

CONVERSATION KILLER

[Gudrun sits in the hospital Intensive Care, next to her grandson, who is in a coma and on life-support. In her capacious carry-bag she has a bottle of Nembutal and a syringe with a life-threatening dose of lithium suspension. She speaks deliberately and with an Icelandic accent.]

GUDRUN

Jack's illness was a musical problem, it started young. As each sign of life opened on to other signs, his actions rang the emigrants cry: "I must go far". He lived through computers from a young age, now one has swallowed him. Is this how far you could come Jack, is this it?

Crazy boy, my grandson. Storm-forced, god-driven I don't know--but greed led him by the nose. His slightest move--a kiss-- was savage, carved out fifty futures--every plan so clever, so devious.

Oh, the way you forced Life right to the edge of the known world, the way you insulted the goddess there! Snip snip: now she's cut ten of the twenty strands holding you... Down you fall, white silence, no more lies...

The Doctor says you could be suspended here for ever on the life support machine.

I don't mind the world changing Jack, I don't mind you changing the world, but to sit on pause, like this, waiting... I should have hit you harder.

Damn you to hell. I came to Canada to take Canada for us. I followed the wolf who swallowed the sun and set the seasons rolling. I waited in the immigrants line, five blocks from this hospital, for my place to shift up along to a shaft of sunlight; in a cold basement I rolled herring morning noon and night, I planned one hundred lives, I planned you, my Grandson, like one of our Viking ancestors. Well... everything changes and becomes a mall.

[she chuckles suddenly and pops a pill in her mouth. She prepares the syringe.]

"Jack". You left me young, preferring the streets, you called yourself Jack ... And the Grandmother had to learn from the crazy kid.

[she takes another handful of pills]

You persuaded me how many different worlds sit side by side on your computer. "Windows, Grendel", you said to me, "like immigration but easy". Travelling from one world to another, adapting in a blink, so completely that every code is obvious. You loose all memory, every trace of where you've been before. Like a drug you said. Hurrying. Like a ship that drops ballast overboard, time accelerates with no memory to hold it down. Each trip you 'd say, "stop at nothing, stop at nothing, faster faster faster"...I didn't know how far you went.

Below, in the waiting area, sour faced police from three different countries sip the hospital coffee and answer their cell phones. They watch Tweety and Sylvester on TV, they share notes, to find who tried to kill you, Jack. I am so proud, you are my little celebrity.

While the bird outwits the cat, Granny is very busy. Granny is solving the musical problem...

I trained you too well-- you are the kind of immigrant everyone fears, Jack, who makes money by taking it, who will not put down roots anywhere or cherish even his Grandmother because he must always be conquering new lands. Up under Life's skirt at the edge of the world!

Too far !

You gave me to the empty spaces. My neighbours drop of old age: Sigurdssen lived here, Johanssen lived there... Arnulfsdottir... stupid ... third world beggars crushed inside your first world city; for myself I would never accept their lot because I had you. But you went... far.

Now the cold wind blows, the sash slams shut. Jack Frost cannot get back in the house." Open the windows! Open the windows!" you say; I will not.

It is good our voyage ends here. Excess brings us back to origins, perhaps. When I entered this country and they stamped my papers, I shrugged off memory, loyalty...in poverty, I allowed myself nothing but ambition. Unacceptable. Everything I taught you: unacceptable.

"Grendel, is there a moral order outside time and change?" " No Jack. There is only Battle ..."

I believe this, Jack, but I no longer accept what I believe.

Today there are too many worlds, and your battles did not bring order, only chaos. You hurt many people. Me...I only hurt you.

As your teacher, I have decided to lock our windows and set a fire.

[she injects Jack's body with a lithium overdose, and takes the last of the Nembutal herself]

We now have twenty minutes to recall our beginnings, and to call up our ancestors from the House of the Dead. My beloved grandson. We will travel together and greet our neighbours together.

If you agree with my judgement, Jack, let your heart beat. I will see it on the screen.

Thank you.

From full length play **White Lies**.

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Dear Jody,

A couple of things all in the same envelope. Firstly, I think you have a database somewhere with my old address at Cornwallis street, as some of my mail comes to the right place and some is still going to that old address (my friend Paula lives there so its not a complete disaster, but would you please check?). Secondly, thank you thank you for persevering in tracking down the royalty check for the U.S. production of *Something Wicked*. I really appreciate your diligence, and next time I see you please let me buy you a beer with some of the proceeds.

Thirdly, I am enclosing two monologues for the competition, and a check for \$20 to cover the submission fees.

Lastly, I filled out the "what I've been doing" list.

Wendy Lill, Carol Sinclair, Paula and I have talked more about a fundraising effort for PUC and hope to do a benefit reading for both PUC and PARC at the Economy Shoe Store Pub in January. We have contacted the managers and are waiting for a response. I don't know how much we could expect to raise. Maybe \$100.

At this point it does look as if I'll have to move in March, although I'm still not 100% sure if it will be to Cincinnati. Nige (my partner who's working there) is also looking for work closer to home. I'll keep you posted, and try to do my most important PUC business here before then. That's the fundraiser I guess, and another report. And some Galway promo.

All the best to you Tony James and Angela for a happy Christmas and New Year,

Yours truly,