

Setting: An old house.

Characters:

- Jack: A typical teenage boy.
- Charlie: A ghost boy.
- Cynthia: Jack's annoying younger sister.
- Mom: Jack and Cynthia's mother.
- The Bird Man: A bird-like demon.

CHARLIE'S BOX

Setting: Lights up on stage right, where MOM, CYNTHIA, and JACK stand, holding cardboard boxes.

CYNTHIA:

(Sneezing) Why is it so dusty in here?

MOM:

(Looking around boxes) It's not that bad, Cynthia.

CYNTHIA:

(Crossing arms) There's a dead rat in the corner.

MOM:

It's a bit of a fixer-upper, I'll admit...

JACK:

(Walking towards stage left) I'm gonna find my room...

(MOM and CYNTHIA exit stage right)

(Lights up on a small bed. There is a small black box on the bed)

JACK:

Mom?

MOM:

(Offstage) Cynth... I don't think you should--

CYNTHIA:

(Offstage) THAT RAT IS NOT DEAD!!!

JACK:

(Picks up box) Huh. (Turns away from bed) What a funny little-- (Tosses and drops box, box breaks, a black feather falls out)

(A beat)

(CHARLIE enters stage left, behind JACK. JACK picks up the broken box, not noticing the feather)

JACK:

(Turning, looking at box) That's weird... the box was empty-- (Sees CHARLIE, "empty" turns into a scream)

CHARLIE:

(Starts crying)

JACK:

(Pauses) Don't... Don't cry... Who are you?

CHARLIE:

(Still crying) I-I'm... Ch-Ch-Charlie... (Dissolves into sobs)

JACK:

(Kneeling by CHARLIE) Why are you crying? Please don't cry... (Attempts to put hand on CHARLIE)

CHARLIE:

(Screams) NO!!! (JACK snatches his hand back)

MOM:

(Offstage) Jack?

JACK:

Just a minute, mom! (To CHARLIE) Hide! Shh! (Turns, CHARLIE disappears offstage)

MOM:

(Entering with a box) Did you find everything okay?

JACK:

(Glancing back, looking for CHARLIE) Uh... Yeah, mom, everything's fine.

MOM:

(Walking to bed, setting box down) Okay, sweetie. I'm glad you're taking everything so well, especially with us having to move and readjust... (Walks to JACK, attempting to kiss his head)

JACK:

(Backing away) Yeah, uh, I'm really liking this, the moving thing.

MOM:

(Putting hands on hips) Okay... Well, I'll let you unpack. Love you. (exits stage right)

JACK:

Yeah, love you too, mom. (turning in a circle) Where'd he go...? (CHARLIE reappears behind JACK, JACK turns) Charlie? Where did you go? (CHARLIE doesn't answer) Charlie? (Kneels and waves hand in front of CHARLIE's face) Hellooo?

CHARLIE:

(Flinching) Please... Please don't hurt me...

JACK:

(Stopping) Huh? Charlie, I'm not going to hurt you.

CHARLIE:

That's... That's what *he* said, too...

JACK:

Who? Who's he?

CHARLIE:

(Quietly) He said he wouldn't hurt me, but he did, he lied... (Looking up at JACK) He *lied*, Jack...

JACK:

(Softly) Charlie, I won't ever lie to you. (CHARLIE sniffles) I promise? (CHARLIE looks away) Shake on it? (CHARLIE considers, then takes JACK's hand)

(Blackout)

(Lights up on CYNTHIA and MOM at a table)

JACK:

(Entering) Goodmorning! (MOM stands up, JACK hugs her. They pull away and hold hands)

MOM:

(Smiling) Well, you certainly are cheerful this early in the-Goodness, Jack! Your hands are as cold as death! Put on some gloves, for heaven's sake!

JACK:

(Startled) Uh, yeah... Gloves, right, sure... (Rushes off to bedroom. MOM and CYNTHIA exit)

(Lights up on bed)

JACK:

(Calling out) Charlie? Charlie! (CHARLIE appears, JACK backs up) ... What are you?

CHARLIE:

What do you mean, Jack?

JACK:

I-I don't know... You... You aren't... I mean, you're-

CHARLIE:

(Almost inaudibly) I'm... dead...

JACK:

(Pointing) Yes! Wait, what...?

CHARLIE:

I was just... Just playing... Alone in my room... And then... Then... (Looks up at JACK) *He* came... I asked if he wanted to play with me... And then it was dark... (Hugs himself) It was cold... So cold... And... And... (Blackout. When lights come back on, CHARLIE is gone, a black feather in his place)

JACK:

(Turning in circle) Charlie? Charlie? Charlie!

CYNTHIA:

(Walking in) Who are you yelling at?

JACK:

(Spinning) No one! Get out of my room! (Searches room)

CYNTHIA:

(Crossing arms) What if I don't?

JACK:

(Crosses angrily to CYNTHIA, grabbing her arm) Get. Out.

CYNTHIA:

(Trying to wrench free) Let go of me! Mo-om!!

MOM:

(Entering) What is going on here?! Jack, let go of your sister!

JACK:

(Letting go) But, she-

MOM:

(Crossing arms) Do. Not. Touch. Your sister.

JACK:

(Becoming more frustrated) But she-

CYNTHIA:

(Innocently) I wasn't doing *Anything*, he just attacked me! (JACK lunges at CYNTHIA, MOM separates them)

MOM:

BOTH OF YOU STOP. Jack, be nice to your sister.

JACK:

But-

MOM:

I'm going to work. If anything happens, you're BOTH grounded. (exits)

JACK:

(Searches more, begins pacing)

CYNTHIA:

(Innocently) Watcha doin'?

JACK:

(Sharply) Nothing.

CYNTHIA:

(Crossing room) Fine. (Finds black box) What's this?

JACK:

Don't touch that.

CYNTHIA:

Why not?

JACK:

(Crossing room) Because I said so. (Taking box) Don't touch my stuff.

CYNTHIA:

(Taking box back) But I want to see it! (JACK takes box back, CYNTHIA snatches it) Give it!

(Blackout, CYNTHIA screams)

(When lights come back on, CYNTHIA is gone, the black box is on the floor where she had been, surrounded by black feathers)

JACK:

(Picking up box) Charlie? Did... Did you do that? (looking up) I-Bring her back, Charlie. Charlie? Charlie! Bring her back, Charlie!

(Blackout)

(Lights up on table, MOM has her head down, JACK is sitting by her)

JACK:

I'm sorry, mom.

MOM:

(Lifting head) How could you let her run off? You're her older brother, you're supposed to protect her!

JACK:

I'm *sorry*, mom. I'm... I'm going to bed. (Stands) Goodnight, mom. I love you. (Walks to stage left)

(MOM exits.)

JACK:

(Flopping down on bed) Ugh, What the HECK?!

CHARLIE:

(Appearing) Are... Are you okay, Jack?

JACK:

No, Charlie. I'm not. My sister "Ran away," and my mom is mad at me, and I have a *ghost* for a best friend. I think I just need to sleep. (Rolls over on bed)

(Blackout)

(Lights up on bed. JACK is sleeping, CHARLIE is sitting solemnly on the foot of the bed, facing the audience)

JACK:

(Sitting up, stretching) Oh, hey, Charlie. (CHARLIE doesn't answer or react. JACK pauses, then reaches for CHARLIE) Charlie?

CHARLIE:

(Pulls knife out) Don't touch me. (Slashes at JACK, a few black feathers fall away from his arm)

JACK:

(Falling out of bed) What the heck?! Charlie, what-

MOM:

(Offstage) Jack? Are you alright?

JACK:

(Standing) Y-yeah, mom, I'm fine. (To CHARLIE, stage-whisper) What is WRONG with you?!

CHARLIE:

(Shaking, begins to cry) I-it's not me... It's... It's *Him*...

JACK:

Who? (CHARLIE continues to cry) Charlie! (Lights dim, CHARLIE sobs harder, rocking back and forth, feathers falling out of sleeves, etc)

CHARLIE:

(Suddenly stops moving and crying) He's here.

JACK:

(Impatient) Who, Charlie?! You keep talking about *Him*, but who *is* he?!

CHARLIE:

The Bird Man.

(Blackout. CHARLIE screams)

(Lights up, still dim, but CHARLIE has disappeared. There is a pile of black feathers in his place. JACK picks up a feather and turns in a slow circle.)

(Blackout)

(Lights up, dim. THE BIRD MAN stands on the opposite side of the bed. JACK turns around, still looking at the feather. He looks up at THE BIRD MAN.)

(Blackout)

JACK:

Cold... So... So cold...