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Dramatic Publishing

BUD, NOT BUDDY

By
REGINALD ANDRÉ JACKSON

Adapted from the novel
by
CHRISTOPHER PAUL CURTIS



Dramatic Publishing

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(BUD, NOT BUDDY)

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* * * *

A workshop of *Bud, Not Buddy* opened on January 14, 2006,
at Book-It Repertory Theatre with the following cast:

Bud (not Buddy) *Earl Alexander*
Mr. Jimmy, Ensemble *L. Sterling Beard*
Herman E. Calloway *Frederick Charles Canada*
Librarian, Ensemble. *Margaret Philips Carter*
Momma, Ensemble. *Rebecca M. Davis*
Bugs, Steady Eddie, Ensemble *Anthony Leroy Fuller*

Miss Thomas, Ensemble. *Demene E. Hall*
Lefty Lewis, Doo-Doo-Bug, Ensemble *Cecil Luellen*
Doug the Thug, Ensemble *Lance McQueen*
Deza Malone, Young Momma, Ensemble . . . *Shermona Mitchell*
Dirty Deed, Ensemble *Michael Place*

Director: Mark Jared Zufelt

Bud, Not Buddy received its world premiere on December 1, 2006, at Book-It Repertory Theatre in Seattle, Wash., with the following cast:

Bud (not Buddy). *Earl Alexander*
Mr. Jimmy, Ensemble *Bob Williams*
Herman E. Calloway *Bill Hall Jr.*
Librarian, Ensemble. *Natasha Sims*
Momma, Ensemble *Chelsea Binta*
Bugs, Steady Eddie, Ensemble *Brandon Boyd Simmons*
Miss Thomas, Ensemble. *Demene E. Hall*
Lefty Lewis, Doo-Doo-Bug, Ensemble *Cecil Luellen*
Billy, Toddy, Doug the Thug, Ensemble. *Stan Shields*
Deza Malone, Young Momma, Ensemble . . . *Shermona Mitchell*
Dirty Deed, Ensemble *John Ulman*

Director: Mark Jared Zufelt

Bud, Not Buddy opened on January 15, 2008, at the Children’s Theatre Company, in Minneapolis, Minn., under the direction of Marion McClinton,

Approaching Bud, Not Buddy

This play has been written in the Book-It style. This allows the play to be supported by actual narrative from the novel. This narrative is most effective when treated as dialogue.

Example. Bud has the line.

The whole room smelled like eraser and it felt like something had poked the back of my eyeball.

Instead of staring out at the audience, a plausible way to deliver this line is to think:

Wow, this room smells like...like, is that eraser— Ow, ow, ow! What happened to my eye?

Bud, as our guide has several asides to the audience, as does the Announcer. Bugs speaks to the audience when he explains where his name comes from and when he's looking for the train. The entire ensemble addresses the audience as they become trees. Other than these moments the narrative is to be treated as in-the-moment dialogue, designed to keep the action moving (not to replace it).

Scenic Elements

I believe it is best to approach the staging of this play in much the same way Shakespeare tackled his plays.

*“Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them,
Printing their proud hoofs i’ the receiving earth;
For ’tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
Carry them here and there, jumping o’er times...”*

There is no actual car. A hat stand can be a tree. Bud must visit several locations; many only once. A simplistic indication of place and time augmented by lights and sound is best. This allows scenes to dovetail on one another, eliminating cumbersome scene changes.

There are several opportunities for heightened theatricality, particularly in the first act. The more we can externalize Bud’s imagination the better. In the second act, Bud’s need to use his imagination for survival decreases dramatically. The few moments he has in that act, Herman as the Big Bad Wolf, recalling the lifeguard, can still be as large as the vampire in the first act.

Music note

The few lyrics used (bottom of page 82) are from “You’d Be So Nice to Come Home To.” So as not to restrict any production for material that may not be in the public domain, I support a musical director’s choice to substitute so long as the song reflects in some way a coming together or a coming home.

BUD, NOT BUDDY

CHARACTER ROLES

BUD, 10	DEZA'S DAD, 30s
BILLY, 12 or 13	DEZA'S MOM, 30s
BUGS, 10	DEZA, 11
CASEWORKER, 30s/40s	JAKE, 30s
MOMMA, 26	POLICE OFFICER, 30s
JERRY, 6	LEFTY, 40s/50s
BARKER, any age	COP, 30s
YOUNG MR. CALLOWAY, 30s	DOO-DOO-BUG, 30s
MR. AMOS, 30s	HERMAN E. CALLOWAY, 40s/50, (bald, big belly)
MRS. AMOS, 30s	DIRTY DEED, 30s
TODD AMOS, 12	DOUG THE THUG, 30s
ANNOUNCER, any age	JIMMY, 40s
VAMPIRE, any age	STEADY EDDIE, 30s
YOUNG MOMMA, 10	MISS THOMAS, 30s/40s
HORSE (nonspeaking), any age	TYLA, 20s/30s
LIBRARIAN, 30s/40s	LIFEGUARD, any age

POSSIBLE DOUBLING

Bud

Ensemble #1 Billy, Doug the Thug

Ensemble #2 Bugs, Young Mr. Calloway, Todd Amos,
Steady Eddie

Ensemble #3 Caseworker, Mrs. Amos, Deza's Mom,
Miss Thomas

Ensemble #4 Momma

Ensemble #5 Jerry, Deza's Dad, Jimmy

Ensemble #6 . . . Barker, Mr. Amos, Horse, Lefty, Doo-Doo-Bug
Ensemble #7 *Announcer, Vampire, Jake, Cop,
Dirty Deed, Lifeguard
Ensemble #8 Young Momma, Deza, Tyla
*Ensemble #9 Librarian, Police Officer
Ensemble #10. Herman E. Calloway

All actors save the ones playing Bud and Herman E. Calloway should be considered as cast. They play the breathers, animals and numbered characters.

All lines and characters should be distributed to suit the strengths of the production at hand. The doubling assignments above are just an example.

Ensemble #7: The roles of Jake, Cop and Dirty Deed should be portrayed by a white male.

*Announcer: The Announcer lines can be divvied amongst the Ensemble or played by the same actor as Dirty Deed.

*Ensemble #9: These roles can be played by a white female, or Ensemble #9 can be omitted. To do so one could have the white male play the Librarian and have a black male actor play Police Officer. The officer is just muscle for hire, employed by the Pinkertons. I have no idea whether a black actor in this role would confuse an audience, or if his subsequent resignation would be more effecting.

ACT ONE

Scene 1

(A group of boys attack the stage. Some play at marbles and jacks, others roughthouse. Standing in a pool of light we find BUD CALDWELL. He places his suitcase on the ground and opens it. He addresses the audience.)

BUD. Most kids in the home keep their things in a paper or cloth sack, but not me.

#1. Bud has his own suitcase.

BUD. Of treasures. *(Of five flyers, he takes out the only blue one. He regards it with great reverence.)* The paper's starting to wear out but I like checking to see if there's anything I hadn't noticed before.

BILLY. The boys at the home were getting their nightly teasing from the biggest bully there was.

ALL. Billy Burns.

BILLY. I don't even belong to this place and it ain't going to be long before my momma comes and gets me out.

BUGS. Billy, your momma must have a real bad memory. Seems like since she was the one what dropped you off here she'd've remembered where she left you by now.

BILLY. Well, well, well, look at who piped up, Mr. Bugs. I wouldn't expect a little ignorant roach-head like you to know nothing about folks coming back here to get you

out. Any fool you see walking down the street could be them. Seven little boys in this room and not a one of y'all knows who your folks is.

BUD. That's not true, I know who my momma is, I lived with her for six years.

BILLY. And what about your old man? How many years you live with him? I got a nickel here and you know what it says? (*BILLY holds the nickel up, moves it like a puppeteer and speaks in his best buffalo voice.*) Billy, my man, go ahead and bet this little no-momma fool he don't know who his daddy is, then I'd have another nickel to bang around in your pocket with.

BUD. You owe me a nickel, my daddy plays a giant fiddle and his name is Herman E. Calloway— (*The boys erupt in an explosion of laughter.*) And with those words that I didn't even mean to say a little seed of a idea started growing.

(*A CASEWORKER enters. The whip has been cracked. Children form a line facing downstage. The WORKER deliberately walks the line.*)

BUD. Uh-oh, here we go again. (*CASEWORKER stops.*) Shoot! She stopped at me.

CASEWORKER. Are you Buddy Caldwell?

(*Lights up on MOMMA.*)

MOMMA. Bud is your name and don't you ever let anyone call you anything outside that either. Especially don't you ever let anyone call you Buddy.

BUD. Yes, Momma.

MOMMA. Don't you worry. (*Lights out on MOMMA. She exits.*)

BUD. It's Bud, not Buddy, ma'am.

CASEWORKER (*grabs another child*). Aren't you Jerry Clark? Boys, good news! You both have been accepted in new temporary-care homes starting this afternoon!

JERRY. Together?

CASEWORKER. Why, no. Jerry, you'll be in a family with three little girls...

BUD. Jerry looked like—

JERRY. He'd just found out they were going to dip him in a pot of boiling milk.

CASEWORKER. And Bud, you'll be with Mr. and Mrs. Amos and their son who's twelve years old. That makes him just two years older than you, doesn't it, Bud?

BUD. Yes, ma'am.

CASEWORKER. Now, now, boys, no need to look so glum. There's a depression going on, people can't find jobs and we've been lucky enough to find two wonderful families who've opened their doors for you. Gather your things. (*She exits.*)

BUD. Here *we go again*. This was the third foster home I was going to, but it still surprises me when my nose gets all runny and my throat gets all choky and my eyes get all sting-y. But the tears coming out doesn't happen.

JERRY. Jerry sat on his bed.

BUD. I could tell that he was losing the fight not to cry.

JERRY. Tears were popping out of his eyes and slipping down his cheeks.

BUD. I couldn't help but feel sorry for Jerry. Six is a real rough age to be at. Most folks think you start to be an

adult when you're fifteen or sixteen years old, but it really starts when you're around six.

JERRY. It's around six that grown folks stop giving you little swats and taps and jump clean up to giving you slugs that'll have you seeing stars in the middle of the day.

BUD. The first foster home I was in taught me that real quick.

JERRY. They expect you to know everything they mean. It's around six that your teeth start coming a-loose in your mouth. Unless you're as stupid as a lamppost you've got to wonder what's coming off next, your arm? Your leg? Your neck? Every morning it seems a lot of your parts aren't stuck on as good as they use to be.

BUD. Three girls sounds terrible, Jerry, but the worst thing that's going to happen is that they're going to make you play house a lot. They'll probably make you be the baby and do this kind of junk to you. (*Tickles him.*) Ga-ga goo-goo, baby-waby. You're going to be great. (*BUD crosses downstage and addresses the audience.*) Six is real tough. That's how old I was when I knocked on Momma's bedroom door... (*Door opens. Sound of sirens. Flashing of lights.*) Then found her. (*BUD plops down on his suitcase and examines his blue flyer.*) Something was telling me there was a message for me on this flyer, but I didn't have the decoder ring.

(A man [BARKER] is revealed standing on a street corner passing out flyers. His face is obscured. As he speaks a spotlight appears; standing in it is YOUNG MR. CALLOWAY playing a bass.)

BARKER. Limited engagement. Direct from an S.R.O. engagement in New York City—Herman E. Calloway and the Dusky Devastators of the Depression!

YOUNG MR. CALLOWAY. In the middle of the flyer was a blurry picture of a man.

BUD. I've never met him, but I have a pretty good feeling that this guy must be my father. Underneath the picture someone had writ—

BARKER. One night only in Flint, Michigan, at the luxurious Fifty Grand on Saturday June 16th, 1932. Nine until—

(MOMMA enters and takes a flyer from the BARKER. She crosses in to BUD.)

BUD. I remember Momma bringing this flyer with her when she came from working one day.

MOMMA. She got very upset.

BUD. I couldn't understand, she kept four others that were a lot like it. *(BUD sits struggling to decode the flyer.)*

MOMMA. But this one got her really jumpy. *(Exits.)*

(Lights shift.)

BUD. The only difference I could see was that the others didn't say anything about Flint on them.

(Lights shift as we are introduced to the AMOSES. MR. and MRS. and TODD AMOS stand next to a bed. MRS. AMOS waves BUD over. He turns back to the audience and speaks.)

BUD. Here we go again. (*BUD crosses to the bed and climbs in. The AMOSES exit turning out the light.*)

Scene 2

(*TODD AMOS re-enters BUD's new room. He is carrying a long yellow pencil. He stops at BUD's head and bends over his face. BUD squirms. TODD turns facing downstage holding the pencil like a thermometer. He wears a robe, slippers and a gigantic smile.*)

BUD. It felt like a steam locomotive had jumped the tracks and chug-chug-chugged its way straight into my nose.

TODD. Wow! You got all the way up to R! (*TODD shows BUD the writing on his pencil.*)

BUD. Ticonderoga? The whole room smelled like eraser and it felt like something had poked the back of my eyeball.

TODD. I've never gotten it in as deep as the N on any of you other little street urchins. I just might enjoy your stay here, Buddy?

BUD. I wasn't about to let anybody call me Buddy and stick a pencil up my nose.

TODD. All the way to the R.

BUD. My fist came open and when it landed it made a pop like a .22 rifle going off.

(*A huge smile appears on TODD's face as he slowly un-
does his robe and lets it fall to the ground. BUD throws
himself off the bed fists up, as we hear the opening bell
to a title fight. They dance around each other.*)

BUD. He could kiss my wrist if he thought I was going to let him whip me up without a good fight. Being this brave. *(TODD punches him square on the nose.)*

TODD. Was kind of stupid. *(TODD proceeds to whip BUD up without a good fight.)* Even though Todd— *(Punch.)*

BUD. Was a puffy, rich old mama's boy— *(BUD ducks)* who wore a robe and slippers.

TODD. He could hit like a mule. *(Punch. BUD drops to the floor in a ball.)*

BUD. There comes a time when you're losing a fight that it just doesn't make sense to keep fighting. It's not that you're being a quitter, it's just that you've got the sense to know when enough is enough.

(MRS. AMOS enters. TODD kicks BUD repeatedly. Upon seeing his mom, he falls to his knees, and grabs his throat. He begins to wheeze heavily.)

MRS. AMOS. Toddy? Toddy boy? You little cur, what have you done to Toddy?

TODD *(breath labored)*. Oh, Mother...I was only trying to help...and...and look what it's gotten me. *(TODD points to his cheek.)*

MRS. AMOS. How dare you! Not only have you struck him, you have provoked his asthma!

TODD. I just tried to waken him to make sure he'd gone to the lavatory, Mother. Look at him, this one's got "bed-wetter" written all over him.

MRS. AMOS. Mrs. Amos hated bed-wetters more than anything in the world.

BUD. I'm not bragging when I say that I'm one of the best liars in the world; Todd was pretty doggone good. He

knew some of the same rules and things I know. Shucks, I've got so many of them rememorized that I had to give them numbers, and it seemed like Todd knew number 3 of...

(Fanfare.)

ANNOUNCER. Bud Caldwell's Rules and Things for Having a Funner Life and Making a Better Liar Out of Yourself. Rules and Things Number 3—

BUD. If you got to tell a lie, make sure it's simple and easy to remember.

TODD. Todd had done that.

MRS. AMOS. You beastly little brute, I will not tolerate even one night of you under my roof.

(MR. AMOS enters.)

MRS. AMOS. Lord knows I have been stung by my own people before. I do not have time to put up with the foolishness of those members of our race who do not want to be uplifted. In the morning I'll be getting in touch with the home and, much as a bad penny, you shall return to them. Mr. Amos will show you to the shed. *(BUD reaches for his suitcase.)* Oh, no, we shall hold on to his beloved valuables. Apologize or I shall be forced to give you the strapping of your life. *(MRS. AMOS raises her hand. She is holding a belt.)*

BUD. I'd apologize. One beating from these Amoses was enough for me.

MRS. AMOS. Well?

BUD. I started shooting apologies out.

TODD. Like John Dillinger shoots out bullets.

BUD. It was wrong to hit you. I know you were only trying to help. *(To MR. AMOS.)* And sir, I'm sorry I got you out of your sleep.

(MRS. AMOS begins swatting the inside of her palm with the belt.)

MRS. AMOS. Mrs. Amos?

BUD. Was going to be the hardest— I'm so grateful for all of your help. And I'm really, really sorry... I could see—

MRS. AMOS. She needed more.

BUD. Please don't send me back— I was being just like Brer Rabbit, when he yelled out, "Please, Brer Fox, don't throw me in the pricker patch." This was...

(Fanfare.)

ANNOUNCER. Bud Caldwell's Rules and Things to Make a Better Liar of Yourself. Number 118—

BUD. You have to give adults something that they think they can use to hurt you by taking it away. That way they might not take something away that you really do want.

MRS. AMOS. Enough. Put him in the shed. *(MRS. AMOS exits.)*

(MR. AMOS leaves to fetch BUD's linen. TODD's asthma vanishes.)

TODD. Buddy, keep a sharp eye out for the vampire bats.

Oh, and watch out for those spiders and centipedes,
Buddy.

BUD. I remember what happened to my best friend, Bugs.

(Lights up on BUGS. He is lying down, tugging, picking and fussing at his ear.)

BUGS. When a cockroach crawled in his ear one night at the home!

(ENSEMBLE MEMBERS 1, 3 and 4 converge on BUGS.)

#4. Four grown folks had held Bugs down—

#1. Whilst they tried to pull it out with a pair of tweezers.

#3. But the only thing that that did was pull the roaches
back legs off. *(BUGS screams.)*

BUD. You'd have thought they were pulling his legs off,
not some cockroach's!!

#3. They were going to have to take him to the emergency
room to get the roach out.

(Shift. 1, 3 and 4 exit. BUGS steps toward BUD.)

BUD. It was almost morning when Bugs got back. Did
they get it out?

BUGS. Oh, hi, Bud. Yeah, they got him.

BUD. Did it hurt a lot?

BUGS. Nope.

BUD. Were you scared?

BUGS. Nope.

BUD. Then how come you were screaming so doggone loud?

BUGS. I didn't know I was, I probably couldn't hear me screaming 'cause that roach was so loud.

BUD. I've seen lots of roaches but I've never heard one of them make any sound.

BUGS. Well, bugs ain't so different from us as you'd think; soon as he saw those tweezers coming he commenced to screaming, screaming in English too, not some bug language like you'd expect from a roach.

BUD. Yeah? What'd he say?

BUGS. All he kept yelling was, "My legs! My legs! Why have they done this to my legs?" (*BUGS faces the audience.*) That's the true story about how Bugs started getting called Bugs. (*BUGS bows and exits.*)

(BUD looks at TODD. MR. AMOS grabs BUD by the arm.)

TODD. The last kid who got put in there got stung so bad he was swole up as big as a whale. The kid before that hasn't been found to this day. All that's left is that big puddle of his blood on the floor.

(MR. AMOS guides BUD toward the kitchen door. BUD stops in his tracks.)

BUD. There was a double-barreled shotgun leaning against the side of the icebox. (*BUD spies his suitcase. He reaches for it. MR. AMOS pulls him back.*) My suitcase! (*MR. AMOS drags BUD the rest of the way outside.*)

MR. AMOS. Into the dark. (*MR. AMOS hands BUD the blanket and pillow and nudges BUD inside.*)

BUD. If I was like a normal kid I would've bust out crying. There was a big black stain in the dirt! They really were going to make me sleep in a shed with a patch of blood from that kid who had disappeared out of here a couple weeks ago!