THE HARE AND THE HAWK

A Draft Opera Libretto by

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CHARACTERS:

TOOTH: young male Snowshoe Hare, tenor

RED: mature female Northern Goshawk, alto

FOUR PINE TREES, soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, and baritone

NARRATOR

TIME & PLACE:

The present. A forest in the north.
THE HARE AND THE HAWK

(We hear piercing screeches against distressed high-pitched cries.)

(Silence.)

(Fade in sounds of rustling wind through trees, bird calls, sandpapery whir of insects.)

NARRATOR
Our story begins moments after a northern goshawk named Red killed Tooth’s mother, a snowshoe hare. This only days after she killed Tooth’s father. The young hare was now alone, too terrified to leave his hiding place.

TOOTH
Red ate my parents,
father first, mother next.
She only left their loving heads!
My pain is quite complex.
I miss my mom so much…
I wish that I were dead!

NARRATOR
The hare was called Tooth because instead of two front teeth, he had only one extra long tooth. Other hares teased him. But Tooth learned to use this slight deformity to carve objects out of wood such as leaves, flowers, and clouds. Red got her name because of her deep red eyes.

THE WILL OF NATURE

TOOTH
My mother told me, Tooth,
it’s not the fault of hawks,
it’s the will of nature.
I said, Mom, if that’s true,
the will of nature is too cruel.
The will of nature is too cold.
If that’s the will of nature
I have no future in nature.

NARRATOR
Here’s an example of “nature”: The goshawk is the fiercest of all birds of prey. They hunt not just for food but for the sheer thrill. When this hawk captures her hare, she starts eating, while it’s still alive. Shocking? Blame nature. That is how goshawks kill.
UNSTOPPABLE

RED
I’m relentless, unstoppable!
I’m furious and enraged!
Failure’s never an option.
I’m fiercely engaged!

NARRATOR
Red’s hunting was so unstoppable
she had decimated the hares in the forest.
But she was slow to notice that --

RED
With short wings and long tail
I can sail, I can sail,
maneuvering around
low over ground,
without a flap, without a sound
silent and deadly as death!

NARRATOR
Awesome hunter she was but slow to notice –

RED
Slash in a flash!
Can’t dash from my grasp!
It’s past your last gasp!

NARRATOR
Red was SLOW to notice –!

RED
What! Me? SLOW!

NARRATOR
Until some pine trees passed her the word.

PINE TREES
Red… Do you knnooooww?

RED
Know what?!

PINE TREES
Tooooooth… Tooooooth…is the laaassssttt.
He’s the laaaassssttt…. the very laaaassssttt.
RED
Last WHAT?

TREES
The laaassssttt… maaaalllle haaarrre.

RED
So what?

TREES
When Toooooth goessssss, aaall haaarrres gooooooo.

NARRATOR
Red faced a dilemma. Which was this:
Nature being nature… if she kills the last male snowshoe hare, then…

HOW CAN I STOP?

RED
There would be no hares at all
when I finally eat them all.
How can I stop eating more?
How do I stop being me?
I’m a goshawk! A goshawk! Ki-ki!
Anyone with eyes can see.
Not hunt a hare? KI-KI!!
An impossibility!

NARRATOR
The last male hare in the forest remained in hiding.

WHAT CHANCE HAS A HARE?

TOOTH
I haven’t been out in days,
since Red took Mom away.
I’m afraid and alone.
No friends, no home.
Nature is wicked and cruel.
A killer of hares now rules.
What chance do I have?
What chance has a hare
with no friends and a home?
Why, why should I care?
MY MOTHER’S EARS

NARRATOR
In his grief Tooth carved dozens of objects from wood.
But they were all the same image: his mother’s ears,

TOOTH
I carved another ear of Mom.
I think it’s the finest one.
The wood is smooth and hard.
Love steered my tooth as I carved.
I miss you, Mom, so very much.
I miss your smell and caressing touch.

NARRATOR
Red stopped hunting hares for a week but…

SICK OF BITS

RED
I’m sick of insects, birds, and snakes!
I’m sick of all the bits it takes
to make a filling meal!
I know what I’d like to kill –
really, really want to kill.
A meal that would be a thrill.
Not birds, or snakes, that never fill.
A snowshoe hare would fit the bill.

NARRATOR
Red had enough – or not enough.
Soon the entire forest knew – except Tooth.

YOUNG PINE
Tooooothhh… Tooooothhh… Tooooothhh…

TOOTH
Is someone calling my name?
Or just the wind whistling, all the same.

YOUNG PINE TREE
Tooooothhh… Tooooothhh… beee affrrraaaiiid.

TOOTH
It’s a pine too small for big.
Why afraid, slender young twig?
YOUNG PINE TREE
Reeeedd… Reeeedd…..
Coming for youuuuuuu… only youuuuuuu!
Ruuunnnnn faaarrrr, faaaarrrr awwaaayy
before morming deeeewww.

TOOTH
Thanks for the warning, twig.
But I’m not leaving, dig?

NARRATOR
The forest was divided. The oldest pines rooted for Red, who respected and feared her raw power.

OLD PINE TREES
Weee wiiishhhh… Weee wiiishhhh… yooouu luck.
Weee wiiishhh… Weee wiiishhh… yooouu luck.
Weee wiiishhhh… Weee wiiishhhhh –

RED
Shut up old barks!
If I don’t find Tooth
you’ll soon see sparks!
Talons filled with embers
from a fresh campfire.
You’ll burn quick, old barks are drier.

NARRATOR
The young pines rooted for the kind, gentle hare.
But kindness would not help Tooth.
Speed and guile were needed now.
The hunt was on!

THE HUNT

TOOTH
I’m quick, fast, and nimble!

RED
I’m relentless, unstoppable!

TOOTH
My leap is untoppable!
I can twist, turn, accelerate!
Watch me flip, flop, somersault!
RED
Slash in a flash!
Can’t dash from my grasp!
It’s past your last gasp!
There’s no chance to last!

TOOTH
My white fur disappears in snow.
I’m safe ‘til it’s time to – GO! GO! GO!

RED
When my talons dig deep
you’ve made your last leap.

TOOTH
She’s over my back!
Going for the kill!
I gotta chance still!

RED
I’m silent as death.
You'll breathe your last breath.
Ki-ki-ki-ki! KREEY-A!

TOOTH
Leap in the air! Twist to the right!
Flip to the left. I’m still in the fight!

RED
Where’s the hare?
Where’d he hide?
Speak up, Pines!
Are you on his side?

OLD PINE TREES
We’re aaallll for youuuuuu.
Never feeaaaarrrr.
Here’s a cluuuuuueeee.
Toooth’s very neeeaaaarrrr.

RED
Useless dead wood!
I’d burn you now if I could!

NARRATOR
For days Tooth managed to outrun, outwit, and evade Red’s grasp.
TOOTH
I've spent all my breath.
I've run out of luck.
Must think of something soon
or nothing's left but death.

YOUNG PINE TREE
Hey, little haaaaarrre!
I'll be your safe theerrrrre.
Hide under my boouuuugh.
Hop in riiiiight nnnooooow!

NARRATOR
That night Tooth searched for wood. But none was right until…
he came upon a log from a white cedar tree.
The wood was fine grained and pale as the moon.
Chips flew in the air. Tooth chiseled nonstop.
By dawn it was done: an exact likeness of his mother
from pointy ears to cotton tail – twice as big and white as snow!

LAST CHANCE

TOOTH
I wish this wood could come alive.
To hear her voice and feel her touch.
My heart aches, my eyes won’t dry.
One last chance before Red’s next dive.

NARRATOR
With his remaining strength, Tooth dragged the great carving to a clearing.
Then he collapsed too weak to move. It didn’t take long. Red circled above.

YOUNG PINE TREES
Toooooothhh! Tooooothhh!
Moooove awwaaaaaaay! Mooooove awwaaaaay!

RED
Biggest hare I’ve ever seen.
Last hare I ate was too lean.
This one looks fat and slow.
I’ll take her down in one blow.

There’s Tooth in the clear!
Not showing any fear!
Wait! Is this a trick?
Or has Tooth gone sick?
YOUNG PINE TREES
Waaakke up, Tooooothhh!
Waaaaake up noooowwww!
Or you’re dooooooommed!

RED
Biggest hare still sits there!
Do I dare? Should I care?
Should I turn away?
Should I be afraid?
Ki-ki-ki-k! KREEY-A!

NARRATOR
Red dived for the kill. Her talons outstretched.
She saw her prey was fake – too late!
The sharp points of the wooden ears cut through her wings.
Her red eyes paled to pink, she cried in pain!

(REDD shrieks ear-splitting screams.)

PINE TREES
Haaawwwwk doowwwnnnn!
Is Reeeddddeeeeeaaad?

NARRATOR
Red was not dead. But her terrifying ability in flight was forever damaged.
Furiously flapping her broken wings, Red managed to fly away.

A NEW DAY

TOOTH
Mother, you saved me!
What I hoped and prayed.
My carving of you
has brought a new day.
I'll never live in fear again.
I refuse to be the prey.
I learned to fight my way.

NARRATOR
Since that day, Red has never returned. Tooth found the remaining female hares.
Nature being nature, he and they soon repopulated the forest with their offspring.
And Tooth never lived in fear again.

THE END