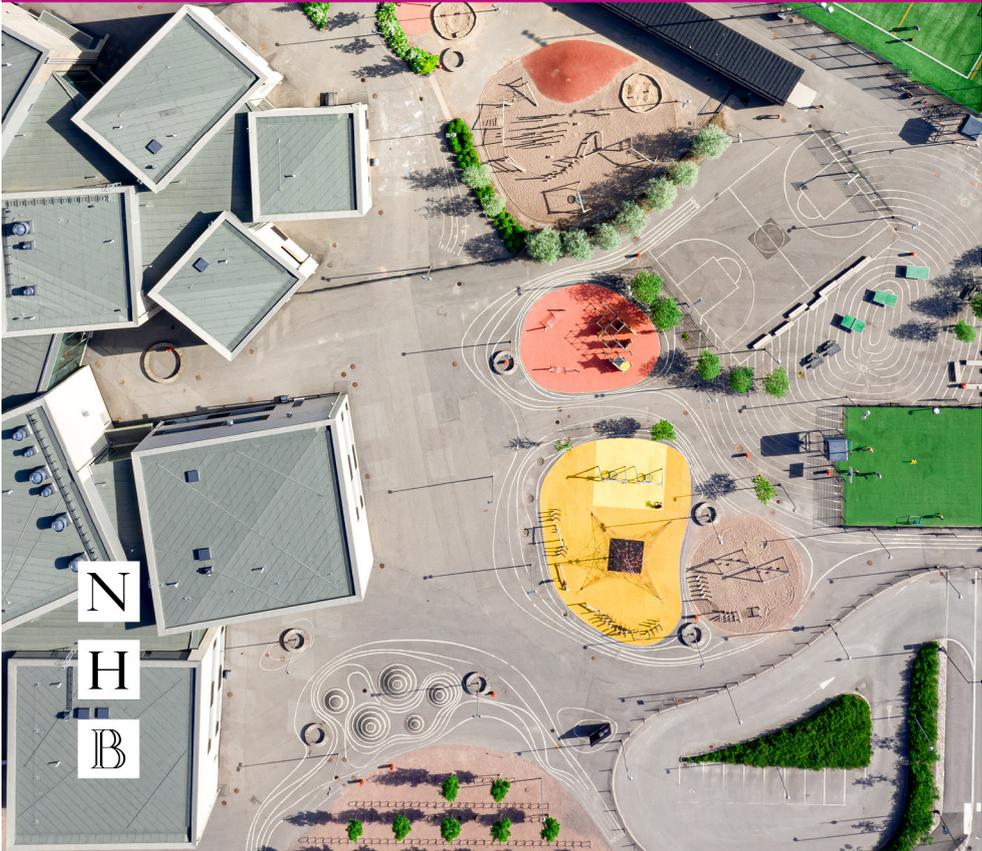




HORIZON

Kwame Owusu



Characters

LUCY
MELODY
MILES
BIANCA
NIA
TOBY
ELLA
ALEX
KENNY
CRESSIE

Notes on the Text

The Investigators are played by the cast.

The Investigators exist in the shadows. They are always hidden in darkness and obscured. They use live microphones to interview the students.

A slash (/) marks an overlapping line. After the slash, the next person's line should come in (over the rest of the other person's line).

A dash (–) marks an interruption. The next person's line should interrupt straight away.

Italics mark an emphasised word or phrase.

Please see the Appendix for a chronological timeline of the events of the play.

Scene One

Day Three.

Darkness.

Suddenly, the space is filled with urgent, insistent music.

The lights rise to the dim glow of streetlights in the dead of the night.

MELODY and CRESSIE run around and across the stage, fleeing for their lives.

Blackout.

Scene Two

Statement One.

Supernatural Anomalies Agency (SAA).

NIA stands in front of us.

The INVESTIGATORS hold microphones, lurking round the margins of the space. We can barely see them.

INVESTIGATOR 1 is played by the actor playing CRESSIE.

INVESTIGATOR 2 is played by the actor playing MELODY.

INVESTIGATOR 1. Can you look into the camera please?

NIA. Oh sorry is it / that –

INVESTIGATOR 1. That red dot in front of the –

Yeah just...

Yep, there. Perfect. Thank you.

NIA. Okay, and I just –

INVESTIGATOR 2. Would you like some water? Before we start?

NIA. I'm alright.

INVESTIGATOR 2. You sure?

NIA. Yeah, thank you.

INVESTIGATOR 1. Okay great. Let's get going then. 'Statement One.' Alright. Whenever you're ready.

NIA. I...

Uh. Think that –

INVESTIGATOR 1. Can you speak up a bit please?

NIA. Sorry, I –

I don't really know what to say.

INVESTIGATOR 2 (*in an encouraging tone*). Just tell us what happened. In your own words. All we want is just, to hear your story. You've got this. Take your time.

NIA. Okay, alright so...

I guess I should probably start at the beginning then. That's where these things normally start, right?

The space is filled with urgent, insistent music.

Blackout.

Scene Three

Day One.

NIA and MELODY, *FaceTiming each other from their bedrooms.*

They're dying with laughter.

NIA (*genuinely cracking up*). Nahhhh what?!

MELODY. Ripped in two!

NIA. You're LYING!

MELODY. Whole back of his trousers!

NIA. Cos he jumped –

MELODY. LEAPED! Like literally threw his body across the room.

NIA (*still laughing*). That's mad.

MELODY. Nicole screamed!

NIA. Nicole screams at everything.

MELODY. I nearly screamed too. His face was like a *scary* kinda red.

NIA. Was everything normal before, or –

MELODY. Yes!

NIA. So he was just / walking around –

MELODY. Yes! Listen, everything was so normal before! Mr Martin's going round checking everyone's work, but his laptop goes into power saver mode and guess who's at the front?

NIA. Uh –

MELODY. It / was James Tier–

NIA. James Tierney.

MELODY. How'd you guess?

NIA. Cos it's always James!! Why was he even at the front?

MELODY. Mr Martin put him there cos he'd been acting up. To keep an eye on him.

NIA. That worked out...

MELODY. Literally. James gets up and moves the mouse, but then he sees there are some minimised tabs, so obviously James being James, he clicks on one and the first one that opens is, and I *swear* I'm not lying... a WikiHow page called 'How to Get a Girl to Like You'.

NIA. WHAT?!

MELODY. The video on the page autoplays and it's this random American woman going through the ten steps to get a girl to fall in love with you. It's like, step one... 'get a new haircut'.

NIA. Wait, NO...

MELODY. YES!

NIA. But –

MELODY. Exactly!

NIA. Mr Martin literally got a new haircut last week!

MELODY. EXACTLY!!! Man's been following it to the letter.

NIA. Oh my days.

MELODY. The video starts playing, Mr Martin turns around so fast he nearly got whiplash, leaps across the room to try and close the laptop screen, but he jumps too fast and the back of his trousers just rips apart! We can't stop laughing and then he sends James out and starts tryna chat about how he must've been hacked or something. It was SO funny!

NIA. That's jokes. Dunno what you're laughing about though! Yours would've been page after page of ASMR.

MELODY. And what?!

NIA. They're gross.

MELODY. They're not! I'll send you my favourite. They're cracking this guy's back like –

NIA. Nahhh don't –

MELODY. It's like... (MELODY *makes the sound of a back cracking and popping.*)

NIA (*shuddering*). Don't.

MELODY (*laughing*). What? What's the problem?

NIA. You're really tryna give me PTSD.

MELODY. They're so relaxing, you just –

MELODY stops talking suddenly and turns, looking at her bedroom door.

Mum's shouting up to go to bed.

NIA. Thank god.

MELODY. I'll see you in the morning!

NIA. If I make it through a night of dreaming about Mr Martin leaping his way into a broken back, so thanks for that.

MELODY (*grinning*). You're welcome! Night.

NIA. Night, Melody.

KENNY enters and speaks to us.

KENNY. I'd just been to my last volleyball match of the season. I was absolutely exhausted, but we won in straight sets so it was worth it. I play as an opposite hitter, and if you saw that last point I scored... Let's just say I'd be surprised if they aren't putting up a statue of me outside school right now.

LUCY enters and speaks to us.

LUCY. I had maths with Mr Martin and people were being so rude in his class. It's kind of annoying when you're basically the only one trying to concentrate. People think they're funny and they're really not. I went to the library after school to finish my work, so by the time I get home it's already dark.

KENNY. After the game, I get home, have some pasta, chat to my parents for a bit and head upstairs.

ELLA enters and speaks to us.

ELLA. I head upstairs, brush my teeth, change and fall back on my bed. It's never felt better.

CRESSIE enters and speaks to us.

CRESSIE. I lie back on my bed and read my comic. I'm reading Green Lantern this week. Volume 5, issue 18. Simon's been taken into the Dead Zone, and he's finally met Hal Jordan and Sinestro. I turn page after page and –

MELODY. I lie on my back, and look up through the skylight above me. Out into deep, dark night.

NIA faces us.

NIA. I put my phone down and look out the window. The sun's gone down, and the city's asleep. I go to close my curtains, but just before I do... I look up. I gaze at the stars and the stars gaze at me. But then I look closer, and see it.

MILES, BIANCA, TOBY, and ALEX enter.

The following section is performed by the whole cast. The lines can be allocated as you see fit – between individuals, pairs, threes, small groups, and the whole ensemble together. Each character is alone in their bedroom.

– I'm about to shut my curtains, but I see this like... glow?

– Despite the clouds, despite the light pollution. I see this purple glow above me.

– Behind the clouds and way up high.

- What *is* that?
- It's faint, but I spot it and once I see it...
- I can't look away.
- I put my book down.
- There's definitely
- without a doubt
- a purple glow behind the clouds.
- Oh my god.
- I keep staring, trying to figure it out, and the sky gets
- brighter and brighter.
- It fills with other colours...
- I push my curtain back as the sky glows.
- I stare out my window and the colours spread and change.
- Across my garden.
- Over my balcony.
- Through the tiny window over my desk I see the sky burning.
- Blazing purple.
- Red and dazzling pink.
- Deep
- deep blue.
- Black.
- Green.
- It's shimmering and shining brighter than I've ever seen.
- It's like the sky's come alive. It's like it's breathing above me.
- I'm staring at the cosmos.
- It's dazzling.
- It's getting closer...
- The light's getting closer.
- All I can see is light.
- The light's so close it's like the sky's on fire.
- It's glowing.
- And then I start to feel like.

- Pins and needles?
- These pins and needles.
- It was like...
- You know when you sit on your hands too long?
- The only way I can describe it, is that it was like pins and needles.
- I look down at my hands and... they're glowing?
- And my arms too.
- I can feel this light coursing through me
- through my blood
- across my skin.
- The light's rushing through my veins.
- My bones.
- Surging round my body.
- My whole body's glowing ultraviolet.
- And then as quick as it came...
- it's gone.
- It's gone.
- The light's disappeared, but I still feel it racing through me.

Scene Four

Supernatural Anomalies Agency.

NIA faces us, alone.

INVESTIGATOR 2. That sounds incredible.

NIA. It was! And I knew I couldn't be the only one that saw it. I WhatsApped Melody straight away, and she saw it too! It feels impossible... but the sky set on fire, and I can feel the light in my bones.

Scene Five

Day Two.

An alarm rings.

Then – a clock ticks a steady rhythm.

BIANCA *runs in.*

BIANCA. Alarm rings. Eyes wide. Pour my cereal in the bowl. Bran flakes. Milk second.

ALEX *runs in.*

ALEX. I've been staring at my alarm for way too long. I don't wanna move. Lie still. Mum shouts up *again!*

KENNY *runs in.*

KENNY. I roll out of bed, jump in the shower, I'm gonna be late. Scrub quick. I'm gonna be so late!

BIANCA. Blow-dry quick. Searching, searching, searching, searching, searching for some ladder-free tights. Got them!

ALEX. I jump in the shower. Ah! Too hot. Down-down-down. Clean. Up. Out.

BIANCA. But something feels strange.

ALEX. It's weird, I can feel this buzzing?

BIANCA *and* KENNY. Buzzing.

BIANCA. In my fingertips.

ALEX. In the palm of my hand.

KENNY. In my mind's eye.

BIANCA *and* ALEX. Out the door.

BIANCA. Run for the bus!

ALEX *and* KENNY. Quick... Uh...

KENNY. McMuffin!

ALEX. Panini!

BIANCA. Hand out.

KENNY. So late.

BIANCA. SO late!

ALEX. Wait! Wait!

BIANCA, ALEX *and* KENNY. Made it!

The school bell rings.

Scene Six

The school bell rings.

Pupils walk to and fro down the corridors, travelling to their classes.

CRESSIE *enters in a hurry.*

ELLA *runs in looking for CRESSIE.*

ELLA *spots her.*

ELLA. Cressie! / Last night I –

CRESSIE. Ella I saw –

ELLA. Oh you go.

CRESSIE. No you.

ELLA. No *you!*

CRESSIE. Oh my god, okay so / I saw a light last night.

ELLA (*failing to contain herself*). I saw a light last night!!

ELLA *and* CRESSIE. You saw a light?

I saw a light.

Wait what?!

ELLA. What kinda light?

CRESSIE. It took up the whole sky, and then I felt this like...

ELLA. Buzzing?

CRESSIE. Buzzing! All over my body.

ELLA. Exactly! I'm freaking out.

CRESSIE. Don't. I –

ELLA. I've been hearing things.

CRESSIE. What?

ELLA. Since this morning.

CRESSIE. Hearing what?

ELLA. Voices! I'm hearing voices! I got on the bus, closed my eyes for like a second to try and get a bit more sleep and they filled my head. Talking about everything. Work, girls, boys, food, funny stuff, awful stuff. It's so loud.

CRESSIE. Amazing.

ELLA. What?

CRESSIE. This is incredible.

ELLA. Hearing things that aren't there?!

CRESSIE. You're not! Look. Just...

Uh...

Put your hand behind your back and pick a number.

ELLA. Are you not hearing what I'm saying?

CRESSIE. Shut up and do it.

ELLA makes three, five, one, four, two with her hand in rapid succession.

CRESSIE. Three. Five. One. Four. Two.

ELLA. How'd you...

CRESSIE. You see!

ELLA. How'd you guess?

CRESSIE. I didn't guess, I saw.

ELLA. Saw what?

CRESSIE. Your hands, Ella.

ELLA. You can't see my hands.

CRESSIE. I can! Look it's... it's Flash Comics Volume 1. Jay Garrick's at his lab and –

ELLA. Jay in the year below?

CRESSIE. No not –

ELLA. Isn't it Gareek? He's from –

CRESSIE. *NOT THAT JAY!* Jay Garrick was the Flash before Barry Allen. He breathes in hard water fumes and before he knows he's got the Speed Force which means his kinetic –

ELLA. Cressie, speak English.

CRESSIE. How are you not getting it? I talk about this stuff all the time.

ELLA. Yeah and I'm bored *all the time*.

CRESSIE. We're Jay Garrick! Except we breathed in light instead of fumes.

ELLA. As in –

CRESSIE. As in you're not hearing things. Well you are. But they're not made up. You're hearing people's thoughts. This is how it always works. You either fall into a radioactive vat, get bitten by something, get a ring from a dying alien, or there's –

ELLA. I get it.

CRESSIE. *OR* there's a cosmic event. This was a cosmic event. Cosmic event plus unassuming humans equals SUPERPOWERS. There's no other explanation.

ELLA. So you can / see –

CRESSIE. I can see through things. Walls, people, anything. Since this morning. I just figured it out quicker than you. You gotta practice.

ELLA. But –

CRESSIE. Give it a go.

ELLA. No!

CRESSIE. Come on.

ELLA. I don't / know –

CRESSIE. Just try!

ELLA. Fine! Fine.

CRESSIE. This is actually the best day ever.

ELLA squeezes her eyes shut.

CRESSIE. Is it working?

ELLA. Wait.

Beat.

CRESSIE. Now?

ELLA. Shut up.

CRESSIE. Sorry.

ELLA waits with her eyes shut, whilst CRESSIE looks at her expectantly.

Slowly, the sounds of a distant crowd begin to fill the space. Far away conversations and speech.

The noises of garbled, overlapping conversations grows.

It becomes an incredibly loud, unintelligible cacophony. Louder and louder until it's almost overwhelming.

ELLA becomes increasingly tense.

CRESSIE (*inaudible over the noise*). Ella?

Beat.

Ella?

Beat.

(As loud as possible.) Ella!!

ELLA opens her eyes and the noise cuts out.

ELLA (*in disbelief*). I've got a superpower...

CRESSIE. You've got a superpower.

ELLA (*ecstatic*). I'VE GOT A SUPERPOWER!!!

CRESSIE. I bet there'll be others.

ELLA. Maybe.

CRESSIE. Definitely! We've gotta find them.

ELLA. Put it on your story.

CRESSIE. What?

ELLA. Snap or something. Put something subtle like, 'Did anyone see a light last night'. If anyone replies ask them what they saw, and if they're talking about the same thing, tell them where to meet us.

CRESSIE. We've gotta tell Lucy.

ELLA. Definitely!

CRESSIE. Let's use Mr Chandler's room, he always leaves it unlocked.

ELLA. Perfect!

CRESSIE. This is is the coolest thing ever.

ELLA. It's pretty cool.

CRESSIE. Comic books, one. World, zero.

ELLA. Shut up.

CRESSIE (*grinning*). You love me!

ELLA. Whatever. Come on, we're gonna be late.

They travel to their class.

KENNY *runs in*.

He stands in front of us, catching his breath.

Statement Three.

KENNY (*catching his breath*). I just –

I just ran –

Miss Mayhew –

Sorry, one sec.

He catches his breath.

Sorry. I was selling some bars by the sports hall and Miss Mayhew was coming right round the corner. Or was about to. She was *about* to come round the corner.

Beat.

I can hook you up?

He opens his jacket and reveals at least a dozen chocolate bars secured on the inside.

I've got Twix, Snickers, Mars, KitKat, and uh... Bounty... sorry... But I can do those half price. I'm adaptable, you see. First rule of business, you gotta be ready to adapt. Second rule of business, sleep with one eye closed, and the other on *the market*. You gotta know your NFTs from your ABCs. I'm still selling physical bars at the moment, but I'm thinking about shifting into digital chocolate in the next quarter.

Beat.

This is gonna sound crazy, but last night, the sky went wild. Burst into flames and colour right above me. After a while I looked away and down at the street under my window. I saw this man glued to his phone start crossing the road. As he crossed, a black Vauxhall Corsa comes speeding round the corner and slams into his side, launching his body over the hood and onto the ground. I can't believe what I've seen, my heart's beating, I'm stressed. I look away, look back... And the man's standing on the pavement, about to cross the road...

Just like he was...

Before I know what I'm doing, I shout out of the window – 'HEY WAIT!'

Beat.

He stops, looks up, I duck so he can't see me, and at the same time the Vauxhall Corsa comes speeding round the corner and carries on down the street, with the man safely on the pavement.

Beat.

Since that moment, I keep seeing things. Things that are about to happen.

Beat.

I've been selling stuff for a couple of years and was doing pretty well but teachers keep confiscating my supply. But now I can see *exactly* when a teacher is about to come round the corner, and before they've even smelt my sweet product, I'm on the move. In the business community this is what we call a competitive advantage. I'm a businessman, what can I say?

As he says 'I'm a businessman', he opens up his jacket again, too fast, and several chocolate bars fall out.

Damn it.

Beat.

After a while last night I started counting, and realised that what I'm seeing is always about to happen in a specific amount of time. I can see into the future, not by years, weeks, days... no, that would just be showing off. I can see into the future by precisely nine seconds. Which is all I need to own the market. So to be honest, I'm not even a businessman. I'm a business, man. To coin a phrase...

Beat.

After last night, my entire model's gonna be untouchable.

The school bell rings.

It becomes distorted and several octaves lower.

The lights slowly dim, leaving KENNY illuminated, surrounded by a void.

KENNY becomes tense.

I don't know what else to say...

Scene Seven

Statements.

Supernatural Anomalies Agency.

NIA, KENNY, MILES, TOBY, BIANCA, LUCY, ELLA *and* ALEX *face us.*

INVESTIGATOR 1. Please can you say your name into the camera?

KENNY. Kenny.

NIA. Nia.

MILES. Miles.

TOBY. Toby.

BIANCA. Bianca.

LUCY. Lucy.

ELLA. Ella.

ALEX. Alex.

Scene Eight

Statement Five.

Supernatural Anomalies Agency.

ALEX Stands alone.

ALEX. We all met up after school, in this English classroom that Mr Chandler never locks. Some of us knew each other already because we're in the same classes. Like I know Kenny cos we're in the same English class. Kenny knows Cressie, Ella, Lucy and Bianca, but I hadn't really spoken to them. Miles knows Toby, and Melody knows Nia. Ella, Cressie and Lucy organised the first meet up, but Nia kinda took charge straight away. People introduced themselves to each other, compared our powers, and then the first thing to figure out... What do we do now?

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