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Theater 123

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### Concept Statement

In today's capitalist society, where earning profit and incessant desire for individual success often take precedence over displaying compassion for those close to you, the artistic team of *By the Bog of Cats* aims to encourage our audience to realize that envy and selfishness are fundamental human traits that can irreparably sever long-held relationships. We hope that when the audience leaves the show, they self-reflect on the relationships in each of their lives where they have been susceptible to greed and envy and take immediate tangible action to mend their relationships before they become irretrievably broken. Marina Carr, the playwright who wrote *By the Bog of Cats*, said regarding Hester, "I am on her side" (according to [The Guardian](#)). Consequently, the artistic team will follow Hester's resilience throughout the play with lighting and emphasize that her struggle with abandonment and thus her resulting selfish desire for acceptance and belonging reflects a common issue in modern society, but members of society must put aside their individual desires if they impose a significant cost on the well-being of those around them in order to live harmoniously and peacefully among one another. Our central image is a dark, misty swamp at dawn. The dark turquoise lighting combined with white fog conveys an ominous outlook on the future of the swamp; the forest — currently hazy — will be swept away in the morning in a cloud of fog if the wind does not take action to blow the fog away. Similarly, we hope to showcase that one's relationships, which may have blossomed over long periods of time like how a forest is built over years of nurturing and growth, can also become obscured or

lost in mists of selfish neglect if not actively cherished and continuously monitored for internal decay toward greed and envy. Therefore, the overall lighting, set, and costume design for this production will be based on a color palette involving white, pale yellows, pale greens, pale blues, teal, turquoise, and dark purple; these colors, which are either rich or evoke mystery, will encourage our audience to actively self-reflect about the montages of envy or selfish greed they have shown in their own personal relationships and hopefully quickly remedy them. The lighting design will also incorporate intense haze along with contrasting pale blue and yellows throughout the scenes when Hester is present to visually represent the emotional turmoil she faces as she searches for a place where she truly belongs until the eventual tragic and poignant yet cathartic scene where she murders Josie and dies herself to save Josie from a potentially miserable life without her mother.



**Central Image**

## Additional Visual Research

**Figure 1**

**Figure 1: (Sunrise in an icy bog):** This image is of an icy, unkept bog in Winter during sunrise. The set of the production will include a bog similar in design to this image with large swaths of unkept grass interspersed. I will incorporate the colors of the grass and the bog in my lighting design; the pale grass in contrast to the shiny, mirror-like iced bog evokes a sense of abandonment and loss in a world continuously growing. That sense represents the emotional turmoil Hester faces throughout the play, so I want to replicate it onstage. Furthermore, I will design the iced bog with a mirror-like reflective surface, similar in style to the image, but more reflective. The audience should be able to see the reflections of the characters as they walk about the stage, and the artistic team hopes this addition further encourages the audience to reflect on

their own relationships and look for ways to remove greed and envy within them wherever possible.



**Figure 2**

**Figure 2 (Ghost decorations on Halloween night):** This image is of ghost decorations in a spiderweb in a family's front yard during Halloween night. I will be incorporating the extensive use of haze and purple lighting in my design to create an eerie atmosphere when the ghosts

(Ghost Fancier and Ghost of Joseph Swane) are present. In our production, the ghosts will be figments of Hester's imagination and symbolize the inner voices and thoughts that guide each member of modern society to choose the path they wish to follow in life. Consequently, the ghosts will be lit in wispy white light surrounded by a magical purple glow, and we hope that the audience begins to imagine, hear, and follow the ghosts — the ones pressing them about the bad decisions they made, the ones predicting the future, and more — present in their own head.





**Figure 3**

**Figure 3 (Wedding venue):** This image is of a table at a small wedding venue. I will be incorporating the dim, pale yellowish-orange lighting present in this venue into my lighting design during the top of Act 2 to emphasize the stark contrast between communal celebration

and Hester's increasing isolation and despair. Furthermore, I will primarily focus the light on the long table and its seated guests during the wedding scene by lighting the middle (but not edges) of the stage in pale yellows in a similar fashion to how the curtains in this image create a natural arch that draws my eyes toward the table. By focusing on the table and the people seated (e.g. Catwoman), the light will encourage the audience to create an intimate connection with the scene and intensely reflect on how their own familial and romantic relationships compare with those involved in the wedding and hopefully take quick action to improve any negative traits (e.g. selfishness, like how Mrs. Kilbride interrupts the bride's father to speak about her son) they have been displaying in their relationships before it is too late to salvage the relationship.



**Figure 4**

**Figure 4 (Tree branch shadows):** This image is of tree branch shadows cast over the floor, giving the ground a cold, wicked appearance that will form the basis of the center of the set of the bog. I will use a tree branch gobo in my lighting design to create an eerie, and unforgiving atmosphere that serves as a visual metaphor for the dark nature of humanity when people succumb to greed, envy, and selfishness. The interplay of light and darkness created on the floor by the tree gobo will represent the internal struggle of Hester regarding finding belonging in a cold, harsh, and greedy world. The shadows of the branches reflect the twisted and broken nature of relationships both in the play and in real life when the people involved begin to care more about their own personal interests and desires than making the other person happy.