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325 W. 38th Street, Suite 305
New York, NY 10018

Phone: 1-866-NEW-PLAY (639-7529)
Email: info@playscripts.com
Web: www.playscripts.com

For my Mom-- who shines for me now and forever

Cast of Characters

MAGDA, a child

MOTHER, her mother

RONALDO, a child

THERESA, a child

KRISTINA, a child

PETERKIN, a child

SHETTLE, a peasant

PEASANTS

A BEGGAR WOMAN

LORD MARKUS

FREDERICK, the head man

RODRIGO, the lead player

TOOT, a player who speaks to the birds with his pipe

GWENDOLYNE, a simple player who speaks to animals

APPLE, a deaf player who knows what is true

STEPHEN, a blind player who sees the future

A FLOCK OF BIRDS

WOLF

DEER

SHE OF THE MOON

AN ANGRY PEASANT MAN

AN ANGRY PEASANT WOMAN

A MILD PEASANT

Place

December, Europe, 1585

Scene 1: Just before dawn in a small village

Scene 2: The forest, a bit later

Scene 3: Traveling east

Scene 4: The home of She of the Moon

Scene 5: Traveling west

Scene 6: The performance

Production Notes

The three animals should be presented in a modified Bunraku Puppetry style. That is, each animal should be animated by one puppeteer who is dressed all in black so as to not draw attention to him/herself. The animals should be large enough to be easily seen by the audience and should be very articulated so that they can have as much movement as possible. The birds should be presented as one flock made up of several individual birds. The deer is mute, the wolf's growl and the birds' chirps should be vocalized by the puppeteers, the birds being done with the help of a whistle or call in the puppeteer's mouth.

In regard to Apple's deafness, casts should feel free to learn as much American Sign Language as they are comfortable with or to make up their own sign language in order to communicate clearly with her.

Acknowledgments

Season of Light was originally produced by the Chatham Middle School Drama Club on Cape Cod, Massachusetts on December 21, 2005. It was directed by Karen McPherson and stage managed by Ashley Shaffer.

MAGDA	Erin Bremser
MOTHER.....	Kelsey Morse
RENALDA	Allie Jason
THERESA	Olivia Malone
KRISTINA	Amanda Malone
PETRA	Lyndsi Forgeron
SHETTLE.....	Brittany Langlois
MARKUS.....	Kyle Forgeron
FREDERICK.....	Damien Chandler
BEGGAR WOMAN.....	Holland Helbling
RODRIGO	Damien Chandler
BIRDS.....	Lyndsi Forgeron
WOLF.....	Olivia Malone
DEER.....	Amanda Malone
TOOT	Laura Wanamaker
STEPHEN	Daniel Enriquez
APPLE.....	Ella Shaffer
GWENDOLYNE.....	Sydney Whitcomb
SHE OF THE MOON.....	Lillian Kaar

SEASON OF LIGHT

A WINTER FAIRY TALE

by Steph DeFerie

Scene 1

(The town square of a small European village in 1585, just before sunrise on a December morning. It is decorated for a celebration.)

(Enter MAGDA, a girl, followed by her MOTHER. MAGDA is in a colorful costume while MOTHER wears ordinary peasant clothes.)

MAGDA. *(Running on:)* Once upon a time, there was a girl who was so happy that she turned into a bird and flew away!

MOTHER. Marishka, hold still a moment and let me brush your hair! Where is your cloak? You will be so cold, you will not be able to speak your part, your teeth will be chattering so.

(MOTHER catches MAGDA but she twirls away, enjoying her costume.)

MAGDA. Is this not the most beautiful dress you've ever seen? You are the most talented mother in the whole world to make it for me!

MOTHER. Thank our Lord Markus for buying the material. I could never afford so costly a fabric.

MAGDA. But you have made it sing! I cannot cover such a wonder with a drab, old cloak! Besides, I don't even feel the cold. The Sister of the Sun is always warm.

(MOTHER crosses to her again.)

MOTHER. Will you let me comb your hair? You want it to look nice for the Solstice now, don't you?

MAGDA. Not just nice, better than it ever has before!

(MAGDA pulls away again.)

MAGDA. Should it be swept of snow again, do you think? I don't want to slip and fall.

MOTHER. My little Magda, it is fine. Everyone has worked very hard to get ready.

MAGDA. It's like a dream. From the moment they called my name at the Choosing until now, I've been so afraid that I would wake up and it would not be true - I would come here today and find that I had not been named or that I had overslept and missed my chance. But it's real! It's really real!

MOTHER. (*Catching her again:*) If you do not stay still, I shall pinch you so you can be sure.

MAGDA. I couldn't sleep at all last night, I was so excited!

MOTHER. You certainly surprised the roosters this morning—no one has ever woken *them* up before.

MAGDA. I want today to last forever!

MOTHER. At least it will last longer than yesterday, even if only a minute or two. When the Winter Solstice is finally here, I feel a great weight lifted from my soul. Just the thought that the sun comes up a little earlier and lasts a little longer makes my heart lighter.

MAGDA. (*Kicking the ground:*) It still feels like Winter—cold and wet and frozen.

MOTHER. There are storms to endure yet, that is true, but the earth is beginning to wake up. We are through going down into the dark. Now, we begin to rise up toward the light again.

MAGDA. (*Pulling away again:*) And I am that light! The Sister of the Sun!

MOTHER. The real Sister could not be more beautiful. Or more infuriating! Come back to the house now so I can put your crown on properly.

MAGDA. I can't go home again now that I am here!

MOTHER. Very well, then. Stay and I will bring it to you. But mind you do not run about and soil your dress.

MAGDA. I promise!

(MOTHER exits. MAGDA crosses to where the “ceremony” will be staged.)

MAGDA. (*Rehearsing:*) Open your eyes, my people, I have not forgotten you. You must rest, the land must rest, the sun must rest so, too.

(*Enter some VILLAGERS—men, women and children. Some are dressed in bright costumes. A BEGGAR WOMAN is among them. She moves through the crowd begging and is given coins by several of the VILLAGERS.*)

(*The CHILDREN run to MAGDA.*)

RONALDO. Magda, are you ready? Do you know your part?

THERESA. Look at your dress! It is the most beautiful thing!

KRISTINA. But where is your crown of light?

MAGDA. Mother is getting it. She spent all Solstice Eve working on it. Wait until you see!

PETERKIN. You will not forget anything, will you? You can remember every word?

KRISTINA. Of course she can! She is the best in lessons. She is not like you with an empty head, Peterkin.

PETERKIN. Anyone can forget things when they are nervous.

THERESA. What is there to be nervous about? We have practiced over and over again so many times, even you must know every bit of it in your sleep!

MAGDA. I know it so well, I could do it backwards.

RONALDO. Magda, no! You must do it the right way! It must go perfectly or the winter will never end!

MAGDA. That is just a story the grandmothers tell to frighten us.

PETERKIN. No, it's true. One mistake and we'll never see the Spring!

MAGDA. Silly! I am not the real Sister of the Sun! I am just pretending to be her. The sun will not care if I make a mistake or not.

RONALDO. But perhaps the real Sister is watching. If she is not happy with your performance, she may not call the sun to return.

KRISTINA. Imagine if it were winter always, dark and cold forever and ever and ever!

THERESA. There would be no more food and the animals would die...

PETERKIN. The wolves would come down into the village and sneak into your bedroom and eat you up!

(PETERKIN and RONALDO pounce on THERESA and KRISTINA. Their screams draw the attention of a woman, SHETTLE, who crosses to the children.)

SHETTLE. Children, please! We have worked so hard for this. Don't ruin your beautiful costumes before the village can appreciate them. You must all concentrate on your parts now. No more playing until after the ceremony. Go to your places and think about what you will do. And don't be nervous!

(The CHILDREN cross away.)

SHETTLE. Marishka. Stay a moment. Are you ready?

MAGDA. Yes, Shettle. I cannot wait!

SHETTLE. You will do a fine job, I know. But where is your crown?!

MAGDA. Don't worry—Mother is bringing it.

SHETTLE. You remember everything I've taught you?

MAGDA. Everything.

SHETTLE. You're not nervous, are you?

MAGDA. No, why should I be?

SHETTLE. You shouldn't! There is no reason to be nervous. It's so silly—every year I am nervous and every year everything goes along fine and the sun comes up exactly when it should.

MAGDA. You are nervous?!

SHETTLE. No! Are you nervous?!

MAGDA. I wasn't until you said you were!

SHETTLE. Now you are making me nervous!

MAGDA. But you said you weren't nervous!

SHETTLE. I wasn't before but now I think I am!

MAGDA. Now you're making me more nervous!

SHETTLE. Don't be nervous!! *(Seeing MAGDA smile, with mock anger:)* Oh, you are wicked to tease me like that!

MAGDA. But you're not nervous any more, are you?

SHETTLE. *(Surprised:)* No, I'm not. I was never nervous about you, anyway. Some of the others I am a little worried about but you, I have no doubts about you. *(With a sigh:)* It's the same thing every year. I do not know why I offer to be in charge.

MAGDA. Because you make the ceremony the best.

SHETTLE. Do you think so? It's kind of you to say but I suppose the sun will come up whether I direct you all or not.

MAGDA. You really think so?

SHETTLE. No. I'd rather not take the chance. Oh, dear. Now I'm nervous again.

MAGDA. *(Trying to distract her:)* Is Lord Markus coming?

SHETTLE. Of course, he would not miss it. *(More nervous:)* Oh, dear. Lord Markus... This is silly. It's not as if *I* were playing the Sister...

MAGDA. But you did once. I'll bet you were wonderful!

SHETTLE. I was. Of course, I was a little nervous before I started but once I began, I was fine. It is such a great honor, you know, but also a great responsibility. Think down through all the years, all the girls in all the villages representing the Sister of the Sun. They were probably all a little nervous.

MAGDA. My mother played the Sister once.

SHETTLE. I'm sure she was very good. Not nervous a bit. But the year after me, or maybe it was the year before, the girl was very nervous. Was it Treena? Or Babka? Oh, she was so nervous.

MAGDA. But she got through it, didn't she? And the sun came up earlier than the day before?

SHETTLE. Oh, yes. No one has ever been so nervous that the Sister has taken offence and allowed the nights to keep growing longer.

MAGDA. So we shouldn't worry.

SHETTLE. We shouldn't worry at all.

(Enter MOTHER. She carries a head-piece with ribbons and a small bundle. She crosses to MAGDA and SHETTLE behind SHETTLE.)

MOTHER. *(Coming up behind SHETTLE:)* Happy Solstice, Shettle.

(SHETTLE jumps and screams.)

MOTHER. I'm sorry! I forgot how nervous you become this day.

SHETTLE. I am not nervous!

MOTHER. *(Giving the bundle to MAGDA:)* I've brought you a bit of bread and cheese for your breakfast. The Sister of the Sun should not suffer her stomach to rumble during the ceremony.

MAGDA. *(Stuffing the bundle into her pocket:)* I'm too excited to eat!

SHETTLE. But you're not nervous...?

MOTHER. *(Finding a distraction:)* Shettle, what are those children doing?

SHETTLE. *(Looking:)* Ronaldo! Stop throwing those dirt clods!

(SHETTLE crosses to the CHILDREN.)

MOTHER. That will keep her busy. Poor Shettle. Every year she is the same. Some day she will explode from nervousness and fly into bits! Now hold still or this will look all wrong.

(MOTHER puts the head-piece on MAGDA's head.)

MAGDA. I wish it was the same one you wore.

MOTHER. So do I. But you know that was lost when our village was attacked. My beautiful home by the sea, all gone... There now, let me look. *(She turns MAGDA to face her:)* Hmm, I'm still not sure about those ribbons...

MAGDA. And Father saw you in it and fell in love with you at that very instant.

MOTHER. He would be very proud of you today.

MAGDA. I wish he were here!

MOTHER. Do you still remember him?

MAGDA. Oh, yes. I can still see him and hear his laugh. I even have the little silver ring he gave me.

(She takes out a ring on a chain around her neck and looks at it.)

MOTHER. But you were so young when he disappeared.

MAGDA. Do you think he will ever come back to us?

MOTHER. Once I was sure he would but now it has been so long... I'm afraid I have lost hope.

MAGDA. But if he wasn't found among the dead after the invaders left...

MOTHER. That was what kept me going for so long. If we could not find his body, he must still be alive somewhere and he would surely do everything he could to come back to us again. Even as the days passed and he did not return and the others left for new villages, I did not lose hope. Even when winter came and we could not stay any longer by ourselves in the ruins and we came here, I still refused to think of myself as a widow. But each long winter has sapped a bit more of my faith and now I look forward, not back.

MAGDA. But he might have been injured! He might still be trying to get back to us right now!

MOTHER. *(With a smile:)* He might. That is what the Solstice reminds us, is it not? We must keep hope alive no matter how dark the winter becomes? That which seems lost may be found again? *(With one last adjustment:)* There! Perfect! Now, remember all that

Shettle and I have taught you. You must not just say the words, you must...

MOTHER / MAGDA ...believe them with all your heart.

MAGDA. I know. But this is just play-acting.

MOTHER. The Sister will know what is in your heart, if you are pretending or if you truly believe. That is what makes a good...

MAGDA. Look, here comes Lord Markus!

(Enter LORD MARKUS dressed in fine clothes. The village head man, FREDERICK, follows him carrying a large clock which is showing the time as 6:59. The VILLAGERS stop talking and turn to MARKUS, showing respect.)

MARKUS. Good people! I am always happy to join you for the celebration of the lengthening of days.

VILLAGERS. Good day to you, Lord Markus. (etc.)

MARKUS. *(To FREDERICK.)* Be gentle with my clock. I have been very careful taking measurements and have set it quite accurately. Sunrise is at 7:02. We have only a few minutes.

FREDERICK. Yes, my Lord.

MARKUS. Frederick tells me that things are mostly well here in the village. Where is the fellow whose house was destroyed by fire?

FREDERICK. Joachim, come forward.

(A MAN comes forward. MARKUS gives him a coin.)

MARKUS. For your loss. And where is the woman whose cow sickened and died?

FREDERICK. Leticia, come forward.

(A WOMAN comes forward and receives a coin.)

MARKUS. So you might buy a new one. It has been a bountiful harvest. I have gifts for everyone.

(The VILLAGERS crowd around MARKUS as he speaks with them. MAGDA draws away, practicing her lines to herself. The BEGGAR

WOMAN, *having already worked the crowd and seeing their attention is elsewhere, drifts over to MAGDA.*)

MAGDA. Open your eyes, my people, I have not forgotten you.

BEGGAR WOMAN. Little Sister of the Sun, might you spare a coin for an old woman who once played the Sister in her youth?

MAGDA. *(Preoccupied:)* I'm sorry, I have no money. Open your eyes, my people...

BEGGAR WOMAN. A crust of bread? A slice of cheese?

MAGDA. I'm very busy...

BEGGAR WOMAN. Just a bit of anything you have...

MAGDA. I cannot help you!

(The BEGGAR WOMAN gives her a curious look and shuffles away.)

MAGDA. *(Rehearsing:)* Open your eyes, my people, I have not forgotten you.

MARKUS. And who is this year's Sister?

(Startled, MAGDA looks up.)

MOTHER. My daughter, my Lord.

MARKUS. Let her come forward.

(Shyly, MAGDA comes forward.)

FREDERICK. This is Marishka, daughter of Remka.

MARKUS. You are as pretty as your name, Marishka.

MAGDA. They usually just call me Magda, my Lord.

MARKUS. Magda, then. Are you ready? Are you sure in your duties?

MAGDA. Yes, my Lord.

MARKUS. *(Gives her a coin:)* So here is something for you.

MAGDA. Thank you, my Lord!

FREDERICK. My Lord, we should not keep the Sister waiting.

MARKUS. *(Clapping his hands:)* Yes, let us begin.

(EVERYONE takes their place. Those in costume go to the central "stage" area, the others go to the side. A chair is brought for MARKUS in a place of honor and he sits. MAGDA runs to her MOTHER.)

MAGDA. Mother, did you see? Lord Markus gave me a coin of my own! And he thinks I am pretty!

MOTHER. *(Giving her a hug:)* And you are! Go and do your best and all will be well.

(The ceremony begins. Feel free to create your own or use the following.)

MAGDA. Open your eyes, my people, I have not forgotten you. You must rest, the land must rest, the sun must rest so, too. But now I call to wake the sun, to wake the land, and life begun! Comes the warmth and light again, grows the crops and land and men!

ALL. Praise the Sister, praise her name, praise the sun, her heat and flame!

MAGDA. Do not let the darkness grow...

ALL. Hear the prayers of those below!

MAGDA. Rouse the sun and bid her rise, Sister who is just and wise. Push back night so black and cold as you have done since days of old.

ALL. We beseech you of the Sun, do not let life be undone.

MAGDA. See the wonder I have drawn—I call you up—the dawn! The dawn!

(EVERYONE looks to the clock. It is 7:03.)

PEASANT 1. What is the matter? Where is the sun?

PEASANT 2. Something's not right!

PEASANT 3. Why doesn't it rise?

PEASANT 4. The clock is wrong!

MARKUS. The clock is not wrong! It is the sun that is wrong!

PEASANT 5. Shettle! What have you done?

SHETTLE. Nothing! It is the same as it has always been! You all know the words by heart! We changed nothing!

PEASANT 6. Then why does the Sister keep the sun hidden from us still?

PEASANT 7. Lord Markus, help us!

MARKUS. I can do nothing!

PEASANT 8. Why are we being punished?

PEASANT 9. The Sister is angry with us! We have done something to offend her!

PEASANT 10. It must be Magda! The Sister is unhappy with her!

ALL. Yes! It's Magda! It's her fault! (etc.)

MAGDA. I did nothing wrong!

MOTHER. You're mistaken! She is not to blame!

PEASANT 11. What else could it be?

PEASANT 12. Everything is the same except for her!

ALL. It's Magda! It must be Magda! She is not one of us! She was not born here! She is from away! (etc.)

(The VILLAGERS move menacingly toward MAGDA and MOTHER, who stands with her.)

MOTHER. No! Stop! Don't hurt her! She has done nothing wrong!

MARKUS. People, wait! You must not do this!

PEASANT 13. Look! The sun is coming up at last!

ALL. Praise the Sister! The sun comes up again! (etc.)

PEASANT 14. But what about tomorrow? Will it be late again?

ALL. It's Magda's fault! (etc.)

PEASANT 15. She was not born here! Drive her out! Drive her away!

PEASANT 16. Show the Sister she is not one of us and we spurn her!

MOTHER. No! You can't! This is her home!

MAGDA. Please don't make me leave! Please!

MOTHER. Lord Markus, stop them!

MARKUS. Good people, hear me!

(But the VILLAGERS are not listening. They are now an angry mob and they close on MAGDA, threateningly.)

ALL. Drive her away! Make her leave! Drive her out! (etc.)

(The CROWD forces MAGDA apart from MOTHER. MAGDA and MOTHER are begging and crying.)

MAGDA. Mother! Help me!

MOTHER. Magda! Magda!

MARKUS. Run, Magda! Before they hurt you! Run!

(MAGDA runs off. The CROWD is yelling after her.)

ALL. Go away and don't come back! Don't curse us anymore! Away with your wickedness! (etc.)

MARKUS. My people! Be calm! The sun is up again! Come to the Manor for the feast and we shall talk of what has happened.

(FREDERICK takes the clock and ALL begin to exit. MARKUS hangs back with MOTHER, who is weeping.)

MOTHER. She will die in the forest!

MARKUS. Woman, do not worry. I will send my men to search for her and I will hide her in the Manor until things are put right and they see that she is not to blame.

MOTHER. But what if things cannot be put right? What if the days keep growing shorter?

(MARKUS *shakes his head—he has no answer.* MARKUS and MOTHER *exit.*)

(Fade out.)

Scene 2

(The forest, a bit later.)

(The scene change is accomplished by the PLAYERS—TOOT, GWENDOLYNE, APPLE and STEPHEN—directed by RODRIGO.)

RODRIGO. Quickly, everyone, quickly now. We must change the setting for the next scene. From the civilized world of the village to the wilds of the forest primeval. Hurry now, take off the houses and bring on the trees. Let us travel into the darkness of the dangerous unknown that surrounds the bright, little islands of man. Animals, are you there?

(Enter a flock of BIRDS, a WOLF, a DEER. These are done in the style of Bunraku puppetry.)

RODRIGO. Most excellent! Toot, do not forget the tree stump. Gwendolyne, perhaps this might be moved just a bit? Perfect! Oh, well done, Apple. Stephen, your strong arm here, many thanks. And now we are ready, I think? Nothing forgotten, nothing amiss? And so away, players, and await your cue!

(Exit RODRIGO, GWENDOLYNE, APPLE and STEPHEN.)

(TOOT, with his flute, hides behind a tree.)

BIRDS, WOLF and DEER enjoy their forest.)

(Enter MAGDA, crying and lost.)

(Startled, BIRDS, WOLF and DEER hide.)

MAGDA. Driven away, cast out like some wicked, cursed thing! And I have done nothing to deserve it! Home, mother, friends, all lost! What shall I do? Where shall I go? Who can I turn to for help and protection? Oh, I shall be eaten by the wild creatures!

(BIRDS suddenly fly up around MAGDA.)

MAGDA. Even the birds spurn me.

(But BIRDS only fly to one side and watch as MAGDA sinks to the ground and cries. WOLF and DEER come out slowly. DEER is curious about MAGDA but WOLF is growling.)

MAGDA. *(Hearing the growling and suddenly raising her head:)* Oh! Help! Help!

(BIRDS cross to TOOT. They whistle at him as if talking and he toots back on his flute or pipes. BIRDS lead TOOT to MAGDA.)

(WOLF and DEER fall back.)

TOOT. ****!

MAGDA. It's a boy! A boy all alone in the forest like me. Hello.

TOOT. ****.

MAGDA. My name's Magda. What's yours?

TOOT. *.

MAGDA. Can't you speak?

TOOT. **.

MAGDA. Where did you come from?

TOOT. ** ***.

(BIRDS whistle in alarm—WOLF is coming back.)

TOOT. *, * ** **.

MAGDA. It's almost as if the birds are talking to you. But that's silly.

TOOT. * *. **** **.

MAGDA. What do you want? I don't understand you.

TOOT. *(Starting to exit:)* *** ** *

MAGDA. Oh, don't go! Don't leave me alone!

TOOT. ** *!

MAGDA. You want me to come with you?

TOOT. *! *!

(BIRDS lead the way off, TOOT and MAGDA following.)

(WOLF and DEER follow off.)

(Enter from the opposite side, the PLAYERS pushing and pulling their cart.)

RODRIGO. *(Using signs for APPLE:)* Ho there, good players! Let us stop. This looks to be a fine spot for our camp tonight.

GWENDOLYNE. You're sillier than I am, Rodrigo. It's too early to set up camp yet.

RODRIGO. Since the days continue to grow shorter, we must settle down sooner than usual.

GWENDOLYNE. Let Stephen set up if it grows dark—it's all the same to him.

RODRIGO. Now, Gwendolyne, you must not tease.

STEPHEN. She speaks the truth, Master Rodrigo. Light and dark and equal in my eyes. Or what's left of them.

APPLE. Camp?

RODRIGO. Yes, dear Apple, this shall be our camp for tonight.

APPLE. Is it safe?

STEPHEN. *(After a moment of concentration:)* We will not come to any harm here.

RODRIGO. Excellent!

(The PLAYERS begin to set up their camp.)

RODRIGO. We will have a rehearsal tonight, I think.

GWENDOLYNE. Must we? If the world is ending, there is no point in practicing.

RODRIGO. Would you have us sit here and do nothing?

GWENDOLYNE. We could have fun!

APPLE. Isn't there anything we can do about the sun?

RODRIGO. If you can think of something that is in our power, feel free to bring it to my attention. I confess I can think of nothing.

GWENDOLYNE. Where is the Sister? Has she forgotten her duties?

RODRIGO. Apparently so.

GWENDOLYNE. It's easy to forget things. I forgot to sneeze yesterday.

APPLE. Stephen? What do you see?

STEPHEN. (*Looking at GWENDOLYNE.*) The Sister has a good reason for keeping the sun away so do not fear. She will bring it back soon and all will be well.

RODRIGO. There you are. There is nothing to worry about. Go and gather some wood like a good girl.

(*GWENDOLYNE exits.*)

APPLE. You were not telling the truth. It was so plain on your face.

STEPHEN. I did not wish to upset her, poor thing. She is frightened enough.

RODRIGO. What do you really see?

STEPHEN. Nothing.

RODRIGO. You have lost your gift?

STEPHEN. No, I see the future still but it is darkness, everything is black.

APPLE. The sun will stop coming altogether?

STEPHEN. That is all I can think it to mean. But we must not tell Gwendolyne.

APPLE. You want us to lie to her?

STEPHEN. You must learn discretion, Apple. It would only distress her to know the truth. Allow her some hope.

APPLE. I wish someone would give me some. It's hard keeping hope alive when you always know the truth. How do you keep your spirits up?

STEPHEN. My knowledge of the future does not keep me from believing that everything will work out for the best. The future is not a stone—it's a river that changes every moment with every choice we make.

(Enter TOOT, MAGDA and BIRDS. RODRIGO looks very frightened for a moment but then regains his composure.)

TOOT. ****! ****!

RODRIGO. And what do we have here? Toot, what odd little bird have you brought us?

TOOT. * ***!

MAGDA. Who are you?!

RODRIGO. We are the Magnificent Astounding Players. *(Indicating:)* Rodrigo, Apple, Stephen and Toot you have already met. Who are you?

MAGDA. I'm Magda. Doesn't he talk?

(At the mention of her name, RODRIGO again looks startled for a moment.)

STEPHEN. Of course he talks. Most times, we can't hush him up.

MAGDA. But he hasn't talked to me once.

TOOT. * * **! * * ** * * ** ** **!

APPLE. There! He is talking now. You just aren't listening.

MAGDA. I can hear him.

APPLE. Hearing isn't the same as listening. I cannot hear you but I can listen to you.

STEPHEN. You have to learn his language. Are you a bird?

MAGDA. No, obviously not.

STEPHEN. Nothing is obvious to me. I cannot see you but I can know you.

MAGDA. How strange you all are.

RODRIGO. Where do you come from?

MAGDA. My village. I've been wandering ever so long.

APPLE. Are you lost?

MAGDA. I've been driven out!

TOOT. **?

MAGDA. What?

STEPHEN. He wants to know why. What have you done?

MAGDA. They blame me for the loss of the sun!

(GWENDOLYNE, DEER and WOLF enter.)

GWENDOLYNE. You did this? You're the one who keeps the sun away?!

MAGDA. No!

RODRIGO. Gwendolyne, this child could not be responsible for so great a...

GWENDOLYNE. The animals are frightened! They say this has never happened before and they are very afraid!

RODRIGO. We are all afraid but...

GWENDOLYNE. The sun is going out! If she has done it, she must undo it!

RODRIGO. Tell us what happened.

MAGDA. We were playing the ceremony of the Sister of the Sun...

APPLE. I remember that from my village...

MAGDA. ...and I was the Sister and I did everything perfectly, the lines and the gestures, I didn't make one mistake but when the time came for the sun to rise, it did not come up as it should!

STEPHEN. So they blamed you for it.

MAGDA. Maybe it is my fault! The only time the sun has ever been late is the only time I have ever played the Sister.

GWENDOLYNE. You see, Rodrigo?! She admits it! Fix it! Fix it now!

MAGDA. But I don't know how!

GWENDOLYNE. I will command the animals to tear you to pieces if you do not return the sun!

(DEER and WOLF come closer, ominously circling MAGDA.)

STEPHEN. Gwendolyne! You must stop them!

GWENDOLYNE. I will not!

APPLE. You know in your heart this is not right. You do not like it when people blame you for wrongs you have not done.

RODRIGO. Comfort them, Gwendolyne. Tell them we will try to find out what is wrong and make it right again.

GWENDOLYNE. Do you promise?

RODRIGO. I give you my solemn vow. We will do all we can. And if we find that this girl is to blame, we will force her to bring the sun back. But we must learn the truth first. Yes?

GWENDOLYNE. Very well.

RODRIGO. Calm the animals and have them spread the word to all. Toot, you must sooth the birds. Let them know we may need their help.

TOOT. *!

(GWENDOLYNE and TOOT lead BIRDS, WOLF and DEER to one side and "speak" to and comfort them.)

MAGDA. Maybe they're right. Maybe if you kill me, the Sister will bring back the sun.

RODRIGO. Nonsense! Apple, is that true?

APPLE. *(Looking closely at MAGDA:)* No. That will not return the sun.

MAGDA. How do you know?

RODRIGO. Apple is deaf but she can see what is true. Just as Stephen is blind but can see the future. Toot cannot speak as you or I but he talks to the birds of the air.

MAGDA. And her?

RODRIGO. Gwendolyne may be simple-minded but she understands the animals of the forest.

MAGDA. And you?

STEPHEN. He protects us from the world that would hurt us.

RODRIGO. And what do you do?

MAGDA. Nothing.

APPLE. Nothing?

RODRIGO. But you must do something if you are to join our company.

MAGDA. Join you? You would have me, even knowing what I have done?

RODRIGO. We are all outcasts here. You want to bring back the light, do you not?

MAGDA. Of course.

RODRIGO. Then we will travel together on your quest to save the world. And if we travel together, you must become a member of our troupe!

STEPHEN. And you must do something to pull your weight.

RODRIGO. So, what can you do?

MAGDA. (*Disappointed:*) Nothing. I'm not like you. I can only do normal everyday things—cooking and sewing and such...

APPLE. But that is most wonderful!

RODRIGO. Indeed! None of us are any use at all in doing those things.

MAGDA. And I can read and write a little...

APPLE. Read!

STEPHEN. And write!

RODRIGO. You have learning well beyond any of us.

MAGDA. (*Bringing out her coin:*) And I have a coin...

STEPHEN. She is rich as well! It was a lucky thing we found her!

MAGDA. But I can't see the future or know the truth or anything marvelous like you can...

RODRIGO. Who can say what will be most important to us on our journey? We must all work together if we are to succeed. What say you, Stephen? Do you see anything now?

STEPHEN. (*After a pause:*) I'm afraid it's just the same as...wait...there is something...just a glimmer, just the tiniest glow far, far off. We have taken the first step in the proper direction. It is right that Magda should join us.

APPLE. He speaks the truth.

RODRIGO. (*With a flourish:*) Then, we begin! Toot! Gwendolyne!

(*BIRDS, WOLF and DEER are dismissed and exit. TOOT and GWENDOLYNE cross to the others.*)

RODRIGO. Magda is of our company now. She is one of us and we must make her feel welcome. Will you offer her your hand in friendship, Gwen?

(*GWENDOLYNE hesitates and then, with TOOT's encouragement, holds out her hand to MAGDA, who shakes it. TOOT bows.*)

TOOT. ** * * **!

RODRIGO. He bids you welcome. Well, now. We shall make our plans tonight around the fire but first we must make our camp. You three go and collect wood and water at the spring we passed.

(*MAGDA, TOOT and GWENDOLYNE take jugs from the cart and exit, talking excitedly.*)

RODRIGO. You must speak what is true to me now. What do you really see?

APPLE. This is truth. Somehow, she *is* responsible for what has happened.

RODRIGO. But how is that possible?

APPLE. I do not know. But as she broke the world, she must be the one to mend it again. Now it is you who must tell the truth. I saw the look on your face when you first saw her. Why does she frighten you so?

RODRIGO. I...know her.

STEPHEN. You've seen her before?

RODRIGO. In a dream. Just a dream. It is nothing. Stephen, what is our future? Tell us our course.

STEPHEN. It is our destiny to aid her. We all must do whatever we can.

RODRIGO. Then we shall follow our destiny to the end. Even if some of us do not live to see it...

(Fade out.)

Scene 3

(That night. EVERYONE is sleeping. STEPHEN is off to one side keeping watch.)

(RODRIGO moans and thrashes about, having a bad dream. He suddenly sits upright, awake.)

STEPHEN. The dream again?

RODRIGO. Every night now. Every blessed night...

(RODRIGO crosses to STEPHEN.)

STEPHEN. And you're sure it's her?

RODRIGO. For years I've had the same dream. I know it as well as I know my own face and that girl has been in it every time. It seems like I've waited all my life to find her. Or at least, since I became Rodrigo. I was not always Rodrigo, you know.

STEPHEN. You never speak of your past.

RODRIGO. I don't like to think of it. I was captured when barbarians from across the sea attacked my town. They took me back to their own land as a prisoner and it was years before I could escape

and return home. When I finally managed it, home was gone. House, family, village, all scattered and abandoned. That night, I had the dream for the first time.

STEPHEN. And it is always the same?

RODRIGO. It never changes. I am a different man with a different name. I am Rodrigo, the leader of outcasts who comes to the aid of a lost girl. There is a mob, I stand before it as I have done for you so many times, it closes in, shouting and violent...

STEPHEN. And then...?

RODRIGO. And then it all goes black and I awake, scared and shaking. I tried to ignore it but it was relentless, returning night after night. What could I do but give up and give in? I changed my name, took in each of you as I found you, formed this company and became your protector. I lost the pain of what might have been and came to enjoy my new life. As the years passed, the dream stopped coming. I had almost forgotten it when it began again...

STEPHEN. ...the night of the Solstice. You woke me up with your crying and thrashing about.

RODRIGO. And it has returned every night since.

STEPHEN. You are afraid that it signals your death? That the girl is tied to it somehow?

RODRIGO. What else could it mean?

STEPHEN. I can think of a thousand other things.

RODRIGO. You see the future. Tell me!

STEPHEN. (*Concentrating:*) It is difficult to see clearly.

RODRIGO. Tell me!

STEPHEN. (*Hesitantly:*) You shall be killed...

RODRIGO. (*A deep sigh:*) Ahhh...

STEPHEN. ...but you shall not die.

RODRIGO. That makes no sense.

STEPHEN. Nevertheless, that is what I see. Death and not death.

RODRIGO. I had hoped for comfort and you give me riddles.

STEPHEN. Do not despair. The future is not fixed in place like a mountain. It is constantly changing and forming itself anew. That is why I am always hopeful—I know there is always a chance that things will work out fine.

(It becomes lighter.)

RODRIGO. Would that I shared your faith. But not a word to the others. I would not worry them. *(Waking the others:)* Come, players! The dawn is late again but it is here at last! Let us greet it with a smile, some breakfast and another day of pleasant traveling.

(The scene change is accomplished by the PLAYERS—TOOT, GWENDOLYNE, APPLE, STEPHEN and MAGDA—directed by RODRIGO. Set pieces are moved a bit to indicate that we are moving to a new place.)

RODRIGO. The scene changes again—a journey! We travel east, seeking the home of the Sister of the Sun! Let us indicate our pilgrimage by moving the trees, wheeling our cart, a flurry of activity! And so we travel through wood and village, asking the way from fellow travelers, human, bird and beast. The days grow ever shorter, the souls of mankind grow ever more fearful, the spirits of the forest creatures quail at the unknown. Surely the end of days is upon us. What nerve to think our little band can change the fate of the world! But we press on keeping our spirits up...

STEPHEN. Gwendolyne, why are fish so smart?

GWENDOLYNE. *(Thinking hard:)* I give up.

STEPHEN. Because they spend their whole lives in schools!

TOOT. ** *** **** ** ** * ** * **?

RODRIGO. A reward? Perhaps kings and princes *will* give us a reward for saving the earth. What would you do with your share, Toot?

TOOT. * ** ** ** ** * ** * ** * ** *! *** *?

APPLE. I would spend it all on a cook to make me chicken pies all the day long. I would eat and eat and eat and grow fat and lazy and good for nothing. Gwen?

GWENDOLYNE. I shall toss my golden coins in the air and watch them twinkle like stars in the daylight sky. Stephen?

STEPHEN. I will dress in furs and have a servant follow me around with a brazier full of hot embers so I will never be cold again.

MAGDA. Someone will mistake you for a bear and kill you!

STEPHEN. Then I will sing as I walk.

GWENDOLYNE. That will surely save you.

MAGDA. Because everyone knows bears do not sing?

GWENDOLYNE. Because his singing is so bad, it will drive all the hunters away!

STEPHEN. Rodrigo, what future do you dream of?

RODRIGO. The past is gone, the future may not come. I try to think only of today.

STEPHEN. Come, don't be so glum—it's but a game to pass the time.

RODRIGO. Well, then, I suppose I would buy a castle and bring everyone I love inside it to keep them safe forever. Magda, what would you do with your riches?

MAGDA. I would buy servants to wait on my mother night and day so that she would not have to work so hard. It's been very difficult with my father gone. Everything would be different if he were still with us. He would not have let them drive me away.

APPLE. You must miss him very much.

MAGDA. I do.

APPLE. You're lucky.

MAGDA. Lucky to have lost a father?

APPLE. Lucky to have had one. I never knew my father. None of us did. We were all rejected when people found out that we were different.

GWENDOLYNE. But we do have a father—Rodrigo! He is always protecting us from crowds of ugly people when they try to hurt us.

APPLE. They accuse us of being witches and devils. They are afraid of our talents.

STEPHEN. I once saw Rodrigo stand alone before an angry mob without a single weapon.

MAGDA. Weren't you scared?

RODRIGO. Of course I was scared.

STEPHEN. He wasn't a bit. He was the very picture of courage.

RODRIGO. I may have looked courageous but inside, I was trembling like a flame in the breeze. That is where my talent for acting comes in. I pretend to be a brave man and others think it is so.

STEPHEN. Don't believe a word of it. I have never seen our Rodrigo frightened even a little bit.

GWENDOLYNE. I'm tired of traveling so hard. Do you really think we shall find the Sister of the Sun?

STEPHEN. She lives in the east, does she not?

GWENDOLYNE. With her sister, She of the Moon.

STEPHEN. So if we continue traveling east, we must surely stumble upon her eventually.

GWENDOLYNE. I don't think she'll like being stumbled upon. My toes always complain when I stumble upon *them*.

MAGDA. How will we know her?

APPLE. She will shine so brightly, I think we can not miss her.

TOOT. ****, ** * * **** * * * **?

MAGDA. My apology must be humble and heartfelt enough to make her change her mind. Rodrigo, could you help me? You are so clever with words.

RODRIGO. What you say must come from your heart, Magda, not from mine. I'm sure you will know the right thing when the time comes.

MAGDA. It can't be long now. We've been traveling for days and days and days.

GWENDOLYNE. If you can call them days, they are so short. I can't eat fast enough—you are serving my dinner meat on top of my breakfast eggs.

(Enter BIRDS, WOLF and DEER. GWENDOLYNE and TOOT speak to them and the ANIMALS exit.)

TOOT. *** ** **! *** ** **!

GWENDOLYNE. They say there are two cottages just over that hill, a light one and a dark.

APPLE. That must be our destination!

TOOT. **!

MAGDA. The home of the Sisters?

GWENDOLYNE. Yes. We have found them at last!

APPLE. Are you ready, Magda?

MAGDA. I'm scared!

RODRIGO. There is nothing to be scared of if your heart is true.

STEPHEN. And we'll be with you.

TOOT. ** **!

RODRIGO. Time is short—let us call on the Sister of the Sun and save the world.

(The COMPANY exits.)

(Fade out.)

Scene 4

(Enter SHE OF THE MOON with her cottage. She sings to the tune of "Green Sleeves" as she sets it up.)

SHE OF THE MOON. Soon comes the dark and so I rise,
With a nonny-hey and a nonny-ho.
The moon I love and the sun despise,
With a nonny-nay nonny-no!
Hang the light in the field of night
And shine the stars in their endless height.
Sleep, sleep the earth below
And pleasant dreams to all dreamers.

(Enter the COMPANY.)

SHE OF THE MOON. Who comes to see me, here at the end of the world?

TOOT. ** **!

RODRIGO. A company of players.

SHE OF THE MOON. Most excellent! We do love a show, my sister and I! What do you play?

RODRIGO. Comedy, tragedy or romance, whatever you fancy but first we ask an audience with the Sister of the Sun.

SHE OF THE MOON. Then you must continue your traveling for she is not at home. I am her twin, She of the Moon.

RODRIGO. Do you know where we might find her?

SHE OF THE MOON. I cannot say. She often wanders the earth for she enjoys the company of mortal men while I am content to stay near my house and await the coming of the night.

RODRIGO. When did you see her last?

SHE OF THE MOON. Just before the Solstice. She was eager to lengthen the days as I was eager to catch up on my rest. If you find her, tell her I am cross with her for forgetting her duty. I am tired of working longer and longer.

MAGDA. What has happened to her?! Why does she not bring the sun again?!

SHE OF THE MOON. I fear she is angry. She punishes mankind for a slight but she has gone too far. I would look for her myself but I am so busy with my moon. Coming up earlier and setting later, it takes all my power to keep it hanging and stop it from crashing to the ground.

MAGDA. It's my fault! I insulted her by my performance and I thought if I could find her and apologize, everything would be all right again. Now she's gone and we'll never find her and...and...

(She is out of breath and sobbing.)

SHE OF THE MOON. Child, how you do go on! It is not your fault. She loves the rituals and the celebrations. She would never punish anyone for performing in one.

MAGDA. Even if I was terrible?

SHE OF THE MOON. Even if you were the worst that's ever been which I am sure you were not. No, she is angry at all Mankind, not just you.

MAGDA. But why?

SHE OF THE MOON. She says they are brutal and selfish and cruel and the sooner they are covered with darkness forever, the better. She doesn't think a wink about all the extra work that means for me.

APPLE. Why would she think so badly of us?

SHE OF THE MOON. She asked for help, you see, and was refused. And just as she was turned away so now she has turned away herself.

TOOT. ** ** ***** **!

GWENDOLYNE. No one would refuse the Sister of the Sun anything!

SHE OF THE MOON. Not if they knew it was her, no. But she travels in disguise, you see, and often appears as a poor old beggar woman. It's a sort of test, to see how patient and good-hearted peo-

ple are. Always she has met with much more good than bad. Until this last time. A child refused her a bit of bread and it broke her heart.

STEPHEN. (*To MAGDA:*) There, you see? It wasn't you at...

MAGDA. Oh, no! It was me, it was!! A beggar woman asked me for food, before the ceremony, and I had some, my breakfast, but I was thinking about my part and I sent her away!

APPLE. She speaks the truth.

RODRIGO. But there must be a way to find her and apologize!

SHE OF THE MOON. She's in one of her moods and believe me, if she doesn't want to be found, she won't be. I'm afraid it's too late—the damage has been done and the world will soon be dark forever. I'll never have a moment's rest again. But come, think of all the wonderful dreams you will have when you lie down to sleep without end.

APPLE. (*Quietly, to RODRIGO:*) She's lying.

RODRIGO. (*Hissing to APPLE:*) What?!

APPLE. What she's saying, it isn't true.

SHE OF THE MOON. Is it not pleasant to escape the cares of life with lovely dreams in the dark?

(RODRIGO takes APPLE aside as SHE OF THE MOON continues talking silently to the others.)

RODRIGO. She of the Moon speaks false? Why?

APPLE. She likes having the moon get more attention than the sun. It makes her feel important. And she really does believe that dreaming is more pleasant than living. She doesn't want us to find her Sister and set things right.

RODRIGO. So we *can* find the Sister of the Sun?

APPLE. It is not as impossible as she would have us believe.

RODRIGO. Then there is hope!

APPLE. (*With a smile:*) As Stephen believes, there is always hope.

(RODRIGO and APPLE cross back to the others.)

RODRIGO. Sister, we thank you most humbly for your help but now we must take our leave...

SHE OF THE MOON. What? No play?

RODRIGO. There is no time. See, the sun sets already and the moon calls to you.

SHE OF THE MOON. My moon, my most beautiful moon! She is ready to rise again! Sleep, my children and begin your evening fantasies.

(SHE OF THE MOON returns to her house, brings up the moon, exits. The COMPANY huddle together.)

GWENDOLYNE. What can we do now?

RODRIGO. Do not despair. Apple has told me the Moon lies. We may still find the Sun before it is too late.

TOOT. **?

RODRIGO. I have an idea.

GWENDOLYNE. *(Looking about:)* I would very much like to find an idea myself some day. Everyone else always has them but look around as I might, I don't see them at all.

RODRIGO. Never you mind—you shall help me with this one. You and Toot must speak again with your friends and then we shall start off at once and go as fast as we can.

APPLE. In which direction? Where are you going?

RODRIGO. The animals will tell us.

STEPHEN. What are we going to do when we get there?

RODRIGO. Our show, of course. A new one. We must rehearse it as we travel for there is not a moment to lose.

TOOT. ***?

RODRIGO. Because we must be ready to perform for the most important audience we have ever had.

MAGDA. A show? Now?

RODRIGO. Not just any show. This time, we are going to save the world!

GWENDOLYNE. *(Tweaking her ears:)* Then I must be certain my ears are on straight. We must all look our best when the kings and princes shower us with gifts to thank us. Then we shall live happily ever after, all of us together.

RODRIGO. *(With a look to STEPHEN:)* Let us hope so.

(Blackout.)

Scene 5

(Traveling west.)

(In the blackout, the house is struck.)

(The COMPANY addresses the audience directly from different areas of the stage, isolated in spots of light.)

(RODRIGO, APPLE and STEPHEN do something theatrical as they speak—walking on stilts or on their hands, juggling, performing simple magic tricks, manipulating puppets, etc. MAGDA works mending a costume. TOOT plays a simple tune. GWENDOLYNE dances. The ANIMALS are also present.)

STEPHEN. And so we journeyed west, as quickly as we could. I saw where we were to perform but I did not know how to get there. Fortunately, the animals did. They sent out queries...

TOOT. *** ** * * ** ...

GWENDOLYNE. ...and news came back to them.

APPLE. We followed their directions, rehearsing as we went.

MAGDA. As we made our way, we cried our upcoming performance.

RODRIGO. Take heart! The end of the world is coming but so are the players!

STEPHEN. Make merry while you can! Lighten your hearts with our joyful show!

APPLE. A show! A show! A show about the Sister of the Sun!

GWENDOLYNE. Come and see our story of the Sister of the Sun!

(The scene reverts to a normal presentation.)

TOOT. *****! *****!

RODRIGO. The birds have found her? Our missing Sister in disguise?

TOOT. ***!

RODRIGO. They're sure?

GWENDOLYNE. The animals say so as well. There is a village around the bend and she is there.

RODRIGO. Stephen, what say you?

STEPHEN. I see a town square with a tree burned and blackened by lightening. I see a tower in the distance. I see...

STEPHEN / RODRIGO. ...a church with a blue glass window.

RODRIGO. Exactly as in my dream...

TOOT. ** * * * * ** **!

GWENDOLYNE. Yes, it's all there! Everything is just as you say.

STEPHEN. *(Concentrating:)* I even see the blister on your heel, Gwen, yes?

GWENDOLYNE. Yes! It is all exactly right!

STEPHEN. Then let us proceed into the village with all haste! Darkness falls again and we must keep it from gaining any more ground or there will be no dawn tomorrow!

(ALL look to RODRIGO.)

RODRIGO. There is no escaping destiny. Let us go bravely to our fate.

STEPHEN. And remember to take hope with us as we go.

(The COMPANY set up the village again and then unpack the cart and turn it into their stage. ANIMALS withdraw to the side.)

RODRIGO. So we return to the place of men. Civilization! The houses and the noise, the crowds and their power. Set up the stage! Bring forth the costumes and the props! Prepare yourselves to give your all... *(Realizing what this means)*...or all is lost forever!

STEPHEN. *(At one side, quietly:)* Be strong. You may not be asked to give all that you have.

RODRIGO. But it is my dream exactly, to the last detail! I feel as though I've lived this a thousand times. I know we must go forward, all the world depends upon it, but I'm afraid. What if I cannot bring myself to do what I know I must? What if I cannot save her?

STEPHEN. You? The brave Rodrigo? Frightened?

RODRIGO. I'm but a man. What else can I be?

STEPHEN. The wheat is cut down but grows again. The sun sets but rises anew in the morning. Can you be any different?

RODRIGO. *(Holding out his hands:)* Look. They tremble. I mustn't let them see me this way.

STEPHEN. You must act for them. Play the old Rodrigo, Rodrigo the bold. And remember, the future shifts from moment to moment. It may not be what you expect.

(It grows darker. Night is here again.)

Scene 6

(By now, the cart has been unfolded and transformed into a small stage. There is perhaps a banner and streamers, a painted canvas for a backdrop, torches to provide light. The COMPANY are in their costumes and move quickly and surely to their places where they dance, juggle, do magic, etc. to bring the people to them.)

(RODRIGO address the audience.)

RODRIGO. Good villagers! You have heard of us, the Magnificent Astounding Players! You have heard that we bring a wonderful new piece to save us all! It is a play so marvelous that the Sister will surely return the sun to us!

(PEASANTS begin to enter and watch. One of them is the BEGGAR WOMAN but she is lost in the crowd. MOTHER is also there.)

STEPHEN. “Season Of Light!” Come and see the “Season Of Light!” An amazing new play that will bring the light back to your heart and the world!

ANGRY PEASANT MAN. Away with you! Let us do penance for our sins in peace! Do not taunt the Sister with your frivolity!

ANGRY PEASANT WOMAN. We want no joy here! Can you not see the world is ending? We must prepare our souls for our doom!

MOTHER. *(To TOOT:)* I am looking for my daughter. You travel far. Have you seen her?

TOOT. ***!

RODRIGO. Is there no more room on this earth for joy? For laughter? For happiness?

ANGRY PEASANT MAN. Leave us or we will make you go!

MOTHER. She is so pretty, I’m afraid she will come to harm, traveling alone...

MILD PEASANT. Let them be, Paolo. Perhaps they can soften the Sister’s heart and save us.

ANGRY PEASANT WOMAN. They will only anger her further.

MILD PEASANT. What more can she do to hurt us? Let them try.

PEASANTS. Yes, let them try, why not, things can’t be worse...(etc.)

ANGRY PEASANT MAN. Mark my words, only evil will come of this! Mark my words!

(ANGRY PEASANT MAN and ANGRY PEASANT WOMAN withdraw to one side.)

MOTHER. *(To TOOT:)* A girl on her own? She is so pretty. Her name is Magda...

TOOT. ****! ****!

MOTHER. I don't understand you...

STEPHEN. Gather around and remember how we have always fought against the growing darkness by turning this time of year into a "Season of Light!"

(The COMPANY finish up their bits and prepare to begin the play.)

RODRIGO. Are you ready, Magda?

MAGDA. I'm afraid.

RODRIGO. There is no reason to be. We are here with you. All will be well.

MAGDA. How do you know? Did Stephen tell you?

RODRIGO. I had a dream. Go through the crowd and look for the Sister. Look carefully for she will still be disguised but you saw her before and you can find her again.

MAGDA. Are you sure she is here?

RODRIGO. The birds and animals say it is so. And did She of the Moon not tell us that they both love a play? We have spread word throughout the land that we are to perform a most wonderful new piece about her. I am positive that she has found us. Now, wait until everyone is...

(RODRIGO has been adjusting MAGDA's costume and now pulls out the chain with the little silver ring on it from around her neck.)

RODRIGO. Here's a pretty ring. Why do you hide... *(He looks at it closely:)* Where did you get this?!

MAGDA. My father gave it to me before we lost him. I wear it around my neck so he is close to my heart.

PEASANTS. We want the show! Start the play! (etc.)

STEPHEN. Rodrigo, come! It is time to begin!

RODRIGO. Your father...I thought you said he was dead...what happened to him?!

STEPHEN. The crowd grows restless!

RODRIGO. Your father!

MAGDA. He disappeared when I was little. Our village by the sea was attacked and we never saw him again! (*Frightened by his intensity:*) Why do you ask?

RODRIGO. But you said your name was Magda...!

MAGDA. It is. Well, a nickname. My given name is...

RODRIGO / MAGDA. Marishka!

MAGDA. How do you know?

PEASANTS. Hurry! Save us! Why do you not start what you have promised us? (etc.)

(The PEASANTS continue grumbling loudly.)

(STEPHEN crosses to RODRIGO.)

STEPHEN. You must come now, Rodrigo! Lord, let this work. I fear they will tear us to pieces if we fail.

RODRIGO. You would rush me so quickly to my end?

STEPHEN. It is our only hope!

RODRIGO. And the future? Is it bright again?

STEPHEN. (*Concentrating:*) As bright as...the sun!

RODRIGO. And the girl...she lives?

STEPHEN. She is fine.

RODRIGO. Then I am not afraid! Magda, go!

(MAGDA begins to wander through the crowd. RODRIGO takes the stage.)

RODRIGO. The play begins. "Season of Light." Once upon a time, the Sister of the Sun decided to leave her home and her twin, She of the Moon, and go out among the people of the earth.

(Enter GWENDOLYNE as the SISTER and APPLE as SHE OF THE MOON.)

GWENDOLYNE. I should like to meet and talk with all kinds of men—the high-born and the low, the good and the wicked. I wish to laugh with the children and cry with the widows. I shall enjoy the life my sun brings to the land.

APPLE. But you will frighten them with your brilliance and beauty.

GWENDOLYNE. *(Putting on a cloak:)* I will put on a disguise. No one will know me and they will treat me as one of their own.

RODRIGO. And so the Sister set forth into the world.

(GWENDOLYNE exits the stage and walks among the crowd.)

APPLE. Perhaps something will happen to her and I will keep my moon up forever! How beautiful to spend your life sleeping and dreaming without a care or a pain.

(APPLE exits. GWENDOLYNE returns to the stage. Enter STEPHEN.)

RODRIGO. And some were good to her...

(STEPHEN gives her a loaf of bread.)

RODRIGO. ...and some were not...

(STEPHEN turns around and back again and grabs the loaf away.)

RODRIGO. ...for that is the way of the world. But she was mostly happy with the people.

GWENDOLYNE. There are more good than bad. All is well.

(Enter MAGDA.)

RODRIGO. But one day, she came upon a girl who spurned her and turned her away. The Sister's heart broke...

ANGRY PEASANT MAN. I have heard this story! The girl's name was Magda! It is she who caused the Sister to forsake us!

MOTHER. It was not her fault! You must not believe...

(MOTHER recognizes MAGDA.)

MOTHER. *(Trying to get through the crowd to the stage.)* Magda? Is it you? Magda!

ANGRY PEASANT WOMAN. That is her! That is Magda! Get her! She is the one to blame!

(The CROWD rushes the stage.)

(The COMPANY tries to stop the CROWD.)

(GWENDOLYNE shouts something to TOOT and gestures wildly. RODRIGO fights to reach MAGDA.)

MAGDA. Rodrigo, I can't find her! I can't apologize to her! We're lost! Help me!

RODRIGO. I'm coming, my little Marishka!

(On the stage, RODRIGO reaches MAGDA just as the ANGRY PEASANT MAN does. The ANGRY PEASANT MAN pulls out a cudgel, swings it at MAGDA. RODRIGO steps in front of MAGDA to protect her and is hit on the head with a mighty blow! He falls, unconscious.)

MAGDA. Rodrigo!

MOTHER. Magda! Magda!

GWENDOLYNE. Animals! Help us!

TOOT. ****! ****! ****! ****!

(WOLF, DEER and BIRDS come forward, attacking the PEASANTS and driving them off. The ANIMALS exit after them.)

(MAGDA kneels over RODRIGO, MOTHER stands above her.)

GWENDOLYNE. Rodrigo, I did it! I found an idea! I called the animals to save you!

TOOT. ****!

GWENDOLYNE. Rodrigo?

(GWENDOLYNE, STEPHEN, APPLE and TOOT cross to MAGDA and MOTHER.)

MAGDA. He's dead! Oh, he's dead!

MOTHER. Magda, are you all right? I've been so worried about you. I've been searching ever since...

MAGDA. He saved me! He stepped in front of me and saved my life. Oh, Mother...

(She breaks down, crying.)

STEPHEN. He always knew it would be so. In his dreams, he knew how it would end. But he went to it bravely.

MAGDA. But it was all for nothing! I couldn't find the Sister! I couldn't tell her how sorry I am! Now the world will end and he will have died for nothing!

(The BEGGAR WOMAN comes forward.)

BEGGAR WOMAN. Are you so sure? He sacrificed himself for you. To give that which is most precious to save another, that is not nothing.

MAGDA. But if I can't make things right, the sun will never return.

BEGGAR WOMAN. He gave his life. What would you give to bring back the sun?

MAGDA. I would beg the Sister's forgiveness...

BEGGAR WOMAN. Words are not enough. To perform magic, you must be willing to sacrifice something precious.

MAGDA. But I have nothing...

BEGGAR WOMAN. Would you give your life?

STEPHEN. You could not ask that. It is not fair to the mother to take her only child away.

BEGGAR WOMAN. That is true. What else have you?

MAGDA. I have nothing of value.

BEGGAR WOMAN. What hangs around your neck?

MAGDA. Just a little silver ring from my father.

BEGGAR WOMAN. Would you give that?

MAGDA. But it is all I have left of him!

BEGGAR WOMAN. Magic is not free. Would you give it to save the world? Your ring and all your memories of him?

MAGDA. (*Horrified:*) All my memories? So I would never think of him again? (*Looking to the others and at RODRIGO's body:*) Yes...yes, I would, if it would bring back the sun.

(The BEGGAR WOMAN holds out her hand. MAGDA takes off the chain and gives it to her. The BEGGAR WOMAN throws off her rags and reveals that she is dressed in a beautiful gown.)

MOTHER. (*With a gasp:*) It is the Sister of the Sun!

BEGGAR WOMAN. I accept your offering. Let the sun return! Let life be restored to all!

(The BEGGAR WOMAN takes MAGDA's memories of her father and brings back the sun.)

ALL. The sun! The sun is back! We're saved! Thank you, Sister, thank you! (etc.)

(The BEGGAR WOMAN exits.)

MAGDA. Rodrigo! You should see it! It's beautiful! The sun is up again! We did it!

(The growing sunlight touches RODRIGO.)

MOTHER. (*Leaning closely over RODRIGO:*) Look! He breathes! He lives!

(RODRIGO wakes.)

RODRIGO. What...what has happened? It is so bright... Am I in heaven?

MAGDA. You're still alive here on earth and the Sister has brought back the sun! I gave her something, but...I can't remember what it was...

RODRIGO. But I should be dead...my dream...(*Staring at MOTHER:*) I *am* in heaven for here is an angel that looks like my wife, my beloved Remka...

MOTHER. Samuel...?

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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