

PERUSAL SCRIPT

EMPEROR WOLF

A POST-APOCALYPTIC FAIRY TALE

by MAHONRI STEWART



Newport, Maine

© 2014 Mahonri Stewart
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CAUTION:

Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that

EMPEROR WOLF

being fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States Of America, the British Empire, including the Dominion Of Canada, and the other countries of the Copyright Union, is subject to royalty. Anyone presenting the play without the express written permission of the Copyright owners and/or their authorized agent will be liable to the penalties provided by law.

Script and music copies must be rented from the Publisher and Royalty must be paid to the publisher for each and every performance before an audience whether or not admission is charged. A performance license must first be obtained from the publisher prior to any performance(s).

1997, 1988 and 1998 Federal Copyright Law -- 17 U.S.C. section 504 -- allows for a recovery of a minimum of \$250 and a maximum of \$50,000 *for each infringement*, plus attorney fees.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of the author or his respective agent(s), or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 or under the terms of any license permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency.

The professional and amateur rights to the performance of this play along with the lecturing, recitation, and public reading rights, are administered exclusively through LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be made. For all other rights, inquiries may be made to the authors through LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS. Any adaptation or arrangement of this work without the author's written permission is an infringement of copyright. **Unauthorized duplication by any means is also an infringement.**

FOR PUBLIC PERFORMANCE RIGHTS YOU MUST APPLY TO THE PUBLISHER OR YOU ARE BREAKING THE LAW!

The possession of this PERUSAL SCRIPT, does not constitute permission to perform the work herein contained, in public or in private, for gain or charity. Proper prior application must be made, license granted and royalty paid before a performance may be given. Copies of this SCRIPT and all other rehearsal materials may be rented from:

LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS

P.O. Box 536 Newport, ME 04953-0536

www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com

Printed in the United States Of America

THIS NOTICE MUST APPEAR IN ALL PROGRAMS, ON ALL POSTERS AND PUBLICITY MATERIALS AND INTERNET ADVERTISING/WEBPAGES FOR THE PLAY:

"EMPEROR WOLF" is presented through special arrangement with Leicester Bay Theatricals. All authorized materials are also supplied by LBT, www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com"

NOTE: Your contract with Leicester Bay Theatricals limits you to making copies of this document for persons directly connected with your production. Do not distribute outside of your cast and crew. Following your performance run you must destroy all photocopies, preferably by shredding them. If we sent you the document in printed format, you must return that document to us. If we provided you with an electronic PDF file, simply trash that on your computer so that it cannot be recovered. The electronic document may only be on ONE computer -- it may NOT be duplicated. This is also a part of your contract with Leicester Bay Theatricals.

LBT ORDER #3304

This post-apocalyptic fairy tale is dedicated to my children Hyrum and Charlotte.

My wife Anne and I are in the habit of reading to our children. Between the two of us, we have covered *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Ozma of Oz*, *The Hobbit*, *The Witches*, *James and the Giant Peach*, *Matilda*, *Peter Pan*, *The Castle in the Attic*, *Artemis Fowl*, *My Father's Dragon*, *The Princess and the Goblin*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*, *The Graveyard Book*, *Peanuts*, *Odd and the Frost Giants*, *The Voyage of Basset*, *Harry Potter*, *A Wrinkle in Time*, *Peter and the Starcatchers*, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Book of Three*, numerous fairy tales (the Grimm Brothers, Hans Christian Anderson, etc.), children's versions of the plays of William Shakespeare, and many more.

That is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg when it comes to the magical worlds we plan on visiting in between the covers of books. So, if the play seems thick with allusions to children's books and magical literature, then that is why. Books have meant a great deal to me through the years, and have now become a vital part of the way I communicate, explore, and teach my children. This play is an extension of that, a theatrical representation of the sacred act of storytelling. It is one of the ways I pass on the True Myth.

—Mahonri Stewart, 2020

FOREWORD

“Hope in a Dystopian Wasteland”

I'd like to tell you a story. It is late spring of 2012. The desert sun has us under its broiler, the daily stress of graduate school burning a different kind of hole in my psyche. I stalk the campus of Arizona State University like the jaded New Yorker I am, black turtleneck and bald head temporarily swapped for a thin, light colored tee shirt and a protective layer of rapidly graying hair on my delicate Russian/Irish white scalp. I'm in a mood.

A jaunty figure, with a spring in his step, approaches from afar. I sigh deeply. As we get closer, we are able to identify the other. I am met with a mile-wide smile, an open heart, and a generous, “Hello, Friend.” I am overcome. I am waylaid. I am caught, bound, and transformed by the simple, yet unexpected greeting filled with love, generosity of spirit, and joy from this friend of mine. It is, of course, Mahonri Stewart.

This joyful and generous spirit shaped the entirety of our collaboration on *The Emperor Wolf*, presented as an undergraduate studio production at ASU's Herberger Institute of Design and the Arts in the Spring of 2014. I first encountered the play as a graduate student representative on the department's season selection committee, where I championed the play for its imaginative staging opportunities and the benefits that a multi-step production process could yield for this play still in development. I was voluntarily assigned to the play as its director, and quickly suggested we work both in rehearsal at night and in class in William Partlan's new play development workshop where undergraduate actors and graduate directors work together with a playwright on site.

Our in-class discoveries were focused on preserving Mahonri's unique perspective on the multifaceted world he created while calling attention to moments or word choices that took the audience too far out of that magical environment. In each case, Mahonri was fully supportive of experiments in the rehearsal room that involved cutting, paraphrasing,

or restructuring. In most cases, we found that the original text served the play best, while some small cuts or edits were employed by Mahonri in the development and rehearsal process.

I cannot go any further without sharing credit for any of this process's success with the undergraduate performers, designers, and in-class audience who gave helpful and insightful feedback to the look and sound of the play, the meaning raised by dialogue and theatrical moments, and inventive solutions to some of the play's challenges. In many ways, it is structured like a film, and the production constraints put in place by the university's studio space meant that we got to find simple and imaginative theatrical techniques to keep the audience on the journey with the characters, and engaging with the magic on the scale of the world Mahonri has built.

A dimensional backdrop of glossy black spikes with stock platforms at oblique angles provided our playing space. Using a single projector and a single screen, our design team created a vivid projected map, like what one would find in the endpapers of a Tolkien novel, to visually link our characters to each new location. We mixed adventurously bold performances, simple costuming and makeup, and projected suggestions of fully realized monsters to communicate the scale and power of our non-human characters. And using multiple practical light sources or floor mounted instruments provided enough visual variety to transform the space as our characters traveled from location to location.

Our young actors dove in to the material with rigor and heart, and I was proud of the truthful character work they contributed to the production. In particular, our Shasta and Madeline embodied exemplary paradigms for the characters, and brought maturity and personal quirks to their portrayals.

Finding a glimmer of hope in a dystopian wasteland is a theme shared by a growing number of plays

emerging in the early part of the twenty first century. Mahonri's effort succeeds by reconnecting his audience with the stories of our collective mythos, and looks not to destroy, rather to bind the evil that mars the world of the play. The writer's spirit of love, joy, and generosity of spirit is found throughout, which I hope you are able to experience in your reading of *The Emperor Wolf* here. It was a pleasure to work on this play in 2014, and I am happy that it has a future bound in text where it may come to life over and over again in the imaginations of its readers.

—*Brian Foley*

Brian Foley is a Director, Instructor, and Performer of Theatre, Variété, and Circus. As a director, he has directed classics, musicals, new works, and devised theatre pieces nationally. He has taught university courses in Acting, Directing, and Clown, and workshops to students of all ages in Circus Skills, Clown, Commedia dell'Arte, and Physical Theatre. Brian is a company member of Bond Street Theater, an Associate Artistic Director of the World Clown Festival in China, and has performed on multiple episodes of Sesame Street. He holds a BFA from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and an MFA from Arizona State University's Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts. A co-founder of Bambouk Clown Theatre and New York Statues, Brian has created original work for festivals, corporate events, cruise ships, and New York City theatre since 1990. He is currently based in Phoenix, Arizona, where he is a collaborator with Mesa Encore Theatre and ASU's Center for Science and the Imagination. He is an adjunct professor of theatre at Arizona State University, a researcher for the Fédération Mondiale du Cirque, and a freelance theatre artist and instructor.

“He had not yet learned that if you do one good deed your reward usually is to be set to do another and harder and better one.”

— C.S. Lewis, *The Horse and His Boy*

EMPEROR WOLF

CHARACTERS

MADELINE — *a young huntress*

SHASTA — *a teenage boy*

EBONY — *a middle-aged, blind woman with a sheath of cloth wrapped around her eyes, or sunglasses*
(*Madeline's mother*)

THE WANDERING WOMAN — *She is a goddess, dressed in an ancient style, perhaps Hebrew, or Egyptian, or Greek, or Babylonian, or some sort of mixture thereof. Her hair is in an exceptionally long braid.*

THE EMPEROR WOLF — *a mystical being*

SPHINX — *a beautiful but intimidating creature who is half woman, half lion, with great wings,*

TANNER — *a graying, grizzled man (Madeline's father)*

GRIFFIN — *can either be a dancer/actor in costume, or a large, beautiful puppet, or any other invention that occurs to the director/designers.*

MINOTAUR — *a legend*

The current, full length version of Emperor Wolf premiered at Arizona State University on February 28, 2014, in Tempe, Arizona. It had the following cast and crew:

CAST

MADELINE: Christine Conger

SHASTA: Zach Turilli

EBONY: Chelsea Juaregi

WANDERING WOMAN: Nikki Gallagher

EMPEROR WOLF: Salim Garami

SPHINX: Melissa Stone

TANNER: Isaac Kolding*

GRIFFIN: Phoenix Huber

*This character was named Derrick in its one hour version with DaVinci Academy.

CREW

DIRECTOR: Brian Foley

SCENIC DESIGNER: Tyler Scivener

COSTUMER: Briana Gaydusek

LIGHTING DESIGNER: Bret G. Reese

SOUND DESIGNER: Eric Lambert

MEDIA DESIGNER: Ryan Kirkpatrick

STAGE MANAGER: Jeremy Leung

Emperor Wolf was originally a much shorter play that was less than an hour long. This succinct version premiered in a production by the DaVinci Academy for Arts and Sciences at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival's American High School Theatre Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland, on August 14, 2013. It had the following cast and crew:

CAST

MADLINE: Natalie Hope Finamore

SHASTA: Jacob Canyon Ward

EBONY: Sarah Howerton

WANDERING WOMAN: Violet Taylor

EMPEROR WOLF: River Ward

SPHINX: Daniel Amsel

DERRICK: Jayson Timothy Veillon

GRIFFIN: David Sanders

CREW

DIRECTOR: Adam Slee

PROPS/TECHNICAL EFFECTS: Adam K.K. Figueira

MASK/CREATURE DESIGN: Russ Adams, Escape Designs

EMPEROR WOLF by Mahonri Stewart. CAST of 8 (4 f, 3 m, 1 non-gender specific) Run Time: 2 hours. TYA. Fantasy costumes. Abstract or representational setting. This post-apocalyptic fairy tale unfolds in a future earth torn apart by division and war, where mythical creatures have become the new ruling class. In this new world of sphinxes, griffins, fairies, and goddesses, none is more fearsome than the Emperor Wolf. When Madeline and her blind mother, Ebony, meet the orphaned Shasta, they are pulled into a hero's quest in which they confront this frightening new order and the Dark Being that has claimed the world. **ORDER #3304**

Mahonri Stewart is an award-winning writer and educator. He has written over two dozen plays, most of which have been produced throughout the U.S. and Europe, including productions in Los Angeles, Scotland, and Switzerland. In 2004, his premiere play *Farewell to Eden* won the Kennedy Center's American College Theater Festival's National Playwriting Award (Second Place) and their National Selection Team Fellowship Award. His play *Legends of Sleepy Hollow* won the Ruth and Nathan Hale Comedy Playwriting Award. Since then he has also received numerous other awards and honors and continues to expand his writing into various mediums, including screenplays, graphic novels, poetry, and novels. He received his MFA degree in Dramatic Writing from Arizona State University and a bachelors degree in Theatre Arts from Utah Valley University. He's a former Playwright in Residence at the Noorda Regional Theater for Children and Youth.

EMPEROR WOLF

PROLOGUE

Enter the WANDERING WOMAN, who speaks to the audience in a storyteller's fashion, although other various methods can also be used to theatrically communicate the story she is telling, whether it be movement, projection, etc.

WANDERING WOMAN: Come and listen to the story. What kind of story really depends on which side of the experience you've been placed on. The destruction of one world can mean the creation of another. So, whether you want to consider this an apocalypse tale or a creation myth is a matter of perspective. Whatever the case, the world had changed.

Even in my hidden places, I could feel it in the earth, the water, the sky. The vibrations were off. I went out from my hiding places, and began my wandering again. The cries of my children were too much to ignore, even if they still refused to see me. It would have been simpler if there had been someone to blame in the beginning, as there was someone to blame in the end. But the fault was widespread, like an infection, like a pandemic.

There were really two wars happening at that time. There was the war between countries, but there was also the war between peoples. My children again cared more about their differences than their similarities. There were no more presidents, or queens, or parliaments, or that sort of person anymore. They were all just broken up into smaller and smaller governments, until there were just governments of ten or five or two or one. Until the Dread Awakening, that is.

A new ruling class, a whole new society of creatures arose. The things my children had only heard about in myths and fairy tales, but who I knew only too intimately. Sphinxes. Griffins. Elves and fairies and spirits and nymphs and monsters and gods and goddesses that had long been forgotten, or rejected, or relegated to books, were now warring with each other for possession of this newly created world.

Many people didn't believe in these returning memories, the stories were just another reminder of how much they had lost and how far they had fallen. Whether they believed them or not, the stories spread and became more convincing and more prevalent. What was becoming obvious was that my children were disappearing, becoming rare, endangered. Instead of being hunters and gatherers, it they became hunted and gathered. For what reason, none of them knew. Out of all these stories, there was one that struck the most fear in the hearts of my children—the story of the Emperor Wolf.

end prologue

SCENE ONE

A MINOTAUR is on stage. Enter MADELINE, who sees the MINOTAUR, but not clearly. MADELINE arms her bow, and lets off an arrow, hitting the MINOTAUR. She approaches the beast, expecting her arrow to have killed it. To her surprise, the MINOTAUR looks up at her, largely unaffected by the arrow. Startled, MADELINE's eyes widen in surprise, having never seen a creature like this before. Their scene freezes.

The SPHINX enters, killing unseen humans. SHASTA enters running, then stops upon seeing the Sphinx. The SPHINX turns on SHASTA and is about to kill him as well, when the WANDERING WOMAN (unseen by SHASTA, but seen by the SPHINX) re-enters and motions to the SPHINX to stop. Their scene freezes.

The MINOTAUR attacks MADELINE, who releases another arrow, which still has no effect, so she takes out her dagger and stabs the creature. The MINOTAUR falls dead.

MADELINE kneels down and touches where she stabbed the MINOTAUR. The EMPEROR WOLF enters, hovering above MADELINE, unable to be seen by her. Their scene freezes.

The SPHINX recognizes the WANDERING WOMAN's authority and withdraws her attack on SHASTA. She kneels down in front of SHASTA and looks him in the eyes. She then rises and, to SHASTA's bafflement, exits, following the WANDERING WOMAN.

SHASTA: *(To the SPHINX)* Why did you spare me?!

MADELINE: What are you?

(MADELINE recoils from the dead MINOTAUR. Both she and SHASTA start backing up until they are nearly back to back, full of fear in their separate moments of time. The EMPEROR WOLF touches MADELINE, which she reacts to, although still unable to see him. Both SHASTA and MADELINE exit. The EMPEROR WOLF smiles, looking after MADELINE, and exits. EBONY enters and sits beside a fire, with a wild, mystical looking staff that she lays across her lap. Enter SHASTA, who is slinking towards EBONY. He approaches her, entranced by the staff, attempting to take it.)

EBONY: I wouldn't try that, young man.

SHASTA: What?

EBONY: I said I wouldn't try that!

(In a swift movement, EBONY knocks down SHASTA and brings the staff down swiftly, stopping it just before it would have cracked his skull.)

SHASTA: I thought you were blind!

EBONY: I am.

SHASTA: It's the staff, I knew it! There's something special about it.

EBONY: And so you thought you would take it from me?

SHASTA: I—I don't know what I thought. I wasn't thinking. I think that was sort of the point. That staff—it called me. I think—I think it wanted me to take it.

EBONY: Is that how you excuse your thievery? The thing wanted to be stolen?

SHASTA: I—I really am sorry. I'm not usually a thief, I promise. I was raised differently than that.

EBONY: How we were raised may not matter anymore. I was raised differently, too, but this new world has made all of that irrelevant.

SHASTA: How did you get it?

EBONY: *(Good humouredly.)* I stole it.

SHASTA: Hypocrite!

EBONY: Yes, of course. This world has made us all thieves and hypocrites.

(Beat.)

The staff called out to me as well. I don't know how, but I could see it—certainly not how you see, not with my eyes. But with some sort of—third eye. It comes and goes, but it alerts me when I'm in danger—and allows me to “see” many beautiful things.

(Beat.)

But that still does not excuse stealing from a blind woman!

SHASTA: I'd feel more sorry for you if you hadn't given me so many bruises.

EBONY: I'd be happy to give you more.

SHASTA: Why does it seem like everyone here just wants to hurt each other?

(EBONY relaxes and feels around to help the boy up.)

EBONY: You say “here” as if you're not from “here.”

SHASTA: I'm not.

EBONY: From across the toxic desert? That's not possible, is it?

SHASTA: No. They're still as deadly as they were. We went around and through the mountains.

EBONY: Those are just as deadly.

SHASTA: As my group found out.

EBONY: Where were you trying to get to?

SHASTA: Missouri.

EBONY: They don't let strangers in there.

SHASTA: We weren't strangers. You could say my people are from there, long ago. But we— weren't able to get back.

EBONY: We? Are there others with you?

SHASTA: Not anymore.

EBONY: My daughter's coming. You'd better make yourself scarce.

*(SHASTA darts off, but rather than exiting, he hides and lingers to watch once he sees
MADELINE enter.)*

MADELINE: I'm back, Mama. Found some rabbit.

(À la Elmer Fudd.)

Be vewy, vewy quiet. I'm hunting wabbits. Heuh-heuh-heuh-heuh.

MADELINE: Mama, I still don't get that joke.

EBONY: *(Sighs)* We have lost our culture.

MADELINE: Your culture was never my culture.

EBONY: Very true. It was an old classic that my parents showed me. Not that I could actually "watch" it anymore, even if there were still televisions.

(MADELINE starts preparing the soup.)

MADELINE: I already skinned it and cut it up, so it should be ready soon.

EBONY: Stumble across any other game which you can follow up on later?

MADELINE: No! Get off my case about it.

(Abruptly)

Any trouble while I was gone?

EBONY: Not a bit.

MADELINE: I still wish you would let me take you with me.

EBONY: Oh, yes, I'm sure I'd be very helpful in hunting.

MADELINE: Don't know, I've seen you do some— weird things. Things you shouldn't be able to do. Ever since you found that staff a few months ago. I still don't know how you stumbled across it.

(Noting the fire.)

I keep telling you not to light those fires when I'm not here. It attracts thieves.

EBONY: Thieves are the least of our worries.

(In the direction of SHASTA.)

I can take care of thieves. What I'm concerned about is wolves.

MADELINE: There are no such things as wolves. Haven't been since before your day, if ever.

EBONY: I would hear them as a child. My father brought back a skin once, when they started encroaching on our property. That was before we moved to the city—before the city was abandoned to the gang lords, of course. But my father hung it right above the fireplace.

MADELINE: Mama, there are no wolves. Maybe you're remembering something you saw on your television thingy. You said it showed moving pictures...

EBONY: This is not the dream of a child! In my day we had wolves.

MADELINE: You're the one who told me they were just stories.

EBONY: So I did.

(Tense beat.)

About the Emperor Wolf. But not about the common wolves. Those have always been real.

MADELINE: The next thing you'll tell me is that the Emperor Wolf himself is...

EBONY: I don't want to talk about the Emperor Wolf.

MADELINE: What has gotten into you?

EBONY: I—I have been re-thinking things since we found the staff.

MADELINE: You've let your imagination get away with you since you found that freaky. . .

EBONY: I am not delusional.

MADELINE: I didn't say that.

EBONY: I've tried to protect you—help us to not live in fear—but maybe I have just made you as blind as I am.

MADELINE: You were right not to believe their stories, Mama. There are none of those things. There are no wolves, and there is especially no Emperor Wolf!

(SHASTA reveals himself.)

SHASTA: That's not true.

(MADELINE swiftly takes out an arrow, drawing it into her bow and pointing it directly at SHASTA.)

MADELINE: Get away from here!

SHASTA: I'm not afraid of your arrows.

EBONY: You should be.

SHASTA: I'm not afraid of her arrows because I have seen much scarier things and had things—dark things, surreal things—attack me which are much more deadly than her. You don't believe your mother? You should. After seeing what I have—especially the Emperor Wolf—I can no longer be scared of anything else.

EBONY: You've seen the Emperor Wolf?

MADELINE: He's just another storyteller!

SHASTA: The Emperor Wolf stands on his hind legs like a man. He has great big hands with fierce claws. He has a snout of razor sharp teeth. He has eyes that remind you of your own blood. There is nothing that has made me more scared in my whole life than the Emperor Wolf.

MADELINE: You're a liar.

SHASTA: You can think I'm a liar...

(SHASTA starts to approach MADELINE, until he is eventually staring directly in front at the arrow which she is pointing at his forehead.)

You can think I'm a thief. You can think I'm any number of things. But I'm not scared of your arrow, for I've seen the Emperor Wolf, I know that I know it, and I know I have seen the other creatures you think are myths. I have seen griffins, and the Sphinx, and monsters. They scare me. You don't scare me.

(MADELINE lowers her arrow, reluctantly impressed by SHASTA's boldness.)

MADELINE: I still think you're a liar.

EBONY: Come, share our meal with us.

MADELINE: Mama, no...

SHASTA: Thank you. I'm very hungry. But I didn't say that for the food.

(MADELINE goes back to preparing the soup with a pot. She pulls out a few bags of spices that are in her pack.)

Are those spices?

MADELINE: What if they are?

SHASTA: You know how rare those are? And you have big bags full! You could trade for so much with those.

MADELINE: We don't need to trade. We like the spices.

EBONY: Oh, yes, we do. Mmmm-hmmmm. I may be blind, but Madeline likes to indulge my other senses.

SHASTA: And you're sharing that soup with me? Spices and all?

MADELINE: Of course we are, you idiot. We can't exactly take the spices out of your part.

SHASTA: Well then, I have something to share as well then...

(SHASTA digs in his bag, from which he pulls out a potato.)

EBONY: What does he have?

MADELINE: He has a potato, Mama.

EBONY: A potato! I haven't had a potato for ages.

SHASTA: I actually have three potatoes, but I'm going to plant the other two soon and make more of them.

MADELINE: But you're sharing that one with us.

SHASTA: If you're feeding me soup with spices, I think that's only fair.

(MADELINE nods, taking the potato and starts cutting it up.)

MADELINE: Yes. Only fair.

EBONY: Thank you, young man.

SHASTA: No, thank you.

(Directed to MADELINE)

Both of you.

(MADELINE looks back, connecting with SHASTA momentarily, but then gruffly goes back to making the soup.)

EBONY: I'm Ebony. This is my daughter Madeline.

SHASTA: My name's Shasta.

EBONY: Shasta. That's a unique name.

SHASTA: It was the name of a character in a book that my father loved. He used read it to me when I was a child.

EBONY: Your father sounds like a good man.

SHASTA: He was. But he's gone now.

EBONY: I'm sorry. And your mother?

SHASTA: She's dead, too.

(MADELINE looks up from her cooking at SHASTA. Her hardened expressions are softening a little.)

MADELINE: So you're alone.

SHASTA: Not completely alone.

(SHASTA pulls out some books from his pack.)

MADELINE: What are those?

SHASTA: Well, they're books.

MADELINE: *(Feigning disinterest.)* So that is what books look like.

EBONY: Books? You really have books? And can you read them?

SHASTA: Yes, my mother taught me.

EBONY: You must value these very much.

SHASTA: Oh, yes. I've had people try to barter for them, but I won't give them up. Much like your spices.

EBONY: Which books are they?

SHASTA: I have more in my pack, but these ones are *The Horse and His Boy*—my father's favorite I was telling you about. *The Wizard of Oz*—as a little boy, I used to think that the tornado it talks about was the thing that changed our world. And this one is the *Doctrine and Covenants*. It is part of my parent's religion.

EBONY: Not yours?

SHASTA: I suppose so, but they always said I was more—independent.

(Beat.)

In any case, there aren't really many Churches to go to anymore, are there? Just us wanderers.

EBONY: Pilgrims. Pioneers. Prophets in the wilderness.

SHASTA: We used to have a lot more books, but those ones got destroyed in one of the great floods. It was soon after that when we saw the Emperor Wolf.

MADELINE: There is no Emperor Wolf! I'm sick of the lies.

SHASTA: I wish they *were* lies!

EBONY: Madeline, you need to apologize.

MADELINE: He's lying to us...

EBONY: We do not lightly call people liars.

MADELINE: *(Reluctantly.)* I'm sorry.

SHASTA: That's okay. But there is an Emperor Wolf.

MADELINE: Whatever.

(Another tense pause.)

EBONY: You said you have other books? Which ones?

SHASTA: There's one with a little man who finds a ring that made him invisible—and there is this part with a little monster who told riddles. And a dragon.

MADELINE: What, have you seen dragons, too?

SHASTA: Of course not. Dragons live in Europe.

EBONY: What other books?

SHASTA: There's one about a boy sent to meet an old woman who was angry about a man who didn't marry her, so she kept wearing the wedding dress until all old and yellow and she never took down the wedding cake, so it was eaten by rats. In the house there was a little girl the old woman took care of that the boy liked, but I could never tell whether she *really* liked him back. She was mean to him, but it seemed like she might actually like him. And there is one called a—a play. You're supposed to perform it in front of other people.

MADELINE: Well, that's silly.

SHASTA: I always thought it sounded kind of nice. The play was about a wizard who lived alone on an island with his daughter and there was a monster and a fairy and shipwrecks. . .

MADELINE: These sound like stupid stories. Totally pretend, nothing real.

SHASTA: They were real to me. Before the flood we even had more books! Including comic books, they had lots of pictures. My favorite was about mutants in a future where they were hunted by these big monster robots. But they got destroyed by the Purgers. There were lots of stories in those, but I only remember some of them. Bits and pieces, that was a long time ago now— things were bad, but we at

least had each other then.

(SHASTA has a hard time containing his emotions.)

MADELINE: Are you—are you *crying*?

EBONY: I would hope you shed some tears for me when I'm gone.

MADELINE: I will not *let* you be gone, Mama.

EBONY: I'm afraid, darling, that may not be a choice you can make.

MADELINE: We've got many years ahead of us.

EBONY: Tell me, Shasta, did you ever read the story about a young girl at a horrible school who could move things with her mind?

SHASTA: No, I haven't read that one.

EBONY: I loved that one as a little girl, when I could still see and read. I had almost forgotten it until just now.

MADELINE: Maybe it didn't matter.

EBONY: It did matter. The girl in that story loved books, too. And you ought to know, Madeline, that you also were named after a little girl in a book.

MADELINE: You—you never told me that.

EBONY: It was a lovely book. With pictures.

(MADELINE, now curious, takes one of the books and starts inspecting it, but can't make heads or tails of it.)

SHASTA: Hey! Be careful with that...

MADELINE: I don't see anything so special about them. Just a bunch of black stuff on white stuff...

SHASTA: Those markings are words.

MADELINE: I know that.

SHASTA: You can't read?

EBONY: I couldn't exactly teach her.

SHASTA: Did your dad die, too?

MADELINE: No, he's alive as far as we know. Wish he wasn't.

SHASTA: Don't say that.

MADELINE: He left us a long time ago. Dinner's ready.

(MADELINE pulls out bowls and utensils from her pack, pouring food in them. They all eat.)

SHASTA: Oh, thank you. It reminds me of something my mother used to make. She was a good cook, too. This is so—so savory.

MADLINE: You think so?

SHASTA: Oh, yes.

(MADLINE nods curtly, the best thing she can come up with for “You’re welcome.”)

MADLINE: Are you a good hunter?

SHASTA: Uh, sure, kinda. Well—not really.

EBONY: Never mind, Madeline will take care of that. But I’m sure that Madeline will be more at ease having you with me when she’s out and about.

MADLINE: What do you mean? Mother, he’s not coming with us.

SHASTA: She’s right. I travel by myself now.

EBONY: Not anymore you don’t.

SHASTA: No, really...

MADLINE: Mama, you can’t...

EBONY: I’m a stubborn old woman. Once I’ve decided something, Shasta, I won’t take no for an answer.

SHASTA: Oh, but...

EBONY: Just say yes.

SHASTA: Uh—okay, I suppose. But I don’t know for how long.

EBONY: As long as we’re useful to each other, I imagine. Can you read from those books to us?

MADLINE: Mother, you said useful.

EBONY: To a blind woman, a story is useful.

SHASTA: I would love to read to you—and it looks like we’ll still have enough light for at least a little while.

(SHASTA opens a book and reads from it.)

“This is the story of an adventure...”

(Blackout.)

end scene one

SCENE TWO

Their fire has gone out and EBONY, MADLINE, and SHASTA in their minds, appears.

EMPEROR WOLF: I swallow suns and moons. I eat souls. I take the light out of everything. Look into the

mirror children and you will see my face...

MADELINE: *(Still asleep.)* I'm nothing like you...

EMPEROR WOLF: The devourer in every reflection...

SHASTA: *(Also still asleep.)* No, no, we got away...

EMPEROR WOLF: I feed on your black thoughts. I feed on your dark hearts. I feed on you!

EBONY: *(Awaking and lifting her staff, which suddenly flashes.)* Leave the children alone!
(The EMPEROR WOLF disappears in the flash. SHASTA and MADELINE still stir fitfully in their sleep.)

Madeline—Shasta—wake up!

(MADELINE and SHASTA awake.)

SHASTA: That was so real...

EBONY: It was real.

MADELINE: What are you both talking about?

EBONY: You know what we are talking about, Madeline.

MADELINE: We were all talking about the Emperor Wolf. The conversation could have easily influenced all of us...

SHASTA: See, you did experience it! You know!

MADELINE: I—I don't know what I know, but that couldn't have been...

SHASTA: People don't simply have mutual dreams.

MADELINE: I don't pretend to understand it—but what you're both implying doesn't make sense—it just doesn't make sense!

SHASTA: The Emperor Wolf has our scent now.

MADELINE: Scent? It was a dream!

SHASTA: He smells our souls.

MADELINE: Ridiculous.

SHASTA: Madeline, this has happened to me before. This is how I lost my father.

MADELINE: The Emperor Wolf isn't real, you lunatic!

SHASTA: No, no, you hear me now, you're ignorant!

MADELINE: What did you call me?

SHASTA: I'm no genius, but I know what I have seen, I know what I have experienced!

MADELINE: Don't you dare talk to me like that— don't you dare! You stand there with imaginary stories that pretend the world is something it isn't and then you try to make me believe fairy tales because of dreams we had—dreams! If I'm ignorant, well, then you're stark crazy! A kid who makes things up to

make sense out of the horrible things in his life. The rest of us deal with what is real.

EBONY: Stop it. Both of you.

MADLINE: But, Mama...

EBONY: Look, Maddy, I'm the one who taught you to be the skeptic—for good reason. I'm proud of you. I'm proud of your mind.

MADLINE: Thank you, Mama...

EBONY: But he's right. There are things—there are things that I have never had the courage to explain. I wanted to protect my little girl from the monsters in the night.

MADLINE: Mama?

EBONY: After your father left, I just took to escaping, hiding us—hoping that the demons would pass us over. But they have found us again.

MADLINE: Mama, you don't have to...

EBONY: Once the whole world collapsed and we were all left to fend for ourselves, the stories started coming—to life.

SHASTA: Let's get out of here. My parents were taking me to a colony in Missouri. My people were traveling there. It's supposed to be safe there. Maybe we can...

EBONY: Nowhere is safe. Maddy, you were too young to remember, but your father followed that thing. He is a servant of the Wolf. That is why he really left us.

MADLINE: What? No, you said that he was a horrible person who abandoned us...

EBONY: He was a very good man—once. I certainly can be and will be! Tanner—he taught me to rely on myself and not on him. When he left—he prepared me for that moment.

MADLINE: There is no excuse for what he did.

EBONY: You don't understand. When I met him, he didn't see...

(Motioning to her eyes)

...this. He wasn't like that. He tried to make me feel good about myself, like you do. It's one of the reasons I loved him and why I find so much of him in you.

MADLINE: I am nothing like him.

EBONY: Before I met him, I was the—haunted one. Sometimes I wonder if I was the Emperor Wolf's first target. I had been having such nightmares...

MADLINE: What do you mean?

EBONY: I have wondered if he took on the burden. Whether he offered himself in exchange... The day he left, the Emperor Wolf was there.

MADLINE: Father lied to us!

EBONY: That is what I used to tell you. But I heard things. I felt things when he left. I've never told you,

but I was awake when he left. He and I spoke—he did not sound like himself. Then I heard the Wolf. The sounds were—unearthly. The growls and the sounds—the howl—none of it was human.

MADLINE: Mama, you've been deceived.

EBONY: I—I felt its breath. Its hot, nasty breath. He rasped out with a voice that I still hear sometimes...

MADLINE: Mama, stop! Please, stop!

EBONY: You think I'm crazy, darling? Maybe so. But my senses told me I experienced something I've never been able to voice you.

MADLINE: That's not true.

EBONY: That soulless wolf took him from us!

MADLINE: No, no, no, no, no. No!

EBONY: Maddy...

MADLINE: Mama, this is cruel. This isn't hope you're giving me, this isn't kindness wrapped in a lie—this is cruelty.

EBONY: The other story was the lie, to protect you. Now I'm telling you the truth.

MADLINE: We're packed. If we're gonna go, let's go. I just don't want to hear another word about...

EBONY: Shasta, have you been to the Forests of Whispers?

SHASTA: That's direction I just came from. But ...

EBONY: Can you lead us there?

SHASTA: No! Why on earth would you want to go there? It's very dangerous.

EBONY: We need to see her.

SHASTA: No! Please—she kills people. Eats them.

EBONY: Only if they can't answer her riddles.

SHASTA: From what I understand, They're kind of hard riddles.

MADLINE: Mama, he's lying. If he had seen the Sphinx, why is he still alive? Are you going to tell us that you answered this fairy tale's riddles?

SHASTA: No, of course not. I ran.

MADLINE: And skinny you, scrawny you were so fast that you escaped?

SHASTA: I don't know why—why I survived. Why she spared me.

EBONY: Spared you?

SHASTA: But the rest of my people—that's how my parents died. How my family and friends all died.

EBONY: Nevertheless, that is where we are going.

SHASTA: But why?

EBONY: If you answer her riddle, the Sphinx can give you knowledge. I want to know how to kill the Emperor Wolf.

MADLINE: Mama, we are not going to...

EBONY: Am I or am I not still your mother?

MADLINE: Am I or am I not the one that keeps us alive?

EBONY: I'm done hiding. Shasta, bring us back to the Forest of Whispers.

SHASTA: There was a reason I ran.

EBONY: I know. But maybe these monsters are as scared as we are. We just have to show a little courage.

MADLINE: Mama, please, we've been safe.

(A light appears from the staff and points in a certain direction.)

EBONY: Is that the direction you came from, Shasta?

SHASTA: Uhm, yes, actually.

EBONY: That's the direction we're going then.

SHASTA: Mama, it's pointless to...

EBONY: Don't be scared, Maddy. Now hold my hand. Lead the way, Shasta.

(Exit SHASTA, EBONY, and MADLINE.)

end scene two

SCENE THREE

The SPHINX flies down, or leaps onto to her perch. TANNER enters, a sword in his hand. The sphinx looks down on him casually.

SPHINX: You have come again, have you?

TANNER: I come as many times as my master bids me.

SPHINX: It is only because of your master that you are still alive.

TANNER: I don't care who dies. You or me. It's all the same now.

SPHINX: I became an Eternal One long ago. You cannot kill me.

(TANNER lifts up his sword and lunges for the SPHINX, who easily dodges him. TANNER attacks again, and after the SPHINX dodges him this time, she claws his back. He withdraws, injured and in pain.)

Tell the Wolf that next time I will kill you.

TANNER: I am just a shell to him. He would just send another.

SPHINX: And I can kill another. I do need the nourishment. But this war between him and I needs to cease. Our kind should not be engaged in such things. You humans have proven where that leads.

TANNER: My Master is very pleased with what has happened to us humans.

SPHINX: I'm sure he is, since he is at the root of it. His howl that alerted us to the tear in this world disturbed us from our sleep and brought us to feast on the carnage he served. But some of us grew dissatisfied with his table. Are you pleased with this new world, mortal?

TANNER: I had my opinions driven from me long ago.

SPHINX: Your vacant eyes may tell that tale. But is your heart so vacant?

TANNER: My heart no longer exists.

SPHINX: Then I pity you all the more. Farewell, mortal, and good journeys. Come to me again and I will eat you.

(The SPHINX is about to regain her perch when she sniffs in the air, catching a scent. She takes a prepped, combative position. tanner goes to exit, but upon hearing people walking near, hides. Enter EBONY, MADELINE, and SHASTA. MADELINE draws an arrow.)

MADELINE: Mother, Shasta, get behind me!

SPHINX: Your weapons can't hurt me, little girl. You may as well save your arrows.

SHASTA: She's right, Madeline. I saw those who died use all sorts of weapons against her. Nothing worked.

SPHINX: I spared you once, Shasta. You almost tempt me too far to come when I am even more hungry.

SHASTA: How do you know my name?

SPHINX: I know all of your names. Have you come to pass into another sphere, Ebony? Have you come to die, Madeline? It's almost your time. But you, Shasta, you can escape that fate, become a lone wanderer, if you...

MADELINE: I—I don't know what you are, but...

SPHINX: What I am! You are right, you don't know what I am. I am beyond you, I am above you. I see into your soul clearly, but my soul is opaque to you. I repeat, have you come to die?

SHASTA: We have come to answer a riddle! That is what I say, right?

SPHINX: You are right. Nothing fancy, just the challenge. Who is your representative?

EBONY: I am.

MADELINE: Mama, no!

EBONY: If I die, then you two are to go on, to run from the Emperor Wolf the best you can. I don't know what to do after this...

MADELINE: Let me do it, let me...

EBONY: I am the representative! Do you heed me, Sphinx?

SPHINX: I heed you and I respect your challenge. But if you answer incorrectly you all die.

EBONY: No, the children must be spared, you can have me.

SPHINX: That is not how this works. And they are no longer children. They have come on a journey that is older than time.

EBONY: Children, if I answer wrong, you need to run. You need to...

SPHINX: Are you ready for the riddle, mortal? If you need a moment...

EBONY: Just ask it.

SPHINX: Very well. In a box lies an important gift. It can be shared or it can be locked away. But either way it is how the world will know you. What is it?

SHASTA: Can we help her?

SPHINX: She is your representative—the burden belongs to her, but if she wants your help, that is her choice. It is her answer that matters. But, be careful, you may lead her astray more than you help her. Once she gives her answer, she can't un-give it.

SHASTA: She said it will be how the world knows us—clothing perhaps? The world judges on the outside appearance...

EBONY: I never have.

MADELINE: Anyway, she said it could be locked away or shared...

SHASTA: You can lock away or share clothes ...

MADELINE: But then it's not how you're known, if you give them away, it's how someone else is known.

SHASTA: I don't see you coming up with anything!

MADELINE: I'm thinking!

EBONY: Shhh—let me concentrate.

(There is a long silence as ebony listens to her thoughts and tries to calmly work this out in her mind.)

You said it was in a box...

SPHINX: Be careful how you proceed with this. You can't un-give your...

EBONY: A voice. A voice is in a voice box. It can be shared or locked away. And that is how at least I know people. Am I right?

SPHINX: *(Beat.)* You have shown wisdom and unique perspective, Ebony, and seen where others could not see. A voice is the right answer. Forevermore, I will not eat you.

MADELINE: Mama—Mama, you did it!

SHASTA: Yes, yes, yes!

SPHINX: You have now all inherited her prize. What knowledge do you seek?

EBONY: We want to know how to kill the Emperor Wolf.

SPHINX: I cannot tell you how to kill the Emperor Wolf.

MADELINE: Wait, no, we had a deal...

SHASTA: Yeah, you're supposed to be fountain of all knowledge.

SPHINX: It is like asking me how to make the sun set in the east. I cannot tell you something that is not possible. The Emperor Wolf is an immortal being.

MADELINE: Then we have risked our lives for nothing!

SHASTA: Wait, wait, we have to—we have to think of another option.

MADELINE: Didn't you hear her? There is no other option!

EBONY: I'm sorry. I thought she could help us...

SHASTA: Wait, wait! There is always another option, there's always another way of thinking of something. We need to imagine another way!

MADELINE: Not all stories have the happy endings of your blasted books!

SHASTA: Not all books have happy endings! But some of them have smart characters. If we give up that easily, then you're right. There won't be any endings worth having. Let me think. Give me time.

SPHINX: You may ask something else of me.

SHASTA: If we can't kill the Emperor Wolf, can we— can we bind him somehow? Imprison him or banish him?

SPHINX: Yes. Yes, that is possible. That is how your world was protected from him before.

EBONY: Good work, Shasta! Please, majestic Sphinx, tell us how to bind the Emperor Wolf.

SPHINX: First you must capture a griffin...

MADELINE: A griffin!

SHASTA: Let me guess, you don't believe in griffins?

MADELINE: No, I think I can believe in anything now. It's just that a griffin sounds hard to catch.

SPHINX: Once you have captured a griffin, it will take you to the Wandering Woman. Obtain from her the braid of her hair. It is with that braid that you can bind the wolf. But first you must learn the value of the braid and how to use it. Seek Wisdom, may She bless you. Farewell.

(SHASTA and MADELINE go to leave, but EBONY lingers by the SPHINX for a moment. They speak privately.)

EBONY: Thank you. Thank you so much for helping us.

SPHINX: You were the one who helped your children.

EBONY: Oh, she's my daughter, but Shasta is not my son.

SPHINX: Isn't he? Who else does he have?

EBONY: Why do you care? You were about to devour us a moment ago.

SPHINX: The survivors become my children, under my protection.

EBONY: I hope you are a good mother.

SPHINX: Not a good one, no. But a fierce one. I hear my children. I hope you can hear yours.

(EBONY listens to both SHASTA and MADELINE, who are chatting happily. MADELINE laughs.)

EBONY: I believe I can now. It's been a long time since I have heard her laugh. She pretends to not like the boy, but...

SPHINX: Be off on your journey now.

EBONY: But the Griffin, how do we find... ?

SPHINX: Shasta knows the way.

EBONY: *(Turning back to SHASTA and MADELINE.)* Shasta, she says you know the way to the Griffins.

SHASTA: I tried very hard to get away from those places, you know.

(Sighs.)

We'll follow the Northern Path nearly to its end. They live in that region of country. But they're big and strong and they can fly. I don't know how we're going to capture one.

MADELINE: Leave that to me.

(Exit the SPHINX, MADELINE, EBONY, and SHASTA. TANNER re-emerges, following them off.)

end scene three

SCENE FOUR

Enter SHASTA, MADELINE, and EBONY.

SHASTA: It's not far now. We've made really good time. If we hurry we can...

EBONY: Wait, wait. I'm very tired, can we... ?

MADELINE: Mama, are you all right?

EBONY: Just the normal aches and pains. I'm not young anymore, Maddy.

MADELINE: Of course not. We need to stop, Shasta.

SHASTA: Okay. Sure. It is going to get dark soon, though...

MADELINE: Then we'll set up camp.

SHASTA: But we're almost...

MADLINE: We'll set up camp.

SHASTA: Okay.

(SHASTA and MADLINE start setting up camp, while EBONY rests. There is a long pause. MADLINE is definitely bothered by something.)

That was the most you've spoken since the Sphinx. Is everything all right?

MADLINE: Yeah, I'm fine.

SHASTA: I mean I would understand if you're a bit rattled. The Sphinx is scary...

MADLINE: I said I'm fine!

(Another pause.)

It's that what we're doing is dangerous.

SHASTA: It's okay to be scared.

MADLINE: I'm not scared—not scared for me, at least.

(They both look to ebony, who has already fallen asleep.)

I don't ever care what happens to me.

SHASTA: You love her a lot.

MADLINE: She's the only one I love.

SHASTA: I can understand that.

MADLINE: I'm not sure if you can. You don't know what it's like to take care of someone.

SHASTA: What are you implying?

MADLINE: Nothing.

SHASTA: I know you don't like me. But you don't have to be cruel.

MADLINE: If you don't like it, just leave then.

SHASTA: *(Looking again at ebony.)* I care about her, too, you know.

MADLINE: You don't even know her.

SHASTA: Not like you, sure. But she was willing to die for us. I think that makes the quality of her soul pretty evident.

MADLINE: Keep that kind of talk to yourself. I'm not pulled in by your stories.

SHASTA: Why are you so intent on not liking me?

MADLINE: What's there to like? You're all hot air and useless dreams.

SHASTA: You think I'm an intruder. Right? Horned in on your life and you would like nothing better than to drive me out of here.

MADLINE: That's right! So why don't you just go?

SHASTA: Because we need each other.

MADELINE: Maybe you need us. But we don't need you.

(SHASTA doesn't move.)

I said get out of here!

SHASTA: Why are you afraid of what I have to offer?

MADELINE: I said that I'm not afraid! Get out!

(SHASTA is determined to stay.)

Selfish brat.

SHASTA: I'm selfish? You can't think of anyone besides you and Ebony. It's like the rest of the world doesn't exist to you! Like we don't matter!

MADELINE: Didn't you hear me? You don't matter. You're all just a set of distant stories, nothing to do with us. We don't need you!

SHASTA: You don't? Because, you know, I was right about the Sphinx, wasn't I? And I'm the one who is leading you to the Griffins, aren't I?

MADELINE: I didn't even want to go to the Sphinx or the Griffins! What's the point of trying to defeat the Wolf, if we're going to be killed in trying to get it done? What would that accomplish? This is pointless!

SHASTA: But I was right, wasn't I? And you were wrong. And that's what irks you most. You didn't even know things like this existed, and you're too proud to face how ignorant you are!

(MADELINE punches SHASTA.)

Oh, is that how you argue your point? How eloquent!

(MADELINE punches SHASTA again.)

Are you tough now? Are you right now?

(MADELINE punches SHASTA again.)

Punch me all you want, Madeline! Beat me 'til I'm bloody and broken! It still won't change a thing.

(MADELINE goes to punch SHASTA again, but then stops short and just pounds on his chest and he grapples with her.)

MADELINE: Please, go—please, please, don't do this to us...

SHASTA: I'm not doing anything to you.

MADELINE: We were fine by ourselves—we were doing just fine...

SHASTA: You weren't doing just fine and neither was I.

MADELINE: You don't care about us—not really ...

SHASTA: That's not true. But you obviously don't care about me.

MADELINE: That's not true, either.

SHASTA: It isn't?

MADELINE: But you're just with us to help yourself.

SHASTA: I won't leave you like he did.

(They are still locked in each other's grip, but now it is more like they are holding onto each other for dear life. Then, it appears as if they might kiss. EBONY's voice pipes up from her "sleeping" place.)

EBONY: Go to bed, kids.

MADELINE: Mama! How long have you been... ?

EBONY: Go to bed.

(They both bolt to their sleeping areas and get under their blankets. Pause. MADELINE's head rises up, looking over at SHASTA, whose head then rises, too, matching her gaze. They just look at each other for a while and then smile. Lights dim.)

end scene four

SCENE FIVE

Lighting indicates a passage of time. EBONY, MADELINE, and SHASTA are all still asleep. TANNER enters. Stealthily, TANNER moves to EBONY and then just lingers above her for a moment. TANNER then swiftly covers her mouth and drags EBONY a ways off as EBONY struggles.

TANNER: Quiet. Please. I'm not here to hurt you.

(EBONY calms down. TANNER uncovers her mouth.)

EBONY: Tanner?

TANNER: I can't stay long. My Master wants you.

EBONY: *(Backing away.)* Then he'll have to fight for me.

TANNER: I-I'm not going to take you to him.

EBONY: You don't know what you'll do.

(The EMPEROR WOLF appears, dream-like.)

TANNER: I—I'm trying to change.

EBONY: Then change. But you can't change with us. Too much has happened. Find a new life.

TANNER: I still ache for you. I miss you two so much.

EBONY: And there's not a day that I don't miss you. But we can't help you anymore—we all have to keep moving.

TANNER: Let me back in. Please.

EBONY: That's a risk I can't take.

(TANNER suddenly yells out in grief, which wakes up MADELINE and SHASTA.)

MADELINE: What's happening?

EMPEROR WOLF: You can't hide from me, Tanner. You can't fight me. I found their scent again.

EBONY: Stay there, Maddy.

TANNER: Filthy beast, stay away from them!

MADELINE: Get away from her!

SHASTA: Madeline!

(In a swift moment MADELINE picks up her bow and an arrow out of her quiver and draws it, pointing it directly at TANNER.)

EBONY: No, Madeline, don't!

EMPEROR WOLF: You can't go back. They won't let you.

TANNER: Maddy, it's me. I'm your dad.

MADELINE: I know who you are.

TANNER: I am—you are...

EMPEROR WOLF and TANNER: You are forever mine.

(A sudden blast of dark lights, sound and smoke emerge from around TANNER and the light is overcome, causing a blackout. There is the sound of the bow firing its arrow and a surprising howl. The lights come on to reveal that TANNER is gone, with the EMPEROR WOLF—no longer dream-like—in his place. There is an arrow protruding from its shoulder.)

EBONY: Maddy, Shasta—run!

MADELINE: Shasta, help me save her!

SHASTA: Right with you, Maddy!

(SHASTA takes EBONY'S staff which is near him and MADELINE takes out her dagger. In an act of foolhardy bravery they attack the EMPEROR WOLF head on.)

EBONY: No—no!

(EBONY tries to grope forward as the battle between the EMPEROR WOLF and the two TEENAGERS rages. Neither MADELINE nor SHASTA are pushovers and they both fight with desperate ferocity. SHASTA, however, is taken down first, knocked unconscious. EBONY has made her way to SHASTA and picks up the staff.)

MADELINE: Shasta!

EMPEROR WOLF: I have wanted your mind for a long time, Madeline, ever since I smelled its alluring flavor years ago.

EBONY: You won't have it!

PERUSAL SCRIPT — **EMPEROR WOLF** by Mahonri Stewart

(EBONY has found her staff. She lunges forward to where she heard the EMPEROR WOLF and strikes him with the staff. There is tremendous light and sound, as something supernatural happens.)

EMPEROR WOLF: Where did you get that? Stop it— stop it!

EBONY: You think you're the only one with power? Think you're the only one with abilities?

MADLINE: Mama, no, stop it, get away...

EBONY: Don't be scared, Maddy. I will protect you.

MADLINE: Don't you dare...

EBONY: Don't forget Shasta—he has no one else. We're all family now.

MADLINE: Mama, Mama, please...

EBONY: I love you.

(There is a brilliant flash of light and immense sound. Then there is darkness and silence.)

end scene five

scenes six through ten comprise 24 more pages