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Dramatic Publishing

THE WOLF AND ITS SHADOWS



BY
SANDRA FENICHEL ASHER

THE WOLF AND ITS SHADOWS

IUPUI/IRT Bonderman Award Winner

AATE/Unpublished Play Reading Project Award Winner

**Commissioned and first produced by
the Omaha Theater for Young People.**

Folktale. By Sandra Fenichel Asher. Cast: 2m., 1w., with doubling, or up to 18 (2m., 1w., 16 either gender). In the forest at night, Wolf and Dog encounter stories from around the world contrasting wolf images in legend and nature. Traveling toward Dog's home, where Wolf intends to seek employment, the two meet a hunter, a priest and a shepherd, each of whom spins a tale of the evil wolf's foolishness and greed. Wolf responds with very different stories of her own. By dawn, she and Dog understand the high price of freedom. With respect for one another, they choose their separate ways. Production notes are available in the script containing details on costumes. Minimal set. Suitable for touring. Masks, puppets and costume pieces to augment neutral clothing. Approximate running time: 50 minutes. Code: WD5.

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The Wolf and Its Shadows



Dramatic Publishing

311 Washington St.
Woodstock, IL 60098-330
Phone: (800) 448-7469

www.dramaticpublishing.com

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Commissioned by the Omaha Theater Company for Young People
(formerly the Emmy Gifford Children's Theater)

Premier Production
Omaha Theater Company
March 10 - 26, 1995

THE WOLF AND ITS SHADOWS

By Sandra Fenichel Asher

Directed by Stephanie Anderson

Set Design by Blaine de St. Croix

Lighting Design by Sheila Malone

Costume Design by Sherri Geerdes

Properties by Kristin Landis

Music Composed & Performed by Sheila Malone

CAST

First Actor (Wolf, Maiden) Pam Carter
Second Actor (Dog, Young Man) John Santangelo
Third Actor (Hunter, Priest, Shepherd, Caribou) Kenny Glenn

PRODUCTION

Technical Director Tim Combs
Production Manager Cassie Moore
Board Operator Stephanie Anderson
Scenic Artist Kristin Landis
Set Construction Tim Combs, Kristin Landis,
Sheila Malone, Ross Manhart, Cassie Moore
Shop Volunteers Sandra Allgeier, Verlan Rumbaugh
Costume Shop Foreman Jill Dibbern
Costume Construction Michelle Bielser, Jill Dibbern, Sherri Geerdes,
Kenda Slavin, Kathleen Vollmer
Wolf Mask Blaine de St. Croix, Sherri Geerdes
Special Thanks To Kevin Ehrhart, Marty Magnuson

This play is dedicated
to Dr. Dorothy Beck Webb,
a wise and courageous Alpha.

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The Wolf and its Shadows

by Sandra Fenichel Asher

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CHARACTERS:

**FIRST ACTOR (female) — also plays WOLF
MAIDEN**

**SECOND ACTOR (male) — also plays DOG
STORY DOG
YOUNG MAN/WEREWOLF
OLD WOLF**

**THIRD ACTOR (male) — also plays HUNTER
PUPPET WOLF
PRIEST
RIVAL
SHEPHERD
STORY SHEPHERDS
PUPPET SHEEP
VOICE of SPIRIT OF THE SKY**

(Actor playing DOG projects a young voice and appearance and the antic, indecisive manner of a puppy. In contrast, WOLF'S voice should be mature and her movements strong and efficient. At first, DOG misinterprets her forceful natural bearing as a personal threat, but it is not. To WOLF, DOG *is* a puppy: amusing, naive. To DOG, WOLF is a mystery, at once both fascinating and dangerous.)

MUSIC: A flute is suggested to highlight certain parts of the action, but other instruments may be used. The effect should be natural, folkloric.

TIME: One night, from dusk until dawn, and imagined times.

PLACE: A forest, and imagined places. The stage may be bare except for tree stumps left and right.

NOTE: Costumes are simple; masks, puppets, lighting, and language receive emphasis. WOLF and DOG wear masks that are close, at least in spirit, to the actual animals, but puppets and masks of the story characters are highly stylized. There is an obvious difference between the artifice of the stories told by HUNTER, PRIEST, and SHEPHERD and the stark simplicity of those told by WOLF.

(At Rise: FLUTE is heard. As house lights dim, the Milky Way - - or Wolf Road - - appears above the dark stage. FLUTE fades out as a chorus of wolf HOWLS begins. ACTORS, without masks, enter and take places center, down left, and down right, facing audience. HOWLS fade. FLUTE plays softly under the following dialogue.)

FIRST ACTOR: *(begins a subtle jogging motion with her hands and feet, reminiscent of the wolf's effortless trot. The movement continues throughout this passage creating a mood of ritual rather than realism.)* It is said that the wolf travels easily between the spirit world and our own - -

SECOND ACTOR: *(Picking up the rhythmic jog)* Along the path we now call the Milky Way - -

THIRD ACTOR: *(Picking up jog)* Once known as the Wolf Road.

SECOND ACTOR: Forever moving - -

FIRST ACTOR: Moving in shadow - -

THIRD ACTOR: Moving in mystery - -

FIRST ACTOR: The wolf disappears into the night - -

SECOND ACTOR: And returns before the morning sun.

THIRD ACTOR: Knowing what we cannot see - -

FIRST ACTOR: Seeing what it cannot say - -

SECOND ACTOR: The wolf dies - -

THIRD ACTOR: And is reborn - -

FIRST ACTOR: Dies - -

SECOND ACTOR: And is reborn - -

THIRD ACTOR: In both worlds - -

SECOND ACTOR: And in the stories people tell.

FIRST ACTOR: *(stops jogging)* We tell the stories.

SECOND ACTOR: *(stops jogging)* We believe the stories.

THIRD ACTOR: *(stops jogging)* We become the stories.

SECOND ACTOR: Be still!

FIRST ACTOR: Listen!

SECOND ACTOR: Understand!

(STARS and FLUTE fade. FIRST and SECOND ACTORS put on masks of WOLF and DOG.)

THIRD ACTOR: *(to audience)* Early one evening, a wolf and a dog chanced to meet.

(THIRD ACTOR exits. FOREST SOUNDS are heard. WOLF trots toward DOG; circles him at a safe distance. WOLF is cautious, but neither aggressive nor afraid. FOREST SOUNDS fade under dialogue.)

WOLF: Good evening, Dog. What brings you into the forest?

DOG: *(wary, but eager to please)* Oh, I enjoy a romp in the wilderness now and then, Cousin Wolf. But perhaps I have wandered a bit farther than usual.

WOLF: It is I who have traveled farther than usual. Hunger forced me to leave my pack.

(She growls with the thought of it; DOG whimpers and cowers although WOLF shows no interest in eating him.)

DOG: Hu-hunger?

- WOLF: We have gone many days without a successful hunt.
- DOG: You haven't eaten in days? How dreadful!
- WOLF: You seem fat and comfortable enough. Tell me, Dog, how do you manage it?
- DOG: There's food enough for all at my master's house -- if you're willing to work.
- WOLF: I do what I must to keep from starving. What is this work you speak of?
- DOG: I bark to keep thieves from my master's door. (*demonstrates with noisy yips and yaps*) In return, he gives me scraps from his own table, morning, noon, and night. That is the secret of my shiny coat.
- WOLF: I could do as much as you and more. (*emits truly menacing growls and snarls, frightening DOG again.*) Is there work for me at your master's house?
- DOG: (*more than slightly apprehensive*) No doubt there is.
- WOLF: Good! Show me the way.
- (*With a nervous whimper, DOG obediently leads the way. LIGHTS, FLUTE, and FOREST SOUNDS indicate a change in time and place as WOLF and DOG circle stage. Suddenly, WOLF stops and sniffs the air suspiciously. FLUTE and SOUNDS fade. A sharp WHISTLE is heard offstage, in the distance.*)
- WOLF: We must hide! Quickly! (*She searches for a hiding place.*)
- DOG: Why? What's wrong? (*Also sniffs air*)
- WOLF: There's a man nearby.
- HUNTER: (*offstage, from a distance*) Dog!

(another WHISTLE)

WOLF: *(not cowardly, but truly concerned)* Hurry! Hide!

(DOG hesitates, not sure which way to run. WOLF slips away and hides. She may be seen, now and then, watching what follows, but never where the HUNTER can see her.)

DOG: *(glances off in direction of HUNTER's call)* It's only a hunter. He won't do us any harm.

HUNTER: *(enters, calling DOG, but searching for WOLF, shotgun at the ready)* Dog! Come to me!

(Another second's hesitation and DOG trots over, whining apologetically. HUNTER lowers gun and pets DOG.)

Why, you're hardly more than a pup! Was it my imagination then? Or did I just see you trotting through the forest with a wolf?

DOG: *(all tail-wagging affection now)* We're going to my master's house. The wolf intends to ask for work and be given food in return.

HUNTER: You're bringing a wolf to your master's house?

DOG: *(confiding, in a whisper)* She'll make a meal of me if I don't.

HUNTER: *(laughs it off)* She'll have to catch you first.

DOG: She's very quick!

HUNTER: *(tapping his head)* But not very clever. The wolf's a fool and that's a fact.

DOG: She didn't seem . . . foolish.

HUNTER: Let me tell you a story. Then you may decide for

yourself.

DOG: *(with immediate, childlike eagerness)* Is there a dog in your story?

HUNTER: There is.

(Puts gun aside and pulls STORY DOG mask from his coat or elsewhere on stage. He hands mask to DOG, who admires it, "tries it on." MUSIC and LIGHTS mark transition into story. MUSIC fades as HUNTER speaks, but may be used to highlight action.)

A dog that had grown old and weary was of no more use to his master. And so, he was turned out into the forest and left to die.

DOG: How horrible!

(Begins to yip and whine; identifying with the story, he speaks lines in quotation marks as STORY DOG.)

HUNTER: Bemoaning his fate, the dog made a terrible racket - -

(DOG howls mournfully)

until he attracted the attention of a huge, grey wolf.

(Pulls out PUPPET WOLF. At the sight of PUPPET WOLF, STORY DOG yips in alarm. HUNTER puts PUPPET WOLF on his own arm and speaks lines in quotation marks as PUPPET WOLF.)

"Greetings, mangy cur. Do you remember me? I was the one you chased from your village when I was driven there by cold and hunger. At last, I will have my revenge!"

DOG: "What do you intend to do with me, Wolf?"

HUNTER: "First, I intend to eat your fur - -

(STORY DOG whines.)

HUNTER: - - your hide - -

(STORY DOG whimpers.)

and your flesh.

(STORY DOG yowls.)

And after I've eaten all that I can, I intend to dance on your miserable bones!"

DOG: *(a series of whimpers, then inspiration strikes STORY DOG)* "Foolish wolf! I barely have flesh enough to cover my bones, let alone satisfy your hunger. Why not fatten me up a bit, so you can truly enjoy your feast? Bring me some fresh mare's meat and see the difference it makes."

HUNTER: "Hmmm, there's wisdom in your idea, mangy cur. I will slaughter a mare for you.

(with leaps, loud growls, MUSIC underscoring and PUPPET jaws snapping, HUNTER mimes the kill and delivery)

Here you are!"

DOG: "Many thanks! *(chomping, slurping, and licking his chops)* Aaaaah! My first good meal in months. How refreshing!"

HUNTER: "Well, are you fat enough yet?"

DOG: "Fatter. Oh, definitely fatter. But not as tender as I might be. If you fed me a bit of lamb, you'd be pleased with the difference it would make."

HUNTER: "Do you think so?"

DOG: "Oh, I know so."

- HUNTER: "Wait here. I'll steal you a lamb from the shepherd's flock."
(again, much leaping, growling, MUSIC, and snapping)
- DOG: *(to audience)* "Has there ever been a more foolish creature?"
- HUNTER: *(As "lamb" is delivered, STORY WOLF begins to show signs that the effort is taking its toll.)* "Your lamb."
- DOG: "Eternally grateful. *(chomping and slurping greedily)* Mmmmm! With every bite, I feel my old body growing stronger and stronger."
- HUNTER: "And are you fat enough now?"
- DOG: "Fatter and fatter still. But not as sweet as I think you would like. Bring me a wild boar to eat, and my flesh will turn tasty as suckling pig."
- HUNTER: "Hmmm, yes, I see what you mean."
- DOG: "I thought you might."
- HUNTER: "I'll hunt your wild boar."
(More MUSIC, leaping about and growling from PUPPET WOLF as "boar" is killed with difficulty and delivered. PUPPET WOLF is obviously near exhaustion from his efforts; more subtly, STORY DOG is gaining strength.)
"This is the last of your meals, cur, and the end of my patience as well."
- DOG: "Won't be a minute!" *(much drooling and chomping, ending in a deeply satisfied sigh - - and a burp.)*
- WOLF: "I've waited long enough. The time has come for me to kill you and eat you up."

DOG: *(as PUPPET WOLF moves toward him)* "Foolish wolf! Thanks to your kindness, I've regained my strength and am more than a match for you!"

(much barking, growling, and MUSIC, as STORY DOG attacks PUPPET WOLF, eventually pulling it off HUNTER'S arm and dashing it to the ground)

"Spend a few days in your den, foolish wolf, licking your wounds and rethinking your plans for me. I suggest you give up all hope of revenge."

(MUSIC and LIGHTS mark transition out of story as DOG bays triumphantly over fallen PUPPET WOLF. MUSIC plays under following exchange until story resumes.)

HUNTER: *(as himself, to DOG)* So! You agree with me, then, that the wolf is a foolish creature?

DOG: *(shaking off the story's spell, puts aside mask and looks at the fallen PUPPET WOLF)* I suppose you could be right, Hunter. But how could a creature so foolish survive?

HUNTER: Ah, well, the story goes on. No dog in this part. Would you mind playing the wolf?

DOG: The wolf?

HUNTER: It's the easiest part.

DOG: *(uncertainly, as HUNTER puts PUPPET WOLF on his arm)* Well, all right

(MUSIC and LIGHTS mark transition into story as HUNTER retrieves his gun; mimes placing of meat.)

HUNTER: No sooner had the wolf decided to be more careful in selecting his prey than he came upon a fine morsel of meat lying in the road right in front of him.

DOG: *(as PUPPET WOLF, "happens along" and discovers meat)* "Hmmmmm, no tricks left in that one, I'll wager! Some careless peasant must have dropped it by mistake. His loss is my gain."

(DOG moves PUPPET WOLF to the meat and begins to devour it noisily. HUNTER raises his shotgun and aims it at him.)

HUNTER: Foolish wolf! It was no careless peasant who left that meat in your path, but a mighty hunter - -

(PUPPET WOLF'S head snaps up and turns toward HUNTER.)

DOG: *(as himself, terrified)* NO!

(GUN goes off. PUPPET WOLF slumps over "dead" as DOG cowers, whimpering.)

HUNTER: And so it was that the foolish wolf met his end.

(MUSIC and LIGHTS mark transition out of story as HUNTER grabs PUPPET WOLF away from DOG. MUSIC fades.)

Oh stop your trembling. It was only a story. But the wolf is a fool and not the least bit worthy of your company. Go home to your master. That's where you belong.

(HUNTER strides off, laughing and swinging PUPPET WOLF "carcass" carelessly over his shoulder as WOLF emerges from hiding and speaks to DOG.)

WOLF: Are you all right?

DOG: *(his trembling belies his words)* Oh - - yes. It was only a story.

WOLF: This time.

DOG: *(considering the story as he pulls himself together)*
Tell me something, please. Why would a wolf fatten an old dog with enough meat to feed his own entire pack?

WOLF: He wouldn't.

DOG: I thought not! You're no fool. You were smart enough to hide from that hunter and his gun. And you care for yourself in the wild by your own wit and cunning.

WOLF: I've learned all that from my pack.

DOG: Then why does the hunter tell such a terrible story about you if it isn't true?

WOLF: I don't know. But there are many hunters and many stories.

DOG: Can you tell a different one?

WOLF: I can.

(FLUTE plays under the following. LIGHTS create an atmosphere very different from that of HUNTER's story.) One day, men of the Wolf Clan were out fishing when they saw a shadow drifting through the water. They paddled toward it and discovered a wolf, swimming so slowly it barely seemed to move. The poor animal was exhausted.

DOG: *(full of sympathy and concern)* Oh! And did the men shoot it?

WOLF: No. They returned with it to their village.

DOG: They brought the wolf home with them!

WOLF: They did. And the wolf remained with the clan. It hunted with the men who had saved its life. Because it knew how to track deer and other wild animals, the clan prospered and never lacked for meat.