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Dramatic Publishing

Gary Grinkle's Battles With Wrinkles and Other Troubles in Mudgeville

A Play

by

STEFAN GRAVES LANFER



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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STEFAN GRAVES LANFER

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(GARY GRINKLE'S BATTLES WITH WRINKLES AND OTHER
TROUBLES IN MUDGEVILLE)

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Premiere Production

Gary Grinkle's Battles With Wrinkles and Other Troubles in Mudgeville was first produced by Long Wharf Theatre, New Haven, Connecticut, touring to elementary schools throughout Connecticut in November and December of 2000. The production was directed by Sarah Peterson and included the following artists:

Cast

Martin A. Maven JOHN EGGING
Maggie Magoulis / Melissa B. Little STACIE LENTS
Gary Grinkle / Arnold J. Arnold TONY MURVIN

Production Staff

Scenic Design FRANK J. ALBERINO
Costume Design STACEY GALLOWAY
Composer SCOTT MACKENZIE
Musical Director ALEX YANG
Stage Manager LYN LISENO
Assistant Stage Manager TRACEY J. HIBBARD
Stage Management Intern KIKA GOMES

Playwright's Notes

After a performance of *Gary Grinkle* at the Foote School in New Haven, Connecticut, I had an opportunity to take some questions from the student audience. "How did you think of the names?" one little girl asked. "How long did it take you to write?" asked a boy to my left. "My teacher wants to know how old you are!" shouted a giggling fourth-grader. The last question came from a timid little boy towards the back, "Do *you* have worries?"

I was floored—caught! How did he know?

"I have a lot," I said.

Part of the spark for *Gary Grinkle* was a visit to a college friend, who lived in New York City. When I arrived, my friend took one look at my functional, but decidedly non-New York attire. "Well," he said, "I can think of a few places we're not going tonight."

He wasn't finished. "Fleece," he continued, "I remember fleece...all laid to rest now in my parents' attic with the rest of my country clothes."

I laughed it off just then, but for some time thereafter, I'd look in my closet and feel low. All of a sudden it seemed all I owned were foolish country clothes.

In the weeks to come, I admit I spent a little money at the mall, just a few things to make me feel ever so slightly more hip. But I also found myself thinking about the fear of looking foolish, about giving in to worries that seem much bigger than they are. And then from somewhere these words...

*Poor, unfortunate Gary Grinkle.
All of his clothes would somehow wrinkle.*

Mudgeville had begun.

Special Thanks

Special thanks to my wife, Ashley, ever my most treasured audience and trusted editor, to Susan, Mallory, Peter and Sarah, whose laughter at my early pages kept me writing more. To Brian Oliveri and Deighna DeRiu, who gave a first reading to Gary and Maggie at a Long Wharf Christmas party. To Sarah Peterson, who heard that reading and caught a vision of a play for young audiences. To Michael Ross, Doug Hughes and Greg Leaming, for standing behind that vision. And to that first creative team, who brought Mudgeville so magically to life. To Amie Brockway, who brought Mudgeville to Margaretville and her Open Eye Theatre, an outpost of artistry in upstate New York, and for championing *Gary Grinkle* to Gayle Sergel at Dramatic Publishing. And to Gayle, my final editor, for the challenge and the fun of looking at *Gary Grinkle* with a new lens.

Production Notes

Although this edition of *Gary Grinkle* offers casting possibilities for over thirty performers, in its Long Wharf Theatre premiere, it had only three adult actors, who divided all the speaking roles in the following manner:

Narrator	Actor 1, Actor 2 and Actor 3
Gary Grinkle	Actor 2
Maggie Magoulis	Actor 3
Melissa B. Little	Actor 3
Arnold J. Arnold	Actor 2
Martin A. Maven	Actor 1
Cornelia	Actor 1

With only three actors, the only speaking roles were those listed above. The non-speaking characters, such as Gary's wrinkle gremlins, and Melissa's germs, existed only in the minds of the characters. Whether these elements are visible to the audience or not, it is important to remember that Mudgeville is a town "chock-full of *imagined* dangers."

To recreate the text for a smaller cast, simply reduce it to its rhyming meter. In other words, cut the minor, non-rhythmic, non-rhyming detours such as the Yak's "That's me!", the mail-person's lines, and the distracted asides of narrators 1, 2, 3 & 4.

One more notable element of this first production was that the characters of Gary Grinkle and Maggie Magoulis were conceived as life-size dolls with rainbow-colored skin and hair. To shift into these roles, Actors 2 and 3 put on these dolls as reverse backpacks, which they animated from behind. In a similar fashion—simple, magical and fun—Cornelia was represented as a spring-loaded head, which sprung from Gary Grinkle's package. Actor 2 pulled a string to make her lips chatter, while Actor 1 spoke her lines from backstage.

Whether with three, thirty-three, or just one, I hope you find Mudgeville to be lots of fun.

Gary Grinkle's Battles With Wrinkles and Other Troubles in Mudgeville

A Play in One Act
For as many as 35 or as few as 3 actors*

CHARACTERS

NARRATORS 1, 2, 3 & 4

GARY GRINKLE: A long-suffering, somewhat doddering, but very lovable older gentleman.

THE WRINKLE GREMLINS: 2-4 mischievous creatures whose sole and boundless delight is wrinkling all of Gary Grinkle's clothes.

MAGGIE MAGOULISH: A very classy older woman, who was once a world traveler; her British accent is almost genuine.

THE YAK: A talking yak from the land of Magoop; now a household pet of Maggie Magoulish.

MELISSA B. LITTLE: A paranoid little girl.

THE GERMS: 3-5 foul, disgusting, ubiquitous germs, which plague poor Melissa B. Little.

* See production notes for alternative casting.

ARNOLD J. ARNOLD: A little boy, who loves his television.

MRS. ARNOLD: Arnold's mother.

WALDO THE DOG: A dog with fleas.

WALDO'S FAMILY: Mother, Father, Brother and Sister, who try to address Waldo's flea condition.

MARTIN A. MAVEN: The new kid in town.

CORNELIA: Gary Grinkle's love interest.

THE MAILMAN/MAILWOMAN

THE MAGIC PINK DANDELION SEEDS: 4-8 magical, pink, bouncing, dashing, darting seeds that are full of surprises.

THE MOUSE: Another resident of the Arnold house.

SETTING: The town of Mudgeville.

Gary Grinkle's Battles With Wrinkles and Other Troubles in Mudgeville

(Enter NARRATORS 1, 2, 3 and 4, on their way to Mudgeville.)

NARRATOR 1.

In all of the world,

NARRATOR 2.

North, South, East and West,

NARRATOR 3.

There's only one Mudgeville,

NARRATOR 4.

Which makes it the best!

NARRATOR 2.

But also the worst,
I suppose,

NARRATOR 3.

just as well.

NARRATOR 2.

Huh?

NARRATOR 3.

That's why there is more
Of a story to tell!

NARRATOR 2 (*to himself*).

Ah, yes. I see what you mean.

NARRATOR 4 (*overlapping with NARRATOR 2*).

You see, there is something,
Some *thing* in the air.

NARRATOR 2.

I've noticed the water
Tastes different there.

NARRATOR 3.

Yes, right.

NARRATOR 4.

Now that you mention it,
I do remember a funny taste.

NARRATOR 2.

Don't you?

NARRATOR 3.

Sort of metallic?

NARRATOR 2.

More *tinny*, I'd say.

NARRATOR 4.

Yes, that seems nearer to how I would describe ...

NARRATOR 1 (*clearing his throat, gesturing to audience*).

Ahem!

(The other NARRATORS realize they've gotten side-tracked.)

NARRATOR 2.

Right. Yes.

NARRATOR 3.

Sorry.

NARRATOR 4.

Where were we?

NARRATOR 1.

Mudgeville.

NARRATOR 4.

Of course.

NARRATOR 3.

Right.

NARRATOR 2.

Mudgeville.

NARRATOR 3.

Unusual place.

NARRATOR 1.

You'll see what we mean
As we tell you about
All of these people
Who

NARRATOR 2.

never

NARRATOR 3.

go

ALL 4.

out!

NARRATOR 1.

They just stay inside,

NARRATOR 2.

Even days when it's sunny!

NARRATOR 4.

To be honest, I think it's
More sad than it's funny.

NARRATOR 1.

But we'll let you judge
For yourselves as you may.
Our story begins
In Mudgeville one day ...

(Enter GARY GRINKLE, shuffling onstage in his undershorts and undershirt. He carries a pair of pants and an iron, perhaps an ironing board under his arm. He is hunched over, distraught. He heaves a deep sigh as he sets up his ironing board.)

NARRATOR 2.

With poor, unfortunate
Gary Grinkle.
All of his clothes
Would somehow wrinkle.

(Enter the WRINKLE GREMLINS, who sneak up behind GARY. They giggle and squeak and laugh a mischievous laugh.)

NARRATOR 3.

He'd wash and dry,
Press and steam,
Attack with his iron
Both crease and seam.

(GARY turns his back for a moment. The WRINKLE GREMLINS attack his newly ironed pants, wrinkling like mad, perhaps tossing them back and forth, perhaps replacing them with some other horribly wrinkled pair they've brought on with them. As GARY turns back around, the WRINKLE GREMLINS scatter and hide. They peek out from their hiding places as GARY slips on his pants.)

NARRATOR 4.

But when he'd put
Them on, he'd find

(GARY spots the wrinkles and is horrified.)

NARRATOR 4 *(continued)*.

A wrinkle in front,
Or sometimes behind.

(GARY suspects foul play, looking all around. The WRINKLE GREMLINS scatter. GARY sets after them with his iron.)

NARRATOR 3.

Really, most folks
Could barely see
These wrinkles at all.

NARRATOR 4.

They were too small for me.

(The WRINKLE GREMLINS run across the stage, GARY following behind, his wrinkled pants off again and in his hands.)

NARRATOR 1.

But Gary would never
Admit defeat,
Determined one day
The wrinkle to beat.

(By now all the WRINKLE GREMLINS are out of sight. GARY looks at his pants, distraught, perhaps slumping into a chair.)

NARRATOR 2.

He missed quite a lot.

NARRATOR 3.

Never made it to work.

(GARY looks at his watch. He heaves a heavy sigh. Enter CORNELIA. She looks at her watch once, twice, three times, tapping her foot impatiently.)

NARRATOR 4.

Or his date with Cornelia.

(CORNELIA looks at her watch one final time, shrugs her shoulders and swipes her hands at the air.)

NARRATOR 2.

Now she thinks he's a jerk!

CORNELIA.

That jerk.

GARY *(calling after her)*.

Wait! Cornelia! If you just give me a

(Exit CORNELIA. She doesn't hear him.)

GARY (*continued*).

minute ...

NARRATOR 3.

That is really a shame.

He's such a nice guy.

NARRATOR 1.

But alone and tormented

He'd often cry,

GARY.

Why? Oh why, you

Blasted wrinkle,

Won't you leave

Poor Gary Grinkle?

(The WRINKLE GREMLINS run on. One of them grabs the already-wrinkled pants from GARY's hands. The GREMLINS toss them back and forth over an increasingly frustrated GARY.)

GARY (*continued*).

I work as hard

As anyone could

To make wrinkled clothes

Unwrinkled for good.

But you are determined

To cling to me.

Isn't there someplace

That you'd rather be?

*(The WRINKLE GREMLINS laugh, "Nope!" "Not us!"
"We like you!")*

GARY *(continued)*.

I could go back to work
And appear at my date
With lovely Cornelia!
I hope she can wait.

NARRATOR 1.

But no luck for Grinkle.
No luck today.

*(Eventually, GARY gets his pants back, and swipes at the
GREMLINS, but they elude his grasp and disappear.
GARY returns to his ironing board and sets about iron-
ing his pants again.)*

NARRATOR 2.

Those pesky wrinkles
Just won't go away.

NARRATOR 3.

Another day passes.
Not even a chance
To see Grinkle outside.

ALL.

He's ironing pants.

NARRATOR 4.

I bet you think Grinkle

Plain silly or foolish,
But wait till you hear
About Maggie Magoulish!

NARRATOR 2.

Oh, brother!

NARRATOR 3.

Right.

(Enter MAGGIE MAGOULISH, dressed in a wild, gaudy, slightly exotic, severely tacky outfit. She carries an armful of mismatched shoes.)

NARRATOR 4.

Poor woman.

NARRATOR 1.

She never goes out,

NARRATOR 2.

Though she's perfectly sane.

NARRATOR 1.

For fear that her shoes
Might get spoiled by rain.

NARRATOR 2.

They are really fancy.
You'd have to agree.
They have all sorts of jewels
You rarely see.

MAGGIE (*displaying a shoe, perhaps dropping several others as she does*).

This one's a *magollow*,

NARRATOR 1.

Magoulish would say,

MAGGIE.

Ten colors and hollow!

But don't go away.

(*MAGGIE drops all of her shoes, save one.*)

For this one's *magitcher*

And so very rare

Every day I feel richer

Just leaving it there!

(*Enter THE YAK.*)

MAGGIE (*continued*).

These shoes were made

From the hair of a yak.

THE YAK.

That's me!

(*MAGGIE strokes THE YAK's head.*)

MAGGIE.

Yes, darling. Tell them all about you.

THE YAK.

I carried a king
All around on my back,
Through the hills of *Magoop*,
In the land of *Magee*,
Where there grows the only
Magallah-mint tree.

NARRATOR 2.

Magallah-mint what?

MAGGIE.

Why everyone knows
That *Magallah-mint* tea
Is the costliest drink
Anywhere! Can't you see?

There is no way,
No way at all
That I will go out.
Raindrops might fall
Anytime, anywhere!
Then what would I do?
No really, I mean it.
I'm talking to you.

And you know what else?
Sunny days are no better.
The color would fade.
This is mountain yak leather!