

The Year of Secret Umbrellas

A short play in two pages by Margot Tenenbaum (age 14, New York City)

CAST

- **CLEMENCE** - A 16-year-old girl with a prosthetic index finger and a fondness for sad operas.
- **EDGAR** - Her adoptive brother, a chess prodigy who hasn't spoken aloud since the Reagan inauguration.
- **MOTHER (voice only)** - A Danish ornithologist who calls weekly from Antarctica.
- **A BLIND DOG** - (portrayed by a taxidermied beagle on wheels).

SCENE ONE

(The stage is a windowless room. A red telephone rings. Clemence sits cross-legged on a small cot, painting her toenails black. Edgar stands by the wall, slowly moving invisible chess pieces.)

CLEMENCE

You can't just stare at the wallpaper forever. Eventually it stares back, and it's always disappointed.

(No response. The telephone stops ringing. A moment passes.)

CLEMENCE

She won't call again. You know how she gets when the penguins molt.

(Edgar sets down an imaginary bishop. He scribbles something on a notepad and slides it toward her. She reads aloud.)

CLEMENCE (reading)

"I dreamt you were drowning in an aquarium. You smiled the whole time."

You always write like a French person who's never been in love.

EDGAR (mimes a shrug)

CLEMENCE

Do you think we're tragic? Or just bored?

(Beat.)

Never mind. I already know.

SCENE TWO

(Later. The cot is gone. The taxidermied dog is now center stage. Clemence lights a cigarette she

doesn't inhale.)

CLEMENCE

The blind dog says he forgives us. That's more than you've ever said.

(Edgar wheels the dog in a small circle.)

CLEMENCE (almost tenderly)

Remember when we thought we'd fake our own disappearances and live in a lighthouse in Portugal?

You said I could be the ghost and you'd do the haunting.

(The red telephone rings again. She doesn't answer it.)

VOICE OF MOTHER (filtered, distant)

Clemence? Edgar? I saw a tern today. It reminded me of your father. Or maybe it was a trick of the fog.

(The line goes dead. Clemence picks up the dog and exits without looking back. Edgar is alone with the invisible chessboard.)

BLACKOUT.