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A Bonderman New Play Festival finalist

# Lost and Foundling



Comedy  
by  
Eric R. Pfeffinger

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Featured in Geva Theatre Center's  
Hibernatus Interruptus Festival of New Plays

# Lost and Foundling

**Comedy. By Eric R. Pfeffinger.** Cast: 2m., 2w., 2 either gender. May be expanded up to 2m., 2w., 11 either gender. Unusual things don't usually happen at Price Mart, but at this Mega Price Mart a mega-unusual thing happened once: a little girl was born. Or left. Or got lost in the aisles and her parents never found her. Whatever it was that happened, it was her destiny to be discovered between Truck Mirrors and Oil Filters by some Price Mart associates. They name her Pryce and raise her. Her first word is "affordable." It's a good life at Price Mart, all things considered: clean, well-lit, lots of stuff at reasonable prices, but her discovery one day that there's a place called Lost and Found all the way on the other side of the store sparks restlessness and curiosity about where she came from. What follows is an epic journey of hilarious proportions as our intrepid heroine sets off alone down strange aisles, through unfamiliar sale zones, past new and threatening merchandise. Armed with only her wits and a celebrity magazine, will Pryce manage to evade dangerous pitfalls like the Demanding Shopper and the Neverending Line? Will she ever make it to the western edge of the store? And even if she does find the Lost and Found counter, will she ever uncover the truth about her real family? A comic and contemporary myth set in the recognizable world of changing rooms, free samples, and incandescent lights that never turn off, *Lost and Foundling* is a modern retail fairy tale about growing up, self-reliance, and big big savings. "Entertaining . . . will help [kids] realize the importance of experiencing the world around them while not being afraid to explore new things." (*The Arizona Republic*) Flexible staging. Approximate running time: 75 minutes. Code: LE4.

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# LOST AND FOUNDLING

a play for young audiences

By

ERIC R. PFEFFINGER



**Dramatic Publishing**

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*Lost and Foundling* was premiere produced by Childs-play at the Tempe Performing Arts Center, Tempe, Arizona, October 2006, directed by David Saar. Co-production with the Geva Theatre Center in Rochester, N.Y.

Pryce . . . . . Yolanda London  
Staci . . . . . Debra K. Stevens  
Jesse . . . . . Jon Gentry  
Custodian. . . . . Dwayne Hartford  
The Slasher, The Demanding Shopper, Lost and Found,  
and Associates. . . . . Katie McFadzen and D. Scott Withers  
P.A. Announcer . . . . . Anthony Runfola

Dramaturge . . . . . Marge Betley  
Scenic Design . . . . . Holly Windingstad  
Costume Design . . . . . D. Daniel Hollingshead  
Lighting Design . . . . . Rick Paulsen  
Sound and Projection Design. . . . . Anthony Runfola  
Stage Manager . . . . . Samantha Ries

# LOST AND FOUNDLING

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

PRYCE, female, young

STACI, female, the narrator and designated Price Mart greeter

JESSE, male, very, very old, Price Mart associate

CUSTODIAN, male

The following parts can be doubled (or tripled, or so on), and can accommodate either gender:

SHADOWY FIGURE

ASSOCIATES

P.A. ANNOUNCER

SLASHER

DEMANDING SHOPPER

NEVERENDING LINE

FREE SAMPLES

LOST

FOUND

The play can be performed with a cast as small as six (at least two female, at least two male), but more players will increase the staging possibilities.



THE TIME

Now, or thereabouts.

THE PLACE

The Mega Price Mart.

# LOST AND FOUNDLING

*(Tight spot on the face of STACI, intoning in terribly significant fairy-tale-narrator mode:)*

STACI. Once upon a time there was a very special land. It was a place that time forgot, where everybody smiled and said “hello” and “excuse me” and it never ever got dark. *(Lights up full on STACI in her khakis and brightly colored monochromatic Price Mart vest; she switches into perky store-greeter mode:)* And the prices were low and stock never ran out and on Tuesdays manufacturers’ coupons were doubled and everything in aisle sixty-one was half off, hello and welcome to Price Mart, I can help you find anything!

*(Other CAST MEMBERS in Price Mart vests flood the stage, crossing back and forth behind and in front of STACI, folding clothes and moving inventory and counting things and generally keeping busy.)*

P.A. ANNOUNCER *(offstage)*. I need a price check at register seventeen. Price check at register seventeen!

STACI. It was a glorious and magical place where every kind of person under the sun came whenever they needed something and always left happy. Where bulk

high-volume purchasing and dominance in the market translated into low wholesale costs for Price Mart buyers and the savings were passed on to you, the customer. You think I'm lying. You doubt that a Price Mart can possibly be such a grand and beautiful place. Well, you're right. This wasn't actually a Price Mart. It was a Mega Price Mart. They're a *lot bigger!* With a lot more stuff. There are only seventy-six of them in the country, and this was one of them, and it was a very special place where people's dreams came true and their shopping experience was extremely satisfactory. (*The people criss-crossing behind STACI dissipate.*) It was also, once, the place where a very unusual thing happened. (*A baby starts to cry and wail.*) Unusual things don't usually happen at Price Mart, but at this Mega Price Mart a mega-unusual thing happened once: a little girl was born. Or left. Or got lost in the aisles and her parents never found her. Whatever it was that happened, it was her destiny to be discovered between Truck Mirrors and Oil Filters by some Price Mart associates.

*(The infant is discovered by ASSOCIATES, including STACI.)*

P.A. ANNOUNCER (*offstage*). Assistant manager Brian to the snack bar please, assistant manager Brian to the snack bar.

ASSOCIATE. This doesn't belong in this aisle.

ANOTHER ASSOCIATE. Where, then, do you think?

JESSE. Um. Uh. "Miniatures"?

CUSTODIAN. "Noisemakers"?

ASSOCIATE. Uh. “Kinda stinky things, that are also damp”?

STACI. There are worse places to be found as a baby. (*To audience.*) We figured.

ANOTHER ASSOCIATE. A doorstep.

JESSE. A handbag.

CUSTODIAN. In the reeds and bulrushes.

ANOTHER ASSOCIATE. In the forest to be raised by wolves.

ASSOCIATE. In the jungle to be raised by apes.

JESSE. Some, uh, other...store, where the...floors aren't nearly so...clean.

*(The ASSOCIATES retreat into the resumed foot traffic of the store's ASSOCIATES and CUSTOMERS, which eventually dissipate again to reveal PRYCE playing with something—perhaps a piece of Price Mart merchandise you wouldn't normally think of as a toy.)*

STACI. But none of those things were this baby's destiny.

It was her destiny to be discovered by these Price Mart associates and not get left, or ignored, or priced to move like an ugly sweater, but rather bundled up and loved and treated like someone very special, because things like this usually happen to princesses and heroes, or so it seems. It was decided, after a few weeks, that she probably needed to have a name. So all things considered, for obvious reasons, she was given the most appropriate name possible. “Pryce.” (*PRYCE gives a thumbs-up.*) And everybody agreed that this was good.

*(JESSE appears.)*

JESSE. Except me.

STACI. Except Jesse.

JESSE. I suggested Marta.

STACI. Almost everybody agreed it was good.

JESSE. But no one listens to me.

STACI. He also recommended the name “Hypoallergenic  
Pineapple Air Freshener.”

JESSE. She was found near the automotive section!

STACI. So “Pryce” it was.

JESSE. Something to be said for having an unusual name,  
dang it. But no one listens to—

STACI. Some associates who’ve been here a long time say  
they can still remember when Pryce said her first word.

PRYCE. “Affordable”!

*(Everyone oohs and aahs.)*

P.A. ANNOUNCER *(offstage)*. Store manager David to the  
snack bar please, store manager David to the snack bar.

JESSE. I remember that. Her first word. That was a pip.  
Sharp as a tack, that one.

STACI. And that’s how this Price Mart came to be the  
home of a very special girl. Lucky. Everyone has happy  
memories of Pryce growing up here. The film counter  
has developed hundreds of pictures from her birthday  
parties alone. *(STACI flips through some pictures.)* I re-  
member this one...

EVERYONE. Happy mega birthday!

It’s your mega day!

Have a happy birthday

The Mega Price Mart way!

SAVE!

*(PRYCE blows out candles on a Hostess-brand pastry as JESSE crouches near her. A FLASH.)*

JESSE. Here you go, Marta—er, I mean Pryce. Happy birthday now, child.

PRYCE. Thank you!! What is it?

JESSE. Nice pair of suspenders. Something to be said for a practical present, dang it. A person could do worse than to keep his pants from falling down!

PRYCE. Oh, thank you, Jesse! I love them! Hey, Jesse... have all my birthdays been here in the Price Mart?

JESSE. Well, sure. Where else would they be, you crazy person?

PRYCE. I don't know...I mean, have I always been here, or did I come from somewhere else?

JESSE. Hey, look what else I got for you—a big bag of baby carrots!

PRYCE *(squeals)*. This is the best birthday ever! Thanks, Jesse!

JESSE. And now I can't stand back up. Dang-nab these consarned knees. *(JESSE waddles away.)*

STACI. And I remember this one...

EVERYONE. Happy mega birthday!

It's your mega day!

Have a happy birthday

The Mega Price Mart way!

SAVE!

*(PRYCE blows out candles on a Hostess-brand pastry as the CUSTODIAN crouches near her. A FLASH.)*

CUSTODIAN. Happy birthday, Pryce. I got you something.

PRYCE. My very own bucket! Thank you!

CUSTODIAN. You're getting older now, and you shouldn't have to wait around for someone else to come along and clean things up for you. I think you're old enough—

PRYCE. —for my own bucket? You sure??

CUSTODIAN. Pretty sure. And before long I'll be happy to teach you all about the whole family of cleansers and cleaning products.

PRYCE. I can't wait! Hey...speaking of "family," did I ever have a—?

CUSTODIAN. —Wanna ride on the riding mower over in lawn care?

PRYCE. Do you even have to ask?? (*PRYCE rides the lawnmower.*)

STACI. And of course I remember this one:

EVERYONE. Happy mega birthday!

It's your mega day!

Have a happy birthday

The Mega Price Mart way!

SAVE!

(*PRYCE blows out candles on a Hostess-brand pastry as STACI crouches near her. A FLASH.*)

STACI. Happy birthday, Pryce.

PRYCE. Oh! My! Gosh! For me?

STACI. It's all yours!

PRYCE. I feel so grown up! I'm going to try it on right now! (*PRYCE dons the present: it's a Price Mart associate vest, much much much much too big for her. She*

*seizes STACI in an enthusiastic hug.*) It's the best present I've ever gotten!

STACI. Oh. Oh, now. That's just silly. Someone, tissues from paper goods...? Thank you. Basically, Pryce grew up beloved by all the Price Mart associates everywhere.

She fit right in and was as happy as a satisfied customer.

PRYCE. I'm the luckiest person in the world.

STACI. We do have everything you could ever possibly need.

JESSE. Automotive needs, aisle eleven.

ASSOCIATE. Kitchen appliances? Aisle twenty-seven, just past the restrooms!

STACI. Little boys' undershirts right around the corner.

JESSE. Ladies' unmentionables— Uh. Well, I'll let someone else—

STACI. Aisle six!

JESSE. Propriety, you know. I'm a gentleman. Probably why no one listens—

ASSOCIATE. Batteries and flashbulbs, aisle seventy-one, quadrant two.

JESSE. Produce along the side wall.

STACI. Frozen foods down the center.

ASSOCIATE. Toilet paper and paper needs, aisle number two! (Number two: tee-hee.)

STACI. Ahem.

ASSOCIATE. I'm sorry.

STACI (*pointing*). Dustpans.

ASSOCIATE (*pointing*). Novelty lamps.

JESSE (*pointing*). Convoluted mattress pads.

STACI (*pointing*). Shampoo and lotions.

JESSE (*pointing*). Blowing and pruning.

ASSOCIATE (*pointing*). Allergy relief.



JESSE (*pointing*). Elimination of heartbreak.

ASSOCIATE (*pointing*). Anti-disappointment.

STACI (*pointing*). Happiness. Aisle twenty, right by the gummy candies.

PRYCE. Isn't it awesome?

STACI. But don't think that life at the Price Mart was all about Pryce getting presents from us. We all got a lot from her, too. Not presents, not merchandise, but...other things.

JESSE. Pryce, you're the only one around here who listens to me.

PRYCE. Oh, Jesse. I like listening to you.

STACI. Pryce would listen to everything Jesse had to say, and in return he would fix her hair. As a bonus, Pryce didn't say anything about the fact that Jesse knew nothing about fixing a little girl's hair.

JESSE. ...and that's when the fella says to me, he says, "Your shoes don't match!" And I says, "Says you!" This is gonna be one heck of a pigtail, Pryce old pal.

PRYCE. Mm, goody.

STACI. Meanwhile, Pryce would keep the custodian company even when he was doing jobs no one else wanted to see him do, like cleaning toilets.

CUSTODIAN. Thanks for hanging out with me, Pryce.

PRYCE. It's fun. And I learn all sorts of stuff.

STACI. Like what?

CUSTODIAN. Like how to clean up vomit!

STACI. Yes, good.

PRYCE. "Sawdust is your friend."

CUSTODIAN. Good girl. Smart one.

STACI. But I think I had the most fun of all with Pryce. Did I mention she taught herself to read? Books and magazines, aisle nineteen.

PRYCE. I taught myself to read as soon as I could, because there were millions of things here waiting to be read.

STACI. Sometimes I'd read to Pryce. Sometimes Pryce would read to me. And sometimes—this was the most fun of all—I'd help Pryce act out stuff she read in the books. (On my breaks, of course.) (*STACI complies with the following, as best she can.*)

PRYCE. Okay, now you be a caterpillar! Now a caterpillar in a cocoon! Now you're a steam engine! Now you're an elephant! Now you're an adjective! Now you're Archduke Ferdinand!

STACI. The things Pryce liked to read the best were adventure stories, and travel books.

PRYCE. Now we're taking a trip!

STACI. Full-speed ahead, Captain Pryce! Where are we going?

PRYCE. To deepest...darkest...Canada!

STACI. Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!

PRYCE. Look out! Ontario, dead ahead! (*Beat.*) Hey, Staci? How would we get to Canada?

STACI. How? Why I suppose we'll do it in this imaginary vehicle of ours. Look out: geese!

PRYCE. No, I mean for real. How would we get there for real?

STACI. For—real? Well. Uh. I suppose first you'd have to, you'd have to leave, leave the—er...uh...look out, tickle fight! Tickle fight!

PRYCE. Wheee hee hee!

STACI. Obviously, Pryce's education was thorough. Price Mart has a wide range of reading material. With the exception of some random inventory-related holes, like astronomy.

PRYCE. Astrono-what?

CUSTODIAN. It's like stars and planets.

STACI. The Price Mart customers don't demand a lot of books on astronomy, for whatever reason, go figure. But that's okay.

PRYCE. At least I know what a convoluted mattress pad is. And what it costs. More than I can say for some people. Hey, what's this thing?

JESSE. Looks like a compass.

PRYCE. Compass. That's a directional instrument.

STACI (Outdoors magazines).

JESSE. It's on a key ring. With keys. A customer must have dropped it.

CUSTODIAN. Lost and Found.

STACI. Yep, send it to Lost and Found.

PRYCE. What's Lost and Found?

JESSE. Pretty much what it sounds like. Where stuff that once was lost now is found?

CUSTODIAN. In theory.

STACI. Sometimes customers come in and leave stuff, accidentally, and we figure they might want it back.

PRYCE. Leave stuff. Yeah, okay. Where's Lost and Found?

STACI. You've never been there. It's way over, way way over.

CUSTODIAN. Western end of the store. I'll arrange to have this sent over there.