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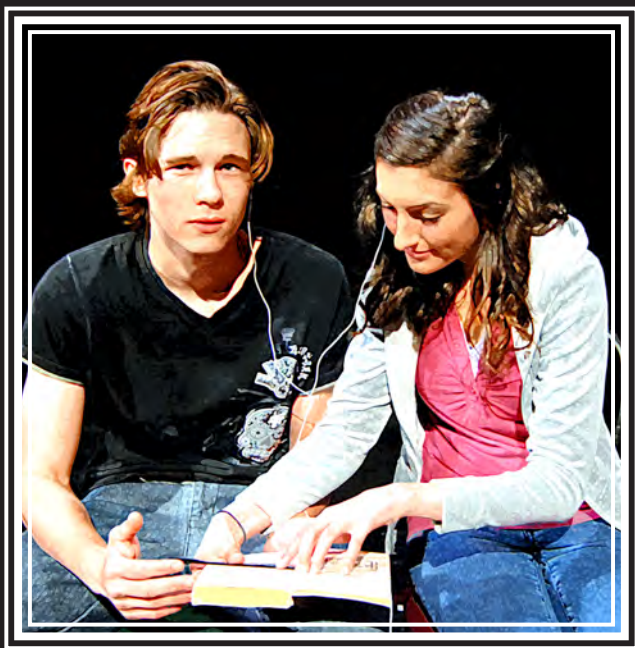
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hard 2 spel dad



(40-minute version)

Drama by Linda Daugherty
and Mary Rohde Scudday

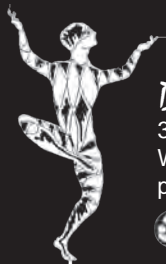
hard 2 spel dad

(40-minute version)

Drama. By Linda Daugherty and Mary Rohde Scudday. Cast: 3m., 5w. Imagine that every time you open a book, letters play tricks on you. They flip, they reverse, they jump upside down. Every sentence you read takes so much effort—so much energy—because the letters don't behave. By the time you reach the end of the sentence, you've lost its meaning. You're embarrassed and feel stupid. This is what two young people with learning differences face in *hard 2 spel dad*. Still grieving and angry over the heroic death of her fireman father, 13-year-old Pamela hopes to make a "fresh start" when she and her mother move to a new town to help care for her grandfather. Pamela has a learning difference, dyslexia, and so, she thinks, does her new skateboarding friend Zak, 15 years old and still stuck in middle school. The two young people struggle to read their class assignment, *Romeo and Juliet*, but when, after watching the modern DVD version, Zak passionately retells the entire story, Pamela concocts a scheme she is convinced will show how smart Zak is. When this backfires, Zak, humiliated and angry, seeks solace in prescription drugs and alcohol with near tragic results. But hope triumphs as, finally, Pamela accepts her father's death, Zak's learning difference is diagnosed and addressed and they both look forward to starting high school. *hard 2 spel dad* dramatizes the loss of self-esteem, isolation, and risky behaviors that all too often accompany learning differences. The play will give audiences an understanding of what it feels like to learn differently, the school's critical role in accommodating learning differences, and the strength, courage and perseverance of those who turn these differences into distinctions. Premier production at the Dallas Children's Theater. *Area staging. Approximate running time: 40 minutes. Code: HA9.*

Cover photo: Dallas Children's Theater, Dallas, Texas, featuring Skyy Moore and Kimberly Kottwitz. Photo: Linda Blase. Cover design: Jeanette Alig-Sergel.

ISBN-10 1-58342-688-4
ISBN-13 978-1-58342-688-3



Dramatic Publishing

311 Washington St.
Woodstock, IL 60098
ph: 800-448-7469



Printed on recycled paper

www.dramaticpublishing.com

hard 2 spel dad

By

LINDA DAUGHERTY and MARY ROHDE SCUDDAY

(40-minute version)



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(hard 2 spel dad - 40-minute version)

ISBN: 978-1-58342-688-3

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hard 2 spel dad premiered at Dallas Children's Theater (Robyn Flatt, Executive Artistic Director) from April 9 through April 25, 2010, directed by Robyn Flatt.

Original Cast

Pop-Pop Larry Randolph*
Evelyn Hanson. Fay Fuselier
Pamela Massey Kimberly Kottwitz / Alex Mutti
Katherine Massey Lisa Schreiner*
Zak Porter Will Altabef / Skyy Moore
Ms. Donahue Sally Fiorello
Annie Porter Amber Devlin
David Porter Steve Jones

Original Production Staff

Scenery Design. Randel Wright
Costume Design Barbara Cox
Sound Design Marco Salinas
Properties Design Jen Spillane
Lighting Design & Production Stage Manager . . Linda Blase*

* *Denotes member of Actors' Equity Association, the union for professional actors and stage managers in the United States.*

hard 2 spel dad

CHARACTERS

- POP-POP/Mr. Sperry an elderly man with
Alzheimer's disease
- EVELYN HANSON the caretaker, 40s to 60s
- PAMELA MASSEY girl about 13
- KATHERINE MASSEY Pamela's mother, early 30s
- ZAK PORTER boy about 15
- MS. DONAHUE 30s to 40s
- ANNIE PORTER Zak's mother
- DAVID PORTER Zak's father

hard 2 spel dad

SETTING: *The recent past. A bare stage that becomes various locations.*

AT RISE: *Big Band-era music plays from a boom box. EVELYN sits in lawn chair, relaxing and reading a book. POP-POP is in his wheelchair center, staring out blankly. He checks his wristwatch.*

EVELYN (*not looking up from her book and talking over the music*). Now don't keep looking at your watch. Your family'll be here, Mr. Sperry. Just enjoy that sunshine. You'll get your good vitamin D out here today.

(He taps his watch, annoyed. She abruptly closes her book and turns off boom box.)

EVELYN (*cont'd*). See, I can't even finish this chapter. I'm going to put the dishes in. You just enjoy the sunshine, Mr. Sperry. And don't look at that watch.

(She exits with boom box. POP-POP frowns at watch and stares into space. Car horn honks. PAMELA, excited and happy, runs on shouting and throws her arms around POP-POP, startling him.)

PAMELA. Pop-Pop! Hey, Pop-Pop! We're here! We made it!

POP-POP. Hey...hey...hey!

PAMELA (*staring at him intently.*). Hello, Pop-Pop, it's me.

POP-POP. Martha!

PAMELA (*clearly and gently*). No, Pop-Pop, it's not Martha. It's me—*Pamela*. Mom and I are here to take care of you. See, there's Mom, by the car. We got all our stuff in. I don't know how we did it but we did.

KATHERINE (*from offstage*). Pammy!

PAMELA. Coming! Hey, Pop-Pop, you look so good!

POP-POP. Where's Billy?

(*PAMELA, frozen, stares at him. KATHERINE enters.*)

KATHERINE. Pamela, I need your help.

PAMELA. Mom, look! Pop-Pop looks really happy to see us!

KATHERINE (*kneeling before wheelchair*). Hi, Dad...it's me.

POP-POP. Martha...?

KATHERINE. No, Dad. It's Katherine...your daughter.

(*POP-POP stares at her blankly. KATHERINE stands, resigned.*)

KATHERINE (*cont'd*). Pamela, come on. We've got a whole car to unpack.

POP-POP. You get Billy to help you.

(*KATHERINE stops a moment, frozen, then continues.*)

KATHERINE. Come on, Pamela. I need you. *(She exits.)*

PAMELA. Okay, Pop-Pop. We'll be right back. *(With a conjuring gesture.) Don't go anywhere! Just kidding.*

(PAMELA runs off. POP-POP stares after her. ZAK enters on skateboard and stops next to POP-POP.)

ZAK. Hey, Mr. Sperry. What's going on?

POP-POP. Hey...

ZAK. Mr. Sperry, it's me. It's Zak.

POP-POP. Hey...Zak...

ZAK. Who are those people?

POP-POP. I...don't know...

(KATHERINE enters, carrying suitcases.)

KATHERINE. Hi.

ZAK. Hi.

(She exits into house.)

ZAK *(cont'd)*. They moving in?

(PAMELA enters with backpack.)

PAMELA. Hi. Who are you? Oh, yeah, you live around here, right?

ZAK. Yeah. You moving in here?

PAMELA. Well, duh. What does it look like?

ZAK. You going to live here? With the old man?

PAMELA *(annoyed)*. Yeah, with my *grandfather*. And that's Mr. Sperry to you. What's your name anyway?

POP-POP. Zak.

PAMELA (to ZAK, surprised). Yeah?

ZAK. Yeah.

PAMELA (pulling up POP-POP's hand to "high five").

Way to go, Pop-Pop!

ZAK. Yeah, way to go, Mr. Sperry. Hey, what grade you in?

PAMELA. Eighth. We've been in that car for days and days. And my mom's making me go to school tomorrow.

ZAK. Yeah, life's tough. See you later.

PAMELA. Hey, how old are you?

ZAK. Fifteen. (*He skates off.*)

PAMELA (*calling off*). Yeah, well, I know how to skateboard, too!

(*EVELYN enters, drying her hands on her apron.*)

EVELYN (*throwing her arms around PAMELA*). Pamela, baby, my heavens, how you have grown! And, you're so pretty! Your momma wants you to hurry up and help get your stuff inside.

PAMELA (*pushing POP-POP*). I got him, Miss Evelyn! Come on, Pop-Pop. Man, I'm totally starving! Aren't you hungry, Pop-Pop? You got peanut butter? I sure hope you've got some peanut butter! (*PAMELA, pushing POP-POP, exits, followed by EVELYN.*)

(*Lights cross fade, school bell rings and, with popular music underscoring, ZAK storms on, holding a paper airplane. He angrily throws it into the air and sits apart, head in his hands. From another direction, KATHERINE*

hurries on holding papers followed by PAMELA with backpack, dragging her heels. Music fades.)

KATHERINE (*handing papers to PAMELA*). Okay, this is your classroom. Give these to your teacher.

PAMELA. Mom, it's too hard having to start a new school in the middle of the year!

KATHERINE. Pammy, my dad needs me now. He only has me. And you know we couldn't afford the house anymore.

PAMELA. I know, Mom, I know. Hey, I wanted to move, too, you know.

KATHERINE. So what's the problem?

PAMELA. The problem is *school*.

KATHERINE. You have to go to school, Pamela. (*No reply from PAMELA.*) "The greater the difficulty, the greater the glory."

PAMELA. Yeah, right.

KATHERINE. I'll be home from work about five, okay? Love you.

PAMELA. Bye, Mom. Love you, too. Hey, it's gonna be okay.

(KATHERINE hugs her and exits. PAMELA takes a deep breath, trying to prepare herself. She notices ZAK, apart.)

PAMELA (*cont'd*). Hey, what're you doing out here?

ZAK. Leave me alone.

PAMELA. I mean, what are you doing *here*? You're fifteen, right? Why aren't you at the high school?

ZAK. Because I'm stupid.

PAMELA. No, you're not.

ZAK. So why am I still in the eighth grade?

PAMELA. Oh... Hey, what kind of teacher's Ms. Donahue?

ZAK (*laughing too loudly*). Oh, man!

(*MS. DONAHUE enters. ZAK turns away.*)

PAMELA. Hi, I'm Pamela Massey. I'm your new student.
We just moved here, like yesterday.

MS. DONAHUE. Why don't you go on in, Pamela?

PAMELA. Okay. Hey, what class is this—oh, I see, uh,
English I.

MS. DONAHUE. Go on in, Pamela. I need to talk to Zachariah.

PAMELA (*amused*). Zachariah?

MS. DONAHUE. Go find a desk, Pamela.

(*PAMELA exits.*)

MS. DONAHUE (*cont'd*). Zak, we need to have a meeting.
(*Handing note to ZAK.*) Here's a note for your parents.
This is the second time you've taken my English class.
You have to keep up with the reading. If you'd just try
harder—

ZAK (*stuffing the note in his pocket*). You want me to go
back to class now?

MS. DONAHUE. No. I want you to sit out here a little longer and reflect on your behavior. (*Handing paper airplane to ZAK.*) And I want you to finish this essay. And proofread it. You'd make a much better grade if you'd just check your spelling. Then you can come back to class.

(MS. DONAHUE exits. Popular music underscores as ZAK angrily rips up the paper airplane and exits. Lights cross fade as EVELYN pushes on POP-POP and sits, reading newspaper. From another direction, PAMELA enters with a groan, carrying a heavy backpack stuffed with books and drops it on the floor. Music fades.)

EVELYN. My word, what you got there?

PAMELA *(annoyed)*. Books. *(Kissing POP-POP on the cheek.)* Hey, Pop-Pop.

POP-POP. Hey...

EVELYN. How was your first day at Jefferson Junior High?

PAMELA. It's school.

EVELYN. You need all those books?

PAMELA. I guess. This one's for English...this is algebra, earth science, health.

EVELYN. Health?

PAMELA. Yeah. Stuff like AIDS and drugs and safe sex.

EVELYN. Oh, my heavens. Well, I guess that's good.

PAMELA *(holding up paperback of Romeo and Juliet)*.

And this we have to read for English.

EVELYN *(lovingly taking book from her and thumbing through it)*. *Romeo and Juliet*. You ever read it?

PAMELA. No.

EVELYN. Oh, well, I love Shakespeare. *(Reading dramatically.)*

“Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.”

PAMELA. I think I'm gonna hate Shakespeare.

POP-POP. Martha—did she call? Did she call?

EVELYN. No, Mr. Sperry, she didn't call. She's just fine where she is. Pamela, I know you and your mom needed a change after losing your dad. I'm so, so sorry that happened, honey. Billy was a wonderful boy...well, a wonderful, young man.

PAMELA (*returning books to backpack*). Yeah.

EVELYN. So brave. He was always like that. Selfless.

PAMELA. Remind me not to be a fireman when I grow up.

(*EVELYN, concerned, stares at PAMELA.*)

POP-POP (*agitated and looking around on floor for something*). Where's Martha? She not home yet?

EVELYN (*waving newspaper*). Is this what you're looking for, honey? How about Pamela reads you the sports pages?

PAMELA. Read?

POP-POP. I need Billy.

EVELYN. He loved your dad to read him the sports pages. He was so happy when your mom married Billy. At last he had a man in the family he could talk sports with. Well, I'm gonna start dinner. (*Handing the paper to PAMELA.*) Here you go. I think having both you girls here has made him think maybe Martha's here, too. (*She exits into house.*)

PAMELA. Okay...the sports page. Let's see... (*Resigned, she flops down by POP-POP, lays the paper on the floor and places her finger under the words.*) "Coach..."

POP-POP. Coach who?

PAMELA. “Coach Stan...Wah...” (*Guessing at the last name.*) “Coach Stan...Wilson—

POP-POP. Stan Wilson? Who is Stan Wilson?!

PAMELA. Maybe—maybe it’s not “Wilson.” (*She shows POP-POP the paper, pointing at the name.*) What’s that word? Pop-Pop, you used to read to me all the time when I was little.

(*POP-POP pushes the paper away.*)

PAMELA (*cont’d*). Okay... “Coach Stan W has said this will be his last... (*She tries to sound out the word “season.” Unsuccessful, she substitutes the word “years.”*) Sss...ee—these are his last...years...this is his last... year as head...football coach of the...Steers. His last *season* as the head of the Steers!”

(*PAMELA’s struggle to read continues as KATHERINE, exhausted, enters apart, sits, opens her purse, takes out her wallet and stares at a picture.*)

PAMELA (*cont’d*). Okay...okay. “He will re...tire from... football coach...ing. My...Marvin...Marvin...somebody, a senior...and last sea...last year’s quiet...qu...back... last year’s...quick...qua...”

POP-POP, PAMELA (*together*). “Quarterback!”

PAMELA. Yeah, yeah, good, Pop-Pop! “Last sss—year’s quarterback has prom...promised...well, he says the Steers will win this year.”

POP-POP. Who won?!

(As actions of PAMELA and KATHERINE continue, lights rise on EVELYN upstage as if in kitchen, holding an open book and wooden spoon. She reads, engrossed and amused, occasionally turning upstage as if stirring supper on stove.)

PAMELA. Uh, well, the Steers won, I guess. Why do you like to read about sports anyway? You could just watch it on TV.

(Actions continue as KATHERINE takes out a folded piece of paper and reads to herself.)

POP-POP *(poking insistently at paper)*. Read that!

PAMELA. All this?

POP-POP. Yes...please.

PAMELA. Okay, sure, Pop-Pop. This is a story, a story about the team from, from 1978...they, they were the champions of the whole state—yeah—they were the state champions and, and...

(All actions continue as lights rise on ZAK, apart, anxiously pacing and holding a note in his hands. ANNIE PORTER, ZAK's MOTHER, enters and he hesitantly hands her the note.)

POP-POP. Who?

PAMELA. Well, this team from 1978. And—and a bunch of old guys decided to have a re...reunion.