**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.**