

TOM's head hits the immaculate table set. Sauce spatters. ELSIE grips the back of his head, her eyes now crazed and wide.

TOM raises his head slowly. Spaghetti and blood covers his face. His nose is crooked.

TOM (CONT'D)
WHAT THE F--

SLAM! ELSIE slams his head again, and again, and again.

Her guests watch in horror, frozen.

SLAM! SLAM! SLAM!

TOM's face is now a crumpled mess of blood. He lies face down in his dinner, lifeless.

FRAN lets a blood-curdling scream. She leaps up from the table and sprints out of the kitchen.

ELSIE watches her with a smile. The front door slams.

NARRATOR
It is considered rude to leave the table without being excused.

ELSIE
(to the guests)
Please, excuse me. That was a very rude thing to do.

She picks up an empty wine bottle from the table and smashes the bottom against the edge. Glass shatters.

She gestures to ERIC, PATRICK and CELESTE with the jagged edge.

ELSIE (SWEETLY) (CONT'D)
Now, don't you guys go running off!

They stare at her in terror.

ELSIE walks out of the house after FRAN, holding the bottle like a knife.

CUT TO:

EXT. DARK STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Streetlights cast haunting shadows over the hidden nooks in the street. FRAN stumbles down the road, her breathing heavy, her eyes panicked and darting.

ELSIE (SINGING) (O.S.)
Frannnnnn

FRAN looks behind her and starts jogging.

Footsteps echo through the night.

FRAN picks up her pace, still looking over her shoulder. She turns to face ahead and-

THWACK!

The jagged edges of the bottle slam into her face. She drops like a sack of potatoes.

ELSIE stands over her, her eyes deranged.

ELSIE
That was very rude of you, Fran.

She shakes her head, tutting.

ELSIE (CONT'D)
Very, very rude.

CUT TO:

INT. ELSIE'S DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The front door slams open. The guests stop their hushed chatter and turn to look.

ELSIE drags FRAN's corpse into the room, the bottle still sticking out of her face.

They watch in horror as ELSIE pulls the body back onto the seat at the table. She takes her seat at the head.

They stare at her.

FRAN's head flops down onto the plate, pushing the bottle further into her face.

CELESTE gags.

ELSIE picks up her knife and fork and begins cutting into a meatball.

ELSIE
So, Eric. How's work?

ERIC looks from his dead wife to ELSIE, shaking. Tears fill his eyes.

ERIC
Wh..what?

ELSIE
How's work?

ERIC
F...fine.

ELSIE chews, looking at him expectantly.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Been feeling a little taken for
granted, but you know...
(he swallows)
...that's life.

ELSIE stops chewing at looks at him with concern. She puts down her fork.

ELSIE
They don't make you feel important?

ERIC shrugs.

NARRATOR
Every human being wants to be
valued. Make your friends feel
appreciated.

ELSIE smiles.

ELSIE
Well. I can help you with that.

She stands and begins walking towards ERIC. He shakes his head vigorously.

ERIC (PANICKED)
No, no, no, that's okay really, I'm
okay

ELSIE
Don't be silly!

CELESTE and PATRICK begin to rise out of their chairs. Her head snaps towards them.

ELSIE (CONT'D)
SIT DOWN!

They obey.

ELSIE grabs ERIC and begins dragging him towards the arched wall hanging behind the table.

ERIC (SCREAMING)
NO, NO, PLEASE, I'M IMPORTANT, I'M
IMPORTANT!

CELESTE and PATRICK scream at ELSIE to stop, but she doesn't listen.

ELSIE
Get on the chair.

ERIC obeys, sweating and shaking.

ELSIE walks to the drawers and pulls out a hammer and box of nails.

ERIC
No, no, please...

ELSIE pulls a chair up in front of him and stands on it. She brings ERIC's hand up to press it against the painted wood of the arced wall. Holding it, she brings up a nail and levels it in the middle of his palm with the hammer.

She raises the hammer.

We are outside the house, looking through the window at the scene. A SMACK rings throughout the room. An eerie ring echos over it, as if the TV has shut out. ERIC's screams are muffled amongst the following SMACK, as well as CELESTE and PATRICK's snuffed cries.

Sound returns as we are back in the room.

ERIC has passed out. CELESTE is sobbing and PATRICK is yelling at ELSIE to stop. She has finished nailing both his hands to the wall.

He hangs there in biblical slaughter.

ELSIE throws her hands in the air and bellows in a deep voice.

ELSIE
BEHOLD...CHRIST!

CELESTE and PATRICK watch in shock.

ELSIE turns to ERIC's limp body and whispers playfully.

ELSIE (CONT'D)
Bet you feel important now.

She jumps down and returns to her seat at the table, once again tucking into her dinner.

ERIC hangs above her like an offering.

CELESTE breathes a shaky breath.

CELESTE
Elsie...Elsie, what the fuck are you doing? This is crazy, you're fucking crazy.

ELSIE
I'm just trying to show you guys that you're important to me. But it's kind of hard when you aren't really returning the favour. I mean, Fran just running off and Tom not playing with me, it's all really quite rude.
(she laughs)
I mean I cooked my fucking dog for you guys. I got this self-help book see and--

CELESTE
Elsie this is madness, we're not your fucking friends alright!

ELSIE (SCREAMING)
STOP INTERRUPTING ME!

She grabs her dinner knife and walks over to CELESTE.

ELSIE forces her hand down her sister's throat and pulls out her tongue.

ELSIE (CONT'D)
You were never a good listener.

She grasps the tongue and raises the knife.

ELSIE (CONT'D)
A good friend always listens.

She begins to saw, and CELESTE begins to scream.

CLOSE UP OF THE KNIFE SAWING THROUGH THE TONGUE.

PATRICK puts his face in his hands and sobs.

ELSIE finishes sawing through the tongue and RIPS it out of CELESTE's mouth with a sickening tear.

PATRICK lets out a loud wail.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

Oh, will you shut the fuck up.

She slams the tongue on the table and walks over to him. She pulls back his face and stares down at him.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

You were never good enough for either of us.

(she gestures to Celeste)

Not once tonight have you tried to control your friends, or your stupid girlfriend. The other day you told me that I should smile more.

(she leans down to whisper)

Well, Patrick. Maybe you should smile more.

She puts the knife to his throat and cuts a sickening red grin in his throat. He gurgles as it gushes blood.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

And for good measure.

She traces the knife to the corners of his mouth and pulls them up with the blade until they slice into a slitted grin on his face.

PATRICK's eyes are blank.

NARRATOR

A genuine smile acts as a messenger of goodwill.

ELSIE stands above him, looking down, smiling fondly.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It communicates, "I like you. You make me happy. I am glad to see you."

ELSIE turns her attention back to CELESTE, who sits, hyperventilating and staring at her tongue on the table. Her mouth still trickles with blood.

ELSIE walks over and slams her sister's head down on the table.

She grabs another dinner knife.

ELSIE

You guys are just being no fun this evening! But you know, you were never very nice to me, were you, Celeste? You were sooooo sick of me all the time, but you just couldn't get away from me!

(she chuckles)

I mean, boy, am I persistent. But, tonight, you've shown me that my efforts have paid off! Because now, I've shown you all how to be good friends. The very best!

(she gestures to Eric)

I even made Eric God!

CELESTE mumbles some nonsense that sounds like a garbled "Jesus Christ".

ELSIE rolls her eyes.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

Whatever.

She raises the knife and stabs it through the back of CELESTE's neck. It hits the table on the other side.

CELESTE goes limp.

ONE SHOT FOLLOWING ELSIE FROM GRINNING DOWN AT THE CAMERA

NARRATOR

The desire for a feeling of importance is one of the chief distinguishing differences between mankind and the animals.

ELSIE takes a pack of cigarettes off the shelf and walks back to her seat at the table. The camera follows her. She sits down, the camera now in front of her, framing her like a god above us.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Here is a gnawing and unfaltering human hunger, and the rare individual who honestly satisfies this heart hunger will hold people in the palm of his or her hand.

BEGIN TO PULL OUT

She pulls out a cigarette and lights it, taking a long drag. The bodies of her friends come into view as we move back. ERIC hangs behind her like a martyr. ELSIE stares down the barrel of the camera, smoke drifting from her mouth, a small smile on her face.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

If you tell me how you get your feeling of importance, I'll tell you what you are. That determines your character. That is the most significant thing about you.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.