

The Last Varix
A Play in One Act
by
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CHARACTER NAME

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

AGE

GENDER

SCENE 1

Lights up on a small, weathered village. The buildings are old, crumbling and sagging, with glistening webs stretched between all it's tallest structures. TOBIAS (12), stands in the village square, observing the webs. CELIA (Late 30's), Tobias's mother, and REID (Early 20's), Tobias's older brother, stand behind him.

TOBIAS

Why does it keep coming back?

He reaches up to touch one of the webs.
Celia swats his hand away.

CELIA

It's not our place to know why it's here. Let the men handle it.

TOBIAS

The men won't handle it. They never do.

CELIA

Hold your tongue, boy. Don't disrespect your brother-

TOBIAS

But why is it here? What does it want?

CELIA

It's just a creature - like any other. It's in it's nature to weave webs-

REID

Do not *lie* to him. He is a child, not a fool.

CELIA

I am not lying to him. I simply don't share your *vulgar* beliefs.

REID

(to his brother, hushed)

You may call it vulgar, but it's the truth.

Tobias, listen to me, it seeks to ensnare us. When the skies unleash their fury and the waters rise once more, children like you--drenched and shivering--will stumble through the flooded streets, only to be caught in its webs. Then, the Varix will ascend from its den and claim them-

CELIA

Enough! Do not fill his head with such tales. The Varix is but a legend.

REID

It is not. I've seen it.

CELIA

You've a cruel sense of jest Reid. Do the village boys not torment him enough?

REID

I'd rather he be teased than dead.

A bell tolls in the distance, beckoning the villagers to the square.

REID

Though he may be dead soon either way.

CELIA

What darkness! I did not create this in you!

REID

It is reality.

CELIA

It is madness!

REID

You think shielding him will spare him? The Varix cares not for your hopes. Only hungers for children-

CELIA

(voice steady, but trembling slightly)

Reid, heed my words, and heed them well. I want no more of your darkness. He will *not* be chosen. If they dare pull his name from that lottery, *the Varix will face a fate more terrible than itself.*

Celia pulls Tobias into her side, protectively.

CELIA

Come, Tobias. Lets go.

(As they walk off, the lights begin to dim, and we are enveloped in pitch black. Silence blankets us for a moment until suddenly- a blood-curdling scream pierces the darkness. It's Celia's voice, filled with raw terror)

SCENE 2

(The lights SNAP back on, illuminating the town square where the ELDER stands, expression grim. TOBIAS is at the center, eyes wide with shock as he is marked.)

CELIA

But why must it be a child?!

ELDER

No one would wish this burden upon you, but the Varix demands youth - innocence. It has always sought untested strength.

CELIA

And what of a woman's strength? I have never seen battle, never been called to the hunt. Surely there is untested strength there! Surely, I can face what he cannot!

ELDER

You will fulfill the duty the village has given you—

CELIA

And watch my child die? That is not a duty I am willing to accept!

ELDER

Celia, there is honor in sacrifice—

CELIA

To hell with the honor of sacrifice! For it to mean anything, it must be willingly given!

ELDER

The Varix cares not for what is willingly given, only for what it is owed.

CELIA

It is a beast! It does not know what it is owed!

ELDER

It is tradition-

CELIA

It is slaughter!

ELDER

If the Varix claims him, he will be honored greatly-

CELIA

The Varix *will not* claim him! My son will not be a name I whisper in grief! I let it be so when it was my husband, when you preached of *honor*, because he was a man, and it was his choice to make. But Tobias is a child! If I must teach him of sacrifice, then let it be my own! Let me go to the Varix tonight. Let me plead with the creature, and if it remains unyielding, let me destroy it. Let me carve it apart!

ELDER

It matters little to me if you tempt fate with the Varix, but mark my words: you will fail. You have until dawn. If you do not return, *we send your boy.*

(At the Elders threat, the stage plumets into darkness, and fills with the sound of rustling leaves and cicadas.)

SCENE 3

(As the lights flicker back on, we find ourselves in a cluttered kitchen, strewn with tools, fabric, and weapons. REID stands at the table beside CELIA, his face drawn with concern, but his hands steady as he sorts through the items.)

He hands Celia a shotgun.

REID

Take the gun, but do not use it.

CELIA

I will have to-

REID

If you do, you will not return. You're an adult. It may toy with the young, give them a chance to survive—but with adults? It will not hesitate, especially if you threaten it. If you want to survive, you will have to barter with it. Outsmart it.

CELIA

But I have promised to kill the beast-

REID

I don't care what you've promised. You will not be able to kill it-

CELIA

But what if I can-

REID

You can't-

CELIA

Reid, the winter has taken it's toll. I'm thin, weak...

REID

Exactly! This is not a fight for the weary! You simply cannot—

CELIA

But if I become what it craves, maybe it will underestimate me. If I hack off what's left of my hair, how should it know the difference?

REID

You're speaking of deceiving something ancient, incomprehensible. You think it can't tell the difference between a woman and a child?

CELIA

I think I can make it doubt!

REID

It is not some mindless creature! It's old. Cunning. *And it can take any form.*

CELIA

Any form?

REID

When you confront it, it may wear the face of Tobias, or even mine. When I first saw the Varix, it took the shape of father. You haven't seen him since we buried him, but I've seen him in the woods, lingering between the trees...

As REID speaks, the world darkens, revealing a shadowy figure peeking through the trees. For a moment, we are there with him, in the memory—surrounded by phantoms and chills, accompanied by the vacuous howl of the wind.

And then, it is gone, and in its place:
CELIA.

CELIA

(voice trembling)

I will carve through each of its faces with the rage of a thousand mothers; *I will not let a beast take my child.*

In one swift motion, CELIA slices off her hair, and shoulders the shotgun.

The lights dim further, and the world transitions, enveloping her in shadow as she takes her first steps into the woods.

Time passes as she is caught on branches, stumbling through the woods.

Finally she reaches a clearing and there it is: the Varix's Den, a gaping maw of twisted roots and damp earth.

VARIX

(booming, disembodied)

You tread lightly, but it matters not. I see you, child.

His voice seems to ricochet off of unseen walls, distorting all around Celia.

VARIX

You were foolish to come here.

CELIA

(voice trembling)

Foolish or not, I still stand before you. Does that not count for something?

VARIX

It counts for nothing. Courage born of ignorance is no virtue.

CELIA

Maybe I am ignorant. But I am not here to prove virtue.

Celia treads closer, grasping the shotgun.

VARIX

Oh? Are you here to slay me? You move with too much certainty, *woman*.

CELIA

You leave me no choice.

VARIX

I did not compel you to come here. It is your dear elders who have stripped you of your choice--

CELIA

(hoarse, hateful)

Only because you demand a sacrifice of my son to satiate your hunger!

VARIX

A sacrifice? Oh, how distasteful! You pitiful, frail creature!

CELIA

Pitiful?

VARIX

Yes! Your human minds are so dreadfully limited! It's almost childish. You take everything you don't understand and weave it into legend!

CELIA

Can you blame us? You are a thing of nightmares! You spin your webs to ensnare our children! You wear the faces of our fallen loved ones-

VARIX

And would you prefer my true form, Celia? Would you like for me to shed this mask of flesh? See the tendrils curl out of my spine? Smell the putrid decay of my age? Would you like to hear my real voice...

The Varix's voice fractures, splintering into two unnatural tones—one shrill and piercing, and the other a guttural, bone-rattling growl. Celia staggers backward, instinctively recoiling.

VARIX

(returning to his normal voice)

No, I did not think so. It is too much for your *pitiful* minds to comprehend. So instead I wear your human faces.

CELIA

And slaughter our children!

VARIX

Ah, yes! The terrible, wicked Varix, devouring children! Oh, how I wish I let your cities drown, you foul-mouthed cretin!

CELIA

How dare you stand there and act as if you do not revel and delight in our homes filling with water!

VARIX

I do not revel in your suffering! Have you ever thought that maybe I am not some incomprehensible horror, but a creature of flesh and blood, just like you?

CELIA

Only when I envisioned the pleasure of slaying you!

VARIX

Of slaying me? For what crime!

CELIA

You crave sacrifice, youth-

VARIX

I do not crave youth! I do not crave anything! I am old, and alone, and the very last of my kind! I have outlived my own people, a *kind* people, and you treat me as if I am some ancient beast! Do you have any idea what that is like? One day, you wake up, and it is *eternity*. You must watch the world turn without the ones you love, and no matter how long you suffer, your body will not die. It is too resistant, too relentless, too sturdy for a life it longs to escape! Celia, I watch your cities crumble with every storm, and it takes all my strength to crawl out from my den and reinforce your godforsaken homes! And yet, you have the audacity to send children to slay me? I despise your kind! By all the gods, I wish I could be indifferent to your suffering, but every year, I hear your children scream when the waters rise, and I cannot bear it!

CELIA

That is what you have been doing... all this time...

VARIX

(softly, wearily)

Yes. I do not feast on your children. I save them. I hold back the storms, and mend the earth beneath your feet. And yet, you hunt me like a monster, and I am forced to defend myself.

CELIA

(voice cracking)

Then why the sacrifices? Why the fear?

VARIX

Ask your people. Fear is easier than the truth. An apathetic world is much scarier than a monster, Celia. I have no hunger for your kind. But you will never stop fearing me, *and I will never stop protecting you.*

Celia lowers her shotgun, tears forming in her eyes. She tentatively reaches out her hand to touch the Varix. Slowly, afraid, she wraps her arms around him. The Varix stiffens, shocked, then slowly, his arms come up to embrace her. Slowly, the lights dim, enveloping them in black.

END OF PLAY