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Dramatic Publishing

THE SECRET LIVES OF TOADS

A comedy for young actors

by

D.W. GREGORY



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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The Secret Lives of Toads was originally produced as part of the Speak Out on Stage Program at Imagination Stage, Bethesda, Md., March 17-19, 2005. Kelly M. Cates directed with the following cast:

Darien Aubinoe	Geni, Kid 4 & 6
Kimberly Blasey	Jill, Kid 5
Matias Breuer	Harvey
Tamara Breuer	Barrie
Ellie Durling	Sharla
Kira Finkel	Jane, Kid 1
Casey Haynes	Laurie, Sloppy
Gabrielle Joseph	Dena
Anna Malawista	Cissy
Connor Martin	Larry, Nigel
Amanda Mendelson	Marla, Kid 3
Brianne Mikesh	Judy, Kid 2
Marissa Mizroch	Rodney, Ginger
Jamie Norwood	Darla
Charlotte Pennington	Chris, Teacher
Tyler Rivlin	Mother, Brenda, Announcer
Aliza Sotsky	Hoppy, Kid 8, Mary
Laura Ventura	Josie, Kid 7
Katie Wetstone	Slappy, Kid 9, Katie
Joel Wilson	Drill Sergeant, Burpy

The play was originally produced with songs by Linda Ng (composer) and D.W. Gregory (lyrics). Linda Ng also served as musical director for the production. Lindsay Miller was the stage manager. The sets were by Tyler Whitmore, lighting by Jason Arnold, costumes by

Kimberley Cruce, sound by Paul Simon, props by Lindsay Miller.

Produced by the Education Department at Imagination Stage, David Markey, director of theatre education; Richard Bradbury, coordinating producer. Bonnie Fogel, Imagination Stage founder and executive director. Janet Stanford, artistic director.

NOTES ON PRODUCTION:

The running time of the play is approximately 40 minutes. In the original production, the play was staged on a unit set with a backdrop that doubled both as the play-ground fence and the frogs' cage in the science lab. The scene changes were achieved by shifting the furnishings on stage. Props and furnishings thus should be kept as simple as possible to allow for quick scene changes by the actors themselves. Tempo is critical to the play's success. The director should also emphasize the need for actors to know their lines and pick up cues quickly—otherwise the play could drag severely.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

The Secret Lives of Toads was developed as part of the Speak Out on Stage Program at Imagination Stage, Bethesda, Md. Working with director Kelly Cates and the students in the Speak Out junior group—students in grades 4 to 6—from September through December of 2004, I developed a scenario that addressed issues of critical concern

to the young actors. The themes that I explore in this play—fear of new experiences, the struggle to fit in, coping with loss, the search for acceptance and the ongoing challenge we all have to figure out who we really are inside—all these are problems that the young actors identified early on and talked about with great honesty and passion.

My thanks to Kelly and the junior group class for their inspiration and their dedication to the project. Thanks also to Imagination Stage Artistic Director Janet Stanford and Director of Education David Markey for the opportunity and to Richard Bradbury, coordinating producer, for helping to pull the class and the production together. Thanks also to Madeleine Burke for her ongoing friendship and support and to my husband Paul Gregory, my biggest fan and most forthright critic.

THE SECRET LIVES OF TOADS

A Play in One Act

For 5m., 18w., 15 either gender, doubling possible

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

HARVEY
HARVEY'S MOTHER
TEACHER/DRILL SERGEANT
MARCHING KIDS NOS. 1-9

CISSY
DARLA
SHARLA
MARLA
JUDY
JANE

LISA
LAURIE
GINGER
BRENDA
JILL

JOSIE
MARY
KATIE
DENA
CHRIS

GERI
LARRY
BARRIE

FROGS:

RODNEY
NIGEL
HOPPY
SLOPPY
SLAPPY
BURPY

ANNOUNCER
TEACHER/COMEDIAN

THE SECRET LIVES OF TOADS

SCENE ONE

(Lights rise on HARVEY and MOTHER. HARVEY is sitting at the breakfast table, staring into space. MOTHER is watching him with annoyance.)

MOTHER. Harvey? *(HARVEY does not answer.)* Harvey?

HARVEY. Hn?

MOTHER. HARVEY! *(He jumps.)*

HARVEY. What? Huh? Who?

MOTHER. Did you hear what I just said? You have five minutes un til the bus! You don't want to be late for your first day at a brand new school. *(Exit MOTHER.)*

HARVEY. A brand new school... *(Soft sound of distant military march.)* I don't want to go to a new school. What if I don't like it? What if the teacher is really mean?

(Music rises and TEACHER appears, dressed as a DRILL SERGEANT. He blows a whistle.)

TEACHER/DRILL SERGEANT. All right, CLASS! Listen up! *(Blow whistle.)* School is now—in SESSION! *(Blow whistle.)* Company! Forward!

(Enter an ARMY of students in two long rows—one marching behind TEACHER and the other in front of

HARVEY, who stands and stares as they pass. HARVEY hurries to get in line.)

DRILL SERGEANT. MARCH! (*STUDENTS march.*)

LEFT!

CLASS. LEFT!

DRILL SERGEANT. LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT.

ALL. LEFT!

DRILL SERGEANT. LEFT!

ALL. LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT!

DRILL SERGEANT. COMPANY, HALT! (*Everyone stops.*) COMPANY, TO ARMS! (*Everyone except HARVEY pulls out a yellow no. 2 pencil.*) COMPANY, FALL IN! (*Everyone drops to the ground and starts to take a test except for HARVEY.*) What's this? No pencil?

HARVEY. I didn't know I needed a pencil.

DRILL SERGEANT. You didn't know? You didn't KNOW? (*Everyone laughs and points at HARVEY.*)

CLASS. HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!

DRILL SERGEANT. QUIET! (*SERGEANT blows whistle to silence everyone.*)

HARVEY. I just started at this school.

DRILL SERGEANT. TRANSFER student, eh? Hmmm... I suppose you'll show up in your UNDERWEAR next!

CLASS. HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA.

DRILL SERGEANT. SILENCE! (*They fall back to their tests.*) Now let me guess what comes next. You don't have your homework!

HARVEY. Um. Well...

CLASS (*sing-song*). He doesn't have his homework. He doesn't have his homework!

DRILL SERGEANT. SILENCE! (*To HARVEY.*) Well? What happened?

HARVEY. I, um...left my homework...in a...a...goldfish bowl. That was stolen by PIRATES!

CLASS. Ooooooh!

HARVEY. And then—a DRAGON came along and ATE THE PIRATE!

CLASS. Aaaaah!

HARVEY. And THEN—the DRAGON fell off the edge of the earth and DISAPPEARED with my homework in his stomach!

CLASS. Whoa!

HARVEY. That's exactly what happened.

(A cold silence as DRILL SERGEANT approaches HARVEY and stares at him.)

DRILL SERGEANT. Do you know what happens to kids who tell lies?

FIRST KID. He flunks math!

SECOND KID. He fails sixth grade!

THIRD KID. They kick him out of school!

FOURTH KID. His nose falls off?

FIFTH KID. His hair turns green!

SIXTH KID. He turns into a pumpkin.

SEVENTH KID. His brother beats him up.

EIGHTH KID. The FBI gets him!

NINTH KID. And then he goes to JAIL! (*Pause.*)

DRILL SERGEANT. No. I'll tell you what happens to kids who tell lies. They get LEFT!

CLASS (*except HARVEY*). LEFT.

DRILL SERGEANT. LEFT, RIGHT,

CLASS. LEFT! (*They begin to march.*)

ALL. LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT. (*They begin to march.*) LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT... (*They all march away and music is softer.*) Left, Left, Left, right, left... (*And softer still...*) Left, left, left, right, left...

HARVEY. Left. I'm gonna get left— But I don't wanna get left!

MOTHER'S VOICE. HARVEY! Harvey!

HARVEY. Where's my pencil. I DON'T HAVE A PENCIL!

(*Enter MOTHER with his lunchbox.*)

MOTHER. Are you still sitting here? The bus is coming up the road.

HARVEY. But I don't WANNA GO TO SCHOOL! Everyone will make fun of me when I don't have my pencil!

MOTHER. Harvey, you are a big silly. Here is your pencil. And here is your lunch. Now give Mother a kiss. (*A kiss in the air.*) AND GET GOING!

(*HARVEY takes the pencil and his lunch and starts to run as STUDENTS swarm in and scene transforms to:*)

SCENE TWO: The Playground

(*Enter HARVEY, alone. He tries to make contact with various people but is rebuffed. HARVEY gives up and sits down. Someone tosses a ball and someone else catches it. The crowd disperses into three groups of GIRLS, each giggling to each other as CISSY enters. She*

is feeling depressed and distracted and doesn't even try to connect to anyone. HARVEY watches her as she sits by herself. DARLA, MARLA, SHARLA, JUDY and JANE watch CISSY.)

DARLA. Hey, look at her.

JUDY. What a mess.

DARLA. Those shoes!

MARLA. That skirt!

SHARLA. That sweater!

JANE. Those socks!

DARLA. Have you ever seen anything so ridiculous?

ALL FIVE. HOW RIDICULOUS!!

(In another group, LISA, LAURIE, GINGER, BRENDA and JILL eye CISSY.)

LISA. Look at her, will you?

LAURIE. That hair!

GINGER. Did she brush it?

LISA. Did she wash it?

BRENDA. Did she comb it?

JILL. Is it hers? *(JILL laughs at her own joke, but the others stare at her.)*

ALL *(to JILL)*. HUH?

JILL *(a little embarrassed)*. That's a joke. *(A moment—then everyone laughs uncertainly.)*

ALL. HOW RIDICULOUS!

(A third group, DENA, JOSIE, MARY, KATIE and CHRIS eye CISSY.)

DENA (*with sympathy*). Look at Cissy. By herself again.

JOSIE. She can sit here if she wants.

MARY. I don't think she wants to.

KATIE. Is she a snob?

DENA. She's not a snob.

CHRIS. Well she's lazy, then. She's failing math.

DENA. It's because she falls asleep in class.

JOSIE. Now that's ridiculous.

ALL (*but DENA*). HOW RIDICULOUS!

DENA (*crosses to CISSY*). Do you want to sit with us,
Cissy?

CISSY. No thanks, Dena.

DENA. We won't bite.

CISSY. I just don't feel like talking to anybody right now,
all right?

DENA. Are you mad at me?

CISSY. It's not you. (*Exploding.*) My brother went back in
the hospital last night!

DENA. Why didn't you say anything?

CISSY. What's there to say? He's sick. Maybe he'll DIE!
(*Sarcastic.*) Wanna go to the MALL now?

*(She turns away from DENA, as enter GERI and LARRY,
with BARRIE, who has something in her hands.)*

BARRIE. It's a toad.

GERI. It's a frog.

LARRY. It's a lizard.

BARRIE. A lizard?

LARRY. It's green.

GERI. You see a tail?

BARRIE. I vote for TOAD.

LARRY. I vote for frog.

BARRIE. And I SAY TOAD!

GERI. Let's take a poll. *(They approach the GIRLS in the first group.)*

BARRIE. Hi, Darla.

DARLA. Barrie. Hello.

BARRIE. Tell us what you think? Frog—or toad?

(She opens her hand to reveal the FROG and DARLA screams and slaps it away. The FROG flies free. Other GIRLS turn and see it. Pandemonium ensues as the other GIRLS jump up and down, screaming and running around the playground, most of them stepping on the FROG as they run behind the fence to get away from it. BARRIE, GERI and LARRY approach the FROG. HARVEY also gets up and steps towards it.)

BARRIE. Oh, no!

HARVEY. Whatever it is, it's DEAD!

CISSY *(jumps up)*. I don't want to hear that WORD! Don't say that word to me, please. I don't want to think about anything that's DEAD!

GERI. DEAD!

LARRY. DEAD, DEAD, DEAD!

GIRLS. DEAD AS A DOORNAIL! DEAD AS A DOOR-NAIL! *(GIRLS behind the fence exit laughing.)*

CISSY. Isn't there anything we can do for it?

GERI *(to CISSY)*. What are you so upset for? It's just a frog.

BARRIE. Toad.

CISSY. But it used to be alive. It used to hop around and breathe and live and enjoy the world!

GERI. Well, now it doesn't. (*GERI moves to step on it again.*)

CISSY. DON'T! PLEASE!

LARRY. You can't get any more dead than dead.

CISSY. I told you! Don't say that word to me!

HARVEY (*takes a napkin out of his lunch bucket and covers the FROG*). I'll just put this in here for now. (*He puts it in his lunchbox.*) And you won't have to look at it.

BARRIE. What are you going to do with it?

HARVEY. I don't know. Maybe we can give it a funeral later.

GERI. A funeral for a frog?

LARRY. Get out of here!

GERI. Where did you come from anyway? Mars? (*LARRY and GERI laugh.*)

BARRIE. Oh leave him alone! He's clearly an environmentalist.

GERI. He's a FREAK!

LARRY (*motioning to CISSY*). And so is SHE!

GERI. And so are you, Barrie, if you hang out with them!

BARRIE. OH, GET LOST! I mean it. Scram! (*GERI and LARRY shrug and exit.*)

HARVEY. Wow. You really told them.

BARRIE. I haven't seen you before. Are you that new kid they said was coming?

HARVEY. Um. Well. I don't know. How do you feel about new kids?

CISSY. I don't mind new kids.

BARRIE (*loudly, hollering off*). It's some of the OLD KIDS that bug me.

HARVEY (*bravely*). Then I'm the new kid. I'm Harvey.

BARRIE. I'm Barrie.

CISSY. I'm Cissy. *(To BARRIE.)* I can't believe you sent your friends away like that.

BARRIE. Who needs friends if that's how they treat you.

HARVEY. Doesn't everybody need at least one friend?

BARRIE. Not me. I'm completely independent. *(Bell goes off.)* Come on! We'll be late for science class!

(They scramble. Exit all as scene transforms to:)