Cast of Characters:

CATHERINE- 40’s-50’s, perfectly coiffed, uptight.

BERNARD- 40’s-50’s, her husband, scholarly, far more patient.

TIM- A young boy of 12.

EDWARD- A young boy of 7.

BETTY- A young girl of 10.

HILDY- 60’s to 70’s, a quirky Irish real estate agent and psychic medium.

Time:

Present day.

Location:

Exmoor, England.
Lights up on an elegant upscale farmhouse kitchen. A weathered, wooden kitchen table stands in the middle of the room. CATHERINE is seated at the table, reading a newspaper and drinking a cup of tea. The scene is quiet and serene as early morning sunlight streams through a window above the kitchen sink. Suddenly, three boisterous children run shrieking and laughing into the kitchen. There are two boys; TIM and EDWARD; and one girl, BETTY. They are all dressed in dull gray clothing and are tossing a red ball back and forth, playing “keep away” with EDWARD in the middle. He grabs at it but drops it and it rolls under the table. CATHERINE puts her feet up on the chair. The children back away to the opposite corner of the room.

TIM

Now you’ve done it.

EDWARD

Be nice!

TIM

Be less clumsy! She’s trying to read.

EDWARD sticks out his tongue at TIM, and crawls through the table legs to retrieve it. He re-emerges and nervously offers CATHERINE the ball.

EDWARD

Do you want to play with us?

CATHERINE sighs, sips her tea, and resumes reading her paper.

BETTY

Leave her alone! Can’t you see she’s busy?

TIM

You know that we’re to entertain ourselves.

EDWARD

I was just asking! I thought it could be fun.

BETTY

(wistfully) I wish we could play outside.
TIM
Enough whining. Please!

There is a long pause as BETTY and EDWARD sadly roll the ball back and forth.

EDWARD
I’m starving.

BETTY
(to TIM) Can we get something out of the ice box?

EDWARD
Everything in there tastes gray.

TIM
Gray is not a taste.

EDWARD
(tossing and catching the ball) I don’t want to be in the middle anymore.

BETTY
You’re the smallest. You haven’t got a choice.

EDWARD
I don’t want to be the smallest anymore.

BETTY
Listening to you makes me tired.

TIM
Enough! Eddie, go take a look. Maybe there’s a breakfast sausage.

BETTY
Ooooh! Yes! Go, Eddie!

EDWARD
(shooting CATHERINE a tentative glance) Alright, alright!
TIM and BETTY cuddle on the floor and watch intently as EDWARD quietly walks to the refrigerator and tries to open it. The door doesn’t budge. He shoots his siblings a nervous look and pulls harder. It still doesn’t open, but bottles rattle loudly inside. CATHERINE stares at the refrigerator in exasperation. After a moment, she goes back to reading. EDWARD takes a deep breath, and pulls as hard as he can. The door flies open and bottles roll out onto the floor. CATHERINE slams the newspaper onto the table. EDWARD stands, frozen and in shock.

CATHHERINE
I cannot deal with this today! (shouts) BERNARD!

BERNARD
(offstage) What?

CATHHERINE
Would you come in here, please?

BETTY
(to EDWARD) Why can’t you do anything right?!

EDWARD
(to CATHHERINE) I’m sorry! Please don’t be cross. I only wanted to see if there was some sausage. We’ll go outside and play.

TIM
Just get over here! It’s no use.

EDWARD, deflated, joins his siblings. BERNARD enters the kitchen, buttoning his shirt.

BERNARD
What’s going on?

CATHHERINE
I really haven’t got the patience today, Bernard.

BERNARD
What’s happened now?
CATHERINE
They’re trying to get into the fridge again.

BERNARD
Catherine, I really wish you would stop referring to them like they’re people.

BETTY
How rude!

CATHERINE
Well, what should I call them?

BERNARD
I haven’t the slightest idea, my love. Please don’t fret about it anymore.

CATHERINE
We can’t have this behavior today. The realtor will be here any minute. I don’t want them ruining everything. They’ve already ruined so much.

TIM
(*rising to his feet*) You can’t talk to us like that!

BETTY
(*tugging on TIM’s pants*) Tim….don’t!

TIM
Well, they can’t. They can’t ignore us!

_He begins opening and slamming a drawer full of kitchen utensils over and over. CATHERINE jumps up from the table and hides behind BERNARD, who stares at it, mouth agape. There is a long pause._

BETTY
(*whispered*) Timmy! They’re going to throw us out!

CATHERINE
You saw that! You saw it, Bernard!
BERNARD

I…I…

CATHERINE
And before they were rattling the refrigerator. I know you think this is all in my head, that I’m just stressed out from the upcoming move, that I haven’t made enough friends in this boring town, but now you’ve seen it for yourself! You saw it! You see what they’ve been doing to me?!

BERNARD

Don’t call them “they.”

CATHERINE
What else should I call them? The ghosts?? The spirits?

BERNARD

It’s all nonsense. This can’t be.

CATHERINE

Can’t it?

BERNARD

Maybe it was an earthquake.

CATHERINE

(laughing wildly) An earthquake! That’s rich, Bernard.

BERNARD

Look, whatever is happening here, I’ve already agreed to move. Again. You can ask me to uproot our lives for the second time in three months, but you can’t ask me to suddenly believe in ghosts!

BETTY

They’ve found us out already!

EDWARD

Are they leaving us?

TIM

Seems like it.
BETTY

*(beginning to cry)* Not again!

*The doorbell rings.*

CATHERINE

Oh, thank God. Just in time.

*She storms from the kitchen to answer the door. BERNARD smooths his collar and looks warily around the room. BETTY rushes to him and wraps herself around his leg.*

BETTY

We’re sorry, Bernard! Please don’t go!

*BERNARD looks down with slight confusion, but convinces himself he’s imagining things.*

TIM

Betty! Come on!

*All three children rise into the air and float above the scene as CATHERINE re-enters with a frizzy-haired woman with thick glasses and a briefcase; HILDY.*

CATHERINE

*(cheerfully)* And this is my husband, Bernard. Bernard, this is Hildy, the realtor. We are so thrilled you were able to come on such short notice.

HILDY

Oh, well, of course! Always looking to make a commission. A cat lady’s gotta eat!

CATHERINE

Ah. Yes. Well, let me tell you a little bit about the property. The house is over one hundred years old but completely remodeled, as you can see.

*HILDY wanders over to the utensil drawers and refrigerator while CATHERINE speaks.*

It’s in fantastic condition. The owner’s before us did a complete overhaul and we’ve only been here a few months, so everything is basically brand new.
HILDY
And you’re already looking to move on? Why?

CATHERINE
Oh. Um. Well, it’s uh...nothing in particular. It’s...uh...

HILDY
(looking up at the children) Yes?

CATHERINE shoots BERNARD a look.

BERNARD
Oh! Um...This house just isn’t the right fit for us.

HILDY
Because of the ghosts?

CATHERINE and BERNARD stare at her in surprise. EDWARD does a flip in the air.

EDWARD
She sees us!

BERNARD
I’m sorry? Did you say...ghosts?

HILDY
(pointing at the kids) Those ones, there.

CATHERINE and BERNARD whip their gaze up to the ceiling. They don’t see anything, but the kids giggle gleefully and do ballet leaps and twirls.

CATHERINE
You can see them?

HILDY
(nodding) Three wee ones. Two boys and a girl. Hullo, up there!
BETTY
(coming to rest on top of the refrigerator) Good day, ma’am!

HILDY
Oh, they’re darling!

BERNARD
(to CATHERINE) Is this some sort of prank?

CATHERINE
No! I swear! Hildy, can you really see them?

HILDY
I haven’t got the imagination to pull your leg about it. You’re not scared of them, are you? They’re just the cutest things.

TIM
I prefer handsome.

CATHERINE
(collapsing into a chair) They’re just children?

HILDY
Yes. It’s normal to take fright at things that startle you, things you can’t see with your own eyes.

BERNARD
You can see...ghosts? All the time?

HILDY
 Comes in handy when selling houses, I’ll tell ya.

CATHERINE
What happened to them?

HILDY looks up to them, questioningly. All three shrug and start playing keep-away with a ball of light, EDWARD again in the middle. CATHERINE and BERNARD gasp as they witness the ball of light bouncing around the room.
HILDY
I don’t know. And neither do they. But it doesn’t seem to bother them one bit.

*The kids continue to play, spinning and laughing as they race through the room, both in the air and on the ground. Sparkles fill the air in their wake. It is joyous, exuberant, the relief of being recognized and appreciated. It is a beautiful spectacle. CATHERINE and BERNARD only witness portions of it, but even they find themselves smiling and holding each other. Eventually, the children tire out and collapse to the ground, laughing and breathing heavily.*

EDWARD
We’re so glad you’re here, ma’am. It’s nice to make a new friend.

*HILDY kneels down and gently touches his cheek.*

HILDY
Me too, dear. What a lovely little face you have.

*EDWARD squeals with delight and runs to hide behind TIM.*

TIM
We don’t mean any harm, ma’am. We just are looking for new friends. Someone to take notice.

BERNARD
What are they saying? What do they want from us?

HILDY
What any child wants, Bernard. Just a little love and attention.

*CATHARINE and BERNARD look at each other. CATHARINE tears up, and BERNARD kisses her forehead.*

BERNARD
What do you think, my love?

CATHARINE
I think we should stay.
BERNARD smiles and nods. He agrees.

BERNARD

(to HILDY) Will you tell them?

HILDY

Tell them yourselves. They’re here. They can always hear you.

BERNARD gulps and addresses the air, not looking anywhere remotely near where the children are, but it’s the thought that counts.

BERNARD

Hello. Uh...Hello. I’m Bernard.

EDWARD

We already know that!

TIM

Shhh!

BERNARD

We want you to know that we’re going to stay. And I’m sorry for not believing in you.

CATHERINE

We’d love to be friends with you. In a non-scary way. Maybe no rattling things in the middle of the night. If possible.

BERNARD

We’re going to just need to ease into it a bit.

The kids look at each other and nod gleefully.

TIM

I think we can manage that.

HILDY

We’re all in agreement, it seems.
CATHERINE and BERNARD hug each other shakily. The kids rush and embrace them as well. CATHERINE and BERNARD feel something tingly and magical and smile widely at HILDY. HILDY nods, contented, swings her purse over the shoulder.

HILDY
A commission would have been nice, but a happy ending is better.

She exits, grinning.

END OF PLAY