

MAGIC LADY

By ALAN ROSSETT

The French version of « Magic Lady » (La Magicienne) was created in Paris at the Théâtre de la Mainate with Odile Mallet as Anna.

Given an award by Adami, it ran from January through May 1990. Some comments:

“A discovery, a world of its own, a gem. This show has real magic. A fabulous presence, an extraordinary simplicity» (France-Culture)

“Singular, imaginative, very original. A play that leads you into dreamland» (Aspects de la France) “Rossett, a Parisian American writing in French has a startling sense of humor” (Humanité) “Cocteau and Woody Allen meet” (Jean Delannoy) “Bewitching, attaching, remarkable” Giovanni Sciuto “Rossett is an artisan in his precision and justice. Odile Mallet performs the key role with real beauty” (CITY)

“L’Avant-scène théâtre” the French magazine specializing in theatre, wrote “Enhanced by Alan Rossett’s sense of humor, an excellent evening of theatre away from overrated shows à la mode.” In 1994 the magazine published the entire play (N. 958).

Revived at the Grand Palais’ Salon du Livre under the heading “Why Does An American Write in French?”

Radio broadcast on TSF.

ALAN ROSSETT
91, rue Nollet - 75017 PARIS FRANCE
Telephone : (33) 1 73 75 57 65

e-mail : rossdoal@aol.com

Alphonse
Anna de Klar
Aunt Cherry

3 (A giant book, designed to accommodate entrances, exits and special effects. The back cover will successively suggest the frame for an author's photo, a mirror, a closet.

In front of the book, two playing areas:

1. Anna's Villa: A table with an old-fashioned typewriter. A book shelf either realistically done or suggested by the actors. On an upper shelf, a porcelain figurine of a young girl. A wall portrait of another young girl.
2. Alphonse's lodgings: A little table with a laptop. Alphonse, a young writer, wearing glasses, intent on writing...)

ALPHONSE

« The first time I saw Anna de Klar...the first time I saw Anna de Klar"... »

(to his typewriter) Come on sweetie, cough up what I know you have! For I am going to write a tale - The Tale Of Anna de Klar...I possess many things about her that...you...

(to the public) don't!

Not that I claim to understand her! Oh no! Can one understand another human being? Isn't one condemned to merely look at an outer surface... a face....façade...with infinite façades inside ...that simply blow away! I was lucky! I was allowed to examine a few key pieces of the "Anna puzzle". And this

(He picks up a newspaper from the floor)

...is perhaps the last one I'll get? Ah Anna is that your laugh? Earlier today on the street when a playful gust of wind blew the newspaper right into my face and I read:

(reading the newspaper) "Anna de Klar...eminent Belgium author...her tales of destiny... Madame de Klar has died of meningitis..." Meningitis! I practically had a laughing fit: From above, the cooing of... a pigeon surely... (Sound of a bird croaking) but I heard a raven screech!

You were watching birds that day...

(Bird sounds as in the shadows Anna appears...looking upwards through binoculars...an elderly lady in a dumpy raincoat, shawl wrapped round her head, very little make-up...she slowly advances...)

...the first time I saw you...in the park...already six years ago...

(He removes his glasses)

Anna de Klar! In flesh and blood! My favorite writer! My idol! I worshipped her!

(Casually she stops moving...)

I stared at her - pretending at the same time I wasn't looking! I absolutely didn't wish to meet the lady! What on earth could I have to say? Ask for an autograph? I'd be terrified! I could hardly breathe. I would've recognized her face anywhere! I'd seen it so often on the back covers of her books!...

(Anna, having wandered behind the "photo frame" of the "back cover", does a series of "Author's Poses")

I'd read everything she'd written!

(She likes that!)

After which – I re-read everything!

(That she likes as well!)

I raced round town in search of long out-of-print editions.

(That she doesn't like!)

Once I held in my hands a crumbling magazine containing her one and only "divertimento for marionettes" written at the age of 12.

(Now Anna becomes a puppeteer manipulating Alphonse!)

In front of a tv set, I'd force an annoyed acquaintance to wait two hours for three typical minutes of one of Anna's bewildering interviews! At night, in bed one of her books in my hands would whisk me away to strange secret kingdoms...where I finally felt completely at home. I let her thoughts pour over mine like a waterfall crashing down on an insignificant little rock at the bottom of a gorge... Those who don't appreciate her style see nothing more than dated behavior in damask gowns. That's not what held me in trance. She possessed an incredible sense of destiny. Omnipotent, she propelled it like a clap of thunder over the immense labyrinth of her stories.

(Bird song...Anna steps out from behind the book...walks, seemingly lost in thoughts. Alphonse wanders in like fashion as well:)

If her words, simple words, could weave such powerful webs, does she herself exist? Little is known of her personal life. And what is known is full of flagrant contradictions! Has she led several parallel lives?...Maybe she is a sorceress...An enchantress...at least a magician...So high, so mysterious, so...

(Alphonse runs smack into Anna who falls badly to the ground -)

ANNA

Ooooooh shit!!

ALPHONSE

Madame de Klar... I'm...I'm...

ANNA

Petrified? So am I! And still on the ground...for God's sake help me up, young man.

ALPHONSE (helping her up)

Oh! Oh! To do this – to you!

ANNA (ironically)

Wasn't the way you wanted to meet me hmm? You've obviously seen my name printed somewhere. If I were just an ordinary old lady...whose spine you'd practically dislocated...you wouldn't give a damn! (brushing herself off)

No serious damage...but still...you'd best see me home.

(Firmly taking his arm) En avanti.

(Sounds of cars in the street)

ALPHONSE (very nervous)

You...you live here?

ANNA

In a way.

ALPHONSE

I didn't know...you lived around here.

ANNA

I'm here...for the moment...

ALPHONSE

Aaahh....Yes...

ANNA

You're tense.

ALPHONSE

That!...I am.

ANNA (musing)

You want to question me...but you don't know how...or what about...yet you're afraid if we don't chatter, I'll find you a boring young man. What crap. A little silence can be most refreshing in this overly noisy world!

(She stops.) Here we are. My place. A strange house. Open the door...I never lock it. Housebreakers! thieves! you're all on my welcome mat! They soon discover I'm a better thief than they! No, there's not much I'm afraid of...Well, very little.

(The lighting intensifies as they enter. She gazes at him.)

You're a writer – is that it?

ALPHONSE

I...

ANNA (not unkindly)

You want to be...once you grow up! (intensely scrutinizes him) Who are you...really?

(He avoids her stare...finds himself looking at his own reflection in the mirror...which gives him courage:)

ALPHONSE

Who are you...really? (He looks at her intensely.)

ANNA (intrigued by his tone)

Ah...? This coat....I'm hot, I'll change. Make yourself at home. (She's disappeared.)

ALPHONSE

Her room!! Her typewriter!! (He'd like to touch it...) No it's too much! Oh! What does she read? (He heads toward the shelf) ...Karl Marx?...Anna de Klar!...Barbara Cartland?? ...Anna de Klar!...The Marquis de...

(He notices the figurine.....looks behind him, fearful of being observed...Rapidly he climbs on the table...and takes the figurine...looks at it very closely...

Anna has suddenly entered.)

ANNA

Ah the sly little imp!

(She's put on a long embroidered cape and a great bulbous turban, she looks like something out of a Flemish painting. She advances toward him with a menacing smile, holding out her hand...Mischievously he chooses not to give the figurine to her!

Very mincingly)

Fair enough: I did steal it in the first place...from my Aunt Cherry! When I ran away from home! I'd always coveted it. It's from Canada, can you imagine? As my Aunt Cherry was from Canada. I was intrigued by all things foreign.

(Suddenly she seizes the figurine. Alphonse stumbles off the table)

...in those days...

(She looks at the figurine for a moment before putting it down:)

I'm writing a story. The Death of The Figurine. I know. There's not a single death in all my tales. Why should there be: My one passion is life! Life! Swept like a field of wheat by a good strong wind! Tangling, snarling! just as we humans never stop twirling and crashing into each other! I see no reason to describe the clinical methods capable of transforming - with one dull chop of the scythe - our admirable faces into chicken heads. (with difficulty) But...but...the girl I've created from the figurine is so marvelously alive, so...I sense death all around her. I don't have the theme yet, the other characters...I've only written one page. (on the defensive) Would you like to see it?

ALPHONSE

HHHHhh...

(His emotion has him take a too deep breath: he has the hiccoughs -)

ANNA

I thought you would!

(pouring him a drink) Down the hatch!

ALPHONSE

Thanks! (Hiccoughs) I don't drink!

ANNA

Till today! Drink! We'll drink together! (pouring herself a glass) To our encounter!

(Hiccough) Every encounter is unique!

(Hiccoughs - which he nearly manages to stop...and then it comes back!

Anna shrieks at him like a banshee!! The hiccoughs stop.)

That's better. (He looks away from her openly curious stare into the mirror again.)

Why are you looking at yourself in the mirror...I'm the one you're interested in. No?

ALPHONSE (He returns her look. With more assurance)

Yes. Very much!

ANNA

But... what have you come for? Tell me the truth. From the first moment when you pretended to bump into me in the park -

ALPHONSE

Pretended? Never !

ANNA

Oh yes you did! Right from the first second we've been wrestling! Why that's it! You've come to murder me! Right?

ALPHONSE

Madame de Klar!

ANNA (chuckling)

I don't give a damn! I'm not afraid of murderers! Kill me? My dear, that is physically impossible!

ALPHONSE (incredulously)

How...physically?

ANNA

You heard me! Wait, I'll get a butcher knife And then you try to slice me up. I don't say the experience will be very pleasant...but I'll get out of the hospital alive...to haunt you! (suddenly very stubborn) I can't be murdered! That's not my destiny! Mine is bad enough without making it worse! Oh stop playing juvenile bewilderment! There's something you want to win from me. Win win! I don't pretend to've figured out what. But I will!

ALPHONSE

I assure you...

ANNA

Why assure me of good intentions when I prefer the bad! I love gambling! Oh I've got a great idea! You and I are going to play! You are going to play a dirty trick on me!

ALPHONSE

A dirty...

ANNA

Yes, like... I don't know...You'll find something.....like ...flooding my bathroom...

ALPHONSE

Flooding...

ANNA

And if you succeed...I'll give you...a souvenir... But watch out, bad boy! I might be the one to play a dirty trick on you. In that case, you'll lose everything!

ALPHONSE

I wouldn't do such a thing! Not to you!

ANNA

Rubbish, it'll be good for you! How old are you?

ALPHONSE

...Twenty...eight...

ANNA

I'm not tricked that easily. You're twenty-four. And you look twenty. You're far too shy for your age. But it's all an act. You can fool others but not me. We're of the same race: Tall Tale Tellers! Behind that cupid's mask your soul is like mine: simply covered with wrinkles. You've seen things, you've even done them. Oh yes you have, stop pretending! We're going to make those wrinkles obvious to everybody! People have to be warned about sharks like us!

ALPHONSE

Madame...

ANNA

"Anna".

ALPHONSE

Madame Anna

ANNA

Yes, my dear?

ALPHONSE

Tell me about yourself...your work...your...life? How they fit together. One into the other. How you manage to bring it off. I've never done anything...finished anything! I don't have a life...I don't have any real friends! I...It's difficult...I know I'm young...doesn't stop me from being desperate! Give me your secrets...Give...Please.

ANNA

...Oh yes I could give you...something (She looks around her.) Sssh!

One night many years ago I was in London. It was raining. As usual! I had no luck hailing a cab...I saw the entrance to the subway, the «tube» as they call it. In going down the steps, I vaguely made out a few people who'd taken shelter... A young man with a briefcase, at first glance an ordinary salesman...but with a strange look in his eyes...a little like yours?... And a charwoman type, she was one-eyed... and a third person. I won't tell you who; you wouldn't believe me. Ten minutes later, on the train, between two stations, we were pulled to a terrific stop, practically thrown out of our seats. Fifty minutes later we were still there! I got up. "I'll be damned if I'm going to wait any longer!" Oddly, almost like an answer, the nearest door onto the tracks slid open. "Don't go, miss, it's dangerous." "Bullshit." I jumped out...and, hugging the side of the train clutched my way down the dark tunnel. Above me, the passengers in windows, ignoring my existence, were as still as mannequins in store windows, as dead people in their tombs. And I left the train, the world of the train...I walked, walked. In the distance I saw a little ivory circle, surely the light from the next station...I took a few more steps. Then, from out of the shadows. the man with the briefcase stepped into the light...the young salesman! Five feet in front of me! Behind him, the one-eyed charwoman...Further behind, that third person. The young man said "This way please." I followed them... We stepped over several tracks...changed directions...forever left the little "moon" of the next station...Here and there, I heard the rustling of rats...they enjoyed

brushing against our feet...Then there was an opening...We went through it...we advanced in a tunnel...Vast tunnel...We walked in silence...the tracks, the gravel were little by little replaced by...grass? We walked...not quite in a straight line...Oh yes...Yes! I could tell you things! Secrets!

(She completely breaks the atmosphere.)

But they'd be lies! Darling! Fruits of my imagination! Fiction! You know the word!? (laughing) Oh if you could see your face! Lovely! You're really annoyed with me! Oh dear! (laughs... then) Your face...among the thousands I've seen...that's what counts. And only that. The faces seen by a lady's who's been around long enough to've seen quite a few. Yellow faces, white ones, rosy, black, beige. I've watched faces watching faces. I've run after faces down the streets of unknown cities...and in the zoo on both sides of the cage, and in prisons on both sides of the cage, and in the brush and on ocean liners and in schools. Ah those lips sipping champagne! Ah, those mouths throwing up! And others screaming in hunger! And each face for me reflected other faces...an infinity of faces...I did not turn away from the contradiction in their eyes. Oh no! I sought it out! It's the little details that ring false which lead you to the truth. The young are old, the sick strong, the prosecutor a helpless defendant. I suspended my vision above faces like a fakir on a flying carpet. And then I descended to ferociously scrape out their hidden thoughts; just in passing I took a few of their hairs when I felt like it. I stole phrases and sweat and polished nails and dirt under those nails. I've used people! Used them! Ruthlessly! By candlelight clapped them into my mouth, chewed them up...and at dawn spat out something else, coming from them and from me, at the same time completely different. Be careful, young man! I'm an outlaw! I'll bite into you as well! Shamelessly I'll roll you inside my beak and when I spit you out you won't recognize yourself. Watch out...if not...if not...I warn you...

(Her energy seems to run out...she suddenly appears to be quite old and fragile.)

I'll make you into just another...another...My God have I drunk too much tonight?

ALPHONSE (insidiously nice, he pours her another drink)

...The first face?...

ANNA

No I've drunk too much...

ALPHONSE ("angelic")

The first face?...

ANNA

I don't know!

ALPHONSE

The first face!

ANNA

I don't want to know!

ALPHONSE (insistently)

The first...

ANNA

Lisbeth! My second cousin on my father's side!

(She goes toward the portrait) We were always together. She died many years ago. Of meningitis. I loved her.

(Alphonse seems troubled by this declaration.)

Oh it was a chaste love! (slyly) Not like Sarita. The portrait of Sarita is upstairs. Hidden. (Very attentively she watches him. He seems terribly embarrassed. He looks away.

Genuinely defensive)

I've loved whom I wanted, when I wanted! No more than most people – a little less. A little I said! Ah now your mind's twirling thoughts of Anna and her "delicate vice". I suppose you have to further debase your image of me, always shove me down a floor! At the same time, you wish to conserve a certain rose petal romanticism... make my vice "delicate"! Thanks for the complement; there's nothing delicate about me! Though...come to think of it...I am just a woman...like all the others...

("Sexily" she advances on him)

Aren't I...dear...aaaah youuuu...

(He tries to squirm away.)

You do find your romanticism slipping from you as it slides over to my side and you're afraid! You're afraid of my face! Of Me! Anna! Woman! Femme fatale!

(She lunges for him; He falls to the ground. Cruelly she laughs at his discomfort. Then:)

I'll spell it out: Anna de Klar has two eyes, a nose, a mouth and...other things which she's used...as ordinarily as everyone else!...ah, those body incongruities ...And the failures!...Alas...God. I've tried everything! I haven't enjoyed everything. I even tried marriage. Did you know that? No...

ALPHONSE (has refound his aplomb)

Yes! Helmut! You were madly in love with him!

ANNA

Says who. I married him simply so I wouldn't have to go home. Do you know where that first home was? The real one.

ALPHONSE

Of course: at the foot of the Himalayas in the middle of an elephant hunt.....in a jungle?

ANNA (laughing)

And why not on the moon? Did you swallow that rubbish...You're as gullible as the rest of them. I was born in a room. A. Room. My mother's on a tiny farm in Flanders. I'm a farm girl oh yes I am!

ALPHONSE

But no! You come from a noble family!

ANNA

Who told you?

ALPHONSE

I read...I thought...that...

ANNA

Correct - on a certain level! For me, the word "noble" implies consideration toward others. Therefore I am the noble daughter of peasants.

ALPHONSE

Peasants!? You!?

ANNA

Disappointed? Shouldn't be. Our farm was charming. Modest but secure. Good land and I was never asked to till it. I was left free to sail through the fields...Wheat ... the meadow...very far... the little bridge..."The Bridge of Angels"...I was happy, so happy...But my mother died...My Aunt Cherry – Widow of my father's brother- came from Canada to take care of me. I adored her! She was a peasant as well. And very noble...Curiously she always regarded me as a chosen creature entrusted to her care. They all did, I never understood why...And then...things went to pieces...His death...in the stables...his agony ..."Keep the child out!" Unless I dreamt that moment? It's so long ago, I don't know anymore, I ran. Aunt Cherry found me, back up propped against a tree trunk...Hidden by low dripping leaves...not far from the cemetery. I was reading Robinson Crusoe...For a moment escaping...my destiny.

As a child I was always reading! It was in books I saw the possibilities of a different destiny. I raced toward it! I did my studies abroad! I married my very first suitor, he published my first stories...I've never been a great success...That's not what bothered me ...All I asked was not to go back there. Ever! I've roamed the world and I've never reseen...those faces. Never! Ne...

(She notice that Alphonse is hiding something. Dangerously)
What are you doing – friend?

ALPHONSE (enthusiastically shows her a little note pad:)

I've been taking notes! That way I'll remember everything you've said! The spiciest details! You talk just like your stories!

ANNA (shortly)

And sometimes I shut up! (She scrutinizes him suspiciously – resentfully)
You're a journalist!

ALPHONSE

Me??

ANNA

That's why you stood on your head to meet me?...to put into print a few miserable secrets of an old lady...who never did you any harm. And not even a first-rate celebrity!

(She tries to grab the note pad –
violently he pushes her away -)

ALPHONSE

No!!

(She comes at him – he pushes her)

It's mine now!!

ANNA

Oooh it's yours now? (a scratching laugh) In that case, Young Journalist -
ALPHONSE

I'm not a journalist!

ANNA

I'd advise you not to take seriously the "spicy details" told by Anna de Klar. They might lead you straight into a law court! I've consecrated my entire life to fiction; do you I think I'd have a single fact? I'm a humble storyteller, not a story! To find out who I really am, you'd have to raise a few tombstones! And drag out of them the guh-guh-guh -

(Suddenly, with no transition, she seems to be strangling. She juts up – she gapes in horror! For in the shadows, a mummy has appeared; figure in black, wrinkled, black straw hat.)

ALPHONSE (to the public, "telling a tale")

In that long long second of time between the senseless appearance of disaster and its recognizable cause, I felt strangely objective. I thought she was having a heart attack and would simply die at my feet.

(Anna gestures to Alphonse pointing out the mummy.)

ANNA (whisper of terror)

Aunt...Cherry!

ALPHONSE (thinks she's gone mad)

"Aunt Cherry!" (Then he sees the figure. Stupefied) Aunt Cherry?!

(She leans against Alphonse. Together they look to the mummy.)

ANNA

You see her too?

ALPHONSE

Yes.

CHERRY (chatty, rather child-like voice)

Hello Little Anna!...How are you?

(The tone brings Anna back to reality. She stares at the intruder...calculates... Then grabs Alphonse's arm, pulling him toward the exit:)

ANNA

Go. Quickly. We'll finish our talk some other day.

(She immediately turns back to Cherry, glaring at her with a certain repulsion. She paces.)

ALPHONSE (« story-teller »)

No!! (Alphonse, forgotten, takes over the stage)

I was eaten alive with curiosity.

ANNA (to Cherry)

I'll get you a chair.

ALPHONSE

I had to know!

ANNA (resentful)

You're supposed to be dead!

ALPHONSE

Pressing myself against the wall of the corridor...I came to another large book shelf, pressing myself...my weight opened it! It was a secret door!

(He finds himself in the frame behind the back cover of the book.)

I found myself in a small space, stuffy as a closet ... or a tomb.

(At the same time; Anna brings in a turning desk chair in which she plunks Cherry...)

Facing me, a sheet of glass in front of which unfurled the most extraordinary scene...

(Play of lights:)

I made out colors and abstract forms...changing...exquisite...

(Anna, upset, gesturing:)

The rainbowed flapping of tropical birds...melting; liquid, disappeared in a second...

(He leans forward)

The image cleared...

(Realistic lighting returns)

Seen from a certain angle, a room came into focus...the room I had just left. In which...the two women I had just left!

(Intensely Anna looks into the mirror, almost face to face with Alphonse)

Apparently she couldn't see me! Therefore!

(Winks to the audience, discreetly takes notes in his pad during the beginning of the following scene:)

ANNA (turning back to Cherry)

How old are you?

CHERRY

I'm ninety-five.

ANNA

Fancy that... (resentfully) You have escaped the malediction.

CHERRY

Malediction?

ANNA

Yes. You're not a ghost...not yet. Just a very old lady. Worn out like your clothes. Hmm. You've come to pinch some money out of me...right?

CHERRY (guilelessly)

But no. Have I ever asked you –

ANNA (exasperated but near tears)
Why haven't you? Why haven't you ever made yourself known?

CHERRY
I thought you wouldn't be interested. You knew where we were...And you go from country to country. it's hard to keep up with you.

ANNA
Then why today?

CHERRY
I've come to say goodbye.

ANNA
«Goodbye» ?

CHERRY (pleasantly)
I'm going to die.
(Pause)

ANNA (with genuine satisfaction)
Good. You haven't escaped the malediction.

CHERRY (bewildered)
What malediction?

ANNA
Death.

CHERRY (patiently as to a child)
Little Anna..You know that death is not a malediction...But one of the many burdens our Lord has laid upon us for our own good. If we believed death a malediction, what would we have to think of our Lord?

ANNA
What indeed! To bestow with the doctor's first slap on the ass our breath. our fear of death. And our battle.

CHERRY
Battle?

ANNA
Yes. The fight to keep the next breath. You cannot love life without loathing and fearing death! And I like life very much indeed!

CHERRY
Oh...I don't feel that way. I haven't thought about it at all.

ANNA
You are lucky. Sometimes it seems I've thought of nothing else. ("hostess") When are you going to die pray?

CHERRY

I don't know.

ANNA

But...It is soon...Or...Would you like something to eat?

CHERRY

That's nice dear but...

ANNA

I mean... your death is for tomorrow?...For this season?

CHERRY

Don't rush me. It's just that when I became ninety-five, it occurred to me that people often don't live that much longer.

ANNA

It occurred to her! Adorable!

CHERRY

So I said to myself Anna never comes to back to the farm so I had better find her and say goodbye.

ANNA

Have you said goodbye to the rest of the family?

CHERRY

No, they've all said goodbye to me. Except Jeanne of course.

ANNA

Who's she?

CHERRY

Your third cousin, you wouldn't know. She's young, fresh, you look at her and smile.

ANNA

Young fresh...won't stop her from dropping dead while you're all smiling at her.

CHERRY

But no! You mustn't say such things! She's so sweet so young why should -

ANNA (pedantically)

She's going to die of meningitis, like you are going to die of meningitis!

CHERRY

Not at all! I'm in excellent health!

ANNA (mystical gesture)

It's the curse of the Klars!

CHERRY (imitating the gesture, bewildered)
The Curse of the Klars?

ANNA
Everybody who bears the name of Klar dies of meningitis! Father! Mother! Grandmother! Lisbeth!...I've done everything to change my life, run away from you! flee your tortured dying faces!

CHERRY
That can't be why you never came back?!

ANNA
Of course it is...Even if I didn't realize it myself! It's fear that's run my life, stirred my feverish gaiety...and driven me frantic: Meningitis! My death! So young! At the age of.....

CHERRY
Anna, how old are you?

ANNA
Well I've been lucky in stretching it out a bit longer than the others. (Very stubbornly) But meningitis will get the best of me! It's the Curse of the Klars.

CHERRY
Little Anna...no Klar has ever died of meningitis.

ANNA (rather melodramatically)
How dare you! My mother! Meningitis! When I was only four years old!

CHERRY
Your mother died of appendicitis.

ANNA
What?

CHERRY
It is a big word. You were only four years old.

(A moment...Anna looks very confused. Alphonse, having stopped writing, follows the scene, motionless.)

ANNA
And Father – when I was seven?

CHERRY
But no, he...

ANNA
What?

CHERRY (looking away)
We told you he died of meningitis. (very ill at ease) We...lied.

(Pause.)

ANNA

Well?

CHERRY

Well...he killed himself. ..You don't tell that to a child: But if a lie has been bothering you, you're old enough to know the truth.

ANNA (astounded)

My father committed suicide. (She takes a moment to assimilate the idea...then...)
But why?

CHERRY (increasingly uncomfortable)

He...He never got over your poor mother's death and then...he fell in love...

ANNA

With whom?

CHERRY

With me! And you know, I never stopped loving the poor brother of your poor father, how could I love him at the same time? And we had crop failure that year! (defensively)
I wouldn't have done anything so odd! But it is very long ago, don't worry about it anymore. Anyway that's how it was.

ANNA (looking at the portrait)

Lisbeth, darling Lisbeth...she was taken so young.

CHERRY

Nooo she's still alive. She had, how shall I put it, an "encounter" with a young man the year when you were doing your studies abroad. After which she was going to have a baby. So she suddenly went away. We thought it best to write and tell you...

ANNA

Meningitis! Your medical vocabulary was rather limited.

CHERRY (guilt-stricken)

We would've told you the truth if we'd known it was bothering you. But your next letter informed us that you were married...and really we never heard from you again!

ANNA

The others in my family...all the others?

CHERRY

You must have imagined it. You had a wonderful imagination, even as a child.

ANNA (rather moved)

Even...even... (facing her book) Years and years of work, a whole life founded on dreams and lies...on an imaginary illness!

CHERRY

I'm sorry.

ANNA

...I'm not. It was a...rather amusing life...And still is, no?
 (She sits at Cherry's feet like a child)
 My aunt, tell me about my family. The truth.

CHERRY (relaxing)

I'll tell you everything, Anna. for I've now had the great proof that it's always wrong to lie.
 Your family is not your family at all.
 (ANNA, startled, violently juts away from Cherry! Placidly) Your father and your mother
 tried and tried but a child never appeared. Alas, the Klar male seldom produces offspring.
 So you came and it was a blessing.

ANNA

Came? A little more precision please!

CHERRY (regretting having started this)

...Uuuh there's nothing for it but for you to know. You were found.
 (Pause.)

ANNA

Where?

CHERRY

In. The fields. You had been left alongside – no *in* really – a sheltering plant.

ANNA (mercilessly)

Which plant.

CHERRY

Uuuh...you were found in a cabbage.
 (Anna sharply turns her back on Cherry.
 Difficult to know if she is howling like an animal or
 shrieking with laughter.)

You're angry, Anna? Eh?

(pause)

ANNA (weakly)

No...I'm...I don't know what I am anymore!...Wait...I do! I'm re-laxed! I've been many things
 in a tumultuous life...but come to think of it, it's the first time I've ever felt relaxed! I've
 received a benediction. Where I've from, I'll never know. What I've been, I accept. Perhaps I
 shall never write again.

CHERRY

Oh you will.

ANNA .

Well perhaps...Dear dear Aunt Cherry. How long are you planning to stay?

CHERRY

I can't leave for another hour!

ANNA

Oh no! You can't go like that!

CHERRY

But now that I've said goodbye...

ANNA (firmly)

We have weeks ahead of chatting with each other! We'll stretch out like old cats and purr and meow and chat! Come along, I'll show you to your room...
(guiding her toward an exit)

CHERRY

Who was the young man?

ANNA

...don't know...

CHERRY

He seemed nice.

ANNA (glancing at herself in the mirror)

A tricky lad.

CHERRY

Who is he?

ANNA

But I don't know! (stops) Damn! I don't know anything about him at all! Not even his name!

(They exit. Alphonse looks at his note pad.)

ALPHONSE

What I'd observed I was not going to lose...It was all filed...here. (touches his forehead)
And I knew it with a lucidity rare for me during that period. I left my pad behind on the floor
...In some distant future would it be discovered, totally incomprehensible? The time had
come to definitively leave Anna de Klar...and start down my own road.

(He turns and stops short, as if walking into a wall)

It was at this precise moment I realized that the book shelf – the secret door! - had firmly
closed behind me! "My God..."

(He knocks...everywhere...He's breathing badly)

The presence of oxygen was becoming evident...by its absence! "I'm trapped! I'm going to
die here!" Unless... (He shouts) Help! (His echo: "help") Help! (Echo: "help". Silence.)

CHERRY'S VOICE

A figurine? I don't remember...

ANNA

But of course. I stole it from you...Wait...

(Anna reappears, takes the figurine...sees herself in the mirror.
With the figurine, "poses artistically")

ANNA

Anna de Klar with what's left of her childhood. Official portrait.

(Weakly Alphonse continues to shout "Help" but now no voice is heard. Anna looks very very closely into the mirror, almost nose to nose with Alphonse. She hears something...whispers)

"Help"?

(She realizes...backs up...smiles ironically into the mirror)

Oh the sly little boob! Is that your dirty trick?...And you want your souvenir?

(Her mocking laugh) Take it. If you can!

(Languorously she holds the figurine in his direction. Suddenly, with an enormous effort, Alphonse's hand goes through the mirror and grabs the figurine: sound of breaking glass, flickering lights. Tug of war between Alphonse and Anna, clutching the figurine. Alphonse gives Anna a great push toward his own room; where, beaten, she places the figurine on his table. As by savage winds, Alphonse is ejected from the back cover of the book and winds up at his table in the present. Anna is thrown halfway into the book and freezes.)

EPILOGUE

(Alphonse puts his glasses back on...drops to the floor the newspaper announcing Anna's death...places the figurine...and leans over his laptop.)

ALPHONSE

"The first time I saw Anna de Klar..."

(He hears a strange tapping like a dripping faucet)

..."The first time I saw Anna de Klar..."

(The faucet. Anna, ghostly, ironic, gestures with the binoculars.
Bird song)

Ah yes! She was bird watching!

(He begins to type his story. Anna waves goodbye to him and enters directly into her place on the back cover. Slyly) And her last impression of me?

(Suddenly Anna leaves the book!) (

ANNA

Oh no! The son of a bitch flooded my bathroom!

BLACKOUT.

END OF MAGIC LADY

Performance rights must be secured before production. For contact info, please visit [the information page for Magic Lady](#)