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The Woods

Robert Alan Evans

Royal Court Theatre Upstairs

5 September–20 October 2018

In the first stages of a lively and deeply unsettling production directed by Lucy Morrison, *The Woods* appears to be one of those ubiquitous, grim post-apocalyptic dramas that always seem to be popping up in new writing theatres.

In fact, by the end of the 80-minute running time, while all is not entirely clear, Robert Alan Evans's play has largely been played out in the head of its unnamed protagonist, a Woman played with determined realism by Lesley Sharp.

Somehow, she has wound up in convincingly sinister woods that designer Naomi Dawson has allowed to overwhelm not only the stage but also impinge upon other areas of the auditorium.

The lonely character's only shelter is fabricated from a metal frame and plastic sheeting, offering little protection or privacy to Woman or her monosyllabic guest played by a full-sized actor Finn Bennett, possibly a young man called Matthew or conceivably a little boy.

As these two struggle to survive in a world that has been completely denuded of even the barest of necessities, the lady of the house receives frequent visits from Tom Mothersdale portraying Wolf in an assortment of guises.

Very little is as it seems, which becomes all too apparent when Lesley Sharp's southern American accent slips into something far more anglicised for no immediately perceivable reason. Woman is clearly deeply disturbed by experiences from her past, a kitchen with a baby alarm hinting about significant elements of her history.

Only towards the end of a challenging but ultimately intriguing evening do some past events that had only previously been implied become more concrete, adding greater depth and meaning to the play and consolidating the impression that Lesley Sharp has excelled herself in a difficult role.

Reviewer: [Philip Fisher](#)