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Plays

The drama magazine for young people

What's in this issue. . .

Upper Grades

The Survivor, by Craig Sodaro

5 actors: 2 male, 2 female, 1 male or female; 25 minutes. Goosebump alert! Eerie tale of the “survivor” of an earthquake in Portugal giving up her life for the life of a baby. Is it real or imagined?

Tempering Temperance, by Carol D. Wise

12+ actors: 6 female, 4 male, 2 male or female, and as many extras as desired; 30 minutes. Family faces the just-passed 18th Amendment’s prohibition of alcohol and the public’s widespread unwillingness to respect the new law.

Middle and Lower Grades

We Gather Together, by Renée C. Rebman

10 actors: 6 female, 4 male; 20 minutes. A true Thanksgiving story: In 1863, Sarah Josepha Hale wins her campaign to help unify the country by establishing Thanksgiving as a one-day, national holiday.

The Emperor’s Lost Penny, by D. J. Luksetich

6 actors: male or female; 15 minutes. A fun play full of old sayings and proverbs: Penny is missing and the Emperor’s advisors, fearing the axe, blame each other.

Planet Parade, by Jane Foster Thornton

24 actors: male or female; 10 minutes. Large-cast play for younger actors: Planets orbit the sun while sharing some facts about themselves.

The Secret Garden, by Frances Hodgson Burnett and adapted by David C. Jones

8 actors: 4 male, 3 female, and 1 male or female for offstage voice; 25 minutes. The beloved children’s classic: Children restore manor house’s long-locked garden and bring joy to a grieving family.

The Survivor is protected by U.S. copyright law. It is unlawful to use this play in any way unless you are a current subscriber to *PLAYS* Magazine (www.playsmagazine.com).

The Survivor

Eerie tale of an earthquake victim giving up her life
for the life of a baby. . . .

by Craig Sodaro

Characters

NARRATOR

MANOEL LINDO, *a thief*

ESTELA LINDO, *his wife*

VITORIA REGALADO, *a survivor*

DOCTOR SILVA

SCENE 1

TIME: *November 1, 1757.*

SETTING: *A shack in the hills above Lisbon, Portugal, with a bench, small table, and a curtain strung across a clothesline. A small box serves as a crib. A mat is on the floor.*

AT RISE: *NARRATOR enters right.*

NARRATOR: On October 31, 1755, the city of Lisbon, the urban center of the kingdom of Portugal, was reveling in its golden age. Portuguese businessmen funneled goods from all over the world to the far corners of Europe. Portuguese colonies in the New World sent shiploads of gold, precious gems,

exotic woods, foods, and spices that put coins in the pockets of many and gave thieves a host of easy targets. Lisbon herself was bustling, sprawling, exquisite. At 9:40 in the morning of November 1, 1755, a loud blast jolted the city. The earth then shook and shook and shook in successive waves, bringing the city to its knees. If that was not enough terror, a massive tsunami washed over the rubble, and what was not completely destroyed by the earthquake was consumed by a fire that raged for weeks, perhaps months. How long did it take to clear the destruction? Many, many years, and for many years after the event, residents and thieves alike dug deeper and deeper to pull out what treasures they might find. (*NARRATOR exits right. MANOEL LINDO enters left cautiously. He holds a sackcloth bag.*)

MANOEL: Estela? Estela? (*ESTELA LINDO enters from behind curtain, holding baby.*)

ESTELA: I was getting worried.

MANOEL: How is our little one?

ESTELA (*Worriedly*): Dado won't eat. He won't cry. It's as if. . .

MANOEL: He will be fine! He is like us, a survivor.

ESTELA: I'm scared, Manoel.

MANOEL: No need any longer! We can now afford a doctor.

ESTELA: You've said that before.

MANOEL: This time I mean it. And what of her? (*He cocks his head toward the sheet.*)

ESTELA: We must get someone to help her.

MANOEL: No.

ESTELA: She needs a doctor, Manoel. She's injured.

MANOEL: She must have just fallen down a hole. There are holes everywhere. . . if you're not careful in all that rubble. . . (*Shakes head*)

ESTELA: She didn't just fall. You told me this morning you dug her out.

MANOEL (*Nervously*): No, no, I was. . . exaggerating.

ESTELA: You said—

MANOEL: I know what I said, Estela, but now that I have my wits all about me, I know what I said at first is impossible. She must have fallen, that's all.

ESTELA: Then tell me where you found her.

MANOEL: In some ruins that have not been cleared out.

ESTELA: Dressed as she's dressed?

MANOEL: Why not?

ESTELA: She is dressed for an important occasion.

MANOEL: So what?

ESTELA: The disaster was two years ago—on All Saints' Day.

MANOEL: And today is our second All Saints' Day since then. (*Shrugging*) She was dressed for church this morning and on her way fell into the ruins.

ESTELA: Something does not feel. . . right.

MANOEL: I tell you, she wasn't buried in the rubble. But these were! (*MANOEL pulls treasures from his bag: a shiny plate, a goblet or two, a silver pitcher, a few pieces of jewelry.*)

ESTELA: Manoel! They are beautiful. Every piece is—oh, Manoel, yes, now we can get Dado to the doctor!

MANOEL: They'll all fetch a good price.

ESTELA: But they belong to someone else. They were used by some very wealthy family. (*ESTELA picks up a piece or two and admires them.*)

MANOEL: Who are long dead now. They don't need these things, but we do. Dado does! Have you fed him?

ESTELA: I've tried, but he won't take anything.

MANOEL: Well, as soon as I sell these things, I'll take him to the doctor.

ESTELA: When will that be?

MANOEL: When Rodrigo arrives.

Tomorrow. . .the next day. (*Shrugs*) In his own time.

ESTELA: I wish. . .

MANOEL: You're always wishing. What do you wish for now?

ESTELA: I wish you had work.

MANOEL: You don't call digging through tons of rubble work?

ESTELA: I mean work that doesn't require us to have to look behind us to see who's following us or forward to see who might catch us.

MANOEL: I won't get caught. I've never been caught!

ESTELA: Manoel—

MANOEL: Never! Even after all this time. . .after all the things I've dug out of the ruins and traded with Rodrigo, no one has ever cast even a wary eye at me. But those things were paltry little nothings compared with this!

ESTELA: Somehow it seems worse stealing from the dead than the living.

MANOEL (*Laughing*): As if they need any of these things! Isn't it better that a family who lost everything is able to use their things now?

ESTELA: But you don't know that they're dead! Perhaps they're alive and they, too, might need these things.

MANOEL: The disaster happened two years ago. No one is looking for their silverware now. No one. (*VITORIA REGALADO pushes curtain aside and enters in a daze. She wears what once was a beautiful dress, but is now torn and dirty. Her face is bruised and covered with dirt. Her arm bears a long,*

deep cut, but is not bleeding.)

ESTELA: Oh!

VITORIA: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to startle you. What—what am I doing here? Who are you people?

MANOEL: I am Manoel Lindo, and this is my wife, Estela.

VITORIA: How did I get here?

MANOEL: I. . .well, I found you.

VITORIA: Where?

MANOEL: In the city.

VITORIA: Where in the city?

MANOEL: One can't really tell any longer where anything is—or was.

VITORIA: I don't understand. What happened?

ESTELA: Do you remember anything?

VITORIA: I—I'm not sure. Oh, look at my dress. . .and my shoes. What happened to them? (*Looks at her arm*) And my arm. I've been cut.

ESTELA: Let me wash that for you. (*ESTELA pours water from a small earthen jug onto a cloth.*)

VITORIA: You said you found me?

MANOEL (*Nervously*): That's right. I was working. . .yes, working in the city and I was looking for. . .well, it doesn't matter who I was looking for, but there you were.

VITORIA: I remember I couldn't breathe.

MANOEL (*Too quickly*): Oh, but you

were breathing! Yes, and you were lying on a piece of broken marble bench.

VITORIA: No. . .no. . .I felt something crushing my chest. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't move. My legs. . .they had no feeling. It was as if a building fell down on me and held me prisoner.

MANOEL (*Nervously*): My lady, pardon me, but that's ridiculous. You were free as a bird.

VITORIA (*Moving to crib*): You have a baby.

ESTELA (*Smiling*): Dado.

VITORIA: How old is he?

ESTELA: Two months.

VITORIA: Hello, Dado. You are a cute fellow.

ESTELA: He is not well.

VITORIA: I see that.

ESTELA: He doesn't eat. He's listless.

MANOEL: But he'll be fine.

VITORIA (*As if just remembering*): I. . .I have a child. My little Luzia. (*Suddenly frightened*) Where's my Luzia?

MANOEL: There wasn't anyone with you when I found you.

VITORIA: Oh, but she was always with me. Since her father died, she clung to me like a fawn.

ESTELA: Perhaps. . .perhaps she is with her grandparents.

VITORIA: Oh, yes. . .maybe. . .but I just

don't remember anything that happened. (*She notices silverware and picks up the pitcher.*) Why is this here?

MANOEL: What do you mean?

VITORIA: It bears our family crest. This is the Regalado crest.

MANUEL: I. . .I just found it, that's all.

VITORIA: No. . .no. . .the servants would never misplace one of our goblets or pitchers.

ESTELA: Do you remember your name? Is it Regalado?

VITORIA: I am. . .I am. . .Vitoria. Vitoria Regalado.

ESTELA (*Shocked*): Vitoria Regalado! Manoel—

MANOEL (*Quickly, covering*): Perhaps Señora wants something to eat. We must not forget to be hospitable.

ESTELA: And just let me clean this wound. (*ESTELA holds VITORIA's arm and looks at the wound.*) Oh!

VITORIA: What's wrong?

ESTELA: This cut is very deep, señora.

VITORIA: It doesn't hurt. I don't feel anything.

ESTELA: And Manoel, it's not bleeding.

MANOEL: Of course it is. Wounds bleed.

ESTELA: Manoel! (*She turns the arm for MANOEL to see clearly.*)

MANOEL: Then it's an old wound. The señora says it doesn't hurt.

VITORIA: Not at all. But my dress. . .I don't understand it at all. It was so beautiful when I put it on this morning.

ESTELA: This morning?

VITORIA: Yes! It's Luzia's favorite and I wanted to look so pretty for All Saints' Day. But now look at it. Torn and dirty. How could that happen? One moment I was checking myself in the glass and tying a ribbon in Luzia's hair and the next thing I know. . .I'm in a strange shack with pieces of my family silver.

MANOEL (*Quickly*): Some bread, Estela. Bread and cheese.

VITORIA (*Bending over the crib*): Poor little fellow. Let Vitoria hold you.

ESTELA: No, please.

MANOEL: If the señora wishes to hold Dado, she can. (*ESTELA fetches bread and cheese.*) Come, sit, señora. (*VITORIA lifts baby from crib.*)

VITORIA (*Sitting*): You are so fragile, my little one. So fragile. What ails you, little one?

MANOEL: You. . .you say you were checking yourself in the glass. . .this morning. . .and then tied a ribbon in your daughter's hair. Were you going out?

VITORIA: Of course. To church. I haven't missed it, have I? (*ESTELA drops something.*) Oh! (*VITORIA gasps.*)

MANOEL: What's wrong?

VITORIA: A loud noise! An explosion!

MANOEL (*Frowning*): An explosion?

VITORIA: I just finished tying the ribbon when we heard a violent explosion. Why do I remember that?

ESTELA (*Terrified*): Because it happened!

VITORIA: What are you talking about?

ESTELA: That's how it began.

VITORIA: What began?

MANOEL: Nothing! Nothing, my lady. (*Glaring at ESTELA*) Estela just likes to make mountains out of mole hills.

ESTELA: Manoel!

MANOEL: Take Dado so the good lady can eat something.

VITORIA (*Looking at MANOEL*): I have seen you before.

MANOEL: Me? No, no, señora. Not me!

VITORIA: I know I have. . .standing near the entrance gate to our house.

MANOEL: And why would I do that?

ESTELA: Manoel?

VITORIA: And now I find you with our family silver.

MANOEL: You've no proof it's yours.

VITORIA: I don't need proof. The Regalado crest is widely known. (*Suddenly*) You. . .you're a thief!

MANOEL: I am no thief! I. . .I saved your life.

VITORIA: From what?

MANOEL: You. . .(*Stammering*) why, you fell into the ruins. I found you

lying there near the bottom of a pit.

VITORIA (*Sharply*): You said I was sitting on a marble bench.

MANOEL: *Lying* on a marble bench.

VITORIA: The only one who's lying here seems to be you.

MANOEL: You insult me!

VITORIA: These are my things. If you didn't steal them, how did you get them? Surely my husband would never have given them to the likes of you.

ESTELA: He. . .he found them, my lady, just as he said.

VITORIA (*Sarcastically*): You found them.

MANOEL: Yes.

VITORIA: Where?

ESTELA: In the rubble. We were going to polish them and then return them, weren't we, Manoel?

MANOEL: I know it looks odd, but, yes, we were.

VITORIA: What is this rubble you keep talking about?

ESTELA: What was left after the earthquake.

VITORIA: Earthquake? (*Slowly remembering*) The earthquake! The loud explosion and then. . .then. . .the house began to shake. I could hear dishes breaking. Plaster crumbling from the ceilings. The tiles peeling from the walls, clunking the ground. I grabbed Luzia. I lifted her into my arms. We made for the stairs. Outside! We had to

get outside! And then a ceiling beam loomed above me and fell in that fraction of a second when you realize. . .

ESTELA: Realize what, my lady?

VITORIA: Your life is over.

MANOEL (*Trying to be nonchalant*): No, no, no. That's impossible, my lady.

ESTELA: It happened two years ago!

VITORIA: What?

MANOEL: My wife speaks foolishly. I found you just this morning.

ESTELA: The earthquake happened two years ago.

VITORIA: That's impossible!

MANOEL: That's what I have told Estela, but she isn't thinking clearly, with Dado being sick and all.

ESTELA: You said you dug this woman from the rubble, Manoel.

VITORIA: Did you?

MANOEL: You know what she says is impossible.

VITORIA: I was trapped for two years in some ruins?

ESTELA: Miracles can happen, my lady!

VITORIA: I don't want a miracle! I just want my Luzia!

MANOEL: I'm sorry, but there was no one else there but you.

VITORIA: And I assume you just happened to pick up a few pieces of silver for your troubles?

MANOEL: No, no, we have no desire for your silver.

VITORIA: Why do I find that so hard to swallow?

ESTELA: It's true, my lady. You may take your silver. I'll put it in a bag for you.

VITORIA: You're thieves! Both of you! You broke into our house and took our silver and now you make up a preposterous story to worm your way out of being hanged!

ESTELA: No! No!

VITORIA (*Indicating the silver pieces*): But here is the evidence!

ESTELA: Manoel will put the silver back where he found it.

MANOEL: No, Estela!

ESTELA: He will! We don't want it! (*ESTELA puts silver pieces into sack.*)

VITORIA: I don't believe you! And how much more have you taken?

MANOEL: None, my lady.

ESTELA (*Shoving the sack into MANOEL's arms*): Here, see, señora? Manoel is taking it back!

VITORIA: But my Luzia! What have you done with her?

MANOEL: We know nothing of your Luzia.

VITORIA: You stole my child! (*She moves to crib.*)

ESTELA (*Defensively*): This is Dado. He is ours!

VITORIA (*Moving about the room*): Luzia! Luzia!

ESTELA: No, señora, she is not here.

VITORIA: You were in the house when the earth shook. You grabbed Luzia and what silver you could!

MANOEL: Never, my lady!

VITORIA: Where is she? What have you done with her?

MANOEL: Estela's right. The earthquake happened two years ago. Two years have gone by.

VITORIA: You're lying! Lying!

ESTELA: No, señora.

VITORIA: It's only been hours. Hours, you hear?

ESTELA: Manoel, take the silver back.

MANOEL: But it's our one chance!

VITORIA: Luzia! Luzia! Where are you, my child?

ESTELA: Do as I say, Manoel.

VITORIA (*Suddenly weak, out of breath*): Oh! I. . .I can't breathe! Help me! Help me!

ESTELA: A doctor! Find a doctor, Manoel, quickly!

VITORIA (*Collapsing on bench*): Help me!

ESTELA (*To MANOEL*): Go! (*He grabs sack, races off left as curtain closes.*)

* * *

SCENE 2

TIME: Several hours later.

SETTING: The same.

AT RISE: *MANOEL and DOCTOR SILVA enter left.*

MANOEL: Estela? Estela?

DOCTOR (*Suspiciously*): Where is this Señora Regalado?

MANOEL: Estela? (*ESTELA enters from behind curtain, holding baby.*) Where is the señora, Estela? The doctor is here. (*ESTELA glances back at curtain, terrified.*) In there, doctor, behind the curtain. There is a small bed. (*DOCTOR moves behind curtain.*) Estela, how is she? Sleeping? (*No response*) Estela? What is it? Is it Dado?

ESTELA: What did you do with the silver, Manoel? What did you do with it?

MANOEL: I. . . I threw it back where I found it.

ESTELA: All of it?

MANOEL: Yes. It's there for someone else to find.

ESTELA: She will be pleased, then.

MANOEL: What does that matter? Somehow she got her life back. I don't understand it. After two years. . . buried in the rubble. . . how is it possible that she lives?

ESTELA: Does she?

MANOEL: Estela, she stood right here. We spoke to her. She recognized the silver pieces. You were here!

ESTELA: Yes, I was here. (*ESTELA sits on bench.*)

MANOEL: Estela, what is it? What's happened? (*DOCTOR enters from behind curtain.*) How is she, doctor?

DOCTOR: What do you mean, how is she?

MANOEL: She was having trouble breathing.

DOCTOR: Difficult for a woman who's been dead two years. . . obviously crushed during the earthquake.

MANOEL (*Shaking head*): What? No. No. . . that's not possible.

ESTELA: Manoel. . .

DOCTOR: Under ordinary circumstances, I should throttle you for wasting my time. A doctor is meant to help the living, not to look upon the dead.

MANOEL: But she can't be dead.

ESTELA: She is, Manoel!

MANOEL: We saw her! She stood right there! We spoke to her!

DOCTOR: I'm afraid your husband is suffering from a delusion of some kind.

MANOEL: It's no delusion. Estela, what happened?

ESTELA: I. . . I helped the señora to bed. I covered her. I came in here because Dado started to cry. When I went back in to check on her. . . (*MANOEL goes behind curtain. A moment later he reappears, his face a picture of horror. He sits on bench, numb.*)

DOCTOR: As I said, under normal circumstances, I would be furious about this. But her brother-in-law, Señor Regalado, is a personal friend, and for two years he has been hoping that somehow he would find the remains of his brother's wife.

ESTELA: Then it is Señora Regalado?

DOCTOR: Oh, yes, I'm sure of it. Señor Regalado has wanted to lay his brother's wife to rest with their daughter Luzia. He's obsessed with the fear that little Luzia is so alone in her grave now. I've tried to tell him otherwise. The priests have tried, but he's been inconsolable. You, señor, will have provided Señor Regalado with a great deal of peace of mind. Tell me, how did you happen to find the body of the señora? (*MANOEL doesn't respond.*)

ESTELA: He was looking for buried treasure.

DOCTOR (*Nodding wearily*): Like so many others. Well, you found a buried treasure. I am sure Señor Regalado will be generous in his gratitude.

ESTELA: You hear that, Miguel?

DOCTOR: It's not every "treasure hunter" who ends up so well. I will have Señor Regalado's men come to remove the señora, and then take you to meet the man himself. He will be pleased. For now, I will say good night.

ESTELA: Please wait one moment, doctor. (*ESTELA takes baby from crib.*) Our little Dado. . .he has been so sick.

DOCTOR (*Taking the baby*): I haven't much time. Many more need my attention. (*He places baby on table with his back to audience. He then does his examination.*) We still have many injured and sick. These camps up here in the hills breed diseases of every kind. But I'm sure you know that.

ESTELA: We try to keep our place clean.

MANOEL: We buy what food we can.

DOCTOR: Then you'd better have some ready for this little fellow. He's hungry.

ESTELA: Oh, that's good news, yes?

DOCTOR: Whatever he had has passed. You are lucky.

ESTELA: Oh, thank you, doctor. Thank you!

DOCTOR: And now I must go. As I said, Señor Regalado's men will be here soon.

MANOEL: Thank you, doctor. Good night.

ESTELA: Good night, doctor. (*DOCTOR exits left.*) Oh, Manoel! It's a miracle!

MANOEL: Yes, a miracle.

ESTELA: And Dado is better. His color is back.

MANOEL (*Looking at the curtain*): From life to death. . .

ESTELA (*Looking at the baby*): Death to life.

MANOEL: I don't understand! She stood here! She spoke to us!

ESTELA: Don't you see? She had to find Luzia. You helped her do that.

MANOEL: It's not possible.

ESTELA: But it's true. And now they'll be together forever.

MANOEL: But how? (*MANOEL sits on bench, bewildered.*)

ESTELA: You opened a door, that's all. Love took care of the rest. (*ESTELA kisses MANOEL on the head, exits behind curtain as the curtain falls.*)

THE END

(*Production Notes on page 38*)

Tempering Temperance

Family faces the 18th Amendment's prohibition
of alcohol and the public's unwillingness to
respect the law. . . .

by Carol D. Wise

Characters

EMMA McCOURT

MAVIS McCOURT, *her daughter*

LILY HORNSBY, *member of the
Women's Christian Temperance*

Movement

JUSTINE LIPTON, *her best friend*

LUCAS McCOURT, *bootlegger*

TRAVIS McCOURT, *his brother*

MAC SIMPSON, *their employee*

NELLIE O'RILEY, *"soda shop" pro-
prietor*

REV. JACOB WILLARD, *Lily's step-
father, minister and temperance
leader*

MIRIAM WILLARD, *Lily's mother*

OFFICER CLANCY

OFFICER MURRAY

EXTRAS *for street "crowds"*

*McCOURT in a chair, right, working
on a laptop. MAVIS McCOURT enters
right, carrying a photo album.*

MAVIS: Mom, check out this old photo album I found in the attic. Look at these funny clothes!

EMMA (*Peering at album*): Ah, that's your great grandmother Lily during the Roaring 20s.

MAVIS (*Frowning*): The Roaring 20s? What was that?

EMMA: It refers to the 1920s, an exciting time of huge social and political change in our country. World War I had ended, and people came alive! They listened to the same music and did the same dances. They had their own slang.

MAVIS: Like what?

EMMA (*Laughing*): Let's see. . . a "breezer" was a convertible car. "The bees' knees" was something special. "White lightning" was bootleg whiskey.

MAVIS: Bootleg whiskey?

EMMA: Illegal alcohol. When the 18th

SCENE 1

BEFORE RISE: *Spotlight on EMMA*

Amendment was ratified in 1920, it banned the use and sale of liquor. This was known as Prohibition. Many people didn't think it was a fair law and bought or sold alcohol anyway. There were special places called speakeasies where they would go to drink it. Some people called rum-runners would buy the alcohol abroad and then sell it to people in the United States. In fact, it's rather a family secret that your great-grandfather Lucas McCourt was a rum-runner. He was quite a colorful character.

MAVIS (*Surprised*): Seriously? (*EMMA nods, smiles.*) Wow! I thought all our relatives were stuffy. I want to hear everything about great-grandfather Lucas!

EMMA: Of course, this was many, many years ago. (*Lights fade and then brighten on center stage.*)

* * *

SETTING: *City street. There is a sign reading O'RILEY'S SODAS on storefront.*

AT RISE: *REVEREND JACOB WILLARD, MIRIAM WILLARD, LILY HORNSBY, JUSTINE LIPTON, and group of women enter left, and march across stage carrying picket signs reading, LIPS THAT TOUCH WINE SHALL NEVER TOUCH MINE, LIQUOR MAKES YOU SICKER, BOOZE AND YOU LOSE, INDULGE AND YOU'LL BULGE, GIN IS A SIN, DEMON RUM IS NOT YOUR CHUM. One of them is beating a drum. They stop center.*

MIRIAM: People of America, beware! Congress has passed the 18th Amendment abolishing alcohol, and yet there are sinners—yes, I say, sinners—who continue to partake of this evil brew.

ALL: Amen!

WILLARD: Proverbs 23: "Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent and stings

like an adder. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things."

ALL: Amen!

LILY: Alcohol can destroy your family. It robs you of your senses and loosens your tongue.

JUSTINE: We must enforce total abstinence from the evils of alcohol. We must destroy those speakeasies which operate outside of the law.

WILLARD: The famous evangelist Billy Sunday has said, "The slums will soon be only a memory. We will turn our prisons into factories and our jails into storehouses and corncribs."

ALL: Amen!

WILLARD: Brothers and Sisters! It is our mission in life to shut down these institutions which defy our nation's laws. It is our solemn duty to unmask the bootleggers and rum-runners who lead innocent victims into sin.

ALL: Amen! (*Group marches off, right. LILY and JUSTINE slip away and stand center, watching others leave.*)

JUSTINE: Do you think they'll notice that we're not with them?

LILY (*Laughing*): I doubt it. Papa is so wrapped up in his cause that he never knows who's there.

JUSTINE: Your stepfather is a little intense sometimes.

LILY: I like to think of him as passionate.

JUSTINE: But you believe in our cause, don't you?

LILY: Absolutely. I've seen the effects of

excessive alcohol—the families suffering, lives ruined. I can understand why Papa is so fervent about abolishing it.

JUSTINE (*Sighing*): But the public doesn't support it.

LILY: I know, and I want to educate them about the error of their ways. I'm just not sure that parading up and down the streets with drums and signs is the way to do it.

JUSTINE (*Puzzled*): What do you mean?

LILY: I think we need to mingle with them—become one of them.

JUSTINE: *Them?*

LILY: The people—the abusers—the sinners.

JUSTINE: What do you mean, become one of them?

LILY: Blend in. (*Raises her skirt to reveal a flapper dress*)

JUSTINE (*Gasping*): Lily! I can see your ankles!

LILY: I know! This is how the flappers dress.

JUSTINE: Flappers?

LILY: Oh, Justine! Don't you know anything? Did you see that Frances Marion picture show *The Flapper*, starring Olive Thomas?

JUSTINE: Of course not! My parents would never let me go to a picture show. Don't tell me that you did!

LILY: Don't worry. No one recognized me. (*Removes hat to reveal her bobbed hair*)

JUSTINE: Lily! You bobbed your hair!

LILY: It's all the latest rage. Papa doesn't know. I had it cut this morning, and I've kept my hat on all day.

JUSTINE: Do you know how angry he's going to be?

LILY: He'll understand when I tell him my reasons. I'm going to visit that speakeasy. (*Indicates O'Riley's*)

JUSTINE (*Shocked*): Not O'Riley's! You can't go in there. It's the devil's den!

LILY: I'm not going to go in there alone. I've gotten a young man to take me.

JUSTINE (*Horrificed*): A stranger? You're going in there with a stranger?

LILY: Lucas McCourt is not a stranger. He comes into the library all the time.

JUSTINE: What do you know about him?

LILY: I know that he's a shipper and he drives one of those new Studebakers.

JUSTINE: A motor car! Have you ridden in it?

LILY: No, but I plan to.

JUSTINE: Papa says those motor cars are just a fad. They'll never replace horse-drawn carriages.

LILY: My father says the same thing, but I've seen him eyeing our neighbor's Tin Lizzie.

JUSTINE: Tin Lizzie?

LILY: That's what they call Mr. Ford's Model T, a Tin Lizzie or a "flivver." With the new assembly line in place, it's actually affordable. Anyway, Lucas has promised to take me for a ride in his Studebaker touring car.

JUSTINE: Lily, you barely know him!

LILY: But he seems very nice, and he's asked me out. He's going to meet me here.

JUSTINE: Meet you here? Not at your house? That is absolutely scandalous! A gentleman always calls for a lady at her home and then asks her father if he may court her.

LILY: Justine, it's the '20s! The war is over and things are changing.

JUSTINE: I don't care. You know your papa would have a conniption fit. And for that matter, what will Mr. McCourt say about you? He's going to think you are one of those—those hussies.

LILY: I just told him I had to work late and to meet me here. *(Sighs heavily)* Papa is always so stern with anyone who shows the slightest interest in me. No one ever comes back a second time.

JUSTINE: Is Mr. McCourt a teetotaler?

LILY: Of course, he is. I know a law-abiding citizen when I see one. He's far too respectable to imbibe.

JUSTINE: Then how are you going to get him to go to O'Riley's?

LILY: I'm sure he thinks it's a soda shop, just like everyone else does.

JUSTINE: What are you planning to do once you get in there? Are you going to start quoting scripture? Sing songs?

LILY: Of course not! I just want to see the inside of one right now. Maybe I can understand the people a little better if I get to know them. You know—walk a mile in their shoes.

JUSTINE: Lily Hornsby. I'm your best

friend. I just can't let you go into a speakeasy with a strange man by yourself. I'm going with you.

LILY: Well, you're welcome to come, but you can't go looking like that. You look like a schoolmarm.

JUSTINE *(Hands on hips):* What's wrong with looking like a schoolmarm?

LILY: Too dowdy! That outfit just shouts TEMPERANCE! You have to blend. Come with me. I'll get you fixed up.

JUSTINE *(Holding her hair):* You can't lay a finger on my hair. My daddy would lock me in my room for a month if I came home with a bob.

LILY: Don't worry. I just want to get you a different dress.

JUSTINE: I can't show off my ankles! I'll look like a floozy.

LILY: Don't be ridiculous. It's the—

JUSTINE: I know. . .it's the—

LILY and JUSTINE: 20s! *(They run off right, laughing. Light fades, then comes up on LUCAS MCCOURT standing on the curb, looking at his watch. OFFICER CLANCY enters left.)*

OFFICER CLANCY: Evenin,' Lucas.

LUCAS: Evenin,' Clancy. Do you have the time? I think my watch is fast.

CLANCY: Quarter past the hour. *(LUCAS looks at watch and frowns, then looks around again expectantly.)*

LUCAS: Thanks, Clancy.

CLANCY: How's your family?

LUCAS: Doin' well. Yours?

CLANCY: Fine. Just so you know, Willard's been hanging around the neighborhood today.

LUCAS: Jacob Willard? The Reverend? What's he up to?

CLANCY: Just sayin' he's hanging around. That's all. I've known you and your brother a long time. Wouldn't want to see you get in any trouble.

LUCAS: Thank you, Clancy. I'll keep that in mind.

CLANCY: You waiting for somebody?

LUCAS: Nah. Just admiring the scenery.

CLANCY (*Squinting as though looking across the street*): The Public Library?

LUCAS: Gothic, don't you think?

CLANCY: I don't know much about those things. Glad to know you're not thinking of visiting O'Riley's tonight.

LUCAS: O'Riley's? Nah! I don't feel much like visiting a soda shop this evening.

CLANCY (*Laughing*): Soda shop, my foot! Lucas, you know I can't come out and say it, being an officer of the law and all, but—well, like I said, Willard's in the vicinity.

LUCAS: Thank you, Clancy, but as I said, I'm just admiring the scenery.

CLANCY: Well, all right, Lucas. I'll be moving along. Have a good evening.

LUCAS: You too, Clancy, and—ah—thanks. (*CLANCY exits right. NELLIE O'RILEY comes out of O'Riley's and watches CLANCY disappear.*) Hey, Nellie!

NELLIE (*Looking off right*): Howdy, Lucas. What'd Clancy want? I saw him nosing around.

LUCAS: He just wanted to know why I was standing here on the sidewalk.

NELLIE: Why *are* you standing here on the sidewalk? I thought you might be one of Willard's Temperance spies.

LUCAS: Willard! I wouldn't be caught dead working for him.

NELLIE: Word is that he's been sniffin' around here.

LUCAS: Clancy said as much.

NELLIE: He did?

LUCAS: Clancy knows everything that goes on around town, Nellie. You know that. He's not on your payroll, is he?

NELLIE: Clancy! (*Waves her hand*) Shoot, Lucas! Clancy's all for law and order. I figure he just turns a blind eye to speakeasies. Prohibition never did set well with him. I think his pa ran a pub back in Galway. Clancy's got enough to worry about without arresting folks for treating themselves to a little rot gut once in a while.

LUCAS: You're not paying those crime bosses to protect you, are you, Nellie?

NELLIE: Not on your life! They have their lol-de-da palaces with the jazz bands and bathtub gin. I keep my place simple. Nellie O'Riley can take care of herself. (*MAC SIMPSON and TRAVIS McCOURT enter right.*)

MAC (*Slapping his leg*): Well, spank me cross-eyed! What are you doing here in the middle of the sidewalk, Lucas? You waitin' for somebody?

LUCAS (*Nonchalantly*): Ah—no! Just standin' here, that's all.

TRAVIS: It sure looks like you're waiting for somebody, Lucas.

MAC: I bet it's that cute little librarian you've been drooling over for weeks.

TRAVIS: What librarian? (*Narrows eyes*) Lucas, you courtin'?

LUCAS (*Irritably*): Travis, my affairs are my business. You're my brother, not my guardian.

NELLIE: Speaking of business, how'd you do on your last run?

TRAVIS (*Brightening*): Looks like we made a clean profit on this trip. Smooth waters and not a FED in sight. I could have done it blindfolded.

MAC (*Pulling a wads of bills from his pockets*): Look at all this cabbage! We're heading for Easy Street! I've never seen this much cash before in my whole life! We should have started this rum-running business years ago.

TRAVIS (*Looking around anxiously*): Mac, for Pete's sake, put the dough away before somebody sees it.

MAC: Horsefeathers! I just have to look at it once in a while to make sure it's for real!

NELLIE: You're slurring a tad bit there. Have you been hittin' the sauce again?

MAC: Not me. It's against the law.

LUCAS: All you have to do is sniff the fumes and you get light-headed.

MAC (*Defensively*): Someone's gotta make sure it's pure.

LUCAS: Pure! Of course, it's pure. That's why we're able to sell it for such a good price. People know it's the best.

MAC: None of those bootleggin' recipes for us! A lot of that stuff tastes like kerosene, if you ask me. Nasty! (*Spits*) 'Ceptin' your recipe, of course, Nellie.

NELLIE: You'd better believe it! My grandpappy's recipe puts those new-fangled formulas to shame. And it's safe to drink. Some of those concoctions are poison.

MAC: You're darn tootin'. Your grandpappy's recipe slides down the gullet like liquid gold. He sure knew how to brew.

NELLIE: Kept his still stashed back there behind the barn until some dad-blamed revenue agent found it. Poor Grandpappy had to spend a few days in the hoosegow until Granny raised the bail. Said that was the start of his lumbago. Only thing that would help it was his white lightning. Be glad to give you the recipe if you want it.

TRAVIS: No thanks, Nellie, and no offense—you make some of the best moonshine in town. It's just that our trademark is the high-quality merchandise we ship from Nassau.

NELLIE: I know that. I keep some of your Nassau stuff in the back room in case some of my clientele want the highfalutin' brew.

TRAVIS: Rum-running is saving us from losing our excursion and freight business. We're finally in the black again. I thought we were going to have to throw in the towel a few months back.

LUCAS: I guess you could call us "honest lawbreakers."

NELLIE (*Laughing*): Honest? How ya figure that?

LUCAS: We don't have to pay organized crime bosses, politicians, or police for protection. We are our own men.

MAC: I'm mighty glad about that! Those crime bosses are downright scary. I saw their mugshots hanging up there in the post office the other day, and they were some of the ugliest creatures I've ever seen. It's almost like they were *tryin'* to be ugly. No wonder they walk around carrying machine guns.

TRAVIS: Well, we don't pack heat in our business. I promised Mama a long time ago that I'd never resort to using a gun. So far I've kept that promise.

LUCAS: A man who lives by the gun, dies by the gun. If we're going to be in business, we aren't going to harm anyone—unless he imbibes too much, and that's his own stupid fault.

TRAVIS: But we have to be careful. The government is keeping a sharp eye out for smugglers and bootleggers.

NELLIE: I don't know what those dad-blamed fools were thinking of when they passed the 18th amendment saying we can't sell alcohol.

TRAVIS: We can thank the Temperance League for that. They weren't satisfied after Congress passed the temporary Wartime Prohibition Act, banning the sale of any beverage with an alcohol content greater than 2.75%.

NELLIE: 2.75%! That's no better'n sarsaparilla!

LUCAS: That law was only intended to save grain for the war effort. They just wouldn't rest until the whole country was dry.

MAC: Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! Temperance women are all a bunch of dried-up ol' prunes, if you ask me. I don't think there's one of 'em under 50.

TRAVIS: They sure slapped our country into a big mess. They're forcin' folks to break the law.

LUCAS: That minister, Reverend Willard, is certainly taking the town by storm. He is bound and determined to make sure there's not a drop of liquor left in the United States. He even serves grape juice instead of communion wine at his church.

MAC: It ain't human to have grape juice for a religious ceremony. I'm sure it says somewhere in the Bible that you have to have wine for church.

NELLIE: The Good Book says even the Lord himself changed water into wine for a wedding.

LUCAS: He sure knew a good thing when he saw it!

MAC: You said it. A man's got to get liquored up just to get him through the ceremony.

TRAVIS: Willard's even been raiding speakeasies. I saw his picture in the paper with that big smug grin of his as they were haulin' folks off to the pokey. Better be on the lookout, Nellie.

NELLIE: Don't you worry about me, Travis. (*Smiles*) I run a respectful soda shop.

MAC (*Laughing*): Soda shop, my foot!

TRAVIS: I don't think this prohibition will amount to a hill of beans. I give it a year or two at the most.

NELLIE: No question about it. Even the

U.S. senators come into my place. I hate to have to be so deceitful. I've always respected the law 'fore this.

LUCAS: I know what you mean. We would love to just be running a good ol' honest shipping business, if it would earn us enough income.

NELLIE: I gotta hand it to you—I think it was pretty smart of you to place your schooner *Jezebel* under British registry to avoid being subject to U.S. law.

TRAVIS: I have to give Lucas credit for that.

NELLIE: Sellin' out in international waters for smaller ships to bring ashore is a stroke of pure genius. They must've taught you more than just shipping at that Pennsylvania Nautical School.

TRAVIS: I just pilot the schooner. Lucas is the brains behind the operation.

MAC: I just hope that the "brains" behind the operation can stay away from that purty woman at the library he's been moonin' over lately.

LUCAS: I haven't been moonin' over her.

MAC: My Aunt Bertha's corset! You have been bug-eyed for weeks.

TRAVIS: All the available women in the world, and you have to go and fall for a librarian! Haven't I taught you anything, Lucas? I hope you haven't told her about our business.

LUCAS: I've only told her that I'm in shipping, but I don't think it will be a problem. She seems very liberated. She said she was even going to bob her hair.

NELLIE: Bob her hair! Now, that's bold!

LUCAS: And she's gettin' one of those new-fangled gowns that show off the ankles.

TRAVIS: The ankles! Lucas, Mama would have a seizure! Next thing you know, they'll be movin' the skirts up past the knees.

LUCAS: I doubt women'll get that rebellious.

MAC: They start showin' off their knees, and I'll go completely barmy.

NELLIE: You're already completely barmy, Mac!

MAC: Shucks! That's part of my charm.

LUCAS: Lily's skirts are quite modest. She works in the Public Library. They aren't going to allow librarians to go around showing off their knees.

NELLIE: Lily, is it?

LUCAS: That's right. Lily Hornsby.

MAC: Is she one of those. . . what do you call 'em, flappers?

LUCAS: Lily's just modern, that's all.

TRAVIS: So what were you doin' at the library in the first place, Lucas? I didn't know you held that much with books.

LUCAS: I've been reading up on shipping.

TRAVIS: Well, just be careful. Women can be dangerous. This isn't anything serious, is it?

LUCAS: We just spend a lot of time together at the library—talking. She's very intelligent. Went to college and everything.

MAC: My grandpappy used to say that you should never start educatin' women. Next thing you know they'll be takin' over men's jobs.

NELLIE (*Defensively*): They should if they're better qualified.

MAC: Shoot! No chance of that happenin'. Men are much smarter. I finished eighth grade. Mam's got my last report card framed on the wall and everything. No one else in our family has ever gone that far before.

TRAVIS: What do you know about Lily's family, Lucas?

LUCAS: I've never even been to her house.

NELLIE: He's been standin' out here in the street like he's waiting for—

TRAVIS: You're waitin' for Lily, aren't you? That's what you're doing.

LUCAS: She told me to meet her here. (*Looks at his watch*) She must be running late.

NELLIE: You gonna take her out somewhere?

LUCAS: Thinking about it. Maybe to O'Riley's.

NELLIE: Good choice!

TRAVIS: Does she imbibe spirits?

MAC: Mercy, Travis! She bobs her hair and wears those new short dresses. What do you think? Of course, she par-takes!

LUCAS: Well, naturally, I'll ask her first if she wants to go. If she doesn't, I'll take her to a picture show. There's a new movie out called "The Sheik."

Rudolph Valentino plays a desert sheik who abducts an English woman.

TRAVIS: Sounds salacious.

MAC: I hear that the women are fainting in the streets over Valentino. Better keep her away from him. You don't want her to be making comparisons. You might not measure up.

LUCAS (*Sarcastically*): You really know how to make a fellow feel good, Mac.

MAC: It's one of my best features.

LUCAS: I'm leaning toward O'Riley's, myself.

MAC: Well, just make sure that it's not raided by that Willard guy. You don't want to be arrested on your first date.

TRAVIS: I don't want to have to come and bail you out. (*LILY and JUSTINE enter right.*)

NELLIE: I think this must be your lady friend right now—and she's brought a spare!

MAC: Leapin' Lucifer, Lucas! Introduce me to her friend.

LUCAS: Hi, Lily!

LILY: Lucas!

LUCAS: Lily Hornsby, I'd like you to meet my friends Nellie O'Riley and Mac Simpson, and my brother Travis.

LILY: So happy to meet you. This is my friend Justine Lipton.

JUSTINE: I hope you don't mind. Lily said something about going to the soda shop, and I've never been.

NELLIE: Well, by all means, everybody,

come on in! A new customer is always welcome.

TRAVIS: I don't know. I don't think this is a good idea.

MAC: Ah, Travis, don't be a spoil sport! Just for a little while.

TRAVIS: All right, but all you're getting, Mac Simpson, is a vanilla float.

MAC: With a cherry on top! I love 'em with the cherries on top. *(They all exit into soda shop. Lights fade and then focus on street. WILLARD enters left with MIRIAM and OFFICERS CLANCY and MURRAY.)*

WILLARD: This is the place, officers.

CLANCY: Reverend Willard, O'Riley's is just a soda shop. I've been in there myself many times.

OFFICER MURRAY: Clancy, you know there have been rumors about this place for months.

MIRIAM: We have it on good authority that they sell spirits in here!

WILLARD: We must scourge this town of these dens of iniquity!

MIRIAM: They are an evil influence on our innocent young men and women!

WILLARD: They are leading them down the paths of crime and wickedness.

CLANCY: Surely you have received some misinformation. Nellie O'Riley is an honest businesswoman.

MURRAY: You know we have to investigate it, Clancy.

CLANCY: I just feel that we need more evidence. I hate to just barge into a

local business and start arresting people on mere hearsay.

WILLARD: Do I need to get a judge's order for you to arrest the heathens in this establishment?

MURRAY: No, sir!

MIRIAM: All you have to do is go in, and if you see one opened bottle of liquor, you arrest everyone there.

WILLARD: They are sinners, reprobates. We must show them the path to salvation.

MIRIAM: You are public servants. It is your job to cleanse our city of the malefactors.

MURRAY: Yes ma'am. *(He and CLANCY enter soda shop, and he calls out loudly)* You are all under arrest! *(LILY, LUCAS, JUSTINE, TRAVIS, MAC, and other extras scream and file out with their hands in the air, followed by CLANCY. MURRAY remains inside.)*

LILY (Surprised): Mama! Papa!

WILLARD (Stunned): Lily! Whatever are you doing here?

MIRIAM: Justine! Is that you?

JUSTINE (Embarrassed): Yes, Mrs. Willard.

LUCAS: Lily! Reverend Willard is your father? But your name is Hornsby!

LILY: Yes. He's my stepfather. . .he's raised me since I was a baby.

MAC: Busted!

JUSTINE (Tearfully): I'm so embarrassed.

LILY: It's my fault. I'm sorry to have dragged you into this, Justine.

JUSTINE: It was my idea, Lily.

TRAVIS (*Angrily*): Nice going, Lucas. You go out with the temperance leader's daughter.

WILLARD: Lily Hornsby, what were you doing inside a speakeasy?

JUSTINE: We were blending, sir.

MIRIAM: Blending!

LILY: I wanted to meet the people who came in to indulge in spirits and to help them—you know, save them from themselves. Marching down the street and quoting scripture didn't seem to be working.

WILLARD: But to enter one of these evil places—and just look at you! Indecent! (*Takes off his coat and covers LILY*) Cover yourself. I can see your ankles. And you've bobbed your hair!

MIRIAM: Justine Lipton, your parents will be furious!

LILY: Justine only did this to help me. She didn't want me to be alone.

JUSTINE: I'm not sorry. These were nice people. I thought they'd be evil, but they're not. (*MURRAY exits from shop with large box.*)

MURRAY: I found a box filled with liquor, stamped with the name McCourt.

LILY: Lucas! What does this mean?

LUCAS: I'm sorry, Lily. I told you my brother and I had a shipping company. What I didn't tell you was that we ship liquor from Nassau.

MURRAY: We're going to have to take you all downtown to headquarters.

MIRIAM: No! You can't take our Lily. It will be all over the papers. Jacob, do something. This publicity will be disastrous for our cause.

WILLARD: Ah—look, officers. Couldn't you just arrest the proprietor and the rum-runners?

CLANCY: Sorry, Reverend. It's all or nothing. Do you want to drop the charges?

MIRIAM: Jacob, we must! We can't have Lily's name in the paper.

MAC (*Laughing*): Front page news! I can see it now! "Temperance Leader's Daughter Arrested in Speakeasy," with a picture of Lily in cuffs with her bobbed hair and flapper dress.

MIRIAM: Her picture! Jacob! We can't have her picture in the paper! Not looking like THIS!

WILLARD (*Firmly*): Miriam, these people are breaking the law.

MIRIAM: Jacob Willard, if you allow them to arrest our daughter, I will let everyone know that you served wine at communion services last Christmas.

WILLARD: It was a mistake, Miriam! The church got the wrong shipment.

MIRIAM: And there was that time you took that cough syrup that was 100-proof—

WILLARD: Miriam!

MIRIAM (*Angrily*): Save it for the judge, Jacob!

WILLARD: I'll drop the charges, but

O'Riley's must become a legitimate soda shop with none of that demon rum hidden in the back.

MIRIAM: We could use the soda shop as our temperance headquarters.

NELLIE (*Sarcastically*) Oh, swell!

WILLARD: And the McCourts have to run a genuine shipping business with no more illegal Nassau runs.

TRAVIS: We tried that before. We weren't making enough money to keep our heads above water. The rum-running business was a last resort.

MURRAY: I know a businessman looking for someone to ship motor car parts.

MAC: We could do that. I think this motor car craze may catch on.

WILLARD: All right, then. I won't press charges. Lily, Justine, let's get you home and into some decent clothing.

MIRIAM: You'll catch your death out here with your ankles exposed like that.

NELLIE: Well, I guess I'd better clean out my soda shop. It breaks my heart to throw out my grandpappy's recipe.

MURRAY: Clancy and I will supervise to make sure that you don't restock it.

MAC: I'll help you, Nellie.

TRAVIS: Well, I suppose I'd better supervise Mac!

MAC: Travis, you are no fun at all!

TRAVIS: Just tryin' to be law-abiding. (*CLANCY, MURRAY, MAC, NELLIE, and TRAVIS exit into O'Riley's.*)

LILY: Lucas, I'm—I'm so sorry about all this. This didn't happen the way I planned it. I had good intentions.

LUCAS: This isn't how I planned it either, Lily. Just for the record, I didn't ever feel good about breaking the law.

LILY: Well, I was breaking the law too. I knew that soda shop was a speakeasy.

WILLARD: You certainly were breaking the law. Just wait until we get you home, young lady.

MIRIAM: I hate walking through the streets with Lily and Justine dressed like this. What will people say?

LUCAS: Wait! Would you all like a ride home in my new Studebaker? It's parked just around the corner.

MIRIAM: A motor car! Good heavens, no! They are an invention of the devil himself!

WILLARD: Well, Miriam, wait a minute. Perhaps just this once. Some of these 20s innovations may be all right. (*They exit. Lights fade and then focus on MAVIS and EMMA.*)

MAVIS: So did Lucas give up his rum-running business?

EMMA: It became a moot point. In 1933, Congress ratified the 21st Amendment to the Constitution that would repeal the 18th and end prohibition. Prohibition had cost the country billions of dollars, and it became impossible to enforce; however, Prohibition lasted 13 years, so I don't know if Great-Grandfather Lucas gave up rum-running before that. Like I said, he was a very colorful character. (*Curtain*)

THE END

(*Production Notes on page 38*)

We Gather Together is protected by U.S. copyright law. It is unlawful to use this play in any way unless you are a current subscriber to *PLAYS* Magazine (www.playsmagazine.com).

Middle and Lower Grades

We Gather Together

In 1863, Sarah Josepha Hale wins her campaign to establish a national day of Thanksgiving and unify the country in the face of the Civil War. . . .

by Renée C. Rebman

Characters

SARAH JOSEPHA HALE

EDITH, *her assistant*

MARGARET

MR. TILDEN

MR. OSWALD, *schoolteacher*

HELEN

LILLY

REGINA

ALBERT

DANIEL

Mr. Oswald's students

phia. Desk with chair behind and one in front of it is right. Desk is cluttered with papers, books, etc. Exit is left.

AT RISE: SARAH is pacing. EDITH sits in chair, taking dictation.

SARAH (*Agitated*): Dear Mr. President. . . In regard to my last eight letters concerning the declaration of Thanksgiving as an official national holiday to be celebrated on a set date in every state (*Pauses*)

EDITH (*Looking up*): Yes, Mrs. Hale?

SARAH: Oh, fiddlesticks! If I weren't such a lady I'd say something stronger.

EDITH (*Alarmed*): What's wrong?

SCENE 1

TIME: 1863.

SETTING: Sarah Josepha Hale's office at Godey's Lady's Book in Philadel-

SARAH: Do you know how long I've

EDITOR'S NOTE

Sarah Josepha Hale was a magazine editor, writer, and campaigner for social justice and equality. She raised money to preserve Mt. Vernon and finalize construction of the Bunker Hill Monument, and convinced President Lincoln of the importance of creating one day on which the entire nation would celebrate Thanksgiving. She even wrote the children's nursery rhyme, "Mary Had a Little Lamb"!

been trying to get the President to establish a set holiday for Thanksgiving?

EDITH: Nearly forty years.

SARAH (*On top of EDITH's line*): Nearly forty years, Edith!

EDITH (*Nodding*): Since John Quincy Adams was president.

SARAH (*Ranting on*): Since John Quincy Adams was president! I've been through—

EDITH: Eleven presidents, ma'am.

SARAH: That's right, eleven! (*Smiles*) Oh, dear, you've heard this story so many times, haven't you?

EDITH: I don't mind hearing it again, Mrs. Hale.

SARAH: You're so kind to put up with me, Edith. (*Pause, then a big sigh*) Let's put the letter away for now. I imagine Mr. Lincoln has enough on his mind. Besides, I can't seem to think of a fresh way to plead my case. Let's go over the articles for the upcoming issue of the magazine.

EDITH (*Nodding, then shuffling through papers*): Well, there's the article on the latest styles from Europe.

SARAH: Fashion articles! But there are so many important news events happening. History is being made!

EDITH: But women still like to read about fashion.

SARAH: Even when there aren't any new clothes to be had for love or money? We're in the middle of a war!

EDITH: I guess that's exactly why. If

they can't buy new clothes, they can at least read about them.

SARAH (*Discouraged*): I suppose so. Put the fashion article in, Edith. (*There is a knock at the door.*)

MARGARET (*Calling offstage*): Excuse me, Mrs. Hale.

SARAH (*Calling*): What is it, Margaret? Come in, for goodness' sake. I deplore shouting like a newsboy!

MARGARET (*Hurrying in, then whispering frantically*): Mrs. Hale, your visitors from the school are here. They're right outside.

SARAH: Fiddlesticks! (*Claps her hand over her mouth, then speaks in a much softer tone*) I forgot they were coming today. Do you suppose they heard me?

MARGARET: It's too late now, they either heard or they didn't.

SARAH: Quite true. Let them in. I'll try to behave. (*MARGARET exits.*) Edith, help me straighten this mess. (*SARAH and EDITH stack papers hurriedly. MARGARET reenters, followed by MR. OSWALD, HELEN, LILLY, REGINA, ALBERT, and DANIEL.*)

MARGARET: This is Mrs. Sarah Josepha Hale, the editor here at *Godey's Lady's Book*.

SARAH (*To group*): Good afternoon.

MARGARET: This is Mr. Oswald and his students.

MR. OSWALD: It is a pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Hale. We've enjoyed seeing how a large magazine is run. It's been quite an education in business for my students.

ALBERT: I'm going to be a businessman!

MR. OSWALD: Don't be impertinent, Albert.

ALBERT (*Insistently*): Well, I am!

LILLY: You hush up! We don't want to hear about it.

DANIEL: You don't want to hear about anything except bonnets and dresses, Lilly.

MR. OSWALD (*Clapping loudly*): Lilly, Daniel, that's enough! (*Other students laugh. MR. OSWALD claps hands again, and they stop abruptly.*) I'm so sorry, Mrs. Hale.

SARAH: No need to apologize. I like to see young people with spirit. (*To ALBERT*) You'll make a fine businessman, Albert.

ALBERT (*Pleased*): Thank you. (*To students, smugly*) There—you see? (*LILLY sticks her tongue out at him.*)

DANIEL (*Looking at papers on desk, to EDITH*): Are you writing a letter?

MR. OSWALD: Daniel! Mind your manners!

SARAH: It's quite all right. I don't mind students with a healthy curiosity. It can be an asset. (*To DANIEL*) You guessed correctly. Edith was writing a letter for me.

DANIEL: You don't even have to write your own letters? Golly, maybe I'll be a businessman, too!

ALBERT (*To EDITH*): To whom were you writing? (*Caught off guard, EDITH looks at SARAH in surprise. SARAH nods to her.*)

EDITH: To President Lincoln.

ALBERT (*Astounded*): Really?

SARAH (*Laughing*): Yes. I'd like the President to establish a national Thanksgiving holiday.

HELEN: I thought it already was a national holiday.

SARAH: That's so, but it was left up to each state to decide when to celebrate. I'd like the entire country to celebrate it on the same day. We need to be unified, especially in times like these, with our country engaged in this horrible Civil War.

MR. OSWALD: A difficult task, particularly since states' rights is such a big issue. There is no unity, not with the South's succession.

SARAH: Which is exactly why now is the time to take a firm stance.

LILLY: Do you think the President will listen?

ALBERT: It doesn't matter. We might be two countries soon.

SARAH (*Adamantly*): Of course it matters! I refuse to believe that our country can be divided.

MARGARET: Mrs. Hale is very patriotic.

MR. OSWALD: Yes, we know. We've read her editorials. Forgive Albert, Mrs. Hale. We study the causes of war, but it isn't easy for the children to understand.

SARAH: At times, it isn't easy for anyone to understand. But I do believe in these United States, and united they will remain.

MR. OSWALD: We all hope so.

SARAH: We can't ruin the dream of our Founding Fathers. What would George Washington think?

REGINA: We've studied about President Washington, too, Mrs. Hale!

SARAH: I'm glad to hear it.

MR. OSWALD: In fact, Regina has something for you, Mrs. Hale.

REGINA (*Stepping forward, holding glass jar filled with coins*): We collected this for your Mt. Vernon fund. We want to help preserve George Washington's home. I'm sorry it isn't more.

SARAH (*Touched and happy*): No need for you to be sorry! This is wonderful. You can't know how much I appreciate your efforts. Thank you, Regina. My thanks to all of you for caring about preserving history.

MR. OSWALD: It was our pleasure to help. (*Turns to HELEN*) Helen, are you prepared?

HELEN: Oh, yes, sir.

MR. OSWALD (*To SARAH*): Helen has prepared a surprise for you, Mrs. Hale.

SARAH: Something more? I love surprises. Please don't keep me waiting, Helen.

HELEN (*Stepping forward, reciting*):
Mary had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow,
And everywhere that Mary went
The lamb was sure to go.
What makes the lamb love Mary so?
The eager children cry.
Oh, Mary loved the lamb, you know,

The teacher did reply. (*HELEN bows shyly as SARAH and others applaud.*)

SARAH: Well done, Helen, thank you.

DANIEL (*Excitedly*): You know who wrote that, don't you, Mrs. Hale?

ALBERT: Of course, she does! Don't be such a dummy, Daniel!

LILLY: Boys are so silly.

DANIEL: Well, maybe she forgot.

SARAH (*Laughing*): I didn't forget that I wrote it, Daniel, but I've never heard it recited so beautifully before.

HELEN: Thank you, Mrs. Hale. (*Knock at the door*)

MR. TILDEN (*Calling offstage*): Mrs. Hale! May I speak to you?

SARAH (*Calling off*): Just a moment! (*To EDITH*) See to that please, Edith. It sounds like Mr. Tilden.

EDITH: Certainly. (*Exits*)

SARAH (*To students*): I'm sorry for the interruption, but this is always a very busy place.

MR. OSWALD: We understand. And we do appreciate your generous hospitality. (*Murmurs of agreement and thank yous from the students*)

SARAH: I love encouraging young people—and future businessmen.

ALBERT: I'll remember you always, Mrs. Hale.

SARAH (*Smiling*): I hope you do, Albert. I'm sure I won't forget you.

EDITH (*Reentering, followed by MR.*

TILDEN: Mrs. Hale, Mr. Tilden has some news you'll want to hear.

SARAH: What is it, Mr. Tilden?

MR. TILDEN (*Glancing at students; gravely*): I'm afraid it's news of the war, ma'am. Unpleasant news.

MARGARET: Shall I escort your visitors out?

SARAH: Mr. Oswald?

MR. OSWALD (*Thoughtfully*): No, no. They may as well hear it now. I'm sure it will be all over the streets soon enough.

SARAH: Go ahead, then, Mr. Tilden.

MR. TILDEN: There's been a devastating battle at Gettysburg. Many casualties and fatalities for both the North, claiming victory, and the South. The lists haven't made it to the city yet, but I'm afraid the losses will be some of the heaviest so far. (*There is a stunned silence. HELEN breaks down in tears. REGINA rushes to embrace her.*)

HELEN: My brother's troop was stationed near Gettysburg. We haven't heard from him in weeks.

REGINA: I'm sorry, Helen.

LILLY: I am, too.

HELEN: He could be injured—or dead.

REGINA: You don't know that! Try to be brave.

HELEN (*Desperately*): I'm sick of being brave! When will this horrible war end?

SARAH (*Sadly; hugging HELEN*): I wish I knew, Helen. You have to be brave, dear. Even when it seems

impossible to be brave any longer.

REGINA (*Frantic*): Isn't there anything we can do to stop this war?

DANIEL: If I were old enough, I'd join the army. I'd whip the Confederates, I would!

ALBERT: I would, too! I'd teach them a lesson!

DANIEL (*Miming action*): I'd shoot them all!

ALBERT (*Also miming*): I'd run them through with my bayonet!

SARAH: Daniel, Albert, please! Don't speak of more fighting!

DANIEL (*Stubbornly*): We have to fight! We have to win! Right, Mr. Oswald?

MR. OSWALD: That's right, Daniel.

SARAH (*Surprised*): Is that what you teach these children, sir?

MR. OSWALD: Of course. Surely you believe in the Union's cause, Mrs. Hale. The President has signed the Emancipation Proclamation. He had the wisdom to do what was right and necessary. Slavery must end!

SARAH: Slavery is wrong, I know that, Mr. Oswald. But the cost is so great. How many lives will be lost before it all ends? Before this country solves its problems, and the fighting stops? Peace is what we need!

MARGARET: You've said that many times, Mrs. Hale.

SARAH (*Sadly*): Yet no one listens.

EDITH: A Thanksgiving day of peace—(*Searches through papers on desk*)

MR. TILDEN: A Thanksgiving day of peace? (*EDITH finds letter, holds it up and reads aloud.*)

EDITH: “To lay aside our enemies and strifes. . . on this one day.” (*Pause*) It was Mrs. Hale’s editorial letter for the magazine when the war started.

HELEN (*Bitterly*): Peace. I don’t believe it’s possible. Not even for one day.

LILLY: I don’t either.

SARAH (*Proud and determined*): Of course, it is. We have to believe that, all of us. Will you believe with me? Will you? (*Students shout “Yes,” except for HELEN. SARAH speaks to her.*) Helen? Do you believe me? (*HELEN slowly nods.*) Then we have work to do.

ALBERT: How can we help?

SARAH: By writing letters. You’d be amazed to know what I’ve accomplished over the years by writing letters. Let your feelings be known—and start at the top! With President Lincoln himself. We must have our Thanksgiving Day. Edith, let’s get paper and pencils for everyone! (*EDITH and MARGARET pass paper and pencils to students.*) We’re in this together. Right, Helen?

HELEN (*Managing a smile*): Right, Mrs. Hale. Together we can . . .

MR. OSWALD (*Encouraging her gently*): Go on, Helen.

HELEN: Together we can make a difference.

SARAH (*Touched and proud*): Write it down, dear girl. Write it down. (*Light fades slightly as all freeze in place to form tableau. One by one, students step*

forward to read a portion of their letters, then remain in line across front of stage.)

DANIEL: Dear President Lincoln, maybe if we could celebrate Thanksgiving together it would help the country stay together. Maybe.

LILLY: I would very much like to celebrate Thanksgiving with the whole country, like one big family. It doesn’t feel that way right now.

REGINA: Dear Mr. President, Sarah Hale is right. All states should celebrate together. We are the United States of America, or we were—before this war.

ALBERT: As a future businessman, I think a single Thanksgiving Day is a good idea. Please give it your careful consideration. Respectfully yours, Albert.

HELEN: I haven’t heard from my brother, who is fighting in this war, for a long time. This frightens me. I am very worried. But if you decide to declare a single Thanksgiving holiday, I promise to try to be hopeful and count my blessings. (*Blackout. After a pause, light comes up on SARAH, who steps forward, holding a letter. Others freeze.*)

SARAH (*Beaming as she reads*): Dear Mr. President, I was very pleased to receive your letter and thank you profusely for giving this country a Thanksgiving Day. I believe this will help us all get through these troubled times. Your leadership in all decisions, small and large, is greatly admired. I send you my good thoughts and much respect. Sincerely, Sarah Hale. (*Curtain*)

THE END

(*Production Notes on page 38*)

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Middle and Lower Grades

The Emperor's Lost Penny

Pithy sayings and proverbs spice up this play about royal advisors with something to hide. . . .

by D. J. Luksetich

Characters

BANKER

TREASURER

SOOTHSAYER

EMPEROR

SERVANT

GUARD

SETTING: *Palace throne room. At center is an elaborate throne on a platform.*

AT RISE: *SOOTHSAYER stands right of throne. After a few moments, BANKER and TREASURER enter right, in conversation. Each is carrying a large book. SOOTHSAYER eavesdrops on their conversation.*

BANKER: Well, it's the end of the month and time to tell the Emperor how much richer he is. *(Sighs heavily)* There must be an easier way to make a living.

TREASURER: Yes. It's all so boring. He gets richer and richer every month while we work harder and harder every day.

BANKER: Maybe the Soothsayer can give us some advice.

SOOTHSAYER: If you don't want to work, you have to earn enough money so that you won't have to work.¹ *(NOTE: See page 34 for the sources of sayings used throughout the play.)*

TREASURER: Oh, come on. You can do better than that.

SOOTHSAYER: Early to bed, early to rise, till you get enough money to do otherwise.²

BANKER *(Sarcastically):* Thanks a lot. *(SOOTHSAYER gives a slight bow.)*

TREASURER *(To BANKER):* Hey, what is a Soothsayer, anyway?

BANKER *(Shrugging):* I don't know. Someone who says sooths, I guess.

TREASURER: I just wish the Emperor wasn't so stingy. He skimps and—

BANKER: Sh-h-h! Here he comes. (*EMPEROR enters right and sits on throne. BANKER and TREASURER bow deeply and stand left of throne.*)

EMPEROR: Ah, my trusted money keepers. And how much richer am I this month than last?

SOOTHSAYER: A fool may earn money, but it takes a wise man to keep it.³

EMPEROR (*To SOOTHSAYER*): You know, I wish you'd tell me a good sooth once in a while. You're supposed to be telling me the *future*, not just these pithy sayings all the time.

SOOTHSAYER: The truth only irritates those it enlightens, but does not convert.⁴

EMPEROR: What's that supposed to mean? (*Frustrated*) Oh, never mind. I only hired you because you're my cousin's brother-in-law. (*Sarcastically*) And another thing. . .are you making these up, or did someone important actually say them? (*SOOTHSAYER, insulted, straightens up.*)

SOOTHSAYER (*Wide-eyed; slowly*): He who—(*Frustrated, EMPEROR shakes head and throws up hands.*)

EMPEROR: Aaggghhh! Sh-h-h! (*To BANKER*) Tell me about my money.

BANKER (*Opening book*): Oh, most wonderful Emperor, your bank account is now larger than all the other bank accounts in the country put together.

EMPEROR: Good, good, good.

SOOTHSAYER: Having money does not insure happiness. People with 10 mil-

lion dollars are no happier than people with 9 million dollars.⁵ (*BANKER and TREASURER look at SOOTHSAYER.*)

EMPEROR: Ignore him. (*To TREASURER*) Speak, Treasurer.

TREASURER (*Opening book*): Oh, most gracious Emperor, the imperial treasury is overflowing with money and jewels. It is the greatest treasure in the world.

EMPEROR (*Delighted*): Excellent!

SOOTHSAYER: Rule number one, never lose money. Rule number two, never forget rule number one.⁶ (*EMPEROR stares at SOOTHSAYER in doubt and puts hands on hips. SOOTHSAYER looks at EMPEROR, shrugs.*) Warren Buffett! (*EMPEROR shakes his head, rolls his eyes in disbelief, and sighs.*)

EMPEROR (*To BANKER and TREASURER*): You, my faithful monetary mentors, shall be greatly rewarded.

BANKER and TREASURER (*In fake modesty; ad lib*): Oh, your imperial majesty, that's not necessary—you really shouldn't. . . (*Etc. SERVANT rushes in right with paper.*)

EMPEROR: No! Really! You deserve to be recognized for your fine work. I am going to give each of you—

SERVANT (*Interrupting*): Your majesty, an urgent message. (*Hands paper to EMPEROR*)

EMPEROR (*Reading to himself*): What's this? (*Stands*) Penny! Missing? (*TREASURER and BANKER look at each other worriedly.*)

SERVANT: Yes, oh great and powerful Emperor. Your penny is missing.

EMPEROR (*Pacing*): No—no. . .this is terrible! (*Angrily*) I cannot be happy if my penny is missing.

SOOTHSAYER: The really happy person is the one who can enjoy the scenery, even when they have to take a detour.⁷

EMPEROR (*To SOOTHSAYER*): Oh, be quiet! (*To SERVANT*) We'll have to do what we did before.

SERVANT: Yes, my lord. Shall I go and get the same Guard?

EMPEROR (*Impatiently*): Yes, yes. Go quickly. (*SERVANT exits left.*) We have to find my penny! (*EMPEROR exits right. BANKER and TREASURER stare for a few moments and then step forward, looking after EMPEROR.*)

TREASURER: He's very angry.

SOOTHSAYER: There's nothing wrong with anger provided you use it constructively.⁸ (*Exits right*)

TREASURER: As I was saying, he seems very, very angry.

BANKER: No kidding! Well, I guess you'll just have to confess.

TREASURER (*Looking at BANKER*): What do you mean?

BANKER: I know what you've been doing at the Treasury.

TREASURER (*Looking away, acting puzzled*): What are you talking about?

BANKER: You've been taking money out all along. A little here and a little there, but it all adds up. Don't deny it.

TREASURER: That's ridiculous. I am

the most honest man in the empire.

BANKER (*Turning away*): Ha! That's a laugh.

TREASURER: Besides, I know all about you and your little side deals.

BANKER (*Acting puzzled*): Huh?

TREASURER: You are the villain in this case, with those secret bank accounts of yours.

BANKER: You're lying. I have no secrets from the Emperor. But you! Now, when he finds out about—

TREASURER (*Interrupting*): You wish! I'll bet the Emperor already knows everything about you, and when that guard gets here—

BANKER (*Interrupting*): . . .he'll arrest you for stealing. (*SERVANT enters left, followed by GUARD, who is carrying a long-handled axe.*)

TREASURER: Me? You're the one—

BANKER: Oh, no, not me, it's you— (*BANKER and TREASURER abruptly stop arguing as SERVANT and GUARD pass. They stare at the axe.*)

SERVANT (*To GUARD*): This way. The Emperor wants you to use the axe again. (*BANKER and TREASURER nervously hold their necks.*)

GUARD: Well, I'm ready. . .and so is my axe. (*SERVANT exits right while GUARD stops to check the sharpness of his axe. BANKER and TREASURER approach GUARD.*)

TREASURER (*Speaking timidly*): Excuse me, has this happened before?

GUARD: What? Oh, you mean about. . .

BANKER (*Secretively; quietly*): Yes, yes, about. . . about the. . .

GUARD (*Loudly*): Penny?

BANKER and TREASURER (*Shushing GUARD and looking around*): Yes, yes.

GUARD (*Looking around with a puzzled expression*): This very thing happened many years ago, before either of you was hired by the Emperor.

BANKER: Was the Emperor very upset back then?

GUARD: Oh, yes, it was terrible! I had to use the axe to—(*BANKER and TREASURER grab necks again.*)

TREASURER: You used the axe?

GUARD (*Smiling*): Oh, yes. It came in handy back then. That was the first time he lost his penny. I think he's even more upset now than he was then. Now, here's what happened. (*SERVANT reenters right and speaks harshly to GUARD.*)

SERVANT: Come on, the Emperor is waiting. (*SERVANT and GUARD exit right. BANKER and TREASURER stand in silence for a few moments, then, worried, they pace and stare at each other occasionally. Suddenly EMPEROR enters right, startling both BANKER and TREASURER. He is followed by SOOTHSAYER.*)

EMPEROR (*Rubbing hands together; loudly*): All right! Now we'll get some action around here. (*Sits on throne*)

BANKER (*Running and kneeling before EMPEROR*): Oh merciful Emperor, please don't blame me for the penny. It was the Treasurer's fault.

SOOTHSAYER (*Standing right of*

throne): Our faults irritate us most when we see them in others.⁹

EMPEROR (*Confused*): What?

TREASURER (*Kneeling before EMPEROR*): Oh mighty one, show me mercy, but it wasn't me. The banker has been stealing from you all along.

SOOTHSAYER: Money in the bank is like toothpaste in the tube: easy to take out, hard to put back.¹⁰

EMPEROR (*Glancing at SOOTHSAYER and back at TREASURER; more confused*): What?

BANKER: No, not me. Oh, maybe a tiny bit, but it was mostly the Treasurer.

TREASURER: Oh, I only took a little, your majesty, not the millions the Banker stole.

EMPEROR: What are you talking about?

BANKER (*Pointing to TREASURER*): This thief! Oh great emperor, the missing penny is only a small part of the fortune the Treasurer has taken from you.

EMPEROR: Missing penny?

TREASURER: It's not much, your majesty, really. But the Banker is the imperial thief. You'll find the missing penny is his fault. (*SERVANT enters right, followed by GUARD, with a bird cage suspended on the end of the axe.*)

EMPEROR: Wait. I, I don't know what—(*TREASURER, seeing axe, throws himself at EMPEROR's feet.*)

TREASURER: Mercy! Mercy! I'll tell you everything, but please spare me.

BANKER: Mercy! Mercy! Please don't cut off my head. (*BANKER and TREASURER grovel at feet of EMPEROR, who has a puzzled look on his face.*)

EMPEROR (*To BANKER and TREASURER*): I don't know what you're talking about.

SOOTHSAYER: Where there is a mystery, it is generally suspected, there must also be evil.¹¹ (*EMPEROR looks at SOOTHSAYER and is about to speak, but BANKER speaks before he can.*)

BANKER (*Looking up*): The missing penny, oh illustrious Emperor.

TREASURER (*Looking up*): Please don't use the axe as you did once before. (*BANKER and TREASURER look at each other, and then grovel again, pleading, begging, crying, etc.*)

EMPEROR (*Loudly*): Quiet! Quiet! (*He looks around.*) Listen! (*All are silent. There is a bird singing in the background. EMPEROR listens for a few moments and then goes behind throne. He comes back with a small bird in his hand.*) Penny! My sweet little Penny. You didn't fly away after all. (*BANKER and TREASURER look up.*)

SOOTHSAYER: Be not penny-wise. Riches have wings. Sometimes they fly away of themselves, and sometimes they must be set flying to bring in more.¹² (*EMPEROR gives SOOTHSAYER a slightly puzzled look and then hands bird to SERVANT.*)

EMPEROR: Take Penny and put her back in her cage.

SERVANT: Yes, my lord. (*Puts bird in cage*)

BANKER (*Astonished*): Penny?

TREASURER (*Flabbergasted*): A bird?

SERVANT: Yes, the Emperor's special pet.

GUARD: A few years ago she flew out the window.

SERVANT: She only came back when we brought the cage outside.

BANKER (*To GUARD*): But the axe?

TREASURER: You said you used the axe!

GUARD (*Looking at axe; amused*): I used the axe to hold Penny's cage.

SERVANT: And the axe handle is just long enough to reach the ledge—

GUARD: The ledge up high near the garden window. . .

SERVANT: . . . where Penny likes being in the sun.

GUARD (*To EMPEROR*): Oh illustrious Emperor, shall I take Penny back to her favorite spot?

EMPEROR (*Sitting*): Yes. Please do that. (*GUARD and SERVANT bow and begin to exit right.*) And then hurry back. (*GUARD and SERVANT pause as EMPEROR speaks.*) I may have another job for you (*Pausing and looking at BANKER and TREASURER*) and your axe. (*SERVANT and GUARD exit right.*)

BANKER (*Begging*): Mercy, your majesty.

TREASURER: After all, your majesty, your Penny was saved. (*BANKER and TREASURER look at each other and nod, then look up at EMPEROR hopefully.*)

SOOTHSAYER (*Pompously*): A penny saved is a penny earn. . . ¹³ (*EMPEROR looks at SOOTHSAYER and interrupts him by clearing his throat. SOOTHSAYER stops and thinks for a moment, then speaks philosophically.*) A penny saved is sometimes a pain in the neck.

BANKER and TREASURER (*Looking at*

each other and holding necks): Uuhhhh! (*EMPEROR smiles at SOOTHSAYER, nods in agreement, and sits. BANKER and TREASURER grovel at EMPEROR's feet and beg for mercy in quiet but desperate voices. EMPEROR taps his fingers on the throne while staring down at them. SOOTHSAYER smiles. Quick curtain*)

THE END

PRODUCTION NOTES

The Emperor's Lost Penny

CHARACTERS: 6 male or female.

PLAYING TIME: 15 minutes.

COSTUMES: Emperor wears royal costume with crown. Soothsayer, Banker, and Treasurer have long gowns with sashes. Servant wears simple tunic. Guard wears uniform and helmet.

PROPERTIES: Long-handled axe; bird cage; small bird; large books for Treasurer and Banker; paper message.

SETTING: The throne room of a palace. At center is an elaborate throne on a platform.

LIGHTING: No special effects.

SOUND: Recording of bird song.

SOURCES OF SAYINGS AND PROVERBS

- (1) Ogden Nash
- (2) Peter's Almanac: anonymous
- (3) Scottish saying
- (4) Pasquier Quesnel
- (5) Hobart Brown
- (6) Warren Buffett
- (7) Sir James Jeans
- (8) Wayne Dyer
- (9) Pennsylvania Dutch proverb
- (10) Earl Wilson
- (11) Lord Byron
- (12) Francis Bacon
- (13) 17th century English saying (also attributed to Benjamin Franklin)

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Lower Grades

Planet Parade

Large-cast play: Planets revolve around the sun while sharing some facts about themselves. . . .

by Jane Foster Thornton

Characters

SUN

MERCURY

VENUS

EARTH

MARS

JUPITER

SATURN

URANUS

NEPTUNE

FIFTEEN CHILDREN

SETTING: *A bare stage.*

AT RISE: *MERCURY, VENUS, EARTH, MARS, JUPITER, SATURN, URANUS, and NEPTUNE are lined up at rear of stage. Each holds a ball the relative size of the planet he or she represents. SUN, bouncing huge yellow ball, enters right.*

SUN:

Hello, hello. I am the Sun.
Today we'll have a lot of fun!
But first, here is my family—
Eight planets, as you all can see.
(Planets come downstage and line up behind SUN. They sing "You Are My Sunshine." When they finish, SUN bows to them.)
Thank you all. I love you, too.
But now we have some work to do.
Take your places, one by one,
Orbiting around the Sun.

MERCURY:

I'm the closest. Look at me!
I am little Mercury.
(Starts moving around SUN)

VENUS:

I am Venus. I'm not far.
I'm sometimes called the Evening Star.
(Starts circling MERCURY and SUN)

EARTH:

My name is Earth. I'm blue and green,
With hills and mountains in between.
(Circles others)

MARS:

Make way for Mars! I'm fourth in line.
Round and round—I'm doing fine.
(*Circles*)

JUPITER:

Here comes Jupiter. Look, you all!
I'm so big and you're so small.
(*Circles*)

SATURN:

Next comes Saturn. See my rings?
They're such pretty, fancy things.
(*Circles*)

URANUS:

I'm Uranus. I'm big, too,
And I come right after you.
(*Circles*)

NEPTUNE:

Neptune's next. I'm cold as ice.
But way out here in space, it's nice!
(*Circles*)

SUN:

Good for you! You're doing fine.
But now, here's an idea of mine.
(*Planets stop circling to listen.*)
I'll decide who is the best,
The planet who outshines the rest.
(*VENUS steps forward.*)

VENUS:

I'm the brightest one above,
Named for Venus, Queen of Love.
I dazzle everybody's eyes.
Surely I should win the prize!
(*MERCURY pushes VENUS away.*)

MERCURY:

I'm the fastest. Can't you see?
You should give the prize to me!
(*URANUS elbows MERCURY out of the way.*)

URANUS:

I'm the seventh from the Sun.
I have many moons, not just one.
I used to be King George's Star.

I'm much better than you are!
(*JUPITER pulls URANUS away.*)

JUPITER:

Your moons! Ha! They're not so fine!
I have more moons that are mine.
I'm so big that all you there
Could fit inside with room to spare!
(*MARS takes JUPITER's place.*)

MARS:

It isn't only moons or size
That settles who should win the prize.
Mysterious Mars, whose glow is red
Should surely be the one instead!
(*NEPTUNE shoves MARS away.*)

NEPTUNE:

My year has sixty thousand days
I cannot feel the Sun's warm rays.
I'm so cold I'm turning blue,
So I should win the prize, not you!

SUN:

You all are special, that is true.
But Earth, we haven't heard from you.

EARTH:

There really isn't much to say.
Day follows night, night follows day.
I'm not too new, I'm not too old,
I'm not too hot, I'm not too cold.
I have one moon, not two or three,
But one is quite enough for me.

SUN:

Can't you tell us something more,
That we haven't heard before?

EARTH:

I have trees, and grass, and sky,
Animals, and birds that fly,
Flowers growing in the ground,
And people—people all around!

PLANETS:

People? People, did you say?
People? People? What are they?
(*FIFTEEN CHILDREN enter, each wearing a hat or some other costume*)

that identifies his or her occupation. They line up across stage, and planets group themselves left and right, peering curiously at CHILDREN.)

EARTH:

These are people—big and small,
Young and older, short and tall.
Every one is special, too.
Let them tell you what they do.
(*Each CHILD steps forward, in turn, to speak his or her lines.*)

1ST CHILD: I'm a father.

2ND CHILD: I'm a mother.

3RD CHILD: I'm a sister.

4TH CHILD: I'm a brother.

5TH CHILD: I'm a teacher.

6TH CHILD: I bring the mail.

7TH CHILD: I put out fires.

8TH CHILD: I ride the rails.

9TH CHILD: I'm a nurse.

10TH CHILD: I drive a bus.

11TH and 12TH CHILDREN:

We are doctors. The nurse helps us.

13TH CHILD:

I sell groceries in my store.

14TH CHILD:

I'm a pilot. Watch me soar!

15TH CHILD:

I'm an astronaut. Very soon
You'll see me fly beyond the moon!

SUN:

All my planet family
Are very, very dear to me.
But I will give the prize this minute
To Earth and all the people in it!
(*SUN hangs large golden sun-shaped medal around neck of EARTH and planets applaud.*)

Now back to work—around you go.
Mercury, Venus, don't be slow.
(*As SUN calls their names, planets go back to rotating around him.*)
Earth, Mars, and Jupiter, too,
Saturn and Uranus follow you.
Last comes Neptune from afar—
All circle round the Sun, your star!
(*Planets continue to orbit around SUN as CHILDREN skip around, singing "You Are My Sunshine" as curtain falls.*)

THE END

PRODUCTION NOTES
Planet Parade

CHARACTERS: 24 male and female.

PLAYING TIME: 10 minutes.

COSTUMES: Planets carry balls the relative size of each planet. Sun wears bright yellow shirt and has huge yellow ball. Children wear hats or carry

an object to indicate occupations.

PROPERTIES: Gold sun-shaped medal on ribbon.

SETTING: A bare stage.

LIGHTING and SOUND: No special effects.

PRODUCTION NOTES
The Survivor
(Play on pages 2-10)

CHARACTERS: 2 male; 2 female; 1 male or female.

PLAYING TIME: 20 minutes.

COSTUMES: 16th-century peasant clothing for Estela and Manoel: a long, dark skirt and a lighter blouse for Estela, dark pants and tunic-type shirt for Manoel. Vitoria wears a fancy dress that is now dirty and torn, perhaps shredded in spots. Doctor wears dark pants, tunic shirt, long vest, and a floppy hat.

PROPERTIES: Sack cloth holding silver items—a plate, several goblets, a pitcher, pieces of jewelry, and so on; a baby doll wrapped in a blanket; a cloth; an earthen jug; a plate; pieces of bread and cheese.

SETTING: A shack in the hills above Lisbon, Portugal. A bench, a small table, a curtain strung across a clothesline, a small box that serves as a crib. A mat on the floor.

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

Tempering Temperance
(Play on pages 11-22)

CHARACTERS: 6 female; 4 male; 2 male or female; as many male and female extras as desired.

PLAYING TIME: 30 minutes.

COSTUMES: Emma and Mavis wear modern clothing. All other characters wear 1920s period clothing. The women are dressed in high-collared blouses and long skirts. Lily wears long coat with flapper dress underneath, and her bobbed hair is hidden under a large hat. Lucas wears pocket watch.

Mac has wads of bills in his pockets. Officers are in uniforms, carry night sticks.

PROPERTIES: Photo album; picket signs, as indicated in text; drum; large box with “MCCOURT” stamped on the side.

SETTING: City street. Sign reading O’RILEY’S SODAS is on storefront.

LIGHTING: Spotlights, fading, etc., as indicated in text.

SOUND: No special effects.

We Gather Together
(Play on pages 23-28)

CHARACTERS: 4 male; 6 female.

PLAYING TIME: 20 minutes.

COSTUMES: Long dresses for women and girls, brown pants, white shirts for boys, suits for men.

PROPERTIES: Unlined paper, pencils, glass jar filled with coins.

SETTING: Sarah Josepha Hale’s office at *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, in Philadelphia. Desk with chair behind and one in front of it is right. Desk is cluttered with papers, books, etc. Exit is left.

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

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Dramatized Classic (Middle and Lower Grades)

The Secret Garden

Children restore a long-locked garden and
bring joy to a grieving family. . . .

by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Adapted by David C. Jones

Characters

MARY LENNOX

MRS. MEDLOCK

MARTHA SOWERBY

BEN WEATHERSTAFF

DICKON SOWERBY

MR. ARCHIBALD CRAVEN

COLIN CRAVEN

MRS. MEDLOCK (*Sternly*): This is where you'll be living, now that your parents are both dead and Mr. Craven has been foolish enough to take you in.

MARY (*Unpleasantly*): This room is too small! The one I had in India was much larger and nicer than this.

MRS. MEDLOCK (*Meanly*): Well, Miss Mary, you'd best get used to it—and don't go roaming the halls and bothering Mr. Craven. He does not like being disturbed, and neither do I!

MARY: Is it true he has a hump on his back?

SCENE 1

TIME: *Early 1900s.*

SETTING: *Bedroom in Misselthwaite Manor, England. Bed center; table next to it holds tray of food.*

AT RISE: *MRS. MEDLOCK enters, followed by MARY LENNOX.*

MRS. MEDLOCK (*Sighing*): Aye, 'tis true. But he has a handsome face and married a beautiful lady. Unfortunately, she died, and he spends all his time mourning his loss. Such a waste.

MARY: Wouldn't he like me to keep him company? He must be lonely.

MRS. MEDLOCK: No! He gave orders that you stay in this wing of the mansion. He doesn't want to see you at all.

MARY: How strange.

MRS. MEDLOCK: Now, eat the lunch I see Martha has prepared for you. You'll find enough books and toys to keep you amused, I'm sure. *(She exits.)*

MARY *(Looking around)*: What a dreary place. I know I'm not going to like it here. *(MARTHA SOWERBY enters.)*

MARTHA: Good afternoon, miss.

MARY: Good afternoon. Who are you?

MARTHA: I'm Martha Sowerby.

MARY *(Imperiously)*: Are you going to be my servant?

MARTHA: I'm to do a bit of cleaning up and bring you your food. But judging from your size, you won't be needing much waiting on, will you?

MARY *(Sharply)*: Of course I will. Someone has to dress me.

MARTHA: Can't you dress yourself?

MARY: Certainly I can. But when I lived in India my ayah dressed me.

MARTHA *(Tartly)*: Well, you're in Yorkshire now, and children here dress themselves. *(Cries are heard off-stage.)*

MARY: What was that noise?

MARTHA: It must be the wind coming across the moors. It often makes a mournful sound. Now, eat your meal

before it gets cold.

MARY: I don't like English food.

MARTHA *(Sharply)*: I've nine little brothers and sisters who would be glad to eat that food in a minute.

MARY *(Surprised)*: My goodness! You have nine brothers and sisters?

MARTHA: Yes. We have to take care of each other since Father died. Thank goodness for Dickon. He's a big help.

MARY: Who's Dickon?

MARTHA: My oldest brother. He's a rare boy. He talks to the animals, and when he plays his pipes, they all stop to listen.

MARY: He must be a strange one.

MARTHA: Oh, no! Everyone loves him. Well, I must be off now. I have a lot of work to do.

MARY: But what will I do?

MARTHA: You could go play in one of the gardens—except for the one that's locked.

MARY *(Puzzled)*: How can a garden be locked?

MARTHA: It can if there's a high wall around it. *(Briskly)* Dress warmly if you go outside. *(She exits.)*

MARY *(Sighing)*: How I wish I were back in India! *(Curtain)*

* * *

SCENE 2

SETTING: *The mansion gardens. There are flowerbeds, bushes, etc., around stage. Fence covered with ivy, brambles, etc. is up right.*

AT RISE: *BEN WEATHERSTAFF is working with a hoe. MARY enters.*

BEN (*Looking up*): Well, well. You must be Mistress Mary, quite contrary. I've heard all about you.

MARY: I am not contrary—and who are you?

BEN: I'm Ben Weatherstaff, the gardener. I've worked for Mr. Craven for many, many years.

MARY: Well, I think you're rude.

BEN: Be that as it may, you'd better get used to me. I'm the only one around here—except for Dickon, that is. He spends a lot of time here too.

MARY: And where's this locked garden I've heard about?

BEN: Why, you're standing next to it.

MARY: But where is the entrance?

BEN: Well, the gate is somewhere under all those brambles and ivy that have grown and covered it. It's been locked up so long.

MARY: But why was it ever locked? I never heard of such a thing.

BEN Well, it was Mr. and Mrs. Craven's favorite spot, and they spent many a happy hour in it, reading and laughing together like two lovebirds. Mrs. Craven used to sit reading on a high branch of one of the big trees, but one day the branch broke and she fell to her death. After that, Mr. Craven had the gate locked, and he hasn't entered the garden since.

MARY (*Resolutely*): Well, I shall find the entrance and go in there to play.

BEN: You won't be able to go in without the key.

MARY (*Surprised*): There's a key? Where is it?

BEN: No one knows. Mr. Craven was so heartbroken he took the key one day and threw it as far as he could. No one has ever found it.

MARY: I'll find it. You'll see.

BEN (*Wryly*): Well, good luck, Mistress Mary. You'll need it. (*Laughs and exits. After a moment, DICKON enters, carrying crow, fox, and lamb.*)

DICKON: Hello. You must be Miss Mary.

MARY: How did you know my name? And who are you?

DICKON: They call me Dickon. And I know about you because my sister, Martha, told me all about you.

MARY: Is it true you speak to animals?

DICKON: Aye. Say hello to my friends. This is Cert, the crow. (*Cawing sound is heard.*) The fox is Captain, and the lamb, Lady. (*Bleating is heard.*)

MARY: Those are strange names for animals.

DICKON: It's what they asked to be called.

MARY (*Scoffing*): Animals and birds can't talk.

DICKON: Sure they can. You just have to know how to listen. (*Looks offstage*) Look! Here comes my friend, Robin. (*Robin puppet flies in.*)

ROBIN: Hello, Dickon. Who is your friend?

MARY (*Astonished*): Why, he does talk!

DICKON: See? You just have to want to listen to them. (*To ROBIN*) What are you up to, Robin?

ROBIN: I'm building my nest. Spring is coming, you know, so I'm busy, busy, busy.

MARY (*Delighted*): Oh, he's so cute and funny. Do you think he would be my friend, too? I have no one to play with.

DICKON: Of course. You can find lots of friends here. You're just sad and lonely now, but you'll find happiness here, just as you did in India.

MARY (*Starting to cry*): No. I shall never be happy here. I hate this place. I want to go back to India. (*Runs off*)

DICKON: She could really use a friend or two, eh, Robin? (*Curtain*)

* * *

SCENE 3

SETTING: *Colin Craven's bedroom. There is bed center, a large portrait covered with sheet, and a window.*

AT RISE: *COLIN is in bed, covered completely with blankets. MARY wanders on stage, doesn't notice COLIN.*

MARY (*To herself*): Mrs. Medlock said the library was here somewhere. (*COLIN starts to cry.*) There's that sound again! That's not the wind! It sounds like crying. (*Notices bed*) Oh! (*COLIN sits up.*)

COLIN (*Frightened*): Are you a ghost?

MARY: Of course not. Do I look like a ghost? Who are you, and why are you in bed? It's two in the afternoon!

COLIN: I'm Colin Craven. My father is the master of this manor.

MARY: Why didn't anyone tell me he had a son?

COLIN: Because no one is allowed to talk about me.

MARY: Why not?

COLIN: Because I'm going to have a hump on my back, just like my father.

MARY: Is that why you cry all the time?

COLIN: Yes.

MARY: Don't you ever leave this room?

COLIN: No. If people look at me, I become ill.

MARY: That's ridiculous! I'm looking at you and you're not getting sick.

COLIN: Well, I might.

MARY: Save yourself the trouble. I'm leaving.

COLIN (*Pleading*): No, don't go! I don't have anyone to talk to except Mrs. Medlock—and she doesn't like me.

MARY: She doesn't like anyone.

COLIN (*Eagerly*): Tell me about India. Mrs. Medlock says that's where you're from.

MARY: You can read about India in books.

COLIN: Reading gives me a headache—and I become sick.

MARY: Well, if I were your father I'd make you read so you can learn about things.

COLIN (*Stubbornly*): No one can make

me do anything I don't want to do.

MARY: Well, why not?

COLIN: Because I'm sick—and won't live to grow up.

MARY: Do you want to live?

COLIN: Not if I have a hump on my back like my father. (*Cries*)

MARY (*Disgusted*): I'm leaving. You cry too much!

COLIN: You'll stay until I say you can go!

MARY: I will not! People who talk about sickness and dying are boring. I wish you were more like Dickon.

COLIN: Who's Dickon?

MARY: Martha's brother. Dickon's not like anyone else I've ever met. He can talk with animals, you know. They all love him and talk back.

COLIN (*Astonished*): Really? That's magic!

MARY: He's going to be my friend.

COLIN: Do you suppose he could be my friend, too? (*MRS. MEDLOCK enters.*)

MRS. MEDLOCK (*Angrily*): How dare you enter this room, Miss Mary! You were strictly forbidden to come to this wing of the mansion!

COLIN: I want her here, Mrs. Medlock.

MRS. MEDLOCK: Calm yourself, Master Colin—or she'll make you more ill.

COLIN: You're the one that is making me ill. Go away!

MRS. MEDLOCK: You must rest now—and you, Miss Mary, must leave immediately, before I summon Mr. Craven.

MARY (*Resisting*): Yes, but I . . .

MRS. MEDLOCK (*In threatening tone*): Now! (*MARY exits. Quick curtain*)

* * *

SCENE 4

SETTING: *Mr. Craven's library, with desk center, and bookshelves on walls.*

AT RISE: *MRS. MEDLOCK is talking to MR. CRAVEN.*

MRS. MEDLOCK: Something must be done about that insolent little brat from India. She's rude and stubborn, and last night I caught her in Master Colin's room.

MR. CRAVEN: Well, Mrs. Medlock, that might be a pleasant change for Colin. He has no friends and sees very few people.

MRS. MEDLOCK: Yes, but she is not the right person for Colin to see. She just excites him and will make him more ill. I won't be responsible if anything happens to him.

MR. CRAVEN: Oh, but you *will* be responsible, Mrs. Medlock. I have entrusted Colin to your care, and if anything should happen to him—well, need I say more?

MRS. MEDLOCK: No. No, of course not. (*Slyly*) I will see that Colin gets everything he deserves.

MR. CRAVEN: Good. Now, send for Miss Mary. I want to talk to her.

MRS. MEDLOCK (*Surprised*): Miss Mary? Here? Are you sure?

MR. CRAVEN (*Sharply*): Yes, I am sure. Now, do as I say.

MRS. MEDLOCK: Very well. (*Exits*)

MR. CRAVEN: It sounds to me as if Mary is just the medicine Colin needs. (*MARY enters.*)

MARY (*Timidly*): You sent for me, sir?

MR. CRAVEN: Yes. Come closer, my dear. Don't be afraid. I know children usually are afraid of me, but I'm quite harmless, I assure you.

MARY (*Boldly*): You don't frighten me.

MR. CRAVEN (*Kindly*): You look just like your father. He was my best friend, you know, and when he died, and I learned you had no living relatives, I felt it my duty to care for you.

MARY: Yes. And I'm truly thankful, sir.

MR. CRAVEN: I wish I could do more for you, but I have been ill.

MARY: I'm sorry.

MR. CRAVEN: Are you being taken good care of?

MARY (*Hesitating*): Well, yes. Martha has been very kind to me.

MR. CRAVEN: And Mrs. Medlock?

MARY: Well, I don't see her very much.

MR. CRAVEN: But tell me, are you happy here?

MARY: I liked India better.

MR. CRAVEN (*Sighing*): Yes, I suppose this is a sad house for a child—so much sickness. But we accept what we

must. Is there anything you need or want?

MARY: I wonder if I could have a place to make a garden? I love gardens so.

MR. CRAVEN (*Pleased*): You do? (*Distantly*) There was once someone very dear to me who loved gardens, too. Yes, of course. Choose any part of the gardens you wish, and I will see that you get all the tools you need. Now, child, leave me—I wish to be alone.

MARY: Thank you, Mr. Craven. (*Nervously*) And. . .and try not to be so sad. (*Runs out. Curtain*)

* * *

SCENE 5

SETTING: *Same as Scene 2.*

AT RISE: *MARY and DICKON, holding ROBIN, are looking at fence.*

MARY: Oh, Dickon, if only we could find the entrance to this locked garden. Mr. Craven said I could have any garden I wish—and I want this one.

DICKON: But even if we found the door, we'd still need the key.

ROBIN: Key, key. Now, where did I see a key?

DICKON: You saw a key, Robin?

ROBIN: Yes. I was flying around the other day looking for twigs for my nest, and I spotted a rusty old key near some daffodils.

MARY (*Excitedly*): Oh, Robin, think—please! Where was it?

ROBIN (*Thinking*): Over there. Near that bush, I think. (*MARY and DICKON run over, search.*)

DICKON: Look! Here it is! (*Holds up*

key) Now if we only knew where the gate was.

ROBIN: Oh, I know that, too.

MARY: Well, why didn't you tell us?

ROBIN: You never asked me.

DICKON: Show us where it is, Robin.

ROBIN: It's over here behind this ivy.
(*They rush over to fence.*)

MARY (*Finding door*): Yes, yes! Here it is. Quick, Dickon. Try the key!

DICKON: Very well. (*He tries key.*) It's turning. . .but very slowly. It's very rusty. There! I think I've got it. Now, we'll just give a little push, and—
(*Wall curtain goes up, revealing a dead garden.*)

MARY (*Excited*): This is it! The locked garden! (*Disappointed*) Oh, but look! Nothing is growing. Everything is dead.

DICKON: It just needs some care, and lots of water. (*Gestures*) See, these rose bushes are alive. Soon they'll be blooming—you'll see.

MARY (*Hopefully*): Do you think so?

DICKON: Yes, but this garden does need a lot of work.

MARY: Dickon, would you help me? The garden is so big.

DICKON: Yes, I'll be glad to help. I love gardening.

MARY: And we won't tell anyone else about it. This will be our secret garden. We'll plant more flowers, and have it looking beautiful again. Then when we're finished we'll let Mr.

Craven see it. Won't he be pleased?

DICKON: Aye, that he will. But it will take quite a while, unless we get some more help.

MARY: Yes, we could use more help, but who? Hm-m. I wonder. (*Curtain*)

* * *

SCENE 6

SETTING: *Same as Scene 3.*

AT RISE: *COLIN is in bed. MARTHA enters.*

MARTHA: Good morning, Master Colin. I've come to do a bit of cleaning up. (*She starts dusting.*)

COLIN: Good morning, Martha. Have you seen Mary today? She said she was coming to visit.

MARTHA: No, I haven't seen her. But if she said she was coming, I'm sure she'll be here. My, it's stuffy in here. Let me open a window—you need some fresh air. (*Opens window*)

COLIN: That's what my doctor says, but Mrs. Medlock tells him I'm too frail, and she always closes the windows. Sometimes I think she doesn't want me to get well.

MARTHA: What a terrible thing to say! Of course she does. There, now. Isn't that better? Well, I must get on with my chores. If I see Mary, I'll tell her you're waiting for her. (*Exits*)

COLIN (*Sadly; to himself*): I think Martha and Mary are my only friends. No one else seems to like me. Not even my own father.

MRS. MEDLOCK (*Entering*): Now, who opened that window? Much too drafty. (*Closes window*) I came to tell you your father is leaving to tour the con-

tenant, and he won't return for several months. So I will be completely in charge of you.

COLIN (*Sullenly*): You always are anyway.

MRS. MEDLOCK (*Sharply*): Don't be rude, young man. It isn't easy taking care of an invalid, and I think you're getting worse. Let me see your back. (*Examines his back*) Yes, the hump seems to be growing. You probably won't live much longer, so you'd better be nice to me if you want me to wait on you.

COLIN: Oh, go away and leave me alone.

MRS. MEDLOCK: Excellent suggestion. (*Mumbling*) Impudent brat! (*Exits*)

COLIN: I wish Martha were the housekeeper instead of that grumpy old thing. (*MARY and DICKON, holding animals and ROBIN, enter.*)

MARY: Hello, Colin. This is my friend, Dickon, Martha's brother. He brought his animals to show you.

COLIN: Where were you, Mary? I missed you so much. Hello, Dickon. Mary has told me all about you.

DICKON: Hello! Want to hold Lady? She's a nice and gentle lamb. (*Baaing is heard.*)

COLIN: Oh, yes, thank you. (*Holds lamb*)

DICKON: My fox is named Captain, and the crow is Cert.

COLIN: I'm glad you came. I have so few visitors—only Mary and Martha. Not even Father comes to see me.

DICKON: Why not?

COLIN: Because he doesn't want to see the hump on my back—and Mrs. Medlock says it's getting bigger.

MARY: Let me see. (*Looks at COLIN's back*) Why, there's no hump there, Colin. Only a knobby spine like mine because we're both so skinny.

COLIN (*Amazed*): You mean I don't have a hump, and I'm not dying?

MARY: Of course not! It's all in your mind.

DICKON: Roses won't grow where there are only thistles.

COLIN: What does that mean?

MARY: It means that you can't have happy thoughts if you always have gloomy ones in your head.

COLIN: You're right. I must find something to do to keep me happy.

MARY: Dickon and I have a secret. I'll tell you if you promise not to tell anyone else!

COLIN: I promise.

MARY: We have found the garden that your mother and father used to love so much, and we're going to make it beautiful again—just the way it used to be.

COLIN (*Excited*): Really? Oh, I wish I could help, but I can't walk. I haven't been out of this bed in years.

DICKON: I could put you in your wheelchair and take you out into the garden. Then you could sit on the ground and plant seeds and help pull weeds.

COLIN: Do you really think I could?

MARY: Of course you could! In fact, you shall! We'll start tomorrow.

COLIN (*Delighted*): That's wonderful! Mary, would you pull the curtain back over that picture?

MARY: Yes, of course. (*Pulls curtain, revealing portrait of beautiful woman*) Why, she's beautiful! Just like a fairy princess. Who is she?

COLIN: That's my mother.

DICKON: But why did you have her covered?

COLIN: I didn't want her to see me with a hump.

MARY: But you don't have a hump, so you don't need a cover anymore.

COLIN: She is beautiful, isn't she?

MARY: Yes. Colin, maybe your father doesn't come to your room because it's too painful for him to see her picture.

COLIN: Do you really think so? I will try to think only happy thoughts from now on.

MARY: We have to go now. Dickon has to run some errands for his mother. We'll see you tomorrow. (*DICKON and MARY exit.*)

COLIN (*Calling off*): Goodbye! Thanks for coming. (*He looks at picture.*) Oh, Mother. Forgive me for covering you up. (*He gets out of bed and tries to walk toward the picture, but falls.*) If only I could walk. . . I will walk. I'll practice a little bit each day, and when Father comes home I'll show him I'm not an invalid anymore! (*Curtain*)

* * *

SCENE 7

TIME: *Two months later.*

SETTING: *Same as Scene 2.*

AT RISE: *MARTHA is onstage. MR. CRAVEN enters.*

MR. CRAVEN: I came as soon as I got your letter, Martha. If what you wrote is true, there will have to be some drastic changes around here. (*MRS. MEDLOCK enters.*)

MARTHA: Aye, 'tis true, sir. Mrs. Medlock was keeping poor Colin in a dark, stuffy room—like the inside of a coffin, it was—and she was telling him he had a hump growing on his back and was dying.

MR. CRAVEN: Is this true, Mrs. Medlock?

MRS. MEDLOCK (*Haughtily*): Of course not!

MARTHA: She's lying, sir. Colin, Dickon, and Miss Mary all told me the same story.

MRS. MEDLOCK: It's all that little brat's fault. You should never have brought her here from India.

MR. CRAVEN: But why would you do such a thing to Colin?

MRS. MEDLOCK: He was slowly wasting away until she came and got him to go out into the fresh air. I knew if he died you would also soon die from a broken heart—and then I would have inherited this fancy place, and I would have lived like a queen.

MR. CRAVEN (*Furious*): What! You'll be lucky to live in a pig sty when I'm through with you. Now, pack your bags. I don't ever want to see you again!

MRS. MEDLOCK: But, Mr. Craven! My salary! My money!

MR. CRAVEN: Your salary will be going to Martha from now on. She will be my new housekeeper.

MRS. MEDLOCK: After all I've done!

MARTHA: I'll go with her, sir, while she packs. Just to see that she doesn't walk away with all the silver. (*Both exit.*)

BEN (*Entering*): Mr. Craven! Welcome home. Mary wants to see you right away. She's in the locked garden, sir.

MR. CRAVEN (*Amazed*): The garden? How did she get in there? I thought the key was lost forever.

BEN: Come, I'll show you. The entrance is this way. (*Wall curtain goes up, revealing a beautiful flower-filled garden. MARY, pushing COLIN in wheelchair, enters, followed by DICKON.*)

MARY and COLIN: Surprise!

MR. CRAVEN: Why, it's beautiful!

You've planted my favorite flowers!

BEN: Just the way it was when your wife was alive, sir. The children have worked very hard to do this.

MARY: Ben helped, too. He told us how it used to look and pruned away all the dead wood.

MR. CRAVEN: And Colin, my boy! You have color in your cheeks, and you've gained weight.

COLIN: And that's not all, Father. (*He gets out of wheelchair.*) I . . . can walk. (*He walks with difficulty to MR. CRAVEN, and they embrace. BEN and DICKON watch happily.*)

MR. CRAVEN: My son! (*MARY embraces them too.*) My children. You have made me very happy! And you have brought love back into our garden.

COLIN: Our secret garden!

MARY: Yes, but now it needn't be a secret any longer. (*Curtain*)

THE END

PRODUCTION NOTES

The Secret Garden

CHARACTERS: 3 female; 4 male; 1 male or female for Robin's voice.

PLAYING TIME: 25 minutes.

COSTUMES: All dress in turn-of-the-century clothing.

PROPERTIES: Hoe; stuffed animals (crow, fox, lamb); robin puppet; key; wheelchair.

SETTING: Scene 1, Mary's bedroom in Misselthwaite Manor. Bed is center; table next to it holds tray of food. Scenes 2, 5, and 7, mansion gardens, with flowerbeds, bushes, etc. A fence

covered with ivy, brambles, etc. is up right. Behind wall curtain is dead garden, Scene 5; flower-filled garden at end of Scene 7. Scenes 3, 6, Colin's bedroom. Bed center, a large portrait of a beautiful woman covered with sheet up right, and window. Scene 4, library. Desk is center; bookshelves on walls.

LIGHTING: No special effects.

SOUND: Cawing and baaing sounds.

NOTE: If desired, this play may be performed entirely with puppets.

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