

BLACK HOLLOW



A play by
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CHARACTERS

RUSTY JACOBS

16. Intelligent, charismatic, but disturbed. Hyperactive and obsessive imagination. Estranged from the people around him, except for a select group of fellow outcasts, for whom he is the de facto leader.

NOAH BURGESS

40's. A struggling but devoted father. His wife, Rusty's mother, was his world. After she died, Rusty became his world.

JESSIE HUGHES

16. Awkward, shy, nerdy. A gamer. One of the outcasts in town. Loyal to his best friend Rusty.

FAYE ROBERTS

16. Punky nerd, emo/goth-leaning. Bright and creative, but contemptuous of authority and control. Can't wait to get out of this town.

CHRISTINA PARKER

40's. Evey's mother. Fifth grade teacher. She grew up in Black Hollow, went to college in-state, and came back to be a teacher. Loves her students, loves her family, loves her town.

HOWARD PARKER.

40's. Evey's father. He commutes to the city, works in an office. He cares about his family but work often takes precedence, and he struggles to achieve a balance.

EVEY PARKER.

16. Popular girl, masking a secret weirdness that draws her to the outcasts. Thoughtful and kind. She has a strong sense of empathy and trusts her gut.

FRANK WADE.

Late 50's. He's a military veteran. Owns the army surplus and camping supplies store and commands the town Militia. Libertarian-leaning, values self-reliance.

SUE WALTON.

40's. Beloved Sheriff of 15 years, she was the youngest Black Hollow elected in a century. Hard-working, caring, but tough. Cares deeply about her town, and is motivated by duty.

SYNOPSIS

It was just another morning in Black Hollow - until it wasn't. A school shooting upends the lives of an idyllic American town, trapping them in a world of memory between a tragic past, a painful present, and an uncertain future. Haunted by the shooter's spirit, the people of Black Hollow piece together the events leading up to the event, reckon with their loss, and find ways to live on. A play about grief, community, and resilience.

STAGING HISTORY

Workshop at Alchemical Studios with Argo Collective. Directed by Nigel Semaj Barnes (2018)

Columbia MFA Thesis workshop at Ford Studio Theatre at Signature. Directed by Lauren ZefTel (2017)

Reading at IRT with Dreamscape Theatre Company. Directed by Brad Raimondo (2016)

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As we shift to JESSIE we can feel a muggy summer night.

JESSIE

My family moved to Black Hollow when I was little. Rusty was my neighbor. He was the first person to talk to me here.

RUSTY sneaks up behind JESSIE.

RUSTY

Hey.

This startles him.

JESSIE

Woah!

RUSTY

Don't be scared. What are you doing out here?

JESSIE

I'm just...hey wait, what about you?

RUSTY

I like to come out here sometimes. You just moved here right?

JESSIE

Uh, yeah.

RUSTY

I'm next door.

JESSIE

Oh!

RUSTY offers his hand.

RUSTY

Rusty.

JESSIE

Jessie.

They shake.

RUSTY

Are your parents getting a divorce?

JESSIE

Huh?

RUSTY

They're yelling a lot.

JESSIE

You heard that?

RUSTY

Do they do that a lot?

JESSIE

Did your parents get a divorce?

RUSTY

My Mom died.

JESSIE

Oh.

Pause.

RUSTY

Hey, wanna see something?

JESSIE

What?

RUSTY

Wait here a sec.

JESSIE

Uh...

RUSTY goes off, leaving JESSIE with the darkness and the crickets.

After a moment RUSTY returns, his hands clasped together.

RUSTY

Come here.

JESSIE

What's in your hand?

RUSTY

Come on!

JESSIE reluctantly approaches.

RUSTY releases his hands, revealing a firefly.

JESSIE

Wow.

RUSTY

It's a lightning bug. I know where to find more. Follow me and you can catch one too.

JESSIE

That was the start of our adventures. We explored our tiny nowhere town, fighting monsters, discovering hidden worlds. When we were...seven or eight I think? He took me out to this lake in the woods behind my house. It was winter. Freezing, and so much snow. When you're a kid, it's pure magic. For just a little while, the world changes. You can even walk on water.

JESSIE and RUSTY shiver as they gaze over an iced-over lake.

RUSTY

Let's go.

JESSIE

Are you sure?

RUSTY

What are you, chicken?

JESSIE

It's not safe.

RUSTY

You don't want to walk on water?

JESSIE

What if it cracks?

RUSTY

You watch too many movies.

JESSIE

I've never seen a frozen lake. It never got this cold in California.

RUSTY

Mehhh, California!

JESSIE

I liked California.

RUSTY

Yeah, cause you never saw anything different.

JESSIE

It's warm there.

RUSTY

Ok, ok. Let's slow down. Let's look at it for a while.

A quiet moment passes.

JESSIE

It's so quiet.

RUSTY

Yeah.

More quiet.

JESSIE

I'm cold.

RUSTY

Me too.

JESSIE

Are we going inside now?

RUSTY

Nope.

JESSIE

Rusty!

RUSTY

Are you kidding? I'm not a chicken. If you're a chicken, you can go cluck-clucking back home.

JESSIE

Maybe I am a chicken.

RUSTY

Even the chicken crossed the road.

JESSIE

I'm not coming.

RUSTY

Ok, but I'm going.

JESSIE

But you'll get in trouble.

RUSTY

Uh-huh.

JESSIE

What if something bad happens?

RUSTY

I guess I'll die alone then.

JESSIE

Don't say that!

NOAH

When I found him he was just curled up in this little ball, tears streaming down his face. I felt guilty. I didn't know what to do for him. Everyone was gathered around Jessie, and I wanted to be with them. Not with him. It didn't have to happen. But that was Rusty...always going too far.