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Family Plays

IN SEARCH OF THREE SILLIES

Folktale/Comedy adapted by

ZINITA FOWLER



IN SEARCH OF THREE SILLIES

In Search of Three Sillies was produced several times and taken on a tour of elementary schools prior to publication. The author, a native Texan, has been fascinated by folklore since childhood. The story of the *Three Sillies* is one of her favorites. Her five published books include *Ghost Stories of Old Texas*, folklore of her home state.

Folktale/Comedy. By Zinita Fowler. *Cast: 5m., 3w.* In this adaptation of the famous English folktale, we see Jack, an energetic young man who is about to ask the girl he loves to marry him. But when he meets her family, he is flabbergasted. They are faced with a problem that's so simple a little child could solve it—but they can't. "How silly can people be?" Jack wonders. Can he marry into this family? He decides to make a search. If he can find three other people as silly as his sweetheart's family, he will return and marry her. This lively play portrays his search for three sillies. He finds them, and their stories make a hilarious play for audiences of all ages. While it is entertaining your audiences, it just may teach them an important lesson. "Judge not, lest ye be judged," the Bible admonishes us. Yet most of us find pleasure in our feeling of superiority when we encounter others who impress us as being somewhat less wonderful than we are. *Easy to stage. Time: any time. Place: all around us. Approximate running time: 15 to 20 minutes. Code: IC7.*

Family Plays

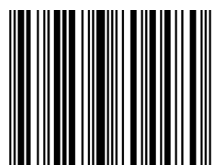
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by
ZINITA FOWLER

**Adapted from an
old English folk tale**

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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ZINITA FOWLER

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(IN SEARCH OF THREE SILLIES)

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IN SEARCH OF THREE SILLIES

An adaptation by ZINITA FOWLER

Cast of Characters

The Piper
Young Jack
Jennie, a young woman
Mother
Father
Farmer's Wife
Traveling Salesman
Schoolboy

Time: *Any time at all*

Place: *All around you*

ABOUT THE PLAY

"Judge not, lest ye be judged," the Bible admonishes us. Yet most of us find pleasure in our feeling of superiority when we encounter others who impress us as being somewhat less wonderful than we are.

In this adaptation of the famous old English folk tale, we see Jack, a young man who is about to ask the girl he loves to marry him. But when he meets her family, he finds himself having to solve a simple problem which is devastating them.

"How silly can people be?" Young Jack ponders. He decides to make a search. If he can find three other people as silly as his sweetheart's family, he will return and marry her.

This lively play portrays his search for three sillies.

While it is entertaining your audiences, it just may teach them an important lesson.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zinita Parsons Fowler is a former children's librarian and school teacher. A native Texan, she has been fascinated by folklore since childhood. The story of the Three Sillies is one of her favorites.

Many of her articles, poems, and short stories have been published. Five of her books have been published: *Ghost Stories of Old Texas*; *Ghost Stories of Old Texas II*; *Ghost Stories of Old Texas III*; *Gotcha/Whatsit?*; and *The Last Innocent Summer*.

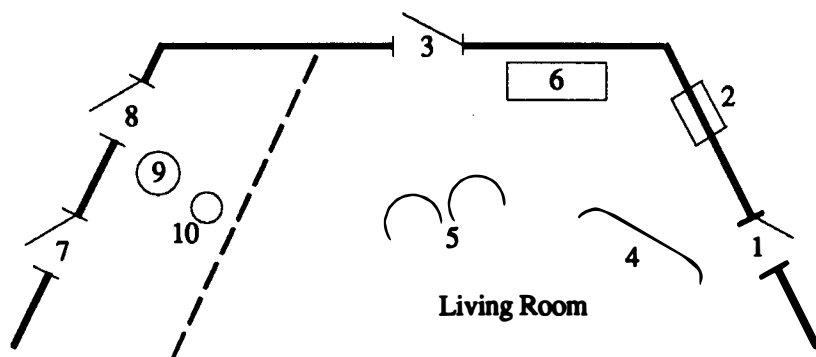
"In search of Three Sillies" was produced several times and taken on a tour of elementary schools prior to publication.

Costumes

Costumes may be modern or any period befitting the character and personality of the wearer. A harlequin or clown costume is one possibility for the Piper. Long-john underwear would be appropriate for the Traveling Salesman as he tries to jump into his trousers.

The Set

Basic floor plan



Scene 1—Living Room

- 1—Door to outside
- 2—Window
- 3—Door to interior of house
- 4—Couch
- 5—Chairs
- 6—Table

Scene 2—Wine Cellar

- 7—door to wine cellar
- 8—entrance to cellar
- 9—large wine barrel
- 10—stool

Scene 3—Farm Kitchen:

Use Table 6 (above), add 2 or 3 chairs

Scene 4—Bedroom in Inn:

Remove table and add bed

Scene 5—A pond. Play on apron in front of curtain

Scene 6—Living Room

The above arrangement of scenes makes quick change simple as the curtain is closed. These plans are, of course, only suggestions. Use your own imagination and ingenuity.

IN SEARCH OF THREE SILLIES

[The PIPER enters in front of curtains, playing a tune on his pipe and dancing along in his own world. He sees the audience out of the corner of his eye, stops and looks for a moment, starts on, stops again, shrugs. He faces front, takes off his cap and makes a sweeping bow]

PIPER. Good morrow, good friends. What a nice surprise to find you here. I didn't really expect you until tomorrow. Or was it the next day, or *[makes a face]* perhaps it WAS today. I often lose track of time. No matter. I know WHY you are here. You want to hear a story and it just so happens that I have a very good one for you. *[He moves toward audience]* It's all about a boy, Young Jack, who came courting a girl named Jeannie and had to ask her parents for her hand in marriage. It begins, as all good stories do, with "Once upon a time—"

[HOUSELIGHTS go down as CURTAIN opens. The stage is split into two scenes: Scene One is the living room of a simple farm cottage, with table, chairs, and a couch. A door at Stage Left is the entrance from outside. A window at Up Left allows characters to look out and see someone approaching the house. A door at Stage Right leads into the cellar, and another door at Up Right is the entrance to the cellar. Scene Two is the cellar, which remains dimly lit until action moves to that area. MOTHER enters the living room at Up Center, speaking to Father, who is offstage]

MOTHER. Come along, now, stop dawdling. Young Jack will soon be here, and we must all look our best.

FATHER *[enters behind Mother, grumpily fussing with his tie]*. What a lot of nonsense! After our daughter is married to this fellow, I certainly do not plan to sit around in my coat and tie, and —

MOTHER. Of course you don't, but she hasn't caught him yet, and we must put our best foot forward. *[Slaps his hands away and works at the tie while FATHER twists and complains and makes it hard for her to get it tied. At last, it is done, and MOTHER gives it a satisfied pat]* There! I must say, you do look quite nice.

FATHER *[mimicking her, irritably]*. I must say, you do look quite nice. Stuff and bother!

[Enter JENNIE, Up Center, in great excitement. She hurries over to window and looks out]

JENNIE. Oh, my! He's coming up the walk! How do I look? Am I all right? [*Pirouettes in front of Mother and Father*]

MOTHER. You look beautiful, daughter.

FATHER. But for goodness sake, stop all that whirling about. You're making me dizzy.

JACK [*calling from outside*]. Halloo, the house! May I enter?

JENNIE [*squealing with excitement*]. Oh, it's him; it's Young Jack. [*She rushes about, plumping up pillows, straightening doilies, etc.*]

MOTHER. Oh, yes, it's Young Jack! Oh, my! [*She, too, begins to rush about, straightening the room, colliding with Jennie*]

FATHER [*sarcastically*]. Yes, I do believe it's Young Jack, and I do wonder if anyone is going to let him in. [*MOTHER and JENNIE freeze in mid-motion and then straighten up slowly to face one another*]

MOTHER AND JENNIE [*together*]. Oh, yes, do ask him to come in.

[*JENNIE seats herself primly on the couch, feet close together, eyes downcast. MOTHER joins FATHER at the door, giving her skirt a last tug and dusting Father's coat vigorously until he irritably slaps her hand away. He swings open the door, his face turning from a scowl to a beaming mask of welcome*]

FATHER. Good morrow, Young Jack. Pray, do us the honor of entering our humble dwelling. [*YOUNG JACK enters breezily. He shakes Father's hand and greets Mother courteously, then crosses to stand in front of Jennie*]

JACK. Good day, Mistress Jennie. I hope you will forgive me for being late, but the cows got out—

FATHER [*coming over to stand behind Young Jack*]. You have cows?

JACK. —and the sheep grew frightened and broke through the fence—

FATHER [*leaning closer*]. You have sheep?

JACK. —and the pigs followed the sheep, and—

FATHER [*almost between Jack and Jennie, visibly impressed*]. You have pigs?

JENNIE [*smiling shyly*]. Don't apologize, Young Jack. You are welcome in our home at any time.

FATHER. No, no, go ahead. What else got out besides cows and sheep and pigs?

JENNIE. Father, Young Jack owns a nice farm over near the next village.

FATHER. A farm? He owns a farm? A whole farm? *[JENNIE and YOUNG JACK nod their heads vigorously, smiling first at one another and then at FATHER, who becomes expansively cordial, rubbing hands together]* Well, well, well, do have a seat, Young Jack. We must talk about *[smiling fatuously at Jennie]*—things. Run down to the cellar, daughter, dear, and fetch us some ale.

[JENNIE rises and takes a large pitcher from the table. She exits to cellar as MOTHER and FATHER seat YOUNG JACK on sofa and draw up chairs on either side of him. They freeze in tableau of conversation as LIGHTS go down in living room and come up in cellar. JENNIE enters cellar, seats herself on stool, turns the spigot on the barrel and holds the pitcher to catch the ale. She is smiling and happy as she thinks of the conversation going on in the room above. She hums a little tune and looks up toward the ceiling. Suddenly, she gasps and drops the pitcher, a look of horror coming over her face]

JENNIE. Oh, look at that ax, stuck up there in the ceiling! How dreadful it is! What if—what if some day Young Jack and I might be married and we might have a young son and we might send him down to the cellar to draw some ale and the ax might fall on his head and kill him. How dreadful that would be! Oh, woe! Woe!

[She puts her head in her hands and begins to cry. LIGHTS dim in cellar and come up in living room]

FATHER. Well, well, well, young fellow, I believe we can work things out with no trouble at all. Jennie never mentioned to me that you were a man of property. *[He frowns in direction of cellar]* Where can the girl be? I'm dry as dust. Go down cellar, good wife, and see what's keeping her.

[MOTHER gets up and exits to cellar while FATHER and YOUNG JACK freeze in tableau of conversation. LIGHTS go down in living room and come up in cellar. JENNIE is weeping noisily. MOTHER stops, shocked, before crossing to her]

MOTHER. What is this, Daughter? The ale is running all over the floor while you sit here crying. What is wrong?

JENNIE *[between dramatic sobs]*. Oh, Mother, what if someday Young Jack and I are married —

MOTHER. Yes —

JENNIE. And what if one day we have a son —

MOTHER. Yes, yes —

JENNIE. And what if one day we send him down cellar to fetch some ale, and —

MOTHER. Yes, yes, yes —

JENNIE. And that ax up there in the ceiling *[pointing upward]* falls on his head and kills him. How dreadful that would be! *[MOTHER recoils at sight of ax and her face crumples into an expression of sorrow]*

MOTHER. Oh yes, how dreadful that would be!

[MOTHER sits down beside JENNIE and they both begin to cry very loudly. LIGHTS dim in cellar and come up in living room where FATHER and JACK are talking]

FATHER. Jennie is an excellent cook as you will find out when we sit down to eat. That is *[clutches throat dramatically]* if we don't perish of thirst before then. Where can those dratted females be?

JACK. Perhaps we should go to see if they need some help.

FATHER *[rising]*. No, no, never mind. I'll go. I know how they dawdle and fiddle about — *[catches himself]* I mean, not Jennie. She *never* dawdles or fiddles about, but — but —

[FATHER exits hastily to cellar as LIGHTS go down in living room and come up in cellar. MOTHER and JENNIE are still seated on the floor, weeping noisily]

FATHER. What's this? The ale is running all over the floor while you two sit there caterwauling like baboons. What is the matter?

JENNIE *[between sobs]*. Oh Father, suppose Young Jack and I got married —

FATHER. Yes —

MOTHER. And suppose one day they have a young son —