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Dramatic Publishing

THE FORGIVING HARVEST

A Play in Two Acts

by

Y YORK



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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(THE FOR GIVING HARVEST)

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for Carl Mulert

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and

“This play was first produced April 14, 2004 at the People’s
Light and Theatre Company, Malvern, Pennsylvania.”

THE FORGIVING HARVEST premiered April 14, 2004 at People's Light and Theatre Company, Malvern, Pennsylvania, with the following artists:

CAST

Mika Anne Berkowitz
Uncle Ted Kevin Bergen
Great David Corenswet
Addison Peter DeLaurier
Teddy Ray Lorini
Mr. Nelson David Whalen

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director Shannon O'Donnell
Stage Manager Thomas P. Miller
Scenic Design Lewis Folden
Costume Design Rosemarie E. McKelvey
Sound Design Charles T. Brastow
Lighting Design Dennis Parichy
Dramaturg Leslie Hempling
Artistic Director Abigail Adams
Managing Director Grace E. Grillet
Director of Production Peter Wrenn-Meleck

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THE FORGIVING HARVEST

A Play in Two Acts
For 3 men, 2 boys and 1 girl

CHARACTERS

MIKA (long “i” as in “Mike”) a girl, nine
TEDDY. her brother, fifteen
ADDISON their father, forties
GREAT a classmate of Mika’s, also nine
MR. NELSON his father, forties
UNCLE TED Addison’s brother, thirty-four

TIME and PLACE:

At the end of the millennium on a farm in Minnesota.

Note: No blackouts between scenes.

ACT I

Scene i

(The barn, Friday afternoon. MIKA enters. She talks to and pets STICKY, a two-year-old, thirteen-hundred-pound beef steer.)

MIKA. Men, jeez. They're going at it again—both of them talking at the same time, neither one of them listening.

(NOTE: Throughout the play, MIKA acts STICKY's part and speaks STICKY's lines.)

STICKY. You've been known to not listen so good yourself, Mika.

MIKA. Hey, I always listen. This is me listening right now. What's this junk on your back? Feels like tar.

STICKY. Maybe it *is* tar. Maybe I was rolling around in some road and got tar stuck on my back.

MIKA. I'll get it out later with the creme rinse—right now I gotta shovel.

STICKY. "Gotta do this, gotta do that, gotta gotta gotta."
(MIKA shoots STICKY a stern look as she begins to shovel manure into the wheelbarrow. It's much harder than she imagined.)

MIKA. I can feel myself getting stronger and stronger as I go. Pretty soon these shovels full won't even feel heavy.

STICKY. Where's the creme rinse—I'm all sticky.

MIKA. Don't make jokes.

STICKY. Sticky withers—no joke.

MIKA. I gotta get your poop outside before it gets dark—

STICKY. Forget the poop—get the creme rinse—

TEDDY (*entering*). Mika...

MIKA. I was n't talking to anybody.

TEDDY. I didn't say you were—

MIKA. Don't be sneaking up on people, Teddy.

TEDDY. I'm not sneaking— Jeez— I just— ...Are you go ing to be all right on your own?

MIKA. Where's everybody going?

TEDDY. Dad's going to the field, and I'm going back to school.

MIKA. Who's helping Dad with the bales?

TEDDY. He's on his own. I can't stand him when he's like this.

MIKA. He'll never get done.

TEDDY. Sure he will. He can do it *all*—and then when he messes up he can yell at *himself*.

MIKA. Why you go ing back to school?

TEDDY. Because I am. Where's Sticky's hay?

MIKA. He ate it.

TEDDY. Are you sure you gave him enough?

MIKA (*shouting*). Yes, I'm sure!

TEDDY. Jeez—. I gotta go. (*Exits.*)

MIKA. When you coming home—? ...What do you think he's up to?

STICKY. He's older. He gets to be up to things.

MIKA (*takes celery out of her pocket*). Eat this if you're hungry. Celery's fat free... You are one gorgeous steer.

STICKY. I'm a model of steer beauty.

MIKA. I gotta get your poop to the power plant.

STICKY. Get me a blanket. I'm cold.

MIKA (*puts a quilt on STICKY*). You'll never guess where I found this. Teddy doesn't appreciate it at all.

STICKY. Teddy does pretty good for a boy—don't go blaming Teddy. Walk me around. That'll warm me up.

MIKA. Okay, but just for a minute.

STICKY. It's going to take longer than a minute to warm up all this steer fat.

MIKA. You're not fat. Boney withers— Steer beauty—

STICKY. I am fat. Supposed to be fat. Fat as a cow. Fat back. Wide body. Oh woe woe woe is me, one fat steer for eternity.

(*Enter GREAT.*)

GREAT. I know how to play talking animals.

MIKA. Hey! What are you doing here?

GREAT. Let me talk for your cow, then it'll be more of a surprise.

MIKA. Get out of my barn.

GREAT (*approaching*). When *you* talk for your cow, you know what you're going to say.

MIKA. Don't hit me.

GREAT. I don't hit people.

MIKA. You hit Buddy Frain

GREAT. He wouldn't walk the plank!

MIKA. What are you doing on my farm, Graham?

GREAT. My father is talking to your father on business.

MIKA. We don't need computers—we're farmers.

GREAT. It's not about computers.

MIKA. What's it about?

GREAT. I'll tell you if I can be the cow voice.

MIKA. He's a *steer*.

GREAT (*steer voice*). "I'll steer this steer in the right direction."

MIKA. Only the handler can talk for the steer.

GREAT (*steer voice*). "I have such boney withers."

MIKA. Stop it! (*Lying.*) It is forbidden. I have to do the voice myself or I get disqualified.

GREAT. 4-H doesn't have rules about a *voice*.

MIKA. How would you know?!

GREAT. I went to the fair.

MIKA (*lying*). The voice is an important part of steer training. So the steer isn't nervous.

GREAT. I don't think you know what you're talking about. You weren't even there.

MIKA. I had a cold. But Sticky would have won a blue ribbon if I hadn't been too sick to go.

GREAT (*takes quilt*). My mother collects these.

MIKA. Hey!

GREAT. She buys them through catalogs.

MIKA. My mother made them from scratch.

GREAT. Mom bought one littler than that for two hundred dollars. You could sell it for a whole fortune.

MIKA. Not for sale.

GREAT. Why not? You need the money.

MIKA. You don't even know us.

GREAT. All farmers need money. It's common knowledge. Twenty dollars. What do you say?

MIKA. Not for sale. Why do you have so much money?

GREAT. For a taxi if Mom can't pick me up from school.

MIKA. Take the bus. It's free.

GREAT. I don't like the bus. I don't like anything *about* Hawthorne. I'm going to go to a different school.

MIKA. There isn't one.

GREAT. There's one in Minneapolis.

MIKA. Sleep-over school?

GREAT. Everybody will miss me a real lot, of course, but nothing is as important as my education.

MIKA. I won't miss you. Buddy Frain won't miss you.

GREAT (*grabs quilt, climbs the ladder to the hay mow. Pirate voice*). "Hey, hey hey, me hearties. We'll hide in this secret loft from Her Majesty's fleet."

MIKA. Any final words you want me to tell your friends and family?

GREAT. "Pi rates have no friends."

MIKA. If one of those bales falls on you, you're dead.

GREAT. "The cargo of this ship is useless straw."

MIKA. It isn't straw. It's hay.

GREAT. "Useless!"

MIKA. Tell that to a steer.

GREAT. "We'll burn it later when we cook our cow."

MIKA. Stop fooling around. We need every single piece of that hay and all the rest that's bundled in the field—if somebody's dad would go away and let my dad get back to work!

GREAT. Your dad shouldn't work so late. He should spend time with his wife and children. That's why we moved away from Seattle. Your dad should get a life.

MIKA. He doesn't need a life, he has a farm.

GREAT. Yes, but—. Yo!

MIKA. What?

GREAT. Mouse.

MIKA. The cat gets them.

GREAT. Call Pest Away.

MIKA. Do you live on Mars?

GREAT. I live in Crest View, gated community.

MIKA. It's Nature. Mice and cats are Nature.

GREAT. We call Pest Away. No Nature allowed.

MIKA. You can't keep out Nature. Nature is too strong. You'd know that if you lived on a farm instead of "Crest View gated, community." It's not citified and exterminators on a farm. This is the real world here. Our food comes in live animals not in cellophane from the grocery store.

GREAT. Is *he* food? (*Points at STICKY.*)

MIKA. No. I mean...he isn't food...until he wins his blue ribbon.

GREAT. We only eat free-range meat.

MIKA. Sticky's free range.

GREAT. Okay. We'll eat him.

MIKA. I'm going to eat him myself, thank you.

GREAT (*waves quilt*). "Slice him up into raw steaks for to feed me hearties."

MIKA. Get down from there. Right now.

GREAT. "I'll fly this captured flag forever over me pirate ship."

MIKA. Put it down—!

(*Enter MR. NELSON.*)

MR. NELSON. Hey, what's going on?

GREAT. "Hey hey, me hearties."

MR. NELSON. Good God, Great, get down from there.

GREAT. "Six teen men in a deadman's chest."

MR. NELSON. We're not going to be pirates anymore, remember?

GREAT. "Yo ho ho and a bottle of rum."

MR. NELSON. His mother will kill me if he gets hurt.

MIKA. Did you call him Great?

MR. NELSON. Yeah. We call him Great. Hi. I'm Mr. Nelson, Great's dad.

MIKA. Get out of the mow, *Great*, or I'll call Pest Away to come exterminate *you*.

GREAT. "Flying the flag of the skull and crossbones."

MR. NELSON. Great. Down. Now.

GREAT (*brief pause*). Sure. Catch. (*Tosses the quilt to MR.*

NELSON.) It's disgusting up here. Rodent infestation.

MR. NELSON. This is lovely. What's it doing up there?

MIKA. *Somebody* took it up there!

MR. NELSON. It's going to get all mildewed.

MIKA (*takes quilt from MR. NELSON*). I keep it in the house. I'm just airing it out.

MR. NELSON. Where did you get it?

MIKA. It's not for sale!

MR. NELSON. Do you have more of them?

MIKA. They're not for sale either.

MR. NELSON. Well, I'll be sure to keep my wallet in my pocket. Isn't this a swell barn, Great? Nothing like this in the city. Smell that smell?

GREAT. Pukey.

MR. NELSON. That's real, that smell. That comes from the land. That's not diesel exhaust from some truck. That's the smell of life.

MIKA (*corrects him*). The smell of manure... I'm getting it outside.

MR. NELSON. No need on my account, miss.

MIKA. Mika.

GREAT. Talk about weird names.

MIKA. Yeah, *Great*?!

MR. NELSON. Mika is a good name from the Good Book.

MIKA. No. It's from Mom's brother Mike, but I was a girl.

MR. NELSON. Well...whatever. Come on, Great; your mother is going to be looking for us.

GREAT. Did you get what you wanted?

MR. NELSON. We'll see. Come on, let's go. Bye, Mika.

(They exit.)

MIKA. Great. Great Great Great Great Great. *(Hugs STICKY.)* I'm sorry he said that about the steaks, Mom. What a creep.

(Enter TEDDY.)

TEDDY. Boy—.

MIKA. Are you still here?

TEDDY. Some people don't have the sense they were born with—.

MIKA. Who?

TEDDY. "I want my son to grow up on the land."

MIKA. Oh, him.

TEDDY. Yeah. Right when he was stepping up to his ankles in cow plop.

MIKA. He likes cow plop. We should send him some.

TEDDY. Is Graham in your class?

MIKA. Don't you mean *Great*?

TEDDY. What are you doing with this? *(Quilt.)*

MIKA. Sticky was cold.

TEDDY. Don't put it on Sticky.

MIKA. It was all jammed in the back of your closet.

TEDDY. Don't go in my closet.

MIKA. I hadda go in your closet.

TEDDY. What for?

MIKA. I hadda find the quilt.

TEDDY. ...Take it inside and put it away.

MIKA. So it can stay all alone in the dark?

TEDDY. At least it won't get ruined.

MIKA. This was particularly and especially made for you,
and you just hide it away.

TEDDY. I can do what I want with it.

MIKA. "The person who is going to *use* a thing is the person who should *own* a thing."

TEDDY. Yeah, Mika, Mom *also* said that you should stay out of my stuff.

MIKA. I gave her the idea for it!

TEDDY. You were too little.

MIKA. No, I did. She was all out of ideas for you, and I said how she should put the Wilson colors on it. I should get to get it.

TEDDY. You can play with it, but you don't get to get it.

MIKA. I'm not playing. Why do you say I'm playing; I'm working really hard. I'm taking care of it. I'm letting it see daylightness instead of closet darkness. I'm being responsible.

TEDDY. You can't have everything that was Mom's. I like to remember her, too, you know.

MIKA. Remember her in your closet?

TEDDY. How do you know I don't go in my closet every day and remember her?

MIKA. Because I took it a week ago! (*TEDDY turns away in exasperation, starts to wheel out the wheelbarrow.*)
Leave it.

TEDDY. What are you doing with it?

MIKA. ...I'm making an herb garden. Just like Mom's.

TEDDY. We don't need an herb garden. Nobody cooks.

MIKA. I'm going to cook.

TEDDY. You hate to cook.

MIKA. Hot dishes from Mom's recipe box—.

ADDISON (*entering*). Never met the man in my life, he comes on my farm uninvited waving a checkbook. Introduces me to his checkbook before he introduces me to himself. "Howdee, Addison, like you to meet my checkbook."

MIKA. What's his checkbook's name, Dad?

ADDISON. Hefty. He wants to buy the rise.

TEDDY. You should sell it; it's just sitting there—.

ADDISON. You know better than that—.

TEDDY. Lots of farmers don't even *have* tree breaks anymore. They're either seeded or sold.

ADDISON. Yeah, with no topsoil left at the end of the winter.

TEDDY. That was a good offer—.

MIKA. "You don't sell off land to solve your financial woes."

ADDISON. I couldn't have said it better myself.

TEDDY. That's because she's quoting you.

ADDISON. You want the Nelsons for neighbors?

MIKA. I don't.

ADDISON. Did you see the inside of his car?

MIKA. What was inside his car?!

ADDISON. It was pristine. Not even dust.

TEDDY. Do you want somebody to judge *you* by the inside of *your* car?

ADDISON. Nothing wrong with the inside of my car.

TEDDY. No back seat. Smells like manure.

MIKA. Maybe Mr. Nelson will buy your *car*. He likes the smell.

ADDISON (*sees manure pile*). Hey, what's that?

TEDDY (*brief pause*). For Mika's herb garden.

ADDISON. Oh. Well, mix in some straw before you spread it.

MIKA. I know.

ADDISON. And get it outside. It's an offense to indoor aroma. (*Turns to STICKY.*) What's this guy doing back in here?

MIKA. ...Shampoo.

ADDISON. Shampoo? Why? Fair's over, you missed it. Too bad. You might have won a ribbon. Fine fat steer.

MIKA. He's actually skinny.

ADDISON. He does n't look skinny.

MIKA. Very underweight.

ADDISON. Well, give the boy some hay. Of course he's underweight if you don't feed him. Every pound's another dollar.

MIKA. He's already had his food for the day. Don't you go feeding Sticky without my permission.

ADDISON. That is the look of a hungry steer.

MIKA. He doesn't want it.

ADDISON. Looks like he wants it to me.

MIKA. He'll be plenty fat when I show him *next year*.

ADDISON. What next year?

MIKA. Yeah, we'll compete *next year*. I deserve to have a chance to compete and I missed my chance on account of I had that bad cold. (*Brief pause.*) It was a terrible cold I had.

ADDISON. ...Are you all better now?

MIKA. ...Yeah. (*MIKA starts out with her wheelbarrow.*)

ADDISON. Don't get mushy about this steer, Mika. You know better than that. (*MIKA exits.*)

TEDDY. Terrible cold with no symptoms. She didn't want to auction Sticky, that's why she had a fake cold.

ADDISON. I remember you getting mushy about a steer getting shipped.

TEDDY. I didn't ever have a steer was born the night my mother died.

ADDISON. ...Sticky goes when the herd goes.

TEDDY. I'm not telling her.

ADDISON. You don't have to tell her, she knows.

TEDDY. I think somebody ought to tell her.

ADDISON. It's a steer. It's not a pet. It's food. Steer get shipped. That's how it is. That's how it always is. She'll be all right.

TEDDY. I don't think she'll be all right. I think she'll be a mess.

ADDISON. She's a farmer.

TEDDY. She's not a farmer. The only farming thing she does is Sticky—and that's more beauty parlor than farming.

ADDISON. Keeping the house clean is part of farming. She's a little housekeeper.

TEDDY. No, she isn't, Dad. Mom hollered at her every day to clean up her room. Don't you remember?

ADDISON. I spend twenty-four hours a day working this land. If I don't go back out and work all night, I can't feed my cattle this winter. I don't have any hours left to be your mommy, Teddy. You're going to have to learn to do without. (*Exits.*)

TEDDY. It's not for me—. What are we going to do with that guy, Sticky? He won't stay in a room five seconds after the conversation gets real.