

# Excerpt terms and conditions

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

---

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 you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

# **The Impracticality of Modern-Day Mastodons (Competition Version)**

By

RACHEL TEAGLE

**Dramatic Publishing Company**

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 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.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com), or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 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 that are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted. |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

©MMXXVI by  
RACHEL TEAGLE

Printed in the United States of America

*All Rights Reserved*

(THE IMPRACTICALITY OF MODERN-DAY MASTODONS  
[COMPETITION VERSION])

ISBN: 978-1-61959-369-5

## IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author 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 *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 (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with  
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”



# **The Impracticality of Modern-Day Mastodons (Competition Version)**

## **CHARACTERS**

JESS (w): A recent Mastodon.

BUSTER (a): Part of a very sick child who made a wish,  
also: CHORUS 1, NORMA, PALEONTOLOGIST 1,  
NARRATOR.

CLARENCE/CLINT (a): A struggling, pun-making journalist,  
then a hyper-suave super-secret agent, also: CHORUS 2,  
THOMAS JEFFERSON, FIGURE.

DELORES (w): A cheerful and professional vocational  
advisor, also: CHORUS 3, LEWIS, FEMALE VOICE.

TRACY (a): A perky newscaster, also: CHORUS 4, INGA,  
COMTE DE BUFON, CLARK.

PAT (a): A sophisticated newscaster, also: CHORUS 5,  
PALEONTOLOGIST 2, PEALE, BALLERINA-SPY.

## CASTING NOTES:

The voices of the chorus should be played by all available ensemble except for Jess. Buster serves as the leader of the chorus.

The unconventional spacing of the voices is meant to be taken as an invitation to play poetically with the speaking of the lines, not as strict timing notes. Multiple voices at once, elongating words, echoes. It should feel like the voice in the back of your head. The text in these moments is less important than the feeling it creates.

In the stage directions, Tracy is a woman and Pat is a man, but they can be easily changed as needed.

The performers may be any race or ethnicity. There is no reason for this script to be performed with an entirely white cast.

# **The Impracticality of Modern-Day Mastodons (Competition Version)**

*(Cold, clear light breaks through the darkness, underscored by the sounds of the tundra. BUSTER enters from a space beyond reality.)*

BUSTER. There are many wonders of the prehistoric world.

*(He summons the CHORUS. They become wondrous beasts. Their voices echo in the back of our thoughts.)*

VOICES. The bestest wonder of them all  
is

the mastodon.

*(The shadow of an enormous creature starts to pass by, one lumbering step at a time.*

*It is a mastodon with huge tusks and enormous feet. The shadow continues to pass, and we see what is casting it: a woman named JESS, more dressed up than she wants to be. She carries her shoes.)*

VOICES (*cont'd*). What would it be like to be

so

big

big

big?

One

electric

being.

*(She raises her hand and the shadow raises its trunk. They reach for something.*

*The lights take us to an apartment. It's late. The shadow is gone.)*

JESS. I'm home. Babe? You still working?

*(CLARENCE enters. He is rumpled and a little nebbish.)*

CLARENCE. Uh, kind of. How was it?

JESS. Stupid. Like really stupid. I had to tie a hundred and sixty sky blue satin chair covers.

CLARENCE. Why?

JESS. Because this is the Regional Insurance Adjuster Association Awards, and we simply cannot have bare chairs. *(She remembers something.)* Oh! Someone left an old newspaper at the hotel, and I found an article you gotta see. *(She produces a clipping.)* You know how they tested the prototype for the flying car? Turns out, the test pilots all used to work together, but not at a lab, at a car wash. Weird, right? I'm going to put it up on the wall.

*(She starts to exit to the other room.)*

CLARENCE. Oh, wait, Jess ...

*(JESS pops back into the room.)*

JESS. What happened to the wall? With the map and the strings and the pictures. Why'd you take it down?

CLARENCE. I pitched the story. And they loved it. They loved it so much, they're putting a senior writer on it. And I'm still churning out puff pieces about cute dogs and sick kids.

JESS. Did you ask to write it?

CLARENCE. I did all the research, they knew I wanted it.

JESS. But did you ask? This was *the story*. This could have been your big break.

CLARENCE. I don't think I even want to be a reporter anymore.

*(A beat.)*

JESS. If you could be anything, I mean anything, what would you be?

CLARENCE. I don't know.

JESS. Come on, what would you be?

CLARENCE. Let's be flying test car pilots.

JESS. I get air sick. And car sick. Game show hosts?

CLARENCE. I hate ties. Jewel thieves?

JESS. Lumberjacks.

CLARENCE. Professional hockey players!

JESS. No, I like my teeth.

CLARENCE. Yeah, I like your teeth too.

*(A beat.)*

JESS. But what do we really do? *(There's no answer.)* You going to bed?

CLARENCE. Yeah, soon.

*(She exits. He picks up the clipping, looks at it briefly and puts it back down. The lights fade to darkness.)*

*A phone rings.*

*A small pool of light reveals CLARENCE on the couch where he fell asleep.*

*The phone rings again.*

*He rolls over to pick it up.)*

CLARENCE (*cont'd*). Hello?

*(INGA is on the other end. We see as little of her as possible. She is mysterious, confident and utterly inscrutable. She has an alluring accent.)*

INGA. You don't know me, but I am about to change your life.

CLINT. Who is this?

INGA. In your pocket, you'll find a stick of gum printed with geographic coordinates. Memorize these coordinates, then chew and swallow the gum. At 1300 sharp, we begin your training.

CLARENCE. Training? For what?

INGA. For the rest of your life, agent.

CLARENCE. Agent? But, I'm not a secret agent, how did you even get this number?

INGA. This isn't your phone. Remember 1300 hours sharp. Ta ta.

*(INGA hangs up. CLARENCE looks at the phone. The phone beeps)*

PHONE VOICE (*recording*). This phone will self-destruct in ten, nine, eight, seven, six ...

*(He panics and throws the phone out the window. It implodes with the smallest explosion noise.)*

CLARENCE. Jess? Jess! Holy crap, Jess! I think ... I think something just happened.

JESS (*offstage*). Yeah ...

*(She enters.*

*She is now a mastodon.)*

JESS (*cont'd*). Something definitely happened.

*(CLARENCE stares up at her.*

*The theme to Nightly News Now kicks in. Lights come up on PAT and TRACY, two news anchors. They have been fighting over the single anchor chair, jostling for position. The lights catch them completely off guard.)*

PAT. Uh ... good evening! I'm Pat St. John—

TRACY. And I'm Tracy Weathers!

PAT. And this ...

TRACY & PAT. Is your *Nightly News Now*!

*(The theme continues as the camera angle shifts. PAT and TRACY bicker briefly as they jostle to new positions.)*

PAT. Negotiations continue this evening for the newly formed Ice Cream Tasters Union over in Milwaukee—

TRACY. Workers have picketed factories across the city demanding shorter hours, wider fudge ribbons and comprehensive dental coverage.

PAT. Industry experts hope an agreement is brokered quickly, as the ICTU represents one of the fastest growing sectors in employment today.

Coming up, more inspiring real-life stories as reports flood in that our dreams are coming true.

TRACY. That's right, dreams are actually coming true.

PAT. And in light of this recent shift, *Nightly News Now* is pleased to announce that twenty-five-year veteran anchor Pat St. John will be joined, permanently, by newcomer Tracy Weathers.

TRACY. That's ME!!

PAT. Yes it is. (*He composes himself.*) When we return; behind the stripes: tiger tamers tell all.

TRACY. Surfers sponsor super scientists to synthesize a safe tsunami at one sixth scale.

PAT. The sky's the limit. Apparently.

TRACY. Even a small-town girl with empty pockets and big dreams could wake up to find herself reading the news off fancy sheets of paper in a snappy blazer.

PAT. Imagine that.

TRACY. Yeah! (*She beams.*) And to our viewing audience, if you, too, wake up with new sense of purpose, don't panic! Vocational Advisors are standing by to help.

PAT. Say, Tracy, with your brand-new news aptitude, they can probably find a great spot for you!

TRACY. They did! Right here. By you!

PAT. Oh. Great. Just absolutely great.

More on this, when we return, after a few brief messages.

TRACY. Hi, Mom! I'm on TV!

*(JESS walks into an office, catching the tail end of the previous session. DELORES, a vocational advisor, is speaking to NORMA, a new astronaut.)*

NORMA. You really think so?

DELORES. I know so. Haven't you always wanted to be an astronaut?

NORMA. Well, yeah.

DELORES. And here's your big chance! Sure, it's a scary thing to go up into space—

NORMA. I've never even been on a plane before.

DELORES. Right. But that's all going to change, because today, you are who you were meant to be. Now, how's about we slap you in a space suit and get you some Tang?

NORMA. I do like Tang.

DELORES. That's the spirit! One small step for man, and all that good stuff. See you next week!

*(NORMA exits. DELORES checks off her clipboard.)*

DELORES *(cont'd)*. And that takes care of that! Now, who's next.

*(DELORES turns and sees JESS. Her jaw drops open.)*

JESS. Please don't scream! I'm not here to eat you or trample you. I've got an appointment. I'm Jessica Goldman.

DELORES. Oh! Oh my. So you are.

JESS. Yes I am. Thank you so much for fitting me in, Ms. Atkins.

DELORES. Please, call me Delores. So, this is a shift thing?

JESS. No, no. I've always been a talking prehistoric elephant. I just need a job.

DELORES. What?

JESS. Kidding. I'm kidding.

DELORES. Oh, I see. You're funny! You're funny.

JESS. Right. Thanks.

DELORES. Well, Jessica, if they sent you here, it's because you need to be with the very best. Now, let's get down to the good stuff. Mint?

JESS. What?

DELORES. Would you like a mint?

JESS. No thanks.

DELORES. You sure? They've got chocolate in the middle.

*(A beat. DELORES is distressed.)*

JESS. Um, I'll try one.

DELORES. Oh, good.

*(DELORES presents the tin of mints. JESS takes one with her trunk and puts it in her mouth.)*

DELORES *(cont'd)*. I just adore these mints. It's a little bitty bit of Christmas any time. I just love Christmas, don't you?

JESS. No. I'm Jewish.

DELORES. Oh. Well, then it's like a little bit bitty of, um, winter. The good part of winter.

JESS. I always thought the good part of winter was the moment before your body goes numb when the wind electrifies every little hair and all of you is finally one being, one electric being.

*(A moment.)*

DELORES. I like toboggans.

JESS. Yeah. They're, uh, neat.

*(A beat.)*

JESS *(cont'd)*. I'm sorry, I'm not very good at interviews.

DELORES. Oh, don't think of this as an interview. We can just chat.

JESS. I do have some questions. Does anyone know what really happened? They said all our dreams came true, but—

DELORES. No no no. Not all our dreams. Just that one special dream, what you wanted to be when you grew up. That one dream came true.

JESS. So, when you were a little girl, you wanted to be a career counselor?

DELORES. A vocational advisor, and thank goodness! Which brings us to you. So, when you were a little girl, you dreamed of being a, um ...

JESS. A mastodon.

DELORES. Yes. You wanted to be a mastodon?

JESS. I did.

*(She takes another mint in her trunk.)*

JESS (*cont'd*). I was not a practical child.

*(PALEONTOLOGISTS 1 and 2 enter. DELORES' office melts away.)*

PALEONTOLOGIST 2. And now, a brief academic presentation for your personal edification.

PALEONTOLOGIST 1. "Mastodons, Mammoths, and Other Wonders of The Prehistoric World"

PALEONTOLOGIST 2. A report by Jessica Goldman, age seven.

PALEONTOLOGIST 1. There are many wonders of the prehistoric world. They are dead now because that was a long time ago.

PALEONTOLOGIST 2. But, we know they were here because they left their bones behind.

PALEONTOLOGIST 1. The bestest wonder of them all is the mastodon. They looked really cool. Like this.

*(They hold up a really good drawing of a mastodon.)*

PALEONTOLOGIST 1 (*cont'd*). This is a really good drawing because I traced it.

PALEONTOLOGIST 2. Mastodons lived right here in the United States of America, but it wasn't called that because mastodons don't care about geography.

PALEONTOLOGIST 1. Their bones have been found everywhere from Alaska to California to Mexico to Connecticut.

PALEONTOLOGIST 2. In fact, I bet that thousands of years ago a mastodon walked right here where you're sitting. Seriously, exactly where you are right now.

PALEONTOLOGIST 1. Pretty cool right?

*(They exit.*

*We move to the apartment. There is a big bouquet of flowers on a table.)*

JESS. Hey babe, I'm home! Aw, flowers ...

*(She reaches for them.)*

CLINT (*offstage*). STOP!!

*(CLARENCE, now "CLINT," a hyper-suave super spy, somersaults in, checking for threats. He probably has theme music. It definitely is awesome.)*

CLINT. Those are no ordinary flowers.

*(He flips to the flower vase and extracts one.)*

CLINT (*cont'd*). See this chrysanthemum? Concealed in the stem is a small caliber poisoned dart.

*(He puts the flower to his lips and blows. We hear broken glass followed by the sound of a cat being shot with a small caliber poisoned dart.)*

CLINT *(cont'd)*. Looks like April showers bring ... deadly flowers.

JESS. Did you just kill a cat?

CLINT. Don't worry, the antidote is in this lamp.

*(He drops the lamp out the window. We hear it shatter. There is a relieved meow.)*

CLINT *(cont'd)*. So, how was your day?

JESS. Great! I ate a tree.

CLINT. Nice, nice.

*(CLINT ostentatiously starts adjusting his tux.)*

JESS. Yes. I see you're wearing a tuxedo.

CLINT. Aren't you gonna ask why?

JESS. Why are you wearing a tuxedo?

CLINT. Operation Wingéd Cobra. Sounds intense, right?

JESS. That's one word for it.

*(He begins checking all of his spy equipment. Everything in the apartment has a secret spy purpose and makes appropriate spy sounds. Most things are guns.)*

CLINT. The Russians are developing a supersonic personal micro-copter, and we have to be ready.

*(He locks and loads a throw pillow.)*

CLINT *(cont'd)*. Have you considered ballet?