

While she's eating, DRESDON appears, posing as a tree tender, wearing an apron which hides his small sword.

DRESDON
 Good evening!

HANNAH
 (Startled but too tired to get up, she reaches for her sword)
 Stop right there, if you know what's good for you!

DRESDON
 (sweetly, trying to calm her down)
 I simply know what's good for *you*, m' lady.

HANNAH
 I beg your pardon?

DRESDON
 The fruit. Of this, my best tree. It's what's good for you. Eat all you want.

HANNAH
 Oh...

HANNAH continues eating, not minding Dresden's little song as she does. He sings without accompaniment.

DRESDON
 (tending to the tree branches, sings)

AWAKE IN THE NIGHT-TIME, BAH DUH DUHN

TRIMMING AWAY, TRIMMING AWAY

AWAKE IN THE NIGHT-TIME

TRIMMING AWAY, TRIMMING AWAY, TRIMMING AWAY

HANNAH
 Thank you. It's very good.

DRESDON

And good for you, like I said. And where is your journey taking you?

HANNAH

To Batone the Oppressor.

DRESDON

What? Ohhhhh -- Definitely NOT good for you, m'lady.

HANNAH

Do you know her?

DRESDON

Living along this road, one hears things from the occasional traveler. I know that she is evil and that most food sources are in danger of being taken over by her. As long as I keep this tree alive so Batone can have all she wants, this tree is safe. As am I, it's secret tender. Which means, if I am careful and sly, I can keep vulnerable travelers--like yourself, m'lady--from starving along their journeys.

HANNAH

(standing up defiantly)

Vulnerable - Ha! I am Hannah Hampshire and I will not be defeated. I am on a mission to negotiate with her -

DRESDON

You don't negotiate with the Oppressor --

HANNAH

-- AND plead the case for our village, and I will fulfill it. Tell me, secret tender, "hearing things" as you do, what kind of mood has Batone been in of late?

DRESDON

Of late? Hmmm. Well let me see... Ha! Silly, naive girl. She's always in the same mood. Sinister. Secretive. Suspicious. Surly. She doesn't make deals.

HANNAH

I say she will. I will convince her!

DRESDON

Hmm. I can see your mind is made up. But I don't recommend going alone.

HANNAH

And who would go with me? You, fruit tree tender? Will you tie her up with your apron strings? Ha!

DRESDON

Well, I have managed to keep the fruit tree from destruction - and keep myself from being caught.

HANNAH

That may very well be true--

DRESDON

---You're eating the fruits of my labor--

HANNAH

---But I have never needed assistance before, and I don't need it now. Now point me to the castle.

DRESDON

I thought you didn't need any assistance?

HANNAH

(exasperated)

Argh!

DRESDON

(He brings out a basket of fruit from behind the tree)

Listen, just let me fill your sack and take you as far as the castle wall.

HANNAH

No, I really don't need --

DRESDON

Anything else to eat?

HANNAH

(looking longingly at the fruit)

I...well...uh...

DRESDON

(putting a piece of fruit in her haversack)

I promise I won't tell anyone I helped you. Your reputation will be safe with me, m'lady.

HANNAH talks quickly while joining DRESDON putting fruit in her sack until they have both filled it.

HANNAH

Fine. But only as far as the wall. I can handle Batone from there.

DRESDON

As you wish, m'lady.

Exit DRESDON and HANNAH, heading for Batone's castle.

Enter JHON, famished and exhausted.

JHON

(looking around but seeing no one)

I could have sworn I heard voices. Naa. Must have been my growling stomach.
(to his stomach)

Shhhh!

JHON sees the fruit tree and what is left of the basket of fruit and is suddenly energized.

JHON

The fruit tree Hannah talked about. Yes! And fruit already picked just for me? Probably not...

(looking around)

I don't see anybody around. And it will spoil if I just leave it, so why not? Good thinking, Jonathan.

JHON drops a piece of fruit and notices more footprints. He takes fruit from the basket and loads his sack.

PLAY TRACK. HF #27 - Jhon to the Rescue

JHON

(loudly and deliberately over music)

Huh. Same footprints as before alongside Hannah's. No time to waste. Got a girl to save.

(Jhon rushes off in the direction of the castle.)