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Family Plays

THE HAPPY SCARECROW

Drama by
I.E. Clark



THE HAPPY SCARECROW

“Thank you for *The Happy Scarecrow*. Never have I directed a play quite like it. The cast loved it. At District Festival we received the superior rating and everybody raved and asked, ‘Where did you get that play?’”
(Marion, Va.)

“My small Sunday school class has agreed to put on *The Happy Scarecrow* for our family night ... I have used your play a couple of times in the past and still think it is fun to do.” (Jo Smith, Faith United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas)

Drama. By I.E. Clark. Cast: 6m., 5w. A mean witch dares a frilly little fairy to prove there’s such a thing as happiness. So the fairy brings a scarecrow to life and promises to make him a real man if he can find happiness. It’s a strange search, sometimes comical, sometimes sad. The scarecrow meets a variety of characters, each providing an insight into human relations as well as excellent roles for your actors and actresses. The scarecrow’s search evokes a little smile, a little fright and perhaps a little tear. What is happiness? Philosophers have struggled with this question for centuries. But sometimes answers are found by simple people with humble aims. What could be simpler than a scarecrow? *The Happy Scarecrow* has been referred to as a delightful “morality play” about giving. It has become not only a popular contest play but also a favorite play for the Easter season because of its subtle hint of the Easter story. It is popular with churches as well as with theatre groups. However, just as the play’s costumes and set are timeless, it can be performed in any month of the year. The play is intended for upper-elementary students or professional children’s theatre. *A director’s script is available containing drawings of costumes and set, details on all technical aspects of staging, and discussion of characterization, plot and theme. It also suggests the complete blocking and full stage directions for all movement and business. Simple ext. set. Costumes: colorful, modern and period. Approximate running time: 30 minutes. Code: HC9.*

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ISBN-13 978-0-88680-077-2



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The Happy Scarecrow

The
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SCARECROW

A One-Act Play

by

I. E. CLARK

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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(THE HAPY SCARECROW)

ISBN: 978-0-88680-077-2

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“Produced by special arrangement with
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THE HAPPY SCARECROW

CAST

(In order of appearance)

The Scarecrow

The Fairy

The Witch

The Man in the Audience*

The Little Girl

The Old Man

The Skunk*

The Jester*

The Scarehuman*

The King

The Princess

(Optional: Children playing)†

Place: *Everywhere*

Time: *Always*

Ψ

*Several roles, including those starred, may be played by either a male or a female (the “Man” in the audience would become the “Woman” in the audience). If necessary to reduce the size of the cast, the roles of the Skunk and the Little Girl may be double cast.

†For a larger cast, the children playing (pages 4 & 7) may appear on stage instead of simply being heard off stage.

ABOUT THE PLAY

What is happiness? Philosophers have struggled with this question for centuries. But sometimes answers are found by simple people with humble aims. What could be more simple than a scarecrow?

Teased by a Witch to prove that there is happiness in the world, a little Fairy awakens a Scarecrow and promises to make him a real man if he can find happiness. The Scarecrow's search evokes a little smile, a little fright, and perhaps a little tear.

Written by I. E. Clark as a contest play, "The Happy Scarecrow" has also become a favorite Easter play because of its gentle hint of another story that took place at Easter time. But just as its costumes and set are timeless, the play is appropriate any month of the year.



COSTUMES AND SET

Possibilities for costuming "The Happy Scarecrow" are limitless. Medieval styles, in keeping with fairy tale tradition, would be appropriate. Modern dress for all characters is also satisfactory. The play has been done in black leotards. The Schulenburg cast used modern dress for the modern-type characters such as the Old Man and the Little Girl and the Scarecrow, and medieval costumes for the traditional fairy tale characters—the Fairy, the Witch, the King, the Princess, and the Jester. An animal costume pattern can be easily converted into a skunk's costume. Black tights and shirt and a black hood and beak will suffice for the Scarehuman. Sketches of the Schulenburg costumes can be found in the 'Stage Magic' Production Script.

The play may be staged with a minimum of scenery—two cardboard trees and a bench. Or an elaborate outdoor scene can be employed. More details for designing a set may be found in the 'Stage Magic' Production Script.

Stage directions, prop lists, and details of costumes and set have been kept to a minimum in this Acting Script to give actors and crew members maximum opportunity to use their own creativity. These aids may be found in the Director's Production Script. See page v for details.

THE DIRECTOR'S PRODUCTION SCRIPT

The Director's Production Script (prompt book) available for this play contains numerous aids designed to save the director hours and hours of valuable time.

Included in the Production Script are drawings of costumes, along with detailed suggestions for color, material, and other aspects of making or finding the costumes. You will also find floor plans drawn to scale; scale drawings of scenery, with suggestions for making or acquiring unusual set pieces, and suggestions for making or finding unusual props.

Also included is information on lighting, make-up, music, special effects, or whatever technicalities the play calls for.

The full text of the play is included, with **detailed stage directions** which show where each actor should be and what he should do all the while he is on stage. Experienced directors have used our blocking as a time-saving foundation upon which to mold their own creative ideas. Inexperienced directors have found our stage directions to be a priceless aid in solving problems of movement, picturization, focus, and other aspects of staging. For the beginning director, using one of our Production Scripts is almost like having a professional director sitting beside you at rehearsals.

The Production Script also contains a detailed discussion of characterization, with suggestions for helping each performer understand the role.

In the case of our one-act classics, the Production Script saves the director even more time by providing well-researched information on the background, history, and significance of the play and its author.

Our Production Scripts have become an indispensable tool for many directors.

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

The Happy SCARECROW

By I. E. Clark

[Curtain opens revealing a scarecrow in a field. Just outside the fence is a path. Inside the fence are two trees with a bench between them.

It is dawn, and it is spring. The sounds of birds and other forest songs are heard. FAIRY enters, singing a spring song and waving her magic wand over the ground.]

FAIRY. Grow, little seedlings, sprout your leaves;
Lift your tiny faces to the sun.
Grow into sturdy autumn sheaves
And then your work will all be done.

[During the Fairy's song, the WITCH is discovered on the bench, glowering at the FAIRY. She obviously has been awakened by the Fairy. Since the song continues with no promise of ending any time in the foreseeable future, the WITCH leaps off the bench and croaks:]

WITCH. Quiet! Cut the cackling!

FAIRY. Oh! You frightened me!

WITCH. Good. I meant to scare you. Waking a person out of her beauty sleep with that silly screeching! What in this putrid world are you so bug-nutty happy about?

FAIRY. Why—why—there is happiness everywhere. See how the tiny flowers peep through the earth, and gaze at the world around them? They see the trees swaying arm in arm and laughing softly. They hear the warm breeze strumming spring songs. The sun smiles down at them and beckons... and the tiny flowers grow and grow to see more of this lovely world. Who wouldn't be happy?

WITCH. Me.

FAIRY. You poor old thing. Why are you unhappy?

WITCH. Once upon a time I was young and pretty as a bee's buzz—like you are now. So naturally I was batty enough to believe in happiness, too. But as I grew older—and wiser—and learned the ways of this moth-eaten world, I saw life as it really is. All around me, tears, and screams, and hate and cruelty. For each tear I saw, a wrinkle grew; for every scream, a strand of gray. Until all my beauty gave way to ugliness and all my joy to sadness, like the world is ugly and sad. The world is ugly, do you hear! There is no such thing as happiness!

FAIRY. I think you're wrong.

WITCH. Wrong! [*She is withered with grief.*] Bless the bones of Beelzebub, I wish I was wrong.

FAIRY. Surely you will admit there is *some* happiness in the world.

WITCH. Not a bit.

FAIRY. Just a tiny bit?

WITCH. Happiness is a delusion.

FAIRY. Not even a tinesy, teensy bite-size bit?

WITCH. No.

FAIRY. Oh, I wish I could make you see how wrong you are. I'm sure there is such a thing as happiness... [*but she is beginning to doubt just a tiny bit*] if you just know where to find it. [*FAIRY studies Witch's face for a moment. Aside*] I'll bet I know how I can make her happy. She said I was beautiful. I'll give her my beauty. Then she will be happy, too! But—but then—if I give my beauty to her—what will become of me? Oh, I shouldn't have such thoughts. I *will* give her my beauty. [*She begins to step determinedly toward Witch, but each step is less determined, until all the determination has disappeared*] Oh, I'll bet she wouldn't even want my beauty...there must be another way... [*She wrinkles her pretty little forehead in a frown, because that helps her think harder*]...I'm happy—where did I find it? Why I just opened my eyes and there it was. [*Her eyes light upon*

the Scarecrow. She studies him for a moment, realizing that his eyes are literally closed. She runs over and touches him, and—you see, it did help to wrinkle her forehead—she gets an idea!] What if he opened his eyes! Would he find happiness? Of course he would, for happiness is everywhere. [*Runs toward WITCH, who all this time has been sitting on her bench feeling sorry for herself because there is no happiness in the world*] I believe—I believe I can prove you're wrong.

WITCH. Oh, Brother Pluto! Deliver me from this wild child.

FAIRY. See this old scarecrow? [*Runs back to Scarecrow*] Just a poor old bundle of rags and straw—no home, no friends;—night, day, sunshine, snow, he has to stand in this one spot....

WITCH. And he can't see or hear the cries of the world. Lucky boy!

FAIRY. Suppose we bring him to life—for one day. If he can find happiness in that day, then real life will be his. If happiness can't be found—well, most likely he will want to be—a scarecrow again.

WITCH. Foolish, frilly, fuzzy little fairy! Why must the young waste youth trying to be wise? [*She sees the excited determination on FAIRY's face and shrugs her shoulders*] Oh go on and have your fun. [*Aside*] I've never seen anybody so anxious to resuscitate a haystack.

FAIRY. [*Waving her wand over SCARECROW*] Mister Scarecrow, wake up! wake up! The world is yours. Go and find happiness!

[*SCARECROW shudders; then shakes his head. His eyes open. He moves one arm up and down, and then the other. He watches the motion with astonishment. He shakes one leg, and then the other. And he marvels at these miracles of movement! He whirls around drunkenly, and then falls. He gets awkwardly to his feet and takes a few stiff, cautious steps around the field.*]

SCARECROW. Is this me! [*He punches his legs, his chest, his ribs. It tickles, and he jumps and giggles*] It's me. Find

happiness, she said. Ha! I am happy. [*He clicks his heels in an awkward dance step, almost falls again, then stands motionless*] I think. What is happiness, anyhow? [*He looks around for Fairy, to ask her*] Hey! [*As he waves at Fairy, he notices that his hands are still straw.*] Fairy—fairy! you forgot something! [*Holding both hands toward her. FAIRY waves her wand and his right hand pops out. She waves wand again and his left hand pops out. SCARECROW watches in dismay.*] Thanks. [*He scratches the back of his neck and pulls a piece of straw out of his collar, looks at it and lets it drift to the ground.*] You told me to find happiness—but what is happiness?

FAIRY. [*Her grades never were very good*] Why happiness is—happiness! It means—being happy. That is—it means—

MAN IN AUDIENCE. [*Stands. He is a scholarly looking person, and sounds just the way a scholarly looking person ought to sound*]. Perhaps I can help you, sir. Webster says, and I quote: “Happiness—noun. The state or quality of being glad or contented; good luck, prosperity, a state of well-being. Synonyms: felicity, joy, bliss....”

SCARECROW. I get the idea. Thanks. [*Looks around stage, finds nothing.*] Where shall I look?

[*FAIRY thinks for a moment and then waves her wand. From off stage suddenly there is the sound of happy children playing. There are screams of delight, and songs like “London Bridge.” Suddenly the joyful sounds stop.*]

VOICE. [*Offstage*] Aw, go on and give it to her.

LITTLE GIRL. [*Offstage*] No, it’s mine!

VOICE. [*Offstage*] You’ve got lots more. Let her play with it for awhile.

LITTLE GIRL. [*Offstage*] No, I won’t! It’s mine and I won’t let her have it. [*LITTLE GIRL appears, holding a doll haughtily. SCARECROW watches her for awhile and then addresses MAN IN AUDIENCE.*]

SCARECROW. How was that again?

MAN IN AUDIENCE. Enjoyment, pleasure, beatitude, delight....”

SCARECROW. [*Addressing LITTLE GIRL*] H—hello. [*LITTLE GIRL stops and looks at him, then looks back at her doll without speaking.*]

SCARECROW. What do you have there?

LITTLE GIRL. It’s a doll, silly.

SCARECROW. May I just hold your doll for a minute? [*LITTLE GIRL sticks her tongue out at him and turns away without answering.*]

SCARECROW. You see—you see, I’m looking for happiness and I thought holding your doll might give me the—might give me the “state or quality of being glad or contented.”

LITTLE GIRL. You can’t have it. It’s mine.

SCARECROW. Why do you want the doll?

LITTLE GIRL. Because.

SCARECROW. Don’t you have another doll at home?

LITTLE GIRL. Oh, I have lots more dolls.

SCARECROW. Then why won’t you give me this one?

LITTLE GIRL. Just because. [*She strolls off.*]

[*SCARECROW watches, puzzled. WITCH nudges FAIRY and cackles loudly. OLD MAN, who has entered along the path and stopped to listen, watches Little Girl disappear, and then speaks.*]

OLD MAN. The young place much importance on unimportant things.

SCARECROW. How—how do you do, sir?

OLD MAN. Good morning, young man. Rich looking field you have there. Growing corn?

SCARECROW. It’s corn, but I don’t grow it. I just keep the crows from eating it.

OLD MAN. I beg your pardon.

SCARECROW. [*Realizing that he no longer looks quite like a scarecrow*] I mean—uh—that is—the scarecrow is “out” this morning, and I’m taking his place.

OLD MAN. Don’t be rude, young man.

SCARECROW. I didn't mean to be rude, sir. The truth is, sir, I'm searching for happiness. The fairy—that is—a friend said the whole world is before me from which to choose. But I can't seem to find the way.

OLD MAN. I am afraid that the route is a long and difficult one. I can show you the path—

SCARECROW. Oh, would you, sir?

OLD MAN. —but I can't tell you how to follow it.

SCARECROW. Oh.

OLD MAN. The simple formula for happiness is this: Live a long life—

SCARECROW. Yes...?

OLD MAN. —and then live it all over again—exactly opposite from the first time.

SCARECROW. But...

OLD MAN. I *said* I couldn't tell you *how*. I was a rich man once. They called me the wizard of wealth. Every copper coin I tossed into the air came down gold. My power extended over the seas and into all the nations you can name. But those who smiled and called me “friend” were not my friends. If I could live my life again, they wouldn't cheat me. No sirree! I'd crush my enemies, I'd gather gold and more gold until I owned all the gold in the world. And let no man dare ask me for a penny! As it is, the only thing of value left in my possession—is this ring.

SCARECROW. It's beautiful.

OLD MAN. And now my son is waiting for me to die so he can have the ring. But I'll make him wait! Oh, I'll make him wait. I may never die at all. I never did like children. *[Exit]*

SCARECROW. *[Looks at Man in Audience]* That's not the way you explained it.

MAN IN AUDIENCE. Aristotle says, and I quote: “It is highly important for us to know in what happiness consists, but such knowledge, considering the variety and variability of human nature, can never be exact. In short—”

SCARECROW. That's short enough—thanks. *[He sits on*

edge of stage, thinking. SKUNK wanders in, walks to Scarecrow and smells him.]

SKUNK. Are you a skunk?

SCARECROW. I—I don't think so. Are you?

SKUNK. Sure. Want me to prove it?

SCARECROW. Say, you seem to be a happy little fellow.

SKUNK. That's me.

SCARECROW. Why are you happy?

SKUNK. 'Cause I have so much fun.

SCARECROW. [*Maybe this is the answer at last and we can drop the curtain*] How do you have fun?

SKUNK. Live it up. Don't miss a chance for laughs. Eat, stink, and be merry! [*SKUNK winds up to laugh at his own pun, but he is interrupted by a sudden outburst of laughter from the children off stage*] See that bunch of kids over there? Watch.

[*SKUNK scampers off. Suddenly, among the childish voices, we can hear one excited voice proclaim, "There's a skunk!" Immediately the children are silent. Then screams of children running away in fright are heard. SKUNK's laughter rings through the air. SCARECROW holds his nose and shakes his head sadly. Then he turns to FAIRY.*]

SCARECROW. Fairy, I—I can't seem to find the way. There's a—a strange feeling here [*places hand over heart*] that I didn't notice when I was a scarecrow. Maybe I'd better —[*he turns toward his pedestal.*]

FAIRY. No—wait! You haven't even begun to look. The day is only half gone.

SCARECROW. But why do they—why can't they.... Isn't there anyone in this strange world who tries to make others happy?

FAIRY. I—surely there—[*that pretty little forehead wrinkles again, and, sure enough, an idea comes. She waves her wand*] See what you think of this gay fellow!

[*JESTER comes skipping down the lane, turns a somersault, and comes to a stop before SCARECROW.*]