

# Plays

THE DRAMA MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

MAY 2020

## UPPER AND MIDDLE GRADES

- Class, Interrupted. . . . . *Christina Hamlett* 2  
Just Plain Folks. . . . . *Margaret Malkind* 11

## DRAMATIZED CLASSIC (FOR UPPER AND MIDDLE GRADES)

- Pride and Prejudice. . . . . *Jane Austen* 21  
Adapted by *Olive J. Morley*

## MIDDLE AND LOWER GRADES

- Old MacDonald's Farmyard Follies. . . . *Lu Sampson* 32  
Punctuation Proclamation. . . . . *Claire Boiko* 37  
Misaki and the Four Truths. . . . . *Ellen M. Eleder* 42  
The Best Thing in the World. . . . . *Mary Jane Noble* 46

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# Plays

The drama magazine for young people

## *In this issue. . .*

### **Upper and Middle Grades**

*Class, Interrupted*, by Christina Hamlett

13+ actors: 7 female, 4 male, 2+ male or female; 30 minutes. In a tense drama, hints about the identity of a high school gunman set up a powerful way to discuss stereotypes and misconceptions.

*Just Plain Folks*, by Margaret Malkind

10 actors: 5 male, 5 female; 25 minutes. Steph's boyfriend and his family drop in for a visit, only to find a totally zany family, and maybe their new best friends.

*Pride and Prejudice*, by Jane Austen, adapted by Olive J. Morley

11 actors: 8 female, 3 male; 35 minutes. An adaptation of the classic 1800's story of the pressure to marry well, and the love and respect that go with it.

### **Middle and Lower Grades**

*Old MacDonald's Farmyard Follies*, by Lu Sampson

21 male and/or female actors; 10 minutes. Lots of singing as the farm comes to life with a cast of old-time favorites—with a moo moo here, and a baa baa there.

*Punctuation Proclamation*, by Claire Boiko

12+ male and/or female actors; 15 minutes. No commas, no periods, no exclamation marks? There is utter chaos when the King abolishes those "inky blobs" from everything in the Kingdom.

*Misaki and the Four Truths*, by Ellen M. Eleder

8+ actors: 3 female, 3 male, male and/or female for narrator, puppeteer, extras; 10 minutes. A charming Japanese folk tale that introduces new vocabulary and the virtues of knowledge, beauty, strength, and determination.

*The Best Thing in the World*, adapted by Mary Jane Noble

9+ male and/or female actors; 8 minutes. Animals search high and low, only to learn the truth about what's the best thing in the world.

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## Class, Interrupted

Hints about the identity of a high school gunman set up a great way to discuss stereotypes and misconceptions.

by Christina Hamlett

### Characters

SHELBY HAYNES, *high school student*

MRS. HAYNES, *Shelby's mom*

TUCKER COLLINS, *high school student*

MR. COLLINS, *Tucker's dad*

SABINA MURPHY, *high school student*

ERIKA LEE, *Sabina's best friend*

MRS. MURPHY, *Sabina's mom*

BRITTA FARRELL, *TV reporter*

OFFICER DANIELS

OFFICER GIBSON

DANA WASHINGTON, *high school student*

THE STUDENT, *off-screen male*

SWAT MEMBER

**TIME:** *Present day.*

**SETTING:** *Any American city. This minimalist production utilizes three kitchen tables and chairs set up in each third of the stage. A scene is lit only when action is transpiring in it. Entrances and exits are made from upstage in center scene and from stage left and stage right in the two outer spaces. The center aisle is also used for a spotlight scene. In the second half of the play, all of the furniture is removed except for a single chair stage right.*

**AT RISE:** *The lights come up stage left where MR. COLLINS is seated on the upstage side of kitchen table. He's reading the newspaper, drinking coffee and eating toast. After a moment, TUCKER enters carrying a cereal box under one arm along with a big bowl and a carton of milk. He sits down and proceeds to generously fill the bowl.*

**TUCKER:** Hey, Dad. What's up?

**MR. COLLINS** (*Off newspaper*): Same-old, same-old. (*Folds paper and sets it aside*) How go the plans for your epic science project?

**TUCKER** (*With a groan*): Doomed to epic failure.

**MR. COLLINS**: So soon? You haven't even started.

**TUCKER**: Yeah, but we got assigned lab partners yesterday.

**MR. COLLINS** (*Fondly*): Ah, lab partners! I remember those days. Did I tell you I got paired with a girl who didn't want anything to do with me?

**TUCKER**: Only about a million times.

**MR. COLLINS**: I told her she shouldn't judge a book by its cover.

**TUCKER**: Real original, Dad. (*Steals a piece of toast*) So how'd that work out for you? (*Sotto voce*) As if I didn't know.

**MR. COLLINS**: I'd say 25 years of bliss and you and your sister made for a pretty positive outcome. And you know why? It's because despite our differences the two of us discovered we had—

**TUCKER** (*Finishing sentence for him*): Chemistry. Yeah, yeah, all meant to be.

**MR. COLLINS** (*Taking his toast back*): Hey, maybe the same thing will happen with you. What's your lab partner's name?

**TUCKER**: Gary the Geek. (*Takes a sip of his dad's coffee*)

**MR. COLLINS**: I take it that's not his real name?

**TUCKER**: Oh, it's Gary all right. The geek part is just what everybody's labeled him.

**MR. COLLINS** (*Taking coffee back*): That's not very charitable, Tucker.

Your mom and I have taught you better than that.

**TUCKER**: Yeah, but in this case it totally fits. The guy's got zero friends. He always eats lunch by himself. He never ever smiles. Plus he's only said like 10 words the whole semester.

**MR. COLLINS**: But now he has you.

**TUCKER**: No way am I going to be his friend, if that's what you're thinking. It's 45 minutes out of my life three times a week. "Pass the beaker," "Light the burner," "Write down whatever smells bad or blows up"—that's as far as it goes.

**MR. COLLINS**: Maybe he's just lonely. Did you ever think of that?

**TUCKER**: Well, if he is, it's his own fault. The guy's been weird since forever. Something to do with his mom splitting when he was five and his dad not being able to keep a job.

**MR. COLLINS**: And you came by this information how exactly?

**TUCKER**: Whatcha mean?

**MR. COLLINS**: If you never talk to him, how do you know his story?

**TUCKER**: 'Cause I soak up what all my buds say. I'm like a human sponge.

**MR. COLLINS** (*Off cereal bowl*): A super-power I won't contest by the way you sponge up food. (*After a beat*) Sure that's going to keep you til lunch?

**TUCKER** (*Taking another bite of toast*): Yeah, I'm good.

**MR. COLLINS** (*Looking at watch*): And I need to get to work. (*As he pushes away from the table, we see for the first time*

that MR. COLLINS is in a wheelchair. He pauses mid-exit.) Tucker?

TUCKER: Yeah?

MR. COLLINS: You might want to give this Gary guy a chance. All it takes sometimes is one conversation to help somebody open up.

TUCKER: I'm not going to be his pal, Dad. He's just a loser I got stuck with in lab. If we start hangin' out together, it could majorly blow my rep. (MR. COLLINS shakes his head in disappointment and exits as the lights go out. The lights come up right where SABINA and ERIKA are excitedly scrolling through pictures on a laptop. Books are on the table and a backpack is on the floor.)

SABINA: The red one or the blue?

ERIKA: I can totally see you in blue.

SABINA: You said you liked the red one.

ERIKA: Let's see it again.

SABINA: Oooh! What about this one? How could we have missed it?

ERIKA: You were scrolling too fast. (MRS. MURPHY enters right wearing a bathrobe and sipping her coffee.)

SABINA: If I get this one, how should I wear my hair?

ERIKA: Definitely up. Or maybe down. Which looks better with the tiara?

MRS. MURPHY: Shouldn't you two be getting ready for school?

ERIKA: Hey, Mrs. M.

SABINA: Mom, you need to help us out here.

MRS. MURPHY: Still trying to decide on the dress?

SABINA: It's not just any dress. It's for Homecoming.

ERIKA: We've narrowed it down.

MRS. MURPHY (*Leaning in to look*): Which two are you thinking of?

SABINA (*Laughing*): Two? Come on, Mom, get real.

ERIKA: Sabina and I have got seventeen that made the first cut.

MRS. MURPHY: Seventeen? Good heavens! How many did you start with?

SABINA: Mom, it's the most important Homecoming of my entire life. This has got to be 100% perfect! If I pick the wrong dress, it will embarrass Jeremy and I could be a social pariah the rest of the year.

MRS. MURPHY: Well, we can't have that, can we? (*Points to screen*) That one's awfully pretty. You've always looked so sweet in pink. (SABINA and ERIKA look at each other, aghast that MRS. MURPHY has no fashion sense. SABINA closes the laptop.)

SABINA: That's O.K., Mom. We'll figure it out on our own.

MRS. MURPHY: You know, I've always thought boys had it much easier. All they really have to do is rent a tux, show up on time, and bring a corsage.

ERIKA (*Laughing*): That is so old school, Mrs. M.

SABINA: Erika's right. Jeremy's gotta buy the tickets, rent a limo, book a place for the after-Homecoming party, pay for dinner—

**MRS. MURPHY:** Are you sure this is just Homecoming and not a secret wedding?

**ERIKA:** Jeremy's crazy-busy for sure, plus all the stuff he's got to do for debate team, student government, team captain—

**SABINA:** And in three weeks he and his parents are doing the whole college tour thing. His mom wants Stanford but his dad says it's Harvard or nothing.

**MRS. MURPHY:** Where does Jeremy want to go?

**ERIKA:** What difference does it make as long as it keeps his parents happy and gets him into all the best clubs?

**MRS. MURPHY:** Well, you certainly picked a popular boy to go steady with, sweetheart. When does he ever sleep?

**SABINA:** Same as the rest of us—in Mr. Berna's math class. *(She makes a dramatic snore and feigns falling out of her chair.)*

**ERIKA** *(Looking at her watch):* Hey, we better get going or we'll be late for first period. *(ERIKA reaches down to grab her backpack while SABINA gathers her books. SABINA gives her mom a kiss on the cheek.)*

**SABINA:** Thanks for the waffles, Mom.

**ERIKA:** Yeah, Mrs. M. You rock! *(The two of them exit right. MRS. MURPHY sits down with her coffee. She opens the laptop, studies the image on the screen.)*

**MRS. MURPHY:** Now, why didn't they like the pink one? I think it's perfect. *(The lights go down on her. They next come up center, where a visibly distraught SHELBY has abandoned her breakfast and is on her cell phone.)*

**SHELBY:** Pick up, pick up, pick up, pleeeeeeze. *(Deep breath, then she speaks into phone)* Danny, hey, it's me. I know you're there. Why aren't you calling me back? I know it got kinda ugly last night but I really, really think we can work it out if we could just talk. I didn't mean any of it. I really, truly didn't and I just want you to know. . . *(MRS. HAYNES enters upstage and is upset by what she's hearing.)*

**MRS. HAYNES:** Shelby? *(Startled, SHELBY ends the call and stuffs the cell phone in her pocket.)*

**SHELBY:** Oh—hey, Mom. I didn't hear you come in.

**MRS. HAYNES:** That wasn't Danny you were calling, was it?

**SHELBY:** I—um—I just wanted to see if he was O.K.

**MRS. HAYNES:** You told me you broke up with him last night.

**SHELBY:** I said I thought we should take a break. There's a big difference.

**MRS. HAYNES:** Shelby—

**SHELBY:** Look, Mom, I know you don't like Danny. I did what you wanted but it's only a matter of time before we get back together.

**MRS. HAYNES** *(As she sits down):* Honey, you deserve a boy much better than he can ever be.

**SHELBY** *(Angrily):* And how do you know that for sure? Do you have a crystal ball? Have you talked to a psychic? Are you reading tea leaves?

**MRS. HAYNES:** No, it's much worse than that. I have something called mother's intuition. *(After a beat)* Sweetie, I know

Danny was your first boyfriend and that's very special—

**SHELBY:** I love him! I can never, ever love anyone else as long as I live!

**MRS. HAYNES:** You know, I said exactly the same thing when I was your age, but it wasn't long before I met other boys and before I knew it—

**SHELBY:** Did your mother hate all of them, too?

**MRS. HAYNES:** Shelby, your grandmother didn't hate anyone. She just felt I could do better and that I was too young to make a smart, informed choice.

**SHELBY:** Well, my choice is Danny. (*Shakes her head*) You should've seen the look on his face when I told him. He walked away from me and when I started to go after him, he just ran and ran and I couldn't keep up.

**MRS. HAYNES:** It's for the best. It really is.

**SHELBY:** You always say that.

**MRS. HAYNES** (*Smiling*): And I'm always right.

**SHELBY:** Why won't he pick up? Why isn't he answering my text messages? What if something's wrong?

**MRS. HAYNES:** Like what?

**SHELBY:** What if he's gone and hurt himself? He cried and said he couldn't live without me! What if—what if he's done something terrible and now it's all my fault?

**MRS. HAYNES** (*Worried*): Shelby, maybe you should stay home from school today.

**SHELBY:** It's because you don't want me to see him, isn't it?

**MRS. HAYNES:** No, it's because you need to be clear-headed so you can focus on your classes. Right now, I don't think you can do that. (*SHELBY jumps up.*)

**SHELBY:** I'm going to school and you can't stop me! And you can't stop me from seeing Danny! (*MRS. HAYNES tries to call after her but SHELBY has already run out. The lights go out onstage. Sound of police sirens is heard. A spotlight comes up in the center aisle on BRITTA FARRELL.*)

**BRITTA:** Reporting live for One Metro News, I'm Britta Farrell. Behind me is Pacific Heights High School, which is currently under police lockdown following reports of an armed gunman. The incident began shortly after students arrived for their first classes of the day. It is believed that the gunman—possibly a student on campus—is acting alone. Parents are being contacted but, according to police, no one is being allowed in or out of the school at this time. (*Spotlight goes out on BRITTA. Lights come up on the left half of the stage. MR. COLLINS, MRS. MURPHY and MRS. HAYNES have gathered with EXTRAS portraying other parents. All are quietly ad-libbing their worries about what's going on.*)

**MRS. HAYNES** (*To MRS. MURPHY*): I know I should have kept Shelby home today. If something has happened to her—

**MRS. MURPHY** (*Comforting her*): It's O.K. I'm sure they're all going to be safe.

**MRS. HAYNES:** But how did this even happen? What is this world coming to that our children aren't even safe in their own classrooms?



**MRS. MURPHY:** There haven't been any shots. It would be worse if there had been shots fired and we didn't know who they were hitting. (*MRS. HAYNES suddenly gasps and bites her lip.*)

**MRS. HAYNES:** I just had a horrible thought.

**MRS. MURPHY:** What is it?

**MRS. HAYNES:** Shelby's boyfriend. He's kind of an edgy sort and not all that nice to her. She broke things off with him last night but—

**MR. COLLINS** (*Pointing downstage*): Look! Here come the police. (*OFFICERS DANIELS and GIBSON are approaching the stage. The onstage crowd immediately peppers them with ad-libbed questions about what's happening.*)

**OFFICER DANIELS:** People, I need your patience, please. I'm Officer Daniels. This is Officer Gibson.

**MRS. HAYNES:** When can we see our children?

**MRS. MURPHY:** Are they all right? Has anyone been hurt?

**MRS. HAYNES:** Have you caught the gunman yet?

**OFFICER GIBSON:** We're working on it, ma'am. In the meantime, we need all of you to please step back to the other side of the street.

**MR. COLLINS:** Does that mean the gunman might shoot at us, too?

**DANIELS:** We have no idea what's going on in his mind, but we're taking every precaution for your safety and the safety of those inside.

**MRS. MURPHY:** What does he want? Is he demanding ransom?

**MRS. HAYNES** (*Tearfully*): I'd pay anything to see my little girl again. She's all I have!

**GIBSON:** We have not as yet made any personal contact, ma'am. A negotiator is on the way to attempt to talk the gunman down.

**MR. COLLINS:** How many guns does he have?

**DANIELS:** We don't have that information at this time.

**MR. COLLINS:** If it's a student, how did he get a gun in the first place?

**MRS. MURPHY:** It's probably stolen. A minor couldn't just walk into a gun store and buy one himself.

**GIBSON:** Folks, again, we need all of you to move across the street and clear the area for any emergency vehicles we might need. (*GIBSON and DANIELS efficiently get the crowd to move offstage as the lights go down. The spotlight comes up in the aisle on BRITTA.*)

**BRITTA:** Reporting live for One Metro News, I'm Britta Farrell. The tension here at Pacific Heights High School has escalated in the hour since it was first reported there was an armed gunman on campus. Members of the police department's SWAT team are on their way. Sources confirm that it is a student rather than an outsider but, thus far, there has been no identifiable motive. We have, however, just learned the gunman has barricaded himself in the second-floor campus library. . . and that he has a female hostage. (*The spotlight goes out on BRITTA. A spotlight comes up right, where DANA WASHINGTON is seated in a*

*straight-back chair. THE STUDENT with whom she converses throughout this scene is hidden stage right and never seen.)*

**DANA** (*Calmly*): How long are you going to keep me here?

**THE STUDENT**: As long as it takes.

**DANA** (*After a beat*): It's a little awkward, don't you think? I mean, I know your name, but you don't know mine.

**THE STUDENT**: What difference does it make? You're just a girl who got in the wrong place at the wrong time.

**DANA**: Well, for what it's worth, my name is Dana. Dana Washington.

**THE STUDENT**: Whatever. Who you are's not worth anything to me.

**DANA**: What about your life?

**THE STUDENT**: What about it?

**DANA**: Is your life worth anything?

**THE STUDENT** (*After a beat*): Not anymore.

**DANA**: I find that kinda hard to believe.

**THE STUDENT** (*Angrily*): You don't know the first thing about me!

**DANA**: I guess maybe I don't. All the times I've seen you around school, you just never struck me as a guy who'd—

**THE STUDENT**: A guy who'd what?

**DANA**: Make this big a mistake and throw his future away.

**THE STUDENT**: Yeah, well, maybe it's the only way out.

**DANA**: There are people you could talk to, you know. People who could help you work out whatever it is you're going through.

**THE STUDENT** (*Angrily*): There's nobody, O.K.? Nobody cares. Nobody listens.

**DANA**: I'm listening, aren't I?

**THE STUDENT**: From where I sit, I don't see that you've got much choice.

**DANA**: I have a choice of wanting to live. Are you going to let me do that?

**THE STUDENT** (*Testily*): What's with the Twenty Questions? Are you a cop or something?

**DANA**: No, but I've had enough experience with them to know that what you're doing isn't going to get you what you want.

**THE STUDENT**: You don't even know what I want, so just shut up, O.K.?

**DANA**: Can you just answer me one thing?

**THE STUDENT**: Why should I?

**DANA**: Because if this is going to be my last few minutes on Earth, I'd like to know a little more about the person I'm spending it with. (*After a beat*) Why are you doing this?

**THE STUDENT**: Why shouldn't I? It's not like anybody's going to miss me.

**DANA**: You don't know that. What about your family? Your friends?

**THE STUDENT**: Listen, Miss Goody-Two-Shoes, you have no idea what it's like to be me and having to pretend everything's peachy perfect when it's not. I

wake up every day and I want to scream my head off but no one's there to listen. *(Starting to sob)* It's all about what *they* want and not about what *I* want. I just want to make it all go away.

**DANA:** Maybe it can. But this isn't the way to do it. Trust me. It really isn't. *(She stands up.)*

**THE STUDENT:** What are you doing?

**DANA:** I'm going to walk out that door. And I'd like you to walk out with me.

**THE STUDENT:** And then what?

**DANA:** What happens next is entirely up to you. *(She holds out her hand as the lights go out right. Spotlight comes up in the center aisle on BRITTA.)*

**BRITTA:** Reporting live for One Metro News, I'm Britta Farrell. The frightening situation this morning at Pacific Heights High School has come to an end with the lone gunman's surrender to police. Although the campus will remain closed for the rest of the day, students are being reunited with their anxious parents. *(The spotlight goes out on BRITTA. Lights come up on the full stage. OFFICERS DANIELS and GIBSON are waving students on right, where they are subsequently embraced by their parents left. TUCKER rushes up to hug his dad.)*

**TUCKER:** Dad!

**MR. COLLINS:** Are you all right?

**TUCKER:** Yeah, it was scary for a while but you know my friend Gary I told you about? He was totally awesome at keeping everybody calm and quiet. I'm thinking maybe we could have him to dinner sometime? I'd really like you and Mom to meet him.

**MR. COLLINS:** We'd be proud to. *(TUCKER wheels his dad offstage. A tearful SHELBY rushes into the arms of her mom.)*

**MRS. HAYNES:** Oh, honey, are you O.K.? I swear I don't know what I'd do if I had lost you!

**SHELBY:** I'm fine, Mom. Seriously. Can we just go home?

**MRS. HAYNES:** Of course, we can, sweetheart. Maybe we can stop and get some ice cream on the way—

**SHELBY:** No, Mom, I gotta get home and recharge my phone right away. Danny's gonna be worried sick about me! *(Before she can protest, SHELBY runs off left with her mother right behind her. SABINA and ERIKA emerge, tearfully clinging to each other. ERIKA spots her mom and rushes over to her. A tearful MRS. MURPHY rushes to hug SABINA.)*

**MRS. MURPHY:** I called your father and he's catching the next plane home. As soon as the school called me—

**SABINA:** Can we just get out of here? I'm not feeling so good.

**MRS. MURPHY:** Of course, we can. I just hope the horrible person who did this gets what's coming to him. A life sentence in prison wouldn't be long enough for anybody who'd do this to his own classmates! Is he someone you know? Did they find out his name?

**SABINA** *(Nodding; somberly):* It's Jeremy. *(MRS. MURPHY gasps in astonishment. She hugs SABINA tightly; the two of them exit. DANA enters, observes her friends being reunited with their parents. She looks around. A man's voice in the center aisle catches her attention.)*

**SWAT MEMBER:** Dana! (*Her face lights up as her dad, in his full SWAT uniform, approaches the stage.*)

**DANA:** Daddy! (*They hug when he reaches the stage.*)

**SWAT MEMBER** (*Proudly*): I hear you were really something in there. (*After a beat*) Just don't make a habit of putting yourself in danger.

**DANA** (*Shrugging*): He was just somebody who needed to talk.

**SWAT MEMBER:** Well, he couldn't have had a better person to listen.

**DANA:** Dad?

**SWAT MEMBER:** Hm-m-m?

**DANA:** I just don't get it. From what they all say, he had everything going for him. The right family. The right neighborhood. All the right chances to do good. (*After a beat*) It's never the ones you think it'll be, is it?

**SWAT MEMBER** (*Putting his arm around her*): No, Pumpkin. It never is. (*They exit as the lights go down and curtain falls.*)

**THE END**

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## PRODUCTION NOTES

### Class, Interrupted

**CHARACTERS:** 7 female, 4 male, 2 male or female, plus male and female extras.

**PLAYING TIME:** 30 minutes.

**COSTUMES:** The students and parents wear modern clothes; Mr. Collins is in a wheelchair. Daniels, Gibson and the SWAT officer wear police uniforms; Britta wears a dark wool coat.

**PROPERTIES:** Breakfast items, newspaper, laptop, books, backpack, microphone, cell phone.

**SETTING:** This minimalist production uses three kitchen tables and chairs set

up in each third of the stage. A scene is only lit when action is transpiring in it. Entrances and exits are made from upstage in the center scene and from stage left and stage right in the two outer spaces. The center aisle is also used for a spotlight scene. In the second half of the play, all of the furniture is removed except for a single chair stage right.

**LIGHTING:** As indicated in text.

**SOUND:** Police sirens.

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Upper & Middle Grades

## Just Plain Folks

Stephanie's boyfriend and his family drop in for a visit,  
only to find a totally zany family—and maybe their  
new best friends. . . .

by Margaret Malkind

### Characters

GEORGE PEREZ

MARILYN PEREZ

STEPHANIE, *their daughter*, 19

LOUIS, *their son*, 15

GRANDMA PEREZ

RONALD, *Louis's friend*

HENRY CARSON

KAREN CARSON

GABE, *their son*, and *Stephanie's boyfriend*

REGINA, *their daughter*, 8

**TIME:** *The present.*

**SETTING:** *Perez living room. Several science fiction posters are on the wall. Straight chair and end table covered with crocheted doily are left; bridge table with two chairs and sofa are cen-*

*ter; bookcase filled with paperbacks and desk with computer and chair are right. A few abstract paintings are propped up against wall, chairs, etc. Exit outside is right; exit to other rooms is left.*

**AT RISE:** *LOUIS and RONALD sit silently at bridge table, playing chess. LOUIS wears surgical mask, white gloves. Suddenly MR. PEREZ backs on left. He wears cape and helmet and holds sword, and is dueling as if with an unseen opponent. LOUIS and RONALD appear not to notice him.*

**MR. PEREZ** (*Lunging*): Take that, Lord Slime, and that, and that! (*STEPHANIE enters right, wearing backpack, carrying suitcase and tennis racket. MR. PEREZ turns, jabbing with sword, and STEPHANIE steps back in alarm. He sees her and cries out excitedly.*) Stephanie! You're home! (*Scratches head; puzzled*) Did I know you were coming home?

**STEPHANIE** (*Laughing*): Dad! Spring break, remember? (*Neither LOUIS nor RONALD looks up.*)

**MR. PEREZ:** Of course! I knew that. It's wonderful to have you home, sweetie. (*Embraces STEPHANIE*)

**STEPHANIE:** It's great to be home! (*Turning sword aside*) Even if it means a few stab wounds.

**MR. PEREZ** (*Removing helmet*): Sorry about that. For a minute I thought you were one of the Planet Plunderers.

**STEPHANIE** (*In mock alarm*): What? You don't even know your own daughter?

**MR. PEREZ:** Sure I do. I recognized you almost immediately.

**STEPHANIE** (*Sarcastically*): Thanks, Dad.

**MR. PEREZ:** I've got to finish this manuscript by tomorrow. And you know I can't write my books without acting them out.

**STEPHANIE:** Yep, I understand that now—even if I do sometimes wish you were a dentist or something more normal.

**MR. PEREZ** (*Waving arm toward bookcase*): Hey, don't forget it's my Ulrich Hammerschlag novels that pay for college.

**STEPHANIE:** I know, Dad. (*To LOUIS*) Hi, Louis. (*Neither LOUIS nor RONALD looks up or speaks. STEPHANIE crosses to table and passes her hand in front of LOUIS's eyes. LOUIS looks up, surprised, smiles at STEPHANIE, then points to chessboard, and returns to game. To MR. PEREZ*) Any special reason Louis is wearing a surgical mask?

**MR. PEREZ:** He's just discovered the germ theory. You know Louis—new year, new discovery.

**STEPHANIE:** Yep, little brother hasn't changed a bit. (*Ruffling LOUIS' hair, then pointing to paintings*) What are all these paintings? (*Moves her head in different directions to try to figure out how to view them*)

**MR. PEREZ:** Oh, your mom bought them at a yard sale last weekend. We haven't figured out yet where we're going to put them.

**STEPHANIE:** Oh. . .well, good luck with that. And speaking of Mom, where is she?

**MR. PEREZ** (*Going to desk*): She's still at the gym.

**STEPHANIE:** The gym! (*Surprised*) Mom is working out?

**MR. PEREZ:** Not "working out"—working. She has a job there. (*He sits at desk, starts typing.*) Sorry, honey. I just got an idea for my last chapter. (*Continues typing during following dialogue*)

**STEPHANIE:** Sure, Dad. Go ahead. (*To herself*) How am I ever going to break it to them? (*GRANDMA PEREZ enters right, bent low, wearing heavy backpack. She wears a T-shirt with RESCUE A RHINO printed on it, hiking boots with bright yellow socks. STEPHANIE runs toward her.*) Grandma! What's with the backpack? Here, let me help you. (*Helps her off with pack*)

**GRANDMA** (*Hugging STEPHANIE, then stepping back*): Stephanie, it's so good to see you. You look wonderful.

**STEPHANIE:** I feel wonderful.

**GRANDMA** (*Coyly*): Who is he this time?

**STEPHANIE** (*Excited*): I'll tell you all about him. (*Changing to solicitous tone*)

You look tired. Where have you been?

**GRANDMA:** Taking a walk down Wilshire Boulevard.

**STEPHANIE:** You walked down Wilshire in that outfit?

**GRANDMA:** Sure, why not? I'm going on a camping trip tomorrow and I have to get in shape. We don't stand still around here, young lady. (*Starts to jog in place*)

**STEPHANIE** (*Shaking her head*): I can see that! (*MRS. PEREZ, carrying shopping bag, enters right.*) Mom!

**MRS. PEREZ** (*Rushing toward STEPHANIE*): Stephanie, darling! (*They embrace.*) I'm so glad to see you! It's been so long! (*GRANDMA sits and starts to unlace her boots.*)

**STEPHANIE:** It really has been a long time. You'll probably be sick of me by the time I have to go back.

**MRS. PEREZ:** Never! I love having you home. (*Reaching into shopping bag and pulling out skull and several bones*) Now, tell me what you've been up to.

**STEPHANIE** (*Pointing to bones; horrified*): Mom, what are those?

**MRS. PEREZ:** Some bones we need as props for Hamlet. I decided to get active again in the Shakespearean Society.

**STEPHANIE:** Oh, that's great. But what I really want to hear about is this job of yours. Why didn't you tell me you were working?

**MRS. PEREZ** (*Arranging bones as she talks*): Well, I just started a couple of weeks ago, and I wanted to see how it worked out before I told you. I'm doing public relations for the Bodywise

Health Club chain, and I absolutely love it!

**STEPHANIE:** That's awesome! How'd you decide to do that?

**MRS. PEREZ:** Every time your father started a new book, I'd think about going back to work, and now I finally did it.

**MR. PEREZ** (*Starting to fence again*): Excuse me, but I've got a bit of dialogue I want to work out. (*Mutters to himself as he fences.*) **MRS. PEREZ** is arranging skull and bones on floor; **GRANDMA** is taking off her socks; **LOUIS** and **RONALD** continue to play chess.)

**STEPHANIE** (*Clearing throat loudly*): Actually, can I tell you guys something? (*No one looks at her. She raises her voice.*) Hello?! (*Everyone stops and looks at her.*) I want to tell you guys something.

**GRANDMA:** You flunked out of school.

**STEPHANIE:** No.

**MR. PEREZ:** You need money.

**STEPHANIE** (*Laughing*): I can always use some, but no, that's not it.

**MRS. PEREZ** (*Hand on heart*): You're in love.

**STEPHANIE** (*Beaming*): Well, yeah, maybe. I've met a really great guy. His name's Gabe Carson.

**MRS. PEREZ:** That's great, honey. I can't wait to hear all about him.

**STEPHANIE:** Well, he can tell you himself. (*Nervously*) He's stopping by today on his way through Los Angeles.

**MRS. PEREZ:** Oh, what a nice surprise!



**MR. PEREZ:** We'll give him a royal welcome, just as the Cloud Walkers did when Prince Nimbus returned from his enchanted pilgrimage.

**STEPHANIE:** Eh, I don't think that's necessary.

**MRS. PEREZ:** So tell us a little bit about him.

**STEPHANIE:** Gabe's an average kind of guy. His father works in a bank, his mother's a teacher, and he has a cute little sister. I wasn't sure he would (*Nervously*). . .well, understand us, (*Blurting out the following*) so I told him Dad's an accountant and Grandma crochets and Mom bakes cookies and Louis plays football.

**MR. PEREZ** (*In disbelief*): An accountant! Stephanie!

**GRANDMA** (*Rising; indignant*): Crochet! Next you'll have me playing bingo at the senior center!

**MRS. PEREZ:** I guess I understand your concern, and we'll try our best—but it won't be easy. The last time I baked cookies, you kids played Frisbee with them. Dad can't balance his checkbook, let alone be an accountant. And as for Louis (*Looks at LOUIS, eyebrows raised*)—well. . .football?

**MR. PEREZ** (*Putting down sword*): Why are you so ashamed of us?

**STEPHANIE:** Oh, Dad, I'm not. . .really, I'm not. I think you're all terrific. I wish you acted more like an average family sometimes, that's all. (*Hesitates*) Or at least that you'd try to, while Gabe's here.

**MRS. PEREZ:** Average, huh?

**GRANDMA:** Boring!

**MR. PEREZ:** Princess Rayna of Star 59 would never say such a thing to her family, and don't forget, they were iridescent. Steph, you never used to think we were unusual. What's gotten into you? College is supposed to be expanding your mind, not closing it!

**STEPHANIE:** It's just that you all come on a little strong to people who don't know you, and Gabe is bound to be a little nervous when he comes here anyway.

**GRANDMA:** I'll change my shirt, if you like. (*To herself*) Maybe I'll put on the one that says, "Live longer, eat kale."

**MRS. PEREZ:** Don't worry, Steph, we won't let you down. Let me know when Gabe comes, O.K.? I have to go look for a sheet for Hamlet's father's ghost. (*Exits. MR. PEREZ returns to his swordplay, GRANDMA puts on her backpack, and STEPHANIE picks up suitcases and racket. Her cellphone rings. She puts down suitcases and racket to answer it.*)

**STEPHANIE** (*Into phone; smiling*): Gabe, hi! (*After a moment, her smile turns into a look of dismay*) Your parents are coming? . . .And Regina? (*With false enthusiasm*) Great! Where are you now? . . . O.K. Stay on Millbrae for three more lights, take a left, and we're the big house white. . .I mean, white house. Sorry, I'm just a little nervous. Anyway, we're the only white house on the street. You can't miss it. . .See you soon. (*Hangs up. To others, in dismay*) His whole family is coming! They'll be here any minute. (*Firmly*) Now, you've got to shape up—all of you. Grandma, please take the backpack off.

**GRANDMA:** I was going upstairs anyway, to soak my blister. Otherwise, I won't be able to keep up with Harold tomorrow.



**STEPHANIE** (*Cautiously*): Who's Harold?

**MR. PEREZ**: Grandma's new boyfriend. (*GRANDMA smirks.*)

**STEPHANIE**: Grandma! Can we focus on my boyfriend for a second? The one whose entire family is going to be here in approximately 30 seconds?

**GRANDMA** (*Indignantly*): Oh, don't worry so much, Stephanie.

**STEPHANIE**: Dad? Won't you help me?

**MR. PEREZ**: Emerson said, "Go put your creed into your deeds/Nor speak with double tongue." (*He fences.*)

**STEPHANIE**: Dad, I'm not asking you to speak with a forked tongue. Just cut out the science fiction for a little while, O.K.? Please? (*MR. PEREZ continues to fence, while GRANDMA continues to stretch. STEPHANIE looks from one to the other.*) Ugh, I can't deal with you all! (*She bursts into tears and exits left, passing MRS. PEREZ, who is entering.*)

**MRS. PEREZ**: What's wrong with Steph?

**MR. PEREZ**: I guess she really cares about this Abe Larson.

**RONALD** (*Suddenly looking up from chessboard*): His name is Gabe Carson. And if you don't mind my saying so, as a good friend of the family, I think you should all help Stephanie make a good impression on the Carsons. (*During his speech, others look at him, stunned.*)

**MR. PEREZ** (*Astonished*): He speaks!

**MRS. PEREZ**: And quite eloquently, I might add.

**GRANDMA**: I guess he's right. What can we fix before they get here?

**RONALD**: Well, you could take some of the posters down and maybe replace them with these paintings? (*He and GRANDMA get frames and hang pictures on walls, upside-down. LOUIS and RONALD remove bridge table, MRS. PEREZ puts bones in pile next to sofa.*)

**MRS. PEREZ** (*To LOUIS*): You may not believe this, Louis, but most people don't wear surgical masks in their homes. Could you take it off, for Stephanie's sake? (*LOUIS nods, shrugs, removes mask. To GRANDMA*) Grandma, maybe you'd like to relax a minute and sit over here. (*Indicates straight chair*)

**RONALD**: Let me help you. (*He leads GRANDMA to chair, left, helps her sit, gets backpack, sets it behind chair. She stares as he hands her doily. She looks at it dubiously.*)

**GRANDMA**: Am I supposed to have crocheted this?

**RONALD** (*Examining doily*): Naw, anybody can tell this is machine-made.

**GRANDMA** (*Surprised*): Really? How do you know that, Ronald?

**RONALD**: I used to crochet a lot to limber up my fingers.

**GRANDMA** (*Skeptically*): For chess?

**RONALD** (*Shyly*): No, when I was younger I wanted to be a concert pianist. (*GRANDMA exchanges a surprised look with MR. PEREZ.*)

**MR. PEREZ**: Ronald, you're full of surprises today, aren't you? (*MRS. PEREZ stands back and looks at others.*)

**MRS. PEREZ**: Let's see, how do we all look? (*To MR. PEREZ*) Honey, why

don't you take off your cape? (*MR. PEREZ does so.*) Let me know when Gabe gets here. I'll be upstairs, practicing my lines. (*MRS. PEREZ exits. GRANDMA puts on socks, boots and imitates "Whistler's Mother" pose. STEPHANIE reenters.*)

**STEPHANIE:** I came back to say I was sorry for. . . (*Surprised*) Oh, you guys, you're the best! (*Looks around*) But the pictures are upside down!

**RONALD:** How can you tell?

**STEPHANIE:** Because the painters' names are at the top. (*Doorbell rings. STEPHANIE speaks excitedly.*) They're here! (*Looks around room wildly, plumping cushions, etc. Doorbell rings again.*) Coming! (*She exits right. Offstage*) Gabe! Mr. and Mrs. Carson, how nice to meet you! And Regina! Come right in! (*STEPHANIE reenters, followed by GABE, MR. and MRS. CARSON, and REGINA.*) I'd like you all to meet Henry, Karen, Gabe, and Regina. (*She introduces family and RONALD. All ad lib greetings, shake hands, etc. STEPHANIE calls out.*) Mom! They're here!

**GRANDMA** (*To CARSONS*): Won't you sit down? (*CARSONS sit on sofa.*) We're so glad you could come. We've been looking forward to your visit for a long time.

**LOUIS:** Yeah, for about five minutes.

**MR. PEREZ** (*In warning tone*): Louis!

**MRS. CARSON** (*Looking around; dubiously*): What a charming home.

**MR. CARSON** (*Looking at walls*): Fantastic art collection.

**REGINA** (*Matter-of-factly*): The pictures are upside-down.

**STEPHANIE** (*Hurriedly*): That's so we can see them from a new perspective and enjoy them more.

**MR. CARSON** (*Skeptically*): I see.

**GABE** (*Brightly*): I think it's a great idea—no different from rearranging furniture from time to time. It's like giving a room a facelift. (*Laughs nervously*)

**REGINA** (*Putting arms out, circling room, and making buzzing sounds*): If we were flies on the ceiling, the pictures would be right-side up.

**MRS. CARSON** (*Cooing at REGINA*): That's my imaginative girl!

**LOUIS** (*Gloomily*): Flies are dirty. They spread disease. They can carry germs from thirteen miles away on their legs and feet. (*All stare at LOUIS, and REGINA sits quickly and tucks her feet under her.*)

**RONALD:** Louis is an expert on the subject of flies.

**MR. PEREZ** (*Snapping fingers*): That gives me an idea! Flies! The Planet Plunderers breed flies as big as dragons and ride to earth on their backs. (*Notices everyone staring at him and trails off*)

**MRS. CARSON** (*Nervously*): The who?

**MR. PEREZ:** Planet Plunderers. Worst gang of interplanetary crooks in the universe.

**STEPHANIE** (*With forced laugh*): Dad's joking, of course.

**MR. PEREZ:** So far, they've attacked only Los Angeles. They come in under the smog and steal gas.

**MR. CARSON** (*Sarcastically*): I had no idea we were all in such danger.

**MR. PEREZ** (*Talking to himself*): On second thought, I won't use flies. (*Snapping fingers*) Giant vampire bats! That's what the Planet Plunderers ride on. But Captain Zemo sees them. (*MR. and MRS. CARSON look at each other in dismay.*)

**MRS. CARSON** (*Uncomfortably*): Honey, I think we may need to leave soon to beat rush hour. You know how LA can be! (*Signals to MR. CARSON, GABE, and REGINA*)

**STEPHANIE**: Don't go yet! (*Pauses*) My dad's a science fiction writer. He's always getting ideas for his next books.

**MR. CARSON** (*Stiffly*): Oh. . .so that explains the outburst. . .

**MRS. CARSON** (*Snobbishly*): I've never been much of a sci-fi fan. My favorite writer is Shakespeare.

**MR. CARSON** (*Snootily*): Yes, the graveyard scene in Hamlet is so satisfying.

**MRS. CARSON** (*Reciting*): "To be, or not to be; that is the question." It's so beautiful and so. . .so provocative.

**GRANDMA**: That's not the graveyard scene. (*Jumps up, goes to pile of bones, and picks up skull. Recites*) "Alas! poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio." That's the graveyard scene.

**MRS. CARSON** (*Noticing bones for first time*): What are those bones for?

**GRANDMA**: Not sure, they're my daughter-in-law's.

**MRS. CARSON** (*Queasily*): Got it. . .(*To MR. CARSON*) O.K., Henry, we really need to get going to beat that traffic.

(*Starts to get up as MRS. PEREZ, wrapped in sheet, enters. MRS. CARSON sees her, falls back on couch, clutches MR. CARSON's arm.*)

**MRS. PEREZ** (*In ghostly voice*): "My hour is almost come, When I to sulph'rous and tormenting flames/Must render up myself." (*Throws off sheet; in normal voice*) How come no one's laughing? (*CARSONS appear stunned. STEPHANIE puts hand to head.*) I'm sorry I wasn't here when you arrived, but I was practicing my part in Hamlet for my Shakespeare club. I play the Ghost. (*Looks apologetically at STEPHANIE, who glares at her*) I didn't even hear the bell.

**MRS. CARSON**: Well, you've certainly got a cast of characters here!

**GRANDMA** (*Suddenly; strapping on backpack*): Yes indeed. And I'm not going to do any more playacting. (*To CARSONS*) I'm eighty-five, I'm going backpacking in the High Sierras with my boyfriend tomorrow, and I want to get ready.

**MRS. CARSON** (*In a huff*): When my mother was eighty-five, we put her in a nursing home. . .old people are much better off that way. Well, I think it's time. (*Rising from sofa*)

**GABE**: I don't want to leave just yet, Mom. (*Admiringly*) We're just getting to know Stephanie's family.

**REGINA**: I think they're weird.

**MRS. CARSON**: Come on, Gabe. (*Gestures to door*) Goodbye, everyone, interesting to meet you! (*MR. and MRS. CARSON and REGINA exit. GABE crosses to STEPHANIE.*)

**GABE** (*Taking her hand*): I'll see you after spring break, O.K.?

**STEPHANIE** (*Upset*): O.K. (*REGINA reenters.*)

**REGINA**: Come on, lover boy. Dad says there are other fish in the sea.

**LOUIS**: That's not true. Actually, many of them are being killed off because of water pollution.

**REGINA**: Uh, O.K. (*Car horn is heard offstage.*) Come on, Gabe, Dad's getting all worked up.

**GABE**: O.K., O.K. Thanks for having us, everyone, sorry my parents are kind of duds. Don't worry, Steph. Everything will be fine. (*Kisses her on cheek. REGINA and GABE exit. STEPHANIE bursts into tears.*)

**MRS. PEREZ** (*Putting arm around STEPHANIE*): Oh, honey. He's a nice boy, but his parents. . .

**MR. PEREZ**: Yeah, seriously. Abe seems like a nice guy, but maybe a little dull? Are you sure about him?

**STEPHANIE**: His name's *Gabe*, Dad. (*Bitterly*) And he's not dull. He's normal. But it doesn't matter, because his parents will discourage him from seeing me again, thanks to all of you. You're off the wall, just like those. . . those. . . (*Sweeps arm in direction of pictures*) upside-down pictures.

**MRS. PEREZ** (*Bewildered*): But I thought we acted fine.

**GRANDMA**: I don't know about the rest of you, but I certainly did.

**LOUIS**: People should know about flies and how filthy they are. (*To RONALD*) How about some chess?

**RONALD**: An excellent idea. (*They place bridge table center, resume playing.*)

**STEPHANIE** (*Picking up bags and racket*): That's it. I'm leaving.

**ALL** (*Ad lib*): What do you mean? Where are you going? (*Etc.*)

**STEPHANIE**: Some place where there aren't any chess zombies or science fiction freaks. (*Doorbell rings.*)

**MR. PEREZ** (*Yelling*): Come in. (*Stands guard with sword*) I'm ready for you! (*GABE enters.*)

**STEPHANIE** (*Surprised*): Gabe! Did you forget something?

**GABE**: I just want you to know I don't care what my parents think. I like your family. I think they're warm and creative and exciting.

**STEPHANIE**: Thanks for saying that. But I don't want you to alienate yourself from your parents. It's obvious that they could never get to like my family. (*CARSONS reenter right.*)

**MRS. CARSON**: I'm not so sure about that, Stephanie.

**STEPHANIE** (*Surprised*): Mrs. Carson!

**MRS. CARSON** (*To PEREZES*): We came back to apologize for acting so rude. We were just nervous about meeting you. You see, we don't have a ton of friends so socializing isn't exactly our forte.

**MR. CARSON** (*Crossing center*): We were trying so hard to be normal we acted snobby and stuffy and we're really sorry. (*To MR. PEREZ*) Mr. Perez, I have a confession to make. I love science fiction! In fact, I've probably read your work, and don't know it. Do you write under another name?

**MR. PEREZ**: I do, in fact. Ulrich Hammerschlag.

**MR. CARSON** (*Awed*): I don't believe it! You wrote *Strangler's Moon* and *The Ripped-Off Planet*!

**MR. PEREZ**: That's right.

**MR. CARSON**: Terrific books! What an ending in *The Ripped-Off Planet*! This is a real honor, Mr. Hammerschlag.

**MR. PEREZ**: Call me Ulrich.

**MR. CARSON** (*Smiling*): O.K. Ulrich. (*They shake hands.*)

**MRS. PEREZ**: I'm Marilyn, by the way. I don't think I got the chance to introduce myself. (*Gestures ruefully to white sheet sitting on couch*)

**STEPHANIE** (*To CARSONS*): I'm so glad you came back. The fact is, my family was just as nervous about meeting you.

**MRS. PEREZ**: Stephanie's right. I must admit, we're not the most conventional family, but Stephanie isn't really like us.

**MR. PEREZ**: The rest of us Perezes live on our own stars, I guess.

**MR. CARSON**: I think that's wonderful, to live life the way you want, without worrying about what other people think.

**MRS. CARSON** (*Wistfully*): I agree. Most people are so afraid to be different. I used to love to go backpacking, but I haven't done it for years. (*Laughs*) Of course, I'm so out of shape now that I probably couldn't last on a trail for more than 15 minutes!

**MRS. PEREZ**: I could work up a set of exercises for you, so you could build up your endurance. I used to be a physical therapist.

**MRS. CARSON** (*Delighted*): Why, thank you, Marilyn! I'd like that.

**STEPHANIE** (*Proudly*): My mom really knows her stuff, Mrs. Carson. (*MRS. PEREZ puts her arm around STEPHANIE.*)

**GRANDMA**: I'll bet you'd like my home-made granola, Karen. It's so much better than the store-bought stuff, and cheaper to make it yourself. Would you like the recipe?

**MRS. CARSON**: Yes, that would be great! I used to make my own but it never turned out quite right.

**GRANDMA**: Well, come with me. (*GRANDMA, MRS. CARSON, and MRS. PEREZ exit.*)

**MR. PEREZ**: Henry, have you ever used a laser sword?

**MR. CARSON**: No, I'm afraid the closest thing I have to a laser sword is my hedge clipper.

**MR. PEREZ**: I don't know how you can get along without one. (*Shows sword to MR. CARSON*) Let me show you what this little thing can do. (*Demonstrates uses of sword to MR. CARSON during following dialogue*)

**STEPHANIE** (*To GABE*): I don't believe it! Ten minutes ago, we had a real battle going on here, and all of a sudden, our families are best friends.

**GABE**: I know. Isn't it great? (*Leads STEPHANIE to sofa*) And now that our families are fast friends, we have some time to relax. (*They sit on sofa and pantomime conversation. REGINA goes over to watch LOUIS and RONALD play chess.*)

**REGINA** (*To LOUIS, as he begins to*

*make a move*): Are you sure you want to do that?

**LOUIS** (*Looking up at REGINA; dubiously*): Uh. . .yeah, sure, I. . .think so. Why do you ask?

**REGINA**: Well, I can give you some advice, if you don't mind. (*LOUIS and RONALD nod, shrug.*) Watch this. (*Leans over board, begins to move chess pieces quickly, then stands, victorious*) Checkmate!

**RONALD** (*Awed*): Wow, how did you do that? (*RONALD pulls up a chair for REGINA to sit, and she explains her chess moves to RONALD and LOUIS in pantomime.*)

**MR. PEREZ** (*Suddenly; clapping hand to forehead*): I've got it!

**MR. CARSON**: Got what?

**MR. PEREZ**: The ending for my book. The Planet Plunderers are cloning all over the place. Zemo and his crew no sooner kill one, than fifty more spring up. Then Zemo remembers their secret fear.

**MR. CARSON** (*Excitedly*): What is it?

**MR. PEREZ**: Heat. At high temperatures, they turn into glass.

**MR. CARSON**: How does Zemo do it?

**MR. PEREZ**: Flame-throwers from an ancient war museum. As Zemo and his troops take off for Planet Earth on their spaceship, they look down for one short minute at the glass menagerie spread out below.

**MR. CARSON**: Wow! That's fantastic! (*They talk aside.*)

**STEPHANIE** (*To GABE*): Aren't they something? As my dad would say, people are just Unidentified Flying Objects until they get to know each other. I think our problems are over.

**GABE**: Good. (*Nudging her*) Because I don't know about you, but I like where this is going. (*STEPHANIE takes GABE's hand and leans into him as curtain closes.*)

**THE END**

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## PRODUCTION NOTES

### Just Plain Folks

**CHARACTERS**: 5 male; 5 female.

**PLAYING TIME**: 25 minutes.

**COSTUMES**: Mr. Perez wears futuristic cloak, helmet. Louis, surgical mask, white gloves. Grandma, T-shirt reading, **RESCUE A RHINO**, yellow socks and hiking boots. Regina, dress with sash, bows in hair. All others, modern clothes.

**PROPERTIES**: Laser sword (cardboard covered with foil or painted fluorescent green); tennis racket; two backpacks; suitcase; shopping bag holding skull and bones; sheet.

**SETTING**: Perez living room. Several science fiction posters are on the wall. Straight chair and end table covered with crocheted doily are left; bridge table with two chairs and sofa are center; bookcase filled with paperbacks and desk with computer and chair are right. A few abstract paintings are propped up against wall, chairs, etc. Exit outside is right; exit to other rooms is left.

**LIGHTING**: No special effects.

**SOUND**: Cell phone ring; doorbell; car horn.

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Dramatized Classic (Upper/Middle Grades)

# Pride and Prejudice

An adaptation of Jane Austen's classic 19th-century story of love and respect. . .

Adapted by Olive J. Morley

## Characters

ELIZABETH BENNET

JANE BENNET

MARY BENNET

KITTY BENNET

LYDIA BENNET

MRS. BENNET, their mother

MR. BENNET, their father

MAID

MR. BINGLEY

MR. DARCY

LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH

## SCENE 1

**TIME:** *Early nineteenth century.*

**SETTING:** *The Bennet parlor in rural England. Sofa is up center and chairs, small tables, etc., are placed around stage. Window is left; exit right. Cabinet upstage holds small bottle.*

**AT RISE:** *JANE and ELIZABETH are sitting on sofa. JANE is doing embroidery; ELIZABETH is sketching. MARY sits apart, reading.*

**JANE** (*Gently, leaning over ELIZABETH's shoulder*): That's good, Lizzie. (*Looks carefully at sketch*) Why, it's Sir William Lucas to the very life!

**ELIZABETH** (*Laughing*): Yes, Jane, it's Sir William breathing the air on his estate, where he has retired to think with pleasure on his own importance!

**JANE** (*Scolding*): Lizzie! Do you ever cease from laughing at people?

**ELIZABETH:** I hope I never ridicule what is wise and good, but follies and nonsense do divert me, and I laugh at them whenever I can.

**MARY** (*Primly*): An unbridled sense of humor can sometimes lead to great trouble. (*Shrill laughter and talking are heard offstage.*)

**JANE:** Lydia and Kitty are here at



last! What can have kept them so long at Aunt Philips's? (*KITTY and LYDIA enter, excitedly.*)

**LYDIA:** You will never guess what news we have! The Devonshire regiment is stationed in Meryton!

**ELIZABETH** (*Bored*): What, all that excitement over a few soldiers?

**LYDIA:** You can turn up your nose if you like, Lizzie. There'll be all the more partners at the Assembly Balls for Kitty and me! We've met and spoken with half a dozen already! There was a charming Mr. Wickham.

**JANE** (*Shocked*): But, Lydia, Kitty! Surely you don't mean you have spoken to these gentlemen without a proper introduction!

**KITTY:** Oh, Aunt Philips introduced us to Wickham.

**LYDIA:** He's simply delightful! So dashing! (*Rambles on*) And he introduced us to the whole group. And they're coming to the next Assembly. I've never been so complimented in my life and if it goes on like this, I do believe Kitty and I will be married before any of you three!

**ELIZABETH** (*With sarcasm*): That would be a triumph, indeed!

**LYDIA** (*Not noticing the sarcasm*): Yes, wouldn't it! And you can't think what Mr. Wickham said to me, Kitty. (*She whispers. They giggle loudly. MRS. BENNET enters left, in a great flurry.*)

**MRS. BENNET:** Girls, girls, what do you think! Netherfield Park is to be taken on a lease, by a gentleman called Mr. Bingley, with an income of five thousand pounds a year!

**JANE:** How very pleasant to have a new neighbor! And a rich one!

**MARY:** And a gentleman!

**KITTY:** Is he married, Mama?

**MRS. BENNET:** Of course not! What would be the point of my being so interested if he were already settled? Just think of it, girls—five thousand a year, Netherfield, and unmarried! I feel quite unnerved at the thought of it! Bring me my smelling salts, Jane. (*She sinks into chair. JANE quickly fetches bottle from cabinet. ELIZABETH fans her mother. MARY returns to her book.*)

**JANE** (*Administering salts*): Dear Mama, how sweetly solicitous you are for our welfare.

**MRS. BENNET:** I've good reason to be, with five daughters, and your father required by law to leave his estate to that odious clergyman, Mr. Collins. And all of you without husbands!

**ELIZABETH** (*Smiling*): But, Mama, we are all still reasonably young. There is surely no need for any of us to consider spinsterhood as permanent yet!

**JANE:** Do not be anxious on our account, Mama.

**MRS. BENNET:** But it behooves me to be anxious! Go to your father, Jane, and tell him that he must call on Mr. Bingley immediately.

**JANE:** But would it not seem that we were pushing ourselves?

**MRS. BENNET:** Nonsense. It is your father's duty as a neighbor to call, and if we don't push ourselves, Lady Lucas will be there before us. I know her, the designing woman! She has her daughter



ter Charlotte still on her hands at twenty-seven. There is not a moment to lose. (*Reluctantly JANE exits.*)

**MARY:** Think of it!

**LYDIA:** Unmarried!

**KITTY:** And five thousand a year!

**ELIZABETH:** But Mr. Bingley might not be attracted to any of us, and in any case, he cannot marry us all!

**MRS. BENNET:** If he marries one of you, I'd be quite satisfied. And as to not being attractive to him, why you know perfectly well a sensible girl can marry whom she chooses.

**ELIZABETH:** But we might not like him.

**MRS. BENNET:** It would be your duty to like a man with an income that size. You are being selfish, Lizzie. (*Pauses*) What is taking Jane so long? (*Calls*) Jane! Jane! (*JANE enters.*) Well, tell us. When is your father going to call on Mr. Bingley?

**JANE:** My father says that he sees no occasion for calling, but that you may go, and take us all.

**MRS. BENNET** (*In disbelief*): I go? But that is impossible! What reason did he give?

**JANE** (*Puzzled*): I think he must have been joking, really. He sent this strange message: "You can all go by yourselves if you like, and I will send him a few lines to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying whichever of my daughters he chooses, though I must throw in a good word for my Lizzie!" (*ELIZABETH bursts out laughing.*)

**MRS. BENNET** (*Indignantly*): Then he

will not call. Oh, have you ever heard of such a thing? That fate could have sent me such a husband as Mr. Bennet! Here, I have been planning and striving to introduce you to gentlemen of prospects, and the moment one comes into the neighborhood, he will not call. It's too vexatious.

**KITTY** and **LYDIA** (*Ad lib*): Then we shan't even meet him! And any one of us might have lived at Netherfield Park! (*Etc.*)

**MRS. BENNET:** I will go myself and talk your father into reason. (*She rises and bustles to door, then stops midway.*) Elizabeth, you can always get round your father. Do, do, my love! Tell him you particularly wish to meet Mr. Bingley.

**ELIZABETH:** Indeed, Mama, I do not, but I will go if you wish. (*ELIZABETH exits left. MRS. BENNET paces, fanning herself.*)

**MRS. BENNET** (*Tearfully*): Always in his library reading. I declare, such selfishness passes all bounds! (*She bursts into loud sobs. JANE, KITTY, LYDIA, and MARY gather round, comforting her. ELIZABETH appears at doorway.*)

**ELIZABETH** (*Coming downstage*): Indeed, there is no need for this grief, dear mother. (*MR. BENNET enters behind ELIZABETH.*)

**MR. BENNET:** Indeed not, Mrs. Bennet. Your concern is certainly unnecessary, since I called on Mr. Bingley yesterday.

**MRS. BENNET** (*Recovering; wildly excited*): You called on him?

**LYDIA:** Yesterday?

**KITTY:** *Really* called, Papa?

**MARY:** On Mr. Bingley? *(To each question MR. BENNET nods, smiling.)*

**MRS. BENNET:** Heaven be praised! Dear, dear Mr. Bennet. *(To girls)* Girls, whoever had such a husband. Have not I always told you how unselfish your father is?

**LYDIA** *(Excitedly)*: Tell us, Papa, what is Mr. Bingley like?

**MR. BENNET:** Lydia, my dear, Mr. Bingley is a thoroughly likable, up-standing young man, and I dare say, he will be very glad to see you all. Now that this confusion seems to be sufficiently cleared up, I will return to the library. *(Exits)*

**MRS. BENNET** *(Overjoyed)*: Dear Mr. Bennet—always planning for your welfare! *(To JANE)* Jane, we must arrange a dinner party. *(Sound of horses' hooves is heard offstage. BENNETS look questioningly at one another.)*

**ELIZABETH:** Who could that be? *(They rush to window.)*

**MRS. BENNET:** It must be Mr. Bingley!

**MARY** *(Looking out window)*: And who is that with him?

**ELIZABETH:** Papa said that he has a friend from Derbyshire staying with him, a very tall man with a proud bearing. Mr. Darcy, I think he is called.

**MRS. BENNET** *(Eagerly)*: Not Mr. Darcy of Pemberley! Girls, we are made! Why, he has ten thousand a year!

**MARY, KITTY, and LYDIA** *(Craning necks eagerly to look out window; ad*

*lib)*: Ten thousand! My goodness! Let me see him! *(Etc.)*

**ELIZABETH** *(Disdainfully)*: If he had double ten thousand, I should not fancy such an arrogant-looking man.

**MRS. BENNET** *(Scolding)*: Don't be ridiculous, Lizzie.

**ELIZABETH:** But, Mama, Papa told me that he was eaten up with pride of family. He had a haughty, disdainful manner, and would scarcely speak to him.

**MRS. BENNET:** All I can say is, Lizzie, if you give way to so much prejudice, you'll never get a husband.

**KITTY** *(Pushing LYDIA aside)*: Don't push so, Lydia. Let me see.

**JANE** *(Restraining her)*: Kitty, don't pull the curtain. They may see us watching.

**MRS. BENNET:** Girls, do you realize they will be here any moment? There, they are dismounting. Kitty, go instantly and do your hair. You, Mary, go and change into something prettier. Lydia, pick up those bonnets and go tidy yourself. *(All scramble to pick up needlework, settle cushions, etc. Finally MRS. BENNET, MARY, KITTY, and LYDIA bustle out in a flurry.)*

**JANE** *(Looking again through window)*: Do you like the looks of him, Lizzie?

**ELIZABETH:** Who? Mr. Bingley? He has an easy, well-bred carriage. Yes, I think I shall like him.

**JANE:** And Mr. Darcy?

**ELIZABETH:** I wish he were not so proud.

**JANE:** They are being shown in. (*She turns from window.*) Lizzie, is my hair tidy? (*Smooths hair with her hands*)

**ELIZABETH:** Jane, you are blushing! I shall begin to think that Mama's hopes may be realized!

**JANE** (*Embarrassed*): Lizzie! Why, I have not even met him! And you looked with some interest at Mr. Darcy!

**ELIZABETH:** He looks very intelligent, and is certainly handsome. I might have looked with interest at him, if he were not so proud. (*Deliberately and clearly*) I do not like proud men. (*MAID opens door wide, and enters.*)

**MAID** (*Announcing*): Mr. Bingley! Mr. Darcy! (*ELIZABETH and JANE turn toward door, and curtsy deeply as curtain falls.*)

\* \* \*

## SCENE 2

**TIME:** A few weeks later.

**SETTING:** An Assembly Ball. Scene may be played before curtain.

**BEFORE RISE:** Dance music is heard. JANE and MR. BINGLEY enter, start to cross stage, stop center.

**MR. BINGLEY:** Miss Bennet, I am delighted that I have come to make Netherfield Park my home. (*Gazes at her; meaningfully*) I never expected to find such beauty here in the country.

**JANE** (*Embarrassed*): Why, Mr. Bingley, I dare say all our lives will be enriched by your presence here. (*They continue left and exit. After a moment, ELIZABETH and MR. DARCY enter right, talking.*)

**ELIZABETH** (*Archly*): It is your turn to say something now, Mr. Darcy. I

talked about the dance, and you ought to make some kind of remark on the size of the room or the number of couples.

**DARCY:** Do you talk by rule only, at balls such as this, Miss Elizabeth?

**ELIZABETH:** Sometimes. One must speak a little, you know. It would look odd to be entirely silent for half an hour together, and yet for the advantage of some, conversation ought to be so arranged that they may say as little as possible.

**DARCY:** Are you consulting your own feelings in the present case, or do you imagine that you are gratifying mine?

**ELIZABETH:** Both, for I have noticed a great similarity in the turn of our minds. We are both of an unsocial, taciturn disposition, unwilling to speak, unless we expect to say something that will amaze the whole room. But I shouldn't compare us. Perhaps you just do not enjoy the company of ladies.

**DARCY** (*Haughtily*): Miss Elizabeth, in the whole range of my acquaintance, I cannot boast of half a dozen ladies who are really accomplished.

**ELIZABETH:** Then, Mr. Darcy, you must expect a great deal in your idea of an accomplished woman.

**DARCY:** Yes, Miss Elizabeth, I do. A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and all the modern languages to deserve the word "accomplished." She must also possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions.

**ELIZABETH** (*Amused*): I am no longer

surprised at your knowing only six accomplished women, Mr. Darcy. I rather wonder now at your knowing any. I must say, I don't have in my character the vanity and pride that you do.

**DARCY:** Ah, vanity is a weakness, indeed. But, pride—where there is real superiority of mind, pride will always be a good regulation. *(Pauses)* Miss Elizabeth, as I have pride in my intellectual powers, so too do I have pride in my feelings for you.

**ELIZABETH** *(Puzzled)*: Your feelings for me, Mr. Darcy? Whatever do you mean?

**DARCY** *(With difficulty)*: In vain have I struggled to keep them restrained, but I can no longer. *(Pauses)* Miss Elizabeth, you must allow me to tell you how ardently I love you.

**ELIZABETH** *(Astonished)*: Mr. Darcy!

**DARCY:** You are surprised. Yes, I confess, so am I. I realize that there will be obstacles—such a marriage would be beneath me. I have considered your background fully, and I am aware of much that is lacking. But I love you. I wish to marry you in spite of this.

**ELIZABETH** *(With irritation)*: Mr. Darcy, in cases such as this the usual custom is to express gratitude for the sentiments avowed. If I could feel gratitude, I would now thank you. But I cannot. From the very beginning of my acquaintance with you, your manners impressed me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others. Mr. Darcy, you are the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed upon to marry.

**DARCY** *(Taken aback)*: I perfectly comprehend your feelings, madam, and

have now only to be ashamed of what my own have been. *(Abruptly)* Forgive me for taking up so much of your time, and accept my best wishes for your health and happiness. Good day. *(ELIZABETH watches as he exits left. Then she exits right.)*

\* \* \*

### SCENE 3

**TIME:** *Some months later.*

**SETTING:** *Same as Scene 1. Small bottle is on table.*

**AT RISE:** *MRS. BENNET is lying on sofa. JANE and MARY are fanning her. ELIZABETH stands by window, alternately looking out and pacing.*

**ELIZABETH:** If only we knew something! If Papa would only write to say where he is, if there has been any sign of them!

**MRS. BENNET:** It's just like your father not to write. He has no consideration for my nerves—none.

**JANE** *(Gently)*: Mama dear, he was distracted with grief and anxiety, like you, when he heard of Lydia's elopement with Mr. Wickham. His silence means there is no news.

**MARY:** Has Mr. Wickham any prospects at all?

**MRS. BENNET:** You know Mr. Wickham has no prospects—a penniless ne'er-do-well.

**ELIZABETH:** And a thousand pounds in debt!

**MRS. BENNET** *(Moaning)*: Oh, my poor Lydia! What is to be done?

**ELIZABETH** *(Hopelessly)*: Nothing can be done. Unless Father discovers their whereabouts in time.

**MRS. BENNET:** My darling Lydia! Eloping to Gretna Green, with no family standing by and no proper clothes for her wedding! No money. Oh, my poor baby!

**ELIZABETH** (*Sharply*): Lydia is far from a baby, Mama, and she has been selfish and thoughtless to us all by running off like this.

**MARY** (*Primly*): Alas, yes! But we may draw from the event this useful lesson—that one false step from a female involves her in endless ruin.

**ELIZABETH:** Oh, Mary, how can you moralize at such a moment! (*Paces again*) Kitty should have told us what she knew.

**MRS. BENNET:** Kitty may know more. (*Sitting up abruptly and calling*) Kitty! Come here this minute! (*KITTY enters sulkily, holding a book.*)

**KITTY:** What is it, Mama? (*Looks around*) How you all take on so! I wish I were with Lydia. We'd be having fun.

**MRS. BENNET:** Kitty, put down that novel, you heartless girl! How could you know of this and say nothing?

**KITTY:** Lydia said I wasn't to tell.

**MRS. BENNET:** You wicked girl, not to tell your parents! (*Sitting up*) Oh, that I had not such a husband, such children. Here's Jane deserted in her prime by that fellow Bingley, when I had all but ordered the wines for the engagement party. And now Lydia runs off with a penniless soldier and disgraces the whole family. This will be all over the neighborhood, and it will give that conceited Mr. Darcy even more cause to look down his nose at us. (*She lies back.*)

**ELIZABETH:** Mr. Darcy—yes. (*Goes to window; sighs*) He certainly will have cause now to consider our family beneath contempt. And I have always suspected that he persuaded Mr. Bingley to leave here to keep him from you, Jane.

**JANE:** Do not let that worry you, Lizzie.

**ELIZABETH** (*Facing JANE*): The trouble with Mr. Darcy is that he is all arrogance and pride, and his possessions and inheritance have given him a sense of his own importance far exceeding its worth. (*Looks out window*)

**MRS. BENNET:** It's just as well you don't admire him, Lizzie, now that all this has happened.

**ELIZABETH** (*Suddenly excited*): Why, there is a carriage coming up the drive, with a lady in it! Who can it be? (*JANE, KITTY, and MARY join her.*) Lady Catherine de Bourgh! Mr. Darcy's aunt! What can bring her here?

**MRS. BENNET** (*Starting up*): Good gracious me! Girls, come and set this sofa to rights. Mary, take away those medicines. Jane, help me with my hair. Quick, a hairpin. Kitty, tidy up that corner. (*They run around doing her bidding.*) Dear me! Of all times for Lady Catherine to call! (*MAID enters.*)

**MAID** (*Announcing*): Lady Catherine de Bourgh. (*BENNETS spring to attention, and curtsy deeply. MAID exits. LADY CATHERINE enters, looks about haughtily. BENNETS make deeper curtsies. Only ELIZABETH seems less obsequious.*)

**ELIZABETH** (*Going forward to greet LADY CATHERINE*): Good morning,

Lady Catherine. We are pleased to see you in Hertfordshire.

**LADY CATHERINE** (*Distantly*): Good morning. (*Disdainfully*) You have a very small park here.

**MRS. BENNET**: It is nothing in comparison to yours, my lady, I dare say.

**LADY CATHERINE**: This must be a most inconvenient sitting room for summer evenings; the windows are full west.

**MRS. BENNET**: Oh, we never sit here after dinner. Would your ladyship like some refreshment?

**LADY CATHERINE**: Thank you, no. Miss Bennet (*Looking at ELIZABETH*), I should like a word with you alone.

**MRS. BENNET**: Oh, certainly, your ladyship. Lizzie will be charmed to entertain you. Come, girls. (*She exits with KITTY, JANE, and MARY.*)

**LADY CATHERINE**: You can be at no loss, Miss Bennet, to understand the reason for my journey hither. Your own heart, your own conscience, must tell you why I come.

**ELIZABETH**: Indeed, you are mistaken, madam. I cannot account for the honor of seeing you here. (*Gestures to sofa*) Please sit down. (*They sit.*)

**LADY CATHERINE** (*Angrily*): Miss Bennet, a report of a most alarming nature reached me two days ago. I was told that not only was your sister Jane on the point of being advantageously married (*ELIZABETH gasps*), but that you, Miss Elizabeth Bennet, would, in all likelihood, be soon afterwards united with my nephew, Mr. Darcy! Though I know it must be a scandalous falsehood, I instantly resolved on setting off for this place,

that I might make my sentiments known to you.

**ELIZABETH** (*Coyly*): If you believed it impossible to be true, I wonder you took the trouble of coming so far. What was your ladyship's purpose?

**LADY CATHERINE**: To insist on having the report of your engagement to Mr. Darcy universally contradicted at once!

**ELIZABETH**: Your coming to see me will be rather a confirmation of it, if, indeed, such a report is in existence.

**LADY CATHERINE**: What! Do you then pretend to be ignorant that it has been spread abroad?

**ELIZABETH**: I never heard that it was.

**LADY CATHERINE** (*Haughtily*): Miss Bennet, I insist on being satisfied. Has my nephew made you an offer of marriage?

**ELIZABETH**: Your ladyship has declared it impossible.

**LADY CATHERINE**: Miss Bennet, I have not been accustomed to such impudence. I am almost his nearest relation and am entitled to know all his dearest concerns.

**ELIZABETH** (*Tartly*): But you are not entitled to know mine.

**LADY CATHERINE**: Let me be rightly understood. This match, to which you have the presumption to aspire, can never take place. No, never. Mr. Darcy is engaged to my daughter. (*Rising triumphantly*) Now, what have you to say?

**ELIZABETH** (*Coolly, rising*): Only this: If he is so, you can have no reason to suppose he will make an offer to me.

(*LADY CATHERINE is taken aback a moment.*) But if he does, I shall certainly not be kept from accepting by knowing that his aunt wishes him to marry Miss de Bourgh. If I am his choice, why may I not accept him?

**LADY CATHERINE** (*Hotly*): Because honor, decorum, prudence, nay, interest, forbid it. Yes, Miss Bennet, interest. For do not expect to be noticed by his family and friends. You will be censured, slighted, despised. (*Triumphantly*) Your name will never even be mentioned by any of us!

**ELIZABETH** (*Sarcastically*): These are heavy misfortunes. But the wife of Mr. Darcy must have such extraordinary sources of happiness attached to her situation that she could, on the whole, have no cause to complain.

**LADY CATHERINE** (*Angrily*): Obstinate, headstrong girl! If you were sensible of your own good, you would not wish to quit your own sphere.

**ELIZABETH**: In marrying your nephew, I should not quit that sphere. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter. So far we are equal.

**LADY CATHERINE** (*Leaning forward and speaking sharply*): Who was your mother? Who are your uncles and aunts?

**ELIZABETH**: If Mr. Darcy does not object to them, they can be of no concern to you.

**LADY CATHERINE**: Tell me once and for all, are you engaged to him?

**ELIZABETH** (*After a short pause*): I am not. (*LADY CATHERINE smiles, well pleased.*)

**LADY CATHERINE**: And will you prom-

ise me never to enter into such an engagement?

**ELIZABETH**: I will make no such promise.

**LADY CATHERINE**: You are, then, resolved to have him?

**ELIZABETH**: I have said no such thing. I shall act for my own happiness, without reference to you, or to any person so wholly unconnected with me.

**LADY CATHERINE**: Do not imagine, Miss Bennet, that your ambition will ever be gratified. (*Starts toward door, then turns*) I am most seriously displeased! (*She exits. ELIZABETH stares after her. She sits, as JANE enters.*)

**JANE**: Lizzie, what did she want?

**ELIZABETH** (*Stunned*): She came to tell me that Mr. Darcy wants to marry me, and she is trying to prevent it.

**JANE** (*Astonished*): Mr. Darcy—marry you? But is it true?

**ELIZABETH**: It is, oh, it is! (*Excited*) I didn't know he still loved me, and she has been so kind as to tell me.

**JANE**: *Still* loves you! Lizzie, Lizzie, do explain!

**ELIZABETH**: Mr. Darcy offered once to marry me, and I refused him.

**JANE** (*Shocked*): Lizzie! But why did you refuse?

**ELIZABETH**: He made no secret that he despised my family. I could not accept him, knowing this. But I did not think he still cared. And now, in spite of all this disgrace with Lydia, it is obvious that he does! And Mr. Bingley loves



you—intends to marry you!

**JANE** (*Overjoyed*): If only it is true!

**ELIZABETH**: That is the glorious, wonderful thing. It must be true, or she would not have come all this way to try to prevent it! (*MRS. BENNET enters.*)

**MRS. BENNET**: Upon my word, what an odd manner her ladyship has. I suppose she had nothing important to say to you, Lizzie?

**ELIZABETH** (*With a smile*): No—nothing important! (*Noisy sounds of excitement are heard offstage. MARY, KITTY, and LYDIA enter.*)

**JANE** and **ELIZABETH** (*Together*): Lydia!

**MRS. BENNET**: Oh, my darling child! I thought you were lost forever! (*She embraces LYDIA, who is immediately surrounded by others.*) To think of it! I have you back, and I thought you had run away with Wickham and had one of those disgraceful Gretna Green marriages with none of us there!

**LYDIA**: But I *am* married to Wickham, Mama! Look! (*Proudly displays wedding ring*) But it was in a London church with Papa and Mr. Darcy there.

**ALL**: Mr. Darcy?

**LYDIA**: Oh, dear, now I've let the cat out of the bag, and Wickham said I wasn't to tell, for Darcy would be furious if Lizzie ever knew.

**MRS. BENNET**: Lizzie?

**JANE**: Knew what? Lydia, you must explain.

**LYDIA**: Well, we were going to Gretna Green, but Wickham has tons of debts and couldn't afford the coach fare. So we went to his old lodgings—to think it out—and Mr. Darcy turned up. He'd searched high and low for us, he said. He settled Wickham's debts and gave him some money, to be settled on me—about a thousand pounds, I believe—and arranged the wedding and let Papa know. It was all lovely, and great fun, and only spoiled by Mr. Darcy looking so grave, the stodgy man.

**ELIZABETH** (*Gravely*): Lydia, you don't seem to realize quite how much you owe to Mr. Darcy.

**LYDIA**: Oh, don't look so serious, Lizzie! You're as bad as he is.

**MRS. BENNET** (*Embracing her*): My darling child! To think I've my youngest daughter married, and only sixteen, too!

**LYDIA**: Oh, I must show the servants my wedding ring! (*She links arms with KITTY and MARY and they exit.*)

**MRS. BENNET**: Heavens! I must begin a search for suitable lodgings for Lydia! (*As she exits*) So much to do! I shall go distracted! (*Exits. JANE and ELIZABETH look at each other, and laugh.*)

**JANE**: Mama is overjoyed. I dare say she may faint from excitement, so I'd better follow her around with smelling salts! (*They laugh.*)

**ELIZABETH**: I don't understand why Mr. Darcy has done this for us.

**JANE** (*Tenderly taking ELIZABETH's hands*): Because he loves you, Lizzie dear. (*JANE exits. ELIZABETH looks wistfully out window. MAID enters and stands at door.*)

**MAID:** Miss Bennet, Mr. Darcy is here to see you. (*She exits. DARCY enters.*)

**ELIZABETH** (*Surprised; curtsying*): Why, Mr. Darcy!

**DARCY:** Miss Elizabeth, it is good to see you again.

**ELIZABETH:** It is good to see you. (*Impulsively*) Mr. Darcy, ever since I found out about your unexampled kindness to my poor sister, I have been most anxious to tell you how grateful I feel. Let me thank you again and again, in the name of my family.

**DARCY:** If you will thank me, let it be for yourself alone. I shall not attempt to deny that the wish of giving you happiness led me on. (*Hesitates*) Elizabeth, my—my feelings and wishes about you are unchanged. But one word from you will silence me on this subject forever.

**ELIZABETH:** Mr. Darcy, my feelings have undergone a change.

**DARCY** (*Eagerly*): Then it is true! Just as I came up the drive, I saw my aunt,

Lady Catherine, and she told me what had passed between you. I knew enough of your disposition to be certain that if you had absolutely, irrevocably decided against me, you would have acknowledged it to Lady Catherine frankly and openly.

**ELIZABETH** (*Laughing*): Yes, you know that after abusing you so abominably to your face, I certainly have no scruple in abusing you to all your relations.

**DARCY:** What did you say of me that I did not deserve? You called me proud, I believe. And so I was. But you, my dear Elizabeth, have humbled me. I hope I have proved that to you.

**ELIZABETH:** And I, dear Darcy, was prejudiced. But no longer. (*They gaze at each other.*)

**DARCY:** Then what I have hoped for all these months has come true. I shall go right in and speak to your father. The sooner I am your husband, the better. (*DARCY and ELIZABETH hold hands and start to exit as curtain closes.*)

**THE END**

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## PRODUCTION NOTES

### Pride and Prejudice

**CHARACTERS:** 8 female; 3 male.

**PLAYING TIME:** 35 minutes.

**COSTUMES:** Early 19th century English. Kitty, Lydia, and Mrs. Bennet wear fussy, frivolous clothes. Elizabeth and Jane are more tastefully dressed. Mary's clothes are staid. In Scene 2, Jane and Elizabeth wear ball gowns, jewelry. Lydia wears wedding ring in Scene 3.

**PROPERTIES:** Embroidery, sketch book and pencil, books, fan.

**SETTING:** Scenes 1 and 3: The Bennet parlor, in rural England, furnished in the style of the period. Sofa is up center, and other chairs, small tables, etc., are placed around room. Window is left; exit is right. Cabinet upstage holds small bottle (smelling salts). Scene 2, Assembly Ball, may be played before curtain.

**LIGHTING:** No special effects.

**SOUND:** Horses' hooves and dance music, as indicated.

# Old MacDonald's Farmyard Follies

Lots of singing as the farm comes to life with a cast of old-time favorites. . .

by Lu Sampson

## Characters

OLD MACDONALD

MRS. MACDONALD, *his wife*

LITTLE BOY BLUE

FOUR SHEEP

FOUR COWS

MISTRESS MARY

OLD WOMAN WHO LIVED IN A

SHOE

EIGHT CHILDREN

**TIME:** *The present.*

**SETTING:** *Old MacDonald's farmyard. Large haystack is at right (or may be painted on backdrop). Painting of farmhouse is on backdrop, left. Sign reading, HELP WANTED, is leaning against wall. Bench is left.*

**AT RISE:** *OLD MACDONALD is raking, stopping often to wipe his brow with large red bandanna. He faces audience, and leans on rake.*

**OLD MACDONALD** (*Singing to tune of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm"*):

Old MacDonald is my name

What a busy life!

On this farm I live and work

With my loving wife.

With hard work here (*Gestures left*)

And hard work there. (*Gestures right*)

Here some work (*Gestures left*), there some work (*Gestures right*),

Everywhere some work, work.

Times are tough down on the farm,

Too much toil and strife.

(*Does a little dance step, tips hat, and bows low. Offstage, sounds of mooing cows and bleating sheep are heard.*)

**MRS. MACDONALD** (*Shouting off left*):

Get out of there! Away from that corn!

Get out of the meadow, I say! (*MRS. MACDONALD runs in, goes to OLD MACDONALD.*)

Paw, come as quickly as you can! Those sheep of yours are getting into the meadow, and those pesky cows are on their way to the cornfield. You have to get out there and chase them back where they belong! (*OLD MACDONALD shakes head, rolls up sleeves, and runs off left, as more bleating and mooing sounds are heard.*)

**OLD MacDONALD** (*Offstage*): Get out of there, all of you! Out of that meadow, out of the corn! Move along!

**MRS. MacDONALD** (*Facing audience and singing to the tune of "Old MacDonald"*):

I am Old MacDonald's wife.

I am busy, too.

On this farm I live and work,  
Sometimes feeling blue.

With hard work here (*Gestures left*)

And hard work there. (*Gestures right*)

Here some work (*Gestures left*), there  
some work (*Gestures right*),

Everywhere some work, work.

Times are tough down on the farm,

I know what to do!

(*Twirls around, curtseys. OLD MacDONALD reenters, walking wearily and wiping his brow.*)

**OLD MacDONALD**: I declare, Maw, there is more work on this farm than one man can handle. I'm all tuckered out! (*Sits on bench*)

**MRS. MacDONALD** (*Patting his back*): There, there, Paw. I have a good idea. I think we need to advertise for some hired help to watch those sheep and cows. (*Picks up sign leaning against wall*) I made this sign yesterday. Read it and tell me what you think.

**OLD MacDONALD** (*Reading aloud*): "Help wanted. Old MacDonald's farm needs a hard-working person to help watch sheep and cows. Good wages. Only dependable applicants need apply." (*Looks up; brightens*) Say, this just might work! I'll hang the sign over here and see what happens. (*Hangs sign up right*)

**OLD MacDONALD** and **MRS. MacDONALD** (*Facing audience and singing together*):

We don't want to leave this farm—  
Here we want to stay.

If only we could find some help,  
Life would be O.K.

With a little help here and a little help  
there,

Here some help, there some help  
Everywhere some help, help.

Times are tough down on the farm,

It's all work, no play.

(*They dance off left. LITTLE BOY BLUE enters right, blowing horn. He stops, reads sign.*)

**LITTLE BOY BLUE** (*Facing audience; reciting*):

I'm Little Boy Blue,

I could blow my horn. (*Blows horn*)

Keep the sheep from the meadow

And the cows from the corn.

And maybe sometimes when not  
watching the sheep,

I'd be under the haystack, catching  
some sleep!

(*OLD MacDONALD enters left.*) Good day, sir. How are you? My name is Little Boy Blue, and I'd like to apply for the job as sheep and cow watcher. I'd do my very best, sir. If the sheep or cows tried to get out, I'd just blow my horn—like this. (*Blows horn loudly*)

**OLD MacDONALD** (*Enthusiastically*): Young feller, I like a boy with ambition! The job is yours. Besides, I know your dear old mother could use the money. I hear she got laid off from her job at the Cinderella Shoe Factory. (*Points finger*) Now, just remember—keep those sheep out of the meadow and those cows out of the corn. (*Exits. LITTLE BOY BLUE walks up and down stage, blowing horn often, sometimes looking off down left. He walks more and more slowly, rubbing eyes and yawning, and finally, pauses by haystack.*)

**LITTLE BOY BLUE** (*Wearily*): I didn't know this would be such hard work! Maybe I can just sit down here for a minute and take a little rest. (*Sits by*

*haystack, yawns, then lies down, falls asleep. SHEEP enter left, form line at center, facing audience.)*

**SHEEP** (*Singing to the tune of "Old MacDonald"*):

This is Old MacDonald's farm,  
Baa, baa, baa, baa, baa. (*SHEEP dance, stepping to the left and kicking up their legs.*)

And on this farm he keeps us sheep,  
Baa, baa, baa, baa, baa. (*SHEEP step right and kick, as before.*)

With a "don't go here," and a "don't go there."

Here a no, there a no,

Everywhere a no, no.

Let's just run away from here.

Baa, baa, baa, baa, baa.

(*SHEEP dance over to LITTLE BOY BLUE, look and laugh, tiptoe off right. COWS enter down left, form line at center, and sing to the tune of "Old MacDonald."*)

**COWS:**

This is Old MacDonald's farm,  
Moo, moo, moo, moo, moo. (*All take dance step to left, kick.*)

And on this farm he keeps us cows,  
Moo, moo, moo, moo, moo. (*Dance to right, kick*)

With a "don't go here," and a "don't go there."

Here a no, there a no,

Everywhere a no, no.

Let's just run away from here.

Moo, moo, moo, moo, moo.

(*COWS dance over to LITTLE BOY BLUE, look at him, and laugh, tiptoe off right.*)

**MISTRESS MARY** (*Shouting loudly from off right*): Get out of my garden! Shoo! Go away, all of you! (*Mooing and bleating are heard offstage. SHEEP and COWS run in right and exit left. MISTRESS MARY follows, shouting and crying. She faces the audience and recites the following.*)

I'm Mistress Mary, quite contrary,

How does my garden grow?

Those sheep and cows have done me wrong—

They really have to go!

(*Crosses left and calls loudly*) Mr. MacDonald, I want to talk to you! (*OLD MACDONALD enters hurriedly, followed by MRS. MACDONALD.*)

**OLD MACDONALD:** What is it? What's the matter?

**MISTRESS MARY:** I have told you many times to keep your sheep and cows out of my garden! This time they've gone too far! They've trampled everything, and my garden is completely ruined. (*Cries noisily*) Boo-hoo-hoo!

**OLD MACDONALD** (*Reciting*):

Mistress Mary, I am very  
Sad to see your garden go.  
Silver bells and cockle shells  
Are pretty difficult to grow.

**MISTRESS MARY** (*With disgust*): Forget the silver bells and cockle shells, Mr. MacDonald. I'm raising vegetables these days. With grocery prices so high, I've taken up organic gardening this year. Those sheep and cows have taken the food right out of my mouth, you might say. (*OLD MACDONALD runs over to LITTLE BOY BLUE, picks up horn and blows it in his ear, then shakes him roughly.*)

**OLD MACDONALD** (*Angrily*): Wake up! Wake up, I say! (*LITTLE BOY BLUE jumps up, startled.*) Well, Boy Blue, a fine watchman you've turned out to be! My sheep and cows have ruined Mistress Mary's garden, and it's all your fault. I hate to say this, but you're fired!

**LITTLE BOY BLUE** (*Sniffing*): I really am sorry, sir, but this job was much harder than I thought it would be. I don't think one person can handle all this work. (*OLD WOMAN WHO LIVED IN*

*A SHOE enters right, followed by EIGHT CHILDREN, all crying.)*

**OLD WOMAN** (*Reciting and sobbing loudly at the end of each line*):

I'm the Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe,

But we've been evicted—what shall we do?

We're all out of butter and all out of bread,

We have nothing left. Not even a bed!  
(*CHILDREN cry noisily as they form a line at center. MRS. MACDONALD goes from one to another, hugging them and brushing their hair back, etc.*)

**CHILDREN** (*Reciting*):

We are the Children Who Live in a Shoe,

So what if it's crowded, we like it, we do.

But now we are hungry, we need to be fed,

That's our sad story, What more can be said? (*All cry loudly again.*)

**MRS. MACDONALD** (*Soothingly*): There, there, don't cry! I think I have a plan that will make everyone happy. Paw, may I have a word with you, in private? (*Leads OLD MACDONALD down left, whispers to him, unheard by audience.*)

**OLD MACDONALD** (*After a moment; waving arms in excitement*): Maw, that's a fine idea! Let's tell the others.

**MRS. MACDONALD** (*Crossing to OLD WOMAN*): Paw and I have this big house with lots of room in it, and there are only the two of us living here. Why don't all of you move in with us? There are plenty of you children to watch the sheep and cows and keep them where they belong. And believe me, we sure could use the help. Everyone would have a home, and we could all—as

they say in fairy tales—live happily ever after.

**CHILDREN** (*Gathering around OLD WOMAN; ad lib*): Say yes! Please say yes! Say we can do it! (*Etc.*)

**OLD WOMAN** (*With feeling; to MACDONALDS*): Bless your hearts, you dear, kind people! Of course we will come here to stay.

**CHILDREN**: Hooray! Hooray! (*All line up facing audience, link arms, and sing to the tune of "Old MacDonald."*)

**ALL**:

We'll live on MacDonald's farm,

Happy we will be.

We'll share the work and share the fun,  
One big family.

With a big smile here and a big smile there,

Here a smile, there a smile,

Everywhere a smile, smile. (*SHEEP dance in, form line.*)

**SHEEP**:

With a baa, baa here and a baa, baa there,

Here a baa, there a baa,

Everywhere a baa, baa. (*COWS dance in, form line.*)

**COWS**:

With a moo, moo here and a moo moo there,

Here a moo, there a moo,

Everywhere a moo, moo.

**ALL** (*Singing*):

We'll live on MacDonald's farm,

You (*Point to each other*), and you (*Point to each other*) and me. (*Point to themselves, then dance off right, singing last song as they exit. Curtain*)

**THE END**

(*Production Notes on page 36*)

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**PRODUCTION NOTES**  
**Old MacDonald's Farmyard Follies**  
*(Play on pages 32-35)*

**CHARACTERS:** 21 male and female.

**PLAYING TIME:** 10 minutes.

**COSTUMES:** Old MacDonald and Little Boy Blue wear straw hats and overalls. Sheep and Cows may wear paper masks and tails and jogging suits or sweatshirts in appropriate colors. Others wear modern dress.

**PROPERTIES:** Rake; handkerchiefs; horn.

**SETTING:** Old MacDonald's farm. Backdrop has large haystack painted on right side, painting of farmhouse on left. Exits are right and left. Bench is at left. Sign reading, HELP WANTED, is leaning against wall, which may be painted in front of house, on backdrop.

**LIGHTING** and **SOUND:** No special effects.



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Lower Grades

# Punctuation Proclamation

No commas, no periods, no exclamation marks?  
There's utter chaos when the King abolishes those  
"inky blobs" from everything in the Kingdom of Bosh.

by Claire Boiko

## Characters

HARK

HAIL

KING PISH-TOSH

ROYAL TUTOR

ROYAL STORYTELLER

ROYAL SCRIBE

ROYAL TREASURER

ROYAL COOK

FOUR COURTIERES

OTHER COURTIERES

**SETTING:** *The throne room of King Pish-Tosh, in the kingdom of Bosh. At center is a large, decorated throne, and diagonally to the left and right are chairs for Courtiers. At left is a small*

*table, on which are a large cardboard hourglass, scrolls, and quill pens. Down right are two stools.*

**AT RISE:** *KING is snoring noisily on his throne. HARK is patrolling the stage from right; HAIL is patrolling from left, and they meet center.*

**HARK:** Come on, Hail, now it's your turn to wake him up.

**HAIL:** Oh, no. I distinctly remember that I woke him the last time, Hark.

**HARK:** Go on. It's half past the hourglass. He'll miss his reading lesson.

**HAIL:** That reading lesson! He's always in such a fearful temper when he has to read. Here, let's toss a coin. *(He takes coin from pocket, tosses and catches it and puts it on the back of his hand.)*

**HARK:** Heads.

**HAIL:** Tails. (*Looks at his hand*) Whew! It's heads. Go ahead, Hark. I'll stay right behind you to catch you when he flattens you. (*ROYAL TUTOR enters timidly left, with easel, large lesson pad, and book.*)

**HARK:** Wait, here's the Royal Tutor. Let him have the honor of telling the King it's time to read. (*Heralds tiptoe down right, sit on stools, and watch. TUTOR places easel, with lesson pad on it, up left, near throne. He opens book, crosses to throne, and pulls gently at KING's sleeve.*)

**TUTOR:** Your Majesty.

**KING** (*Snoring*): Bluhuhuh.

**TUTOR** (*A little louder*): It's time for your daily reading lesson, King Pish-Posh. (*KING sits bolt upright.*)

**KING:** Humph! Reading, is it? I knew there was some reason why this was a bad day.

**TUTOR:** If only Your Majesty would relax. Reading is fun.

**KING:** Fun! I'd rather be boiled in green, gurgling oil. All those letters huddling together, staring at me like black cats—

**TUTOR:** The letters are trying hard to mean something to you, Sire. Here. (*He uncovers sentence written on the lesson pad, which reads, "I am the King."*) This is the sentence we have been trying to read for the last three months. Do let us see now, how well you can read it.

**KING** (*Scowling*): Tutor, that sentence is too hard. There are (*Counts on his fingers*) ten letters in that sentence.

Why can't I have a sentence with one letter? I could read that.

**TUTOR** (*Sighing*): Impossible, Sire. Come now, please. I know you can read this. I beg you to try.

**KING:** Botheration! (*He thrusts out his lip as he glares at sentence.*) Umm—

**TUTOR:** The first word is—(*Points to himself*)

**KING:** The first word is YOU. There, I read a word.

**TUTOR:** No, no, Majesty. The word is me—I mean, I.

**KING:** I knew that. I was jesting with you. Let me read it now. I—

**TUTOR:** Sound it out, Your Highness.

**KING:** A-M. A-M. Aha! I have it! Lallapalooza!

**TUTOR** (*Throwing up hands*): No, Sire. Am. Now try the next word. And I suggest that you really look at the word.

**KING:** You never let a poor king rest, do you? Very well, I'll look. I'll stare a hole through the paper. (*He stares at the easel. He rises, takes a pace closer, and stares again. Then he goes up and tries to brush the period off the paper.*)

**TUTOR:** What is the matter, Majesty?

**KING:** There is some sort of beetle on the paper. (*Slaps the easel*) There! I got it! No, I didn't. He's still there.

**TUTOR** (*Coming to the easel*): Let me see. Oh, I beg to differ with you, Sire. That is not a beetle. That is a period.

**KING** (*Walking back to throne*): I don't care what kind of insect it is. It does-

n't belong in my nice, neat palace. (*KING sits on throne, crosses arms across chest.*)

**TUTOR:** But a period is a punctuation mark. It is part of the sentence.

**KING** (*Surprised*): What? Do you mean to tell me that, in addition to 26 letters of the alphabet, I shall have to remember an inky blob?

**TUTOR** (*Patiently*): There are many punctuation marks, Sire. There are commas, exclamation marks, question marks, colons, and apostrophes.

**KING** (*Holding his ears*): Enough! Stop! I won't have it. No. Twenty-six letters are troublesome enough.

**TUTOR:** But there is nothing I can do, Sire. Punctuation was part of the language before we were even born.

**KING:** Well, I can do something about it. I shall abolish it.

**TUTOR** (*Wringing his hands*): That is not possible!

**KING:** Am I, or am I not, the King? I am the King! (*Pompously*) There. That's a good sentence. You ought to have that sentence on the easel: "I am the King." I can abolish anything I wish. (*To heralds*) Heralds! Heralds! (*They rise and run to KING.*)

**HARK:** Front and center, Sire!

**HAIL:** At your service, Majesty!

**KING:** Draw up a proclamation of abolishment. (*Heralds cross to table with scrolls and quill pens, and prepare to write proclamation.*) Ahem. (*KING dictates.*) "His Royal Highness, King Pish-Posh of the Kingdom of Bosh"—do you have that?

**HARK:** Yes, Sire.

**KING:** "Hereby proclaims that all punctuation marks shall be abolished throughout the land, forever and ever and a day." Seal it with the royal seal and proclaim it immediately.

**HAIL:** Immediately, Your Majesty. (*Heralds bow and exit with scrolls, HARK at left, HAIL at right.*)

**KING:** There. That is that. Now, let us be done with reading. It is time for the court to assemble. Tutor, bid my courtiers and the Storyteller enter. (*TUTOR exits right and returns with COURTIERS.*) Now, we must have a jolly story. Where is my Storyteller? (*COURTIERS sit on chairs to left and right of throne. ROYAL STORYTELLER runs in right with large book under his arm.*)

**STORYTELLER:** The Royal Storyteller begs to announce his presence in the court of King Pish-Posh.

**KING:** Humph. Very good. Let us have a story.

**TUTOR** (*Aside*): I do hope it isn't "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" again.

**KING:** Let us have "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" again!

**COURTIERS** (*Groaning*): Oh, no!

**1ST COURTIER:** Please, Sire, not that story today.

**2ND COURTIER:** Please, Sire, we have heard that story 365 times.

**KING:** Humph. I suppose it is the fashion to be democratic. Very well. What other story would you like to hear?

**3RD COURTIER:** Might we hear about Robin Hood?

**COURTIERS:** Yes, yes!

**KING:** Robin Hood? That's a frightful story. Think what that outlaw did to good King John. Some other tale, think of some other tale.

**4TH COURTIER:** Then, Your Majesty, may we hear the story of Sleeping Beauty?

**KING:** Does it have a bad fairy in it?

**4TH COURTIER:** Oh, yes. She is most dreadfully wicked.

**KING:** Then we shan't have it. Bad fairies make me nervous.

**COURTIERS** (*Sadly*): Oooh.

**KING:** It is my turn. Royal Storyteller, open your book to the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. (*As STORYTELLER opens book, HAIL enters right, and HARK enters left to announce proclamation. They read from scrolls.*)

**HAIL:** Hear ye! Hear ye! His Royal Highness, King Pish-Posh of the Kingdom of Bosh, hereby proclaims—

**HARK:** That all punctuation marks shall be abolished throughout the land forever and ever and a day. (*Heralds exit, HARK left and HAIL right.*)

**STORYTELLER:** What? No more punctuation?

**KING:** Never mind. It doesn't concern you. Continue.

**STORYTELLER:** Very well, Your Highness. (*He begins to read in a sing-song fashion with no pauses. As he*

*reads, COURTIERS yawn and fall asleep, and KING grows more puzzled.*) "Once upon a time there lived a little girl named Goldilocks she was an adventurous child she lived in a great wood her parents said do not go into the forest alone but she said pooh pooh I am old enough to take care of myself—" (*Etc.*)

**KING** (*Thundering*): Stop!

**STORYTELLER:** This is impossible, Your Majesty. There are no commas or periods. It is like being in a wilderness with no signposts.

**KING** (*To TUTOR*): Is this true?

**TUTOR:** It is true, Sire. I tried to warn you. (*HARK enters left with ROYAL SCRIBE and ROYAL COOK, who carries large menu and wooden spoon. HAIL enters right with ROYAL TREASURER, who carries small abacus.*)

**HARK:** Your Highness! There is terrible chaos in the land. The people clamor for you to restore punctuation. Thousands of requests are pouring in. The Royal Scribe is desperate.

**SCRIBE** (*Bowing*): Honored King, the records of the kingdom are snarled and confused. We need our apostrophes urgently. Without apostrophes we do not know what belongs to whom, or whose things are which.

**HAIL:** The Royal Treasurer is in a tizzy. He cannot figure out the taxes.

**TREASURER** (*Bowing*): Moneyed Majes-ty, I must have periods in abundance. We use them by the carton for decimal points. (*Holding up abacus*) I cannot tell now whether you have one million gold ducats or only one millionth of a ducat.

**COOK** (*Advancing to KING and thrusting menu under his nose*): Look at this menu. Does this sound appetizing? Beef soup salad creamed chicken ice cream.

**KING**: Creamed chicken ice cream? (*Makes a face; then, to audience*) What do you think? Does that sound good to you? (*Waits for response*) No, I don't think it sounds very good, either. Eeeww! Very well. I declare a state of emergency. I seem to have made a mistake. Kings do make mistakes.

**TUTOR**: Sire—

**KING**: You shouldn't interrupt in the middle of my mistake.

**TUTOR**: But I merely wanted to tell you that you can put things right again. (*In stage whisper, as he points to heralds*) The heralds.

**KING**: I can? Yes, yes, of course I can. Heralds. (*They bow.*) Punctuation is in again. Go spread the word.

**ALL**: Hooray! (*Heralds exit.*)

**KING**: And now we can get on with our story.

**ALL**: Ugh.

**KING**: On second thought, ever since I heard that story without the punctuation, I am not nearly so fond of it. (*To 4TH COURTIER*) What was that tale you declared was so interesting?

**4TH COURTIER**: “Sleeping Beauty,” Your Majesty.

**KING**: “Sleeping Beauty” it shall be, then. After all—(*He stares at easel.*) I am-the-King. Period. (*Excited*) I read it! I read the sentence. There was nothing to it. It was fun!

**ALL**: Hooray for King Pish-Posh!

**KING**: I'm a Royal Reader! Why didn't someone tell me it was fun?

**TUTOR**: We tried, Sire. We certainly did try! (*Curtain*)

## THE END

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## PRODUCTION NOTES

### Punctuation Proclamation

**CHARACTERS**: 12 or more male and female.

**PLAYING TIME**: 15 minutes.

**COSTUMES**: Heralds wear tunics, tights, berets, and boots; Hail has a coin in pocket. Tutor is dressed in academic robe and wears mortarboard; Storyteller wears long robe, conical magician's hat and glasses. Scribe wears cloak over pants and has quill pen behind ear. Treasurer wears long black cloak and hat with gold coins on it. Others wear appropriate court costume.

**PROPERTIES**: Easel, lesson pad, lesson book, large book for Storyteller, large menu, wooden spoon, small abacus.

**SETTING**: The throne room of King Pish-Tosh, in the Kingdom of Bosh. At center is a large, decorated throne, and diagonally to the left and right are chairs for Courtiers. At left is a small table, on which are a large cardboard hourglass, scrolls, and quill pens. Down right are two stools.

**LIGHTING**: No special effects.

# Misaki and the Four Truths

A charming Japanese folk tale that introduces new vocabulary and the virtues of Knowledge, Beauty, Strength, and Determination. . . .

by Ellen M. Eleder

## Characters

NARRATOR (adult or gifted reader)

MISAKI

MOTHER

FATHER

SISTER

BROTHER

WISE MAN

GEISHA GIRLS

SAMURAI

SOLDIERS

PUPPETEER

**TIME:** *Present day.*

**SETTING:** *All action occurs in front of a closed curtain. At left are four folding chairs. At right is a bench in front of a red Shinto Shrine. To the right of the Shrine is a large Japanese urn.*

**AT RISE:** *NARRATOR enters to address audience. PUPPETEER is hidden behind urn.*

**NARRATOR:** Once upon a time on the island of Japan surrounded by the cold, cold, blue waters of four seas, there lived a little girl named Misaki. (*MISAKI enters center, carrying book bag. She bows to audience.*) Misaki lived with her mother, father, sister, and brother. (*MOTHER, holding vase with flowers; FATHER, carrying fishing rod; SISTER, carrying school book; and BROTHER, holding sword, enter right. They bow to audience and sit in chairs. MOTHER begins ichibana [flower arranging]. FATHER fixes fishing rod. SISTER begins to do homework. BROTHER polishes sword.*)

**MISAKI (To MOTHER):** Okahsan, why do you fix the flowers?

**MOTHER:** They bring beauty to our home.

**MISAKI (To FATHER):** Otohsan, why do you fix the rod?

**FATHER:** The fish are determined as they swim upstream. I must be determined to catch them for our dinner.

**MISAKI (To SISTER):** Why must I do

my lessons?

**SISTER:** To be wise.

**MISAKI** (*To BROTHER*): Brother, why are you a soldier?

**BROTHER:** To protect our country.

**NARRATOR:** Misaki began her lessons while Mother completed her ichibana, Father finished his carp rod, Sister studied her lesson, and Brother polished his sword. When she was tired, she asked:

**MISAKI** (*To MOTHER*): Okahsan, when may I visit Grandmother by myself?

**MOTHER:** When you understand the four truths you will be grown up enough to visit Grandmother by yourself.

**MISAKI** (*To FATHER*): Otohsan, when may I visit Grandmother by myself?

**FATHER:** When you understand the four truths you will be grown up enough to visit Grandmother by yourself.

**MISAKI** (*To SISTER*): Sister, when may I visit Grandmother by myself?

**SISTER:** When you understand the four truths you will be grown up enough to visit Grandmother by yourself.

**MISAKI** (*To BROTHER*): Brother, when may I visit Grandmother by myself?

**BROTHER:** When you understand the four truths you will be grown up enough to visit Grandmother by yourself. (*MOTHER, FATHER, SISTER and BROTHER exit left.*)

**NARRATOR:** Misaki did not know what the four truths were, but if Otohsan,

Okahsan, sister, and brother said she must understand them in order to visit Grandmother, Misaki decided she must set off to find and understand the four truths. Taking her school bag with her, Misaki began her search for the four truths. (*MISAKI picks up school bag and skips around audience. WISE MAN, carrying thick book, enters right and sits on bench. MISAKI approaches WISE MAN.*)

**MISAKI** (*Bowing*): Konnichiwa.

**WISE MAN** (*Bowing*): Konnichiwa.

**MISAKI:** I am looking for the four truths.

**WISE MAN:** If you wish to learn the highest truth you must begin with the alphabet.

**NARRATOR:** Misaki wondered if this meant she must do her homework?

**MISAKI:** Arrigato! Sayonara! (*Waving goodbye, she skips around audience. GEISHA GIRLS enter right and stand in front of bench. MISAKI bows.*) Konnichiwa.

**THREE GEISHAS** (*Bowing*): Konnichiwa.

**MISAKI:** I am looking for the four truths.

**THREE GEISHAS:** Laughter, smiles, and beauty bring happiness and fortune.

**NARRATOR:** Misaki wondered if that meant she must appreciate the beautiful things in the world around her.

**MISAKI:** Arrigato! Sayonara! (*Waving goodbye, she skips around audience. SAMURAI SOLDIERS enter right and stand in front of bench. MISAKI bows.*) Konnichiwa.



**SOLDIERS** (*Bowing*): Konnichiwa.

**MISAKI**: I am looking for the four truths.

**SOLDIERS**: Be strong and fearless. (*SOLDIERS perform sword movements.*)

**NARRATOR**: Misaki wondered if that meant she must not be afraid to do new things.

**MISAKI**: Arrigato! Sayonara! (*Waving goodbye, she skips around audience.*)

**SOLDIERS**: Arrigato! Sayonara! (*Large carp jumps out of the Japanese urn.*)

**MISAKI** (*Bowing*): Konnichiwa.

**CARP**: Konnichiwa.

**MISAKI**: I am looking for the four truths.

**CARP**: Energy and determination help us swim upstream.

**NARRATOR**: Misaki wondered if that meant she should never give up.

**MISAKI**: Arrigato! Sayonara!

**CARP**: Arrigato! Sayonara! (*Carp returns to urn. WISE MAN, GEISHAS, SOLDIERS exit. MISAKI sits on bench.*)

**NARRATOR**: Misaki thought about what she had learned from the Wise Man, the Geishas, the Samurai Soldiers, and the Carp. She must remember to do her homework, for the wise man had said, "If you wish to learn the highest truths you must begin with the alphabet." She must remember to enjoy the beauty of the world as the beautiful geishas had said. How beautiful her mother's vase

had been. She must remember the courage of the Samurai Soldiers in battle. She must remember the courage of her brother the soldier. She must appreciate the determination of the carp as it tries to swim upstream. Just like the determination of her father as he mended the fishing rod. Misaki walked home. (*MISAKI walks the opposite direction, around the audience. MOTHER, FATHER, SISTER, BROTHER enter right and perform tasks, as before.*) When Misaki returned home, Mother was still arranging the flowers.

**MISAKI** (*To MOTHER*): How beautiful!

**NARRATOR**: Father was tightening the line on the fishing rod. Misaki whispered in her father's ear. (*NARRATOR whispers as MISAKI leans into FATHER's ear.*) How determined the carp are when they swim upstream for what they want. You too are determined as you spend so much energy fishing for our dinner. (*In normal voice*) Misaki's sister was completing her homework.

**MISAKI**: I must complete my homework now. (*To BROTHER*) How brave you are to be a soldier.

**NARRATOR**: Mother, Father, Sister, and Brother all looked up from their work and nodded. They knew that Misaki had come to understand the four truths: Knowledge, Beauty, Strength, and Determination.

**MOTHER**: Misaki? Would you like to visit your grandmother by yourself next week?

**NARRATOR**: Misaki smiled and nodded her head. (*Curtain*)

**THE END**

(*Production Notes on next page*)

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**PRODUCTION NOTES**  
**Misaki and the Four Truths**  
*(Play on pages 42-44)*

**CHARACTERS:** 1 male or female adult or gifted reader for Narrator, 3 male; 3 female; as many male and female as desired for soldiers and geishas; 1 male or female for Puppeteer.

**PLAYING TIME:** About 10 minutes.

**COSTUMES:** Soldiers wear black and everyone else wears Japanese kimono.

**PROPERTIES:** Misaki carries school bag, Mother has a vase with flowers to arrange, Father a fishing rod, Sister a book with school lessons, Brother a sword and Wise Man a thick book to carry. Geisha Girls wear flowers in their hair and carry small bouquets of flowers. Soldiers carry swords. One large rod fish puppet.

**SETTING:** Misaki's house: four chairs left in front of a closed curtain.

Japanese Shinto Shrine: red Shinto Shrine pinned to closed curtain right.

**LIGHTING** and **SOUND:** No special effects.

**CHOREOGRAPHY:** The choreography for the soldiers using swords is rhythmic in 4 beats:

1. Swords point up
2. Swords across body, point left
3. Swords across body, point right
4. Lunge

**TRANSLATION:**

*Arrigato* Thank you

*Konnichiwa* Hello

*Okahsan* Mother

*Otohsan* Father

*Sayonara* Goodbye

*Ichibana* The art of Japanese flower arranging

# The Best Thing in the World

Animals search high and low to find out the truth  
about what's the best thing in the world. . . .

Adapted by Mary Jane Noble

## Characters

NARRATOR

OLD MOTHER WEST WIND

SLENDER FIR TREE

STRIPED CHIPMUNK

PETER RABBIT

BOBBY RACCOON

JIMMY SKUNK

REDDY FOX

JOHNNY CHUCK

**TIME:** *The present.*

**SETTING:** *Woods with a few trees, one hollow tree, a few flowers and the green meadows off to the side.*

**AT RISE:** *OLD MOTHER WEST WIND has stopped to talk to SLENDER FIR TREE, standing amongst trees. STRIPED CHIPMUNK sits under tree.*

**NARRATOR:** Old Mother West Wind stopped to talk to the Slender Fir Tree.

**OLD MOTHER WEST WIND:** I've just crossed the Green Meadows and there I saw the Best Thing in the World.

**SLENDER FIR TREE:** How exciting! *(OLD MOTHER WEST WIND blows off stage.)*

**NARRATOR:** Striped Chipmunk, sitting under the Slender Fir Tree, couldn't help hearing what Old Mother West Wind said.

**STRIPED CHIPMUNK:** The Best Thing in the World? Why, it must be heaps and piles of nuts and acorns! I'll go find it.

**NARRATOR:** Striped Chipmunk ran down the path through the woods as fast as he could go. *(CHIPMUNK jogs past the trees and around the back of the trees, and then off stage. PETER RABBIT hops onto the stage and starts eating some of the flowers.)* Pretty soon he met Peter Rabbit. *(CHIPMUNK jogs back onto the stage. PETER RABBIT stops eating flowers.)*

**PETER RABBIT:** Where are you going in such a hurry?

**CHIPMUNK:** Down in the Green Meadows to find the Best Thing in the World. *(CHIPMUNK jogs past the trees, around back and off stage.)*

**RABBIT:** The Best Thing in the World? Why, that must be heaps and piles of carrots and cabbage! I'll go find it. (*Hops off. BOBBY RACCOON enters, gets positioned behind hollow tree.*)

**NARRATOR:** They passed the great hollow tree and Bobby Raccoon put his head out. (*CHIPMUNK and RABBIT jog/hop back onto the stage and stop along the far side of the hollow tree.*)

**BOBBY RACCOON:** Where are you going in such a hurry?

**CHIPMUNK and RABBIT:** Down in the Green Meadows to find the Best Thing in the World. (*They jog/hop off stage.*)

**RACCOON:** The Best Thing in the World? Why, that must be heaps and piles of milky corn. I'll go find it. (*RACCOON waddles after them. JIMMY SKUNK gets in position by tree and pretends to arrange small sticks and twigs.*)

**NARRATOR:** At the edge of the woods they meet Jimmy Skunk. (*CHIPMUNK, RABBIT and RACCOON move back onto the stage and stop alongside JIMMY SKUNK.*)

**JIMMY SKUNK:** Where are you going in such a hurry?

**CHIPMUNK, RABBIT, and RACCOON:** Down in the Green Meadows to find the Best Thing in the World. (*They jog/hop/waddle off the stage.*)

**SKUNK:** The Best Thing in the World. Why, that must be heaps and piles of beetles. I'll go find it. (*SKUNK jogs after them. REDDY FOX gets positioned behind one of the trees.*)

**NARRATOR:** They were running so fast they didn't see Reddy Fox until he jumped out from behind a tree. (*CHIP-*

*MUNK, RABBIT, RACCOON and SKUNK move quickly back onto the stage. CHIPMUNK and RABBIT pass the tree, REDDY FOX jumps out.*)

**REDDY FOX:** Where are you going in such a hurry?

**CHIPMUNK, RABBIT, RACCOON and SKUNK:** Down in the Green Meadows to find the Best Thing in the World. (*They jog/hop/waddle off stage.*)

**FOX:** The Best Thing in the World, why, that must be heaps and piles of young chickens. I'll go find it. (*FOX jogs after them. They all jog/hop/waddle onto the stage and off again for the second time on their way to the Green Meadow, then JOHNNY CHUCK gets positioned toward front of stage and near meadow, sweeping with a broom.*)

**NARRATOR:** By and by they go past the house of Johnny Chuck. (*CHIPMUNK, RABBIT, RACCOON and SKUNK move back onto the stage and jog so they are behind JOHNNY CHUCK. They stop and make a semi-circle with CHUCK in the middle.*)

**JOHNNY CHUCK:** Where are you going in such a hurry?

**CHIPMUNK, RABBIT, RACCOON, SKUNK, and FOX:** Down in the Green Meadows to find the Best Thing in the World.

**CHUCK:** The Best Thing in the World, why, I don't know of anything better than my own little home and the warm sunshine, and the beautiful blue sky. (*Others shrug their shoulders and jog/hop/waddle into the meadow, searching. While NARRATOR talks, CHIPMUNK, RABBIT, RACCOON, SKUNK, and FOX search in every corner of the meadow, under every imaginary blade of grass and stone. They shade their eyes and look*

*far out into the imaginary meadow. They might sit and rest for a second and fan themselves, and then the search continues. In the meantime CHUCK is playing with the sticks SKUNK left on stage, maybe dancing around the trees, and enjoys the day.)*

**NARRATOR:** So Johnny Chuck stayed at home and played all day among the flowers and the merry little breezes of Mother West Wind. He was as happy as could be. But all day long Chipmunk, Rabbit, Raccoon, Skunk, and Fox ran this way and that over the Green Meadows under the very warm sun. They were very hot and tired. And still they couldn't find The Best Thing in the World. When the long day was over they started back. They were very, very tired and cross. They passed by Johnny Chuck's house. (*CHIPMUNK, RABBIT, RACCOON, SKUNK, and FOX push each other and act grumpy. They drag themselves back into the woods and gather around CHUCK again.*)

**CHUCK:** What did you find?

**CHIPMUNK:** Not one single nut or acorn. (*Shows empty hands*)

**RABBIT:** Not one leaf of cabbage or carrot. (*Shows empty hands*)

**RACCOON:** Not one bit of sweet milky corn. (*Shows empty hands*)

**SKUNK:** Not one single beetle. (*Shows empty hands*)

**FOX:** Not one tiny chicken. And we're starving. (*Shows empty hands and rubs his/her stomach*)

**CHUCK:** Better luck next time. (*They continue to drag themselves home across the stage. CHUCK continues to play and enjoy the late afternoon. OLD MOTHER WEST WIND comes blowing in from off the stage.*)

**NARRATOR:** Halfway up the path they met Mother West Wind.

**OLD MOTHER WEST WIND:** Did you find the Best Thing in the World?

**CHIPMUNK, RABBIT, RACCOON, SKUNK, and FOX** (*Ad lib, with great emotion*): No! Not a thing! What a waste of time! (*Etc.*)

**OLD MOTHER WEST WIND** (*Wisely*): Well, Johnny Chuck has it. He's happy with the things he has and isn't wanting things someone else has. He is content. That is the Best Thing in the World. (*Others show facial expressions of surprise, resignation; one or two might sit down and cry, a couple gather around CHUCK, pat him/her on the back etc. After a few moments, all performers stand in line and together take a bow.*)

**THE END**

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## PRODUCTION NOTES

### The Best Thing in the World

**CHARACTERS:** 9 male and female. (If more characters are needed, the children can be the trees and flowers in the woods.)

**PLAYING TIME:** 8 minutes.

**COSTUMES:** Animals, tree.

**PROPERTIES:** Sticks, twigs, and a small broom.

**SETTING:** Woods with a few trees, the

Slender Fir Tree, one hollow tree, a few flowers and the green meadows off to the side.

**LIGHTING and SOUND:** No special effects.

**NOTE:** Narrator may be eliminated, but younger children are aided by his or her directions.

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