

CLOSETTE

A bedtime play experience for wee-ones and not-so-wee-ones

By: Brendon Allen

Inspired loosely from the picture book *Child of Glass* by Beatrice Alemagna

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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.

This play is designed as a three actor experience, but can also be accomplished by two or even one. All the roles are written gender neutral, so you can approach casting in whatever manner you please.

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 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.

This play does call for one prop beyond a blanket and that's a flashlight. If you have one, great! If you do not, it's no big deal. The flashlight or lights will allow you to play more with the shadow puppet concept that comes up in the play.

I hope you enjoy this "bedtime play experience." Break a leg!

CASTING

Parent: Parent of the child

Wee-One: Child of the parent

Stage Directions

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Wee-one is snuggled next to her Parent who has fallen asleep reading The Bridge to Terabithia. Wee-one watches the glasses on the bridge of Parent's nose as they start to slide down with the Parent's tilted head. The child counts as the glasses slide.

How do you go to sleep most nights?

Do you read books?

Do you have a favourite stuffed animal or blanket?

Do you snore? Come on, you can tell me.

The wee-one in this story, who we call Wee-One, loves to watch her parent fall asleep in bed.

How does your parent fall asleep? Do they ever snore? Come on, you can tell me.

Wee-one: (quietly) One...Two...Three...Four...Five (pushes the glasses back up as they are about to fall off and then starts the countdown again) One...Two... Three... Four... Five... Six.... Seven (a bit more desperation in her voice) ...Eight...Nine...Ohhhhh....Ten!

Parent wakes up at the same time as Wee-one tries to push up the glasses that are slipping down Parent's nose.

Parent: (groggy) What? Did I fall asleep?

Wee-one: I got to ten! New record.

Parent: I probably broke a record for zonking out too...I don't think I even got two pages in.

Wee-one: Not even one, but who's counting?

Parent: You, apparently.

Wee-one: Are you ok? You seem pretty droopy today.

Parent: Is this my therapy session again?

Wee-one: I like hearing about what is going on inside you.

When you have a hard day, how do you deal with all that stuff?

Do you have people to talk to?

Maybe you have siblings that need to talk. It can sometimes be pretty hard to even make sense of all the feelings.

Parent: To be honest, you give better advice than my therapist most days. How are you growing up into such a little person?

Wee-one: News flash! I have always been a person.

Parent: Right! Sometimes we grown-ups forget that.

Wee-one: It's ok, sometimes I forget you were ever a kid.

Parent: Honestly, I had a hard day. All sorts of government paperwork. It gets me down. I think we are lucky to get help, but everyday I wake up and I feel like the rules of the game have changed.

Are there moments when you feel like your routine or what you were expecting to have happen, shifted? It is so annoying. Especially now, when it isn't clear what normal even is.

What do you miss most from not having regular school days?

What do you miss the least?

Wee-One: It sounds like playing *Capture the Flag* with Tanis, she always changes the rules about T.O. and where the boundaries are.

Parent: Sounds like Tanis will have a lovely future in government employment.

Wee-One: I will let her know.

Parent: Oh, please don't. I shouldn't have said that. (*Deep exhale*) I just don't feel like I am built for this kind of moment in time. There is so much in flux and with priorities shifting, I feel like no one knows what to do with its artists. There is so much to learn and if anything the artists are in the business of navigating the unknown. But I feel like all the feelings are just bubbling up to the surface and it comes out as an ocean of worry. And everyday I wake up and I look to the news and everything just seems to be going haywire. Some of it good, some of it scary, and some it is hard to tell. (*looking back to Wee-One*) Did I lose you?

Wee-One: Totally! But that is ok.

Parent: Do you ever feel like your feelings are just too close to the surface? Sometimes I can't even contend with what I am feeling.

Wee-One: Yea. All the time.

Now I have to warn you, this is where the subject changes.

Does that ever happen to you?

Where you are talking about your day and then all of a sudden you are like “who was the first person to eat asparagus and just know that it wouldn’t be poison?”

Well Wee-One has one of those moments here.

Wee-One: I dealt with that rodent problem for you?

Parent: I didn’t know we had a rodent problem.

See what I mean?

Wee-One: Well, by rodent, I mean a sort-of-ghost-thingy.

Parent: Like a ghost of a rat?

Now, I don’t think I warned you that this is a ghost story, but trust me. It is not a scary ghost story.

Wee-One: No, just a girl...but she is like uninvited. So, kind of like a rodent.

Parent: An uninvited guest? Like an in-law?

Wee-One: (repeats) An in-law?

Parent: Whoa, Your Honour, please strike that from the record as well.

Wee-One: (not getting the joke) Huh?...

Parent: Nevermind. Put that in the Tanis-file. Don’t repeat that, ok?

Wee-one makes a gesture of a key locking her lips.

Grown ups ask us to do that sometimes.

Sometimes even our friends ask us to do it.

But in these moments where I think it may come in handy later, I don’t fully lock it away.

How about you?

Parent: Why is this the first I am hearing about your ghost? You would be the first person I would tell if I had a ghost. Especially if it was a ghost rat!

Wee-One: She showed up a few weeks ago in my closet. I think it was my first haunted closet.

Parent: I shouldn’t have shown you the 80’s *Ghostbusters*.

Wee-One: No, she wasn’t like all slimy or screamy or sticky. She was scared.

Parent: So, your closet ghost was the one who was scared?

Wee-One: Yea, she spent the first few nights just crying in my closet.

Parent: Aw, that is super creepy.

Have you ever had any monsters or ghosts in your closet?

Maybe they find it cozy with all the clothes and dust bunnies in there.

Do you know what a dust bunny is? Definitely different from a ghost rat.

Wee-One: It just made me want to help her. But when I approached her she was extra scared.

Parent: Weren't you scared?

Wee-One: I was at first, but there was something about her, that made me feel like she needed to be taken care of. I think she needed a person to listen. *(to Parent)* Do you get that from people sometimes?

Parent: I guess, yeah. Colleagues and friends. These days even more.

Wee-One: I'm gonna try something.

Parent: You've got a look in your eye.

Wee-One: Well, I've watched you direct. Remember that time you brought me into your rehearsal and the actors were being told their lines by the lady with the binder.

Parent: They were taking cues and getting line readings. She was the stage manager.

Wee-One: Yes, that, and they were moving around where they were supposed to on stage.

Parent: Blocking, yes.

Wee-One: Well, I'm gonna see if you can take cues and blocking, and stuff.

Parent: Line-Readings-

Wee-One: *(abruptly pushing the parent like a director)* -Shh. I will put you in place to start.

Wee-One pulls Parent to a kneeling position and moves them to the centre of the bed. The comforter is placed over their head, still showing their face, they are turned towards the head of the bed, where the pillows are. Wee-One sits in front of them. Wee-One whispers in Parent's

ear, giving directions. The Parent crouches slightly and starts softly crying. Parent is playing the part of the ghost. They stage this moment together on the bed. Wee-One explains it live to Parent. The Parent occasionally breaks character and this is indicated in the stage directions. Have you ever had a chance to see your parent(s) at work? Sometimes it can be weird to see people doing something different than what you are used to. Here Wee-One is playing herself in a scene, while Parent plays the ghost. So, Wee-One is directing the director.

Wee-One: Oh, you are back. Are you still sad? It's ok to cry. Is there anything I can do to help you? Are you all alone?

Parent: (in a bad French accent, in-role) Non, Non...Merci.

Wee-One: Oh, you are French.

Parent: Oui.

Wee-One: I don't want this to sound mean, but why are you in my closet? (no reply) Do you have a name?

Parent continues to cry in-role.

Wee-One: Oh, it doesn't matter. Is it ok if I turn on my flashlight? I just wouldn't mind seeing you better.

Wee-One whispers the line to Parent.

Parent: Oui. Ca va.

Wee-One grabs the trusty flashlight that is always next to her bed and shines it on Parent, in-role.

Parent: (ad-libbing in French) Oh, mon dieu!

Wee-One: Sorry, I didn't mean to get your eyes. (brief pause) Oh, wow! Your tears are so beautiful, they shine in the light, like crystals.

Parent: (ad-libbing) Well, you see, I am magic-

Wee-One: She did not say that, please don't make up the script. I will give you lines.

Parent: Desole. (drops the accent) I am used to the being the one who gives the-

Wee-One: Quiet on the set!

Parent: I don't ever say that-

Wee-One: I can re-cast you know. Brambles can take directions if I have enough treats.

Parent: (Low) I'll behave. Don't wake up the dog.

Wee-One: (takes a deep breath) Where was I? Oh, yes. Why are you crying? Did someone hurt you? (Giving directions) You nod your head.

Parent nods.

Wee-One: I get a bit closer and see that her skin is crystal. Clear even. We sit there quietly and I hold out my hand. She grabs it. (repeats it as a direction) She grabs it.

Parent grabs Wee-One's hand.

Parent: (no accent) This is nice.

Wee-One: As I get a closer look at her hand, I can see that I can see right through it. She tells me that she is... (Wee-One whispers to Parent)

Parent: (accent) Transparent.

Wee-One: I could see my hand through hers. She was not quite like how I imagined a ghost. I could even see tiny cracks on her hands.

Wee-One whispers to Parent.

Parent: (accent) I am sensitive.

Wee-One: She tells me a giant story about how she was born. She tells the story with big hands and her hands catch my flashlight. Her life story becomes a shadow story on the walls.

Can you make shadow puppets? They are lots of fun.

Can you imagine the story of this girl?

Where did she come from?

Can you try telling this story with shadow puppets. It helps to turn the lights down low.

You might be able to make shadow bunnies, shadow wolves and other characters; add them to the story of the girl in the closet.

If you want, you could make an entire shadow-play that you could perform for your parents or friends.

What would you call the play?

Wee-One: News of her birth spread for miles around. The people came from far and wide. They wanted to see her. They wanted a glimpse, a touch, to take photos, and write on the internet-

Parent: (no accent) -And judge.

Wee-One: Yes. Everyone had an idea of who she was and what should happen next for her. They had lots of advice for her parents. But something started to bother the people who saw her. What bugged them the most was her ideas. Because she was, sort of like glass, her ideas could be seen. Her thoughts sort of floated in her head like balloons that people could see.

Wee-One whispers to Parent.

Parent: (accent) This bothered my parents the most. It was easy when I was a child, as my thoughts were the thoughts of a child, but as I grew up. So, did my thoughts. It was impossible to hide my thoughts from others.

Wee-One: The words of others led to more cracks. (*taking on the voice of an adult*) “Can’t you keep your thoughts to yourself?!” (*another grown-ups voice*) “You should be ashamed!”

Do you think you can create a shadow puppet of the girl and her transparent head that shows all her thoughts?

What would that look like with shadow puppets?

Parent: (no accent) What did she do? Umm, I mean, what did I do?

Wee-One: She ran away, she kissed her parents and left.

Parent: What! She just left?!

Have you ever wanted to run away?

Sometimes people just need some space. I hope you never had to run away to get the space you need. Maybe just hide in your closet for a bit.

Wee-One: She wandered for a long time and found places where she felt safe. She started making a habit of finding other children and following them home.

Wee-One whispers in Parent’s ear.

Parent: (accent) Everywhere I went, it was the same thing. People being mean because of how I looked. But other children didn’t judge and I could be safe.

Wee-One: I started calling her Closette in my mind. But I never said it out loud. *Les Miserables* was the only real french story I knew, so “Cosette” turned into “Closette” because she had settled in so comfortably in my closet.

*Parent briefly hums “One Day More” or another tune from *Les Miserables*.*

Do you know this musical? Do you like musical theatre?

How do you feel about singing? Is there a song you could share right now?

Parent: (with accent) Talking with you makes me feel better.

Wee-One: She was feeling accepted by the kid and the cracks started to go away.

Wee-One whispers in Parent's ear.

Parent: (with accent) I think it is time I go home. It is a long journey back and maybe I should start tomorrow.

Wee-One: When I woke up this morning there was a message written on the glass. I don't even know what all the words mean.

Parent: (no accent) What do you mean, she wrote on the glass?

Wee-One: (passing the flashlight to Parent) Here, go see for yourself.

I absolutely love secret messages. Have you ever written with invisible ink? Mirror messages or lemon juice secret messages. There are so many ways to leave a secret mark. Even Closette has a way.

Parent leaves the bed and goes to the window.

Parent: What! This is like frost on the... How did you-? How did she-?

Wee-One: What does it say?

Parent: (reading) Sparkling-

Wee-One: (giving a direction) -Like Closette.

Parent: (with an accent) Sparkling, luminous, sensitive, transparent, resolute. Bisou.

Wee-One: What does “bisou” mean?

Parent returns to the bed and gives Wee-One a kiss on the head. Did you know any fun french words? Which word is your favourite?

Parent: It means kisses, kind of like giving a kiss before saying goodbye. I think you really helped Closette.

Wee-One: What about “luminous” and “resolute?”

Parent: (still mystified) Who wrote this message?!

Wee-One: I told you, it was Closette.

Parent: Luminous means like, bright and wonderful. Like you!

Wee-One: Ha, thanks.

Parent: Resolute means confident, and whole...Closette was a bit broken and scared. I don't think she feels that way anymore. (Pause) Seriously, how did you write that on the window like that?

No response from Wee-One.

Parent: Well, I think those words can help me too. Having to justify my existence everyday has me feeling not-so-luminous these days. But Closette is right. I can be sensitive, while remaining resolute.

Wee-One lets out a big yawn

Parent: Did I lose you again?

Wee-One: Nope...Ready for bed.

Parent: Thanks for adding some sparkle to my night. You should be an assistant stage manager on my next show. If there is a next-

Wee-One pulls Parent's head close.

Wee-One: Bisou! (softly kisses Parent)

Parent: (with the accent) Bisou!

Wee-One: (holding up *Bridge to Terabithia*) Don't forget your prop. I can see the worry coming back. Be luminous and resolute.

Parent: See you in the morning. Bonne Voyage Closette!

Exits humming a tune from Les Miserables.

What do you think happens at the end of Closette's story?

Do you think she gets home?

Does she take a train?

Does she live in Canada or France, or another french speaking place? How many countries in the world do you think have french as a language?

Are things different for her now? Did her parents miss her?

I like to imagine that at the end of the story, people have changed somehow. How do you think the wee-one in this story changes by the end of this play? Has the parent changed

Now that the play is done, are you any different? Maybe you are a bit more luminous? Maybe not.

Wee-One turns off the flashlight.

Sweet Dreams.