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Dramatic Publishing

Somebody Catch My Homework

A One-act Play

by

SANDRA FENICHEL ASHER

Inspired by the poetry

of

DAVID L. HARRISON



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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DAVID L. HARRISON

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For
David L. Harrison,
poet and friend *extraordinaire*

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Somebody Catch My Homework was first produced by Good Company Theatre for All Ages, a community outreach project of Drury University's School of Education, at the Vandivort Center Theatre in Springfield, Mo., April 11-14, 2002, under the direction of Maxine Whittaker, with music by Ric Averill. The cast was:

CLAIRE. Gaelle Barnett
SAMANTHA. Hanna Friedrick
BRADLEY Jeffrey Binney
SIDNEY. Corey Kilburn
BUS DRIVER, SAMANTHA'S DAD Greg Brock
CLAIRE'S MOM, MISS KERR. Fenn Samudra
CLOCK, STUDENT Justin Ott
CLOCK, STUDENT, CLIFFORD Idan Flasterstein
CLOCK, STUDENT, BRADLEY'S MOM Tomiann Brashers
STUDENT, SIDNEY'S MOM, CAT. Mandi Johnson

PRODUCTION STAFF:

Stage Manager: Tomiann Brashers
Lighting Design: Louis Schaeffer
Original Music: Ric Averill
Tech Operator: Devin Lofton

The script was later refined through workshopping and a touring production by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, March 8-April 11, 2003, under the direction of Manon van de Water, with music by Ric Averill. The cast was:

CLAIRE Elyte Salna
SAMANTHA Anna Kacyn
BRADLEY Shane Cody
SIDNEY Ryan Dembroski
EVERYONE ELSE Amber Page

PRODUCTION STAFF:

Stage Manager: Matt Vanden Boogart
Scenery Designer: Brandon Ribordy
Costume Designer: Molly Rebuschatis
Lighting Designer: Brandon Thrasher
Technical Director: Dennis Dorn
Tour Manager: Alex Rodinsky
Choreographer: Andrea Harris
Education Director: Takeo Fujikura
E-Team Members: Faiza Altaf, Cassandra Proball, Roberto Rivera
Props Master: Pamela Thoms
Props Crew: Jeffrey Miller, Morgan Bell
Scenic Artist: Laura Janssen
Paint Crew: Sarah Possin, Yote Chussoipin, Danielle Boland, Lindsay Mathers, Naomi Stiller-Bachman, Sherry Yang, Kevin Choe, Sung Hwan Kim, Jinhee Beack, Barbara Lynds, Katherine Ball, Diana Glowing, Naoya Hashimoto, Amy Sawyers, Alexandra Kadlec
Head Electrician: Andy Rusterholz
Light Board Operator: Jason Weber

Portions of the play were also read at the 2002 Children's Literature Festival of the Ozarks in Springfield, Mo., and the 2003 Children's Literature Festival in Warrensburg, Mo., by David Harrison, Gary Blackwood, Barbara Robinson, and the playwright, who thanks all of the above for their insight and enthusiasm!

Somebody Catch My Homework

A One-act Play

For 2m, 2w, 1m or w. Expandable to 11+ roles

CHARACTERS

SAMANTHA . a fourth-grader, the new girl, quiet, bright, missing her lost cat

SIDNEY a fourth-grader, the class clown

BRADLEY . . a fourth-grader, bright, bookish, gentle and comfortable with that

CLAIRE a fourth-grader, a friendly, outgoing teenybopper

EVERYONE ELSE all-purpose player, male or female, wears basic black and augments this with whatever colorful costume piece is needed to identify each of the characters (or objects) being portrayed:

CLOCK

SAMANTHA'S MOM (or DAD)

MR. JONES, a school bus driver (or MRS. JONES)

CLAIRE'S MOM

CLIFFORD, a classmate

MISS KERR, a teacher (or MR. KERR)

BRADLEY'S MOM (offstage voice)

SIDNEY'S MOM (offstage voice)

CORKY, a cat

(These roles may be divided among a number of actors, and increased with a CLOCK for each child, more kids on the bus, more classmates, etc. Dialogue in the pre-recess and after-school poems may then be divided up.)

TIME: The present.

PLACE: In and around home and school. Scenes should flow into one another and are represented by minimal set pieces and props.

APPROXIMATE RUNNING TIME: 45 minutes

ORIGINAL MUSIC for this play is available from: Ric Averill, (785) 842-6622, raverill@sunflower.com

Somebody Catch My Homework

AT RISE: *WAKE-UP MUSIC* begins. *SAMANTHA*, *SIDNEY*, *BRADLEY* and *CLAIRE* sit straddling chairs in areas of the stage representing their separate bedrooms, each asleep with a pillow propped up on the back of the chair and a blanket gathered over his or her shoulders. *SAMANTHA* clutches a stuffed cat; *BRADLEY* has fallen asleep reading one of his many books. *CLAIRE* may be holding her hairbrush and a teen magazine. *SIDNEY* has a basketball nearby. All wear T-shirts and tights, slacks, or sweat pants so that they can “dress” quickly with one or two added or removed pieces of clothing.

EVERYONE ELSE enters as *CLOCK*, on tiptoe, signals “Shhhhh!” to the audience, and weaves among the sleepers, who pop their heads up just long enough to recite their lines before dozing off again.

NOTE: When “POEM” is indicated, dialogue is performed directly to the audience, with a heightened delivery style and appropriate attention to rhythm. In essence, instead of breaking into song, the characters break out in poetry!

CLOCK.

(POEM; rhythmic "Tick-Tock" is repeated to MUSIC throughout the following dialogue until "BRRR-RINGGG!")

TICK	TOCK	
TICK	TOCK	
TICK	TOCK	
TICK	TOCK	
TICK	TOCK	CLAIRE.
TICK	TOCK	Clocks don't care!
TICK	TOCK	
TICK	TOCK	SAMANTHA.
TICK	TOCK	Clocks don't care
TICK	TOCK	If you toss all night!
TICK	TOCK	
TICK	TOCK	BRADLEY.
TICK	TOCK	Clocks don't care!
TICK	TOCK	
TICK	TOCK	SIDNEY.
TICK	TOCK	Clocks don't care
TICK	TOCK	If you don't sleep tight!
TICK	TOCK	
TICK	TOCK	SAMANTHA.
TICK	TOCK	Clocks don't care!
		CLAIRE.
TICK	TOCK	All they ever do is...
		BRADLEY.
TICK	TOCK	All night through they...
		SIDNEY.
TICK	TOCK	Cover up your head they...
		SAMANTHA.
TICK	TOCK	Roll around your bed they...

TICK	TOCK	BRADLEY. All night long they...
TICK	TOCK	CLAIRE. Same old song they...
TICK	TOCK	SIDNEY. Same old verse they...
TICK	TOCK	SAMANTHA. What could be worse than...

(Beat.)

BRRRINGGG!!!

(Another beat, as WAKE-UP MUSIC ends. Then, while CLOCK runs off...)

FOURTH-GRADERS *(sitting bolt upright in shock and surprise at the alarm)*. Aaaaaahhhhhh!

(DRESSING MUSIC begins. EACH FOURTH-GRADER now collapses into his or her unique mode of waking up: yawns, stretches, head-scratching, etc., as he or she climbs out of "bed." SAMANTHA gives an extra hug to her stuffed cat and places it lovingly on her pillow. ALL come forward, each in his or her own way, skipping, shuffling, etc., to his or her own "mirror." They are still in different houses and therefore do not look at or speak to one another. SAMANTHA mimes the dutiful washing of her face and brushing of her teeth. She is obviously sad about something. CLAIRE brushes and arranges her hair with exaggerated pride and pleasure. SIDNEY does energetic but not terribly efficient calisthenics. BRAD-

LEY is absorbed in reading a book. He picks up his toothbrush but forgets to use it. Or, he comes within inches of brushing his hair with it, but the need to turn the page of his book saves him every time. These actions go on for a moment or two, then SAMANTHA'S MOM is heard offstage.)

SAMANTHA'S MOM (*offstage*). Breakfast is ready!
Better hurry up! You don't want to be late for school!
(*FOURTH-GRADERS note this, but go right on with some variation of what they've been doing, without hurrying.*)

SAMANTHA (*POEM*).

Ten whole minutes

Till the bus—

CLAIRE.

Scads of time—

BRADLEY.

What's the fuss?

SAMANTHA.

Two to dress,

SIDNEY.

One to flush—

BRADLEY.

Two to eat—

CLAIRE.

One to brush—

SAMANTHA.

That leaves four
to catch the bus—

SIDNEY.

Scads of time!

CLAIRE.

What's the fuss?

(CLAIRE takes another moment to admire her hair; SIDNEY flexes his muscles; BRADLEY notices his toothbrush at last, quickly brushes his teeth, and then uses the toothbrush as a bookmark. ALL THREE toss on additional "dress" pieces and run offstage in any direction other than where SAMANTHA is standing. SAMANTHA goes back to her bed, picks up her stuffed cat and sadly hugs it. DRESSING MUSIC fades.)

SAMANTHA'S MOM *(enters)*. Samantha, honey, breakfast is ready.

SAMANTHA *(with a sorrowful sigh)*. I'm not very hungry.

SAMANTHA'S MOM *(worried and sympathetic)*. You're not?

SAMANTHA. I miss Corky.

SAMANTHA'S MOM. I know, sweetheart. Daddy and I miss him, too.

SAMANTHA. Do you think he'll ever come back?

SAMANTHA'S MOM. I really can't say, hon—

SAMANTHA. Are you sure we looked *everywhere*?

SAMANTHA'S MOM. Samantha, we don't have time to discuss this now. You don't want to be late on your very first day at your new school, do you?

SAMANTHA *(softly)*. Do you think he's dead?

SAMANTHA'S MOM. I hope not. *(Beat.)* Tell you what, sweetheart. If Corky doesn't come back soon, we'll get you a new cat—

SAMANTHA. I don't want a new cat!

SAMANTHA'S MOM. —whenever you're ready.

SAMANTHA. I'm not ready!

SAMANTHA'S MOM. That's fine. You don't have to be.

But let's talk about this when we have more time, okay?

SAMANTHA. Okay. (*SAMANTHA'S MOM exits. SAMANTHA kisses her stuffed cat and replaces it on her chair with a pat. CAT MUSIC begins. POEM.*)

Through the window
Sunlight streams
To warm the kitty
Where he dreams

And interrupt
His peaceful doze
With sunny kisses
On his nose.

(Beat, CAT MUSIC ends.)

Please be alive, Corky. Please come home.

(She closes her eyes for a moment, then places the stuffed cat back on the chair, and exits. A beat, then SCHOOL BUS HORN toots and SCHOOL BUS MUSIC begins. EVERYBODY ELSE enters downstage as MR. JONES, bops across the stage once or twice "driving a school bus" with a steering wheel and a honking horn. Ideally, the horn and the background MUSIC will complement one another in a playful way, particularly when MR. JONES brakes for frequent, sudden stops. During these bops and stops, OTHERS clear off blankets and

pillows and move chairs back to be used in the classroom scene. MR. JONES exits. SAMANTHA enters DR with her bookbag, sets up a BUS STOP sign, and stands glumly beside it, waiting for the bus, which is not at her corner yet, so she hasn't seen it. After a moment, BRADLEY enters L, his nose in a very large book, perhaps The Encyclopedia of Reptiles and Amphibians. He walks directly to the bus stop, only noticing SAMANTHA when he's nearly bumped into her. He is awkward but very endearing. SCHOOL BUS MUSIC fades.)

BRADLEY. Oh. *(Beat.)* Hello.

SAMANTHA *(shy, but he does seem awfully nice—)*. Hello.

BRADLEY. How are you?

SAMANTHA. I'm fine, thanks. How are you?

BRADLEY. I'm fine. *(Awkward pause, then—)* Are you waiting for the bus?

SAMANTHA. Uh-huh.

BRADLEY. Me, too.

SAMANTHA. Okay.

BRADLEY *(a beat, he'd like to say more, but—)*. I need to finish reading my book.

SAMANTHA. Okay.

BRADLEY *(indicating a spot across the stage)*. I think I'll sit over there until the bus comes.

SAMANTHA. Okay.

BRADLEY *(a hesitant beat, then—)*. Okay. *(He crosses stage, stops mid-way and turns to face SAMANTHA again, bursting with the news.)* Guess what!

SAMANTHA. What?

BRADLEY. There are three thousand, five hundred different kinds of frogs in the world!

SAMANTHA (*impressed*). I didn't know that!

BRADLEY (*taps his book*). It's true.

SAMANTHA. Wow!

BRADLEY (*quietly pleased with her reaction*). Yeah.
Wow.

(He sits down and after another interested glance at SAMANTHA, whose returned glance sets them both blushing, he reads his book. SCHOOL BUS MUSIC resumes. MR. JONES enters and bops across the stage once or twice, then exits. BRADLEY and SAMANTHA alter their waiting stances in some way, without seeing the "bus." CLAIRE enters UL, also with a bookbag, and skips down toward SAMANTHA. SCHOOL BUS MUSIC fades.)

CLAIRE. Hi!

SAMANTHA. Hello.

CLAIRE. You're new here, aren't you? I saw the moving van at your house!

SAMANTHA. Uh-huh.

CLAIRE. What grade are you in?

SAMANTHA. Fourth.

CLAIRE. Me, too! (*Beat.*) You've already missed three weeks of school.

SAMANTHA. I know. I'll never catch up.

CLAIRE. Sure you will. It's not that hard. And Miss Kerr is really nice.

SAMANTHA. I'm glad.

CLAIRE. My name's Claire. What's yours?

SAMANTHA. Samantha.

CLAIRE. Ooooooh! “*Samantha*”! That is *such a cool* name!
I wish *my* name were Samantha!

SAMANTHA. Claire’s a nice name...

CLAIRE. It’s okay. But it’s not *cool*, like *Samantha*. (*SAMANTHA shrugs, not sure what to say to that.*) You seem sad. Are you? (*As SAMANTHA turns away, to hide tears.*) I hope it’s not because you’re the new girl. Our school is fun. You’ll like it, I promise! (*Beat.*) Our class is a little goofy, but—

SAMANTHA. No, it’s not that...

CLAIRE. Don’t tell me! Do you have a new baby at your house, too? We have a new baby at our house, and she’s enough to make *anybody* sad. All she ever does is scream her head off—and sleep!

(BABY POEM MUSIC begins. EVERYBODY ELSE enters upstage as CLAIRE’s MOM, holding a “baby” and pacing nervously. Ideally, the baby is a hand puppet with a large head and very large mouth. CLAIRE and SAMANTHA do not see CLAIRE’s MOM, but CLAIRE mimics some of her actions as they perform POEM.)

CLAIRE (*cont’d*).

Every minute she’s awake,
Life is very different now,
Nothing seems the same somehow—

CLAIRE & CLAIRE’S MOM (*in stage whispers*). “Mustn’t wake the baby.”

CLAIRE.

They smile at every move she makes,

Croon about her pretty eyes,
Giggle when she wets or cries—

CLAIRE & CLAIRE'S MOM (*in stage whispers*). “Shhhh,
don't wake the baby.”

CLAIRE.

She has a room as big as mine,
Crammed with baby stuff galore,
And every day they buy her more.

CLAIRE & CLAIRE'S MOM (*in stage whispers*). “Please,
don't wake the baby.” (*CLAIRE's MOM turns away and
faces upstage. Puppet baby's head is visible over her
shoulder.*)

CLAIRE.

Until she came my life was fine,
All I wanted was a pup,
I'll be glad WHEN SHE GROWS UP!

*(Puppet baby's mouth opens wide. SOUND of baby
shrieking wildly, then CLAIRE's MOM spins around.)*

CLAIRE.

CLAIRE'S MOM.

Oh, no! I woke the baby! Oh, no! You woke the baby!

*(BABY shrieks a few more times, then CLAIRE's MOM
hurries off. BABY POEM MUSIC ends. BABY SOUND
fades.)*

SAMANTHA (*smiling a little, in spite of herself*). No,
that's not it, either. There's no new baby at our house.

CLAIRE. What, then?

SAMANTHA. It's...oh...nothing. It makes me sad to talk
about it. (*She nods toward BRADLEY.*) Who's that boy?