

JIM: I'd like to know if Miz Watson's done put a reward out on me . . .

HUCK: How's if I take the canoe an' slip over tomorrow?

(Slight pause as Jim considers.)

JIM: Well, you'll have to go in the dark and look sharp . . . Say, Hucky — that bonnet don't look half-bad on you. You git yo'self into one o' them calico dresses, an' won't nobody know you's Huck Finn.

HUCK: Hey, Jim, that *is* good. *(Huck holds one of the dresses to himself.)* Huck Finn? My name's . . . Sarah.

(Jim laughs.)

HUCK: Sarah Williams to you, Jim.

(Jim's laugh grows as lights fade to blackout.)

Afternoon of the Elves

Y York (adapted from Janet Taylor Lisle)

Based on Janet Taylor Lisle's award-winning book, fourth-grader Hillary Lenox is befriended by two neighbor girls, who teach her how to "fit in." But Sara Kate, the outcast little girl next door, draws Hillary to her with the discovery of a secret elf village in the backyard.

Two Females

In the first scene, Hillary enters Sara Kate's backyard, drawn by her curiosity of the elf village. In the second scene, Hillary, growing more skeptical, questions Sara Kate further about the "elf" people in the backyard.



Sara Kate's backyard. This yard is the antithesis of the Lenox yard. There are old appliances, car engines, tires, brambles. There, in the midst of the mess, is an orderly elf village. Little houses built with sticks, string, rocks, and leaves; separated by rows of rocks into an elf development. A well in the center of "town." Sara Kate is working on the elf village. Hillary enters with her book bag through the hedge; without looking at Hillary, Sara Kate speaks.

SARA KATE: I first saw it a couple of days ago, it just sort of appeared. They must work all through the night, but it isn't done. You can see where a couple of houses aren't finished, and there's places made ready for houses with no houses on them yet.

HILLARY: How did you know I was here?

SARA KATE: Do you want to see the village or not?
HILLARY: OK. (*Impressed.*) Wow. Too-too good. Look, they used sticks and leaves for roofs. And rocks to separate the little houses. It's a little neighborhood.
SARA KATE: Yeah, they took rocks from our driveway.
HILLARY: They stole them?
SARA KATE: Yeah, there's rocks gone from our driveway.
HILLARY: Should we put them back?
SARA KATE: No, the elves *need* them, and we don't even *have* a car anymore.
HILLARY: You don't have a *car*?
SARA KATE: No. So what?
HILLARY: Nothing. (*Beat.*) Well, they shouldn't steal. Even rocks.
SARA KATE: The elves don't think so.
HILLARY: (*Shocked.*) They don't think it's wrong to steal?
SARA KATE: Elves have different rules.
HILLARY: They *steal*?!
SARA KATE: Just stuff nobody is using. Or stuff from mean rich people.
HILLARY: How do they know who's mean?
SARA KATE: They just know.
HILLARY: Look, a well, a tiny little well. Let's haul up some water.
SARA KATE: Leave it alone. It's very fragile.
HILLARY: It *all* looks real fragile. What happens when it rains?
SARA KATE: They rebuild and repair. Elves are at the complete mercy of earth forces.
HILLARY: (*Pause.*) How do you know so much?
SARA KATE: . . . I think the elves sneak stuff into my brain.
HILLARY: What do you mean?
SARA KATE: I tried to haul up some water and all of a sudden I was thinking "the elves won't like this."
HILLARY: (*Beat.*) Sara Kate, are you sure elves built this? Maybe

this was built by mice. Mice could live in these houses quite nicely.

SARA KATE: Mice! That is really — that is just — that is so *stupid*! When did you ever hear of mice building houses?!

HILLARY: Or even a person could have built these houses.

SARA KATE: Look, I didn't have to invite you here today, and I didn't have to show you this. I thought you might like to see an elf village for a change. If you don't believe elves built this, that's your problem. I *know* they did.

HILLARY: I never saw elves in *my* backyard.

SARA KATE: Well, of course not.

HILLARY: What do you mean?

SARA KATE: (*Sincere, kind.*) Elves would never go in your backyard, no offense, Hillary, but your backyard would not offer any protection. See, elves need to hide, they hate it when people see them. In the olden days, it didn't matter so much, but now, there's too many people, and too many bad ones; elves can't risk being seen by a bad person.

HILLARY: (*Worried.*) Why? What would happen?

SARA KATE: There's no telling, but it would be very terrible. They know they're safe here, there's a million places to hide in this yard.

HILLARY: (*Looks around, impressed.*) Yeah, I see what you mean.
(Hillary sneaks up on things and peeks behind them, looking for elves, as she begins to believe Sara Kate's elf information.)

SARA KATE: Where, for example, would they find stones in your yard to make these little private lots?

HILLARY: (*Realization.*) Right. Our driveway is all paved with cement. There's no rocks anywhere in our yard. And Dad rakes the leaves the second they fall; so there's nothing to make a roof out of! (*She begins to skip.*) Wow. Your yard is perfect for elves! Look at all the junk to hide in, and

strings and wire to make the houses, and rocks, and leaves for roofs. *(She stops skipping abruptly.)* Oh, is it all right to skip?

SARA KATE: What are you talking about? *(Sara Kate skips and jumps and prances about.)* Of course it's all right to skip. It makes the elves really happy.

HILLARY: It does? *(She skips.)*

SARA KATE: Yes! And if you make them happy enough, they trust you and let you peek at them. *(Stops suddenly.)* Listen! I hear them laughing now.
(Hillary stops skipping. They listen.)

SARA KATE: Their language is like earth sounds. But if you listen real careful, you can hear that it's really elves.
(Both girls are affected by a felt presence. Hillary is amazed.)

HILLARY: *(Whispers.)* Sara Kate? I think they're here.

SARA KATE: Yes, I feel it too. Don't talk about them or they'll go away. Act natural.
(Hillary tries to act natural. She hums and opens her book bag.)

SARA KATE: *(Disdain.)* Are you doing *homework*?!

HILLARY: *(Whispers.)* I was going to write something down. In my diary.

SARA KATE: Don't whisper, whispering isn't natural. What are you going to write?

HILLARY: About the elves. I keep a record, a written record of everything. I document my life.

SARA KATE: Why do you want to do that?

HILLARY: In case we get famous — me and Alison and Jane. I have all our documentation in our diary.

SARA KATE: I don't want to be famous. *(Beat.)* I'm going to straighten the rocks.

HILLARY: I can do that, too.

SARA KATE: I don't want to interrupt your documenting.

HILLARY: It's no interruption.
(Hillary puts diary in book bag. The girls start to straighten rocks at one of the "lots.")

HILLARY: Oh, look.

SARA KATE: Little steps.

HILLARY: *(At the same time.)* Little steps!

SARA KATE: Oh! Orion's belt, the Big Dipper, the Little Dipper, the Pleiades, Virgo, Gemini, Aquarius, Libra, Pisces, Capricorn. Ten! *(Beat.)* How come you didn't punch me?

HILLARY: What are you talking about?!

SARA KATE: Ten stars. We said the same thing at the same time. You're supposed to punch me while I say ten stars.

HILLARY: *(Realizing.)* Sara Kate, you're supposed to say "pididdle," and then make *me* say ten of something, and punch *me*. You don't have it right at all.

SARA KATE: *(Flares up.)* Who cares?! It's *your* stupid game. I just did it because I thought *you* liked it, *I* don't like it, it's a stupid game. Who cares?!

HILLARY: *(Trying to end the argument.)* I'm sorry, I didn't mean — you're right! It is a stupid game, you're right. Who cares?

SARA KATE: Yeah, who cares.
(Pause. Hillary walks near the elf houses.)

HILLARY: *(An idea.)* The elves must think we're giants!

SARA KATE: *(Impressed.)* What?!

HILLARY: Yes! They think we are kindly human giants! *(Stands on something to look around.)* Kindly giant sisters who watch over elves.

SARA KATE: *(Pretending to keep watch, a giant voice.)* The kindly giant sisters scan the horizon for signs of danger! All clear on the western bank!

HILLARY: *(Playing along.)* All clear on the eastern bank.
(Hillary walks in a large fashion. A lumbering, giant walk. Sara Kate does too.)

HILLARY: The kindly giant sisters walk the land, keeping watch.

SARA KATE: The ground quakes with their steps.

HILLARY: But the elves have no fear.

(A figure appears in a window. It is a thin woman wearing a nightgown; she is clearly very ill, with wild hair.)

SARA KATE: No dangerous humans in sight.

HILLARY: Only the kindly *giant sisters*.

SARA KATE: *(At the same time.)* — *Giant sisters*. All elves must proceed to their homes.

(Hillary sees the figure in the window. She is frozen in fear.)

SARA KATE: Elves may continue construction on the village. The kindly giant sisters will lift and carry objects of great size — *(Sara Kate notices Hillary and looks to the house where she sees the figure.)*

SARA KATE: You have to go.

HILLARY: What is — who is —

SARA KATE: Just go. You have to go.

HILLARY: But I —

SARA KATE: No buts. Get going.

HILLARY: But you shouldn't —

SARA KATE: Here! Here's your bag. Just take it and go. Go home, Hillary.

(Hillary leaves through the hedge. Sara Kate sighs and turns toward the house, where the figure has disappeared.)



The Connolly backyard. Sara Kate. An elf-sized Ferris wheel made from bicycle tire rims, quite amazing. There are other changes as well. Hillary, carrying her old jacket and book bag, comes quietly through the hedge; Sara Kate couldn't possibly hear.

SARA KATE: Isn't it beautiful?

HILLARY: I didn't make a sound; how did you know I was here?

SARA KATE: I don't *know*; I just . . . know. *(About the wheel.)*

What do you think?

HILLARY: *(She drops her jacket and book bag and walks around and admires it.)* It's really something. Tiny little seats.

SARA KATE: Elf size.

HILLARY: How did they carry the tires?

SARA KATE: Many many of them working together.

HILLARY: How do you know?

SARA KATE: Information gets into my brain.

HILLARY: Is it a voice gets in your brain?

SARA KATE: Yes.

HILLARY: What's it sound like?

SARA KATE: It sounds . . . like me. *(Beat.)* The tires are from that old bike. See? The bike tires are gone. These are those tires.

HILLARY: How are you going to ride it?

SARA KATE: It's an old piece of junk; nobody could ride it. See this?

(Something that might be a tiny swimming pool.)

HILLARY: A swimming pool. Oh my goodness! They made a little swimming pool.

SARA KATE: Or something.

HILLARY: You know what? I bet they're going to make a whole amusement park. Right in your backyard. Merry-go-round, roller coaster. It's perfect. The elves will ride the rides until they get hot, and then they'll go for a swim.

SARA KATE: *(Unconvinced.)* Maybe.

HILLARY: What do you mean “maybe”?

SARA KATE: Elves are not tiny human beings. They’re elves, completely different from humans. It’s possible to jump to wrong conclusions.

(Hillary considers the pool.)

HILLARY: *(An idea.)* It’s a power source.

SARA KATE: *(Impressed.)* Aaaaah, yessss; combination hydro and photovoltaics.

HILLARY: Yeah, a power source.

SARA KATE: *(Playing.)* The power streams down from the sun —

HILLARY: *(Playing.)* And the stars, too. It never stops coming down, a never-ending source of power —

SARA KATE: If you’re feeling a little energy drain, stop at the power pool —

HILLARY: For a fill-up. *(Sticks her finger in the pool; she expands.)* I’m filling up with power. Pow, pow.

SARA KATE: Don’t explode!

HILLARY: Now I’m full of energy. Energy to heat the houses.

SARA KATE: Except elves don’t get cold.

HILLARY: No way!

SARA KATE: Well, they dooooo, but not until it’s freezing. When they finally get so cold they can’t stand it, they move into empty human houses. *(Neatens the village.)* Come on; the kindly giant sisters must help the elves again.

HILLARY: The Hillary giant lines up the scattered stones around the elf houses.

SARA KATE: The Sara Kate giant gathers berries for the elves’ dinner.

HILLARY: And the Hillary giant helps her.

(Sara Kate eats berries. Hillary sees and tries some; they’re terrible.)

HILLARY: Yuk. These are terrible, yuk. Poison I bet.

SARA KATE: *(Playing.)* Not to an elf. *(Pops a berry in her mouth.)*

HILLARY: *(Serious.)* Don’t eat that, Sara Kate. *(Beat.)* Are you hungry?

SARA KATE: *(Serious.)* I’m not hungry.

HILLARY: You can eat at my house.

SARA KATE: *(Subdued.)* No. I eat with my mom. *(The game again.)* Here. Put leaves and little sticks in this box, Hillary giant.

(Sara Kate suddenly turns, as if to see something. Hillary looks, too, but the elves are gone.)

SARA KATE: Gone.

HILLARY: I wish I could see an elf.

SARA KATE: You have to sort of see them out of the corner of your eye.

(Hillary looks forward, trying to see sideways.)

SARA KATE: Don’t worry if you don’t see one right away. It might take them a long time to trust us. Move your bag.

(Hillary picks up her book bag, remembers her diary. Starts looking around.)

HILLARY: If the elves took the tires and all, but they need them to cool off and stuff, I think that’s all right.

SARA KATE: *(Not really paying attention, walking in the giant way.)* Of course, it’s all right.

HILLARY: But it would probably be wrong if they took somebody’s personal stuff.

SARA KATE: Human rules don’t work for elves. What are you doing way over there?

HILLARY: If there was something that a human being *owned* and *needed* and *loved*, and an elf didn’t need it or love it or anything. It would be wrong for that elf to take it.

SARA KATE: What are you *doing*? There’s no building materials over there.

HILLARY: I’m looking for something.

SARA KATE: What?

HILLARY: My diary. I’m looking for my diary.

SARA KATE: Your diary isn't over there.
HILLARY: (*Hopeful.*) Where is it?
SARA KATE: How should I know? Is that what this is about?
Your diary? (*Beat.*) You *do* think I stole your diary.
HILLARY: (*Too fast.*) No. No. I . . . I lost it. I can't find it. And
I had it here yesterday, so I thought, maybe.
SARA KATE: What?! You thought, what?!
HILLARY: I thought . . . maybe . . . I *left* it here. By mistake.
SARA KATE: You think I sneaked into your stupid book bag and
stole your stupid diary. Boy, you *are* the same as Jane and
Alison. Every time something happens, you blame it on me.
You are sickening.
HILLARY: (*Getting mad.*) What am I supposed to think? The last
time I ever saw it I was here —
SARA KATE: (*Shouting.*) Who cares what you think? You're a stu-
pid little girl with stupid little friends.
HILLARY: (*Shouting.*) I am not stupid and my friends are not stu-
pid. We have a song —
SARA KATE: A stupid song to show how stupid your brains are —
HILLARY: Don't you call us stupid. You got held back. You're
the only one's stupid around here.
SARA KATE: Get out. Get out of my yard.
HILLARY: I was going to give you my jacket. I brought my jacket
all the way over here to give it to you.
SARA KATE: Who wants your stupid jacket?! Get out.
(*The Ferris wheel spins by itself, whirs, dazzles. The girls
are silent, amazed. Hillary stops it.*)
SARA KATE: (*Gently.*) Why did you stop it?
HILLARY: It scared me.
SARA KATE: (*Sympathizing.*) Oh, don't be scared of elves. Elves
can't hurt people. People can hurt elves is all.
(*The window shade on the house is pulled to one side.*)
HILLARY: Do you want my jacket? My mother said I could give
it to you. I got this new one.

SARA KATE: So you could match your good friends.
HILLARY: . . . You never wear a coat.
SARA KATE: I don't . . . get cold.
HILLARY: Like an elf.
(*Sara Kate notices the window shade.*)
SARA KATE: Oh, man. I gotta go before the bank closes. Do you
want to go shop with me?
HILLARY: Do you go to the corner, to Mr. Neal's?
SARA KATE: No. I go to the supermarket. Things are cheaper, and
it's . . . just better to go to the big stores.
HILLARY: My mother would kill me if I went all the way to the
supermarket.
SARA KATE: So don't go, no skin off my nose.
HILLARY: No, OK, I'll go. I'll go with you.