



Sample Pages from The Blue and the Grey

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THE BLUE AND THE GREY

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT BY
RS Paulette



The Blue and the Grey

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Characters

4W 3M + Students

CHARLENE EMERSON: “Charlie” is a high school junior, female, protagonist. Sees ghost, worries for her sanity.

RACHEL CARR: High school junior, female, Charlie’s best friend. Civil War buff, snarky, on the overbearing side, worries for Charlie’s sanity.

DARREN ALGER: High school junior, male, outcast. Haunted by the death of ANA, withdrawn, insular.

ANA ALGER: Child of eight or nine years old, female, ghost. Wears a blue parka/winter coat. Never doubles as a Student.

MORRISSEY: Late thirties, AP US History teacher, male, liked. Trusted teacher, half-hearted confidant, called “Moz” as an honorific by students.

UNCLE WALT: Mid-forties, poet, ghost/figment. Manifestation of poet Walt Whitman, though possibly something else. Never doubles as a Student.

MRS. E.: Late thirties, early forties, female, mother to Charlie. Presumed widow, husband disappeared fourteen years ago. Strong, bedrock, single mother. Doubled by a student.

STUDENTS: Nameless, faceless classmates; doubles as The Grey and others.

THE GREY: Ghosts of Confederate soldiers ambushed at the Lake following the first battle of Fredericksburg, 1862; doubled by Students.

THE DRUMMER: Plays the marching snare for the Ghosts; doubled by a Student.

THE CAPTAIN: Leads the Grey, carries a sword; doubled by a Student.

Time

The modern day.

Place

A rural Virginia town, America.

Setting

Various—Charlie’s house and bedroom; school classrooms; the local Lake.

Stage

The stage is set as a composite dreamscape of Charlie's key memories surrounding the events of the play. All physical elements, then, serve as simple indicators of where we are spatially, while also serving as a blending and blurring of those spaces into one another.

Downstage Center, for instance, is a small wooden platform, four feet square and perhaps a foot tall. This serves predominantly as "The Ice."

Stage Right and Stage Left are three rows of desks, angled symmetrically in an inverted "v," with the point directed Upstage Center, and the rows serving as the sides of the "v." The desks are lined up long-medium-short starting from Center Stage. This space is essentially "The Classroom."

What's most important about the rows of desks is creating a stage picture with the sense of a diminishing one-point perspective leading to Upstage Center.

Upstage Center is ANA's "spot"—a raised platform with stairs leading down from the platform.

It is in the hollow of the "v" where much of the scene-work takes place, no matter where we are located.

The Blue and the Grey was first produced at Rappahannock County High School for the 2014 VHSL One-Act Play Competition with the following cast & crew:

CHARLIE	Jane Purnell
RACHEL	Emma Endre
DARREN	Gus Norris
MORRISSEY	James MacLeod
ANA	Katelyn Fisher
	Kathryn Fisher
UNCLE WALT	Henry Mason
MRS. E.	Cammy Clark
STUDENTS/THE GREY	David Smoot (Student/ Captain of the Grey)
	Kate Moreno (Teacher/Student)
	Trusten Murrah (Student/Grey)
	Amanda Puskar (Student 1)
	Madison Stevens (Student 2)
	Savannah Stevens (Student 3)
	Christian Poffenbarger (The Drummer)
	Catherine Deane
	Elizabeth Fisher
	Morgan Flanagan
	Sara Garcia
	Emily Preston
STAGE MANAGER & CREW	Parker Critzer
	Nicky Taylor (Lights)
	Johnny Beard
	Caleb Ramey
	Jonathan Sanders (Sound)
	Mahlet Yirgu
DIRECTOR	RS Paulette

Some Prefatory Notes Regarding Choices Made During The First Production

This play was originally written for the RCHS Drama Club for the 2014-2015 school year. It is, at the time of this writing, that Drama Club's greatest success under my tenure as Drama Club advisor—including, but not limited to, first place finishes in the VHSL One-Act Competition at the Conference and Regional level, along with several acting recognitions for the students playing Charlie, Darren, and Uncle Walt.

One of the wonderful experiences of directing your own work is not only the sense of collaboration which comes with any production, but in particular with the special fluidity and flexibility that my cast and I experienced that only comes with producing an original work. In that sense, I can't help but feel a shared ownership with those students—many of whom are alumni; many of whom are current students as I write this.

In the interest of passing along that same sense of adventurous collaboration between director and cast, I offer the following notes based on the original production as a guide for how we made our initial decisions which helped shape the script as you see it here. (These Prefatory Remarks are non-spoiler notes, whereas the "Final Notes" listed after the playscript should be considered spoiler-heavy.)

Thanks.

On the staging, holistically: The desks should never be removed; the platform remains for the duration; everything at ANA's "spot" remain untouched. Whenever moments occur when the Classroom intrudes on action at the Lake, or vice versa, the intent is that the stage picture is all one image—it's best to communicate the visual language of the play simply, with actors slipping into winter jackets and hats when at the Lake; pulling hats off for quick returns to the classroom; removing winter gear completely when we're in CHARLIE's house or the Classroom for a sustained length of time, etc..

For the desks, I used six rows of about 8-5-3 desks per row for each row (8 desks furthest Center, 3 desks furthest toward SL/SR; you get the picture), staggering them to give the illusion of a fuller space; the diminishing one-point perspective is the key idea, though—all roads lead to ANA.

Transitions should be quick, almost instantaneous except where indicated—this can be accomplished with alternation of light color or intensity and the aforementioned costuming indicators, in full view of the audience.

As noted here and in the setting description at the beginning of the script, any technical element which contributes to the atmosphere—dreamlike, ghostly, haunting—is where a lot of the fun is had with the piece.

I encourage playing with the staging to suit your needs and interpretation of the show, while using the staging as written as a guide.

On ANA's Spot: We did this with two symmetrical sets of four-step stairs—angled on a similar line to the “v” of the desks—with a simple rehearsal-block in the center of the “v.” This made ANA shorter than much of the GREY for the climactic moment in Scene 13, which was effective. Also, at competition, we had no control over a direct, overhead light, so the note later about the muskets provided the theatrical lighting needed for that same scene.

On timing: Speed, especially the transitions, should be a factor. The play was written for the VHSL One-Act Play competition, which has a fixed length—from first theatrical effect to last theatrical effect—of 35:00. 35:01, and you are disqualified from progressing in the competition. This is the script which the actors performed at each competition, usually timing out at about 33:00 or 34:00, give or take thirty seconds or so. This is all to say: Yes, Virginia, you *can* get this down to time.

On the drumming: I was fortunate enough to have cast a DARREN who was the percussion leader in our school's marching band; our UNCLE WALT also served in the same section. Our DARREN found a rhythm from old Civil War-era sheet music, adapted it, and actually led rehearsals where I asked him to teach fellow students how to drum on the desks. Our DRUMMER was also cast from the band, so he quickly picked up the rhythm and played it on a marching snare. At the time of this writing, several Ensemble members can still drum the rhythm with the tips of their fingers on their desks.

All of this is to say the theatrical effect of the drumming was a *major* enrichment activity both for the cast in particular and for the department as a whole. So, you know, have fun with it.

I. INTERSTITIAL I: “Beat! Beat! Drums!” Pt. I

IN DARKNESS, we hear STUDENT voices—said as a chorus, almost affectless. Also, we hear drumming—a Civil War-era march beat on the top of the desks, in time to the rhythm of the poetry. The effect is ethereal, haunting—an ocean in a seashell.

STUDENTS: Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!

VOICE 1: Through the windows—through doors—burst like a ruthless/force,

VOICE 2: (*With a slight overlap, at the “/” in the previous line.*) Into the solemn church, and scatter the/congregation,

VOICE 3: Into the school where the scholar is studying,
Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have
now with/his bride,

VOICE 4: Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or
gathering/his grain,

STUDENTS: (*Back to a single voice; the same “Beat! beat! drums!” rhythm; it ends sharply, almost abruptly.*) So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you bugles blow.

2. “The Grey hears you.”

Lights up on CHARLIE at the CS platform. She addresses the audience. Behind her, STUDENTS sit in desks, all facing full-back. Music plays.

CHARLIE: So my Mother gave me a musket. I know, weird, right? And if I were Rachel, I’d probably be super-into-it; but this is me, and when she offered me this...this thing... It was wrapped in burlap, and she held it out to me gently, gingerly, swaddled in her arms. It’s been sitting in a corner of our attic, forgotten for the last fourteen years, she said, and Mom’s recent cleaning binge turned it up, so she brought it down to me.

A FEMALE STUDENT enters from desks: MRS. E.

MRS. E.: I thought you might want it.

CHARLIE: (*To MRS. E.*) Mom. Really. What am I going to do, defend the homestead? It’s a musket—a Confederate antique that my father had abandoned in the attic.

MRS. E. exits to desks.

CHARLIE: Later that night—through the rain and the lightning—was the first time I talked with Ana, the kid who died five years ago out in the deep blue of The Lake. And talking with Ana led to Darren and Rachel and The Lake, which led to The Grey, to Uncle Walt and the living, vibrating colors of the aurora borealis, and finally to the truth about...all of it...

Music should fade out completely by this point.

CHARLIE: But I'm getting ahead of myself. So, no, Mom called Rachel and Rachel gave our number to some local re-enactor who promised us he would give the musket a good home. And that... should have been that. But, as I said, that night a thunderstorm rolled in.

Under, STUDENTS tap their fingers lightly on the desks—rain. Tapping continues until—

CHARLIE: A latch was loose on the shutters. It banged—

BANG! STUDENTS palms flat against the desktop, sharp, on time with CHARLIE's "banged"—a roll of thunder. No hesitation on CHARLIE's line.

CHARLIE: —open.

The thunder hangs for a moment. Then light tapping resumes.

CHARLIE: I moved to close the window in the rain and the lightning... and I saw...I saw Ana in the corner of my bedroom.

Lights change. ANA appears at her 'spot,' up-center. She is simultaneously ghost-like and beatific in appearance—unsettling, but not grisly; angelic, but not holy.

CHARLIE: (Reacts.) How the hell did you get in here?!?

No response from ANA—CHARLIE blusters, sputters. Tapping continues.

CHARLIE: You can't be in here—this is my room! (CHARLIE calls off.)
MOM!

ANA: (Finger to her lips. Tapping tapers.) They'll hear you.

CHARLIE: What are you talking—

ANA: Quiet! (Beat.) You don't want to wake them.

CHARLIE: Wake who? What the hell are you talking about?

ANA: The Grey. The Grey hears you.

Sudden series of BANGS from STUDENTS—the rhythm from “Blow! Bugles! Blow!” in Sc. I, but unsaid. Simultaneously—

CHARLIE: Who are—

Beat. Tapping resumes.

ANA “disappears”—that is, for CHARLIE she has. ANA remains a moment for a lingering look at CHARLIE, then exits, off.

CHARLIE: —the Grey...? What’s going on?

3. “You don’t turn down a glass of water.”

Lights change. Tapping fades with ANA’s exit. RACHEL enters from desks. CHARLIE approaches.

RACHEL: You’re going crazy, Charlie. That’s what’s going on.

CHARLIE: Rache...

RACHEL: I’m serious. I think you’re ready for the nuthouse. I’ve known it for years, Emerson—I was just waiting for you to take that first step and admit that your life had become unmanageable.

CHARLIE: *(Eye roll.)* I knew I shouldn’t have said anything.

RACHEL: Were you asleep?

CHARLIE: What? I mean, maybe. Probably. What are we talking about again?

RACHEL: Sleepwalking. It’s not unheard of, you know? My cousin’s boyfriend, once...he said they caught him, shuffling in his socks down the second story halls of his house, his trembling hands adjusting the thermostat while he complained about the cold. In the summer.

CHARLIE: *(Not really.)* Freaky.

RACHEL: I know. Hand-to-God honest, though. True story.

CHARLIE: I’m telling you, it happened. She was there—I was wide awake.

RACHEL: Was she cute?

CHARLIE: (*Get serious.*) Rachel. She.

RACHEL: I say take what you can get... (*Beat. CHARLIE glares.*) What? Like Grammy always said, if you're lost in the desert—parched—well, you don't turn down a glass of water.

CHARLIE: Hand-to-God, Rachel...I think it was Ana.

Pause. After a moment, the bell rings.

RACHEL: Come on. We got history.

4. "I'm not stupid, you know..."

Lights change. MORRISSEY has been sitting in a desk. He stands and addresses the class. RACHEL and CHARLIE take desks, hoping he'll ignore their lateness. A Classroom.

MORRISSEY: Think of this more as...local history. Put a location we all know and love into a context. See, history happens—has happened all around us. Your job is to show the class that history.

CHARLIE: (*To us.*) Rachel perked up immediately, started waving her hand to get my attention.

RACHEL turns in her seat, mimes grouping with CHARLIE, desperate for her attention. After a couple of beats, she gives up.

CHARLIE: (*Continuing, oblivious to RACHEL's pantomime.*) It was obvious she wanted to group up and pick The Lake, even if I had a better idea, which I didn't. See, since sixth grade we've all known Rachel is deaf to the word "no."

RACHEL crosses below the Platform, pulls out cell phone with camera. Shrugs into a winter coat or hat.

Lights change and reality shifts. The Lake.

RACHEL: No, no...this isn't right...

CHARLIE steps forward, donning some coat or hat of her own. RACHEL hands her the phone.

MORRISSEY: Ladies? (*They both turn. Lights shift, reality breaks slightly—a last moment for RACHEL and CHARLIE in the Classroom.*) Darren needs a group—can he join you two?

CHARLIE: (To MORRISSEY.) Sure, Moz.

RACHEL: (To CHARLIE.) Perfect.

Lights change back to The Lake. Under dialogue, CHARLIE points the camera at various landmarks RACHEL indicates, taking pictures. DARREN joins them, shrugging into his own coat.

CHARLIE: (To us.) It's got a name, you know. But all of us—adults and kids alike—we don't use it. To us, it's just "The Lake."

Lights shift to the Classroom. During the following, MORRISSEY checks papers under dialogue, lingers a moment after it's done, then sits.

STUDENT 1: (Leans over to another student.) Follow the highway down a stretch, then take a left at The Lake, you can't miss it...

STUDENT 2: (Ditto.) Are you going to The Lake this weekend?

STUDENT 3: (Calls across the Classroom.) My dad's trying to take me fishing at The Lake again...

STUDENT 4: (Stage whisper to nearby student, then giggles.) There we were, alone at The Lake, so...

Lights shift back to The Lake. RACHEL's pointing various landmarks as CHARLIE takes pictures. DARREN's off to the side, an obvious third wheel.

RACHEL: So we know the Lost Confederates retreated from First Fredericksburg and made their way out here. (Pauses a beat for CHARLIE to click the camera.) It took about a day, but as they settled in to camp the night of the 14th, the Union detachment came from that direction. (Click.) Fighting was fierce, and by the time the Union wiped out the Lost, night would have fallen, the stars would've come out, and they all would have been lying out under the shifting kaleidoscope of the aurora borealis. (Click.) Like a Van Gogh, or something.

CHARLIE: (Click. To us.) Morrissey gave us a long timeline for the project—so, major grade—all the way up through Thanksgiving, with the final presentations after we got back. There was a tremor in Moz's voice when he responded to Rachel's pitch, though. Rachel assured him we would be fine—that I'd be fine with the idea. There was a Whitman element that piqued my interest, so she thought that'd keep me sane. As for Darren...he seemed okay, but it was really obvious he wasn't. He just went along with it anyway...

RACHEL: Anyway, I bet you there's some natural lee that the Lost used to shield themselves—probably the other side of that hill. Charlie, make sure to get some good shots of the tree. I'm heading to check it out.

RACHEL waves them on, exits to the wings. CHARLIE moves to exit, stops, turns to DARREN. A moment.

CHARLIE: You coming?

DARREN: I'll be right there.

CHARLIE: You didn't have to come with us, you know. We're just "location scouting."

DARREN: No, I know.

CHARLIE: Rachel's practically going to do the whole presentation herself. We're going to have to pry the project from her hands in order to take credit for *something*.

DARREN: I figured. *(Beat.)* Lake's not freezing yet.

CHARLIE: It's been warm this year.

DARREN: Yeah. *(Beat.)* I'm not stupid, you know.

CHARLIE: Huh?

DARREN: I know why you two picked me for this project—

CHARLIE: What do you—we didn't "pick you," it was Moz who—

DARREN: *(Holds up his hand, stops her talking.)* It's okay. *(Beat. It's not.)* Like you said... Rachel's practically going to do the whole thing herself. *(Silence. Awkward. He shivers.)* It always gets cold.

CHARLIE: You sure you're okay with this?

DARREN: Let's catch up with Rachel.

He exits, off. CHARLIE trains the camera after him. Click. Click-click-click. Click. She looks at phone.

CHARLIE: Hmm. *(Beat. Not sure what she's seeing.)* Huh?!!

5. "Tell me you see it."

Lights change. Another Classroom.

CHARLIE crosses to a desk, sits, huddles over the phone, thumbing through images. RACHEL enters and sits next to her. One STUDENT steps forward as TEACHER, reviews work on other STUDENT desks.

CHARLIE: Tell me you see it.

RACHEL: *(Fumbles in her purse.)* Stupid. I forgot my contacts this morning.

CHARLIE: *(Indicates the screen.)* Right there.

RACHEL: The blob? Or the blurry blob?

CHARLIE: Right there! The smudge of blue... Look. Darren passes by the tree and, in these three exposures, suddenly there's a smudge of blue right next to this...tree...

TEACHER: Are you ladies finished? Do I need to take the camera?

CHARLIE & RACHEL: *(Overlapping, awkward ad-lib. Putting camera away.)* Sorry. We'll put it away. Integers. Divide by twelve. Away. Sorry. Ur. Um. Numerator.

6. "And the next thing I knew, I was awake."

Lights change. CHARLIE crosses downstage. ANA enters at her 'spot.' Light tapping from STUDENTS—more "rain."

CHARLIE: *(To us.)* Bottom line: I know it sounds like I'm crazy. "Girl haunted by dead sister of classmate."

ANA: Shhhh.

CHARLIE: But you tell me what I should have been thinking. The thunder, the lightning. The loose latch against the windowpane. The smudge at The Lake.

ANA: Are you there? I can't hear you.

CHARLIE: Was I awake or was I dreaming? Did I really see Ana, or just dream her?

ANA: Quiet! You don't want to wake them.

CHARLIE: When her visits were regular, I took comfort. A sure sign that Rachel was right—that maybe it's crazy when crazy is a comfort.

ANA: Shhh.

CHARLIE: But then, as I got used to Ana, she stopped. And that's when I started to worry.

ANA: The Grey will hear you.

CHARLIE: Was I daydreaming sleep? Or was I a sleeper wishing I was awake?

ANA: Are you there?

CHARLIE: But then I did see her. Or rather, I saw her again, and what she said...what she said was finally different.

CHARLIE turns to ANA. Tapping increases intensity—it's becoming rhythmic, patterned; starting to resemble the pattern established for "Beat! Beat! Drums!"

In the distance—growing in intensity; impossibly for CHARLIE—a marching snare is heard. "Beat! Beat! Drums!"

ANA: Where am I? I'm so scared, Darren.

DARREN: *(A voice in darkness; affectless.)* Turn around.

CHARLIE: I'm right here, Ana.

ANA: I can't hear you.

CHARLIE: I'm right here!

DARREN: Hold your breath.

ANA: Shhhh.

CHARLIE: What do you want?

DARREN: You're swimming the wrong way.

CHARLIE: Follow his voice!

ANA: It always gets cold.

Tapping and drumming stops. Sudden. Quiet.

STUDENTS & DARREN: *(Sotto voce.)* Let not the child's voice be heard...

CHARLIE: Are you there?

STUDENTS & DARREN: *(Still sotto.)* Make even the trestles to shake the dead...

CHARLIE: I'm right here, Ana. Can you hear me? Ana...?

ANA disappears. Taps resume.

CHARLIE: *(To us.)* I had dreams. Bad dreams. They kept me up some nights. And some nights, the dreams would turn...okay. *(Tapping stops. Abrupt.)* Some nights...some nights, I'd dream of Uncle Walt.

UNCLE WALT appears. He's a kind, calming, paternal presence. He doesn't need to be a caricature or spitting image of Walt Whitman—it's probably better if he's not. What's most important is that his presence is a calm center in CHARLIE's wildly spinning world.

CHARLIE: Often, he wouldn't do much. Sometimes, he'd just...just stand there. I'd try to get his attention. Wave 'hi,' call out to him: "Hey, Walt." He'd never say anything...

After a beat, UNCLE WALT smiles.

CHARLIE: ...he'd just smile. And I'd see him, and I'd wave. Then I'd smile. And then I'd just walk away. And the next thing I knew, I was awake.

CHARLIE exits to desks. UNCLE WALT turns at looks at her for a moment. Exits, off.

7. INTERSTITIAL 2: "Beat! Beat! Drums!" Pt. 2

Lights change. In low light, we hear STUDENT voices.

STUDENTS: *(Drum the "Beat! beat! drums!" rhythm, as a full chorus.)*
Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!

VOICE 6: Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets;

VOICE 7: Are beds prepared for sleepers/at night in the houses?

VOICE 8: No sleepers must sleep in those/beds,

VOICE 9: No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or speculators—would they/continue?

VOICE 10: Would the talkers be/talking?

VOICE 11: Would the singer attempt/to sing?

VOICE 12: Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case/before the judge?

STUDENTS: (*Drum the “Beat! beat! drums!” rhythm, as a full chorus.*)
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.

8. “I’m in love with you, you idiot.”

Lights change. The Classroom.

CHARLIE turns in her desk towards MORRISSEY as he enters from desks. DARREN and RACHEL orient themselves towards him, too, hang-dog. STUDENTS are “invisible.”

MORRISSEY: So, what happened...exactly...

CHARLIE: (*Stands; to MORRISSEY.*) We went back to The Lake. We heard it had finally frozen over.

RACHEL: (*Stands, joins her with the phone; to MORRISSEY.*) We wanted to take pictures of The Lake the way it would have been in early 1863.

CHARLIE: Rachel insisted—

Transition to The Lake—lights, coats and hats, etc.

Reality remains a little broken for the duration: MORRISSEY remains, an observer from the Classroom—as they play out the scene, they’re “telling” him the story, so he’s imagining the events and will occasionally interrupt.

RACHEL: (*In the scene, to CHARLIE and DARREN.*)—the remains were discovered late in December, and they weren’t identified and sent home until sometime in January, well after decomposition started.

CHARLIE and DARREN share a look.

RACHEL: Seriously, you guys, I know what I’m talking about. I’m going to get a few shots in.

RACHEL starts taking photographs. She wanders off towards the wings, remains onstage, continuing the photography.

CHARLIE: It’s her “process.” I’ve learned not to question it.

DARREN: Right.

CHARLIE: How’s your part coming?

DARREN: I found some county records which traced some of the Lost Confederates back to their homes. There's an entire exhibit out of the local Historical Society that's got great stuff. You?

CHARLIE: Up to my ears in Romanticism. (*Changing tacks.*) I was talking with Moz the other day. He was bugging me about being drowsy in class lately.

DARREN: You have been looking ready to nod off a lot of the time.

CHARLIE: Anyway, I tried to tell him it wasn't a big deal. Only, here's the thing... I don't know the right way to tell you this, but...

RACHEL crosses back to them.

RACHEL: Idea. You. Charlie. Ice. Lake. Click. Whattayasay?

Big pause. Hangs. DARREN looks at nobody.

RACHEL: Eh? Eh?

CHARLIE: Huh?

RACHEL: I thought a shot of you standing on The Lake would be... I dunno...poetic.

MORRISSEY: (*Back to the Classroom.*) You really thought this was a good idea?

RACHEL: It *really* seemed like a good idea. At the time.

CHARLIE: (*Back to The Lake.*) I dunno, Rache. I don't really see the value in—

RACHEL: Come on.

DARREN: (*Suddenly.*) I'll do it.

Another big moment. Hangs.

DARREN: Take the picture of me. I'll do it.

RACHEL: (*Sidelong at CHARLIE.*) I don't know, Darren, it was meant to be for Charlie's part. "Sound my barbaric yawp" and all that.

DARREN: It's fine. I'll go.

MORRISSEY: (*Back to Classroom.*) So you went.

DARREN: Yes.

MORRISSEY: Knowing how dangerous it was, you went anyway.

DARREN: Yeah, I...

MORRISSEY: Over a dumb presentation? I mean, don't get me wrong, I love my assignments, but you of all people should know how dangerous it is...

DARREN glares at MORRISSEY for a moment, then heads towards "the hallway"—the wings—but doesn't exit.

MORRISSEY: How does he seem to you two?

RACHEL and CHARLIE share a look.

RACHEL: It's...it's really hard to say. We used to be better friends before...before everything with Ana, and I...I really miss...

CHARLIE: I think what Rachel's trying to say is...well, we've been trying to look out for Darren. We've got good reasons and everything, but...

MORRISSEY: How'd you get him off The Lake?

CHARLIE: Hmmm?

RACHEL: I'm sorry?

MORRISSEY: Darren. When you realized that he wasn't...that standing on the ice wasn't good for him...how'd you get him to come back?

Back to The Lake. DARREN, isolated, has turned away from everyone.

RACHEL: *(Calls out to DARREN.)* We got the shots! *(Looks at viewscreen.)* What's that smudge?

CHARLIE: We're good, Darren! Come on back!

RACHEL: *(Looks up. After a beat.)* He's not moving.

CHARLIE: He will.

RACHEL: No, I'm serious, Charlie. Look. *(They do. A beat.)* He doesn't look right.

CHARLIE: His shoulders are—is he crying?

RACHEL: Darren? Darren are you—

CHARLIE: I should.

CHARLIE moves forward. One foot on the Ice. Large BANG from STUDENTS—a crack under her foot.

RACHEL: Charlie! Stop.

CHARLIE: *(Looks at her feet.)* That's not a good sound.

RACHEL: Darren, you need to walk back. Now. Carefully.

CHARLIE: *(Returning to RACHEL. Gingerly.)* We're going to have to go get him, Rachel. *(Gets out phone.)* Or call somebody. Or something.

RACHEL: Wait. Charlie, just...

A moment. During the following, DARREN reacts very clearly and with naked honesty to RACHEL's words—looks up, looks at her, looks away, shakes his head, lets his head fall. CHARLIE can see that RACHEL's words land, physically.

RACHEL: Darren. Darren, can you hear me? Nobody thinks you're stupid. Charlie told me what you said—that first day of the project, out here... I didn't want you in our group for Ana's story. Did you notice how I haven't even brought it up? That's not... I asked you to be a part of our group because... because I'm in love with you, you idiot.

Pause. CHARLIE looks at RACHEL. RACHEL can't look at anyone. Gingerly, DARREN crosses over the Ice to RACHEL and CHARLIE.

DARREN: What was that?

CHARLIE: *(Back to the Classroom. To MORRISSEY, as if it was his question.)* We...uh...we just told him that he should come back. *(RACHEL and DARREN look at her.)* And eventually he did.

MORRISSEY: Do you have everything you need from out at The Lake? *(They all glance at each other.)* Promise me, right now, that you have no reason—none at all—to go back there for this project. *(Nobody moves.)* Promise. *(They nod.)*

9. "...a no-show."

Lights change. RACHEL, DARREN, MORRISSEY exit to desks. UNCLE WALT enters from wings.

CHARLIE: And we meant it, too, Uncle Walt... Darren and Rachel—they didn't want to break the promise. They wanted to prove to

Moz... I don't know. That they got it. That the ice wouldn't drag them down. But me—I wanted to go back, wanted to know... what made it so special. And since that day with Darren, Ana's been a no-show. So, was that what she needed? To see Darren again? Books and movies and stuff, there's all that crap about ghosts resolving something—so, if that's... If that's what she needed, why did she come see me?

Without CHARLIE seeing him, UNCLE WALT gives her a knowing look, then exits, off.

10. “Like she was trying to give me a high five.”

Lights change. CHARLIE's room in her house. CHARLIE lies with a notebook in front of her. DARREN sits, tapping on a laptop.

CHARLIE: Don't know that I've ever seen Moz so disappointed.

DARREN: I know.

CHARLIE: How you doing?

DARREN: Good. Rachel's been weird to me.

CHARLIE: Yeah. She's back in super-student mode. Throwing herself into the project and everything.

A moment.

A shiver.

Light tapping, less rain than drums.

CHARLIE: Every time we go there, I think about the Lost.

DARREN: *(Considers.)* She was a good egg. Ana.

ANA enters at her “spot,” in light.

CHARLIE: *(To us.)* I wanted to get him talking. Talking's good, isn't it?

She nods at DARREN. He continues.

DARREN: Smart, too. God, she was smart. Had the best GPA in the fifth grade. I know that doesn't mean much to us now—but she cut her shapes, did her long division, read her Scholastic books from the book fair. That's AP level work when you're a fifth grader. *(Beat.)* We used to play Mario Kart together. That little jerk always used the spiny shell on me when I'd take the lead. Always send me spinning out of control while she sped ahead,

laughing like she wasn't cheating. I mean, she *technically* wasn't, but you get the idea. (*Silence. The tapping increases intensity—a reflection of DARREN's emotional intensity. Then:*) I remember yelling down into the ice. Like a dumbass. Like she could hear me. You're swimming the wrong way, I yelled. Turn around, I yelled. I yelled, hold your breath.... I yelled. (*Beat.*) Her blue, fingerless gloves kept slamming against the ice below me. Like she was waving at me...like she was trying to give me a high five. (*ANA holds a finger to her lips. DARREN calms. Tapping calms.*) I thought it was, like, cursed. The Lake. Cursed, haunted, whatever. When we first learned about the Lost, I thought it was, you know, The Lake's fault. Like something out of a King novel. Like some Indian burial ground would explain it all away. (*Beat.*) Silly, I know. Middle school. But I think that's why I just...went along with it. Being grouped with you. And Rachel.

The tapping stops. The air in the room hangs for a moment; neither CHARLIE nor DARREN seem to notice, lost in thought.

DARREN: (*Looks suddenly at CHARLIE.*) Do you know what happened to your dad out there?

CHARLIE: (*Sputtering.*) But... How—you know about—?

DARREN: Five years, Emerson. Tell me you never wondered about The Lake. Tell me, had you been the right age, you wouldn't have dug around, spent slow summer Saturdays pouring over whatever Mrs. Hix has in the library.

CHARLIE: Well...well, no—no, I didn't. I just... (*Beat.*) I was a four-year-old kid. I barely remember my father. I remember...he had these sunglasses he used to wear—aviators, I think they call them. Shiny gold rims and reflective lenses. He'd hold me, you know, carry me on his shoulders or hold me in front of him. And when he did, all I could see was my own face distorted back at me as I'd reach for... (*Beat.*) He used to laugh. It made me laugh, which made him laugh, and we'd never stop. Used to make Mom so mad. I remember his breath smelled like honey, always slightly sick...slightly sweet. (*Beat.*) But, no, I never thought much about The Lake.

DARREN: You can still see it, you know. The spot on the tree where your dad's car bumper rolled into it, broke off chunks of bark, rested against the bare trunk. Bark never grew back.

CHARLIE: Darren, stop.

DARREN: It's where the ambulance pulled in. Right up to the same tree. Then they got out, wrapped the treeline in yellow tape... they dove down to pull her out.

CHARLIE: This isn't doing anyone any good. Talking isn't—

DARREN holds up his hand—cuts her off. Looks over the audience—to him, we're the surface of The Lake.

DARREN: *(After a pause.)* The yellow tape never got pulled down, just torn in the wind and left lying on the broken blocks along the surface of the ice. The ice melted that spring and... *(Beat.)* Bet the tape is still down there, somewhere. Covered in dirt and sod. A warning to the fish: "Danger. Do not cross."

CHARLIE: *(Affectless.)* Fish can't read.

Hold for a moment—a lighthearted break. CHARLIE and DARREN look at each other. Crack a smile, CHARLIE first—"Did I really just say that?" DARREN exits to desks. ANA crosses downstage—the closest to us she's ever been.

II. "I just want you gone!"

Lights change. CHARLIE stands, crosses to ANA. STUDENTS begin tapping.

CHARLIE: *(To ANA.)* So now you're back, now you're here to... to what? Darren started talking about you, Ana. He seems better. So why are you still here?

ANA: *(Finger to her lips.)* Shhh.

CHARLIE: Screw you, okay? Screw you and all this haunting ghost crap!

ANA acts more panicked. Looks around desperately. Shushes become less ethereal, more human. STUDENTS start a round of shushing, sending CHARLIE into a fury.

CHARLIE: No! No, I won't be quiet! I can yell! I can scream if I want to, okay?!? I don't care anymore, I just want you gone! *(STUDENTS stop shushing.)* I want you out of my room, out of my life!

STUDENTS slowly exit off...one by one... Criss-crossing one another, glaring at CHARLIE like malevolent spirits— They are a stream of bodies flowing around—overtaking—CHARLIE.

ANA: The Grey hears you!

CHARLIE: (*Overlapping ANA's line, repeating ad-libbed approximations and extensions of the lines—she's desperate, clinging to everyone who passes her.*) You know you should just come back, right? You know you can just come back!

ANA: (*Rushes offstage; for CHARLIE, ANA's exit is lost in the shuffle.*) The Grey is coming! They hear you, and the Grey is coming!

CHARLIE: (*Still overlapped and repeated to a crescendo, an explosion.*) Come back!

It's clearly no longer ANA—or the STUDENTS—she's yelling for. Regardless, by this point, the rest of the STUDENTS are completely gone, never to return to the desks.

MRS. E. enters from wings, which cuts CHARLIE's repetition abruptly.

CHARLIE: Oh, God! Mom, you scared me.

MRS. E.: Everything all right?

CHARLIE: I...yeah. Fine. Everything's fine.

MRS. E.: Sleeping? Bad dream?

CHARLIE: (*Reaches out.*) I thought I saw...I guess...yeah.

MRS. E.: (*Hugs her.*) Shhh. It's okay. It's okay. I hear you. (*Hold the hug for a moment, soothing. Then:*) Charlie, have you looked outside? The aurora's back—has been the last few nights.

CHARLIE: (*Looks. After a moment.*) The aurora?

MRS. E.: (*Looks.*) It's so rare to see it this far south.

CHARLIE: The last time was...

MRS. E.: Yes. Fourteen years ago.

CHARLIE: (*Short beat.*) Mom? Where's the musket?

CHARLIE quickly exits to wings. MRS. E. moves to follow when—

12. “Sitting in the corner of my bedroom...”

Lights change. MRS. E. with RACHEL and DARREN, who enter from wings.

RACHEL: ...and you didn't worry when your teenage daughter asked you for a gun?

MRS. E.: (*Sigh.*) No, Rachel, honestly, I didn't. I don't think there's much harm she can do with a non-functioning musket. I trust my daughter—

RACHEL: I really don't think that's the best idea, Miss E. We're teenagers.

MRS. E.: I have to. We're all we have. Look, the damn thing's been sitting in the corner of my bedroom ever since—

RACHEL: So she's gone, and the gun's gone.

MRS. E.: Yes. Any idea where she might have gone?

RACHEL looks at MRS. E. Withering. A moment.

RACHEL: Pretty good idea.

RACHEL exits, off. DARREN lingers.

DARREN: You're right, Mrs. Emerson.

MRS. E.: I'm sorry?

DARREN: You're right to trust your daughter. She knows what she's doing. She needs this. We'll be back.

DARREN lingers another moment, then exits, off. Lights fade on MRS. E., alone.

13. “Tell me you're seeing this...”

Lights change. The Lake. RACHEL and DARREN enter from opposite directions, look at each other expectantly, then around before—

RACHEL: Have you seen—

DARREN: No. You?

RACHEL: No. (*RACHEL looks at her phone. Trains it around The Lake.*) Last time we were here—the pictures that Charlie took—they

never came out right. (*Phone's trained towards UC—on ANA's "spot."*) Can't focus. Just a blue—Darren. Do you see that?

DARREN turns. ANA enters her "spot," in light.

DARREN: See what? I don't see any—

DARREN starts to cross upstage, stops on the Ice. A loud CRACK from the drum—cracks underfoot. RACHEL changes her focus to his feet.

DARREN: (*Staring at ANA.*) —Ana?!? Ana!

RACHEL: (*Grabs for DARREN, pulls him back off the Ice.*) Darren!

Marching drums, distant. Regular. Metronomic. A marching beat we've heard before—"Beat! Beat! Drums!" repeating.

ANA reacts. RACHEL reacts. DARREN doesn't.

RACHEL: Do you hear that?

DARREN: Tell me you're seeing this...

From opposite RACHEL and DARREN, CHARLIE enters, carrying a Civil-War era musket. She approaches the Ice, stops in the center of it, sighs. Looks around. She doesn't see RACHEL and DARREN. Marching beat increases volume—getting closer.

DARREN: Look.

RACHEL: Charlie? Charlie!

CHARLIE drops to one knee. Uses musket to steady herself.

ANA: (*Finger to her lips. To RACHEL and DARREN.*) Shhhh.

THE GREY appear from both wings: CAPTAIN and DRUMMER first, leading a procession of, say, six STUDENTS dressed as confederate soldiers, split between them. The formation is symmetrical, even.

THE GREY should feel like a cross between apparitions and automatons—they move with precision, their focus and momentum unwavering. They are the living memories of an unstoppable enemy.

As they march on, CHARLIE watches them, then raises the butt of the rifle and begins hammering the Ice—to break through it; to break the spirits free; to break open her memories; to break open the past.

The rhythm that CHARLIE hammers into the Ice acts in a cacophonous counterpoint to the marching beat. It increases, in intensity and volume. She becomes savage, wild, as the Ice just. Won't. Break.

DARREN takes a step towards CHARLIE; RACHEL won't let go of him. Trains the phone on CHARLIE: Click. Click.

THE GREY mount the stairs on either side of ANA. Ready rifles. THE CAPTAIN straddles the top of the stairs. Raises his saber; in response, THE GREY raise rifles to firing positions.

DRUMMER strikes a drumroll. CHARLIE raises the musket and—

ANA: The Grey hears you.

—CHARLIE strikes. DRUMROLL CRACKS.

BLACKOUT.

14: INTERSTITIAL 3: “America” by Walt Whitman

IN DARKNESS, we hear the wax cylinder recording of Walt Whitman reading America. An MP3 download is available at theatrefolk.com.

America.

*Centre of equal daughters, equal sons,
All, all alike endear'd, grown, ungrown, young or old,
Strong, ample, fair, enduring, capable, rich,
Perennial with the Earth, with Freedom, Law and Love...*

15. “Let me hold on to you.”

Lights change. CHARLIE appears—possibly in ANA's “spot.” UNCLE WALT is downstage.

CHARLIE: Cold.

UNCLE WALT: I should think so.



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