

BEING A GROWN-UP by CHRIS WALKER

I have not been told if this is so, but I suspect this was a group enterprise to take as a piece of educational theatre to primary schools. The jokey but teacherish manner of the Presenters and the learning points stated throughout each scene would suggest it is aimed at such an audience.

Having said that, the style is light-hearted and jokey, very suited to an age-group of upper primary. The points made are certainly clear but always larded with enough humour to make them palatable.

There is no play as such. This is a series of sketches, each able to stand on its own, and each taking a particular point about the difficulties of navigating the adult world. The general message is given in the last scene: don't try to grow up too soon. Adult life may seem attractive, but it is beset with hazards and rules.

The fact that it is a series of scenes means that it is infinitely adaptable. Length, the number of scenes used, can all be tailored to fit your own requirements.

All of the scenes are very easy to stage. Set, light and other requirements are simple.

The fact that each scene stands on its own means that the play needn't be full-length - which it is if played all through - but can be any length you choose. I list the cast below for each scene, but even those with a large number listed can be flexible - waiters can become waitresses and vice versa. Many can be either sex, as you want - e.g. teachers, presenters and so on. Often there are sub-sections within a scene, which means that doubling can occur to reduce the number of cast.

The play could not be more flexible and consequently useful so far as these things are concerned.

CAST

PRESENTERS 1 & 2 run throughout all scenes [but could of course be swapped with others in the group to allow a variety of types of role]

PROLOGUE: 4F, 2M ANNIE, JODIE, MOLLY, SALLY, JIMMY, TOMMY - all 'children' between 5 and 7 years

RULES: 4F,4M with doubling, or 24 mixed cast with min 5M, 7F the rest either/or GROWN-UP, CHILD 1, CHILD 2, WOMAN 1, WOMAN 2, BARMAN, MUM, POLICEMAN 1, POLICEMAN 2, WORKER 1, WORKER 2, TEACHER, MANAGER, FAN, STEWARD, MIKE, CARL, ANGELA, ROB, SAMANTHA, MARK, WIFE, GIRL, GUY - the scene, which contains a number of sub-sections, could be played with a minimum of about 8 doubling up - suggest about 4M, 4F if you do this. It could also be a large group scene for your whole group, [max 24] after which scenes with smaller casts give your cast more scope. If using full cast of 24, you need a minimum of 5 boys, a minimum of 7 girls, plus the rest can be either sex. This holds good for the whole play. No scene involves more than this number of compulsory boys or of compulsory girls. Remember that the two presenters occur throughout, making for a potential cast of 26.

PARENTING: 5F teenagers: STACEY, JACKIE; MUM; small child - HARRIET, CHARLOTTE = 7ish

LIVING IN YOUR OWN HOME: 5F, 2M JULIE, SARAH, LOUISE - university students sharing flat; JOHN, RACHEL - young marrieds, MUM, DAD

PAYING THE BILLS: 1M, 1F, 3 either WATER BILL, GAS BILL, ELECTRIC BILL, MAN, WOMAN

GETTING A JOB: 1M, 1F, 4 either 4 INTERVIEWERS: 1a, 1b, 2a, & 2b, KATIE, DANIEL

WHAT JOB?: for a cast of 3, either M or F or both. Part of the fun is to play different sexes: who swap roles to play KID, MUM, ASSISTANT, CLEANER, MEDIC, 2 GRAVEDIGGERS, PRIEST, CANDICE, LYNN, TWO FIREMEN, COPPER, 2 ACTORS, DIRECTOR, PLUMBER

EATING HEALTHILY: 2M, 1F, 2 either JOE, ALAN, WAITRESS, INSTRUCTOR, HELEN + 3 extra girls

FINDING LOVE: 8M*, 5F, 1 either. *This is another scene with sub-sections, which could involve doubling if required for MAN, WOMAN, PETE, KEV, EMILY, FRED, MANAGERESS, BILL, BEN, TANYA, TIM, SLEEPER, STEWARD, PENNY

FINDING LOVE: THE BLIND DATE: 1M, 1F, 1either WAITER, DOREEN, JAMES

BIG MISTAKE: 3M GEORGE, CRAIG, DARREN

EPILOGUE: 4F ANNIE, MOLLY, SALLY, JODIE - children as for Prologue

If all scenes played, running time is approximately one and a half hours. Because of the episodic nature of the play, it is best to keep setting, furniture and props to the minimum. Many props are mimed. Lighting and technical effects are also simple.

EXTRACT ONE

PROLOGUE

Stage represents a playground; Annie and Jodie on a see-saw SL, Molly and Sally on a round-about CS; Jimmy and Tommy sit comparing some collectable in the background, USR.

ANNIE Jodie, I'm bored of see-saw.
JODIE Me too, Annie. Let's go play round-about.

Jodie gets off without thinking so Annie thuds to the ground.

ANNIE Ow!
JODIE Don't be a baby. Come on!

They walk over, holding hands, to where Molly and Sally, with arms linked, mime round-about.

JODIE Can we get on too?
MOLLY How old are you?
ANNIE I'm ... [***scrunching hands together with pleasure***] ... FIVE!
JODIE And I'm nearly six. I can do my own hair.
SALLY Well, you're not old enough.
MOLLY You might fall off.
SALLY You didn't say 'please', anyway.
MOLLY You don't get things if you don't say 'please'.
SALLY That's a rule.
ANNIE How old are you then?

MOLLY We're seven.
JODIE *to Molly* Is your name Sally?
SALLY She's Molly. I'm Sally.
Jodie runs upstage to talk to the boys.
ANNIE That's her brother, Jimmy.
MOLLY He goes to our school.
SALLY *brightening* You can play with us if you like.

Jodie leads Jimmy to the group, his friend Tommy following a few steps behind, reluctantly.

JODIE This is Jimmy.
MOLLY Yeah. Jimmy Stupidface!
JIMMY Stupid to you, Molly Melon-head.
SALLY *putting hand on chest of each to separate* Stop saying nasty names and act like grown-ups do.
ANNIE But they're not grown-ups.
TOMMY Will be one day.
JODIE When I'm a grown-up, I'm going to have a big house with a big garden and lots of pets.
TOMMY I want to drive a big car.
JIMMY When I grow up I'm going to be a doctor.
MOLLY I want to be a nurse.
ANNIE We can play doctors and nurses.
MOLLY I have to see how hot your head is to see if you are ill. [**Slaps hand on Tommy's head.**]
SALLY Let's pretend I fell off the swing and you have to make my leg better.
JIMMY *grabbing her leg* It's gone green. We'll have to chop it off.
MOLLY But Doctor, we could put it in a pot-thing so her friends can write on it.
JIMMY No, we can't. I'm the doctor and it's up to me. [**Sticks tongue out.**]
TOMMY *striking a pose* I want to be a pirate, like Jack Sparrow! With a parrot and a ship so I can go to sea, with no more parents telling me what to do.
JODIE *hanging on to Tommy's arm, staring up gleefully* No-one telling you to brush your teeth and no bed-time.
SALLY Stay up as long as you want.
ANNIE But you'd be too tired for school.
JIMMY When you're a grown-up you don't go to school.
JODIE My mummy does. It's a grown-up school.
MOLLY Well, why isn't she in the playground then?
JODIE She's too busy studying so she can get a job with lots of money.
JIMMY How much does Batman get paid?
TOMMY He can't get paid 'cos no one knows who he is. It's secret!
SALLY You can be Superman. He doesn't wear a mask.

Tommy strikes Superman pose.

MOLLY But you have to marry Lois Lane!
TOMMY I'm not marrying anybody. I'm going to play football. [**To Jimmy.**] Come on!
JIMMY *following him* See you in a bit.

The boys depart. As they do, Jodie speaks.

JODIE Jimmy likes you, Sally.
ANNIE/JODIE Sally and Jimmy, sitting in a tree, k-i-s-s-i-n-g!! [**They make kissy faces.**]
SALLY When you're bigger you get to kiss boys.
MOLLY I kissed a boy already.

SALLY Who was it?
MOLLY Walter Williams. I did it for a jelly-baby.
JODIE If you kiss a boy, I heard you get a real baby.
ANNIE No. I heard your brains fall out.

Freeze. Presenters come forward. Children quietly exit as they speak.

PRESENTER 1 When you're young you have all kinds of ideas about what it will be like one day when you're older. Stick your hand up any of you who think it would be fun to one day have your own house... car...? money...? Maybe even a family? How about going to work? What about deciding for yourself what to wear and eat each day. Go on, stick your hands up, if you want to be grown-up, so my trusty assistant here can count.

PRESENTER 2 **scampering about madly as if trying to count**
[If a lot of hands] Really? Are you in for a surprise!
[Or if not many hands] No? You're smarter than the last lot we performed for.

PRESENTER 1 You see, most kids think how great it will be when one day they are grown up and can do all kinds of things they're not allowed to do now.

PRESENTER 2 But we're here to let you in on the truth about the grown-up world ... and when you know, I bet you'll wish you could stay a kid!

EXTRACT TWO

PARENTING

PRESENTER 1 Now let's take a look at what can be one of the hardest things grown-ups have to cope with. Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be a Mum or Dad one day? Maybe even thought you could do a better job?

PRESENTER 2 Well, it's not as easy as you think ... especially if you have more than one child to look after, who has to be kept out of trouble.

Mum downstage is miming adding ingredients to something at a work surface in the kitchen. Behind her a teenage girl, Stacey, is on the phone. A ten-year old girl, Jackie, is apparently searching for something, and a toddler, Harriet, is crawling around the floor.

STACEY So what you need to do is just play it cool and not make a big deal out of stuff. Yeah. Really.

JACKIE Mum, I'm hungry!

MUM I'm making dinner right now, Jackie. Just be patient.

JACKIE But Mum, can I have some sweets? Where did you put them?

MUM Not right now. Dinner will be ready soon and I don't want them spoiling your appetite.

STACEY No, that's not what he said at all.

MUM Stacey, won't you please get off the phone. You've been on for ages and I was expecting an important call.

STACEY **shushing her** This is really important. [**Back into phone.**] That was just my mum. Anyway, what she actually said was that he said that she is not totally as pretty as you ...

Jackie trips over Harriet on the floor. Harriet starts wailing and sucking her hurt fingers, which Harriet has 'stepped on.'

MUM Jackie, forget the sweets and mind what you're doing! Stace! Please get

off that phone and take care of Harriet. I'm trying to get a meal ready here and I can't do everything.

Jackie sits on a chair sulking. Stacey continues talking but moves to the side with her back to everyone, talking quietly so we can't hear her.

PRESENTER 1 One of the problems with young children is that they need a lot of watching because they don't know what is dangerous.

Harriet is kneeling up and trying to screw one of the fingers she was sucking into an imagined socket.

MUM *alarmed and rushing to pull the hand back* Harriet! No! Mustn't put wet fingers in electric plug sockets. Here, Jackie, you look after her.

Mum sits Harriet on Jackie's lap.

PRESENTER 2 Is that the smell of burning food?

MUM Oh no! The stew!

Mum turns back to lift pan off the stove and stir. Jackie puts Harriet back down on the floor as she finds a tube of wine gums in her pocket, unwraps and starts eating. Harriet crawls into the leg of the table, bumps her head and cries, alerting Mum.

MUM Jackie, where did you get those from? Didn't I tell you not to eat any sweets? And Stacey, will you come off that phone right now and watch Harriet for me.

Mum comes up behind Stacey, who hasn't been listening, removes phone from her hand and switches it off.

STACEY I was in the middle of an important conversation. I HATE you! [*She storms off.*]

MUM The sweets, Jackie. Now.

Jackie sulkily hands them over. Mum kneels beside Harriet who has been crying throughout the above.

Show Mummy where it hurts.

Harriet points to her head and Mum starts stroking it gently.

There, there. Kiss it better. [*Kisses her head.*] Who's a big brave girl? [*Gives her a toy off the table to distract her.*]

JACKIE When's dinner? I'm hungry!

MUM Oh no, the stew. It's ruined. Jackie, just go and look in the freezer and find something we can put in the oven or microwave.

Jackie reluctantly gets off her chair and moves to the door, passing another child, Charlotte, aged 7, who is coming in from playing in the garden.

JACKIE as she passes her Mum's burnt the dinner. Again!

MUM I'm sorry, Charlotte. Dinner's not ready yet. You can go back out in the garden to play with your friends for a little longer.

CHARLOTTE Mum?

MUM *wearily surveying the remains of the stew* Yes, darling?

CHARLOTTE Jenny's Mummy and Daddy have got her a dog. [*Pause.*] Can we

get a dog?...

EXTRACT THREE

LIVING IN YOUR OWN HOME

PRESENTER 2 One day, on the road to becoming an adult, you will move out from living with your parents and have to look after yourself.

PRESENTER 1 You might like the idea, but it does mean you will have to do all the washing-up, make your own meals, and wash all your clothes - even your underwear.

PRESENTER 2 Well, especially your underwear!

PRESENTER 1 Instead of moving out to live all on your own ...

Julie is seen waving goodbye.

... your first experience of trying to do things for yourself might be living with a group of friends.

PRESENTER 2 Like Julie, Sarah and Louise here - three university students sharing a house.

JULIE When's dinner coming - I'm starving?

SARAH *pointing a remote and pressing hopefully* Dinner doesn't come. You have to make it now.

JULIE How do I do that then?

SARAH *still pressing* Well, first you have to go shopping and buy it.

JULIE There must be an easier way!

LOUISE *entering, carrying a tin of beans* What do I do with these?

SARAH *pauses* First you have to open the can.

LOUISE With?

SARAH A can OPENER.

LOUISE Then what?

SARAH Stick them in the microwave?

LOUISE You're such an expert. [*She exits.*]

SARAH Why won't the TV work? I'm pressing the On button.

JULIE You've not plugged it in.

SARAH Oh, yeah. [*She does so.*]

JULIE And you've got the remote the wrong way round.

SARAH Oh yeah. [*Turns it round and round and round.*] No, not that.

JULIE Hurry up! We'll miss *Neighbours*.

LOUISE *entering eating straight from a can of beans* Actually these beans aren't that bad straight from the can.

SARAH & JULIE Yuk!

LOUISE I couldn't figure out the microwave.

SARAH Is there a bit of a pong in here?

LOUISE That'll be Julie's underwear from the last three weeks piled in the corner, waiting to be washed.

JULIE Does anyone know how to use the washing machine? I'm going out tonight and I don't have anything clean to wear.

SARAH Did you say three weeks?

JULIE Well, I didn't even know we had a machine until today.

LOUISE I can tell you what the problem is with the TV.

SARAH What?

LOUISE The aerial's missing.

JULIE You going to share those beans?

Louise comes in and sits amongst them with the can.

SARAH Not so bad. How many cans you got?
JULIE What about *Neighbours*?

Sarah and Louise start cheerfully singing the theme song. Julie eventually joins in.

PRESENTER 1 If you never learn how to use the washing machine, shop, make a meal, or even set up a telly while still at home with your parents, then life without them won't be easy...

EXTRACT FOUR

FINDING LOVE

PRESENTER 1 Love, it has been said, makes the world go round.

PRESENTER 2 Well it certainly seems to put most adults in a spin.

PRESENTER 1 As you get older, you are all going to find yourselves becoming more and more interested in finding that one special person to ...

PRESENTER 2 *pulling face* ... get mushy with.

PRESENTER 1 *flapping hand frantically* Make your heart beat faster.

PRESENTER 2 Make you feel all pink and fluffy inside.

PRESENTER 1 Someone to be your partner ...

PRESENTER 2 Your other half.

PRESENTER 1 One you want to spend the rest of your life with. Maybe even have a family.

PRESENTER 2 Okay, we get the idea. Move on!

PRESENTER 1 There are lots of different ways in which you might meet a person and fall in love, and we are going to show you just a few of them.

PRESENTER 2 You might meet someone special through a chance conversation about a subject in which you are both interested. While shopping at a book store for instance...

A woman stands skimming through a Harry Potter book at a book store. A man, passing by takes note of her and stops. He sidles up close enough to spy what book she has in her hands.

MAN I'd buy that if I were you.

WOMAN I beg your pardon?

MAN That's really good. He's one of my favourite authors.

WOMAN *smiling with amusement* Really?

MAN Yeah. I've read all of his books.

WOMAN *still smiling* Oh? Which one's your favourite?

MAN *not expecting this* Err ... his first one.

WOMAN *having fun* What did you like about it?

MAN The way he ... er ... used words to ... kind of ... tell the story.

WOMAN *acting impressed* Why, that is so true.

MAN *gaining confidence* He makes Harry seem like a real person.

WOMAN Your favourite author, eh? So how come you don't know J.K.Rowling is a woman?!

MAN *thinking quickly* Ah! Yes, well ... you may think that, but he's very shy and pretending to be a woman is just a trick he plays to ... to ...

WOMAN *walking away* Nice try. Better luck next time!

PRESENTER 1 When trying to make conversation, it always helps if you know what you are talking about!

Two lads just wearing shorts mime kicking a ball back and forth as if on a beach.

PRESENTER 2 Some people fall in love on holiday at the seaside.

KEV Beckham lays it off to Gerrard ...

PETE ... to Rooney ...

KEV ... To ...

They gape at a girl in shorts and halter-top who strolls in-between them carrying a towel which she arranges and sits on as if to sun herself. Kev and Pete stand there gob-smacked.

PETE/ KEV Corrrrrr!!!

The girl, Emily, removes suncream from her bag. Pete kicks the ball towards her and goes to retrieve it, posing to show off his physique - which isn't much. Funnier if the actor is small and slender, trying to act like Mr Universe.

PETE Sorry to disturb you. Just came for our ball.

EMILY Oh my! Hello there.

PETE *seeing cream in her hand* Need a hand?

EMILY *pointing at area on her back* Well, there is a place on my back which I can't reach, if it's not too much trouble...

PETE *smiling and taking bottle* No trouble at all.

EMILY Oh, you do have a lovely touch. How long are you here? [***A meaningful look.***]

PETE That depends on ... how long you'd like me to be here for. [***Smiles.***]

PRESENTER 1 And before too long...

Time has passed. The two stand facing, she with her arms around his neck.

EMILY This is the very spot where we first met. Good old Blackpool.

PETE Emily, I have something important to ask you. I don't know quite how to do it, when or where, or what to say, but ... but ...

EMILY *giggling* Yes? Yes? Say it!

PETE *getting down on one knee* W ..w..w..will ... will ... you? ...

EMILY Marry you? Oh yes, Pete. Yes! Yes! Yes! I will! ...

If Pete is small, Emily picks him up in her arms and carries him off to the sound of the Wedding March. otherwise they go off hand in hand.

EXTRACT FIVE

EPILOGUE

The same children as in the first scene.

PRESENTER 2 And that just about winds us up. Now, did we forget anything?

Anne, dressed in overalls with rake over shoulder and a bag in hand walks across stage.

PRESENTER 1 Where are you off to, then?

ANNIE *proudly* I've got a job. Clearing Mrs Henderson's drive. And look! I've packed a healthy lunch - chicken in wheatbread and some grapes.

As Annie walks off, Molly appears in a dress, wearing lipstick.

PRESENTER 2 Hello, Molly. What are you all dressed up for?

MOLLY I'm just going for a little walk around town to see if just by chance I might meet a boy who's nice. I might go to a book shop.

As Molly departs, Sally appears.

PRESENTER 1 Sally, fancy seeing you...

SALLY I can't stop! I've got a date with Jimmy. We're going to go for a picnic and learn how to kiss.

PRESENTER 2 Goodness me!

Jodie comes up behind clutching a wad of papers.

JODIE I picked up all the bills from the kitchen table. I want to go and pay them so we won't have anything cut off. I've got all my pocket money savings here, but I don't think it's enough.

She exits.

PRESENTER 2 *smacks head* Okay. Now I remember what we forgot. We missed out one very important bit of advice.

PRESENTER 1 & 2 Don't be in such a hurry to be an adult.

PRESENTER 1 Sure, you're going to have to deal with all the stuff we've shown you one day, but childhood doesn't last long.

PRESENTER 2 Enjoy being a kid for just as long as you can.