The Cry of the Peacock

by Billy W. Boone II

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DEDICATION

For my girls: Meg, Ruby, and Norah
In Memory of CMJ

STORY OF THE PLAY

Young Mary Blanton has suffered some kind of trauma as evidenced by her monster-filled dreams and the horrific scratches on her neck and back. Who did this to an innocent 9-year-old girl, a child who finds comfort through an imaginary pet peacock? Dr. Janice Todd is called before a review board to defend her investigation of the child abuse case. She recounts her discoveries and interviews with the Blanton family, and scenes of Mary's recent past are brought painfully to life. Three judges, staged as omniscient, skeptical shadows, and several surreal nightmare monsters who taunt and terrify, bring Mary's abuse into stark scrutiny. In memories and revelations, the line between fact and fiction blurs, leaving one grasping for the truth. The truth that monsters are real, living among us, hiding behind the faces of the people we know and trust. Inspired by real-life tragedy.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

White Deer HS, White Deer, TX

Cast: Meghan Collier, Skylar Freeman, Lauren Cotton, Rhoan Cox, Abbie Brainard, Teal Forney, Blake Jones, Dillon Cotton, Austin Guillen, Macey Hendricks, Mikayle Roberts, Courtney Barrow, Brendan Hudspeth. Directors: Tiffany Cotton, Amanda Taylor, and Billy Boone

Special thanks to JoAnn Pritchard, Brandon Campanella, Courtenay Cooper, and the White Deer ISD Staff and Administration.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 4 w, 10 flexible)

DR. JANICE TODD (f): Psychiatrist who is contracted through Child Protective Services to evaluate child abuse cases, mid 40s.

BAILIFF (flex): The bailiff for the state review board for psychiatric science. An offstage voice.

JUDGES (flex): 3 Members of the state review board for psychiatric science. Only appear as shadows cast upon the scrim. Lines may be assigned by director.

MARY BLANTON (f): Age 9. Quiet and shy. Her best friend is an imaginary peacock.

STEPHANIE COOPER (f): School teacher. New to town and new to the school, mid 20s.

CHASE BLANTON (m): Father of Mary, husband to Beth. Quick tempered, mid 30s.

BETH BLANTON (f): Mother of Mary, wife to Chase. Mid 30s.

CHARLIE (flex): Once a real peacock that resided in the park, now an imaginary peacock that has befriended Mary.

CALEB (m): A boy 12 to 14 years of age.

MASON (m): A boy 12 to 14 years of age.

SHADE (flex): The master of the nightmares, a creature shrouded in black rags and shadows. Death itself.

WINGS (flex): A nightmare, a creature with wings.

MOON (flex): A nightmare, a creature with fangs.

SLITHER (flex): A nightmare, a serpent.

FACE (flex): A nightmare.

SETTING

Present day. Scenes move fluidly between the present trial and the past as Dr. Todd recounts her investigation. Playing areas are easily staged with just a simple piece or two of furniture including an office desk with chair, two visitor chairs, a small art table with stool, a park/school bench, and a table with 3 chairs. Mary's bed can be on casters so monsters can emerge. The trial is staged with the use of a scrim and shadows.

Prologue- Present. The inquest at the state review board of psychiatric science.
Scene 1- Afternoon, December 3rd. A school playground.
Scene 2- Afternoon, December 10th. Dr. Todd's office.
Scene 3- A memory of the morning of December 3rd. The Blantons' dining room.
Scene 4- December 10th. Later in the afternoon following scene 2. Dr. Todd's office.
Scene 5- A memory of an afternoon in mid-October. Rosebud Park.
Scene 6- December 10th. Later in the afternoon following scene 4. Dr. Todd's office.
Scene 7- December 2nd. Evening, previous week. Mary's bedroom.
Scene 8- December 10th. Later in the afternoon following scene 6. Dr. Todd's office.
Scene 9- A memory of an afternoon in early November. The classroom.
Scene 10- December 10th. Early evening following scene 9. Dr. Todd's office.
Scene 11- December 11th. Evening of the next day. Mary's bedroom.

Due to the fluid movement between present and past, a chronological timeline of scenes is: Scene 5, scene 9, scene 7, scene 3, scene 1, scene 2, scene 4, scene 6, scene 8, scene 10, scene 11, prologue.

During the acting of the show, the NIGHTMARES may be used in the periphery of the stage, traversing from one dimly lighted area to the next. Skulking and lurking, just outside the light, as if they are forever hiding just like outside of Mary's conscious mind.

PROLOGUE

(AT RISE: LIGHTS illuminate TODD seated at a desk. It is present day at the state review board of psychiatric science.)

BAILIFF: *(Offstage.)* All rise.

(TODD stands. Three shadows of the judges are cast against the scrim. SFX: A gavel sounds.)

BAILIFF: *(Offstage.)* The State Review Board of Psychiatric Science is now in session. Case number 1883, Dr. Janice Todd, please raise your right hand. *(TODD raises her hand.)* Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?
TODD: I do.
JUDGES: Dr. Todd, do you know why you have been brought before the Psychiatric Science Review Board?
TODD: Yes, Your Honor.
JUDGES: And you understand the implications of this hearing?
TODD: Yes, Your Honor. I could lose my psychiatric and medical licenses.
JUDGES: Yes, Dr. Todd, among other things. Strong allegations have been leveled against you for medical malpractice or in the very least professional negligence and unethical behavior that led to the—
TODD:*(Interrupting.)* Yes, your Honor. I fully understand why I am here.
JUDGES: *(Interrupting.)* Good, then you will start by testifying about your investigation of the case of Mary Blanton.
JUDGES: This case was referred to you by Child Protective Services?
TODD: Yes, Your Honor.
JUDGES: How was this abuse first report to CPS?
TODD: It was on Monday, December 3rd that Mary's teacher contacted CPS about possible abuse. On Friday, CPS referred the case to me for further evaluation.

JUDGES: Why was it referred to you? You are not employed by the CPS or the state?

TODD: No, Your Honor, I am not. However, I am the only certified psychiatrist in the area, so I volunteer my services to CPS.

JUDGES: So once this case was referred to you, you began your investigation?

TODD: Yes, Your Honor. I first interviewed the family the following Monday, on December 10th. Your Honor, I think it is important that you know that as a medical doctor, I have believed the world to be black and white. All things must be able to be quantified and qualified, weighed and measured, or it does not exist. There is but two things in this world, that which is fact and all else is merely fiction. And things that cannot be counted and numbered are nothing but fictitious beliefs and superstitions. After so many years of practice helping with child protective services, I had seen so much evil in this world, I had lost my hope in the decency and goodness of humanity. After all, if all you ever see is evil, then evil is all you will ever see. Evil was there lurking in every darkened doorway, in every corner, down every dark alley, the evil of humanity. Abuse, neglect, violence, assault. It was everywhere and in everyone.

JUDGES: Dr. Todd, we are here to find out the truth of what really happened to Mary Blanton; your philosophical treatise on the state of mankind is irrelevant to our hearing today.

TODD: Yes, Your Honor. Please forgive me. You wanted the truth. Now that is an elusive creature. *(Moves to the front of the desk. Speaking to the audience.)* At times I feel like I have the truth, that I have caught it by the tail, but then it ever so swiftly runs through my fingers, like catching water in your hand. Truth. Once upon a time, I met a girl named Mary.

(LIGHTS illuminate MARY seated on a bench on the opposite side of the stage. She sits, unmoving.)

End of Freeview

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