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*Dramatic Publishing*

# **SMALL ACTORS**

by

**STEPHEN GREGG**



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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# SMALL ACTORS

A One-act Play  
For 4 women, 4 men, 2 either  
(doubling and extra characters possible)

## CHARACTERS

EMILY ..... about 16  
JASON ..... her friend  
LAURA ..... her mother  
PAUL ..... her father  
MR. PHELPS ..... her drama teacher  
SAMUEL ..... her brother, 10  
KESIA ..... Emily's aunt  
WENDY / JULIET  
ROMEO  
THE CHORUS of *Romeo and Juliet*

and...

Assorted cast members of *Romeo and Juliet*

Assorted relatives of Emily's

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

Mr. Phelps can be played as Mrs. Phelps. Kesia could be a man—just change the name.

You may or may not want to use music during the *Romeo and Juliet* performance, and/or applause during the *Romeo and Juliet* curtain call.

The *Romeo and Juliet* performance should be short. Play the joke and get out. Two minutes tops, I would think.

Feel free to change the year of the dates mentioned in the play.

I frankly like it that in the middle of this one-act we get to hear a big chunk of one of the great speeches ever written. However, it's going to play best if Jason is a good actor. If you make the (equally valid) choice that Jason is a bad actor, you may want to cut some of his long Romeo speech.

I've seen the slow-motion ending work fine, and I've seen it fail miserably. The important thing is that it not look like a horrible, slow-motion car wreck. If it's not working, the easiest fix is to cut it. Have the characters freeze immediately (or almost immediately) after the last line—"Hang on!"—and go to a blackout.

And finally, a staging idea that I'd like to steal. Nancy Curtis and her students at First Colonial High School in Virginia Beach did a lovely production of the play in which the small ensemble became most of the props and set pieces needed. To convey the movement of the car, a student drifted past it holding street signs. Once, memorably, he became a jogger and jogged past the car backwards, since the car was passing him. It was pretty funny.

## SMALL ACTORS

AT RISE: *A school drama department. EMILY and her friend JASON are standing near a call board.*

EMILY. Hang on, I'm almost ready! OK. I'm gonna look  
I'm gonna look in two seconds. Ready ...

JASON. Let's just do it.

EMILY. Wait! *(To no one in particular.)* Oh please please  
please this would make my day so much better I am  
having such a crappy day. Look at this. *(She hands JA-  
SON a note she's been carrying.)*

JASON. Ooh.

EMILY. My dad's gonna kill me.

JASON. Yeah, he is. Are you ready?

EMILY. Not yet! Almost. I'm nervous. I have that feeling.  
You know that feeling in your stomach? When you're  
about to learn something that could change your whole  
life?

JASON. It's not going to change your—

EMILY. It could! To play a part like this, it could change  
everything. People—I swear people would treat you dif-  
ferently just because they knew you were going to play  
it. And then on opening night, well, forget it, you're *it*.  
At the end, at the curtain call, somebody would hand  
you flowers, and you'd be all surprised. "Oh, flowers for

me? Just because I played one of the great roles in the English language?"

JASON. I'm looking.

EMILY. Not yet! (*She closes her eyes and crosses her fingers.*) OK. Good luck.

JASON. You too.

EMILY. You first. Who are you? (*JASON looks. Apparently, he sees both their parts. He's disappointed for EMILY.*)

JASON. Sampson.

EMILY. Who's that?

JASON. Same thing I always get. One of those characters who sets things up in the first scene and then has nothing to do the rest of the play.

EMILY. I'm sorry.

JASON. It's all right.

EMILY. And me?

JASON (*after a moment*). It's not Juliet.

EMILY. Oh. (*Pause.*) Who got Juliet?

JASON. Wendy.

EMILY. Of course. What part did I get? (*Pause.*) Did I get a part?

JASON. Yeah.

EMILY. Which one?

JASON. It's a servant. The second servant.

EMILY (*flips through her copy of the play*). The second servant. (*Reading.*) "I know not, sir." What else? (*She keeps flipping through the play. Then back. Then forth.*) That's it. That's my entire part.

JASON. There must be more.

EMILY. I don't think so.

JASON. Are you sure?



EMILY. Jason, I only have one line. "I know not, sir."

JASON. Yeah, but look where it is.

EMILY. Jason, it's four words.

JASON. This is like the most important moment of the  
play.

EMILY. It's four *one-syllable* words.

JASON. So you get a bigger part next year. Fall musical.

EMILY. I hate musicals.

JASON. You have to check here if you want to accept the  
role.

EMILY. I don't know ...

JASON. Oh come on. It'll be fun.

EMILY. I'm sort of busy.

JASON. Doing *what*? Take the part.

EMILY (*marks the call board*). It's not going to change my  
life.

LAURA. You don't know that.

*(And we've changed scenes. This is Emily's home. She's  
talking to her mother.)*

EMILY. Yes I do.

LAURA. You don't know that he's going to yell at you.

EMILY. Mom, he always yells at me.

LAURA. That's not true.

EMILY. It *is* true.

LAURA. Well, why do you think that is?

EMILY. You really want to know?

LAURA. Yes.

EMILY. I think it's because he wants a son.

LAURA (*saddened by this*). Don't say that.

EMILY. If I were his son he wouldn't yell at me.

LAURA. I hope you don't really believe that. (*After a moment.*) Now let me see. (*She looks at the paper in EMILY's hand.*) Well, it's not exactly good news, is it? You're right, he's going to yell. You'll live. (*Maybe she gives her a consoling peck on the forehead.*) How was your day otherwise?

EMILY. It was all right. I got a part in the school play.

LAURA. What?

EMILY. I got a part in the school play.

LAURA. Congratulations! That is so wonderful!

EMILY. Thanks. I didn't know you'd be so excited.

LAURA. That makes me very proud of you! When is it?

EMILY. The 16th and 17th of May.

LAURA. Oh no.

EMILY. What?

LAURA. We're going to be gone. Honey, the 16th is the day your father and I are going on vacation.

EMILY. Oh.

LAURA. Oh, I feel terrible.

EMILY. No, Mom, it's fine.

LAURA. No, that makes me sad. I want to see you. What's the part?

EMILY. You're going to be gone?

LAURA. I'm sorry. Who are you playing?

EMILY (*after a moment*). Juliet.

LAURA. JULIET! You're playing Juliet! I played Juliet!

EMILY. I know!

LAURA (*calling off*). PAUL!

PAUL (*off*). YEAH?

LAURA. COME IN HERE!

(*PAUL enters.*)

LAURA. Tell your father what you just told me.

EMILY. I'm going to be in the school play.

LAURA. She's going to be Juliet.

PAUL. In...

LAURA. What do you think, in?

PAUL. No.

EMILY. Yeah.

PAUL. Congratulations!

EMILY. Thanks.

LAURA. We're not going to Hawaii.

EMILY. What?

PAUL (*overlapping*). Whoa. We should talk about this.

EMILY. No no no, Mom. That's really not necessary.

PAUL. Those tickets are not refundable.

LAURA. I'm not going.

PAUL. I am. No offense, Emily.

LAURA (*overlapping*). I'm going to see you play the part.

EMILY. No, Mom—

LAURA. It's important to me.

EMILY. It's important to *me*. Mom, if you cancel your trip,

I'll drop out of the play. I'm not kidding.

PAUL. She seems like she means it, Laura.

LAURA. All right, it was just a thought.

EMILY. Thanks anyway, though.

PAUL (*notices the note*). What's that?

EMILY. Oh, it's... (*She hands him the paper.*)

PAUL (*reading*). "Be informed that your daughter, Emily, is currently failing history. Please sign this and return it to me."

EMILY. It's just—there's so much to memorize, and...

(*Her voice trails off as she sees PAUL staring at her.*)

PAUL. And you had other things on your mind, *Juliet*.

EMILY. What?

PAUL. You had to prepare your audition. Didn't you?

EMILY. Uh-huh.

PAUL. Now that you've got the part, you'll do better.  
Won't you?

EMILY. Yeah, I will.

LAURA. Of course you will, *Juliet*.

EMILY. OK. You know what? That could get old really quickly.

LAURA. This is going to change your life.

EMILY. I know.

MR. PHELPS. You don't sound like you believe that.

*(Back at school. MR. PHELPS and the cast of Romeo and Juliet.)*

EMILY. I do.

MR. PHELPS. Let me hear it again.

EMILY. "I know not, sir."

MR. PHELPS. Again. And mean it!

EMILY. "I know not, sir!"

MR. PHELPS. No no. Mean it.

EMILY. "I KNOW NOT, SIR."

MR. PHELPS. From your heart.

EMILY. "I know not, sir."

MR. PHELPS. Your *heart!*

EMILY. "I know not, sir."

MR. PHELPS. Where's your heart?

EMILY. "I know *not*, sir!"

MR. PHELPS. All right, let's stop here. We've hit our first snag. Emily, you're sounding...

ROMEO. False.

MR. PHELPS. Exactly! I'm not feeling truth. What's motivating you here?

EMILY. A... desire to express that I don't know...it? (*ALL are disappointed with this patently stupid answer.*)

MR. PHELPS. I'm sensing a lack of commitment from you. Is that possible?

EMILY. No! It's...well, maybe. It's just...this is such a small part.

MR. PHELPS. There are no small parts, Emily.

EMILY. It's not even that it's small. It's just so...It's exactly the kind of part you'd expect a person like me to play.

MR. PHELPS. I'm sorry?

EMILY. You know. You look at her, (*Referring to WENDY.*) and you think, "Oh, Juliet." Of course. Of course she's the lead. She's never in her life going to have a part that consists of four one-syllable words.

WENDY. How do you know?

EMILY. I just know. And then you look at me, you look at my life, and you think, "Oh, crappy little walk-on." And, I mean, if you were me, wouldn't it worry you that that's going to be it, your whole life? Like your whole life is going to be the equivalent of this four-word role?

MR. PHELPS. People play all sorts of roles.

EMILY. I don't think that's true. I think if you play the second servant in *Romeo and Juliet*, you end up playing it your whole life. (*ALL stare at her for a moment.*)

MR. PHELPS. One more time.

EMILY. "I know not, sir."

MR. PHELPS. Well, there's work to be done. But right now—

LAURA. It's dinner time!

*(Back home.)*

EMILY. Great, I'm starved.

LAURA. We're having shrimp!

PAUL. Your favorite!

EMILY. What's the occasion?

LAURA. You. You're the occasion.

PAUL. We're proud of you. I'm proud of you.

LAURA. And so am I.

PAUL. And so am I.

LAURA. And so am I.

EMILY. You two are awfully cozy.

LAURA. It's you. Your triumph is bringing us closer together.

PAUL. Don't worry. We'll eat fast, so you can get upstairs and learn your part.

EMILY. I learned it already.

PAUL. She learned it already!

LAURA. Amazing! You are amazing! I can't get over how different you are.

EMILY. Different?

PAUL. We might as well say what we mean. Better.

EMILY. How better?

PAUL. More mature.

LAURA. And more confident.

PAUL. And prettier.

EMILY. Dad.

PAUL. It's true. Oh, you've always been pretty, in a... supporting character kind of way. But now ...

LAURA. Now you're a leading lady.

PAUL. Exactly.