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Dramatic Publishing

# The Fantastic Return of the Fabulous Fable Factory

A Musical Play in One Act

Book by JOSEPH ROBINETTE

Music by THOMAS TIERNEY

Lyrics by THOMAS TIERNEY and JOSEPH ROBINETTE



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#### ISBN: 1-58342-324-9

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# **ABOUT THE MUSICAL**

The Fabulous Fable Factory created fables more than two thousand years ago. At some point, the factory lost a very important part—the Moral Maker. Traveling through time and space for eons, unable to make fables anymore, the factory landed one day in a wooded area behind the home of a young boy who accidentally discovered the factory.

The boy surprised the factory members, as well as himself, by being able to supply the morals to the stories which the Fable Factory churned out. Wanting to stay with the factory, and being urged to do so by its members, the boy was gently informed by the factory owner, a Mr. Aesop, that moral making is not a part-time job, and that if he stayed, he'd be leaving his family, friends and home behind.

Reluctantly departing, the boy bade a fond farewell to his newfound friends, taking with him a memory which would last a lifetime. The factory then hurtled back into space, searching for other young Moral Makers who could help it turn its stories into fables.

Thirty years after having been discovered by the young boy, the Fable Factory members decide to return to the spot of that discovery in hopes of reuniting with the boy—now grown, of course—who was their very first "temporary" Moral Maker.

This musical is the sequel to *The Fabulous Fable Factory*.

# The Fantastic Return of the Fabulous Fable Factory

A Musical Play in One Act For 5 Males and 4 Females (flexible\*)

#### CHARACTERS

MR. AESOP (\*MRS. AESOP) STRAUCEY (\*STUART) PLUTO (\*POLLY) CASSIE (\*CASEY) WADSWORTH (\*WENDY) GRETEL (\*GRADY) FELIX (\*PHOEBE) EMMA (\*EMMETT) JAKE (\*JANE) OFFSTAGE VOICE: JAKE'S COMPUTER OFFSTAGE VOICE: JAKE'S FATHER (or JANE'S MOTHER)

TIME: The present. PLACE: The interior of a fable factor.

NOTE: This musical may be performed by a cast of seven (see production notes on page 70).

# **MUSICAL NUMBERS**

"The Fable Factory Flies" Factory Parts
"Seven Fabulous Parts" Factory Parts
"Ask the Porcupine" Jake and Company
"Sailing Far From Home" Parts I, II, III Two Factory Parts (playing Sailor and Chee-Chee)
"Use It or Lose It" Aesop and Company
"The Daydreaming Milkmaid" All except Jake
"Your Time Will Come"
"Finale: The Fable Factory Flies" Factory Parts
(Incidental and underscoring selections are contained in the

piano/vocal score.)

# The Fantastic Return of the Fabulous Fable Factory

SCENE: The interior of an old, seemingly abandoned, factory. Through high windows, shafts of diffused light dimly illuminate the factory. Extending from one of the windows to the stage level is a ladder. Barely visible are the factory parts—STRAUCEY, PLUTO, CASSIE, WADSWORTH, GRETEL, FELIX and EMMA—who are frozen in individual positions near one another in a line stretching from C to L.

Scattered about the factory are various props and costume pieces which will be used by the FACTORY PARTS when the fables are enacted throughout the play. Also strewn about are old boxes and trunks containing more props, sheets of paper—resembling parchment—and a factory mechanism at L consisting of a wheel, switch and lever which activates the factory. At R is a partially hidden burlap blanket under which AESOP sleeps.

AT RISE: For a moment there is no movement. Then, each FACTORY PART, in turn, beginning at L, slowly pivots and taps the next part in line on the shoulder, until all are unfrozen and looking in the direction of AESOP. They creep toward him.

ALL (speaking in turn). Shh... Good, he's asleep... Let's get started before he wakes up... (They begin to move back toward L.) Do you really think we should do this? We've never done it before... But we've watched Mr. Aesop do it thousands of times... Sure, we'll just do what he does, step by step... Oh, he's going to be surprised when he wakes up! (They have rolled on from just off L an old-fashioned Rube Goldberg-type contraption with wheels, pulleys, dials, etc., which is the Fable Factory piloting device.) All right. We're ready!

### (SONG: "THE FABLE FACTORY FLIES")

# 1<sup>ST</sup> FACTORY PART (WOMAN) *(singing)*. WE'RE GOING BACK TO A PLACE WHERE WE'VE BEEN BEFORE.

# 2<sup>ND</sup> FACTORY PART (WOMAN). BREAKING THROUGH TIME AND SPACE, HOPING WHAT'S IN STORE

3<sup>RD</sup> FACTORY PART (MAN). WILL BE THE SAME AS IT WAS THEN.

# ALL THREE. HERE WE GO TO WAY BACK WHEN!

4<sup>TH</sup> FACTORY PART (MAN). SET THE DIALS,

# 5<sup>TH</sup> FACTORY PART (WOMAN). CHECK THE SHIP,

BOTH. GET THE VECTORS RIGHT

- 6<sup>TH</sup> FACTORY PART (WOMAN). FOR THIS FANTASTIC TRIP THROUGH THE STARRY NIGHT.
- 7<sup>TH</sup> FACTORY PART (MAN). WE'RE OFF, AND ON A SEARCH TO FIND

ALL.

A SPECIAL PLACE WE LEFT BEHIND. THE FABLE FACT'RY FLIES THROUGH INTERSTELLAR SKIES. IT'S MAGICAL, FANTASTICAL, IT'S MYSTICAL AND WISE. ALL LOGIC IT DEFIES. THE FABLE FACT'RY FLIES.

THE FABULOUS FABLE FACTORY'S FLYING HIGH. THE GAUGES SAY WE'RE ON OUR WAY AS THIRTY YEARS OF TIME GO BY.

WOMEN.

OUR MISSION IN THE END IS TO FIND A LONG LOST FRIEND.

MEN.

AND WHEN WE SEE HIS FACE AGAIN, WE'LL KNOW WE'RE BACK TO WHERE AND WHEN WE WANT TO BE, ALL. AND THAT IS WHY WE'RE FLYING HIGH.

3<sup>RD</sup> FACTORY PART (MAN). SEE THE BLINK.

1<sup>ST</sup> FACTORY PART (WOMAN). HEAR THE BUZZ.

2<sup>ND</sup> FACTORY PART (WOMAN). TARGET'S NOW IN SIGHT.

WOMEN.

DON'T YOU THINK THAT THIS WAS AN AMAZING FLIGHT

MEN.

THROUGH SUNS AND MOONS AND MILKY SKY,

ALL.

AS THIRTY YEARS OF TIME GO BY. THE FABLE FACT'RY FLIES THROUGH INTERSTELLAR SKIES. IT'S MAGICAL, FANTASTICAL, IT'S MYSTICAL AND WISE. ALL LOGIC IT DEFIES. THE FABLE FACT'RY FLIES, THE FABLE FACT'RY FLIES.

(They push the piloting device offstage, then begin crossing to AESOP who is still asleep.) IMAGINE WHAT HE'LL SEE WHEN MISTER AESOP OPENS HIS EYES.

### HE'LL GET A BIG SURPRISE. HE WON'T BELIEVE HIS EYES. THE FABULOUS FABLE FACT'RY FLIES.

(Waking AESOP.)

ALL. Happy birthday, Mr. Aesop!

AESOP (stirring). Huh? What? Who?

- STRAUCEY. Wake up, Mr. Aesop. It's your birthday.
- AESOP (now awake). Why—I do believe it is. That must be why you let me sleep so long. (He yawns.)

PLUTO. How old are you this time, Mr. Aesop?

AESOP (counting on his fingers). Let's see. I believe it's two thousand four hundred and sixty-nine.

CASSIE. That's what we thought.

WADSWORTH. And that's why we have a special birthday present for you today.

AESOP. A present? For me?

FELIX. We've brought you to a very special place.

AESOP. Brought me?

- EMMA. While you were sleeping, we guided the Fable Factory to a spot you've wanted to go back to for thirty years.
- AESOP (*with concern*). You flew the Fable Factory? All by yourselves?

PLUTO. We've watched you do it enough all these years.

GRETEL. We all kept our eyes on

The distant blue horizon.

WADSWORTH. And set the vibrant vector Atop the red reflector.

STRAUCEY. We measured the chronometer

With a big thermometer

- FELIX. And opened up the oculars
  - To the past particulars.
- CASSIE. But we never let our attitudes Intrude upon the platitudes.
- AESOP. Well, you certainly followed the directions, all right. So, where did you bring us?
- GRETEL. Do you remember a young boy who once discovered the Fable Factory in the woods near his home?
- AESOP. We've been discovered by hundreds of children over the years.
- PLUTO. But this one was special. He became our *first* temporary Moral Maker after we lost our permanent one. His name was Monroe.<sup>\*</sup>
- AESOP. Oh yes. Delightful lad. What was his *last* name?
- CASSIE. We never asked him. Anyway, you often said you'd like to know how he turned out—what he's doing now.
- WADSWORTH. So we've landed in the woods behind his home, hoping he might drop by again.
- AESOP. He would be a grown man by now. Probably doesn't take walks in the woods anymore.
- EMMA. But maybe he'll *sense* that we're in the neighborhood.
- AESOP. Perhaps so. Did you set her down in the exact same place as before?
- FELIX. According to the Huguenot

We landed on the spot.

AESOP. Well, let's take a look out this window. (He goes to a window as the OTHERS follow.) Hmm. It's a bit

<sup>\*</sup> See production notes for minor dialogue changes if the role of Jake is played by a female (Jane).

dark outside, but that doesn't look like a wooded area to me.

- STRAUCEY. What do you see?
- AESOP. Not a single tree. There's a large building that seems to have no end. And chariots, coming and going.
- PLUTO. Chariots?
- AESOP. Covered chariots. With no horses pulling them.
- CASSIE. Impossible. Chariots can't run without horses.
- AESOP. And there—I see giant letters above the endless building.
- WADSWORTH. What kind of letters?
- AESOP. They look like the Greek symbols for Mu, Alpha, Lambda and Lambda.
- GRETEL. What's that in the alphabet they use here?
- AESOP. M-A-L-L.
- FELIX. What's a M-A-L-L?
- AESOP. I have no idea. But obviously, we landed in the wrong place. (ALL are disappointed.)
- EMMA. I think we'd better leave the navigating to Mr. Aesop from now on. (*ALL agree.*)
- ALL. We're sorry, Mr. Aesop.
- AESOP. It's quite all right. You were trying to give me a birthday present. And it's the thought that counts. (A noise is heard offstage.)
- STRAUCEY. Shh... What was that?
- PLUTO. Sounds like someone is coming.
- AESOP. Quick! Get back to your places. (ALL return to their original positions and freeze as AESOP crawls under the blanket until he is hidden from view.)

(JAKE, a twelve-year-old, wearing glasses, enters and climbs down the ladder. He is wearing a pair of

brand-new "funky" pants with the tag still attached. He also may be wearing socks, but no shoes. He has a small, palm-sized electronic device, resembling a prickly pear, hanging around his neck. He looks about the factory in wide-eyed amazement.)

JAKE. Wow! This must be the new store that's about to open. Maybe it's going to be an arcade. (He spots the FACTORY PARTS.) Or maybe a clothing store. These look like dummies. (A low negative sound is heard.) I mean mannequins. (A low sound of agreement is heard.) Yeah, that's it. The things they put the clothes on and set in the windows... But these things look real-almost alive. (He touches two or three of the FACTORY PARTS which move slightly, then rock back into place.) I'll bet this is going to be an arcade, and these figures are part of a new 3-D virtual reality game. (The low guttural sound of "Huh-uh" is heard.) I wonder where you put the money in. (He goes to the mechanism that operates the FACTORY PARTS—a wheel, switch and lever. He reads a small plaque on the wall.) Hmm. What does this say? "Pull Here." Well, I always try to do what I'm told.

(He pulls the lever as the factory is activated. Vocalized "industrial" sounds are emitted by the FACTORY PARTS which begin an assembly-line movement. Each has its own individual mechanical movement, yet there is a definite wholeness to the entire operation. JAKE is taken aback by the action, but he is not fearful, and he even begins to get into the rhythm of the machine.) (AESOP emerges from under the blanket and rushes toward the lever. JAKE quickly, but quietly, moves to the other side of the stage as AESOP turns off the machine.)

- AESOP. What's happening? What's going on here? Who turned on my machine?
- JAKE. Me, sir.
- AESOP. Who are you?
- JAKE. Just me, sir. I—I didn't know there was a night watchman here.
- AESOP. Night watchman?
- JAKE. Yes, sir. And I didn't break in, really. There was a hole in the wall of Macy's fitting room. It led to here.
- AESOP. What's a Macy's?
- JAKE. You know. A store in the mall.
- AESOP. Oh, yes. The M-A-L-L.
- JAKE. My dad picked me up after school today. He's letting me buy some new clothes. I was trying on these pants. They're what all the cool kids are wearing. Then I noticed the hole in the wall.
- AESOP. Well, if your father's waiting for you, maybe you'd better—
- JAKE. Oh, he's in another part of the mall. (*He glances at the device around his neck, then lowers his voice.*) He's walking down the south wing. I think he's going to buy me some software for my Porcupine here. (*He indicates the device.*)

**AESOP.** Porcupine?

JAKE. Yes. This is my birthday. I'm twelve years old.

AESOP. What a coincidence. It's my birthday, too.

JAKE. No kidding. How old are you?

- AESOP. Two thousand four hun— Let's just say I'm well into middle age.
- JAKE. So, when does the arcade open, Mr. Night Watchman?
- AESOP. This isn't an arcade, nor am I a night watchman. My name is Aloysius A. Aesop.
- JAKE. Nice to meet you, Mr. Aesop. I'm Jacob M. Watson Jr., but my friends—what few I have—just call me Jake.
- AESOP. Pleased to meet you, Jake. (They shake hands.)
- JAKE. So, if this isn't an arcade, what is it? And what are these dummies doing in here?
- AESOP (chuckling, as a low "growling" sound is heard). This is the Fabulous Fable Factory.
- JAKE. Must be a new chain.
- AESOP. And those "dummies" are factory parts.
- JAKE. What does the factory make?
- AESOP. Stories. And sometimes fables— *(Eying JAKE.)* —*if* we happen to find a temporary Moral Maker.
- JAKE. Moral...that's something that teaches a lesson, isn't it?
- AESOP. Exactly. Do you want to give it a try?
- JAKE. I'd like to help, but I'm sure I couldn't come up with— (*Taking the device from around his neck.*) Wait a minute. I'll bet the Porcupine can do it.
- AESOP. What is a porcupine? Besides an animal.
- JAKE. It's the brand name of my cyberonaputer.
- AESOP. Cyberonaputer?
- JAKE. It's the latest. It can do *anything*. (As he explains, the FACTORY PARTS, unnoticed by him, gather behind him with great interest.) See? The telecyber shows me that my dad has gone into the software shop. The longitube tells me Mom's at home baking my birthday

cake. Terrific. Chocolate icing with sprinkles. And the oberometer says it's going to be a cold winter in Wyoming.

- AESOP. That's quite a device. And you're saying that this thingamajig can make up morals.
- JAKE. It can do anything.
- AESOP. Then let's give it a try. (*The FACTORY PARTS* shout "Hooray," "Let's do it," etc., momentarily frightening JAKE.) Sorry. They get a little excited when a potential Moral Maker shows up. Even if it's a—thingamajig.
- JAKE. Porcupine.
- AESOP. Right. Everybody, this is Jacob M. Watson Jr.
- STRAUCEY. Yes, we heard.
- PLUTO. We'd like to be your friends. May we call you Jake?
- JAKE. Sure. (Quickly counting them.) Seven. That's more friends than I've got already. (ALL laugh.)
- AESOP. And now, I'll let the factory parts introduce *themselves* to *you* and tell you what they do.

#### (SONG: "SEVEN FABULOUS PARTS")

# STRAUCEY (speaking in rhythm).

I'M STRAUCEY THE STORY STARTER, I GET 'EM OFF THE LAUNCHING PAD.

#### PLUTO.

#### I'M PLUTO THE PLOT PLOTTER. I PLOT 'EM HAPPY; I PLOT 'EM SAD.

CASSIE (singing).

I'M CASSIE THE CHARACTER CONCEIVER. I IMAGINE 'EM SILLY OR SERIOUS, FUNNY OR GOOD OR BAD.

WADSWORTH.

I'M WADSWORTH, THE FACTORY'S WORD WORKER. I GET TO CHOOSE FROM WORDS LIKE "FATHER" OR "POP" OR "DAD."

(Speaking in an aside.)

(IS "DADDY" OR "PAPA" BETTER? OR "PATER" OR "BEGETTER"?)

GRETEL (speaking).

IN ADDITION TO BEING WORDY, OUR WADWORTH'S A LITTLE NERDY. I'M GRETEL THE GRAMMAR GUARDIAN. I MAKE NOUNS AND VERBS AGREE.

FELIX.

I'M FELIX THE FEELING FINDER. FOR EACH FABLE, MY PART IS KEY.

EMMA (singing).

I'M EMMA, THE EMOTION EMOTER. I NEVER HOLD BACK, I'M OFTEN OVER THE TOP WITH FABULOUS EMOTIONS THAT KEEP GOING AND WON'T STOP.

ALL.

WITH A WHOOSH-WHOOSH AND A ZOOM, A FABLE'S ABOUT TO BLOOM

STRAUCEY (speaking). FROM WHERE THE STORY STARTS

ALL (singing). WITH HELP FROM SEVEN FABULOUS PARTS.

1<sup>ST</sup> FACTORY PART. BUT A STORY BY ITSELF IS NOT QUITE ABLE TO BECOME AN HONEST-TO-GOODNESS FABULOUS FABLE

# 2<sup>ND</sup> FACTORY PART *(speaking)*. WITHOUT THAT IMPORTANT PART NUMBER EIGHT,

3<sup>RD</sup> FACTORY PART. A MAKER OF MORALS WOULD BE JUST GREAT.

(The FACTORY PARTS encircle JAKE.)

ALL (singing).

WITH A BONG AND A BANG AND A BING, AND A WHOOSH-WHOOSH AND A ZING, WHEN THE FACTORY'S UP TO SPEED, A MORAL MAKER IS WHAT WE NEED, A MORAL MAKER IS WHAT WE NEED, A MORAL MAKER IS WHAT WE NEED!

JAKE. Nice to meet you, everybody.

AESOP. Well, shall we do our first story and see if the Porcupine can give it a moral? (ALL enthusiastically agree and go to their places as JAKE watches eagerly. AESOP goes to the mechanism and turns the wheel.) Selector. (*He flips on the switch.*) Switch. And let the Fabulous Fable Factory begin!

(He pulls the lever and the FACTORY PARTS begin to move and make the "industrial" sounds. STRAUCEY picks up a sheet of parchment—or paper—from a box at her side, passes her hand across it two or three times and hands it to PLUTO who does a similar kind of movement. He then passes it on to CASSIE, and the action continues until the parchment reaches the end of the line, whereupon EMMA drops it to the floor. AESOP picks it up.)

- AESOP. Hmmm. This one looks interesting. *(Leading JAKE to the periphery of the stage.)* Jake, you sit right over here and be the audience for the story. Do you think the Porcupine can pick up everything from this far away?
- JAKE. Easy. The Porcupine has a range of three thousand miles.
- AESOP. Very impressive.
- JAKE. From this distance, the Porc can probably come up with *two* morals.
- AESOP. We'll see. We'll see. Let's get ready, everybody, for the story of— "The Little Boy Who Cried Wolf."

(The FACTORY PARTS hurriedly gather the properties and don costume pieces as they set up for the story which requires: a SHEPHERD BOY, three SHEEP, two WOODSMEN and a WOLF. The SHEPHERD and the SHEEP take center stage as the WOODSMEN and WOLF are UL and UR respectively and turned away from the audience, suggesting that they're offstage.)

- NARRATOR (AESOP) *(reading)*. There once was a shepherd boy—
- SHEPHERD (to the NARRATOR, a bit haughtily). S'cuse me. They call me Shep. Shep for short.
- NARRATOR. —who tended a flock of sheep, day after day, high on a hillside. (*The SHEEP begin "baaing.*" *They wander about munching grass.*)
- SHEPHERD. There's only one thing I can say about tending sheep— (One or two SHEEP give him a couple of questioning "baas.") —it's boring. (The SHEEP turn away from him, "baaing" quietly with disdain.) Everyday, the same old, same old. (Calling to a SHEEP.) Get away from that bluff, Bernie.

SHEEP (to herself). It's Barbara.

SHEPHERD. Do you know what we need around here? A little excitement. (Looking off into the distance.) Look at those two woodsmen cutting trees down there. I'll bet they're bored, too. Chop, chop, chopping all day long... I think I'll liven things up a little bit. (Shouting in the direction of the unseen WOODSMEN.) Hey, down there! Yoo-hoo! Help! Help! Wolf! Wolf! A wolf is attacking my sheep! (After a moment.) Good. They heard me. Here they come.

(Two WOODSMEN enter carrying axes.)

- WOODSMEN. Where is he? Where's the wolf? We'll get him! Etc. (*They look about and see the sheep grazing peacefully.*)
- 1<sup>ST</sup> WOODSMAN. Wait a minute.
- 2<sup>ND</sup> WOODSMAN. There's no wolf up here.

### **PRODUCTION NOTES**

#### ROLE CHANGE FROM JAKE TO JANE

The following changes should be made if JAKE is played by a female (JANE):

- All masculine references will be feminine as appropriate. "Monroe" references become "Margo."
- References to "Dad" become "Mom" and vice versa (i.e. "...my mom *has* gone into the software shop... Dad's at home baking my birthday cake").
- JANE'S full name is JANE M. WATSON. The following dialogue replaces the "Jacob M. Watson Jr." sequence in the final scene.

WADSWORTH. ... Thank you, Jane M. Watson. GRETEL. Say, what does the "M" stand for anyway? JANE. Margo. *(There is a stunned silence.)* That's my mother's *first* name. I'm Jane. She's Margo. EMMA. Did she live...? *(Etc.)* 

 A WOMAN'S VOICE replaces a MAN'S VOICE near the end.

# **SMALLER-CAST VERSION**

The premiere production of the smaller-cast version of *The Fantastic Return of the Fabulous Fable Factory* was presented by The New Candlelight Theatre, Ardentown, Delaware, with the following cast:

Aesop
Jake Jordan Weagraff
Stuart
Polly Gerri Weagraff
Casey Paul Weagraff
Wadsworth Jim Rubright
Gretel Stephanie Jaye

Producers: Robert Miller and Jody Anderson Miller Director: Sheldon B. Zeff

By eliminating the characters of FELIX and EMMA and doubling certain roles in some of the fables and/or reducing the number of roles in others (i.e., one woodsman instead of two, two sheep instead of three, fewer mice, etc.), this musical can easily be played by a cast of seven.

The following lyric alterations should be used for the song "Seven Fabulous Parts" (retitled "The Factory's Fabulous Parts" for the smaller-cast version). A musical cut will occur from the end of Bar 21 to the beginning of Bar 27.

GRETEL (speaking).

# IN ADDITION TO BEING WORDY, OUR WADSWORTH'S A LITTLE NERDY. I'M GRETEL THE GRAMMAR GUARDIAN.

### I MAKE NOUNS AND VERBS AGREE. THE BOY SEES, AND THE GIRL SEES, BUT YOU AND I, WE SEE.

#### ALL.

# WITH A WHOOSH-WHOOSH AND A ZOOM, A FABLE'S ABOUT TO BLOOM

#### STRAUCEY.

#### FROM WHERE THE STORY STARTS

ALL.

# WITH HELP FROM ALL OUR FABULOUS PARTS.

# 1<sup>ST</sup> FACTORY PART.

# BUT A STORY BY ITSELF IS NOT QUITE ABLE TO BECOME AN HONEST-TO-GOODNESS FABULOUS FABLE,

2<sup>ND</sup> FACTORY PART.

# FOR THERE'S A PART THAT'S CRUCIAL, YES, INDEED.

# 3<sup>RD</sup> FACTORY PART. A MAKER OF MORALS IS WHAT WE NEED.

#### ALL.

#### WITH A BONG AND A BANG AND A BING,

Etc... (Same to the end of song.)