The Influenza of 1918

by

B.L. Morrison Drama Team
B.L. Morrison School
Postville

Cast:

Narrator	Jade Holwell
Max	Bronson Jacque
Influenza	Dalton Manak
Boas	Jordan Sheppard
Father	James Jacque
Margaret	Haley Shiwak
Isadore	Dalton Manak
Sailor	Jordan Sheppard
Caroline	Taylor Jacque

Teacher Director: Carla Colbourne Jacque

This play is set in Okak, Labrador, 1918. The drama involves the devastation caused by the Spanish Flu that spread that year, after the arrival of the supply ship, the Harmony. In the play characters are going about every day duties and chores when they suddenly fall ill. Influenza is a character in the play who escorts people to their fate, death. The play ends with a note of encouragement to learn from the past, hold on to important traditions and make the future the best it can possibly be.

Narrator: *It is the year 1918 and we are in Okak, Labrador. The supply ship, the Harmony, has just landed. The locals are anxious to trade their furs, fish and belongings with the sailors on the ship in exchange for winter supplies. Among them is a man who hopes to be able to get a gun to give to his son.*

Scene 1

On board the Harmony (there are people all around, and everyone seems to be talking at once)

Sailor : *(yelling out)* Gun for trade! Gun for trade! Best deal of the year, one you won't want to miss!

Father : How much do you want for it? A gun is just what I have been looking for.

Sailor : If you can give me enough seal skin to make a coat you got a deal.

Father : Seal skin is worth a lot, I will have to look at the gun and see if it is worth it. (*Sailor hands over the gun and father has a long look at it)* I have been wanting to get something useful for my son, and I think this gun will suit him just fine.

Sailor : So, do we have a deal or not, cause if you don't want it I'm sure someone else will?

Father : Deal it is. (*Hands over seal skins in exchange for the gun.)*

Sailor : One other thing, you better tell your son how dangerous guns can be and that you can kill a person with one of these.

Father : Thank you, I am sure it will be put to good use, and help provide my family with much needed food for years to come. *(Leaves the ship to go home)*

Scene 2

Father and son are at home preparing to go hunting.

Father : Good morning Isadore, the weather is looking fine out there this morning. We should have a fine day off hunting.

Isadore : I will start getting things ready now. There is nothing like a good day out hunting. Do

you know where the harpoons are, and if they were sharpened after you used them last?

Father : Yes son, they are down by the stage head, we can get them on our way. I have something else to show you that we will take on our hunt today, and we may get to use it instead of the harpoons.

Isadore : What is it, dad?

Father : For a long time now, I have been wanting to get a gun. Yesterday on the Harmony a sailor was willing to trade his gun for enough seal skin to make a coat. It was a huge sacrifice but I did it anyway. It means we may have to spare things along for the winter, hope it was not a mistake.

Isadore : Really, you got a gun?! I can't believe it.

Father : I want it to belong to you son, you are still young. I am getting older now and like to do things the traditional way. You will probably take to this better than me.

Isadore : Gee thanks Dad, I hope it will bring us many kills, and lots of luck.

Father : I am sure it will. *(Coughs)* Here, you take the gun and go look for seals, I think I need to stay at home, I don't feel well all of a sudden. *(Coughs and holds on to his head)* Before you take it and go, I was asked by the sailor to warn you that guns are very dangerous and you can kill someone with it, if you are not careful.

Isadore : Okay Dad, I will go and look for seals, feel better soon.

While Isadore is leaving the house, Influenza walks in and covers Father with a black sheet and leads him off stage to the beat of drums.

Scene 3

Narrator : At the dock the son meets up with two friends who are also going hunting.

Max : Hi Isadore, it should be a good day for hunting.

Isadore : Hi. It is a good day, hope it don't blow later.

Max : *(Notices the gun)* Cool, where did you get the gun, Isadore?

Isadore : My Dad traded some furs for it with a sailor on the Harmony yesterday.

Max : It must have been a lot of furs.

Boas : Can I see it? *(Reaches for the gun)*

Isadore : *(Making sure they can't get the gun)* I don't want anyone touching it, it's really powerful and can kill someone.

Max : We better get going Boas. Hope you see some seals to shoot at today Isadore.

Isadore : See you later.

Influenza walks on stage as the two hunters are leaving and covers Isadore with a black sheet, leading him off the stage to the beat of drums.

Scene 4

Boas and Max arrive home for supper.

Narrator : The two hunters, Boas and Max, arrive home for supper. Their two sisters, Margaret and Caroline, are in the kitchen almost finished making fish for supper.

Boas : Look girls, we had a good hunt. We killed a seal, and when we went ashore to clean it we saw a company of partridges and killed four of them.

Marg : Oh, perfect! Caroline and I will pick them after supper and we will have good ol' soup tomorrow.

Caroline : Let's eat now, you can put the partridges in that basin.

They all sit down to eat.

Max : We saw Isadore earlier and he had a gun that his Father got for him from a sailor on the Harmony. He was going hunting, I wonder how he made out with it.

Marg : He may not have done as well as you guys, even with that new gun.

Caroline : Earlier today there was talk that a couple of people were getting ill all of a sudden, no one seems to know why or what is going on.

Boas : Let's hope it is nothing serious, or that no one dies.

They finish eating.

Marg : We had better go and pick those partridges before it gets dark out there.

Marg and Caroline exit with the partridges.

Scene 5

Margaret and Caroline are by the wharf picking their partridges.

Caroline : Margaret, look at this!

Marg : What is it, and where do you think it came from?

Caroline : It's a gun, I wonder if it is Isadore's. Remember Max said he had one that he got from his father?

Marg : Strange that he would leave it on the wharf like that. Maybe since he is not used to taking a gun when he goes hunting, he may have just forgotten it and went on home.

Caroline : Should we leave it here, or do you think we should take it to his house?

Marg : I'm not sure, maybe he has just gone to get something and will be right back. If he don't show up before we are finished the partridges, we should bring it to him, I s'pose.

Marg and Caroline pick the partridges.

Caroline: I guess we are going to have to go to Isadore's to give him his gun cause he didn't come to get it and we can't just leave it here.

Marg : This all seems strange to me, hope there is nothing going on.

Scene 6

Narrator : Margaret and Caroline walk to Isadore's house, they call out to him, but no one answers. Influenza is there, waiting for them.

Marg : I don't think there is anyone at home.
Caroline : Let's just put the gun inside the door and go, I am not liking this at all.

They both go inside.

Margaret : Look, the fire is lit so they must have just gone out somewhere. Let's go in a minute,

I want to stand by the stove and warm up, I feel kinda cold.

They both sit on the small couch that is near the stove. Influenza walks in, sits between them and puts his arms around them.

Narrator : Meanwhile, Max and Boas think that Margaret and Caroline are taking too long, so they decide to go and check on them.

Scene 7

Begins at the dock.

Max : I don't see them here anymore, but looking at the feathers that are around they must have already been here and picked the partridges, let's look up over the hill for them. Maybe they saw Isadore and went with him.

Boas : Well let's check with Isadore, they may have gone up to see how he made out hunting today.

They get to the house and notice that the door is opened. They both start calling out to Marg and Caroline. No one answers so they go inside.

Max : Blessed Boas, Margaret and Caroline are both on the couch but there is no response from either of them.

They go over to them, touch them, give them a little shake.

Max : You don't suppose that they are dead do you?

Boas : This is the weirdest thing. What's that thing in between them on the couch?

Influenza bolts up off the couch and a fight breaks out, that the boys win together. Influenza is left on the stage floor.

Scene 8

Boas : Max, we survived the great influenza, even though we lost too many of our people in such a short time.

Max : We will never forget them, they will always be a part of who we are.

Father : Carry on our rich traditions.

Isadore : Remember to live off the land.

Marg : Respect those who have passed away.

Caroline : Remember them as they were.

Narrator : *Isadore and his father, Caroline and Margaret made up just a very small fraction of the Inuit people who died from the Spanish Flu. In fact, two thirds of the Inuit population were victims of that terrible illness that was brought to their shores by the Harmony. The devastation and sadness experienced, while it is such a significant part of our history, can only be imagined today. The past shall forever remain the same, it can never be changed. We can only impact the future and make sure we change it for the better. We have survived because we have worked together. Now we will thrive, because we are alive.*

THE END