RAVENS
By Jacek Zuzanski
Excerpt of the play

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Narrator
Sophie
Uncle Fred
Father
Grandma
Goodie Hatch
Brothers
Winds
Lizard
Sun
Wolf
Moon
Bat
Stars
Footman
Ravens

NARRATOR:
Once, in a house on the edge of a village surrounded by fields and forests, along with her mom and dad, lived Sophie. They lived in the house far from other houses in the village, and Sophie often played alone.

SCENE I

SOPHIE

UNCLE FRED
Hello Sophie. What are you scratching at there?

SOPHIE
Hi uncle. I am drawing.

UNCLE FRED
What is it?
SOPHIE
Children. Here is a girl and a boy is there.

UNCLE FRED
Didn’t your dad leave something for me?

SOPHIE
No, nothing. The boy will have freckles.

UNCLE FRED
Are you sure he didn’t give you anything for me?

SOPHIE
I’m sure. And he will be read–haired like you uncle.

UNCLE FRED
Oh well. I have to run to see your neighbor. Bye Sophie.

SOPHIE
Buy. And the girl will have blue eyes like mom.

FATHER
Sophie, Here you are… Uncle Fred will be passing by (here). Please give him this box

SOPHIE
Yes, but ...

FATHER
He should be here soon. Will you remember?

SOPHIE
I will, but…

FATHER
That’s good. (Leaves)

SOPHIE
But dad, Uncle was just here. And now what? I don’t know if he will be coming again.

GRANDMA
How is my Sophie?

SOPHIE
Oh granny, I have to run after uncle Fred. (She runs out)
GRANDMA
Gone…

GOODIE HATCH
Good morning Goodie Willow. Isn’t Sophie growing up to be a pretty girl?
GRANDMA
That’s true, she is pretty.

GOODIE HATCH
And how clever! Just think what kind of men her brothers would have been…

GRANDMA
Oh, dear, better not say that out loud!

GOODIE HATCH
True, that’s the holy truth, you’re right about that. But the boys, too bad. To think, everything could have been so different if only Sophie….
GRANDMA
Sophie has nothing to do with this.

GOODIE HATCH
True, that’s the holy truth, but her brothers, don’t you think that something should be done?

GRANDMA
I don’t think there is anything to do.

GOODIE HATCH
But someone has to be guilty. Oh, I left a cake in the oven. Extend my greetings to the family! *(Runs out)*

GRANDMA
Thank you, thank you, and the best of health to you and yours.

SOPHIE
Grandma…

GRANDMA
Oh, here you are.

SOPHIE
I heard everything.

GRANDMA
What did you hear?
SOPHIE
Is it thru I have brothers?

GRANDMA
I shouldn’t talk to you about it.

SOPHIE
Why not?

GRANDMA
It's not that simple.

SOPHIE
Not simple?

GRANDMA
You better ask your mom.

NARRATOR
Sophie was very anxious about what she overheard and she asked her mom about brothers. First Mom did not want to say anything, but Sophie begged and begged so finally mom told her about the day when Sophie was born. That night, Sophie could hardly sleep. And when she did, she had a dream.

SCENE II
BROTHERS

BROTHERS
They say mom is going to have a baby.
What do you think?
I don’t know.
Do you think we will have a brother or sister?
There is seven of us boys already.
I would rather prefer a brother
I would like a sister better.
A sister would not be bad.
Everybody will like her.
When will it come?
Soon.
I want to see.
Me too!
They don’t want us to disturb.
It would be good to have a sister.
We could teach her a lot.
I would show her how to do a slingshot.
Me too!
Girls don’t use slingshots!
So what they shoot from?
They do not shoot.
Not at all?
They play with dolls.
I would carve her a doll.
Me too!
What would I do?
You could make a little bed for the doll.
This was my idea!
We don’t know yet whether it will be a girl.
I want to do something to help.
You're too small.
You are too small yourself!

FATHER
Quiet boys. We need water. Take a jug and fast run to the well.

BOY
Dad, is this a girl?

FATHER
Yes, yes a girl, you have the little sister.

BROTHERS
We have a little sister, we have a little sister!
I will help you.
I want to help to.
I will help to hold it.
I will turn the crank.
Let me carry the jug.
Dad gave it to me.
You carried it before.
Now it’s my turn.
Give it back, dad gave it to me!
But he wanted to give it to me.
You never walked for water.
So now I will.
Give it to me.
No.
Give it back.
I also want to.
You again!
I got it.
Let it go.
Let loose.
Leave it.
Do not pull.
Harder.
You'll see.
Not at all.
Let go.
Hold it.
Pull on.
That’s mine!
Ours!

(The jug fell to the ground and broke)

Now what?

NARRATOR
As the boys looked down at the smashed pieces of the jug on the stony path, and watched the water disappear into the ground, people inside of the house were waiting.

GRANDMA
Where’s the water. Has anyone gone for water?

FATHER
I sent the boys, they should be back already.

GRANDMA
We need it now!

FATHER
They should be here already. They are playing pranks again. Troubles all the time with these boys! I have had enough of this! I could have walked to the well and back three times already. The crows on the fence are of better help. I hope these kids turn into Ravens and fly away! I hope they get lost behind highest mountains. I don’t want to see them again!

NARRATOR
Barely had the father uttered these words, when they heard sound of wings.
(Seven black birds circle above their heads. They circle around over the house and then flew away.)

SCENE III
WINDS

NARRATOR
Winds howled behind the window. The door squeaked. The winds torn down (ripped off)
leaves of the apple tree gusted them around whistled and whispered.

WINDS
This is all your fault.
They had to fly away to the end of the world.
It’s your fault.
They live far away in hunger and cold, with no mother, no father, no sister and no heat in the fireplace.
It’s your fault.
You do not deserve happiness.
You do not deserve love.

SOPHIE
What should I do? I cannot stay here. There is no longer any place for me here.
Maybe, at least, I can go and look for my brothers
WIND
It will be a long very long journey.
SOPHIE
I know. I'll take a little stool to sit on when I get tired.

WIND
The hunger will gnaw on your bones day after day.

SOPHIE
I'll take a loaf of bread for hunger.

WIND
You will perish of thirst anyway.

SOPHIE
For the thirst I'll take a jug of water.

SCENE IV
LIZARD

NARRATOR
And Sophie went on the road. In the evening, after wandering the whole day, she stopped to sit on her little stool and relax.

VOICE
Hey you!

SOPHIE
Who is it?
VOICE
It is I!

SOPHIE
Where are you?

LIZARD
Here.

SOPHIE
Can you come out so I can see you?

LIZARD
I am not exceptionally good looking.

SOPHIE
You are what?

LIZARD
They say I am rather ugly.

SOPHIE
I know what you mean.

LIZARD
Do they say you are bad?

SOPHIE
That’s why I had to go away.

LIZARD
You ran away?

SOPHIE
I need to find my brothers.

(Lizard appears from behind his hiding place.)

LIZARD
What do they look like, these brothers of yours?

SOPHIE
They are ravens.

LIZARD
How many?

SOPHIE
Seven.
LIZARD
I know someone who will know where they are. If you want I will lead you to him.

SOPHIE
Will you?

LIZARD
We will need to cross this desert.

SOPHIE
Let’s go then.

LIZARD
It's a long way to go. Give me this heavy jug. I'll help you carry it.

NARRATOR
The lizard took the jug of water from Sophie and they set off. First bushes disappeared, then the last clumps of grass, and finally after day long walk they were surrounded by the rocky glowing heat of emptiness.

SOPHIE
Is it far?

LIZARD
We are almost there.

SOPHIE
It is so terribly hot and there is not even a sliver of shade to hide in.

LIZARD
We are close to the sun’s home. The sun should know where your brothers are.

SOPHIE
Let's sit down for a moment and have a drink of water

LIZARD
There is no much left.

SOPHIE
What do you mean?

LIZARD
This jug probably has a hole
It is empty!

LIZARD
It has to have a crack.

SOPHIE
You drank it when I wasn’t looking!

LIZARD
Imagine that! I am showing you the way, I am carrying this heavy jug of yours, and you repay me with accusations! From here on you’re on your own. I have enough!

NARRATOR
The lizard turned away from Sophie and fled.