

PLAYS FOR  
**New Audiences**

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

# *One Snowy Night*

by Charles Way

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Characters:

Nonni

Bjartur

Rosa

Titla

Gullbra

The Stag

The Ice Troll

The Fire Troll

*The play was originally written for a cast of four, plus an on stage musician who also takes the part of Gullbra.*

Note:

The play was inspired by a chapter in the famous Icelandic novel, 'Independent People' by Halldor Laxness, which describes a boy waking up in a lonely Icelandic croft, circa 1900. The setting for this play is the same but the story of One Snowy Night is my own. To acknowledge my debt to Mr. Laxness I have borrowed some of his character's names.

NOT LICENSED FOR PRODUCTION

Cast

Imagine this  
far across a northern sea  
an island is being born.  
imagine that.  
Out of the deep it rises  
like a troll  
roaring its unknown name.  
Volcanoes to the east  
Glaciers to the west.  
Ice and fire  
Ice and fire.  
Sometimes the fire  
rolls down the mountainside  
and on to the ice below- Oh  
imagine that.  
imagine this,  
far across a northern sea  
this island is growing up.  
In summer it never gets dark  
and in winter it never gets light.  
imagine that.  
imagine this.  
In the very heart of this island  
lies a valley covered all in snow.  
And in the valley is a tiny croft  
covered all in snow  
right up over the roof.  
imagine that.

Nonni

Imagine me  
a boy living in the croft  
covered all in snow  
and I'm thinking  
when will the day begin?  
When will father wake up?  
When will mother wake up?

## Part 1: Black Pan and Pot Stick

Nonni's mother Rosa is heavily pregnant. She is sleeping in a chair. She snores a little. Nonni's father Bjartur is asleep on the floor. He snores a lot. A little way from him is Titla the dog, also asleep.

Nonni                      Mother? Wake up. Wake up. (*She turns away.*) Father? (*He snores grumpily and turns away.*) Titla. Titla wake up. (*Titla growls lowly. Nonni sees a heavy black saucepan with a wooden spoon in it.*) Hey you Black pan wake up. And you pot stick, wake up. Wake up. Black pan, wake up. (*He shakes them. Nonni puts on the voices of the black pan and the pot stick.*)

Black Pan                What? What? What? What's going on?

Nonni                      It's time to wake up Black pan. And you too Pot stick.

Pot Stick                No no. Let me sleep Let me sleep.

Nonni                      Wake up. Wake up. Its nearly morning.

Black Pan                What do you want?

Nonni                      I want you Black pan and you Pot stick to do something for me.

Pot Stick                Is it dangerous?

Nonni                      Yes very dangerous.

Nonni makes the pot stick shake with fear.

Black Pan                Ha ha. Look at the got stick shaking with fear.

Pot Stick                Aren't you scared Black pan?

Black Pan                No. I'm not scared of anything

Nonni                      Good, because this is what you must do. You must wake up my mother---and my father. (*The Pan and stick look at each other then back*

*to Nonni.) All you have to do Pot stick, is to hit Black pan very hard several times and they'll wake up.*

Pot Stick I won't do it. I won't do it.

Nonni Why you, sniveling little pot stick, have you no courage? Stand up straight. There that's better. Are you ready?

Black Pan I'm ready.

Pot Stick I'm not.

*Nonni approaches his parents, but the pot stick begins to shake with fear.*

Pot Stick Wait, wait.

Nonni What now?

Pot Stick What if I break in two?

Nonni You won't- don't be stupid. Come. Come.

*Nonni approaches again and is about to hit the stick against the pan.*

Pot Stick Wait wait.

Nonni What now?

Pot Stick What if they get angry and throw me away?

Nonni You are a useless stupid stick- what are you?

Pot Stick A useless stupid stick. (*Nonni sits down angry with himself.*) But at least I'm not in trouble.

Nonni That's right- we're not in trouble.

Black Pan What's wrong with trouble- I like trouble

Nonni                    You? That's because you never think , you just rush in like an idiot.  
Mother needs her sleep.

Black Pan              Why?

Nonni                    I told you yesterday, she's going to have a baby. Can't you  
remember anything?

Black Pan              I'm a black pan, I don't have a memory.

Nonni                    No- you just have a big hole where your brain should be. [Pause]  
She's going to have a baby and this morning she's going to the farm  
at Rauthsmyri , 'just in case'.

Black Pan              Are you going?

Nonni                    No, they're leaving me behind as usual.

Black Pan              Why?

*Nonni shrugs.*

Pot Stick                I know. I do-Your mother and father don't care about you anymore.  
That's just obvious.

Nonni                    That's right, that's right, that's right.

*In a sudden fit of temper he bangs the pot stick against the black pan. The others now wake up.  
Bjartur sits up straight as if he's been shot. Rosa comes forward sharply and stops Nonni.*

Rosa                     Nonni? What are you doing making such a din?

Nonni I                    t wasn't me-it was them. They made me.

Rosa.                     Oh- I see. They made you.

*Bjartur falls back asleep never really having woken up. Titla growls and relaxes.*

Rosa                   What's the matter Nonni- can't you sleep? (*He shakes his head.*) Not like your father hey? He could sleep through the end of the world. Why can't you sleep? (*He shrugs. Rosa groans suddenly in pain.*)

Nonni                   What's the matter?

Rosa                   Don't be frightened-its only a little- ooh- uncomfortable. Now go back to sleep.

Nonni                   How can I sleep with Father snoring like that?

*Rosa goes to Bjartur and gives him a kick. He stops snoring.*

Rosa                   Don't you try that.

Nonni                   You were snoring just as loud.

Rosa                   That's right. Snoring for two. Oh what a scowl ? What is it Nonni? Tell me.

Nonni                   I don't want you to go to Rauthsmyri. I want you to stay here with me.

Rosa                   Nonni, when you were born I was very ill. There was no doctor for miles . This time I go to Rauthsmyri, there's a doctor there. Just in case.

Nonni                   Why doesn't the doctor come here?

Rosa                   Poor people travel to see the doctor, the doctor travels to see the rich people. That's how it works.

Nonni                   Its not fair, it's not fair.

Rosa                   Oh there's that scowl again. It makes you look like a troll, scowling and stamping his foot.

Nonni                   There's no such things as trolls.

Rosa                   [*With mock anger*] How dare you say such a thing.

Nonni Father says there are no trolls.

Rosa How would he know Hey? He sees only sheep. I have seen a troll with my own eyes.

Nonni Where?

Rosa Far from here- on the Glacier at Skaftellsjokul. Oh yes.

Nonni What kind of troll?

Rosa A strange creature- with white hands and cold eyes. He lives on the glacier, but he calls it , 'The Ice river'. Trolls have different names for everything.

Nonni Why?

Rosa Who knows- they're Trolls. Come -sit by me. Sit. I will tell you all about them. This Ice Troll, he has a brother.

Nonni A brother?

Rosa Who lives on the lip of the volcano at Helka. Never have two brothers been so different. One is made of ice and the other made of fire sometimes- they meet and fight. Oh you should see what happens then-ice and fire, ice and fire-

Nonni Mother! You think I can't tell your just changing the subject.

Rosa Oh ,was I? I thought a story might help you sleep. *[Pause]* Nonni- when I come back from Rauthsmyri- you'll have a little brother- or sister and if you wake up early -like today you can talk to them. Oh yes, you won't have to talk to pots and sticks ever again.

Nonni I don't talk to pots and sticks.

Rosa Oh no?

Nonni No!



Rosa Oh there's that troll again.

Nonni Stop talking about trolls.

Rosa Well I saw you chatting to the black pan and the pot stick -Oh what a conversation.

Nonni [*Angrily*] I don't talk to them---they talk to me.

Rosa Ah. And what do they say?

Nonni Its a secret.

Rosa Would you like to tell your mother what kind of secret?

Nonni A secret they overheard in the cow shed.

Rosa Yesterday?

Nonni [*Nods*] They overheard you talking to father. You said I was too young to stay in the croft all alone. What if something went wrong, you said and I was left here for weeks all alone and you were crying and called Father names and tried to hit him with a bucket.

Rosa You know what your Father is like. A big lump of rock. You can't change the mind of a rock. I've been trying for years. It's useless. But he is strong too-as a rock must be in a land as harsh as this.

Nonni If you leave me here, I'll never speak to you again-ever.

Rosa Don't say such things Nonni. Are you trying to upset me? What? Now you won't talk to me-ever? Look at you-like a little lump of ice. Well I know how you feel but all the same I must go to Rauthsmyri.

Nonni If it wasn't for the stupid baby you wouldn't have to go anywhere.

Rosa Ha, there's the Troll again, or is that his brother?

Nonni I told you, stop talking about Trolls -I don't like them. I don't like them.

Rosa Nonni- stop- stop. Everything will be alright, I know. I know. Truly I know.

Nonni How do you know?

Rosa Because I can see into the future.

Nonni Can you really?

Rosa Oh yes, most women can. For instance, in one moment your father will wake up. There. And I shall tell you what he'll do next. Next he will yawn, like so. Then he will scratch. There we are. Now he will clear his throat, spit, pull up his trousers. You see, the future is easy to read.

Nonni But he always does that.

Rosa Which just goes to prove that the past and the future are exactly the same thing, you understand?

Nonni No.

Bjartur Has winter gone?

Rosa Not yet.

Bjartur By the time we get back from Rauthsmyri winter will be gone.

Rosa Oh I see, now you control the weather as well.

Bjartur Come we must get ready to leave while there is still ice for the sledge to run on. Titla.

Titla Yes master.

Bjartur Ha- get ready for a nice long walk hey.

**PURCHASE PERUSAL FOR FULL SCRIPT**