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Lee Pape

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THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA

The Bravest Thing in the World

A Comedy of Childhood in One Act

By
LEE PAPE



PHILADELPHIA
THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

1917

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The Bravest Thing in the World

This play in 1915 won the "Jayne Prize" offered by the Philadelphia Center of The Drama League of America for the best original children's play in a competition conducted by the League. Its first performance was at the Broad Street Theatre, Philadelphia, before a Drama League audience. It was presented by Plays and Players, of Philadelphia, assisted by the Southwark Neighborhood House Dramatic Club, with the following :

CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE CHERRY FAMILY :

FATHER, <i>an extra nice kind of father</i>	}	<i>Mr. William Hughes Mearns</i>
MOTHER, <i>just the best kind of mother</i>	}	<i>Mrs. Maurice Walsh Fagan</i>
GEORGIE, <i>a little boy of six</i>	- - - -	<i>Miss Rose Green</i>
TOOTSIE, <i>a little girl, seven-going-on-eight</i>	}	<i>Miss Emma Fagley Mearns</i>
JACKIE, <i>a big boy of nine</i>	- - -	<i>Miss Fanny Green</i>
THE TINKLE MAN, <i>who has the Box of Wishes</i>	}	<i>- - Mr. Vinton Freedley</i>
NURSIE DELIA	- - - -	<i>Mrs. William Gibbons Morse</i>

TIME OF PLAYING.—Thirty-five minutes.

Notice to Professionals

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THE STORY OF THE PLAY

It all takes place in the nursery of the Cherry children. Georgie, the youngest, isn't very brave. The others, Jackie and Tootsie, have taken the Dark Walk, which is a very scary journey through the long hall with the lights out. Their mother tells them about the Tinkle Man, a fairy who gives wishes to brave children. When the children are alone the Tinkle Man comes with his box of wishes. While the Tinkle Man is telling the others the rhyme of the Googlywatt, Georgie takes the box. He longs to open it—but doesn't. "Georgie is the bravest. Sometimes the bravest thing in the world is to run away from temptation." Georgie gets his wish. He wishes he were brave enough to take the Dark Walk. The Tinkle Man disappears. Father and Mother come back. Georgie wants to try the Dark Walk. "No time like the present." The lights are turned off and they wait until Georgie reappears in the doorway. "I did it."

COSTUMES, ETC.

The parts of the three children may all be played by girls, if desired, although the part of Jackie will probably in most cases be played more successfully by a boy.

FATHER. About thirty. He wears evening clothes, and at first entrance carries his overcoat over his arm. He carries no hat at first entrance, but has one at final entrance. The overcoat should if possible be one with a bright, gay lining.

MOTHER. About twenty-eight. She wears a handsome evening gown suitable for the opera, and a long opera cloak or fur coat. She has a light scarf over her hair at first entrance.

JACKIE, TOOTSIE, GEORGIE. Ages as in cast of characters. All wear pajamas and bedroom slippers. Georgie's pajamas must have a breast pocket on the left side.

NURDIE DELIA. May be of any age. She wears black dress, white apron, small white cap on her hair. At second entrance wears nightcap and nightgown and over the latter a very brightly colored dressing gown.

THE TINKLE MAN should appear young—perhaps about twenty. His costume to be effective should be carefully planned. He is in doublet and hose all of green, except for frilly white cuffs and ruff, and two stripes, black above orange, may be about his chest and upper arms. (These stripes are not necessary, however.) His pointed cap fits tightly, and a wing stands up from each side. His shoes and long hose are of green. On his cap, his toes, his arms, and elsewhere, are little brass bells that tinkle as he moves. Although rather elaborate experience has shown that this costume may be quickly made of inexpensive materials.

PROPERTIES

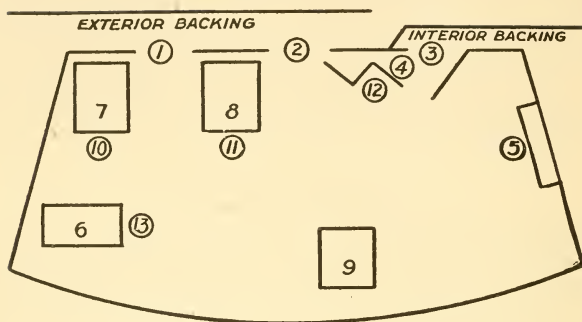
Scattered about the room, on the furniture, etc., at rise of curtain are various articles of children's clothing, and many toys, including a teddy bear. On the table a box of lead soldiers, Jackie's cap, and some books. On the mantel a child's silver cup, with a handle on the side.

For JACKIE, umbrella, sailboat or other toy that requires mending.

FATHER, silver cup, teddy bear, box of lead soldiers, boy's cap, opera hat.

TINKLE MAN, "Box of Wishes." This should be about nine inches long, by six inches wide, by five inches deep. It should be covered with bright yellow paper or cloth, and should be ornamented with bands and buttons of gold or bright brass. Attached to it is a golden band about one and a half inches wide, long enough to pass over the Tinkle Man's right shoulder and let the box rest against his left hip at his entrance. He slips off this belt and box shortly after entering.

SCENE PLOT



SCENE.—The nursery in the Cherry home. Practicable windows up r. and c., at 1 and 2. Window No. 1 should be wide and low enough to allow of quick exit and entrance through it. The exterior backing should be far enough away to allow of a quick leap or dive in exit through window No. 1. Door at 3, up l. Screen at 4, up l. Mantel at 5, l. Door r., small bed for Georgie (6). Up r. beds, a little larger, for Tootsie (7) and Jackie (8). Chairs at foot of all three beds and in front of screen (10, 11, 12, 13). Small but strong table down l. c. (9). Other furnishings suitable for a nursery, good color prints on the walls, etc. There should be a real or false electric light button on the wall l. of the door.

It is important that the lights should be arranged so that they may be suddenly turned off. The effect of the final scene depends upon having a dark stage for a few minutes. There should, however, be light thrown on GEORGIE when he appears at door on his entrance at the end so that he may be clearly seen by the audience. This may be accomplished by setting a shaded light or candle on the mantel, the light being thrown on the door, or by placing a dim spot-light outside and over the door, to throw light down on Georgie.

The Bravest Thing in the World

(It all happens in the room where the Cherry children sleep till they are called in the morning, and frequently longer. Their beds are like the three bears' beds: a little bed for GEORGIE, a middle-sized bed for TOOTSIE, and a big bed, almost, for JACKIE. There are two windows (see Scene Plot) and a door that leads into the hallway. The screen is for the Cherry children to put their toys behind so they won't be under people's feet in the dark. You can see a rocking horse peeping out. Then, of course, other chairs and pictures and things. NURSIE DELIA, who is pottering about setting things to rights, leaves the room soon after MOTHER and FATHER appear.)

(TOOTSIE and GEORGIE, in their pajamas, are roaming about on their hands and knees, like wild bears, or, for that matter, lions or tigers. JACKIE, also in pajamas, is the mighty hunter. He is crouching behind this side of GEORGIE'S bed, aiming his trusty rifle (really only an umbrella) at TOOTSIE, and the wild animals are expressing their feelings by an occasional bloodthirsty, Ooh! Ooh! Suddenly JACKIE fires by going Bang! and quickly half opening and shutting the umbrella. But it seems that TOOTSIE is only wounded by the shot, or maybe missed altogether, for she springs at the hunter ferociously. Just in time JACKIE fires again, and TOOTSIE rolls over on her back with her arms and legs in the air. So she must be whatever kind of wild animal dies like that. GEORGIE, who seems to be only a baby wild animal, is naturally frightened and runs and hides behind the chair by the screen.)

JACKIE (creeping over and putting his head down by TOOTSIE'S head so the baby wild animal will think its mother is calling). It's all right! He's gone away. Come out from behind that tree. (He creeps back to the bed again,

and GEORGIE, thus cruelly deceived, ventures forth, and is immediately shot and rolls over on his back. JACKIE, rising proudly.) Hah, hah!

(Enter MOTHER and FATHER, up L. FATHER has on his going-to-the-Opera clothes and is carrying his overcoat over his arm, and MOTHER looks beautiful in a wonderful long fur coat and a lovely scarf that covers her hair.)

FATHER. Hah, hah yourself!

MOTHER (putting her hands up like a megaphone). All abed going to bed!

(The two wild animals magically become alive and jump up and run over to MOTHER and FATHER.)

GEORGIE. Mother and Father are going to the Opera!

FATHER (raising high the arm that hasn't got his overcoat over it and making his voice sound like opera-singing). They are!

TOOTSIE. Do they do it that way at the Opera?

FATHER. Worse, Tootsie, worse.

(He puts his overcoat on a chair up L.)

MOTHER. Impossible.

FATHER (insisting on it). Worse!

JACKIE (putting the umbrella in the corner behind TOOTSIE'S bed and then coming forward). I've been shooting wild animals. When I grow up I'm going to be a great soldier and shoot my country's enemies.

MOTHER. And how about if they shoot you?

JACKIE. Oh—they won't. Anyhow, maybe I'll be a great hunter, instead, and just shoot lions.

TOOTSIE. I'm going to be a lion tamer and tame them. That's harder than shooting them.

GEORGIE. But they might bite you, Tootsie.

TOOTSIE (down L.). Oh, I'm not afraid of that. I'm not afraid of anything. Didn't I take the Dark Walk last night? (Runs to her mother.)

MOTHER (up R. C.). My brave little girl! (She gets down on her knees and pulls TOOTSIE up against her soft furs.) And it wasn't so awful, was it?

TOOTSIE. It was pretty awful!

(This makes them all laugh.)

FATHER (*up L., looking up from a sailboat that he has been fixing for JACKIE*). Why, Toots, did anything jump out at you?

TOOTSIE. Well—there was something, at the top of the three little steps. (FATHER *shakes his head and laughs as if he didn't believe it.*) With heads! (She *stamps her foot.*)

JACKIE (R.). Oh, I know that thing! You won't see it after about the third time.

GEORGIE (*down L.*). Ooh! What is it?

JACKIE. It's a big—big —

(*He makes both hands look like dragon's claws and comes down L. shooting them out at GEORGIE.*)

FATHER (*sharply, to JACKIE*). Now!

GEORGIE (*running to MOTHER*). Stop!

MOTHER. Jackie! (She *gathers GEORGIE in with the arm that's not around TOOTSIE.*) Never mind, dear. Georgie's going to take the Dark Walk himself soon, aren't you, Georgie boy?

(*GEORGIE buries his face in MOTHER'S shoulder.*)

FATHER. Sure he is!

JACKIE (*down L.*). Aw, he's even afraid to go to sleep unless the light's lit.

TOOTSIE. I'm not.

FATHER (*teasingly*). Huh!

TOOTSIE (*a bit lamely*). — Any more.

FATHER. But you're a head bigger than Georgie.

MOTHER. And you're seven-and-a-half and Georgie's only five-going-on-six.

TOOTSIE. But I'm only a girl, and Georgie's a boy.

GEORGIE (*emerging from MOTHER'S shoulder*). I bet I'll take the Dark Walk in less'n—in less'n two years!

JACKIE. Two years, gee! You'll be pretty near a man, then.

FATHER. That's right. He'll be a man as soon as he takes the Dark Walk. Come on, Georgie, have an elephant ride! (He *hoists GEORGIE up on his shoulder.*) Make way for the Boomboom of Bishwar!

(*Goes R. and then L., carrying GEORGIE.*)

(*MOTHER rises, her arm still about TOOTSIE'S shoulder.*)

GEORGIE (*grabbing almost as though he were drowning and FATHER'S head were a raft*). Put me down! Put me down!

FATHER. What's the matter? I won't drop you. And you're mussing my nice hair!

GEORGIE (*beating his feet against FATHER'S chest*). Put me down!

FATHER. But I've got you tight!

MOTHER (*quietly*). Better put him down, Father.

FATHER (*as he puts GEORGIE on the floor again, down L.*). Georgie! I'm ashamed of you!

(*GEORGIE runs up R. C. to MOTHER, who makes him feel all right again by stooping down and kissing him.*)

JACKIE. The Tinkle Man will never give Georgie a wish for being brave! How about the time I scared away the burgular!

FATHER. Hah! That was the time.

TOOTSIE (*clapping her hands*). That was the time!

GEORGIE. Jackie's the bravest of all!

JACKIE (*looking as proud as he feels*). I guess I am!

FATHER. Come on, Jackie, we'll show 'em how you did it. Then, Mother, we'll have to go.

(*He gets his overcoat and puts it on inside out. It has a gay, bright lining and really makes FATHER look entirely different.*)

TOOTSIE. Father's going to be the burgular!

GEORGIE. Oh, goodie!

FATHER (*modestly, as he turns up his overcoat collar*). I don't know whether I can look the part very well.

GEORGIE (*encouragingly*). Yes, you do, Father. You look like one.

TOOTSIE. Exac'ly.

JACKIE. And here, Father. Here's my cap.

(*Takes cap from table down L. C., hands it to FATHER, and then goes up C.*)

FATHER. That's right. All burglars have to wear caps, don't they?—or else get a bad mark for deportment. (*FATHER pulls cap down on the front of his head like a burglar, only of course it's much too small and makes them all laugh,*

MOTHER *too.*) What's the joke? If I don't look like one I'm not going to pretend!

JACKIE (*by bed up c.*). But you do, Father, you do! You look just like one! Don't he, Mother?

FATHER. Do I, Mother?

MOTHER (*up r.*). Well, I'm sure if I saw anybody after dark looking like that, I'd run.

JACKIE. There!

FATHER (*who trusts MOTHER'S judgment in everything*). All right, then. Let's see, I come in the window, don't I?

MOTHER. No, the door. You're not used to coming in windows.

FATHER. Very well, the door, then. (*Turns toward door, but stops half way.*) But how about my bull's-eye lantern? Ah, here's something!

(*He takes silver cup from the mantel, L.*)

GEORGIE (*r.*). That's mine. It's got G. C. on it, for Georgie Cherry.

JACKIE. And I must be in bed, same as I was the time of the real burglar.

(*He takes a header into the almost-big bed up c., while FATHER goes out up L., and closes the door after him. FATHER opens the door far enough to stick his head in and give a burglar look around. Then he comes in all the way, walking as though the room were dark and the only way he could see anything is by moving GEORGIE'S cup about in front of him like a dark-lantern. MOTHER and TOOTSIE and GEORGIE are sitting on TOOTSIE'S bed, up r., watching, and they laugh as FATHER pounces on GEORGIE'S teddy bear and lifts it from behind the screen up L. and tucks it under his arm.*)

FATHER. Ah, hah! I wonder what crib this is?

JACKIE (*pretending to wake up, and springing to his knees in the bed*). It's the Cherry crib, and you better get out of it quick, too!

FATHER (*after turning wildly about in every direction but the right one and finally making believe to see JACKIE for the first time in the light of the bull's-eye*). Ho, ho! Who's this fine young gentleman?

JACKIE. That's all right who I am, but I know who you are, all right. You're a burglar!

FATHER (*very much surprised and mortified*). Sugar ! There must be something about my appearance !

JACKIE. A baby could tell you're a burglar !

FATHER. Oh, don't say that !

JACKIE. It's true, and you better not lose any time getting out, either.

FATHER. Ha, ha, ha ! Ho, ho ! Why, you don't think you can keep me from crackin' this crib, do you ? Who are you, little shaver ?

JACKIE. I can soon tell you who I'm going to be. Just as soon as I grow up I'm going to be governor of this state.

FATHER (*quite impressed, in spite of himself*). No !

JACKIE. Yes. And if you don't get out of here before I count ten, do you know what's the first thing I'll do when I'm governor ? I'll make a law to cut all burglars' legs off instead of just arresting them.

FATHER. No ! All our legs ! You wouldn't !

(*He rubs his legs at the bare thought.*)

JACKIE. Wouldn't I, though ? And what's more, I'll let everybody know that you were the cause of it, and then no burglar will ever have anything to do with you.

FATHER (*trembling with apprehension*). But I say ! I'm first lookout officer of the Burglars' Club, you know. I couldn't afford to have anything like that happen to me. It'd ruin me. It would mean the end of my social career !

JACKIE. You heard what I said. Now I'll give you ten to get out. One, two —

FATHER (*backing toward window up c.*). Have mercy, young gentleman ! I've got a wife and thirty-four small children to support. (*Coaxingly.*) Just let me steal a teeny little bit !

JACKIE. — Three, four —

FATHER. Just those lead soldiers, then. (*Points to lead soldiers on table, down L. c.*) I can melt them and make counterfeit silver dollars out of them.

JACKIE. — Five, six —

MOTHER. Not the window, Father !

FATHER (*changing his direction so that now he is backing out toward the door*). My night's work will be wasted. The sun will rise in less than an hour. Think of my wife and thirty-four —

JACKIE. — Seven, eight —

FATHER (*almost crying*). We lose our vacation if we're caught working after the sun's up!

JACKIE. ——— Nine ———

FATHER (*who is now in the hall with his hand on the outside knob of the open door*). Oh ———

JACKIE. ——— Ten!

FATHER. Fudge!

(*He slams the door hastily.*)

TOOTSIE (*running down c. with GEORGIE, while MOTHER follows not quite so fast*). That's how!

GEORGIE. That's how he did it!

(FATHER *comes back with his overcoat on properly and the collar turned down, and walks over to the table, L. C., to put JACKIE'S cap back so JACKIE won't have any excuse to rush about the house at school time shouting that he can't find his cap.*)

MOTHER (*up c.*). Oh, but I'm proud of my brave children! I shouldn't be surprised if the Tinkle Man dropped in on you any day now.

FATHER (*up L.*). It's getting late, Mother. Time and tide wait for no man, even when his wife's with him. Hear 'em say their prayers and come along.

TOOTSIE. Tinkle Man, Mother! Say the Tinkle Man first!

JACKIE. Oh, yes, Mother!

GEORGIE. Tinkle Man!

(MOTHER *comes down R., the children around her.*)

FATHER. But I repeat—time flies, and we don't move! Haven't I any voice in this family at all?

MOTHER. Indeed you have. If it wasn't for your voice, these children would never wake up in the morning. I can't make them hear.

FATHER (L.). They're afraid of me, that's the reason! (*He makes a terrible face, sticking his thumbs in his ears and wagging his hands, but the children only laugh as though the idea of anybody's being afraid of FATHER is simply too funny.* FATHER, *triumphantly.*) See!

MOTHER. Father, where's your Opera-hat? I'll have these three in bed by the time you've found it. I suppose you haven't the faintest idea where it is.

FATHER. I have, too. I know exactly. It's under my bed—or in the wardrobe—or on top of it—or ——

MOTHER (*who has been shaking her head at FATHER'S guesses*). It's in the library closet.

FATHER. —— Or in the library closet.

(*Exit up L.*)

MOTHER. Now, anybody that wants to hear about the Tinkle Man! (*She sits on the edge of GEORGIE'S bed, down R. JACKIE sits on one side of her, TOOTSIE on the other, and GEORGIE gets around back and puts his arms about her neck.*)

There's a tinkle at each wrist, there's a tinkle on each shoe —

(Little bells that have been kissed!)—he can talk in tinkles, too.

He moves like corks on water, for that's just how he feels,

And his charming little daughter always follows him on wheels.

He has a box of wishes, and each wish has a wave To float upon, like fishes, and if only you've been brave,

He'll let you put your hand in till you feel your dearest wish,

And catch it by its tiny fin—exactly like a fish!

JACKIE (*after the three of them have stared at MOTHER a wide-eyed, breathless moment*). He'll let you put your hand in till you feel your dearest wish ——

TOOTSIE. And catch it by its tiny fin ——

GEORGIE. Exactly like a fish!

TOOTSIE. You saw him once, didn't you, Mother?

MOTHER. When I was a little girl. He's invisible to grown-up people, you know.

TOOTSIE. You must have been an awful brave little girl!

MOTHER. No braver than my Tootsie. She took the Dark Walk last night.

JACKIE. He's almost all in green, isn't he, Mother? With two wings on his cap.

GEORGIE. Wings on his cap? Is that what makes him move like corks on water, Mother?

MOTHER. I shouldn't be surprised.

JACKIE. Well, when he comes, I bet a thousand dollars I'll be the one, all right. (*Crosses L., strutting.*)

MOTHER. Careful with your money, there, Jackie!

TOOTSIE. He needn't be so sure, anyway. Didn't I take the Dark Walk?

JACKIE. Oh, that! I did that a year ago.

GEORGIE. Mother?

MOTHER. Georgie?

GEORGIE. Do you think I might ever be the one?

(*This seems to strike JACKIE and TOOTSIE as a most deliciously funny notion.*)

TOOTSIE. You!

JACKIE (*running back R.*). When were you ever brave?

GEORGIE. Do you, Mother?

MOTHER. Yes, dear. You never can tell.

JACKIE. I know what I'll wish for. I'll wish for a magic carpet like the one in the Arabian Nights.

GEORGIE. Ooh! Will you let me go riding on it with you sometimes, Jackie?

(*Enter FATHER, up L., with his Opera-hat, and comes down R. to the bed.*)

JACKIE. Maybe. If you're good.

MOTHER. If wishes were carpets, Jackie would ride.

TOOTSIE. I know what I'd wish for. I'd wish for a fairy godmother, like Cinderella's. Or no,—I'd wish—

FATHER. Keep 'em for the Tinkle Man. (*Warningly.*) Mother, I'll be going without you in a moment. And then wouldn't you feel bad!

MOTHER (*overwhelmed at the thought*). I'd never get over it. Come, kiddies, say your prayers and tumble into bed if you don't want Father to go without me.

JACKIE (*as he drops down on his knees*). Quick, you two!

(*While TOOTSIE and GEORGIE are scrambling down from the bed, FATHER walks over to window up C. and raises it.*)

FATHER. Plenty of air, plenty of air!

Good for the lungs and good for the—hair.

(*The three children are now kneeling on the floor in front of bed with their heads against MOTHER'S knees. She is*

seated on bed. MOTHER holds up a hand to let FATHER know it's no time for noise, and the curtain falls.)

(It stays down just long enough to give you time to imagine that JACKIE and TOOTSIE and GEORGIE have been tucked in, and that MOTHER and FATHER have gone to the Opera. Now, if you've imagined that, it will be no trouble at all to imagine that the children have been asleep—oh, two hours. And then the curtain goes up again.)

(The children are asleep in their beds, though the room is still lighted. After a few moments the window up R. between TOOTSIE'S bed and JACKIE'S rises quietly, and the TINKLE MAN bobs lightly in, and as he moves, just as MOTHER said, like corks on water, examining the room and the sleeping children, you can hear his tinkles. Once he goes back to the window and shakes his head reprovingly at the sky. Then he bobs over to the fireplace, bends his knees till he is about JACKIE'S size to discover whether the children can reach the mantel, finds they can't, and unslings his box of wishes and puts it up there. The children have been tossing restlessly, as though undecided whether to stay asleep or wake up and see what's in the room. GEORGIE decides to wake up and see.)

GEORGIE *(down R., sitting up very straight and very suddenly)*. Ooh!

THE TINKLE MAN *(like an echo, as he turns from the mantel)*. Ooh!

(JACKIE and TOOTSIE start up, rubbing their eyes.)

JACKIE. What? What is it?

TOOTSIE. It's the Tinkle Man!

THE TINKLE MAN *(echoing, as he bobs extra-joyfully)*. It's the Tinkle Man!

(The children spring out of their beds and come down R. C.)

JACKIE. But where's your little daughter?

TOOTSIE. Your charming little daughter, who always follows you on wheels!

THE TINKLE MAN *(down C.)*. Not always. That's just it. *(He bobs to the window up R. for another glance at the sky, the children following him.)* She's forever stopping!

She stopped at the little dipper for a drink and at the great dipper for a swim. She stopped at the moon for a piece of cheese—she's always hungry, she's got the moon all nicked up!—she stopped to chase a comet, and finally she stopped to slide on the milky way. But I'll fix her! I'll put butter on her wheels and then she won't be able to stop. (*Looks out the window once more.*) I suppose she's gone home again.

GEORGIE. Where? Where does she live?

THE TINKLE MAN. Why, at my house, of course. Two doors from the Beginning. (*He points through the window, and the children cluster about him, following the direction of his finger.*) There? Do you see that light? That very last one in the sky?

TOOTSIE. That little star that's winking all the time?

THE TINKLE MAN. It does look like a star, doesn't it? That's the lamp-post in front of my house.

JACKIE. What makes it wink like that?

THE TINKLE MAN. The breeze factory is right around the corner, and the breezes are always getting loose and blowing my light. (*Comes down c., the children following.*) I've complained about it, but it doesn't seem to do much good. (*His voice suddenly grows stern.*) And speaking of light, how's this? Here I come bobbing in expecting to meet the bravest children in the world—I've been hearing about you!—and how do I find you? Asleep—with the light lit!

JACKIE. Oh, that's for Georgie. Mother always turns it out when she comes home. I'm the one that scared away the burgular.

TOOTSIE. And I'm the one that took the Dark Walk last night.

GEORGIE. And I'm the one that ——

THE TINKLE MAN. Yes?

GEORGIE. That's going to take the Dark Walk—some time.

(THE TINKLE MAN *laughs, and so do* JACKIE *and* TOOTSIE.)

JACKIE. Going to take it!

(*He and* TOOTSIE *jump and clap their hands, repeating, "Going to take it!" while* GEORGIE, *ashamed, walks slowly backwards up l. with a finger in his mouth.*)

THE TINKLE MAN. Well, that's a start, and that's something. Things without a start almost never get anywhere. Mabel Maud Diminish never had a start. Shall I tell you about her?

JACKIE. Oh, yes!

TOOTSIE. Please!

(GEORGIE *is now sitting on the chair in front of the screen up L.*)

THE TINKLE MAN (*bobbing, when he is half-way through, onto GEORGIE'S bed, down R., where he finishes*).

Mabel Maud Diminish —

(And this is only part)

Could never, never finish

'Cause—she never had a start!

Never an answer when they'd call —

(And this is the remainder)

She never really was at all;

And-they-never-found-out-what-detained-her!

TOOTSIE (*on bed down R.*). Poor thing! And what do you s'pose did?

THE TINKLE MAN. Hard to say. But imagine my surprise, when I bobbed in to see if she deserved a wish, to find she hadn't got there yet—no start, you see!

JACKIE (*down R.*). Oh, say, where is your box with the wishes in?

THE TINKLE MAN (*pointing L. to it*). Up there. Safe. (*The children, including GEORGIE, still on the chair, look at the box of wishes on the mantel, L.*) 'The difficulty is, I'm allowed to give only one wish at a time to a family, or else there mightn't be enough to go 'round. Why, sometimes I bob in on families with as many as nineteen, all deserving wishes. It's pretty hard on me, you know, having to decide which one's the bravest.

(GEORGIE *gets up off the chair and pushes it over to the mantel, L., just under the box of wishes.*)

JACKIE. But it oughtn't to be hard on you here. Scaring away a burgular, you know!

(*He sits on the edge of the bed, at the foot, hugging his knees.*)

TOOTSIE. Yes, but the Dark Walk—for a girl!

(*She, knowing that whatever JACKIE does is worth imitating, sits on the pillow end of the bed hugging her knees. To politely include them both in the conversation, the TINKLE MAN has to keep turning his head from side to side. GEORGIE has now climbed up on the chair, taken down the box of wishes, and stands holding it L. and looking from the box to the TINKLE MAN. Then he turns it round and round, examining it.*)

THE TINKLE MAN. That's just it. You've got to take everything into account. What's brave for one might not be for another, you see. (*To JACKIE.*) It would be brave of you to hang over the clothes line and take a beating, if you needed one, without crying, but your parlor carpet, now, could do the very same thing and it wouldn't be brave at all. Do you see the difference? Do you see how hard it is on me? (*TOOTSIE and JACKIE nod.*) Billy Bunt, for instance. At first glance, you'd have thought he was brave as anything. But he wasn't, so very. Shall I tell you about him? (*TOOTSIE and JACKIE lean toward him, nodding briskly.*) Well —

He took a pirate bad and bold —
 Umpdumped him in a trunk ;
 O how that pirate's blood turned cold !
 And how his eyes with terror rolled
 When, quick as wink-wank-wunk,
 He found himself in an empty hole
 Without a bottom to it,
 Sliding down, down, down like the devil's coal,
 With nothing to eat but an egg and a roll,
 And not much time to do it !

(*JACKIE and TOOTSIE crow with delight, but the TINKLE MAN holds up his hand to show there's more to it.*)

Now picture Billy's parents' joy,
 If Billy'd been a little boy
 With his statue now marking the place !

(*GEORGIE raises the Wish Box to his ear, and grins with delight. He hears the wishes inside.*)

TOOTSIE. And wasn't he ?

THE TINKLE MAN.

Ah, no, dear children, Billy Bunt
 Was a great big whopping elefant,
 And the trunk was the one on his face !

(GEORGIE hugs the Wish Box tight and with a glance at the TINKLE MAN, runs with it up behind the screen.)

TOOTSIE. But couldn't an elephant have a wish—by putting his trunk in, I mean ?

THE TINKLE MAN (*bobbing off the bed and down L. C., followed by children*). Wouldn't do. There's too many children want 'em as it is, without letting in the animals. What if I gave them to lions and tigers, and they started wishing for babies for breakfast ! (*Still looking at the children, his arm is stretched toward the box of wishes, and you can see that he means to take it down. But as a new thought strikes him, he forgets what he went over for.*) Besides, it would spoil their dispositions. The fine thing about animals is, they're satisfied. They hardly ever want to be anything but just what they are. Of course, I've known a few cases where animals were dissatisfied, but they've all ended badly. The googlywatt, for instance, who wanted to be a winkus. Perhaps—but it's not a cheerful thing.

TOOTSIE. Oh, yes !

JACKIE. Tell it !

(THE TINKLE MAN bobs once around the room, the two children following Indian-file, finally bringing up down C., with the TINKLE MAN between JACKIE and TOOTSIE, the latter facing L. He makes slow circles with his hands over their heads which cause JACKIE and TOOTSIE to revolve once and then sit tailor-fashion at his feet.)

THE TINKLE MAN. I warn you, it's sad. However ——
 (*He sits between them.*)

It was a sweet young googlywatt
 With beautiful eyes and a purple spot,
 Who wanted to be a winkus ;
 Sighing sickly sighs, groaning ghastly groans,
 Crying, " Wocka wo wo ! " in pitiful tones
 On the banks of the pale green Drinkus.

Its father tried beatings, its mother tried tears,
But the googlywatt sat there for eighty-nine years,
 A-yearning to be a winkus,
Till the night air finally gave it a chill,
And it shivered and died, a googlywatt still,
 On the banks of the pale green Drinkus.

TOOTSIE. Poor thing! And why did it want to be a winkus?

THE TINKLE MAN. Goodness knows. Like most cases of dissatisfaction, there was very little reason for it. Now if it had been a winkus, and wanted to be a googlywatt, I might understand, because winkuses are usually delicate, and not at all handsome, and squeak when they walk.

JACKIE (*rising*). Well, anyway, we're not animals, and I should think scaring away a burglar —

TOOTSIE. And I should think taking the Dark Walk, for a girl —

THE TINKLE MAN. Yes, and now the only point is, what should I think? It must be a great comfort for you two to know what you should think, but after all, it's not necessary.

TOOTSIE (*who, you remember, is facing the mantel*). Oh! The box of wishes! It's not there! (*Springs up.*)

THE TINKLE MAN (*springing up*). What? But that's impossible, you know, because I—I put it there.

(*He is undoubtedly very much upset and afraid to look, although both JACKIE and TOOTSIE are now on their feet staring spellbound at the empty spot on the mantel.*)

TOOTSIE. But look and see! Look! Look!

(*Still the TINKLE MAN hasn't the courage to.*)

JACKIE. It's gone, all right. (*He runs to the mantel.*) And so's Georgie! Where's Georgie? Georgie must have it.

THE TINKLE MAN (*whirling around and then running over to the mantel*). It is! It's gone! It's gone! My box of wishes is gone!

TOOTSIE. But it can't be, for real, you know. Georgie must have it somewhere. Let's find Georgie.

THE TINKLE MAN (*who would never have thought of that himself in his present nervous state*). Yes, find Georgie

and get it back! (*He is so overcome by his loss that he just stands there repeating, "Find Georgie! Find Georgie!" until JACKIE and TOOTSIE, shouting, "Georgie! Georgie!" have run out up L. into the hall, where you can still hear them shouting for a moment or two. Then the TINKLE MAN bestirs himself and dashes about looking for GEORGIE in the most impossible places, such as behind pillows and under books and rugs and in the grate, and even, as a brilliant thought, in GEORGIE'S little silver cup on the mantel. He talks to himself as he hunts.*) That boy shouldn't have done that. Wherever can he be? Georgie! Georgie! Oh, my box of wishes! Georgie!

(*Suddenly, as he stops down R., he sees that GEORGIE, with the box of wishes in his hands, has come out from behind the screen up L., and is looking at him.*)

GEORGIE (*after a moment*). I never even opened it. (*Comes down L.*) Cross my heart, Tinkle Man! I wanted to, awful, but I—I didn't.

THE TINKLE MAN (*darting over L., snatching the box, and holding it up to his ear*). Oh, he didn't! He didn't! I hear them in there! (*He bobs happily about the room, hugging his box of wishes and singing:*)

A tinkle, a tinkle,
A merry-go-winkle!
A tinkle all covered with dew!
A tinkle, a tinkle,
A merry-go-winkle!

(*He bobs onto the table down L. c.*) A nice little tinkle for you! Do you know what would have happened, Georgie, if you had tried to steal a wish? (*GEORGIE, down L., shakes his head.*) Your favorite wish would have snapped your middle finger right off, and the rest of the wishes would have taken fright and died, and no little boy or no little girl could ever have had a wish again.

GEORGIE. Never?

THE TINKLE MAN. Never.

GEORGIE. Oh, then I'm glad I didn't. But you don't know how terribly nearly I did!

THE TINKLE MAN. Perhaps I do know, Georgie.

(*He bobs down from the table just as JACKIE and TOOTSIE enter up L.*)

JACKIE. We can't — Why, there he is!

TOOTSIE (*coming down L.*). And you've got your box of wishes back!

JACKIE (*coming down L.*). And now I can have my wish. I'm the bravest, you know.

THE TINKLE MAN. No, Jackie, Georgie is the bravest.

JACKIE. }
TOOTSIE. } Georgie?

GEORGIE (*most surprised of all*). Me?

THE TINKLE MAN (*kissing his box of wishes*). Georgie. You'd never suppose, would you, now, that sometimes the bravest thing in the world is to—run away?

TOOTSIE. Brave, to run away!

JACKIE. He's fooling.

THE TINKLE MAN. Ah, but I'm not, though. (*He sits on the edge of the table, TOOTSIE sits on the floor facing him, her back to audience, and JACKIE and GEORGIE draw close to him on either side. GEORGIE is to R. of table.*) The bravest thing in the world is to run away from something you can't even see.

JACKIE (*who still thinks the TINKLE MAN is fooling*). Oh!

THE TINKLE MAN. From a little sugar-and-molasses dwarf called Temptation. And don't think he's easy to run away from—he's invisible, you see. I mean, you don't see, you can't see anything that's invisible to you, just as grown-up people can't see me because I'm invisible to them. The only way you can tell Temptation is near you is by a sudden feeling that you want to do something that you know you oughtn't to do. That's Temptation's breath on you. And his breath is sweet, because he's made of sugar and molasses, and that's another reason why he's hard to get away from. But Georgie just ran away from him, and this time Georgie's the one that gets a wish.

(*He bobs off the table, drawing GEORGIE over a little toward the bed down R.*)

GEORGIE. Oh, then I wish —

THE TINKLE MAN. Any wish at all.

TOOTSIE. Oh, wish, Georgie, wish!

GEORGIE. I wish I wasn't afraid to take the Dark Walk.
THE TINKLE MAN. A beautiful wish! Come, then.

(*He bobs down onto one knee, opening the box just wide enough for GEORGIE to slip his hand in, while JACKIE and TOOTSIE draw near and watch. When GEORGIE takes his hand out again, it is closed tight about his wish. There are voices outside.*)

JACKIE. Mother and Father!

(*Enter MOTHER and FATHER up L. As they come in, GEORGIE crams his wish into the breast pocket of his pajamas jacket. THE TINKLE MAN springs up. MOTHER has put her furs and scarf away, and looks even more beautiful, if possible, in her Opera-gown.*)

THE TINKLE MAN (*prancing gleefully and whispering*):

Hey diddle dee
They can't see me!

MOTHER (*up C.*). Well, what's the meaning of this?

FATHER (*up L.*). Twelve o'clock, P. M., midnight, and all out of bed!

THE TINKLE MAN (*still in a giggly whisper*). See, I'm invisible to them.

(*He bobs all about MOTHER and FATHER, getting himself into the funniest positions and making the funniest faces. The three children, laughing scandalously for that hour of the night, jump into their beds and look over the brass bars as though they were in three boxes at the theatre. MOTHER and FATHER, who naturally would like to know what it's all about, look in every direction, but of course it doesn't do them a bit of good, because the TINKLE MAN is invisible to them.*)

MOTHER. Have they lost their senses?

FATHER. Blessed if I know. There must be something to laugh at.

MOTHER. But there's absolutely not a thing!

GEORGIE (*hardly able to talk for laughing*). They don't see him! They don't see him!

(*He is out of the bed now, jumping and clapping his hands; so are JACKIE and TOOTSIE. THE TINKLE MAN finally ceases bobbing and making faces, blows a kiss to the children and bobs out the same window he came in by up R., leaving it open after him, because where he comes from there are no windows or doors, and he doesn't know they're supposed to be left the way you find them. The children, up R., run to the window and wave and call good-bye to him, and then turn again to enjoy the comical way MOTHER and FATHER are looking at each other in bewilderment.*)

JACKIE. It was the Tinkle Man!

TOOTSIE }
GEORGIE } (*running down L.*). It was the Tinkle Man!

MOTHER. They've been dreaming.

JACKIE (*prancing down L.*). But we haven't—he just went out the window. See, it's still open.

FATHER. The window is open, certainly. I didn't do that, I swear—right over their beds!

(*He goes up R. and closes it.*)

GEORGIE (*down R.*). And he gave me a wish!

(*He feels in his pocket, and by the expression on his face you know the wish is not there.*)

JACKIE (*coming to C.*). Is it gone?

(GEORGIE, *almost ready to cry, nods Yes.*)

TOOTSIE (*suddenly understanding, kneels in front of GEORGIE*). It's all right, Georgie! Don't you see, it must be all the way inside of you already. Why, now you can take the Dark Walk! Don't you feel as if you could?

GEORGIE (*after a moment spent in finding out how he feels*). Yes.

FATHER. Big man! And in the words of what's his-name, there's no time like the present.

TOOTSIE (*springing up*). Do it now, Georgie, do it now!

MOTHER (*coming down R.*). Oh, Georgie, do you think you can?

(JACKIE *crosses to her.*)

GEORGIE. Yes, Mother, I've got my wish. (*Puts his hand over his heart.*) I feel it in here. I'm not afraid to take the Dark Walk. Can I do it now, Father?

FATHER (*coming down c.*). Do you mean, may you?

GEORGIE. Yes, sir, can I?

FATHER. You may. Now we'll see if you can. (*He puts his hand on GEORGIE'S shoulder.*) Now, son, don't run, and don't cry, and don't look back. (*He goes up L. to the door and opens it.*) Sing out when you get to the library, and I'll turn out the light.

(*For just a moment GEORGIE is a bit weak at the knees. Then he feels at his heart again to make sure the wish is still there, straightens up like a soldier, marches bravely across to the door and out.*)

MOTHER (*R. C., calling after him*). Good luck, Georgie!

'TOOTSIE (*R. C.*). Good luck! (*GEORGIE disappears into the hallway, and the rest of them stand looking toward the open door and waiting, JACKIE and 'TOOTSIE each with an arm about MOTHER. FATHER still has his hand on the door-knob up L. 'TOOTSIE is remembering last night.*) After you get past the three little steps it's not so bad.

GEORGIE (*'way off in the library*). All ready!

FATHER (*loudly, as he shuts the door and pushes the electric light button on the wall right by it*). Go!

(*And now the room is as dark as a room can be. You can tell who's talking only by the voices.*)

'TOOTSIE'S VOICE (*after a little while*). He must be up to the three little steps by now.

JACKIE'S VOICE. Shh! (*After another little while.*) I wonder if he's very scared?

'TOOTSIE'S VOICE. Hush! . . . He's pretty long.

THREE VOICES. Shh!

(*Just as you are getting ready to think he is pretty long about it, the door opens, and in the dim light which comes from above the doorway, outside, you can just about make out that it's GEORGIE.*)

GEORGIE (*standing in door up L., as FATHER pushes the button and the lights come on again*). I did it! I did it! (*FATHER, amidst the exultant shouts of the rest of the Cherry*

family, lifts him up on his shoulder, and GEORGIE flings his arms wide.) I did it!

FATHER. Make way for the Boomboom of Bishwar!

(There is an informal, hurrahing parade, in the course of which NURSIE DELIA appears at the doorway in a state of shock and a nightcap, and what must be the most vivid dressing-gown in the world, and the curtain falls.)

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