

Myth, Military and Monsters: A Collection of Plays

by

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Shadow On the Wall

Characters

Chris: A young boy, 8 years old. Timid, but curious.

Ro: A young monster. Inexperienced, sympathetic, and compassionate.

Mom: Chris' parent. Stressed, overworked, but still attentive.

Wags: A young monster who speaks and acts like a pirate.

Hollow: A shadowy monster, either seen as a shadow projected onto a wall, or a heavily cloaked black figure.

Stone: A wise, cranky, ancient monster with no eyes and a big mouth.

Note on Characters: Though Chris is written as a male, gender is not an issue. The script is designed to allow for either gender for most roles.

Settings

Chris' Bedroom: A bed, toy chest, a coat rack, bedroom door, and a closet door. The walls of the stage are bare, except when Shadows appear.

The Black Between: An empty stage. The lights are dim allowing for minor shadows and silhouettes. If possible sounds, voices and music should echo.

Valley of Spire: Small patches of grass and various rocks. The walls of the stage are rolling hills.

The Spiked Mountains: The stage is sparse, with perhaps a few sharp jagged looking boulders. The walls of the stage are impossibly tall, sharp mountain peaks.

Forest of Forget: There is one, hollow, dark, twisted tree at the center. The walls of the stage are ever moving, shifting, dark trees. They scrape and scratch about.

Scene One: Dark Shapes

Chris' bedroom

The stage is dimly lit. Shadows briefly appear upon the walls and then vanish. The bedroom door opens and casts a long shadow across the room. CHRIS enters and prepares to sleep (i.e. Pulls back the covers, gets his favorite stuffed animal). Chris sets an inhaler on the night stand. There is a soccer ball next to the bed. Chris kicks the ball against the closet door.

Mom (OS)
Chris, time for bed!

Chris
Ok, Mom.

Mom (OS)
Brush your teeth?

Chris
Yeah.

Mom (OS)
Pajamas?

Chris
White ones.

Mom (OS)
Is your inhaler on the nightstand?

Chris
Mom, I don't need it.

Mom (OS)
Chris, don't argue.

Chris
Fine.

Chris looks at the inhaler and sticks out his tongue.

Mom (OS)
Good. Do that and then grab a story. We've only got time to read one tonight.

Chris

But it's Friday. (Said in some kind of melody.) "Two by two, as stories go, the more you read the more you grow." We only read one last week. You promised two tonight.

Mom (OS)

Ok, two, but short ones. Find them and I'll be there in a sec!

Chris

Ok!

Chris goes to the closet and searches inside. He finds nothing. He thinks. He exits through the open bedroom door. He is heard rummaging through drawers or cabinets.

Chris (OS)

Ha! Got ya!

Chris returns. He is happy but out of breath. He stops, and steadies himself and notices his long shadow filling the stage. He makes shadow puppets, silly gestures and movements with his shadow. He laughs. Chris sits on the bed and takes a few deep breaths. A moment later MOM enters.

Mom

Ready?

Chris

Ready.

Mom

Good.

Chris

Good.

Mom takes the books.

Mom

Alice in Wonderland... The Brothers Grimm? Chris!

Chris

What?

Mom

What is it with these stories? You know they're bad for you.

Chris
They're not bad.

Mom
No Brothers Grimm. You know what happens.

Chris
I like them. I like the spooky stuff. It makes me jump.

Mom
Jump?! No, Chris. No. No jumps. No bumps, creeps, peeps, or frights in the night. No. We just saw the doctor last week. I won't let you have another asthma attack. If we read this now, you'll have a nightmare later, and another attack. Do you remember *Coraline*? You didn't sleep for days. Sweetie, this is new for both of us. We BOTH have to learn. We both have to make changes.

Chris
I don't want to change. I hate change. Look, I won't get scared. I promise. I feel fine. Go ahead, feel my chest.

Chris takes a few deep breaths, holds the last one, then coughs a little.

Mom
No, Chris. No Grimm. No more getting scared.

Chris
Fine ... Alice then.

Mom
Good.

Mom starts to open the book. Chris looks contemplative and serious. Mom sees Chris' expression.

Mom
Chris, what is it?

Chris
Mom, am I broken?

Mom
Broken? What? No. Don't think like that.

Chris

I hate this.

Chris knocks his inhaler to the floor.

Mom

Chris, don't do that. You're not broke. You're just different. You've... changed.

Chris

I don't want to be different. Different stinks.

Mom

Sometimes change is good, but being different isn't good, or bad, or broken. It just means you're different. You understand?

Chris

The kids at school laugh.

Mom

I know. Your principal called about it. You know you shouldn't fight. (Beat.) You know what, don't let it bother you. You'll make new friends.

Chris (Softly)

No, I won't and I don't care. I just want to stay here and be with you. I just want to read.

Mom

I'm happy you enjoy reading so much, but what about soccer? You love to run and play. Don't you miss that?

Chris

I like reading now.

Mom

You like soccer too. You can still play, and run, and jump, and everything. You can take a puff before practice and everything will—

Chris

No. (Shakes Head.) No more soccer. I don't want to.

Mom shakes her head in frustration, then ponders.

Mom
You like spooky stuff, right?

Chris
Yeah.

Mom
Well, Dr. Jones said the more you play, the stronger you get.

Chris
No more soccer!

Mom
Just listen for a sec. If you're stronger, then you could read more scary stuff. Stay strong and there's less of a need for the inhaler. Less need means more spooky stuff.

Chris thinks, and then shakes his head.

Chris
No... I don't want the inhaler. I don't want soccer, or friends, or anything. I don't want to be different.

Mom
Ok, enough of that! Dang it, Chris. Why do you have to be so difficult? (Beat. Calms down.) Ok... Ok, happy thoughts now. We've got a story now don't we. You lie down. I'll read.

Chris still looks depressed. The Mom tickles Chris lightly to coax a smile from him. Chris giggles and pushes Mom's hand playfully away.

Mom
Ok. Ok. Under the covers. Hop to it little rabbit.

Chris climbs into bed and pulls the covers up. Mom sits on the edge of the bed, and opens the book.

Mom
Chapter One. Down the Rabbit Hole

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, 'and what is the use of a book,' thought Alice 'without pictures or conversation?'

Chris and Mom make their hands into rabbit heads. They make the hand rabbits hop and play. Chris giggles. Mom smiles. Pause. Mom's cell phone rings. Mom puts down book and pulls out her phone. Chris rolls eyes.

Mom

(To phone.) Hello? ... Oh! Mr. Palmer... Oh. Yes sir, I was just... No sir, I just left the files at my... No. No, I didn't get a chance to... Yes, I realize we're busy, but...

Chris holds up the book and points to it.

Chris (Softly)

Mom.

Mom

(To Chris.) Hold on. (To phone.) Yes sir, I fully intend to when I get back to...

Chris (Softly)

Mom!

Mom

(To Chris.) Wait. (To phone.) Yes, I'll get to that as soon as I... What, now!? ... Well no, sir, I... No, I'm at home with Chris, my... But, sir, I... But..... Yes, sir. I'll get on that... Yes, sir, tonight... Good night.

Mom puts the phone away. Pause.

Chris

What's wrong?

Mom

... I'm sorry, Chris... The story has to wait.

Chris

But you promised!

Mom

Tomorrow. We'll read tomorrow.

Mom stands. Chris pouts.

Mom

Three. We'll read three tomorrow. I—

Chris
You promise... I know.

Mom wants to say something. The phone rings again.

Mom
For crying out loud! (Answers phone with forced cheer.) Hello.
Yes, Mr. Palmer. I was just... Yes, sir... Yes, sir... Yes, sir, I'll
get right on it... Goodnight.

Mom hangs up phone and goes to the bedroom door.

Mom
Tomorrow night. We'll read tomorrow. Get some sleep, Chris.

Chris
Is it ok if I read alone?

Mom
Sure, but NO Grimm. Understood? No nightmares.

Chris (Frustrated)
Ok, Mom. No Grimm.

Mom
Ok. Good (Beat.) Well, night—night little rabbit.

Chris
Night.

Mom kisses Chris on the forehead, picks up the inhaler, sets it back on the nightstand, and exits. Phone rings offstage. Mom huffs in frustration. Chris pouts for a moment.

Chris (Mocking imitation of Mom)
No Grimm. Don't have fun. Don't get scared. Don't Jump.

Chris looks around and picks up the fallen books. He looks at the Brother's Grimm book, but eventually puts it down. He then picks up the Alice book, finds a favorite passage and starts reading. As Chris read, the intensity of his voice is meant to convey growing anticipation, excitement, and even a little fright.

Chris

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of FLAME,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And BURBLED as it came!

Shadows slowly appear and move about the room's walls. Chris looks up from the book and is startled. The Shadows move and dance, when suddenly Hollow's silhouette flashes on the wall. Chris startles and drops the book. An asthma attack begins. Chris starts to breathe deeply.

Chris
Mom!

The Shadows vanish.

Chris
Mom!

Mom (OS)
Chris? What is it? ... Chris!?

Chris
Shadows!

Mom enters.

Mom
Chris! What's wrong!?

Chris
The...The...

Mom
Oh, God. Not again. (Looks around frantically.) Inhaler?

Inhaler?

Mom goes to Chris' night stand and gets the inhaler. Chris struggles to breathe.

Chris
The Shadows.

Mom
Chris, open up.

Chris
I don't... need it.

Mom
Chris, please!

Mom makes Chris use the inhaler. Chris struggles, but eventually relents. Chris coughs. Mom wraps her arms around Chris and rocks him back and forth.

Mom
Good air in... Bad air out... Good in... Bad out.

Chris' breathing steadies. Mom holds Chris tight.

Mom
What happened?

Chris
The Shadows... on the wall... they-they moved... they scared me.

Mom
Shadows?

Chris
Yeah... I was reading. Then the shadows moved. And... And—

Mom
They scared you? Dang it, Chris! I told you NO Brothers Grimm!

Chris
What? I didn't—

Mom
Don't worry me like that. No nightmares! I can't keep coming up here. You have an inhaler. Stop being so stubborn.

Chris
But this is important!

Mom
Chris, stop this. Now! You know what this job is for me, for us. I need it so I can take care of us. I need you to be strong and healthy, so I can be strong and healthy. It's just you and me. If you get hurt, THAT scares me... but not in the jumpy, fun way. Ok? No more scares. And TRY to use your inhaler, please.

Chris
I know what I saw.

Mom
Chris enough.

Chris
I saw them move.

Mom (Frustrated)
One.

Chris
I saw them!

Mom
Two! (Mom stares down Chris.) Go. To. Sleep.

Chris
Ok. (Pouts.) It's not fair.

Mom
I know, Chris... I know. (Beat.) Night little rabbit.

Mom goes to kiss Chris, but he flops to his side, and yanks the covers up. Mom shakes her head, puts the inhaler on the nightstand, and exits. Chris begins to fidget from boredom. Eventually, he gets up and starts to examine the walls.

Chris
Where are you? ... Shadows? ... Hello?

Giving up, Chris shrugs and goes back to bed, takes out a flash light and makes his own shadow puppets. Slowly, the Shadows reappear. Chris startles, yet looks on with fascination. Eventually, the Shadows fade away and Hollow's silhouette

returns. Chris' curiosity gets the better of him, and he extends a hand to investigate the silhouette. Just as Chris is about to make contact, the wall stretches. The wall bends as if a hand were trying to push through it. Chris jumps back. Hollow laughs.

Chris

AHHHH!

Chris rushes back into bed.

Hollow

Yes. Run... Run and hide... all the more fun.

Chris

Mom! Help!

Hollow

No help for you... none will come.

Chris

Go away. Leave me alone.

Hollow

Alone you are... alone you stay.

Chris starts gasping.

Chris

W-Who are you... W-What are you?

Hollow

Here to Scare... darkly... twisted... the monster's way.

Chris

Scare?! ... M-Monster?! ... Mom!

Hollow

Yes, yell.

Chris

Mom!

Hollow

More!

Chris
MOM!

Hollow bellows a thunderous laugh, but slowly his silhouette and the laughter fade away. Chris hides under the covers and tries to steady his breathing.

Chris (Softly)
Mom?

Chris peers out and looks around. He shakes his head and hides again. Pause. RO enters from the closet, and trips over the soccer ball. Chris sits up and sees Ro. Pause. They stare. Chris screams and hides under his covers. Ro screams and runs back to the closet. Eventually, Chris comes out from under the covers.

Chris
Go away... J-Just go away... I'm not af-fraid... I know you're there.

Chris' heavy breathing becomes more pronounced.

Ro
No, you don't.

Chris
Yes... I do... You're talking.

Ro
This isn't me. It's the wind. (Makes wind sound.)

Chris
Who... are you?

Ro
The wind. (Makes wind sound.) See.

Chris
I don't... believe you.

Ro
But I have to... you're suppose to... just believe me. Ok.

Chris
Who are you?!

Pause.

Ro
FINE. You wanna see me? You asked for it!

Ro swings the closet door open and jumps onstage.

Ro
HAPPY?!

Chris
AHHHHH!

Chris hides. Chris is on the verge of another attack.

Ro
Here I am. You wanted to see me. Hey kid, look. See? I'm here.
(Beat.) Hey stop that. I did what you wanted. I'm standing right
here. Hey... Hey, stop ... stop, please. (Beat.) Please, don't. I-I
didn't mean to... look I'm sorry. Are you ok?

Chris
Go... away.

Ro (Softly)
I said I was sorry. Please... please stop crying.

Pause. Chris peers out from under the covers. Ro kneels down in front of the bed and reaches out to Chris. Chris pulls away. Keeping an eye on Ro, Chris finds his inhaler. He picks it up, but stops. He looks at it, and then to Ro.

Chris
No... I don't need... the inhaler.

Chris puts the inhaler down, and struggles to regain his breath.

Ro
I'm sorry. Really I am. I didn't mean to be... mean. I just...

Chris studies Ro. Ro fidgets a little from the scrutiny.

Chris
You're not... like before... You're smaller... You're my monster?
... You're not so scary.

Ro

Hey, take that back!

Chris
Your horns... they're so tiny

Ro
They're still growing in.

Chris
You're tail... it's so thin.

Ro
I'm having it replaced next week.

Chris
And your teeth... they're not even sharp.

Ro reaches for Chris' arm.

Ro
We can test that.

Chris
And... And you're just so... so small.

Ro
You're short too, Stumpy.

Chris
I'm 8... We're all short.

Ro
Oh... right.

Chris
Who are you?

Ro
I'm Ro. Who are you?

Chris
My name is Chris... So, you're a monster. My monster... I thought you'd be... scarier.

Ro

Scarier? (Beat.) Oh, right! Shoot! SCARE TIME!

Ro lurches up and starts walking around like Frankenstein's monster, with arms out straight and stiff legs. She deepens her voice and groans. Chris starts to chuckle. His breath steadies.

Chris
That's not very scary.

Ro
Well who asked you?

Chris
Sorry. (Beat.) Is this gonna take long?

Ro composes herself. Suddenly, she starts jumping around the room like a wild idiot making all sorts of strange animal noises. After a moment Ro stops to catch her breath.

Ro
So... how was that?

Chris (Laughing)
Ummmm...

Ro
That bad, huh?

Chris
You made me laugh a little. Does that count?

Ro
Oh, this is bad.

Ro covers her face.

Chris
Oh. Oh, I'm sorry. I-I mean to... um, ah... you could try again.
YEAH. Try again!

Ro
I failed.

Chris
I promise. I'll get scared next time. (Chris makes a fake scared

expression.) See. Scared.

Ro

All my friends are gonna laugh.

Chris

Really. I don't mind if you scare me.

Chris gets into bed and pretends to sleep.

Ro

I can't do it. I can't even scare a little. What's the use?

Chris

Look, I'm going back to sleep. This is me sleeping.

Ro

My life is over. Washed up. Bibity, bobby, poof!

Chris

Now is a good time. Anytime now.

Ro

My mom always said I'd never amount to anything. (Spoken as a monster's mother.) "You need more dirt under your nails, Ro. Keep playing with your food, Ro, its still alive. Make a bigger mess, Ro, your room is too clean. You'll never amount to anything, Ro. Keep picking your nose, Ro. Get inside Ro... you stink."

Chris

You have a mom?

Ro

Well ma, looks like you were right... I totally stink. (Falls to knees.) I stink hard. (Falls onto face.) Just not in the good way.

Chris

You ok?

Ro

No.

Chris

Why?

Ro
Cause a monster who can't find her Scare isn't a monster at all.

Chris
You WERE scary. You scared me a lot before.

Ro sits up.

Ro
No, not scary. I can't find my Scare, with a capitol S.

Chris
Scare?

Ro
Yeah. Monsters don't just scare, little S, we use Scare, capitol S.
It's like... like food.

Chris
You eat Scare?

Ro
No. No. We don't eat it, it's just... just something that completes
us. Like you HAVE to breath. Monsters HAVE to Scare. It
makes us whole. It keeps us going.

Chris
Makes you whole? (Beat.) Oh... Ok.

Ro (Uncomfortable)
Yeah, never mind. Look this has been, um, interesting, but I'm
already in enough trouble. I think I better get going.

Ro gets up and heads to the closet.

Chris
You're done?

Ro
Afraid so. I still haven't found my Scare.

Chris
And a monster without her Scare is no monster at all.

Ro

Gee... thanks for reminding me. Ok, well this has been an embarrassing first Scare. Sooooo. Bye, now.

Chris

This is your first time?

Ro

Yup. So, please don't rub it. Don't tell anybody that I stink at my Scare. And PLEASE don't tell anyone that I was... nice.

Chris

But-But what about earlier?

Ro

Bye now.

Chris

You scared me then. You were good then.

Ro

I said bye— ... Earlier? Wait, what?

Chris

I was REALLY scared when you made the room move... well the shadows move, I guess.

Ro

The-The shadows? They moved?

Chris

Yeah, that was really scary. Scary, but kinda cool. You could do that again.

Ro (Afraid)

No. No I can't.

Chris.

Look, I promise I'll be scared this time.

Ro

No. Seriously I CAN'T. I can't make shadows move. I'm not that kind of monster.

Chris
There are other kinds of monsters?

Ro
Yeah. And I'm not the one who was here. This IS my first Scare.

Chris
Oh. Right.

Ro
I wasn't the one who scared you. I wasn't the first one to... oh, no.
(Beat.) Shadows?!

Chris
What?

Ro
I know. I know who was here. Oh crud!

Ro rushes to the closet door. She struggles to open the door.

Chris
Where are you going?

Ro
Home! Quick and quiet. (Struggles with door.) Dang it. The door is stuck.

Chris
Your world! Can I come!?

Ro
What? No! Humans aren't allowed.

Chris
Why? I won't do anything-

Ro
Look, I've got to get out of here. So if you don't mind, BE QUIET!

Chris
You're so mean.

Ro

Look, I don't have time to argue. I need to get out of—

The lights dim and Shadows appear on the walls again.

Ro
Oh, no. Too late.

Chris
It's... It's him. The Shadow Monster.

Ro
His name is... Hollow.

Hollow's silhouette appears on the wall. Ro struggles with the door.

Hollow
What is this? ... Do I know you?

Ro
Oh, crud!

Hollow
Once was one... now is two.

Chris
MOM HELP!

Hollow
Ah, yes. Screams... Music of the night.

Ro
Oh, crud! Oh, crud!

Chris
The Shadow is back!

Hollow
Come you both... join my FRIGHT!

Hollow bellows and it shakes the walls. As the walls shake the closet door wobbles open.

Ro
YES, the door! HA! See ya!

Chris
Hey! Wait!

Ro escapes into the closet. The door begins to shut. Hollow begins to push through the wall again.

Chris
MOM! ... MOM!

Chris looks at the closing closet door, and then to Hollow. Chris starts to gasp.

Chris
What do I do?! ... What do I do?!

Chris looks for his inhaler and finds it on his bed. Chris looks back to the closet door. Pause.

Chris
RO! Wait for me!

Chris takes a deep breath and jumps into the closet. The closet door shuts. Hollow bellows. Black out.

End Scene.

Scene Two: Into the Black

The Black Between.

Lights fade up to barely illuminate the stage. The characters should be seen as silhouettes. Suddenly, Ro comes rushing on stage.

Ro
So dark... Hello? ... Hello?

Chris enters. He struggles to breathe.

Chris
Ow.

Ro

Is anyone there?

Chris

Help.

Ro

Wow this place is dark.

Chris

Ow.

Ro

Can anyone hear me?

Hollow (OS)

No help for you.

Chris

Hello... Anybody?

Hollow (OS)

None will come.

Ro

I've got to get out of here.

Chris

It hurts.

Ro

Which way?

Hollow (OS)

Alone you are.

Chris

Ro? ... Mom?

Hollow (OS)

Alone you stay.

Chris

Please?

Ro

Oh crud. Oh crud.

Hollow (OS)
Darkly. Twisted.

Ro
Remember Ro, just find the light.

Hollow (OS)
The monster's way.

Ro
Just look for the light.

Chris
I don't like it here.

Hollow (OS)
Alone.

Chris
I'm scared.

A soft light, the shape of a door way, shines from off stage.

Ro
There! The light. The way home!

Chris
Hello?

Black out.

End Scene.

Scene Three: From Dark to Darker

Valley of Spire.

Lights up. The closet door is on the opposite side of stage. Pause. The closet door springs open and Ro comes tumbling out.

Ro
... HOME!

Ro hunches over on all fours and kisses the ground. Chris enters and tumbles through the door. The door shuts and fades away. Chris struggles to breathe.

Ro
AHHH! You're here!

Chris
I... can't.

Chris kneels, clutching his chest. He then lies on his side.

Ro
HA! I know that look. First time though the Black Between. Scary isn't it? What a rush! That was awesome, huh? (Beat.) Awesome, right? (Beat.) Chris, you ok? (Beat.) Chris?!

Chris coughs.

Chris
It's nothing... I... I'm Fine.

Ro
You sure?

Chris lies on his back and tries to take a deep breath. He coughs harder. Ro looks worried.

Ro
Oh, I don't like this.

Chris
I'm... fine.

Ro
You need help and... and I'm right here. What do I do?

Chris shakes his head. He gasps.

Ro
Stubborn as a Sobbergob. Look, I don't know what this is, but you dropped it. Will this help?

Ro holds up the inhaler.

Ro

I found it in the Black Between. I stubbed my toe on it.

Chris reaches for it, then shakes his head, and lies back down. He coughs violently.

Chris

No... I don't ... need it.

Ro

Chris, come on. How does it work?

Ro

I... Am... Fine.

Ro studies the inhaler for a moment. She squeezes it and it goes off.

Ro

Oh, puff-puff. I get it.

Ro cradles Chris and makes Chris use the inhaler. Chris' breathing steadies quickly. Pause.

Ro

Any better?

Chris

A little... I didn't need your help.

Ro

Chris look, I don't want to see you hurt. What else can I do?

Chris thinks, but eventually relents. Chris pulls Ro to him, and wraps her arms around his shoulder. He places her hand upon his chest. He takes a deep breath, and coughs.

Chris

Breathe with me.... In with the good... Out with the bad... Good in... Bad out.

Chris/Ro

In with the good... Out with the bad... Good in... Bad out.

Chris takes a deep breath, holds it, and exhales. He does not cough.

Ro
Better?

Chris
Better.

They smile. Ro lets go of Chris and stands up.

Ro
Ahhhh. It's good to be home.

Chris
This is home?

Ro
Yup. From your world, back to mine. There's nothing quite like... oh. (Beat.) Oh, no.

Chris
Ro, what's wrong?

Ro
Oh, boy. Oh boy. Oh, boy. Oh—

Chris
Ro?

Ro
No-No-No-NO! You're not supposed to be here. I'm SO in trouble.

Chris
What's wrong? You're safe now. You're home.

Ro
SAFE?! You have no idea what you've done. What I'VE done!

Chris
What did you do?

Ro
You're not suppose to be here. Humans aren't allowed to cross to

our world, Spire, the Monster world.

Chris

Oh. Well, I'll just go back home.

Ro

You can't go back home. Not that way.

Chris

But you just said I couldn't stay.

Ro

Look. (Points to where the door was.) It's gone. The door, you can't go that way.

Chris

But-But I just-

Ro

Sorry. You can never use the same way twice. One Scare. One way in. One way out. Then, POOF. It moves.

Chris

Then bring it back. Bring the door back!

Ro

Look! Settle down! (Beat). Think of it like this, in your world only things with wings can fly, but here all sorts of monsters can.

Chris

What does that have to do with the door?!

Ro

It has everything to do with the door! This is Spire! The rules are different! So settle down and start thinking like a Monster!

Ro pushes Chris to sit on a rock.

Chris

Think like a Monster... a Monster? (Looks Ro up and down.) Can you fly?

Ro

What, me? No. I'm not that kind of monster.

Chris
What are you?

Ro
A Weirdling.

Chris
Weirdling? (Beat.) Weird.

Ro
Exactly.

Chris
Weirdling. Huh. How many Monsters are there?

Ro
What? Oh, well, ah... there's Stranglings. Their like us
Weirdlings only—

Chris
Strange?

Ro
Yeah! See, you're getting it!

Chris
So then what makes you different from other monsters?

Ro
Different?! Hey now! Hey, I never said anything about the
Different. I don't want ANYTHING to do with them. They're the
last kind of Monster, the oldest.

Chris
Are they bad?

Ro
They can be. They can be the worst, and they can be the best.
They're... They're just different. They Scare like no other
monster. They Scare across the Black Between, where we just
came from. They can scare from our world to yours.

Chris
The Black Between? The place in the closet? (Beat.) Wait.
Hollow. He's a Different.

Ro

Yup. He's one of the oldest of the Different.

Chris

How old?

Ro

No one knows. Not even Old Stone.

Chris

Old Stone? Is he a really old rock?

Ro

See, you're thinking like a Monster already. Old Stone is one of the oldest. Stone knows a lot, but doesn't know... (Thinks.)
Wait! Old Stone! The Stone knows!

Chris

Stone? The stone knows... what?

Ro

About Hollow. About you. About the way to get you home. Stone might know where your door is! He's been around since before dirt. Stone has to know the way. Just HAS to.

Chris

Really?! You sure?!

Ro

Yes. Old Stone IS mean and grumpy, but honest too.

Chris

Ok. If you trust him I can too.

Ro

Really?

Chris

Well, yeah. I trust you. You trust Stone.

Ro

Oh... ok. Well, if we're going to get you home then we better get moving. There's no telling what someone might do if they saw a human here.

Chris
Ok. You lead. I'll follow.

Ro
Good. Alright, I think Stone was this...

Suddenly, an eerie thrum sound from off stage.

Chris
What is that?

Ro
I-I don't. (Beat.) Come on, let's get out of here.

Chris and Ro start backing offstage. WAGS enters. He sneaks up behind Ro and Chris, waits a moment, and jumps out. He startles Chris and Ro.

Wags
AHHHRRRRRR!

Chris/Ro
AHHHHH!

Ro drops to the floor and covers her head. Chris nearly has a panic attack. He begins to gasp. The eerie noise stops. Wags laughs and points.

Wags
Ahhh Harrrrr! I got ya good. Both of ya.

Chris
W-Who... are you? ... Oh. Ow.

Wags
BOO!

Chris flinches and Ro shudders. Wags laughs harder. Chris struggles to breathe.

Wags
They call me Wags, Scally Wags.

Ro
Wags?

Wags

Arrrr. Wags indeed.

Ro

Wags!

Ro stands. Chris tries to steady himself.

Wags

Me!

Ro

What are you doing—

Wags

Well, I be Scarin' ya it seems. Ah harr. I scared ya so bad, ya was floppin' on the floor like a frightened flounder!

Ro

(To Wags.) I wasn't flopping. (To Chris.) Chirs, you ok?

Chris

I'm... I'm fine.

Ro

You don't looks so good.

Wags

(To Ro.) Talk about not lookin' so good. Ya be lookin' all sorts of ugly. Scared and ugly. Ah, harr!

Ro

I wasn't scared. I was just finding my... my... my tail! Always falling off.

Wags

Ya weren't findin' nothing but ya spine. Ha. I got ya good.

Ro

I. Was. Not. Scared!

Chris

Yes you were... You jumped... You flopped... You cried... You were scared.

Wags

Arrrr, ya tell'em kiddo.

Chris
And you? ... Who... Who are you?

Ro/Wags
WAGS!

Chris flinches, but he continues to breathe deeply.

Ro
He's a Strangling.

Wags
And she be a Weirdling.

Ro
And we're friends.

Wags
Oh, hey now. I be ya friend?

Ro
Ok, childhood rivals.

Ro and Wags stand off a few paces from each other. They turn. Pause. They quickly spin around and face each other in scary poses. They laugh.

Wags
Ah harr. Friends we be. Indeed.

Ro (Smiling)
Yeah. Whatever. (Beat.) Oh, good job by the way. Eerie noise. Nice touch.

Wags
Arr. Thanks. It be me new thing.

Chris
LOOK! I don't care. I don't have time. I want to go home. I want to get back to MY world.

Ro
Oh, right. Old Stone.

Wags

Your world? Old Stone? What's goin' on, Ro?

Ro

Um... I, ah... well...

Chris

Oh geez. Look, Ro came to my world to scare me, I mean Scare with a capitol S. Anyway, she came in. She... She TRIED to Scare me, but she couldn't. Then I cried, then she cried, then we talked, and then she had to go.

Wags

So wait, you're a child? A HUMAN child? (To Ro.) WOW. Ya be in SOOOO much trouble. Ya know THEY gonna be commin' for ya. (To Chris.) And, wow. Ya be SOOOO much smaller than I thought ya'd be.

Chris

Hello, I'm 8. (Beat.) Wait, why haven't you seen a human before?

Ro (Proudly)

He hasn't gone yet. He hasn't crossed to your world. He's still "practicing". His scare isn't ready yet. (To Wags.) And I won't get in trouble, because no one is going to find out. WE'RE going to find Chris' door.

Wags

If the kiddo is here, ya already in trouble. They be commin' ... they be commin' for sure.

Ro

Empty words from a Monster who hasn't even Crossed yet. Who hasn't even Scared yet.

Wags

"If ya do somethin', do it right!" That's what me mummy always says.

Chris

They. They. They. Who are THEY?!

Ro

Ah, um... I... let's get going Chris.

Wags

They? Didn't Ro tell ya? (To Ro.) Ro, shame on ya. (To Chris.) Look kiddo, THEY be The Different, and they be The First. And the First have a job to do, a terrible job. They be here to guard the Black Between. They watch. Watch and wait. They keep humans out of Spire. If ya be here, the Different are sure to follow.

Chris

The Different? What-What will they do? Will they... hurt me?

Ro

Chris, don't think like that. Let's just get you—

Wags

No, Ro. The kiddo needs to know. (To Chris.) Here be the Monster's honest truth. The Different Scare, they Scare as dark as the Black Between. If they find ya they won't let ya go. They'll Scare ya, and Scare ya, and keep on Scarin' ya. It'll never end.

Chris

Is that why we're running, Ro? Will Hollow do that to me... to you?

Wags

HOLLOW!? You saw Hollow!? He knows ya be here!? Hollow... Wow. Ya REALLY be in trouble now. (Beat.) So, did ya try and Scare 'em back? AH HARR, what a story that'd be. A Weirdling Scarin' one of the Different. So, did ya Scare'em? Did ya Scare Hollow!?

Ro

Ah... No... I don't think I can.

Wags

Ah, what kind of Monster are ya?

Chris

The kind that can't Scare.

Ro

HEY!

Chris

It's true.

Wags
What's the kiddo mean, ya can't Scare?

Ro
Well... I, um...

Wags
You. Can't. Scare... AH, HA!

Wags erupts into laughter. He clutches his stomach and points at Ro.

Ro
Stop it. I so can too Scare!

Wags
Can't scare. Ah, Harr! Can't scare.

Ro
I can too scare.

Wags
Probably-Probably Scares like a baby Weird. All drool. No bite!
Ah, harr!

Ro shakes with anger, and starts jumping around the stage. She makes all sorts of robot noises and speaks in a computerized voice.

Ro
Run. Run away. I am here to Scare you. Run. Run and hide. I will terrify, horrify, mummify. Run. Run and cry.

Ro continues to move strangely. Wags stops laughing. Wags and Chris both stare at Ro. Pause. They burst out laughing.

Ro
Hey! Stop it! That was scary! Hey. Stop it. That isn't funny!

Wags
No... THAT was funny!

Chris
Sorry, Ro. You just look so silly.

Ro

Oh sure, you have a panic attack when Wags Scares you, but me?
(Beat.) Hey, stop it! Stop laughing!

Frustrated, Ro starts to jump up and down.

Ro
Stop it! Stop it! Stop it! Stop it! STOP IT!

As Ro jumps up and down, little by little the ground begins to rumble. Suddenly, a loud quake sounds. Everyone falls.

Ro
Wow... did I do that?

Wags
Ok. Ok. So, ya scary. I get it. I get it.

Chris
Ro... was that you?

Ro
I-I don't know.

Ro quickly gets up and jumps again. Nothing happens. Jumps. Nothing. Jumps. Nothing. Pause. Suddenly, the quake happens by itself. Everyone falls.

Wags
By my beard, WHAT was that?!

Chris
What's going on? Ro, was that you?

Ro
I... No. It wasn't.

Chris
Then what's doing that?

The ground quakes again. Suddenly, Shadows appear off in the distance. Ro and Chris look at each other.

Chris/Ro
HOLLOW!

Wags

Hollow!? What? He be here?!

Ro
Hollow! He followed us!

Chris
Oh, no!

Wags
Hollow? What... you... oh, boy!

Chris
What do we do?! What do we do?!

Ro/Wags
HIDE!

Chris starts to have another asthma attack, but Ro helps him find a rock to hide behind. Wags finds a smaller rock and ducks behind it, but his butt and feet stick out from one side. The stage grows dark. Hollow enters. He drifts from one side of the stage to the other. He stops. He sniffs.

Hollow
Hello, what is this? ... Such a perfect stench... Something so near.
Fear... Fear I smell... Who I wonder... Who else is here?

Hollow sniffs again, and searches the stage, eventually finding Wags' butt and feet. Pause. Hollow taps Wags on the butt. Wags twitches, but does not get up. Hollow taps again. Wags twitches. Finally, Hollow holds up his head and bellows loudly. Frightened, Wags jumps up and runs away. Hollow waves his hand in a strange gesture. Suddenly, Wags is enveloped in darkness.

Wags
AH! By my beard! Help! Help me! I-I can't move. The shadows, they've got me!

Hollow
A Strangling... How wonderful... How interesting... A new toy JUST for me...

Wags
Oh. Hollow. Nice to be seein' ya. Ah, don't mind me. I'm just a-a wandering Pirate. Ah, Harrr. See? Pirate.

Hollow

Be quiet and do not lie... A child I smell... Where. Is. HE?

Wags

Um... ah... a child? Here in Spire? Ya be joking right?

Hollow

Me... Never.

Wags

I-I have no idea what ya be talkin' about.

Hollow

HA! ... Don't be clever.

Wags

Well, I saw a little nerfle snake a ways back. Does that count?

Hollow

The child was here... Do. Not. Lie.

Wags

I... Um... I...

Hollo

Patience runs thin... The truth NOW... or we say goodbye.

Wags (Resolved)

Ya know what Hollow?

Hollow

What?

Wags

Ya can go scare a bumble-goat for all I care. They be me friends.
So, I ain't telling' ya SQUAT!

Hollow

Fool.

Hollow extends his bony hand into the darkness holding Wags. A rumbling noise sounds. Wags screams. A loud crack sounds. Then silence. Wags falls to the ground. The darkness around Wags fades.

Hollow

Such the Fool... I leave you now, little Strange... Leave with out a backward glance...

Now you are nothing... You should have spoken... When you had the chance.

Hollow bellows as he exits. Lights return to normal. Slowly, Chris and Ro come out. Ro goes to Wags, but does not touch him. Chris breathes heavily.

Chris

Ro! ... Let's go.

Ro

But I... We have to do something. Wags, he's... hurt.

Chris

We... have to go.

Ro

He saved us! We can't leave him! He's a friend. You don't leave friends!

Chris

Ro... I'm scared... Please.

Ro

NO! I won't leave Wags!

Chris

But... But he's gone.

Ro

He's not gone... Just hollowed.

Chris

I don't ... understand.

Ro

Spire is Spire. Earth is Earth. Different worlds. Different rules. In your world Hollow just Scares. Here, he hollows. He leaves nothing but a shell. Hollow takes everything from you. If we touch Wags, he'll crumble.

Chris

Ro, I... I don't want... to stay... I'm scared... we have to... to

go... Stone, remember? ... He can help.

Pause.

Ro
You're right.

Chris
Do we go?

Ro
Yeah... come on.

Ro take one last look at Wags.

Ro
See you soon, Wags. (Beat.) I promise.

Chris
Please, Ro... I'm scared.

Ro
I know.

Ro nods and wraps her arm around Chris' shoulder. Chris winces, and clutches his chest.

Ro
Oh, crud. You're not gonna make it like this. Chris, please do me a favor. Use the puff-puff thing. It's gonna be a long walk.

Chris
Lets just go... Please.

Ro
For Wags?

Chris hesitates, eventually nods, uses the inhaler, and takes a deep breath. Chris and Ro walk slowly together and exit. Black out.

End Scene.

Scene Four: Begrudging Rock

The Spiked Mountains

Lights up. Ro enters and slowly wanders the stage. Chris enters a moment later struggling to catch his breath.

Chris
Ok... Stop-Stop... Geez, I can't breathe... Dang. I use to hike and run all the time... (Defeated.) I hate my body.

Ro (Under breath)
You and me both.

Chris
Hey, Ro. Are we there yet? ... Is this where Stone is?

Ro ignores Chris, and continues to search

Chris
Ro, what's wrong? (Beat.) Ro? (Beat.) Ro!?

Ro
What?!

Chris
What's the matter? ... Are you angry?

Ro
Yes! Ok! YES!

Chris
What's wrong?

Ro
You! You're here. You shouldn't be here!

Chris
I'm sorry. I'm trying to—

Ro
You're sorry? That's all you got? One of my best friends was JUST hollowed out, I'm terrified, I don't know where I'm going, and to top it all off I'm STUCK trudging around with YOU!

Chris
I-I didn't know... I didn't mean to...

Ro
You know what, I don't care. I just want to find Old Stone. Go over there sit down, rest up, and I'LL take a look around.

Chris (Defensively)
I don't need rest... I just need my breath.

Ro
Could've fooled me... Sit!

Ro gestures towards a rock in the middle of the stage. Reluctantly, Chris sits down. Ro starts to search.

Ro
Stone, come out, come out where ever you are... Stone... Stone...
Old Stone?

Chris
Are you sure this is the place?

Ro
Of course I'm sure... Stone ... Stone. Come on out, Stone. We're not going to leave. I'm serious! (Beat.) Alright, Stone. I didn't want to do this! But you made me! "99 bottles of slime on the wall! 99 bottles of slime! Take one down and splash it around! 98 bottles of slime on the wall! (Continue song until about 97 or so.)

Stone (Muffled)
OK. OK. Enough. I can't take it anymore!

Chris realizes the voice is coming from the rock beneath him. Chris gets up. STONE rolls over.

Stone
Enough. I give up! I give up!

Ro
Stone is that you?

Stone

No. I'm some other talking rock.

Ro

You... You look different.

Stone

And you smell the same. Pitiful. But speaking of smell... what is that noxious odor? Ro, you smell like a human. Disgusting!

Ro

Ah, um... actually, Stone, I'd like you to meet Chris. Chris, this is Old Stone. Old Stone, this is Chris.

Chris

H-hello. (To Ro.) Can he see me?

Stone

A human... A HUMAN?! Ro, what have you done?! (To Chris.) And of course I can see you. It doesn't take eyes to see, not here, but if I had eyes I wouldn't believe them. RO, YOU KNOW BETTER!

Ro

Oh, crud. Here we go.

Stone

"When a child crosses, this the Monster's way, You'll Scare less and less each and every day. When a child knows the route, the Great and Black divide, then we Monsters are left defenseless with no where, no place to hide. Your guard, your shield, your wits all are left undone, and then the horrible, the terrible, the Different are sure to come."

Ro

I know. I know. If a child knows the way, we're all in trouble.

Stone

And yet a CHILD stands before me!

Chris

So what? What did I do? Yes. I am here. I broke your rule, but... but did I hurt you? Did I do something bad? What... What did I do!? Why do you all hate me?

Ro

We don't hate you Chris, its just... its not about hate, its about safety. No one hates you.

Stone

I do.

Ro

It's just... you can't stay.

Stone

Quiet you. You walking, talking pile of idiocy.

Ro

Ah, dang it all! We came here for your help. We just need some answers. We get them and we'll be on our way.

Stone

Ha! You believe that I would help a human?! Of all the idiotic monsters I've met, you take the pebbles. No. Humans. Allowed.

Chris

Please, Mr. Old Stone. Just listen to Ro. She knows what she's—

Stone

Ro, knows? Ro, knows?! HA! There is nothing a Weirdling knows that Old Stone does not.

Ro

STONE LISTEN! (Beat.) Wags is gone.

Stone

Wags? Wait, Scally Wags? What happened?

Ro

Hollow... Hollow happened.

Stone

Hollow? (Beat.) Wags? No this can't be. What brought Wags to such a fate?

Chris

We did.

Ro

We did!? Oh, no. YOU did! I've got nothing to do with—

Stone
Weirdling, focus!

Ro
Right. Sorry. Well, ya see, I... I mean we... I mean...look, I went to the human world and found Chris, but I... I wasn't the first monster there.

Stone
Hollow was first? You took one of Hollow's. It all makes sense.

Chris
Hollow found me. Then Ro did. Hollow found us. We ran here. Then Wags found us and—

Stone
And Hollow appeared. Hollow was after you two, but found Wags instead. I told you the Different would follow.

Ro
We know that, but that's not important. Wags IS. You have to know something that might help

Chris
Please Old Stone, Wags needs help.

Stone turns from Ro and Chris. He contemplates. Pause.

Stone
No. I can not. I will not. The child will be caught. The Different MUST find you. For all Monsters to be safe a... a sacrifice must be made. I do not know anything that will help.

Ro
You would sacrifice Wags? You're horrible.

Stone
I am not the one who sacrificed Wags. You two brought Hollow to Wags. You two are to blame.

Chris
Stone, please help us. We'll do anything.

Stone slowly turns away and ignores Ro and Chris.

Ro
I guess that's a no.

Chris
No? But-But... Wags. He needs our help. We have to—

Ro
Chris, let it go.

Chris
But what about Wags.

Ro
If Stone says there nothing that can be done, then... then we have to let Wags go... my friend... a good friend... a great friend. Face it, Wags is gone. Bye bye. Poofed. Wizzled off. Whammed away. Sickle squished. Giggle Gumffed. Bibble Bunked--

Stone
Oh, enough! Quiet your flapping lips you bobble headed Weirdling! (Beat.) There is a way.

Chris/Ro
What?!

Ro
There is?!

Stone
Of course there is. There might be a way. One single, dangerous way to save Wags. But dare I tell you?

Chris
Yes! Tell me. Anything. Something. Please!

Ro
Oh crud. Why don't I like the sound of this?

Stone
If you want Wags back... you have to make Hollow... Laugh.

Chris
Laugh?

Ro
Oh, double crud.

Chris
That's easy. He laughs all the time.

Stone
No, you simple child. Listen. Hollow makes himself laugh all the time, but to save Wags YOU must make Hollow Laugh. BUT, even I do not know what may happen should you actually succeed. No one has ever Scared Hollow, let alone made him Laugh. The skies may fall, lakes might boil, forests could wither and die. Hollow's defeat could have... complications.

Chris
But you're Stone, don't you know everything?

Stone
I am old child, but even I do not know what may come. Hollow has Scared countless children and monsters alike. His Scare is like none other. Defeat him and anything is possible.

Chris
But to save Wags, we only have to make Hollow laugh, right?
That sound easy.

Stone
To save Wags, this is the only way I know.

Chris
Ok. Ok. Make Hollow Laugh. We can do this.

Ro
You're serious about this?

Chris
Wags saved us. That's what friends do. That's what I will do. Wags is your friend. Wags is-is my friend.

Ro
You just met him.

Chris
So, I just met you. I don't care. I was scared when Hollow came, and I just wanted to get away. Now, I just feel horrible. A friend

is a friend. You taught me that. Wags needs us. We have to do something.

Stone

Humans... crazy. All of them.

Ro

I taught you that? Ok... Ok, lets do it. Let's make Hollow Laugh. Laugh with a capitol L. HOWEVER if we do this, after we get back, Old Stone, you WILL tell Chris how to get home. How to get to his door... understand?

Stone

Ha! If you get back! I knew you two were after something else. Help the human get home, I think not. I will help Wags, but not the child! Since when does a Weirdling pup tell Old Stone what to?

Ro

You know all about Hollow. You know the kind of Different he is. You may be cranky, but he's down right nasty. Besides, we're the ones going to face him. We do the work. We make Hollow Laugh. We save Wags. You save Chris. Chris is gone and no more human in Spire. Everyone wins.

Stone

Everyone wins? (Thinks.) Oh, all right. I'll help the human, for the sake of Spire... and for Wags.

Chris

Yes!

Ro

Thank you, Stone.

Stone

IF you return, IF you save Wags, IF you make Hollow Laugh, THEN I will show Chris his door. But remember, this has never been done before. Be wary of unforeseen consequences.

Chris

For Wags, it's worth it. We owe him. Thank you for helping, Old Stone.

Ro

Yeah. Thanks.

Stone

Ha. Don't thank me yet. You've still a task to do. Hollow waits. Waits for you at his home.

Ro

H-His home?

Stone

Where else. Hollow rests in the deep forest. The dark forest. The Forest of—

Ro

Forget... The Forest of Forget.

Stone

Go to his home, the twisted tree at the forest's center. There you will find him resting.

Ro

Ok. So, yeah. We're going to the Forest. The Forest of Forget. Great.

Chris

Oh, crud?

Ro

Yup. Um... Stone... Just one more problem.

Stone

And what is that?

Ro

Um well... Chris kinda gets sick when he gets scared—

Chris

Ro! I do not!

Ro

Chris, you stop breathing.

Chris

I. Do. Not.

Stone
Is the Weirdling correct, child?

Avoiding the answer, Chris looks down at his feet.

Stone
Well, I'll be a petrified dung heap. It IS true. Interesting.

Ro
How is Chris suppose to walk into The Forrest of Forget and make Hollow Laugh? He'll stop breathing after ten seconds. His breath just up and runs away. Poof, gone. He needs one of those puff-puff things.

Stone
An inhaler. I see. This is a problem. Rather different.

Chris
No, its not. I am not different.

Ro
That's not what he meant, Chris. Look, all we're saying is—

Stone
Ro, leave us.

Chris / Ro
What?

Stone
I must tend to the child on this matter alone. Please go.

Ro
No way. I'm not going anywhere.

Stone
Do you want my help or not? I will not send an ill prepared child to save my friend. Do as I say or save Wags yourself.

Chris
Ro, don't... please.

Ro
No, hold on. (Thinks.) Believe it or not Chris, I do trust Stone. He might be grumpy and mean, but... the Stone knows. If he says

go, I will. You'll be fine, Chris. (To Stone.) Right?

Stone
Monster's Honor.

Ro
Ok, then. I'll be right over there. Five minutes Stone. Not a second more.

Stone
More than I need.

Chris
Ro? Don't go.

Ro
It's ok. If you can't trust Stone, then trust me.

Ro smiles. Chris nods. Ro exits. Chris backs away from Stone.

Chris
W-What do you want, Stone?

Stone
First hand knowledge.

Chris
What does that mean?

Stone
Just this. (Stone begins to chant.) Urgo Rum Nur Rook Toe Ga.
(Repeat as needed.)

Stone begins his Scare. The rocks around the stage come to life and roll. They crowd Chris and pin him in place.

Chris
Ah! Let me go! Leg me go! Ro, help!

Stone
She can not help. She can not save you. Urgo Rum Nur Rook Toe Ga.

Chris starts gasping.

Chris

Please. Please stop... I... I can't... breathe.

Stone

Do something, Child. Something quick. Save yourself. Think. What can you do? What do you have?

Chris

I... I can't...

Stone

I don't know if I can stop. I haven't Scared in a long time. Urgo Rum Hur Rook Toe Ga. (Repeat as needed.)

Chris

Please... I can't... I... I'm scared.

Stone sighs and stops chanting. Everything stops. Pause.

Stone

A shame. You gave up so easily, child. I thought you would be stronger.

The rocks roll away, and Chris struggles to breathe. Chris' inhaler is left lying on the ground.

Stone

Breathe easy, child. Use your inhaler.

Chris looks to the inhaler and hesitates.

Stone

Do it.

Chris uses the inhaler and takes a few deep breaths.

Chris

You're horrible.

Stone

Perhaps, but do not fear me, Child. Be afraid of yourself. If you refuse to use a simple inhaler, how can you ever hope to save Wags? You are different now, embrace this.

Chris

I. Am. Not. DIFFERENT!

Stone

Youth... such naiveté. Well then, it seems our time is nearly up. However, if you are to take something away from our little chat, remember this... if you can save yourself, you can save a friend.

Ro (OS)

Alright! Times up, Stone! You ok, Chris?

Ro enters.

Stone

Ah, right on time.

Chris

No.

Stone

The child is fine, perhaps a bit startled.

Ro

Chris, what did Stone do—

Stone

Enough with the questions, Weirdling. We've little time and much to do. I will ask this one last time. Are you ready to face Hollow, regardless of the consequences?

Pause. Chris and Ro look to one another. They nod.

Chris/Ro

Yes.

Stone

So be it. Well, there is little more I can do. You two are as ready as you ever shall be. Off with you then. Go and defeat the big bad monster.

Ro

Wow. (Takes a deep breath.) Ok then, I guess we-should-be-going?

Chris

Yeah... right.

Ro and Chris start to leave, but Ro turns back.

Ro
Wait, one last question?

Stone (Annoyed)
Yes, Weirdling? What now?

Ro
Um... well... how do we make Hollow Laugh?

Stone
Ha! Good question. Um. (Ponders.) I really have no idea.

Chris
But-But you're Old Stone. You know everything... right?

Stone
Hmph. Nearly, child. Nearly everything, about anything. This is one of those nearly moments. Well then, on your way now. Good luck.

Stone turns away from Ro and Chris. He goes to sleep. Ro and Chris look at each other.

Chris/Ro
Oh, crud.

Chris and Ro shrug, then exit. Black out.

End Scene.

Scene Five: A Dark Chuckle

Forest of Forget

Lights up. Ro and Chris tip toe onstage. The only noise coming from the forest is the sliding and scraping of the trees as they move about. Chris is already breathing heavily.

Chris

This forest is creepy... Oh, look. A tree. Is that it?

Ro

I think so. We're near the forest's center. That's got to be Hollow's home. Chris, are you ok?

Chris

I'll be fine.

Ro

Just don't forget your inhaler.

Chris

I know. I know. (Beat.) So what now? Do we wait for Hollow to come out? How long does he sleep?

Ro

What do I look like, a Different sleep specialist? I have no idea.

Chris

Well, I don't see you doing anything.

Ro

Well, just let me think for a second. Ok?

Chris

Ok.

Ro

Good.

Chris

Good.

Ro ponders. Pause. Ro motions for Chris to say put. Ro slowly tip toes to the mouth of the tree. She waits, gathering her courage, then knocks loudly on the tree trunk. Ro runs back and stands beside Chris.

Chris

That was your idea?

Ro

It was all I could think of.

The tree rumbles and shakes. Ro and Chris jump.

Chris

That did it.

Ro

Oh, crud.

Chris

What do we do now? He needs to Laugh, right?

Ro

I've used up my good ideas for the moment!

Chris

Ok, Ok... ah... um... we could make funny faces? Or we could tickle him?

Ro

And touch him?! Are you nuts?!

Chris

We could act silly and do stupid stuff? Ah... we could, ah... I don't know... We could tell him a joke?

Ro

A joke?

Chris

Wait. Yeah, a joke. Hollow's awake now. He can hear us, right?

Ro

Hear us, yeah. Right. Sure. Oh, crud.

Slowly, Hollow emerges from the tree. He stretches, yawns and the forest shakes in response.

Hollow

By the Black Between... What is this ... You two are here?

Ro

I... Ah... Um...

Hollow

And with you comes a sweet stench ... Something like fear!

Chris

Ro! A joke. Just tell him a joke!

Ro

Um... I... Ah... Crud...

Hollow

What no voice?... Fear has your tongue, I see...

Ro

Oh, crud! Oh, crud!

Hollow

What were you thinking... Coming to MY TREE?!

Ro turns and runs. Hollow moves to Ro. Chris stands off to the side.

Ro

Chris! Help!

Chris

Oh boy, oh boy.

Ro

Now would be a good time!

Chris

Um-ok. Hey Hollow, how many monsters does it take to screw in a light bulb? (Beat.) None. They all live in the dark!

Hollow stops. He looks at Chris.

Hollow

The child jokes? ... At a time like this?
Just for that... I will not miss.

Hollow tries to catch Chris. Chris quickly climbs the twisted tree to get out of Hollow's reach.

Chris

Oh, no. Oh, NO!

Hollow

HOW DARE YOU! ... A child, in my tree!?
It shall not stand... It shall not BE!

Hollow Bellows. The tree shakes. Chris barely holds on and he starts to gasp.

Chris

Ro! ... Do something! ... Tell a joke!

Ro

Oh. Oh, right! ... Hey Hollow, try this one on for size. What's the best way a kid can scare a school teacher? (Beat.) They hand in their homework! Ha! Get it?

Pause. Hollow Bellows again. He starts to gesture like when he captured Wags in darkness.

Chris

Ro, run!

Ro tumbles out of the way, just as that section of stage falls dark. Hollow starts a new gesture. Ro tumbles away. Hollow gestures. Another section of stage falls dark.

Ro

CHRIS! HELP!

Chris

I... I can't.

Ro

Please! Now's not a time to lose your breath!

Chris

I'm scared... I can't... I can't think.

Ro

Well then start! OH, CRUD!

Hollow gestures. Ro tumbles.

Chris

Ro, NO!... Hollow stop! ... Please! ... No more... No more Shadows. No more ... No more Scaring...Please... Just stop.

Ro

Chris, do something!

Chris
No more... No more Scaring... Just stop! ... NO MORE SCA--
..... Scaring?

Ro
What did you say, Chris? You're not making sense.

Chris
Scaring? ... Scare... Wait! SCARE! Ro, I got it! I know what
to—

Ro
I don't understand what you're—Oh, crud!

Hollow gestures. At the last second, Ro tumbles out of the way. Ro is quickly running out of energy. Hollow is close to capturing her.

Chris
HOLLOW, NO! ... Ro, get away! Ro! ... RO I'm coming!

Chris pulls out his inhaler, and uses it. Chris takes a few deep breaths and drops from the tree.

Chris
Save myself... and save... a friend.

Hollow starts to gesture and takes the last few steps towards Ro. Ro is exhausted.

Hollow
Tick, Tock... Tick, Tock... You're out of Time.
All the running... but alas... Now, you're MINE!

Hollow finishes his gesture and Ro is caught in darkness. Ro screams.

Chris
Leave. My. Friends. ALONE.

Chris runs with all his strength and knocks Hollow to the ground. The darkness around Ro disappear. Chris grabs Hollow's cloak and pulls it over the monster's head.

Chris
Back off, Hollow.

Ro
Chris, no! Run!

Hollow
You little menace... You little cretin.
It won't be long...before you are beaten.

Hollow tries to get out of his tangled cloak. Chris back up to Ro.

Ro
Chris, what are you doing? You're crazy—

Chris
Ro, listen. I've got an idea—

Ro
We need to get out of here—

Chris
NO! Just listen. I know what I'm doing—

Ro
Oh, crud. Oh, crud. He's getting up.

Hollow straightens out his cloak and slowly gets to his feet. Chris grabs Ro and pull her close. Hollow circles closer to them.

Ro
Chris, run! Get away. Save your—

Chris
No. (Smiles) I know what I'm doing.

Chris whispers to Ro.

Ro
You want to WHAT!?! And you want me to—

Chris
Just do it!

Hollow backs Chris and Ro against the tree. Chris shields Ro.

Hollow

Urrrrahhhh! ENOUGH! ... No more plans. No more friends.
I've had enough... Here and now... All. This. Ends.

Chris

Trust me, Ro.

Ro

But I—

Hollow lunges for Chris. Chris lunges for Hollow. Chris is captured in darkness.
Hollow laughs. Chris cringes and yells. Ro backs away.

Ro

Chris? (Beat.) CHRIS!?

Chris (Weakly)

Do it, Ro... Now... Please.

Ro

Oh, crud! Ok. Ok. Ah, crud. Here goes. Hey, Hollow. This one's for you. You over grown, soggy dish towel!

Ro starts her Scare. She moves like Frankenstein's monster again. Ro walks stiff legged, arms straight out. Hollow contorts his head and studies Ro. Suddenly, Ro starts walking and making noises like a chicken, then a duck, a rat, a cow and many other animals. She moves towards Hollow. Hollow lets go of Chris, and backs away. The darkness fades from Chris.

Chris

Go Ro! You're doing it!

Flailing around stupidly, Ro continues to move forward. Hollow backs up until he hit's the twisted tree. Ro stops inches from Hollow, and ceases her Scare. They stare. Pause.

Hollow

Through all of Spire ... Top to bottom... Never have I seen.
Something so stupid... So ridiculous... So obscene.
I... I... Can not... Do not know what to say.
What... What was THAT? ... That Weirdling display?

Ro

That? Oh, it's nothing. Just something I like to call... my scare.

Pause. Hollow chuckles. The tree shakes a little. Hollow stops. Chris and Ro

back away. Hollow chuckles louder. The tree shakes more. Hollow's laugh continues to get louder. At the height of Hollow's laugh, the huge tree splits in half and Hollow stops laughing. The forest stops shaking. All is quiet. Curiosity takes over Chris and he goes to investigate. Ro tries to stop Chris, but Chris gets away. Chris goes up and pokes Hollow. Hollow's empty shroud tumbles to the floor. Hollow is gone.

Ro
Did-Did we do it? Is he gone?

Chris
Yeah. (Beat.) He's gone.

Ro
He's GONE!

Chris
HOLLOW IS GONE!

Chris and Ro hug. They join their hands and dance in a circle.

Chris/Ro
Ha, ha. Hollow is gone. Ha, ha. Hollow is gone. (Repeat as necessary).

Suddenly the twisted tree starts to crack and break even more.

Chris
Oh, boy. The tree! It's coming apart!

Ro
Oh, crud! Oh, wow. I don't feel so good.

Chris
W-What do we do?!

Ro
I... I don't know. Oh, ow... my body.

Chris
Ro?!

Ro
Yeah, let's get out of here. I don't feel so—

Tree limbs start to fall everywhere.

Chris
Too late!

Chris/Ro
CRUD!

Black out. The sound of cracking and falling tree limbs continue.

End Scene.

Scene Six: Till Dark do us Part

Forest of Forget.

Lights up. All the tree branches are gone. The twisted tree is whole again. All is quiet. Chris and Ro lay upon the floor. Pause. Chris props himself up, looks around, and slowly gets up.

Chris
What happened? Oh. Ow. Everything hurts. Hey Ro, you ok?

Chris finds Ro unconscious.

Chris
Ro... RO?!

Ro jolts awake screaming. Chris screams. Pause. Ro clutches her head.

Ro
Oh, my head. Are we still alive?

Chris
I think we're alive.

Ro
Being alive hurts.

Chris
Tell me about it.

Chris looks around.

Chris
Hey Ro, Where did all the tree limbs go?

Ro
What? Oh, they probably went for a walk. They get bored sometimes.

Chris
They get bored? They can move?! Cool!

Ro (Sarcastic)
I know, right? Gotta love Spire. Always changing.

Chris
Yeah. Kinda like us. We changed Spire.

Ro
What?

Chris
We changed Spire. We made Hollow Laugh. He's gone.

Ro
Oh, Crud. I forgot. Hollow's gone!

Chris
Yup! We did it. You did it.

Ro
I did, didn't I?

Chris
Yup. You saved us. You saved Wags.

Ro
No. We did. We saved Wags. (Beat.) Wait. Wags! Is he ok?

Chris
I don't know. I just got up. I don't know how long we've—

A familiar eerie thrum sounds.

Chris
Ro, is that you?

Wags (OS)
BOOOOOOO! ARRRRRRRR!

Chris/Ro
AHHHHHH!

Wags
Ah-harr! Got ya! Got ya again!

Chris
Wags?

Ro
Wait, Wags?

Wags and Stone enter. Stone carries Wags on his back. They stop just short of Chris and Ro. The thrum stops.

Wags
Stone! Stop! Arrr, that be good! That be good!

Stone
Oh, do be quiet. You Stranglings complain too much.

Stone sets Wags down. Chris and Ro hug Wags.

Wags
Ah, harr. Well, nice to be seein' ya, too.

Chris/Ro
Wags, you're here!

Wags
I am? Oh, right! I am! Thanks to you and Stone.

Ro
H-How'd you... when'd you... who'd you... wow, you're here!

Wags
Indeed. Here I am!

Chris

Wags, you're ok! But, how'd you get here?

Wags

Stone, he came for me. One second Hollow was over me, then the next... Old Stone be wakin' me up.

Stone

I found Wags just as you said.

Wags

That he did, and Stone told me what ya did. Goin' up against Hollow. Goin' to make Hollow Laugh for... for me... I don't know what to say.

Wags begins to cry.

Stone

Oh, I think I am going to be sick. Oh, how dreadful... But speaking of that, what is that dreadful odor?

Stone sniffs.

Stone

Ro, is that you? You don't smell of human at all... You smell pungently awful. It is ever so delightful.

Chris

I don't smell anything.

Ro

Stone, are you ok?

Wags

I think all the rollin' be going to Old Stone's marbles.

Stone

Hmmm... Ro tell me, how are you feeling?

Ro

Well, I-I actually... kinda... sorta feel funny. How'd you know?

Wags

What ya be hintin' at there, Stone?

Stone sniffs again, then chuckles to himself as if he's just realized something.

Stone

Nothing my friends. Nothing at all. Just something unforeseen...
Ah, well I think I have had enough excitement for a few more
lifetimes. I am plum worn out. If everyone is as they should be,
then I shall take my leave. I'm going home.

Ro

Home? (Thinks.) Wait, HOME! Hey, Stone hold on!

Stone

What is it Weirdling?

Ro

We saved Wags. Where is Chris' door?

Chris

Oh, yeah! My door! MY HOME!

Stone

Ah, yes. How did I forget about that?

Chris

I want to go home! Please Stone, I miss my Mom.

Stone

Oh, ye of little faith. I am a Monster of my honor. Just you wait a
moment.

Ro / Wags

Stone!

Stone

Wait for it. Wait for it. (Beat.) Ah. There you have it.

Chris' door appears behind Chris, Ro and Wags. They do not turn to see it.

Ro

Have what?

Wags

Arr, where be the door?

Chris

I don't understand.

Stone

Look.

Stone gestures to the door. Chris, Ro and Wags turn around.

Chris

MY DOOR!

Stone

As I said. I will point the way home. Trust the Stone, Child. Old Stone knows.

Chris

Thank you, Stone!

Ro

Yeah, thank you.

Stone

I am a Monster of honor.

Wags

That ya be, Old Stone. That ya be.

Stone

Yes, well... I ah... You're all very welcome. WELL, if all is well and right, then I shall take my leave. Wags, it was a pleasure seeing you again. Do be a Strangling and not a stranger. I hope to see you again, and soon.

Wags

Be seein' ya Stone.. Ya can count on that.

Stone

And you Ro, come and see me as well. I believe we've much to discuss. Spire is different now, and so are you it seems.

Ro

Um... Ok... Sure.

Ston

Good. Now then, down to Chris... well then... keep up the good work.

Chris stares at Stone. Pause. Chris hugs Stone suddenly.

Stone

Ah, disgusting! I'll smell for weeks. And not in the good way.

Chris

Thank you, Stone.

Stone

No. No thanks needed. No further praise, nothing else is necessary. I'm simply one stone who just wants to roll on my way... on my way now... that way... over there... LET GO OF ME!

Chris releases Stone. Stone shutters and shakes off the hug.

Stone

Yes... well then... goodbye.

Chris/Ro/ Wags

Bye Stone!

Stone nods and exits. Chris, Ro and Wags wave him off.

Chris

Wow. It's over. It's all over. I can go home!

Wags

Ah-harr! Ya betcha kiddo. Home it is.

Ro

This couldn't be better. Everything is perfect.

Chris

I get to go home. I get to see my Mom. This IS perfect!

After a moment, Chris' smile fades.

Ro

Chris, what is it?

Chris

I... I kinda don't want to go. I like it here. I like Spire.

Wags.

Ah harr, I know what ya be meanin' kiddo, but the door is here and ya best be—

The lights cast upon Chris' door begins to “blink“ in and out. Chris is almost out of time.

Wags
Arrr, What be happenin'?

Ro
The door, it's fading. Oh, crud!

Chris
What? No! I don't want to leave yet!

Wags
No time, kiddo. Ya gotta get goin'.

Chris
But-But friends don't leave friends. I need more time!

Ro
It's ok, Chris. You NEED to get home.

Chris
I need you guys. Friends don't leave.

Wags
But what about your Mom, don't you need her too? I know she needs you.

Wags
It be ok, kiddo.

Ro
Go, Chris. Go back to your home, to your life... to your Mom.

Chris tries to find the words to protest, but realizes Ro and Wags are correct. Pause. He hugs them.

Wags
Arrrr. I know, Chris. I know. (Beat.) We be missin' ya too.

Pause.

Chris
I love you guys.

Ro
And we love you.

Chris pulls away from the embrace.

Ro
Its ok. Go home, Chris... please.

Chris wipes the tears from his eyes, waves goodbye, and runs through the fading door. Black out.

End Scene.

Scene Seven: Home Sweet ... Alone?

Chris' Room.

Lights up. Everything is as Chris left it. Suddenly, the closet door rattles, rattles again, then bursts open, and Chris come tumbling out. The closet slams shut. Slowly, Chris looks around the room.

Chris
Hello? ... Hello? ... Home?... Home... I'M HOME!

Chris picks up a stuffed animal, hugs it and spins around. Chris checks around the room to make sure everything is safe.

Chris
Hello? ... Hello? ... Come out come out where ever you are ...
Hello? ... Shadows? ... Hollow? ... Anybody?

Mom (OS)
CHRIS! GO TO SLEEP!

Chris
AHHHH! Crud, Mom. (Beat.) Wait. MOM!

Mom enters.

Mom
What did I tell—

Chris
MOM!

Chris embraces his Mom.

Mom
What the... look, I told you to sleep.

Chris
I'm back! You won't believe where I just—

Mom (Irritated)
Chris.

Chris
There was this monster from my closet. I went to her world and there was a funny pirate, a talking stone and a really, REALLY, scary, shadow—

Mom
Chris!

Chris
They were so nice. Except for the scary one. He was really mean—

Mom
Chris, ENOUGH! You're not making any sense. Just settle down before you have another attack.

Chris
It's ok. I have my inhaler. I use it when I need it.

Mom
Wait, what? (Dumbfounded.) I... I thought you hated it?

Chris
I do, but... but it doesn't bother me so much. I understand now. If I stay strong, then I can help keep others strong too. Save myself, and save a friend.

Mom looks down at Chris, stunned. Eventually, she kneels and curiously looks Chris over. Slowly, she opens her arms and beckons Chris to her.

Mom
Chris, come here.

Chris
O... K...

Chris slowly goes to his Mom. Mom wraps her arms around Chris in a joyful hug.

Chris
Um, are you ok? Mom, you're acting weird.

Mom laughs a little and pulls away from Chris, but still holds him by the shoulders.

Mom
I know. I know... sorry.

Chris
It's ok. Are you still mad at me?

Mom
No, heavens no. I'm just... I'm just happy. Chris, when did you get so smart?

Chris
When I met my monster.

Mom (Chuckling)
Oh, really? You did, did you?

Chris
Yup. She's as smart as the Jabberwock, and twice as silly.

Mom
The Jabberwock, really? (Laughs, then ponders.) Hey Chris, I was really starting to enjoy reading tonight and I'm kind of getting bored downstairs all by myself. Would you like to finish the story tonight?

Chris

Well, yeah but... but... you have work, right?

Mom (Smiling)

Work can wait.

Chris

Really?!

Mom

Yup. Go find the book and I'll go save my work. I'll meet you back here in two ticks, little rabbit!

Chris

Cool! Ok!

Mom makes her hand into a bunny and uses it to “kiss” Chris’ forehead. Mom happily exits.

Chris

Parents... crazy. All of them.

Chris shrugs and looks around his room.

Chris

Alice? Where’s Alice?

Chris rummages around. He looks on the bed and on the floor.

Chris

I know it was here somewhere. In the closet... in the hallway... under my pillow? (Thinks.) Wait. Under my bed!

Chris runs behind his bed and ducks down.

Chris

Oh, cool! *Where the Wild Things are*. Oh, I love this one!

Chris springs up with the new book and sits on his bed. He looks through the book.

Chris

I forgot about this one. All the pictures and the colors and the monsters. I love this... and the monsters?

Pause. Chris puts the book down and looks to the closet.

Chris
Ro... are you in there... hello?

Chris gets up and enters the closet.

Chris
Ro... Wags... Stone... anyone?

Nothing happens. Chris returns to his bed. He looks at the book, then he holds it to his chest.

Chris
I miss you, Ro.

Pause. Chris takes a deep breath and opens the book. He reads. After a moment, Shadows slowly start to form on the walls. These Shadows are small and fairy like.

Chris
Huh? Shadows? Oh, no! Shadows! HOLLOW! No. Please no... no more... Hollow? Please don't Scare me... oh crud!

Ro
Crud indeed!

The Shadows change into Ro's silhouette.

Chris
AHHHH!

Ro
Gotcha!

Chris
No! No! Please don't! Please, Hollow don't... Ro?!

Ro
In the Shadow. Present and accounted for.

Chris
Ro?

Ro
Yes?

Chris
RO!

Ro
What?!

Chris catches his breath.

Chris
It's you. I-I can't... I don't... WOW! You're here!

Ro
You betcha.

Chris
That's great! I'm so happy to see you... but hey, don't Scare me like that!

Ro
Wait. Say that again.

Chris
You scared me.

Ro
Yes... yes, I did.

Ro puts her fists on her hips in a triumphant stance.

Ro
I. Scared. You.

Chris
Wait! YOU scared me!? And-And, you're a Shadow? You're like Hollow? But... but how? But... but when?

Ro
I know! Twisted isn't it! You'll never guess how. Ready for this? You're gonna freak! (Beat.) I. Took. Hollow's. Scare!

Chris
WHAT?!

Ro

I KNOW!

Chris
But-But... HOW!?

Ro
Stone has never seen, heard, or smelled anything like this before. The best that he could guess was when I made Hollow Laugh, things worked in reverse. I made him Laugh and I got his Scare.

Chris
Awesome! But-But how did you get back here? How are you a Shadow?

Ro
I figured out how to work Hollow's Scare, MY new scare... well sort of. It's almost like an instinct. I think and I cross. So I came here. You were the first person I wanted to see.

Chris
Yeah, to Scare me.

Ro
Ah... well...yeah, sorry about that.

Chris
It's not funny.

Ro
It was a little funny. (Shrugs.) But I know what you mean. Sorry about that. You forgive me?

Chris
Yeah. I guess.

Ro
Thanks, Chris. Dang it's good to see you!

Chris
It's good to see you too. Well, your Shadow I guess.

Chris and Ro laugh.

Mom (OS)
Chris? Is everything alright up there?

Ro (Whispers)

Oh, crud!

Chris

I'm alright, Mom. I'm just talking to my friend Ro. The monster from my closet.

Ro (Whispers)

Chris! What are you doing!

Mom (OS)

Oh, really? You found your friend then? Well, say "HI" to your monster for me. I'm still finishing up. I'll be there in just a sec.

Chris

Ok, Mom. I'll wait.

Mom (OS)

Thanks, Chris.

Chris shuts the bedroom door.

Ro

CHRIS! Dang it! Don't do that. You scared me.

Chris

Wait... say that again.

Ro

Oh. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ok, I deserved that.

Chris

Yeah, ya did.

Ro

We even?

Chris

For now.

Ro

Ha. Fair enough.

Pause.

Ro
I missed you, Chris.

Chris
Missed you too, Ro.

Pause. Ro makes the wall stretch as she pushes her hand towards Chris. Chris takes his palm and lays it flat over Ro's.

Chris
Best friends?

Ro
Always.

Chris
Promise?

Ro
Monster's Honor.

Black out.

The End

Over There

Lights up. The stage is set to resemble the interior of a home garage. Various tools, a bike and a work bench fill the stage. ALEX, a sophomore, paces back and forth. After a moment, JAKE, another sophomore, enters. Alex is dressed rather fashion forward, while Jake is dressed in comfortable, but dated clothes. Alex moves around holding a piece of paper tightly.

Alex
It's 7... You're late.

Jake
I got lost, Alex. Sue me. (Looks around.) So, I know I agreed to help you, but why the clandestine ambiance?

Alex
Huh?

Jake
All the cloak and dagger? (Pause. Rolls eyes.) Why are we in the garage?

Alex
Oh, that? I don't want my mom to hear us talk.

Jake
Ok, paranoid. Check.

Alex
Whatever. So, are you ready to go, or what?

Jake sets down his backpack, pulls out a notebook and pen, and accidentally drops a bible onto the floor. Alex sees the bible and her face fill with disgust.

Alex
Could you put that away? (Points to the bible.) Now, please?

Jake
O—Kay. (Puts bible into backpack.) Well... ready when you are.

Alex
No laptop? Jake, I don't want to waste any time. This is really important to me.

Jake

I'm faster this way. You talk, I write. I'll clean up my notes, then email them later. (Thinks.) As my science partner, shouldn't you know that by now?

Alex

Jake, I just need access to that wordy brain of yours. You're good at this kind of stuff. Really good. Half the time, I don't understand the junk you write in class... but in a good way. Look, can we just work? My mind feels like its gonna explode, if I don't do something. Chunks everywhere. Not pretty.

Jake

I didn't realize. (Readies to write.) Ok... Fire away.

Alex

Thank you. Alright, I'll read what I have and we'll go from there. (Breathes.) "Dear Mr./Mrs. Blank. I am writing to you about an important problem—"

Jake

What if you rephrased the line, "an issue of the utmost urgency?"

Alex

You mind letting me finish?

Jake

You're the boss.

Alex

Thank you. (Clears throat.) "...an issue of the utmost urgency. My father has served in the Army for a long time, and fought in many wars. He always came back, but after his last tour he was different. He was angry all the time. He punched holes in the wall, ignored me and my brother, and argued with mom. She would cry herself to sleep sometimes. (Pause.) But eventually, things got better. Life was good for a few years, but all that changed two months ago. My dad got new orders. He went away... to fight... again. A month later, I came home and my mom was sitting in her car... crying. She wouldn't tell me why, but I knew. I found the letter from Dad, and read it. After that, I knew that he needed to come home. That is why I am writing to you. You could help me and my dad. You have influence. I know if he stays over there things will just get worse. Please, help my dad come home." (Looks to Jake.) There... What do you think?

Jake

Wow. That was... honest, if a little crude... generic, too.

Alex

Dammit! (Crumples paper.) Why is this so difficult?! How can I make it better? (Grabs front of Jake's shirt.) You're the smarty with all the words. I want this—NEED this to work this time! Make it better! Please?!

Jake

Geez, get a grip. (Pulls away from Alex.) What'd you mean "this time"?

Alex

I already sent the letter off to a family friend, hoping he'd say, "Sure, yeah. I totally understand where you're coming from." But all I got was a pat on the head and, "Oh, how cute. You must really love your dad." It was an epic fail.

Jake

Harsh. So, that's when you came to me?

Alex

No. Next, I sent the letter off to everyone I know, but they all came back again with, "How cute," and, "That's nice." Pissed me off. No one takes me seriously. (Rubs temples.) THAT is when I called you.

Jake takes the letter and reads it. Pause. He shakes his head and gives the letter back.

Jake

Well, that's the thing. I... I don't ... honestly, I don't think I'm the best person to help you with this.

Alex

What? Sure you are. You're EXACTLY the best person.

Jake

I didn't know THIS is what you were going to write. I don't think—

Alex

Look, I know what I'm doing. I've shaken hands with three governors, two senators, eight congressmen, and some crazy Army

guys. I've been collecting names, numbers, addresses and emails. The day my dad left, I went to work... I'm not giving up without a fight. This letter is GONNA get done.

Jake

Ok, your dad and the Army stuff, I get that, but how do you know congressmen?

Alex

My mom, she's a mayor's aid... personal assistant kinda thing. She takes me along to all these boring functions and stuff, but I meet A LOT of people.

Jake

Huh, I had no idea. (Thinks.) Ok, you're idea is gutsy, but still... I don't think you should be doing this.

Alex

Oh, come on! I'm, like, this close to finishing. I can see the words up here. (Points to head.) They're screaming to get out!

Jake

I'm sorry, but I respect what your dad is doing. He made a choice. He knew the consequences. Now, he's living up to them.

Alex

So my dad WANTED to go to war and get shot at?!

Jake

No. Maybe. I don't know. I'm not him. I'm me. I think we shouldn't do this.

Alex (Flustered)

But... But... You said you would help. Besides YOUR mom is gone too! You told me last week. THAT'S why I asked you. You know what it's like. I thought you... You're supposed to understand! You're supposed to care!

Jake

I do. I just... Alex, I do want to help you. I'll help you deal with the stress and the exploding brains, but I CAN'T help you with this. (Holds up letter.) I don't agree with it. I respect what my mom is doing, and your dad. Things will get better. They'll both be fine. Trust me.

Pause. Alex shakes her head.

Alex

Nope. Sorry. Sure your mom is gone, but that doesn't make you an expert on anything. You don't know my dad. Completely different situation. He's on the front lines, not stuck behind a desk on some comfy base. He's responsible for people's lives. He gives orders that can get people killed. THAT is the stress he lives with. I don't think that was what he signed up for.

Jake (Defensive)

My mom is a surgeon, Alex. She's as front line as you can get. If your dad gets hurt, ten to one my mom is the one stitching him up.

Alex (Defensive)

Oh! So, now she's better than my dad? She's some great surgeon, and he's just a brain dead grunt?!

Jake

No one is better! My mom wants to help others, just like your dad. They BOTH want to serve. THAT'S all I'm saying! Geeze, you're nuts.

Alex gets up and begins to pace. She clinches her fists.

Jake

Alex, relax. You're making me crazy.

Alex stops abruptly.

Alex

You? (Beat.) Oh, no. YOU make ME crazy! You psycho religious zombie! People like you are why my dad is gone. It's always about land, or money, or religion. Always the same war. Always the same crap.

Jake

Wait, when did I become the bad guy here? I'm trying to help. (Beat). And where the HELL did you get that I'm religious? I mean... ME?

Alex goes to Jake's backpack and pulls out the bible. She holds it up.

Alex

This is how I know! (Tosses the bible to Jake.) Everyone one at

school has seen you reading it. At lunch. Waiting for class. Walking home. It's like you're hypnotized or something.

Jake

This? (Holds up bible.) I'm a sicko because I read? Then why ask me for help?

Alex

Ok. You're not the bad guy. THEY are. Over there with my dad. You? You're all wiggy about the bible stuff, but you're REALLY good with writing stuff. That's why I asked. I want to get this— NEED to get this letter done. I don't care what it takes. This letter WILL work! I'll even give you my iPod as payment. Here take it.

Alex pulls out an iPod from her pocket and offers it to Jake. He shakes his head. Instead, he opens the bible to a book-marked page.

Jake

Keep your stuff. I said I'd help. (Offers the bible.) But you should read this.

Alex

What? No. Forget it.

Jake

Trust me... read it.

Alex

No.

Jake

It's only—

Alex

I said, no—

Jake

Read it! (Beat.) Dammit, you're a pain. You want to stand there and judge me? Fine, but do it with insight. Ignorance is ugly.

Jake offers the bible again. Alex puts the iPod away, and crosses her arms defiantly.

Jake

You asked me for help, now I'm asking you. Partners work

together, right?

Pause. Alex takes the bible.

Alex

I must be desperate. (Reads passage.) That's it? One line? But... But you're ALWAYS reading this. Isn't there more?

Jake

You really have no clue do you? (Chuckles.) Alex, I hate church. It's a place to hear some old fart talk about a bunch ancient mumbo jumbo. I HATE going.

Alex

But you still have the book?

Jake

True, but THAT is for a reason. The book was a gift from my mom. Before she left, she marked this page to remind me—to help me. That's why I read. I read to remember. The book isn't perfect, but the passage makes sense.

Alex rereads the passage. Pause.

Alex

Honor thy father and mother?

Jake

I know, right? (Chuckles.) It's corny.

Alex

But why that passage? What's the deal?

Jake stiffens his posture, and turns away from Alex.

Jake

My brother... I hit him once. That's the deal.

Alex

And that relates to the passage how?

Jake

One day he and I are best friends. The next day, my mom ships out and... and then I get pissed off. I just want to fight. Someone. Anyone. He walked by, made a wise crack and... boom. I hit him.

Alex

So? I fight with my brother all the time.

Jake

Not like this. I HIT my brother... HARD. He didn't deserve it. That's why I read the passage over and over again. I made a promise. (Beat.) "Be good, Jake. Make me proud." That's all my mom asked for. But instead... I hurt my brother.

Alex studies Jake. Pause.

Jake

What?

Alex

Yeah. I don't buy it. You're just afraid. All calm and cool on the outside, but that's just a front. You're just as scared as I am.

Jake

You don't know what you're talking about.

Alex

What's so wrong about being a little bad? Personally, I think a little anger can make for some major motivation. Like with me and the letter. I'm not giving up on my family.

Jake

Wait?! I and you think I have?!

Alex

I didn't say that.

Jake

Don't you dare think for even a SECOND that I've given up. Yes, I want to fight, to scream, to blame everyone and everything, but I don't. I'm TRYING to respect my mom's wishes. If I want my mom to come home, the only thing I can do is wait and have faith. You fight to bring your dad home, away from danger, but I KNOW that my mom is strong enough to fight her OWN way home. She doesn't need me for that.

Alex

Of course she does. Families fight for each other, or is your mom some lost cause now? Honor thy mother? What a crock.

Jake
A CROCK!? What about your dad? Stupid little sergeant
marching up a stupid little hill. THAT is a lost cause. Always
fighting. Never winning. Just like Saint Jude. (Thinks. Smiles.)
Sergeant Jude. Patron soldier of lost causes. Your dad is a joke!

Alex
You jerk!

Jake
Whatever.

Alex
Don't you laugh at him!

Jake
Little man. Little hill.

Alex slaps Jake.

Alex
No one laughs at my dad.

Pause. Jake shoves Alex aside, takes her letter and rips it apart.

Alex
Jake, what are you—NO, MY LETTER!

Alex tries to stop Jake. He pushes her away, and tosses the scraps of papers in to
the air.

Jake
Oh gee, would you look at that. The letter is finished.

Alex
Damn you!

Jake turns and collects his notebook and backpack. Alex looks at Jake, then to his
bible. Pause. She scrambles to the bible, opens it, tears out the booked marked
page, and rips the page up.

Jake
What the—NO!

Alex tosses the bible across the room and drops the ripped page.

Jake
That was my mom's!

Alex
And that's for my dad!

Jake grabs Alex and shakes her a little. She struggles to get free.

Jake
How could you?!

Alex
Ah! Let go of me!

Jake
Shut up!

Alex
You're hurting me!

Jake
I said SHUT UP!

Jake pins Alex against a wall. They both stop moving.

Jake
How could you? (Beat.) I promised. I PROMISED HER! I needed that to remember. How will I... I can't forget. I CAN'T. That was the last thing she asked! Be a good person. That's ALL! (Beat. Releases Alex. Steps away.) I already failed once. I WON'T do it again! (Beat.) I need it to remember. I need the promise for my brother...for me... for Mom. I don't want to forget. (Beat.) I won't lose her.

Jake grabs his belongings. Alex inches away, and she stands ready to run.

Jake
I'm not going to hit you. (Beat.) I'm done hurting people.

Alex
Ok... Ok. Look, how about we both just chill a sec and then—

Jake

No, I'm going now.

Alex
Wait! WHAT?! No—no—no. You can't go!

Jake
You can finish the letter yourself.

Alex
What? But I... I didn't mean to...

Jake walks to the door.

Jake
Save it. Come Monday, I want a new science partner. (Stops walking.) And just so we're clear, regardless of all this. (Points to the space between them.) I hope your dad is alright when he comes home. No one deserves that.

Alex
Please, don't go. I'm... I'll buy you a new bible. Please, stay and help me.

Jake
Alex... Goodbye.

Jake shakes his head and exits. Alex stares at the empty doorway.

Alex
DAMMIT!

Alex freaks out. She kicks the bike, flails in frustration, and covers her mouth and screams. After a moment, she stops screaming, walks to the nearest wall, and bonks her head against it.

Alex
Crap! CRAP! CRRAAAAAPPPPPP! (Stops bonking. Catches breath.) What am I doing? (Beat.) No... No, I can't leave it like that. (Beat.) Crap.

Alex pulls out her cell phone. She stares at it for a moment, wipes her eyes, then dials. Pause.

Alex (Hysterical)
Jake, please don't hang up, it's me! (Beat.) No—No, I just

wanted to— (Beat.) Please, I just— (Beat.) Dammit! Shut up a sec would ya?! (Beat.) Thank you. (Takes deep breath.) Look, I know things got insane. I was angry, and I took it out on you, and I just... I got crazy. I shouldn't have said you were scared. I shouldn't have slapped you. I shouldn't have torn up the... you didn't deserve that. You're a nice guy. You're mom has a good son. I get why she's proud. (Beat.) So what I'm saying is... I... I'm sorry... That's what I called to say. (Beat.) Ok, you too. (Beat.) Bye.

Alex puts her phone away. Pause. Suddenly, she grabs a broom and starts to clean up. Pause. Alex starts to cry. She stops sweeping and leans on the broom. Pause. Jake enters.

Jake

Hi.

Alex

JAKE?! Where'd you—I thought you were... Hi... So... You're back.

Jake

Yeah, I guess so. (Beat.) Want to write that letter?

Alex

What? But I thought you—

Jake

I made a promise... I intend to keep it.

Pause. Alex nods and beams with a smile.

Alex

REALLY?! But I— you said—I thought... never mind. I'll go print another.

Jake

Ok. I'll be here.

Alex starts to leave, but stops when she gets to the door.

Alex

Hey, Jake... Thanks for coming back.

Jake

Thanks for the apology.

Alex

Sure.

Pause. Jake nods and smiles back. Alex exits. Jake sets down his backpack, leans against the workbench, and whistles as he waits. Black out.

The End.

In the Beginning

Formatting Note: *Italicized* dialogue means Crag is acting out his past experiences.

Darkness. Pause. A light appears on one side of the stage and begins to drift to the center.

Not yet. No, not yet. The time is not right. Be patient.

A second light appears, on the opposing side of the stage, and drifts towards the center as well.

Almost. The lights are almost... Almost... ALMOST... THERE!

The two lights cross and illuminate CRAG sitting on the floor. He is dressed in black. Crag begins the play moving and speaking with lots of energy, but becomes slower as time goes on.

Hello? There you are. Hello? Can you see me? I can see you.

A rumbling quake sounds. Crag looks down.

Yes—Yes, of course I'm trying.

A howling wind sounds. Crag looks up.

Yes—yes, of course I will ask them. (Looks to audience.) Can you see me? (Nods.) You can. (Beat.) You can? (Beat). Wait! You can! Ha—Ha! Yes—Yes! You can! Oh, how wonderful! I have been waiting—WE have been waiting for SOOO LONG!

A quake and wind sound. Crag looks up.

They are here! (Looks down.) They can see! (Looks to audience.) So long has it been! Oh, for days, and seasons, and years, and for ages beyond count, I have waited—waited for you. And here you are! (Dances.) They are here! Ha—Ha—Ha! They are here!

A quake sounds. Crag stops dancing and looks down.

Ah, what—what? (Beat. Nods.) Yes, you are right. Apologies. (Looks to audience.) Hello. I am profoundly overwhelmed to see you and to be seen. It has been a long while. Yes, a LONG while.

But here, now, **THIS** is important. One time, just **ONE** chance to get things right—to **MAKE** things right. Long ago, my friends told me, “One day you will have your chance. You will show the way. You will have the answers, the wisdom. Look for the lights to align and that will be your time—time to show and shine.” (Points to both spot lights.) And there are my lights. See, it is true. I am here to tell you—to show you **THE** truth. Oh, you think you know, but you do not. That is why I am here. Now is perfect, the last, the **ONLY** moment for a story—**MY** story—**THE** story. The lights are aligned and teller of tales is ready. Yes, right about... now.

Crag stands, composes himself, bows, then raises his arms to welcome the audience.

Let me tell you of the beginning, the **REAL** beginning. Once, long ago, the world was new. New and perfect. The world was simple. Just dust, and sand, and horizon. Forever into forever. Everywhere and forever. Just me and forever, but... but how different I was from the world. (Looks at his body.) I didn't always look like this.

Crag looks at his body. He studies his arms, and feet, and fingers and toes. Pause.

Now, I'm just... old. Old and gone. But not always. Way back when, when I was new, I. Was. **HUGE**. Massive. Expansive. Monolithic. Titanic. Humungous. Gigantic. Enormous. **GINORMOUS**. I was walking, talking, thinking big. The moving mountain. The living mountain. All the living things of creation **WERE** me, **CLUNG** to me. I was the protector, the guardian of life and the living.

A quake sounds. Crag looks down.

Yes. Yes, I know you disagree, but I must tell the **FULL** story, **MY** story. I will get to what you want. (Looks to audiences. Smiles.) Sorry, where was I? Yes. I had life, held life. Through me all of the living were held safe... contained. Everything was perfect. (Hugs himself.) I. Was. Beautiful. Ha! Ha! Absolutely wonderful! I was perfect... well, perfect for a Crag anyway. Ah! Yes, Crag. That's my name. Cragmous. Crag to my friends.

A quake and wind sound.

Well, Crag to me anyway. (Smiles. Lost in thought.) Huh! What? ... Oh, sorry. Yes. Beautiful. I was covered, covered in endless shapes and colors. Thousands of different things, all more interesting and beautiful than the last. They were all so tiny, so helpless compared to me. They were so small, in fact, I could not hear them. Somethings hung and clung, and ran about, but... but my head was up SOOOOO high, all I could do was look down—look down and smile. There were trees, and rocks, and creatures that walked on twos. Bushes, and vines, and animals that walked on fours. Shrubs, and weeds, and critters that traveled on eights, and tens, and twelves, and even more. Some things had wings, though they weren't strong enough to fly up so high, to meet old Crag eye to eye. No, not that strong. Still, they all were SO beautiful. But the MOST beautiful of all were the flowers... lilacs were my favorite. (Smiles. Thinks.) Sorry, what? Yes. Me and them. Alive, and living, and with life. So there I was, big, and grand, and full of everything, but only able to watch—watch and smile. A lonely life you might think, but don't you fret. There was SO much more to see. Yes, I was big. Yes, I was handsome, but there was SO much more beyond what I was. In the beginning, I was not alone. From below, I found support.

Crag points down as a quake sounds. Crag points up as a wind sounds.

From above I found shelter. From horizon to horizon, I was surrounded—surrounded by Ground and Sky. Ground provided the path to tread and confidence to stand. Sky sent the whispering wind to push and encourage. In the beginning, there was Ground, and Sky, and Crag. Me. We were giants, the gargantuan three, the greatest of friends, all so wild and free.

A wind and quake sound. Crag smiles and looks down.

Yes, I know. (Looks up.) Yes, I will tell them. (Looks to audience.) Endless and forever. That was all there was. Endless forever. Forever and ever... and ever... and ever and... never. Me, and Sky, and Ground. Never slowing, never showing, ever going. Everything so big, but... so what? After a life of lasting sameness, even I got bored. I could not hear the alive and living, and Ground and Sky would only talk so much. "Patience," They'd say. "Have patience." But what was a Crag to do? No one would play. So one day I looked up to Sky, then down to Ground, and I asked them, *"Is this all? Isn't there more? I can see you, Sky. I can see you, Ground. I can even see me, but... but, I want more. I want to touch more, to feel more, to hear more. I want SOMETHING*

more!”

A quake sounds. Crag looks down.

“What do you mean it is not for me to know yet?! I must know. I am Crag. I am of the beginning. Shouldn’t I know everything too?”

A wind sounds. Crag looks up.

“What do you mean, ‘It is not time yet?’ What difference is time? Now is now, and I am bored. You are you, and I am me... but isn’t there just a little more?”

Pause. Crag looks down. Pause. Crag looks up. Pause. Frustrated, Crag sits down.

“If you will not share, then I do not care. I thought we were friends—friends from beginning to beyond. (Beat. Looks up. Looks down. Shakes head.) Can’t you just tell me something... a small thing... anything”?

Crag looks up. Pause. He looks down. Pause. His shoulders slump.

And so I waited. I looked at the ground and waited. (Looks down.) I looked to the sky and waited. (Looks up.) I looked at myself and waited. (Searches himself.) Nothing happened. They would not answer me. Everything was on their time. They had answers, but they would not share. Everything was as it was, forever and nothing. Just me, and Ground, and Sky. Nights turned into days, turned into summers, into winters, into seasons, and seasons beyond count. And you know what I found out... that I hated to wait—hated not knowing. What was coming? What was next? Always the question, but never the answer. I hated to wait, but wait I did. (Pause. Slowly smiles.) And you know what? (Nods.) Just when waiting became horribly beyond terrible, something... something stirred. Right here. (Points to belly.) Suddenly, I rumbled. I churned. I bubbled, but then IT moved. (Draws a line upwards to his neck.) It moved. It wiggled. It squiggled, and then... blech. It. Burst. OUT! Right out—out of my mouth, and came to float right in front of me. So little, and fluffy, and small. It wafted in the breeze. It was SO odd! *“What are you?”* I asked the floating fluff. Curiosity took hold of me and I tried to touch the fluffy white thing, but just as I got close—squick... IT licked me!

Pause. Crag laughs and slaps his belly.

“Amazing! I have never seen you before. You are SO different. Hmmm... what shall I call you? (Thinks.) A piff? A skleck? A gloud? A cluff? (Thinks.) Gloud... cluff? A gluff? A coud? A goff? A cloud? Wait... cloud? That’s it! A CLOUD!” The little “cloud” was so white, and little, and precious. I needed to KNOW this cloud, to understand all that it was. I wanted the Cloud to lick my finger again. (Raises finger to poke.) But as I touch little white fluff—POOF. It split. Suddenly, there were two! AMAZING! MORE clouds! So, I touched again, and POOF! Again, it split! So, I touched again! Poof. Again. Poof. Again. Again. Again. Poof. Poof. Poof. POOOOOOF! (Stretches arms wide.) Soon, the sky was full. Clouds were everywhere. They looked AMAZING! And they felt amazing, right there. (Points to finger.) Where it licked me. They looked amazing and felt amazing, but... would they taste amazing? (Smiles sinisterly.) Ha, I had to try. I had to jump, to taste. So, I bent my legs. (Bends legs.) Opened my mouth, and... (Opens mouth.) JUMPED.

Crag springs up high and bites at the air. Pause. He exhales.

They tasted... WONDERFUL! They tasted like perfection. My head was covered by wisps of gray and white. HA! They tickled me, tickled my nose. (Tickles tip of his nose.) Right there, on the tip. Oh, they were tricky, tickly, little things. So silly and so free. Some were big, or small, or wobbly. The clouds had a mind of their own. Always changing. Always playing. Always moving. Always... Changing? (Thinks.) Wait? Change? No. That wasn’t right.

Crag looks about the stage cautiously.

Change? No, things were not to change. The beginning was the world, and the world had only the beginning. Ground, and Sky, and Crag. Me. That was all the world was meant for. There were three, as was meant to be... but... but suddenly there was another. The clouds... the clouds were foreign. The clouds were not of the world. The clouds were of... they were of me. They changed the beginning, but they came from me. (Thinks.) I changed everything? I was the changer? The shaper? The... The taker of the beginning? (Beat.) No, I was the protector, the holder of life. I was not the changer. There was only to be Sky, and Ground, and

Crag. Me. That was all the world needed, but... I changed it. I changed the world. (Beat.) No... No. I wouldn't let that happen. The world was not meant for change. I could not let it be!

Crag nods. He warily looks around. Exaggeratedly, he stalks and prowls around the stage.

The clouds, they were everywhere. A cloud here. (Points.) A cloud there. (Points.) Everywhere. (Points, points, points.) Clouds, clouds, CLOUDS. They HAD to go. I had to UNchange my change. I had to EAT the clouds, everyone of them. (Jumps, bites at air, lands, and swallow exaggeratedly.) Ha! I got one. Got one and swallowed it—gobbled it right up.

Crag crouches. He stalks. Pause. He jumps, bites, lands and swallows big. He rubs his belly and smiles. He does this a few times. Eventually, he gets tired and hunches over.

“HA! I got you. Nothing could keep from Crag. Nothing. I will undo what I did, so what I did would be no more. (Jumps. Bites. Swallows.) I can catch you, gobble, gobble you right up, then down, down you go. Back inside, right where you belong.”

Slowly, Crag looks around the stage. He swats about a few times, but suddenly backs up slowly. He looks out to the crowd, from the floor, slowly looking up to the ceiling as if something is growing bigger and bigger.

Or so I thought. I thought I was big, and scary, and mean. I was Crag. They should have been impressed, but... but they weren't. All around me, the clouds collected and grew. They came at me. Up. Down. Right. Left. Front. Back. (Turns in a circle.) They floated down. They floated in. They... They tried to capture me. ME? CRAG? (Swings and swats about.) But, I was SO big, and they were SO small... but they were SO many. They were EVERYWHERE.

Crag moves about the stage, as if blind. He stumbles, feeling his way as he speaks.

“Black. Dark. Nothing. (Stubs toe.) Ouch. My toe! Ahhh!” I could not see as the clouds pressed, and passed, and pressed some more. I was blind. (Stumbles.) Tricky things. (Gets up.) Treacherous things. (Jumps and bites.) Horrible things. (Jumps and bites.) *“I do not need to see. I can still fight. I can still win. I do not need what you take. I need NOTHING!”*

Crag wildly bites at the air. He jumps, stumbles, and flails about.

“HA! I have you. I will get you—ALL of you. You are mine. I am CRAG! Nothing shall change on my watch. Nothing! I am Crag! The PROTECTOR!”

A quake and wind sound. Crag looks up then down.

I know you do not agree, but I do not care. This is MY story. YOU gave me this time—this one and ONLY CHANGE. They must know MY thoughts, MY feelings, MY story. This is MY time so LET. ME. SPEAK.

Pause. Silence. Crag nods triumphantly.

Apologies. Sky and Ground can be very loud. (Clears throat.) As I was saying. The clouds, they frustrated me. Angered me. Scared me. Made me shout, and shake, and fight, and fear. So much conflict and so much rage, I could not contain the emotions. From fight, and fall, and fright, something else happened. Something NEW stirred from within. (Touches cheek. Examines hand.) *“What is this? My eyes? My eyes, they... they are leaking? (Tastes the tears.) Salty, bitter and swelling. Tears? (Shakes head.) No. No distractions. No time for tears. I MUST fight. I MUST move. A protector does not yield! Ever moving, always going, never—AHHHHH! (Moves forward, arms outstretched, but stumbles.) AH. What the—Who the? Who is there? Who I ask! Who are YOU?!”* (Beat.) I waited for a response... I waited... and waited, but... but the only thing that came was pain. I was hurt. I fell and struck my shoulder. (Searches chest and arm.) *“What? No! The trees of my chest, MY trees, they... they are gone! No, this cannot be! (Searches stage floor.) My trees are gone. I cannot touch them, cannot reach them. (Shakes head. Gets back up.) Where are they? Where? WHERE?!”* (Swings arms wildly, and stubs toe.) *AH! Ouch! Not again!”* Again, always again, I stubbed my toe and knocked my knee. Suddenly, I sensed that my shrubs and vines had fallen away. My legs were thinning. (Inspects legs.) *“No—No, not more! No more! What am I doing? I HAVE to protect life and the living, but... but I’m failing.”*

A quake sounds. Crag looks down.

ENOUGH, GROUND. I will tell things MY way. (Looks to

audience. Beat.) The bits and pieces of life and living, they were slipping away. I had to find them. I had to gather them—the lost—the gone. I had to protect.

A wind sounds. Crag looks up.

Let me SPEAK, SKY! (Looks to audience.) I had to fight—fight—fight! No cloud would best me! I was the protector, the guardian, the CRAG.

A quake and wind sound violently. Crag looks up, then down.

SHUT UP! I have the light. The time is MINE! I SHALL have my final say! SO. GO. AWAY! (To audience.) Nights pass, days too. Thinner and thinner I became. Fight and fall. Try and fail. Pull and push, and kick and cry. Hate, and hate, and hate some more. Stumble—Tumble—Block—Endless knock. AHHHHHHH! It went on, and on, and on, but I could not see. Those clouds, hateful, terrible clouds. They made my body whittle away. Shrubs scrapped, trees toppled, vines ripped, my boulderous bones were all broken and torn. And the beautiful-beautiful flowers, they... they were... (Shudders.) All of it was gone. (Wraps arms around body and shivers.) I did not need to see to know the truth. Clouds were everywhere, as I stumbled—tumbled about. Fight. Fail. Hate. Hate. Hate. (Looks up.) *“I cannot see you. I cannot beat you. I am Crag, and I am... nothing.”* (Kneels. Lies down. Curls into fetal position.) *“Go. Leave a Crag to peace and pieces.”*

Pause. Crag weeps. Long pause. The stage grows dark. Thunder sounds. Crag flinches.

“What!?! No. No more. Don’t bother me. JUST. GO. AWAY!”

Thunder sounds. Crag covers his ears. Slowly, the sound of rain builds.

“What now? I am beaten. Just let me be! Please! (Beat. Sits up, and searches the stage with hands.) What? What is this? Wet? Everything is... wet? But why? What are the clouds doing? (Scratches head.) Down, down comes the waters. But why? (Thinks.) The clouds. (Thinks.) Are they... could they be... crying? (Pause. Looks around.) Yes... yes, they are.” Thunder rolled. Lightning flashed. Everything filled with light and sound and cold—cold wet. The clouds cried and filled the space from Ground to Sky.

Crag sits. He cups his hand, as if to catch the rain, then licks his cupped hand.

I tasted pity... and sadness... and sorrow. But for what?

Thunder sounds.

“Hello? Yes, I hear you. I can’t see you, but I know you are there. I know you suffer, but why? Why do you cry? Tell me! I must know!”

Thunder sounds again. Crag reacts as if hearing the answer to his question.

“You!?! You are sad too? What makes you this way, makes you pity? What fills you with such sorrow? (Beat.) Tell me! I must know!”

Thunder rumbles. Pause. The sound of rain stops. Slowly, a sliver of light shines upon Crag. Crag examines himself in the light.

“Me? You... You cry because... because of me? (Thinks.) You cry, because I cry. You are sad, because I am sad. I—I do not know what to say. (Thinks.) I... I’m sorry? (Thinks. Nods.) Yes. I am sorry.”

Thunder rumbles. Crag slowly nods in agreement. The stage brightens. Crag stands.

The clouds took pity on me. They fought because I fought, and cried because I cried. And just like that, the fight was over. Slowly, slowly, every so slow, the clouds rolled away. Up, and up they went. Back to heights on high. Floating in the sky. (Looks around the stage.) But my, oh my... what changes they left for me to see.

Crag extend his arms as if trying to reach out and encompass the whole horizon.

Not just the clouds, but EVERYTHING was different. The sand, the dirt, and the blue—blue from above, from horizon to horizon, all of it was different. There were trees, and boulders, and shrubs, and bushes, and vines, and mountains, and gorges. All that I had lost, they all found new homes. All the life, all that I protected and kept, they were rooted anew. They were safe and sound, but they were not alone. There was more, so MUCH more. There were oceans and lakes and rivers. OH, the rivers! Big, vast, veins of tearful water surging about. The clouds, they cried for me and

those cries collected and cut their way through the soil. As the Sky filled with clouds, so did the Ground with waters of sorrow and joy. From East, to West, to South, to North, all was new, and different, and... and scary. Everything was new. (Beat.) Even me.

Crag looks down and examines his body.

After the clouds, after the darkness, the tears, the forgiveness, I became what you see now. Just Crag. Crag the old. Crag the wise. Crag the living memory. A shadow of what I was. No more titan of titans. No more living mountain. No more Crag the Protector.

A quake and wind sound violently. Crag loses his balance.

WHAT?! You want me to speak, to share, to give my answers in the time I have. Yet, you grumble—grumble ALL the way?! (Looks down.) Quake and shake. (Looks up.) Rush and Gush. It does not matter anymore! They know my story! (Points to audience.) They know the truth! They know the beginning. They know that changes are to come! (Look up.) Yes, I should have listened. (Looks down.) Yes, you told me to wait, but that was all. You never told me more. Never prepared me. Never explained. You just said to wait. That's all. That's it. And SOOOOO WHAT?! You try and tell me now, but you are out of time. I DON'T CARE! I will do what this Crag wants, what this Crag feels is right. I will tell them what you did not tell me. (Looks to audience.) In the beginning, there was Ground, and Sky, and Crag. Me. (Beat). Back then, I wish I had known more—known the truth. Things will happen you cannot expect. You, and you, and you, and even you—all of you—everything will change. From a beginning, an end will come. Ground and Sky, they did not tell me. They did not share the truth. Back then, the beginning was all I knew. (Beat.) I wish I had known. I would have done more—said more—seen more—BEEN MORE. But now YOU know. Now YOU can tell the rest—all of the living creatures and critters. Tell them of the change that came. Tell them—

The two lights shining down on the center stage begin to separate. A soft quake and wind sound, as Crag frantically address the audience.

Oh, no! I am out of time! Oh, no. Oh, no. Time. Always too much, and never enough. Please—Please before I go, remember—remember me! Remember my words—my story—the beginning is

the beginning, but not the end. An end will come, but you must not fear! Remember my words. Remember my story. Remember to live, and be alive, and love all you have. Just remember to always—

The spot lights separate. Crag collapses. He does not move. The stage grows dark. The quake and wind fade away. Black out.

The End.