

LENA PASSES BY (EXCERPT)  
By Amanda L. Andrei

CAST OF CHARACTERS

**THE BALA FAMILY**

<u>LENA BALA:</u>	23 years old, female, Filipina Romanian American
<u>LUPU BALA:</u>	Mid-50s, male, Romanian by birth, American by choice. Lena's father
<u>AUNTIE URSA:</u>	Early-50s, female, Romanian. Lena's aunt, Lupu's sister
<u>PÂCALĂ:</u>	Late 20s, male, Romanian. Cousin of Lupu and Ursa
<u>TÂNDALĂ:</u>	Late 20s, male, Romanian. Cousin of Lupu and Ursa
<u>CORNELIU BALA:</u>	Mid-50s, male, Romanian. Grandfather of Lena, father of Lupu and Ursa
<u>TRIANTAFILLA BALA:</u>	Early-50s, female, Romanian. Grandmother of Lena, mother of Lupu and Ursa
<u>YOUNGER LUPU:</u>	Late 20s, male, Romanian

**THE SPIRITS**

<u>DIAVOL DOI:</u>	A handsome devil. One of Lena's spirit guides
<u>CURIOASA:</u>	A woodpecker woman. One of Lena's spirit guides
<u>DIAVOL UNU:</u>	A devil. Trickster buddy of Diavol Doi
<u>OFFICER:</u>	A secret police officer
<u>WOLF/MAN:</u>	Corneliu's other form
<u>WOLVES:</u>	Ancestors - past, present, and future

The following roles are double-cast:  
LUPU BALA / CORNELIU BALA / WOLF/MAN  
AUNTIE URSA / CURIOASA / TRIANTAFILLA  
DIAVOL DOI / PÂCALĂ / OFFICER  
DIAVOL UNU / TÂNDALĂ / YOUNGER LUPU  
WOLVES to be played by all actors

Place

America - Lena and Lupu's house  
Romania - A rented flat, Pâcală and Tândală's house, a bizarro church, a trail, the Gilort river, Corneliu's house

Time

Now

PROLOGUE / PROLOG

*Complete darkness.*

VOICE (LENA'S)

*(singing "Trece un nouraș pes us" [[A little  
cloud in the sky passes by]])*

Foaie verde de-un harbuz  
Shy-rye-ra  
Foaie verde de-un harbuz  
Trece-un nouraș pe sus  
Da da da da, la la la la, lye la...  
Da da da da, la la la la, lye la...

[[Melon's green leaf  
Shy-rye-ra  
Melon's green leaf  
A little cloud in the sky passes by  
da da da da, la la la la, lye la...  
Da da da da, la la la la, lye la...]]

VOICES (LENA AND OTHERS)

*(singing)*

Nu știu-i ploaie ori ninsoare,  
Shy-rye-ra  
Nu știu-i ploaie ori ninsoare,  
Ori lacrimi de fată mare  
Da da da da, la la la la, lye la

[[This is to be your sin, my dear  
Shy-rye-ra  
This is to be your sin, my dear  
For you loved me and then you left me.  
Da da da da, la la la la, lye la.]]

VOICE (LENA)

*(singing)*

Da da da da, la la la la, lye la...  
Da da da da, la la la la, lye la...

*Silence.*

The Story of Our Hero / Povestea Fata Frumoasa

*Lights.*

*Curioasa, a woodpecker, and Diavol Doi, a demon, peer at and acknowledge the audience.*

*Clothed in red, white, and black with abstract geometric designs of rosettes, suns, and serpents, they look like Romanian village mummers, something like the brezaia, turca, or capra, all masked and textured with goatskin, sheepskin, linen rags, feathers, ready to parade through the streets worshipping Dionysus or Christ.*

DIAVOL DOI

It happened once upon a time...

CURIOASA

Diavol, no -

DIAVOL DOI

Curioasa, what do you mean, NO -

CURIOASA

*(re: theatre)*

Look where we are. It's not in the past, it's happening NOW.

DIAVOL DOI

Ahhhh, woman...! Bună [[Okay]], it happens once upon a time...

CURIOASA

For if it had never happened, how could it be told?

*Diavol Doi gives her a look. Curioasa shakes her tail feathers.*

CURIOASA (CONT'D)

In that time, a bird could sign her name on the wall.

DIAVOL DOI

A bigger liar he who doesn't trust me at all.

*Lights on Lena and Lupu's American house: a hallway with two rooms.*

*Throughout Diavol Doi and Curioasa's conversation, Lena works in her room: cleaning up and freshening her altar, blending teas.*

*Her father, Lupu, reads in bed next door. Occasionally, he tries to exercise, but he is clearly not in the greatest health.*

*Lena checks on Lupu, offering him tea and food. They eat and laugh together. He shows her the books. She corrects his exercise poses.*

*Anytime Lupu has the urge to smoke, he does it out of Lena's sight. If she comes in, he hides the cigarette.*

*They look at her altar together.*

DIAVOL DOI (CONT'D)

There was a girl, a woman, our hero -

CURIOASA

Our little pirpiruna, named by her archipelago mother -

DIAVOL DOI

And her Danubian plain father -

CURIOASA

Two souls who met in the city of Bucharest

DIAVOL DOI

A winding city with roads that rise like tombstones

CURIOASA

In a country that can be wounded, but never killed

DIAVOL DOI

A land where there is more past than present or future

CURIOASA AND DIAVOL DOI

*(whispering, overlapping, getting slightly louder)*

Romania Romania Romania Romania Romania Romania Romania Romania  
Romania Romania Romania Romania

CURIOASA

And so the girl's mother traveled from her native Philippines -

DIAVOL DOI

Another crossroads in itself -

CURIOASA

To find her fortune in a land of wolves, secrets -

DIAVOL DOI

A land of impalers, occupations, people you cannot kill -

CURIOASA

And met her husband-to-be in his native city. What wolves and trials they faced! The bitterness of winter, the duplicity of family, the great heights of despair -

DIAVOL DOI

Oh, is this her story, or theirs?

CURIOASA

It is all intertwined, my friend.

DIAVOL DOI

Until they escaped to America, and made a life on the edges of a new city, and they had a daughter, and they named her -

LUPU

Lena!

DIAVOL DOI

a compromise of sorts -

CURIOSA

for her mother wanted her Linaw, meaning clarity or clearness, as of a mirror, liquid, vision, eyes, speech,

DIAVOL DOI

but her father wanted her

CURIOASA

Ileana, after Ileana Cosânzeana, our country's other fairy tale hero, beautiful and bold -

DIAVOL DOI

But their American doctor could never pronounce it, and their American co-workers looked puzzled, and their American neighbors shrugged their shoulders -

CURIOASA

And so they settled on Lena, though her mother, until she disappeared, called her Ligayang Linaw, "Happy Clarity"

DIAVOL DOI

and her father still called her

LUPU

Lenuța, my dear little Ileana.

*Lena goes to her father.*

CURIOSA

And with the meaning of her last name - in her mother's homeland

DIAVOL AND CURIOSA

Bullet!

DIAVOL DOI

and in her father's

DIAVOL DOI AND CURIOSA

Monster!

CURIOSA

one syllable away from

DIAVOL DOI

dragon and beast.

CURIOASA

These meanings and all others she tattooed on her brown white golden dark light glowing skin, for she is a -

DIAVOL DOI AND CURIOASA

*(whispering, overlapping)*

Crossroads confluence crossroads confluence crossroads  
confluence crossroads confluence

CURIOASA

And to find your ancestors is to find yourself.

DIAVOL DOI

To heal your ancestors is to heal yourself.

*By this time, Lupu is back in his bed. He seems sicker than before.*

CURIOASA

And as painful as it might be, and as hard as she might try to escape it -

DIAVOL DOI

The past is reaching for her.

CURIOASA

And when the past reaches for you -

DIAVOL DOI

You don't always survive.

CURIOASA

Because one day, something in his blood caught up to him, and her father fell gravely ill.

*Curiosa and Diavol step back.*

LUPU

I have fallen gravely ill.

LENA

Papa? Oh my God, Papa? What is it now?

*Lupu coughs violently. Lena goes to him.*

LENA (CONT'D)

Papa? Papa? Here, drink some water.  
It's from all your smoking, isn't it? I told you it would catch up to you one day.  
Two stents in your heart and you still can't stop.

*Lupu lights a cigarette. Lena snatches it away.*

LUPU

Hey! Dictator!

LENA

Papa, please. You're sick.

LUPU

Don't worry about me, Lenuța, I'm...

*He falls asleep. Loudly.*

LENA

Oh, Mama.

*Wind blows against the house.*

LENA

I wish you were here.

LUPU

*(waking up)*

I'm dying, Lena.

LENA

No, Papa, you just fell asleep -

LUPU

Same thing -

LENA

Let's get you some fresh clothes.

LUPU

I can do it myself.

*Lupu changes out of his shirt. Lena brings him a new one, then stops short. Lupu's body is covered in bruises and has patches of fur sprouting up. He coughs - it turns into a growl - then back into a cough.*

LENA

Oh my god, Papa...

LUPU

What?

LENA

Your back... your arms... there's red bruises all over...

*Lupu inspects himself.*

LENA

And... and... fur?

*Lupu lies down.*

LUPU

It's happening.

LENA

What's happening?

LUPU

They're finally catching up to me. My heart problems.

LENA

You've got FUR..

LUPU

Pah, stray hairs.

LENA

This is more than heart problems. I think... I think...

LENA AND DIAVOL DOI

It's ancestral.

LUPU

Ancestral? What do you mean?

LENA

It feels like... like if I look at these wounds hard enough, I see all our family who went before you - before us - whether peasant or king, warrior or thief -

LUPU

And so they want me back, so I'm turning into a wolf?

LENA

*(laughing)*

That's ridiculous.

*Lupu doesn't laugh.*

LENA (CONT'D)

Right? It's ridiculous.

LUPU

Lena, I'm dying.

LENA

No!

*A rumble of thunder.*

LUPU

Control yourself. First your mother with her wind, then you with your thunder... This is part of life, Lena. I must accept it.

LENA

I haven't found Mama yet. You can't die if our family's incomplete -

LUPU

Oh, Lena...

LENA

I put up the altar every night. I clean it, I put fresh flowers on it, I even put sweets even though I wonder if you're supposed to do that for a diabetic? I need to check with my curanderas...

LUPU

She's gone her own way...

LENA

We don't know if she's dead, or kidnapped, or - or -

LUPU

Vanished of her own free will?

LENA

But I feel her! Even though she's gone, the wind carries echoes of her voice - and why else am I training to be a healer if not to find her, Papa?

LUPU

You and your healer friends... all those acupuncturists and curanderas... when are you going to reapply to medical school?

LENA

Papa, you have FUR on your body. You think med school is going to solve that? You think that's some normal disease?

LUPU

Let her be, Lena. Let her come to you when the time is right.

LENA

Stop changing the subject -

LUPU

You think this fur, these bruises, have something to do with your mother disappearing?