

# Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*Dramatic Publishing*

# **Christabel and the Amazing Pedal Power Challenge**

A Full-length Play

by

JOANNA H. KRAUS



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

© The Dramatic Publishing Company

\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: [www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com), or we may be contacted by mail at: DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, 311 Washington St., Woodstock IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MMXI by  
JOANNA H. KRAUS  
Printed in the United States of America  
*All Rights Reserved*  
(CHRISTABEL AND THE AMAZING PEDAL POWER CHALLENGE)

ISBN: 978-1-58342-724-8

For Ted and Tim,  
who have always been my staunch supporters.  
Thank you!

## **IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS**

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with  
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Christabel and the Amazing Pedal Power Challenge* (formerly titled *Pilot Christabel*) necessitated extensive research and I am deeply grateful for the help I received.

Thank you to the following people and institutions that contributed to my understanding of the medical ramifications of Christabel's condition:

Nancy Blackburn, then intake coordinator, Golden State Rehabilitation Hospital, San Ramon, Calif.; Lecil Harper, then manager, Rehabilitation Physical Therapy, Kaiser Permanente, Kaiser Foundation Rehabilitation Center, Vallejo, Calif.; Jeanette Engel-Ramirez, then referral coordinator, John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek, Calif.; Bob Brown, now retired instructor, Glen Paul School, Eureka, Calif., and designer and pit crew for first handicapped entry of the cross-country Great Arcata to Ferndale Kinetic Grand Championship (formerly known as Kinetic Sculpture Race); and Sandra Hartlieb, VSA Indiana (formerly known as Very Special Arts of Indiana), Indianapolis, Ind.

My appreciation to the late Hobart Brown, founder of the first Kinetic Grand Championship; to Sally Freeman, fellow writer and long-time friend; to author Barbara Steiner for her enthusiastic support of the initial story; and to the wonderful East Bay writers in my critique groups, who supported me with honesty and patience over several drafts (not to mention years).

Play development was assisted by several individuals and institutions who generously gave their time and expertise. Among them:

Patti Stauch, then director of drama at De La Salle High School, Walnut Creek, Calif.; Michael Pearl, director, Grandview Theatre Company, Grandview High School, Aurora, Colo.; the New Play Project and in particular director Craig Kosnik and dramaturge Anne Negri, at Arizona State University,

Tempe, Ariz.; and to the Diablo Actors Ensemble Studio, Walnut Creek, Calif., where Samantha Fryer directed its first production.

Last, to my in-house critic, Ted, who read every single draft commenting with candor and never complaining when I asked innumerable times, “Could you take a look at this?”

### **AUTHOR’S NOTE**

Every play has a trigger. This one has three.

Several years ago, while on a faculty exchange at Humboldt State University, Arcata, Calif., I was asked to help create a tour show on the history and folklore of the North Coast. That was when I discovered the Kinetic Grand Championship founded by the late Hobart R. Brown in 1969. This 3-day Memorial weekend race is over sea, sand and slime. Second, while conducting my research I found a news clipping about a young athlete whose body was permanently confined to a wheelchair due to a football accident. Nevertheless, he entered the race on a specially designed chair.

Today, there are many similar spin-off races. Although they differ in length and location all are wildly costumed and high-spirited.

The third influence was my former student in the Arts for Children Program at the College at Brockport State University of New York. Gerry was imaginative, intellectually curious and capable. Her mind leaped where her legs could not. Though multiple sclerosis limited her body to a wheelchair, the disease rarely limited her lively spirit. Sometimes she left me notes with a question or a comment. More often it was a thank you. But the truth is Gerry taught me far more than I ever taught her.

*Christabel and the Amazing Pedal Power Challenge* was given a staged reading by the New Play Project, Arizona State University, Tempe, April 2010, director Craig Kosnik, dramaturge Anne Negri, with the following cast:

Christabel Patience Locke . . . . .	Laura Miner
Marghi . . . . .	Liana O'Boyle
Dave Taylor . . . . .	Sam Keller
Richard Locke . . . . .	Ron Bowen
Brittany . . . . .	Ashley Provenzano
Emily Locke . . . . .	Katherine Krzys
Annette . . . . .	Elizabeth Stocks
Bud Silver . . . . .	Alejandro Sanchez Vega
Victor Gambino . . . . .	Ryan Frazier
Hank Angstrom . . . . .	Martin Prows
Stage Directions . . . . .	Anne Negri

*Christabel and the Amazing Pedal Power Challenge's* premier production was given by Diablo Actors Ensemble Studio, Walnut Creek, Calif., December 2010, director Samantha Fryer, with the following cast:

Christabel Patience Locke . . . . .	Maria Borromeo*
Marghi . . . . .	Julie Marcrum*
Dave Taylor . . . . .	Taylor DuFrane*
Richard Locke . . . . .	Chris Connor
Tiffany . . . . .	Samantha Fryer
Emily Locke . . . . .	Marie Stillwagon
Annette . . . . .	Meghan Ihle
Bud Silver . . . . .	Andrew Talbot
Victor Gambino . . . . .	Avery Hurd*
Mr. Anderson . . . . .	Paul Newby
Cheerleader/Tech . . . . .	Bobby Borromeo*

\* Indicates student member of DAE Studio.



# Christabel and the Amazing Pedal Power Challenge

## CHARACTERS

- CHRISTABEL PATIENCE LOCKE . . . Focused, adventurous, determined. 14 ½.
- \*MARGHI . . . . . Her friend. Loyal, caring. 14 ½.
- DAVE TAYLOR. . . . . Self-confident, handsome. 17.
- RICHARD LOCKE . . . Christabel's father. Ecology professor at local university. Charming, self-centered. Takes the easy way. Late 30s.
- TIFFANY . . . . . His new wife and former graduate student. Strong-minded, adores him. Bright, healthy, fit. 25.
- DANIEL . . . . . Their new baby. (prop doll)
- EMILY LOCKE . . . . . Christabel's mother. An administrative assistant. Angry about divorce, overwhelmed by her new responsibilities. Mid-30s.
- ANNETTE . . . . . Occupational therapist, warm, wise. Late 20s.
- BUD SILVER . . Physical therapist. Straight-forward. Early 30s.
- VICTOR GAMBINO. . . . . Volunteer at medical center. Mature high school junior. 17.
- PAT ANDERSON. . . . . Principal of Eastview High School. Personable, promotion-minded. 40s.

\*Marghi is pronounced with a hard "g."

## CASTING NOTES

By double casting, the role of Christabel can be played by an actor with a disability.

If the performer in Act One, Scene One (before the fall) is of similar size, stature and general appearance as the performer who plays Christabel throughout the rest of the play, the audience will accept the convention.

The role of the principal may be cast either as male or female.

**TIME:** The present.

**PLACE:** A small coastal city.

Unit set with levels and multiple playing areas.

## **ACT ONE**

Scene 1: Stage area at Pope Intermediate School.

Scene 2: Mitchell Medical Center. Two weeks later.

Scene 3: The medical center. An occupational therapy room.

A month later.

Scene 4: Christabel's new home. Two weeks later.

Scene 5: The medical center, paragym and cafeteria. A week later.

Scene 6: Eastview High School. The principal's office and later the cafeteria. A few days later.

Scene 7: Christabel's home, then Victor's car. Later.

Scene 8: Eastview High School. A few days later.

Scene 9: The paragym. Soon after.

## **ACT TWO**

Scene 1: Richard's family room. Later.

Scene 2: The weekend Christabel's home. Later.

Scene 3: The paragym. A few days later.

Scene 4: A school hallway. April.

Scene 5: The town plaza and segments of the race course. The day of the Pedal Power Challenge, June.

## **PRODUCTION NOTE**

Technical aspects of the production can be handled as simply and creatively as the director wishes. One can use visual options instead of technology. Some of these might include stylized movement, choreography, set pieces or props—along with sound—to create a sense of time and place. The media option during the sequence leading to Christabel’s catastrophic fall is suggested strictly as an option. Although not necessary, should the director choose to use projections in the last scene, it’s preferable that these be lighthearted sketches in keeping with the spirit of the Pedal Power Challenge.

When 14-year old Christabel falls off an extension ladder finishing the lights for her school's spring production. she becomes an instant paraplegic. Angry and embittered she's convinced her life is over. Months later she's at the Mitchell Medical Center paragym for physical therapy.

## SCENE FIVE

SCENE: *Mitchell Medical Center. A corner of the paragym and later the cafeteria. A week later.*

*(Note: A paragym would resemble a regular gym except for patients in wheelchairs with therapists and a tilting board to relearn how to be upright, etc. Only pulleys are practical.)*

AT RISE: *CHRISTABEL* in wheelchair is on the pulleys. Her hands hold the rope end. While she yanks the right hand down, the left is pulled into the air and vice versa.

*She grunts with the effort.*

BUD. Playtime. (*Removes pulleys and lifts her up and stretches her across a huge gym ball, then helps her rock slowly back and forth.*) You've come a long way since the tilt table, kiddo. (*CHRISTABEL sighs.*) Tired already?

CHRISTABEL. No.

BUD. Bored?

CHRISTABEL. No...it's...Bud, how long do I have to do these exercises? How many months? When can I stop?

BUD. Never.

CHRISTABEL. *Never?*

BUD. If a muscle isn't used, it gets stiff.

CHRISTABEL. It's not going anywhere.

BUD (*consults clipboard*). We can change the order, but you've got to finish. Sit-ups or push-ups first?

CHRISTABEL. Cyanide or arsenic?

BUD. That bad? Take five. (*Helps her off the ball and back into the wheelchair. Sits beside her.*) Want to talk?

CHRISTABEL. I mean, what's it all for? What's the point? I'll never be able to hike again...or go to a dance at school. It's like I'm dead.

BUD. What's happening at home?

CHRISTABEL. The only thing she lets me do by *myself* is change the leg bag.

BUD (*with a smile*). That'll ease up once she gets used to the situation. Sometimes it takes the parents longer than the patients.

CHRISTABEL. She gave away half my things; the bunk bed, my bicycle... (*BUD reacts.*) Okay, I can understand the bicycle. But she could have asked me first. And she took down the posters from my old bedroom and was going to throw them in the garbage.

BUD. What sort of posters?

CHRISTABEL. A huge one of me and my dad hiking in the Grand Canyon. A drama club poster. A PPC poster.

BUD (*sits up sharply*). PPC?

CHRISTABEL. Pedal Power Challenge.

BUD. I know what it is.

CHRISTABEL. She said all those reminders won't help me adjust. She called it "sick."

BUD. It's not. I'll ask our psychologist to talk to her. (*Scribbles a note on his clipboard.*) Christabel?

CHRISTABEL (*wary*). Please, no sermons.

BUD. Wouldn't dream of it. Ever been to the Pedal Power Challenge?

CHRISTABEL. Every year with my dad, since I was twelve. I sold cookies there. Missed last June. (*Waves toward hospital wing.*) In the hospital. Dad promised as soon as I turned fifteen, we'd *do* the race. Together. We'd take an old jeep, gut the insides, plaster photographs all over it or paint murals.

BUD. Of what?

CHRISTABEL. The family. When we *were* a family. Before Tiffany. And the baby.

BUD (*glances at file*). Fifteen next spring, right.

CHRISTABEL. June 21st. First day of summer.

BUD. Still want to hit that race?

CHRISTABEL. Sure. I'll stop off on my way to Mars.

BUD. I'm serious. Do you want to?

CHRISTABEL. No family. No jeep. No legs.

BUD (*thinking out loud*). Hmm. Think we've got just enough time.

CHRISTABEL. For what? I'm not going, Bud. Not like this. I don't even want to *see* it.

BUD. I don't mean *see* it, Christabel. Not *at* the Challenge. I mean *in* the Challenge.

CHRISTABEL. Are you buying me a motorized chair?

BUD. Nope. It's the same crazy race it's always been. People-powered works of art with wacky names. No motors allowed.

CHRISTABEL. Or charity cases.

BUD. Thought you said you wanted to be in it.

CHRISTABEL. That was *before*. BEFORE. Bud, I don't want to sit on the sidelines forever...watching everyone else have fun. What kind of life is that?

BUD. You can do a lot more than you realize. (*CHRISTABEL shrugs.*) I want to enter you in the PPC.

CHRISTABEL (*stares*). Human-powered vehicles only, remember? An all-day race that covers land and sea, remember?

BUD. Hear me out. All year I've been designing a wheelchair in my head. A wheelchair that could go across rough trails, sand dunes, city streets and unpaved roads—and, yes, cross water. You'll be the right age this June. You're lightweight. I'd be part of your pit crew. And Annette can help too. And I've got a great new volunteer assistant, Victor. Maybe him too. Christabel, think of the promotion for the rehab center if you tested

it. Think of the people in the world who need a chair that can go anywhere. Think of the difference it could make for people who live in places where they don't have paved roads, let alone super highways. (*CHRISTABEL looks at him astonished.*) Hey, I'm throwing you a ball, kiddo. Catch it.

CHRISTABEL (*wants to believe*). How?

BUD. Of course we'd have to strengthen those arm muscles and naturally you'd need to train every day. But you could do it.

CHRISTABEL (*reality rushes in*). The PPC is for *them*, not me. Whoever heard of a gimp in the race? No, Bud, I can't.

BUD (*slams his fist against a punching bag*). That word is not allowed. (*CHRISTABEL looks up at him, startled.*) In this room we use words like try, fight, live. We do not, under any circumstances, you hear me, we never, never say, "can't." No one in my care sits around and says, "Poor me." When you leave here, you don't ask for help, unless it's an emergency. You're fourteen years old. How the heck are you going to live the next seventy years? Saying, "I can't." "I won't." "I shouldn't." (*Thunders on.*) Other people have handicaps. The only difference, Christabel, is that yours is easy to spot. (*Glares.*) I want that girl back who knows life is to live.

CHRISTABEL (*yells*). So do I. SO DO I. (*Wheels out in a fury.*)

(*LIGHTING fades on BUD as CHRISTABEL angrily heads toward the entrance.*)

A few seconds later, VICTOR enters running after her.)



VICTOR. WAIT. (*Catching up with her, walks in front of her and stops the chair.*) Wait a minute, will you?

CHRISTABEL. Who are you?

VICTOR. Victor Gambino. Bud's new assistant.

CHRISTABEL. You can tell him for me I'm not going back there. Not today. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to catch the Ambucab.

VICTOR. You'll have a long wait.

CHRISTABEL. Why?

VICTOR. There's a tie-up on the road. The driver's stuck in traffic. She called the office just when I punched in.

CHRISTABEL. How long?

VICTOR. At least an hour. Bud sent me to tell you.

CHRISTABEL (*rants*). An hour? What kind of service is that? It's cold outside. And it's raining. What am I? Some kind of package no one wants?

VICTOR (*calmly*). The driver said she'd call again when she's closer. We thought you should wait inside.

CHRISTABEL. And do what?

VICTOR (*an easy smile*). Have dessert with me.

CHRISTABEL (*embarrassed*). If I don't exercise, I can't eat. I left early today.

VICTOR. I heard. But you did half the exercises, so half a dessert can't hurt. Keep me company?

CHRISTABEL. I'm not very good company.

VICTOR. Heard they've got great apple pie.

CHRISTABEL (*tempted*). I...like apple pie.

VICTOR. Me too. We'll share. They'll page us when the driver gets here.

*(They start toward the cafeteria, suggested by a table and chair.)*

CHRISTABEL. I know I've seen you before...someplace.

*(Pause.)* The Pedal Power Challenge?

VICTOR. Yup.

CHRISTABEL. Weren't you in the newspaper?

VICTOR. We all were. *(With a mock bow.)* Sleepless Knights.

CHRISTABEL. You won an award, right? For stopping to help some guy who lost his axle in the sand.

VICTOR. When you wear shining armor you do stuff like that. *(By now they are at the cafeteria.)* Cocoa, coffee, soda, tea? Bud said the treat's on him.

CHRISTABEL. Coffee.

*(She wheels to table. VICTOR gets pies and mugs of coffee and joins her.)*

*Through the rest of the scene they eat and drink.)*

CHRISTABEL. What's it like being in the PPC?

VICTOR. The most exciting thing I ever did. Sometimes you want to stop, but you keep on going and eight hours later, you feel...like your life can never get better.

CHRISTABEL. We were supposed to be in it this year. My dad and I. Couldn't wait. But that was *before* the accident. *And* his new wife. *And* the new baby.

VICTOR. Don't you still want to race?

CHRISTABEL. Look at me.

VICTOR. I'm looking.

CHRISTABEL. So? It's impossible.

VICTOR. If you say so.

CHRISTABEL. Victor, I'm stuck in this chair. And no sleepless knight can change that. End of fairy tale.

VICTOR. You sound like my sister, Elena.

CHRISTABEL. Is she a T-5 too?

VICTOR. No. Blind. An accident. Two years ago. Her whole ballet world gone. Just like that. (*CHRISTABEL listens intently.*) Afterwards, all she did was stay in her room, listen to the rehearsal CD and do the steps in her mind.

CHRISTABEL. Did she have a big part?

VICTOR. Not really. But she lived for the ballet. I sat with Elena every afternoon for months. She needed company.

CHRISTABEL. Does she still? I mean we...that is... (*Stops, embarrassed.*)

VICTOR. She's 476 miles away. She goes to a special school. But thanks.

CHRISTABEL. What about her friends?

VICTOR. One day the ballet teacher brought a whole group over. With flowers. But when they realized she'd never dance again, they stopped coming.

CHRISTABEL. Is she blind...for good?

VICTOR (*nods*). I miss hearing her music. She had it on all the time.

CHRISTABEL. Why didn't any of her friends stick around?

VICTOR (*shrugs*). Guess it was easier to stay away.

CHRISTABEL. That's mean, Victor. MEAN. (*Frightened by the story, she shudders, imagining herself. Then, defiantly sits up straight.*)

VICTOR. Got a name for your chair?

CHRISTABEL. A name?

VICTOR. Sure. People name pets. Why not a wheelchair?

CHRISTABEL. What sort of name?

VICTOR. One you can live with for a long time.

CHRISTABEL. You're not a doctor. (*Upset, wheels away from table.*)

VICTOR. Wait, Christabel. Wait. (*She turns.*) What I mean is do you want to keep calling it, "the chair." Asking, "Have you room for the *chair*?" "Will the *chair* fit in the trunk?" Those wheels have to take you everywhere.

CHRISTABEL (*retorts*). Until I get wings.

VICTOR. Look, maybe it isn't your friend now. But it will be.

CHRISTABEL. Wanna bet? (*Wheels away.*)