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Dramatic Publishing

EAST OF THE SUN

by

WILLIAM GLENNON



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(EAST OF THE SUN)

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EAST OF THE SUN

A Play in Two Acts
For 3 to 7 Men and 3 to 7 Women
(extras if desired)

CHARACTERS

ANCILLA the Ice Witch
HOB her assistant
PRINCE NORDO
PRINCESS of the Long Nose
POPPA the father of seven daughters
SNOWDROP the youngest daughter
FOUR TROLLS who can also play:
BRILL, a hag
HUG, a hag
SIX SISTERS (two actors, plus four puppets)
NORTH WIND (as puppeteers)

The play is in two acts with an intermission after Scene Three.

There should be as seamless a flow as possible from one scene to another, and the play should move at a very brisk pace.

EAST OF THE SUN is suggested by a Norwegian folk tale and can be designed and costumed to reflect that part of the world a long, long time ago, or it can be surrealistic to reflect an off-center world at any time.

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The castle of ANCILLA, known also as the Ice Witch. The castle appears to be made of glass and ice, a frozen grotto.*

AT RISE: *There is distorted music, strange and tinkly. As the lights come up we see ANCILLA, seated, but she is not really in full view yet. She remains motionless for a moment then she stands and moves slowly, facing upstage. She raises her arms suddenly, a signal for the sound of shattering glass, her signature throughout the play. She whirls around, facing front, hands extended upwards, revealing a very unattractive creature with a glazed expression.*

ANCILLA (*shouting*). Hob! Hob! In here! (*She waits, not moving.*) Hob! In here! Now!

(*HOB, her assistant, not quite human, emerges from a recess and stops beside her, his arms also outstretched. They listen intently.*)

HOB. There's an extra chill in the air tonight. The castle is shivering.

ANCILLA (*breaking the tension and moving away*). Hurry. I'm on tonight. Remember? (*With HOB's assistance, ANCILLA begins to transform herself from the ugly, hag-like*

creature now on view to a very beautiful, stylish Ice Witch. They work together with precision, using whatever makeup, costumes or props are needed to achieve the result.)

HOB (*as they begin*). They say she has ice water in her veins.

ANCILLA. Is all in readiness?

HOB. And a cold granite stone where her heart should be.

ANCILLA. They say. I know the Princess is ready. She's been ready forever. Frantic, in fact. But what of him? He's awake?

HOB. Attend the tale the Ice Witch tells.

ANCILLA. Try Queen. Or Empress. Not Witch. I've told you.

HOB. No Queen can cast a spell like you. No Empress has your power.

ANCILLA. I know, but it sounds better. Queen Ancilla. Empress Ancilla.

HOB. Ancilla, the Ice Witch.

ANCILLA. Careful, Hob. Well, *are* they ready?

HOB. The pretty Prince and the ugly Princess?

ANCILLA. Just moderately ugly. So-so ugly.

HOB. The nose of the Princess is not so-so. It is very much so. (*He circles his finger in front of his face and makes a noise.*)

ANCILLA. Well, he's pretty enough for both of them. That's why I picked him.

HOB. A touching story. Back up and begin. The Ice Witch plots.

ANCILLA. Hob!

HOB. And out goes Hob, faithful and...

ANCILLA. Foolish.

HOB. Faithful and fierce, out to do her bidding. Kidnap the Prince. The pretty one.

ANCILLA. Say "handsome." Sounds better.

HOB. Out to his castle in the far reaches of frost, out to pour magic into his drink and whisk him away, asleep and unknowing.

ANCILLA. You had help.

HOB. His fate, you ask? I shudder to think.

ANCILLA. The Princess is not all that bad.

HOB. Oh, no? Measure her nose. (*Gesture and noise. The transformation continues.*)

ANCILLA. Hurry.

HOB. It all might explode, you know, the whole thing. Ka-boom! And there go your plans, scattered to the winds, fallen on the ice. Pity.

ANCILLA. No, my plans are all falling into place. Tonight's the night.

HOB. Places, please! Here, Miss Nosey Posey, take a peek at His Royal Numbness. "Oooo! Gimme-gimme!"

ANCILLA. Yes, when she sees him she'll purr like a kitten.

HOB. And when he sees her, he'll faint.

ANCILLA. If she fails to bewitch him, then I will.

HOB. Ah, yes, you. Let us now consider the Icy One. What comes your way when the curtain falls?

ANCILLA. I told you. A diamond.

HOB. Tell me again.

ANCILLA (*imagining it*). A diamond. A fabulous diamond.

HOB. Another stone.

ANCILLA. With special powers. (*He snorts "Ha!"*) You wouldn't understand.

HOB. Of course not.

ANCILLA. How the Princess got her hands on it I'll never know.

HOB. Special powers. You don't really believe that, do you?

ANCILLA. Just think, Hob. I shall look into the diamond and see what's yet to be, the future. All mysteries solved.

HOB. We're not meant to see the future. It's a big secret.

Didn't they tell you? Mind those danger signs.

ANCILLA. You babble too much.

HOB. I worry.

ANCILLA. I don't.

HOB. You've never done this before. A wedding.

ANCILLA. That's why I'm excited.

HOB. What about the Witches Code? Did you check?

ANCILLA. The Witches Code? I'm way beyond any code.

I'm Ancilla. My power is supreme.

HOB. So you say. *(He picks up a hand mirror and stands away from her.)* Here. Look into the diamond and tell me what you see. *(Answering immediately.)* Just your face! *(She turns to him, the transformation complete. In spite of himself he is once again dazzled and he speaks with awe, very moved.)* Your face. Your very beautiful face.

(There is a clamorous noise like chimes gone amok, and ANCILLA and HOB pose, hands and arms outstretched as in the beginning of the scene. The distorted music rises. FOUR TROLLS, hideous grunting creatures, tumble into the scene and with great efficiency change whatever is necessary to create the crystal hall, providing a space for ANCILLA to conduct business and places for her clients. TWO TROLLS exit and the other TWO TROLLS parade in front of ANCILLA and HOB who follow them in an arc to the platform center. ANCILLA takes her place, with HOB to one side, and raises her arms, after an impressive musical sting.)

ANCILLA. Let the night increase my power! Let demons stir!

HOB. Summon the Prince.

ANCILLA. That's my line, Hob. Summon the Prince! (*ONE TROLL rushes out.*) I trust he's awake by now. He better be. (*HOB makes a slight adjustment to ANCILLA's costume, merely touching it lightly, but her reaction is manic.*) Stop it! No one touches the Queen! No one touches the Empress.

HOB (*backing off*). No one touches the Ice Witch.

ANCILLA. Summon the Princess. (*SECOND TROLL rushes out.*) Now! One happy ending, coming up.

HOB. We'll see.

(TWO TROLLS enter supporting PRINCE NORDO. The TROLLS grunt and snarl as they help him to his place. He is young, handsome and very personable, but at the moment a little tattered and unbalanced like one awakening. He finds something to lean on, a railing, an icicle. Once he seems secure, the TWO TROLLS tumble and grunt their way out.)

ANCILLA (*pause*). Prince Nordo. (*Solicitous.*) Prince Nordo. Here I am, over here. (*NORDO turns in her direction.*) Come out of your nightmare. Let your dream begin.

HOB (*quietly*). Whoo-ee.

ANCILLA. You've found your eyes? (*NORDO nods slowly, looks around, amazed.*) And your ears. You *do* hear me? (*Another slow nod.*) What of your royal voice? Can you speak?

NORDO (*slowly*). Uh...I...I...

ANCILLA (*coaxing*). Ah, yes. You've emerged from your sleep and cast it aside.

NORDO. I think so.

ANCILLA. Good. We must talk. Seriously.

NORDO. Where am I?

ANCILLA. At my castle, dear Prince. *(He looks around.)*

And where does my castle lie?

NORDO. Yes, where?

ANCILLA *(slowly, her voice hard and unearthly)*. East of the sun and west of the moon.

HOB *(an eerie echo)*. East of the sun and west of the moon.

ANCILLA. And you're here at my special invitation for an equally *special surprise*.

NORDO *(waking up more)*. I was...knocked out.

ANCILLA. Hob! Did you hear?

NORDO. Put to sleep. Then kidnapped. That's it, isn't it?

ANCILLA. Hob, do you hear what the poor Prince is saying?

NORDO. Who did it? You two?

ANCILLA. It was my special invitation, wasn't it, Hob?

NORDO. It was something in my drink.

ANCILLA. For a special reason.

NORDO. Something that put me to sleep.

ANCILLA. Where can she be? Why is the Princess so late?

HOB. She's powdering her nose. Takes a while.

NORDO. That's it! You put me to sleep. But then, how did you get me here?

HOB. It wasn't easy.

ANCILLA. He had help. Credit the North Wind.

HOB. And who pulled him up on the back of the North Wind? And held him there? Hard enough to hang on yourself at full speed.

NORDO. I came here on the back of the North Wind! *(There is a commotion off.)*

ANCILLA. For my *special surprise*. Aha! We may soon feast our eyes.

(TWO TROLLS enter escorting the PRINCESS OF THE LONG NOSE. She is well-named. Her nose is very long)

and thin and curls up in a circle at the end. At the moment she is giddy and excited.)

ANCILLA. Ah, you are here, dear Princess, at last. *(This sends the PRINCESS into a little fit of nervous laughter.)* Just over there, Trolls. *(She indicates the space and the TROLLS guide the PRINCESS to it.)* And now, finally, we are all met.

PRINCESS. All of us? You mean he's here, too? Is he gorgeous? I'll bet he is! Where are you, Princey? *There he is!* Augh! I think I'm going to faint. I'm so nervous. I mean, is this dress all right? Gloves! I should have worn gloves! Oh, shoot! Never mind. I tell you, my mouth's watering. *(Quickly takes out huge diamond from purse or pocket and waves it.)* Here we go! Gimme-gimme time! *(Sudden panic.)* Listen, he won't run away, will he?

ANCILLA. Dear Princess, may I present His Royal Highness, Prince Nordo?

PRINCESS. You certainly may. Wrap him up and tie on a bow! Oooh, I'm all pins and needles. *(Waving.)* Yoo- hoo! Hello, there! I forgot my gloves. Is that all right? I mean, you don't mind, do you? *(Sudden panic.)* He hasn't got another girl, has he? Ooh, those eyes, that mouth...

HOB. That nose.

ANCILLA. Now, then.

PRINCESS. When do I get him? Is he ready? *(Calling.)* You ready? Ready-ready-ready? *(Sudden panic.)* Quick, before another Princess sees him.

ANCILLA. Your Highness, it pleases me to present to you...

NORDO. Your *special surprise*.

ANCILLA. The loveliest Princess in any land.

NORDO. I'm out of here. *(He runs off. ANCILLA lets out a blast on a whistle and the FOUR TROLLS follow him. They all snarl and hiss loudly.)*

PRINCESS. Where's he going? What's the matter? Did I say something?

ANCILLA. He'll be back. Fret not. And then we shall see what we shall see.

PRINCESS. What does that mean? You want this diamond? You just deliver the Prince or we'll really see what we shall see. Get it?

HOB. My, my. All those plans, scattered to the winds. Ka-boom. As predicted. *(He bows.)*

(The FOUR TROLLS bring NORDO back. He's no match for them but he is struggling.)

PRINCESS. There he is! He came back! I knew he would. He cares, see, he really cares. *(She waves and smiles. NORDO takes another look at her and bolts free, but only for a moment. The TROLLS are soon holding him down on the floor.)* Don't you hurt him! Don't you dare hurt him! If they hurt him I'll scream! *(She jumps up and down, screaming.)*

NORDO *(frantic, he yells)*. Let me up! Get off! *(Etc. HOB observes bemused. Finally ANCILLA raises her hand to signal and a tremendous sound effect rings out like miles of glass shattering. ALL start and look up. Silence.)*

HOB. One happy ending, coming up.

ANCILLA. Well, Your Highness, you are, I see, ready to proceed with the ceremony. *(His protest is muffled when a TROLL covers his mouth.)* Splendid. And you, my pretty Princess? Are we to assume you, too, are ready? *(The*

PRINCESS rushes, getting as close as possible to NORDO, trying to ignore the TROLLS.)

PRINCESS. Ready-ready-ready!

ANCILLA. The diamond, please.

PRINCESS. Not till we're all hitched up.

ANCILLA. But I must measure its powers, make certain it's working. You must give me a glimpse of the future.

PRINCESS. It's working. And you can stick to the present, Ancie.

ANCILLA *(pause)*. We'll proceed. *(Snaps her fingers and starts putting on one last special bit of costume or jewelry with HOB's help.)* The happy marriage of the Prince and Princess.

NORDO *(free of his gag)*. Never! I'll never marry her!

PRINCESS *(stops his regagging)*. Sure you will.

NORDO. I'd rather marry a Troll!

PRINCESS. Why? They're horrid. See? *(She grabs a TROLL by the collar and drags him close.)* I'm much prettier. I hate Trolls. *(She shoves the TROLL away and he hisses at her.)*

NORDO. Then change me into a Troll! I beg you!

PRINCESS. Never, you silly.

NORDO. Or a dwarf, a distant demented dwarf!

PRINCESS. Oh, I see, he's joking.

NORDO. Make it a bear, a huge, stupid bear! Anything! Please!

PRINCESS. Bears aren't stupid. Didn't you know that? *(Giggles.)* Come to think of it, you'd make a really nice bear. All fuzzy and cute. *(The idea flashes on.)* Say! Then I wouldn't have to worry about another Princess giving you the eye.

NORDO. What eye?

PRINCESS. If you were a bear, I mean. Only part-time, of course. (*Reasoning it out.*) You know, I like this. I really like this. See, there's my bear out there all day, scaring off all the pretty girls, then at night back he comes and presto! change-o! he's a Prince again. Simple.

NORDO. Somebody's making this up.

PRINCESS. I'm real glad you thought of it. Big load off my mind.

NORDO. Or I'm having a nightmare.

PRINCESS. No more worries about losing my precious Princey. Just make him a daytime bear. Whew! Are we clever or what?

NORDO. Pretty soon I'll wake up.

PRINCESS. Ancilla can do it. You'll see.

NORDO. Do what?

PRINCESS. Change you into a bear, part-time. You wouldn't mind, would you?

NORDO. Take my kingdom! Please! My castle! My pony! No, not my... Yes, my pony! Only let me out of here! (*He struggles and is gagged again. ANCILLA and HOB turn back into the scene, her costume complete.*)

PRINCESS. Hey! We'd better get things moving. He's sort of restless.

ANCILLA. Ah, yes.

PRINCESS (*to TROLLS*). You've mussed up his hair, you stupid Trolls! (*She hits a nearby TROLL who snarls and barks.*) Hey, Ancie, you can do it, can't you?

HOB. Ancie.

ANCILLA. Do what?

PRINCESS. Weren't you listening? He wants to be a bear, during the day. Then my Prince at night.

ANCILLA. This is a serious ceremony, Your Highness. Mustn't joke.