



THE BOROCHI

BY

KEVIN B.

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama Editor EZRA NEIGHBORS writes... There is a thrill within the unknown. Going through a haunted house, the looming jump scares and adrenaline-inducing panic around of every corner keeps people coming back for more and more. There is a similar thrill when reading a script blind and without any preconceived notions about what I am going to read. So, I will admit: I didn't have a single clue on earth what a boroichi was before reading*

The Borocho by Kevin B. Furthermore, in this play this wolf/fox/deer/canine hybrid on stilts manifests as a demon-esue stalker of our main characters. The demon preys upon our characters fears, desires, wishes, hopes, and wants. That's quite a package our Bolivian cast have to unpack within the halls of an Austrian castle.

If a straight-forward-demonic-horror-gorefest wasn't enough to quench our thirsts, The Borocho really shines light on the overwhelming feelings of being lockdown in a worldwide pandemic. -cough- COVID -cough- -cough-...

The Borocho peers into the nitty-gritty realities many of us faced because of COVID: suspicions, longing, anxiety, death, jealousy, etc. Playwright Kevin B provides humor, absurdity, and surrealism as wrapping paper to deliver a truly insightful gift.

Five Stars

Characters

Gabriella, 17

Elena, 20

Cruz, 19

Bernita, 18

Basilio, 18

The Borocho

Setting: *A Castle in Austria, The Year 2020*

"You are the music while the music lasts."

~ T. S. Eliot

Act One

(GABRIELLA is looking at a BOROCHI. She's just come upon it.)

GABRIELLA

I was going for a walk.

BOROCHI

And who said you could go for a walk?

GABRIELLA

I was bored.

(She discovers something.)

I've been bored.

BOROCHI

You should be practicing.

GABRIELLA

I've been practicing for days.

BOROCHI

Do you think you're perfect?

GABRIELLA

No.

BOROCHI

No, you're not perfect. That's why you need to practice. You'll *never* be perfect, but the more you practice the worse you'll feel about your imperfections.

GABRIELLA

What were you doing?

BOROCHI

Beg your pardon?

GABRIELLA

When I came towards you? Were you--

BOROCHI

Eating.

GABRIELLA

What were you eating?

(The BOROCHI smiles.)

BOROCHI

One of the elders in the pack tried to challenge me.

GABRIELLA

Why?

BOROCHI

Because he caught me fucking his wife.

GABRIELLA

Why were you...doing...that?

BOROCHI

Why do you play the cello?

(The BOROCHI smirks.)

Because you're good at it.

GABRIELLA

Can I keep walking?

(A moment.)

BOROCHI

I'll allow it for tonight. Just let me give the rest of the pack a heads up so they don't rip your stomach open. Once they know you're under my... *supervision*, you'll be safe. Well--safer.

GABRIELLA

Are you in charge now?

(A beat.)

BOROCHI

I've always been in charge.

GABRIELLA

Of your pack, not me.

BOROCHI

What's your name?

GABRIELLA

Gabriella.

BOROCHI

Gabriella. *Nobody* is in charge of you. Just because I can kill you and let my pack feast on your body, that doesn't mean I'm in *charge* of you. Your fear. Your fear of me. That's what's in charge of you. Not me. I have nothing to do with it.

(The BOROCHI exhales.)

But *yes*, I am in charge of my pack. And my pack has to eat.

GABRIELLA

What will you feed them?

BOROCHI

Can you send one of your friends out tonight? The one with the big ears?

GABRIELLA

Nobody has big ears.

BOROCHI

You're not very perceptive--for an artist.

GABRIELLA

I'm not an artist. I'm a cellist.

BOROCHI

And that? That is why you are *never* getting out of here.

GABRIELLA

Is there some magical journey of discovery I have to go on? I won't participate in anything like that. I'm very practical. I wouldn't even be *speaking* with a Borochi under normal circumstances, but it's freezing and I'm not sure how--

BOROCHI

Gabriella. You're never getting out of here...because there's nowhere else for you to go.

(The BOROCHI laughs and exits. GABRIELLA is alone. MUSIC plays. She begins to walk. As she walks, the house creates itself around her. When she realizes where she is, she stops. Shivers. ELENA enters. She sees GABRIELLA. A beat.)

Scene Two

ELENA

You weren't thinking of going out walking, were you?

GABRIELLA

What?

ELENA

What?

GABRIELLA

Did you ask if I was going to go out walking?

ELENA

No, why would you do something like that? And why would I *ask* you that? And why do you smell like mangle?

GABRIELLA

The shower in my room isn't working.

ELENA

Yes, it is. I used it an hour ago.

GABRIELLA

Why were you using my shower?

ELENA

Because Cruz threw up in mine. Why did you lie about yours being broken?

GABRIELLA

I wasn't lying. It *was* broken.

ELENA

I can't have you losing your mind, Gabriella. Once we get out of here, we have a concert to perform, and you're barely any good when you've got your wits about you, so I doubt you'll be much to write home about if you're insane. Please go clean up the puke in my shower, then take one yourself, because you smell like a fur coat made out of a hyena carcass, and you're nauseating me.

GABRIELLA

Borochoi carcass.

ELENA

What?

GABRIELLA

Nothing. Is Cruz sick?

ELENA

He just ate too much chocolate. All they have in this castle is chocolate.

GABRIELLA

It's good chocolate.

ELENA

It may be good, but you can't survive only on chocolate. Why couldn't they have sausage or bratwurst or whatever they call sausage here? The kitchen is practically empty. We're going to starve to death if we don't all murder each other first.

GABRIELLA

I'd rather be murdered than starve.

ELENA

I'll keep that in mind.

(CRUZ enters.)

CRUZ

I've discovered I don't like white chocolate.

GABRIELLA

Are you all right, Cruz?

ELENA

Please tell me you haven't vomited again. Between that and the stench of Gabriella, we'll soon need to open all the windows, and the bats will probably fly in and give us a disease and I'll have to go get a doctor except I won't be able to find one and we'll all die.

CRUZ

You said it was just a flu.

(A moment.)

ELENA

A flu can be very serious.

GABRIELLA

Have we tried calling out again?

ELENA

My cell isn't getting any reception.

CRUZ

What about the phone in the hall?

ELENA

The rotary phone? Who are we going to call? Joan of Arc?

CRUZ

It was ringing last night.

GABRIELLA

It was?

ELENA

No, it wasn't.

CRUZ

Yes, it was.

(A beat. Then ELENA laughs.)

ELENA

You're sick. You don't know what you're saying. We should lock you up in one of the upstairs closets until you start making sense again, but we can't, because we all need to practice.

GABRIELLA

What if the concert is cancelled?

ELENA

The concert is *not* cancelled.

CRUZ

How do you know?

ELENA

Because people don't just go around cancelling concerts simply because there's a pandemic. It's not civilized.

CRUZ

Who says anybody here is civil? This is Europe.

GABRIELLA

I don't want to talk about geography. I want to talk about rehearsal. Has anybody seen Bernita?

CRUZ

Has anybody seen Basilio?

ELENA

Maybe they went for a walk. They're both stupid enough to do something like that.

CRUZ

I'd like to go for a walk.

GABRIELLA

Nobody should go for a walk.

CRUZ

Why not?

GABRIELLA

Because the castle is surrounded by Borochi. Borochi.

ELENA

No, it's not. There are no Borochi. What even is a Borochi? You're just saying words. Borochi, Borochi, Borochi. It's nonsensical.

GABRIELLA

You don't know what a Borochi is?

CRUZ

Is it some kind of German booby trap?

GABRIELLA

How do you two not know what--

ELENA

We have rehearsal in ten minutes, and if the twins aren't back by then, I'm kicking them out of the group.

CRUZ

Where would they go?

GABRIELLA

Not for a walk, I hope.

ELENA

There are a hundred rooms in this castle. They'll find somewhere to go, but they won't have to, because they're stupid, but they're not stupid enough to miss rehearsal.

CRUZ

Didn't there used to be more of us?

ELENA/GABRIELLA

No./Yes.

CRUZ

There's no such thing as a symphony with only five musicians.

ELENA

A symphony doesn't have to be a lot of--

GABRIELLA

We're really more of a *band* right now, aren't we?

ELENA

You know what we are? We are *professionals*. And it's time we started acting like it.

CRUZ

I think I might throw up.

ELENA

Go to Gabriella's room and do it then.

GABRIELLA

Go ahead, Cruz. I'll just pick another room.

ELENA

No! You can't just pick a new room every time somebody throws up in yours. It doesn't work that way.

GABRIELLA

But there are so many

ELENA

You have to learn how to tough it out, Gabriella.

GABRIELLA

That was what you said when my toe got infected and fell off.

ELENA

Well, nobody needs eleven toes anyway.

(BERNITA enters.)

BERNITA

Why didn't we have rehearsal last night?

ELENA

Finally, she arrives.

BERNITA

What do you mean '*Finally*'? I sat in the ballroom for hours yesterday waiting for all of you to show up and then I fell asleep on top of the grand piano. It was extremely rude.

ELENA

Which ballroom were you in?

BERNITA

There's more than one?

ELENA

This is why I said we all needed to stay in the same part of the castle.

CRUZ

Bernita, I don't feel well.

ELENA

He's fine.

BERNITA

He doesn't look fine.

ELENA

Why do you care? And where's your brother?

BERNITA

I haven't seen him.

GABRIELLA

Did the Borochi get him?

BERNITA

What's a Borochi?

GABRIELLA

You too, huh?

ELENA

Bernita, if your brother is dead--

(BASILIO enters.)

BASILIO

I'm not dead. Unfortunately. I tried on some armor I found in a closet, and I fell over, and I couldn't get back up for a few hours. When I finally did, I thought I was a knight, but I'm not, am I?

(A beat.)

ELENA

Excellent! We're all here.

(BERNITA looks at BASILIO.)

BERNITA

Who is this?

CRUZ

That's Basilio. He's your brother. Your twin.

GABRIELLA/BERNITA

That's not Basilio.

ELENA

I can't take much more of this.

BASILIO

What kind of joke are you two playing?

ELENA

Whatever you're doing, there's no time for it. We have to rehearse.

BERNITA

I'm not rehearsing with him. He's a fraud.

CRUZ

Bernita, it's your brother.

BERNITA

I know what my brother looks like, Cruz.

ELENA

Obviously you don't, since he's standing right in front of you.

BASILIO

Maybe she's sick.

BERNITA

I'm not sick.

CRUZ

I'm the sick one.

GABRIELLA

It's not Basilio.

ELENA

Then who is it?

GABRIELLA

It might be one of the Borochoi.

ELENA

What are these Borochoi you keep talking about?

BASILIO

You don't know what a Borochi is, Elena?

GABRIELLA

You do?

BASILIO

I knew you would all lose your minds. None of you had any mental acuity to begin with, and to be frank, I thought you'd all be at the cannibalism stage by now.

BERNITA

You are not my brother. My brother would never use the word '*acuity*.'

BASILIO

Bernita, when you were five-years-old, you set your rocking chair on fire, and then put it out using nothing but your spit.

ELENA

There! He knows that supremely disturbing fact about you. That means he's your brother.

BERNITA

My brother never knew I did that.

CRUZ

But you did it? Wow, Bernita.

BERNITA

I'm not staying here with him.

ELENA

Where are you going to go? We're not allowed to leave.

GABRIELLA

I wouldn't go outside.

ELENA

You already went outside!

GABRIELLA

I meant, if I were one of you.

BASILIO

How did you go outside if all the doors have been boarded shut?

ELENA/GABRIELLA/BERNITA.../CRUZ

All the doors are boarded shut?/Maybe she went through a window?

BASILIO

It's so nobody tries to get in.

BERNITA

But what if we want to get out?

GABRIELLA

We shouldn't try to get out.

ELENA

I agree--but we should still have the *option*.

CRUZ

Who boarded the doors? Did *I* board the doors?

BASILIO

They were boarded up when we got here.

BERNITA

Then how did we get in?

CRUZ

Through a window.

BASILIO

The windows are boarded up too.

CRUZ

This is starting to seem strange.

BERNITA

Starting to?

GABRIELLA

I feel better with everything boarded up. Maybe *I* boarded it up?

ELENA

How would you have done that? You can barely tune a cello properly and you expect me to believe you can *board up a window*?

BASILIO

You can tune a cello?

CRUZ

That's a stupid question.

GABRIELLA

Should we rehearse?

BASILIO

Didn't there used to be more of us?

BERNITA

I'd like to go outside.

GABRIELLA/ELENA

No!/Nobody's going outside.

BERNITA

I'm not staying here with a bunch of con artists and an idiot.

CRUZ

Which one is the idiot?

BERNITA

I'll take my chances with the plague.

GABRIELLA

And the Borochi.

BERNITA

And the Borochi. Whatever those are.

ELENA

And what are we supposed to do about the concert?

BERNITA

There isn't going to be a concert, Elena.

ELENA

You take that back.

BERNITA

You know as well I do that there aren't going to be anymore concerts. No concerts. No theater. No parties. Nothing. So just stop pretending, because you sound like a lunatic.

(Looks at BASILIO.)

And will you please take off my brother's face? I don't know where you got it, but it doesn't belong to you.

(Something has shifted. ELENA is shaking. GABRIELLA and CRUZ are in shock. BASILIO is confused. But BERNITA has gone somewhere else entirely.)

Where did you get my brother's face?

BASILIO

It's me, Bernita.

(He goes to touch her, but she swats his hand away.)

BERNITA

My brother would have gotten me out of here. He wouldn't be trapped in here with me. He could never be trapped anywhere.

BASILIO

Why don't I take you back to your room?

BERNITA

I don't know where my room is.

CRUZ

Yours is the one next to the one where I was staying until I couldn't remember where I was staying.

ELENA

Facing the garden.

(A beat.)

Bernita is staying in the room facing the garden. I assigned her that room, because I thought she'd like seeing where all the flowers used to be.

GABRIELLA

How would you know it's a garden? It's freezing outside. There's ten feet of snow.

ELENA

There isn't any snow. It's July.

CRUZ

It's March.

BERNITA/BASILIO

It's August./It's December.

(A moment. A BOROCHI HOWLS.)

ELENA

What was that?

GABRIELLA

I...have no idea.

(Lights shift.)

Did something just change?

(Blackout.)

Scene Three

(CRUZ's bedroom. He's practicing with his instrument. The BOROCHI appears at the window. A moment passes. CRUZ feels the BOROCHI's presence at the window. He looks over and sees the creature staring at him. CRUZ puts his instrument down. The BOROCHI smiles. Then--)

CRUZ

Are you a bird?

BOROCHI

Do I look like a bird?

CRUZ

Not all birds look the same.

BOROCHI

How are you feeling, Cruz?

CRUZ

My foot's fallen off.

BOROCHI

Which foot?

CRUZ

The one that looks like a foot.

BOROCHI

Well, that's no tragedy then, is it?

CRUZ

It could be. If you've never lost a foot before--it could be. If you've lost a hand...maybe it wouldn't be so bad.

BOROCHI

Have you ever lost a hand?

CRUZ

A few times. But I always get them back.

BOROCHI

When did you last eat?

CRUZ

On the plane ride here.

BOROCHI

That's not true.

CRUZ

I know.

BOROCHI

You're starving, Cruz.

CRUZ

Then why do I keep vomiting?

BOROCHI

There are other things in you that want to come out.

CRUZ

Like what?

BOROCHI

You tell me. What does it look like? What you throw up?

CRUZ
It's white.

BOROCHI
That's the good stuff.

CRUZ
I don't want the good stuff coming out.

BOROCHI
Then you should sew your mouth shut.

CRUZ
I don't know how to sew.

BOROCHI
You could have someone else do it for you.

CRUZ
I could ask Elena.

BOROCHI
Elena is too squeamish.

CRUZ
But Elena is in charge?

BOROCHI
The boss is not the boss.

CRUZ
But then who--

BOROCHI
Would you like to be in charge?

CRUZ
No.

BOROCHI
I want to ask you again and I don't want you to answer so quickly, all right?

(A beat.)

Cruz, would you like to be in charge?

CRUZ

Would I have to sew my own mouth shut?

BOROCHI

If you wanted to.

(The BOROCHI smiles.)

I could teach you.

(CRUZ considers this.)

CRUZ

To sew?

BOROCHI

To do a lot of things.

CRUZ

Do you know how to play?

(CRUZ holds up the instrument.)

I'd like to see you play.

BOROCHI

You'd have to let me in first.

CRUZ

Will you hurt me?

BOROCHI

Do you want to be hurt?

CRUZ

I want to hear music. I haven't heard music in so long.

BOROCHI

But you've been practicing.

CRUZ

But I can't hear anything. Just the roar of the wind outside. This is--This is the first time I haven't heard the wind trying to come in.

BOROCHI

I told it to wait while we spoke.

CRUZ

You control the wind?

BOROCHI

The world wants you to get what you want, Cruz. It doesn't want to stand in your way.

CRUZ

And what do you want?

BOROCHI

I want...to stay warm.

CRUZ

But you have such a big coat.

BOROCHI

You can try it on.

CRUZ

Show me what you look like without it?

(The BOROCHI steps back from the window and removes its fur. It stands there, naked, staring at CRUZ.)

You're what Gabriella was talking about.

BOROCHI

I won't tell her that you want to try on my coat.

CRUZ

I want to so badly.

BOROCHI

If you won't let me in, then come outside.

CRUZ

I'm not supposed to.

BOROCHI

Who told you that?

CRUZ

Elena.

BOROCHI

Is Elena in charge of your pack?

CRUZ

I...think so?

BOROCHI

But you're so much stronger than her, Cruz. Don't you know that? Don't you know you're stronger than her?

CRUZ

She's a prodigy. She played for President Zamora when she was nine.

BOROCHI

So what? That's only talent. Talent can be taught. Strength can't.

CRUZ

I can't go outside, but...if I let you in here, will you hurt Elena?

BOROCHI

I don't want to hurt anybody.

CRUZ

Not even me?

BOROCHI

No.

(A moment.)

CRUZ

But I want to be hurt.

BOROCHI

Why?

CRUZ

Because when I was a child, I saw my father slice a man's throat at a card game and a little bit of the blood got in my eye, and now I still see it.

BOROCHI

What were you doing at the card game?

CRUZ

I was supposed to be in bed. They played cards in the basement. My mother went to sleep. I had a nightmare. My father always held me after my nightmares. I went to the basement stairs. I heard talking. I walked down and as I was walking I heard one of the men call my father a cheater, and before I knew it, the blade was out--

BOROCHI

What did the other men do?

CRUZ

They just sat there. Then, two got up, and they dragged the man with the cut throat into a backroom in the basement, and a second later, I heard what sounded like sawing.

BOROCHI

And what did your father do?

CRUZ

He came up to me and took the handkerchief out of his pocket. He wiped my face, but he didn't see the blood in my eye. Then he brought me up to bed and told me a story and said I should go right to sleep and that everything I witnessed that night was a nightmare and that you should never speak of your nightmares or they'll reveal themselves to be true.

BOROCHI

How did your father die?

CRUZ

He's not dead.

BOROCHI

Are you sure?

CRUZ

A nightmare only reveals itself to be true if you speak of it.

BOROCHI

Will you be with your father when he dies?

CRUZ

A nightmare doesn't stand outside your window in the cold without its coat, catching its death.

BOROCHI

Do you think I'm afraid of death?

CRUZ

I think you are death.

BOROCHI

Open the window, Cruz.

CRUZ

I think you're a nightmare.

BOROCHI

Let me in.

CRUZ

I think you're nothing to speak of.

BOROCHI

Don't make me blow.

CRUZ

I think you want to reveal yourself to me.

BOROCHI

Your house is straw.

CRUZ

I think you want to show off.

BOROCHI

Your house is poorly constructed.

CRUZ

Those who play their instruments only for show will never make the kind of music that true artists desire to make.

BOROCHI

Did your father tell you that one, Cruz?

CRUZ

No. He never spoke to me after that night.

BOROCHI

And why not?

CRUZ

Because when I woke up the next morning, I went into his room, found his blade, crawled up on top of his sleeping body, opened his mouth, and cut his tongue out.

(A moment. The BOROCHI puts its coat back on.)

BOROCHI

Do the others know who you are?

CRUZ

They know that when I play, my music matches theirs. They don't need to know anything else about me.

(The BOROCHI exits. The WIND howls. Lights shift.)

Scene Four

(BERNITA and BASILIO are in their room sitting on their respective beds, facing each other.)

BERNITA

Why don't you look like my brother?

BASILIO

It's because you have expectations of what I should look like.

BERNITA

Of course I do. I know what you look like and I expect you to look that way when I look at you.

BASILIO

Always?

BERNITA

Yes, always.

BASILIO

But I'll age.

BERNITA

And I'll watch you aging. I'll notice you aging.

BASILIO

I don't think you have been. Noticing.

BERNITA

You're a completely different person.

BASILIO

Nobody thinks that but Gabriella--and you.

BERNITA

They will when they hear you play. They'll notice.

(A beat.)

BASILIO

What makes you so sure?

BERNITA

You can put on any trappings you want, but you could never play the way my brother played.

BASILIO

It's possible my talent has lessened.

BERNITA

It's not about a talent great or small. It's about the way his fingers bring about his sounds that could only be made by him, and the fact that you don't understand that only further proves that you're an imposter.

BASILIO

How long do you think we've been here?

BERNITA

We arrived on Tuesday.

BASILIO

But what do you know about a Tuesday?

BERNITA

What kind of question is that?

BASILIO

I'm trying to illustrate for you that you can't fly halfway across the world and expect everything to look the way it did back home, Bernita.

BERNITA

If you tell me what you've done with him, I won't be angry.

BASILIO

You already are angry.

BERNITA

I won't be angry...er.

BASILIO

You don't think you've changed, Bernita?

BERNITA

I haven't. You recognized me.

BASILIO

But you say I'm not Basilio. So what does it prove that I recognized you?

BERNITA

The others--

BASILIO

The others recognized me and it seems to hold no weight with you.

BERNITA

I know who I am and I know who's not who.

BASILIO

You're an authority on identity. That's how you always knew which one of mother's boyfriends was which.

BERNITA

If you were my brother, and you're not, but if you were, I would say that telling mother's boyfriends apart wasn't hard. You just had to remember which ones had toupees and which ones didn't, and what color the toupees were. After that, it was simple.

BASILIO

Which was the one that used to come around on...Tuesday's?

BERNITA

Ha! She never had anyone over on Tuesday's.

BASILIO

Oh, I get it now. What you need to learn is that not wanting to know something isn't the same as not knowing.

BERNITA

On Tuesday's, she went to supper club.

BASILIO

And she always came back--

BERNITA

Alone.

BASILIO

You'd be asleep.

BERNITA

I never slept.

BASILIO

Children sleep. It's what they do.

BERNITA

I have never slept a night in my life.

BASILIO

She came home with him every Tuesday.

BERNITA

Basilio was always sleeping. He was the one who got to sleep.

BASILIO

He had the dark red toupee.

BERNITA

He wouldn't know any of this.

BASILIO

And a red mustache.

BERNITA

I have a memory of every man and there was no red toupee.

BASILIO

He let you twirl it a few times, didn't he?

(A beat.)

BERNITA

You're a disgusting thing, whatever you are.

BASILIO

How long do you think we've been here?

BERNITA

Too long.

BASILIO

Has it been a week?

BERNITA

We arrived today.

BASILIO

But how long is today?

BERNITA

These are inane questions.

BASILIO

Didn't Bernita always love riddles?

BERNITA

Riddles are clever. What's clever about defining a day?

BASILIO

Somewhere between clever and wise, there's a much more interesting place than all your notes on a page could ever imagine, Bernita.

BERNITA

A day is twenty-four hours long. We've only been here for five.

BASILIO

You've seen seven different seasons come and go.

BERNITA

The weather in Austria is volatile.

BASILIO

So was the music the man with the red toupee used to make when he sat down in the parlor and played for mother late, late into the night. Do you remember how you'd dance in your sleep, Bernita?

BERNITA

How could I remember that?

BASILIO

I thought you remembered everything?

BERNITA

I remember my dreams. Dreams of being born without a brother. Dreams of it being just me.

BASILIO

I'd open my eyes after a peaceful rest and instead of the morning, I'd find you with your hands around my throat.

BERNITA

I didn't understand why you were there.

BASILIO

Because there was too much of you and it needed to go somewhere.

BERNITA

But when I started to play--

BASILIO

The man with the red mustache taught you how to play.

BERNITA

It could go there. It could go into the music and there wasn't any need for you after that. That's why I should have kept my hands where they were.

BASILIO

Instead you taught me.

BERNITA

Yes.

BASILIO

The way he taught you.

BERNITA

He never hurt me.

BASILIO

Not in a way that would get him in trouble. He was too smart for that.

BERNITA

He put the instrument in my hand.

BASILIO

He sat across from you.

BERNITA

He watched while I told myself the story of the music.

BASILIO

You memorized it when he saw you struggling.

BERNITA

There was no struggle.

BASILIO

You fooled him.

BASILIO

Later on, I showed it to you.

BERNITA

From memory.

BASILIO

Your perfect memory.

BERNITA

I wish I didn't.

BASILIO

I know.

BERNITA

I wish I never remembered anything at all.

(The sound of GLASS BREAKING.)

Scene Five

(The MAIN HALL. ELENA is sweeping up glass.)

ELENA

A new window breaks every hour.

(GABRIELLA enters.)

GABRIELLA

I found more glass in the eighth basement, but does anyone know how to make a window?

ELENA

We'll just nail the glass against the panes.

GABRIELLE

I don't think that will--

(CRUZ enters.)

CRUZ

I think I know what a Borochoi is now.

ELENA

Everybody knows what a Borochoi is, you buffoon.

GABRIELLA

They do?

ELENA

Am I the only one who doesn't look forward to freezing to death? We need to keep the outside *outside* and right now the only thing separating us from the elements is the big double door leading into the castle.

GABRIELLA

There are *lots* of doors leading outside.

ELENA

Have you tried going through any of them?

GABRIELLA

No. I like the big double door. It feels like it's composed of grandeur.

ELENA

None of the other doors leading to the outside take you outside.

CRUZ

It's true. You just wind up in the kitchen.

GABRIELLA

How is that possible?

CRUZ

It's a big kitchen.

ELENA

It's in the center of the house.

GABRIELLA

But the doors are always next to windows and the windows are looking out on the--

ELENA

It's all about how you look, Gabriella.

GABRIELLA

But looking outside and then moving in that direction should take you--

ELENA

I was referring to your appearance. You need to dress up for rehearsal.

GABRIELLA

When is rehearsal?

ELENA

Now.

CRUZ

Didn't we just have rehearsal?

ELENA

We haven't rehearsed since we've been here.

GABRIELLA

Elena, we rehearsed last night.

CRUZ

You made us play until the sun came up.

ELENA

We haven't seen the sun in days.

GABRIELLA

What do you think that light is outside?

ELENA

Don't you know about snow, Gabriella? Don't you know how the moon bounces off it? *Don't you know anything?*

(BERNITA enters.)

BERNITA

What's she screaming about now?

ELENA

Where have you been?

BERNITA

In the kitchen. I keep trying to take a walk outside and I still find myself winding up under the pots and pans, so I made a little snack.

CRUZ

Can you make me one? I'm starving.

BERNITA

There's no food. I ate one of the pans.

ELENA

We're guests here. Can you *please* ask like it?

GABRIELLA

How did you even find this place?

ELENA

There was an ad in the airport. Stuck to one of the planes.

BERNITA

We never should have put her in charge of lodging.

(BASILIO enters.)

BASILIO

Have I gone to bed yet?

CRUZ

You don't look like you're in bed.

BASILIO

I meant--have I slept?

ELENA

All you do is sleep.

BERNITA

Demons need rest.

ELENA

Are you still on about that? He's your cousin.

BASILIO

Brother.

ELENA

Brother. He's your brother. Not your cousin. And not your nothing. Not a stranger. Why am I the one who has to maintain sanity around here?

GABRIELLA

Is there any chance I could be pregnant?

(ALL look at her.)

ELENA

Who would have gotten you pregnant?

GABRIELLA

The Borochi?

BERNITA

There she goes again, making up words. Borochi, *pregnant--*

CRUZ

I might be pregnant by the Borochi too--whatever any of that means.

BASILIO

Are we all losing our marbles? Is that what's happening? It can happen to a group of people, you know. We should all drop acid and see if that helps.

GABRIELLA

I like that idea.

CRUZ

Me too.

ELENA/BERNITA

No.

(A BOROCHI howls.)

CRUZ

Elena, is there no way to get out or no way to get in or both?

ELENA

It would have to be both. Both is the only way it could be.

BERNITA

How do you know that?

ELENA

I don't.

BASILIO

Anecdotal evidence will tell you that we're in much more danger from each other than we are from anything external.

BERNITA

So you're saying we should be afraid of *you*?

BASILIO

Not necessarily me, but I suppose, if the danger were within, I'd have a one in five chance of being the one you should all be worried about.

GABRIELLA

I'm worried about food.

ELENA

We have plenty of food.

CRUZ

Is any of it edible?

ELENA

No, but there's plenty of it.

BERNITA

We're going to starve.

GABRIELLA

We could go hunting.

BERNITA

What's there to hunt?

GABRIELLA

The Borochoi.

CRUZ

I don't want to eat a living thing.

GABRIELLA

Oh, it'll be dead before we eat it.

BASILIO

We could grow our own food.

ELENA

We're only going to be here for a week.

(ALL, but ELENA laugh.)

What was so funny about that?

CRUZ

We've already been here for weeks.

BASILIO

Months.

GABRIELLA

Has it gotten colder?

ELENA

It's always cold in here.

BERNITA

I'm burning up.

CRUZ

You might have a fever.

BASILIO

We should probably just kill her.

ALL, but BASILIO

What?

BASILIO

Sorry. I meant '*put her out of her misery.*'

BERNITA

I'm just warm. I'm not sick.

BASILIO

That's exactly what a sick person would say.

BERNITA

I am *not* sick.

CRUZ

You don't look well.

BERNITA

None of us look well! We've been trapped in this castle for years.

ELENA

A week.

BERNITA

You had short hair when we arrived, Elena.

ELENA

I've never had short hair. Not even when it was fashionable.

GABRIELLA

When was short hair fashionable?

ELENA

In the 20's.

CRUZ

The 1920's?

ELENA

When else?

BERNITA

When were the 1920's?

ELENA

What kind of question is that? They were...a long time ago.

BASILIO

How long ago?

GABRIELLA

Thirty years ago.

ELENA

Longer than that.

BERNITA

It would be...ten years ago?

ELENA

I said *longer*.

CRUZ

Then how much longer?

ELENA

I don't know. I don't do math.

BASILIO

It's not math. It's language.

(CRUZ coughs. A moment.)

ELENA

How long have you had that cough?

CRUZ

Not long.

BERNITA

But you do have a cough?

CRUZ

That was the first time.

GABRIELLA

That was the first time you coughed?

CRUZ

Yes.

BASILIO

You've never coughed before?

CRUZ

No.

BERNITA

Never in your entire life?

CRUZ

No.

ELENA

You look like you want to cough again.

CRUZ

I don't.

BASILIO

You can cough, Cruz, it's okay.

CRUZ

I don't need to.

GABRIELLA

Are you sure?

BERNITA

You should cough if you have to cough, Cruz.

ELENA

It's not healthy to hold it in.

BASILIO

It's like when you try not to sneeze and a badger steals your uncle.

CRUZ

But I don't want to get anyone sick.

ELENA

It's just a cough.

BERNITA

Nobody's going to get sick.

BASILIO

You're definitely not sick.

GABRIELLA

You look great.

BERNITA

Go ahead and cough, Cruz.

ELENA

Go on.

GABRIELLA

It's okay.

BASILIO

Cough.

(A moment. CRUZ coughs. They ALL throw themselves on him. CRUZ screams. The lights shift.)

Scene Six

(BERNITA in the kitchen. She's eating what looks like the mangled carcass of something. She's using her hands and making quite a mess. A door opens. The BOROCHI stands in the doorway.)

BOROCHI

Hungry?

(BERNITA looks up. She laughs.)

BERNITA

What are you supposed to be?

BOROCHI

The lover of the Borochoi you're eating.

BERNITA

I...found this.

BOROCHI

No, you didn't. I left it for you.

BERNITA

Do you...want some?

BOROCHI

No, I already ate two of her litter. Well...our litter.

BERNITA

So you're...a cannibal?

BOROCHI

Not usually, but--It's been a long winter.

BERNITA

There's no food in this kitchen. I'm making do with what was here. I couldn't eat another spatula.

BOROCHI

I'm not judging you, Bernita.

BERNITA

I was starving.

BOROCHI

I'm familiar. With starvation.

BERNITA

Are you trying to fatten me up? Is that what this is? I eat your lover, and then you eat me, and you get double the food? Like when you shove all that gunk down a goose's throat and the liver tastes--

BOROCHI

I don't work that hard for my meals.

BERNITA

Why did you leave this for me?

BOROCHI

Because you left something for me?

BERNITA

I did?

BOROCHI

Cruz. I found him out in the garden. He was scrumptious.

BERNITA

I didn't...We...We just wanted to leave him somewhere cold so that his body would be preserved for when we get out of here and we can let his family give him a proper burial. That was the thinking behind it. It was compassionate. It was a compassionate thing that we did for him, and if there were any other ways to--

(The BOROCHI growls. BERNITA shivers. BOROCHI smiles.)

BOROCHI

Didn't you think about all the animals who would come calling once you left perfectly good meat out in the elements? Or do you think you're the only one who's starving?

BERNITA

I didn't--

BOROCHI

Admit it, Bernita. You wanted me to consume him. You didn't want any proof of what you'd done.

BERNITA

It wasn't just me.

BOROCHI

You're going to lie and say he wandered off, aren't you?

BERNITA

But he did. In a way, he did.

BOROCHI

You all set upon him.

BERNITA

But then we went to bed. When we went to bed, he was still breathing. I think? And then we went to bed. And he could have gotten up and left. He could have wandered outside. That's possible.

BOROCHI

The only reason you can say that is because you let your brother do the dirtiest part for you.

BERNITA

Basilio told me to go to bed.

BOROCHI

And then he left it for Elena.

BERNITA

I was tired. I didn't feel well. I still don't feel well.

(Another growl.)

BOROCHI

Better not say that out loud, Bernita. I'd hate to see you go the way of Cruz. You're much smarter than he is, and intelligence should be kept intact if at all possible.

BERNITA

What else were we supposed to do? He was putting us in danger.

BOROCHI

You were already in danger.

BERNITA

Nobody else was coughing.

BOROCHI

Sickness isn't the only threat, Bernita.

BERNITA

Who told you my name?

BOROCHI

You did. While you slept. I heard you whispering it. I have very good ears.

BERNITA

Will you--

BOROCHI

Yes?

BERNITA

Will you eat the others?

BOROCHI

Would you like me to?

BERNITA

Maybe.

BOROCHI

Not Gabriella though.

BERNITA

But she's not talented. I don't even know why she's in the group.

BOROCHI

She supplies the weakness. Every group needs weakness.

BERNITA

That doesn't make any sense.

BOROCHI

Nothing but strength and the whole thing falls in on itself. Strength is heavy. Too heavy for most to carry.

BERNITA

Are you very strong?

BOROCHI

Stronger than your brother.

BERNITA

My brother doesn't need to be strong. He's...sly. Like you.

BOROCHI

Would you like me to eat him?

BERNITA

No. But he's not here. That Basilio isn't Basilio. But if he was here...no.

(A beat.)

Yes.

(A moment.)

No.

(A beat.)

No. Never mind.

BOROCHI

What if he asks me to eat you?

BERNITA

I wish he would.

BOROCHI

You want to be eaten?

BERNITA

I want to leave.

BOROCHI

There are doors.

BERNITA

That go nowhere.

BOROCHI

They go to the kitchen.

BERNITA

I'm sick of the kitchen.

BOROCHI

But it's so cozy in here.

BERNITA

Then you stay here. Let me go outside.

BOROCHI

Outside you'll go the way of Cruz.

BERNITA

Or I'll be the new you. I like your fur.

BOROCHI

Do you want to touch it?

BERNITA

I want to strip it from you and cover myself in it.

(She picks up a knife.)

BOROCHI

Do you have any experience with taking a life?

BERNITA

I eat, don't I?

BOROCHI

Do you want to hear the way I howl when I'm in pain and know you're the one causing the pain?

BERNITA

I'm in pain. Why shouldn't you be?

BOROCHI

Do you worry about your moral state?

BERNITA

I went looking for right and wrong and all I found was the kitchen.

BOROCHI

You should know that after one bite, I don't stop until the job is done.

BERNITA

Then I suppose I'll have to bite you first.

(The BOROCHI begins to circle BERNITA. He's amused.)

BOROCHI

Are you the dangerous one? It's always so hard to tell.

BERNITA

I've always wanted to be dangerous. It seems to be the only way to protect one's self from danger.

BOROCHI

My lips are wet, Bernita.

BERNITA

So are mine. And I'm hungry.

BOROCHI

You just ate.

BERNITA

Hunger makes you hungrier.

BOROCHI

One of your fellow musicians could walk in at any moment.

BERNITA

Then I'll eat them too.

BOROCHI

Were you the one I saw standing over Cruz in the night? I thought it was one of my pack, but maybe--

BERNITA

Maybe I'm one of your pack?

BOROCHI

Will you grow fur then?

BERNITA

I hope so. It would help keep me warm.

BOROCHI

I wonder who tastes better--you or Basilio?

BERNITA

Me.

BOROCHI

Why you?

BERNITA

I've had longer to marinate.

BOROCHI

You're twins.

BERNITA

I was born nineteen minutes before him.

BOROCHI

Nineteen minutes.

BERNITA

The happiest nineteen minutes of my life.

BOROCHI

Have you ever listened to a nineteen minute song?

BERNITA

I'm a classical musician. Every piece of music I love is the length of a Russian audiobook.

BOROCHI

Do you ever get lost in the time?

BERNITA

You have to get lost in something.

BOROCHI

I have no sense of time.

BERNITA

Because you're not human?

BOROCHI

Because constant hunger becomes its own sense of time.

BERNITA

I want to be hungry all the time.

BOROCHI

You'd run out of food.

BERNITA

I'd eat Elena.

BOROCHI

And then what?

BERNITA

I'd eat Gabriella.

BOROCHI

And then what?

BERNITA

I'd eat my brother, because he's not my brother anyway.

BOROCHI

And then what?

BERNITA

I'd find my real brother and eat him.

BOROCHI

And then what, Bernita?

BERNITA

I'd eat you.

BOROCHI

Why would you wait so long to get to me?

BERNITA

Because you should always save the best meal for last. That's you. You're the very best meal. The dessert. You're cake and chocolate.

BOROCHI

I underestimated you.

BERNITA

I've always been underestimated.

BOROCHI

What was the best thing you ever ate?

BERNITA

Once I didn't eat for two years and then I had one hard-boiled egg with a little bit of salt on it. It was incredible.

BOROCHI

The egg?

BERNITA

The deprivation. And what it did to the egg.

BOROCHI

I've always had dreams of finding a henhouse.

BERNITA

But you have. You have found one. Can't you hear the chickens? Can't you hear them clucking? Go. Go through the castle. Find them. Find them and bring them into the kitchen and you and I will feast until-- Until I feast on you.

BOROCHI

But then you'll be all alone.

BERNITA

And then I'll start with my left leg. And then my right.

BOROCHI

Bernita--

BERNITA

My fingers. Then an arm.

BOROCHI

What will be left?

BERNITA

I'll be so full.

BOROCHI

What will be left of anything?

BERNITA

I'll finally be--

(Blackout.)

Act Two

(ELENA is mopping something up. This happens towards the end of the intermission. As the lights go down in the theater, ELENA continues mopping. BASILIO enters.)

BASILIO

My sister is missing.

ELENA

She can't be missing.

BASILIO

I can't find her.

ELENA

That doesn't make her *missing*. That just means she doesn't want you to find her.

BASILIO

Have you seen her?

ELENA

I don't look for people who don't want to be found.

BASILIO

Aren't we supposed to have a rehearsal.

ELENA

All of a sudden you care about rehearsing.

BASILIO

We have to do something. It's been a few days.

ELENA

It's been a few years. Shows what you know.

BASILIO

Didn't there used to be more of us?

ELENA

More than you and me?

BASILIO

You, me, and my sister.

ELENA

And Gabriella.

BASILIO

Who's Gabriella?

ELENA

The woman who's not me.

BASILIO

That's my sister.

ELENA

The woman who's not me and not your sister.

BASILIO

Are you thinking of that dead Borochoi we found outside?

ELENA

You mean the body?

BASILIO

Yes.

ELENA

That was a person.

BASILIO

It was?

ELENA

Yes.

BASILIO

Do we know who it was?

ELENA

No.

BASILIO

Should we call someone about it?

ELENA

Who we would call? There's no service here. Would we call the police? Marie Antoinette? Our phones are dead. The body was in the garden when we got here. There's no electricity to charge the phones. Maybe the person killed themselves but if we report it, we'll be charged with murder. I'm not a murderer. *You* might be a murderer, but *I'm* not a murderer.

BASILIO

It looked like a Borochoi.

ELENA

Cruz was very hairy.

BASILIO

Who is Cruz?

ELENA

What?

BASILIO

Who's Cruz?

(ELENA laughs.)

ELENA

You're very funny, Bernita.

BASILIO

I'm Basilio.

ELENA

I can never tell you apart.

BASILIO

We're not identical.

ELENA

Why not? It seems like it would be easier that way.

(GABRIELLA enters.)

GABRIELLA

Has anyone seen Cruz?

BASILIO

We murdered him.

GABRIELLA

I thought we murdered Basilio?

BASILIO

No, I'm Basilio.

GABRIELLA

So we...*didn't* kill you?

BASILIO

No.

GABRIELLA

That's too bad. I liked Cruz.

ELENA

Whereas I didn't care for Cruz, but I still liked him better than you.

BASILIO

Have you seen my sister?

GABRIELLA

Isn't Elena your sister?

ELENA

Bite your tongue.

BASILIO

My sister is Bernita.

ELENA/GABRIELLA

Have you checked the kitchen?/Look in the kitchen.

BASILIO

How do I get to the kitchen?

ELENA

How do you *not* get to the kitchen?

BASILIO

Have we heard any news about what's happening out there?

GABRIELLA

In the kitchen?

BASILIO

In the world.

GABRIELLA

I don't understand what you mean.

BASILIO

You know why we're here, don't you?

GABRIELLA

To rehearse?

ELENA

By the way, good rehearsal last night.

BASILIO

We didn't rehearse last night.

GABRIELLA

We did. You weren't there.

BASILIO

There are only four of us left. If I wasn't there--

ELENA

Three of us. One, two, three. Or can't you count?

BASILIO

There weren't three of us. There were four.

GABRIELLA

There were five. Six if you count the Borochoi.

(A HOWL is heard.)

BASILIO

What the--

(ELENA coughs. BASILIO and GABRIELLA look at her. A moment. Then, ELENA takes out a knife.)

ELENA

It's just a cough.

GABRIELLA

That's what Cruz said.

ELENA

Who is Cruz?

BASILIO

Maybe you should stay in your room, Elena.

ELENA

You think if I'm sick, you two aren't sick? We've been here all this time. The windows are nailed shut. The doors don't lead to anywhere. We touch each other constantly. We hold each other constantly. We call Mother Theresa. Cruz was sick and we sunk our teeth into him!

BASILIO

You're making up stories. You're delirious. Do you have a fever? It seems as though you may have a fever.

(He takes a step towards her and she brandishes the knife at him. He steps back)

ELENA

I--have never--felt better--in my--life.

(She's short of breath.)

GABRIELLA

She needs to go outside.

ELENA

What's outside? There is no *outside*.

BASILIO

We have to put her there. She can't just *go*.

ELENA

I'm not going anywhere. I'm in charge of this group.

BASILIO

Who decided that?

ELENA

Do you want to be in charge, Basilio?

GABRIELLA

Are we still a group?

(WALLS SHAKE.)

BASILIO

Elena, did you do that?

ELENA

Do what?

GABRIELLA

She couldn't have.

BASILIO

She's in charge, isn't she?

ELENA

What are you two talking about?

BASILIO

You're going to bring the castle down around us. Then you'll be outside. Then we'll *all* be outside.

ELENA

How?

(Then, she sneezes. The floor RUMBLES.)

What was that?

BASILIO

That was you.

ELENA

You think I'm causing earthquakes now?

(BASILIO takes out his own knife.)

BASILIO

I think there are great forces at work.

GABRIELLA

Are you two the reason I couldn't find a steak knife last night?

ELENA

You found steak?

GABRIELLA

No, I was trying to cut myself out of a dress.

BASILIO

No steak. No food. There's only water from the melting snow. It gets colder in here everyday.

ELENA

It'll warm up. Things get cold, then they get warm.

BASILIO

Stop talking about natural progression. We have left the natural order behind us. Now is the time of miracles.

ELENA

You've been radicalized.

GABRIELLA

Have you been talking to the Boroichi?

BASILIO

I'm going in my room, once I find it, and I am not coming out until we're ready to leave.

ELENA

But what about our concert?

BASILIO

There isn't going to be a concert. They won't even let us go outside, and you think they're going to let us hold a concert?

GABRIELLA

I'm not sure I remember how to play.

ELENA

That's because you never rehearse.

GABRIELLA

Do you remember how to play?

ELENA

Of course I do.

BASILIO

What do you play?

(A beat. ELENA thinks about it. She doesn't remember.)

ELENA

I...I'm a musician.

BASILIO

But what do you play?

ELENA

I am a musician.

BASILIO

You can't just say that.

GABRIELLA

Let her say whatever she wants.

BASILIO

Let her say she's a musician. Let her say that she's well. Let her say that we're going to get out of here if that's what she wants to say.

ELENA

I never said we were getting out of here. I said *I'm* getting out of here.

BASILIO

Drop your knife.

ELENA

No.

BASILIO

Or bring it to your throat.

GABRIELLA

No!

BASILIO

You've infected us all.

ELENA

I am healthy.

BASILIO

You are diseased.

GABRIELLA

Who do you think you are talking to her this way?

BASILIO

The two of you killed Cruz.

ELENA

And where were you?

BASILIO

I am where I have always been. Elsewhere.

ELENA

How convenient to always be elsewhere.

(The WALLS start to move.)

GABRIELLA

Are the walls...?

(The FLOOR RUMBLES.)

ELENA

No talking about the walls.

GABRIELLA

But--

BASILIO

Who's doing this?

ELENA

Nothing is--

(BASILIO begins to cough. He covers his mouth, but blood comes pouring out of it, splattering on the floor. GABRIELLA and ELENA back up, but the walls push them closer to him. BASILIO can't stop coughing. Blood is everywhere. GABRIELLA and ELENA scream, but all we hear is howling. Blackout.)

Scene Eight

(BASILIO is laying in bed, barely conscious. The BOROCHI enters dressed as a nurse.)

BOROCHI

How are you feeling?

BASILIO

Am I still in the castle?

BOROCHI

No.

BASILIO

Was I ever there?

BOROCHI

What do you think?

BASILIO

I think it was a dream. I think I closed my eyes and when I opened them, I discovered that I was still intact.

BOROCHI

Where do dreams live?

BASILIO

Are you a nurse?

BOROCHI

I'm an angel.

BASILIO

Did I die? Did I die in my dream?

BOROCHI

Do you think it's possible to die in a dream?

BASILIO

I can't feel my legs.

BOROCHI

You're just so handsome, Basilio. Even now.

BASILIO

Will I be beautiful even after I die?

BOROCHI

Some have stayed intact. There was a nun--

BASILIO

You must do what I say. Pack me in ice. Cover me in glass.

BOROCHI

I should write this down.

BASILIO

There was so much blood. I tried to keep it in, but it kept coming out, and before I knew it, there was nothing left to me at all.

BOROCHI

When you were born?

BASILIO

I started coughing--

BOROCHI

You're sick.

BASILIO

I tried so hard not to get sick.

BOROCHI

But you were always sick.

BASILIO

That can't be right.

BOROCHI

Sickness is still there even when it doesn't show.

BASILIO

Did I infect the others?

BOROCHI

Possibly.

BASILIO

They must be sick now. The walls closed in. I couldn't stop them. I couldn't stop anything. My charm was no match for the architecture.

BOROCHI

That was Elena's fault.

BASILIO

The blood was everywhere.

BOROCHI

Blood carries.

BASILIO

Why am I so clean?

BOROCHI

I licked it off you.

BASILIO

What kind of nurse are you?

BOROCHI

You're lucky I didn't do what I do to a member of my pack when they're sick. We don't even eat them. We cast them out. We wait until they fall asleep and then we disappear in the night.

BASILIO

But I *have* been cast out.

BOROCHI

In warmth. In comfort.

BASILIO

You call this comfort?

BOROCHI

Try being a Boroichi in the snow.

BASILIO

I know about being a Boroichi.

BOROCHI

Yes, I think you do.

(A beat.)

BASILIO

I should have gotten rid of them all when I had the chance.

BOROCHI

Then you'd be alone.

BASILIO

I'm alone now anyway, aren't I?

BOROCHI

I suppose so.

BASILIO

We all end up alone. Why be dragged there? To loneliness? Why not run towards it? Run towards your enemies. It'll terrify them. Great generals do that in battle. They run down the hill screaming, and no matter how outmatched they are, it is enough to give them an advantage. Loneliness is no different than that.

BOROCHI

What do you want to have happen to you after you die?

BASILIO

Nothing. Nothing at all. Just leave me here.

BOROCHI

I can't. You'd haunt the castle. It would be too odd. A lonely Bolivian ghost stalking the halls.

BASILIO

Send me home.

BOROCHI

They wouldn't take you even if I could.

BASILIO

How close are we to the ocean?

BOROCHI

Not very close.

BASILIO

What do you feel you owe me?

BOROCHI

I feel a great debt to the dead. More than what I feel I owe you now. Still breathing. Still complaining. Still reeking. My sense of smell is pronounced and it's crippling.

BASILIO

Will you bathe me?

BOROCHI

I could.

BASILIO

I'd like to leave clean.

BOROCHI

All right.

(The BOROCHI moves to BASILIO and takes off his clothes. It gets a bucket from under the bed, and begins to bathe him.)

BASILIO

You're being so tender.

BOROCHI

As opposed to...?

BASILIO

I know you're a killer.

BOROCHI

There's a tenderness to it. Engaging with death.

BASILIO

I was so sick all throughout my childhood. Bedridden. The first time I ever felt like a proper human being was after my mother died. She'd been poisoning me. Not my sister, just me. Nobody knew why. It's a syndrome, that's true, but...She never took me to hospital. Which is most unusual. Most people who poison their children...They want attention. From doctors. Nurses. They want to be told they're such a saint for taking care of a poor sick child. My mother never got any of that. But she didn't want me dead either. She only gave me enough poison to keep me ill, but never to kill me. I wonder why.

BOROCHI

She wanted you dependent on her. Completely.

BASILIO

I would have been anyway. I was a child.

BOROCHI

Children grow. They get old. They learn to walk. They challenge you. Try to take over from you.

BASILIO

She didn't want me playing an instrument. She forbade it. I only picked it up after she died. One of her boyfriends--he took us in. Me. My sister. He bought me a cello. I was never as good at playing it as I

could have been if I had started earlier. He would tell me that. He would always tell me how good I could have been if it weren't for my mother.

BOROCHI

How did your mother die?

BASILIO

She fell down the stairs.

BOROCHI

She fell?

BASILIO

She liked to stand at the top of the stairs and look down.

BOROCHI

Are you sure she--

BASILIO

I asked Bernita.

BOROCHI

What did she say?

BASILIO

She said '*Look how much better you're doing.*' That was her response.

BOROCHI

And you--

BASILIO

We never spoke of it again.

(The BOROCHI stops bathing BASILIO.)

BOROCHI

I think you're clean now.

BASILIO

Can you pretend to be a priest the way you pretend to be a nurse?

BOROCHI

I suppose I could.

BASILIO

Would you read me the Last Rites?

BOROCHI

You're a Catholic?

BASILIO

No.

BOROCHI

What do you believe?

BASILIO

I believe hard work leads to greatness.

BOROCHI

Did you work hard?

BASILIO

Not hard enough. Not long enough.

BOROCHI

What else do you believe?

BASILIO

That there is no Heaven.

BOROCHI

Do you still believe that?

BASILIO

Yes, but I'd like to be wrong.

BOROCHI

Do you believe you could get into a Heaven that looks like the Heaven you don't believe in?

BASILIO

No.

BOROCHI

Why not?

BASILIO

Because you're not the first Boroichi I've invited into my room.

BOROCHI

We all like the company of the enemy sometimes, Basilio.

BASILIO

But what about when *you're* the enemy?

BOROCHI

What do you mean?

BASILIO

I see angels when I play. They come towards me and I play faster. The faster I play, the farther away they stay until I can't see them anymore. I don't want them to come any closer, because I know why they're there. I should have died from that poison. I shouldn't be here, but I was sneaky. I cheated. I cheated death, and then my mother fell down the stairs because my sister pushed her and that was the ultimate cheat. I always thought my mother was my angel, but....It's Bernita. That's why I keep her close. She was the only angel I wanted around me, because she was the only one not trying to take me away.

(A beat.)

BOROCHI

Where is your sister now?

(BASILIO smiles.)

BASILIO

You want to find her, don't you?

BOROCHI

She was in the kitchen.

BASILIO

We're all in the kitchen.

BOROCHI

She's not there now. I checked.

BASILIO

Then she finally did it. She escaped. Good for her.

BOROCHI

I'll find her.

BASILIO

Or she'll find you. I wouldn't go standing at the top of any stairs.

(He gasps.)

BOROCHI

What? What's wrong?

BASILIO

They're here.

BOROCHI

Who?

BASILIO

The angels.

BOROCHI

There are no angels here.

BASILIO

They want to hear me play. Fetch me my instrument.

BOROCHI

You're hallucinating.

BASILIO

They're begging me. Have you ever heard angels beg?

BOROCHI

You see no angels.

BASILIO

There are so many.

BOROCHI

You're alone, Basilio.

BASILIO

No, I'm not.

(He smiles.)

For the first time--I'm not.

(Lights shift.)

Scene Nine

(The kitchen. GABRIELLA enters, covered in blood. She's holding a knife. A sound from the other side of the kitchen. It startles her. She turns toward it holding the knife, which means she doesn't see BERNITA coming up behind her until she's almost upon her, but she turns at the last minute and holds the knife on her. BERNITA pulls out her own knife and the two are at an impasse.)

BERNITA

Who's blood is that?

GABRIELLA

Mine.

BERNITA

I don't believe you.

GABRIELLA

Can I ask you something, Bernita?

BERNITA

Go ahead.

GABRIELLA

How much do you like your brother?

BERNITA

I don't have a brother.

GABRIELLA

That's the right answer.

BERNITA

Did you know that I've been made God of the Kitchen?

GABRIELLA

By who?

BERNITA

There was a war. I fought.

GABRIELLA

Who did you fight?

BERNITA

The Borochoi.

GABRIELLA

And you won?

BERNITA

I vanquished it.

GABRIELLA

And what about Elena?

BERNITA

What about Elena?

GABRIELLA

What did you do to her?

BERNITA

She was sick. I couldn't let her in the kitchen. I can't go letting sick people walk in and out of here.

GABRIELLA

How do you know you're not sick?

BERNITA

I've transcended health and sickness.

GABRIELLA

Are you a God or a--

BERNITA

Do you want to stay here or not?

(A beat.)

GABRIELLA

Not?

(A moment.)

BERNITA

Then where are you going to go?

GABRIELLA

Home.

BERNITA

Where's home?

GABRIELLA

Tarija.

BERNITA

What's that?

GABRIELLA

Tarija. In Bolivia.

BERNITA

Which is what?

GABRIELLA

What?

BERNITA

What is Bolivia?

GABRIELLA

It's...a country. *Our* country.

BERNITA

You're just using words, Gabriella.

GABRIELLA

You asked me a question.

BERNITA

I asked you for answers. You're giving me puzzles.

(HOWLING.)

Was that inside or outside?

GABRIELLA

Is there a difference?

BERNITA

I'm not scared of the Borochoi.

GABRIELLA

You met the Borochoi?

BERNITA

Oh yes. We're very friendly.

(HOWLING, but this time, it sounds like many BOROCHI.)

GABRIELLA

Is there any way to barricade ourselves in here?

BERNITA

Yes. Pile up all the spoons against all the doors.

GABRIELLA

Maybe we could hide inside the freezer.

BERNITA

Then we'll freeze.

GABRIELLA

Or the stove.

BERNITA

We'll burn.

GABRIELLA

We have to do something. Nobody ever wants to do anything. Everybody just wants to lie down on the knives and wait for them to cut you.

(BERNITA sneezes. A moment.)

BERNITA

Just a sneeze. Not a cough.

GABRIELLA

Why would that make me feel better?

BERNITA

Everybody sneezes here. If you don't sneeze, then something's wrong with you. Is something wrong with you?

GABRIELLA

No.

BERNITA

I don't believe you.

GABRIELLA

You're not a doctor.

BERNITA

I'm better than a doctor. I'm a seer. I can see into you. I can see your sickness.

(BERNITA coughs.)

Dammit.

GABRIELLA

You need to go lie down. Go find some more knives.

BERNITA

No!

GABRIELLA

You can't run the kitchen if you're sick.

BERNITA

I'm not sick.

GABRIELLA

That's not what your mother told me.

(A beat.)

BERNITA

You never knew my mother.

GABRIELLA

What do you think happened as she hit each of those steps?

BERNITA

Stop it.

GABRIELLA

Do you think as her forehead hit the first step she lost consciousness?

BERNITA

You're afraid of me.

GABRIELLA

Did the second one kill her?

BERNITA

You're trembling!

GABRIELLA

And with the third one--did she see beyond her own life?

BERNITA

You'll die of fright standing before me!

GABRIELLA

What did you do, Bernita?

BERNITA

She was hurting my brother.

GABRIELLA

How could you do such a thing?

BERNITA

She was going to kill him.

GABRIELLA

You played God.

BERNITA

We all play God. Every day. Everything we do. We take a step to the side, and somebody moves forward, and if they fall, we make them fall by letting them. Just by letting them.

GABRIELLA

You should eat something.

(GABRIELLA begins preparing a meal for BERNITA.)

BERNITA

We don't have any food.

GABRIELLA

You know the story of stone soup?

BERNITA

In stone soup, there was food. That story is about teaching generosity, not about making something out of nothing. You need the Bible for that.

GABRIELLA

It takes years to starve to death.

BERNITA

We've been here for years.

GABRIELLA

We just got here this morning.

BERNITA

Were you here with us when we arrived?

GABRIELLA

I play the flute.

BERNITA

You play beautifully.

GABRIELLA

I just learned how to play this morning.

BERNITA

You can have a sense of someone's talent without ever knowing anything about them.

GABRIELLA

When you and Basilio play alongside each other, I can't tell the sounds apart.

BERNITA

He plays faster than I do. I have to speed to catch up.

GABRIELLA

Why not ask him to slow down?

BERNITA

I don't believe in it. You go as fast as the fastest player.

GABRIELLA

Your arms. They go and go--

BERNITA

I feel carried along by it. The speed I'm trying to match.

GABRIELLA

Elena yells--

BERNITA

Not until after. In the moment, in front of an audience, she's not allowed to. That's what I love about performance. Once it starts, there is no control. Only the illusion of control.

GABRIELLA

Have I ever slowed you down?

BERNITA

You go faster than you think, Gabriella.

GABRIELLA

I would like to be graceful.

BERNITA

Grace is given to you. It can't be created.

(GABRIELLA has finished making something for BERNITA. She puts the plate in front of her. It's piled high with food.)

GABRIELLA

Eat.

BERNITA

This looks like real food. Is there more?

GABRIELLA

We'll be rescued soon.

BERNITA

We don't need to be rescued. People know where we are.

GABRIELLA

There are all kinds of rescue.

BERNITA

We could leave right now if we wanted to, but we're doing the right thing.

GABRIELLA

The right thing?

BERNITA

For those outside.

GABRIELLA

There's nothing outside. Just snow. Just the cold weather and the trees with their branches snapping from the frost.

BERNITA

At least it's warm in here.

GABRIELLA

I can see your breath.

BERNITA

That's not the cold. It's just that my breath is warmer than the air in the room, but it's not because the air in the room is cold.

GABRIELLA

At least if I can see your breath, I can keep away from it.

BERNITA

Do you think they'll find us here one day?

GABRIELLA

Who?

BERNITA

Whoever decides to come looking for us.

GABRIELLA

Everyone we know is halfway across the world.

BERNITA

Do you know anyone who would care enough to come looking?

GABRIELLA

My sister might.

BERNITA

What's your sister's name?

GABRIELLA

Bernita.

BERNITA

That's my name.

GABRIELLA

Would you come looking for me?

BERNITA

Nobody even knows we're here.

GABRIELLA

Of course they do. We're in the news. We're famous. They're talking about us all over the world.

BERNITA

For now. But they'll forget.

GABRIELLA

And then what?

BERNITA

What?

GABRIELLA

After they forget--then what?

BERNITA

Who could ever forget?

(A beat.)

No, really. How would you make yourself...

(Lights shift.)

...Forget?

(MUSIC.)

Scene Ten

(ELENA in the garden. The BOROCHI approaches.)

BOROCHI

You must be cold.

ELENA

I can't feel it.

BOROCHI

You should come inside.

ELENA

I've spent enough time inside.

BOROCHI

You have rehearsal.

ELENA

There's no one left to rehearse.

BOROCHI

The beautiful thing about music is that you don't need anyone else to play it, or so I'm told.

ELENA

I used to play alone. I used to do everything alone. I spent most of my time by myself. In a room. Me and my...my instrument.

BOROCHI

Why were you alone?

ELENA

My father would lock me in the room. Make me play for hours. When he heard me make a mistake, he'd add ten minutes to the clock. When I played through a piece flawlessly over and over again, I'd hear the key turn, and the door unlock, and I'd collapse with relief. Before then, there was no eating. No rest. No comfort. No parental love being exhibited. Life was about approval. That's how I learned to look at art. As a way to achieve approval. As a way to touch something always beyond your reach. As a way to learn perfection. Never understanding that perfection is the same as Manderlay. As Shangri-la. A place that can never be seen, because it never existed in the first place.

BOROCHI

Show me the part of you that you'd like me to bite first.

ELENA

Start with my hands.

BOROCHI

Cruel.

ELENA

I want to know there's no going back. To where I came from. To what I thought I could do. To what I was worth to other people but not myself. Start with my hands.

(The BOROCHI takes ELENA's hands, but rather than bite them, it takes them tenderly and leads her to what looks like a concert hall. It sits her down. There is no instrument waiting. There's nothing waiting, but it's a beautiful hall nonetheless.)

BOROCHI

No one is here.

ELENA

Where am I?

BOROCHI

Did you ever love it? The music?

ELENA

There's no way for me to know.

BOROCHI

But you can find out.

ELENA

There's no one here?

BOROCHI

And there never will be, Elena.

ELENA

What does that mean?

BOROCHI

It means you can go back to the castle. Eat. Drink. Sleep. Rest. And then come here and make all the mistakes you like. And never be punished for it. You can have both. For the first time, everything can be true all at once.

ELENA

And I don't have to play if I don't want to?

BOROCHI

No. No, you don't. I just wanted you to know that this was here. That it was possible.

ELENA

May I confess something to you?

BOROCHI

Yes.

ELENA

I...have *never* wanted to play.

BOROCHI

I know that.

ELENA

But now...

(She mimes picking up an instrument that isn't there. A moment passes. She begins to play. The lights slowly come up on the other musicians. Each playing their own instrument that isn't there. First BASILIO, then CRUZ, then BERNITA, and finally GABRIELLA. Although we can't see the instruments, we hear the MUSIC. They play together and when they finish, they each stand up abruptly looking out into the darkness with a bit of fear and a bit of relief. The MUSIC is still playing. Who is playing it? They don't know. They just keep staring out into where there might be someone listening.)

End of Play

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *The Borochi was written in 2020 after I read a news story about a group of musicians trapped in a castle in Europe. The castle was surrounded by wolves, and (as best I can remember), the musicians were being housed there while they were awaiting a performance that had been cancelled due to the pandemic. I had no desire at the time to write about anything pandemic-related, and I tend to veer away from stories that "sound like they would make for a good play," especially stories that are making the rounds on social media. Something about the gothic nature of this story appealed to me, and I had been wanting to write*

something within the horror genre for some time. It also struck me that I had no idea when I (or anyone for that matter) would have a play produced again. That fear transformed into a feeling of liberation, and I wrote The Borochi without any consideration for how it would be produced. There are elements of the play that would prove to be a real challenge for a creative team, but at the same time, I think the real challenge exists within the mystery of the play itself. Even as the playwright, I'm left with so many questions every time I go back and look at the play, but more than anything else I've written, it's the one I come back to time and again.

AUTHOR BIO: Kevin B is a playwright from New England. They have been produced at the New York Fringe Festival, Village Playwrights, 2 Oceans Theater, and Theater Southwest. They are the author of "Combustion." (IG: KBJR0719)