

Plays for Young Audiences

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

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A Spell of Cold Weather

by
Charles Way

A Spell of Cold Weather was originally commissioned by Theatre Centre, London and The Sherman Theatre, Cardiff, Wales. First performed at Cefn Onn Primary School, Cardiff, Wales in November 1995.

**DO NOT REPRODUCE.
NOT LICENSED FOR PRODUCTION.**

Characters

Betty

Tomos Trickman

Holly

Bob

Cow/Cock/Dog (played by Tomos)

Setting: The play is set on a farm on the borders of England and Wales.

Scene 1 (Tomas Trickman and the Farmers)

Music, This music is later identified with TOMOS TRICKMAN who now enters, TOMOS is a faery, of a type which, in British folklore attached themselves to a particular household. He is friendly and mischievous. TOMOS fits across the stage. His movements are neat and swift. He plays 'peepo' with the audiences. He does not speak. After he has made the initial contact, he shows them the instrument that made the music, He makes them laugh and feel secure. Tomos then presents to the audience a large cut-out sun and demonstrates how in the context of this play he can control time. As he nears the west, the skies darken. He takes a few steps back and the lights rise again. He allows the sun to 'sink in the west' and then picks up a moon establishing that the action of the play begins at night. Finally he presents a bowl to the audience. He shows them it's empty - and illustrates how hungry he is. TOMOS then hears BOB and BETTY, who now enter, They are preparing for bed. BOB is humming in a grumpy kind of way. TOMOS moves between them, making it clear that the two farmers cannot see him. He places his bowl on BOB'S side of the bed and then waits, hoping that tonight the farmers will relent and feed him.

BETTY: Be quiet.

BOB Just hummin.

BETTY: Sounds like a bee in a bottle.

BOB continues his preparations for bed He holds up the toothpaste and looks for his toothbrush.

BETTY: What you looking for?

BOB: Toothbrush.

BETTY: Bah! (She gets into bed and he hums again as he continues his search) Stop hummin'.

BOB: Bah!

BETTY: Don't know what yer so cheerful fer, anyhow.

BOB: I'm not - I'm not cheerful at all.

BETTY: Stop hummin' then.

BOB: Not cheeful a bit - I'm not.

BETTY raises her magazine, 'The Farmers' Monthly' and reads. BOB continues his search for his toothbrush and instead hands TOMOS' bowl. He is holding it when BETTY looks up.

BETTY: What you doing with that old thing?

BOB: It was just there, on the end of the bed.

BETTY: Well, put it away.

BOB: Betty?

BETTY: What?

BOB: Don't you think we should -?

BETTY: - Should?

BOB: Well, we could -

BETTY: What -?

BOB: Put some food in it.

BETTY: Who for, Bob?

BOB: For - um - Tomos Trickman.

BETTY: Bah! I told you not to mention that name on this fam. There is no such person, no such creature as Tomos Trickman. Stuff an' nonsense.

BOB: I'll leave it empty, then .

BETTY: Aye - better still, throw it away.

BETTY returns to her reading. BOB throws the bowl away but it is caught by TOMOS, who looks at it sadly. He then decides to take revenge. At this moment, BOB sees his toothbrush lying on the floor at the end of the bed. TOMOS sweeps forward and spins BOB round, steals the toothbrush and pulls the blanket of the bed.

BETTY: What you doing?

BOB: What?

BETTY: Pulling the blanket off me.

BOB: No, I never.

BETTY: You. did - look.

BOB: I never.

BETTY: Bah!

She picks the blanket up and returns to bed.

BOB: Have you seen my tooth-

BETTY: No.

BOB: Brush?

BETTY: Bah. *(She settles down to read. BOB turns away and TOMOS pulls off the blanket again.)* You!

BOB: What?

BETTY: You done it again. Pulled the blanket off yer own wife in the middle of winter.

BOB: I never touched the blanket.

BETTY: Bah.

BETTY then retrieves the blanket. TOMOS then puts the toothbrush on her side of the bed. BOB puts the paste down on his side of the bed. He looks under the bed. TOMOS steals the toothpaste. BOB is now under the bed, humming.

BETTY: Will you stop that hummin'.

BOB emerges on her side of the bed and sees his toothbrush.

BOB: What's my toothbrush doing over here?

BETTY: I'm trying to read.

BOB: You took my toothbrush.

BETTY: No, I did not take your stupid toothbrush.

BOB: HAH!

BETTY: HAH!

As BOB crosses back at the base of the bed, TOMOS whips ofthe blanket again.

BETTY: I'll clobber you, I will.

BOB: I never touched the blanket. *(He gets back round his side of the bed and the toothpaste has gone.)* Where's the toothpaste?

BETTY: Hey?

BOB: You've taken the toothpaste.

BETTY: Course, I haven't.

BOB sees the toothpaste on her side.

BOB: What's it doing over your side then?

BETTY: Bah. *(She throws it at him)* I'm trying to read.

BOB: I'm trying to clean my teeth.

BETTY: Well, try a bit harder. *(BOB puts the brush and paste down. He gets a bowl and a jug of water. TOMOS puts some paste on the brush and BOB starts to brush his teeth. He starts to hum.)* Stop. *(Meanwhile TOMOS squeezes toothpaste into one of BOB's slippers. BOB is humming again.)* Be quiet!

A dog barks loudly offstage. (i.e. TOMOS)

Bob: Now you set the dog off.

BETTY gets up and shouts

BETTY: Quiet down dog - Quiet. *(Dog barks back louder than before)* Go and shut that dog up, go on.

BOB: You go.

BETTY: I'm in me pyjamas.

BOB: So am I.

BETTY: I'm reading.

BOB: I got nothing on me feet.

BETTY: Put yer slippers on then.

Dog barks louder.

BOB: Oh alright - alright. *(To dog) BE QUIET! (He puts on his slippers)* That's funny.

BETTY: What?

BOB: There's something sticky in my slipper.

BETTY: That'll be yer foot, Bob.

BOB: No, it's - it's toothpaste.

BETTY: Toothpaste? In yer slipper?

BOB: Toothpaste.

BETTY: I thought you were going to clean yer teeth, not yer toenails.
(The dog barks again) Go and shut that dog up.

BOB sighs and goes offstickily. TOMOS then puts his bowl on the bed next to BETTY. Offstage, we hear BOB talking to the dog. BETTY then sees the bowl and is very surprised. She picks it up and at that moment, BOB returns. She looks guilty.

BETTY: I thought I told you to throw this away.

BOB: I did throw it away.

BETTY: Well, throw it further.

BOB throws the bowl away and as before TOMOS magically retrieves it. He looks sadly at the bowl. BOB is now shivering with cold.

BOB: What date is it Betty?

BETTY: Twenty-sixth of December - why?

BOB: Twenty-sixth?

BETTY: What?

BOB: I've got a funny feeling we've missed something.

BETTY: Don't put yer cold feet on me.

BOB: Good night, Betty.

BETTY: Good night Bob.

The lights begin to fade.

BOB:

Feels like we're in fer a spell of cold weather.

Scene 2

The Farmers wake up. Music. TOMOS removes the moon and replaces it with the sun. The lights rise on the two fanners who are still in bed. In their sleep, they struggle for control of the blankets. TOMOS enters as the cockerel. The cockerel/TOMOS places himself between the two farmers and crows loudly. They wake up with a yell and jump out of bed. BOB chases the bird for a few moments, but fails to catch it.

BOB: One of these days.

BETTY: We'll have that bird for supper.

BOB starts to get dressed but BETTY is getting back into bed.

BOB: Come on Betty, it's morning.

BETTY: I'm not getting up.

BOB: You got to get up.

BETTY: What fer?

BOB: For work.

BETTY: Work? Ugh. *(She hides beneath the covers.)*

BETTY: *(gently)* Come on Betty, we used to enjoy the farm. We used to enjoy work. We used to be happy.

BETTY: *(From under the covers)* It's your turn to make the tea.

BOB: I'll get it now.

He trudges sadly off. BETTY emerges.

BETTY: I used to enjoy the farm. I used to enjoy work. I used to be happy - but I'm not now - no, I'm not now and I don't know why - I don't know at all.

TOMOS enters on a bike wearing a postman's hat. In his teeth, he has a letter. TOMOS rings the bike bell with annoying persistence.

BETTY: *(calls out to BOB)* Postman.

BOB: *(enters with tea)* Your turn.

BETTY: Bah. *(She gets up and halts the postman. He keeps ringing the bell.)* Stop ringing that blasted bell. *(She takes the letter from TOMOS)* Thank you.

TOMOS rings the bell twice in reply. He then rides off ringing the bell.

BETTY: Stop ringing that blasted - one of these days ...

As she opens the letter, TOMOS gets off the bike, removes the postman's hat and listens.

BETTY: It's a letter from my sister, Avril.

BOB: Oh, aye. What do she want?

BETTY: *(reads)* Dear Betty.. . Oh, dear me -

BOB: What?

BETTY: She has to go into hospital fer an hoperation on her hankle.

BOB: Oh - there's sorry for her, then.

BETTY: *(reads)* AH!

BOB: *(shocked)* What?

BETTY: And she wants us to look after her little girl while she's away.

BOB: Her little girl? You mean - a child?

BETTY: A child.

BOB: Us can't have that.

BETTY: I don't want a child up here.

BOB: I don't like children.

BETTY: Neither do I.

BOB: I mean - I don't know any.

BETTY: Neither: do I.

BOB: Oh dear, dear.

BETTY: *(reads)* She will arrive at the train station at tea time on
December the twenty-seventh.

BOB: That's today.

BETTY: *(reads)* Please look after her, until I'm better. Love from your
sister, Avril.

BOB: We can't - we can't - we can't.

BETTY: *(reads)* P.S. I enclose some money to cover the cost of her
stay.

Silence. BETTY shakes the letter and a £20 note flutters to the floor.

BOB: Oh well -

BETTY: We'll have to, then.

BOB: Seeing as we're getting paid.

BETTY: But what will us do with her?

BOB: I don't know.

BETTY: What do children do?

BOB: I don't know.

BETTY: What do children like doing?

Silence.

BOB: I don't know that either.

BETTY: Yewer useless you are.

BOB: So are you, then.

The dog barks offstage.

BOB/BETTY: Be quiet!

BETTY: You go down to the station.

BOB: Me?

BETTY: You.

BOB: No, I can't - not me.

BETTY: Yer not frightened of a little child are you?

BOB: No - no. But what shall I say to it?

BETTY: Say? Say, 'Hello'.

BOB: A child. Oh dear, oh dear.

BETTY: Get on with you.

BOB: I'll take the car.

BETTY: Walk - it'll save petrol. -

BOB: We don't need to save petrol.

BETTY: Walk - it'll give 'ee time to think what to say to the child.
She's called Holly.

BOB: What you'll do then?

BETTY: I'll work. I'll milk the cow, fetch the eggs an' count the sheep. *(She picks up her tea.)* Who's drunk my tea? *(The cockerel, i.e TOMOS, crows with satisfaction)* You blasted bird. *(She chases the bird / TOMOS off, then returns and stares at BOB)*
Well, don't just stand there - start walking.