

Illinois Jane and the Rainforest of Retribution

by
T. James Belich

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CHARACTERS

DR. ILLINOIS JANE (F), *dashing young heroine*

SID KNICKERBOCK (M), *her reluctant sidekick*

NATASHA NOVELOVA (F), *evil Russian countess*

IVAN THE IRRITABLE (M), *ex-Russian ballet*

DR. THADDEUS JANE (M), *the heroine's father*

LOUISIANA JANE (F), *Illinois' older sister*

THE MONKEY, *a rare painted howler monkey*

*Plus extras, as desired, to assist with the giant anaconda, crocodiles,
and other animals*

(F) indicates a female role

(M) indicates a male role

All other roles may be cast as either gender

Total Roles: 7 (3 female, 3 male, 1 male or female) plus extras

Production History

Illinois Jane and the Rainforest of Retribution was first performed by Sauk Rapids-Rice High School in Sauk Rapids, Minnesota in January and February of 2008. It was directed by Julie Christenson with the following cast and crew:

DR. ILLINOIS JANE
SID KNICKERBOCK
NATASHA NOVELOVA
IVAN THE IRRITABLE
DR. THADDEUS JANE
LOUISIANA JANE
THE MONKEY
RAINFOREST ANIMALS / LAVA /
ANACONDA / CROCODILES

ANACONDA / RIVER /
STAGE CREW

LIGHT CREW

Abbey Gooch
Blake MacKenzie
Katie Sigler
Peter Fradette
Derek Schultz
Erika Azure
Emily Murphy
Aimee Josephs
Jeremy Karnik
Dani Meyer
Jennifer Schroeder
Mercedes Tenter
Rachel Frerich
Russell Johnstone
April Josephs
Aaron Lucas
Jason Mo
Derek Freese
Tim Roth

Technical Requirements

Set Description

With the exception of the first scene, all scenes take place against the backdrop of the jungle. Additional set pieces may be brought on to represent ruins, a volcano, a rope bridge, etc. Given the brevity of the first scene, which takes place in the empty cargo hold of an airplane, this scene may be done very simply. For example, it could be done either on a bare stage or with the curtains drawn in front of the jungle scenery. Further details on the setting are given in the stage directions at the beginning of each scene.

Sound Effects

Many of the "special effects" in this play are intended to be suggested through the use of sound and lights, rather than be portrayed literally. Most of the sound effects can be done simply, and some may even be dispensed with entirely if the action is made sufficiently clear by the staging.

The suggested sound effects are as follows:

An airplane flying

A rush of wind

An explosion

Jungle wildlife

A rumbling sound, like an earthquake (used several times throughout the play)

The sound of large rocks falling down

A motorboat driving

Gunfire

A waterfall

A slithering snake

The flow of lava

An erupting volcano

Creaking wood

A rope breaking

Prop List

Whip (Optional)

Old and worn maps – (2)

"Parachutes" (i.e. backpacks with a cord, the "ripcord," hanging out) – (4)

Blindfold

Several pieces of rope (for tying people's hands and feet)

Several long ropes or cords

Guns – (2)

A flower

Large backpack

Banana

A stick of "dynamite" (i.e. a red tube with a fuse sticking out)

Matches

A large "stone" box which holds the Oracle (see description in Scene 5)

Glass orb or other such object to represent the Oracle

SCENE 1

(The cargo hold of an airplane, which we hear flying. We hear the sound of someone being punched. DR. ILLINOIS JANE stumbles backwards onto stage and falls down. ILLINOIS is dressed in a leather hat and coat, Indiana Jones style, and carries a whip (optional). IVAN THE IRRITABLE enters and picks ILLINOIS up by the collar. IVAN wears a trenchcoat, underneath which he wears a black, male ballet outfit. Tights are a must. IVAN is large and burly and speaks with a Russian accent. Think Arnold Schwarzenegger, but with poise. In his free hand IVAN holds a worn and folded map.)

IVAN: Looking for this, Illinois Jane?

ILLINOIS: The map! *(She tries to grab it, but IVAN pulls it out of reach and laughs.)*
Hand it over. *(IVAN knees ILLINOIS in the stomach.)*

IVAN: But I do not think so. *(He turns ILLINOIS around, grabs her arms behind her, and forces her to the far edge of the stage. With his free hand IVAN mimes opening the airplane door. We hear a rush of wind as it is opened.)* This is, how you say, end of line.

ILLINOIS: Woah!

IVAN: Goodbye, Dr. Jane. *(IVAN prepares to throw ILLINOIS out of the airplane, but she frees one arm and elbows him. He lets go and staggers backwards. ILLINOIS raises her fists.)*

ILLINOIS: You were saying? Who are you, anyway?

IVAN: I am Ivan the Irritable. *(He suddenly removes his trenchcoat, revealing his ballet outfit, and tosses the coat aside.)* I dance the ballet.

ILLINOIS: You've got to be kidding.

IVAN: But no, they kick me out of Russian ballet. I am most unhappy about it.

ILLINOIS: Just give me the map, Ivan.

IVAN: Never. For we shall find the Oracle of Pakamockitockey. I mean, Mocketypachety... no, how does it go...

ILLINOIS: Pachacamac? *(Pronounced "Pock-ahk-ah-mahk")*

IVAN: Gezentight.

ILLINOIS: I don't have time for this. *(She points behind him.)* Look! A critic!

IVAN: *(Turning around) Where? (ILLINOIS delivers a mighty kick that sends IVAN flying. He drops the map and ILLINOIS grabs it.)*

ILLINOIS: *Ha! (She finds the stack of "parachutes" and starts to put one on. The parachutes are actually backpacks with a cord, the "ripcord," hanging out.) Sid! Sid, time to go! (SID KNICKERBOCK hops on. SID is dressed in knickers, knee-high socks, prominent glasses, and clothes more suitable for a quiet library than an adventure. SID's hands and feet are both tied and he wears a blindfold.) Sid!*

SID: *Coming as fast as I can, Dr. Jane.*

ILLINOIS: *Quick, put this on. (Without looking at SID she tosses him a parachute which of course he does not catch. ILLINOIS turns to see him.) What happened to you?*

SID: *I wish I knew.*

ILLINOIS: *Well hurry up and untie yourself.*

SID: *I'm sorry, what?*

ILLINOIS: *Untie yourself. We've got to jump!*

SID: *How am I supposed to... From the plane?!? (SID starts to fumble around for the parachute but accidentally kicks it away.)*

ILLINOIS: *You've got 30 seconds. (She finishes putting on her own parachute.)*

SID: *Of course I do. (IVAN grabs ILLINOIS from behind and wraps one arm around her neck. IVAN takes back the map.)*

IVAN: *Mine, I believe.*

ILLINOIS: *(Struggling to speak) Sid... Sid! (SID has continued to kick the parachute around the stage and is now heading towards the open airplane door.)*

SID: *Over here. (ILLINOIS continues to struggle with IVAN.)*

ILLINOIS: *Turn around!*

SID: *Why? (ILLINOIS breaks free from IVAN, races across the stage and grabs SID in the nick of time. She then punches IVAN just as he leaps over to her. IVAN staggers back.) What? (ILLINOIS puts the parachute into his hands.)*

ILLINOIS: *You're going to want this before you go out there. I'll get the map.*

SID: It'd better be worth it.

ILLINOIS: Sid, the map gives the location of the Oracle of Pachacamac which can show you any moment in the future. It'll be worth it. Now get that on! (ILLINOIS crosses to IVAN.)

SID: But how...? *(He shrugs and starts gnawing at his ropes. They soon come off.)* You've got to be kidding. *(He takes off his blindfold and starts to put on his parachute as ILLINOIS and IVAN face off. ILLINOIS strikes a fighting stance while IVAN strikes a ballet pose that is meant to be intimidating but isn't.)*

IVAN: You think you can challenge the Countess? She shall have the Oracle of Pookeynokey. That is to say –

ILLINOIS: Pachacamac!

IVAN: Yes, and with it the Countess shall rule the world!

SID: Guess we don't have to wonder about the villain's motivation. *(ILLINOIS and IVAN circle around each other as SID finishes with his parachute.)* OK, Dr. Jane, I'm almost ready. *(He leans over, facing the airplane door, and starts to untie his feet.)* I just need to finish untying – *(While SID is speaking IVAN charges ILLINOIS, making a series of ballet-like leaps. ILLINOIS retreats and bumps into SID, knocking him offstage and out of the airplane.)* Ahhhhhhh!!!!!! *(ILLINOIS and IVAN pause as they watch SID fall.)*

ILLINOIS: I'm beginning to see why they kicked you out of the ballet. *(ILLINOIS punches IVAN and he staggers back. IVAN then charges ILLINOIS who trips him, causing him to fall right in the front of the airplane door. ILLINOIS grabs IVAN and holds him as if holding him partly out of the door.)*

IVAN: But I am afraid of heights!

ILLINOIS: The map, Ivan.

IVAN: Never. *(ILLINOIS holds him out a little farther.)* Here, take it! *(He gives ILLINOIS the map. She pushes him back into the plane and stuffs the map into her pocket.)* Go ahead and jump. We shall shoot you down!

ILLINOIS: I don't think so. You're about to have some engine trouble. See ya! *(She jumps offstage and out of the plane.)*

IVAN: Borscht. *(The COUNTESS NATASHA NOVELOVA enters from the shadows. She is a cross between the classic femme fatale and the stereotypical literature professor. She also speaks with a Russian accent.)*

NATASHA: You have let them escape, Ivan.

IVAN: Countess! *(He stands at attention in a ballet-like pose.)* I am most sorry, but Illinois Jane –

NATASHA: Has the map.

IVAN: Da. But I shall find her and –

NATASHA: You fool of an ape. It is exactly as I have planned! *(She laughs her evil villain laugh and takes out a second map.)*

IVAN: There are two maps?

NATASHA: But of course. I wish for Illinois Jane to pursue the Oracle into the jungle and there meet her doom.

IVAN: I do not understand.

NATASHA: You see, Ivan, without conflict there can be no theater. Dr. Jane and I must together struggle for the Oracle or else the play would be over before it began. It is our destiny to meet face to face at the climax!

IVAN: Ah yes, very Russian.

NATASHA: All we need now, Ivan, is the key. Then I, Countess Natasha Novelova, heir to the throne of Russia and professor of literature at the University of Moscow, shall have the Oracle and with its power the world shall be ours! *(They laugh villainously.)* It is as in my own great unpublished, unrecognized novel. In chapter 6, when the noble Anushka is betrayed by her sister, and – *(We hear a small explosion.)* Ivan?

IVAN: Ah yes, Dr. Jane said we might experience trouble with our engine. Most perceptive.

NATASHA: She has sabotaged us!

IVAN: Very Russian indeed. *(We hear a second explosion.)*

NATASHA: Borscht. *(NATASHA and IVAN run to grab parachutes for themselves and jump offstage and out the door as the lights go to black.)*

SCENE 2

(Ruins in the jungle, Peru. During the blackout we hear SID scream and then fall onto stage. The lights come up on SID who lies tangled in a number of cords which come from his "parachute" and trail offstage. SID wakes up and groans. The jungle background will now be constant throughout the rest of the play. To help create the feel of the jungle, the playwright encourages the use of additional jungle sounds and "animals." Such animals could either be portrayed by actors in costume or by puppets, such as in the stage version of "The Lion King." The use of such animals, however portrayed, will help the monkey, the giant anaconda, and the crocodiles to better blend visually into the rest of the show. The sounds of wildlife will also be helpful as the characters are transitioning from one part of the jungle to another.)

SID: Ohhh, there's got to be an easier way to get a map. I wonder how long I was out. *(He struggles to untangle himself and remove his parachute. As he does so the MONKEY enters. The MONKEY, a painted howler monkey, differs from other howler monkeys in that its fur is brightly-colored in many places. Specifically, its tail contains a specific series of colors which will become important later on. The painted howler monkey is a very affectionate and trusting species which especially enjoys mimicking others and tends to attach itself to one or two specific individuals.)* "I'm sure we won't have to jump from the plane," Dr. Jane says. You'd think I'd know better by now than to believe that. Dr. Jane? Dr. Jane! Where am I? *(He starts to look around. As he does so the MONKEY follows him around and imitates his actions, but SID doesn't notice.)* Cool, ruins! *(He looks up and reads from an invisible inscription.)* Huh, that looks like the dialect of Pachacamac. *(The MONKEY makes a sound that sounds like agreement. SID slowly turns to face the MONKEY.)* Ahh! *(The MONKEY screams back. SID tries to run away, but whichever way he goes the MONKEY blocks his path and mirrors his every action.)* Nice monkey... *(SID realizes that the MONKEY is imitating his gestures and tries out a few simple actions which the MONKEY mirrors. SID's gestures become bigger and more difficult until he tries one so complex that the MONKEY just shakes its head as if SID is crazy. SID gives up and tries to shoo the MONKEY away.)* All right, go on, monkey. *(The MONKEY has become attached to SID and doesn't want to leave.)* Come on, go on, you don't want to be here when the villain shows up. *(NATASHA enters dramatically.)*

NATASHA: Now, Dr. Jane, we meet again!

SID: Ah! *(SID and the MONKEY each struggle to get behind the other with the MONKEY finally ending up behind SID.)*

NATASHA: *(Pointing a gun at SID)* You are not Dr. Jane. You are the sidekick, yes? Sidney Knickerbock?

SID: Uh-huh, I'm a librarian. Didn't you tie me up on the plane?

NATASHA: Why yes. *(She holds out her hand.)* Countess Natasha Novelova, arch-nemesis of Illinois Jane. *(SID nervously shakes her hand.)* I do not believe we have met.

SID: Which is strange, when you think about it. I've been Dr. Jane's sidekick a long time.

NATASHA: It is new backstory. Happens all the time in sequels.

SID: Right. *(The MONKEY makes a sound as if to say, "That's ridiculous!")*

NATASHA: *(Referring to it)* This is your pet, Sidney?

SID: Uh, not exactly. *(To the MONKEY)* Go on, shoo! *(NATASHA points her gun at the MONKEY.)*

NATASHA: I shall take care of it. *(The MONKEY cowers behind SID.)*

SID: That's all right, it's harmless, really.

NATASHA: *(Gesturing with her gun)* Be gone! *(The MONKEY scampers off.)* Much better. I would rather we were alone. *(SID laughs nervously. She gestures to the inscription with her gun.)* Can you read these writings, Sidney?

SID: Yeah, I've studied a lot of South American languages.

NATASHA: As smart as you are handsome.

SID: I'm sorry? Look, I really should – *(SID tries to leave but NATASHA suddenly embraces him.)*

NATASHA: *(Overdramatically)* Sidney, how can you run from me? Do you not feel it?

SID: Huh? *(He tries to break free of her embrace.)*

NATASHA: The attraction, the irresistible connection between us. *(The MONKEY is still watching them discreetly and finds this all very romantic. Painted howler monkeys are, after all, very sentimental creatures. The MONKEY then exits, having had an idea.)*

SID: What?

NATASHA: Oh Sidney, this is just as in my own novel –

SID: *(Impressed)* You've written a novel?

NATASHA: Yes, "Farewell to Siberia: A Tale of Tragedy and Tragic Love." This is just as in chapter 14 when Praskovya and Lavrenti meet for the first time.

SID: How about that.

NATASHA: Sidney, ever since we first met...

SID: Which has been all of five minutes.

NATASHA: ...I have felt the passion between us. Why should we deny it?

SID: I'm sure there's a reason... *(He finally breaks free of NATASHA and she points her gun at him once more.)*

NATASHA: *(Back to being the calm villain)* But you are right, now is not the time for such indulgences. *(By this time the MONKEY has re-entered, unseen by either of the others.)*

SID: I couldn't agree more. *(NATASHA gestures to the ruins.)*

NATASHA: Follow me.

(SID looks at the gun, laughs nervously, and enters the ruins after NATASHA. The MONKEY follows. SID sees it and tries to shoo it away without NATASHA seeing it. The MONKEY offers SID a flower and points at NATASHA. SID tries to get rid of the MONKEY while the MONKEY tries to get at NATASHA to give her the flower. SID finally grabs the flower and hides the MONKEY behind him just as NATASHA turns around to see what is happening. She sees the flower which it looks like SID is offering her.)

NATASHA: *(Touched)* Sidney... *(She takes the flower and continues walking. SID glares at the MONKEY which is very pleased with itself. SID pushes the MONKEY away, but it continues to follow at a distance and continues to imitate everything that SID and NATASHA do.)*

SID: So where's Ivan?

NATASHA: Still untangling himself from his parachute. Buffoon. But you are far more useful, Sidney. Ivan does not read Pachacamac.

SID: He can't say it either. *(NATASHA suddenly laughs as if this is the funniest thing she has ever heard.)*

NATASHA: But you are clever.

SID: Uh, thanks. *(Slight pause)* So... you're into literature?

NATASHA: *(Proudly)* Da. I am professor of literature at University of Moscow. *(Suddenly angry)* But no one will publish my novel!

SID: I'm sure it's wonderful.

NATASHA: *(Excited)* Then you will read it?

SID: *(Not wanting to)* Sure.

NATASHA: Oh Sidney, how I have waited for this day, just as Praskovya in chapter 63... *(She comes very close to SID.)*

SID: That's a lot of chapters. *(Changing the subject)* Wow, look at all this writing.

NATASHA: *(The villain again)* Tell me what it says.

SID: It's a history, of how the Pachacamac Empire used the Oracle to defeat its enemies.

NATASHA: Until their greed destroyed them. Yes, I know the story.

SID: So why do you want it?

NATASHA: To assume my rightful place on the throne of Russia!

SID: Well, at least you're not a communist.

NATASHA: I am a descendant of the Russian tsars! And when I am tsar over the whole world, then let us see if they still reject my novel!

SID: Yeah you mentioned that no one would –

NATASHA: One hundred and thirty-seven rejections!

SID: Wow, that's a lot... hey looks like we made it to the central chamber... which is empty. Shouldn't there be something here?

NATASHA: That inscription, Sidney, what does it say? *(SID reads it. By this point the MONKEY is standing right behind him and reads over his shoulder.)*

SID: *(Reading)* "The key is the monkey's tail." That doesn't make any sense.

NATASHA: Sidney, you are a genius. *(Passionately)* You know, I am without my henchman...

ILLINOIS: *(Offstage)* Ivan! Get back here you bumbling Baryshnikov! *(IVAN enters, making several large leaps, and hides behind NATASHA. The MONKEY watches IVAN and is even more impressed with him than with SID. It starts following and imitating IVAN, but IVAN does not yet see it.)*

IVAN: If she asks, I am not here.

NATASHA: *(Insincerely)* My brave Ivan, where would I be without you. *(ILLINOIS enters.)*

ILLINOIS: Ivan, I want to know where... Sid! There you are!

SID: Dr. Jane!

ILLINOIS: What are you doing with my sidekick, Countess?

NATASHA: Sidney was helping me translate. He is most clever.

SID: You really think so?

NATASHA: I do. I would very much like to see your library sometime.

SID: *(Embarrassed)* Well, I suppose...

ILLINOIS: Sid, are you flirting with my arch-nemesis?

SID: No! I would never –

NATASHA: What? *(She slaps SID.)*

SID: Ow!

NATASHA: No one breaks the heart of Natasha Novelova!

SID: I didn't mean to give you the idea that –

ILLINOIS: Are we looking for an Oracle, or aren't we?

NATASHA: *(Calm again)* Ah yes, the Oracle.

ILLINOIS: You'll never get it.

NATASHA: Because you have the map? *(She takes out the second.)*

ILLINOIS: We'll still find it first, or I'm not Dr. Illinois Jane, cartographer extraordinaire.

NATASHA: I know who you are.

ILLINOIS: *(Referring to the audience)* Well they might not. That first scene moved pretty fast. *(The MONKEY, standing behind IVAN, nods and grunts in agreement. IVAN sees the MONKEY for the first time and screams.)*

IVAN: Ah! Monkey! *(He makes large ballet leaps around the stage, trying to get away from the MONKEY. It imitates his ballet moves and follows him. We hear a rumbling sound as the ruins start to collapse.)*

NATASHA: *(Pulling him close)* Sidney, what is it?

SID: The ruins must be unstable. All that jumping around... *(They all act as if the ground is shaking.)*

NATASHA: *(To IVAN)* Quickly, take him!

ILLINOIS: Sid! *(We hear the sound of large objects crashing around them. NATASHA exits one direction while IVAN follows and drags SID behind. The MONKEY follows IVAN as ILLINOIS exits opposite. The lights go to black.)*

SCENE 3

(The jungle, near the Amazon river. ILLINOIS enters, dusty from the debris, and coughs.)

ILLINOIS: When I get my hands on that Countess... *(LOUISIANA JANE, ILLINOIS' older sister, enters. Where ILLINOIS is the Indiana Jones of the family, LOUISIANA is the Crocodile Dundee. She speaks with an Australian accent.)*

LOUISIANA: Hey kiddo, lose something?

ILLINOIS: Louisiana? What are you doing here?

LOUISIANA: Heard you were looking for the Oracle of Pachacamac.

ILLINOIS: So?

LOUISIANA: Thought I'd come lend a hand.

ILLINOIS: What, run out of tombs to loot?

LOUISIANA: It's called treasure hunting, Ill.

ILLINOIS: Don't call me that.

LOUISIANA: So did you get the map?

ILLINOIS: Of course! *(She takes it out.)* See?

LOUISIANA: *(Taking the map)* Good job, kiddo!

ILLINOIS: Thank you. *(She takes it back.)* Now if you'll excuse me, I need to find a way into the uncharted depths of the jungle.

LOUISIANA: All taken care of. *(DR. THADDEUS JANE enters carrying a large backpack. He is dressed impeccably in a suit and bow tie and exudes an air of confidence that can only be found in someone who believes he is the James Bond of the cartographic world.)*

ILLINOIS: *(To LOUISIANA)* You brought Dad? Why would you bring Dad?

LOUISIANA: Relax, kiddo, it'll be fun.

ILLINOIS: For you. You've always been his favorite. And since when do you have an Australian accent?

LOUISIANA: Six years in the Outback'll do that to ya.

ILLINOIS: Uh-huh. So how did you know where to find me?

THADDEUS: It was remarkable! I've never seen such a master tracker. That's my girl! We're sure to find that Oracle now.

ILLINOIS: Right, because I never would have found it on my own. *(To LOUISIANA)* See what I mean?

LOUISIANA: Admit it, you could use a little help.

ILLINOIS: I have help! I have a sidekick, don't I?

THADDEUS: Speaking of which, where is Mr. Knickerbock?

ILLINOIS: That's not the issue.

LOUISIANA: Got kidnapped by the villain, huh?

ILLINOIS: Shut up! Dad, tell her!

THADDEUS: Now girls, if we're going to make this a family adventure...

ILLINOIS: We're not! This is my adventure!

THADDEUS: Oh it'll be fun, Illinois, just like when you were kids.

ILLINOIS: *(Under her breath)* Yeah, mine's the only family that went searching for El Dorado for summer vacation.

LOUISIANA: Come on, it won't be so bad. *(THADDEUS and LOUISIANA lead ILLINOIS to the boat. The boat is represented by four acting blocks, two in front and two in back, which are the seats of the boat. All else is mimed and done with sound effects.)* Here we go!

THADDEUS: Isn't she a beauty?

ILLINOIS: Uh, yeah. Where did you get it?

LOUISIANA: Well, I've been in Peru awhile now, had some time to kill...

ILLINOIS: You *built* it?

THADDEUS: That's my girl!

ILLINOIS: Stop saying that!

THADDEUS: Now Illinois, don't be jealous.

ILLINOIS: Is there anything you don't do? *(They get in the "boat" and stow THADDEUS' backpack and any other gear.)*

LOUISIANA: Just play the hero. *(LOUISIANA gets into the pilot's seat.)*

ILLINOIS: I'm driving.

LOUISIANA: I don't think so.

ILLINOIS: I'm the heroine!

LOUISIANA: So?

THADDEUS: It is her boat, Illinois.

ILLINOIS: That is so not fair!

LOUISIANA: Is too.

ILLINOIS: Is not!

LOUISIANA: Is too!

ILLINOIS: Shut up!

THADDEUS: Girls...

LOUISIANA: Hey Dad, want to co-pilot?

THADDEUS: I'd be delighted. *(He sits in the front of the boat with LOUISIANA while ILLINOIS is forced to sit in the back.)*

ILLINOIS: I don't believe this. *(LOUISIANA starts up the boat and they all jolt as the "boat" starts moving.)*

THADDEUS: Cheer up, Illinois. We need you to navigate, after all. You did get the map, didn't you?

ILLINOIS: Yes! Without help, I might add. Except Sid's.

LOUISIANA: Yeah, what did happen to him?

ILLINOIS: Shut up!

THADDEUS: So where to?

ILLINOIS: *(Referring to the map)* We're here, just outside of Iquitos, Peru, and can take the river to the middle of the rainforest here. We'll have to go on foot from there. Just don't miss this turn.

LOUISIANA: 'Course not. *(Slight pause)* So Dad, tell us the story.

THADDEUS: *(Pleased)* Well... if you insist. Centuries ago the people of Pachacamac possessed a powerful Oracle which their priests hid deep in the rainforest. With its power to see the future, Pachacamac became a great empire. But when the emperor grew greedy and cruel the priests rebelled. They placed a curse on all the people of Pachacamac, the empire fell, and the Oracle was lost.

LOUISIANA: I love a good curse.

ILLINOIS: There's no such thing as curses. *(We hear the sound of machinegun fire.)* Woah! *(She looks behind them.)* The Countess! *(LOUISIANA and THADDEUS quickly mime buckling themselves in.)* We've got to lose them!

LOUISIANA: Hang on! *(LOUISIANA speeds up the boat and she and THADDEUS lean back. ILLINOIS almost falls out of her seat.)*

ILLINOIS: Wait, I'm not... *(LOUISIANA starts to steer the boat sharply back and forth. ILLINOIS stumbles around as the boat pitches from side to side.)* ...strapped in. You did that on purpose!

LOUISIANA: Did not!

ILLINOIS: Did too!

THADDEUS: Girls, this is hardly the time. *(We hear more gunfire.)*

ILLINOIS: *(To LOUISIANA)* That's it, move over. *(ILLINOIS tries to take the steering wheel.)*

LOUISIANA: No!

ILLINOIS: I'm the heroine!

LOUISIANA: It's my boat! *(They struggle for the wheel.)*

THADDEUS: *(Looking back)* Wasn't that where we were supposed to turn?

ILLINOIS: You missed the turn!

LOUISIANA: That was your fault.

ILLINOIS: Was not!

LOUISIANA: Was too!

ILLINOIS: Just give me the wheel. *(They continue to struggle for it.)*

THADDEUS: *(Still looking back)* Hm. They didn't miss the turn.

ILLINOIS: Louisiana, we need to turn around before... *(They all become aware of the growing sound of a waterfall and turn to face front.)*

LOUISIANA: Is that...?

THADDEUS: I'm afraid so.

EVERYONE: Waterfall!!!! *(The lights go to black and they all scream as the boat goes over the falls.)*

SCENE 4

(Deep in the Amazon rainforest. SID enters. As SID says his first line NATASHA enters, followed by IVAN who bounds onto stage. He is in turn followed by the MONKEY who imitates his ballet moves. The two villains strike a dramatic pose with the MONKEY in the background.)

SID: *(To himself)* "It's not like you're going to get kidnapped by the villain," she says. Sure, Dr. Jane.

NATASHA: Ivan, can you not taste of our victory?

IVAN: I can, Countess.

NATASHA: We have triumphed over the great Illinois Jane and the Oracle lies within our reach!

IVAN: Da!

SID: I don't think Dr. Jane is – *(NATASHA takes hold of SID and draws him close. The MONKEY pulls IVAN close, much to his surprise.)*

NATASHA: Sidney, with Dr. Jane gone nothing stands in the way of our being together.

SID: But I –

NATASHA: Say you will be mine and the world shall be yours.

SID: I'm really flattered, but...

IVAN: Perhaps I should... *(He and the MONKEY make themselves discreet.)*

SID: ...I'm one of the good guys, Natasha.

NATASHA: Must that keep us apart?

SID: I'm afraid so. Besides, Dr. Jane is fine. I saw her climb out of the river.

NATASHA: *(The villain again)* But of course she did. Once more she eludes my grasp and my victory is torn from me. Just as in...

SID: ...chapter 103, I know.

NATASHA: Da! But unlike Irinushka Nazarbayevna I shall not let such trials lead me to despair. Dr. Illinois Jane shall yet be destroyed!

SID: I really doubt that.

NATASHA: There are so many dangers in the jungle, Sidney. Who knows what Illinois Jane may yet encounter? *(She laughs villainously.)*

SID: Oh yeah? *(He puts up his fists.)* I'll stop you.

NATASHA: So loyal, how irresistible. But it breaks my heart to do this. *(She floors SID with one punch. By this point IVAN and the MONKEY are picking bugs out of each other's hair.)*

IVAN: I am most confused, Countess. Do you like him or do you not?

NATASHA: Take him, Ivan!

IVAN: Da, Countess!

(NATASHA exits. IVAN follows, dragging or carrying SID, and laughs. The MONKEY imitates his ballet leaping and laughter and follows. In another part of the jungle LOUISIANA enters followed by ILLINOIS and THADDEUS.)

THADDEUS: *(To ILLINOIS)* Did you see how she handled that puma? Remarkable!

ILLINOIS: I saw it, Dad. I also saw her take us over a waterfall.

THADDEUS: Yes. I'm sorry about your boat, Louisiana. Any chance we can salvage it? *(We hear a distant explosion.)*

LOUISIANA: Nope. *(She looks at the ground.)* Here, looks like they went that way.

THADDEUS: How can you tell?

LOUISIANA: Takes a master tracker to see the signs.

THADDEUS: Amazing! I can't see a thing.

ILLINOIS: Try looking at the footprints, Dad.

THADDEUS: Ah yes. Good show, Louisiana.

ILLINOIS: *(To LOUISIANA)* I don't like this. Don't you think it's just a little too easy to follow them?

LOUISIANA: Just 'cause you couldn't find the trail. Come on, Dad.

THADDEUS: You know, Louisiana, your mother would've been proud to see you now. She was always at home in the jungle.

LOUISIANA: Thanks, Dad. Hey Ill! (ILLINOIS *glares at her.*) Sorry. Try to keep up, huh? There're a lot of dangerous predators about.

ILLINOIS: I'm coming! (*She stomps ahead to catch up with LOUISIANA as the three of them trek through the jungle. THADDEUS soon lags slightly behind.*) So are you going to tell me what this is all about?

LOUISIANA: What do you mean?

ILLINOIS: You may play the heroic naturalist, but you never do anything unless there's something in it for you.

LOUISIANA: Give your big sister some credit, Illinois. Mom always wanted to find the Oracle. Think of how proud Dad'll be.

ILLINOIS: Uh-huh.

LOUISIANA: Sure, if you want the truth, I'm hoping we'll find some other artifacts of value. No harm in making a living, is there?

ILLINOIS: Anything we find goes in Dad's museum. This is my adventure, not one of your treasure hunting trips.

LOUISIANA: Have it your way, kiddo. (*Slight pause*) Do you think it really works?

ILLINOIS: What, the Oracle? Only one way to find out, isn't there? (*We hear the sound of a large snake slithering nearby as a shadow passes over the lights.*)

THADDEUS: What was that?

ILLINOIS: Probably just a sloth or something.

LOUISIANA: Ill, you're a great cartographer...

ILLINOIS: (*Exasperated*) Well thank you.

LOUISIANA: ...but no biologist. That was no sloth. That was an anaconda.

ILLINOIS: A snake.

LOUISIANA: It's not just a snake.

THADDEUS: It's not?

LOUISIANA: The anaconda is the biggest, baddest reptile on this continent. The name means "elephant killer." Your average anaconda is 15, maybe 20 feet long. But here,

in the deepest, darkest depths of the jungle they can get 40, 50, even 60 feet long. *(We again hear a slithering sound as a shadow passes over the lights.)*

ILLINOIS: So, big snake.

LOUISIANA: That's right. *(The slithering sound continues and grows closer.)*

THADDEUS: *(Nervously)* I wouldn't be too worried.

ILLINOIS: Why's that?

THADDEUS: I don't think they have the budget to put a 60-foot snake on stage. *(The snake appears: while it can be done invisibly, or through the use of shadows, the author encourages creativity in creating an actual snake. The cornier, the better.)* Do something, Louisiana!

ILLINOIS: Why her?

THADDEUS: Would you rather take care of it?

ILLINOIS: You don't think I can?

THADDEUS: I don't think this is really the time to discuss this.

LOUISIANA: Leave it to me, Dad.

ILLINOIS: Louisiana, you're not really going to tackle a 60-foot anaconda on your own, are you?

LOUISIANA: You bet. *(She tackles the snake and eventually pushes it offstage where we hear a struggle, then silence. Pause. LOUISIANA re-enters.)*

ILLINOIS: I don't believe it.

LOUISIANA: Believe it, kiddo.

THADDEUS: Did you see how she wrestled that snake?

ILLINOIS: Yes, Dad. And did you see how she led us right to it?

LOUISIANA: What are you talking about?

ILLINOIS: I told you it was too easy to follow the Countess. She wanted us to run into that snake.

THADDEUS: Do you think so?

ILLINOIS: I know so. I know how villains think.

LOUISIANA: Sure you do, Ill. Now come on, let's rescue that sidekick of yours.
(LOUISIANA *exits.*)

THADDEUS: You have to admit, that was something.

ILLINOIS: Look, Dad, she may be the world's best snake wrestler, but she doesn't know anything about taking down a villain. She led us right into a trap.

THADDEUS: And saved us from a giant snake. I'm sure you'll take care of the Countess, Illinois, but no one knows the jungle like Louisiana.

ILLINOIS: We'll see. Something about this doesn't feel right.

(ILLINOIS *and* THADDEUS *exit after* LOUISIANA. *Elsewhere in the jungle* NATASHA, SID, IVAN, *and the* MONKEY *all enter. The* MONKEY *continues to follow and imitate* IVAN.)

IVAN: You are a fool, sidekick.

SID: Oh yeah?

IVAN: Da. Mikhail Baryshnikov is not half the dancer of Vladimir Vasiliev. (*The* MONKEY *grunts in agreement.*)

SID: I don't know, Baryshnikov's performance in The Nutcracker was one of the greatest performances of modern times.

NATASHA: Enough! Must you talk of nothing but the ballet?

IVAN: But Countess, the ballet is the great icon of Russian culture.

SID: And the first performance of the Bolshoi Ballet dates back to the reign of Catherine the Great.

NATASHA: (*Surprised*) You know Russian history?

SID: My college major. I was always fascinated by Tsar Alexander the Second.

NATASHA: My favorite!

IVAN: A weak man with no sense of economic principles.

NATASHA: What do you know of it? *(She leads SID away from IVAN.)* Tell me, Sidney, have you ever been to Russia? *(IVAN and the MONKEY engage in elaborate warm-up routines in the background.)*

SID: No, we don't find many lost Russian maps.

NATASHA: Do you travel nowhere but with Illinois Jane?

SID: Believe me, it's enough.

NATASHA: The places I could show you.

SID: Look, Natasha, it's not that I don't think you're nice...

NATASHA: If only you were not the sidekick of my enemy.

SID: Yeah, well, what can you do.

NATASHA: But after I have defeated her... *(She pulls SID very close.)*

SID: *(Trying to pull away)* Let's just wait 'til then, shall we?

NATASHA: Speaking of which, this shall do nicely. *(SID looks around, unsure of what he's supposed to be seeing.)*

SID: It's a very nice mountain. *(The villain again, NATASHA pulls IVAN to one side so that SID cannot hear them.)*

NATASHA: Ivan, that boulder there. *(She points offstage.)* On my signal, the *échappés sautés*.

IVAN: I would have thought the *pas de basque* more appropriate...

NATASHA: Go!

IVAN: Come, my monkey friend! *(IVAN strikes a ballet pose and leaps offstage. The MONKEY imitates and leaps after him. In the meantime SID has been trying to slowly sneak away. But just before he is about to exit NATASHA pulls him back into an embrace.)*

NATASHA: Now it is just you and I. *(Throughout their moment together, the lights begin to slowly change to red.)*

SID: Great, uh, what's the next part of the villainous plan?

NATASHA: Must we discuss business? I would rather talk about us.

SID: This is starting to bear an uncanny resemblance to chapter 196.

NATASHA: I am flattered that you know my novel so well.

SID: Well you have been reciting it whenever we're not onstage. Look, Natasha, you're a very nice villain...

NATASHA: But you will be merely the sidekick once again? You could be so much more.

SID: You think so?

NATASHA: Do you think that I fall for every sidekick?

SID: I was starting to wonder...

NATASHA: You have a heroic nature, Sidney. So smart and brave, everything I have ever desired. Illinois Jane can never appreciate you as I can.

SID: Well...

NATASHA: To be the villain, it is a lonely life. How I have longed for someone to share it with.

SID: *(As he pulls himself away)* It would never work out. I mean, I could never be a villain.

NATASHA: Perhaps that is why I love you so, Sidney.

SID: Really?

NATASHA: So pure and incorruptible.

SID: Really?

NATASHA: So modest, so sweet and kind.

SID: *(Softening)* Yeah?

NATASHA: I see such potential in you, Sidney. *(By this point the lights have become noticeably red and for a moment it looks like they might kiss.)*

SID: Really?

NATASHA: It is too bad I must now feed you to the volcano.

SID: What? (*NATASHA seizes him and starts to drag him over to a rock which may or may not be invisible.*) Look, can we talk about this?

NATASHA: I am afraid not. Dr. Jane must not reach the Oracle. As sweet as you are, I need you as bait.

SID: (*Trying to break free*) Dr. Jane! Dr. Jane, it's a trap!

NATASHA: So loyal, I admire that. (*She gags SID.*)

SID: Mmpf! Mmhm! (*Angry, he continues to try and talk, but is incomprehensible. NATASHA starts to tie SID to the rock.*)

NATASHA: I am sorry it had to end this way, Sidney. I was growing quite fond of you. (*She kisses SID on the cheek. He sighs, then becomes angry again.*) And the same to you, my dear.

(*ILLINOIS, LOUISIANA and THADDEUS enter. THADDEUS is breathing heavily as they have just run up the volcano. By this point the MONKEY has snuck back onstage. As the following dialogue continues, the MONKEY starts to groom SID. SID, however, tries to communicate to it to remove his gag. The MONKEY instead runs off and returns with a banana which it offers SID. SID shakes his head angrily. The MONKEY shrugs and starts to eat the banana. SID is unable to get any further help from it and gives up.*)

ILLINOIS: Hand over my sidekick, Countess! (*ILLINOIS charges NATASHA who pulls out her gun.*)

THADDEUS: That's hardly sporting.

NATASHA: How good to see you, Dr. Jane. Trouble with your boat?

LOUISIANA: This is your arch-nemesis then, kiddo?

NATASHA: I do not believe I have had the pleasure.

ILLINOIS: My sister, Louisiana.

THADDEUS: (*Proudly*) Who just defeated a 60-foot anaconda.

NATASHA: And here I thought it would have such a nice dinner.

THADDEUS: You did lead us there on purpose!

NATASHA: But of course.

ILLINOIS: (*To LOUISIANA*) Told you.

LOUISIANA: Did not.

ILLINOIS: Did too!

LOUISIANA: So?

ILLINOIS: Give it up, Countess. There's no way off this mountain except past us.

NATASHA: You are the greatest cartographer, Illinois Jane...

ILLINOIS: That's right!

NATASHA: ...but clearly no geologist.

ILLINOIS: Meaning what?

NATASHA: Meaning this is no mountain. Ivan, the boulder, now!

IVAN: *(Offstage) Da, Countess! (We hear IVAN pushing a large boulder and then the sound of lava as it starts to flow. The lights grow an even deeper red.)*

NATASHA: Goodbye, Dr. Jane. So nice to have met your family. *(Dramatically)* Sidney, like Praskovya in chapter 534 I shall weep for you. Farewell! *(She exits in the same direction as IVAN, followed by the MONKEY.)*

SID: *(Still gagged)* Rohrer Wrain, mms ah mraph!

ILLINOIS: What? *(She removes SID's gag.)*

SID: It's a trap! *(The volcano rumbles.)*

ILLINOIS: Great, stuck on top of an active volcano. *(She unties SID from the rock.)*

LOUISIANA: The lava's got us cut off, kiddo.

ILLINOIS: What, no jungle wisdom to save us?

LOUISIANA: Oh is this my fault too now?

THADDEUS: Girls, now is not the time to argue.

ILLINOIS: *(To THADDEUS)* Just help me look for a way out of here!

SID: *(To LOUISIANA)* Uh, hi. Sid Knickerbock.

LOUISIANA: Louisiana Jane.

SID: More backstory?

LOUISIANA: That's right. So what's with you and the femme fatale?

SID: Wish I knew.

LOUISIANA: She's cute.

SID: Think so?

LOUISIANA: Sure. And she's got good taste.

ILLINOIS: Are you kidding me?!? *(The volcano rumbles and they all act as if the ground is shaking. They are forced to retreat into a smaller and smaller area as the lava pens them in.)*

THADDEUS: I think it's about to erupt.

LOUISIANA: So what's the plan, hero?

ILLINOIS: I'm working on it. If we just had a way to divert the lava flow...

THADDEUS: Such as? *(SID takes out a stick of "dynamite": a red tube with a fuse coming out. The others look at him in surprise.)*

SID: *(As he lights the "dynamite" and prepares to throw it)* "It's not like we're going to need dynamite to save ourselves from an erupting volcano," she says.

ILLINOIS: Well... how was I supposed to know! *(SID throws the "dynamite" offstage. Pause.)*

THADDEUS: That was anti-climatic. *(We hear the sound of an explosion.)*

LOUISIANA: Not bad, sidekick! *(The rumbling of the volcano grows louder and they all act as if the ground is shaking a lot.)*

THADDEUS: Perhaps we should...

ILLINOIS: Run!

(ILLINOIS, SID, LOUISIANA, and THADDEUS all run offstage and we hear the volcano as it erupts. The lights shift back to the jungle as NATASHA, IVAN, and the MONKEY enter.)

NATASHA: Oh Ivan, could there be any more dramatic story than this? To defeat my greatest enemy was I forced to sacrifice my one and only love to the volcano! *(She weeps dramatically on IVAN's shoulder. The MONKEY imitates and weeps on IVAN's other shoulder.)*

IVAN: There, there, Countess. You are better off without the sidekick. He had no understanding of the ballet.

NATASHA: I shall never think of the library the same again. And I shall always return my books on time. Oh, but what future could there have been? Can villain and hero ever truly love one another?

IVAN: *(After a slight pause to think about it)* No.

NATASHA: Have you no sense of romance, Ivan?

IVAN: No.

NATASHA: No wonder they kick you out of ballet. *(The MONKEY chatters angrily at NATASHA for insulting IVAN.)* What is *that* still doing here?

IVAN: *(Proudly)* The monkey, it is my protégé. *(He strikes a ballet pose which the MONKEY imitates perfectly.)*

NATASHA: How appropriate. *(They come to a thin, rickety "bridge" that spans a great chasm. Two ropes, stretching across the stage, could be used to mark the sides of the bridge, or it may be fully imaginary with the actors walking only on a thin strip of the stage. Focusing the lights on this area may also aid in the effect.)* Here, Ivan, we must cross this bridge.

IVAN: It does not look very strong, Countess.

NATASHA: Just do not do any of your foolish jumping. Now go!

(IVAN and the MONKEY nervously tiptoe across the bridge and exit. NATASHA begins to follow. ILLINOIS enters with SID, LOUISIANA, and THADDEUS.)

ILLIONIS: Hold it right there, Countess! *(She hops onto the bridge and they act as if it starts to sway back and forth.)*

LOUISIANA: I'd be careful there, Ill...

NATASHA: Illinois Jane! It seems even an active volcano cannot stop you. I am impressed.

SID: Actually, that was me.

NATASHA: But I should have known. My Sidney, always the clever one.

SID: *(Blushing)* Thanks.

ILLINOIS: Enough with the flattery. *(She puts up her fists.)* This is as close as you're going to get to the Oracle.

NATASHA: You have always sought to thwart my ambitions, Dr. Jane, but this time I shall not fail!

LOUISIANA: *(To ILLINOIS)* Tell me she's not going to launch into one of those cliché villain monologues.

ILLINOIS: Oh yeah.

NATASHA: When the Oracle is mine I shall at last achieve my great dream of abolishing all literature save the Russian novel.

THADDEUS: Oh dear.

NATASHA: The world has lost its appreciation for this most perfect form, caring only for literature's greatest flaw: the happy ending!

THADDEUS: *(To SID)* Is she aware this is a comedy?

NATASHA: It is only in tragedy, in suffering, that one finds meaning and in this the Russian novel excels above all others.

ILLINOIS: Look, I know what this is about. You want to publish that stupid novel of yours.

NATASHA: How dare you insult my life's work! When I rule the world, it shall be required reading at all universities.

SID: They won't have time for much else. *(By this point SID, LOUISIANA, and THADDEUS are also on the bridge.)*

ILLINOIS: That's not a fate I would wish on anyone. *(NATASHA prepares to fight ILLINOIS.)*

NATASHA: Sidney, you must go. I would not want anything to happen to you.

SID: I'm not going anywhere. *(He loses his balance and almost falls off the bridge.)*

ILLINOIS: Like you care what happens to him.

NATASHA: More than you can understand.

IVAN: *(Offstage)* Do not fear, Countess, I am coming! Feel the wrath of the *grand jeté!*

NATASHA: Ivan, no! *(IVAN and the MONKEY leap onto stage and onto the bridge. Pause as they all listen to the bridge creak dangerously.)*

IVAN: Borscht. *(There is a snapping sound and the lights go to black. Everyone screams as the bridge breaks and they all "fall.")*

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