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Cast of Characters

EMMA and DILEMMA	Twin sisters—our narrators
SARAH SORENSON	A brave girl—20
KEVIN SORENSON	A lost boy, 15
JOSHUA LAWSON	A natural leader—18
JENNIFER MASTIFF	A future queen—18
TARA HIVE	Fluttery, insecure—16
DAD	A good man, running from grief
BOYS & GIRLS OF “THE FLOW”	A team, a club, an army
PRINCIPAL HIVE THE MAYOR SHERIFF MASTIFF	The Town Fathers of Farmingdale
RAVEN WOLF	Characters invited from another story

Acknowledgements

The Flow was commissioned by the Guthrie Theater, Joe Dowling, Artistic Director.

THE FLOW

by Dominic Orlando

(Lights up with sudden brightness on a bare stage.)

(Off, a small bell rings.)

(Twin sisters enter: EMMA and DILEMMA. Dressed identically. Very friendly, buoyant—but somehow otherworldly. They take position: EMMA far right, DILEMMA far left.)

EMMA. *(To the audience—making introductions:)* Emma. My sister: Dilemma.

DILEMMA. *(Same:)* Dilemma. My sister: Emma.

EMMA. That was easy. Let's begin: Once upon a time—

DILEMMA. Now don't laugh.

EMMA. Once upon a time—

DILEMMA. Here it comes. *Don't laugh.*

EMMA. There was...a boy.

(KEVIN enters, in simple pants and shirt.)

DILEMMA. Who is this Boy? Listen: This Boy is you. "Me? I'm watching the show—I'm me"—that's what you're thinking. Or—this Boy has black skin, mine is white. Or—this Boy has white skin, mine is black—or red—or yellow. You're not listening. This Boy—is you.

EMMA. Once upon a time there was a Boy. And a Girl.

(SARAH enters, in a simple peasant dress.)

DILEMMA. This Girl is you as well. This is a story about *you*. But I can hear you already: I'm much older— I'm much too old for stories now.

(She smiles.)

Really? Then why are you here? And why do you turn on the television, or go to the movies, day after day? You really have to try your best to keep up.

EMMA. Let's make The Boy and Girl brother and sister. And give them amazing names: Kevin—

(The BOY bows.)

—and Sarah—

(The GIRL bows.)

DILEMMA. Oh! you will say, they do not dress like me, or sound like me. Listen: They are the same as you. This world of ours is very, very old—do you really think everything has not already happened? Listen: Everything has already happened.

EMMA. If you keep interrupting, you'll ruin my whole story.

(Beat—satisfied, she starts again.)

Kevin and Sarah were very happy growing up together, but then one day—

DILEMMA. Have you ever been hiking on a long trail? Maybe you have noticed small piles of stones, set out by the other hikers who have gone before you. What is the purpose of these stones? These stones are like stories. These stones say: Everything has already happened. Go this way, and you will not be harmed. If you listen to a story very carefully, it becomes a pile of stones.

EMMA. *(Insisting:)* Kevin and Sarah were very happy growing up, but then one day—

(Makes sure she won't be interrupted.)

But then one day...the Mother they loved so dearly—she grew very ill, and died. Their Dad, in his grief, dove into his work—he was so successful, they had to travel all over the county, or sometimes, Dad traveled even further, and left the children far behind.

(DAD enters.)

DAD. My business calls me away again, children. But listen: Your Mother left you each a beautiful silver ring when she died. All her

other things—her books and paintings—I’ve put deep into storage—but you should have these rings your Mother left you. She would want you to wear them always, and never part, not until you’re all grown. When you’re young, the world is a storm—you need something to hold onto.

(DAD gives them each a silver ring, exits.)

EMMA. They didn’t understand what Dad meant, but they put on the rings and never took them off. And promised never to part ways until they were all grown. But then one day—the wars came, and Sarah forgot what she promised her father, and decided it was her duty to go off and fight.

(SARAH takes off her dress—underneath she wears the uniform of a Marine recruit. She hands the dress to KEVIN.)

SARAH. I have to go off and fight the wars—goodbye, Kevin.

(KEVIN throws her dress on over his clothes.)

Very funny.

KEVIN. Why’re you so set on fighting? You’ve always been like this. I don’t get it.

SARAH. You remember how Dad liked to read us “Sleeping Beauty”—

KEVIN. Dad loved “Sleeping Beauty.”

SARAH. That dumb story, over and over again. That Prince on his warhorse, with his sword and his armor—so brave and so strong. And what does the Princess do? She sleeps. She sleeps through the whole story until the big, brave Prince frees her. Well, not me. I’m not sleeping through this war. I’m going to be a hero.

EMMA. There was a lot her brother could say to that, but he only said:

KEVIN. Goodbye, Sarah. I’ll miss you. Come back safe.

SARAH. Keep my silver ring to remember me by.

KEVIN. You can’t be without a silver ring—take mine.

(They exchange rings.)

SARAH. Goodbye, little brother! Be happy!

(She exits.)

DILEMMA. Can we hear what Kevin wanted to say to his sister, but didn't.

EMMA. Yes, I think we should.

KEVIN. I remember Dad reading "Sleeping Beauty." That dumb story. And that Prince, in all his armor, riding—an expert with the sword and bow—and then, and then he fights that dragon—all alone, just a puny little sword against a magic dragon! And what does the Princess do—she sleeps. Lucky her! You want to go fight dragons, be my guest. I'll be on the couch!

EMMA. And so, Sarah went off to fight the wars. But Kevin still had two years left at school—

(A pack of STUDENTS comes running on—KEVIN frantically takes off the dress and adjusts his clothes—the STUDENTS rush past KEVIN and off.)

Now remember, their Dad is very successful, and so they move from town to town a lot.

(DAD enters.)

DAD. Ok, Kevin—here we are: Farmingdale High School. I'll be home in a few weeks. I've rented us a little house in the nicest part of town—here are the keys.

KEVIN. Farmingdale's my third school in a year! I'm not learning anything. I'm always alone.

DAD. Remember your silver ring! You're never alone. Be happy!

(He shakes KEVIN's hand, exits.)

EMMA. So Kevin went to Farmingdale. He worked very hard. He even wrote for the newspaper. In fact, he was in the office of the school newspaper, alone one night, when something happened.

(KEVIN at a small desk.)

The office was empty—maybe the whole school was empty. Kevin knew the little house in the nicest part of town would be empty. Ever worse—Kevin was starting to *feel* a little empty himself. And then:

VOICES. (*Off:*) Team! Team! Team! Team!

(*Four BOYS and four GIRLS, all dressed identically, rush by KEVIN, chanting. KEVIN jumps to his feet, surprised and delighted—*)

BOYS & GIRLS. (*Off:*) Team! Team! Team! Team!

(*KEVIN runs off, following the sound. The BOYS & GIRLS run on—then rush off, just as KEVIN rushes back—he stops a moment, looking around—then follows them.*)

EMMA. Kevin followed the sound of their chanting down and down, through hallways of the school he didn't know existed, until he came to The Almost Locked Door.

(*The Almost Locked Door appears.*)

DILEMMA. “The Almost Locked Door”?

EMMA. Well, OK, it *was* locked. But Kevin found, if he pulled hard enough on the Almost Locked Door, he could open it just a crack—just enough to hear—

(*KEVIN pulls the door open a crack.*)

JOSH. (*Off:*) What is The Flow?

BOYS & GIRLS. (*Off:*) The Flow is The Future!

(*The door slips from KEVIN's hands and slams shut.*)

KEVIN. What is, “The Flow”?

(*He takes a breath, tries the door again, pulling it open just a crack.*)

JOSH. (*Off:*) Do we have the fuel?

BOYS & GIRLS. (*Off:*) We have the fuel!

JOSH. (*Off:*) Is The Tank full?

(*The door slips out of KEVIN's hands, slamming shut.*)

DILEMMA. Third time's a charm, so the tales say.

(KEVIN tries to pull the door open enough to slip through—he's almost got it—but it slips out of his hands again—)

(This time someone on the other side stops it from closing.)

(KEVIN stares at the door, then steps back slowly as it opens from the other side.)

(JOSH steps through the doorway—looming.)

JOSH. Sorry, Spud—only members of The Flow are allowed to—

(He stops—his eye caught on something.)

Wow. Cool ring. Silver. Pretty-pretty.

KEVIN. Well—this one is my sister's—but—my Mom gave them to us—la—*left*—them to us—we—I—

JOSH. *(Eyes on the ring:)* Whoa—kiddo, don't spoil the story. Wait and tell everybody—

KEVIN. “Everybody”? But—but you just said—only—only members of—what is “The Flow”?

JOSH. *(Big smile:)* Who listens to little ol' me— Come on in! And get that ring ready for show and tell!

KEVIN. Great—sure. “Show and Tell”—great. Sounds great. Thanks. Thank you so much—

(He breaks into a big smile. JOSH puts an arm around him, leading him through the door—KEVIN is beaming.)

BOYS & GIRLS. *(Chanting, beyond the door:)* Kevin! Kevin! Kevin! Kevin! Kevin!

(JOSH returns, alone, pulls the door closed with a big smile.)

(Blackout.)

EMMA. Now might be a good time to see what's happening with Sarah—

DILEMMA. A fine idea, sister—let's look:

SARAH. *(In darkness:)* So am I the Prince now?

(A light reveals SARAH in a Marine dress uniform, the dress sword hanging off her belt.)

Dear Kevin: I've been thinking about the last time we talked, and "Sleeping Beauty," and wanting so bad to be The Prince instead of the Princess—

DILEMMA. Oh, no, that's all wrong— *(Cups her hands, shouting at SARAH:)* The Prince is you, *and* The Princess is you.

SARAH. Ever since Mom died I felt kind of lonely inside—and Dad is never... I thought if I came here I might—I thought maybe they could teach me about the Dragon, about what the Dragon looks like—*outside* of stories—what the Dragon looks like in real life—and if I knew that maybe—

DILEMMA. The Dragon is you, too!

SARAH. Do you ever feel a, a, *blankness*, Kevin? Sometimes, when everyone's asleep, I'll sit in the cold moonlight, just staring ahead, and it feels like that cold and lonely light is soaking into me—I hold up my ring—our ring—I try to remember Mom, but Dad seems so far away—

(A SERGEANT snaps to attention nearby.)

SERGEANT. Sorenson? Sarah Sorenson? *(Showing a telegram:)* This came for you.

(SARAH takes the telegram, bowing her head to read it.)

Is everything all right, Sorenson?

SARAH. Sir, it's my brother Kevin, sir. *(She looks up from the telegram.)* He's disappeared. Sir.

(Blackout.)

EMMA. Sarah's Dad was in another land on his business, and though they left one message after another, he could not be reached. So Sarah was sent to Farmingdale to see about her brother.

SARAH. *(In darkness:)* What is The Flow?

(Lights. The Principal's office.)

(The PRINCIPAL, the SHERIFF and the MAYOR. SARAH stands across the room from them, in her dress uniform, the sword hanging off her hip.)

MAYOR. First, let's thank Principal Hive for letting us use his office for this—meeting. Meeting.

PRINCIPAL. My office is at your service, Mr. Mayor. Farmingdale is more like a family than a town.

MAYOR. Thank you, Principal Hive. Hive. And thank you, Sheriff Mastiff, for taking time off your busy rounds to be with us. With us.

SHERIFF. Like the man said, Mayor—Farmingdale is a family.

(He growls.)

MAYOR. As Mayor of Farmingdale, I want to assure you, Miss Sorenson, Sorenson—I want to assure you that everything possible is being done to find your brother. Isn't that right, Sheriff?

SHERIFF. Everything possible is being done. Within the Law, of course, Mr. Mayor.

MAYOR. Of course, Sheriff Mastiff. Everything within the Law—that goes without saying.

SARAH. What is, "The Flow," Principal Hive?

PRINCIPAL. "The Flow" is the most successful after-school program our school has ever seen.

MAYOR. My son Josh is the founder and president.

SHERIFF. My daughter Jenny is the founder and vice-president.

PRINCIPAL. My daughter Tara is the secretary.

MAYOR. They have their monthly meetings at our Cabin at The Lake. Least while the weather holds up. Then they have their meetings up at Snowtop. We're very proud of The Flow. The Flow.

SARAH. Wasn't my brother Kevin with The Flow when he disappeared?

SHERIFF. *(Growls, takes out a huge pad, reads:)* "Subject Kevin Sorenson attended the monthly meeting of The Flow at Snowtop

Estate. He was driven home by Joshua Lawson and Jenny Mastiff. They left Kevin at his door.”

SARAH. But, what did—what did they—what is “The Flow”?

(Beat.)

PRINCIPAL. *(Fluttering through papers on his desk:)* You should see the Flow in action—they’re at Mankato Middle School right now. The Flow’s more like community service than a club. Farmingdale’s more like a family, than a town.

SARAH. “Mankato Middle School”—thanks. I’ll go have a look.

(Blackout.)

JOSH. *(In darkness:)* Good Morning, class—we’re The Flow.

(Lights. JOSH LAWSON stands at the head of a classroom at Mankato Middle School.)

(To his left, four BOYS dressed identically. To his right, four GIRLS, dressed identically. JENNY, also dressed identically, stands beside him. TARA, also dressed identically, sits, taking notes. They all face the classroom. They look more like successful young adults than teenagers. Above their heads, a banner: “Go With The F.L.O.W.”)

The Flow is very happy to be here at Mankato Middle School—to talk to you guys and maybe answer some questions you might have.

(He looks around, smiles.)

You don’t look too happy to see us.

(Smiles.)

I know what you’re thinking—“Why do I have to sit through this crap? Bunch of honor roll kids doing volunteer work to beef up their transcripts”—but The Flow means much, much more.

(Takes a fake beat.)

Well—okay—maybe we are beefing up our transcripts. Just a little.

(Smiles.)

But really, we're a Time Machine. You know what a Time Machine is—right? Well, we came here in a Time Machine to tell you The Future, *your* future—is real. And you need to be ready for it. You need to invest in the most valuable stock there is: Your own future.

(Smiles.)

How do you do that? How do you invest in your future? By *not* investing in the things that can destroy it. What do I mean by that? Hmm...what can destroy the future—Jenny?

JENNY. Drugs and alcohol can destroy the future, Josh!

JOSH. What can destroy the future—Tara?

TARA. Uhm—sex before marriage and abortion can destroy the future, Josh!

JOSH. What can destroy the future—Cory?

BOY. Too much partying and not enough study can destroy the future, Josh!

JOSH. And what does The Flow say to all that?

ALL. DON'T DESTROY YOUR FUTURE!

JOSH. What does The Flow say?

ALL. DON'T DESTROY YOUR FUTURE!

JOSH. What does The Flow say?

ALL. DON'T DESTROY YOUR FUTURE!

(Blackout.)

SARAH. *(In darkness:)* Jenny Mastiff?

(Lights. JENNY and TARA outside Mankato Junior High School. JENNY walks with fierce determination—TARA shuffles behind in a flurry of papers and knapsacks—they turn, hearing Jenny's name called. SARAH enters. JENNY stares at her.)

SARAH. I'm Corporal Sarah Sorenson. Kevin's sister. Kevin Sorenson?

(Her finger twitches suddenly. It's her ring finger—she controls it, embarrassed.)

JENNY. Wow...that outfit's just so cool. And it fits you so well. Really nice around the shoulders. I mean, you look like a boy, which is—is—*silly*...but it's cool, too.

SARAH. *(Controlling her ring hand:)* I was hoping to talk to you and Josh about my brother.

JENNY. Wow. Sure. Josh has—he'll be done in a second. Tara was just going for the car. Right?

(She looks at TARA.)

TARA. Oh. Right. I can get the car. You guys wait here for Josh.

(She exits.)

(SARAH realizes the ring has stopped twitching.)

JENNY. That's my car over there— isn't it a monster? I think it gets, like, point-five miles a gallon or something—but look at it! I mean, the windows are smoked, and it has four-wheel drive, and I can tell you, when people see me and Josh coming up in their rear-view mirror—that's the greatest feeling in the whole world! That monster rumbling underneath you, eating up the ground, and you look out those windows, and you see people who can't see you, but they can see you coming, and they just *step aside*—

SARAH. What does F.L.O.W. stand for?

JENNY. Future Leaders Of the World—Flow. Future Leaders Of the World. It was supposed to be Future Leaders of America, but that spells out “FLOA” which isn't a word, I don't think.

SARAH. What does The Flow do up at Snowtop?

JENNY. It's great! Josh's Dad has, like, four gabillion acres, and he lets us have our monthlies—

SARAH. Your “monthlies”—

JENNY. The monthly FLOW. It's all about psyching yourself up for college, you know, beefing up your transcript, helping the community—everybody wins.

SARAH. But you stay the weekend up at Snowtop?

JENNY. What's keeping Josh? (*Turning back to SARAH:*) Yeah—it's great. It's all in the woods and so cold. But there's fireplaces and a Jacuzzi—

SARAH. A Jacuzzi?

JENNY. Joshy, Joshy, Joshy!

SARAH. So you guys drove my brother Kevin home? From Snowtop? Are you sure Kevin got inside?

(TARA honks the horn, off.)

(SARAH's finger starts up again—she controls it.)

JENNY. There's Tara with the car, but—and there's Josh! Joshy, Joshy, Joshy!

(JOSH bounds on, holding a sleek silver thermos that looks almost like a big bullet.)

JOSH. The Tank is full!

JENNY. Josh, this is Stanley—

SARAH. Sarah.

JENNY. (*Laughs at herself:*) “Stanley”—what a goof. This is Sarah? She's Kevin's brother? Kevin Sorenson?

JOSH. Jesus, I... Kevin's sister... I don't know what to say...

(He takes her hand sympathetically—then his eye catches on her ring—he brushes it discretely with his thumb.)

We dropped Kevin off at home. It wasn't even that late. I saw him go in.

JENNY. Josh always waits outside till people get in safe.

JOSH. I don't...I mean, I keep thinking—was there something I could do? Did we drive away, like, *two seconds* too soon? I just feel—Sarah? Oh, I'm sorry, I'm just saying all the wrong things.

DILEMMA. Why isn't Sarah talking?

EMMA. Sometimes beauty, charm, charisma—it confuses people, and they can't talk—no one knows why.

DILEMMA. Isn't there a word for that spell? The spell of beauty, charm and charisma all rolled into one?

EMMA. A very old word. That spell is called a "glamour."

SARAH. I—uhm— *(She meets JOSH's eyes.)* No. I understand what you're saying. I do. Thank you.

JOSH. If you need anything—

JENNY. —anything—

JOSH. —while you're in town. *Anything.* You let us know, OK?—

(A car door slams, off, and TARA rushes in.)

TARA. C'mon guys, we have to get ready for—

(SARAH's hand—the ring hand—shoots into the air like an exclamation point. Everyone stares.)

(SARAH waves, improvising.)

SARAH. Ok, then—thanks! Bye!

(Awkward beat. JOSH nods soberly, kisses her cheek. He exits with TARA and JENNY. SARAH watches after them, then looks down at her ring:)

Kevin?

(Blackout.)

EMMA. The Flow has a small office, in the basement of Farmingdale High School.

(Lights. The office. JOSH is on his cell.)

(PRINCIPAL HIVE enters.)

JOSH. Principal Hive! With the Hi-Five!

(Snaps the phone shut.)

Sorry—checking the weather. We're heading up to Snowtop—I want to beat that storm—

PRINCIPAL. We all have great hopes for you, Josh. You and Jenny.

JOSH. Great girl, Jenny. So's Tara. Great Young People in this town, Principal Hive. A real future.

(The SHERIFF and the MAYOR enter have entered.)

Dad?

MAYOR. It's all about the future, Josh. Josh.

SHERIFF. For you and my Jenny. The future.

MAYOR. Governor Lawson. Governor. Josh-*shua* Lawson.

SHERIFF. First Lady. Jennifer Mastiff-Lawson.

JOSH. That's the plan.

SHERIFF. *(He growls. Takes out his giant pad:)* "Subject Kevin Sorenson lives in a little house in the nicest part of town rented by his father—Mr. Sorenson. A complete examination of said premises revealed nothing disturbed and said windows and said doors locked from the inside."

MAYOR. Nothing disturbed. Disturbed.

PRINCIPAL. Doors locked from the inside. Windows.

SHERIFF. You didn't drop Kevin off. Kevin never made it home. No one's been in that house.

(He starts eating the notes off the pad.)

MAYOR. It's all about the future. The glow of promise. The promise of beauty. Governor Joshua Lawson. *President* Joshua Lawson.

(Suddenly grabs JOSH by the collar, pulling him close—the others FREEZE.)

We're with you, Josh. Behind you all the way. But you can't step in anything that leaves footprints.

(He releases JOSH, breaking the FREEZE.)

Have a good meeting, son! Get up to Snowtop ahead of that storm. Storm.

(The MAYOR, SHERIFF and PRINCIPAL exit.)

(JOSH stares after them. TARA bustles in, loaded down with papers, and he snaps out of it, turning on her.)

TARA. Ok, Josh—everybody's out in the parking lot waiting to head up to Snowtop. I gave out the carpool list—here's your copy. And some maps—here's a copy of that—

JOSH. Tara. We need to talk about something, Tara. Something important.

TARA. Am I coming up to Snowtop this month, Josh, is that it? Am I?

JOSH. Tara, Tara, Tara. How old are you?

TARA. Uhm—I'll be seventeen in December.

JOSH. That's almost a year away, Tara. What did they tell you when you joined The Flow?

TARA. *(Sigh:)* The first lesson of leadership is Humility.

JOSH. And what does that mean?

TARA. *(Sigh:)* I can't go up to Snowtop until I'm seventeen.

JOSH. Good, good, good. No, we have to talk about something a lot more serious than Snowtop. You took something from me, Tara—something that's mine. And I take very seriously what's mine. Tut-tut-tut—we don't need to talk about it—nothing needs to be said—or done. I'll hold out my hand, and if you put this thing, this thing you— *(Sudden, tight rage)* —stole.

(Smiles.)

That you stole from me. Put it in the palm of my hand and it's all forgotten and forgiven.

(He holds out his hand.)

(Beat. TARA takes off the silver ring and sets in JOSH's palm.)

TARA. I only took it because, because, because *you said*—

JOSH. *(Closing his palm over the ring:)* Sssssh. Forgotten and Forgiven. Everything is golden. The future is golden.

(He smiles down at her—she smiles back, relieved.)

(Suddenly he kisses her hard, on the mouth. She doesn't know what to do, drops her papers all over the floor. He pulls her body very close to his.)

(After a moment, he breaks the kiss.)

(She pulls away, confused and disheveled.)

(JENNY pokes her head in so suddenly TARA screams.)

JENNY. *(Ignoring TARA:)* Ready to go, Josh? The tank is full! Gotta beat that storm!

JOSH. Rough and ready! Show me the High-Five, Tara!

(TARA, terrified, High-Five's JOSH.)

JENNY. Seeya on Monday!

(They exit. TARA collapses into a chair, weeping. SARAH enters. She sees TARA and holds up her ring hand—nothing happens.)

SARAH. Tara? What's wrong? Where is everybody?

TARA. Snowtop.

SARAH. Oh, right. I guess it has been a month.

(TARA nods, sobbing, head bowed.)

(SARAH tries her ring again, waving it over TARA's head. Nothing. She looks around, discouraged. Sees the sleek silver thermos, unscrews it.)

You want some tea or— *(She smells the thermos)* —what *is* this stuff?

TARA. *(Waving away the offer:)* No, no—the tank is full...the tank is...full...

(SARAH slowly screws the top back on the sleek thermos, setting it down.)

(TARA cries.)

SARAH. OK. Well. Don't let it get to you, Tara. Tell Josh I was looking for him, please. Ok?

(TARA *nods*. SARAH *turns, starting off*.)

TARA. (*Blurting:*) He took back my ring! Josh gave me a pretty ring and then he just took it back!

(SARAH *struggles to stay calm—turns slowly, looking at TARA with intense focus*.)

SARAH. A silver ring?

TARA. Y-yes. Well, okay, maybe he didn't *give* it to me, exactly, but he said, he said as soon as I was old enough to go to Snowtop, we could, we could be—

SARAH. Look carefully, Tara: Was it a ring like this one? Like mine?

TARA. He gave it to you! And you look like a boy! But I am old enough! I swear I am!

SARAH. (*Crouching down to be face to face:*) And were you wearing Josh's ring when we were all in the parking lot today?

TARA. Y-yes I was—stop *scaring* me!

(SARAH *stands up like a bolt*.)

SARAH. Where is Snowtop?

TARA. (*Sniffling:*) There's a map—I—I made copies and everything—

(*Blackout.*)

(*In the darkness a wind howls.*)

DILEMMA. Cold.

EMMA. Cold, wind and snow.

DILEMMA. Does Sarah know about the storm?

EMMA. Sarah hasn't lived up North—not ever. She doesn't watch the sky with an eye toward her fate.

(*A cold light cracks down on SARAH, sword drawn, moving against the wind.*)

Of course there's no driving her car through this storm—Sarah has to hike—

DILEMMA. But there's a deep, dark forest all around Snowtop.

(SARAH falls to her knees. Then curls up on the ground, shivering.)

EMMA. The snow falls and falls. The forest turns white. The forest turns to ice.

DILEMMA. Sarah is lost and cold in the old forest—*do* something, Emma.

EMMA. We've been over this, Dilemma—the story tells us where to go—we don't—*interrupt*.

DILEMMA. But we could help her. We could call for help.

EMMA. You can't go around interrupting things, Sister—everything will get confused.

DILEMMA. Raven! Raven!

EMMA. *(Mortified:)* Raven belongs to a different kind of story, Sister, don't—

(RAVEN flies on with a loud caw.)

RAVEN. What is this young Prince doing, sleeping in the snow?

DILEMMA. Her name is Sarah—she's trying to get to Snowtop and save her brother from the dragon—can you help her?

RAVEN. It's about time you noticed the Dragon. The Dragons eat the forest and burn the land—the skies turn black with poison—and where are the Princes? Where are the fine Princes to slay the eaters of the Earth? Now a Prince has come at last—of course the forest will help him—

(She flies off.)

EMMA. I'm not happy about this interruption. Not one bit.

(RAVEN returns, followed by WOLF. WOLF noses SARAH gently, then breathes his hot breath on her—the snow melts and she stirs.)

RAVEN. Up you go, Fair Prince. Climb on Wolf's back and he'll take you to Snowtop.

WOLF. Only if you promise to kill the Dragon once you get there.

SARAH. Kill—

RAVEN. We know humans have funny words for things—and sometimes lies can make men kings, and make women beautiful. We have no such luxuries in the forest. Will you go to Snowtop and slay the Dragon?

SARAH. *(Stands, climbing on WOLF's back:)* Show me the way—

(RAVEN flies off. WOLF follows, SARAH on his back.)

EMMA. What a mess you make of things, sister.

DILEMMA. Sarah hunts with Raven and Wolf, as her ancestors did, a thousand thousand years ago.

EMMA. Whose story is this, anyhow?

DILEMMA. This is the story of a Prince, a Princess and a Dragon. And we will see it to its end.

(Blackout.)

SARAH. *(In darkness—groggy, sleepy:)* Josh—Josh it's so cold...

JOSH. *(In darkness:)* Sssh, drink this and sleep...

(Lights. Snowtop. SARAH lies on a soft rug. JOSH hovers over her, helping her sip the silver thermos. She wears her summer dress. Her hair is combed out and flows under her head like a soft pillow.)

Dude, you had us so worried. What were doing out there in the snow? If Jenny wasn't so scared of wolves—she heard the howling and made me check it out. I am the boy, after all.

SARAH. *(Reaching up to drink:)* You are. You are the boy.

(She sits up, barely—he holds the thermos to her mouth, supporting her head with his other hand—she drinks, leaning on her hands to get closer, slurping—)

(Wiping her mouth with the back of her hand:) It's so nice and hot...
(Notices what she's wearing:) What a pretty dress...

JOSH. It sure is...you look like a princess...

SARAH. A princess...

(She smiles. Then sees something over his shoulder, in the shadows. She stands, still groggy.)

SARAH. Who's that—

(Before JOSH can stop her, SARAH runs across the room.)

(A light reveals KEVIN, lying on a narrow bed. KEVIN wears the Marine dress uniform, the sword held with both hands so that it runs up the length of his body, to his mouth. He sleeps.)

JOSH. *(Keeps his cool, follows her:)* That's the Dragon!

SARAH. *(Eyes wide:)* The dragon...

JOSH. Dude came up here with us. For a while it was all good—everything was good. But then there was some madness—so we had to put him out of commission.

SARAH. Wow. He doesn't look like a dragon.

JOSH. Oh, don't let that fool you. A dragon can look like anything—or anybody.

SARAH. So how do you know one when you see it?

JOSH. You ever see those old pictures—like in a museum? The dragon in his cave. And he's got, like, all this gold spread out around him—he's practically sitting in it! And he's got babes hung up on the walls in chains—princesses and shit. Man, who can spend all that gold, or be solid with all those different ladies? That's how you know a dragon—he just wants more. He just wants more and more and more. He sees something pretty-pretty—it doesn't matter if it's gold, or a car, or a house, or a person—he wants it. And when he wants, he takes. And after he takes, he hoards—he never lets go of anything. That's how you know a dragon.

SARAH. He is pretty.

JOSH. Pretty-pretty. But full of want. So much want it's like a fire in his mouth.

(SARAH touches KEVIN's hand—something strikes her and she looks at her ring hand—her finger and the ring are both gone. A bandage covers her hand.)

JOSH. Frostbite, Dude. You must've be out there for hours. But you're safe now—

SARAH. Where's everyone else?

JOSH. *(Stroking her face:)* It's a big, big, house. Lots of land, too. The boys and girls run wild on Snowtop—but we leave no footprints. Not even in the snow.

SARAH. What pretty rings you have... I remember rings...two silver rings...

JOSH. Time to drink more and sleep.

(Comes back with the thermos.)

Open wide, pretty-pretty—nice and hot.

(SARAH opens her mouth, but it's obvious she's struggling to remember. Something changes on her face and she drinks very deeply. Then turns up her face to JOSH to be kissed. JOSH smiles wickedly and kisses her—but his face darkens as he realizes she's pushing the liquid out from her mouth and into his. He tries to pull away, but she holds him close. Finally, he breaks free, sputtering.)

JOSH. Not so pretty-pretty...just like your brother, first so pretty, then so mean...so...

(He collapses, knocked out.)

(SARAH tries to clear her head. She grabs the rings to pull them off JOSH's finger. They will not budge.)

JENNY. *(Bursting in:)* Hey, Josh, is the tank full?

(Sees SARAH.)

Oh, hi, Stanley. Where's your handsome suit?

(Sees KEVIN—laughs.)

Funny-funny. But I think you both look better the other way. Boys are boys and girls are girls when it comes to principals and sher-

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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