

Black and White

A Play in One Act

By

Forrest Musselman

12415 County 28
Mabel, MN 55954
(507) 493-5290

“Black and White” was first performed November 15th, 2001, at The Studio Academy Charter Arts High School in Rochester, MN, as part of a collection of original one-act plays called “Caboodle”.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

The original cast and crew who did an excellent job bringing the script to life. They are: Cassandra Sheppard, Jada Corson, Jordan Walker, Lee Rinehart, Brandon Krom, Brianne Brutinel, Lindy Sexton, Laura Goetsch, Katie Koga and Beth Johnson.

The young playwrights who contributed their ideas towards this show. They are: Aaron Bateson, Adam Brady, Ashley Cook, Kelly Fredrickson, Sterling Haukom, Liz Klempf, Brandon Krom who came up with the original concept, Mary Krueger, Nathan McCann, Emily Miller, Andy Nicola, Sara Packer, Andy Rinehart, Tim Shoen, Vanessa Smith, Jason Wehrs, Shane Halverson and Paul Hart.

Everyone at Studio Academy willing to support original theatrical productions and allowing students to be overly creative. And, of course, Melisa and Jackson.

PRODUCTION NOTES

This play runs around twenty-five minutes.

Everything presented on stage should be in black, white, and shades of gray to help give the illusion of an old television sitcom. Laugh tracks can even be included but it is not marked in the original script.

To help with the overall feel of the show, actors should not be realistic in their line delivery. Instead, the emotions should be exaggerated and reflect many of the old television family sitcoms of the 50’s and 60’s.

The props are as follows: Several old school books, a shotgun case, 1 tray, 2 glasses of milk, napkins, a wrapped present, a newspaper, a martini glass, a catalog, a briefcase, and a table setting for four people.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Mother: SHE is the stereotypical mother figure portrayed on early television sitcoms.

Father: HE is the stereotypical father figure portrayed on early television sitcoms.

Susie: SHE is the daughter, seventeen, and very innocent.

Bobby: HE is the son, fifteen, and very innocent.

Allen: He is the next door neighbor, seventeen, and very ambitious.

Scene

In the living room of an American suburban home.

Time

The late 1950's.

SETTING: *A living room in the late 1950's. The front door is stage right, and several platforms lead down into the living room area. A couch and chair are located directly downstage center, while a small dining room with chairs is located upstage. A door at stage left leads to the kitchen. Various*

paintings adorn the walls. Everything is in black, white, and shades of gray.

AT RISE: *Mother enters wearing a dress, apron, pearls and high heel shoes. Music is playing softly. She is carrying a tray with a plate of sugar cookies and two glasses of milk. She sets them on the table and walks stage right to turn off the radio. She continues humming to herself and walks back to the kitchen door. The front door opens SUSIE enters. She is young and dressed in the latest fifties style clothing for teens.)*

SUSIE

Mother, I'm home!

MOTHER

Welcome home, Susie. Where's your little brother?

SUSIE

Bobby should be here pretty soon. He stayed after to help Mr. Thompson clean the science room for extra credit.

MOTHER

Wonderful. How was school today?

SUSIE

Gee, Mother, must you ask the same question every day?

MOTHER

Of course, you're my daughter and I love you.

SUSIE

Oh, Mother. School was just spiffy! There was only one air raid drill today, and I got an A+ on my home economics report.

MOTHER

That's wonderful, dear! What did your teacher say?

SUSIE

She said my report was very insightful and that I could be seen as a visionary.

MOTHER

Goodness! All that from doing a report on aerosol cans?

SUSIE

It's the wave of the future, Mother. It's going to make life so much easier.

MOTHER

I suppose you're right, dear.

SUSIE

These inventions are going to carry us far into the future, Mother. Take, for example, asbestos. It's a far easier way to insulate a house and keeps us warmer; therefore cutting costs on our electrical bill. Our science teacher was handing some around to us today in class. It doesn't even smell or anything.

MOTHER

Oh, Susie, you're so smart. What am I going to do with you?

SUSIE

Gee whiz, Mother. You're not going to cry again, are you?

MOTHER

No, I'm fine. Just eat your cookies, dear.

SUSIE

Yes, Mother. *(Takes a bite. Thinks for a moment.)* Mother?

MOTHER

Yes, dear.

SUSIE

Do you think I'm pretty?

MOTHER

Well, of course, dear. Why do you ask such a silly question?

SUSIE

I don't know. It's just that the Homecoming Dance is coming up pretty soon and... Well, there haven't been any boys that have asked me to go with them yet.

MOTHER

Oh, don't be silly, dear. Boys are just shy, that's all. I'm sure there's two or three that are working up the nerve to ask you right now. Right?

SUSIE

I guess so.

MOTHER

Are there any that you'd like to have ask you out?

SUSIE

Well, there may be one. *(Stamps foot)* Ooo, it just makes me so mad. I wish I could ask someone and get it over with.

MOTHER

Don't you dare talk that way! A lady never makes the first move. Never.

SUSIE

Yes, Mother. I'm sorry I was acting so radical.

MOTHER

It's okay. *(Pauses)* Don't worry, dear. Someone will ask you.

SUSIE

If you say so, Mother.

(The front door opens and BOBBY walks in. He is around fifteen and is carrying his books and a shotgun case.)

BOBBY

Mother, I'm home!

MOTHER

Hello, Bobby. How was school?

BOBBY

It was swell. I stayed after to help Mr. Thompson clean the science room. He was so impressed with me that he gave me some mercury to play with.

MOTHER

That's wonderful, dear. May I see it?

BOBBY

Naw, it slipped out of my hands and went down into the storm drain.

MOTHER

Oh. Well, it's good that you're helping out the teachers.

BOBBY

Now with the extra credit, I'm earning 110 percent!

MOTHER

Goodness! And how did your demonstration speech on cleaning a gun go?

BOBBY

Gee, Mother, it was keen.

MOTHER

I should say it was clean. After all, that's what the speech was about.

BOBBY

No, Mother, keen. Keen, like in neat-o? The teacher even let me pass my gun around the class so everyone could see up close. It was the swellest demonstration speech out of the entire class.

MOTHER

Well, a smart boy like you needs nourishment to keep the brain working extra hard.

BOBBY

Sounds good to me. Oh, boy, sugar cookies. My favorite!

SUSIE

Don't hog them all, Bobby. I might want some more.

BOBBY

Gee whiz, can't a fella eat in peace?

MOTHER

That's enough fighting, kids. I'll just bring you out some more.

BOBBY

Naw, that's okay, Mother. I want to get all my homework done before supper anyway.

SUSIE

That's a good idea. I think I'll do that too. I'm sorry I snapped at you, Bobby.

BOBBY

That's okay. I still love you.

SUSIE

I love you, too.

(They hug, grab another cookie, take a bite at the same time, and exit through the kitchen. MOTHER smiles, takes the plate and glasses, and exits after them. After a moment's pause, the front door opens and FATHER enters. He is dressed in a three piece suit and is carrying a briefcase and a present. He takes off his hat and places it on the coat rack)

FATHER

Honey, I'm home. (*Mother enters, almost running.*)

MOTHER

Welcome home, Father.

FATHER

Hello, dear.

MOTHER

Goodness, Father, you're three minutes late. What happened?

FATHER

Sorry, dear, but traffic was a little heavy. If I had a phone in the car, I would have called.

MOTHER

(*Giggles*) A phone in the car. How absurd.

FATHER

How was your day?

MOTHER

It was lovely, dear. But enough about me. How was work at the office?

FATHER

Oh, you know, just a lot of paper shuffling. Thank golly it's Friday.

MOTHER

Oh, you and your little catch phrases. When are you going to give those up?

FATHER

When one of them catches on, I suppose. Say, aren't you forgetting something?

MOTHER

Of course not! Happy anniversary, dear.

FATHER

Happy anniversary. Here's your present.

MOTHER

Father! I thought we agreed that there would be no gifts.

FATHER

Nonsense. You know I couldn't resist buying you a little something to show my love and appreciation.

MOTHER

You're such a sweet, dear man. What is it?

FATHER

It's a blender.

MOTHER

Oh, Father! You shouldn't have!

FATHER

Now you can make those special dinners twice as fast.

MOTHER

Oh, what would I do without you? Thank you so much.

FATHER

You're so welcome. *(They kiss.)*

MOTHER

Now you just sit right down and I'll get your drink.

FATHER

If you insist. *(He moves to the chair where a newspaper sits. He picks up the newspaper and sits down. He begins to read. MOTHER enters from the kitchen with a martini.)*

MOTHER

Here's your martini, dear.

FATHER

Ah, thank you. *(He takes the martini and sips it.)* Mmmm, that's perfect, dear.

MOTHER

You would hope so... after fifteen years.

FATHER

What would I do without you? Thank you so much.

MOTHER

You're so welcome. *(They kiss. SUSIE and BOBBY enter from kitchen.)*

SUSIE and BOBBY

Father!

FATHER

Hey, pumpkin. Hi ya' squirt.

BOBBY

Hey, Father. Do you think we could go fishing after dinner?

FATHER

I'm not so sure, squirt. Did you finish taking care of the lawn like I asked?

BOBBY

I finished spraying it with D.D.T. this morning, and I even burned those old tires too!

FATHER

Hmmm, I thought we could finish painting the garage tonight. I picked up some more lead-based paint.

BOBBY

Yeah, I guess.

FATHER

We need to finish reinforcing the bomb shelter too.

BOBBY

All right.

MOTHER

Oh, Father, quit teasing him. The painting can wait.

FATHER

I suppose you're right, Mother. Perhaps we can all take a drive in the country, eh?

BOBBY

Gee, Father. That would be swell.

FATHER

Sure it would. It's a beautiful day, gas is cheap and plentiful, and my Buick gets twelve miles to the gallon. What more could a guy ask for?

BOBBY

Not much, Father.

FATHER

How about you, pumpkin? Would you like to see the countryside?

SUSIE

But "The Shadow" is on the radio tonight. You know that's my favorite show.

MOTHER

I think you've been listening to too much radio, Susie. Don't you know too much can rot your brain.

SUSIE

Oh, Mother. That's all hearsay. Besides, when are we going to get a television set?

FATHER

Television?

SUSIE

Mary's mom and dad from across the street just bought one.

FATHER

And if Mary jumped off a bridge, would you jump too?

SUSIE

No... it's just that...

FATHER

Television is just a common fad just like hula hoops. Everyone has to have one, but then the interest goes away. It'll never amount to anything.

SUSIE

Yes, Father.

MOTHER

Your father is right, dear. Now come and help me get dinner started.

SUSIE

Yes, Mother. Father knows best.

FATHER

Your sister gets some funny ideas in her head sometimes, you know that, squirt?

BOBBY

Gosh, I'll say. You should hear her complaining that she's never going to get a date for the Homecoming Dance?

FATHER

Is that right?

BOBBY

Yep. Well, I best be getting back to my homework.

FATHER

Good boy.

(Bobby exits. The doorbell rings. He looks at the door and then towards the kitchen. The doorbell rings again. He looks at the door and then towards the kitchen.)

FATHER

Mother! Someone's at the door!

(MOTHER scurries out from the kitchen.)

MOTHER

Sorry, dear. *(Goes and opens front door. A young man is standing there, wearing jeans and sweater with the school patch on it.)* Yes, may I help you?

ALLEN

Hello, are you Mrs. Frost?

MOTHER

Yes. And you are?

ALLEN

I'm Allen, ma'am. Allen Smart from down the street.

MOTHER

Well, it's a pleasure to meet you. What can I do for you?

ALLEN

Well, my government class is selling magazines in order to raise money and I was wondering if you would be interested?

MOTHER

Possibly. What are you raising money for?

ALLEN

We want to raise awareness about our natural resources.

MOTHER

What about them?

ALLEN

We need to use more of them. Buying more coal and cutting down more trees would help boost the economy.

MOTHER

What do you think, Father?

FATHER

Certainly, we're always willing to help out school projects. Why don't you come in and I'll take a look at what you have to offer.

ALLEN

Thank you, sir.

MOTHER

Please, come in. (*Allen enters*) I'll just go check on dinner.

FATHER

Is there going to be any dessert tonight, Mother?

MOTHER

Of course, dear. Susie is putting the finishing touches on it right now. Excuse me, Allen.

ALLEN

Of course, ma'am. (*MOTHER exits*)

FATHER

Sit down, son. Let's see what you have.

ALLEN

Yes, sir. (*Hands catalog to FATHER*) I believe the best deal is the subscription to Life Magazine. For only one dollar, you can get the magazine for a year.

FATHER

A dollar! Gee golly, back when I was your age, a year's subscription was twenty-five cents.

ALLEN

I promise you, sir, it's the best deal you'll find.

FATHER

(*chuckles*) I see we have a little salesman in the making. Good for you, son. Always pushing that sale. I'll have to watch out for you when you enter the work force.

ALLEN

Thank you, sir, but I'm thinking more about politics.

FATHER

Is that right?

ALLEN

Yes, sir. It's my dream to become the president of the United States some day.

FATHER

That's an awfully ambitious goal, young man. Good for you.

ALLEN

Thank you. It's either that or be an astronaut.

FATHER

An astronaut! Why would you want to do that?

ALLEN

So I can explore space, sir.

FATHER

What's there to explore in space? We all know the moon is made of cheese.

ALLEN

Blue cheese, sir.

FATHER

Blue cheese. Now don't let those science fiction books clout your brain. All that talk of martians gets everyone absolutely wacky. No, politics is the way to go.

ALLEN

I tend to agree with you, sir. My father, he's the new judge in town, (*Father freezes and stares into space. The sound of a cash register is heard.*) thinks it's the way to go too. (*Father doesn't reply.*) Sir? Sir? Sir?

FATHER

You know, I like you, son. You've got ambition.

ALLEN

Thank you, sir.

FATHER

What grade are you in?

ALLEN

I'm a senior, sir.

FATHER

My daughter is a senior. Do you know Susie?

ALLEN

I sure do, sir. She's swell. She's in my home economics class.

FATHER

That's queer. I didn't know boys had to take home economics.

ALLEN

It's a required class now. They want to make us more rounded. (*Crosses legs*)

FATHER

I see. (*Pause*) Just between you and me, son... what do you think of the... the... the, um, birds and the bees?

ALLEN

I don't dare, sir. I need to think of my future. Birds and the bees do not mix with politics.

FATHER

Wonderful! That's good to hear. Are you going to the Homecoming Dance?

ALLEN

Gee willikers, I'd like to if I could find a date.

FATHER

Would you be interested in asking Susie?

ALLEN

Gee whiz, I sure would sir. I mean, if it's okay with you.

FATHER

Of course, of course. I tell you what. Why don't you have dinner with us and you can ask her then. Okay?

ALLEN

That would be swell, sir. I'll just run home and ask my parents if I can.

FATHER

Good boy.

ALLEN

I'll be right back, sir.

FATHER

I'll be right here. (*ALLEN exits out front door. FATHER shuts the door. MOTHER enters from kitchen.*)

MOTHER

Did that nice young man leave already?

FATHER

Yes, but set the table for one more. He's coming back to eat with us. (*Bobby enters but isn't seen by MOTHER and FATHER.*)

MOTHER

Oh, how wonderful. Why?

FATHER

He's going to ask Susie to the Homecoming Dance. (*Bobby freezes in alarm.*)

MOTHER

Really.

FATHER

What's wrong?

MOTHER

Are you sure Susie is okay with this?

FATHER

Why wouldn't she be? She wants a date, doesn't she?

MOTHER

Maybe you should have asked her if it was okay first.

FATHER

Nonsense. She'll be fine.

MOTHER

Father.

FATHER

Oh, all right. Send her in quick, would you?