

EVERGREEN

A New Musical

by

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CHARACTERS

MAYA, 13 - bright, inquisitive, skeptical (played by an adult)

JOSHI, 10 - Maya's brother (played by an adult)

ANYA / ESTRELLA - Maya's mother / a star in the sky

RODZIC / TAK HARUS - Maya's father / a stag of the Petrified Forest

WUJEK / BELSNICKEL - Maya's uncle / a water witch

YAMMA - Maya's grandmother

A CHORUS OF CHILDREN - playing various roles throughout

TIME

The story takes place in a mythic time—either the very distant future, or the very distant past—when much of the world has become a desert and human society has shriveled and fragmented.

PLACE(S)

Maya and her family live in tents by an isolated desert oasis. Leaving her home world behind, Maya journeys across the desert, reaching a sea. After crossing the sea, she comes to a petrified forest. And from there, she ventures into the crater of a dormant volcano.

Scene 1: The Oasis

(During the opening music, the entire company enters on stage, creating a tableau image that suggests community and connection. At the center of the image is YAMMA, the storyteller, and MAYA, downstage center. The group freezes with their focus on YAMMA. Then, MAYA steps from the tableau, and begins to sing to the audience. As she sings, the world around her springs to life. As she mentions her family members, we see them moving through their daily routines.)

SONG: MY GRANDMOTHER COUNTS THE DAYS

MAYA

MY GRANDMOTHER COUNTS THE DAYS AS THEY GO BY.
SHE HAS A BOOK, SHE MAKES A MARK, GIVES EACH A NAME.
SOMETIMES IT'S A SATURDAY,
OR SOMETHING CALLED THE SEVENTH,
SOMETIMES IT'S DECEMBER THE ELEVENTH.

MY GRANDMOTHER COUNTS THE DAYS—I DON'T KNOW WHY,
WHEN EV'RY DAY FROM DAWN TO DUSK IS JUST THE SAME.
MOTHER SAYS IT'S MEANINGFUL,
BUT I AGREE WITH FATHER.
I DON'T SEE WHY ANYONE WOULD BOTHER...

TIME GOES BY
MY UNCLE'S BEARD GETS GRAYER
IN A WHILE
I'LL BE SHORTER THAN MY BROTHER
EACH NEW DAY'S
NO DIFF'RENT FROM ANOTHER

STILL MY GRANDMOTHER COUNTS THE DAYS—I DON'T KNOW WHY.
MY GRANDMOTHER COUNTS THE DAYS AS THEY GO BY,
UNTIL IT'S HERE...
THE DAY THAT SHE CALLS THE BEST DAY OF THE YEAR.

(ANYA, entering.)

ANYA

Aren't you done yet, Maya? Your father will be home any minute now.

MAYA

Almost. How far do you think he went today? I wonder if he went east...? I've never gone past the dunes, but he promised to take me the next time he goes.

ANYA

Less daydreaming and more sweeping.

MAYA

Why does it matter if the floor's clean?

ANYA

Because, tonight is special.

MAYA

It doesn't seem any different to me. What's so special?

ANYA

Maya—do you have to be difficult? Today of all days.

MAYA

I'm not being difficult, I'm just asking a question.

ANYA

It's almost time for the gathering. You don't want to miss your grandmother's stories, do you?

MAYA

I've heard all her stories before, Mother.

ANYA

But it's a tradition. Everyone else will be there...

MAYA

All the children. I'm too old for that stuff.

ANYA

Please, Maya. It means so much to Yamma.

MAYA

I just don't believe in it anymore.

ANYA

What don't you believe?

MAYA

Any of it. It's fine for Joshi and the other kids, but grownups don't believe in those things...

ANYA

I do.

MAYA

You do?

ANYA

Of course. I've never seen them, but I know Yamma has.

(Apart from MAYA and ANYA, we see YAMMA,
with an audience of CHILDREN gathering around her.)

SONG: A THING CALLED SNOW

YAMMA

WHEN I WAS A GIRL,
A GREAT MANY YEARS AGO,
I CAN STILL REMEMBER
THERE WAS A THING CALLED SNOW

CHILDREN

OOOOH... THERE WAS A THING CALLED SNOW

YAMMA

FALLING FROM A CLOUD,
TO BLANKET THE LAND BELOW
IN A TIME KNOWN AS DECEMBER,
THERE WAS A THING CALLED SNOW.

CHILDREN

A CLOUD...
TO BLANKET...
DECEMBER...

CHILDREN

OOOOH... A GREAT MANY YEARS AGO
THERE WAS A THING CALLED SNOW

YAMMA

POWDERY AND WHITE,
SLIPPERY AND WET,
SOFTER THAN A GRAIN OF SAND
FLUTTERING IN FLAKES
TICKLING YOUR CHEEKS
MELTING THE PALM OF YOUR HAND

CHILDREN

WHITE...
WET...
LIKE GRAINS OF SAND...
FLAKES...
CHEEKS...
MELTING IN THE PALM
OF YOUR HAND...

YAMMA

ONCE, IN A WORLD I USED TO KNOW,
THERE WAS A THING CALLED SNOW.

(Back to MAYA and ANYA, apart from the others.)

MAYA

Okay, let's pretend snow existed. What would it be made of?

ANYA

Well, Yamma says it's a kind of water...

MAYA

Water comes from the ground, not the sky.

ANYA

But you've seen a cloud, Maya. That's made of water—just like the steam from a kettle.

MAYA

Steam is hot. And Yamma says snow was cold. And she says it covered all the ground. You know there's not enough water in the whole world to do that.

ANYA

Yes, yes. You win. It makes no sense, I know. But I believe it anyway. Someday you'll understand, Maya—there are things we must believe in, even when we have no way of knowing the truth.

YAMMA

WHEN I WAS A GIRL,
IN HAPPIER TIMES THAN THESE,
GROWING ALL AROUND US
THERE WAS A THING CALLED TREES.

CHILDREN

THERE WAS A THING CALLED TREES

YAMMA & CHILDREN

RISING FROM THE GROUND
TO SWAY IN A GENTLE BREEZE
TALLER THAN THE TALLEST TENTPOLE
THERE WAS A THING CALLED TREES

EVERYWHERE THEY GREW A
BEAUTIFUL AND GREEN CANOPIES
OF SHADE WERE SPREAD EV'RY
LITTLE LEAF
TREMBLING WITH LIFE
ON THE BRANCHES OVERHEAD

ONCE IN HAPPIER DAYS THAN THESE,
THERE WAS A THING CALLED TREES.

YAMMA

And there were so many kinds! Birches with silver bark. Willows with their gently drooping boughs. Pines and firs with their shiny, sharp needles.

JOSHI

Needles?! Like for sewing?

YAMMA

Yes, Joshi. But softer...

JOSHI

I'd stay away from those.

YAMMA

But they were the most special kind! We called them evergreens, because they stayed green all through the winter.

JOSHI

Weren't all trees green?

YAMMA

Some of the time, but not always...

ONCE EV'RY YEAR THE SNOW WOULD FALL
AND ALL THE TREES WOULD SEEM TO DIE
ONCE THERE WAS SOMETHING WE CALLED SEASONS
THERE WERE REASONS WHY
SOON THERE WOULD BE A NEW REBIRTH
AND ALL THE EARTH WOULD COME ALIVE
FOR A THING
WE CALLED SPRING...

NOW IT'S BEEN SO LONG
SINCE I'VE SEEN ANY GREEN THING GROW,
BUT I CAN STILL REMEMBER...
LIFE WASN'T ALWAYS SO.
SPRING WILL COME AGAIN
THE TREES WILL RETURN, I KNOW.
AS SURELY AS THERE ONCE WAS A THING CALLED SNOW

CHILDREN

SPRING WILL COME AGAIN,
AS SURELY AS THERE ONCE
WAS A THING CALLED SNOW.

(Enter WUJEK and RODZIC. WUJEK carries a bulging sack. RODZIC wears a backpack, out of which a strange spindly -tree|| is sticking up behind his head.)

WUJEK

Happy Holiday! And what a haul for the holiday!

ANYA

You can take that right on in, Wujek.

WUJEK

I worked up such an appetite... I think I'm going to eat most of this myself.

(Exit WUJEK. ANYA gives RODZIC a kiss on the cheek.)

ANYA

I was getting worried. You were gone so long.

RODZIC

We had to go a long way to find everything we needed...

MAYA

Did you go east? Past the dunes?

RODZIC

Even farther than that.

(JOSHI rushes in, very excited, peering at Rodzic's -tree.||)

JOSHI

Is this our new tree?

RODZIC

This is the best I could find. It will have to serve...

JOSHI

I like it—it's taller than the old one.

(fiercely, to MAYA)

And I get to decorate it.

MAYA

No one's fighting you for that.

ANYA

No tree until after the feast.

JOSHI

Aww.... Then I get to light the fire.

ANYA

I already have the cook fire going.

JOSHI

Aww...

ANYA

But you can go fetch more fuel, Joshi. Tonight we keep the fire going all night.

JOSHI

And I get to stay up late!

(Exit JOSHI.)

ANYA

Come with me, Rodzic. I want to put that in a different place this year.

(MAYA starts to follow them)

And Maya, sweep out this sand your father and uncle tracked in.

(Exit ANYA and RODZIC. Music under as MAYA is left alone onstage for a moment. With a sigh, she goes and takes a broom from the corner and begins to sweep the sand out. She works her way out the door and disappears. Enter WUJEK and RODZIC. MAYA peeks in, eavesdropping on their conversation.)

RODZIC

We shouldn't be feasting when we don't know how much longer we'll be able to find food.

WUJEK

But it lifts people's spirits. One night of feasting gives us courage to face another year of famine. And think of the children, Rodzic. What else do they have to look forward to?

RODZIC

I do think of the children. And I wonder what kind of future there will be for Maya and Joshi. Every year we have to go farther and farther to gather supplies... It's only a matter of time before we've used up everything. And what then?

WUJEK

I suppose we'll have to pull up stakes—like father did...

RODZIC

And if we leave here, who knows if we'll find another source of water.

WUJEK

Of course, we might try the North...

RODZIC

There is nothing to the north—only desert.

WUJEK

But the legends...

RODZIC

Yamma's stories are just that—stories... made up to entertain the children.

WUJEK

The North could be our last hope. If there's still a place where things can grow, then we wouldn't have to forage and scavenge.

RODZIC

I wish I could believe it. But I won't risk everything chasing after something that may not exist.

(RODZIC notices MAYA listening. He crosses to her.)

RODZIC

Better to endure...

WUJEK

(to MAYA)

... and hope for change.

(Exit RODZIC and WUJEK. Enter JOSHI with two buckets that he swings like bells.)

JOSHI

Ding! Dong!

(swinging a bucket toward MAYA)

Dung!

MAYA

Joshi—get that away from me.

JOSHI

What? It doesn't smell anymore. It's all dried out.

(Exit JOSHI)

MAYA

(calling after him)

And thanks for letting the sand blow in again. I just finished sweeping it out!

(MAYA resumes her sweeping and works her way out the door.
The WINDS call to her... and sing with her during her song.)

SONG: MAYA'S WIND SONG

MAYA

DESERT WINDS, YOU COME TO ME
FROM SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY.
I WISH I KNEW THE SECRETS YOU
HAVE COME SO FAR TO SAY,

BECAUSE I HEAR YOU WHISP'RING IN MY EAR,
BUT THE MESSAGE ISN'T CLEAR...

DESERT WINDS, THIS LAND OF MINE
IS DRY AND STILL AS DEATH.
BUT WHEN YOU'RE THERE TO STIR THE AIR,
THERE'S SWEETNESS ON YOUR BREATH.

AND I WONDER IF THE PLACE YOU COME FROM
IS BEAUTIFUL AND GREEN.
AND I WISH THAT I COULD RACE BESIDE YOU,
AND SEE THE THINGS YOU'VE SEEN.

IF I COULD RUN FASTER THAN THE WINDS BLOW,
GO EVERYWHERE THEY'VE BEEN,
I KNOW I WOULD FIND THE ANSWERS THERE,
WHERE THE WINDS BEGIN.

DESERT WINDS, I'VE WATCHED YOU CARVE
YOUR PATHWAYS THROUGH THE SAND,
EACH A TRACK THAT'S LEADING BACK
TOWARD YOUR NATIVE LAND.

AND IMAGINE IF TOMORROW MORNING
I BOLDLY VENTURED FORTH.
I COULD FOLLOW ON THOSE WINDING PATHWAYS
TO FIND WHAT'S THERE UP NORTH

I COULD RUN FASTER THAN THE WINDS BLOW,
GO EVERYWHERE THEY'VE BEEN
NO WALLS COULD EVER HOPE TO HOLD ME IN

IF THEY'RE REAL, LET ME SEE THE SNOWFLAKES—
FEEL THEM FALLING ON MY SKIN!
AND IF THERE TRULY IS A TREE
I'LL BELIEVE IT WHEN I SEE.
AND THE ONLY PLACE ON EARTH THAT IT COULD BE
IS THERE...
WHERE THE WINDS BEGIN.

(MAYA stands outside the tent, listening to the wind. Enter YAMMA.)

YAMMA

Is that Maya?

MAYA

Yes, Yamma. It's me.

YAMMA

My eyes get worse and worse. Do you know, I looked for you when I was telling my stories... and I couldn't find your face among all the others.

MAYA

I'm sorry. I was... helping Mother.

YAMMA

You don't have to be sorry. I forget sometimes. You're past five thousand days now.

MAYA

Am I really that old?

YAMMA

Yes, I've kept count.

MAYA

Why do you count, Yamma?

YAMMA

Because I want to know when it's a holiday, of course!

MAYA

But does it really matter? Why this day?

YAMMA

Tradition, I suppose.

MAYA

So it's true there's nothing special about today.

YAMMA

We make it special, Maya. It's special because we choose to celebrate it.

MAYA

It just seems strange to me.

YAMMA

Of course it does. It's your thirteenth holiday. That was when your mother stopped believing too.

MAYA

Mother stopped believing?

YAMMA

Of course! Anya used to ask all the same questions of me. And she wouldn't listen either.

MAYA

But why?

YAMMA

Who knows? I suppose she just needed to see for herself.

MAYA

But what did she see?

YAMMA

Look there, beyond—in the distance. What's there?

MAYA

Rocks. Sand. Dirt. Nothing much.

YAMMA

I don't think that's true. If there wasn't something important, you wouldn't spend so much time looking. There are journeys we all must take on our own, Maya. Your mother had to find her own way, and I think you do too. (beat.) Why don't you come back inside now?

MAYA

I like it better out here. No Joshi to bother me.

YAMMA

All right then, but don't stay out too long, Maya.

MAYA

Just another minute!

(YAMMA starts to exit, but turns to the audience and narrates.)

YAMMA

But Maya stayed outside much longer than a minute. She studied her father's map until the sun had set completely, and only the light of mother's lantern was left. By the time she went back inside, the fire had died down, and everyone was exhausted—but she had made her decision. She waited until the whole tent was sleeping, quietly gathered her things, and set off on her own... or so she thought!

Scene 2: The Desert

(Music under as MAYA travels. JOSHI follows her at a distance, carrying a large pack full of supplies that occasionally clanks. Several times MAYA hears something and stops to look behind her. JOSHI hides, crouching behind scrub brush. The last time he is caught out with nowhere to hide, and throws cloak over himself and does his best to impersonate a rock. MAYA crosses to him and prods him with her foot.)

MAYA

What are you doing out here?

JOSHI

What are you doing out here? We're not allowed to go wandering off on our own.

MAYA

It's very dangerous.

JOSHI

I know! That's why I came!

MAYA

Don't worry about me. I'll be fine. I've been out overnight with Father before.

JOSHI

So where exactly are you going?

MAYA

I'm not sure exactly. But generally... North!

JOSHI

Why?

MAYA

To get away from you.

JOSHI

Well you didn't. (beat) I think I know where you're going.

MAYA

Can't you ever just leave me alone?

JOSHI

No. Not unless you tell me where you're going.

MAYA

Go home, Joshi.

(MAYA turns and begins to go on her way again.
JOSHI follows, clanking. She rounds on him.)

MAYA

Joshi!

JOSHI

You're going to find the trees, aren't you?

MAYA

Maybe...

JOSHI

So you do believe.

MAYA

I didn't say that.

JOSHI

Mom's gonna be angry.

MAYA

No she won't. She'll understand.

JOSHI

What do you mean?

MAYA

Yamma said that Mother had to find her own way, too.

JOSHI

Don't you think that was just an expression?

MAYA

No!

(MAYA looks worried for a moment, but hides this from Joshi.)

JOSHI

If you're going to find the trees, then I'm coming with you.

MAYA

No, you're not.

JOSHI

You can't stop me from coming.

MAYA

You're too young to go out on your own.

JOSHI

I won't be alone. I'll be with you.

MAYA

I don't need your help.

JOSHI

Ha!—that's what you think.

S ONG: YOU'D N EVER GET
FAR

JOSHI

WHEN YOU SET OFF ON AN EXPEDITION,
YOU HAVE TO MAKE A PLAN,
AND CAREFULLY PICK THE THINGS YOU PACK,
RIGHT DOWN TO EACH POT AND PAN.
YOU DON'T HAVE ANY SUPPLIES OR TOOLS
OR EVEN A MASON JAR.
IT'S PAINFULLY CLEAR IF I WASN'T HERE
YOU'D NEVER GET FAR.

Did you even bring water?

MAYA

Of course I did.

JOSHI

And how about food?

(no response)

Aha!

JOSHI

HOW FAR WOULD YOU GET WITHOUT A BISCUIT?

MAYA

—I'LL RISK IT.

JOSHI

DID YOU EVEN THINK TO BRING SOME ROPE?

MAYA

—NOPE.

JOSHI

A MEASURING CUP?

MAYA

—I CAN GET BY WITHOUT IT

JOSHI

I DOUBT IT.
A TINDER BOX?
SOME EXTRA SOCKS?
YOU'RE LUCKY I CAME ALONG!

MAYA

—WRONG.
WHEN YOU ENDEAVOR TO CROSS THE DESERT,
YOU HAVE TO TRAVEL LIGHT.
YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE THE KITCHEN SINK
AND EVERY SPOON IN SIGHT.
LOOK AT YOU—CLATTERING OVER SAND DUNES,
LIKE SOME BIZARRE BAZAAR!
NO CAMEL OR HORSE TO HAUL IT, OF COURSE.
YOU'D NEVER GET FAR.

(MAYA points to a strange utensil JOSHI has brought.)

MAYA

What are you going to do with this?!

JOSHI

LAUGH, SURE—MAYBE I'M YOUNGER
BUT I KNOW HOW TO GET BY.
WHEN YOU'RE DYING OF HUNGER
DON'T EVEN TRY TO GET IN ON MY
BISCUIT SUPPLY!

MAYA

WE BOTH KNOW I'M A LOT BOLDER.
WHAT I DID, YOU'D NEVER DO.
BUT I'M SO MUCH WISER AND OLDER
MAYBE I KNEW
SOMEHOW THAT YOU
WOULD FOLLOW AND BRING ALL THOSE THINGS WITH YOU TOO!

BOTH
HERE WE ARE TAKING A TRIP TOGETHER,
WHETHER WE WANT TO OR NOT!

MAYA
YOU ALWAYS NEED TO FOLLOW MY LEAD.

JOSHI
AND YOU NEED THE STUFF I'VE GOT.

MAYA & JOSHI
MAYBE ALONE WE WERE NOT SO HOT,
BUT NOW AS A TEAM WE ARE!

MAYA
I GOTTA ADMIT I WAS UNDERPREPARED.

JOSHI
IF IT WASN'T FOR YOU I WOULD NEVER HAVE DARED.

BOTH
A SISTER AND BROTHER,
WITHOUT ONE ANOTHER
WE'D NEVER GET FAR.

(JOSHI hears something.)

JOSHI
What's that noise?

MAYA
I don't hear anything, just the wind.

JOSHI
Yes, the wind. Only it sounds different than at home. Lower...

MAYA
That must be because we're out on the dunes. More echo.

JOSHI
I think it's getting louder.

MAYA
Don't worry. The wind is my friend.

JOSHI

No it's not.

MAYA

What do you know?

JOSHI

Maya, that's crazy. The wind is not a person.

MAYA

I've just got a feeling about this, Joshi. I can't explain. You can go home anytime you like, but if you're coming along with me you've got to trust me.

JOSHI

You mean, I should believe in you, even though there's no good reason?

MAYA

Right.

JOSHI

Okay.

MUSIC: THE SANDSTORM

(Suddenly a sandstorm—made of children!—is upon them. MAYA and JOSHI cling to each other as they are buried by the sand. Enter BELSNICKEL, an old man with a large sack strapped on his back and a forked stick in his hands. He grasps the forked end in both hands and slowly scans the stick over the ground.)

SONG: THERE IS WATER AROUND

BELSNICKEL

THERE IS WATER AROUND EV'RYWHERE,
WAITING THERE TO BE FOUND.
HIDDEN SOURCES ABOUND EV'RYWHERE
FOR THOSE WHO KNOW
WHERE THEY FLOW.
IN THE AIR THAT WE BREATHE,
OR BURIED DEEP UNDERGROUND...
THERE IS WATER AROUND EVERYWHERE...

(Music crescendos as Belsnickel's divining rod begins to twitch. He follows until the rod leads him to where the children are buried.)

BELSNICKEL

Aha!

(Excited, BELSNICKEL tosses aside his divining rod and digs until he has uncovered them. MAYA and JOSHI tumble out, gasping and coughing.)

BELSNICKEL

Kids?!

MAYA

Oh, thank you so much, Mister!

JOSHI

You saved our lives!

BELSNICKEL

I'm finding kids now?

MAYA

I didn't think we'd ever get out of there.

BELSNICKEL

I have half a mind to put you back... tricking me like that. I suppose you think you're pretty funny.

JOSHI

We didn't mean to trick you.

BELSNICKEL

Then what on earth were you doing hiding out under there?

MAYA

We were caught in a sandstorm.

JOSHI

We got buried.

MAYA

How did you ever find us?

BELSNICKEL

I found you because you're juicy.

MAYA

What do you mean?

BELSNICKEL

I mean you're moist. Damp. Soggy. Boggy. Juicy.

JOSHI

(to Maya)

Is he going to eat us?

BELSNICKEL

Wet behind the ears too. And anything that's the least bit wet, I'll always find it.

MAYA

Why?

BELSNICKEL

Because of who I am!

MAYA

Who are you?

BELSNICKEL

I'm Belsnickel. But more to the point, I'm a Water Witch.

JOSHI

Well, which is it?

BELSNICKEL

Yes.

JOSHI

Are you a "what" or a "which"...?

BELSNICKEL

What?

JOSHI

So you're a "what"...?

BELSNICKEL

I'm a witch.

JOSHI

You just said you were a "what."

BELSNICKEL

When?

JOSHI
Just then. You switched.

BELSNICKEL
Switched to what?

JOSHI
No, to "which."

BELSNICKEL
What?!

JOSHI
"Which!"

BELSNICKEL
Wait!! I think I see what's going on here. I'm not a "hwat" or "which. I'm a Water Witch!

JOSHI
Oh...! (beat) What's that?

BELSNICKEL
A Water Witch is someone who can find water hidden underground.

JOSHI
How do you do that?

BELSNICKEL
I guess you could say it's by a kind of magic.

MAYA
You can do magic?

BELSNICKEL
Sometimes.

JOSHI
Where's your magic wand?

BELSNICKEL
I don't have a wand.
(picking up his divining rod)
But I do have a "Y"

A what? JOSHI

No. It's called a "Y" BELSNICKEL

Why? JOSHI

That's right. BELSNICKEL

He means h-why is it called that? MAYA

SONG: THE Y OF A WITCH

Ah... I see. BELSNICKEL

WHEN YOU WANT TO KNOW THE RATIONALE,
THEN "WHY?" IS QUESTION YOU ASK.
BUT WHEN YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A MOIST LOCALE,
THE TOOL THAT IS BEST FOR THE TASK IS THIS—
(he turns it to look like the letter 'Y')
THIS IS THE "Y" OF A WITCH.

(in awe) JOSHI
Ohhh...

Well show us what it does. MAYA

No. I don't need it right now. BELSNICKEL

When do you use it? JOSHI

When, you say...? BELSNICKEL

WHEN YOU'RE TRAVELING ACROSS THE SAND
 AND MANY A MILE YOU HAVE MARCHED,
 IF YOUR TRAVELING WAS POORLY PLANNED,
 THERE'S A THREAT OF A THROAT THAT'S PARCHED.
 AND WHEN YOU HAD THAT YEN
 YOU WOULD BE GLAD YOU HAD ON HAND
 A STICK TO SCRATCH THAT PARTICULAR ITCH.
 THAT IS THE WHEN OF THE "Y" OF A WITCH!

THERE YOU ARE WITHOUT A DROP TO DRINK.
 YOU'RE SCARED AND PREPARED FOR THE WORST.
 AND AS YOU'RE STANDING THERE YOU STOP TO THINK,
 "AM I GONNA DIE OF THIRST?"
 JUST IMAGINE IF A TOOL COULD TELL
 RIGHT BELOW YOU IS A COOL, WET WELL,
 THOUGH THE LAND
 WHERE YOU STAND
 LOOKS AS DRY AS A DITCH.
 THAT IS THE WHERE OF THE WHEN OF THE "Y" OF A WITCH!

NOW, PERHAPS YOU WONDER,
 HOW DOES THE Y OF A WITCH WORK?
 THAT I'M ABOUT TO TELL YOU BY AND BY...
 WHERE THERE'S WATER UNDER,
 THAT'S WHEN THE TIP WILL TWITCH, JERK
 AND THAT IS THE HOW OF THE WHERE OF THE WHEN OF THE "Y"

JOSHI

CAN I TRY?

BELSNICKEL

No!

NOT JUST EV'RYBODY'S GOT THE KNACK
 TO TELL WHERE THE WELL WATER LIES.
 DON'T IMAGINE THAT THE AV'RAGE HACK
 IS WISE IN THE WAYS OF Y'S.
 I'M ESPECIALLY INCLINED PROFESSIONALLY:
 -FINDING WATER IS MY NICHE.
 THAT IS THE WHO OF THE HOW OF THE WHERE
 OF THE WHEN OF THE "Y" OF A WITCH!
 YES! I AM THE WHO OF THE HOW OF THE WHERE
 OF THE WHEN OF THE "Y" OF A WITCH!

JOSHI

Can I at least hold it?

BELSNICKEL

Absolutely not! These are extremely rare. Would you like to know what this is made of?

JOSHI

Yes!

BELSNICKEL

Yew wood.

JOSHI

Yes...

(pause)

I would.

BELSNICKEL

You would what?

JOSHI

I would like to know... what it's made of.

BELSNICKEL

Yew wood!

JOSHI

Yes!!

MAYA

Will you two stop it!

(after a silence)

What is yew wood?

BELSNICKEL

Well it's a kind of wood...

(blank expressions)

From a yew...

(nothing)

...tree.

MAYA

That came from a tree?!

BELSNICKEL

Yes, yes of course. That's where wood comes from.

MAYA

So there really are trees?

BELSNICKEL

Not many nowadays. But up north there is one last grove of evergreens...

MAYA

You have to tell us how to get there. That's where we're going. We want to see the trees—for ourselves.

BELSNICKEL

Oh. Well it's a quite a long journey from here. Let's see... you have to follow the Chthonic River north until you come to the Saline Sea. And after you've crossed the Sea, you'll come to the Lapidarian Forest—it's really too much for children on their own.

MAYA

We can take care of ourselves. Or at least I can.

JOSHI

Ha!

BELSNICKEL

Did you bring provisions?

JOSHI

(punching Maya's arm)

See?

MAYA

We have plenty of water, some biscuits, a tinder box—

BELSNICKEL

You'll never make it. Not on foot. No, no, no...

(he rummages in his sack, and produces a coconut, which he places in MAYA's hands.)

BELSNICKEL

You'll need this.

MAYA

What is it?

(BELSNICKEL lifts off the top half of the coconut, revealing what looks like a mound of gravel inside.)

BELSNICKEL

Provisions enough for your whole journey.

JOSHI

Food!

(JOSHI grabs a big pebble and is about to pop it in his mouth.)

BELSNICKEL

Stop!! Don't eat that!!

JOSHI

I thought you were giving it to us.

BELSNICKEL

But it's dehydrated!

MAYA

What do you mean?

BELSNICKEL

It's dried out. You have to add water. Like this...

(BELSNICKEL takes a red pebble delicately between his fingers and then plunges it into the water bucket. When he pulls his hand out, he holds a dripping red apple.)

JOSHI

What is that?

BELSNICKEL

It's an apple. And this—

(He takes a slightly larger green pebble and repeats the procedure)

—is a cabbage.

JOSHI

(holding out his big pebble)

What about this one?

BELSNICKEL

(taking it from him)

That one is a watermelon. If you had eaten that, it would have sucked all the water out of your body and expanded inside your belly...to about this size.

(BELSNICKEL mimes the scenario)

JOSHI

Wow! Can I try it??

MAYA

Joshi, just be quiet for a minute. Look, Mister Belsnickel—we're grateful for this food, truly. But we really need to know how to get to the evergreen grove. Where do we find the Thockin... the Kithenock—

BELSNICKEL

The Chthonic River? You're practically on top of it right now! It's a tremendous flow of water, just a few feet below the sand... but it's no good for drinking.

MAYA

How are we supposed to follow it if it's underground?

JOSHI

We need a 'Y' like yours...

BELSNICKEL

Not for this you don't. Just listen...

(He points to the ground. JOSHI drops to his knees and puts an ear to the ground. Sound cue—rushing water)

JOSHI

Oh!

(BELSNICKEL steps away from them and narrates.)

BELSNICKEL

Joshi listened as hard as he could, listened deep down below the layers of sand and rock, listened with his whole soul—and then he heard it. The swift rush of living water, speeding through the ground. At first he had to stay very close to the earth to follow the trail, but as they moved slowly across the dunes, the low rumble of the river became easier to follow. Soon, it was second nature for him to hear the hum of the water below the higher singing of the wind. For days the two children traveled, resting during the heat of the day, and walking at night. Occasionally they would stop to eat – snacking on biscuits, and re-hydrating all kinds of exotic vegetables. Out of the coconut shell container came carrots, mangoes, brussel sprouts, bananas, even an eggplant! Maya carefully noted the path of the river on her Father's map. And then, finally, at dawn one morning—after they'd walked further than they thought possible—they saw it!

Scene 3: The Sea

(JOSHI and MAYA stare offstage at the sea.)

Water!

JOSHI

So much of it!

MAYA

So this is where they're keeping it all...

JOSHI

I can't believe it.

MAYA

Why? Yamma always told us most of the Earth was covered with water.

JOSHI

I thought it was just one of her stories... This must mean we're getting warmer.

MAYA

Funny, it seems colder.

JOSHI

What if all of it is true?

MAYA

I don't see why it's so hard for you to believe a story.

JOSHI

It makes me wonder...

MAYA

It makes me thirsty!

JOSHI

(JOSHI goes to drink the water.)

Joshi—wait!

MAYA

Blech!! Tastes like... tears!

JOSHI

MAYA

The Chthonic River flows into this sea. Belsnickel said it was no good for drinking.

JOSHI

Well he was right.

(pause)

What are we supposed to do now?

MAYA

He said we have to cross the sea.

JOSHI

It's not very deep. Maybe we can walk.

(JOSHI walks into the water, to an offstage point.)

MAYA

I don't think that's a very good—Joshi!

(Splashing noises are heard. Then silence.)

JOSHI

It gets a lot deeper.

(Enter JOSHI, wet.)

MAYA

What if there were a way to go on top of the water...? Remember back home? When you lower the pail into the well—it sits up on top of the water.

JOSHI

No, it doesn't. It tips over and sinks.

MAYA

It sinks once the water gets in. But not when it's upright. It's the same with a cup in the wash basin. Where's that coconut shell?

JOSHI

It's got all our food.

MAYA

Here...

(she takes it from him and dumps the pebble food into his pack.)

JOSHI

Careful!

MAYA

If you put this face-up in a bucket of water, it would sit on the surface instead of falling to the bottom.

JOSHI

(skeptically)

I've never seen that.

MAYA

Trust me, it works. If we could just be inside a cup or a bucket... I'll bet we could ride on top of the water!

JOSHI

We're not going to fit in a bucket.

MAYA

Something bigger. Like a giant bucket.

JOSHI

Where are we going to get that?

MAYA

Well... maybe we'd have to make it.

JOSHI

Out of what? There's nothing here. Just the desert and the sea.

MAYA

Just let me think for a minute!

JOSHI

(looking at the coconut shell)

I just don't think it would really ride on top of the water...

(JOSHI puts the coconut shell in the water, to test it. MAYA is lost in thought, sketching on JOSHI's notepad. JOSHI returns, dragging a large coconut shell-shaped boat.)

JOSHI

Maya—look!

MAYA

Where did you get that?!

JOSHI

It's the coconut shell.

MAYA

It grew?

JOSHI

Just like the apple, and the cabbage...!

(They set about embarking...)

SONG: SAILING SEQUENCE

SAMMY

SO THE TWO CLIMBED IN
TO THEIR SHELL-SHAPED SHIP
AND UPON THE SEA SET FORTH

MAYA

See? What did I tell you? It doesn't sink...

JOSHI

That's great! But how do we make it go?

MAYA

I have an idea...

(she sets about fashioning a mast and sail from her
broom and a piece of fabric)

KYRIAN

AND THEY CAUGHT THE WIND
WITH A MAKESHIFT SAIL
AND IT CARRIED THEM TO THE NORTH

JOSHI

This sure beats walking. I just hope we're going the right way.

MAYA

We're supposed to cross the sea. So all we have to do is keep the land directly behind us... until we see land in front of us.

JOSHI

How much further do you think it is?

KYRIAN & SAMMY

THE SEAS WERE GENTLE
AND THE SUN WAS WARM.
THE BREEZE WAS STEADY ALL DAY THROUGH
AND SOON THE SLIGHTEST TRACE OF LAND
HAD VANISHED FROM THEIR VIEW.

JOSHI

Do you think we're still going in the same direction?

MAYA

It's hard to tell now.

JOSHI

(licking his finger and holding it up)

It feels like the winds are changing...

KYRIAN

AND THE DAY WORE ON
AS THE SUN GREW RED
SINKING LOWER IN THE SKY.

JOSHI

I think we're going in circles.

MAYA

There's no way we can possibly tell, Joshi. It all looks exactly the same... In every direction, it's just water and more water, all the way to the sky.

JOSHI

I know. But I'm pretty sure this is the cucumber I dropped overboard a while ago.

(JOSHI reaches outside the boat retrieves the cucumber.
He takes a bite and makes a face...)

JOSHI

Pickled.

SAMMY

AND THE STEADY WIND
THAT HAD BEEN THEIR FRIEND
NOW BEGAN TO DIMINISH AND DIE

JOSHI

Do you think the wind will ever come back?

MAYA

I don't know.

JOSHI

It's getting dark.

MAYA

I know.

KYRIAN & SAMMY

THE CLOUDS HUNG MOTIONLESS, THE DARKNESS FELL.
THE SEAS BECAME AS SMOOTH AS GLASS.
AND NOW THEY SIT IN SILENCE AND IN STILLNESS
AS THE HOURS SLOWLY PASS...

JOSHI

What do you think they're doing back home right now?

MAYA

They're probably worried sick about us.

JOSHI

Really?

MAYA

Mother's crying. Yamma's trying to tell her it'll be all right. Father and Uncle are out searching for us.

JOSHI

Do you think they'll find us?

MAYA

No. The sandstorm swept our trail away.

JOSHI

We should go home. We're making everyone miserable.

MAYA

We can't, Joshi. We've lost the wind.

JOSHI

Then we'll have to push ourselves through the water somehow. I must have brought something I can use...

(JOSHI begins rummaging through his supplies.)

MAYA

Joshi, there's no point. We don't know which way is North, or which way is home. We're in the middle of nowhere.

JOSHI

But maybe we can get out of the middle. Maybe we can get far enough to see land again.
(coming up with a water dipper)
Aha! This will work.

(JOSHI starts trying to paddle.)

MAYA

I guess the wind really wasn't my friend. Maybe it's gone back to where it came from. I wonder where that is...

JOSHI

I wish I had a big dipper...

(MAYA suddenly looks up to the sky.)

MAYA

Joshi, look! The stars are coming out...

JOSHI

If you tilt your head a bit, they look almost the same as they do back home!

SONG: STORIES IN THE STARS

STARS

BING, BING, BING, BING, BING...

MAYA

CASSIOPEIA !

JOSHI

WHAT?

STARS

BING, BING, BING, BING, BING...

MAYA

THOSE FIVE BRIGHT STARS.

JOSHI

WHERE?

MAYA

THERE.

STARS

BING, BING, BING, BING, BING...

JOSHI

I ONLY SEE A KIND OF "W"

MAYA

THAT'S THE TROUBLE—
YOU HAVE NO IMAGINATION.

JOSHI

First a Y... now a W.

MAYA

No, it's Cassiopeia's throne.

JOSHI

How do you know?

MAYA

Mother used to tell me the story. Cassiopeia was the queen of Ethiopia. She boasted that she was more beautiful than even a sea nymph. And so the god of the sea flooded her lands, until all of Ethiopia was covered by water.

JOSHI

This must be Ethiopia!

MAYA

It's just a story, Joshi. I don't think it's a real place.

JOSHI

Oh. What's the point of a story if it's not true?

ESTRELLA

THERE ARE STORIES IN THE STARS
THAT THE SAILORS USED TO STEER BY.
AND WHEREVER THEY WOULD GO
THEY WOULD KNOW
THAT AN OLD FAMILIAR FRIEND WOULD BE NEARBY
ON THE ENDLESS BLACKNESS
OF THE OPEN OCEAN
THEY WOULD LOOK TO HEAVEN'S DOME

AND THE STORIES IN THE STARS
WOULD GUIDE THEM ON THEIR WAY HOME.

STARS
BING, BING, BING, BING...

MAYA
THAT ONE'S ORION

JOSHI
BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW?

STARS
BING, BING, BING...

MAYA
THOSE THREE ARE HIS BELT.

JOSHI
OH.

STARS
BING, BING, BING, BING, BING...

MAYA
AND THERE'S THE LION, SEE?
THE MANE, JAWS
THE PELT, THE PAWS.

JOSHI
MAYA, LOOK—
THERE'S A HOOK!

STARS
BING...
BING...

MAYA
THAT'S THE SCORPION'S TAIL

STARS
BING, BING, BING, BING...

JOSHI
OVER THERE,
THAT BIG SQUARE!

MAYA
THAT'S PEGASUS.

STARS
BING, BING, BING, BING...

JOSHI
TO THE RIGHT
THERE'S A KITE

STARS
BING...
BING...

THAT'S ABOUT TO SET SAIL

BING, BING, BING, BING...

MAYA

AND TO THE SOUTH
THAT'S THE MOUTH
OF THE PISCES.

JOSHI

What did you say?

MAYA

That's Pisces, the fish. I don't really know what a fish is-

JOSHI

No, before that. Where did you say it was?

MAYA

Well it's to the south of the Great Square of...
(stunned)

It's to the south... ! We know where we are!

ESTRELLA

THERE ARE STORIES IN THE STARS
THAT THE SAILORS USED TO STEER BY...
(etc.)

STARS

BING, BING, BING, BING...
(etc.)

MAYA

NOW WE JUST NEED TO FIND URSA MAJOR.

JOSHI

THAT'S THE DIPPER, RIGHT?

MAYA

RIGHT.
THERE IT IS!
THAT'S THE BEAR, I WOULD WAGER.

JOSHI

DRAW A LINE THROUGH THOSE TWO,
GOING TOWARD THE HORIZON...

MAYA

THAT'S THE LINE THAT THE STAR
THAT WE'RE AFTER LIES ON!

BOTH

TRAVEL ON,
TRAVEL ON,
AND ON.

JOSHI

AND THERE YOU ARE!

MAYA

POLARIS SHINES...

JOSHI

THE NORTHERN STAR!

MAYA

POLARIS SHINES...

MAYA, JOSHI, ESTRELLA

TO GUIDE US ON OUR WAY
HOME.

(ESTRELLA narrates.)

ESTRELLA

But home was still a long way off for Maya and Joshi. They now stood on the farther shore of a distant sea, in strange land. As the bright sun rose, and the stars winked out one by one, they dragged their trusty coconut boat out of the water, and tied it using Joshi's rope. Then, they headed off into the wilderness, eager to see what they would find. The land around them seemed grey, bleak, cold – like metal. They trudged uphill, until they could no longer see the ocean behind them. Eventually, they came to a vast plateau. It was strangely flat. Here and there were boulders dotting the landscape, like scattered toys. As they marched along the plain, the boulders became more regular, and taller, until they looked like eggs standing on end. Soon enough, the boulders began to look almost like pillars, or watchmen, standing quietly outside a gate. Then the boulders stopped looking like boulders, and stretched to stand far above their heads, taller even than their father. The air tasted strange as they breathed it in, and Maya began to worry.

Scene 4: The Petrified Forest

(MAYA and JOSHI are walking in the petrified forest.)

MAYA

What is this place, Joshi?

JOSHI

I think it must be the forest.

MAYA

These are trees?

JOSHI

Look—the trunks, the branches. It's just like Yamma said.

MAYA

But different. They're so... sharp-looking.

JOSHI

It almost looks like they're made of...

(JOSHI reaches out to touch one of the trees.)

MAYA

Wait—maybe you shouldn't touch them.

JOSHI

Why not?

MAYA

I have a strange feeling about this place.

JOSHI

I just want to know.

(Chimes, as JOSHI touches a tree.)

Solid rock! Do you think they grew that way?

MAYA

I don't know. But let's keep going. Maybe this means we're getting closer to the real trees.

JOSHI

Look at this, Maya! There's something in this one—it's a fossil!

MAYA

A what?

JOSHI

A fossil. It's when a creature gets trapped in stone and preserved for all time. I've found a bunch of them back home, but none of them are this good. It's some sort of lizard, I think. See, there's the head... and there's the tail. I have to collect this!

MAYA

No, just leave it alone. Please, Joshi.

JOSHI

It'll only take a minute. Good thing I brought a hammer!

MAYA

Joshi...

(JOSHI begins hammering at a tree. After a few blows, there is a deep resonant boom, simultaneous with Joshi's hammering. Joshi pauses, then hammers again—another boom.)

MAYA

You'd better stop.

JOSHI

I'm done. I got it.

(He holds up his trophy. Another boom.)

JOSHI

It wasn't me!

(The booms continue, getting a bit faster.)

MAYA

Do you feel that?

JOSHI

The ground is shaking.

MAYA

It's getting louder. It sounds like...

JOSHI

...footsteps. Something is coming.

MAYA

I don't want to find out what it is. Let's get out of here.

(MAYA starts to leave. JOSHI remains, staring at his fossil.)

MAYA

Oh—never mind! It's too late.

(MAYA and JOSHI stand frozen. Music under, as TAK HARUS enters)

JOSHI

(whispering)

What is it, Maya?

MAYA

Some kind of animal, I think... like a camel or a giant goat.

JOSHI

Do you think it's friendly?

MAYA

How should I know?

JOSHI

Talk to it.

MAYA

I can't talk to it. It's an animal.

TAK HARUS

WHO DARES DEFILE THIS FOREST?

WHO DARES TO TOUCH MY TREES?

INTRUDERS—YOU ARE NOT WELCOME IN THESE WOODS.

MAYA

We're sorry. We didn't mean any harm...

TAK HARUS

Who are you?

MAYA

I'm Maya. And this is my brother, Joshi.

(pause)

What's your name?

TAK HARUS

I am Tak Harus, a stag of this forest.

JOSHI

Maya, he looks like the trees! Ask him what he's made of...

MAYA

Quiet, Joshi.

TAK HARUS

Why have you come here?

MAYA

We were looking for trees.

TAK HARUS

Then you have found them.

MAYA

But this isn't how they're supposed to be. There was supposed to be brown bark, and green leaves. And the branches were supposed to sway in the breeze. Yamma said that the trees were living things, but everything here seems so dead.

SONG: THESE TREES

TAK HARUS

YOU WONDER HOW IT HAPPENS?
I CAN TELL.
HOW TIMBER TURNS TO GRANITE
CELL BY CELL.
HOW SLOWLY DAY BY DAY
THE LIVING WOOD GIVES WAY
TO STONE.

Once a grove of redwoods stood here in the shadow of the mountain... and beneath their canopy were others: pines, cedars, fir trees, climbing ivy. Living creatures of all sorts dwelt under the growth of leaves and vines. These were my friends. This was my home.

ONE MORNING THERE'S A TREMOR
IN THE GROUND.
LIKE DEEP AND DISTANT THUNDER
COMES THE SOUND
ALL MY FRIENDS BEGIN TO RUN
AND SO I'M THE ONLY ONE
WHO SEES...

I TURN TOWARD THE MOUNTAIN—
THERE'S A FLASH.
A BURST OF BURNING EMBERS,
AND HOT ASH.
AND THE BLAST OF IT ARRIVES
WITH A FORCEFULNESS THAT DRIVES
ME TO MY KNEES,
AND BURIES ME
ALONG WITH ALL THESE TREES.

Ash covered us. The water seeped through from above, encasing us, sealing us in. And as the years went by, what once was alive was changed. The molecules of ash and sand replaced the molecules of wood, turning the trees to solid stone.

AND I, THE ONLY WITNESS
LEFT TO TELL,
WAS ALTERED BY THIS TRAGEDY
AS WELL
BY THE SUDDEN SHOCK THAT NUMBS,
AND THE HARDENING THAT COMES
WITH TIME.

AT FIRST THE TRANSFORMATION'S
ALL OUTSIDE:
AN ALABASTER HOOF,
A MARBLE HIDE
BUT IT SPREADS BENEATH THE SKIN
_TIL THE BLOOD THAT FLOWS WITHIN
IS LIME.

IT HAPPENS VERY SLOWLY.
IT'S NOTHING AT THE START.
BUT PARALYSIS CREEPS IN
BY SMALL DEGREES.
IT CAN HAPPEN TO A HUMAN.
IT CAN HAPPEN TO A HART,
WHAT HAPPENED TO THESE TREES.

For so long I have walked these silent woods—the only one to bear witness, the only soul for whom these trees still existed. And now two little humans have come. It is a sign of something. I have seen your kind before. You come with saws and axes. You come to plunder—

MAYA

No, we only wanted to look—I promise. Please, if you'll just let us go, we won't bother you anymore.

(a pause)

TAK HARUS

You may go...

MAYA

Oh, thank you.

TAK HARUS

...but your brother cannot.

MAYA

What do you mean?

TAK HARUS

He has taken a piece of this forest. So now he is a part of it.

MAYA

You mean the fossil? He'll give it back. Joshi, give that piece of rock back to the stag so that we can get out of here.

(JOSHI holds up his hand, still gripping the fossil. He turns his hand over in back, studying it in amazement.)

TAK HARUS

It's not so easy as that...

MAYA

Joshi, just drop it.

JOSHI

I can't! I can't open my fingers!

MAYA

Will you stop joking around!

JOSHI

I'm serious. I can't feel my hand.

MAYA

What's happening?

TAK HARUS

The same thing that happened to the trees. Only, for your brother, the change will come more quickly.

JOSHI

My arm... it feels cold, and heavy!

MAYA

Make it stop! Please!

TAK HARUS

It is not my doing. It is the trees themselves that have this power.

MAYA

Then we have to get out of this forest. Joshi, come with me—run!

(MAYA starts to run. JOSHI follows, but stops as one foot becomes rooted to the ground.)

JOSHI

I can't.

MAYA

Come on! I'm scared!

(MAYA comes back and tugs at his arm.)

JOSHI

You're scared? I'm petrified!

MAYA

(struggling to move JOSHI)

No, I won't let it happen. I'll carry you out of here.

SONG: FEEL FREE

JOSHI

MAYA—STOP!

IT'S NO USE.

I DON'T THINK I'M GONNA GET LOOSE.

THOUGH IT'S HARD FOR ME TO SPEAK THIS WAY,
WHILE THERE'S TIME, LET ME SAY...

DON'T BE UPSET—IT ISN'T SO BAD.

DON'T LET OUR LAST FEW MOMENTS BE SAD.

IT DOESN'T HURT—IT COULDN'T I GUESS.
 I'M TOUGHENING UP,
 AND FEELING THINGS LESS.
 I'LL BE ALL RIGHT—I'M GONNA BE STRONG.
 LIKE BOYS ARE S'POSED TO BE.
 AND I WILL WAIT NO MATTER HOW LONG
 DON'T FEEL SORRY FOR ME.
 FEEL FREE.

YOU HAVE A MISSION.
 YOU HAVE TO SEARCH ON.
 I HAVE TO STAY AND BE A PLACE FOR BIRDS TO PERCH ON
 YOU HAVE TO FOLLOW YOUR GUIDING STAR.
 AND IF YOU'RE TIED TO A ROCK LIKE ME YOU'D NEVER GET FAR.
 YOU'RE GETTING WARMER,
 I'M GETTING COLDER.
 YOU ALWAYS TOLD ME I SHOULD BE A LITTLE BOLDER
 TOO BAD THIS BOULDER CAN'T BE THERE
 TO HELP YOU SHOULDER THE LOAD.
 INSTEAD I'LL STAY PUT,
 AND SLOWLY ERODE.

TAKE BACK YOUR HAND BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.
 YOU COULD BE STUCK LIKE ME IF YOU WAIT.
 YOU KNOW I CAN'T HELP HOLDING ON STILL.
 YOU HAVE TO LET GO, _CAUSE I NEVER WILL.
 LEAVE ME BEHIND AND NEVER LOOK BACK.
 GO OUT AND FIND YOUR TREE.
 NO HUG GOODBYE—I'D PROBABLY CRACK.
 JUST PROMISE YOU'LL GO—DO IT FOR ME!
 I WANT YOU TO KNOW
 I WANT YOU TO FEEL...

(Before he gets to the last note of the song,
 JOSHI's petrification is complete.)

MAYA

It should have been me. I was the one who ran away from home. He only wanted to protect me. He was afraid something terrible would happen to me. And now...

TAK HARUS

Nothing can happen to him now. He is safe.

MAYA

But is he even alive?

TAK HARUS

No. But neither is he dead.

MAYA

Is it... forever?

TAK HARUS

I have always thought it was. I told myself that what happened to the forest and what happened to me could never be undone. I squeezed from my heart every last bit of hope, until it was compressed into a glittering and cold diamond—hardest of all substances. And yet... today I felt it soften. Your brother moved me. His faith in you, his willingness to sacrifice—I'd forgotten these things existed. And now I wonder if perhaps there is a way...

MAYA

There has to be. Please, I'll do anything. Just tell me what to do.

TAK HARUS

You must do as your brother asked. You must prove that his faith in you was not misplaced, that his sacrifice was not in vain. You must find the living trees.

MAYA

But they've all turned to stone.

TAK HARUS

Not all of them. There is a place where earth is still fertile. It is dangerous, but that is where you must seek your trees.

MAYA

Where?

TAK HARUS

Inside the mountain.

(MAYA turns to look, and TAK HARUS begins narrating.)

Maya looked at the distant mountain, now silent. Her stomach gave a lurch as she thought of venturing on alone, but she shouldered Joshi's pack, took a deep breath, and headed off. The stone trees closed around her, and soon enough she could no longer see the clearing where Joshi stood. She kept looking back to make sure she would remember the path she had taken, to come back the same way and find Joshi again. The further she went, the steeper the path became, until she was practically scrambling on her hands and knees up the hillside. As she climbed, it got colder. She shivered each time a gust of wind blew.

Scene 5: The Volcano

(MAYA explores, uneasily. She sings quietly to give herself courage.)

MAYA

I HAVE A MISSION.
I HAVE TO SEARCH ON.
I HAVE TO FOLLOW MY GUIDING STAR...

(MAYA sees the grove of evergreen trees.)

S ONG: -EVER GREEN ||

MAYA

BEAUTIFUL...
TOWERING...
QUIETLY ALIVE...
DELICATE...
INTRICATE...
CLEAN...
MAJESTY AND MIGHT...
MIRACLES OF LIGHT...
SWEET-SMELLING...
AND EVER SO GREEN...
I DON'T KNOW
WHAT IT ALL COULD MEAN.

ANYA TREE

CLIMBING LIKE LADDERS TO THE SKY,
GRACEFUL BOUGHS SPREAD WIDE,
SOME WORN TO SPLINTERS
FROM ALL OF THE WINTERS THEY HAVE SEEN.
MEN IN THEIR HOUR OF NEED RELY
ON ALL THAT THEY PROVIDE.
SHELTER, FUEL,
A PROMISE OF RENEWAL EVERLASTING,
EVERGREEN.

WUJEK TREE

DRAWING A STRENGTH FROM DOWN BELOW,

RODZIC TREE

WHERE THEIR ROOTS RUN DEEP,

ANYA, WUJEK & RODZIC TREES

STANDING TOGETHER,
THROUGH WIND AND THROUGH WEATHER THEY'RE SERENE.

+MAYA

WHILE COUNTLESS SEASONS COME AND GO
THEIR SILENT WATCH THEY KEEP.
SWAYING, BENDING,
A SIGN OF NEVERENDING LIFE.
EVERLASTING,
EVERLIVING,
EVERGREEN.

MUSIC: FIRE BALLET

(MAYA wakes from her reverie.)

MAYA

HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN STANDING HERE...?
AND WHEN DID IT GET SO COLD AND DARK?
NOW TO MAKE A CAMPFIRE...
NOW TO GATHER KINDLING...
LITTLE BITS OF FALLEN TWIGS AND BARK...
NOW TO TAKE THE FLINT AND STRIKE A SPARK

(MAYA strikes the flint several times, until at last a spark
—played by a child—appears. The spark grows into a fire,
as more children enter. Wind (girls) comes and scatters the sparks
and the Maya's campfire now begins to grow out of control,
eventually spreading to the surrounding evergreen trees.
Maya tries frantically to put the fire out. But it's no use. At last
the fire burns itself out, after all the trees are consumed. MAYA
is left in complete darkness, weeping. Enter YAMMA.)

YAMMA

Maya...

MAYA

Grandmother? Is that you?

YAMMA

Yes, Maya.

MAYA

I can't see you.

YAMMA

I can't see you either. But I'm here. Don't you know my voice?

MAYA

Of course I do... but it's so dark. What happened?

YAMMA

The light has gone out of the world.

MAYA

But why?

YAMMA

Who knows? But we must know the darkness to appreciate the light. Be patient, Maya.

(pause.)

MAYA

Grandmother?

YAMMA

Yes?

MAYA

I'm sorry I didn't believe you. I'm sorry I wouldn't listen.

YAMMA

It's all right, Maya.

MAYA

I just - I wanted to see for myself.

YAMMA

And what did you see?

MAYA

Oh, Yamma! I found them! The evergreens. I saw the trees!

YAMMA

And? How was it?

MAYA

Just as you said - they were tall, taller than fifty men, with arms and shoulders reaching out to climb on. And, Yamma, the smell... you never told me about the smell... so clean, so sharp and new, like... like... green, morning and breath – like hope!

YAMMA

That's very well put, Maya. How could I forget?

MAYA

But, grandmother... The trees... the fire... the wind came, and the sparks... they flew up to the branches... I didn't mean to...

YAMMA

You tried to stop the fire from burning, Maya.

MAYA

But you don't understand, it was too late! They burned. They're gone... and Joshi's gone too! He followed me... and now he's trapped in the stone forest...

YAMMA

What is gone may come again.

MAYA

How?

YAMMA

Feel - there, by your hand.

MAYA

Ouch!

YAMMA

You found it. Even in the dark.

MAYA

It's sharp! What is it?

YAMMA

It is the new beginning. You will take it, and keep it safe. And when the time comes, you will put it in the earth, and wait for life to come again.

MAYA

How will I know when it's time?

YAMMA

You will know. Just as you knew it was time to make this journey.

(pause.)

MAYA

Grandmother, what will happen now?

YAMMA

You must go back, of course. You must tell them what you saw!

MAYA

But they won't believe me.

YAMMA

Does it matter?

MAYA

If only Joshi could help!

YAMMA

(laughing) You wouldn't be able to keep him quiet!

MAYA

But how can I free him? And even if I can, how can we get home? It's so dark, I can't even see the stars. Yamma, will the light ever come back?

YAMMA

Perhaps.

MAYA

What do you mean?

YAMMA

It is up to you. You must begin again.

MAYA

Begin what?

YAMMA

The story.

MAYA

I don't know if I remember the words.

YAMMA

Do you know how it starts?

MAYA

I think so.

YAMMA

Then say what you remember, but make it your own.

MAYA

WHEN I WAS A GIRL

YAMMA

...IN HAPPIER TIMES THAN THESE

MAYA

GROWING ALL AROUND US,
THERE WAS A THING CALLED TREES.

BOTH

OOH... THERE WAS A THING CALLED TREES.
RISING FROM THE GROUND
TO SWAY IN A GENTLE BREEZE,
TALLER THAN THE TALLEST TENTPOLE,
THERE WAS A THING CALLED TREES.
OOH... THERE WAS A THING CALLED TREES.

(The kids re-enter with JOSHI, once again creating the petrified forest
as Maya narrates her journey.)

MAYA

And as Maya stood in the deep darkness at the heart of the volcano, she heard the voices begin to grow in strength around her, and she knew she wasn't alone. Then she put her foot out carefully, and found that underneath it there was a soft path. Slowly, she began to move forward again, one foot in front of the other – almost creeping at first, but gradually faster and faster, until she was practically flying down the slope of the mountain. Ahead of her, she could see the trunks of the stone trees thrusting up from the ground, and she sped towards them. She remembered the way exactly, and before long she saw Joshi standing in front of her, just as she had left him. Suddenly, she knew what she had to do. She took the sharp pine cone she still held in her hand, and placed it in Joshi's cold, stone palm. She pushed on his stiff fingers and they closed around it. And as she watched, his hand turned from solid rock to warm, living flesh—and he began to breathe again...

Scene 6: The Return

(Music under as MAYA places the pinecone in JOSHI's fist, and slowly he becomes un-petrified.)

JOSHI
...FREE!

MAYA
You're back!

JOSHI
And so are you!

MAYA
I didn't think I'd ever hear your voice again...

JOSHI
I knew you'd find a way. Did you find the trees?

MAYA
Yes! Oh, Joshi—I wish you could have been there. We can go back...!

JOSHI
It's all right. I don't need to see them.

MAYA
But you wouldn't believe how—

JOSHI
No, Maya. I do believe...

MAYA
You always did.

JOSHI
And now you do too.

MAYA
Now everyone will.

(THEY embrace. It begins to snow.)

JOSHI
Look, Maya—it's snowing!

MAYA

It's beautiful!

(a moment)

JOSHI

Come on... let's go home.

(During the song, we see a -rewind of their journey,
through the forest, the sea the desert, until they arrive back home.)

SONG: (REPRISE) STORIES IN THE STARS

STAR CHILDREN

THERE ARE STORIES IN THE STARS
THAT THE SAILORS USED TO STEER BY.
AND WHEREVER THEY WOULD GO
THEY WOULD KNOW
THAT AN OLD FAMILIAR FRIEND WOULD BE NEARBY
ON THE ENDLESS BLACKNESS
OF THE OPEN OCEAN
THEY WOULD LOOK TO HEAVEN'S DOME
AND THE STORIES IN THE STARS
WOULD GUIDE THEM ON THEIR WAY HOME.

MAYA

Look! There it is!

JOSHI

Home! Hurry up, Maya!

MAYA

It looks strange somehow.

JOSHI

No it doesn't. It looks perfect! There's the tent. There's the bucket in the well...

MAYA

And here's my broom! Just where I left it!

JOSHI

(calling out for anyone to hear)

It's us! We're back!

YAMMA

Joshi? Is that you?

JOSHI

Yes! Yamma! We did it! I didn't get to see the trees, but Maya did... And look what she found!

YAMMA

What's that? (feeling it) Ah! A pine cone.

JOSHI

A pine cone? What's a pine cone?

(ANYA runs out and embraces Joshi, then Maya. She is followed by RODZIC and WUJEK.)

ANYA

Joshi! Maya! You were away so long!

MAYA

Were you worried about us?

ANYA

Of course! But Yamma told me you would come back, when you were ready.

RODZIC

We followed your trail, but we lost your tracks in the Northern dunes... There were signs of a great storm. I thought we'd lost you for good!

WUJEK

But then... we met a strange man, who called himself Belsnickel — he told us he had met you, and seemed to think you would be just fine. He gave us something called an artichoke, and sent us on our way.

JOSHI

An artichoke! Can I see?

WUJEK

Certainly. I haven't yet figured out how to eat it.

JOSHI

It's very spiky. A lot like the pine cone!

RODZIC

We kept going North until we reached a wide expanse of water — but we had no way to cross... So we turned back.

JOSHI

You needed the coconut.

MAYA

Oh Father, then you were there? You saw the great sea?

RODZIC

I didn't think it was possible, so much water.

MAYA

Neither did I. But it's true! See, here. I charted it all on the map—I knew you'd want to know the way.

RODZIC

My map!

MAYA

Sorry... But look! Maybe we can go back there someday? Together?

YAMMA

Perhaps Maya would like to tell us of her journey?

ANYA

Yes. Tell us, Maya. What did you see?

MAYA

Well, I don't really know where to start... it's all so hard to believe! I wish I could explain it...

ANYA

You don't have to explain, Maya. We believe you.

MAYA

You do?

ANYA

Of course.

JOSHI

So Maya sat down, and the children gathered around her, and she began to tell her story. She was nervous, because she wanted to tell it well – and not leave out any important details, especially about her heroic younger brother Joshi. She began at the beginning, and told of all her adventures... through the desert, across the sea, and into the stone forest... until she found the evergreen trees. And she showed them the pine cone she had brought back, as proof.

ARI

And as the children listened, the walls of the tent seemed to disappear around them.

JAKE

And when they held Maya's pine cone in their hand, the desert outside began to change.

IZZY

Pale sand shifted and grass began to grow.

GABBY

Rocks sprouted twigs.

KAYLA

Then entire tree trunks began to rise up from the earth!

FRANCESCA

Green vines pushed through the dirt, and climbed up the rough bark.

BRIDGET

The desert wind, once hot and dry, was cool and gentle...

AUDREY

...and stirred the new leaves on branches arching over them.

SAMMY

Fresh streams sprang up from the ground, between the roots of the trees.

KYRIAN

Ferns curled at the edge of the water, and thick moss covered the rocks.

DREW

Animals of all sorts returned to the verdant wood, living amongst the lush green boughs.

ASHLEY

And standing tall above it all was the evergreen tree, which grew from the first pine cone, which Maya brought home from her journey.

SONG: FINALE (EVERGREEN REPRISE)

MAYA

CLIMBING LIKE LADDERS TO THE SKY,
GRACEFUL BOUGHS SPREAD WIDE,

YAMMA

SOME WORN TO SPLINTERS
FROM ALL OF THE WINTERS THEY HAVE SEEN.

JOSHI

MEN IN THEIR HOUR OF NEED RELY
ON ALL THAT THEY PROVIDE.
SHELTER, FUEL,

MAYA

A PROMISE OF RENEWAL EVERLASTING,

YAMMA

EVERGREEN.

W/A/R/M

EVERGREEN, EVERGREEN... etc.
DOWN FROM THE DAWN OF HUMANKIND,
A FAITH WAS HANDED ON,

KIDS

NATION TO NATION
THROUGH EACH GENERATION IN BETWEEN.

ALL

FAITH THAT WHEN SUMMER'S AT AN END
AND WARMER DAYS HAVE GONE
ALWAYS, TRULY,
THE WORLD CAN BE NEWLY MADE

YAMMA

EVERLASTING

WUJEK

EVERLIVING

ANYA

EVER LONGING

RODZIC

EVER GIVING

KIDS

(variously)
EVER HOPING
EVER PRAYING

EVER CHANGING
EVER STAYING
EVER LEARNING
EVER KNOWING
EVER YEARNING
EVERGROWING

MAYA

EVER AFTER

ALL

EVERGREEN

(End of show.)