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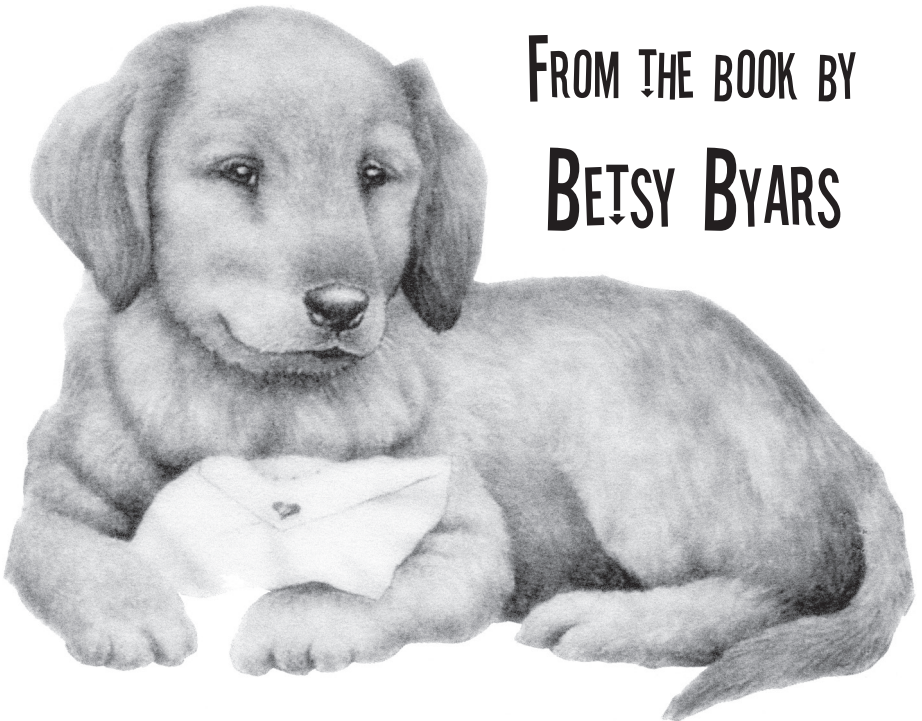
Dramatic Publishing

THE PINBALLS



DRAMA ADAPTED BY
AURAND HARRIS

FROM THE BOOK BY
BETSY BYARS



THE PINBALLS

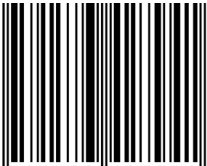
AATE Distinguished Play Award Winner

Premiered at Northwestern University Department of Drama. Written in a theatrical and imaginative style, utilizing exciting musical, sound and lighting effects, this play is both touching and funny. It treats a modern social problem with arresting insight, humor and emotional theatrical impact.

Drama. Adapted by Aurand Harris. From the award-winning novel by Betsy Byars. Cast: 3m., 2w. Three children are bounced like pinballs from one foster home to another. Carlie, age 15, is a streetwise natural leader who is also a victim of child abuse. Thirteen-year-old Harvey is wheelchair-bound after his drunken father ran over both of his legs with his new car. Thomas J., 8, was abandoned on a doorstep as a baby. Each longs for the comfort of a real home. Now they come together for the first time at the home of Mrs. Mason's, an understanding foster mother who encourages them to follow Carlie's urging "to do something for ourselves." By the end of summer the "pinballs" have become a family. *One set. Contemporary costumes. Approximate running time: 75 minutes. Code: PE8.*

ISBN-13 978-1-58342-794-1

ISBN-10 1-58342-794-6



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The Pinballs (Harris)



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www.dramaticpublishing.com

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WOODSTOCK, ILLINOIS • AUSTRALIA • NEW ZEALAND • SOUTH AFRICA

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(THE PINBALLS)

ISBN: 978-1-58342-794-1

THE PINBALLS

Betsy Byars was born and grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina. She was graduated from Queens College in Charlotte with a degree in English. Currently, she lives with her husband, a professor, in Clemson, South Carolina. They are the parents of three daughters and a son.

A well-known author of books for children, Betsy Byars won the Newbery medal in 1971 for her book SUMMER OF THE SWANS. Her books published by HarperCollins include GOOD-BYE, CHICKEN LITTLE, THE TWO-THOUSAND-POUND GOLDFISH, THE SEVEN TREASURE HUNTS, and her popular I Can Read books, THE GOLLY SISTERS GO WEST and HOORAY FOR THE GOLLY SISTERS.

THE PINBALLS, published by HarperCollins in 1977, has won six separate awards voted upon by school children—in Arkansas, California, Georgia, Kansas and Wisconsin. It was an ALA Notable Book of 1977 and has been adapted into an ABC Afterschool Special.

To order copies of THE PINBALLS and other titles by Betsy Byars please send order to:

HarperCollins Publishers
Keystone Industrial Park
Scranton, PA 18512

Or phone: 800-822-7737
PA residents - 800-822-4377

THE PINBALLS

**The premiere of THE PINBALLS was directed
as an M. F. A. Thesis project by**

JON EBY

under the Faculty Guidance of

RIVES COLLINS

at Northwestern University

THE PINBALLS

DEDICATED
TO
JOHN EBY
RIVES COLLINS

THE PINBALLS

CAST

Carlie, age 15

Mrs. Mason

Harvey, age 13

Thomas J., age 8

Harvey's Father

Voices: TV Announcer

Doctor

Court Clerk

Judge

Photographer

SCENE

The Yard outside Mrs. Mason's house.

TIME

The Present. Summer.

The play is in six continuous scenes.

THE PINBALLS

(There is lively introduction music of a TV news cast. A soft glow lights the stage. At back is a suggestion of a house)

Announcer: *(Off)* Good morning. We bring you- -News of the world! The headlines of the day. *(Trumpet)* The President of the United States signs important tax bill. The President rests at Camp David. *(Trumpet)* The world of sports is knocked out by a new sports scandal. *(Trumpet. Carlie enters with suitcase and baton, stands C. She is in her early teens, street wise, and likeable. She is humorous in her exaggerated speech and body language.)* July has been proclaimed- -Ice Cream Month of the Year!

(Lights come up on Carlie)

Carlie: My news of the day! *(Imitates trumpet)* Ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta. Juvenile girl sent to foster home. *(Speaks like herself)* Me, Carlie. The judge looked at me, smiled and said, "I hope you will like your new home." I'll bet the old judge never saw a foster home. Then he said, "You will stay there until your mother and step-father STABILIZE their home situation." Ho-oo! That means I'll stay here until I'm ready for the old folks home.

(Mrs. Mason enters at back. She is ever cheerful, helpful and shows her affection with a motherly pat or hug)

There she is- -Mrs. Mason. Her name should be FOSTER. *(Laughs)* Get it? Mrs. Foster- -FOSTER home. I knew it. See. She's wearing an apron. She's trying to LOOK like a mother- -like a MOTHER on a TV show.

Mrs. M: Come in, Carlie. Your room is all fixed. I know you'll like it. Blue curtains and a blue bed spread.

THE PINBALLS

- Carlie: Blue?
- Mrs. M: The social worker said blue was your favorite color.
- Carlie: Wrong! I like red- -bright red.
- Mrs. M: But you told the social worker- -
- Carlie: Do you think I'd tell HER the TRUTH? Who- -oo! She's dumb and she's dumpy.
- Mrs. M: Lunch is almost ready. You must be hungry. Then afterwards we'll fix the room for the boys who are coming.
- Carlie: Boys? (*Interested*) Whoo- -oo! There's going to be some boys here?
- Mrs. M: Thomas J. and Harvey.
- Carlie: How old are they?
- Mrs. M: One is eight and the other is thirteen.
- Carlie: Whoo- -oo! Too young. What's wrong with them?
- Mrs. M: Wrong?
- Carlie: What's their trouble? Why are they sent to a FOSTER home?
- Mrs. M: Well- -they can tell you that themselves.
- Carlie: I can tell you why I'm here. It's because I got a creep of a step-father. Whoo- -oo! He hit me so hard I had- - (*Proudly*) - -a concussion. But I got right up and hit him with a frying pan. Nobody hits me without getting hit back.
- Mrs. M: (*Reaches for suitcase*) Let me help you carry your- -
- Carlie: DON'T TOUCH THAT! It contains personal and valuable things.

THE PINBALLS

- Mrs. M: Oh. I see you have a baton.
- Carlie: That's valuable, too! *(Grabs it)* I was going to be a majorette in school. I went to Majorette Clinic. Cost my mom \$15.00. But you can't even try out unless your grades are good. Now what does good grades have to do with twirling a baton- -tell me that? And then! I was all set to try out for Miss Teenager- -baton twirling was my talent- -which I'd already spent \$15.00 for- -Well, the week before tryouts was when my step-father attacked me. I never had a chance- -to win- -or- -to twirl. *(Begins twirling and taking majorette steps)*
- Mrs. M: I am sure you would have been picked as one of the winners.
- Carlie: *(Anger and frustration mounting)* Social worker said I should twirl- -when I feel signs of stress. Helps you relax. *(Twirls more and steps higher)*
- Mrs. M: I know. When I'm tense I sew. I make an apron or a skirt. I'll teach you how to sew.
- Carlie: My real father left before I was born. My second father- -step-father- -when he left he stole my baby sitting money. And number three- -Whoo- -oo! Hit! Bing! Bang! He hit me first. But they sent me to a FOSTER home.
- Mrs. M: I know. Everything seems wrong today.
- Carlie: SEEMS wrong!
- Mrs. M: The first day is always the hardest.
- Carlie: How do you know? Have you ever been in a foster home?
- Mrs. M: I have had seventeen children who have stayed with me. And all of them have gone on into the world. To college. To jobs. Things will be better tomorrow. You'll see.

THE PINBALLS

- Carlie: They'd better be better.
- Mrs. M: Is that a car pulling up in front? Yes, it's a van. And stopping here. That will be Harvey. We are all going to have to help Harvey—help him in getting about. You can put your things inside. And, Carlie, the curtains for your room, we'll dye them—dye them bright red. (*Smiles at Carlie, happily*) Go along. (*Exits*)
- Carlie: I'm going. There's no other place for me to go. (*She picks up suitcase. With her other hand she halfheartedly twirls the baton, vocalizing a few tooting sounds, like a marching band. "Toot-toot-too-tooty-toot-toot", and in rhythm marches with exaggerated steps into the house*)
- (*Music stops. Mrs. M, talking, enters at side. She is wheeling Harvey who is in a wheelchair. Harvey is a studious young boy. Both legs are in casts*)
- Mrs. M: I hope the trip didn't tire you. But now that you're here, you can rest. I have unpacked and put all your things in your room. It is on the front. Lots of sunshine. Would you like some juice or a coke?
- Harvey: No, thanks.
- Mrs. M: Now about your legs. The doctor said for me—
- Harvey: They're all right.
- Mrs. M: But any time—
- Harvey: I'll tell you—when they hurt.
- Mrs. M: (*Looks at his legs*) One of my boys—I've had seventeen children who have stayed with me—and one of the boys broke his arm, and it was in a cast and he—
- Carlie: (*Enters*) Where is he?

THE PINBALLS

- Mrs. M: Carlie, this is Harvey.
- Carlie: Who—oo! A cripple in a wheelchair. I've been put in a hospital. Calling all doctors. Calling all doctors.
- Mrs. M: I'll leave you two to get acquainted. Carlie, you wheel Harvey inside when he's ready. Carlie- -
- Carlie: Yeah, yeah, I will.
- (Mrs. M exits)*
- What happened to your legs?
- Harvey: Nothing.
- Carlie: Well, something must of happened. They don't put casts on your legs for the fun of it.
- Harvey: They are broken- -both of them.
- Carlie: *(Excited)* Wow! Did the bone jab out through the skin?
- Harvey: Yes.
- Carlie: Oh, wow! I'm very interested in broken bones. Yeah, blood pressure, operations! I might be a nurse. Well, I'm waiting. What happened?
- Harvey: I broke my legs playing football.
- Carlie: What position do you play?
- Harvey: Quarterback.
- Carlie: You're no quarterback. I've seen Joe Montana- -in person. So- -what really happened?
- Harvey: I was playing football.

THE PINBALLS

- Carlie: Listen, my favorite TV show is on right now, so if you're going to tell me a bunch of big lies about what happened to your legs, well, I'll just go in and watch.
- Harvey: Go on. Watch it.
- Carlie: I will. *(Goes to back, turns)* Be careful, Harvey, don't make any touchdowns while I'm gone. Who—oo! *(Exits)*
- Harvey: I wish—I wish I had been playing football. And all the class would have signed their names on my casts, like they did on Bill's when he broke his arm. "Maryann Eby," "Butch," "Donna Barry," she wrote hers with lipstick. And Miss Howell would write on mine, "To a wonderful English student." But I wasn't playing football. I try to forget. But I keep remembering...keep hearing the roar of the car. *(Forcing himself to be cheerful)* It should have been one of the happiest days of my life. My essay- "Why I Am Proud to Be an American," won a prize. Ten dollars. They were going to take my picture for the newspaper. Dad promised to drive me there and watch me get the award. Dad was still in the house- -having himself a drink- -two- - or three drinks.
- (Harvey turns wheelchair around, facing upstage, and, unseen, removes his casts)*
- Father: *(Enters at side. He mimes drinking and happily sings a bit. He looks at watch)* Is it that late? I'll have to hurry. Well, one more drink. The fellows at the Club, they'll wait. It's poker tonight, and I feel like a winner! Harvey, Harvey, I'm leaving. Do you hear me, Harvey? Now where in the devil did he go? Harvey!
- Harvey: *(Walks, with no casts, to bench, sits)* I was waiting in dad's new car. I'd been sitting there for fifteen minutes.
- Father: *(Comes to bench)* What are you doing out here? What are you doing in the car? Get out. I'm late already. *(Mimes opening car door and sits in "driver's seat" on bench)*

THE PINBALLS

- Harvey: Get out?
- Father: That's what I said. Get out.
- Harvey: This is the night I get my award.
- Father: What award?
- Harvey: My essay. You promised- -promised to take me.
- Father: I didn't PROMISE. I said I would if I could.
- Harvey: You promised. You said if I'd quit bugging you, you'd take me.
- Father: Get out, Harvey.
- Harvey: No.
- Father: I'm telling you for the last time, Harvey. Get out.
- Harvey: Drive me to the banquet and I'll get out.
- Father: You'll get out when I say so. I'm late for my poker game. And I say you get out. NOW! *(Reaches across Harvey and mimes opening car door and pushes Harvey out)*
OUT!
- Harvey: *(Falls, gets up)* No, no. You promised. You promised.
(Father mimes locking door. Harvey mimes trying to open it. Father mimes starting the engine. Sound effect,. Harvey runs in front of "car")

Stop. Wait. You can't leave. Let me in the other side. You promised. *(Roar of engine grows louder. Harvey screams in pain and falls. Stage is flooded with red light. Harvey goes to wheelchair. Engine roar becomes deafening. Ambulance siren is heard. There is sudden silence. Regular lights)*

THE PINBALLS

Father: *(Stands alone, speaks to unseen person)* He's going to be all right. He's going to be all right, isn't he, doctor?

Doctor: *(Woman's voice, off)* He's had a bad fright, but he'll come around. There are some bruises. *(Announces)* Both of his legs are broken.

Father: Broken. It was an accident. That's the truth, doctor. It was a new car. He ran in front and I thought I put the shift in reverse, but it was in drive, and I stepped on the gas- -

Doctor: *(Off)* He will have to wear casts on both his legs- -and be in a wheelchair- -for quite a while.

Father: I was going to take him to get an award. It was an accident—an accident, doctor.

Doctor: *(Off)* I am sure it was. We will keep him in the hospital for a few days.

Clerk: *(Voice, off)* Silence. Order in the court room. The judge will speak.

Judge: *(Voice, off)* This court is now in session. *(Sound of gavel hitting)*

Father: *(Turns to other side, facing an unseen judge)* Your honor, it was an accident. I wasn't used to the new car. By mistake I put it in drive instead of reverse- -

Judge: *(Off)* The report says before the accident you had been drinking.

Father: Only one, your honor. Maybe two drinks.

Judge: The report says, of late, you have quite a problem with alcohol.

Father: I- -You see, Judge, his mother left- -my business is off, and- -

THE PINBALLS

- Judge: *(Off)* It is the order of this court, since there is no mother in the home, that the boy, Harvey, will be put in a foster home until such time as his father can control his drinking and make a safe home for his son. Next case. *(Sound of gavel hitting)*
- Father: Yes, your honor. *(Exits)*
- Harvey: *(Wheels around facing front, sitting in wheelchair, wearing two casts on his legs)* They sent my prize to me in the mail. And took my picture- -in a wheelchair.
- Carlie: *(Enters)* The orders are- -to help you come into the house, so you- -as she says- -*(Comically imitating Mrs. Mason)*- -can settle in.
- Harvey: I can wheel myself.
- Carlie: *(Dramatically)* Oh, no. Don't take that pleasure away from- -the slave of the world. I know one thing, if someone waited on ME, I'd drop over dead. *(Harvey does not respond)* You don't get anything, do you, Harvey? I just gave you the perfect chance to INSULT me. I said, "If someone waited on me, I'd drop over dead." Now you should say, "Is that a promise?"
- Harvey: Why?
- Carlie: Because that's the way life is. You insult the other person before he can insult you.
- Harvey: There's a car driving up in front.
- Carlie: A car? Talent scouts from Hollywood! Hollywood here I am! They've heard about my twirling- -*(She steps, sways, twists)*- -and my sex appeal.

THE PINBALLS

- Mrs. M: *(Hurries in, with flowers. Gives flowers to Carlie who throws them on table)* It's Thomas J. They are bringing him early. He's so little- -so young. We'll all have to help and look after him. *(Hurries out)*
- Carlie: You and me and him, we're three stray cats and she's taking us in. Meow- *-(Humps her back)-* -Hiss-s-s-s.
- Mrs. M: *(Enters)* Come along, Thomas J. I want you to meet the other children. *(Thomas enters with small bag. He stands small and alone)* This is Carlie.
- Carlie: Hi. At least you can WALK.
- Thomas: *(Shouts, as if speaking to a deaf person)* HELLO. I AM GLAD TO MEET YOU.
- Carlie: And he can TALK!
- Mrs. M: And this is Harvey. You and he will share the same room. If he needs me in the night, you can call me.
- Thomas: *(Shouts)* I'LL BE GLAD TO.
- Carlie: He's got the voice for it. Listen, you, when my favorite program is on TV you'd better *(Whispers)-* -whisper.
- Thomas: *(Shouts)* I'LL BE GLAD TO.
- Mrs. M: Thomas J. has been staying with two elder sisters. They both are hard of hearing. *(Thomas nods)* So he had to speak up to be heard. *(Thomas nods bigger)* But here, Thomas J., you can speak quietly.
- Thomas: *(Shouts)* I'LL BE GLAD- *-(Mrs. M. motions to him to lower his voice. He speaks softer)* I'll be glad to.
- Carlie: Why did they take you away from your home?
- Thomas: *(All look at him. He looks at each one, then speaks)* I- -I DON'T HAVE A HOME.