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Dramatic Publishing

The Transition of Dovele Pequeno

Comedy by
Gabriel Jason Dean



**Winner of the 2012 Kennedy Center ACTF
Theatre for Young Audiences Award**

**Runner-up for the 2012 Kennedy Center ACTF
Steinberg/ATCA National Student Playwriting Award**

The Transition of Doodle Pequeño

Comedy. By Gabriel Jason Dean. Cast: 4m., 2w. It's Halloween in Southern California, the Santa Ana winds blow fiercely and nothing is as it seems. Doodle Pequeño and his Mamá recently moved across the city to a cramped apartment in a quadruplex after Papá was deported to Mexico. Anxious to trick-or-treat, Doodle comes home from school to discover that Mamá is unexpectedly working overtime at her new job. Forlorn, he summons Valencia, his imaginary trilingual goat, to keep him occupied. While Valencia is teaching Doodle to speak "Goat," a vampire appears at the window. It's Reno, a kid in the quadruplex who has come to welcome Doodle to the neighborhood. Reno is a self-described "vaudeville vampire," which means that, in addition to his fangs, he dons a tutu. Although Doodle doesn't quite know what to make of his eccentric new friend, Reno convinces Doodle to wear a skirt of his own and go trick-or-treating with him. They venture out into the courtyard where they encounter Toph—a cowboy bandit third-grader, and Marjoram—a sans-costume sixth-grader, who have a history of bullying Reno for his dress-wearing proclivities. They hurl hurtful words they don't quite understand, and, when the bullies turn to Doodle to ask him why he's also wearing a dress, Doodle betrays his new friend, saying "No. No. Reno made me. I didn't wanna wear it." After an epic head-butting battle with his imaginary goat and a visit from a troll named Baumgartner, Doodle understands that difference is to be celebrated. *The Transition of Doodle Pequeño* is a magic-filled, multiple award-winning play for all ages about two boys who become friends in spite of their differences. It examines the consequences of misused language, provides insight into the lives of Mexican-immigrant children and interrogates the issues of gender-identity and homophobic bullying. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 60 minutes. Code: TT5*

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The Transition of Doodle Pequeño

A play for audiences of all ages by

GABRIEL JASON DEAN



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“There came a time when the risk to remain tight in the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.” *(Anais Nin)*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My process is deeply influenced by my collaborators and so this play owes many debts of gratitude. First and foremost, this play would not have been possible without Suzan Zeder, who patiently helped me stay true to the spirit of *Doodle Pequeño* and the kids in the quad. My immense thanks to Abra Chusid, Steven Wilson, Wendy Bable at People's Light & Theatre, Kim Peter Kovac and Deirdre Lavrakas at the Kennedy Center, The Youth Ensemble at A Red Orchid Theatre, Robyn Flatt at Dallas Children's Theatre, Sherry Kramer, James Still, Andrew Hinderaker, Alexis Scott and Jessie Dean. And to Karen Rodriguez, the original Valencia: *gracias por ayudarme con el español*.

FOREWORD BY SUZAN ZEDER

It's a wonderful thing when a writer discovers his or her voice. It's even better when that voice has something important to say for or about children. But it is best of all, when that writer is one of my students and that discovery happens in my class. It has been my great pleasure and privilege to introduce Gabriel Jason Dean to the world of Theatre for Young Audiences and now to write this introduction to his play *The Transition of Doodle Pequeño*.

At the end of the first semester of the first year of the MFA program in playwriting at the University of Texas, we ask our students to submit a portfolio of plays consisting of all of the plays they wrote before coming to us and all of their work in the first semester. In the dozen or so plays that Gabriel Jason Dean submitted, I noticed a fascinating pattern. Virtually every play featured a child or young character as a pivotal force in the dramatic action. None of these plays were intended for young people and indeed all of the child characters in Gabe's plays were in great peril, facing huge obstacles, often at the hands of adults. The children in Gabriel Jason Dean's adult plays dwell in dangerous places physically and emotionally and survive (or don't) by their wits, their courage and their humanity. What excited me most, however, was the fact that Gabe's theatrical worldview included children as citizens of the drama and subjects worthy of our attention and respect.

The Transition of Doodle Pequeño is Gabriel Jason Dean's first play written specifically for a young audience. In this play, he has tackled some serious subjects: bullying, gender identity and the isolation faced by children of immigrant parents. This journey into the child space of Doodle and his imaginary goat, Valencia, has brought him rich rewards as a writer: humor, fantasy and a love of language whether it be English, Spanish or Goat. In the years to come it will be fascinating to see if Gabriel Jason Dean's adult plays will continue to sophisticate and deepen his plays for young people and how his plays for children will bring the light of laughter and imagination to even the darkest places.

Isn't it exciting to be at the beginning of something wonderful?

The Transition of Doodle Pequeño was first presented on November 30, 2011, as a workshop production by the University of Texas at Austin Department of Theatre and Dance in the Oscar G. Brockett Theatre, directed by Steven Wilson and featuring the following cast:

Doodle	Rene Castro
Reno.....	Isaac Gomez
Valencia.....	Karen Rodriguez
Marjoram.....	Uyen-Ahn Dang
Toph.....	Jacques Colimon
Baumgartner	Rudy Ramirez

The University of Texas at Austin workshop production was created in collaboration with the following artists:

Stage Managers.....	Sarah Naderi & Victoria Solorio
Assistant Director	Sam Gorena
Dramaturg.....	Abra Chusid
Composer.....	Randy Maguire
Sound Design.....	Stephanie Busing
Charge Scenic Artist.....	Emily Haueisen
Technical Director	Dave Vieira
Scenic Design.....	William Bloodgood, Mason Baker, Daniel Berkowitz, Nicole Ciesinski, Samantha Hong, Hannah Milem, Christen Perez, Danica Salazar & Bich Vu
Costume Design.....	Susan Mickey, Hope Bennett, Rebecca Bost, Haley Box, Emma Dirks, Jennifer Garrison, Josie Hood, Lily Matthews, Josh Miller, Payal Patel, Elise Romero, Catherine Solheim, Nickie Temprachanh, Vanessa Villareal, Morgan White & Chin-Hua Yeh
Lighting Design.....	Michelle Habeck, Melissa Brown, Jordan Kirby, Natasha Rice, Kristen Thompson, David Toro, Dawn Wittke & Danielle Wright

The University of Texas at Austin production was then presented as a staged reading at Dallas Children's Theatre in February 2012.

The Transition of Doodle Pequeño was presented as a rehearsed reading in May 2012, at the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, as part of *New Visions/New Voices* in partnership with People's Light & Theatre in Malvern, Pennsylvania, directed by Wendy Bable.

Winner of the NETC Aurand Harris Award and the Kennedy Center ACTF Theatre for Young Audiences Award

Runner-up for the Kennedy Center ACTF Mimi and Harold Steinberg National Playwriting Award

The Transition of Doodle Pequeño

CHARACTERS

DOODLE	a fifth-grade boy
VALENCIA	Doodle's imaginary goat
VOICE OF MAMÁ.....	voiced by Valencia
RENO	Doodle's fifth-grade neighbor
BAUMGARTNER.....	a mysterious old man
MARJORAM	a sixth-grade tomboy
TOPH	a third-grader, Marjoram's little brother

CHARACTER NOTES

The vocal inflection of a native “Goat” speaker sounds a lot like a Mexican accent. In fact, maybe they’re even the same.

< > is a beat for the actor.

The Voice of Mamá should be performed live offstage by the actress playing Valencia.

SETTINGS

A quadruplex in Southern California on Halloween.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The first time I experienced a production of *The Transition of Doodle Pequeño* with a group of 8- to 12-year-olds in Austin, Texas, I was a big bundle of nerves. *Doodle Pequeño* is my first play for young audiences and it pushed me as a writer much more intensely than previous plays for adults. Who knew it would take a sassy goat to help me understand that I not only should take responsibility for my play, but also for the conversation it creates? That November night in the back row of the Oscar G. Brockett Theatre as the lights went down, I'm sure a few more gray hairs blossomed on my temples. But when the peals of infectious laughter began, I relaxed and went along for the ride.

At the play's conclusion, we held a discussion and asked, "What is this play about?" Many eager hands shot up. Friendship was the ubiquitous answer. I couldn't agree more. But the friendship that blossoms between Doodle and Reno is sadly not always the reality for people with gender-identity questions. I don't wish to oversimplify things and convey that everything "gets better" when gender-questioning kids find a friend. At the end of this play, I don't know what the future holds for Reno and Doodle, only that they are at the beginning of something new.

In addition to being a celebration of the possibility of friendship, I hope *Doodle Pequeño* is a story that asks the audience to examine labels, question pejorative terms and understand the deleterious consequences of misused language. Words have the power to enslave and destroy. But when examined with open hearts, those same words possess the ability to free and restore us. It's also about actions—how simple kindnesses might save us—sharing an orange, teaching a song, attempting a new language, or trying to understand someone instead of mocking him because he's different.

I hope the play will be as meaningful to you as it is to me.

July 19, 2012

The Transition of Doodle Pequeño

AT RISE: *The jack-o'-lantern 6 o'clock Pacific sun is beginning to set on a hilltop stucco quadruplex in Southern California. Leafy trees in the courtyard cast eerie shadows. The Santa Ana winds blow and we hear the low murmur of many wind chimes. BAUMGARTNER, wearing a nuclear waste-style getup with a fumigating mask, grumbles through the courtyard. He's fertilizing plants, weeding his beds, examining his trees and hanging a few Halloween decorations.*

(DOODLE, wearing his school uniform and a backpack, sprints into the courtyard, seemingly carried by the wind.)

DOODLE. Trick-or-treat! Smell these feet! Gimme something good to eat! If you don't, then I don't care ... *(Forgets words.)* If you don't, then I don't care ...

BAUMGARTNER *(peeking out from a bush)*. I'll pull out your ugly hair! *(Laughs raucously.)*

(The wind howls. DOODLE and BAUMGARTNER regard each other. DOODLE runs toward his apartment. BAUMGARTNER watches him. Lights rise on DOODLE and Mamá's cramped, one-window, studio apartment crammed with unpacked boxes. A message machine lets out a lonely beep.)

DOODLE. ¡Mamá! ¡Ya llegué de la escuela! < > ¡Mamá!
< > Oh no.

(DOODLE presses a button on the message machine.)

VOICE OF MAMÁ *(via the answering machine)*. Hola, Doodle Pequeño. This is Mamá. Are you home? < > Ohhh ... lo siento mucho, cariño. La otra cajera renunció hoy. Y ahora tengo que cubrir su turno. < > I know, mi amor, you are going to be angry, pero este trabajo nuevo nos va a ayudar a pagar los gastos. Pero, llegaré a casa by nine of the clock—

DOODLE. You promised—

VOICE OF MAMÁ. I so sorry, niño. Pero, I bringing 25 PayDay candy bars home para tí— *(To customer.)* I be right with you, sir. Necesito regresar a trabajar, Doodle.

DOODLE. I want to go trick-or-treating. Like normal kids!

VOICE OF MAMÁ. Llegaré a la casa a las nueve—

DOODLE. All the candy'll be gone by then!

VOICE OF MAMÁ *(to customer)*. One second, sir. Doodle—I almost forgetting—por favor, take the monies upstairs to the landlord.

DOODLE. That man is super scary!

VOICE OF MAMÁ. Él es muy agradable. Ahora eres big boy. La renta se tiene que pagar hoy.

DOODLE. You're the adult! You pay for things. Not me.

VOICE OF MAMÁ *(to customer)*. I be right with you, sir.

Oh, estoy emocionada por verte en tu disfraz de diablo!

DOODLE. I'm not wearing that stupid devil costume!

VOICE OF MAMÁ. < > Doodle ... things will be better for us.

(Singing.)

NARANJA DULCE
LIMÓN PARTI—

(BEEEEEEEEEP! DOODLE slumps, unwraps a PayDay candy bar, eats it miserably.)

VALENCIA *(from inside the cabinet)*. B-eh-eh-eh-eh!

(DOODLE casually opens the cabinet and VALENCIA, the goat, emerges.)

VALENCIA. Hola hola, Doodle Pequeño ...

DOODLE. Hola, Valencia.

(VALENCIA takes the PayDay from DOODLE, chomps it.)

DOODLE *(cont'd)*. Heeey—por qué estas eating my candy bars? Aren't you supposed to be eating grass or something?

VALENCIA. Ay, give me break. I *your* imaginary goat. I eat what *you* eat, mijo.

(DOODLE slumps.)

VALENCIA *(cont'd)*. Ay, you are one cloudy little Doodle.

DOODLE. I hate this stupid place so stupid much! We haven't unpacked yet! I've been wearing the same underwear for *three days*! I am not paying the stupid rent! *(Finds his devil horns, tail and bow tie. As he speaks, he rips them up.)* Y no voy a ir a stupid trick-and-treat o usar estos cuernos estúpidos estúpidos!

VALENCIA (*stomps and kicks some boxes which fly across the room*). Espera. Why are we so much angry?

DOODLE. Mamá's stupid job!

VALENCIA. Stupid stupid stupid! Wait. What does that mean?

DOODLE. It means we hate it.

VALENCIA. Stu-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-pid!

DOODLE. Mamá's going to be mad at us.

VALENCIA. These things could be worse. (*Scratching herself.*) At least *you* no have fleas. <> Ah, maybe instead of your devil horns, you wearing my horns instead.

(VALENCIA lifts her horns off her head, places them on DOODLE's head. DOODLE giggles in spite of himself and VALENCIA goat-leaps.)

VALENCIA (*cont'd*). You be the goat. I will be the *chupacabra!*

DOODLE. Chupahuh?

VALENCIA. Chupacabra. You know, mijo ... goat vampire.

DOODLE. Vampire?

VALENCIA. Sí. The chupacabra comes out at night when cabritos like you are asleeping. He bites them on the neck with his muy grande fangs—

DOODLE. Fangs!?

VALENCIA. Sí, and then he drinks all their blood like it was Kool-aid! <> Mwah-ah-ah-ah-ah!

(Silence.)

VALENCIA (*cont'd*). Now, you be the goat.

DOODLE. Why do *I* have to be the goat?

VALENCIA. Because you wearing the horns.

DOODLE. < > Fine. But *no* biting!

VALENCIA. Yeah, yeah. OK. Now, channel your inner goat.

(DOODLE strikes his best goat pose.)

VALENCIA *(cont'd)*. This is your best goat?

DOODLE. Yeah, what's wrong?

VALENCIA. Goats have four legs.

(DOODLE goes down on all fours.)

VALENCIA *(cont'd)*. That's a little better.

(VALENCIA adjusts DOODLE to make him more goat-tastic.)

VALENCIA *(cont'd)*. Sí, now you are a real goat.

DOODLE *(unconvincingly)*. Bah-ah-ah-ah-ah.

VALENCIA. Más o menos. Now, pretend you are asleeping.

(DOODLE snores.)

VALENCIA *(cont'd)*. Cierra los ojos!

DOODLE. If I close my eyes, then you'll attack me.

VALENCIA. Sí.

DOODLE. I don't wanna be attacked.

VALENCIA. Are you scared of the chupacabra?

DOODLE. No!

VALENCIA. Then, cierra los ojos!

(DOODLE closes one eye.)

VALENCIA (*cont'd*). Both eyes!

(DOODLE nervously closes both eyes. VALENCIA hides in a small box. A loud grinding noise comes from the courtyard where BAUMGARTNER is fiddling with an uncooperative machine.)

DOODLE. Valencia? What is that noise? Valencia? (*Opens his eyes, looks around for VALENCIA.*) Valencia?

(DOODLE goes to the window to investigate the noise and sees BAUMGARTNER.)

BAUMGARTNER. Blasted technology!

(VALENCIA emerges from the small box and stalks behind DOODLE chupacabra-style. VALENCIA looks as though she is going to ferociously bite DOODLE's neck. DOODLE turns to see her.)

DOODLE. AHHHHHHHHH!

(VALENCIA goes for DOODLE's neck, but instead of biting him, she makes a fart noise on his neck with her lips.)

DOODLE (*cont'd*). Hey! Hey! No flurbling, Valencia!

VALENCIA. ¿Qué?

DOODLE. No flurbling my neck meat.

VALENCIA. What is *flu-u-u-u-rbling*?

DOODLE. Farting on my neck.

(VALENCIA flurbles DOODLE. DOODLE flurbles VALENCIA.)

VALENCIA. Be-eh-eh-eh-eh!

(DOODLE chases VALENCIA! She goat-leaps on boxes, chairs, counters. They chase until they are out-of-breath exhausted.)

VALENCIA (*cont'd*). Ayaya! The sugar from the PayDays making me bouncing off the floors!

DOODLE. You mean bounce off the walls—

VALENCIA. BAHFOOGEE.

DOODLE. What did you say?

VALENCIA. < > Bahfoogee.

DOODLE. Is that Spanish?

VALENCIA. No. It's Goat.

DOODLE. You speak Goat?

VALENCIA. Por supuesto, Doodle. I am goat, so I speak goat.

DOODLE. What's it mean?

VALENCIA. It's a curse word in Goat. Not meant for cabritos like you to be hearing.

DOODLE. I'm not a cabrito anymore. What's it mean?

VALENCIA. Is a b-a-a-a-a-d word to say—como when you lose something importante. I say it when I mixing up my Goat and English phrases. When I *lose* my words. I say it lots of the times.

DOODLE. Teach it to me!

VALENCIA. < > You can no say it front of Mamá. Do we have a deal?

DOODLE. Deal.

VALENCIA. Repite, por favor: *BAAAAHHHHFOOOOGEEE!*

DOODLE. *BOOOOOOOOOOFAAAAAAAHHHHGEE-EEEEEE!*

VALENCIA. Um, your accent's a little funny. It sounded like you saying I have a big nose.

DOODLE. You do have a big nose.

VALENCIA. Besides the point. < > Try again.

BAAAAHHHHHHFFFFFOOOOOOOOGEEEEEEEE!

DOODLE. *BAAAAHHHHHHFFFFFOOOOOOOOGEEEEEEEE!*

VALENCIA. Very good!

DOODLE. *BAAAAA—*

(BAUMGARTNER grinds in the courtyard. DOODLE and VALENCIA cautiously approach the window. The two are amazed by BAUMGARTNER's every move. He smashes something underfoot, picks it up and examines it.)

BAUMGARTNER. Looks like your run-of-the-mill *Drosophila melanogaster*. Not a *Drosophila suzukii*, thank goodness. *(Ritualistically puts things from the grinding machine into his sprayer.)* A bit of bone meal, kale, clay, shark fin, garlic—

(BAUMGARTNER pours a red liquid from the machine into his sprayer. He slowly drags a big ladder across the courtyard. It makes horrendous noise. He climbs, grumbling with every step. He stands on top of a ladder, grunting and spraying the trees with a frightening mist.)

DOODLE. *WHAT ... is that? Is it el chupacabra?*

VALENCIA. No, it's worse. It's the *L-A-A-A-A-ANDLORD*.

DOODLE. What do you think he's *doing*?

VALENCIA. He say something about bones.

DOODLE. So?

VALENCIA. Maybe he's doing an ancient vo-oo-oo-oo-oo-oo-doo magic spell cursey thingy. Maybe he's a *brujo*?

DOODLE. Witches are usually girls.

VALENCIA. Boys can be witches, too.

(A gust of wind. BAUMGARTNER is shaky on the ladder. Wind chimes roar.)

BAUMGARTNER. BWAH! Confound Santa Ana! Stay in Mexico!

DOODLE. I don't think I can give him the money.

VALENCIA. You no pay, we no stay.

DOODLE. ¿Y qué? This place is a dump.

VALENCIA. This place is our new casa, Doodle Pequeño!

DOODLE. You sound like Mamá.

VALENCIA. Fine. This place is stu-u-u-u-upid.

DOODLE. Much better.

(VALENCIA kicks a box across the room. DOODLE throws a small box marked "fragile." Major breakage.)

VALENCIA. Oopsy. Mamá is going to grind us for good.

DOODLE. *Ground* us.

VALENCIA. BAHFOOGEE.

(DOODLE picks up the box.)

VALENCIA (*cont'd*). If you no open it, then you can deny it was you.

DOODLE. Sí, tienes razón. (*Hides the box in the cabinet.*)

VALENCIA. Out of the mind, out of the sight.

DOODLE. No, out of sight, out of mind.

VALENCIA. Ay, Bahfoogee!

(DOODLE stares worriedly at the cabinet. After a moment, he opens the cabinet and pulls out the box.)

VALENCIA *(cont'd)*. Ay, Doodle. No abras esa caja.

(DOODLE pulls a bit of the tape off the top. VALENCIA gasps and shudders. DOODLE pulls again.)

VALENCIA *(cont'd)*. Be-eh-eh-eh-eh-eh!

(DOODLE pulls again. VALENCIA faints.)

DOODLE. You are so dramatic.

(DOODLE digs inside the box, spilling packing peanuts on the floor. VALENCIA suddenly uprights.)

VALENCIA. Oooooo—what are those?

DOODLE. Peanuts.

VALENCIA. ¡Ay, delicioso! *(Eats one, violently spits it out.)*

DOODLE. ¡No, cabra tonta! Packing peanuts. For to pack things.

VALENCIA. Yuck! Phew! Ewwwww. Gr-o-o-o-o-o-ss!

(VALENCIA takes the box, dumps it. A broken picture frame falls out. DOODLE picks it up. It's a photo of DOODLE, Mamá and Papá.)

DOODLE. Oh no. *(Sitting.)* Oh no.