

# MOONLIGHT PRELUDES

by David MacDowell Blue

a short play

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### CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 women, 1 man)

CYANNE MacQUWEN (*30s or 40s, female*) Luthier, i.e. a maker of stringed instruments. Intensely curious, with a love of stories. Graduate of the El Dorado Conservatory of Music. Has a club foot and walks with a limp.

DEIRDRE LONG (*17, female*) High school student, violinist of great promise. Daughter of an LAPD Sargent. Somewhere on the autism spectrum. Preparing to audition for the El Dorado Conservatory of Music.

RICHARD BUCKINGHAM (*22, male*) Violist of great promise, student at the El Dorado Conservatory of Music. Son of a wealthy corporate lawyer. His stepmother is Deirdre's aunt. Has albinism.

### SETTING

A meeting room above the New Crescent Coffee Shop, near the campus of the El Dorado Conservatory of Music near Malibu, California.

### TIME

Tuesday, October 30, 2007. In the wake of a terrible wildfire that destroyed many homes. No one knows it of course, but another major wildfire will begin in just 24 days.

### NOTES

Albinism is humans usually manifests as extremely pale skin, due to almost total lack of melanin. Hair is usually pale blond, and eyes very pale blue. Usually. Nearly everyone with this condition has poor eyesight. All need to avoid direct sunlight.

Siobhan is pronounced “show-VAN.”

MOONLIGHT PRELUDES (then titled *Preludes for Moonlight*) had its first performance as part of the Quick Creation Festival, sponsored by Son of Semele theatre company [www.sonofsemele.org](http://www.sonofsemele.org) in Los Angeles California. It was performed Friday, Dec. 11, and Saturday, December 12, and Sunday December 13, 2020. The event was live and online.

The cast consisted of:

Jacklyn Narian as Deirdre  
Dorothy Grace Laity as Cyanne  
Hayden Wilder as Richard

**MOONLIGHT PRELUDES**

*[Upstairs meeting room at the New Crescent Coffee Shop. Clubs meet here, along with small parties, or even auditions. It looks comfortable. If there are pictures of the moon, so much the better. Maybe some Halloween decorations. FX: Footsteps coming up stairs. Enter Deirdre Long, 17, who looks around the meeting room.]*

**DEIRDRE**

Yeah. Funny name. New Crescent. *[She claps her hands, loudly. Listens.]* Nice.

*[FX More footsteps. Enter Cyanne MacQuwen with two violin cases in hand.]*

**CYANNE**

Hello!

**DEIRDRE**

Hello.

**CYANNE**

Now, I presume you are Deirdre Long, right? Because I don't want to go on and on and on about something which some stranger who won't give a frog's fart about. So?

**DEIRDRE**

So?

**CYANNE**

Are you Deirdre Long?

**DEIRDRE**

Of course I am.

**CYANNE**

Oh, good. Happy Halloween by the way!

**DEIRDRE**

Not yet.

CYANNE

Well, technically. What should I say today then? I mean, what is today? All Hallows Eve Eve?

DEIRDRE

*[Thinking about it]*

Tuesday.

*[Cyanne takes that in, and as she does, there are footsteps coming up the stairs. Enter RICHARD BUCKINGHAM, wearing, as ever, dark clothes and dark tinted glasses.]*

CYANNE

Ah! Mr. Buckingham! So pleased to meet you.

RICHARD

You haven't really. Not yet. *[To Deirdre.]* This is her?

DEIRDRE

Yes.

RICHARD

Frankly, I am disappointed.

CYANNE

Sorry?

RICHARD

I see you have two violin cases, not one. Disappointing.

CYANNE

Sorry about that. Why, if I may ask? Never mind. Do let me introduce myself, if I may?

DEIRDRE

We know who you are.

RICHARD

Cyanne MacQuwen.

DEIRDRE

Who else would you be? Aunt Salem said you wanted to meet us here, tonight, at seven o'clock. *[To Richard.]* This place has a strange name. New Crescent Coffee Shop. I mean, a moon cannot be both new and a crescent at the same time.

RICHARD

Very true. I hadn't thought of it that way, but that is true. Very true.

DEIRDRE

Not unless there were two moons. So, I suppose that would work if we were on Mars. But we're not. So it doesn't.

RICHARD

We might one day be on Mars. It remains a real possibility. In our lifetimes, even.

DEIRDRE

Will there be coffee shops, though?

RICHARD

Absolutely.

DEIRDRE

*[laughs]*

Good point. But then, which will come first? The new moon or the crescent? When people say it, I mean. What's the difference between a New Crescent and Crescent New?

RICHARD

Depends on the standards being used, which may or may not make sense, like everything else.

DEIRDRE

So no way to know?

RICHARD

Not yet.

CYANNE

*[Re-entering the conversation]*

Well, the 'new' refers to the fact the original Crescent Coffee Shop burned down. They relocated it here and students at the Conservatory, we began to call it "new" as opposed to old. After my time of course, I used to go to the Old Crescent. Nobody called it that then, of course!

*[Silence. Then...]*

DEIRDRE

Richard told me all about why the shop is named the way it is. He's a student at the Conservatory for two years. I'm auditioning in the spring.

RICHARD

I would be astounded if you aren't accepted. *[To Cyanne.]* And I own this coffee shop.

CYANNE

What? Really? Since when?

DEIRDRE

Last year. Well, Richard's father bought it and gave it to him.

RICHARD

He overreacted. He does that.

DEIRDRE

He does.

RICHARD

But, Miss MacQuwen, you have something from my Uncle Ian Buckingham? That is the reason for our being here?

CYANNE

I do, yes. And I'm obeying his instructions.

DEIRDRE

Richard thinks this is about the Dark Swan. Is he right?

CYANNE

Indeed, Miss Long, he is very right. *[Pause.]* If I may, how much do you know about the Dark Swans?

DEIRDRE

I didn't look up a lot about them. Richard has. As for the violin, well, maybe I should call it "her"? Uncle Ian always called his violin that. Called her, that. She, her, my lady, the lady.

RICHARD

Every now and then he called her his "bride."

DEIRDRE

He was sweet that way.

RICHARD

I wouldn't say sweet.

DEIRDRE

You should.

RICHARD

You may well be right.

CYANNE

You called him Uncle Ian? He wasn't your uncle, though.

DEIRDRE

By marriage. Since I was twelve. Five years. When my aunt married Richard's father.

RICHARD

Didn't you know that? Not an outstanding example of research on your part.

CYANNE

Didn't think I needed to.

DEIRDRE

You met her. Aunt Salem.

CYANNE

Yes. The point is—the Dark Swans were the last violin-viola pair created by the great Wolf Einhorn before his suicide. Urban legend has it the instruments are cursed, bringing tragedy upon all those who own or play them. Partially because Einhorn committed suicide but also because of the history of everyone who ever owned them. Except maybe your Uncle Ian.

DEIRDRE

He did die famous. A renowned musician, with a wide circle of friends, independently rich.

RICHARD

Relatively few violinists merit headlines.

DEIRDRE

He even left me a trust fund to pay for college.

RICHARD

My father overreacts. My uncle, he... *[Tries to find the right words.]*

DEIRDRE

He did kind things.

RICHARD

Yes.

CYANNE

But alone. At least he never married. Odd for such a handsome and charming man, at least so it



seemed to me.

DEIRDRE

He didn't seem alone.

CYANNE

Anyway, here in this case, I have the Dark Swan violin, which he explicitly instructed in our contract should be given privately, in the presence of Mr. Richard Buckingham, to you Miss Deirdre Long. This beautiful instrument, almost a hundred years old, is now yours.

*[Cyanne gives the violin case to Deirdre, who opens it and takes out the beautiful violin within. Both Deirdre and Richard have emotional reactions as it comes into view.]*

DEIRDRE

You were right.

RICHARD

Perfect.

DEIRDRE

Maybe it should go to you.

RICHARD

I can hardly wait to hear you play it.

DEIRDRE

I am almost afraid to.

CYANNE

Oh? Are you superstitious?

DEIRDRE

No. Why do you ask?

CYANNE

Curiosity. Mr. Buckingham, I also have something here for you.

RICHARD

Thank you, no.

CYANNE

You don't know what it is, yet.

RICHARD

I have my own viola and a very fine one it is too. I am sure whatever you have for sale is a fine instrument, one anyone else would be proud to own. But no, thank you. Please peddle your creations elsewhere.

CYANNE

Oh, I didn't make this, Mr. Buckingham. I repaired it. Please, this is not for sale. It was a commission from your late Uncle, and bequeathed specifically to you.

*[She passes the second violin case to Richard, who hesitates then takes and opens it. Within is a viola. He picks it up and brings it into view.]*

RICHARD

*[Impressed, despite himself]*

A very fine recreation.

CYANNE

No. Not really.

DEIRDRE

She said she repaired it.

RICHARD

*[Take him a moment to process this.]*

The original Dark Swan viola was destroyed.

CYANNE

No. The neck was, well, crushed, and there were over a dozen deep scratches on the body, but an easy repair really. Of course I took special care. The wood for the new neck, calculating the precisely right length, recreating the varnish. Not too hard, that last one. I'm something of an authority on Einhorn instruments. The scratches were easy enough. But I wasn't satisfied until I was sure their voices blended together, the way Einhorn intended. The way these two are supposed to sound. Ian and I tested them together. Not that my playing was anywhere even close to his level, but still...!

*[During all this Richard examines the instrument closely, spotting the subtle signs of repair, tapping it to hear the resonance of the viola's body, and having a quiet but powerful reaction as he realizes this is*

*indeed what she says it is.]*

DEIRDRE

Does Richard's father know?

CYANNE

I don't believe so. Ian seemed very keen on keeping it all under wraps. He re-contacted me a little while after he retired, all very hush hush. I could see this meant a great deal to him but he refused to explain much.

RICHARD

Miss MacQuwen. Please leave. Thank you. Very much. But for now, right now, please leave.

CYANNE

Oh. As you wish. I hope, sooner or later, to hear the two of you play these--

RICHARD

*[Interrupting]*

Maybe you will. Good night.

DEIRDRE

Good night.

*[Cyanne exits and we hear footsteps going down the stairs.]*

RICHARD

Father said this was destroyed. And I believed him. But Ian, Ian never said a word.

DEIRDRE

It was your Aunt Siobhan's, wasn't it?

RICHARD

Yes.

DEIRDRE

Ian and she were very close. Or at least that was what everyone says.

RICHARD

Closer than either ever was to Father.

DEIRDRE

But he almost never mentioned her. Not to me.