

## SCRIPT SAMPLE

Michael B. Brave™ – a new musical in two acts by Richard Gustin

### ACT ONE

#### SCENE ONE

*(At rise MICHAEL is discovered standing on a rock in a watery dream world. Wind is heard and the sound of surf.)*

MICHAEL

*(Musical underscoring)*

I almost drowned when I was five years old. My family and I were on vacation in Ocean City, Maryland, with our cousins who lived nearby. I was walking along the shoreline of the Atlantic Ocean by myself, watching a few small waves trickle in, when a huge wave suddenly appeared and swept me into water above my head. I didn't know how to swim, and I was terrified. As I drifted under the water, my brief life passed before my wide-open eyes. I waved my arms and kicked my legs wildly. I was starting to feel lightheaded when I saw a watery vision of a woman in a white gown.

*(WOMAN IN WHITE appears)*

MICHAEL

As she floated closer to me, even though we were underwater, I clearly heard her whisper to me,

WOMAN IN WHITE

Michael, don't be afraid,  
Just believe in yourself.  
Believe, believe, believe –

BELIEVE *(Song) (She sings)*

The sea is deep  
A mystery  
Full of life  
Beauty to behold

Turtles of green  
Whales of blue  
Home to fishes  
Full of wishes  
But not for you

*Chorus*

Just believe in yourself  
Believe in yourself  
Believe, believe –

WOMAN IN WHITE (*spoken*)

Don't be afraid, Michael.

(She sings.)

*Verse*

The tide comes in  
The tide goes out  
You should know  
It's not your time to sleep right now  
Sea urchins of red  
Crabs of gold  
They'll pinch your nose  
And grab your toes  
Trust your instincts and you'll be fine

*Chorus*

Just believe in yourself  
Believe in yourself  
Believe, believe –

*Verse*

You have so much to do  
Time to grow tall  
Right now  
You just have to believe

**End Song**

(WOMAN IN WHITE *disappears in the sea mist*)

MICHAEL

A few seconds later, I heard a man's voice. He was yelling at me, but I couldn't understand him. The water was about three feet over my head, when the man swam toward me and pulled me back to the beach. There, he made sure that I was breathing, and then he walked away without saying a word.

Although I was petrified by the experience of almost drowning and seeing a ghost, I never told my parents. They had warned me not to wander too far away from them on the beach. If they ever knew what happened, I figured they'd probably watch me like hawks for the rest of my life.

As far as the lady in white who could speak underwater, I tried to convince myself that I had imagined her. Part of me, however, never let go of the possibility that she might have been real. And how did she know my name?

(WOMAN IN WHITE Song Echo – Recorded)

Just believe in yourself  
Believe in yourself  
Believe, believe –

WOMAN IN WHITE (*spoken*)

Don't be afraid, Michael.

(MICHAEL *jumps off the rock and crosses downstage.*)

Fast forward! It's six years later. On a chilly October evening, my parents, my brother, and I moved into our new house on Oakland Avenue in Long Field, Illinois. This happened a few days before I met Kirby. Our new home was a wood-framed, two-story house painted white that had been vacant for several months and was cold and drafty.

(*The Benton house materializes before our eyes*)

MICHAEL

After the movers left, my dad turned up the heat on the thermostat in the living room. As I watched, I saw a face reflected on the plastic cover of the thermostat.<sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

DAD *enters and stands by the thermostat. The thermostat glows a ghostly green. DAD gives it a few taps.*)

MICHAEL

Dad didn't react to the reflection, so I assumed he didn't see it. I wondered if I should mention the reflection, when it vanished.

(*Thermostat ghostly green light fades.*)

My family probably would have thought I was imagining things anyway. I also knew my brother Bryan –

(BRYAN *appears, smiling*)

(that's him) would tease me mercilessly for saying something weird. At that time, my older brother always thought everything I said was weird.

(BRYAN *sticks his fingers in his ears and wiggles his fingers while blowing MICHAEL a raspberry. BRYAN exits. MOM is straightening out the antique lace curtains in the living room.*)

DAD

That's weird! Do you hear that strange noise?

(*We hear a sound "Eee-awe, eee-awe, eee-awe..."*)

There it is again! Oh boy, that's why I didn't want to buy an old house. My parents warned me there would always be something that needed fixing.

MOM (*sweetly*)

But we fell in love with its *charm*. Right?

MICHAEL (*aside*)

Mom had convinced Dad to buy an older house, even though his parents and her parents had warned them it would need a lot of work.

DAD (*rolling his eyes*)

Right. Let's all hit the sack and start unpacking tomorrow.

*(MICHAEL races up the stairs to his bedroom and shuts the door. He sheds his clothes in record time revealing PJs underneath and starts bouncing happily on his bed. Mom peeks in the door of his room.)*

MOM

Did you brush your teeth?

MICHAEL

Yep.

*MOM (turning off the bedroom lamp.)*

Wow, Michael! That's gotta be a record for the fastest time you ever brushed your teeth before going to bed.<sup>[SEP]</sup>

*(Michael looks at audience with a smile. MOM continues)*

I'm amazed. You really must like it here.

MICHAEL

It's nice having my own bedroom. Goodnight.

*(MOM kisses MICHAEL tenderly on the forehead.)*

G'night.

*(Room lights fade. MICHAEL turns over in bed and is asleep. The downstairs thermostat glows a ghostly green. The house is quiet. All is well.)*

*(Fade to black)*

## SCENE TWO

*(Next day. Sunday. A bright cheery morning. MICHAEL wakes with a start in his new surroundings. Realizing he's in a new house and all is well, he rolls over contently and closes his eyes. BRYAN enters silently tiptoeing with a pillow behind his back and starts to whack MICHAEL with it.)*

BRYAN

Hello, stranger!

*(BRYAN whacks MICHAEL with the pillow.)*

MICHAEL *(fending BRYAN off)*

Stop it! Stop it!

BRYAN *(laughing)*

Little Mama's boy!<sup>[SEP]</sup>

MICHAEL

Would you just get out of my room, please?!

BRYAN

Or what? What are you gonna do, crybaby? Go crying to your mama?

MICHAEL

Get out of here!

BRYAN

Just trying to toughen you up Little Mikey.

*(BRYAN stands by the bed.)*

MICHAEL *(furious, picking up a shoe to throw)*

I don't need your help. Get out of my room!

BRYAN

Okay, stranger. And I do mean 'strange.'

*(BRYAN starts to exit out the bedroom door and sticks his head back in the doorway.)*

BRYAN

Hey, I'm going to the pool today. I'd invite you to come but ... Little Mikey is scared of water, isn't he? *(makes chicken clucking sounds)* What a loser!

*(BRYAN smiles at MICHAEL and slams the door just before the shoe MICHAEL has thrown hits it.)*

MICHAEL *(to audience)*

Argh! If you don't have an older brother count yourself lucky. I have my own room, but Bryan is still attacking me. I'm going to have to start locking my door.

*(MICHAEL puts his head under the covers. Pause. A strange squeaking sound is heard: Eee-awe, eee-awe. MICHAEL pokes his head out from the covers. A voice not much louder than a whisper is heard. The voice of KIRBY.)*

KIRBY

Get out of *my* room.

*(MICHAEL flies out of bed and down the stairs, almost slamming into the kitchen table. DAD is making coffee.)*

DAD

Hey, kiddo. What's going on? *(smiling)* You look like you just saw a ghost.

MICHAEL *(take to audience)*

No... um... I just need something to eat. Can I have some cereal? *(to audience)* I wasn't ready to tell anybody about what I had just heard. I'd seen my first ghost when I was five, and now I could only come to one conclusion: This house is haunted!

*(Blackout)*

SCENE THREE

*(The following evening. MICHAEL is on his bed doing homework with his computer on his lap. KIRBY theme music is heard as a light-gray fog floats in through the closed bedroom window. MICHAEL looks at the fog more curious than alarmed. Out of the fog walks a pale-gray boy about MICHAEL's age, who has no color other than the various shades of gray that you would see in an old-time, black-and-white movie. The boy wears a 1940's suit with knee-length trousers, a button-down shirt, a necktie, and dark knee-high socks.)*

*(MICHAEL is frozen in fear.)*

KIRBY

Boo!

*(MICHAEL runs to the bedroom door trying to escape as his laptop falls to the floor.)*

KIRBY

No! Stop! Stop! Don't run away! I was just kidding. *(smiling)* Ghosts don't really say 'Boo.'

MICHAEL

Oh ... um ... sorry. My name is Michael Benton, and I'm not used to being around ghosts.

KIRBY

Pleased to meet you. My name is Curtis Williams Scott, but Grandmamma and Mother called me 'Kirby.' The three of us used to live here, but now I'm the only one left. What are you doing in my room?

MICHAEL

Me and my family just moved here, and on the first night when I saw a face in the thermostat, I was starting to wonder if this house was haunted.

KIRBY *(joining MICHAEL sitting on the bed)*

I'm especially proud of my face-in-the-thermostat trick.

*(MICHAEL picks up his laptop from the floor and sits on the bed.)*

MICHAEL

That was cool. How'd you do it?

KIRBY

I can't explain how I do it. I just think about it, and it happens.

MICHAEL

I wonder why I could see your face in the thermostat, but my dad couldn't.

KIRBY (*shrugs*)

That's another thing I can't explain.

MICHAEL

How old are you anyway? I'm eleven, and you look pretty close to my age.

KIRBY

Well, I was born in 1934, but I died when I was eleven, so I never grew up. If I was alive today, I'd be about eighty years old.

MICHAEL (*impressed*)

How did you die?

KIRBY

Um ... I'd rather not say. It's kind of embarrassing. (*trying to change the subject*) What's that silver thing you dropped on the floor?

MICHAEL

It's a laptop computer. (*flips it open*) Whew! I'm lucky it didn't break.

KIRBY (*scrunching his face close to the screen*)

What does it do?

MICHAEL

Kids use laptops nowadays to do homework. It's electronic.

KIRBY

Is the teacher inside of there, too?

MICHAEL (*smiling*)

No. My teacher, Ms. Frankel, still teaches in a classroom at my school. I need to give her the report I'm working on by tomorrow morning.

KIRBY

What's the report about?

MICHAEL

The Wright Brothers.

KIRBY

Why are you doing a report on them?

MICHAEL

Because Amelia Earhart, Bessie Coleman and Neil Armstrong were already taken.

KIRBY

Ha, that's funny. You seem pretty smart. Maybe you and your machine could help me figure something out.

MICHAEL

What's the problem?

KIRBY

I'm trying to find Mother. She died in this house, but her spirit hasn't come back. I miss her and want to know when she's going to return.

MICHAEL

When did she die?

KIRBY

I think it was last December, but I don't pay much attention to calendars. Do you think you could help me?

MICHAEL (*considering*)

Hmm. That's a tough one. Let me think about it. I'll try to help you, but not tonight. I need to finish my report. Is it okay if we talk more tomorrow?

KIRBY

Yes, of course. Finish your homework. But please don't tell anyone else about me.

MICHAEL

You bet – if I told anyone, they'd think I was crazy. It's our secret.

*(And with that, KIRBY transforms into a swirl of fog (theme music) and disappears. MICHAEL stares at the wall astonished as the lights fade to black.)*

#### SCENE FOUR

*(The next morning. The Benton family is gathered at the kitchen table eating breakfast before MICHAEL and BRYAN head off to school and parents to work. ANITA and DAVID are laughing as the lights rise.)*

MICHAEL

Who lived in this house before we did?



DAD

Old Lady Sco..., I mean Mrs. Caroline Scott. She was over a hundred years old when she died. Her brother, George Williams, sold me the house. He's in his nineties and lives at the end of this block in the house with the white picket fence. Why do you ask?

MICHAEL

Just wondering.

BRYAN (sarcastically)

“Just wondering.”

MICHAEL

Mom!<sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

BRYAN

Little Mama's boy.

MOM (admonishing)

Bryan

BRYAN

What? Michael started it.

DAD

What have we talked about, Bryan?

BENTON FAMILY FUGUE (*Song*)

MICHAEL *sings*

Bryan's a jerk  
He never shares his ice cream  
And his ears are full of dirt  
He has no friends  
Ask anyone in school  
And they will tell you once again  
(*Repeats*)

MRS. BENTON *sings*

Why can't you two get along?  
I don't like this painful path we're on  
I just want tranquility  
In my home  
Can't you do that for me?  
(*Repeats*)

BRYAN *sings*

Michael is a wimp  
Michael is a wimp  
No one will like him  
And he's just a little shrimp  
(*Repeats*)

MR. BENTON *sings*

Where's the game?  
Who took the remote again?  
(Repeats)

MICHAEL, BRYAN, MRS. BENTON, MR. BENTON *sing*

Benton fugue  
The Benton family fugue!

### End Song

MICHAEL (*fed up*)

See you later.

(MICHAEL *grabs his backpack with a piece of toast in his mouth and exits.*)

MOM

Bye.

DAD

Be careful crossing the streets.

MOM

Good luck with the Wright Brothers!

BRYAN

You're gonna need it!

(MICHAEL *crosses downstage in a pool of light and addresses the audience.*)

MICHAEL

My presentation on the Wright Brothers went alright. Sheesh, it's hard when the whole class is looking at you bored out of their gourds. I tried my best to look like a Wright Brothers aviator pioneer complete with a fake mustache, goggles and aviator hat. It wasn't the greatest costume, but I knew I would get extra credit points on my presentation for making the effort. It didn't help that Vickie Vargas was staring at me in the front row making moon eyes. Don't ask me what that means. It's just that everyone thinks Vickie has a crush on me.

Her presentation on Bessie Coleman was better than my report on the Wright Brothers. Vickie said my hat was weird, but that I did a good job. Her father died in a car accident last December, and I feel sorry for her. I can't imagine what it would be like to lose a parent. (*beat*) To come to think of it, I just realized that Vickie's dad and Kirby's mom died in the same month last year. I wonder if Vickie is able to talk to her dad's spirit. Maybe she knows something about the spirit world and can help me with Kirby's problem.

**END OF SCRIPT SAMPLE**