

Buried Treasures
a short play
by John Mabey
First Prize
Playwriting Adults

CHARACTERS

Ava

Female
Late 20s

Agnes

Female
Late teens

LOCATION

A small patch of land in Fontana Lake, North Carolina.
It's the remains of Proctor, a former town located in Swain County,
which remains submerged under water
but sometimes reveals itself to those who seek.

SYNOPSIS

Two siblings are swept away by the currents of their relationship.
But the promise of buried treasures is either a buoy or an anchor.

AVA digs a hole in the mud with a shovel
(actions implied) . AGNES approaches.

AGNES

Fool.

Agnes tosses a sack on the ground.

AGNES

You forgot somethin.’

AVA

Don’t need whatever that is.

AGNES

Well that’s a nice ‘how-do-ya-do.’

AVA

I’m not going back.

AGNES

Didn’t ask you to.

AVA

Ma and Pa send you?

AGNES

They’re glad you’re gone. Gave me your room - all your stuff.

AVA

Now I know you’re lying. Don’t got stuff.

AGNES

They cut you outta the will, too. Leave you nothin.’

AVA

‘Nothing’ is exactly what they’ll leave us. That and debt.

AGNES

Pa already gave you his hairy ears.

AVA

Go.

AGNES

You know how hard it was to find you?

AVA

Yep.

AGNES

Pa says you're a runaway but Ma thinks you're dead. Which is it?

AVA

Can't be a runaway when you're in your 20s. And no one's dead.

AGNES

That's a lie. Sammy's dead.

AVA

What?

AGNES

Is that hair cloggin' your ears? *Dead.*

AVA

How?

AGNES

Stupid dog went chasin' soggy tennis balls and got hit by a Chevy with racin' stripes down the sides.

AVA

I don't believe it.

AGNES

I know. Who has racin' stripes anymore?

AVA

I'm talking about *Sammy*.

Right. AGNES

Did he - was it quick? AVA

Right in front of me. AGNES

I'm sorry. And that you had to see it. I'm really sorry. AVA

So that's what it takes for you to say 'sorry?' AGNES

Aggy, look - AVA

I go by 'Agnes' now. AGNES

Since when? AVA

You'd know if you stopped hiding out here 'n came back with me. AGNES

I can't. AVA

You *won't*. AGNES

Not until I find it. AVA

At least come back for a shower 'n soup beans. Water gets low twice a day - that's two chances to walk home 'n let us know *you're* not dead, too. AGNES

AVA
(sarcastic)

'Home.'

AGNES

You know where home is.

AVA

I do. (*runs her hands over the dirt*) It's just hiding.

AGNES

What's gone is gone. You care more about what's below than what's right here.

AVA

Worried about me?

AGNES

'For' you.

AVA

I'm good.

AGNES

You look like crap.

AVA

Don't care how I look.

AGNES

Now *that* I actually believe. You're never gonna find a date now, lookin' all hairy 'n gross.

AVA

You'd be surprised what guys are into.

AGNES

Not anymore.

AVA

What's that supposed to mean? Are you dating?

AGNES

Don't see why not. I'm officially a year older now. A year older *today*.

AVA

(realizing)

Oh, Aggy - 'Agnes.' I'm real sorry. Did they at least get you a birthday cake this year?

AGNES

.....

AVA

You know, I'm *their* same age - right now - when they got married and popped me out.

AGNES

Not in that order.

AVA

And I'm Nana's same age when their house got flooded to build the dam. (*runs her hands over the dirt*) Right here, thereabouts.

AGNES

Geez you're old.

AVA

Time moves different the older you get.

AGNES

Whatever's still buried out here is no treasure.

AVA

Nana and Papa are buried out here.

AGNES

(pointing in another direction)

In the *actual* cemetery, above the water line.

AVA

I'll know the treasure I'm looking for when I find it.

AGNES

Everything from here is too banged-up to save.

AVA

Not everything.

Ava looks to her sister. A moment.

AVA

Mom and Dad forgot about this place.

AGNES

Have to, if you ever wanna move on.

AVA

And sometimes the best way forward is reaching back - to what everyone else forgot.

AGNES

Can't go forward *and* back.

AVA

The water does.

Beat

AVA

Tell me where he's buried.

AGNES

(confused)

Papa?

AVA

Sammy.

AGNES

Oh, right.

AVA

Did you bury him in the backyard by the oak?

Agnes shakes her head.

AVA

Where then?

Agnes hesitates, then motions to the sack she was carrying at the beginning. Ava jumps back.

AGNES

What? You're already diggin' a hole.

AVA

Agnes!

AGNES

Thought you'd wanna say goodbye. My bad. You never said goodbye to me neither.

AVA

You don't carry around dead dogs!

AGNES

Oh, shut your face. Sammy's alive - probably chasin' that squirrel right about now. You know the one, wonky tail, always digs-up bulbs.

AVA

Stop. Sammy's fine?

AGNES

Got mud in your ears, too? Yeah, dog's fine. But good to know what you actually care about. *Who*.

AVA

There is something very wrong with you.

AGNES

With all of us. That's why we gotta stick together.

Beat

Ava cautiously opens the sack and peeks at what's inside. She removes clothes and food.

AGNES

You smell somethin' awful - take the clean clothes. Got food in there, too.

Ava holds-up some t-shirts.

AVA

Um. These're yours.

AGNES

Nah.

Ava holds-up a shirt that says 'Aggy.'

AGNES

Fine, yeah. Okay.

AVA

Are *you* running away?

AGNES

If you make me say 'I missed you' then I swear I'll go home and kill that stupid dog for real.

AVA

I got it. No more questions. (*beat*) And I missed you, too.

Agnes walks around the hole Ava was digging.

AGNES

No lost treasure yet?

AVA

Maybe whatever's out here isn't *lost*, just ran away. Escaped.

AGNES

And what if there's nothin' to find at all?

AVA

Depends on what you're looking to find.

Beat

Agnes shivers in the wind, and Ava puts a jacket around her.

AVA

Water's getting higher. Last chance to go back for the night.

Agnes looks back toward the way she came.

AGNES

You 'n me, we never get *more* - can barely afford what we do have.

AVA

But what if we tried?

AGNES

No use - it's like what you said, with the water. It tries to leave but always goes back.

AVA

Maybe it's just showing us the way.

Beat

Agnes picks up the shovel. And they continue digging. Together.

END OF PLAY