

Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Dramatic Publishing

EXCAVATING MOM

A One-Act Play
by
JAMES DeVITA



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

***** NOTICE *****

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalog and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to:

DRAMATIC PUBLISHING
P. O. Box 129, Woodstock, Illinois 60098

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved.

For performance of any songs and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MCMXCIX by
JAMES DeVITA

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(EXCAVATING MOM)

ISBN 0-87129-904-6

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the Play *must* give credit to the Author(s) of the Play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production. The name of the Author(s) *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author(s), if included in this book, may be used on all programs. *On all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

EXCAVATING MOM was originally produced in Wisconsin by First Stage Milwaukee.* It premiered March 31, 1995 under the direction of Rob Goodman. The set and costume design was by Danila Korogodsky; lighting design by Michael Rourke; sound design by Doug Hillard; movement for the dinosaurs by Ron Anderson; and the production stage manager was Peggy Link. The cast was as follows:

Mallory McKay	Sara Horn
Judith McKay	Jane Hanneman
Mrs. Helmsley	JoAnne Woodard
Mrs. Boyd	Carol Johnson
Owen	Ron Anderson
Jean	DeAnne Phillips
Allen	Steve McCormick
Dinosaurs	Steve McCormick, DeAnne Phillips, Ron Anderson, Carol Johnson

* Then entitled *Dinosaur!*

EXCAVATING MOM

A Play in One Act
For 3 Men and 4 Women, with doubling*

CHARACTERS:

MALLORY MCKAY . . . Judith's estranged daughter, 12-14
MS. JUDITH MCKAY paleontologist.
Director of the museum
MR. HELMSLEY . . . representative of the board of directors
of the museum
MRS. BOYD assistant to Judith
OWEN paleontologist
JEAN paleontologist
ALLEN paleontologist

*The characters Jean, Owen, Allen, and Mrs. Boyd double as dinosaurs.

SET: Single, flexible set

To Mallory and Lyndsey Senn

EXCAVATING MOM

SCENE ONE

SETTING: *The floor of the set is an excavation site within a museum. In the floor is a huge footprint, big enough to hold three or four people. It is strewn with tarps, tools, general excavation paraphernalia; maybe a table—strewn with charts, maps, etc.—and a crate for a seat for first scene with JUDITH and MR. HELMSLEY. Pieces of crushed shells may be visible. The footprint is unrecognizable as such to the audience and will remain so until the last moment of the play. It can then be revealed little by little as the play progresses by removing objects, but mustn't be recognizable until the end.*

AT RISE: *OWEN and JEAN are working inside the footprint.*

OWEN (*rising and groaning a bit*). My knees are gone. I actually have no knees Can I—? (*JEAN hands him a tool.*) Thanks. I got another mess of 'em over here.

JEAN. Are they any bigger?

OWEN. Nope. Same ol' thing.

JEAN. Great. You want to switch for a while?

OWEN (*crosses*). Thanks. (*They exchange tools.*) Here.

JEAN. Thanks. (*They settle into new positions.*)

BOTH. Ah. There we go. OK. (*Etc.*)

OWEN. Don't much matter where you move to, it all looks the same.

JEAN. I'm so sick of staring at a bunch of broken eggshells. (*Voices offstage.*) Shh! Here they come.

OWEN. Look busy there.

(*JUDITH MCKAY and MR. HELMSLEY enter mid-conversation.*)

MR. HELMSLEY. Scientists and scholars don't go to museums, Ms. McKay, and if they *do* they don't pay for their tickets. Who pays? Mommies and daddies.

OWEN. Here we go again.

JEAN. The monthly-mommy-daddy speech.

MR. HELMSLEY. That's right, mommies and daddies that have lots of cute little boys and girls. Little boys and girls who like to eat all day long at the snack bar and spend lots of money in the souvenir shop buying T-shirts and little plastic dinosaurs, OK? Now, as much as you may not *like* this, as much as it may call into question your scientific *integrity*—I hate that word—mommies and daddies *pay* for you to do what you do. So either they start coming in that door or you're on your way out.

JUDITH. But we're so close. Look at the evidence we just—

MR. HELMSLEY. Judith. Judith. You've been *so close* for four and a half years now.

JUDITH. But—

MR. HELMSLEY. *FOUR*—

(*MRS. BOYD enters.*)

MRS. BOYD. Excuse me, Ms. McKay?

JUDITH. What?

MRS. BOYD. I'm sorry to interrupt.

JUDITH. What is it?

MRS. BOYD. You have to sign this or we won't get the—
you know, the—

JUDITH (*snatching the order form*). Just give it to me.
(*Signing.*)

MRS. BOYD. You know, the—

JUDITH (*giving it back*). There. Now get back to work.
(*MRS. BOYD exits.*)

MR. HELMSLEY. —AND A *HALF* YEARS! That is
not—

JUDITH. Mr. Helmsley, these fossils have been buried for
sixty-five *million* years. It takes an enormous amount of
time to remove the shells without—

MR. HELMSLEY. Ms. McKay, sit down. Please. Sit. I've
been doing this a long time, OK? No, shh. Listen to me.
Number one: Kids today do not want to see a bunch of
broken eggshells. No matter how important a discovery
it may be... *they don't care*. Number two: They *do* want
to see... what... what do they want to see? Come on, help
me out here... what? Begins with a T... A big T...

JUDITH. Tyrannosaurus Rex.

MR. HELMSLEY. *Thank you*. They want to see a T-Rex
munching on a Brontosaurus or picking his teeth with
the horns of a Triceratops? They want spectacle, they
want entertainment—you listening to me?—they want
Steven Spielberg! Didn't you see the movie?!

JUDITH. Everybody has a T-Rex.

MR. HELMSLEY. Excuse me, *excuse me*, everybody but
us. We don't have a T-Rex. There are three museums

within an hour's drive of here that each have a T-Rex—and we don't. And those little kiddies are gonna tell their mommies and daddies to drive to see the T-Rex or they're gonna kick and scream, and believe me—I've got two of my own—Mommy or Daddy's going to take them. That is not a good thing.

JUDITH. Six months. Just give me six more months. If nothing—

MR. HELMSLEY. I can't do that.

JUDITH. Why not? All I'm asking for is—

MR. HELMSLEY. Look, everybody has been very patient. You've had more than enough time. So just stop digging for this Megameea, Magamma—

JUDITH. Megamaiasaur.

MR. HELMSLEY. Whatever the thing is, and dig us up a Tyrannosaurus Rex! Or at least something with *teeth*. Big ones. We have nothing with teeth in the whole museum. Got a bunch of cutesy herbivores. They're about as *interesting* as vegetarians.

(MRS. BOYD re-enters with a crate.)

MRS. BOYD. Ms. McKay?

JUDITH. Put it over there.

MRS. BOYD. Where?

JUDITH. Right over there! (After placing the crate, MRS. BOYD exits. To MR. HELMSLEY.) If I find what I'm looking for it'll make a T-Rex look like a poodle. There has never been a dinosaur even imagined to be this big. Look at what we've found so far.

MR. HELMSLEY. I've seen everything—

JUDITH. Just give me a second. (*Showing her charts.*)

Now, we know that dinosaurs always build their nests the length of *one dinosaur* of their species away from each other, right? Now, look at this ... the nests we've uncovered here ... *one hundred and eighty-five feet apart!* That's five or six times bigger than any Maiasaur ever discovered. And look at this, this is what a normal footprint of a Maiasaur looks like. Meg would have one four to five times as big as this!

MR. HELMSLEY. *Meg?*

JUDITH. The Megamaiasaur.

MR. HELMSLEY. You've been on this project too long.

JUDITH. *This is the biggest dinosaur that's ever existed.*

MR. HELMSLEY. You have no proof. Watch my lips ... *no proof.*

JUDITH. How do you explain the eggs then? For these to be normal Maiasaur eggs there would have to be hundreds of them in one nest. That's *unheard* of. These have to be eggs of some enormous size!

MR. HELMSLEY. Then why don't you just put one together and prove it.

JUDITH. The shells are crushed too small. But that's the most amazing thing. The eggs were crushed into tiny pieces because the babies stayed in the nests walking around on them while they were growing. Just like birds do. Do you know what that means?

MR. HELMSLEY. They were fat babies, what?

(MALLORY enters, suitcase in hand, accompanied by MRS. BOYD, who is carrying some of MALLORY's things. They wait off to the side for a bit. They should be

settled and still by JUDITH's line: "...left their babies to grow up by themselves.")

JUDITH. It means that the Megamaiasaurus did not abandon her children. Up until now everyone's thought that dinosaurs laid their eggs and then left their babies to grow up by themselves. But the ones we found had to have been in their nests for months or the shells wouldn't be crushed so small. *Somebody had to bring them food!* Don't you see? The Megamaiasaur is the first dinosaur we know of that mothered her children.

MRS. BOYD. Excuse me—

JUDITH (*ignoring MRS. BOYD*). She brought back food for them and stayed with them until they were big enough to go out by themselves.

MRS. BOYD. Excuse me—

MR. HELMSLEY. Maybe they took a walk, got some food on their own, and then went *back!*

JUDITH. No—we've found fossilized scraps of what they fed on, twigs, leaves...all come from trees. The *tops* of trees that babies couldn't possibly have reached. It had to be an adult that brought it back.

MRS. BOYD. Ms. McKay?

JUDITH. Over there.

MRS. BOYD. Pardon me?

JUDITH. Whatever it is, stick it over there! (*To MR. HELMSLEY.*) Don't you see what this means!?! This is *proof* that the Megamaiasaur was a real mother, a *good* mother.

MR. HELMSLEY. No, that's not *proof*. That's what we'd call a *theory*. That's what we'd call a *really neat idea* that you can't prove. And I am not going in front of the

board of directors to ask for money again for your *really neat idea*. Because I have a *really neat* job that I like and I want to keep, OK? And you better start thinking that way too.

JUDITH. We could make history here!

MR. HELMSLEY. You're going to *be* history. (*Beat.*) You have one week.

JUDITH. One week?! You can't do that!

MR. HELMSLEY. No, but the bank can. And the board of directors can. Hey, we're not the bad guys here. We've given you every chance. You have one week to show me some actual proof of a Meyeeg—Mayhaga—Megameyo—

JUDITH. Megamaiasaur.

MR. HELMSLEY. —whatever—or I'm shutting you down.

JUDITH. Please don't do this.

MR. HELMSLEY. It's out of my hands. Dig us up a T-Rex, or we'll find somebody who will. Have a good day.

MRS. BOYD. Uh... Ms. McKay?

JUDITH. What is it now? (*MRS. BOYD gestures toward MALLORY. JUDITH sees MALLORY for the first time.*)

MRS. BOYD. These are, uh... you don't need to sign anything. They're, uh... her things.

JUDITH. I completely forgot she was coming.

MRS. BOYD. Yes... well... she's here.

JUDITH. Hello, Mallery.

MALLORY. Hello, Judith.

JUDITH (*to JEAN and OWEN*). What are you two looking at? Get back to work. (*To MALLORY.*) Do you remember where your room is?

MALLORY. Yes. (*JUDITH heads offstage. MALLORY heads off in the opposite direction.*)