

# SUPERMARKET OF LOST

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A short drama by  
Cassandra Hsiao

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

AUSTIN, 17. Strong-willed, displays a devil-may-care attitude whenever he can.

HAILEE, 16. Girl-next-door. Embraces every day with open arms.

VIOLET, 10. Stubborn, tongue-in-cheek. Stunted maturity for her age. Wearing purple.

PA SYSTEM, the voice that announces closing of the Supermarket. In the background, regular.

## NOTES

Throughout the play, Austin is exchanging random items in his backpack for things he finds on the shelf.

The "exit" to the Supermarket can be imagined (characters bumping into an invisible barrier). It could also be the frame of a doorway with no door.

The PA System's time cues can and should be properly adjusted to the runtime of the play.

On page 16, you may change the date in Austin's line "Says she was born in 1917" to be 100 years before the current year of your production.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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*(Lights up on a supermarket aisle. This is no ordinary grocery store, no, this is the Supermarket of Lost. The shelves are filled with your typical lost-and-found items such as clothes, books, files, phones, jewelry, silverware, watches, etc. There are also oddities such as a Beatles vinyl record, a clock, figurines, key chains, earphones, posters, glassware, a painting that looks fairly valuable, toys, old photos, a typewriter, etc.)*

*(VIOLET, wearing mismatched clothes much too small for her, peeks around a shelf as AUSTIN enters. He's sporting a backpack and a pair of cool headphones around his neck. He twirls a pocketknife. He flicks the blade open. Closes it. Then carefully places it on the shelf.)*

**PA SYSTEM:** Ladies and gentlemen, the Supermarket of Lost is closing soon. Time to make all final selections on exchanges and swaps. Remember, everything you lose will eventually end up here. The next time we open could be in one year, five years, or a hundred years. Thank you for shopping at the Supermarket of Lost!

*(Austin sees Violet. They are strangers to each other. Both are scouring the shelves when their eyes alight on the same thing – a Rubik's Cube. They both start for it.)*

**AUSTIN:** Dibs on that!

*(He grabs it.)*

**VIOLET:** Hey, I was here first!

**AUSTIN:** You don't have anything worth trading for it, kid.

**VIOLET:** I'm Violet. And I don't need to trade. I live here. Hey... That looks cool too!

*(She looks past him to the knife on the shelf. As she lunges for it:)*

**AUSTIN:** Hey hey, that's not yours –

**VIOLET:** Finders keepers, losers weepers! Shelf, free-for-all.

*(She grabs it. There's a brief moment of shock as she touches it. Then confusion takes over. She flicks it open, examines the blade.)*

**AUSTIN:** That's dangerous—

**VIOLET:** *(Swiping dangerously close to Austin:)* Where'd you get this?

**AUSTIN:** What's it matter to you?

**VIOLET:** Where'd you get this?

**AUSTIN:** Give it to me!

**VIOLET:** *(Overlapping:)* I—I know this. From somewhere.

**AUSTIN:** That's enough. Now scram.

*(He takes it from her, closes the blade, and returns it carefully to the shelf.)*

**VIOLET:** Hey... Nice headphones!

*(She grabs the headphones from around his neck. He's caught by surprise and chases her around the aisles.)*

**AUSTIN:** You little—those are *nice* headphones! I'm not trading those, they're meant for more than your Disney Princess crap!

**VIOLET:** Ooh, you said a bad word!

**AUSTIN:** I'll keep saying bad words until you give it over!

*(HAILEE enters, carrying a big box full of items: things from her childhood, room decorations, and flower bouquets. Austin crashes into her and everything spills to the ground.)*

**HAILEE:** Oh my God!

**AUSTIN:** Oh! Sorry.

*(He helps Hailee put the items back into the box. Violet retreats into the aisles, paying close attention to Austin and Hailee.)*

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*Austin looks at the box of items as Hailee begins to put them on the shelf.)*

**AUSTIN:** Hey, I've never seen an employee around here before. Restocking the shelves?

**HAILEE:** Um, no, I don't work here. These are all my stuff.

**AUSTIN:** What are you going to do, exchange all this for the entire store?

**HAILEE:** Oh, I'm not here to exchange for lost items. I'm here to give away.

**AUSTIN:** That's not the point of the Supermarket.

**VIOLET:** Everything you lose ends up here. If you take something from these shelves, you have to exchange something of equal value. Whatever you exchange, you'll lose in your memory.

**AUSTIN:** Thanks, know-it-all. *(Beat.)* So you're just gonna give all your memories away?

**HAILEE:** Yeah, I mean, I'm not taking. I'm just...giving.

*(Violet runs up and takes something from her items.)*

**AUSTIN:** Aren't you just a little taker.

**VIOLET:** Finders, keepers.

**HAILEE:** It's fine. Like I said, I mean to give these all away.

**AUSTIN:** *(Helping her set up items on the shelf:)* Mind if I look through?

**HAILEE:** Sure, why don't you just dig through somebody's childhood.

**AUSTIN:** Well, you're leaving them at a *supermarket*. Of course people are going to dig through. *(Holding up bouquets of flowers:)* Man, you killed a lot of flowers.

**HAILEE:** They were gifts.

**AUSTIN:** From who?

**HAILEE:** ...None of your business, really.

**AUSTIN:** Well, they're definitely not going to last until the next Supermarket opening.

**VIOLET:** That's a very long time. And no one knows when!

**AUSTIN:** (*After a beat:*) I'm Austin, by the way.

**VIOLET:** I'm Violet.

**AUSTIN:** I don't know *her*.

**HAILEE:** ...Hailee, I'm Hailee.

**AUSTIN:** Why did you hesitate?

**HAILEE:** I just...didn't really see the point.

**AUSTIN:** Of what?

**HAILEE:** It's not like it matters.

**VIOLET:** People come and people go. That's how the Supermarket works. You never stop and talk to strangers in a supermarket. And even if you do, they always leave. You'll never meet them again.

**AUSTIN:** You don't know that.

**PA SYSTEM:** Shoppers, we're committed to helping you live a carefree life. Trade your burdens away here at the Supermarket of Lost. Lose what you need to lose and find what you need to find!

**HAILEE:** I've never seen either of you around these parts.

**AUSTIN:** I usually enter near Aisle 10031999.

**HAILEE:** Whoa, that's far. How big is this market?

**VIOLET:** Big. Some people can't even find their way out until

I help them.

**HAILEE:** That's nice of you.

**VIOLET:** Yeah, I know.

**HAILEE:** *(To Austin:)* So, you're shopping around?

**AUSTIN:** More like leaving something behind.

*(He looks pointedly at Violet, who meanwhile has taken the knife from the shelf and is flicking it.)*

**HAILEE:** Should she be playing with that?

**AUSTIN:** *(Tightly:)* No.

*(He takes it from Violet and sets it back on the shelf.)*

**HAILEE:** Means a lot to you, doesn't it.

**AUSTIN:** *(Beat).* No. Not to me. *(Short beat.)* To my dad.

*(They finish stocking her objects. Austin looks at another shelf and finds a vinyl record: The Beatles.)*

**AUSTIN:** Whoa! How does someone even lose a vinyl record?

**HAILEE:** They could have exchanged it for something of equal value.

**AUSTIN:** Why would you want to lose this?

**HAILEE:** Maybe it had some sentimental value. Maybe they wanted to forget about their heartbreak, or something.

*(Violet points at a doll, one of the objects from Hailee's box.)*

**VIOLET:** Can I have that?

**HAILEE:** Of course.

*(She takes it off the shelf and hands it to Violet.)*

Her name is Starr. She has the superpower of giving you courage when you need it the most.

**VIOLET:** Really?

**HAILEE:** So whenever you need to feel brave, you hug her. And you'll feel much better.

**AUSTIN:** Hailee here will give you the doll if you give me back my headphones.

**VIOLET:** No way!

*(She blows a raspberry. Austin chases her around. He stumbles and gives up.)*

**HAILEE:** Do you know each other?

**AUSTIN:** Nah. But she kind of reminds me of someone...

*(A beat as Violet goes off to play with her doll and Austin and Hailee examine objects on the shelf. He looks at an empty bottle.)*

**AUSTIN:** *(Absentmindedly:)* My dad should probably come here more often.

**HAILEE:** Why?

**AUSTIN:** He has lots of things he wants to forget. *(Beat)*. Photos of his exes. His near-empty bank account. His criminal record. Swiss Army knife tricks, trespassing, smuggling when he was younger.

**HAILEE:** He did that stuff?

**AUSTIN:** He was a lot younger. He's different now, trying to give me a better life. It's just that he wishes he could forget about all of that. Doesn't want me to follow in his footsteps. *(Beat)*. I'm trying to help him forget.

**HAILEE:** By stealing his stuff?

**AUSTIN:** He really, really doesn't need his knife anymore, trust me.

**HAILEE:** ...He's lucky to have you.

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**PA SYSTEM:** Ladies and gentlemen, we want to make your lives easier which is why you'll find a wide selection of items here on the shelves for you to trade. Please note that the Supermarket of Lost is closing in ten minutes, and may not reopen until the next day, year, or century.

**AUSTIN:** (*Picking up a jar of beads, one of the items from Hailee's box:*) What are —

**VIOLET:** Beads of inspiration.

**AUSTIN:** What do you get inspired by?

**HAILEE:** Well... Art, I guess, and nature. Um, movies that are at least twenty years old. I start thinking of all these plots, and I get this creative energy —

**VIOLET:** Wait. They're still glowing... Why would you give your brightest ideas away? (*Holding up a long piece of string:*) Your trail of thought looks pretty new too.

**AUSTIN:** Whoa. You could write a novel with this.

**HAILEE:** I don't have the time to write a novel. That's why I'm giving them away.

**AUSTIN:** What do you mean?

**HAILEE:** Never mind.

**AUSTIN:** If I had your brainpower and imagination, I wouldn't just leave all my ideas for strangers to sift through.

**HAILEE:** That's the point.

**AUSTIN:** Why?

**HAILEE:** Forget it.

**AUSTIN:** I mean, why can't you *do* something with all of this? I would. I'd write a gazillion novels and win a million Pulitzer Prizes and study chemotherapy to cure cancer and try to save lives —

**HAILEE:** If I had the cure to cancer, I wouldn't be here giving all my stuff away!

**AUSTIN:** (*A shocked beat.*) Do you have... Are you—are you going to...

**VIOLET:** Is it...scary?

**HAILEE:** (*She takes a breath.*) Yeah. It is.

**AUSTIN:** That's—I'm...sorry.

**HAILEE:** Sorry... What can being sorry do?

**AUSTIN:** I just—

**HAILEE:** I'm sorry too. Cause it's harder on my parents, really. They're more scared than I am.

**AUSTIN:** I can imagine.

**VIOLET:** No, you can't.

**HAILEE:** None of us can. There's nothing like losing a child... I tried sneaking out this morning, you know, like a normal teenager, 'cause I didn't want to explain why I have all this stuff. But my dad was in the doorway. And he just stood there, crying a little. And then he let me pass. We didn't even say a word. (*Beat.*) You know those movies where the kid dies and the parents never clean out their room? They just leave everything where it was. Which means they'll leave my bed unmade, because I never make my bed. They'll leave my art up on the walls until the paper starts to curl and the watercolor starts to fade. They'll leave all my favorite books to rot on the shelf with no one to read them.

**AUSTIN:** You can't believe the movies—

**HAILEE:** That scene where the mom or dad passes by the kid's closed door, and it's like something punches them in the gut and they double over and collapse to the floor? It's real,

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Austin. I'm not even gone yet and I've heard them break down crying when they see my stuff around the house. (*Beat.*) I can't stand it. They've got to make room in their lives for more than me.

**AUSTIN:** It must hurt to let go of all of this.

**HAILEE:** I just hope everything will end up in good hands.

**VIOLET:** It will.

**AUSTIN:** How do you know?

**VIOLET:** People come here for a reason.

*(Violet shifts her attention to the flowers from Hailee's box and plays with them. Hailee and Austin watch.)*

**HAILEE:** People keep giving me flowers and it sucks. Like, thanks for another grave decoration to put in my room.

**AUSTIN:** Flowers are dumb.

**HAILEE:** Right? And I think dead people would agree. I've always wanted to go to a graveyard and replace all the flowers with plastic balls from a children's ball pit. Red, blue, orange, green, yellow, pink, purple balls just scattered across the grave. And maybe a ball pit will actually appear for them in heaven, or hell, or outer space, or wherever dead people go next.

**AUSTIN:** Let's do it.

**HAILEE:** Fill a graveyard with plastic balls?

**AUSTIN:** Yeah! What else have you always wanted to do?

**HAILEE:** I've always wanted to ransack a record shop and smash all the vinyl to create a giant mosaic on the wall.

**AUSTIN:** Maybe not ransack, but that's definitely doable.

**HAILEE:** I want to visit every coffee shop within a fifty-mile

radius. I want to rescue all the shoes hanging on phone lines and give them to the homeless. I want to climb a water tower. I want—I just want...

**AUSTIN:** What do you want?

**HAILEE:** More time.

**VIOLET:** I have time!

*(Violet runs up to Hailee and gives her a clock.)*

**HAILEE:** Aw, thank you. *(To Austin:)* And, um. Thank you.

**AUSTIN:** For what?

**HAILEE:** I don't know. But thanks.

**AUSTIN:** *(Clearing his throat, changing subject:)* You know, sometimes it feels like...like I'm not supposed to be here. *We're* not supposed to be here. It's just...so private. I mean, these are all things from someone else's life.

**HAILEE:** Things people lost and things people wanted to lose. *(Beat).* What do *you* want to exchange?

**AUSTIN:** Well, I've been thinking, if I leave my report card here, would I forget about all my C's and D's?

**VIOLET:** You'd still have bad grades, silly.

**HAILEE:** I mean, really. What's something you want to let go of?

**AUSTIN:** Besides my record-breaking score of bad grades?

**HAILEE:** *(Laughing:)* Yeah, besides that.

**AUSTIN:** Well, there's one thing...a memory... There's someone—

**HAILEE:** What happened?

**AUSTIN:** She's probably dead. It's been so long.

**HAILEE:** Who?

**AUSTIN:** She was three when I lost her. I was ten. God. I was just a kid. *(Beat)*. We were at the mall. I let go of her hand for one minute—one minute! And when I turned around, she was gone. *(Beat, breaking.)* We tried everything. The police. FBI. Posters and billboards with her face, everywhere. They told us to stop, said it was hopeless. But we kept looking...and still, nothing.

**HAILEE:** It's not your fault.

**AUSTIN:** I wish I could forget about her. But I can't. Not even here.

**HAILEE:** What was her name?

**AUSTIN:** I—I don't know... I mean, I can't remember—oh my god her name... She was frickin' obsessed with *Sesame Street*. She liked the purple one, the one with two pigtails. I thought she was way too smart for that show. Like, she couldn't even climb up on the couch by herself but she could figure out who the bad guy was in every murder mystery we watched. *(Beat.)* After...after, you know, my dad stopped talking to me, except when he had to. He probably wants to forget about it too.

**HAILEE:** She's too precious to let go.

**AUSTIN:** We never did. Never had a funeral. Dad and I...we didn't want to say goodbye, so we never had any closure.

**HAILEE:** Closure. What does closure even mean? Death? Not for my parents, because they'll cry a river after I die.

**AUSTIN:** It's letting go, and never finding it again.

**HAILEE:** And being okay with that.

**AUSTIN:** Have you ever left something here and found it again?

**VIOLET:** That's impossible. The store is too big. After it closes, everything rearranges.

**HAILEE:** Too many lost items...

**AUSTIN:** There's still hope though, right? What if it was something really important?

**VIOLET:** Like this?

*(Violet grabs a passport off a shelf.)*

**AUSTIN:** Oooh, sucks to be that guy.

**VIOLET:** She's an old lady, actually. Look!

**HAILEE:** Oh my goodness, her hair is almost as pink as those flowers.

**AUSTIN:** Are those Harry Potter glasses? Is she holding a wand?

**HAILEE:** She's so weird. The cool grandma type of weird. I would like to meet her.

**AUSTIN:** I would have loved to meet her. But I don't think she's still alive.

**VIOLET:** Why not?

**AUSTIN:** *(Pointing to the passport:)* She's old. Says she was born in 1917. That would make her...

**HAILEE:** A hundred years old. That's not impossible.

**AUSTIN:** Not very likely either.

**HAILEE:** Sometimes people surprise you.

**AUSTIN:** With what? A will to live?

**HAILEE:** Yeah. Some people have strong wills. I wish I had one.

**PA SYSTEM:** Attention, shoppers. Please note we will be

closing soon. Time to make all final selections on exchanges and swaps. We are committed to helping you find what you need to find.

**AUSTIN:** Hey listen – do you want to smash vinyl after this?

**HAILEE:** Did you say...smash vinyl?

**AUSTIN:** ...Yes. And then build the giant mosaic on the wall, like you wanted.

**HAILEE:** You know...you know it's not like...like *this* can go anywhere...

**AUSTIN:** What do you mean?

**HAILEE:** I'm a dead end. It's –

**AUSTIN:** *Not* pointless. Time is time is time is time.

**HAILEE:** Even if it's short?

**AUSTIN:** Especially if it's short.

**VIOLET:** Just say yes!

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