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A Comedy in One Act
by
CHRISTINE E. SCOTT

Pinch Me!



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY
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(PINCH ME)

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PINCH ME!

A Comedy in One Act
FOR TWO BOYS AND FIVE GIRLS

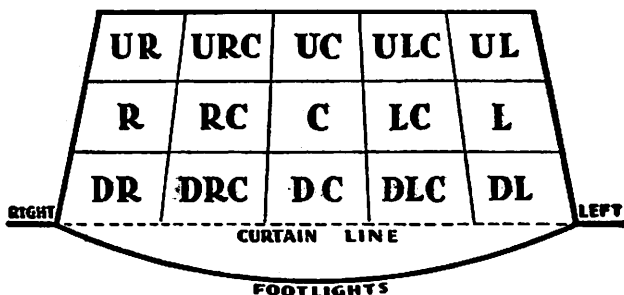
CHARACTERS

DANNY BATES.....*a teen-age boy*
JOE GILLIS.....*his pal*
ALICE BATES.....*Danny's teen-age sister*
MRS. BATES.....*their mother*
MISS NELSON }.....*teachers at the high school*
MISS CRAWFORD }
COUSIN GERALDINE.....*an unwelcome guest*

PLACE: *The living room of the Bates home.*

TIME: *Late afternoon. The present.*

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

PROPERTIES

GENERAL: Sofa, end table and lamp, small table and two chairs, two easy chairs, removable cushion on one easy chair, hat and coat rack, magazine on end table, books and papers on table L C, bottle of glue offstage.

GERALDINE: Several large books, box of chocolates, suitcase.

DANNY: Large handkerchief, small package containing chocolates, pencil.

MOTHER: Grocery list, glass of ice water, heavy blanket, glass of milk, cup and saucer.

ALICE: Ice bag, large pillow.

JOE: Pencil, small package containing artificial spider and an artificial frog.

PRODUCTION NOTE

Nothing adds more to the polish of a production than the quick picking up of cues. Unless there is a definite reason for a pause, train your actors to come in with their speeches "on the heels," so to speak, of the preceding speeches. When a production lags, audience interest likewise will lag.

It is always advisable during the last week of rehearsals to hold one or more sessions during which the actors merely sit around in a circle and go through lines only with the express purpose of snapping up cues.

PINCH ME!

SCENE: *The living room in the Bates home. An archway R leads to the front door as well as other rooms in the house, while a similar archway L leads to the bedrooms upstairs. The essential furnishings are a sofa at R C, facing the audience, with an end table and lamp left of it. At L C is a small round table, with chairs upstage and left of it. There is an easy chair D R and another one D L. Upstage of the archway L is a hat and coat rack. Other furnishings may be used as the size of the stage permits.]*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *It is late afternoon. Scattered on the table L C are books and papers. DANNY and JOE are seated at the table, DANNY in a chair upstage of the table, JOE left of the table. They are lively, mischievous boys in their teens, dressed in school clothes. Right now they are endeavoring to concentrate. JOE is chewing his pencil. DANNY'S pencil is perched back of his ear, and he is tilted back in his chair, scratching the back of his head as he "concentrates." There is a moment of deep silence.]*

JOE [*yawning noisily*]. Boy, this is really stiff! But stiff!
[*Leans chin in hand dejectedly.*]

DANNY. How many problems do we have left?

JOE [*turning back to his book with a long sigh*]. Only a couple—but wait till you hear this one. It's a doozy. [*Reads aloud from book.*] Two x square over y plus y square, equals five y square, minus four x cube over z square. Try that one on for size!

DANNY [*slapping his forehead with exaggerated gesture*].
Ouch! Say it again and say it slow. [*Looks among papers and books for his pencil.*]

JOE [*again reading from book*]. Two x square over y plus y square—

DANNY. Wait, Joe! I've lost my pencil.

JOE [*glancing up*]. It's behind your ear.

DANNY. Oh, yeah. [*Takes pencil from behind his ear.*] I'm always putting one there and forgetting. Put a wet paint brush up there one time.

JOE. You didn't!

DANNY. Yep. For a week I was the only kid in town with a green scalp. Now, Joe.

JOE [*reading again*]. Two x square over y plus——

[*MOTHER, a youthfully attractive woman, enters R. She wears a simple house dress.*]

MOTHER [*coming C*]. I need a few things at the store, Danny. Are you boys nearly through?

DANNY. Wish we were.

JOE [*with a groan*]. This is just awful stuff, Mrs. Bates.

[*ALICE enters R breathlessly. She is sixteen and pretty, but prone to dramatize. She wears school clothes. She stops in front of sofa and clasps her hands in dramatic gesture.*]

ALICE. Mo-ther! The most *tragical* thing has happened! You can't imagine who is coming! To supper! [*Wails.*] And for the week-end! [*Pauses impressively.*] Cousin Geraldine!

MOTHER. Cousin Geraldine! Coming here?

DANNY [*folding hands, looking heavenward*]. Oh, happy, happy days!

MOTHER. I had no idea——

ALICE. She just came in on the bus and called from the drug store. Oh, it's devastating—simply and utterly devastating! [*Flops down on sofa, the picture of despair.*]

MOTHER. Well, of course we haven't seen her for quite some time. Maybe she's—she's—*different*—now.

ALICE. And some of the high school crowd are coming over tonight. Oh, it's just tragical—simply and utterly tragical!

JOE. What's wrong with your Cousin Geraldine?

DANNY [*scratching his head, puzzled*]. Well, she—no. She's—— [*Turns to ALICE.*] What would you say?

ALICE. Cousin Geraldine? [*Pauses, then gives up.*] Words fail me! But utterly! [*Flops back on sofa again.*]

DANNY. Dear Cousin Geraldine. The family brain. She read all of Shakespeare's plays by the time she was five, and she cut her teeth on a slide rule!

MOTHER [*taking step toward him*]. Now, Danny—that's enough. When Geraldine comes in, you must tell her it is very nice to have her visit us and that you are glad to see her.

DANNY [*loudly protesting*]. Oh, now, Mom!

MOTHER [*severely*]. Danny!

DANNY [*slowly and in a monotone, facing front*]. Hello, Cousin Geraldine. It is very nice to have you visit us. We are very glad to see you. [*Coughs, and grabs his throat.*] You see, Mom? Saying a thing like that is liable to strangle me!

MOTHER. Danny!

DANNY. All right! I'll say it! I'll say it! But I can't put my heart into it.

MOTHER [*starting R*]. I may have to revise the supper a little if Cousin Geraldine's going to be here. She used to be—well—*different* about eating. [*Starts out R.*] Come, Alice, I'll need a little help. [*Goes out R.*]

ALICE [*rising*]. It's a catastrophe! I'll just die—simply die! [*Starts R.*] This is the end—the utter, utter end! [*Goes out R.*]

JOE [*rising*]. Maybe I'd better go.

DANNY. Stick around, Joe. You wouldn't leave your old pal in his hour of need, would you? [*Voices are heard off R.*] Oh—oh—Cousin Geraldine's arrived! [*Pushes JOE back in chair.*]

[*MOTHER enters R, followed by COUSIN GERALDINE, who is sixteen, tall, gangly and awkward. She wears heavy-rimmed glasses, carries two or three large books, a box of chocolates and a suitcase. ALICE follows, a tragic expression on her face.*]

MOTHER [*as they enter*]. Why, of course we're glad to have you stay here, Geraldine. Aren't we, Alice? [ALICE gives MOTHER a stricken look. MOTHER and GERALDINE come C. ALICE pauses D R. MOTHER turns to DANNY. GERALDINE puts down her suitcase.] Geraldine's going to stay for the weekend. The folks are away on a business trip, but Geraldine said she'd rather stay with us.

DANNY [*dismally, as he and JOE hastily rise*]. Oh, great. [MOTHER looks at him warningly.] Oh, hello, Cousin Geraldine. [Again repeating his rehearsed speech tonelessly.] It is very nice to have you visit us. We are very glad to see you.

GERALDINE. I brought some reading with me. I always spend my week-ends reading the classics, you know. Homer—Shakespeare—Milton. [*Goes to end table left of sofa and puts her books down.*]

DANNY. This is my pal, Joe Gillis. My cousin, Geraldine Andrews, Joe.

JOE [*nodding*]. Hi.

GERALDINE. I'm very pleased to make your acquaintance, Joseph.

JOE [*to DANNY, in shrill voice*]. Joseph, she says! I haven't been called that since the time I emptied the bucket of skim milk into Mom's embroidery basket!

GERALDINE. I picked up some chocolates at the bus station. [*Puts her box of candy on table by sofa.*] I always nibble on chocolates when I study. I'm on a new diet—and it includes candy. It gives me energy. Where shall I hang my coat, Aunt Ruth?

MOTHER. Oh, let me take it! I'll put it right over here. [*Helps GERALDINE remove her coat, goes U L, hangs it on hat rack and returns.*]

GERALDINE. And my scarf? [*Takes off her scarf.*]

ALICE. I'll take it, Cousin Geraldine. [*Takes scarf and hangs it on rack with coat.*]

GERALDINE [*as ALICE comes C, near MOTHER*]. I'd better take

off this jacket, too. It was rather cold when I left. [*Slowly takes off her jacket.*]

MOTHER. Let me. [*Helps GERALDINE with jacket, goes over, hangs it up and comes back.*]

GERALDINE. I do believe I'll take off my sweater. [*DANNY and JOE stare at each other, wide-eyed.*]

ALICE. Of course. [*Helps GERALDINE with sweater, goes over, hangs it up, then comes back.*]

GERALDINE. I won't need this other light sweater in here, either. [*Short pause. Neither MOTHER nor ALICE makes a move, but they look at each other.*]

DANNY. Your turn, Mom.

MOTHER [*startled*]. Of course. I'll take it, Geraldine. [*Once more helps GERALDINE with her sweater, goes over, hangs it up and comes back c.*]

GERALDINE [*going to table, picking up one of her books*].

What are you reading for amusement these days, Danny?

DANNY. "The Adventures of——"

GERALDINE. Children's books! I might have expected it. You're so immature, Danny. Why, I've been reading a group of the most difficult essays, and the English teacher says that my comprehension and deep understanding are highly remarkable.

DANNY [*to JOE, mock serious*]. Are you mature, Joe? Have you read your classical essay today?

JOE. No. Me reading Peter Wabbit.

GERALDINE [*moving to table L C, picking up one of the boys' books*]. Don't tell me this is what you're studying! Really? Surely you're not having trouble with these elementary little problems, are you?

DANNY [*baring his teeth*]. Grrrrr!

GERALDINE. Why, these are so simple a child of ten could do them. [*Drops book and moves to sofa.*]

JOE [*to DANNY*]. Say, let's find that child of ten and let him take over. I'm getting hungry.

GERALDINE [*sitting on sofa*]. What are you having for supper, Aunt Ruth? Remember, I have a very delicate stomach.

MOTHER [*dryly*]. I remember.

GERALDINE. I just don't eat like other people. [*As scene continues, DANNY and JOE sit at table again, and ALICE crosses D L and sits, unhappily.*]

MOTHER [*pleasantly, stepping toward sofa*]. Well, we have a nice meat loaf and mashed potatoes—

GERALDINE. Meat loaf? Dear me, that is one of the very things I must never, *never* eat. I'll take a broiled lamb chop. And a small baked potato. I can eat only baked potatoes—never boiled or fried. And do you have some oatmeal?

MOTHER. Why, we'll have some at breakfast tomorrow—if you like.

GERALDINE. I've worked out a diet schedule myself that gives me just the combinations I need. At breakfast I have a large serving of stewed lettuce leaves with a raw egg.

DANNY. Like she says. She doesn't eat like other people. [*JOE smiles faintly and gulps.*]

GERALDINE. But I must have the oatmeal for supper tonight—*cold*. And over it a half cup of undiluted mushroom soup—also *cold*. It's on my new diet. [*DANNY and JOE stare open-mouthed at each other.*] And for lunch tomorrow you'll have to order some sardines. I have them every day at noon—rolled in chocolate sauce and sprinkled with grated cheese. [*JOE looks very ill. DANNY pats his shoulder.*]

JOE [*between hard swallows*]. Your—mother said—she needed some—things at the store—pal. [*Rises, unsteadily, grasping table.*] Maybe the air—would—you know—do us good.

DANNY [*rising*]. We'll go the long way. [*Waves his arm in large arc.*] The long, long way. Trot out your list, Mom.

MOTHER. It's in the kitchen. I'll have to add a few items. [*Goes R.*] Just a minute, boys. [*Hurries out R.*]

GERALDINE [*rising*]. You can take me up to my room now, Alice. I'm to have the large room at the front, of course?

ALICE [*hesitating, as she rises*]. Of course—Cousin Geraldine. It's—my room, but—

GERALDINE. But you remember I just can't sleep in a small room. It stifles me!

ALICE [*moving C.*]. Of course. I'll move to the back room.
[*Looks at DANNY with tragic expression.*]

GERALDINE. Has the room been refinished? You had a terrible yellow flowered paper before. Yellow has always made me feel positively ill.

ALICE. We had it done over just last spring. It's a lovely blue design now, and——

GERALDINE. Blue? Well, that's a little better, although you should have known that green would have been more correct. [*Starts L.*] You can come up and show me where things are. [*Turns L.*] And I'll want you to bring up my suitcase later, Danny. [*Goes out L.*]

ALICE [*mournfully*]. This is all simply too grim—but utterly.
[*Follows GERALDINE out L.*]

DANNY [*wiping forehead with very large handkerchief*].
Whew! [*Comes C.*]

JOE. Say, why don't you come over to my house for the week-end? [*Crosses C.*]

DANNY. Joe, you amaze me! How could I leave when I am so glad my Cousin Geraldine is here to visit us and when I am so glad to see her. You heard me say it!

JOE. Yeah—I know. You mean you're stuck with her.

DANNY. Stuck—and how. [*Suddenly pauses, and a delighted expression comes onto his face.*] Sa-ay! I just thought of something! If we're going to be stuck with her for the week-end, let's make her really stick!

JOE. What do you mean?

DANNY. Remember that big bottle of glue we had left over from making the Hallowe'en party decorations? It's a shame to let it dry up and go to waste. Suppose I were to pour a nice little coating over that old cushion—[*Points toward chair D R.*]—and suppose Miss Geraldine Superiority accidentally sits down . . . [*Rubs his hands together gleefully.*]

JOE [*drawing up stiffly, staring severely at DANNY*]. Do you

mean I'm to be a party to such trickery—this base assault on the dignity of one of your favorite relatives? Terrible! Unthinkable! [*Quickly.*] Where's the glue?

DANNY. In my room. But we'll have to wait until we get back from the store. And besides—[*Grins.*]—I think we're going to need a few more little items. [*Villainous laugh.*] Heh—heh—heh.

JOE. Say, things are looking up. What do you mean—[*Imitates villainous laugh.*]—Heh—heh—heh?

DANNY [*moving back of sofa*]. Well, for a start—what if a big black spider were sitting over on the arm of the sofa when a certain person comes in? [*Moves his fingers over right arm of sofa in imitation of legs of a spider.*]

JOE. Good thinking. Good thinking. [*Nods approval.*]

DANNY [*hurrying to table L C, making notes on slip of paper*]. And how about . . . [*Glances cautiously L, as JOE joins him, and two boys bend over paper, whispering gleefully.*]

[*MOTHER enters R with her list for the store.*]

MOTHER. Here's the list. [*Comes in front of sofa.*]

DANNY. Okay, Mom. [*Stuffs note quickly in pocket, then crosses to MOTHER for list.*]

MOTHER. Before you go out, take Geraldine's suitcase up to the large front room.

[*MOTHER goes out R.*]

DANNY [*picking up suitcase*]. Up to the large front room! The other one is stifling! Air! Air! [*Coughs, clutches his throat dramatically and staggers out L with suitcase.*]

JOE [*calling after him*]. I'll wait here. [*Strolls over, picks up a magazine from table by sofa and sits, leafing it through casually. He absently takes two or three chocolates from the open box beside him as he reads.*]

[*DANNY re-enters L.*]

JOE [*tossing aside magazine*]. Ready? [*Rises.*]

DANNY. Ready.

JOE [*holding out box*]. Here. Have a chocolate.

DANNY. Don't mind at all. [*Takes some from box.*] Thanks.

JOE. Don't thank me. Thank Geraldine.

DANNY. They're good. [*Takes another.*]

JOE. Not bad.

DANNY. Could be better? [*There is a gleam in his eye.*]

JOE. Could be.

DANNY. And I know how. We have a box of red pepper in the kitchen. Do you follow me?

JOE [*glibly*]. You mean get some substitute chocolates, cut off the bottom, remove some of the inside, insert portions of said red pepper and stick the bottom back on again and put them in the box—casual like.

DANNY [*somberly*]. I'm surprised at you, Joe, thinking up a scheme like that. [*Quickly.*] I'll get the pepper when we go out and we can do it over at your house. [*Starts R.*] Come on, we've got work to do!

JOE [*following*]. And busy hands are happy hands, you know. [*He and DANNY go out R in great glee.*]

[*MOTHER enters R.*]

MOTHER [*moving L C, calling*]. Alice? Can you come down a minute?

[*ALICE enters L.*]

ALICE [*coming L C*]. Mother! It's all simply too grim! I'll just die! She has my best slippers and took my bedspread and my pillows. And now I have to take her a glass of ice water.

MOTHER. I'll take the ice water to her. [*Goes out R. ALICE moves R C and sinks dejectedly to sofa.*]

[*MOTHER re-enters R with a glass of ice water and hurries out L.*]

GERALDINE [*offstage L*]. Alice! Come up here a minute!

ALICE [*wearily*]. Yes, Cousin Geraldine. [*Rises and hurries out L.*]