

NOOK & CRANNY

A bedtime play experience for wee-ones and not-so-wee-ones
By: Brendon Allen

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Note to the reader/performer:

This play is best performed as a bedtime play experience in a cozy bed with however many wee-ones you have around. I would bring your laptop or tablet into bed with you.

If you don't have access to a laptop or tablet to get cozy with, just print off as many copies of the script as you may need for the readers you want to cast.

The Nan character is written as if she is online on a Zoom call. Perhaps this is the way you intend to read this due to isolation, or perhaps for fun, you want to try it this way. If not and you are all in the same space, I think the stage directions will still give you a clear sense of the action.

The stage directions are written with a participatory feel. This is an attempt to make the experience feel like a giant California style bed of joy and laughter, even if your bed is only a twin or a double, maybe a queen. Play along if you can. If your wee-ones are drawing, feel free to take a break and let them do their thing. Grown-ups, feel free to doodle along too to make it more fun. If the stage directions ask you a question, feel free to answer out loud. If you want a record of your event, use the screen recording function on your device and you will have a version of this play performed by your family forever.

I like cozy blankets and comforters, but how you set the scene in your bed is up to you. Maybe your AC is lame or non-existent: if that is the case, you set the stage in whatever way you feel most comfortable.

If you have a small whiteboard or doodle pad available, it will allow you and your wee-ones to take on Doodle's parts and participate in the show. The parts of Chirp and Doodle are designed to be given to young actors who aren't comfortable reading, they can just be prompted by the stage directions.

I hope you enjoy this "bedtime play experience" and I look forward to hearing your thoughts about it online. Break a leg!

Casting:

If any of your wee ones are comfortable reading the script, they are welcome to take on parts. Ideally, this piece should be taken on by a minimum of two readers.

When there is 1 performer:

If there is only one Performer, I would suggest taking on different voices for the various characters. It does get a bit complicated when Mom and Nan start playing the monsters, but you can do it!

When there are 2 performers:

Performer 1: Mom and Nan

Performer 2 (ideally online): Stage Directions, Whisper, Doodle and Chirp

When there is 3 performers:

Performer 1: Mom, Chirp and Doodle

Performer 2: Whisper

Performer 3 (ideally online): Nan and Stage Directions

When there is 4 performers:

Performer 1: Mom

Performer 2: Whisper

Performer 3: Stage Directions, Doodle & Chirp

Performer 4 (ideally online): Nan

When there are 5 performers:

Performer 1: Mom

Performer 2: Whisper

Performer 3: Stage Directions Doodle & Chirp

Performer 4 (ideally online): Nan

Performer 5: Doodle & Chirp

When there are 6 performers:

Performer 1: Mom

Performer 2: Whisper

Performer 3: Stage Directions Doodle & Chirp

Performer 4 (ideally online): Nan

Performer 5: Doodle

Performer 6: Chirp

Social Media:

If posting about this piece on social media, please remember to tag us:

Facebook = Brendon Allen

Twitter = @brendoncallen

Instagram = @brendoncallen, @loveylibrary

Characters:

Stage Directions: If you have enough readers, the stage directions can also be read by one actor.

Whisper: Is a younger member of the household and always communicates through whispers.

Doodle: Is a younger member of the household, even younger than Whisper & getting their kicks out of communicating only through doodles these days.

Chirp: Is the youngest member of the household, very interested in birds and bird-calls. Chirp only communicates through bird sounds.

Nan: Is the grandma (or pa) to Whisper, Doodle & Chirp. Mother to Mom and could be talking to the kids via Zoom or Skype or could be in the same room.

Mom: is the Mom to Whisper, Doodle & Chirp. Can be shifted to Dad, Moms or Dads depending on how you want to perform it.

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This play happens in a cozy bed. In fact the whole set for this play is a bed in a bedroom. Can you see it in your mind? This is the location of nighttime stories for this household.

Can you give this family a last name? Feel free to invent it. Go ahead! If there are multiple suggestions, remember many families have hyphenated names. What name have you settled on?

Say it out loud...

That sounds like a fun name. Make sure to remember it.

Well, this is the (insert the new surname here) family's story. They too are isolating for the pandemic and up to this point they have not been able to spend time with their grandmother, who lives elsewhere. What they have been doing to maintain a sense of pandemic-proximity, is to share a nighttime story-time date most nights. They call their grandmother ("Nan") on Zoom, so she can check-in and share the stories too. Tonight Nan is a little late and Mom started the stories without her. When her call comes in, Mom is already a few pages into tonight's chapter.

Nan is a great storyteller.

Do you have a grandparent in your life? Maybe you are lucky and you have more than one. If you don't have any grandparents, you can just imagine Nan as an imaginary grandparent for you.

Does the grandparent or parents like to tell stories?

Well, Nan is quite a character and she often comes up with some funny stories and memories along the way.

She is also great at sneaking in some toilet humour when you least expect it. If you don't know what "toilet humour" is, maybe a grown-up in the room can explain it to you right now. Usually it involves a silly fart joke.

Do you know any good jokes?

Can you share one with us?

I bet you don't have any toilet humour jokes, right?

I think you and Nan might get along.

Mom is a big fan of fantasy, magic, fairy tales, witches, unicorns, knights, dragons and schools of wizardry. She reads two picture books and a chapter of a novel to her wee-ones every night. What sort of novels do you think they have read?

What are your favourite stories or fairy tales?

It sounds like you would enjoy Mom's stories, too.

Can you pick the book they are reading right now? Make sure to remember it.

We hear the sounds of Mom reading (Insert the name of the book here), she is pretty tired tonight and her voice shifts to a calming roll of sound. It's kind of like the story is being read to you by a blue whale, but you are in the whale's tummy and hear the words from outside. That's kind of like another story you might know.

The story has soothed Chirp (the youngest wee-one) and Doodle (the middle wee-one) to sleep and all they can hear is whale songs in their sleep now.

Whisper continues to listen to the story. Nan's joins the online Zoom call late. Whisper waves to her and starts to make faces at Nan on the computer screen.

What funny faces do you think they are making?

Go ahead, show me what funny faces you've got!

Nan avoids the temptation to say "If you keep doing that, your face is gonna stay that way," in fact, she responds with even bigger and even funnier faces. She is a seasoned pro with faces. What funny faces can the grown-ups reading this make?

Whisper: (Excited, but still whispering to Nan) I learned a new word today. It was not from my box teacher (giggles).

Nan: (also whispering) Your box teacher?

Whisper: That's what I call Mr. Stevens, who's in the computer now, *my box teacher*. I am not used to seeing him in a box and he is not used to living in a box. But he is my box teacher now. I love hanging out in a box, but it doesn't stay a box for long.

Nan: (whispering) Psst...Whisper, is your mom still reading (*Insert the name of the suggested book here*)?

Whisper: Yes, we're in the middle. It's pretty intense!

Nan: Shouldn't you be listening?

Whisper: I am listening. I can listen and do all sorts of stuff.

Nan: Oh, OK. I can barely work my cell phone and here you are juggling all sorts of things.

There is a rustle of the sheets and Whisper takes the computer under the sheets. We can still here Mom reading the book. Whisper has made a sheet fort around the computer screen.

Nan: Whoa, where are you taking me?! The world went dark!

Whisper: Ritual!

Nan: What? What do you mean?

Whisper: That's my new word. Ritual! It means something that you do over and over because it makes you feel good.

Nan: That's right. Where did you come across that word?

Whisper: It's like this. What we do everynight. The stories, the cozies, the cuddles. This is our ritual.

Nan: You are so right. The snuggles are our ritual. I wish I could be there with you. *(brief pause)* Hey, Whisper, can you give your Mom a nuzzle for me? You are a very good nuzzler.

Whisper: OK.

This would be a good time to nuzzle those around you that you are reading with (Audience of wee-ones have a nuzzle).

Whisper: Mission accomplished!

Nan: I think that is one of our rituals, too.

Whisper: Soon, right, Nan. Soon, I can give you a nuzzle.

Nan: That will be nice. Are you ready for some air? It must be getting hot under the covers.

Whisper: Almost. Nan, do you ever get scared of the dark or being alone?

Nan: You know, my dear, I get scared a lot! Tonnes!

Whisper: You do?!

Nan: There are lots of things that are mysterious and not knowing can be scary.

Whisper: But what is a big kid supposed to do? I need to be brave for Doodle and Chirp.

Nan: Well, do you think your Mom is ever afraid?

Whisper: My Mom?! She's not afraid of anything! Today when we were walking. This jogger was, well, jogging and she showed this guy on the sidewalk how to keep the right amount of distance like a boss. She swung her bag Ninja Turtle - styles and the guy went flying to the side. He was like "Whoa!" and I was like "Woah..." She was so brave. She's never afraid.

Nan: Well, it is a time where we have to be brave and we have to step up if others aren't obeying the rules.

Whisper: (*imitating Mom's ninja move*) She was like (*makes a ninja noise*).

What would your ninja move look like? It has to clear a jogger out of the way, let's see it
(Audience of wee-ones gives us their best ninja moves).

Mom: What are you two getting up to down there?

Nan: Oh, busted!

The blanket is removed and Whisper comes out with the computer. Chirp wakes up from a sleep making cute bird-like noises.

Chirp: Twee, Twee, Twee.

Nan: I'm sorry I was late tonight, honey.

Mom: It's no problem, Mom. Oh, look who's waking up. (*to Chirp*) Why hello there sleepy-bird. I thought we may be ready for the nest tonight, but Nan and Whisper's blanket showdown woke you up. Come here. (*Soothes Chirp in her arms and simultaneously Doodle stirs*) Oh, and of course, here's the other one. Hello my sleepy-Doodle.

Nan: (*looking from the screen of the computer*) Aw...Would you look at those sleepy cream puffs! I'm sorry we woke you.

Mom: Are you kids ready to call it quits for tonight? I can tell Nan is full of beans.

Nan: It was Whisper, we were talking about how brave you were when you fought for your space on the sidewalk today with the jogger.

Doodle's face lights up with the memory and they grab a doodle pad and start drawing the jogger.

You can grab your doodle-pad or whiteboard, draw a jogger, just like Doodle does.

Mom: (*to Whisper*) You were talking to Nan about that?

Whisper: You were all (*makes a ninja sounds*) Hee Yaw, Kee Ya!

Mom: Well, I don't think it was quite like that. He did look quite like a ninja, I must say. All masked and in black tights. Wait, does that make me Donatello? Leonardo, maybe?

Whisper: No, you're like Splinter!

Nan: Or, like Rey!

Mom: Oh, I think we are getting our storylines mixed up here. That's Star Wars, Mom.

Nan: Isn't yoda a turtle?

Mom: (*ignoring her mother*) At that moment I didn't feel much like a ninja or a jedi.

Whisper: (*lifting up the computer*) Do you think I can take Nan with me to bed tonight?

Nan: Aww, such a sweetheart.

Mom: That's lovely love, but Nan needs her sleep too. She's not a night light.

Nan: I wouldn't mind-

Mom: -No, we aren't getting into that-

Doodle gets everyone's attention and shows the doodle pad drawing of the jogger.

Did you do a doodle of a jogger?

Let's see it!

Whisper: Wow, that is exactly what he looked like. It's like I'm there.

Mom: You were there!

Nan: Great detail Doodle! Can you show me what your Mom looked like doing her ninja moves?

Doodle goes back to the doodle pad to draw what Ninja-Mom looks like.

Can you use your doodle pad to draw your parent or grandparent as a ninja?

Mom: Trust me, you don't want to cuddle up with Nan overnight. She snores like a transport truck.

Nan: Hey!

Whisper: More like a streetcar!

Mom: You're right!

Nan: Both of you knock it off or I am hanging up this call.

Mom: (Whispering to the three kids) If she could figure out how the buttons worked.

The inhabitants of the bed share a small laugh at Nan's expense.

Nan: I heard that!

Whisper: (lower than usual) It's just I'm a bit scared of the dark...

Chirp: (encouragingly) Twee, Twee.

Mom: Sorry, love, I didn't hear you...you are reaching subtonal frequencies.

Nan: Is that even a word? Subtonal?

Mom: Listen, who set up your stereo for you?

Nan: Oh, that's right you did. I was just gonna Geek Squad-it...*Sub-tonal*...huh!

Whisper: (slightly louder, still a whisper) I'm scared of the dark.

Chirp: (adamantly) Twee, Twee, Twee!

Whisper: Ok, Chirp, ok! It's a bit more than that.

Doodle pops up with a drawing of Ninja-Mom to show.

How did your ninja doodle go?

I probably didn't give you enough time, do you want a moment to finish it. No problem. Finish the doodle before we move on.

Mom: Oh, I like that I get my own ninja mask around my eyes.

Whisper: I think they are bandanas.

Mom: Well, Momma-Ninja has her own bandana! Maybe mine could be tiger-print!

Nan makes a tiger sound.

What does your tiger-sound sound like?

Mom: Whatever is going on in your room at night, it can't be too much for (*she tries out her super hero voice*) Tiger-print-ninja-mom!

Whisper: (a little upset) It's a big deal.

Nan: My dear, she was just joking.

Doddle takes the doodle pad back and starts drawing frantically.

Whisper: It isn't a joke.

Mom: I'm sorry, you are right. Tell me what's bugging you. Doddle seems to know all about it.

Whisper: We talk about it a lot.

Chirp: (forceful) Twee!

Whisper: All three of us talk about it a lot. I think it is starting to freak them out too.

Nan: Aw, what is it?

Mom: Snuggle closer and tell me.

Whisper: There are monsters in my room. They come out in the dark. Doddle can show you what they look like.

This is a point where your audience of wee-ones could take a crack at drawing the monsters if they want to. I know drawing monsters can sometimes be a little scary. Sometimes drawing something makes it less scary. Maybe they can give the monster a name. Where in the room do they live?

Mom: Can you tell me a bit more about what is scaring you?

Whisper: It comes out from my book nook and the sounds are so creepy. It cracks and crinkles across the floor and it comes for me in my bed.

Nan: That does sound scary.

Whisper: It always takes me by surprise. Right when I am about to settle into sleep. Like it is waiting, waiting, waiting.

Doddle: (abruptly shows the sketch of the monster and scares Mom and Nan) Boom!

Both Nan and Mom jump, startled by the unveiling. They are also startled by the fact that Doddle made any sound at all.

Have you ever had a monster in your room?

Can you sketch a bedroom monster on your doodle pad?

Mom: Oh, that is scary. I can see why you're worried.

Nan: There are lots of scary things in the world today, aren't there? I'm sure some of that is sitting on your mind as you try to sleep.

Mom: As scary as things can get, you know they are only things, right? But sometimes our minds are running so quickly that we blow up these scary things to a size that is overwhelming.

Nan: Like that time when I put too much yeast in the bread we were making and it fluffed up and filled my oven.

Whisper: I remember that! I made a lot of money in my swear jar that day!

Mom: Now, there's not a hope in hell you can even find yeast.

Whisper: Ha! 25 cents!

Mom: What? Did I swear? Oh, whoops.

Nan: The point is that sometimes things can get inflated.

Whisper: Doodle still ate that bread. Doodle eats everything.

Mom: What I think Grandma is trying to say, is that the darkness is just that, but when you add your worries to it.

Nan: It becomes a Yeast Monster.

Mom: You say the monster came from your book nook, right?

Whisper, Doodle and Chirp nod their heads.

Are you ready to show your monster doodle?

Now would be a good time.

Mom: Well sometimes you just need to name the fear and tell it that it is not gonna take up your space anymore.

Whisper: Name it? What does that mean?

Mom: *(starts to move away from the bed, she changes her posture to look more like the monster in Doodles drawing or like the monster in your drawing, she changes her voice to*

sound like a monster, she takes on the role of a monster) Errr eww...You must be Whisper...my name is Nook and Nook lives in your book nook.

Whisper: Mom, what are you doing?

Mom: Nook don't know this Mom, my name is Nook. Nook is a big fan of your book collection. Nook is a fan of your room, it is cozy.

Whisper: Nook, why do you sneak into my room at night?

Mom: Well, Nook is a shadow-monster. Nook only can come out in the nighttime. Daylight is too much for Nook. Nook is lonely and Nook likes to visit.

Nan: *(she is adjusting and changing her voice to join in on the fun, she does her best monster voice)* Not so lonely, you always have Granny-... I mean Cran, -Cranny...your best shadow friend. I live in the dark crannies of your room. Cranny.

Mom: *(still in role but annoyed)* Cranny, what are you doing here? Nook doesn't need Cranny right now! Nook is fine.

Nan: Well, you said you were lonely! So, Cranny came to make you not so lonely.

Whisper: Are you guys fighting?

Mom: Nooooo.

Nan: Well, sometimes shadow-monsters fight, too!

Mom: I guess just like Whisper and Chirp and Doodle. Do you fight?

Whisper, Doodle and Chirp nod their heads.

Nan: Well, Nook and Cranny fight all the time.

Mom: Hey! Not all the time. Cranny can just be pushy sometimes and maybe a bit passive aggressive with Nook.

Whisper: What is passive aggressive?

Mom: Nook is off topic. What Nook wanted to say was, was, was...

Nan: Just like Nook told me that maybe now was not the best time for Cranny to visit. Just do that. Name the thing that is scaring you and say, not right now. Can you say that?

Whisper: Not right now?

Nan: Yes, just like that! When Nook starts fumbling around in the shadows at night, just say, Nook not right now! Go away!

Whisper: Nook, not right now! Go away!

Chirp: (aggressive) Twee, two, tweet!

Whisper: That was pretty easy.

Nan: Just keep in mind that these things that scare us are real, but we're strong and we still have our voices. Even when things are really scary. Maybe some nights you can even talk to Nook and maybe you find out Nook is lonely and just wants someone to talk about Polly Pockets or something.

Whisper: I like Polly Pockets.

Mom: Yea, Nook would like that.

Doodle stands up from the bed to join Mom and shows her a doodle of Nook and Cranny. Do you think you wanna doodle what you think Nook and Cranny look like. Remember Nook lives in a book nook and Cranny makes a home in all the dark corners and crannies.

Mom: Is that a picture of Nook? Nook loves this! Look Cranny (shows the drawing to Nan on the computer).

Whisper: Doodle, can I keep this drawing? I think it might help me...you know, remember all this.

Doodle tears off the page and gives it to Whisper.

Mom: (yawns) Nook is getting tired! Nook is going to take these two to bed.

Whisper: Night-night (kisses Doodle and Chirp). And one for you Nook (kisses Mom).

Mom carries them out of the room for bed. They exit.

Nan: Night night to you Whisper, thank you for keeping me company.

Whisper: You're welcome, Cranny! (Pause) You know what is neat! We made another ritual tonight.

Nan: We did?

Whisper: We talked about the scary. The dark things that keep us up at night. Making time tonight for that made it seem less....less, you know, less everything.

Nan: Yes, I know.

Whisper: Cranny, could you pass on a message to my grandma for me?

Nan: Sure thing, I'd be happy to.

Whisper: Do you think she's scared? Maybe she can name this thing? This virus is just a thing, right? It's a scary thing. She tells me to use my voice. I don't know how to be brave all the time. How is she being brave with this thing? 'Cause she seems so strong to me. Maybe you can take over my mom's bandana and give it to Nan. To kick some butt and keep our rituals going.

Nan: (*moved by Whispers words*) I think I might deliver that message personally to her. Shadow-monsters can do that, you know.

Whisper: Oh, Cranny, one more message.

Nan: Sure thing kiddo.

Whisper: To leave the call you press the red button on the right, ok?

Nan: (*with a little laugh in her voice*) Sweet dreams Whisper.

Whisper: Sweet dreams Cranny...Night-night Nook!

Whisper closes the computer and turns off the lights.

This might be a good time to share a kiss and a snuggle with those you are reading this play with. If some of them are online you can blow them a kiss. It won't be long till you can snuggle with them again.

Thanks for all your help with telling this story.

Night-night.

The end