

**E G Lambert School  
Churchill Falls**

**presents**

**The Splitting Axe**

**Cast**

Lizzie	Heidi Kent
Bridget the Maid	Gillian Dawe
Emma	Alyssa Lake
Vicki	Laura Bonnell
Molly	Kelsey Kent
Helen	Krista Collins
Bernadette, Sandy	Emily Bonnell
Charlotte	Sarah Fowler
Psychologist	Elizabeth Noonan
Mr. Borden	Shane Collins
Mrs. Borden	Alexis Loder

Teacher Advisors: Mrs. Rosemary Vigeant, Mrs. Leonia Card

*On August 4, 1892 the town of Fall River, Massachusetts was shocked to hear the news that Andrew Borden and his wife, Abby, had been murdered – killed by an axe. Daughter Lizzie was soon arrested and tried for their brutal slayings. Although she was acquitted after a short trial, the incident has endured in both criminology and pop culture.*

*The Pichitawno Players have used these events to create their own version . Here is what they think happened*

## ACT I

### Scene 1

*Dim lights; Lizzie jumping as her parents turn the rope. Alters on side singing.*

**ALTERS** Lizzie Borden took an axe and gave her mother 40 whacks. When she saw what she had done, she gave her father 41.

*Parents drop rope and exit from either side. Lizzie continues jumping in a trance state until "awakens" and screams. Enter maid.*

**MAID** It's okay. It's okay. Give me that darn rope!

*Exits Lizzie*

## Act 1

### Scene 1

*Enter Emma with bags.*

**Emma:** What was that?

**Maid:** What do you mean? I didn't hear anything.

**Emma:** I could have sworn I heard a scream.

**Maid:** Let me help you with those.

**Emma:** Thanks, Bridget. It's so good to be home. How is she?

**Maid:** Who, Lizzie? She's as well as can be expected.

**Emma:** A year is hardly enough time to grieve...

*Awkward moment.*

**Maid:** She was very close to Mr. and Mrs. Borden. Your parents were a big part of her life. In fact they were important to all of us. She's taking it pretty hard. Some days she's not herself. She's having trouble, she's lost her appetite, and the worst part about it is...

**Lizzie:** Oh, Emma! It's so good to see you. When did you arrive?

**Emma:** Just a moment ago.

**Lizzie:** How was the train ride?

**Emma:** It was...long and well...it's so good to be home.

**Lizzie:** You must be so tired. Let me get your things.

**Emma:** Why, thank you.

*Exits Lizzie with baggage.*

**Emma:** She seems fine to me...not upset at all.

**Maid:** She's excited you're home. It's been a good day.

**Emma:** Bridget, I didn't want to say anything in front of Lizzie, however, things don't feel the same here.

**Maid:** What do you mean?

**Emma:** Well, for one thing when my train arrived in at the station this morning, I ran into my good friend Charlotte and she avoided my gaze. It seems no one wants to make conversation with me. People were looking at me and whispering and I'm sure I heard Lizzie's name. I know it was a terrible crime, but it's been a year and we're trying to move on. They should too. Are people still accusing Lizzie?

**Maid:** As you know there was a trial and the jury acquitted her, but people still talk. Don't pay any heed.

**Emma:** Everyone's convinced. They were almost scared to look at me. They say she got away with murder.

**Maid:** It wasn't Lizzie. My Lizzie would never do such a thing.

**Emma:** Be reasonable Bridget. Who else could it have been?

**Maid:** I know her. It wasn't my Lizzie. Shameful you accusing her of killing your parents.

**Emma:** I'm not accusing her of anything, I want to find out who killed my parents. That's why I'm here. I need some closure. It's been a year and I still don't know who has taken their lives.

**Maid:** The police couldn't figure it out, I don't see how you can.

**Emma:** This is more personal for me, it's not just another case. It's my life.

**Lizzie:** Emma, I've made some tea. Won't you please join me in the kitchen. We have so much catching up to do.

*Exits Emma.*

**Maid:** How dare she try to blame my Lizzie! We're going to have to be more careful now that she's around trying to find answers. A whole year and they still haven't forgotten. I can't let her find out. I'm the only one left now. I've got to protect my Lizzie. I must protect the innocent from being blamed of that horrible crime. No matter what happens she won't hurt my Lizzie it'll be too much for her. I have to hide them from Emma. They haven't been as bad lately; a few slip ups but nothing that can't be controlled. We've been okay for a year. We can manage while she's around. Emma can't push too much, for all our sakes.

### Scene 3

*Knock on door. Maid occupied. Lizzie enters.*

**Lizzie:** I'll get it!

*Emma follows and Lizzie opens door. Children taunting voices off stage.*

**Sandy:** (*Singing tune.*) "Lizzie Borden took an axe..." Lizzie, you're crazy. How could you kill your parents? (*ad libs more terrible things*)

*Maid gets up and shuts the door and curses under her breath. Lizzie puts her hands over her ears, rocks back and forth mumbling then a look comes on her face. She backs away silently as Vicki starts to scream.*

**Vicki:** How dare they? So young. They think they know everything but they don't. How dare they say that to Lizzie? She can't handle this!!

**Emma:** Lizzie, darling? Are you okay?

**Vicki:** Don't call me that. (*storms off*)

**Emma:** I'm going to find out who those kids were.

**Maid:** Ugh! (*mumbling*) Vicki! She needs to control her temper. (*exits*)

#### Scene 4

*(A knock. Enter Charlotte who answers the door to find a child ad libbing and Emma at the door. Emma has the child by the ear and tosses him inside.)*

**Charlotte:** What's going on?

**Emma:** Well, Charlotte, I'm sorry we have to meet under these circumstances, but I caught your child outside of my house heckling my sister and accusing her of terrible things.

**Charlotte:** Sandy, get in here! I'm so sorry. I raised you better than this.

**Emma:** I'm sorry I reacted so harshly, but it really upset Lizzie.

**Charlotte:** It won't happen again, I assure you. Please come in, it's great to see you back in town. What brings you here?

**Emma:** I'm sorting through my parents' belongings. I've found things I never even knew existed. My stepmother had an impressive collection of jewellery. More surprising, I found a journal that my father kept. I haven't had a chance to read it but maybe it will have some answers. It has, after all,

been a year which is why I was so shocked to see the taunting is still happening!

**Charlotte:** You must understand that things like that just don't go away quickly. Lizzie seemed like the culprit.

**Emma:** But why?

**Charlotte:** Well, Lizzie never gets out much. No one really knows her. Anything seems possible. After all, they found the axe in your basement.

**Emma:** There was no blood on Lizzie. No one can prove she did anything.

**Charlotte:** Who else could it have been?

**Emma:** Lizzie would never kill our parents. This whole thing has upset her so much. There's no way she could commit murder. I know my sister.

**Charlotte:** Well, it must have been someone within the house.

**Emma:** But who?

**Charlotte:** What about Bridget? Do you think she could have done it?

**Emma:** Well, I didn't do it and I'm certain it wasn't Lizzie. The maid would be the only other option.

**Charlotte:** Did the police ever question Bridget?

**Emma:** They questioned all of us, but whoever did it knew what they were doing.

**Charlotte:** Did your parents have any enemies? It was such a vicious crime. It would take a very disturbed person to do such a thing.

**Emma:** I don't think anybody hated my parents. They did so much for the community. So it must have been someone in the house.

**Charlotte:** How is Lizzie anyway?

**Emma:** She's fine, but she seems a little bit distant.

**Charlotte:** Distant?

**Emma:** I can't quite put my finger on it, but she's had a hard year.

**Charlotte:** Well maybe she needs someone to talk to. They have doctors now for that.

**Emma:** A doctor? What are you talking about? She's not sick. She just needs some time. I'm here now. I'll help her. *(moves to exit)* It was nice seeing you, but I must be getting home. *(exits)*

*Sandy enters and Charlotte reprimands her, adlibs angry rant, as they exit.*

## Scene 5

*Lizzie is sitting and holding skipping rope. Alters and Lizzie are talking at the same time. Emma enters and the alters are quiet.. Lizzie continues to mumble.*

**Emma:** Lizzie? What are you doing? Lizzie? *(shakes her)*

**Lizzie:** What? What's going on? What happened?

**Emma:** You were mumbling. Who were you talking to?

**Lizzie:** I wasn't talking to anyone.

**Emma:** Lizzie, I think you need to speak with someone. What happened last year has obviously had an effect on all of us, but you have to deal with it every day. I can't imagine having to deal with the people here, the taunting and the stares.

**Lizzie:** Well I guess so.

**Emma:** I'm going to make a phone call. *(exits)*

**Maid:** Look what you've done! Now she's calling that psychologist. Who knows what he'll do to you! You've put everyone at risk! I told you while Emma's here we have to be careful.

**Lizzie:** Who has to be careful? I don't see the problem with seeing a doctor. What's the harm in it? It's just somebody to talk to. It sounds like a nice idea to me.

**Maid:** Well, I guess you're going to have to do this. Emma's very persistent about having you see someone. You just have to be careful about what you say, okay dear? Come with me now, I'll get you some tea.

## Scene 6

*Lizzie on couch. Enter doctor and Emma.*

**Emma:** I'm so glad you were able to come see my sister. Now that I'm home I can see for myself what people have been talking about. They say her behaviour hasn't been the same since that day and she seems so troubled.

**Doctor:** Don't you worry. Everything will be fine. I'll have a chat with her and we'll see how things go.

**Emma:** I hope so doctor. She's not the same Lizzie I once knew. She's changed...I don't know...She's just different.

**Doctor:** It's all right Mrs. Borden. Sometimes tragic deaths of loved ones, particularly parents, can have traumatic effects on a person.

**Emma:** I hope you can help her. She's very troubled. Thank you Doctor. *(exit)*

**Doctor:** Good day Ms. Borden, how are you?

**Lizzie:** I'm fine doctor, thank you. How are you?

**Doctor:** I'm well thanks. How do you feel about having your sister home?

**Lizzie:** It's wonderful to have her back for a visit.

**Doctor:** Were you and your sister close growing up?

**Lizzie:** Well, not really. She got to do a lot of things and go places with my parents that I didn't. They said it was because she was nine years older than me. I had to stay home.

**Doctor:** Do you think that was the real reason?

*Child and Mother Alters come and take Lizzie off stage. Alters sit down in Lizzie's spot and answer the doctor's questions.*



**Molly:** Mr. and Mrs. Borden always like Emma better. Mrs. Borden never told me I was pretty. Not like they told Emma.

**Helen:** I think you're pretty. Mr. and Mrs. Borden never appreciated her, not like real parents should.

**Doctor:** Did that hurt your feelings?

**Molly:** *(sad and sulky)* Emma could always do whatever she wanted. They were embarrassed by me. They never wanted anyone to see me. Mrs. Borden didn't love me like my real mommy would. In her eyes I'd never be anything but the stepdaughter. I couldn't do anything right, but Emma, she never did anything wrong. She always got treated like a princess, cause she was their perfect little angel.

**Helen:** It's a shame the way they treated her.

**Doctor:** Did you and your sister ever do anything together...*(pause)* Like play any games?

*Flashback to child Emma and child Lizzie skipping and singing skipping rhyme. Parents walk in.*

**Mrs. Borden:** How many times have I told you not to skip in the house? It makes way to much noise. Give me that rope!

**Father:** Emma, we're going into town today. Go get ready!

**Mrs. Borden:** *(Tying up Lizzie)* I've told you over and over again and you never listen! Why can't you be more like your sister?

*Mother and Father exit leaving Molly alone, screaming, "It's not fair" (Helen present). Scene goes back to the present.*

**Doctor:** How did you feel about your sister having more privileges?

**Lizzie:** That's the way things were. I don't remember feeling angry about it. I love my sister.

**Doctor:** What did you think about your parents leaving you alone?

**Lizzie:** I never questioned it. Emma was older, so she got to go. That's the way things were. I didn't mind.

**Doctor:** I understand that Mrs. Borden was your stepmother. What do you remember about your birth mother?

**Lizzie:** I was only young when she passed away, but she actually noticed and loved me, unlike Mrs. Borden and Father. All they ever told me was that she went to heaven.

**Doctor:** What do you know about this place called heaven?

*Bernadette enters with rosary bead, actually the skipping rope, and praying.*

**Bernadette:** Repent! Repent! The Kingdom of God is at hand. Well...it's hard to explain, but you have to live a good life and have faith in the Lord. The Lord says...

**Doctor:** Were Mr. and Mrs. Borden church goers?

**Bernadette:** *(gets angry)* It was shameful! They may have been present in church, but they didn't follow the Lord's way.

**Doctor:** Can you explain?

**Bernadette:** They'll be damned to hell for the cruelty they bestowed upon that innocent lamb. No good Christian would ever treat a child that way.

**Doctor:** How did they treat her?

**Bernadette:** Sinners! They abandoned that child of God. They didn't love her as they should. Negligence! Sinners!

**Doctor:** Sinners?

**Bernadette:** Mr. Borden was often seen leaving those houses of ill repute. And as for Mrs. Borden, she thought no one knew of her drinking and gambling on the Sabbath Day. She thought she was hiding it, but we all knew.

**Doctor:** Did Lizzie know about these sins?

**Bernadette:** It was always worse for the child. Lizzie paid the price. The things that she had to go through, the things they did to her. *(mumbles)* Repent! Repent!

**Doctor:** What kind of things did they do to her?

*Bernadette leaves. Enter Vicki.*

**Vicki:** What do you mean? What did they do? What didn't they do?

**Doctor:** Well now...

**Vicki:** Everyone thought they were perfect, but it was all for show. If only they knew what happened behind closed doors.

**Doctor:** Can you tell me more about this?

**Vicki:** Talk, talk...What's the good of talking! That's all everyone ever did. No one ever did anything to help that poor girl! Talk, talk, no one ever listens!

**Doctor:** Did you listen?

**Vicki:** Of course I did! I was the only one that tried to help her. The Bordens always took their anger out on Lizzie. Time after time she was sent to bed without her supper. They tied her up and abused her. I was the only one who stood by her. I felt the pain every time she was strapped. If anyone ever questioned the bruises they'd say that clumsy Lizzie fell.

*Goes into flashback of Father strapping Lizzie.*

**Father:** How many times have I told you? When will you ever learn?

*Real Lizzie enters and sits down. Vicki exits.*

**Lizzie:** I don't wanna talk anymore...

**Doctor:** There's more to...(cut off by Lizzie who puts up her hand)

**Lizzie:** No..

*Doctor leaves.*

## **Scene 7**

*Maid walks in and alters enter.*

**Maid:** Hello, my dear.

*Lizzie, dazed on couch, doesn't answer.*

**Maid:** How are you?

*Alters struggle to answer. Vicki breaks through as she's the powerful alter.*

**Vicki:** I don't want to see him anymore! He should mind his own business. He's going places where he doesn't belong. *(frustrated and paces)*

**Molly:** I didn't like that man. He made me think about the bad things. I don't wanna think about that.

**Helen:** It was very stressful; Molly didn't want to answer those questions. Why does he need to interfere?

**Maid:** Emma thought it would be best if she had someone come over to see how everything is.

**Molly:** That wasn't very nice of Miss Emma.

**Helen:** What right does she have to bring him here?

**Bernadette:** That man's not following the Lord's way.

*Pushes through alters and shows she's angry with Emma.*

**Vicki:** She never cared before. She didn't mind leaving her sister alone, why should she care now? We handled it before, we can do it again. We can take care of ourselves!

**Maid:** You have to stop doing this. If Emma finds out, just think what will happen to Lizzie.

*Enter Emma.*

**Emma:** How was your meeting with the doctor, Lizzie?

**Lizzie:** Fine, thanks.

*Alters circle Lizzie.*

**Bernadette:** She's a sinner too.

**Molly:** Lizzie, she's the reason your mommy and daddy treated you that way.

**Helen:** Your parents loved her more!

**Vicki:** She's getting in the way. *(Vicki overpowers)* It's none of your business . It's not like you care! You've never cared! It's always been about you! You didn't even help us. You went along with Mr. and Mrs. Borden and didn't look back! You don't think of anyone but yourself, so why pretend to care now? You have no right!

*Leaves and storms off stage. Emma is surprised at first encounter with alters, confused and gets cross. Maid tries to leave.*

**Emma:** What's going on with my sister...? *(turns to Maid)* What's going on? There's definitely something wrong with her!

**Maid:** People get angry sometimes, she's had a rough day, Emma.

**Emma:** That wasn't just angry, there's something wrong. I think she needs help. She's not herself. Life's been hard on her lately with our parents and the people around here. It must have been too much for her!

**Maid:** She doesn't need help. She's fine!

**Emma:** There is no way she's fine. That's not normal, Bridget.

**Maid:** It's normal for her. Leave it alone!

**Emma:** What do you mean? Has this been going on for awhile? The sudden changes and trance-like states?

**Maid:** No, I don't know what you're talking about. My Lizzie is the way she's always been.

**Emma:** That can't be true, unless she's always been this way. Bridget tell me the truth! If it wasn't her, then who could it have been?

**Maid:** What are you implying Miss Emma?

**Emma:** Well there were only two people in the house that night, you and Lizzie, and we're both convinced that it wasn't her.

**Maid:** You're accusing me? I've been a loyal employee of this household for years. What reason would I have to take their lives?

**Emma:** There were only two of you there! I've thought through all of the other possibilities. This is the only one that makes sense!

**Maid:** How do you know that it was only Lizzie and me in the house? Your parents trusted me with taking care of Lizzie and her ways. They didn't think you needed to know about it.

**Emma:** My parents knew? Why didn't anyone say anything? Why didn't anyone help her?

**Maid:** Mr. and Mrs. Borden didn't want her to be put away and they didn't want to be judged. You didn't need to know. We've been fine here. It's nothing we can't handle.

**Emma:** What do you mean? What were my parents trying to hide?

**Maid:** It's not my place to say anything.

**Emma:** My parents are dead now. You're the only one that knows her.

**Maid:** Emma, I've told you already it's not my place to say anything.

**Emma:** Fine. I'll find out sooner or later. You can't hide this from me!

*Emma storms off.*

**Maid:** Lizzie!...(walks to side of stage; calls to Lizzie; Lizzie walks in) I told you this was going to happen! This is what happens when you can't control yourself. Emma's going to have you put away.

**Lizzie:** I didn't mean...(trying to get something out)

**Vicki:** (walking out) Fool! What do you think Emma's going to do! We're stronger than her! She can't control us.

**Maid:** How are you going to do that?

**Vicki:** Don't worry, we'll figure it out!

**Maid:** I warned you. I don't see how you can stop her now!

*Maid freezes and doesn't hear.*

**Vicki:** (to other alters) We've done it before - we can do it again.

**Maid:** Don't blame me if she takes you away. I've warned you.

*Maid walks off. Lizzie center and alters line up behind Lizzie.*

**Lizzie:** I don't understand why she wants me to go away? It's been a while since we were together. Things were going so well. I thought so at least...I guess we're not as close as we were. Doesn't she love me anymore? Why doesn't Emma want to play with me? Don't worry darling, you can play with mommy. We'll have fun together. How could she send us to that house of sinners? I knew this from the beginning. I knew this was going to happen. She's a threat. Who does she think she is? She can't just walk in here and expect us to change for her. We are who we are and no ones going to change that..(pause)...I know what we can do...

*Lizzie walks off, alters follow or black out.*

## Scene 8

*Emma sifting through the box from the attic, finds jewellery, and takes out the journal.*

**Emma:** (looking through journal)I still can't believe he kept a journal!

“April 27, 1861 : Emma's sixteen today, we had all of her friends in the yard for a gathering. We had to keep Lizzie hidden in the house for the day so she wouldn't interfere.” (Shocked pause)

“February 22, 1875: We thought Lizzie would grow out of this, but as she ages her episodes are getting much worse. October 2, 1886: Lizzie's gotten even more distant, we see less and less of her each day.”

His last entry! A week before the murders. “August 1, 1892: It's getting much harder to control Lizzie. She seems to have divided, it seems like she's a different person every time we see her. We never know what to expect. When she calls herself Vicky she becomes extremely angry. I don't know how much longer we can hold these people off. “

*Emma continues reading silently as Lizzie enters being pushed by her alters.*

**Lizzie:** I can't do this, don't make me.

**Vicki:** Yes you can! Remember we've done it before.

**Lizzie:** No! I don't want to do this.

**Bernadette:** God wants you to. He will give you the strength.

**Lizzie:** This is wrong. It's not my right to take her life.

**Helen:** It's okay darling. Just give me the rope we'll do it together. All of us.

**Emma:** Lizzie! What are you doing?...This isn't funny, Lizzie. Stop it. This isn't a game.

*All alters put hands over mouth and line up in horizontal line.*

**Bernadette:** *(with axe)* Those who do not walk in His light, shall forever be put into darkness.

*Bernadette passes axe to child, scared of it hides it behind mother, and mother takes axe.*

**Helen:** No child should ever be left alone. *(passes it to Vicki)*

**Vicki:** This is what happens to people who get in our way. You can't control us.

**Emma:** Lizzie...please...

**Lizzie:** Goodbye, my sister! *(takes a swing)*

**Maid:** Lizzie!

*Black out. In the darkness alters say "We're not Lizzie!"*

## **Scene 9**

*Playing tug of war. Alters on one side. Lizzie on the other singing rhyme. At the end the alters win, Lizzie falls. Blackout.*

**Curtain**