

DEVUSHKA AND THE CAT

A Ten Minute Play  
by  
Kasy Ostrom

SAMPLE PAGES

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## CHARACTERS

DEVUSHKA – a young Russian girl who is fiercely smart and wildly adventurous. She is young at heart but wise for her years. She can be played by either an older actress who can play young or a younger actress who can play old.

MAMA – Playful and wise. Tells her daughter meaningful stories at bedtime. Doubles as an Amur Leopard: a big, beautiful, elegant, and stunning wild cat.

PAPA – Rough around the edges. A father who cares deeply for his daughter but, ultimately, cares more about riches than his daughter's happiness.

*Note: Though our story takes place in Russia, no Russian accents needed.*

## TIME

Not too long ago. Maybe yesterday. Maybe the day before.

## PLACE

A small house in a small Russian village.

A great forest.

## PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

This play was inspired by the stunning and gravely endangered Amur Leopard.

CITES Appendix I, <http://www.worldwildlife.org/species/amur-leopard>

I've always had a great fascination with cats, especially big, wild ones. As I researched and learned more about the tragic situation of the Amur Leopard in Russia (and China) I began to imagine a Russian folktale: one that I could one day tell my own daughter in hopes that she'll care about the lives of these amazing cats as much as I do.

SCENE 1

(In Darkness or in hazy lighting, we hear a mother telling her daughter a bedtime story.)

MAMA

Once upon a time.

DEVUSHKA

What time, Mama?

MAMA

Not too long ago, my sweet.

DEVUSHKA

Not, like, yesterday though.

MAMA

(playfully)

Maybe, like, yesterday though. Maybe the day before! Hush up and let me tell the story.

DEVUSHKA

Sorry, Mama

MAMA

Once upon a time, in a small Russian village on the edge of a great forest, there lived a young girl who was fiercely smart and wildly adventurous.

(LIGHTS UP on DEVUSHKA. She is young, fiercely smart, and wildly adventurous. She is the girl in the story *and* the girl to which the story is being told. She stands in her small house. A physical door leads out to the forest and the rest of the house lies offstage. She holds a sketchbook and pencil. DEVUSHKA sneaks stealthily towards the door. PAPA enters from the offstage. DEVUSHKA quickly hides the sketchbook and turns around to face her PAPA.)

PAPA

Where do you think you're going at this time of night, Devushka?

DEVUSHKA

Nowhere, Papa. I'm not going anywhere.

PAPA

Back to bed.

DEVUSHKA

I can't sleep!

PAPA

And in the morning I won't be able to wake you up! I know how this works.

DEVUSHKA

I'm nocturnal, Papa. I prefer the night.

PAPA

You've been reading too many books.

DEVUSHKA

You're the one who buys me books and now you don't want me to read them?

PAPA

You're a young girl who needs sleep. Not a wild cat.

DEVUSHKA

I wish I was a wild cat!

PAPA

I know you do. I know my daughter well. But you're not. Now, back to bed with you.

DEVUSHKA

Fine.

(DEVUSHKA sulks offstage. PAPA exits behind her. After a moment or two, DEVUSHKA peeks back out and makes a mad dash out of the door.)

MAMA

Her Papa was right. Reading books made this young girl love adventure. But there was another reason the girl snuck out at night. She had a secret.

(The house door vanishes and DEVUSHKA stands in a great forest. Lights rise on MAMA who transforms herself into an Amur Leopard. She wears a coat that symbolizes this transformation, but she also transforms physically. MAMA is a regal, beautiful, big, wild cat.)