

Scene 1

Characters:

Girl
her Brother
a Ghost
the House
the Scissors

Midnight. The Brother and Ghost are in the kitchen sitting across from each other at the table. The table holds a mug and a flask. The Girl enters in pajamas, gets a glass from the cabinet and fills it with milk. She slides into the seat next to the Ghost. She and the Brother consider each other for a moment before she raises the glass and tips it toward him. He returns the gesture with the flask before they both take a sip. He stands, paces the narrow space between the kitchen and the dining room, looks in the fridge, then sits down again. He repeats this movement every few moments.

Brother: Bad dream?

Ghost: Bad dream?

(The Girl takes another long sip, swooshes the milk in her mouth before swallowing.)

Girl: The one where you die. It's getting more vivid. You are. And I never get to say goodbye.

(The Brother laughs. The Ghost doesn't.)

Brother: Hungry?

Ghost: Hungry?

Girl: Not enough to eat—you gonna whip something up?

Brother: Yeah, thinking to. Can't sleep.

Ghost: Yeah, thinking to. Can't sleep.

(He watches her play with the rim of the glass. He gets up and starts slowly pacing.)

Brother: These dreams happening
pretty often now, huh?

Ghost: These dreams happening
pretty often now.

Girl: Often enough.

Brother: Should I be worried?

Ghost: Should I be worried?

(She stops playing with the rim and looks at him, then glances at the Ghost. Sleeplessness has aged him. She looks at the gnarled twists scattered around his head. He sits down and reaches up to wind a twist around his finger.)

Girl: We should all be worried. Because your Ghost is getting louder. Sometimes he even gets up before you do.

(She begins to pick her nails.)

I mean, he scares the shit—

Brother: *Hey—*

Ghost: *Hey—*

Girl: sorry, the crap out of me in the mornings. He's getting too big. One of these days I'll just be able to...

(She carefully reaches her hand out toward the Ghost and it moves through him. Her Brother shudders but she doesn't see it.)

touch him. I mean, I don't know. What can you do.

(The Girl picks up the glass and finishes her milk. The Brother stares at the Ghost. The Ghost stares at the Girl. The Girl considers the flask. The Brother suddenly hops up to the fridge and pulls out a handful of food that he dumps on the table.)

Brother: Well, don't crowd the table

Ghost: Please. Leave.

if you're not gonna eat.

(She chuckles and nods but sits a moment longer watching him search for a pan in the floor cabinets. She nods at the Ghost, who pays her no mind. She gets up.)

Girl: Night, bro. Sleep well.

(He keeps moving around pots and pans, looking. Neither respond.)

End Scene 1

Scene 2

Noon. The Brother stirs awake. Above, the faint noises of an awake home. He rolls over and sees the Ghost sitting at the desk. Curious, but unsurprised by Ghost's presence, he sits up on the edge of the bed. Ghost moves closer to him.

Brother: I thought we agreed to take this slow.

(Ghost turns away, fixes his image to be less like the Brother's. The Brother watches as the Ghost's exterior turns again to the translucent film it was when they first convened.)

Ghost: Better?

(The Brother jumps up, startled at hearing Ghost's voice without his own—its fullness.)

Brother: Slower.

(Ghost reaches towards his throat and makes a turning motion with his hand.)

End Scene 2

Scene 3

Midnight. The House shudders awake and feels the Brother passed out on the dining room table. She peeks through the cracked room doors to see the other kids sleeping. She goes to sit next to the boy, takes his hand. She looks around to see if the Ghost is present.

House: How many people does it take to ruin a home?
Each season, I held these kids in all their stupid splendor
their sun smelling selves those swelling bodies blooming
Jeez.

(She squeezes the boy's hand as he mumbles under his breath.)

I loved all that stank and sang in the whirlwind
of their most sacred hours. Their most sinful sins. And yet.
The weight of this first one.

This grief-slapped boy begged a god forward
and when none came, he split so neat at his seam
I questioned had he ever been whole.

How many people does it take? Two. The answer is two.

This boy was born heavy. But who's to blame
for the something-else that floated out his spine ekwensu
slouched through on his behalf, took dominion,
and put holes in me I'm still fixing.

(The boy yanks his hand away and adjusts his sleeping position. House begins to play with one of his twists.)

Can you love a thing that plans to end you?

End Scene 3

Scene 4

Midnight. A few weeks later. The Girl is woken up by the House's groans. She hears a wooshing in the kitchen and leaves her room to investigate. She sees the Ghost walking between the kitchen and dining room. He's mostly solid now, but when he turns, she can see his figure shimmer in the light as a few rays find a path through him. He hasn't taken the Brother's face yet, so his features are ghoulish, hazy and unfixd. She doesn't see her Brother. The Ghost catches sight of her and pauses, then moves towards a seat. The Girl follows.

Girl: Why are you here?

(Ghost peers past her, down the stairs.)

I know you can speak without him. I've heard you congregating in the walls.

(His non-face face contorts.)

Ghost: I was called here.

Girl: By who?

Ghost: Him.

Girl: How?

Ghost: It's hard to say. I was Nowhere, then this shriek then, this house in the distance, this one. Some warmth. Then, a boy in the dark. And I understood.

Girl: Understood?

Ghost: It's hard to say.

Girl: When will you leave?

(Ghost considers the question, tips his head to the side.)

Ghost: It's hard to say.

Girl: Try.

Ghost: Sooner than you'd—

Girl: Good.

(The Girl quickly gets up and heads back to bed, leaving the Ghost at the table. Ghost stands slowly, considers the shape of his legs. When he looks up, something on the fridge catches his attention. He walks over and leans in, tilts his head, then snaps upright. He continues pacing.)

Ghost: If you say so, Girl.

End Scene 4

Scene 5

Midnight. The kitchen. The Ghost and the Brother are conversing in low, hushed tones. The Brother slams his fist on the table just as the Girl walks in and towards the fridge. As she opens it, she notices the picture. She yanks it out from under its magnet.

Girl: What's this?

(The Girl throws the picture across the table and stares at them. They stop their conversation but neither look at her. The Brother fidgets in his chair and the Ghost leans back.)

Girl: Hey. Who did that?

(The Ghost sighs and picks up the picture. He quickly examines its clean, slanted cut before placing it back on the table.)

Ghost: The Scissors did this. Take it up with them.

Girl: Scissors!

(There's a scraping noise. The Scissors appear next to the Girl.)

Scissors: You'll wake the House.

(The Girl walks to the other end of the table where the photograph landed and holds it up, pointing to the missing half. The Scissors look at the Brother, who's hunched over now, his head in his hands.)

Scissors:	Well,	Yes
	I was	I get
	asked	hungry
	to	I
	take	
	what's	the
	offered	young
	he didn't	boy of
	offer	your
	yet	brother
	but	and erase
	I	and snip
	know	his
	the	story
	smell of	clean

absence away

Ghost, you're looking
good these days. Solid.

Ghost: Thank you.

Brother (*muffled*): Thank you.

Girl: What's your reason.

(She puts the picture back on the table.)

Ghost: I—

Girl: Not you. *You.*

(The Brother raises his head but doesn't face her.)

Brother: An unburdening, I want an unburdening. The picture is fixed. Whole. You understand?

Ghost: Yes.

Scissors: Certainly.

End Scene 5

Scene 6

Midnight. The Brother is in his room, packing. The Ghost helps, his solid hands the same as the Brother's, but packing quicker. They're both opening drawers, closets, boxes, checking to make sure they're clear. The House wakes, creaks towards the boy's room. She stands in the doorway, watching them. The boy glances at her.

Brother: House, where's my headphones, do you know?

(House stays silent, her eyes moving between the two.)

House: Which one are you? My son or my sorrow?

Ghost: House, it's me, come on.

Brother: House, it's me, come on.

(The ~~Brother~~ Ghost shakes his head before going to look for the headphones. The Brother keeps packing. The House goes upstairs, checks that the others are sleeping, then goes to the Girl's room. She sits at the foot of her bed. The boy enters, stands a little way away.)

Ghost: She'll be alright. She usually is.

House: Whichever one you are, leave her be for as long as you can. She doesn't need your kind of ruin. Not yet. Not ever.

Brother: She'll be alright. She usually is.

(The House gently pulls the boy's headphones out from underneath the Girl's pillow and tosses them to him. She moves past him to the foyer, where the ~~Brother~~ Ghost has begun shuffling bags from the room to the car. He has propped the screen door. The Brother walks past the House to his room to collect the remaining bags. He hands them off to Ghost. Once Ghost leaves, House closes the door and locks it.)

House: What if I can't let you leave like this?

Brother: What if you already have?

(House swings the door open and sees ~~Ghost~~ ? in the car, driving away. She turns back to the ~~Brother~~ ?.)

Girl: Hey. House, what's up? I heard you groaning.

House (*startled*): Just speaking with your Brother.

Girl: Oh, where is he? I don't see him.

(He steps closer to the light.)

~~Brother~~ ~~Ghost~~ ?: I'm here. Sorry to wake you, everything's fine. I was just saying goodnight.

End Play

Epilogue

The Scissors and the Ghost. The Scissors examine their handiwork, feel the edge of the place where the Brother's image once was. They consider the other child in the picture.

Scissors: What becomes of the boy who's left?

Ghost: I'll know soon.

End.

