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Dramatic Publishing

ACCIDENTAL FRIENDS

A Play
by
Y YORK



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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"Originally Commissioned and Produced by Idaho Theater for Youth,
Directed by David Lee-Painter. The Cast included Dawn Kristen Flood
as Hilda; Martin McClendon as Jonathan; John Hanley as Willie;
and Heather Lea Poole as Marcie."

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for Diane

ACCIDENTAL FRIENDS was commissioned and produced by Idaho Theatre for Youth for their 1994 season.

Cast

Hilda *Dawn Kristen Flood*
Jonathan *Martin McClendon*
Willie *John Hanley*
Marcie *Heather Lea Poole*

Director *David Lee-Painter*
Costume Design *Melanie Burgess*
Set Design *Dean Panttaja*
Music/Sound Design *Joe Jacoby*

Staff

Artistic Director *David Lee-Painter*
Managing Director *Cynthia Gaede*

ACCIDENTAL FRIENDS

A Play in One Act
For Two Men and Two Women

CHARACTERS

JONATHAN
MARCY
WILLIE
HILDA

}

all in the eighth grade, almost teens

TIME

Fall: leaves, pumpkins, costumes, early darkness, change.

PLACE

Outside of a school and in a hospital room.

PRODUCTION NOTE

This play was written for a small, travelling theatre group. The two locations (hospital room, schoolyard) can be indicated by a two-sided, standing set piece, one side for each location. If a bench is used in the schoolyard, it can also appear in the hospital. A buzzing sound (like that at the end of a class in school) can begin the play, and separate the scenes. The on-stage actors can indicate the end of the scene, perhaps by hitting a freeze position for a beat prior to the buzzer. After the buzz, those on-stage actors can swivel the set piece and remove props. Those actors coming into a scene can set their own stage. In the school scenes, this can be done while talking. In the hospital, Jonathan can set his scene, and then take his place in the chair. The play will also work in a theatre, with sets, and lights, and fol-de-rol. Change Hilda's right- or left-handedness to suit the actress.

ACCIDENTAL FRIENDS

SCENE: *Two days before Halloween, outside of school.*

AT RISE: *MARCY and WILLIE, two semi-cool eighth graders, carry books, wear jackets.*

WILLIE. If *nobody* does the homework, what can they do?

They can't put us all in detention.

MARCY. It isn't that hard, Willie.

WILLIE. It is unbelievably hard; she can't even explain it.

How are we supposed to do it if the teacher can't do it?

MARCY. Why don't you try studying?

WILLIE. Oh, yeah, big shot; you're not worried because your mom explains it.

MARCY. Your parents can explain it.

WILLIE. My parents don't do math since they got an accountant.

(Enter HILDA MEISBERG, also eighth grade, a loser. Stands nearby.)

WILLIE. If I fail, I can't go to Yellowstone.

MARCY. So don't fail.

WILLIE. It doesn't make sense. "Pick a number." What number? "It doesn't matter what number, Willie." How can it not matter what number I pick?! *(They notice HILDA.)* And I suppose you think it's easy.

HILDA. Equations make more sense when you substitute an actual number.

MARCY. An *actual* number?

WILLIE (*deep sarcasm*). Silly me, I must have been using a non-actual number. (*Beat.*) What are you staring at?

HILDA. How come you *dress* like that?

WILLIE. You should talk.

HILDA. You shouldn't wear that coat.

WILLIE (*can't believe it*). Why shouldn't I wear this coat?

HILDA. Somebody might knock you down and take it.

WILLIE. What are you *talking* about?

HILDA. When personal items inspire envy, people do that.

MARCY. Not around here.

HILDA. How come he didn't write us back?

WILLIE. Who?!

HILDA. I expected a reply.

WILLIE. Are you even speaking English?

HILDA. I'm Hilda Meisberg.

MARCY. We know who you are; we don't know what you're talking about.

HILDA. We all wrote him. He's your pal. How come he didn't write back?

MARCY. ...Jonathan?

HILDA. Yes. I've been waiting for a reply.

WILLIE (*as an insult*). Well, I wouldn't hold my breath if I were you.

HILDA. Is he dead?

MARCY. No, he's not dead!

HILDA. Then where's my reply?

MARCY. He's not going to write to you.

HILDA (*beat*). Thanks for the information. (*Exits.*)

WILLIE. Turn down the heat! What was *that*?

MARCY. *That's* somebody can explain math to you.

WILLIE. I'm not that desperate. What a geek.

MARCY. So what, if she can help you?

WILLIE. I'd have to be nice to her.

MARCY. Just 'til you figure out equations.

WILLIE. Not worth it. She'd never go away. They're like dogs; throw them a bone, and they're always sniffing around your door.

MARCY. I can't believe she's Holly's sister. Holly wasn't geeky even a little.

WILLIE. Yeah, see, I don't remember this Holly person at all.

MARCY. She's regular. You'd never know she was a brain. She went to California right before fifth grade; that's when we got Hilda.

WILLIE. Well, no wonder I don't remember. Fifth grade!

MARCY (*sarcastic*). Oh, yeah, light years away. (*Beat.*) So how is Jonathan?

WILLIE. Haven't you seen him?

MARCY. No.

WILLIE. Some friend you are.

MARCY. I don't like hospitals.

WILLIE. Afraid you'll catch something and die?

MARCY. Die of boredom more like it. How is he?

WILLIE. I don't know; I haven't been either. (*They think this is funny.*) Jonathan wouldn't want us to be bored.

SCENE TWO

SCENE: *Later that day. A hospital room.*

AT RISE: JONATHAN, sitting in a chair, head wrapped in bandages, can't see. HILDA enters, stands quietly for sev-

eral seconds, then closes her eyes and holds her breath. A pause.

JONATHAN. Is somebody here?

HILDA (*big explosion of breath*). It took you long enough.

JONATHAN. Who is it? Who's there?

HILDA. Almost a minute, I'll bet.

JONATHAN. I recognize your voice.

HILDA. I thought maybe I was losing my touch.

JONATHAN (*annoyed*). What touch?

HILDA. My telepathic touch. I am Hilda Meisberg, thinking thoughts of my presence into your mind.

JONATHAN. I *heard* you breathing.

HILDA. I *wasn't* breathing.

JONATHAN. Then I heard you stomping around. You didn't think thoughts into my mind.

HILDA (*an explanation*). My sister and I are telepathic. Sometimes with other people, too.

JONATHAN. You and I are not telepathic, forget it.

HILDA. Is it dark in there?

JONATHAN. In where?

HILDA. Under those big bandages.

JONATHAN. *Yeah*, it's *dark*; what do you think?

HILDA. I hope you're not too scared of the dark.

JONATHAN. ...What?

HILDA. It would be very terrible to be scared of the dark and thrust into a dark world where no light can ever enter again.

JONATHAN (*is a little scared of the dark*). These bandages are coming off. What do you want here, anyway?

HILDA. I'm in your class.

JONATHAN. I *know* you're in my class. What are you *doing* here?

HILDA. Some weeks ago, Mrs. Holcomb made us write to you. I didn't know who you were.

JONATHAN. You know who I am.

HILDA. Your name, actually, rang no bell. I became curious only after writing you a lengthy, interesting letter. To which I received no reply.

JONATHAN. I got a bunch of letters.

HILDA. Couldn't read them, I suspect, in your present state of bandage-ment. Why didn't somebody read them to you?

JONATHAN. Because...I don't know...they're personal; I'm saving them. Until the bandages come off.

HILDA. Meanwhile all the news grows old. (*HILDA picks up letters from the floor.*) These are them. Bobby O'Neill, Brenda Smoot. Hilda Meisberg, that's me. Marcy Kennedy, I'll bet this one is *truly* personal. (*She opens it.*)

JONATHAN (*hears*). Hey! Like you said, it's personal.

HILDA. You want me to hold it against your forehead so you can osmose the info?

JONATHAN. ...What's that mean?

HILDA. Learning without working at it. Like your pal Willie. This letter might contain an emergency. Sitting here on your floor for weeks and weeks unopened. A pressing emergency.

JONATHAN. Yeah, okay. Read it.

HILDA. "Dear Jonathan, sorry about the accident. Hope you get better soon. Yours truly, Marcy Kennedy." (*Sarcastic, but not mean.*) My. What a warm and insightful letter.

JONATHAN. Hey, it's a nice letter.

HILDA (*sarcastic*). Yes, from a real good friend.

JONATHAN. If you don't know who I am, how do you know Marcy is my friend?

HILDA. I've made observations. Marcy and Willie get a lot of attention since one-third of their threesome is so mangled in the hospital.

JONATHAN. I'm not mangled. Is there a letter from Willie?

HILDA (*reading envelope*). Willie Johanson. (*Opens, reads.*)

"Dear Jonathan. Was so sorry to hear about the accident. Hope you get well soon. Sincerely, Willie Johanson." Don't any of your friends know how to write complete sentences? "Hope you get well" does not contain a subject. Nor does "was so sorry to hear about the accident"; we can't assume the subject because all singular and collective subjects fit this verb form. *I was so sorry; Dracula was so sorry, Michelangelo was so sorry; the Congress of the United States was so sorry to hear about your accident. (Sometime during the above JONATHAN's negativity relents somewhat.)*

JONATHAN (*joking*). Congress? I didn't realize I made the national news.

HILDA (*smile*). Sure, you're famous. When do you get to go home?

JONATHAN. They haven't said.

HILDA (*looks out, as if looking at a TV*). Do you want the TV on?

JONATHAN. No. It's really stupid when you can't see it.

HILDA (*mocking TV ads*). "Buy, buy, buy! Buy my soap, no buy my soap. Wear this lipstick and your lips will stay dewy; wear *this* lipstick and boys will kiss it off you."

JONATHAN (*defensive*). I like baseball on TV.

HILDA. I like it better on the radio.

JONATHAN. Yeah, that's fun. It's like old fashioned or something.

HILDA. If you really want a challenge, try basketball on the radio.

JONATHAN. Yeah, but I never know who to root for. I wish Boise'd get a team.

HILDA. The Boise...Bombers!

JONATHAN (*into it*). Yeah! The Boise Bombers annihilate the Lakers for the championship of the world! (*Gestures.*) Yes! (*Beat.*) I'm not supposed to get excited.

HILDA. Do you have to sit there all day?

JONATHAN. Mostly. If I fall or something, I could hurt my eye. I have to be quiet.

HILDA. You're not supposed to even stand?

JONATHAN (*annoyed slightly*). No, I can stand, I *stand*, I walk around, I just have to be careful of falling.

HILDA. You could do knee bends. You could hold on to your chair. You wouldn't fall.

JONATHAN. It's very different when your eyes are banded; you need your eyes to balance, you know.

HILDA. I'll try it first. (*HILDA does knee bends with her eyes closed.*)

JONATHAN. Try what?

HILDA. I have my eyes closed, and I'm doing knee bends. Yes, I think this is a good idea for you.

JONATHAN. No, it's too dangerous.

HILDA. Give it a try; I'm right here to catch you if you fall.

JONATHAN (*sarcastic*). Oh, right! You can really catch me.

HILDA. Give it a try. You can hold on the whole time. Just try it. *Try.* (*A brief pause, then JONATHAN gets up, slowly to try knee bends, slowly at first, remaining close to the chair, then bolder.*)

JONATHAN (*knee bends*). Boy, I'm really stiff.

HILDA. That's what happens when you veg.

JONATHAN (*defensive*). It's not like I have a choice, you know.

HILDA. What time do your friends come?

JONATHAN (*awkward short pause*). Various times.

HILDA. Because I want to be long gone before they arrive.

JONATHAN. Lighten up on my friends; they're my *friends*.

HILDA. Yes, they wrote you such interesting letters.

JONATHAN. So everybody can't write a great letter; they're still my friends.

HILDA. Real friends would read your letters to you. Let's walk around.

JONATHAN. I can't—

HILDA. Sure, we can walk around the room or down the hall or something. (*Takes his arm.*) Let's go.

JONATHAN. Just around the room. (*She walks him around the room.*)

HILDA. You should do this regularly so you don't go completely stale in your muscles.

JONATHAN. My mom works; she's *tired* when she gets here.

HILDA. Get your friends to do it.

JONATHAN. ...Yeah.

HILDA (*pause, realizes*). Do you mean to say that those good friends of yours haven't been by?

JONATHAN. I didn't say that.

HILDA. I am telepathic to you.

JONATHAN (*makes it up*). They came; they came here *a lot*. They...made such...a lot of noise, they said they couldn't come anymore.

HILDA. Who said? They said or the hospital said?

JONATHAN. The hospital said they couldn't come anymore. Because they were rowdy. Rowdy. Besides, they're busy. Willie has practice every day. What kind of friend am I, anyway? All wrapped up like this.

HILDA. A friend in need.

JONATHAN. I can't help Willie with his homework—I can't play on the team—I'm gonna have a scar! What good is that?!

HILDA (*brief pause, then to calm him*). Don't worry about a scar; scars are in. (*Nods to herself, makes a decision.*) They'll tell you that when they visit you again. Scars are all the rage.

JONATHAN. Yeah, sure.

HILDA (*beat*). Quite a fancy room. Private.

JONATHAN. I get roommates. They keep getting well and leaving.

HILDA. You should leave; you don't seem so sick.

JONATHAN. There's nobody home, and I have to be bandaged. They covered both my eyes to make sure I stay still.

HILDA. Does your mother come every day?

JONATHAN. Yeah, she's great.

HILDA. Where's your dad?

JONATHAN. We don't talk about my dad.

HILDA. Yes, us too. My sister lives with him.

JONATHAN. Where?

HILDA. California.

JONATHAN (*an insult*). Why don't you live there, too?

HILDA. Because I live here. (*Insulted, HILDA lets go of his arm.*)

JONATHAN. Hey, don't let go. I can't see.

HILDA. Who's paying for this little vacation, anyway?

JONATHAN. The construction company. (*Nervous.*) Where are you?

HILDA. Are you balanced?

JONATHAN (*scared, mad*). Yeah, I'm balanced—I can't see!

HILDA. Your chair is somewhat behind you.

JONATHAN. Come on, Hilda; I could hurt myself.

HILDA. You won't; I'm right here the whole time. You gotta do this. Try it, try to get there on your own. *(Pause.)* Just try it. *(JONATHAN slowly tries to find the chair. Unbeknownst to him, HILDA remains very close to make sure he is safe.)* Colder...warmer...colder...getting warmer, warmer, hot—

JONATHAN. Ouch. *(Bumps chair.)*

HILDA. Bingo!

JONATHAN *(sits)*. I bumped myself.

HILDA. I got another fun idea. *(She takes an award ribbon pin [with a red ribbon attached to it] from her coat, fastens it for safety's sake, and puts it in his hand.)*

JONATHAN *(sarcastic)*. I can hardly wait.

HILDA. What's this?

JONATHAN *(frustrated)*. I don't know; how am I supposed to know?

HILDA. Touch it.

JONATHAN. I am touching it! I don't know what it is.

HILDA. Figure it out. *(Pause.)* Just try.

JONATHAN *(sigh)*. I think...it's a ribbon.

HILDA. Good. What kind of ribbon?

JONATHAN. Well, it's got a...it's like an award, like a *blue* ribbon.

HILDA. Very, very good.

JONATHAN. That's right?

HILDA. A hundred percent. I won it.

JONATHAN. What for?

HILDA *(taking it back)*. Math. *(Beat.)* I got a blind pal can tell colors by touching.

JONATHAN. How does he do that?

HILDA. You tell me—you just did it. Said it was a *blue* ribbon.

JONATHAN *(laughs)*. I did, didn't I. *(Tentative.)* I think I'd like to get a drink of water.

HILDA. Where's your glass?

JONATHAN. No. I want to get it myself. (*Stands.*)

HILDA (*secretly pleased*). Oh, all right. The sink is somewhat behind and to your right. Colder...colder...warmer... warmer stiiill—

SCENE THREE

SCENE: *Halloween. A street.*

AT RISE: *WILLIE dressed as a soccer player, MARCY is a gypsy; they have a sack of Halloween candy.*

MARCY. I can't believe they gave you all this great stuff.

WILLIE. Not exactly gave. I explained about the dangers of unwrapped food.

MARCY (*sarcastic*). They looked really grateful.

WILLIE. Their parents would just take it away when they got home anyway.

MARCY. You could trick or treat yourself.

WILLIE. I'm too big to knock on people's doors after dark.

MARCY. It would be better than stealing candy from little kids.

WILLIE. I'm not stealing from them, I'm protecting them by removing all suspect items from their sacks.

MARCY (*looking in the bag, removes a wrapped candy bar*). What's suspect about this?

WILLIE (*sarcastic*). Oooops. Want half?

MARCY. Sure. (*MARCY splits the candy bar while WILLIE finds cookies in the bag.*)

WILLIE. My parents always made me toss all the great homemade stuff. "Only eat what's wrapped; don't talk to strangers."

MARCY. Yeah! "Watch out for weirdos." Parents think we go brain dead as soon as the sun goes down. Like I'd really stand around talking to some weirdo. (*Beat.*) Can we go yet?

WILLIE. Judy said to come after dark; her father takes her trick or treating like a kid.

MARCY. Her father is a geek.

WILLIE. "Hello, William. Haven't seen your parents at PTA lately."

MARCY. "Isn't that magazine too old for you, Marcy?" Like we could corrupt his sweet little Judy.

WILLIE. She's the most corrupt person we know, but her parties are the best.

MARCY. Except when her parents come downstairs.

WILLIE. Didn't they say no more parties?

MARCY. Yeah, she bargained for it; she got a perfect score in science.

WILLIE. Oh yeah, science.

MARCY. What did you get in science?

WILLIE. The jury's still out; I'm taking my D to the Supreme Court.

MARCY. Your parents aren't going to let you go to Yellowstone.

WILLIE. Boy, turn it down, Marcy.

MARCY (*beat, to change the subject*). Judy's going to have prizes. Categories.

WILLIE. What category are you? Mood Assassin?

MARCY. Most beautiful.

WILLIE. I thought you were going to wear your soccer uniform.