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Dramatic Publishing

**From the
Newbery Award-winning
book by Lois Lowry**

The Giver

Two-Act Version

Adapted by Eric Coble

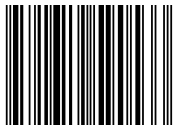


The Giver Two-Act Version

*Drama. Adapted by Eric Coble from the Newbery Award-winning book by Lois Lowry. Cast: 4m., 4w., extras as desired or 4m., 2w. with doubling, extras as desired. Jonas' world is perfect. Everything is under control and safe. There is no war or fear or pain. There are also no choices. Every person is assigned a role in the community. But when Jonas turns 12, he is chosen for special training from The Giver—to receive and keep the memories of the community. The Giver is the only person who holds the memories of real pain and real joy. Now Jonas will learn the truth about life—and the hypocrisy of his utopian world. Through this astonishing and moving adaptation, discover what it means to grow up, to grow wise, and to take control of your own destiny. *The Giver* was commissioned by Oregon Children's Theatre and has played to sold-out audiences at such theatres as Oregon Children's Theatre, First Stage Milwaukee, The Coterie Theatre, People's Light and Theatre Company, Dallas Children's Theater, Stages Repertory, Nashville Children's Theatre, Lexington Children's Theatre, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Florida Repertory Theatre and Indiana Repertory Theatre. Unit set. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Code: GC9.*

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The Giver

(Two-Act Version)

A play by

ERIC COBLE

Based on the book by

LOIS LOWRY



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(THE GIVER [TWO-ACT VERSION])

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The Giver

(Two-Act Version)

CHARACTERS

FATHER: Jonas' good-natured father.

MOTHER: Jonas' good-natured mother.

LILY: Jonas' 7-year-old sister. May double as ROSEMARY.

JONAS: an 11-year-old about to grow older.

ASHER: Jonas' best friend, 11 years old.

FIONA: another friend of Jonas', also 11. May double as ROSEMARY.

LARISSA: an old woman in need of care.

The CHIEF ELDER: the master of the ceremony.

The GIVER (OLD MAN): an old man about to change.

ROSEMARY: a young girl from the past.

VARIOUS VOICES: as many extras as desired as members of the community.

PLACE: In and around the community.

TIME: Soon.

PRODUCTION NOTES: The play can be performed by as few as six actors: 4 men (Father, Jonas, Asher, the Giver) and 2 women (Mother / Chief Elder, Lily / Fiona / Rosemary / Larissa).

The play must move quickly, using light shifts and sound as Jonas is pulled from place to place, as opposed to elaborate sets that take time to bring on and off. There should be NO blackouts. All residents of this world, including the adults, should speak in natural contemporary ways, NOT as emotionless robots. The strangeness of this society appears in word choices and what is not said, rather than in “science fiction” behavior.

The Giver

(Two-Act Version)

AT RISE: *In the darkness, the sound of a jet plane ROARS overhead. Pause. Then a CALM VOICE echoes around us.*

VOICE (V.O.). Attention. There is no cause for alarm. The low-flying airplane seen over the Community today was not a threat. A pilot-in-training merely misread his navigational instructions and made a wrong turn. Realizing he was breaking the rules, he was trying to find his way back before his error was noticed. He apologizes for any alarm he may have raised. (Beat) Needless to say, he will be released.

(Silence. Then lights come up on a family eating at a simple table: FATHER, MOTHER, 7-year-old LILY and 11-year-old JONAS. They all wear comfortable grey clothes and eat cheerfully in a harsh white light.)

FATHER. Who wants to be the first tonight for feelings?

LILY. I felt very angry this afternoon. My Childcare group was at the play area and we had a visiting group of Sevens, and they didn't obey the rules *at all*. I was so angry at one male, I made my hand into a fist, like this. *(She demonstrates.)*

FATHER. Where were the visitors from?

LILY. Some other Community. I don't remember.

MOTHER. How did you feel when your group of Sixes visited another Community last year?

LILY. Strange. They were learning usages my group hadn't learned yet, so we felt stupid.

FATHER. Do you think that the boy today felt strange and stupid, being in a new place with rules he didn't know about?

LILY. ... Yes.

MOTHER. I feel a little sorry for him.

LILY. Me too. And sorry I made a fist. Thank you.

(They continue eating.)

FATHER. Well, I'm feeling a little worried.

MOTHER. What about?

FATHER. One of the newchildren isn't doing well.

LILY. What gender is it?

FATHER. Male. He's a sweet little male, but he's not growing as fast as he should and he doesn't sleep soundly. The other Nurturers and I have him in the extra care section, but the Committee's beginning to talk about releasing him.

MOTHER. Oh no. I know how sad that must make you feel.

FATHER. I may ask the Committee for permission to bring him here at night, if you don't mind. I don't want to trust him to the night crew. I think he needs something extra.

MOTHER. Of course.

LILY. Maybe we could even keep him!

MOTHER. Lily—

LILY. I know. Two children to each family. Very clear.

FATHER. Thank you.

MOTHER. Jonas?

(JONAS has been staring at his food.)

FATHER. Jonas.

JONAS. What?

FATHER. We're sharing feelings. Anything you want to share?

(Beat. He looks at them)

JONAS. I'm feeling ... apprehensive.

FATHER. Why is that, son?

JONAS. I know there's really nothing to worry about, every adult's been through it, you and Mother and everybody. But ... it's almost December.

(They look at each other.)

LILY *(almost whispered)*. The Ceremony of Twelve.

FATHER. ... I'm glad you told us your feelings.

MOTHER. Lily, go get on your nightclothes. Father and I are going to talk to Jonas for a while.

LILY. But—

FATHER. Lily.

LILY. Privately?

MOTHER. Yes. This talk will be a private one with Jonas.

(LILY gives her brother a final look and walks out. FATHER takes a sip of coffee. Silence. They wait.)

FATHER. When I was an Eleven as you are, Jonas, I was very impatient waiting for the Ceremony of Twelve. I enjoyed the Naming of the Ones as I always do, but I didn't much pay attention to the other ceremonies, except my sister—she became a Nine that year, and we watched and cheered when she removed her hair ribbons and got her bicycle. I'd been training her on mine, even though I wasn't supposed to.

(*MOTHER and JONAS laugh.*)

JONAS. Everybody breaks that rule.

MOTHER. I think the Committee is looking into lowering the age of bicycle-riding—

JONAS. Which means the children will be Elders by the time any change is made.

FATHER. So I cheered Katy and her bike and I didn't pay much attention to the Tens and Elevens and *finally* at the end of the second day, it was my turn—

JONAS. The Ceremony of Twelve.

FATHER (*nods*). My parents looked so proud. Even my sister—though she wanted to be out riding that bicycle publicly—but to be honest, there wasn't the suspense there is for your Ceremony. I was already fairly certain what my assignment was going to be.

JONAS. How? It's a secret. The Committee of Elders don't tell anyone what their assignment's going to be—

MOTHER. Yes, how'd you know?

FATHER. I knew what my gift was. When my friends in my age group were holding bike races or building vehicles or bridges with their construction sets—

JONAS. Like I do with my friends—

FATHER. I was always drawn to newchildren. I spent all my volunteer hours at the Nurturing Center. The Elders knew that.

JONAS. They've been watching me a lot at school. They watch all the Elevens and take notes.

FATHER. They don't make mistakes. So when my assignment was announced as Nurturer, it wasn't a big surprise. It was what I most wanted.

JONAS. But I don't know what I most want. I don't know what my gift is. What if I'm disappointed with my assignment?

MOTHER. They'll find exactly the right assignment for you. Don't worry. *(She rumples his hair.)* And after your Ceremony you'll be training with your Assignment Group—

FATHER. No more volunteer hours. No more recreation hours. Your old friends won't be as close—

JONAS *(shaking his head)*. But Asher and I will always be friends, right? And we'll still be in school—

FATHER. Absolutely. There'll just be changes.

MOTHER. *Good* changes, though. After my Ceremony, when I entered my training for Law and Justice, I found myself with people who shared my interests. I made friends on a new level, friends of all ages—

JONAS. Did you still play after Twelve?

MOTHER. Occasionally. But it didn't seem as important to me.

FATHER. I still do! Every day in the Nurturing Center. Bounce on the Knee, Peek-A-Boo, Hug the Teddy. Fun doesn't end when you become Twelve.

(LILY walks in wearing a grey nightgown, with a stuffed elephant.)

LILY. This is certainly a very *long* private conversation.

(MOTHER and FATHER laugh and begin clearing the table.)

FATHER. I'll come help you remove your hair-ribbons, Lily-Billy.

LILY *(looking at her stuffed animal)*. Are all comfort objects imaginary creatures?

FATHER. I think so. Yours is an “elephant,” right?

LILY. Right.

JONAS. Mine was a “bear.”

(FATHER, MOTHER, LILY are gone as 11-year-old ASHER charges on-stage in a grey tunic, awkwardly. Lights shift.)

ASHER. Mine was a “dolphin.”

ANNOUNCER (V.O.). Twelve Days Until the Ceremony.

DIFFERENT ANNOUNCER (V.O.). Attention. This is a reminder to Females under Nine, that hair ribbons are to be neatly tied at all times.

ASHER. That has to be about your sister.

JONAS. Of course it is. Her ribbons are always a mess.

(They pass a basket of grey apples.)

ASHER. Throw me an apple.

JONAS. Asher—

ASHER. What? I need to improve my hand-eye coordination, don't I?

JONAS. No doubt.

(JONAS scoops up an apple and tosses it to ASHER as they spread out, playing catch.)

ASHER. You know what I *don't* want to be assigned? I could never be an Instructor of Threes.

(JONAS laughs.)

ASHER (*cont'd*). Can you imagine me teaching them precise language?

JONAS. Every one of them would be asking for a smack when they want a snack!

ASHER (*drops the apple, scoops it up and tosses it to JONAS*).

You'd think after the fourth round of the discipline wand, I'd have learned not to say, "I want my smack" at meal time—

JONAS. Remember the lashes on your legs?

ASHER. Remember when I stopped talking altogether?

JONAS. Silent Asher! How we long for those days!

ASHER (*throws the apple hard at JONAS*). The Threes I'd be teaching would long for those days—it'd be a total disappointment—

JONAS. I think you mean "disaster."

ASHER. "Disaster." Exactly.

*(And as ASHER throws the apple, for a moment—only a moment—it **changes**. It flashes RED ... then it lands in JONAS' hand. He pauses ... looks at it. It's grey again.)*

JONAS. Did ...

ASHER. What?

JONAS. Nothing.

(He throws the apple—again, only for a second, it flashes red in the air. Asher fumbles and drops it.)

JONAS (*cont'd*). Ash? Does anything seem strange to you? About the apple?

ASHER. Yes! It keeps jumping out of my hand onto the ground.

(He throws it back as a chime sounds.)

ASHER (*cont'd*). Back to learning.

(ASHER slumps off. JONAS looks at the grey apple in his hand a moment longer and then puts it in his tunic pocket as—

A baby cries. JONAS turns to see LILY, MOTHER and FATHER walking to the dining table carrying a crying bundle. Fluorescent light glares.)

LILY. Isn't he cute?? Look how tiny he is! And he has funny eyes like yours, Jonas!

(JONAS walks over and looks at the baby.)

MOTHER. Lily, it's rude to point out differences.

LILY. I apologize, Jonas.

JONAS. Apology accepted.

LILY. But they're light! Like yours! Maybe he has the same Birthmother as you!

(JONAS stares at the baby.)

LILY *(cont'd)*. What's his comfort object called?

FATHER *(looks at a tag on the animal)*. "Hippo" it says.

LILY *(giggles)*. Hippo!

(JONAS walks away, getting his homework out on the table.)

LILY *(cont'd)*. I think newchildren are so cute. I hope I get assigned to be a Birthmother.

MOTHER. Lily! *(LILY recoils.)* Don't say that. There's very little honor in that assignment.

LILY. But I was talking to Natasha, she does her volunteer hours at the Birthing Center, and she told me that the Birthmothers get wonderful food and most of the time they just play games while they're waiting—

MOTHER. For three years, Lily. Three births and then they're Laborers for the rest of their lives until they enter the House of the Old. Is that what you want?

LILY. Well, no. I guess not.

(JONAS finds the apple in his pocket. He takes it out and looks at it. The baby cries.)

LILY *(cont'd)*. I wish we knew his name.

FATHER. As a matter of fact—I feel a little guilty about this, but I saw this year's naming list in the office today. Number 36—this little fellow—if he makes it to the Naming without being released—he's to be Gabriel. I whisper it to him if no one is around to hear me.

(JONAS looks at them.)

LILY. Hello, Gabriel.

FATHER. I call him Gabe, actually.

JONAS. Gabe. *(They all look at him.)* It's a good name.

ANNOUNCER *(V.O.)*. Attention. This is a reminder to male Elevens that objects are not to be removed from the recreation area and that snacks are to be eaten, not hoarded. Thank you.

(JONAS looks at the apple, still grey in his hand. His family looks at him.)

JONAS. I just wanted to look at it ...

(They watch him uncomfortably. He throws it in the trash.)

LILY. I think Gabriel's asleep.

FATHER. Here. I'll show you how to feed him.

(They walk out.)

JONAS. Father ...

(An 11-year-old girl runs on behind JONAS as lights shift. This is FIONA. She's in a grey tunic, carrying towels. Several bathtubs appear around the stage.)

ANNOUNCER (V.O.). Ten Days Until the Ceremony.

FIONA. Hello, Jonas.

JONAS. Hello, Fiona.

FIONA. You're doing your volunteer hours in the House of the Old today?

JONAS. I thought so. Yes. I wanted to see you. I mean I haven't seen you in a while. You know.

FIONA. I'm glad you're here. We celebrated a release this morning, so that always throws the schedule off a little. Asher and I are going to help with the bathing. You want to help?

JONAS. Sure.

(ASHER enters, escorting an OLD MAN to a tub offstage.)

ASHER. Hi, Jonas!

JONAS. Hi, Asher.

(FIONA starts after ASHER with her towels.)

JONAS *(cont'd, to FIONA)*. Maybe we can talk after you're done?

FIONA. Maybe. We'll see.

(And she's gone as JONAS steps to an old lady [LARISSA] entering in her grey bathrobe. He reads her nametag.)

JONAS. Your turn, Larissa. I'll start the water and help you in.

(He pushes a button on the tub. Sound of running water as he helps her in and removes her robe. She leans back.)

JONAS (*cont'd*). Comfortable?

(She nods. He starts gently, steadily, scrubbing her back.)

LARISSA (*eyes closed*). This morning we celebrated the release of Roberto. It was wonderful.

JONAS. I knew Roberto! I helped with his feeding last time I was here, just a few weeks ago—

LARISSA (*opening her eyes*). They told his whole life before they released him. They always do, but to be honest—*(Whispers.)* Some of the tellings are a little boring. I've even seen some of the Old fall asleep during tellings. Like when they released Edna—did you know Edna?

JONAS. No.

LARISSA. Well, they tried to make her life sound meaningful—and of course all lives *are* meaningful—but Edna. My goodness. She was a Birthmother and then worked in food preparation for years, she never even had a family unit—*(Confidentially.)* I don't think Edna was very smart.

(JONAS laughs and begins washing her feet)

LARISSA (*cont'd*). But Robert's life was wonderful. He had been an Instructor of Elevens, he'd been on the Planning Committee, raised two very successful children *and* did the landscaping design for the Central Plaza. Not the labor, of course, but the design!

JONAS. Now your shoulders. *(She leans forward and he scrubs her shoulders and neck.)* Tell me about the celebration.