

**This Isn't Right**  
Les Rigolettes

This play is dedicated to all the land protectors who protested against Muskrat Falls.

Cassie is new to Rigolet and has little knowledge about the Muskrat Falls project. Throughout the play she learns about the concerns of local residents and starts to understand why they are protesting. However, her family has a different opinion and she must decide for herself what is right.

**Cast**

Protestor/Presenter . . . . . Robert Jacque  
Cassie. . . . . Brianna Wolfrey  
Alison . . . . . Alison Falliser  
Nathan/Alison's brother . . . . . Nathan Jacque  
Shania/Alison's Grandmother . . . . . Shania Williams  
Director/lead writer . . . . . Robert Jacque  
Stage Manager . . . . . Miss Denty

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Props

Small round table

6 chairs

Coffee table

Podium

Door

Bed

## This Isn't Right

### Scene 1

*Speaker is standing downstage center, speaking to the audience. A group of people are watching on downstage right.*

Speaker - They are putting people's health at risk.

*Crowd murmurs in agreement.*

Crowd - This will change our way of life forever!

Speaker - They are creating a public health hazard. They are refusing to clear cut and remove the topsoil in the flooding area. This will release poisonous methyl-mercury into the water, and our traditional food will become contaminated!

Crowd - I will not stand for this!

*Crowd murmurs in agreement.*

Crowd - Make Muskrat Right!

*Cassie walks onto stage. As she approaches Alison, the chanting sounds fade. Cassie taps her on the shoulder. Lights focus on Cassie.*

Cassie - Excuse Me? What's going on here?

Alison - Um, this is a protest.

Cassie - For what?

Alison - We are rallying against the Muskrat Falls Project. have you heard of that?

Cassie - Well, I've heard of it. Look, I just moved here. What is this all about?

Alison - So, a while ago, the government announced a brand new hydro-electric project on the Churchill river. It was supposed to bring cheap, clean power to Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

Cassie - But, this sounds pretty good to me. Why are you all protesting against this?

Alison - Um... It's hard to explain. Here, Shania can explain this better. Hey, Shania!

Shania - Yeah?

Alison - Cassie wants to know why we're protesting against this. You're better at explaining than me.

Shania - Okay. So this project is a dam of Muskrat falls, on the Churchill River. The problem is, the company in charge is refusing to clear away the flooded area.

Cassie - So what does that mean?

Shania - When this area is flooded, a chemical called methyl-mercury is going to be released from the soil into the water, and this chemical happens to be harmful to humans.

Nathan - When they say harmful, they mean it. It could make you go blind!

*Cassie is shocked.*

Shania - But, if they clear-cut the area and remove all of the soil, there will be far less methyl-mercury exposure.

Alison - And that's what we want. This methyl-mercury will climb up the food chain until it is in our food!

Nathan - This is going to endanger our very way of life!

Cassie - Oh, but isn't this electricity still good?

Nathan - This is our lives at risk!

Cassie - Well, yeah, I guess so.

*Alison looks over at the speaker.*

Alison - It looks like the protest is over. If you want, you can come over to my house tomorrow, we can talk more about it.

Cassie - uh, okay.

*Lights return to normal, sounds return.*

Speaker - I want to leave the Government this message: Don't play Russian roulette with our lives! We will not stop until changes are made!

*Crowd cheers, lights fade.*

## Scene 2

*Lights up. Cassie is entering the door to their home, set contains door at stage left, couch, chair and small coffee table. Set is repeated in scene 3. Cassie's mother is sitting in a chair, reading a book.*

Cassie - Hey, I'm home.

*Cassie walks over and sits down at the couch.*

Mother - Hi there dear, how was your day?

Cassie - It was fine.

Cassie's mom - Did you meet anybody?

Cassie - Well, I met a few people at a rally down by the dock.

Mother - A rally?

Cassie - Yeah, there was a gathering today protesting against the Muskrat Falls Project.

Mother - Oh, that. Look dear, I wouldn't get caught up in that if I were you.

Cassie - What? Why not?

Mother - It's just, well I don't really see what those people are going on about. "Poisoning us." It seems to me that the government is doing the right thing, giving us this clean energy.

Cassie - Yes, but don't you think it's sort of bad, for them to ignore the idea of this project contaminating their food supply?

Mother - Just remember what your dad always said. Anything in life that is worthwhile involves some risk.

*Cassie looks troubled.*

Cassie - *(hesitantly)* Yeah, I suppose I see what you mean.

*Lights fade on stage left. Cassie walks over to stage right and sits down on her bed. She reaches for her laptop. Voices are projected through speakers, describing quotes argumentatively, for and against the project. As the quotes continue, voices rise in volume, until it is a roar of voices, and Cassie closes the laptop. Beat, then lights out.*

*Lines found below will be recorded and not spoken onstage.*

*Voice - Announced a 6.2 billion dollar deal to develop the Lower Churchill hydroelectric megaproject...*

*Voice - Downstream in lake Melville, the report finds, methyl-mercury levels are expected to increase by as much as 380 percent if only partial clearing takes place in the reservoir...*

*Voice - If people in the area are told not to eat fish, seabirds and seal because of high mercury levels, they will be compensated.*

*Voice - As Labrador Inuit we cannot be bought, and most certainly (not) by a project that will impact the way of life and the future of Labrador Inuit and other Labradorians.*

*Voice - The development of this resource has been researched, studied, considered, and resolved by some of the greatest minds in the world.*

*Voice - The development of Muskrat falls will power homes and businesses across Newfoundland and Labrador with clean, renewable energy for generations to come.*

*Voice - I consider this to be what we would call cultural genocide, because our culture will die because of this.*

*Voices become jumbled together, as speed increases.*

*Voice - Muskrat falls will mean an end to dependence on oil...*

*Voice - It's very important that our lives matter.*

*Voice - We're working very hard to address the concerns.*

*Voice - We are running out of time.*

*Voice - We will take the time to study the findings further.*

### **Scene 3**

*Cassie meets up with Alison at her house, set is repeated from scene 2 with small changes to distinguish it from previous scene. Stage right is changed to a kitchen, with table and chairs. Cassie knocks, and is answered by Alison.*

Alison - Hello! Come in, make yourself at home.

Cassie - Hi.

*Both walk over and sit down at the couch.*

Alison - Would you like something to drink? Tea? Coffee?

Cassie - Tea's fine.

Alison - Alright, just a minute.

*Alison walks to the kitchen.*

Cassie - I did some research last night.

Alison - Oh yeah? What do you think about it now?

Cassie - Well...

*Alison walks back to the couch with two cups of tea)*

Alison - I guess it is a lot to take in after just hearing about it.

Cassie - Yeah, it is. I didn't realize how much of an impact it would have on you.

Alison - It's our way of life. I can't imagine losing my connection with the land. This food is important to all of us.

Cassie - I can't stop thinking about the benefits, but then I look at the cost of it all, and...

Alison - My family and I believe that this is too big of a price to pay.

Brianna - Yes, and I see that, but... I don't know.

Alison - Well, it seems quite simple to me.

*Door opens. Alison's brother and grandmother walk in; Nathan has two partridges in his hand.*

Nathan - Hi! We just got some partridges!

Alison - Ooh, great!

Cassie - Uh, what's a partridge?

*Nathan and his grandmother look at each other, confused, then Nathan holds up the partridges.*

Nathan - This!

Grandmother - Hello, what's your name?

Cassie - I'm Cassie

Grandmother - Well, nice to meet you! So, you're staying for supper, I assume?

Cassie - Oh, um, sure!

Alison - Yes, the salmon just finished cooking!

Grandmother - Oh, great! Come along, Nathan, you can help me set the table?

Nathan - Uh, okay.

Nathan and Grandmother cross to stage left.

Alison - So, anyway, there's going to be a presentation at the town hall tomorrow, it's going to explain all of the effects of methyl-mercury, and all of that stuff. Wanna come with me?

Cassie - Sure, I'd like to know more about this methyl-mercury that's causing such a big fuss.

Alison - I think it would be good information to know.

Grandmother - Supper's ready!

*The grandmother sets the platter of salmon on the table.*

Alison - Oh, you're going to love the salmon, it's my favorite.

Cassie - Ooh, Yum!

*Cassie and Alison cross to stage left.*

Grandmother - Oh, it smells good today!

*They all sit down at the table.*

Nathan - Save the tail for me, please!

Grandmother - Well, I guess this will be the last salmon that we'll have.

Cassie - How come?

Grandmother - Next year, like it or not, the methyl-mercury will be in the water, and that means it will be in the fish too.

Cassie - Oh, right...

Nathan - And I don't really want to eat poison fish.

Grandmother - And it's not just the fish, either. The seals and the sea-birds eat the fish too, and they eat lots of them, which means more and more mercury.

Cassie - I didn't realize that.

Grandmother - I remember when Dad would fry up a fish for our breakfast each morning... I never got sick of it. It is one of my favorite foods.

Cassie - This isn't right.

*Beat, then stage goes black.*

#### **Scene 4**

*Seats are placed on either side of a Speaker, Cassie, Alison, and her family walk to their seats.*

Speaker - Thank you all for coming here tonight. We have put together this presentation to inform everyone on the effects of methyl-mercury, which will be released as a result of the flooding of the Muskrat Falls reservoir.

Methyl-Mercury is a chemical found in the soil. It is not harmful as long as it is in the ground, but it will be released into the water when The Dam is flooded. Now, Clearing away all of the fauna and soil in the flooding area will decrease the amount of this chemical released into the environment to a safe level, but there are no plans at the moment for the company to clear away anything.

This methyl-mercury is a neurological toxin, that is, it affects the Central Nervous System: the brain and spinal cord. Its effects are very similar to that of Cerebral Palsy, which include problems with movement and coordination, lung function impairment and decreased mental



functioning. These effects are most prominent in infants, and it may cause growth problems, as well as sight and hearing impairment. Of course, these effects vary in intensity based on how much of the chemical one is being exposed to.

Nathan - So, how much methyl-mercury will we actually be exposed to?

Speaker - that is an excellent question. Based on the research that has recently taken place, we believe that mercury levels in and around Lake Melville will increase by 380%, if there is no clearing of the reservoir area. However, if all of the topsoil is cleared away, the methyl-mercury levels are estimated to rise by only 13%. This is what we are fighting to achieve.

Alison- I know that to avoid this poisoning we have to stop eating our traditional food. Can you explain why?

Speaker - The methyl-mercury that is in the water will affect all organisms within the marine environment. This includes Seals and birds that prey upon fish. The higher up the food chain it goes, the more mercury there is. It starts in the plankton, then a tiny organism will eat that, and another will eat that, on and on until it comes to the fish and other animals that are eaten by people, and as this methyl-mercury rises up the food chain, it accumulates, which means harmful doses end up in our food.

If you have any more questions, we have put together a pamphlet about all that we have discussed tonight. Thank you for coming.

*Applause. Lights out.*

## Scene 5

*Cassie walks through the door of her house. Stage left is identical to that of scene 2. Her mother is on the couch reading a newspaper.*

Cassie - Hello.

Mother - Hi.

Cassie - I just got back from this presentation— and before you say anything, yes, I know that you told me not to get involved, but I think this is important. I'm going to the protest later, and I want you to come with me. Here, look at this, I got it from the lecture.

*Cassie mother takes the pamphlet, reads it.*

Mother - Where did they get their information from? I have read that the company involved with the project has said that the flooding will not affect any of the people in this area.

Cassie - Where are you getting *your* information from? Research has proven that the flooding will cause methyl-mercury levels to rise to a dangerous level for the people who eat the food!

Mother - This research that you speak of was undertaken on behalf of the government fighting against Muskrat falls! Who says it isn't biased?

Cassie - If you actually research this, you would know that the research by the Nunatsiavut Government had covered a larger area and spent more time upon it than that of the company involved with the project. Who says they aren't biased?

Mother - Perhaps, but they're in too far now to stop this project! Too much money has already been put into it!

Cassie - You see, that's the thing, they don't want to shut the project down! They want all of the land that will be flooded to be cleared of vegetation and soil, because that will reduce the levels of mercury to a point which isn't harmful. If you're going to take a side in this argument, at least get your facts straight!

Mother - Okay, now you're going too far!

Cassie - Alright, I'm sorry, but I just want you to see that these people that are fighting for their culture, these land protectors, are doing the right thing.

Mother - Why are you being so passionate about this? This isn't your fight. You don't have to go to this protest.

Cassie - This isn't just about them. It's about all of us. This is a Human Rights Issue.

*Cassie walks away. Cassie's mother sits back down, picks up the pamphlet, reads it again. Beat. Lights out.*

## Scene 6

*Cassie walks onstage, meets her friends standing in a group, holding signs.*

Cassie - Hello!

Alison - Oh, Hi!

Cassie - What's going on?

Shania - We were just talking to Nathan about the protest in Goose Bay. He just got back.

Cassie - Oh yeah, how did that go?

Nathan - It was good. We protested near the front gates of the worksite. We let the workers out, but kept anyone from getting in. I also took part in a walk to our local M.P.'s office. you know, I'm quite proud of how many people showed up.

Cassie - I'm really proud of all of the support that is being given, from all across Labrador, and all of Canada!

Shania - And it's not only aboriginal people, everyone is supporting us.

*Nathan looks at watch.*

Nathan - Okay, guys, looks like it will be starting soon.

Alison - You're coming with us to the rally, right Cassie?

Cassie - Yeah, but I don't have a sign.

Shania - Oh, that's fine, we have a couple extra ones.

*They all exit stage left.*

## Scene 7

*Alison, Cassie, Shania and Nathan are standing on either side of Speaker who is downstage center.*

Speaker - Thank you all for coming, I am proud to see so many people show up for such an important issue. Today, I want to hear your voice, because this issue is about you. This is an open mic discussion; does anyone wish to speak?

*Alison walks up to the mic.*

Alison - I'm here today for future generations. When I was younger, and I'm sure there are many out there that are proud of this as well, I had the privilege to shoot out of a rifle. My great grandfather witnessed it. I'm sure he wouldn't want our culture to go down the drain. I want my children and grandchildren to have the same experience.

Speaker - Thank you for your very touching words.

*Shania walks towards the mic.*

Shania- So, this past summer I shot my very first seal. My parents and siblings were with me. I had this huge, happy expression on my face. My brother was trying so hard to kill one before me and my dad said, "give your sister a try bhy." He handed me the gun and on my second shot I got a huge jar (seal). My brother got really jealous. I want to see my children and grandchildren feel the excitement I had when I hit the seal.

Speaker- What a nice story. Thank you for sharing that with us. Anyone else?

*Cassie walks to the mic, hesitantly.*

Cassie - I just moved here a week ago. I didn't know much about The Muskrat Falls Project, but my new friends told me about it all, and I for one think this is terrible. I can't imagine losing such a big part of my life. Though it hasn't had much of an influence on me, it has for all of these people who call Labrador home. I want to Make Muskrat Right.

Speaker - Thank you for sharing your thoughts. Thank you to everyone who spoke here today, I truly believe that the people of Labrador are resilient, and together, we can ensure that our land is protected for years to come.