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*Dramatic Publishing*

A Musical Play In One Act

# **the fabulous fable factory**

Book by Joseph Robinette  
Music by Thomas Tierney  
Lyrics by Joseph Robinette  
and Thomas Tierney



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(THE FABULOUS FABLE FACTORY)

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**THE FABULOUS FABLE FACTORY** was first produced by the Glassboro Summer Theatre at Playhouse 121, Glassboro State College, New Jersey, with the following cast:

**MONROE** . . . . . *Patrick Kelly*  
**MR. AESOP** . . . . . *Jeff Carey*  
**STRAUCEY** . . . . . *Deborah Barnes*  
**PLUTO** . . . . . *Julian J. Terzini*  
**CASSIE** . . . . . *Polly K. Davis*  
**WADSWORTH** . . . . . *Greg Fellows*  
**GRETEL** . . . . . *Katie Bond*  
**FELIX** . . . . . *Gary Lawrence*  
**EMMA** . . . . . *Christine Carter*

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**THE FABULOUS FABLE FACTORY**  
*A Musical Play in One Act*  
**For Five Men and Four Women**

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**CHARACTERS**

**MONROE**

**MR. AESOP**

**STRAUCEY**

**PLUTO**

**CASSIE**

**WADSWORTH**

**GRETEL**

**FELIX**

**EMMA**

**TIME:**     *Now.*

**PLACE:**    *Somewhere . . . new.*

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# **the fabulous fable factory**

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**SCENE:** The interior of an old, seemingly abandoned, factory. Through high windows and a skylight, shafts of diffused light dimly illuminate the factory. Extending from one of the high windows to the stage level is a ladder. Barely visible are the parts of a "machine" which is actually seven actors dressed in tights. Each is frozen in a position which suggests he is a part of the whole, yet he assumes a different pose from the others. Scattered around the factory are various properties and costume pieces which will be used by the "machine" when the fables are enacted throughout the play. Also strewn about are old boxes and trunks, containing more props, sheets of paper resembling parchment, and two-dimensional factory pieces such as cogs and gears. At L is an oversized lever which is used to activate the "machine." At UR is a large, partially hidden, burlap blanket which appears to be covering an object.

**AT RISE OF CURTAIN:** A voice is heard singing in the distance. It belongs to MONROE, a twelve-year-old who is "every inch a boy" -- attractive, but not cute, clever, but not coy. After the first few lines of the song, he appears outside a high window, raises it carefully, and slowly makes his way down a ladder and into the factory. During the song, he wanders with wide-eyed

amazement among the "machinery parts" and other factory fascinations. NOTE: The song may be pre-recorded and begun when the curtain rises, playing over Monroe's discovery of the factory.)

(SONG: 'NEW')

**MONROE.**

New, that's what I want to do.  
Find a place to go to;  
Somewhere I haven't been,  
Somehow I can get in-to

New, all along I just knew  
Something new would come through.  
Just gotta know it will,  
Look everywhere until  
You're seeing castles and kingdoms,  
Pure mystical magic visions.  
You're being wizards and warriors,  
People you've never met  
In places where you'll be yet.

New, that's where I'm gonna do  
All that I've wanted to.  
When things are getting old  
You've gotta get a hold on  
New.

(On the last word of the song, MONROE inadvertently leans against the lever at L. Suddenly, the stage lights come up full as the "machine" is activated. Loud, discordant music accompanies vocalized "industrial" sounds by the parts which begin an assembly line movement. Each part has its own individual mechanical movement,

yet there is a definite wholeness about its operation. Terrified, MONROE rushes toward the ladder, but cannot seem to get up. He hurriedly searches for another exit until he sees the burlap blanket begin to move. He is panic-stricken when he notices the old, but sprightly, bearded AESOP emerge from under the blanket and rush toward the lever. MONROE runs in the opposite direction and hides behind a box in a corner.)

- AESOP. What's happening? What's going on here? Who turned on that machine? I have to stop it -- no time to lose. (As he shuts down the "machine," the stage lights dim to half.) There. Now, who's in here? Who turned on my machine?
- MONROE (meekly, from the corner where he is hiding). Me, sir.
- AESOP. Who are you?
- MONROE. Just me, sir.
- AESOP. Where are you?
- MONROE. Here, sir.
- AESOP (spying MONROE; going to him). Ah, so there you are. How did you get in here?
- MONROE. I . . . I don't know.
- AESOP. And why did you come in here?
- MONROE. I'm afraid it's kind of hard to explain, sir.
- AESOP. Well, I think you'd better try to explain.
- MONROE. I'm not exactly sure how I got here or why.
- AESOP. You must have some idea.
- MONROE. Well, I . . . I guess it all started this morning when I was at home doing my chores.
- AESOP. Chores?
- MONROE. Yes, like -- cleaning my room, raking the leaves, cutting the lawn -- you know -- chores.



**AESOP.** And?

**MONROE.** Well, I got tired of doing all those things. They get old, if you know what I mean, so I decided I'd try to find something . . . new for a change. I started walking into the woods near my home. Then suddenly I was here. I don't really know how it happened.

**AESOP.** Hummm. You say you were looking for something new?

**MONROE.** Yes, sir.

**AESOP.** Well, I'm afraid you'll have to look elsewhere. This place is very old.

**MONROE.** But it's new to me.

**AESOP.** Are you sure you weren't just snooping around -- trying to cause trouble?

**MONROE.** Oh, no, sir. Honest.

**AESOP.** Then why did you turn on that machine?

**MONROE.** It was an accident. Really it was.

**AESOP (after a moment).** Oh, very well. I suppose you're telling the truth. But you should be more careful in strange places.

**MONROE.** Yes, sir.

**AESOP (moving to the "machine").** This old machine is in pretty good condition, but it's a mite stubborn. It doesn't want anyone else working it except me. That's why it made such a racket when you turned it on.

**MONROE (examining the "machine").** Gosh. It really is a fascinating machine. It looks almost . . . alive. What does it do?

**AESOP.** Nothing now. A long time ago it made stories.

**MONROE.** Stories?

**AESOP.** Well, not just ordinary stories, but special stories -- with morals.

**MONROE.** What are morals?

**AESOP.** That's not easy to answer. Actually, you need to hear a moral to really know what it is.

**MONROE.** Why doesn't the machine make stories any more?

**AESOP.** Can't.

**MONROE.** Why not?

**AESOP.** It's missing a very important part. Fits right over there.

**MONROE.** Can't you buy a new part?

**AESOP.** I ordered one, but it hasn't come yet. Don't know what could be holding it up.

**MONROE.** When did you order it?

**AESOP.** Let's see. Come November, it'll be exactly two thousand years ago.

**MONROE (incredulously).** What?

**AESOP.** Well . . . the mails are a little slow these days.

**MONROE.** Excuse me for asking, sir, but how old are you?

**AESOP.** Two thousand four hundred and thirty-nine.

**MONROE.** Two thousand four hundred -- wow! That's a lot of birthday parties.

**AESOP.** Truth to tell, birthday parties aren't as important to me now that I'm reaching middle-age.

**MONROE.** Are you really two thousand four hundred and thirty-nine years old?

**AESOP.** Do I look it?

**MONROE.** Oh, no, sir. You don't look a day over . . . a thousand.

**AESOP (flattered).** Nice of you to say so. Well, I enjoyed our little chat, but now I'm afraid it's time for you to go.

**MONROE.** Can't I stay a little longer?

**AESOP.** I'm surprised I let you remain this long. We don't ordinarily allow visitors here. Well, good-bye . . . uh . . . uh . . . did you tell me your name?

**MONROE.** It's Monroe.

**AESOP.** Monroe. A pleasure meeting you, Monroe.

**MONROE.** And it was a pleasure meeting you, Mr. . . . uh . . . Mr. . . . uh . . .

**AESOP.** Aesop. Aloysius A. Aesop.

**MONROE.** Good-bye, Mr. Aesop. (They shake hands.) And I'm sorry I came here without being invited.

**AESOP.** It was an honest mistake, I'm sure.

**MONROE.** Well -- it's easy to make an honest mistake, but it's not a mistake being honest. (He turns to go.) Good-bye. (AESOP waves as MONROE begins climbing the ladder. Suddenly, he does a double-take.)

**AESOP.** Uh, Monroe, just a minute.

**MONROE.** Yes, Mr. Aesop?

**AESOP.** Would you say that again?

**MONROE.** You mean, "good-bye"?

**AESOP.** No, no. The part about being honest.

**MONROE.** Let's see. (He tries to recall.) It's easy to make an honest mistake, but it isn't a mistake being honest.

**AESOP.** Where did you hear that before?

**MONROE.** Nowhere. I just made it up.

**AESOP.** That, Monroe, is a moral.

**MONROE.** It is?

**AESOP.** It is -- and a pretty good one at that. Tell me, do you know any other morals?

**MONROE.** I'm not sure. I still don't understand what a moral is.

**AESOP.** If you listened closely to a narrative, do you suppose you could illustrate its intent?

**MONROE** (a bit puzzled). Do what to its what?

**AESOP** (a little bigger). If you were to hear a tale, do you think you could tag it with a truth?

**MONROE** (very confused). Do what with a what?

**AESOP** (expansive). If I tell you a story, can you tell me what it means?

**MONROE.** I . . . I guess I could try. (AESOP takes him by the shoulders and pushes him toward the "machine.")

**AESOP.** Stand right over here, my boy, and we'll

put you to the test.

MONROE (afraid). But . . . but I . . .

AESOP. All parts in place.

MONROE. Mr. Aesop, I think I'd better . . .

AESOP (going to the lever). Turn on the machine.

(MONROE is firmly grasped in place by one of the "parts.")

MONROE (with great alarm). I'll be electrocuted!

AESOP. Let The Fabulous Fable Factory begin!

(AESOP throws the lever and the "machine" begins to move to loud, somewhat discordant, music. The music and sounds this time, however, are more pleasant and melodious than when the "machine" was previously activated. The lights have also come up full, and the factory is in smooth operation. All the while, the trembling MONROE holds his hands over his face, afraid to look. Finally, as the movement and music fade, a single sheet of parchment paper, which has been passed down the assembly line, is mechanically handed to MONROE who drops it to the floor. The factory "parts" assume their original positions when the music stops.)

AESOP (going to MONROE; picking up the sheet of paper). Ah, here we are. This looks like a good story. It needs only one thing to make it special. So, Monroe, all you have to do is . . . (He looks at MONROE who is still holding his hands before his face.) Monroe! What's the matter?

MONROE. You mean I wasn't electrocuted?

AESOP (laughing). Don't be silly! This factory was built twenty-three hundred years before electricity was discovered. Shocking, isn't it! (A big laugh. MONROE doesn't understand.)

**AESOP** stops laughing and clears his throat.)

Now, **Monroe**, are you ready to hear the story?

**MONROE**. I . . . I guess so.

**AESOP**. Very well. Sit right over here. (**MONROE** is led to the periphery of the downstage area, and he is positioned in a way so that he becomes the audience for the enactment of the story. **AESOP** then moves to the opposite side of the downstage area.) Listen very carefully, **Monroe**, and hear what it has to say. I think you're going to like this one. It's all about "The Country Mouse and the City Mouse."

(The members of the factory hurriedly gather properties and don costume pieces as they set up for the first fable which requires: **REGINALD** -- the city mouse; **MILTY** -- the country mouse; a **POSTMAN** and two **CATS**. The remaining members are the **TRAIN**. [The **POSTMAN** and two **CATS** may also join the train by removing their "character" pieces.] Each **MOUSE** places a wooden box at **LC** and **RC** respectively. They sit at their "homes." The other characters remain upstage away from the action until they are needed.)

**AESOP** (reading from paper as the action unfolds).

"A city mouse once received a letter from his cousin in the country." (The **POSTMAN** delivers a letter to **REGINALD**.)

**POSTMAN**. Special delivery here for a Mr. Reginald L. Rodent the Third.

**REGINALD** (a bit stuffy, but likable). I am Reginald Rodent. (He takes the letter.) Thank you. (The **POSTMAN** leaves as **REGINALD** reads the letter. **MILTY**'s voice is heard.)

**MILTY** (a heavy rural accent). "Dear Cousin

**Reginald:** Why don't y'all jest pack up sometime and come on out here fer a visit in the country. We'd shore love to have you. Rurally yours, Milty. "

**REGINALD.** That's very nice of him. The country isn't always well-educated but it's certainly well-ventilated, and I can use some fresh air. Yes -- I will visit my cousin, Milty Mouse.

**AESOP.** "So Reginald packed his bag and went for a weekend in the country." (The TRAIN shuffles by Reginald's house. He grabs onto the "caboose" as they head for the country, winding around the stage until they arrive at Milty's. Music begins. The TRAIN begins singing from the moment it forms until it deposits REGINALD, after which it inconspicuously returns upstage.)

(SONG: "METROLINER")

**TRAIN.**

Wanna see your cousin in the country  
Or a natty city slicker?  
Metroliner!  
Ride the super choo-choo,  
And you're guaranteed to get there so much  
quicker.  
Metroliner!

(Spoken by one person or the entire train.)  
Nothin' finer!

(REGINALD knocks three times and MILTY mimes opening the door.)

**MILTY.** Howdy, Reginald.

**REGINALD.** Good day, Milty.

**MILTY.** Awful nice to see ya.

**REGINALD.** The feeling is mutual, I'm sure.

**MILTY.** Huh?

**REGINALD.** It's good to see you, too.

**MILTY.** Oh. Set a spell? (**MILTY** seats **REGINALD** on the box.)

**REGINALD.** Thank you.

**MILTY.** Hungry?

**REGINALD.** Somewhat.

**MILTY.** Well then, I'll jest rustle up a tad of grub.

**AESOP.** "The country mouse had little to offer, but he gave freely of his meager food." (**MILTY** offers **REGINALD** several dishes. These may be real or mimed.)

**REGINALD** (with reservation as he tastes a dish).  
What's this?

**MILTY.** Buttermilk and turnip greens.

**REGINALD** (tasting another dish, which he dislikes).  
What's this?

**MILTY.** Hominy grits and rutabaga jam.

**REGINALD** (almost green as he samples another dish). What's this?

**MILTY.** Pig's feet and 'possum pie.

**REGINALD** (verbalizing his distaste). I do not wish to offend you, Cousin Milty, but how can you put up with such awful food as this. . . (Looking around.) . . . and live in such a dilapidated house?

**MILTY.** Easy -- it's all I got.

**REGINALD.** Come with me and I will show you how to live. When you've been in the city a week, you'll never want to return to the country again.

**MILTY** (as **REGINALD** pulls him out the door). Now, Reginald, I'm not sure I really . . .

**AESOP.** "But before Milty knew what had happened, he was heading for the city." (Again the **TRAIN** swings into motion and carries the two passengers into the city. Music begins again.)

## (SONG: "METROLINER")

TRAIN.

Wanna see your cousin in the country  
Or a natty city slicker?  
Metroliner!  
Ride the super choo-choo  
And you're guaranteed to get there so much  
quicker.  
Metroliner!  
(Spoken.)  
Nothin' finer!

AESOP. "They arrived late at night." (REGINALD indicates that they must be quiet. They walk in circles around the box as though they are climbing stairs.)

REGINALD. You will want some refreshments after our long journey.

AESOP. ". . . said the polite Reginald as he took his cousin into the grand dining room where they found what was left of a fine feast."

MILTY. My goodness gracious -- look at that food. I ain't never . . .

REGINALD (correcting him). Haven't ever -- we're in the city, you know.

MILTY. Haven't ever seen such a spread like this before in my life. (He samples food, either real or mimed.) What's this?

REGINALD. Chocolates.

MILTY. My, my. What's this?

REGINALD. Caviar.

MILTY. My, my. What's this?

REGINALD. Champagne.

MILTY. My, my. What's this? (Two CATS suddenly appear behind the mice.)

REGINALD. Cats!



**MILTY.** My, my! (A mad chase follows. Just as the mice are about to be caught, two factory members appear with their four arms connected in a circle. The mice jump through the circle which "snaps shut" when the cats approach.)

**AESOP.** "Finally, after the long chase, the mice found a hole where they stayed until the cats became tired and went away." (The CATS stretch, yawn and crawl out of the scene. Moments later, the mice open the "hole," look around and creep out quietly.)

**MILTY.** Good-bye, Cousin Reginald. I . . . I 'preciate yore hospitality.

**REGINALD.** What? Leaving so soon?

**MILTY.** Yeah, I've seen about all of the city I need to see.

**AESOP.** "So Milty waved good-bye to his cousin and was off to the country again." (The TRAIN has formed and has begun to sing under Aesop's speech. It picks up MILTY and returns him to his home.)