

MYSTERY PLAYS: On the Air

By Alice Duckworth

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PUBLISHED BY
ELDRIDGE PUBLISHING COMPANY

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ABOUT THE PLAYS

Turn down the lights in your classroom and let your actors raise some goosebumps as they read and create the sound effects for these radio plays. "The Pool" (5 characters) is about a hidden pond with enticingly deadly waters; "The Mask" (4 characters) is about a tribal mask which has powers to change looks; and "The Message" (7 characters) is about a fax machine which sends warnings ... by itself.

THE POOL

CAST OF CHARACTERS

NARRATOR

JENNY

MARK

BRIAN

NURSE

THE SWIMMING HOLE

Scene 1

NARRATOR: Jenny, Mark, and Brian have been enjoying the last day of summer break in their favorite swimming hole. But now, the sky is darkening, and a chill wind has come up. It looks like rain ...

JENNY: B'rr, I'm getting out. I've got goose bumps.

MARK: Me, too.

BRIAN: I'm not cold, but if you two are splitting, so am I.

NARRATOR: Putting on their sweats and tennis shoes, they start walking home, but Brian changes his mind.

BRIAN: Look, school starts tomorrow. I don't want to go home yet. Let's do something exciting.

JENNY: Like what?

BRIAN: We could go to the cave pool.

MARK: Are you serious?

BRIAN: *(Grinning.)* Sure, I feel like living dangerously.

NARRATOR: There is a long pause while Jenny and Mark look at each other.

MARK: I know you haven't lived around here very long, Brian, but that place has a very bad reputation.

BRIAN: I've lived here long enough to hear plenty about it. But you know what I think? I think it's all superstition.

MARK: OK, think what you want. But there are some strange stories about that pool. My grandfather knew a man who could never speak again after he looked down into it.

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JENNY: Mark's right, Brian. There's another story that's even worse.

BRIAN: (*Very much the skeptic.*) I can't wait to hear about it.

JENNY: It's not a joke, Brian. This man went to the pool, and, somehow, his foot slipped into it. It got infected. They tried every kind of medication but nothing worked. It kept getting worse, and finally, it had to be amputated. Later, when they examined the foot, it was all puffy and had turned black.

BRIAN: Oh, come on, Jenny, who's going to believe that!

JENNY: I know it sounds unreal, but too many things have happened to too many people not to believe some of the stories.

MARK: I heard that story, but it was different than the way you tell it, Jenny.

BRIAN: I'll bet it was. After all, two different people made it up.

MARK: (*Ignoring BRIAN.*) The way I heard it, when the doctor went back to get the foot, it was gone.

BRIAN: (*Laughing.*) Walked away by itself, huh?

MARK: (*Very serious.*) Either that or just disappeared.

BRIAN: Geez! I don't believe either of those stupid stories. Look, why would the water in the pool be any different than the water we've been swimming in all afternoon? The creek runs right down into the cave. If that water's polluted in some way, we're already in trouble.

MARK: (*Thoughtfully.*) What you're saying makes sense, but it doesn't explain all the stories.

BRIAN: Well, I'm going down there, anyway. Go on home, if you want to. I'll see you tomorrow.

MARK: (*Hesitating, then making a decision.*) We might as well go with him, Jenny. As far as the cave.

JENNY: Oh, OK. But no farther.

BRIAN: Great! Let's get moving then. Before the rain starts.

THE CAVE
Scene 2

NARRATOR: When they arrive at the cave, Brian hesitates long enough to give Mark and Jenny a big grin, then ducks his head for the low entrance and goes in. Jenny and Mark follow, but stop just inside.

MARK: You're sure you want to do this?

BRIAN: Absolutely.

MARK: *(Taking a deep breath.)* OK. If you walk back into that tunnel about thirty feet, you'll see the pool. But, Brian, remember, don't look into it!

BRIAN: Sure. See you soon.

NARRATOR: It's dark and eerie inside the cave. A large bat flies out, but finding daylight, quickly swerves and flies back in again, just missing Jenny's head. The place is very damp, and they can hear the trickle of dripping water, and deeper inside the tunnel, a kind of bubbling sound.

JENNY: *(Shivering.)* I wish I hadn't come. I hate this place. It's not just the pool. The whole place is spooky.

MARK: Yeah. But Brian will be back in a minute. He just wants to say he's been here. Like us. We did the same.

JENNY: But we didn't look in the pool. We were afraid.

MARK: We warned him, Jenny.

JENNY: I know. *(After a long pause.)* I was thinking about that day in history class when Miss Reynolds told us about this pool. Remember she told us the legend dates back to when there were no white people around here, just native Americans.

MARK: I remember. After one of the chief's little girls drowned in the pool, he had his medicine man put a curse on it, and none of that tribe was allowed to ever go there again.

JENNY: Right! I'm not sure I believe in curses. I'd rather not. Not the kind that can cause terrible things to happen to people.

MARK: Whether it's a curse or not, we know there's something weird about this place. *(Pause.)* Brian's been in there long enough! What do you suppose he's doing?

NARRATOR: Suddenly, they hear a shout.

BRIAN: *(From a distance.)* MARK! JENNY! COME HERE!
I'VE GOT HOLD OF SOMETHING! I NEED HELP!

MARK: *(Shouting back.)* YEAH? WHAT IS IT?

JENNY: Don't go in there, Mark!

MARK: Don't worry. I'm not going.

BRIAN: *(From a distance.)* I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS.
BUT HURRY UP! IT'S GETTING AWAY!

MARK: *(Shouting back.)* WE'RE NOT COMING, BRIAN!
YOU'D BETTER COME ON OUT! D'YOU HEAR? IF
YOU DON'T COME RIGHT AWAY, WE'RE LEAVING!

That ought to bring him out.

JENNY: Don't count on it.

NARRATOR: Jenny and Mark stare down the shadowy
tunnel that leads to the pool. Brian isn't calling anymore.
The only sound is the dripping water and the squeak of
bats.

MARK: *(Calling.)* BRIAN!

JENNY: S'hh, here he comes.

NARRATOR: Brian staggers toward them, holding his left
hand as though it is hurt. His face is flushed, and his eyes
are unnaturally bright.

MARK: About time you got out of there. What happened to
your hand?

BRIAN: I got bitten.

MARK: *(Shocked.)* By what?

BRIAN: Some long, slippery thing. Weird-looking,
swimming around in the black water.

JENNY: *(Horried.)* You put your hand in the pool?

BRIAN: I had to. I wanted to catch the ... whatever it was. I
was going to take it home, so I could tell everyone I caught
it in the infamous pool.

MARK: You idiot! Talk about being stupid! Let's see your
hand. *(Pause.)* I don't see any mark on it, but it looks like
it's beginning to swell. You'd better get to the doctor.

BRIAN: I do feel kind of strange ... kind of dizzy.

JENNY: I can't believe it! Brian, after we warned you, why
did you put your hand in the pool?

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