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SHAKESPEARE'S DEAD DAMES

by David Overton

SHAKESPEARE'S DEAD DAMES
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SHAKESPEARE'S DEAD DAMES

A Play in One Act

Written by David Overton

Character List

(Flexible, gender-blind casting for 7 actors.)

TAMORA: From the play *Titus Andronicus*. Sensible.

Blood around her mid-section because she was stabbed by Titus. *(Likely between 35 to 50 years old.)*

JOAN: From the play *Henry VI, pt. 1*. Resolute. Speaks

in French and English. Covered in black ash because she was burned at the stake. *(Likely around 19 years old.)*

JULIET: From the play *Romeo and Juliet*. Melodramatic.

Has a dagger between her breasts. *(Likely between 13 to 16 years old.)*

LADY MACBETH: From the play *Macbeth*. Paranoid.

Bruises on her face because of her suicide. *(Likely between 22 to 34 years old.)*

OPHELIA: From the play *Hamlet*. Unhinged. Singer.

Soaking wet because she drowned in a nearby river. *(Likely around 19 years old.)*

CLEOPATRA: From the play *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Haughty and sensual. Has snakes draped around her neck because she placed them there as a method of suicide. *(Likely around 20 years old.)*

DIRECTOR: Affected, British accent. Any gender

Pretentious and lofty. *(Anywhere between 25 to 55 years old.)*

Note

Ages are provided for reference only; as in many productions of Shakespeare's plays, age is not as important as ability to show status and hierarchy.

Synopsis

After their in-performance deaths, six female Shakespearean characters find themselves in a holding area until the play they are a character in gets revived by another Shakespeare company so that they can (re)live their tragedy over (and over) again. It's a comic romp that evokes Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit* meets Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* meets Monty Python's *Flying Circus*.

Setting

Three door frames on a bare stage. Seven 'harp-backed' chairs knocked over and disorderly on stage. The Present.

Run Time

20-40 minutes.

Shakespeare's Dead Dames

JOAN:

Bonjour? (*Waits for a response*) Bonjour? Est-ce que quelqu'un ici? (*Waits for a response*) Je pense que je suis perdu. A-looooo?

DIRECTOR:

Please! Could you please keep it quiet? Do you want to wake the dead?

JOAN:

Ah, je suis très désolé. Mais, je ne sais pas pourquoi je suis ici.

DIRECTOR:

Ah, tu es Joan, non?

JOAN:

Oui. Je suis Jeanne d'Arc.

DIRECTOR:

(*Looking at her disheveled appearance*) Yes, no doubt you are.

JOAN:

Et je pense que je suis mort.

DIRECTOR:

Oui, c'est dommage. Tu est mort.

JOAN:

Comment est-ce arrivé?

DIRECTOR:

How did this happen? The English decided you were dangerous, a heretic, even a witch.

JOAN:

Mon Dieu! Ces bâtards anglais! Sont horribles!

DIRECTOR:

(Clucks, then) Calmez-vous, calmez-vous. Je suis désolé mademoiselle, mais on ne peut pas parler en française.

JOAN:

Pourquoi?

DIRECTOR:

Parce que le public et les autres seront confus.

JOAN:

Très bien. En anglais. Those English bastards! They are horrible!

DIRECTOR:

Yes. Well, I was just setting up for today's session. Would you mind helping with these chairs?

JOAN:

Session?

DIRECTOR:

Yes, you'll be seeing others soon who will help you understand your...character. Think of it as a therapy session.

JOAN:

Understand my character? I understand my character; I wish to kill zee English bastards! They are horrible!

DIRECTOR:

Yes, yes.

JOAN:

And you! You are English!

DIRECTOR:

Yes. I am.

JOAN:

Oh, you scum!

DIRECTOR:

Well, you'll have plenty of time to talk about all that in session.

JOAN:

I don't need 'session'! I need sword!

DIRECTOR:

(Chairs are set in a semi-circle) Yes, I'm sure. Now, I won't be long. Others will be coming.

JOAN:

But I – !

DIRECTOR:

Try to relax.

JOAN:

But I don't – !

DIRECTOR:

You'll need your strength.

(*DIRECTOR exits*)

JOAN:

But I don't need 'session'! Eeeenglish pig! (*beat*)
What I wouldn't do for a glass of water. (*beat*)
Session, pah! Mon Dieu, mother would love this.
(*Imitates her mother's voice*) 'Joan, I want you to sit here
and tell me why you think you see God.' I don't
think I see God, I see God!

(*Sees TAMORA who has just entered*)

Oh, God!

TAMORA:

Hello.

JOAN:

Bonsoir.

TAMORA:

What is this? A therapy session?

JOAN:

Oui, exactament. C'est une séance de thérapie.

TAMORA:

(*Having some trouble with the language*) 'Séance de...?'

JOAN:

...de thérapie. Séance de thérapie. Oui, exactament.

TAMORA:

A therapy session? Just what I need.

JOAN:

(*Sincerely*) Vraiment? Really?

TAMORA:

No. (*beat*) So, a therapy session?

JOAN:

Oui.

TAMORA:

Wonderful. Mother would love this. (*Imitates her
mother's voice*) 'Tamora, I want you to sit here and tell
me why you want to become a warrior.' I want to
become a warrior because I want to defend myself
from men.

JOAN:

Oooh! I say same thing!

TAMORA:

Who are you, anyway?

JOAN:

Je m'appelle Jeanne d'Arc.

TAMORA:

Joan? Joan of Arc? The fighter who led the French
army against the English at the battle of Orléans?

JOAN:

Oui.

TAMORA:

The one who, to avoid being assaulted or raped,
dressed in men's clothes?

JOAN:

Oui!

TAMORA:

The one who heard voices from the Heavens?

JOAN:

Oui!

TAMORA:

So, you're a little nuts, but great work!

JOAN:

Ah, merci beaucoup! And you? Are you God?

TAMORA:

No, but if I were, I'd be 'Goddess'.

JOAN:

Are you English?

TAMORA:

No, I'm Queen of the Goths.

JOAN:

The Goths are savages, no?

TAMORA:

No, we are not savages! And we are definitely not English either. Look, why don't we just slow down.

JOAN:

Bon.

TAMORA:

Have a seat.

JOAN:

(Takes a seat tentatively) Merci.

TAMORA:

You're welcome. Normally, I'm not inclined to be so hospitable but you seem a bit frazzled. Your hair is a bit...singed, did you know that?

JOAN:

My hair is singed?

TAMORA:

Well, yes, and to be perfectly honest, you look a mess. Are you alright?

JOAN:

Just thirsty. You wouldn't have a glass of water by any chance? I feel like I just got out of a fire.

TAMORA:

No, sorry.

(LADY MACBETH enters, walking through scene, rubbing her hands)

LADY MACBETH:

Out damned spot, out I say! What, will these hands ne'er be clean? Out damned spot, out I say! *(exits)*

JOAN:

Who was this?

TAMORA:

No idea. But I think I know why your hair is singed and you look a mess.

JOAN:

Is that so?

TAMORA:

And my own situation.

JOAN:

Yes, and?

TAMORA:

Yes, I think you were burned at the stake and I was

stabbed with a sword.

JOAN:

What is this you say?

TAMORA:

I'm saying, we're dead.

JOAN:

No, no – we can't be! I'm going to live forever and defeat the English! *(JOAN spits at the floor)*

TAMORA:

(Aside, to audience) And they call me 'savage'. As I was saying, my name is Tamora.

JOAN:

I never hear of you.

TAMORA:

Most people haven't. But do you know the phrase about 'fury' and 'woman' and 'scorn? The likes of which hell hath no? Well, I'm her.

JOAN:

Oh. Mon Dieu.

TAMORA:

Don't worry, I won't do you any harm. We women have to stick together.

(JULIET enters)

JULIET:

Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name; Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, and I'll no longer be - *(sees other women)* - aaaaaaarrrrrrraaahhhahhahhaaah!

(While JULIET is screaming, TAMORA goes to her and slaps her three times)

TAMORA:

Stop that this instant!

JULIET:

(Stunned) Thank you, I needed that.

(LADY MACBETH crosses again)

LADY MACBETH:

Out, damned spot! Out, I say! Here's the smell of blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Out, damned spot! Out, I say!

(LADY MACBETH exits. The three women exchange glances at each other, shrug and continue scene)

TAMORA:

You know, you shouldn't just come into a place and start wailing about a guy. You'll give women a bad name.

JOAN:

(Takes JULIET by the shoulders) Mon Dieu! I see in your eyes! You are in love!

JULIET:

Yes, it was heavenly!

JOAN:

Ah, l'amour! Were you married by a priest?

JULIET:

Yes!

JOAN:
To a man?

JULIET:
Yes!

JOAN:
And your honeymoon? Paris?

JULIET:
Uck! I hate him.

JOAN:
Pardonnez-moi?

JULIET:
Paris! (*spits*)

JOAN:
Oh! You vile thing!

TAMORA:
Quit the spitting!

JOAN:
Paris is the most beautiful city in the world!

JULIET:
No, no – not Paris, the city; I mean Paris, the boy.

TAMORA:
A boy? Named Paris? How queer.

JULIET:
No, he wasn't. But I was married. His name is
Romeo. Oh, Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou
Romeo, Deny thy father and refuse—

TAMORA:
Stop that, stop that! Listen. We have some bad news

for you.

JULIET:
News? Bad?

TAMORA:
Yes. Bad.

JULIET:
O, spite! O hell!

JOAN:
You don't even know what it is yet!

JULIET:
Is Romeo slaughter'd, and is Tybalt dead?

JOAN:
Who is Tybalt?

TAMORA:
Hush! Now listen, it's just the three of us. And we
are all - dead.

JULIET:
O, spite! O hell!

JOAN:
Mon Dieu!

JULIET:
I can't be dead!

TAMORA:
You are.

JOAN:
I can't be dead!

TAMORA:

You are.

JOAN:

No! I shall live forever and defeat zee English!

TAMORA:

Girls, girls! Get a hold of yourselves! Now, as I see it, a pattern is forming here.

JULIET:

A pattern?

TAMORA:

We are all characters from plays written by William Shakespeare.

JULIET:

Characters...?

JOAN:

From plays...?

JULIET:

Written by William Shakespeare?

JOAN:

Oh! He is English, no?

JULIET:

Yes.

JOAN:

(Spits onto floor) Oooof! Ces bâtards anglais! Sont horribles!

TAMORA:

That may well be so, but he gave you time onstage. He gave you a voice before and even now, after

your death.

JOAN:

A voice?

TAMORA:

Yes, a voice! And life; or at least, life while your character is alive. But for now, we are dead.

JULIET:

When will we be alive again?

TAMORA:

When the next Shakespeare Festival gets under way, I suppose.

JULIET:

Oh, the waiting! The agony!

JOAN:

But you just got here moments ago!

JULIET:

Still, any time away from Romeo is an eternity! O, alack! Alack!

TAMORA:

Settle down, you. I'd like to keep things under control before they get any crazier.

(Enter OPHELIA, soaking wet)

OPHELIA:

O my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted!

TAMORA:

Oh, my giddy aunt.

THE ACTS OF LIFE

by Jonathan Rand

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Cast of Characters

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| AVA | BOBBY |
| ADAM | OBIE |
| ADVERTISEMENT | EDITH |
| PAUL | BLANCHE |
| LYDIA | PENNY |
| SEAN | GREG |
| OLIVE | GAME SHOW HOST |
| DAN | BELLA |
| ZARIAH | SOCKS |
| HENRY | HAIR GEL |
| HENRY'S MOM | DEODERANT |
| EVANGELINE | STATEMENT A |
| OWEN | STATEMENT B |
| ZOE | STATEMENT C |
| AARON | EMILIO |
| LINDSAY | COLIN |
| DAWSON | RYAN |
| STEVE | PROMISE A |
| TRACY | PROMISE B |
| BRENT | PROMISE C |
| EVELYN | EDIE |
| BECKETT | BELLA, AGE 15 |
| HARPER | ALECIA |
| CHRIS | MATH CLUB |
| VERA | CROSS COUNTRY |
| VIOLET | DRAMA |
| VALENCIA | GOAL A |
| VIVENNE | GOAL B |
| VANESSA | GOAL C |
| VENUS | INSTANT WEDDING |
| VICTORIA | PARTICIPANTS |
| VALERIE | COOPER |
| VALENTINA | CECILIA |
| BARRY | LOGAN |
| STAN | DR. CHAN |

Setting

- I: Multiple blind date locations—can be simply four chairs
- II: Either two TV ad sets, or some location for in-person pitches
- III: A generic office
- IV: Classic game show set—can be simply two podiums
- V: An implied marathon

Synopsis

Through a series of metaphorical and literal comedic vignettes, *The Acts of Life* follows one family across multiple generations as they grapple with those big stages: dating, marriage, childbirth, school, parenthood, and beyond.

Production Notes

If any technology or pop culture reference becomes dated, please replace with a modern reference. And feel free to be flexible with gender.

The cast size can be as small as 6 and as large as around 80—and should be handled as ideal for each production. For example, Ava and Adam can be played by the same performers throughout the play, but could also be portrayed by distinct performers in each scene. Regardless, it may be a good call to incorporate some color scheme and/or costume element that ties those characters together, telegraphing that these are the same characters throughout.

Acknowledgments

The Acts of Life was commissioned by LaVilla School of the Arts in Jacksonville, Florida where the 2020 premiere production was directed by Samuel Fisher and starred Olivia Harris, Brennan Mitchell, Ben Harris, Winsor Crenshaw, Ayviana Singh, Dakota Burton, Madeline Hinchliffe, Caleb Gaff, Bella Rose, Carolina Baldwin, Ruby Simmons, Ty Duva, Hannah Fussell, Lucy Woodward, Essence Stephenson, Sara Lester-Norman, Kate Gibson, Anastasia Clinkscales, Wallis Whelan, Austin Hadd, Akilah Prior, Sofia Marcilese, Mia Jorgensen, Fendie Pogue, and Elizabeth Jones.

I

All Thumbs

(Lights up to AVA and ADAM on their respective phones, in different locations. Between them—in some alternate void—is a personified ADVERTISEMENT.)

ADVERTISEMENT:

Tired of casual, pointless dating?

(AVA and ADAM nod.)

Ready for a serious relationship?

(AVA and ADAM nod.)

Then try ThumbTime! Just swipe through the profiles. Don't like what you see? Move on with a simple Thumbs Down.

(ADVERTISEMENT gives a Thumbs Down with her actual thumb and we hear a fitting sound effect, e.g. DONK!)

But if this could be “The One,” give 'em a Thumbs Up—

(ADVERTISEMENT gives a Thumbs Up and we hear

a fitting sound effect, e.g. BING!)

—and a nice, blind coffee date could just turn into an even nicer, *not-blind wedding ceremony*.

(Very brief wedding sound effect / song.)

Try ThumbTime, every time! *(Tone change:)* Terms and conditions may apply.

(ADVERTISEMENT is gone. Skeptical, AVA and ADAM swipe through profiles on their phones, giving Thumbs Down after Thumbs Down, along with the sound effect. Eventually one profile on each phone incites a moment of consideration, followed by a hesitant Thumbs Up. Some very brief transitional lighting and/or music that leads to...)

(AVA and ADAM are either in the same spots or in chairs several feet away from each other—again in different locations. But on the other side of each of them is a chair where each of their blind dates will sit, also facing forward.)

AVA:

Nice to meet you.

PAUL:

Same here.

AVA:

So... tell me about yourself.

PAUL:

Oh man—well, for starters I'm a real political junkie.

AVA:

Yeah? I kinda pay attention.

PAUL:

Oh, I'm hooked. So much to think about—to *debate*.

AVA:

Like what? Climate Change?

PAUL:

Nah, that's just Glacial Discrimination.

AVA:

Sorry, what?

PAUL:

My real passion is Gum Control.

AVA:

Gum Control?

PAUL:

Yeah! I mean, the sugar-free is fine, but, like, Bubblicious or Juicy Fruit? Enough is enough.

AVA:

That's not a thing.

PAUL:

Or Clams' Gender rights!

AVA:

What?

PAUL:

Should we allow clams to use *any* clam bathroom, or do clams even *use* bathrooms—don't they pee in the ocean?

AVA:

I can't tell if you're serious.

PAUL:

No this is *important*. You know what really fires me up

is the War on Pugs a.k.a. Pet Neutrality a.k.a. Border Collie Security. Or all the problems out there with *food*? There's the whole breakfast cereal scandal with the Immigration Bran, orrrrrr, y'know, Ben & Jerry-mandering, orrrrrr Freedom of the French Press or Freedom of Peach... And listen: I love to kayak and eat salty food, so I'm fully behind the Boating Rights Act *and* the Bloating Rights Act; or what about Elfcare, whether it's Single-Player, or Medicaid, Medicare, or Medican't, or even just boycotting escalators because the real threat? Stairrorism.

AVA:
You're serious.

PAUL:
Dead serious. Oh and hey, listen: I may be a man, but I support you 100%. So please know you have my unwavering support when I give you these.
(He hands her a pair of sneakers.)

AVA:
Why...?
(With utter sincerity, he holds his hand to his heart.)

PAUL:
I believe in a Woman's Right to Shoes.
(AVA gives a Thumbs Down. DONK!)

ADAM:
Nice to meet you.

LYDIA:
Meat is murder.

ADAM:
No, not "meat" like "beef." Like: it's nice to make your acquaintance.

LYDIA:
Oh, so I'm your *acquaintance*? We can't even be *friends*?

ADAM:
Sorry—I'd like to *introduce* myself.

LYDIA:
It's alllll about you, isn't it? Typical...

ADAM:
Okay, how about a simple: Hi.
(Beat.)

LYDIA:
I don't do drugs.
(ADAM gives a Thumbs Down. DONK!)

AVA:
So you're an airline pilot.

SEAN:
Yep.

AVA:
That's so neat.

SEAN:
Yeah, I mean, obviously it feels almost *electric* spending your entire adult life above the clouds, but there's also that profound *connection* with the other pilots and passengers—we're all up there together. Y'know? We're all at risk, but we have to trust each other. This is flight.

This is mankind's greatest triumph. Honestly it's a dream come true.

AVA:

I love that. What airline do you fly for?

SEAN:

Uh, Disney.

AVA:

Okay, so like their corporate jets?

SEAN:

No, the tiny airplane ride at Disneyland.

(Beat.)

What a *rush*.

(AVA gives a Thumbs Down. DONK!)

ADAM:

So where you from?

OLIVE:

Seventh Street.

ADAM:

Oh, no, not where you live now, but where are you from originally?

OLIVE:

Well before then I lived on Riverside Drive.

ADAM:

No, I mean where were you when were little.

OLIVE:

Ohhhhhhhhh. Preschool.

ADAM:

No... In what place were you born.

OLIVE:

Ah! Sorry! I'm an idiot.

ADAM:

It's okay.

OLIVE:

Where was I *born*!

ADAM:

Yes.

OLIVE:

Got it, got it, got it.

(Beat.)

A womb.

(ADAM gives a Thumbs Down. DONK!)

AVA:

This place is pretty cool.

DAN:

Yeah if you're a shill for Corporate America.

AVA:

No, I mean I just think it's got an okay vibe.

DAN:

That's what they want you to think.

AVA:

Who's "they" exactly?

DAN:

I would tell you, but— *(He looks around.)* —they're listen-

ing.

AVA:

Who's listening...?

DAN:

Shhhhhhhhhhh!

(DAN looks around suspiciously, then pulls out an easel pad or dry-erase board and writes something with a marker. Then shows it.)

POSTER:

The NSA

AVA:

Oh...

DAN:

(Whispers loudly:) Or...

(He writes and shows.)

POSTER:

The Illuminati

DAN:

(Whispers loudly:) Or...

(Writes and shows.)

POSTER:

Our Alien Overlords

DAN:

(Whispers loudly:) Also...

(Writes and shows.)

POSTER:

I have to pee.

(DAN casually stands and starts to exit.)

(AVA gives a Thumbs Down. DONK!)

ADAM:

So where are you from?

ZARIAH:

The mean streets.

ADAM:

Okay—*which* mean streets?

ZARIAH:

Vermont.

ADAM:

Are there mean streets in Vermont?

ZARIAH:

(Intensely:) South Vermont.

(ADAM gives a Thumbs Down. DONK!)

AVA:

So do you get along with your family and all?

HENRY:

Yeah, like, my mom and I are pretty close.

(HENRY'S MOM emerges from behind HENRY out of nowhere.)

HENRY'S MOM:

(Emphatic:) We're VERY close.

(AVA gives a Thumbs Down. DONK!)

ADAM:

So do you get along with your family and all?

EVANGELINE:

Actually, I'm an orphan.

ADAM:

Oh. Y'know I think you're the first orphan I've met.
Was it tough, growing up?

EVANGELINE:

Frankly, yeah. But hey—it is what it is.

ADAM:

I'm sorry.

EVANGELINE:

I mean, technically both my parents are alive and well,
but—you get it.

ADAM:

No?

EVANGELINE:

Oh. I mean, when I was like eight? I think? My parents wouldn't get me this one video game for Christmas, so ever since they've just been dead to me.

ADAM:

So they're alive...

EVANGELINE:

THEY'RE DEAD TO ME.

(ADAM gives a Thumbs Down. DONK!)

AVA:

So your profile said "legal professional."

OWEN:

Mm-hm, yeah, actually I'm in the middle of this intense trial right now.

AVA:

Oh yeah?

OWEN:

You hear about that guy who cheated all those senior citizens with that credit card scam?

AVA:

(Chuckling:) You're with the prosecution, I hope.

OWEN:

(Chuckling back:) Okay, guilty as charged, I'm for the defense, but hear me out...

AVA:

(Open-mindedly:) Okay...

OWEN:

I'm representing myself.

(AVA gives a Thumbs Down. DONK!)

ADAM:

So you're a judge?

ZOE:

No, no, I'm judgmental.

(ADAM gives a Thumbs Down. DONK!)

(AARON wears a police uniform.)

LAW & ORDER: RHYMES AND MISDEMEANORS

by Jonathan Rand

LAW & ORDER: RHYMES AND MISDEMEANORS
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Cast of Characters*

(*See Production Notes for information
on doubling and gender flexibility)

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| INTENSE VOICEOVER | WEASEL |
| CHUH-CHUNK | OFFICER EENY |
| PLACE | OFFICER MEENY |
| TIME | OFFICER MINY |
| PETER | OFFICER MOE |
| DETECTIVE ITSY | E.A.D.A. JACK |
| DEPUTY TWINKLE | A.D.A. MARY |
| LT | LITTLE BABY |
| RAILROAD WORKER | DEFENSE ATTORNEY |
| BLACK SHEEP | BLUE |
| SOLE PROPRIETOR | BUTCHER |
| BINGO | BAKER |
| DEPUTY ROSIE | CANDLESTICK MAKER |
| HUBBARD | CAPTAIN BOAT |
| KING COLE | BAKER'S MAN |
| MACDONALD | HOT CROSS |
| THE OLD MAN | GEORGIE |
| OLD-TIMERS | SIMON |
| PAGEANT PRODUCER | MUFFIN MAN |
| PAGEANT HOST | PETIT CHOCON |
| PAGEANT FRONTRUN- NER | LITTLE DOG |
| PAGEANT CONTES- TANTS | SUNSHINE |
| CHERYL | JUDGE GOOSE |
| | DOCTOR FELL |
| | ROCK-A-BYE BAILIFF |

Synopsis

In the nursery rhyme criminal justice system, citizens are represented by two separate yet equally ridiculous

groups: the nursery rhyme police who investigate nursery rhyme crime, and the nursery rhyme district attorneys who prosecute the nursery rhyme offenders. These are their stories.

Production Notes

It's unnecessary to be familiar with the *Law & Order* television drama after which this play is modeled.

Please resist the urge to sing any of the rhymes. All dialogue should be spoken.

See the Appendix for suggested doubling-casting and a rhyme guide.

Use any level of set, props, and costumes that fits your budget, but simplicity tends to be ideal. For instance, Bingo need not wear an elaborate dog costume, but instead maybe a dog nose, ears, and tail. Imagination can rule the day.

Feel free to be flexible with gender. For instance, even though certain names or roles (e.g. Jack) might be assumed to be male, there's usually no reason they can't be played by anyone.

Please replace any outdated pop culture references if they will no longer resonate.

This play was formerly entitled *Law & Order: Nursery Rhyme Unit*.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Hope Hynes Love and her insanely talented drama students at East Chapel Hill High School for their support in the development of this play.

Law & Order: Rhymes and Misdemeanors

*For Ramona—
How I wonder who you'll be*

*(Optional: The title appears from darkness:
“Law & Order: Rhymes and Misdemeanors”)*

INTENSE VOICEOVER:

In the nursery rhyme criminal justice system, citizens are represented by two separate yet equally ridiculous groups: the nursery rhyme police who investigate nursery rhyme crime, and the nursery rhyme district attorneys who prosecute the nursery rhyme offenders. These are their stories.

(Lights shift to CHUH-CHUNK, PLACE, and TIME. They always face straight ahead toward the audience, without emotion. Perhaps they wear shirts with their character names on them in block letters. They are the human equivalent of the sound and the setting titles from the TV series.)

CHUH-CHUNK:

Chuh-chunk

PLACE:

Poplar Park Penthouse

TIME:

8:12 A.M.

(Lights shift.)

(PETER is flustered by the crime in question, but is also scurrying around in an apron preparing unique vegetable dishes. DETECTIVE ISABELLA ITSY and DEPUTY TOM TWINKLE enter, holding up their police badges. Throughout the scene, PETER periodically returns to the same nondescript pint of apparent ice cream, spooning spoonfuls into his mouth.)

ITSY:

NRPD: Water Spout Precinct. This is Deputy Twinkle and I'm Detective Itsy.

PETER:

Thank you for coming. I'm freaking out.

TWINKLE:

We're here to help. Dispatch said you want to file a Missing Persons report?

PETER:

No, not Missing Persons.

TWINKLE:

What then?

PETER:

Missing Peppers.

TWINKLE:

Sorry?

PETER:

A Missing Peppers report.

ITSY:

That's not a thing.

PETER:

No, you can report Missing Peppers, Pumpkins, Parsnips—a veritable vanished-vegetable verification vista.

TWINKLE:

(Who'd been flipping through forms; surprised:) Huh, he's right. *(Shows the Missing Peppers form.)*

ITSY:

You have *got* to be kidding.

PETER:

(Offers a snack:) Turnip turnover?

ITSY:

No.

TWINKLE:

I get the sense you like vegetables.

PETER:

I *venerate* vegetables.

TWINKLE:

(Pen poised:) Okay, last name?

PETER:

Piper.

TWINKLE:

First name?

PETER:

Peter.

TWINKLE:

And tell us about your missing...peppers.

PETER:

Wait a sec—you both look familiar. (*To ITSY:*) Weren't you in the news for some legal trouble?

ITSY:

Sir—*focus*.

PETER:

(*To TWINKLE:*) And I *definitely* know you. That name. (*Thinking aloud:*) Twinkle, Twinkle... (*A revelation:*) The little *star*! You were the lead in *SpaceKid*!

TWINKLE:

(*Evasive:*) Yeah, long time ago. But back to the peppers—

PETER:

That show was the *best*. (*Struggling to recall:*) What was your catchphrase...?

TWINKLE:

(*Reluctantly:*) Weach fuhw duh staughs!¹

PETER:

Yeah!! So good. Well, except for Season Two...

ITSY:

(*Annoyed:*) The *peppers*!

PETER:

Right, right. So at six I went to Produce Palace to pick some pickled peppers.

1 “Reach for the stars” but with the delivery of a young child

ITSY:

And how many pickled peppers did you pick?

PETER:

Precisely?

ITSY:

Painstakingly.

PETER:

2.3 gallons.

TWINKLE:

(*Indicating form:*) Gallons aren't an option here.

PETER:

Oh, 8.8 liters?

TWINKLE:

Nope.

PETER:

One half-kenning? A quarter-bushel?

TWINKLE:

How about “pecks”?

PETER:

What's a *peck*?

TWINKLE:

I don't know. It's one of the options.

ITSY:

Tell the man how many pecks.

PETER:

No clue—let's find out. (*To his iPhone:*) How many pecks in a quarter-bushel?

SIRI:

There is one peck in a quarter-bushel.

PETER:

Sooo... one peck.

TWINKLE:

Math checks out.

PETER:

(Offers a snack:) Beet bourguignon?

ITSY:

No.

TWINKLE:

What happened next?

PETER:

Well, police people, I was plum petered out from my prior personal pump-up at Planet Pecs on Pappadeaux Parkway where I'd packed in plenty of pullups, power partials, plate pinches, pyramid presses, planks, pylo pushups, and pectoral plunges, so while picking at a petite portion of those previously-presented pickled peppers, I proceeded to padlock my peepers for a picosecond while previewing *Pretty in Pink*, and then presto: pinched pickled peppers.

TWINKLE:

That's a lotta P's.

PETER:

No, *this* is a lotta peas.

(PETER reveals a very large container of loose peas, or empties a basket filled with an excessive number of bags

of frozen peas.)

ITSY:

So you called 911 for *peppers*...

PETER:

Well, these aren't pedestrian, paltry, plebeian, passable, prosaic, *plain* peppers. These are positively premium, prominent, peerless, preeminent, *perfect* peppers.

TWINKLE:

Are they valuable?

PETER:

Prodigiously, preternaturally profitable.

TWINKLE:

I'll just write down "yes."

PETER:

(Offers a beverage:) Curried cauliflower cocktail?

ITSY:

NO.

TWINKLE:

So here's the question: If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, where's the peck of pickled peppers that Peter Piper picked?

PETER:

And *another* question: Will SpaceKid sign my cabbage?

(TWINKLE unenthusiastically autographs the cabbage as the dialogue continues.)

ITSY:

(To *PETER*:) Have you noticed anything out of the ordinary?

PETER:

Apart from a pepperless pepper pantry?

ITSY:

Apart from a pepperless pepper pantry.

PETER:

No.

TWINKLE:

(To *ITSY*:) A dead end...

ITSY:

Knick-knack *paddywhack!*²

PETER:

Come to think of it, I *did* find this towel and yoga mat.

TWINKLE:

(Reading the logo on both:) LT Yoga Studio.

ITSY:

One, two, double my clues...

TWINKLE:

(To *PETER*:) Well don't worry, sir—we'll catch your pepper punk. Until then, maybe don't drown your sorrows *too* much in that Häagen-Dazs.

PETER:

Oh it's not ice cream; it's puréed pumpkin.

2 An expletive in this world

ITSY:

(Resigned:) Perfect...

TWINKLE:

So, Itsy: think we'll find our pepper prowler at the yoga place?

ITSY:

Let's just say: I wouldn't be *shock-ra*'ed.³

(Lights shift.)

CHUH-CHUNK:

Chuh-chunk

PLACE:

LT Yoga Studio

TIME:

9:37 A.M.

(Lights shift.)

(A yoga studio where a class is underway, led by LT. Its yogi members are *RAILROAD WORKER*, *BLACK SHEEP*, and *SOLE PROPRIETOR*.)

LT:

And now let's move into our next pose: Downward Facing Dog Who Laughed to See Such Sport.

(The *YOGIS* do the classic pose Downward Facing Dog, while chanting.)

RAILROAD WORKER / BLACK SHEEP / SOLE PROPRIETOR:

Ha ha, such sport.

3 A pun combining "shocked" and "chakra"

(ITSY and TWINKLE have entered, badges held up.)

TWINKLE:

NRPD, Water Spout Precinct. Who's in charge?

LT:

That would be me. What seems to be the problem?

ITSY:

We'll ask the questions.

TWINKLE:

Name?

LT:

My name is LT and I am the founder slash life compass of LT Yoga Studio. (To the YOGIS:) Always breathe in, breathe out...

TWINKLE:

(Showing LT the towel and yoga mat:) We found these at a crime scene, so we'll need a list of all your members.

LT:

The entire LT Yoga Studio membership is before you.

ITSY:

You only have three members?

LT:

We receive millions of applications each year, but only accept three. We are *highly* exclusive. (To the YOGIS:) Hold your positions, and breathe...

TWINKLE:

What makes your studio so in demand?

LT:

Our signature yoga pose, of course! Last year it was named Top Yoga Pose by *Mega-Zen Magazine*.

ITSY:

(*Disingenuous:*) Congrats.

LT:

Would you like to see it?

ITSY:

No.

LT:

If you insist. Class, let us move to the LT Yoga Studio Signature Pose.

(*The YOGIS are energized by this.*)

One two three four:

(*The YOGIS chant as they carry out poses that match the words.*)

RAILROAD WORKER / BLACK SHEEP / SOLE PROPRIETOR:

I'm a little teapot short and stout. Here is my handle, here is my spout. When I get all steamed up, hear me shout: Tip me over and pour me out.

(*And they're done. Despite the simplicity of the poses, this was draining for the YOGIS. They're immediately winded, and proud of their accomplishment. This was a big deal. High-fives all around, followed by stretching and cooling down with towels, sports drinks, etc.*)

ITSY:

And you make *how* much cash?

LT:

Truckloads.

ITSY:

(*To TWINKLE:*) I'm in the wrong field.

TWINKLE:

We'll need all your whereabouts between 7 and 8 this morning.

LT:

Certainly. (*Clap clap.*) Everyone! Let's all help these lovely officers. I'll start: From dawn until this class I was at the Michael Kors Coarse Corps Cores Core Coeur Course.

ITSY:

Excuse me?

LT:

Oh it's the Michael Kors-sponsored course run by the Marine Corps that strengthens your core and your coeur⁴ by lifting coarse apple cores.

ITSY:

Thanks.

LT:

Of *course*.

TWINKLE:

(*To RAILROAD WORKER:*) And *you*?

RAILROAD WORKER:

I've been working on the railroad all the live-long day.

⁴ For "core" she points to her midsection and for "coeur" (French for "heart") she points to her heart.

TWINKLE:

Engineer?

RAILROAD WORKER:

Yes. I oversee operation of Thomas the Tank Engine in my mom's basement.

ITSY:

(*To TWINKLE:*) Have we gotten one *normal* answer today...?

RAILROAD WORKER:

(*Proudly:*) Thomas is the cheeky one.

TWINKLE:

(*To BLACK SHEEP:*) What about *you*?

BLACK SHEEP:

I was volunteering for the yes-profit organization Wool for the Wealthy.

TWINKLE:

Wool for the Wealthy?

BLACK SHEEP:

We bag up rare Escorial wool for the affluent so their servants can sew them the most nonessential fine wool products, like this tiny sweater for a caviar fork. (*Holds it up.*)

ITSY:

How vital.

BLACK SHEEP:

Indeed! Today we provided three bags' full to those who truly need it least.

ITSY:

And they are...?

BLACK SHEEP:

Let's see... One for the Masters champ Jack Nicklaus, one for the Dame Judy Dench, and one for Lil' Wayne, who lives down the lane.

TWINKLE:

(To **SOLE PROPRIETOR**, an elderly woman:) And what about you?

SOLE PROPRIETOR:

(Sports drink in hand:) Me? Oh, I cooked and ate a goose with my wonderful family for the best Christmas Eve dinner ever.

(A moment.)

TWINKLE:

Ma'am, it's nowhere near Christmas.

SOLE PROPRIETOR:

Hmm? What?

ITSY:

And we're asking for your alibi in the *morning* not *evening*.

SOLE PROPRIETOR:

It was a *delicious* Christmas goose.

TWINKLE:

Ma'am, you're lying.

(A moment.)

SOLE PROPRIETOR:

All right, all right! I am a terrible fibber. This morning I *wasn't* eating a Christmas goose with my family. I don't even *like* my family. And I'm *Jewish*.

And *vegan*.

ITSY:

So your alibi's rubbish; let's hear the *truth*.

SOLE PROPRIETOR:

Well... I may have sneaked into a pumpkin eater's penthouse.

ITSY:

Ah *hah!*

TWINKLE:

Ma'am, you're under arrest for plundering pickled peppers.

SOLE PROPRIETOR:

Peppers? What peppers?

ITSY:

The peppers pilfered from Pumpkin Pete.

SOLE PROPRIETOR:

Oh I don't know about any peppers.

TWINKLE:

Then why were you there?

SOLE PROPRIETOR:

Someone stole my sole!

TWINKLE:

Your soul?

SOLE PROPRIETOR:

From my shoe-plex.

ITSY:

(Deadpan:) You are an *old woman* who lives in a *shoe*...

SOLE PROPRIETOR:

A shoe duplex. At the retirement village. That man eyeballed my wall-to-wall Dr. Scholl's.

TWINKLE:

Wait, when you say "soul," you don't mean your, y'know, spiritual essence?

SOLE PROPRIETOR:

Oh no, I mean the bottom of my *shoe* house.
(*Pointing to the bottom of her shoe:*) SOLE... Anywho, I followed him to his penthouse, but he clearly had no interest in my sole. (*Conspiratorial:*) I *think* he was stalking my *corn*.

TWINKLE:

(*To ITSY:*) Another dead end...

ITSY:

Dinah, blow your horn!⁵

SOLE PROPRIETOR:

And when I got back to the house, its *laces* were *also* stolen! Those really tied the shoe together!

TWINKLE:

(*To ITSY:*) Head back up to Water Spout?

ITSY:

Yeah...

SOLE PROPRIETOR:

Anyway, it was probably the same crook who stole from my neighbor at the retirement village. Just horrifying. Back to yoga!!

(*She returns to a yoga pose.*)

5 An expletive in this world

ITSY:

Wait, what?

SOLE PROPRIETOR:

Oh, you didn't hear? Some *other* granny got burgled.

(*Twinkle's cell rings or vibrates.*)

TWINKLE:

(*To his phone:*) Twinkle. Okay we'll be there. (*To ITSY:*) Yep—retirement village.

ITSY:

Some old crone, she got robbed?

TWINKLE:

She got robbed and maybe sobbed.

ITSY:

It's a crime spree, deputy; put away the phone.
(*Intensely:*) Time to hit the nursing home...

(*Lights shift.*)

CHUH-CHUNK:

Chuh-chunk

PLACE:

Old Smoky Retirement Village

TIME:

11:36 A.M.

(*Lights shift.*)

(*ITSY and TWINKLE arrive at the Old Smoky Retirement Village clubhouse. BINGO, a dog, is running an in-progress bingo game for the residents. DEPUTY ROSIE is already there analyzing the*

A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN NOVEMBER ON THE BANKS OF THE GREATEST OF THE GREAT LAKES

by Kate Benson

A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN NOVEMBER ON THE BANKS
OF THE GREATEST OF THE GREAT LAKES

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A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN NOVEMBER ON THE BANKS
OF THE GREATEST OF THE GREAT LAKES

by Kate Benson

A Beautiful Day in November on the Banks of the Greatest of the Great Lakes was first produced in New York City by New Georges (Susan Bernfield, Producing Artistic Director; Jaynie Saunders Tiller, Managing Director; Sarah Cameron Sunde, Deputy Artistic Director) and WP Theater (Lisa McNulty, Producing Artistic Director; Maureen Moynihan, Managing Director).

This production was directed by Lee Sunday Evans.

with

Ben Williams

@ **Hubert Point-DuJour**

Cheesecake **Brooke Ishibashi**

Cherry Pie **Heather Alicia Simms**

Trifle **Nina Hellman**

GrandDada **Gerry Bamman**

SnapDragon **Mia Katigbak**

Smilesinger, The Twins, Wives of the Twins, Republican's Wife, Trainer, Trainer's Partner **Jessica Almasy**

Fred, Ed, Ned, Runnerman, The Twins, Wives of the Twins, Smilesinger's Husband, Republican **Christian Felix**

Gumbo **Kristine Haruna Lee**

set designer **Sara C. Walsh**

costume designer **Kathleen Doyle**

lighting design **Barbara Samuels**

sound design **Brandon Wolcott**

associate sound designer **Adrianna Brannon**

production stage manager **Jaimie Van Dyke**

Great Lakes was originally produced by New Georges in May 2014 at Dixon Place as part of The New Georges Jam and Toast, a festival of plays by The New Georges Jam, a working lab for early-career theater makers founded in 2010 under New Georges' auspices by playwright Lucy Alibar and directors Jess Chayes and Portia Krieger to cultivate new collaborative relationships through 3-D play development and by including playwrights and directors as equal participants.

Synopsis

A Thanksgiving play called by sports announcers. Every family holiday is full of tradition. Every family holiday is full of strife and joy. Where do our traditions come from? Why do we hold so tightly to them? Join the Family at Wembly Stadium as they play the game called Thanksgiving Day: a day of gratitude in which we watch some people knock some other people down in order to get the ball over the line.

Setting

A sports arena—of sorts—on the shores of the Great Lakes, reminiscent of being Home for the Holidays.

Some Things to Keep in Mind

This is a play without stage directions.

There are no props of any kind. (There is nothing to prop up here.)

People are seen.

There are microphones.

and @ call it like they see it.

No one else sees what they see.

It might be like listening to a baseball game on the radio in the hot sun on a summer afternoon, back in the United States of Baseball's distant past when the professionals played games during the day and it really mattered.

It is also not under any circumstances a radio play.

[text] indicates text that should not be read aloud but should be acknowledged in some way.

(text) indicates text that is spoken quietly, to oneself, sometimes in rebellion.

* indicates overlapping text

The pace of this play is professionally fast: Basketball Fast, not Football Slow, or Baseball Inert, because we're all going to die soon and there is no time to waste.

Cast

THE ANNOUNCERS

#: in charge of action. Professional talker, fast-paced and leathery. Wearing professional headphones.

@: in charge of color commentary. Also a professional talker, fast-paced and honey-voiced, also wearing professional headphones.

THE FAMILY

SnapDragon: Matriarch. Blind and Ceremonial. Wearing Blu-Blockers*.

GrandDada: Patriarch. Deaf and Pragmatic. Wearing giant hearing aids.

Trifle: Oldest daughter. Not like Olga.

Cherry Pie: Middle daughter. Not like Masha.

Cheesecake: Youngest daughter. Maybe a little like Irina.

Fred: Trifle's husband

Ed: Cherry Pie's husband

Ned: Cheesecake's husband

Smilesinger: Daughter of Trifle & Fred

Smilesinger's husband: Husband of Smilesinger

Brainerd: Son of Trifle & Fred. Absent.

Brainerd's wife: Wife of Brainerd. Absent.

Gumbo: Daughter of Cherry Pie & Ed. Divorced.

The Twins: Sons of Cherry Pie & Ed

Wives of the Twins: Wives of the Twins. Nothing alike.

Runnerman: Son of Cheesecake & Ned. Single Parent.

Republican: Son of Cheesecake & Ned

Republican's Wife: Wife of Republican. Weirdo.

Trainer: Daughter of Cheesecake & Ned

Trainer's Partner: Partner of Trainer. A survivalist.

GreatGrandBabies: a herd of uncountable babies. Voracious. On liquid diets. None of them belong to Gumbo.

*Blu-blockers: giant sunglasses blocking blue wavelengths of light.

A Note on the Staging

There are many possible versions of *Great Lakes*.

A Beautiful Day in November on the Banks of the Greatest of the Great Lakes is a meal for the ears. There are no stage directions written in because: in any theatrical event (except for some of them), the director has to figure out how it's gonna go. *Great Lakes* allows the director and the ensemble and the designers great(er) latitude to imagine the specific motion of the performers and the particular architecture of the space, on purpose. Thanksgiving is a national holiday adapted to each family's preferences and traditions: so let it be with *Great Lakes*. The text is the sheet music; how the orchestra plays it is up to the orchestra.

This play invites an audience to listen and imagine everything occurring. There is no need to supply an audience with an actual turkey burning in an actual oven. (What happens when I say: *don't think about elephants?*)

My dad used to sit in the backyard in the summer and listen to baseball games on the radio. He was not in the ballpark, and yet he was perfectly able to follow the action and understand the tension and drama of what was go-

ing on over there in Wrigley Field while also remaining present in the backyard with the swing and the birds and a hoard of kids and dogs running around. He didn't miss a thing. (Not even the crab-apple fights.)

So: it is important not to replicate action being discussed with matching physical action. We tolerate an awful lot of dislocation, in fact. And perhaps families are about withholding as much as bestowing. Withhold. Figure it out.

This play is not a radio play. This play is not an event that happens in a mimetic rendering of a house. It instead asks all participants to: imagine; get with their own families; contemplate the turkey, the pie, the grandmother, blood. The participants do not need help visualizing any of it; they have everything they need.

Staging is action. Find some action that is exciting. The metaphors are mixed here, on purpose, fruitfully, as they are in this bananas country we find ourselves living in at this moment in time. Do not forget: there are a lot of us here in the United States, and we are doing wildly different things until we're not, until we're doing something together. There is a strong family resemblance, even if our faces and our bodies look completely different.

So: no table. For god's sake, no turkey. No food. Yes imagination, probably no to mime, and I hope you accept the invitation to think about representation and what it means: who are you representing, and how? To what end?

Life is short. The day is long. There is so much to see and to do, and none of it bears repeating. Make it new.

A Note on the Casting

Age matters. People who have been alive longer than other people know things that the younger people do not.

Racial, religious, and physical resemblances should be resisted. Make it look American, as diverse as the streets in a large city. Please.

@:

A fine day

#:

Couldn't be finer

@:

Really just

#:

a fine day!

@:

yes a fine, fine day

#:

A fine day in November

@:

Crisp

#:

Almost chilly

@:

But not yet precisely cold

#:

If you're going out today
you'll want a coat

@:

You'll be glad you have
your coat

#:

It's a day for gladness!

@:

A fine day for gladness

#:

Gratitude

@:

Gratitude and Gladness

#:

Yes Gratitude and Gladness

@:

A beautiful day here on the shores of the Great Lakes

#:

And here's Cheesecake
moving from the hall closet
down the hall
into the dining room

@:

Cheesecake
The youngest of the three

#:

She's carrying
What's that she's got in her hands
Lace
White lace
Oh yes
She's carrying the tablecloth

@:

That's her grandmother's tablecloth

#:

A tradition here at Wembly

@:

Lace tatted by Verdigris
Cheesecake's Great Grandmother
And stitched into the tablecloth by
Cheesecake's grandmother Ladyfingers
When Ladyfingers was a girl of 6
A family heirloom passed down
Through the generations

#:

And here come
Cherry Pie and
Trifle
up the back
stairs

@:

Cherry Pie and
Trifle
Carrying half
of another family heirloom

CHERRY PIE:

Here we come with the table!

TRIFLE:

Half of the table
ooo careful

@:

That would be
the Round Table
A Table designed and built by GrandDada

CHEESECAKE:

Oh good I was just getting the tablecloth
Out of the hall closet

#:

Cherry Pie and Trifle
Set down one half of the
table top,
a rough-hewn half moon

CHERRY PIE:

The other half is
in the stairwell

@:

The Round Table is not
strictly speaking a table
But a table top
In two pieces
Fit together
Each piece a half-circle
Screwed into some
Temporary Wooden Legs

TRIFLE:

Back in a jiffy!

#:

For those of you
just joining us
The Round Table
is arriving now
here at Wembly
It's going to be
a special day

@:

Yes the Round Table
is reserved for only the specialest of
Special Days
The Round Table itself
Designed according to
the specifications
Of the room
How large can the table be
while still leaving space
for chairs

In fact

yes

yes

I think

Research

I think we have specs

yes

yes

here they are

#:

Here come the specs!

@:

The specs

The dimensions of the room
sixteen feet by twelve feet
so we've got
a table whose
diameter can't exceed
8 feet
the average human

JACKED!

by Idris Goodwin

JACKED!

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Jacked! was co-developed between Cleveland Playhouse’s Classroom Matinees Program and StageOne Family Theatre.

Jacked! was produced by Cleveland Playhouse’s Classroom Matinees Program, StageOne Family Theatre and Metro Theatre.

Setting

A rural community in America

Synopsis

Inspired by Jack and the Beanstalk, *Jacked!* fuses storytelling with poetry and a bit of hip-hop. In this reimagined world of magical beans and shady deals, “happily ever after” is just the beginning for Jack. When no one can care for him but himself, Jack takes matters into his own hands and steals a golden goose. But the eggs that goose is laying turn Jack’s world upside down, and he embarks on a journey that will change his life forever.

The Role of Music

There is non-stop music underscoring this play. Scenes and all. Some moments where dialogue turn into raps.

The Set Up

Two mics on stands. A structure—chest or box or something from which necessary props and costume can be taken quickly. This is a presentational/meta piece—the quick

changes shouldn’t attempt to be hidden.

Character List

This is a play for two performers:

1) Jack—a kid

2) Second Performer plays:

Jack’s Mama

Mink the Mysterious

Harp

George Giant

Owens

Banker

Farmer Rex

Goose

Hughes

Gina Giant

The Goose can be a puppet, as can Jack’s cow, Daisy.

We hear music
Jack takes the stage, grabs the mic

JACK:

Do you ever think you're doing a good thing but the
more you do it
you realize that you're just making things worse?

Do you ever think, "how can something that feels
good
make everything bad for so many other people?"

Do you ever think "maybe it won't be so bad?"
But every day, you see it, worse and worse
But you just don't know how to stop it?

The music shifts

My name is Jack.

But not Jack Horner who sat in the corner
Or Jack who went with Jill up the hill to fetch the
water
Jack Frost, Or Jack who built the house

SECOND PERFORMER:

(on second mic)

That belonged to the farmer
sowing his corn
That kept the rooster that
crowed in the morn

JACK:

*That woke the judge
all shaven and shorn
That married the man
all tattered and torn*

SECOND PERFORMER:

*That kissed the maiden
all forlorn
That milked the cow
with the crumpled horn*

JACK:

*That tossed the dog
that worried the cat*

SECOND PERFORMER & JACK:

*That killed the rat
that ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built*

JACK:

I'm not that Jack

SECOND PERFORMER:

*Jack Jack Malone the human parking cone?
Jack who didn't know Jack? Jack Jheri Curls?*

JACK:

*None of those—I'm just Jack.
You know my story.*

The music shifts

JACK:

*I was poor / hungry
living on a farm
Scrawny
Lean
legs and arms
pockets empty*

*Cupboards lean
Wasn't always like that
It was a sight, back
when*

SECOND PERFORMER:

*Used to be
All you'd see
Was
green on green on green
Green on green on green
Green on green on green*

JACK:

*Everybody was happy
Nobody was mean*

SECOND PERFORMER:

*Green on green on green
Green on green on green*

JACK:

*Everybody prospered
Helped each other out*

SECOND PERFORMER:

*Green on green on green
Green on green on green*

JACK:

*Then fire and a drought
Lead out the spout*

SECOND PERFORMER:

*Lean and lean and lean
Lean and lean and lean*

JACK:

*Soil ain't healthy
Nothing green comin' out*

SECOND PERFORMER:

*Lean and lean and lean
Lean and lean and lean*

JACK:

*Not a beet to eat
A leaf, not a sprout*

SECOND PERFORMER:

*Lean and lean and lean
Lean and lean and lean*

JACK:

*No broccoli or spinach
Our farm it was finished*

We hear a weak and desperate 'moo'

*The second performer becomes Mama
She's got Daisy, the cow*

MAMA:

(treated like verse-dialogue)

*Jack, I know you love Daisy
But she's grown old,
Useless, lazy
It has to stop
she chews and chews
not a milky drop
a cow that's dry?
Time to say goodbye*

JACK:

She told me

MAMA:

*take cow to market
Sell her for meat*

JACK:

*And she shoved me and Daisy
Onto the street*

*I grew up with Daisy
She was my friend
And now I was marching her
To face her end*

But then

The music shifts
The Second Performer becomes
Mink The Mysterious (MTM)

MTM:
Nice Cow

JACK:
What?

MTM:
I said nice cow

JACK:
Thanks

MTM:
Where you taking her?

JACK:
Market

MTM:
What for?

JACK:
I'm sorry, who are you?

MTM:
Mink

JACK:
I can't talk right now, Mink. I have to get Daisy here

to market before it closes up. If I don't come back
with something, Mama will have my hide.

MTM:
With something? Something like what?

JACK:
Money.

MTM:
I have something better than money.

JACK:
Better than money?

MTM:
What I am about to show you will change your life
forever.

*Mink reaches into his pocket and produces
three beans!*

JACK:
What're those?

MTM:
Beans!

JACK:
Beans?

MTM:
Magic beans.

JACK:

Why would you want a cow if you have magic beans?

MTM:

Lemmie guess, Jack, you and your mama go to bed
starving every night, don't you? Don't be ashamed.
Most people around here have that problem. Soil's
been dead a long time, ain't it?

JACK:

Well, if you have so much magic, make it better.

MTM:

I would if I could. I got just enough decent soil to
grow just a few magic beans. BUT, you know what
it takes to grow more magic beans? Lots and lots
of healthy soil, and you know what helps keep soil
healthy and happy? Cows, cows to chew the grass,
and to, uh—fertilize—you give me Daisy here that
means I can grow more, and if I can grow more, I
can help more. It's called trickle-down economics.

JACK:

Huh?

MTM:

Look, you take Daisy to market—it's not going to go
well for her. You trade to me—I'll take great care of
her and then you get these beans.

JACK:

Well, what'll they do?

MTM:

Make your dreams come true!
That's what they do!

*I may be mysterious but I don't lie
Man, I couldn't even if I tried
Just look at this face
You won't see a trace
Of dishonesty
No siree!*

*I may be mysterious but I don't lie
I couldn't even if I tried*

*These three beans, they fulfill dreams
That's what they do
Make dreams come true*

*Daisy'll live
And even better for you
These three seeds'll turn gray skies blue
Will turn water to wine*

JACK:

I'm too young for wine

MTM:

*But these three seeds
gonna blow your mind
Put 'em in the dirt
wait till they work
these three seeds*

gonna blow your mind

JACK:

Just put ‘em in the dirt?

MTM:

That’s how they work

These three seeds gonna blow your mind

Just put in the dirt

Watch how they work

JACK:

These three seeds

Gonna blow my mind

MTM:

Those three seeds gonna blow your mind

So, we have a deal?

The music shifts

JACK:

I did it. I saved Daisy. And I rushed home. Excited,
burst into the house to tell Mama.

The Second Performer as Mama

MAMA:

Jack!

I said take Daisy to the market.

You comin’ up in here with some beans!

Beans?!

What’s the matter with you?

Beans?!

She takes the beans

MAMA:

Ridiculous!

JACK:

(back at the mic)

And she threw them out the window

MAMA:

Beans!

JACK:

I got sent to bed without a bite of dinner.

*(Not that there was much to eat in the first
place.)*

Overnight—those beans sank into the soil, dry and
unhealthy as it was—those beans must have really
been magical. I thought Mink was just giving me a
lot of hot air.

*The Second Performer produces/builds a
beanstalk*

JACK:

But then a beanstalk started to grow, it grew and grew
and grew. Straight up into the clouds.

Jack looks at it

JACK:

Mama!

Mama, you have to see this!

Mama!

MAMA:

(audio)

Leave me alone, Jack!

Jack just looks at it

JACK:

There are two types of people. Climbers and lookers.

Lookers look up

And climbers—

Jack places a foot and stops

JACK:

I have no idea what's up there.

Maybe there's trouble?

Maybe there's danger?

Maybe there's food!

Jack begins to climb

Climbing

Climbing
Climbing
Climbing

*The Second Performer is tracking the inches
and feet*

JACK:

Oh, man

I can see the town from up here—our farm, The
Owens Farm, The Hughes and McGee—all looking
pretty sad—

Finally

*Jack is gob-smacked at what he sees
He ventures and surveys
The music shifts*

JACK:

Inside everything is larger than usual—almost 100
times bigger!

Whoa, look at that!

*The Second Performer produces a sparkling
container*

Wonder what's in here? Jewels? Skulls? —Cookies!?

Jack opens it

THE BRIGHTEST THING

(Or, The Squonk Play)

by Don Zolidis

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Setting

America, both real and imagined.

Synopsis

An American fable that's tinged with sadness about a girl's imaginary journey in a hot air balloon to rescue her mother.

Cast of Characters

EMELIA: a curious girl.

FATHER: her father. Very busy.

BIG FAIRY: a large fairy working for Amazon. Tiny wings. Maybe a tutu? Male-identifying.

THE SQUONK: a mythical furry beast with self-esteem issues. The Squonk can look like anything, but very weird, covered in warts or hair, and usually frightened or sad. Female-identifying.

THE BALLOONIST: a man of industry. Top hat. Spiffy vest. Perhaps a handlebar mustache. Played by the actor who plays Father.

THE JACKALOPE: a mythical creature with antler horns and an attitude. Aggressive and small.

MANNY THE MANATEE: a Manatee. Female-identifying. Played by the actor who plays Mother.

SAM: a mean alligator, any gender.

CLIVE: a mean alligator, any gender.

BEETLEJUICE: a red giant star, any gender.

SIRIUS: the dogstar, any gender.

POLARIS: the north star, any gender.

MURDER HORNET: a very large hornet. Not friendly.

SNOWBEARD: a pirate with an eye patch and ski gear.

He has a hook for a hand.

PIRATES

GEESE

MOTHER

MAGIC: this is the Chorus and consists of as many actors as necessary. The MAGIC can also double as all the other characters except BIG FAIRY and EMELIA.

Note on MAGIC

For scene changes, and other magical effects in the play, Magic enters and performs the various changes. Magic can look like anything, but I imagine it shimmering or brightly colored. Magic is playful, fun, and the individual actors playing the roles have different personalities, intentions, and characters. They are encouraged to annoy, flirt, tease, and pester as they perform their magic. It is perfectly fine that some magic can get upset, or even sad, or refuse to do what it's supposed to do.

Gender of the Characters

Although I've listed suggested genders for some characters, any of the characters may be any gender. Please shift pronouns accordingly. Perfectly fine for "Father" to be a mother as well.

The Brightest Thing (Or, The Squonk Play)

America.

A very nice house.

FATHER is working in his office. He is working very hard. Many facts and figures are being calculated.

EMELIA enters, flounces, sits down. There's nothing to do. She sighs. She sighs LOUDER, looking over at her father, who ignores her completely.

She cautiously enters his office. SIGHS. He keeps working.

EMELIA:

Dad?

Dad?

Dad. Daddy.

FATHER:

Go play, honey.

She doesn't.

EMELIA:

Daddy. Daddy. Daddy? Dadddddy? Daddydaddydaddy-daddydaddy.

He ignores her.

Emelia starts making funny voices.

<high pitched>

Daddy. DADDDDDy.

<low pitched>

Daddy.

<evil elf>

Daddy. Daddy. Daddy!

<the devil>

DADDY.

He finally turns around.

FATHER:

What is it?

EMELIA:

I'm bored.

FATHER:

Then go play with your puzzles. I'm working.

EMELIA:

Why.

FATHER:

Because I need to work.

EMELIA:

Why.

FATHER:

So I can make money and afford this house.

EMELIA:

That's dumb.

FATHER:

That's not dumb—

EMELIA:

Just my opinion. You can't disagree with an opinion.

FATHER:

Go work on your puzzles or use your imagination.

EMELIA:

Can we get a dog?

FATHER:

No.

EMELIA:

Can we get six dogs?

FATHER:

Why would we get six dogs?

EMELIA:

So we could have a dog in every room. Then you'd open the door to any room and you'd be like yay a dog is in here!

FATHER:

They—dogs move around.

EMELIA:

I think that's a good thing. But the dogs could be

friends. Or we could attach them to a sled. We could attach them to a sled and I could sled around the house.

FATHER:

I don't—I don't think it's a good idea to dogsled inside the house.

EMELIA:

Have you tried it?

FATHER:

No.

EMELIA:

Then how do you know?

FATHER:

I need to work, Emelia.

EMELIA:

Why do dogs sniff each other's butts?

FATHER:

That's what they do.

EMELIA:

I think it's rude.

FATHER:

They're dogs. They enjoy butts.

EMELIA:

Why don't cats sniff each other's butts?

FATHER:

Cats aren't interested, honey. Please—I need to work.
Do your puzzle.

He tries to go back to work.

EMELIA:

You always work. When is Mom coming back?

Father stops.

FATHER:

We don't know that, honey.

A moment.

He turns back to work.

Emelia leaves.

She enters the living room. She sighs, then takes out a very large puzzle of America.

EMELIA:

All right America, let's put you together.

She picks up a piece and mimes talking with it.

'I don't want to be on the bottom!'

Shh, Florida, that's where you belong.

'No, you can't make me!'

She picks up another piece and attacks the first piece with it.

'I'm New Jersey and I'm going to eat you! I am a big mouth!'

The lights flicker.

What's that?

Everything darkens. Perhaps smoke billows out. Ominous music.

And then –

SNOWBEARD the pirate, with an eyepatch and ski gear, leaps out from behind something. He has a hook for a hand.

SNOWBEARD:

Yar! I be looking fer Emelia!

EMELIA:

That's me!

SNOWBEARD:

Ho ho ho.

EMELIA:

Santa?

SNOWBEARD:

No. I don't look anything like Santa.

EMELIA:

You said ho ho ho.

SNOWBEARD:

I'm a pirate. We also say ho ho ho. It's our thing.

EMELIA:

It's really more of a Santa thing, actually.

SNOWBEARD:

Did I come down a chimney? Do you hear reindeer?
Santa is a good person bringing joy and presents—

EMELIA:

Where?

SNOWBEARD:

No, he's not here! I'm just describing him! Can you let

me finish what I was saying? Sorry, hold on, I'm off
me whole rhythm now, can I make another entrance
please?

EMELIA:

Sure.

SNOWBEARD:

All right.

He hides behind a chair.

Ominous music again. He leaps up.

Yar! I be looking fer Emelia!

EMELIA:

You already know who I am.

SNOWBEARD:

My name is Snowbeard—ha ha ha ha. I am a pirate,
as you may have deduced from me eye patch and other
accoutrements.

EMELIA:

Are you wearing a snowsuit?

SNOWBEARD:

I am a skiing pirate. Me and me crew spend a lot of
time at resorts in Colorado. Sweet powder there.

EMELIA:

Oh I like skiing—

SNOWBEARD:

BUT I AM NOT HERE TO TALK ABOUT SKIING!
No—I am here because...

He pauses dramatically –

Continues to pause.

EMELIA:

Why.

SNOWBEARD:

This is normally when my parrot interjects, but I was not able to bring her because there are limitations to my hologram technology—so ye have to imagine her cackling and saying *because...* I HAVE KIDNAPPED YER MOTHER HA HA HA YARRR!

EMELIA:

NO!

SNOWBEARD:

YES! HA HA HA!

MOTHER enters, perhaps in a pool of light, separated.

MOTHER:

Emelia! Help me! Hlllp!

EMELIA:

Mommy!

Emelia reaches out for her.

SNOWBEARD:

She is also a hologram. Just in case ye were wondering. And ye'll never get her back! Ha ha ha ha!

He pauses.

That's what I came here to say. Peace out.

He turns to look backwards.

All right cut the transmission please. I have made me

dramatic pronouncement!

EMELIA:

You'll never get away with this!

SNOWBEARD:

Isn't somebody supposed to be working the hologram machine? Hey. HEY I'M STILL PROJECTING TO THIS GIRL'S HOUSE, STANDING HERE LIKE A GOOFBALL! All right, I'm revoking all chair lift privileges for the lot of ye!

EMELIA:

Wait, where are you Mommy?!

MOTHER:

Asp—

Lights go down, cutting her off.

EMELIA:

Asp? Asp?! What is Asp?

She spins around.

Dad! Daddy! Daddy!

The sound of WIND CHIMES in the breeze, then—

WHUMP.*

**If you're able to have a window, it would be great to see BIG FAIRY fly smack into it. Otherwise this can be an off-stage noise.*

EMELIA:

What was that?

BIG FAIRY

(in pain) Ohhhhh...

*Big Fairy stumbles in, or climbs in, rubbing his face.
He wears tiny wings and an Amazon delivery outfit. He
carries a package.*

Oh man, I thought that window was open. I'm like
flying all gracefully or whatever, and WHAM. Aw jeez
my face. I need to sit down.

He sits.

EMELIA:

What are you?

BIG FAIRY:

What does it look like? I'm a fairy.

EMELIA:

You're very large for a fairy.

BIG FAIRY:

WHOAH. That is a STEREOTYPE. Not all fairies are
little, okay? Some of us... are more generously propor-
tioned. And I work for Amazon. Are you Emelia?

EMELIA:

Yes?

He tosses the package at her feet.

BIG FAIRY:

Package for you.

EMELIA:

You're a delivery fairy?

BIG FAIRY:

Amazon wanted to create a fleet of flying drones, but
apparently that was "expensive" or whatever, so now
they just hire a bunch of fairies to deliver everything.
Most of the time we're invisible.

EMELIA:

Wow.

Emelia opens the package.

Look at this!

*There's a backpack inside. Powerpuff girls or My Little
Pony.*

It's a backpack! It's a sign!

BIG FAIRY:

No, it's a backpack.

EMELIA:

A sign of what to do! What goes in backpacks? Things.

BIG FAIRY:

Among other things.

EMELIA:

Things for journeys. This is a sign I need to go on a
heroic journey! To save my Mommy. YES.

She begins digging in it.

BIG FAIRY:

Good times.

*Emelia starts putting the puzzle pieces of states into the
backpack.*

EMELIA:

I'm gonna need this—and this—and this—maybe some food, maybe some weapons. You don't happen to have a grappling hook, do you?

BIG FAIRY:

Not on me. All right kid, I gotta bail. Lots of packages to deliver. They got like a homing beacon implanted inside in my skull. If I don't get my deliveries done, *p-choo!*

Makes a sign of his skull exploding.

EMELIA:

Your skull explodes?

BIG FAIRY:

No, it's just bad.

EMELIA:

Wait a minute! I need a guide! I can't go on a heroic journey all by myself! I'm going to need a supernatural advisor. Like a fairy god...

Big Fairy belches.

God-uncle! The one who still lives with his parents.

BIG FAIRY:

I still live with my parents.

EMELIA:

You're perfect! Come on! I have recently received a communication from a group of skiing pirates located in Colorado. They think that just because they're thousands of miles away they're safe, but oh ho do they have another thing coming! This is gonna be EPIC!

She paces, plotting.

With this map, I will be able to figure out how to get to Colorado!

BIG FAIRY:

All right look kid, if I'm gonna be your supernatural helper or whatever, you need to understand a few things.

EMELIA:

Shoot.

BIG FAIRY:

One, I'm super lazy. So you're gonna have to do it largely yourself.

EMELIA:

Sweet, what's the next one?

BIG FAIRY:

That's it. I don't have the energy to make a longer list.

EMELIA:

I can work with that. Hold on one second.

She runs in to her Father's office.

Hey Dad, I'm going to Colorado with a big fairy to rescue Mom who's been kidnapped by ski pirates. Kay bye.

She exits. He doesn't notice.

EMELIA:

All right I'm ready! LET'S DO THIS.

BIG FAIRY:

Sure thing.

He waits.

RIGHT BEFORE I GO.

by Stan Zimmerman

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The Cast

Narrator
Young Man
Young Woman
Man
Woman/Kristin

Production Note

The piece is designed for performance by an ensemble of variable size, an ensemble of between five and beyond, any age and any gender. It's suggested this play be read by actors on stools in front of music stands.

Performance Note

Actors should read each letter with emotion and urgency. Do NOT play it sad. Read it as if it was a monologue to a specific person. Give these letters (and people) life! Pace is of the utmost importance as the piece drives to the end. It is also strongly suggested that the audience is not waiting for actors to walk to their music stands before starting to speak. Using visuals of authors of the various notes is suggested.

"In America, suicide now claims more lives than murder"

The Suicide Notes

RALPH BARTON
American cartoonist (1891-1931, 39)
IDA CRADDOCK
19th century American advocate (1857-1902, 45)
MISAO FUJIMARA
Japanese poet (1886-1903, 17)
DAVID FOSTER WALLACE
American author/professor (1962-2008, 46)
BILL ZELLER
American computer programmer (1983-2011, 28)
VINCE FOSTER
Bill Clinton's White House Counsel (1945-1993, 45)
DEBORAH JEANE PALFREY
aka The DC Madam (1956-2008, 52)
DANIEL SOMERS
Iraqi War Veteran (1983-2013, 30)
PEG ENTWISTLE
Welsh born, English actress (1908-1932, 24)
JAMES WHALE
British film director "Frankenstein" (1889-1957, 67)
GEORGE SANDERS
English actor: "All About Eve" (1906-1972, 65)
VIRGINIA WOOLF
English writer (1882-1941, 59)
HUNTER THOMPSON
American journalist/writer (1937-2005, 67)
FREDDIE PRINZE
American actor/comedian (1954-1977, 22)
CHRISTINE CHUBBUCK
American newscaster (1944-1974, 29)
KURT COBAIN
American musician (1967-1994, 27) - read by COURTNEY LOVE

ANGELINA GREEN

American student (1999-2013, 14) - read by her mom, DAN-
IELLE

AMANDA TODD

Canadian student (1996-2012, 15) - read by her and her
DAD

KATE VON ROEDER

trans software engineer (1987-2014, 27)

STEVEN

American teen student

ROY

NYC taxi driver (48)

JULIE

Detroit teacher (59)

PHILIP

Boston artist (31)

MARY

Seattle costume designer (23)

Right Before I Go.

*ACTORS and the NARRATOR enter. They take seats
on stools in front of music stands.*

*VISUAL CUE: CLIP OF “DARK SHADOWS” with
“Victoria Williams” (or the YOUNG WOMAN can
read)*

VICTORIA WILLIAMS (ON TV):

“...My journey is just beginning. A journey THAT I am
hoping will somehow begin to reveal the mysteries of
my past. It is a journey that will bring me to a strange
and dark place. To a world I’ve never known, with
people I’ve never met.”

SOUND CUE: PHONE RINGS

*LIGHTS UP on the Narrator watching TV and eating
from a bowl of cereal.*

VICTORIA WILLIAMS:

“People who tonight are still only vague shadows in my
mind, but will soon fill all of the days and nights of my
tomorrows....”

SOUND CUE: ANOTHER PHONE RING

NARRATOR:

Mom, can you get that?! I'm watching "Dark Shadows"!

WOMAN:

(as Narrator's Mom) It's your teacher, Mrs. Golden. What did you do now?!

NARRATOR:

(sighs, then, to audience) What I had done was create my own play with my classmates. I looked over and saw my mother breathe a sigh of relief when she realized I wasn't in trouble. Mrs. Golden was calling to recommend I go to a local summer theatre camp. Even though I was under their age limit, I was only seven at the time, they accepted me. I was nervous and had a stomachache the first day my Mom dropped me off. But then I got very excited when they cast me as the King in—"The Princess and the Frog". That is until I read the script. I found the writing way too corny for my refined taste. I had to take action. So without telling anyone, I rolled up my favorite Batman beach towel and stuffed it into the knickers of my costume to make me look like a portly King. To complete my transformation, I slipped on my father's white Jack Purcell sneakers, size 10. Let me point out here, I was four foot-two with a huge Jew fro. The minute I walked on stage, the audience roared with laughter. It sent a jolt right up my spine! That's when I knew I had two choices for a career in life—writing sitcoms...or politics. I chose sitcoms.

And I was extremely fortunate to have written for the

Girls—"Golden" to "Gilmore". And in between, a tour of duty on "Roseanne". We'll talk!

But theatre has always been my first love. The immediacy of an audience, every night, I desperately missed that. When I finally wrote a play, of course, it was a comedy. A producer expressed interest and wanted to do a *big* reading of it back east. But first at my home in LA, I hosted a *small* reading. One of my best friends, Kevin, agreed to do the stage directions. Stage directions are very important. They set the tone. The pace. And Kevin read them with such exuberance. So I asked if he would read them again. In New York. He jumped at the invitation. Over the next few weeks, I repeatedly gave him ways to back out, but he said he never missed one of my productions and he wasn't about to miss this one. I was thrilled that such a close friend was going to be a part of an exciting new journey for me.

But it was not to be.

A few days before we were supposed to fly to New York, I was at home watching TV, this time glued to a Real Housewife flipping a table. My phone rang. I checked caller ID. I didn't want it to be some annoying telemarketer. Or my mother. Both would be hard to hang up on.

It was Kristin, Kevin's best friend. I only saw her a couple times a year. Like at Kevin's birthday dinners, or his Oscar parties. I always tried to sit next to her. She never failed to make me laugh. My heart began

to pound as I picked up the phone. I'm not sure why, but I had this sinking feeling it was bad news about Kevin. I don't remember exactly what she said, everything became a blur. But I knew I heard the words—"Kevin"...and—

WOMAN:

(playing Kristin) "Suicide".

NARRATOR:

Are you sure?

WOMAN:

I just got off the phone with Kevin's friend, Claudia. She just got a call from Matthew.

NARRATOR:

(aside, to audience) Matthew was Kevin's ex-lover.
(to Woman) And...

WOMAN:

Kevin mailed him a suicide note.

NARRATOR:

Mailed? Wait. When did he do this?

WOMAN:

Yesterday. Must've been right before...you know....

NARRATOR:

What did it say?

WOMAN:

Well, what he was planning to do. What he did.

NARRATOR:

You mean...exactly how?

WOMAN:

Every detail. Of course, Matthew immediately jumped in his car and headed straight to Kevin's house. But it was...

NARRATOR:

Too late?

WOMAN:

Yes.

NARRATOR:

What did Matthew do?

WOMAN:

—He called the police.

NARRATOR:

The police?!

WOMAN:

What would *you* do?

NARRATOR:

(to audience) This was too much to process. I was feeling all these different emotions—Shock. Anger. Guilt. Sad and mad. All at the same time. But mostly confused. Like why would he do this? How could he not tell me he was contemplating such a thing, we were so close? Did he know all along that he wasn't coming with me to New York? My head was spinning with questions. I knew so little about suicide. So what does one do when they're completely and utterly uninformed? You turn on your computer. I was instantly overwhelmed.

The Young Man, Young Woman, Woman and Man

stand as they talk.

YOUNG MAN:

According to the CDC, the overall suicide rate in the US has risen 30% in the last twenty years.

YOUNG WOMAN:

Globally, there are nearly one million suicides each year.

MAN:

That means every twenty seconds someone in the world will die by suicide.

WOMAN:

And every twenty-one seconds, someone is left to make sense of it.

YOUNG MAN:

So in the next hour, over a hundred and eighty people will take their own life.

YOUNG WOMAN:

But only about a third of them will leave a note.

The Young Man, Young Woman, Woman and Man sit.

NARRATOR:

Kevin was one of them. The following morning Kristin called me at an ungodly hour. It didn't matter. I hardly slept that night.

WOMAN:

Hey, it's me, Kristin! I found out more information. Are you sitting down?

NARRATOR:

It's 6am. I'm *lying* down.

WOMAN:

Kevin wrote something to his four best friends.

NARRATOR:

Another note?

WOMAN:

No. It was part of the letter he sent to Matthew. You and I are two of the four he mentioned.

NARRATOR:

How do you know this?

WOMAN:

I called Matthew last night after we hung up and did a little snooping. He said he wasn't ready to talk but he did tell me that the police took the letter.

NARRATOR:

That's not good.

WOMAN:

But luckily, he excused himself to go to the bathroom, snuck into Kevin's home office and Xeroxed it before giving it to them.

NARRATOR:

So he has a copy?

WOMAN:

Yes.

NARRATOR:

That's great!

WOMAN:

But that doesn't mean he'll give it to us. You know Matthew.

NARRATOR:

(deflated) True.

(then, to audience)

See, Matthew is not exactly a very communicative person. You know, the kind that make you feel like you shouldn't ask anything too personal. But I had to figure out a way to get that note. I felt if I could just read it, it would help fill in the blanks. In the meantime, I Googled "Suicide Notes". One of the first that popped up was from Ralph Barton, a popular American cartoonist. On an April day in 1931, he mailed this letter to The New York Times.

The Young Man stands.

YOUNG MAN:

I have had an exceptionally glamorous life, as life goes. The most charming and intelligent people have liked me. And the list of my enemies is very flattering. I have always had excellent health; but since my early childhood I have suffered from a melancholia.

It has prevented my getting anything like the full value out of my talent, and the past three years has made work a torture. It has made it impossible for me to enjoy the simple pleasures of life. I have run from wife to wife, from house to house and from country to country in a ridiculous effort to escape from myself. In doing so, I am very much afraid that I have brought a great deal of unhappiness to those who have loved me.

In particular, my remorse is bitter over my failure to appreciate my beautiful lost angel, Carlotta, the only

woman I ever loved and whom I respect and admire above all the rest of the human race. She is the one person who could have saved me, had I been savable.

I present my remains, with my compliments, to any medical school that fancies them. Or soap can be made of them.

Young Man sits.

NARRATOR:

Is that how Kevin felt? Hopeless? If so, why didn't he talk to me about it? Or Kristin. Anybody! Kristin and I began calling each other. Multiple times a day. We became kind of like Nancy Drew and "one" Hardy Boy—piecing together clues of our various memories. Including how we initially met Kevin.

For me, it was a Sunday morning and my friend Steve invited me out to brunch. I. Hate. Brunch. I know, not a popular opinion. I like my Sunday mornings to myself. And The New York Times. Arts & Leisure section. I'm old-school, I like getting ink on my hands. But that Sunday, something said—"Go meet Steve." So I did. He didn't tell me a friend of his was joining us. Someone who just moved to LA from New York. Kevin.

(deep breath)

How can I best describe Kevin? Okay. Just picture Prince Charming. Tall. Handsome. Charismatic. Mid 20's. I wouldn't have been surprised if he arrived at the restaurant on a white horse and checked it at the valet. Kevin loved people. And people loved him. He

made everybody smile!

(then)

I guess, except himself.

Over the years as we got to know each other, he shared stories of how tough it had been growing up without ever knowing his father. Living with his single mom until she ran off, abandoning Kevin, forcing him to live on his own. When he was just fifteen. How could a mother do that? So different from my childhood. My mom has always been my rock.

I found this note from Ida Craddock, a 19th century advocate of free speech and women's rights. She left two letters before ending her life. One to the public. And this one to her...

Young Woman stands.

YOUNG WOMAN:

Dear, Dear Mother:

I know you will grieve over me for having taken my life....Oh, how sorry I am to hurt you, as I know this act will do. But, oh, mother, I cannot, I will not consent to go to the asylum, as you are evidently planning to have me go. I know that this means a perpetual imprisonment unless I either recant my religious beliefs or else hypocritically pretend to do so. I cannot bring myself to consent to any of these three alternatives.

I maintain my right to die as I have lived—a free

woman. Not cowed into silence by any other human being. If, on the other hand, the prison to which Judge Thomas evidently proposes to send me were to be my destined lot, then my work is ended so far as this world is concerned. My books have been given a start, approved by physicians and other reputable citizens, but the world is not yet ready for all the beautiful teachings which I have to give it. Other people will take up my work, however, some day—will take it up where I laid it down, and will start from where I left off and do better work than they could have done but for me. Some day you'll be proud of me. You will understand that what I have done has been done because you and my father prepared me for just such a propaganda to humanity.

You may ask why I did not give up and come home to live with you, taking up other work and resuming my name of "Miss Craddock". But, dear mother, I could be of no possible help to you, with the shadow of reproach which bigots and impure-minded people have put on me. I should only be a hindrance to your respectability. Moreover, my individuality has some rights. I cannot recant my beliefs and throw aside a principle for which I have toiled and struggled for nine years, even at the behest of a mother that is dear to me.

Goodbye, dear mother, if only for a little while. We shall meet in the next world.

Young Woman sits.

WOMAN:

Hey, it's me, Kristin! Why didn't you call me back last night?

NARRATOR:

I started reading other suicide notes online. So many
I'm finding are real eye-opening.

WOMAN:

Do I need to do an intervention?

NARRATOR:

No! Well, maybe. Okay, I've become completely
obsessed.

WOMAN:

Uh-oh.

NARRATOR:

I started copying and pasting them into a folder on
my computer. I found this one from a Japanese poet,
Misao Fujimara. He felt so rejected by a woman he
loved he wrote *his* suicide note as a farewell poem on a
bark of a tree.

Man stands.

MAN:

Delicate line between heaven and earth...
The calm of the ages,
all the world's worth.

Such minuscule measure,
while we think it so grand...
Just five specks of smallness,
This soft quiet land.

So frail and so fleeting,
in the end you will see
Simple dreams were Horatio's philosophy.

For all the truth,
all creation,
all secrets of yore
Can be told in an instant,
by then they're no more.

The Woman stands.

WOMAN:

Ah,
The Unexplainable
All worries unsettled,
heartache unresolved...
All questions unanswered,
with death,
shall be solved.

MAN:

We already teeter,
this sheer cliff so high.

WOMAN:

When we fall to corruption,
insecurities die.

MAN:

To end is to start;

WOMAN:

To surrender is to know.

MAN:

Despair and depression,

WOMAN:

Together they grow.

#HASHTAG

by Jonathan Rand

#HASHTAG

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Setting

A living room—actual or implied

Synopsis

#Your #parents #definitely #know #everything #about
#social #media.

Cast of Characters

*(can be cast with between 2 and 25 performers; see Smaller Cast
Versions for details)*

MOM, 40s-50s

DAD, 40s-50s

JORDAN, 10-13 (*non-speaking*)

Mom and Dad's friends and family:

| | | |
|----------|-------|---------|
| KEVIN | CORA | TRACY |
| GREG | DORIS | GRANDMA |
| PATRICIA | ELSA | DREW |
| PAM | FAYE | KYLE |
| SEAN | GIA | JEANNIE |
| JOY | HOPE | FLO |
| AVA | IRIS | |
| BARB | ED | |

Production Notes

When much of these topics inevitably become outdated, then the play's a period piece with the following voiceover introduction: "The year was 2020, and this was the world as we knew it. Parental discretion advised."

Feel free to be flexible with gender and change character names to best fit the actor's gender.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Hope Hynes Love and her incredible drama students at East Chapel Hill High School for their support in the development of this play.

Dedication

For Mom and Dad.

#hashtag

(Lights up to MOM, DAD, and JORDAN. They're wrapping up some family activity, like dinner or a board game or a movie. Throughout the play, JORDAN calmly absorbs everything without obvious reaction.)

MOM:

Honey, your dad and I know you're going through some changes, and we'd like to open up an honest dialogue.

DAD:

This should be a safe space to discuss anything.

MOM:

Truly anything.

DAD:

Because at your age, certain topics can be awkward. But if you're *open* to it, we're ready to have "The Talk."

MOM:

So this is hard to explain, but... Well when you *like* someone and want to... *connect*... No.

DAD:

When people want to express emotions... How do I put

this... We're talking about something called sssss— (To MOM:) I can't; she's too young.

MOM:

(To DAD:) It's okay; I've got this. (To JORDAN:) It's time you learn about sssss— (To DAD:) Whoa, yeah that's tough.

DAD:

(To JORDAN:) Honey, we need to talk about sssss—

MOM:

Social media!

(A moment to exhale.)

DAD:

Okay... Now... let's start with the bad news: social media is confusing and complicated and can't be taken lightly.

MOM:

Which means you'll need to learn a lot before we give you this phone—

DAD:

(Fighting tears:) Her *first* phone...

MOM:

—and because “it takes a village to raise a child” we've asked our neighbors to help.

DAD:

What Mom's trying to say is: our most tech-savvy friends are waiting in the laundry room to come out for a presentation.

MOM:

So, without further ado...

DAD/MOM:

(Poorly/awkwardly overlapped:) SOCIAL MEDIA!!

MOM:

Lesson One: Twinterest!

DAD:

No, it's Twinstagrams.

MOM:

Ah, I think we're both wrong. It's The Twitternet.

DAD:

That's it!

MOM:

So this websurfing webpage is *extremely* useful. Just visit the online Twitternet, which is htp semicolon forward slash backslash twitternet dot-com. Wait, is it dot-com?

DAD:

No, it *sounds* like dot-com? Like dot-Guam, or Scott-Caan...?

MOM:

Anyway, you boot it up, and just type *any question* into The Twitternet.

DAD:

So we know your head must be all OMG up in this business, which is why to demonstrate here's Greg and Kevin from our lukewarm yoga class.

MOM:

Gentlemen?

(KEVIN and GREG appear.)

KEVIN:

Hey Greg, will it rain today?

GREG:

Good question, Kev. Let's check The Twitternet.
(*Thumb-typing:*) "Will it rain today?"

KEVIN:

Then you tap "Twit."

GREG:

(*He does:*) Twit.

KEVIN:

Then just wait a few seconds, and The Twitternet answers!

GREG:

Ooh! Here's a Twit from at-sign trollytroll6: "Yes, it'll rain today. Pound-sign google much?"

KEVIN:

So now we know that it will rain!

GREG:

Hey, *another* answer: "Today's forecast: cloudy with a chance of stupid."

KEVIN:

Oh no, that last word wasn't relevant to weather.

GREG:

The telephone must be broken.

KEVIN:

Maybe blow on it? Or smack it?

(GREG tries that.)

GREG:

Oh another Twit! We're back online! This one says, "Make real cash from home by clicking here."

KEVIN:

Wait, *real cash*??

GREG:

We like real cash!!

KEVIN:

Click it! Click it!

MOM:

Thanks, guys.

(KEVIN and GREG are gone.)

DAD:

Next up: hashtags.

MOM:

Now you may wonder: Are hashtags related to hash browns?

DAD:

And the answer is yes.

MOM:

That's right. When hashtags were invented, they were just a potato-based breakfast dish.

DAD:

We used to hit the local diner and just devour hash browns, corned beef hash, and plates and plates of hashtags.

THE CHRISTMAS CAROL FARCE

**Featuring the Five-Minute
Christmas Carol**

by Jon Jory and
Michael Bigelow Dixon

Adapted from Charles Dickens'
A Christmas Carol

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THE FIVE-MINUTE CHRISTMAS CAROL
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Character List

Approximately 17F/8M, but can be doubled to 10F/6M

3 Stage Crew Members (*Gender-neutral*)

Charles Dickens (*Male*)

Chastity Karioke (*Female*)

Megan McCandless (*Female*)

Production Assistant (*Gender-neutral*)

Marley & Merchant #1 (*Female*)

Fred and Mr. Fezziwig (*Male*)

Bob Cratchit (*Male*)

Mrs. Cratchit (*Female*)

Young Scrooge and Topper (*Male*)

Mrs. Fezziwig (*Female*)

2 Fezziwig Daughters (*Female*)

Character Woman (Many roles) (*Female*)

Seminola (*Female*)

Mister Slick (*Male*)

Thanatos (*Gender-neutral*)

Mo Moscatoni (Truck Driver) (*Female*)

Past, Present, Future Ghosts (*Female*)

Merchant #2 (*Female*)

Merchant #3 (*Male*)

Turkey Boy (*Gender-neutral*)

Tiny Tim (*Male*)

Synopsis

Charles Dickens' ghost arranges for a high school production of *A Christmas Carol* to be broadcast on TV. The cast is ecstatic, until they learn their performance must be cut to one hour. At the TV studio, they discover it must be cut to 40 minutes for commercials. Just before they go on-air, an overtime football game forces them to cut again. When all that's left is 5 minutes, they perform a hilariously fast holiday classic.

Setting

Various locations at Slowdance High School and the production studio at KCAT TV. The time is the present.

Note

"Featuring the Five-Minute Christmas Carol" is part of the title and should be included whenever the title is printed.

The Christmas Carol Farce

Featuring the Five-Minute Christmas Carol

*A wall with five doors. The doors are red and green.
The wall itself is white, eight feet tall and decorated for
Christmas. Furniture will sometimes be brought on in
front of the wall. Doors 1, 3 and 5 (left to right) suddenly
open. Three stage crew members step on stage.*

ALL 3 STAGE CREW:

Stage crew!

STAGE CREW #1:

Without us...

ALL 3 STAGE CREW:

Nothing.

STAGE CREW #2:

With us...

ALL 3 STAGE CREW:

Everything! (*Fists in air!*) Stage crew are the gods of
theatre.

*(Stage Crew #1 and #2 exit, closing their doors. Stage
Crew #3 hooks a white pillow to the door and exits.
As soon as the Stage Crew #3 exits, all three are seen*

again.)

ALL 3 STAGE CREW:

Lights up!

(We go from work-light to stage-light. A woman dressed in a robe enters and stands against the door with her head against the pillow. A second door opens and Charles Dickens enters! He speaks in a big voice.)

DICKENS:

Chastity Karioke!

(The woman tosses and turns.)

Awake!

(She does. She is disoriented.)

CHASTITY:

What?

DICKENS:

I am the ghost of Charles Dickens.

CHASTITY:

Yeah, right.

(She sleeps. A door opens. A hand comes out holding a bucket. Dickens takes it, goes over to the sleeping woman and drenches her with the water in the bucket—yes, really.)

CHASTITY:

What are you doing?

DICKENS:

I am the ghost of Charles Dickens, writer of the

nineteen greatest novels ever written.

CHASTITY:

(Mopping herself off with the pillow.) There is no such thing as ghosts.

DICKENS:

There are in *Christmas Carol*, I wrote it.

CHASTITY:

And I just directed it at Slowdance High School. Now go away, you're a dream.

(She hangs the pillow back on the door and "sleeps".)

DICKENS:

(Loudly.) Chastity Karioke!

CHASTITY:

What??

DICKENS:

Your production of *Christmas Carol* sucked.

CHASTITY:

It did not suck. The audience loved it.

DICKENS:

27 people came. You should have done *Grease*.

CHASTITY:

We've done *Grease* seven times. I'm not doing it again.

DICKENS:

You are a failure, Chastity Karioke. Plus, you have a very weird name.

CHASTITY:

I don't want to go into that.

DICKENS:

When you were in New York, you had 1,806 auditions and you never got cast.

CHASTITY:

Okay, maybe sometimes I overslept.

DICKENS:

1,800 times.

CHASTITY:

Is this another dream about bullying?

DICKENS:

Then you went to Chicago and had 700 auditions.

CHASTITY:

Chicago doesn't cast people from outside Chicago.

DICKENS:

Then you moved from Chicago to here and became a high school drama teacher in a town where no one goes to plays and the only kids who audition are Goth.

CHASTITY:

They are great kids. It's just hard to cover all their tattoos with makeup.

DICKENS:

Fly with me, Chastity Karioke. Just as I made Ebenezer Scrooge a good man, I will make you a successful play director, known in the four corners of your country.

CHASTITY:

Really?

DICKENS:

Absolutely.

(He holds out his hand.)

CHASTITY:

May I ask you a question?

DICKENS:

Go for it.

CHASTITY:

Whatever happened to Marley?

DICKENS:

Well, Marley is dead to begin with. Since then he's appeared in almost 250,000 productions of *Christmas Carol* as Marley's Ghost.

CHASTITY:

You mean that whenever *Christmas Carol* is presented, the actual ghost of Marley plays Marley's Ghost?

DICKENS:

He auditions and he's terrific. Plus he knows the lines and brings his own chains.

CHASTITY:

Is he in my production?

DICKENS:

Absolutely.

CHASTITY:

I wondered who that kid was when he auditioned!

DICKENS:

Take my hand.

(She does. The lights change.)

CHASTITY:

Why do I take your hand?

DICKENS:

It represents flying.

CHASTITY:

But we're not really flying.

DICKENS:

Of course you're not flying, you're in a play.

CHASTITY:

They fly in *Peter Pan*.

DICKENS:

We couldn't afford the equipment. Look below you, what do you see?

CHASTITY:

It's Slowdance High School, where I teach!

DICKENS:

Let's go down to your office. Flap your arms.

(They flap wildly and then fall on the floor. Meanwhile, the Stage Crew bring on a small desk and two chairs. Chastity leaps to her feet. Dickens follows.)

CHASTITY:

That was exhilarating!

DICKENS:

Pretending you're flying always is. Now go sit at

your desk. I need to conjure up a TV producer.

(He begins something that looks rather like modern dance.)

CHASTITY:

What are you doing?

DICKENS:

This is what real conjuring looks like. That Harry Potter stuff is baloney.

(He ends up lying across the desk. There is an explosive sound. A door opens and a woman, Megan, enters dressed in black. She is followed by a Production Assistant.)

MEGAN:

Hi, I'm Megan McCandless, Line Producer for ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS and double X, P.

CHASTITY:

What is XXP?

MEGAN:

I have no idea, I just say that for fun. *(To Chastity.)*
And you must be...?

CHASTITY:

Chastity Karioke.

MEGAN:

For real?

CHASTITY:

My dad and I made it up.

MEGAN:

I have been dying to meet you.

CHASTITY:

And this is Charles Dickens.

MEGAN:

Who is?

CHASTITY:

(Pointing.) He is.

MEGAN:

There is nobody there.

DICKENS:

Don't ever call me a nobody.

MEGAN:

Oh, I get it. That's hilarious.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT:

(Stone-faced.) Completely hilarious.

MEGAN:

It's as *IF* you were collaborating with the real Charles Dickens.

CHASTITY:

Well...

MEGAN:

And you're like introducing him even though he's been dead for dog-years. That is so scary-hip! So, Chastity (which would be an unusual name in Hollywood): a parent of some kid in your production—I think he played Marley—

(Door opens on Marley.)

MARLEY:

I wear the chains I forged in life.

(Door closes.)

CHASTITY:

Yes, maybe it was Marley...

MEGAN:

—sent a performance video of your production. And everyone at the network just wiggled out! I mean, it killed! It decimated! People were cheering and weeping and laughing. *(To the Production Assistant.)* Weren't they?

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT:

Weeping and laughing.

MEGAN:

Because it was so touchingly bad, so heartfeltly awful, so cleverly inept. It was like an injured puppy, it just melted our hearts. *(To the Production Assistant.)* Didn't we cry?

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT:

(Stone-faced.) We cried.

MEGAN:

There is nothing so naïve and helpless on television, so we have to put it on television.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT:

We have to...*(A pause.)*...put it on television.

MEGAN:

It's like a traffic accident, you just can't look away. The advertisers are just begging us to take their money.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT:

And we will.

MEGAN:

We can line up a television consortium of every major network and the Food Channel so that on December 24th, if you turn on your flat-screen, there's nothing to watch except *Chastity Karioke's Christmas Carol*.

CHARLES DICKENS:

I wrote *Christmas Carol*.

CHASTITY:

Charles Dickens wrote *Christmas Carol*.

MEGAN:

We are so over him.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT:

So! *(Megan looks at her.)* Over him.

CHASTITY:

Am I in a dream?

MEGAN:

There's only one thing.

CHASTITY:

What?

MEGAN:

Can you cut it to 60 minutes?

DICKENS:

No.

CHASTITY:

Yes.

DICKENS:

Away, spirits!

(Megan and the Production Assistant are blown away, like leaves in a storm.)

CHASTITY:

I'm bigger than *Game of Thrones*!

DICKENS:

This is ridiculous.

(He moves to the doors.)

I'm going to write *David Copperfield*!

(He exits. Door closes behind him. Four other doors open and out of them stream the entire cast of Christmas Carol. They are in school clothes, but wear various costume pieces to present their characters. Chastity addresses them.)

CHASTITY:

Are we all here?

1ST WOMAN:

Marley and Charwoman.

1ST MAN:

Fred and Mr. Fezziwig

2ND MAN:

Bob Cratchit and Old Joe.

2ND WOMAN:

Mrs. Cratchit.

3RD MAN:

Young Scrooge and Topper.

3RD WOMAN:

Mrs. Fezziwig, Belinda and Merchant.

4TH WOMAN:

Fan, Mrs. Fred, Woman with Umbrella, Belle, Merchant 2, Scrawny Boy, Tootles, Laundress, Woman Carrying Dog, Narrator, Fezziwig Dancer, Londoner, Martha, The Boy, Ignorance, Christmas Present, Christmas Past, Christmas Future and... Turkey Boy!

(Much whistling and applauding by the cast. Several dazzling bows by 4th Woman.)

CHASTITY:

But...where's Scrooge?

CAST MEMBERS:

(Looking around.) Where's Scrooge?

2ND WOMAN:

He says he's running late from the dentist, has marching band practice and has to finally get a girlfriend, but he'll be here shortly.

CHASTITY:

(Coyly.) I have news.

CAST MEMBERS:

What news?

CHASTITY:

(Too darling for words.) We're going to be famous.

CAST MEMBERS:

How?

CHASTITY:

We're going to be on...*(Gesticulating wildly.)*...television!

CAST MEMBERS:

(Gesticulating wildly.) Television?

CHASTITY:

The Slowdance High School Thespian and Equestrian Society will present...

(Center door opens on Charles Dickens.)

DICKENS:

Charles Dickens' immortal...

CHASTITY:

My version of *Christmas Carol*.

DICKENS:

Wait a minute.

(Door closes on him.)

CHASTITY:

(Thrilled.) See you at the studio!

(The cast breaks into a wild celebration throwing confetti in the air that lasts exactly 8 seconds and then stops dead.)

CHASTITY:

Go.

(All five doors open and the cast streams out. Doors close.)

CHASTITY:

I'm going to be famous!

MARY AND JOSEPH... AND COMPANY

by David Overton

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MARY AND JOSEPH...AND COMPANY

Written by David Overton

Character List

MARY: 20s to 50s. Gentle, sensible.

JOSEPH: 30s to 60s. Anxious, practical.

MATTHIAS: 20s to 50s. Dashing, confident.

JEZEBEL: 20s to 50s. Humble, honest.

BOY: Teens to 30s. Brash, goofy.

NOTE: *Mary and Joseph...and Company* is written for 3 to 5 players. MARY should be played by a woman, JOSEPH should be played by a man, and the three other characters—MATTHIAS, JEZEBEL, and BOY—could all be played by the same male actor; however, these three roles could be distributed between three other actors if desired.

Setting

A significant distance from Bethlehem on the day of the eve of Christ's birth.

Run Time

25-40 minutes.

Synopsis

Mary and Joseph...and Company tells the story of Mary and Joseph as they journey toward Bethlehem to be counted in the census, and their amusing encounters with characters the whole family will recognize. This fresh (and slightly irreverent) reimagining of Mary and Joseph draws on the comedic styles of Don Knotts, Steve Carell, John Cleese, and Kristen Wiig and provides warmth and laughter during the holiday season!

Notes to the Director

Mary and Joseph...and Company is a delightful play that works well on its own as a fresh, new holiday treat, or presented in tandem with a fundraiser.

To keep the jokes that occur within the play secret, consider simply listing the actors' names in order of appearance in the program, rather than disclosing the characters' names.

Above all, this play should be fun and joyful.

MARY AND JOSEPH ...AND COMPANY

It is dawn, in an arid desert area, a significant distance from Bethlehem. A very pregnant MARY is sitting “side-saddle” on a chair which is turned backwards, as if she’s sitting upon a donkey. She is asleep. JOSEPH is quietly unpacking a few essential items from his own chair-as-donkey to make a camp and cook breakfast. He might have a picnic blanket, mugs, pan, forks, twigs, and a grill-grate. The chairs-as-donkeys should be low, wooden, and rickety. After a few moments, MARY snorts and is awake.

JOSEPH:

Ah! Good morning, love.

MARY:

Wha-? What are we doing?

JOSEPH:

Oh, um, well, you see, I thought I’d make us some breakfast.

MARY:

We’re not continuing on to Bethlehem, then?

JOSEPH:

No. I mean, yes; it's just that I thought we'd stop for a spell and have a bite.

MARY:

You're not lost again, are you?

JOSEPH:

What? No! No, of course not. *(beat)* I mean, maybe a little, but I won't be after the sun goes down.

MARY:

After the sun goes down?

JOSEPH:

Right, well, it's hard to see the stars when the sun is up.

MARY:

Hard...to see the stars.

JOSEPH:

Hard. But it's the uh, the uh...

MARY:

Star of Bethlehem, right?

JOSEPH:

Right! Star of Bethlehem that we're following.

MARY:

So, what have you got there? Eggs?

JOSEPH:

Yep. Eggs, croissants, -

MARY:

Croissants? From that baker I like?

JOSEPH:

That's right, dear, that baker you like.

MARY:

Ooooo, fancy, fancy!

JOSEPH:

Oh, and uh, I also -

MARY:

Joseph! Is that? Is that? *(horried)* Bacon?

JOSEPH:

Well, under the circumstances, I just thought that we may as well -

MARY:

City ordinance or not, we are not going to stoop to eating bacon!

JOSEPH:

Aw, but it's just a couple of slices. Come on, now. Got to keep your strength up.

MARY:

My strength is fine; and so's yours! Now toss that off and crack those eggs!

JOSEPH:

Oh, alright.

(flings bacon away toward audience, cracks eggs into pan)

MARY:

(after a few moments) You're awfully quiet there, Joe. Joey? You're not still upset about the bacon, are you?

JOSEPH:

Bacon? No, no. Just, just thinking.

MARY:

Thinking. Everything all right?

JOSEPH:

Yes, of course. Of course. *(pause)* It's just that, well...

MARY:

Yes?

JOSEPH:

Since you asked...

MARY:

Yes?

JOSEPH:

Well, the other night...

MARY:

Yes, what about it?

JOSEPH:

You said, "That baker I like," and, well, the other night...at the party...are you sure that you and Isaac...

MARY:

Isaac?

JOSEPH:

Yes, that you and Isaac; that you two weren't...

MARY:

Weren't...?

JOSEPH:

That you two aren't...

MARY:

Aren't...?

JOSEPH:

That you two didn't...?

MARY:

Oh, you're not going to start that again, are you?

JOSEPH:

I just – well, I just know how Isaac can be.

MARY:

Oh? And how can Isaac be?

JOSEPH:

Well. He's...He's got a reputation, you know.

MARY:

For what? He's a baker! He makes challah bread, that's all!

JOSEPH:

Oh, it's not just challah bread! Not just challah bread! He makes all sorts of things! Baked things!

MARY:

Like what?

JOSEPH:

Like, like buns and rolls and, and he likes to *work* it and *knead* it and...

MARY:

What are you talking about?

JOSEPH:

The rolls! The buns!

MARY:

The rolls and the buns?

JOSEPH:

Yes, the rolls and the buns!

MARY:

Joey. Really?

JOSEPH:

Oh, come on! It's all that bread innuendo!

MARY:

Bread...innuendo?

JOSEPH:

Yes! Bread innuendo! And the women! They love it! *(imitating Isaac)* "Oh, good morning ladies! Let me know if you want some of my buns!" Or sometimes he'll say, "Just step in here and watch it rise!"

MARY:

Oh, stop it now, Joey! Come on, I get bread from him once a week and that's it!

JOSEPH:

That's it?

MARY:

That's it!

JOSEPH:

That's it?

MARY:

That. Is. It!

JOSEPH:

(sulking) Oh, darling, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. It's just

that. Well, our lives have changed so much since that night.

MARY:

Joey, honestly. I told you, nothing happened with me and Isaac!

JOSEPH:

I'm not talking about Isaac. I'm talking about the other man.

MARY:

What other –

(Using a tall stool, and riding in similar "chair-fashion" as MARY and JOSEPH did earlier, MATTHIAS suddenly appears.)

MATTHIAS:

Whoa, there, whoa! How do you do? *(stays on stool-as-camel)*

JOSEPH:

How do you do.

MATTHIAS:

Name's Matthias.

JOSEPH:

Joseph. This is Mary.

MARY:

How do you do.

MATTHIAS:

How do you do. You two live around here?

JOSEPH:

Oh, no, no. We're just passing through.

MATTHIAS:

Oh, you headed to Bethlehem to be counted?

JOSEPH:

Yes. City ordinance, so.

MATTHIAS:

What do you know! I'm headed there, too!

JOSEPH:

Oh, are you?

MATTHIAS:

Yes, yes! You riding to Bethlehem on...donkeys?

JOSEPH:

Yes, those two are ours. This one is Amos, this is Dinah.

MATTHIAS:

I see, I see.

MARY:

That's a nice camel you have there.

MATTHIAS:

Oh, Tamar? Yes, she's a beaut.

JOSEPH:

That's a "she"?

MATTHIAS:

Yes, good girl. Donkeys, eh? Donkeys are good for heavy loads and the like, but you can't beat the handling and comfort of a good, two-humped camel.

JOSEPH:

Maybe, but there are those who would say that

two-humped camels are a little ostentatious. Even pretentious.

MATTHIAS:

Oh, no! Not at all. Matter of practicality, really. And once you've tried a two-humped camel, you'll never go back to donkeys again!

JOSEPH:

Is that right?

MATTHIAS:

Absolutely! Here, give it a try! (*dismounts*)

JOSEPH:

No, really, I couldn't.

MATTHIAS:

Come on now, I insist! Here, let me help you up.

JOSEPH:

(*mounts*) Oh. This is nice. I like the height. Can really see where you're going. Oh! I see you went all in for the leather saddle. How do you get it started?

MATTHIAS:

Easy. (*whacks the chair*) Y'alla! Y'alla!

JOSEPH:

Whoa! Whoa! (*rides around a bit*) OK, OK, that's enough! How do I stop it?

(*MATTHIAS steps in and stops the riding by grabbing the stool*)

MATTHIAS:

Easy, girl, easy! Here, let me help you down. (*does*

so) So? Am I right?

JOSEPH:

Not bad, not bad. Good pick-up; a little torquey,
but not bad.

MATTHIAS:

And the comfort? You can't beat it, right?

JOSEPH:

I must admit, the two humps are really luxurious.

MATTHIAS:

Didn't I say so? And with such a long journey,
there really is no other way to ride.

MARY:

Wouldn't that be nice? Camels? All the way to
Bethlehem?

JOSEPH:

That would make the trip more comfortable.

MATTHIAS:

Yes, yes. Well, I should be off. (*mounts his camel*) You
know the way, right?

JOSEPH:

Yes, of course!

MATTHIAS:

Excellent, excellent. It's easy, really. Don't know
why so many people get lost.

JOSEPH:

Right, of course. (*begins describing the route*) It's just –

MATTHIAS:

(*very confidently*) Just over that ridge –

JOSEPH:

ridge...

MATTHIAS:

- and by the oasis –

JOSEPH:

oasis...

MATTHIAS:

you adjust so that the hills –

JOSEPH:

the hills...

MATTHIAS:

- are on your western flank –

JOSEPH:

western flank...

MATTHIAS:

Then by the big boulder –

JOSEPH:

big boulder...

MATTHIAS:

- you realign yourself with the eastern plains
straight on into Bethlehem!

JOSEPH:

(*beat*) Could you go back to the part about the oasis?

MATTHIAS:

Oh, yes, the oasis. Lovely spot. You and the Mrs. will
enjoy that! All right, delighted to have met you all.

JOSEPH:

Likewise.

MATTHIAS:

Come on, Tamar! Y'alla! Y'alla! (*off he goes*)

MARY:

That was – (*about to say “nice”*)

JOSEPH:

Summarily *unhelpful*!

MARY:

Oh, Joey.

JOSEPH:

(*muttering*) Ridge! Oasis! Flank! Big boulder! These high rollers think they know everything!

MARY:

Oh, come now. Just because he had a camel.

JOSEPH:

Oh, never mind that. What were we talking about before that character showed up?

MARY:

(*with a sigh*) The baker. Isaac.

JOSEPH:

Isaac! That's right!

MARY:

Nothing happened.

JOSEPH:

No, I'm through with him. I mean the other man.

MARY:

(*incredulously*) What other man?

JOSEPH:

The other man. What was his name? Ah! Gabriel!

MARY:

There was no “Gabriel” at the Goldstein's!

JOSEPH:

I don't mean at the Goldstein's! I mean the-other-man-Gabriel while we were sleeping!

MARY:

Oh, you mean the angel, Gabriel!

JOSEPH:

Exactly! The one you told me about. The one with the message.

MARY:

Ah, yes, Gabriel. The message. That was some *good* news he had.

JOSEPH:

I'm not exactly sure the news he had was good.

MARY:

Sure, it was! That was the night he told me that this (*indicates her belly*) would happen! It was absolutely good news!

JOSEPH:

And that's exactly what I'm talking about! Suddenly there's gossip about how it all happened! I'm getting slapped on the back! The boys are giving me cigars! Isaac's giving *me* challah bread! I mean, we're suddenly going to be parents! Well, you, anyway.

MARY:

Oh, come now, Joey. I told you, Gabriel made it very clear that there would be divine intervention

should there be any sort of misunderstanding.

JOSEPH:

I know, I know. Gabriel. The angel. I just don't understand why I wasn't part of the conversation.

MARY:

You were asleep!

JOSEPH:

Oh, Mary! What am I thinking? Isaac? Gabriel? Two-humped camels? It's got me all confused!

MARY:

Calm down, calm down. (*rubs his shoulders*) Awful lot of tension. Come now, Joey, don't be upset.

JOSEPH:

(*with a deep breath*) I just keep thinking about that night. That night! You remember what we were doing that night?

MARY:

Well, yes, I do. It was lovely, Joey. We all had a grand time! The food! The wine!

JOSEPH:

The challah bread.

MARY:

Oh, now stop it. Isaac supplied the bread that night because it was his job.

JOSEPH:

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. (*after a few moments*) So, Isaac had nothing to do with aaaaaaanything else that night?

MARY:

Will you cut it out!

JOSEPH:

Alright, alright. (*beat*) You know, I might have had one too many that night.

MARY:

We all enjoyed ourselves, that's what we did.

JOSEPH:

Yes, well, I'm sure I overdid it. I don't remember much after the fifth round of "Shalom Aleichem."

MARY:

Last thing I remember was "Tzena, Tzena, Tzena"!

JOSEPH:

No recollection of that one at all.

MARY:

Well, Isaac sure had some moves with that one and – oh, never mind. We all had a good time and earned a good night's sleep.

JOSEPH:

Earned a good night's sleep – and some wild dreams, I'd say!

MARY:

Gabriel wasn't a dream, Joey! Just because you were sleeping.

JOSEPH:

I know, I know.

MARY:

You were snoring to beat the banshees.

JOSEPH:

Oh, sorry about that, love.

MARY:

(*beat*) Aaaaand you kept calling out. I remember.

JOSEPH:

I did?

MARY:

Sure did. Called out.

JOSEPH:

What'd I say?

MARY:

Kept repeating a name.

JOSEPH:

A name?

MARY:

Yes, a name.

JOSEPH:

Oh. (*beat*) Abraham?

MARY:

No.

JOSEPH:

Moses?

MARY:

No.

JOSEPH:

Gabriel?

MARY:

Actually, it was "Rebekah."

JOSEPH:

Rebekah?

MARY:

Yes. Kept shouting, "Rebekah! Rebekah! Oh, Rebekah!" And that's what I wanted to talk with you about.

JOSEPH:

Talk with me about?

MARY:

Yes. You. Who's Rebekah?

JOSEPH:

I don't know any Rebekah!

MARY:

Oh yes you do!

JOSEPH:

I do?

MARY:

Think real hard, Joe. Rebekah? She gave us those apples and honey a few months ago.

JOSEPH:

(*thinking*) Apples and honey, apples and honey...?

MARY:

For Rosh Hashanah.

JOSEPH:

Ooooh! Apples and honey! (*overlapping*)

MARY:

Yes, apples and honey.

MATERIAL GIRLS

by Michael Griffo

MATERIAL GIRLS

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| | |
|---|----------------|
| | Time |
| Present | |
| | Setting |
| An empty stage representing the kids' homes, a classroom, a basketball court | |
| | Cast |
| TIFFANY | |
| MACY | |
| ALEXIS | |
| FIFI | |
| PENNY | |
| DYLAN | |
| NICO | |
| CODY | |
| JAN | |
| MS. HENDERSON | |
| DIDI | |
| ROXIE | |
| BRADY | |
| STUDENTS | |
| The Chorus: | |
| GINA | |
| BETTINA | |
| ALESSANDRINA | |

Casting Note

The 'students' are between the ages of 15-18 and you can mix genders as you see fit. The only adult character, Ms. Henderson, should be played by a student and should wear something that makes her appear older.

Synopsis

Some girls got it and some girls don't. Materialism, that is. They're the fashionistas, the influencers, the girls who worship at the altar of the Kardashians. The girls who think they have everything they need to succeed in life—but do they? As Tiffany and her material girl—and guy—friends get ready to graduate high school, they start to realize there might be more to life than finding the perfect lip gloss and the most glittery eye shadow, but is it too late to make a change? Penny doesn't think so. With her help, Tiffany and her fashion victim friends, might just discover they have other options to succeed in the material world.

Scene 1

All the characters range in age from 15-18 with the exception of MS. HENDERSON, but she should be played by a student as well. Unless noted, all of the girls look like they could be on a cover of a fashion magazine or host their own YouTube beauty channel. They don't need to be beautiful or skinny, but their hair, make-up, and clothes are fashionable and trendy. This is what they live for. Same goes for some of the boys. Any references to locations or teachers can be changed to make them specific to your school.

At rise, we see the CHORUS: GINA, BETTINA, and ALLESSANDRINA standing downstage. They are like a Greek Chorus, but they are the epitome of what a material girl is. Super trendy, lots of make-up, perfect hair and nails. They narrate and comment on the action and speak in rhyme, which can be like rap. They are unseen by the rest of the characters and, if possible, they should be in a spotlight.

When CHORUS is used in the dialogue, it means that all three characters speak at the same time.

GINA:

A long time ago, in 1985
Our queen released a song
That made us come alive

BETTINA:

Lyrics full of strength, of wisdom and of truth
It was as if Madonna
Had channeled mighty Zeus

ALLESSANDRINA:

Now we stand before you—please try not to pass out
Witness our perfection
The skill in which we pout

*All three strike a pose and pout like a model for the
camera for a few beats.*

GINA:

We're Gina

BETTINA:

Bettina

ALLESSANDRINA:

And Alessandrina

CHORUS:

Three goddesses with powers
Like a prima ballerina

*If one or more girls can do a pirouette, they should. If
not, one girl should strike a balletic pose flanked by the
other two.*

CHORUS:

Now watch our tale begin, watch our brave new world

Commanded not by men
But by material girls

Beat and then spoken:

GINA:

By material

BETTINA:

By material

ALLESSANDRINA:

By material

CHORUS:

(Beat) Girls!

Blackout.

Scene 2

TIFFANY, MACY, FIFI, and ALEXIS are in the four corners of the stage each sitting at a desk. TIFFANY and MACY are downstage right and left and FIFI and ALEXIS are upstage left and right so when they speak it's like a round robin. The desks can be tables or school desks, it doesn't matter. They could have make-up and hair care products as props, or if it's easier, they can mime what they're doing. When they talk, they're talking into their computers doing a live stream or YouTube tutorial.

PENNY, who is not a material girl, is standing in the middle of the stage and watching what's taking place around her. She is not impressed.

TIFFANY:

(Applying mascara.) I find the best way to get that Bambi eye look is with L'Oreal's Bambi eye mascara. It's right there in the name! With one application, you'll see your lashes separate to give you that wide-eyed innocent look. You'll be, like, a real-life Disney cartoon.

MACY:

(Applying lip gloss.) If you want your lips to look ul-

tra-glossy, super-pouty, *and* be soft and moisturized, you must get NYX's butter gloss lip gloss. Your lips will feel like buttah and you'll look so fabulous you can keep your mouth shut and everyone will still be talking about you.

FIFI:

(Applying eyeshadow.) The smoky eye is so passé, people. It's time to say hello to the *sunset* eye. Inspired by the colors of the sunset, Natasha Denona's sunset eyeshadow palette will turn your eyes into a force of nature. Red, gold, a little burnt orange and no guy will be able to resist watching your sun set.

ALEXIS:

(Applying rouge.) There's no need to blush, girls, we all want to look beautiful—and with the Multiple Stick by Nars your cheeks will never look rosier. Or more contoured. Or alive! Choose from their exotic colors, Maui, Puerto Vallarta, or my favorite, the dark and shimmery Na Pali Coast.

PENNY:

Tell me Alexis, do you have any idea where the Na Pali Coast is?

Once PENNY speaks, the YouTube sessions are over. The girls don't move, but they are now in the same space.

ALEXIS:

(She has no idea.) It is...the coastline of a, like really, beautiful, foreign country celebrities flock to.

PENNY:

It's in Hawaii.

ALEXIS:

I was right. A foreign country.

PENNY:

Hawaii is a state!

ALEXIS:

Have you noticed that you always yell when you're wrong?

PENNY:

Have you noticed that you're always wrong?

TIFFANY:

You're always asking so many questions Penny. You sound like one of those people who, you know, ask a lot of questions of people and then post them in an online article because they think—and this is the really funny part—they think people actually go online to read.

PENNY:

You mean a reporter?

TIFFANY:

A sad, tiresome, and fake profession.

PENNY:

News isn't fake, Tiffany. I mean some news can be, but real truth, real facts, they aren't fake.

MACY:

You know, 'fake' kind of sounds like 'fact.' Hey! Maybe they come from the same, you know, language and mean, kind of, the same thing.

FIFI:

Macy, I've always said you're the brightest bulb in this chandelier. Fake and fact are like rouge and blush.

ALEXIS:

And lipstick and gloss.

PENNY:

And idiot and moron.

ALEXIS:

Exactly!

TIFFANY:

How about 'makeover' and 'you should really try to look more presentable in public'?

PENNY:

How about you start to pay attention to your classes and homework or else you're going to wind up not being able to get a job after you graduate?

MACY:

I have a job, Pen, I'm an influencer.

FIFI:

Hashtag me too.

PENNY:

You really shouldn't say that out loud, Fifi, it doesn't mean what you think it means.

FIFI:

Who's the moron now? It means that *me too* am an influencer and I have sponsors who pay me to talk about their products on my YouTube channel to my over 175,000 followers.

TIFFANY:

You only have 175,112 followers.

FIFI:

I know. That's why I said I have over 175,000 followers.

TIFFANY:

(*Condescending*) But, *Feef*, by saying you have ‘over 175,000 followers’ you make it sound like you have a lot more than 175,112.

FIFI:

No it doesn’t, *Tiff*, it makes it sound like I have over 175,000 followers. Which I do. (*Beat*) And which you do not. You only have 103,127. I have an app on my phone that updates all my competition’s followers every fifteen minutes.

TIFFANY:

You are not my competition.

FIFI:

I know. For me to be *your* competition, our roles would have to be reversed and you’d have to have more followers than me. And that won’t happen for a long, *long* time.

PENNY:

Who cares how many followers you have?

All the girls shriek as if someone has died.

ALEXIS:

Penny!

MACY:

How can you say such a thing?

TIFFANY:

Sometimes you are downright cruel.

PENNY:

Oh, please.

FIFI:

Cruel, Penny, you’re cruel!

PENNY:

Fine! I take it back.

The girls are incredibly relieved.

ALEXIS:

That’s better. I can breathe again.

FIFI:

You take things too far sometimes.

MACY:

You look at the line in the sand and you deliberately cross over it. And you do not care about the carnage you leave behind.

PENNY:

Carnage?

MACY:

Yes, *carnage*, it’s a word, you know, like literally right there in the dictionary under the K’s.

PENNY:

You mean the C’s.

MACY:

(*Beat*) It doesn’t matter where it is in the dictionary, Penny, it’s in there because it’s a word!

PENNY:

I know it’s a word! I just find it completely inappropriate to be used in this situation.

TIFFANY:

And I find your footwear to be completely inappropriate

to be worn with the rest of your outfit, but did I voice my opinion? Did I scream it at the top of my lungs?

PENNY:

I didn't scream.

TIFFANY:

Did I take everything that you hold dear, place it under my Tory Burch Gemini Link low-top platform sneakers, and crush it until nothing existed but the dreams on which they were born?

PENNY:

Save your drama for your followers.

TIFFANY:

(Beat, she's stunned.) You don't follow me?

PENNY:

Of course not.

Again, the girls shriek as if someone just died.

Neither does Cody.

The girls shriek even louder.

TIFFANY:

Do not spread lies about my boyfriend!

PENNY:

It isn't a lie, go ask him.

MACY:

Beyond cruel!

ALEXIS:

Like a vicious, angry, straight-A student with no cheekbones and absolutely no fashion sense.

FIFI:

You, Miss Penelope Fitzgerald, know how to wound, I'll give you that.

PENNY:

How have I wounded you? Because I don't follow your beauty tutorials online?

TIFFANY is shocked and looks around at the other girls with her arms outstretched as if to ask, "Doesn't she get it?" The other girls shake their heads slowly and lower their eyes as if they can't bear to look at PENNY.

TIFFANY:

It's like you've taken a sharp-edged 'Pink Holographic Star' Clear Jelly press-on fingernail and dug it into my chest until you punctured my heart. *(She presses the index finger on her left hand over the right side of her chest.)*

PENNY:

(Beat) Your heart's on the other side.

TIFFANY:

(Without looking down, she moves her hand to the left side and cries even harder.) It hurts even more on this side, Penelope!

PENNY:

If that's going to cause you to have a meltdown, I hate to see what happens to you in a few years when you leave Emerson High and all this teenaged prettiness fades away. When glittery eyeshadow and glossy lip gloss won't be able to hide the stress and anxiety that's going to creep into your face as you try to make it in this world.

MACY:

The only things that're going to creep into my face are Botox and a plastic surgeon's scalpel.

ALEXIS:

You tell her, Macy!

FIFI:

And Penny, nothing, and I mean *nothing*, makes the world right again like a little bit of glittery eyeshadow. You might want to jot that down so you remember it.

PENNY:

Thanks, Fifi, I'll do that. It might come in handy for my interview with the Environmental Defense Fund. I'm on the short list to join their student program this summer.

FIFI:

Why do you want to waste the summer helping crazy people?

PENNY:

What?

FIFI:

Mental. You said you're going to defend mental people.

PENNY:

Environmental!

ALEXIS:

Again with the yelling.

PENNY:

You guys would make Ghandi yell!

MACY:

The new kid from Dover who lets me copy his bio

homework?

PENNY:

No! The champion of the peaceful resistance movement whose guidance helped India gain its independence from British rule!

ALEXIS:

Could be the same guy, Pen, you never know.

PENNY:

Now you're driving me crazy.

FIFI:

Then it's good you're going to work with those people, you can help yourself.

PENNY:

It's the Environmental Defense Fund, they raise money and awareness to fight global warming, restore the ecosystem, and stop corporations and manufacturers from destroying the earth and depleting it of its natural resources.

The girls stare at her as if she's speaking a foreign language.

You four could care less about any of that.

TIFFANY:

And for once, Penny, we're all on the same page.

Blackout.

PROMAPOCALYPSE!

by Michael Griffo

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Time

Present

Setting

A school gym on Prom Night

Synopsis

Ask any high school senior and they'll tell you that prom night is the most important night of their lives. But thanks to Julian—an evil alien warlord from Rangor posing as an ordinary high school student—prom night has turned into an absolute disaster. And it's all thanks to Becca, an innocent, college-bound kid who made the colossally bad decision to ask Julian to the prom. Now Julian has the senior class right where he wants them: all in one spot so he and his henchmen can bring them to aa fight to the finish as Becca and her friends try to save themselves from a horrible existence and—more importantly—save the prom!

Cast of Characters

The entire cast are high school students.

BECCA

ALI

T.J.

MAX

JULIAN

VALERIE

LOLA

GEORGE

PAUL

CHARLENE

HENCHMEN

HENCHWOMEN

Scene 1

The stage is decorated in some way to indicate that we're at the prom. Some balloons, streamers, a banner that says the name of the school or just "The Prom". You can use your imagination to include as little or as much decoration as you wish to make it look like your school's actual prom.

The only requirement is that there needs to be a rectangular table, upstage center, with a long tablecloth that falls to the ground so the audience can't see underneath the table. On top of the table there needs to be a punch-bowl filled with punch and some glasses.

Whenever there's a mention of a teacher, a rival school, or a location, feel free to insert the name of a local teacher, school, or location to make the play more personal to the audience.

At rise, BECCA and ALI, both 17, are standing SL. They are holding onto each other and they're frightened. They're wearing prom dresses. They don't let go of each other during the first part of their scene.

BECCA:

This cannot be happening!

ALI:

I know, but it is.

BECCA:

I can't believe this is all my fault.

ALI:

I know, but it is.

BECCA:

Ali! What do you mean it's my fault? Why would you say such a thing?

ALI:

You said it first, Becca. I'm only agreeing with you.

BECCA:

But why would you agree with me?

ALI:

Because I'm your best friend.

BECCA:

Best friends are supposed to say, 'No way Becca, this isn't your fault.'

ALI:

Remember our pact from fourth grade?

BECCA:

Of course, I do! What kind of question is that?

ALI:

We got stuck in my basement because my stupid brother thought it would be funny to lock us in and turn off all the electricity, so we were stuck in the dark for

hours.

BECCA:

It was not funny, and I've never forgiven Parker for that.

ALI:

Neither have I. But what did we promise each other in that dark and cold basement?

BECCA:

That we would never let Parker forget the trauma he subjected us both to.

ALI:

And.

BECCA:

From that day forth, we would always carry a flashlight with us in case we didn't have our phones to use the little flashlight thing to light the way.

ALI:

And!

BECCA:

What else is there?

ALI:

The most important part of the pact!

BECCA:

Oh, right, sorry! That if we ever got out of your basement we would be best friends forever which meant that we would always have each other's back, we would never try out for the same parts in the school play, we would never fight over the same boy, and we would never lie to one another. *(Beat)* This really is all my

fault, isn't it?

ALI:

Yes.

BECCA:

Thank you for being my best friend.

ALI:

I'll always be your best friend...even though you set this whole nightmare into motion. I mean the catastrophic situation we find ourselves in right now is all because of you. None of us, not any one of us in our class is going to experience the prom, and it's because of you—and even though all of that is true, I'm still your best friend.

BECCA finally lets go of ALI.

BECCA:

You're laying it on a little thick, don't you think?

T.J. and MAX, both 17, emerge from underneath the table where they've been hiding. They're wearing suits or tuxes.

T.J.:

She's telling it like it is, Becca.

ALI:

T.J., Max! Where'd you guys come from?

MAX:

Underneath the table. We hid there when everybody ran outside and probably right into the danger zone.

BECCA:

What do you mean that Ali's telling it like it is?

T.J.:

Just what I said. She's telling you the truth.

ALI:

Like I promised I would in fourth grade.

MAX:

That's a really sweet pact by the way. I bet you were the one who made it up Ali, am I right?

ALI:

You would be correct about that.

MAX:

I knew it. If you remembered the pact, Becca, maybe we wouldn't be in this predicament.

BECCA:

What's that supposed to mean?

T.J.:

Have you learned nothing from Ms. Capuano? In the English language, dialogue is filled with subtext. Don't just read the words, understand the unspoken meaning within those words.

BECCA:

If you haven't noticed, the world is crashing all around us. This isn't the time or the place for subtlety. Will you just spit it out and say what you mean?

T.J.:

You asked Julian to the prom.

BECCA:

Because Ali told me to! She said there's no reason why a girl can't ask a guy to the prom, so if I wanted to go to the prom with him, I should just ask him.

MAX:

Girl power rocks!

ALI:

Thanks Max, it does. And yes, I did tell you to ask Julian to the prom.

BECCA:

So, you're partially to blame.

ALI:

That is a big fat negative.

BECCA:

That is called aiding and abetting.

T.J.:

Oooh, Becca has a point.

ALI:

No, she doesn't. (*Lying.*) I don't know what you're talking about.

BECCA:

Says the girl who stays home from school to binge *Law & Order*.

MAX:

No way! I do that too. The *law* part is scary, but the *order* part makes me feel safe. It's like super compelling TV.

BECCA:

You know what else is compelling? The fact that Ali is complicit in this entire prom fiasco.

ALI:

I am not!

T.J.:

Oh no she didn't!

MAX:

You watch your mouth Becca Ferguson!

BECCA:

Com-*pli*-cit!

ALI:

You're the one who asked Julian to the prom, not me, so that means you and you alone are the one responsible for all of this.

T.J.:

Now she has a point, Becca.

MAX:

Team Ali all the way!

BECCA:

(*BEAT and then BECCA bursts into tears.*) You're right! You're all right! I am responsible! But how was I supposed to know the truth? I mean, *seriously*, how was I supposed to know that Julian is a bloodthirsty alien from another planet who came here from the far reaches of the galaxy to destroy the world and kidnap our entire school to take us back to his planet as prisoners to be intergalactic manual laborers? I just thought he was a cute guy who moved here from Paramus.

ALI:

He is very cute.

MAX:

In, like, an alien sort of way.

ALI:

But he isn't from Paramus, Becca, he's from...*outer space!*

BECCA:

I know that now! But come on, you liked him too. You all did. None of you can deny that.

T.J.:

He's the best outfielder our team's ever had.

MAX:

He opened my eyes to the dangers of carbonated soda. Sugar is, like, the root of all evil, people.

ALI:

He asked me for help with his calculus homework *and* told me not to listen to Ramona Hawkins when she told me my face wasn't the right shape to handle bangs. What's not to like?

BECCA:

Then you admit it, you're all a little bit complicit.

T.J.:

I guess so.

ALI :

We all are.

MAX:

Yes! Yes! A thousand times yes!

ALI:

No one suspected anything. Not even George.

BECCA:

I know. I was just talking to George the other day and he was saying how cool Julian is. We all thought Ju-

lian was the new kid in school trying to be everyone's friend, not some alien trying to be everyone's Supreme Leader.

The lights flicker and the kids freeze. The lights can either remain on or dim. JULIAN's voice comes over a loudspeaker or he just speaks into a microphone from offstage. We don't see him, we only hear his voice.

JULIAN:

Attention Secaucus High School, this is your Supreme Leader. You know, Julian, the alien you all thought was from Paramus. I feel really bad to inform you that prom has officially been cancelled. Hashtag bummer, right? *(Beat)* Sorry, not sorry! I don't feel bad at all. And do you want to know why? Because I'm your Supreme Leader, that's why! And in a few short minutes you're all going to be transported to my home planet of Rangor in the second quadrant of the fourth galaxy, which is thirty-seven million light years away, give or take, where you will all become my subjects and do my bidding for the rest of your lives. We're gonna have so much fun!

BECCA:

He can't do this!

JULIAN:

I can do this and it's all thanks to you, Becca. C'mon everybody, give it up for Becca Ferguson! If it weren't for you asking me to be your prom date, I wouldn't be able to carry out my thoroughly evil, master alien plan. My entire planet filled with vengeful, violent, human-hating aliens thanks to you! Oh, and if you haven't noticed already, I've interfered with 5G and have

rendered your cellphones obsolete.

MAX:

(Taking his phone out of his jacket pocket.) That's why I can't get a signal.

JULIAN:

Sorry kids, you can't call your mommies and daddies to pick you up and save you from the big bad alien boy. You're all on your own and you're all mine! *(He laughs maniacally.)*

If the lights dimmed, they should now go back to normal.

BECCA:

Now the entire school knows this is my fault!

T.J.:

I think we have other things to worry about, Becca, than your reputation.

ALI:

We have got to stop him! I do not want to spend my life on Rangor. Who knows what we're going to have to do? Build bridges.

T.J.:

Dig tunnels.

MAX:

Type.

ALI:

Type?

MAX:

Yes! On an old fashioned non-electric typewriter. Have you ever tried to do that? It's torture to all ten fingers!

T.J.:

You better get used to it because there's no way we can stop him. He's all-powerful and we're just a bunch of kids.

BECCA:

There's no way I'm going to let Julian get away with this.

ALI:

What are you going to do?

BECCA:

I have no idea, but I got us into this mess, and mark my words, I'm gonna get us out of it.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 2

The stage is the same. ALI, T.J. and MAX are standing in a bit of a semi-circle around BECCA.

MAX:

We're back from the commercial break, Becca, so what's the plan?

BECCA:

I don't know, I haven't gotten to the actual plan making phase of my plan.

VALERIE and LOLA, both around 17 and wearing prom dresses rush in from SR. If they can, they enter through a door and slam it behind them. They should look a little worse than the others. Their hair is messed up, they have dirt on their faces and arms, and their dresses are ripped. LOLA is only wearing one high-heeled shoe, so she limps when she walks. LOLA is a goth girl so she should be dressed in all black.

VALERIE:

You better think of one fast because Julian is on his way and he's bringing an army of Rangorian henchmen with him.

LOLA:

Have you ever seen a Rangorian henchman? They are not happy people, people.

T.J.:

Valerie! I thought you got swooped up with all the others!

VALERIE:

We did, when Julian used that huge butterfly net thing. Its official name, by the way, is a Rangorian Round-Up Net.

LOLA:

A little something we learned while being held captive by the alien warlord who you, Becca Ferguson, helped unleash on all of Secaucus!

BECCA:

I'm so sorry Lola, I never meant for any of this to happen.

LOLA:

(LOLA walks over to BECCA limping the whole way.) But it is happening and if we don't do something we're going on a one-way trip to a hostile environment.

MAX:

We go to high school, we're already in a hostile environment.

LOLA:

Maxwell MacGillicutty, this is no time to be cracking jokes!

MAX:

I'm scared! When I'm scared, I joke.

THRICE UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR

**A Triptych of
Three-Actor Trysts**

by David Overton

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Synopsis

Thrice Upon a Midnight Clear gives audiences a peek into the unlikely—but hilarious—conversations of The Three Wise Men, The Three Wise Women, and The Three Not-So-Wise Shepherds in this traveling triptych as they follow the Star of Bethlehem contemplating its wonder, its mystery...and a good game of golf!

Because each of the “Three-Actor Trysts” are self-contained, *Thrice Upon a Midnight Clear* can easily be inserted throughout a holiday concert to provide variety and an opportunity to include some talented actors.

Setting

The outskirts of Bethlehem.

Character List

ABRAM

JACOB

ISAAC

ISABEL

TERESA

MARIA

MELCHIOR

BALTHASAR

CASPAR

Author’s Note

These short sketches are suitable for all ages and perfect for audiences eager for laughs during the holiday season. Directors may cast 3 to 9 actors (any gender) but ideally, this three-actor triptych is an arrangement where Actor 1 will play ABRAM, ISABEL, and MELCHIOR; Actor 2 will play JACOB, TERESA, and BALTHASAR; Actor 3 will play ISAAC, MARIA, and CASPAR.

In performing these roles, think of comedy styles and actors including Monty Python, Gene Wilder, Mel Brooks, and Mike Meyers.

These skits can readily be produced as a puppet show.

The Three (Not So Wise) Shepherds

PART 1 of 3

ABRAM, JACOB, ISAAC under a chilly, starry night.

ABRAM:

Boys, boys, hello boys!

JACOB:

Ah, Abram! Good to see you!

ISAAC:

You're late.

ABRAM:

Late? It's just sundown. Late. You're early.

ISAAC:

Not early. On time.

ABRAM:

And how did you do that? Probably rode your camel during daylight hours!

JACOB:

He doesn't have a camel.

ABRAM:

Then his donkey!

ISAAC:

No donkey.

ABRAM:

Then how were you so speedy?

ISAAC:

New sandals.

ABRAM:

The ones I gave you for your birthday?

ISAAC:

The very same.

ABRAM:

Ah, you see! You see! And no blisters, eh?

ISAAC:

Well, between the toes chafes a little.

ABRAM:

Then you walk too fast!

JACOB:

Where are my sandals, Abram?

ABRAM:

It wasn't your birthday.

JACOB:

But it will be.

ISAAC:

And when it is, new sandals. OK?

ABRAM:

OK.

JACOB:

OK. *[beat]* Or maybe a new tunic.

ISAAC:

A new tunic?

ABRAM:

I don't sew.

JACOB:

I need a new tunic.

ABRAM:

I don't sew.

ISAAC:

He doesn't sew.

JACOB:

But I need a new tunic.

ABRAM:

I don't sew!

ISAAC:

Boys, boys! Listen, we are here not to argue about tunics! We are here to play cards.

ABRAM:

Yes, cards.

[beat]

JACOB:

Or golf.

ISAAC:

I brought cards.

JACOB:

I brought clubs.

ABRAM:

I vote golf.

JACOB:

I vote golf.

ISAAC:

You vote golf. You vote golf. You got balls?

JACOB:

I got balls.

ABRAM:

I got—

ISAAC:

That's enough with the balls; let's play golf.

JACOB:

It's a beautiful night; a beautiful night for golf.

ISAAC:

We always play cards.

ABRAM:

That's the point: we always play cards. Tonight, we play golf.

JACOB:

We could stand a change.

ISAAC:

Ah, change. Change! Wouldn't that be something?

JACOB:

You've heard about this census bureau and the counting, right?

ABRAM:

Oy. How can they count all the people? So many. Look at the stars; how could you count them?

[beat]

ISAAC:

It could be done.

ABRAM:

[mocking] It could be done.

ISAAC:

It could be done.

ABRAM:

It could be done?

ISAAC:

It could be done!

JACOB:

It must be done. If there is to be any change, it must be done!

ABRAM:

But what's the point?

JACOB:

The census data will determine congressional representation, inform the allocation of hundreds of billions in federal funding, and provide data that affects communities for the next decade; redistricting and so on.

ISAAC:

That is why everyone must be counted.

[beat]

ABRAM:

What about the Samaritans?

JACOB:

Ach! The Samaritans! *[spits]*

ISAAC:

What, Jacob! What? What's with the "the Samaritans"
[spits]?

JACOB:

Because! The Samaritans! *[spits]*

ABRAM:

Now, now; now, now. Everyone counts. Everyone must
be counted.

JACOB:

But the Samaritans! Why? *[spits]*

ABRAM:

Because everyone must be counted! And enough with
the spitting; we're going to be camping here tonight.

JACOB:

Still, the Samaritans! There's not one good one among
them!

ISAAC:

We must treat each other as our brothers; or at least,
our 'neighbors.'

ABRAM:

Yes, do unto others as you would have them do unto
you.

JACOB:

Who said that?

ABRAM:

I don't know, but somebody should!

ISAAC:

Abram, you have the makings of a leader in you!

JACOB:

And that's what we need; new and better leadership!

ISAAC:

Like...like a flickering candle in the cold night.

ABRAM:

[modestly] Yes, yes.

JACOB:

A ray of hope in an expanse of darkness.

ABRAM:

Yes, yes.

ISAAC:

A shining beacon against the black, existential void.

ABRAM:

Yes, yes.

JACOB:

A spark of—

ABRAM:

All right; all right! Enough with the light and the
dark!

ISAAC:

Look! Look there!

JACOB:

What?

ISAAC:

That light!

JACOB:

Where?

ISAAC:

There, that star!

ABRAM:

Now that's a light.

ISAAC:

It's like...like a flickering candle in the cold night!

JACOB:

A ray of hope in an expanse of darkness!

ABRAM:

A shining beacon against the black, existential void!

ISAAC:

What do you suppose it is?

JACOB:

Maybe it's new and better leadership.

ABRAM:

I thought 'new and better leadership' was me.

JACOB:

You don't have a star over you like that!

ISAAC:

I think whoever's below that star is going to be the new leadership.

[beat]

JACOB:

Unless he's unpopular.

ISAAC:

Unless he's *popular*.

JACOB:

What do you mean?

ISAAC:

If he's popular, he's gonna make enemies.

ABRAM:

Even the best leaders are bound to have those who dissent.

JACOB:

I see your point.

ISAAC:

They'll eat him alive.

ABRAM:

[groans] Oy.

JACOB:

They'll stomp him under their collective foot!

ABRAM:

[groans] Oy.

ISAAC:

They'll crucify him!

ABRAM, JACOB, ISAAC:

[groans] Oy vey!

ISAAC:

What can we do?

[beat]

JACOB:

Let's play golf.

ABRAM, ISAAC, JACOB:

Golf!

[fade]

The Three Wise Women **PART 2 of 3**

ISABEL (married to CASPAR), TERESA (married to BALTHASAR), MARIA (married to MELCHIOR) are gathering by a small table with chairs; perhaps it's TERESA'S gazebo.

ISABEL:

Hello there, Teresa.

TERESA:

Oh, hiya, Isabel.

MARIA:

Teresa, Isabel, 'morning.

ISABEL:

Maria! So good to see you!

MARIA:

Aw, you're a doll!

ISABEL:

Ah, it's good to be alive on this glorious morning!

TERESA:

Yes, indeed!

MARIA:

And with a good cup of coffee, too.

[All drink]

ISABEL:

Ooh, Teresa! What'dja put in the coffee this morning?

TERESA:

Nothing, I just used soy creamer instead of dairy.

MARIA:

Is it kosher?

TERESA:

Doesn't have to be.

ISABEL:

It's so creamy and smooth.

MARIA:

Better on your stomach, too, I'd say.

TERESA:

Yeah, that's why I did it.

ISABEL:

Aren't you wise!

TERESA:

Gotta live up to the story's expectations.

ISABEL:

Yes, we wise women have a right to be proud!

TERESA:

Mmm-mmm.

ISABEL:

Facts at our fingertips!

TERESA:

Indeed!

MARIA:

Quick: the sum of the square roots of any two sides of an isosceles triangle is—

ISABEL, TERESA, MARIA:

—equal to the square root of the remaining side!

TERESA:

The current king is...?

ISABEL, MARIA:

Herod!

TERESA:

Actually a "client king"—but good job nonetheless!

ISABEL:

True, true.

MARIA:

"Best to look before you..."

ISABEL, TERESA:

"Leap!"

ISABEL:

"A bird in the hand is worth more than..."

TERESA, MARIA:

"Two in the bush!"

MARIA:

Ah, yes. We are indeed wise!

[beat]

CINDERELLA: THE REAL STORY

by Rayven Craft, John
Maclay, Austin Nelson, and
Emma Swain

CINDERELLA: THE REAL STORY

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CINDERELLA: THE REAL STORY

A new play by Rayven Craft, John Maclay, Austin Nelson, and Emma Swain

Commissioned in 2020 by the Orlando Repertory Theater

SYNOPSIS

This new take on an old classic tells the forgotten stories hidden in the fairy tale we all know so well. Hilarious, imaginative, and powerful, this play is specifically designed to be performed by young performers and may be adapted to a virtual or in-person performance venue.

PLACE

A magical land far, far away—but not that far.

SETTING

Variously: the Kingdom, the Palace, the Ball, Fairy Godmother's workshop, Dad's house, etc.

TIME

Once upon a time.

CHARACTER LIST

Chorus 1
Chorus 2
Chorus 3
Chorus 4
Cindy
Laurel (Fairy Godmother)
Arthur (Prince Charming)
Monty the Rat
Dad
Stepmom
King
Steward
Stepsister 1
Stepsister 2

AUTHOR'S NOTES

There are no 'types' for these characters. Be creative and inclusive!

RUN TIME

45 minutes.

CINDERELLA: THE REAL STORY

*(AT RISE, CHORUS 1, 2, 3, and 4 onstage together
with all other characters frozen in tableau nearby.)*

CHORUS 1:

Once upon a time...

CHORUS 4:

Really? That's how we're starting?

CHORUS 2:

In a land far, far away...

CHORUS 4:

It wasn't that far.

CHORUS 3:

Lived a young woman named Cinderella.

CHORUS 4:

No there wasn't.

CHORUS 1:

What are you doing?

CHORUS 3:

Yeah, stop it!

CHORUS 2:

It's not cool.

CHORUS 1:

I know it's your first day in our chorus, but we have a particular way of doing things, so maybe just watch and listen today.

CHORUS 4:

I'm not trying to be a jerk. I just think we should tell the true story.

CHORUS 1:

That's what we're all trying to do!

CHORUS 2:

Yeah!

CHORUS 4:

Are you kidding me? You didn't even get her name right. No one calls themselves Cinderella. That's the name the bullies gave her 'cause she always had to work with the cinders, you know—the fireplace? which is why she was so dirty? You might as well call her FilthyElla. It's a nickname and it's mean.

CHORUS 3:

Then what is her name?

CHORUS 4:

Cindy. Just Cindy.

CHORUS 1:

Cindy?

CHORUS 2:

If we call her Cindy, will you let us tell the story?

CHORUS 4:

Of course! If you tell it right...

CHORUS 3:

FINE! We'll start over.

CHORUS 2:

I know I didn't have this much attitude on my first day. OK. Let's go.

CHORUS 1:

Once upon a time...

CHORUS 4:

That's still pretty cliché.

CHORUS 2:

In a land far far away...

CHORUS 4:

It really wasn't that far. An hour, maybe two.

CHORUS 3:

Lived a young woman named...Cindy.

CHORUS 4:

Much better.

CHORUS 1:

There was also a kingdom. And more than anything else, the King wanted his son, Prince Charming, to marry and live happily ever after.

KING:

More than anything else, I, the King, want you, my son, Prince Charming, to marry and live happily

ever after.

CHORUS 1:

Very good.

CHORUS 2:

The Prince thought that sounded delightful.

PRINCE CHARMING:

That sounds delightful!

CHORUS 1:

So the King did everything he could to find a suitable match.

KING:

I did everything I could to find a suitable match!

CHORUS 1:

He threw parties, he held contests, but no one seemed to be the right fit for the Prince.

CHORUS 2:

Finally, the King said he was throwing a ball and inviting the entire kingdom. The plan was that by the end of the ball the Prince would be engaged.

CHORUS 3:

Everyone was so excited to go to the ball. Everyone except...Cindy. For you see, Cindy would not be going to the ball.

CHORUS 1:

Her mother had died and her father had remarried a very unpleasant woman with two even more unpleasant daughters.

CHORUS 2:

And then he died too,

CHORUS 3:

Which left Cindy with this trio of unpleasantness.

CHORUS 2:

The stepsisters bullied her, they teased her, and they called her Cinderella because the cinders from the fireplace left her face and clothes dirty with ash.

CHORUS 1:

Right. Her real name was Cindy, but they wouldn't listen to her.

STEPSISTER 1:

Cindy? More like Cinders, you filthy girl.

STEPSISTER 2:

I think we will call you Cinderella.

STEPSISTER 1:

That's amazing. Now back to work, Cinderella. Cindy-soot-face!

CHORUS 1:

When news arrived of the great ball to find the Prince a partner, the stepsisters were thrilled. They had attended every party, entered every contest, but had never been quite able to win the Prince's affection. But this time, they were determined.

STEPSISTER 1:

This year is my year.

STEPSISTER 2:

Or maybe it's mine!

STEPSISTER 1:

As long as it's one of us.

STEPSISTER 2:

We can move into the palace!

CINDY:

That sounds nice.

STEPSISTER 1:

I bet it does, Cinder-ella.

STEPSISTER 2:

But sadly no ball for you.

CHORUS 1:

So the sisters went to the ball, leaving Cindy behind.

CHORUS 2:

Fortunately, she had the ability to talk to animals, including some mice.

CHORUS 2:

So she did have a few friends.

MONTY THE RAT:

Hi Cindy! Let us help you! We will do whatever it takes to help you get to that ball!

CINDY:

Thank you, kind mouse!

MONTY THE RAT:

You are so welcome.

CHORUS 1:

Cindy also had a willow tree planted in the background that she watered with her tears till it grew tall and beautiful. Somehow, this tree embodied the spirit of her dead mother and could grant her wishes, and so she wished for a beautiful

dress with glass slippers and went to the ball.

CHORUS 2:

There, Cindy and Prince Charming danced and fell in love. But before he could learn her name, she ran off because her dress was going to turn back to normal at midnight, which is what happens when you make wishes on your dead mother's tree.

CHORUS 3:

BUT she left a glass slipper behind. And so the next day, the Prince visited every house in the kingdom to see who would fit the slipper.

CHORUS 1:

The stepsisters tried so hard, but they could not get their feet into it. But it fit Cinderella and then they got married.

CHORUS 2:

She moved to the palace and lived happily ever after.

CHORUS 3:

Thank you all! Until next time! Let's get going to Snow White, y'all!

(Everyone starts to pack up and exit the stage, except CHORUS 4.)

CHORUS 4:

Whoa!

CHORUS 2:

What?

CHORUS 4:

You just said a lot of crazy stuff right there! That

doesn't even make sense.

CHORUS 3:

Like what? Give an example!

CHORUS 4:

Well for starters, or rather for enders, they did not live happily ever after. But before that, so many things are wrong; you actually got a lot more wrong than you got right.

CHORUS 1:

Yeah, right!

CHORUS 2:

Prove it.

CHORUS 4:

You don't believe me? Ask them.

CHORUS 3:

Ask who?

CHORUS 4:

The characters, of course.

(talks to MONTY)

Hey you! Is that how the story went?

MONTY THE RAT:

Are you speaking to me?

CHORUS 3:

Can you do that?

CHORUS 4:

Do what?

CHORUS 2:

Talk to the characters!

CHORUS 4:

Oh sure. I do it all the time. That's how I always know the real story. You've gotta check your sources. So, hey—is that how the story happened?

MONTY THE RAT:

Not really. I mean...we aren't even mice. We're rats. We don't really enjoy being called mice. Rats are infinitely superior to mice, and it's a gross mischaracterization, plus the stereotypes—

CHORUS 4:

But the story! Is the story accurate?

MONTY:

Not even close. It didn't even mention our sensational rap.

CHORUS 2:

Sorry?

MONTY:

Our sensational rap. You know—like when we were like—

He's so famous, but he's nameless

What's a Charming? That's alarming

CHORUS 3:

OK. I think we get the idea.

DAD:

Could I say something?

CHORUS 3:

Now they're all talking!

DAD:

I just wanted to say that I was not dead. I just wasn't...really around.

STEPSISTER 1:

And we weren't evil!

STEPSISTER 2:

Plus we were like barely in your version.

STEPSISTER 1:

We are central characters.

DAD:

Listen, I'm not saying I was the best father, okay? But, hey, look at it from my point of view. I'm sitting there and my wife has just died of the plague, and I've got this daughter to raise who I don't really know that well. And I'm trying to run a small business here with very few customers left. The plague had wiped out most of my best regulars—the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker, you know—and so I had to travel to get any business. It took up a lot of my time, okay? So did I marry right away so that someone would take care of my daughter? Maybe. But I thought I was doing the right thing.

CHORUS 1:

Why are you saying all of this?

DAD:

I just feel like you weren't giving some important context. I was doing my best.

STEPSISTER 1:

So were we. Look, I'm not saying I was nice to Soot

Face. But we didn't ask for this.

STEPSISTER 2:

No we did not. Not at all!

STEPSISTER 1:

Mom said she was getting married to this business owner in town and we were like, "Fine, sure, more money for us," right?

STEPSISTER 2:

But then he shows up with her.

STEPSISTER 1:

Her.

STEPSISTER 2:

And she's all nice and friendly and kind and thoughtful.

STEPSISTER 1:

So obviously we hated her. Who wants that around all the time?

STEPSISTER 2:

So annoying.

STEPSISTER 1:

The worst.

STEPSISTER 2:

And as for the chores, what's the big deal? The new kid does the chores. That's totally reasonable.

DAD:

So I wasn't around a lot. I guess I didn't really notice that Cindy wasn't having a great time. A small business is very demanding, and especially at the beginning, say the first five to ten years. So

I don't remember a lot of what was happening at home during that time. But whenever I saw my new wife, she said things were fine. And then usually would tell me to leave and go make more money. So that's what I did. See? I'm a good guy. I did my best. Those stepsisters were the real problem.

STEPSISTER 1:

Also like where even was her dad? He's always saying he's got to work but it seemed like he never actually had any money.

STEPSISTER 2:

Yeah and Cindy is totally his job, not ours. So I don't even feel bad. And after she married Charming, she didn't even let us live at the Palace. Who's the evil stepsister then, huh? She was our stepsister and she wouldn't let us live in the Palace and, to me, that makes her the evil stepsister.

STEPSISTER 1:

Don't believe the stories. Considering everything we had to put up with, we were pretty wonderful. We didn't have a Fairy Godmother. Anybody can be successful when you've got a magical Fairy Godmother.

STEPSISTER 2:

I heard it wasn't even a Fairy Godmother. I heard it was that tree she planted in the back. I heard it was haunted by the spirit of her dead mother and the magic of the haunted tree got her to the ball that night.

STEPSISTER 1:

What?

STEPSISTER 2:

That's the rumor out of the Palace. That she planted some twig her father gave her and then she watered it with her tears and it turned into some magical dead mother tree. A magical dead mother wishing tree.

STEPSISTER 1:

Well that's just ridiculous. She didn't have a wishing tree.

STEPSISTER 2:

That's what people are saying.

STEPSISTER 1:

Well they're wrong. It was a magical Fairy Godmother who appeared out of nowhere for one night only and fulfilled all of her wildest dreams, which were apparently limited to one night at one ball wearing shoes made of glass.

STEPSISTER 2:

Yeah, 'cause that makes a lot more sense.

STEPSISTER 1:

And think about it. She could've wished for anything. World peace, the end of hunger, justice for all, cures for disease. She could have been the patriarchy-smasher to end all patriarchy-smashers. But no! She wished for a dress and a ticket to a party. But we're the evil ones.

STEPSISTER 2:

For the record, I would've wished for world peace.

DISTANCE LEARNING

by Carey Crim

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Character List

Donna Rhodes: An English teacher. A smart, caring and dedicated educator. (*Caucasian*)

Eli: A high school student. Smart and funny. Tends to get away with things because of his charm. Everyone loves him. Doesn't take life too seriously until it all changes. (*African American*)

Mia: A high school student. Intelligent, strong, knows who she is. (*Latinx*)

Darius: A high school student. Smart kid, hard worker. Caretaker of friends and family (*Any ethnicity*)

Kaylee: A high school student. Wants to be friends with everyone. Still figuring things out. Has some anxiety. (*Caucasian*)

Esther: A high school student. Good student. Very involved in school activities. Knows everyone. (*Any ethnicity*)

Hugo: A high school student The consummate theater kid. (*Any ethnicity*)

Weston: A high school student. Good kid. Average student. (*Caucasian*)

Emily: A high school student Well informed, opinionated, struggling a bit with depression (*Any ethnicity*)

Captain Vanessa Moore: Eli's mom. Captain in the navy. A strict but supportive parent trying to keep it all together under very challenging circumstances. (*African American*)

Emmet: Mrs. Rhode's son, 15. An off-stage voice.

Setting

Various English online class meetings for an American public high school during the 2020 Covid 19 Pandemic.

Synopsis

A group of high school seniors face their final year learning online with a beloved teacher as a pandemic rages outside. Together they will face social isolation, missed milestones, the potential loss of friends and family, their places in the world and what the birth of a new social justice movement means for them.

Author's Notes

This play can be performed completely online or it can be performed onstage with or without screens. Be creative.

Where race and ethnicity are indicated, they should be honored. Where race or ethnicity are not indicated, that does not by default indicate whiteness, but rather that a character can be of any race or ethnicity.

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Scene 1

*We see news videos about the beginnings of COVID-19.
Transition to...*

LATE MARCH, 2020

High school English teacher Donna Rhodes turns on her laptop camera. She checks the image and tries to figure out her first online class meeting. No one else has joined yet.

She looks at herself on camera and frowns. She makes a couple of faces. She tries to look more confident, less tired, less anxious.

The meeting isn't starting. She pushes a few buttons trying to get it going. Nothing. She makes a phone call.

MRS. RHODES:

(On her cell phone) Tell me again how to let them into the meeting? *(Beat.)* Right. Yep. No, that just seemed too easy. I'm over-complicating things. What time does yours start? Why am I so nervous? I've been teaching for—Let me ask you something. Are you—Never mind.

Okay, but it's incredibly shallow considering... everything. Are you wearing makeup?

Esther, one of her students, joins the meeting. Esther Zooms from her family room. Mrs. Rhodes doesn't notice her at first.

MRS. RHODES:

You *are*? I knew I should have at least put some—I mean I never really do but with this lighting and... I don't know, I feel like I look sick. And ancient.

ESTHER:

Hi Mrs. Rhodes.

MRS. RHODES:

Gotta go!

(She hangs up).

Esther! Hello.

ESTHER:

Hi.

MRS. RHODES:

That was Mrs. Hatton. Did you have her last year for computer science?

ESTHER:

No. Mr. Simms.

MRS. RHODES:

Right. That's right. *(Beat.)* How are you?

ESTHER:

Okay. I mean... you know.

MRS. RHODES:

Your family okay?

ESTHER:

My grandmother moved in with us.

MRS. RHODES:

And how is that?

ESTHER:

She cooks way better than my mom so...

MRS. RHODES:

That's a bonus?

ESTHER:

Yeah. You don't need makeup. You look fine.

MRS. RHODES:

You heard that? The things we focus on, right?

ESTHER:

My mom is freaking out about how she's going to get her roots done.

MRS. RHODES:

I didn't even think about that one yet.

Kaylee, Mia, and Darius join the meeting.

Kaylee is painting her nails.

Mia is still eating breakfast.

Darius sits in his closet. A pair of boxer shorts hangs on the doorknob behind him.

MRS. RHODES:

Hey, Kaylee. And there's Mia. Hi, Darius.

DARIUS:

Hey, Mrs. Rhodes. Hi Esther.

ESTHER:

Hi.

KAYLEE:

Darius, are you in your closet?

DARIUS:

Um...Yeah.

KAYLEE:

Okay, weirdo.

DARIUS:

Shut up. It's the only place that's quiet.

KAYLEE:

Well you might want to get your nasty dirty boxer shorts out of frame.

DARIUS:

What?

KAYLEE:

Ew.

Darius looks around, mortified, and cleans up his closet space.

KAYLEE:

Just change your Zoom background.

DARIUS:

I can't.

KAYLEE:

I can walk you through it. It's like so easy. Just go into

your settings and—

DARIUS:

I'm using my mom's old computer and it's ancient. It doesn't do shit. I'm not even sure it will stay connected for the whole class.

MRS. RHODES:

Did you apply for one of the computers from the district?

DARIUS:

They ran out.

MRS. RHODES:

Let me see what I can do.

DARIUS:

No, it's fine, Mrs. Rhodes, it's—

MRS. RHODES:

I may even have one you can use until this is all over. Okay?

DARIUS:

I couldn't—

MRS. RHODES:

Yes you could.

DARIUS:

I—thanks.

Eli logs on next. He's Zooming from his bed. Covers and all.

ELI:

What up, all?

Kids respond hello, hi, etc. Everyone loves Eli.

MRS. RHODES:

Eli, are you in bed?

ELI:

Yes, ma'am.

MRS. RHODES:

This is still school, you know.

ELI:

I know. But I'm not dressed.

KAYLEE:

Nice.

ELI:

Don't pretend you don't like it.

MIA:

Watch it.

KAYLEE:

Jealous much?

MIA:

Of you? No.

MRS. RHODES:

Okay, okay. Settle. Eli, could you, uh, *remedy* the clothing situation please?

ELI:

Sorry, Mrs. Rhodes. I overslept. Give me a sec.

MRS. RHODES:

Do what you have to do.

Eli switches to an avatar while, presumably, he gets

dressed.

Hugo joins the meeting. He Zooms from his bedroom as well, dressed in an outrageous tuxedo.

MRS. RHODES:

So we're still waiting on Hugo, Weston, and Emily.

HUGO:

No, I'm here.

MRS. RHODES:

So you are. How did I miss that? Nice tux.

He straightens his bow tie.

HUGO:

Thank you very much.

Weston and Emily join the meeting.

EMILY:

Am I late?

MRS. RHODES:

Not yet.

WESTON:

Hugo, what the hell are you wearing?

HUGO:

Someone had to represent.

WESTON:

Okay but—

MRS. RHODES:

No buts. You do you, my friend.

HUGO:

Loud and proud. Happy Ides of March, everyone.

MRS. RHODES:

Someone was actually paying attention to *Julius Caesar* this year?

MIA:

But it's not the 15th. This isn't even the actual... *Ides* or whatever.

HUGO:

We missed it. We clearly did not give the Ides of March due props this year.

DARIUS:

Is that why things suck so much?

HUGO:

Could be. Could be.

MRS. RHODES:

Well, suck or not, that outfit is pure *Saturday Night Fever* perfection.

ESTHER:

What's that?

HUGO:

Exactly what I was going for, Mrs. Rhodes! Mr. Reynolds let me raid the costume closet right before school closed. I was hoping to find something for prom.

ELI (STILL AN AVATAR):

You may want to get a date first.

HUGO:

Who is that? Is that Eli? Good point. You free?

ELI (AVATAR):

Maybe.

MIA:

Hey!

ELI (AVATAR):

Kidding, babe.

MRS. RHODES:

Eli?

ELI (AVATAR):

Yup.

MRS. RHODES:

Are you dressed?

ELI (AVATAR):

Kind of. I can't find my pants.

KAYLEE:

No one wants to see that.

MIA:

Speak for yourself.

KAYLEE:

Haven't you seen it already?

Some of the kids whistle or whoop or otherwise egg them on. Eli switches on his camera. He is buttoning his pants.

ELI:

Found 'em.

MRS. RHODES:

Nice of you to join us.

KAYLEE:

Now that Eli has pants, can we talk more about prom?

MRS. RHODES:

No.

MIA:

Will there even be a prom?

EMILY:

Who cares?

KAYLEE:

Of course there will be a prom.

ELI:

What says our student council rep? Darius?

DARIUS:

I haven't heard otherwise.

KAYLEE:

Why wouldn't there be one?

DARIUS:

Uh... lockdown?

KAYLEE:

For two weeks. To flatten the curve or whatever.

WESTON:

Yeah, prom isn't until May.

EMILY:

Do you see what's happening in Italy?

WESTON:

I don't watch the news.

EMILY:

Big surprise there.

WESTON:

What's that supposed to mean?

KAYLEE:

Can we get back to prom?

MRS. RHODES:

NO! We cannot! We need to start the, oh what do you call it, oh yes, the *learning* portion of our morning.

MIA:

But—

MRS. RHODES:

GUYS!

MIA:

I'm not a guy.

MRS. RHODES:

No. Right, I know that. Still unlearning too many years of, well, everything.

MIA:

All good.

MRS. RHODES:

We don't know when we'll be able to safely return to school but—

ELI:

Wait, what about Senior week? I have epic pranks to plan and execute.

ESTHER:

What about graduation?

KAYLEE:

Of course we'll have graduation.

MIA:

Not necessarily. What if it goes longer?

Everyone begins talking over one another again.

KAYLEE:

Like how long?

DARIUS:

Who knows?

MIA:

What if it goes until summer?

WESTON:

No way. No *way*!

DARIUS:

But we'll definitely have graduation, right? I mean we can't *not* graduate.

MRS. RHODES:

STOP! One at a time. You will graduate. I don't know what that's going to look like yet, but, provided you don't totally bail for the rest of this year, you'll graduate. Okay?

The kids respond with yeah, okay, sorry Mrs. Rhodes, etc.

MRS. RHODES:

Good. Now... Can we discuss some literature? Who wants to start? Please tell me someone did the reading?

Hugo pushes the raise-your-hand icon and also raises his

actual hand.

MRS. RHODES:

Oh, look at that. There's a raise-your-hand icon. How civilized. Hugo?

HUGO:

What about Les Miz? They can't cancel the spring play. I have the lead.

DARIUS:

We know.

HUGO:

I'm just saying.

EMILY:

There's a lot of things way more important than Les Miz.

HUGO:

(Scandalized) What things?

MRS. RHODES:

GUYS! *Sorry*. PEOPLE! We don't know what the future holds. The only thing we can be certain of today is that things are most likely going to change again tomorrow. Because I know that none of us thought, when we said goodbye on that Friday, that *this* would be our next hello.

WESTON:

We should have known. It was Friday the 13th after all.

MRS. RHODES:

Was it? So it was. But for now, for this moment, can we just figure out how to do this? How to learn this way? Discuss literature this way? Maintain some sense of...

