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## **Family Plays**

# A TRYING ORDEAL

by  
Albert Green



# A TRYING ORDEAL

“Our group was asked to give a second showing of *A Trying Ordeal* to our congregation at Smithville Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio. The play was well received.” (Miriam G. Meyer, Rittman, Ohio)

**Drama. By Albert Green.** *Cast: 3m., 5w.* A tender play about a young girl whose mind doesn't work as fast as those around her. While Mae sits on a park bench, an assortment of people go by. Most do not understand Mae, and this often results in a trying ordeal. To most of them, as well as to the audience, Mae is “different.” One of the questions raised by this play is, “Is that difference good or bad?” *Mae can be any age from 10 or 12 to 16 or 17. In the premier production by a high-school drama class, the role was played by a 14-year-old freshman girl, who interpreted Mae as being her own age. Doris might be as young as 16 or as old as the early 20s. Joe would be about the same age as Doris or a year or two older. The play probably has its greatest impact if Mae is about 14, Doris about 16, and Joe about 17. Simple to stage. One act. Set: city park. Time: present. Approximate running time: 20 to 25 minutes. Code: TR9.*

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A Trying Ordeal

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**A Play in One Act**

**by**

**Albert Green**

**I. E. CLARK PUBLICATIONS**

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# **A TRYING ORDEAL**

## *Characters*

**MAE** – a simple-minded girl

**DORIS** – her older and taller sister

**JOE** – a blue-collar worker

**FIRST YOUNG BOY** – with a bicycle

**SECOND YOUNG BOY** – a thief

**YOUNG GIRL** – with a large rubber ball

**FIRST YOUNG GIRL** – an unskilled worker

**SECOND YOUNG GIRL** – her friend

**Time:** The Present

**Place:** A park in the middle of the city

## **NOTES ON THE PLAY**

This is the poignant story of a young girl who cannot quite understand the world around her. Mae's older sister Doris leaves her sitting on a park bench while Doris goes into a nearby building to apply for a job. An assortment of people pass through the park, entering Mae's world for a few moments – with varying results. To most of them, as well as to the audience, Mae is "different." One of the questions raised by this play is: "Is that difference good or bad?"

Mae can be any age from 10 or 12 to 16 or 17. In the premiere production by a high school drama class, the role was played by a 14-year-old freshman girl, who interpreted Mae as being her own age. Doris might be as young as 16 or as old as the early twenties. Joe would be about the same age as Doris, or a year or two older. The play probably has its greatest impact if Mae is about 14, Doris about 16, and Joe about 17.

## A TRYING ORDEAL

By Albert Green

*SCENE. A park in the middle of the city. A bench is at Center. A path leads from an arch Down Right to an arch Down Left. Outdoor scenery may be added as desired.*

*AT RISE. DORIS, followed by MAE, enters Down Right. DORIS is holding a book.*

DORIS. What I want you to do is wait for me. [*Stops at bench and points to it*] You sit here. [*Points to off Down Left*] I'm going across the street to that building.

MAE. [*Stops in front of bench; her eyes have a sort of vacant expression. She speaks with a childish tone, as though she were younger than she is.*] Can't I go with you?

DORIS. [*Impatient*] I told you! I'm going to apply for a job!

MAE. Why can't I go with you? — Please, Doris?

DORIS. Didn't I explain it to you? When a person applies for a job they have to go by themselves!

MAE. [*Plaintively*] What'll I do here by myself?

DORIS. You'll just sit here and wait. [*Gets a thought; offers Mae the book*] Here, you'll read this.

MAE. [*Not taking book*] I don't like that book. It hasn't got any pictures.

DORIS. It's all I've got. [*Commanding*] Take it!

MAE. [*Takes book reluctantly*] Will you be long?

DORIS. I don't think so.

MAE. I hope it's not long. I don't like to sit by myself.

DORIS. There's nothing to be afraid of here. Don't you want us to have some money this summer? To spend?

MAE. *[Asking]* Spend on what?

DORIS. *[Wearily]* Things. Maybe a new dress.

MAE. *[Smiles]* I'd like that. I want one with flowers. I like flowers. Can I have one with flowers?

DORIS. We'll see. If I get the job. Now sit down.

MAE. *[Sits down on bench]* You sure you won't be long?

DORIS. *[Starts toward exit Down Left]* I won't be long. *[Stops and turns near exit]* Be sure and be here when I get back.

MAE. All right.

DORIS. *[Gazes at Mae for a moment, uneasy]* You live at 3246 Mulberry Street. — Remember?

MAE. *[Vexed]* Don't I always remember?

DORIS. Sometimes. *[Shakes her head in discouragement and exits]*

*[YOUNG GIRL enters Down Right. She works her way to Down Center, bouncing and catching a large rubber ball.]*

MAE. *[Watches the ball avidly]* That's a pretty ball. *[Gets no answer]* Can I play with it?

YOUNG GIRL. *[Unfriendly]* No. It's my ball.

MAE. Let me touch it.

YOUNG GIRL. No.

MAE. *[Leaves book on bench and goes to Young Girl]* Can I play with it just one time?

YOUNG GIRL. *[Hesitates]* I'll give you one bounce — that's all. *[Hands ball to Mae]*

*[MAE awkwardly bounces the ball but is not able to catch it. YOUNG GIRL retrieves it.]*

MAE. Can I try again?

YOUNG GIRL. *[Displeased]* No! I don't want you to lose my ball! *[Exits Down Left]*

MAE. *[Looks thoughtfully off Down Left for a moment. Then pantomimes bouncing ball high and catching it. Smiles]*

to herself with triumph / I'll bet I could catch the ball if I tried real hard.

FIRST YOUNG BOY. *[Enters Down Right walking a bicycle; stops near Mae; to her]* Would you do me a favor?

MAE. *[Turns to him]* A favor?

FIRST YOUNG BOY. Would you watch my bicycle for me?

MAE. *[A bit flustered]* Watch it?

FIRST YOUNG BOY. *[Points to off Down Left]* I have to go across the street to that building. I'll only be a minute.

MAE. *[Points to bicycle]* Can't you take it with you?

FIRST YOUNG BOY. I have to go up on an elevator.

*[SECOND YOUNG BOY enters Down Left unnoticed by Mae or First Young Boy. He sneaks to Up Center and listens.]*

MAE. I've never been on an elevator. Is it fun?

FIRST YOUNG BOY. *[In a hurry]* I'll leave it right here, and you keep an eye on it. *[Leaves bicycle and starts toward Down Left]* Don't let anybody touch it. *[Exits]*

*[MAE examines bicycle with interest. SECOND YOUNG BOY studies Mae with a furtive, shrewd expression, and then goes to her.]*

SECOND YOUNG BOY. Hi.

MAE. Hi.

SECOND YOUNG BOY. Is that your bicycle?

MAE. No. I'm watching it for a boy.

SECOND YOUNG BOY. Can you ride it?

MAE. *[Shakes her head]* It's too hard for me.

SECOND YOUNG BOY. Want me to show you how to ride it?

MAE. *[Eagerly]* Would you? I'd like to know how.

SECOND YOUNG BOY. Watch me. *[Takes bicycle and walks or rides it toward Down Right]* It's easy. *[Exits with bicycle]*

**MAE.** *[Gazing off after him]* He rides it real nice. *[Sits down on bench and gazes thoughtfully ahead for a moment]* I thought he said he was going to show me. *[Shrugs; then picks up book, opens it, and reads it with childish slowness]* "To be – loved – and – ah – cho-sen by a good man is the best and sweet-est thing which can hap-pen to a wo-man." *[Repeats it incorrectly from memory with more expression; looking at audience]* "To be loved by a good man is the best – for a woman – that can happen – to a woman." *[Mulls it over for a moment; yearning]* I wish I had a father. That's what I'd like more than anything else in the world – a father. I wonder how it feels to have a father . . . . *[She continues to hold the closed book.]*

**FIRST YOUNG BOY.** *[Enters quickly Down Left, looks for his bicycle]* Hey, what happened to my bike?

**MAE.** *[Casually]* A boy took a ride on it.

**FIRST YOUNG BOY.** *[Dumbfounded; then angry]* I thought you said you'd watch it!

**MAE.** *[Innocently]* I watched it.

**FIRST YOUNG BOY.** *[Outraged]* Oh-h! Which way did he go?

**MAE.** *[Points off Down Right]* That way.

**FIRST YOUNG BOY.** *[Runs a couple of steps toward Down Right, then stops and turns; vehemently]* You crazy girl! You crazy, crazy! *[Exits running]*

**MAE.** *[Stares ahead a moment, tears coming to her eyes; with a sob]* I'm not crazy. I'm not, I'm not!

*[FIRST YOUNG GIRL and SECOND YOUNG GIRL enter Down Left.]*

**FIRST YOUNG GIRL.** *[To Second Young Girl, continuing a conversation]* It was no use waiting. That line was too long.

**SECOND YOUNG GIRL.** *[Agreeing]* By the time they got to us, the jobs would all be taken.

FIRST YOUNG GIRL. I don't need a job that bad.

SECOND YOUNG GIRL. Me neither.

MAE. *[Rises quickly and hurries to a position in front of Girls. The book is still in her hand. Appealing]* Was it my fault? *[Both YOUNG GIRLS look at Mae in surprised puzzlement.]*

FIRST YOUNG GIRL. *[Annoyed]* – What?

MAE. *[Distraught]* That boy called me crazy.

SECOND YOUNG GIRL. *[After a pause, with sympathy]*  
What boy?

MAE. The boy who told me to watch his bicycle.

FIRST YOUNG GIRL. *[Looks around, irritated]* I don't see any bicycle.

MAE. It was here before. Then a boy took it for a ride. Then another boy said I was crazy.

FIRST YOUNG GIRL. *[Bluntly]* What do you expect us to do?

MAE. *[Plaintively]* I did watch the bicycle. Honest I did. But – *[Stops, tries to solve the puzzle and cannot; begins to sob]*

SECOND YOUNG GIRL. *[Trying to help]* Don't cry. Never cry over spilled milk.

MAE. *[Thinks; then]* It wasn't milk. It was a bicycle.

FIRST YOUNG GIRL. *[Impulsively]* What's that book you got? *[Takes book away from Mae and reads the title "Little Women." [Opens book to flyleaf and reads in a derisive manner] "Lou - isa May Al - cott . . ." – Phooey! [Starts walking toward Down Right with the book in her hand]*

SECOND YOUNG GIRL. *[Pursuing her]* Give her back that book! *[Makes attempt to take book from First Young Girl]*

FIRST YOUNG GIRL. *[Fends off attempt, then throws the book at Mae's feet]* Who wants her old book! It's no good anyway!