AT THE FAIR
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SYNOPSIS: It's 1947. The State Fair has been closed for two years due to war shortages and the polio epidemic. Newly opened, young people flock to the fair unleashing all their hopes and dreams that have been bottled up the last few years. Virginia's mourning the lost use of her legs from polio. Rosie is trying to get her con-artist brother to go legit. Carolyn has a secret she needs to tell Daniel and a mysterious stranger from "up north" is trying to connect with his lost family. And Randy – Randy just wants a home for his prize chicken that doesn't deserve to be a chicken pot pie. In the course of the play, quests are devised, wishes float in the wind and the possibility of dreams coming true is very real.

"Hope's funny. It sneaks back into you when you're not listening."

"A time where we come together again after two years of being afraid to touch, to speak, even to acknowledge each other."

SETTING: The play takes place in a grassy knoll away from the main part of the fair so all you really need are benches (and maybe a trashcan or two). You can certainly add more if you wish to but it's not necessary.

COSTUMES: It's 1947. Guys are in dungarees, sneakers and t-shirts. Maybe a button-down shirt. The young women are in dresses. Sneakers are fine as are character shoes. Georgia and Bobby may be better dressed than the others. Again, you can go into more detail – but you can also opt for simplicity.

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AT THE FAIR

CAST: (all teens) 13 (6f, 3m, 4 m or f)

RUNNING TIME: 70 minutes
TIME: Labor Day Weekend, 1947
PLACE: County or State Fairgrounds

CAST OF CHARACTERS: 13 (6f, 3m, 4 m or f) *You may change pronouns, genders. Extras (walk-ons) possible

LOCAL KIDS

1. VIRGINIA: (f) 16 years old. In a wheelchair from polio. WANTS: to dance
2. DANIEL: (m) 18 years old. Virginia's brother. A budding artist who. WANTS: To help his sister
3. CAROLYN: (f) 18 years old. Rich and sweet, Daniel has a crush on her. And she on him. WANTS: A friendship with Daniel
4. ELIZABETH: (f) 17 years old. Carolyn's confidante ; WANTS: to keep the peace
5. MARILYN: (f) 17 yrs. old Georgia's friend WANTS to help Georgia
6. GEORGIA: (f) 17; Upper-crust city-girl who WANTS: to preserve her world
7. BOBBY (m or f) 13; Georgia's younger brother or sister; WANTS: attention

FARM KIDS

8. JANSEN (m/f) 15 yrs. old; farm kid; WANTS an adventure
9. RANDY (m/f): 13 yrs. old; farm boy who WANTS: To protect his chicken!
10. KELLY (m/f): 15 yrs. old. WANTS: To help her brother because he needs it

FOSTER CARE KIDS

11. ROSIE (f) 17 yrs. old; a born entrepreneur; is savvy to the world and how to use it; WANTS: to make something of herself
12. OZZIE (m) 19 yrs. old. Rosie's brother - lived in foster care until a year ago when he struck out on his own. Very capable; WANTS: to live off the grid

VISITOR FROM AN UP NORTH SMALL TOWN

13. FINN (male) 18 yrs. old. A "lost" cousin of Carolyn. Trying to make something of himself. WANTS: to connect with family

*Announcer: You can pre-record the announcer's voice or make him/her a character.

The play is continuous without scene breaks.

At the Fair

AT RISE it is early a.m. on a summer day. You may use your county for the setting of the Fair. We are by a grassy knoll in the fairgrounds away from the crowds where people come to rest, to picnic, or to regroup.

RANDY and KELLY (siblings) enter followed by JANSEN. RANDY has a basket with "Chickie.")

JANSEN

It's the last day of the fair and nothing spectacular has happened to me. We get the same breakfast I eat at home. I see the same farm animals I see at home. I get up before dawn just like at home. Being a 4H kid is as dull as ditchwater. I need an adventure.

KELLY

Farm kids do not have adventures. We have chores. Tomorrow we go home and then there's nothing but work! And Randy - you can't bring Chickie to breakfast! What's she going to think when we're eating bacon and eggs?

RANDY

I don't eat bacon. You know that! And I won't eat eggs in front of her.

KELLY

I'm eating the bacon *and* the eggs!

JANSEN

The same old drab farm breakfast…

RANDY

How can you live on a farm and get to know the animals and then chow down on them? It's wrong!

KELLY

You can't carry Chickie around at the Fair all day. You need to sell her.

RANDY

She won First Prize! She doesn't deserve to become a chicken pot pie!

(And they exit as VIRGINIA is wheeled on by her brother DANIEL. On the outskirts, CAROLYN and ELIZABETH enter. CAROLYN sees DANIEL and quickly pulls ELIZABETH aside. MARILYN, GEORGIA, and BOBBY stroll on and watch. We hear "snippets" of conversations.)

CAROLYN

He’s here! Just as I hoped.

ELIZABETH

Somehow I knew "he" would be the reason that we are here at dawn. Did you tell him?

CAROLYN

No.

ELIZABETH

When are you going to, Carolyn? You're running out of time.

CAROLYN

Today. I'll tell him today. I wish I didn't have to.

(And the conversation switches to VIRGINIA.)

VIRGINIA

Tell me again why we had to come so early. The ticket takers weren't even ready for us.

DANIEL

I can wheel you around easier without the crowds.

VIRGINIA

Oh, so it's my fault is it? We're making decisions because I'm in this horrid chair.

DANIEL

Virginia! Don't twist my words.

(DANIEL stops and sees CAROLYN. They wave at each other and smile.)

VIRGINIA

Who are you smiling at? Lordy Daniel, have you no sense? Carolyn De Munn comes from a different world.

DANIEL

She was a good friend to me all those months when you were in the hospital. And when everything was closed, we took walks by the river just to get out. We're going to go to the Harvest Dance together in October – just as friends.

VIRGINIA

Good! Because you're not going to have a "happily-ever-after" with her. At the end of the day she goes home to the top of her gilded hill and you go down to our little hollow.

DANIEL
You're getting very depressing to be around. Can't you just enjoy being outside again with people around? Isn't it great to have the Fair back? To be with people that are not Mom and Dad? It's like our future has returned.

VIRGINIA
Polio took my future! There! I said it. No one else will.

DANIEL
I'm sorry. I know it's hard.

VIRGINIA
You have no idea. *(Beat.)* We need to go into the Arts Building. That's the only reason I wanted to come here.

DANIEL
You know that's the only place I don't want to go!

VIRGINIA
Fine! I'll go myself!

DANIEL
Virginia! You can't! I'm supposed to watch over you.

VIRGINIA
I hate this - never going anywhere by myself! It's as if nobody trusts the rest of me because my legs don't work. I still have a brain. If you really want to do something for me, why don't you get me some cotton candy?

DANIEL
We only have a dollar left!

VIRGINIA
You shouldn't have bought a ticket for me. Nobody sees a person in a chair. You didn't have to pay for a "nobody."

DANIEL
I don't think they start selling cotton candy until later – I mean cotton candy for breakfast?

VIRGINIA
We're at the Fair. We're supposed to eat fake food. Let's see what time they open.

(MARILYN, GEORGIA and
BOBBY approach CAROLYN and ELIZABETH.)

GEORGIA
Hi Carolyn. Still making googly eyes at Daniel the Unsubstantial?

MARILYN
That's a bit harsh, don't you think Georgia? After all, you did go out with him.

GEORGIA
Correction: he walked me home a few times until my mother put an end to it. He has no money and never will. He wants to go to art school. Ever hear the phrase “starving artist?” Carolyn would have to support him.

CAROLYN
Don’t marry me off just yet. I have years of flirting and dating ahead of me. All the wartime shortages and the polio epidemic robbed us of the carefree years.

ELIZABETH
And today is a carefree day. Can we just go play and not discuss people’s personal lives? I don’t want to play “what if?” I just want to hold a baby lamb.

GEORGIA
Don’t you think it’s best to date those that are marriage material? Otherwise it’s just a waste. My mother said she wasted a year of her life on someone not suitable. And we already lost – how many months because of the polio epidemic? Time we won’t get back. The clock’s ticking. The time to work on our future is now.

MARILYN
We are not going to work on our future today! Today is footloose and fancy free with a roller coaster ride that scares the willies out of us. Let loose, Georgia! Have some fun.

GEORGIA
It’s just best to know things. Be aware of situations. The doctor bills put Daniel’s family in debt. His Dad is working two jobs. The poor man never even finished high school. And Daniel took a job in the paper factory to help out. Do you want to marry into that quagmire?

ELIZABETH
I think it’s admirable that Daniel is working to help his family.

CAROLYN
Daniel will make something of himself. I’d stake my life on it.

GEORGIA
Sure, if you think working some menial job is a definition of success. Is that what you want? To marry someone who lives paycheck to paycheck?

ELIZABETH

She smiled at a fellow. I didn't know that carried an acceptance of marriage. Come on Carolyn, there's a lot to do and we won't get to it all if we waste our time discussing non-existent marriage plans. Ta ta, you three. Be careful where you step. I hear the fair is teeming with menial workers!

(CAROLYN and ELIZABETH march off in one direction. GEORGIA stares and then turns her gaze to DANIEL.)

DANIEL

Let's go see the champion pigs.

VIRGINIA

The pigs wouldn't happen to be in the same direction that Carolyn went, are they?

DANIEL

Just a coincidence, Virginia. A happy coincidence.

(DANIELS wheels VIRGINIA off as GEORGIA watches intently.)

BOBBY

I'm bored. Can we go do something now? I don't want to discuss people's personal lives. That's boring, too.

GEORGIA

Don't nag. I'm thinking what to do.

BOBBY

I could just go around by myself. Lots of kids my age do.

GEORGIA

Mom said I had to watch out for you.

BOBBY

Watch out for me on the rides then. Let's do something.

GEORGIA

They're not open yet.

BOBBY

How about some cotton candy?

GEORGIA

Too early.

MARILYN
Be careful, Georgia. You're starting to sound like your mother.

GEORGIA
I am *not* my mother!

(FINN enters from elsewhere. He sees GEORGIA and waves at her.)

MARILYN
Georgia – there's a strange guy waving at you.

(*FINN approaches.)*

GEORGIA
We're leaving. Now. C'mon, Bobby.

BOBBY
Where're we going?

GEORGIA
To the pigs.

MARILYN
Georgia willingly going to the pigs. Now that is something I never thought I'd see.

GEORGIA
They're cute, right? When they're little.

(GEORGIA grabs BOBBY and hastily exits. MARILYN follows. And finally FINN does, too. OZZIE enters pulling a wagon. It has crude signs attached, "Dream Granter," and "Go on a Quest." At least two balloons are attached to his wagon. ROSIE enters and runs to OZZIE.)

ROSIE
OZZIE! You're here! You're here!

OZZIE
Rosie! I missed you!

ROSE
What are you wheeling and dealing now?

OZZIE
Oh those accusing words. It's almost as if you didn't trust me. So, what's going on? You didn't say much on the phone.

ROSIE
I want it to be a surprise! Can you wait a bit?

OZZIE
That's never been my strong point.

ROSIE
I know – but sometimes – when you have to wait – it's all the sweeter. Now it's your turn to tell me something - what's all this? It doesn't look legal.

OZZIE
I'm totally legal. Look – here's my permit. I'm a "Dream Granter." For a measly ten cents, I'll listen to your dreams and send you on a quest to make it come true.

ROSIE
The permit says that for ten cents, you will try and guess their weight. And if you're not within five pounds – they get a prize.

OZZIE
I didn't like those odds so I changed it to a dream-granter.

ROSIE
So you're not legal.

OZZIE
Only if your read the fine print.

ROSIE
I'm not sure I like that. You need to protect your dreams. Not confess them to some stranger at a Fair.

OZZIE
I'm a good Dream Granter. Remember when you'd make a wish and I'd send you out on a quest?

ROSIE
Wishes - yes. You blow on a dandelion and send them to the sky. But not dreams. They're sacred.

OZZIE
This work is getting me places. I made a bunch of money granting dreams at this carnival in Florida. It's only ten cents. Nobody loses.

ROSE
How many times have you gotten arrested with your new gig?

OZZIE
Only twice. Once I even got a ticket to leave town. That was helpful.

ROSIE
I don't like toying with people's dreams. If they don't get what they want - they may never dream again.

OZZIE
Did I teach you nothing? It's not the dream that's important - it's the quest!

ROSIE
Last year, I dreamed that you and I would be together at the Fair this year and here we are. I made it happen. I'd hate to see you get arrested here because you came to see me.

OZZIE
Nah. It's fine. The Fair's so busy nobody will notice me and my little wagon. It's pretty clever, you have to admit. I'll make some chump change before I'm chased out of here. I miss you, you know? My offer still stands. You can escape from that family you're with and travel with me. We'll see the world.

ROSIE
I'm planning on college. And my new family is very nice. Everything is different. Stay put and let me help you. You can go back to school. Good times are coming. The war is over. Change is in the air. You can go back to school and get your high school diploma. We can make our dreams come true – together.

OZZIE
I like this new "Grant a Dream" gig. I'm my own boss. I've been doing this for six months and Rosie - the people - they tell you the most amazing things. There was this little girl who wanted her cat to fly so they didn't have to keep climbing up trees to rescue it. And then there was a young boy who wished his father would come home safe from the war -

ROSIE
Did he? The father - come home safe?

OZZIE
I don't know.

ROSIE
Ozzie! You're nothing but a charlatan - a fake - you're not a "Dream Granter!" You're a "Dream-Stealer!"

OZZIE

When did you become a saint? How many years did we spend sneaking into the Fair – swiping nasty - but tasty - fried foods -

ROSIE

- That was "stuff." Not dreams. And we shouldn't have.

OZZIE

Don't get all legal on me. You used to trust me.

ROSIE

Stay here with me. You don't have to be a con-man forever.

OZZIE

One should do what you're good at and I'm good at this. Come on Rosie – tell me your dream. Let me help you make it come true.

ROSIE

I just did. You weren't listening.

OZZIE

We may have different plans but we both want to be together. Let's up the stakes, shall we? If I make someone's dream come true - you'll leave your foster family and come with me. We'll go on quests together and my dream will come true -

ROSIE

I told you - I have plans -

OZZIE

But if I am - as you say - a charlatan - a fake - and can't make dreams come true - then I'll stay here. I'll play protective big brother, work some menial job and finish my education. Even if it kills me. Which it will. If you're so sure – take a gamble. Maybe you'll get your dream. Maybe I'll get mine. Deal?

ROSIE

I – well – all right - deal. But it's a sucker bet. You're going to lose.

OZZIE

I don't think so.

ROSIE

Oh! I think it's time. I have to attend to – some things… Can you wait here? I don't want to lose you.

(ROSIE exits.)

OZZIE

Where would I go?

(OZZIE settles down – behind his wagon. RANDY, KELLY and JANSEN enter.)

RANDY

Did you look at that breakfast? Chicken fingers everywhere! Sorry, Chickie. I wish you didn't see that.

KELLY

You're hopeless. We should start packing.

RANDY

I'm not packing until I find a home for Chickie!

JANSEN

Hey! Look at that wagon, Randy? "Dreams Granted!" We should check it out.

(KELLY and RANDY argue as JANSEN approaches OZZIE.)

OZZIE

Oh! Hello? Got a dream?

JANSEN

(Pulling out what looks like a cauldron for a witch!)

What's this?

OZZIE

It's my magic pot. I put ingredients in it and make dreams come true. Care to try?

JANSEN

How does it work?

OZZIE

That's a secret.

JANSEN

I have a dream - you can't make it come true.

OZZIE

You don't know that for sure. How about I send you on a quest? Then we'll see who's right.

JANSEN

I don’t have a dime.

(JANSEN sits down by OZZIE and gets comfortable.)

OZZIE

Shouldn't you be somewhere - else?

JANSEN

No. Not really. Something tells me you might be my adventure.

(The conversation switches to VIRGINIA, DANIEL, CAROLYN and ELIZABETH. ELIZABETH is now wheeling VIRGINIA and DANIEL is with CAROLYN.)

VIRGINIA

Well, that was a waste.

ELIZABETH

Who knew the pigs would be gone already?

VIRGINIA

I didn’t really want to see the pigs.

ELIZABETH

Neither did I.

VIRGINIA

You have to help me get Daniel into the Arts Building. He's being very pig-headed and won't go.

ELIZABETH

Why are you so set on going there? You know he wanted to enter the art competition and couldn't. You know your father doesn't approve of his painting.

VIRGINIA

I have my reasons - please! Help me. Go on - talk to Carolyn and Daniel - tell them there's a painting you really want to see.

ELIZABETH

There is?

VIRGINIA

There is.

(ELIZABETH goes over to DANIEL and CAROLYN. VIRGINIA wheels herself closer to OZZIE and listens. KELLY and RANDY are with OZZIE.)

OZZIE
What? Your dream is to find a happy home for a chicken?

RANDY
Yes. Can you do it?

OZZIE
Of course I can! I'm a dream-granter! But like it says on the signs - you have to earn your dream.

KELLY
We just paid you!

OZZIE
You paid for the Quest.

RANDY
Your sign says "Dreams Granted!"

OZZIE
And they will be granted – of course it will cost you a nickel. But first, you must go on the Quest.

JOYCE
Come on, Raymond - something tells me we just lost a dime.

RANDY
No! I need to find Chickie a home! I'll do anything!

OZZIE
Then listen close. You must find me three things. Something royal so I know your dream is true-blue, something magical to set the dream in motion and something evil that we will vanquish to ensure no harm comes to your dream. Then I will put them in my magic pot and if you wish hard enough - your dream will be granted.

RANDY
I don't know what you're talking about.

KELLY
They're all stuff he stole from fairy tales.

RANDY
How am I going to find fairy tales at the fair?

KELLY
Leave it to me. Royal, magic, evil – that's all we need. Are you sure you want to do this quest thing?

RANDY
Yes!

KELLY
Take good care of Chickie. I'm glad we don't have to lug her around anymore. See you later, Jansen!

(RANDY and KELLY exit.)

OZZIE
Wait a minute! HEY! She doesn't have a home *yet.* Great. I'm babysitting a chicken.

(Noticing JANSEN who is doing a "thumbs down approval" rating of OZZIE.)

OZZIE (cont'd)
What? You don't think his dream will come true?

JANSEN
Oh please! I can make that dream come true! You're nothing but a fake.

OZZIE
Then why don't you leave?

JANSEN
I need to watch you. I'm your conscience.

(VIRGINIA wheels herself over.)

OZZIE
Hey little lady! Need to go on a quest?

VIRGINIA
What I need a quest won't get me.

OZZIE
Got a dream?

VIRGINIA

Look at me. Now, do you really think I need a dream? Or perhaps something more useful? Like a typing class so I can earn a living while sitting in a chair all day. Don't pretend to make dreams come true – someone might get hurt.

OZZIE

Did you take too many bitter pills today?

VIRGINIA

Does it look like my life's a walk in the park?

OZZIE

Wake up Sleeping Beauty. Nobody's life is.

VIRGINIA

What - did you call me?

OZZIE

You heard me. Sounds to me like there might be a real person inside - but she's asleep.

VIRGINIA

My legs are sleeping. And they're not going to wake up.

OZZIE

The mind can do wonderful things.

VIRGINIA

Are you a doctor?

OZZIE

A dream-granter -

VIRGINIA

A fake! Don't you think if I could "dream" myself into walking again, I would have done that?

OZZIE

Try me out - tell me your dream and go on a quest. You never know what you'll discover.

VIRGINIA

You really are shameless! Trying to take advantage of a cripple.

OZZIE

I don't think anyone takes advantage of you.

(*ROSIE enters.)*

ROSIE
It appears I jumped the gun. They're not ready for me.

OZZIE
To do what?

ROSIE
To do that "thing" I'm not telling you about yet. It's my surprise.

(Noticing VIRGINIA.)

Oh, hello.

OZZIE
Rosie - meet Sleeping Beauty.

VIRGINIA
Virginia.

ROSIE
Watch out for my brother, Virginia. He has been known to cast spells on people!

VIRGINIA
Yeah - well, I've already been cast under an evil enchantment. It's called polio. Excuse me.

(VIRGINIA goes to her brother.)

ROSIE
I hope you haven't been promising to make her dreams come true.

OZZIE
Not to worry. She has no dreams.

ROSIE
So - did you grant any dreams while I was gone?

OZZIE
I'm working on it. There's a situation that just might pan out. Just you wait – you'll be riding the rails with me tonight.

ROSIE
We'll see.

(The conversation switches to VIRGINIA

and DANIEL.)

VIRGINIA

I'm back!

DANIEL

Oh! Good.

VIRGINIA

Didn't even notice I was gone.

DANIEL

Virginia! Can you stop -

VIRGINIA

Stop what? Stop being in this chair?

DANIEL

The bitter stuff… the blame game…

CAROLYN

Daniel! Let it go.

DANIEL

I'm trying to help her!

VIRGINIA

Yes. I feel marvelously helped. Thank-you Daniel.

DANIEL

Virginia!

VIRGINIA

Leave me alone!

(VIRGINIA wheels herself away.)

DANIEL

Virginia!

CAROLYN

Leave her be. She'll do better if you do less.

ELIZABETH

Maybe I should go to her.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)
(ELIZABETH catches up with VIRGINIA.)

Virginia! He didn't mean –

VIRGINIA
I know – I don't know why I say these things. I just – can you leave me alone, Elizabeth? I'm never alone.

ELIZABETH
If you're sure –

VIRGINIA
I am. Thanks.

(ELIZABETH exits.
VIRGINIA wheels herself close to OZZIE.
GEORGIA, MARILYN and BOBBY appear.
GEORGIA and MARILYN are arguing.)

GEORGIA
There he is! Go on - give it a go.

MARILYN
I don't want to flirt with him! Besides, he's with Carolyn.

GEORGIA
Come on! It'll really get her blood boiling. She's leaving tomorrow and she'd just hate it if she knew Daniel already found someone else. He's fickle. I know. As soon as I let him down, he ran to Carolyn. Apparently he didn't miss me at all. There was no proper mourning period. Besides, you're an adequate replacement for Carolyn.

MARILYN
"Adequate." Why do I not feel complimented?

GEORGIA
You know what I mean.

MARILYN
I'm never sure.

BOBBY
Are we discussing people again? Can I have some cotton candy so I don't have to listen?

GEORGIA
Here! We passed the wagon down the road. Buy some and come right back.

GEORGIA (cont'd)
(She gives him some money)

That's me - being sweet. Take it or leave it.

BOBBY
I know I'm being bribed. I don't mind.

(BOBBY exits.)

MARILYN
Why don't you flirt with Daniel?

GEORGIA
I already had my day in the sun with him, remember? He didn't take it well when I told him that my mother disapproved of him. Of course, my mother disapproves of everyone. You know what they call me at school? The "untouchable." I think my mother won't be happy until I'm locked away in a convent. I think that's what they're doing to Carolyn. Locking her away somewhere overseas so she forgets about Daniel.

MARILYN
So maybe we should let them have this time together and not interfere. If it was you, wouldn't you like that?

GEORGIA
But it's not me. It's Carolyn. She didn't have to grab Daniel right after I left him. She could have waited five minutes.

MARILYN
It feels wrong to flirt with someone I have no interest in.

GEORGIA
But it's for a good cause.

MARILYN
Really? What's the good cause?

GEORGIA
"Georgia's revenge."

MARILYN
I don't know, Georgia. You're starting to sound like your mother.

GEORGIA
I am *not* my mother.

(FINN enters.)

MARILYN
I didn't know – oh Georgia – look – that guy's back.

GEORGIA
Time to get lost. We need to grab Bobby and his precious cotton candy and lose that guy.

(MARILYN and GEORGIA exit. FINN follows. The conversation switches to OZZIE, ROSIE, JANSEN and VIRGINIA.)

JANSEN
She's back!

OZZIE
Oh! Sleeping Beauty – can't stay away?

VIRGINIA
Don't call me that! Please.

OZZIE
It's the name of a time-honored princess.

VIRGINIA
I know who she is. Her name was Aurora. An evil fairy came and put a spell on her and she fell asleep for a hundred years. When the evil fairy came to put the spell on me – she missed. Only my legs fell asleep. I wish the rest of me could sleep through all of this.

OZZIE
You're already asleep. You just don't realize it.

VIRGINIA
I'm – well, I'm just not me anymore. I don't know why I came back here.

OZZIE
You must like something about me. Maybe it's the quest.

VIRGINIA
I don't know where to go. I guess being away from people for a few years has shut down my social skills. I just seem to be in the way a lot.

ROSIE
But you are wanted here. Right, Ozzie?

OZZIE
She can hang with my conscience here.

JANSEN
Jansen. The name's Jansen.

OZZIE
I seem to be attracting non-dreamers. Ironic, no?

VIRGINIA
Dreams just get you hurt.

OZZIE
You have a dream. And it's powerful. Try the quest. You never know what you'll discover.

VIRGINIA
What I need a quest won't get me!

ROSIE
I don't know. Maybe Ozzie's right. Maybe you do need something – a wish!

(Rosie gets a balloon from the wagon)

ROSIE (cont'd)
Here! Take this. We'll start small. Hold on to the balloon, make a little wish – just a whisper and send it away.

JANSEN
Can I make a wish?

ROSIE
Of course.

VIRGINIA
I - don't - make wishes.

ROSIE
Just try, Virginia. It costs nothing to try!

OZZIE
Wait a minute! It costs a dime!

ROSIE
That's dreams - not wishes.

OZZIE

Well, I ought to get at least a nickel.

ROSIE

Okay you two, got a wish?

JANSEN

Yes.

VIRGINIA

No.

ROSIE

Come on, Virginia. Just the tiniest little hopeful thought. Now - we're going to send the balloons to the heavens. And who knows what will happen? We'll let it go on the count of three. Ready? One … two … THREE! Go on – let it go!

(JANSEN releases their balloon. VIRGINIA starts to let the balloon go and suddenly grabs it tighter than ever)

VIRGINIA

I can't! It'll get stuck somewhere - just like I'm stuck.

ROSIE

So - you do have a wish!

VIRGINIA

I - don't! I don't know why I came back here. I'm leaving!

ROSIE

Yes you are. With me.

(ROSIE jumps off and goes to VIRGINIA'S chair)

See you later, Ozzie!

(*ROSIE runs VIRGINIA off stage)*

OZZIE

Hey! I don't know if you should be kidnapping someone in a wheelchair!

(BOBBY and ELIZABETH enter.)

ELIZABETH
You're Georgia's brother/sister, right?

BOBBY
Maybe. She'd never own up to it.

ELIZABETH
Where is she? You need to keep track of each other. It's easy to lose people at the Fair.

BOBBY
She's somewhere ignoring me.

ELIZABETH
I feel you. I'm kind of a third wheel with my friends. Aren't we pathetic? The "Unwanted Duo." What do you say - we get out of here and go on some rides?

BOBBY
You mean it?

ELIZABETH
The higher and faster the better!

BOBBY
That'll make Georgia happy. She wanted me to go away!

ELIZABETH
What're we waiting for?

(BOBBY and ELIZABETH run off.
DANIEL and CAROLYN walk together -
it is an awkward situation.)

DANIEL
You - wanted to speak with me?

CAROLYN
Yes.

(Pause)

DANIEL
It's - pretty silent - for someone who wanted - to talk.

CAROLYN
Yes.

(Pause)

DANIEL

The Harvest Dance at school?

CAROLYN

Yes. No.

DANIEL

You - don't want to go with me?

CAROLYN

Yes.

DANIEL

Yes - you do want to go with me or yes - you don't want to go with me?

CAROLYN

Neither.

DANIEL

I didn't think there were any other choices. You found another dance partner.

CAROLYN

No! I'm-going-to-a-horrid-finishing-school-next week-for-an-entire-year-and-I-hate-it-and-I-didn't-know-how-to-tell-you.

DANIEL

You're going away?

CAROLYN

For a year!

(DANIEL puts his arm around her to comfort her.)

DANIEL

It's okay, Carolyn. How long have you known?

CAROLYN

All summer!

DANIEL

You've known all summer that you're going away for a year and *I'm* comforting *you!*

CAROLYN

I didn't know how -

DANIEL

I thought we were friends.

CAROLYN

We are.

DANIEL

Friends tell each other things. Things like, "I'm going away for a year." Excuse me, I had better get back to Virginia. Virginia? VIRGINIA! Where could she have gone?

(GEORGIA rushes over followed by MARILYN and FINN.)

GEORGIA

Has anyone seen Bobby? He/she went to get cotton candy and just disappeared. Mom'll kill me if I don't bring Bobby home.

FINN

I'll help you.

GEORGIA

Excuse me, but I don't need some beggar helping me.

FINN

I'm not a beggar.

GEORGIA

I saw you out the window. My mother gave you some money to go away. She does that with beggars.

FINN

I'm not a beggar! I didn't take the money. Listen to me! I'm your cousin.

GEORGIA

How horrible you are. My brother's missing and you're making up lies to – I don't know – get money from me or something.

(CAROLYN approaches)

CAROLYN

I'll help you, Georgia. I know what kids like. I have a bunch of younger siblings. Let's try the rides.

GEORGIA

Rides make him sick.

CAROLYN

Maybe the arcade? Come on.

FINN

I still want to/

GEORGIA

/Stay away or I'll call the cops.

(*GEORGIA and CAROLYN exit.)*

DANIEL

Where would Virginia go?

MARILYN

She talked to that guy over there. The one with the "Dream Granter" sign.

(They rush to OZZIE)

DANIEL

Excuse me -

OZZIE

Do you want a dream granted?

DANIEL

No – I need to find my sister,

OZZIE

Oh - so you do want me to grant you your dream!

DANIEL

No! I just need to know if you've seen my sister - it's hard to miss her - she's in a wheelchair -

OZZIE

It's going to cost you -

DANIEL

Oh for goodness sakes! I'm trying to find my sister! She may need me!

MARILYN

Come on - the Agriculture Building is right here - she probably wandered inside.

DANIEL
I don’t think my sister would wander inside an agricultural building.

MARILYN
You never know what people will do. Especially if they want to be alone. Learn to expect the unexpected from people – that’s my motto.

(DANIEL and MARILYN run off)

OZZIE
Wait! I didn't say I wouldn't help! She's fine! She’s with my -

(To JANSEN)

OZZIE (cont’d)
Watch my stuff, will ya? I’ll find Virginia. I know where Rosie likes to go.

(OZZIE runs off.)

JANSEN
Wait up! I want to help!

(*JANSEN runs off. We hear RANDY let out a large painful noise.)*

RANDY
Owwwww!

(RANDY and KELLY appear. RANDY is scuffed up and limping.)

KELLY
I *wish* you hadn't climbed the tree.

RANDY
Hold this -

KELLY
I'm not holding a flea-bitten bird's nest. Euuuu. I don't know why you need it!

RANDY
It's royal. If you’re a bird. Oh! Did you see that butterfly! I need that butterfly!

(RANDY runs off and KELLY follows.)

KELLY
Watch where you're going!

RANDY
(Offstage)
Owwwww

(KELLY runs off as ROSIE enters with VIRGINIA.)

VIRGINIA
Empty. Where'd everyone go?

(From around the theatre, we hear calling.)

GEORGIA
Bobby!

DANIEL
Vir-gin-ia!

ROSIE
Sounds like someone's looking for you!

VIRGINIA
My brother. This is the first time I've been away from a family member in over a year! I like it here – all is quiet -

KELLY
RANDY! GET OUT OF THE GARBAGE!

ROSIE
… sort of …

DANIEL
VIRGINIA!

MARILYN
Virginia!

VIRGINIA
Sounds like lots of people are looking for me. Should I go?

ROSIE
If you want to.

VIRGINIA

Aren't you coming with me?

ROSIE

You still have arms. You could find your brother - if you really wanted to.

VIRGINIA

I don't know what I want anymore. I like that no one's here right now. I've had two years of people hovering. Doctors, my parents, Daniel. Is it wrong to want to be alone?

ROSIE

I used to wish for the same thing. I was never alone for ten years.

VIRGINIA

It wasn't polio…

ROSIE

No. I was an orphan. My brother and I spent ten years in an orphanage – bedrooms filled with other kids. Eating meals in a noisy, dark cafeteria. Taking classes with huge numbers of kids who would come and go. Did you ever have a birthday cake?

VIRGINIA

Well…. Yeah. Every kid gets a birthday cake.

ROSIE

Not in an orphanage. It would be too expensive. I bet you even got presents.

VIRGINIA

What are you saying?

ROSIE

There was a time when I would have happily been in a wheelchair to be brought up in a family where my birthday was celebrated.

VIRGINIA

It's different. Your situation was temporary. Mine is forever.

ROSIE

Your family is forever. It's a forever I will never know.

VIRGINIA

Please don't tell me how lucky I am.

ROSIE

Somebody has to.

VIRGINIA

I don’t want to hear it.

ROSIE

But you just did. Your ears work perfectly well, Virginia. Even if your legs are uncooperative.

DANIEL (O.S.)

Vir-gin-ia!

VIRGINIA

He is persistent.

ROSIE

Brothers can be that way.

VIRGINIA

I'm mad at him. I made his dream come true and he doesn't even know it.

ROSIE

Dream?

VIRGINIA

He painted a picture. A glorious, sun-drenched picture of our Grandfather’s meadow. I entered it in the Art Show and it won a blue ribbon. I have the note here.

(She brings out an award letter.)

ROSIE

Virginia, you're a dream-granter!

VIRGINIA

No! Well - sort of. The Show is in the Art Building but he refuses to go in there.

ROSIE

Well, if he won't go into the Art Show - maybe we can bring the Art Show to him. Let me think it through. It just might work. I have some secrets of my own. So, how did you manage to get the painting to the Fair?

VIRGINIA

With the help of some nurses. I can do - some things.

ROSIE

You can do a lot of things. As soon as you give yourself permission. After years in the orphanage and then in foster care with a not so wonderful family, I finally gave myself

ROSIE (cont'd)
permission to look into what I could do. What was possible. Of course, I still clung to my brother.

VIRGINIA
Your brother the "dream granter?"

ROSIE
I know his outside is kind of – scraggly. But there's a heart inside. He used to send me on quests – searching for bird feathers, flat rocks – that sort of thing and then he would tell me if I wished on them my wish would come true. Not right that minute but someday. When he aged out of foster care, he left. I was brought to another home and they gave me – possibilities. In the end, my wishes did come true. I found hope. It only took two years.

VIRGINIA
I lost hope two years ago.

ROSIE
I'm sorry. But hope's funny. It sneaks back into you when you're not looking.

VIRGINIA
I thought I was going to die and sometimes – I wanted to. But I'm still here and I wonder why. My family's been wonderful to me – even when I'm not wonderful to them. And I'm sorry, too. Foster care must have been hard.

ROSIE
Sometimes but not always. Will you never walk?

VIRGINIA
I don't think so. There were some surgeries. There was hope that there was a little life in these limbs. And then I had the hot blanket treatments – over and over again. There's still hope that I'll have a future clunking around in braces. But I don't know if I want that. For someone who was a dancer –

ROSIE
- You were a dancer?

VIRGINIA
Let's just say, I thought it was my future. But that was "once upon a time." It's been rough trying to figure my new body out. I don't know my possibilities anymore.

ROSIE
You're still holding on to the balloon.

VIRGINIA

I know. I like the idea of holding something that could potentially fly. But you're wrong, about having a wish. I don't. When I lost my ability to move, I lost my ability to wish.

ROSIE

Somewhere inside you Virginia – there is still movement. You have arms – they move. You have a neck that moves. You're not in an iron lung. I think you'll find a new way to move. I'm betting on you.

(JANSEN enters.)

JANSEN

Here you are! Right back from where you started. The whole world is looking for you and I found you. I should get a prize.

VIRGINIA

Who are you?

JANSEN

A nobody. A humdrum farm kid with a dull, monotonous life where nothing ever happens.

ROSIE

I'm glad you're here.

JANSEN

Really?

ROSIE

I may need some help. There's a painting I need to get out of the Arts Building.

JANSEN

Is this like – an art heist? I've heard about those.

ROSIE

It's exactly like an art heist.

JANSEN

I'm in.

VIRGINIA

What are you thinking?

ROSIE

If Daniel won't go to the Art Show, maybe we can bring the Art show to him.

VIRGINIA

I don’t see how.

ROSIE

Start exercising your wishing muscle. I’ll slip into the Arts Building and talk to some people.

VIRGINIA

So, do you have an “in” with these people or what?

ROSIE

Let’s just say I can be persuasive. Sometimes. I never know.

(ROSIE and JANSEN exit and VIRGINIA is alone. From another part of the fair, a band is heard. Instinctively, VIRGINIA begins to move to the music: she tries to move her legs – she really tries but there is nothing. She awkwardly lifts her arm. It works but is not yet graceful. She tries her legs again. Nothing. She tries a ballet-first-position with her arms which is not too bad. She alternates her arms in some of the ballet positions. For a moment in time, she is the music. The music stops, VIRGINIA stops. She tries to lift her legs with her arms. They are frozen. SHE grabs her balloon but decides not to wish. She remains frozen as the lights change – or fade to black if you wish an intermission.)

----------*Optional Intermission* ----------

(It’s just a few minutes later. GEORGIA and CAROLYN enter.)

GEORGIA

It's like he evaporated! How can a kid just disappear?

CAROLYN

We have the entire security force looking for him. Don't worry Georgia.

GEORGIA

I wished it. I wished for him to go away and he did!

CAROLYN

Maybe he's on the rides.

GEORGIA
He doesn't have any money. And besides - they make him sick.

CAROLYN
Let's try the Arts Building. It's the only building we haven't been in.

GEORGIA
Somehow, I don't see my brother walking voluntarily into any building marked "Arts." Unless he didn't go voluntarily - Carolyn!

CAROLYN
We'll find him!

GEORGIA
I wish -

CAROLYN
Georgia! Don't wish! Really. You don't have the knack! Come on - the Arts Building's always crowded – it's easy to get lost in there.

(CAROLYN and GEORGIA exit as ELIZABETH and BOBBY enter. BOBBY has a stuffed "magical" animal: a unicorn or a dragon or what you will.)

ELIZABETH
I wish you had told me about your motion sickness before we rode the roller coaster.

BOBBY
I'm sorry. I thought I outgrew it. I think I'll just sit still for awhile with my prize.

ELIZABETH
You did really well at the arcade.

BOBBY
I don't know what to do with it. Want it?

ELIZABETH
My mom won't let bring any more stuffed animal into the house. I sort of have – hundreds of them. We should probably find your sister. So she doesn't worry.

BOBBY
Nah, she probably didn't even notice I was gone.

(RANDY comes limping in followed by KELLY. RANDY is bandaged and has some

items: a jar that used to contain a butterfly, and a bird's nest. KELLY carries a fried chicken wing in a bag. RANDY sees the wagon is unattended and rushes over.)

RANDY
HE'S GONE! HE LEFT CHICKIE ALL ALONE! SHE COULD HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED!

KELLY
You are becoming very odd, do you know that? I'm tired. I'm going to rest. *Away from Chickie!*

(KELLY settles close to ELIZABETH and BOBBY. RANDY gets CHICKIE and joins KELLY.)

ELIZABETH
(Looking at RANDY)
Oh my. What happened to you?

RANDY
I went on a quest.

BOBBY
That's kind of neat.

RANDY
I really need something magical very, very badly or my chicken will not have a home.

ELIZABETH
Now that's the most fascinating thing I've heard all day. Do tell.

RANDY
If I finish my quest – everything will be perfect. And if I don't finish it, my world will fall apart. All because my magical butterfly flew away. I have everything else I need but the magic keeps tripping me up. Wait a minute – what's that you're holding?

BOBBY
It's a unicorn. I wanted a horse but they were all out.

RANDY
How much for the unicorn?

KELLY
We're out of money.

RANDY

I can give you my socks. Or my shirt? Or – how about Chickie's first prize ribbon? Name your price.

BOBBY

I don't want anything. If it makes you happy to have it – take it.

RANDY

Kelly! Look. Something magical! And I didn't need to climb a tree or go into the garbage to get it!

(ROSIE, VIRGINIA and JANSEN enter with DANIEL'S painting. It has a blue ribbon on it. They also bring an easel and will be setting it up.)

VIRGINIA

Do you have some kind of pull with these people?

ROSIE

Sort of. I won this contest and I have to give a speech – which I'm really nervous about – and I thought – wouldn't it be nice to have a painting as the backdrop. I can do a very good "Poor-little-old-me-orphaned-at-a-young-age" imitation. When people feel sorry for you – they kind of give in to you. I think you know something about that.

VIRGINIA

Wait! Do you think I take advantage of the fact that I am in this chair?

ROSIE

Don't you? Sometimes?

VIRGINIA

I …don't know.

ROSIE

Bet you think about it all the time. I would have in my olden days. It's leverage. Besides – the Fair is giving me an award. They have to be nice to me.

JANSEN

I should join my friends but first I must say I am forever in your debt.

ROSIE

Who exactly are you?

JANSEN

A nobody who has known nothing but drudgery farm work his whole life. But today, I am Jansen – a person who has seen another part of the world – a person who spent the afternoon with a con artist and went on an art heist that wasn't a real art heist but close enough. It is what I wished for! And you helped me make it come true.

ROSIE

I'm glad. I think. Just don't tell my brother your wish came true. He'll charge you. Now I have to get ready for my speech. And Virginia, we really should look for your brother. He must be frantic.

(MARILYN, DANIEL and OZZIE enter.)

DANIEL

Are you sure your sister is a responsible person?

OZZIE

My sister - responsible? Well, no - but I'm sure Sleeping Beauty is okay -

ROSIE

Speak of the devil -

MARILYN

Daniel! Look!

(DANIEL rushes over)

DANIEL

VIRGINIA! I've been looking all over for you! Are you all right?

VIRGINIA

I think so.

MARILYN

Now that "lost and found" is over, I'd better find Georgia. Someone has to keep that girl in check.

(FINN enters and sees BOBBY and goes over to him. The conversation switches.)

FINN (To BOBBY)

Hey.

BOBBY

Hey, yourself.

FINN

I'm Finn.

BOBBY

That's nice.

FINN

Have you ever heard of me?

BOBBY

No.

ELIZABETH

Is he bothering you?

FINN

I'm his cousin.

BOBBY

What?

FINN

Your cousin.

BOBBY

I know all my cousins. We all live near each other.

FINN

Your cousin from your mother's side.

BOBBY

My mother has no family.

FINN

Not true.

ELIZABETH

He doesn't know you. You should leave.

FINN

He should know me. Family should know each other.

(GEORGIA enters with CAROLYN)

GEORGIA
If we don't find him – my mother will kill me and I really don't want to be dead. Or maybe she'd just throw me out and I'd be poor and where would I go/

CAROLYN
Relax, Georgia. You won't have to be poor or dead. We'll find him.

(BOBBY looks up and sees GEORGIA and waves and comes over)

BOBBY
Hey Georgia!

GEORGIA
Bobby?

(GEORGIA rushes over and embraces BOBBY in a huge hug which BOBBY barely submits to.)

GEORGIA (cont'd)
I've been so worried - I've looked everywhere - we were in all these buildings and I kept seeing kids who looked like you and weren't you -

(She abruptly lets go of him and maybe shakes him a bit.)

You little sneak! How dare you go off and leave me to worry! I almost had a nervous breakdown looking for you!

BOBBY
Gee, Georgia - I didn't know you cared.

GEORGIA
I didn't say I cared - you don't look so good.

BOBBY
I went on some rides.

GEORGIA
What is the matter with you? You know they make you sick! You know they're not good for you. How many times do I have to tell you these things?

CAROLYN
Since it looks like "all's well that ends well," I'll look for my friends.

GEORGIA

Carolyn?

CAROLYN

Yes?

GEORGIA

Thank-you. For – you know – helping me.

CAROLYN

No problem. You would have done the same for me.

GEORGIA

I hope so.

(CAROLYN exits as MARILYN enters.)

MARILYN

Virginia's been found!

GEORGIA

And Bobby.

MARILYN

So let's celebrate. Ice cream? Pronto pups?

GEORGIA

You know that stuff's not good for you.

MARILYN

…. Sounding like your mother –

GEORGIA

- Stop with my mother.

(Finally noticing FINN.)

You! What are you doing here?

BOBBY

He's our cousin.

GEORGIA

I know all our cousins. He's looking for a handout -

FINN

- I'm not -

GEORGIA

Oh you'll have some grand story but eventually you'll be asking me for money.

FINN

I won't.

MARILYN

At least hear him out. I really don't get your obsession with money.

GEORGIA

It's all I have. I don't paint, dance, sing or have any talent. I do okay at school. I dress nicely. My mother sees to that. But there's nothing more. It's all I am.

MARILYN

You're a good friend.

GEORGIA

Really?

MARILYN

Sometimes.

FINN

So, can I talk now?

GEORGIA

Sure. But make it quick.

FINN

I'm your cousin on your mother's side. My mother was your mother's sister.

GEORGIA

My mother's sister died a long time ago.

FINN

If you think April was a long time ago…

GEORGIA

What?

FINN

My mother passed away in April. I found news clippings about you from your Coming

FINN (cont'd)
Out Party two years ago– my mom saved the Society Pages and I always wondered why It wasn't till she was sick that she told me about you..

GEORGIA
So you are looking for a handout.

FINN
I just wanted to meet you – that's all. I grew up thinking I had no family. Then I found the clippings and well…

GEORGIA
You found out we are rich and hoped to partake.

MARILYN
Georgia – stop with the money obsession.

GEORGIA
Sorry. It's a bad habit.

FINN
Maybe I was right all along. Maybe I don't have a family. I just thought we should know each other. I hoped – but I was wrong.

BOBBY
Where's your father?

FINN
He's been gone a year. Black lung disease. It happens a lot to mine workers.

BOBBY
I'm sorry.

GEORGIA
So, you're saying my mother's sister – my aunt was married to a miner?

FINN
They were very much in love. In the end, I think my mother died of a broken heart.

ELIZABETH
That's kind of romantic.

FINN
If you think dead people are romantic – well, I guess.

ELIZABETH
I'm sorry. I read too many dime store novels.

GEORGIA
So, if you don't want a handout – what do you want?

FINN
I just wanted to meet you and maybe get to know you. I don't have anyone else. But now a friendship seems unlikely so – "nice meeting you and all that corny stuff."

BOBBY
Wait. I want to know you.

GEORGIA
Bobby…

BOBBY
I want to know him! You can stay and listen or go somewhere and stick your nose in other people's business – that seems to be your favorite thing.

GEORGIA
He could be a con artist.

BOBBY
Even better. I never met a con artist before. I want to hear what he has to say.

FINN
Let's talk away from everyone. Some stuff is personal.

(BOBBY and FINN move away.)

MARILYN
You should join them.

GEORGIA
Come with me?

MARILYN
I'll stay here. Some stuff is personal. And I think you need to figure this out on your own. But Georgia – think for yourself. Don't think about what your mother would say.

(GEORGIA joins FINN and BOBBY.)

ELIZABETH
And here we are – both left hanging as our friends find people more interesting than us.

MARILYN

It's kind of like high school.

ELIZABETH

Exactly like high school.

MARILYN

Except – we're at the fair and there are bands everywhere.

ELIZABETH

Follow the music?

(ELIZABETH and MARILYN do so. JANSEN joins RANDY.)

RANDY

Where have you been?

JANSEN

For your information, I was having an adventure that involved stealing a painting! You don't look so good.

RANDY

I know – but I finished my quest! So Chickie should have a loving home.

JANSEN

I don't know about that Ozzie character really helping you – but I tell you what – if he can't give Chickie a home – I can. I don't think Mom and Dad would mind another chicken.

RANDY

Really?

JANSEN

Sure.

RANDY

Why didn't you tell me this earlier? Before I got myself all cut and bruised?

JANSEN

Didn't think of it till now.

(RANDY sees OZZIE and rushes to him.)

RANDY

Give me back my dime!

OZZIE

What happened to you?

RANDY

I got all banged up searching for your magical things! Don't change the subject! You left Chickie all alone and who knows what could have happened to her! And I found her a home all by myself so I didn't need your silly quest!

OZZIE

Not so fast - let's discus it. Show me what you found. Did you find the magical things??

RANDY

I found a castle – see. It's a bird's nest and that's royal. Cuse your home is your castle, right? It's the bird's castle. And I had a butterfly which used to be a caterpillar – and that's magical! But he flew away and my new friend gave me this magical stuffed animal. And now – for something evil –

(RANDY gets the bag with the fried chicken from KELLY.)

Here. I can't bear to look at it.

OZZIE

(Taking the fried chicken leg out)

It's a fried chicken leg!

RANDY

I know! And once it was an adorable chickie! It's evil what they do to chickies! So, you see - I did everything you wanted. And guess what? I found Chickie my own home -

OZZIE

Oh really? How?

RANDY

Jansen lives on a farm and can take Chickie home – I should've asked him earlier.

OZZIE

But you didn't think of it until after you went on the quest. You got what you wanted because of "the quest." No refunds.

(OZZIE moves to ROSIE who is nervously studying a piece of paper.)

OZZIE

Rosie?

ROSIE

It’s starting Ozzie – it’s starting!

OZZIE

What?

(*We hear an announcement.)*

ANNOUNCEMENT

The presentation for the winning essay of “What the Fair Means to Me” by Miss Rosie Randall will be held shortly in the meadow. There’s room for everyone so come on down. Then, take a stroll in the staging area and see the blue ribbon painting from some a very fine artist. Following that, there will be music provided by our 4H members. The presentation is free and will begin in two minutes.

ROSIE

Omigosh! Omigosh! Two minutes! I'm nervous!

OZZIE

Rosie? You won an essay contest?

ROSIE

I'm on, Ozzie. I get to read my essay and I get a prize and everything. That's why I wanted you here.

OZZIE

You won the essay contest?

ROSIE

First prize!

OZZIE

You won an essay contest????

ROSIE

And it comes with one hundred dollars. One hundred dollars, Ozzie! I was going to use it for college but then I thought – bring Ozzie here. Give him the money. It’s enough for you to start a proper life. Isn't this just the best day? How about you? How's your day going? Grant any dreams?

OZZIE

Sort of in a roundabout way. Trying to decide if its legit.

ROSIE

It has to absolutely legit if I'm going to join you.

OZZIE

I know.

(As OZZIE and ROSIE deal with each other we hear DANIEL'S conversation with VIRGINIA.)

DANIEL

Virginia? Is - that my painting?

VIRGINIA

Nah. How would your painting get here?

DANIEL

VIRGINIA! *That's* my painting!

(CAROLYN joins them.)

CAROLYN

Daniel? Isn't that your painting? The painting – that was in the school hallway?

DANIEL

Virginia?

VIRGINIA

I entered it. Last spring. I knew you were worried that it would hurt me - to enter the painting of our summer up north before all this happened - but it doesn't, Daniel. It's beautiful.

CAROLYN

Congratulations, Daniel. It's stunning.

(Meanwhile DANIEL crosses to see his painting up close.)

DANIEL
(Crossing to ROSIE.)

That's - my painting.

ROSIE

I know.

DANIEL

I'm – Daniel. Virginia's brother.

ROSIE

I know that, too.

DANIEL

It's like a dream come true.

ROSIE

It looks like a lot of dreams are coming true.

OZZIE

All but one. If she would just admit she has one.

(He looks at VIRGINIA who does not notice.)

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE

If you could all take your seats. The ceremony is about to begin.

((GEORGIA, BOBBY, FINN, MARILYN and ELIZABETH gather around. As do BOBBY, RANDY, KELLY and JANSEN. Everyone gets settled. DANIEL may be wearing the blue ribbon. We hear an announcement.)

ANNOUNCER

The State Fair is proud to announce that the winner of "What the State Fair Means to Me" essay contest is Miss Rosie Randall! Miss Randall will now read her essay for you.

ROSIE

(ROSIE can do a lot of this directly to the audience.)

Thank-you so much. I'm - nervous. You know - I dreamed of this day - for a year. But in my dreams - I wasn't nervous.

OZZIE

You're doing well, Rosie.

ROSIE

Okay. "What the State Fair Means to Me." The Fair is a feast for senses. Reach out and touch – a soft chick, a wooly lamb. Feel the stickiness of sugar spun into cotton. Ride the Ferris wheel and touch the sky. Taste a soft-serve ice creaming melting down your hands. Or the crunch and crackle and salt of all that fried food on a stick. Listen to the ukuleles in the park and the big Band sound from the Grandstand. Then meander to the barns and hear the cornucopia of moos, oinks and neighs. Gaze your eyes on the coat of arms at the International Center or the balloons drifting up and away to new places. Take in the

ROSIE (cont'd)
aroma of butter and salt from the popcorn vendor and the vanilla scent as you pass the cookie wagon. And then discover your sixth sense.

Feel the sweet dreams that went into the blue ribbon chocolate layer cakes, listen to the beating heart of the needlepoint or the color wheel in the paintings. Appreciate the longings of all that come here wishing for a good harvest and a sustaining winter. And as summer comes to an end, we remain united in thanks to the farmers whose bounty helps us through the winter. We wish for the coming year to bring goodness and sustenance. A year filled with hope. A year of accomplishment. A time where we come together again after two years of being afraid to touch, to speak, and even to acknowledge one another. It's a new world for all of us. Drink it up. Breathe it in. Check the fairgrounds for old memories and look to make new ones. It only comes once a year.

ANNOUNCEMENT
Thank-you Miss Randall for the lovely sentiments. Please give her a hand. We will close the program with the band "Hearts and Hands" who will play for your enjoyment.

(*As the music plays, all react. A few may dance in the aisle, on the perimeter of the stage. RANDY may dance with CHICKIE. CAROLYN with DANIEL. ROSIE with OZZIE. However you would like it.*

VIRGINIA starts swaying to the music. Then her arms gently dance. She circles the stage alone – in her chair and comes to the painting and touches it. All may stop and watch her. VIRGINIA is in her own world.

OZZIE approaches and turns her chair and slowly they begin a dance of sorts. They touch hands. The chair will glide, turn, they come apart and then together. Daniel joins them and turns her in the chair. The music ends and there is some sporadic applause for the band and the dancers. "MUSIC NOTE: You may compose some music, find a piece from SLEEPING BEAUTY for a young performer to play, or find a piece in public domain. It should be fairly slow. If you have a license that covers music in a play, use any song that speaks to you and your license permits.)

OZZIE
Hey, Sleeping Beauty. I think you just woke up.

(*DANIEL hugs VIRGINIA and they quietly speak as OZZIE joins ROSIE)*

ROSIE
Ozzie! Her dream - you helped her get her dream -

OZZIE
Does that mean I get my wish? Joining me, Rosie?

(*ROSIE moves away as the others depart. There are good-byes amid all the different groupings. First we are with ELIZABETH and CAROLINE.)*

ELIZABETH
Carolyn, it's time. Your father will be picking us up soon. Do you want to say good-bye to Daniel?

CAROLYN
We're meeting tomorrow for the long good-bye.

(*ELIZABETH and CAROLINE exit.)*

(*Now we move to KELLY, RANDY and JANSEN.)*

KELLY
Come on, Raymond. We need to pack up.

RANDY
Promise you'll take care of Chickie.

JANSEN
You're going to visit in two days! You'll see her then!

(JANSEN, KELLY, and RANDY exit.)

ROSIE
I told the administration you'd pick up your painting here. I hope that's all right.

DANIEL
It's perfect. Virginia?

VIRGINIA

I know. It's time to go. I'll be ready in a minute. I'll meet you at the gate. Oh! Daniel? Do you have a dime?

DANIEL

One grimy, sweaty one. Here. I'll be waiting.

(Now we move to FINN, GEORGIA and BOBBY.)

GEORGIA

Is that really all you want?

FINN

I start Basic Training next week and then I'm off to Germany to help with the reconstruction. I just thought that letters from home would help if I was homesick. And then I thought – who's left to write to me? Which I why I came down to meet with you.

BOBBY

I definitely think it would be way cool to get letters from Germany. I'm in.

FINN

Would your parents mind?

GEORGIA

I really don't care. All these secrets – I know why she did it. She didn't want anyone to know she was poor when she married my dad –

BOBBY

- Wait! She was poor?

GEORGIA

Haven't you heard Dad throwing it in her face when they fight?

BOBBY

I never pay attention when they fight.

GEORGIA

I can't believe I'm saying this but in this case – you're the smart one. You have our address? I mean you did visit –

FINN

It was right there bright as day when the door slammed on my face.

GEORGIA

I'm sorry. I really don't want to turn into my mother. And I want to know more about your mother – my aunt – before you go. Can you come by tomorrow? There's a lovely park nearby where we can talk.

FINN

Are you sure? Your mother…

GEORGIA

I'll talk to her for a change. Friends?

FINN

Cousins.

(They hug or shake hands awkwardly. MARILYN goes to GEORGIA.)

MARILYN

Georgia! Your Dad's waiting not-so-patiently at the gate.

GEORGIA

We have to go.

FINN

I'll walk you.

GEORGIA

Stay here. I don't want him to see you… yet.

BOBBY

What an amazing day.

(MARILYN, GEORGIA, BOBBY and FINN exit.)

(VIRGINIA approaches OZZIE.)

OZZIE

I guess I'll get going. Someone - somewhere must have a dream.

VIRGINIA

Ozzie -

(She hands him a dime.)

OZZIE

I didn't send you on a quest.

VIRGINIA

Didn't you? Here –

(She unties the balloon.)

I needed a dream. Not a wish.

ROSIE

Then free it. Let it soar.

(VIRGINIA unties the balloon and wheels herself away.)

ROSIE

You won the bet, fair and square. I'll go with you. But first I need to say good-bye to the Johnsons. They've been so kind to me.

OZZIE

I don't think I made her dream come true. I think you did. You need – to stay here and make your plans and if it's all right - I'll continue down my own path.

ROSIE

Are you sure?

OZZIE

No. But it's the right thing to do. And sometimes, even I will do the right thing. Are you leaving now?

ROSIE

Not till the Fair closes. It's a beautiful night. I want get on the Ferris wheel and see everything lit up and wait for the fireworks. We can spend the evening together.

OZZIE

You always did know how to get your own way.

(DANIEL enters and stops as he watches VIRGINIA. She has the balloon up in the air but is still holding on to it. She tries to stand. She doesn't really make a go of it but the effort was there. ROSIE and OZZIE also watch.)

Determined, VIRGINIA sits up as high and mighty as she can. And with a great force of energy, propels the balloon into the air. All watch the balloon. VIRGINIA makes one gesture of accomplishment. She may not be "back" yet but she has found new life. The lights fade to black.)

End of Play – a Note follows

*You may change Virginia's description of the painting on page 31 to suit a painting you would like to use.