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Family Plays

Five Little Peppers



Dramatized from Margaret Sidney's story
by
Rosemary G. Musil

Five Little Peppers

Highly amusing comedy.

Comedy. Adapted by Rosemary G. Musil. Based on the book by Margaret Sidney. *Cast: 3m., 4w., 7 boys, 2 girls.* Retaining the full flavor and all the well-remembered incidents of the original story, Rosemary G. Musil has given this play a sense of humor which is not only modern, but also perennial. The five Pepper children at home are always getting into mischief and having to be helped out of it by Grandma Bascomb. But when they join forces with the wealthy Whitney children, the fun is intensified, for the Whitneys are of a mischievous turn themselves. The play illustrates the good American tenet that poor people with ambition may better themselves, and that rich people recognize an obligation to help others. Modern children will love the Peppers just as their grandparents did. *Two sets. Modern costumes. Approximate running time: 80 minutes. Code: FB3.*

Family Plays

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Five Little Peppers (Musil)

FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS

dramatized from Margaret Sidney's story

by

Rosemary Gabbert Musil



Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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(FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS)

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Five Little Peppers

By ROSEMARY GABBERT MUSIL

CAST

POLLY PEPPER
BEN PEPPER
DAVEY PEPPER
JOEL PEPPER
PHRONSIE PEPPER } the five little Peppers

MRS. PEPPER, their mother

GRANDMA BASCOMB, their next-door neighbor

MISS JERUSHY HENDERSON, a village busybody

AN ORGAN-GRINDER

JASPER KING, well-to-do city boy

MR. KING, his father

VAN WHITNEY
PERCY WHITNEY
DICKY WHITNEY } Mr. King's grandchildren

MARIAN WHITNEY, their mother

CHARLES WHITNEY, their father

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE

SCENE 1. The combination kitchen-living-dining room of the Pepper family.

SCENE 2: The same, a few weeks later.

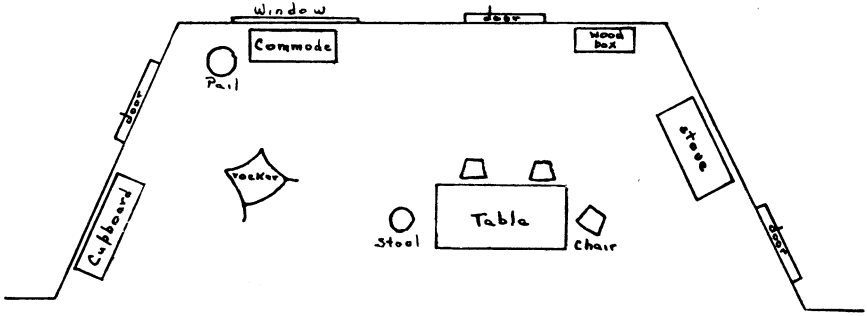
ACT TWO

The library of the Kings' elegant home, a month later.

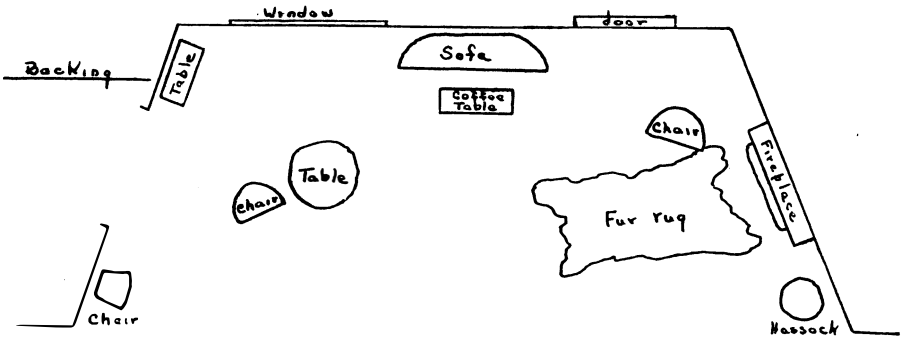
ACT THREE

The same, two months later.

SCENE DESIGN FOR
FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS



Act One



Acts Two and Three

PROPERTY LIST

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Candle for Joel
Breakfast dishes in cupboard
Wood in wood-box
Hat, gloves and purse, off right, for Momsey
Tailored coat, neatly-folded, in cupboard
Oatmeal, for eating, off left
Cap for Ben
Ear trumpet and spectacles, for Grandma
Cooking utensils, in cupboard, and on stove
Ingredients for making cake, in cupboard
Hammer and nails
Bedroom slippers, off right, for Phronsie
Wormwood herbs, hanging over stove
White rag for bandage
Sunken cake, slightly burned, in oven
Little bunch of flowers, in window
Bread and sorghum, for eating
Stick of wood, outside, for Polly

Scene 2.

Doll and bowl of soapy water, for Phronsie
Bread board and dough, for Polly
Axe, for Ben
Ingredients for making gingerbread, in cupboard
Big white apron, flung over rocker
Edible gingerbread cookies in oven
Misshapen gingerbread man, in oven
Glass of water, for Polly to give Mr. King
Sound effect of coach and bugle
Cape and bonnet, for Polly

ACT TWO

Sound effect of piano-practicing, off right in alcove
Paper sack, containing candy, on drum table
Toy boat for Van
Small toy for Dick
Phronsie, wrapped up in brown paper and string

ACT THREE

Tortoise-shell glasses, for Phronsie
Several dolls, for Phronsie
Drawing-box, containing colored chalks, on drum table
Cotton, in Van's pocket
Cloth and bowl of water, off right, for Mrs. Pepper

This play was produced for the first time in March, 1939, by the Children's Theatre of Evanston, Illinois, under the direction of Miss Winifred Ward. The technical material used in this book is taken from the Evanston production and is reproduced here by courtesy of Miss Ward.

Five Little Peppers

ACT ONE

SCENE I. *Setting: The combination kitchen-living-dining-room of the Pepper family. It is a poor room—the plaster is cracked, and the furniture is well-worn and outmoded, but it is clean and cheerful. The cupboard down right is gay with dishes, the rocker has a bright cushion, and the window is hung with colorful curtains. The old-fashioned wood stove has a well-rubbed look, and the wood-box beside it is neatly kept. There is an old marble-topped commode up center, containing dishpan and water bucket, and a towel rack is attached. The family dining-table, with chairs grouped around it, is slightly left of center. There are three doors to this room—one up right, leading to Momsey's bedroom; one down left, leading to the attic room, where the boys sleep; and one up back, a little left of center, leading outside.*

ACTION: *As the curtain rises, it reveals the kitchen in early morning light. Joel enters from the left door (from upper bedroom). His hair is tousled, and his shirt is not buttoned. He is carrying a candle which he places on the table at left center. He buttons his shirt and fastens his dangling suspenders. Then sweeping the hair out of his eyes, he tiptoes over to the bedroom door at right, listens carefully, then nods his head in satisfaction. All seems to be going well. He tiptoes back over to the left door elaborately, and calls in a loud stage whisper up the stairs.*

JOEL: Davey, Davey! Come on down and shut the door!

DAVEY (*calling down in loud whisper*): Are they up yet?

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- JOEL (*looking about cautiously before answering*): Shhhhh! You'll wake 'em if you're not careful! Hurry up!
- DAVEY (*comes in yawning and hitching his suspenders over his blouse*): I'm . . . (*yawn*) . . . here! (*Leans up against the cupboard sleepily.*)
- JOEL (*shutting door*): Well, it's about time! How're we goin' t' get breakfast and surprise 'em if they wake up before we get started even? Hurry and set the table . . . I'll make the fire.
(*Joel hurries to the wood box, opens it and takes out an armload of wood. Davey, still half asleep, moves over to the table and leans his head on his hand, his body reclining against the table.*)
- DAVEY: Seems awful early. (*Yawns.*) You sure it ain't still night?
- JOEL (*kicking stove door open with his foot*): Of course it ain't. You're just lazy. Go'n, set the table.
(*Begins to poke wood in stove.*)
There's still a fire in the stove. Momsey and Polly musta set up awful late with their sewing.
(*Davey moves over to cupboard and takes down cups and saucers.*)
- DAVEY: Did they get the coat finished Momsey had to have for the tailor shop today?
- JOEL: I don't know. I went to bed. Hey, don't make any noise with those dishes. We don't want to make one speck of . . .
(*He drops a stick of wood on the floor with a bang. Both boys jump, look about ruefully, then breathe a significant sigh of relief when nothing happens.*)
- DAVEY: Yeah! Don't make any noise!
(*Puts cups and saucers about, then gets knives, forks and spoons out.*)
- JOEL: There, I guess that'll burn! (*Shuts door, then grabs up the water bucket.*) Run down and get the oatmeal Polly made last night when you get through there, Davey. I'll get the water. (*Runs out, leaving door open, revealing a bright fall morning outside.*)
(*Davey puts the knives, forks and spoons on the table, then turns to open the door at left to get the oatmeal. As he does so, Phronsie in her petticoat, and barefoot, dragging her dress behind her, enters from the right bedroom door. She moves over to the table, leans against it, and yawns audibly, causing Davey to jump and slam the door.*)
- PHRONSIE: Uhmmmmmmm! (*yawning*) Is it time to get up yet?
- DAVEY (*slamming door and springing over to her. He puts his hand over her mouth and looks toward the right door fearfully*): Phronsie! Shhhhh! (*He listens at right door, then shuts it carefully.*) Shhhhh! (*to Phronsie*)
- PHRONSIE (*whispering in wonder*): Is it a secret?
- DAVEY: Yes. You aren't supposed to be up. Just Joel and me!
- PHRONSIE: But I am!
- DAVEY: Yes, I guess you are! Oh my, are Momsey and Polly awake?
- PHRONSIE: No, just me!
- DAVEY: Well, thank goodness for that.

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JOEL (*entering with water which he carries with great difficulty and places on the commode*): It's sun up, Davey. You can blow out the candle.

DAVEY: Look! (*pointing to Phronsie*)

PHRONSIE (*agreeably*): Hello!

JOEL: What did you get up for?

PHRONSIE: I always get up in the morning.

JOEL: Yes, but it isn't time.

PHRONSIE: You want me to go back to bed?

JOEL: No. You'll wake Polly and Momsey. Put your dress on, and stay here. Did you get the oatmeal, Davey?

DAVEY: No . . . I'll get it now.
(*Goes out left door.*)

PHRONSIE: What's the secret, Joey?

JOEL: What secret?

PHRONSIE: Davey said you had a secret from Polly and Momsey and Ben and me.

JOEL: This is the secret. (*Waving his arm about the kitchen vaguely, then putting another stick of wood in the stove.*)

PHRONSIE (*puzzled*): The kitchen?

JOEL: No. Us getting the breakfast before Polly and Momsey wake up.

PHRONSIE: Why?

JOEL: Because Momsey and Polly had to sew last night till all hours, and Davey and I want to show 'em we're grown up by getting breakfast before they wake up. Besides, it's Momsey's birthday.

PHRONSIE: Oh, is it? Can I help, Joey?

DAVEY (*entering with the oatmeal*): Here's the oatmeal. Shall I warm it up?

JOEL: Yes, put it on the stove and stir it. You can finish setting the table if you want to, Phronsie.

PHRONSIE: All right!
(*She climbs up on the chair by the cupboard and lifts down plates and takes them over to the table. Davey has the cups, saucers and silver on by now. Joel slices bread at the cupboard.*)

DAVEY: Hey, don't make so much noise, Phronsie!

PHRONSIE (*chanting as she puts the plates around*): Don't make noise! Don't make noise! Don't make . . . don't make . . . don't make noise!

DAVEY: It's light now and the candle's still a-burnin'.

JOEL: Yes, blow it out, Phronsie. Then put it back in the cupboard! Candles cost money.

PHRONSIE (*obediently*): Yes ma'am!
(*She leans across the table, and blows lustily. The candle goes out. She then attempts to reach the candle. She stretches her arm out, and rises on tiptoe. Her weight is thrown against the leaf of the drop leaf table, and it tips over on its side, spilling Phronsie, dishes, tablecloth, and all. The boys see it start to go and cry out in horror. They stand transfixed as the family rush to the scene. Phronsie, overcome with guilt,*

FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS

sits among the ruins woefully.)

DAVEY: Phronsie! Look out!

JOEL: Catch it! Catch it! Oh!

(The clatter brings Polly, Mrs. Pepper and Ben on the scene. Polly and Mrs. Pepper are fully dressed, but Ben has been caught unawares and is wearing an old-fashioned nightgown and cap, and is barefooted. They all run on, talking at once.)

POLLY: What is it? What's happened? *(entering from right).*

MRS. PEPPER: Children! Children, what is it?

BEN *(entering from left)*: Burglars, help, police! Mammy!

MRS. PEPPER: Joel and Davey! What . . . why, Phronsie!

PHRONSIE *(wailing as she emerges from the mess)*: But we wanted to surprise you!

MRS. PEPPER: Surprise me? Oh! Oh!

(She hugs Phronsie to her, laughing heartily, and Ben and Polly join in, then begin picking up the dishes.)

POLLY: By tipping the table over, Phronsie? My, it's a good thing these dishes don't break easily.

BEN: I should say so! They'd have been in a thousand pieces if they'd been Deacon Blodgett's china!

MRS. PEPPER: Ben! Look at you!

BEN: What? *(Looks down in surprise.)* Oh! I guess I forgot something! *(He backs toward the door, then turns and dashes out quickly.)*

MRS. PEPPER *(laughingly)*: I guess you did! But Joel and Davey! What were you children doing up at this early hour?

JOEL: Aw, Davey and me wanted to show you we were big enough to get breakfast.

DAVEY: We were going to surprise you and have it all on the table, then Phronsie had to go and wake up.

JOEL: Yes, why did you!

PHRONSIE *(sighing)*: I wish I hadn't!

MRS. PEPPER: Well, it was nice of you anyhow, and you can just go right ahead and finish getting breakfast, for I'm going to run down to the shop right now.

POLLY: But Mother, you haven't eaten yet.

MRS. PEPPER: I know, dear, but I'm not hungry. And if I get down there bright and early, I can use the machine, and get through much sooner. Maybe I'll even get home in time for lunch. Get the sewing for me, won't you?

(Mrs. Pepper goes into the bedroom for her hat, gloves and purse.)

POLLY: I have it. *(She smooths out the coat, and folds it.)* It looks awfully nice, Momsey. I'm sure the tailor man will like it.

MRS. PEPPER *(entering and taking the coat)*: Yes, it is nice, dear, and I never would have finished it, if you hadn't sat up last night and helped me. *(Ben enters, fully dressed.)* Ben dear, what time are you going over to Blodgett's?

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BEN: Soon as I grab some breakfast. Here, Davey, give me some of that oatmeal.

(Snatches up a saucer, and dishes out oatmeal, eating at table hurriedly.)

MRS. PEPPER: Well, goodbye, dear. *(She kisses Polly, then Phronsie, and waves at the boys.)* I'll try to be home real, real early. Be good boys. *(She goes out.)*

CHILDREN: Good bye. Good bye, Momsey. We will!

(Phronsie runs to the window, and climbing up into the rocker, waves until her mother is out of sight. Joel and Davey and Ben are at the table, eating oatmeal. Polly is putting things on the table.)

POLLY: Come, Phronsie, and eat your breakfast.

BEN: I've got to hurry! I want to get all Deacon Blodgett's wood chopped by noon. Then maybe I can drive over to Higbee with him, on business. Polly, give me a piece of bread, will you?

POLLY *(hurrying to supply everybody)*: Goodness, what a hurry this morning is turning out to be!

JOEL: Yeah, and we thought it would all turn out so good.

DAVEY: It would have, too, if Phronsie hadn't spoiled it.

POLLY: Well, cheer up. If Momsey gets to come home early from work, it will turn out good. What made you think of it, boys?

JOEL: We did it for Momsey's birthday.

POLLY *(in astonishment, drops her spoon)*: Her what?

JOEL: Birthday. You and Ben said it was today, remember?

BEN: That's right, Polly.

DAVEY: And we thought if we made breakfast, it would be like giving her a present.

POLLY: Oh my! It is Momsey's birthday and I never even thought of it!

PHRONSIE *(getting up, seriously)*: I want to do something for Momsey's birthday!

BEN: Yes, Polly, we ought to.

JOEL: She's so good to us and she works so hard!

DAVEY: She's the best mother in the whole wide world!

(Waves his cup of water about and Joel dodges.)

JOEL: Look out who you're splashing!

POLLY: I know it! We should do something, but what?

BEN: Could you make her a birthday cake?

DAVEY: Oh, Polly, can we?

PHRONSIE: Yes, that's it . . . with candles like I saw in a book once!

POLLY: Oh, dear, I . . . I never did make a cake. I wouldn't know how!

BEN: Sure you can. Polly can do anything. Where's my cap? *(Takes cap from cupboard.)*

JOEL: Aw, it's easy. You just put some flour and sugar in and wet it a little, stir it around . . . don't you?

POLLY: I'm afraid there's more to it than that. Wait, let me see if we have any brown flour left.

(Runs to cupboard and peeks in canister of flour.)

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BEN: Well, I'm off. Good luck with the cake, Polly. Good bye. (*Exit.*)

CHILDREN: Good bye.

PHRONSIE: Is there enough, Polly?

POLLY: Yes, there's flour enough. Go down to the provision room and see if there's cinnamon and raisins, Joey.

JOEL: You bet! (*Scoots off seat and flies out left door.*)

DAVEY: I'll clear away the dishes!

POLLY: Yes, indeed, we'll all have to help if I bake a cake before Momsey comes home.

(*They stack the dishes, scraping them off into a bucket, and setting the stacked dishes on one end of the table, scooting the tablecloth out from under them.*)

JOEL: There's plenty, Polly. See?

(*Hands her sack of raisins and jar of cinnamon.*)

PHRONSIE (*clapping hands*): Oh, good!

POLLY: But I've got to have a recipe. I wouldn't know how to bake a cake without a recipe.

JOEL: A what?

POLLY: A recipe, something that tells you how to bake a cake, and what to put in it. Grandma Bascomb would have one! Run over and ask her for me, won't you, Joey?

JOEL: You bet! (*dashes out of the door.*)

POLLY (*calling out after him*): Tell her we haven't any eggs or milk. We'll have to have a recipe without.

(*Shuts door and turns to Davey who has the dishpan out, has poured water in it from the kettle on the stove, gotten dish rag, soap and dish pan from the "water-bucket" table rack, and is now washing dishes industriously.*)

Here, Davey, I'll help you.

(*Grabs up a towel and begins wiping dishes. Phronsie sets them away.*)

I do hope she has a recipe that doesn't take eggs or milk.

PHRONSIE: Wouldn't it be lovely if we did have eggs and milk?

DAVEY: We can't have, they cost too much!

POLLY (*brightly*): Just wait till our ship comes in!

PHRONSIE: Will we be rich then, Polly?

POLLY: I should say, we will be! Rich as kings!

JOEL (*coming in door with Grandma in tow*): Here she is, Polly, and she's a-goin' to get you started on it.

GRANDMA (*breathless*): Mercy me, how you do hurry a body!

PHRONSIE (*running to Grandma and throwing her arms about her*):

Oh, Grandma, we're going to have a cake!

GRANDMA (*holding up her ear trumpet to Phronsie's lips*): Hey? You got the stomach ache?

POLLY: Oh, Grandma, we're going to bake Momsey a cake!

GRANDMA (*nodding head knowingly*): Oh! Your ma's got the stomach ache!

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- JOEL (*shouting into the ear trumpet*): No! The cake! The cake! Not a stomach ache! Polly's goin' t' make a cake!
- GRANDMA (*backing away, and taking her ear trumpet down to shake it, then wiping it off inside with her apron*): Well, don't shout so about it, Joey! I know she's goin' to make a cake. Lands, it's what I come over fer, wasn't it? A body 'ud think I was stone deaf . . . (*Shakes out trumpet.*) I kin hear as good as anybody. (*Wipes and blows on it.*) Trouble is, folks don't talk plain!
- POLLY: Joel, you help Davey finish the dishes, won't you, while I get started on the cake!
- JOEL: You bet! (*Grabs up towel and goes after dishes with happy vigor.*) (*Polly gets out flour, sugar, mixing bowl, sifter, and paper to sift flour on.*)
- GRANDMA (*sinking down in rocker and taking recipe out of her apron pocket*): Now, let's get down t' facts. Joel said you didn't have any eggs or milk, Polly.
- POLLY: No, we don't. Can you make a cake without them, Grandma?
- GRANDMA: Of course you can. (*Begins hunting for her glasses. They are perched atop of her lace cap. She always puts them there when she's through using them, but is never able to remember it.*) Let's see. (*Begins looking in apron pocket, then gets up and lifts pillow in rocker, thinking she must have laid them beside her.*)
- PHRONSIE: What are you looking for, Grandma?
- GRANDMA: My glasses! Must have left them at home. Joey, run over and . . .
- JOEL: Ha, ha! They're on your head.
- GRANDMA: My head? (*feels*) Oh! Now I wonder how they got there. (*Settles down again.*) Well, Polly, are ye ready to start?
- POLLY: Yes, Grandma.
- GRANDMA: All right. Here we go! Two cups of flour (*reading from paper*).
- POLLY: Two cups of flour. (*Measuring flour out in cup and dumping it into sifter.*) We've just got brown flour, Grandma, will it matter?
- GRANDMA: Not a mite. Got that?
- POLLY: Yes. Now what?
- GRANDMA: Two teaspoons bakin' powder, one-fourth salt, and three cinnamon.
- POLLY: Just a minute. (*Begins to measure and mix ingredients in sifter.*)
- DAVEY: I'm all through now, Polly.
- POLLY: Good. Throw the water out in the pail. Joey, if you're through, get the hammer and nail that wood box lid down, won't you? We'll be tearing our clothes on that sharp corner.
- JOEL: Sure.
(*He hangs up the tea towel on the rack, Davey throws out the water, and Polly sifts flour industriously as Phronsie watches her for a moment.*)

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Then as Joel gets out the hammer, Phronsie drifts over toward the wood box.)

POLLY: Now what, Grandma?

GRANDMA *(She has been holding the recipe up to the light, scanning it closely and scowling and moving her lips for some time; now she shakes her head and hands the recipe over to Polly):* I declare, girl, I can't make this writing out. My specks must be goin' back on me. Here, you take it, your eyes are sharper than mine.

(Spreads it out before Polly on table.)

POLLY: Why, it's sugar, Grandma.

GRANDMA: Oh, yes, sugar. Now go ahead. It'll tell you what to do. *(There is a loud bang, then a cry from Phronsie, who jumps about on one foot, yelling. Joel has hit Phronsie's toe, while trying to hammer the nail in the box corner. Polly runs to her, pushes her in a chair, and rubs her foot. Then not knowing what to do, gathers her into her arms, and tries to console her. Joel and Davey look on helplessly, Joel almost in tears, and Grandma can't make any sense out of it all, not being able to hear in all the confusion.)*

PHRONSIE: Oh! Oh! Pollllllly! He hit my toeeeeeeee!

JOEL: Oh, Phronsie, don't cry! Please don't cry, Phronsie. Oh, please don't! I didn't go to do it, honest, I didn't.

POLLY: Oh, Phronsie darling! *(Runs to her.)*

GRANDMA: Here, here, what's she dancin' 'round like an Indian fer?

JOEL: I... *(wailing)* I think I killed her!

GRANDMA: Hey, what's that? *(To Davey:)* What's he sayin'? *(Puts ear trumpet down.)*

DAVEY: Joel nailed Phronsie's toe with a hammer!

GRANDMA: Oh! Here, let me look, Polly. *(Picks up Phronsie's foot.)* Well, I should say so... it's a-turnin' blue!

JOEL *(wailing)*: Is she a-gonta die?

GRANDMA: Now, don't be silly. Phronsie, honey, don't you cry! I know the very thing for it.

POLLY: Oh, do you, grandma?

(Phronsie, interested, stops crying.)

GRANDMA: Of course. Here, Joey, get me some of those wormwood herbs hangin' there by the stove... and I'll just take a pan of hot water and put some of them in it. *(Pours hot water into small pan on stove and breaks herbs into it.)* Now, Polly, you get a white rag fer a bandage, and we'll have her well in a few minutes.

POLLY: Oh, Grandma, that's wonderful!

(Gets rag from cupboard. Grandma puts some of it in the water, and uses the rest for a bandage, tying the soaked rag about Phronsie's toe.)

PHRONSIE: Will I ever be able to wear my new shoes again, Polly?

POLLY: My goodness, yes. You'll be well in no time now.

PHRONSIE: Oh, then I don't care!

(Sighs contentedly as her toe is wrapped.)

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- GRANDMA: Better put a bedroom slipper on it, Polly, so's she won't catch cold.
- JOEL: I'll get one of Ma's. (*Dashes into bedroom, returning with grey felt slipper.*)
- GRANDMA: Well, I guess I'd better get back to my beans. You foller the receipt, Polly, and you'll get along all right with your cake. You can send the receipt back by one of the boys. (*Pronounced "recelet" by Grandma.*)
- POLLY: Oh, Grandma, you helped us so much!
(*Gives her a hug, knocking her cap askew.*)
- GRANDMA (*straightening cap*): Oh, 'twern't nothin' . . .
(*Puts shawl around her shoulders preparing to leave. She bends over and pats Phronsie's cheek.*)
- Well, now, be a good girl, Phronsie, and your foot will be all right.
- PHRONSIE: You probably saved my life, you wonderful Grandma Bascomb, you!
(*Hugs her, knocking Grandma's cap askew. Grandma straightens it patiently.*)
- GRANDMA: Well, you're quite welcome, I'm sure. I got to get along. I've got some beans boilin' on th' stove. Well, goodbye.
(*Straightens her bonnet, and Joel comes running up, throws his arms about her, and knocks her cap completely off.*)
- JOEL: Thank you for fixin' Phronsie! (*Gives her hug.*)
- GRANDMA (*Glaring in disgust at her cap*): I didn't fix her. You did!
(*Picks up her cap, starts to put it on her head, then looks about suspiciously at the children, and holding it in her hand, half backs out the door so they can't embrace her again.*)
- CHILDREN: Goodbye, Grandma . . . etc.
- DAVEY: Look at Phronsie's foot! It looks just like a puddin' bag!
- PHRONSIE: Like an old grey puddin' bag! (*Kicks foot out and laughs.*)
- JOEL: You got the cake ready, Polly?
- POLLY: Goodness, I forgot. Let's see, I was putting the sugar in. Soon as I've stirred it, Joey, it's ready to pour into the pan. Put in lots of wood so it will bake good.
(*She pours the cake out into the pan, a little round pan. Joel stirs up the fire, and puts more wood on.*)
- There, now the cake will bake.
- DAVEY: Hooray for the cake!
- PHRONSIE (*kicking her foot*): Hooray!
- JOEL: Hooray, hooray, double hooray! (*He stamps about the room noisily.*)
- (*Polly puts water in the mixing bowl, rinses it out, wipes it and puts it away. As she throws the water into the pail, she asks Davey to take it out. She then puts away the other things, cleans off the table with a rag, and puts the red checked cloth back on it.*)
- POLLY: Throw the water out, won't you, Davey?

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DAVEY: All right. (*Grabs the bucket and leaves.*)

JOEL (*dancing about the room, his spirits high. He shadow boxes.*): I'll bet it's going to be the best cake in the whole wide world. I'll bet it's so good that people will ask Polly to make cakes for them always and forever after!

POLLY: Don't brag too soon!

PHRONSIE: Oh, Polly, would you?

POLLY: Bake their cakes? Of course I would. I'd make six hundred cakes a day and charge a dollar apiece for them!

(*The children are getting more and more joyous with the success of their secret.*)

JOEL: Whoppety! Six hundred cakes a day! We'd be rich!

(*He shadow boxes and sidesteps more vigorously.*)

PHRONSIE: We'd buy Momsey a new silk dress.

JOEL: And a diamond ring! (*Punches an unseen enemy in the nose.*)

POLLY: And a new work basket!

JOEL: And I'd get a carriage and a team of horses and go prancin' 'round town yellin' . . . "Get out of my way, everybody! Here we come!" (*Imitates driving a high-spirited team.*) "Get up there, Star, you old horse you! High up, Beauty! Get goin' fast! Get out of the way everybody. Get out of the way! Get out . . ." ulp!

(*Miss Jerushy, the minister's sister, has been knocking at the door for sometime, but the children haven't heard her for the noise. As Joel comes by the door, Miss Jerushy determines to enter, and runs right into Joel who, when he sees who she is, is frightened to death, and without even thinking, gulps and dives under the table. Miss Jerushy stands outraged, and Polly is worried as she comes forward to welcome her.*)

Whoppety! (*Dives under the table.*)

MISS JERUSHA: Oh! Why, the very idea!

POLLY: Oh, Miss Jerushy, are you hurt?

MISS JERUSHA: I've had the very breath knocked out of me! The very idea!

POLLY (*bringing chair forward*): I—I guess we didn't hear you knock!

MISS JERUSHA (*sitting*): Small wonder, with all this going on. It sounded like a band of wild Indians must have been scalping you, and I decided I'd better come in and see.

POLLY: I'm so sorry. Sit here, won't you?

MISS JERUSHA (*sitting, and glaring at Phronsie as she does so*): When I was a little girl, we were taught to get up and give our elders the best seats in the house. But of course your mother hasn't had much opportunity to teach you children manners, I guess, poor soul!

POLLY (*quickly*): Oh, but Phronsie hurt her toe and can't walk very well.

PHRONSIE (*gravely*): Joey nailed my big toe to the wood box.

MISS JERUSHA (*astonished*): He what?

POLLY (*quickly*): She means he hit her with the hammer. He never

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meant to, though.

MISS JERUSHA: Well, I should hope not!

(She peers around the table, just as Joel gets up the nerve to take a peek at her. When he sees her looking at him, he ducks back.)

Is . . . is he quite right?

POLLY: Right?

MISS JERUSHA: Yes, in the head?

POLLY: Why—why, of course! Joey is bright!

MISS JERUSHA: Well, he doesn't sound much like it, hitting people on the head with hammers and hiding under the table when people come to call.

JOEL *(coming out defiantly)*: I ain't a-hidin'!

POLLY: Joel! *(To Miss Jerusha:)* Joel is really a very nice boy . . . he—he was just happy!

MISS JERUSHA: So he hits people on the head with hammers!

JOEL: It wasn't her head! It was her toe!

(Glares at Miss Jerusha, his fright forgotten in his anger.)

MISS JERUSHA: Well, enough of this. I came to ask your Ma to make me a new jacket. She sews fer people, don't she? Where is she?

POLLY: She's at the tailor shop right now. I'll tell her to see you this afternoon if you like. She'll be home early today.

DAVEY *(rushing in and banging the bucket so hard Miss Jerusha jumps and yells)*: Polly, is the cake . . . Oh! *(Sees Miss Jerusha.)*

MISS JERUSHA: My goodness! And who is this?

POLLY: This is my other brother, Davey.

MISS JERUSHA: Well! *(glaring at Davey)* Hasn't your mother taught you the proper way to enter a house . . . coming in banging buckets and scaring folks to death. Why don't you children help your poor mother, instead of going about banging buckets and hitting people with hammers!

DAVEY *(angry)*: We do help her!

JOEL: Yes, and you stop talking about our mother, too! She's . . . she's all right!

POLLY: Oh, Joel!

MISS JERUSHA: Well, I never! Humm, I'd better go!

JOEL *(under his breath)*: Nobody's keepin' you!

POLLY *(almost in tears)*: Oh, Joel!

MISS JERUSHA: Well, he may be bright, but he certainly doesn't act like it! I'm coming back to tell your Ma about this!

(Flounces out the door.)

JOEL: Don't cry, Polly. She was a bad old woman, and I wouldn't cry about her!

DAVEY: She talked about our mother!

POLLY *(wiping her eyes determinedly)*: Yes, you're right! I won't cry about it again. She had no business to talk to us that way.

PHRONISIE *(sniffing)*: Polly, what is that funny swell?