

**A Readers' Theater Adaptation of Jacqueline West's *The Books of Elsewhere:*
The Shadows
by Nicki Stohr**

Characters:

Olive 1	Narrator 1
Olive 2	Narrator 2
Horatio 1	Narrator 3
Horatio 2	Narrator 4
	Narrator 5
	Narrator 6

Narrator 3: This script comes from the fantasy novel, *The Books of Elsewhere: The Shadows* book 1 by Jacqueline West.

Narrator 5: Olive had trouble getting to sleep that night.

Narrator 1: For a while, she thought she was sleeping, but then she opened her eyes and saw that the minute column on the digital clock had only gone up by three. Olive sighed.

Narrator 4: She punched the pillows. She kicked her legs under the bedspread so that it billowed up like a parachute. She listened to the distant sound of her parents talking between the busy clicking of computer keys.

Narrator 2: Olive tried counting sheep, but she got lost around forty-two.

Narrator 6: Olive had never been good at counting. While learning to count to one hundred, she had always skipped the eighties completely. She had gone straight from seventy-nine to ninety while her parents had exchanged aggrieved looks above her head.

Olive 1: [talking to Hershel, her stuffed animal] I give up.

Narrator 4: Holding him high in the air above her. His black bead eyes caught the dim sheen of streetlights through the windows.

Olive 2: I'm not even going to try to fall asleep. I'll just lie here, wide-awake, all night long.

Narrator 1: She turned on her side so she could look out of the window. There wasn't much to see.

Narrator 3: The gauzy curtains stirred in a slight breeze, the branches of the willow tree swayed, and a gigantic orange cat pushed up the window frame and squeezed its body through.

Narrator 2: Olive sat up. The cat stood for a moment, sniffing at the air. Then it trotted soundlessly across the room, examining the furniture with a careful solemnity.

Olive 2: [whispered] Here, kitty, kitty.

Narrator 6: The cat ignored her. It moved away from the dresser toward the vanity, hopping up onto the cushioned chair.

Olive 1: [whisper a little louder] Here, kitty, kitty, kitty.

Narrator 5: The cat was now looking into the vanity mirror. Its reflected green eyes glanced at Olive for a split second.

Horatio 1: That's not my name.

Narrator 1: Then the cat looked back at its mirror image and ran one paw delicately over its nose.

Horatio 2: [murmurs] Gorgeous.

Narrator 4: Half of Olive's brain said, That cat just talked! The other half of Olive's brain said stubbornly, No it didn't. All Olive's mouth said was...

Olive1: What?

Horatio 1: I said [scornfully] That's not my name.'\

Olive 2: But everybody calls a cat that way.

Horatio 2: What if I called you girly?

Horatio 1: Here, girly, girly, girly. Rather insulting, isn't it?

Olive 2: I'm sorry. I won't do it again.

Horatio 2: Thank you.

Narrator 3: The cat gave her a slight but gracious nod before turning its attention back to its own reflection.

Olive 1: [tentatively] What is your name?.

Narrator 2: The cat stood up and stretched itself. Its orange fur puffed and settled on its back, and its tail, as thick as a baseball bat, twitched above its head,

Horatio 1: [said with great dignity] My name is Horatio. And you are?

Olive 2: Olive Dunwoody. We just moved here.

Horatio 2: Yes, I know.

Narrator 4: The cat turned his wide orange face toward Olive. Then he leaped down onto the rug.

Narrator 6: Olive half expected a cat that size to make a crash like a dropped bowling ball, but he landed with surprising lightness.

Narrator 1: The cat trotted to the end of Olive's bed and sat, looking up at her.

Horatio 1: I suppose you plan to stay for a while.

Olive 1: Well- yes. My mom and dad said they want to stay here for good.

Olive 2: That's why they bought his house. We always lived in apartments before.

Horatio 2: Just because they bought this house doesn't mean that you will stay here forever.

Narrator 2: The cat's eyes glinted up at her like bits of green cellophane.

Horatio 1: A house doesn't belong to someone just because it has been paid for. Houses are much trickier than that.

Olive 2: What do you mean?

Horatio 2: I mean, this house belongs to someone else. And that someone may not want you here.

Narrator 3: Olive felt a bit miffed. Settling Hershel in her lap...

Olive 1: Well, I don't care. I don't like it here anyway.

Olive 2: This house is creepy and weird, and it has too many corners. And ... it's keeping secrets.

Horatio 2: You've noticed that have you?

Horatio 1: Very good. You're brighter than I gave you credit for.

Olive 2: [uncertainly] Thank you.

Narrator 5: The cat edged a bit closer to the bed.

Horatio 1: Keep your eyes open. Be on your guard.

Horatio 2: There is something that doesn't want you here, and it will do its best to get rid of you.

Olive 1: Get rid of me?

Horatio 2: Of all of you. As far as this house is concerned, you are intruders.

Horatio paused.

Horatio 1: But don't get too anxious. There's very little you can do about it either way.

Narrator 1: The cat turned with a swish of his huge tail and headed toward the window.

Horatio 2: I'll be keeping an eye on you.

Horatio 1: Personally, I like seeing someone new in this place.

Narrator 5: Squishing his orange bulk through the window, the cat stepped out onto the balcony and disappeared.

Narrator 3: Ripples of goose bumps scuttled from Olive's toes all the way up to her scalp.

Narrator 2: She grabbed Hershel's fuzzy body squeezed it.

Olive 2: I'm dreaming, aren't I?

Narrator 4: Olive asked Hershel. Hershel didn't answer.

Narrator 6: In the distance, she heard her father knocking his toothbrush on the sink.

Narrator 1: The house creaked.

Narrator 4: A twig of the ash tree tapped softly against her window, again and again, like a small patient hand.

Narrator 2: To find out more about Olive's adventures and Horatio's protection of the house on Linden Street. Plus learn about the other two cats who live in the house by need reading this exciting fantasy novel, *The Books of Elsewhere: The Shadows* by Jacqueline West.