

# Excerpt terms and 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.

*Dramatic Publishing*

# KINDNESS

By  
DENNIS FOON



**Dramatic Publishing**  
Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY 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: DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, 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.

©MMVIII by

DENNIS FOON

Printed in the United States of America

*All Rights Reserved*

(KINDNESS)

For inquiries concerning all other rights, contact:  
Kensington Literary Representation, 34 St. Andrew St.,  
Toronto, ON, Canada M5T 1K6  
Phone: (416) 979-0187

ISBN: 978-1-58342-606-7

For the remarkable Aliayta Foon-Dancoes,  
who was a resource, sounding board and inspiration.

## 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 of Woodstock, Illinois”

\* \* \* \*

*Kindness* was commissioned by Manitoba Theatre for Young People (MTYP), Leslee Silverman, artistic director. *Kindness* was first produced by MTYP at the CanWest Performing Arts Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba, November 15, 2007, Richard Greenblatt, director, with the following cast:

Keegan . . . . . Tom Keenan  
Damon . . . . . Daniel Briere  
Tessa . . . . . Andrea Scott  
Everyone else . . . . . Stefanie Wiens  
Stage Manager . . . . . Kirsti Bruce

### CREATIVE TEAM

Composer . . . . . Cathy Nosaty  
Set and Costume Designer . . . . . Leanne Foley  
Lighting Designer . . . . . Bill Williams  
Puppet Artist . . . . . Shawn Kettner  
Video Consultant . . . . . deco dawson

## PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES:

I confess: I was, for much of my life, an avowed pet hater. It all started when I was eight. I was having trouble breathing and my mom took me to the allergy doctor. When we came home with the diagnosis, it was announced that our dog, Sandy, and our budgie, Beaver, had to go. My older brothers begged my parents to keep the pets and get rid of me, but you know how stubborn and foolish parents can be. The pets were given away, and my brothers began a lifelong campaign of torture against me. It wasn't until I went to Winnipeg to research this play and started talking to the students from a variety of schools that I started to change my mind. These kids loved their animals and I began to understand how important pets can be to people's emotional lives—and how much I had missed.

We discussed a lot of things—their families and friends, their loves, their hates, their fears, the empty spaces in their hearts. What struck me from these conversations was that no matter what their difficulties—and some were huge—many of these kids had enormous compassion for one another and the world around them. Some showed it by supporting a friend in need, others had begun fund-raising efforts for worthy causes. These kids, barely alive a dozen years, got me thinking about those empty spaces—and how all of us need to find ways to fill them.

My deepest thanks to my brilliant friend, colleague and inspiration, Leslee Silverman, artistic director of Manitoba Theatre for Young People, for creating an environment

where plays like this can be born. My gratitude to everyone at the theater for making it my home away from home. And to the incredible Richard Greenblatt, maestro and magician, director of the premier production, who continues to dazzle me.

And my special thanks to the wonderful kids and staff at Kent Road, Rockwood, Gray Academy, Queenston and Greenway schools.

# KINDNESS

## CHARACTERS

KEEGAN . . . . . a boy, about 11 years old  
TESSA . . . . . a girl, about 11 years old  
DAMON . . . . . a boy, about 11 years old  
MS. FELDSPAR . . . . . their music teacher  
KEEGAN'S GRANDPA  
DAMON'S MOM . . . . . working single mother  
TESSA'S DAD . . . . . a white-collar worker  
ZOEY . . . . . a girl, about 11, boy crazy, best friends with  
CHLOEY . . . . . a girl, about 11, also boy crazy  
REX . . . . . 12, not a very nice person  
TV NEWS ANCHOR (VOICE)  
RONNY . . . . . Damon's oldest brother  
JOHNNY . . . . . Damon's next oldest brother  
DONNY . . . . . Damon's youngest older brother  
VETERINARIAN  
PRINCIPAL  
SPCA WORKER

*Kindness* can be played with a minimum of 4 hyperactive actors or a maximum of 17 merely excited ones.

In the premier production, four actors played all the roles. The actor who played Damon also played Keegan's Grandpa. Tessa also played Damon's Mom, Keegan also played Tessa's Dad. The fourth actor played everyone else.



## PRODUCTION NOTE:

In the original production, live video projections created the backdrops and allowed for giant shadow effects—for example, Rex was represented by a huge shadow fist. Some puppet and mask work was also used by the “everybody else” actor to create Damon’s three brothers, Chloey and Zoey—and other roles. I urge all directors to use their imaginations and resources to take my stage directions as an inspiration, not an imperative.

## LANGUAGE NOTE:

There are many topical references in the play. Please feel free to update them. If you have any concerns or questions, I can be reached through the publisher or:  
[www.dennisfoon.com](http://www.dennisfoon.com)

# KINDNESS

*(Three kids are playing a song very badly. TESSA is on the trombone, KEEGAN on flute, and DAMON on clarinet. As one wrong note follows another, TESSA, who is the only one holding her own, erupts.)*

TESSA. Oh, we reek! We stink!

*(A shadow appears of the teacher, MS. FELDSPAR.)*

MS. FELDSPAR. Why did you stop playing, Tessa?

TESSA. This isn't music, it's toxic waste. We'll make people's brains explode.

DAMON. Yeah, die! *(He blows an excruciating out-of-tune high note on his clarinet.)*

TESSA. You're pathetic, Damon. You never practice, you don't care.

KEEGAN. I care.

TESSA. Yeah? When was the last time you practiced, Keegan?

KEEGAN. Um...

TESSA. We're gonna look like morons at the concert, Ms. Feldspar, unless they start practicing!

DAMON. All I do is practice!

KEEGAN. I practice pet tricks.

TESSA. Great, our trio's got a concert in two weeks and you're practicing pet tricks!

DAMON. Sit! Heel! Beg! Roll over! (*KEEGAN looks at him, bewildered.*) She's right, you need more practice.

MS. FELDSPAR. I picked you three because your instruments will sound lovely together, won't they, children?

ALL. Yes, Ms. Feldspar.

MS. FELDSPAR. So, what are we going to do?

ALL. Practice, Ms. Feldspar. (*The children watch MS. FELDSPAR leave, then start packing up their instruments.*)

DAMON. Nice work, snitch witch.

TESSA. What did you call me?

DAMON. Fat mouth. Snot nose.

TESSA (*grabs his shirt*). Don't you dare.

DAMON (*grins*). Snotty snob. (*TESSA cocks her fist, struggling not to smash him. DAMON, ducking, wheels away from her, and steps out of hitting range.*) Besides, I do practice. Every day for at least two minutes. See, I got important things to do.

TESSA. Like what?

DAMON. Like feed my fish. They eat a lot. And my dad just got a 64-inch TV. And an X Box, and PS3, and a Wii, and a Game Cube. And tons of games: Heavenly Sword, Grand Theft Auto, Halo 1, 2, 3, Need for Speed, Guitar Hero...

TESSA. Well, no wonder—

KEEGAN. I had a video game once. It broke.

DAMON. Got a dirt bike? I do. A Honda XR100R. And a pocket bike, a Mini-Rocket Blue and a Ski-Doo Mach Z and a Superjet Wave Runner. What do you got?

KEEGAN. A bicycle.

DAMON. Mountain? Racing? BMX?

KEEGAN. Just a bike.

DAMON. Ouch, lame! My dad's got a '71 Mustang 429  
Cobra Jet. What's your dad got?

KEEGAN. Your dad flies an airplane?

DAMON. It's not an airplane, moronic, it's a car! A Mustang! *(Checks to see if KEEGAN gets it.)* Mustang? *(KEEGAN doesn't have clue.)* Ow, loser! *(He turns to TESSA.)* So you wanna go out?

TESSA. What?

DAMON. On a date. You and me. Me and you.

TESSA. A date? Why would I want to go on a date?

DAMON. Why not, snobby? You like me, I like you, you like me.

TESSA. My name's Tessa, not snobby, and I don't like you.

DAMON. Sure you like me. All the girls like me. They think I'm cute. I'm a chick magnet.

TESSA. You like chicks? Go to KFC.

DAMON. Come on, I'll take you to a movie. My treat. I'm rich, my dad gave me twenty bucks. See? *(He waves a 20-dollar bill in front of her.)* C'mon, you don't get offers like this everyday.

TESSA. I'm not even twelve yet. Talk to me in ten years.

DAMON. When you're twenty? You'll be all wrinkled like a prune.

TESSA. I'll wrinkle you, Damon. Get lost!

*(DAMON, grinning, sees CHLOEY and ZOEY enter. He runs to them.)*

DAMON. Hey Chloey, hey Zoey!

*(CHLOEY and ZOEY are Barbie dolls—or some other theatrical equivalent.)*

CHLOEY. Saw you talking to Miss Stuck-up.

DAMON *(loving this)*. Oh you did, didja?

CHLOEY. Do you like Tessa? Think she's cute?

DAMON. Maybe, maybe not.

CHLOEY. You like her, admit it!

DAMON *(grinning)*. That's for me to know and you to find out.

ZOEY. He's smiling, he's in love!

CHLOEY. I can smell it on him! L-O-V-E!!

ZOEY. I wonder if she likes him.

DAMON. Oh, she likes me all right. Did you see how mean she was to me?

CHLOEY. Yeah, she treats him terrible!

ZOEY. She must love him!

DAMON. ...I asked her out.

*(CHLOEY and ZOEY giggle crazily.)*

ZOEY. On a date? With you?

CHLOEY. But she's such a snob!

ZOEY. She doesn't even shop at Lululemon!

CHLOEY. Where're you taking her?

DAMON. Wherever she wants. A movie.

*(CHLOEY and ZOEY scream.)*

ZOEY. Damon, you are the coolest.

CHLOEY. The amazingest.

ZOEY & CHLOEY. The awesomest.

DAMON. I know. (*He struts away. ZOEY and CHLOEY vanish.*)

(*KEEGAN approaches TESSA.*)

KEEGAN. ...You wouldn't happen to have a dog by any chance, would you?

TESSA. A dog? Yeah, I have a dog. His name's Joey.

KEEGAN. If you wouldn't mind me asking, what breed of dog is Joey?

TESSA. A golden retriever.

KEEGAN. Excellent.

TESSA. You like goldens?

KEEGAN. Yes. Very much. Perfect for my experiment.

TESSA. ...Your experiment?

KEEGAN. My project for the science fair. I'm trying to determine what grows faster, animal hair or human hair. I shaved Irwin and myself this morning and I'll be taking a measurement every day.

TESSA. You shaved yourself?

KEEGAN. Yes. (*He shows her.*) See?

TESSA. Gross.

KEEGAN. It was easy, really, Irwin didn't mind at all.

TESSA. Irwin's your dog?

KEEGAN. My guinea pig. We're very close. Whenever he sees me, he says: bweep-uueep.

TESSA. How nice.

KEEGAN. The problem I'm facing is that some animals' hair might grow faster than others. So for my project to have scientific validity, I have to measure the hair growth in other species as well. Your golden retriever, for example, is significantly different than a guinea pig.

So I would like your dog, Joey, to participate in my experiment.

TESSA. You want to shave my dog? Are you crazy?

KEEGAN. Only a small patch. It doesn't hurt. It would be of great benefit to science. I use a disposable razor, it's completely hygienic.

TESSA. I don't care. You're not touching my dog!

KEEGAN. Irwin didn't mind, really. Now we have matching bald spots. I can shave you too, if that would make you happier.

TESSA. Get lost, you creep. (*TESSA storms away. KEEGAN follows after her.*)

KEEGAN. I don't think you understand—

*(KEEGAN stops cold. Looks up. REX, the large bully, looms over him. REX is a huge SHADOW PUPPET. TESSA, still angry, coldly watches.)*

REX. Hey, ugly.

KEEGAN. My name is Keegan.

REX. I say your name is ugly. (*He flicks his finger, knocking the wind out of KEEGAN.*) What's your name?

KEEGAN. ...Keegan. (*REX flicks his finger again. KEEGAN falls down. Slowly gets up.*) Excuse me, Rex, but why me?

REX. Because you're cross-eyed.

KEEGAN. I'm not cross-eyed.

REX. I can fix that. (*He flicks his finger. KEEGAN's head whips back.*) Now, let's start again. What's your name?

KEEGAN. Kee— (*REX flicks his finger. KEEGAN goes down. Struggles to get up. REX raises his hand again. KEEGAN hesitates. Quietly:*) Ugly.

REX. What?

KEEGAN. Ugly.

REX. Good. Now aren't you glad you learned your name?

*(REX fades away. KEEGAN looks at TESSA, who just leaves. KEEGAN, limping, sore, slowly goes. TESSA goes home. She pets a big golden lump of fur: her dog, JOEY.)*

TESSA. And he said he wanted to shave some of your hair off. I'd never let him do that to you, Joey. You'll always be safe with me. Nobody's ever gonna hurt you. You ready for a song? Okay.

*(She picks up her trombone, but just as she starts to play, TESSA'S DAD, a shadow, rises.)*

TESSA'S DAD. Tessa, who are you talking to down there?

TESSA. Joey.

TESSA'S DAD. Joey's stone deaf.

TESSA. He understands me.

TESSA'S DAD *(sighs)*. Well, you've practiced enough today, come upstairs.

TESSA. I have a lot more to do.

TESSA'S DAD. You can't stay down there by yourself all the time.

TESSA. I'm not by myself. I'm here with Joey. He feels the vibration. He likes it.

TESSA'S DAD. He only stays there because he can hardly move anymore, Tessa.

TESSA. That's not why.



TESSA'S DAD. He hasn't been eating. (*Heavily.*) ...It's going to end soon, Tessa.

TESSA. I have a new song I'm learning for him.

TESSA'S DAD. Tessa, you really have to face—

TESSA. Just 'cause you've given up on Joey, doesn't mean I have to. (*TESSA plays on her trombone. TESSA'S DAD goes. She stops playing. To JOEY.*) He's wrong, you know. I read about the healing power of music. I wish I knew about this a long time ago, everything would be different. Way different. I'm gonna fix you, Joey. 'Cause it works, they say it really works. Okay... Ready? (*With total concentration, she plays a few sweet bars.*) How's that? Okay, try to stand up, Joey. (*JOEY doesn't move.*) You can do it, come on. Come on. Okay, okay, I know what. I'll play your favorite, this will make you feel better for sure. Ready? Okay. (*She plays the beginning of "My Grandfather's Clock."* *JOEY doesn't move.*) Come on, Joey, you can do it. You can't just lie there. (*She plays a bit more. Nothing.*) You have to move around, you have to, or people are going to think you can't anymore, and then they might, they might...so come on, Joey, move! Please. Move. Please. (*He moves a little. Hugging him:*) Attaboy.

(*KEEGAN comes home, hearing the voice of a television NEWS ANCHOR.*)

TV NEWS ANCHOR (*over*). The first dyke has burst and the city has been ordered to evacuate. There's no end in sight for the rain, the river is overflowing and if more dykes fail it will be a catastrophe. Highways are grid-locked with thousands of people trying to escape and the

mayor is calling for calm and praying for the rain to stop. Meanwhile, in local news...

KEEGAN. Irwin! Irwin! C'mere, time for your lesson!...  
Hey, Grandpa, have you seen Irwin?

*(The shadow of KEEGAN'S GRANDPA appears.)*

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA. Grandma took him to the vet,  
Keegan.

KEEGAN. Oh no. Why? Is he sick?

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA. Looks like he's got a skin dis-  
ease.

KEEGAN. Is it bad?

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA. Some kind of mange, I figure.  
Poor fella's losing his hair. Found a bald patch on him.

KEEGAN. ...Oh.

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA. I'm surprised you didn't notice  
it.

KEEGAN. Me too.

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA. Hey, what happened to your  
head?

KEEGAN. Nothing. *(He squirms while GRANDPA investi-  
gates.)*

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA. Hold still, steady... Holy mack-  
erel. You got a bald spot too.

KEEGAN. Oh.

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA. Good grief, boy. We better get  
you to the doctor. That guinea pig gave you the mange!

KEEGAN. No, he didn't, Grandpa...I gave it to him.

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA. You gave Irwin the mange?

KEEGAN. Yes, I mean, no, not exactly. The thing is I...I  
shaved him for my science project.

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA. You did? (*He laughs uproariously; he can hardly stop for a breath.*) Oh, that's a good one, that's a great one. I wish your daddy was alive to hear that, Keeg, he'd laugh his head right off.

KEEGAN. Is Grandma gonna be mad?

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA. Mad? She'll be laughing too hard. (*KEEGAN starts to limp away.*) What's wrong with your hip, Keegan? Another science experiment?

KEEGAN. I fell.

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA (*gives him an inquiring look*).

Really now? So how exactly did that happen?

KEEGAN. I fell after I was hit.

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA. Hit by what? A rocket?

KEEGAN. Yes. In the form of a very large bully.

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA. Bug! Only one thing to do about bullies. Stand up to 'em. He hits ya, ya hit him back twice as hard.

KEEGAN. He's gigantic. His muscles are as big as my head.

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA. Then get your muscles big too. Start lifting my weights. Get some bulk on ya and clobber the clod. Get it?

KEEGAN. Got it.

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA. Good. Pump that iron, kid. (*KEEGAN lamely begins lifting some barbells.*) That's it, you're getting the hang of it.

TV NEWS ANCHOR (*over*). Breaking news on the southern floods!

KEEGAN'S GRANDPA. Hang on, let's see this. (*He turns up the volume.*)