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Family Plays

The Shining Moment

A bright, glowing comet streaks diagonally across the upper half of the image, leaving a long, luminous trail against a deep blue night sky filled with numerous stars of varying sizes and brightness. The comet's head is a bright white point of light, and its tail is a broad, curved band of light that tapers as it extends.

**By
Kathryn Schultz Miller**

The Shining Moment

AATE Unpublished Play Reading Project Award Winner

Post-Corbett Award for excellence in playwriting

Ohio Arts Council 1986 Playwriting Fellowship

Drama with music. By Kathryn Schultz Miller. Cast: 1m., 1w., 1 boy, 1 girl. This is a heartwarming story of a grandfather's extraordinary gift of life. Many turn-of-the-20th-century songs such as "By the Light of the Silvery Moon" and "The Good Old Summer Time" enhance the magic. Grandpa remembers his shining moment in 1910, the year of Halley's comet. As his life comes to an end, he seeks to pass on the glory of that moment to his grandson. Set on an Ohio farm, the play introduces two children; William Henry and his tomboy cousin, Ally. They learn about friendship and maturity as Grandpa's shining moment becomes clear with a bittersweet ending. Production notes are available in the script containing details on costumes, set, characterization and music. *One set. Costumes: from the 1890s in the American Midwest. Approximate running time: 60 minutes. Code: SU4.*

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DEDICATION

To my mother and father

I wish to thank the Ohio Arts Council for granting a Playwriting Fellowship to complete this work. I also wish to thank the Projects Pool of the Cincinnati Fine Arts Fund for its continual support and encouragement for the development of my new scripts.

THE SHINING MOMENT

The original production of **THE SHINING MOMENT** was produced by Players Theatre in Columbus, Ohio. The first performance was presented on August 24, 1985 in Players' Henry Van Fleet Theatre. It was directed by Kathryn Schultz Miller with the following cast:

ALLY GREENWAY Deborah Colvin
IDA GREENWAY Pamela Hill
EDSEL GREENWAY Justin Simons
WILLIAM HENRY HALL . . . Preston Misner

Stage Manager Jane Byrns, Tour Manager Susie Kramer, Set Design by Herb Snouffer and William Barto, Costumes Design by Lucy Mann and Properties by Susie Kramer. The piece was commissioned by Youth Theatre director, Steven Anderson.

A production of the revised version was produced by ArtReach Touring Theatre in Cincinnati, Ohio. The first performance took place at Gabriel's Corner Arts Center on January 17, 1987. It was directed by Kathryn Schultz Miller with the following cast:

ALLY GREENWAY Debra Miller
IDA GREENWAY Carolyn Kmieck
EDSEL GREENWAY Vam Ackerman
WILLIAM HENRY HALL . . . Dahn Schwarz

Set and Costume Design by Dahn Schwarz. Photographs, by Barry I. Miller, are of this production.

CHARACTERS

Ally Greenway

Age 11, Ida's daughter.

Ida Greenway

Age 45, Edsel's granddaughter, Ally's mother,
William Henry's aunt.

Edsel Greenway

Age 89, Ida's grandfather, great grandfather to Ally
and William Henry.

William Henry Hall

Age 12, nephew to Ida, son of Ida's sister Eva
Greenway Hall who does not appear in the play.

SONGS

In the Good Old Summertime
Wait 'Till the Sun Shines, Nellie
Take Me Out to the Ball Game
Brahms' Lullabye
By the Light of the Silvery Moon
Shine on Harvest Moon

A production score is available from Anchorage Press, Inc.

SETTING

The play is set at a small farmhouse near a very small rural town in Ohio. The set consists of the front porch of the house with a suggestion of roof, railing, steps and a recently built makeshift ramp of unpainted plywood. The porch must have a workable screen door and a window in which a working record player is visible. A clothesline with a few pieces of laundry may be attached from one corner post to a free standing pole. The porch is painted white although it is weathered and in need of a new coat. A wheelchair will be placed on the porch along with a porch swing or piece of worn looking wicker furniture. An area of about 15' x 20' directly in front of porch will serve as the "front yard" playing area. A worn plain looking bench will be in this area. Near the porch may be a barrel in which props may be stored.

COSTUME SUGGESTIONS

WILLIAM HENRY may be costumed in navy blue slacks, light blue shirt and dark blue tie. He may also wear a navy blue cap. This outfit should resemble a school uniform. **ALLY** wears worn jeans, tennis shoes and a tee shirt with a baseball logo or message on it. **EDSEL** wears a loose fitting plaid shirt, worn brown pants and soft black shoes. He may also wear a baseball cap. **IDA** should wear a skirt and blouse or light cotton dress with little decoration. Her costume should reflect the rural setting without seeming dated.

(The play is set in June of 1986. It is appropriate for family audiences.)



THE SHINING MOMENT

(All enter from various directions of playing area singing "In the Good Old Summer Time". They sing happily and enthusiastically, moving freely about the stage and singing directly to the audience. Eventually Ally and Edsel will stand behind bench. Ida will sit and William Henry remains in playing area with suitcase and record collection. The song stops.)

ALL: (SINGING)

In the good old summer time,
In the good old summer time,
Strolling through the shady lanes,
With your baby mine,
You'll hold her hand and she'll hold yours,
And that's a very good sign,
That she's your tootsie wootsie,
In the good old summer time.

WILLIAM HENRY: *(addressing audience)* It sure wasn't what I expected, I can tell you that much. Mom had painted me a picture of Wilsonville so big and fancy you'd think you were going to spend the summer in something as good as Disneyland, that's what. Lots of talk about. . .

ALLY: Wide open fields!

WILLIAM HENRY: Green rolling hills. . .

IDA: Wild blackberries!

WILLIAM HENRY: Catfish that melt in your mouth. . .

EDSEL: Night air so clear and cool it makes you tingle all over.

WILLIAM HENRY: A place to be free, she wrote.

IDA: That's how I remember it from my very own girlhood.

WILLIAM HENRY: It was the one of the longest letters she ever wrote to me.

IDA: Now I'm afraid I won't be able to visit you this summer, William Henry. . .

ALLY: I'm afraid I'll be very busy. . .

IDA: Very busy!

EDSEL: Now you mind Aunt Ida.

IDA: You be nice to Grampa Edsel.

ALLY: And don't get in the way!

IDA: Remember to be polite.

WILLIAM HENRY: And she signed it with. . .

ALL: *(Ally, Ida and Edsel blow kisses.)*
Love and kisses!

WILLIAM HENRY: And at the bottom she printed a neat little date.

ALL: May 5, 1986.

(William Henry sits next to Ida on the bench and all but William Henry sing a quick, staccato, bumpy version of "In the Good Old Summertime" as they pretend to be riding in a bus.)

ALLY, IDA & EDSEL: In the good old summer time,
In the good old summer time,

Strolling through the shady lanes,
With your baby mine,
You'll hold her hand and she'll hold yours,
And that's a very good sign, . . .

EDSEL: Next stop, Wilsonville!

ALLY, IDA & EDESEL: That she's your tootsie wootsie,
In the good old summer time.

(There is a squeal from all as the bus stops. Ally, Edsel & Ida use their arms to open the "door" and push William Henry out. William Henry stumbles out and stops looking all around. Others turn their backs to audience.)

WILLIAM HENRY: It seemed a little spooky to me, I'll tell you, even though it was bright and sunny and it must have been about 100 degrees in the shade. Well, wouldn't you think it was spooky if you come into a new town, find yourself slapped onto a strange sidewalk, you look around and what do you see? Nothing, nobody, that's what. Not a soul. Just a run down gas station, a hardware store. Wilsonville wasn't much. *(pause)* I just watched that Greyhound bus leaving me behind. Its red coca-cola sign getting smaller and smaller and smaller. . .

(Others move upstage as William Henry gets more forlorn watching a point ahead of him. Edsel moves offstage, Ida gets props from barrel - an apron and brown paperbag. Ally breaks from them and comes sneaking up behind William Henry. She pokes him from behind.)

ALLY: Boo!

(She laughs and William Henry gasps and tries to recover himself.)

Here he is, Mom! He's here. Come on, Mom, he's here!

WILLIAM HENRY: Cousin Alice?

ALLY: We knew you were coming. The bus was supposed to be here at 12:43 but it didn't come then so we waited until 12:52 then Mom said she had to get some light bulbs so I said I'd go with her 'cause it's awful hot out here today, don't you think? It sure is cooler in the hardware store. Mr. Daley's got fans on the ceiling so it makes it windy, you know? Whatcha got there?

WILLIAM HENRY: Records.

ALLY: Oh good. We got a record player. Sometimes it plays kinda slow though, you know. But you can just put your finger on the record and push it along, you know. It works just fine if you do that. *(turns to call)* Mom! Come on Mom! *(turns back)* I like baseball. Do you like baseball?

IDA: *(Ida turns and becomes part of the scene)* Now, Ally, don't you go yelling your fool head off at me like that. About to drive a person nuts.

ALLY: Lookee here, Mom. It's Billy! He sure did get here just like you said. You're a little bit late but that doesn't matter much.

IDA: *(looking him over)* Hello there, Billy. *(extends her hand)*

WILLIAM HENRY: It's William, ma'am.

IDA: William, is it?

WILLIAM HENRY: *(a little embarrassed but standing his ground)* Actually, it's William Henry. Most people call me William Henry.

IDA: *(surprised and curious)* Well, I knew that was your name, but I suspected only Eva called you that. My sister always did go in for high sounding names like that.

ALLY: Are you a sissy? Because Richard Taylor is a sissy. He says you have to call him Richard instead of Rick and he collects stuffed animals and he stays home most of the time.

IDA: Stop it, Ally. That's not polite.

ALLY: I just wanted to know. See look, Mom, he's got records. Do you like Elvis Presley? I like Elvis Presley. I have two Elvis Presley records. Now Cheryl Watkins she likes Barry Manilow.

IDA: Oh, heavens, Ally. *(taking suitcase)* Well, the least we can do, William Henry, is help you carry your things. *(gestures to Ally to take record case)* Ally. *(moves upstage)* Now do try to keep up kids. Grampa needs his lunch. *(exit)*

(Ally and William Henry trail behind like they are following her but Ally keeps jumping in front of William Henry and stopping causing them to make very little headway.)

ALLY: Do you like to go to school because I don't.

WILLIAM HENRY: Well . . .

ALLY: Is it hot at the Academy like it is here?

WILLIAM HENRY: It's . . .

ALLY: It sure is hot, isn't it? I bet you have to sleep in bunk beds and line up for breakfast every morning. I bet they make you eat mush and peas in boarding school. Boy, I'm glad I don't go to boarding school. I bet you like to hunt crawdads because I do and I know a real good creek for hunting crawdads.

WILLIAM HENRY: Well, I . . .

ALLY: Whew! I need a rest.

(She plops down on bench. William Henry stands awkwardly beside her then sits down on the ground.)

ALLY: *(leaning into William Henry, suddenly very serious)* Guess what.

WILLIAM HENRY: What?

ALLY: Grampa Edsel is going to die.

WILLIAM HENRY: Is he sick in bed?

ALLY: Nope.

WILLIAM HENRY: Then how do you know he's going to die?

ALLY: He's old.

WILLIAM HENRY; Well, just because you're old doesn't mean you're going to die.

ALLY: *(full of doom)* Grampa Edsel is eighty-nine years old.

WILLIAM HENRY; Oh.

(pause)

ALLY: *(suddenly excited)* I tell you, it was a sight, William Henry. This ambulance came barreling up to our place and the sirens were just screaming to beat the band. *(stands and makes siren noises)* And all the neighbors came running down the road to see what was going on. *(imitating)* "Oh, can we help? Can we help?" And then we all just stood back and watched. We just stood real quiet and watched while they carried Grampa out on a stretcher. Boy, that was a sight, I'll tell you. *(pause)* Grampa Edsel had to stay in a hospital up in Springfield for about a month. Mrs. Coleman

said that's just how it was when her father-in-law had his heart attack.

WILLIAM HENRY: Heart attack?

ALLY: Mom says he's never ever, ever supposed to get out of his wheelchair and sometimes when he kind of stands up to reach something like the milk on the top shelf of the refrigerator? Boy does that make her mad and she comes running. But you know what Grampa says?

WILLIAM HENRY: What?

ALLY: He says his backside is turning to mush, that's what. He says if he doesn't get to walk pretty soon he's surely going to die and that's the truth. And I believe him because you know what?

WILLIAM HENRY: What?

ALLY: Grampa Edsel knows things. He doesn't talk much but when he does. . . it's cause he knows something important. He's sort of like a fortune teller. Says it comes easy to him on account of his being so old. You know what he says about you?

WILLIAM HENRY: (*surprised*) About me?

ALLY: Yep. Know what he says?

WILLIAM HENRY: What?

ALLY: He says you're going to grow up to be an all-star famous baseball playing champ. That's what he says.

WILLIAM HENRY: Well, he's wrong.

ALLY: No he's not. Guess how he knows.

WILLIAM HENRY: I can't guess.

ALLY: Because he was an all-star champ once. It's true! He was just about as famous as Pete Rose way back when. He says one time he batted 424. His shining moment he calls it. I just love it when he talks about his shining moment. He was on all kinds of baseball cards and Cheerios and things.

WILLIAM HENRY: I don't believe you.

ALLY: Well, it's true. He says all Greenways got to have their shining moments. It's in the blood. I'd be an all-star too only they don't let girls in the big leagues. Grampa says that's okay -- it's their loss.

WILLIAM HENRY: But I'm not a Greenway. My name is Hall. William Henry Hall.

ALLY: Your mother is a Greenway, isn't she?

WILLIAM HENRY: Well, yeah.

ALLY: Here, catch. *(She throws him a light bulb from the paper hardware sack. He flinches but catches it.)* Okay, now let's see how good you can pitch. You see that tree way out?

WILLIAM HENRY: Alice, I can't . . .

ALLY: Do you see it?

WILLIAM HENRY: Well, sure.

ALLY: Let's see which one of us can hit it. *(Ally starts to throw then freezes.)*

WILLIAM HENRY: *(to audience)* And before I knew what was happening Alice had grabbed herself a light bulb out of that hardware sack and was swinging her arm around like it

wasn't even attached to her body. She was acting like a crazy fool, spitting on that light bulb and rubbing around on it like it's a baseball then she starts into swinging her arm again and wiggling her behind and before you know it she let that thing fly with a . . .

(Ida and Edsel have entered during this speech. Ally breaks freeze and throws imaginary ball.)

ALL: KER-POW!!

WILLIAM HENRY: . . . that sounded like a firecracker went off in your hat.

(Ida, Edsel and Ally begin singing "Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie" as they stroll, smiling, to their places. On the very last note Edsel is sitting in wheelchair holding baseball bat and wearing a baseball cap, looking off at tree Ally hit, laughing. Ally moves from center to Edsel's side and laughs with him. Ida takes William Henry by the arm and leads him to Edsel.)

IDA, ALLY & EDESEL: Wait till the sun shines, Nellie,
When the clouds go drifting by,
Don't you sigh,
We will be happy Nellie,
Don't you sigh,
Down lovers' lane we'll wander,
Sweethearts you and I,
So won't you,
Wait till the sun shines, Nellie,
Bye and by.

IDA: William Henry, this here's your Great Grampa Edsel Greenway. You haven't seen him since you were a baby.

WILLIAM HENRY: How do you do, sir?

(William Henry extends hand but Edsel doesn't acknowledge)

him at all. William Henry is awkward and confused, looks at Ida.)

EDSEL: *(laughing, slapping arm of wheelchair, still looking in direction of tree)* It's a grand slam!

IDA: *(trying to be patient)* Grampa. Grampa?

EDSEL: *(suddenly alert)* Yes?

IDA: Grampa, this here's William Henry. He's come to visit for awhile. You remember William Henry, don't you, Grampa? This is Eva's boy. You remember.

EDSEL: *(trying to remember)* William Henry. . . William Henry. . .
(Ida gives up and changes conversation.)

IDA: When's the last time Eva came to visit you, William Henry?

WILLIAM HENRY: Oh, it's been about a month or so. Maybe longer.
(pause) I don't keep track of time so well.

IDA: And your Dad?

WILLIAM HENRY: Like I say, it's kind of hard for me to keep track.

IDA: *(shaking head)* That Eva. My, my, my. . .

EDSEL: *(suddenly)* William Henry?

(Grabs William Henry by the shoulders and draws him close. All freeze while William Henry speaks.)

WILLIAM HENRY: Oh, boy, did he squinch his face up tight and look hard at me. He leans over and grabs my shoulders and pulls me in close and I can see his blue eyes are kind of smeary and weak looking but, boy, his hands were strong and holding on to me tight. Then he smiles real slow up

close to me and I can see his teeth are all yellow and separate but stuck hard in there like Indian corn.

EDSEL: (*excited, announcing, breaking freeze*) Billy Boy Hank!
Billy Boy Hank!

IDA: No, Grampa. This is William Henry. Likes to be called William Henry.

EDSEL: Billy Boy Hank! Billy Boy Hank!

IDA: Grampa. . .

EDSEL: (*suddenly serious, holding up baseball bat*) You're just in time, Billy Boy.

WILLIAM HENRY: Just in time?

ALLY: (*laughing and agreeing with Edsel*) Just in time!

WILLIAM HENRY: In time for what?

IDA: Well, I should say, you're just in time for lunch if I ever get it put together. (*exiting through screen door*) You like turkey, William Henry? I've got some nice pieces of turkey left over.

WILLIAM HENRY: Yes, ma'am.

IDA: I'll make us some sandwiches. (*exit*)

ALLY: (*grabbing record case*) Lookee here, Grampa. William Henry brought records. You want to play 'em? Let's play us some records, Grampa!

EDSEL: (*not really comprehending*) Let's play 'em!

WILLIAM HENRY: Oh, no, I . . .