Livvy and the Forest Creatures

The set is darkened as the audience enters. Projections of an old-growth forest and its creatures fill the theatre and surround the stage. Sounds of a peaceful afternoon in the forest, with filtered sunlight.

A big sign is stapled to a post or tree: POSTED. STAY OUT. LOGGING OPERATION. SEA TO MOUNTAINS COMMUNITY. There's a shadow of a big logging truck looming in the forest.

Crow and Coyote enter. They've just been talking to one another, but stop as they see the sign.

CROW

What the…

COYOTE

Well, dung. Dung, dung, dung.

CROW

So they're at it again.

COYOTE

I'm gonna talk with June about this. See what she knows.

CROW

I'll check it out too. I'll fly around the center of town and see what's what. Gather intel.

Crow exits.

COYOTE

(*calling after Crow*) Intel? Stay away from the fries, Crow! Focus on the task!

Livvy enters with a school backpack, bag of fast food, and soda and a straw, in a disposable cup. Coyote sees her, stops, and hides behind a stump, or a rock, or a post. She sees the sign, and leans over the fence to look closer. She sighs. She turns back to the yard. She sets her food and backpack on the table, and pulls up the bench; she takes out a cell phone and starts scrolling and texting.

She calls her father, and walks as she talks, looking into the forest. Coyote has to keep moving to hide, listening to her conversation.

LIVVY

(*slashes indicate pauses*) Hi Dad! I'm home./ Sitting in the backyard. / Yeah, I got some tacos. / I'm gonna do homework./ I really am!/ I'm working on it./ I promise./ When do you get home?/ Okay. / I will!/ But Dad, it's going to be really awful here without the trees./ I know./ I know./ Okay/ All right. / Bye, Dad.

Livvy opens up her backpack and pulls out a notebook. She opens up the fast-food bag and unwraps the tacos. Coyote creeps close to the fence, eyeing the food, and nearly knocks the fence over. Livvy sees Coyote, and jumps up, knocking over the bench.

LIVVY

Coyote! (*waving her arms and jumping*) Shoo! Shoo! Get out of here!

COYOTE

Whoa! No need to get all huffy! I'm not even in your territory.

LIVVY

That's right! And you better not come in. (*pause*) Did you just talk?

COYOTE
LIVVY

COYOTE

Of course I did. I heard me. You heard me.

LIVVY

Coyotes are supposed to run off when people yell at them. That's what you're supposed to do. Go on! Scat! Leave!

Livvy advances on Coyote.

OYOTE

(*as Livvy approaches*) Hey! I'm not gonna do well with you in my face. I'm a coyote. Back off!

Crow enters, and rushes to flap in Livvy's face. She backs off, fast.

CROW

Hey, girl! Yeah, you!

Livvy begins to exit, running.

COYOTE

Girl! I'm not gonna hurt you! Come back!

Livvy turns back.

LIVVY
What about the crow?

COYOTE
Crow's cool. Tell her, Crow.

CROW
I am? Cool? Yeah, I'm cool. Relax!

LIVVY
CROW
COYOTE
LIVVY
Wait. Are you really a crow? And a coyote? Is this some kind of joke? It's crazy how real you look!

CROW
COYOTE

CROW
What's with her?

LIVVY
Maybe I'm dreaming. (*pinches herself*) Ouch! I'm not dreaming.

CROW
Weird.

LIVVY
I'm not weird! It's weird that you can talk!

CROW
I talk all the time! I'm a chatterbox. Coyote here, though, is more the strong, silent type/

COYOTE
(*to Livvy*) I understand your confusion. Humans don't usually understand other creatures. You do.

LIVVY
I do? How come I never heard animals talk before, then?

CROW
Uh…you weren't listening? You didn't pay attention?

COYOTE

Something opened up your ears.

LIVVY

Okay! So let's say this isn't a joke or a dream. And suddenly I can hear you. What do you want?

COYOTE

I'm looking for my friend. She lives here. I kinda lost my head when I saw the tacos. Sorry.

LIVVY

You have a friend here?

COYOTE

Yeah. I haven't seen her for a while. We gotta catch up.

LIVVY

What does your friend look like?

COYOTE

She's very beautiful.

LIVVY

Is she old? Or young? Tall or short? Skinny or big? Is she a human?

COYOTE

Human. Old, I think. She's named June. She has eyes the same color as mine. We laugh about that. Is she here? Inside the house?

LIVVY

My grandmother was named June.

COYOTE

Was? What do you mean, was?

LIVVY

Grandma died. Last month.

COYOTE

Ohhh.

Crow puts a wing on Coyote's shoulders. Coyote cries.

COYOTE

(to Livvy) You must have loved her too.

LIVVY

Yeah. I did. I miss her.

All wipe tears from their faces.

LIVVY

How did you know Grandma?

COYOTE

She knew my mom. And my grandma. And her mom. My family goes way back with June. We used to sit together, just quiet, in this forest. (*beat*) Maybe you got the gift of understanding from June.

LIVVY

She didn't teach me about that.

COYOTE

These gifts can come in many ways. (*beat*) I haven't seen you here before.

LIVVY

My dad and I moved here to take care of Grandma. She died about a month after we came.

COYOTE

I wish I could've seen her one last time. I was ranging in the mountains for a few months. I thought for sure June would outlive me. I thought she'd be here to see my kits grow up. (*cries*)

LIVVY

She told me about this forest. She told me where to go to find her favorite spots. I brought her fallen cedar fronds, and made cedar tea for her. She said she'd make friends with the forest creatures, but/

CROW

You thought she was just sayin' she liked the creatures, right?

LIVVY

I guess so. I didn't think she actually talked with other beings, though.

CROW
It's way fun. I LOVE talking with other species, and giving them advice/

COYOTE
CROW

LIVVY
At least Grandma isn't here to see the forest cut down.

COYOTE
(*to Livvy*) You said you're gonna miss the forest.

LIVVY
Yeah. But my dad says there's no way to keep it. The town has to have more houses.

CROW
Caw! They can put more houses in the town! There's more land there.

LIVVY
My dad says this is a development for rich people. They will want a pool, and a club house, and big driveways/

CROW
Caw! Caw! Cut down the forest for that!

LIVVY
The town needs the income from the new property taxes. For the schools. And for street repairs. Things like that. Otherwise, lots of people here will move away, and the town will die. My dad told me.

CROW
The town will die? Fat chance! People know lots of ways to live beside chopping down the forest!
COYOTE
CROW

COYOTE
Whaddya want this girl to do?

CROW
She's gotta stop the cutting!

LIVVY
Me? Stop the cutting? I just moved here! I don't have any friends! Grandma died. And my mom left us years ago/

COYOTE

(*puts a paw on Livvy's shoulder*) That's really hard. I'm sad you are suffering, June's granddaughter.

LIVVY

Livvy. My name's Livvy. Thank you.

COYOTE

Livvy? That sounds like it might be a tree name/

LIVVY

Yeah. Olivia. Olive tree. My dad picked it out. He said olive trees are strong and they can endure almost everything. He tells me I'm strong, too. But…I don't feel strong right now.

A moment between Coyote and Livvy.

CROW

Ahem! Hellooo…You got time to sit and chat? Time's wasting! We've got to do something! Specifically you, Livvy!

COYOTE
CROW
COYOTE

LIVVY

How can I stop the cutting? My dad's working with the housing developer. He got really lucky 'cause he grew up here, and people know him. He hasn't had a good job in a really long time.

CROW

That's the only job in town?

COYOTE
CROW
COYOTE

LIVVY

He always worked construction, but he hurt his leg, so he couldn't do that anymore. He'll lose the job if the developer can't cut the forest down.

CROW

I saw a Help Wanted sign at the coffee shop in town/

COYOTE
CROW
LIVVY

LIVVY

I've got to go. (*she gathers up her belongings as she speaks and begins to exit)* I have homework to do/

COYOTE

Wait! Don't go!

Livvy exits. She stops, somewhere hidden from Crow and Coyote, when she hears them talking, and listens.

COYOTE

She left.

CROW

I tried to give her some ideas. I guess ya just can't help some people/

COYOTE

You just tramped all over her feelings. That's why she left.

CROW

Feelings? Feelings? I'm a crow! We don't deal in feelings.

CROW
COYOTE
CROW

CROW

She just didn't care.

COYOTE

I don't think that's it/

CROW

I see a human who thinks humans are all that matter on this Earth. Like without clean air, and water, and trees they can survive for more than a minute. Look, Coyote, we don't have time for 'feelings.' It's action time! (*beat)* Anyway, *I* think we're fascinating. Who would want to lose us?

COYOTE

Crows?

CROW

All of us. Trees, and grasses, and mosses. Air, water, soil. Insects, and mammals, and birds/

COYOTE

What good does it do that we're fascinating? If humans think there's nothing they can do to stop the destruction, we're all toast. Them, too.

CROW

Not toast. I love toast. Especially with butter. How about…burnt to a cinder?

COYOTE

Sure. Whatever. This forest is the last connection between the sea and the mountain on this whole coastline. It'll be a wasteland.

CROW

We're caught in a trap that's squeezing shut. Snap! (*beat*) What would you have told that girl, anyway? She thinks the housing development is a good idea/

COYOTE

I don't know. (*beat*) June would've found a way. If she'd been around, she would never have let the town do this/

Livvy steps out of hiding.

LIVVY

I do care!

Coyote and Crow jump up.

COYOTE

You snuck up on a coyote! Whew. Scary when that happens.

CROW

I saw her. Crow sight. We're famous for it.

LIVVY

I didn't mean to scare you.

CROW

I wasn't scared.

COYOTE

Why'd you come back?

LIVVY

I heard you say I didn't care about the forest. I do!

COYOTE
I thought you were happy about the housing development/

LIVVY
I didn't say happy! How can my dad keep his job if these houses aren't built?

COYOTE
I don't know. *(beat*) People can be really clever, though. They're always finding new ways to keep me out of their backyards…

LIVVY
But there's so many more of us now. Where are we going to live?

CROW
I don't know either. But even people don't want to live in a world without trees. Not enough oxygen, heat no one can get away from, topsoil washed away/

COYOTE
Seas eating away more land, most animals and plants dead/

LIVVY
(*buries her head in her hands*) I know. I've been researching.

CROW
Wow. Really? Now we're talkin'! I LOVE research/