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Family Plays

FAREWELL TO GALATEA



Comedy by
FORD AINSWORTH

FAREWELL TO GALATEA

"We love this play! And so have our judges! Thanks I. E. Clark and Ford Ainsworth!" (Kathi Stapp, Eastland High School, Texas)

Comedy. By Ford Ainsworth. *Cast:* 2m., 4w. Pyggy, the resident artist in a modern high-society spa, imitates his namesake, Pygmalion, the ancient Greek sculptor who created a gorgeous statue, named her Galatea, fell in love with her and prayed to the gods to bring her to life. Pyggy creates his ideal sculpture by "borrowing" a perfect feature—an ear, a nose, etc.—from each of his models. He appropriately names his sculpture Galatea. When the slumbering Olympian gods find out about this modern Galatea, the excitement begins. The play is a brilliant commentary on the meaning of love. But this is a modern story; they don't live happily ever after. Noted for his incisive analysis of human emotions and motivations, Ainsworth gives us a fresh view of love in this play. As he did in *Persephone*, the author takes age-old ideas and re-evaluates them in terms of modern life, producing a work of significance and universality. Above all, Ainsworth knows how to entertain. *Farewell to Galatea* tells the story of a young man who dreams of the ideal girl—and doesn't know what to do with her when his dream comes true. The play is for adults and young adults. *Set:* an artist's studio. *Time:* the present. *Approximate running time:* 30 to 35 minutes. *Code:* FC9.

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A Comedy in One Act

by

FORD AINSWORTH

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311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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FORD AINSWORTH

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(FAREWELL TO GALATEA)

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FAREWELL TO GALATEA

Characters

Eros, *god of love*

Pyggy, *a young artist*

Thalia, *a Cloud Crest hostess*

Galatea, *a beautiful statue*

Mrs. Bedford, *a wealthy guest at Cloud Crest*

Julia Sylvester, *Mrs. Bedford's niece*

Time: The present or thereabout

Place: Cloud Crest, an expensive
resort in the hills

ABOUT THE PLAY

Did you ever have thoughts like these: "I wish I had Joan's beautiful hair. I wish I had Betty's terrific personality. I wish I had Evelyn's lovely figure. I wish I had Cheryl's pretty eyes." (Or, "I wish I had Bill's muscles, Eddie's voice," etc.)?

What would happen if all these ideal features really were wrapped up in one person? "Farewell to Galatea" provides a logical answer.

In Greek mythology Pygmalion, the sculptor, created a gorgeous statue, named her Galatea, and promptly fell in love with her. He prayed to the gods to bring his statue to life, and they granted his prayer. Pygmalion and Galatea got married and lived happily ever after.

In Ford Ainsworth's play, presented on the following pages, a young modern painter nicknamed "Pyggy" creates his ideal sculpture by combining one person's perfect ear, another's perfect nose, and so on—and appropriately names her Galatea. Eros, the Greek god of love, brings her to life. But this is a modern story; they don't live happily ever after.

Noted for his incisive analysis of human emotions and motivations, Ainsworth gives us a fresh view of love in this play. As he did in "Persephone," the author takes age-old ideas and re-evaluates them in terms of modern life, producing a work of significance and universality.

But above all, Ainsworth knows how to entertain. "Farewell to Galatea" tells the story of a young man who dreams of the ideal girl—and doesn't know what to do with her when his dream comes true.

In its first year of existence, "Persephone" became one of America's favorite contest plays. "Farewell to Galatea" is sure to be equally popular in contests, night of one-acts, assembly programs—everywhere that one-act plays are presented.

JULIA—is a pretty, impressionable, eager young girl of sixteen. She has a great interest in all the arts and views the artists who create such works in a romantic light. She expresses her admiration and pleasure in an open, unsophisticated manner which is refreshing and rather touching.

COSTUMES

The costumes described here are those worn in the original production. Each producer, of course, is at liberty to design other costumes. See sketches, page 35.

PYGGY—wears a light weight, long-sleeved, turtle neck shirt and comfortable, jean-cut trousers. He also wears a tailored "smock," much like a doctor's jacket with a waist tie. The jacket, or smock, may be removed after he finishes work on Galatea. He puts it on again as he prepares to begin work at the end of the play. In the original production, the costume was color-keyed to the set. His trousers were the same French blue of the drapes, the shirt was a paler hue of the same color, and the smock was the orange-cream of the furniture. The only restriction is the color of the smock. It should *not* be white.

THALIA—wears a slightly modified Tyrolean outfit. A white, short-sleeved blouse is covered by a fitted vest bodice. The vest is black, trimmed with bright flowered braid. The full green skirt is trimmed with bands of the same bright flowered braid on bands of black. Black stockings and low-heeled black shoes complete the costume.

EROS—wears a white "wedding" tuxedo with red lapels, red cummerbund, and red bowtie. The red is a deep wine red. The white ruffled shirt may have tiny red piping on the ruffles. With the addition of white shoes and socks, he should resemble a live valentine. An alternate choice would be a white vested suit with a red tie. He should look very stylish and elegant.

GALATEA—also wears white. Her robe is of soft easy-draping and flowing material. The robe is simple, straight cut, and gathered on the shoulder. White cord, fastened at the shoulder, criss-crosses the breast and ties around the waist. A free-floating white chiffon panel is gathered across the shoulders in back. The corners of the chiffon panel are tied to her wrists with tiny white ribbon. Hair should be worn up with sculptured curls in back. The towel costume should be draped loosely and cover her almost completely.

MRS. BEDFORD—wears an elegant, soft, easy-fitting dress with a minimum of elegant accessories such as rings and pins. She can wear lavender without feeling "elderly." Her clothing reflects good taste first and wealth second.

JULIA—wears a skirt and blouse that is youthful, but not fussy. Her costume contrasts sharply with Mrs. Bedford's. It is in good taste, but casual and easy.

PROPS

Portrait of Thalia—on easel. A little extra touch of excellence can be added to a play if a real portrait of the actress playing the role can be used. However, if such a portrait cannot be obtained, the picture must be handled so that the audience never sees it.

Box of paints and brushes—on work bench

Additional paint supplies on tables and in alcove

Coffee cup, water glass—on Left table

Assorted sketches, canvases, and frames such as an artist might have scattered about his room.

Pictures, anatomical charts, and matted sketches on the walls, as desired

2 Brushes and a paint-daubed palette—in Pyggy's hands at the beginning of play

Tray containing coffee pot and plate with two doughnuts—brought on by Thalia

Portrait sketch wrapped in brown paper—brought on by Mrs. Bedford

Handbag—Mrs. Bedford

Checkbook—Mrs. Bedford

Wrist watch—Thalia

Stack of 12 small sketches (an eye, and ear, etc.)—in night stand drawer

Jar of nectar—Eros

Beach towel—in Left table drawer

Suitcase—under cot

Other props, furniture and decorations as desired

SET

The impression is the colorfully cluttered workroom of an artist.

In the original production color was added to the set by painting furniture and door and window frames a warm orange-cream. Curtains over the bathroom and front door openings (instead of doors) matched the color of the furniture. The alcove curtain was French blue.

See floor plan, next page.

LIGHTS

The only special lighting in the original production was a cool blue light in the alcove area. The prologue could be played in a follow spot if desired.

A FINAL WORD

Give the play an energetic pace. "I rarely let my performers sit and talk for long," Ford Ainsworth said. He likes to keep actors moving—a technique which has made him a highly successful director of contest plays in high school and college.

FAREWELL TO GALATEA

[The action of the play takes place in the studio of the resident artist at Cloud Crest. The easel and a bench to hold paint box, brushes, and paints are in the Down Right area. Down Center is a small model stand and chair. Down Left are a table, a small stand, and a high stool. The table and stand hold additional paint supplies, coffee, cup, and assorted utensils. At Right, an open hallway leads to other areas of Cloud Crest. At Left, a curtained doorway and small window open into the bathroom. Up Center, a raised platform is occupied by a low cot and a high stool. The platform area forms an alcove which can be concealed by a draw curtain when necessary. A number of sketches are scattered about the room.]

As the play opens, EROS stands before the drawn curtain of the alcove. He speaks to the audience, coming forward to address them]

EROS. Welcome to the world of illusion! A world created by a condensation of light . . . a vibration of breath, borne for a moment on the invisible wings of air. Illusion is my specialty. You see I am an illusion myself, the grandest of all illusions . . . love. That's who I am . . . Eros, the god of love. The Romans called me "Cupid"—but you know the Romans! They always thought they could improve on everything, even the gods! Don't let the costume fool you. I'm a bit too . . . mature . . . these days to go around wearing only red ribbons and pink dimples and carrying a toy bow with heart-tipped arrows. I never really used those arrows, anyway. They were only symbols, quaint and charming, but impractical.

No, my method of operation has always been illusion. It's a far more effective means of handling romantic problems. And that's my whole business, solving the eternal problems of love. Of course, originally, love was intended to solve problems, not create them. But that was before you mortals started to tinker-with it. Mercy! What a mess you do make! But I suppose that's your nature. You simply cannot accept even the most wonderful of gifts and be satisfied with it. You always think you can improve on everything. You men especially! You have been given the gift of woman . . . the most provocative, the most fascinating, the most unpredictable of gifts in the whole creation. And what do you do? You do exactly what the young man behind this curtain is doing. Look! *[He gestures and the curtain opens to reveal PYGGY, hard at work perfecting Galatea's left eyebrow. He is unaware of Eros. His attention is fixed on GALATEA, who sits immobile but graceful on the high stool]* There he is, lost in dreams, laboring to create his ideal, his Galatea. *[He inspects Galatea]* And she is lovely. But the classic

harmony of her features is only an arrangement of plaster and paint. Even the most commonplace of mortal women is a far more wonderful creation than his lifeless imitation of perfection.

But don't try to tell him that! Oh, no! He is on fire with creation, intoxicated by his vision of perfection. And he's also headed for trouble. That's why I'm here. He isn't quite ready for me yet, but he will be soon, so . . . I'll be back! [*EROS disappears down left. PYGGY continues to work for a moment*]

THALIA. [*Off Stage Right*] Pyggy! Knock, knock! [*PYGGY quickly closes curtain, hiding himself and Galatea. THALIA enters carrying a tray with a pot of coffee and two doughnuts. She is dressed in a becoming Tyrolean costume, the regulation uniform for employees of Cloud Crest*] Pyggy! [*She places tray on table and knocks on wall beside curtain*] Pyggy, it's after ten o'clock! [*She returns to table to arrange breakfast things*] Breakfast is served, courtesy of Thalia Jackson, your friendly smiling Cloud Crest hostess. [*PYGGY emerges from behind curtain and crosses unnoticed to table*] Pyggy!

PYGGY. [*With mock formality*] Good morning, friendly, smiling hostess.

THALIA. [*With mock curtsy*] Good morning, sir! [*She places model chair at table*] Coffee and doughnuts, fresh from Cloud Crest's luxurious Alpine Dining Room! [*He seats himself*] Your comfort is our only concern.

PYGGY. That's a great idea! [*He raises his face to invite a kiss*] I'm ready to be comforted.

THALIA. [*Amused*] Oh, for heaven's sake, Pyggy! [*She kisses him lightly*] I managed to swipe two doughnuts this morning, see? [*He pushes the doughnuts aside*] What's wrong with you?

PYGGY. I can't eat when I'm uncomfortable. I'm still not completely comfortable. [*He invites another kiss*]

THALIA. [*Mock disapproval*] Pyggy! [*She kisses him not quite so lightly*] We don't have time for that this morning. [*She starts to pour coffee in his cup*] Ugh! What's this mess in your cup?

PYGGY. [*Inspecting cup*] That's not mess, Thalia. That's water color . . . viridian green. I'll wash it out. [*He rises*]

THALIA. I'll do it. You wouldn't get it clean. [*She takes cup into bathroom. PYGGY quickly goes to curtain and opens it a bit to admire his Galatea*] Honestly, Pyggy, you're going to poison yourself someday the way you mix paint in your dishes. If I hadn't noticed this stuff in your cup you would have poured coffee on top of it and gulped it down! [*She returns to table*] There! I hope that's clean. Now come sit down and drink your coffee. [*He doesn't hear*] Pyggy! [*She crosses to him*] What are you doing? Bird watching in your bedroom?

PYGGY. [*Hastily closing curtain*] Oh! No, no . . . I . . .

THALIA. [*Leading him to table*] Your coffee is ready. [*He sits. She crosses back to curtain*] And while you're eating, I'll make up your bed.

PYGGY. [*Rushing to stop her*] No! Wait, Thalia! I . . . I've already made my bed!

THALIA. Good! Then we can open the curtain.

PYGGY. [*Stopping her*] No!

THALIA. Are you *hiding* something in there?

PYGGY. [*Drawing her back to table*] I need a little privacy! This place has no latches, no lock, no doors!

THALIA. [*Placating*] All right, if you're sure your bed is made in case anyone looks in there. [*He sits at table. She begins tidying up stand at left*] We have to make a good impression!

PYGGY. A good impression?

THALIA. [*Excited*] You are going to have an important customer this morning! A very important customer!

PYGGY. [*Unimpressed*] By that, you mean a very *rich* customer, I suppose?

THALIA. Rich . . . important. It's the same thing.

PYGGY. [*Disturbed*] You know, Thalia, that worries me about you.

THALIA. What worries you?

PYGGY. Rich . . . important. It's *not* the same thing. Do you really believe that money is the only important thing?

THALIA. Of course not, silly. Not the *only* important thing!

PYGGY. The *most* important thing, then? Do you?

THALIA. [*Coming to table*] It is when you don't have it! But it's not important when you *do* have it, and the more you have, the less important it is. That's why this customer is so important. It's Mrs. Bedford.

PYGGY. Mrs. Bedford?

THALIA. She asked me if you did oil portraits as well as sketches, and of course I . . .

PYGGY. Wait a minute! *Who* is Mrs. Bedford?

THALIA. You did a pastel sketch of her, remember?

PYGGY. [*Remembering*] Oh! Mrs. Bedford. The perfect ear!

THALIA. The perfect what?

PYGGY. Nothing. I just remembered that Mrs. Bedford has perfect ears.

THALIA. She also has more money than the rest of the guests at Cloud Crest put together! Her husband was so impressed with your sketch that he wants you to do an oil portrait of her! Do you know what that means?

PYGGY. It means I won't be able to please her. She will expect the painting to look exactly like the sketch . . . and it won't. I can't . . .

THALIA. [*Brushing the objection aside*] It means money, Pyggy! This is what we've been working for! You only get thirty-five dollars apiece for your sketches, but an oil painting is worth *hundreds* of dollars! How much do you think we ought to charge?

PYGGY. [*Not very interested*] I don't know. I haven't thought about it.

THALIA. Well, let's think about it now! The materials are more expensive and it takes longer. [*She goes to portrait on easel*] How long did you work on this one of me? Two weeks? How many *hours* would you say?

PYGGY. You can't charge for portraits by the hour. [*He comes to easel*] It's not just a matter of time spent . . .

THALIA. Well, how much, then? How much would you charge for this one of me?

PYGGY. It's your portrait. How much is it worth to you?

THALIA. Be serious, Pyggy! This is our big chance! We took these jobs at Cloud Crest this summer to make money, didn't we?

PYGGY. And we have! I've sold about thirty-five sketches.

THALIA. [*Correcting him*] Forty. You've sold forty sketches at thirty-five dollars apiece. That's fourteen hundred dollars. Are you satisfied with that?

PYGGY. It's more than I expected.

THALIA. [*Earnestly*] It won't seem like much when you start spending it! As long as I can swipe food for you from the dining room and you don't pay rent, you can put most of it in the bank. But what about this fall? It won't last two months!

PYGGY. [*Lightly*] Sure it will . . . if you move in with me. I'll pay the rent, you buy the groceries. We will both save money. How about that?

THALIA. If that is a proposal, it doesn't have much style. If it's a business proposition, fourteen hundred dollars is not enough to open negotiations. But in either case, I can tell you this: if I ever move in with you, it won't be to save money!

PYGGY. [*Philosophically*] Seemed like a great idea to me. I guess I'll just have to get a job when the money runs out.

THALIA. But you need time to paint! Look, Pyggy, if you sell Mrs. Bedford an oil portrait, every guest at Cloud Crest will want one! And it won't stop there. If enough rich people have your portraits on their walls, more rich people will buy them. It's chain reaction. It's free advertising. You'll have a name, a reputation. You can go on doing nothing but portraits all your life!

PYGGY. [*Shuddering*] What a horrible thought!

THALIA. [*Amazed*] Horrible thought! Then what are we doing here? I thought you wanted to be an artist!

PYGGY. Sure I do! But portraits are not the *only* thing . . .

THALIA. But portraits sell! You already have a buyer even before you paint the picture. And you can paint other things between portraits. Believe me, Pyggy, if you have to take a steady job, you won't have time to do much painting of any kind. [*She crosses to table*] Are you finished with your breakfast? [*She puts coffee and cup on tray*]

PYGGY. I've barely started. [*THALIA picks up tray and crosses to curtain*] Where are you going with that?

THALIA. Mrs. Bedford will be here any minute, and she's bringing her niece with her to see your work. You don't want them to find you *eating*. You can finish your breakfast in here. [*She starts to open curtain*]

PYGGY. [*Rushing to stop her*] Wait! I'll take it. [*He takes tray*]

THALIA. What's the matter with you?

PYGGY. You wouldn't want an important customer to find you in my bedroom, would you?

THALIA. I'm beginning to wonder what she *might* find in there! [*She crosses to easel area*] What a mess! [*She begins to tidy up*]

PYGGY. Don't move anything.

THALIA. Eat your breakfast.

PYGGY. [*Going behind curtain*] And don't make any deals with Mrs. What's-her-name!

THALIA. Bedford. Mrs. Elliot Bedford. You be thinking about a price while you eat. And don't think cheap. She can afford it. [*She crosses to table*] You forgot the doughnuts! [*She takes them to curtain as MRS. BEDFORD and JULIA enter right. Mrs. Bedford carries her portrait sketch in a paper wrapper*]

MRS. BEDFORD. [*To Julia*] This is the resident artist's studio. [*She sees Thalia*] Oh! I hope we're not intruding?

THALIA. Oh, no! Not at all! [*PYGGY extends a hand through curtain and takes doughnuts*]

MRS. BEDFORD. [*Crossing to table*] I love the casual, artistic atmosphere of this place.

JULIA. Oh, yes! [*She admires portrait of Thalia on easel*]

MRS. BEDFORD. [*Unwrapping her sketch at table*] We wish to speak to the resident artist, Mr. . . . Uh. [*She consults signature on sketch*]

THALIA. [*Helpfully*] Westgate.

MRS. BEDFORD. Yes, Westgate. He does such lovely work. [*JULIA brings portrait from easel to show her*] Oh! Is this his work, too?

THALIA. Oh, yes. In *oils*, of course!

MRS. BEDFORD. Yes. What do you think, Julia?

JULIA. [*Admiring portrait*] Very nice! Especially the eyes. His oil technique is even better than . . . [*She pauses, inspecting signature on portrait*]

MRS. BEDFORD. What is it?

JULIA. The signature. It's not the same, see? P-Y-G-G-Y? Pyggy?

THALIA. Oh, that's a nickname. At school we called him *Pygmalion*.

MRS. BEDFORD. *Pygmalion*?

THALIA. Because he was always drawing imaginary beautiful girls, like the Greek sculptor . . .

MRS. BEDFORD. Oh, yes! *Pygmalion*! He made a beautiful statue of his ideal woman and called her . . . what was that name, Julia?

JULIA. [*Returning portrait to easel*] *Galatea*. He called her *Galatea* and she came to life.

MRS. BEDFORD. [*Crossing to Julia*] Yes. That was it. Does he sign his oil paintings "Pyggy"?

THALIA. Oh, no. He signed my portrait "Pyggy" because I call him that.

JULIA. [*Quickly*] *Your* portrait?

MRS. BEDFORD. [*Comparing portrait to Thalia*] Of course, Julia! Look!

JULIA. [*Comparing*] Yes! A remarkable likeness. He catches the . . . *personality*, doesn't he?

MRS. BEDFORD. That's exactly what your Uncle Elliot t said about mine. It catches my personality. [*To Thalia*] I thought I'd have an oil done . . . exactly like this. [*She shows sketch*]

THALIA. [*Eagerly*] I'm sure Mr. Westgate would be delighted. [*Mirroring Mrs. Bedford's sophistication*] The oils would be more expensive, of course.

MRS. BEDFORD. Of course. [*PYGGY steps out from behind curtain*] Oh, Mr. Westgate! It's so nice to see you again. I'm Mrs. Bedford . . . remember?

PYGGY. Oh, yes.

MRS. BEDFORD. And this is my niece, Julia Sylvester. [*PYGGY acknowledges the introduction*] We are greatly impressed with your work. My husband was delighted with the sketch.

PYGGY. Thank you.

MRS. BEDFORD. [*Crossing to portrait on easel*] And your oil work is even more impressive, don't you think so, Julia?

JULIA. Yes. The eyes are so *alive*.

PYGGY. Thank you.

MRS. BEDFORD. My husband wants an oil painting just like this [*indicating the sketch*], but I do have a problem. I'm leaving Cloud Crest tomorrow, and I know you couldn't possibly do an oil painting in a few hours; so I wonder if I could leave the sketch with you and let Julia pick up the sketch and the portrait when you have finished? She will be here for two more weeks. Will that give you time enough?

PYGGY. [*Politely, but firmly*] That's plenty of time, but I'm afraid I couldn't . . .

MRS. BEDFORD. [*Taking out check book*] Oh I know the oils would cost more. Suppose I write a check in advance for whatever it is?

PYGGY. I'm sorry, but I really couldn't accept it.

MRS. BEDFORD. [*A bit nettled*] Oh? If you would prefer cash, I can . . .

PYGGY. [*Quickly*] No. No, it isn't the *check*. I mean I can't accept the commission. I can't . . . reproduce this.

MRS. BEDFORD. [*Not understanding*] Oh?

PYGGY. It's difficult to explain exactly, but . . . [*with sudden inspiration*] What do you see when you look at this? [*He holds up sketch*]

MRS. BEDFORD. [*Uncertainly*] I see . . . myself.

PYGGY. Yes, but it isn't like a mirror, is it?

MRS. BEDFORD. [*With a slight chill*] You mean it flatters me?

PYGGY. No! No, not flattery. But when you look in the mirror, you see yourself through your own eyes. When you look at this, you see yourself through *my* eyes.

MRS. BEDFORD. [*Warming up*] Oh! Yes, I understand.

PYGGY. But it's more than that. It took both of us to produce this. You here, [*seating her in model chair*] as the model, the . . . inspiration; and me here, [*going to his easel*] as the viewer . . . the interpreter. We did this sketch together. But now look! [*He turns sketch so she can see it*] Do you remember what thought or fantasy was passing through your mind to light your eyes like that?

MRS. BEDFORD. Why . . . no . . . I . . .

PYGGY. Or what momentary feeling touched your heart and found its way into that fleeting smile?

MRS. BEDFORD. I don't remember, but . . . you're teasing me.

PYGGY. [*Earnestly*] Believe me, I am not! But if I held this sketch up before you and said, "Now look like that!"—could you do it?

MRS. BEDFORD. [*Rising and taking sketch*] I see! I could never reproduce this exact expression. And if you tried to copy it . . .

PYGGY. Exactly! I could never recapture the flash of vision, the spark of contact between your smile and my brush. I could only imitate lines and colors. It wouldn't be the same. I'm sorry.