

SHARP ENDS, A GHOST STORY

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Cast of Characters:

Narrator, much like the Narrator of Our Town. In general, whatever they say signifies the corresponding staging suggestions. They control the flow of action.

Rosalind, the babysitter. Smart, outgoing and kind hearted.

Bobby Owens, a young boy. Boisterous, lonely, and curious.

Ted Owens, Bobby's father. Strong, loving, a family man.

Sarah Owens, Bobby's mother. Cautious, fearful, believes in curses.

Mrs. Perkins, a neighbor of the Owens.

Sheriff Whitman. Pragmatic, a dutiful public servant.

Millie the cat. Black and playful.

Yvonne Hiver. A supposed witch.

Claire Hiver. A supposed witch.

Tom Wilkins. The town drunk.

Amy Gray. 16-years old when she has a run in with the Hiver Curse.

Jonas Miller. A former star quarterback of the high school football team.

Various Hiver men and women, and

Townpeople of all ages, and family units (past and present day).

Setting:

Small town America, the past and present day. This is a parallel universe to the real world, and has a distinctly different "feel" to it. Dystopian. Foreboding around the edges. Off, somehow.

Note:

This is a folk horror story and has elements that can be made as scary as you like them to be. Imagination is everything when producing this work. It is written to be kind of tech-heavy, with projections and effects such as fog, wind, etc. I welcome all interpretations and imaginings of this piece. As long as it is scary and creepy, anything could work to tell the tale.

A lot of the acting is non-verbal. There's a lot of business to attend to though and the scenes shouldn't feel rushed just because no one is talking. The words count when they're spoken. Seek actors who are very physically emotive and know how to tell a story with their bodies.

ACT I**Scene 1**

At rise: A cheerful looking neighborhood in small town America, present day. Tree lined streets and stately homes. The OWENS house is a beautiful older looking home with a green grassy yard and white picket fence, everything stirling and bright. Toys belonging to a young boy litter the porch and yard. The NARRATOR enters and crosses the stage towards the home. She stands near the OWENS' front porch, admiring the place. A little boy, BOBBY OWENS rushes out the front door carrying a worn stuffed tiger (a la Calvin and Hobbes). He gently sets the tiger, LEROY, down in the grass, and plops down beside it, spreading out a pail of Army figures, or the like, and starts playing. He's lost in his own world. Kids and their parents stroll through the scene as the NARRATOR comes downstage center.

NARRATOR

Bobby didn't much like his mother telling him what to do. He was seven, almost eight, and he knew everything a boy needed to know. He knew that pirates would steal your treasure if it wasn't buried properly, and that he was going to be an astronaut when he grew up (after he was a fireman and a policeman, but before he became President). His mother always laughed--

SARAH OWENS appears, laughing merrily as she fusses over BOBBY OWENS, her young and very adorable son.

SARAH

--You have so many ideas in your little head!

NARRATOR

But Bobby was serious when it came to piracy and space exploration. He was an adventurer at heart. Apart from the wonders of deep space and the open ocean, Bobby was most interested in the old house that sat at the end of his neighborhood.

The lights dim a bit and we see a darker home appear at the edge of the upstage corner, lurking as if it's alive. The house is dilapidated, falling apart, and very foreboding.

Cont...

The Hiver House had crouched at the very edge of the town since before Bobby had learned to walk. He was probably more interested in it than he might have been, because his mother had forbidden him and his faithful babysitter, Rosalind, from walking that way on their outings.

ROSALIND and BOBBY go running across the stage in a swirl of action. SARAH OWENS enters to the front porch as BOBBY and ROSALIND come skidding to a halt in front of her.

SARAH

Don't go poking around that old place! You'll fall through the floor and break your arm!
Or maybe something even worse!

Bobby rushes off, herded by a sheepish ROSALIND. SARAH looks after them, shaking her head.

NARRATOR

Our story begins in the springtime. It was a warm June day, the grass was bright green, and the birds were singing in their nests. It was a day that would change things forever, but of course, no one knew it then. Bobby's mother and father were leaving for a few nights to go to Aunt Jess's house somewhere far away.

Enter TED and SARAH, with a few overnight bags. BOBBY enters from behind them and starts messing around downstage, maybe drawing with chalk or doing wheelie on a tricycle. The parents mime packing up a car.

CONT.

Bobby had been to Aunt Jess's a few times. What he most remembered about it were the huge fields of corn. Corn so high you could climb it to the clouds. When they'd come home, he'd tried to convince his mother to plant a corn maze in their backyard. But his mother just gave Bobby's father that worried look of hers, brow furrowed, lips tightly pressed together. There was to be no corn in Bobby's garden, only the familiar tomatoes, squash, and pole beans he liked to pick right off the vine. Bobby often heard his mother speak about the corn being cursed, and ---

SARAH

-- I'll not have any of that horrible crop growing in our yard, thankyouverymuch. We left that god awful town behind for a reason. I want to forget everything about corn. If I even *see* a can of corn in the pantry, I'll take it outside and burn it!

TED

Making a show of joking about it to BOBBY, who is passing through the room.

Ok, honey. We get it. You don't like corn because of some nefarious and eerie dealings you had with it in the past.

He turns to SARAH and gives her a serious look.

Shh- honey. We'll give him nightmares. Don't spook the kid!

NARRATOR

But Bobby was staying behind tonight, and Rosalind was coming over to watch him. She would let him stay up later than his prescribed bedtime and they'd eat freshly popped popcorn, and go outside and look for shooting stars with Bobby's stuffed tiger, Leroy. Bobby had decided he would try and convince Rosalind to take him to the old Hiver Mansion where they could explore without worrying about his mother. They'd bring flashlights and jackets, in case it got cold, and a slingshot for protection.

SARAH

To BOBBY, holding him by the shoulders and kneeling on front of him.

Please be good, and *listen* to Rosalind. She's in charge until we get home. I'll call you when we get there.

BOBBY

Ok, mommy. I will.

SARAH kisses BOBBY, and hugs him tightly. TED then scoops BOBBY up, making him squeal with delight, swooping him up and down like an airplane before setting him down.

TED

Bye buddy, be good, like Mom said. Love you, pal.

BOBBY gives his dad a funny little salute. TED and SARAH get into their “car” and drive offstage. We hear the sounds of the car receding. ROSALIND joins BOBBY in the yard, holding a little plate of snacks for him. They wave to the car and look at one another, BOBBY giving a huge grin.

ROSALIND

What are you smirking about mister? You look like you’re up to no good.

BOBBY

Can we go down to the Hiver house and explore tonight? I’ve got my flashlight and my compass, and I’ll go to bed right after! I won’t say a word to my folks. It can be our special secret!

NARRATOR

As the NARRATOR speaks, TED and SARAH come downstage center, pretending to be in the car.

As he said this, Bobby’s mother turned in the passenger seat and looked back at the receding shape of her son. Bobby was gesturing wildly to Rosalind, his hero cape flying in the breeze. Her husband noticed her looking back and reached over to squeeze her hand in his own.

TED

It's ok honey, Rosalind won't let anything happen to him.

SARAH

You know I always get nervous when we go to my sister's. I left that place for a reason, Ted. And now this town seems to be heading in that same dark direction.

TED

Sarah, honey, they don't do that kind of thing there anymore. They don't do that kind thing *anywhere*, anymore. Ok? We're helping Jess out. It's a good thing. Our town is fine, except for the odd witch and boogeyman every now and then.

NARRATOR

As they passed the town's last stoplight, the highway opening up before them, Sarah looked back towards the house. Bobby felt far away from her. She almost blurted out for them to turn around and go home. Then she bit her lip (hard) and tried to smile. (*SARAH says these lines next:*) "I know, honey...I just...I feel..." (*NARRATOR says these lines next:*) her voice faded as a huge cargo truck rushed by. Ted turned the radio to a pleasant country station where a woman was singing about winning the lottery. He didn't hear her finish her sentence.

TED exits the stage as SARAH stands alone in a spotlight and the NARRATOR fades away in shadow.

SARAH

Cursed, I feel cursed.

SARAH exits and the lights blackout.

ACT 1**Scene 2**

Lights come up on NARRATOR again, who is downstage near the audience. BOBBY and ROZ are now on the front porch, where ROZ reads and sips lemonade as BOBBY plays with Leroy. They become part of the tableau as each of the other characters make their appearances but do not notice the NARRATOR or the others.

NARRATOR

Rosalind was a level headed young woman who took no nonsense from any of her charges. She'd been babysitting Bobby since he was born, and now, in her second year at the local university, she'd grown very fond of him, and close to his family . When she babysat him, she wore running shoes, knowing she'd have to keep up with him, and tied her yellow hair in a ponytail. She indulged his whimsical childhood fantasies, and helped him create the worlds they played in: from the lush Amazonian jungles, to the center of a black hole, Rosalind was always there, encouraging Bobby to use his imagination. Due to a tragedy when he was three and Mrs. Owens had lost the baby, Bobby didn't have any siblings to play with, and he was often too imaginative and excitable for the likes of the other neighborhood kids. They couldn't seem to play with him for long periods of time. Rosalind felt sorry for him. He was the only kid she had a hard time saying no to--a fact of which Bobby was very much aware. So when Bobby begged to explore the Hiver Mansion, Rosalind felt bad refusing, but she knew it was for the best. Too many bad things had happened there.

TOM WILKINS appears and walks downstage as if in a daze, looking shell shocked. He can look as graphic as you please. He begins stiffly repeating some hideous motions, as though we're seeing the moment his fate descended upon him-- slowly and with increasing horror in his body and face.

Tom Wilkins, the town drunk, had crept in one night and got his head stuck in a rotting railing. He wasn't discovered for two days, after which, he remained catatonic.

AMY GRAY appears and walks downstage to stand near TOM, moving stiffly, or even being pushed by someone in a wheelchair if you like. She joins in on the same motions as TOM, syncing up with him.

Sixteen-year-old Amy Gray and her friends had made it to the second story one evening before she fell out a window and was paralyzed for life.

JONAS MILLER enters and walks downstage next to the other two victims, with all the evidence of being blind, and looking singed. He too joins in these wordless motions, looking ritualistic as he syncs up with TOM and AMY. It's like they're all being possessed by something sinister and dangerous.

Jonas Miller, the star quarterback of the high school football team, had the great misfortune of having his kerosene lamp explode on him while he was messing around in the Hiver's yard. The accident left him blind and burnt.

The three of them continue their disturbing motions as the lights grow dim, and a red hue takes over the periphery and background of the stage.

And other kids had met with the same: mangled limbs, mouths of teeth plain falling out, eyes lost to broken glass, and painful body rashes that left permanent scarring.

A shadow seems to swoop over the stage, and the sounds of wind rushing through grow louder. The lights on the porches flicker and leaves blow off of the trees. The whistling winds sound eerie.

The incidents at the Hiver place kept parents up at night, especially when their kids were at sleepovers--or on Halloween. It seemed that every time the jack-o-lanterns came out, the bravest of the town's children decided to take their chances at the mansion. The kids never seemed to learn. They had to find out for themselves.

The three specters fade away, as if being pulled back by someone unseen force. The lights shift back to the NARRATOR, who looks at their departures sadly. As the next lines are spoken, we see HIVER MEN and WOMEN drifting on and off the stage as fog and darkness creep in.

Rosalind didn't know the true history of the Hiver House. It had been abandoned since before her parents were born. Legend said the Hivers came from a long line of magicians, pagans, and witches. You could go to any of the Hiver women for special medicines, or for spells to cast upon your enemies. It was said several Hiver children had died in the womb, leaving their mothers vengeful and jealous of townswomen with healthy babies.

A group of HIVER MEN pass through the scene, dragging some poor soul with them, bloodied and nearly unconscious.

The Hiver men were fearsome and worked in shadowy industries where you could hire them to exact physical vengeance on a foe. Eventually, though, between the violence and the miscarriages, the family numbers dwindled and most of the Hivers moved away to other cities during the Depression or faded into the background, shunned from all good society.

We see some beautifully dressed women, walking in a dreamlike way, all in white. They aren't angels, though. As common TOWNSFOLK appear with their children, the sheer sight of these women causes them to flee.

Sometimes, the women could be seen walking together in the cemetery, dressed in long white gowns, and holding bunches of herbs, a black cat following close behind. Parents pulled their children close when walking past a member of the Hiver clan, lest their child be touched, and grow sick, or disappear into thin air.

A small child is left on the stage as the group of HIVER WOMEN descend upon it, swooping in and concealing the small figure as they hurry offstage in a pack. A shrill scream is heard. The NARRATOR grimaces and pauses. Two more women enter; YVONNE HIVER and CLAIRE HIVER. They look imposing and powerful. They observe the NARRATOR, who notices and looks quickly away.

A long time had passed since the last remaining Hivers, Yvonne and Claire, spinsters both, retreated into their house. Some said they'd been driven inside by an angry mob--whatever the case, they never did come out again. Their mummified remains were only recovered after a nosy realtor had started poking around.

YVONNE and CLAIRE make strange symbols with their hands and seem to be muttering under their breaths. We don't hear them. They cross slowly towards the OWENS home and begin watching BOBBY and ROZ. The NARRATOR looks nervous but sticks to the story, pretending they aren't there. The women exchange looks to one another and then slowly fade into the background, disappearing almost. NARRATOR looks relieved when they finally go.

CONT.

Some folks still blamed them whenever trouble befell the town, whether it was a broken sewer main, an infestation of grasshoppers like the one that once covered the area in a thick storm of bugs, or the train derailing that killed sixty people waiting at the depot, and another forty-eight on board.

On the back scrim, we see an image of the town cemetery, high on the hill. Graves keep popping up in a projection upon the hillside, faster and faster. Ravens wheel high overhead, screaming.

Nothing good ever stayed in the town, no sir. All the good things seemed to slip out while people were looking the other way.

The NARRATOR pauses, as the wind whistles mournfully through the empty stage. They look around, as if something is watching them. The lights abruptly go back to normal, like it's late afternoon in Spring. Neither BOBBY or ROZ have noticed the happenings around them. Now, ROSALIND bends down to look at BOBBY and says firmly:

ROSALIND

Bobby, you know the rules. Your Mom says we can't go down that way anymore. It's a rule for all of us, not just you. I'm not gonna break the rules, ok?

More to herself than him:

I make waaay too much money to risk this job.

BOBBY

Pouts for a beat. Then:

What if we just go as close as we can? I'll shine my light around and see if there's any ghosts flying by, and then we can race each other back home!

ROSALIND

No. End of discussion, ok? Let's go do something fun. Let's go make ice cream floats!

BOBBY

PUH-LEEZE ROZ? Cmon. You wanna see it too. I just know it!

NARRATOR

Who's been observing this exchange.

Rosalind sighed. She said no again. But Bobby kept coming back with a clever rebuttal. Finally, he got her to agree that they'd walk to the edge of Hawthorne Street and look

across to where the Hiver home lay barren. There would be no shining of flashlights in ghosts' faces, and neither of them would tempt fate by stepping into the street. Rosalind had to admit she was curious too. She'd spent her share of Saturday nights cruising by the old mansion. But she didn't want to get into any trouble with Bobby's parents. They paid her too well and university was expensive.

ROSALIND and BOBBY go into the house. Lights change to signify nightfall as the Narrator continues.

CONT.

After dinner Bobby put his coat on, and also his explorer hat. He stuffed gum, his compass, and a whistle into his pockets, tied his shoes as best he could, and grabbed Leroy. Rosalind tried to stall him with his favorite dessert (A brownie sundae) but he stamped his feet and demanded loudly that she keep her promise. So she too grabbed her coat, and another flashlight, and they walked into the dusk, passing families out for an evening stroll.

ROZ and BOBBY exit the house and begin walking, passing by various TOWNFOLK out strolling in the dusk. Bobby waves excitedly to friends. Suddenly, a black cat runs onstage and begins pestering BOBBY and ROZ, who welcome her presence. They mimic the narration as the following is said:

A block or two from home, they heard a yowling and turned to see Millie, the Johnson's black cat, following them. Bobby loved Millie, and had even set a box on the deck for her to sleep in on cold nights. He clapped his hands in delight as she rubbed her head on his legs. Then he was off again, marching purposefully towards Hawthorne Street. Millie

trotted along behind him. Rosalind brought up the rear. Occasionally, she swept her flashlight into the murky side yards, where animal shapes seemed to dart behind walls and fences as her light flashed by.

The set seems to be moving behind them as they amble along, with scenes of the neighborhood house flashing by, interspersed with brief flashes of more sinister things. NARRATOR follows along closely behind the group. The set reveals a terrifying old ramshackle home, and a yard in total decao and disrepair. Black is the theme. Black and spikey and thorny and dangerous.

CONT.

Before Rosalind knew it, they had arrived at the junction of the old-and-new neighborhoods. Hawthorne Street spread before them, and a few homes down, sat the Hiver Mansion. Beyond it, across a small stream, and stretching back into the distance, was the old cemetery and the county parkland. The lots in this old part of town were big. Stately oaks, bushy willows, and scaly fruit trees--the remnants of once-thriving orchards-- filled in the spaces between. Ancient rose bushes branched out with thorny spikes, angling for careless passersby. The mansion itself sat squatly in the middle of its lot, looking as if it might sink like a crocodile into a swamp. The once majestic home was now in a state of decomposition. The roofs slanted in on themselves, windows wide open, or broken out entirely. The grand porch was marked with missing slats and posts. Long vines of ivy dangled like predatory lures. The eye-like windows and mouthlike doors formed an almost human expression of anger.

Beat. NARRATOR looks around nervously again as we see dead people and strange people crossing quickly in the background, upstage. YVONNE and CLAIRE once again make a cross, like great white sharks. They eyeball BOBBY.

NARRATOR

I've seen enough. This is where I leave you all.

The NARRATOR hurriedly exits. BOBBY gapes at the house, entranced.

BOBBY

There's ladies in there, Roz.

ROSALIND

With rising panic.

What are you talking about? There's no one in there!

BOBBY

His voice is monotone.

I can see them. Two old ladies. In white. Under the stairs.

BOBBY steps off the curb, moving towards the lot like he's being pulled by a rope. ROSALIND watches this as if frozen, fear welling up inside her. When she tries to call after him, no sound comes.

ROSALIND looks at the house, the front of it, and sees dark marks on the wood, crawling slowly, like worms. She shakes her head, looks again, and they're gone. Strange shadows dance all over.

BOBBY continues being pulled to the house. Suddenly, Millie, the

*old black cat, rushes through Bobby's legs, breaking his trance.
The cat jets towards the rickety, wrap-around porch.*

BOBBY

Hey! Millie, come back!

He runs after Millie, waving his flashlight, his explorer hat falling from his head as he goes. ROSALIND leaps from the curb and runs hard too, her legs heavy and sluggish--and finally catches BOBBY as he pauses on the old stone walkway. She grabs him up swiftly and strongly, and he gasps at her strength. To think he'd always made her play the damsel in distress in their pirate games.

ROSALIND

No Bobby!

She turns and looks around her for a beat. ROSALIND realizes suddenly that every single house in sight was either abandoned or for sale. Real estate signs in various stages of weathering sway in the terrible breeze.

CONT.

Oh my God...

She grips BOBBY'S shoulders and he yelps, squirming. A dark shadow, MILLIE perhaps, slips underneath the porch.

BOBBY

Roz... you're hurting me. Lemme go. We gotta get Millie.

ROSALIND

Do NOT go after Millie. We're going home, Bobby. Now.

The breeze picks up then, and the trees sway violently. A burst of skeleton leaves hit Rosalind, blinding her momentarily. BOBBY and ROSALIND freeze, now fully scared and accepting it. The wind sweeps down the street like a small tornado, then the trees become still again. A faint moan is heard somewhere behind the Hiver's rotting fence, like a creature in pain and afraid.

ROSALIND drops her grip on the sweaty boy, and straightens back up, shifting from foot to foot nervously. Everything around her goes dark, except for her face and maybe her upper torso, as we hear the sound of her heart pounding. The old oaks creak against the roof in the persistent breeze, and a huge limb drops suddenly to the ground with a crack. Lights come back to normal brightness and we can see the stage. We see that BOBBY is gone. ROSALIND, who doesn't notice his absence yet, practically leaps out of her skin, and breaks into a sprint, skidding to a halt suddenly as she remembers him. ROSALIND, with her back to where he was, reaches her hand back for him to take it, but he isn't there anymore. Leroy is lying on the ground.. She whips wildly around, spinning, yelling for the boy. Up on the porch, lights gleam behind the great front doors, and then they lurch open. A shadow figure (CLAIRE) obscured by the dim light behind it appears. Long,

spindly fingers slowly beckon to ROSALIND, who looks like she's frozen but trying to break free and run. A dark thing (YVONNE) moves towards her from behind an old hedge in the yard. Blackout as the wind moans.

ACT I

Scene 3

Lights up back on Miller Street, where the sidewalks glow with bright and comforting lights. MRS. PERKINS is taking her dog outside to do her usual evening business. MRS. PERKINS pauses as she passes the Owens home. She, and we, hear the landline ringing through the open window. She pauses a bit, then exits offstage. The Owens' phone continues to ring. It rings until we almost can't take it anymore, becoming more abrasive the longer it rings. Blackout.

ACT 1

Scene 4

Lights up as we see SHERIFF WHITMAN walking up to the OWENS front door, grumbling at having been taken away from his Friday night poker game. He ambles up the front steps and knocks on the door. We hear in the car radio the sounds of the dispatcher taking calls, telling an officer to

calm down on the other end “What?!” “Are you sure?” “Hold on, I’ll send backup.” Ambiguous but alarming statements. SHERIFF keeps knocking, peeking in the kitchen window occasionally. Millie enters the scene, cruising by casually. She hops up onto the porch and settles down into her bed as the SHERIFF looks at her. Blackout.

The End