

# Grace Will Lead Me Home

By

Alexia Tiches

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**Synopsis:** Grace does not know how to react to the news that her mother only has a few months left to live. In order to cope with her grief, she vows to save her mom no matter the cost. Grace, with the help of her friends, goes on an adventure to find the mythological Giant Squid Curatio [cure-<sub>AE</sub>-shee-o], whose ink can cure anything. But Grace finds more obstacles when pirates, scientists and gangsters get between her and her dream. Grace must accept her changing world throughout her quirky and hilariously awkward adventure.

### **13 Males, 6 Females (Flexible casting.)**

#### **Cast of Characters:**

Dan: Grace's father and a man who always tries to make things better.

Grace: An awkward teenage girl. Stubborn and scared about the world around her, she refuses change and becomes uncomfortable at almost any moment. She is the embodiment of most teenage girls. Add a tablespoon of awkward and a half-teaspoon of sarcasm.

Rachel: The voice of reason and a role model and mother of Grace. She is everything to Grace and she can even get a joke!

Nurse: A sympathetic soul forced to be the bearer of bad news.

Sam: A sarcastic, sassy, and cheeky young girl, unafraid to say what she thinks. She is the opposite of Grace, but will do anything for her friend.

Dylan: He doesn't know what he's more obsessed with: mythological creatures, or his best friend Dana.

Dana: The other half to Dylan. If you asked him what he wanted to be when he grows up, he would say the Lochness Monster.

Carol Bishop: A thirteen-year-old boy trapped in the body of the thirty year old. Although extremely nerdy and in love with the Giant Squid Curatio, he somehow is a smart-alecky, pretentious person with a dash of creepy. If I met him in real life, my first thought would be, "ew".

Kyle: One of Carol's minions. He is obsessed with the Giant Squid Curatio and Sam. Add two teaspoons of creepy.

Fred: A lover of the Giant squid Curatio. Add only one teaspoon of creepy.

Mrs. Bishop: A sweet lady, who does not deserve the hell of catering to her thirty-year-old son.

Dr. Downhart: A conniving scientist, who only cares about himself and his career.

Captain: An old pirate soul, with a heart in the sea.

Skipper: A scheming skipper, mixed up with the wrong people, who only care about himself and money.

Sailor: A happy-go-lucky sailor.

Cyrus: A sadistic and theatrical gang leader. He loves what he does, and what he does is kill and get paid.

SG 1 Suspicious Guy 1): One of Cyrus's callous goons.

SG 2 (Suspicious Guy 2): Another one of Cyrus's callous goons.

Martha the Mermaid Woman: A woman hopelessly obsessed with mermaids and would do anything for her passion.

\*All creatures should be evidently fake with a dreamlike quality.

## ACT ONE

***Scene 1: The Hospital. The background is black. The left side of the stage has a hospital bed, a heart monitor, and a chair. A curtain divides the hospital room and the other side of the stage. Rachel sleeps in the bed and The Nurse looks over files. Dan and Grace enter on the right side, which is dark, and the spotlight is on them as they enter.***

DAN

You know, Grace, you have to cheer up. Mom's been having a hard time recently and she would love to see your beautiful smile. It'll make her happy.

GRACE

*(Looking especially gloomy.)* Oh sure *(Sarcastically.)* wouldn't we all love to see my beautiful smile.

DAN

Don't be like that honey. It's been hard on all of us. Just—

GRACE

Just what? Be like, *(In a high pitched, girly preppy voice.)* 'Oh mother, you're looking so lovely, he he. Father, look how lovely Mother looks, ha ha. Isn't our life just swell?' *(A frown appears on her face immediately after she finishes speaking.)* I really don't think so.

DAN

Just tell her a joke or something.

GRACE

*(Sarcastically.)* Because a joke can cure cancer.

DAN

It cures sadness.

GRACE

No Dad, chocolate, sappy movies, and crying cures sadness.

DAN

*(Smiling.)* And jokes. C'mon, she's expecting us.

GRACE

What else would she be doing?

DAN

Just smile, Grace. A smile can do wonders.

*Grace and Dan push through the curtain and enter the hospital room.*

NURSE

Mr. Gregory, Grace, right on time. Rachel is just finishing her lunch. You guys can take a seat if you want.

*Grace takes a seat beside the bed.*

RACHEL

Oh hey guys! Finally, it's been so boring. I'm so glad you're here.

GRACE

Hey Mom.

DAN

Hi Sweetie. How has your day been?

RACHEL

The usual.

DAN

That bad?

*Rachel shrugs.*

GRACE

Hey mom, knock knock.

RACHEL

Who's there?

GRACE

Not your white blood cells!

DAN

Grace! What's wrong with you?

GRACE

Dad, get it? Because white blood cells fight diseases and Mom has like the worst disease.  
(*Awkwardly.*) Ha ha. This is swell.

NURSE

(*Grimaces.*) What a lovely daughter you have.

RACHEL

I loved it.

DAN

That's not what I meant as a joke.

GRACE

It had a punch line.

NURSE

(*Awkwardly.*) Okay then. Mr. Gregory, if you don't mind seeing me outside for a second. I think Rachel and Grace will want some time together.

*Nurse and Dan exit the hospital room through the curtain, leaving Grace and Rachel.*

GRACE

You feeling okay, Mom?

RACHEL

Oh you know, the usual. I sleep all day, except when I eat, and the food is disgusting.

GRACE

Next time, I'll bring a hamburger.

RACHEL

Good. All they say is, 'you're so strong, Rachel. You'll get through this, Rachel. You look so good today, Rachel.' And all I want is for them to adjust my pillow, or get me a different flavor of yogurt. They always give me strawberry, and I hate strawberry.

GRACE

Well, I'm glad you're having fun.

RACHEL

Sure, this is great. But enough about me, I don't want to depress you. Tell me about you, about school. How was your last day?

GRACE

Oh you know, the usual. I sleep all day, except when I eat and the food is disgusting. They had hotdogs for lunch, and they were green! Green hotdogs, can you believe it? It's like the school is trying to poison us.

RACHEL

Was it like a mucus green or an emerald green? You know how much a difference that makes.

GRACE

A mucus green.

RACHEL

That sucks. (*They both start laughing; Rachel's laugh turns into a cough.*) At least it's summer. You can enjoy yourself now.

GRACE

You should rest. I don't want you wasting your energy.

RACHEL

All I do is rest, Grace. I'm tired of it. I don't want to live out the rest of my life lying in a bed, waiting to die. I want to climb a mountain, rob a bank, and maybe wrestle a bear or something. I want to go out in a bang, not sit here until my light fizzles out.

GRACE

Don't talk like that Mom. You're not dying.

RACHEL

*(Sarcastically.)* Sure, and the beef stew the nurse just gave me is real meat. Grace, this stupid heart machine thing is counting down my life. Listen to it. *(Mocking.)* Beep beep beep; that's my life now. My life is now a sequence of beeps.

GRACE

Mom, you're going to get better. Everything is going to be fine. I promise.

RACHEL

*(Not paying attention to her and getting tired.)* "When he shall die, take him and cut him out in little stars, and he will make the face of heaven so fine that all the world will be in love with night and pay no worship to the garish sun." *(Sighs.)* You know, Shakespeare said that. I think, in *Hamlet*, but I'm not sure. That's what I want you to do when I die, Grace. I want you to chop me up and throw me to the sky so that I can be with the stars and shine. I want to shine, Grace. I want to shine forever, with the stars.

GRACE

That's not necessary, Mom. You're not going to die. Look, look at you! You're already shining.

RACHEL

*(Increasingly getting tired.)* I'm not a star. I'm a human, a human that's expiring. You see, when stars die, they explode. I wish I could go like that, something grand, not whither away until I'm nothing.

GRACE

Don't we all.

RACHEL

Instead of exploding, I'm just going to dim until, poof, I'm gone.

GRACE

Stop talking about death. It's not good for you.

RACHEL

The only time I'm not talking about death is when I'm sleeping and maybe eating.

GRACE

Okay, take a nap then. You're not going to die. Now c'mon live your life.

RACHEL

I don't have a life left to live.

GRACE

Sure you do! You have this bed, and your regular meals, and that TV with how many channels? A hundred? More? In three months tops you're going to be jumping around like your usual self. Live for that future. Plus there's me, and Dad. Live for us. Mom, you're not going to die. Nothing's going to change.

RACHEL

*(Ignoring her.)* I'm going to sleep now, okay?

GRACE

Okay. Dream of wrestling a bear, or maybe you could be a trapeze artist in a circus.

RACHEL

Don't worry, I will. You know, Grace, that's where I feel most alive, in my dreams. There, I can be anyone, do anything, and accomplish everything. In my dreams, I don't have cancer. These stupid beeps and this bed do not limit me. Grace, in my dreams, I can live. I can't live in this dreadful room. I can only die. And I don't want to die.

GRACE

Then dream. It seems like the answer is pretty simple.

*Rachel goes to sleep. The light in the 'hospital room' dims, but not completely and a spotlight appears on the other side of the stage where the nurse and Dan have been 'conversing'. The nurse shows him her clipboard and other stuff people do when they're talking to a nurse about they're dying wife. Rachel is asleep in the 'hospital room' and once the nurse and Dan start talking, Grace listens to the conversation.*

NURSE

Dan, she's not doing too well. We try to raise her spirits, but I think she knows it too. There's nothing we could really do at this point.

DAN

*(Resigned.)* How much time does she have left?

NURSE

A month? Maybe two? At most, the summer, I believe. At this point, the most you can do is make sure she has good rest of a life. She deserves it.

DAN

No, she deserves to get out of here. You know she hates it.

NURSE

*(Gently.)* Everyone hates being locked up until they go. If she stays in the hospital, it'll prolong her life. If you want her for the summer, she'll have to stay here.

DAN

This is terrible! Are you sure there's nothing we can do?

NURSE

At this stage, Dan, I'm afraid all we can do is wait.

DAN

Great, we just wait until she dies.

*Nurse nods solemnly.*

*All the lights turn on and the whole stage is lit. Nurse and Dan reenter the hospital room. Grace scrambles to her seat as if she wasn't listening in on their conversation.*

GRACE

Mom fell asleep.

DAN

*(Recovering emotionally.)* Okay then, I guess we should go. I would have wanted to talk to her for a little, but I don't want to bother her now. *(Looks at nurse.)* Thank you for today. *(Looks at Grace).* Let's go Grace.

GRACE

Already? Shouldn't we at least be with her for a while?

DAN

Unless you want to watch her sleep, come on. You have the whole summer to come and visit.

GRACE

*And after that? (Dan stares at Grace harshly. There is an awkward silence, as Grace and Dan have an emotional and sad staring contest.)*

DAN

We're leaving.

NURSE

Don't worry, Grace. She'll be here for you tomorrow, so you can visit again.

GRACE

Are you sure about that?

NURSE

She's strong; she'll get through this.

*Blackout, spotlight on Grace.*

GRACE

*(Looks down at her mom.)* These losers don't know anything. I'll cure you, and you can live in reality, with Dad and me. I'll do this. I promise.

*Grace exits through the curtain and exits the stage. Spotlight out.*

***Scene 2: Grace's Bedroom. Grace is sitting in the desk, reading a book. There is a bed next to her with a stack of books on it. Grace is reading fervently, murmuring to herself. In walks Sam from stage right.***

SAM

Really? I ask you to go to the mall with me and you say that you're "busy." This isn't busy, Grace, this is school. What could be more important in those books than going to the mall with me?

GRACE

I'm trying to figure out a cure for cancer.

SAM

*(Complaining.)* But there's this huge sale and I really need a new pair of heels for that blue dress I got.

GRACE

Sam, please. The nurse told my Dad that my Mom only has till the end of summer to live. I need to find a way to save her.

SAM

So you, a girl whose highest grade in science class was a C+, is going to find a way to cure cancer?

GRACE

Exactly.

SAM

Why can't you accept the fact that your Mom has cancer? A lot of people have it.

GRACE

Because I can change that fact. If you're going to stay here, grab a book and read. If anything strikes your fancy, tell me.

*Sam grabs a book and the two girls are now reading. Enter: Dana and Dylan. Dana is hugging a book.*

DYLAN

Are you kidding me? The kraken would totally destroy a dragon, what are you talking about?

DANA

A dragon has fire breathe, what does the kraken have, tentacles on its face? No, a dragon would win.

DYLAN

The Kraken lives in the water, man, water puts out fire breath, the kraken would win. Don't be an idiot.

SAM

Guys, shut up! Can't you see we're reading here?

DANA

You're reading? Hey Dylan, look how rare this creature is.

DYLAN

I know, Dana. I've never seen a Sam reading in real life before. This is impressive.

DANA

We'll get famous for this find.

SAM

GO AWAY!

DYLAN

You go away.

GRACE

All of you just leave! Can't you see that I'm actually trying to do something? My Mom is dying. Don't you understand? Stop talking about dragons and Sam reading and either leave or help me. I'm running out of ideas. These stupid books, they don't tell me anything.

SAM

Girl, people devote their lives to find a cure. You can't really expect to find it with reading just one book. Things change, people die, there isn't anything you can do about it.

DANA

*(Mischievous.)* Or is there?

*Dana starts to flip through the pages wildly until they get to a certain page it shows it to the girls.*

DANA AND DYLAN

The Giant Squid Curatio!

SAM

A squid? We're going to save Grace's mom with a squid?

DYLAN

Not just a squid, Dilweed, the Giant Squid Curatio.

DANA

*(As he reads, Grace begins to fall asleep).* The Giant Squid Curatio has used millions of years of development to evolve into the perfect mending machine. When attacked or threatened, the Giant Squid Curatio squirts out gallons of ink. This ink, unlike the ink of the Colossal Squid and the Giant Squid, has been found to cure almost any ailment it is treated on.

DYLAN

Don't you see, Grace, we can catch the Giant Squid Curatio and save your Mom. Grace? Grace?  
*(Shakes her awake)*

GRACE

What, oh sorry, I haven't slept in a while; I've been so worried.

SAM

You see, you need to relax. You're going to burn yourself out!

DANA

That doesn't matter. The question is, are you in Grace?

SAM

*(Doubtful.)* A squid is going to save her mom, a squid from your stupid creature book that doesn't even exist? Sure.

DYLAN

No, but listen. This guy, Carol Bishop, he wrote the article in our book. He spotted the Giant Squid Curatio a couple years ago. He's been doing research about it ever since. If anyone knows anything about it, it's him.

DANA

*(Snickering.)* Carol is a girl's name.

SAM

So is Dana.

DANA

*(His smile fades immediately to a frown.)* It's unisex!

SAM

You guys are so useless. I'm trying to help Grace cure cancer and all you do is tell us about a mythical squid with healing abilities. I wonder who would win the better friend competition.  
*(Points to herself.)*

DYLAN

It does exist!

SAM

Does not!

DANA

Does too!

GRACE

Where does this Carol guy live?

*Both Dylan and Dana acknowledge their small victory.*

SAM

Are you serious?

GRACE

You're right, Sam, I can't cure cancer. The smartest people alive can't do it. It seems that catching a giant magical squid is a better chance to save my Mom.

DANA

Beat that, Sam!

DYLAN

*(Grabbing Grace by the arm.)* Come on, Grace. You, Dana, and I will go and find this Carol dude. Sam can stay here and go shopping or something. Maybe she'll finish her book.

*Dana, Dylan, and Grace exit, leaving Sam alone.*

SAM

This is such a waste of time, and I'm not going to fall for it. They think they're so clever tricking Grace with their magical squids and men with girl's names. No, they're not dragging me along on this insane adventure. I'm going to the mall, with or without Grace.

*Grace enters.*

GRACE

Sam, just come with us. You know you don't like to be alone.

SAM

*(Crosses arms.)* Nope!

GRACE

Sam, please don't leave me alone with Dylan and Dana. There's only so much I can take. I need you.

SAM

Fine, but only because I care so much.

*Exit. Blackout.*

***Scene 3: Carol's Bedroom. Like a child's bedroom, the walls are covered in maps and pictures of squids. Carol is on his racecar bed reading the book Dylan and Dana had, while Kyle and Fred are on the floor looking at a map.***

KYLE

Oh, so you're thinking that she'll be on the coast, right there. *(Points to the map.)* Interesting.

FRED

Yeah, if you look at the mating patterns of regular giant squids...

KYLE

But she isn't just a regular giant squid.

CAROL

No, Fred's right. The Curatio has the same mating patterns as the regular squid, as we've noted from what that one fisherman up north told us last year.

KYLE

Do you think it's time to capture her?

CAROL

*(Annoyed.)* One does capture the Curatio, Kyle. She is a free spirit that roams and does as she wishes. She roams and lives as a majesty of the sea. We can't just catch the Curatio. We must love her, caress her, like a newborn baby. She'll be like my newborn baby, a beautiful, healing, suction cup covered baby.

MRS. BISHOP

*(Enter.)* Carol honey, you have some people who would like to talk to you. Please behave yourself.

*Grace, Sam, Dylan, and Dana enter.*

CAROL

Thanks mom. Oh, and can you get us some bagel bites?

MRS. BISHOP

Haven't you had enough bagel bites?

CAROL

Mommy, don't embarrass me!

*Mrs. Bishop exits.*

CAROL

So what can I do for you four sprouts?

SAM

Sprouts?

GRACE

Hi, I'm Grace...

DYLAN

*(Excitedly cuts in.)* You're Carol Bishop! We've read all your work about the Giant Squid Curatio.

DANA

Well, we just read the one article in our book. It was still really amazing, though.

CAROL

Why thank you, Youngins.

GRACE

That isn't why we're here, Mr. Bishop.

CAROL

Please, darling, call me Carol.

KYLE

*(To Sam. Creepily.)* Hello, Honeybuns, I'm Kyle.

SAM

*(Uncomfortable.)* Hi.

GRACE

Anyway, I—we need your help. We need to find the Giant Squid Curatio.

FRED

The Curatio! Why would you want to find her?

CAROL

Calm down, Fred, let the little lady talk.

GRACE

Well, you see, Carol, my mom's sick...

CAROL

*(Eager to show his knowledge.)* I understand everything! You need to use her magical wonderful, fantastic qualities to save her. You know she could, and she can! The Curatio is beautiful.

SAM

*(Sarcastically.)* I bet she's gorgeous.

KYLE

You're feisty, aren't you?

SAM

*(Creeped out.)* Thanks.

DANA

She likes it when you talk to her like that.

SAM

Shut up!

CAROL

So, what's in it for us if we help you find the Curatio?

SAM

How about the fact that you're going to find the thing you've been obsessing about all of your life? I would think this is the greatest thing that ever happened to you.

CAROL

A lot of things happen in my life.

SAM

I'm guessing a girl isn't one of them?

CAROL

Never insult a man who's help you need. NEVER!

*Enter Mrs. Bishop.*

MRS. BISHOP

Is everything okay? I heard yelling.

CAROL

Everything's fine, Mom! Where are the bagel bites?

MRS. BISHOP

I'll get them, Sweetie. *(She exits.)*

CAROL

*Pause.*

I'll do it.

GRACE

What? Really? We didn't really talk about it that much. Are you sure?

CAROL

On two conditions. Number one: I want her.

GRACE

You can keep...her. I just want the ink, I guess. I need to save my Mom. You see she's...

CAROL

Number two: You have to find the means of transportation.

GRACE

I'm sure I have some money saved up. My Mom's worth it...

CAROL

You hear that boys, we're finally in business! Okay, Kyle you have to look into that map a little more. I'm sure we can find accurate coordinates. Of course they won't be perfect. I mean nothing's perfect. You see, kidlings, we believe that we understand the Curatio's mating pattern.

SAM

So, you like to study a magical squid's mating pattern? That's what get's you going, huh?

CAROL

*(Irritated.)* Not a magical squid, Missy, a highly evolved giant squid. And if studying her mating patterns is what it takes to find her, then I'm willing to study it.

GRACE

I'm sorry about her; she's not necessarily too excited about this whole thing. Thank you so much, here's my number (*Hands him her number.*), call me when you have the coordinates. Hopefully, she, the squid, will be close, but I guess we can commute if necessary.

CAROL

Wonderful! (*Rushing them to leave.*)

DAMA

Uh, can I have an autograph, though?

DYLAN

Maybe a picture?

CAROL

Oh no no no, my kiddies we have work to do, as do you. Please, shoo shoo, we need to concentrate. You know, for our mission.

GRACE

Okay, well bye thank you!

KYLE

Bye Sam!

*Grace, Sam, Dylan, and Dana all exit, leaving Carol, Kyle, and Fred alone. Light change.*

CAROL

Kyle, keep looking into the coordinates. Fred, I want you to call our friend, Dr. Downhart. Tell him that we're finally going to do it.

FRED

Do you want him to come over? We could talk in person about the deal.

CAROL

Perfect! Get to it.

*Fred goes off stage to call Mr. Downhart. The lights darken, but the stage doesn't change. The men change positions to show a change in time.*

*Jason Downhart enters with Mrs. Bishop.*

MRS. BISHOP

Honey, Dr. Downhart is here, and here are your bagel bites. (Sets the bagel bites down.)

CAROL

Thanks Mommy, now go. (*Mrs. Bishop exits.*) Dr. Downhart! It sure is wonderful to see you again. Did you change your hair? Wow, you're looking great. Your eyes are so bright, like a newborn child.

FRED

Like a model.

KYLE

(*Dreamy.*) A Russian model, with daddy issues and an alcohol problem, but she's still beautiful. You know what I mean?

DR. DOWNHART

(*Uncomfortably.*) I guess. Uh thank you. (*Turns to Carol.*) I was told that you're in.

KYLE

As far as we can get in, you know what I'm saying?

CAROL

Mind my friends, they aren't exactly, you know, there. But, yes, I believe that the deal you offered us has finally been made, set in stone as they say. This girl and her friends came to visit us. They were odd creatures, I'll tell you. Yet, she came to us, saying that she needs to find the Curatio to save her father or something. Whatever. As she spoke I thought to myself, 'perfect this is exactly what we need.' Dr. Downhart, my team and I (*Fred and Kyle wave.*), we've been

planning to find the Curatio for years now. The only thing holding us back was transportation. You see, our funds are exceptionally low. Yet, this young girl, Sandy, I believe she was called, she promised to buy our transportation needs if we just helped to find the beautiful squid. So we're in, we're going to find it.

DR. DOWNHART

No, I don't believe you are.

CAROL, KYLE, FRED

What?!

DR. DOWNHART

Carol, this young girl will get in the way of our studies. We cannot examine the Curatio with some kids in our way.

CAROL

I thought that at first too. But she only wants some of the ink, which is a small sacrifice. Don't you think?

DR. DOWNHART

No no, Mr. Bishop.

CAROL

I thought we talked about this. It's Carol.

DR. DOWNHART

Sure, the only problem with your plan is the plan itself. Can't you see the problems? (*They shake their heads.*) Your means of transportation is the problem. I understand that you're lacking the money that is needed to find the Curatio, but we need the entire thing to conduct our experiments, er studies. Merely studies (*looks suspicious.*).

FRED

All she wants is some ink, Dr. Downhart. That's barely a price to pay for something so...

CAROL

Spectacular.

DR. DOWNHART

Fine. You see, I won't have a silly girl and her friends get in the way of my squid and me. I want—I need the entire thing. All of it.

CAROL

She needs it for her Dad, or maybe it was her Mom, yeah I think it was her Mom. Anyway, you don't really think a tiny bit of ink will make a difference in such a grand animal?

DR. DOWNHART

*(Annoyed, and somewhat mocking.)* Listen up, Carol, and listen well. Without me, you and your little geeks would have nothing but maps and folklore to quench the weird obsession you have with this squid. I require the entire thing, which means and, I must specify, every drop of that ink. Do I make myself clear?

KYLE

But her Mom needs it. She'll die.

DR. DOWNHART

People die all the time, Carol. Science on the other hand, science lives forever. In order to discover the immortality of this creature, I'm going to need you to follow my instructions. Number one: find the squid. Number two: get the squid. Number three: give me the squid. Easy enough: no kids, no parents necessary. Now do I make myself clear?

CAROL

*(Irritated.)* As clear as a newly washed window on a summer day.

DR. DOWNHART

Perfect! I'm glad we've come an agreement. *(They shake hands.)*

*Dr. Downhart exits.*

FRED

Are we really going to take the only cure that girl has away from her?

CAROL

You heard Dr. Downhart, 'science is immortal.' As unyielding fans of the Curatio, it is our job to make her immortal.

KYLE

But Grace's Mom will die? I don't know if I can do this, man.

CAROL

*(Sadly.)* We all have things, ordeals in our lives. It's whether you can overcome them that really counts. When she get's over her Mom's death, and she will, she'll be stronger. Technically, we're doing her a favor.

KYLE

Whatever you say man.

CAROL

Let's get back to work. We need to find those coordinates.

*Blackout.*

***Scene 4: Grace's Bedroom. All the books are gone, and Sam is lying on the bed, constantly moving to get comfortable. Grace sits on the desk while Dylan and Dana read their book on the floor.***

SAM

This whole thing seems a bit sketchy, don't you think? Do you honestly expect those weirdoes to be able to help us find the squid?

GRACE

Well, I think Dylan and Dana are pretty trustworthy. *(Smiling.)*

DANA

That's not very nice.

SAM

I'm talking about Carol and his goons. I know you're in a good mood now, because we kind of have a plan worked out. But how are we going to get a boat when we don't know where we're going?

DYLAN

I'd hate to say it, but I think I agree with her. *(Pretends to get sick.)* Yeah, I know, it sounds pretty crazy, but Sam's kind of right. Plus, I don't know about you guys, but I don't know anyone who has a boat.

GRACE

I'm sure we can find someone who is willing to rent one to us. Maybe drive us, because none of us have a boating license.

SAM

*(Sarcastically.)* Of course, how easy! 'Excuse me sir, can you drive us to the middle of the ocean so that we can catch a magical giant squid that happens to cure cancer?'

DANA

We don't have to tell them what we need them for. We can pay extra for the 'no questions asked' special.

GRACE

Look, for some reason, I'm feeling good about this. I don't care about your concerns, Sam. No offence, but they're just holding us back. We need to be optimistic in order for this to work. So, stop whining about how crazy this is, and actually help!

SAM

Whining? I'm just trying to be realistic, Grace! I'm sorry that reality happens to get in the way of your plan.

GRACE

*(Ignoring her.)* Dylan, Dana, let's go down to the pier and try and find someone who'll help us. I think a fisherman would be perfect! They could get us there, and help us catch the thing. C'mon.

SAM

Really? You're just going to ignore me now? You're the one that got me into this. It was not my idea.

GRACE

It wasn't your idea to come and try to help my Mom? I would think as my best friend you'd do anything to save her.

SAM

Of course, I would, but Grace this was insane from the start, and I mean before we started talking squids here. You're delusional, and I'm just trying to help you.

GRACE

Help me what? Help me let my Mom die? I'm not being delusional I'm being desperate. If you're not going to come, stay. That way you won't hold us back.

SAM

I hold you back? Are we just going to forget the time when you literally held me back from dating Pete McCowskey last year, when I had a crush on him for like five years?

DANA

Um, I'm sorry to burst in on this little catfight, but the estrogen levels in this room are getting a little too high for comfort.

SAM AND GRACE

Shut up, Dana!

GRACE

I would think that my Mom is just a little bit more important than Pete McCowskey.

SAM

That's not the point, the point is—

DYLAN

Stop it! You guys are doing nothing productive, and look you've almost made Dana cry. (*Turns to him.*) It's okay, man, it's okay. Now I know we're all a little creeped out by this whole thing. Trust me, I love creatures like the Curatio, but that Carol dude is a piece of work. Let's just calm down, breathe, maybe we can make some tea or something. I don't know, but I know fighting's not going to do anything.

*Enter Dan.*

DAN

Oh, looks like the whole peanut gallery is here. Dana, Dylan how are we?

DANA

(Sniffles.) Peachy.

DANA

Wonderful, and Sam how are you? (*She ignores him.*) Okay then, Grace I was wondering if you would like to visit your mother today. I know how eager you were to stay last time, so—

GRACE

Actually Dad, I have plans. I mean I would love to see her, trust me. But you know, I'm busy.

DAN

Let me guess, teenager stuff? You guys playing Spin the Bottle and Seven Minutes in Heaven? Brings me to the good ol' days.

GRACE

Unfortunately, no. But thank you for suggesting what we should do next.

DAN

Fine, fine, I can tell when I'm not wanted. I'll see you at dinner.

DYLAN

See ya later, Dan!

DAN

(*Irritated.*) Good bye Grace's friends. (*He exits.*)

SAM

So, what now chief, Seven Minutes in Heaven or catch a magical squid?

GRACE

Look I'm sorry, just— *(Her cell phone rings.)* Give me a second. *(Answers phone.)* Hello? Oh hi, yes yeah. I guess so. Sure. Really? Yeah, we were just about to go find it. I think there's one around here. *(Holds phone to chest.)* Guys get a piece of paper and right this down. *(Picks up phone again.)* Okay go. So latitude is 35 degrees and longitude is negative 110 degrees. Okay cool! That's not too far, just a little north! Um, I'll call you when we find a ship. *(Hangs up phone.)* We have it; we're ready to go!

SAM

Let's just go.

DANA

I love the pier, Dylan!

DYLAN

You just like throwing stuff at the seagulls.

DANA

Exactly my point! *(Exit, followed by Dylan.)*

*Blackout*

***Scene 5: The Dock. It is surrounded with boats and ocean. Captain and Skipper are on stage left tending to their boat, called Usain Boat. Sailor ties knots in the background. SFX: sea dock sounds. Enter Grace, Sam, Dylan and Dana.***

SAM

I told you no one was going to believe us!

GRACE

I bet we would at least have a chance if Dana and Dylan wouldn't hijack almost every boat here and pretend to be pirates.

DYLAN

It's not our fault.

DANA

It's just too tempting.

SAILOR

Oh, hello there, do you need a boat?

GRACE

Well actually yes, yes we do. But it's sort of tricky.

SAILOR

How so?

GRACE

Well, we need to capture a giant magical squid.

SAILOR

Oh. (*Slowly inches away.*)

GRACE

Wait don't go. We need you

DYLAN

We need you like a woman with thirty cats needs human contact.

*Sailor exits.*

SAM

(*To Dylan.*) There is something seriously wrong with you you know that right?

GRACE

Yeah, thanks a lot Dylan. How many people do you think are left that are actually willing to help us?

SAM

I didn't think there were any to begin with.

GRACE

But we need a boat!

*Enter Captain.*

CAPTAIN

Ye need a boat, ye say? Well, look no further, savvy. I am Cap'n, just Cap'n. I've been a Cap'n since I was born. I just popped out of me mother already driving a boat. These swashbucklers know nothin' about the ocean. They think it's all about their fancy shmancey GSP and high-

powered jets and such. Me, on the other hand, well, I could be a professor. I got me a boat, ye see, the best damn boat you salty dogs have ever seen.

GRACE

Can we rent it?

CAPTAIN

Rent her, lease her, take her on a date; you can do anything to her if you pay the right price.

*Enter Martha the Mermaid Woman.*

MARTHA

*(Irritated.)* No, no! Captain, you're not going to take away my customers: you and your stupid boat. Not today! *(Turns to the kids and speaks nicely.)* Hello children, I'm Martha. I specialize in mermaid tours, and mermaid swims. I'm the number one mermaid specialist in this area.

CAPTAIN

And the craziest specialist. Please, me hardies, I do this because I care. Do not put your sea adventure in the hands of this witch.

MARTHA

Me? A witch? Please. I am a connoisseur.

CAPTAIN

Ye be crazy.

MARTHA

There is nothing wrong with being obsessed with something. Me? I live my life for mermaids. When I wake up, I think, "What would the mermaids be doing right now?" My diet includes high sodium foods. I only drink salt water, because you know, that's what they drink. I devoted my life to saving them and their home. A mermaid saved me once, when I was young. She saved me, and since then I've been hooked. Sure, I want to be a mermaid, what's so wrong with that? Sometimes, I stick my legs together and pretend I have a tail. It's an amazing feeling. I see nothing wrong with loving something. I'd sacrifice my life for the mermaids. They're endangered, you see. I need to save them.

GRACE

We need more of a fisherman than a tour guide, I'm sorry.

CAPTAIN

Ha, witch. Ye see. Yer folly has not enticed these savvies. Leave now, wench, and never return.

MARTHA

It's not your decisions. It's the kids'.

GRACE

I think we'll have to go with Captain. I'm sorry.

MARTHA

*(Turns to Captain)* You crab! You take everything away from me! I need to save my maids, my mermaids, that is.

CAPTAIN

Well, wake up me hardy. Tis' a hard task to change the fate of something and these kids ain't gonna help you. *(Turns to kids.)* What can I do ya for?

*Martha lets out a "humph", and exits stage.*

DYLAN

Can you take us to these coordinates? *(Hands him a piece of paper.)*

CAPTAIN

Oh, now ye children wanna go to da middle of de ocean? Eh?

SAM

We want to go fishing.

CAPTAIN

Fishing that far out? Why would you little land lovers want to be fishing in da deep sea?

DANA

What she was going to say was; we want to purchase your 'ask no questions' special. You know what I mean, buddy?

CAPTAIN

No, my child, I'm afraid I don't. I also don't know why you want to go out so far in the ol' big blue. As your potential host of the sea, I would think that I have the right to know.

DYLAN

It was a dark and stormy night, Captain. Grace and Sam were reading and talking about shopping, while the heroes of our story, Dana and me, were in our headquarters, researching the beast that we hope to catch... with your help of course.

CAPAIN

Son, you got yer own Moby Dick, I see. (*Calls off stage.*) Hey, Skipper, come over here and meet our new clients!

GRACE

You mean you'll help us?

*Enter Skipper.*

SKIPPER

For a price, of course. Hello, I am Skipper; originally Harold, but since I started working for Captain, I'm now Skipper.

CAPTAIN

Aye, savvies, what beastie are you hoping to catch?

GRACE

The usual.

DYLAN

The craziest.

DANA

The fantasticalest.

SAM

*(Annoyed.)* A magical giant squid.

DYLAN & DANA

The Giant Squid Curatio!

CAPTAIN

The Curatio, ye say?

GRACE

You've actually heard of it?

CAPTAIN

Sure! Ye know I saw her a while back. But I'm just a fisherman, no scientist. I wasn't able to find her again.

SKIPPER

This is perfect, truly perfect! The fee is \$300 per day.

SAM

\$300 for some boat? That's a little steep, don't you think? I mean, especially for this piece of junk.

SKIPPER

That's the price. Take it or leave it

CAPTAIN

And she's not a piece of junk!

GRACE

It's fine; I guess I can dig a little deeper for some more cash.

CAPTAIN

*(To Dylan and Dana.)* Ye know, once, when I was just a wee lad, I was sailing out in India, with a load of shrimp fishermen. We were on the boat for weeks, I'll tell you, boys. On da third week, we were bumped. Bumped, I tell ya. When I looked over the edge, guess what I saw?

DYLAN

The Kraken?

DANA

Lochness Monster?

DYLAN

Stupid, that's in Ireland. Wait no, Scotland, you idiot.

CAPTAIN

No, me savvies, we saw a plankton, a plankton the size of a great white. That was one of the craziest things my seein' holes ever have seen.

SKIPPER

Don't worry; he's a perfectly capable driver. Of course, I can't say that his mind's as capable, but you'll be fine.

GRACE

Thank you. This is perfect. I don't have the money right now. We'll get it to you, I promise.

SKIPPER

We accept payment before the ride, so you'll need it then. Other than that, I believe we have a deal.

*Light change: dim down lights and spotlight on private conversation.*

GRACE

See Sam, I told you we could find some one that would help us.

SAM

I'm speechless.

DYLAN

That's the first.

DANA

Dude, that Captain guy is so chill. Like I want him to be my best friend.

DYLAN

Hey!

DANA

Well, wouldn't you?

DYLAN

I guess.

GRACE

Guys, we have to go and call Carol. He'd be glad to hear the news.

SAM

I bet it'll be the highlight of his life.

*All four exit and lights return.*

SKIPPER

Okay, Captain, can you clean the Usain Boat? It's filthy.

CAPTAIN

A little dirt never harmed nothing.

SKIPPER

There's blood and fish guts on it. Can you just go?

CAPTAIN

Back in the day, we cleaned our boats with fish guts instead of soap.

SKIPPER

Just do it.

CAPTAIN

Aye, you don't have to recite Nike slogans to me, I'm already as intense as my body allows.

*Skipper groans.*

CAPTAIN

Fine, fine, don't pass a kidney stone about it.

SKIPPER

Just go! (*Captain exits stage and Skipper dials his phone.*) Hey, it's me. We've got it. Sure, uh huh. Yeah, I could meet you there. Of course, he's not coming; he doesn't even know who you are. Okay, okay, perfect, bye.

*Skipper hangs up and smiles.*

*Blackout.*

***Scene 6: The Italian Restaurant. There are tables in the background and a table center stage, with three chairs. Skipper waits there patiently, playing with a flower in the middle of the table. The two suspicious men enter and join Skipper at the table.***

SG 1

Good afternoon, Harold.

SKIPPER

How ya doing guys? Please, I go by Skipper now if it's all right with you.

SG 2

Sit down Harold.

SKIPPER

Sure.

SG 1

Is it true?

SKIPPER

Oh yeah, it is. There I was: Captain and I had just docked and these kids came up to us and practically gave us the coordinates. They basically told us where to find it. All we need to do is take them along, catch the thing, and it's yours.

SG 2

Why did they come to you?

SKIPPER

They wanted to catch it. Which is an easy fix, I mean, they're just kids. I can handle them.

SG 1

You better, because if we don't get it, you don't get your money.

SKIPPER

Obviously. Just, when we catch it, I'll be like, "Okay kids, time to go." Then, when we dock, I'll take the thing. What're they going to do? Tell their parents on me? Anyway, I'll be too rich for them to even try to sue.

SG 2

We'll see about that, Harold.

SG 1

You do know what will happen if you don't get us that squid?

SG 2

Our boss can be ruthless to those who don't comply with him.

SG 1

Ruthless indeed.

SKIPPER

Of course, I know what Cyrus can do. (*Chuckles.*) Which is the exact reason why I won't let you two down. I know the consequences.

SG 2

Are you sure about that, Harold?

SG 1

Remember last time?

SKIPPER

Hey, I didn't know Captain was going to tell those dopes about our first sighting. It's not my fault. (*Chuckles.*) What do you expect from a man, who only eats fish oil pills and left over bait?

SG 2

(*Slams table.*) Stop acting like this is a joke!

SKIPPER

Well, then stop acting like I'm a joke! I'll get your damn squid. But you'll have to trust me.

SG 1

Trust is a fickle word, Harold.

SG 2

Fickle indeed.

SKIPPER

You guys are like those twins in *The Shining*.

SG 1 & SG 2

You better take care of it, Harold

SKIPPER

Of course, I will. Look at me, you creepers and read my lips. I know what I'm doing, okay? I know what has to be done and I'm not afraid to do it. You go ahead and tell your boss that, okay? I don't need you in my sandwich about every little thing I do. I got this. You need to have a little faith. Oh wait, faith. Isn't that a pretty fickle word too?

SG 1 & SG 2

Fickle indeed.

SKIPPER

Good, now I can't stay here any longer. Sorry to be rude, but your presence is beginning to irritate me.

SG 1

How charming.

SG 2

You're not rude at all.

SKIPPER

Goodbye boys, I'll see you and my money when I finish our deal.

*Skipper exits the stage. They watch him walk off stage.*

SG 2

He left us with the bill.

*Blackout. End of ACT ONE.*