

Muddy Waters

Written by Niyazi Unugur

Created in collaboration with the Kensington Green Company 2024-25

© BLACK BOX DRAMA LTD

All Rights Reserved



BLACK BOX
DRAMA SCHOOL

FOREWORD

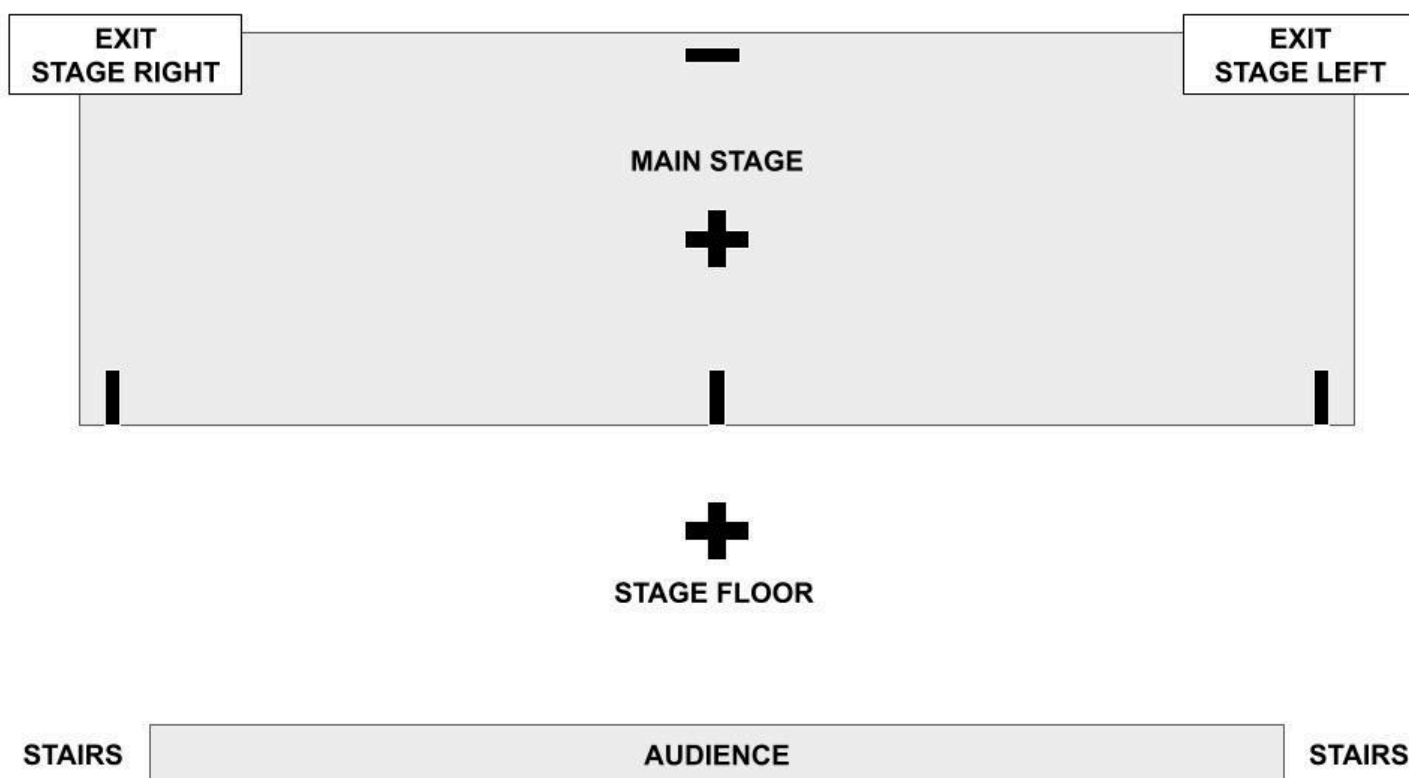
When a group of excited school pupils and their teachers set off for a seaside trip to Bournemouth, their adventure takes an unexpected turn. As night falls, their bus breaks down in the middle of nowhere, leaving them stranded. With no other options, they take refuge in an eerie, abandoned house by a misty lake known as Muddy Waters.

What starts as a harmless sleepover in a spooky old house quickly unravels into a chilling night full of mystery and unease. The house by Muddy Waters hides a dark past – one filled with sorrow and tragedy. The pupils must navigate their own fears and suspicions, as tensions rise and friendships are tested. Can they uncover the truth behind the haunting and escape unscathed?

This thrilling play combines suspense, mystery, and moments of humour as it explores themes of courage, teamwork, and the consequences of choices long past.

This play was inspired by the role-play sessions with the Kensington Green Company of 2024-25. Using the 'Role That Dice' system, the pupils explored an immersive world in an improvised drama setting. Through this process the pupils created the characters, lines and narrative for this play.

STAGING DIAGRAM - THE TABERNACLE THEATRE



SCENE 1. HOBSON ESTATE (1927). EXT. NIGHT.

A spotlight illuminates ADELINE HOBSON, a young girl, sitting on the edge of the stage. A picnic blanket is spread beside her, and she is playing with her teddy bear, MR. BROWNLOW.

ADELINE

Would you like another biscuit, Mr. Brownlow?

You mustn't be shy - they're your favourite!

(pauses, listening)

Three biscuits?!

Oh, you are greedy today!

ANNETTE HOBSON, a pregnant mother in her late twenties, appears upstage and kneels beside ADELINE.

ANNETTE

Adeline, dinner's ready. Come inside now.

ADELINE

Mummy, Mr. Brownlow and I are having a picnic.

He's eaten three biscuits!

ANNETTE

Three biscuits?

He'll have no room for pumpkin stew.

ADELINE

He's still hungry, Mummy.

Can he have stew too?

ANNETTE

Only if he eats all his vegetables.

No hiding peas.

ADELINE

He says peas taste like boogies!

ANNETTE

Boogies!

They giggle together for a moment, then ADELINE gestures towards her pregnant mothers baby bump.

ADELINE

I can't wait to meet *him* mummy?

ANNETTE

Him?

What makes you think it's a boy?

ADELINE

I can tell.

(talking to the baby bump)

You're *my* brother.

And I can't *wait* to meet you.

ANNETTE

Come along, darling.

It's nearly dark.

ADELINE hesitates, looking outward toward the lake.

ADELINE

Mummy, the lake looks - *strange* tonight.

Like it's watching us.

ANNETTE glances toward the lake, her smile fading briefly. She gently takes ADELINE's hand.

ANNETTE

It's just a lake, sweetheart.

Nothing to worry about.

Let's get inside.

ANNETTE takes ADELINE's hand as she clutches MR. BROWNLOW tightly.

They walk offstage together, their figures fading into the shadows. The stage darkens, and the soft sound of rippling water grows steadily louder, filling the silence.

SCENE 2: STAFF ROOM. INT. MORNING.

The staff room is modest and cluttered, with a small radio playing faintly in the background. MR. HOLT stands stiffly by the window, an umbrella in hand. His tweed jacket is immaculate, his expression dour. He checks his watch with a sigh.

The faint sound of rain tapping on the windows as the iconic opening of “Every Breath You Take” begins to play, its melody filling the room.

MR. HOLT, stood glancing out of the window as the music plays softly in the background. MISS MACKENZIE is sat with a mug, reading a book.

MISS MACKENZIE

We have an eventful weekend ahead Mr Holt, don't we!
Or should I say, Britain's leading expert in disapproving looks?

MR. HOLT doesn't look to her, instead continues staring outward with a grimace.

MR. HOLT

Drizzling, grey, and cold.
What expression would you have me wear Miss Mackenzie?
In a few hours, we're off to Bournemouth for the entire weekend with that ragtag bunch of pupils.
If that doesn't justify my miserable demeanour, I don't know what does.

MISS MACKENZIE

Miserable's when the kettle's broken and the biscuits are gone.
We're not quite there yet, are we?

MR. HOLT

Give it time. It's only 8 a.m.
You'll have the rest of the faculty in here soon enough.
Gossiping and filling their pie holes with complimentary custard creams.

MISS MACKENZIE stands and approaches him, looking outward too.

MISS MACKENZIE

You know, you could try smiling.
It wouldn't kill you.

MR. HOLT

No, but it might encourage conversation.

MISS MACKENZIE grins, unfazed.

MISS MACKENZIE

I think the trip will do us *all* some good.
Bournemouth's lovely this time of year.

MR. HOLT

(dryly)

Ah yes, the sea air, the smell of fish and chips,
And a swarm of sugar-filled children terrorising seagulls.
A paradise, truly.

MISS MACKENZIE

Well, I can't wait.
The kids are excited.

MR. HOLT silently grimaces, continuing to look out of the window.

MISS MACKENZIE

(with a mischievous smile)

Come on, chaos builds character.

MR. HOLT

(grunting)

They're starting to arrive.

MISS MACKENZIE

We better get going.
I've packed extra biscuits.

MR. HOLT

(Straight-faced)

Biscuits?

Excellent.

Nothing bonds a rabble of kids like arguing over the last custard cream!

MISS MACKENZIE

Good thing I only packed bourbons then!

MR. HOLT allows the faintest hint of a smile but quickly leaves.

MISS MACKENZIE waits a moment, looks out the window, smiles and follows after.

SCENE 3: SCHOOL GATE. EXT. MORNING.

ROCKY enters first, carrying a scruffy backpack and holding a small translation book. He flips through it, mumbling French phrases to himself with a light French accent.

ROCKY

(reading aloud from the book)

Où est la gare?

Where is the train station?

(pauses, frowning)

Why do I need zis?

We are not even taking a train.

(flips a few pages, mumbling again)

Quel temps fait-il?

What is ze weather like?

(pauses, exasperated)

Why so many words for rain?

Drizzle, shower, pouring.

In France, we just say *pluie*.

Simple!

GREGORY enters with his backpack.

ROCKY realises GREGORY and slams the book shut.

ROCKY

(moving his bag)

Pardon.

GREGORY

You're the new kid.

Rocky?

(sitting beside him)

I'm Gregory

They sit in an awkward silence for a moment.

GREGORY

Listen, you'll learn to love it.

This country's all about tradition - some weird, some wonderful.

First lesson, though: tea's sacred.

Say anything bad about it, and you'll have enemies for life.

ROCKY chuckles, feeling a bit more at ease.

Before they can continue, TOMMY bursts onto the scene, holding a football.

TOMMY

Morning, losers!

Did you catch my hat trick on Saturday?

Three goals, baby!

Carried the whole team to victory.

You're welcome.

GREGORY

(dryly)

Humble as ever, Tommy.

JOSH strides in confidently, dressed neatly, his hair perfectly combed, holding a clipboard and pen. An air of self-importance as he surveys the group.

JOSH

(clearing his throat)

Tommy, must we?

The entire school has heard about your hat trick.

Some of us prefer to celebrate more... meaningful achievements.

TOMMY

Oh yeah? Like what?

Memorising a textbook?

JOSH

(smugly)

I'll have you know, I recently placed first in the county maths competition.

TOMMY

(mockingly)

Oh, amazing!

Did you sign autographs after?

Bet the fans went wild.

JOSH

(sharply)

Knowledge is the foundation of success, Tommy.

Kicking a ball around might make you popular now,

But brains will get you somewhere in life.

TOMMY

Yeah, well, my “kicking a ball around” just won our school their first trophy in a decade!
What’s your trophy look like?
Oh wait - you don’t have one!

JOSH adjusts his blazer, looking pointedly at the clipboard in his hand.

JOSH

I don’t need trophies. I have responsibilities.
As class rep, it’s my job to ensure order.
Something this trip will *desperately* need with *you* involved.

AVA, CAM, and MAYA, enter next, laughing loudly.

AVA

Watch out, everyone!
Clipboards at the ready!

They immediately zero in on JOSH who moves downstage left.

CAM

The school prefect and his clipboard.
Don’t you ever get tired of being you, Josh?

MAYA

(mocking)
Yeah, Josh, is that clipboard attached to you?
Or can you take it off at bedtime?

JOSH

(trying to maintain composure)
As class rep, it’s my duty to -

AVA

(interrupting)
Blah, blah, blah.
We know.
“Rules this, regulations that.”

CAM

(laughing)
Can’t you ever just... I don’t know, live a little?

GREGORY

(standing)

Come on, girls!

Why don't you just leave him alone!

AVA

Oh, relax.

He loves it.

Don't you, Joshy?

JOSH glares at them but says nothing. ROCKY shifts uncomfortably, catching AVA's eye.

AVA

(moving to ROCKY)

And who's this?

A new face!

Are you lost, or are you actually meant to be here?

CAM

He looks like he packed for a camping trip, not a school one.

ROCKY

I'm here for the roadtrip.

MAYA

Oh! He talks!

And with an accent!

AVA

That's adorable.

What's your name?

ROCKY

Rocky.

MEAN GIRLS

Rocky?

The group is interrupted as MAXIMILIAN strides in, impeccably dressed in a blazer and loafers. His confidence dominates the space as he speaks outward to the audience.

MAXIMILIAN

Rocky!

Short, I imagine, for the noble French names Rochard or Rochefort.

(sneering towards the girls)

But I wouldn't expect you all to appreciate that level of refinement.

MAXIMILIAN turns toward ROCKY and shakes his hand.

MAXIMILIAN

Bonjour Rocky.

A *pleasure* to make your acquaintance.

I am Maximilian the Third.

(turning to look outward to the audience)

This weekend's experience is what one might call... character-building.

A lesson in humility for me, courtesy of papa, who insists I spend my term mixing with -

(pauses, gesturing around dramatically)

The future employees.

AVA raises an eyebrow, clearly annoyed, while CAM glares. MAYA shifts uncomfortably.

TOMMY narrows his eyes and steps forward, crossing his arms.

TOMMY

Wow, Maximilian - that's some speech!

Do you rehearse these speeches in front of a mirror, or do they just come naturally?

MAXIMILIAN

(looks at TOMMY, unfazed)

Oh, Tommy, I assure you, addressing people of *your* calibre requires no preparation at all.

(turning away from the group, looking outward)

Now, let's not dwell on it, shall we?

This quaint little exchange program is only temporary.

A month from now, I'll be back at Eton, and you...

(pauses)

...you'll all still be here.

MR. HOLT storms onto the scene, the energy shifts instantly. His sharp presence commands attention, and the group instinctively straightens up, falling silent.

MR. HOLT

Right you lot - line up!

The PUPILS fall in line, backs straight and eyes forward.

MR HOLT walks behind the line intimidatingly, before speaking.

MR. HOLT

Let me be clear on the rules for this weekend.
No tom foolery.
No wandering off.
And absolutely no embarrassing the school in public.
Is that understood?

(silence)

I said, is that understood?

ALL

Yes, Mr. Holt!

From behind him, ROBIN enters with MISS MACKENZIE.

MISS MACKENZIE

I found this one lurking in the playground.

ROBIN

Sorry, I'm late sir.
Hope I didn't miss anything sir.
(holding out a packet of gum)

Gum, sir?

MR. HOLT stops abruptly and turns to glare at ROBIN, who stands his ground.

MR. HOLT

Robin, what is the school policy on chewing gum?

ROBIN

It's just, you look like you could use it sir.

ALL PUPILS begin teasing, which makes MR HOLT even more serious.

ROBIN

What I meant sir, was -
Freshens the breath, relieves stress.
Very minty.

MR. HOLT

I know what you *meant* - Boy!
Chewing gum is contraband.

ROBIN

Oh, I know, sir - no gum in school.

But technically, we're not in school cos we're already on the school trip, aren't we?

Individual packed lunches *are* allowed.

Me ma packed me this gum.

You should have one, sir - they're good.

Got a real minty *snap* to 'em.

The pupils lean in as they suppress laughter.

MR. HOLT narrows his eyes, considering his options.

ROBIN keeps holding out the gum, refusing to back down. Finally, MR. HOLT sighs heavily.

MR. HOLT

Fine. If it'll shut you up.

MR HOLT takes a stick from the pack and pulls, triggering the prank. A loud snap clamps down on his thumb. The pupils erupt into laughter as MR. HOLT recoils, his face a mix of fury and disbelief as he grips his thumb in the air.

ROBIN

Classic sir!

Priceless!

You should've seen your face sir!

MR. HOLT glares at him, fuming, and then looks out at the laughing pupils who quickly stop laughing for fear of MR HOLT'S fury.

MR. HOLT

Boy, once we return from this trip!

You'll be spending the next week in my office!

Twice a day!

Before and after school!

MISS MACKENZIE

Oh come on Mr Holt - it's just a bit of fun!

MR. HOLT

Fun?

If this is your idea of fun, Miss Mackenzie, it's going to be a long weekend!

Right - we're leaving - follow me!

The PUPILS grab their belongings and exit the stage, following MR HOLT out.

SCENE 4. HOBSON ESTATE (1958). INT. DAY.

ANNETTE HOBSON, now elderly, sits in a high-backed chair, a walking stick resting against her side. **ALISTAIR HOBSON**, her 30-year-old son, is carefully placing items into a box.

ALISTAIR

(Holding up a dusty book from a box)

Do you want this one, Mum?

Looks like Dad's old journal.

ANNETTE

(Squinting)

Hmm? Oh, no.

Best leave that behind.

I've no use for it now.

ALISTAIR places the journal in the box and picks up a small toy car, smiling slightly.

ALISTAIR

My old toys?

I didn't think you kept them.

ANNETTE

Truth be told, I kept too much,

Your father always said I hoarded memories like treasure.

ALISTAIR gently places the toy into a box. He moves toward another pile and spots something tucked under a chair - a small, worn teddy bear. He picks it up and brushes off the dust.

ALISTAIR

(Holding it up, intrigued)

What's this? A bear?

ANNETTE looks over, her expression shifting from confusion to a strange, almost wistful recognition. She sits up slightly and stares at it.

ANNETTE

(Softly)

Mr. Brownlow...

ALISTAIR glances at her, surprised.

ALISTAIR

Mr. Brownlow?

ANNETTE

(Reaching for the bear, her hands trembling)

I haven't seen you in years. I thought you were long gone.

(She cradles it carefully, her eyes misting as she strokes its worn fur)

You were hers...

ALISTAIR frowns, confused.

ALISTAIR

Hers?

ANNETTE doesn't respond immediately, lost in thought.

ALISTAIR watches her for a moment before sitting beside her.

ALISTAIR

Whose was it, Mum?

ANNETTE hesitates, a shadow crossing her face as she clutches the bear tighter. She looks away, avoiding his eyes.

ANNETTE

No one. It doesn't matter.

ALISTAIR

But you just said -

ANNETTE

(firmly, cutting him off)

It's just a silly old bear, Alistair.

Leave it be!

A tense pause. ALISTAIR looks at her, puzzled but reluctant to press further.

ALISTAIR

(trying to lighten the mood)

Well, I think he's got some charm.

Maybe I'll keep him - he looks like would suit the new house.

ANNETTE's grip tightens instinctively, her voice low but firm.

ANNETTE

No. He stays in *this* house.

ALISTAIR leans back, taken aback by her tone.

He studies her for a moment before nodding slowly.

ALISTAIR

Alright, Mum.

Whatever you want.

The room falls into an uneasy silence. ANNETTE's thumb strokes the bear's worn fur as if trying to unlock a memory she refuses to share. The lights dim slightly, focusing on her and the bear as eerie music begins to play softly in the background.

SCENE 5: SCHOOL BUS. NEW FOREST. TWILIGHT.

The school bus winds its way down a narrow road through the dense New Forest, twilight casting long shadows between the trees. “Every Breath You Take” by The Police plays on the crackly radio.

MR. HOLT drives, his grip on the wheel firm, his eyes fixed on the road ahead.

MISS MACKENZIE sits at the back, calmly reading a book. The pupils are sat gazing out of the windows, their faces a mix of boredom and weariness. A few moments of quiet pass, the only sounds being the faint music and the hum of the bus engine. Suddenly, **TOMMY** breaks the silence.

TOMMY

Squirrel!

Everyone looks out of the windows, excited by the sudden outburst.

GREGORY turns to **TOMMY** with a raised eyebrow.

GREGORY

That’s not a squirrel. That’s a bird.

TOMMY

(Grinning)

Doesn’t matter.

I saw it first, so I win.

ROBIN

Win what, exactly?

Bragging rights for spotting a bird?

Oh yeah, would you like some crisps Tommy?

MAYA

You’re not funny you know.

We all know that’s just another one of your pranks!

Loser!

MAYA makes an L shape with her hand and mouths ‘loser’ and the group ad lib reactions.

MISS MACKENZIE

Bottoms on seats and quieten down.

It goes silent again. After a while, **ROCKY** spots something out of the window.

ROCKY

(pointing)

Wait... squirrel!

The group snaps their heads toward where ROCKY's is pointing. CAM squints.

CAM

That's not a squirrel.

That's... uh, horse poo.

Laughter erupts. MAXIMILIAN adjusts his blazer, looking disgusted.

MAXIMILIAN

Horse poo?

Really?

Girls, do try to maintain *some* standards.

Can we *please* focus on something more productive?

TOMMY

(mockingly)

Oh, apologies!

Are we not being fancy enough for His Lordship?

The pupils snicker, a few nudging each other, eager to see MAXIMILIAN'S reaction.

MISS MACKENZIE stands and gestures for the children to sit.

MISS MACKENZIE

Tommy!

Let's keep it civil!

AVA

Yeah, Tommy!

Let's keep it civil.

A chorus of "Ooooo" from the school kids, teasing and trying to encourage an argument.

Until MR. HOLT, clearly annoyed, raises his voice without taking his eyes off the road.

MR. HOLT

Silence!

If I hear another peep, I swear, you'll all be walking home!

The group falls into a tense, uneasy silence as MR. HOLT reaches for the radio, turning up the volume. After some time there is a burst of static feedback through the speakers, sharp and jarring. The bus shudders violently and the engine splutters and cuts out.

ROBIN

What was that sir?

ROCKY

(looking out nervously)

The bus... it stopped.

MR. HOLT

I'll go see what's wrong.

Stay here!

MR. HOLT steps off the bus.

The pupils exchange uneasy glances as they ad-lib reactions.

MISS MACKENZIE folds her book and speaks calmly.

MISS MACKENZIE

Everyone - let's stay calm.

I'm sure it's nothing and we'll be on our way soon!

GREGORY peers out of the window, frowning.

GREGORY

Miss, the sun's setting...

AVA

(leaning back, arms crossed)

Great. Just what we needed to make this trip even worse!

A spooky forest in the middle of nowhere.

MR. HOLT re-enters the bus, looking frustrated.

MR. HOLT

Right, that engine is knackered.

MAYA

(nervously)

So... what do we do now, sir?

MR. HOLT

(consulting a map)

There's a lodge up near this lake, just a short walk from here.

MAXIMILIAN

A lodge?

In this wilderness?

Sounds... charming.

MR. HOLT

We'll head there and call for help.

Grab your bags and follow me.

(turning and pointing)

Stay together at all times.

TOMMY

(exiting)

Keep up, slowpokes.

The group grabs their bags reluctantly, filing off the bus. As they step into the forest, the light dims further. Night begins to fall, and the sounds of the forest, distant rustling, faint animal calls, grow louder as they exit the stage.

SCENE 6: MUDDY WATERS LODGE. EXT. NIGHT

The stage is dimly lit, except for a faint red glow coming from the inside of the lodge. The ENSEMBLE enters and stands huddled outside the lodge door, bags slung over their shoulders, visibly uneasy. A soft wind howls faintly in the distance.

MR. HOLT

(shouting out)

Hello?

Is anyone there?

Silence. MR HOLT calls out again, this time louder.

MR. HOLT

Hello?!

The pupils exchange uneasy glances.

AVA

(Looking up at the lodge)

This place is totally creepy.

It looks like something out of a horror film.

MAYA

I don't think I like it here.

TOMMY

It's just an old house.

Probably empty, that's all.

JOSH

If it's empty, then who left the lights on?

And why red?

That's not normal.

MISS MACKENZIE

(Trying to reassure them)

It will be fine, everyone.

Think of this as part of our adventure!

GREGORY

I don't think any of us signed up for this kind of adventure, Miss

MR. HOLT

Hello?!

MAXIMILIAN

(pulling a comb from his pocket)

Well, clearly no one's home.

I'll take care of this.

A little finesse is all that's needed.

MAXIMILIAN kneels by the lock, attempting to pick it with his comb. It snaps immediately.

MAXIMILIAN

What kind of barbaric lock is this?

ROBIN

Great job, Max.

How will you survive this weekend now, without your hairbrush?

TOMMY pulls out a tennis racket from his bag

TOMMY

Let me show you how it's done Maxy!

Stand back, everyone.

TOMMY winds up his racket to smash at the window, but almost hits MR. HOLT, who ducks for cover in time. The group collectively gasps as MR. HOLT whirls around, glaring at TOMMY.

MR. HOLT

(furious)

Tommy!

TOMMY

Sorry sir!

MR. HOLT

This isn't Wimbledon!

Put that racket away before I confiscate it!

TOMMY shrugs sheepishly and stuffs the racket back in his bag. MR. HOLT, sighs heavily. He moves toward a flower pot near the door and lifts it, revealing a small key.

MR. HOLT

(triumphant, holding up the key)

A spare key.

MISS MACKENZIE

Well done, Mr. Holt.

Come on, everyone.

Let's get inside before the rain starts.

The group begins filing into the lodge, their unease growing. **ROCKY** lingers outside, his gaze drawn to something on the ground - a small, worn teddy bear. He picks it up, brushing off the dirt. As he holds it, he hears a faint voice as **ADELINE** enters from the staircase downstage.

ADELINE

Hello?

ROCKY freezes, looking around. The faint figure of **ADELINE**, a ghostly young girl, appears, bathed in dim light. Her expression is distant but curious.

ROCKY

Hello?

Who are you?

ADELINE

(smiling faintly)

I'm Adeline.

Are you here to play?

ROCKY

(confused)

Play?

Where are your parents?

ADELINE

They're not home anymore.

MISS MACKENZIE

(calling from the door)

Rocky!

Before **ROCKY** can ask another question, **ADELINE** disappears. **ROCKY** stares at the spot where she stood, clutching the teddy bear tightly. **MISS MACKENZIE** enters.

MISS MACKENZIE

Rocky!

Come on, you'll catch your death out here.

ROCKY hesitates, glancing back at the forest. He shivers and moves toward the door, still holding the bear, he casts one last glance over his shoulder into the trees before exiting.

After some time, ALISTAIR HOBSON enters, wearing a trench coat and a fedora-style hat. He carries a paper bag of groceries in one arm, shielding it from the rain. He approaches the front door, sets the grocery bag down carefully and starts patting the ground near the door, lifting a flower pot.

ALISTAIR

(grumbling)

Now where's that blasted key?

Always under the flower pot, where else would it be?

He lifts the other stones, only to find nothing underneath. He frowns, checking around the area in growing frustration.

ALISTAIR

Oh, brilliant Alistair.

Now you've lost the key.

Typical you!

He straightens up, brushing his hands on his coat, and his eyes narrow as he notices faint light flickering from inside the lodge. He stiffens, ducking low as his voice drops to a whisper.

ALISTAIR

Wait... someone's in there!

He steps back cautiously, scanning the ground. His gaze lands on a small rock nearby. He picks it up, holding it awkwardly in his hand like a makeshift weapon.

ALISTAIR

(to himself)

Alright, alright.

Just... stay calm.

Could be squatters!

Or... worse!

Wait, what's worse than squatters!

He takes a tentative step toward the door but then retreats slightly, lowering the rock to grab a larger one from the ground. It's heavier. He tests the weight of the new rock, frowns, and sets it down. His gaze shifts to a fallen branch nearby - a long, sturdy piece of wood. He picks it up, holding it like a club. His stance is awkward but determined.

ALISTAIR

(wielding the branch)

Right. This should do the trick!

He approaches the door cautiously, his footsteps exaggeratedly slow and silent. His nerves get the better of him, and he spins around suddenly, brandishing the stick as though someone is sneaking up behind him. Of course, no one is there. He laughs nervously, shaking his head.

ALISTAIR

(chuckling nervously to himself)

Get a grip, Alistair.

You're scaring yourself now.

(takes a deep breath)

Alright, whoever's in there... you're about to regret it!

ALISTAIR takes one last look around, then cautiously exits the stage, sneaking around the side of the house to enter through the back door. The stick held high above his head.

SCENE 7: MUDDY WATERS LODGE. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY. NIGHT.

The PUPILS enter from stage left, led by MR. HOLT. They carry their bags, looking around nervously. The eerie red glow of the moon from the window casts faint shadows through the room. The sound of creaking floorboards and faint wind adds to the atmosphere.

MR. HOLT

(irritated)

Where *is* Miss Mackenzie?

AVA

She went after the new kid, sir.

MR. HOLT

Oh yes, the French exchange student.

What was his name again?

ALL (in unison)

Rocky!

MR. HOLT exhales sharply, shaking his head as he sets down his bag. He surveys the group with a firm gaze.

MR. HOLT

Alright, listen up.

You're staying down here.

Do not wander off, do you understand?

The pupils nod reluctantly, murmuring agreement. MR. HOLT points to JOSH.

MR. HOLT

Josh, you're in charge while I check upstairs for a phone.

TOMMY

(rolling his eyes)

Oh, great - just what we needed!

The Clipboard King calling the shots.

JOSH

(adjusting his glasses)

Rules are rules, Tommy.

We'd all be lost without them!

MR. HOLT

Enough!
I won't be long.
Behave!

MR. HOLT grabs a flashlight from his bag and exits upstage right. The PUPILS sit on the floor dropping their bags with sighs. A tense silence fills the room.

MAYA

I don't like this place.
It feels... wrong.

CAM

It's just an old house, Maya.
Don't freak yourself out.

ROBIN

Bet it's haunted.
A place like this?
Probably got a gruesome past!

MAXIMILIAN

Robin, you're not scaring anyone.
Haunted or not, it's disgusting.
Look at the state of this place.
It's a mess!

MAXIMILIAN yanks the rug up, revealing deep, jagged scratch marks carved into the floorboards. The group gasps and gathers around to look.

GREGORY

What do you think made these?
They're huge.
(tracing the marks with his finger)
They almost look like claw marks.

JOSH

No animal I've read about could make something like this.

TOMMY

Probably just the floorboards rotting.

Old wood gets weird, right?

(nervous)

Right?!

ROBIN

(grinning, leaning closer)

Or maybe it's where the ghost dragged the bodies.

MAYA shudders and moves away from the group, her gaze caught by a large portrait hanging on the wall. It depicts a stern-looking lady in Victorian clothing. She stares at it.

MAYA

The painting... it just -

CAM

What?

MAYA

(her voice trembling)

I... I swear the eyes just moved.

The group stand and gather to look at the painting.

CAM squints and steps closer, studying it.

CAM

(flatly)

It's just a painting, Maya.

You're imagining things.

MAYA

No, I saw it!

The eyes... They followed me!

The group exchanges uneasy glances.

AVA

(shivering slightly, hugging her arms)

This place gives me the creeps.

I don't like it.

I don't like any of this.

First the school bus just breaks down,

Then these claw marks on the floor,

Now this?

(turns to the others, voice tense)

Tell me I'm wrong.

Tell me you don't feel it too.

ALISTAIR HOBSON has entered cautiously from stage left, holding the large wooden stick he picked up earlier. He approaches the group from behind, grips the stick tightly, raising it above his head as he creeps closer. He pauses for a moment, gathering his nerves. Just as he's about to strike, one of the pupils senses something and turns around. The entire group spins to see **ALISTAIR** looming with the stick raised. They scream in unison.

ALL (PUPILS)

AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

Startled, **ALISTAIR** screams back, his voice loud and more panicked than them.

ALISTAIR

AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

The screaming continues for a beat, creating a moment of slapstick comedy.

Finally, the pupils scramble to their feet as **ALISTAIR** lowers the stick slightly, his breathing heavy. At that moment, **MR. HOLT** re-enters from stage right, and **MISS MACKENZIE** and **ROCKY** rush in behind him from stage left.

MR. HOLT

(firmly, addressing ALISTAIR)

What in the world is going on here?!

ALISTAIR

(demanding)

I should be asking you that!

What are you doing on my private property?!

The pupils fall silent, glancing nervously between **MR. HOLT** and **ALISTAIR**.

MR HOLT steps forward, lowering his voice to sound calm but authoritative.

MR. HOLT

Look, we're on a school trip and our bus has broken down.
We just needed a place to shelter for the night.
We'll be on our way at first light.

MISS MACKENZIE

(stepping forward, smiling warmly)

So sorry for the intrusion.
It's been a bit of a long day, and the children were getting cold - we didn't mean to trespass.

ALISTAIR

Well, I suppose I can't blame you for that.
Fine, fine - you can stay the night.
This is my family home, but it's just me now.
I'm moving back in to do the old place up and as you can see, it needs a lot of work.

ALISTAIR gestures to the grocery bag he left by the door earlier.

ALISTAIR

Mother left me her recipe for the most delightful pumpkin stew.
Best thing on a cold night like this.
You all look like you could use a good meal.
I'll whip something up for you before bedtime.

MISS MACKENZIE smiles brightly, clasping her hands together.

MISS MACKENZIE

That's so kind of you, Mr...?

MISS MACKENZIE offers her hand and after a moment ALISTAIR shakes it.

ALISTAIR

Hobson. Alistair Hobson.

MR. HOLT

We appreciate your hospitality, Mr. Hobson.

ALISTAIR

It's fine.
Look, get yourselves settled and meet me in the dining room in twenty minutes.
Try not to break anything in the meantime.

SCENE 8: THE LAKE. NIGHT. (1927)

The stage is dark except for a single spotlight, **ADELINE HOBSON**, stands on the raft. She holds a single oar, gently rowing. **MR. BROWNLOW**, her worn teddy bear, sits propped up beside her.

ADELINE

Oh, Mr. Brownlow, don't look at me like that.
I know, I know... we left your hat on the island.
Don't worry, we'll go straight back and get it!

ADELINE rows a bit harder

ADELINE

(mimicking a scolding tone)

Mummy says I "shouldn't take the boat out at night."
But it's not far!
I promise. I know the way.

We'll be back before anyone notices.

(pauses, looking up at the sky. The faint sound of raindrops begin)

Nothing to worry about Mr Brownlow.

Just a little sprinkle.

(slightly nervous.)

Oh dear... it's starting to rain harder.

(panicking)

Oh no... it's - it's too fast!

Wait - wait!

ADELINE drops the oar and looks around frantically, gripping MR. BROWNLOW tightly as the raft begins to thrash more violently.

ADELINE

(screaming over the storm)

Mummy -

Mummy!

Help!

ADELINE reaches one hand desperately toward the sky, clutching MR. BROWNLOW tightly in the other.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 9: MUDDY WATERS LODGE. THE LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

The PUPILS sit scattered on the floor of the dimly lit living room.
MISS MACKENZIE sits in the arm chair, watching over the pupils.

The earlier excitement of the evening has faded, replaced by a quiet sense of unease.
The glow from lanterns cast long eerie shadows across the walls.
Outside, the wind howls, rattling the windows.

MISS MACKENZIE

I know this isn't where any of us planned to be tonight.

I know it's dark, cold, and a little bit... unusual.

(forces a small smile, trying to lighten the mood.)

But we're all here together, and that means we're going to be just fine.

The PUPILS shift, uncertain. The silence lingers for a moment before ROBIN, leaning against a chair, suddenly perks up with mischief in his eyes. From his bag, he pulls the crisp box prank.

ROBIN

Miss?

Ya want some crisps?

ROBIN holds out the box, feigning innocence.

MISS MACKENZIE

Oh, thank you, Robin, that's kind of —

MISS MACKENZIE opens the box. A loud bang bursts from inside the fake crisps box.

MISS MACKENZIE yelps, nearly falling off her chair.

The PUPILS burst into laughter, collapsing into each other in fits of giggles.

Even MISS MACKENZIE chuckles, shaking her head.

MISS MACKENZIE

Robin!

ROBIN

(grinning proudly)

You have no idea how long I've been waiting for that, miss!

MISS MACKENZIE

I walked right into that one, didn't I?

Fair play, Robin -

The PUPILS relax slightly, the mood lifting for a brief moment, as they begin miming. Across the room, MAXIMILIAN and GREGORY huddle, speaking in low, hushed tones.

GREGORY

(seriously)

You do realise how strange all of this is, don't you?

MAXIMILIAN

I must admit, I've been pondering and have come to that exact conclusion. The lodge, the way we ended up here, the scratches on the floor - It all feels a little too convenient.

GREGORY

So, we agree.

Maybe we need to do some investigating?

TOMMY, eavesdropping, grins.

TOMMY

If you're planning on sneaking off, I'm coming with you.

You wont last five minutes without my strength - and good looks!

TOMMY flexes dramatically and kisses his biceps.

GREGORY rolls his eyes, but MAXIMILIAN gives a reluctant nod.

MAXIMILIAN

Fine, you can come with us.

But no flexing.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the room, ROCKY sits alone, cradling MR. BROWNLOW in his arms. MAYA, CAM, and AVA exchange uneasy glances before approaching him.

AVA

Frenchie.

(pause)

Oi, Frenchie.

Why are you playing with that teddy?

ROCKY

I found it outside.

MAYA

(frowning)

Outside where?

ROCKY

The little girl gave it to me.

The MEAN GIRLS exchange nervous glances.

CAM

(slowly)

What - what little girl?

ROCKY finally looks up, his face pale.

ROCKY

She said her parents aren't home anymore.

A heavy silence falls. The girls glance at each other, terrified. Before they can tell MISS MACKENZIE, MR. HOLT enters from stage left, with ALISTAIR carrying a large pot of stew.

MR. HOLT

(firmly)

Alright, everyone, dinner's here.

Sit up properly.

The PUPILS slowly settle into place as ALISTAIR places the pot down and begins serving.

ALISTAIR

Pumpkin stew - it's my mother's recipe.

She left it to me before she... well, before she passed.

Best thing for a cold night like this, she would say.

The PUPILS take bowls, some hesitantly.

ROCKY exits, sneaking out.

As they eat, MAXIMILIAN, GREGORY, and TOMMY seize the opportunity to interrogate ALISTAIR.

MAXIMILIAN

(curiously)

So, Mr. Hobson, if that is your real name -

How long has this place been in your family?

ALISTAIR

A long time.
Generations.

GREGORY

And before you moved back in?
Who lived here then?

ALISTAIR

No one, really.
It's been empty for years.

TOMMY

Ever owned any large pets?
A tiger with large claws perhaps?

ALISTAIR looks at him confused.

ALISTAIR

A tiger?

Before they can press further, JOSH suddenly realises ROCKY is missing.

JOSH

Sir?
Where did Rocky go?

Everyone glances around. Panic flickers in the air. MR. HOLT stands up sharply.

MR. HOLT

Stay put.
He's probably just gone to the loo.
I'll go find him.

The group now eat their stew, in an uneasy silence.

AVA

Miss, Rocky said something *really strange* earlier -

MISS MACKENZIE

What is it Ava?
Tell me?

CAM

He said was talking to a girl who lives in the woods.

A long unnerving silence.

Suddenly, a screeching noise echoes from upstairs.

The sound is unnatural, distant yet far too close.

They all stand and look up, their eyes wide in terror.

Some cover their ears, others just stare at each other in fear

JOSH

That sounded like it came from upstairs.

ALISTAIR

No panic, I'm sure it's nothing.

Probably, just an old pipe.

I'll go check.

ALISTAIR stands to leave and turns to grab the large piece of wood from earlier.

ALISTAIR

You know - just in case.

ALISTAIR exits.

MISS MACKENZIE

Girls, did Rocky say anything else?

AVA

I can't remember, miss.

MISS MACKENZIE

We'll have to go after him.

MAYA

I'm scared, miss.

CAM

What was that noise, miss?

ROBIN

Probably the ghost!

The group panic as MISS MACKENZIE stands, trying to regain control of the group.

MISS MACKENZIE

Robin, one more word out of you!

(shouting)

Silence!

The PUPILS all in shock from the impressive vocal display!

MISS MACKENZIE

(firmly)

Everyone, follow me.

Stay together and do not panic.

The group begins to exit upstage right.

MAXIMILIAN, TOMMY and GREGORY peel off from the group and meet downstage centre.

GREGORY

The forest - that's too obvious.

Out in the open at night.

They're probably walking into a trap!

MAXIMILLIAN

Well, should we probably tell them?!

GREGORY

They'll only slow us down.

We'll be better without them.

MAXIMILIAN and TOMMY look at each other in confusion.

GREGORY

Now, if this were a Stephen King novel, the monster wouldn't be in the loft.

Think about it!

We heard the noise from up there.

And what does that mean?

MAXIMILIAN and TOMMY look at each other again in confusion.

GREGORY

Exactly, it's just a red herring!

But here's the thing - sometimes the attic isn't where the monster is.

It's where the answers are!

Like, in *The Goonies* when they find Chester Copperpot's wallet, inside the Moss Garden Cavern,

Near the skeletal remains of - Chester Copperpot himself!

(looking at the others, his voice dropping slightly, serious now.)

So yeah, the attic probably isn't where the danger is -

But it might be where we finally figure out what is really going on.

Let's go!

GREGORY exits.

TOMMY

That was awesome.

MAXIMILIAN

Indeed.

They exchange a final look, before exiting upstage left.

SCENE 10: MUDDY WATERS LODGE. FOREST. NIGHT.

In the finale of the play, the lighting shifts between the two stages as the scene unfolds.

THE FOREST: STAGE FLOOR in DIM-LIGHT

A picnic blanket is spread stage-right, a child's tea is arranged neatly, with MR. BROWNLOW. MR. HOLT sits stiffly, legs-crossed and vacant, his hands limp in his lap.

ROCKY

(urgent, shaking him)

Mr. Holt!

You have to wake up!

We need to go - now!

She'll be back soon!

ADELINE enters from the staircase, stage-right, carrying a small wicker basket.

ROCKY freezes, panic flashing across his face.

ADELINE

(mocking, sweetly)

What are you doing, you silly boy?

It's nearly dinnertime.

Sit down.

ROCKY

(desperate)

Please - just let us go!

ADELINE

(ignoring him, cheerful)

I've brought a special treat for our picnic.

Gooseberries - these are Mr. Brownlow's favourite.

ADELINE turns to ROCKY, her eyes darkening. Slowly, she raises a hand.

ADELINE

(commanding, voice laced with magic)

I said - sit down.

ROCKY's body stiffens. His expression empties as the spell takes hold.

He sits beside MR HOLT, eerily still - silent, vacant, staring into nothing.

ADELINE

(getting cross)

Don't give me that face, Mr Brownlow.

Eat up, now - it's nearly bedtime.

You don't want to go to bed on an empty tummy, do you?

ADELINE lifts her head suddenly, as if sensing something. Then she tilts her head towards the staircase upstage left, where MISS MACKENZIE and the pupils enter cautiously, stepping into the forest. MISS MACKENZIE softly, raises her hands in a calming gesture.

MISS MACKENZIE

Hello there, young lady -

ADELINE keeps staring but doesn't respond.

MISS MACKENZIE

We don't want to interrupt your picnic.

But... our friends, they'll need to come back with us now.

ADELINE stands, her expression unreadable.

ADELINE

But, we haven't finished our picnic.

A beat of silence as the PUPILS exchange nervous glances.

MISS MACKENZIE

We're sure they're enjoying your picnic, but -

(glancing at the sky)

It's very late.

ADELINE's smile widens.

ADELINE

You should stay for supper too?

MISS MACKENZIE steps forward cautiously, kneeling beside MR. HOLT.

MISS MACKENZIE

Mr. Holt?

You need to wake up!

MR. HOLT and ROCKY do not move, so MISS MACKENZIE tries to lift MR HOLT up.

ADELINE

You shouldn't have done that.

(raises her hand towards MISS MACKENZIE)

That's not kind!

Before anyone can react, MISS MACKENZIE gasps - her body suddenly locks up, her arms snapping to her sides as if pulled by invisible strings. Her eyes glaze over. She is now entranced and takes a seat between MR HOLT and ROCKY.

AVA

(urgent)

Miss Mackenzie?

(scared)

What's happened to her?!

They ALL freeze.

BLACKOUT on the STAGEFLOOR.

THE ATTIC: MAINSTAGE in SPOTLIGHT

A single spotlight illuminates a faded portrait, as GREGORY, MAXIMILIAN, and TOMMY cautiously step forward.

TOMMY

(looking around, unimpressed)

So... this is the attic?

I thought it would be creepier!

MAXIMILIAN

It certainly smells creepy.

GREGORY halts, eyes fixed on a dust-covered portrait. He brushes it clean, revealing a man and woman in early 1900s attire. The woman, visibly pregnant, stands beside a small girl clutching a teddy bear.

GREGORY

Guys... check this out!

MAXIMILIAN and TOMMY move in, studying the portrait.

They carefully turn the portrait over, revealing a faded inscription.

GREGORY

(Reading aloud)

“Hobson Family – 1927.”

MAXIMILIAN

(pointing at the portrait)

I think that’s Alistair’s mother.

Before anyone can speak further, from the shadows, ALISTAIR HOBSON suddenly bursts onto the stage, wielding his stick screaming. The boys scream back, stumbling over each other in pure terror.

TOMMY

Would you stop doing that!

ALISTAIR

Sorry!

MAXIMILIAN

Mr. Hobson... look we found this!

ALISTAIR peers at the image, as his expression softens recognising his mother and father, but then his eyes stop on the girl. His brow furrows in confusion.

ALISTAIR

That’s... my mother and my father... but who’s the girl?

A heavy pause. The pupils look at one another.

GREGORY

(pointing at the inscription)

It says it here: “The Hobson Family – 1927. Annette, Albert, and Adeline Hobson.”

A long silence.

ALISTAIR

1927 - that was the year before I was born?

MAXIMILIAN

(gently)

Mr. Hobson... I -

I think you had a sister.

ALISTAIR stares at them, shaking his head slightly as if rejecting the idea.

ALISTAIR

No. Mother never mentioned it.

She would've said -

TOMMY

Check this out.

Look - isn't that the teddy bear Rocky had earlier!

ALISTAIR

Mr Brownlow.

They ALL freeze.

THE FOREST: STAGE FLOOR in DIM-LIGHT

The scene shifts back to the picnic in the forest.

MR HOLT, ROCKY and MISS MACKENZIE remain seated, crossed legged, facing forward in a trance. **ADELINE** is combing **MISS MACKENZIE's** hair.

The pupils, **ROBIN, CAM, MAYA, and JOSH** stand off to the side.

AVA

I *really* think we should get back to the house and find the others!

ROBIN

Agreed.

(looking over to ADELINE)

This is pretty creepy - even for me...

JOSH

So, I ran the calculations,

And, if we don't leave right now the chances of our survival are just 2.7 percent..

That is not agreeable at all. So -

CAM

(interrupting)

What about our teachers?

And the new kid!

We can't just leave them here - with her.

ROBIN

Well - we kinda could...

MAYA takes a step towards ADELINE.

MAYA

Hello?

ADELINE stands and studies MAYA.

ADELINE

You have such lovely eyes.

They remind me of mothers.

MAYA

Where is your mother?

ADELINE

Mother has gone away.

MAYA

And you're here all alone now?

ADELINE

No, Mr Brownlow looks after me now.

And I look after him.

MAYA

My name's Maya, what's your name?

ADELINE

I'm Adeline.

CAM

Adeline, how long have you been here?

ADELINE lifts her gaze, staring directly at CAM - a moment too long.

ADELINE

I don't remember.

CAM glances at the others, then back at ADELINE, more hesitant.

CAM

How did you get here?

ADELINE

I've always been here.

ROBIN

(whispering to JOSH)

Is it just me, or is that the worst possible answer she could've given?

JOSH adjusts his glasses, voice strained.

JOSH

(gulps)

Erm -

What do you do here, in the woods... all by yourself?

ADELINE's expression doesn't change, but she tilts her head slightly.

ADELINE

I wait - for new friends to join my picnic.

Would you like to join my picnic?

ROBIN

Don't be rude Josh.

Go on - join the picnic!

From the staircase stage left, MAXIMILIAN, GREGORY, and TOMMY enter.

MAXIMILIAN steps forward first, his usual arrogance stripped away.

His voice is gentle, careful, as if he's speaking to a fragile child.

MAXIMILIAN

It's okay.

I think I know what's going on?

(to ADELINE)

Hello, are you Adeline Hobson?

ADELINE

Hobson?

Yes - that was my family name -

MAXIMILIAN

You've been waiting here for a long time.

And I think I know why.

Something happened to you?

Didn't it?

ADELINE

Stop talking!

You're ruining the picnic!

(raising her hand)

That's not kind!

Before anyone can react, the PUPILS gasp - their bodies suddenly lock up, arms snapping to their sides as if pulled by invisible strings. Their eyes glaze over, now entranced.

ALISTAIR HOBSON enters, his movements hesitant.

ALISTAIR

Hello Adeline.

You don't know me... but I think I know you.

ADELINE just stares. Her fingers tremble slightly as she holds her spell.

ADELINE

You... look like daddy?

ALISTAIR

Well - that makes sense.

(pause)

I'm his son.

And, that means, I'm your brother.

ADELINE blinks, stunned, as though she's struggling to process, as she releases the spell.

ALISTAIR

(kneeling as he holds up portrait)

Look here is my mother and father - and this is you.

I think you're my sister.

I think something bad happened to you.

And, mother never told me about you.

She looks up at ALISTAIR, searching his face as if she's memorising every detail.

ADELINE

You really are my brother?

ALISTAIR nods once, his throat bobbing as he swallows back emotion.

ALISTAIR

Yes. And I think you've been waiting for *me*... for a very long time.

ADELINE's lip trembles slightly, looking back up at ALISTAIR, her eyes searching.

ADELINE

I remember now.

I was waiting for you.

I was so excited.

I was going to teach you all my favourite games.

ALISTAIR

You don't have to wait anymore, Adeline.

(pause)

It's okay - you can go now - if you want to.

ADELINE looks around, almost as if seeing the forest differently.

ADELINE

(panicking)

I was only trying to help Mr. Brownlow...

His hat - I left it by the lake -

It wasn't far.

I knew the way.

I knew the -

ALISTAIR
(calming)
It's okay.

ADELINE looks down at her dress, fingers ghosting the fabric as if remembering.

ADELINE
So, can I go now?

ALISTAIR
Only if you want to.

ADELINE looks down at **MR. BROWNLOW** one last time before stepping forward and holding him out to **ALISTAIR**. He hesitates, eyes flicking between **ADELINE** and the bear.

ADELINE
Mr. Brownlow always wanted a brother.

ALISTAIR hesitates, then carefully takes the bear from her hands.
ADELINE exhales a shaky breath - like a weight has been lifted.
She steps back, her smile peaceful now, her eyes full of something unspoken but content.

ADELINE
It was lovely to meet you.

ADELINE hugs **ALISTAIR**, they embrace for a moment.

ADELINE
Goodnight, brother.

ALISTAIR
Goodnight, sister.

With that, **ADELINE** begins to walk away, up the staircase, disappearing into the shadows. Everyone watches her. No words are spoken. They don't need to be. The forest, once haunted by a restless child, is now quiet. Peaceful. The past has finally been laid to rest.

ALISTAIR still gripping **MR. BROWNLOW** tightly, as the stage **FADES TO BLACK**, the wind whispers one last time, carrying the faintest echo of a child's laughter.

END