



THE FISHERMAN

An Original One Act

by

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Directed by Alex Holtzman

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STANFORD
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THE FISHERMAN

Setting:

The tiny village of Kettyen, on the southeast coast of Finland. Early 1900's.

Cast of characters:

ISAK LINDBERG

Our hero. A 50-year-old fisherman with a dark past and many secrets.

ANNA LINDBERG

Isak's daughter. 18-years-old. Her entire body is covered in long, jagged scars.

PRENTICE ABRAMS

Isak's apprentice and Anna's secret boyfriend. 19-years-old. At the beginning of the play, he walks with a limp.

EBBA EKLUND

The village barmaid and amateur shaman. A bit loco.

IGOR CARL GUSTAV IV

A visitor from Russia. Mid 30's.

LISICA THE FOX

Igor's beautiful wife. Also mid 30's.

Running time: 35 minutes (based on staged run-through)

(AT RISE: The interior of the Lindberg cottage. We are in the kitchen, which has a counter with a large, old-fashioned waffle maker and a stove, and a table with two chairs. Two doors against the back wall lead to two bedrooms, one Isak's, one Anna's. A door at stage right opens to the outside world.)

(It is a dark and stormy night. Every few seconds the calm of the kitchen is punctuated by a burst of thunder and lightning from outside. ANNA is making ABRAMS pancakes. He sits blindfolded, awaiting his dinner.)

ANNA

Wait for it...

(She flips the pancakes.)

ABRAMS

Oh my GOD these smell good.

ANNA

Wait for it....

(She serves them up onto a plate.)

ABRAMS

Come onnnnnn....

ANNA

TAH-DAH!

(She places the plate in front of him with relish and pulls off his blindfold.)

ABRAMS

OH MY GOODNESS.

ANNA

EAT, boy.

(Abrams takes a bite.)

ABRAMS

GAHHH.

(He begins devouring them.)

ANNA

It's a new invention: Waffle-pancakes.

ABRAMS

GAHHHHHHH.

ANNA

I made batter for waffles but used it to make pancakes.

(Abrams stops eating long enough to pull her onto his lap and kiss her.)

ABRAMS

You're brilliant.

ANNA

I know.

ABRAMS

Where did those blindfolds go?

(She giggles. They kiss again.)

ANNA

You taste like pancakes.

ABRAMS

Waffle-pancakes.

ANNA

Should we go back to my room?

ABRAMS

I think I should finish these amazing pancakes first.

ANNA

I think you should spend the night tonight.

ABRAMS

(Beat.) My GOODNESS these pancakes are good. Do you think I could get the recipe for my grandma?

(She climbs off him and goes to clean the skillet.)

ANNA

Forget it.

ABRAMS

Anna, stop being ridiculous. I can't spend the night. Do you want your father to drive his fishing reel down my throat? Because that's what will happen if he catches us.

ANNA

I said forget it.

ABRAMS

It's dangerous enough that I'm sitting in your kitchen in the middle of the night. He could come home any minute.

ANNA

We both know he's at Ebba's tavern right now, and we both know that means he won't be back until daylight. And even if he were to come home, he'd be so drunk you could walk up to him buck naked and he wouldn't know the difference. Besides, that's not the point. The point is that I want him to know about us. I want to tell your parents, too. This started months ago. Why are we still sneaking around?

ABRAMS

I don't want to lose my job, Anna.

ANNA

Oh, are you serious? Dad won't fire you. You're the best assistant he's had in years. Plus who else would put up with his hangovers?

ABRAMS

Are you serious? Just a couple of days ago weren't we making a list of creative forms of torture using bait and tackle?

ANNA

Ok, true. He likely will seriously injure you. But he won't fire you.

(They both smile.)

We don't have to tell him tonight. We can wake up really early and you can leave before he comes home. But please spend the night.

(He rises and crosses over to her at the counter. He walks with a heavy limp. They kiss.)

ABRAMS

Ok.

ANNA

Thank you.

(They begin kissing. Abrams lifts Anna up onto the counter.)

ABRAMS

You're sure we won't get caught?

ANNA

Abrams there is ZERO chance my father will come home tonight.

(The door flies open and ISAK stumbles in.)

Dad!

(Abrams pulls away from Anna in horror. She drops to the floor with a thud.)

Ow.

ABRAMS

Sorry.

ISAK

OUT OF MY WAY, ANNA! WHERE IS MY LANTERN? WHERE IS MY BOOTS?

(Clearly drunk, Isak storms through the kitchen, pulling on a raincoat, hat, thick rubber gloves, and boots.)

ANNA

Why are you soaking wet? Did you walk all the way home from Ebba's tavern?

ISAK

WHERE IS THE CAMPHOR OIL??

ANNA

Oh, no. Daddy—SIT DOWN.

ISAK

Get out of my way, Anna.

ANNA

(To Abrams) Can you get him a glass of water?

(To Isak) Daddy, you're drunk. You're seeing things. She's not out there.

ISAK

I seen her Anna. Up there on that cliff—waiting for me.

(A silhouette of a craggy cliff begins to glow on the strip of back wall above the Lindberg cottage. At the tip of the cliff, overlooking the edge, a tiny white light begins to pulse and glow.)

(Anna moves to block her father from the door.)

ANNA

Daddy YOU'RE DRUNK.

(Isak shoves her aside and storms out.)

ABRAMS

Are you ok?

ANNA

I swear to God, sometimes I hate my father.

ISAK

(Offstage) MY DARLING! MY LOVE!

(Anna gets her coat and galoshes.)

ANNA

I have to go after him. Last time he nearly drowned.

(There is an ominous crack of thunder and lightning.)

ISAK

(Offstage) MY DARLING! MY DARLING! I'M COMING TO YA!

ABRAMS

Anna, what's wrong with him?

ANNA

When he gets drunk, he hallucinates. He thinks he sees...something impossible. Out on the water. So he gets in his fishing boat...

ABRAMS

I'll come with you.

ANNA

No. You were right. You should go home.

(From offstage we hear Isak scream—a terrifying, inhuman wail. Anna and Abrams rush to the window.)

(Isak appears stage left, outside of the cottage. In one extended moment, the sky is illuminated. Isak's silhouette—arms outstretched—glows bright white. Then the light dies, and Isak disappears.)

DADDY! DADDY!

(Anna and Abrams flee the cottage.)

(Gradually the sky lightens. The storm dies. It is the next morning. We hear birds chirp.)

(Abrams and Anna enter and stop just outside the kitchen, hauling a smoldering, wet, unconscious Isak in a wheelbarrow.)

ABRAMS

Ok. Ok. Stop here. Let's carry him inside.

ANNA

Ready? One...

ABRAMS

Two...

ANNA AND ABRAMS

UNNNNNHHH.

(They lift Isak out of the wheelbarrow and carry him inside.)

ANNA

Here. Set him here.

(They lay him down on the floor. Anna exits into the bedroom and comes back with blankets. They pull off his boots.)

ABRAMS

What do we do?

ANNA

I'll watch him while you find Dr. Strindberg?

(Abrams nods and turns to leave.)

ISAK

(Still groggy.) My love! I'm... I'm coming!

ANNA

Daddy??

ISAK

(Sitting up) OH SWEET JESUS CHRIST MY HEAD HURTS! JESUS! How much did I drink last night? (Turning toward the bedroom door) ANNA!!!

ANNA

I'm right here.

ISAK

Oh. Good morning. Put coffee on the stove, will ya? (He sees Abrams.) What are you doing here? You know I don't fish on the Sabbath.

ABRAMS

Um. Well. I was with Anna last night when you got hurt.

ISAK

What do you mean you were with Anna last night?! (Beat.) Wait, when did I get hurt? (Beat.) What smells like burning?

ANNA

How many fingers am I holding up?

ISAK

Anna, what are you doing?

ANNA

What year were you born? (pointing to Abrams) What's his name?

(Isak stares blankly at Abrams, then at Anna.)

ABRAMS

That's normal. He never remembers my name.

ISAK

Why are my ears ringing?

ANNA

You were struck by lightning last night.

ISAK

What?

ABRAMS

It's true. I saw it happen, too.

ANNA

You came home drunk about one in the morning. You were rambling about seeing mom up on the cliffs, so you went out in your fishing boat in the middle of a thunderstorm.

ISAK

Lightning? Struck by lightning?

ANNA

You're not in pain, are you?

ISAK

Anna, go find Ebba Eklund right now.

ANNA

If you can walk we should head down to Dr. Strindberg's.

ISAK

Get Ebba NOW, please.

ANNA

But what can she do? She's not—

ISAK

GODDAMNIT, CHILD. AM I ASKING YOU A QUESTION?

ANNA

Yes, sir.

(She exits. Isak and Abrams stare at each other for a long, awkward moment. Isak takes off his gloves and coat.)

ABRAMS

Can I get you anything? Coffee?

ISAK

What did you say your name was?

ABRAMS

Prentice Abrams. I go by Abrams.

ISAK

Do I know you?

ABRAMS

Um. Yes. I work for you.

ISAK

Aaaaaaaahh. Yes. I remember you. Prentice the Apprentice.

ABRAMS

Please, call me Abrams.

ISAK

You brought in that ten-foot swordfish last month.

ABRAMS

Yes.

ISAK

Very impressive.

ABRAMS

Well, thank—

ISAK

What interest do you have in my daughter, Prentice?

ABRAMS

Anna? Um. She's a great girl.

ISAK

Uh-huh.

ABRAMS

And we are great—friends.

ISAK

That's nice. Because I've always told Anna that if she were to have a boyfriend behind my back, I'd track him down and ram my fishing rod down his throat.

(Abrams laughs nervously. For far too long.)

(Beat.) Weren't you going to make coffee?

(Abrams scrambles over to the counter with his trademark limp and puts a pot of water on the stove to boil.)

You're from the Abrams clan up north, I assume?

ABRAMS

Yeah! From the village just outside—

ISAK

Sheep farmers, right?

ABRAM

Um. Yes. I'm the first in the family to leave for fishing. My dad always said—

ISAK

What's wrong with your leg? Why do you limp like that?

ABRAMS

I blew out my kneecap playing soccer as a kid. I like to tell people that....

(He trails off, expecting to be interrupted.)

ISAK

Go on.

ABRAMS

Oh. I like to tell people that I was destined for fishing. Because I'm sort of like a pirate. (Beat.) YAR. Haha. (Beat) You know... Because it's like a... a peg leg.

ISAK

Prentice, I assume you've been in Kettyen long enough to know that I'm sort of a big deal here.

ABRAMS

Yes, sir.

ISAK

People know me.

ABRAMS

Yes.

ISAK

I've got a damn fine boat and a damn fine crew. I sure as hell hope you're not using Anna to get close to me and my little enterprise.

ABRAMS

What? No!

ISAK

Because that would make me very unhappy, Prentice.

ABRAMS

Anna and I met in town! We became friends before I had any idea I was working for her father.

ISAK

I find that hard to believe.

ABRAMS

Why?

ISAK

I think we both know why.

ABRAMS

(Mortified) With all due respect, sir, I don't think—I mean, you're talking about, about her scars? I don't think they make her any less... any less—

ISAK

Prentice, come here.

(He beckons Abrams over but Abrams doesn't move.)

I won't bite you. I just want to explain something to you.

(Terrified, Abrams concedes.)

Now I am going to say this once. And only once. So please listen carefully—

(At this exact moment, Isak places his hand on Abrams' shoulder. There is a spark at the spot of contact—a jolt of energy passing between the two men—and Abrams jumps back in pain. He grabs his bad knee for a split second, doubled over in agony. Then just as suddenly the pain is gone.)

(Isak grabs his gloves from the floor and pulls them back on.)

What happened? What did you do?

ABRAMS

My knee!

(He takes a few ginger steps. No limp.)

Something happened to my knee.

(He walks across the room. Perfect gait.)

My knee is fixed!

(The two men stare at each other in bewilderment. Then the door flies open and Anna streams in.)

ANNA

I found Ebba! Is everyone alright?

(She sees the looks on the men's faces.)

(To Abrams) You told him? I'm so proud of you!! (To Isak) Daddy don't kill him.

(EBBA EKLUND enters, carrying a suitcase.)

EBBA

All right, Lindberg. Show me where it hurts.

ISAK

Ebba...

EBBA

I never shoulda let ya leave my place last night, as messed up as ya were.

(She moves to hug him, but he pulls away.)

ISAK

Don't—don't touch me just yet.

EBBA

Why?

ISAK

I was struck by lightning.

EBBA

So I heard. Chasing the specter of yer late wife, no less.

(She slams the suitcase down on the counter and whips it open, revealing an array of colorful bottles inside.)

I got stuff for headaches, stuff for sore backs—stuff to knock you out or wake you up. What'll it be?

ABRAMS

Anna—look at this.

(He begins to pace rapidly back and forth across the room.)

ANNA

Oh. My. God.

ABRAMS

Mr. Lindberg touched me—

ISAK

—and there were sparks—

ABRAMS

—and my knee was fixed.

(Anna gasps.)

EBBA

Explain. I'm in the dark here. (motioning to Abrams) This is the boyfriend?

ANNA

His knee is bad. Normally he walks with a limp.

ABRAMS

But now my knee is brand new!

EBBA

And Lindberg did this?

ISAK

There was a jolt—like lightning—going between us.

ANNA

Daddy, what if something happened to you last night? Something... big?

ISAK

(Beat.) How do we test this?

ANNA

Use me! See if you can cure my scars!

ISAK

No... Too dangerous. I won't use my daughter as a guinea pig. (Beat.) Any other ideas?

(At once everyone is frantically moving. Abrams rushes out the door, and Anna and Isak begin clearing the kitchen.)

(Ebba steps downstage center and begins narrating a telegram aloud. A messenger on a horse appears at her side.)

(Production note: The same actor who plays Igor should play the messenger, and the horse should be a cardboard cutout.)

EBBA

IGOR. STOP. COME QUICKLY TO KETTYEN. STOP. TO LINDBERG'S HOME. STOP. BRING LISICA. STOP. I'VE FOUND US A MIRACLE. STOP.

(Ebba steps back to join Isak and Anna in the kitchen. The three crouch down behind the kitchen table. Abrams enters through the front door, leading a little old blind lady by the hand.)

(Production note: The same actor who plays Lisica should play the little old blind lady.)

ABRAMS

All right, grandmother! Right this way!

GRANDMOTHER

Oh, Prentice, you're such a good grandson! It was so kind of you to invite me over for milk and cookies!

ABRAMS

Um. Anything for you, grandma.

(Anna shoves Isak forward.)

ANNA

Now!

(Isak springs forward and clasps both bare hands on either side of Grandmother's head. The old woman screams and jumps back. She rubs her eyes a few times in bewilderment.)

GRANDMOTHER

I can see... I can see!

(She looks around her. Then begins screaming.)

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!
AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!

(She runs out the front door, still screaming. Gently, Abrams shuts the door.)

ANNA

Ok. Test over.

EBBA

You're the second messiah.

(Isak pulls his gloves back on.)

ISAK

I need a drink.

(There is a long, tense pause.)

EBBA

Lindberg. This is what we've been waiting for for years.

ABRAMS

This is incredible! Think of all the people you could help!

ISAK

Think of all the people I could bribe.

ABRAMS

What?

ANNA

(Quietly) You can fix me.

ISAK

Think of all the power I will have. Diplomats—politicians—businessmen... The one thing a rich man could never buy was health. Not until now.

ANNA

My skin will heal. Finally.

EBBA

You know what this is, Isak! Don't kid yourself!

ABRAMS

You—you can't play God like that! That's crazy! Whole countries would go to war for you!

ISAK

They would, wouldn't they?

EBBA

This is dark magic shining through, all the way across the ocean, Isak. This is your chance to cure her.

ANNA

YES. Thank you! Wait, you're talking about me, right?

ISAK

I wonder if I could raise the dead.

ANNA

DADDY.

(Everyone stops.)

Fix me. Fix my skin. PLEASE.

ISAK

Anna I've already told you no.

ANNA

You don't know how many nights I've cried myself to sleep. How many times I've prayed that one day it would all just magically go away...

ISAK

I told you NO, Anna.

ANNA

What is wrong with you? Why won't you help me?

ISAK

STAY AWAY FROM ME. All y'all—just stay away.

(He turns to leave.)

NOBODY hears about this. D'ya hear me? We keep this between the four of us, until I decide what we do next.

(He exits.)

EBBA

I'd better go after him. The most important thing right now is that he stays sober. Don't leave this kitchen.

(She exits.)

(Another long pause.)

ANNA

(To the wall) FUCK YOU.
FUCK YOU YOU FUCKING SELF-CENTERED ASSHOLE.
FUCK.

(She goes to the counter and begins furiously throwing ingredients into a large mixing bowl.)

ABRAMS

What are you doing?

ANNA

I'm making waffles.

ABRAMS

Why?

ANNA

Because when I'm happy I make pancakes, and when I'm PISSED OFF I make waffles.

(After a moment he laughs. Then she begins to laugh. Or cry. It is difficult to tell.)

(Abrams is totally useless here. He has no idea what she's feeling and he has no idea what to do or say.)

I'm sorry. I'm just thinking about me here. (Trying hard to be sincere, but failing) Abrams I'm so happy for you that your leg is better! I really am.

ABRAMS

(Beat.) Anna, what's wrong?

ANNA

(scoffs) What isn't wrong?

ABRAMS

I had no idea that your skin bothered you this much.

ANNA

Well now you know.

ABRAMS

But why? I mean, I had NO IDEA you were this self-conscious. You never, ever talk about it. I don't even know how you got your scars.

ANNA

You never asked.

ABRAMS

That doesn't mean I don't care! I didn't know how to ask without feeling rude. I always wondered why you never mentioned it.

ANNA

Yes, because every girl is eager to talk to her boyfriend about her disfiguring skin condition.

ABRAMS

How did it happen? Was it an accident?

ANNA

Abrams, this is the last thing on Earth I want to talk about right now.

ABRAMS

Fine. But do not make this about me. It's your choice if you don't want to open up—not because I wasn't willing to listen. (Beat) This isn't important right now, anyway. I'm terrified of your father.

ANNA

HA. Join the club.

ABRAMS

Do you think he's serious?

ANNA

What, about wanting to control armies and raise the dead? Please, Abrams. My dad is a drunk deadbeat. Half the time he can't get his pants on in the morning without my help. I know exactly how this is going to play out—he'll use it to make himself even more of a bigshot here, but every cent he makes he'll spend on whiskey. He always acts like he'll conquer the world, but—trust me—he'll never leave Kettyen.

ABRAMS

I don't know, Anna. I feel like this is so much bigger than him. I don't know if he could keep it quiet even if he wanted to.

ANNA

You know what? I really don't care. If he's not going to help his own daughter, I don't care what happens to him. Ugh—it's going to be disgusting how he flaunts this over the village. He's always thought of himself as being so superior—and now he really is.

ABRAMS

And Ebba Eklund? What was she talking about?

ANNA

I have no idea. She and my father are always bickering about something.

ABRAMS

You know her well?

ANNA

She's my godmother. My dad acts like he hates her, but Ebba was close with my mom, so of course he always wants her around.

ABRAMS

Then we can trust her.

ANNA

Of course we can trust her.

ABRAMS

It's just, she has a—

ANNA

Reputation?

ABRAMS

For deceiving people. Cheating them out of their money. Selling them false potions.

ANNA

Yeah, well, you could call that clever business, couldn't you? And some of her potions do work. Here, your waffles are ready.

ABRAMS

Anna, I don't know what's going on in your dad's head right now, but I'm glad he won't "cure" you. I think your scars are beautiful.

ANNA

Just eat your waffle.

(The lights rise on stage left and we find Isak sitting alone on the edge of the same cliff where he saw the vision of his wife, occasionally taking swigs from a flask. He talks to the heavens.)

ISAK

ALL RIGHT, GOD. You got my attention. Now tell me what you're playing at.

YOU TRYING TO MOCK ME?? You and I both know that the last time I tried to heal the sick, I ruined my life. So what does this mean? I'm not a bad person, you know. Despite what you may think. Despite all evidence to the contrary.

You know I've always hated you?? Not because of my wife—no, not even because of what happened to her. I hated you LONG before that.

Because I was meant to be GREAT. I feel it in me. In my BONES. I was meant to cross oceans. And fight demons. And walk through fire.

But where did you put me?? In a village so small the neighboring cities haven't even heard of us. Into a family so small all we've known how to do for four hundred years is sit in a boat with a net and WAIT. I want to move MOUNTAINS. But you made me small and plain. WHY DID YOU TRAP ME?

(Beat.) I will forgive everything, God, if you don't let me screw this up. Just make Anna love me. For once in my life, I just want her to look at me and feel proud of her father.

(Ebba enters.)

EBBA

What are you doing?

(Isak jumps.)

ISAK

You followed me here?

EBBA

I didn't have to. You're predictable, Lindberg. Where else would you go?

ISAK

Leave me at peace, Ebba.

EBBA

You won't find her here. She's not waiting for you up on these cliffs, no matter how many times you delude yourself into thinking you can see her. And there's no atonement when it comes to the dead—no matter how many drunken apologies you throw out into the wind.

ISAK

Say whatever you want, witch. I'm free. I'm the second fucking messiah, in case you haven't noticed, and it's only a matter of time before Anna and I are living like royalty in some big house in the city, and you won't be able to touch us anymore.

EBBA

Is that what you believe? That I'm the enemy? No, Lindberg—this is not my doing. This is not an accident, and this is not a coincidence—you know why God's done this to ya. You know what you owe me.

ISAK

I owe you nothing.

EBBA

You owe me a DAUGHTER, Isak. Now, you're going to help me find her, and you're going to turn her back to the way she was.

ISAK

Anna and I are going to leave the village. We're going to seek the refuge of the king and you'll never see us again.

EBBA

I'll tell everyone the truth about what happened to your wife. The whole village will know.

ISAK

I don't care.

EBBA

Anna will know.

ISAK

She won't believe you.

EBBA

You so sure about that?

ISAK

(Beat.) If I help you find Lisica, and I cure her... I have your silence?

EBBA

Anna will never know.

ISAK

As soon as it's all over, we're leaving for good.

EBBA

You were always a smart businessman, Lindberg.

ISAK

Shut up.

EBBA

I'll find you at sunrise. And we'll do this.

ISAK

(He nods.) We'll do this.

(The lights rise in the kitchen and we return to Abrams and Anna. She has continued to make waffles, so now there is a stack sitting on a plate on the counter. He is finished eating.)

ABRAMS

Your waffle was yummy.

ANNA

Thank you.

ABRAMS

Almost as good as your waffle-pancakes.

(No response.)

I really do think you're beautiful.

ANNA

Give it a rest, Abrams.

ABRAMS

What? What is wrong with me saying that?

ANNA

It's too easy for you to say that. Your knee is brand new. (She sighs.) No, I'm sorry. I'm stressed out. (Beat.) I just really, really wish my mom were here.

ABRAMS.

I guess I should go. (Beat.) I should probably go check on my grandma.

(Suddenly there is a loud BANGING on the door.)

ANNA

Damnit.

ABRAMS

You think that's your dad?

IGOR

(From behind the door) Hello? Someone please help.

(Anna opens the door. IGOR enters. He is dressed in ridiculous purple courtesan's clothes, complete with a feather plume in his hat. He speaks in a ridiculous, over-the-top Russian accent. He carries a suitcase and a printed poster.)

Is this the home of Isak Lindberg, the Miracle Healer?

ANNA

I think I just hallucinated. What?

IGOR

I've been on a boat all day. I come from Russia, with the sole intention of finding Mr. Isak Lindberg, the Miracle Healer.

(He hands Abrams the printed poster. It has a large picture of Isak's face, underscored by the words, "ISAK LINDBERG: MIRACLE HEALER.")

ABRAMS

Anna, why is your father's face on this poster?

IGOR

I asked someone at the docks where to find him. They sent me here.

ANNA

Sir, where did you get this?

IGOR

Mr. Lindberg is very famous in Russia.

ANNA

That is highly ironic because my father hates Russians.

IGOR

Does he live here?

ANNA

I'm sorry, but someone is playing a joke on you. Mr. Lindberg is not a 'miracle healer.'

IGOR

Please. Please help me. My wife is very ill. I am desperate. I will do anything.

ABRAMS

We're sorry, but—

IGOR

I am prepared to pay quite handsomely.

(He unsnaps his suitcase and opens it, revealing it to be jam-packed with rubles.)

ANNA

Why don't you come in, Mr.—

IGOR

Igor Carl Gustav the Fourth. Call me Igor.

ANNA

--and we'll see what we can do?

IGOR

FANTASTIC. Let me fetch my wife.

(He exits.)

ABRAMS

What in the hell do you think you're doing?

ANNA

I didn't commit to healing his wife, for goodness' sake! Let's just keep him close until we know what's happening.

(She snatches the poster from Abrams' hands.)

What IS this?

ABRAMS

(Seeing the returning Igor) What is THAT?

(Anna and Abrams gasp as Igor wheels in what is clearly a large cage, covered with a bright red piece of fabric, hiding the insides.)

You keep your wife in a CAGE?!

IGOR

Shhhhh! She is sleeping. I explain to you, she is very ill. (With great gravity) The cage keeps everybody safe.

(Anna and Abrams stare in shock as he maneuvers the cage into the kitchen.)

Now do you have a room for me? Or should I sleep elsewhere?

ANNA

Um. You can sleep in my room.

IGOR

FANTASTIC. Are you sure?

ANNA

Yes. That's fine. Here, it's through here.

(She leads him into one of the back bedrooms and returns alone. Abrams and Anna stare at the cage, again. Finally...)

ABRAMS

Oh, fuck.

ANNA

This is really not something I want to deal with right now.

ABRAMS

Should we look?

(They meet glances, then, as though reading each other's minds, at once move to opposite sides of the cage, each taking the fabric in their hands.)

One...

ANNA

Two...

(Together they fling up the red curtain, exposing the creature inside. It is a feral fox.)

(Production note: The creature inside the cage should be a large, dorky fox puppet. It should look as much like a stuffed animal as possible.)

ABRAMS

AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!!!

ANNA

AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!!!

(When they scream, the fox goes crazy, thrashing around, madly growling and hissing. They drop the curtain and the fox is covered, but we can still here it wailing.)

Don't just stand there! Make it stop!

(Abrams panics and looks wildly around the kitchen for any possible solution. Impulsively he grabs a waffle from the kitchen counter. Anna pulls the curtain back and he throws the waffle inside at the beast. At once the fox goes silent.)

(Beat.) A waffle? You give it a waffle?

ABRAMS

Well what was your genius solution?

ANNA

(Taking a deep breath) Ok. I don't know where Ebba is, but I need to go find my father. Can you just stay here and watch this—thing—and I'll be back as soon as—

(She stops in mid-sentence. Her gaze is fixated on the countertop, where Abrams took the waffle.)

ABRAMS

What?

ANNA

Abrams.

ABRAMS

What happened?

ANNA

We could drug him.

ABRAMS

Igor? What good would that do?

(Anna moves over to the counter and grabs Ebba's suitcase from behind the waffles. She hurriedly flings it open and scans the bottles. Finally she jerks at a tiny, all-black bottle and holds it up.)

ANNA

Nightshade. A few drops of this makes people pliable. Easily persuaded. We put a few drops in his whiskey and I bet I can get him to cure me.

ABRAMS

Whoa. Oh my god.

(Quickly Anna moves to pour a glass of whiskey.)

ANNA

Why didn't I think of this earlier?!

ABRAMS

Anna there is a FOX sitting in CAGE in your KITCHEN—and you're still thinking about this??

ANNA

I wasted all that time trying to argue with him!

(As she moves to drop the nightshade into the whiskey, Abrams grabs her hands.)

ABRAMS

Are you OUT of your MIND? That stuff is really dangerous.

ANNA

Relax. I've seen Ebba do it a thousand times—whenever she thinks someone is going to skip out on their tab. (Beat.) Abrams, let go of me.

ABRAMS

I am not going to stand by and let you drug someone.

ANNA

Abrams what else am I supposed to do? You know how stubborn he is.

ABRAMS

Your scars are beautiful.

ANNA

Oh, FUCK YOU.

ABRAMS

You seem to be saying that a lot tonight.

ANNA

Who the hell are you to judge me, Abrams? You don't know what it's like. You've always been good-looking and popular and everyone's always liked you.

ABRAMS

You know that's not true.

ANNA

I'll just be your deformed girlfriend, waiting on the sidelines, boosting your ego.

ABRAMS

What? Anna—I've been a gimp for ten years, remember? Or, at least, I used to be.

ANNA

Like that compares. (Beat.) Why don't you want to help me?

ABRAMS

I want to help you! But not like this.

ANNA

Why can't you take my side? Why didn't you back me up when I was yelling at my dad to help me?

ABRAMS

Anna...

ANNA

(Beat.) Why won't you make love to me, Abrams? What's wrong with me that you won't spend the night? What's wrong with me that you won't tell your parents we're dating?

(She sets the bottle back down on the counter, whiskey untouched.)

ABRAMS

I didn't—I didn't mean—

ANNA

Don't bother. (Beat) I'll be back soon, ok?

(Before she leaves, she stops in the doorway.)

We don't know how I got my scars. My parents just found me one day—covered in blood.

(She exits. Abrams is left alone in the kitchen. He stares at the bottle on the counter. He hangs his head in his hands. Finally, he walks over to the counter, unscrews the bottle, and places a few drops of nightshade in the glass of whiskey. He is placing the bottle back in the suitcase when the bedroom door flies open, and Igor steps out in ridiculous bright purple pajamas.)

IGOR

Good evening, sir!

ABRAMS

Um. Hi.

IGOR

Is the lady of the house available?

ABRAMS

She had to step out for a moment.

IGOR

Indeed.

ABRAMS

Listen. About your "wife"—

IGOR

Do you have something to drink? I seem to have something of a stomachache—seasickness, I'm sure—and a nip of something would be FANTASTIC.

(He sees the glass of whiskey on the counter.)

Can I have this?

ABRAMS

No! Don't touch that. That's for Mr. Lindberg.

IGOR

Oh. I see. He will definitely drink this?

ABRAMS

Yes. But I can get you something else. I know there's mead in the cellar.

IGOR

That would be FANTASTIC.

ABRAMS

Ok. Just... hold on.

(He exits. Igor watches him leave. When he's sure that Abrams is out of earshot, his whole body relaxes, and he rolls his eyes. He yanks off his sleeping cap. His Russian accent is gone.)

IGOR

Idiot.

(Igor walks over to the cage and kicks it. The fox inside yelps.)

You still alive, wench?

(He pulls a tiny bottle from his pajama pocket. He places three drops of an unknown liquid into the glass of whiskey.)

You better know what you're talking about, Ebba.

(He goes to the doorway, looks both ways, then disappears. After a moment Abrams reenters, carrying a bottle of mead.)

ABRAMS

I got your mead...Hello?

(He pokes his head into the bedrooms. Nothing.)

(Mimicking Igor) Well this is just FANTASTIC.

(He pours himself a glass of mead and sits down. He is about to take a drink when suddenly a woman's voice cries out from the cage.)

LISICA

(From behind the curtain) Help me! Please let me out!

(Abrams flies up and rips the curtain from the cage. There is a woman—a beautiful woman—trapped inside. He whips open the cage door and LISICA crawls out.)

Thank you.

(She stands up and dusts herself off. She is stunningly gorgeous. She is wearing a bright red, skintight dress which leaves nothing to the imagination. She has long, thick red hair, exactly like a fox's bushy tail.)

ABRAMS

Um. Are you ok?

LISICA

(She shrugs.) Oh. I'm used to it by now.

ABRAMS

(Transfixed) You're b-b-b-beaut—b-b-b-beautiful. I'm sorry. I've seem to have lost control of my gross motor skills.

LISICA

(Smiles) I'm used to that, too.

ABRAMS

Is your hair naturally that color?

(She stares at him.)

What are you doing?

(She leans her face in close to his. She kisses him.)

(The lights rise on stage left and we find Isak stumbling on the road back to his cottage, flask now empty. He is staring aimlessly into the distance as he walks. We see the silhouette of the cliffs again, with the white-hot light glowing at the edge.)

(Anna enters.)

ANNA

Dad!

(She wraps her arms around him in a hug. He is still wearing his raincoat, so there is no skin-to-skin contact. But she is not trying to be cured—she just wants to give him a hug. He is moved beyond words.)

I've been worried sick about you, Daddy. Where have you been? Are you ok?

ISAK

(He holds onto the embrace for as long as possible.) I'm ok now, Anna.

ANNA

Come home.

ISAK

(He wheels her around and points to the glowing white light at the top of the hill.) Do you see that cliff? I had to go there tonight. That's where yer mother waits for me.

ANNA

I know, Daddy.

ISAK

She died there, you know. When you were just a little girl.

ANNA

(Beat.) What?

ISAK

(His eyes are glazed over.) Such a strange thing, being struck by lightning.

ANNA

Daddy, mom died in her sleep.

ISAK

(Beat.) Oh. That's right. I get confused sometimes.

ANNA

(She is beyond exhausted now. She is beyond hunger and sleep and caring about her dead mother. She is consumed by her need to be cured.) Why are you always DRUNK?! (Beat.) Dad, look at me.

(She maneuvers herself around him to get in front of his face.)

I have never asked you for anything. Ever. I have kept my mouth shut for all these years. I have scrubbed your dishes and cleaned your fishing reels and for SO MANY NIGHTS I have sat up and waited for you to come home. I have been my own mother since I was nine years old. And I have never complained. Not once. But I need you to do one thing for me, ok? This is all I will ever ask of you. Please—fix my skin.

(As Isak speaks the following monologue, the silhouettes of Lisica and Abrams are illuminated against the fourth front wall of the house. We see just their silhouettes—and we see them slowly, slowly peeling articles of clothing off of one another. We see them come together in an embrace, then sink down to the floor and disappear.)

ISAK

(He is in another world.) Such a strange, strange experience, to be struck by lightning. For just a moment—one brief, perfect moment—the whole world is illuminated. And yer whole body is lifted up to the woman you love. And everything glows white-hot, and cold at the same time. And you can't feel yer body, but you know that it's moving forward, devouring everything in yer

path. And for that moment, you can't feel anything at all—except for the gravity of what you want and the hunger of what yer body needs.

ANNA

(She begins to cry.) You're not going to cure me, are you?

ISAK

I can't. I just can't, Anna. I wish I could make you understand.

ANNA

(She sobs.) BUT WHY?? (Beat.) No. Don't answer that. I know why—because if I'm not ugly anymore you can't keep me in that kitchen. You're afraid that if you cure me, I'll leave you. I'll find someone better than you and I'll love him more than I love you and I'll leave you for him. Well guess what daddy? I'm going to leave you anyway.

(She takes off down the road, exiting stage right. Isak sits in silence. Then abruptly the white-hot pulsing stops. The spell is broken. Isak shakes the drowsiness from his head.)

ISAK

Anna? No, Anna—DAMNIT.

(He sprints down the road after her, exiting. The lights rise in the kitchen. Lisica and Abrams are in their underwear, pulling clothing back on. Abrams is in disbelief about what just happened.)

ABRAMS

What just happened?

LISICA

(She smiles.) They all say that. (Beat.) Do you want a waffle?

ABRAMS

No, seriously. What just happened?

(She takes a big bite of a waffle.)

LISICA

I didn't make you do anything, kid.

ABRAMS

You're not human, are you?

LISICA

Well, duh.

(The door opens and Anna enters.)

ANNA

Abrams, we're leaving. I—

(She stops. She sees the scene in front of her.)

(Quietly) What are you doing?

ABRAMS

Anna, I don't know what happened.

ANNA

Is this the Russian's wife?

LISICA

(Proffering her hand) It's a pleasure.

ABRAMS

She's not human, Anna! I had no control over myself! I didn't know what I was doing!

ANNA

Oh no oh no oh no oh no oh no oh no...

ABRAMS

Don't cry...

(He tries to hold her.)

ANNA

(Moving away) You wouldn't touch me before, don't touch me now. (Beat.) I wanted to be beautiful, Abrams, because I wanted you to love me.

(She turns and leaves. Abrams just stands there. Lisica laughs, enjoying herself.)

(Then Isak walks in. Lisica immediately turns her back and starts putting on her dress, so that Isak does not see her face. Isak, like Anna, does a double-take before he realizes what he's looking at.)

ISAK

Oh, FANTASTIC.

ABRAMS

Please don't use that word.

ISAK

I had you pegged right from the start, didn't I? I knew you were using my daughter.

ABRAMS

No. It's not like that!

ISAK

You're going to be sorry, boy. Ohhhhh, Prentice the Apprentice is going to be one sorry boy. I'm going to ruin you. You'll never fish in Finland again.

(He sees the whiskey on the counter and in one swift motion downs it.)

ABRAMS

No! Don't drink that!

ISAK

(Ignoring him) Get out of my home.

(Lisica spins around. Isak drops the glass and it shatters.)

YOU.

LISICA

Hello, lover. Long time no see.

ISAK

(He doubles over and nearly falls, either from shock or nightshade.) I'm... I must be hallucinating. How did you find me?

LISICA

The past has a way of coming back to haunt you, wouldn't you say? (She edges closer to him, seductively, as he writhes in pain.) What was it I told you once? That you'd never be able to get rid of me, no matter how hard you tried?

ISAK

Did Anna see you? Promise me she didn't see you.

LISICA

Oh, she was here. And she looked pretty upset. I'd go find her before she does something—RASH. Pun intended. (Beat.) Now where is that lovely wife of yours? I've always wanted to meet her.

(Isak speeds out. Abrams stares at Lisica.)

LISICA

What are you looking at, kid?

(In a daze, Abrams stumbles out. The lights in the kitchen fade.)

(Lights rise on stage left. We are at the edge of the cliff again. The entire area is glowing with a white fog.)

(Isak finds Anna in the mist, face-down in a heap on the ground. Anna sits up. She is covered in blood. She has been tearing at her skin, trying to peel off her scars.)

ISAK

What did you do to your face?

ANNA

(Hysterical.) I didn't mean to. I swear. I just wanted to be beautiful.

ISAK

Anna... Shhh. Daughter...

ANNA

I didn't mean to, daddy, I didn't mean to, I didn't mean to, I swear I didn't mean to....

(She tries to tear at her face again but he pins her arms down)

ISAK

(Softly) What have I done?

ANNA

How did mommy really die? Tell me.

ISAK

Oh, Anna, oh, Anna, oh, Anna... how do I begin to tell you? I've done so many horrible things... Your mother killed herself. She walked off this very cliff.

ANNA

Why would she do that?

(He launches into the story—all of his secrets spilling out. Throughout this entire scene, he grows progressively weaker, sicker, and incoherent with every line as the nightshade sets in. Simultaneously, the sun sets, and we see thunderstorms growing in the distance.)

ISAK

There was another woman. In Russia.

ANNA

(Beat.) But daddy you HATE Russians.

ISAK

I would see this woman on my fishing trips. Just across the Baltic Sea, every few weeks. But her mother—a woman named Ebba Eklund—found out.

ANNA

Ebba Eklund—had a daughter?

ISAK

Ebba *has* a daughter. She tried to blackmail me. Threatened to tell my wife, if I didn't give her everything she wanted. I was trapped. Then one day a sickness hit the village where—this woman lived.

ANNA

What was her name?

ISAK

Lisica Eklund. Lisica got very, very sick. Ebba was desperate. She told me she was going to make a potion—a very dangerous potion—and I had to help her or she'd expose the affair.

ANNA

And you helped her.

ISAK

I had to!! Don't you see? I had to make a sacrifice. A horrible, horrible sacrifice. (Beat.) The potion needed blood. The blood of a young woman.

ANNA

(Beat.) Daddy. No.

ISAK

I didn't know where else to get it—

ANNA

(softly) No.

ISAK

—so I took a knife. And I took it from you.

ANNA

(softer still) How could you?

ISAK

I didn't know, Anna! I didn't know you would scar so badly! I was terrified!

ANNA

The miracle healer. One daughter's blood for another's.

ISAK

The magic worked. Lisica lived. But she became a—a creature. A creature that has to feed off other humans to survive. Oh, Anna! The choices I would take back, if only I could! I didn't know! How could I have known? How could I have known what your mother would do when I broke down and told her everything? I thought I would redeem myself—all I did was destroy another life. (Beat.) And I had to bring Ebba back to Finland with me. She made me. I even built her tavern. Please forgive me, Anna! I will do anything for your forgiveness.

(He kneels down beside her. He leans in close.)

The worst part of it all... is that I so loved your mother. I truly loved her. I don't know why I cheated on her... What's wrong with me??

(He takes off his gloves.)

And that is why I couldn't bring myself to cure you, Anna. I sound like a fool to say this, but... I loved your scars because they remind me, every day, of what I lost. They remind me of your mother.

(He places his hands on either side of her face. There is a spark and she cries out. Her face is still covered in blood, so we can't quite tell if the scars are still there.)

ANNA

You're too late.

(Isak is practically doubled-over now with the pain of his stomach.)

ISAK

I'm always too late. There is no atonement when it comes to the dead.

(Suddenly his eyes glaze over and his head jerks up.)

I see her now, Anna.

(He stares out into space.)

(A whisper.) My darling! My love! I'm coming to ya!

(He drops dead.)

(Anna gasps and shudders. She gives her father's body a shake, but he doesn't move. Slowly she rises. She turns to the edge of the cliff. The lights fade on stage left and the silhouette of the cliff in the background is illuminated again. Only this time we see a tiny figure—Anna's figure—walking toward the edge of the cliff and leaping off. As the figure falls through the sky, it begins to glow bright red.)

(The sun sets. It is night. The lights rise on the kitchen. Lisica is sitting at the table, finishing her waffle.)

LISICA

DAMN. These are really good waffles.

(The door flies open and Ebba enters.)

EBBA

I got tired of waiting so I thought I'd—

(She gasps. She stops dead in her tracks.)

Lisica?

LISICA

Mommy?

EBBA

Is that you, my darling, darling daughter?

(She rushes to her. The pair embrace.)

How did you know where to find me?

LISICA

Igor knew. He brought me here. He said you sent him a telegram.

EBBA

But I wasn't expecting you to get here so soon!

(Lisica places her head in her mother's lap, and Ebba strokes her red, bushy hair.)

No matter. The sooner the better.

LISICA

Did you really find someone to cure me, momma?

EBBA

Yes, darling. Mommy is going to make you all better. I promise, I promise, I promise. You're going to be all better.

(Lights fade.)

END OF PLAY.