

Not Another Bedtime Story!

A One-Act Play

By Bobby Keniston

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DEDICATION

This play is for Jimmy, a great lover of stories.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Katie and Max Grimm are tired of having to listen to their mom's bedtime stories about fluffy hamsters and magic smiles. When they tell her they've outgrown them, she asks for one more chance to tell the best bedtime story ever. Their dad, who loves to write zombie fan fiction, overhears and wants in on the challenge to tell the "King of Bedtime Stories"! Katie and Max have some tricks up their sleeves, however, since telling their own scary stories at summer camp. Zombie bunnies! Evil scientists! Gloomy gamma rays! Post-apocalyptic survivalists! One thing is for sure -- this is NOT another bedtime story!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 m, 7 w, 2 flexible, extras and doubling possible)

- *MAX GRIMM:** A little boy who thinks he's too old for bedtime stories.
- *KATIE GRIMM:** His sister. She feels the same way.
- POLLY GRIMM:** Their mother who loves telling them bedtime stories.
- FRED GRIMM:** Their father who has an odd fascination with zombie stories.
- KING OF SUNFLOWER COVE:** A regal bunny. (Can double as Zebediah.)
- QUEEN OF SUNFLOWER COVE:** A regal kitty. (Can double as Zelda.)
- HYSTERICAL BUNNY PAGE:** The one who witnesses the kidnapping of the king and queen.
- PRINCE HOPPYEARS:** A young prince who is tasked to save his parents. A bunny.
- PRINCESS PURRFECT PAWS:** A kitten. She insists on going along to help save her parents. Very independent.
- DR. GLOOMY GUS:** A sourpuss (or evil genius depending on the story). Wants the world to be a gloomy place.
- DR. GLADYS MAGUIRE:** A serious scientist who is developing a serum to help change zombies back.
- BRICK:** Her nephew (or niece). He is a bit of a scaredy cat, living in this post-apocalyptic world.
- JANE:** Brick's sister. She is tough, a survivalist.
- ZACK:** A thinking zombie who wants to be human again.
- ZELDA:** Zack's mother. Disapproves of Zack wanting to be human. (Can double as Queen.)
- ZEBEDIAH:** Zack's father. Also disapproves of Zack wanting to be human. (Can double as King.)
- OPTIONAL EXTRAS:** If you would like extras in your production, there can be a number of zombies as a kind of zombie chorus.

***NOTE:** *Max and Katie can be played by a variety of ages, from 12 and even upwards of 16, which makes the fact that they are too old for bedtime stories all the more obvious.*

SETTING

The settings and props should be simple and easily moved. There are a few basic locations:

The Story Area: It is the area that Polly has deemed the “bed-time story place.” Near a comfy chair for mom or dad are floor mats for the two children. This minimal area can be located either far down left or far down right, so that when the stories are enacted most of the stage is available. On the chair is a colorful conductor's hat.

Sunflower Cove: A background of a bright, cartoony sunflower meadow, looking like a children's show from PBS.

Post-Apocalyptic World: Stereotypical city background after an apocalypse with dirty, crumbling buildings.

Zombified Sunflower Cove: A mashup of the cartoony Sunflower Cove and the zombie apocalypse world.

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(AT RISE: MAX and KATIE GRIMM are in the "bedtime story place." They are sitting on their story mats, looking a bit glum.)

MAX: I can't believe we have to go through this again.

KATIE: Max...

MAX: It's embarrassing, Katie.

KATIE: I know.

MAX: It's like torture!

KATIE: Now you're just being dramatic.

MAX: That story last night...

KATIE: *(Making a face.)* "The Loving Little Fluffy Hamsters."

MAX: It literally hurt my ears it was so awful!

KATIE: We have to tell Mom the truth. We're too old for her bedtime stories.

MAX: *(Shudders a little.)* Especially after those scary stories at summer camp.

KATIE: You mean with Counselor Ned...

MAX: Don't even say his name!

KATIE: My point is that we just have to talk to Mom.

MAX: I don't want to hurt her feelings.

KATIE: Neither do I, but you have to be direct with adults. It's for their own good.

MAX: But she'll get that sad, disappointed look on her face, like when we told her we don't like going to the petting zoo anymore.

KATIE: Maybe she will, but it's not our fault we didn't stop growing when we were five. We either deal with that sad look or be told bedtime stories until we're in our twenties. What's it gonna be?

MAX: Maybe by then, nostalgia will make her stories cool again.

KATIE: Come on, Max!

MAX: Okay! When she comes in here, you can tell her.

KATIE: WE can tell her.

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(POLLY GRIMM, their mother, enters. She is in good spirits with a big smile.)

POLLY: Hey, kids! Time for the best part of the evening!
Bedtime Story time with Mom!

MAX and KATIE: *(Unenthusiastic.)* Yay!

POLLY: That's the spirit! *(SHE picks up the conductor's hat and puts it on.)* All aboard the Story Train! Next stop, the land of imagination! *(Imitating a train chugging.)* Chugga-chuggachugga-chugga...

MAX and KATIE: *(Even more unenthusiastic.)* Choo-choo.

POLLY: *(Sitting down in the chair.)* All right! What kind of story would you kids like to listen to tonight?

(KATIE gives MAX a look. She stands up. Max stays seated. Katie gestures to him. He stands.)

KATIE: Mom, there's something we need to tell you. Right, Max?

MAX: *(Evasive.)* Uh... it's mostly Katie.

(KATIE glares at HIM.)

POLLY: Oh no! Was the story about the Loving Little Fluffy Hamsters too scary last night?

KATIE: No, Mom.

POLLY: I should have left out the part about Henry Hamster being forced to run in the wheel by Despicable Dog! You probably both had nightmares!

MAX: It wasn't scary, Mom. It was...

KATIE: Pathetic.

POLLY: *(Shocked.)* What?

KATIE: I'm sorry! That was harsh. True, but harsh.

POLLY: You've always loved my stories!

KATIE: When we were five. But we BOTH feel that we've gotten too old for them. We love spending time with you, but... well, your stories are for little kids.

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POLLY: *(Getting that sad, disappointed look.)* This is like the last time we went to the petting zoo. Max, do you feel the same way?

(MAX looks torn and doesn't know what to say. KATIE shoots him another look.)

KATIE: What are you, the silent partner? Tell her!

MAX: *(Can't look at his MOTHER.)* It's not that your stories are bad... we've just outgrown them. Especially after summer camp...

KATIE: Don't go there.

(Pause as POLLY tries to compose herself. KATIE and MAX look a little guilty.)

POLLY: I understand. *(SHE sadly takes the conductor hat off.)*
Well, I guess I won't be needing this.

KATIE: It's still a nice hat.

MAX: Yeah... and, who knows? Maybe... uh... maybe you'll learn to drive a train someday. *(KATIE gives HIM a look.)*
I'm just trying to help.

POLLY: Wait a second! You said you had outgrown my stories, which is a fair criticism. But what if... now just hear me out...

(FRED GRIMM wanders on with his horror novel and overhears the rest of this conversation. He is wearing a sci-fi themed shirt, perhaps with a message about zombies.)

KATIE: Hear you out about what?

POLLY: What if tonight, I told you both the best bedtime story ever!? I could make it a bit more age appropriate...

KATIE: Mom...

POLLY: It will be like a challenge! If I can tell you a story that you both like, I get to keep telling you bedtime stories until...

MAX: Not until we're in our twenties!

POLLY: No. But for at least another six months. Deal?

KATIE: I don't think it's a good idea...

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POLLY: *(Putting the hat back on.)* Come on, kids! Who wants to jump on the Story Train? Chugga-chugga-chugga-chugga...

FRED: Choo! Choo!

(THEY all finally notice that FRED is in the room.)

KATIE: *(To FRED.)* Please don't encourage her, Dad!

FRED: I just heard the word challenge, and you know that I'm always up for one!

POLLY: What are you talking about, Fred?

FRED: How about this? You tell the kids a bedtime story. Then I'll tell the kids a bedtime story. And whichever story they like better won't be just another bedtime story. Oh, no! It will be the all-time, "long live the king" of bedtime stories!

POLLY: What makes you think you can tell a better bedtime story than I can?

FRED: I'll have you know that I am very creative! I write *The Walking Dead* fan fiction online under the name *ZombieCatcher4Evah*.

POLLY: Are you kidding me?

FRED: Nope! My latest story got over seventy-six views! In fact, it got seventy-seven!

POLLY: I am so happy I married you.

MAX: There's no need to argue about this, Mom and Dad. It's only a bedtime story.

FRED: Well, Polly, if you're too SCARED to accept my challenge...

KATIE: Let's not do this, Dad.

POLLY: Oh, you think I feel threatened by you, *Zombie Fever*?

FRED: Pretty big words for a woman who tells stories about fluffy hamsters!

MAX: *(To KATIE.)* I knew we should have waited until our twenties to say something.

POLLY: We'll see who has the better story. Okay, kids! Time to get on the Story Train!

KATIE: Maybe we should just forget the whole thing...

POLLY: Story Train! Now!

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(The KIDS sit down in their spots. FRED stands with his arms crossed, unimpressed.)

POLLY: *(Cont'd.)* I call this story... "The Happy Bunnies and Kitties of Sunflower Cove."

(KATIE and MAX share a look. FRED lets out a little derisive snort, and POLLY glares at him.)

POLLY: *(Cont'd.)* That's enough out of you, mister! *(Starting the story.)* Once upon a time, in the magic land of Sunflower Cove...

(LIGHTS up on Sunflower Cove. The LIGHTS dim, but don't completely go out on storytelling area.)

FRED: Sunflower Cove sounds absolutely ridiculous.

POLLY: Knock it off! If this is a competition, you need to zip it! No fair influencing the judges.

FRED: Fine. My lips are sealed. You don't need my help to lose.

MAX: *(To KATIE, quietly.)* Do you think our bedtime story issue is ruining Mom and Dad's marriage?

KATIE: I suppose something has to sooner or later, statistically speaking.

MAX: Very comforting, thanks.

POLLY: *(Continuing the story.)* Sunflower Cove was run by a handsome king and a beautiful queen.

(The KING and the QUEEN enter. Right now, they are just dressed as a human king and a human queen.)

POLLY: *(Cont'd.)* The king was a very regal bunny, and the queen was a most gracious and royal kitty.

(The KING and the QUEEN don't look thrilled about this. They glance over at POLLY, who, of course, doesn't notice them, then sigh. The king takes a pair of bunny ears out of his pocket and puts them on. The queen does likewise with kitten ears.)

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POLLY: *(Cont'd.)* The king and queen had once ruled separate kingdoms, the king with his little bunny son, and the queen with her little kitty daughter. But one day, the king and queen met, and fell in love...

(The KING and the QUEEN look at each other lovingly and join hands.)

FRED: *(Aside.)* What is this, *The Brady Bunch*? Am I right, kids?

KATIE: We have no idea what you're talking about.

POLLY: *(Ignoring THEM.)* And after their wedding, they ruled over the peaceful land of Sunflower Cove with wisdom and joy, and bunches and bunches of love.

(The LIGHTS fade a bit more on the storytelling area.)

KING: *(Overly dramatic.)* My darling queen, how lucky we are to live in such a happy land, and how lucky I am to have you by my side.

QUEEN: Yes, my dear. Here in Sunflower Cove, there are a million reasons to smile!

KING: Maybe even a million and one!

QUEEN: Shall we count the reasons, my darling bunny?

KING: You know I will, my lovely queen! My number one reason for smiling is you, my love!

QUEEN: And you are mine!

FRED: *(From the storytelling area.)* Oh, please! If this gets any sweeter, you're going to give us cavities. Right, kids?

(POLLY makes an effort to ignore FRED and continues with the story.)

POLLY: As I was saying, the king and queen were so utterly happy as they continued to count their reasons for smiling, until they came upon their favorite reason of all...

(The action shifts back to the story world of Sunflower Cove.)

End of Freeview

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