

# Booktalk!

## Pretend She's Here Script

### For this Book Talk you will need

- 2 actors (Emily, Mrs. Porter)
- **Emily:** flannel pajama pants, Halloween-themed t-shirt, black long-haired wig (if necessary), stitch mark on side of forehead, long rope – one end looped around right ankle & other tied to leg of bed
- **Mrs. Porter:** dress pants, sweater, slip-on shoes
- **Additional props:** 3 chairs side-to-side with blanket along seats and pillow at one end (to simulate bed), medium-sized table (to simulate night table), small lamp, tray, bowl, mug, plate with fake toast on it, copy of *Pretend She's Here* (lying on night table next to lamp)

**Mrs. Porter:** *(walking into the room carrying tray; Emily sitting on edge of bed)* Good morning, sleepyhead. You must be hungry.

**Emily:** *(flatly)* Is it day or night?

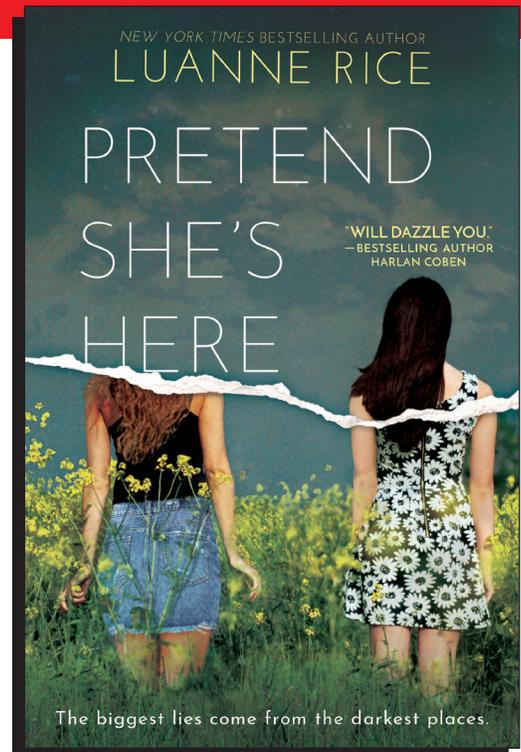
**Mrs. P:** *(laughing lightly, then pursing her lips with amusement)* Do you think I'd be feeding you breakfast at night?

**Emily:** *(looking up, sounding surprised)* I slept till noon?

**Mrs. P:** Your tummy was so upset on the car ride. I wanted to make one of your favourites, but I think it's better to stay mild for now. Toast, chicken soup, tea. *(placing the tray on night table, then coming to sit on the bed beside Emily; Emily staring at her knees, refusing to look up)*

**Mrs. P:** For both our sakes, Emily, I'm going to talk to you honestly... As much as it pains me to go backward. *(sounding disgusted)* To call you by your 'other' name.

**Mrs. P:** *(pausing momentarily, then continuing)* I miss my daughter. I know you miss her, too. Those letters you wrote after she... *(pausing to think of the right word)*...was gone. They meant the world to us. To me. She thought of you as a second sister. I thought of you as a third daughter.



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- Emily:** *(flatly)* It's true, you *were* my other family. *(looking up)* But I *have* a mother, Mrs. Porter. And a father, and my own sisters and brothers.
- Mrs. P:** You said it yourself – we were your other family. And you needed it, considering your mother.
- Emily:** *(defensively)* She's better now.
- Mrs. P:** *(sighing)* I know you want to believe that. But she doesn't deserve you, after all the harm she's done. *(matter-of-factly)* But she will go on, I promise you. *(placing her hand over Emily's hand)* You live with us now.
- Emily:** *(answering meekly)* No, I don't! I can't!
- Mrs. P:** *(sounding firmer)* Emily – and this is the last time you will hear that name – you *will* get used to it. You have to. So will they.
- Emily:** *(shouting)* NO! You know that's not true.
- Mrs. P:** *(distractedly)* When Lizzie got sick, I refused to believe it could be bad. It just wasn't possible.
- Emily:** *(looking down & softening tone)* I remember...
- Mrs. P:** *(continuing)* When things got really bad with her, when we knew she wasn't going to get better, I heard every single second of the day tick by in my head. I wanted to hold each one, make it last longer so she would stay... *(hesitating)* And when the doctor told me she only had days... *(pausing)* I wanted to die.
- Emily:** *(looking up)* But you have another daughter. She needs you.
- Mrs. P:** I love Chloe for trying. And she IS dear – you saw how she coloured her hair, just like her big sister. To help me keep Lizzie alive in our lives.
- Emily:** I wish more than anything that was possible.
- Mrs. P:** *(looking at Emily)* But it is possible. With you.
- Emily:** *(shaking her head)* You already found out: Chloe can't be Lizzie. And neither can I. *(raising her voice)* There's only one Lizzie!
- Mrs. P:** *(looking angry, sounding stern)* Please don't raise your voice to me. I've cooked a nice meal for you. I've taken care of you – stitched that cut on your head. I will treat you like my child because you *are* my child now. *(insistently)* Do you understand?

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- Emily:** No, I don't. *(staring into her face)* I don't believe you want to do this to me. You wouldn't want to put my mom through this. Or my dad, either... They're my family. They're the people I love. If you truly care about me, you'll let me go.
- Mrs. P:** Oh, you're not leaving... This is your new home, and we're your new family. *(grabbing Emily's hand)* *(releasing Emily's hands)* So don't make this worse. Understand that the only way you can protect your *(using air quotes)* family, is to be my daughter... To be Lizzie.
- Emily:** *(sounding bewildered)* How will that protect them?
- Mrs. P:** *(standing as she continues)* Because if you don't do this – if you try to run away – your family will pay. *(turning & walking offstage)*
- Emily:** *(jumping off the bed & yelling after Mrs. P)* Take it back! Say you don't mean it!
- Emily:** *(flopping back down onto the bed, then speaking to audience somewhat frantically)* Does she mean it? Is she actually planning on keeping me here like this? *(grabbing copy of Pretend She's Here off night table)* The only way you'll find out is to get your own copy of *Pretend She's Here* from your Scholastic Book Fair.