

Plays

THE DRAMA MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

OCTOBER 2026

UPPER GRADES

- You, the Jury. *Kathy Applebee* 2
Let's Talk About It. *Martin A. Follse* 11

DRAMATIZED CLASSIC (FOR UPPER GRADES)

- The Flying Dutchman. *Richard Wagner* 21
Adapted from the opera *Der Fliegende Hollander*
by *Jesse J. Martin*

MIDDLE AND LOWER GRADES

- The Other Witch. *Douglas Evans* 29
Mystery at Mother Goose's Place. . . . *Bill Majeski* 33
A Halloween Carol. *Jane Tesh* 40

Subscribers. Persons and entities with subscriptions in force at the time of the performance may produce the plays in any issue of this magazine royalty-free, provided the performance is part of a regular school or dramatic club activity. Such persons and entities may also reproduce copies of the individual play being produced for members of the cast, and may videotape or record rehearsals or performances of the play, for use by such members in connection with preparation for a performance of the play. Subscribers may not videotape or record the production of the play for any other reason, and may not reproduce or transmit the production via television or radio, or via the internet or other electronic methods, without the written permission of, and the payment of any required royalties to, Plays/Sterling Partners, Inc.

Non-subscribers. Persons and entities that are not current subscribers to this magazine must apply in writing to Plays/Sterling Partners, Inc. for royalty quotations and permission to copy, reproduce, distribute, transmit, publicly display, or publicly perform any of the plays herein. Permission will be granted on a per-performance basis only, and under no condition may permission be transferred.

All readers. All rights not expressly granted by these paragraphs are reserved by Plays/Sterling Partners, Inc. If you have a question about the rights granted herein, or would like to request permission to perform, distribute, transmit, display or copy any of the literary or dramatic works in this magazine, please contact PLAYS, The Drama Magazine for Young People, 897 Washington St., #600160, Newton, MA 02460.

Publisher: PETER A. DIMOND
Editor: ELIZABETH PRESTON
Editorial Assistant: PAIGE TURNER
Customer Service: LINDA HAND
Shipping: WOODY PALLET

897 Washington St., #600160, Newton, MA 02460-0002
(617) 630-9100 Fax: (617) 630-9101
E-mail: customerservice@playsmagazine.com

© Sterling Partners, Inc. 2026. Title registered as trademark.

PLAYS, The Drama Magazine for Young People is published online seven times a year, monthly except June, July, August, and September, and bimonthly January/February, by STERLING PARTNERS, INC., 897 Washington St., #600160, Newton, MA 02460. Subscription rate: 1 year, \$75.00.

Plays

The drama magazine for young people

In this issue. . .

Upper Grades

You, the Jury, by Kathy Applebee

36 actors: 6 female, 12 male, plus male and female extras for Bailiff and Jurors; 30 minutes. Grand Jury hears the details of the mysterious death of Edgar Allan Poe, and must render a verdict. Hark the raven, nevermore!

Let's Talk About It, by Martin Follose

8 actors: 5 female, 3 male; 30 minutes. Spunky grandmother helps to get a couple back together, and models the importance of human connection.

The Flying Dutchman, based on the opera by Richard Wagner, and adapted by Jesse J. Martin

26+ male and female actors; 30 minutes. Cursed to roam the seven seas for an eternity, captain seeks a love that will set him free.

Middle & Lower Grades

The Other Witch, by Douglas Evans

10 actors: 4 male, 4 female, 2 male or female; 30 minutes. Classroom Halloween party seems to have an uninvited guest. Which witch is it?

Mystery at Mother Goose's Place, by Bill Majeski

8 actors: 4 male, 4 female, 20 minutes. Did Humpty Dumpty fall, did he jump, or was he pushed off that wall to his death? This play will egg you on and crack you up!

A Halloween Carol, by Jane Tesh

20+ male and female actors; 20 minutes. Stingy witch sees her future and realizes she needs to change her ways to have a happy life.

You, the Jury

Audience members will be asked to render a decision
in the Grand Jury hearing involving the death of
Edgar Allan Poe. . . .

by Kathy Applebee

Characters

BAILIFF

JUDGE NICHOLAS BRICE

I. NEVETT STEELE, *Attorney
General for Baltimore City*

BENJAMIN C. PRESSTMAN,
Baltimore City Counsellor

DR. EDWARD REILLY, *coroner*

NEILSON POE, *Edgar Allan Poe's
brother*

WITNESSES:

DR. JOHN J. MORAN, *physician*

JOSEPH WALKER, *friend of Poe's*

DR. JOSEPH E. SNODGRASS,
temperance advocate and editor

SARAH ELMIRA SHELTON, *Poe's
first love*

ELIZABETH FRIES ELLET,
writer

COLONEL WILLIAM LUMMIS,
Ellet's brother

FRANCES SARGENT OSGOOD,
poet

MARIA CLEMM, *Poe's aunt*

HENRY WADSWORTH

LONGFELLOW, *poet*

SARAH HELEN WHITMAN, *poet*

ELIZABETH BARRETT

BROWNING, *poet*

RUFUS WILMOT GRISWOLD,
editor

JURORS, *18 cast members or pre-
selected audience members*

SETTING: *A Baltimore Courthouse,
November 1849. Witness stand (chair)
is center, flanked by Judge's bench
(table with gavel on it, and chair) stage*

*right and lawyer's table with papers on
it stage left. There is a section of seats
for jury members at right side of stage,
and chairs for witnesses at left.*

AT RISE: *I. NEVETT STEELE, DR. EDWARD REILLY, NEILSON POE, and BENJAMIN C. PRESSTMAN are seated at table left. JURORS are seated off right while WITNESSES, ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING, and SARAH HELEN WHITMAN are seated left or off left. BAILIFF enters left.*

BAILIFF: All rise. (*Everyone stands.*) Presiding Judge Nicholas Brice of the Baltimore City Court is in the courtroom. (*JUDGE enters left and sits at bench. Everyone on stage sits again.*)

JUDGE: I have impaneled a Grand Jury to determine if the death of Edgar Allan Poe was due to foul play, natural causes, or an accident. Will the eighteen jurors who have been selected please come in? (*JURORS enter.*)

BAILIFF: Jurors, please take your seats here. (*Indicates the section of seats right, and JURORS are seated*)

JUDGE: You the jury are instructed to pay close attention to the testimony presented and rule on this matter.

BAILIFF: Consider yourselves under oath. . . .Who represents the legal interests of the deceased?

NEILSON (*Standing*): I do, Your Honor. I am Neilson Poe, Edgar's brother.

BAILIFF: Would you state your occupation, Mr. Neilson?

NEILSON: I am a Baltimore attorney and journalist.

JUDGE: Have you had any involvement in this case?

NEILSON: Yes, Your Honor. When news of Edgar's condition reached me at the courthouse, I rushed to his hospital bedside. I also paid his medical expenses

and arranged his funeral.

JUDGE: Thank you. You may be seated. (*NEILSON sits. JUDGE addresses JURORS.*) When a Grand Jury is considering murder, consider motive, means, and opportunity. Motive—why a murderer did it.

BAILIFF: Opportunity is being in the right place at the right time to commit the murder.

JUDGE: Means takes into account the method of murder, whether it be by poison, gunshot, stabbing, those sorts of things. A murderer had to have access to the means of the murder.

BAILIFF: Also consider who, if anyone, benefits or benefits the most from the victim's death.

JUDGE: Our solicitor, I. Nevett Steele, the Attorney General for Baltimore City, will question the witnesses and possible suspects.

BAILIFF: He is being assisted by Benjamin C. Presstman, the Baltimore City Counsellor, and Dr. Edward Reilly, the Baltimore City Coroner.

JUDGE: Dr. Reilly, I believe you will call the first witness. (*REILLY stands.*)

REILLY: Yes, Your Honor. I call Dr. John J. Moran, resident physician at Washington College Hospital. (*DR. MORAN takes the stand.*) Dr. Moran, what was Edgar Allan Poe's exact cause of death?

MORAN: His cause of death was officially listed as "phrenetic," or brain inflammation.

REILLY: How did he present?

MORAN: In a state of extreme delirium.

REILLY: And during the four days he was hospitalized leading up to his death?

MORAN: He frequently hallucinated, displayed agitated outbursts, at one point asking someone to hand him a pistol so he could “blow out his brains.” He also repeatedly shouted “Reynolds!” but no one knew who he might mean.

REILLY: Did any of Mr. Poe’s physical symptoms point to chemical poisoning or a beating?

MORAN: I cannot determine that definitively, due to the lack of a forensic autopsy and missing medical records.

REILLY: Can you give us a *specific* cause of death?

MORAN: I cannot.

REILLY: You may step down. We call Joseph Walker to the stand. (*MORAN and REILLY return to lawyer table. I. NEVETT STEELE stands and WALKER takes the stand. This process is repeated whenever a witness is called, and then finishes testimony.*)

STEELE: Mr. Walker, did you discover Mr. Poe?

WALKER: Yes, I did.

STEELE: Where and in what condition?

WALKER: Mr. Poe was delirious and dressed in cheap, ill-fitting clothes at Ryan’s Fourth Ward Polls on election day.

STEELE: Describe the location to our Grand Jury.

WALKER: It occurred in the Fourth Ward polling place, quite close to the basement at Ryan’s Tavern. He was

incoherent and lying in a nearby ditch.

STEELE: Thank you, Mr. Walker. You may step down.

PRESSTMAN: I call Dr. Joseph E. Snodgrass to the stand. . . . Explain to our jury your relationship to Edgar Allan Poe.

SNODGRASS: I am an editor and was a close friend of Mr. Poe. Mr. Walker summoned me to the tavern and I arranged for Poe to be hospitalized.

PRESSTMAN: Is it true you are a passionate temperance advocate?

SNODGRASS: Yes. Poe’s death is a tragedy and one I am afraid could have been avoided. We don’t know for sure it was drink that left him in a disheveled and drastically injured state, but liquor is the bane of all mankind.

PRESSTMAN: Is it true that Poe had joined the temperance movement, claiming to shun alcohol, with which he’d struggled all his life?

SNODGRASS: Yes.

PRESSTMAN: How did you find out about Mr. Poe?

SNODGRASS: I received this letter on October 3, 1849. (*Pulls letter from pocket and reads from it*) Dear Sir. There is a gentleman, rather the worse for wear, at Baltimore’s Fourth Ward polls, who goes under the cognomen of Edgar A. Poe, and who appears in great distress. He says he is acquainted with you. He is in need of immediate assistance. (*Pause*) Signed Yours, in haste, Joseph W. Walker.

PRESSTMAN: When you went to his aid, what did you find?

SNODGRASS: Edgar was weak and trembling, drenched in perspiration, drifting in and out of consciousness.

PRESSTMAN: What do you believe happened to Mr. Poe?

SNODGRASS: It is my belief that Poe was intentionally drugged with toxic amounts of cheap alcohol by political gang members, probably the Pug Uglies, in order to have him vote over and over at different polling places as part of a cooping scheme. He was found at a location well-known for cooping to occur.

PRESSTMAN: Kindly explain what a cooping scheme is to our jury.

SNODGRASS (*Irritated*): Cooping is an evil, dishonest, and notorious form of electoral fraud practiced here in Baltimore. Political gangs, often violent, kidnap unsuspecting men, hold them prisoner in a “coop” or cellar, drugging or plying them with alcohol. On election day, gang members drag these befuddled men to multiple polling places and force them to vote repeatedly for a specific political candidate. These men are often disguised in different clothing, say changing the coat and hat, each time to fool election officials.

PRESSTMAN: Can you think of any other reason Mr. Poe would have been in such a state?

SNODGRASS (*Incensed*): Perhaps because of an illness. I heard Elmira Shelton packed him off to Baltimore with some medicine full of alcohol. (*More kindly*) She was probably unaware of the medicine’s contents.

PRESSTMAN: That is hearsay. We will have to verify this with Mrs. Shelton’s own testimony. Any other theories?

SNODGRASS: Poe once stated, “Have you seen Griswold’s *Book of Poetry*? It is a most outrageous humbug.” Griswold was angry about that review. He hated Poe and is a convicted liar, forger, coward, a backbiter and scandal-monger. Maybe Griswold is a murderer as well.

PRESSTMAN: You may step down.

STEELE: I now call Sarah Elmira Shelton. . . .How were you acquainted with Mr. Poe?

SHELTON (*Nostalgic*): I was Edgar Allan Poe’s first love. We were barely in our teens. It was not to be. My parents found out and split us apart.

STEELE: Mrs. Shelton, is it true you were Poe’s inspiration for many of his poems?

SHELTON (*Proudly*): Yes. “Tamerlane” and “Annabel Lee” in particular.

STEELE: When did you and Mr. Poe become reacquainted?

SHELTON: I was living in Richmond, a widow, when he came back a couple of months ago to court me. Within a couple of weeks, we were engaged. (*Sadly*) But once again we were separated, this time by the Grim Reaper himself.

STEELE: What do you believe happened to cause his death?

SHELTON: I think Edgar succumbed to the flu—which might have turned into deadly pneumonia. His last night in Richmond, he was very sick, and I insisted he see a doctor because he had a weak pulse and a fever. I didn’t think he should journey to Philadelphia to edit Mrs. St. Leon’s book of poetry.

STEELE: But he left anyway?

SHELTON: Yes. And somehow ended up in Baltimore.

STEELE: How was he dressed when he left?

SHELTON: Like the refined gentleman he was. His own clothing may have been switched to those clothes he was found in.

STEELE: What do you think of the theory that your brothers committed murder to prevent your marriage to Poe?

SHELTON (*Adamant*): Utter nonsense! My brothers would never have harmed him, no matter how much they disapproved of our pending wedding. But I'm not so sure about Colonel Lummis or even his sister Elizabeth Ellet. She is quite the vindictive woman who meddles where she is not welcome.

STEELE: Thank you, Mrs. Shelton. You may step down.

PRESSTMAN: I call Colonel Lummis to testify. . . . Explain to our Grand Jury who you are.

LUMMIS: I am Colonel William Lummis, the brother of Elizabeth Fries Lummis Ellet.

PRESSTMAN: What caused friction between you and Poe?

LUMMIS: When Frances Osgood demanded her letters back because they were less than discreet, my sister asked for hers back as well. (*Hastily*) Not because of the contents. When Poe failed to comply, she asked me to step in.

PRESSTMAN: What did those letters contain?

LUMMIS: I don't know. You'd have to ask my sister.

PRESSTMAN: Is it true you challenged Poe to a duel?

LUMMIS: Yes, but it never happened, because the letters were returned.

PRESSTMAN: What do you think accounts for Poe's death?

LUMMIS: I believe he died from the effects of debauchery. He fell in with a companion or two, maybe former cadets from his army days. (*Digressing*) Did you know Poe was dishonorably discharged?

PRESSTMAN: Irrelevant. Continue with your theory.

LUMMIS: They probably went out drinking and Poe succumbed to his own bad decisions. He accidentally fell into a ditch, passed out and succumbed to the elements.

PRESSTMAN: You may step down. I call Elizabeth Fries Lummis Ellet to testify. . . . Explain to the jury who you are.

ELLET (*Pompously*): I am Elizabeth Ellet, poet, historian, author. I am the first writer to record the lives of women who had made significant contributions during the American Revolution.

PRESSTMAN: People in your literary circle describe you as spiteful, vindictive, meddling, and obnoxious.

ELLET (*Arrogantly*): Women have always been jealous of me and my talent.

PRESSTMAN: Is it true you were divorcing your husband to marry Poe?

ELLET (*Sharply*): Of course not. Those gossiping busybodies. It's true my husband and I are separated, he in South Carolina and I in New York, but we are

not divorcing. (*Spitefully*) However, did you know a *married* Poe and a *married* Frances Sargent Osgood corresponded in private and flirted in public? They published several poems to each other, some under pseudonyms. Isn't it obvious Poe and Osgood were engaged in an illicit affair?

PRESSTMAN (*Sternly*): Please stick to the matter at hand. What about the letters between you and Poe? Were they romantic?

ELLET: Of course not. When I warned Osgood to beware of her indiscretions, I also asked that my platonic letters be returned by Poe. Finally, I had to ask my brother to intervene, as he has just testified.

PRESSTMAN: What is your theory regarding Poe's death?

ELLET: I think Edgar was murdered by Elmira Shelton's three brothers, to protect the Shelton family fortune. Maybe he was wearing those awful clothes to disguise himself from them. Maybe they intercepted Poe in Baltimore, beat him, and left him for dead. Or maybe Sarah Osgood herself was involved.

PRESSTMAN: You may step down.

REILLY: I call Mrs. Frances Sargent Osgood to testify. Introduce yourself.

OSGOOD (*In flirtatious manner*): I am poet Frances Sargent Osgood. Don't believe the rumors Poe and I were engaged in anything other than a professional relationship. Our poetic and personal exchanges were completely platonic. But I do believe the exchanges between Poe and me aroused some jealousy in Rufus Griswold, the man who edited my book of poems.

REILLY: So, was there bad blood

between Poe and Griswold?

OSGOOD: Yes. It started when Griswold published *The Poets and Poetry of America*, which included several of Poe's poems. Poe was displeased with Griswold's lukewarm review of his work and accused Griswold of favoring his friends, particularly Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

ELLET (*Standing and shouting*): He most certainly did!

JUDGE: Enough! (*Pounds gavel*): You will remain seated and silent until called for. (*ELLET nods and sits, chagrined.*)

REILLY: Continue, Mrs. Osgood.

OSGOOD: Griswold replaced Poe as the editor of *Graham's Magazine* at a higher salary. By this time they could not stand each other. It just got worse and continued after poor Edgar died.

REILLY: What do you mean?

OSGOOD: That horrible, anonymous obituary about Edgar. Everyone knew it was the work of Rufus Griswold. Here, let me read part of it. (*Taking paper from her purse, reading*) "Edgar Allan Poe is dead. He died in Baltimore the day before yesterday. This announcement will startle many, but few will be grieved by it. He had few or no friends. As a critic, he was little better than a carping grammarian." (*Looks up*) Very ungenerous.

REILLY: Did you have any reason to see Poe dead?

OSGOOD: Of course not. I couldn't swat a spider, much less harm someone. (*More seriously*) But someone did. The question is who? Did you know that Poe's mother-in-law and aunt, Maria

Clemm, fought over his few possessions with Poe's family? You might want to ask Mrs. Clemm if she could bear to see her Eddie married again to any other woman than her dearly departed daughter, Virginia.

REILLY: Thank you, Mrs. Osgood. You may step down.

STEELE: I call Mrs. Clemm to testify. . . How are you and Mr. Poe related?

CLEMM: I am poor Eddie's aunt and former mother-in-law. (*Sadly*) He was married to my dear Virginia, who died after suffering with tuberculosis. Oh, how he loved Virginia. She was just twenty-five when she died.

STEELE: How did her death affect him?

CLEMM: He dreaded to be alone. I did my best to care for my Eddie and to help him, but he experienced dreadful ups and downs after Virginia died.

STEELE: Do you think he was murdered?

CLEMM: No. I think he could have been poisoned from coal gas that is used for indoor lighting. Or maybe mercury poisoning. During the cholera epidemic in July in Philadelphia, his doctor prescribed mercury chloride.

STEELE: One moment, Mrs. Clemm. (*Calling to REILLY*) Doctor Reilly, is mercury chloride toxic?

REILLY (*Standing*): It is, and it can cause brain dysfunction. However, toxic effects like a burning sensation, nausea, and vomiting appear quickly within ten to fifteen minutes to a few hours after ingestion. Severe abdominal pain and acute kidney failure would appear in a matter of hours or days, not months. (*Sits*)

STEELE: Thank you, Dr. Reilly. (*Turning back to CLEMM*) What about the rumor that he had rabies?

CLEMM: Just rumors. It is true his beloved cat, Catterina, died just after he did. But she died from a broken heart, not rabies. Besides, they said Eddie was drinking water at the hospital until his death, which those with rabies cannot do. I think his death was a tragic accident.

REILLY (*Standing*): That is also correct. (*Sits*)

STEELE: Did you end up inheriting Poe's possessions?

CLEMM: Not really. Rufus Griswold was Eddie's literary executor, so Mr. Griswold took charge his manuscripts.

STEELE: Thank you. You may step down.

PRESSTMAN: I call Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to the stand. . . Tell us about yourself.

LONGFELLOW (*Modestly*): I am Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, an American poet of this century. I wrote "The Song of Hiawatha" and "Paul Revere's Ride."

PRESSTMAN: Why didn't you and Poe get along?

LONGFELLOW: Poe claimed I was famous only because I married an heiress. He called me "a little quacky." You could say there was a long-standing war between us.

PRESSTMAN: Where were you on October 3, 1849?

LONGFELLOW: I was at 105 Brattle Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts, my home, when I wasn't teaching at

Harvard. Obviously I could not have been in Baltimore at the same time.

PRESSTMAN: You may step down. I call Editor Rufus Wilmot Griswold to the stand. . . .How did you know Mr. Poe?

GRISWOLD (*Snobbily*): We were both writers, poets, editors, and members of elite literary salons—though I must add I am obviously Poe’s social and moral superior. From our first meeting in 1841, I disliked the drunken fool who also dabbled in drugs. Poe was nothing more than a poor Southerner with an unimpressive smattering of education and an acid pen.

PRESSTMAN: What do you mean by “an acid pen”?

GRISWOLD: Poe was a mad, drunken, womanizing opium addict who based his darkest tales on personal experience. Who was Poe to appoint himself as the literary conscience of America? My obituary, while not flattering, was true.

PRESSTMAN: Your dislike of Poe is more than evident. There were rumors you both were romantically linked to the same woman. Did you hate him enough to kill him?

GRISWOLD: Those rumors about the two of us being rivals for Fanny Osgood are absurd. I edited her collection of poetry—that is all. Besides, why would Poe leave his manuscripts to me unless he trusted me?

PRESSTMAN: So, you directly benefited from his death?

GRISWOLD (*Defensively*): Of course not. His stories and poems will quickly pass into obscurity within three years. Mark my words.

PRESSTMAN: What do you believe happened to Poe on October 3, 1849?

GRISWOLD: I believe Poe ran into some friends from West Point, and, unable to handle liquor, became madly drunk. He then left his friends to wander the streets. In his drunken state, he was robbed and beaten by ruffians and left insensible in a ditch all night.

PRESSTMAN: You may step down.

STEELE: Your Honor, we have finished with the witnesses and turn the proceedings back to you.

JUDGE: Very well. (*Addressing JURORS*) You have heard the testimonies. The matter is now in your hands. If twelve of you agree to vote a “True Bill,” I will authorize a criminal trial. If you twelve agree that not enough evidence has been produced, you must declare “Ignoramus,” dismissing the idea of a murder having been committed for lack of evidence. (*BAILIFF and JURORS exit.*)

WHITMAN (*Rising gracefully from her seat*): While we wait, Your Honor, may we read aloud one of Edgar’s poems?

JUDGE: Who are you, madam?

WHITMAN: I am Sarah Whitman, poet, essayist and one-time fiancée of Mr. Poe’s. And this (*Indicating ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING*) is Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

BROWNING: I just adored Poe’s “The Raven.”

WHITMAN: Poe reviewed Mrs. Barrett Browning’s work, calling it “poetic inspiration in the highest. Her sense of Art is pure in itself.” He dedicated his 1845 collection entitled *The Raven and Other Poems* to her.

BROWNING: While the Grand Jury deliberates, Your Honor, we would like to read part of “The Raven” in Mr. Poe’s honor.

JUDGE: I see no reason why not. (*LONGFELLOW and ELLET grumble and glare.*) You may proceed. (*BROWNING and WHITMAN read, timing it to end with JURORS and BAILIFF returning to the stage.*)

WHITMAN: Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary, over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—

BROWNING: While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping, as of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

WHITMAN and BROWNING (*In unison*): “Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door—only this and nothing more.”

WHITMAN: Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter, in there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;

BROWNING: Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he; but, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door.

WHITMAN and BROWNING (*In unison*): Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—perched, and sat, and nothing more.

WHITMAN: And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting on the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;

BROWNING: And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming, and the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;

WHITMAN and BROWNING (*In unison*): And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor shall be lifted—nevermore! (*BAILIFF enters.*)

JUDGE: Ah. . .has the Grand Jury reached a verdict?

BAILIFF: They have, Your Honor. In the matter of the death of Edgar Allan Poe, the Grand Jury finds. . .(*Based either on a pre-determined outcome or the actual consensus of JURORS, BAILIFF informs JUDGE. The other characters should react appropriately. JUDGE directs BAILIFF to detain a suspect or end the court session with no arrest.*)

JUDGE: Case closed. (*Pounds gavel*)
THE END

PRODUCTION NOTES

You, the Jury

CHARACTERS: 36 actors: 11 male, 6 female, 19 male or female for Bailiff and Jurors.

PLAYING TIME: 30 minutes.

COSTUMES: Period appropriate; black robe for Judge.

PROPERTIES: Purse for Osgood with selected poem inside; copies of the abbreviated poem “The Raven” for Browning and Whitman.

SETTING: Baltimore courthouse, November 1849. Witness stand (chair) is center, flanked by Judge’s bench (table with gavel on it, and chair) stage right and lawyer’s table with papers on it stage left. There is a section of seats for jurors at right side of stage, and chairs for witnesses at left.

LIGHTING and SOUND: No special effects.

Let's Talk About It 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).

Upper Grades

Let's Talk About It

Spunky grandmother helps to get couple back together,
and models the importance of human contact. . . .

by Martin A. Follose

Characters

SARAH WILLIAMS

NOAH

QUINN

ETHAN

DYLAN

CHLOE

EILEEN WILLIAMS, *Sarah's
mother*

GRANDMA BECKER, *Sarah's
grandma*

SCENE 1

TIME: *The present. Late afternoon.*

SETTING: *Williams' living room. Exit right leads outside; exit left, to kitchen; exit up center, to bedrooms. Curtained window is in right wall. Sofa and coffee table are up right. Two easy chairs are up center and up right with small*

table between them. Deck of cards is on table. Desk is up left; table with vase of flowers, up right.

AT RISE: *Play rehearsal is in progress: SARAH sits in chair, script in hand; ETHAN is pacing downstage; QUINN stands far left; QUINN and CHLOE are on sofa; NOAH stands far right, holding cane.*

ETHAN (*In British accent*): We have searched the room and have found no evidence of the murder weapon. (*Searching for words*) Ah. . . ah. . .

SARAH (*Prompting from script*): Perhaps the weapon. . .

ETHAN (*In normal voice*): Oh, right. (*In accent*) Perhaps the weapon was an ordinary item we've overlooked. (*There is a long pause.*)

SARAH: Chloe! Your line.

CHLOE: Oh! (*She rushes downstage.*) Why are we looking for a weapon when we should be looking for the

killer before he. . .

ETHAN: Or she. . .

CHLOE: . . or she can kill again.

ETHAN: My dear, we appear to have no evidence to identify the murder weapon, never mind the killer. (*After a pause*) Um. . .

SARAH: Oh, Ethan, for heaven's sakes! You'll have to spend some time learning your lines! (*Looking at script*) Logic would indicate. . .

ETHAN (*Annoyed; in normal voice*): I would have gotten it in a minute, Sarah. (*In accent*) Logic would indicate that if we concentrate on the murder weapon, the killer will be revealed soon after. (*QUINN crosses to ETHAN.*)

QUINN: Sir, all the windows and doors are locked from the outside.

SARAH (*Chiding*): That's inside, not outside, Quinn.

QUINN (*Icily, to SARAH*): Oh, yes. How silly of me. All the windows and doors are locked from the *inside*. (*Glares at SARAH*)

ETHAN: Ah! This means that the killer is still in this house. (*To QUINN*) Please ask everyone to assemble here immediately.

QUINN: Yes, sir. (*Begins to move away*)

SARAH: Don't forget to curtsy. (*QUINN returns to her place and curtsies, then moves out of rehearsal area.*)

ETHAN: With everyone assembled, we will attempt to force the hand of the killer to strike again, but this time we will be ready.

SARAH (*Reading her part from script*): As long as I'm not his next victim! (*DYLAN rushes in to address ETHAN.*)

DYLAN: The maid has informed me that you wish to see me.

ETHAN: Yes, doctor. Please be seated. Now all we need is Old Man Withers to make our group complete.

DYLAN: Surely you don't think he has anything to do with the murder? (*NOAH slowly moves downstage, with a slight hop every now and then. He is bent over, holding his back with one hand, the cane in the other.*)

SARAH: Wait a minute, Noah. You're supposed to be an old man, not a sick kangaroo.

NOAH (*Annoyed*): I'm doing my best, Sarah.

SARAH: Well, you'll have to try a little harder. (*To everyone*) You all will—you're missing your cues, haven't memorized your lines, and if we don't pull this play together soon, Mr. Freed will cancel it. (*Others exchange exasperated looks.*) Now, make your entrance again, Noah, and this time, do it right!

NOAH (*Throwing his cane to the floor*): No! I've had it, Sarah. No matter what anyone does, it's not good enough for you.

SARAH: Would you stop taking this so personally? I'm just telling you your Old Man Withers isn't convincing.

NOAH (*Angrily*): Well, maybe you can be more convincing, because I quit! (*He rushes out right.*)

SARAH (*Upset*): Noah, wait!

QUINN (*Angrily, to SARAH*): Oh, great! Now the play will definitely be canceled. (*To CHLOE*) Come on, Chloe, let's go. I don't know why we signed up for this stupid play, anyway. (*CHLOE and QUINN exit right. SARAH sits on couch, upset.*)

DYLAN (*Uncomfortably*): Well, I guess I'll see you tomorrow. (*Exits right*)

SARAH: What's the matter with me? I've made a mess of everything!

ETHAN: Don't be so hard on yourself. Maybe Noah just wasn't the right one for the part. I think I could have done a better job—after all, my father is over 50.

SARAH (*Ignoring ETHAN*): What does Noah expect me to do? As the director, I'm supposed to direct, but instead he thinks I'm picking on him. (*Hopefully*) Maybe I can talk him into coming back. (*After a moment*) No, he'd never come back after the way I treated him.

ETHAN: Sarah, I've been meaning to ask you something. Do you think we could go out some time?

SARAH (*Still ignoring ETHAN*): I shouldn't have said anything to him. I always ruin everything.

ETHAN: It wouldn't have to be a real date or anything. Maybe I could take you to the game tonight.

SARAH (*Suddenly realizing ETHAN is talking to her*): What?

ETHAN: There's a game tonight, and—

SARAH: Oh, that's right. I was supposed to go with Noah, but (*Sighs*) I guess that's off.

ETHAN: I'll go to the game with you.

SARAH (*Surprised*): You! Oh, no thanks, Ethan. I don't feel much like watching a game.

ETHAN: Come on, it will take your mind off things.

SARAH: I guess you're right. (*After a pause*) O.K. Sure. I'll go with you.

ETHAN (*Pleased*): Great! (*EILEEN WILLIAMS rushes on right.*)

EILEEN: Oh, Sarah, I'm glad you're home. (*Exchanges distracted greetings with ETHAN*) Where's Grandma? (*GRANDMA enters up center, unnoticed by others.*)

SARAH: In her room.

GRANDMA: Not any more. (*Sits in easy chair up center*)

EILEEN (*Turning*): Oh, hi, Mom.

SARAH: Hi, Grandma.

GRANDMA: Eileen, you're just getting home?

EILEEN: Yes, and I have a historic commission meeting in. . . (*Looks at watch*) oh, no. I'm late already. Now, where did I put my notes from the last meeting? (*Crosses to desk*) Sarah, could you fix dinner for Grandma? (*Rummages through papers on desk*)

SARAH: I can't, Mom. I'm going to the game tonight.

EILEEN: Could you at least pop a dinner in the microwave for her? I've got to leave.

GRANDMA (*Tartly*): I can fix my own dinner.

EILEEN: Now, Mom, you know how the

buttons on the microwave confuse you, and I don't want you using the stove—you'll burn the house down. (*Finds papers, picks them up*) Oh, good. Here they are.

SARAH: Don't worry, Mom. I'll fix her something.

EILEEN: Thanks, honey. I've got to run. Bye. (*She exits right.*)

SARAH (*To ETHAN*): This will just take a few minutes, Ethan.

ETHAN: O.K. No problem. (*SARAH exits right.*)

GRANDMA (*To ETHAN*): In my day, you didn't need a master's degree to fix a TV dinner.

ETHAN: Yes, ma'am.

GRANDMA: In fact, we ate real food, not this precooked, prepackaged junk.

ETHAN: Yes, ma'am.

GRANDMA: After all, you have only one body, so why not fill it up with good food? (*Holds out arms*) Just look at me. (*ETHAN looks at GRANDMA, smiles uncomfortably.*) This is what will happen to you if all they feed you is processed foods. Knees that won't bend, a weak heart, hair that falls out in bales, eyes that work better closed—all because of fake food. (*SARAH enters with dinner on tray.*)

SARAH: Here's your dinner, Grandma. (*Crosses to chair*)

GRANDMA: I'm not hungry.

SARAH: Grandma! You have to eat!

GRANDMA (*Angrily*): And I don't want to eat alone again, either.

SARAH: I'm sorry, Grandma, but I have to leave. Now, come on, this is your favorite—chicken curry.

GRANDMA (*Disdainfully*): Chicken curry is not my favorite—it's just the only frozen dinner that's edible.

SARAH: Maybe I can fix you a real dinner tomorrow night.

GRANDMA (*Sarcastically*): Which tomorrow is that?

SARAH (*Impatiently*): Would you like us to stay while you eat your dinner?

GRANDMA: And have you watch me chew every bite? No, thanks; you go on to your game.

SARAH (*With sympathy*): Are you sure? I can stay home.

GRANDMA (*Kindly*): No, dear, go to your game. (*Nobly*) I'm fine.

SARAH: O.K., thanks, Grandma. (*Hands tray to GRANDMA, kisses her on cheek*) Let's go, Ethan. Bye, Grandma. I'll see you later.

GRANDMA: Bye, dear. Have a good time. (*SARAH and ETHAN exit. GRANDMA begins to play with her food, making strange faces, etc.*) I can make better food than this, if they'd only let me. (*Mimicking*) You know how all those buttons on the microwave confuse you. Don't use the stove, you'll burn the house down. (*In normal voice*) In all my years, I've never burned so much as a finger. Develop a few gray hairs and wrinkles and they're ready to discard you like an old shoe. (*She touches her face.*) These wrinkles aren't from old age—they're just wisdom lines. And boy, do I have a lot of wisdom. (*Puts tray on table, rises*) Still, they treat me like a child: tell me

when to get up, when to go to bed. (*Indignantly*) Well, I'm no child. I'm a responsible, intelligent adult. (*Sighs, returns to chair, sits*) Everybody has somewhere to go, someone to be with, someone to eat with. (*Looks at dinner*) Good food to eat. Oh, well, I guess I should have a few bites. (*Picks up tray, begins to eat. A few moments later, doorbell rings.*) Come in, come in. (*NOAH enters right.*)

NOAH: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt your dinner.

GRANDMA (*Wryly*): I don't consider it an interruption—more like a rescue.

NOAH (*Puzzled*): I'm sorry, I don't understand.

GRANDMA (*Picking up a piece of chicken with fork*): Take a bite of this and you'll understand.

NOAH (*Looking at chicken with distaste*): No thanks.

GRANDMA: I wouldn't eat it either, but I don't have a choice.

NOAH: I came to pick up Sarah.

GRANDMA: Oh, I'm sorry. She already left with another young man.

NOAH (*Upset*): She did? Who?

GRANDMA: Ah, I think his name was Ethan.

NOAH: Ethan! (*Falls onto couch*) Oh, I'm such a jerk. Sarah probably hates me.

GRANDMA: Hates you? Why?

NOAH: I've been going out with her for a couple of months now, and. . .

GRANDMA: Oh! You must be Noah! Sarah talks about you all the time.

NOAH (*Smiling*): She does?

GRANDMA (*Nodding*): Yes. She really likes you.

NOAH (*Sighing*): Not any more. Not since I quit the play. Sarah had some suggestions for how I should play my part, but I took it the wrong way. (*Puts head in hands*) I've really messed things up with her.

GRANDMA: Maybe it's not as bad as it seems. Sometimes we see things that happen to us as much worse than they really are.

NOAH: Well, it's bad enough. She went out with Ethan.

GRANDMA: No point cooking up the past. It will just give you indigestion. (*Pats stomach*) Ask me. I know. (*Pushes tray aside*) You need to get your mind off your troubles. Do you play gin rummy?

NOAH: Sure. And I'm pretty good, too.

GRANDMA: Well, we'll just see about that. (*Points to chair across from her. NOAH sits. GRANDMA shuffles, deals cards.*)

NOAH: How long have you been living here? (*They play cards during following dialogue.*)

GRANDMA: Oh, it's been a little over two weeks now. I spend a lot of time in my room, watching TV. The ladies on *The View* are better friends to me than my own family.

NOAH (*Puzzled*): Then why did you come to live here?

GRANDMA: Sarah's mother thinks I'm too old to take care of myself. She wanted me to move in so that she could take care of me and spend more time with me. But I hardly ever see her or Sarah.

NOAH: I'm sorry. . . . What's it feel like being old?

GRANDMA: I don't feel old! I feel as young as I did when I was 20, but now, people treat me differently. Oh, maybe I don't move quite as fast, but my mind is as good as anyone's. Except when it comes to math—I never was very good in math. But when you're old, people treat you as if you suddenly aren't able to do any of the things that you've done all your life.

NOAH: I can't imagine myself as an old man.

GRANDMA: Well, don't rush into it; you have a long life ahead of you. (*Lays her cards down*) Gin!

NOAH (*Surprised*): You beat me!

GRANDMA: I've got experience on my side. How about another game?

NOAH: Sure. I have nothing else planned.

GRANDMA (*Dealing cards*): Now, what are we going to do about your problem with Sarah? Want me to talk to her?

NOAH: No! And please don't tell her I came over tonight.

GRANDMA: But you need to tell her how you feel.

NOAH: I can't do that. And besides, she went on a date with Ethan, which puts me sort of out of the picture. You have to promise me you won't say anything to her.

GRANDMA: All right, all right. But you have to promise that you'll come over again and play some more cards.

NOAH: Sure, I will—but only when Sarah's not here.

SARAH (*From off right*): Thanks, Ethan. See you tomorrow.

NOAH (*Suddenly*): It's Sarah! I can't let her see me.

GRANDMA: Quick, go out the back. (*NOAH starts left.*) And don't forget to come back for a visit.

NOAH: I'll be back, I promise. (*He exits left. SARAH enters right.*)

SARAH (*Surprised*): Grandma! You're still up!

GRANDMA (*Wryly*): Unless I'm sleep-walking.

SARAH (*Pointing to cards*): Who were you playing cards with?

GRANDMA: Myself. (*She quickly moves to where NOAH was sitting, picks up his cards.*) Gin! (*Quick curtain*)

* * *

SCENE 2

TIME: *Several days later.*

SETTING: *The same.*

AT RISE: *EILEEN is arranging flowers in vase. GRANDMA enters up center, wearing nice dress.*

EILEEN: You look nice today, Mom. What's the occasion?

GRANDMA: I'm expecting a visitor. (*Coyly*) A gentleman friend, actually.

EILEEN (*Sharply*): A gentleman friend?

GRANDMA: Is that so hard to believe?

EILEEN: I don't like the idea of a stranger in the house.

GRANDMA: He's not a stranger to me.

EILEEN: Well, he is to me, and I don't want him in the house.

GRANDMA (*Pretending not to hear*): What did you say?

EILEEN: I said I don't want that man in my house.

GRANDMA (*Louder*): What?

EILEEN: Oh, Mother, stop it. You're not hard of hearing. (*Looks at watch*) I have to go.

GRANDMA: Where to now?

EILEEN: The Parents Planning Committee is meeting to plan the Fall Talent Show. I'll heat something up for you before I go.

GRANDMA: Don't bother. I'm not hungry.

EILEEN: Are you sure?

GRANDMA: I'm sure.

EILEEN: O.K. Tell Sarah I'll be home by ten. (*EILEEN exits right. GRANDMA crosses to sofa and begins playing solitaire. SARAH, carrying armload of books, enters up center, looking depressed.*)

GRANDMA: Hi, honey. Are you going out, too?

SARAH: Ethan is picking me up. We're going to the library to study. (*Almost in tears*) Oh, Grandma.

GRANDMA: What is it? (*Pats sofa cushion*) Come sit down and tell me all about it. (*SARAH crosses to sofa and*

sits next to GRANDMA.)

SARAH: Ever since that last play rehearsal, Noah has hardly said two words to me.

GRANDMA: Have you tried talking to him?

SARAH: I'd like to, but I never see him. Nobody knows where he goes after school. He's not home, and he's not with friends. He's being very mysterious. (*Begins to cry*) I think Noah has another girl.

GRANDMA (*Hugging SARAH*): Now, dear, I wouldn't say he's found another girl, exactly.

SARAH: What do you mean?

GRANDMA: Oh, nothing. I have a feeling that Noah still likes you.

SARAH: You do? (*GRANDMA nods.*) But what am I going to do?

GRANDMA: Since Noah won't talk to you, the next time you see him, march right up to him and tell him you want to know what's going on. You have every right to ask him that. Now, come on, wipe those tears away.

SARAH: Thanks, Grandma. (*GRANDMA and SARAH hug. Doorbell rings.*) That must be Ethan. (*Calls*) Come on in! (*ETHAN enters right.*)

ETHAN: Hi, Sarah. Hi, Mrs. Becker. (*GRANDMA smiles and nods.*) Are you ready, Sarah?

SARAH: All set. (*Kisses GRANDMA on cheek*) Bye, Grandma. And thanks.

GRANDMA: Bye, dear. (*SARAH and ETHAN exit.*) Somehow I've got to get Noah and Sarah back together. Seems young people just don't know how to

communicate these days. (*Doorbell rings.*) Come in. (*NOAH enters.*)

NOAH: Hi, Mrs. Becker.

GRANDMA: Noah, I'm glad you could come over tonight. Ready to challenge me in another round of gin rummy?

NOAH: Sure. (*NOAH sits across from GRANDMA and they start to play cards.*)

GRANDMA: You know, Noah, I remember when Louis—that's my late husband. . . . (*Dreamily*) We used to do everything together. Even after ten years, I still miss him. . . . Anyway, I remember when Louis and I would play cards till all hours of the night. He'd always let me win a few. . . . I'm sorry, I shouldn't be going on about my past. How about you, Noah? What do you like to do?

NOAH: I like most sports. . . and I like acting, but I'm not very good. That's why I'm going to quit the drama club.

GRANDMA: Oh, don't quit! If you give up acting you'll never find out how good you might have been. If you keep working at it, I'm sure you'll surprise yourself. It's like climbing a mountain: Only those who climb to the summit can become the best they can be. Never give up trying to do your best.

NOAH: I only hope I don't fall off the summit!

GRANDMA (*Laughing*): Oh, Noah, you're a funny one. (*NOAH laughs, too.*) I haven't laughed like this in a long time.

NOAH: Neither have I.

GRANDMA: Well, laugh at this: Gin! (*GRANDMA lays her cards down.*)

NOAH: You beat me again!

GRANDMA: How about some iced tea before the next game?

NOAH: That sounds good, thanks.

GRANDMA: Come out to the kitchen with me and we'll see what we can find. I think we have some cookies, too. (*They exit left. SARAH and ETHAN enter right, a few moments later.*)

SARAH: I'll be down in a minute.

ETHAN: No rush. I'll wait here. (*SARAH exits up center. Moments later NOAH enters left, carrying two glasses and plate of cookies.*) Noah! What are you doing here?

NOAH: What am I doing here? What are *you* doing here?

ETHAN: Sarah and I were on our way to the library, but she had to come home to get her biology book.

NOAH: Where is she?

ETHAN: Upstairs.

NOAH: I can't let her see me. (*NOAH begins to exit right. ETHAN grabs him.*)

ETHAN: Hey, what's going on? Nobody's seen you for days. Where have you been hiding?

NOAH (*After a pause*): Well, after I ran out of play rehearsal the other day, I cooled off and came back to pick up Sarah for the game. But the only one home was her grandmother. She seemed so lonely, and I didn't have any place to go, so I stayed and talked with her.

ETHAN (*Surprised*): You did? What did you talk about?

NOAH: Lots of things. She's a really neat lady. (*SARAH enters up center. NOAH sees her, turns away.*)

SARAH (*Surprised*): Noah! What are you doing here?

ETHAN (*Uncomfortably*): You know, I think it's time for me to leave. I'll see you tomorrow, Sarah. (*ETHAN exits right.*)

NOAH: I came over to play cards with your grandma.

SARAH (*Puzzled*): Why would you want to do that?

NOAH: When I came to pick you up for the game and found you'd already gone with Ethan, I stayed and talked with her. She asked me to come back and play cards again.

SARAH: That's really nice of you.

NOAH: It's been really fun. I like her a lot.

SARAH: Noah, I wanted to talk to you, but I didn't think you wanted to talk to me. (*GRANDMA enters up center.*)

GRANDMA: Well, I see you two have finally broken the ice.

SARAH: Grandma! Why didn't you tell me that Noah was coming over to visit you?

GRANDMA: He asked me not to. And besides, Noah's the first person who's paid any attention to me in a long time. Your mother is a member of every club, organization, and committee in town—except for the "Take An Old Mother to Lunch" club. And you're

always on the go—as a girl your age should be, mind you—but once in a while it would be nice to sit down and talk to you, the way we did the other day. But—first things first. Now, I knew that you and Noah were having troubles. . .

SARAH (*Embarrassed*): Grandma!

GRANDMA: Now, let me talk. (*To NOAH*) Noah, do you still like Sarah? (*NOAH hesitates.*) Speak up.

NOAH: Yeah, sure I like her—a lot!

GRANDMA: And Sarah, do you like Noah?

SARAH: Yes.

GRANDMA: You two! When you have a problem, don't clam up—speak up! Talk your problems out. You'll find that most of them are just misunderstandings.

NOAH: Sarah, I'm sorry.

SARAH: So am I. (*They cross to center and hug.*)

GRANDMA (*Pleased*): See? This old lady isn't so dumb after all. (*EILEEN enters quietly right, unnoticed by others.*)

SARAH: Thanks, Grandma.

NOAH: Yeah, thanks, Mrs. Becker.

GRANDMA: Now, you two run along. I'm sure you have something better to do than to entertain an old lady. (*She heads toward chair. SARAH and NOAH exchange looks, smile.*)

SARAH: Actually, Grandma, how about a game of cards?

NOAH (*Enthusiastically*): Yeah, I want a rematch!

GRANDMA (*Beaming*): Now you're talking!

EILEEN: Mind if I join you?

SARAH (*Surprised*): Mom!

GRANDMA: Eileen! I thought you had a meeting.

EILEEN: I did—but on the way over there I began to think about it. . . (*Puts*

her arm around GRANDMA) and I realized what I really want to do tonight is stay home with you. Is that O.K.?

GRANDMA (*Squeezing EILEEN's hand*): Of course it is! But you'd better watch out. You're up against some serious gin rummy players here.

EILEEN: Well, we'll just see about that! (*All laugh, sit, begin to shuffle cards, etc., as curtain closes.*)

THE END

PRODUCTION NOTES

Let's Talk About It

CHARACTERS: 3 male; 5 female.

PLAYING TIME: 30 minutes.

COSTUMES: Modern dress. Eileen Williams wears work clothes, watch. In Scene 2, Grandma changes into nice dress.

PROPERTIES: Script; cane; TV dinner, fork, on tray; books; two glasses of iced tea; plate of cookies.

SETTING: The Williams's living room. Exit right leads outside; exit left, to

kitchen; and exit up center, to bedrooms. A window with curtains is in right wall. There is sofa up right with coffee table in front of it. Two easy chairs are up center and up right with small table separating them. Deck of cards is on table. Desk is up left; table with vase of flowers, up right.

LIGHTING: No special effects.

SOUND: Doorbell.

This adaptation of *The Flying Dutchman* 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).

Upper Grades

The Flying Dutchman

Cursed to roam the seas for eternity, an ill-fated captain seeks a love that will set him free. . . .

Based on the opera *Der Fliegende Holländer*
by Richard Wagner, adapted by Jesse J. Martin

Characters

DALAND, a Norwegian sea captain

THE STEERSMAN, on Daland's ship

THE CREW, on Daland's ship

THE DUTCHMAN, Captain of a ghost ship destined to sail forever

SENTA, Daland's daughter

MARY, Daland's housekeeper

TWO GIRLS

ERIK, a hunter, in love with Senta

VILLAGE MEN AND WOMEN

THE GHOSTLY CREW, on Dutchman's ship

sea, near the Norwegian coast. There is a ship (see *Production Notes*) anchored at one side of the stage.

AT RISE: Wind is howling; a storm is in progress. Crew call back and forth to each other while tying down the ship. DALAND has gone up onto the cliffs with his telescope to look around the area, to determine where they've landed.

SAILOR 1: Cast me a rope.

SAILOR 2: Pull in that sail and tie it down.

SAILOR 3: Where are we, Captain?

DALAND (*Focusing his telescope and calling to the crew*): I judge us to be only about five miles from home. This storm has almost swept us onto the cliffs. The wind and the sea are mightier than man. Put your trust in them and the Devil will be sure to intervene and throw you off course.

SCENE 1

TIME: 17th century, Norway.

SETTING: Cliffs along a wide expanse of

SAILOR 2: Secure the ship.

SAILOR 1: The anchor is down. We're holding fast.

SAILOR 2: I think the waves seem steadier now.

DALAND (*Calling back to the ship*): The storm will pass. We will start out again after we rest. Steersman, keep watch awhile, while I go below. We are secured so there is nothing to fear, but better to have someone on deck.

STEERSMAN: I'll keep watch, Sir. (*DALAND goes back to the ship, joining the other men, who all exit below deck. STEERSMAN yawns, shakes himself and gently sings to keep awake.*) Oh my love—when the wind is North, I am sad that we are far apart. Oh, South wind blow and cheer my saddened heart.

Oh, gentle South wind fill our sails. I've bought my love a golden ring. And over the sea I shall return to you, and we shall marry in the Spring. (*He struggles to stay awake and finally slumbers at the wheel. It grows dark. Suddenly the blood-red sails and black mast of the Flying Dutchman ship appears. [See note] DUTCHMAN, in dark Spanish costume, comes slowly from his ship onto the land.*)

DUTCHMAN: Seven years and I am again cast ashore. Always the same, it never ends. Once more I come to seek salvation—but I shall never find it. For years I have sought the ocean's dark abyss, trying desperately to drown my ship. But it is not to be my fate. Since the curse began I am destined to sail on forever—only landing for a single day every seven years. My ship, laden with the gold and treasures I have accumulated, does me no good. A single ray of hope consoles me, that someday

I shall find one woman who is true until death. But until the final raising of the dead, this void will never be filled. (*He stands quietly looking out to sea, with his head bowed. DALAND comes up from below and notices DUTCHMAN's ship.*)

DALAND: Hey, Steersman, wake up!

STEERSMAN (*Sleepily*): All is well. The gentle South wind will blow and once again I'll see my beloved.

DALAND (*Shaking STEERSMAN*): You call this keeping watch? Were you sound asleep? (*Points to DUTCHMAN's ship*) What ship is that?

STEERSMAN (*Suddenly noticing ship*): What is that? I didn't hear any anchor drop.

DALAND (*Calling out to DUTCHMAN'S ship*): Hello—hello. Answer me! (*Only the distant wind is heard.*) It seems they are as asleep as you.

STEERSMAN (*Also calling out*): Answer us! Name and Country!

DALAND (*Noticing DUTCHMAN on shore*): Ah, wait! I think that must be the captain. (*Calls out*) What ship are you?

DUTCHMAN (*Without looking up*): I've traveled far in the storm. I sought to anchor here. Would you refuse me?

DALAND: Never! From one seaman to another, hospitality is always given. Who are you?

DUTCHMAN: A Dutchman.

DALAND: So, you too were driven here by the storm. I am only a few miles from my own home and family. Has your ship suffered any damage?

DUTCHMAN: It seems my ship can never be damaged, even in the worst of storms. I have known many voyages, but for me the years just pass without change. Would you allow me to be your guest for one single day? You will not regret it. My ship is loaded with cargo of gold, precious stones and jewels. You will make a great profit if you agree.

DALAND (*A bit leery but interested*): It is a strange tale you tell. A ship laden with riches. Has an evil star dogged you and your crew?

DUTCHMAN: So it seems. But my offer still stands. For a single night's lodging I will give you a cask of treasure. Gold is of no use to me. I have neither wife nor children, and I shall never find my own home. (*After a moment*) Tell me, do you have a daughter?

DALAND: I do.

DUTCHMAN: Let her consent to be my wife!

DALAND (*Taken aback*): Your wife? Good sir, she is the prize of all I have. I will not give her up to just anyone—even a fellow seaman.

DUTCHMAN: A daughter need never stop loving her father, but she can also give a husband affection as well. I am a rich man, she shall lack for nothing. (*DALAND muses on this.*) What say you? May I meet your daughter?

DALAND (*After a long, thoughtful pause*): The storm seems to have settled enough that the sea is relatively calm once again. We shall put up sail soon and be home later today. Then you shall meet my daughter and if you are to her liking, then—(*Shrugs*)

DUTCHMAN (*Turning away, aside*): Can I yet hope again. Will she redeem

my life and be my salvation?

DALAND: The mighty power of the vast ocean has brought us together. Maybe this is fate. (*Calling to STEERSMAN*) Raise the anchor and call the men. We set off again!

DUTCHMAN: Sail on ahead and I will instruct my men to follow. My ship is swift, and we shall not be far behind. (*Wind rises again suddenly.*)

DALAND: As you wish. See how the wind fills our sails. The time is right. Let us be off! (*STEERSMAN calls to the crew and they prepare to depart. DUTCHMAN watches them and then slowly returns to his silent ship.*)

* * *

SCENE 2

SETTING: Room in Daland's house. On the walls are such nautical objects as maps, charts, etc. On one wall is a portrait of a man with a dark beard, wearing a dark Spanish costume. Large armchair is center; other pieces of furniture fill out the space, as desired, as do spinning wheels, if available.

AT RISE: MARY and GIRLS are sitting around their spinning wheels (sewing can be substituted for spinning wheels). SENTA is in a large armchair, contemplating the picture.

MARY: Senta, you dreamy girl. You don't (*spin/sew*). You just sit there, deep in your fantasy, and stare at that portrait.

GIRL 1: It helps pass the time to stay busy until our men—far away at sea—return to us.

GIRL 2: Senta is not like us! Her man is not a seaman but a hunter instead.

MARY: Idling away her time in fantasy. Foolish child!

SENTA: Fantasy, you say! I believe the story. (*Indicating the portrait*) How could his story not move you? His suffering has been great.

MARY: That's enough nonsense, Senta! He is only a myth.

GIRL 1 (*Teasing*): What would Erik say if he saw your devotion to that strange portrait?

GIRL 2 (*Laughing*): Erik with his hot blood and wild temper could shoot his rival right off the wall.

SENTA (*Finally losing her patience*): Enough of this chatter. Mary, tell us the Dutchman story again, please.

MARY: Oh, let the Dutchman rest in peace! It's quite absurd.

SENTA: Very well, then I'll tell it myself. I know it by heart. (*The others sigh but are slowly drawn in as she relates the tale*)

The night was stormy, and the wind blew bitterly as a ship tossed in the rising sea. Angry at the storm because he was unable to get his bearings, the Dutchman stood on deck and shouted his reckless curses to the skies: "To eternity I will fight. Never shall I let the sea get the better of me. I'll not give in to the waves, even in the severest of storms."

Alas, the devil rose from the deep, heard his cry, and took him at his word. So now he is condemned to sail on forever without rest and without hope.

One chance remains to regain his peace and stop his eternal wandering. A woman who believes in him without question and is true until death, can bring him rest. Poor haunted man, when will you find her? The ship with blood-red sails shall travel the seas forever until that time comes.

GIRLS (*Ad lib*): To find such a woman who would give her life to save him seems impossible! And as Mary says, who knows if this tale is only a myth. It may be a story told to scare children! (*Etc.*)

SENTA (*Dreamily*): Every seven years he lands on shore to seek that true and faithful bride. Perhaps I shall be here the next time he does.

GIRL 1 (*Shivering*): Oh, but who has a love that is stronger than death?

SENTA (*Standing; inspired*): I do! I shall be the one to save him. (*ERIK enters and hears SENTA's last words.*) Through me you shall be saved. Let me come face to face with you and I shall prove it.

MARY and GIRLS (*Ad lib*): Senta! Stop! You're mad! Possessed! (*Etc.*)

MARY: I swear I shall have that picture taken down and burned when your father returns. This has gone too far.

GIRLS (*Ad lib*): Erik, talk to her. Foolish girl. Make her see reason. (*Etc.*)

ERIK: I've come to tell you all that the men are back. I've seen their ship in the harbor.

SENTA (*Happily*): My father!

ERIK: He will soon be here.

GIRLS (*Joyfully, ad lib*): Oh, thank goodness! They have returned. Let's run down to meet them at once. (*Etc.*)

MARY: No, wait! Go and start the fire for the cooking. The men will want a hot meal after their long journey.

GIRLS (*Ad lib*): Yes, you're right, Mary. We will clean up here and get started

on the cooking. (*Etc. GIRLS put aside their spinning wheels/sewing and MARY hurries them out. SENTA is on her way out as well but is stopped by ERIK.*)

ERIK: Senta, wait! Before your father leaves on his next voyage we must have this settled. I have only my huntsman skills to offer. Your father values money and will certainly refuse my proposal to you because I am not wealthy, but. . .

SENTA: Let's not discuss it now, Erik.

ERIK: I can't wait any longer. This constant—and yes, mad—infatuation of yours with that portrait of the Dutchman and his story is always preying on your mind.

SENTA (*Boldly*): Are you afraid of a story and a picture? How could such a tragic tale not move you to pity? Each time I see his haunting stare I am taken once again by his sad fate.

ERIK (*Solemnly*): Now I understand that what I've dreamt is true! He shall take you from me.

SENTA: What are you talking about?

ERIK: In my dream, I stand up on the cliff, watching the waves. An unknown vessel comes forward. Two seamen row toward the harbor. One man is your father, the other—

SENTA: The other—

ERIK: Pale and wan and dressed in black. You run to meet them, and I see you before this man with—

SENTA: A haunting stare!

ERIK: Yes, it is he!

SENTA (*Excited*): He has come to claim me. He seeks me out and I must be his.

ERIK (*Anguished*): No, Senta, I will not allow that dream to come true!

SENTA: Erik, I cannot challenge the fate of the sea. It is my destiny.

ERIK (*Despondent and angry*): Then I have lost you! (*Exits*)

SENTA (*Looking at portrait and recalling the lines from the story*): May you be granted a wife faithful and true— (*Suddenly door opens and DALAND and DUTCHMAN appear. SENTA's gaze turns from the picture to DUTCHMAN. She is transfixed. DALAND is surprised, expecting SENTA to come to him with open arms.*)

DALAND: Senta, my child, your father comes home after a long voyage. No embrace? You stand there like stone.

SENTA (*Going to embrace him*): Of course, Father. Welcome home. But who is this stranger?

DALAND: We must make this sailor welcome as our guest. Homeless, he has wandered far and wide, tossed by storms across the oceans. In distant foreign lands he has amassed a fortune. But now he seeks a home—and I have invited him to stay with us. (*To DUTCHMAN*) You can see for yourself. Have I overpraised her virtues? (*DUTCHMAN nods quietly, keeping his eyes fixed on SENTA.*) Senta, he has come to ask for my most precious gift—your hand. (*Pause*) And if it suits you I give my blessing. (*Pulling out some jewels from his coat pocket*) Look at these. And he has more, even finer than these. All this can be yours if you agree. (*Looking at the two, neither of whom has said a word*) No one speaks? Are you both struck dumb? I shall

leave you alone. (*Quietly, to SENTA*) Win him! Take the chance when it is offered to you. (*To DUTCHMAN*) Stay here. It is her decision we must consider. But as I said, she is true and fair. (*DALAND exits slowly, surprised that the two have not approached each other.*)

DUTCHMAN (*Aside*): She seems so gentle. Can I dream once again that she will be the one to save me? (*Approaching SENTA*) You must not feel that you need accept me. Your father's sudden unexpected choice comes as a surprise.

SENTA: Grim fate has filled your days. I can see it in your eyes. It seems I have been waiting for this moment. My father has spoken, and I will obey.

DUTCHMAN: So swift and sure? Has my plight moved you so much?

SENTA: I know your suffering and I will do what I can to ease it.

DUTCHMAN: If you understood the sacrifice you will make, then your youthful spirit would desert you.

SENTA: No. Love has revealed my true vocation. I feel a power within me. Have no fear. I am faithful until death.

DUTCHMAN: Such words I have longed to hear. What wild emotion seems to bind us together? May it strengthen and hold true. (*DALAND reenters, but remains in the background, watching them.*)

DALAND (*Aside*): Here it seems he has found his destination. (*Aloud, to DUTCHMAN*) I can no longer restrain my crew. We always give a celebration when our ship comes home. Even as we speak, the women are preparing food and drink. (*Slyly*) If your engagement were also to be made known—it would

be the crowning joy to the event. Senta, tell me now, what do you say?

SENTA (*Holding out her hand to DUTCHMAN*): Here is my hand. I give it with my heart and unto death we shall not part.

DUTCHMAN (*Aside*): At last my journey's end is in sight. Satan has lost his hold on me at last.

DALAND: This match, brought about by a tempest, now ends in peace. Come, let the celebrations begin. (*They all exit.*)

* * *

SCENE 3

SETTING: *A bay with rocky shores. At one side is Daland's house. In the background up center are the two ships. Daland's ship is brightly lit.*

AT RISE: *SAILORS and WOMEN are feasting, talking, etc. DUTCHMAN's ship is dark and silent.*

SAILORS (*Calling out to DUTCHMAN's ship; ad lib*): Hey Steersman, leave your watch. Come join and enjoy a toast here with us. (*Etc.*)

WOMEN (*Ad lib*): Come out! There's plenty of food and drink. We shall serve you first, since you are our guests. (*Etc. All remains quiet and eerie.*)

STEERSMAN: Not a light to be seen! No hint of a crew.

SAILOR: Maybe they are still asleep, dreaming of a hearty meal and drink!

WOMEN (*Ad lib*): They can have a real one here! (*Laughing*) Maybe they are dead. They drink no wine, they eat no bread. (*Etc.*)

SAILORS (*Variously, ad lib*): You've all heard of the legend of the Flying Dutchman. Maybe this is the ship.

Only ghosts on board. Hundreds of years they have sailed the sea. No food or drink. No shipwrecks or diseases touch them. (*Etc.*)

WOMAN: Leave them be. This means more for you. (*SAILORS heartily agree. The scene, although calm, slowly changes. A ghostly blue light slowly engulfs DUTCHMAN's ship. WOMEN draw away in fear as phantom voices of the DUTCHMAN's ship are heard off-stage.*)

GHOSTLY CREW (*Offstage, various voices*): Bring her into the bay. Our haunted Captain goes on land. Seven years have passed. He seeks the maiden's hand, the love that won't betray. Where can this bride be? Has he failed yet again in his quest? The Devil has claimed us all, for eternity. (*Etc.*)

SAILORS and **WOMEN** (*Ad lib; terrified*): Oh, they are ghosts. Leave them alone! (*They hurry into house. Once again all is quiet. The blue light has dimmed on DUTCHMAN's ship but is still visible. Suddenly, SENTA rushes out of house, followed by ERIK.*)

SENTA: No, Erik! I cannot join you. Do not ask again.

ERIK: It is madness. You can't be serious!

SENTA: I cannot explain it. You wouldn't understand.

ERIK: What spell are you under? You have my faithful heart and hand, but you reject it for someone you just met? I know your father approves of this match because the stranger seems to be rich, but how can you pledge yourself to this man?

SENTA: I must. I've always known it would happen. It has been my destiny. A promise I made commands me.

ERIK: What promise? I once held you in my arms. (*Embraces her*) Did I only imagine your love? (*DUTCHMAN comes out of house and sees SENTA in ERIK's arms.*) Do not turn away from me for some phantom lover.

DUTCHMAN: Betrayed once again! You are already promised to another. Satan it seems still has me in his grasp, and my search must continue.

ERIK: Senta, did you hear his mad ravings? He admits to being in league with the Devil. How can you even hope to marry such a man?

DUTCHMAN: Farewell, Senta. I leave you to him. I had hoped you were different. (*He heads to his ship. The blue light on his ship now turns crimson.*)

SENTA (*Barring his way*): No, wait. I will follow you!

ERIK: Leave him. Only misery can come of this!

DUTCHMAN (*Blowing a whistle and shouting to his ship*): To sea once again, men! Get ready to cast off. (*The groaning sighs of his men are heard.*) Senta, you must stay. I will not destroy you as I did the others.

ERIK: He is a madman! Can't you hear him! He has destroyed others! (*Calling out to DALAND's house*) Help me rescue her before it is too late.

SENTA (*To DUTCHMAN*): I swore an oath to you. Do not doubt me. Nothing can change my mind. (*MARY, DALAND, SAILORS and WOMEN enter.*)

ERIK: I cannot believe what I hear.

DUTCHMAN (*To SENTA*): Learn the dreadful fate from which you have been spared. I am indeed condemned to

roam the earth's seas. I can only be saved by a woman who is constant, even in the face of death. But I will let you go even though you made me a promise. Do you know the Fate of those who broke their oath? Countless victims have already paid the price. But you, Senta, shall be saved. Farewell! (*SENTA holds on to him.*)

SENTA: I knew well what my Fate was to be. When I first laid eyes on you, I never turned back. Your quest has come to an end. Take me with you.

DUTCHMAN (*Holding up his hand against the crowd who advances on them*): It is as she says. Every crew, across the years, has turned away from me in terror. I am "The Flying Dutchman," cursed for all time to roam the vast seas! (*Crowd reacts.*)

DALAND: Senta, my daughter, I cannot allow you to go. Forget my words of

encouragement and remain here with us. (*DUTCHMAN hurries to his ship, which has begun to churn in the waves. The crimson light grows stronger, and a bolt of lightning illuminates the sky.*)

GHOSTLY CREW (*Offstage; ad lib*): We are ready, Master. We set out again and will sail with you for all eternity. (*SENTA frees herself from the group and runs to the crags, leaping onto a rock with outstretched arms as the ship starts to pull away.*)

SENTA: I am the angel that will save you. Do not desert me now. You are free! (*She throws herself into the sea. Immediately DUTCHMAN's ship goes dark. There is a whirlpool of light which seems to rise into the sky, the glow signifying the unity of the two. The crowd sees this sign and reacts. DALAND falls to his knees as MARY and ERIK stare in speechless wonder.*)

THE END

PRODUCTION NOTES

The Flying Dutchman

CHARACTERS: 3 male, 3 female, as many male and female extras as desired for Crew Members and Villagers.

PLAYING TIME: 30 minutes.

COSTUMES: Only the Dutchman has a specific-looking costume. Director and Costumer may decide on the others.

PROPERTIES: Telescope; spinning wheels (or sewing items); jewels for Daland's coat pocket; baskets of food and drink; whistle for Dutchman.

SETTING: Scene 1, cliffs along a wide expanse of sea, near Norwegian coast. There is a ship anchored at one side of the stage. It may be a stylized representation, with ship's wheel, pipe railing, and deck, or more elaborate, with ropes and crates, barrels, lantern, etc. For Dutchman's ship, just the bow with a single mast/red sail is pushed on

stage next to Daland's ship, with a light change to simulate the mood. Scene 2, room in Daland's house. See description at beginning of scene. Scene 3, a bay with rocky shores. At one side is Daland's house. The two ships are in the background up center. Daland's ship is brightly lit.

LIGHTING: If desired, stormy lighting in Scene 1. Blue, and later red lighting on Dutchman's ship in Scene 3, along with a bolt of lightning. At end of play, whirlpool of light seeming to rise into the sky.

SOUND: Storm and wind in Scenes 1 and 3.

NOTE: In Scene 3 a few members of Dutchman's ghostly crew may be seen as well, if desired by the director.

The Other Witch 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).

Lower Grades

The Other Witch

Classroom Halloween party seems to have an
uninvited guest. . .which witch is it?

by Douglas Evans

Characters

TEACHER, *dressed as Abe Lincoln*

CLARA, *dressed as witch*

OTHER WITCH, *in witch's outfit,
holding a broom*

EMILY, *dressed as fairy with wand*

TIMOTHY, *dressed as pirate*

JESSICA, *dressed as clown with
mask*

JONATHAN, *dressed as vampire
with mask*

SARAH, *dressed as skeleton with
mask*

ROGER, *dressed as Frankenstein's
monster with mask*

CHARLIE, *dressed as werewolf with
mask*

SCENE 1

TIME: *Halloween afternoon, present day.*

SETTING: *A modern third-grade classroom. Halloween decorations cover the wall. Plastic pumpkin full of candy sits on desk. At center stands a tall rack with six apples dangling from strings.*

AT RISE: *Spooky Halloween sounds play. Students mill about the room, putting on masks and adjusting costumes. At right, CLARA is putting the finishing touches on her witch costume. EMILY stands beside her. TEACHER, hangs apple from the rack.*

CLARA (*To self*): Eh! Eh! Ehhh! See how ugly I am, I am. I'm E-S-T! Est! I'm wearing the creepiest, ugliest, scariest costume in the class. Eh! Eh! Ehhh! (*Wiggling black fingernails, CLARA turns toward EMILY.*) Look, Emily, see how ugly I am?

EMILY (*Waving wand*): Brag! Brag! Brag! That's what you always do, Clara. You think you're the best at everything.

CLARA: That's me. I'm E-S-T! Est! I'm the wickedest, meanest, nastiest witch in the entire school.

EMILY (*Shaking head*): Brag! Brag! Brag! (*TEACHER waves arms, claps a few times.*)

TEACHER: Attention, ghouls and boos. It's time for our Halloween party. Gather around the hanging apples. (*Students form a semicircle behind the apple rack, facing downstage. CLARA stands in the half-circle left. TIMOTHY stands to her right, SARAH to her left. From right, OTHER WITCH, holding a broom, enters unnoticed and joins the semi-circle opposite CLARA. TEACHER continues with speech.*) All right, here are the rules. You must kneel by an apple with your hands behind your back. You'll have fifteen seconds to try and grab it using only your teeth.

CLARA (*To TIMOTHY*): Eh! Eh! Ehhh! How do you like my costume? Don't you think I'm the ugliest kid in the class?

TIMOTHY (*Pointing across the group with his hook hand*): Ahoy! Look over there, matey. Someone else is dressed as a witch. And that other witch beats you for ugliness by a mile. Arrr! Now, that's ugly. (*CLARA looks across half-circle.*)

CLARA (*Stomping foot*): Oooo! I told everyone that I was going to be a witch this Halloween! So who had the nerve to dress up as the same thing?

TEACHER (*Addressing class*): O.K., ghosts and goblins, time to catch those apples. Who wants to go first?

ALL STUDENTS (*Waving hands back and forth*): I do! I do!

TEACHER (*Pointing to JESSICA*): Jessica! Give it a try. (*JESSICA removes her mask and kneels by an apple with her hands behind her back.*)

JESSICA: This looks easy.

TIMOTHY: Arrr! Especially with a big mouth like yours. (*Other students laugh.*)

TEACHER (*Checking watch*): You have fifteen seconds. One, two, three—chomp! (*JESSICA tries biting the apple as the others cheer her on. If she succeeds, she stands, holding the apple.*)

CLARA (*Shrugging*): Well, that other witch isn't Sarah. But who could she be?

TEACHER: Time's up, Jessica. You may take the apple for a treat. Who's next? (*JESSICA pulls the apple off the string and returns to the semicircle. Students raise hands.*)

JESSICA (*Helpfully, to others*): Watch it. The apples are slipperier than you think. Try biting the stem.

CLARA (*Looking around*): If that other witch isn't Jessica, I'll bet it's Jonathan. He's always trying to show me up!

TEACHER (*Pointing to a vampire*): Jonathan, your turn. (*JONATHAN takes off his mask and kneels before a hanging apple.*)

JONATHAN (*To apple, in Dracula's voice*): I *vant* to suck your blood.

TEACHER: One...two...three...bite! (*JONATHAN tries to bite into the apple while the class cheers.*)

CLARA: Now I'm really stumped. Who could that other witch be? (*CLARA turns to SARAH.*) Hey, Skeleton, do you know which kid in the class also dressed up as a witch?

SARAH (*Shrugging*): I don't know. But that other witch sure gives me the creeps. I've never seen an uglier costume.

CLARA (*To self*): Well. . .that other witch isn't Jessica, Jonathan, Timothy, or Sarah. (*JONATHAN removes the apple from the string and returns to the semicircle.*)

TEACHER: Roger, your turn. (*ROGER removes his mask and kneels by the next apple.*)

ROGER (*In monster's voice*): Me hungry. Me see apple. Me eat apple. (*ROGER chases the apple with his teeth.*)

CLARA: And that other witch isn't Roger either. But I have a hunch. Could there be an extra kid in this room? (*ROGER leaves the game, holding his apple. CHARLIE, dressed as a werewolf, removes his mask and kneels before another apple.*)

CHARLIE: Awooooooo! Full moon! Snack time! (*While CHARLIE plays the game, CLARA points to each student, counting carefully.*)

CLARA: Aha! Just as I thought. There's an extra kid in here. I bet that other witch is a party crasher. Some kid from another class whose Halloween party was boring, so she snuck into ours. (*OTHER WITCH looks toward CLARA, smiles, and waves.*)

CLARA: Ooo! How rude can you get? What a showoff. Go on, rub it in, why don't you? My costume took me all night to make. I'll bet anything that

other witch's costume is store-bought. (*CHARLIE returns to the half-circle with the apple. TEACHER grabs a plastic pumpkin full of candy bars.*)

TEACHER: O.K., monsters and mummies, game time is over. Let's have a Halloween treat. No tricks.

CLARA: Finally! This is the moment I've been waiting for. Now I can see who that other witch really is. (*STUDENTS line up before TEACHER, who hands out candy. CLARA and OTHER WITCH remain in the half-circle.*)

TEACHER: Be patient. No pushing. One bar per spook. (*CLARA marches up to OTHER WITCH. They stand nose to crooked nose.*)

CLARA: O.K., you. You're in big trouble. You don't belong in this room, do you? Who are you? I was supposed to be the ugliest kid in the class, and I was until you showed up.

OTHER WITCH (*Grimacing*): Frightening party, isn't it, Missy?

CLARA (*Making a face*): Just who are you? Where did you come from?

OTHER WITCH (*Pointing upward with her broom*): From four thousand feet up, Missy. Fine flying weather today. Dark and stormy.

CLARA (*Frowning*): O.K., knock it off. What class are you from? Why are you really here?

OTHER WITCH (*Raising broom*): Why, I spotted some friends down here having a party, so I thought I'd swoop in and join the fun. But now I must be off, Missy. Busy day for us witches, as you know. (*OTHER WITCH walks right, places the broom between her legs and*

runs off the stage. CLARA watches, jaw dropped.)

CLARA (*To self*): Did you see that? She hopped on her broom and zoomed away. That other witch was a real witch! (*CLARA spins toward other students and points off right, shouting.*) Witch! Witch! Look out the window, everyone. A witch is flying over the playground! A real witch!

ROGER: Yeah, sure, Clara. We get it.

You think you're the ugliest witch in the world.

CHARLIE: You were uglier before you put the costume on.

EMILY: Brag! Brag! Brag! You always think you're the best at everything.

CLARA (*Shrugging*): Well, how do you like that? I guess now I really am the ugliest kid in the class. (*Lights fade.*)

THE END

PRODUCTION NOTES

The Other Witch

CHARACTERS: 10 actors: 4 female, 4 male, 2 male or female for Teacher and Other Witch. Characters can be any mix of male/female, as desired, depending on the makeup of the class.

PLAYING TIME: 30 minutes (includes time for bobbing for apples).

PROPERTIES: Watch for Teacher, small candy bars in plastic pumpkin.

SETTING: Modern third-grade class-

room. Halloween decorations cover the wall. Stage center stands a tall rack with six apples hanging from the top bar on strings.

COSTUMES: See list of characters at beginning. Actors may wear different costumes, if desired.

LIGHTING: No special effects.

SOUND: Spooky Halloween sounds.

Mystery at Mother Goose's Place 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 & Lower Grades

Mystery at Mother's Goose's Place

Did Humpty Dumpty fall, or was he pushed off that wall? A pun-filled play that will egg you on and crack you up. . . .

by Bill Majeski

Characters

DETECTIVE ARMSTRONG

MOTHER GOOSE

JACK HORNER

JACK B. NIMBLE

OLD WOMAN

LITTLE BO-PEEP

TOM TOM

JILL

SETTING: *The stage is empty. At right there is a door, with a sign that says, MOTHER GOOSE'S PLACE. At left there is a door, with a sign that says, SHOE.*

AT RISE: *DETECTIVE ARMSTRONG moves around stage making notes on a note pad, then crosses to door right, and knocks. MOTHER GOOSE opens door and steps out.*

MOTHER GOOSE (*In a high, cracking voice*): Yes?

DETECTIVE ARMSTRONG: Mrs. Goose?

MOTHER GOOSE: Well. . .uh. . .yes. Who wants to know?

ARMSTRONG (*Flashing credentials*): Detective Armstrong. Homicide.

MOTHER GOOSE: What can I do for you, Detective Homicide?

ARMSTRONG: My name's Armstrong, Detective Armstrong. Look, Mrs. Goose—

MOTHER GOOSE: Mother Goose. You can call me Mom. Everybody does.

ARMSTRONG (*Hesitantly*): O.K.—Mom. I'm here to investigate the death of one of your residents. (*Checks his note pad*) Name of Humpty Dumpty.

MOTHER GOOSE: Poor Humpty. He was one of the nicest. A real good egg.

He came from a long line of Dumpty's.

ARMSTRONG: Well, he's reached the end of the line. (*Checks note pad*) Now we know he either jumped, fell, or was pushed from a wall here at your establishment. We have reason to believe he was murdered.

MOTHER GOOSE: The way I heard it was:
Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
All the King's horses and all the King's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

ARMSTRONG: What? Somebody touched the body?

MOTHER GOOSE: Some people tried to help. They were willing to get involved. Humpty was popular. He had friends in high places.

ARMSTRONG: Like on top of that wall. (*Points up and off right*) Maybe a friend who shoved him off?

MOTHER GOOSE: You really think he was pushed?

ARMSTRONG: That's what I'm here to find out. What do you think?

MOTHER GOOSE: Well, Humpty never was well coordinated. He used to wobble when he stood up. He may have gotten dizzy and toppled off.

ARMSTRONG: O.K. Now, Mrs. Goose—uh, Mom—(*MOTHER GOOSE nods and smiles.*) I want to see a list of all your boarders.

MOTHER GOOSE: Sure. (*Picks up a book from inside door and hands it to ARMSTRONG, who flips through it, closes it, and hands it back to her.*)

ARMSTRONG: You mentioned a king.

MOTHER GOOSE: Everybody knows him. That's Old King Cole. Oh, he's a merry old soul, and a merry old soul is he. . .

ARMSTRONG: I've seen merry old souls before. Sometimes they turn out to be not so merry. Thanks, that will be all for now. (*MOTHER GOOSE nods, exits. JACK HORNER enters left, carrying stool, and sits on it, facing left. ARMSTRONG turns, crosses left and sees HORNER, who pantomimes eating.*) Hey, pal. What's your name?

JACK HORNER: Jack Horner.

ARMSTRONG (*Checking pad*): O.K., Horner, where were you yesterday at one p.m.?

HORNER: One p.m.? Oh, I was sitting in this corner, eating a Christmas pie. I put in my thumb and pulled out a plum and said, "What a good boy am I."

ARMSTRONG: I'll be the judge of that. Did you know the late Humpty Dumpty?

HORNER: Is he late again? He's never on time. We've warned him, but do you think he listens?

ARMSTRONG: Humpty Dumpty is dead.

HORNER: I'll bet you he's late for his own funeral.

ARMSTRONG: Do you know anybody who might have wanted Humpty out of the way?

HORNER: No, but there are some ruffians about. A gang called Little Red and her Riding Hoods. Motorcycle

mob. They wear masks and cause all sorts of trouble.

ARMSTRONG: What kind of trouble?

HORNER: Last week they short-circuited the milking machine at the dairy farm. That cow really jumped over the moon!

ARMSTRONG (*Writing on pad*): Little Red and her Riding Hoods. Got it. Horner, stick around, would you?

HORNER: Of course. I'm always here in my corner—eating. Pleasure to meet you. (*HORNER holds out hand, ARMSTRONG grabs it and they shake hands. ARMSTRONG pulls away, and wipes hand, disgusted.*)

ARMSTRONG: Horner, next time you shove your thumb into a pie, wipe it off, would you?

HORNER: You got it! (*Shouting off-stage*) Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man, bake me a cake as fast as you can. (*Exits, as JACK B. NIMBLE enters right, carrying a large cardboard "candlestick," which he puts down on floor. He begins to jump over candlestick.*)

ARMSTRONG (*Approaching NIMBLE*): O.K., bud. Track meet's over.

JACK B. NIMBLE (*Stopping his leaps; bored*): I'm Jack B. Nimble.

ARMSTRONG: What's with the jumping?

NIMBLE: I'm jumping over a candlestick. It's my way of expressing myself.

ARMSTRONG (*Shrugging*): If you get your kicks that way, it's O.K with me. Let me ask you something. Did you

know Humpty Dumpty was dead?

NIMBLE: Dead? I didn't even know he was sick.

ARMSTRONG: He jumped, fell, or was pushed from that high wall around this place.

NIMBLE (*Nodding philosophically*): That would do it.

ARMSTRONG: You don't seem broken up over it.

NIMBLE: Not half as much as Humpty. That's a long drop. Any clues?

ARMSTRONG: We're checking it, which reminds me—some of the King's men tried to put him together again. Where can I find them?

NIMBLE: Try the castle.

ARMSTRONG: Where's that?

NIMBLE (*Reciting as he resumes his jumping*): You walk a crooked path and you go a crooked mile, and you find a crooked sixpence against a crooked stile.

ARMSTRONG (*Bewildered*): Thanks. . . I think. See you at the Olympics. (*NIMBLE exits. ARMSTRONG, shaking head slowly, crosses to Mother Goose's Place and knocks on door. MOTHER GOOSE opens it immediately.*)

ARMSTRONG: Mom, you've got some rather eccentric people here.

MOTHER GOOSE: Tell me about it.

ARMSTRONG: Where will I find the King's men?

MOTHER GOOSE: They might be over

at Old MacDonald's Farm.

ARMSTRONG: What's at MacDonald's Farm?

MOTHER GOOSE: Oh, a chick, chick here, a chick, chick there, here a chick, there a chick, everywhere a chick, chick. . . .

ARMSTRONG: Sounds like a bunch of dumb clucks to me.

MOTHER GOOSE: Yes, birdbrains, every one. But there are also cows—moo, moo here, moo, moo there, here a moo, there a moo. . . .

ARMSTRONG: I could listen to that till the cows come home, but let's get down to business. Who else lives around here?

MOTHER GOOSE: Let me see. There's Bobby Shaftoe. But he isn't here anymore. Bobby Shaftoe's gone to sea, silver buckles at his knee.

ARMSTRONG: Silver buckles? And they let him into the Navy? (*Shakes head sadly*) Oh, say. I noticed a giant shoe over there. (*Points to door left*) What's that all about?

MOTHER GOOSE: An old woman lives in the shoe. But she probably won't have too much to say to you.

ARMSTRONG: Lives in a shoe and won't say much, eh? Maybe I can loosen her tongue. I'll be back. (*Crosses left to door and knocks. MOTHER GOOSE exits. OLD WOMAN opens door and steps out.*) Hello, ma'am. I'm Armstrong from Homicide. You have a nice place here.

OLD WOMAN: Thanks. It's a little tight around the heel when all the kids are here, but it's home.

ARMSTRONG: Just how many children do you have?

OLD WOMAN (*Counting on fingers*): Let's see now. . . there's Joey, Thomas, Fuzzy, Wuzzy, Tutti-Frutti, and the triplets, Ichabod, Ignatius and Ignition. That's for a starter. Then there's David and Goliath, and Merrill, Lynch, Pierce, Fenner, and Kumquat.

ARMSTRONG (*Dazed*): O.K., O.K, forget it. You don't know anyone who might have killed Humpty Dumpty, do you?

OLD WOMAN: I seldom venture out of the house. Too much to do. Would you please excuse me now? It's my rest and rehabilitation period.

ARMSTRONG: Oh? What do you do to relax?

OLD WOMAN (*Starting through door*): Oh, I go into the toe box, light a eucalyptus candle, and hide from the kids for a while. (*She exits. LITTLE BO-PEEP, dressed in shepherd's clothing and carrying a staff, enters left.*)

LITTLE BO-PEEP (*To ARMSTRONG*): Excuse me. Have you seen any sheep around here?

ARMSTRONG: That's about the only thing I haven't seen. Who are you?

BO-PEEP: Bo-Peep. And I've lost my sheep. But confidentially, I think they were stolen.

ARMSTRONG: Why do you say that?

BO-PEEP: They'd always come home, wagging their tails behind them. But today they didn't come home. A lot of strange things are happening.

ARMSTRONG: Tell me about it.

BO-PEEP: As I said, my sheep are missing, and Tom Tom, the piper's son, stole a pig from Jack Spratt, and away he ran. And he's been running with a rough bunch.

ARMSTRONG: Little Red and her Riding Hoods?

BO-PEEP: Oh, so you've heard about them? Awful people.

ARMSTRONG: What else has been going on?

BO-PEEP: Well, Mary had a little lamb, and that's gone. Little Miss Muffet had her tuffet stolen. It turned up later in a used tuffet lot.

ARMSTRONG: They're paying top dollar for used tuffets these days. What else?

BO-PEEP: Let's see. Oh. We had a party the other day, and we got Little Boy Blue to come blow his horn because the sheep were in the meadow and the cows were in the corn. Now the sheep, including mine, are gone. So are the cows.

ARMSTRONG: You know, you people don't need a detective around here. You need a game warden.

BO-PEEP: No kidding. Oh, and Little Boy Blue's horn was stolen, too. For a while we didn't have any music.

ARMSTRONG: Hmm. Interesting. So, we have a crime wave and a possible homicide. Do you know anybody who might have wanted Humpty Dumpty dead?

BO-PEEP: No one. Except maybe that awful Little Red and her Riding

Hoods. They'd do anything.

ARMSTRONG: It's tough to catch them. I understand they wear masks. Nobody can identify them. Well, thanks for your cooperation, Ms. Peep. See you around. *(BO-PEEP exits right. ARMSTRONG scrutinizes note pad, paces throughout following speech.)* Let's see. . . Humpty Dumpty murdered. . . crime wave. Maybe they're connected. Quite a list of suspects here: the King's men, who tried to put Humpty together again; King Cole, merry old soul; Jack Horner *(Wipes hand in disgust)*, self-styled good boy with sticky hands; Jack B. Nimble, candle jumper. Cross out Bobby Shaftoe—he's at sea. Old woman in the shoe? No, too busy with her kids. Bo-Peep, seems innocent, but you never know. Tom Tom, pig thief. . . Mary's lamb is heisted, Miss Muffet's tuffet pilfered, Boy Blue's horn missing. *(Shakes head)* Cows. . . sheep. Strange doings. *(Emphatically)* Little Red and her Riding Hoods—the masked motorcycle gang. *(Thoughtfully)* Yes. Little Red and her Riding Hoods. *(TOM TOM, wearing black leather jacket and carrying a chain, and JILL, in similar attire, chewing gum, bound through door of Mother Goose's Place, right. They stand with thumbs in pockets.)*

TOM TOM: Hey, dude, what's the word?

ARMSTRONG: Police. Your name?

TOM TOM: Tom Tom.

ARMSTRONG: The piper's son?

TOM TOM: You got it. And this is Jill.

ARMSTRONG: I hear a pig was stolen. Know anything about it?

TOM TOM: No way, nuh-uh.

ARMSTRONG: How about Jack Spratt? Does the name ring a bell?

TOM TOM: Sure, skinny dude. Jack Sprat can eat no fat, his wife can eat no lean.

JILL: There's no food waste in that house, zero waste. And Mrs. Spratt? She needs all those calories, because she's training for a bodybuilding competition. Boy, nobody messes with her. You see. . .

ARMSTRONG: O.K., O.K., let's stay on topic here. Either of you know Humpty Dumpty?

TOM TOM: Only by name. And hey, if you're through, we've got places to be, people to see.

JILL: Yeah, let's go, man. (*TOM TOM and JILL exit through door of Mother Goose's Place. ARMSTRONG snoops around stage, pulling magnifying glass out of pocket, then looks off right.*)

ARMSTRONG (*To self, musing*): That's a high wall. Dumpty took quite a fall. No wonder the King's men couldn't put him together again. Dangerous for him to be sitting up there in the first place, but he must've had quite a view. (*MOTHER GOOSE enters through door.*)

MOTHER GOOSE (*Surprised, in strong, loud voice*): Detective Armstrong. Er, uh. . . (*In high, creaky voice*) Detective Armstrong, I didn't expect that you'd still be here.

ARMSTRONG (*Swinging around to face her*): Mom, I think you have a couple of bad apples in your midst. Tom Tom and Jill. I want to see them for further questioning.

MOTHER GOOSE: Tom Tom and Jill? But they're such nice people.

ARMSTRONG: They may have killed Humpty Dumpty.

MOTHER GOOSE: Impossible! I don't believe it.

ARMSTRONG: Well, you may be right, but I've got a feeling about them. Where are they now?

MOTHER GOOSE: They're in the living v-v-v-room.

ARMSTRONG (*Frowning*): Where?

MOTHER GOOSE: In the living v-v-v-room.

ARMSTRONG: Run that by me one more time.

MOTHER GOOSE (*Louder*): Living v-v-v-room. (*She pantomimes kick-starting a motorcycle.*) Vroom! Vroom! (*TOM TOM and JILL, wearing crash helmets and masks, run in through door right.*)

TOM TOM: We're ready, Little Red!

JILL: Where's the caper, Big Momma?

ARMSTRONG: Everybody hold it. (*Points off right, in direction of "wall"*) Any person (*Slowly*), or egg, sitting on that wall could see everything that was going on in Mother Goose's Place. (*Sound of cows mooing, sheep baa-ing, etc., is heard offstage.*) And all the stolen "articles." The game's up, sister—"Mom," that is—unless you want me to believe that MacDonald's Farm has just relocated. Produce the goods.

MOTHER GOOSE (*Nervously*): You must be mistaken.

ARMSTRONG: I think not. Humpty

found out that you were the ones who sacked Old MacDonald's Farm, the ones who stole Bo-Peep's sheep, Boy Blue's horn, Mary's lamb and Muffet's tuffet, the ones who put that cow in orbit. Humpty knew all, so you had to get rid of him. After that, it was scrambled eggs. I'm arresting you all for the murder of Humpty Dumpty. *(He rips bonnet and gray wig off MOTHER GOOSE's head, revealing that she has long red hair.)* Little Red in person!

MOTHER GOOSE *(In loud, gravelly voice):* Let's split, gang! *(MOTHER GOOSE, TOM TOM, and JILL run off left, ad libbing sounds of motorcycles. Suddenly a dull thud is heard offstage, followed by two more. One by one,*

MOTHER GOOSE, TOM TOM, and

JILL, dazed, stagger onto stage and collapse onto floor.)

TOM TOM: That was like hitting a brick wall! *(ARMSTRONG, puzzled, crosses left and peers offstage.)*

ARMSTRONG *(Calling offstage):* Why—why, you must be Mrs. Spratt! Thanks a million. *(Shakes head incredulously)* Man, does she look strong! *(Takes cell phone from pocket, punches in numbers and lifts phone to ear)* Hello, Chief? Armstrong here. I've wrapped up the Humpty Dumpty slaying. Send a car to Mother Goose's Place. *(Ends call, then calls offstage)* Oh, Mrs. Spratt? Don't go away. My agency is always looking for good, strong, community-minded individuals. Would you be interested in a job? *(Curtain)*

THE END

PRODUCTION NOTES

Mystery at Mother Goose's Place

CHARACTERS: 4 male; 4 female.

PLAYING TIME: 20 minutes.

COSTUMES: Armstrong wears trench coat over everyday clothes. Mother Goose wears a bonnet, shawl, and long skirt, and a gray wig, under which there is a red wig, which may be made of long yarn. Jack Horner wears a little boy's suit and a bow tie. Jack B. Nimble wears a sweatsuit and tennis shoes. Old Woman wears disheveled work clothes. Little Bo-Peep wears shepherd's clothing and carries a staff. Tom Tom and Jill wear black leather jackets, graphic T-shirts, etc., and

may carry chains. At end of play they wear masks and crash helmets.

PROPERTIES: Note pad; ledger or book; stool; large "candlestick" cut out of cardboard; magnifying glass.

SETTING: The stage is empty. At right, there is doorway and door, with a sign reading **MOTHER GOOSE'S PLACE**. At left there is a doorway and door, with a sign saying **SHOE**.

LIGHTING: No special effects.

SOUND: Sound of cows, sheep, pigs, etc., and thudding noises, as indicated in text.

A Halloween Carol

Stingy witch sees her future life, and realizes she'll
need to change her selfish ways. . . .

by Jane Tesh

Characters

BAILEY BOGWATER, *meanest
witch in town*

SPOOKER, *a ghost, her assistant*

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PAST

YOUNG BAILEY

MRS. CRAWLY, *Young Bailey's
schoolteacher*

GHOSTS

WITCHES

GOBLINS

CREATURES

BERT OGG, *a goblin*

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PRESENT

MRS. SPOOKER

SPOOKER JUNIOR

SPOOKETTE

LITTLE BOO

} *her children*

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN FUTURE
FIVE GHOSTS

TIME: *Just before Halloween.*

SETTING: *Bailey Bogwater's office in Scare City. At center are desk and chair, with small stool next to desk.*

AT RISE: *BAILEY BOGWATER is at her desk, counting money. SPOOKER is sitting on stool, taking down the amounts in a notebook.*

BAILEY: Ah, hah! Two thousand ninety-seven, two thousand ninety-eight, two thousand ninety-nine (*Pauses and looks around for the last coin and holds it up triumphantly*) Three thousand!

SPOOKER (*Writing it down*): Three thousand. Will that be all, Miz Bogwater?

BAILEY: All? Of course not! We're going to count it again.

SPOOKER: But we've counted all your money ten times today.

BAILEY: And we'll count it ten times more.

SPOOKER: But Miz Bogwater, tonight's Halloween!

BAILEY: So what?

SPOOKER: I was hoping to have the night off to go haunting with my family.

BAILEY: Bah! Halloween's no excuse. Silly humans running around in costumes, begging for candy. Ridiculous!

SPOOKER: But you're a witch. I thought all witches loved Halloween.

BAILEY: What did Halloween ever do for me?

SPOOKER: You must have some fond memory of Halloween.

BAILEY: Oh, go on! I can see you'll be no use to me tonight.

SPOOKER: Thanks! (*Exits*)

BAILEY (*Grumbling to herself*): Halloween! Bah! (*She rubs her hands together gleefully and starts counting her money. Moaning sound is heard offstage.*) What's that? Who's there? (*GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PAST enters. He or she wears a gray cloak over ghost costume.*)

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PAST: Woooo! I'm the Ghost of Halloween Past!

BAILEY (*Unimpressed*): Well, of course you're a ghost, silly. This is Halloween.

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PAST: And you don't believe in Halloween. I've come to show you your past.

BAILEY: Been there.

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PAST: Ah, but

have another look. (*GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PAST waves hands and other GHOSTS come out. They take the money, desk, and stool, and bring on a small school desk with attached chair. YOUNG BAILEY enters and sits at school desk, looking dejected.*)

BAILEY (*Surprised*): Why, that's me when I was young! (*MRS. CRAWLY, another witch, enters.*) And there's Mrs. Crawly, my teacher!

MRS. CRAWLY (*To YOUNG BAILEY*): Bailey Bogwater, I'm disappointed in you! You haven't paid any attention to your lessons. You're way behind in shrieking, and your spell casting is the lowest in the class.

YOUNG BAILEY: Sorry, Mrs. Crawly.

MRS. CRAWLY: What in the world do you daydream about all day?

YOUNG BAILEY: Halloween!

MRS. CRAWLY: Halloween? That's months away!

YOUNG BAILEY: Yes, but it's so exciting! I can't wait!

MRS. CRAWLY: Let me tell you something, young witch. If you don't get this work done, there'll be no Halloween for you!

YOUNG BAILEY: But I want to fly in the night sky with the bats and the owls!

MRS. CRAWLY: The bats and owls have done their homework. Now you do yours! (*MRS. CRAWLY exits.*)

BAILEY (*To GHOST*): I didn't remember that. No wonder I don't like Halloween. It got me into trouble!

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PAST: Let me

show you another scene. (*GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PAST waves his hands. YOUNG BAILEY stands. Another GHOST takes the school desk and exits. As spooky music is heard, GHOSTS, WITCHES, GOBLINS, SPOOKER, MRS. SPOOKER, SPOOKER JUNIOR, SPOOKETTE, LITTLE BOO, BERT OGG, and other CREATURES come in and start dancing.*)

BAILEY: I remember this! My first big Halloween Ball! I was so excited.

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PAST: And what happened? (*YOUNG BAILEY stands forlornly in the center as the others dance and caper around her.*)

BAILEY: I remember this, too. No one would dance with me.

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PAST: No one?

BAILEY: Well, no one except Bert Ogg. (*BERT approaches YOUNG BAILEY and bows. YOUNG BAILEY takes a look, then folds her arms and turns her back on BERT. BERT's shoulders sag and he walks away.*) And I turned him down.

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PAST: Why?

BAILEY: My mother told me not to associate with goblins, but I wish—

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PAST: What?

BAILEY: Never mind. (*Irritably*) Can we go now?

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PAST: Just a minute. (*GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PRESENT enters and slaps hands with GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PAST in the manner of tag-team wrestling. GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PRESENT wears bright orange and*

black cloak over ghost costume.)

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PRESENT: My turn.

BAILEY: Who are you?

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PRESENT: I'm the Ghost of Halloween Present.

BAILEY: Halloween present? Sure, hand it over.

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PRESENT: Not that kind of present. Your present life. (*GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PRESENT waves his hand. All dancers exit, leaving SPOOKER and his family center. MRS. SPOOKER hands trick or treat bags to her children, who are bouncing up and down with excitement.*)

MRS. SPOOKER: Now, this is what the human children do. They go from house to house, shouting "Trick or treat!"

CHILDREN: Trick or treat! Trick or treat!

SPOOKER JUNIOR: What's a treat, Mother?

MRS. SPOOKER: Well, Spooker Junior, it's usually candy.

SPOOKETTE: Candy? What's that?

SPOOKER: Something that tastes really good.

LITTLE BOO: Are we going to get some candy?

SPOOKER: We don't have enough money for candy, Little Boo, but we have each other, and that's a treat for me.

SPOOKETTE: Can we find a house to haunt?

SPOOKER: Sure we can, Spookette!

CHILDREN: Yay! Whee! *(They run off.)*

SPOOKER: Don't go too far!

MRS. SPOOKER: Oh, Spooker, I wish we had something to give the children for Halloween! If only that witch you worked for wasn't so stingy!

SPOOKER: Now, now, dear. Bailey Bogwater isn't that bad. At least I make enough to keep us in clean sheets.

MRS. SPOOKER: And this is Little Boo's first Halloween. I wanted it to be special.

SPOOKER: Maybe we can find a nice graveyard to haunt. I think there's one over by the river. Let's go see! *(They exit. BAILEY watches them go.)*

BAILEY: I never realized he had such a big family to support.

GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PRESENT: You've been too caught up in your own life, Bailey Bogwater. Would you like to see how it ends?

BAILEY *(Nervously):* What do you mean? *(GHOST OF HALLOWEEN FUTURE enters and tags GHOST OF HALLOWEEN PRESENT. He or she is taller than the other ghosts and wears a black robe with a hood over his ghost costume.)* You must be the Ghost of Halloweens yet to come. *(GHOST OF HALLOWEEN FUTURE nods and points with a long skeletal finger. Other GHOSTS bring on a headstone and plop it down.)* You want me to read what that says? *(GHOST OF HALLOWEEN FUTURE*

nods.) This can't be good. *(She cautiously approaches the headstone, and just when she gets to it, there is a shriek and GHOST BAILEY, a ghost wearing a witch's hat, leaps up from behind the stone. BAILEY shrieks, too, and falls down.)* Is that me? Have I become a ghost? *(GHOST OF HALLOWEEN FUTURE nods. BAILEY recovers.)* Well, that's not so bad. *(All GHOSTS enter and circle GHOST BAILEY.)*

1ST GHOST: It's that stingy witch!

2ND GHOST: Bailey Bogwater! I remember her!

3RD GHOST: She gave poor Spooker such a hard time.

4TH GHOST: She's not really one of us!

5TH GHOST: She's nothing! *(ALL GHOSTS shriek and laugh and whirl GHOST BAILEY around until she's sitting next to the headstone. GHOST BAILEY begins to cry. GHOSTS, including GHOST OF HALLOWEEN FUTURE, exit.)*

BAILEY: That's it? I'm left all alone? Not even the ghosts will talk to me? That's horrible! What can I do to fix things? *(Looks around)* Hey, where are you? *(There's no answer. BAILEY sits down next to GHOST BAILEY, who takes one look at her and exits, too.)* Not even my own ghost wants to be with me! I've got to get back! I've got to change things! *(She's sitting there sadly when SPOOKER JUNIOR, SPOOKETTE, and LITTLE BOO enter.)*

SPOOKER JUNIOR: Here's the graveyard! Whooooo!

LITTLE BOO: Look at me! I'm haunting!

SPOOKETTE: Good job, Little Boo! (*Sees BAILEY*) Oh, excuse us, Miss Witch. We didn't see you.

BAILEY (*To herself*): Nobody does. (*Squares her shoulders*) But that's going to change! (*To CHILDREN*) You're Spooker's kids, aren't you? (*CHILDREN gasp and cling to each other.*)

CHILDREN: Miz Bogwater! (*SPOOKER and MRS. SPOOKER enter and react in the same way.*)

SPOOKER: Miz Bogwater, I apologize! I didn't know you'd be here.

BAILEY: Neither did I. It's O.K., though. I have a Halloween present for you.

SPOOKER: For me?

BAILEY: Yes. From now on, I'm going to pay you twice as much! And you can have every other day off!

SPOOKER: That's wonderful! Thank you! Children, what do you say?

CHILDREN: Thank you, Miz Bogwater.

BAILEY: That's not what you say. Kids, hold out those bags and try again.

CHILDREN: Trick or treat!

BAILEY: That's better! (*Drops money into each bag. LITTLE BOO tugs on her skirt.*) You have something else to say, Little Boo?

LITTLE BOO (*To audience*): Happy Halloween, every one! (*Curtain*)

THE END

PRODUCTION NOTES

A Halloween Carol

CHARACTERS: 5 female; 3 male; 4 male or female for Ghost of Halloween Past, Ghost of Halloween Present, Ghost of Halloween Future, and Little Boo. As many males and females needed for Ghosts, Witches, Goblins, and Creatures.

PLAYING TIME: 10 minutes.

COSTUMES: Witch, ghost, and Halloween costumes; gray cloak for Ghost of Halloween Past; orange and black cloak for Ghost of Halloween Present; black cloak for Ghost of Halloween Future.

PROPERTIES: Money bag and jingly coins for Bailey; school books, notebook, and pencil for Young Bailey; trick or treat bags for Spooker's children; bony finger for Ghost of Halloween Future; paper or foam headstone.

SETTING: Bailey Bogwater's office; desk, stool. Smaller school desk for Young Bailey.

LIGHTING: No special effects.

SOUND: Spooky music for Halloween Ball.

Plays

THE DRAMA MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



Subscribe to this *fabulous* magazine and—

- Stimulate classroom discussion
- Expand students' imagination
- Improve reading and speech skills
- Increase students' vocabulary

Seven online issues a year; 6 to 8 royalty-free plays for lower, middle, and upper grades in each issue; **plus** *1,000+ plays online for subscribers!*

Subscribe now!

1 year, \$75.00

Checks, purchase orders, Mastercard and Visa

Plays, the Drama Magazine for Young People

897 Washington St. #600160 Newton, MA 02460

(617) 630-9100 Fax: (617) 630-9101

www.playsmagazine.com

