

THE MONKEY QUEEN

A short play

by

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Characters

TONI, 14 or 15 years old

MICHELLE, two to three years younger, her sister

DANETTE, Michelle's age, their cousin

TWO HANDS, Toni's shadow surrogate

BARBIE, Michelle's shadow surrogate

MONKEY QUEEN, Danette's shadow surrogate

Place

A campsite at night, a single dark tent on an otherwise empty moonlit stage.

Time

Last summer.

Notes on the Production

The actors playing TONI, MICHELLE, and DANETTE are miked offstage. The puppeteers in the tent are backlit as if by two small, movable "flashlights" and a single, stationary "lantern." The puppeteers mime the three characters as they speak, using the shadows of their bodies and props and the shadows of the surrogates to convey the action. The surrogates are stylized hinged puppets in the "wayang kulit" style of traditional Javanese theatre. (See <http://discover-indo.tierranet.com/wayang.html>)

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THE MONKEY QUEEN

A campsite at night, a single dark tent on an otherwise empty moonlit stage.

The sound of crickets fades to an almost subliminal effect. At the first loud cough from the audience...

DANETTE

What was that? *(Uneasy whisper in the dark)*

Toni. *(Beat)*

Toni! *(Beat)*

TONI

Mmmm...

A "flashlight" goes on, casting DANETTE's shadow on the tent wall.

DANETTE

You hear that?

TONI

(Groggy)
Aw, not again. You and your sauerkraut -- some day somebody's going to set your butt on fire.

DANETTE

That wasn't me. It's outside.

A second light casts MICHELLE's shadow SL of DANETTE's.

MICHELLE

What's outside?

DANETTE

Something. A noise. I just heard it.

MICHELLE

What is it?

TONI

Nothing. Danette, Michelle -- both of you turn out the lights and go to sleep.

DANETTE

Could be the wind. Or a squirrel.

TONI
(Provocatively)
 Maybe it's a bear.

MICHELLE
 Oh no.

DANETTE
 There bears here? You never said anything about bears, Toni.

The "lantern" comes on, casting TONI's
 shadow SR of MICHELLE's.

TONI
 Geez, you guys, there aren't any bears, OK? Just a couple of
 pre-pube psychos.

DANETTE
 You don't know that. About the bears, I mean.

MICHELLE
 And stop calling us pre-pubes.

TONI
 Michelle, pick a number between four and six.

MICHELLE
 No.

TONI
 Pick.

MICHELLE
 Come on, Toni, no.

TONI
 OK, five.

TONI makes a bird's head with her
 hands, stabbing MICHELLE's head five
 times with its "beak."

TONI (CONT'D)
 Caw, caw, caw, caw, caw.

MICHELLE knocks the "bird" away with
 her Barbie doll.

MICHELLE
 Cut it out.

TONI
 Then don't be stupid.

MICHELLE
Do that again, I'm telling Mom.

TONI
She won't do anything -- she's busy.

MICHELLE
Sleeping.

TONI
(Ironic)
Right.

(Snide)
You see the way Uncle Mark was looking at our mom during dinner? The way they kept hinting we should go to our tent?

MICHELLE
So?

TONI
So maybe they don't want to be brother-in-law and sister-in-law anymore.

TONI taps the fingertips of both hands together, with kissy noises.

MICHELLE
Eww -- shut up.

DANETTE
You think so?

TONI
Go find out.

MICHELLE
You're sick.

TONI
What's the matter, Michelle -- scared?

MICHELLE
I just think you're disgusting.

TONI
No, disgusting is a gas attack.

TONI squeezes her cupped hands together to make raspberry sounds.

MICHELLE
Now who's being stupid?