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## **SHELF LIFE**

**(A Christmas Dream Play for Kids Over 13)**

**By Phillip Carlyle Wagner**

### **CHARACTERS:** (actors: as few as 11, as many as 19)

TOYM (65) & UNCLE (45)	(should be played by the same actor)
DAD (37) & BRO (18) (a younger Toym)	(should be played by the same actor) [Option: the use of masks makes it possible for one actor to play all four ages]*
DOLL & LAURA & NEICE #4	(15-16, must be played by the same actress)
JACK BOX	(ageless)
BIG DOG	(ageless)
POPULAR PIRATE BOB	(ageless)
BRASSY& MOM &NIECE #1 (16-35)	(must be played by the same actress)
SASSY & NIECE #2	(teen, must be played by the same actress)
TRASHY & NIECE #3	(teen, must be played by the same actress)
MASKED VILLIAN #1	(male any age, needs mature voice for part of it)
MASKED VILLIAN #2	(male or female, low voice, large, any age)
MASKED VILLIAN #3	(male any age, mature voice)

SISTER #1	(17)	(may be played by same actress who plays Sassy)
SISTER #2	(16)	(may be played by same actress who plays Trashy)
JACK	(18)	(may be played by same actor as Jack Box)
MR. SMITH #1	(35)	(may be played by same actor who plays Big Dog)
MR. SMITH #2	(35)	(may be played by same actor who plays Bob)
SHERIFF #1	(30)	(may be played by same actor who plays Big Dog)
SHERIFF #2	(30)	(may be played by same actor who plays Bob)

("BRATS" DOLLS PLAY OTHER CHARACTERS AS WELL)

\*(For a High School production of this play all characters may easily be performed by teens, even the old man, but it is intended that an older man play TOYM and UNCLE and a younger person play BRO and DAD.)

A toy shop with counter along part of one wall, bench, stools of various sizes and colors, an old 40's radio, a few cabinets and a table.

The present.

A large box and a huge stuffed dog are along one wall amongst some empty shelves.

A Geppetto-like toy maker, with a German accent (later British and French), sits slouched over the table writing in candle light. He fiddles with his old trimly kept silver beard and scruffy thinning hair. He wears reading glasses. He usually rolls his r's.

TOYM: It was (vas) the night before Christmas und (unt) all through the house not a creature was (vas) stirring not even a-- (pause). Why (vhy) does that sound so familiar? (reads to himself, his lips moving then) Agk, it's been done! (frustrated, he paces, smacks his forehead) I need new "appropriate" Christmas messages to

include for my customers, ja. I don't think kids are getting the correct messages these days. Nobody seems to understand(t) me anyway (continuing with v for w, etc.). Maybe it is my accent. (his own natural accent) Wait. I must be dreaming. I don't have an accent. Well, I do, but . . . I have to write this down . . .

(He sits and readies himself to write some more, but falls asleep, face on the table, snoring. PAUSE. There is a soft KNOCK on the door. The candle goes out.)

TOYM (CONTD German accent again.)

(he begins to write, his face close to the page like he was never asleep, mumbles) There was a soft knocking at the door. (a little LOUDER KNOCKING, he keeps writing) There was always knocking at the toy maker's door. (A THIRD LOUDER KNOCKING, he finally realizes it is at the door) Oh it's the door. (then slowly like Arte Johnson) Very interesting. (Goes to the door) I'm coming. I am coming. Hold your donkeys und horses. (opens the door) Go away. (closes door, then opens door) Go away. I do not have time for knocking. I am closed, ja. (He closes the door and listens, silence, then speaking through the door) I know you are out there. Go away, or I will call the Toy Police. (listens, hears SOBBING, shouts at door) Stop sobbing like a girly-girl! It will not help you get into my shop! (Big SOB, he opens the door) All right, come in!

(DOLL ENTERS, she wears a princess dress and is made-up like an old fashioned collectible display doll, her hair beautifully curled and layered atop her rosy face. She uses a delicately laced parasol as both a fashionable walking stick and shade from any source of light that she finds disagreeable. Her sobs stop. Her movement is swift, graceful until she reaches center where she poses stiffly.)

DOLL: (British accent) May I stand here, please?

TOYM: (his jaw drops, his accent changes to the same as hers) You are a doll!

DOLL: Why thank you, good sir. My name is Princess. What is your name, kind sir?

TOYM: I am Toymaker (pronounced Tom-aker) Why do I sound so funny?

DOLL: You don't sound funny to me.

TOYM: Oh Wizard! Now, I have your accent.

DOLL: Yes, indeed, and a lovely one it is. I am aware of your occupation. What is your name, sir?

TOYM: (puzzled) That is my name. Mister Toymaker. (thinks, still puzzled) I don't remember my first name. I haven't heard it spoken since . . . hm. What is it that you want?

DOLL: Why to speak to you, Mister Toymaker, of course.

TOYM: Would you like to sit down, young lady?

DOLL: I never sit. (she proudly poses) I am a collectible, my good man.

TOYM: Oh, that's right.

DOLL: I have heard good reports of your work, sir, and I was hoping that you could help me. I desperately need a change, you see. Oh, I don't mind standing all the time. That is not the problem at all. It's my hair; I have to do something with my hair.

TOYM: Your hair is lovely.

DOLL: Yes, indeed, too lovely I think. I don't fit in, you see. Tomorrow is Christmas, and well, frankly, no one has bought me. I desperately need to be needed.

TOYM: Well, perhaps you will be bought for someone's birthday. You don't necessarily have to wait until next Christmas, ja. ["ja" even with a French or British accent since his accent now copies hers]

DOLL: (posture gradually sags as she speaks) Next Christmas? You have no idea how many Christmases I have waited standing straight and proud and beautiful. And yet across the aisle every "Brats" doll, not to mention every accessory, is sold, year after year after year.

TOYM: I don't understand: a brat was in your store, and they sold her doll? That must have really "ticked-off" the little girl.

DOLL: No, no, sir, quite the contrary. The Brat is the doll. I mean that particular doll is called a "Brats" doll. (spells it) B. R. A. T. S. The company that makes them has trouble with proper spelling as well. Some clerk keeps trying to spell Brats with a "Z" like it was

someone's name or something. Each doll has a name of its own, like "Kiano", "Lilianninini", or Toad Pie, I have heard tell.

TOYM: How many years has this been going on?

DOLL: For me personally, sir, (really sags) It has been fifty, sir. (tearfully) First was that overly developed Barbie. She took all the sales. What they ever saw in her is beyond me. Frankly, I thought she was a bit of a tart. Then the very wide-faced, wide-eyed, overly cutesy-pied, and lusciously lippered "Brats" dolls "hit" the market, as they say. (her speech begins to slow down and eventually stalls) I finally left my shelf in search of an answer. I met this woman with a cow, or was it magic beans and a cow, and she said I should find a toy maker and get a "make-over", I took that to mean a refitting. I saw your sign—I saw your sign . . . I saw your si-- . . . (very slowly winding down, singing) "Daisy, Daisy, bring me your answer do. I'm half crazy. . .

(She hangs limply stooped over, her hands dangling just above the floor, like a released marionette)

TOYM: I knew it. She is defective. Where is your key, Princess?

DOLL: (still stooped) I have no key. I never had a key. In over 50 years I have not had a key. (awkwardly pulls herself up) I just get these anxiety attacks, forgive me. It is very unbecoming, I realize.

TOYM: You don't look fifty, you know.

DOLL: Please! I am a doll. Can you help me?

TOYM: But you are beautiful the way you are.

DOLL: (stomps her foot) Yes! But I want to be popular!

TOYM: (German) Ja, you are certainly not fifty, that is for sure.

DOLL: I am in my teens. I have never been certain which teen, but one of them.

TOYM: I would like to help you, but I am closed. Tomorrow is a holiday. What can I possibly do?

DOLL: I can wait. Did you just change your accent? (he looks innocently at her) Is that a shelf over there?

TOYM: Yes, but—

DOLL: Please, Mr. Toymaker! (she poses prettily)

TOYM: (British) All right, all right, but I do not understand why you would want to be like a, what did you call it, a Brat's doll?

DOLL: No, no, I want to be better than a "Brats" doll; so that I can be popular.

TOYM: Well, making you popular is not necessarily making you better.

DOLL: (pause) Yes, well, you may have a point there, but if I don't conform in some way to the expectations of the masses how will I ever sell?

TOYM: Being yourself is not enough?

DOLL: For fifty years it has not been enough, my good man!

TOYM: All right then, there is a guest toothbrush and towel in the guest washroom through there. It used to be my daughter's. There are some nice roomy shelves in the storage room there too, if you get uncomfortable in here. (German) Gute Nacht, I am going to retire in there. (he points off in the opposite direction.) We will discuss this when I wake up.

DOLL: (warmly) Thank you for letting me stay. (she holds back her tears)

(He goes right; she goes left; he stops before his door, mechanically. She hesitates at her door and then goes through.

He absently returns to his table and puts his head down and stays there as though asleep.

Pause. DOLL returns, does not take notice of him.

She looks the room over for the first time, selects low shelf, steps up onto a small footstool then onto the low shelf [with plenty of hair room] and takes a pose. She does not like her pose and changes to another. Satisfied, she freezes, prettily. Her eyes slowly close.

She hears a SCRATCHING, slowly opens one eye, pivots her head left toward the big dog doll then right toward the big box. Silence. She sighs. Re-poses, then slowly closes her eyes.

JACK'S HEAD AND TORSO pop out of the BOX.

She jumps and squeaks.)

JACK: (Australian accent if possible) Hi, I am Jack Box.

DOLL: Don't ever do that again. (Sighs) I am Princess.

JACK: I know I heard the old man and you.

DOLL: Was that you scratching yourself in the box?

JACK: No, wasn't me. Must have been Big D.

BIG D (optional Scottish accent) It was I, indeed.

DOLL: (not surprised) What does the D stand for?

BIG/JACK: Dog.

DOLL: Oh, of course. How do you do. It is very kind of you to introduce yourselves, but I really need to have some quiet time. (takes a new pose)

JACK: (BOX and all, moves to the front door, and tries to look out of the little window door that is in it, but his box won't let him get close enough.) Rats, I can't reach it.

BIG D: (flops over near him, opens it with his nose) You can never reach it. I don't know why you try.

JACK: Well, things could have changed.

BIG D: (like Jake just doesn't get it) Poor Jack and his chaos theory.

DOLL: What are you doing? This is not my idea of quiet time.

BIG D: Looking to see if you were followed.

JACK: If we look out the windows, they can see that we are looking to see if they are there. That's why we look out this little window, see.

DOLL: Who may I ask?

BIG D: Ah, who, ah, whoever, you know. I don't know—somebody could be there—you never know.

JACK: (still looking out) Oh, boy, there is somebody. You've been followed.

DOLL: What on earth are you talking about?

BIG D: They don't look very friendly, all snooty and such. Ah-oh, and angry. They look very angry.

JACK: (to BIG D, dramatically) It is a good thing we checked.

BIG D: They'll make mince meat of the old man. He has no idea.

JACK: They won't like it that he let her in here, that is for sure.

DOLL: Will you stop that, and tell me what is the problem!

JACK: (goes to the toy maker) Wake up, wake up! Come on, Grandpa!

BIG D: Ah-oh. He won't wake up. He's in deep. Try again!

JACK: Get up! Wakey, wakey! No use. He is in Neverland.

DOLL: Leave him be, for mercy's sake. (realizes) What's he doing sleeping in here?

(The TOY MAKER sleep walks out the door right, the others watch amazed.)

BIG D/JACK: Whoa!

(BIG D closes the door for the toy maker.)

BIG D: That's a new one. Walking out of his own dream.

JACK: Well, obviously he is still having it.

BIG D: It's up to us then.



JACK: Right. (checks the through the little door window)

BIG D: All right, Princess. To the storage room.

DOLL: I beg your pardon?

JACK: Beat it, lady. Here they come. They look pretty nasty too.

DOLL: (finally nervous) How do you know they are coming for me?

(They both make a sound and look at her like,  
“are you kidding”?)

DOLL (CONTD.): All right, then. The storage room you say?

JACK: And hurry; lock it from the inside if you can.

DOLL: I have no idea if I will be able. I will try.

(BIG D closes the door after her.)

JACK: Quick, look normal.

BIG D. Is the front door locked?!

JACK: Ah-oh.

BIG D. (whispers loudly) See if you can get the old man to dim the light!

JACK: (whispers loudly) All right, help me. (They both strain a little)

(The stage light dims to half. PAUSE.  
A LOUD BRASS “STINGER” accompanies the  
DOOR being thrust open, street light  
silhouettes THREE austere looking “Brats  
Dolls” about 5’3”.

SPOOKY WHISPERY VOICES immediately  
follow the musical sting with an elongated  
“B R A T S” while the girls hold their pose.

BRASSY, SASSY AND TRASHY are pretty  
with exceptionally wide faces, full lush lips,  
super large “eyes”, circled with dark make-up,  
and long long lashes [perhaps with a mask

piece or make-up to puff out their dazzling rosy cheeks for the roundest cutest faces possible]. Their hair is well kept and exceptionally long. SASSY'S hair is in wide extremely long pig tails with overly cute ribbon ties. TRASHY has sexy long bangs and style to match. BRASSY'S long hair piece nearly touches the floor and is kept off of her face by elegant barrettes. She, alone, is in charge. [If looks could kill, these are them].)

- BRASSY: (steps into the half light, poses, hip slung) What a dump. (slowly takes in the shop) Take a good look around girls. She's in here somewhere, I know it, or that Magic Cow is going to have a lot of explaining to do.
- SASSY: Say, Brassy, I'm hungry.
- BRASSY: So what? You're a "Brats" doll. How many times do I have to tell you dolls don't eat.
- SASSY: Well, I thought, you know, like we could just pretend.
- TRASHY: Yeah, shut up, Sassy, and look around like you were told.
- SASSY: Shut up yourself, Trashy. I know how to look around. (TRASHY shakes her head and rolls her eyes at her like "what an idiot") (They scout around.)
- TRASHY: Hey, these are boy toys, I think. It's been so long since I have been with a boy toy.
- BRASSY: Shut up, Trashy.
- TRASHY: I'm just saying.
- SASSY: Now, who doesn't know how to look around, Trashy?
- TRASHY: You need help, sister. Seriously.
- BRASSY: (goes over to the box) Come out of there, you little creep.
- SASSY: What is she doing, is she okay?
- TRASHY: It's a jack in the box, stupid.

SASSY: Oh. (then) Come out of there, you little creep!

JACK: (Lazily wiggles his head out) Oh, hello, what's going on? I was asleep, see. I am Jack Box.

BRASSY: I am Brassy, that is Sassy, and that is Trashy.

TRASHY: (smiles coyly) Hello there, Jack.

BIG D: (pretends to wake too) Oh, my goodness, what have we here?

SASSY: (grabs her heart in fright) Oh! Oh! I thought you were a stuffed dog!

BIG D: I am.

SASSY: No I mean like a real dog that died and was stuffed, you know? And then talked! I had no idea you were a doll.

TRASHY: (to BIG D) She means "like" taxidermy. She needs help.

SASSY: What? Taxi what?

BRASSY: Shut it, Sassy. Look, you two, we are looking for an old doll. Well, she doesn't look old, but believe me under all that make up.

BIG D: Do you mind me asking why you are looking for her?

BRASSY: No, I don't mind. When you hear, you will want to help us anyway.

JACK: (smiles) How do you know we have seen her?

BRASSY: Oh, come on now, boys. He just said "why are you looking for her", which he would only ask if he knew something.

BIG D: (apologetically to Jack) Oh.

BRASSY: We got wind of her scheme to get a make-over, see, to be better, more popular.

TRASHY: Yeah, like us, pop-u-lar.

SASSY: I overheard her talking to herself, like across the aisle. She often does that.

BRASSY: And, so what happens if she really does get made-over better than the rest of us, what would become of us then? Our market share would plummet—why it is down right communistic is what it is.

TRASHY: That's right, Brass, she's a commie, all right.

SASSY: Yeah!

BRASSY: So where is she?

BIG D: She left.

JACK: That's right, a little bit before you got here.

BIG D: She went out that very door. (points toward the front door)

BRASSY: Why didn't we see her leave then?

JACK: A little bit before that.

SASSY: Let's go get her!

BRASSY: Wait. Who is through that door? (points right)

BIG D/JACK: (pause, then simultaneously) The toy maker.

JACK: He told her to leave.

BIG D: He hates girl toys. (a beat) No offense.

BRASSY: None taken--he's an idiot. I'll deal with him later. And that door? (left)

JACK/BIG D (pause, then simultaneously) Noth'n.

BRASSY: She's in there, girls. Follow me.

(JACK and BIG D block the way)

JACK/BIRG D You can't go in there.

BRASSY: Move or die!

JACK: (trembling) You don't want to go in there. It's—it's—full of snakes, see!

BIG D: That's right. It's full of—what?—snakes? Right, snakes!

BRASSY: Whoever heard of a toyshop that was full of snakes? That is about as remotely plausible as snakes on an airplane! Now, move it or lose it!

JACK: No! You'll be bitten, maybe swallowed.

BIG D: Whole! Or crushed! You wouldn't want to be crushed. I hear it is very unpleasant.

BRASSY: Nor would you! Now move!

(BRASSY pushes them aside with her super strength, opens the door and screams.  
BRASSY slams the door, turns, and presses her back against it.)

TRASHY/SASSY: (simultaneously) What is it?

BRASSY: Snakes! A gazillion of them! I hate snakes!

BIG D/JACK: (together, scared) He's dreaming snakes! (they realize and look at each other not scared) Cool!

(THE DOOR opens pushing BRASSY whose feet slide, then she turns and pushes back.)

BRASSY: Help me, you clowns!

TRASHY: (starting to help, but offended) Clowns?

(SASSY, BIG D AND JACK, scared again, help push against the door. JACK is mostly in the way, but they get it mostly closed again, but dozens of "SNAKES" wiggle around the edges like the top of Medusa's head; 2 or 3 get into the room [pulled by strings] and squirm their ways out the front doors, which opens by "magic" to let them out. All the characters step and hop to avoid them while still managing to close the door. They then barricade it with the table and a bench.)

SASSY: That was close.

(Everyone keeps eye-balling the door off and on.)

BRASSY: Keep on an eye on that snake door, Trashy

TRASHY: Roger that.

JACK ASIDE TO BIG D: I hope she is locked up safe in the storeroom.

(BIG D nods agreement and signals a “shhh”.)

BRASSY: (pulling herself together) Did you just whisper something to the Big dog?

JACK: Who me? No!

BRASSY: What! Do you think because it says “aside” next to your dialogue that we can’t hear you, you moron.

JACK: Okay, okay, don’t have a kangaroo. I said, “I hope the toy maker is safe in his room.”

SASSY: (astonished, points at the “snake” door) The toy maker is in there!

BIG D: No, no, young lady, we told you before he’s in there, or at least he was.

SASSY: Well, somebody better tell him he has a big snake problem. And don’t call me “Lady”.

TRASHY: (still guarding the door) Brassy, the door looks like it is breathing heavier.

BRASSY: Keep an eye on it. I want to meet this toy maker right now.

BIG D/JACK: (simultaneously quickly) He’s asleep.

JACK: He’s always sleeping. He might be walking around, but he’s still asleep.

BRASSY: What!

JACK: I said—

BRASSY: I know what you said! “He’s asleep.” Do I look like I care? Sassy, open that door and call the toy maker.

SASSY: (whining) Why do I always have to do stuff?

JACK: She is afraid there might be more snakes.

BRASSY: You're cruis'n for a bruis'n, Jack. Yeah, I hate snakes, but I'll open that door. Just watch me. (bravely stomps over and opens the door)

(A FEW BATS [on strings] fly out of the door, up and out of sight. BRASSY ducks, screeches and slams the door.)

TRASHY/SASSY: (also ducking) Bats!

(BRASSY stands, one hand on a hip and looks at Jack with chargin.)

BRASSY: (slow burn to Jack) Don't say a word.

(JACK fiddles with his fingers and purses his lips trying not to comment.)

BIG D: (whispers to Jack) It's difficult, I know—

BRASSY: You too, Big Dog. Unless you don't want to see tomorrow.

(BIG D "bites his lip." There is a knock on the door behind BRASSY; she jumps then looks cool again like an embarrassed cat covering up her reaction.)

BRASSY: (CONTD.) Get it, Sassy.

SASSY: Can bats knock?

BRASSY: No! Just do it! Do it! (SASSY rushes over, ducks, then opens the door)

(TOYM ENTERS, arms outstretched, still sleep walking. He slowly passes by BRASSY.)

BRASSY: (CONTD.) Hey, you, I want to have a word with you.

(He ignores her and walks across the stage then stops. He goes to the front door absently

and closes the little door window, then he locks the door and starts for the “snake” door. When he gets to the “barricade,” he stops, arms outstretched, and knocks silently in the air. BRASSY moves to next to him.)

BRASSY: Holy banana splits! What’s his problem!

TRASHY: Does he know there are snakes in there?

BIG D/JACK: He knows.

BRASSY: This place is too insane for me to deal with right now. Let’s go, girls.

SASSY: But aren’t we—

BRASSY: (cuts her off with a stare, the two girls follow her) We are going back to the cow lady and get more satisfactory instructions, and this time, girls, there will be a quiz—so you better take notes. (the three girls leave)

(TOYM stops knocking, turns around and watches the action. They can no longer see him.)

JACK: Where’d he go?

BIG D: (walks near TOYM but does not touch him) He was right here knocking on the air, then he wasn’t.

JACK: Oh, this is spooky.

BIG D: Is he still dreaming?

JACK: Of course, or you wouldn’t be talking.

BIG D: Maybe he went back into the other room. You know, like poof.

JACK: Well, we have to go in there and see if he is all right.

(The “snake” door opens, pushing the table and bench. TOYM subsides to a corner. POPULAR PIRATE BOB ENTERS and climbs over the bench and table like he is climbing



around a ship, humming "a Pirate's life for me".)

BOB: (goes to JACK then turns his back on him) Pull that. (JACK pulls a cord on BOB's back) Shiver me timbers a barricade, Arg. Pull it again. Pull it again!

JACK: No, Bob, just say what's on your mind; you don't need your cord pulled.

BOB: Arg, but it feels so good.

BIG D: What are you doing in here? You are supposed to be in Laura's old room.

BOB: Arg, I saw this beautiful maiden in distress, me thinks she went into hiding in the storeroom. I had to make it across the valley of snakes, but they are gone now. I scared them off, arg. And the princess is going to marry me at sea. Arg.

JACK: Arg, shut up. No, she isn't. She's too young.

BOB: (smiles) Arg.

BIG D: You don't even know her.

BOB: What has that got to do with it?

DOLL: (pokes her head) Is it safe to enter?

(BOB turns, looks, grabs his heart and collapses.)

DOLL: (CONTD., she looks at BOB) Perhaps not.

BIG D: They left, but I'm not sure if it's safe anywhere Popular Pirate Bob is. He's a little impulsive.

BOB: (rises, sweeps his hat gallantly and bows) At your service, me Lady.

DOLL: Well, I'm not quite sure what kind of service you have in mind, but I think I will pass for the moment, thank you.

BOB: (disappointed) Arg.

JACK: I think we had better keep an eye out the little door window, just in case.

(The LIGHTS FLICKER. The FRONT DOOR SWINGS OPEN. Another loud MUSICAL STING, and the THREE “BRATS” DOLLS are once again SILHOUETTED against the street light.)

This time, the THREE “BRATS” WHISPER LOUDLY a long sustained “Bratssssss”, cued tightly onto the end of the musical sting.)

BRASSY: Now I’ve got you, my pretty, and your little pirate too.

BIG D: How did you open the door? It was locked!

BRASSY: (holds up a key) I took this key off the old coot when no one was looking. It is what I do. Where is the old goat anyway? Did he go back to his room?

(TOYM still stands in the corner, invisible to the other characters.)

BIG D: We don’t know. He just vanished.

JACK: But you can bet he knows what is going on. And he’ll never let you take Princess.

BRASSY: “Princess Sminchess”! She’s going with us. And we’ll give her a make-over she will never forget.

BOB: (stands gallantly, hands on his hips, barring the way) No way, arg!

JACK: (wobbly in his box, quite nervous) That’s right—no way, arg. You’ll have to go through us before you can touch Princess.

BIG D: (agreeing) Ruff, ruff!

DOLL: Oh my word, this is almost like being popular!

BRASSY: Trashy, take out Big Dog.

TRASHY: Piece of cake, chief. Go that.

BRASSY: Sassy, take out that ridiculous pirate.

SASSY: Right, chief. Piece of—something—go.

BRASSY: And I'm going to squish Jack so far down into his box his springs will be through the floor, comprende?

BIG D: Brace yourselves, gentlemen.

DOLL: And what of me? Am I to be forgotten? You think I don't figure into this army of the righteous? Well, you are sadly mistaken. (she closes her parasol and readies it like a fencing sword, her left hand at the back posed in the air for balance)

BOB: Be still my heart. I love her even more. (then to BRASSY) How do you like the odds now, Miss Flashy Brassy?

BRASSY: Not as much, but I'm not worried.

TOYM: (German accent, joins the fray) But if I join their side, that increases the odds way beyond your expectations, ja?

BRASSY: You're old and lame, what can you do?

TOYM: Lame this! (snaps his fingers--)

(Bats and snakes start flying and slithering about. One bat gets into each of the Brats' hair [if possible] and a snake by their feet.

The LIGHTS FLICKER like in a storm.

LOUD MUSIC—"THE VALKYRIE"--BLASTS [optional: add a "million" helicopter propeller sounds, as was heard in "Apocalypse Now"].)

BRASSY: You'll pay for this my pretty! We'll be back with reinforcements! We have friends too, you know! You'll see! There are lots of Brats in this world!

(All the BRATS GIRLS CACKLE as they hurry out the front door.

MUSIC CONTINUES TO BLARE as the LIGHTS FADE [or the curtain falls].)

e n d   s c e n e

## S C E N E   2

The bench and table are back in place, not barricading the door left. Stage empty. The Big Dog is gone, but the Big Box is back against the wall in a corner with a cloth over it.

(DAD ENTERS [many options: TOYM could be masked, except for his mouth; TOYM could wear a toupee and keep his beard or not; or TOYM could be played by a younger actor, 35, who resembles TOYM.]

DAD sets cereal and bowls, spoons and milk on the table. LIGHTS CANDLE, moves his writing stuff to side, crosses to left door.)

DAD:            Laura, Laura, breakfast is ready!

LAURA:        (OFF [option: she is played by the Doll]) I'm coming. Can't find my art notes.

DAD:            (laughs) It'll get stale.

LAURA:        (OFF) You find them then.

DAD:            They're your notes. I don't wear them.

LAURA:        (she laughs heartily) That's not fair. Oh, here they are. (He mouths the next words exactly as she speaks them--) They're right where I left them, in my backpack.

(DAD turns on the radio. We hear noise and "bla-bla-bla"—unintelligible, but definitely the sing-song of a commercial spot spinning its pitch can be discerned.)

DAD:            (to himself) There are no longer any absolute truths on this planet only spinning tales of fancy, but whose fancy should we follow this week? (he snaps at radio) Stop that! (he snaps it off, then mimics its sing-song) What right have you to come into my shop to pop and

slop all over my counter top? All I wanted was a little bit of music, but nooooo! All I get is consume or die!

LAURA: (enters, she is 16) Good morning, Dad. (she sits, pours cereal and eats) Wants some cereal?

DAD: Oh, hi. Yes, thanks. (sits, eats) Hey, how do you figure that the profit motive has become the end all and be all of society's driving force?

LAURA: What?

DAD: Never mind. Commercial got to me again, that's all.

LAURA: Oh that. Yeah, I heard.

DAD: You heard me?

LAURA: Dad! If I was at school, I would have heard you. In fact the neighbors tell me what you say, I don't have to listen. (smiles)

DAD: (chuckles) So did you finish your homework?

LAURA: Dad! That was last night. I finish my homework the evening before it is due.

DAD: Well, yeah, you do, but when I was in high school—

LAURA: You often did yours in the morning. I don't work like that, Pop.

DAD: (smiles) Hey, don't call me Pop. It makes me feel old.

LAURA: You're thirty something. I am teen something. You're old any way you look at it.

DAD: Ouch. So what is on for today?

LAURA: Same old.

DAD: Nice touch.

LAURA: You don't look a day over 25.

DAD: (chuckles) I heard that old men are not old in their dreams, but 25. Usually 25. (he "shakes the idea off")

LAURA: (she looks bewildered and rolls her eyes up) Hey, should I walk home today?

DAD: Naw, naw, I'll pick you up.

LAURA: No, it's art lesson day—a mom day. Did she tell you she would pick me up? Or should I walk home?

DAD: (offended) This is your home.

LAURA: Don't go ballistic. You're not going to go ballistic?

DAD: Who is going ballistic?

LAURA: This is one of my homes. Art lesson day is "other home day."  
(angry) You know that. How can you forget a pattern?

DAD: It is not a pattern to be divided up.

LAURA: Really? Well, whose fault is that?

DAD: That's not very fair.

LAURA: (slams her spoon in her bowl, grabs her backpack and goes) No, it is not fair. It is not fair to me. See you Friday! (slams the door)

DAD: (opens door, shouts out) I'm sorry, but it is not my fault!

LAURA: (distant) Yeah! She left you for her psychiatrist, I know! Why don't you tell the whole frigging neighborhood.

DAD: (closes door) I wasn't going to say that. I wasn't going to say that. I was going to say—oh never mind what I was going to say. It doesn't matter what I was going to say. It never matters what I say. What the hell was I going to say? (he works angrily on a toy on his counter)

(KNOCK on the door)

DAD: (CONTD. opens door) I just wanted to ask if—oh sorry, we're closed.

(TWO MEN in matching suits and ties enter and pass him.)

[OPTION: BIG D could play #1; BOB could play #2.]

[2<sup>nd</sup> OPTION: they wear neutral masks].)

#1: (accent like Mr. Smith in Matrix) It's all right we're not here for toys. We did our Christmas shopping early.

#2: (Arkansas, like Bill Clinton, accent) Your daughter?

DAD: Yes, she just left.

#2: Nice.

DAD: (suspicious) Yes.

#1: We heard you were having a bad year.

DAD: Who are you? Why are you here? What do you want from me?

#1: (laughs) This guy thinks he Captain Kirk, Number Two.

#2: (chuckles) Captain Kirk.

DAD: I—

#2: The Company sent us.

DAD: What!

#1: Number Two meant “government.” The government sent us.

DAD: Really. Federal, Provincial, Regional, City, town, or village?

#1: Yes. And you could be in a lot of trouble.

#2: Yes--trouble.

DAD: Because it has been a slow year?

#1: (pause) Yes, Mr. Toymaker. (pronounced “Tom-aker”)  
You see, Mr. Tom-aker, it is Tom-aker, isn't it?

DAD: Close enough.

#1: We've, um, been meaning to ask you about your year, and well, if you had our help, perhaps your year would improve.

#2: I am most certain that it would, Mr. Tom-aker.

DAD: And just how would you go about that? May I see your identification, please?

#1: Oh, you can trust us, Mr. Tom-aker. We're on your side.

#2: Your side, Mr. Tom-aker.

DAD: None the less, could I see it, please, or I will have to insist that you leave.

#1: I wouldn't do that if I were you, Mr. Tom-aker. We are here to help you, you see.

DAD: Please leave, now, or I will have to phone and report you.

#1: No, no, no, you do not want to do that. We are here to protect you, Mr. Tom-aker.

DAD: What is your name?

#1: My name is Mr. Smith.

DAD: (doubtful) Yes, and yours?

#2: My name is Mr. Smith also.

DAD: Interesting. (opens the door) Mr. Smith, Mr. Smith, would you please leave now.

#2: (closes the door, and Dad cannot stop him) No, no, no, Mr. Tom-aker. Mr. Smith and I are your friends.

(LAURA enters through the front door.)

LAURA: Oh, I beg your pardon. Am I interrupting?

#2: Polite little girl.

LAURA: I'm not little.



DAD: Laura, don't ask any questions just get back out there and catch the bus. Now.

LAURA: But I already missed the bus—I was hoping you could give me a ride to school? (she winks knowingly)

DAD: (gets it) Oh, all right. Sorry, gentlemen, but I have to go. Make yourselves at home. I'll be back—oh, maybe by the end of the month.

(DAD and LAURA go out swiftly before the TWO MEN can make a move.)

DAD: (whispers OFF) Thanks, honey.

LAURA: (whispers OFF) You betcha, Pop.

DAD: (normal voice OFF) Did you get your mom a Christmas present yet?

LAURA: (OFF) Dad!

(The TWO MEN look around, check his writing notes.)

#2: Look at this, Number One. He has written down our whole conversation. How did he do that? Did you see him writing?

#1: (checks the notes) No I did not. But it is obvious he knows more than he lets on. It's as though he knew we were coming.

#2: (ominously) And what we would say? [LIGHTS GRADUALLY DIM]

#1: Check around the rest of the place carefully, maybe there is something we missed. The Company will want to know everything.

(They check the materials on the work counter. When they get close to the big box, the top springs open causing the cloth on it to go flying. JACK pops up wobbling to and fro and scares them. They both pull their hand guns and aim them at JACK. JACK simply bobs back and forth in an eerie rhythm, his face frozen in a menacing grin, like a deadly jester.)

#2: This place is really creeping me out, and I don't like the looks of that candle one little bit.

#1: Yes, let's go. (to no one) But count on it, Mr. Tom-aker, you have not seen the last of Mr. and Mr. Smith.

(They go. LIGHTS FADE EXCEPT -- Behind a scrim at the back of part of the set, DAD [Toym] is silhouetted. His body moves ever so slightly as his voice is heard over SPEAKERS.)

TOYM: (VOICE OVER) That was the last time I saw Laura. Blow out your candle, Laura, and so goodbye.\* [TOYM'S LIGHT FADES OUT]

(The CANDLE flickers OUT by itself [trick wick].)

e n d   s c e n e   t w o

\*taken from the end of "Glass Menagerie" by Tennessee Williams

### S C E N E   3

(The big box is closed, [Jack gone]. Flowers sit on top of it. Stage empty. Candle stays out. SISTER ONE and SISTER TWO ENTER from RIGHT, go to the radio and fuss over which channel to choose. We hear RADIO NOISE, AND SWITCHING of stations (some Christmas music) in the background, finally they agree not to listen at all and turn it off as—

[OPTION: The SISTERS may be played by SASSY and TRASHY].)

SIS 1        He didn't show. I waited 30 minutes. 30 freaking minutes!

SIS 2        I told you he wouldn't.

SIS 1        What!

SIS 2        He doesn't really care. He never calls.

SIS 1        That's not true.

SIS 2            Doesn't care.

SIS 1            Shut up. Toym, get in here and settle this!

(BRO, an actor about 18, or TOYM with young neutral mask, ENTERS RIGHT also. He wears an apron and dries a plate with a dish towel.)

TOYM AS BRO: What!

SIS 1            Hey, big brother, Jack calls me all the time, doesn't he?

BRO:            Yeah! Every time anyone else wants to use the phone!

SIS 1:           (to Sis 2) See!

SIS 2:           That doesn't prove anything. Toym get out of here! (TOYM exits)

(The two girls sit at the table)

SIS 1:           Jack is going to enlist, you know.

SIS 2:           (worried) What?

SIS 1:           He wants to get to Afghanistan before it's all over. He'll be 18 this month.

SIS 2:           What! He never told me! (gasps)

SIS 1:           (pause, in shock) Oh, you—you—you—bit—you. You are seeing him aren't you? My own sister.

SIS 2:           Don't be ridiculous.

SIS 1:           The s.o.b. I'll—I'll—how long has this been going on?

SIS 2:           I just meant he is my friend too, and he didn't tell me!

SIS 1:           That isn't the vibe I am getting, sister dear. That's why you're so jealous of the phone calls because you can't talk to him around here because I would have found out. I'll kill him before he gets to Afghanistan!

SIS 2:           That's terrible.

SIS 1:           So!

SIS 2:           If he didn't tell me he was joining up, then I can't mean very much to him, can I?

SIS 1: So you are seeing him!

SIS 2: I'm just saying.

(BRO ENTERS from right drying a glass.)

BRO: What's this about Afghanistan?

SIS 1&2: (simultaneously) Jack wants to go.

BRO: Me too.

SIS 1&2: (simultaneously) No!

BRO: Yeah, shoot me some rag heads. Just kidding. No, I really want to serve, you know.

SIS 2: Don't kid about that.

BRO: (joins them at table) I'm not. Jack and I are going to enlist together—who knows, maybe we can get into the same unit.

SIS 1: Are you crazy? You, Toym Toymaker (pronounced Tom-aker), my big brother is going to enlist? I thought you wanted to make toys like Grandpa did.

BRO: Later for that. You didn't sound like you objected to Jack going?

SIS 1: Well, I don't want him to go but accept his decision.

BRO: Accept mine then.

(KNOCK at the door)

SIS 1&2&BRO: (simultaneously) We're closed.

JACK: (OFF) It's me—Jack.

(JACK BOX has slipped out of the back of his box and through a hidden panel in the back wall behind his box. He wears casual teen clothing.) [OPTION: If TOYM is wearing a neutral mask then so should Jack.]

SIS 1&2 (simultaneously) Jack!

BRO: (opens the door) Come on in, Bro.

JACK: Hi, girls, what's up?

SIS 1: (simultaneously with Sis 2's next line) Have you been seeing my sister!

SIS 2: (simultaneously with Sis 1's line above) Are you really going to enlist!

JACK: (laughs) Yes and yes. You're both just so great. (to Sis 1) Sorry, I couldn't tell you, Sally, you know.

SIS 1: Ohhhh!

JACK: (to Sis 2) I couldn't tell you about the military until now because I knew you'd kill me.

SIS 2: Ohhhh!

SIS 1: (to Bro) You knew this all along, didn't you?

BRO: What! I have eyes.

SIS 1&2: (simultaneously) Ohhhhh!

JACK: (to Sis 2) Aren't you going to try to talk me out of it?

SIS 2: Would it make any difference?

JACK: Well, it would show you care, but no, my mind's made up.

SIS 2: It is not going to be what you think it is.

JACK: Oh, like you would know.

SIS 2: That's not fair. You know what I mean.

JACK: It's not something you would understand, you're a girl.

SIS 2: Oh!

SIS 1: This is driving me crazy. You now what, you better not have made it with my sister!

SIS 2: Sally!

BRO: Whoa!

SIS 1: Yeah, whoa! Because I'm pregnant!

(Jaws drop)

BRO: Too much information.

SIS 2: No we didn't! Oh, my word! You're—

JACK: But you can't be. I—

SIS 1: Well, it didn't work.

(They all look from one to the other, lost for the moment, eyes shifting back and forth like in a murder mystery—suddenly--)

SIS 1: (CONTD.) What! I wasn't going to have it!

BLACK OUT

e n d s c e n e 3

#### S C E N E 4 (INTERLUDE)

(The stage remains dark, soft sweet music plays)

TOYM: (VOICE OVER ON SPEAKERS as old man, clears his throat, then-) I didn't go to Afghanistan after all. Jack did.

(JACK is silhouetted in dim red behind scrim)

TOYM: (CONTD. VOICE OVER) I stayed with Sally. Her sister and I insisted that she have the child. I agreed to raise it on my own, and I hoped that Jack would return to her one day. Jack didn't return.

(JACK fades away in the dim red light)

TOYM: (CONTD. VOICE OVER) He was killed by a roadside bomb. (PAUSE) We named his little girl Laura. (PAUSE)

(A DIM POOL OF LIGHT REVEALS the OLD TOY MAKER at his table writing--)

TOYM: (still VOICE OVER as he writes) I became a toy maker. (pause)  
Just as my grandpa had been before me.

e n d s c e n e 4

## S C E N E 5 (POST INTERLUDE)

(TOYM puts on his half mask as DAD, or the younger actor for Dad slowly takes his place in view of the audience, and the OLD TOYM fades into the darkness.

STAGE LIGHTS FADE UP revealing MOM, who must be played by BRASSY [no option and no mask no matter what].)

DAD: (pounds on the table and rises) You are only her step mom!

MOM: You are only her uncle!

DAD: Well, uncle counts more than step mom.

MOM: It doesn't matter. I became her mom in her eyes.

DAD: And I became her father long before you came along.

MOM: You were only ever her uncle. Look, Toym, she wants to go sailing around the world as much as I do.

DAD: Yeah, with her step dad and her step mom!

MOM: You mean her other step dad?

DAD: That's not funny. I mean she should stay here with me because I am her real family.

MOM: And I'm not?

DAD: I'm her blood. And I say she stays!

MOM: She doesn't care about your blood. What has blood meant to her her whole life? Her own mother gave her up. He father left her with you and got himself killed in a pointless war.

DAD: Don't talk like that! It wasn't pointless. He loved her.

MOM: How do you know that!

DAD: I just know. He'd want her to stay with me.

MOM: It's only a sailing trip. You'll see her again.

DAD: (livid) It is a two year freaking sailing trip, and you know that, and you know how much I will miss her. You were my wife once. You know how much I care about her!

MOM: (she waits for him to calm down) I've always respected that, but "because I was your wife," I have equal claim to her, and I don't want to not see her for two years either, for your information.

DAD: Yes, but I'm not the one changing the status quo here. You are. I'm not going anywhere.

MOM: You can say that again.

DAD: Oh, that was low, even for you. You divorced me; so you could marry your freaking psychiatrist, and I'm supposed to feel bad because I am a loser.

MOM: No, no, I didn't mean it like that.

DAD: No? What else could it possibly mean?

MOM: It just slipped out. I don't know what I meant. You never go anywhere, that's all. Our lovely Laura wants to go on this sailing trip because she's young and spirited. She will learn so much, Toym, Let her go.

DAD: She is too young. She's 15.

MOM: Nearly 16, Toym. And adventuresome and curious, and you need to let her go.

DAD: I know what you mean, "let her go"—metaphor princess. I'm not ready to let her go yet. She is too precious to me. I'll "let her go" when she is 18. How's that?

MOM: Oh, Toym, poor Toym. The trip is now. Phillip and I have been planning this trip for over three years. Everything is right for right now. Everything has come together for us finally. Now is the time, and now is Laura's time too. Don't make us go back to court over this.



DAD: Yeah, everything has come together—for you! It's like a perfect storm for me! And I'm smack dab in the middle of it. What do you mean "back to court"? Phil's a pirate. He stole my wife. (practically in tears) And now he wants to steal my little girl and go sailing on his stinking pirate ship. I dedicated my whole life to her, and I want to continue—

MOM: (coldly) That was always the problem with you, Toym. You're just too damned passionate for your own good. And now you're being selfish as well. The girl wants to go on the trip—let her go.

DAD: (hesitates) Selfish? Passionate?

MOM: (hands him a folded legal document) I knew you would be impossible about this. Here is the court order giving me permission to take her out of the province for a minimum of two years and a maximum of three years. Phillip asked me to try to reason with you one more time, but I told him it wouldn't do any good.

DAD: (lost, gripping the document) Permission—what? Permission from the court? But I wasn't represented.

MOM: Exactly, Toym, you failed to appear at all. You were so busy neglecting my lawyer—so set on never leaving your toy shop to emphasize the point that you have never taken Laura anywhere, I guess, that now you have made us stoop to this (points at document). Hell, Toym, I had to beg the judge not to charge you for contempt of court for not appearing when you had been subpoenaed. You were subpoenaed, remember?

(MOM watches him for a moment, feels pity for him as he crumbles into a chair and buries his head into his hands, his forearms shaking from stress, then she quietly, almost in tears herself, goes out the front door.

LIGHTS SLOWLY DIM. TOYM is left in a dim POOL OF LIGHT at the table, still shaking.)

DAD: (VOICE OVER ON SPEAKERS) Laura went sailing with her mom around the world and disappeared in a perfect storm.

(AS THE LIGHT FADES, the SCRIM in the back is lit in dim red again, but NO ONE is there.

THE SCRIM LIGHT FINALLY ALSO FADES.)

e n d s c e n e 5

S C E N E 6 [optional: not to be used in the children's version]

(We hear a STORM, and WAVES SPLASHING against a yacht. Out of the darkness LAURA carries a LANTERN through a door. [It provides the only light on the set except for occasional flashes of LIGHTING. The THUNDER is in sync with the LIGHTING. They are in the perfect storm.] LAURA and MOM (played by Doll and Brassy) sway with the severe pitch of the yacht. [It should look dream-like, surreal, slowed motion, but no real water should splash against the imaginary boat, but the actors should be wet and in rain gear and play downstage away from the walls. The table should be pushed to one side in the dark. One, at least, should have a sailor's rain hat with strap. MOM's arm is broken and in a sling. It hurts a lot.] LAURA wears a LIFE JACKET.)

LAURA: Mom? Mom?

MOM: Over here, honey.

LAURA: I can't find Phil.

MOM: (trying to be strong) I know. I know. Ouch.

LAURA: Is your arm worse?

MOM: No, no, yes, it hurts like hell. I only just broke it, you know. This storm came up so fast. I—(she stops speaking)

LAURA: I couldn't steer the yacht, Mom! I couldn't make it do anything! I almost flew off!

MOM: (Leaning on the table in the dark, still swaying and bobbing with the pitch) Stay down here like I told you! Don't you dare go up there

again! The engine is completely flooded. We are not sinking though. Get me a life jacket now!

(LAURA goes to one door in the dark, reaches in as though it were a closet of some sort and pulls out 2 life jackets. They shout between thunder claps.)

LAURA: Just in case, right?

MOM: Put it on me, damn it!

LAURA: Just in case, right! (she holds up the other life jacket)

MOM: (holding back tears) He is not going to need it, Laura! He is not going to need it!

LAURA: Dad was right! We shouldn't have come!

MOM: Your uncle doesn't know a thing about sailing! This is just bad luck, very bad—(she can't talk anymore, she is too choked up)

LAURA: He is my Dad!

MOM: (takes her in her arms, Laura holds onto her too) I know! I know! We checked! We double checked and checked again! What, is this storm the tower of Babel come to haunt me? We took on too much! We dared too much! Your father was right! Your father was right, damn him! I should—(she stops in total fear at what she sees before her--) Oh my God!

(LAURA SCREAMS as she sees the wave coming at them. They clutch each other tightly, the lantern held near their faces. Their eyes and heads move up in unison, slowly watching, going to the top of the proscenium arch. The LANTERN goes out. BOTH women SCREAM. A tumultuous ROAR of water drowns them out . . . then SILENCE.)

e n d s c e n e 6

## SCENE 7

(The box remains in its spot at the back, and the table is still against the wall.

TOYM is asleep at the table [still by the wall], alone, suddenly he jerks and gasps for air. He has a German accent again.)

TOYM: Boy that had to be the worst nightmare yet. I was my ex-wife! Und I had broken arm, (his arm hurts and he rubs it) Oh Boy, you know for darn toot'n that is not what she would have said. How do I know what happened anyway? Nobody was there. I mean it was just bad weather, ja? (pause) Perfect bad weather. (pause)

(He starts to light the candle but stops, goes to the door, waits. Pause. Then knocking. He opens it.)

TOYM: (CONTD.) You're late.

(FOUR LITTLE GIRLS, played by the same actors who play Brassy, Sassy, Trashy, and Princess [Doll]. They walk on their [knee-padded] knees to appear shorter. They wear big pouf dresses that touch the floor and hide their calves and feet. They carry masquerade masks on sticks.

They form a line, then simultaneously don their masks.)

ALL FOUR  
LITTLE GIRLS:

Good morning, Uncle. We promise we will be good. (they smile sweetly and "curtsy")

(Then they lower the masks. Their faces contort into sinister little grins, and they scurry to different toys around the shop and start handling them.)

TOYM  
AS UNCLE:

(mumbling to himself) I don't have enough to do without baby-sitting my two dear sisters' children--while they go Christmas shopping? Why don't they shop here anyway? Hey, you, don't touch that! It is drying the glue there. Back off, you little wienersnitzel!

DOLL: (starts to cry) Ohhhhh.

UNCLE: It's all right, don't cry. Just stop doing that. (she twists in both hands) Don't make me come over there.

DOLL: (she cries louder) Ohhhh! (the other three also start to cry)

UNCLE: Now look what you have done. (they all cry louder, he rushes to DOLL and puts her mask before her eyes. (Instantly she stops crying, and so do the other "children") There, there, no need to be upset. Just think about the other guy a little bit once in a while—that's all I'm saying, you see.

DOLL: (the mask comes down a bit from her face, she thinks about crying—) Ohhh. (he quickly pushes it back up before her eyes, she stops)

UNCLE: At least try to put on a happy face, ja.

(The others don their masks and begin to sash shay around the room without touching anything.)

LITTLE  
BRASSY: Uncky Toym, why don't you ever take us anywhere?

UNCLE: I'm the baby sitter. I don't go anywhere. (getting a box from under a counter)

SASSY: Take us to the zoo today. Today, Uncky.

TRASHY: Are there little boys at the zoo?

DOLL: What is zoo?

UNCLE: A place you pay money to see living things in cages.

DOLL: Like little boys?

UNCLE. No, like big apes. Here is a box of toys you can play with. I'll be right back. I have a box of dress up clothes in the storage room left from Lau—never mind. I'll be right back. Behave yourselves. Touch anything that isn't in that box I just gave you—und it will explode. (he goes left)

(They set aside their masks)

DOLL: Is explode bad?

SASSY: (quoting an adult) Yes, so stay within the box.

BRASSY: (slyly) I think he said that to scare us.

TRASHY: (takes a guy doll out of the box, lovingly) A Ken doll. This box has everything.

SASSY: Does Uncle Toym make Ken dolls too, oh my!

BRASSY: I don't think he makes that stuff. Maybe someone left it.

DOLL: What's a Ken?

TRASHY: (holds it closely in front of her face) This is Ken.

DOLL: (starts to cry) He is so little.

SASSY: It is a toy, Angel, a toy.

DOLL: (keeps crying) He is so little.

BRASSY: (to Sassy) Tell your little sister to stop crying.

SASSY: Stop crying, Angel. (Doll cries louder) Now what?

BRASSY: (quoting an adult) Don't make me come over there, Angel.

DOLL: (trying to stop) Okay. Okay. Okay.

TRASHY: (looking out the window) It is dark so early in winter. How does Santa find everybody's place—it's so dark. Do you think Uncky will let me keep Ken?

BRASSY: No. What is so great about a Ken doll anyway?

TRASHY: Just wait till you grow up.

BRASSY: What did you say? Are you calling me a baby? I wouldn't call me that if I were you. (she grabs the doll and pops its head off) How do you like him now?

TRASHY & DOLL: (sob) Ohhhhh!

SASSY: What's the matter now?

DOLL: Now he is more little!

TRASHY: You asked for it! (she slaps Brassy)

BRASSY: (more angry than hurt) Ooooooooo! (they fight)

(The “baby cat-fight” is totally even, neither child getting much of an advantage over the other, mostly taking turns being on top after rolling around. SASSY cheers them on. DOLL cries and cheers alternately.

UNCLE ENTERS with a big box of clothes. Stomps his foot. The girls stop immediately. He says nothing about it, and the girls all rush to their masks and hold them up, all in sweet poses.)

UNCLE: You little girls like to play dress up, ja?

ALL FOUR: Ja!

UNCLE: (picks up Ken, puts Ken’s head back on and puts him back in the first box) Well, get busy then. I will go make us a snack. (as he goes right) Kids.

(During the dress up scene, the girls gradually come to their full height and grow into teenagers, their masks reverse. Option: their pouf dresses could fall as they rise to knee-length dresses.)

SASSY: Oh, look!

TRASHY: I like the pink one, no the red one, no the orange one.

BRASSY: That one is mine!

DOLL: Ouch! Watch it!

TRASHY: Oh, I will look like a queen.

SASSY: I get the fireman’s hat.

TRASHY: What’s that doing in here?

DOLL: I be Princess, princess, princess! Marry the Moon in the Man.

BRASSY: (smiles) Man in the Moon.

(They all pause and look at BRASSY who looks great dressed as a voluptuous movie star in a “mink” coat. They ooo and ahhh. She flutters her eye-lashes. They continue to dress

“into their teens”. The last thing in the box are four backpacks. As they turn their masks around to “their teen selves”, they all don lip stick, then they all slouch, and all their poses henceforth display bad posture, and an “attitude”. DOLL moves to the radio and turns it on low.)

SASSY: Like I mean, like, if you could have seen him, like, he goes (looks cool) then he says, you know, like whoa, you should have been there.

TRASHY: I know what you mean.

SASSY: You do?

TRASHY: Exactly.

BRASSY: Hey, Sara, give me a hand with the toys going to Good Will.

DOLL: Later. I want listen to some tunes. Why Uncle Toym can't get a new radio is beyond beyond.

BRASSY: It works. What more do you need?

SASSY: Like speakers maybe. (joins DOLL)

DOLL: Yeah, you can hardly hear this one, even up full blast.

BRASSY: Back it off a bit. You're making the speaker crack.

DOLL: Oh, is that what that is.

TRASHY: I'll help. Which ones?

BRASSY: The ones in those two boxes. (points to the toy box and the clothes box)

SASSY: (shouts off) Hey, Uncle Toym, we need a ride back!

UNCLE: (enters, buttoning up a different shirt) Your snacks are in your packbacks.

BRASSY: Backpacks.

UNCLE: That's what I said. Who's packing the donations?

BRASSY: (indicating TRASHY and herself) We are. (They each grab a box)



SASSY: Wait. Wait! I like like this one. Crank it up, little sister.

DOLL: I told you it is.

SASSY: Like try harder! (she cranks it—this time in the music blares a pop tune)

(UNCLE covers his ears. BRASSY and TRASHY put their boxes down and start to boogie. DOLL and SASSY are laying down some crazy moves over by the radio.)

UNCLE: What happened to my radio! Are you crazy! What did you do! For goodness sake, protect yourselves. Cover your ears!

BRASSY: Come on, Uncle. It is not so bad once you get used to it. (she gently uncovers his ears) See, it's got a cool beat.

UNCLE: (starts slowly to bob to music) It still hurts, but not as much.

TRASHY: (watching Uncle) Go that! (the girls discard their backpacks)

UNCLE: I don't know about this. It is kind of scary. (he starts getting into it)

(The MUSIC, on its own, GROWS even louder but transitions to some really funky ROCK JAZZ [without changing channels] like "Weapon of Choice", and UNCLE goes wild. At first none of the girls can dance to this, but BRASSY starts after a bit, kind of following UNCLE's lead. Then the others get into the groove. It has a big finish with all facing front, arms outstretched in a fantastic Broadway colossal stretch. Then the radio blows a tube, on the last crashing tag note—Bam! The room is silent and all the characters move sheepishly back to where they were at the beginning of the dance, don their backpacks [again] and ready themselves to depart. UNCLE just stares at the floor, breathless, and waits.

The LIGHTS DIM. The four girls drift off stage each going a separate way. Doors open for them, automatically, and close "by themselves". DOLL glides through the audience, right through the "proscenium", while UNCLE slowly sits at his table, tries to light the

candle, but it will not light, then resignedly  
SIGHS, lays his head on the table and sleeps.

LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE, faint CLASSICAL  
MUSIC (Bach) is heard in the distance, and  
remains under throughout the intermission.)

e n d   s c e n e   7

INTERMISSION

## S C E N E   8

Table is near center. Jack's Box is in its corner. TOYM (the old guy) is asleep at the table. He wakes and takes in his surroundings. Lights the CANDLE. Shivers, rubs his hands together near the candle light.

(The FOUR TEEN-AGE GIRLS enter in the reverse way they left, drifting backwards, the DOORS OPENING and CLOSING "magically by themselves." They do not wear backpacks. The radio is off.

Once in position, everyone holds in neutral character, then BRASSY breaks the hold by crossing to the candle and blowing it out. Everyone resumes character.)

BRASSY:     There is such a thing as electricity, Uncle. And another thing, we could use a little heat in here.

TOYM:        (relights the candle, German accent) There is your heat, sweetheart.

SASSY:        She is right. Like if we had electricity maybe it wouldn't be so boring here.

TOYM:        What's boring is your parents leaving you with me when you are old enough to have jobs, that's what "ist" boring is.

SASSY:        Why do you still talk like you are from the old country?

TOYM: Doesn't everybody? (Brassy chuckles)

TRASHY: (to Sassy) We have electricity, stupid. He just likes the candle. He can talk any way he wants to.

SASSY: Then where is like the t v? Where is the computer? Where's his cell? How can he live like this? Pfffft. You don't even have like an old phone with like a wire going somewhere. Pfffft.

TOYM: Happy New Year! That is precisely why you are here! Your cell was taken away! You were grounded for broadcasting over that internet thingy, you are so fond of, against one of your teachers, poor soul. You get no parties, no phone, (to Trashy) no boys, (to Doll) no trouble. Your parents are out enjoying themselves. And you are here because I never go out and because (to Sassy) I don't have "electricity"—well, of course, I have electricity, you nincompoop, but no electricity driven gadgets that ruin people's lives. (raises a bowl from the counter) Chips anyone?

SASSY: Did you just call me a nincompoop?

TOYM: Ja, das ist correct.(hands her a phone from behind the counter) Here, call 911.

SASSY: Oh, you stupid old man—I didn't know you had a phone. You said you didn't have a phone. Give me that. (grabs the phone, its cord dangles loosely) What! This is like a play phone—like it's dead and everything. There's not even like a tone. You—you—like--

TOYM: Stupid old man.

SASSY: That's right!

BRASSY: Shut up, will you, it was just a joke. (smiles at TOYM) And a good one!

TOYM: (two thumbs up) Bonus.

DOLL: I don't think that's funny. Don't tell my sister to shut up. (to BRASSY) You shut up!

TRASHY: Hey, watch it there, cousin, or I'll have your guts for garters.

TOYM: Where on earth did you ever here that expression?

TRASHY: From you, Uncle.

TOYM: Well, I was not serious. It's a limey expression anyway. Not much use.

SASSY: That's horrible. You're horrible.

TOYM: Everything I say is horrible, but everything you say does not stink.

SASSY: What! What! I said "what"!

TOYM: (looks puzzled) What?

SASSY: You know what! I'm telling, I'm telling, I'm telling you I'm telling.

BRASSY: (raises play phone) 911.

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SASSY: Ohhhh!

TRASHY: Who are you going to tell? The principal? You are so lame.

SASSY: I'm telling mommy.

DOLL: Yeah, me too, our mommy.

BRASSY: Your mommy put you here.

DOLL: I can still tell her.

TOYM: I'm sorry. I should not tease. Sassy, you are not a nincompoop.  
(pause) I am a nincompoop.

SASSY: (pause) Okay.

TOYM: (pause, everyone takes a deep breath) Who wants to be in a play?

DOLL: I love being in plays. I do. I do.

SASSY: Like what sort of play?

BRASSY: I'm in.

TRASHY: What do we do?

TOYM: The play is called "The Dream Play", and you all already know your lines.

SASSY: We do?

TOYM: Ja, that was your line. Very good. (changes to French accent)  
Now, I get to use a sort of French, maybe French Canadian accent,  
I'm not sure.

SASSY: What if I say something that is wrong?

TOYM: You will not. You cannot. The audience will be that direction,  
okay? Open up. Play to the audience.

SASSY: Like this?

TOYM: Oui, like that. You will be the Queen of the Nile. (Sassy grins  
happily)

BRASSY: Who am I?

TOYM: You are the wild hunter from Connecticut. You are crazy and  
gallant. You have élan.

BRASSY: What's that?

TOYM: "Élan" is French for something with commitment, with style,  
revolutionary verve or something Napoleonic—I'm not sure, but you  
can do it.

TRASHY: What am I?

TOYM: His young voluptuous lover?

TRASHY: Uncle!

TOYM: You were made for it. Trust me.

BRASSY: (chuckles) This isn't going to be the European version or anything  
like that?

TOYM: No, no, no, this is a play, not a film. It's not French anyway. It is  
just that the director has a French accent. Don't worry. You will  
retain your innocence.

TRASHY: (chuckles, then in a French accent) She is not so innocent.

BRASSY: Ohh!

TRASHY: (Canadian accent) Can I have a French accent, please can I have a French accent?

TOYM: Obviously, you felt the part right away. Of course, knock yourself out.

BRASSY: What do I have to sound like?

TOYM: Masculine. People from Connecticut have no accent. It is like being from a city in Saskatchewan. No one can guess where you are from.

TRASHY: (lowers her voice a lot) Okay.

DOLL: (pouts) What about me?

TOYM: You, ma chere, will be The Princess, of course.

DOLL : What is my name? What is my name?

TOYM : Laura. Princess Laura.

(Pause: they all turn away from the audience, when they turn back they are in their new characters)

TOYM: (as the director/detective, still French Canadian accent) The body was found over there.

BRASSY: (low voice) But inspector, the body moved by itself after it was dead. How could it really be dead?

TOYM: I will get back to you. Queen of the Nile, where were you last night?

SASSY: (makes up her own mixed accent) I was asleep in the room next to Princess Laura's room. The same as every night. (sadly) Alone, Inspector Pierrot.

TOYM: (whispers) I am French or French Canadian, not a Belgian.

SASSY: Alone, Inspector Clouseau.

DOLL: (French accent, like Clouseau's) I was in my room also. Alone.

TOYM: (loses his accent for a line) In your what?

DOLL: My room. My room.

BRASSY: (low) Something is amiss.

TOYM: I know. I know, but what? Improvise.

BRASSY: (whispers) You are supposed to say “room” like Clouseau, not Angel.

TOYM: I know. I know. Shhhhhh. Improvise.

TRASHY: (whispers) I haven’t even been introduced yet.

TOYM: Let me introduce, the lover, who’s name I forget.

TRASHY: (very French) Lola. I am Lola Marie Colbert, but call me Lola, s’il vous plait. It is true I was with the body, I mean, the deceased, the night before he died. All night. And all I have to say is that he was alive then.

BRASSY: (low voice) You couldn’t have been because I was with him all night—hunting.

DOLL: (very French also, the acting becomes very intense and “real”) Then it must have been a hunting accident. Did you shoot him in the face?

BRASSY: No, no, it was not I. He was already dead when I shot him. It was an accident, but he was already dead.

DOLL: Then it must have been a hunting accident.

BRASSY: (whispers in great distress) You already said that, nit.

DOLL: (she produces a realistic looking hand gun from behind the counter) All right, I confess, but you will never take me alive. I Princess Laura will go away and disappear in a perfect storm. You can’t stop me, Inspector.

(TOYM GASPS then stands confused and does not say anything.)

BRASSY: No, my love. Don’t try to take the blame for me. (she tries to wrestle the gun free).

TRASHY: No, I killed him. I hated him really, you see. He told me last night that he loved another, the Queen of the Nile. He thought it was the

name of a yacht, but later he learned to love her. He deceived me. He used me. Give me that gun. I want to shoot something. (the three wrestle for the gun)

SASSY: I knew I was innocent. Give me that gun. I want to kill myself. My love is gone, and I want to join him! (all four wrestle for the gun).

(The sequence begins again, very realistic acting, not stylized at all)

DOLL: All right, I confess, but you will never take me alive.

BRASSY: No, my love. Don't try to take the blame for me. (wrestles for gun)

TRASHY: No, I killed him. I hated him really, you see. He told me last night—

SASSY: I knew I was innocent. Give me that gun. I want to kill myself and join him!

(TOYM stands frozen in a silent scream)

DOLL: All right I confess and disappear in a perfect storm.

BRASSY: No, my love!

TRASHY: (desperately) I want to shoot something!

SASSY: (crying) I knew I was innocent.

(The gun FIRES ONCE: the characters freeze in mid air as they EACH reach for fatal wound. TOYM'S frozen silent scream takes an even more grotesque shape. The LIGHTS DIM except for a pool of Light on the table)

DOLL: (casually sits at the table facing the audience, the rest hold, her own accent) In the middle of his play within his dream, Toym recognizes the process and is puzzled over the reality of it. How can he possibly have memorized the lines of the play if he is only just dreaming the "play" for the first time? If a tree falls in the middle of his dream, does anyone hear it? Harder still, how did he know everyone's lines? Even harder still, what if there is a repeat performance within the dream, a second night let down? How could his brain possibly remember the lines the way he had dreamed them the first time?



BRASSY: (maintains her frozen position, a voice from the dull light, spoken slowly, rhythmically) When he comes to a fault, a missed line, a missed cue in a dream, does he skip a part or improvise?

(Painfully all the characters, except DOLL, in unison change to another distorted shape, some holding wounds, and freeze again.)

DOLL: I am Laura, and I disappear in a perfect dream, (pause) or was it a perfect storm?

(All painfully change shape, but their feet stay planted. DOLL'S LIGHT IS DIMMED as she too painfully poses, face in the dark.)

SASSY: (a litany) What if there is a series of faults?

DOLL: Then he is forced to improvise--he cannot just skip--in order to make it make sense. After all, there must be an audience if indeed it is a "performance" in a dream.

TRASHY: (wistfully like a dark angel) And that necessity to make it make sense makes the dream an unbearable nightmare.

DOLL: A conflict of interests to be sure.

BRASSY: The subconscious running rough shod over itself.

DOLL: Like layers of the same story competing to BE the story.

SASSY: It is a fundamental struggle for dominance of control of one's own mind.

DOLL: --by different layers of that mind. At first dependent on the accuracy of repetition, then next, dependent on the accuracy of the improvisation within the framework of the play, the invention of the mind during the dark hours of sleep, or the mind's dark hours.

TRASHY (wistfully like a dark angel) A total nightmare. A total nightmare.

DOLL: A conflict of interests to be sure. (relaxes her pose, her LIGHT increases)

BRASSY/SASSY/TRASHY: (WHISPER LOUDLY IN UNISON) Then it gets worse!

DOLL: (accelerates tempo and increases intensity to end, almost shouting)  
Someone else, another character in the play, forgets his or her line or says it incorrectly; so you automatically improvise the scene to make it work, but on one level you realize while you are dreaming that all of the lines spoken by all of the characters are only memorized by you because you are the only one making up this crap! In fact, you are every freaking character! And you think, "How freaking long can I keep this up?" That's when you wake up screaming, my friend!

(HER LIGHT SNAPS OFF, TOYM'S UP.  
His face is forward and up distorted in pain, mouth wide!)

FADE TO BLACK

e n d s c e n e 8

## SCENE 9

(TOYM is in a pile on the floor where he had been standing previously. The others are gone. The rest of the scene is unchanged. He is crying, his face buried into the floor.

JACK, as a teenager, not as a jester, steps out of the Jack-in-the-box's box and goes to TOYM's side.)

JACK: Toym . . . Tom-aker? Toym?

BRO: (Toym when he was younger) Jack? Jack is that you? Where are you?

JACK: Right here, Toym. Right here. How's my little girl, Toym? How's Laura?

BRO: (rises) Well, wherever you are, do you want to sit down?

JACK: It's okay, Toym. I have nothing to sit on.

BRO: Right here at the table, man. There's a chair, not too comfortable, there.

JACK: No, I mean, I don't have anything to sit on.

BRO: Oh, I see. I mean. Okay—whatever.

JACK: So how has she been? I am glad you made Sally have her.

BRO: Yeah, that part wasn't easy. (Occasionally directs remarks to where "he thinks" Jack is standing, often missing)

JACK: Well?

BRO: I'm going to get married, Jack. Nice girl, Janelle Jette, French. Cute.

JACK: That is great, Toym. So how is Laura?

BRO: Great. She talks and everything. She spoke in paragraphs before she said anything at all. She took so long to talk we thought she was, you know, but turns out she is smarter than all of us.

JACK: Yeah, slow isn't necessarily bad, it is just slow. I learned that in the military. Does she look like me?

BRO: No, she looks like me. Of course she looks like you, and she looks like Sally, which is what bothers me. I marry Janelle. The kid grows up looking like Sally and someone she doesn't even know.

JACK: She has to look a bit like you. You're her uncle.

BRO: (smiles) Yeah, she's cool. But I can see already that Sally is starting to realize she was wrong to give her up, and now I'm giving her a new mom sort of. You know what I mean?

JACK: Yeah, I know.

BRO: I mean, isn't she going to want to know who her real mom is? And what if Sally has more kids? She's married now, you know. Nice guy—Bob.

JACK: No, I didn't know.

BRO: Well, the thing is I couldn't give her back, you know.

JACK: I wouldn't want you to, Toym. You will know what is right, and you will do it, maybe even Sally will know, who knows? Maybe Janelle will know.

BRO: I already know she will want to be her mom forever. Janelle can't have kids.

JACK: Oh.

BRO: Yeah, she loves kids. I get the feeling she is planning a pow-wow with Sally before the marriage to get that all cleared up, about Laura, you know.

JACK: You're okay not having any more kids?

BRO: Well, no, not really, but I fell for Janelle, and well, what am I suppose to do --unfall?

JACK: Take me to Laura. Let me see her, okay, pal?

BRO: Oh, sorry, yeah, you got it. What was I thinking? This way, dude. Where the hell are you?

JACK: I'm right here, Toym. I'm right here.

BRO: This way. (he points off left, they start) LIGHTS FADE

e n d s c e n e 9

## S C E N E 10

(MOM [played by Brassy] is seated at the table reading a report card on Laura. The stage is set the same as previously.)

MOM: (shouts off) Yeah, this report card is great. She really cleaned up this time.

DAD: (Toym at 38ish enters wrapped in a towel, drying his hair with another) Yeah, I was really impressed. When I was in--

MOM: "High school I never did that well".

DAD: Yeah, that's right. I guess I say that every time, eh?

MOM: Every time.

DAD: Hey, how was your last session with your psychiatrist friend?

MOM: Stop being jealous. He's not my friend. He's my doctor.

DAD: I'm not jealous. He is an ass.

MOM: I can tell by your tone, and the fact that you think he is an ass. He is my psychiatrist, that's all. You just get dressed.

DAD: Why, you expecting somebody? It's my birthday. Laura is on a school trip to Vancouver. We're home alone for a change. Did I say it was my birthday?

MOM: (smiles) Yeah. (nervously looks out the window) You never know though. Our home is a toy shop too, yes?

DAD: You put the closed sign up, didn't you?

MOM: I'm sure I did, but you know, perhaps I should check. (There is a KNOCKING at the door) Oh, Toym, I forgot, I left something on the stove. Could you get that, please?

DAD: Is something wrong?

MOM: No, no, I just left something. (she hurriedly brushes passed him, goes right)

DAD: Something is wrong. I'm standing here in towels, and I'm supposed to answer the door. Holy man! (He hides behind door and opens it a crack—a hand slides a document through the door into his hand.)

(Then TWO MEN in Sheriffs' uniforms push their way into the shop [OPTION:played by Mr.& Mr. Smith].)

SHERIFF 1: Are you Toym Tom-aker?

DAD: Yes, I am, but you have caught me at an awkward moment.

SHERIFF 2: Then you have been served, sir.

DAD: Excuse me, served what? Is there some problem? If you wait a moment, I will get dressed and come right back.

SHERIFF 1: That won't be necessary. It is our duty to inform you, however, that you are evicted from your home at this very moment. You have two hours in which to collect your belongings, and if you remain here after two hours, it will be our duty, as we are charged, to arrest you and escort you to the court house holding jail.

DAD: There must be some mistake.

SHERIFF 2: It is all there in the document, Mr. Toym-aker.

DAD: (calls off) Janrelle! Honey, would you come here!

SHERIFF 1: I don't believe she can hear you, Mr. Toym-aker.

DAD: Don't be ridiculous. I really must ask you "gentlemen" to leave.

SHERIFF 2: I don't think you realize the gravity of your situation. It is an official order. We are the deputies assigned to this task. You are the one who is going to have to be out of here in two hours or be forcibly removed.

SHEFIFF 1: Don't make this any more unpleasant than you already have, Mr. Toym-aker.

DAD: Me? Get out of my house! (Calls off) Janelle! Janelle! Just wait. (he storms off right) Janelle! Janelle? Where . . . Janelle? (he returns) She is not there.

SHERIFF 2: Of course not, Mr. Tom-aker. She believes herself to be in peril. We advised her earlier, as did her lawyer, to leave the premises as soon as we arrived to deliver the court order. We informed her of our estimated time of arrival so that she would be prepared.

SHERIFF 1: In these matters, it is the safety of the plaintiff that is the first consideration. The court does not wish to be responsible for having the plaintiff victimized further.

DAD: (dizzy) Who is the victim here? (looks at document, starting to shake) What does exparte mean?

SHERIFF 1: I am not a lawyer, Mr. Toym-aker. You need to get yourself a lawyer.

DAD: What does exparte mean!

SHERIFF 2: That the order was written exparte—without your knowledge—without your presence. It's done to protect the plaintiff.

DAD: What!

SHERIFF 2: You were not represented by anyone. It's B.C. law. (Note: use your own location)

DAD: (confused) Without representation! I am ordered out of my house—on what grounds? What are you saying?

SHERIFF 1: (scornfully) Haven't you been listening! You are a danger to your wife and child, Mr. Toym-aker, and the court has ordered you to leave your home in order to protect them! Is that clear enough!

SHERIFF 2: You have two hours or it's jail!

SHERIFF 1: That's how the court sees it, pal!

DAD: But I'm not—Why, I was just talking playfully with my wife only moments ago—

SHERIFF 1: That's all we can say, Mr. Toym-aker.

DAD: (shaking furiously) But who believes I am dangerous!

SHERIFF 2: Get a hold of yourself, man.

SHERIFF 1: Your wife, Mr. Toym-aker! We told you your wife!

DAD: Why would she say I'm dangerous? Based on what? And why would they believe her if she did say that?

SHERIFF 2: Because your wife's psychiatrist says she is telling the truth. It's on page seven of your copy of the document, man.

SHERIFF 1: That's enough, Ralph! Shut it. Two hours, buddy. (they go)

DAD: (smashes his naked back up against the door) Her psychiatrist said it!

BLACK OUT

e n d s c e n e 9

S C E N E 11

(The scene begins with SASSY, TRASHY, as teenagers as before, but with no masks, instead they slowly alter their costumes and make-up as the scene progresses, often facing away from the audience, and transition into the “Brats Dolls”.)

SASSY: (like a poem, in cadence) I heard: he scared his wife--

TRASHY: (whispers contemptuously) And: had to leave his home.

SASSY: I heard: he caused his child to suck her thumb.

TRASHY: And wet her bed—ah-huh, and wet her bed. (chuckles)

SASSY: I heard: you never know what a man does--

TRASHY: (whispers seductively) In: the privacy of his own dark home.

SASSY: I heard: he raised his voice at the court.

TRASHY: (sinisterly tickled) So: the court agreed he was dangerous.

BRASSY: (Enters from front door as a “Brats Doll,” they stop and anticipate)  
I heard: the rumors and disgusting lies. I was: in the child’s hand in the court room.

TRASHY: (hisses but cautiously) She was 15: why would she carry you?

BRASSY: I was not always mean--she needed me. Her heart: it was nearly still and broken. She: never sucked her thumb--my dear friends. She: wet her bed only once--she was three. She knew: her uncle as her loving Dad. He was: passionate not abusive, my friends.  
[Cadence for all characters ends]



SASSY: Wait a minute, you hadn't even been made yet. How are coming up with all this stuff?

TRASHY: That's right. I am impressed, Sassy. How unlike you. You actually thought of something. (then to BRASSY) So what's the story, sister?

BRASSY: There is no story. I am making this up as I am going along. I mean, he is. Well, I mean, I am because he is me right now.

SASSY: What!

TRASHY: Ohhh-kay.

BRASSY: (involuntarily lowers her voice) Laura never knew how much her step-mom had lied. He never told her. But he did tell Laura repeatedly that his wife had abandoned him in order to marry her psychiatrist, and that his testimony got Toym thrown out of his own house, (shrugs), but he got back in when Phil and Janelle started to live on their yacht. He never got custody, but Laura spent half the time with him anyway, until that fatal trip.

SASSY: Where did he make his toys while he was thrown out?

BRASSY: I don't know. You think he tells me everything?

SASSY: Oh. (scratches her head, confused)

BRASSY: Are you guys ready yet? (as "Brats Dolls")

SASSY/TRASHY: Yeah. Let's do this.

(They face away a second, then spin in unison with a MUSICAL STING while the LIGHTS CROSSFADE TO TEMPORARILY SILHOUETTE THEM as they WHISPER LOUDLY " B r a t s ")

BRASSY: It's show time!

(LIGHTS FLUTTER, then DIM to LOW LEVEL as the three dolls creep around "spy-like" separately, checking here and there for snakes and such, casing the joint.)

TRASHY: I don't see any snakes or bats.

SASSY: Me neither.

BRASSY: Where's the fat dog?

SASSY/TRASHY: I don't know.

BRASSY: Open that door on your left.

SASSY: You open it. (gets a glare from Brassy) Okay!

(They carefully move to door left, prepared to duck and/or hop. They are too afraid. Pause. BRASSY determinedly goes to the door right, but holds up as she reaches for the knob. Pause. She looks at the other two BRATS.)

BRASSY: Where are our reinforcements? They should open these doors.

SASSY: Maybe they went to the wrong toyshop.

TRASHY: They could be lost, somewhere in town.

BRASSY: All three of them?

TRASHY: The streets are confusing, like in Victoria. They all have three names.

SASSY: (eagerly) I have three names.

(BRASSY glares at SASSY who presses her lips tightly together like she is sorry and will shut up, then BRASSY signals them to follow her, and they stealthily exit out the front door.

BIG DOG and BOB ENTER FROM RIGHT. BOB is whistling the theme from "The Magnificent Seven".)

BIG D: That was a great flick.

BOB: (follows him in, impressed) Toym said he has seen it seven times! Arg!

BIG D: Kurosawa is his favorite filmmaker. He is such a film buff, our Toym. He sees every film no matter what.

BOB: Hey, Jack, you missed a good one. It was like a western only better because they were seven samurai instead of cowboys. Nearly everyone dies. (savoring it) Arg.

JACK: (voice from within Jack's box) Seen it. The girls are back. You'd think people and creatures would check this box. I mean, if the box is here, like right here, where do they think I am? (he pops up) I heard everything they said, and frankly they aren't so bad.

BOB: Are you crazy--arg?

JACK: I don't know. It was weird, like Toym was inside Brassy's head or something, see. It was cool but bogus, you know what I mean?

BIG D: No. (pause) We'd better tell Toym. He and Princess went to the corner store for more popcorn. Well, where are the Brats?

JACK: They went that way, I think. It is hard to determine direction when you are in a box, eh. They went to hunt down their reinforcements.

BOB: What if they run into Toym and Princess, ah-oh arg.

BIG D: Did they say how many reinforcements?

JACK: Ah, yeah—only three.

BIG D: Yeah, but which three?

BOB: (to Big D) What do we do, Big D.? Arg.

BIG D: Let me think. Jack you didn't hear anyone else moving around or anything besides the three Brats?

JACK: I don't think so, though one of them sounded like she was trying to imitate Toym or a train conductor or something.

BIG D: Did they sound more reasonable or just as insane as ever?

JACK: First they sounded like Emily Dickinson or somebody, no more like Robert Frost, no more like—

BIG D: Jack!

JACK: Then after that they sounded just as stupid and mean as before. And they were sneak'n.

BOB: Arg. I better get my cutlass.

BIG D: First, Pirate Bob, run to the store and tell Toym. Go on--go.

BOB: Arg, I don't want to miss anything. (pouts) And I want to get my cutlass.

BIG D: Go!

BOB: Aye, aye, Capt'n. (he goes)

JACK: Big D, now we are outnumbered, even if it is only three more.

BIG D: Oh, cats, that's right. I better check the back door and make sure it is locked. (he heads off left)

JACK: Lock the front door too.

BIG D: (OFF left) Okay.

JACK: Oh, I'll try, maybe this time. (JACK tries to reach the front lock but his box prohibits him)

BIG D: (returns) Did you get the front lock?

JACK: I tried.

BIG D: (puts the closed sign out and locks the front door) All right then, Popular Pirate Bob will get his cutlass. What do you have?

JACK: To fight with? A broken spring maybe. I might be able to come up with a broken piece of spring.

BIG D: Good. I have nothing. What should I get?

JACK: I don't know. Grab a toy or something.

BIG D: Right. (he just stands there nervously figuring out what to do)

JACK: Grab a toy or something.

BIG D: I don't know what to grab. (They hear a sound and freeze--)

(They hear a LASER CUTTING SOUND and see a RED GLOW around the front door LOCK, then the lock falls to the floor. THE

FRONT DOOR SLOWLY OPENS BY ITSELF.  
They look toward it and take a deep breath and hold it.

Very slowly a large figure wearing a Darth Vader Helmet and dark robe steps into the door frame, no music, but there is a flash of light for the SILHOUETTE EFFECT, we hear heavy breathing through the mask [or over speakers]. He carries a light saber, "red" when it is on. Pause.)

JACK: (still holding his breath) You better get that toy.

(Now VADER'S MUSIC comes in very heavily as DARTH moves further into the room and takes another stance. Silence.)

BIG D: (trying to hold his breath) Can we get music like that?

(DARTH slowly turns toward BIG D and JACK; they freeze, like "dolls". He walks over to them and gives them the "once over". They remain still. He checks through the door left, then the door right, puzzled he returns to the front door, pauses.)

DARTH: Those three brats said they'd be here. Well, I don't see them. (he does the finger snapping "left right left" wave thing) If somebody calls on Darth to do a job for them, they had better be serious. This is really starting to tick me off. (He goes, but brushes by someone heading toward the door, partly off stage) Oh my word, you should do something with that hair.

(The TROLL [in mask] ENTERS, she/he has bright pink hair, a fat nose, puffy cheeks, protruding ears and a wide stupid grin. The TROLL drags a big heavy wooden gnarly club. [can be but does not have to be large]. Big D and Jack stay still.)

TROLL: (very low, butch voice, not too bright, speaks slowly. cockney accent) Hello. (goes to Big D and Jack) Hello. Are you the three brats? Hello?

JACK: (trying not to laugh) Dah! We are the two brats.

TROLL: "Dah", I was just going to say "dah" myself. (laughs stupidly) But you said it first, huh-huh. (suspiciously) Hey, you don't look like brats.

BIG D: We are not brats at all actually. Jack was just "toying" with you. We are two dolls--just like you.

TROLL: You wouldn't want to be just like me. (laughs) Huh-huh. I was looking for some dolls though. They wanted me to meet them here and club somebody.

BIG D: Well, there haven't been any dolls here today other than the two of us.

JAKC: Maybe you've got the wrong place, mate.

TROLL: No, I'd know if it was the wrong place. I have a wrong place sense.

BIG D: That dark gentleman that you passed by on your way in is also looking for three "Brats" dolls. Why don't you catch up to him and look for them together?

TROLL: All right, then. Thanks. (goes out mumbling) I wonder what he thinks is wrong with my hair?

JACK: Oh, that is just grand, Big D. Now, they will be together when they come back, stab and club us. Why didn't you send him some place else, you nit?

BIG D: It wouldn't have done any good. (serious) He has a "wrong place sense".

JACK: (understands) Oh.

(They hear SCRATCHING OF "RAZORS" ON THE FRONT DOOR and freeze—)

BIG D/JACK: (simultaneously whispering through their clenched teeth) What now?

(The door opens a crack, then a hand with razors protruding from the ends of the fingers comes around the edge of the door and drums the razors playfully on the door. Pause.)

FREDDY: (voice of Freddy Krueger from behind the door whispers horribly)  
I'm looking for three teen-age brats. Ring any bells? Ding-dong.  
(chuckles)

BIG D/JACK: (simultaneously whisper in fear) Freddy Krueger.

FREDDY: You must be dreaming. (laughs sinisterly from behind the door)

BIG D: (panicking to Jack, whispers) No, but someone is.

(FREDDY slips through the door, closes it slowly behind himself, leans up against the door. Wears A FREDDY MASK, horizontally striped dark shirt, dirty trousers and Freddy hat.)

FREDDY: (poses, extra long outstretched arm, if possible) How do you like these trade mark and copyright infringements?

JACK: (aghast, whispers) Who would make a Freddy Krueger doll!

FREDDY: Only the very lonely. Whispering doesn't help, you know. Well, where are my three teenage dolls? They were very specific, and I don't see them. Are you messing with me?

BIG D/JACK: (simultaneously) No!

FREDDY: I didn't think so.

BIG D: They are not here.

FREDDY: But they were here, weren't they?

BIG D: Ahhhhhhh—

FREDDY: I'll wait for them.

(They wait awkwardly. Freddy hums "Singing in the Rain".

The Three BRATS DOLLS ENTER, BIG D and JACK GASP.

DARTH and TROLL ENTER behind the girls. BIG D and Jack GASP again. FREDDY counters to the side.)

SASSY: (poses and whispers loudly) Brats.

BRASSY: There isn't time for that! Get out of the doorframe; so we can shut the door, you idiot. (Sassy almost cries and moves) Keep the closed sign up.

(BRASSY nods at TRASHY, and TRASHY shuts the door and looks disdainfully at SASSY and makes a noise at her like "Pfffft". SASSY almost cries again.)

BRASSY: (CONTD. to Jack and Big D) All right, you two, where is Grandpa and the Collectible?

BIG D: He is not really a grandpa. He has no grandchildren, only nieces.

BRASSY: You know what I mean, dog face. And where is Popular Pothead Bob?

JACK: Pirate Bob.

BRASSY: Whatever. (Pause.) Well, no more Mr. Nice Guy. You guys are going down. (to DARTH) You, Mister Vader, check out what's through those two doors. (to TROLL) You, Bad Hair Day, nail Jack into his box! (to FREDDY) Freddy, just Nail the Big Dog. (rubs her hands together) Put him in the furnace or something.

FREDDY: (grins) Go that.

(VADER checks door left first; he moves very masculinely.)

BIG D: I think you are being rash.

BRASSY: They don't call me Brassy for nothing. Get him out of here.

DARTH: (lowering his voice "trying" to sound more masculine) All clear in there, commander. But I sense they are somewhere on this planet.

BRASSY: (sarcastically) Good call, Darth. (then) Check through the other door.

(DARTH stealthily exits right. TROLL grabs some pegs off of a counter, swings his/her club at Jack. "Whoa" JACK SHOUTS and ducks into his box, then TROLL slams the lid down



and starts nailing it shut.)

TROLL: (chuckles) Huh-huh.

(FREDDY moves toward BIG D.)

BIG D: I already phoned 911. You don't want to—

BRASSY: He only has a play phone, Freddy. We checked.

FREDDY: (Hums the Nightmare on Elm Street nursery tune--) I bet you wish you weren't dreaming little doggy dreams now, eh, Big D?

BIG D: (backs into the left door, reaching for the door knob) If it was my dream, you'd be puppy chow, retard. You sure you want to dance with me?

FREDDY: I like you. You're funny. It is always more fun "to dance" with someone you really like, you know.

BIG D: (opening the door) I have pretty big sharp teeth, and a dinosaur bite. You sure you want to do this?

FREDDY: (wiggles his razors near Big D's face) Are they as sharp as these? (grins)

BIG D: Sharp this, charcoal breath! (he turns and runs through the left door)

(FREDDY follows after BIG D)

BRASSY: Don't let him get away!

(We hear NOISES OFF, banging, crashing, GROWLS [from both characters], a loud slam and silence—PAUSE.)

BRASSY; (CONTINUED, to Sassy and Trashy) Go see what happened.

SASSY: I'm not going in there! He scared me like when I thought he was just stuffing, remember?

TRASHY: I'll go if Troll goes.

BRASSY: Troll, go.

TROLL: (chuckles) Huh-huh.

(TRASHY and TROLL go off left.)

SASSY: Now, like we are they only, you know--you and me. What if like the old man and that “thinks she is a princess” come back?

BRASSY: Precisely. We can handle them.

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SASSY: (not sure) Sure. (pause) Like what about Pirate What’s His Face?

BRASSY: I think he won’t return. Who knows where he is. I think we scared him the first time.

(PIRATE BOB climbs over a flat that is part of one of the walls [hidden ladder backstage] and jumps into the room with his cutlass drawn.)

BOB: Arg! You’re scary, all right. I’ll give ye that, but I’m sworn to protect m’lady, and you’ll not be hav’n a good day today.

BRASSY: Perhaps I misjudged you.

BOB: Like that’s never happened before, arg.

SASSY: (pouts) No one ever came to my rescue.

BRASSY: When have you ever needed to be rescued?

SASSY: Well, there was like that little brat Sandra who pulled my left arm off once.

BOB: That’s noth’n. I had my left leg pulled off once.

SASSY: That’s no worse than an arm.

BOB: By a lawn mower! It was ugly, I tell ye, arg. I was sailing in a sea of grass when—

BRASSY: Shut up.

BOB: Arg.

BRASSY: Do you really think you can take us on alone?

BOB: You being only two little lasses I think I can breech the gap.

(DARTH ENTERS FROM THE RIGHT, and immediately draws his "light" saber.)

SASSY: (fingers to her chin in amazement) Oh my goodness, I'm being rescued.

DARTH: (normal high voice and lisp) Don't be ridiculous. This has nothing to do with you. I would take on this pirate any day. I like the cut of his jib.

BOB: (confused) Arg.

DARTH: (realizes he used the wrong voice, lowers it, can't stop the lisp though) What I meant was the force is not with you, you filthy pirate. Avast!

(They CLASH weapons, once, twice, parry, slash)

BRASSY: Wait! That may not be necessary.

(TRASHY and TROLL ENTER LEFT)

TRASHY: (seductively) Ah, Popular Pirate Bob. It has been a long time. I see you brought your cutlass. (smiles threateningly) Well, I've brought a troll.

TROLL: (chuckles) Huh-huh.

BOB: (thinking over his situation) Ohhhhhkay . . . ah . . . arg.

TRASHY: Neither Freddy Krueger or Big Dog is in there or the storeroom.

(FREDDY barges through the front door.  
BOB is now completely surrounded by six dolls.)

FREDDY: (perplexed) He out ran me--the beast. That has never happened before. But then I have never chased a really big dog before. (then realizes BOB is there and is very interested) Oh, is this another one of the dolls you want me to "take away" while he is in dreamland?

BRASSY: Yes, he is, but I think you don't have to be the only one. Your position seems pretty hopeless, don't you think, Mr. Lonely Pirate

Bob. It could go easier on you if you were to tell us where the old man and that prissy little collectible are hiding.

BOB: (gulps, then bravely) I don't know a thing.

TRASHY: (sexily) I think I can get him to talk.

BRASSY: There isn't time for that. Christmas is tomorrow. In fact, we are out of time, Bob, and that means **you** are out of time; so—

BIG D: (comes back through the left door behind Trashy and Troll who counter) No, you are out of time! (He holds a large yellow Smurf Bat in his paws.)

BRASSY: (laughs) You guys amaze me! What do you think you are going to do with that? I've got Vader, Kruger and Super Troll. And this is all you can bring to the table? What a bunch of losers.

(Then a RUMBLE from Jack's Box, a glow peeks through from a crack between the lid of his box and the box. It inches up a bit, shaking the box and lid, the glow getting stronger, until a LOUD SOUND OF POPPING "NAILS", and suddenly the lid POPS OPEN! JACK POPS UP right behind the lid, with a sinister Jester's grin, bobbing crazily left and right, with two scary looking, twisty, gnarly broken springs, one extending from each hand.)

JACK: Like the big dog said, "Let's dance!" (PAUSE, then--)

(All SIX of the "Bad Guys" laugh uproariously. They settle.)

BOB: I see you be laughing now, but ye who laughs last, last best, I be tell'n ye.

(The SIX laugh again and have trouble stopping, each one giggling off the energy of another, each causing the other to start laughing again, recalling the situation, or just because, like at a pajama party--while the three defenders stand perplexed.

Finally BRASSY stops laughing, and the laughter suddenly stops all at once, “like magic”.)

BRASSY: (deadly serious) All right boys and girls, now is the time to come to the aid of your party. The party is over. It’s my party, and you’ll cry if I want you to. Our agenda, boys and girls, kill the egotistical pirate, kill the fat dog, and kill that zealot jack-in-the-box! Do I make myself clear!

ALL 5 OF THE OTHER ATTACKERS: (like robots simultaneously) Roger, roger.

BOB: Zealot! Arg!

(VADER slashes at Bob. BOB parries and strikes at Brassy. BRASSY dodges and spin kicks Bob back against the wall while SASSY AND TRASHY battle with Jack.

They use their elongated finger nails [more than before if possible] while JACK deflects and lunges with his springs.)

JACK: Back off, you creepoids!

(Both TRASHY AND SASSY HISS at JACK.

TROLL and FREDDY move on BIG DOG, but BIG DOG’S first mighty swing with his Smurf bat catches both TROLL and FREDDY smack in the face [fake it please] and they go reeling across the room. But on their next move, FREDDY ducks under BIG DOG and up behind him putting him in a full nelson, razors behind DOG’s neck, while TROLL smashes DOG’s bat with his club until DOG loses it.

Meanwhile, BOB blocks a few strikes from DARTH and keeps his distance from BRASSY’s continued martial arts moves until he too finally loses his cutlass. BRASSY picks it up.

In the back, both SASSY and TRASHY take turns getting scratched by JACK’s springs.)

TRASHY: Ow, my beautiful face! Oh, you're in trouble now! (she scratches his face)

SASSY: Your face. Who cares about your face? What about my face! (she also scratches Jack)

(SASSY AND TRASHY then manage to pin JACK's arms back against the wall, and it looks like they both intend to bite JACK's neck to finish him off.

BRASSY and VADER force BOB to the floor and stand over him with his sword and VADER's light saber ready to finish the job.

And TROLL AND FREDDY push BIG DOG to the floor and stand with club and razors ready to finish him off too.

PAUSE.)

BRASSY: How poetic. They all disappear in a single flash.

FREDDY/SASSY/TRASHY: (simultaneously like a chorus) Or a single slash.

(EVERYONE takes a deep breath. Pause.

TOYM, the old man, rushes on so fast from left he is like lightning striking. He is dressed in a dark brown robe with a hood over the back of his head like "Obi-Wan Kenobi", he flashes his "blue" light saber so quickly his enemies do not have time to react.

He knocks the club and razor glove from TROLL and FREDDY. Then he whips by SASSY and TRASHY, threatening so that they release JACK's arms and back away in terror.

Then he spins and swings once at BRASSY's cutlass and knocks it out of her grasp. He deflects VADER's light saber away from BOB, but though VADER is turned away and his saber pointed at the floor away from BOB, VADER manages to recover, does not lose his

saber and comes back with a huge parry that throws TOYM off balance. They stare at each other.

TOYM, BIG D [who picks up his bat], and BOB [who picks up his sword] back up surrounding JACK. JACK wiggles furiously like he is ready for another go. PAUSE.)

BRASSY: (catching her breath) Hardly a Mexican stand off, boys. You're still out numbered. And your little surprise, old man, only went so far, didn't it?

TROLL: I lost my club.

BRASSY: Well, pick it up, stupid. This isn't Harry Potter.

TROLL: (embarrassed) Huh-huh.

TOYM: (his own accent to the end) We may be out numbered, but what if we have the balance of power waiting in the wings?

BRASSY: What do you think I am stupid like a Troll?

TROLL: (looks at the floor unhappy) Ohhhhh.

BRASSY: What do you have left? You four and one little prissy collectible. Where is she? You can't hide her forever. What is she going to do—show up as Princess Lea? I doubt it. Even if she does, she's got noth'n. Get ready, boys and girls, this time we don't hesitate. No dramatic pause as it were.

(EVERYONE takes a deep breath.)

TOYM: Wait.

BRASSY: What!

TOYM: Shouldn't there be an attempt to settle this even now by peace talks.

BRASSY: Get out of town! This whole thing has been a preemptive strike from the beginning. Don't you get it! This is War! Toy Wars! A War Between the Shelves, and that is the worst kind. We want to be the only dolls in the consumers' dreams.

FREDDY: (enraptured) Yeah, I love being a doll.

BRASSY: We want the market share. In fact, we want all there is to share. In other words, we don't want to share. Do you get it? She changes to more like us--we lose. What if everybody in the world did that, what kind of world would that be? If we can't stop her, guess what, old man. We will stop you. We will stop you from changing her. There just isn't room for her kind, old buddy, do you get it? Or your kind for that matter. Don't think your shelf life doesn't have an end, old man.

TOYM: I never thought otherwise, but I am willing to risk shortening it for her sake.

BRASSY: What! She is a doll!

TOYM: Let's just say she reminds me of someone. So do you for that matter.

BRASSY: What! What! Oh, you're starting to play with my anger management now!

TOYM: I don't see what difference your anger makes. You already plan to kill us. I just was thinking that you remind of my ex-wife.

BRASSY: What! I don't want to hear this. (to VADER) Did you hear that? His ex-fricking-wife! (to the others) Did you hear that! I don't believe this! I am too young for this.

TRASHY: He is just trying to get to you. Looks like he is.

BRASSY: Shut up!

TOYM: My ex-wife had some excellent qualities. She was a liar. That part wasn't good, but she did love our daughter; so much so, that she lied about me in order to get custody, although she did agreed eventually to share Laura's time equally between us. Heck, she even loved me for awhile.

BRASSY: Until she met her psychiatrist.

TOYM: That's right.

BRASSY: (puzzled) How did I know that? (worried) Just stop it, old man.



TOYM: One of my nieces was like you too. She was smart like you, rough around the edges like you, but un-like you, she was more understanding and tolerant.

BRASSY: I'm not like that! (grabs her head) Will you stop it!

TOYM: Are you sure you're not like that?

BRASSY: (exasperated) What! Oh, I hate you. I could kill you.

TOYM: That's the part that is different.

BRASSY: (deep breath, eyes narrowed, but low steady voice) Kill them all.

TOYM: Wait. We do have one more surprise. I wasn't kidding about that.

BRASSY: (they hesitate) Will you just kill them, please.

TROLL: But what's the surprise? I like surprises, huh-huh.

TOYM: You won't like this one. It's that balance of power thing I told you about before. Good or Evil can win; it can go either way depending which side this person chooses.

BRASSY: You are insane. There is no good or evil, just consumers. Who is this person? It can't be Princess because—

DOLL: (from Off Left) Can't it?

(They all turn to the door left. DOLL steps in as ELECTRA. Her garment is a tight red jumper reminiscent of Electra's red outfit, but not the same. The weapons, however, are two long knives with double hilts one each direction and are unmistakably Electra's. Her hair falls a long way down her back, like Electra's.)

BRASSY: Are you nuts! You changed her into a modest Electra? That is crazy. She is a Princess Collectible. She is useless. It doesn't matter if she dresses like Al Gore, she will have no influence on this outcome!

DOLL: Try me, sweetie.

BRASSY: (furious) Don't call me "sweetie".

DOLL: Sweetie.

BRASSY: I will kill you! You are a collectible. You're not even supposed to be able to move. What a world. What a world.

DOLL: (Makes a stunning martial arts move and postures) I am still a collectible! I am just a very fast collectible. And I choose Good!

(LIGHTS FLASH, FLUTTER, PULSE.  
ACTION MOVIE MUSIC BLARES.  
"ELECTRA" moves like a butterfly and stings like Muhammad Ali, disarming the TROLL, slicing the long finger nails off of SASSY and TRASHY. ELECTRA scares FREDDY so badly that he cowers in a corner for awhile. JACK moves his box around to fight better in this section. The Good Guys stay generally center in a circle, covering each other's backs. The Bad Guys try to attack from the outside of the circle and try to break it. TOYM generally betters VADER, spinning and swirling as though he was 25. JACK finally leaves the circle and traps SASSY and TRASHY in a corner, pressing them with the box and threatening them with his springs. BIG D takes on the TROLL bat to club CLASHING and THUDDING repeatedly. FREDDY rejoins the fight with verve and clashes razors with BOB's cutlass, eventually moving out of the circle advancing and retreating variously with each other. BRASSY, suddenly out of nowhere, has two samurai swords, and goes toe to toe with "ELECTRA".)

DOLL: What's with the two samurai swords, Dad, I mean, Mr. Toym-aker?

TOYM: (over his shoulder as he fights VADER, LASER SOUNDS ON SPEAKERS) Sorry, honey, I mean, Princess. I just saw Seven Samurai and well. I can't get it out of my head. (EMPHASIS IN LIGHTING SWITCHES AREAS WHEN NECESSARY, NEXT IS DOLL AND BRASSY--)

DOLL: Well, that's just ducky, that's what that is.

BRASSY: Will you two shut up and fight.

DOLL: How is this then? (She spins close to the floor, one leg outstretched and catches BRASSY by the heel flipping her to the floor.)

BRASSY: (“flips” [kips if can] herself up swiftly and kicks ELECTRA in the fanny) How do you like those apples, Princess?

DOLL: (indignant) Those are hardly apples, my dear. Try this. (She stabs near her face, BRASSY dodges, exhales air like “that was close”)

(Everyone fights, some help others from time to time or switch enemies. Finally, VADER starts to get the better of TOYM, who is breathless [VADER never tires].)

VADER: (menacingly, deadly) Yes, you were fast for awhile, Obi-Wan, but now your age is starting to show.

(TOYM grabs his heart momentarily but fights on.

The TROLL finally begins to overpower BIG DOG.)

BIG D: I am losing ground here, I’m afraid. Pity.

TROLL: (chuckles) Huh—huh. (referring to before) “Harry Potter”—I get it! Huh.

(And FREDDY manages to get BOB’s sword and scratches BOB’s side badly with his razors.)

BOB: (cries out) I’m wounded! Come to my aid, come to my aid, arg!

FREDDY: Now, it is getting gnarly! Finally, a “dream come true.” (laughs horribly)

(SASSY and TRASHY, however, are still trapped by JACK. SASSY is still furious, stomps her feet and shakes with rage, but hardly fights at all.

TRASHY has given up completely and has started to be attracted to JACK. [JACK, though we can’t see his face really, has noticed].)

SASSY: Oh, I hate you! I hate you!

TRASHY: (relaxed against the wall) I find him rather cute.

JACK: You're not so bad yourself, young lady, just stay back against the wall there. You too, Sassy.

SASSY: Ohhhhhhhh!

TRASHY: (warmly) Whatever you say, Jack.

(Spotlight on BRASSY and DOLL, other lights dim)

BRASSY: (breathless) have never met another doll I couldn't beat.

DOLL: (not breathless) Thank you, indeed.

(TROLL takes a big swing at BIG DOG and clocks him. BIG DOG goes down for the count.)

BRASSY: There goes one of your boys.

DOLL: (still fighting) Oh, my!

BRASSY: And look over there, looks like another one is on his way.

(FREDDY smashes BOB in the jaw with his non-razor fist, and BOB is down and out.)

FREDDY: So, you wanted to be a pirate. (laughs)

(FREDDY, with BOB's sword, and TROLL attack TOYM, and TOYM is faced with three enemies when he was already wearing thin; he is backed into a corner. He is struck by all three and falls forward. They circle him for the finish.

JACK can't help him because he is occupied with SASSY's outrage and TRASHY's "peace-making".)

(DOLL notices, of course, and fires a combination at BRASSY that disarms her of

both her swords. BRASSY is totally vulnerable, but DOLL watches her a moment. BRASSY prepares to die.)

BRASSY: Go ahead, what are you waiting for?

(DOLL nods a polite Japanese-like honorable bow and rushes to TOYM's aid.)

BRASSY: But . . .

(SPOTLIGHT comes up on TOYM's fight as ELECTRA swirls through the milieu and the three bad dudes all fall backwards away from TOYM.

She steps on FREDDY's sword hand and the TROLL's club hand, [simultaneously if possible] forcing them both to let go of their weapons.

FREDDY tries to use his razor hand on her, but she blocks it with one of her long knives, then plucks it off his hand and whips it up and out of the set.)

FREDDY: Whoa!

TROLL: Ouch . . .

(But VADER has sneakily come from the dark and prepares to finish TOYM. ELECTRA realizes she cannot move without freeing the others, and VADER is already at TOYM's throat.)

DOLL: Dad, I—

DARTH: (menacingly, no lisp) You cannot stop the dark side; you should have killed her when you had the chance.

DOLL: No, please.

DARTH: (mockingly) “No, please.” (He raises his saber)

BRASSY: No! Leave him alone. We've won! (she has her two swords again)

(LIGHTING RETURNS TO GENERAL LIGHTING)

VADER: Are you insane!

BRASSY: No, just satisfied.

VADER: Well, that is too bad. I'm not.

(He makes his move, but both BRASSY and DOLL quickly move and extend their weapons and together stop the light saber.)

VADER: (CONTINUED, to BRASSY) You will die for this!

(Having been freed when ELECTRA moved, TROLL and FREDDY grab up their club and sword and pounce on ELECTRA who turns and meets them weapon to weapon.

TOYM weakly moves to check both BOB and BIG DOG to see if they are all right, the two slowly come around, but are very weak.)

BRASSY: (having a tough time with VADER) Trashy, Sassy, help me!

SASSY: What are you talking about! Like that is Vader, girl!

TRASHY: (Almost swooning now she speaks very aerially) Okay, I'll be right over. (Then she sees what is going on) What the heck is going on! Holy catfish on a Thursday! What are you doing, girl! Jack, help her!

JACK: (turns around, can't believe his eyes) What in the—double whoa on you! Good grief! (to TRASHY) You want me to help her?

TRASHY: (pleadingly) If you love me, yes!

JACK: (roles his eyes) Oh my word! What about Sassy?

SASSY: What about me—leave me out of this. I don't love you!

JACK: Will you stay still or what?

SASSY: I am standing right here. Like, I am not going anywhere. Frankly, like I think I am going to be sick.

TRASHY: (pleadingly) Jack?

JACK: Holy. Hey, Princess, what should I do?

DOLL: (still holding off TROLL and FREDDY) I've got this. Help her!

(She fights TROLL and FREDDY off through left door.

JACK awkwardly puts his big box self between VADER and BRASSY.)

JACK: (to Brassy) You better not kill me after this.

BRASSY: (while blocking a slash) I wouldn't think of it. Ouch, you stepped on my foot.

JACK: (jockeying around for position) Sorry. I can't see my feet.

(TOYM, BOB, and BIG DOG get up, TOYM grabs his saber; all three advance on VADER.

Bob's sword and the Troll's club suddenly come sliding across the floor out of the room off left. And then we hear a LOUD TWO MAN "Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!" fading away in the distance off left.

VADER realizes that everyone except SASSY is advancing on him—)

DARTH: (flips his cloak and backs away) Another day, another world perhaps. I am not your father, Princess. (flips his cloak again and "vanishes")

[the LIGHTS GO OUT FOR A SECOND: VADER goes out the front door as fast as he can. The others are not really amazed.]

BIG D: Rather a contrived exit I would say.

JACK: Bogus.

BOB: Arg. What about Princess?

(DOLL ENTERS from LEFT. She is carrying her parasol now instead of her knives and wears a small stylish hat.)

DOLL: Sorry about the mess in there, but it was pretty badly knocked about before we went in there, but it is worse now.

BIG D: What about, you know?

DOLL: Oh that. They were both in tears when last I saw them. I think they will go back to the respective shelves.

(Awkward pause. Everyone looks at BRASSY.)

BRASSY: (very embarrassed) Well, thank you, gentlemen. Ah, we really have to be going now. (She starts for the door)

TRASHY: But I don't want to go now. I want to stay here . . . with Jack.

SASSY: I want to go now!

TOYM: Anybody can stay that wants to stay. This is a toy shop.

BRASSY: (hesitates at the door, takes a deep breath) I really have to be going.

DOLL: What about the market?

BRASSY: (pause) The market will just have to understand.

TOYM: Understand?

BRASSY: You know what I mean. Tolerance. I have to go. (she leaves)

SASSY: (leaves) It is about time.

TRASHY: (realizes her friends left) I may really--stay?

TOYM: You were always welcome.

TRASHY: (doesn't understand, but) Oookay. Where is my shelf? May I have one—



TOYM: Yes, right there, next to Jack.

(JACK and TRASHY smile at each other.)

BIG D: Hey, Bob, maybe I'll stay with you in the other room over there.

BOB: Well, shiver me timbers. We are not going to be picking out curtains together or anything are we?

BIG D: No, I just thought a new old shelf would be nice. We can still visit in here, you realize. (smiles at JACK)

BOB: (realizes and accepts the arrangement) Arg. (they take the club, bat, and cutlass and go left)

BIG D: (cheerfully) We can start by cleaning up the mess in there.

BOB: (disappointed) Arg.

TRASHY: Do you want to go for a walk, Jack?

JACK: I can't get through the door.

TRASHY: (wondering about the inconvenience of the box) Oh, I hadn't thought about that.

TOYM: If you go to the back wall, Jack, where you were before. I can get you out that back wall?

JACK: You can?

TOYM: Sure, I do it all the time.

JACK: I didn't know that.

TOYM: No, you wouldn't. But you will this time. Promise.

(JACK smiles at TOYM, then smiles at TRASHY, goes to wall, disappears in box, pulls the lid closed.)

TRASHY: You are just putting us on, right? You can't do that really, eh?

JACK: (BACKSTAGE) Hey, Trashy. Do you mind if I call you something else?

TRASHY: (excited, rushing out the front door) Of course not. I hate that name.

JACK: (BACKSTAGE) How about Little Miss Sunshine?

TRASHY: (BACKSTAGE) No.

JACK: (BACKSTAGE, fading away) What about Madonna?

TRASHY: (BACKSTAGE) No.

JACK: (BACKSTAGE still fading) What about—(they fade away, unintelligible)

DOLL: Who is going to fix your lock?

TOYM: I will. It's no biggie.

DOLL: So I guess now that I am different, changed, more marketable that I will return to my shelf in the store with great confidence.

TOYM: I said any of you could stay.

DOLL: (pause) I know. But that is part of your dream, not mine. I have a destiny to fulfill.

TOYM: (kindly) Yes, I know. You are young and spirited, adventuresome and curious. You need to go. Still, I liked the old you too.

DOLL: (kisses him on the forehead) Thank you for your help.

TOYM: Thank you for saving my life.

DOLL: Oh that. That was nothing. It was fun actually. A little scary, but fun.

TOYM: Yes, it was a little scary. Good-bye, Princess.

DOLL: Good-bye, Mr. Toym-aker. (they smile, she opens her parasol and leaves)

(TOYM SIGHS, picks up his light saber, laughs, puts it behind a counter, then goes to his table, he starts to light the candle, but it will not light. He yawns, he rests his head on the

table; soon we hear him snoring. LIGHTS DIM but do not go out. The radio comes on by itself. Not on auditorium speakers, but realistic sound comes from the radio.)

RADIO: Good morning, Mister Morning. It is a beautiful Christmas morning. Merry Christmas, world. My goodness, it is still dark, people.

(The CANDLE LIGHTS by itself [now an electric wick] and the intro to “What Child Is This” begins on the radio. STAGE LIGHT comes up a bit too.)

ANNOUNCER: (Voice over music) Well, we will just light a candle here in the studio for this wonderful Christmas morning. And here is one of everyone’s favorites, “What Child Is This”.

(His voice over ends as the musical intro ends and the melody begins. It is an instrumental with no vocalist.

TOYM slowly raises his head as the melody begins.

He looks around bewildered. He yawns, then scratches his head.)

TOYM: Why is the radio on? It doesn’t have a radio alarm. It’s too old. Did I leave it on? And the candle—did I light it? (looks at his clothes) Man, I fell asleep in my Star Wars robe again. Will I ever grow up? (goes behind the counter, pulls out the light saber, laughs; then he tries to turn it on, but it will not shine) Batteries are probably as old as Christmas itself. (sets it down, goes over toward the radio) Beautiful song, but I have to go back to sleep—in my bed this time. Why am I talking to the radio? Lonely, I guess. Strange dreams will do that. (He notices his front door lock, laughs) I will have to fix that lock one of these days. Well, sorry, buddy, but-- (reaches to turn off the radio, but the music fades quickly, and the announcer returns).

ANNOUNCER: (very fast, clipped and jovial) This just in. Oh, what a beautiful Christmas story this is. Sorry to interrupt such a beautiful tune, but this can’t wait. We’ll get back to that tune right after this. Unbelievably, yesterday on Christmas Eve, three members of a family believed to have been lost at sea over 26 years ago, 26 years ago!-- were discovered, that’s

right, on Christmas Eve, I kid you not, on an uncharted island in the Pacific. It doesn't get any better than this, people. Rise and shine, and thank somebody for something. Somebody, I hear, the three rescued folks said, hasn't been notified yet because, get this, he has no cell, not even an old phone, folks, not internet, not TV. Who doesn't have TV! This guy has nothin'. This guy is lonely. Well, just in case he has a radio, which I doubt, I am going to play him a special message.

VOICE ON TAPE COMING FROM RADIO: Hi, Dad. We just reached civilization. We're all healthy. It was horrible being stranded, but we had good eats on the island that we were lost on. Mom's a survivor, you know that. I am a lot older now, but I am on my way home. I'm coming home, Dad, to you. I'm coming home. I'll be there first thing in the morning, Christmas morning. I don't care if it is still dark. Do you believe it! I love you, Dad. I hope you are all right. We've got a lot of catching up to do. I love you, Dad, Laura.

(He turns off the radio. Slaps his face.  
Turns on the radio.)

ANNOUNCER: It just doesn't get any better than this. Merry Christmas everyone! (he turns off the radio again. Slaps his face and shakes his head. Slaps his face again. Turns the radio on.)

ANNOUNCER: And now back to that more than appropriate tune that I promised.

("What Child Is This" begins again at the melody line.

He turns it down, but lets it play softly in the background.

He pinches his bum.)

TOYM: Ouch! (he slaps his face again, blinks his eyes several times, pause)

(There is a KNOCK ON THE DOOR. His jaw totally drops. He slowly, apprehensively turns to the door.

DOLL'S VOICE FROM BEHIND THE DOOR: Merry Christmas, Dad! It's me  
Laura! Your lock is broken! (the door opens a crack) Are you there!

BLACK OUT! SILENCE!

APPLAUSE!

The End

*Playwright's Notes:*

Some scenes may be frightening to young children.

Any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely intentional. Dramatic license has been taken with dialogue in order to facilitate whatever the writer wanted to do.

For stealing their ideas, the playwright wishes to thank the following writers:

Edward Albee "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"

Tennessee Williams "The Glass Menagerie"

Harold Pinter "The Birthday Party"

Thornton Wilder "The Skin of Our Teeth"

Eugene O'Neil "The Great God Brown"

And as if they need recognition:

The makers of Bratz dolls

The makers of "Star Wars"

The makers of "Nightmares on Elm Street"

The makers of those ridiculous flaming haired cute Trolls

Mom and Dad

The edited for children version of "Shelf Life" is called "Toy Wars" in order that no one will accidentally do "Shelf Life" as a children's Christmas play, which it is not, they should make a mental note of this now, in case they didn't read the whole title.

end of notes.

P. Wagner

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