

Prancer Auditions

3.

Females & Males Ages 7-14

PRANCER

SCENE 1 - FOREST - NIGHT

The stage is dark. Sounds of a winter night in the forest gradually become audible. WIND whispers through the branches of the trees. An owl HOOTS. A twig SNAPS as an unseen animal runs through the woods. The wind suddenly picks up, blowing hard. Then, as the wind settles back to a whisper...

There is movement at the back of the stage. An animal, in silhouette. SCURRYING SOUNDS erupt in the dark forest as animals react to the unexpected appearance of this creature. At first, the way the light hits the animal, only its body is visible. Then, the creature's crown of antlers is revealed. When the animal walks from the darkness at the back of the stage, a soft beam of moonlight reveals it to be a reindeer. By now all forest sounds have stopped. Even the wind.

The deer stops at the edge of the stage and regards the audience. Looking this way and that, it is as though the animal is trying to communicate something. After a moment of silent communion with the audience...

The WIND and the SOUNDS OF THE FOREST return. They gradually diminish as the stage FADES TO BLACK.

MUSIC: "Little Drummer Boy", sung by a grade school choir.

LIGHTS UP to reveal...

SCENE 2 - GRADE SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

MISS FAIRBURN, the music teacher, is at the front of the classroom, playing piano as her pupils sing "Little Drummer Boy". She frowns and holds up a hand to stop the singing.

MISS FAIRBURN

(indicating one half of the classroom)

Just this half.

Half of the students sing a few verses, then Miss Fairburn stops the singing once again. She gets up and walks between two rows of seats toward the back of the room.

#1

MISS FAIRBURN (CONT'D)

You three. Sing.

Miss Fairburn frowns as the three students sing. One of the students is very loud and off key.

MISS FAIRBURN (CONT'D)

That's enough.

The three students stop singing. Miss Fairburn leans down close to nine year old JESSICA RIGGS.

MISS FAIRBURN (CONT'D)

Jessica, I think you should...

RILEY

Shut up.

MISS FAIRBURN

That's enough from you, Riley.

EMMA

Sounds like a cat dying.

MISS FAIRBURN

Another crack from any of you and you're looking at detention.

That silences the students.

MISS FAIRBURN (CONT'D)

Just sing a little softer, Jessica.

The bell rings, announcing the end of the school day.

MISS FAIRBURN (CONT'D)

Listen up everyone. You need to have your angel costumes ready in two days. If you haven't started them yet, now's the time.

The students start filing out of the classroom. One of them, TOMMY, goes to a calendar which has been drawn on the blackboard.

GAVIN

(yelling)

Can I cross off the Christmas calendar, Miss Fairburn?

MISS FAIRBURN

Yes, you may, Gavin. And don't shout.

Gavin crosses off "December 19" with an exaggerated flourish.

GAVIN

(shouting)

Only six more days until Christmas!

Two stylishly dressed girls, NITA and STACY, walk past Jessica, who is still sitting at her desk.

NITA

(loud enough for Jessica to hear)

I liked Jessica's singing, didn't you, Stacy?

STACY

Absolutely. It's very... original.

Jessica gives the two girls a look as they walk off giggling. RYAN NICOLSON and Gavin now brush past Jessica's desk, one on either side. Gavin mimics Jessica's loud, off-key singing.

GAVIN

Pah-rum-pum-pum-PUM!

JESSICA

Stuff it, Gavin.

Gavin grins at Jessica and makes a face. CAROL WEATHERBY comes up to Jessica.

CAROL

They're idiots, Jess. Forget 'em.

Jessica glares at Ryan and Gavin as they exit the classroom, then opens her desk top and starts pulling out some of the contents. The only student left in the classroom at this point, besides Jessica and Carol, is TOMMY, who cleans the erasures.

CAROL (CONT'D)

Better hurry with that or we'll miss the bus.

JESSICA

It's too nice outside to ride in a smelly old school bus. I'm walking home. Come with?

Carol thinks about that, then shrugs her okay. She sits at the desk next to Jessica. Jessica continues to drag a comical assortment of stuff out of her desk top. This includes a large amount of gold and white cloth material. (For her angel outfit). Some of the stuff she muscles into her backpack, some of it she shoves back inside the desk.

CAROL

Uh... don't you think it's time to clean out your desk?

JESSICA

Why? I never know when I might need some of this stuff.

Done packing her backpack, Jessica gets up from her desk. Bulging to the breaking point, her pack hangs heavy.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

See ya, Miss Fairburn.

MISS FAIRBURN

Jessica, I need to speak with you for a moment. Your language arts worksheet is two weeks late.

JESSICA

Two weeks? Really? I thought it was only --

MISS FAIRBURN

Do you have someone at home to help you with these assignments?

JESSICA

Yeah. No, I mean... I can do it.

MISS FAIRBURN

You do know, Jessica, that students with missing assignments cannot participate in the holiday concert.

JESSICA

I'll finish it in time, Miss Fairburn. I promise.

MISS FAIRBURN

You'd better get started on your angel outfit tonight, as well. Hear?

JESSICA

Yes, ma'am.

CAROL (CONT'D)

What's wrong? I said I'd go to McFarland's.

JESSICA

My Aunt Sarah's been coming out to the house a lot lately.

CAROL

That's why you're so mopey? I thought you liked your Aunt Sarah.

JESSICA

I was coming down from my room last night and heard them whispering about something.

CAROL

What were they whispering about?

JESSICA

My aunt asked my dad if he *talked* to me yet. I don't know what that means, but I didn't like the sound of it.

CAROL

It could mean anything. Maybe he just wants to talk to you about Christmas vacation.

JESSICA

I doubt that.

CAROL

Well, there's no use getting all depressed about it. C'mon. If we don't go to McFarland's right now, I'm gonna lose my nerve.

RYAN

(offstage)

Hey! Riggs!

Ryan Nicolson enters with Gavin, Riley, Emma and Tommy. They all have sleds.

RYAN (CONT'D)

You two goin' to Willow Run?

CAROL

What's it to you?

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#2

RYAN

Easy, Weatherby. We come in peace.

Jessica grabs the rope attached to her sled and stands.

JESSICA

Willow Run's for kids. We're goin' to McFarland's.

RYAN

McFarland's! You're crazy.

JESSICA

I've been called worse. By you, actually.

Jessica and Ryan have a staring contest. Ryan breaks the moment with a grudging smile.

RYAN

You've got guts. I'll hand you that.

RILEY

Seriously. That woman is terrifying.

EMMA

She called the cops on my brother just for trick or treating at her house on Halloween.

JESSICA

Don't worry about us. We can handle her.

RYAN

Yeah, but if I don't see you two in school tomorrow, I'll know where you are.

JESSICA & RYAN

(in unison)

McFarland's attic.

A grin from Ryan.

JESSICA

Have fun with the little ones.

GAVIN

Hey! Willow Run ain't just for kids.

CAROL

It ain't McFarland's either.

This time it's Carol and Gavin who have the staring contest.

RYAN

Let's go, all.

(to Jessica)

Good luck.

Ryan, Gavin, Riley, Emma EXIT toward the back of the stage. Tommy finishes up tying a shoelace on one of his boots.

TOMMY

Have fun, you two!

The perpetually happy Tommy runs to catch up with the group.

CAROL

You know, now that I think of it, Willow Run sounds pretty good to me.

(off Jessica's glare)

I'm kidding! Let's go.

Jessica and Carol exit.

The lighting begins to change, indicating that time is passing. Late afternoon gradually becomes early evening. OFFSTAGE, we hear Jessica and Carol laughing. They burst into view, running hard.

JESSICA

(collapsing to the ground)

Oh, that was the best. THE BEST!

CAROL

You could have told me your sled was broken, Jess.

JESSICA

Just the steering.

CAROL

Just? We almost ran right into Mrs. McFarland because of *just!*

JESSICA

She got out of the way.

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9.

An older woman with an unruly mane of grey hair, grasping a small pet carrier in both hands and dressed in drab clothing, stalks down the sidewalk. She turns into the Christmas tree lot and disappears among the trees.

#3

CAROL

That was Mrs. McFarland, wasn't it?

JESSICA

Yeah. She never comes to town. What a sighting!

CAROL

She gives me the creeps.

JESSICA

She gives everyone the creeps. Hey, I just got a great idea.

CAROL

What?

JESSICA

We're going sledding tomorrow at Mrs. McFarland's.

CAROL

What? No way! Why would you want to go there?

JESSICA

Her back yard has the best sledding hill in town.

CAROL

That woman's crazy. For real. Besides, didn't your dad tell you to stay away from her place after you...

JESSICA

That's what's gonna make it all the more fun. I'm not supposed to go there, and Mrs. McFarland is crazy. 'Course if she catches us she'll kidnap us and make us prisoners in her attic.

CAROL

Stop it, Jess.

JESSICA

You know what Mrs. McFarland really for real does, though?

CAROL

What?

JESSICA

Keeps all her dead cats in her attic.

CAROL

Okay. I've heard enough.

JESSICA

I'm serious. She has 'em all stuffed, in all different kinds of positions, and she puts 'em in her attic.

CAROL

Stop talking.

Just then, there is a commotion down at the end of the block. One of Santa's reindeer has broken away from the display and falls to the ground with a thud! Jessica and Carol run to the scene of the accident.

Herb Drier appears from his butcher shop.

HERB DRIER

Look at this! I've been telling the council for years we need a new Santa display.

Jessica walks toward the fallen reindeer.

HERB DRIER (CONT'D)

Stay away from there, Jessica. It's lucky no one was hurt already.

JESSICA

They're going to fix him, aren't they?

HERB DRIER

Of course they'll fix him. We can't have Santa missing one of his reindeer, now can we? I'm going in and calling the Mayor right now.

Drier heads back into his store. Jessica watches as a crew worker picks up the fallen reindeer.

CAROL

I gotta get home, Jessica. I'm already gonna catch it for being late.

JESSICA

Okay, Carol. See ya tomorrow.

The deer silently regards Jessica.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

You need to come with me. My dad can fix you up. He's tended to our old horse Ralph more than once. And Bessie, too.

But the reindeer bolts when Jessica gets too close.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Wait!

The deer disappears into the encroaching darkness. Jessica takes a couple a quick steps after the reindeer, then stops. She runs to her sled, grabs the rope and charges offstage in the opposite direction that the reindeer went.

Prancer
Ages 15+
#4

SCENE 7 - RIGGS HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Someone is ringing the kitchen doorbell. John enters the kitchen from the hallway. He opens the door to reveal Mrs. McFarland.

JOHN

Mrs. McFarland.

MRS. MCFARLAND

Is your daughter here, Mr. Riggs?

JOHN

No. She's...

MRS. MCFARLAND

Do you know where she is?

JOHN

Ah...

MRS. MCFARLAND

I didn't think so. Please let me inform you. Not more than one half hour ago your daughter rode her sled through my flower garden. Ruined the entire middle section.

JOHN

Would you like to come in, Mrs. McFarland?

MRS. MCFARLAND

No. This won't take long.

SLAM!

John and Mrs. McFarland both react to the OFFSTAGE sound of a door being slammed shut.

JESSICA

(off stage)

Dad! I just saw a wounded deer in the woods!

Jessica charges into the kitchen and skids to a stop when she sees Mrs. McFarland.

MRS. MCFARLAND

A-ha. Same color parka. Same scarf. It was you, all right. You have a lot to answer for, little girl.

JESSICA

Why? What did I do?

JOHN

Did you go sledding at Mrs. McFarland's about a half hour ago, Jessica? Don't lie to me.

A pause.

JESSICA

Yes, sir. I did.

MRS. MCFARLAND

There's your confession. I will be reporting you to the police as soon as I get home, little girl.

JOHN

Now, I don't think that's necessary. Please, come in, Mrs. McFarland. You'll be more comfortable...

MRS. MCFARLAND

She trespassed on my property. Ruined part of my flower garden. She even tried to run me over.

~~LIGHTS DO A SLOW FADE~~

#6

SCENE 22 - RIGGS HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

John is in the kitchen with his sister, pacing. Sarah sits at the kitchen table.

AUNT SARAH

...I was so worried, John. She took off first thing this morning without saying a word to me. I have no idea where she was all day.

JOHN

This is the very thing I told you about. She does whatever she wants, whenever she wants.

John heads for the stairs.

AUNT SARAH

Go easy on her, okay?

JOHN

She did this to spite us.

AUNT SARAH

You have to remember this is not an easy thing we're putting her through.

JOHN

Think it's easy for me? Think I like sending my daughter off to live someplace else? Not being able to provide for her?

AUNT SARAH

You've provided for your family for a long time, John.

JOHN

Not any more. The bank turned me down for a loan yesterday.

AUNT SARAH

Oh, John. I'm so sorry.

John turns for the stairs.

AUNT SARAH (CONT'D)

John? Come over here, please. Sit for a minute.

JOHN

What? What do you...

AUNT SARAH

Just a minute.

John reluctantly sits at the table. Aunt Sarah reaches out and takes her brother's hand. John is uncomfortable with the intimacy.

AUNT SARAH (CONT'D)

It's okay. I just want to talk.

JOHN

About what?

AUNT SARAH

When we were younger. Around Steve and Jessica's age. I've been thinking a lot about those days lately. Maybe it's because of all the time I've been spending with Jessica.

JOHN

I haven't thought about those days in a very long time.

AUNT SARAH

In that case, I'd like to remind you of something.

That gets a look from John.

AUNT SARAH (CONT'D)

You might have been the younger one, but you always took care of me. Fought off those bullies who wouldn't let me alone, with my thick glasses and skinny legs. Stepped in when I got into it with dad. You made things better, John. That's because you wanted to make things better. It's part of who you are. I think... when there was nothing you could do to make Allison better...

John takes his hand away from his sister.

AUNT SARAH (CONT'D)

What I'm trying to say is... it's my turn, now. I want to do everything I can to try to make things better. For you. For your family. More than anything, I want to see the old John again. The younger John, is what I mean. I miss him.

JOHN

I think you're looking at the past through rose colored glasses, Sarah.

AUNT SARAH

I'm not. Unlike when I was younger, my vision is perfectly clear now.

JOHN

Is that all?

AUNT SARAH

Yes. That's all I wanted to say.

Sarah watches sadly as her brother exits the kitchen.

UP IN JESSICA'S BEDROOM

Jessica lays on her bed, on top of the covers, all her clothes still on. She listens to Christmas music on the radio. The door opens and her father enters. Jessica sits up and meets his stern glare.

JOHN

You know you're in trouble, don't you.

JESSICA

Yes, sir.

JOHN

I just talked to your Aunt Sarah. Where were you all day?

JESSICA

I can't tell you.

JOHN

Say that again?

JESSICA

I can't tell you where I was today. It's a secret.

JOHN

A secret.