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*Dramatic Publishing*

# **THE PLANT THAT ATE DIRTY SOCKS**

**A Play**

**by**

**NANCY MCARTHUR**

**based on her book**



**Dramatic Publishing**

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

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## Director's Note

Whenever a book is transformed into a movie, television series, or live stage play, certain changes become necessary for a variety of reasons.

In creating the theatrical version of her best-selling book *The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks*, Nancy McArthur faced a number of challenges. The foremost challenge was writing a play that would last around an hour when performed. To achieve this, characters had to be deleted and time sequences compressed.

We hope that if you are a fan of *The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks*, you will enjoy this play on its own terms. We had a great deal of fun putting it together.

If you haven't read *The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks*, I hope that you will find a copy and discover for yourself the complete, uncut adventures of Fluffy and Stanley, which are as follows:

- The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks* (1988)
- The Return of The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks* (1990)
- The Escape of The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks* (1992)
- The Secret of The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks* (1993)
- More Adventures of The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks* (1994)
- The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks Goes Up in Space* (1995)
- The Mystery of The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks* (1996)
- The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks Gets a Girlfriend* (1997)
- The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks Goes Hollywood* (1999)

—Jonathan Wilhelm

*The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks* had its world premiere on February 7, 1998, at The Cleveland Museum of Natural History with the following cast:

Michael ..... HOWARD TAYLOR  
Norman ..... JAY LEVAN  
Mom ..... MARTHAN M. BROWN  
Dad ..... JOHN SCOTT RICHARDS  
Fluffy ..... NICOLE LOPRESTI  
Stanley ..... MEREDITH MCDONALD  
Pat Jenkins ..... CHRISTY IGO  
Mrs. Leedy ..... MARGARETTA PARISH  
Kim Christopher ..... CHRISTY IGO  
TV Cameraman ..... BILLY WA!

*The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks* was revived at The Museum on October 29, 1998, with the following cast:

Michael ..... CHRISTINE FALLON  
Norman ..... JORDAN ZIRM  
Mom ..... MARTHAN M. BROWN  
Dad ..... HOWARD TAYLOR  
Fluffy ..... NICOLE LOPRESTI/JAN GLASSER  
Stanley ..... SARAH JACKSON  
Pat Jenkins ..... CASSIE HART/SHANNON ASHFORD  
Mrs. Leedy ..... MARGARETTA PARISH  
Kim Christopher ..... CHRISTY IGO  
TV Cameraperson ..... MARGARETTA PARISH

Both productions were directed by Jonathan Wilhelm.  
Plant costumes were designed by Ed Eckert.

# THE PLANT THAT ATE DIRTY SOCKS

A One-act Play

For 10 actors (some doubling possible)

1 man, 2 women, 2 boys, 1 girl,

four parts that can be played by men or women

## CHARACTERS

MICHAEL

NORMAN, his younger brother, the expert pest

MOM

DAD

FLUFFY\*, Norman's plant

STANLEY\*, Michael's plant

PAT JENKINS, Michael's nosy classmate

PRINCIPAL LEEDY\*

KIM CHRISTOPHER, TV reporter

TV CAMERAPERSON\*

\*May be portrayed by a man or a woman. Some of the minor parts can be doubled.

Casting note: Stanley is a little taller than Fluffy.

Approximate running time: One hour

# THE PLANT THAT ATE DIRTY SOCKS

## SCENE 1

AT RISE: *MICHAEL enters through center of curtain. He is casually dressed, with half his shirttail hanging out from under a sweatshirt, ruffled hair, and untied sneakers. He looks around at the audience.*

MICHAEL. Hi! My name is Michael. My mom and dad say I'm the world's messiest kid. They're always telling me, Pick that up. Put that away. Clean up, clean up! You wanna see why? *(Waits for response.)* Could you open the curtains, please?

*(Curtain opens. Lights up revealing the boys' room. Two beds, MICHAEL's on the left, a ruffled mess; NORMAN's on the right, neatly made. Between the beds is a wide, low bureau or chest of drawers. On it sit two flower pots, one on each side. Behind and above the bureau is a large window with drapes open. On MICHAEL's side of the room, his bed is surrounded by junk.)*

But this big mess is not my problem.

*(NORMAN enters. He is also casually dressed but very neat-looking. MICHAEL gestures toward him.)*

This is my problem: my little brother, Norman. (*NORMAN looks around at the audience, smiling.*) We share the same room. He's a neatness nut and a big pest. ("*Pest*" is the irritating word: *NORMAN is all ears!*) He drives me crazy!

NORMAN (*scowls at him; to audience*). I am NOT a pest!

MICHAEL. Are too!

NORMAN. Am not! (*This exchange is repeated three times, with NORMAN whining the last "Am not!"*)

MICHAEL (*to audience*). And he whines! Every time I get something he doesn't have, the only way to shut him up is to give him some. Like the two big seeds I got in the mail. (*He starts to walk upstage to pots.*)

NORMAN (*the know-it-all, following MICHAEL*). The one you gave me must be bogus. It's not growing.

MICHAEL. Quit complaining! See, there's a little green dot just starting in my flowerpot. Yours will probably grow soon.

NORMAN. No fair if yours grows faster than mine!

MICHAEL (*to audience*). See? He's a pest!

MOM (*offstage*). Time for school, boys! Your bus is here!

(*NORMAN picks up immaculate book bag and exits in a slow and dignified fashion. MICHAEL drops armful of books, must gather, etc., while wildly searching for his backpack, before rushing after NORMAN. He waves to audience as he leaves. Lights fade, except for spotlight on flowerpots.*)

## SCENE 2—TRANSFORMATION #1

*(Spotlight is on two large, apparently empty flowerpots. The plants begin to grow. Blackout.)*

## SCENE 3

*(Lights up in boys' room. There is an empty laundry basket at the foot of NORMAN's bed. MICHAEL and NORMAN run in with their schoolbooks.)*

MICHAEL. Wow! I can't believe how fast these grew while we were at school! *(NORMAN reaches under his bed and pulls out his Super Splasher Water Blaster.)*  
Don't aim that thing at me!

NORMAN. Don't tell me what to do! *(He aims the water gun into the flowerpot and pumps.)*

MICHAEL. Why don't you water your plant like a normal person?

NORMAN *(boastfully)*. I'm not normal. I'm Norman. *(MICHAEL looks at the audience and nods.)*

MOM *(offstage)*. Boys! I'm doing laundry! Gather up your dirty clothes!

*(MICHAEL stands on his bed, digging through junk for socks and wadded-up clothes, which he "shoots" at the laundry basket across the room.)*

NORMAN. What kind of plants are they supposed to be?

MICHAEL. I don't know. The package said "Amazing Beans." But I lost the directions. *(In digging through his*

*stuff he casts some aside, and it falls over the dividing line.)*

NORMAN. Ugh! Your messiness is oozing over on my side!

MICHAEL (*kicking things back over the line, leaving a little clear space on his side, points to it*). Ugh! Your neatness is oozing over on my side! (*He turns his back on NORMAN as he throws another wadded-up sock at the basket.*) Hook shot! (*NORMAN slowly aims his Water Blaster at MICHAEL's back.*)

MOM (*entering, clearing her throat*). Be careful where you point that thing. (*NORMAN puts the Blaster back under his bed. MOM picks up laundry basket and begins rooting through MICHAEL's obviously smelly clothes.*) There should be more socks.

*(As MICHAEL finds a few more in the rubble, he wads them up and throws them into the basket like basketballs. MOM starts poking through junk, picks up a book, opens it, and finds a sock between the pages.)*

MOM. What's this doing in here?

MICHAEL. Bookmark. (*Takes it from her hands.*) Thanks! That's the overdue library book I lost.

MOM (*picking up more stuff*). Why did you throw these Muncho Cruncho candy wrappers on the floor? They belong in the wastebasket. Wait a minute—where is the wastebasket?

MICHAEL (*taking wrappers from her*). Don't throw those away! As soon as I save up twenty-five proofs of purchase, I'm sending in for a free plastic race car.

MOM (*rolling her eyes*). How many have you got so far?

MICHAEL. I don't know. I lost track.

MOM. Just don't send in for any more offers like the seeds that turned into those plants. They're strange.

NORMAN (*patting his PLANT's leaves*). I like them! They grow fast. Sort of like Jack and the Beanstalk. (*Hands her his folded stack of dirty clothes.*)

MOM. Thank you, Norman. (*Turning to leave, she trips over large rock hidden by junk.*) What's this rock doing here?

MICHAEL. That's one of my collections.

MOM. One is not a collection.

MICHAEL. I got more. (*He pushes things aside and finds another rock, then another.*)

MOM (*shaking her head and sighing*). If you would get things together—all the bird feathers in one box, your acorn collection in another, and get this stuff organized, then you could find things.

MICHAEL. But I know where everything is! (*MOM clears her throat.*) Most of the time. Besides, I'm saving this stuff for my Science Fair project. (*He drops the rocks back into the pile.*)

MOM. Remember that homework you lost and had to do over? You didn't find it until a week later. You're going to have to clean up this mess—or else.

MICHAEL. Or else what?

MOM. Your father and I will think of something. (*Exits with clothes basket.*)

NORMAN. Hey, what are you going to make for a science project?

MICHAEL. I don't know. Maybe I'll build a robot that'll clean up my stuff and make my bed and build a spaceship to fly you to another planet! (*Throws a pillow at NORMAN, NORMAN throws it back at him.*)

MOM (*offstage*). Boys! Time for dinner!

## SCENE 4

*(MICHAEL and NORMAN run from their room to kitchen. Lights down on boys' room and up on kitchen table and chairs. MOM, DAD, MICHAEL and NORMAN are eating dinner.)*

MICHAEL. Can Jason sleep over on Friday night?

DAD. Not until you clean up your room.

NORMAN. My side's clean. Can I have Bob sleep over?

MOM. Not until Michael cleans up his side.

NORMAN. No fair!

DAD. No sleepovers until that room is completely clean.

That's final. Now I have some news you're going to like. I'm going to get three weeks' vacation!

MOM. We can finally take that trip. And you always wanted to go to Disney World.

NORMAN & MICHAEL. Yay!

MICHAEL. That's so cool! Can I have some broccoli, please?

MOM. Why this sudden urge for broccoli? I usually have to tell you to eat it—or else.

MICHAEL. I want to feed some to my plant. You keep saying broccoli is good for us, so maybe it'll be good for my plant. I've been digging little bits of people food into the dirt—like compost, only not exactly.

NORMAN. No fair feeding your plant extra stuff!

MICHAEL. I'm just experimenting!

DAD. Those plants are getting too big, too fast. No more feeding them. Not even broccoli. Just sun and water.

MICHAEL. That'll wreck my experiment!

DAD. No; you've seen how your plant grows with feeding. Now see how it grows without it.

MICHAEL. But what if it collapses from no food?

MOM. That plant looks like it can take care of itself. It looks like it could take over the whole house! Now eat your broccoli—or else.

MICHAEL. Or else what?

MOM. Or else tomorrow we'll have those plants for dinner! (*Blackout.*)