

# Nevermore

Written by Niyazi Unugur

*Created in collaboration with the Highgate Red Company 2025-26*

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## **SYNOPSIS**

### **Genre: Thriller (Fantasy)**

*At the rundown orphanage Nevermore, life is governed by strict discipline, fading traditions, and the fragile hope that one day the girls might be chosen by a wealthy family and taken away. Unknown to the pupils, the orphanage itself is facing imminent closure unless new investment is secured, a fate that could leave the girls lost to the world beyond its gates.*

*When a mysterious benefactor arrives offering a rare opportunity to a select few, excitement ripples through the orphanage. As tests are set and names are announced, hope and jealousy collide. Yet beneath the promise of escape, something far more troubling begins to surface.*

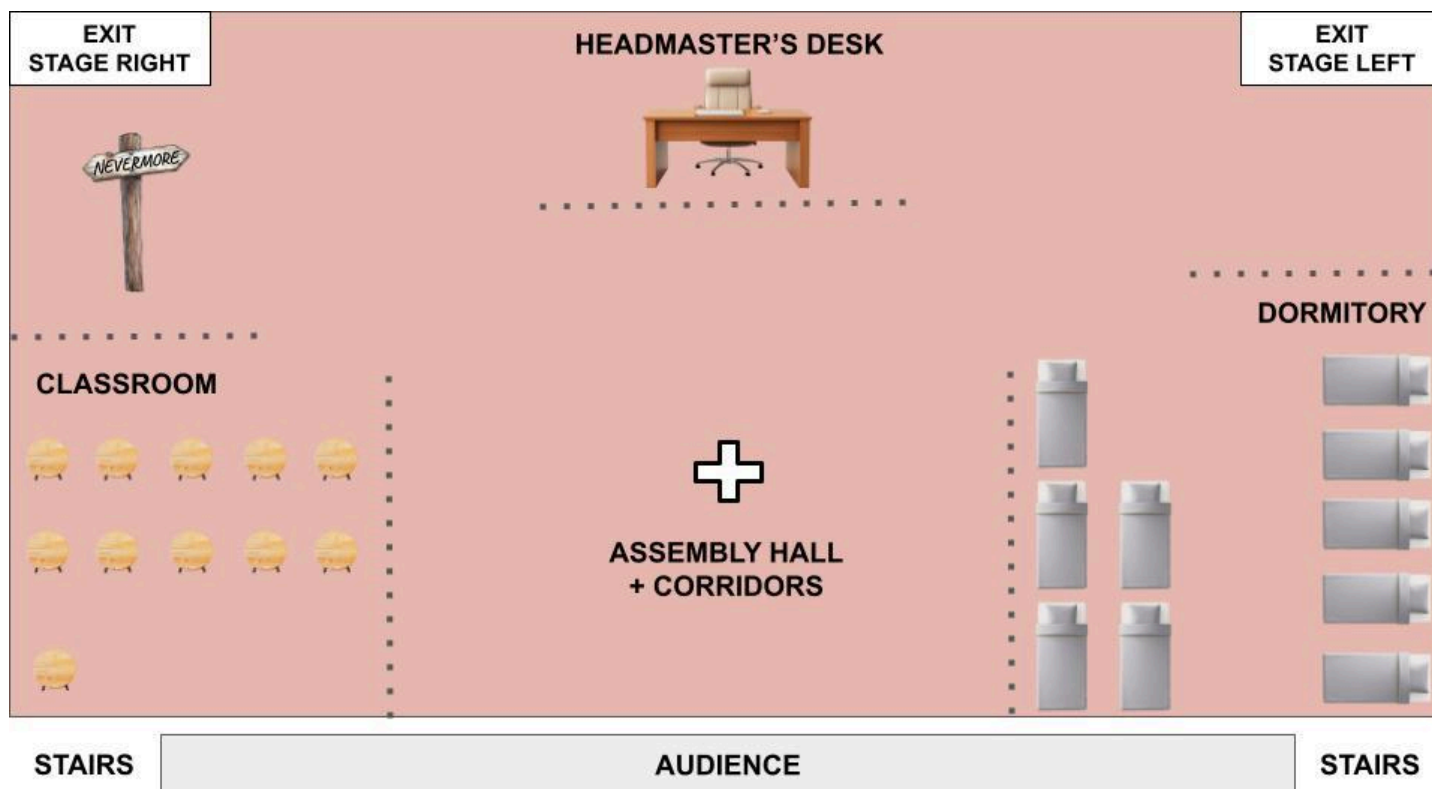
*As the story unfolds, long-buried secrets emerge, revealing that Nevermore's history stretches back to World War II, a time when children vanished with alarming regularity. Hidden beneath the orphanage lie tunnels and forgotten spaces, leading the pupils toward a magical and dangerous world they were never meant to discover.*

*Blending dark fantasy with moments of humour, courage, and rebellion, Nevermore follows a group of children who refuse to accept obedience at any cost. As they uncover betrayal, challenge authority, and confront forces determined to shape their futures, the pupils must decide whether they are willing to risk everything to save their friends.*

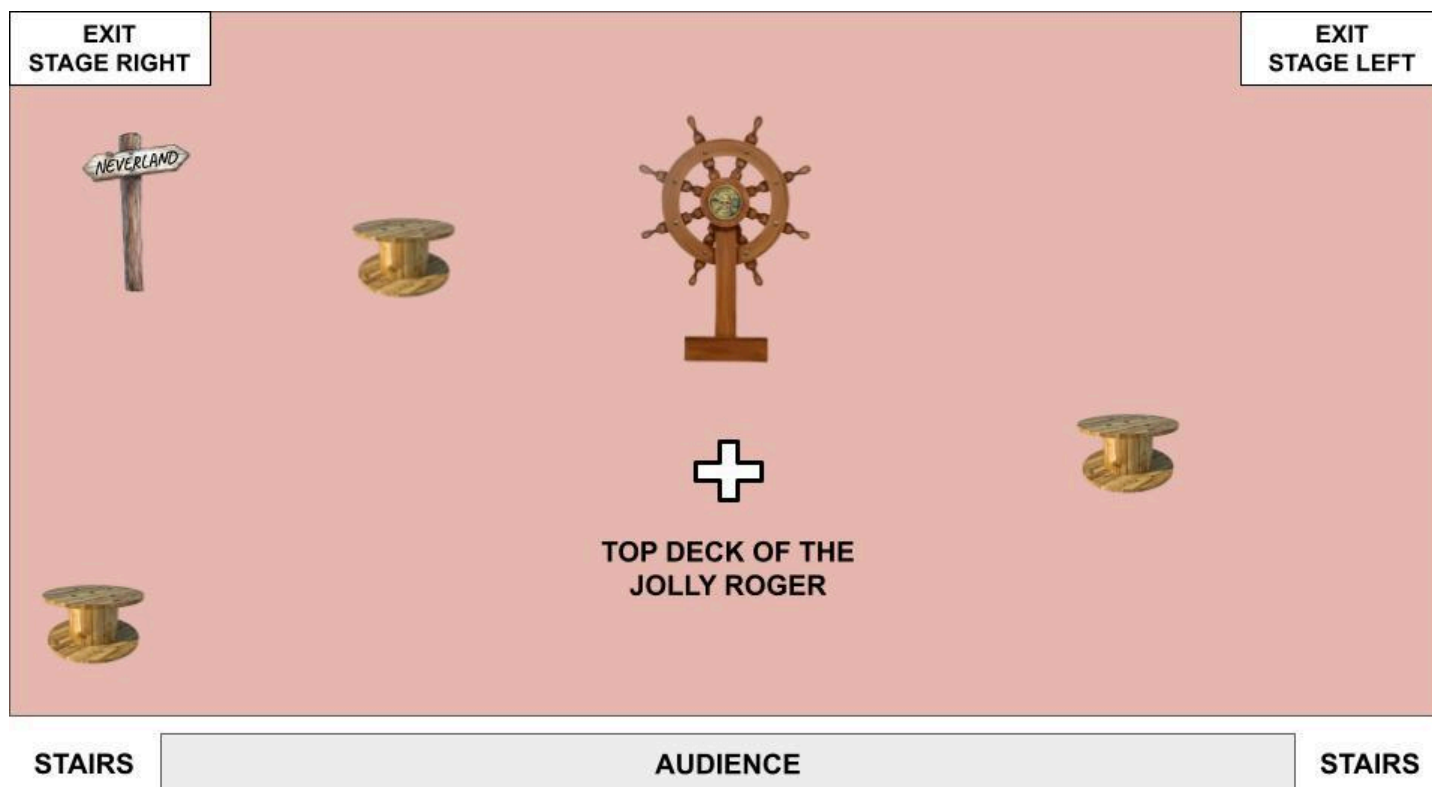
This play was inspired by the role-play sessions with our Highgate Red Company of 2025–26. Using the Role That Dice system, pupils explored an immersive, improvised drama world where their choices shaped the story. Through collaboration, investigation, and roleplay, the pupils created the characters, dialogue, and narrative that formed the ideas for this script.

## STAGING DIAGRAMS

### ACT ONE - NEVERMORE



### ACT TWO - NEVERLAND



## SCENE 1: NEVERMORE ORPHANAGE. MORNING.

**LX: 0** – Preset: low green/purple

### **MUSIC:**

*As the audience enters, the scene is set and the cast are frozen in tableau.*

*Downstage right: the CLASSROOM.*

*JUNIORS sit on wooden stools, frozen mid-lesson.*

*Some pupils have hands raised.*

*Others looked bored or daydreaming.*

*One is making fun of a peer.*

*Another stares out of the window into the distance.*

*MISS BROOKSON stands downstage, warm and attentive, pointing at the board, a book tucked under one arm, her expression kind and encouraging.*

*Downstage left: the DORMITORY.*

*SENIORS lay or sit in their beds, lined in rows.*

*Some are curled beneath thin blankets, clutching pillows or soft toys.*

*Others sit upright, half-awake, rubbing their eyes or staring towards a small, unseen window.*

*One appears to be mid-whisper to a roommate.*

*Another as though something has just woken them.*

*Upstage centre: the HEADMISTRESS'S OFFICE*

*HEADMISTRESS GREYMOORE and MISS HEATHERS stand in tense conversation, frozen.*

*GREYMOORE sits at a desk, pen poised above a document, just before signing.*

*MISS HEATHERS towers above GREYMOORE, her posture rigid and commanding.*

*Their eyes are locked. The moment is heavy with pressure.*

*The rest of the STAFF are upstage, in positions frozen that suit their role.*

*MR CORRIGAN, the caretaker, is mid-sweep, broom paused sweeping the floor.*

*MR HOLT, the P.E. teacher, stands with a football under one arm.*

*MISS STEEL, the music teacher, holds a conductor's baton, mid-gesture.*

*MISS SIGANDON, the science teacher, is examining a small vile, eyes alight with curiosity.*

*MISS MACKENZIE stands hunched in the background, hands clasped, watching everyone.*

**SONG: 'NEVERMORE'**

**LX: 1 – State A (Classroom)**

*EMMA sings softly from the classroom.*

**EMMA**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
We'll be nevermore.

**LX: 2 – Add State B (Dormitory)**

*MOLLY sings, sitting upright in her bed.*

**MOLLY**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
We'll be nevermore.

**LX: 3 – Add State C (Office)**

**ALL**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
Nevermore, we'll be nevermore.

*The ENSEMBLE freezes in a new tableaux as ARIANNA sings.*

**ARIANNA**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
We'll be nevermore.

*MIRA sings from the dorms.*

**MIRA**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
We'll be nevermore

**ALL**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
Nevermore, we'll be nevermore.

*The ENSEMBLE freezes in a new tableaux as MISS STEEL sings centre stage.*

**MISS STEEL**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
We'll be nevermore.

**JESS**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
We'll be nevermore.

**ALL**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
Nevermore, we'll be nevermore.

*The ENTIRE CAST now sings one final verse together, followed by a chorus.*

**ALL**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
We'll be nevermore.

Nevermore, nevermore,  
We'll be nevermore.

Nevermore, nevermore,  
Nevermore, we'll be nevermore.

**LX: 4 – Blackout**

*The STAFF upstage exit.*

**SCENE 2: DORMITORY. NEVERMORE ORPHANAGE. MORNING.**

**LX: 5 – State B (Dormitory)**

*The dormitory is dimly lit as thin light filters through high windows.  
Some SENIORS lie awake in bed, staring at the ceiling.  
Others sit upright on their beds, knees pulled in.  
The atmosphere is calm but heavy.*

**ELLA**

Some nights I dream, and when I dream, I forget where I am.  
Then I wake and remember.

**LIV**

I wake and I am already tired.  
Like this place has beaten me before it starts.

**AVA**

Nevermore feels smaller every year.  
Like the walls move in when no one is looking.

**SIERRA**

Do you ever wonder what the others are doing?  
Our friends, the ones who left Nevermore.

**MOLLY**

Rose wrote me once, she got taken in by a rich family.  
Said they had carpets everywhere and a chandelier!

**POPPY**

Clara joined a travelling circus.  
She was always so good at gymnastics.

**ISABELLA**

Mary was sent to a butcher's shop.  
She said the work was hard, but she ate well.

**MIRA**

I heard one girl went to sea.  
All the way to America.

**REBECCA**

They are the lucky ones.  
We are the leftovers. The scraps.

**POPPY**

Once they leave, they do not stay long in our lives.

**AVA**

Yep, it's always the same.  
They write for about six months, then the letters stop.

**ELLIE**

Can you blame them?

**ELLA**

Sometimes I wonder if anyone is coming for us.

**LIV**

For us?  
I do not think anyone is coming to save us!

**SIERRA**

We are the old stock now.  
And Nevermore is all we will ever know.

*A long beat of silence.*

*No movement but lots of eye contact.*

*The quiet is deliberate and uncomfortable.*

**MOLLY**

I hate this place.  
Especially when it is quiet.

**POPPY**

Nevermore has taught us how to survive, that is something, I guess.

**ISABELLA**

One day, something will change for us. It has to.  
And maybe we'll end up out there, beyond these high walls.

**ELLIE**

Or maybe nothing changes.

And this is it for us.

***MISS HEATHERS enters suddenly.***

***She says nothing as she stands in the doorway, an intimidating figure.***

***At once, the SENIORS scramble to their feet as the room snaps into order.***

***Each pupil stands rigidly at the end of their bed, eyes forward, hands by their sides.***

***MISS HEATHERS moves slowly down the line, inspecting them one by one.***

***She leans in close to a pupil. Waits and then moves on.***

***Her silence is deliberate. Suffocating.***

**MISS HEATHERS**

The Headmistress has summoned you to the Assembly Hall.

There will be an important announcement made this morning.

***She pauses, letting the words settle.***

**MISS HEATHERS**

Make your beds.

Then report to the Assembly Hall immediately.

***She exits without another glance.***

***Silence as the SENIORS exchange brief looks. No one speaks.***

***Quickly they gather their sheets and pillows and then exit following MISS HEATHERS.***

***The room is left bare.***

**LX: 6 – Fade to blackout**

**SCENE 3: JUNIORS' CLASSROOM. NEVERMORE ORPHANAGE. MORNING.**

**LX: 7 – State A (Classroom)**

*Morning light spills across the classroom*

*MISS BROOKSON sits at the front of the room, reading from a worn copy of 'Treasure Island'.  
The JUNIORS lean forward, completely absorbed.*

**MISS BROOKSON**

"I remember it as if it were yesterday; the sudden fall of the breeze, the heat, and the silence, broken only by the rippling of the water against the bows. The island was thickly wooded. From the beach, a gentle slope rose up to the rocks standing out strangely from the green. All was wild and overgrown. I had soon begun to enjoy the adventure..."

*She closes the book gently.*

**MISS BROOKSON**

Now, how do you think Jim Hawkins felt when he first saw Treasure Island?

**EMMA**

Excited.

Like something amazing was about to happen.

**CHARLOTTE**

I think Jim Hawkins was very brave.

Even though he was very scared.

**LEO**

He was probably confused at first.

The island was all new to him.

**VALENTINA**

I think he must have liked it straight away.

Imagine, he's never seen anything like that before!

**ARIANNA**

I think Jim Hawkins would have felt free.

Like no one could tell him what to do!

**JESS**

I wish I could see an island like that.

Just once.

**SILVIA**

It must've been so quiet, out there in the wild all alone...  
I think Jim trusted the island.

**ANNIE**

I would not like being on that island.  
It would feel like someone or something was watching me.

**MISS BROOKSON**

Well done girls, great answers.  
Now does anyone have any questions?

**CATTIE**

Miss, do you think it was a calm quiet?  
Or the kind of quiet that makes you nervous?

**MISS BROOKSON**

Definitely the calm kind of quiet.

**CASSY**

Miss, does Jim Hawkins survive in the end?

**MISS BROOKSON**

Well girls, we will just have to wait and see, won't we.

*The JUNIORS groan and beg.*

**MISS MACKENZIE**

Good morning everybody!

**MISS BROOKSON**

Good morning Miss Mackenzie!  
Girls?

**JUNIORS**

Good morning Miss Mackenzie!

*MISS BROOKSON notices MISS MACKENZIE who is standing in the doorway.  
MISS MACKENZIE enters without announcing herself.*

**MISS MACKENZIE**

Treasure Island, a fantastic choice Miss Brookson.

*(She steps further into the room.)*

I think Jim was a very naughty boy for wandering so far from home.

Maybe a wolf with big sharp teeth got him in the woods.

Or maybe something far worse.

**MISS BROOKSON**

That's enough, Miss Mackenzie!

*(reassuring to pupils)*

Girls, I'm sure nothing like that happens to Jim Hawkins.

**MISS MACKENZIE**

The headmistress has summoned everyone.

Staff and pupils.

To the Assembly Hall.

**MISS BROOKSON**

We'll be right along.

**MISS MACKENZIE**

Do not take too long, girls.

*(A pause. A thin smile.)*

You would not want to upset the headmistress.

**MISS BROOKSON**

Let's hurry along now girls!

*MISS MACKENZIE turns and glides out.*

*A moment of silence.*

*The JUNIORS stand and lift their stools in unison, taking them as they leave.*

*They file out, following the same path MISS MACKENZIE took.*

*The classroom is left empty.*

**LX: 8 – Fade to blackout**

**SCENE 4: ASSEMBLY HALL. NEVERMORE ORPHANAGE. MORNING.**

**LX: 9 – State D (Assembly Hall)**

*MR CORRIGAN stands downstage left, polishing something that does not need polishing.*

*MR HOLT and MISS SIGANDON sit on the edge of centre stage, looking outward.*

*MISS STEEL sits on a stool, downstage right, reading through sheet music.*

**MR HOLT**

All I am saying is, we don't get called to assembly without reason.

Something is coming, and I think it's something bad.

**MISS STEEL**

It does feel awfully sudden.

**MISS SIGANDON**

And that usually means money.

**MR CORRIGAN**

Nevermore is not what it used to be.

It has been running thin for years.

**MR HOLT**

I have seen it before.

If there are to be cuts, it will be us first to go!

**MISS STEEL**

As if it is optional.

The arts and sports are never appreciated

**MR CORRIGAN**

People do not give like they used to.

Not to places like this.

**MISS SIGANDON**

Orphans are not fashionable.

Not anymore.

**MISS STEEL**

I remember a time when benefactors would be bending over backwards to help.

Now they barely answer letters.

**MISS SIGANDON**

Or perhaps Greymoore has finally had enough?  
Or maybe she's been forced to go?

**MR CORRIGAN**

The headmistress has held this place together for two decades.  
Let's give her a bit more credit, ey.

**MR HOLT**

Well, if it is redundancies, I ain't going quietly!

**MISS STEEL**

Nor me.

**MR CORRIGAN**

Whatever it is, Nevermore is changing.

*They fall silent as distant footsteps echo down the hall.*

*They stand and move into their assembly positions.*

*The rest of the STAFF and PUPILS enter in complete silence, filing into place.*

The PUPILS get into their ASSEMBLY FORMATION.

*GREYMOORE is the last to enter.*

*She moves downstage left, scanning the hall as if taking stock of what remains.*

*She turns to face outward, a measured pause before she speaks.*

**GREYMOORE**

These great halls of Nevermore have many stories to tell.

Did you know girls, before the war, this building housed orphaned boys.

Lost boys, searching for purpose in uncertain times.

When the war came, the world changed and Nevermore changed with it.

Under my leadership, these walls were given new life - a renaissance, of sorts.

We became a school for girls.

A place of care, discipline, and opportunity.

I have tried, tirelessly, to bring this school into a new age of education.

To ensure its survival.

And now, an opportunity has been presented to us.

An exciting one.

*A murmur of excitement mixed with visible relief among the pupils and staff.*

*GREYMOORE raises her hand and silence once more.*

## **GREYMOORE**

A benefactor has travelled a great distance to be with us today.  
From the Netherlands.  
She comes offering possibilities and purpose.  
A future beyond these walls.  
So, it is my honour to introduce her.  
The Baroness Van de Kooh.

***The BARONESS VAN DE KOOH enters from the staircase stage left, flanked by MR SMEE  
Elegant. Controlled. Observant.  
She pauses, surveying the pupils, then the hall itself.***

***The PUPILS straighten instinctively, staring in awe.  
The STAFF exchange cautious looks, tension beneath their composure.  
VAN DE KOOH moves downstage centre and begins.***

## **VAN DE KOOH**

Good morning, girls.  
It is a pleasure to be here.  
My mother once visited these halls and spoke very highly of Nevermore.  
She was a philanthropist, who was in fact building a theme park and zoo for orphaned children.  
But she died mid-project. So sad.  
***(Long pause, as the pupils exchange glances.)***  
My mother left me her fortune and something far more important  
She left me the blueprints for the theme park and it will be a place of wonder!  
***(Another pause, moves down the line to observe the pupils more closely)***  
This past year I have travelled the seven continents, searching for gifted young talent.  
And, that search has led me here, to Nevermore.  
Over the coming days, I will observe you.  
How you learn and how you behave.  
Then, some of you *will* be invited to sail back with me to the Netherlands.  
***(begins to move towards SMEE, whilst talking)***  
And together, we *will* complete my mother's project.  
Built in her honour.  
For children like you.

***A loud flurry of excitement and applause fills the hall, as the VAN DE KOOH stands, composed and dignified, receiving it bowing. She steps aside to rejoin MR SMEE, who leans in.***

## **MR SMEE**

Fantastic speech, Baroness.  
Wonderful, truly just wonderful!

***MR SMEE adds an exaggerated wink. A fraction too obvious.***

***VAN DE KOOH gives him a sharp glance and MR SMEE straightens at once.***

***VAN DE KOOH makes a small, precise gesture toward the exit and they exit together.***

***GREYMOORE moves forward, reclaiming the space.***

***Her presence quiets the room immediately.***

**GREYMOORE**

Thank you Baroness.

Now girls, we have heard the opportunity placed before us.

***A pause. She lets the weight of the word opportunity settle.***

**GREYMOORE**

Breakfast.

Use the time wisely.

Think carefully about what lay ahead.

And approach the days to come as you always have.

***(a glance across to all of them)***

With confidence.

**ALL**

Confidence!

***MISS MACKENZIE enters, dragging a large metal pot and ladle across the floor.***

**MISS MACKENZIE**

Right then, girls.

Get your slop.

***She peers into the pot, stirs slowly.***

**MISS MACKENZIE**

I made it fresh this morning.

It's extra sloppy!

Line up.

***She lets out a strange, wheezing laugh that goes on a beat too long.***

***A collective groan from the pupils as they reluctantly line up.***

***Bowls of slop are handed out to the pupils by staff.***

***As the line forms centrestage, GREYMOORE's attention locks onto ISABELLA.***

**GREYMOORE**

Isabella.

A word, if I may?

***ISABELLA hesitates, then obeys, moving to join her downstage centre.  
The pupils continue lining up, watching them but trying not to stare.***

**GREYMOORE**

Isabella, you are the oldest here.

And frankly, you've become too old for Nevermore.

***(pause)***

So let me be very clear what the stakes are.

If you are not chosen by the Baroness, you will leave at the end of this week.

No more chances.

***A quiet, cruel beat.***

**GREYMOORE**

Do not waste this opportunity girl.

***GREYMOORE turns away without waiting for a response.***

***MISS MACKENZIE trundles her pot off and the rest of the STAFF exit too.***

***MISS BROOKSON lingers, clearly conflicted.***

**MISS BROOKSON**

***(softly)***

Izzy, I believe in you.

I believe in all of you.

Believe in yourselves and show them who you really are.

***MISS BROOKSON places a warm hand on her shoulder and then exits.***

***Silence.***

**SCENE 5: PLAYGROUND. NEVERMORE ORPHANAGE. MOMENTS LATER.**

*A long silence lingers.*

*The pupils settle into the space slowly.*

*No one rushes.*

*Most sit on the floor, some rest against the walls.*

*Wooden bowls in their hands or on their knees.*

*Some lift the bowls, sip cautiously, then stop.*

*Others do not eat it at all.*

*Several stare outward, lost in their own thoughts.*

*ISABELLA remains downstage centre, alone.*

*Her bowl sits untouched.*

*The weight of the moment is visible.*

*Eyes drift toward ISABELLA, then away.*

*No one speaks.*

*Eventually, POPPY, LIV, and AVA quietly break from the group and move beside ISABELLA.*

*Close, but not crowding.*

**AVA**

Don't let Greymoore get inside your head.

**POPPY**

You know, it's not about you.

**LIV**

Greymoore doesn't want Nevermore to fail and she needs someone to blame.

**ISABELLA**

*(quiet, to herself, then aloud)*

She hates me.

But I have potential.

And I am not wasting it.

Not if it's my last chance.

*A beat.*

**LIV**

If it is your last chance.

It's a chance to prove her wrong.

***ISABELLA nods, though her doubt still lingers.***

***The silence settles again.***

**EMMA**

This looks like vomit.

**CHARLOTTE**

Probably is.

**EMMA**

I'm not eating this.

**CHARLOTTE**

Eat a little, Emma.

You won't do well in the trials on an empty stomach.

**LEO**

So this Baroness, she owns a whole ship?

**VALENTINA**

That means she's actually rich.

Which means, no more slop!

**LEO**

If it is a ship, does that mean we leave London?

Like properly leave?

**VALENTINA**

I can't wait to get out of here.

And wave goodbye to the other side of these walls!

**ANNIE**

The Baroness said she will observe how we behave.

**CATTIE**

So all we have to do is behave like saints.

**CASSY**

*(playful mocking)*

Yes of course ma'am.

**CATTIE**

*(bows to courtesy)*

Whatever you need ma'am.

**SILVIA**

What is a vessel?

**JESS**

It's a big ship.

Like those ones in the stories Miss Brookson tells us.

**CASSY**

Does that mean we get to eat fish?

Because I would really love to try fish!

**POPPY**

I would like to eat anything but this.

Why is it so grey!

*The PUPILS ad-lib a reaction, agreeing.*

**ELLA**

This is all so exciting!

Imagine we do get chosen to go to the Netherlands.

Where even is that?

**LIV**

It's in Europe, I think.

**SIERRA**

Why here?

Why Nevermore?

Of all the orphanages, she chooses this dump!

**ISABELLA**

Precisely, it's because Nevermore *is* a dump.

And more importantly, Greymoore is desperate.

That's why.

**AVA**

Yep, Greymoore knows we will do anything to leave.  
And, she will do anything to make money and keep this place open.

**ANNIE**

Well, maybe the Baroness chose us because we are special.

*REBECCA laughs once, cold and moves to ANNIE.  
ELLIE and MIRA stand back to back watching over the others.*

**REBECCA**

Listen carefully.  
You are not special.

**ANNIE**

I am!  
Miss Brookson told me so!

**REBECCA**

Silly girl, she says that to all the juniors.

**ARIANNA**

*(confidently, touching her necklace)*

Well, I've got my lucky charm.  
So I'm going to be fine.

*REBECCA turns and gives ELLIE and MIRA a nod.  
They move towards ARIANNA.*

**ELLIE**

Who gave that to you?

**ARIANNA**

My mum.

*An awkward beat.*

**ELLIE**

Your Mum didn't give that to you.  
Because, you don't have one.

*Ad-lib teasing from the group.*

**MIRA**

That necklace probably came from lost property.

***MIRA, ELLIE and REBECCA laugh.***

***ARIANNA's hand drops from the necklace.***

***REBECCA now stands to address the whole group.***

**REBECCA**

Listen up everyone, I am not staying here.

If I am stuck in Nevermore, there will be trouble - for all of you.

So I *will* be getting on that ship.

**ELLIE**

Same.

And if anyone thinks they can take our place, you'd better think again.

***A small hush spreads.***

***Some girls lower their eyes.***

**SILVIA**

I don't like how you said that.

That's not kind!

**CATTIE**

It doesn't matter what she says.

We can outperform them.

**CASSY**

Yeah, that's all we need to do.

***A beat.***

***REBECCA kneels to her.***

***MIRA circles in from behind.***

**REBECCA**

Say that again.

**MIRA**

Go on.

***AVA stands. Calm. Firm. Unshaken.***

**AVA**

Everyone has waited for this opportunity.  
And, everyone deserves a fair shot.

***REBECCA stands to intimidate her.***

**AVA**

Yes, we're competing against each other.  
But, everyone deserves a fair shot.

**REBECCA**

Oh, you want a fair shot?

***(pause)***

I will give you a fair shot.

***REBECCA steps forward and slaps AVA hard across the face.  
The sound cracks through the space.***

***AVA reels back a step, stunned.  
Her hand rises to her cheek.***

***A sharp intake of breath from the group.***

***AVA looks up at REBECCA and steadies herself, refusing to cry.  
REBECCA stands grinning.  
AVA stands to meet her.***

**AVA**

You do not scare me.  
You only embarrass yourselves.

***MISS HEATHERS enters with MISS SIGANDON.  
The playground snaps into stillness.***

**MISS HEATHERS**

Girls, what is happening here?

***Silence.***

**MISS SIGANDON**

Ava, you're bleeding?  
Who did this?

*Silence.*

**MISS HEATHERS**

Tell me!

*Silence.*

**MISS HEATHERS**

Fine.

Then you will all be held responsible.

Clean this mess up at once and get to your classrooms!

*MISS HEATHERS turns and exits.*

*MISS SIGANDON follows, disappointed.*

*REBECCA, MIRA and ELLIE exit first.*

*AVA retreats downstage left holding her face,.*

*ELLA stands and steps forward.*

**ELLA**

Thank you, Ava.

For standing up for all of us.

**AVA**

I meant it.

I meant what I said.

This week, everyone deserves a fair shot.

*Excitement stirs again through the group.*

*The girls exchange looks, a shared, unspoken agreement.*

*A distant bell rings.*

**LX: 10** – Fade to blackout

*PUPILS pass their wooden bowls to MISS MACKENZIE and get into ASSEMBLY FORMATION.*

## **SCENE 6: MONTAGE. VARIOUS CLASSROOMS. NEVERMORE ORPHANAGE**

**LX: 11 – State D (Assembly Hall)**

### **MUSIC:**

*The space transforms into a continuous montage, underscored by the music.*

The PUPILS are in their ASSEMBLY FORMATION.

GREYMOORE, VAN DE KOOH, and MR SMEE observe from the staircase downstage right.

### **GREYMOORE**

Now we must approach the trials of this week, as you always have.

With discipline. Determination.

And above all, with -

### **ALL**

Confidence!

---

### **PE LESSON**

*MR HOLT strides forward.*

*The PUPILS quickly move into GRID FORMATION, feet together, eyes forward.*

### **MR HOLT**

Right!

Knees up.

Get them high!

*The PUPILS begin running on the spot, knees lifting sharply.*

*MR HOLT walks the line, watching closely.*

### **MR HOLT**

Higher - this is not a stroll in the park!

*He waits and observes.*

### **MR HOLT**

Did I say slow down?

***MR HOLT stops and gives his next command.***

**MR HOLT**

Star jumps.

***The PUPILS explode into star jumps, arms and legs wide.***

***MR HOLT walks up and down the line, observing them closely.***

**MR HOLT**

Proper technique.

Full extension!

***He waits and observes.***

**MR HOLT**

Did I say stop?!

We don't have all day!

**They continue, even though most are clearly tired.**

**MR HOLT raises a hand. The movement stops.**

**MR HOLT**

On your backs!

Sit-ups.

***The PUPILS drop where they stand and begin sit-ups.***

***MR HOLT crouches beside one pupil.***

**MR HOLT**

Up,down

Up,down

Quality over speed.

***MR HOLT stands and straightens up.***

***A beat, before MR HOLT grins.***

**MR HOLT**

Everybody...the Plank.

Quit your moaning.

And up!

***The PUPILS groan as they move into plank. MR HOLT stands, arms folded, watching.***

**MR HOLT**

Straight backs.

Clench your butt cheeks!

*Time stretches. Some pupils shake. Some drop.*

**MR HOLT**

This is where discipline shows.

*He waits and observes in silence.*

*The music carries us onward.*

**MR HOLT**

Good, take a breather.

It's time for your Science lesson.

---

**SCIENCE LESSON**

*MISS SIGANDON enters, clapping her hands with excitement.*

*MR HOLT exits.*

The PUPILS form THREE STATIONS:

*One downstage right.*

*One centre stage.*

*One downstage left.*

*MISS SIGANDON moves between them, animated and alert.*

*At the first station (downstage right), pupils carefully pour liquid from one beaker into another. The mixture fizzes and bubbles.*

**MISS SIGANDON**

Careful with the mixtures.

Precision matters.

**PUPILS**

Yes Miss Sigandon!

*She corrects a pupil's grip, steadying the pour.*

*MISS SIGANDON moves to the centre station.*

*Pupils build tall towers using blocks or stacked objects.*

*They test balance and structure, watching towers wobble, collapse, or stand.*

**MISS SIGANDON**

The key is balance!

Build something that lasts.

Higher, not faster.

**PUPILS**

Yes Miss Sigandon!

*MISS SIGANDON knocks down the experiment with a light touch and the pupils react.*

*They rebuild, placing each block with care.*

*MISS SIGANDON crosses to the final station (downstage left).*

*Pupils experiment with motion and force, propelling objects across a surface at different speeds. An object rolls towards MISS SIGANDON's foot and she stops it.*

**MISS SIGANDON**

An object in motion stays in motion.

Until something stops it.

*MISS SIGANDON raises an eyebrow.*

**MISS SIGANDON**

Control the force.

Observe the outcome.

**PUPILS**

Yes Miss Sigandon!

*The pupils gather their experiment boxes, which are collected by stage-hands.*

**MISS SIGANDON**

Ready yourselves girls.

It's time for your obedience lesson.

**The music carries the montage onward.**

## **OBEDIENCE LESSON**

***MISS HEATHERS steps onto the stage from the staircase.***

***MISS SIGANDON exits.***

***The PUPILS form THREE LINES upstage, facing downstage. Each pupil at the front of a line places a block on her head and begins to walk slowly downstage toward the audience. When a block falls, the pupil stops, retrieves it, and hands it to the next pupil in the queue. That pupil then places the block on their head and the cycle repeats.***

***Throughout, MISS HEATHERS patrols the space, watching closely, correcting posture, applying pressure.***

**MISS HEATHERS**

If the block falls,

You fail.

Begin.

**MISS HEATHERS**

Eyes forward.

Do not look down.

**MISS HEATHERS**

Slow steps.

Steady minds.

**MISS HEATHERS**

Posture first.

Correction follows.

**MISS HEATHERS**

Balance shows discipline.

Discipline shows worth.

***Groups take turns crossing the stage.***

***Some blocks fall. Some remain perfectly balanced.***

**MISS HEATHERS**

Right ladies, ready yourselves for your Music lesson.

---

## **MUSIC LESSON**

***MISS STEEL steps into the space as the instrumental music fades.  
The PUPILS move into GRID FORMATION and sit on their knees, facing forward.***

### **MISS STEEL**

Sit up **straight**.

Breathe together.

Listen to one another.

And girls, be brave!

***MISS STEEL sings an opening solo of the NEVERMORE anthem.***

### **MISS STEEL (SINGING)**

Nevermore, nevermore,

We'll be nevermore.

Nevermore, nevermore,

We'll be nevermore.

Nevermore, nevermore,

Nevermore, we'll be nevermore.

**The anthem continues as EMMA sings a solo line.**

### **EMMA**

Nevermore, nevermore,

We'll be nevermore.

### **MIRA**

Nevermore, nevermore,

We'll be nevermore.

### **ALL**

Nevermore, nevermore,

Nevermore, we'll be nevermore.

### **MOLLY**

Nevermore, nevermore,

We'll be nevermore.

**ARIANNA**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
We'll be nevermore.

**ALL**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
Nevermore, we'll be nevermore.

**VALENTINA**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
We'll be nevermore.

**JESS**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
We'll be nevermore.

**ALL**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
Nevermore, we'll be nevermore.

***The ENTIRE CAST now sings one final time together.  
MISS STEEL conducts as the harmony builds.***

**ALL**

Nevermore, nevermore,  
We'll be nevermore.

Nevermore, nevermore,  
We'll be nevermore.

Nevermore, nevermore,  
Nevermore, we'll be nevermore.

***A beat as the song resolves and the montage ends.***

**LX: 12 – Fade to blackout (slow)**

**SCENE 7: ASSEMBLY HALL. NEVERMORE ORPHANAGE. NIGHT.**

**LX: 13 – State D (Assembly Hall)**

*The PUPILS are in their ASSEMBLY FORMATION.  
STAFF line the edges of the stage.*

*A long silence.*

*MR SMEE steps forward.  
He clears his throat, then clears it again.  
He checks a piece of paper, realises it is upside down and turns it over.*

**MR SMEE**

Right.

Yes.

Good evening, girls... and staff... and - well, everyone!

*A small, nervous laugh. No one joins in.*

**MR SMEE**

Well.

The week has... um... concluded.

The trials.

All of them. Done.

Every task. Every test. Every— er— observation.

*He nods, reassuring himself.*

**MR SMEE**

A great deal of thought has gone into the final choices.

A great deal.

*A beat.*

**MR SMEE**

So. I will now be calling names.

If your name is called, please step forward and form a line.

*He gestures to downstage.*

*He smiles awkwardly and then immediately regrets it.*

**MR SMEE**

Right then.

Let us begin.

*He looks at the list.*

*One by one the pupils move downstage to form a seated line.*

**MR SMEE**

Ella.

Ava

Isabella.

Emma.

Liv.

Poppy.

Charlotte.

Ellie.

Valentina.

Molly.

Sierra.

Leo.

*Some are hopeful. Others unsure.*

*MR SMEE looks at them for a moment, then to the VAN DE KOOH who nods.*

**MR SMEE**

Thank you.

Girls, truly, you have all shown your talent.

Commitment.

And bravery.

*He swallows.*

**MR SMEE**

After careful consideration...

Regretebbley, you have not been selected.

*The words land slowly.*

*Silence.*

*Shock.*

*Contained emotion.*

**HEADMISTRESS GREYMOORE**

Staff, would you please escort these pupils back to their dormitories.

*The unsuccessful PUPILS exit with MISS BROOKSON, MISS SIGANDON, MR HOLT, MISS STEEL and MR CORRIGAN. As ISABELLA turns to go -*

**GREYMOORE**

Isabella.

*ISABELLA stops and makes her way to GREYMOORE.*

**GREYMOORE**

Pack your belongings.

You will be leaving Nevermore in the morning.

*ISABELLA nods and then exits.*

*PUPILS: JESS, CATTIE, CASSY, ANNIE, SILVIA, ARIANNA, REBECCA and MIRA remain. A shift in the air as VAN DE KOOH steps forward. Calm. Composed.*

**VAN DE KOOH**

Congratulations.

*The word lands softly. Precisely.*

**VAN DE KOOH**

You have shown excellence.

Discipline.

Promise.

*She turns to the GREYMOORE.*

**VAN DE KOOH**

And you, headmistress.

Your tireless work in preparing must be commended.

We shall have a sweet treat, to celebrate!

*MR SMEE steps forward holding a small, ornate box.*

*He kneels, opening it.*

*Inside: gold-foil chocolate coins.*

**VAN DE KOOH**

A tradition from my homeland.

The Dutch take great pride in our chocolatiers.

*Excitement as the PUPILS and GREYMOORE accept the chocolate coins.*

*MISS HEATHERS and MISS MACKENZIE decline but watch on.*

*One by one, the coins are unwrapped and eaten.*

*A pause.*

*Then -*

*Drowsiness.*

*Knees buckle.*

*Heads droop.*

*Bodies sink gently to the floor.*

*They fall asleep where they stand.*

*The hall is littered with their sleeping bodies.*

*Silence.*

*VAN DE KOOH surveys the sleeping bodies.*

**VAN DE KOOH**

*(to SMEE)*

Very efficient.

*MR SMEE speaks but his bashful warmth is gone.*

*His voice changes - unmistakably pirate.*

**MR SMEE**

I been perfectin' the recipe, Cap'n.

*MR SMEE hands VAN DE KOOH a pirate hat.*

*VAN DE KOOH exchanges it with his hat, smelling the pirate hat.*

*He places the hat on his head and his posture shifts.*

*His posture shifts.*

*His smile sharpens.*

*Now, it is CAPTAIN HOOK standing before us.*

**CAPTAIN HOOK**

It is always fun playing dress-up...

But I did miss being me.

***(turning to MISS HEATHERS)***

Congratulations, Miss Heathers.

You are the new Headmistress of Nevermore.

***MISS HEATHERS does not smile.***

**MISS HEATHERS**

A pleasure doing business with you, Captain Hook.

**HOOK**

Oh, believe me - the pleasure was all mine.

***(surveys the sleeping bodies.)***

Now, we'd better be on our ways, Smee.

We've got a ship to catch.

***The four stand among the sleeping bodies.***

**LX: 14 – Fade to blackout**

**SCENE 8: DORMITORY. NEVERMORE ORPHANAGE. NIGHT.**

**LX: 15 – State B (Dormitory)**

*The dormitory is dimly lit.*

*The PUPILS sit upright in their beds.*

*No one quite knows what to do with themselves.*

*A long beat.*

**VALENTINA**

Is anyone actually sad?

**EMMA**

Yeah, I am.

It would have been fun to go on an adventure!

**AVA**

Well I'm not.

I'm happy I get to stay.

Here, together, with you all.

**SIERRA**

You're right.

We're together.

We're safe.

That's what matters.

*A beat.*

**ELLIE**

*(snapping)*

You're all so pleased.

Pleased to be losers!

**CHARLOTTE**

That's not fair.

**MOLLY**

We tried our best!

**LEO**

The Baroness must've made a mistake.

*The mood shifts.*

*Accusations start to land.*

**POPPY**

Maybe it wasn't a mistake.

**ELLA**

What's that supposed to mean?

**POPPY**

The Juniors always get special treatment.

**LIV**

Stop it.

That's not fair.

It's not their fault.

*The door opens quickly.*

*MISS BROOKSON, MR HOLT, MISS SIGANDON and MISS STEEL step in.*

**MISS STEEL**

Hello poppets.

**MISS SIGANDON**

These things happen, girls.

There'll be plenty more opportunities for you all in the future.

**MR HOLT**

Everyone, okay?

*Downstage, ISABELLA quietly packs her bag.*

*Everyone notices.*

*No one says anything.*

*MISS BROOKSON moves to her, kneeling beside her.*

**MISS BROOKSON**

Nevermore isn't the whole world.  
There will be other chances and you'll find them.  
You did well.

*ISABELLA doesn't look up.*

**ISABELLA**

Not well enough.

*She stuffs more clothes into the bag, faster now.*  
*MISS BROOKSON hesitates, then gently rests a hand on the bag.*

**MISS BROOKSON**

Get some rest.  
I'll help you pack properly in the morning.

*ISABELLA nods.*  
*The PUPILS climb into their beds.*  
*The staff turn before leaving.*

**MR HOLT**

We're proud of you.  
Goodnight girls.

**LX: 16 – Fade to blackout**

\_\_\_\_\_

*Blackout should last 15 to 20 SECONDS*

*MISS HEATHERS slips across the stage carrying a lantern to the HEADMISTRESS'S OFFICE, she freezes upon entering.*

\_\_\_\_\_

**LATER THAT NIGHT**

**LX: 17 – State B (Dormitory)**

*Thunder explodes overhead and lightning rips through the darkness.*

**LEO**

*(sitting up)*

What was that?!

**LIV**

Will you shush!

I'm trying to sleep!

**LEO**

I heard something - footsteps.

**LIV**

No, you did not.

**LEO**

I did!

*The rest of the PUPILS begin to wake now too.*

**VALENTINA**

What's going on?

**LEO**

I heard a noise.

From the corridor!

**CHARLOTTE**

Oh no!

What if it's a monster?

**EMMA**

I'm scared.

**CHARLOTTE**

Me too!

**AVA**

Don't be so silly.

**EMMA**

We're not being silly!

**CHARLOTTE**

We're scared!

**SIERRA**

Can you please stop talking?!  
I'm trying to sleep!

*Another flash of lightning.  
The PUPILS scream.*

*MISS BROOKSON enters.*

**MISS BROOKSON**

*(irritated, tired)*

What is all this noise?

**POPPY**

Leo said she heard something, Miss!

**MOLLY**

She thinks someone is walking around the corridor.

**LEO**

I saw something.  
Then there was a big bang and then footsteps!

**MISS BROOKSON**

It's just the thunder.  
Go back to bed darling.

*A pause.*

**ISABELLA**

Miss, the others haven't come back yet?

*MISS BROOKSON scans the room, curiously.*

**ELLA**

Greymoore said they'd be here in the morning.  
She said we could say goodbye.

**MISS BROOKSON**

Okay I'll go check.

Stay here.

All of you.

*MISS BROOKSON moves toward the door and exits, disappearing down the corridor.*

*The PUPILS freeze.*

**LX: 18 – Fade to blackout**

**SCENE 9: HEADMISTRESS' OFFICE. NEVERMORE ORPHANAGE. NIGHT.**

**LX: 19 – State C (Office)**

*MISS HEATHERS, who has been frozen until now, comes to life and enters the office. She sets the lantern down on the desk and begins searching for something.*

*Frantic. Precise.*

*She opens drawers.*

*Checks shelves.*

*Pulls books away and shakes them.*

*Lifts the chair.*

*Checks beneath it.*

*Nothing.*

*Her jaw tightens.*

*She searches faster now.*

*Less controlled.*

*MISS BROOKSON should allow 30 seconds of uninterrupted searching before entering into the lit area of the stage. Upon entering she abruptly stops, taking in the mess.*

**MISS BROOKSON**

Miss Heathers?

What are you doing?

*MISS HEATHERS pauses and turns, rising slowly.*

*Her gaze locks onto MISS BROOKSON, as she moves towards her, deliberate and calm.*

**MISS BROOKSON**

Where are the girls?

**MISS HEATHERS**

Gone.

*MISS BROOKSON steps closer.*

**MISS BROOKSON**

Where is the Headmistress?

*MISS HEATHERS smiles.*

**MISS HEATHERS**

You're looking at her.

**MISS BROOKSON**

What have you done?

**MISS HEATHERS**

I have done what was necessary.

To save Nevermore.

*MISS BROOKSON processes this, confusion and shock washing over her.*

**MISS BROOKSON**

I can't let this happen.

*She turns to leave.*

*MISS HEATHERS moves instantly grabbing MISS BROOKSON by the hair.*

*She slams her forward, smashing her head onto the desk.*

*Once.*

*And again.*

*And again.*

*And again.*

*MISS HEATHERS releases her and MISS BROOKSON collapses to the floor.*

*MISS HEATHERS now stands over her lifeless body, breathing heavily.*

*She picks up the lantern and exits.*

**LX: 20 – Blackout**

**SCENE 10: DORMITORY. NEVERMORE ORPHANAGE. NIGHT.**

**LX:** 21 – State B (Dormitory) – snap

**SFX:** ‘*THUNDER*’

*A violent burst of thunder.*

*The PUPILS stand*

**ELLA**

What was that?

**VALENTINA**

That wasn't thunder!

**MOLLY**

It sounded like it came from the Headmistress' Office.

**EMMA**

We should check if Miss Brookson is okay?

**ISABELLA**

She should've been back by now.

**CHARLOTTE**

What if the monster got her?!

**AVA**

We can't just stay here.

**ELLA**

But she told us to stay here!

**ELLIE**

I don't care.

Something's wrong.

*Another low rumble of thunder.*

*The girls flinch together.*

*MOLLY steps forward from the huddle.*

**MOLLY**

Remember when we were little and scared,  
It was always Miss Brookson who made us feel safe.  
She was kind to us - no matter what.  
She was there when we needed her.  
And now, I think she needs us!  
We can't just hide.

*A murmur of agreement.*

**ISABELLA**

If we go.  
We go together.

*Footsteps approach.*

*MR HOLT enters, half-asleep.*

**MR HOLT**

Girls, why are you all awake?

*MISS STEEL enters, wrapping a cardigan tighter.*

**MISS STEEL**

What is all this noise?  
It's the middle of the night!

*MISS SIGANDON appears next.*

**MISS SIGANDON**

I could hear you from the stairwell.  
What's happened now?

**POPPY**

We heard a noise.  
Coming from the Headmistress' Office.

*A sudden thunderclap as MR CORRIGAN rushes in, torch in hand.*

*The PUPILS and TEACHERS SCREAM in tandem.*

*MR CORRIGAN just as frightened screams back.*

*A brief moment of comedy.*

**MR CORRIGAN**

Calm down!

Calm down!

It's alright!

It's just me!

What is all this commotion about?

**LIV**

Miss Brookson was walking the corridors earlier.

Leo saw her!

**EMMA**

So, Miss Heathers went after her.

But she hasn't come back.

**VALENTINA**

And... the others never came back either!

Greymoore said they would leave in the morning?

*The STAFF exchange looks.*

**MISS STEEL**

Alright, everyone stay calm.

Stay here.

We'll go check.

**CHARLOTTE**

We're coming too, miss.

**MISS SIGANDON**

Girls, this isn't a game.

**MOLLY**

We're coming too.

**The PUPILS stand defiantly.**

**The decision lands.**

*MR CORRIGAN switches his torch on.*

**MR CORRIGAN**

Okay then, follow me.  
Stay close.

*They move together downstage to stage right and then to the HEADMISTRESS' OFFICE.  
As they enter, they find MISS BROOKSON collapsed, bruised and unconscious.*

**ELLA**

Miss Brookson!

*MISS STEEL and MR CORRIGAN stay with the girls.  
MISS SIGANDON and MISS STEEL kneel by her body and check her pulse.*

**MISS SIGANDON**

She's breathing.  
She's alive.  
But barely.

**MISS HOLT**

Brookson?  
Brookson?  
Can you hear me?  
Brookson?

**MISS STEEL**

Who did this to her?

*While the STAFF tend to MISS BROOKSON, the PUPILS begin searching instinctively.  
POPPY discovers a secret box, disguised as a stack of books.*

**POPPY**

I think I've found something.  
Something important...  
*(opens up the map)*  
It's a map.  
It looks like there's a tunnel system that leads to a secret door, under Nevermore?

**ELLIE**

What's this key for?  
And what's with this weird symbol?

*SIERRA stumbles upon GREYMOORE'S DIARY.*

**SIERRA**

This is Greymoore's diary!

*(reading)*

"Funding is to be withdrawn."

*(runs her fingers over the word)*

"Immediate closure of Nevermore if no alternative income is found."

**LEO**

So that's why the Baroness came?

**CHARLOTTE**

We weren't being helped.

**EMMA**

And we're not special.

**VALENTINA**

We were being traded - for money.

**SIERRA**

*(reading)*

"I fear that Heathers wants Nevermore for herself."

*(a beat)*

"And that she'll bring danger to the children."

*LIV discovers a golden flute in the box, among the items.*

**LIV**

It's a flute?

**ELLIE**

Look, it's the same symbol that's on the key.

And the map!

**ISABELLA**

So Miss Heathers contacted the Baroness?

**POPPY**

For money.

**AVA**

In exchange for?

**ISABELLA**

Children

*(A beat)*

We have to find them.

**AVA**

We have to save them.

***MISS BROOKSON stirs.***

***MISS BROOKSON***

*(weak)*

Miss Heathers.

She attacked me...

She was searching... for something.

***The pupils look at the items in their hands.***

**ELLA**

I think she was searching for these.

**MR CORRIGAN**

We need to get to the tunnels.

We need to find the others.

Follow me.

Now.

***MR CORRIGAN turns on his flash lights and exits downstage right, into the tunnels.***

***The others follow closeby.***

***The lights hold.***

***Ten seconds pass and MISS HEATHERS rushes in.***

***MISS MACKENZIE follows.***

***They stop.***

***The room is empty.***

**MISS HEATHERS**

She's gone.

She was right there...

***MISS HEATHERS spots the secret box, left open on Greymoore's desk and slams the table.***

**MISS HEATHERS**

Damn it!

*A beat.*

**MISS MACKENZIE**

I know where they're going.

*MISS HEATHERS lifts her head.*

**MISS MACKENZIE**

*(moves downstage)*

Last winter, I began noticing rats in the pantry.

So I followed them deep, deep beneath Nevermore, into the tunnels.

The rats, they'd always vanish.

And always in the same place.

And that's when I discovered an invisible door.

A gateway to somewhere else.

Old. Powerful. Magical.

I never understood what it was or where it led.

Until this week, when the pirate arrived.

No carriage. No gate.

She came from below.

*MISS HEATHERS' eyes light up.*

**MISS HEATHERS**

This door.

Take me there.

*They arm themselves with makeshift weapons and exit downstage right.*

*The hunt has begun.*

## SCENE 11: TUNNELS BENEATH NEVERMORE ORPHANAGE. NIGHT.

**LX: 22 – State E (Tunnels)**

### **MUSIC:**

*Dim light, broken by moving shadows.*

*The motif begins playing as the stage becomes a maze and the CHASE SEQUENCE begins.*

- 1. PUPILS and STAFF enter downstage left via the staircase. They move low and fast. They check the map before exiting upstage right.*
- 2. MISS MACKENZIE leads MISS HEATHERS from downstage left via the staircase, they follow the same path but ten-seconds behind. They move with focus, pause a moment and exit upstage right.*
- 3. PUPILS and STAFF re-emerge from upstage left and move downstage centre, into the lower levels of the tunnels. Once down into the first row, they move up the staircase stage right and disappear.*
- 4. MISS MACKENZIE and MISS HEATHERS re-emerge, they wait a moment, and then follow the same path downstage centre, into the lower levels of the tunnels. Once down, they move up the staircase stage left and disappear.*
- 5. Finally, the PUPILS and STAFF re-emerge from upstage right.*

**POPPY**

*(checking the map)*

This is it?

But where's the door?

*They look around, re-checking the map.*

*MR CORRIGAN sweeps his torch slowly across the ground, the beam catches something.*

**MR CORRIGAN**

Over here!

Look...

*MISS SIGANDON crouches, brushing dust from the floor.*

*She traces the carved inscription with her fingertips.*

**MISS SIGANDON**

It's Latin.

*(kneels to read the inscription)*

Instrumentum in tenebris,  
Cantus e corde,  
Deinde da mihi clavem.

**ELLIE**

What does it say?

**MISS STEEL**

An instrument in the dark,  
A song from the heart,  
Then give me the key.

*LIV steps forward, clutching the GOLDEN FLUTE.  
She hesitates. Her hands tremble — then steady.  
She lifts the flute to her lips and plays the NEVERMORE ANTHEM.  
The air changes. A low hum builds beneath the sound.  
The walls seem to vibrate.*

**LX: 23 – State E (Tunnels) + DSC spotlight**

*A thin seam of light appears, downstage centre, outlining the shape of a hidden door.*

**ELLA**

It's working — I can see something!

*POPPY steps forward with the KEY.  
Keeping her eyes on the glowing outline, she reaches into the air — as if feeling for resistance. Her hand meets something solid.  
She finds the invisible lock.  
The key slides in.  
She turns it.*

*A beat.*

*Then a violent surge of light blasts outward from the doorway and shockwave ripples across the stage. The PUPILS and STAFF are thrown backward — collapsing to their knees, shielding their faces. The hum becomes a roar. Everything goes white.*

**LX: 24 – Blackout**

**SCENE 12: THE JOLLY ROGER. NEVERLAND. NIGHT.**

**LX: 25 – State F (Jolly Roger)**

**SFX: 'DOCKS'**

*A large ship's wheel stands centre stage.*

*Lanterns sway gently.*

*The sound of water against wood.*

*A low sea-shanty underscores the scene.*

*The LOST ONES are on deck.*

*Some play cards.*

*One or two sharpen their blades.*

*One coils rope with careful precision.*

*Some drink from wooden tankards.*

*ONYX stands at the ship's wheel, steering steadily.*

*JINX kneels with a spyglass, scanning the horizon.*

*A beat.*

**THORN**

Do you ever feel like the sea is watching us back?

**ONYX**

She's not watching, she is waiting.

**CORAL**

Waiting for what?

**ONYX**

To claim what she's owed.

*A thoughtful beat.*

**CRIMSON**

It's quieter out here than on land.

**AMETHYST**

Out here, we're free.

**LUNA**

Yeah, free inside a floating cage.

**PEARL**

Life is a cage.

But it's easier when you stop looking at out,

And instead start looking in.

*Another thoughtful beat.*

**THORN**

You ever notice how big it is?

Makes you feel small.

**JINX**

*(peering through the spyglass)*

Nothing but water and sky.

Like the world forgot everything else.

**LUNA**

Or maybe we've sailed off the edge of it.

**PEARL**

It makes you feel so small.

**LUNA**

I've always felt small.

**THORN**

Sometimes I wonder if I'm dreaming.

Rememberin' somethin'.

Like, maybe I used ti be someone else.

**CORAL**

Before the ship?

**CRIMSON**

There's no life before the ship.

**ONYX**

Sounds like the lot of you have had one rum too many!

***MR SMEE bursts on to deck via the staircase downstage right.***

**MR SMEE**

On your feet!

Stand tall!

Captain on deck!

***The LOST ONES stop whatever they were doing, instantly rise and snap to attention.***

***CAPTAIN HOOK strides on, slow and deliberate, bottle in one hand.***

***He says nothing as he looks the crew up and down.***

***He moves downstage centre and sits on the edge of the stage, staring out to sea.***

***The LOST ONES watch him.***

***He takes a slow swig.***

***A beat.***

**HOOK**

At ease.

***The crew relax from attention, but remain standing.***

**HOOK**

Beautiful, ain't she.

***Silence.***

**CRIMSON**

Aye, Cap'n.

**PEARL**

She's calm tonight.

**CORAL**

Too calm.

**THORN**

Cap'n when do we set sail?

**HOOK**

When the tide turns.

**JINX**

How long's that?

**SMEE**

Couple of hours, give or take.

**AMETHYST**

And where will we be goin', Cap'n?

**HOOK** *does not answer but continues to stare out into the distance.*

**SMEE**

We've business unsettled.

**LUNA**

What kind of business?

**HOOK**

Treasure.

**ONYX**

What kind of treasure?

**HOOK**

The best kind.

Old friends.

**A shift.**

**CORAL**

Friends?

**PEARL**

Are they pirates too?

**SMEE**

Aye.

Our old crew.

**HOOK**

My Lost Boys.

**JINX**

Lost?

What happened to them?

***HOOK's jaw tightens.***

**SMEE**

They were taken.

**THORN**

Who took em Cap'n?

***HOOK spits the name.***

**HOOK**

Peter.

**SMEE**

The trickster got his spell in 'em.

**LUNA**

What did Peter do?

**SMEE**

Enchanted 'em.

Twisted their heads.

Filled 'em with stories.

**ONYX**

Stories?

**HOOK**

Lies.

***A flicker of temper.***

**HOOK**

He turned them against me, with his dark magic.

***HOOK takes a long swig from his bottle.***

**SMEE**

Cap'n's just concerned for his crew, that's all.  
Wouldn't leave his Lost Boys out there - alone.  
Not ever.

**CRIMSON**

Then we'll get 'em back.

**PEARL**

Aye, Cap'n.  
Whatever needs doing.

**CORAL**

No one steals from us.

**JINX**

We'll hunt this Peter down.

**AMETHYST**

And bring the Lost Boys home.

**LUNA**

We're your crew now too, Cap'n.

**ONYX**

And you can rely on us.

*HOOK slowly stands to look at his crew.*

*A charged silence.*

*THORN steps forward slightly.*

**THORN**

For the Lost Boys.

*A beat.*

**CRIMSON**

For the Lost Boys.

**PEARL**

For the Lost Boys.

**CORAL**

For the Lost Boys.

**JINX**

For the Lost Boys.

**LUNA**

For the Lost Boys.

**AMETHYST**

For the Lost Boys.

**ONYX**

For the Lost Boys.

*SMEE, swelling with pride.*

**SMEE**

For the Lost Boys.

*Finally, HOOK raises the bottle high.*

**HOOK**

For the Jolly Roger.

*JINX stiffens and moves to look out to shore.*

*She raises the spyglass again.*

*Squints.*

*Freezes.*

**JINX**

...Cap'n.

There's movement.

On the shoreline.

*The crew shift, instinctively reaching for their blades.*

**JINX**

A group.

Coming out of the cavern.

Heading straight for us.

*A flicker of tension.*

*HOOK does not turn immediately.*

*HOOK takes one last swig from the bottle and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.*

*He takes the spyglass from JINX with his spare hand and looks out to the shoreline.*

**HOOK**

We've got company.

*HOOK turns slightly to SMEE.*

**HOOK**

Smee, fetch the prisoner.

**SMEE**

Aye, Cap'n.

*SMEE nods and disappears below deck.*

*HOOK turns to THE LOST ONES.*

**HOOK**

Ready your weapons and take cover, my Lost Ones.

*The pirates draw their weapons and scatter with precision ducking behind barrels.*

*HOOK watches the dark shoreline, completely still.*

**LX: 26 – Blackout**

**SCENE 13: THE JOLLY ROGER. NEVERLAND. NIGHT.**

**LX: 27 – State F (Jolly Roger)**

**SFX: 'AT SEA'**

*The sea hums as dim lantern light glows, creating moving shadows on the stage.  
The deck appears empty, but unseen the PIRATES hide in shadows, behind crates and  
crouched beneath deck*

*MR CORRIGAN, torchlight up, leads the PUPILS and STAFF slowly onto the deck from  
downstage. They move carefully. Alert.*

**MR CORRIGAN**

Quietly.

They must be here somewhere.

*A faint groan.*

*At centre stage, chained to the deck, sits GREYMOORE.  
Bruised. Scruffed up. Terrified.*

*The PUPILS gasp and rush toward him.*

**GREYMOORE**

*(realising)*

No, no you shouldn't be here...

You must go now, quickly!

You shouldn't be here...

**ELLA**

What have they done to you, miss?

**EMMA**

Look Miss... you're bleeding...

**CHARLOTTE**

Who did this?

**VALENTINA**

We're getting you out of here.

**LEO**

Headmistress, Where are the others?

**GREYMOORE**

Yes, Headmistress yes, I remember now.

You must go now, please.

They're watching!

**CHARLOTE**

Who's watching?

*The PIRATES now show themselves, rising with blades drawn, surrounding them in a circle.*

**LUNA**

No one do anything stupid!

**ONYX**

And no one'll get hurt!

**ELLIE**

Rebecca? Mira?

**VALENTINA**

Why are you dressed like that?

**AMETHYST**

Let's not make this harder than it needs to be, ey?

**PEARL**

On your knees!

**CRIMSON**

Hands behind your heads.

**CORAL**

Slowly, where we can see em!

**THORN**

You heard her.

**JINX**

Thought ya could sneak aboard, did you?

*The PUPILS and STAFF stare at them, confused.*

**EMMA**

This isn't funny.

*CRIMSON steps forward, blade inches from LEO's chest.*

**CRIMSON**

Do we look like we're joking?

**PEARL**

Knees.

*CORAL spits to the side.*

**CORAL**

Now.

**AMETHYST**

We won't ask again.

*One by one, the PUPILS and STAFF lower to their knees.  
Confused. Frightened.*

**JINX**

You've trespassed on the Jolly Roger.

**ONYX**

And trespassing.

Well, let's just say we take that very personally.

*The PUPILS and STAFF hesitate.*

*MR CORRIGAN takes his hands away from his head to plead with LUNA.*

**MISS STEEL**

You need to snap out of this immediately ladies!

*LUNA moves the tip of her blade closer to MISS STEEL.*

**LUNA**

Who ya calling lady?

**LEO**

This isn't right.

**ELLA**

Don't you recognise us?

**CHARLOTTE**

They're not listening.

**EMMA**

They're not themselves.

**VALENTINA**

Something's happened to them.

*A beat.*

**MISS SINGANDON**

Girls, up!

We're leaving.

*HOOK strides on to the stage, pistol drawn.*

**HOOK**

No one's going anywhere.

*HOOK surveys the scene.*

**HOOK**

Pleasure to see you all - again.

**ISABELLA**

Baroness Van de Kooh...

**HOOK**

The name's Hook.

*(removes hat with exaggerated elegance and sweeps into a bow)*

Welcome to Neverland.

**MR CORRIGAN**

Hook?

**SMEE**

Captain Hook!

**VALENTINA**

Hook?

Hook backwards spells...

**ELLA**

K-O-O-H

Kooh!

Baroness Van de Kooh!

**POPPY**

From Never-land.

**MR HOLT**

Wow, I did not see *that* coming!

**MISS BROOKSON**

You lied to us!

*HOOK smiles thinly.*

**HOOK**

Bind them.

They'll be coming with us to the island.

*The PUPILS, STAFF and PIRATES remain completely still as lanterns flicker.*

**LX: 28 – Fade to blackout**

**SCENE 14: THE JOLLY ROGER. NEVERLAND. NIGHT.**

**LX: 29 – State F (Jolly Roger)**

**SFX: AT SEA**

*The Jolly Roger rocks gently at sea as the lanterns sway.*

*The PUPILS and STAFF sit bound back-to-back across the deck, wrists tied.  
There are clusters of prisoners across the stage, each guarded by a PIRATE.*

**ELLA**

Listen to me.

You are not pirates!

Hook has put some kind of spell on you!

**ONYX**

You hearing this.

I think this one's gone do-lali!

**MOLLY**

We've come to save you!

**CORAL**

We don't need saving.

**SIERRA**

You're from Nevermore Orphanage.

**CRIMSON**

Nevermore Orphanage?!

O, that sounds fun.

Quick, please take us back!

**PEARL**

Ya see, here's the thing.

Out at sea, this is the only life we know.

It's all we've ever known.

We're pirates.

Always have been

Ain't that right?

**CORAL**

Ay, born on the tide.  
Raised by it.

**CHARLOTTE**

No. You were raised with us.

**THORN**

Careful with that tongue.  
Or I'll have to cut it out.  
Feed it to the gators.

**LIV**

Your real name's Arrianna.  
Remember, we used to bunk together.  
You were always the bottom bunk, because you're scared of the dark.

**AMETHYST**

Ha! Me, fearing the dark?

**LEO**

She's telling the truth.

**LUNA**

Ignore them.

**ELLIE**

Listen to me, your real name is Rebecca.  
And we're all in big danger.

**ONYX**

Enough, or you'll regret it.

**VALENTINA**

Where are you taking us?

**THORN**

To the island.

**CRIMSON**

To settle a debt.

**LEO**

What debt?

**AMETHYST**

The Cap'n's got unfinished business.

**MOLLY**

Why do you need us?

**ONYX**

Ain't ya figured it out yet?

*(leans in)*

You're the bait.

*Silence.*

**EMMA**

Bait for what?

**CORAL**

For big bad the monster.

**CHARLOTTE**

Monster?

**JINX**

A dark wizard.

The Cap'n says this wizard, Peter, tricked his old crew, The Lost Boys.

Peter put a spell on em...

**PEARL**

Peter turned em against the Cap'n.

**CORAL**

Peter made em go crazy.

**CRIMSON**

And we're gonna save em.

And you're gonna help us.

*Downstage, LUNA closely watches over her cluster of prisoners: CHARLOTTE, LIV, MOLLY.*

**LUNA**

Listen.

Free the others.

Get to safety.

**CHARLOTTE**

Silvia?!

You recognise us?!

**LUNA**

I do but then I don't.

There's this voice in my head that keeps talking.

It stopped a few hours ago, but I can feel it still there - just quieter.

**LIV**

How did this happen?

*LUNA glances around.*

**LUNA**

Hook fed us these chocolates.

I think *he's* the evil wizard and we're all under *his* spell.

And, I think if we can hurt him, it might wake the others up.

*She slips a dagger into CHARLOTTE's bound hands.*

**LUNA**

Free the others.

I'll create a distraction.

*JINX lowers the spyglass slowly.*

**JINX**

Land ahoy!

**ONYX**

*(shouting)*

Captain!

*HOOK strides in from upstage.*

*SMEE lingers behind him.*

**HOOK**

At last, the island is in sight!

*HOOK moves downstage centre, looking out toward the island.*

**CRIMSON**

Aye, Captain.

Tonight we'll save 'The Lost Boys'  
And you'll finally get your revenge.

**PEARL**

We're ready Cap'n.

**AMETHYST**

Whatever needs doin'.

**THORN**

Peter thinks he could steal from you.

**CORAL**

Evil, tricky wizard.  
Won't know what hit him.

**ONYX**

Oh, he's gonna pay.

**JINX**

And then, we'll bring them back Cap'n.

**HOOK**

Make sure you do.  
Remember, I do this all for 'The Lost Boys'.  
And for you my 'Lost Ones.'

*LUNA stands.*

**LUNA**

Do you?

*Silence.*

*All eyes turn.*

*HOOK's jaw tightens.*

**HOOK**

'Cuse me?

**LUNA**

You say it's for us.

But really, it feels to me like it's all for you.

*A ripple of unease among the pirates.*

**HOOK**

Careful.

**LUNA**

Or perhaps you just want revenge for being humiliated?

*Gasps from the PIRATES and SMEE.*

**SMEE**

Another word and you'll be walkin' the plank!

**ENTER SLOW MOTION**

*All eyes turn to SMEE and at that moment.*

*CHARLOTTE rises and lunges with her dagger raised.*

*HOOK spins and catches her wrist.*

*HOOK drives his blade in and twists.*

*CHARLOTTE lets out a guttural sound, as she gasps for air.*

*LUNA takes her second blade and drives it into HOOK's back.*

*HOOK releases CHARLOTTE and as she stumbles down MISS BROOKSON catches her.*

*HOOK and the PIRATES fall to their knees, as the enchantment begins to break.*

*SMEE fires his gun into the air*

**The SOUND OF GUN FIRE brings us OUT OF SLOW MOTION**

**JESS**

Where are we?

**MIRA**

Rebecca, why are you dressed like that?

**ONYX**

Mira, why are you dressed like that?

**HOOK**

Smee?!

What is happening?

**SMEE**

The spell appears to be breaking.

Cap'n, we ought to be goin'!

**HOOK**

This isn't over.

I'll see you on the island.

***HOOK and SMEE leap overboard.***

***The PIRATES untie the prisoners.***

***ANNIE and SILVIA move to CHARLOTTE and kneel beside her.***

**ANNIE**

Is she going to be okay, miss?

***MISS BROOKSON cradles her.***

**MISS BROOKSON**

She'll be okay.

Hey, look at me.

Hey, hey, stay with me.

**ANNIE**

Charlotte - You were right

Brave and Scared.

Just like Jim Hawkins, you were brave, even though you were scared.

***SILVIA grips her hand.***

**CHARLOTTE**

***(weak)***

Did it work?

**ANNIE**

It worked.

***A faint smile, then CHARLOTTE exhales, then complete stillness.***

**CATTY**

What did we do?

**CASSIE**

Did we hurt you?

**MISS STEEL**

You weren't yourselves.

**ANNIE**

Hook used us.

*ISABELLA, LIV and AVA step downstage.*

**ISABELLA**

We need to stop him.

**LIV**

No more waiting to be saved.

**AVA**

We find Peter.

Then we go after Hook.

**ISABELLA**

Together.

*(a beat)*

Nevermore taught us *how* to fight.

But, Neverland is *where* we fight.

*ALL now look out toward the dark island, united on the deck of the Jolly Roger.*

**LX: 30 – Blackout**

**SCENE 15: TUNNELS BENEATH NEVERMORE ORPHANAGE. NIGHT.**

**LX:** 31 – DSC doorway spotlight

**SFX:** 'SEWERS'

*A single spotlight downstage centre.*

*From the shadows, MISS MACKENZIE enters first, lantern in hand.*

*MISS HEATHERS follows close behind. Tired and breathless.*

*Both are filthy from the tunnels.*

**MISS MACKENZIE**

Here it is, you see?

I told you I knew the way - even without a map.

**MISS HEATHERS**

Well, it took you long enough.

*MISS HEATHERS steps past her, drawn toward the faint seam of light coming from the door.*

**MISS HEATHERS**

It is magnificent.

Like holding the night in your hands.

Magical.

I wonder what's on the other side.

*MISS MACKENZIE drifts subtly behind her, lifting the lantern so the glow catches the doorway.*

**MISS MACKENZIE**

If you get close enough...

You can actually see through the gateway.

*MISS HEATHERS leans in.*

**MISS MACKENZIE**

*(softly)*

Just a little closer...

*MISS HEATHERS leans in further and reaches her hand out and through the gateway.*

*In a flash MISS MACKENZIE shoves her forward.*

***MISS HEATHERS stumbles through the invisible threshold and off stage.  
MISS MACKENZIE steps into the centre of the spotlight, lantern raised.***

**MISS MACKENZIE**

And with that, Nevermore is mine.  
Mine!

***MISS MACKENZIE lowers the lantern slowly.***

**MISS MACKENZIE**

I have given my life in service of Nevermore.  
No one worked harder than I.  
I kept Nevermore breathing!  
And now they will finally the world will see me.  
***(adjusts her posture)***  
Headmistress Mackenzie.  
Respected.  
Admired.  
Confident!

***Suddenly a hand shoots out from the portal - MISS HEATHERS' arm.  
She grabs MISS MACKENZIE by the leg.  
MISS MACKENZIE gasps.***

**MACKENZIE**

Get off me!

***MACKENZIE is yanked forward and stumbles through the gateway into Neverland.***

**MACKENZIE (O.S.)**

NEVERMOOOOOOOORE!

***The spotlight remains on the empty space.  
From beyond the portal MACKENZIE'S voice echoes, distant and fading.***

**LX: 32 - Blackout**

**END OF PLAY**