

# PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

2400 THIRD AVENUE SOUTH  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55404  
612-872-5108  
FAX 612-874-8119

## *Big Baby*

*or*

## *The Nine Days' Wonder*

*A curious satirical tragedy in diverse scenes and centuries*

By  
Brendan Murray

*Big Baby* was first jointly presented by Theatre Centre and The Royal Exchange Theatre, UK, in 1999

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## DEDICATION

For Ros and Simon, the true begetters of this particular progeny.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The name FOGGY NAN is stolen [without permission] from Etherege's Man of Mode and that of EVERYBODY ELSIE [with permission] from Mike Kenny's Song from the Sea.

## CHARACTERS

JANET

JOHN

BABY

EVERYBODY ELSIE [Being variously: FOGGY NAN, a midwife; DOCTOR GOOD, a good doctor; SIR QUANTITY MARWIT, the REVEREND DOOM, MONSIEUR le REGLE and PROFESSOR WUNDERKIND, men of learning, all; LADY FASHION, a woman of quality; DICK DODGER, a wonder-monger; a Constable; a Politician; and oft'times Himself ]

## NOTE

The action of the play starts sometime in the Eighteenth Century and ends up, shall we say, tomorrow...

## THE PROLOGUE

### BEAUTIFUL MUSIC PLAYS

ELSIE

What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals; and yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust?

Ah! The Immortal Bard! Richard II... Henry V... Hamlet, Prince of Denmark..... I mean I'm not just some poor bastard who shakes a pair of maracas at a holiday camp in Bridlington. Or anything like that... I never got the breaks, that's all. Because a lot of it is luck, you know. And who you know. And, God knows, I knew nobody. Still, ancient history all that; spilt milk under the bridge. No tears called for.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Let's not jump the gun; rush the fence; shoot our load before we've got our socks off, eh? No. Let us as the Welshman said, begin at the beginning. Or even a little before: back up, like a cricketer about to bowl a googlie; hit the ground running, all that sort of thing. It's important, in short, to be up to speed, for the tale that follows is a tale fantastical: merry, mawkish, melancholic; tantalizing, terrible and true. A history of hope; a chronicle of caution: the travels, travails, trials and tribulations of a simple country John, his Janet and their baby. Oh, and what a baby! Beautiful; miraculous; unique... Like every baby ever born.....

Now, as our tale begins, this babe is but a twinkle in his parents' eye and they but two young lovers on a sunny day. Then cast your minds back, if you will, and lo!: our story begins two hundred and fifty years ago... or so.....

THE FIRST DAY

IT IS SPRING IN THE COUNTRY IN THE 18th CENTURY.

JOHN                    I'll have you yet, you mayfly!

JANET                  Nay, but you must catch me first.

JOHN                    Catch you, is it? Right then!

A CHASE. HE CATCHES HER. LAUGHTER. PAUSE.

JANET                  John, do you dream?

JOHN                    Sometimes.

JANET                  What of?

JOHN                    Of what might be.

JANET                  And what might be?

JOHN                    A thousand things.

JANET                  Name one.

JOHN                    Why then, I dream of lying with a lass.

JANET                  That much I know!

JOHN                    And lying with her more.

JANET                  But after that!

JOHN                    Of marriage; raising children; growing old.

JANET                  Would you be rich?

JOHN                    But rich enough.

JANET                   And famed throughout the land?

JOHN                   If being loved by those I love be famed, then I would be so.  
[PAUSE] And what of Janet's dreams?

JANET                   Why, to marry well - for love you understand - and bear a child  
who'll thrive and do such things, as never child did do before.

JOHN                   Save Jesus.

JANET                   Aye; save Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

JOHN                   I love you.

JANET                   Truly?

JOHN                   By the sun and moon and everything.

JANET                   The stars as well?

JOHN                   The stars as well.

JANET                   Enough to make my dreams come true?

JOHN                   Would you be a mother, then?

JANET                   If you would be a father.

JOHN                   To have a child!

JANET                   Our own sweet babe.

JOHN                   To love us always and be loved by us in turn.

JANET                   The chance to right the wrongs we suffered at our parents' hands.

JOHN                   The chance to take our place within the world - for who would say  
"Do this; do that" to a man who is a father?

JANET                   None, I warrant. So?

JOHN                    So what?

JANET                   What say you?

JOHN                    Yes, I say and with that yes do give my heart.

JANET                   Then so say I.

A BEASTLY SOUND IS HEARD FAR OFF.

JANET                   What's that?

JOHN                    Some beast is slaughtered I should say.

JANET                   I like it not.

JOHN                    Peace, John is here.

JANET                   Oh, John.

JOHN                    Oh, Janet.

JANET                   John.

JOHN                    Oh, Janet.

THEY COUPLE.

JANET                   John.

JOHN                    Janet.

JANET                   John!

JOHN                    Janet!

JANET                   John!!

JOHN Janet!!

JANET John!!!

JOHN Janet!!!

JANET John!!!!

JOHN Janet!!!!

PAUSE. JANET SITS UP.

JANET John?

JOHN Mm?

JANET I think I be with child.

JOHN [SITTING UP ALSO] Surely?

JANET Aye; I heave, I crave, I swell. [BEAT] Call Foggy Nan, my time is come.

JOHN So soon?

JANET My waters break, and I am set to be delivered. Call Nan I say!

JOHN RUNS ABOUT, CALLING FOR FOGGY NAN.

FOGGY NAN [APPERAINING] So what's the great emergency?

JOHN 'Tis Janet has come on.

FOGGY NAN Well look not so surprised, for coming on doth follow on from springtime larks, my lad.

JANET It was the both of us.

FOGGY NAN And is that so?

JOHN                    We love each other.

FOGGY NAN            Bless you, but I hope that be enough. So young themselves. 'Tis only yesterday I brought the pair of 'em a-mewling from their mothers' bellies.

A SHADOW CROSSES THE MOON.

JANET                    The moon grows dark!

FOGGY NAN            'Tis but the Stork come with your child.

JOHN                    Our child!

FOGGY NAN            Did I not say as much? Now off with you, for these are women's mysteries. Away, I say! [TO JANET] Come on, my peach.

FOGGY NAN LEADS JANET OFF. PAUSE.

JOHN                    This waiting sure will drive me mad. And what if something should befall and I should lose my wife, my babe? [WE HEAR JANET CRY OUT] Sweet Jesus, let them both fare well and bring them safely through this time of trial.

FOGGY NAN            [OFF] Peace now, good girl; 'tis bravely done.

FOGGY NAN ENTERS.

JOHN                    What news?

FOGGY NAN            You have a son. He and his mother both do thrive.

JANET ENTERS WITH BABY IN HER ARMS.

JANET                    Rock-a-by baby, in the tree top;  
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock;  
When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall... See, John.

JOHN                    I never thought to look on anything so wonderful.



JANET I know. It frights me when I think on it. So perfect, so unspoilt, so full of possibility. And what have we to give him?

JOHN Love.

JANET Is love enough?

JOHN I'd rather have it than to have it not. To be unloved, unwanted... No. Whatever comes our way in future times; whatever wrongs we do or crimes commit; whatever should befall - never let them say we did not love him.

JANET He wakes.

JOHN Hello there, little man. I am your father; this your mother be and you... Well, you are just the wonderfulest baby ever born. You are, you know. And whatsoe'er you want or need, you holler and your mum and dad will see you get it. In't that right?

JANET That's right.

JOHN Just ask your mum and dad. And that's a promise.

FOGGY NAN I'm away, then. Now you take care, my girl; and you, my lad, take care of her and the both of you take care of this here child.

JANET But we're so poor and the world so big and baby here so small.

FOGGY NAN You just be glad he's safely in your arms.

JOHN We are.

FOGGY NAN You make a picture, I'll say that.

JOHN And we'll do all we can to keep it so; to see to it that our sweet child will be the best, best-loved, most cherished babe in all the world. Is that not so? What say you, eh?

BABY Mama.

JANET                    Did you - ?

BABY                    Mama.

JOHN                    Sounds like -

BABY                    Dada.

JANET                    Oh, Sweet Jesus, he can -

BABY                    Baba.

JANET AND JOHN LOOK AT THEIR BABY.

BABY                    Mama. Dada. Baba!

JOHN                    He can speak!

BABY SQUEALS WITH DELIGHT AND SEEMS TO LEVITATE AND GLOW. THERE IS THE SOUND OF ANGEL VOICES.

JANET                    See!

JOHN                    Hear!

FOGGY NAN            Heaven help us: the child is a wonder!

JANET AND JOHN GAZE UPON THEIR MIRACULOUS BABE. FOGGY NAN SLIPS AWAY.

BABY                    Ha!

THE FIRST INTERLUDE

ELSIE                    Of course every parent of a new-born baby thinks the sun shines out of its arse but in this case, well... For all as looked upon the babe did smile and feel renewed and there are many tales of beggars

finding fortunes; barren wives made fertile; lame men set a-gambolling like lambs and we might show them save for want of time and budgetary considerations.

But one such instance we will illustrate: a little low-key on the face of it; a little lacking in spectacular allure; but of significance in that it moves our story on - and that, let's face it, can be no bad thing. The country then and there a scene wherein our happy family encounters Doctor Good, a goodly doctor come from London on a melancholy mission.

## THE SECOND DAY

### A GAME OF PEEK-A-BOO!

JANET                   Where's he gone?

JOHN                    Boo!

BABY                   Ha!!!

JANET                   And where's he gone?

JOHN                    Boo!

BABY                   Ha!!!

JANET                   And where's he gone?

BABY                   There!

JOHN                    That's right, you cheeky monkey.

BABY                   Not a cheeky monkey.

JANET                   No, of course you're not. Just Daddy being silly.

BABY                   Silly Daddy!

JOHN MAKES LIKE A MONSTER. BABY SQUEALS.

JANET                    Don't fright him now.

JOHN                    He's not afraid. He knows it's only Daddy, in't that right?

JOHN ADVANCES ON BABY. BABY SQUEALS.

JANET                    Honestly, you two!

JOHN                    [MOCK SERIOUS] Alright, alright. Here then.

AND HE HOLDS UP THE FINGERS OF HIS HAND.

BABY                    One, two, three, four, five!

JANET                    Yes!

BABY                    Ha!

JOHN POINTS TO THINGS OF VARIOUS COLOURS.

BABY                    Red, green, yellow, brown...[LOOKING UP TO WHERE HIS FATHER POINTS]... the cosmos.

PAUSE. JANET AND JOHN SHARE A LOOK.

JOHN                    Round and round the garden, like a teddy-bear: one step; two steps-

JANET                    [[JOINING IN] One step; two steps -

BABY                    And tickle him under there!

JANET AND JOHN TICKLE BABY. LAUGHTER. THEN BABY SLEEPS.

JANET                    He's off.

JOHN                    I think we be the richest people in the world.

JANET                   The poorest you should say.

JOHN                    Are you not happy, then?

JANET                   I worry.

JOHN                    Why?

JANET                   Because I am a mother.

JOHN                    Look at him: he's everything we dreamed.

JANET                   I know he is, I know. And dreams are fine but getting on in life is something else.

JOHN                    What would you have him do then?

JANET                   Be a gentleman.

JOHN                    But we are simple country folk.

JANET                   That's what I mean! When did simple country folk get on?

DOCTOR GOOD ENTERS, ALL FORLORN.

JANET                   Now there's a gentleman.

JOHN                    And did you ever see a sadder sight?

JANET                   No, indeed. Go ask him what the matter be.

JOHN APPROACHES DOCTOR GOOD.

JOHN                    Excuse me, sir. Can I assist?

DR GOOD               Perchance you might direct me to some craggy peak.

JOHN                    This is flat country, sir.

DR GOOD            Why then, to some rampageous raging torrent.

JANET              Our rivers be as meek as they be shallow.

DR GOOD            Oh dear.

JOHN                Why look you disappointed? They are beauteous.

DR GOOD            What use is beauty to a man who seeks to end his life?

JANET              Oh, sir! You move me all to tears.

DR GOOD            Pardon me for that, I have no mind to spread my misery. I'll leave  
you then, and seek my death some other place.

DOCTOR GOOD MAKES TO GO.

JOHN                But hold, sir.

DR GOOD            Yes?

JOHN                This must not be.

DR GOOD            Why, can you give me reason not to die?

JOHN                I think I can.

DR GOOD            How so?

JOHN                By looking here, upon our child.

DR GOOD            Your child?

JOHN                For all who look upon his face are filled with joy.

DR GOOD            Your natural paternal pride does you a credit, lad -

JANET              Just look, sir.

JOHN                See!

BABY                      Good morrow, sir, and joy to you this day.

AND SAYING THIS, BABY SEEMS TO LEVITATE AND GLOW. THERE IS THE SOUND OF ANGEL VOICES.

DR GOOD                Miraculous!

JOHN                     Did we not say as much?

DR GOOD                You did indeed. By Jupiter, my faith in life is all restored!

JANET                    It is the way with everyone who looks on him.

DR GOOD                How old is the babe?

JANET                    But two days, sir.

DR GOOD                More wondrous yet! Pray tell me, little man, how came you by such manners at so slight an age?

BABY                     I am nothing more or less than what my parents here would have me be.

DR GOOD                And you have saved me from eternal hell.

BABY                     Think nothing of it, Sir.

DR GOOD                Oh, but I do! My name is Dr. Good.

JOHN                     We're pleased to meet you, sir.

JANET                    I'm sure.

DR GOOD                And now you must allow me to express my gratitude by doing what I can to help your child.

JOHN                     Would you be his tutor?

DR GOOD                Nay, for he requires instruction far beyond my capabilities.

JOHN                    Then..?

DR GOOD              What say, you, little man: how would you like to come with me to London, there to study Latin, Greek and Mathematics?

BABY                    Your offer is a generous one, but you must ask my parents, sir, for I am but a new-born babe.

DR GOOD              Then may he come?

JANET                  What, lose my child?

DR GOOD              Then you come, too.

JOHN                    And lose my wife?

DR GOOD              Why then, come one, come all!

JOHN                    We know not what to say.  
DR GOOD              Say aye.

JOHN                    What think you?

JANET                  Aye.

JOHN                    Then aye we say.

JANET                  Aye, aye!

BABY                    Ai-ai-ai-ai!

MUSIC: A VOCAL QUARTET

BABY                    To London, then, to London,  
                              To the future now we turn:  
                              So much for me to do, to see  
                              To feed my need to learn.

DR GOOD              To London I will lead you



If you'll kindly take my hand;  
To college where with knowledge  
You will find the Promised Land.

ALL Fa-la-la

JOHN To London, then, to London  
With my baby and my wife;  
With hearts a-glow we gladly go  
To get a better life.

JANET To London, then, to London!  
And horizons bold and far:  
So much that's new, to see, to do;  
So sing we fa-la-la!

ALL Fa-la-la!

AS THE MUSIC ENDS, THE BEASTLY SOUND AGAIN, STILL FAR OFF. THEY  
LOOK ABOUT THEM.

#### THE SECOND INTERLUDE

ELSIE So...London! Up the apples and pears; down the Old Kent road;  
blimey, gov'nor, mind me plates of meat! And see: Westminster  
Abbey, The tower of Big Ben, the rosy red cheeks of the - [PAUSE]  
Just a minute, that can't be right. This is the 18th century. In't that  
right, Mr Hogarth? What's that? Oh, I know! That Caroline of  
Brunswick, she's a one! But enough of all this tittle-tattle; what of  
our intrepid travelers? [LOOKING ROUND] Lost!

JANET John, where are we?

ELSIE Told you.

JANET And where is Dr Good?

JOHN Who can say? For London is so big.

ELSIE                      And the cast so small... But nil desperandum. Not yet at least.

THE THIRD DAY

SOMEWHERE IN LONDON.

JOHN                     I think this be the street.

BABY                    [READING] Scholastic Row.

JANET                  And here are three fine schools.

JOHN                    But which one did the Doctor recommend?

BABY                    The British Association of Licensed Learning and Scholarship.  
B.A.L.L.S. [BABY IS ABOUT TO SAY WHAT THIS SPELLS]

JANET                  No.

BABY                    The College of Reasoning, Arts & Philosophy. C.R.A.P. [BABY IS  
ABOUT TO SAY WHAT THIS SPELLS]

JANET                  No.

BABY                    The Academy of Regulated & Successful Erudition. Arse!

JANET                  Alright, young man.

JOHN                    This is the one; I remember now.

JANET                  I don't know why they have to have such fancy names.

JOHN                    I'll knock.

HE DOES SO. SIR QUANTITY MARWIT APPEARS.

SIR Q                    Yes?

JOHN                    If it please your worship -

SIR Q                    Servants' entrance round the back.

JOHN                    No, sir, we are here to see -

JANET                    That is, we'd like to meet -

JOHN                    If it might be convenient -

JANET                    And not unduly -

SIR Q                    Oh, for heaven's sake; who do you want?

JOHN                    [REFERING TO A SLIP OF PAPER] Sir Qu...

JOHN SHOWS THE PAPER TO JANET.

JANET                    Sir Quan...

JANET SHOWS THE PAPER TO BABY.

BABY                    Sir Quantity Marwit.

SIR Q                    [AFTER A MOMENT] I am he.

JOHN                    Beg pardon, sir.

JANET                    Your servant, sir.

BABY                    Good day, good sir.

SIR Q                    Good day to you, young man. You had best come in.

AND IN THEY GO AND LOOK ABOUT THEM.

JANET                    Oh, John, a floor of seasoned wood!

BABY                    Ha!

JOHN                   Excuse us, sir; at home we have no floor except the beaten earth.

SIR Q                   [STRAPPING BABY DOWN] Indeed.

BABY                   Ah!

JOHN                   Oh, sir, what are you doing?

SIR Q                   What does it look like?

JOHN                   Well -

JANET                  No, what my husband means, your worship, is you'll never see our baby work his wonders if he be restrained, for he does rise into the air and seem to glow.

SIR Q                   This is the Age of Reason! The very Epoch of Enlightenment! Flying babies; radiant infants - these are the superstitious ravings of the ignorant.

JOHN                   We never said that he could fly. Rise up, we said. Rise up and glow. Not fly.

SIR Q                   You came to me that I might educate your child?

JANET                  We did, Sir Quantity.

SIR Q                   Then you must trust I know my business. The Academy of Regulated and Successful Erudition boasts a faculty renowned for its unwavering devotion to the Three R's.

JANET                  That's Reading, Writing and Arithmetic?

SIR Q                   Results. Results. Results!

JOHN                   You think, sir, you might help our child to thrive?

SIR Q                   Beneath my tutelage there is no reason why this infant should not grow to be a wonder of the age, a paragon of learning and a beacon

in the dark night of ignorance that is the common people's lot.  
[ASIDE] Won't do me any harm neither.

JANET                    John, do you hear? A wonder of the age; a parody of bacon!

SIR Q                    What says our genius in waiting? Would you be schooled be me?

BABY                    If it do make my parents glad and they think fit -

JANET                    Oh, John, remember all our dreams for him.

JOHN                    I know.

JANET                    That he should make his way in life and be a gentleman.

JOHN                    And that will make you happy, Jan?

JANET                    You know it will.

JOHN                    Then I do give consent.

JANET                    [TO SIR QUANTITY] Excuse me, sir. [KISSES JOHN]

BABY                    My parents' joy convinces me that I should be your pupil.

SIR Q                    Bene. Bene! Now, to make a start.

JOHN                    But he's so young.

SIR Q                    Give me a child to the age of seven and I will give you the man.

JOHN                    Our baby is but three days old.

SIR Q                    Then I will give you a colossus!

JANET                    As long as he's a gentleman.

SIR Q                    Quite so.

JOHN [TO BABY] You study well now; as you're bid, and I'll make you a spinning top, how's that?

BABY Ha!

SIR Q No games; no toys: He who plays as a boy will play as a man.

JOHN Is that so wrong?

SIR Q I hope you jest.

JOHN But games and playing -

JANET Course he do!

SIR Q To work, then! Time for our scholar here to meet his tutors - each and every one a prime practitioner of pedagogical precision: The Reverend Doom, a Scots Divine; Monsieur le Regle, late of the Sorbonne, and from Westphalia, Professor Wunderkind.

SIR QUANTITY EXITS.

JOHN Where are they?

JANET Hush!

SIR Q [OFF] The Reverend Doom.

REVEREND DOOM ENTERS.

REV D What's this? Bestrapped? Do you take fits, child?

BABY It was Sir Quantity. He thought it best.

REV D That man and his proclivities... The English Public Schools have much to answer for. Here, child, receive and inwardly digest.

HE PLACES UPON BABY A HUGE TOME, TEARS A PAGE FROM IT AND STUFFS IT IN BABY'S MOUTH. JOHN MAKES TO GO TO BABY BUT JANET STOPS HIM.

REV D                    Now answer me: Who made you?

BABY                    My parent's, Reverend Sir.

REV D                    [STRIKING BABY WITH A CANE] Blasphemer!

BABY                    Ah!

JOHN                    Have a care, your Reverence; he's a babe.

REV D                    And who are you?

JOHN                    His father, if it please you.

REV D                    It does not! Now, answer me again, child: Who made you?

BABY                    God made me, Sir.

REV D                    He did! And why did God make you?

BABY                    I cannot truly say -

ANOTHER SWIFT STROKE OF THE CANE.

BABY                    To know Him, love Him and to serve Him.

REV D                    Where?

BABY                    [AFTER A MOMENT] In this world and forever in the next.

REV D                    Correct. Enough. Monsieur le Regle! The child is ready for assessment.

REVEREND DOOM EXITS.

JOHN                    Would you go on?

BABY                    A gentleman must know his catechism.

JANET                    Good boy.

MONSIEUR LE REGLE ENTERS.

M L R                    Bonjour, bonjour, et comment allez vous, bebe?

BABY                    Tres bien, Monsieur.

M L R                    Bon, bon. Voila!

HE PLACES A SECOND TOME ON TOP OF THE FIRST; TEARS A PAGE FROM IT; STUFFS IT IN BABY'S MOUTH AND THEN PROCEEDS TO TAKE BABY'S MEASUREMENTS.

JOHN                    What are you doing, sir?

M L R                    Monsieur.

JOHN                    Monsieur...What are you doing?

M L R                    Alors, what does it look like?

JOHN                    Like you would have the measure of my child.

M L R                    Exactement.

JANET                    So you would measure -

M L R                    All that may be measured. Oui. Regarde! We take the measure of the baby's weight.

JOHN                    Which tells you what?

M L R                    How heavy is the baby.

JANET                    Oh!

M L R                    And then we take the measure of his height.

JOHN                    And that reveals?



M L R                    How tall he is.

JANET                    Just fancy!

M L R                    Then we measure here: around his head.

BABY                    So I would know how big a hat to buy!

M L R                    Enfant mechant! [PAUSE] Alors, you must not scoff, mais non. These measurings they are important: the weight is such and such, you learn the arts; the height is so and so, we teach the science. All students must be measured and assessed accordingly.

JOHN                    But why?

M L R                    Why? Why!? Why!? Why!? I measure and assess because Sir Quantity would have me measure and assess. And I, in turn, am measured and assessed by how much I have measured. [AFTER A MOMENT] But I have said too much. Je vais. Je vais trouver Professor Wunderkind.

EXIT MONSIEUR LE REGLE.

JANET                    I'm not so sure I understood a word of that.

JOHN                    Nor me. But how's our scholar? Bearing up?

JANET                    I'd say so, bravely!

BABY                    Yes, mother, dear; I do my best.

JOHN                    And what more can be asked of a man?

ENTER PROFESSOR WUNDERKIND.

PROF W                    Gutten ahben, meine kleine mensch. I am here to teach you Latin - ja? - unt mathematics. So!

HE ADDS TWO ENORMOUS TOMES TO THE PILE ON BABY'S CHEST; TEARS A PAGE FROM EACH AND STUFFS THEM IN BABY'S MOUTH. BABY IS OBVIOUSLY

IN SOME DISTRESS BUT SEEING ITS PARENTS ANXIOUS LOOKS, SMILES BRAVELY.

PROF W           Amo, amas, amat.

BABY             Amamus, amatis, amant.

PROF W           Gut! Cogito ergo sum?

BABY             Et cum spiritu tuo.

PROF W           Ja! Annus mirabilis?

BABY             Nice arse!

PROF W           Wunderbah! 48 unt 95?

BABY             143.

PROF W           The sqvare of the hypotenuse -

BABY             Is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides.

PROF W           Amo, amas x 69?

BABY             We love each other very much.

PROF W           Gut, gut!

BABY             Is love enough?

PROF W           Conjecture: this is not permissible!

BABY             I only meant -

PROF W           Verbotten! Did I ask for your opinions?

BABY             No, Professor.

PROF W           No! It's facts I vont, unt lists unt tables.

JANET                    Tables?

PROF W                 Gott in himmel! Who are you?

JANET                    His mother.

PROF W                 So! Then see how much Professor Wunderkind has taught your child! Come, quickly now; recite the tables you have learned.

BABY                     Dining table; kitchen table; bedside table; picnic table; gaming table; water table.

PROF W                 Gut!

JANET                    I never knew there was so many.

PROF W                 Oh, ja, unt more besides. My father knew them all - a brilliant man, God rest his soul - in fact he held the Chair in Tables at the University.

JANET                    Fancy!

ALL AT ONCE BABY VOMITS UP THE PAPERS.

PROF W                 Mein Gott!

JANET                    Oh, dear.

JOHN                     Never mind, soon have you all cleaned up.

PROF W                 Nein; he must eat it.

JANET                    What?

PROF W                 It must not go to waste.

JOHN                     But -

PROF W                 He must eat.

JANET                    [AFTER A MOMENT] Come on then, love. There's a good boy.

JANET FEEDS BABY THE CHEWED-UP PAGES.

PROF W                Gut. Unt now I get Sir Qvantity. Sir Qvantity!

PROFESSOR WUNDERKIND EXITS.

JOHN                  Well done, old son.

JANET                Aye, you have made us proud.

BABY                 [TRYING TO SMILE AND NOT TO GAG] Ha!

THE BEASTLY SOUND. A LITTLE CLOSER. ENTER SIR QUANTITY, STUDYING PAPERS.

SIR Q                 Good...good... Yes, excellent results!

JOHN                 Results of what?

SIR Q                 The infant's Target Attainment Test.

JOHN                 Which measures?

JANET                John!

SIR Q                 His level of attainment. And having successfully attained the target, he progresses to the next level.

JOHN                 But what is he actually learning?

SIR Q                 Why, man, how to succeed!

JOHN                 It's just that he don't smile as much as he used to.

SIR Q                 Will smiling find him work or fill his belly?

JANET                Sir Quantity is right, John.

JOHN                    I'm not saying he ain't. It's just that he don't smile as much.

BABY                    Really, father; I'm all right.

JANET                   There, you see.

SIR Q                    Here's something will make us all smile: tomorrow at The Royal Society I lecture. Attend and you will see your child the envy of the world; a living advertisement for the Academy's methodology. The King himself will hear me speak. There's talk of an ennoblement for services to education...[FAR AWAY FOR A MOMENT]... The Baron Marwit! And so to bed! Child, know the contents of those volumes by the morrow, and you, the parents, you may sleep in the cellar.

SIR QUANTITY EXITS.

JANET                    The Royal Society! Do you hear, John?

BABY                    I'd better get to work.

JOHN                    Don't be up too late now.

THE THIRD INTERLUDE

ELSIE                    Ooh... what a to-do! Baby up half the night, memorizing everything from Marcus Aurelius to Jan Zamoyski. And poor old mum and dad fretting in the vaults - "Will he be all right? Shouldn't he be getting some sleep? Are we doing the right thing?" - you know how parents are. I remember my old man. He was a character! Proper caution, with that belt of his..... [BEAT] I was a big disappointment. But soft! Methinks I scent the morning air. I do. It is the dawn; the morn; the moment all of educated London has been gagging for: The Royal Society Annual Memorial Baronial Testimonial. Vide!

THE FOURTH DAY

JANET AND JOHN AT THE ROYAL SOCIETY. BABY ON A DAIS.

JANET                There he is.

JOHN                Aye.

JANET                And see, John, all these people!

JOHN                Aye.

JANET                The Quality.

JOHN                If that they be.

JANET                Of course they are. You only have to look at them to know.

JOHN                I know they think they're very grand.

JANET                I'll tell you this, I wish I'd something else to wear.

JOHN                There's nothing wrong with how you look.

JANET                I feel so...countrified.

JOHN                And so you are: my lovely country girl; my Jan.

JANET                But what's it matter how we look? It isn't us that folk have come to see.

JOHN                Nor is it yet the King himself. It is our own dear child.

JANET                Our child!

JANET WAVES AT BABY. BABY WAVES BACK, NERVOUSLY, AND ATTEMPTS A SMILE. JOHN MOUTHS "GOOD LUCK". SIR QUANTITY SWEEPS IN AND UP TO THE PODIUM.

JOHN                Here goes.

JANET                    Oh, John!

SIR Q                    Your Royal Highness; Peers of the Realm; Your Worship The Mayor; Ladies and Gentlemen: I've got a lovely bunch of coconuts. There they are all standing in a row. Big ones, small ones, some as big as your head and yet *Nam sine doctrina vita est quasi mortis imago*.

BABY                    Without knowledge, life is but a shadow of death.

SIR Q                    Bene. Your Royal Highness, My lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, *Ecce Homo* - the fruits of my labour, the proof of my pudding; the most successful pup in the history of the world ever [Volume III]: *L'Enfant Enorme; Die Grossekinde; Big Baby!*

BABY                    History: William the Conquerer, Richard the Lionheart; Henry IV - parts I & II - Bloody Mary; Oliver Cromwell; the Restoration; Enlightenment! Science: Hydrogen, Helium, Lithium, Beryllium, Boron, Carbon...

BABY CONTINUES TO MOUTH THE PERIODIC TABLE AS SIR QUANTITY RESUMES HIS LECTURE.

SIR Q                    This is a child of humble - nay, the humblest - origins; begotten by some rustic Jack and Jill - and here I beg the royal pardon - in the heat of copulation and with no more thought to what might be the issue of their lust than have the beasts of the field. Regard them, if you will: the sprog's progenitors.

JOHN                    [QUIETLY] Our names are John and Janet, not -

SIR Q                    Rude and ignorant they may be but not without ambition: to see their baby better its condition. But how to aid them in this noble quest? By encouraging their offspring's creativity? Where does it live? In a world that wants to know of it the meaning of life, or rather one that asks how deep your pockets be; how fast your car; how big your dick? I think we know the answer. It is incumbent then upon we educators to equip this infant with the necessary means of its survival. For who in the world has not to pass muster?

Who has not his targets to attain? Who has not to measure up? Yea, verily, these are testing times!

CLIMACTIC MUSIC. THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE. SIR QUANTITY BOWS, SMILING, GROVELLING, AS THE KING PROCESSES OUT.

BABY                   ...West Bromwich Albion 3, Tranmere Rovers 2; Ipswich Town 0, Charlton Athletic 4; Crystal Palace 2, Nottingham Forest 2; Birmingham City 1, Sheffield United 0; Wolverhampton Wanderers 5 -

SIR Q                   All right, you can stop now.

BABY                   Queen's Park Rangers 3; Crewe Alexandra 1, Stckport Coun-

SIR Q                   I said enough!

JANET                  Is what he says not right, sir?

SIR Q                   What?

JANET                  Does he speak out of turn?

SIR Q                   The lecture, girl, is over.

JANET                  Then..?

JOHN                   What happens now?

SIR Q                   I beg your pardon?

JANET                  John!

JOHN                   What happens now...sir.

SIR Q                   Well, I don't know about you but I'm off to the Palace for my investiture.

JOHN                   And our baby?



SIR Q                    You saw how he performed. Are you not satisfied?

JOHN                    Performed? Performed, is it? He's not some dancing bear!

SIR Q                    Listen, sunshine, I've done my bit. You wanted him educated; you've got it. Now it's up to you: you are his parents after all; you do have some responsibility. So if you'll excuse me..... Oh, and if we meet again, don't forget to bow, I'll be a frigging Baron.

SIR QUANTITY SWEEPS OUT. PAUSE.

BABY                    Did I do something wrong?

JANET                    No, you were wonderful: speaking all those words. I'd never've remembered half of 'em, I wouldn't, truly.

JOHN                    No, nor me. You did us proud.

BABY                    As long as you both liked it.

JANET                    Oh, we did. We loved it.

JOHN                    [AFTER A MOMENT] Here, I know: Round and round the garden, like a teddy-bear. One step, two step -

BABY                    And the distance travelled will be equal to the total number of steps taken multiplied by the length of each step where all the steps are of equal length.

JANET AND JOHN SHARE A LOOK.

JOHN                    Yeah. Well...

JANET                    Fancy!

BABY CRIES. LADY FASHION ENTERS.

LADY F                    Darling, you were fabulous! More than fabulous: the best. Better!

BABY                    Thank you.

LADY F                 Hanging on your every word. Of course, I missed a bit of it; the middle bit; well, most of it actually: had to let the King - big yawn - have his droit de seigneur! [SHE FONDLES HER BREASTS]

BABY                    Jus primae noctis.

LADY F                 More or less! Anyway, having a little party - just a few of the really now people - wondered if you'd like to pop along.

BABY                    Party?

LADY F                 Sort of Wits and Glitz, you know.

JANET                  Oh, John!

LADY FASHION SEES JANET AND JOHN.

LADY F                 And who do we have here?

BABY                    My parents.

LADY F                 Really? Well...aren't you a lucky boy? I do hope I'll have the pleasure... of seeing both of you tomorrow night.

JOHN                    I'm not sure -

JANET                  Thank you, yes; we'd love to come. Wouldn't we, John?

JOHN                    Well...

LADY F                 Oh, don't be shy. Is he shy? Adorable. Tomorrow then, say, eight; eight-thirty? [KISSING BABY] Love you loads. SHE KISSES JANET ON THE CHEEK AND JOHN ON THE MOUTH.] Ciao.

JOHN WIPES HIS MOUTH. PAUSE.

BABY                    That was Lady Fashion. She's a hostess.

JOHN                   It's plain what she is.

JANET                 John!

JOHN                   [AFTER A MOMENT] And what's all this "ciao" business?

BABY                  It's Italian: means hello or good-bye.

JOHN                  Well, that's a lot of use!

JANET                 I expect it saves a lot of bother.

JOHN                  What, in case you don't know if you're coming or going?

BABY                  It's just a word.

JOHN                  Bloody stupid.

JANET                 John! Not in front of B.A.B.Y.

JOHN                  He can spell, mother.

JANET                 I'm just saying. [PAUSE] Anyway: a party.

BABY                  Yes!

JANET                 Mixing with celebrities...people with connections; influence.

JOHN                  I think we should go back home.

BABY                  To the country?

JOHN                  Well, if this is London -

BABY FALLS TO THE FLOOR IN A TANTRUM.

JANET                 Please, John, no, not now; not now we've come this far. Let's go to the party at least, eh? Please. Could be his big break. How about it? For him. For me.

BABY                   Daddy?

JOHN                   [AFTER A MOMENT] I suppose... If that's what...Yeah, all right.  
Why not?

BABY                   Ha!

JANET KISSES JOHN ON THE CHEEK AND EXITS WITH BABY. THE BEASTLY SOUND. A LITTLE CLOSER YET. AFTER A MOMENT JOHN LICKS HIS LIPS AND FOLLOWS.

#### THE FOURTH INTERLUDE

ELSIE                   So old Sir Fartface has buggered off. So what? Who needs him?  
We've got a party to go to. And not just any party: we're talking "A"  
List here. We're talking canapés and things on sticks. The dog's  
bollocks. Not the... I mean... You know what I mean.

I like a bit of a do; chance to get my glad rags on; do the business.  
That's what it's all about, you know: rubbing shoulders with the  
cognoscenti; massaging the egos of the influential; pressing the  
flesh; shaking a leg. Oh, I know what you thinking but I'm not past  
it yet. Everything's in working order: gavotte till you drop, that's  
my philosophy. And where better to get on down than Lady  
Fashion's fabulous fundraising Fiesta?

#### THE FIFTH DAY

LADY FASHION'S SOIREE. JANET AND JOHN HANDING ROUND DRINKS AND SPEAKING IN UNDERTONES.

JANET                   I've got a feeling this could be the night.

JOHN                   For what?

JANET                    You know, for him to make his mark and take his place amongst the Quality.

JOHN                    I'm getting sick of the sound of that word.

JANET                    You want him to get on, don't you?

JOHN                    I want him to be happy.

JANET                    And I don't?

JOHN                    I didn't say that.

JANET                    [AFTER A PAUSE] There's certainly a crowd.

JOHN                    Just a few people, she said.

JANET                    Anyway, the more as see him, the more chance he has to -

JOHN                    What? Make a monkey of himself? And us, too, I shouldn't wonder: the way he's been behaving recently...Little Lord Muck.

JANET                    Now, that's not fair, he's worked so hard. He just gets excited sometimes.

JOHN                    That's all very well but look at us, Jan; I mean what are we doing here? This place is a circus.

JANET                    Ssh! Someone'll hear.

JOHN                    You think I care?

JANET                    Please, John, for his sake. [PAUSE] For me.

JOHN                    [AFTER A MOMENT] Alright.

LADY FASHION ENTERS, SPEAKING TO SOMEONE OFF.

LADY F                    Thanks J.C., you're a darling but apparently he's got his own music, so there's no need. Yes, later will be heavenly.

SHE TAKES A DRINK FROM JOHN. DELIBERATELY.

LADY F                   Ciao everybody; lovely to see you all; glad you could make it, bla bla bla. What? The ceiling? Yeah...Italian bloke... Tiepolo... something... I'll give you his number. Anyway, we all know why we're here, I think - that's right, Dr Johnson: to find the funds to found a hospital for all the precious paupers. Now, if you thought last week's act was good - you know, the little German kid on keyboards: Wolfhound Armadillo...Whatsisface - well, if you thought he was good, I can tell you you are going to love what I've got for you tonight. He's new - he's what...five days old or something sickening? - but he's already a star of the Royal Society so let's have an enormous eighteenth century hand for...Big Baby!

A FANFARE. BABY IS REVEALED. THEN SILENCE.

LADY F                   Well, go on, darling: do your stuff, we're waiting.

BABY LOOKS TO JANET AND JOHN. JANET NODS.

BABY                    Ut non sit satis aestimare, parens melior homini an tristior noveca fuerit.

LADY F                   Oh, no, poppet, we can live without the Latin.

BABY LOOKS TO JANET & JOHN WHO SMILE.

BABY                    To be, or not to be, that is the Question: Whether 'tis Nobler in the mind to suffer -

LADY F                   Sweetie! If I'd wanted Shakespeare I could've had Garrick. You know what I'm saying?

BABY                    Er...

LADY F                   We want to see you float, angel, or whatever it is you do. Come on, we've heard the rumors; we want to see you glow and make us glad.

PAUSE.

JANET                    Do as the lady says.

BABY                    I cannot.

JANET                    Course you can.

JOHN                    Come on.

BABY                    I cannot, truly.

JANET                    Yes, you can.

BABY                    Oh no, I can't.

JOHN                    Oh yes, you can.

BABY                    Oh no, I can't.

LADY F                 Oh, pantomime! Very a la mode!

BABY                    Please, madam -

LADY F                 Float, you little bastard.

JANET                    Please.

JOHN                    For Mum and Dad.

BABY TRIES TO FLOAT. JANET AND JOHN LOOK ON, IMPLORINGLY. THEN BABY FARTS AND FILLS ITS NAPPY. JANET AND JOHN LOOK AGHAST. LADY FASHION GLARES AT THEM THEN RECOVERS, CLAPPING HER HANDS TOGETHER.

LADY F                 Bravo! Bravo! Tres amusant. Well, don't you see? It's so perfectly post-modern: the baby farts in the face of conventional expectations! The smell? Well, that, of course, is... shit. Yes. And see: I share in Baby's genius... [AND SHE EATS SOME OF THE SHIT] Oh yes, this is something special... something else: more snap than crack; more pop than coke and twice as fast as speed!

[SHE EATS] So, who's for shit? Right! Everybody on the terrace, then, I'll bring it out! [GOING AND RETURNING] Well, I hope you're satisfied. Thanks to you I had to eat crap in front of my guests. You and your shitty baby. I should have you for fraud.

JOHN                      But I thought -

LADY F                    If you're not gone when I get back, I'm calling the police.

JANET                    But -

LADY F                    No. I mean it. I want you out.

SHE GOES. PAUSE.

JANET                    I don't understand. What did we do?

BABY                     It's my fault, isn't it?

JOHN                     No.

BABY                     It's my fault for doing a poo-poo.

JOHN                     You're a baby; you do poo-poops. We all do poo-poops. It wasn't anybody's fault.

JANET                    [AFTER A TIME] No.

JANET GOES. THE BEASTLY SOUND. STILL CLOSER.

JOHN                     Come on.

JOHN AND BABY GO

THE FIFTH INTERLUDE

ELSIE                     Oh dear..! Still, mustn't get too gloomy, must we? Too down in the proverbials. You never know, there might be something good



coming up. Like the interval. No, I'm only joking. There is no interval. You wouldn't think it was a lot to ask for, would you? Fifteen minutes' peace and quiet and a small tub of Haagen Dazs. But apparently it is. [JANET, JOHN AND BABY APPEAR, DESTITUTE.] And I'm not the only one feeling peckish. It's a disgrace. Some people, they shouldn't be allowed to have kids