THE CASE OF THE MISSING HOMEWORK

A MELODRAMA FOR YOUNG ACTORS

By Gary H. Smith

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STORY OF THE PLAY

In this melodrama for grade school students, Peter Prune steals the homework of his lovely sister, Priscilla, to give to his girlfriend to gain brownie points. His girlfriend is Priscilla's fellow student and terrible rival, Sally Sumpgump, and with the stolen homework, will get the highest grades! Foulfellow Fern, an inefficient detective, is called in. But as always, the hero, Godfrey Goodfellow, methodically narrows the suspects down to the nasty villain and justice prevails.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 m., 8 w., extras)

PRISCILLA PRUNE: A lovely student *(the heroine!).*
MRS. PETUNIA PRUNE: Priscilla's dignified mother.
MR. FARNUM PRUNE: Priscilla's stern father.
GODFREY GOODFELLOW: Priscilla's boyfriend *(the hero!).*
FOULFELLOW FERN: A not very efficient detective.
MISS BEATRICE BEANBAG: Fern's efficient secretary.
MISS HELEN HOTAIR: Priscilla's talkative teacher.
MR. J. BARTLE BOODLE: Priscilla's stuffy principal.
PETER PRUNE: Priscilla's nasty brother.
TULIP TURNIPSEED: A student.
SALLY SUMPGUMP: Another.
CHUCK STAKE: Another.
MARY GOROUND: Another.
STUDENTS
A HARRIED STAGEHAND
A NARRATOR

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I
Scene 1: The Prune House.
Scene 2: Schoolroom.

Act II
Office of Foulfellow Fern, detective.

Act III
Scene 1: The Prune House.
Scene 2: Schoolroom.

Prologue

NARRATOR: Today, the class is going to present a melodrama for your enjoyment. Many years ago the "melodrama" was a popular kind of play in the United States, and even today melodramas are presented in many parts of our country. A melodrama is a very dramatic kind of play. There is always a hero and a heroine - the "good guys." There is also a "villain" - he's the "bad guy." Melodramas are usually pretty silly, and you're supposed to laugh. In fact, you are supposed to cheer for the good guys and boo the bad guy. To help you, we have a stagehand who will hold up a sign when you are supposed to cheer or boo. Before the melodrama begins, let's practice. The first sign is the "cheer" sign. *(STAGEHAND holds it up.)* Let's hear you all cheer! The next sign is the "boo" sign. *(STAGEHAND holds it up.)* Let's hear you all "boo!" Now the "oh" sign. You're supposed to sound surprised. *(STAGEHAND holds it up.)* Let's hear the "oh!" Finally, the "mmm" sign. You're supposed to sound interested. *(STAGEHAND holds it up.)* Let's hear you all go "mmm." Now remember, whenever you see a sign, all of you do just what it says. Our melodrama is called "The Case of the Missing Homework." We hope you enjoy it. Here we go!

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: There are three chairs and one table at CS. MRS. PRUNE is sitting in one of the chairs, knitting; MR. PRUNE is sitting in another chair, reading the newspaper; PRISCILLA is sitting at the table doing her homework.)

PRISCILLA: *(Looking up from HER work.)* Mother, oh Mother, I have at last finished my homework!

MRS. PRUNE: *(Puts down HER knitting.)* Why, land of Goshen! That is fine, my lovely Priscilla. What an industrious student you are! Don't you think so, dear Farnum?

MR. PRUNE: *(From behind HIS paper.)* Grumpf!

PRISCILLA: *(Jumping up from the table and skipping over to MR. PRUNE'S chair.)* Father, oh Father, I know that you are a STERN man and have high expectations. But never fear, I will strive to obtain the highest grades at school, and I WILL SUCCEED! *(To the audience.)* For I am a very good student!

(STAGEHAND holds up a sign reading "cheer.")

MR. PRUNE: *(From behind HIS paper.)* Gumpf!

MRS. PRUNE: That's my lovely Priscilla! I know that you will do very well this year. *(To audience.)* For she is a very good student!

(STAGEHAND holds up the "cheer" sign.)

PRISCILLA: Father, I know that I shall receive the highest grades in my class. For this homework that I have finished is the last homework for the year. If I receive one hundred on it, my total score will be higher than anyone else!

MRS. PRUNE: That is right, Farnum. It is a very important homework assignment.

MR. PRUNE: *(Putting down HIS paper.)* What will happen if Priscilla does not receive one hundred on her homework?

PRISCILLA: *(Very worried.)* Oh my! Then Miss Helen Hotair, my teacher, will be very disappointed with me. *(To audience.)* And even worse, my fellow student and terrible rival, Sally Sumpgump, will get the highest grades!

(STAGEHAND holds up a sign saying "oh!" Enter PETER.)

PETER PRUNE: Hello, Father. Hello, Mother. Hello, stupid!

MRS. PRUNE: Why, land of Goshen, Peter! What a nasty thing to call your sister, the lovely Priscilla!

PRISCILLA: Pay no attention to him, my darling mother. We all know Peter is a very NASTY boy!

PETER PRUNE: Nyah nyah! You're just saying that because you think you're smarter than me! *(To audience.)* And what makes me so mad is that she is smarter than me!

(STAGEHAND holds up a sign saying "hmmmn.")

MRS. PRUNE: Land of Goshen, Peter! Why, you have never received more than a zero on any homework paper, and lovely Priscilla has always received one hundred!

PETER PRUNE: I don't care! Ugly Priscilla is just a goody-goody. I'll bet she won't get one hundred this time, and Sally Sumpgump will get the highest grade! Nyah, nyah! *(Runs out .)*

MRS. PRUNE: Land of Goshen, Farnum. Peter is certainly a very NASTY boy!

MR. PRUNE: Humpf! Peter takes after his old man! *(To audience.)* Namely me!

End of Freeview

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