

PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

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

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Penrod

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Act I, Scene 1

Act Curtain rises to reveal exterior of Schofield home and stable. A fence along the back of the yard and a clothesline upon which hangs a pair of men's red flannel long johns. Various TOWNSPEOPLE stroll past. Suddenly PENROD flies out the front door, sees the long johns on the line, grabs them, then leaps over the fence as we hear women's voices from inside the house.

MRS. SCHOFIELD (Offstage.) Penrod?!

DELLA (Offstage.) He went out through the parlor, ma'am.

MRS. SCHOFIELD, MARGARET, and DELLA enter through the front door and look about the yard for PENROD.

MRS. SCHOFIELD PENROD!

MARGARET Mother, we're going to be late. PENROD!

MRS. SCHOFIELD PENROD! COME BACK HERE!

MARGARET (At the stable door.) PENROD! GET BACK INSIDE! WE KNOW THAT YOU'RE IN THERE. . .

MARGARET &
MRS. SCHOFIELD DON'T YOU TRY TO HIDE!
PENROD, COME OUT ON THE DOUBLE
PENROD, YOU OBEY!
MUST YOU ALWAYS CAUSE SUCH TROUBLE?

DELLA (Turning back to re-enter the house.)
LORD, HOW DO CHILDREN EVER GET TO BE THIS WAY?!

MARGARET PENROD, WE'RE WAITING. . .

MRS. SCHOFIELD PENROD, WE'RE GETTING MAD!
WE CAN'T KEEP CALLING. . .

MARGARET PENROD! STOP STALLING!

MRS. SCHOFIELD PENROD, YOU WICKED CHILD!

MARGARET NO OTHER BOY AS WILD!

MARGARET &
MRS. SCHOFIELD MUST YOU ALWAYS BE SO BAD?!

MRS. SCHOFIELD and MARGARET enter the house and disappear. PENROD appears through the gate and goes to the stable and enters. The house shifts off as the stable pivots to reveal its interior. It has a loft and a sawdust bin. The music continues.

PENROD WHY CAN'T THEY EVER LEAVE ME ALONE?
WHY CAN'T THEY GIVE ME A DAY OF MY OWN?
WHY AM I NEVER ALLOWED ANY PEACE?
JUST AN HOUR WOULD BE NICE –
FIFTEEN MINUTES AT LEAST.
IS IT A CRIME IF I DON'T WANT TO BE
THE THINGS THEY'RE ALWAYS EXPECTING OF ME?
WHY CAN'T THEY EVER LEAVE ME ALONE –
LET ME JUST BE ME?

Never mind; I know. I guess I've been told a million times: "You're the worst boy in town, Penrod." What do they know? They don't know what I'm really like. . .

I LIKE APPLES AND SWIMMING AND WALKING AROUND
SOMETIMES FISHING OR BASEBALL OR GOING DOWNTOWN.
AND SOMETIMES JUST RUNNING HOME QUICK CAN BE Nice
'CAUSE IF DELLA'S MADE PIE MAYBE I'LL GET A SLICE.
I LIKE MEETING MY FRIENDS IN OUR SECRET HIDEOUT
AND THE SILENT SCREEN SHOWS WHERE THE VILLAINS
AREN'T CAUGHT
BUT WHERE I Like BEST TO BE MORNING OR NIGHT
IS HERE WITH MY DOG AND THE STORIES I WRITE.

By this time PENROD has pulled out a cigar box which has been buried in the sawdust bin. From it he has removed a battered notebook which he holds in his hands.

PENROD My story. (PENROD hears a scratching at the stable door.) My dog!
(PENROD climbs over the sawdust bin and goes to the door.) Duke?
Duke - - you alone? (Duke whines in response.) Come on in, boy.

(PENROD opens the door and Duke jumps into his arms. PENROD forgets to close them behind him as he brings Duke to the sawdust bin. He has rigged up a basket on a rope.) Ele-vay-tor, Duke. That's right -- go on -- jump in. Ele-vay-tor -- ting, ting! (Duke sits in the basket as PENROD pulls it up and over into the sawdust bin. PENROD sits beside him with his notebook.) Good ole Duke. You know, I wish I was you. You don't have to be in no dumb school pageant, do you? No sir! You get to do most anything you please. You and Harold. How 'bout helpin' me to write some more about Harold? Wanna'? Yeah -- there's a good ole boy. (PENROD opens the notebook and reads. In the void above the stable there suddenly appears an old "silent movie" title card.) "Harold Ramorez, the Road Agent -- Or -- Wild Life Among the Rocky Mountains" by Penrod Schofield. (Piano music. The title disappears and in flickering "movie" light is HAROLD -- a gun-toting Western outlaw and MR. WILSON -- a man in a suit.) "Chapter Six. Harold Ramorez lifted his ottomatick and pointed it at the sheriff Mr. Wilson. "You thought you could surprise me by hiding here in my secret hideout but, ho, ho, I guess I got you cornered instead, you stupid lawman." "You may think you have me, Harold Ramorez, but the posse will be here soon I reckon," said Mr. Wilson. "I ain't afraid of the law! Nobody tells Harold Ramorez what to do! Now you, Mr. Wilson - prepare to go and meet your Maker!" "Throw down your pistol and fight like a man, you blank, blankety-blank," growled Mr. Wilson. Harold and the Sheriff fought like the devil. (HAROLD and MR. WILSON fight.) Suddenly Harold's woman came into the room. (A WOMAN appears.) "Stop, Harold, stop! What are you doing, Harold?"

DELLA (Outside the stable.) What are ye doing, Penrod? Penrod?

PENROD "No, Harold!", she pleaded. "Go away," Harold snarled to the woman.

DELLA (Entering the stable.) Penrod?!

PENROD "Leave us be, woman!"

DELLA Come out of there or you'll be sorry.

PENROD "You get out of here, or you'll be sorry.

DELLA I'll do nothing of the kind! Now come on out; your mama's wanting you!

HAROLD, MR. WILSON, and WOMAN suddenly stop and look down with puzzled expressions as they fade from view.

PENROD Huh?

DELLA (Reaching over the sawdust bin and grabbing him.) Come along, Mister Penrod.

She drags PENROD out of the stable. Scenery shifts back to position at the top of the play.

Act I, Scene 2

Continuous with the preceding. As DELLA escorts the protesting PENROD toward the porch, MRS. SCHOFIELD appears to meet them.

PENROD Leggo, Della!

DELLA Yes, I let go and you're off away down the street. I'm too old a woman to run after you, Mister Penrod. Here he is, Ma'am.

MRS. SCHOFIELD Thank you, Della.

DELLA I'll be going back to my kitchen, if you don't mind.

PENROD I don't know why I got to be in any dumb old school pageant!

MRS. SCHOFIELD (Ushering him toward the house.) Never mind. (A call.) Margaret? We'd best make haste! We wouldn't want Penrod to be late!

PENROD I don't care if I never get there.

MRS. SCHOFIELD (Sitting him down on the swing.) Well, you shall get there, Penrod, if it's the last thing I do. There cannot be a Pageant of the Table Rounde without the Childe Sir Lancelot. It is a great honor to be the

Childe Sir Lancelot, Penrod - I hope you realize that. (*Another call inside the house.*) Margaret? Would you kindly fetch your father's underwear from off the clothesline?

MARGARET (*Appearing at the door.*) With pleasure!

MRS. SCHOFIELD Now, Penrod - come inside and take off your clothes.

PENROD I don't know why I can't just put the costume on over my own clothes!

MRS. SCHOFIELD Well, you can't wear silk stockings over a pair of knickers, now can you?

PENROD I don't mind.

MARGARET (*Having looked about the clothesline.*) Mother? They're not there!

MRS. SCHOFIELD But they must be; Della washed them this morning.

MARGARET See for yourself. They're gone.

MRS. SCHOFIELD What are we going to do? They were to be his pantaloons. Penrod can't appear in the pageant without pantaloons.

PENROD turns to go indoors. A brief pause as the women understand.

MARGARET &

MRS. SCHOFIELD (*Looking at PENROD.*) Penrod?!

MRS. SCHOFIELD What have you done with them?

PENROD With what?

MARGARET You know very well "what"! Papa's old red flannel winter underwear's "what"!

PENROD Maybe somebody stole them?

MARGARET Yes, Penrod - you! I'll look inside the stable.

PENROD No - you can't!

MARGARET Oh, yes I can!

PENROD It's my place! It's private!

MARGARET Not anymore.

PENROD They're not in there!

MRS. SCHOFIELD Oh, no? Then where? (*PENROD winces - unsure of what to say.*)
Della?!

PENROD No, Mama -- don't bother Della; she always gets mad at me.

MRS. SCHOFIELD I've no other choice. If your father weren't away, he'd get an answer
out of you. (*Another call.*) Della? !

Suddenly the sound of a dog growling upstage of the stable. MARGARET goes to investigate and is seen engaged in a tug-of-war with Duke for the red long johns. MARGARET is victorious.

MARGARET (*Handing the long johns to her mother.*) Well, my, oh, my! It seems
that silly old dog is worth something after all.

MRS. SCHOFIELD What a good boy, Duke!

PENROD (*A mutter.*) Yeah. Thanks a lot, Duke.

MRS. SCHOFIELD (*Taking his arm and heeding to the door.*) Come along, Penrod.

PENROD (*With a sigh of defeat.*) Alright, alright.. . I guess I'm coming, ain't I?

Music underscore as MARGARET and MRS. SCHOFIELD stand at the doorway, MARGARET holding open the door and MRS. SCHOFIELD holding the underwear, waiting for PENROD to ascend the porch steps to meet his doom. When he reaches the door, MARGARET pushes him quickly inside and the women follow him in with a slam of the screen door. The music accelerates and PENROD reappears halfway out the door several times - we see him in various stages of undress and costume dress -- MARGARET and MRS. SCHOFIELD each time pulling him back inside, or PENROD runs back in of his own accord when

TOWNSPEOPLE passing by catch a glimpse of him in his humiliating attire. When his absurd "medieval" costume is finally complete PENROD flies out the screen door and comes to a screeching halt when he sees his best friend SAM and his mother MRS. WILLIAMS step up to the house. PENROD quickly clutches the cape he wears tightly around him so as not to reveal his costume.

SAM (A half-hearted greeting, also clutching a cape around himself.) Yay, Penrod.

PENROD "Yay" yourself, Sam.

MRS. WILLIAMS Good afternoon, Penrod.

PENROD 'lo, Mrs. Williams.

MRS. WILLIAMS All ready for our little pageant, are we?

PENROD Guess so, ma'am.

MRS. SCHOFIELD and MARGARET appear at the door, donning their hats and gloves.

MRS. SCHOFIELD Good afternoon, Eugenia. Hello, Samuel. I hope we haven't kept you waiting.

MRS. WILLIAMS Not at all, Caroline. I had some slight difficulty persuading the Childe Galahad into his costume.

MRS. SCHOFIELD You too? Penrod? Why don't you show Mrs. Williams what you're wearing?

PENROD No!

MRS. SCHOFIELD Why ever not?! Eugenia, I've quite outdone myself this year and I'm not ashamed to say it. The time had come to retire my husband's winter underwear, and now they make a cunning pair of pantaloons, I think, We cut off the legs, added a bit of braid. . . I'm sure no one will recognize them for what they are.

PENROD (Under his breath.) They will too.

MRS. WILLIAMS I believe I do recognize the golf cape, however. Margaret? Didn't you wear that a few years past when you played the game with my son Robert?

MARGARET I did indeed, Mrs. Williams.

SAM You really wearing your papa's underwear, Penrod?

PENROD You dare tell a soul and you're a dead man, Sam Williams.

MRS. WILLIAMS *(To MARGARET.)* Why, I remember when you played the Childe Helen of Troy to my Robert's Childe Paris. Such a charming little pair you were! And what a sweet girl you are, to show such interest in your little brother's activities.

MARGARET Thank you kindly, Mrs. Williams. *(PENROD groans in disgust.)* Is something the matter, Penrod? Does your stomach ache again?

PENROD No, Margaret - - it's your mooning over Robert Williams that's making me sick. *(MARGARET pinches him.)* Ow!

MRS. SCHOFIELD *(At the edge of the stage.)* What is it, Penrod?

PENROD She. . . !

MARGARET *(Covering his mouth with her hand.)* I think poor little Penrod must have been stuck by a safety pin, Mother.

MARGARET pushes PENROD on their way offstage. MRS. SCHOFIELD and MRS. WILLIAMS follow as SAM lingers behind.

MRS. WILLIAMS Come along, Samuel.

Sam follows unwillingly as lights fade and scenery shifts.

Act I, Scene 3

The school auditorium. At stage right is the small proscenium opening and curtain; downstage is an old upright piano. Stage left is a wall which is painted scrim, allowing for "bleed-through" view of backstage. The stage is filled with CHILDREN in costume, PARENTS, the old janitor MR. CAPP, MISS SPENCE the accompanist, and -- supervising the activity -- the director and authoress of the pageant, MRS. LORA REWBUSH.

MRS. BASSETT (Entering with GEORGIE in tow.) Mrs. Rewbush?! Georgie's here!
Georgie's here! Georgie's here!

MRS. REWBUSH Oh, good! We have our little Childe Mordred, Miss Spence!

Miss SPENCE Always a pleasure to see you, Georgie!

MRS. REWBUSH Well, now -- are we all assembled? I know we have our little Childe Mordred, but have we. . . (She counts heads.) . . . oh, Childe Arthur, your costume is positively regal, Maurice!

MAURICE It cost twenty dollars.

MRS. REWBUSH Yes, and here's our Childe Queen Guinevere. You look a picture, Marjorie.

MARJORIE Thank you, Mrs. Rewbush.

MRS. REWBUSH Oh, dear! But where is my Childe Galahad. . . and Childe Lancelot?

MRS. REWBUSH and CHILDREN look about. MRS. SCHOFIELD, MARGARET, and MRS. WILLIAMS shout from offstage.

WOMEN Here they are!

MISS SPENCE (With the sourest of expressions.) Umm-hmm. Tardy. . . as usual.

PENROD and SAM are hustled onstage by their MOTHERS and MARGARET.

MRS. SCHOFIELD I am dreadfully sorry, Mrs. Rewbush, if we have caused any delay.

MRS. REWBUSH No doubt. And now - - without a moment to spare, I might add - now that our little Table Round is complete, I must ask you, ladies, to please step out into the foyer until we are ready to begin.

MRS. SCHOFIELD (*Exiting.*) Gladly, Mrs. Rewbush.

MRS. WILLIAMS (*To SAM, as she exits.*) Mother will be watching, Samuel.

SAM I'll do it. I'll do it right. I'm here, aren't I? I guess I might as well do it.

MARGARET Now you be sure and enjoy yourself, Penrod. I know I will.

MARGARET reaches into her purse and pounds him with a powdered puff before rushing off.

MRS. REWBUSH (*Beckoning the CHILDREN about her.*) Children? I trust that you have all memorized your words, your movements, and - last but not least - the lovely music composed for you by our dear friend and - to some - sixth grade teacher: Miss Spence. Let us all take a moment to express our thanks to her, shall we?

MISS SPENCE (*After nodding to the applause.*) Remember , children: e-nun-ci-ate! The lips, the teeth, the tip of the tongue.

CHILDREN (*Accustomed to the drill.*) The lips, the teeth, the tip of the tongue.

MISS SPENCE (*Resuming her seat at the piano.*) The lips, the teeth, the tip of the tongue.

MRS. REWBUSH Very good. But let us also strive to transcend mere elocution this day - let us illumine the legend -- let us touch and move our audience -- let us be, however briefly, immortal -- yea, let us be...

MR. CAPPS (*Walking in.*) Well, Mrs. Rewbush? You done with me or what?

MRS. REWBUSH Yes. Thank you, Mr. Capps. If you would only be so kind as to open the doors for our audience and then that will be all.

MR. CAPPS (*Starting off.*) That's right. Gettin' myself in front of a stampede of womenfolk's all I need. . . .

MRS. REWBUSH Mr. Capps -- if you please! I cannot allow you to greet our audience in such attire. First you will change out of those filthy overalls. (*He stops in his tracks and glares at her.*) Please!

MR. CAPPS *(Muttering as he goes off.)* Dern it, I don't know why a janitor's got to mess with this nonsense year after year. . .

MRS. REWBUSH That's all, children -- off with you now-- hie thee hence! Hie thee hence!

CHILDREN scatter into the wings as scrim burns-through to reveal MR. CAPPS tossing his overalls on his janitor's cart. CAPPS wades through the crowd of children and passes MRS. REWBUSH with a grunt to open the doors to the auditorium. MARJORIE stands beside MAURICE as MABEL and the other "CHILDE LADIES" fawn over him. As SAM and PENROD pass by, MABEL calls to SAM.

MABEL Hello, Sam.

SAM Mabel.

MABEL Just look at Maurice's costume! Don't you think it's beautiful?

SAM It's alright, I guess.

MAURICE "Alright"? I had it made special.

SAM Yeah, well mine was made special too, Maurice.

MAURICE Really? Well let's see it, then.

SAM You will.

MAURICE No -- I want to see it now.

SAM So who cares what you want?

MABEL Would you let me see it, Sam?

SAM I don't know, Mabel.

MABEL Please? I'll bet you look real handsome, Sam. Won't you give me just a peek?

SAM Oh, I guess.

SAM opens up his cape and shows them. MAURICE, MARJORIE, and MABEL laugh with great scorn.

MAURICE Yeah, Sam -- your costume's special, alright! Specially ugly!

PENROD Quit your laughing! Can he help it if his folks don't have a million dollars to buy him a stupid old monkey suit?

MAURICE And what you got on, Penrod? What you got on under that ole golf cape?

PENROD None of your business.

MAURICE Come on, Penrod -- what you got on?

PENROD Nothin'!

MAURICE Nothin'? Nothin'? Then you must be naked! (*A call to the others as MABEL and MARJORIE laugh.*) Penrod Schofield says he hasn't got nothin' on under that ole golf cape! He's naked! Penrod's naked!

MRS. REWBUSH (*Poking her head through the curtain.*) Will you shut up back there?! I mean - hush, dear children, hush! It's almost time! (*She turns back to the audience and we see the CHILDREN assemble in lines except for PENROD who spies MR. CAPPS overalls on the janitor's cart and, after a moment of thought, grabs them and disappears into the wings. MRS. REWBUSH turns and addresses the audience.*) And now, on behalf of the Homeless Infants' Betterment Society, the Indianapolis Women's Arts Guild takes great pleasure in presenting, "The Children's Pageant of The Table Rounde". (*MRS. REWBUSH curtsies and then slips through the curtain.*) Little knights and little ladies? Ready. . . prepare. . . act!

Music fanfare from MISS SPENCE on the piano and the curtain rises to reveal CHILDREN in tableau. MRS. REWBUSH observes nervously from the wing.

CHORUS CHILDREN OF THE TABUL ROUND –
LITTUL KNIGHTSAND LADIES WE

LET OUR VOY-SIZ ALL RESOUND –
FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITEE.
NOBLE BABES OF YESTERYEAR IN OUR KINGDOM CAMELOT
MAY WE EVER PERSEVERE DOING WHAT WE OUGHT.

MAURICE EACH LITTUL KNIGHT AND LADY BORN
HAS NOBLE DEEDS TO PERFORM
IN THE CHILDE-WORLD OF SHIVULLREE
NO MATTER HOW SMALL HIS SHARE MAY BE.
LET ME NOW PRESENT TO YOU THIS DAY
THE FAIREST ONE TO E'ER BE SEEN. . .

MARJORIE SWEETEST OF ALL IN THE REALM CAMELOT,
I AM THE FAIR QUEEN GUINEVERE
HAPPY THE CHILD-WIFE OF ARTHUR YOUR KING,
I BID WELCOME TO EVERYONE HERE

LADIES A LOVER OF TRUTH AND OF BEAUTY IS SHE –
OF DELICATE MANNERS AND WAYS --
YES, ONLY THE NOBLEST AND KINDEST OF MEN STAND TO
EARN THE RARE WARMTH OF HER GAZE

MARJORIE SO THEN HEAR ME, GOOD SIR,
NEVER STRAY FROM YOUR TASK,
TO BE MODELS OF CONDUCT IS ALL THAT I ASK.
PRAY, LET NO FOUL MISDEEDS MAR OUR PURE
REPUTATION
LEST YOUR PRESENCE BE BANISHED FROM THIS DIVINE
NATION

GEORGIE I AM SIR MORDRED THE CHILD, AND I TEACH
LESSONS OF SELFISHEST EVIL, AND REACH
OUT INTO DARKNESS, THOUGHTLESS, UNKIND,
AND RUTHLESS IS MORDRED, AND UNREFINED!

SAM I AM THE PUREST OF THE PURE
I HAVE BUT KINDEST THOUGHTS EACH DAY
I GIVE MY RICHES TO THE POOR,
AND FOLLOW IN THE MASTER'S WAY.

MISS SPENCE is obliged to vamp repeatedly as it becomes obvious to the CHILDE ACTORS and unseen audience that PENROD is absent. MRS REWBUSH suddenly reappears in the wings, pulling at PENROD and throwing him onto the stage.

PENROD I AM SIR LANCELOT, THE CHILD
 GENTUL-HEARTED, MEEK, AND MILD
 WHAT THOUGH I'M BUT A LITTUL CHILD
 GENTUL-HEARTED, MEEK, AND MILD,
 I DO MY SHARE THOUGH BUT...
 (PENROD coughs, not wanting to continue. MRS. REWBUSH shouts
 from the wings, "Penrod!")
 THOUGH BUT A TOT...
 I PRAY YOU KNIGHT SIR LANCELOT!

MERLIN hands to MAURICE his sword. MAURICE steps in front of SAM.

MAURICE Childe Galahad, doff thee now thy mantle. (SAM allows his cape to
 drop to the floor.) By the power of this enchanted sword Excalibur , I
 dub thee knight. (MAURICE dubs him. MAURICE steps to PENROD,
 but keeps a greater distance than with SAM previously.) Childe
 Lancelot, doff thee now thy mantle. (PENROD doesn't make a move.)
 Childe Lancelot, I your King am telling you that you'd better doff
 thee now thy mantle!

PENROD still won't. MAURICE angrily throws his sword down and pulls the golf cape from PENROD's back to reveal that he is wearing MR. CAPPS overalls. A moment of stunned silence from all, and a sudden outburst of laughter mixed with cries of consternation from the stage and from the audience. MRS. REWBUSH goes toward PENROD - her hands ready to choke him. MARJORIE is beside herself with fury and screams angrily at PENROD. PENROD makes a dash past MISS SPENCE, a few KNIGHTS chasing him. MISS SPENCE's wig flies off her head in the melee. Lights fade on pandemonium.

Act I, Scene 4

Schofield Home Exterior. Monday morning. Lights rise on MARGARET sitting on the porch swing and writing a letter. Occasionally she looks up from her writing and sighs, "Oh, Robert!". Suddenly there is the offstage shout from SAM.

SAM Penrod! Yay, Penrod!

The boy enters. Schoolbooks dangle from a leather strap over his shoulder.

MARGARET Sam Williams!

SAM 'Lo, Margaret. (He calls again.) Penrod!

MARGARET Well, I guess you're mighty lucky my father is still away.

SAM Huh?

MARGARET I believe he's told you on more than one occasion that if you want Penrod you ought to go to the door like a civilized human being.

SAM But I thought you said your father's away.

MARGARET He didn't mean just when he was at home, he. . . oh, it's hopeless. (MARGARET hollers inside the door.) Penrod! (A pause. She receives no answer.) Penrod! Sam's here; now hurry up!

SAM Penrod!

MARGARET (Setting down her paper and pen.) Oh, never mind. I'll get him. I swear sometimes that boy's deaf. . . Penrod!

MARGARET exits through the front door, calling. Her voice fades away as PENROD appears from around the side of the house with a handful of doughnuts.

PENROD Lord, I wish she'd leave me alone!

SAM Yay, Penrod. (Seeing the doughnuts.) Biters!

PENROD (An angry bark.) I don't care; I got plenty.

SAM What are you so mad about?

PENROD As if you don't know! I guess it's all your fault I got in trouble at the pageant and had to stay in the house all yesterday.

SAM What did I do?

PENROD If you weren't so doggone sweet on Mabel Rorebeck maybe you wouldn't have gone and showed her your costume and then the other kids wouldn't have laughed and then I wouldn't have got the idea to go put on old Mr. Capps' overalls, now wouldn't I?

SAM Huh?

PENROD Yeah -- I guess it's your fault all right.

SAM *(A slight pause.)* Well, if it is I guess I'm sorry. *(PENROD doesn't respond.)* Hey -- what makes you go and say I'm sweet on Mabel Rorebeck?

PENROD Ha--don't you think I can tell?

SAM How?

PENROD I just can.

SAM Oh, yeah? Well, you ought to know, cause you're sweet on Marjorie Jones.

PENROD Like fun I am.

SAM I guess that proves it.

PENROD What do you mean?

SAM Because my papa says that whenever someone denies something that means it's true.

PENROD Oh, yeah? Well, your papa don't know the first thing about nothing!

MARJORIE and MAURICE appear on their way to school.

SAM More than yours does, I guess!

PENROD My papa knows plenty!

SAM Yeah -- well I guess he knows enough to keep away from you!

PENROD You take that back!

SAM I won't!

PENROD Take that back before I sock you!

MARJORIE *(Shouting.)* Penrod Schofield, you horrid boy, don't you dare hit Sam Williams!

PENROD *(Without realizing who it is.)* Who asked you to butt... *(A pause.)* Oh.

MARJORIE *(To SAM.)* Good morning, Sam. You're welcome to walk to school with Maurice and me if you'd like. I'm sure he wouldn't try to start a fight with you.

PENROD I didn't start it, Marjorie, Sam was...

MARJORIE *(To MAURICE.)* You know, Maurice, for our English assignment I'm going to write about the pageant, but after Penrod ruined it, I had to change my topic. Instead I chose to write about "The Worst Boy in Town".

MAURICE Well, I wrote about the pageant anyway... sort of. I wrote about how much King Arthur liked Guinevere.

MARJORIE Did you? I'll bet it's a really nice paper, too, Maurice.

SAM Mine's about fishing.

MARJORIE Oh?

MAURICE Hey, Penrod -- what did you write about?

PENROD None of your business.

MAURICE Well, it better be good, that's all I got to say. I'll bet Miss Spence is pretty darn mad - after what you done to her wig at the pageant. (*A school bell in the distance.*) Oh, goodness! We'd better run, Marjorie.

MARJORIE (*Exiting with MAURICE.*) Coming, Sam?

SAM Sure. (*Turning to PENROD.*) Hey, Penrod. . . .

PENROD Go on.

SAM I didn't really mean it when I said. . . .

PENROD (*Turning as if to go inside.*) I gotta get my books.

SAM I'll wait.

PENROD (*Angrily shoving him.*) No, Sam. You don't want to be late on account of me. Go on, I told you!

SAM (*With a shrug, starting off.*) Alright.

SAM exits. PENROD turns and punches the air with his fist.

PENROD Take that, Maurice Levy! (*A kick.*) And that! (*His fists fly for a moment and then he suddenly stops.*) And as for you. . . little. . . Miss. . . Marjorie. . . Jones. . .how to deal with you. . . let me think. . . what would Harold do?

The lighting becomes a bit eerie as the figure of HAROLD RAMOREZ appears in the stable loft. The silent movie music creeps underneath PENROD's narration as HAROLD, MR. WILSON, and a WOMAN pantomime the action described.

PENROD (Voice-over.) "You are a traitor, Woman!" Harold snarled. "A double-crossing vixen to help my enemy Sheriff Wilson so I will have to teach you a lesson I guess." "What are you going to do to me, Harold?" Harold pulled open the heavy old trap door to the well beneath them. "No, Harold Ramorez -- don't make me jump -- I cannot swim! No, Harold, no! Don't! Harold! No! Harold!"

The WOMAN falls out of sight with a scream as MARGARET'S voice is heard approaching from inside the house.

MARGARET Penrod! Penrod! (*The lights shift back to normal and PENROD snaps out of his daydream. The school bell tolls loudly again.*) Penrod? You'll be late for school!

PENROD School! (*PENROD rushes down the walk and then stops himself.*) My books! (*PENROD runs to the porch to get them and stops.*) But the assignment! Dern it -- I didn't write anything! What am I gonna tell Miss. . . . (*He sees MARGARET'S writing on the porch swing.*)

MARGARET (*Her voice growing nearer.*) Penrod?! Is that you out there?

PENROD grabs a sheet of MARGARET'S letter and stuffs it in his jacket pocket as MARGARET appears. PENROD rushes past her.

PENROD I forgot my books.

MARGARET If you think Mama's going to write another tardy excuse, you may as well forget it because she's not even here, she's. . . .

PENROD (*Rushing off.*) Who cares?!

MARGARET (*A growl of frustration.*) Ooooh! (*Sitting on the swing.*) Well, Robert, when we're married, I certainly don't want us to have any boys. Yes, I'm afraid you'll just have to settle for daughters, Robert. (*MARGARET has turned back to the porch swing to continue her writing and searches unsuccessfully for the page she was working on.*) Robert. . . Robert. . . my letter. . . Robert, sweetheart, where are you?

Lights quickly fade as act curtain falls. During the scene shift, downstage of the Act Curtain, a NURSEMAID enters pushing a baby buggy. She is met by POSTMAN KRAUSS, and they chat. A clap of thunder sends the NURSEMAID scurrying off and PENROD rushes onstage, bumping into POSTMAN KRAUSS and injuring the man's leg – also causing letters to fly into the air. PENROD pauses to consider helping the POSTMAN, but then turns and rushes on his way to school. We begin to hear the sound of children singing "Columbia, The Gem of the Ocean."

In the Blackout the sound of children's voices singing "Columbia the Gem of the Ocean" under the direction of MISS SPENCE. Lights rise to reveal sixth-grade classroom. In the corner of the room is the dunce's stool. On the last phrase PENROD rushes into the room and sits, panting for breath.

MISS SPENCE And on this stormy Monday morning did we have one little pupil tardy, class?

CLASS Yes, Miss Spence.

MISS SPENCE And which little pupil was tardy, class?

CLASS Penrod, Miss Spence.

Miss SPENCE And is this the first morning Penrod has been tardy, class?

CLASS No, Miss Spence.

MISS SPENCE And who can tell me precisely how many mornings Penrod has been tardy? (*CHILDREN raise their hands.*) Maurice Levy?

MAURICE One-hundred fifty three, Miss Spence.

MISS SPENCE No, that is not correct. Marjorie Jones?

MARJORIE One-hundred fifty four, if we include today, Miss Spence.

MISS SPENCE That is correct, Marjorie -- for we must include today, mustn't we, class?

CLASS Yes, Miss Spence.

MISS SPENCE holds a piece of chalk out to PENROD and PENROD walks up to the blackboard where there is a special area covered by a roll-down map. Miss SPENCE pulls the cord and the map rises to reveal a series of hatch marks with the heading "PENROD". PENROD silently adds another mark to it.

MISS SPENCE (*To PENROD.*) You may be seated. (*PENROD returns to his seat. She addresses the class.*) As you all know, our assignment over the weekend was one final exercise in prose writing. Have I a pupil

who would like to share his or her writing endeavor with us by reading it aloud?

GEORGIE *(Waving his hand wildly.)* Please, Miss Spence! Please! Please! Please!

MISS SPENCE My, my -- it would appear that Georgie Bassett is the most eager of my pupils this morning -- indeed every morning. Very well, Georgie.

GEORGIE *(Carrying a little basket up front with him.)* Thank you, Miss Spence. *(He reads from his paper.)* "An Ode to Spring". . . Spring is my most favorite season. The cruel winter snow no longer bids us stay indoors, although there is always plenty to do in the home, like helping mother with her housework or reading the encyclopedia or engaging oneself in a quiet hobby. But in spring, a person may go out of doors into the garden. So many colorful and delicate blossoms! *(GEORGIE pulls a bouquet of flowers from the basket.)* There are many names for flowers, but I like to call them "nature's ornaments". And I think it is important to share flowers with the poor and the sick people in hospitals. Yes, my favorite season of all is the spring. Indeed, the only thing I do not like about spring is that it brings the school year to a close. Oh, I wish school could go on the whole year round, don't you? *(GEORGIE looks up from his paper and smiles at the class.)*

Miss SPENCE That was most delightful, Georgie.

GEORGIE Thank you, Miss Spence. And these flowers are for you.

MISS SPENCE Oh, how sweet you are, Georgie! And for your creative use of visual aids you may expect a grade of "A".

GEORGIE Thank you, Miss Spence.

MISS SPENCE You're most welcome, Georgie.

PENROD groans with tremendous disgust as GEORGIE returns to his seat.

MISS SPENCE *(Hearing PENROD's reaction.)* Have you a problem, Penrod?

PENROD Huh?

MISS SPENCE Is something the matter? I distinctly heard you groan. Are you ill?

PENROD No, ma'am.

MISS SPENCE Then I must assume that was an expression of some low esteem regarding Georgie Bassett's writing endeavor. Perhaps you would care to read?

PENROD Alright.

MISS SPENCE (*Stunned.*) What?!

PENROD Alright, I will.

MISS SPENCE You have a paper?! Forgive me if I seem astonished. Please, by all means, do share it with us.

PENROD takes the sheet of paper and walks up to the front of class.

PENROD "Dear friend, You call me beautiful, but I am not really beautiful, and there are times when I doubt if I am even pretty, though perhaps my hair is beautiful, and it is true that my eyes are like blue stars in heaven. . . ." (*The CLASS begins to giggle. PENROD looks up at them.*) Huh?

MISS SPENCE (*Stepping over to grab the letter.*) Just a moment, young man! (*She looks at it, at the class, and then at PENROD.*) Go on.

PENROD (*A gulp.*) Ma'am?

MISS SPENCE (*Thrusting the letter back in his hands.*) Continue with your letter. We'd like to hear some more about your *eyes* being like blue stars in heaven, wouldn't we, class?

CLASS (*Trying not to laugh too hard.*) Yes, Miss Spence.

MISS SPENCE Penrod?

PENROD (*Looking at the letter as if for the first time.*) Oh, no!

MISS SPENCE Penrod?!

PENROD Ma'am?

MISS SPENCE Continue.

PENROD But. . . .

MISS SPENCE (*With a glare, urgently.*) I said, "Continue"!

PENROD Yes, ma'am. (He heaves a sigh, then reads as rapidly as is humanly possible.) "I often think and a tremor thrills my being when I recall your words to me that last evening in the moonlight when you said you would wait years to win me but I should not have permitted you to speak to me so until we have our parents' consent, yet, oh, how sweet it was! It would be absurd for me to consider ourselves absolutely engaged – not yet -- you ought to have your utter freedom. But that night, my dearest, that night on the verandah with the lilacs' fragrant perfume and the touch of your hand -- oh! Could such a night m u r again? Could it? Will it? Tell me, darling, that it was not a dream!" (*Another sigh as he drops the paper by his side.*) Yours respectfully, Penrod Schofield.

PENROD drops his head as the CLASS erupts into uncontrollable shrieks of hysterical laughter. MISS SPENCE lets it wash over PENROD for a few moments, then claps her hands for silence. The CLASS eventually settles down.

MISS SPENCE Penrod Schofield!

PENROD Ma'am?

MISS SPENCE You did not compose that letter.

PENROD No, ma'am.

MISS SPENCE That is your sister's letter, isn't it?

PENROD I guess so, ma'am.

MISS SPENCE You stole a personal letter?

PENROD I didn't know that. . . .

MISS SPENCE I will hear none of your feeble excuses, Penrod Schofield! You *may* be seated! (*PENROD starts toward his desk.*) Not there! To the dunce's chair! (*He moves to the dunce's chair and puts on the hat. The CLASS giggles win.*) Silence! We have much to learn. . . though certain pupils to never learn. Enough of compositions -- let us now review the elements of sentence construction, shall we, class?

CLASS Yes, Miss Spence.

Music. Lights begin to focus down to highlight PENROD on the dunce's stool.

Act I, Scene Six

Continuous with the preceding. MISS SPENCE invites a couple of STUDENTS up to the blackboard.

MISS SPENCE Clara Raypole? Roddy Bitts? Will you step up to the blackboard, please?(*She hands them each a piece of chalk which they use to point to the components of the sentence as MISS SPENCE sings.*)

A SENTENCE IS CONTRUCTED WITH A VERB
AND WITH A NOUN
A VERB DESCRIBES AN ACTION
AND A NOUN IS WHAT OR WHOM
LIKE LETTERS, NOUNS ARE PERSONAL,
AND SO IT IS MOST CRIMINAL
TO STEAL A PERS'NAL LETTER;
PENROD'S ACTIONS MAKE US FROWN
LET'S HOPE HE LEARNS HIS LESSON
IN THE CORNER OF THE ROOM

The CHILDREN begin to repeat MISS SPENCE's verse and fade out as PENROD begins to sing over them.

PENROD HOW DID ALL THIS HAPPEN? WHAT DID I DO WRONG?
 THAT MISS SPENCE IS REALLY MEAN
 AND ALL THOSE KIDS BEHAVE LIKE FIENDS
 BUT SOMEDAY THEY'LL BE SORRY
 THAT THEY TREATED ME THIS WAY
 'CAUSE SOMEDAY I'LL BE RICH AND FAMOUS
 IF I COULD JUST GET AWAY
 IF I SIT REAL STILL MAYBE I CAN TRY
 TO BECOME THE FIRST-EVER BOY TO FLY
 WHAT A SIGHT I'D BE!
 HEY, JUST LOOK AT ME!
 WHAT IS THIS? WHERE AM I?
 I'M UP HIGH! HERE'S THE SKY!

PENROD has begun to rise up into the air as the blackboard and wall upstage begin to be filled with clouds.

PENROD LOOK AT ALL THOSE PEOPLE GETTING SMALLER AS I RISE
 WHEN THEY LOOK UP HERE, BOY,
 ARE THEY IN FOR A SURPRISE!

PENROD HEY -- I'M FLYING! I'M FLYING! I'M FLYING!
 NOW THAT I'M FLYING NOBODY CAN SAY
 "PENROD, WHAT A DUNCE! MUST YOU PULL THOSE
 STUNTS?!"
 THEY'LL SHOUT "HOORAY!" AS THEY SEE ME FLY BY
 OH, WHAT A GREAT HERO AM I!
 I MIGHT NEVER COME BACK DOWN
 WHAT'S THERE FOR ME ON THE GROUND?
 PEOPLE WILL SHOUT AS THEY GATHER AROUND.

PENROD has begun to fly overhead with a miniature "birds-eye view" of the town beneath him. Various TOWNSPEOPLE join MISS SPENCE and the students in observing PENROD with wonder and excitement.

TOWNSPEOPLE PENROD OUR HERO -- MIGHTIEST BOY OF ALL!
 PENROD OF ALL WE SEE, YOU ARE MOST WONDERFUL!
 HE ROSE OVER GRAVITY -- JUST ANOTHER LAW HE
 DISOBEYS
 PENROD, THE PRIDE OF OUR CITY,
 WE SING TO YOU OUR PRAISE!

PENROD OUR HERO - - MIGHTIEST BOY OF ALL !
PENROD OUR HERO -- WE SHALL OBEY YOUR CALL!

MARJORIE appears on a little hilltop with a bouquet of flowers as PENROD hovers above her head.

MARJORIE PENROD, FORGIVE ME FOR ACTING SO MEAN
 SEEING YOU I SWOON! TAKE ME TO THE NOON!
 I NEVER DREAMED YOU HAD TALENTS SO GRAND;
 COME AND CLAIM YOUR MARJORI E'S HAND!

MARJORIE tosses the bouquet into the air.

TOWNSPEOPLE (Like a church choir.) OH, PENROD -- HERO TO US ALL THIS
 DAY
 OUR PRAISES SING WE TO YOU, HEAR US SAY
 YOU ARE THE MIGHTIEST OF BOYS WE KNOW
 WE GIVE THANKS (WE GIVE THANKS)
 FOR YOUR PRANKS (FOR YOUR PRANKS)
 HEAR US SING (OH, HEAR US SING)
 YOUR NAME (WE SING YOUR NAME)!
 (The march tempo resumes and accelerates.)
 PENROD OUR HERO -- MIGHTIEST BOY OF ALL!
 PENROD OUR HERO -- MIGHTIEST BOY OF ALL!
 PENROD OUR HERO -- MIGHTIEST BOY OF ALL!

As the CHORUS builds the thunder of the storm begins to return with MISS SPENCE's strident voice calling "Penrod!" repeatedly -- increasing in volume. With a crash of thunder PENROD begins to fall and the lights blackout. The music traces a deflated decent and with a great "thud" lights rise on MISS SPENCE standing in front of PENROD who sits dreamily on the dunce's stool in the "restored" classroom.

MISS SPENCE Penrod! Penrod Schofield, I'm addressing you! Penrod! Penrod!

PENROD *(A shout -- still in his daydream.)* Oh, for Pete's sake, can't you keep
 still a minute??!

MISS SPENCE's jaw drops to the floor as the CHILDREN'S eyes bulge in amazement. Lights quickly fade to Blackout.

ACT I, Scene Seven

The interior of the Schofield home. A table with a telephone and a screen behind it. The sound of MARGARET complaining to MRS. SCHOFIELD off-stage. MRS. SCHOFIELD's voice approaches from the wing.

MRS. SCHOFIELD *(A call, offstage.)* Never mind, Della -- I'll answer it.

MARGARET *(Angry; following her mother onstage.)* I just know he took my letter, Mama! I swear, when he gets home I'm going to. . . .

MRS. SCHOFIELD *(Picking up the telephone.)* Please, dear - your mother's on the telephone. *(Into the phone.)* Hello? Oh. . . good afternoon, Miss Spence.

MARGARET If Penrod's there, I want to talk to him.

MRS. SCHOFIELD Why, no, Miss Spence - he hasn't come home yet.

MARGARET I'll check the stable again. *(Marching offstage.)* Penrod??!

During the following, PENROD, behind the screen, cautiously attempts to get hold of the strap which binds his school books together. He has evidently left them on the floor and hopes they will not be noticed by his mother. As the conversation continues, he slowly pulls the books toward him.

MRS. SCHOFIELD Yes, Miss Spence - that was his sister. Yes, she does sound a bit upset. Oh, Penrod did borrow her letter, did he? And what else? He told you to "keep still"? Shameful - yes! Did he offer an explanation? He said he was thinking? Thinking what? Just thinking? No, I find that somewhat difficult to believe myself. Now, now, Miss Spence, you mustn't give up entirely. Take heart - - you have only four more days of the school term to deal with Penrod - - I have him every day of my life. Oh, yes, I'm sure I can think of a suitable punishment. Thank you for calling. Goodbye. *(MRS. SCHOFIELD hangs up the telephone and clicks for the operator.)* Hello? Operator? Long distance, please. Dayton, Illinois. The Colonial Hotel. Person - to -person to Mr. Henry Passloe Schofield from his son, Penrod.

A groan from PENROD as MRS. SCHOFIELD hands the telephone over the back of the screen. Lights fade to Blackout.

Act I, Scene Eight

Schofield Home Exterior. Exterior of stable. Bed sheets and pillowcases hang on the clothesline. It is the following Saturday morning. As lights rise we see DELLA appear from behind the house and cross the yard toward the stable; in her arms she carries a wooden crate which contains junk from her cleaning of the pantry and medicine chest. She sets the crate down beside a few others which rest against the stable next to the garbage can. As she heads back toward the house she is met by MRS. SCHOFIELD, who seems to be in a bit of a hurry as she pulls on her gloves.

MRS. SCHOFIELD Penrod's still at the breakfast table. Keep an eye on him, would you, Della?

DELLA No, ma'am.

MRS. SCHOFIELD I beg your pardon?

DELLA I've got to go to market, now don't I? I remind you of the lad's birthday party on Monday. It's customary to serve the guests some sort of refreshment, isn't it?

MRS. SCHOFIELD I quite understand, Della. Go to market. Anyway, I've already asked Margret to watch over Penrod. I don't know why I should worry so about leaving him alone; he's still confined to the house and yard - what great trouble could Penrod get into here? (DELLA, with a deadpan expression, raises an eyebrow.) Goodbye.

DELLA watches MRS. SCHOFIELD leave, checks the laundry with her fingers to find it's still damp, then starts toward the house.

SAM (Offstage.) Penrod!

DELLA (As SAM enters.) Mr. Sam Williams-- must you always beller so?

SAM Huh?

DELLA There's a door on the front of the house. It has a little doorbell beside it.

SAM Huh?

DELLA Never mind.

SAM Is Penrod home, Della?

A slam of the kitchen screen door and PENROD rushes out, looking behind him, carrying a handful of doughnuts. He bumps into DELLA, the doughnuts fly out of his hands and DELLA catches them in her apron.

PENROD Sorry, Della.

DELLA Sorry for what - nearly knocking me over or stealing my doughnuts? Mr. Sam Williams to see you, Mr. Penrod. *(DELLA exits behind the house.)*

SAM Yay, Penrod.

PENROD Yay yourself. *(PENROD notices the bottle of dark liquid SAM carries.)*
Say - what you got there, Sam?

SAM Lickerish water.

PENROD *(Grabbing at the bottle.)* Drinkin's!

SAM No, Penrod!

PENROD What do you mean, "No"?! I said "Drinkin's", didn't I? That means I got it right.

SAM Well. . . okay. But only down to there, though. *(SAM indicates a level on the bottle and observes closely as PENROD tips his head back and drinks deeply, With a satisfied "Aah" PENROD gives the bottle back to the unhappy SAM.)* Hey! "Down to there," I said! You went too far!

PENROD Where'd you get that old lickerish water from anyway?

SAM Over at the carnival.

PENROD What carnival?

SAM The Barzee-Potter Dog and Pony Show. They just got in this morning. Say -- want to go later on?

PENROD No.

SAM Huh? Oh, yeah -- I forgot. It ain't that you don't want to go - you can't go. You got to keep to your yard, don't you? On a count of what you said to Miss Spence the other day.

PENROD Dern that old Miss Spence!

SAM Well, just think -- no more school and no more Miss Spence for almost three months! Summer vacation -- yippee!

PENROD Some vacation.

SAM Yeah. Too bad you can't go to the Barzee-Potter Show.

PENROD I don't care.

SAM Ho! Like fun you don't!

PENROD Why should I? I guess I got plenty to do right here.

SAM What've you got to do that's better than a carnival? You just tell me, Penrod Schofield.

PENROD Well. . . .

SAM Yeah?

PENROD Well, I...

SAM Uh- huh?

PENROD *(Suddenly spying the trash by the stable.)* Well, just looky! Looky, Sam! Looky here!

SAM What? Them ol' rats? We got rats at our house, too.

PENROD No, not the rats! Looky here! I guess this ain't any good ol' pile o' stuff there, is it? Oh, no!

SAM Good for what?

PENROD Ain't you got any imagination, Sam? Drug store!

SAM Huh?

PENROD *(Sorting through the stuff.)* Old raspberry preserves. . . cinnamon extract. . . why, there's even some powder here from when Papa had the influenza.

SAM *(Holding up a bottle.)* What's this? Hair tonic?

PENROD And what does it matter to you what it is? Maybe you just better get along to that carnival now, Sam.

SAM But ain't we gonna play at drugstore?

PENROD "We"?

SAM Come on, Penrod -- we could be partners!

PENROD No, Sam -- I guess I can run my own drugstore; thanks just the same. But if you really wanted to, I'll let you be a customer, I suppose.

SAM No! Partners! "Penrod and Sam"! Please?

PENROD Oh, alright. But it's got to be "Schofield and Williams". Sounds more grown up that way.

SAM *(Helping PENROD assemble stuff for the "store".)* "Schofield and Williams" - that's just grand! Now who'll we get for customers?

PENROD Who needs customers?

SAM But. . . .

PENROD You really don't have no imagination, do you, Sam?

SAM I got plenty - you'll see. (*He assumes the voice of an older gentleman merchant, consulting an imaginary pocket watch.*) Well, Mr. Schofield -- it's nigh about eight o' clock in the morning. Lots o' sick folk waiting outside. Are we open for business?

PENROD You bet! Let all them poor, suffering multitudes come right on in, Mr. Williams! (*Music. DELLA appears and SAM points to her.*)

SAM We're in luck, Penrod! Look - a live one!

PENROD Just barely, Sam.

PENROD & SAM GOOD MORNING, MISS O'SHEA, AND HOW ARE YOU TODAY?
YOU SAY YOU HAVE A PAIN THAT JUST WON'T GO AWAY
"BUBONIC PLAGUE"?! OH, POOR DEAR!
YOU MUST FEEL MIGHTY QUEER.
WELL, SAY NOTHING MORE; STEP INSIDE OUR DRUG STORE.
YES, UNBEKNOWNST TO YOU WE HAVE A SECRET BREW
GOOD FOR ANY MALADY OR ACHE
IT WILL MODULATE THAT GROWL
AND WIPE AWAY YOUR SCOWL
JUST OBSERVE WHAT A POTENT TONIC WE CAN MAKE. . .

They begin to pour the contents of various bottles and jars into a large, old ceramic chamber pot.

PENROD & SAM SHE COULD USE SOMETHING SWEET. . . Maple syrup'll do fine.
AND THIS OLD APPLEJACK. . . ought to make her shine.
CASTOR OIL AND SOME BLEACH. . . wouldn't want to waste it.
HALF A CUP IPECAC. . . don't ask me to taste it!

DELLA (*As she exits.*) MIND YOU, BOYS, I DON'T WANT TO FIND A MESS HERE WHEN I GET BACK!

PENROD & SAM ALRIGHT, BUT YOU'LL REGRET YOU DIDN'T GET. . .
THE MEDICINE FOR ANYTHIN' THAT AILS YOU
WHEN ALL OTHERS FAIL YOU CAN'T GO WRONG.
JUST A SIP AND THEN YOU WILL DISCOVER
SOON YOU WILL RECOVER -- FIT AND STRONG!
BUY A BOTTLE -- BETTER YET A PAIL, IT NEVER WILL GO
STALE WE GUARANTEE
PENROD AND SAM ARE OPEN NOW FOR BUS'NESS MAKIN'
YOU A HOMEMADE REMEDY
SCHOFIELD AND WILLIAMS' MIRACLE ELIXIR, TRY A
SAMPLE AND YOU'LL SEE!

POSTMAN enters, pauses, and sorts through the letters in his sack.

PENROD & SAM GOOD MORNING, POSTMAN KRAUSS;
A MOMENT, IF YOU PLEASE?
WE'VE NOTICED THAT YOU LIMP;
PERCHANCE FROM SOME DISEASE?
NOT LEPROSY! OH, HOW GRIM!
YOU COULD LOSE LIFE AND LIMB.
BUT TAKE HEART, GOOD SIR, WE'LL CONCOCT YOU A CURE.
YES, LET YOUR WORRIES CEASE,
WE'LL KEEP YOU IN ONE PIECE.
WE'VE GOT STUFF THAT WORKS JUST LIKE A CHARM.
IF BUT ONCE A DAY YOU DRINK
'T WILL KEEP YOU IN THE PINK
YOU WON'T EVER DROP A FINGER, LEG, OR ARM.
WHAT WE NEED IS SOME GLUE. . . Oh, yes indeed!
AND A DASH OF CEMENT. . . Agreed!
NOW SOME EAU DE COLOGNE.. . "Forbidden Kiss"
TO PROVIDE A SWEET SCENT. . . Does your sister really wear
this?

POSTMAN has stepped up to the front door and delivered the mail to MARGARET, who disappears inside again.

POSTMAN (To PENROD and SAM as he exits.) SORRY, BOYS –
I'M TOO BUSY WITH THE MAIL TO PLAY "LET'S PRETEND".

PENROD & SAM AND THEN WE'VE GOT. . .
THE MEDICINE FOR ANYTHIN' THAT AILS YOU
WHEN ALL OTHERS FAIL YOU CAN'T GO WRONG
JUST A SIP AND THEN YOU WILL DISCOVER
SOON YOU WILL RECOVER -- FIT AND STRONG!
BUY A BOTTLE -- BETTER YET A PAIL, IT NEVER WILL GO
STALE WE GUARANTEE
PENROD AND SAM ARE OPEN FOR YOUR BUS'NESS MAKIN'
YOU A HOMEMADE REMEDY
SCHOFIELD AND WILLIAMS MIRACLE ELIXIR
TRY A SAMPLE AND YOU'LL SEE!

The song ends with the two boys holding forth between them a bottle of their dark-colored concoction just as MAURICE passes by. He spies the bottle and, as PENROD did to SAM earlier with the licorice water, MAURICE points at the bottle and rushes over.

MAURICE Drinkin's!

PENROD & SAM Huh?

MAURICE You heard me; I said "Drinkin's"! Hand over that licorice water!

SAM No, Maurice, you can't!

MAURICE Oh, yeah? Just watch me! (MAURICE grabs the bottle.)

SAM Don't!

MAURICE Why not?

PENROD Maurice is right, Sam -- why not?

SAM & MAURICE (Looking incredulously at PENROD.) Huh?

The lights suddenly change as SAM and MAURICE freeze. Silent movie melodrama music heralds the faint appearance of HAROLD RAMOREZ in the stable loft. MR. WILSON can also be seen, blindfolded, struggling at the ropes which bind his hands. PENROD looks up at the stable as he narrates the action in taped voice-over.

PENROD *(Voice-over.)* Sheriff Wilson struggled at his bonds as Harold Ramorez held the murky bottle in front of the sheriff and sneered, "I guess you are in a real fix aren't you? Yes, yes – that Woman has met her Maker, but since you were so sweet on her then I suppose you better join that vile hussy and you sure will just as soon as you have drunk up all this here poison! " "No!" Sheriff Wilson cried. "No, Harold, no!"

SAM tries to tug the bottle back from MAURICE as the music and image of HAROLD and MR. WILSON quickly fade away.

SAM No, Penrod! We won't let him. . .

PENROD Now don't be so selfish, Sam. Maurice ain't about to drink it all, I don't even think he could if he wanted to.

MAURICE Oh, no?
MAURICE tips his head back and drains the contents of the bottle as PENROD looks on with a peculiar smile and SAM'S eyes bug out in horror. MAURICE hands back the empty bottle with the sigh of a job well done followed by a belch.

MAURICE Sorry, Sam.

SAM *(Looking woefully at the empty bottle.)* If you ain't now, you sure are gonna be.

MAURICE Wish I could stay, boys, but I gotta get myself ready for Marjorie. I'm taking her to the Barzee-Potter Dog and Pony Show this afternoon.

PENROD You don't say. *(As MAURICE exits, an ominous mutter.)* Well, Maurice, you and Marjorie have yourselves a real nice time.

SAM Penrod. . . do you know what you've done?!

They are interrupted by the sound of two boys giggling from behind the fence. PENROD cocks his ear.

PENROD Hush, Sam!

SAM Maurice is gonna

PENROD Didn't I just tell you to hush?

SAM Well, what is it, Penrod?

PENROD *(Moving stealthily toward the fence.)* How should I know? Spies, maybe!

SAM "Spies"? Oh, Lordy, no! Someone's seen us poison Maurice Levy. We're gonna have to spend summer vacation in reform school, I just know it!

PENROD quickly disappears behind the fence and the laughter is soon mixed with squeals and cries of "Let go!". PENROD returns dragging two boys -HERMAN and VERMAN - into the yard by their arms.

PENROD Here, Sam, hang on to the little one.

SAM Who are they?

PENROD Give me a chance to interrogate 'em, will you? Alright - who are you?

HERMAN *(Trying to keep from giggling.)* Herman. Name's Herman.

SAM *(Referring to the hysterically giggling VERMAN.)* You brothers?

VERMAN Ma mame Vermum.

SAM Huh?

VERMAN Vermum!

PENROD *(To HERMAN.)* What's he saying?

HERMAN He said his name's Verman.

PENROD & SAM "Yer man"?

HERMAN Yeah -- rhymes with Herman and Sherman.

PENROD Who's Sherman?

HERMAN Was three boys in our fam'ly. Oldest one named Sherman, an' then me -- Herman, 'an then him - - Verman. But Sherman -- he's dead. Verman -- he's the littlest.

PENROD I can see that. Now why were you laughing back there?

HERMAN Just laughing at what you did to that one boy.

PENROD So -- you were spying!

VERMAN No spyah! Jus ookah!

SAM Huh?

VERMAN No spyah! Jus ookah!

PENROD What did he say?

HERMAN He said we ain't been spying; just looking.

SAM Oh, Lordy , Penrod -- they got to be spies - - this one can't even talk English!

VERMAN Wha you meem ba map?! I cam hoo!

PENROD Huh?

HERMAN He's says he can too talk English -- he jus' can't talk no better than that. Verman's tongue-tied.

PENROD What do you mean?

HERMAN His tongue don't move. Jus' sits in there.

PENROD & SAM Really?

HERMAN Show 'em, Verman. (*VERMAN opens his mouth up wide for SAM & PENROD to stare inside with tremendous awe.*)

VERMAN Mow you hoe hem yah fimhuh.

PENROD (*Enchanted.*) Now what did he say, Herman?

HERMAN He says I ought to show you my finger.

PENROD What for?

HERMAN (*Displaying one hand with a missing finger.*) Cause I ain't got one!

PENROD & SAM Wow!

VERMAN (*Proudly.*) I mum map.

PENROD (*To VERMAN.*) You done that? (*VERMAN nods with a big smile.*)

HERMAN Right! That's what he said. Yessuh -- Verman done chopped 'er off with an ax.

SAM What for?

HERMAN No reason.

VERMAN He hoe me hoo.

PENROD You told him to?

HERMAN Yeah. Never 'spected him to really do it, though.

SAM You with the carnival?

HERMAN Huh?

SAM Well, I ain't seen you before today.

HERMAN No - we movin' in across'd the alley.

SAM Dern it! I was kind of hopin' you were carnival freaks, maybe. Say, how'd you like to go to the carnival? I was just about to myself.
(PENROD shoots a wounded glance at SAM.)

VERMAN *(Nodding his head vigorously.)* Uh-huh!

HERMAN We can't, Verman. We ain't got no money.

PENROD smiles and sighs, relieved. MARGARET suddenly appears out of the front door, in quite a hurry.

MARGARET *(Waving the letter she received earlier.)* Sam Williams! I am extremely upset with you!

SAM Why? What did I do?

MARGARET You did nothing, that's what! You did not tell me that your brother was coming back from college this afternoon.

SAM So what if he is?

MARGARET *(Heaving a sigh of frustration.)* How can such a brilliant young man as Robert have such a stupid little brother?! Penrod, I have to go.

PENROD Good.

MARGARET Downtown.

PENROD Go anywhere; so long as you're gone.

MARGARET I have to get a new dress.

PENROD Well, you ought to do something about your looks.

MARGARET I'm supposed to be watching you.

PENROD I won't tell.

SAM I won't tell.

HERMAN & VERMAN We won't tell. (*MARGARET shoots them a puzzled look , then exits.*)

SAM (*Excited.*) Your papa still away on business, Penrod?

PENROD Yeah.

SAM Then you're all alone?

PENROD Yeah.

SAM Yippee! Then you can go to the carnival!

PENROD No I can't.

SAM Huh? Why not? You don't mean you're just gonna sit here and. . . and behave?!

PENROD Well. . . Herman and Verman here don't have any money, so they can't go. And today's the last day I'm supposed to stay in the yard, so I guess I can wait one more day and go tomorrow. I sort of got myself an idea, anyhow.

SAM What kind of idea?

PENROD Well, you said yourself that Herman and Verman could be freaks, didn't you?

VERMAN I aim mo freak!

HERMAN I ain't no freak neither!

PENROD I didn't mean no offense by it. I just think I know a *way* we could all make a little money for to go to the carnival tomorrow.

SAM, HERMAN, VERMAN (*In unison.*) How?!

PENROD We could put on our own carnival! A sideshow! (*Music.*)

SAM Where?

PENROD Right here!

SAM With what?

PENROD For Pete's sake, Sam! Can't you try and use a little imagination?!

The boys huddle as the music takes over. GEORGIE BASSETT and BABY RENNSDALE enter and notice something exciting going on. They go into the yard and tug at PENROD's jacket. He gestures for them to go away. They persist. He gestures again. SAM, HERMAN, and VERMAN scatter as PENROD turns impatiently to GEORGIE and BABY.

GEORGIE & BABY (*Pleading.*) Please?

PENROD Oh, alright; I guess so.

GEORGIE and BABY hug each other with delight as music continues and curtain falls.

Act I, Scene Nine

The act curtain depicting the street. Continuous with the preceding. CHILDREN at play are interrupted by a BOY who enters on stilts, wearing a sandwich board. CHILDREN and TOWNSPEOPLE begin to assemble as SAM enters laden with pots and pans and washboards to be a "One-Man Band". PENROD follows, wearing an old top hat and a mustache drawn of charcoal. He stands on a soapbox and speaks as BABY pulls on a toy wagon with the caged rats on it.

PENROD Lay-deeze and Gennulmen, Gennulmen and lay-deeze! Big show!
Big show! Came to the Schofield and Williams Big Show and
Museum of Curiosities! Lookee, lay-deeze and gennulmen: not one,
not two, but three genuine trained Michigan rats -- that's right!
What do they do? Come and see!

The parade passes offstage.

Act I, Scene Ten

Curtain rises to reveal the stable interior -- dressed with painted sheets and pillowcases borrowed from the clothesline. PENROD and SAM usher the CHILDREN into the stable area. BABY RENNSDALE collects the pennies and papers of pins from the spectators.

PENROD Pray, no jostling, lay-deeze and gennulmen, walk right in. Miss Baby Renns. . .

BABY Amy! My name is Amy!

PENROD Miss Amy Rennsdale will kindly take your one cent -- your one-tenth of a dime -- or your twenty pins -- no bent pins accepted, please. Now step this way, no jostling, please, there is room for each and all. Welcome to the Schofield and Williams Big Show and Museum of Curiosities. (*Fanfare from SAM.*) Gennulmen and lay-deeze -- I give you Duke, the genuine, full-blood Indian warrior dog from the Western plains and Rocky Mountains! (*The CHILDREN are unimpressed.*) Next we have the Michigan wild rats -- yes, indeed -- trained to jump and run all around their box at the slightest pretext. . . (*The rats do very little.*) . . . at the slightest pretext. . . (*PENROD takes a hammer and pounds on the box.*) There! That's all they do. (*CHILDREN groan.*) Gennulmen and lay-deeze, Sherman, the wild animal from Africa -- whose capture cost the life of a big Bwana game hunter! Yessir -- Sherman, the wild animal from Africa! (*PENROD calls their attention to a raccoon in a cage.*)

CHILD That ain't nothing but an old raccoon!

PENROD Now, lay-deez and gennulmen --not one, but two genuine African tattooed Pygmy warriors! (*SAM gives another fanfare.*) I give you -- at no extra charge -- Herman and Verman! Point, Herman. (*HERMAN obeys. The audience gasps.*) Yes, lay-deeze and gennulmen -- this is the only one-fingered tattooed African warrior in the whole state of Indiana. Lost his finger wrestling 'gators in the Congo River! (*HERMAN bows to applause.*) An' speakin' of 'gators -- I call your attenshun to the rare and seldom seen South American dog part alligator! Yes -- half dog, half 'gator -- a bona-fied freak of nature! (*BABY parades past the Children with a dachshund on a leash.*) Mr. Williams -- a fanfare, if you please. And now - the one - the

only - Verman, Herman's Pygmy brother, who can't talk but only his native language. Talk some for the folks, Verman.

YERMAN *(In his tongue-tied manner.)* Twinkle, twinkle little star, How I wonder what you are! Up above the world *so* high, Like a diamond in the sky. *(A burst of applause from the CHILDREN.)*

PENROD I thank you, Verman!

CHILDREN More! More! Let him talk more!

VERMAN When the blazing sun has gone, When he nothing shines upon,
Then you show your little light, Twinkle, twinkle. . .

PENROD *(Signaling SAM for another fanfare.)* I said that's enough, Verman!
Lay-deeze and gennulmen – if you please! Schofield and Williams proudly presents the stupendous, the amazing, the death-defying...
Georgie Bassett: the human cannonball!

BABY pulls a sheet aside to reveal a wooden barrel mounted precariously on a platform. GEORGIE pokes his head out from the barrel and waves. Penrod takes a kitchen match and lights the fuse. As he does so the door to the stable bursts open and in comes MRS. SCHOFIELD, DELLA, and MRS. BASSETT.

MRS. SCHOFIELD Penrod? Mrs. Bassett wants to know if you've seen her little boy. .

DELLA Lord in Heaven, what have you done with my bed linens?!

MRS. SCHOFIELD What are all these children doing in. . . ?

MRS. BASSETT Georgie? Georgie, are you in here?

GEORGIE *(Poking his head out of the barrel again.)* Look, Mama; look! I'm a cannonball!

DELLA *(Rushing to the barrel.)* Oh, my Lord!

DELLA quickly pulls GEORGIE out of the barrel and places him in his mother's arms. MRS. SCHOFIELD tries to usher the CHILDREN away from the barrel. In the stampede, the canopy

and "displays" disassemble as the "cannon" suddenly explodes with a puff of smoke. The lights blackout. A pin-spot immediately rises on PENROD - his face black from the explosion.

MRS. SCHOFIELD (In the darkness.) Penrod!

PENROD sighs. Pin-spot irises out. Blackout. Act Curtain falls.
Intermission