

Playing Seriously

A Comedy-Drama for Kids Young and Old

Cast of Characters

This play demands that the actors be adept with physical comedy, improvisation, and movement.

BIG CHEESE: big and clunky; thickheaded; takes himself too seriously; likes to carry a huge poster of Shakespeare with him.

QUEEN BEE: sharp; confrontational; hard worker; thinks highly of herself; always carries a pocket dictionary.

SWEET CORN: sweet, good-hearted, charming, flirtatious

MIGHTY MOUSE: strong and tiny; laid-back; funny without trying to be; dreamy; flexible—physically and mentally; loves peanut butter and always carries a jar tied around the waist.

WATERCOLOR: an artist; shy; deep thinker; nonverbal; has liquid-like movements; always carries a paintbrush in her hand. Actor must be able to do live, artistic paintings on stage.

BLUE J: playful and sneaky; cocky; innocent-looking; quick; always eats sunflower seeds.

The Setting

Time: Present

Place: Act I Neighborhood backyard

Act II Desert Southwest in the mind of WATERCOLOR

Act 1

[As the kids enter the auditorium, the company is in various stages of warm-ups—the types of warm-ups will depend on the skills of the cast. The follow-

ing is an example: ballet stretches, dance and tap moves, vocal ranges, Shakespearean or dramatic monologues, sign-mime images, mime exercises, Tai Chi moves, and playing musical instruments, preferably flutes. Each actor focuses on one specific warm-up or may do a few. Everyone should move around the stage. There should be a feeling of camaraderie and play, all except for BIG CHEESE, who is always serious. The music should have a jazz quality that fits the tempo of the overall warm-up scene. The tap warm-up should add percussion to all of this. The entire scene should look like a visual orchestra beginning slowly and eventually merging and building to some type of crescendo as more and more kids file in. The high point should be when the audience is seated.]

BIG CHEESE: (*Gestures to rest of the actors that the audience has arrived:*
“They’re all here!”)

[The actors quickly run downstage to introduce their names. It should be so fast that it looks and sounds like one name.]

ALL: Hi I’m BLUE J-QUEENBEE-SWEETCORN-WATERCOLOR-
MIGHTY MOUSE—!

[BIG CHEESE, the last to arrive in the “group portrait,” bumps into the group causing the rest of the actors to fall forward.]

BIG CHEESE: BIG CHEESE!

[Disappointed at the group, he gestures to start over. Everyone gets up. He takes a deep breath. The actors misinterpret this as their cue and they step forward at once, like before, except this time BIG CHEESE restrains them.]

BIG CHEESE: (*Serious and over-dramatic.*) Good morning (*Or whatever.*), I am Big Cheese.

WATERCOLOR: (*Gestural and Tai Chi-like; not voiced.*) I’m Watercolor.

[The characters each produce a short dramatic movement that indicates their personality.]

BLUE J: That’s Watercolor. (*Big signs.*) I’m Blue J. (*Does a tap move or whatever.*)

MIGHTY MOUSE: (*Does a quick African-American jig [or whatever] and tries to outdo BLUE J.*) I'm Mighty Mouse.

SWEET CORN: (*Does a ballet move [or whatever] and tries to outdo MIGHTY MOUSE.*) I'm Sweet Corn.

QUEEN BEE: And I am . . . (*Not sure what to do—a little stage fright; gets a movement idea at the last minute.*) QUEEN BEE!

BIG CHEESE: Much better, but all of you are playing around . . . you're not serious. We have an audience out here.

MIGHTY MOUSE: We're playing? I thought we were acting.

ALL (*except BIG CHEESE*): Yeah, I was acting. Me too! (*Ad lib.*)

BIG CHEESE: (*To the audience.*) What do you people think? Were they playing? (*Expected audience response would be yes; if no one responds, pretend that someone did say yes.*) See! I told you! We should act seriously.

QUEEN BEE: Act seriously?

ALL (*except BIG CHEESE*): Serious? Act serious? How?

BIG CHEESE: Like this . . . (*Gestures to the other actors to move out of the way; demonstrates in a serious, clumsy, and overdramatic way; the others try to stifle their laughter as he says his speech.*) "To be, or not to be, that is the question: whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortunes or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them." (*The group stifles laughter at BIG CHEESE's seriousness.*)

MIGHTY MOUSE: Huh??

QUEEN BEE: What was that?

BIG CHEESE: (*Proudly fingerspells.*) S-H-A-K-E-S-P-E-A-R-E. (*Signs.*) Shakespeare. One of the world's greatest writers of plays.

SWEET CORN: Oh, what was his sign name again?

BIG CHEESE: SHAKESPEARE. SHAKE. SPEAR. SHAKE-SPEAR. Get it? (*No one gets it. He raises his leg.*) Grab my leg. (*No response.*) Here—grab my leg.

SWEET CORN: That's not a very nice thing to say to a lady.

BIG CHEESE: Queen Bee—come here and grab my leg.

QUEEN BEE: No, I'm a Queen—I don't lower myself to do things like that.

BIG CHEESE: Mighty Mouse—help me.

MIGHTY MOUSE: (*Sticking a finger in a jar of peanut butter tied around the waist.*) I'm eating.

BIG CHEESE: Watercolor! Hey, Watercolor! Grab my leg. (*WATER-COLOR is painting in the air with a paintbrush.*)

SWEET CORN: Shh! She's busy painting.

BIG CHEESE: Painting what? Nothing there!

SWEET CORN: She's working on new ideas. Saves paper.

BIG CHEESE: Blue J! Get over here. Hold up my leg. See a roll of paper in there? See it?

BLUE J: I don't like looking up people's pants.

BIG CHEESE: Pull the paper out. I can't reach it.

[BLUE J pulls an unusually long, rolled-up poster out of BIG CHEESE's pant leg.]

SWEET CORN: That's why he always walks around so stiff.

BLUE J: What do you carry that around for?

BIG CHEESE: It's my picture of Shakespeare. My hero!

BLUE J: What's up with him?

BIG CHEESE: Hold this end.

[BIG CHEESE and BLUE J unroll the poster. The others watch.]

QUEEN BEE: Who's that?

BIG CHEESE: Shakespeare! *You* would love him. He used to write plays and perform for a queen like you—the Queen of England.

QUEEN BEE: He wrote for the rock band Queen??

BIG CHEESE: Stone band? Huh!?

SWEET CORN: No, silly you! Not rock like a stone, rock like rock-n-roll!!

BIG CHEESE: No, no, no. You're both wrong. Shakespeare died over 300 years ago.

BLUE J: Hey—what are you carrying around a picture of a dead man for?

QUEEN BEE: Yeah, that's kinda creepy.

SWEET CORN: Does he have a girlfriend? He's cute. Long hair. An earring.

QUEEN BEE: YUCK! He's bald.

SWEET CORN: I bet he's really cool.

QUEEN BEE: (*Sing-song/sign-song.*) Sweet Corn loves Shakespeare.

Sweet Corn loves Shakespeare. Sweet Corn loves—

SWEET CORN: Well . . . if you're a queen, where's your king?

Don't have a king, do you? You are a Queen Bee. No king?? A queen bee—bzzzzzz (*Shows a flying bee stinging QUEEN BEE'S butt.*)

BIG CHEESE: (*Lets go of the poster, which rolls up in BLUE J's hands.*)

Will you stop it! Shakespeare is dead. Shakespeare—

BLUE J: (*Signs Shakespeare's name with the poster in his hand.*)

SHAKESPEARE! I got it, I got it, I got it! Let me explain. Watch me guys.

SWEET CORN: Blue J's smart. Watch.

BLUE J: I have a spear in my hand. Right? I'm going to shake it.

See? I put SHAKE and SPEAR together. What do I have? SHAKESPEARE! (*The poster flies out of his hands and into the audience. Silence.*)

BIG CHEESE: MY POSTER! Please! Give me my poster back.

Pleaassse?

[*Hopefully an audience member will return the poster to BIG CHEESE, who takes it and returns to the group.*]

MIGHTY MOUSE: You're not going to say thank you?

BIG CHEESE: Oh sorry. Thank you.

MIGHTY MOUSE: Not to me, you pea brain. To the person who handed you the poster.

BIG CHEESE: Oh! (*To the audience member.*) Thank you.

MIGHTY MOUSE: Is that all? You should give a tip.

BIG CHEESE: A tip? What's that?

MIGHTY MOUSE: A little money. Like in a restaurant. You pay the waiter some money as a way of expressing thanks for good service.

[*BIG CHEESE puts his hands in his pocket to pull out some change. He looks at MIGHTY MOUSE and gestures if he should give a coin to the*

audience member. MIGHTY MOUSE nods yes. He gives the audience member a penny.]

MIGHTY MOUSE: You gave only one cent? You're cheap!

BIG CHEESE: I'm not rich!

MIGHTY MOUSE: You have a pile of money in your pocket.

BIG CHEESE: I do not.

MIGHTY MOUSE: I saw it.

BIG CHEESE: I got bad service from that kid anyway.

MIGHTY MOUSE: Get outta here.

BIG CHEESE: You see the rough way he gave me back my Shakespeare poster?

QUEEN BEE: Oh that kid gave it to you nice and gently.

SWEET CORN: Such a sweet kid.

BLUE J: Yeah, that's a good kid. Hey, want some of my sunflower seeds? Here. *(Throws a handful on the floor.)*

[WATERCOLOR gets everyone's attention with her brushing movements. She calls over MIGHTY MOUSE and quickly writes and draws on MIGHTY MOUSE's back as one way to communicate ideas to the group.]

MIGHTY MOUSE: Watercolor wants to say something to Big Cheese . . . Shakespeare wasn't always serious. He wrote a lot of comedy too. Lots of fun and play.

[All get the idea to demonstrate some comedy to BIG CHEESE. In the manner of The Three Stooges, MIGHTY MOUSE punches BLUE J in the stomach, hits him on the head, and kicks him to QUEEN BEE who stomps on his feet. Next, WATERCOLOR makes his head turn up and down and back and forth with her paintbrush, and then she slaps him across the face with the paintbrush into SWEET CORN's arms. She cradles and comforts him in her arms.]

SWEET CORN: Blue J, you're cute, but I like Shakespeare better. *(She drops him. All look at BIG CHEESE.)*

ALL *(except BIG CHEESE)*: You see?

BIG CHEESE: I don't think that's funny. Looks violent to me.

BLUE J: It's not real.

SWEET CORN: It's pretending.

QUEEN BEE: We're making it up.

[WATERCOLOR gestures "playing" with her paintbrush.]

MIGHTY MOUSE: *(Referring to WATERCOLOR.)* It's playing.

[QUEEN BEE and BLUE J do a quick demonstration of faking a violent movement.]

MIGHTY MOUSE: Understand?

BIG CHEESE: Still looks violent to me.

[WATERCOLOR motions MIGHTY MOUSE over and draws on her back.]

MIGHTY MOUSE: Watercolor says, "Remember Shakespeare's famous quote— *(Loud, microphoned Shakespearean voice overhead.)* 'All the world's a stage, and all the men . . . and women merely players.'"

SWEET CORN: Wow! Watercolor is smarter than Blue J.

BIG CHEESE: Did you hear that?

QUEEN BEE: *Hear that??* What's the matter with you? You're deaf!
How can you *hear* that?

BIG CHEESE: You're deaf too!

QUEEN BEE: Soooo? *(Points to BLUE J.)* He's deaf too!

[The rest of the characters point to one another in quick succession.]

BLUE J: *(Points to SWEET CORN.)* She's deaf too!

SWEET CORN: *(Points to MIGHTY MOUSE.)* She's deaf too!

[WATERCOLOR gestures "I'm deaf too!"]

BIG CHEESE: All right, all right, all right . . . Did you feeeeeeeel that? *(To MIGHTY MOUSE.)* Mighty Mouse—sign that again.

[All except MIGHTY MOUSE gesture "wait" as they scramble into position on the ground to get ready to feel the coming vibrations. This should

look comical as each has his or her own way of sensing vibrations (through the nose, a toe, a finger, a tongue, whatever).]

MIGHTY MOUSE: All the world's a stage, and all of the men and women are merely players.

[All gesture excitedly that they felt something.]

MIGHTY MOUSE: All the world's a stage . . . (*Enjoying this; finding a rap-like rhythm.*) all the world's a stage . . . all the world's a stage . . . all of the men . . . all of the women . . . all of the men . . . all of the women . . . merely players . . . merely players. (*Etc., etc., to be improvised.*)

[All of the characters except BIG CHEESE join in and do a little rap or hip-hop dance, with some repeating MIGHTY MOUSE's signs above.]

BIG CHEESE: I don't get it.

SWEET CORN: Did you notice your hero, Milk Shake, used the word "players?"

BLUE J: Not milkshake. Shakespeare!

QUEEN BEE: It's like you can make *any* place in the world become a stage. And *anyone* can play on the stage.

BIG CHEESE: Well, I still think we should be serious about our work.

SWEET CORN: But, playing is important. It helps us become more imaginative, more creative.

BIG CHEESE: Well, these people here from schools all over the place came all this way to see us give a play. So, we should be serious, make it worth their time.

BLUE J: Excuse me.

BIG CHEESE: HEY! Don't you throw sunflower seeds at me.

BLUE J: How do I get your attention? You're always blabbing away.

BIG CHEESE: Next time, come over and tap me on the shoulder.

[BLUE J comes over and taps BIG CHEESE on the shoulder.]

BLUE J: What is (*Fingerspells.*) P-L-A-Y?

BIG CHEESE: Play? (*As in "drama."*)

BLUE J: P-L-A-Y.

BIG CHEESE: You mean play-play? (*Sign like in “playing around.”*)

BLUE J: (*Signs it four different ways.*) Play-play, play, play, play, whatever.

SWEET CORN: Looks like it means many things.

MIGHTY MOUSE: Let’s go look it up in the dictionary.

[All except QUEEN BEE begin to run off stage. QUEEN BEE stomps her feet. Everyone stops suddenly, perhaps bunching up in a funny group pose, and slowly turn towards her. She pulls out a pocket dictionary.]

QUEEN BEE: Where are you going? I’ve got a dictionary right here.

BIG CHEESE: What do you carry around a dictionary for?

QUEEN BEE: You forgot that I’m also the *Spelling Bee*. HA-HA-HA-HA (*No one laughs.*) Now, to look up p-l-a-y.

[The whole group crowds in trying to read. QUEEN BEE is about to explain the first definition but SWEET CORN beats her to it.]

SWEET CORN: Oh! Here’s one definition: “to play a musical instrument or to make sounds.”

[She pretends to play a flute; BLUE J pretends to play the drums; MIGHTY MOUSE plays the trombone; WATERCOLOR plays the harp; QUEEN BEE finally joins and plays the violin. BIG CHEESE makes vocal sounds. When everyone stops, BIG CHEESE continues to make loud, awful sounds with an awkward gesture. SWEET CORN taps him on the shoulder and tells him it is over. QUEEN BEE gets ready to explain another definition. BLUE J beats her to it.]

BLUE J: Ah! Here’s a good one: “to pretend or make-believe.”

[He gives an example of an imaginary telescope or similarly shaped object. The next character in line takes the telescope and transforms it into something else similar to the telescope shape. Everyone does a transformation with some type of rhythm. SWEET CORN, the last person, makes a conductor’s baton and orchestrates the group as they perform their ideas with rhythm. MIGHTY MOUSE beats QUEEN BEE to the next definition.]

MIGHTY MOUSE: OH YEAH! The most obvious definition: “it is what you call a performance on stage”—a P-L-A-Y. (*Finger-spells.*)

[The group does a melodramatic skit.]

BIG CHEESE: Well, let’s make a play!

QUEEN BEE: A play without using anything? Just mime and gestures?

BLUE J: She’s got a point. Why don’t we add some things? Use a little bit of everything.

BIG CHEESE: Okay, so what do we need?

SWEET CORN: Oh! Oh! Oh! . . . Actors!

MIGHTY MOUSE: We’ve got ’em. Right here.

SWEET CORN: Oh, um, . . . (*Gestures.*) Costumes?

MIGHTY MOUSE: Costumes. Very good! Go downstairs and see if you can find some old clothes.

[Upstage right, SWEET CORN sets up a flat horizontally as if she were opening an outside storm-cellar door. She exits behind the flat like walking down steps. Each actor who goes down “the cellar” should go with a unique exit (by steps, elevator, escalator, firefighter’s pole, rope, spiral staircase, etc.). WATERCOLOR gestures something about scenery and background.]

MIGHTY MOUSE: Scenery, background? Sure, go see if you can find some paint and something to paint on.

[WATERCOLOR sets up another flat horizontally, upstage left, and exits. Throughout all of the quirky exits, BIG CHEESE is puzzled at how everyone “leaves” the stage. QUEEN BEE gestures, “What about stage and curtains?”]

MIGHTY MOUSE: Go look around and see if you can find something for curtains.

[QUEEN BEE exits behind the first flat. BLUE J gestures, “What about a director?”]

MIGHTY MOUSE: Okay, you be the director.

[BLUE J gestures, “No, no, not me. I just want to act. I don’t want to tell people what to do. Why don’t you be the director?”]

MIGHTY MOUSE: No, no, you be the director and tell people what to do.

BIG CHEESE: Hey, wait a minute; I wanna be the director.

[BLUE J ignores BIG CHEESE and gestures to MIGHTY MOUSE, “Uh-uh, you.”]

MIGHTY MOUSE: No, you.

BIG CHEESE: What about me-me-me?

BLUE J: You.

MIGHTY MOUSE: YOU!

BLUE J: YOU!!

[An index-finger swordfight ensues until BLUE J “stabs” MIGHTY MOUSE.]

MIGHTY MOUSE: *(Acts out a melodramatic death.)* AHHHH!! UGH!!
OH-OH-OH . . .

[BIG CHEESE really believes this and tries to comfort/resuscitate MIGHTY MOUSE.]

BIG CHEESE: Oh, Mighty Mouse is hurt! Are you okay?

MIGHTY MOUSE: Get off of me. I was playing, you see? All right, Blue J, you win. I’ll be the director. Why don’t you go find us some props?

BLUE J: Huh? What’s that?

MIGHTY MOUSE: P-R-O-P-S. Things that actors can use while acting. Suppose you need to act out someone jumping rope. You would need to have rope.

[A piece of rope comes flying out from “down below” (the upstage left flat) and smacks MIGHTY MOUSE in the face.]

BLUE J: Aha! So, what do I look for?

MIGHTY MOUSE: Just go find some everyday stuff.

[BLUE J exits behind the second flat; QUEEN BEE enters from behind the first flat with a clothesline and poles. MIGHTY MOUSE appreciates her discovery. He shows her that the poles need some kind of support. QUEEN BEE goes off searching for something.]

BIG CHEESE: Something's missing.

MIGHTY MOUSE: What?

BIG CHEESE: We need a writer—you know, a storyteller, to help create the story. No story, no play.

MIGHTY MOUSE: Oh, *now* you wanna “play.” (*Uses the sign PLAY as in “drama” and teasingly transform it to “playing-around.”*)

BIG CHEESE: Well, you know what I mean . . .

MIGHTY MOUSE: Why don't you think of a story? Maybe a story with some animals in it.

[QUEEN BEE enters with a tire. Her posture and movement resembles a turtle.]

BIG CHEESE: Hey, what about a turtle story? I loooove turtles.

MIGHTY MOUSE: (*Not very excited.*) Turtles? (*Pause.*) Yeah, whatever.

[BLUE J, having crossed over backstage from behind the second flat, comes up behind the first flat loaded down with costumes. He has a comical appearance. When he “arrives,” he fumbles all of the props and costumes onto MIGHTY MOUSE and BIG CHEESE. They help BLUE J set all of this stuff down.]

MIGHTY MOUSE: I'm going to help the others.

[MIGHTY MOUSE gestures to someone “down below,” behind the first flat, to throw something. At the same time BIG CHEESE taps her on the right shoulder. MIGHTY MOUSE turns and a tablecloth smacks BIG CHEESE in the face. BIG CHEESE has been following MIGHTY MOUSE everywhere, wanting to ask her a hundred questions. MIGHTY MOUSE scolds the person “down below.” BIG CHEESE taps MIGHTY MOUSE on the left shoulder and a second tablecloth comes flying up and slaps BIG CHEESE in the face. MIGHTY MOUSE exits “down below.”]

BIG CHEESE: (*Pacing.*) Turtles, turtles . . . turtles. Let's see . . . gotta come up with a story about turtles. Aw man, my mind is a blank. (*Runs to QUEEN BEE.*) Do you know— (*QUEEN BEE shoves a clothesline pole in his hand and gets BIG CHEESE to help her. This is her way of telling him to "shut up and work."*)

BIG CHEESE: (*Sees a break.*) Do you know any stories about turtles?

QUEEN BEE: Let's see, . . . "The Tortoise and the H-A-R-E."
(*Fingerspells sloppily so that her R resembles an I.*)

BIG CHEESE: The turtle and the hair? I don't know that one.

QUEEN BEE: H-A-R-E. Like rabbit. Not hair.

BIG CHEESE: Oh. I knew that. Your spelling is funny. (*Pause.*) So tell me how the rest of it goes.

[*QUEEN BEE quietly fills BIG CHEESE in on the story while SWEET CORN and MIGHTY MOUSE enter from "down below" with more costumes and props.*]

BIG CHEESE: Oh Mighty Mouse, I got a great story! "The Turtle and the Rabbit"!! I just thought of it. You know, the turtle and the rabbit? They have a race. The big-headed rabbit bets that he can beat the turtle. I won't tell you what happens in the end. What do you think?

QUEEN BEE: Hey buster, I gave you that idea.

BIG CHEESE: Aw, you gave me a little teensy-weensy idea, but I made it a much bigger idea. Anyway, thanks all the same.

QUEEN BEE: Is that all I get? Just a "little teensy-weensy" thanks?

BIG CHEESE: Whaddya want? Flowers and an Olympic gold medal?

QUEEN BEE: Oooooohhh, big shot! C'mon, put 'em up!

BIG CHEESE: Okay, okay, I'll give you a tip.

MIGHTY MOUSE: Wait a minute, now! This is no way to make a play.

QUEEN BEE: You tell him!

MIGHTY MOUSE: This takes cooperation and teamwork! Everybody is equal—I don't want any stars in this play.

BIG CHEESE: Fine! You're the director; I'll do what you tell me to do.

[QUEEN BEE and BIG CHEESE angrily walk away from each other.]

BLUE J: (To WATERCOLOR, "down below," behind the second flat.)
Okay, throw it.

[WATERCOLOR makes a wild throw with a beach ball. BLUE J barely catches it and orders QUEEN BEE to set it in a corner. QUEEN BEE misunderstands and throws the ball to SWEET CORN, who is setting up props near the corner. Puzzled, SWEET CORN throws the ball to MIGHTY MOUSE, who is trying to figure out the clothesline set-up. MIGHTY MOUSE throws the ball to BIG CHEESE, who is sulking in a corner. Not knowing what to do with it, BIG CHEESE throws the ball back to BLUE J. BLUE J repeats his order with more emphasis. QUEEN BEE and the group do the same thing. BLUE J repeats himself one more time. Meanwhile, WATERCOLOR throws up another object, like a hat. BLUE J catches it and orders QUEEN BEE to set it in the corner. Same problem as before. By now the group is having fun. A gas can gets thrown up, and soon the five actors are juggling objects among themselves. At first, it is pandemonium but later it changes to a rhythm with the actors laughing and carrying on.]

WATERCOLOR enters nonchalantly with her paints and brushes. Seeing it is "raining" with objects, she opens an umbrella and walks through the group. After she passes them, everybody stops. WATERCOLOR stops, looks back at them, shrugs her shoulders, and moves on.

BLUE J remembers why he was angry and retrieves all of the objects and sets them in the corner where he wanted them. He demonstrates to QUEEN BEE what she was supposed to have done. QUEEN BEE grabs the ball out of BLUE J's hand, gives it to SWEET CORN, and blames her. SWEET CORN blames MIGHTY MOUSE, and so on until the whole group is quickly passing the ball around in a circle having fun; all the while BLUE J is running around trying to catch the ball. Finally, BLUE J rears up like a bull and comes running into the small circle. The characters catch him flying in midair and hold him there. WATERCOLOR picks up the

ball, which has landed near her. She walks over to BLUE J and calmly hands it to him and strokes his hair.]

MIGHTY MOUSE: *(Breaking the tension.)* Soooooo, what are you planning to do with this clothesline?

QUEEN BEE: Ummm . . . *(Drawing a blank.)*

[SWEET CORN, covering for QUEEN BEE, grabs WATERCOLOR, who is curious about the coffee cans dangling from each pole. The cans contain clothespins. SWEET CORN “hangs” WATERCOLOR up on the line with clothespins as if she were clothing that needed to be air-dried. MIGHTY MOUSE approves of SWEET CORN’s idea.

WATERCOLOR demonstrates another alternative. All except QUEEN BEE become subway or bus riders holding onto the overhead line. MIGHTY MOUSE and BIG CHEESE become halves of the train door. They come to a stop. QUEEN BEE gets on board and the doors quickly shut behind her. The door halves fade and become more passengers. Everyone squeezes in.

BLUE J drifts forward half-asleep. He jerks awake and accidentally pulls the emergency brake, which is the coffee can cord. The train or bus stops suddenly. BLUE J gets an idea from the can. He demonstrates two people talking on the phone. Standing outside the stage right pole, BLUE J does a little improvisational sketch with QUEEN BEE, talking gibberish on the phone. QUEEN BEE must be inside of the stage left pole.

After BLUE J and QUEEN BEE chat a bit, WATERCOLOR comes around with a sheet of paper, helped by BIG CHEESE. They hang up the paper in front of QUEEN BEE, who is chatting away.

When WATERCOLOR pulls the clothesline over she reveals MIGHTY MOUSE in QUEEN BEE’s place holding the coffee can and looking puzzled. Meanwhile, BLUE J is confused at how he lost QUEEN BEE on the line. MIGHTY MOUSE blows into the can. BLUE J reacts to the air coming through. WATERCOLOR comes back with a second sheet of paper to hang next to the first sheet.]

MIGHTY MOUSE: What are you doing?

SWEET CORN: Watercolor is very, very smart. She's setting up the stage with curtains. When we are ready to perform, we can open this and make entrances— (*From behind, BIG CHEESE pokes his head in between the "curtains."*) Like that!! Later, if you want background, she can paint it. She can even change the background while you act.

MIGHTY MOUSE: Brilliant!! That's the best idea I've seen all day.

ALL: Watercolor, that's awesome! Radical! Cool! (*Etc.*)

BIG CHEESE: (*A little dejected.*) Yeah, good idea.

MIGHTY MOUSE: Okay, everybody let's get busy.

[WATERCOLOR gets busy preparing her paints and brushes in front of the paper curtains.]

ALL: What are we doing?

MIGHTY MOUSE: You all know the Tortoise and the Hare story?

ALL: Oh yeah! Great!!

[WATERCOLOR goes to work on painting some curtains and a logo on the clothesline.]

BIG CHEESE: Hey, I thought that was my idea. How come everybody knows the story already?

QUEEN BEE: Silly! That's an old fable. It was written a quadrillion-zillion years ago. Everybody knows it.

MIGHTY MOUSE: Okay, pay attention. Big Cheese, I want you to be the rabbit. And I want you, Queen Bee, to be the turtle.

[BIG CHEESE goes to help WATERCOLOR.]

SWEET CORN: (*With a Hollywood attitude.*) Verrry interesting choices.

BLUE J: (*Hollywood attitude.*) Why?

QUEEN BEE: Yeah, why?? I'm the queen, I can't be a turtle.

MIGHTY MOUSE: Why not? I'm the director. We're playing remember?

SWEET CORN: Okay! So, what do we do now?

MIGHTY MOUSE: We should set up a starting line. A road for the race. Maybe some trees and bushes along the way. A finish line.

I want the actors to play hard, to . . . umm . . .

BIG CHEESE and WATERCOLOR: (*Subtly interrupting.*) What should we name our play group?

MIGHTY MOUSE: . . . play serious.

BIG CHEESE and WATERCOLOR: Play Serious? Interesting name.

[WATERCOLOR walks back to the curtains and paints the words PLAY SERIOUS in view of the audience. This should be done quick and dirty like a child. The letter S should be painted backwards.]

MIGHTY MOUSE: What did they ask me?

BLUE J: I don't know.

SWEET CORN: Something about a name for our group.

MIGHTY MOUSE: A name for our group?

[BIG CHEESE pokes his head between the curtains again. WATERCOLOR accidentally paints across his forehead while painting the group's name along with the proverbial masks of comedy and tragedy.]

BIG CHEESE: Excuse me . . . do you mind if we move the clothesline back? We need to set up the road and other things here.

[The clothesline gets moved upstage. A pile of props and costumes are seen center stage. We see that QUEEN BEE is about to put on a baseball catcher's chest protector. The group reacts excitedly with this object choice for a turtle's underbelly. Everybody helps find more objects for her. They tie a wok onto her back. Someone buffs the wok. Another person puts potholder mittens over her hands. In a daze, she sees herself transformed. She exits behind the clothesline curtains.]

MIGHTY MOUSE directs the setting up of props and costumes. Next, everyone squeezes a couple of neckties over BIG CHEESE's head. It should be a huge struggle, and, when it is over, he springs forward with floppy ears. Someone stuffs a large fluffy object on his butt for a tail. He exits behind the clothesline curtains. Everyone else grabs some props and exit.

WATERCOLOR is the last one on stage who has not figured out what animal to be. Instead, she uses her props to make herself a sophisticated lady who opens the curtains. WATERCOLOR exits behind one of the curtains.

One by one the troupe enters as animals, with the turtle being first and the rabbit being last. They go into a wild and wacky, nonverbal performance of The Tortoise and the Hare. Besides (or instead of) being a foot race, this may be a fingerspelling alphabet race. This should be done with sound effects and painting (a map of the race showing the progress of the runners or a racetrack—this is wide open and left up to the director and painter).]

BIG CHEESE: I enjoyed that. Now I really understand what you mean by playing. (*Signs as in “playing around.”*)

SWEET CORN: See? All this time you thought a play had to be serious, right?

BIG CHEESE: Yeah, but I’m curious . . . what was the point of “The Tortoise and the Hare” play?

WATERCOLOR: (*Gesturing with paintbrush; Mighty Mouse translates.*)

The point was if you work slow and steady, and not brag about how good you are, you will “win the race”—you will get your goal. That can relate to anything in your life.

QUEEN BEE: We should do another play!

ALL: YEAH (*Etc.*)!!

[WATERCOLOR gestures that she has one.]

BIG CHEESE: You?

[WATERCOLOR gestures, “What do you mean you?”]

MIGHTY MOUSE: What do you mean “you?” You don’t think girls can write plays? Huh?

BIG CHEESE: Well, no, I didn’t mean that. I just meant that I’m, I’m surprised that Watercolor created a play.

SWEET CORN: What’s the play about?

[Group forms a huddle. It should be fun and playful to watch this as WATERCOLOR explains her play.]