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*I Don't Want a
Walky-Talky
Doll!*



by Connie Dudley Cummings

Independent Study CMA 499

advisor-

Donald B. Dalton

subject-

I DON'T WANT A WALKY-TALKY DOLL!

a one-act play

written and directed

by

Connie Dudley Cummings

**PRESS
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Playwright Connie Cummings

Student - Directed Play To Premiere December 9

Connie Cummings is directing and producing a play she has written entitled, "I Don't Want A Walky-Talky Doll!" It will premiere December 9 and 10 at 8 p.m. in PSU's Performing Arts Center. Admission is free.

"It's not for kids," she explains, and adds, "but it's about kids, what we do to them -- what was done to us, I suppose."

"It's a dramatization of the socializing process children go through, and more," she continues.

Connie is a senior from Fayetteville who has a contracted major in writing with a concentration in drama. She is married and has a seven year old son.

Her interest in playwriting is new. She played a part in the spring semester production, "The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-In-The-Moon Marigolds" and decided writing and directing a play would be an even more exciting challenge than acting in one.

"I proposed writing and producing a play of my own for my Independent Study," she recalls, her green eyes surveying the empty stage from where she lounges in her first row seat. Then she adds with a sigh that is drowned in the vastness of the empty auditorium, "But I didn't have any idea then how involved it would be!"

The actual writing of the play began during the summer and was finally completed at the end of October.

"I wasn't satisfied with the script, but there just wasn't any time left for revising it anymore," she explains with a shrug of her shoulders. "I had to cast the parts and start rehearsing."

"So, it'll just have to go as is," she says, then adds with hands clasped, "for now."

There are four major roles, all female, and all played by PSU students, except for the part of Dolly, who is a "live" doll. Connie's seven year-old niece, Renee Holland, plays that part. Cathy Locklear, from Pembroke, plays the little girl Dolly belongs to. Katy Brown, from Fayetteville, plays the impatient mother. And Vivian Glover, from Dunn, plays the part of the young grandmother.

"I feel really lucky to have such a good cast -- they're terrific to work with," Connie says with a note of appreciation in her voice. "I thought I would be so nervous telling people what to do -- you know, playing the boss," she smiles and adds, "but they're great."

Connie is playing a bit part, a giant "Walky-Talky" doll who chases the little "live" doll around in one scene.

"I really didn't want to act in it at all!" she exclaims brushing her short brown hair away from her face, "but Renee said she wouldn't let anyone else chase her around but me!" She shakes her head in mock exasperation.

"I didn't want her to rewrite my script and run off the stage during the performance" she adds, forming a mental picture of that disaster on the stage in front of her. "I can just see it!"

A partial set will be used; rugs, furniture and possibly some doorframes for a touch of realism. Lighting and music will contribute to the effect of the performance. Connie is using music from the "Switched On Bach" album recorded with a moog synthesizer. Rob Van Hoy has volunteered to be the sound technician and Don Dalton has volunteered his services as lighting designer.

"With all that help, I think it's going to come off pretty well," she says with optimism in her voice.

"I've worked hard on this, and I'm learning an awful lot," she says and pauses reflectively. "And that's what I set out to do," she adds.

Connie is finishing up her course work at PSU this semester and plans on graduating in the spring. She started out as an Art major several years ago in Tennessee, then changed to Urban Affairs. But by the time she enrolled at PSU in June of 1975, she had decided to go for a major in writing.

"I took the elementary acting class just for fun last fall," she explains, "and discovered I really liked drama as a medium of expression."

"My limited experience shows, of course," she admits, but adds defensively, "This is my very first play, you know."

She hopes the experience with seeing her play through all its stages will help her to write more and better plays. She admits that some parts are a little weak but expresses confidence that it will be an entertaining hour of theater.

"I Don't Want A Walky-Talky Doll!"

A brand new play opens in the Performing Arts Center here December 9 and 10 at 8 p.m. Written and directed by Connie Cummings, a senior from Fayetteville, the play is called "I Don't Want A Walky-Talky Doll."

Four PSU students and a second grader have the major roles in this student production.

Cathy Locklear plays the role of Cindy, the little girl who resists the pressure to "straighten up and fly right." The title of the play is a line of hers. Cathy is a senior with a contracted major in Creative Writing and Journalism. This is her first role on stage at PSU. She is married and lives in Pembroke.

"I'd always wanted to be in a play here," says Cathy, "but the night rehearsals weren't convenient." She goes on "I'm glad I

waited. This seems like the perfect play for me to be in, especially since we have afternoon rehearsals."

Katy Brown plays the role of Cindy's mother, a frustrated young woman who shouts at Cindy "I know what you want and need better than anyone." Katy is a sophomore drama major from Fayetteville who has been involved in several PSU productions, both on stage and back stage. She played the role of Tillie in "The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-In-The-Moon Mari-golds" and two roles in "Christmas Carol." She spent three months this summer in Ohio playing a role in the outdoor drama "Tecumseh."

"I've played a lover, a fairy and a little girl," Katy laughs, "and I like the chance to play a mother. It's a new challenge since I don't

have any kids" she adds.

"I think it's a good idea for students to direct plays because it offers a chance for them to broaden their range in theater," says Katy.

Vivian Glover is playing her first role on the PSU stage. She plays the busy young grandmother who is completely at ease with society she is so much a part of. "This Santa Claus job is something else!" granny laughs importantly. Vivian is a sophomore from Dunn majoring in Sociology. She has worked behind the scenes in some PSU productions including "Mari-golds."

"I'm thinking of getting a concentration in drama" Vivian explains, "and I figured this would be a good way to start out. I've always had a fear of getting in front of people," she goes on, "and this might be a good opportunity for me to overcome it."

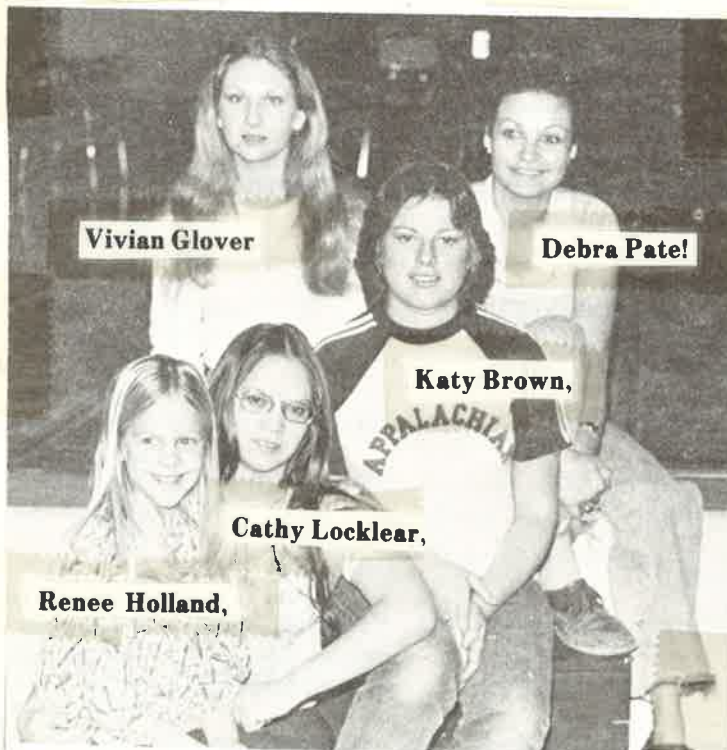
Renee Holland, Connie's 7 year old niece from Fayetteville, plays the part of Dolly. Dolly is a "live" doll, a symbol of Cindy's childish creativity. Renee is in the second grade at Alger B. Wilkins elementary school in Fayetteville. This is her first acting experience.

"When I grow up, I'd like to be a singer and a movie star" Renee announces.

Debra Pate is playing the role of the "Baby Sez So" walky-talky doll who invades Cindy and Dolly's territory. Debra is a junior from Pembroke majoring in drama. She has played parts in "Indians," "Pymalion" and "110 Degree In the Shade."

"I've never played a computer type machine before" Debra says, and adds, "it's an interesting experience."

Debra is taking the part Connie was originally going to play. Renee at first would not consent to having a stranger chase her around the stage to "scary" music. But after meeting Debra, she changed her mind.



Scene 1

Two sets will be visible. One will be lighted--the little girl's bedroom. It should be pink and frilly. A rug can provide the 'outline' of the room. A twin bed, a little girl's vanity with stool, and a little red rocking-chair are arranged neatly around the room. It should not be too neat for this. The bed is unmade, the little girl is still in nightgown. It is the first day of Christmas vacation.

The first movement of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major is heard as lights fade up on the bedroom. Cindy is dancing with Dolly around the room. Both are very happy, smiling, laughing. As they dance, they forget to stay within the bounds of the bedroom and dance beyond-- up to the front of the stage, pretending they are on a real stage, bowing and curtsying to each other and a 'make-believe' audience.

Dolly is played by a real little girl who does not speak. She is a dancing rag doll who comes to life for Cindy, who is alive for Cindy. Dolly is Cindy's playmate and a projection of Cindy's childish creativity.

Dolly wears tights and leotard and ballet shoes, with an old sash tied around her middle. Her hair is not 'new doll neat' but rather she has the appearance of being an old doll, worn from use.

Cindy has grabbed a sheet from the bed to make an exotic garb for herself. They continue dancing until they have made their way back into the bedroom, when suddenly Brenda appears. She stands hands on hips looking

disapprovingly at the mess the room is in.

Simultaneously with her entrance, Dolly falls in her tracks like a rag doll, and Cindy stops dancing and looks at her mother. The music ceases with Brenda's entrance.)

(BRENDA

You're still playing! (pause) You haven't even started cleaning up your room yet! (pause) Grammy will be here any minute, and you haven't even started cleaning up your room! Jesus... put that doll away right now and get this pigsty cleaned up!

(Cindy starts unwrapping the sheet from around her body as Brenda turns to leave. Brenda stops and looks back at Cindy.)

BRENDA

You know you're really starting your Christmas vacation off on the wrong foot.

(She sighs and leaves. As soon as Brenda is gone, Dolly gets up and comes to help Cindy make up the bed. Cindy talks confidently to Dolly as they work.)

CINDY

Mommy always wants the house spic 'n' span when Grammy comes over. I always have to hide all my stuff. (pause) I think it would be a good idea to just shut the door so they couldn't see my room, don't you Dolly?

(Dolly smiles and nods yes. They continue picking up around the room and Cindy hums a Christmas carol-- "Deck The Halls" as lights come up on the livingroom and fade on the bedroom.)

Scene 2

(The livingroom is also delineated only by a rug. It is furnished in modern furniture, vinyl and bland. A record player sits on a small table, a lamp sits on a table beside the couch, and there is an arm chair near the couch. As lights fade up, Brenda is ushering her mother into the room.)

BRENDA

Here, Mother, let me take your coat.

GRAMMY

Oh, thank-you dear. (as she slips out of it and evaluates the room.)

BRENDA

How about a cup of coffee? (as she walks toward the kitchen area behind the curtain.)

GRAMMY

If you have some Coffee-Mate. (as she strolls about the room, reacquainting herself with its contents.)

BRENDA

Sure do. Bought it just for you. (and she enters with two mugs of coffee, hands one to her mother and they sit.)

GRAMMY

Isn't Cindy up yet? I mean, I know it's her Christmas vacation, but goodness, it's 10:30!

BRENDA

Oh, she's been up for hours, but she's been too busy playing with that old rag doll of hers to even get dressed. (to Cindy in her room) Cindy! Hurry up in there! Grammy's here!

GRAMMY

She's really attached to that rag doll isn't she? (sips her coffee)

BRENDA

Lord, yes! You'd think it was alive to hear Cindy talk about it.

GRAMMY

Well, I imagine she clings to it because her daddy gave it to her, How long's she had it? Three, four years?

BRENDA

Too long! I've never liked it- it's such a tacky-looking doll. Her "daddy" gave it to her right after the divorce.

GRAMMY

(rising and going to look down the hallway to make sure Cindy isn't listening) I still haven't bought Cindy's Christmas present yet, so... maybe I could buy her a new doll-- a really nice one she can be proud of.

BRENDA

Hey, yeah, that's perfect Mother. There's one in the Penney's catalog that's really pretty. (she fumbles through a stack of magazines under the table and finds the catalog.) I was looking at it just the other day.

GRAMMY

Do you think it should be a baby doll, or maybe a teen-aged doll? How about a Barbie, or...

BRENDA

Oh Mother, she's only eight years old. (fumbling through the toy section.)

Here it is. Listen-- "24 inch Little Wispy Walker/Talker. She keeps you company by walking with you and talking too. She says eight different phrases. Dressed in a gingham gown with matching bonnet/shoes. Curly, rooted hair, vinyl and polyethylene body with eyes that close." \$9.66.

(Grammy has walked over behind the couch where Brenda is sitting and reading, and is examining the doll on the page over Brenda's shoulder.)

GRAMMY

Well, how about this one here? "Baby Sez So-- She just loves you and will tell you so! Just press her gently in one of five spots and she'll say one of five charming phrases: "I love you, Mommy! Change me! I like my bottle! Yummy, yummy! Baby pretty now! She's cute and cuddly in pretty dress and panties. Soft vinyl with rooted hair." \$24.98

(Cindy has entered during this last paragraph and understands what is happening. She is dressed in a Christmas pants outfit. Dolly is facing her, standing on Cindy's toes, so that when Cindy walks, she steps with her.)

GRAMMY

Isn't that cute? "Baby Sez So!"

BRENDA

I like the Little Wispy Walker/Talker, Mother. I think it would be more... well, you know, more suitable.

CINDY

(walking cheerily into the room with Dolly) I've already got the best Dolly in the world, so I don't need a new one. (to Dolly) Say good

morning to Momma and Grammy, Dolly. (pretending a voice for Dolly and making gestures) "Good morning Momma and Grammy." (she sits)

GRAMMY

(smiling and going to hug Cindy as Cindy and Dolly sit) Hello, sweetie. How are you this morning? (kisses her cheek)

CINDY

Me 'n' Dolly are just fine.

GRAMMY

(picking up the catalog) Mommy and I have been looking at the "Wish Book."

CINDY

(taking the offered catalog and looking disinterestedly at the pages of dolls) Oh, look Grammy! Here's what I want for Christmas! It's a little girl's sewing machine, see?

GRAMMY

I see.

CINDY

I could sew some clothes and things for me and Dolly!

BRENDA

You don't know how to sew.

CINDY

Well, I could learn how to.

GRAMMY

It might be dangerous, sweetie. What if you sewed your finger?

CINDY

Oh, I wouldn't. I'd be very careful...I promise! (looking up pleadingly at Grammy)

BRENDA

Oh, Cindy, you couldn't play with it by yourself...

CINDY

Yes I could!

BRENDA

I'd have to watch you every minute...

CINDY

No you wouldn't Momma, I'd...

BRENDA

You're too young to have a sewing machine, of all things!

GRAMMY

Did you even look at the pretty dolls back here, Cindy? (turning the pages to the doll section)

CINDY

I don't wanna look at dolls! (holding Dolly tighter) I have a Dolly... my Dolly!

BRENDA

That "dolly" of yours is worn out, in case you haven't noticed.

CINDY

She just needs some new clothes...

BRENDA

She needs more than new clothes! All the neighbors must think I can't afford to buy you anything the way you lug that old doll around!

CINDY

I'd love to make her some new clothes, and I COULD do it by myself.

BRENDA

You could not!

GRAMMY

Girls, girls...9laughing nervously0

GRAMMY

Girls, girls... (laughing nervously) Hey! 'Tis the season to be jolly!"
Remember?

BRENDA

Want some more coffee, Mother?

GRAMMY

No, dear, thanks, I need to be going. I've got some shopping to do...
grocery shopping. (she pats Cindy on the knee) You know Cindy, when you're
at home, you and Dolly have a lot of fun, but while you're at school,
poor Dolly is here all alone. Don't you think Dolly might like a playmate
to play with when you're not at home?

CINDY

No.

GRAMMY

Well....I'd get lonesome if I were left alone all day.

CINDY

But you're not like Dolly. (pause) Dolly just wants me.

BRENDA

Forget it Mother. She's just being obstinate today.

CINDY

(standing up) I don't want a new doll! I don't want a new "Walky/Talky
Doll!"

BRENDA

Go to your room! (Cindy grabs Dolly up in her arms and dashes from the
room) Sorry, Mother.

GRAMMY

That's all right dear. (as she puts on her coat) Thanks for the coffee.

BRENDA

Bye, now.

GRAMMY

Bye bye, dear. (she exits)

(Brenda turns around angrily and looks down the hallway toward Cindy's room. Lights fade out on livingroom and fade up on the bedroom as she marches from one to the other.)

Scene 3

(She enters without advance notice. Dolly becomes unalive. Brenda stands with hands on hips and glares at Cindy.)

BRENDA

Well!... you proud of yourself? (Cindy looks down at her hands and doesn't answer) You've got some nerve, little girl, looking a gifthorse in the mouth like that!

CINDY

But, Momma, I just...

BRENDA

You just made a fool of yourself, and me! You've really made a good impression on Grammy. She just wants to get you a nice Christmas present and you pitch a fit! Jesus!

CINDY

But I didn't want a new doll.

BRENDA

(outshouting her, mimicking her) "I don't want a new doll... I don't

want a new Walky/Talky Doll!" (pause) You've embarrassed me again, little girl. Grammy must think I don't teach you any manners at all! She must think I'm raising an ungrateful little brat!

CINDY

I just thought she would...

BRENDA

No, you didn't think! When someone wants to give you a present, you don't go around giving out orders about what you want.

CINDY

(wiping her tears away) But how else will they know what to get me?

BRENDA

I'll tell them.

CINDY

But you don't know either.

BRENDA

Oh, don't I? I'm your mother. I've known you all your life. I know what you want and need better than anyone!

CINDY

I know... and Daddy knows.

BRENDA

Daddy!? Daddy knows nothing! He's the one who gave you that stupid doll in the first place! Well, I've had it up to here with that creepy doll! (she pauses and sighs) You better be thankful Grammy's going to buy you a new doll for Christmas, cause you're going to need one. (Cindy holds Dolly tighter as Brenda prepares to leave the room.) Now! You can just spend the day in your room since you don't know how to behave when you come out. You can be thinking of how to apologize to Grammy when she comes over next week. (she exits)

Scene 4

(Cindy remains sitting on her bed. Dolly 'comes to life.' She is smiling, consoling Cindy. She tugs at Cindy's arm trying to get her going, to get her out of this sullen mood. No sounds or music are heard. Dolly gives up pulling on Cindy and begins to dance around the room, trying to entice Cindy to join her. Cindy begins watching her and music fades in very slowly at first. Dolly dances to the music. It is from the first movement of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major.

Cindy gradually gets in the mood. She pretends to be the maestro conducting the orchestra while Dolly dances. Dolly moves to the stage, away from the bedroom. But something is wrong with Cindy. Her attention is not focused completely on the music or Dolly. She looks around expectantly and stops conducting. Then the 'bad' strains of this first movement take over. It is ominous. Dolly stands bewildered, looking at Cindy.)

CINDY

Dolly? Run, Dolly!

(Walky/Talky dolls come onto the stage. They are people dressed as polyethylene dolls, walking stiffly, repeating phrases--"I like my bottle," "Change me," "Yummy, yummy," and "I love you, Mommy." The dolls look sterile and unalive. They head for Dolly.

CINDY

Look out, Dolly! Come back, come back, Dolly!

(She tries to make her way back but the Walky/Talky dolls are all around her. Cindy is standing on the bed looking on in horror, crying "Dolly,

Dolly!" Suddenly she stops and appears to have thought of something. She begins to wave her hands around in the air. Her eyes are closed tight. She is trying to concentrate. The "bad music" fades and with it the dolls start to retreat. New, "good music" fades in. Cindy is in control now. Dolly regains her composure and dances her way back over to the bedroom. The music and lights fade as Cindy and Dolly embrace.

Scene 5

When the lights fade on the bedroom they fade up on the livingroom, dimly. Brenda is lighting a Christmas candle. She sits back and gazes at it, she is dreaming, thinking back to her own childhood, to her own fantasies. She looks toward the bedroom and gets up as if to go to Cindy, but stops before she gets to the hallway. She pauses uncertainly, then goes and gets the candle, to carry with her into Cindy's room. When she enters, the lights fade to black on the livingroom. No lights come on in the bedroom. Brenda walks over to Cindy's bed and sits next to Cindy on the other side. She ~~comes close~~ kisses Cindy's head affectionately, apologetically. She bends and kisses Cindy's forehead, then leaves the room and blows out the candle.

Scene 6

(It is evening a week later. Lights fade up on the livingroom. The humming of a Christmas carol is heard. It is Brenda. She walks into the livingroom with a small, obviously fake Christmas tree. She sets it down on a table and opens a couple ornament boxes she has carried with her, and begins decorating the tree. She is dressed in a Christmas robe. The tree and its decorations are not pleasing to the eye.

Cindy walks into the room with construction paper and scissors in her hands. She is wearing a robe. She looks at the tree as she seats herself on the floor, beside a table, Brenda is still humming and decorating.)

CINDY

I wish we could have a real Christmas tree.

BRENDA

What? (stopping her humming and turning to notice her daughter for the first time.)

CINDY

I said I wish we could have a real Christmas tree. They smell so good.

BRENDA

That's easy for you to say. You're not the one who has to go buy the dumb thing, lug it home in the car, then clean up the car, then set it up in the house, then water it everyday and vaccuum the needles and of course, get the thing out! (she pauses for a breath) All you think about is how good they smell!
Ha!

CINDY

If I did all that, could we get a real tree next year?

BRENDA

Sure, sure.

CINDY

Well..... I could.

BRENDA

Besides all the mess involved in having a live tree in the house, there's a couple other things that children don't consider.

(Cindy looks expectantly at her mother, waiting for an explanation sure to come)
Real trees are too big for our apartment, in case you haven't noticed. If we did get a real tree, we'd probably have to rearrange the whole room to accomodate it. And another thing, if we did get a real tree, it would cost 10 to 15 bucks, little girl-- something you have a tendency to forget about---money. And I sure as hell can't afford to pay 10 to 15 bucks every year for a messy, big evergreen just so you can enjoy the "nice smell."

CINDY

Don't they sell little trees?

BRENDA

Oh Cindy will you be realistic just for once? We can't afford it, and I wouldn't want one even if we could. They're too much trouble.

(A pause in conversation. Cindy begins cutting strips of the construction paper, very meticulously. Brenda resumes decorating.)

CINDY

Have we got any glue Momma?

BRENDA

How would I know? You're the one who's always using it. (pause) Why?

CINDY

I'm gonna make one of those paper chains, like a garland, to hang around the tree.

BRENDA

You can make one, but you're not going to hang it on this tree.

CINDY

(looking up) Why not?

BRENDA

I'm not going to have it looking like the prizewinner in a tacky contest.

CINDY

Please Momma? I'll do it real neat. It won't look tacky.

BRENDA

No.

(She stands back to see if it needs any more bulbs on it)

CINDY

You wouldn't let me hang any bulbs on it because you think I'll break them, and you wouldn't let me put the tree together cause you think I don't know how. Can't I even make a chain to hang on it?

BRENDA

(patronizingly) You don't want to have a....a...bad looking tree, do you?

CINDY

We've already got a "bad" looking tree!

BRENDA

Look, little girl, don't get sassy, I'm not taking any sass. Grammy's coming over to bring some presents for our tree, so you just better straighten up and fly right. Understand!

(Cindy doesn't answer. She picks up her things and goes to her room. Brenda sighs and looks guilty, like she didn't mean to be "that" way. She plops in a chair, lights a Christmas candle and rubs her forehead with her hand, gazing at the candle. She gets up and puts on a tinsel-like Christmas record on the stereo to cheer her up. She snaps her fingers to the beat and proceeds to put away the boxes the bulbs were in, and make sure the tree is just right.

A knock is heard at the door, but Brenda doesn't notice. Then a louder knock. Brenda goes to open the door. It is Grammy.)

BRENDA

Well, Hi mother.

GRAMMY

Hi doll. (shouting to be heard) as she comes into the room carrying presents)

Isn't that a little loud?

BRENDA

Oh, Yeah. Here, let me turn it off. (she goes and turns it off)

GRAMMY

Well, dear, I see you got your tree up. (putting the presents beside the tree as she appraises it)

BRENDA

Yeah, how do you like it?

GRAMMY

Oh, it looks as gay as it did dast year. Listen, I've got Cindy's Christmas present in the car, but I'll need some help to carry it in. It's rather large. (she laughs)

BRENDA

Did you get the Wispy Walker/Talker I showed you?

GRAMMY

(nods her head vigorously) No, I got the Baby Sez So-the one I like. It's bigger than she is! (demonstrating with her hands)

BRENDA

Let's go bring it in.

(They exit. Cindy walks into the room looking around for Momma and Grammy. She goes to the front door and looks out, runs back into the hallway as they re-enter with a very tall box with a large bow on it. Brenda checks the room before they bring it in.)

BRENDA

Let's take it into the kitchen... I'll hide it in the broom closet. (they take it behind the curtain) (Noise is heard as if they are putting it away. Cindy re-enters the room nonchalantly. She goes over to the tree and examines the presents. Brenda and Grammy come back in.)

GRAMMY

Hi Cindy!

CINDY

Hi Grammy! I see you brought us some presents! Tomorrow morning we get to open them up!

GRAMMY

That's right sweetie, only one more night to go, then it's Christmas.

BRENDA

Mother, would you like some coffee or a Coke, or something?

GRAMMY

No dear, I really can't stay. I have to go and deliver all the other kids' presents. You're my first stop of the evening. This Santa Claus job is something else! (laughs)

CINDY

(shaking the larger present) Is this one for me Grammy?

GRAMMY

Well, uh... Why don't we keep it a surprise?

CINDY

This one's mine, isn't it?

BRENDA

Now, Cindy, don't be pushy.

GRAMMY

This one's your mother's sweetie.

CINDY

Oh. Then this one is mine. (she holds up the smaller present to examine it.)

GRAMMY

Don't worry, Cindy, that's not all you're getting for Christmas. Now, let me see you smile. There, that's better. (turning to Brenda and getting up) Now, remember Christmas dinner will be ready about two. Why don't you come a couple hours early and bring your presents so the kids can see what everyone got for Christmas?

BRENDA

Thanks for dropping the presents off Mother. I'll bring your presents over when we come, OK?

GRAMMY

Sure, doll. Now be good Cindy, cause "Santa Claus is coming to town!"

CINDY

Bye, Grammy.

BRENDA

Merry Christmas!

(Grammy waves as she leaves. Brenda looks at Cindy.)

BRENDA

Time for bed little girl. Come on, I'll tuck you in.

(They leave together and go to the bedroom Brenda blows out the candle before she goes. The lights dim on the livingroom as lights fade up on the bedroom, as they enter.)

BRENDA

Want Dolly to sleep with you?

CINDY

(looking at her mother, then at Dolly) Yes.

BRENDA

(Taking Dolly by the hands and walking her over to the bed where Cindy sits watching. She sings as she walks Dolly over.) "You better watch out, you better not cry, You better not pout, I'm telling you why--Santa Claus is coming to town. He's making a list, checking it twice, he's gonna find out who's been naughty or nice--Santa Claus is coming to town!" (but seeing that Cindy isn't responding, she stops.)

BRENDA

You look sleepy. Goodnight honey, sweet dreams. (She kisses Cindy's forehead)

CINDY

G'night mommy.

(Brenda gets up and leaves the room. The lights fade quickly to black.)

Scene 7

(After about 60 seconds of blackness and silence, a fumbling noise is heard from behind the curtain, like broom or mop handles hitting the floor. The lights fade up to a purple shade. A pause, then another noise from behind the curtain and Cindy and Dolly move in their bed, as if having a nightmare. The "bad" music of the second movement of the Brandenburg Concerto No.3 in G major fades in slowly. Cindy sits up in bed suddenly, fearfully. Dolly sits up next to her sensing something's wrong. The music grows louder, then the curtain falls to the floor in the livingroom, making a loud bang. Cindy and Dolly jump, then cling to each other. The big, new doll is visible, coming into the livingroom. It is like the dolls in the earlier scene. It moves like a robot.

Cindy moves between the New Doll and Dolly, as if to protect her. The New Doll continues its approach. As it gets very close, Cindy throws her pillow at it, trying to knock it down, but that doesn't stop it.

The doll's arms are outstretched toward Dolly. It is intent upon Dolly. Cindy realized this. She cries out "Run Dolly!" Dolly hesitates, then dashes across the room while Cindy tries to thwart the New Doll, but she is unsuccessful. The New Doll is after Dolly. It is relentless.

Finally, Cindy tries to control the situation by conducting "good" music in. "Dance Dolly!" she shouts, and motions her to go out on the stage, as if the New Doll can't follow her.. The "Good music" fights the "bad music" but the "bad" wins, and the New Doll overcomes Dolly, killing her. Dolly falls to the floor, face down, defeated. New Doll says "Baby Pretty Now". A spotlight focuses on her figure, while the eerie lights and music fade out. The New Doll retreats to the livingroom as the room fades to black.

Scene 8

(Dolly remains lying on the floor as the spotlight fades out and lights come up on both the bedroom and the livingroom. The New Doll is visible sitting by the Christmas tree on the floor with her legs outstretched, stiff. Cindy is asleep in her bed. Brenda comes into Cindy's bedroom. She seems surprised and uncertain.)

BRENDA

Cindy?... Cindy?...(she crosses to the bed looking around the room as she goes) Cindy? Hey? Wake up! It's Christmas morning! Time to see what Santa Claus left for you.

(pause. Cindy stirs) Wake up silly! (pause, Brenda shakes Cindy.) Hey. I expected you to be up at the crack of dawn. And here it is 9 o'clock and you're still in bed! Come on little girl, wakeup! (gives her a little spank. Cindy begins to come awake. Rubbing her eyes.) Come on, come on! It's Christmas morning-- let's go open the presents. Hurry up! We've got to get breakfast, clean this place up a little and go over to Grammy's after we open the presents, so come on!

(Cindy sits up during this and is now fully awake. She notices Dolly is gone, and looks about the room for her. Then she looks beyond the room to where Dolly lies. Brenda grabs her arm and pulls her out of the room.

BRENDA

The presents, remember the presents? (As they enter the livingroom they stop.) Well, Well, lookee there! (Cindy gazes at the New Doll sitting on the floor.) Come on Cindy, let's go check her out. (Brenda goes over to the New Doll, leaving Cindy standing alone.) Oh my goodness, isn't she pretty? Look at her face Cindy. Come on Cindy. (Cindy still does not move. Brenda gets exasperated and dashes over to get her.) Come see your New Dolly. (She drags Cindy over the the doll.) Isn't she pretty? She's a Baby Sez So. She talks! (She pushes a button on the doll's back and the doll says "Yummy Yummy.") Oh, isn't that cute?

(Cindy just looks at it. Brenda begins opening the wrapped presents nervously.)

I don't know what's the matter with you, but this is no way to act on Christmas morning. You're supposed to be happy, not glum and lifeless. Come on. Snap out of it! (pause) Oh Look Cindy, isn't it beautiful? (She has opened a present that is a sweater) Mother remembered. (She begins to open another one.) This one is from... You know who (she giggles) Oh look, it's a necklace! Oooooohhhh! I bet no one else got a gift like this. (Cindy is gazing out to where Dolly lies..) Cindy! Wake up, will you? Here, open your presents, Here's one from Grammy. (Brenda unwraps it, irritated. It is a vanity brush set.) Isn't that pretty? I guess Grammy figures you're getting to be a big girl now, so you've got to start taking an interest in your looks. Isn't that nice?

(When all the presents are opened, Brenda rises.)

Let me get my camera, I want to take some pictures of Christmas morning for the album. (She gets an instamatic camera with flashcube and comes back.) Come on, smile now and move a little closer to your pretty new "Baby Sez So". Come on! Get over there now! (Brenda's patience is gone.) Now, smile! (Cindy moves closer to the New Doll and looks at her mother. Brenda snaps the picture.) Now why don't you sit in her lap? Let's get a cute shot. Move! (Cindy follows her mother's orders. Brenda snaps another picture.) Smile! (She reaches over and pinches Cindy's cheek, then steps back to take another picture.) Smile,!!!

(Click. She takes another and another and another as the curtains close. Dolly still lies on the stage.)

The curtains close.

Scene 9

(Dolly sits up and smiles as the gay music of the third movement plays. She dances a few seconds-then black out.

THE END

How to write, produce and direct

a play, or which do I value more?

My vanity or my sanity?

by Connie D. Cummings

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"How To" Feature

by Connie Cummings

△ How do you write, produce, and direct a play and keep your sanity? You don't. You have a choice--one or the other, but not both.

△ These observations come from an "experienced" young playwright, producer, director who just recently completed doing the afore-mentioned feat of daring--me--Connie "Dummy" Cummings.

△ It all started innocently enough one winter day about a year ago. Visions of fame, fortune and superstardom launched me into an Independent Study project for my major in writing and drama at Pembroke State University. I proposed that it include writing and directing a play of my very own. My name would be in lights! Well, at least in cardboard in the student center.

△ I would stun the world with my depth of insight into human nature and life itself! There was only one small obstacle standing in my way--getting my deep observations onto paper in the form of a play. Little matter that I had never even tried to write a play before. Little matter that I had never acted in a play before, except for a production of "Goldilocks and The Three Bears" in the first grade. Little matter that I had only seen two plays performed.

△ To make a long, ridiculous story short, I was like the bumblebee who flies because he's too dumb to know his wings are too teensy to carry his great, fat body through the air.

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How to
take 2
Connie Cummings

Writing the play...

The first six months of this year I fumbled around searching for a worthwhile, meaningful subject to delve into. I knew that "my" play must reflect my profound understanding of society and humanity. So what did I end up doing? "I Don't Want A Walky/Talky Doll!" It finally dawned on me around July that the sands of time were slipping through my fingers and making them too sore to hold a pen. You know how that goes, when the mind is willing but the hand falls flat on its knuckles.

Well, when the Fall semester started and I only had two half-baked outlines on paper, I decided it was time to get serious about this project, that a play wasn't going to leap out, full-grown from my forehead. So the real job of writing began, and continued sporadically through the end of October, on Sunday afternoons when I would leave my "darling" son at my "darling" mother's house for a few "darling" hours. Then there was no procrastination time left!

Scene by scene I committed my story to paper, never letting anyone get so much as a peek at it. It was too private. Actually, that's a euphemism for I was afraid of criticism. During the last week of October I typed up the manuscript on a typewriter in the typing classroom of the B.A. building, since I don't own a typewriter and don't know how to type worth a hill of question marks.

After running several copies off, I passed out scripts to some trusted advisors. They all commended me for a job-well-done, well-done for a beginner that is, and offered a multitude of suggestions and criticisms. I was ready with my answer to any and all advice. "I appreciate your suggestions and I'll keep them in mind when I rewrite my play for

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How to
take 3
Connie Curran

its Broadway opening." Of course it was too late to use any advice about style, form or content anyway.

Directing the play...

So I dived into my next role with enthusiasm--director. I held try-outs and cast the five parts from the three girls who showed up, which was no easy task. They didn't complain though, but brought me some girls to fill the other parts.

My only questionable choice in casting was insisting on using a real little girl for the part of Dolly-- a "live" rag doll the dumb author insisted on using as a symbol in the play. I cast my seven-year-old niece in that part. The problem there was that I had to drive 50 miles to get her for rehearsals.

It was at about this time that I decided for sure that the middle initial "D" in my name really did stand for "Dummy." You see, it wouldn't have been so absurd but I had to drive 50 miles from Fayetteville to Pembroke each morning to attend my classes, then drive the 50 miles back to pick up my niece, and drive back to Pembroke for rehearsals, then drive those same blasted 50 miles back home in the evening. Not very economical, or very smart.

Once the casting was done, rehearsals began in earnest, or in the Green Room, whichever was available. It was during this time that I acquired a fear that perhaps a captain cannot fully man a ship all by herself. I received commitments for assistance from several reliable people to take care of the technical aspects of the play. The ship was on course, however leaky it might have seemed at the time.

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How to
take 4
Connie Cummins

Designing the set...

I knew what the set should look like, theoretically and ideally, but that wouldn't be sufficient for two performances on the stage of the gargantuan PSU Performing Arts Center. The audience had to see it too! Besides that, my Directing 331 teacher required a formal floor plan and ~~plot~~ plot. He even insisted on a play analysis and a formal director's book with floor plans, action maps etc. It meant I had to plan out what I was doing, however much that went against the grain of my personality.

So I designed a set according to the specifications of the author, and went about gathering set pieces. My family was very glad it was a "small-scale" operation. After I cleaned out my niece's bedroom, my sister began to doubt the value of my glorious venture. My mother didn't mind my borrowing her little "office" Christmas tree, but when I took her favorite den arm-chair, her smile dimmed just a tad. I was going to borrow our livingroom furniture, but my husband said he wasn't sitting on the floor for any play or any playwright for that matter!

So with rehearsals well underway, the set becoming a realization, all I had to do was convince the Dean of Student Affairs to let me use the \$2 million Performing Arts Center for two performances and a dress rehearsal night. I was as good as I could be during our meeting. I even named the play something other than my first choice, so that he would have one less objection. (You see, my first choice was "Smile, Dammit, Smile!" but I was sure profanity would be "frowned upon.") He finally signed the paper and I had a building!

Once the building was secured, all I had to do was round up an audience. Now, at larger schools this task might be a relatively simple matter, but at Pembroke? Mission: Impossible is an understatement!

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How to
take 5
Connie Cummings

I taped an interview with myself and submitted a story, with picture, to the school newspaper. It was published. This was a good start, I thought, until the college PR man took my story, rearranged the facts to protect the guilty and flashed it all over Southeastern N.C. He changed the dates of the performance and a few other pertinent data, and I was on my way to a capacity crowd--for a VW bus!

I had a script, a cast, a set, a show complete with lights and sound, a stage to perform it on and lots of best wishes. The show did go on, and off, and on, and off nearly as planned and the audiences applauded! What did it matter that my grades had plummeted? What did it matter that my muscles were so tense I had a perpetual stomach-ache? It was worth all the pain, as the birth of a baby is worth the labor pains.

I still say you have a choice. You can either write, produce and direct a play, or you can keep your sanity. If you don't believe the dichotomy, look me up. I'm in the book under "D" for Dummy, or is it Dunderhead?

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