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Dramatic Publishing



The Wish Peddler

A Short Play for Children

By

TOM McCOY



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(THE WISH PEDDLER)

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THE WISH PEDDLER

*A One-Act Play
for Thirteen and Up, M or F*

C H A R A C T E R S

SPEAKER

NARRATOR

ACTORS A, B, C, D

WITCH

LAUGHMAKERS 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

LION

CLOWN

WRITER

TREES

VILLAGERS

CHILDREN

WISH PEDDLER

Time: The Present

Place: In a Play

Scene One

The stage lights go up to reveal four PEOPLE on a bare stage, plus the SPEAKER.

SPEAKER. Good evening, everyone. (The FOUR mumble the obvious.) Yes . . . of course, good afternoon. (The SPEAKER acts highly nervous.) Welcome to our . . . um . . . ah . . . play. First we thought about doing . . . (A approaches the SPEAKER and pushes her out of the way.)

A. We thought about doing this play which deals with an Eskimo boy and all about where he lives and what his house is like and the stuff he does . . . but after we read it, we realized we couldn't do it because we couldn't get any snow or ice or polar bears . . . and, even if we could, the snow would melt and where could we keep a polar bear? So, we decided . . . (The SPEAKER comes back to stop A from telling the audience the obvious.)

SPEAKER. Decided to read some more plays to see if any of those would be better . . . you know, easier to do. (B approaches and the SPEAKER backs away.)

B. They told me to read all these plays because we had to choose one and do it. Well, I read this one I liked a lot. See, it's about this girl who gets picked up by some people from another

planet who comes to this planet in a flying saucer . . . this huge flying saucer. The whole play is about what they all see on the way back and what this place is like where all these people are from. This other place is all under water and all the people look like fish and live in great big seaweed towers and . . . (He speaks sadly.) . . . we didn't know where to get enough water or if we did get all that water, how to keep us all from getting wet, so . . . (C approaches and B returns to his place.)

C. We kept reading . . . kept looking. I found this really neat play about this pig who had magic in his tail and how everybody who twisted the pig's tail would get a thousand dollars in gold. But after a time, almost everybody in the whole world found out about the pig and everybody was twisting and pulling and shoving until the poor pig's tail fell off and the pig got run over by everybody trying to get to touch the tail. I guess it was just too sad a story . . . plus nobody wanted to play the pig. (D now approaches and glares at C.)

D. Well, would you? Would you like to end up all squashed and flattened? (C returns to her place.) Well, would you? Boy, that's really dumb. (C looks around and summons up all her courage.) And since I'm up here and nobody wants to tell you . . . the truth of the whole thing is that we don't have a play to do for you tonight . . . (The OTHERS mumble the obvious.) . . . this afternoon . . . because we couldn't find one we could all agree on or how to do it . . . or anything. It's just too hard . . . we're only kids ourselves, you know. (The SPEAKER slowly comes forward.)

SPEAKER. So . . . we're really very sorry . . . but there won't be any play today and . . . well . . . if you want your money back, just go . . .

(There is a loud knock at a back door behind the audience. A shabbily dressed PEDDLER comes in, pulling a box, and makes his way into the auditorium. He seems sinister yet somehow appealing; honest and dishonest all at the same time. He makes his way from person to person seemingly unconcerned with where he is or the fact that there are people on the stage.)

PEDDLER. Hello! Hello! Hello! Wishes anyone? Anyone care for a wish? Wishes for sale. Care for a wish? (He makes his way toward the stage. He sings as he goes.)

IT'S NOT IN THE WIND
IT'S NOT IN THE STARS,
IT'S NOT IN THE PRESENT
OR WHAT HAS BEEN,
IT'S IN MY BOX,
IN MY BLACK BOX,
THAT'S WHERE WISHES ARE.
JUST GIVE A LITTLE
AND WE'LL BEGIN.

(D confronts the PEDDLER angrily.)

D. Hey, you . . . we're in enough trouble already . . . all these people came to see a play and we don't have one and then you come along, come right in here with that stupid old box asking for money.

PEDDLER. Ah . . . I didn't say anything about money. I said just give a little . . . that could be anything . . . your ring, for instance . . . give me that and I'll give you a wish. (He speaks like a carnival barker.) "All wishes guaranteed or payment cheerfully refunded pursuant to paragraph five, subsections A and C of Wishingness, Incorporated, Yours truly, President and Chairman of the Board." (Back to himself.)

Now, your ring? (ALL urge D to go ahead and give him the ring.)

D. Yeah, sure, go ahead. It's not your ring! Suppose I give him my ring and it all turns out to be a big joke — what then? Who's going to get my ring back?

B (suddenly, trustingly). Here, take my ring.

PEDDLER. Thank you. Now . . . your wish?

B. I wish we could do a play.

PEDDLER. But a play has characters, a story, scenery; each of those is a separate wish.

B. All right. I want a play and I want a clown in the play so I wish for a clown. Here is my ring . . . give me a clown.

D. And if he gets a clown, I'll give you my ring and wish for a . . . a . . . a lion!

PEDDLER. Because you gave a little bit . . . here's a wish . . .

I hope it fits. (The lights go out. The PEDDLER goes off.)