

PERUSAL SCRIPT

Petunia Passes

A Short Play
by
Thomas F. Rogers



Newport, Maine

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PETUNIA PASSES

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

PAT -- a young mother

RICHARD -- her husband & a professor

TRICIA -- their fifteen-year-old daughter

EDDIE -- their nine-year-old son

JOHN -- their neighbor, a stock broker

PETUNIA PASSES by Thomas F. Rogers. 2M 1W 1B 1TG. One Interior. Order #3054

SYNOPSIS: After the husband and father of a typical young suburban family wrecks their car, they are forced to alter their customary routine and restrict their future activity both to going places on foot and to a more family-centered life style. They finally become reconciled and see this radical change as a blessing in disguise until....

Thomas F. Rogers –

A former director of the BYU Honors Program, Thomas F. Rogers was a professor of Russian language and literature at Brigham Young University, now retired, and the author of more than a score of plays, many on Mormon subjects. Four of these were published in *God's Fools* (Signature Books, 1983), which also received the Association of Mormon Letters Drama Prize that same year. Those titles are **HUEBENER**, **GOD'S FOOLS** (or **JOURNEY TO GOLGOTHA**), **FIRE IN THE BONES** and **REUNION**. Other titles include **THE SECOND PRIEST** and **THE SEAGULL** (adapted from the Chekov play). In 1992, **GENTLE BARBARIAN**, **FRERE LAWRENCE** and **CHARADES** appeared in a second anthology entitled *'Huebener' and Other Plays by Thomas F. Rogers*. Then **THE ANOINTED**. He has also penned stage adaptations of Dostoevsky's novels, *Crime and Punishment* and *The Idiot*. The former received a BYU production, directed by Tad Danielewski, in which Tom played the role of Marmeladov. In 1995–1996 *God's Fools* was produced (in translation) by a professional repertory theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia. (While Rogers was serving as an LDS mission president. He also played the role of the American double spy, Cooper in that production. Later on that mission he directed a Russian language version of *Huebener* in St. Petersburg.)

Rogers' theatrical activity includes extensive acting and directing in addition to writing plays. He directed the premiere productions of Robert Vincek's *For the Lions to Win*, Thom Duncan's *Matters of the Heart* and Eric Samuselsen's *Accommodations* as well as States-side productions of *Huebener*. He's also directed Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* (in German) for Deutsches Teater Salt Lake City and Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*, Pirandello's *It Is So If You Think So* and Pinter's *The Caretaker* for the BYU Department of Theatre. Cited by Eugene England as "undoubtedly the father of modern Mormon drama," he received the Mormon Arts Festival's Distinguished Achievement Award in 1998 and in 2002 a Lifetime Service Award from the Association of Mormon Letters.

His latest published stories appeared in the Summer 1991 and Winter 2003 issues of *Dialogue* (receiving an annual *Dialogue* fiction award) and in the collections *Christmas for the World* and *The Gifts of Christmas*. Rogers has served as editor of *Encyclia*, journal of the Utah Academy, and is the author of two critical monographs, *'Superfluous Men' and the Post-Stalin 'Thaw'* (Mouton) and *Myth and Symbol in Soviet Fiction* (The Edwin Mellen Press). He studied at the Yale School of Drama and holds degrees from the University of Utah, Yale, and Georgetown. He has also studied theater in Poland and Russian at Moscow State University and taught at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and the University of Utah. He has had extensive residences in Russia, Eastern Europe, India and China. He and his wife Merriam are the parents of seven children, thirty-eight grandchildren and, so far, three great grandchildren. They reside in Bountiful, Utah.

PETUNIA PASSES

SCENE ONE: *Kitchen in the middle-class home of a harassed and 'driven' Mormon professor and his family.*

PAT: Tricia, Eddie, hurry to the table. Your father's --

TRICIA: Wait till I comb my hair out!

PAT: -- already warming up Petunia. He'll be --

EDDIE: Just a second, Mom!

PAT: -- leaving in --

RICHARD: *(entering with book and coat)* Aren't the kids eating --

PAT: -- five more minutes!

RICHARD: -- breakfast? I've got to go.

PAT: You've also got to --

RICHARD: It's another one of those days, darling.

(RICHARD sits.)

PAT: -- eat this bowl of cereal, Richard.

RICHARD: I haven't even prepared my first lecture.

PAT: Well, you won't make it through the second without some vitamin B and Riboflavin. Which reminds, me, you'll need to stop at the store on your way home tonight.

EDDIE: Mom, where's the toothpaste?

PAT: Kids, hurry!

EDDIE: Just a second, Mom!

PAT: We're out of --

RICHARD: I'd give twenty minutes --

PAT: -- eggs.

TRICIA: Coming, Mom!

RICHARD: -- for one of his seconds.

EDDIE: I can't find the toothpaste!

PAT: It's in the cabinet.

RICHARD: Didn't you get a week's supply on Saturday?

PAT: It lasts longer than a week, silly.

RICHARD: Then why didn't you buy enough?

PAT: I did. He just couldn't find it.

RICHARD: Eggs?

PAT: No, toothpaste.

RICHARD: Then I'm certainly not going to buy any more on the way home tonight. Let me make that perfectly clear.

PAT: But we don't need any more toothpaste.

RICHARD: Then why did you ask?

PAT: Because we're out of --

RICHARD: But you just said we don't need --

PAT: Eggs, Richard. Eggs we're out of. We do need more eggs.

RICHARD: I give up.

PAT: Well, how can you get anything straight -- trying to eat, read and talk to me all at the same time?

RICHARD: Pat, honey, I didn't ask to talk to you, or for any cereal. But I do have to skim this chapter before I meet my students.

TRICIA: Good morning, Daddy.

RICHARD: Hmmmm.

TRICIA: Daddy, it's me, your only daughter.

RICHARD: Oh, hi, Tricia. I'm sorry. Ready to go? Where's Eddie?

PAT: Sit down, dear, and eat this cereal. Eddie!

EDDIE: Just another second!

TRICIA: Daddy, I'll need my elephant pants tomorrow. Could you and Petunia pick them up at the cleaners tonight on your way from work?

RICHARD: Elephant pants! No wonder we use so much toothpaste.

PAT: Eggs!

RICHARD: Eggs too. Too bad our elephants don't lay their own eggs

TRICIA: Daddy!

RICHARD: By the way, I didn't know we had any elephants. Where do we keep them these days? In the garage? Or the bathroom maybe? I never seem to get in there in the mornings. Maybe that's why.

PAT: Eddie, you'll have to walk to school! Petunia's leaving!

RICHARD: So now I have to stop at the grocery store and buy our elephant eggs and toothpaste and then pick up its duds at the cleaners.

TRICIA: Daddy!

PAT: Now, Richard!

RICHARD: Well, just so I get home by 5:30. I bowl tonight at 6:00, you know.

EDDIE: Hi, Dad!

RICHARD: Hi, buster. Did your elephant finally kill that toothpaste?

EDDIE: My what?

RICHARD: Just a private joke between us gals.

EDDIE: Say, Dad...

PAT: Eat, Eddie, and let your father concentrate on his book.

EDDIE: Dad, I'll need a ride tonight with you and Petunia. Mr. Ziegler's called a special cub pack meeting. Okay, Dad?

RICHARD: Okay.

PAT: I'm so glad we decided to enroll him with that group in Indian Hills. Mr. Ziegler's such an outstanding leader. What time is your meeting, Eddie?

EDDIE: Six o'clock.

PAT: But Richard, you're going bowling at six.

RICHARD: That's right.

PAT: Then how can you ... ?

RICHARD: How can I? How can I concentrate on this book, you mean? If I ever get through this page, let alone this chapter, it will be a miracle. If I can do that, you needn't worry. I'll have discovered how to be in two places at the same time by six o'clock this evening!

TRICIA: You can't take him anyway, Daddy.

EDDIE: He can too!

TRICIA: He can't!

EDDIE: Can too!

TRICIA: Cannot!

EDDIE: Can!

TRICIA: Can't!

PAT: Children! For heaven's sake!

TRICIA: Remember, you promised to drive me to Julie's. We're on the prom committee, and we're planning to watch an old Hitchcock re-run together at seven after we plan the dance. David will be there too. I've just got to go.

RICHARD: A re-run, huh? Hitchcock too? Well, don't go 'psycho' or get 'vertigo' with all that re-running, will you?

EDDIE: Vertigo, what's that?

RICHARD: In 'suspense' are you? Well just 'wait until dark'.

EDDIE: Wait till --

RICHARD: Just take my word -- it's for 'the birds'. It's 'notorious'. It's 'the view from the window'. It's 'north by northwest'.

EDDIE: Dad, are you okay?

RICHARD: All right, Eddie. Vertigo is what happens to people who find themselves rushing day in and day out rushing on asphalt treadmills in their private Petunias. It's like flying a combat mission your whole life long and always... always vondering ver-to-go next. Ver-to-go next. Get it?

TRICIA: Dad, you're almost another Robin Williams.

PAT: Yes, almost.

(Doorbell rings.)

EDDIE: I've got it!

RICHARD: The story of my life. 'Almost a this', 'almost a that.' Almost accomplishing so many things and, even when I do, almost having the time to sit back and savor them. Almost...

TRICIA: Golly, Dad, if we only had two cars, like the Mitchells.

RICHARD: What? On my salary? Perhaps if I were an M.D. or a lawyer or an electrician or plumber at \$46.00 an hour overtime. Or in stocks and bonds like John Mitchell. But honey, I'm the lowliest of the low. I'm just a PhD. An academician.

PAT: Two cars wouldn't help either, dear. John and Martha never even have meals, let alone go anywhere together. It wouldn't help your violin any either, Tricia. You must practice more.

EDDIE: Hey, Dad!

(Offstage)

Dad, it's Mr. Mitchell!

PAT: Oh!

RICHARD: Well, speak of the --

PAT: Richard!

JOHN: Hi, Pat.

PAT: How are you, John?

JOHN: Hi, Dick. How's the professor? I sure hate to disturb your morning meditation, but --

EDDIE: Mr. Mitchell's car won't start.

JOHN: Just too cold, I guess. Must have frozen the gas line. I'll have to put some of that anti-coagulant in the tank. Martha's Corvette won't start either. Same problem, I guess.

RICHARD: You should have settled for a vintage claptrap like our Petunia, John. Almost 90,000 and never let us down yet.

PAT: And not a scratch on her either. Richard keeps her so beautifully polished. Why, she's just as lovely as the day we got her.

RICHARD: No, John, none of these modern flashes-in-the-pan for us. Reliability is what we're after.

JOHN: You're right, Prof. Just don't make them like they used to. I guess that's why this morning ... well, I guess that's why I had to...

EDDIE: He needs a ride in to work.

RICHARD: Oh. Oh, sure. Why didn't you say so in the first place, John?

JOHN: I feel bad having to trouble you like this, Richard, but if you could just take me as far as you're going, 'til you head toward campus. I can make it the rest of the way on foot.

RICHARD: Wouldn't think of it, John. You wouldn't do a thing like that to me now, would you? It's all the way to your office or not at all.

JOHN: Well, it shouldn't take more than five, ten additional minutes if there aren't any traffic problems. I think the ice has mostly cleared since the last storm.

RICHARD: Don't you worry, John. I'm glad to help out. What's a neighbor for? We'd better go right away though. Ready kids? Petunia's leaving. Got your coats on?

TRICIA: Sure thing, Dad. But what about tonight at Julie's?

PAT: You can talk about that after your father comes home tonight, dear.

RICHARD: Right, let's talk about that later, honey.

TRICIA: Sure, Dad.

EDDIE: Mom, where's my coat?

PAT: Oh, Eddie! Not now. Please don't hold your father up any longer. He's already late ... I mean, he's...

JOHN: In that case, Richard, maybe I'd better ask someone else.

RICHARD: You'd better no such thing! I'm not late -- not yet. There's time ... pile in, kids. Got your coat, Eddie?

EDDIE: Found it!

RICHARD: Good!

JOHN: I just couldn't think of anyone else to turn to, Dick.

RICHARD: Of course, John.

(Catching Eddie's eye)

Dis vas 'ver-to-go'.

(Laugh; they leave. Returning)

Call the department, will you, Pat? We've got a new extension: 4028. Tell the secretary I'm on my way and not to let the students leave. It'll be about fifteen minutes into the hour before I get there. If I'm lucky. Is that clear?

PAT: Sure, honey. Perfectly clear.

RICHARD: *(blowing her a kiss)* Ver-to-go! I could tell John ver-to-go. But I'd better not, huh?

PAT: Right!

(Phone rings.)

Hello, Martha. Yes, they just left. Yes, John's with them. It's no bother. A sale at Sears tomorrow? But I just couldn't tell Richard I'll need the car. I'll have to go on Saturday on the way to Tricia's violin lesson and Eddie's volleyball. I think they're playing in Summerville, and, oh dear, there's my hair appointment.

(Lights down, lights up.)

The stores will be open late, you say? Oh, I forgot to call Richard's secretary that he ... well, I'll call you later. All right, Martha, goodbye.

(Hangs up.)

Oh dear, now what was that extension?

(Blackout.)

SIX pages left in Scene Two