DR. DOLITTLE

by Craig Sodaro

Loosely based on Hugh Lofting's books,
"The Story of Dr. Dolittle" and "The Voyages of Dr. Dolittle"

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Dr. John Dolittle loves to tend to animal patients more than to his human patients and, before he knows it, he's left with no paying patients at all! His housekeeper sister, Sarah, worries about back taxes owed. Things look bleak until Dolittle's parrot Polynesia teaches him to talk to the animals. Now Dr. Dolittle can help cure ailing pets with ease, and pet owners far and wide bring their sick cats, dogs, even horses to him.

One day, a monkey visits the office. Chee-Chee begs Dr. Dolittle to go to Africa to save the monkeys from an illness ravaging the land. Dr. Dolittle spends all his money to do just that. As payment, Chee-Chee gives him a most unusual animal – a pushmi-pullyu, a creature with two heads that squabbles with itself all the time.

Back home in Puddleby-on-the-Marsh, Dr. Dolittle tries to revive his practice and fend off Mrs. Endicott, the tax collector's wife, who has her eye on his place. But a call for help comes from a far island where a famous naturalist, Long Arrow, is missing. Dolittle promptly sells his father's gold watch and sets sail to help.

Once Long Arrow is saved, Dr. Dolittle and his friends head home to England, but along the way, they're attacked by a fierce band of pirates. But Dr. Dolittle manages to outwit them. He even takes over their ship, and their treasure will pay for his taxes.

But when he sets foot on English soil, Mrs. Endicott has him arrested for cruelty to animals – she claims he experimented and created a freakish beast – the pushmi-pullyu. With the help of his animal friends and Long Arrow, Dr. Dolittle manages to refute the outrageous charges. Still, it looks like he will lose his house to Mrs. Endicott after all, until his sister Sarah turns the tables on the wicked tax collector's wife for good.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Approx. 11 m, 14 w, 28 flexible. Much doubling possible.)

MRS. POLLYPIPER: A patient of Dr. Dolittle.
SARAH DOLITTLE: Dr. Dolittle's sister.
DR. JOHN DOLITTLE
MRS. ENDICOTT: Wife of the tax collector.
JIP: A dog.
GUB-GUB: A pig.
POLYNESIA: A parrot. (Female)
SMOKEY: A cat. (Female)
MRS. DABBLEY: Smokey's owner.
MRS. JENKINS: Owner of Clyde, the horse.
DAB-DAB: A duck. (Female)
CLYDE: A horse.
CHEE-CHEE: A monkey. (Female)
MR. ANTONIO: Chee-Chee's owner.
MISH-MOSH: King of the monkeys.
KALOOKI: Queen of the monkeys.
MONKEY GUARD ONE
MONKEY GUARD TWO
PUSHMI: Llama-like creature – one side.
PULLYU: Llama-like creature – the other side.
MATTHEW MUGG: The cat meat man.
THEODOSIA MUGG: His wife.
MIRANDA: A bird.
GULL: A seagull.
JEKA: Popsipetel person.
SEKA: Another.
MEKA: Another.
TEKA: Another.
BUZZ: A mosquito.
LONG ARROW: Naturalist.
RAT ONE
RAT TWO
RAT THREE
BEN ALI: Pirate leader
SHARK ONE
SHARK TWO
PIRATE ONE
PIRATETWO
PIRATETHREE
PIRATE FOUR
PIRATEFIVE
PIRATESIX
NEWSBOY
MRS. APPLEBY
GIGI: Mrs. Endicott's cat.
MR. CRABTREE: Prosecutor.
JUDGE
MR. JENKYNS: Defense attorney.
BAILIFF
NIGEL: The Judge's dog.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES AND SET DESCRIPTIONS

ACT I

Scene 1 – Dr. Dolittle's house in Puddleby-on-the-Marsh, England. (A chair and table set with doctor's bag complete with stethoscope and a few other medical instruments.)
Scene 2 – The same, a month later.
Scene 3 – The jungles of Africa, weeks later. (A palm tree or two with a large rock, center.)
Scene 4 – Dr. Dolittle's house, a week later. (Same as Scene 1.)
Scene 5 – On the deck of the Curlew, weeks later. (A smokestack center, two funnels, one left, one right. Crates and boxes here and there on the "deck.")

ACT II

Scene 1 – The island of the Popsipetel People. (Fabric painted to look rock-like thrown over funnel. Palm trees replace funnels. The smokestack has turned around and is now a mountain. The two funnels have become rocks with spray-painted fabric thrown over them.)
Scene 2 – At sea on the Curlew, a few days later. (As before: smokestack center, two funnels, crates, boxes.)
Scene 3 – Canary Island, immediately after. (Palm trees in different spots. Perhaps flowers here and there.)
Scene 4 – Deck of the pirate ship, a short time later. (Turn smokestack and funnels around from Curlew scene and have skull and crossbones painted on backs. Two chests DS bearing the legend "Treasure! Do Not Touch!")
Scene 5 – A street in Puddleby-on-the-Marsh (in front of the curtain) and a courtroom. (Table, center, for Judge. Witness chair to left of table. Small tables right and left for attorneys. Bench left and right behind tables for spectators.)

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: Dr. Dolittle's house in Puddleby-on-the-Marsh. MRS. POLLYPIPER sits nervously on a chair. SARAH DOLITTLE stands by her silently reading a note.)

VOICE OF DOLITTLE: Dear Sister Sarah, Have gone to Grimbledon to buy some gooseberry salve for poor Jip. The cut he got on that barbed wire fence seems to be a bit infected, and we wouldn't want him to suffer through that. Please tell Mrs. Pollypiper to be a bit patient with me. She's human, so I know she'll understand. Your devoted brother, John.

POLLYPIPER: Human? Of COURSE I'm human.

SARAH: Then I'm sure you'll understand.

POLLYPIPER: I understand only one thing, Miss Dolittle.

SARAH: What's that, Mrs. Pollypiper?

POLLYPIPER: I am a longtime patient of your brother's and my appointment was for three o'clock. Three o'clock! What time is it now, Miss Dolittle?

SARAH: Three twelve. And I might add that's not really very late –

POLLYPIPER: I don't like to be kept waiting, especially when your brother's off buying gooseberry salve. Who's this Jip, anyway?!

SARAH: *(Covering.)* Why ... why he's a young neighborhood boy.

POLLYPIPER: What's his last name?! I've never heard anyone called by that silly name before. Jip.

(JIP, the dog, limps on left, panting. He moves to POLLYPIPER.)

POLLYPIPER: Good gracious, a dog!

DOLITTLE: *(Off left.)* Jip?! Jip, did you go into the examination room?

POLLYPIPER: This is Jip?

(JIP barks as DOLITTLE enters left holding a jar of salve.)

DOLITTLE: There you are, my hairy friend!
POLLYPIPER: *(Insulted.)* I beg your pardon!
SARAH: The doctor meant the dog, not you, Mrs. Pollypiper. And brother, dear, I'll be glad to take Jip so you can see Mrs. Pollypiper now.
DOLITTLE: Oh, but Jip is in pain.
POLLYPIPER: Well, so am I! My lumbego is acting up again!
DOLITTLE: Would you mind giving Jip your seat, Mrs. Pollypiper ... just for a moment.
POLLYPIPER: *(Rising.)* Well, I NEVER!
SARAH: Brother, dear, can I speak to you for a moment ...
DOLITTLE: I really must get this salve on Jip.

(SARAH pulls DOLITTLE down right.)

SARAH: *(Pulling papers from HER pocket.)* Do you see these, John?
DOLITTLE: There's a good boy, Jip.
SARAH: These are bills. The butcher, the oil man, the coal man, the dairyman ... we owe them money ... and look at this! It's a notice from a Mrs. Endicott! We owe taxes ... years of taxes! Haven't you paid the taxes, John?
DOLITTLE: Please, Sarah, this can wait!
SARAH: It can't wait! Mrs. Pollypiper is your last patient!
DOLITTLE: There's nothing wrong with her that some good hard labor and exercise wouldn't cure. She's a hypochondriac!
SARAH: Thank goodness someone is because that's what's kept us fed. Please don't treat her badly or we'll lose the house for sure!
DOLITTLE: I promise, Sarah. I do. *(DOLITTLE goes to chair.)* Mrs. Pollypiper ... you look absolutely terrible today!
POLLYPIPER: *(Moving to chair.)* I woke up with the worst headache and almost immediately developed a rash!
DOLITTLE: Up, Jip ... up you go!

End of Freeview

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