

THE OTHER SIDE

A short drama by
Randy Wyatt

Adapted from the short story by Count Eric Stenbock

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

FRIAR FELIX, weather-beaten, serious, protective.

LILITH, a maternal, kind woman with long golden hair and a secret.

YVONNE, a woman of small means and equal patience.

GABRIEL, dreamy, different, possessed.

CARMEILLE, an earnest girl with wide eyes.

DARK NIGHTINGALE, a dark singing bird, large beak.

HOMUNCULI, lost faceless souls.

NOTES

Gabriel can be Gabriella. Carmeille can be Carmine. Genders of these two can be any combination. Genders of the Dark Nightingale and the Homunculi don't matter.

The Homunculi can also be interpreted with masks of owls, serpents, or hybrid animals with red eyes on human bodies. Regardless, they are shadowy and have human bodies, no matter what form their faces take. There can be anywhere from two to more than ten of them.

The Dark Nightingale's song lyrics are of a language, invented by Stenbock, which seems to have origin in elements of French, Bulgarian and Latin. She can double with the Homunculi.

The wolf mask should ideally be white, but can be any wolf mask, as long as the same looking one is used for both Lilith and Gabriel.

(A wolf howl. A cacophony of whispered mutters, growls, curses and prayers. They build to a climax and then cease. FRIAR FELIX is revealed holding a lantern. He is shell-shocked, speaking to us in a voice full of dread:)

FRIAR FELIX: Listen.

(Another wolf howl, louder. The Friar jumps at it, straining into the darkness. The whisperers snicker at him then stop. His gaze rests on us again.)

There was a village and a forest, separated by a brook.

(As he speaks, two HOMUNCULI set a silvery length of cloth as a brook, dividing the left and right sides of the stage. They disappear.)

My parishioners live well enough on our side of the brook. No one crosses over to the dark and evil forest. No one but the wicked men who—for nine days a year—fall prey to a certain sort of...madness.

(A DARK NIGHTINGALE sings. Perhaps she is revealed in a dark beaked mask. Or perhaps we only hear her right now.)

DARK NIGHTINGALE: *Ma zála liral va jé*

Cwamûlo zhajéla je

Cárma urádi el javé

Járma, symai, – carmé –

(As the Nightingale sings, two mothers, each on a separate side of the stage, are revealed, holding candles, calling up their respective stairs or offstage areas. LILITH is dressed in a white flowing nightgown. YVONNE is not so elegant.)

LILITH: Gabriel.

YVONNE: Gabriel!

FRIAR FELIX: *(To us:)* Listen.

LILITH: Gabriel, wake up, child. I've made you breakfast.

YVONNE: Gabriel, wake up, you lazy whelp.

LILITH: Oatcakes and cream and a chocolate croissant. Come out.

YVONNE: The friar said you were acting strange, you idle thing. Go back to the parish and apologize this minute.

FRIAR FELIX: *(To us:)* Listen.

DARK NIGHTINGALE: *Zhála javály thra je
al vú al vlaûle
va azré Safralje
vairálje vajá?*

(As the nightingale sings, GABRIEL comes sleepily towards Lilith. He seems disoriented, a little absent. He has a phosphorescent blue mark on his forehead. Lilith, smiling, greets him with open arms. On her side, Yvonne taps her foot angrily, waiting.)

LILITH: My Gabriel.

YVONNE: *(As she storms offstage to get him:)* Gabriel! How dare you ignore me! Reply to me this instant or I—

(Yvonne screams offstage.)

Gabriel! Where are you?! Friar! Someone send for the Friar!!

FRIAR FELIX: *(To us:)* And thus, was I summoned.

(Lights down on the Friar, or he exits. The Nightingale sings again. Gabriel is dreamily distracted with the singing as Lilith dotes on him.)

LILITH: Why Gabriel, how late you are today.

GABRIEL: Is this a dream?

LILITH: *(Taking the flower out of his hand:)* You slept so long. You were so tired yesterday.

GABRIEL: I was so tired yesterday.

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LILITH: (*Tossing the flower away DS:*) You don't need this right now.

GABRIEL: I don't need that right now.

LILITH: My Gabriel.

(A wolf howl. Lights up on Yvonne and Friar.)

YVONNE: (*Agitated:*) But in the middle of the night, Friar!

FRIAR FELIX: He was strange at Mass yesterday.

YVONNE: Where could he be?!

FRIAR FELIX: The other acolytes noticed his seeming—distant. They said he didn't bow his head to pray. They said he had forgotten how. Darkness abounds in this age.

YVONNE: Those boys never liked him. He has no friends.

FRIAR FELIX: He has a friend in me.

YVONNE: Of course with you, Friar.

(A wolf howl. Yvonne moans.)

Oh, I am afraid. I am afraid for him, Friar. We must pray for his soul.

FRIAR FELIX: Prayer finds purchase in action. Where would he have gone? Think.

YVONNE: (*Wailing:*) I've no idea.

CARMEILLE: He has gone to the other side.

(Both startled, Friar and Yvonne round on the sudden appearance of CARMEILLE.)

YVONNE: The little girl from the edge of the village. You follow him.

FRIAR FELIX: Carmeille. What did you say, child?

CARMEILLE: He hasn't come back. I had hoped he might.

YVONNE: Heavens preserve us! He's lost.

FRIAR FELIX: *(To Carmeille:)* How do you know this?

CARMEILLE: I watched him jump over the brook.

(Gabriel appears on the other side of the brook, staring at the blue flower on the ground. He reaches towards it.)

FRIAR FELIX: Why? Why would he do this foolish, wicked thing?

GABRIEL: I...must... Is this a dream?

(Carmeille joins him in this scene, a flashback.)

CARMEILLE: Gabriel. Come back right now.

GABRIEL: It sings to me.

CARMEILLE: It is a witching flower. Friar warned us.

GABRIEL: Can't you hear it?

(The Dark Nightingale sings from the darkness.)

DARK NIGHTINGALE: *Carma seraja. Laja Laja! Luzha!*

GABRIEL: It is the song—of a friend.

CARMEILLE: No one must cross to the other side.

GABRIEL: Why?

(A beat. Carmeille doesn't know why. Gabriel picks up the flower. Carmeille jumps the brook to his side.)

CARMEILLE: No! Don't touch it!

GABRIEL: *(Intoxicated by its power:)* It's... Oh, it's... I... Oh. It's the song.

(He rubs the flower on his forehead.)

CARMEILLE: It's evil.

GABRIEL: That's what they say.

(He holds the flower out to her.)

Touch it.

(Carmelle starts to reach out, then hesitates.)

FRIAR FELIX: Did you? Did you touch the witching flower?
Did you?

GABRIEL: Isn't it lovely?

(Carmelle touches the flower. She almost loses her strength to stand.)

CARMEILLE: I...feel so strange. Oh, I don't like its perfume—
there's something not quite right about it. Gabriel, let me
throw it away.

*(A wolf howl. Lilith appears, standing, in a wolf mask. Two
Homunculi attend her on either side. Carmelle screams.)*

We must go!

*(Carmelle jumps back over the brook, then looks back. Lilith
reaches a hand towards Gabriel.)*

Gabriel?

(Gabriel takes Lilith's hand. They walk into the darkness.)

Gabriel! Come back!

YVONNE: You wicked child!

(Carmelle returns to the scene in progress at Yvonne's house.)

You left my son with that monster!

CARMEILLE: I ran all the way home and fell sobbing into my
bed. I slept until just now. I had dark and disturbing dreams,
wolves' teeth and red shining eyes.

FRIAR FELIX: You touched the witching flower.

YVONNE: Insolent and foolish. Worthless. My poor son!

CARMEILLE: You never listened to him. He told you what he heard at night. You ignored him. I was a friend to him, not you.

YVONNE: (*Ignoring Carmeille, to Friar:*) What must we do? Can anything be done?

FRIAR FELIX: I will set the boys to hunt the wolf.

YVONNE: I only hope it is not too late.

CARMEILLE: (*Running out:*) I must find him.

(Carmeille exits.)

FRIAR FELIX: (*Running after her:*) Carmeille!

YVONNE: Friar! What would you have me do?

FRIAR FELIX: (*Stopping long enough to lock eyes with her:*) Pray.

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