

# WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

*By*

*Hannah Lee DeFrates*

# WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

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## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

Hello beautiful star!

I see you have found my little fourth floor stairwell, and I'm so happy you have decided to tell this story. Before you begin, I would like to offer a few notes to help guide you as you undertake this big adventure.

### **A note on ages:**

To the director...

The timeline of this story is roughly seventeen years. With each scene comes a passage of time. The visual and technical choices of this are up to you and your team. When it comes to casting, though, I suggest you cast actors close to the final ages of the characters.

To the actors...

Even when the characters are at their youngest, please do not try to "act like children" or play down to them. They are not caricatures, rather, they exist in memories as they are "today." Approach them as you would any other human with hopes and dreams and fears.

### **A note on structural integrity:**

Now, I am well aware that it is not typical for high-rises to have windows in their stairwells, but I don't care about what's typical. This stairwell has a window. It's more surreal that way.

### **One more note:**

It is mentioned late in the play that the plague doctor is a cultural symbol of the society where our protagonists live. Therefore, every one of them owns a plague mask and cloak. Do with that information what you will. That is all the wisdom I can offer in this moment. I wish you all the best with your production of *Where the Lost Children Play*. I know you will be wonderful.

Welcome to Willowhaven.

Merde. And this was good,

*Hannah Lee DeFrates*

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

CAST: 4 Women, 1 Man

WILLOW female-presenting, self-proclaimed Peter Pan; Daff's older sister

POPPY female-presenting, the Wendy to Willow's Peter; Violet's older sister

CHRYS female-presenting, sentimental and superstitious for good reason

VIOLET female-presenting, innocent and sarcastic; wise beyond her years

DAFF male-presenting, kind of a himbo

TIME: Memories over 17 years in a century undefined

PLACE: The fourth floor stairwell in the Order of Contagion

# WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

## PROLOGUE

*Yesterday. Morning. A stairwell. Gentle rain hits a small window above the landing. POPPY (32) sits on the stairs, gazing at what appears to be a note in her hand. WILLOW (32) appears behind her, in a space of her own.*

**WILLOW.** Dear Poppy, I suppose you want an explanation. But I don't have all the answers, and it wouldn't change anything anyway. Yes, there were things I didn't tell you. Believe me, I wanted to, but I couldn't risk putting you or the others in danger. Nope. I swore to protect *my* Wendy Darling to the day I die. And while we're on the subject... J.M Barrie, literary genius, he said "to die will be an awfully big adventure." I always hated that line... What am I trying to say? I guess... Peter Pan left behind a shadow, and likewise. I am in the rain, and the stars, and the air. Reach out. Touch me. I am also reaching, holding you by the transitive property. *(Poppy and Willow reach for each other.)* All my love, forever and Neverland. Willow. *(Long pause.)*

**POPPY.** In reality, you never said these words. They came from me. *(Ah. We were mistaken. It is no note, just an old photograph. Willow leaves.)* Life isn't a fucking storybook, Poppy. In real life, no one leaves a note with all the loose ends and strings attached tied up in a nice little bow. They never say the things that could have been said. They can't. That would defeat the purpose. In reality, you're lost. And I'm here, staring at a photograph, and wishing it would speak back. I sound crazy. But maybe if

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I look hard enough, I'll find you... *(Poppy takes a moment before getting up, turning back time as she exits.)*

### ACT ONE

#### SCENE 1

*Seventeen years ago. The fourth floor stairwell in a high-rise. It's simple and empty, save for a wickless citronella candle on the windowsill. Willow (15) throws open the door.*

**WILLOW.** Ta-da! *(She struts into the stairwell, followed by Poppy (15), DAFF (9), CHRYS (8), and VIOLET (6).)*

**CHRYS.** It's a stairwell.

**WILLOW.** I know! Isn't it great?!

**DAFF.** Is this the secret place you were talking about?

**WILLOW.** What part of "Ta-da!" did you not understand?

**CHRYS.** But this isn't a secret place. Everybody knows about the stairs.

**WILLOW.** But nobody uses them.

**CHRYS.** Nobody?

**WILLOW.** Have any of you ever seen a person ever use the stairs ever in your entire life? *(Everyone thinks for a minute.)*

**VIOLET.** We all use the elevator.

**WILLOW.** Bingo. Poppy and I have been coming here for years, and we've never seen anyone.

**POPPY.** It's true. This might be the most secret place in the Order.

**DAFF.** Cool!

**WILLOW.** Well, this is exciting. We should celebrate with like a snack or something. Is anyone hungry? I ask that because I'm hungry and maybe if one of you has a snack, you'll be nice and share with me.

**POPPY.** Do you want me to get you a juice box?

**WILLOW.** Ya! This is why you're my favorite.

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**VIOLET.** Poppy, can I have one too?

**DAFF.** Me too please!

**POPPY.** I see what's happening here. Chrys, do you want juice?

**CHRYS.** If you have one, yes please.

**POPPY.** Okay. Five juice boxes. Be right back. *(She exits in pursuit of juice.)*

**DAFF.** This place is kinda really cool. Echo! Echo, echo.

**VIOLET.** It doesn't have an echo. It just makes your voice a little louder.

**DAFF.** You have no proof.

**VIOLET.** Science...

**DAFF.** ...is a... four, five... six... seven letter word. *(Poppy returns with a handful of juice boxes. She passes them out, and the others thank her.)*

So, what do we want to play?

**VIOLET.** Can we play tag?

**WILLOW.** Classic! Who wants to be "it"?

**POPPY.** Nose goes! *(Everyone scrambles to touch their own nose.)* Looks like it's you Willow. Womp-womp!

**WILLOW.** Bleh! I don't like being "it."

**CHRYS.** Snap likes being "it." I could go see if he wants to play. *(Poppy and Willow exchange a look.)*

**WILLOW.** Actually... he can't play.

**CHRYS.** Why not?

**WILLOW.** 'Cause we're in a secret hideout and it's a secret.

**CHRYS.** Isn't that mean?

**WILLOW.** Not when you're a club.

**CHRYS.** But we're not a club. Are we?

**WILLOW.** Yeah we are.

**CHRYS.** But clubs do stuff... like special stuff. We don't do anything like that.

**WILLOW.** We do now, because now we're all together here, we will have what all good clubs have.

**DAFF.** What?

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**WILLOW.** A ceremony.

**VIOLET.** Ooh!

**WILLOW.** Uh huh. A secret ceremony. *(Willow takes the unlit candle off the windowsill and places it on the floor, inviting her friends to join her in sitting around it.)* I now call the Council of Willowhaven to be in session.

**CHRYS.** Willowhaven?

**DAFF.** *(Amused.)* You named it after yourself?

**WILLOW.** Well yeah.

**CHRYS.** That's not fair.

**WILLOW.** It is. I found this cool place for us and claimed it in my name.

**VIOLET.** Like an explorer!

**WILLOW.** Exactly! I'm an explorer. And this stairwell is ours now, because I said so. You're welcome. Okay then. I now call the Council of Willowhaven to be in session for the very first time. *(She nudges Poppy to continue.)*

**POPPY.** Uh... We five in attendance are gathered here in unity, and gathered are we in honor of the one who did establish our sanctuary and give it her name. We raise a drink to the noble Willow. *(She raises her juice box and the others follow suit. Willow smirks at Poppy. Poppy smirks back. Everyone takes a sip from their juice. There is a beat where everyone just kind of sits there and stares at each other.)*

**CHRYS.** Is that it?

**WILLOW.** *(Improvising.)* Not yet. Now we all have to put two fingers on the ground around the candle like so. *(She demonstrates.)*

**VIOLET.** That looks like a star.

**CHRYS.** Ooh yeah!

**WILLOW.** Okay. Then make a star. And then... We close our eyes and make a wish. But in your head, not out loud, or it won't come true.

**POPPY.** Then, when you're done, you can open your eyes and say...

**WILLOW.** Merde! *(Poppy laughs.)*

**VIOLET.** Merde?

**DAFF.** Merde.



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**CHRYS.** Merde.

**VIOLET.** What does that mean? *(Poppy and Willow laugh.)* Poppy, what does it mean?

**DAFF.** I think it means “good luck.” I think I read that somewhere.

**VIOLET.** Oh!

**WILLOW.** Sure. Let’s go with that. *(She winks at Poppy, who smiles at the ground.)*

**POPPY.** Merde... And this was good.

**WILLOW.** There we have it. Ceremony! *(She pokes Chrys’ shoulder.)*  
Also, tag! You’re it! *(Chrys gasps and everyone scrambles away.)*

**CHRYS.** No fair! *(She jumps up and chases Daff up the stairs.)*

### SCENE 2

*Sixteen years and five months ago. Perhaps festive music can be heard from somewhere beyond the stairwell. Willow (16) and Poppy (16) sit on the stairs as Willow tries to convince Poppy to try a questionable concoction.*

**POPPY.** No.

**WILLOW.** Come on. It’s good.

**POPPY.** I literally just saw you dip a hot dog in maple syrup. I don’t trust you.

**WILLOW.** Please? *(Poppy shakes her head.)* Truth or dare?

**POPPY.** Truth.

**WILLOW.** You were supposed to say “dare.”

**POPPY.** Well, I didn’t.

**WILLOW.** Fine. Then, I *truth* you to eat it.

**POPPY.** That’s not how that works.

**WILLOW.** Can it be for today though?

**POPPY.** No way.

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**WILLOW.** It's just popcorn and honey mustard. It's not like it's rat poison.

**POPPY.** Might as well be. Who puts honey mustard on corn?

**WILLOW.** I put honey mustard on everything. *(Poppy makes a face.)* Come on. You owe me.

**POPPY.** No I don't. *(Willow's facial expression suggests otherwise.)* That was two years ago!

**WILLOW.** And it was a mighty big favor. One might even say I saved your life.

**POPPY.** No one says that.

**WILLOW.** They should. If I hadn't stepped in, you would've had to go to Founder's Ball with Snap.

**POPPY.** Ugh.

**WILLOW.** You know I'm right. *(Beat.)*

**POPPY.** Fine. I'll eat your gross concoction. But because I want to, not for any other reason. *(Poppy ingests some of Willow's "gross concoction" as Willow gloats.)*

**WILLOW.** Eh?

**POPPY.** It's not disgusting.

**WILLOW.** Score!

**POPPY.** But it's not— *(Enter Daff (10), Chrys (9), and Violet (7).)*

**WILLOW.** Hey guys!

**DAFF/VIOLET/CHRYS.** *(Adlib.)* Hi!

**POPPY.** Did you thank Dr. Hyacinth for taking you to the Festival?

**DAFF/VIOLET/CHRYS.** Yes.

**WILLOW.** Did you guys have fun?

**DAFF/VIOLET/CHRYS.** *(Adlib.)* Yeah!

**WILLOW.** What kind of fun stuff did you do? *(Adlib. Daff, Violet, and Chrys excitedly talk over each other as each speaks of their own experience at the Festival, ending with...)*

**VIOLET.** And we just saw the puppet show.

**WILLOW.** Which one?

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**VIOLET.** The one where Founder Rosanna escapes the Garden.

**WILLOW.** Classic. The Garden is such a fascinating concept. Utterly horrifying, but kinda interesting.

**CHRYS.** Is it real?

**WILLOW.** What?

**POPPY.** The Garden? No.

**CHRYS.** How do you know?

**WILLOW.** Vampires don't exist.

**CHRYS.** Oh. But the puppeteer said people from the Garden are not vampires. They're just scary people.

**POPPY.** Okay, but there's no way there's really a coven of women out there who do nothing but sing nursery rhymes, pick flowers, and drink blood. It's ridiculous.

**CHRYS.** But what about the puppet show and the Founders and history—

**VIOLET.** Yeah. Why would the Order lie to us? *(Willow shrugs.)*

**WILLOW.** So we don't try to leave.

**POPPY.** As if there's anything we need out there that we don't already have in here.

**CHRYS.** My brother says there's a place out there called "Freedom."

**POPPY.** That's not a place.

**CHRYS.** But—

**VIOLET.** Why doesn't anyone ever go out there?

**POPPY.** We don't need to. And besides, the Garden's a myth, but there are other things out there that are much worse.

**VIOLET.** Like what?

**CHRYS.** Hyacinth says there's "chaos" in the air outside and that opening the door lets order out and chaos in. *(Daff and Violet look to their respective older siblings for elaboration on Chrys's comment, but Poppy shakes her head and continues.)*

**POPPY.** There are things like poverty, and war—

**VIOLET.** The card game?

**POPPY.** No.

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**WILLOW.** Real war is basically when a bunch of people are forced to attack a bunch of other people, so they kill each other and destroy each other's stuff.

**VIOLET.** Does the team that kills the most people win?

**POPPY.** Not necessarily.

**DAFF.** Are there points for destroying things?

**POPPY.** Nope.

**CHRYS.** Then how does it stop?

**WILLOW.** Eventually someone decides they don't want to do it anymore, and then everyone goes home.

**DAFF.** That's dumb. Why do they attack each other in the first place?

**POPPY.** Because they're told they hate each other.

**DAFF.** Why?

**POPPY.** They make up reasons.

**CHRYS.** I don't like that.

**DAFF.** Me neither.

**WILLOW.** Good thing we don't have to worry about that. *(Beat.)*

Everyone good to start the Ceremony now? *(The others nod and place the candle in position.)*

### SCENE 3

*Sixteen years ago. The five are lounging in the stairwell, listening to Willow (16) telling a story, and at the same time doing their own thing.*

**WILLOW.** ...Do I want a lizard? Yes. Of course I do. Who doesn't? But! I didn't want that guy's lizard. And I didn't think he really had one anyway. I thought he was being... gross, if you know what I mean.

**VIOLET.** I don't know what you mean.

**WILLOW.** You don't wanna know.

**VIOLET.** Yeah I do.

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**WILLOW.** (*Ignoring her.*) But then, he reaches into his pocket and pulls out a real, live, lizard. And that was my time to go, so I started to walk away, and I see this *thing* fly past me. He threw the lizard. He threw the lizard at me!

**CHRYS.** What the crap?

**DAFF.** Was it okay?

**WILLOW.** Yeah. It landed on its feet and waddled back to the guy. And I was like “Missed me!” and I sprinted for the elevator and I was like... (*She mimes impatiently jamming the elevator button.*) And finally it opened and I made it before he could do anything else, and now I’m here, and I’m still alive... and that is why we don’t go down to the second floor without a buddy. (*Beat. Daff goes over to the railing.*)

**DAFF.** What would happen if someone slid down this thing? Do you think it would be a fun ride?

**WILLOW.** You never know unless you try.

**DAFF.** Dare me?

**CHRYS.** No! You could get hurt.

**DAFF.** Or I could go for a fun ride. (*He climbs onto the railing.*)

**CHRYS.** Daff! (*But it’s too late. He’s already sliding down the banister.*)

**DAFF.** Weee!!! (*He lands on his feet at the bottom.*)

**WILLOW.** How was it?

**DAFF.** I 100 percent died.

**POPPY.** You look remarkably similar to when you were alive.

**DAFF.** So I still look good.

**VIOLET.** Boooo!!! (*Daff shoots her a look. Violet smiles innocently.*)

That’s what ghosts say. Right?

**DAFF.** Boooo! I am the ghost of Daff, and I’m haunting you! Booooooo!

**WILLOW.** If I was a ghost, I’d haunt the heck out of you guys. No lie. Follow you around and like pour water on your heads. Woooo! Phantom of the Sop-era!

**DAFF.** Nice.

**VIOLET.** What if we’re actually all ghosts right now?

**CHRYS.** We’re not.

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**VIOLET.** But how would we know? What if we're all ghosts and we don't know it?

**WILLOW.** The only way to know for sure is to see if you can walk through a wall. All ghosts can walk through walls. It's a fact.

**VIOLET.** Really?

**WILLOW.** Yup.

**DAFF.** I knew that.

**CHRYS.** How?

**DAFF.** Willow teaches me a lot of weird stuff.

**WILLOW.** Yeah I do! *(They high-five. Violet stands.)*

**VIOLET.** So if I...

**POPPY.** Okay! Are we ready for the ceremony?

**VIOLET.** Okay. *(Violet sits back down.)*

**WILLOW.** Poppy, can you get the juice?

**POPPY.** Why do I always have to get it?

**WILLOW.** As juice queen, it is your royal duty to your people.

**POPPY.** Well when you put it that way... *(She smiles.)* Please don't run into any walls while I'm gone.

**WILLOW.** We'll wait till you're back to do that.

**POPPY.** Gee thanks. *(Poppy exits. Willow looks down at her watch.)*

**WILLOW.** How long do we think it will take her?

**CHRYS.** Two minutes.

**WILLOW.** Hm. Daff?

**DAFF.** One minute, 27 seconds, and 46 milliseconds. But why juice every time? Why not... uh...

**WILLOW.** Go on. I demand you articulate what is better than a juice box. *(Daff cannot find an answer.)* I rest my case. Violet? *(Violet doesn't hear her.)* Vi. Violet. *(Violet looks up from her book.)*

**VIOLET.** Huh?

**WILLOW.** We're timing Poppy. Any guesses?

**VIOLET.** Oh sorry! Um... one minute and 31 seconds.

**WILLOW.** O-kay! Whatcha reading? *(Violet flashes the cover.)* Mm *Charlotte's Web.* "Some pig." *(Daff makes a pig noise and Chrys laughs.)* Do you like it?

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**VIOLET.** Yeah. It's not my favorite, but it's good.

**WILLOW.** Do you have a favorite?

**VIOLET.** Yeah. *Alice in Wonderland.*

**CHRYS.** I love that one!

**DAFF.** Me too.

**WILLOW.** Gotcha. My favorite is *Peter Pan.* (*Daff groans.*)

**CHRYS.** What's wrong with *Peter Pan*?

**DAFF.** First of all, she reads it every night.

**VIOLET.** So?

**DAFF.** Out loud!

**WILLOW.** Sharing is caring! Your next point?

**DAFF.** It's kinda... It's just not really my thing.

**WILLOW.** What?! But what about all the magic? And adventures! And Neverland! And never growing up!

**DAFF.** Maybe I want to grow up.

**WILLOW.** You kidding me?

**DAFF.** Being a kid sucks.

**WILLOW.** No it doesn't.

**DAFF.** Yeah it does. Kids can't do anything.

**WILLOW.** Well, in Neverland you can go on adventures with the Lost Boys... Except if it was up to me, I'd make them lost girls, 'cause boys suck.

**VIOLET.** Yeah! (*Poppy returns with juice boxes.*)

**WILLOW.** One minute, 57 seconds, and 65 milliseconds.

**POPPY.** Two seconds better than my last time. What are we talking about?

**VIOLET.** "Boys suck."

**POPPY.** Ah. Yes they do. Sorry Daff.

**DAFF.** Nah. We suck.

**CHRYS.** That's not true! My brother's a boy... (*Poppy and Willow exchange a look, but don't say anything.*)

**DAFF.** Your brother sucks. (*Poppy stifles a laugh.*)

**CHRYS.** Nuh uh! (*She looks to Poppy and Willow for support.*)

**POPPY.** Sorry Chrys. I don't make the rules...

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**CHRYS.** That's mean.

**POPPY.** Come on Chrys.

**CHRYS.** You guys are being mean.

**DAFF.** Sorry. I didn't mean it.

**WILLOW.** Sorry.

**CHRYS.** Okay.

**WILLOW.** (*Changing the subject.*) Ooh! Guys! I know it's like months away, but Halloween; *Peter Pan* theme. Who's in?

**POPPY.** Only if I can be Wendy.

**WILLOW.** I wouldn't have wanted it any other way.

**POPPY.** Cool.

**WILLOW.** And I'm Peter Pan. Obviously.

**POPPY.** Clearly. What about Daff?

**WILLOW.** Captain Hook.

**DAFF.** No way!

**WILLOW.** Why not? You said you didn't like Peter Pan, so...

**DAFF.** But I don't wanna be the bad guy.

**POPPY.** Well I don't think Captain Hook sees himself as the bad guy.

(*Setting the scene.*) He's a valiant gentleman setting out to avenge a wrong and take back what's rightfully his.

**DAFF.** Interesting. I never thought about it that way.

**WILLOW.** So...

**DAFF.** Fine. But I get a sword.

**WILLOW.** Aye aye captain.

**CHRYS.** What would I be?

**POPPY.** Tinkerbell.

**WILLOW.** One hundred percent.

**CHRYS.** Awww! Yay!

**DAFF.** Wait. Did you guys hear about the time Tinkerbell drank a gallon of water?

**CHRYS.** What?

**DAFF.** She peed 'er pants.

**POPPY.** Oh.

**WILLOW.** Good one.



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**DAFF.** Get it?

**POPPY.** No, I got it. Let's just... Who would Violet be?

**WILLOW.** Ooh... She could be a Lost Boy or a pirate or—

**DAFF.** The dog.

**VIOLET.** No!

**DAFF.** And you could wear a cute little bonnet.

**VIOLET.** No.

**POPPY.** Ooh. What about the mermaid?

**VIOLET.** I wanna be the crocodile so I can attack Daff.

**POPPY.** Solid logic.

**DAFF.** What? Hey! Why's everyone coming after me?

**WILLOW.** Karma?

**DAFF.** For what?

**POPPY.** Your awful puns.

**CHRYS.** No! *I don't think your puns are awful, Daff. I think Poppy meant to say awful-ly good.*

**DAFF.** Thanks Chrys.

**VIOLET.** No they're pretty bad.

**WILLOW.** Get 'im Croc! *(Violet feeds into the metaphor, moving toward Daff all crocodile-like.)*

**DAFF.** Not fair! It's four against one!

**CHRYS.** I'll protect you with my fairy magic.

**WILLOW.** Traitor!

**DAFF.** Plot twist! Ha!

**VIOLET.** Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock... Tag. You're it.

**DAFF.** Oh! *(The girls scatter.)* Oh it's on! *(He jumps up and begins to chase the others.)*

### SCENE 4

*Fifteen years ago. Poppy (17) sits alone in the stairs, running her fingers through her hair. Enter Willow (17).*

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**WILLOW.** (*à la Wendy Darling.*) Girl, why are you crying?

**POPPY.** That's my line. And I'm not crying. (*Maybe she is. Maybe she isn't.*)

**WILLOW.** What's up?

**POPPY.** Snapdragon stopped by this afternoon, spouting a whole lot of nonsense. He wanted me to join a "book club."

**WILLOW.** Yeah. He tried to give me the spiel. You wanna know how I shut that down?

**POPPY.** Hm?

**WILLOW.** Okay! You be Snap. You be Snap and I'll be me. Ready? Action!

**POPPY.** (*Mocking him.*) I am the voice of change and freedom! Life is meaningless...

**WILLOW.** Now ask me to join your book club.

**POPPY.** Hey, join my anarchist group. Oops, I meant "book club." We're meeting in the Laundry Room at 8.

**WILLOW.** "Sorry Snap, but I'm already in a book club... And it's just me reading *Peter Pan* out loud in my living room and it happens at whatever time I feel like. And right now that appears to be at-the-exact-time-as-your-meeting-o'clock. Bummer." And then I shut the door in his face.

**POPPY.** I wish I had your audacity.

**WILLOW.** Did he really say that? "Life is meaningless"?

**POPPY.** He did. Said every day here is the same and so life has no point.

**WILLOW.** What an idiot.

**POPPY.** He's going to get himself washed, just like his dad. And then Chrys will lose her brother too.

**WILLOW.** That's sucky. What is he even trying to do? That's a real question. I didn't let him explain.

**POPPY.** I don't know. He wants to... like... overthrow the Order or leave or something. He and his army of teenagers... It's not fair what he's going to do to Chrys. It's not fair. I would never put Violet in danger like that. I just do not know what his problem is.

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**WILLOW.** Do you think he's gonna tell her about the... "book club"?

**POPPY.** I made him promise not to get her involved. But I don't trust him. It's only been like two years since their dad's little uprising. The Order hasn't forgotten. There are going to be Officials swarming their apartment the moment he starts his stupid meeting. She'll be in the wrong place at the wrong time. And what if they decide to arrest her too, get rid of the whole family, kill two birds with one stone?

**WILLOW.** When is the meeting? Thursday? What if we had a spontaneous little sleepover at my place that night?

**POPPY.** Then they'd definitely think she was part of Snap's plan, and all of us too. We can't risk it.

**WILLOW.** You're right... Snitches get stitches, but we *could* tell Hyacinth.

**POPPY.** Their stepmom? She already knows.

**WILLOW.** Oh. Well shit.

**POPPY.** I'm scared, Willow. What would we do if they took her?

**WILLOW.** They won't. Here: When she comes over on Thursday, I'll make a big lunch, and then we'll play the craziest game of tag ever. That should tire her out. Then she'll be asleep by the time Snap tries to overthrow the government.

**POPPY.** I guess. I wish there was more we could do.

**WILLOW.** I mean, if worst comes to worst, one of us could distract... pull the fire alarm, or... I think there probably is a way to leave the Order if someone really wanted to.

**POPPY.** There isn't.

**WILLOW.** There might be.

**POPPY.** Don't say that out loud!

**WILLOW.** Okay! (*Poppy stares past Willow.*)

**POPPY.** Is that something you want to do? Leave?

**WILLOW.** Not particularly. I'm just saying it's not impossible. If we ever had to... But for now, I like my pointless, day-to-day routine.

**POPPY.** Me too. (*Willow puts her arm around Poppy.*)

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**WILLOW.** Our life might be meaningless, but it means a whole lot to me.

### **SCENE 5**

*Fourteen years ago. Violet (9), Chrys (11), Daff (12), and Willow (18) sit on the landing, having a picnic. Willow notices the book Violet has with her.*

**WILLOW.** Is that *Peter Pan*?

**VIOLET.** No.

**DAFF.** You're obsessed.

**WILLOW.** Who? Me?

**CHRYS.** No. That's what I thought it was too. (*Willow peers at the cover of Violet's book.*)

**WILLOW.** Oh. *The Little Prince*.

**VIOLET.** I like it.

**WILLOW.** I never said I didn't.

**CHRYS.** What's it about?

**WILLOW.** It's like French *Peter Pan*.

**VIOLET.** Um... not really.

**WILLOW.** No. I'm right; Think about it. It's a little boy in a green suit, who lives in a magical land in the sky and goes on adventures.

**VIOLET.** Well I guess...

**WILLOW.** Only he's much lamer, 'cause instead of lost boys, mermaids, and fairies; he hangs out with a flower, a bunch of boring old men, and a fox. And I think there was a lamplighter or something?

**VIOLET.** Yeah.

**CHRYS.** And what kind of adventures do they go on?

**VIOLET.** He goes to different planets.

**CHRYS.** Oooh!

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**WILLOW.** Yeah, but when he gets there, he mainly just sits there and talks.

**CHRYS.** About what? (*Willow shrugs.*)

**DAFF.** Do they talk back? The fox and the flower?

**VIOLET.** Yeah. They're his friends.

**DAFF.** And what about the lamp?

**VIOLET.** *Lamplighter*. Not lamp. That would be silly.

**DAFF.** But a flower is not. Gotcha. (*Violet scrunches up her nose at him.*)

**CHRYS.** What does he do?

**WILLOW.** The lamplighter? Basically it's this guy who turns on the lights and then turns them off. And then turns on the lights. And then turns them off. Over and over and over again every single day.

**CHRYS.** For forever?

**WILLOW.** I think so.

**DAFF.** Wow.

**CHRYS.** What?

**DAFF.** That just sounds like a lot of work for nothing. A forever of, well, nothing.

**CHRYS.** That's sad.

**DAFF.** Yeah.

**VIOLET.** That kinda sounds like Poppy's job.

**WILLOW.** Hey now. Your sister works really hard to keep you safe and happy.

**VIOLET.** I know. I'm sorry.

**WILLOW.** Nothing to be sorry about. Just reminding you.

**CHRYS.** Okay. This is cool and all, but it doesn't really sound like *Peter Pan* to me.

**WILLOW.** Yeah it does. Just a lamer version.

**CHRYS.** But the thing that really makes Peter Pan *Peter Pan* is that he doesn't grow up.

**DAFF.** Yeah. Does the Little Prince live in... *Le Neverlande*?

**WILLOW.** I mean he technically never grows up.

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**CHRYS.** “Technically?”

**DAFF.** Yeah. I don’t like the sound of that.

**VIOLET.** Um.

**WILLOW.** You can’t tell me I’m wrong.

**CHRYS.** Wait, what happens?

**VIOLET.** He... gets bitten by a snake...

**CHRYS.** Oh! Ew!

**VIOLET.** ...and dies.

**DAFF.** No! That’s awful!

**CHRYS.** That’s so sad.

**DAFF.** This is a kid’s book?

**VIOLET.** It’s kind of an everybody book.

**CHRYS.** Sounds like a nobody book to me.

**VIOLET.** It’s actually really pretty.

**DAFF.** Ooh snakebite. Pretty.

**VIOLET.** No! It’s written like poems.

**CHRYS.** I still don’t think I want to read it.

**DAFF.** Me neither.

**CHRYS.** I don’t like stories where someone dies at the end.

**DAFF.** Me neither.

**WILLOW.** Yeah no.

**VIOLET.** But he has to.

**CHRYS.** What do you mean?

**VIOLET.** It’s the only way to get home.

**CHRYS.** I don’t get it.

**VIOLET.** He wants to go home, and when he dies, he goes home. To the stars.

**CHRYS.** Is that what happens when you—

**WILLOW.** (*Shutting that down.*) Alrighty! So... After examining the evidence, a decision was made... And I was right. The Little Prince really is just Peter Pan’s boring, French step-cousin.

**VIOLET.** Uh...

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**WILLOW.** If you close your eyes and squint.

**VIOLET.** Okay. *(Poppy enters wearing a plague doctor mask and cloak. She shoves the mask in her purse as she joins the group.)*

**WILLOW.** Hello!

**VIOLET.** Poppy!

**POPPY.** Hi guys! What have you been up to?

**WILLOW.** A friendly debate, which I won.

**VIOLET.** Debatable...

**WILLOW.** And I mean, we're obviously having a picnic. Saved you a sandwich. *(She passes a plate to Poppy, who examines it.)*

**POPPY.** Thanks. What kind?

**WILLOW.** It's a "whatever I had in my fridge surprise."

**POPPY.** Should not have asked. *(Poppy takes a seat next to Daff.)*

**DAFF.** We've decided you're the lamplighter.

**WILLOW.** They decided.

**POPPY.** I'm a what?

**VIOLET.** Lamplighter. From *The Little Prince*.

**POPPY.** I love that book.

**WILLOW.** It's a choice. I'll give you that.

**POPPY.** So, *lamplighter*. I'm surprised you didn't call me a "rumped field poppy." *(The kiddos giggle.)*

**WILLOW.** Don't give them ideas.

**POPPY.** I'm just saying, it's a low-hanging insult. It's literally right in the book. Thank you for not going there.

**WILLOW.** We would never!

**VIOLET.** But it wasn't an insult. I like the lamplighter. He's important.

**WILLOW.** Well I don't care what y'all say, you're a rose in my eyes.

**POPPY.** I don't want to be the rose. The rose is a bitch. *(Chrys gasps at Poppy's profanity.)*

**DAFF.** You said a bad word!

**POPPY.** *(Teasing.)* Is that really what you think of me?

**WILLOW.** Only in the sense that you're beautiful and perfect.

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**POPPY.** No... I think I'd rather be the lamplighter.

**WILLOW.** Really?

**POPPY.** Vi's right. He's important. If he doesn't light the lamp, the planet sits there in the dark forever.

**WILLOW.** Okay. I can't argue with that.

**POPPY.** For someone who doesn't like this book, you seem to know a lot about it.

**WILLOW.** Again, I never said I didn't like it. I just think that it would suck to wait your whole life for Peter Pan to show up, just to have it be his sickly French cousin from space. Like... *(Poppy mouths "What?!" Willow then proceeds to act out what might just be the worst crossover ever.)*

"Boy why are you crying?" "I don't know how to draw a sheep." "Peter?" "Non. Tis I, le petit prince. Hon hon hon! *Buongiorno!*" "Oh." "And I've come to take you to my magical home in the sky. Hold up. Let me just get my magical fairy dust... *(She reaches for something in the picnic basket.)* ...Just kidding! It's a snake! *(Willow throws a twisted up napkin at the kids, who probably shriek until they realize it's just a napkin. Willow then pretends to die a gruesome death.)* Blegh!!!" The end!

**POPPY.** That's an interesting take.

**WILLOW.** Are you gonna look at me and tell me I'm wrong?

**POPPY.** No... Nope. *(Poppy checks her watch.)* Ooh. *(Poppy begins to speed eat her sandwich.)*

**WILLOW.** Calm down. You've got like 45 minutes.

**POPPY.** Yeah. But I need to get some things done before I get back. So thank you for the sandwich and the show...

**WILLOW.** Any time. Any time. But hey. *(Willow pulls Poppy aside. Meanwhile, the kiddos start playing "The Pen Game" with a spoon.)*

Everything okay?

**POPPY.** Yeah fine. Why?

**WILLOW.** 'Cause you look... and I mean this in the nicest way possible, but you look like sh... merde.



## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**POPPY.** Oh. I... It's the job. Sometimes it really does feel like I'm the Lamplighter, I guess. *(Poppy shrugs.)* But what can ya do?

**WILLOW.** I think it might be better if you think of the job as a duty... 'cause "duty" is a funny word. *(Poppy laughs.)* There it is. I like it when you smile.

**POPPY.** I like it when ridiculous things come out of your mouth.

**WILLOW.** Then it's a good thing I've never planned a word I've said in my life. *(Meanwhile...)*

**DAFF.** I don't get it!

**VIOLET.** Chrys. You try. *(Violet passes the spoon to Chrys.)*

**CHRYS.** Okay. I can play the spoon game. I can play the spoon game. Can you play the spoon game?

**DAFF.** I don't know! Maybe? *(Violet passes him the spoon.)* I can play the spoon game. I can play the spoon game. Can you play the spoon game? Did I do it?

**VIOLET.** Nope. *(Chrys and Violet giggle.)*

**DAFF.** What?

**VIOLET.** Daff. It's okay.

**DAFF.** No it's not. I have to get this.

**VIOLET.** Okay! Watch again. Okay? *(She notices Poppy has pulled her mask back out of her purse and started to put it back on.)*

**VIOLET.** Wait. Is Poppy leaving? Bye Poppy!

**POPPY.** Bye Vi.

**DAFF.** Later Lamplighter!

**POPPY.** Yup. Off to light some lamps, or whatever.

**WILLOW.** You do that. But for the record, you'll always be Wendy Darling to me.

**POPPY.** Did you just call me "darling?" *(Willow smirks. Poppy smiles back, before turning to go.)*

WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**SCENE 6**

*Thirteen years ago. Daff (13), Violet (10), and Chrys (12) scramble up the stairs. Poppy (19) calls after them.*

**POPPY.** I'll meet you guys up there in a bit, okay? *(She turns to Willow.)*  
Hey, do you have a minute?

**WILLOW.** Not really. There's so much I need to do right now. Gotta practically rearrange my whole apartment. And cook dinner. Gosh! Gotta figure out what I'm going to make for dinner. I should've started earlier but Chrys was acting weird and my head's been all over the place—

**POPPY.** Deep breath.

**WILLOW.** No time. *(She starts toward the door to the fourth floor.)*  
Maybe if I move her into my room, and I sleep in the living room... Then, I'll need to...

**POPPY.** Willow.

**WILLOW.** Sorry. Thinking out loud...

**POPPY.** You're fine. Is Chrys moving into your apartment?

**WILLOW.** I'm going to ask her tonight. She stayed with us last night—

**POPPY.** I know. But—

**WILLOW.** But what?

**POPPY.** Are you sure you can handle this right now? I mean with your daycare and Daff and yourself—

**WILLOW.** Uh—

**POPPY.** I'm just saying, that's a lot—

**WILLOW.** I know!

**POPPY.** Willow—

**WILLOW.** But she... She can't live by herself. She's twelve!

**POPPY.** I know that but you need to take a minute to just—

**WILLOW.** I can't do that! I have to—

**POPPY.** Look I trust you, but you are in so over your head—

**WILLOW.** I... It's not like there's any other choice...

**POPPY.** What about me?

**WILLOW.** What?

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**POPPY.** She can stay with me and Violet.

**WILLOW.** I'm sorry. *You want to take Chrys in?*

**POPPY.** I don't see a problem.

**WILLOW.** I can't help but notice that the two of you don't always...  
*(Poppy gives her a look that says "'Don't always' what?")* Get along.

**POPPY.** It's not my fault her brother was a dick. *(Beat.)* I'm sorry. That was insensitive.

**WILLOW.** No he was. But this is the rest of her life. This is serious.

**POPPY.** I am being serious. I have the space. There's an extra bed in Vi's room, and she and Vi are best friends anyway...

**WILLOW.** Are you sure?

**POPPY.** Yeah.

**WILLOW.** Okay. Thank you.

**POPPY.** Of course. *(The two stand there in silence for a beat or two.)*  
There's also something else.

**WILLOW.** What?

**POPPY.** Chrys came to me earlier, and uh... she told me something really disturbing.

**WILLOW.** Oh gosh. What?

**POPPY.** Apparently last night, before the Officials came, *Spyacinth* told her about what happens in the Laundry Room.

**WILLOW.** You're kidding me. For real?

**POPPY.** You can't repeat this... *(She whispers the rumor in Willow's ear.)*

**WILLOW.** That's fucking disgusting! Ugh! *(Willow tries to process the awful information.)* So that's how they kill you down there?

**POPPY.** Apparently.

**WILLOW.** Wow.

**POPPY.** Yeah. Listen, I don't know what to do with that information. There's nothing we really can do... but it's important that we both know. *(Willow has a moment of frustration.)*

**WILLOW.** How did we not suspect anything?

**POPPY.** What? That Chrys' stepmom was an Official spy? *(Willow nods.)*  
Our parents all filed for promotion and left the Fourth Floor as soon as

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

they got a chance. Like it or not, *Spyacinth* was the closest thing to a mother we had.

**WILLOW.** Well, I guess she was good at her job.

**POPPY.** Yeah.

**WILLOW.** Wait. But then why did they arrest her?

**POPPY.** No clue.

**WILLOW.** I don't like that.

**POPPY.** We'll be okay.

### SCENE 7

*Ten years ago. Deep night. Daff (16) wanders into the stairwell. Chrys (15) is there too, but both of them are obscured and unseen by the audience.*

**DAFF.** Oh hey you! Didn't expect to find you here. Chrys? Whatcha looking at? Chrys? Hey Chrys. I think maybe you should get away from there. Chrysanthemum! (*Sounds of something important going on. Daff stumbles into view, Chrys in his arms.*)

**CHRYS.** Daff? (*He hugs her tighter.*)

**DAFF.** Oh my gosh! Oh my gosh Chrys. What happened?

**CHRYS.** I... don't really know... (*But she does, at least a little. She glances at the edge and begins to sob.*) I'm so sorry you saw—

**DAFF.** Hey... hey...

**CHRYS.** I'm sorry.

**DAFF.** No. You're okay.

**CHRYS.** I... I just... I'm so sorry.

**DAFF.** You're okay. *You're okay.* (*Chrys sniffs, looking up at him.*) Okay? Don't ever do anything like that again. Promise? (*Chrys nods. Daff continues to look gravely into her eyes until she finally responds.*)

**CHRYS.** Okay. (*They hold each other for a good long time. Then Chrys looks up at him.*) Please don't tell Poppy.

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**DAFF.** *(Hesitantly.)* Wha—

**CHRYS.** Please. She'll be mad.

**DAFF.** I don't think she will be—

**CHRYS.** Daff please.

**DAFF.** I—

**CHRYS.** Please.

**DAFF.** Okay. *(They hold each other, neither one wanting to let go, perhaps in the hope that by holding on long enough, their pain will fade away; a foolish thought, really, but here we are. Chrys rests her head on Daff. He stares past her, conflicted.)*

### SCENE 8

*Nine years and 355 days ago. It is late. The stars outside are shining. Enter Daff (16), carrying a blanket and pillow. He makes sure the door shuts quietly before propping his pillow against a wall that faces the window. Violet (14) and Chrys (15) enter whilst his back is turned.*

**VIOLET.** Hey! *(Startled, Daff screams, but then he sees it's just Vi and Chrys.)*

**DAFF.** Oh my gosh you guys!

**VIOLET.** Sorry.

**DAFF.** You're fine. Whatcha doing?

**VIOLET.** We couldn't sleep. What are you doing here?

**DAFF.** *(Half-truth.)* I... like to look at the stars.

**CHRYS.** Why do you have a blanket and pillow?

**DAFF.** So I can be comfortable. Smart people stuff! You guys wanna join?

**CHRYS.** Sure.

**VIOLET.** I've got nothing better to do.

**DAFF.** She says, as if she doesn't love stars.

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**VIOLET.** Ya got me! *(The three sit together, looking out the window for quite some time, resting in the silence together.)*

**DAFF.** What do you think it would feel like to hold a star?

**CHRYS.** Warm. Lifegiving. The brightest, most beautiful feeling in the world. And you'd want to hold it forever and ever. But you can't, 'cause you'd burn up.

**DAFF.** That's lovely. I always thought that it would feel like...

**VIOLET.** Don't say cheese.

**DAFF.** I wouldn't, 'cause that's the moon.

**VIOLET.** *(Sarcastically)* Okay.

**DAFF.** As I was saying, I always thought the stars were like glitter. Handfuls of it. How else would they be so sparkly?

**VIOLET.** Cute, but you're both wrong. According to science, stars are little balls of gas.

**DAFF.** I don't believe that.

**VIOLET.** Believe what you want... You're still wrong.

**DAFF.** I will. *(Daff turns to Chrys, pointing at Violet.)* She thinks the stars are made of farts.

**CHRYS.** Gross.

**VIOLET.** You two are unbelievable. *(She shifts her position.)* Ah!

**CHRYS.** What?

**VIOLET.** Something's poking me. What is that? *(She fumbles around for the culprit, eventually finding a lone puzzle piece.)*

**CHRYS.** A puzzle piece?

**VIOLET.** Yeah. Found it under the rug earlier. Guess I picked it up and forgot.

**DAFF.** Do you have any puzzles missing a piece?

**VIOLET.** I haven't done a puzzle in years. I don't want to just throw it out though. It's pretty. What do ya think I should do with it?

**DAFF.** Eat it.

**VIOLET.** Gross. No.

**DAFF.** Let me eat it.

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**CHRYS.** You will choke.

**DAFF.** You never know.

**VIOLET.** No one is ingesting a puzzle piece.

**DAFF.** Fine. Have it your way.

**CHRYS.** What if you turned it into a necklace or something?

**VIOLET.** Ooh! That could be cute. Ya. Chrys' idea wins.

**CHRYS.** Yay! *(Violet suddenly sniffs the air.)*

**VIOLET.** Ew. What is that?

**CHRYS.** Ugh!

**DAFF.** It was the stars. *(The girls look at him and laugh.)*

### SCENE 9

*Nine years and 353 days ago. Too late to be night. Too early to be morning. Willow (22) enters in somewhat of a panic and finds Daff, asleep on the floor.*

**WILLOW.** There you are. Almost gave me a friggin' heart attack.

**DAFF.** *(Half-asleep.)* Chrys?

**WILLOW.** Errrh! Try again.

**DAFF.** *(Awake now.)* Willow.

**WILLOW.** What do you think you're doing?

**DAFF.** Nothing.

**WILLOW.** *(Not believing him.)* Mmhm.

**DAFF.** Okay fine... I... uh... I wanted to write a poem, but I couldn't focus so I thought looking at stars would help... But I guess I must've fallen asleep...

**WILLOW.** You're a terrible liar. You know that?

**DAFF.** What are you talking about?

**WILLOW.** I don't see a pen or paper...

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**DAFF.** I'm really in more of a brainstorming phase...

**WILLOW.** And the stars weren't visible tonight. Too foggy. What's going on?

**DAFF.** I told you. Everything's fine.

**WILLOW.** Something's off with you.

**DAFF.** Nuh uh.

**WILLOW.** Come on Daff. I haven't seen you this way since... *(Daff looks away.)* Well, after everything, you should know you can talk to me.

**DAFF.** I know. It's just, it's not mine to share.

**WILLOW.** What's not... Okay, then tell me this: How many nights have you snuck out to come here?

**DAFF.** Is it really a big deal?

**WILLOW.** It is if it's been affecting you. Come on, you literally have dark circles.

**DAFF.** Can we please just drop it? You're not my mom, Willow.

**WILLOW.** I'm not a pill-popping drunk. You are correct.

**DAFF.** Then—

**WILLOW.** But I am your sister and that should count for something. *(She makes deliberate eye contact with Daff.)* If you really didn't want to talk, you'd've gone back to the apartment already. *(Daff knows she's right.)* I'm not gonna tell anyone.

**DAFF.** Not even Poppy. Especially not Poppy. Promise? *(Willow crosses her heart. Daff takes a pained breath.)* It's Chrys. A few nights ago, I came out here, and I saw... I think she tried to jump.

**WILLOW.** What?

**DAFF.** She was leaning and she let go... She almost fell over the rail. She could've... But I stopped her...

**WILLOW.** Daff...

**DAFF.** She made me swear not to tell anyone. But I...



## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**WILLOW.** So you've been coming here every night to make sure it doesn't happen again. *(Daff nods.)* Daff, I know you want to protect her, but you can't keep doing this. You're gonna make yourself sick.

**DAFF.** I know, but—

**WILLOW.** I wish I had better advice, but you're just going to have to trust her. *(Beat. Daff nods slowly.)* Everything's gonna be alright. You'll see. *(Tiny beat.)* Now go the heck to bed. *(Daff lingers a moment, before he follows Willow out of the stairwell.)*

### SCENE 10

*Nine years and 44 days ago. Late. Poppy (22) sits alone. Suddenly, a piercing alarm blares. She scrambles to leave, but something out the window catches her eye. She peers out, watching intently until there's nothing more to see.*

### SCENE 11

*Nine years and 43 days ago. The next morning. Poppy sits on the stairs, analyzing a newspaper article. Enter Violet.*

**VIOLET.** Hey Poppy, can I borrow your copy of *Rebecca*?

**POPPY.** Uh huh. Should be on my dresser.

**VIOLET.** Cool. Thanks. *(Violet looks over Poppy's shoulder.)* What's that?

**POPPY.** You heard the alarm last night...

**VIOLET.** Yeah?

**POPPY.** There was an escape.

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**VIOLET.** Oh yeah. But I heard they caught the guy.

**POPPY.** That's what they're saying. *(Poppy looks at the paper again.)*

“Man Apprehended in Failed Escape Attempt Charged With Disturbing Order”

**VIOLET.** Okay?

**POPPY.** I could've sworn I saw three *women*.

**VIOLET.** What?

**POPPY.** Running away. I watched them out the window. See that break in the trees? *(She points out the window for Violet to see.)*

**VIOLET.** Yeah.

**POPPY.** That's where they disappeared. But here's the interesting part: I kept watching, and nobody went after them. It was almost as if the Officials didn't know.

**VIOLET.** Huh. *(Poppy turns her attention back to the paper.)*

**POPPY.** So then, who is this?

**VIOLET.** It could be faked.

**POPPY.** Maybe. But something about it feels earnest.

**VIOLET.** Interesting word-choice...

**POPPY.** What I'm trying to say is, this doesn't look like the Order's usual brand of propaganda.

**VIOLET.** Right...

**POPPY.** But I know what I saw. *(Poppy ponders.)*

**VIOLET.** So then what do you think it all means?

**POPPY.** I don't know. What if this man got himself caught on purpose?

**VIOLET.** Why, though?

**POPPY.** To take focus away from the women long enough for them to get away.

**VIOLET.** Like a decoy?

**POPPY.** Yeah... Exactly. Is that crazy?

**VIOLET.** Well, yeah. But it's not impossible.

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**POPPY.** Interesting...

**VIOLET.** Or this whole news story is just a media cover-up.

**POPPY.** Maybe... But I'm not so sure.

### SCENE 12

*Nine years ago. Enter Willow (23). Poppy (23) is already there, chilling on the landing.*

**WILLOW.** Hey. You.

**POPPY.** Hey you.

**WILLOW.** I have a bone to pick with you.

**POPPY.** Oh no. What did I do now?

**WILLOW.** Oh like you don't know. *(Poppy snorts, giving Willow a look that invites her to continue.)* You have invaded my brain.

**POPPY.** Have I?

**WILLOW.** Ya. I can't have a nice peaceful think anymore without you popping up and distracting me like a little... invader. What gives?

**POPPY.** That's an interesting predicament, because you see... I was going to ask you the same thing.

**WILLOW.** Mc'scuse me?

**POPPY.** Yeah. For the past month or so, you have been there every time I close my freaking eyes. And it makes me feel so... *viscerally confused.*

**WILLOW.** Oh. So, whatever should we do?

**POPPY.** I guess the only viable option is to cut off your head.

**WILLOW.** Alright bet! But wait. Hold on. That doesn't solve *your* problem.

**POPPY.** You're right. That wouldn't be fair, because I would still be stuck thinking about you, while you're blissfully unaware... Huh... I guess we need to cut off my head too.

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**WILLOW.** Ok then, next order of business is: how will we... We need to figure out how to do it at the same time.

**POPPY.** Perhaps we could...

**WILLOW.** I got it! What if you get a sword and I get a sword—

**POPPY.** From where?

**WILLOW.** Huh?

**POPPY.** Where are we gonna get a sword?

**WILLOW.** We'll get there when we get there. So if we both have swords and you stand here and I stand *here*, and then we count to three and on the count of three we both swing... But wait, no. There are so many things that could go wrong.

**POPPY.** Hm...

**WILLOW.** Oh! I got it! Duh. We could get Daff and Violet to do it for us.

**POPPY.** Perfect.

**WILLOW.** Teamwork! *(They high-five.)*

**POPPY.** Why are we like this?

**WILLOW.** I blame whatever microscopic beings are floating around in the air and laying eggs in our brain.

**POPPY.** Oh is that what's going on here?

**WILLOW.** Yeah I think so.

**POPPY.** Well I'm glad that's settled.

**WILLOW.** Yeah. But it still doesn't solve our problem.

**POPPY.** No. I guess you'll just have to deal with me.

**WILLOW.** Ditto.

**POPPY.** There are worse things to think about.

**WILLOW.** Wise words.

**POPPY.** Thank you. *(They sit together for a long beat. After a while, Poppy looks over at Willow.)* This is driving you crazy, isn't it?

**WILLOW.** So much!

**POPPY.** I don't know what to tell you.

**WILLOW.** Ahhhhh!!! *(Poppy pulls a juice box from her purse.)*

**POPPY.** Will this make you feel better?

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**WILLOW.** A little. *(She picks up the juice.)* Thanks. Seriously, what would I ever do without you?

**POPPY.** Well for starters, you'd have to get your own juice.

**WILLOW.** Tragic. *(Long beat.)* But seriously. I think I'd explode.

**POPPY.** We can't have that.

**WILLOW.** No.

**POPPY.** Well then it's a good thing I'm not going anywhere.

### SCENE 13

*Seven years ago. Chrys (18) is sitting on the stairs, reading. After a moment, Violet (16) enters, eating half of a hamburger out of a bowl with a fork.*

**CHRYS.** There are so many things I could say right now, but I'm not gonna, 'cause I'm nice.

**VIOLET.** Don't judge me.

**CHRYS.** I thought you were gonna make popcorn or something.

**VIOLET.** We don't have any.

**CHRYS.** So you chose a hamburger?

**VIOLET.** Uh huh. *(Beat.)* So... How long have you had a crush on Daff? *(Taken aback, Chrys looks away and pretends to read.)* Chrys?

**CHRYS.** How did you know?

**VIOLET.** Oh, buddy. It's kinda obvious.

**CHRYS.** Really? *(Violet nods.)* Oh my gosh!

**VIOLET.** But it's just 'cause I notice things.

**CHRYS.** Like what?

**VIOLET.** For starters, that's his book. And then there's eye contact, lack of eye contact, tone of voice...

**CHRYS.** Okay. Are you done?

WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**VIOLET.** Not yet. Have you noticed how much you smile around him? Look at you. All I had to do was say his name.

**CHRYS.** Well, he's an amazing person.

**VIOLET.** See?

**CHRYS.** What?

**VIOLET.** You two would be really cute together.

**CHRYS.** Aww! Really? Yay!

**VIOLET.** Utterly annoying, but cute...

**CHRYS.** Why are you bringing this up now? (*Violet shrugs.*)

**VIOLET.** I think you should tell him how you feel.

**CHRYS.** What!

**VIOLET.** You should tell him! Founder's Ball is this weekend. Just saying.

**CHRYS.** I can't do that!

**VIOLET.** Why not?

**CHRYS.** I can't! He's my friend.

**VIOLET.** So?

**CHRYS.** I don't want to make things weird. 'Cause if I make things weird, I could potentially ruin our friendship. And then he'll never look at me the same way again. And I don't think I could handle that.

**VIOLET.** You're not going to do that.

**CHRYS.** How do you know?

**VIOLET.** Well, for starters, you're both so weird already.

**CHRYS.** Hey!

**VIOLET.** I mean that in the most loving way possible.

**CHRYS.** Uh-huh.

**VIOLET.** Secondly, I don't think you could ever "ruin" your friendship.

**CHRYS.** I don't wanna risk it. Besides, I think he likes someone else.

**VIOLET.** Who?

**CHRYS.** Someone else.

**VIOLET.** *Who?*

**CHRYS.** I don't want to say.

WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**VIOLET.** I won't tell. Come on Chrys, please.

**CHRYS.** Fine. I think he likes you. (*Violet cracks up.*)

**VIOLET.** Wait. You think... Daff... and..... Oh heck no!

**CHRYS.** But I've seen you two—

**VIOLET.** It's all platonic... Oh gosh. I would never.

**CHRYS.** You sure?

**VIOLET.** Chrys. He likes *you*. Like, *like-like-like-like like-likes* you.

**CHRYS.** How do you know that though?

**VIOLET.** He literally told me.

**CHRYS.** Really? (*Violet nods.*) Still, I don't think I could tell him.

**VIOLET.** Okay. Then I will.

**CHRYS.** No! Vi! Please don't!

**VIOLET.** Fine. But what if I—

**CHRYS.** No. Don't do anything. Please.

**VIOLET.** Okay okay. I won't. But only 'cause I'm such a good friend.

(*Chrys screws up her face mockingly. Then...*)

**CHRYS.** Okay Vi, your turn.

**VIOLET.** Wait what?

**CHRYS.** We talked about my love life. It's only fair.

**VIOLET.** (*Almost daring her.*) Go for it.

**CHRYS.** Who do *you* like?

**VIOLET.** No one.

**CHRYS.** No one? What about "library boy"?

**VIOLET.** Birchfield?

**CHRYS.** Ya.

**VIOLET.** No.

**CHRYS.** He's kind of cute though. Don't you think?

**VIOLET.** Not really.

**CHRYS.** Seriously?

**VIOLET.** That sounded mean. I mean he's not bad-looking, but I... don't think of him that way.

**CHRYS.** Well, I think he likes you.

WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**VIOLET.** We're just work-friends.

**CHRYS.** Yeah but he stands near you all the time and he's always like "Hi Violet!" And he does all the eye contact stuff and—

**VIOLET.** Oh no... Oh no.

**CHRYS.** So you seriously don't like him?

**VIOLET.** I don't think so.

**CHRYS.** What if he asks you to the Ball?

**VIOLET.** Eh I don't know. Go as friends? Uh... But... I wouldn't want to hurt his feelings but also... Let's pray he doesn't. That'd be so awkward.

**CHRYS.** Do you really not like *anyone*?

**VIOLET.** I guess. I'm not really interested in that kind of thing.

**CHRYS.** What do you mean by that?

**VIOLET.** I don't really know. I just... I don't really "get attracted" to people just by looking at them... Like, I feel like I could look at a hundred people and feel nothing. You know what I'm saying?

**CHRYS.** Not exactly.

**VIOLET.** Like, for instance, I've never wanted to kiss anyone. The whole concept is kinda gross... Like really gross... Like why does every fairytale end with "True Love's Kiss"—

**CHRYS.** But you do believe in true love, right?

**VIOLET.** I mean, the idea is great. Having a person. *Your person*... But everything else that comes with it... I don't... I don't need that. And I don't really want it. I believe in true love. I do... I'd like to fall in love someday I think..... But, I look at Poppy and Willow, and... I don't know if I could ever be that for another person... It's just... I don't know. (*Beat.*) Does that make me broken?

**CHRYS.** Of course not.

**VIOLET.** Thanks for listening.

**CHRYS.** You can always talk to me. I won't judge.

**VIOLET.** Thanks. But guess what all this means for us.

**CHRYS.** What?



## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**VIOLET.** I get to make fun of you and Daff all I want and you've got no ammo.

**CHRYS.** Ooh! No fair!

### SCENE 14

*Four years ago. Chrys (21) sits on the stairs. There is a flower in her hair. She watches Daff (22), who clears his throat ceremoniously.*

**DAFF.** Okay. Here it goes. *(Chrys smiles in amusement.)*

**CHRYS.** Daffodil, what are you doing?

**DAFF.** It's the anniversary of our first date, Chrysanthemum.

**CHRYS.** I know.

**DAFF.** So, I might have written you a poem...

**CHRYS.** You did what?

**DAFF.** And I memorized it too. So please don't say anything until I'm done, or I'll completely forget it.

**CHRYS.** Okay.

**DAFF.** Unless it really sucks. Then *please* tell me to shut up.

**CHRYS.** I'm sure it doesn't suck.

**DAFF.** I appreciate your confidence in me. I am not so sure. *(Daff thinks about beginning the poem, but then bursts into laughter.)*

**CHRYS.** What?

**DAFF.** It's now hitting me how cheesy this is.

**CHRYS.** I'm not judging you.

**DAFF.** You promise?

**CHRYS.** I'm not Violet.

**DAFF.** Speaking of, how 'bout we don't tell her about this.

**CHRYS.** Just do the poem. Please? I'm not going to make fun of you. I want to hear it.

**DAFF.** Okay. Woo! Ahhhhhhhh..... That was not part of it.

**CHRYS.** I didn't think it was.

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**DAFF.** Okay. For real now. *(Deep breath.)* Some will promise to give you the moon. Some may promise the stars. Others still will vow to capture the planets and cut you rings from their rings. And you will wait an eternity with empty hands. For no one can gift-wrap the stars, or the moon, or the sky. A person whose feet have not once left the ground can't possibly give you a thing they have never even seen. But I will not promise you any celestial bodies. I know they are far from my reach. Instead, all I can offer is a love, messy as all the seasons. And this. *(He pulls a handful of gold glitter from his pocket and throws it into the air.)*

**CHRYS.** Glitter?

**DAFF.** Closest thing to stars, I think. *(Beat.)* 'Cause remember that one conversation we had that one time... *(Chrys nods, smiling at him.)*

**CHRYS.** Daff, you wrote that?

**DAFF.** Yeah.

**CHRYS.** It's the cutest thing ever!

**DAFF.** You think?

**CHRYS.** It's beautiful!

**DAFF.** No. You are.

**CHRYS.** Awww!! Stop!

**DAFF.** I love you.

**CHRYS.** You do?

**DAFF.** Yeah.

**CHRYS.** Me too. *(Chrys takes Daff's hand and the two run out of the stairwell together.)*

## SCENE 15

*Two years ago. An ungodly hour. Willow (30) sits on the floor against the wall. Her cloak is draped over her shoulders like a blanket, and in the crook of her arm, she holds a worn plush turkey. Somewhere on the floor*

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

*beside her is a bag of cheap candy that she eats absentmindedly as she stares into space. After a few moments, Poppy (30) enters.*

**POPPY.** Hey.

**WILLOW.** Hey.

**POPPY.** Whatcha doing?

**WILLOW.** Sitting...

**POPPY.** I'll sit with you. *(She joins Willow on the floor.)* Couldn't sleep? *(Willow shrugs.)* Me neither. *(They sit for a moment, feeling each other's presence.)* Whatcha got there?

**WILLOW.** A snack...

**POPPY.** Is that what I think it is?

**WILLOW.** Maybe.

**POPPY.** Willow!

**WILLOW.** What?

**POPPY.** You know that's like a hundred percent sugar.

**WILLOW.** Mm-mm good.

**POPPY.** That's going to keep you up.

**WILLOW.** Eh.

**POPPY.** So, what's up?

**WILLOW.** Can't a woman sit in the stairwell, eating crappy candy at an ungodly hour without there being something wrong?

**POPPY.** Willow.

**WILLOW.** Yeah?

**POPPY.** Well, for one thing, you've got Borf... *(Willow looks down at the stuffed turkey in her arms.)*

**WILLOW.** *(Coyly.)* And why should I not have a gift given to me by my favoritest human in the entire world?

**POPPY.** You know what I mean.

**WILLOW.** Remember when you gave him to me?

**POPPY.** Your tenth birthday?

**WILLOW.** Yeah tenth. You were so pleased with yourself.

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**POPPY.** I had found the ultimate pun, hadn't I?

**WILLOW.** A stuffed turkey... *(The women share a small laugh.)*

**POPPY.** And didn't it used to make a sound? When you pressed its wing, didn't it make a... turkey sound?

**WILLOW.** Yeah, but not anymore. Wanna hear what it sounds like now?

**POPPY.** You're going to do it anyway.

**WILLOW.** Correct. *(She presses the wing, and from the toy comes an awful, garbled sound.)*

**POPPY.** Oh! No.

**WILLOW.** Yeah...

**POPPY.** Okay. But seriously, what's going on?

**WILLOW.** It's nothing.

**POPPY.** Nothing?

**WILLOW.** Poppy—

**POPPY.** Willow. *(Willow hugs Borf to her chest.)* Hmm... Truth or dare?

**WILLOW.** Dare.

**POPPY.** I dare you to tell me what's up. If you want.

**WILLOW.** Ah, the illusion of free will. *(Willow takes a beat to collect her thoughts. Poppy waits patiently.)* Today I had a realization.

**POPPY.** *(Supportive.)* Yeah?

**WILLOW.** We were having dinner, Daff and I, and he was talking about, ya know, like big person stuff, like he used the word "nonetheless." And... I don't know, I realized... Daff's 24. And I don't mean that I didn't know that before, because that would be stupid. He's been 24 since September. I know; I threw his birthday party. But... I guess it didn't fully register that my kid brother isn't a kid anymore. Soon enough he'll want his own place. Maybe he's already started thinking about it.

**POPPY.** I know that's hard. It is. But it's natural. Chrys moved out when she was 21, remember? *(Willow sighs, nodding slowly.)* Hey. But even when Daff decides to, you'll still see him. We still see Chrys every day. She just lives down the hall now.

**WILLOW.** Yeah, but... He's old enough to file for promotion.

WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**POPPY.** He's not going to do that. He'd never leave Chrys.

**WILLOW.** They could get married and he could take her with him.

**POPPY.** Oh...

**WILLOW.** I mean, I'm perfectly happy living here forever.

**POPPY.** Me too.

**WILLOW.** But what if *they're* not? Neither of them like their jobs. How many more tables does Daff need to push around before he realizes there's another option? And I'm sure Chrys would love to leave the Fourth Floor. So then—

**POPPY.** Willow...

**WILLOW.** What happens to us, to our family, if they leave?

**POPPY.** It stays just as strong.

**WILLOW.** See, I want to believe that. I really do. But how many people who have left the floor do we still know? Can you think of any? Because I can't. If they leave, we'll never see them again.

**POPPY.** Come on, it's *Daff* we're talking about.

**WILLOW.** He's a whole-ass person now, Poppy.

**POPPY.** I know. And he's grown up well.

**WILLOW.** I know. He's a good egg. And I should be happy and proud of him, and I am, but... What do *I* do now? The first thing on my to-do list has always been "make sure Daff doesn't die." But he doesn't need me to do that anymore.

**POPPY.** That's a good thing. It means you did good. (*She looks Willow in the eyes.*) You did good.

**WILLOW.** I guess. (*She fiddles with Borf.*)

**POPPY.** Has Daff actually said anything about leaving?

**WILLOW.** No but I just... (*Willow makes a frustrated sound.*)

**POPPY.** I understand. (*She squeezes Willow's hand.*) I understand.

**WILLOW.** Ugh! I'm pathetic. What happened to me? Maybe I've become the thing I hate most.

**POPPY.** Your mom?

**WILLOW.** Fuck that.

## WHERE THE LOST CHILDREN PLAY

**POPPY.** Sorry. Too far?

**WILLOW.** Nah. That was a good guess. But no. I'm a boring grown up.

**POPPY.** Willow, I assure you, you couldn't be boring if you tried. *(The bittiest of pauses)* You're Peter Pan. *(Willow sighs.)*

**WILLOW.** I think I've lost sight of Neverland. Thing is, I don't even remember leaving. But I know I don't have long until I run out of pixie dust and forget how to fly.

**POPPY.** Well then we can learn to walk together. *(They share a bittersweet smile, slowly and naturally moving to resting on each other in the silence. Eventually, Willow notices that Poppy has begun to drift to sleep.)*

**WILLOW.** Poppy?

**POPPY.** Hm?

**WILLOW.** You should go to bed.

**POPPY.** Mm. Are you going to?

**WILLOW.** In a little bit.

**POPPY.** Okay. *(Willow offers her hand to guide Poppy to her feet. As Poppy opens the door, she turns around one more time.)* Willow. *(Poppy reaches out and grasps the air. Willow smiles softly and does it back at her. They remain like this for an extended moment, gazing at each other and holding the air, and "by the transitive property," holding each other.)*

**WILLOW.** Good night Wendy Darling.

**POPPY.** Good night Peter Pan.

**END OF ACT 1**

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—***

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