

RUMPUS

A tinker 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 story time or weekend play experience. The performance is meant to inspire activities and fun on a sunny day when maybe you do not have any plans yet.

If you do not have access to a laptop or tablet that all the actors can read from, just print off as many copies of the script as you may need.

The stage directions are written with a participatory feel. This is an attempt to make the experience feel playful. Play along if you can. If the stage directions ask you a question, feel free to answer out loud.

The play works best with a cast of three, but can be done in any way you choose. The casting is flexible to allow for name changes, gender flexibility and ways to personalize to match your household. It is up to you. Each scene does not go beyond two characters speaking, so you can share all the parts, including reading stage directions.

This play presents the opportunity for the actors to engage in making recyclable instruments and to plan for an environmentally friendly parade. Maybe you want to plan a pandemic parade for someone's birthday or maybe for no reason at all.

This tinker play pays homage to Maurice Sendak's *Where The Wild Things Are*, and a few lines in the epilogue have been respectfully paraphrased.

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

Let the wild rumpus begin!

CASTING

Mo/Maurice: Is the birthday boy, who is coming off of two weeks of extra isolation due to a bad case of poison ivy. He has just moved to a new neighbourhood. His cousin, Knox, often takes care of him. Mo's father plays in the symphony and, before Covid, took him to concerts all the time. Mo's dad has had to be away for most of his birthday because he is involved in some trial run performances and children are not allowed to attend.

Knox: Is the cousin of the birthday boy. Knox goes to the neighbourhood school, volunteers at the library and is an avid runner. They know that Mo was feeling anxious about his birthday, so Knox has a plan.

London: An industrious 4th grader in the neighbourhood, with a passion for guitars.

Mom: London's Mother, very busy trying to juggle at-home responsibilities and work tasks.

Pike: A youngster in the neighbourhood with plans to create a huge design empire.

Lark: Pike's partner in design.

Dada: Father to Max & Web. Reflects on his high school years too much and definitely thinks of the glory days of his high school band way too much.

Max: A youngster from the neighbourhood who wants to channel their energy into being a drummer.

Web: The younger sibling to Max who basically wants to do everything Max does....so, drummer, it is.

Pina: A crafty dancer in the neighbourhood with a flare for repurposing old clothes into musical/movement instruments.

Grammy: Pina's grandmother.

Chas: An older gentleman in the neighbourhood who works at the public library.

Stage Directions: It can be fun to have a separate performer read the stage directions.

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We see Mo/Maurice and Knox hanging out in the living room. Today is Mo's birthday, but Mo has recently moved to this neighbourhood and spent the last 2 weeks recovering from a bad case of poison ivy. As a result, Mo is feeling pretty down about the day in general. Have you ever had to miss school for being sick? It's a bummer. Nothing like the amount of time we missed due to the pandemic though. I think Mo is excited to get to know people in his new neighbourhood, but it's hard to have your birthday be the first day you can leave your house. What would you do?

SCENE 1:

Mo: So...the layer of pink became something I kind of liked. It felt cool. Cool, like cold, like an air conditioner shirt. At first it was weird, but then I kind of liked it. It was time together with my dad. Weird time, but still special.

Knox: Are you talking about calamine lotion?

Mo: I don't know the name, but it's itchy cream.

Knox: Sounds like calamine. I used it when I got into a bush of poison oak.

Mo: For me it's poison ivy.

Knox: We're like the poison gang.

Mo: We could be a band.

Knox: Yeah, that would be a cool band name! The Poison Gang!

Mo: I miss music.

Knox: Music still exists, the virus didn't kill music.

Mo: But hearing it played live. Like what my dad is doing right now. But I can't go today, cause it's like experimental stuff and old people at the symphony don't like kids.

Knox: Not all old people.

Mo: Not all, but *symphony people* do this head-turn-thing every time I get into the music. I mean, what's the point if you can't sing along?

Knox: Maybe they need an air conditioner shirt to help them chill a bit.

Mo: Like shower them in itch cream (*makes a hose sound*).

Knox: We could add some streamers and balloons to make it a birthday thing.

Mo: That would be so sweet.

Pause.

Knox has come over to watch over Mo, but I also think Knox knows how sad Mo has been. I think Knox has a plan.

Knox: Kind of a wacky birthday for you this year, huh?

Mo: I think my party is officially cancelled for this year.

Knox: What?!

Mo: Maybe if my birthday is cancelled, the year can be kinda like a do-over.

Knox: Like you don't age until next year?

Mo: Exactly. Like I could be seven for a whole other year.

Knox: Is that what you want?

Mo: No, not really. I'm pretty done with seven.

Knox: Heck, you could live forever that way.

Mo: But I wouldn't get any birthdays, at all.

Knox: And that kind of sucks, doesn't it?

Mo: More than anything. (*Hears a knock at the door*) What's that?

SCENE 2:

Now this play jumps around a little bit. Don't worry, we will get to the knock on the door soon, but for now, I want you to go back in time with me just a little bit and meet London. London is in

the middle of a project. She's building a guitar. If you feel like building a guitar, there are many ways to do it. Here's one suggestion: <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Rubber-Band-Guitar>

London: Do you have a shoe box?

Mom: Basement.

London: Rubber bands?

Mom: Junk drawer.

London: Tape?

Mom: My desk. I think. I can never find it when I want it.

London: (unclear exactly on the name) PVC pipe?

Mom: No can do. You putting in a new bathroom? What's going on?

London: A big cardboard tube, then.

Mom: Check the recycling bin. You gonna tell me?

London: I'm not breaking any laws.

Mom: You better not be. Okay, cool, sounds good.

London continues tinkering and building a DIY guitar.

SCENE 3:

Pike and Lark are starting a business. They want to be designers. In fact, these aren't even their "real" names. They are in charge of creating decorations for the neighbourhood parade. This is the surprise that Knox has planned for Mo's birthday. Visions of musical instruments, streamers, banners and all filling the street. Knox has been clear about how to do this during a pandemic and the kids from the street are very excited. Would you like to make some banners and decorations? Maybe you have an upcoming celebration or event, or maybe you are preparing for your very own street parade. Pike and Lark are using all recyclable materials and reusing materials that have already been used once. If you want some pointers for your crafting, look here:

<https://www.momtastic.com/family/diy-for-moms/diy-crafts-for-mom/102382-making-a-paper-party-garland/>

Pike: We have received our first design gig, Lark.

Lark: You mean "Pike & Lark Events!!!"

Pike: It sounds so cool and our new names sound really good together.

Lark: Yeah, I think I'm good with Lark.

Pike: If not, this is the time to change before we launch our brand. Speak now!

Lark: Right...what does "launch our brand" mean?

Pike: Like we are this (*indicates each other*) forever.

Lark: Oh, like I'm "Lark" forever?

Pike: Yes...

Lark: Can't I try it on for a while?

Pike: Well, maybe this first contract can be experimental and we don't have to have business cards.

Lark: We have business cards?

Pike: Well, not if you can't settle on your name.

Lark: Who did we sign a contract with? Do we get paid?!!

Pike: This is an exposure event to build up brand awareness.

Lark: Sounds like a fancy way of saying "no money," right?

Pike: Well, Knox from the Running Club at school asked us to do this for their cousin, Maurice, who just moved into the neighbourhood.

Lark: I don't know Maurice.

Pike: Nobody does, apparently Maurice caught a really bad case of poison ivy and has been trapped inside for weeks. Just as they moved in. But, today is Maurice's birthday and he can finally go outside.

Lark: Where did he catch poison ivy?

Pike: I think he was camping. Anyway, we need to get on the design, the parade is only a few minutes away, so we need to get banners, garland and streamers.

Lark: A few minutes already?! And all of it has to be made from recycled material!

Pike: This is gonna be so much better than the makeover shows I watch with my mom.

Lark: The neighbourhood will never be the same, once they have met Pike & Lark Events!

Pike: Are you liking the name, now?

Lark: You better make some business cards.

Pike and Lark frantically start their party prepping-process.

SCENE 4:

Dada is cleaning the kitchen and looks at the chore-wheel on the fridge. Do you have chores you do at home? What are they?

Dada: You wild things need to get out of the house, you have been hypnotized by *RoadBlocks* all morning. You need to take out the recycling. There are huge cans filling up the garage because you didn't take out the bins last week. *(speaking to himself)* I have now learned the error of my Costco ways. There is only so much chilli someone can eat over a pandemic.

There is the sound of commotion from upstairs.

Dada: What are you up to? Hey, what are you doing up there?

Max: *(voice from upstairs)* Do not disturb!

Dada: Oh, not the sign, don't put the "Do not disturb" sign on the door. I wanna know. It sounds cool. Are you making music? You know I had a band in high school!

Max & Web: *(voices from upstairs)* We know!

Web: *(voice from upstairs)* You've told us a trillion times!

Dada: You know the drummer is the true heart of a solid band.

Max & Web: *(voices from upstairs)* We know!

Dada: Are you making skin drums, wood drums, steel drums,...what?

*They are indeed making drums for the neighbourhood parade. Would you like to make some?
There are so many cool ways to make drums, but here is a start:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i877bBuWvus>

Max: (voice from upstairs) We got it covered Dada!

Dada: You good for drum sticks? Cause I have some extra in the base-

Web: (voice from upstairs) Dada, we said we got this!

There is the surge of drumming sounds and marching around the room upstairs.

Dada: Aww, man, a marching band? That is so cool! Marching bands are totally cool again. You guys need a triangle?!

Max: (voice from upstairs) We've got the triangle covered, Dada.

Dada: Do you need a roadie?

Web: (voice from upstairs) Sure!

Dada: What can I do to help?!

Max & Web: (voices from upstairs) Could you take out the recycling!

Dada: Yes, I'm on it.

SCENE 5

Grammy is in charge of watching Pina this afternoon and she has come downstairs in an elaborate outfit made up of all sorts of cloth bracelets covered in bells and other jangly things. Grammy is blocking the door so that Pina can't get out.

Grammy: So, tell me again how this all started? Where are you going?

Pina: Maurice loves music and he goes to the symphony all the time.

Grammy: Who is Maurice?

Pina: I don't know.

Grammy: You don't know.

Pina: Well, he lives on the street now.

Grammy: Now?

Pina: Well, forever, now.

Grammy: Forever, now?

Pina: He moved here.

Grammy: OK, gotcha. But why have you turned all your brother's donation pants into bell bracelets and anklets and...

Pina: Don't forget around my neck.

Grammy: I never thought I would regret teaching you how to sew, but here we are.

Pina: I need to go Grammy. It's gonna start and I will miss it.

Grammy: Where does it start? How long does it last?

Pina: We have the same protocols as the public pool. 6 feet apart, no touching and *(yells wildly)* Getting Down!

Grammy: What?!

Pina: Well, that one I added.

Grammy: How many tutus do you have on at one time?!

Pina: All of them!

Pina has crafted a very expressive way to share her passion for dance and music. Maybe you want to do the same. You don't have to stick to the suggestions from here, you can make anything you want. Here is another link to help spark your tinkering spirit:

<https://redtri.com/homemade-instruments/slide/20>

SCENE 6

Chas is an older man from the neighbourhood and he's been picked to get the parade started. The General Marshall of the event. He is sharing his speech out on the street like a town crier.

He's not normally very loud, but for this occasion he has gone all out. As he shouts, all the participants come out of their houses, get their instruments, banners, signs, masks, etc.

Chas: Hear ye, hear ye!

I call on the attention of all those who can walk, talk and make noise! Even those who struggle to walk or can't walk, join in on the fun in whatever way you can. The wild rumpus is upon us!

You may not be aware but today is a very special day for one of our new residents.

Maurice is having a birthday!

Now, I was asked by Knox to be the Grand Marshall of this illustrious event and I must say, I have never been more honoured!

Knox is an amazing tutor at our after school drop-in at the library, and I have had the pleasure of working with them for at least a year now. I must say, it has been quite some time since I warmed up my storytelling voice and by golly this feels good.

The libraries have been closed for months and I haven't had a chance to rumble, stomp and WOOP for a while!

You will see that we are all wearing masks, some more colourful than others, you will see we are all carrying instruments, some more engineered than others. Personally, I decided to dust off my old baritone from my days in the cadets (*lets out a blaring note on the brass instrument*) and it too is a little dusty, but this wild rumpus is not about me! It's about celebrating Mo!

Here you see drums, guitars, recorders, clarinets, bells, streamers, signs, singers, dancers and all forms of merry-makers.

So, take a note from an old fart like me.

The sun is out! Grab a pot or a pan, grab a spoon or a spatula, put on your masks and join in the fun!

Keep six feet apart and let's see what this birthday parade can do.

It's true that viruses can spread like the dickens, but when I heard Knox's idea to celebrate Maurice, I have to say it warmed my heart. So I say, hear ye, hear ye, grab your noisiest joy-maker because even 6 feet apart and with masks on, warm hearts can spread, too.

Come gather around, come rumpus, because Maurice is turning 8 and you are invited!

SCENE 7

Now we are back where we started. Do you remember Mo and Knox? I'll even repeat a few lines so you're sure you didn't miss anything.

Mo: I could be seven for a whole other year.

Knox: Heck, you could live forever.

Mo: But I wouldn't get any birthdays.

Knox: And that kind of sucks, doesn't it?

Mo: More than anything. *(Hears a knock at the door)* What's that?

Knox: I think there's something going on out on the street.

Mo: It's not garbage day.

Knox: Nope, must be something else, you should go check it out.

Mo opens the door to an explosion of homemade instruments, cheers, birthday wishes and the sound of his new neighbourhood making him feel at home. At first Mo is taken aback and unsure how to proceed. The street erupts into a very funky version of "Happy Birthday" and Knox picks Mo up in a huge hug.

Knox: I love you Mo and you are gonna love this neighbourhood!

The sound of cheers is heard.

Mo: *This is the greatest symphony I have ever heard!*

EPILOGUE

An epilogue is kind of like the story after the story.

Knox: That day was such a blast. Mo was so surprised and he met so many new people from his new school out on the street. It had been so heartbreaking to see Mo so sad in the world he had created in his room. The plan was that the camping trip was going to be a special treat, right after the chaos of the move, but the poor little guy stumbled onto the wrong path with the wrong plants. Then his pandemic isolation became a double isolation.

But out on the street with the drums, the guitars, the ribbons and the cheers...I've never seen Mo smile so big as he danced along while the sun danced through the leaves of the trees. I think that's when I could see it in his eyes that he'd dropped the idea of this being a do-over year.

My absolute favourite moment was when Mr. Chas from the library, who had the biggest smile I've maybe ever seen, took off his paper crown. He walked over to Mo and he took a knee.

I don't know why I thought Mr. Chas would be a great choice to Marshall the parade, honestly. He's not loud, he's not outgoing, and I've never seen him march. But he exploded onto the street with a baton made from a whisk, two paper towel rolls taped together and a yellow dish glove to make it look regal, and did he ever work the crowd. Maybe I sensed that he was kind of like Mo, he deserved a moment where anything he wanted to happen, happened.

There he was kneeling to Mo and he held up his baton to Mo and he said: "Today you are the king of all wild things, no longer a boy, pretending to be a wolf, pretending to be king, today you are king." He tapped Mo's shoulders like he was being knighted, he handed him the baton and placed the paper crown on his head. The only smile that was bigger than Mo's was Mr. Chas.

I swear I could see Mo float up into the air, above the parked cars, beyond the canopy of trees, past the hydro lines and the rooftops. Mo was the king in that moment without a single person touching him or lifting him, Mo was flying.

The End.