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Dramatic Publishing



THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

Adapted by
JAMES STILL

From the Story by
MARGERY WILLIAMS

THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

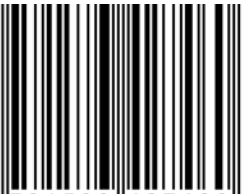
Finalist in Theatre Communications Group (TCG) Plays in Process

Originally produced by the Emmy Gifford Children's Theatre in Omaha, the play has been successfully produced at theatres around the country. Enjoyable to all groups (including adults), and appropriate for holiday productions. The play is filled with action and humor, and the costumes for the toys can be great fun!

Fantasy. Adapted by James Still. From the classic story by Margery Williams. Cast: 10 either gender (doubling possible). Written as a "memory play," *The Velveteen Rabbit* is an emotional journey through time told through the eyes of a young man looking back on his childhood. By reliving the relationship between his 4-year-old self and his favorite toy (the velveteen rabbit), he rediscovers the true meaning of friendship. Central to the story is, of course, the velveteen rabbit, who is introduced to the idea of becoming real by the old rocking horse. The play explores the rewards of loyalty, the poignancy of loss, and the wonderful, surprising powers of love. *Unit set. Simple or elaborate costumes, as desired. Approximate running time: 55 minutes. Code: V39.*

Cover Art by D. Keith Johnston, originally designed by the production at the Lexington Children's Theatre

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The Velveteen Rabbit (Still)



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SECOND EDITION



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(THE VELVETEEN RABBIT)

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For Roberta

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

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SPECIAL NOTICE

The following notice must appear on all printed programs: “*The Velveteen Rabbit* was originally produced by The Emmy Gifford Children’s Theatre in Omaha, Nebraska.”

"The Velveteen Rabbit" was originally presented by The Emmy Gifford Children's Theater in Omaha, Nebraska, on September 11, 1986. It was directed by James Larson; the scenery and lighting were by Steve Wheeldon; and costumes were by Sherri Geerdes. The cast was as follows:

The Velveteen Rabbit	Kathy Wheeldon
Older Steve	Matt Kamprath
Ben	Wes Bailey
Rocking Horse	Amy Kunz
Rabbit #1	Tracy Iwerson
Magic Fairy	Dehbi Shannon
Younger Steve	Patrick Flanery
Boat	Moose Epperson
Train	Eric Sopeich
Rabbit #2	Valerie Engler

"The Velveteen Rabbit" (in a revised script) was presented by The University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas in February, 1991. Direction was by the playwright, scenic design by Vaughn Schultz, lighting design by John Britton, costume design by Erik Bruce and original music by Sean Gutteridge. The production stage manager was Kathy Yehle. The cast was:

Older Steve	Sean Andrew Gutteridge
Younger Steve	John Orzulak
Ben	Dan Waller
Velveteen Rabbit	David Hall
Rocking Horse	Diana Dresser
Train/Rabbit #1	Cinnamon Schultz
Boat/Rabbit #2	Juan P. Shuk
Magic Fairy	Becky Hofmann

THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

Older Steve
Younger Steve
Ben
Velveteen Rabbit
Rocking Horse
Train
Boat
Wild Rabbits
Magic Fairy

Time: The present and the past.

Place: Steve's bedroom and the woods in his backyard.

There is no intermission.

NOTES ON THE PRODUCTION:

In producing "The Velveteen Rabbit," please do not be daunted by some of the "effects" suggested in the script. The play will work in a simple straight-forward production just as it will work in a more lavish production. The story is what is important.

In the original production at The Emmy Gifford Children's Theater, Ben rode a skateboard and the Train and Boat did the play on roller skates which gave all three characters a specific kind of mobility — especially compared to the Velveteen Rabbit. The setting was Steve's bedroom with the back wall painted on a scrim so that anytime the scene would shift outdoors, the lights would change and simply "wash away" Steve's bedroom wall. The furniture always remained on stage so there was never any long scene changes. Original music was used within scenes and for transitions. I mention all of this as examples of how certain "problems" might be solved from a production viewpoint. And also because I am especially fond of the original production and the way the play was approached.

On a personal note, I would like to emphasize that any of these roles could be played by men or women — even Ben and Steve could be changed if you felt that was important to your production. Again, the story is what is important — telling the story, sharing the story and exploring the wonderful relationship between a child and the toy he learns to love.

— James Still
1988

A funny thing happened to me a few years ago. I was asked to direct *The Velveteen Rabbit* at the University of Kansas. In that production, the director (me) got the writer (me) to consider some rewrites. This was long after the play was published. The republication of the play includes those rewrites (and a few more too!). I'd like to thank Orlin Corey of Anchorage Press for understanding the writer's process and for supporting this play's ongoing life. Here, then, is the new *Velveteen Rabbit*. It's a bit leaner and structurally tighter - - but its heart remains unaltered.

___ James Still
1996

THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

(A man enters. He is in his mid-twenties, dressed casually and speaks directly with the audience. His manner is easy, simple.)

STEVE:

This play is about me. Lucky for you I'm a likable guy. Just ask me if you don't believe me. Besides, it's not only about me. It's about what happened to me — about what I remember. In this play I'm only four (six) years old and I guess you can tell I'm not four years old anymore. See, this was few years ago: before I went away to college, before I learned how to ride a bike. Even before I went to kindergarten. By the way, my name is Steven. You can call me Steve if you like. My mom and dad used to call me Steven when they were upset with me — like the time I threw that snowball through our neighbor's window. They called me Steven that whole day. Come to think of it, they called me Steven that whole winter. But that's another play. Anyway, where was I? O — THIS play! It begins with my birthday party — four years old. *(He opens the stage curtains slightly and we hear a small group of children angelically singing "Happy Birthday")* Doesn't that sound nice? It was a quiet party and we all behaved like angels. *(Pause)* And I'm lying through my teeth. *(He opens the curtain again and we hear a party in full-tilt, with the sound of children laughing, screaming, running . . .)* Turning four really felt like the biggest deal possible. The great thing about being four is that every day is like a thousand years because a million things happen *(Snaps his fingers and lights and party laughter/noise immediately goes to full)* like that! We were having a great time! *(Birthday presents enter: a new Toy Boat and Toy Train race onstage by themselves. A little boy brings on a giant stuffed rabbit.)* That's me! *(Running over to the little boy)* This is me when I was four years old. This is where our play starts. *(He sings)* "Happy Birthday to me . . ."

YOUNGER STEVE & OLDER STEVE: *(Together)* “. . . Happy Birthday to me.”

(The song ends and Young Steve blows out the candles on the cake as Old Steve talks to the audience:)

OLDER STEVE: I know you're not supposed to tell what you wish — but since it happened so long ago I'll spill the beans. Anyway this is my play and I can do whatever I want. The truth is I was wishing that I could be like my older brother, Ben.

(Ben, 12, walks in with a football, raps Younger Steve on the head, plays keep-away with the football.)

OLDER STEVE: Or maybe I was wishing that Ben would be nicer to me. Ben was 12 then. My big brother. He played basketball and football and got good grades in school. To me it seemed like he could do anything in the world. In those days - - and this may sound funny now that we're both grown up and all — Ben was my hero.

BEN: I love ice cream.

YOUNGER STEVE: I love ice cream too.

OLDER STEVE: *(To audience)* I still do.

BEN: I hate cake.

YOUNGER STEVE: I hate cake too.

OLDER STEVE: *(To audience)* I was lying. I loved cake.

BEN: I'm gonna play some football.

YOUNGER STEVE: Me too.

BEN: With who?

YOUNGER STEVE: With you.

BEN: No you're not.

YOUNGER STEVE: Why not?

OLDER STEVE: (*Unseen by Ben and Young Steve*) Yeah, why not?

BEN: Because you're too little.

YOUNGER STEVE & OLDER STEVE: (*Together*) I'm not too little.

YOUNGER STEVE: I'm four years old!

BEN: Big deal. I wish I had a real brother. One that was cool. One that was twelve.

YOUNGER STEVE: I'll be twelve . . . someday. Can't we pretend that I'm twelve now?

BEN: No. We can't.

YOUNGER STEVE: Why?

BEN: Because you're four. (*He exits*)

(Younger Steve is left alone with his toys: a train engine, a motor boat, a velveteen rabbit and an old rocking horse. All the toys are played by actors.)

OLDER STEVE: I was crushed. Ben didn't know how much he could hurt me. But I had my toys: a train engine that blew real smoke out of his smoke stack, a racing motor boat that had a horn I could toot, and an old rocking horse that had only recently been brought down from the attic still covered with dust. (*Crosses to the Velveteen Rabbit*) O yeah — and this velveteen rabbit. A Christmas present from the year before. What does a velveteen rabbit do? To tell the truth I had never played with it and had even forgotten that it was there.

BEN: *(From offstage)* Steve! Your turn to set the table!

YOUNGER STEVE: *(To his toys)* I'm not ever going to eat again. I'm gonna stay with you and we'll read books together and play football forever. We'll do everything. We'll run for President. And go to the moon. Maybe we'll live on the moon. Just us alone.

BEN: *(From offstage)* Steve!

YOUNGER STEVE: I'm not hungry!

BEN: STEVE!!!

YOUNGER STEVE: I'm not eating. And I don't want to set the table.
(Looks around and sees the Velveteen Rabbit) The velveteen rabbit can do it. Make HIM set the table. He's not doing anything important.

BEN: He's not real. We need a real little boy to set the real table with real dishes or you're gonna have a real big brother who's real mad and who's gonna hit you REAL HARD!

YOUNGER STEVE: I'm real scared.

(Ben jumps into the room and wrestles the unsuspecting Younger Steve to the floor tickling him and roughing him up in fun)

WOMAN: *(From offstage)* STEVEN!!!

(Ben and Younger Steve freeze and look at each other)

OLDER STEVE: That's my mom. Notice that she called me "Steven". I noticed. I did eat again. *(Younger Steve is leaving)* In fact, I set the table right then.

(Alone, the toys come to life. The Train takes off and runs around the room wildly; the Motor Boat puttters around the room and toots his horn; the Rocking Horse watches happily and the Velveteen Rabbit — caught up in the spirit, tries to hop but quickly falls over in a heap. He has no hind legs.)

BOAT: *(Laughing cruelly at the rabbit)* O boy! What kind of rabbit are you? Don't you have any batteries?

VELVETEEN: Batteries?

BOAT: Yeah fuzzy brain. Don't you know what batteries are? They make you go-go-go! *(He takes off around the room)*

VELVETEEN: I don't think I have batteries.

TRAIN: He's just a stuffed animal — filled to the seams with sawdust.

BOAT: What's he do?

TRAIN: He doesn't DO anything. He sits there and waits for someone to pick him up.

VELVETEEN: I'm for hugging.

BOAT: *(Mocking)* He's for hugging. *(The Boat and Train hug each other laughing all the while)*

VELVETEEN: What's wrong with that?

BOAT: Welcome to the 21st Century, man.

TRAIN: It's all about moving.

BOAT: Getting attention from kids!

TRAIN: Keeping their attention!

BOAT: Doing more!

TRAIN: Moving faster!

BOAT: Making noise!

TRAIN: Acting real!

VELVETEEN: What do you mean?

TRAIN: You push a button and we move — like the real thing.
Like a train.

BOAT: Like a boat!

VELVETEEN: What's a real rabbit do?

(The Train and Boat look at each other and laugh)

TRAIN: He hops.

(Velveteen tries to hop and falls over on his face)

BOAT: Too bad for you . . . sack-a-sawdust.

(The Boat and Train laugh and race off together.)

ROCKING HORSE: *(Helping Velveteen up)* Don't listen to them.

VELVETEEN: Easy for you to say.

ROCKING HORSE: I understand how you feel.

VELVETEEN: Sure.

ROCKING HORSE: Trust me. They're just toys. Their batteries will run down or their buttons will get broken; they'll wear out and never be played with again.

VELVETEEN: But the boy hasn't played with me ONCE.

ROCKING HORSE: Nobody remembers toys like the Boat. Inside - - they're only a couple of dead batteries.

VELVETEEN: But I don't have batteries inside.

ROCKING HORSE: EXACTLY! What DO you have inside, Velveteen? You have to find out what's inside. (*Gently*) You and I are not like the Boat or the Train. We'll never have batteries. But so what? We can do anything! That's what's so magical about being a toy. To a child - -you can be REAL!

VELVETEEN: REAL!!! There's that word again. I never, ever, never want to hear that word again!

ROCKING HORSE: My friend . . .HEY! Toy Magic. That's what I'm talking about.

VELVETEEN: Toy Magic?

ROCKING HORSE: It's very strange and wonderful.

VELVETEEN: And magical. You said magical.

ROCKING HORSE: And magical.

VELVETEEN: What's so magical about it? I see most of your paint is worn off and almost all of your tail is gone. That doesn't seem so wonderful to me. And certainly not magical.

(The Boat and Train race on, acting like an old vaudeville team, honking horns after each bad joke. Velveteen and Rocking Horse watch.)

TRAIN: Hey Boat! Why'd the rabbit cross the road?

BOAT: I don't know, Train. Why DID the rabbit cross the road?

TRAIN: To get to the other side!

VELVETEEN: Hocus-pocus: HOPI!!! *(He tries to hop and falls over again.)*

(Ben chases Younger Steve through the room; the toys freeze until the boys are gone.)

ROCKING HORSE: *(Watching Ben exit.)* I was the older brother's toy a long time ago: when he was a little boy. We had some wonderful times. He helped make me real.

VELVETEEN: What is REAL? Does it mean having things that buzz inside you — like the tooting sound the Boat makes? Or having a button that makes you move like the Train?

ROCKING HORSE: Real isn't how you're made.

VELVETEEN: Good thing - - considering I'm made from good-for-nothing sawdust.

ROCKING HORSE: Real is something that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you — then gradually you become real.

VELVETEEN: Does it hurt?

ROCKING HORSE: The truth?

VELVETEEN: Yes. Does it hurt?

ROCKING HORSE: Sometimes.

VELVETEEN: I don't want to hurt.

ROCKING HORSE: Nobody wants to hurt. But part of being real is being able to FEEL. It's true that you feel bad things.

ROCKING HORSE: But you also feel good, great things! Being loved and loving someone back - - those are wonderful feelings. It's a magical gift.

BOAT: What about this: what's the National Rabbit Dance?

TRAIN: I give up! What IS the National Rabbit Dance?

BOAT: The . . . Bunny Hop, of course!

VELVETEEN: Does being real happen all at once like being wound up or pushing an "on" button?

ROCKING HORSE: It doesn't happen all at once. More bit-by-bit. In fact, it's always happening to you. In a kind of slow motion — you become.

VELVETEEN: You become what?

ROCKING HORSE: You become true. Very, very slow. It takes a long time.

VELVETEEN: Tell me what I have to do and I'll do it!

ROCKING HORSE: Sometimes you don't DO anything. Sometimes you just have to BE there and something . . . MAGICAL . . . can happen.

VELVETEEN: Magical?

ROCKING HORSE: That's why it doesn't happen to toys who break easily, or have sharp edges, or have to be carefully kept and handled with kid gloves. Generally, by the time you are real, most of your fur has been loved off and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby looking.

VELVETEEN: Like you?

ROCKING HORSE: (*Laughs*) Like me.

VELVETEEN: Sounds awful.

ROCKING HORSE: These things don't matter because once you're real you can't be ugly, except to toys who don't understand.

VELVETEEN: Like the Train and Boat.

ROCKING HORSE: Exactly.

TRAIN: What did the rabbit say when someone wanted to talk to him?

BOAT: Tell me, what did the rabbit say when someone wanted to talk to him?

TRAIN: I'M ALL EARS!!!

VELVETEEN: Are you real?

ROCKING HORSE: The little boy's older brother helped make me real many years ago. Before he had the skateboard — he had me! And once you're real you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always. In your heart.

VELVETEEN: Wow. That's a long time. I wonder when this magical real will happen to me.

ROCKING HORSE: It's happening already.

VELVETEEN: It is?

ROCKING HORSE: When the little boy hugged you - - that was the beginning.

VELVETEEN: But why do you have to grow shabby and lose your eyes and whiskers? I wish I could become real without all of that happening.

OLDER STEVE: It wasn't until a few weeks later that I started to get to know the Velveteen Rabbit. It was night and I was already in bed almost asleep.

(The toys creep up to Young Steve who sleeps in his bed. "It's a game." They get very close and he suddenly jumps.)

YOUNGER STEVE: Ben! *(Pause)* Ben! *(Pause)* BEN!!!

WOMAN'S VOICE: *(From offstage)* Benjamin! Check on your little brother!

BEN: *(Comes in and looks at Steve)* What do you want?

YOUNGER STEVE: I heard a noise.

BEN: You didn't hear a noise. Now go back to sleep. *(He starts to go)*

YOUNGER STEVE: I DID hear a noise.

BEN: Steve — I'm tired. Please go back to sleep. Here. *(Picks up the first toy he sees)* Take the Velveeta Rabbit. He'll keep you company. And protect you from all the boogey men hiding under your bed.

YOUNGER STEVE: Were you ever scared when you were four?

BEN: Me? Never. No way. *(The Rocking Horse lets a giggle slip)* What was that?

YOUNGER STEVE: What?

BEN: That noise.

YOUNGER STEVE: I didn't hear any noise. Maybe YOU should sleep with my Velveteen Rabbit.