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## **Family Plays**

# STORYVILLE

Comedy/Drama with  
Audience Participation  
by  
LORRAINE THOMPSON



# STORYVILLE

“*Storyville* was created to be our spring 2002 show. The script was written with simplicity and budget in mind. It was designed to be flexible, manageable and, most importantly, entertaining. We enjoyed much success with our run, and I am sure others will as well.” (Author, Lorraine Thompson)

**Comedy/Drama. By Lorraine Thompson. Cast: 7 to 45 actors.** A wise woman enters carrying a large book titled *Storyville*. She crosses to Center Stage, sits and addresses the audience. “Storyville is the town where everyone has a fable to unfold and a tale to tell. Stories are different, but they all begin with ‘Once upon a time...’” Numerous players enter, all talking at once until the wise woman signals to the audience, blows her whistle and starts the procession of stories with the Lion King and his bad breath. When given the opportunity, most people will jump at the chance to tell their story. The characters in this one-act play are no different. You see, everyone in Storyville has a tale to tell. The problem is, they all want to talk at the same time. Other tales include a farmer and his family who felt their house was too small until the wise woman solved their problem; the Gingerbread Boy; a vain, rich woman who wanted attention until she got it with a dress of rags; a little red hen who refused to share her bread with her friends who had refused to help her raise the grain; and a farmer who needed help to pull up a big turnip (asking children in the audience for help). Adults and children alike will take delight as many of their favorite characters come forward on stage to share their stories. Other characters include five fishermen who thought one had drowned when each one doing the counting failed to count himself; followed by Chicken Licken, who thought the sky was falling; and finally Foxy Loxy, who was outwitting several of the others when all the characters rush on stage trying to say the last line to each of the stories. The wise woman says that there is only one way to end all good stories and asks the audience to chant, “They all lived happily ever after.” She closes the book as she says, “The end.” *This quick paced, audience participation play is easy to mount and can be performed in any type space. The flexible casting and simple set and costumes make it ideal for both schools and touring companies. Approximate running time: 30 to 40 minutes. Code: S1B.*

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Storyville

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by

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“Produced by special arrangement with  
Family Plays of Woodstock, Illinois”

# STORYVILLE

## *Cast of Characters*

*This play is very flexible when it comes to casting. There are forty-five characters; however, the play can be done with as few as seven actors.*

WISE WOMAN (Player 1)  
 PLAYERS 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, & 7  
 LION KING  
 QUEEN  
 SHEEP  
 DONKEY  
 FOX  
 FARMER  
 FARMER'S WIFE  
 CHILD 1 & 2  
 CHICKEN  
 COW  
 GINGERBREAD BOY  
 OLD WOMAN  
 RICH WOMAN  
 SERVANTS 1 & 2  
 DRESSMAKER  
 MERCHANTS 1, 2, & 3  
 BOY (with radio)  
 LITTLE RED HEN  
 CAT  
 DOG  
 PIG  
 GIRL (with jump rope)  
 TURNIP FARMER  
 MYRTLE LOUISE  
 SISSY JANE  
 DOODLEY DOG  
 PUFF PUFF FLUFFY BALL (cat)  
 MOUSE  
 HERO  
 FISHERMEN 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5  
 ANNOUNCER  
 CHICKEN LICKEN  
 BROOSTER ROOSTER  
 DUCKY LUCKY  
 GOOSEY LUCY  
 FOXY LOXY

## About the Play

When given the opportunity, most people will jump at the chance to tell their story. The characters in this one-act play are no different. You see, *everyone* in Storyville has a tale to tell. The problem is, they all want to talk at the same time. Adults and children alike will take delight as many of their favorite characters come forward on stage to share their stories. One amusing tale leads to another, and all of them lead you to Storyville. This quick paced, audience participation play is easy to mount and can be performed in any type space. The flexible casting and simple set and costumes make it ideal for both schools and touring companies.



## *PRODUCTION NOTES*

### **Properties**

Wise Woman—pillow, big book, glasses, whistle

Fox—handkerchief

Rich Woman—2 note cards

Servant #1—2 pieces of pretty fabric, 1 piece of ragged fabric

Servant #2—small bell

Merchant #1—carpets

Merchant #2—small boxes with “Ogre-Be-Gone” written on front

Merchant #3—fish on a stick

Boy—boombox

Girl—jump rope

### **Costumes**

Costumes can be as simple, or as complicated, as you want. In the original production, brightly colored tee-shirts and pants were used as the “base costume” and costume pieces were added as needed to distinguish the many characters. Pieces such as hats, shawls, and vests were very effective and easy to manage.

### **Set Requirements**

There are minimal requirements for the actual set. A bare stage can be used. In the original production, a portable stage constructed of PVC pipe consisted of three sides. Curtains were made to fit each side. The center curtain was split into two panels for easy entrances and exits. Two stools were placed in front of the center curtain. All props and costume pieces were stored behind the stage in a trunk until needed.

# Storyville

By Lorraine Thompson

*[As the show begins, PLAYER 1, dressed as “the wise woman” enters carrying a pillow and a large book. The title of the book, Storyville, is in big letters on the cover. She crosses to Center Stage. She sees the audience]*

WISE WOMAN. Excuse me, is anyone sitting here? No? Good. *[She puts her pillow down on the floor and sits. It takes her a while to get comfortable. At last she settles down. She puts on her glasses and opens up the book]* Hello and welcome to Storyville, the town where everyone has a fable to unfold and a tale to tell. Everyone here has a story. And stories, as you know, are like people... they are all different. But, in following with our narrative traditions, all Storyville stories begin with the same four words: *[PLAYER 2 enters. His “Once upon a time” is spoken in unison with the Wise Woman’s]* Once upon a time...

PLAYER 2. *[The next sequence of lines overlaps. Each PLAYER enters telling his or her story. They each get a bit upset at being interrupted and continue on in louder and angrier tones]* Once upon a time... *[PLAYER 3 enters and begins speaking]* in a jungle far away there lived a lion. He was the mighty ruler of his land...

PLAYER 3. Once upon a time *[PLAYER 4 enters and begins speaking]* there lived a farmer. He had a wife, two children, a cow and some chickens...

PLAYER 4. Once upon a time *[PLAYER 5 begins speaking]* in a small village there lived a little old woman. She was very lonely. One day she decided to make some gingerbread...

PLAYER 5. Once upon a time *[PLAYER 6 enters and begins speaking]* there lived a very beautiful woman. She was also very conceited. One day she decided she needed a new dress so she went to the dressmaker...

PLAYER 6. Once upon a time *[PLAYER 7 enters and begins speaking]* in a land far away there lived a gingerbread boy...

PLAYER 7. Once upon a time... a little red hen was pecking away in the barnyard when she...

PLAYER 2. Excuse me. Hello! I was here first so I get to tell my story first.

PLAYER 3. No, no, no! Why should your story go first. I have a story too you know!

*[ALL begin fighting over who should go first. The WISE WOMAN shakes her head, takes off her glasses and closes her book. She gestures "One moment" to the audience. She stands and crosses to stand to one side of the argument. She pulls out a whistle and blows it. EVERYONE stops fighting and looks at her. They are very quiet. After a moment's pause, the WISE WOMAN speaks]*

WISE WOMAN. Once upon a time *[OTHERS lean toward her in anticipation]* there lived *[they lean in a bit more]* a lion. *[She blows her whistle again and ALL exit, except the LION KING, QUEEN and PLAYER 6]*

PLAYER 6. This lion was the mighty ruler of his land and he had a very bad temper.

LION. *[Yelling]* What do you mean I have a bad temper? Nobody talks to me like that! *Roar!*

QUEEN. Raymond! What is going on here? What are you yelling about? Calm down this instant!

LION. Yes, dear.

PLAYER 6. The lion had a wife who tried her best to keep his temper in control.

LION. There you go again with the temper! I ought to...

QUEEN. Raymond! Calm down. King or not, you must try to control your outbursts!

LION. Yes, dear.

PLAYER 6. The queen had been meaning to have a talk with the king for a long time about a problem... *[QUEEN is not thrilled at the prospect of telling the king about the problem. She signals Player 6 to stop talking... but it is too late. The KING is interested]*

LION. You wish to speak with me about a problem? Well, why didn't you just say so?

QUEEN. Well, dear... I... you see... We don't have to talk about it right now if you are busy...

LION. Nonsense! I always have time for you. What is it?

QUEEN. Well... dear... This isn't very easy to say...

LION. *[His patience is growing thin]* What is it?

QUEEN. Well, you see dear... You have... well you have...

LION. *[Yelling]* What!

QUEEN. *[Blurting it out]* You have horrible breath!

LION. I have what?

QUEEN. *[Getting braver]* I said you have horrible breath! It is absolutely the worst breath I have ever smelled!

LION. I don't believe you! I speak to thousands of animals in my kingdom every day. No one has ever said anything about my breath!

QUEEN. Oh, please! Have you never noticed how they cry and faint when you speak? Doesn't that tell you something?

LION. Why, of course it tells me something! It tells me that they are touched and overwhelmed by my greatness.

QUEEN. Oh! They are overwhelmed all right! But it is not by your greatness!

LION. Are you saying that they cry and faint because of my breath?

QUEEN. Yes, my dear. I'm afraid I am.

LION. *[Getting angry]* Well, we shall see about this! I will call my three advisors. They will tell me the truth!

PLAYER 6. The king summoned his three advisors. The sheep was the first advisor to enter.

SHEEP. *[Entering nervously from Stage Left. The sheep bows]* Yes, your majesty, how may I help you?

LION. Dear sheep *[LION draws sheep close to him]* Do you think *[exhales]* that my breath *[exhales]* is bad? *[exhales]*

PLAYER 6. The sheep's eyes began to water. She knew that the king's breath was terrible... but she knew his temper was worse!

SHEEP. *[Suffering the horrible breath]* Oh, no! Your highness has wonderful breath! I wish everyone had breath as pleasant as yours.

LION. *[Getting angry]* I see your eyes watering! How dare you lie to me! *[He roars angrily. The SHEEP drops to the ground trembling]*

PLAYER 6. The donkey was the next advisor to enter the room. *[DONKEY enters from Stage Left]* He saw the sheep shaking on the floor and he thought to himself...

DONKEY. *[To audience]* She must have made the king angry. I will not be so foolish.

LION. Come here, donkey.

DONKEY. *[Crossing to the lion and bowing]* Yes, my king, how may I serve you?

LION. *[Drawing the DONKEY closer to him]* Do you think *[exhales]* that my breath *[exhales]* is bad? *[exhales]*

PLAYER 6. The donkey began to sway back and forth. *[The DONKEY sways]* The strong odor from the lion's mouth almost caused him to faint.

LION. Well?

PLAYER 6. The donkey looked again at the sheep and then said...

DONKEY. Oh! Your highness...your breath smells as sweet as the flowers in springtime!

LION. Does it? Then why did you almost faint? ROAR! *[The DONKEY drops shivering to the floor next to the sheep]*

PLAYER 6. The fox was the last advisor to come into the room. *[The FOX enters from Stage Left]* She saw the sheep and the donkey shivering on the floor. She knew she had to use her wits if she wanted to remain standing...

FOX. I must use my wits if I want to remain standing. *[She pulls a large handkerchief from her sleeve]*

LION. Fox, come a bit closer... I want to ask you a question. Would you say *[exhales]* that my breath *[exhales]* is bad? *[exhales]*

FOX. *[Covering her nose with the handkerchief]* Oh, your majesty... I have such a terrible cold... I cannot smell anything at all! *[She winks at the audience]* I am so sorry! *[She sneezes and exits Stage Left]*

PLAYER 6. Sometimes it is best to keep your opinions to yourself. Hey, lion *[taunting the lion]* want a breath mint?

LION. Why you! *[He chases Player 6. PLAYER 6 exits Stage Left]*

QUEEN. Raymond!

LION. Yes, dear.

*[The WHISTLE sounds from behind the curtain. The LION and the QUEEN exit Stage Right. The FARMER enters from the Center of the curtains into the playing area. The WIFE and TWO CHILDREN enter around from Stage Right. WISE WOMAN enters from Stage Left. WIFE sits on the Stage Right stool with CHILDREN at her feet. WISE WOMAN sits on her pillow on the Stage Left stool. FARMER stands between them]*

FARMER. The lion wasn't the only one with problems. There was also a farmer and his family who had problems of their own.

WIFE. You see, they lived in a very small house.

CHILDREN. This house was way too small for the farmer and his large family.

CHILD 1. *[The TWO CHILDREN begin to fight over a pretend toy]*  
That is my toy!

CHILD 2. No it's not! It is my toy!

CHILDREN. Mama!

WIFE. *[To audience]* One day the wife had had all she could take. *[To farmer]* I just can't take it anymore! Something has got to be done. Our house is way too small! *[The CHILDREN nod in agreement]*

FARMER. What do you want me to do? We don't have enough money to move or build a new house.

WIFE. Go see the wise woman.  
 FARMER. The wise woman?  
 CHILDREN. The wise woman!  
 WIFE. Maybe she can help.  
 FARMER. So the farmer went to see the wise woman.  
 WISE WOMAN. [*Meditating*] Ohmmmmm.  
 FARMER. Excuse me, wise woman?  
 WISE WOMAN. [*With dialect*] Vat is jour problem?  
 FARMER. Our house is too small.  
 WISE WOMAN. Jou go home and jou bring in jour chicken.  
 FARMER. So the farmer went home.  
 WIFE. His wife met him at the door. Well, what did she say?  
 FARMER. She said to bring in the chicken.  
 CHICKEN. [*Entering from Stage Right*] So the chicken came in.  
 Cluck, cluck, cluck... [*The CHICKEN continues to cluck while the CHILDREN are fighting*]  
 CHILDREN. The children were fighting.  
 CHILD 1. That is my toy.  
 CHILD 2. No it's not. It is my toy.  
 CHILDREN. [*CHICKEN makes her sound with the same inflection as the children*] Mama!  
 WIFE. This won't do. Go back to the wise woman!  
 FARMER. So the farmer went back to the wise woman.  
 WISE WOMAN. Ohmmmm.  
 FARMER. Excuse me, wise woman?  
 WISE WOMAN. [*With each visit the WISE WOMAN becomes more and more annoyed*] Vat is jour problem?  
 FARMER. Our house is *still* too small.  
 WISE WOMAN. Go home and bring in jour cow.  
 FARMER. So the farmer went home.  
 WIFE. His wife met him at the door. Well, what did she say?  
 FARMER. She said to let in the cow.  
 COW. [*Entering from Stage Right*] So the cow came in. Moooo, Moooo.  
 CHICKEN. The chicken was clucking. Cluck, cluck, cluck...  
 CHILDREN. The children were fighting.  
 CHILD 1. That's my toy.  
 CHILD 2. No it's not. It is my toy.  
 CHILDREN. [*With animals*] Mama!  
 WIFE. This is not working! Go back to the wise woman.