

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

Boundless Grace

Story by
Mary Hoffman

Adapted for the Stage by
Charles Oyamo Gordon

Music Composed by
Michael Keck

Boundless Grace was first presented by The Children's Theatre Company for the 1997-1998 season.

The license issued in connection with PYA perusal scripts is a limited license, and is issued for the sole purpose of reviewing the script for a potential future performance. All other rights regarding perusal scripts are expressly reserved by Plays for Young Audiences, including, but not limited to, the rights to distribute, perform, copy or alter scripts. This limited license does not convey any performance rights of any kind with this material. By accepting any perusal script(s), Licensee agrees to and is bound by these terms.

Characters

- *Griot*
- Grace
- Ava (Mom)
- Nana
- Kelly
- Juneatha
- *Miss Geraldine (a puppet, animated by Griot)*
- *Paw-paw (cat)*
- Tariq Tambajang (Dad)
- Jatou
- Neneh
- Bakary
- *Dalasi (dog)*

Doubling can occur with characters in *bold*.

Ensemble includes: Chief, King, Vendors, Stilt Dancer, Villagers, Crocodiles

We hear the sounds of traditional Mandinka processional drumming. Lights rise on the GRIOT who rather dances out and sings to the audience. His/her song is based on traditional Mandinka music, but is in the style of popular highlife. The GRIOT may play an African "guitar" if possible. GRIOT will sometimes sing, sometimes speak. We are to understand that the entire story emanates from this GRIOT, so jumps and changes should be expected. The following songs are call and response.

GRIOT: JALIYA ALLAH LE KA JALIYA DA
JALIYA ALLAH LE KA JALIYA DA
GRACE IS A CHILD JUST EIGHT YEARS OLD
SWEET, SASSY, SMART, TALENTED
LIKE SHE 'SPOSED TO BE
HER FAVORITE THINGS ARE BOOKS AND DAYDREAMS
OF HER IDEAL FAMILY
THE MORE SHE READS THE MORE SHE DREAMS
OF HER PERFECT STORYBOOK LIFE
A FATHER, A MOTHER, A SISTER, AND A BROTHER
GRACE, IN HER WORLD OF BOOKS AND DREAMS
O, JALIYA ALLAH LE KA JALIYA DA - GRACE
O, JALIYA ALLAH LE KA JALIYA DA - GRACE

The following visions are in GRACE'S imagination. There should be special lighting to indicate always when we are in GRACE'S imagination.

GRACE: (reading) And the Indian princess was rescued by her glorious father, the most noble chief in all the land (A regal Native American Chief enters through a trap in the floor.) Father!

CHIEF: Daughter!

GRACE: (Reading) And the Mandinka king celebrated his brave daughter in front of his entire kingdom. (An African King

enters through the back wall of GRACE'S room. He gives her a rose and exits through the wall.) My father!

KING: Mandinka people, my daughter!

GRACE: Whoa!

MY DAD IS AN AFRICAN KING

HE'S BRAVE, STRONG, CAN DO ANYTHING

HE HAS SERVANTS AND GOATS, A WHOLE KINGDOM
TO RULE

HAS A GREAT BIG HOUSE

MY DADDY'S COOL

THAT'S MY DADDY, HE SO COOL,

GO DADDY, GO DADDY

MY DAD IS AN AFRICAN KING

HE'S SMART, HE SAYS THE FUNNIEST THINGS

HE'S THE BEST RULER FOR THE ENTIRE LAND

HE'S GENEROUS AND KIND TO ALL HIS FRIENDS

MY DADDY, HE SO COOL,

HE'S MY DADDY, GO DADDY,

THAT'S MY DADDY, HE SO COOL,

GO DADDY, GO DADDY

AVA: Grace. Grace. Grace! GRACE! GRACE! (*AVA enters. Lights to normal.*) Girl, can't you hear!? I've been calling you for hours.

Look at this room. What are these pop tarts doing all over

the floor? I told you to straighten up before we went

shopping. Nana'll be home in a few minutes, and you're not

even ready yet! What have you been sitting up here doing?

GRACE: I'm sorry, Ma, I..uh.. I was just thinking.

AVA: Paw-paw, get off that bed! You're shedding! Couldn't you think while you clean and get dressed?

GRACE: AWWW, ma, I...

AVA: "Awwww, ma" nothing! Let's get thrs room in order n...and what is this chair doing in the middle of the floor?

GRACE: It's the throne of a Mandinka Princess.

AVA: Well, you just call up that Mandinka Princess and tell her to bring her royal behind over here and help you tidy up your room. Let's move it, girl, I gotta go straight to work after we shop. (*Ava rushes about straightening up. PAW-PAW rubs itself against AVA's legs like cats do.*) Paw-paw, stop. Help clean up!

GRACE: Ma, why do you have to work every Saturday?

AVA: Do you eat every Saturday?

GRACE: Of course.

AVA: That's why I work every Saturday. It takes money to feed you.

GRACE: Nana has money and she doesn't work on Saturday.

AVA: Sweetie pie, Nana is retired and she gets a little social security pension check that she graciously shares with us. It is still not enough to pay all the bills.

GRACE: I was hoping you'd take me to the museum later today and then maybe we could.. .

AVA: Girl, Lord knows, I'd love to take you; you know that I love to take you places when I can. Remember how much fun we had at the state fair?

GRACE: Yeah, all the cheese curds and mini-donuts, and the rides.

AVA: And I remember how scared you were of that roller coaster thing, the whatchamacallit? You know, the spiral twister!

GRACE: I was not scared!

AVA: Hmmmph! Then why were you screaming?

GRACE: I was having fun. You were the scared one!

AVA: That Spiral twister was invented to physically abuse parents. My legs felt like boiled spaghetti time I climbed off that machine.

GRACE: *(Giggling)* Ma! Listen at you being silly!

AVA: *(Giggling with her)* A little maybe. But, anyway, you'll have to get Nana to take you to the museum today. She'd love to go.

GRACE: Awwwww, Ma, Nana always takes me. I wish I had a big brother who'd take me places!

AVA: Well, Grace, you don't have a brother. You have a mother and a Grandmother. We're your family.

GRACE: But we're not like a REAL family
I ONLY HAVE MY NANA AND YOU MAMA
OUR FAMILY IS NOT LIKE THOSE IN MY STORIES
WISH I HAD A SISTER AND A BROTHER
IN EVERY STORY FAMILY THERE'S A FATHER

AVA: YOU HAVE A MOTHER AND A NANA WHO LOVE YOU
KEEP YOU SAFE, CARE FOR YOU EVERY DAY
LET'S BE WE HAVE EACH OTHER
YOU NEVER HAVE TO'BE AFRAID

NANA: WE FUSS 'N LAUGH 'N CRY WITH EACH OTHER
THAT'S WHAT FAMILIES DO

BUT WE LIKE TO SAY IN THE ISLANDS
A FAMILY'S LOVE SWEETER THAN MANGO FRUIT

AVA & NANA:

'CAUSE A FAMILY IS JUST WHAT YOU MAKE IT
LET'S MAKE OUR FAMILY STRONG
JUST LIKE A ROCK SO BIG YOU CAN'T SHAKE IT
A FAMILY IS JUST WHAT YOU MAKE IT

GRACE:

Mama, our family is not like a real family ...
I KNOW YOU LOVE ME, NANA
AND MAMA I KNOW YOU TRULY DO

IN MY BOOKS WITH PICTURES AND STORIES
REAL FAMILIES HAVE THE LOVE OF A FATHER

AVA & NANA:

GRACE, A FAMILY IS JUST WHAT YOU MAKE IT
LET'S MAKE OUR FAMILY STRONG
JUST LIKE A ROCK SO BIG YOU CAN'T SHAKE IT
A FAMILY IS JUST WHAT YOU MAKE IT
GRACE, A FAMILY IS JUST WHAT YOU MAKE IT
LET'S MAKE OUR FAMILY STRONG
JUST LIKE A ROCK SO BIG YOU CAN'T SHAKE IT
A FAMILY IS JUST WHAT YOU MAKE IT

AVA:

I understand, Grace, but. . .well. . . , Grace, we have to go on
without your father, except for his occasional letter. He
started a business; he's real busy all the time.

NANA:

Don't worry up yourself so; time coming when you see your
father again.

GRACE:

I don't remember ever seeing my father.

AVA:

When you were a toddler, before your father and I divorced,
you saw him everyday until he moved back to Gambia, West

Africa. You were too young to remember. He used to snuzzle you on your neck because it made you laugh real loud, and he loved to carry you around the neighborhood and show you off. He was so proud of you!

GRACE: (dreamily) He did? Really?

AVA: Yes, he did, and I've told you this a thousand times. Now, let's stop this daydreaming and get on the road.

GRACE: Yes ma'am, no more daydreaming.

AVA: Good, we'll be waiting for you to get ready and come downstairs. Hurry up before the supermarket closes.

AVA and NANA exit. GRACE stares off into space, starting to drift into a daydream. She, picks up two puppet dolls, one female, Sarah Peg Leg and one male, Peg Leg the Pirate. The lights change to GRACE vision mood. She changes her voice as she, speaks through the dolls.

PEG LEG: I, Peg Leg the pirate have to rescue my daughter from that nasty Blackbeard

SARAH: Father, father, save me. He wants to make me walk the plank.

AVA: (off) Grace! Grace! GRACE! Don't you start that daydreaming again! Get over here, girl!

As the lights return to normal, GRACE remembers, grabs some clothes, quickly changes, and runs off, pushing the chair ahead of her. GRIOT strolls in. GRIOT, with his hands and feet starts clapping and stomping a double dutch beat. Lights crossfade, rise on a suggestion of a "school yard" at recess. It is not Monday. KELLY, JUNEATHA, and GRACE play jump rope. GRACE is jumping, messes up after a few moments.

GRIOT: HAVE YOU SEN SISTER SADIE
SHE WENT OUT TO PICK SOME DAISIES
HUSBAND SAID THAT SHE WAS LAZY

THEN HE TRIED TO DRIVE HER CRAZY

(GRACE, KELLY, & JUNEATHA join in and chant faster)

TOOK HER TO THE MOUNTAIN TOP

THINKING HE WOULD PUSH HER OFF

HE SLIPPED AND FELL INTO A WELL

THEN HE DIED, WENT STRAIGHT TO.. .OOOOH!

(faster)

SADIE WENT TO BUY SOME SHOES

SADIE SAYS THEY LOOKIN' GOOD

SADIE WENT TO HOLLYWOOD

BUT HER HUSBAND'S GONE FOR GOOD

(even faster)

HAVE YOU SEEN SISTER SADIE ...

GRACE: *(missing, stumbling, embarrassed)* Kelly, I told you to keep the ropes straight!

KELLY: Girl please! you just can't jump! Yo feet supposed to be up when they down and down when they up. Don't blame the rope!

JUNEATHA: She look like my daddy when he's trying to jump rope. He got this great big butt.

Other girls are giggling. GRACE is not happy.

GRACE: I do not have a big butt!

JUNEATHA: Ain't nobody said you did. I'm talking about my daddy. The rope keep getting stuck on his butt.

KELLY: My daddy belly so big he don't even try ta jump.

JUNEATHA: Yeah, yo' daddy look like he pregnant. You sure he ain't yo' mama?

KELLY: *(Playfully pushing JUNEATHA)* Hey, that's alright, my daddy and his big belly love to take me shopping every Saturday.

JUNEATHA: *(high five)* Wow! Go 'head, girl! Every Saturday?

KELLY: Every Saturday. I spend weekends with my dad.

JUNEATHA: *(turning the rope)* But how do you get him to take you shopping?

KELLY: *(illustrating)* You soften him up first. Like, tell him what a good daddy he is. They love that!

JUNEATHA: I just throw a natural fit; be crying and hollering how cheap he is. They hate that!

KELLY: Sugar works better than vinegar with dads.

The bell ending recess.

GRACE: You're just playing your dad for a fool!

KELLY: *(squaring off for battle)* You call my daddy a fool!

GRACE: You shouldn't do that to your father.

KELLY: Well, he's my daddy, and if I wanna play him, that's my privilege, and don't be calling my daddy no fool, Little miss cain't jump!

KELLY and GRACE start a pushing match that is broken up by the teacher MISS GERALDINE, a large puppet- perhaps- upstage. Her mouth is manipulated by the GRIOT who also affects humorous voice as her voice which is commanding, high pitched, very proper.

GERALDINE: Stop it! *(adlib to an audience member)* Where did you get your hair? Aren't you a little big for my classroom? Did I see you chewing gum? I know I saw you chewing gum. Stand up! Gum! Gum in my classroom! But it happens to be my favorite flavor, hmmmmm! *(crosses to stage)* Now, What is the meaning of this?

Following exchange is rapidfire.

- GRACE:** She pushed me, Miss Geraldine.
- KELLY:** Miss Geraldine, this heifa called my daddy a fool.
- GRACE:** I did not! I said she play him like a fool!
- KELLY:** A fool is a fool, fool!
- GERALDINE:** ENOUGH! Both of you go straight to the principal's office, and not a peep shall I hear from either! Have I made myself clear? Have I made myself clear? Have I made myself clear?
- GRACE & KELLY:** Yes, Miss Geraldine.
- GERALDINE:** Be gone! (*adlib to send JUNEATHA offstage, then muttering*) I shoulda been a radio DJ like I wanted to.

Lights crossfade, rise on GRACE writing "I will not fight" on the blackboard one hundred times.

In another area lights rise on AVA, NANA and GERALDINE. A letter envelope floats through the space.

- GERALDINE:** She barely listens in class anymore. Her homework is never done properly.
- AVA:** What do you suggest, Miss Geraldine? I do want her schoolwork to improve. I mean, I don't understand . . .why, she reads all the time. I can't get that girl's head out of a book.
- GERALDINE:** She spends far too much time reading fairytales and African adventure stories. Her schoolwork has become sloppy; she whines, and sometimes fights. I think she should be sent away to a strict boarding school for incorrigible little girls.

Lights on GRACE fade out.