

The Docents, Scene Two, Kimberley Lynne

The woman and the boy walk the road at dusk. The boy is ahead of the woman, pulling the cart quickly. The woman follows, sweeping their tracks with a long, leafy branch.

Woman You pull too fast. I can't keep up.

Boy I'll slow down if you talk. Will you talk? It must be safe by now.

Woman He can catch up with us so easily. He can run.

Boy Rock. *(He stops and removes his shoe.)* I tell you, I can't see him and if I can't see him, then he's gone.

Woman Oh, that makes sense.

Boy The road's straight here. It's hard to turn this thing on a round road.

Woman We're still a little out in the open.

Boy We've been out in the open before.

Woman With many carts around us.

Boy I can see him. I can hear him. I can smell him.

Woman Well, he did have a distinctive scent.

Boy So, how'd you get three aces?

Woman He smelled of dirt and something else underneath, vodka maybe and something under that, maybe blood.

Boy How'd you get three aces?

Woman I had one up my sleeve.

Boy You said you don't like games of chance.

Woman That's why I keep an ace up my sleeve.

Boy That's cheating. You don't cheat.

Woman *(She stops.)* He was robbing us. Our country's at war. All conversations become sword fights, and all rules of civilization are abandoned. I'm sorry you have to learn - - -

Boy You must be pretty good to cheat him. Where'd you learn that?

Woman We'll rest here for a minute. It's a fine view. You don't get views like this in the city. Don't you worry about that soldier. No matter how fast he is, we're smarter. We have to be. There's a river ahead.

It'll hide our tracks. We can outsmart him by seeming not so smart.

Boy I know. We can't sound too smart or he'll think we're smart and - - -

Both Rich.

Boy I've never been rich.

Woman We're the richest people we know. We have the treasure. You have a father.

Boy Is he gone? Your father?

Woman I don't like talking about him in this heat.

Boy My mother's gone.

Woman Is she? It makes you grow up.

Boy I'm seventeen. I was training as a blacksmith before the war, and I could've taken him, that soldier. He's more thief than soldier.

Woman Even if you could've pinned him, you'd have to kill him to keep him quiet and you don't want to have to do that yet. Don't cross that line until you absolutely have to. Violence is their tool. Try to use your wit before your fists. Better for our treasure.

Boy *(Finishes with her.)* Better for our treasure. Always the treasure.

Woman Because it's a great treasure, a treasure so great that in a world without it, all the metaphors the soldier used about grass and sky would cease to be and evaporate into the air, a nothing, no comparative, no reflection, no mirror into which we can see ourselves flicker by from time to time. Worse than a world ruled by the Enemy. Worse than no world at all. A world ruled by artless supply sergeants. And thieves.

Boy What's a metaphor?

Woman Something that describes something else better with a comparison. The sky was an endless piece of blue silk.

Boy It's just a bunch of old bowls.

Woman It's the history and heritage of our people and must be guarded fiercely. All of the rest of life must be forfeited for it, for all the shopkeepers and soldiers and farmers and kings alive now and yet to

come. And they may never know that we defended it. They may never know that we struggle to keep its flame alive. They pass us on the road and don't know our sacrifice. It doesn't matter. Our ancestors know, and we are better for it. We protect the treasure and hold it dearly and when the fighting stops we'll share it again and place it on pedestals and stand before it and feel the tears - - -

Boy *(Pointing offstage.)* Rabbit! *(He runs offstage.)*

Woman How can you see that? Don't go far. Boy? *(In a whisper.)* Boy? Can you hear me? *(She reaches into the cart for a cleaver and holds it out in front of her.)* Boy? I hate it when you leave me and so suddenly. *(Sounds offstage of the boy crashing through bushes. The woman repeats her mantra to calm herself.)* It's the history and heritage of our people and must be guarded and guarded fiercely, all the rest of life must be - - -

Boy *(Re-enters with a slingshot. Beat.)* It got away.

Woman *(She hides the cleaver and sneaks it back into its place on the cart.)* Well, we have a little bit of the last one left. We'll leave your tracks up the hill to confuse him.

Boy Can I hold one again? I like holding them.

Woman Hold one what?

Boy *(Re-sheathing his knife.)* You know.

Woman We have to get further away. And it's not completely dark yet.

Boy Almost. I can polish one.

Woman They're safer when they're dirty. Not so shiny.

Boy You say that and then you polish them.

Woman Your hands have oils on them that can dull the glaze.

Boy You're afraid I'll drop one - - - *(Bombs offstage again.)* Coming from the east. *(He takes out his journal.)* Was that light there before? Before the rabbit?

Woman Two sunsets tonight. Looks like the Enemy's burning something by the river over there. Or the bombs started fires. Or the villagers are

burning their crops - - -

Boy My mother had people who live along that river.

Woman We'll pray for them and make an offering. We protect this treasure for them; that's all we can do. (*The boy wanders.*) This is just another excuse for you to leave the cart. Another imaginary rabbit.

Boy I saw a rabbit.

Woman First, we'll circle around and dodge the army to the south. We'll keep to the trees. We go south. We run in front of the regiment.

Boy That soldier's probably south of us by now, circling around us.

Woman Wouldn't we see him? I thought you could smell him.

Boy Not if he stayed to the trees and rubbed rabbit all over himself. Not with all that smoke from the valley.

Woman He'd have to catch a rabbit - - -

Boy Did you see how his left hand trembled when he dealt the cards? There's something wrong and weak in him.

Woman Of course, he's wrong and weak. He's a deserter and a thief. Go ahead and worry. It sharpens listening and seeing - - - (*Sees the fire increase.*) Oh. We should've caught up with your father and brother and the rest of the south wing of the museum by now.

Boy We all run in circles like dogs.

Woman We're dodging an army.

Boy Ssh! I thought I saw something by the edge of the trees, there, but my eyes could be playing tricks.

Woman They're sharper than mine.

Boy (*Whispered. Out.*) . . . Hello?

Woman Careful.

Boy Did you hear footsteps? All this circling and going nowhere.

Woman We're guarding the treasure. That's somewhere.

Boy It doesn't feel like anywhere. Wait. (*Still listening.*)

Woman If we kept it in one set place, they'd find it.