

# **Excerpt Terms & Conditions**

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

**You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.**

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity of scripts.

## **Family Plays**

# A FRIEND LIKE ARTIE

Drama by  
WIL DENSON



# A FRIEND LIKE ARTIE

**Drama. By Wil Denson.** *Cast: 2m., 2w.* Jennifer “Britts” Britain is 13 years old today. She has planned a party for herself and her best friend, Artie. Artie is 17, but he’s more like 7. Britts is the brightest thing in his life. She teases him, big-sisters him and teaches him how to have fun. But now Britts is 13—she is a teenager, a young adult. Her peers remind her that it’s time to put away childish things, including Artie. It’s time for her to grow up. But what about Artie? He’ll never grow up. This 30- to 35-minute play was written before the full-length *Artie*. Due to the success and dramatic impact of this short script, the author expanded it into the longer version. The plot is similar but with some differences; for example, this one-act version has four characters instead of six. However, the theme is the same: Why do so many of us treat handicapped people—and anybody else who is “different”—so cruelly? Why must we recede into our own narrow social world of friends as part of the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood? *A Friend Like Artie* will tear at your heartstrings—and your conscience. The message of *A Friend Like Artie* is similar to the theme of *Artie*: Growing up is painful. This play is intended for audiences of all ages. *With its virtually bare stage, it can be performed anywhere.* *Approximate running time: 30 to 35 minutes. Code: FE2.*

## Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098-3308  
Phone: (800) 448-7469 / (815) 338-7170  
Fax: (800) 334-5302 / (815) 338-8981

[www.FamilyPlays.com](http://www.FamilyPlays.com)

ISBN-13 978-0-88680-330-8



9 780886 803308 >

A Friend Like Artie

# A FRIEND LIKE ARTIE

A One-Act Play

By

WIL DENSON

**Family Plays**

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

© Family Plays

\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by FAMILY PLAYS without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website [www.FamilyPlays.com](http://www.FamilyPlays.com), or we may be contacted by mail at: FAMILY PLAYS, 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

© 1988 by  
WIL DENSON

Printed in the United States of America  
*All Rights Reserved*  
(A FRIEND LIKE ARTIE)

ISBN: 978-0-88680-330-8

## IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author(s) of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author(s) *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author(s), if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with  
Family Plays of Woodstock, Illinois”

# **A FRIEND LIKE ARTIE**

*Cast*

**Britts**

**Artie**

**Peter**

**Linda**

Δ

**Place: a city park**

**Time: about four in the afternoon of a late-August day**

## ABOUT THE PLAY

Although this play is perfectly suitable for high school and junior high students to perform, it is designed for performance by adults. University students played all the roles in the premiere. "A Friend Like Artie" is intended for audiences of all ages, and—with its virtually bare stage—it can be performed anywhere.

A videotape of the university production is available from I. E. Clark, Inc. Playing time is about 30 minutes. The actor playing the role of Artie does a masterful job of portraying the retarded boy; it's hard to believe he's a university student. For this reason alone the tape is an excellent lesson in acting.

A full-length version (60-75 minutes) entitled *Artie* is also available. The full-length play adds two additional characters—Gail, an unpleasant, unattractive girl of 13; and Monkey, the hyperactive troublemaker in Wil Denson's powerful *Welcome to Carnie*.

• • •

The message of "A Friend Like Artie" is similar to the theme of *Artie*: Growing up is painful. Whoever said "school days are the best days of your life" must have had a horrible adulthood.

Jennifer "Britts" Britain is 13 years old today. She has planned a party for herself and her best friend, Artie. Artie is 17, but he's more like seven. Britts is the brightest thing in his life. She teases him, big-sisters him, teaches him how to have fun.

But now Britts is 13. A teen-ager. A young adult. Her peers remind her that it's time to put away childish things. Including Artie. It's time for her to grow up.

But what about Artie? He'll never grow up . . .



## PRODUCTION NOTES

### *Properties*

Baseball cap, worn baseball glove, pin-on buttons, ball point pens—Artie  
Huge grocery sack full of various snack foods: chips, dips, Cokes—Artie  
Large trunk-like plastic cooler—Artie  
2 high fold-up canvas chairs—Artie  
Volleyball—Britts  
Pocket watch—Artie  
Bottle opener—Artie

### *Costumes*

**Britts** is a normal "girl-next-door" type, with an athletic touch. She may wear jeans, sweatshirt, and sneakers—or whatever is current at the time you do the play. **Artie** has a rather mismatched array of various-sized clothes. His pants are too large and too long, his socks droop, his cap cocks to one side, his sneakers are untied, and his hair is mussed. **Peter** is very clean-cut. His oxford shirt is freshly laundered and his Levis stonewashed. **Linda** is more into a "new-wave" style of dressing. She might wear a mini skirt, flashy belt, and dangling earrings.

### *The Set*

The play may use a bare stage. The cooler and chairs brought on by Artie are the only set pieces. The setting is an open area in a public park. Trees, chain-link fence, and other props may be added but are not needed.

## A FRIEND LIKE ARTIE

*[A park. Afternoon. Late summer. LIGHTS. After an instant JENNIFER "BRITTS" BRITAIN enters in high good spirits. Britts is thirteen years old today. Her clothes have a who-cares look; she is far more interested in doing things than in how she might appear to others. She is very normal in a "girl-next-door" sort of way: active, athletic, a trifle skinny. Her most noticeable quality is her openness, her directness, her naturalness. Britts is a newly-thirteen, hands-on-hips, genuine American sparkler. With Britts is ARTIE. Artie is almost seventeen, but his chronological age is immaterial for Artie is mentally retarded; he has the emotional and intellectual maturity of about six. Even physically he is underdeveloped for sixteen. He speaks little, and when he does his speech patterns are slow, each word something of an effort. None of these things matter in the least however, as long as Artie is with Britts. For he adores her. He worships, tags-after, obeys, imitates her. When with Britts Artie is a puppy—warmth and wag and tongue and paw. Try as he might there is ever an amusing disarray about him; his baseball cap points off to one side slightly, his sneakers are untied, his socks droop, his hair goes off in all directions. In addition Artie's pants are too large at the waist and much too long; only heroic pant-cuffs and a tightly cinched belt make them wearable at all. And all about Artie are revealing touches—a worn-out baseball glove carefully buckled onto his belt, several pin-on buttons he has found, an array of ball point pens.*

*What we notice most about the pair as they enter, however, is the superhuman amount of "things" carried by Artie compared to Britts' almost empty-handedness. Artie is pack-horsed with a huge grocery sack of food, a large trunk-like plastic cooler, and two high fold-up canvas chairs. Britts carries only a volleyball. Both feel this inequity is quite funny.*

*Britts has already gotten Artie well on the way to hysteria when they enter]*

**BRITTS.** *[Flipping and catching the ball] Fair's fair, right, Artie? I mean I've got the ball, haven't I? Nobody helping me. Everybody does his share, right? [Seeing how close she can come to making him drop the chairs] Those chairs can't be that heavy anyway. I mean a little*

wood, a little cloth. How much can they weigh? No laughing now. No laughing. *[Adding weight by leaning on the cooler as they walk]* This heavy? Now is it? How about now? No giggling—no giggling now. Shouldn't carry so much if it's too heavy for you, Artie. What are you laughing at? You want to drop all that stuff? *No giggling.* You sound like a wiener.

*[They have reached the main playing area by now and there is no longer any pretence of going anywhere. BRITTS simply stands and concentrates on turning ARTIE into a squirming, writhing mass of laughter. He is helpless under his burdens, unable to defend himself against her unmerciful tickling]*

BRITTS. Come on, Artie, get serious. What's all this giggling about? Now if somebody was *tickling* you I could see it. I mean if somebody was *trying* to make you laugh there'd be some excuse. I mean *tickling* could make anybody lose it. Like if I did something like—this. Or this. Or *this*. *[When she finally has him totally destroyed BRITTS steps back, hands-on-hips, surveying her work, laughing a little herself at his hysteria. Shaking her head]* What a laugher. Honest, you must be the best laugher in the world. Look at you. I can't believe it. *[Looking around]* Okay, okay, okay. Let's get serious now. Time to get organized. This looks like a good place. Time out. *[The N. F. L. signal. ARTIE quickly becomes all seriousness, all attention]* Time out now. Let's set the stuff up. I'll get the chairs, you get the cooler and food and stuff, okay?

ARTIE. *[Nodding seriously]* Okay. *[We sense Artie's handicap partially in the way he reacts to things. Restraint and reserve are unknown to him; he gives his all to whatever the moment holds. He is quite able to go from side-splitting mirth to life-and-death labor with little transition]*

BRITTS. *[Working with the chairs]* Good. Just take the Coke out of the cooler and then close it up again, okay? Then we can use the cooler for a table. Put the chips and stuff on top of it. Okay?

ARTIE. *[Serious stuff, this]* Okay.

BRITTS. *[Working]* No *big* hurry. Only I told Mrs. Thompson we'd be back by six and you know how *she* is. So we'll just set the stuff up and have the party and like that. *[Turning to him]* Wait. Wait, hold it. Time check. What time is it?

ARTIE. *[He pauses; not his favorite lesson; he shrugs helplessly]* I don't know.

BRITTS. Well, not without looking. Come on. You got the watch I gave you? *[He nods]* Get it out. Now, what time does it say?

ARTIE. *[Studying the pocket watch, but a total out-of-the-blue guess]* Three-thirty?

BRITTS. Three-thirty? Come on, Artie, you can do better than that. You didn't even look. You just guessed. Now this is important. What time?

ARTIE. Four-thirty?

BRITTS. No. Don't guess. Think.

ARTIE. *[Shaking his head]* I don't think I can get—

BRITTS. Come on, now. Try. Where's the big hand?

ARTIE. On the seven.

BRITTS. Little hand?

ARTIE. Past the four.

BRITTS. So?

ARTIE. I don't know.

BRITTS. Try.

ARTIE. *[Nodding miserably]* I'm trying. I still don't know.

BRITTS. Come on. *[Prompting]* The little hand is the—

ARTIE. Hour hand.

BRITTS. And the big hand is the—

ARTIE. *[Sitting on one end of the cooler]* I thought this was supposed to be a party.

BRITTS. Well, sure. It is. Only you have to learn how to— *[Breaking off, realizing he's right]* Okay. Okay, it's four-thirty. A little past. You're right. It's party time. Now— *[Thinking of a way to cheer him again]* —straighten your cap.

ARTIE. *[A little behind]* What??

BRITTS. Your cap. Your cap. Straighten your cap. Here. *[BRITTS snatches Artie's cap and the chase is on]*

ARTIE. *[Rising, smiling broadly]* You took my—

BRITTS. *[Getting a quick jump on him]* Honest, Artie, I don't know about you.

*[ARTIE begins to beam as he realizes Britts has restored the party atmosphere. He sets out after her. Only it is less a chase than a game or performance or ritual. For Artie has no chance and both*

*know it. BRITTS dances along backwards, skips, dodges, fakes, taunts him, leads him to every possible area of the room and over every conceivable barrier. And she talks a mile-a-minute)*

BRITTS. You lost it again. Third time today. Gotta hang onto things, Artie. I think you may be losing it—lost it—can't find it. Listen, what's Mrs. Thompson gonna say? Gotta tell her, you know. *[Acting it out on the fly]* Mrs. Thompson, Mrs. Thompson, Artie lost his cap again. What's she gonna say, Artie? What's Mrs. Thompson gonna say? I mean, listen, I'm supposed to look after you but I can't do much with somebody who can't even hang onto his cap. Honest, she won't let you go with me if you don't do better than that. *[BRITTS abruptly reverses directions, spinning around to come face-to-face with ARTIE, stopping him in his tracks, the cap between her knees. Sharp, demanding]* Time out, time out. Now where's the cap? *[He hesitates the briefest instant, then nods toward the cap]*

ARTIE. You've got it.

BRITTS. *[Mussing his hair wildly, vigorously]* Me?!? Me?!? Where've I got it?? *[Darting off again]* Listen, comb your hair. Look at you. You look like some cow's been using your head for a popsickle. *[BRITTS sails the cap like a frisbee into the picnic area and then beats him to it. Keeping the chairs between them]* Listen, is that true? Is that what really happened? Did some cow really lick you? Really? Oh, yuk! *Yuk-ers!* Cow spit! Cow droooooo! Oh, Artie! Eeeeeeyuk. *[Panting, BRITTS stops and quickly gives the time-out sign]* Okay, okay, okay. Time out, time out. Here's your cap. That's enough. I quit. Game's over. Whew. I'm whipped. *[BRITTS climbs into a chair and flops back with an exaggerated groan, her feet dangling]* Ohhhhhhhhh. Wow. Tired city. Ahhhh. Break time. You can finish with the stuff now if you want. Whew. *[ARTIE takes the cap, looks at Britts to make sure the game is truly done, then puts the cap on carefully and goes about the business of laying out chips and dip on the cooler. BRITTS watches him for a moment]* You're really something, Artie. You know that?

ARTIE. What?

BRITTS. Really. I swipe your cap, tickle your guts out, make you do all the work, and all you do is laugh. You're okay, you know.

ARTIE. *[Seriously, slowly]* No, I like it.

BRITTS. Yeah, sure, I know you do. Only, you know.

ARTIE. I don't mind.

BRITTS. No, I know. Know something? I like it too. *[Breaking out of potential mawkishness; rising]* Listen, let's split a Coke, okay? Come on. Coke time. Walk this way, please. *[It's one of their favorite games. BRITTS leads ARTIE in a short grotesque parade around the area, both of them limping monstrously. Ending it, getting a Coke]* Coke. *[Snapping out her hand]* Opener. *[BRITT sits in the chair again. ARTIE digs into his pocket and proudly produces, among other things, a bottle opener. BRITTS opens the bottle, wipes the top off on her shirt, and is about to drink when she notices ARTIE's intent stare]* Okay, okay. You first. Only not too much, okay? Just take it easy. You drink too much Coke. It'll rot your teeth. Sit. *[ARTIE sits in the other chair with a good deal of squirming and adjusting, not settling down until his position exactly matches hers. She hands him the bottle]* And nooooo spitting in the bottle, got it? Yuk. And don't tell Mrs. Thompson, okay? She doesn't like me to give you Coke. *[There is a pause as ARTIE drinks carefully. He finishes and hands her the bottle, carefully watching as she drinks and gives it back. BRITT stretches expansively, embracing the day]* What a day, Artie. We should come here more often. Don't you feel good? Should have a picnic every afternoon. Ahhhhhhhhhhh. *[Turning to him]* Listen, you know what day it is?

ARTIE. *[Nodding]* Your birthday.

BRITTS. Well, sure, I know you knew *that*. How old??

ARTIE. Thirteen.

BRITTS. *[Doing a pinball machine]* Hey, right. Ding-ding-ding-ding. *[She draws her knees up, wrapping her arms around them. Becoming introspective]* Huh. Thirteen. How about that. Big thirteen. Everything different. Wonder if it'll be unlucky. Probably. Big deal. You feel any different when you turned thirteen?

ARTIE. *[He shrugs and continues to sip the Coke]* No.

BRITTS. Huh. You turned thirteen so long ago you probably can't even remember. *[Regretfully]* Boy, Linda sure got different. Hardly know her any more. All she thinks about now is make-up and boys. Scary. She's so nervous about starting junior high Monday I bet she won't sleep all week-end. Probably wear a headband to bed every night. What a wiener. *[Leaning back]* Junior high school. Huh. Not so scary. Big deal, who cares. Huh. Wonder what it'll be like.

*[The thoughtful mood of the scene is shattered by ARTIE burping loudly. BRITTS sits up quickly; she breaks into laughter]*