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Family Plays

THE MYSTERY OF THE
PEANUT-BUTTER SPACEMEN

Mystery comedy by
Phil Gilbreath



THE MYSTERY OF THE **PEANUT-BUTTER SPACEMEN**

The Mystery of the Peanut-Butter Spacemen was originally produced by the Sager Creek Arts Center in Siloam Springs, Arkansas, where it won the Sager Creek Arts Center Playwriting Contest. The cast is flexible. Many roles may be played by men or women. Author Phil Gilbreath is the resident playwright for the Intermission Dramatic Arts Group in Siloam Springs. Gilbreath says that he “strives to write characters that the audience can connect with and that the performers can enjoy portraying.”

Mystery/Comedy. By Phil Gilbreath. *Cast: 8 actors, flexible.* *The Mystery of the Peanut Butter Spacemen* follows the Fedora Club, a group of junior-high friends who meet once a week for “secret club stuff.” During one of the meetings, a strange message interrupts the program on their radio: “Rednaxela to Ittessor. Please acknowledge. This is the Mother Ship.” Ittessor’s voice answers: “Do you have instructions for the Away Team?” Rednaxela’s voice: “Affirmative. We must have more specimens—tonight. Collect four quadrupeds and deliver them to the landing site. Contact Cirrem to assist you.” Ittessor: “I require more fuel for the biped. Bring four jars of peanut butter with you.” Peanut butter? What’s going on? Is this a voice from a UFO? It presents a mystery too good to pass up, and soon the kids find themselves investigating the relationship between alien life forms, pet-nappings and ... peanut butter?! Are they in danger? They are! This well-plotted comedy will keep your audiences amazed and amused. Who are Rednaxela, Ittessor and Cirrem? One of the club members deciphers the names—can you? *Set: secret club house. Time: now. Approximate running time: 50 to 60 minutes. Code: MN7.*

Family Plays

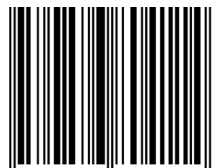
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www.FamilyPlays.com

ISBN-13 978-0-88680-411-4



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A ONE-ACT COMEDY
BY PHIL GILBREATH

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(THE MYSTERY OF THE PEANUT-BUTTER SPACEMEN)

ISBN: 978-0-88680-411-4

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THE MYSTERY OF THE PEANUT-BUTTER SPACEMEN

Characters:

THE FEDORA CLUB

LIZ GRIFFIN: The leader of the “Fedora Club,” because at 14 years and 8 months old, she is the oldest. She’s bright and eager and takes no “guff” from anyone, especially boys.

CHAD PENNER: Also 14 years old (but only 4 months) and the grudging second in command. He’s an avid athlete and the rambunctious member of the group, barely able to sit still for more than a few seconds. He often speaks before he thinks—if he thinks at all.

TASHA “SNIFFER” DUBOIS: A 13-year-old allergy sufferer who is forced to speak through her nose. She is always intent on the latest news. When she can be pulled away from her papers and magazines, she is a very analytical thinker.*

SIMON JACOBS: The youngest (12) of the group. He dresses in the latest teen fashions, has a slow Southern drawl, and is a peace maker at heart. He says he loves rock music and is taking heavy metal guitar lessons. Secretly, he is taking violin lessons and is a lover of classical music.*

CUTTER DRYDEN: 13 and the new member of the club. He is quiet, preferring to speak in single, mono-syllabic words, but has a definite mischievous quality about him. He is capable of articulate “speeches” when the situation calls for it.*

THE ALIENS

(NOTE: Each of the three aliens needs a
distinctive alien voice and mannerisms)

REDNAXELA: Shrill, determined.

CIRREM: He is on the large side because of his fondness for anything sweet.*

ITTESSOR: A bit of a bumbler and a coward at heart.*

*May be played by male or female

Scene

The “secret” club-house of the Fedora Club

ABOUT THE PLAY

“The Mystery of the Peanut-Butter Spacemen” follows the Fedora Club, a group of junior high friends who meet once a week for “secret club stuff.” During one of their meetings the members pick up a strange message on their battered radio. It presents a mystery too good to pass up, and soon the kids find themselves investigating the relationship between alien life forms, pet-nappings, and...peanut butter?!

The play won the Sager Creek Arts Center Playwriting Contest.

The play is flexible. As indicated by the original cast, many roles may be played by males or females.

The author is the resident playwright for the Intermission Dramatic Arts Group in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. He says that he “strives to write characters that the audience can connect with and that the performers can enjoy portraying.”

Playing time is 50-60 minutes.

Originally produced by the Sager Creek Arts Center, Siloam Springs, Arkansas, under the direction of Jeni Bailey, with the following cast:

“THE FEDORA CLUB”

Liz Griffin.....	Cara Pettie
Monica Penner.....	Cecillea Pond
Tasha “Sniffer” Dubois.....	Natalie Pond
Simon Jacobs.....	Stephen Sbanotto
Cutter Dryden.....	Skye Williams

“THE ALIENS”

Rednaxela.....	Tammy Koschnitzke
Cirrem.....	Carrie Brown
Ittessor.....	Robert Koschnitzke

Crew

Director.....	Jeni Bailey
Assistant Director.....	Brandi Williams
Set Design and Construction.....	The Cast
Lighting Execution.....	Elaine Sbanotto

PRODUCTION NOTES*Properties*

News magazine—Tasha
Watches—Liz, Cutter
Blindfold—Cutter
Hat (fedora) on desk
Notebook—Simon
Paper and pencils—Club Members
Old radio, chalk
Doughnut—Merric
Jump rope

Costumes

THE KIDS: The only special considerations for the kids are these: Simon needs to appear to be a “metal-head” type with the appropriate clothes of a teen “rebel.” Cutter should wear a cap to hide alien antennas until the end. Also, since the club only meets once a week, a change of clothes between Scenes 1 and 2 would be in order, but don't delay the play—a change of blouse, jacket, etc. will suffice.

THE ALIENS: Make up the wildest and most alien thing you can afford!!! Just make sure that the head covering is easily removed for the “unmasking.”

Sound Effects

The only special sound effects are those that supposedly come from the radio: static, hard rock music, a piercing sound, beeps, electronic whistling.

Set

The play takes place in the club house of the Fedora Club. The club house is filled with the clutter of youth (books, magazines, posters, junk food, etc.). Necessary to the plot are a beat-up desk, and a chalkboard. The club house has one door, a window that shows the outside, and a “secret” crawl-through escape door hidden behind the desk.

THE MYSTERY OF THE PEANUT-BUTTER SPACEMEN

Scene 1

[The Curtain rises and we see LIZ and CHAD nose to nose in an argument. TASHA sits on the floor, bracketed by the two combatants, but oblivious to them as she reads a news magazine]

LIZ. ...And if you think for one minute that I'm going to let you...

CHAD. Hey, Chick! I'm just as much a leader in this group as you are!

LIZ. Who are you calling "chick"? *[Shoves Chad]* And don't forget, buster, I'm 4 months older than you!

CHAD. *[Hesitating]* So????? *[TASHA sneezes explosively]*

LIZ & CHAD. *[Absently]* God bless you!

TASHA. *[Without looking up from reading]* Dank you.

LIZ. *[Continuing argument]* So...I'm the oldest, so I'm the leader of everybody, including the *other* leader.

CHAD. *[Beginning to whine]* I just want to bring *one*, Liz! Sheesh, it's not like I want to bring all of them at once!

LIZ. No! You know the rules!

CHAD. But I don't want to make them a new member of the club. I just want to show off what we do at our meetings!

LIZ. No! You can't bring *any* of your girlfriends to the meetings. You bring one and before you know it they all want to come and gawk at us! *[Suddenly suspicious]* How many girls are you "going with" anyhow?

TASHA. Fourteen.

LIZ. Fourteen???? What a creep! How can you date fourteen girls at one time?

CHAD. *[Smugly]* They don't mind. I just let 'em wear my letter-jacket once in a while and they're all happy.

LIZ. *[With disgust]* You're a Neanderthal, you know it?

CHAD. *[Smugly]* I've never even been to Europe, much less the Netherlands!

LIZ. *[Confused]* What????

TASHA. *[Talking through her stopped-up nose]* I believe he's made the mistake of *dinking* dat de residents of de Nederlands are referred to as Neandertalls.

LIZ. What a dunce! A Neanderthal is a caveman, Einstein!

CHAD. *[Pouting]* Well, whatever. You shouldn't be calling me names all the time anyway. It's not nice.

LIZ. *[Impatiently looking at watch]* Where is Simon? He's fifteen minutes late!

TASHA. He's bringin' dat new kid, Cutter Dryen.

LIZ. I know, Sniffer. I was talking to myself. *[CHAD opens his mouth to make a wisecrack and LIZ turns on him]* Don't even think about it, smart guy.

[The club "KNOCK" on the door interrupts LIZ's lecture. She walks over and returns the "answering-knock." SIMON enters, leading a blindfolded CUTTER]

LIZ. It's about time. Why were you late? Did you stop at the record store to listen to that new heavy metal CD *[update when necessary]* by Screaming and Stomping or something?

SIMON. You try leadin' a guy down the street with a blindfold on his face. I wasn't about to hold his hand or anything!

LIZ. Why didn't you just cut through Mrs. Alexander's backyard like always?

SIMON. I did. At least tried. But she came yellin' out of the house and said she didn't want us crossin' her property any more.

LIZ. That's odd. I could understand if we had bothered something, but...*[has a sudden thought]* Chad!

CHAD. What?

LIZ. Did you do something to make Mrs. Alexander angry?

CHAD. NO! How can you say a thing like that? *[EVERYONE gives Chad a suspicious look]* Look, I didn't do anything. *[Sheepishly]* At least not this time.

LIZ. *[Threatening]* We'll talk later, Chad.

TASHA. Well, take off hid blindfold, Dimon, and begin de introductions.

SIMON. Oh yeah. Sorry, Cutter. *[SIMON removes the blindfold and CUTTER looks about the clubhouse with curiosity. SIMON announces very officially]* Gang, this is Cutter Dryden. He's 13 years old, likes comic books, "Star Trek," and Peanut-Butter Creamfilled doughnuts at Mr. Rossetti's bakery. Cutter, this is the gang. As your sponsorin' member of the Fedora Club, I welcome you.

LIZ. I'm Liz Griffin, and I'm the leader of...

CHAD. *[Pushing Liz aside]* ONE of the leaders, thank you very much. Chad Penner, the *other* leader of the club.

TASHA. I'm Dasha Dubois. *[Sniff]*

LIZ. Otherwise known as "Sniffer."

SIMON. We call her that because she always has allergies. *And* she is always sniffin' out news. You know, readin' papers and magazines and stuff.

CUTTER. *[Waves casually]* Hey!

LIZ. Simon, since you're Cutter's sponsor, you can give him the pledge.

SIMON. OK. *[Gets fedora off the desk and puts it on Cutter's head]* Cutter, raise your right hand. Do you pledge to have fun, be courageous, and try your best to be creative on a kid's small allowance?

CUTTER. Yep.

SIMON. Then I proclaim you a member in good standin' of the Fedora Club.

ALL. Amen!

TASHA. At dis time, Cutter, it's cusdomary to say a few words.

CUTTER. *[Thinking momentarily, then shrugging]* Cool!

LIZ. *[Waiting expectantly for Cutter to say more, then looking at Tasha and shrugging]* Well...let's get started. Now, Cutter, this is how we operate around here. We meet once a week on Friday afternoons. Everyone comes with an idea for something to do and then we write them down on pieces of paper. After everyone has written down their idea, *[retrieves fedora from Cutter's head]* we put them all inside this hat and draw one out. Whatever is on the paper, is what we do for the afternoon. Got all that?

CUTTER. Yep.

LIZ. Good. So, let's get on with it. Everyone get some paper and pencils

SIMON. *[Tearing paper out of his notebook]* Here, Cutter, I got extra for you.

TASHA. Bay I bake a suggestion?

LIZ. Sure, Sniffer. What is it?

TASHA. Cutter bight have a better idea...uh...uh...*[sniffs several times as if a sneeze is coming on, but it never materializes]* whew...of whad de club norms are if we all state our ideas oud loud as we write 'em down.

CHAD. Good idea, Sniffer! I'll go first.

LIZ. Chad... You know the rules. Whoever has a brand new idea is the one who goes first.

SIMON. Yeah. You made that one up yourself when you wanted to be the first to taste my mom's double Dutch apple pie

CHAD. OK, OK! Can't a guy be enthusiastic?

LIZ. OK, Sniffer. What's your idea?

TASHA. *[Writes as she talks]* Terrible Tabloids. Cutter, dat's where we go to da superbarket, go in one at a dime and buy a tabloid, and den see who can find da absolutely dumbest story. *[CUTTER shakes his head thoughtfully]*

CHAD. OK. My turn.

LIZ. *[Trying to be patient]* Alright, Chad. Go.

CHAD. Obstacle course. We have this really cool course set up in the woods behind my house. We see who can get through it the fastest. Swinging from ropes, climbing trees, stuff like that. I usually win, but everyone has a blast. *[LIZ and TASHA exchange glances and roll their eyes]*

LIZ. Simon?

SIMON. *[Writing]* Channel surfin'. We get the radio out and try to find the weirdest station on AM. Last time we did that we listened to a whole show full of polka music. *[The GROUP groans in mock dismay and then laughs]*

LIZ. Here's my idea. 1943. *[Writes down date]* That means we go over to see Granny Snuff. She's the oldest woman in town. 93 years old and can outrun Chad. Loves to talk about the past. We name a year and she tells us the most incredible stories you've ever heard from that year.

SIMON. So, Cutter, that give you any ideas?

CUTTER. Yep. *[Writes down idea before speaking]* Golden oldies.

SIMON. Cool! You mean listenin' to records or something?

CUTTER. Yep. Grandpa's.

LIZ. Wow! From what years?

CUTTER. '30's.

CHAD. I didn't even know they made records back then!

TASHA. Big bands, Chad.

CUTTER. Right.

LIZ. *[Studying Cutter]* You don't talk much, do you?

CUTTER. *[Shrugging]* Nope.

LIZ. OK... Well. Let's fold our ideas and put them in the fedora. *[LIZ*

passes around the fedora and they drop their papers into the fedora. SIMON, the last person to get the hat, holds it out to Cutter]

SIMON. Cutter, since you're new, you get to pick. Draw one out and give it to Liz. *[CUTTER carefully draws out a paper and passes it to LIZ]*

LIZ. And today's activity is...*[opens paper]* channel surfing!

CHAD. I'll get the radio! *[Gets radio and sets it up on desk]* Simon...it's all yours. Find a really strange station for us.

SIMON. Let Tasha. She's real good at gettin' those weak stations to come in.

TASHA. Oday. *[The GROUP gathers around the radio as TASHA turns it on and begins turning the dial. The get static at first, but then a clear channel comes in playing hard rock. TASHA stops and looks up at Simon]* Dounds like your kind ob busic, Sibon.

SIMON. Uh? *[Realizing he's supposed to like hard rock]* Oh, yeah! *[Begins to "air jam"]*

CHAD. Keep going, Sniff. Let's find a really weird one. *[TASHA turns the dial carefully until an extremely loud SOUND comes piercing out of the radio. The GROUP reacts strongly to the annoying noise]*

LIZ. *[Shouting over noise]* What is that?

SIMON. Turn it down!

CHAD. Ow! Quick!

[As TASHA reaches for the dial, the SOUND stops and a complete silence follows. They look at each other and shrug. TASHA reaches for the dial again and a strange beeping comes across, quickly followed by the alien-sounding voice of REDNAXELA]

REDNAXELA. Rednaxela to Ittessor. Acknowledge Ittessor. This is the Mother Ship.

CHAD. What in the world?

LIZ. Shhh!

ITTESSOR. *[Alien voice]* Mother Ship, this is Ittessor. Do you have instructions for the Away Team?

REDNAXELA. Affirmative, Ittessor. We must have more specimens. Tonight, collect four quadrupeds and deliver them to the landing sight. Do you understand?

ITTESSOR. *[Barks three times]* Acknowledge?

REDNAXELA. Affirmative. Contact Cirrem to assist you. I will

bring the Mother Ship to the landing sight at the usual hour.

SIMON. Wait a minute...

LIZ. Shhh!

ITTESSOR. Mother Ship. I require more fuel for the biped. Please bring four jars of peanut butter with you. Acknowledge.

REDNAXELA. *[Losing her alien voice momentarily]* What a fat little...*[Quickly resumes alien voice]* Has he consumed all the fuel?

ITTESSOR. Affirmative. You know it is required for successful bipedal operations.

REDNAXELA. Caution, Ittessor. Earth may not have enough fuel for the bipedal operation. Comprenez vous?

TASHA. They know French????

ITTESSOR. Acknowledged. Ittessor out.

[The GROUP look at each other in momentary confusion, trying to make sense of what they just heard]

CHAD. *[Freaking out]* What'll we do!!!

SIMON. No, wait a minute. Last night I was listening to the concert on the radio...

CUTTER. MegaRock?

SIMON. No, Mozar...uh, yeah. MegaRock. Anyway, right in the middle of the show, those weirdos cut in. Started talking about all kinds of "peds," whatever that is. Just like now!

LIZ. They said "quadruped." That means an animal that walks on four legs.

TASHA. And da second alien barked. *[Sneezes]* Could mean dogs.

CHAD. *[Nearly frantic]* I can't believe you people! Aliens just talked on *our* radio, and you're acting like it's nothing!!!

LIZ. Chad, they're not aliens. Everyone knows there is no such thing.

CHAD. But can we assume that? What if Earth is about to be invaded?

TASHA. Highly unlikely.

CHAD. I think we should go tell the Army.

LIZ. Goof-head! Do you honestly think they'd listen to a dumb story about barking aliens? We're just kids.

CHAD. Well, I think we're in for an invasion. When you get carried off by some lizard-bug-thing, don't come crying to me.

LIZ. Chad. Sit down. *[CHAD sits and pouts for a few moments]*