

Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

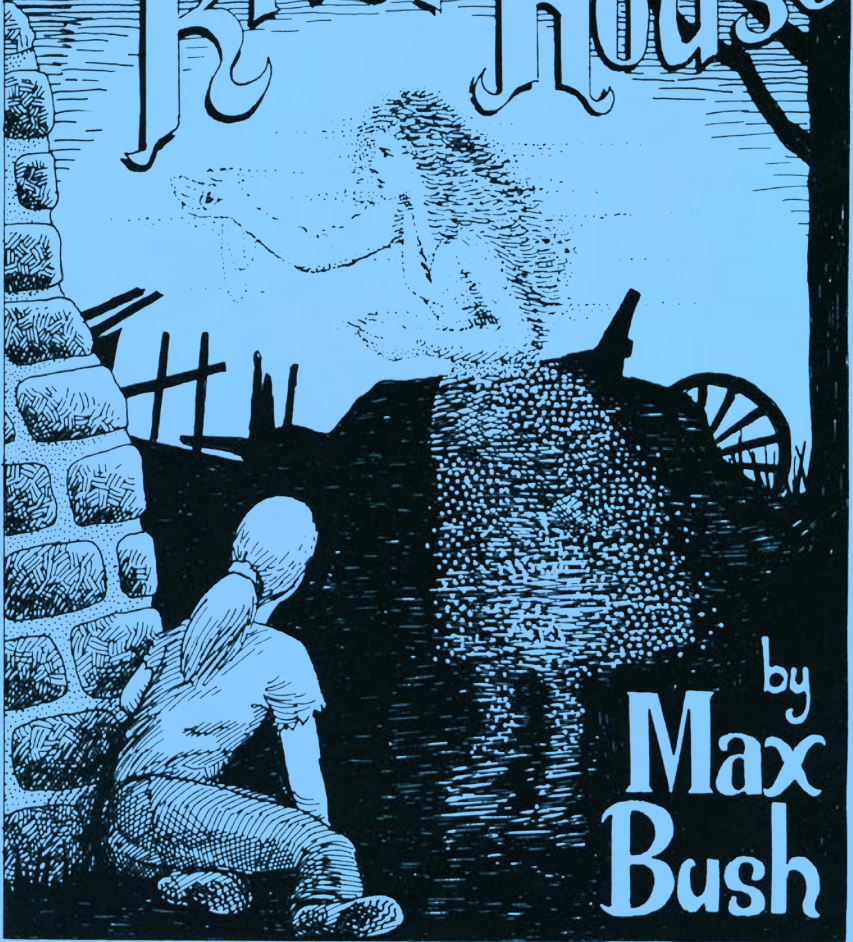
You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Dramatic Publishing

Ghost of the River House



by
**Max
Bush**

Ghost of the River House

IUPUI /IRT Bonderman Award

A drama commissioned and successfully premiered
by the Grand Rapids Circle Theatre.

Drama. By Max Bush. *Cast: 3m., 2w.* Here is a haunting and beautiful story of a child who is seeking her father's love. With the help of her grandfather, 10-year-old Jenny finds healing and the courage to be herself. Jenny chases after her father, brother and grandfather, hoping to go fishing with them. But her father says he wants to fish with her brother and leaves Jenny hurt and confused beside the ruin of the old river house homestead. Grandpa George stays with Jenny, despite her father's protests, and listens as she tearfully shares feelings of being unloved. Together they explore the old homestead and encounter the ghost of a beautiful young woman, Jenny's great-great-aunt Sondra. Sondra reveals secrets from the family's past and gifts Jenny with part of the lost family treasure. Ultimately, with Sondra's affirmation and Grandpa George's support, Jenny begins to realize her worth and understand a past that echoes still within herself and her difficult relationship with her father. *One set. Contemporary costumes. Approximate running time: 55 minutes. Code: G94.*

ISBN-13 978-0-87602-354-9



Ghost of the River House



Dramatic Publishing

311 Washington St.

Woodstock, IL 60098-330

Phone: (800) 448-7469

www.dramaticpublishing.com

Ghost of the River House

By
MAX BUSH



Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

© 1996 by
MAX BUSH

© 1997 by
ANCHORAGE PRESS, INC.

Cover art by John S. Douglas

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(GHOST OF THE RIVER HOUSE)

ISBN: 978-0-87602-354-9

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

**Dedicated to JOE DULIN
and JEANNE AVERILL**

GHOST OF THE RIVER HOUSE was commissioned by the Grand Rapids Circle Theatre, funded in part through a grant by the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs, and opened on June 14, 1993, with the following cast and crew:

CAST:

JENNY Megan Dullaghan
LARRY Preston Koning
LAWRENCE John S. Douglas
GRAMPA GEORGE Jack Gillisse
SONDRA Amy Gaipa
THOMAS John S. Douglas

PRODUCTION STAFF:

Managing Director Joe Dulin
Director Max Bush
Scenic Design Tom Lohman
Lighting Design Matt Taylor
Music Composer Linda Missad
Costume Designer Heather Edwards
Light Board Operator Andrew Fraser
Sound Board Operator Amy Tenbrink
Producers Carol LaMange, Sally
Schaafsma
Acknowledgements Myra Bush, Debra Olsen,
Rosanne Steffens, Joe Zainea,
Waters Corporation, Susan
Hinkle

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The author gratefully acknowledges the following for their help in developing the script: Alan Levy, Jeanne Averill, Laurie Brooks Gollobin, Ric Averill, Lynette Gallert, Myra Bush, Debra Olsen, Penelope Victor, Dorothy Webb, Mark McCreary, Janet Allen, Scot Copeland, and the casts and crews of the first productions.

GHOST OF THE RIVER HOUSE was a winner in the Sixth National Waldo M. and Grace C. Bonderman Youth Theatre Playwriting Competition sponsored by Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis and was featured in a rehearsed reading at the 1995 Youth Theatre Playwriting Symposium held on the campus of IUPUI.

GHOST OF THE RIVER HOUSE

CHARACTERS:

JENNY	10
LARRY	11 Jenny's brother
LAWRENCE	33, Jenny's father
GRAMPA	55, Jenny's grandfather
SONDRA	19, a ghost
THOMAS	24, a memory

The roles of Lawrence and Thomas are to be played by the same actor.

TIME: Evening, in October of the present year.

PLACE: A ruined house near a river.

RUNNING TIME: Approximately 50 minutes.

I LOVE YOU TRULY from Seven Songs by Carrie Jacobs-Bond, MCMVI

GHOST OF THE RIVER HOUSE

(At rise we see the foundation of a ruined house framed by large shade-trees. All that's left standing is the field stone chimney and the low, crumbling foundations of the walls. Weeds, wild flowers and bushes grow up through the cracks in the floor. Vines hang off the trees, crawl over the foundation and onto the floor. A broken, skeletal pear tree with a twisted trunk and twisted branches stands behind the house, all that remains of the backyard orchard.)

(Most of the usable boards and bricks have been removed. Various articles remain from the house and are scattered about: a kitchen chair, a number of badly damaged paintings, a cushion, a toy boat, a book, a rusty shovel head, a deflated ball, a disconnected well pump, sink, a set of disconnected stair steps, etc.)

(It's evening in autumn, the colors of the trees are rich and vibrant; colored leaves lay scattered over the entire scene.)

(Larry, his Father and Grandfather enter carrying fishing poles and tackle, heading past the ruined house. Grampa also carries a lantern.)

FATHER: Fishing in the river isn't like fishing in the lake. In the lake you go to where the fish are waiting. Here in the river, you wait for the fish to come to you.

LARRY: What bait do you think I should use, Grampa?

GRAMPA: Nightcrawlers.

FATHER: That's right.

LARRY: *(To Dad.)* But I want to use the new lure you gave me - -
it's for walleyes.

FATHER: But if you use a nightcrawler you'll catch more fish.

GRAMPA: Sure, Larry, on a nightcrawler you'll get walleye, but then
again, you might hook a catfish or even a small mouth
bass.

LARRY: But what I want is a walleye.

FATHER: *(Supportively.)* All right, then use your new lure. And if it
works, I might even try it.

LARRY: Walleye tastes the best.

GRAMPA & FATHER: Yeah.

JENNY: *(Off.)* Wait! Dad! Dad, wait!

FATHER: Jenny . . .

LARRY: I thought you said she had to stay in the house with
Grampa and Mom.

FATHER: What has she got?

JENNY: *(Jenny runs on carrying a fishing pole.)* I found a pole.
So I can come along.

LARRY: I don't think so.

JENNY: I found a pole in Grampa's basement, I'm coming along.

FATHER: Jenny - -

JENNY: I'll put on my own nightcrawler.

LARRY: Well, give it up, you're not coming.

FATHER: Larry, I told you, stay out of it.

LARRY: You said just the three of us were going. You said that yesterday, remember?

FATHER: I know what I said, son. *(To Jenny.)* I told you in the house. This is something I promised Larry we'd do together. Just him and me and Grampa. Larry and I need some time together alone, with a little peace and quiet, and we have to talk.

JENNY: About what?

FATHER: I told you. That's between Larry and me. Why don't you go back to the house and draw in your new book.

JENNY: We don't spend time together, alone.

FATHER: We do too.

JENNY: When?

FATHER: Jenny, relax.

LARRY: Yeah, Jennifer, relax.

JENNY: My name is Jenny, Lawrence. Why do you have Mom's camera? Does she know you took it?

LARRY: Yes. I'm going to take a picture of the ghost and send it to the National Inquirer. Going to make a million bucks.

JENNY: Oh, righto, Lar. Sondra hates you. You try to take her picture and she'll drop a tree on you like she did dad.

LARRY: Dad, can we go? I don't like it, here, by the old house.

JENNY: Dad, why can't I go?

FATHER: Because I don't want any fighting. I'm sick of it.

JENNY: I'll be quiet. I can be quiet.

FATHER: Like you are now?

JENNY: But this is different.

FATHER: Larry can sit still and fish and that's what we're going to do. Relax, be quiet and fish.

JENNY: Mom says you have to talk to Larry. I won't talk. I won't listen. I'll just fish. Then when you're done, I want to talk to you, too.

FATHER: Jenny, go back to the house and do something with your mother.

GRAMPA: I'll stay with you, Jenny.

FATHER: Dad --

GRAMPA: Sure.

FATHER: Damn it, Dad. I told you, don't get into this.

GRAMPA: I can fish here anytime.

FATHER: We go through this everytime I want to take Larry, someplace. She's got to learn: There are some things I can and will do with her and some things I don't want to and won't do with her. Going fishing here is something I want to do with my son, just like you did with me. What's wrong with that?

GRAMPA: The kid just wants to go fishing, Larry.

FATHER: It's a lot more than that and we all know it.

GRAMPA: All right. Like what?

FATHER: I don't want to go through this all, again. I get enough from her mother. And I don't like just standing here next to this place.

LARRY: Yeah, let's go.

FATHER: *(To Grampa.)* Are you coming?

GRAMPA: I'm staying with her.

FATHER: Let's go.

JENNY: *(Erupting.)* Why can't I go? I'm not going to do anything wrong. Why can't I go?

FATHER: This is something for Larry and me to do. You're just going to have to understand that.

JENNY: Why do I have to understand? Why doesn't Larry have to understand?

FATHER: Don't pull on me.

JENNY: I want to go! I just want to go!

FATHER: Jenny, calm down!

LARRY: God, Jenny, you're going to blow.

FATHER: There's no reason for you to get this emotional!

JENNY: I have to go with you! Let me go, please, Daddy! I'll do anything you tell me to!

FATHER: No! That's it, little lady! Now, no more! You stay here with Grampa or you go back to the house.

JENNY: But I - -

FATHER No! I don't want to hear any more! Don't you make this any worse for yourself. And if you say anything more, you will, I guarantee it. Larry.

(He exits. Larry moves to Jenny, takes her pole, then goes off. Jenny watches them go, then sits.)

JENNY: *(Softly, to herself.)* I could go. It would be all right. I could go. *(She pulls her knees up to her chest.)* I never went fishing in the river before. *(She cries.)*

GRAMPA: Do you want to go fishing with me? I know where the best runs are for walleye. You could use my fishing pole.

(She indicates "no".)

Do you mind if I stay with you?

(She indicates "no".)

JENNY: Why won't he let me go, Grampa?

GRAMPA: Well, he said he needed to spend time alone with Larry.

JENNY: He does. All the time. What's wrong with me? He hates me.

GRAMPA: There's nothing wrong with you, Jenny. I do know that. So it's got to be something else. Maybe he does have some things to talk over with Larry.

JENNY: He just won't. No matter what I do. He just . . . won't. *(She turns to Grampa.)* I know why. Why he won't let me go.

GRAMPA: Why?

JENNY: I do. I know why.

(Grampa waits for an answer.)

It's because Larry's a boy.

GRAMPA: Is that what you think?

JENNY: I know. He loves Larry more than me. Because Larry's a boy.

(He sits next to her, puts his hand on her.)

I can't help it I'm a girl.

GRAMPA No, of course not. That's one of the big reasons I like you; because you are a girl.

JENNY: It's not my fault. I just want to die.

GRAMPA: Oh, no, Jenny.

JENNY: I do. Sometimes I just want to die. I don't know what to do.

GRAMPA: You did something. You told me about it. That's important.

JENNY: You think it's true?

(Grampa starts to answer, stops, considers what to say.)

Do you?

(Again, he doesn't answer, but now looks directly at her.)

You see? It is. Just because he's a boy. Doesn't anybody notice? Larry's like his best friend.

(A wind begins to blow. Grampa hears it, looks up. Jenny stands.)

I wanted a basketball for my birthday and he finally bought me one - - a girl's basketball - - but he doesn't play with me. He bought Larry a new glove and they play catch all the time. I can throw almost as far as Larry and I bet I could beat him in basketball but he's too chicken to play me. What can I do so dad will be different about me?

GRAMPA: Have you talked to your dad about it?

JENNY: Yeah. And so has mom. He just says it isn't true.

GRAMPA: Well, keep talking. I know he's got a lot on his mind, working too hard - -

JENNY: He works all the time.

GRAMPA: - - taking care of bills - -

JENNY: Yeah, but he never has any money. You should hear them argue about it.

GRAMPA: - - but nothing is more important than you. And I'll talk to him, again, too, whether he wants to or not.

JENNY: I was going to talk to him again tonight but . . .

(The wind blows stronger.)

GRAMPA: Ah, that's a cold wind.

(Jenny looks up, sensing something in the wind.)

I think your Dad sees himself in Larry. Larry reminds him of himself when he was a boy.

JENNY: Yeah, Dad named him after himself - - Lawrence.

GRAMPA: You'd look funny wearing a name like that.

JENNY: Yeah. So does Larry.

GRAMPA: I guess when I named your dad I should have named him something like Shirley; then maybe he'd of named you after himself.

JENNY: Shirley, Grampa? I'd be Shirley?

GRAMPA: Yeah!

JENNY: "Welcome to your first day of school. What's your name, little girl?"
"Shirley."
That is so bad.

GRAMPA: That's what I would have named my daughter, if I had one.

JENNY: She's lucky you didn't.

(A voice begins to emerge [miked] in the wind, a woman's whispering voice. The words are indistinct. Another voice, this time a man's, joins in the whisper. We are able to make out fragments of a conversation.)

Who is that? Do you hear that?

GRAMPA: What?

JENNY: It sounds like . . . like people talking . . . somewhere.

GRAMPA: I don't hear anything.

JENNY: Listen, Grampa, don't you hear . . . ?

GRAMPA: A man and a woman?

JENNY: Yeah, maybe, but . . .

GRAMPA: They're having an argument?

JENNY: Yeah, about . . . a dream . . . money. Money.

(The male voice fades out but the female voice fades in clearer.)

VOICE:: Jenny . . . Jenny.

JENNY: Who . . . ? Do you hear somebody calling me?

GRAMPA: Calling you? By your name?

JENNY: Yeah.

GRAMPA: Your dad you mean?

JENNY: No, like a woman.

GRAMPA: Your Mom?

JENNY: No. Listen, Grampa.

VOICE: Jenny . . .

JENNY: There. My name.

VOICE: Jenny, stay . . . stay . . .

JENNY: What?

VOICE: Stay.

JENNY: *(The voice is gone, the wind is dying out.)*
Hello! . . . What did you say?

(The wind fades out. To Grampa.)

JENNY: I heard someone calling me.

GRAMPA: From where?

JENNY: Over . . . I don't know. I couldn't tell.

GRAMPA: A woman's voice?

JENNY: Yeah.

GRAMPA: Far away, but yet right next to your head.

JENNY: Yeah. Who is that?

GRAMPA: Sondra.

JENNY: The ghost?

GRAMPA: That's the way it sounds.

JENNY: I've never heard that before.

GRAMPA: She doesn't usually call people by their name, though.

JENNY: Why me?

GRAMPA: I don't know. Maybe she likes you.

JENNY: *(She walks toward river.)* If she likes me she can go scare Larry. And make him fall into the river . . . How long do you think they'll be gone?

GRAMPA: A while.

JENNY: Can we wait here for them?

GRAMPA: You want to wait here?