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*Dramatic Publishing*

# THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

A Play in Two Acts

by

PHIL GRECIAN

Based on the Book

by

MARGERY WILLIAMS



**Dramatic Publishing**

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PHIL GRECIAN

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MARGERY WILLIAMS

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for Alex

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# THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

A Play in Two Acts

For 2 Women, 1 Boy, and 8 Men or Women

## CHARACTERS

ALEX ..... a little boy about eight years old  
NANA ..... an older woman  
TIMOTHY ..... a toy wooden lion  
MOUSE ..... a wind-up mouse toy  
BULKA ..... a toy rag puppy  
THE VELVETEEN RABBIT ..... a stuffed toy rabbit  
THE SKIN HORSE ..... a well-worn toy horse  
THE TOY FAIRY looks after the toys we have loved and lost  
RABBITS 1 ..... a wild rabbit, timid and suspicious  
RABBIT 2 ..... another wild rabbit, out-going and bold  
THE DOCTOR ..... from time to time, comically pompous

PLACE: A country house.

TIME: The early 1920s.

## ACT ONE

**SETTING:** *A Victorian-style country house and garden. The house is elevated and cut away to reveal a little boy's bedroom. A door on the R leads to a hallway. There are two bay windows to the left. The D window has a window seat with a hinged lid. A bed, spilling over with pillows and quilts, is located between the windows, the head against the wall. There is a bureau L of the hallway door and a closet L of the bureau. A small table with a lamp is located D of the bed, and a toybox with a hinged lid stands DL. The D walls are cut away. The U walls are full height. The garden is somewhat overgrown but still lovely. A tree stump stands just R of C, and to the left the ground rises to a small stand of trees. There are hillocks and hidey-holes, bushes and undergrowth, perfect climbing trees with low-hanging branches—in short, everything a child could want.*

**AT RISE:** *It is late evening. ALEX, a small boy, bursts into the bedroom through the hallway door and jumps onto the bed. NANA, a stout older woman in a dustcap and apron, enters, out of breath.*

ALEX. I won, Nana! I won!

NANA. Oh, mercy! *(She collapses across the foot of the bed, gasping for air. ALEX moves down to her.)*

ALEX. What's the matter, Nana?

NANA *(gasping)*. I'm not made for running.

ALEX. I won, Nana!

NANA. I have short legs...and...

ALEX (*strutting back up to the head of the bed, bouncing NANA with each step*). I am the champion of everyone! I am the best racer in the whole world!

NANA. ...and...I'm much too...

ALEX. I can run faster than the wind!

NANA. ...much too round.

ALEX (*bouncing on the bed*). And I can jump higher than a kangaroo! (*His bouncing toward the head of the bed tosses NANA about at the foot of the bed.*)

NANA. Stop stop stop stop stop! (*ALEX stops suddenly, sits on the bed. NANA, with much groaning, manages to pull herself from the tangle of bedclothes to stand none too steadily on the floor.*) Too much excitement can lead to an upset tummy.

ALEX. I don't have an upset tummy.

NANA. *I do.* (*She crosses away from the bed a bit, recovering. Turns.*) Now, it's time for bed. (*She sets about straightening the bedclothes and tucking him in.*)

ALEX. You're not sick, are you, Nana?

NANA. No, I'm not ill...and I don't want you to be ill, either. So you must get a good night's sleep, and...

ALEX. Tommy's sick.

NANA. Yes, he is.

ALEX. And Mary.

NANA. Tommy and Mary and a lot of other children have scarlet fever. That's why school's out a month early. We don't want the rest of you children to catch it.

ALEX. There's no one to play with.

NANA (*feigning hurt*). We've played together all day, haven't we?

ALEX. Uh huh. It was fun. (*Pause.*) But not the same.

NANA (*sits on edge of bed*). I'm sorry, Alex.

ALEX (*hopefully*). Maybe I could go visit William.

NANA. William has scarlet fever, too.

ALEX. I'm not scared of the...sc...Scarlet Fear.

NANA. Is that so?

ALEX. Uh huh. So...how about if I go see Tommy, then?

NANA. I'm afraid not.

ALEX. How about Mary, then?

NANA. I told you, William and Tommy and Mary all have scarlet fever and can't...

ALEX. Will they die? (*A pause.*) Nana, will they die?

NANA. We hope they won't. (*Trying to take his mind from it.*) You go to sleep now. (*She moves toward the door quickly.*)

ALEX. Where's my china bulldog? (*He jumps up and begins rummaging through the bed.*) I always sleep with my china bulldog. Where is he?

NANA (*crossing back to bed*). Now look what you're doing!

ALEX (*not being unreasonable, nor throwing a tantrum, merely stating his case*). I want my china bulldog.

NANA. Don't you remember? When we played pirate this morning up in your treehouse...

ALEX (*stops. Ruefully.*). Oh...yeah...my china bulldog walked the plank.

NANA. And broke into a million pieces.

ALEX. Crash!

NANA. I *told* you that would happen.

ALEX. We could glue him.

NANA. He's all tiny tiny little pieces. Nothing big enough to glue. (*A pause while ALEX digests this information.*)

ALEX. I'll miss that ol' china bulldog.

NANA. I'm sorry.

ALEX. He wasn't real, though.



NANA. Of course not, he was made of china, like a tea cup.

ALEX (*warming to the subject*). Sometimes toys are real.

NANA. They are?

ALEX. Uh huh. You can talk with them and they can tell you bedtime stories...and they're soft and warm to sleep with.

NANA. The china bulldog wasn't very soft.

ALEX. No.

NANA (*rising and crossing L*). Too bad for him. If he'd been soft he'd have survived walking the plank. We'll find you another toy to sleep with.

ALEX (*standing on the bed*). What toy can I sleep with?

NANA (*picks up boat*). Your boat?

ALEX (*with a laugh*). It doesn't have a face! (*NANA bustles about room, picking up toys. As each toy is rejected, she moves it to the crook of her arm.*)

NANA. Timothy, your wooden lion!

ALEX. No.

NANA. Wind-up mouse!

ALEX. No.

NANA. The rag puppy!

ALEX (*pauses. NANA freezes. He considers*). Nnnno.

NANA. Easter chicken.

ALEX. No.

NANA. Harlequin.

ALEX. No.

NANA (*crossing to the toy box*). Well then...(She tosses the armload of toys into the box, closes the lid. Finds the toy Skin Horse on the floor, picks him up.) How about the Skin Horse?

ALEX. Too big.

NANA. I'm sorry, Alex, but there aren't any others to...(She gets an idea.) Your rabbit!

ALEX. What? (*NANA crosses to the closet, still carrying the toy Skin Horse. Opens the closet door, goes inside and begins rummaging around.*)

NANA. Your velveteen rabbit!

ALEX. I don't have a velveteen rabbit.

NANA. Yes you do! You got him at Christmas...but you had so many things, I just put him away in here until...ah! (*She emerges from the closet with a box wrapped in Christmas paper. The lid is wrapped separately. She has left the toy Skin Horse in the closet.*) Here it is! (*She crosses and puts the box on the bed, removes the lid, takes out the toy Velveteen Rabbit.*) The Velveteen Rabbit! (*She hands the rabbit to ALEX. He examines it while she crosses back to the closet with the empty box. Goes in.*)

ALEX (*considering carefully*). Well...he is softer than the china bulldog.

NANA (*from inside closet*). He'd survive walking the plank, too. (*ALEX examines the toy rabbit. Finds the small bell on a ribbon around its neck.*)

ALEX. He has a silver bell! Listen! (*He shakes the bell.*)

NANA (*comes back into room, closes the closet door, crosses to bed*). Very nice. What do you think? Is he real?

ALEX (*with a critical eye*). Not yet...but he could be.

NANA (*putting the bed back in order, tucking ALEX in yet again*). Well, the two of you can get to know each other. Now...go to sleep. (*She kisses him on the forehead. He holds out the rabbit.*)

ALEX. Kiss Fluffy, too.

NANA. I didn't know he had a name.

ALEX. He does now.

NANA (*kisses the rabbit*). Good night, Fluffy.

ALEX (*wiggling the rabbit, speaking in a high falsetto*). Good night, Nana.

NANA. My sakes! I do believe he's becoming more real by the moment. (*She crosses to the door, turns out the light at the wall switch.*) Sleep tight.

ALEX. We will. (*NANA exits, closing the door. ALEX sits up, wipes the kiss from his forehead.*) Know what, Fluffy? My china bulldog broke into pieces. He wasn't real, though. Maybe you'll be real. Would you like that? (*Pause. He nods rabbit's head.*) You want to play tomorrow? We could play pirates. (*He yawns.*) Or maybe...knights of the round table...and we could...could...(*He yawns.*)...slay a big dragon. You could be...(*He yawns again and sinks down under the covers.*) You could be my friend. My other friends all got made sick by the Scarlet Fear, and...I'm awful lonely, and...I...(*He is asleep.*)

*(A pause, then a small noise comes from somewhere in the room. A few moments of silence, then another noise, a bit louder now. Silence again. Now the lid of the toy box rattles and shakes. There is a roaring from within which builds in volume and apparent ferocity. As the roar reaches fortissimo, the lid flies open and TIMOTHY, the wooden lion, sticks his head out and lets go with an impressive sneeze.)*

WIND-UP MOUSE (*from inside toy box*). Timothy!

TIMOTHY (*looking back into toy box as he crawls out*).  
What?

MOUSE. Cover your mouth when you sneeze!

TIMOTHY. I didn't sneeze in there! I sneezed out here! I came out here because it's dusty in there!

MOUSE (*head popping out of toy box*). Just the same, it's polite to cover your mouth!

TIMOTHY. You sound more like Nana every day.

BULKA (*inside toy box*). You're standing on my ear!

MOUSE (*looks down into toy box*). Who's that?

BULKA. Me...Bulka, the rag puppy. (*A little shriek.*) Now you're standing on *both* my ears!

MOUSE (*shifts position*). Is that better?

BULKA. Yes. Could we come out now, please?

MOUSE. Oh...I suppose so.

(*WIND-UP MOUSE crawls out of the toy box. BULKA's hand comes out of the toy box and waves about in the air.*)

BULKA. I need help.

(*TIMOTHY and MOUSE exchange looks. MOUSE sighs and moves to take BULKA's hand. With MOUSE's help, BULKA, a patchwork rag puppy with multi-colored ears and tail made of frayed bundles of cloth scraps, emerges from the toy box. Once out, he looks back down into the toy box.*)

BULKA. Anybody else want out? (*No sound. BULKA turns to the others.*) They're mostly asleep now, I think.

MOUSE. There's not enough room in there! Everybody's packed too closely together.

BULKA. It's especially bad when some people have hard metal wind-up keys that stick *other* people in the ribs. (*MOUSE looks insulted*)

TIMOTHY. It's even worse when *some* people have big floppy dusty ears that cause *other* people to sneeze.

BULKA (*marching up to TIMOTHY and facing off*). I can't help it about my ears, Timothy!

TIMOTHY. Well, I'm...I'm...(*He sneezes in response to the dust BULKA has raised.*) allergic!

BULKA. Bless you.

TIMOTHY. Thank you.

MOUSE. You'll wake The Boy!

TIMOTHY. No we won't! A sleeping child can't hear toys talk.

MOUSE (*turns*). Are you sure?

TIMOTHY. If you don't believe me, ask the china bulldog.

BULKA (*crossing toward bed*). China bulldog? (*A SHAPE, covered with quilts and blankets, rises to a sitting position on the bed.*) China bulldog, Timothy says that The Boy can't hear us because...

*(The VELVETEEN RABBIT emerges from the tangle of bedclothes. BULKA screams and faints dead away.)*

TIMOTHY (*dryly*). A sleeping child can't hear toys scream, either.

MOUSE (*referring to BULKA who apparently faints a good deal. The others take it calmly*). Certainly raises a lot of dust when he falls.

TIMOTHY. Certainly...(*He sneezes.*)...certainly does.

MOUSE (*crossing toward bed, stepping over BULKA*). You're not the china bulldog.

VELVETEEN RABBIT. No, I'm not. (*TIMOTHY crosses to BULKA, who is coming to, and helps him up.*)

MOUSE. Who are you then?

VELVETEEN RABBIT (*climbing out of the bed*). I'm...I'm the Velveteen Rabbit.

MOUSE. Do you have a name?

VELVETEEN RABBIT. No, I...wait...yes...yes, I do. Fluffy. Is Fluffy a good name?

MOUSE. It'll do.

VELVETEEN RABBIT. It's new, I've hardly used it yet.

BULKA. You scared me!

VELVETEEN RABBIT. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to.

MOUSE. You get out of that bed right now, you don't belong there! That's the china bulldog's place!

VELVETEEN RABBIT. I...I...

MOUSE. Right now! *(Pause, then the RABBIT, very meekly, slides out of the bed.)*

TIMOTHY. Come over here. *(VELVETEEN RABBIT crosses to them. They circle him, prodding, poking.)*

MOUSE. You don't have a wind-up key, do you?

VELVETEEN RABBIT. No.

MOUSE. I didn't think so. Toys with wind-up keys are the best kind. You'll notice I have one.

VELVETEEN RABBIT. It's very nice. *(Eager to please.)* I have a silver bell on a ribbon. *(VELVETEEN RABBIT shakes the bell.)* If I ever get lost, I can tell where I am... even in the dark.

TIMOTHY. Who made you?

VELVETEEN RABBIT. I don't know.

TIMOTHY. A soldier carved me out of wood.

VELVETEEN RABBIT. I don't think I was carved by a soldier.

BULKA *(feeling RABBIT's arm)*. No. You're not wood.

VELVETEEN RABBIT. I'm made of velveteen.

BULKA *(impressed)*. Velvet?

VELVETEEN RABBIT. Velveteen.

BULKA *(recoils)*. Oh!

MOUSE. Sawdust!

TIMOTHY. What?

MOUSE. Feels like he's stuffed with sawdust!

TIMOTHY *(sniffs at the RABBIT and then lets go with a huge sneeze)*. He is stuffed with sawdust!

VELVETEEN RABBIT. Is that bad?

BULKA. Well...it's a bit old-fashioned.

VELVETEEN RABBIT. I'm sorry.

BULKA (*bragging*). I'm very modern! I'm made of the best papier-mâché and covered with linen and cotton and wool and silk and satin...

TIMOTHY. ...and dust.

BULKA (*sticks his tongue out at TIMOTHY, then turns back to the RABBIT*). ...but no velveteen. (*Struts away from the RABBIT.*) It's not good to be made of velveteen. Velveteen doesn't wear well...and it's not modern.

VELVETEEN RABBIT (*humbly*). I can't help the way I'm made.

TIMOTHY. Now, where's the china bulldog?

VELVETEEN RABBIT. I don't know.

MOUSE. Should we get angry and shout at you?

VELVETEEN RABBIT. Please, I don't like to be shouted at.

BULKA. Then you'd better tell us what you've done with the china...

VOICE. Leave the rabbit be!

*(There is confusion among the others. Ad lib: "Who's that?" "Where is that coming from?" "I don't know!" Now the closet door swings open forcefully and the SKIN HORSE enters. Like the toy we have seen earlier, his mane is short and sparse and his tail is thin and ragged. His brown coat is bald in patches, and his seams are loose here and there, exposing straw stuffing.)*

SKIN HORSE. Shame on all of you!

TIMOTHY. The Skin Horse!

MOUSE. He looks mad.

BULKA. Hello, Skin Horse. We were...we were just...

SKIN HORSE (*crossing to them as the RABBIT counters back toward the bed*). Didn't you hear what Nana said? (*The OTHERS shuffle their feet and mumble.*) Timothy?

TIMOTHY. Well, I was busy...I was...I didn't...

SKIN HORSE. Mouse?

MOUSE. I *would* have heard, but Nana fastened my ears back on last week, and I think she got some glue inside, so...

SKIN HORSE. Bulka?

BULKA. I didn't...I was...he...if I...(*With a moan, BULKA faints. TIMOTHY crosses to him.*)

MOUSE. What did Nana say?

SKIN HORSE. She said that the china bulldog fell out of the treehouse...(*The OTHERS gasp.*)...and broke into a million pieces.

TIMOTHY. Couldn't he be glued? (*Helps BULKA to his feet.*)

MOUSE. Like Nana glued my ears?

SKIN HORSE (*moving back toward the foot of the bed*). The bits were all too small, so Nana swept them up and threw them away.

BULKA. Eeew!

TIMOTHY. Bad luck for the china bulldog.

MOUSE. At least there'll be more room in the toy box.

BULKA. Mouse! That is so rude! The china bulldog was never in the toy box, anyway! He was The Boy's sleep-with toy.

SKIN HORSE. Now the Velveteen Rabbit is The Boy's sleep-with toy.

MOUSE. That's not fair! (*VELVETEEN RABBIT, frightened, burrows under the covers.*) We should have had a chance!

SKIN HORSE (*turning*). We *all* had a chance, and The Boy picked the Velveteen Rabbit. Now, go back to the toy box, all of you.

TIMOTHY. Well, but...



SKIN HORSE (*sternly*). It's night time. Time for sleeping.

BULKA (*completely cowed. Quickly*). Time for sleeping.  
Good night. Good night. Good night. (*Crosses to toy box. Turns.*) Aren't you coming? (*TIMOTHY, with a shrug, crosses to the toy box. BULKA, satisfied, climbs inside, closely followed by TIMOTHY.*)

MOUSE (*marching resolutely toward the bed*). I don't intend to go to bed until...(*SKIN HORSE moves to confront the MOUSE, who changes direction abruptly and heads for the toy box.*) Oh my, so tired. Goin' to bed. My, my. Snore, snore. (*MOUSE climbs into the toy box.*) Time for bed. Ho hum. Hardly wait. Night night. (*Shuts lid quickly.*)

BULKA (*from inside toy box*). You're stepping on my paw!

MOUSE (*from inside toy box*). Am not!

BULKA. Are too! Ow! Ow! Ow!

TIMOTHY (*from inside toy box*). Don't thrash about so!

BULKA. I can't help it!

TIMOTHY. You're raising too much du...du...du...(*He sneezes, and the lid of the toy box pops upward. Dust flies. Now TIMOTHY's head and shoulders pop into view. To SKIN HORSE:)* Excuse me.

SKIN HORSE. Bless you.

TIMOTHY. Thank you. (*TIMOTHY exits into toy box, closes the lid. SKIN HORSE crosses back to the bed.*)

SKIN HORSE. They're gone.

(*VELVETEEN RABBIT comes out from under the quilts at the foot of the bed.*)

VELVETEEN RABBIT. Thank you for your help.

SKIN HORSE (*shrugs*). They're really very nice once you get to know them.