SOMETHING ABOUT A BEAR

A play with songs.

{inspired by an Evgeny Schwartz play, *A Day for ordinary miracles*}

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commissioned and produced by Theatre Novi Most,

University of Minnesota.

**Settings**

**{all in Minnesota}**

A small diner in a microscopically-small town above Duluth, MN

A cabin in the woods near the Boundary Waters

The woods near the Boundary Waters

An hunting lodge near the Boundary Waters

**Time**

Now

**Characters**

WIZARD, ageless, maybe goes back to Merlin

KRYSTAL, a young woman from the town who works in the diner where she meets Wizard and then names him “Merle” since she can’t pronounce his name.

LORNE (or LORNA), the person who owns the diner, oblivious

HUNTER, a local hunter named Hiram

INNKEEPER, named Andre, owns the hunting lodge, where he plays jazz for people who don’t care.

BEAR, a young man, formerly a bear cub, raised by WIZARD and KRYSTAL as their own.

KING, a monarch from a European country everyone has forgotten about, still stuck in the fairy tale land but actually falling apart. (We never go there because KING is made to appear in Minnesota by magic)

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE, the King’s head man, evil bureaucrat.

COURT MUSICIAN, tries hard but has bad equipment, plays a sort of hurdy-gurdy-trumpet-one-man-band-with a touch of one of those monkeys you wind up and they play the cymbals? Instrument is beat-up but at its best looked like a Dr. Seuss design.

EXECUTIONER, it’s just a job and he’s glad to have it. (Could be the MUSICIAN as well—same person holds both jobs)

MINISTER, potential revolutionary, but only in the King’s country. Good man.

ORINTHIA, courtly young woman, takes care of the Princess, vacuous.

AMANDA, helps Orinthia, just as vacuous, but stupider.

{ORINTHIA and AMANDA’S last name may have been Kardashian}

PRINCESS, a real one, through and through, in the Princess Diana way, capable, smart, humane and capable of strong action.

SINGERS/MUSICIANS

In a cold place, you can see your breath

And in the deep part of night

When the sky is full of crystals

Trapped in black ice

You can see shapes and signs

What do they say?

You are alone, save love

You are alone, save love

Save love, above all, save love.

Once there was a woman

So full of life,

Carried in the eyes of no lovers

Across many cold years

She waited and longed.

Once there was a wizard

Who lost his way,

Carried by longing, he wandered,

Until he came to the waters

On the boundary of nowhere,

And tired, so tired, he stayed.

Through frost, through snow,

They saw each other’s true shape,

Not the shape of the body,

But the shape of the soul,

The shape of the true soul

And she saw, not an old broken man, but a beautiful soul,

Who had come to her small town, Embarrass—

It’s real, look it up—

[a huge map of Minnesota is seen, Embarrass is pointed out]

[SPOKEN. We are in LORNA’S CAFÉ]

KRYSTAL

Folks from Illinois call it “am bare ASS”—very rude-sounding. But it’s “Embarrass” to us. Just like the feeling. And we have the politeness to call their state “Illinois” instead of “Illy noise” with the “s” on the end. It’s a small thing but, it’s an example of why and how people, in general, have worn me out. I’m getting pretty sick of them, to be honest about it. My daddy had the tow truck business here, and I’m here to tell you that people can be so petty sometimes.

It’s terrible to admit, but I’m glad my dad is gone. He wanted me to get out of here and I hate for him to see me still stuck in this little town.

Another warm-up on that coffee?

You’re awfully glum tonight there, my friend.

What’s on your mind? Huh? Shall I tell you more about my day? More about how people annoy me. Except you. You do not annoy me. At all. And you are the only person who listens to me, and I know I do ramble a bit.

WIZARD

Will you marry me?

[She looks at him. They stare a long time. Music? Sound of the cold?]

WIZARD

I’m a wizard.

KRYSTAL

Every man says that.

[Asking him for advice--a real question]

Don’t they?

[WIZARD does some magic. They are in their home, the place where their life will be. It’s near the Boundary Waters]

WIZARD

That was amazing! Look at this place! I was so afraid I’d whoosh us to some ugly, desolate spot. But everything is here. And the woods at our doorstep.

KRYSTAL

[still trying to figure out what just happened]

Was there something in that coffee??!! No, wait. You drank the coffee. Not me.

WIZARD

It’s not some kind of drug. It’s *real* magic. Look around. Don’t you like it here? If you don’t, just say the word, and we can go back to the café. But, first, don’t say anything, just listen to me. I love you so much. I haven’t said anything, but I’ve been coming to the café and just being around you, I started feeling, yes, feeling my power come back to me. I had gotten so worn down, I could barely conjure anything, even the simples travel of any kind. I was walking everywhere. I know that’s supposed to be good for you. But, look, I got us here and produced a house! With magic.

What do think?

KRYSTAL

I…like it here. I do.

WIZARD

But do you like. . .me?

KRYSTAL

Of course I like you. Quite a lot. But I was hoping you’d ask me to the movies or something like that. Or out to eat somewhere other than in that terrible café I work at.

WIZARD

The food is awful.

KRYSTAL

It is awful. Even the mac and cheese is bad. How can you make bad mac and cheese? I felt guilty serving you some of that terrible food.

WIZARD

[looks into her eyes and hypnotizes her]

You’ve fallen in love with me. You will stay and be my wife. You will never leave me.

KRYSTAL

“I’ve fallen in love with you. I will stay and be your wife. I will never leave you.”

What did I just say? Was I talking?

I—I really, really like it here.

I should tell Lorna, my boss, I’ve gone for the day. Do you have a phone?

[WIZARD snaps his fingers, LORNA enters, as if sucked in]

KRYSTAL

Lorna. I’m off for the rest of day.

WIZARD

Off for the rest of your life.

KRYSTAL

Off for the rest of my life. I quit, Lorna. I’m sorry.

LORNA

That’s all right, Krystal. It’s okeedoke. It’s fine. I was gonna lay you off, anyway. You know, business has—. What?

[WIZARD snaps his fingers and LORNA disappears. I imagine that LORNA is busy and barely notices that she’s been swept into another place and we only see her confusion as hse leaves. OR, she’s just too frozen with fear to do anything but reply]

WIZARD

I know this is rather sudden. But I feel—I just feel—something—I have done magic all my life—all my lives, really, but what I’m feeling is more than magic. It makes me want to give up my art forever and--and—-just make one thing like this house with carpentry. I want to make something with my hands. No magic. Just tools and wood and skill. For you. To please you.

KRYSTAL

You please me.

[She kisses him]

WIZARD

You are the true magician.

KRYSTAL

What is your name?

[WIZARD whispers into her ear]

KRYSTAL

That sounds like a girls’ name.

I’m calling you Merle.

SINGERS

And so it came to pass,

They lived happily ever after.

Though they had no children.

He became a carpenter,

The worse carpenter in the land,

So they had plenty of firewood.

WIZARD

[about some failed carpentry project of his]

Burn it.

KRYSTAL

Are you sure?

WIZARD

Look at it.

KRYSTAL

Let’s take a walk. I don’t need a coffee table or whatever you were making there, Merle.

[They are **in the woods** and hear a female bear in pain. A hunter (Hiram) and a local innkeeper (Carl) enter, hunter with shotgun]

HIRAM

[to KRYSTAL and WIZARD]

How did you folks get here so quickly? I didn’t hear anything.

CARL

You’d better stay back. We’ve got an injured animal here.

HIRAM

A female bear.

KRYSTAL

You shoot a mama bear? What is wrong with you?

HIRAM

I didn’t. But I have to be honest with you, I’ve always wanted to bag a bear someday.

CARL

[offstage]

She’s over here, Hiram. And she’s almost done for. Poor thing.

KRYSTAL

[to WIZARD]

Can you heal her? With your magic?

WIZARD

Oh, darling. I wish I could, but I’ve never had that kind of power. I can’t make living things whole. I can take them places and I can conjure almost up any object. Things—I’m good with things. I’m sorry.

HIRAM

[offstage]

Stay away! Oh god. One of those traps. Her hind leg is nearly off. Don’t! What are you doing?!!

CARL

[offstage]

I can’t stand to see an animal in this kind of pain. I’m going to get her out of this trap--

[Huge Growl, then, CARL shouts in pain, re-enters, with blood on him. Sound of a shot, then another. HIRAM re-enters]

HIRAM

I had to do it. She would have killed you.

We’ll have to load her into your truck, Carl.

KRYSTAL

You’d better get a rabies shot there, Carl.

CARL

I’m fine. Just a little scratch.

HIRAM

She wasn’t rabid. Just caught in one of those traps. And genius here decided to free her. I hope she didn’t have any cubs. They will die.

CARL

Can you back the truck into here? With a winch, we should be able to hoist her up into the back.

HIRAM

It’ll take two of us to get her on the sling. Somebody should be in the truck.

KRYSTAL

I can drive the truck. My dad had Ned’s Towing, remember?

CARL

She can do it, Hiram.

WIZARD

Wait—I can move the bear.

KRYSTAL

Not with your back, dear.

[ASIDE to WIZARD]

If they find out you’re a wizard, our lives with never be the same.

CARL

Come on, Krystal.

[CARL and HIRAM exit]

WIZARD

[to KRYSTAL]

But with a little flick of the wrist, I could help.

KRYSTAL

I don’t want you to be tempted. Go home. And walk. I don’t want anyone seeing your magic.

[She exits. WIZARD is left alone. Sound of whimpering, offstage, not where MAMA BEAR was, elsewhere, where her cub might have gone. WIZARD follows the sound]

WIZARD

[From offstage]

Oh no. Oh, poor little guy. She’s gone. You mama’s gone. Come to me. Come on. Shhhhhh.

Sleep.

[WIZARD enters, carrying a sleeping bear cub. We hear the sound of the truck coming and the beep beep beep of backing up. WIZARD hides with bear cub, then *whooshes* himself into his home]

WIZARD

[sings]

I can feel the weight of his sleepiness

The weight of the trust he gives to me

To hold him, while he sleeps.

To hold him, while he sleeps.

Something awakened in me now.

I want to change his life,

Give him a better chance.

He will live free of traps.

I’ll make him into a man.

But, in the meantime, he’ll be my son.

He’ll be my little furry son.

My son.

[Time passes. WIZARD speaks to bear cub]

You need to sleep in a bed, a soft bed.

[WIZARD exits with cub, into the bedroom offstage]

[KRYSTAL enters]

KRYSTAL

Hello? Boy, that was a tough job. Carl is taking care of everything. He’s going to have the head mounted for his place, that inn of his. He knows somebody who will do a beautiful job. I’m tired. I think I might go right to bed.

WIZARD

In the bedroom.

KRYSTAL

Yes. That’s the place.

WIZARD

Wait. Talk to me. I’ve missed you.

Are you ever sad because we don’t have a child?

KRYSTAL

I think of it sometimes.

WIZARD

What if Nature. Out there. Sent us a gift?

Not magic, or anything.

KRYSTAL

What are you talking about? Did you get me a puppy? Oh, you are so cute. You got me a puppy because you knew I’d be sad about the mama bear.

WIZARD

Nature, sometime, is wiser than magic. And--

[WIZARD sneezes]

KRYSTAL

Bless you.

WIZARD

Thank you. Anyway, sometimes nature—

KRYSTAL

There’s a puppy in the bedroom! You are adorable!

[She hugs WIZARD]

WIZARD

Wait, darling, I need to explain--

[out of the bedroom, comes A YOUNG MAN, dressed in his father’s nightshirt? This is the BEAR. He begins sniffing around]

BEAR

Ahhgrrr. Grrrrr?

KRYSTAL

Merle?

WIZARD

That’s not what I brought home.

KRYSTAL

What have you done?

WIZARD

I found him, well, not exactly him. I found a bear cub.

[BEAR has sniffed KRYSTAL’S hair, likes it. He licks her cheek. Then curls up around her]

KRYSTAL

Awwwwww.

WIZARD

Whatever he is, I think he’s ours.

SINGERS

How do you make a man?

How do you raise a boy?

Oh, let him be wild,

Let him run and know the woods

Like other boys know a toy,

Teach him to be kind

But let him to be fierce

Let him be moved by the moon

And lulled by the sun.

Let him know who he is,

Inside and out

Indoors and out in the heart-pounding wild.

Out in the heart-pounding wild

Listen to the heart of the wild.

Listen to the heart

Of the wild.

KRYSTAL

Where is he?

WIZARD

He’s out.

KRYSTAL

With one of the girls down the way? I want him to have a normal life.

WIZARD

NO! NO girls. He’s out in the forest, where he belongs.

KRYSTAL

But he’s our son. He needs to be a part of the *human* world. We’ve home-schooled him, so he knows a lot. But it’s time. He’s nearly a man. Have you had the talk? About females?

WIZARD

Ummm. . .

KRYSTAL

I’ve answered his questions as they’ve come up. Like where’s Africa and is the Blue-Footed Booby a real bird and how are babies made. And I explained it to him, in a general way, and he fell on the floor, laughing, but then he stood up and said, “You know? It’s possible.” But now he’s asking harder questions and it’s his father who should explain it all to him. He can’t stay a little—

WIZARD

--CUB.

KRYSTAL

***--boy*** for the rest of his life. Look, I bought him some clothes, not just things I’ve made, but clothes from a store. From the men’s department.

[BEAR enters. He is still part bear, with fur sticking out. He’s wearing something fashioned from is father’s old clothes? His mouth is blue]

BEAR

Maaaaaw.

Booberriee {the “r” sound becomes a growl} eeeeeezzzzzzz.

KRYSTAL

Mother likes your outside voice, but you need to practice speaking like us. We don’t want the school people to come and say we haven’t done our job with you.

BEAR

[clears his voice, coughs out his “bearness’]

Rubber baby buggy bumpers.

[clears again, seems satisfied]

I was out, under the sky. Near the well. And I started feeling so trembly and like I wanted to jump. And then my heart began to beat. And I wondered if there are any—any—other—kind of—ones—like me. And I wanted to find one—her—yes—a her.

KRYSTAL

[to the WIZARD]

Have the talk.

[to BEAR]

Your father needs to talk to you about something..very important.

WIZARD

[to KRYSTAL]

There’s more to “the talk” than the average father/son “talk,” my dear.

[to the BEAR, starting to try to tickle him]

How’s my little cub? How’s my little, furry, ferocious--

[WIZARD starts rassling with BEAR—all to avoid “having the talk,” but BEAR tops WIZARD soundly]

KRYSTAL

[to WIZARD]

Merle? He’s nearly a man.

WIZARD

[to BEAR]

Your mother has some real human clothes and I want you to clean up and try them on.

BEAR

Yes, Mother.

[He exits to change]

KRYSTAL

Why don’t you want him to grow up?

WIZARD

I do. But his development as a male has some challenges.

KRYSTAL

Yes. And you’re his father. Even though you’re a wizard, magician, whatever word you like to use.

WIZARD

Yes. And *magic*, my dear--magic existed before magicians. We, and I fear I am the only one left, we magicians learn the ***art*** of ***practicing*** magic. Do you see what I mean? “Magic” is a huge universe of power and transformation. But the use of it—it’s in this book I carry, but I haven’t really consulted it in a while. I’ve been studying Carpentry. But when I met you, I did some summoning and that’s what we magicians learn--how to summon it, magic, and, at times, shape it, and, well, all that summoning and shaping is an inexact science.

KRYSTAL

What are you saying, Merle?

WIZARD

Making a house, with magic, is easy. Making a man is problematical. Making a man from a bear is even more problematical. Our son just sort of happened, dearest. I was thinking wouldn’t it be great to have a child and there was this bear cub and then I *sneezed*. Remember that? I didn’t really even say magic words or *whoosh* something into being. I just thought and sneezed. And somehow that became a *wish* and wishes are powerful and even dangerous when the person doing the wishing is a magician and has sort of forgotten he was since he’s been working very hard becoming a real carpenter. But ever since I met you, my love, magic just oozes out of me all the time, and I can’t always predict--

[BEAR enters. He is dressed, but has his pants on backwards]

BEAR

I like these clothes! And the zipper on my bum is very useful, except it’s hard to reach—

KRYSTAL

Take them off.

[She starts to help, sees he’s wearing no underwear underneath].

In the bag from the store are some small white pants, very small, with elastic. You put them on, too.

[BEAR exits]

KRYSTAL

You see? He’s a man. And as soon as he masters the art of putting his clothes on—

WIZARD

I thought he would just live here forever. With us.

KRYSTAL

He should live with us as long as he wants to. But he may want to have his own house. And wife.

[BEAR enters. He has his jockey shorts on over his pants. KRYSTAL shakes her head, “no.”]

BEAR

I knew it. I should have stuck with my first idea. Don’t worry, Mother.

[BEAR exits]

KRYSTAL

You’re the one who changed his life forever by turning him into a man.

WIZARD

I saved his life. And I hadn’t done magic in such a long time. I ached for it. I longed to do it.

KRYSTAL

All right. Then do it now. Wave s wand, cast a spell, whatever, Merle. And give that boy all the knowledge he needs to know to become a man. Do it now. Tell him about himself. Everything.

WIZARD

With your permission.

KRYSTAL

Just do it.

[WIZARD concentrates. MUSIC? SOUND?]

BEAR

[makes a sound that would come from someone who has just gotten all he needs to know about becoming a man. He THEN enters, nearly hyperventilating, the way a stressed animal breathes, panting, really, goes to KRYSTAL, kneels before her, embracing her and sobs. Then he crosses to WIZARD and stares at him]

All….these…..feelings, Father???

WIZARD

I saved your life! In the woods. You would have died! Or they would have killed you! Your mother was dying from a cruel human act, and--

BEAR

Mother!?

This is my mother!

[she goes to him]

How can I become a man? How can I become one of those?

KRYSTAL

They’re not so bad, sweetie. I quite like them.

BEAR

I was in my room, putting on these clothes you bought for me. And this waking dream opened my forehead like a hatchet had hit me right here. And in poured a knowing of all manner of things I’d never imagined and the world became as crystalline as ice that even my tears couldn’t melt. And I was crying, hoping you would hear me.

KRYSTAL

I did.

BEAR

Why didn’t you come? And stop it?

WIZARD

Tell him.

BEAR

Father? Why didn’t you come and save me? Like you did when I’d have a bad dream? You owe me some comfort since you stole me from my life!

KRYSTAL

Tell him.

BEAR

Somebody better tell me. Something.

WIZARD

Your mother—

BEAR

My mother…was a bear. I saw that. I saw the whole thing.

KRYSTAL

She didn’t want to leave you.

BEAR

It doesn’t matter. Now I’m one of the kind of animal that killed her.

WIZARD

Bears are carnivorous.

BEAR

I know that. But they don’t kill for sport.

KRYSTAL

Son—

BEAR

I want a name. If I am to be a man. I want a name.

WIZARD

Uhhh—

KRYSTAL

My father’s name was “Ned.”

BEAR

Good. Done. No more, “cub” or “son.” I am Ned. And I am a man.

KRYSTAL

There.

WIZARD

There’s something more.

KRYSTAL

Yes, your father needs to talk with you—about love.

And I’m not leaving until he does.

WIZARD

Son. When you meet a girl. You like.

KRYSTAL

Go on.

WIZARD

You must not kiss her.

KRYSTAL

At first.

WIZARD

Never.

KRYSTAL

What?

WIZARD

Because….because.. if you do, there’s this thing that will happen.

KRYSTAL

But it’s natural.

WIZARD

It’s more than that. It’s sort of unnatural naturalness.

KRYSTAL

Merle. You’ll give the boy a complex.

WIZARD

You were made by magic. And every magic spell contains a curse. And the curse in this one is this:

BEAR

Fatherrrrr. . .what are you saying?

WIZARD

I turned you into a boy from a bear cub and if you kiss a human girl, you will turn back into a bear, a grown male bear. And, since we’re vegan--not my choice, your mother’s, --and she will be meat, and you will be carnivorous, and being carnivorous, you’ll probably devour her on the spot.

BEAR

What. …….?

KRYSTAL

Merle? What have you done?

WIZARD

I didn’t intend it, I didn’t even cast a spell. I was just thinking how nice it would to have a son, and that became a sort of wish, and then I sneezed and, he came out from the bedroom, transformed into a human.

KRYSTAL

How do you know he’ll turn back into a bear?

WIZARD

Because every wizard’s wish contains a curse. We’re not supposed to have wishes. We are channels for magic, that’s all. That’s why none of are rich. You’d never notice us, although you’ve walked by us every day. We’re supposed to be selfless. I was selfish and now my son has to pay.

BEAR

How can I live?

KRYSTAL

Wait. Did you wish for me?

WIZARD

No. That’s what’s so amazing. I thought my life was over—I was as empty as a—what’s a local reference? A grain elevator, an empty grain elevator, that is. And then I got to know you. And I begin to fill up.

KRYSTAL

That is nice, if only, you’d stopped.

WIZARD

But then we wouldn’t have him.

BEAR

I am doomed. Father. I am doomed. How will I ever find. . .love?

WIZARD

I’m so--

[starts to sneeze]

I’m—-

[starts to sneeze again]

I must be coming down with something.

KRYSTAL

Stop!!! Don’t sneeze!!

WIZARD

[SNEEZES]

That feels better. And look, nothing--

[KING enters. He’s a King from a fairy tale, full regalia]

KING

[to BEAR]

Off with his head!!! This interloper in my kingdom. How dare you be standing in my presence. EXECUTIONER!! Where are you?

[EXECUTIONER enters, followed by MINISTER-IN-CHARGE]

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Your Undying Eminence. Forgive us. We were just in the. . .courtyard. . .of your—where are we???

KRYSTAL

Oh no. OH NO!! Look what you’ve sneezed up now!!

MUSICIAN

[late, trying to play one of his instruments]

KING

Oh, don’t even try. You’re late. The moment’s passed. I’ve already entered.

[to MINISTER-IN-CHARGE]

Kill him.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Which one, Scintillating Ruler of my Soul. The executioner? Because he would have to kill himself.

KING

I meant the musician. Oh, nevermind. Don’t kill anyone. Right now, anyway. That moment’s passed, as well. I’m bored and glad we’re some place other than my dull kingdom although I don’t recall how we got here.

KRYSTAL

[to WIZARD]

This is bad. And it’s your fault.

WIZARD

I have a feeling it will all be fine, dearest.

KRYSTAL

Nothing will be fine again!!

BEAR

Wizard?

WIZARD

What happened to “Father”?

BEAR

I will never call you “Father” again!

[BEAR EXITS]

KING

You must be the King here--everyone is angry with you. Fools. They do not appreciate total—totalit—what is that word?

EXECUTIONER

Totalitarianism.

[ORINTHIA enters]

ORINTHIA

Forsooth, we have wandered into some Hellish place. Amanda?

AMANDA

[entering]

I was walking in our garden and now I am in some dreadful, uncouth, wild and messy—

CARLENA

[entering]

Oh, ladies, try not to be obnoxious, at least for a little while. As head Lady-in-Waiting, I am responsible for your behavior. But I do have to ask, where are we?

MINISTER

[entering]

I apologize for our entourage.

KING

Don’t apologize for anything!!! Now where is the ***throne***?

KRYSTAL

Well, through there.

[She points the way. The KING exits, followed by the MINSTER-IN-CHARGE]

He didn’t even say, “hello.” I guess he’s in a hurry. I hope there’s toilet paper.

[PRINCESS enters]

CARLENA

Oh, here’s my princess.

WIZARD

Ah. It’s beginning to make sense.

PRINCESS

Pardon me. I’m looking for my father? I was in my boudoir, fixing my hair, and, suddenly, I’m. . .in front of this charming…--

AMANDA

It’s not charming.

ORINITHIA

It’s a—horrendous—

CARLENA

Girls, really! Why can’t you be more like the Princess?

AMANDA

We’re in a woodpile. It’s icky.

PRINCESS

[to KRYSTAL]

I apologize, Mistress.

KRYSTAL

Krystal.

PRINCESS

Mistress Krystal. I apologize for the rudeness of just everyone, I suspect.

CARLENA

I brought her up. These others were hired. From a temp agency.

BEAR

[enters]

I’ve made a decision. I must go and live by myself. I must go to the--

[he sees the PRINCESS. PRINCESS sees him. They stare at each other]

--who are you?

WIZARD

Ah.

KRYSTAL

[to WIZARD]

Stop saying “Ah.” There’s nothing “ah” about any of this.

PRINCESS

I am a princess. And you are sooooo. . . .

[about to say “beautiful”]

--someone my own age.

BEAR

I feel the same.

[they smile at each other]

PRINCESS

I—I—feel. I feel something I haven’t felt before.

BEAR

I do, too.

Oh no.

PRINCESS

Who are you?

BEAR

NOBODY!!!

[He runs away, quickly]

KRYSTAL

That is our son. He’s usually quite polite.

[KING re-enters]

KING

I don’t know what you’re idea of “throne” is, but that is definitely not it. The seat HAS A HOLE IN IT!!

PRINCESS

Father.

KING

What? Darling of all darlings? Daddy is here. What?

PRINCESS

I have such a pain, Daddy. Here. I think I just had my heart broken.

CARLENA

Oh, don’t tell him that.

KING

By whom??? I WILL HAVE HIM KILLED AT ONCE.

PRINCESS

No!! Don’t!!

CARLENA

See?

KING

Why not? He has broken something, *anything* of yours—then he must die. But your heart—well, he deserves the worst. If there was something worse than death. I have my Minister-in Charge think of something. Minister-in-Charge, is there something worse than death?

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Piano recital, your superbness. Or shopping with any of the Ladies in Waiting. That interminable speech last month given by that terrible blowhard. . .oh, wait, that was me.

KING

Too many choices, Minister-in-Charge! You always overdo everything.

CARLENA

As do you, my king.

KING

[to the PRINCESS]

My darling girl, my little truffly bon-bon, I don’t have a heart, so I cannot know your pain, but it’s the custom or even a law somewhere although I’ve never cared much for laws because they impede my decision-making process. There’s even a name for it. The Minister named it. . .where is he?

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Here, your Tyrannicalness.

KING

No, not you.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

But I am the Minister-in-Charge.

KING

No, the other one.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

But he is surly, sire. Whereas I am your sycophant. Why would you want to talk to him at all?

KING

He used a term for my way of ruling that I quite liked. I wanted him to repeat it.

MINISTER

Here, King, whatever. I am here.

KING

Why is everyone hovering?

ORINTHIA

We have nothing to do, Sire. There’s no gossip. There people are too nice. Particularly her.

KRYSTAL

Why, thank you, but I am a bit, a tiny bit worried, you know, because our son seems to have left, in a hurry.

WIZARD

No problem. Everything is working it its own way.

KRYSTAL

People always say that when they have no idea how anything is working out. Excuse us, folks, but my husband and I are going to have a terrible, terrible argument and it’s going to be right here because our house is kinda cozy might be the word?

WIZARD

Well…

I hate to resort to this, but I have to—

[hypnotizes her]

You are very tired and you need to sit.

KRYSTAL

“I am very tired and need to sit.”

[KRYSTAL sits.\]

WIZARD

I’m going to get our son.

[WIZARD exits]

KING

That!! That is what I do!! Now what do you call that?

MINISTER

That is *magic*, your Kingness.

KING

I’m a magician!!!

[to MINISTER-IN-CHARGE]

YOU! You are a chicken!! Poof! Zap! Whatever!

[MINISTER-IN-CHARGE is so not going to become a chicken]

I’ll try again. On one of my ladies in waiting.

CARLENA

Don’t.

KING

[choosing another one]

“YOU ARE A KITTY-CAT !!

ORINITHIA

Meow?

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Oh no.

AMANDA

Meeeow?

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Really.

ORINITHIA

Hello, Kitty.

AMANDA

Hello, Kitty.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

[shutting them up with voice of Satan]

Good-bye, Kitties!!

[ORINTHIA and AMANDA start to cry]

MINISTER

Don’t humor him.

Sire, you are not a magician. You are a tyrant. And you operate through your Whim. Which I call your Whim of Iron.

KING

That’s it!! That’s the term. Yes. My Iron Whim. And I have inherited it from my family. It is in our bloodline and our heads and there’s that other part that my daughter just had broken—yes!!! You’ve all been distracting me!! From the problem at hand.

CARLENA

I was hoping he’d forget.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Which is what, your Divine Rulership?

CARLENA

Here we go.

KING

MY DAUGHTER IS UNHAPPY BECAUSE SHE HAS A BROKEN HEART AND I DON’T KNOW WHAT THAT IS SINCE I HAVE NO HEART!!!

PRINCESS

I’m sorry, Carlena. Why must it always be this way? I’m afraid to express myself because it might end in people being killed.

CARLENA

It’s not your fault your father is a despotic, insane, total dictator.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Anyone here with a heart? Who can explain…?

EXECUTIONER

Uh. Nope. Lost mine with the fortieth head I chopped off.

MUSICIAN

My heart is in the hurdy-gurdy I had to leave on the way here.

ORINITHIA

I kept my make-up in mine and now I don’t know where it is.

AMANDA

I have no idea what you’re talking about. Is it edible? Oh yes, I had a chocolate heart. And I ate it!! Yummy.

MINISTER

Mine dried up during your rule, Sire of the Iron Whim. And it blew away.

KING

That does not help me. I’m getting annoyed. And we all know what happens: Annoyance to Irritation to Chafing to a Rash to Growing Redness to Grumbling if you’re lucky because that’s a warning to Ordinary Anger which leads directly to Blind RAGE!!!!

CARLENA

I have a heart. And it is broken.

MUSICIAN

Does it play music?

CARLENA

It did. But no more.

EXECUTIONER

Does it beat strongly in your chest when you’re about to kill someone?

AMANDA

Is it edible?

CARLENA

No!

It is full of feeling and—

ORINTHIA

--make-up?

CARLENA

You are all pathetic!! When I came to the court, I thought I had found a haven. A place where I could get over what had happened to me in a frozen land. Much like this one. And being with the Princess, being a mother to her, has helped me. But still, this aching I have, this longing. It has been a habit of longing and almost sweet. I’ve gotten used to it. But since we came here, the pain has gotten so bad. At times, I cannot breathe.

PRINCESS

Carlena, I had no idea. How sad. I feel such pain for you.

CARLENA

You’re just like your mother—an excess of compassion.

KING

My Princess, this feeling Carlena is describing, is that it? This heart break?

PRINCESS

Yes.

KING

Carlena. cure her, then.

CARLENA

I don’t know how.

KING

I’m sorry I can’t hear you because if I could hear you say that, I’d have to have you killed.

PRINCESS

Daddy! Don’t touch a hair on Carlena’s head!

KING

Oh, all right. I can deny you nothing.

CARLENA

I only know what happened to me. I don’t know the cure. I suppose I must tell you the story. It seems to be that sort of day.

Well, I met this man. He had a name close to mine and that started us up. Talking. “Your name is like mine.” Sounds so banal. But he did the most charming thing a man had ever done. He listened. He listened to me. And I rambled on, not being used to that kind of attention. From anyone. So the simplest thing: “See the dog.” “Look at that flower.” “Your eyes are beautiful.” “I think we should spend the rest of our lives together.” All that had such importance. And then lots of laughter. From us. Everything was funny. The back of his neck looked like that of a boy. Smooth. Soft hair, slightly curled. I could see it as he leaned into me and we stood there, ear-to-ear. His heart began to beat—

KING

Yes. He had one of those, too. I’m beginning to feel slighted. Short-changed. But I am perfect. I am King. If a heart were necessary to be King, then I would have been issued one. Oh, good, problem solved.

CARLENA

Oh, Princess. I hate to see you so sad.

PRINCESS

Why do we become attached to people when they can break our hearts?

KING

Anyone? Anyone? My daughter, the Princess, has asked a question and not one of your has an answer. Answer her?

ALL

[different phrases from different characters, staggered]

We don’t know. Beats me. Do you know? Don’t ask me. Huh? Can we Google it? What are you talking about? What? I don’t know. No idea. Don’t look at me. I have washing to do. I really should be elsewhere.

KING

You are all useless!! Get out of my sight!!!

[to the PRINCESS]

Except you, darling.

[No one moves]

I COMMAND ALL OF YOU TO LEAVE !!!

[no one moves]

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Where shall we go, your Infancy?

AMANDA

There’s nowhere.

ORINTHIA

There’s no shopping.

AMANDA

I could so use a manicure. And a pedi. My nails. . .awful.

MUSICIAN

There’s no town square where I could play a make some change, at least. A Kopeck.

EXECUTIONER

I’m assuming I’m to stay to execute those who don’t leave.

KING

NO!! I WANT EVERYONE OUT OF MY SIGHT!!

MINISTER

The woods is the only place for us to go.

[WIZARD re-enters]

KING

[About KRYSTAL]

And her!!! I want that chair. I need to sit.

WIZARD

Not a good idea. She’s upset with me and I interrupted--

KING

Unmagic her. At once.

WIZARD

[to KRYSTAL]

Darling. Remembering that you’ve fallen in love with me, you will stay and be my wife, you will never leave me—wake up.

KRYSTAL

Oh. Ah. I feel so rested. Nothing like a good sit down. . .wait a minute. . .

[looks at WIZARD]

I AM FURIOUS WITH YOU!!

WIZARD

Layers of spells. I can never keep track of them!! Wizardry one-o-one: Keep It Simple.

Darling, our son is coming back. I found him and talked to him.

[KING sits in chair]

KING

AHHHHH. That’s better.

[BEAR re-enters]

BEAR

[To Princess]

I would like to try again.

Hello. My name is Ned.

Allow me to shake your hand.

PRINCESS

Hello.

BEAR

And your name is. . .

[PRINCESS looks at her father—she’s never been named. Looks at Carlena who then shakes her head as if to say “I don’t know.”]

PRINCESS

“Princess.”

[BEAR holds her hand]

BEAR

Let’s be best friends.

PRINCESS

That will be easy.

SINGERS

Through frost, through snow,

They saw each other’s true shape,

Not the shape of the body,

But the shape of the soul,

The shape of the true soul

And she saw, not a young man, but a beautiful soul,

And she knew. . .

You are alone, save love

You are alone, save love

Save love, above all, save love.

BEAR

Don’t get too close.

PRINCESS

I can’t help it.

BEAR

It’s not going to work.

PRINCESS

It’s because I’m a princess, isn’t it? That I can’t do anything useful in the world? And that is why you won’t love me? Give me a name. We’ll forget I’m a princess.

BEAR

That’s not it.

SINGERS

Through frost, through snow,

They saw each other’s true shape,

Not the shape of the body,

But the shape of the soul,

The shape of the true soul

And she saw, not a young man, but a beautiful soul,

And she knew. . .

You are alone, save love

You are alone, save love

Save love, above all, save love.

BEAR

I—I—I have to go!!!

[BEAR runs off]

KRYSTAL

[to Wizard]

I CAN’T LEAVE YOU AND I WANT TO !!! AND I DON’T WANT TO LOVE YOU AND YET I DO !!! YOU’VE CREATED A NIGHTMARE WITH YOUR DAMNABLE MAGIC!!!

PRINCESS

I can’t bear it, Father. Carlena.

If he can’t love me, I’m going to become SOMETHING ELSE.

[PRINCESS leaves]

KING

[quiet]

Off with their heads. Everyone. Even mine.

Off with everyone’s heads.

SINGERS

End of Act One.

ACT TWO

[The HUNTING LODGE, owned by CARL. There is the head of MAMA BEAR mounted and on display. CARL and HIRAM (the hunter) are looking at it]

CARL

Yep.

HIRAM

Right.

CARL

Looks good

HIRAM

Nice job, there, taxidermist.

CARL

I jobbed it out. To Harold down in Embarrass. I explained to him that she was put to death mercifully because her hind leg was shredded.

HIRAM

Those traps are pure evil, Carl.

I come from a long line of hunters. People who hunted to live. My grandmother put the small game my brothers and I shot into the rain barrel and chopped them out for stew and the like. And then venison. When I got older. Got my first buck. All the recipes for venison. The competition amongst my uncles for the best way to cook venison. Barbecued, pan-fried, sautéed with onions, roasted in a roast pan with parsnips, grilled rare, stewed in a stew.

CARL

Any of those recipes taste good?

HIRAM

Nope.

CARL

Not in my family, either.

HIRAM

Maybe we shoulda let the women cook it.

CARL

I don’t know. My Aunt Mabel’s venison stew was largely inedible.

HIRAM

Your wife ever cook. . .venison?

CARL

I never married, Hiram.

HIRAM

Okay. I didn’t know. I’ve wanted to ask but I don’t like to pry. I want you to know that I accept all people and their. . .partners. . .

CARL

I was in love, and got my heart broke in two. It was a woman that did it. And I never got over it. Move on, they say. Well, I did. I moved on up here and bought this lodge, named it after her. “Live by the side of the road and be a friend to man,” my daddy used to say. And that’s what I did. And it’s been just fine. It’s cozy and people arrive, covered in snow, and I warm them up. With hospitality.

HIRAM

Well, Carl. You’re a good host. And my new apprentice is learning a lot while we stay here. I was going to take both of my apprentices hunting but this snowfall will keep that from happening. The new one’s eager and learns fast. The older one--

[PRINCESS enters, dressed as a man, accompanied by WHITMAN, the older apprentice.]

PRINCESS

[to HIRAM]

I’ve cleaned the guns, I mean, rifles. We’re running low on gun oil.

HIRAM

You’re using too much, then. Take a cloth and wipe them all down. And Whitman? Don’t let him use too much gun oil.

WHITMAN

I tried to tell him, sir. But he’s so eager that “splooch”--gun oil everywhere.

HIRAM

Fix it. You’re the oldest.

PRINCESS

I’ll do better. I promise.

HIRAM

[to WHITMAN]

What’s his name? I keep forgetting.

PRINCESS

Bob. Name’s Bob.

WHITMAN

I thought you said it was ‘Tom.”

PRINCESS

I meant “Tom.”

WHITMAN

He don’t know his own name.

PRINCESS

I’m an orphant.

WHITMAN

That doesn’t—

HIRAM

Don’t give him a hard time. He’s an orphant.

WHITMAN

I give up. Whether he’s ready or not. I’m going out to bag something today. Even if it’s that scruffy-looking bear running around out there. I seen him.

CARL

All bears are protected, son.

HIRAM

And Whitman, as long as you talk like some trigger-happy idiot, you’re not going anywhere.

WHITMAN

I don’t think he’s a bear at at all. I think he’s a yeti.

PRINCESS

We shouldn’t kill him. We should capture and study him.

WHITMAN

You’re such a sissy!

PRINCESS

I am not!

[She shoves WHITMAN. HIRAM breaks them up]

HIRAM

Boys!! Come on.

It’s this weather—they need to get out.

[He starts to exit, PRINCESS following after]

PRINCESS

I’m not a sissy. I’ll show you. I want to learn everything. I want to become the most accomplished hunter in the land.

WHITMAN

You just show up one day and get all the attention. It’s not fair.

[They exit]

HIRAM

He’s a good kid--Bob Tom.

CARL

He’s small.

HIRAM

That’s all right. You don’t have to be big to be a good hunter. Big men make a lot of noise. Ever see a big man trying to stalk an elk? We can move an elbow ever so slightly and break a stick and watch the animal high-tail it out of there. I’m telling you—we even breathe loudly.

You know that someday I want to bag a bear. A male. And I want to do it in the manly way. Me and my twelve-gauge. Couple of slugs. Or my thirty aught six Mauser. None of that cartridge-loaded automatic cowardly shooting those panty-waists from the city use. A single shot, right in the heart, when the bear is rampant, up on his hind legs. And another shot loaded, just in case the first shot didn’t do.

CARL

Well, give that up, Hiram. Bear hunting’s illegal but every year about this time, they come down for food and I hear people out there shooting. Brown bears start showing up. That’s what she was.

HIRAM

You believe those stories about that bear that Whitman was talking about?

CARL

Could be one with some kind of mange making its hair fall out.

HIRAM

This snow is getting heavy. It’s drifting.

CARL

[looking out]

What the heck?

HIRAM

What is it?

CARL

Looks like a herd of Yeti.

HIRAM

What?

CARL

I’d say bear but they’re walking on their hind legs.

HIRAM

I’ll be switched—it’s humans.

CARL

I’ve got guests!! Well, isn’t that a helluva note and in this weather!! Come in!!

[CARLENA enters, bundled and unrecognizable. She sneaks in and hides, to get warm. No one notices her, ORINTHIA and AMANDA follow]

ORINTHIA

That was the worst trek we’ve done so far.

AMANDA

“Trek,” Orinthia. “Trekking” was NOT in the job description for being a Lady-in-Waiting. I told you we should have taken those au pair jobs.

ORINTHIA

But, Amanda, a court and a king and a princess. It was going to be a fairy tale.

AMANDA

Have you read many fairy tales.?

ORINTHIA

Are they in books?

AMANDA

Yes.

ORINTHIA

Well, no, then.

AMANDA

My mother used to read them to me. At bedtime. She was not a nice woman. They all gave me nightmares. Children being thrown into ovens. Goblins in caves. Trolls under bridges. None of them were places for princesses or even young beautiful girls who deserve—

ORINTHIA

DESERVE to be princesses.

MINISTER

Oh, what a lovely place.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Horrible.

[sees head of bear]

Oh.

[shudders]

Where have we landed now? I had such a nice life. I lived in a castle!!! This is not a castle. Although it is far better than that other hovel we visited.

HIRAM

What do you mean? That bear’s a beauty. And a prize. And this is a beautiful place here.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Who gave you permission to speak to me?

HIRAM

Carl—who is this guy?

CARL

Side of the road, friend to man, Hiram. We can’t always choose.

HIRAM

I’m going to check on my apprentices.

[HIRAM exits]

MUSICIAN

[entering, breathing heavily, blows one of his instruments—out comes ice? Snow?]

My spit froze.

EXECUTIONER

I told you to clean your valves.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

[Looking for the KING]

Your Divine Eminence?

[Sees the KING “outside,” then speaks to the MUSICIAN and EXECUTIONER and MINISTER]

Oh dear, I’ll need help.

CARL

Luggage? That’s my job. I’ve got a handtruck.

[They all exit and return with the KING, on the handtruck, frozen. They place him by the firepit]

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

I supposed this is a problem now.

MINISTER

[disappointed]

He’s alive

KING

[trying to speak. MINISTER-IN-CHARGE leans in to listen]

I……nnnn……own.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

What, your Magnificent Muteness?

KING

Where. . . .is. . . .the. . . .throne?

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

They are even less likely to have one here than in that other uncivilized place we were.

KING

I. . .need. . . .throne.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Yes, you deserve a throne. Don’t we all. . .deserve more, much more than we’re going to get here. Or anywhere, in fact.

CARL

That’s not the Carlena Lodge way. Here we say, “If you think about what you deserve, you can’t appreciate what you have.”

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

So this is the lodge of low expectations.

KING

Throne?

MUSICIAN

[listening to the KING]

Oh! He needs the toilet.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Well, that is where my duties end.

[MINISTER, MUSICIAN, EXECUTIONER carry frozen KING offstage to where CARL points]

CARL

It’s that way. It’s marked, “Stags.” It has antlers on the. . .they’ll figure it out.

ORINTHIA

Where is our other Lady-in-Waiting?

AMANDA

Our OLD one.

ORINTHIA

Our Old Woman in Waiting.

CARL

Mean girls have to sleep in the woodshed.

CARLENA

I’m here. I’m over here. I was exhausted by all that walking through the woods.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Oh, more nature. More natural beauty. A blizzard—isn’t it a wonder! We would have died out there in another hour! I hate nature. Every snowflake is different, they say. Big whoop, I say--it adds up to so much white mush. “Those little geometric snowflake designs look like stars!” What do stars look like? Take a piece of leather, poke holes in it, stretch is over a glass and look through it. The sky with stars! We’re little bugs, trapped in some evil little child’s glass and the stars are the air holes his mother made him poke in the cover to keep us from dying.

ORINTHIA

That is so depressing.

AMANDA

I don’t like the out of doors, either, because it’s bad for my hair, but, that, what you just said—that is bleak.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

When you’ve lived as long as I have, working for His Unparalleled Imbecility, you will get bleak. Last spring, I saw a butterfly in flight. Its head was so tiny and brainless. Its wings were going—flip-flap—what a nitwit! This vision affected me so much that I had to steal more than my usual amount from the King’s coffers. Why should I restrain myself when the world offends my every sensibility? The birch is dumb, the oak is an ass. The river—a babbling idiot. The clouds are moronic. People! People are all awful. Even newborn babies have but one desire—to eat and to sleep. And to poop and pee. And, just for variety, to drool and, if you’re fortunate to be around for it, vomit on themselves and, of course, on you.

MINISTER

[entering]

The King is better now.

MUSICIAN

[entering and successfully plays one of his instruments]

EXECUTIONER

[entering with the KING]

Make way for his Majesty the King. All bow. Whatever.

KING

Better. Now. Where is my daughter? I am here to find my daughter. There’s nowhere else she could have traveled to so she has to be here. Or.. or..I can’t think about it.

CARLENA

Oh, Reginald. I’m sure she’s fine. She’s very strong, although you can’t see it, could never see it in her.

CARL

Who said that?

CARLENA

I did. And I could use a hot toddy or a Tom and Jerry.

CARL

. . .okayyyy. . .

CARLENA

Please.

KING

Her mother had the audacity to die when the Princess was only seven minutes old. And left me with this small baby. A girl. What was I going to do with a little girl?

CARLENA

What you did. Raise her. With my help, of course.

KING

And now that I love her and made her the center of my life, and now that she has my heart, she runs away.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Excuse me, your Egomaniacalness, your what?

KING

My-----THAT’S WHERE IT IS!! SHE HAS IT!! I do have a heart and the Princess has it!!

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

[having trouble controlling his sarcasm]

Oh, we really must find her now. She has royal property. And I’m certain it’s worth its weight in gold. When I get back to the city, I’m going to look for a job in customer service or the Department of Carriages and Other Vehicles would hire me, I know.

MINISTER
I would think that considering the body weight of the King, his heart must weigh quite a lot

KING

What. Are. You. Saying. Young Man.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Oh, you have no sense of self-preservation, do you?

MINISTER

Why should I worry, when the world here is such a lovely place? I mean, the climate is terrible, but the people are nice, so now I fear nothing. It is tyrants who should be afraid.

CARLENA

Young Minister. I’d be careful. Don’t let the strain of the journeys and the extreme weather make you foolhardy. I don’t know how many “second Minister’ jobs there are in this current job market.

MINISTER

One can only stand what one can stand for only so long, dearest Lady-in-Waiting.

CARLENA

Perhaps one should stand a little more before one shoots off one’s mouth and loses one’s head.

KING

What are they talking about, Minister-in-Charge?

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Oh, who knows. I just want to find the Princess and get out of here and go some place warm, your Majestical Something or Otherness.

KING

I’m detecting a considerable falling off of enthusiasm, not to mention less worshipping of me!!

CARLENA

Oh, Reginald. You are exhausting. And your wife died--that inconvenience that left you with a motherless daughter--your wife died, dear King, from lack of love. YOUR LOVE. She lost the will to live, waiting for you to love her.

KING

Fortunately, there is a buzzing in my ears right now, because if I heard you, what you just said, I would have to order the executioner to—

CARLENA

Oh, give it up, Reginald. I don’t care what happens to me.

EXECUTIONER

What? Did I hear my job title?

CARLENA

You are too small to wield that axe and your know it. You couldn’t execute a rat, if we needed you to.

EXECUTIONER

I haven’t been able to work out, lately, with all this travel. And the damp has rusted my equipment. But I could be up and running in a few—

CARL

[with the hot toddy]

Here is your drink, my lady. I had to heat the—

CARLENA

Yes?

CARL

[hands the toddy to someone]

Hold this.

[He removes CARLENA’S hood]

It is YOU.

CARLENA

I was afraid you’d recognize me.

CARL

Why, “afraid.”?

CARLENA

Because I’m very sad. My princess is gone.

CARL

So is mine. That was you.

CARLENA

You broke my heart!!

CARL

You broke MY heart.

CARLENA

You left me!! You galloped away.

CARL

You left me! I had to gallop away because my heart was broken.

CARLENA

I saw you on the dance floor, whispering in the ear of that beautiful girl.

CARL

She was a terrible dancer and I was saying, “One, two, three—one, two, three.” Into her ear, to keep her off my feet. She kept stepping on them! And I was trying to divert myself by dancing with that clumsy cow of a woman because I had just seen you in the arms of that handsome man!

CARLENA

That handsome man was a childhood friend I hadn’t seen in years. We were hugging because he told me he had just gotten married!

CARL

That image of your in another man’s arms broke my heart! So I rode up here, bought this lodge and named it after you. The Carlena. It’s called the Carlena Lodge. There’s a sign right out there.

CARLENA

How could I have seen that? It’s covered in snow!

After you left me, I cried so hard, I had no more tears left, so I joined the court of this pathetic excuse for a monarch, only to take care of his infant daughter. Who has now gone missing! FROM A BROKEN HEART.

ORINTHIA

This is better than gossip.

AMANDA

This is gossip, only it’s happening right in front of us.

KING

This buzzing in my ears is getting intolerable!! I keep almost hearing criticism of me. Minister-in-Charge!

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Yes, Sire?

KING

I must—I need to lie down. I feel an erosion of power. I feel that respect for me has decreased. I am beginning, in fact, to FEEL things in general, and I don’t like it. I need food. I need drink. I need bon bons. I need graham crackers and milk. I need my daughter to return. Please take me away before I do something….something…..

MINISTER

--human? King? Before you do something human?

KING

Take me away, now!

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

[getting EXECUTIONER, MUSICIAN to help KING offstage]

Come on.

Beddy-bye.

CARL

There’s a room ready. It’s the bigger one, of course.

[CARL points and they remove the KING and exit, too, leaving CARL, CARLENA, ORINTHIA, AMANDA, MINISTER. ]

AMANDA

[staring at CARL and CARLENA]

Do old people ever kiss?

ORINTHIA

[staring at CARL and CARLENA]

I hope not. That would be disgusting.

MINISTER

Why don’t we leave them alone?

[He pulls the two women away but they continue to stare, waiting for the “disgusting” kissing that might happen]

AMANDA and ORINTHIA

[as MINISTER exits with them]

We don’t want to miss anything.

[they are gone and CARL and CARLENA are alone]

CARL

I’ve missed you…..so.

CARLENA

My life stopped.

CARL

Is there hope for us?

CARLENA

I must look old.

CARL

You are still beautiful.

CARLENA

I remember your eyes.

CARL

I remember your. . .mouth.

CARLENA

I remember your hair. The back of your neck.

CARL

I have a beard. I could shave it, though.

CARLENA

It’s lovely.

CARL

So are you.

CARLENA

Can we forgive our….our….

CARL

..stupidity?

CARLENA

Our lack of trust.

CARL

Our selfishness.

CARLENA

Our cowardliness.

CARL

Our anger.

CARLENA

Our. . .our. . .

CARL

. . .human fraility?

CARLENA

Our massive imperfections?

CARL

Yes.

CARLENA

What?

CARL

I can forgive all of that. And more.

CARLENA

I--I can’t. All those years!

CARL

Think about the years left. We have those.

CARLENA

It’s too late for us, Carl. To answer your question. The answer is no, there’s no hope for us.

CARL

I refuse to believe that!

SINGERS

Love takes no less than everything.

Trust, faith, honesty, forgiveness.

Trust, faith, honesty, forgiveness.

No place for pride,

No place for anger,

No place for holding on,

No place for letting go.

No place for being right,

No place for being wrong,

Knowing the darkness in the light,

Hearing the discord in the song,

Knowing that life is short,

We make certain love is long.

We must believe that love is long.

Love, please, last long.

Please, love, last long.

[light shift. CARL and CARLA separate and exit. BEAR enters. He looks beyond wild, almost bear-like. He could be mistaken for a forest animal]

BEAR

Uhhhhhn uhhhhnn. Fire.

Uhhhhn. Warm.

Food.

[finds something, devours it. PRINCESS enters, with rifle, aims it at BEAR]

BEAR

Oh, go ahead and shoot. I don’t care.

PRINCESS

You. . .speak!

BEAR

Doesn’t matter.

PRINCESS

You’re that scruffy bear they talk about. Whitman wants to shoot you.

BEAR

Who is Whitman?

PRINCESS

The hunter’s apprentice. The OTHER hunter’ apprentice. I am a hunter’s apprentice, too. You’re not a. . .yeti? Oh, that’s stupid. If you were yeti, you wouldn’t know what a yeti it.

BEAR

I used to be at home in the woods. But now, everything is different.

[He stops when he sees the head of MAMA BEAR on the wall]

--that bear looks familiar.

PRINCESS

You seen one bear, you seen them all. I am a very accomplished hunter. I am—I can—take this gun, RIFLE, apart, clean it and oil it, and put it back together, so it works and everything. And you can shoot it. **I**, that is, **I** can shoot it. I’m learning a trade so I can earn my own living. Because I want to prove—

BEAR

Prove what?

PRINCESS

You speak very well. And you are very nice, whatever you are.

BEAR

I feel at home with you. I am so tired. And hungry, scavenging out there.

PRINCESS

Wait. Here’s some energy food we learn to carry as hunters.

[She gives it to him, he eats out of her hand, then her physical presence overtakes him]

You’re—you’re not going to chew me up, are you? Because I have a gun. Over there. “Always keep your hand on your rifle,” the hunter told me. I’ll never be a good hunter!

BEAR

Of course I’m not going to chew you up. I’m human. I just haven’t bathed or shaved in a long time.

PRINCESS

I know.

BEAR

You don’t even have a beard. They are so much trouble.

You are very pretty for a hunter. Oh, what am I doing???? I am in love with my Princess!! But your eyes are lovely. Oh shoot me!!! I am miserable!!! You’re a hunter, an accomplished hunter—shoot me!!

PRINCESS

You are in love with a princess?

BEAR

Yes!!

PRINCESS

But Princesses are silly.

BEAR

Not this one.

PRINCESS

Why aren’t you with her? Why are you out here, unshaven and unwashed?

BEAR

Because—because—I can’t be near her.

PRINCESS

Because she is silly and useless.

BEAR

Stop saying those things about her. I don’t care how beautiful your eyes are, you cannot criticize the person I’m in love with.

PRINCESS

I have to go. I have things to do.

BEAR

I have to get away from you. I feel more lightheaded than ever.

[BEAR exits further into the INN]

Where’s the innkeeper? I need something to eat—table scraps—I don’t care.

[BEAR is gone]

PRINCESS

Oh, why are things so messed up when they’re wonderful? It’s him. But why did he run from me? Even if he loves me, I can’t have someone love me who keeps running away. I can feel how much he likes me but he thinks I’m a boy. That wouldn’t last long. He’d find out I’m a girl and then, would he run away again?

WIZARD

[entering]

I….am…..so…….out…….of……..shape. I used to walk everywhere. After the levitation became more and more difficult. But now—

PRINCESS

[fake low voice]

Hello, Fellow traveler. Welcome to Carlena Inn. I am Tom, the apprentice to the hunter.

WIZARD

No, you’re not. But I don’t care. I am looking for my son. I am desperate to find him. Lost children this winter. My son is gone. And a King has lost his daughter. We’re both bereft. Children have no idea how much they destroy us with worry. And, oh, this is my fault. And my son’s mother is furious with me. And I love her so much. Life was simpler—when? Always. Before I became the last of my. . .tribe? I guess you’d call it. No one needs wizards when they have cell phones. And no one needs a wizard who can’t operate a cell phone. That’s me. Microwave ovens? I put an egg in one—to cook it? The egg was in the shell. It seemed like such an efficient way to bake an egg. I was so wrong. Krystal—that’s my wife—was so patient with me, smiling as she scraped the egg off the inside—I can’t dwell on that, on those happier times. I’ve failed her in more important ways than putting an egg in the microwave, ways she will never forgive.

PRINCESS

I will never forgive my father.

WIZARD

Why not?

PRINCESS

He turned me into a princess.

WIZARD

But you’re a “hunter’s apprentice,” you told me.

PRINCESS

I am becoming that. Because I am determined to cast off my sissy ways. He raised me in a hot house, like a beautiful, poisonous flower. Though my Lady-in-Waiting did her best to educate me--still, I never saw the world. So I know nothing. I’ve learned more in the last several days? --however the passage of time is measured since we left our kingdom—uh-oh.

WIZARD

I won’t reveal your secret yet, but you’d better show your distraught father that you are all right, or I will do something extreme.

PRINCESS

Turn me into an animal or something?

WIZARD

No. I’m a little worried about how that might turn out. . .

PRINCESS

I don’t believe you’re a wizard.

WIZARD

I’ve begun to doubt it myself. I do know I’m a father who is very worried about his son.

PRINCESS

I—I have to get back to work.

WIZARD

Tell you father. He is here somewhere.

PRINCESS

If you’re a wizard, can you make your son love me?

WIZARD

I can put a spell on him. But that’s not real love. You’ll never be sure the person really loves you. But I think he does love you. The question is, do you love him?

PRINCESS

I don’t know. I’m different now. And I feel different.

WIZARD

Oh, don’t break his heart. Please. Go find your father. And take this gun away.

PRINCESS

Rifle. It’s a rifle.

[she exits with the rifle]

WIZARD

A spell is not real love. They have to choose to love you. It’s such a faulty system. How have humans stood it all these thousands of years? It has made me so unhappy at times. Like now.

BEAR

And yet you turned me into man.

WIZARD

Son!! I mean, Ned. Ned. Come here, please.

[BEAR goes to his father and nuzzles him]

WIZARD

Your mother—

You have to come home. I want you to come home.

BEAR

This blizzard—

WIZARD

It’s more than that. You’re running from your life.

BEAR

Where is my life?

WIZARD

She’s here.

BEAR

Where? Where?

WIZARD

The hunter’s apprentice.

BEAR

I knew there was something about him. Oh, that means she is right here. But Father—

WIZARD

You called me, “Father” again.

BEAR

How can I even be near her and know what will happen?

WIZARD

Love her from afar.

BEAR

Are you crazy? Tell me how to do that. How can I do that?

[HIRAM enters]

HIRAM

The roads are closed. How did you get here?

WIZARD

A combination of sputtering levitation and snow parting—two ancient techniques, neither of which seem to work that well for me anymore. But here I am.

HIRAM

Snomobile, huh?

WIZARD

Sure. You betcha.

This is my son. Ned.

HIRAM

So you’re not a yeti and you got a name. Nice to meet you.

WHITMAN

[entering, takes rifle from Princess and points it at BEAR]

Get out of the way, Bob Tom. I’ve got this one.

BEAR

“Bob Tom”?

PRINCESS

NOOOOOOOOO!

[flings herself on the rifle. It goes off]

WHITMAN

Bob Tom!!! What did you do????

[everyone runs on and finds the PRINCESS lying, shot BEAR is sobbing and trying to tend to her]

HIRAM

[entering, taking the rifle from WHITMAN]

Give me that gun right now!!!

KING

Oh no, what now. I was sleeping so well.

Is somebody finally dead? Executioner!! Did you do this?

[EXECUTIONER enters, see what he thinks is a dead body and faints]

KING

And I wonder why my executions haven’t been going well, lately. SOMEONE COME AND CLEAN THIS UP!! MINISTERS!!!

BEAR

Oh. Oh. Oh…..

CARL

[enters and cradles PRINCESS]

This isn’t a boy. This is a girl.

CARLENA

[going to her]

Oh no. It *is* a girl. It’s the Princess.

KING

Oh no no no no no no no no no.

BEAR

It is my Princess?

[He picks her up]

CARLENA

Put her over here. Let me see how badly she’s hurt.

[They carry her to a place that’s comfortable, by the fire]

PRINCESS

Uhhhh.

BEAR

She’s talking.

PRINCESS

Where is my Bear?

BEAR

Here.

PRINCESS

Ned.

BEAR

Yes.

Hunter? Where is the hunter?

HIRAM

Here.

BEAR

I know you’ve always wanted to kill a bear, a male bear. Well, here is your chance. When I kiss my princesss. And I will. At that moment, you must shoot me. Because I will turn into a bear and devour her. Do you understand?

HIRAM

I…yes. I understand.

BEAR

You must not miss.

HIRAM

I won’t.

PRINCESS

Ned. Come to me.

BEAR

I will be there.

Hiram?

Ready?

[HIRAM aims the gun at BEAR]

BEAR

I love you, Princess.

PRINCESS

Give me a name. I never had one. Carlena, what was my mother’s name? We were never allowed to speak it.

KING

Her name was Eileen.

BEAR

Ready, Hiram?

I’m about to be happier than I have ever been in my life.

PRINCESS

Me,too.

BEAR

Do you know that we’re risking everything?

PRINCESS

I have nothing left to lose. Just come here.

BEAR

Good-bye, Father. I would have had nothing if you hadn’t taken a risk. And you did it out of love.

WIZARD

I’m sorry, son.

BEAR

DON’T BE!!

PRINCESS

Ned? Hurry.

BEAR

I love you.

[BEAR leans in and kisses PRINCESS. HIRAM aims, but doesn’t shoot because BEAR doesn’t transform into an animal. BEAR stops kissing and looks up. He is, in fact, more human. He goes in for another kiss. No change. In fact, PRINCESS is getting better, too. Soon, they are both standing and kissing—a human man and woman, both healthy]

BEAR

The curse in the spell. Where is it?

PRINCESS

I don’t know, Ned. But kiss me again.

[SOUND OF SNOWPLOW. BEEP, BEEP. BEEP. LORNA enters with KRYSTAL

LORNA

How you doing there? Krystal came to get me and we got on the snowplow to come get you folks out of here. We plowed for miles—couldn’t see our hands in front of our faces. So, Carl. How you doing? Brought some supplies. You folks could use a party is what I think. Come out here and help us unload, huh? You girls, come on, get a load off and let’s get some work done. Come on.

WIZARD

[to KRYSTAL]

Hello, dear.

KRYSTAL

I cannot stay mad at you. Is that some magic thing you did to me?

WIZARD

I’m hoping it’s love.

KRYSTAL

[doubts]

Hmmmm.

BEAR AND PRINCESS

[to WIZARD and KRYSTAL]

Mom and Dad.

[to KING]

Dad.

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

Rats. Happiness. Nauseating.

KING

You’re fired.

[to MINISTER]

But you’re not.

MINISTER

I quit.

Long live the revolution.

[LORNA hands him a box to unload]

CARL

It’s a day for miracles. Why can’t we be one?

CARLENA

No reason. She’s happy. Let’s be happy, too.

[They kiss]

ORINTHIA and AMANDA

We were thinking of opening a nail salon. In Embarrass.

LORNA

That’s fine. But in the meantime. There’s this work to do. You know that word, “work”?

[hands them some decorations, notices outside]

Uh-oh, it’s snowing again.

Minnesota. You gotta love it.

BEAR

Mother!! I’m so happy. The curse in the spell—didn’t happen!

KRYSTAL

[to PRINCESS]

Welcome to the family. And your father, too, even.

KING

Thank you. But who is this Monstrous Lorna person?

LORNA

You must be Mr. King. Well, we’ve got a lot more unloading to do. Come with me. I’ve got gallons of mac and cheese.

KRYSTAL

[to WIZARD about the mac and cheese]

There’s the curse in the spell.

[They laugh at this]

WIZARD

Seriously, though, about the curse in the spell. Why didn’t it work this time?

KRYSTAL

I’ve been wanting to tell you for a while--your spells, dearest, they don’t work that well.

WIZARD

But I hypnotized you.

KRYSTAL

Oh, that’s not a spell. I’ve been hypnotized to quit smoking and that worked.

WIZARD

All right, then. I have to tell you something. It’s difficult to tell you this, but I hypnotized you right after I asked you to marry me. Because you said you liked me, but that wasn’t enough. And I was afraid you’d leave me, so I—I hypnotized you. And then I said, “You’ve fallen in love with me. You will stay and be my wife. You will never leave me.” Do you remember that?

KRYSTAL

No.

WIZARD

I hate to tell you, but it was hypnotism. It wasn’t your choice. I could not trust—-

KRYSTAL

--love. You could not trust love.

WIZARD

That’s right.

KRYSTAL

And yet, your son kissed a young woman and didn’t turn into a bear.

WIZARD

I don’t understand.

KRYSTAL

Listen, darling. There’s so much you don’t understand. And I don’t understand it, either. But, I haven’t left you, and, let’s be honest, I have had plenty of reasons, lately. And yet here I am. You know, Merle. I do love you. I do. You have to believe that.

WIZARD

It’s so strange for a wizard to have to have faith.

KRYSTAL

Can we just stop second-guessing everything. Forget about what is magic and what isn’t. And be happy?

WIZARD

Let’s try.

COMPANY SINGS

Love takes no less than everything.

Trust, faith, honesty, forgiveness.

Trust, faith, honesty, forgiveness.

No place for pride,

No place for anger,

No place for holding on,

No place for letting go.

No place for being right,

No place for being wrong,

Knowing the darkness in the light,

Hearing the discord in the song,

Knowing that life is short,

We make certain love is long.

We must believe that love is long.

Love, please, last long.

Please, love, last long.

You are alone, save love

You are alone, save love

Save love, above all, save love.

[BEAR is drawn to the head of the Mama Bear on the wall. He stares at it. PRINCESS joins him, looking at it, soon the entire cast is looking at it]

WIZARD

One last time. Hold on to me, Krystal.

KRYSTAL

What are you doing?

[WIZARD does a spell. MAMA BEAR awakens, shakes her head. BIG RUMBLE OF SOUND AND SMOKE and everything goes dark. When the lights come back on, MAMA BEAR’S HEAD IS GONE from the mounted plaque].

PRINCESS

You ARE a Wizard.

BEAR

There she goes! Back up into the mountains!

[THE CAST ALL WATCH THE MAMA BEAR ESCAPE]

KING

I want to be able to do that.

HIS RETINUE

Forget it.

BEAR

Thank you, Father.

WIZARD

The rest of the “magic” in this family, I now leave to you, your love, and your mother. I’m retired.

LORNA

I don’t believe that for a minute there. No, I sure don’t. You betcha.

**END OF PLAY**

