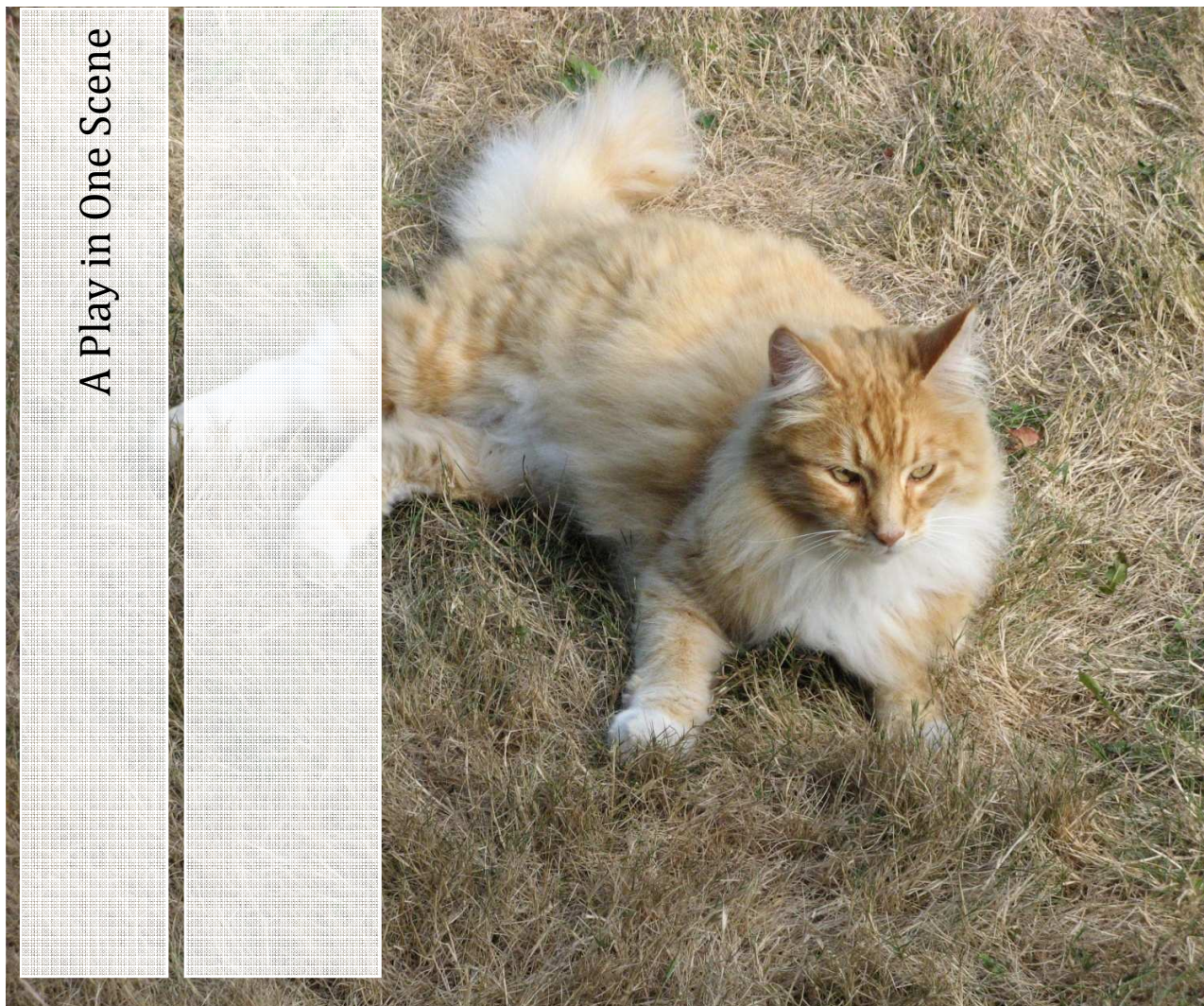


Who Will Love My Children?

A Play in One Scene



Cast: 2 men, 2 women

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WHO WILL LOVE MY CHILDREN?
A play in One Scene

Mrs. Greene has been forced into a retirement home by her absent son, but she insists on setting the table every day for all her “children.” The home medical staff thinks she’s bonkers, but one caring young man will set them straight.

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

MRS. GREENE: An elderly lady who has been forced into a retirement home by her distant son.

NURSE: An easily exasperated, no-nonsense, middle-aged woman.

DOCTOR: A kindly, though skeptical, man of little imagination.

YOUNG MAN: A friendly, caring individual who is completely sympathetic with Mrs. Greene.

SETTING: The main room of an apartment in a retirement home. There is a table set with several small dishes and bowls.

AT RISE: MRS. GREENE is bustling about the room, setting the table and pretending to dish out food.

MRS. GREENE

Now, Tommy, you leave your sister's dish alone. Just because you always gobble down the tastiest parts first, and Sally saves them for last, doesn't mean I gave her more...

(Pause while she continues to putter.)

Don't be a tattle-tale, Sam. Yes, I know where my thimble and earring are. No, Meg shouldn't have taken them, but that's between her and me... Well, that's true. Meg, honey, you ought not to hoard all the toys. They're for everyone, and you must learn to share... I understand, sweetheart, but they'll always be there for you, too.

(Pause.)

Tommy! What did I just tell you?... No, that's all right, Sarah. You don't need to sit between them. Tommy will be good... No, Sally. Your brother is not a "rat," and calling him names will not help to better his manners...

Now. Is that everyone? Wait a minute. Where's Charlie? Charlie? Charlie!? Oh, there you are. Come on, sweetheart. Join us at the table. Please? Oh. Sorry. I guess you're right. You are not "sweet"—but I do love you anyway, Charlie. Won't you please come and join us?

(NURSE and DOCTOR ENTER.)

NURSE

What did I tell you, Doctor? She's done this twice a day since she got here.

MRS. GREENE (bristling)

Didn't your mother ever teach you to knock before entering someone else's room?

(Towards a corner of the room in a soft voice.)

Charlie, darling, it's all right. They won't hurt you.

Mrs. Greene (cont.)

(To the NURSE in an angry voice)

Now, look what you've done—scared poor Charlie half to death! I've told you my youngest is afraid of strangers, and now you've gone and frightened him!

DOCTOR (condescendingly)

Who is Charlie, Mrs. Greene?

MRS. GREENE

He's my youngest...or at least he's the newest member of the family. I don't know how old he really is.

DOCTOR

You "family"... Hmm. I see.

NURSE

What family?

MRS. GREENE

Why, *my* family! And you know, you don't see, Doctor, because you've just frightened them all away!

NURSE (exasperated)

You don't have any young children, Mrs. Greene. You have only one grown son. You don't even have any grandchildren.

Really, Doctor. Mr. Greene explained all about his mother's fantasies. She thinks she has a whole house full of children...

MRS. GREENE

It's true! I did!

DOCTOR

You seem to be mistaken, Mrs. Greene. According to your records, here, you only had the one son before your husband passed on, way back in nineteen-fifty-four.

MRS. GREENE

Well, I know *that*. I'm not batty. They're not my children by blood, of course.

DOCTOR

Oh? And how did you come by them?

MRS. GREENE

They are adopted, obviously. First Sammy...nearly sixteen years ago. He's really getting up there, now. Then came dear Sarah, always so helpful and loving; and tiny, homeless Meg; and the twins, Tommy and Sally—they fight like cats and dogs, but they're really very close; and finally, poor Charlie. No one wanted Charlie. He's been in and out of so many foster homes, it's no wonder it's so hard for him to trust anybody.

NURSE (rolling her eyes)

Really...

DOCTOR

You say they're all adopted? Well, that's a lot of children to take in, Mrs. Greene.

MRS. GREENE

There were more, of course.

DOCTOR (surprised)

More?

MRS. GREENE

Yes... So many... Some stayed on for years; others for only a short time. (Wistfully.) I miss them all. And I just hate to think of all those other unwanted children still out there on the streets... so cold, so lonely...

NURSE

But there are no children here!

MRS. GREENE

Don't you think I know that? I'm not blind! I can see what you and my son have done to my family! You took them all away from me! Who will love my children, now!?

(MRS. GREENE begins to cry softly.)

(After a moment, a YOUNG MAN ENTERS. He is wearing a khaki uniform and carrying a clip board and a baseball-style cap.)

YOUNG MAN

Excuse me?

NURSE

Who are you?

YOUNG MAN

I'm looking for Mrs. Greene.

NURSE

You have no business being in here, young man. I must ask you to leave at once.

YOUNG MAN

But I have some information for Mrs. Greene. It's very important.

DOCTOR (cutting off the NURSE)

Are you a relative?

YOUNG MAN

Uh, no, sir.

DOCTOR

In that case, the nurse is right. You can't stay here. Mrs. Greene is not feeling well at the moment.

YOUNG MAN

Gee, I'm sorry to hear that, Doctor, but maybe what I have to tell her will cheer her up.

(to MRS. GREENE)

I know it's been a week, Mrs. Greene, but I worked as fast as I could.

MRS. GREENE (tentatively)

Do I know you, young man?

YOUNG MAN

You might not remember me, Mrs. Greene. We only met the one time...at your old house...the day your son picked you up?

MRS. GREENE (angry)

Oh, yes. Of course. I remember now.

(brightening)

Why, of course! You were that nice young fellow who was going to find homes for all my children!

YOUNG MAN

Yes, ma'am. That's me.

NURSE

Oh, please... Don't encourage her!

YOUNG MAN

What do you mean?

NURSE

For the hundredth time, Mrs. Greene: You have no young children. You have one grown son, who brought you to live here but no other children!

MRS. GREENE (snapping)

A lot you know!

(to the YOUNG MAN, now excited)

My dear, have you been able to place them?

YOUNG MAN

Yes, Mrs. Greene. That's why I'm here. I have a list for you. And all the families gave me their phone numbers so you can call and talk to them whenever you like.

(The YOUNG MAN hands MRS. GREENE a piece of paper. SHE scans it greedily.)

MRS. GREENE

Even Sammy...

YOUNG MAN

Yes, ma'am. She's with a really nice lady across town with a whole house full of teenagers.

MRS. GREENE

And this family...you did warn them about Meg's...habit, didn't you?

YOUNG MAN

They understand, and it's all right.

MRS. GREENE

She really doesn't mean to steal things, after all. It's just that she's had so little in her life that she could call her own.

YOUNG MAN

I managed to get Tommy and Sally placed together, like you asked.

MRS. GREENE

Oh, I'm so glad. They've never been apart, you know. Neither would admit it, but they'd be lost without the other.

Is Sarah's new family nice, too?

YOUNG MAN

They sure are—and they have a little girl who's already crazy about Sarah.

(MRS. GREENE reads further then freezes suddenly.)

MRS. GREENE

What about Charlie? I don't see his name here! Where's Charlie!?

YOUNG MAN

Well, I...

MRS. GREENE

Please tell me he's all right!?

YOUNG MAN

Oh, he's fine, Mrs. Greene, it's just that... Well, I know you wanted all your kids to go to families, but the truth is, nobody wanted Charlie. He was just too scared to be anything but nasty to everyone, and it was getting so close to his time that I... well, I broke one of my own rules and took him myself. I know I'm single, Mrs. Green, but now that it's just the two of us, I think Charlie likes living in a bachelor pad. At least he's starting to settle down, and I think he'll be happy there.

MRS. GREENE (relieved)

Oh, I'm sure he will be, my dear. He needs so much attention, and he always was a little jealous of the others.

NURSE (interrupting)

Oh, for heaven's sake. This is ridiculous. These children Mrs. Greene says she has are only make-believe. I'm telling you, this woman does not have any children!

YOUNG MAN (disgusted)

A lot you know.

(The YOUNG MAN puts on his cap. The letters "A.S.P.C.A." are bold and clear on the front. HE crosses to write his own name and phone number on the list he has given MRS. GREENE.)

YOUNG MAN (cont.)

Here's how you can reach Charlie and me, Mrs. Greene. Before I go, is there anything special Charlie likes?

MRS. GREENE

Well, he loves catnip, but don't give him any. He is a violent drunk. If you really want to make a good impression, though, he adores tuna fish.

YOUNG MAN

I'll pick up a can of Bumble Bee on the way home.

MRS. GREENE

Oh, you'll spoil him!

YOUNG MAN

So, I'll spoil him. He deserves it.

MRS. GREENE (shaking her head)

Figaro or Friskies would be just fine. Oh, and maybe some of those Yum, Yum treats.

YOUNG MAN

Got it.

(HE glares at the NURSE then kisses MRS. GREENE on the cheek.)

I think I'll have to spoil you some from now on, too. So, what can I get for you?

(MRS. GREENE is taken aback but very grateful for the attention.)

MRS. GREENE

Just your company would be enough for me.

YOUNG MAN

You'll get that anyway. There must be something special you'd like.

MRS. GREENE (thoughtfully)

Well, perhaps some raspberry preserves would be nice.

YOUNG MAN (with a grin)

Raspberry preserves it is. I'll be back as soon as I can. And if I can ever get Charlie back in the carrier, I'll bring him along for a visit, too.

(The YOUNG MAN gives her another kiss on the cheek and EXITS.)

(The NURSE is astonished. MRS. GREENE smiles broadly and maybe a little smugly.)

DOCTOR

That is quite a family you have managed to adopt, Mrs. Greene.

MRS. GREENE

Yes, it is... just as I told you.

(CURTAIN)

END OF PLAY