The Voice from the Boat

An original play by
Jacek Zuzanski and Laura Opie

Excerpt of the play

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ANNA – attentive, usually quiet, hears the voice from under the boat. Likes to read, but is more of a daydreamer. Visits summers with her brother, Randy. They stay at their Grandfather’s, near the beach.

RANDY – Anna’s older brother. Outspoken. A leader. Kind to everyone but his sister, but she couldn’t care less.

MEERA – One of Anna’s two best friends, along with Suzy. Meera is a year-round resident. Max’s sister.

MAX (MAX/MAXINE) – Meera’s brother or sister. They are very close in age.

SUZY - One of Anna’s best friends, along with Meera. Sam’s sister. Another year-round resident. Works at the village store, which her parents own. Sam’s sister.

SAM (SAM/SAMANTHA) - Suzy’s brother/sister. Agreeable, with a wild imagination and love of talking like a pirate.

HELEN - Loves to read, doesn’t take sides. Intellectual, reads everything she can get her hands on. An authority everybody respects. Good natured, but doesn’t laugh (or grimmace) at stupid jokes.

TATA – Helen’s cousin. New to the group, staying the summer with Helen. A bit of a tom-boy. Knows a lot about witches, wizards, psychics, and magic, since her sister investigates and studies these things.

CHRIS (CHRISTOPHER/CHRISTINE) – One of the gang. Comes for the summer. Tends to side with Randy.

PAT (PATTI/PATRICK) – A real observer. Is often quiet, assessing the situation, letting others do the talking, but jumps in when something needs to be said. Pat’s parents are both doctors in the local hospital.

KODA – Aside from this group, a bit of a loner. Has natural leadership qualities he doesn’t often use. He is a little morbid, at times, for good reason.

LILIAN – A ‘girly-girl.’ Just little stuck-up, would like to always be the center of attention.

ELANA TORRINGTON – A homeless woman found outside the Old Boatyard.
SCENE 1
THE BOAT

(Randy enters. As he speaks, Anna, Chris, Sam, Pat, Koda, and Suzy take positions near an upside down, partially buried boat.)

RANDY

(To the audience.) It was a great summer, an unbelievable summer. And it all started with my sister Anna, and the boat. I don’t usually like to give Anna credit for anything, but without her, I guess it would have been an ordinary summer. Did I mention the boat? It’s on my grandfather’s beach where a bunch of us always play almost every day.

PAT
I’m so glad this boat didn’t get washed away. How long has it been here?

SUZY
Max jumped off it two summers ago and twisted his ankle.

CHRIS
It wasn’t here three summers ago.

ANNA
Yes it was. It was buried deeper for a long time.

RANDY
Like you’d remember.

ANNA
Ask Grandpa. It’s been here forever.

RANDY
Yup. The dinosaurs used it as a breakfast bowl.

SAM
Who cares how long it’s been here. I wonder if it traveled through strange, foreign lands.

KODA
Maybe some infamous villain escaped in it and landed here, on this beach.

(Enter Helen with Lilian, Max, Meera, and Tata.)

HELEN
Hi, guys. This is my cousin Tata. She’s spending the summer with me. Tata, this is Koda, Randy, Chris, Anna, Suzy, Sam, and Pat. Now you’ve met the whole gang. (Kids on beach greet them casually.)

TATA
Wow, that’s a cool boat.
PAT
I think it was a pirate’s boat.

SAM
Arr, shiver me timbers.

KODA
Maybe it came from an uncharted island with cannibals on it.

SAM
Maybe from a magic island! Maybe one with dragons, gnomes and witches.

MAX
And giants. Ho ho ho, hwa, hwa, hweeee!

KODA
Not “Ho ho, ho.” “Fee, fie, fo, fum…”

MAX, SAM & PAT
…I’ll grind your bones to make my bread!

CHRIS
Guys, do you remember that poor homeless woman they found unconscious by the old boatyard last month? Have you heard anything about her, Pat?

HELEN
(To Tata) Pat’s parents are both doctors at the hospital.

PAT
Last I heard she was still in a coma. The specialist said to keep her alive and wait.

CHRIS
Think you could ask your Mom more about her?

PAT
I can’t ask, but she’ll be home from work soon, and if we’re playing board games in the den we can hear something when she talks to my dad.

SAM
I guess most of us have to be home for dinner. (Others nod.)

MAX
Meera and I can come. Mum and Dad are eating out.

KODA
I can, too.
PAT
Great. Let’s go.  *(Exits with Max, Meera, and Koda.  Others except Lilian exit. Susy, Helen, Meera, and Tata re-enter.)*

SCENE 2
A DOG FOR SUZY

LILIAN
*(To the audience.)* A couple of days after Tata joined our gang, we found out there was another visitor in our neighborhood.

SUZY
My Aunt Holly found a dog.

HELEN
I know you are nuts about dogs.

MEERA
I think you’ve wanted one since you could say “dog.”

LILIAN
So where did she find it?

SUZY
It came right into her yard. I wish it had come into mine.

HELEN
Did she call the Animal Control Officer?

SUZY
Just to report it, not to turn it in. They haven’t found an owner yet.

TATA
What kind of dog is it?

SUZY
I don’t know.

MEERA
I’ve always wanted a Pug -- they are sooo cute!

LILIAN
We love our Bichons. I wouldn’t want any other kind. *(Sam runs in.)*

SAM
Suzy!!!  Mom & Dad are thinking about letting you keep the dog Aunt Holly found!
SUZY
They said that!?!?

SAM
They are just worried what to do when we go away.

MEERA
I’ll take care of it, and I bet Anna would help.

SUZY
Oh, Meera! That would be great!!! Come help me convince them! *(Exit Suzy & Meera together. Exit Helen, Tata, and Lilian.)*

SCENE 3
THE VOICE

SAM
*(To audience.)* So the dog jumped straight into the story and a few hours later Suzy brought the happy news to Anna. *(Exit Sam.)*

(ANNA enters, she walks, listens, looks around, sits down facing the boat. Suzy enters.)

SUZY
Guess what, Anna! I am going to have a dog. My Aunt Holly found it. A stray. She travels too much to keep it, but she said it’s a great dog, and she spoke with my mom, and my mom spoke with my dad. Oh I am so happy! I am going to have a dog! Hey, Anna -- are you listening?

ANNA
It speaks.

SUZY
What do you mean ‘it speaks’? My dog? No, of course not.

ANNA
No, not the dog.

SUZY
Then what are you talking about? Is this some kind of game?

ANNA
No, but, but…. Promise you won’t tell anyone?

SUZY
I promise.

ANNA
I heard a voice.
SUZY
So what. Everybody hears voices. Sometimes I think I hear growls and snarls.

ANNA
But I heard a voice from under the boat.

SUZY
From under the boat?

ANNA
It said: “You must be strong for the next full moon, or they will catch you.”

SUZY
We better tell your mom.

ANNA
No, you promised you wouldn’t tell anybody.

SUZY
Ok, ok. Are you going with me to take my new dog to the vet?

ANNA
No, I’m supposed to be back home now. (Exit Anna.)

SUZY
See you later. (To audience.) So Anna went home, and I went to see my Aunt Holly, and take the dog to the vet. On the way I met Randy. I’m usually good at keeping secrets, but I guess I was preoccupied. (Suzy remains for next scene.)