

Strange Far Place

A Lovecraftian Tale of the Frozen North
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Cast

Angelique	Scientist and occult dabbler. Driven.
Catherine	Occult practitioner. Friendly, kooky.
Gerald	American scientist.
Emilia	British scientist.

Settings

Tempe, Arizona. Catherine's studio.

Various locations in the isolated village of Wales, Alaska. These include the Wales Insane Asylum, the elder's cabin, the caverns under that cabin, and the Arctic wilderness.

All locations are minimally indicated with lights changes. The stage should be empty of furniture.

Costumes

Angelique wears practical spelunking clothes.

Catherine's outfit is free flowing hippie, but not completely unbelievable for the Alaskan wilderness.

Gerald and Emilia wear dark pants and white dress shirts under crisp lab coats.

Time

The dead of winter.

A spotlight rises on Angelique on her knees. She's wears a straightjacket, and stares wild-eyed at the audience, her hair flying everywhere. She is mentally somewhere else, having a bad memory. Maybe she converses with herself... maybe she drools... A door creaks. Cold light fills the stage as Gerald and Emilia enter. He has a clipboard and takes notes as Emilia examines her. They nod at each other, then lift her by her shoulders.

EMILIA

On your feet now, Angelique

She offers no resistance. They move her upstage and undo her jacket. They attach her newly freed arms to the rear wall, splayed wide, then move away.

GERALD

This should feel like a liquid warmth, flowing softly through your body...

Angelique suddenly is very conscious and in a lot of pain.

ANGELIQUE

Aaaaahhhhh!

EMILIA

That's right, just let it in.

GERALD

Feel yourself clearing up?

She's not feeling any better. The opposite. It burns.

ANGELIQUE

Uhhhhh...

EMILIA

Come on now. Toughen up.

GERALD

You can do it.

EMILIA

You've got to try harder.

GERALD

(to Emilia)

... it's not actually easy. I mean, it really hurts.

EMILIA

Shut up.

Angelique goes very still and quiet.

EMILIA cont.

Yes? Tell us, Angelique.

ANGELIQUE

I remember.

Lights go black. In the darkness, there is feminine singing. It is a wordless, airy noise, with an almost alien quality. Lights rise on Catherine sitting cross-legged, her eyes closed, humming the fading song. Angelique enters. She is transformed: confident, well-coifed, and perfectly sane. Catherine greets her without opening her eyes. Amelia and Gerald stand to the side, observing.

CATHERINE

Please come in, Angelique. I'm so glad you're here.

ANGELIQUE

...hello. Catherine?

CATHERINE

It's so nice to meet you, sister. I hope you don't mind. I think of all of us who search as sisters.

ANGELIQUE

No, that's fine.

CATHERINE

Blessed be.

ANGELIQUE

You know what I'm here for. You've located the Inupiaq hole to the center of the world.

Catherine opens her eyes and turns to Angelique.

CATHERINE

Yes. Why would you be interested in that?

ANGELIQUE

Why wouldn't I be?

CATHERINE

That wasn't the question.

ANGELIQUE

Does there have to be a why?

CATHERINE

There's always a why.

ANGELIQUE

Do you have to know it?

CATHERINE

The truth you seek is dangerous, Angelique. The way is cold, and will take us far north. You go looking for ancient answers to modern questions. You think you are ready to look into the hole to the center of the world?

ANGELIQUE

I'm ready to learn. I am not scared.

The scientists burst in and speak to Angelique. Catherine doesn't hear them, and moves slowly toward Angelique's back as she interacts with them.

EMILIA

Could you be more vague??

GERALD

Maybe we should just let her tell the story?

EMILIA

At this rate, the infusion will wear off before we learn anything.

ANGELIQUE

I've never remembered this before. This is new to me.

GERALD

Try to remember faster.

EMILIA

Whatever her misgivings, we know the two of you left Arizona together for Anchorage, then took an eight-seater to Wales... we're in Wales. You're in Wales now. What happened when you first arrived?

ANGELIQUE

Catherine and I become friends.

Catherine is behind her and speaks in her ear.

CATHERINE

Of course we do.

Blackout. The sound of a small airplane landing in the darkness. Lights rise to find Angelique alone in her spot again. She speaks to the audience.

ANGELIQUE

We flew in to Wales aboard a toyish-seeming prop plane, severe winds driving us from side to side and up and down as we landed on a primitive gravel runway. Desolate, even by Alaskan village standards. No mountains. A flat, dry, cold tundra, with a dying forest as you look inland. And shockingly warm, in the 40s, and the wind that had buffeted us all seemed to swirl twenty feet in the sky, leaving us untouched on the ground, as if we were shielded by some invisible power. An elder met us. He took us back to one of the small houses. He opened a trap door and led us down the ladder it revealed... which led to stairs...which led to another ladder.

She relives her journey through mime.

By flashlight, we went deeper and deeper into the darkness... at the end of the second ladder, our guide pointed down a slanting passage, then went back up the ladder, and left us there with his muttered curse lingering behind him.

Lights dimly cover the stage. The sound of dripping water. Gerald and Emilia contort their bodies to form the entrance to a deeper cave, in the shape of a grotesque and giant skull. Catherine joins Angelique, and they grope through the cave, holding hands. They both have flashlights.

CATHERINE

It's so warm. And damp... the breeze... it makes it feel like...

ANGELIQUE

Breath. Foul giant's breath.

CATHERINE

Ha ha ha. I was going to say "wet Fall Maine mornings in my childhood."

ANGELIQUE

This smell reminds you of your childhood? I'm sorry.

CATHERINE

You get used to it.

The stop and stare at the deeper cave entrance.

ANGELIQUE

What is that?

CATHERINE

It looks like a skull.

ANGELIQUE

It does.

CATHERINE

A very large skull.

ANGELIQUE

It's... humanoid.

CATHERINE

That's not...

Angelique's flashlight dies.

ANGELIQUE

Damn it.

CATHERINE

Maybe we should go back.

ANGELIQUE

We've come too far. Shine your light for me...

Catherine shines her light at the cave entrance. Angelique edges forward.

CATHERINE

Wait! The left eye... is that moss... moving.

They stare... and suddenly jump. Then they exhale, laugh.

ANGELIQUE

Just a frog. Come on, don't lose your nerve. You have the light. You should lead. Or I can go first. If you give me your light...

CATHERINE

No. That's all right.

Catherine goes first into the cave. Emilia and Gerald maintain their form, except for turning their heads to speak to Angelique.

EMILIA

When she said it looked like a skull...

GERALD

...and you agreed...

EMILIA & GERALD

Why did you keep going?

ANGELIQUE

I don't know.

CATHERINE

What?

ANGELIQUE

What?

CATHERINE

What don't you know? Come on, stay close to me.

Catherine shines her flashlight over the audience as the lights dim to near blackness. The two women move forward through a tapering passageway.

ANGELIQUE

Okay, okay... Keep going.

CATHERINE

Ow. Don't step on me.

ANGELIQUE

Just keep going forward. Don't stop.

CATHERINE

Don't push.

ANGELIQUE

There! See it? It's broadening...

The two women burst into a much larger cave with audible sighs. For a moment, they just are thankful to not be confined. They clutch their knees, catch their breath... hear something... smell something? They both slowly look up, still only lit by the single flashlight... and they see it, the most horrible thing anyone could ever see... and the flashlight goes out. Angelique screams. Lights very slowly rise as their eyes adjust.

Quiet! This is a privilege. CATHERINE

...What? ANGELIQUE

Your death will feed him, and he will then feed me. CATHERINE

I don't understand! ANGELIQUE

Don't fight me. CATHERINE

Get away from me! ANGELIQUE

This is what you wanted! CATHERINE

Feed him yourself. ANGELIQUE

Angelique strikes Catherine and hurls her to the monster. The sound of it feeding is moist. Angelique stares, then runs away while looking back in slow motion, strobe light if available. Gerald and Emilia enter and talk to her as she runs.

So she was... "eaten by a monster"? EMILIA

Yes. ANGELIQUE

You said that the creature "shubbered." What does that mean? GERALD

EMILIA

And you expect us to believe this monster business?

GERALD

Doesn't it make you want to look up what "shubbering" means?

EMILIA

Where'd you end up, Angelique?

GERALD

Where can you possibly be running to?

ANGELIQUE

It doesn't matter.

EMILIA

We get it, you're scared. Where did you go?

ANGELIQUE

The woods.

Angelique stops running and goes to the ground.

GERALD

Horrible place, the woods.

EMILIA

Nobody goes there without a gun.

GERALD

Let alone while being chased by a monster.

ANGELIQUE

He couldn't follow me. The passage was too narrow.

EMILIA

Then why'd you keep running?

ANGELIQUE

I'll never stop running.

GERALD

Brrrr. That just made my blood run cold.

Angelique turns on them, very sharp.

ANGELIQUE

What are you doing here?

GERALD

What do you mean?

ANGELIQUE

What are you doing in Wales, Alaska? With your clipboard and your weirdo antique laboratory... What do you want from me?

EMILIA

We just want to know what happened.

GERALD

It's okay, Emilia. Angelique, I'll tell you.

EMILIA

Wait, what?

GERALD

We're alien hunters.

EMILIA

That is a secret, you idiot!

GERALD

We have been looking for answers in the sky for years. It just recently came to our attention to turn the telescopes the other direction. Alien life is churning beneath us!

EMILIA

(to Angelique)

It's perfectly possible that what you saw seemed like a monster... but what is a monster? Just an animal shape we don't recognize. An alien shape. And maybe he was just trying to say hello to your friend.

Angelique stares at her... then is overcome with derisive laughter.

GERALD

Hey... there's no need to be rude.

Emilia and Gerald exit. Angelique's laughter fades. She realizes she has the use of her hands. She begins to look for a way out of where they have left her. The lights flash up and down, and there is the sound of a ticking clock. When she sits on the floor, the noise stops and the lights return to normal. Again, the door creaks. Catherine, now massively pregnant, enters dragging Gerald's dead body.

CATHERINE

Hello again, Angelique!

ANGELIQUE

But you—

CATHERINE

I know! It looked bad. That was not what I had imagined. But... once it got going... once his mind was one with mine... I understood my role.

She exits and returns dragging Emilia's body.

ANGELIQUE

And... what is that role, Catherine?

CATHERINE

It's lots of things. Right now, He wants all his food in one place. So my role is the bearer. You are the awaited fruit that will nurture the child. My child, who will rule the world.

The dead scientist corpses turn their heads and speak in unison.

GERALD & EMILIA

How did that make you feel when she said "the world"? How did you feel about being the "awaited fruit"?

ANGELIQUE

You're not real... you're not real!!

CATHERINE

Oh I'm real.

ANGELIQUE

(turning on Catherine)

No... no, you're not! You're not and you're not and none of this is!!

CATHERINE

Just keep telling yourself that. Oh! ... Pregnancy is hard work.

Catherine sits down. Angelique starts to go by her, but Catherine grabs her ankle.

ANGELIQUE

I have to go back!

CATHERINE

You're food!!!

Angelique breaks away. The other three become a deafening cacophony of overlapping voices.

CATHERINE & EMILIA & GERALD

Where are you going? Where? Where are you going? There's nowhere to go.

Angelique runs to the foot of the stage. The others chant softly underneath her. The lights slowly dim to her final spot.

ANGELIQUE

Through the woods... into the cabin... through the trap door... down the ladder... down the stairs... down the ladder... down the hall... into the tapering narrow... and the darkness... and the darker darkness... And finally...

She stares up at the most lovely thing she has ever seen.

I'm ready.

Lights flash to full then go to black. A moist feeding sound. End of play.