

PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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East of the Sun and West of the Moon

Adaptation by

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CHARACTERS

- Tove (The heroine, a beautiful brave girl)
- Gjerd (Her cruel mother)
- Olav (Her sweet crippled father)
- Gunnhild (Her vain ugly older sister)
- Trud (Her greedy shrill sister)
- Knut (Her bullying brother)
- Einar (Her lazy nearsighted brother)
- Froy (Her gentle brother with a stutter)
- Frid (His twin sister who's mute)
- The Bear (A great white bear)
- The Prince (A handsome nobleman who has turned into the bear)
- First Hag (A crone played by a man)
- Second Hag (A crone played by a man)
- Third Hag (A crone played by a man)
- East Wind (A lovely Japanese woman)
- West Wind (An English fop)
- South Wind (A dashing man from the Caribbean)
- North Wind (A gigantic head exhaling blasts of air)
- Troll Princess (The villain, a dead ringer for Gunnhild)
- Queen Mother (Her mother, a dead ringer for Gjerd)
- Durt (The bridesmaid, a dead ringer for Trud)
- The Photographer
- The Minister
- The Ringbearer
- The Choir Mistress
- Assorted Servants and Trolls

Prologue

Long, long ago in a country far to the north. A terrible blizzard is raging on the edge of a forest. We gradually became aware of a meager cottage through the swirling snow. A slender plume of smoke rises from its chimney. The smoke suddenly stops. The door of the cottage opens. We hear children crying and a woman banking orders, then a 15 year old girl dressed in rags is shoved out the door.

GJERD Hurry up now, gather all the kindling you can find. And don't let the trolls get you.

GUNNHILD We're freezing inside.

TRUD And hungry.

GJERD,
GUNNHILD,
& TROD Hurry up, you lazy girl!

Tove starts looking for kindling. As she fills her tattered sack, the forest comes to life. The trees start moving and the wind seems to be chanting, "Follow me, follow me". The girl lifts her head, fascinated. Her ears become our ears. Mysterious breathing swells around her. She squints to see better. The trees that are darting about are actually trolls. They have hideous faces and long furry tails. They start taunting her, but she's so focused on gathering the kindling, she pays no attention to them. The breathing gets louder and louder. It takes on a majestic musical quality. The girl periodically looks around to see where it's coming from, but never makes out the source. We do. It's coming from an enormous white bear. He's been there all along but because of his great size and color he's been invisible. The bear watches her with great interest as the storm rages on. We're clearly entering a mysterious world where nothing is what it seems.

Act 1, Scene 1

The interior of the cottage, a joyless sooty room that functions as kitchen, living room and bedroom to a family of nine. A rickety ladder leads to a loft area in a corner, The father, Olav sits by the fireplace whittling. He once split and sold wood for a living, but due to an accident he's now crippled and broke. His children swarm around the sputtering fireplace trying to keep warm, They include: Gunnhild, ugly and vain, 17; Trud, greedy and shrill, 16; bullying Knut, 14; lazy and nearsighted Einar, 13; the twins, mute Frid and her stuttering brother Froy, 7. They're all fighting and screaming, except for the twins who are playing with the shavings at Olav's feet. Their mother, Gjerd, sourly looks on.

KNUT *(Pushing Einar away from the fire place.)* Move.

EINAR Make me!

KNUT I said, MOVE! *(Pounding him on the head.)*

EINAR OW, OW, OW!

KNUT I got here first!

EINAR *(Fighting back.)* Knut hit me, Knut hit me!

GJERD *(Swatting Einar.)* Don't come crying to me.

GUNNHILD *(Pulling a shawl off Trud's shoulder.)* Gimme that!

TRUD Hey, that's my shawl!

GUNNHILD I'm so cold, my hands are blue.

TRUD *(Wailing.)* GUNNHILD TOOK MY SHAWL!

GUNNHILD *(Thrusting them out.)* Look at them. . .

TRUD *(Trying to snatch it back.)* Give me back my shawl!

GUNNHILD Bright blue!

TRUD *(Wailing.)* It's mine, it's mine, it's mine!

KNUT *(Takes another swipe at Einar accidentally knocking Gunnhild in the head.) Crybaby!*

GJERD Children, children . . .

Einar snarls like a dog and bites Knut in the arm.

KNUT Einar bit me!

GJERD Then bite him back.

TRUD I'm hungry, I'm hungry...

KNUT,
EINAR & TRUD We're all hungry!

GJERD Where's Tove, that lazy girl?

KNUT *(Starts singing.)* "Tove, Tove, under the stove. She's so ugly she looks like a clove."

ALL *(Except OLAV and the TWINS)* "Tove, Tove, under the stove. She's so ugly she looks like a clove." *(They all roar with laughter.)*

TOVE slips into the room, dragging a pouch filled with kindling. it's the girl who was out in the storm. She's almost frozen to death and covered with snow.

TOVE I'm back.

GJERD Well, finally!

GUNNHILD It took you long enough.

TOVE It was so beautiful outside.

GJERD What were you doing?

GUNNHILD Taking a nap?

TOVE The forest is sprinkled with diamonds.

GUNNHILD We're freezing!

TRUD And hungry!

ALL *(Except OLAV and the TWINS)* We want our dinner. we want our dinner!

TOVE *(Reaching into her pockets.)* I found some walnuts and juniper berries.
(They leap on her and start fighting.)

KNUT, EINAR
GUNNHILD,
TRUD *(All at the same time.)* Gimme, gimme! I had them first! Hey, those berries are mine! No fair, no fair...

Their fighting gets more and more out of control until they're snarling on the floor. They finally rise, hands and faces smeared with nut shells and berry juice.

GJERD *(To Olav.)* And what about you whittling by the fire like an old woman?

OLAV I'm making somethinga For the twins.

GJERD What are you getting us to eat?

OLAV A little castle.

GJERD We can't a castle, fool!

OLAV But they can play with it and dream. Children need dreams as much as food.

GJERD I might as well be married to a troll for all the good you do us.

TOVE He's injured Mama, It's not his fault.

OLAV I do what I can. I offer them other worlds. I'm working on the staircase. Look, it has a hundred and three steps, one for each star leading to Orion's belt.

GJERD Sometimes I think you are a troll!

TOVE Mama!

GJERD My Olav would never be hit by a falling tree, he knows the forest too well.

OLAV It was an act of God.

GJERD It was the act of a troll.

OLAV We're in His hands.

GJERD (*Furious.*) You're not my husband, you're a troll pretending to be my husband!

OLAV Gjerd, Gjerd, calm yourself. . .

GJERD Trolls are everywhere.

OLAV Where's the sweet woman I married with the laughing voice?

GJERD (To Tove.) For all I know, you may be a troll. (To Frid.) Or you! (To Froy.) Or you!

OLAV There are no trolls in this house, we're a pious, God fearing Christian family.

GJERD We're a starving, freezing, penniless family and it's all your fault! Troll, troll, troll...

GUNNHILD,
TRUD, KNUT
and EINAR (*Join in, dancing around him in a troll-like way.*) Troll, troll, troll . . .

The twins cling to Olav.

TOVE *(Rushing to protect him.)* Stop, stop he's my dear Papa, Stop it!

GUNNHILD,
TRUD, KNUT
and EINAR Troll, troll, troll . . .

OLAV *(To Tove.)* It's the madness of hunger that drives them to it. It will pass when spring comes.

GJERD If we live that long.

TOVE *(Surreptitiously pouring some berries in his hand.)* Here, Papa, I saved some for you.

OLAV No, no, give them to the twins. They need them more than I do. *(He gives them to Froy.)*

FROY Th-th-th-th-thank you, Papa. *(He hands some to Frid. Frid gobbles them up and flashes a radiant smile.)*

GJERD Hey, where did those berries come from? You've been hiding them, you wicked girl!

GUNNHILD No fair, no fair.

TRUD What about us?

Silence falls. It's shattered by three loud knocks on the door.

KNUT What's that?

EINAR Who's there?

TRUD Oh oh!

GUNNHILD Oh no!

GJERD More trolls!

Everyone screams and then freezes. Frid starts to whimper. Tove scampers up the ladder to her loft. She peers out the little window to get a better view. Shifting sections of an enormous white bear appear -- an eye, a muzzle, a chunk of shoulder.

GJERD Shhhh!

GUNNHILD Be quiet, Frid! (*Frid whimpers louder.*)

KNUT Shut up, or I'll stuff a rag in your mouth. (*Frid whimpers even louder.*)

EINAR Be quiet!

GJERD Wouldn't you know it, it's the mute who makes the most noise.

FROY (*Putting his arm around her.*) Shhhh, my little f-f-f-flower. I'll p-p-p-p-protect you.

TRUD What a pair. One can't speak and the other stutters!

There's a moment of silence, then the three knocks sound again.

GJERD Cross yourselves, children. (*They cross themselves, the knocks bang louder.*)

OLAV Where are your manners? Isn't anyone going to answer the door?
(*Looking at Gjerd.*)

GJERD (*Looking at Gunnhild.*) Don't look at me.

GUNNHILD (*Looking at Trud.*) Don't look at me.

TRUD (*Looking at Knut.*) Don't look at me.

KNUT (*Looking at Einar.*) Don't look at me.

EINAR (*Diving under a table.*) I'm out of here!

GJERD (*Sounding more and more witch like.*) I think the twins should go.

GUNNHILD,
TRUD, KNUT
and EINAR *(Pointing at them.)* Yes, the twins! The twins!

Frid and Froy quake in terror, arms around each other.

GJERD Frid? Froy?

The heavy breathing that Tove heard in the forest returns.

GJERD We're waiting. . .

The breathing gets louder. No one moves.

TOVE I'll get it, I'll get it.

She scurries down the ladder, runs to the door and opens it. A blast of snow rushes in, slamming everyone against the wall.

OLAV No Tove, no!

TOVE *(Peering into the gale.)* Who is it? *(She starts to step outside.)* I can't see you through the snow.

GUNNHILD *(In a whisper.)* Where's she going?

GJERD Let the trolls take her, she's one of them anyway.

TOVE *(Stepping out further.)* Where are you?

TRUD Shut the door before we freeze to death!

TOVE Oh, now I see you. . . *(Portions of the bear become visible.)*

ALL *(Except TOVE and FRID.)* It's a bear!

KNUT *(Diving under the table with Einar.)* Make room for me! *(Frid whimpers in terror.)*

FROY *(Putting his arms around her.)* There, there, I'll t-t-take care you.

TOVE (To the bear.) Come in and warm yourself.

GJERD Shut the door, shut the door!

The bear is too large to fit through the door. We only see sections of him as he paces by the windows.

TOVE (To the bear.) We don't have anything to eat, but you can warm yourself by the fire.

GJERD What are you talking to him for? He's a bear, he can't understand you. (The bear makes strange guttural noises.)

TOVE Look at him, his eyelashes are frozen. He has such sad eyes. What have you seen that makes you suffer so?

GJERD Foolish girl, he's just a stupid animal. (The bear roars. They all freeze with terror.)

GJERD (To the bear.) Sorry, sorry, I take it back. (The bear snarls menacingly.)

GUNNHILD Somebody speak to him.

Knut roars like a bear in an effort to communicate. Einar joins in and soon they're on all fours in an orgy of mockery.

TOVE Don't tease him!

There's a sudden change in atmosphere. The lights get strange, the sound of the breathing returns and far away music plays.

THE BEAR I'll make you as rich as you now are poor if you give me your daughter.

GJERD He spoke!

TRUD He spoke!

GUNNHILD He spoke!

EINAR He spoke!

KNUT He spoke!

GJERD *(To the bear.)* What did you say?

THE BEAR I'll make you as rich as you now are poor if you give me your daughter.

OLAV My daughter? Which one?

THE BEAR *(Indicating Tove.)* That one.

OLAV *(With a piercing cry.)* No!

GJERD Take her!

OLAV My angel.

GJERD Good riddance to bad rubbish.

TRUD Yes!

GUNNHILD Yes!

EINAR and KNUT Take her, we're rich . . . Take her, we're rich . . .

GUNNHILD,
TRUD, KNUT
and EINAR *(Start singing.)* "Tove, Tove, under the stove. She's so ugly, she looks like a clove!" *(The bear roars, cutting off the singing.)*

THE BEAR *(To Tove.)* Will you come with me?

TOVE But what about my family?

GJERD Go!

ALL *(Except OLAV and the TWINS.)* Go, go!

TOVE They need me.

GJERD Not as much as the riches you'll bring. Money, money!

KNUT and EINAR Food, food!

GUNNHILD
and TRUD Clothes, clothes . . .

TOVE Who'll look after Papa and the twins?

THE BEAR I'll be back in a week, you can give me your decision then.

The bear vanishes and the atmosphere returns to normal. Silence as everyone looks at Tove.

TOVE (With a breaking heart.) I can't go. I can't!

GUNNHILD,
TRUD, KNUT
and EINAR (Start singing.) "Tove, Tove, under the stove, She's so ugly, she looks like a clove!"

The lights snap out. It's the middle of the night and very dark. The blizzard has returned in all its fury. The cottage rattles like a pebble in a jar. Everyone's asleep except for Tove who sits up in her loft, gazing out the window at the storm. Gjerd, Gunnhild, Knut and Einar snore in a comical pattern of syncopated rhythms. They snore and stop, snore and stop and finally stop altogether. We gradually hear the bear's breathing again. It sounds scarier than ever - alien and inhuman. Tove stiffens, backing away from the window. Gjerd, Gunnhild, Knut and Einar resume snoring. Their snores dovetail with the bear's breathing making eerie music. Tove pulls her rags tighter around herself. Frid suddenly starts to whimper in the throes of a nightmare.

TOVE Frid, wake up, wake up. You were having a nightmare. Come up to my bed and I'll look after you.

Tove gathers her in her arms and sings a lullaby. Moonlight pours through the little window bathing them in light.

TOVE (Sings.) HUSH, HUSH, DON'T YOU CRY,
IT'S JUST THE WIND THAT SWEEPS THE SKY.
THE WORLD'S ASLEEP AND LOST IN DREAMS,

NOTHING, DEAR, IS WHAT IT SEEMS.
THERE, THERE, DRY YOUR EYES,
WHAT YOU HEAR IS SLEEPERS' SIGH
FATHER TOSSES, MOTHER SNORES,
SAFE FROM HARM, WE'RE SNUG INDOORS.
TURN, TURN, EMBRACE THE NIGHT,
SO WE CAN WALK INTO THE LIGHT..
STEEL YOUR HEART AND LET ME GO,
SO I CAN BREAK THIS CHAIN OF WOE.

The lights slowly dim. It's a week later. Olav sits by the fire, whittling. Frid and Froy are busily at work by his side. There's no sign of Tove. Gjerd, Gunnhild, Trod, Knut and Einar are gathered around the window, hoping to be the first to spy the bear.

GJERD Just our luck, he probably won't come.

GUNNHILD Of course he'll come, he promised.

GJERD Do you keep your promises? *(Pause.)* Well?

KNUT, EINAR
and TRUD NO!

GJERD So why should a bear be any different?

OLAV Because he isn't one of us.

GJERD Who asked you, you foolish old man?

OLAV *(Working on the staircase of the castle.)* 39 steps to go.. .

The sound of the bear's breathing is suddenly heard.

GJERD Shhhh! *(It gets louder.)*

GUNNHILD What's that? *(And louder.)*

GUNNHILD,
TRUD, KNUT
and EINAR *(Full of joy.)* The bear!

OLAV and FROY (Full of fear.) The bear. . .

The bear knocks on the door. Falling on top of each other as they race to the door.

GUNNHILD I'll get it!

TRUD I'll get it!

KNUT I'll get it!

EINAR I got it!

Einar beats the others to the window and opens it so the bear can speak.

THE BEAR I have returned. What is your decision?

GJERD *(Rising.)* Take her!

GUNNHILD,
TRUD, KNUT
and EINAR Take her!

OLAV *(Crossing himself.)* God protect us.

GJERD Money, money. . .

KNUT Pies, pies...

EINAR Candy, candy

GUNNHILD Furs, furs . . .

TRUD Rubies, rubies . . .

OLAV From this day on, all joy is gone.

THE BEAR *(In a mighty voice.)* SEND HER OUT TO ME! *(They all look around the room.)*

GJERD *(In a sing-song.)* Tove . . . ? Oh Tove?

GUNNHILD,
TRUD, KNUT
and EINAR *(Likewise.)* Where are you?

GJERD *(Sing-song.)* The bear is here.

GUNNHILD,
TRUD, KNUT
and EINAR Yoo hooooo...

GJERD Where is that cowardly girl?

GUNNHILD Probably stealing our clothes for her journey.

TRUD What clothes? We don't have any clothes.

GUNNHILD Right, right, I forgot.

GJERD It's just like her to keep us waiting. *(Stamping her feet.)* Tove, get in here right this minute!

Tove emerges from out of nowhere, she's dressed in a fantastic cloak woven of fir boughs and hawk feathers. Pine cones and sprigs of holly adorn her hair. A great radiance emanates from her.

TOVE I'm ready.

OLAV Look at her. . .

FROY She's so b-b-b-b-beautiful!

GUNNHILD,
TRUD, KNUT
and EINAR Where did you get that cloak?

TOVE I made it.

GJERD It's the work of trolls. Out, out, leave this house!

GUNNHILD,
TRUD, KNUT

and EINAR Out! Out!

OLAV Come child, let me give you my blessing.

TOVE *(Rushing over to him.)* Oh Papa!

OLAV *(Embracing her.)* This is your moment Tove, seize it. Nothing is what it seems in this world, so don't be afraid.

FROY *(Flinging his arms around her.)* We m-m-m-m-made you something.
(Frid holds up a wooden flute.) It's a f-f-f-flute. Whenever you miss us, ppp-play it and we'll be with you.

Frid starts playing it, making the most extraordinary music. Everyone gapes at her, astonished.

GJERD *(Pointing at Frid.)* She's a troll, just like her sister!

THE BEAR Come, it's time to go.

The wind roars. Once again it seems to be chanting, "Follow me, follow me." Tove gives Olav, Frid and Froy a final embrace. Frid hands her the flute.

OLAV My rabbit, my dove. . .

TOVE *(Tears herself away and rushes out the door, her words echoing after her.)*
I'll be back, I'll be back.

The chanting of the wind and the bear's breathing swell to a crescendo as the lights slowly fade.

ACT1, SCENE 2

It's several days later, near dawn. The bear and Tove are walking through the forest. At first glance, it's a magical sight - the bear as white and massive as a glacier, Tove at his side, fearless and radiant in her evergreen cloak.

THE BEAR How are you doing?

TOVE Fine.

THE BEAR Are you sure?

TOVE I'm sure.

THE BEAR I don't want you to be afraid.

TOVE I'm not.

THE BEAR It's a long journey.

TOVE There's so much to see.

THE BEAR Describe it to me.

TOVE Trees as tall as catherdrals.

THE BEAR What else?

TOVE Badgers, deer, racoons . . .

BEAR More, more . . .

TOVE *(Looking around.)* Birds, butterflies and spider webs. Everything's so beautiful.

THE BEAR *(Barely audible.)* Not as beautiful as you.

The trees drop away and the landscape chages to a lush valley. Tove and the bear appear as dots on the horizon.

TOVE Where are we?

THE BEAR Entering the Valley of the Whales.

TOVE The Valley of the Whales?

THE BEAR At the dawn of time, this land was submerged under the ocean and schools of whales swam overhead. Their ancient bones nourish the soil we're standing on.

TOVE I've never seen a whale. What do they look like?

THE BEAR *(Looking up.)* See those clouds. . . they still swim overhead, only now the water is gone. *(The clouds assume the shape of tumbling whales.)*

TOVE *(Gasping.)* Oh, look at them all . . .

THE BEAR If you listen carefully, you can hear them singing. *(Silence as Tove listens.)*

TOVE I don't hear anything.

THE BEAR Hold your breath.

Tove takes a deep breath and we finally hear them singing haunting unearthly songs. The lights get all blurred and watery creating the illusion they're on the ocean floor. Tove makes a strangled sound.

THE BEAR Are you still holding your breath? *(Tove struggles not to breathe.)* Let it out, let it out! *(She lets it out in a great rush.)* I've got to watch you, I keep forgetting how determined you are.

Tove and the bear disappear over the horizon. The whales' singing gives way to the sound of the wind whistling across a desolate moonscape.

TOVE Where are we now?

THE BEAR In the Graveyard of the Woolly Mammoths.

TOVE What's a woolly mammoth?

THE BEAR A prehistoric elephant covered with fur.

TOVE Elephants had fur?

THE BEAR And were over ten feet tall. This is where they came to die millions of years ago. (*We hear woolly mammoths stampeding in the distance.*)

TOVE Why here?

THE BEAR Because it was so out of the way. Their tusks were made of ivory and were greatly prized by primitive man.

TOVE I've never seen ivory.

THE BEAR You will, you'll see everything and more.

TOVE (*Pointing to a far away crag.*) What's that?

THE BEAR It's called the Winged Needle.

TOVE It's so high.

THE BEAR It's where ancient birds came to hatch their young. Dodos and the albatross. (*We gradually hear cawing and the flapping of wings.*)

TOVE How do you know so much?

THE BEAR I know nothing compared to you.

TOVE What do I know?

THE BEAR (*Softly.*) How to bewitch all who see you. (*Suddenly stopping.*) Wair! Look up!

She does. An arch of red, yellow, green, blue, and violet light flashes across the sky.

TOVE What is it? (*An amazing light show begins.*)

THE BEAR The Northern Lights.

TOVE Where do they come from?

THE BEAR Far above the North Pole.

TOVE Look at all those colors.

THE BEAR They occur during the equinox when the sun crosses the earth's equator.

They walk beneath a curtain of light and are dappled with color. The lights gradually dim, the sky gets darker, and the stars come out.

THE BEAR Don't you want to ride?

TOVE I'm not tired.

THE BEAR But why walk if I can carry you?

TOVE Because this way I feel the journey. I don't want to miss anything.

THE BEAR We still have very far to go.

TOVE I'll keep up.

Several days pass. As they travel fatigue starts to set in. The bear's breathing becomes labored and soon Tove's footsteps fade. The lights come up on Tove, who's on his back. Her hair has mysteriously grown and streams around her shoulders.

THE BEAR Wake up, we're here.

TOVE Oh, I must have fallen asleep.

THE BEAR You've been asleep for days.

TOVE Days?

THE BEAR Look at your hair. For every day that passed, it grew an inch.

TOVE (Finally noticing it.) Good grief! It's down to my waist. (The lights fade around her.)

THE BEAR Welcome to my palace.

TOVE We're underground?

THE BEAR It was cawed under this mountain long ago.

TOVE (Jumping off his back and running towards the door.) I can't be underground, I have to see the sun and stars. Let me out! Let me out! Let me out!

THE BEAR I can't, you'd perish outside. It's not what you think, open your eyes and look.

The lights come up on a portion of the bear's palace. One never sees it whole, but in shifting fragments. Tove catches glimmers of staircases that lead to astonishing heights, cascading waterfalls and woodland paths. The palace is underground, after all. The walls are made of sheer rock, brooks babble underfoot, and gnarled trees sprout in the strangest places. Birds sing overhead and fish glint in freshwater pools. Everything exists in its natural state. The furnishings and decorations are made of felled trees, jagged rocks, chunks of crystal, mica, antlers, fur and feathers - all from a bearish masculine point of view.

The overall effect is stunning, but because no sunlight comes in except from a tiny window in the ceiling, there's a melancholy about the place. Sickly torches waver in sconces and dim candles sputter in lofty chandeliers, but they're never quite bright enough. As time passes, this feeling of gloom becomes more pronounced.

TOVE (Gazing at the shifting panorama.) It's so huge. . . a person could get lost.

THE BEAR I don't have that many visitors.

TOVE How do you find your way around?

THE BEAR In fact, you're my first one.

TOVE Don't you get lonely?

THE BEAR *(Softly.)* Don't speak to me about loneliness.

TOVE I've never been lonely because of all my brothers and sisters.

THE BEAR I envy you.

TOVE I miss them already.

THE BEAR I want you to be comfortable here. You can feast on anything your heart desires. Plump berries, roasted pigeons. . .

TOVE I could never eat a pigeon.

THE BEAR I prefer fish myself. Whole . . .

TOVE Uuuugh!

THE BEAR And still wiggling.

TOVE UUUUGH! Have you ever had pine cone soup?

THE BEAR Pine cone soup?

TOVE It's seasoned with fir boughs and juniper berries.

THE BEAR Have you ever had seaweed stew?

TOVE Please!

THE BEAR How about whale blubber tarts?

TOVE Stop, stop!

THE BEAR Or salmon tail pie?

TOVE I had boiled reindeer antlers once.

THE BEAR I prefer their hooves.

TOVE Uuuugh!

THE BEAR Enough! Let me show you to your room.

TOVE My room?

THE BEAR Where you'll be staying.

TOVE I've never had a room to myself.

THE BEAR Actually you have the entire palace to yourself. I'm rarely here during the day. You can explore to your heart's content. You're my guest, not my prisoner. There's only one place you may not go and that's down this staircase.

He points to a sinister looking trap door. The lights dim and eerie music plays.

TOVE Where does it lead?

THE BEAR To pain and sorrow. Swear you won't go down.

TOVE (Raising her hand.) I won't go down.

THE BEAR Swear again.

TOVE I swear.

THE BEAR And again.

TOVE I swear.

THE BEAR And again.

TOVE I swear.

The music stops and the lights return to normal.

THE BEAR Listen to me. I want you to be happy here. There are streams to swim in, meadows to run through and hillocks to climb . . .

TOVE (Following him.) But why me? Why was I chosen?

THE BEAR You ask too much.

TOVE I'm just a simple girl.

And suddenly they're in her bed chamber which features a soaring canopy bed made of butterfly wings. It seems to hover in mid air. Tove gasps.

THE BEAR I designed the bed especially for you, I hope you like it.

TOVE It's beautiful. I've never had a real bed.

THE BEAR I must go now. If you need anything, just ring that bell.

He eyes a silver bell that sits prominently on her night table. And suddenly he vanishes, his footsteps and breathing echoing down the long staircase.

TOVE Wait, come back! Don't leave me. (But he's gone. She looks around the room. Her former delight turning to dread.) Come back, come back. . .

The lights slowly dim around her. When they return, it's the dead of night. The candles have burned down to guttering stubs. Tove tosses and turns in bed She hasn't slept a wink. The night is filled with unsettling mountain sounds – startled elk, flapping eagles, hissing rattlesnakes - not the familiar forest creatures she's used to. Midst this cacophony, we become aware of a stranger sound. it's hard to identify at first, but it gradually coalesces into a man playing a stringed instrument and singing. His voice is achingly beautiful and sad. Tove sits up, riveted. She gets out of bed and creeps to the trap door.

She step onto the trap, it creaks menacingly, she retreats and runs back to the bed. The lights change, indicating the passage of time. Tove is revealed finishing a meal set out on a silver tray. She picks up the bouquet of roses that accompanies it, lights a candle and sets out to explore the castle in search of the bear.

TOVE Mr. Bear, where are you? Yoo hoo . . . Mr. Beaaaaaaar?

The lights shift again with the passage of time. Tove enters with her bouquet. She passes the trap door with a longing look but continues on to the bed. She brushes her hair and settles down for yet another night. The lights fade.

Tove is reading a book when a swarm of butterflies passes. She chases them off stage but is immediately back with a net trying to catch a lone straggler. She delights in everything around her, splashing in a brook and then swinging on a rope from nowhere. Tove plays the little flute Frid gave her but only hears the melody of the mysterious singer.

TOVE What beautiful singing. I've got to find where it's coming from.

She takes a step towards the trap door, but the sound of her oath reverberates around her. She retreats back to her bed. The singing becomes lovelier. She approaches the door again.

TOVE This is torture, torture!

She pulls open the trap door, ignoring the hideous sound it makes. She grabs a candle from a nearby sconce and slowly goes down the stairs. She descends many flights with many turnings. She raises her candle to see better, but a gust of wind extinguishes it. She continues on, clutching the sides of the walls. Her eyes slowly adjust to the darkness. She enters a dim and drafty dungeon. What she sees is extraordinary. A man is sitting in a cage, playing the violin and singing. The sound of the bear's breathing surrounds him. It's obviously the bear in human form. She settles down next to the cage to listen, leaning her face against the ban.

PRINCE (Singing) WINGED CREATES LARGE AND SMALL
LOVE WITH FIERCE BRIGHT HEARTS.
MOSQUITOES SPOON AND JUNE BUGS SWOON,
SWEARING NOT TO PART.
EACH TO EACH, THE INSECTS SING,
DRONING THEIR DESIRE.
TERMITES PINE AND MOTHS ENTWINE,
DRAWN TO PASSION'S FIRE,
EAGER TO EXPIRE.
SO RUN TO ME,
CLIMB TO ME,
SWIM TO ME, FLY - -
REACH FOR ME,
DARE FOR ME,
TAKE TO THE SKY.
I'LL BE WAITING,
NOT LATER BUT SOON,
EAST OF THE SUN
AND WEST OF THE MOON.

It's clearly a love song meant for her. She listens enrapt until the birds start cawing and a shaft of sunlight falls on her from the tiny window in the ceiling. She staggers back up the forbidden staircase and collapses on the floor.

PRINCE (Singing) THE LOUDEST CLAMOR'S FROM THE BIRDS,
IN YELLOW, GREEN, AND BLUE,
SPARROWS SQUAWK AND PARROTS TALK,
SHRIEKING, "I LOVE YOU".
STORKS AND CRANES WAX ELOQUENT,
THEY CURTSEY, MINCE AND BOW,
LONG NECKS TURNING, BRIGHT EYES YEARNING
UNDER FEATHERED BROWS.
THEY RHYME THEIR COURTLY VOWS.
SO RUN TO ME,
CLIMB TO ME,
SWIM TO ME, FLY - -
REACH FOR ME,
DARE FOR ME,
TAKE TO THE SKY.
I'LL BE WAITING,
NOT LATER BUT SOON,
EAST OF THE SUN,
AND WEST OF THE MOON.

Weeks have passed.

THE BEAR I've returned.

TOVE (Weakly.) I want to go home.

THE BEAR What's been going on?

TOVE I want to go home!

THE BEAR Look at you. . .

TOVE (Starting to cry.) I want to go home.

THE BEAR You've gotten so thin.

TOVE I'll die if I stay here.

THE BEAR What have you been doing?

TOVE Let me go, I beg you!

THE BEAR You may go for one week

TOVE (*Embracing his leg.*) Thank you, thank you . . .

THE BEAR But there's one condition.

TOVE Anything, anything . . .

THE BEAR You must avoid your mother.

TOVE I will.

THE BEAR She's going to want to be alone with you to ask about your life here.

TOVE I won't go near her.

THE BEAR You mustn't tell her anything.

TOVE I won't.

THE BEAR Not a word of what you've seen or done.

TOVE Not a word.

THE BEAR No matter how she implores or threatens you.

TOVE I promise.

THE BEAR Swear it.

TOVE I won't say a word.

THE BEAR Again.

TOVE I swear.

THE BEAR And again.

TOVE I swear.

THE BEAR And again.

TOVE I swear.

THE BEAR *(Softly.)* I'm doomed.

TOVE What did you say?

THE BEAR Nothing, nothing. *(He sighs.)* Get up on my back, you'll be home in no time.

TOVE *(She staggers towards him.)* Thank you, thank you. . . *(The lights start to dim.)*

THE BEAR Remember, not a word to your mother.

TOVE *(Climbing up on his back.)* Not a word. . .

THE BEAR Hold on tight, you'll be there before you know it.

TOVE *(Starting to fall asleep.)* Not a word.

Traveling music starts to play and the lights fade to black.