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Family Plays

Heidi

From the book by
Johanna Spyri

Adapted for the stage by
Lucille Miller



Heidi

Drama. Adapted by Lucille Miller. Based on the book by Johanna Spyri. *Cast: 3m., 7w., 2 boys, 1 girl.* Heidi is a fresh and delightful play of the Swiss Alps. Heidi is one of the happiest characters in all literature to present before children. Lucille Miller's play depicts her vividly as a winning and personable little girl who is full of fun and mischief but whose influence is nevertheless wholesome and good. Her scenes with the calm uncle and with the Sesemann family are especially dramatic and make an eloquent appeal to every heart. The play follows the book closely, retaining all the well-loved episodes that keep this story eternally alive in the hearts of children. *Three sets. Swiss costumes. Approximate running time: 70 minutes. Code: HB2.*

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“Produced by special arrangement with
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CAST

(in order of their appearance)

ALM UNCLE, Heidi's grandfather

MINISTER FROM DORFLI

PETER, the goatherd

DETE, Heidi's aunt

HEIDI

BRIGATTA, Peter's mother

PETER'S GRANDMOTHER

SEPPI, a ragged boy of the streets

TINETTE, a maid in the Seseman household

FRAULEIN ROTTENMEIER, the Seseman governess

CLARA SESEMAN

MR. SESEMAN, Clara's father

MADAME SESEMAN, Clara's grandmother

SCENES

ACT ONE

Outside the Alm Uncle's one-room hut.

ACT TWO

A room in Peter's cottage.

ACT THREE

In the Seseman's drawing room.

ACT FOUR

Outside the Alm Uncle's hut.

H E I D I

ACT ONE

SCENE—*The scene takes place in front of the Alm Uncle's one-room hut. In the background are mountains, which can be made with projections, or painted on a canvas drop. A beautiful carved bell-post is center stage, and to the right of this is an incline. At one side of the house is a goat shed. There are benches to the right and left. Bells tinkle during the entire scene. Wind sounds and yodeling also will add to the atmosphere.*

As the curtain rises, Alm Uncle is putting straw in the goat shed, and petting the goat with gentle strokes.

ALM UNCLE: There! That ought to make you happy.

PETER (*from offstage, high up the incline*): Alm Uncle! Alm Uncle!

ALM UNCLE: What are you doing on that ledge? Get back up there to your goats!

PETER: But look down! Someone's coming up the Alm!

ALM UNCLE (*threateningly*): I'll tend to that. You get back to your business.

PETER: It's company, Alm Uncle!

ALM UNCLE (*roaring*): Did you hear me? (*Peter evidently retreats, and Alm Uncle relaxes his militant position.*) That's better. Meddling goat boys! (*He turns to peer down the mountain.*) Now who can be coming up the Alm to see me? (*Goat cries.*) No more of that. I have to finish this spoon. (*He takes a piece of wooden carving from a nail outside the hut, and peers down the mountain again.*) It's the minister from Dorfli! (*Goat cries.*) What's the matter with you? Don't you like the minister either? (*Goat cries.*) Well, never mind. I'll send him off in short order. He'll let you alone. Go back in the shed there. Yes, way back in the shed. There. (*He starts toward the house.*) We'll fool him. He'll find no one at home. (*The Minister's song has been growing stronger and nearer all the time, and he enters before the Alm Uncle can get inside his hut.*)

MINISTER: Well, well! It's quite a climb to your house, Alm Uncle.

ALM UNCLE: I make it at least a dozen times a day.

MINISTER: I'd forgotten just how steep it really is. It has been a long time since I was up here.

ALM UNCLE: A year.

MINISTER: It's pleasant enough up here in the summer time.

ALM UNCLE: It's always pleasant here—when people let me alone.

MINISTER: I often worry about what might happen to you, living all alone up here, with no one to keep you company.

ALM UNCLE: Flowers, pines, goats—they are better company than your gossiping villagers.

MINISTER (*laughingly*): You do us wrong.

ALM UNCLE: Quit your tongue wagging!

MINISTER: Your old friend, the school-master, and I were talking about you yesterday.

ALM UNCLE: I'd hoped you'd given me a rest long ago.

MINISTER: We would all like to have you come back to Dorfli and live with us. Why don't you come this winter? The whole Alm will be frozen up.

ALM UNCLE: I know where there is plenty of wood, and I spend my time laying up a supply, instead of trying to tend to other people's business (*Peter's yodel is heard from up the incline.*)

MINISTER: A man dries up and withers like the leaves in fall without friends.

ALM UNCLE: Friends, bah!

MINISTER: At least you have Peter, your goat boy, to come by every day.

ALM UNCLE: Impudent rogue!

MINISTER: He takes good care of your goats. No finer goats than yours are to be found on the mountain.

ALM UNCLE: A lot of milk they'll give today. Instead of letting them graze peacefully, he runs down to the ledge and shouts nonsense to me.

MINISTER: Peter always brags about your goats. He is as fond of them as he would be if they were his.

ALM UNCLE: Do you think I'd let him take care of them if he weren't? (*Peter's yodel is heard very near.*) What's this? (*Peter rushes in, breathless from a dash down the mountainside.*) What are you doing down here? Why aren't you up there tending your goats?

PETER: Oh, Alm Uncle, the goats are safe. They're grazing on the slope. And there's company coming up the Alm. See? (*He points down the mountain, and Alm Uncle and Minister follow his finger.*) I'm going to meet them! (*He rushes off, with a monster of a yodel.*)

ALM UNCLE: You lazy, good-for-nothing boy!

MINISTER: It's Dete and Heidi.

ALM UNCLE: Dete! I never could stand that girl.

MINISTER: She's been a good mother to Heidi, your grandchild.

ALM UNCLE: What do you know about it?

MINISTER: She's a thrifty and hard-working girl, too.

ALM UNCLE (*sneering*): Hard working—
 MINISTER: Yes indeed.
 ALM UNCLE: Never saw her work anything but her tongue.
 MINISTER: When did you last see your grandchild?
 ALM UNCLE: None of your business.
 MINISTER: I was only thinking—
 ALM UNCLE: What?
 MINISTER: I was thinking that Dete may be bringing Heidi to live with you.
 ALM UNCLE: Me! Won't have her.
 MINISTER: She'd be good company for you.
 ALM UNCLE: I don't like company.
 MINISTER: Everyone in the village talks about what a bright, happy child she is.
 ALM UNCLE: Don't want her around. Or anyone else.
 MINISTER: She's your own grandchild.
 ALM UNCLE: I'd choose my goats to anyone I know. Do I offer you advice?
 MINISTER: Do I need it!
 ALM UNCLE (*taking up his carving and whittling furiously*): Sit there if you want to, but I've said all I have to. (*There is an awkward pause, then Dete enters, breathless from her climb.*)
 DETE: Good day, Alm Uncle. (*Alm Uncle sits there, whittling away, and ignoring her completely.*)
 MINISTER: Good day, Dete. Alm Uncle is a bit surprised at your coming.
 DETE: I can see that something is wrong. Alm Uncle, I've brought Heidi to live with you.
 ALM UNCLE: Take her back. I won't have her.
 DETE: Since mother died a year ago I have had to hire someone to take care of her while I worked. Now I have a chance to live with a very wealthy family in Frankfurt and earn good wages. I mean to take it. So I've brought Heidi for you to take care of.
 ALM UNCLE: So that's it? And when she starts to fret and whine, what am I going to do with her then?
 DETE: That's your affair.
 MINISTER: Where is the child now?
 DETE: Playing with Peter, the goat boy.
 ALM UNCLE: I suppose he's forgotten all about the goats. If I had a hold of that boy. Peter! (*Rings bell.*) That ought to bring him fast enough.
 DETE: There you are making a scene just as I expected you to.
 ALM UNCLE: What are you talking about?
 DETE: She really knows nothing about your temper! If she did, goodness knows she wouldn't want to stay.
 ALM UNCLE: I'll show her in short order what kind of temper I have.

DETE: You'll treat the child well, or I'll have the law on you!

ALM UNCLE: Pretty high and mighty with your words.

DETE: Not so high and mighty either! You ought to have heard what the people in Dorfli said when I told them Heidi was coming here to live with you. The cobbler said—

ALM UNCLE: You told the cobbler, did you?

DETE: He said I didn't dare leave her with you.

ALM UNCLE: That old turkey-gobbler!

DETE: He said it would be cruel for anyone to live around you—let alone a child.

ALM UNCLE: Everyone in Dorfli knows your scheme by now, no doubt.

DETE: And the baker's wife said: "Are you going to give the child over to that old crosspatch up there? It surprises me beyond words that you can think of such a thing."

ALM UNCLE (*haughtily*): What a surprise they will get when you have to take her back with you.

DETE: That will never be.

ALM UNCLE: We'll see. Anything else anyone said?

DETE: They said the child would be lonely. Isn't there anyone she can play with?

MINISTER: She can play with Peter.

ALM UNCLE: He's gone all day with the goats. No one ever comes here.

DETE: That is worse than I expected.

MINISTER: It certainly won't be very pleasant for the child.

DETE (*quickly*): He can take her down to see Peter's mother and his grandmother.

ALM UNCLE: Oh, I can, can I?

DETE: Don't you even go there?

ALM UNCLE: No!

MINISTER: You could help the grandmother a great deal, Alm Uncle.

ALM UNCLE: I ask no help from people and I expect to give none.

MINISTER: How much happier you would be if you did.

ALM UNCLE: How much do you help her?

MINISTER: I help her all I can. But I'm not as handy with tools as you are.

ALM UNCLE: All you do is offer advice.

MINISTER: It makes me feel very badly to see the grandmother's house falling to pieces day by day.

DETE: How can you live up here, her nearest neighbor, and let the shutters fall off the windows and the roof fall away? It would mean nothing at all to you to fix it.

ALM UNCLE: Well, why don't you fix it?

DETE: I would certainly, if I knew how.

MINISTER: You know very well, Alm Uncle, that women can't do such things.

DETE: I shall stop in on my way back and ask them if they will look after Heidi in payment for your fixing their house.

ALM UNCLE: You'll do nothing of the kind.

MINISTER: Heidi would enjoy them.

ALM UNCLE: Take her to them! I don't intend to have an unreasonable little thing crying around me.

MINISTER: You have only to see the child and you will love her as everyone else does.

ALM UNCLE: Bah! Never saw a girl that was worth her salt!

MINISTER: She looks very like her father, your son.

DETE: She's quite pretty, too.

MINISTER: Dete must think of the future.

DETE: Yes, I—

ALM UNCLE: You didn't think very far when you bought that hat. You look like an ostrich.

DETE: Well, I did think of the future. You won't have to get Heidi any clothes for a long time.

ALM UNCLE: I certainly won't!

DETE: I bought her two new frocks, a red woolen shawl, a pair of shoes, and I've knit her several pairs of stockings.

ALM UNCLE: Well, where are they? Where are her clothes?

DETE: She's wearing them.

MINISTER: All of them?

DETE: We've come a long way and that seemed the best way to carry them.

ALM UNCLE: Why, you lazy, inhuman person. Weighing a child down with clothes like that!

(We hear Heidi and Peter singing an old Swiss folk song in the distance. Suggest that Heidi sing and Peter yodel. Heidi is clad in her underslip and underwear. She runs right up to the minister.)

HEIDI: Are you my grandfather? *(As soon as Heidi starts toward them, Grandfather picks up the straw that fell and goes around to the goat shed.)*

MINISTER: No, child, I am the minister.

DETE *(horrified)*: Heidi, come here!

HEIDI: Yes, Dete. What do you want?

DETE: What do you think I want!

HEIDI: I don't know, Dete.

DETE: Where are your clothes?

HEIDI: Down there. They were too hot.

DETE: You wretched child. Have you no sense at all?

HEIDI: The goats didn't have any clothes on so I didn't see why I have to. I like it better this way.

DETE: Where are your shoes and stockings?

HEIDI: Down at the foot of the hill.

DETE: Go and get them.

HEIDI: I just can't walk any more.

DETE: Peter, you go and get them.

PETER: I have to watch my goats.

DETE: I'll give you a franc if you'll get them. (*Peter bounds off with alacrity.*)

HEIDI (*picking up Alm Uncle's carving*): Oh, what's this?

DETE: It's your grandfather's.

HEIDI: Where is my grandfather?

DETE: He is in the house.

HEIDI: Why doesn't my grandfather come to see me? I know. I'll bring him out! Grandfather! Grandfather! (*Runs to door, Grandfather comes out.*)

ALM UNCLE: Stop that shouting.

HEIDI: Here's your stick. Look, grandfather. I've some blue gentians for you—Oh! What's the matter with them? They weren't like this when I picked them!

ALM UNCLE: They like to stand out there in the sun, and not to be shut up in a petticoat.

DETE: Shake hands with your grandfather, child.

ALM UNCLE: Shake hands with the minister, he likes it.

MINISTER: God bless you, child. Your grandfather needs you to warm his heart.

HEIDI: How do you warm hearts?

MINISTER: You'll know, my child. You'll know. Take good care of the child, my son. (*Exits.*)

PETER (*entering carrying clothes done up in a red petticoat*): Where's my money?

ALM UNCLE: Money for what?

DETE: You're in a great hurry for it, aren't you?

PETER: You said you'd give it to me.

ALM UNCLE: I'll give you five minutes to get out of my sight, and back where you belong.

PETER: I want my money first.

DETE: Take it, for goodness' sake. (*Peter seizes the money, tosses the bundle of clothes at Dete, and dashes up the incline.*)

ALM UNCLE: What are those red things?

HEIDI: They're my clothes. I guess I'd better put them on. Here, grandfather, help me, please. You hold my skirt, while I put on my blouse. Not like that. Here, like this. Now I'm dressed, grandfather.

DETE: I never heard of such nonsense as you've been up to.

ALM UNCLE: I've had enough nonsense from you. Be off with you, and take this child with you. And don't let me see your face again in a hurry.

DETE: Well, I'll go, but the child is to remain with you.

ALM UNCLE: She is, is she?

DETE: Stay right here, Heidi.

HEIDI (*frightened*): But I want to go with you, Dete.

DETE: No, Heidi. You are to stay here with your grandfather. (*Alm Uncle goes inside his hut, and bangs the door shut.*)

HEIDI: Oh, Dete, I want to come with you.

DETE: No, Heidi. You sit right here. (*Dete starts down the mountain.*)

HEIDI (*running after her*): Dete! Oh! (*A soft cry from a young goat is heard from the shed. Heidi looks around to find the source of it. She wipes the tears away with her fists, and goes toward the shed. Kneels down and pats the goat's head.*) Are you crying because you are alone, too? (*The goat cries. Heidi puts her head against that of the goat.*) Well, you have me. Are you hungry? (*Goat cries. Heidi looks fearfully toward the hut. Alm Uncle has gone inside.*) I don't know whether I dare tell him or not. Shall I? (*Goat cries. Heidi speaks timidly*): Grandfather! Oh, I guess I'd better not. (*Goat cries.*) Grandfather—

ALM UNCLE (*appearing at the doorway*): Are you still here? What do you want?

HEIDI: She—he—it's hungry.

ALM UNCLE: What makes you think so?

HEIDI: It's crying, Grandfather.

ALM UNCLE (*looking thoughtfully at her*): Some one else has been crying, too.

HEIDI (*brushing her hand across her face*): Just a little. (*Goat cries.*)

ALM UNCLE: What do you think it wants?

HEIDI: Would some milk do? And please put it in a bottle, so I can feed it. (*Grandfather makes a noise which sounds strangely like a chuckle, and goes into the house. Heidi returns to the goat.*) Grandfather likes you. So do I. Don't get afraid when he goes "gr-r-r!" (*Alm Uncle comes out with a bottle of milk.*) Oh, let me—

ALM UNCLE: What do you want?

HEIDI: Let me feed it.

ALM UNCLE: What do you know about feeding this young fellow?

HEIDI: I'll just put it in his mouth. See, he doesn't need any help.

ALM UNCLE (*grinning in spite of himself*): Is anybody else hungry?

HEIDI: Oh, I am!

ALM UNCLE: How soon could you eat?

HEIDI: Right away.

ALM UNCLE: What? Before Little Swan finishes?

HEIDI: Little Swan? Is that her—its name? What a pretty name! Hurry up, hurry up, Little Swan. Just feel how flat I am. You're full. All gone now. (*Heidi picks up the stool beside the shed, and carries it over the bench where Alm Uncle is sitting.*) This is for me.

ALM UNCLE: Who said so?

HEIDI: It just fits me.

ALM UNCLE (*cutting bread in great hunks and giving it to her.*) Here.

HEIDI (*with her mouth full*): This is good. Guess I was hungry.

ALM UNCLE (*handing her some milk*): Take this, and put some meat on your bones.

HEIDI (*looking at him*): Why doesn't it make you any fatter, then, grandfather?

ALM UNCLE: I see you have eyes in your head.

HEIDI: I never saw anybody without eyes.

ALM UNCLE: But they don't all know how to use them.

HEIDI: What are you whittling, Grandfather?

ALM UNCLE: A spoon to use in making the cheese you eat.

HEIDI: Why is it so big?

ALM UNCLE: It has to be big, to stir the curds.

HEIDI: What are you carving on the handle?

ALM UNCLE: Look and see.

HEIDI: Oh, flowers and a little goat! How wonderful you are, grandfather! And you've carved them on your stick there, too. Will you carve my stick like that?

ALM UNCLE: Where is your stick?

HEIDI: I haven't one yet. But Peter said everyone had to have a stick on the mountain.

ALM UNCLE: How am I to carve your stick, if you haven't any?

HEIDI: Well grandfather—

ALM UNCLE: H'm?

HEIDI: Do you need that spoon right away?

ALM UNCLE: Of course not. I'm only making it now, so as to have it ready when the time comes.

HEIDI: Oh.

ALM UNCLE: Why do you ask?

HEIDI: It's just about long enough to make a stick for me, and the carving on the handle is nearly done. And you could cut it straight down here. And I could have it right away.

ALM UNCLE: You could, could you?

HEIDI: Yes. May I have some more, please? It tastes just like cinnamon and sugar. (*The wind blows musically through the mountains.*) Listen, grandfather. What is it?

ALM UNCLE: It's the wind in the fir trees down below.

HEIDI: I like it. What is it saying?

ALM UNCLE: It says different things to different people.

HEIDI: What does it say to you?

ALM UNCLE: It's mocking at the people who huddle and gossip down below in the village. It says, "If you would come up here and live on the height, it would be better for you."

HEIDI (*listening all the while*): It's laughing. It's happy. Oh, look down below, where Peter and I picked the flowers. Everything is dancing with the wind. (*She dances in her joy. The wind grows wilder, and she follows, shouting and dramatizing the power of it. Then it dies down, moaning low, and her mood follows.*) Now it is

sad and sorry, grandfather. Why do you think it feels like that? Oh, I know! It's about Peter's grandmother. It has been shaking the shutters and frightening her. Peter told me how the house shook in the wind, and made the grandmother afraid. (*She goes up to her grandfather.*) Grandfather, you must take a hammer and some nails, and fasten the grandmother's shutters, for the house shakes and rattles all over.

ALM UNCLE: Oh, must I? Who told you that?

HEIDI: Nobody told me, but I know it for all that, for Peter said everything is giving away, and the grandmother lies trembling for fear the house will fall down on their heads. Nobody can help her but you. So we must fix it. We will fix it, won't we grandfather?

(*Yodelers in the distance, answering each other.*)

Who is singing, grandfather?

ALM UNCLE: Shepherds, or goat herds, watching their flocks on the high peaks.

HEIDI: Why?

ALM UNCLE: They are answering each other across the valley, so they won't feel lonely.

HEIDI: Is that where Peter takes his goats?

ALM UNCLE: No. Peter goes on the slope of our mountain, just above.

HEIDI: Oh, I want to go right on up where Peter is, and see all the flowers he told me about, and the goats climbing and feeding. Please come now.

ALM UNCLE: Peter will soon bring the goats down for the night. Tomorrow, you may go up with Peter.

HEIDI: And I'll use my new stick to help me climb the rocks, the way Peter does.

ALM UNCLE: Will you?

HEIDI: Can't you get it made by tomorrow?

ALM UNCLE: If I whittle far into the night.

HEIDI: Oh, thank you, thank you! What fun it will be! Oh—Grandfather—

ALM UNCLE: What now!

HEIDI: I won't go with Peter, after all.

ALM UNCLE: Why not?

HEIDI: You'll be too lonely, all day long.

ALM UNCLE: What makes you think so?

(*Yodeling is heard offstage.*)

HEIDI: Grandfather!

ALM UNCLE: What!

HEIDI: We can sing to each other, too, when I'm up there, and you're down here. Then you won't be lonely.

ALM UNCLE: I don't know any songs.

HEIDI: They're easy. Peter taught me one just coming up the mountain. I'll teach it to you.

ALM UNCLE: I'm too old to learn new songs.