

Afternoon of the Elves

adapted by Y York

from the Newberry Honor Book by Janet Taylor Lisle

play copyright © 1993, for rights contact: Dramatic Publishing.

originally commissioned and produced by Seattle Children's Theatre, September 1993.

Dedication:

For Marin Elf

Characters: JANE and ALISON are stars of the fourth grade; they have recently allowed HILLARY LENOX to join their ranks. SARA KATE CONNOLLY is an upperclassman who has been held back for a second try in the fifth grade. MR. LENOX and MRS. LENOX are Hillary's parents. MRS. CONNOLLY is Sara Kate's mother; she is a person unable to cope.

Setting: The main settings are the amazingly well manicured Lenox backyard, that abuts the atrocious Connolly backyard that is filled with old appliances, car motors, tires, general junk, and brambles; in the midst of the mess is the elf village. Another important setting is inside the deteriorated Connolly house. Secondary settings are outside of the school and on the town, both of which can be implied with sound and lights. A simple design that allows both backyards to use the entire stage is recommended.

Scene 1, outside of school, Friday afternoon. A bright fall day. Jane Webster and Alison Mancini, dressed alike with matching hairdos, leaving school with books, giggling, etc.

Hillary: (off) Wait up!

Alison: (Playing) Do you hear something, Jane?

Jane: (Ibid) Not a thing, Alison.

Hillary: (off) It's me, Hillary, wait!

Alison: Oh, it's Hillary, Jane. Do you think we should wait for Hillary?

Jane: Hillary-who-didn't-do-her-hair?

Hillary: (off) I didn't have time!

Alison: We had time.

Jane: We made time.

Hillary enters. She is dressed as they, but with different hair. She carries a book bag.

Hillary: (Out of breath, defensive) My mother didn't have time.

Jane: You let your mother do your hair?

Alison: I don't let my mother touch my hair. She pulls it, then when I scream and run she says, "Alison Mancini, get in this chair or I'm going to call your father at the office." I tremble, Mother, I just tremble. I do my own hair.

Jane: I do, too.

Alison: (To Jane) You have to do your own hair.

Jane: (Defensive) So what?

Alison: So nothing.

Hillary: How do you do it by yourself?

Alison: With two mirrors and a chair.

Jane: (to Alison) And a hairbrush.

Hillary: I don't think I can do it.

Alison: Well you have to learn so we can be the Mighty Three.

Hillary: Guess what? I heard Mr. Decker call us the Three Musketeers; I heard him say so to Mrs. Gray this morning. "Well, I see you've got the Three Musketeers in your class," he said.

Jane: Too-too good.

Alison: Write it down, Hillary.

Hillary: I already did (hugs book bag).

Alison: We're getting famous. That's what happens when there's three of you; people start to notice you; you get famous.

Jane: And three's the right number.

Alison: Yes, if you're four, people think you're a gang.

Jane: (Rhyme, rap) The number four is very poor!

Alison: Oh, stop it, already. We all know you can rhyme.

Jane: I have to keep in practice.

Hillary: Practice for what?

Alison: Jane's father only lets her watch TV if she rhymes.

Hillary: Wow, that's crummy.

Jane: It won't last; his new girlfriend is a poet. (Rhyming) The number two is one too few.

Alison: Yeah. Two is no good. If there's only two, it's the same as one; nobody notices.

Hillary: We, the Mighty Three.

Jane: (Singing) Alison, Hillary and Me. Hey! Maybe we should be a band. We already match.

Alison: (to Jane) You can write the songs. Let's start right away. Where should we go?

Jane: My house.

Hillary: (Same time) My house.

Jane: Pididdle!

Hillary: ...(almost the same time) Pididdle!

Jane: I said it first.

Hillary: (at the same time) I said it first.

Jane: Who said it first, Alison?

Alison: Jane.

Jane: I win. Okay, okay. Name ten...stars.

Hillary names ten current rock, movie, and TV stars, while Jane punches her in the arm.

Jane: Ten! I'm exhausted. Let's go get something to eat.

Enter Sara Kate Connolly, as if she has been watching. She is unkempt in the way of the neglected and poor.

Sara Kate: Stop hitting her.

Jane: Gross, gross.

Alison: Are you spying on us, Sara Kate?

Jane: You spy.

Sara Kate: I said don't hit her.

Hillary: Nobody's hitting me, I'm fine.

Sara Kate almost speaks, but then backs away and exits.

Jane: Yuk. That's why I couldn't finish my lunch. Sara Kate sat down at my table, made me lose my whole appetite. She is gross.

Alison: She is mental. (To Hillary) She got held back. She's supposed to be two years ahead.

Hillary: She lives behind my house.

Jane: Yuk.

Alison: Her mother drank pesticide before she was born.

Jane: Have you seen her lunch? Mush in a thermos. Yuk.

Hillary: If her mother drank pesticide she'd be dead.

Alison: Maybe she is dead. Nobody's ever seen her.

Hillary: I've seen her.

Alison: Maybe that's just a ghost; the ghost of Sara Kate's mother, oooo.

Jane: Sara Kate is a magician.

Alison: She is not.

Jane: Yeah she is. Whenever Sara Kate Connolly is around, people's things disappear. She stole a bike and used it to deliver newspapers. She delivered a paper to a policeman's house.

Sara Kate re-enters.

Sara Kate: Stop talking about me.

Jane: You are a spy.

Alison: Oh, brother. (New tactic) Look, Jane, look, Hillary, look who has come back to talk to us. Sara Kate Connolly.

Jane: Sara Kate Connolly, the magician.

Alison: Can you tell me exactly where you got those amazing boots? I'm dying to get some exactly like them for a trip to the Arctic Circle.

Jane: And I need a pair for my trip to the Peruvian desert.

Alison: But what do you need them for, here, in America, Sara Kate Connolly?

Jane: For a job in a gas station?

Alison: Are you going to get a job in a gas station now that you don't have a bicycle to ride on a paper route anymore? Huh?

Sara Kate: I need to talk to you.

Alison: You need to talk to who?

Sara Kate: Not you. (Hillary) You.

Hillary: Why do you need to talk to me?

Sara Kate: I need to talk to you alone.

Alison: Oh, brother—

Jane: Well you can't.

Sara Kate: It's actually very important. And private.

Jane: She'll tell us later.

Sara Kate: Maybe. Maybe not.

Hillary: I don't have anything to say to you.

Sara Kate: Of course you don't have anything to say to me. I have something to say to you. But you will have to tear yourself away from these two chaperons.

Hillary: (mad) They're not chaperons! (beat) What are chaperons?

Sara Kate: Body. Guards. For the young and frightened.

Hillary: I'm not frightened.

Sara Kate: Then let's talk. You. And me. Over there.

Hillary: (to Jane and Alison, whisper) I better talk to her or she'll never go away.

Jane: What about our song?

Hillary: We can do it tomorrow. At my house.

Alison: (Whispers) Do you want us to stay and listen?

Hillary: No, it's okay. I'll see you tomorrow.

Alison: Okay. Bye. Bye, Sara Kate Connolly, see you at the gas station.

Alison and Jane exit. Brief pause.

Sara Kate: Why did you let her hit you?

Hillary: It was a pididdle.

Sara Kate: A what?

Hillary: A pididdle. We said the same thing at the same time. Then Jane said pididdle so I had to name ten stars and let her punch me 'til I got done.

Sara Kate: That doesn't even make sense!

Hillary: It's just a game.

Sara Kate: It's a stupid one!

Hillary: (Pause) What do you want?

Sara Kate: (formally) Are you Hillary Lenox?

Hillary: You know who I am. Our backyards touch.

Sara Kate: I can't be sure who you are, you're dressed exactly like Alison Mancini and Jane Webster. Girls of a predatory and evil nature. You should hope they never commit a crime; you might get blamed.

Hillary: Why?

Sara Kate: You dress like them; the witness might identify you by mistake.

Hillary: Well, it's me, Hillary.

Sara Kate: If you're Hillary Lenox, I need to talk to you about a matter concerning our touching backyards. (Beat) Have you peeked through the vegetation into my backyard lately?

Hillary: (annoyed) I never have peeked into your backyard, through the vegetation or the bushes.

Sara Kate: Then, it's as I thought. (beat) I am the only one who knows.

Hillary: (annoyed) What? The only one who knows what?

Sara Kate: About the elves.

Hillary: What are you talking about?

Sara Kate: In my backyard that touches your backyard, even as we speak, there is a village of tiny houses built for and by elves.

Hillary: That's crazy.

Sara Kate: You haven't seen it.

Hillary: Is this some kind of trick?

Sara Kate: No, it's not a trick. I don't blame you for not believing; I wouldn't believe either if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. Right in the yard, tiny little houses that nobody but a tiny elf could live in.

Hillary: Well, let's go take a look.

Sara Kate: Not yet. Come after four.

Hillary: I want to go now.

Sara Kate: Well you don't get what you want. Come to my house after four.

Hillary: Maybe I will; maybe I won't.

Sara Kate: (Beat) You will. Don't come to the front. Come to the backyard. After four.

Scene 2, Friday afternoon. The lights reveal the Lenox backyard, a stoop and a back door to the house, a shed, tools and catalogs on stage. This yard is manicured and sculpted. A new birdbath. Mr. and Mrs. L and then Hillary.

Mr. L: (About birdbath) Do you think it's alright here?

Mrs. L: Frank, it's fine, it's great. It's been great every place we've put it in the last hour. Let's leave it there.

Mr. L: (looks at a catalog) It looks bigger in the picture.

Mrs. L: There's nothing around it to compare it to in the picture.

Mr. L: I should have ordered the biggest one.

Mrs. L: This one is fine.

Mr. L: Do you really think it looks okay?

Mrs. L: Yes, it looks okay!

Mr. L: Just okay?

Mrs. L: It looks...fabulous. Authentic.

Mr. L: Yeah, I guess I think it does, too.

Mrs. L: Can we address the mess behind the garage now?

Mr. L: Now, Honey, I'll get to that, after the yard. All things in good time.

He leaves the catalog on the stoop with the others. Hillary enters skipping.

Hillary: Wow, that is too-too good.

Mr. L: Hillary, honey, don't skip on the grass, skip on the cement. You're tearing up the lawn.

Hillary: Sorry, Dad. Looks good, really nice. A lot nicer than the picture.

Mr L: Thanks, honey. Do you think it looks good here?

Hillary: Well...

Mrs L: Yes, you do, you do.

Hillary: Yeah, looks good, Dad.

Mrs L: (about book bag) Did they give you homework over the weekend?

Hillary: No. It's just my diary inside. (beat) Can Alison and Jane come over tomorrow?

Mrs. L: Sure. You can play in the yard.

Mr. L: -I gotta move it.

Mrs L: No!

Mr. L: No, I gotta. I can't have little girls poking it and knocking it.

Hillary: We don't do that.

Mrs L: Never mind, Honey. Your Dad has temporarily lost his reason. (beat) Were the girls mad we didn't do your hair?

Hillary: ... It was okay.

Mrs L: I'll do it tomorrow.

Hillary: I can do it myself.

Mrs. L: Was it fun to dress alike?

Hillary: Too-too fun, Mom. Everybody noticed.

Mr. L: And that's good?

Hillary: Dad! Of course it's good. It's too-too good. Jane and Alison know all about it. They've been doing it for a long time, and everybody in school knows who they are.

Mr. L: And that's too-too good?

Hillary: Yeah, it's too-too good.

Mrs. L: (Beat) Are they nice to you, honey?

Hillary: They let me dress like them!

Mrs. L: They've been friends for a long time. You're still the new kid.

Hillary: Mom, they're nice to me, it's fine.

Mrs L: Okay. Do you want a snack?

Hillary: No. I'm going to visit Sara Kate.

Mrs. L: (Surprised) Sara Kate? Next-door Sara Kate?

Mr. L: I thought you were friends with Alison and Jane.

Hillary: I'm not friends with Sara Kate; I'm only visiting her.

Mrs. L: Why don't you invite her over here instead?

Hillary: Because she doesn't go places.

Mrs. L: That house looks like it's going to fall down.

Hillary: I'm not going in the house; we're going to play in her yard.

Mr. L: (sarcastic) The yard, great. You'll probably come home with some disease.

Hillary: There's no disease over there.

Mr. L: Or lice. Or poison ivy. We should call the Health Department.

Hillary: Dad, you can't call the Health Department! You can't!

Mr. L: Don't raise your voice to me, young lady.

Hillary: Oh, I tremble, I just tremble!

Mrs. L: Hillary!

Hillary: Whaaat?!

Mrs. L: ...We're not going to call the Health Department. Your Dad is just having an opinion. (beat) How come Sara Kate invited you? What's the occasion?

Hillary: No occasion. She invited me and I want to go. (beat) You're always saying how we should be nice to the less fortunate.

Mrs. L: (Beat) Alright. But go get a snack. I think you're having low-blood sugar. Eat some protein.

Hillary: Yes, ma'am.

Hillary exits.

Mr. L: "I tremble. I just tremble?"

Mrs. L: I don't know where she comes up with these things.

Mr. L: Where do you come up with low-blood sugar?

Mrs. L: I don't know. (beat) Do you think we should have had more kids?

Mr. L: Ask me on a different day.

Mrs. L: Not for us; for her.

Mr. L: She's fine, honey, she's just fine. (beat) Except we'll probably have to de-louse her when she gets home from Sara Kate's.

Mrs. L: Don't I recall some stories about you and head lice?

Mr. L: (defensively) We all had 'em.

Mrs. L: And we all survived. She'll be okay.

Mr. L: (beat) What about that bike business?

Mrs. L: Honey, we don't even know if that story is true; let's give Sara Kate the benefit of the doubt.
