

# Plays for Young Audiences

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

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## *Harriet the Spy*

By  
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From the Book by  
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*Harriet the Spy* was originally produced by the Children's Theatre Company in the 1987-88 season.

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### Author's Note:

Harriet's house and school should exist simultaneously and be connected by 'the street', a sort of front yard cum playground for Harriet and her friends.

Several scenes will flow rapidly in and out of these locations and there should always be a fluidity of movement throughout. Also Harriet's 'spy prep area' and her spy route should be set somewhere apart from her daily life.

### Characters:

- Harriet
- Mother
- Father
- Cook
- Sport (Simon)
- Janie
- The Boy with Purple Socks
- Beth-Ellen Hansen
- Marion Hawthorne
- Rachel Hennessey
- Carrie Andrews
- Laura Peters
- Pinky Whitehead
- Miss Elson
- Ole Golly
- Mama Dei Santi
- Bruno Dei Santi
- Papa Dei Santi
- Fabio Dei Santi
- Little Joe Curry
- Harrison Withers
- Mrs. Agatha K. Plumber
- Nadine
- Mr. Waldenstein
- Miss Berry

## SCENE ONE

Lights come up on Harriet writing in her notebook. She speaks aloud as she composes, and occasionally scratches out a word to revise. She is dresses for school.

HARRIET            I am a spy with a notebook. I am a spy that writes everything down, every single solitary thing that happens to me. Only nurse Ole Golly understands about my notebook, she says description is good for the soul and clears the brain like a laxative. I am a good spy who has never been caught. (Harriet inspects her work) Yeah! (Back to writing) When I grow up I will be a famous writer and people will bow to me in the streets and shower me with tomato sandwiches and egg creams where ever I go... Do they have tomato sandwiches everywhere? Check on that... And I'll find out everything about everybody and put it all in a book. The book is going to be called Secrets by Harriet M. Welsh. I will also have photographs in it and maybe some medical charts if I can get them.

## SCENE TWO

Lights up in the kitchen. Mother is on the telephone. Father is reading the newspaper over coffee. Cook is standing by the door with Harriet's lunchbox.

COOK                Harriet!

Harriet runs downstairs and grabs her lunchbox.

HARRIET            Tomato sandwich, thank you very much...

COOK                How 'bout pastrami? Bologna? Why does it have to be tomato every day? How 'bout roast beef? Cucumber?

HARRIET            Tomato, tomato tomato!

Sport enters and calls from the street.

SPORT               Harriet!

HARRIET            Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye...

Harriet joins Sport in the street. He throws a football at her.

SPORT             Harriet! Catch! I wanna practice before school.

Harriet hands the ball back to Sport getting a good look at his face. Then opens her notebook.

HARRIET            Me too...

She balances her book on one knee to write.

HARRIET            (Voice/over) Sometimes Sport looks like he's been up all night. He has funny little dry things around his eyes. I worry about him. (Closing her notebook) Writers have to practice too. For instance, if I don't express myself there's a chance I could get permanently stuffed up and become a danger to myself and society.

Jamie enters. Sport throws her the football.

SPORT             Janie! Catch!

Janie catches and returns the ball to Sport.

JANIE                Oh dear, another year of school starting. Another year older and I'm no closer to my goal.

Harriet writes.

HARRIET            (Voice/over) Janie gets stranger every day. Her goal is to be a chemist who can blow up the world.

SPORT             Harriet, catch!

Harriet drops her notebook to catch the football. Janie retrieves the book and hangs on to it for a wicked moment.

HARRIET            Hey! That notebook's private!

Janie hands it over and Harriet dusts it off.

JANIE (To Sport) Harriet must have a hundred notebooks by now.

HARRIET No, I have 14. This is number 15. How could I have 100? I've only been working since I was 8, and I'm only 11. I wouldn't even have this many except at first I wrote so big my spy route took almost the whole book.

The school bell rings and the three friends walk toward their classroom.

SPORT You spy on the same people every day?

HARRIET Yes, this year I have the Dei Santi family, little Joe Curry, Harrison Withers and a new one, Mrs. Agatha K. Plumber.

JANIE I just have one big notebook in my laboratory with around 250 pages full of scientific formulas I've developed... Right now, I have an experiment on a slow boil that my mother thinks may in fact successfully blow up the world. She says it smells like it could blow up the world.

SPORT I don't have notebooks. Ball players don't have to keep notebooks. But I have a ledger...

HARRIET (Taking notes) What's that?

SPORT For financial records. To make sure my father and I have enough money to eat dinner every night.

HARRIET Oh...

SPORT Before I started, sometimes all there was was martinis for him and olives and peanuts for me.

HARRIET (Pen poised to write) What's a martini exactly?

JANIE  $M = \frac{(3.5G + \frac{V}{2})}{4(H_2O)^3} + 3$  (M is equal to three point five G plus V divided by 2 over 4 times H-2-O to the third power.)

SPORT                      What writers drink after a hard day.

HARRIET                    I should know that...

They enter class. The boy with the purple socks is already there. Harriet, Sport, and Janie find desks near each other. Harriet takes out her notebook.

HARRIET                    (Voice/over) That boy with purple socks is here again. Who ever heard of purple socks?

JANIE                        (To Harriet) There's that dreadful Beth-Ellen Hansen.

Beth-Ellen enters timidly and sits, timidly. Harriet writes:

HARRIET                    (Voice/over) Beth-Ellen always looks like she might cry.

Marion Hawthorn enters imperiously, shadowed by Rachel Hennessey.

MARION                    Good morning, Harriet, Simon, Jane.

RACHEL                    Good morning, Harriet, Simon, Jane.

Harriet and Sport squelch laughter.

JANIE                        Are they not too much?

Carrie Andrews enters clumsily and waves to all. Harriet writes:

HARRIET                    (Voice/over) Carrie Andrews is considerably fatter this year.

Laura Peters enters gawkily, giggling, and sits besides Carrie. Harriet writes:

HARRIET                    (Voice/over) And Laura Peters is thinner and uglier. I think she could use some braces on her teeth.

SPORT                      Oh boy...

Pinky Whitehead enters weakly, sits weakly and gives a weak smile. Harriet writes:

HARRIET                    (Voice/over) Pinky Whitehead has not changed. Pinky Whitehead will never change. My mother is always saying Pinky Whitehead's problem is his mother. Does his mother hate him? If I had him, I'd hate him.

Miss Elson enters and all the children rise.

MISS ELSON                Good morning . . .

The children sit and Miss Elson continues talking but cannot be heard above Harriet's writing:

HARRIET                    (Voice/over) I'll tell you one thing. I don't want to live like Miss Elson. The other day I saw her in the grocery store and she bought one small can of tuna, a diet cola, and a pack of cigarettes. Not even one tomato. She must have a terrible life

MISS ELSON                ...That said...I'm eager to tell you that this semester begins The Gregory School's 'Keep Clean Campaign'. That means we're all going to make a special Gregory effort to keep the school halls and classrooms free of messy candy wrappers and all that chewed out gum disposed of under every convenient desk. It will not do! Sixth grade is an important time in your life and I'm sure no one wants an untidy school to stain their memory...

Marion waves her hand frantically

MISS ELSON                Yes, Marion.

MARION                    Miss Elson, couldn't we form litter police patrols to make sure everybody is obeying the cleanliness laws?

MISS ELSON                Good suggestion, Marion. We need more thinkers like you! But let's first see how the campaign progresses, shall we? And now, people, we'll have the election for class reporter, who as you know has the honor to write and edit the sixth grade page for the Gregory School News! The floor is now officially open for nominations...

SPORT                      I nominate Harriet Welsh.

JANIE                        (Yells) I second it!

RACHEL                   *(Prissy)* I nominate Marion Hawthorne. She, as we all know, is an extremely experienced reporter, since she's been class editor for us since first grade. I almost don't know why we even have to have an election.

MISS ELSON               This is an exercise in democracy, Rachel. One never knows the outcome, and it's good to keep those democratic muscles limber.

RACHEL                   Yes, Miss Elson. *(Rachel sits then waves her hand wildly)*

MISS ELSON               Anyone else? What is it, Rachel...

RACHEL                   Miss Elson, I would just like to add that Marion is honest, thoughtful, hardworking, and generous to all those students who she has seen chewing gum which is strictly forbidden, and other people who have dropped candy wrappers everywhere. She has never told on anyone. Yet.

*The class shifts uncomfortably in their seats. Marion shoots Beth Ellen a look and Beth Ellen rises timidly.*

BETH ELLEN               *(Stammering)* I second Marion Hawthorne's nomination.

MISS ELSON               Any further nominations? No? Then let's vote. All those in favor of Harriet Welsch for class reporter?

*Janie, Sport, Harriet and Pinky raise their hands.*

MISS ELSON               In favor of Marion Hawthorne?

*Marion, Rachel, Carrie, Laura, Beth-Ellen and The Boy with Purple Socks raise their hands.*

MISS ELSON               Marion Hawthorne is hereby elected... Congratulations Marion...

*Miss Elson's voice fades out behind Harriet as she writes:*

HARRIET                   *(Voice/over)* You'd think the teachers would smell a rat because neither me nor Sport nor Janie has ever won an election in this school.

The school bell rings and the students stand in groups of their friends to exit.

JANIE                    Our day will come... Just wait...

SPORT                    Forget it... Hey Harriet, whyncha come over this afternoon...

The three friends leave school for the street.

HARRIET                    After my spy route maybe...

SPORT                    Gee, Janie's working in her lab, you two are always working...

JANIE                    I can't stop now. I'm developing a formula to blow up my enemies...

HARRIET                    Oooohhh....

JANIE                    I'm serious, Harriet... This time they're really after me.

SPORT                    Who?

JANIE                    My mother, my father, my brother, my grandfather. .My mother says since I'm going to blow up the world I have to go to dancing school and learn manners...

SPORT                    *(With a shrug)* Grown-ups.

JANIE                    This time they could take it all away. My laboratory, equipment, my Bunsen burner.

HARRIET                    What would you do?

Sport and Janie walk Harriet to her door.

JANIE                    Leave of course, run away somewhere where chemists are appreciated.

SPORT                    You mean like a drug store?

JANIE &  
HARRIET

SPORT!

HARRIET

What is this about dancing school?

JANIE

Just wait, buddy, they're gonna get you too. I heard my mother talking to your mother. Whoever heard of Pasteur going to dancing school? Or Madame Curie, or Einstein?

HARRIET

Whether they how it or not, I'm not going.

JANIE

They will never get us.

*The three friends shake hands, all together. Sport and Janie exit, shouting:*

SPORT & JANIE

Never!

### SCENE THREE

HARRIET

*(Racing inside, shouting)* Hello Cook! Hello Cookie!

*A piece of cake has been set out on the kitchen table. Cook enters in time to collide with Harriet.*

COOK

*(Shouting)* You're more like a missile than a little girl! *(exits)*

HARRIET

*(Still shouting)* Hi Cooky! Bye Cooky! Time for my cake and milk!  
Time for my cake and milk! Ole Golly!

*Harriet sits down and opens her notebook. She writes:*

HARRIET

*(voice over)* I always do carry on a lot.

*Cook enters with a glass of milk for Harriet and a cup of coffee for herself.*

COOK

What're you always writing in that dad blamed book for?

HARRIET

Because I'm a spy. I'm a good spy too. I've never been caught.

COOK                   How long you been a spy?

HARRIET               Since I could write. Ole Golly told me if I was going to be a writer I better write everything down. So I'm a spy that writes everything down.

COOK                   *(Unconvinced)* Hmmm. Some spy. I don't know about that Nurse of yours, that 'Ole Golly.'

HARRIET               I know all about you.

COOK                   Like fun you do.

HARRIET               I do too. I know you live with your sister in Brooklyn and that she might get married and you wish you had a car and you have a son that's no good and drinks.

COOK                   What do you do child, listen at doors? I think that's very bad manners...

HARRIET               Ole Golly doesn't. Ole Golly says find out everything you can 'cause life is hard even if you how a lot.

COOK                   I don't know. Like I said, I don't how about that Ole Golly and that 'boyfriend' of hers...

HARRIET               Boyfriend! What do you mean boyfriend?

COOK                   I don't know...

*Ole golly enters.*

OLE GOLLY            What is it you don't know? Any inquiries you have, ought to be directly addressed to me, don't you agree?

COOK                   *(Standing abruptly)* Can I get you your tea now, Miss Golly?

OLE COLLY            That would be most kind of you. *(Takes out a book)* Good afternoon, Harriet. *(Ole golly starts to read.)*

HARRIET           What're you reading?

OLE GOLLY       Dostoyevsky.

HARRIET           What's that?

OLE COLLY       (Reads) "Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things..."

Cook sets ole golly's tea down.

COOK             Ha! Fat chance.

OLE GOLLY       (Continues, ignoring the Cook) . . .once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with an all embracing love.

HARRIET           What does that mean?

OLE GOLLY       (Trying) Well. . .maybe if you love everything then. I guess you'll know everything... then... it seems like you love everything more. Well, that's about it.

HARRIET           (Standing and shouting) I want to know everything! Everything in the world. Everything, everything! I will be a spy and know everything!

OLE GOLLY       It won't do you a bit of good to know everything if you don't do anything with it.

HARRIET           I think I'll go out and do something ....

COOK             Yes. Go out and play.

HARRIET           I do not go out and play! Writing is hard work!

## SCENE FOUR

Cook exits with a dismissive gesture. Harriet races to her spy prep area.

HARRIET            (Sing-song) Spy route, spy route... (Harriet stops for a moment to write in her notebook) Maybe all that love stuff Ole Golly's reading has something to do with that boyfriend Cook mentioned. Check on this after spy route. (She closes her notebook and starts to dress.) Spy clothes, spy clothes!

Music accompanies Harriet as she decks herself in her beloved spy clothes. She possesses the dedication and devotion of a bullfighter preparing for battle in the ring.

HARRIET            Jeans!

Harriet grabs an ancient pair of jeans and holds them up to the lights so it is clear how threadbare, worn and patched they are. She puts them on quickly then reaches for her belt.

HARRIET            Belt! (She checks each attachment.) Flashlight in case I'm ever out at night. (She laughs) Leather pouch for notebook, leather case for extra pens, water canteen in case I end up in the desert.. . girl scout knife with screwdriver.. .collapsible knife and fork in case I ever have to eat out in the desert some night... It hasn't happened yet... (She shakes herself and laughs as the attachments jingle and jangle.) Sneakers! Sweatshirt!

She picks up an old pair of sneakers and wiggles her fingers through the holes in the tops before putting them on. Then she covers up with an old sweatshirt with a hood. Finally, Harriet puts on an old pair of spectacles without glass in them.

HARRIET            There! Now I look even smarter!

She makes a complete turn as if admiring herself before a mirror, then runs, pleased and laughing to begin her spy route.

## SCENE FIVE

Harriet stops at the Dei Santi grocery.

HARRIET            (Flipping through her notebook) First assignment... (She reads) The Dei Santis, big family, pretty noisy assignment...

Lights come on in the Dei Santi Grocery and the store rocks with noise and activity. Harriet sneaks up, to stare through a window. On the opposite side of the store are two more open windows through which fly various objects, symbols of the turmoil inside.

MAMA              No! Nothing! Niente! Never! Accident! Mio Figlio, he take the truck, he die! Oooh! Violenza!

The sounds of crockery breaking.

BRUNO             Oh, Mama... .

MAMA              Don't you Mama, mia . . . . Que Miseria, No. No. No. No. No! O Dio! Miseria in Milano!

A rolled up newspaper flies out the window, followed by a few plates.

PAPA               Look how you treat your Mama, you no good bum!

A salami flies out the window, followed by more broken crockery, a string of sausages and a bucket.

FABIO              Wassa matta? I just wanna borrow the truck.

MAMA              No! Accident! You'll have an accident, my little son... Grief and heart ache! Diom Mio!

Mama walks outside the store, wrings her hands dramatically then pops back inside.

BRUNO             Papa, let him borrow... let him have fun he's only 18...

FABIO              Yeah, I'm only 18.

A boot flies out the window.

PAPA                      18 too old for fun!

Papa punches his fist through the wall to punctuate. Harriet jumps back, and the voices inside the store fade as Harriet writes:

HARRIET                      What is too old to have fun? You can't be too old to spy except if you were 50 you might fall off a fire escape but you could spy around the ground a lot.

Harriet sneaks around the grocery to an alley behind. Little Joe Curry is sprawled on the ground, eating and surrounded by food. Harriet reads from her notes:

HARRIET                      ...Little Joe Curry ...Delivery boy... always hungry... 1 count... 2 cucumbers, 3 tomatoes, loaf of bread, custard pie, 3 quarts of milk, no 4 quarts of milk... meatball sandwich, 2 jars of pickles, 4 apples, a salami...

Lights dim on the Dei Santis and the alley and come up on the Harrison Withers' room. Harrison is playing a jazz saxophone. He's surrounded by cats. Harriet climbs a fire escape to spy on him. She reads from her notebook.

HARRIET                      Harrison Withers--musician... shares room with 25 cats. Special investigation for today. Discover whether Harrison Withers eats the same food as his cats.

The cats start to meow, and Harrison lays his sax down to feed them.

HARRISON                      Hungry? (He pours cat food into bowls.)

HARRIET                      (Writing/voice-over) I bet nobody but me knows he has all those cats. I bet they wouldn't let him keep them if anybody knew. Sport's landlord won't let him have even one cat and Sport's apartment is twice as big as Harrison Withers'.

HARRISON                      There now, we're all going to eat now. Hello, everybody ...yes ...yes ... hello. Hello David, hello Rasputin, yes Goethe, Alex, Sandra, Thomas Wolfe, Pat, Puck, Faulkner, Cassandra, Gloria, Circe, Koufax, Marijane, Willy Mays, Francis, Kokosdlka, Donna, Fred,

Swam, Mickey Mantle, Sebastian, Yvonne, Jerusalem, Dostoyevsky, and Bamaby. Hello hello hello.

Harrison takes up a small container of yogurt to eat.

HARRIET (Writing) Wow. Yogurt. Think of eating that junk all the time. I always say there is nothing like a good tomato sandwich now and then...

Harrison Withers picks up his sax and plays again.

HARRIET (Writing) Anyway, I wouldn't mind living like Harrison Withers because he looks happy. He really loves those cats. And he loves to play his music. Ole Golly says that people who love their work, love life. Do some people hate life? I wonder what it's like to be by yourself so much. I just wonder if he has any human friends...

Harriet climbs down the fire escape as lights fade on Harrison Withers and come up on Mrs. Plumber's house. Harriet walks right up to the door and reads the name over the bell.

HARRIET Mrs. Agatha K. Plumber (She sneaks to the side and from her notebook.) Divorced... lives alone.

Nadine enters and Harriet closes her notebook and sneaks past Nadine to a dumbwaiter in Mrs. Plumber's kitchen. Nadine picks up a food tray and sings.

NADINE There she is... Miss America....

Harriet hoists the ropes to elevate the dumbwaiter. At one point it seems she may fall, but she saves herself. When Harriet stops pulling, lights come up on Mrs. Plumber in bed, speaking on the phone.

MRS. P. I have discovered the secret of life!

HARRIET (Voice/over) Wow!

MRS. P. My dear, you just take to your bed. You just refuse to leave it for anyone or anybody. Oh yes, darling, I know. I know you can't run away from life. I agree you. I loathe the people who do that. But you

see, I'm not... While I'm lying here I'm actually working because, you see, and this is the divine part, I'm deciding on a profession.

Nadine enters with the food tray.

MRS. P.                   (Cranky) Put it over there... (Nadine Exits)

Harriet opens her notebook and the dumbwaiter squeaks. Mrs. Plumber notices and stops to listen, and Harriet holds her breath. Then, as Mrs. Plumber returns to the phone, Harriet slowly, carefully, opens her notebook.

MRS. P.                   My dear, I have infinite possibilities...

HARRIET                   (Writing/voice-over) It's just what Ole Golly says. Rich people are boring. She says when people don't do anything, they don't think anything, and when they don't think anything there's nothing to think about them. If I had a dumbwaiter I would look in it all the time to see if anybody was in it.

The dumbwaiter squeaks again.

MRS. P.                   Nadine!

NADINE                   Yes Ma'am.

MRS. P.                   Do you hear that old dumbwaiter creaking?

Nadine stops to listen and Harriet holds her breath, again.

NADINE                   No, Ma'am.

Harriet starts to slowly lower herself down.

MRS. P.                   It was probably only my imagination... (Back to the phone) Now, don't you think I would make a marvelous actress or there's always painting...?

Harriet jumps out of the dumbwaiter and runs to her spy prep area.

HARRIET                    *(Writing/voice-over)* I think Mrs. Plumber might be too dangerous an assignment. But I would like to know what job she takes. What can you do lying down?

Harriet takes off her spy clothes and puts on a nightgown. She stops a moment to jot something down.

HARRIET                    *(Writing/voice-over)* Mrs. Plumber and Harrison Withers are both alone a lot. Their houses are quiet. We have a noisy Cook, but I like some action around. I wonder, what is it like to be alone all the time?

Ole Golly enters. She points Harriet in the direction of her bedroom.

OLE GOLLY                Remember to wash your neck.

## SCENE SIX

Harriet gets ready for bed.

HARRIET                    Ole Golly, if people are alone all the time I feel sorry for them.

Ole Golly readies Harriet's school clothes.

OLE GOLLY                "That inward eye which is the bliss of solitude."

HARRIET                    What?

OLE GOLLY                What?

OLE OLLY                    Wordsworth, "I Wandered Lonely as A cloud".

HARRIET                    Well, don't you feel sorry for them?

OLE GOLLY                "How sweet, how passing sweet is solitude."

HARRIET                    Ole Golly! Do you or don't you feel sorry for people who are alone?

OLE GOLLY        No, I don't.

Mother and Father stick their heads in to be kissed good-night.

MOTHER        Good night darling.

FATHER        Good night sweetheart.

HARRIET        Are you going to a big party tonight?

MOTHER        A big tiresome party with foreign diplomats and movie stars. I'll tell you all about it tomorrow... Sleep well, Harriet darling... Bye, Miss Golly. (*Mother and Father exit.*)

HARRIET        But at least if you lived alone, nobody could send you to dancing school.

OLE OOLLY     "Solitude the safeguard of mediocrity, is to genius the stern friend."

HARRIET        I said you wouldn't have to go to any damn dancing school!

A brief steely silence.

OLE GOLLY     What is all this about dancing school? And since when have you judged any education profane?

HARRIET        I don't want to be poor and I don't want to be alone and spies don't go to dancing school!

OLE GOLLY     Oh, but they do.

HARRIET        They do not!

OLE GOLLY     Harriet, have you ever thought about how spies are trained? Remember that movie we saw about Mata Hari one night on television? (*A screen behind shows a clip of Greta Garbo as Mata Hari.*) Where did she operate? She went to parties, right? And remember the scene with the General or whatever he was? She was dancing,

right? Now, how are you ever going to be a spy if you don't know how to dance?

HARRIET But will I have to wear those silly dresses? Couldn't I wear my spy clothes?

OLE GOLLY Of course not. If you wear your spy clothes everybody knows you're a spy. So you have to look like everybody else. Then you'll get by and nobody'll suspect you.

Harriet gets into bed and reaches for her notebook.

HARRIET Maybe that's true. But I'd still feel sorry for you if you didn't have any human friends only maybe 25 cats to keep you company.

Ole Golly kisses Harriet goodnight.

OLE GOLLY "This above all, to thine own self be true. And it must follow as the night the day. Thou canst not then be false to any man."

HARRIET Sometimes I wish you would just speak English.

OLE GOLLY That is Elizabethan English, Harriet. "When that April with his shoures soote/ The droghte of March perced to the roote." And that's Chaucer. F.Y.I. There are as many ways to live as there are people on earth. Go to sleep now Harriet. *(She turns off the light.)*

HARRIET Ole Golly, is it true you have a boyfriend?

OLE GOLLY Yes.

HARRIET YES!

Ole Golly exits. Harriet tries to write by flashlight. Then in a quick motion throws down her flashlight and opens her curtains and writes by city light, and moonlight.

HARRIET *(Writing/voice-over)* This is incredible! Cook gave me a good clue. Ole Golly has a boyfriend! When does she see him?

Harriet looks out the window to see Mr. Waldenstein enter. Ole Golly enters to meet him in the street in front of the house. Mr. Waldenstein tips his hat and gallantly offers Ole Golly his arm.

HARRIET                    *(Writing/voice-over)* Life is a great mystery. Is everybody a different person when they are with someone else? I wonder if people act this way when they get married? Would Ole Golly's boyfriend come to live with us then? They could put their child in my room if they wanted. I wouldn't mind. I don't think... unless it was a very noisy child. *(Harriet closes the curtains and shuts the light.)* Then I would smash it.

## SCENE SEVEN

Lights come up on Carrie and Laura in the street hawking the Gregory School news.

CARRIE                    Get your copy of the Gregory School News!

Sport enters and takes a copy.

LAURA                    Fresh issue! First of the year!

Janie enters, gets her copy and joins Sport.

CARRIE                    Red hot sixth grade page!

JANE                      School is getting too ridiculous. Miss Elson is going too far... Today I got the impression she didn't think a single one of us knew anything about the history of vaporous gases in the twentieth century. And look at this newspaper! This newspaper is ridiculous! Look at Marion Hawthorne's editorial...

SPORT                    Dumb and boring. *(Reads)* "We must not drop our candy wrappers on the ground. They must be put into wastebaskets provided for this purpose."

JANIE                    I'd like to put Marion Hawthorne in a wastebasket.

SPORT                    Harriet oughta write it. She's a writer.

CARRIE Gregory News! Immaculate report on clean school!

SPORT They can have their dumb paper.

JANIE They should be blown up.

Lights up on Harriet's house. Cook yells out the door.

COOK Harriet!

Harriet runs on.

HARRIET Janie, I think they got me...

JANIE How? A silent bullet, right? Lie down, maybe I can burn it out...

HARRIET No... dancing school. It looks like I have to go if I'm gonna be a spy.

LAURA Cleanest news in town!

JANIE C'mon... Who ever heard of a dancing spy?

HARRIET Mata Hari... I can't help it Janie...

COOK Harriet, girl, where are you?!

JANIE I'll carry on the fight alone, if I have to... to the last atom of my being, the last particle. There have been people before me who have been misunderstood.

Cook enters and grabs Harriet.

COOK Didn't you hear me call? It's Miss Golly's day off and your parents have a big affair tonight and I got to know where you are!

Cook leads Harriet to the kitchen.

HARRIET Let go of my arm, you're pinching...

COOK                    I'll do more than that!

LAURA                 Read all about it! Stainless halls!

CARRIE                 Tidy classrooms! Clean news!

JANIE                    I'll give you clean news...

*Janie backs Carrie and Laura offstage.*

JANE                    That rag's not fit to clean my cat box. I'd clean fish on it before I read another word.

SPORT                  Oh boy, am I glad my father never even heard of dancing school!

## SCENE EIGHT

*In the kitchen.*

HARRIET                Is Ole Golly already gone?

COOK                    Yep, and your parents leave soon too. We're stuck with each other you and I, so don't give me any aggravation you hear? My poor heart gave me so many palpitations I thought I would fall over already today, so no loud noises or surprises you hear me loud and clear?

HARRIET                I guess I'll help my mother get ready to go out.

COOK                    Quiet as a mouse, Miss, please.

*Harriet tiptoes out of the kitchen then slams the kitchen door and runs upstairs yelling.*

HARRIET                MOTHER!!

*Mother enters carrying a phone, she covers the receiver.*

MOTHER                In a moment Harriet darling... (Mother exits.)

Harriet falls on her bed to write.

HARRIET            Cook deserves palpitations, even if she did give me a good clue about Ole Golly's boyfriend. Is she meeting him now? There is more to this love thing than meets the eye. I am going to have to think about this a great deal but I don't think it will get me anywhere.

Mother enters dressed for a fashionable night out.

HARRIET            Mommy!

MOTHER            What is it darling?

Mother sits down to struggle with her bouffant in front of the mirror.

HARRIET            How did you meet Daddy?

MOTHER            On the boat going to Europe.

HARRIET            I know that. I mean how did you meet him. How was it?

MOTHER            You mean how exactly? I was coming out of the dining room and I bumped into him. It was a very stormy crossing and he threw up.

HARRIET            Do people always act strange when they meet who they're going to marry?

MOTHER            Well, no dear. I doubt it. You see he'd thrown up.

HARRIET            I know! But what does it feel like?

MOTHER            To have someone throw up on you?

HARRIET            NO! I mean what does it feel like when you meet the person you're going to marry?

MOTHER            Are you considering it? Marriage...?

HARRIET            Me! I'm only 11!

MOTHER            I'm just wondering. You seem so worried.

HARRIET            I'm not worried, just curious... I just wondered what it would feel like.

MOTHER            Well, I imagine it's different for everyone. I felt... I felt your father was the best looking man I'd ever seen. The fact that he threw up on me made me laugh instead of being absolutely furious. I haven't the faintest idea what anyone else feels...

Father enters.

FATHER            Good Lord, you're not half ready yet.

MOTHER            Why don't you go and get the car out, darling. I'll be right there.

Father exits. Mother sprays herself with perfume.

HARRIET            If Sport threw up on me, I'd bash his teeth in.

MOTHER            Oh no you wouldn't.

HARRIET            Oh yes I would.

Mother catches Harriet and tickles her.

MOTHER            Oh-no-you-wouldn't (*Kisses Harriet*) Good night, Harriet.

Mother exits. Harriet writes.

HARRIET            There is more to this love thing than meets the eye. I am going to have to think about this great deal but I don't think it will get me anywhere.

Mother and Father stick their heads in again to be kissed.

MOTHER            Go to bed on time, darling.

FATHER            Goodnight, sweetheart.

*Mother and Father exit. Harriet writes.*

HARRIET            I think maybe they are right when they say there are some things like this love thing... I won't know about until I am older.

## SCENE NINE

*Cook yells up from the bottom of the stairs, breaking Harriet's concentration.*

COOK                Harriet! You in your room? Remember, I gotta keep tabs. Answer me now, I don't wanna hafta go gallivanting after you with my palpitations and everything I got to worry about.

*Harriet ignores Cook and keeps writing.*

HARRIET            Maybe when I grow up I can have an office. On the door it can say, 'Harriet the Spy' in gold letters and underneath it can say Any Spy Work Undertaken. I wonder if I will get any murder cases? I would have to have a gun and follow people but I bet it would be at night and I wouldn't be allowed out.

*Cook crankily climbs the stairs.*

COOK                You're a wonder for avoiding reality, anybody ever tell you that? You ever listen to anything? I doubt it. If you were my daughter... Whad'ta want for dinner? I'm making lamb chops. You probably want hamburgers. Fine. Don't think about me and the extra work. Look at how you made me walk all this way.. .Harriet!

HARRIET            *(Sweetly)* Yes?

COOK                No respect...You don't care one dime for my palpitations...

Ole Golly and Mr. Waldenstein enter.

COOK                *(Yells)* Who's that! What's that coming into the house, now? Nothing but trouble and sorrow and more trouble and probably more sorrow.

Cook starts making her way, carefully back down the steps.

OLE GOLLY            Do come in, Mr. Waldenstein

MR. W.                Why thank you, Miss Golly, so very nice of you to invite me to dine with you.

Harriet races downstairs pushing past Cook.

HARRIET              Ole Golly!

MR. W.                And this must be your charming ward.

OLE GOLLY            Harriet, this is Mr. George Waldenstein. Mr. Waldenstein this is Miss Harriet M. Welsch. Please sit now. I'll have dinner ready in a minute.

Cook shambles downstairs.

COOK                  What's this, Miss Golly. A strange man in my kitchen. This ain't regular.

OLE GOLLY            Please do not concern yourself Cook. I shall prepare a simple dinner... *(Ole golly puts on an apron.)*

COOK                  Not in my kitchen, it ain't regular at all...

OLE GOLLY            Now wouldn't you like an evening to catch up on your magazines. You always complain there's never enough hours in the day to read the National Enquirer. Just sit down and give your palpitating heart relief.

COOK                  I'll sit down all right. And make sure everything's done regular. And no mistake...

Ole Golly quickly prepares dinner.

MR. W.                I think we have a friend in common, Harriet.

HARRIET              Who's that?

MR. W. Little Joe Curry.

HARRIET The delivery boy at the Dei Santi's?

COOK That Curry boy's no good. He always breaks the eggs. That's all I got to say...

HARRIET He certainly eats a lot.

MR. W. Yes, I imagine he would. He is a growing boy. He says that he has seen you many times on his delivery trips.

HARRIET Anyplace else?

MR. W. He sees you walking home from school.

COOK That girl does not walk. She zooms like a rocket, straight into me half the time not caring one dime for the circumstances of my own poor health no sir...

MR. W. Little Joe Curry is an enigma to me. He has no other ambition than to be a delivery boy. After all, to me this makes very little sense.

OLE GOLLY That is because you have had another life, Mr. Waldenstein.

MR. W. Yes, I had a big business once Harriet. Once long ago I had a very big business. I was a jeweler. I made a lot of money and I was the most miserable man alive.

COOK Ha! Get off it!

MR. W. I saw that life was so much dust in my hands, always dust nothing more... and so I became a delivery boy. That's what I am now, Harriet, a hard working delivery boy. From the moment I made that decision life was sweet again.

Ole Golly sets plates of food in front of everyone.

OLE GOLLY It must have taken a lot of courage... (Pause) George...

COOK                   It ain't regular.

Ole Golly fixes Cook with a steely look and Cook yawns.

OLE GOLLY            I believe we're all sufficiently familiar with your opinion.

COOK                    (Yawns) It ain't...

Cook falls forward over her dish, snoring slightly. Harriet pokes Cook gingerly with a finger.

HARRIET               Cook's sleep.

OLE GOLLY            Don't poke, Harriet...You were saying George?

MR. W.                 I was saying I'd like to suggest a celebration in honor of the sweetness of life. I would like to take you two ladies to the cinema.

OLE GOLLY            Oh no, we couldn't do that.

HARRIET               (To Mr. W.) Hey! You're all right!

OLE GOLLY            Harriet!

HARRIET               Come on Ole Golly, why not? I never get to the movies!

MR. W.                 Yes, why not, Catherine?

OLE GOLLY            Why, it's obvious. I must stay here with my charge. It would never do.

MR. W.                 Of course. What a pity.

HARRIET               But Ole Golly, my parents won't be home 'till late. You always say when Daddy wears a white tie they won't come home 'till late.

MR. W.                 It would give me such pleasure.

Cook snores loudly.

MR. W.                    If some harm were to come to the child I would understand, Catherine. But as it is... a simple movie, a soda perhaps at the drugstore, no harm will come.

Harriet pulls the paper out of Cook's hands.

HARRIET                (*tearing through the paper*) Here! Look what's playing Ole Golly. It's perfect! A spectacular about the Greek Gods. It's what I'm studying and I like Apollo and Athena the best!

Cook snores again.

OLE COLLY            I guess we'll be home in plenty of time to do the dishes. We better hurry to the early show.

Ole Golly turns the lights down in the kitchen as she, Harriet and Mr. Waldenstein climb aboard Mr. Waldenstein's delivery bike, in the street.

MR. W.                Pop in here, Harriet. Hold tight Catherine...

OLE GOLLY            Be careful, George.

MR. W.                Fear not, I have precious cargo.

Harriet, Ole Golly and Mr. Waldenstein exit and the screen behind is suddenly filled with a clip of a Hercules movie. Something like 'Mighty Hercules.' Tearing a temple apart with his bare hands to the strains of heroic music.

Mother and Father enter immediately and Father turns the lights on the messy kitchen and Cook who wakes with the light.

MOTHER              What is this! What is the meaning of this? Look at you, Cook! I am amazed!

Mother goes upstairs to check on Harriet.

HARRIET              (*Voice-over*) This movie is a gas. Zeus is so angry all the time, he makes a lot of temples fall over. Paul Newnan is Zeus, and Shirley McClaine is Athena.

MOTHER                    *(Screams)* Harriet! *(She runs downstairs.)* Where is my child?!

COOK                        *(Rubbing her eyes awake)* Oh Ma'am, I'm sure I don't know. Ole Golly musta took her somewhere, with that man.

FATHER                    What man? I'm calling the police!

COOK                        I said he wasn't regular! He gave up a big business, that's not regular in my book.

MOTHER                    They've stolen my daughter. *(Screams)* HELP!

Father grabs the telephone. And the house is suddenly lit like a torch. Police sirens sound behind as Ole Golly, Harriet and Mr. Waldenstein enter on the grocery delivery bike. Harriet's head peeks out from her seat in the basket. Father sees her and runs in to scoop her up.

FATHER                    Harriet!

Mother races over.

MOTHER                    *(To Harriet)* Darling... Miss Golly! How dare you! Without permission. We were terrified. Who is this strange man?

MR. W.                      I...we...meant no harm sir, ma'am I can certainly explain.

FATHER                    Miss Golly, come inside here. Come along Harriet. Miss Golly, what is this business? Who is this man?

OLE GOLLY                He...

MR. W.                      I really think there has been a misunderstanding...

OLE GOLLY                This...

MOTHER                    Who is this man!

OLE GOLLY                *(With dignity)* Mrs. Welsch, I would like to explain that no harm has come to Harriet. We simply went...

MOTHER                    Harm! Harm! What about the harm to me?! Do you realize it's midnight!? I have never had such a terrifying experience. I don't care what you did or where you went. This is not going to happen again. Miss Golly, you are FIRED!

Harriet bursts into tears.

FATHER                    Now, dear...

OLE GOLLY                Mrs. Welsch, I hope you know me well enough by now to how that as long as this child is in my care not one thing would harm her in any way. If anyone were to harm her it would be over my dead body!

MOTHER                    I don't care! You're fired!! I am putting Harriet to bed. *(To Father)* If you want to discuss this further with this woman and this strange man you never laid eyes on before then go ahead.

*Mother marches Harriet upstairs.*

MR. W.                    Mr. Welsch, I have children myself. I know how upsetting this kind of thing can be...

*Mother drops Harriet on her bed and descends the stairs. Harriet immediately runs after and rests at the top of the stairs to eavesdrop.*

FATHER                    Darling, let's give him a chance to explain...

MR.W.                    Mr. and Mrs. Welsch. I simply want to say that this misunderstanding does not have to be a tragedy. If it weren't for the fact that just this evening I asked for the hand of Miss Golly in marriage and she has most kindly accepted me, the loss of her very pleasant place here would most certainly be just that, a tragedy. But as it is I do not think that she need have one minute's unpleasantness about this. I only hoped and I know I speak for her too, that the leaving would be more amicable than this.

*A brief silence.*

MOTHER                    But Miss Golly, you can't leave. What would we do without you?

OLE GOLLY I thank you for that Mrs. Welsch. I think however, that in many ways the time has come. Not only for me but for Harriet as well.

Harriet descends the stairs slowly.

OLE COLLY (To Harriet) 'The time has come, the walrus said'

HARRIET To talk of many things

OLE COLLY Of shoes and ships and sealing wax

HARRIET (Laughing) Of Cabbages and kings

OLE GOLLY And why the sea is boiling hot

HARRIET (Shouting with glee) And whether pigs have wings!

OLE COLLY (To the Grown-ups) Excuse me. You're not even in your night gown yet, Harriet, get going.

## SCENE TEN

In her room. Harriet dresses for bed.

HARRIET Will Mr. Waldenstein be working right around the corner?

OLE GOLLY No, we have decided to visit his mother and father in Montreal. Then, if we like it, we might live there.

HARRIET MON-TREE ALL! Where's that?

OLE GOLLY Harriet, don't take on so. You how perfectly well it's in Canada.

HARRIET But then I won't see you!

OLE GOLLY            You've no need to see me. Listen, you don't need a nurse now. When you're big and sell your first book, I'll come into the bookstore and get a signed copy. How 'bout that?

HARRIET              Wow, you mean you'll ask for my autograph?

OLE GOLLY            I guess you could put it that way. (*Ole Golly tucks Harriet in, then hands her notebook and flashlight.*) Now, you better get to work. You've got a lot to catch up on in your notebook.

*Harriet throws herself on Ole Golly's neck to hug her.*

HARRIET              You're going now?

OLE GOLLY            Good-bye Harriet the spy. None of that now. Tears won't bring me back, remember that. Tears never bring anything back. Life is a struggle and a good spy gets in there and fights. (*She turns out the bedroom light.*) Remember that... No nonsense.

*Ole Golly exits. Harriet turns on her flashlight and writes.*

HARRIET              Will I feel all the same things without Ole Golly here? I already feel there's a funny little hole in me that wasn't there before, like a splinter in your finger, but this is somewhere above my stomach.

*Saxophone music ends the scene as the lights fade to black.*

**END OF THE ACT**