

# PREVIEW

## BEFORE OZ

by

Lauren Grove



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**Cast of Characters**

*(12–30 actors possible. Double casting is an option.)*

*Main Cast*

FRANK, the imaginative and eccentric writer of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

MAUD, Frank's headstrong but loving wife.

MATILDA, Maud's mother and Frank's mother-in-law. She is a stern suffragette.

THOMAS, Maud's brother and Frank's brother-in-law.

SARAH, Thomas Gage's wife and the sister-in-law of the Baums.

DOROTHY, the daughter of Thomas and Sarah. She is a sweet but sickly child.

BILL, also known as William Wallace Denslow, an artist and illustrator.

LENNY, a kind but often brainless store clerk.

BERT, acts like a tough bully but is actually a big ol' coward.

HARRY, Frank and Maud's oldest son.

ROBBIE, Frank and Maud's youngest son.

PEGGY, Mrs. Baum's faithful nurse with a hidden talent.

*Ensemble*

MARY LOUISE

CHILD 1–3

GEORGE

GLORIA

PUBLISHER 1–3

MRS. BOLGER

TOWNSPERSON 1–5

BERNICE

CLEETUS (non-speaking)

BERT'S GANG (non-speaking)

DOCTOR

FARMER (non-speaking)

PARTY GUEST 1

Additional PARTY GUESTS (non-speaking)

## **Setting**

Mid-nineteenth century to early twentieth century.

Syracuse, New York

Aberdeen, Dakota Territory

Chicago, Illinois

Hollywood, California

## **Production Notes**

### *Set*

The set may be as simple or elaborate as desired. For ease, it is recommended that production groups use projections or a main backdrop, and then bring in props and a few pieces of furniture to represent different places. It is also suggested that performing groups use instrumental music during transitions, such as Christmas music before the Christmas party scene, funeral music before the scene where Matilda is told about the engagement, etc.

### *Casting*

*Before Oz* plays with history as we go through the mid- to late nineteenth century and beyond. As history is fluid in this play, casting should be as well. Any actor may be cast in any of the roles, regardless of ethnicity, body type, age, etc. Do not try to match the historical figures' physical appearances. In addition, actors of any gender identity may play any character as long as the character's gender remains as written. If double casting is needed, the ensemble roles may be played by members of the main cast and/or as few as three actors. It is suggested that Bernice be played by a male actor.

### *Cuttings*

This is the full-length edition of *Before Oz*. There is also an abridged edition available. Performing groups may feel free to use either version, or combine them. For instance, a performing group may use the abridged version, but add back in a scene or two from the regular version. Scenes appearing in both versions **MUST** be performed, however. (Contact Lauren Grove for further clarification.) Instances of strong language, such as "damn" and "hell" are optional.

### *Mrs. Baum*

There are several options for staging Mrs. Baum's various narrations. She may be in a hospital bed, or simply a rocking chair. In addition, performing groups may choose to have some of Mrs. Baum's narrations be offstage voiceovers. As long as her first narration, last narration, and any scenes involving Peggy's responses are staged, the rest may be voiceover if desired.

### *Duel*

If performing groups do not want to show a gun on stage, Frank could instead spend the scene reaching into his jacket threateningly rather than pulling a gun out. Performing groups opting to go this route should change Maud's line in that scene from "I heard gunshots!" to "I heard shouting!"

### *Intimacy*

In the script, Frank and Maud show their affection for each other by kissing. If performing groups are uncomfortable staging kisses, they may be replaced with embraces, kissing hand(s), hand-holding, gently touching a cheek, or any gesture that would show affection.

### **Acknowledgments**

The original production of *Before Oz* took place November 22–24, 2024, at Lower Dauphin High School, Hummelstown, PA, with the following cast and staff:

FRANK. . . . .	Hunter Meyers
MAUD. . . . .	Adeline Jackson
MRS. BAUM . . . . .	Rachel Linnell
MATILDA . . . . .	Srishti Gleeson
THOMAS. . . . .	Jaxon Umidi
SARAH . . . . .	Jordan Braman
DOROTHY . . . . .	Mel Lerch
LENNY. . . . .	Wren White
BILL. . . . .	Beth Tylwalk
BERT . . . . .	Levi Dickinson
MARY LOUISE / PEGGY . . . . .	Seylah Hoke
HARRY . . . . .	Jay Keener
ROBBIE . . . . .	Caden Slatt
ENSEMBLE. . . . .	Magnolia Douglas, Kylie Heim, Owen Hess, Hope Millar, Damien Murphy, Evan Nop

Director / Playwright . . . . .	Lauren Grove
Assistant Director / Producer . . . . .	Doug Grove
Technical Director. . . . .	Mike James
Stage Manager. . . . .	Daphne Linn
Stage Crew. . . . .	Lily Kratz, Alex Elicker, Islay Plante, Sylvia Linnell
Technical Crew. . . . .	Asher Barrs, Phoenix Gontkovsky, Rylan McClain, Allison Assalita, Sarah Jones

# BEFORE OZ

by Lauren Grove

## Act One: New York (and California)

### Scene 1

*(A hospital in Hollywood, California, 1953.)*

*(Far stage left is a hospital bed. Upon the bed sits MRS. BAUM. She is an old woman, but don't let that fool you. She may be sick and elderly, but she is still every bit the headstrong, proud woman she has always been. Her gray hair is neat as a pin. Her hospital gown is crisp and clean. On a tiny table beside her bed sits a worn, well-loved copy of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. PEGGY, a bubbly young nurse, enters stage left.)*

**PEGGY:** Good morning, Mrs. Baum.

**MRS. BAUM:** Morning, Peggy.

*(PEGGY begins to check MRS. BAUM's vitals.)*

**PEGGY:** And how is my favorite patient this morning?

**MRS. BAUM:** I don't know. Why don't you go find her and ask her?

*(PEGGY just laughs and shakes her head, used to MRS. BAUM's antics.)*

**PEGGY:** Take a deep breath in for me.

*(MRS. BAUM does so, though it's painful.)*

**PEGGY:** You seem to be about the same as yesterday.

**MRS. BAUM:** And the day before that, and the day before that... This dying business is slow work...

**PEGGY:** Are you eager to leave us so soon?

**MRS. BAUM:** I'm ninety-one years old, dear. I've lived a good, long life. And I've got people waiting for me on the other side... So why don't you finish checking me over so I can get back to dying.

**PEGGY:** *(Laughing again:)* Whatever you say, Mrs. Baum.

*(She goes back to checking over MRS. BAUM. MRS. BAUM is startled as she notices something on PEGGY's hand.)*

**MRS. BAUM:** Good heavens, child, what is on your hand?

**PEGGY:** What? *(She looks at her hand.)* Oh, that's just paint.

**MRS. BAUM:** Paint?

**PEGGY:** Yes. I...well, I like to paint. I was working on a piece before my shift. I must have missed a spot when I was washing my hands. I'm terribly sorry, Mrs. Baum! I can assure you that we value cleanliness above all else here at...

**MRS. BAUM:** Yes, yes. It's all right. No harm done. *(She assesses the nurse.)* So, you're a painter, are you?

**PEGGY:** Yes, ma'am.

**MRS. BAUM:** You'll have to show me your work sometime.

**PEGGY:** Well, actually, that's one of mine. *(She points to the framed painting on the table. She smiles, but shrugs.)* I like to brighten the patients' rooms.

**MRS. BAUM:** *(Taking the small, framed picture and studying it:)* Hmm...

**PEGGY:** Is something wrong? Is it bad?

**MRS. BAUM:** Not at all, dear. It's quite lovely. I'm just wondering what an artist such as yourself is doing changing the bedpans of cranky old ladies.

**PEGGY:** I happen to like being a nurse.

**MRS. BAUM:** As much as you like being an artist?

**PEGGY:** Oh, well...I...I guess...

**MRS. BAUM:** I thought not.

**PEGGY:** I do love to paint... It's just...

**MRS. BAUM:** Just what?

**PEGGY:** Well... Being an artist doesn't pay the bills.

*(MRS. BAUM starts laughing heartily as PEGGY looks on, bewildered.)*

**PEGGY:** Mrs. Baum...?

**MRS. BAUM:** I'm sorry. *(She tries to collect herself and wipes her eyes.)* It's just, you sound exactly like my late husband.

**PEGGY:** I'm confused... *(She looks at MRS. BAUM as she continues to chuckle.)* Are you sure you're okay?

**MRS. BAUM:** Quite all right, I assure you. *(She takes PEGGY's hands and smiles broadly.)* I believe that you, my dear, were sent to me for a reason. Call it fate.

**PEGGY:** You believe in fate?

**MRS. BAUM:** Oh, I believe in fate, destiny, all of that...

**PEGGY:** Really?

**MRS. BAUM:** *(Nodding:)* And, most importantly, I believe in a person becoming who they were meant to be... Hand me that book, dear.

*(She points to the little table. PEGGY picks up the book and sees the cover.)*

**PEGGY:** *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz!* This is one of my favorites.

**MRS. BAUM:** *(Smirking:)* Mine too.

**PEGGY:** And I love the movie.

**MRS. BAUM:** Hmph... Hollywood took several liberties with my husband's book. Though that rainbow song is quite catchy...

**PEGGY:** Your husband's book?



**MRS. BAUM:** Read the cover.

**PEGGY:** *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank... *(She looks at the last name:)* Baum. Wait, you're that Mrs. Baum? The wife of...

**MRS. BAUM:** The writer of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, yes. Read the first page.

**PEGGY:** *(Opening the book, she reads:)* "This book is dedicated to my good friend and comrade, my wife."

**MRS. BAUM:** I'm not one to boast, but that is me.

**PEGGY:** Oh my goodness! This is one of the most famous books in all of children's literature. Your husband...he was a genius.

**MRS. BAUM:** *(Smiling:)* Didn't know you had the wife of a celebrity in your ward, did you?

**PEGGY:** I'm such a big fan! I have so many questions for you. But wait... How do I sound like your husband?

**MRS. BAUM:** I have never met a man more determined to run from his destiny than Frank Baum.

**PEGGY:** I don't think being an artist is my destiny.

**MRS. BAUM:** Do you love painting?

**PEGGY:** Well...

**MRS. BAUM:** Don't lie to a dying old lady.

**PEGGY:** Yes. More than anything.

**MRS. BAUM:** Then hush and listen, dear. *(She takes the book from PEGGY and touches the cover lovingly.)* You wouldn't know it from reading the book, but Frank fought against his fate every step of the way. And it was quite a long way to get to Oz. Our lives certainly had plenty of twists and turns.

**PEGGY:** How did you two meet?

**MRS. BAUM:** I met Frank on a cold December night in 1881. A night that would change Frank's life...and mine...forever...

*(Lights down stage left.)*

## Scene 2

*(A Christmas party in Syracuse, New York, 1881.)*

*(Lights come up center stage on a grand home at Christmastime. PARTYGOERS eat, drink, chat, and mingle around the festively decorated living room of MARY LOUISE and her husband. After a few moments, MARY LOUISE enters in a lovely party dress. She begins chatting with a friend when she sees her brother walk through the door. She immediately rushes to him.)*

**MARY LOUISE:** Frankie! You made it!

**FRANK:** Of course I made it. You sent me a telegram every week for the past month to remind me.

**MARY LOUISE:** Can't a sister want to spend the holidays with her favorite brother?

**FRANK:** I suspect you have ulterior motives...

**MARY LOUISE:** Oh hush. Give me your coat.

*(FRANK dutifully takes off his coat and hands it to MARY LOUISE. She then sees his suit.)*

**MARY LOUISE:** Really, Frankie... You couldn't have dressed up a little? It's a Christmas party!

**FRANK:** This is my best suit!

**MARY LOUISE:** That only makes it worse... I wish you'd let me send you some money.

**FRANK:** I do just fine on an actor's salary, Mary Louise.

**MARY LOUISE:** *(Gesturing to the suit:)* Clearly not. *(She hangs up his coat and turns back to him, hands on her hips.)* I don't know why you love the theatre life. Seems like nothing but lousy pay and too much traveling...

**FRANK:** I happen to like the traveling.

**MARY LOUISE:** If it's travel you're after, you could...

**FRANK:** *(Holding up a hand to interrupt her:)* And I happen to enjoy being onstage. I get to be creative, Mary. And there's nothing like the thrill of live theatre! You'd know that if you ever bothered to come to one of my plays...

**MARY LOUISE:** I don't approve of this career, Frankie.

**FRANK:** You don't approve of anything I do.

**MARY LOUISE:** I would very much approve if you finally settled down and had a family. Maybe even started a business of your own. You know what father always used to say...

**FRANK:** Yes, yes... "Baum men are men of business."

**MARY LOUISE:** Indeed.

**FRANK:** Can we change the subject? Or do you plan to lecture me at the doorway for the entire party?

**MARY LOUISE:** Fine, fine. Come in. *(She takes his arm and guides him into the living room.)* Welcome to my little soirée.

**FRANK:** *(Looking around at all the people:)* Little? It looks like half the city is here!

**MARY LOUISE:** You do like to tease me.

**FRANK:** I'm not teasing. I see the Grahams, the Johnsons... You even managed to get a Vanderbilt to attend. It's a who's who of New York society. And is that the mayor?

**MARY LOUISE:** Yes, yes it is. But...there is someone in particular I want you to meet.

**FRANK:** Oh Mary, not again.

**MARY LOUISE:** This one's different.

**FRANK:** They're always "different."

**MARY LOUISE:** I can tell you're lonely, Frankie. And I've recently become acquainted with the loveliest young lady. She is an absolute delight.

**FRANK:** Who is she?

**MARY LOUISE:** Maud Gage.

**FRANK:** Gage? You mean, the suffragette's daughter??

**MARY LOUISE:** Her mother is Matilda Gage, yes...

**FRANK:** That woman is a witch!

**MARY LOUISE:** She's not a witch. She's just passionate about women's rights.

**FRANK:** Matilda Gage has been known to make grown men cry. I can only imagine what her daughter must be like.

**MARY LOUISE:** She's wonderful, really.

**FRANK:** I've asked you to stop meddling in my personal life.

**MARY LOUISE:** It's not meddling; it's matchmaking!

*(They've reached MAUD before FRANK can get in another word.)*

**MARY LOUISE:** Ah, here we are! Maud, this is my brother Frank Baum. He's an actor, but don't hold that against him. And Frank, this is Maud Gage. You'll just love her!

*(MAUD is a vision in pink, like Glinda. For a moment, FRANK and MAUD just stare at each other. He is clearly instantly smitten. Everyone else at the party freezes. The lights dim until only FRANK, MAUD, and MARY LOUISE are lit. FRANK takes MAUD's hand and kisses it.)*

**FRANK:** Well, Miss Gage, consider yourself loved.

**MAUD:** *(Smiling:)* That sounds like a promise, Mr. Baum. Please see that you keep it.

*(They both smile, lost in each other's eyes. MARY LOUISE keeps looking between the two of them, beaming.)*

**MARY LOUISE:** Well, I'll leave you to it!

*(She starts to exit and then leans into FRANK's ear:)*

You can thank me later.

*(The lights come up and the PARTY GUESTS unfreeze. A lively holiday song begins to play and several couples take to the dance floor. FRANK and MAUD look around, and then back at each other sheepishly.)*

**FRANK:** I suppose you realize my sister set us up?

**MAUD:** *(Laughing:)* It wasn't hard to figure out. Mary has a way of shifting the subject of every conversation to her handsome and single brother. It's always "Frank this" and "Frank that."

**FRANK:** *(Wincing:)* She means well, but she can be a bit...overzealous.

**MAUD:** Overzealous. Good word. Are you a writer as well?

**FRANK:** No, no. Nothing of the sort. Just a humble actor, as my sister said.

**MAUD:** I must admit, I've always loved the theatre, much to my mother's horror.

**FRANK:** *(Smiling, encouraged:)* Really?

**MAUD:** *(Nodding:)* I could never be onstage, of course. I'm not the type. But I do enjoy seeing a play.

**FRANK:** I love the magic of theatre. Leaving your worries behind and getting lost in the world of the story.

**MAUD:** Yes, and...

*(Couples are dancing around them. One woman bumps into FRANK.)*

**PARTY GUEST 1:** I do beg your pardon!

*(Before FRANK can answer, her partner has whisked her to another part of the dance floor.)*

**FRANK:** It's rather cramped in here...

**MAUD:** Your sister did invite an awful lot of guests...

**FRANK:** Here. *(He grabs her hand.)* Come with me.

**MAUD:** Where are we going?

**FRANK:** To my sister's study, away from the crowd.

*(FRANK leads MAUD to far stage right. Lights come up stage right where a small sofa sits. The lights go down on the Christmas party and the PARTY GUESTS exit. MAUD and FRANK sit.)*

**FRANK:** There. I can finally hear myself think.

**MAUD:** Are your sister's parties always so well attended?

**FRANK:** She wouldn't have it any other way. Have you never been to one of Mary's gatherings before?

**MAUD:** No, I usually don't make it up to Syracuse often.

**FRANK:** Where are you from?

**MAUD:** Not too far from here. I live with my parents in Fayetteville. Although only during school holidays. I suppose my current address is Cornell.

**FRANK:** A college girl!

**MAUD:** I'm in my second year.

**FRANK:** I'm sure your mother must be proud of having her daughter attend university.

**MAUD:** Oh, yes. Maybe a little too proud... It seems to be all she talks about these days.

**FRANK:** Well, she is a suffragette...

**MAUD:** What about you, Mr. Baum? Do you live near here?

**FRANK:** Call me Frank, please.

*(MAUD smiles and nods.)*

**FRANK:** I grew up right in the palm of the Finger Lakes.

**MAUD:** Palm?

**FRANK:** Yes. Here... *(He takes her hand in his and holds it palm up.)* This area of New York is like a hand. And the lakes make the shape of fingers. *(He traces her fingers with his.)* And I grew up outside of Syracuse, in the palm.

*(He kisses her palm gently. MAUD blushes and gently takes her hand back, holding it dearly with her other hand.)*

**MAUD:** My... You do have a way with words...

**FRANK:** If you say so.

**MAUD:** You never thought about being a writer?

**FRANK:** There's not much money in writing. Or in theatre, for that matter. *(He turns to her.)* Don't tell my sister I said that.

**MAUD:** So, it's about the money...

**FRANK:** When I was growing up, my father was always reminding me that Baum men are men of business. And the most honorable thing a man can do is provide for his family.

**MAUD:** Why does that concern you?

**FRANK:** In truth, it never did matter to me. *(He takes a quick pause as he looks into her eyes.)*  
But I think I might be beginning to see the error of my ways...

*(He takes her hand.)*

**MAUD:** *(After a moment:)* Oh, I see...

*(She blushes and looks down at their joined hands. After a moment, she looks into his eyes.)*

Well, just to be clear, I would never want a man to give up his dreams for me. I would be content if my husband was an actor, a writer, or any profession, as long as he was happy.

**FRANK:** Very noble of you. But I assume a roof over your head and food on the table would make you happy as well?

**MAUD:** Of course, but...

**FRANK:** I rest my case.

**MAUD:** Answer me this, do you like storytelling?

**FRANK:** Oh, very much. I used to tell Mary Louise stories all the time when we were growing up. That's not the issue.

**MAUD:** Money is the issue...

**FRANK:** Right.

**MAUD:** Even though you never cared about such things until tonight...

**FRANK:** Well, when you put it that way, I sound daft.

**MAUD:** *(Laughing:)* I'm beginning to suspect being daft is inherent to your personality.

**FRANK:** *(Playfully.)* Miss Gage, you wound me!

**MAUD:** Maud, please.

**FRANK:** *(Smiling:)* Maud.

*(She nods.)*

**FRANK:** You don't mind being in the company of such a daft man, Maud?

**MAUD:** Not if he's also a talented man. Why don't you tell me one of your stories?

**FRANK:** What?

**MAUD:** Come on, Mr. Actor. Show me what you've got.

**FRANK:** Now?

**MAUD:** Yes.

**FRANK:** I feel rather put on the spot... What do you want to hear? Cinderella? Snow White?

**MAUD:** No, one of your originals. One of the ones you used to tell your sister.

**FRANK:** I don't know...

**MAUD:** Please?

*(She puts on a pout and bats her eyelashes.)*

**FRANK:** Oh, don't look at me like that...

*(She continues to pout.)*

**FRANK:** Maud...

*(She puts her hands together in a pleading gesture.)*

**FRANK:** Okay, fine! *(He mutters under his breath:)* Women... I guess, there was one she was particularly fond of about a fairy tale land filled with magical creatures. There were witches and enchanted trees and even talking animals.

**MAUD:** What kind of talking animals?

**FRANK:** All kinds. Lions and tigers and bears.

**MAUD:** Oh, my!

**FRANK:** And there was a village of little people. They were full-grown adults, but no bigger than children.

**MAUD:** That sounds marvelous! I wish I had an imagination as rich as yours. *(She laughs.)* I wish I had any imagination at all.

**FRANK:** Of course you have one.

**MAUD:** No, I'm far too logical, I'm afraid.

**FRANK:** I don't believe that. Everyone has an imagination.

**MAUD:** No, it's true. I was terrible at make-believe as a child.

**FRANK:** Well, we'll have to fix that. Here, give me your hands. Take a deep breath and clear your mind.

*(She takes a deep breath and focuses on FRANK.)*

**FRANK:** Picture a land. A land in the midst of a country of marvelous beauty, with lovely patches of green grass all around.

**MAUD:** Green is my favorite color.

*(FRANK leads MAUD to center stage. The projection turns from a Victorian house at Christmas to a beautiful fairyland with a yellow brick road. Trees and huge, bright flowers are brought on stage, surrounding FRANK and MAUD.)*

**FRANK:** Then imagine the deepest, most emerald green you have ever seen. And there are stately trees bearing rich and luscious fruits. In the trees, birds with rare and brilliant plumage perch and sing the prettiest songs you've ever heard.

*(The sound of birds chirping is heard as the stage is transformed.)*

**FRANK:** There are banks of beautiful, fragrant flowers covering the rolling hillside. A little ways off is a brook, sparkling and rushing along between green banks. Past the brook is a dazzling brick road, shining like gold, winding its way through the countryside.

*(MAUD is entranced. She gasps and looks around the stage.)*

**MAUD:** I see it, Frank! I see the land!

**FRANK:** I knew you could.

**MAUD:** I can see it all!

**FRANK:** All I can see is you...

*(He touches her cheek gently, then leans in and kisses her.)*

*(Lights down center stage. Lights come up on MRS. BAUM far stage left.)*

**MRS. BAUM:** I fell for Frank Baum that night, and I tell you, dear, I fell hard. I had never shared such an instant connection with another person before or since. As winter faded and the spring flowers bloomed, so too did our courtship. And by the first whispers of summer, Frank had proposed. *(She shows off her ring.)* It's a beauty, isn't it? Emerald, my favorite color. *(She sighs happily, looking at the ring.)* A life with Frank sounded like a wonderful adventure. I couldn't wait to get married. All that was left to do was...inform my mother.

*(Lights down stage left.)*

### Scene 3

*(The Gage parlor room in Fayetteville, New York, 1882.)*

*(Lights come up center stage on the Gage family home. FRANK and MAUD enter.)*

**FRANK:** Are you sure this is a good idea?

**MAUD:** If we're going to get married, you have to meet my mother sooner or later.

**FRANK:** Later. Later sounds good...

**MAUD:** *(Calling out:)* Mother! We're home!

*(MATILDA enters.)*

**MATILDA:** We?

**MAUD:** Yes. Mother, this is my very dear friend, Frank Baum. Frank, this is my mother, the one and only Matilda Gage: published author, acclaimed orator, and famous suffragette.

**FRANK:** *(Extending his hand for a handshake:)* Pleased to meet you.

**MATILDA:** Hmph...

*(She makes a noncommittal noise and looks him up and down, disapprovingly. She does not shake his hand. FRANK awkwardly withdraws his hand and gives her the flowers he is holding in his other hand.)*

**FRANK:** These are for you.

**MATILDA:** *(Not taking them:)* I'm allergic to poppies.

**MAUD:** *(Taking the flowers out of FRANK's hands and forcing them into her mother's:)* No, she's not.

**MATILDA:** Well, I don't like the color.

**MAUD:** Mother, behave.

*(MATILDA casts one more glare at FRANK and goes to put the flowers on the table. FRANK and MAUD sit on the couch, and MATILDA sits on an armchair.)*

**MATILDA:** Very well, I shall act the perfect host. Tell me, Mr. Baum, what is it you do?



**FRANK:** I'm an actor.

**MATILDA:** Oh, how awful for you.

**FRANK:** What?

**MAUD:** Frank is an actor by choice, Mother. He likes his job.

**MATILDA:** I see. So, you heard the Gages are a wealthy family, yes? And you're using my daughter to seek a donation for your theater?

**FRANK:** What?

**MAUD:** Mother, really!

**MATILDA:** What? You show up unannounced with some random actor in a shabby coat. What am I to think?

**MAUD:** We, we wanted to discuss something with you, Mother.

**MATILDA:** And what would that be?

**FRANK:** Well, Matilda... Is it okay if I call you Matilda?

**MATILDA:** No.

**FRANK:** *(Very nervous, and it does not help:)* Okay, um, well, Mrs. Gage, I think Maud is swell. Really swell. We've been spending quite a lot of time together since last Christmas and I... you see, we... Well, the thing is... When a man realizes that it's time to... What I mean to say, is...um...

**MATILDA:** Out with it, young man!

**MAUD:** What Frank is trying to say is, we're in love.

**MATILDA:** *(Flying out of her chair:)* You're in WHAT?

*(MAUD stands and pulls FRANK to his feet. She holds his hand.)*

**MAUD:** And we're getting married.

**MATILDA:** You're getting WHAT?

*(She is about to explode. It takes all her energy to calm herself down. She begins to fan herself and says through gritted teeth...)*

**MATILDA:** May I speak to you alone, Maud?

**MAUD:** Anything you have to say to me, you can say in front of Frank.

**MATILDA:** I think not. *(She turns to FRANK.)* You. Out. Now.

**MAUD:** No, Frank, stay.

**MATILDA:** I said go!

**MAUD:** He's my fiancé, and I say he stays!

**MATILDA:** This is my house, and I say he goes!

**FRANK:** How about I just go sit in the hallway... You two have a lot to talk about...

*(FRANK slips out the door and sits on a bench in the hallway. He can still hear the ongoing conversation, however, and reacts to everything being said.)*

**MATILDA:** An actor? You want to marry an actor? Have you lost your mind?



**MAUD:** Mother...

**MATILDA:** You are Maud Elizabeth Gage! You are one of the first women to ever attend Cornell University. Has this Frank person even finished high school?

**MAUD:** Well, not technically, but he...

**MATILDA:** You could be a doctor or a lawyer, Maud.

**MAUD:** I know, but...

**MATILDA:** In my day, a woman could only dream of achieving such heights. What I wouldn't have given to attend medical school... And here is my own daughter, ready to throw it all away for an *actor*.

**MAUD:** Please just listen to me!

**MATILDA:** No, you listen to me! If this Frank Baum character is an actor, then he's nothing but an impractical dreamer. He'll never be able to support a family.

**MAUD:** I fell in love with his mind, not his wallet.

**MATILDA:** You have so many suitors, Maud. Pick another one. Pick anyone! Just not this one.

**MAUD:** But I love him, Mother. He's brought color into my world.

**MATILDA:** *(Rolling her eyes and mumbling:)* Color... Ridiculous... *(She sits and picks up her fan. She begins to fan herself again.)* I suppose it's my own fault, really. I raised you to believe a woman could do anything she wanted, be anything she wanted... So, you went ahead and decided to be an actor's wife. The irony...

**MAUD:** You're right. You raised me to think for myself, but now that I'm doing something you don't like, you want me to be meek and obedient.

**MATILDA:** I don't want you to be meek and obedient. I just want you to forget the actor.

**MAUD:** He's not just any old actor, Mother. He's a *wonderful* actor. He's a wizard on stage; you should see him! He did a performance of the play *Matches* in Richburg a few weeks ago, and he was absolutely brilliant.

**MATILDA:** That's your opinion.

**MAUD:** Did you see today's paper? *(She grabs the paper and begins looking for the right page.)* They reprinted a theatre review from last month's *Oil Echo*. They called Frank's performance a triumph! Here. *(She finds the page and begins to read:)* "Mr. Baum is to be congratulated. He has a fine presence, a handsome countenance, and an ease and grace in his stage movements. He has showed himself a complete master of his role." *(She closes the paper.)* What do you have to say to that?

**MATILDA:** Didn't the theatre burn down before Act Two?

**FRANK:** *(Walking in, he can't help but interject:)* Unfortunately, theatre fires are a constant risk, but Act One that night was really...

**MATILDA:** Sit down, actor! You have no lines in this play!

**FRANK:** *(Scared, immediately sitting on the sofa:)* Yes, ma'am.

**MATILDA:** How can I make you understand... You're destined for more than this. I refuse to have my daughter be a fool and marry a damn thespian!

**MAUD:** My mind is made up, Mother. I am determined to be Mrs. Frank Baum.

**MATILDA:** I'll let you marry that man when monkeys fly!

**MAUD:** I will marry Frank with or without your blessing!

**MATILDA:** You wouldn't dare...

**MAUD:** Watch me. And if you plan to be in my life, and the lives of any future grandchildren, I suggest you get used to the idea of us together. *(She grabs her coat and begins to exit angrily.)* Come on, Frank.

**FRANK:** *(Rising from the sofa:)* Where are we going?

**MAUD:** To elope!

*(She exits in a huff.)*

**FRANK:** Oh, right... *(He turns awkwardly to MATILDA.)* Um, it was nice to meet you...

*(She glares at him. He quickly runs after MAUD.)*

*(Lights go down center stage and up stage left on MRS. BAUM.)*

**MRS. BAUM:** We did not end up eloping. Mother eventually...begrudgingly...allowed Frank and I to marry in her parlor. On a sunny day in 1882, we said our vows before a house packed with our friends and family. Everyone dressed in their finest attire...except for Mother who wore black as though she was in mourning...

*(MRS. BAUM shakes her head.)*

Frank quit the acting troupe soon after our wedding, though I begged him not to. I told him over and over that I would support his dreams, but his father's words had taken root. He was determined to keep food on the table and a roof over our head.

We settled down in a rented house in Syracuse and Frank took a job at a local market to support us. Nine months later, Harry Neal Baum came into the world. I tell you, you have never seen a more beautiful baby than my little Harry! I know every mother says that, but in Harry's case, it's true... And Frank was a wonderful father. No matter how tired he was at the end of the day, he always took time to play with the baby.

*(Lights down stage left.)*

#### Scene 4

*(A small family room in Syracuse, New York, 1883.)*

*(Lights up on the Baum living room in Syracuse. FRANK and MAUD are sitting on the couch. FRANK is reading the paper while MAUD works on her embroidery. A white bassinet sits in the corner. FRANK sighs contentedly and props his feet on the table.)*

**FRANK:** There really is no place like home...

*(MATILDA enters from a back room with a book and sits herself between FRANK and MAUD.)*

**FRANK:** Unless you have houseguests...

**MATILDA:** What was that?

**FRANK:** Nothing, Mother Gage...

**MATILDA:** You should take your feet off the table, Frank. It's considered rude.

**FRANK:** It's my house!

**MAUD:** Mother...

**MATILDA:** Fine, live like heathens...

*(She shrugs and sits back with her book.)*

**FRANK:** Remind me again how long you plan to stay...

**MATILDA:** Until Maud gets back on her feet. I wouldn't expect a *man* to comprehend the pains of childbearing...

**MAUD:** I told you, Mother, I'm feeling much better. And little Harry is in perfect health.

**MATILDA:** Well, let's give it another week to be sure.

**FRANK:** *(To himself:)* A whole week?

**MATILDA:** What was that?

**FRANK:** Nothing...

*(They settle back into reading and embroidering. After a moment, FRANK spies an article that catches his attention. He sits up.)*

**FRANK:** Would you look at this? A cyclone hit Leavenworth, Kansas last Tuesday. Buildings were destroyed all over town and, good Lord, twelve people lost their lives.

**MAUD:** Why anyone would move to the plains is beyond me.

**FRANK:** Spoken like a true city girl.

**MATILDA:** I quite agree with you, Maud. It's flat, dry, and dusty, and you're always worried a cyclone will come and rip your house right off its foundation... We don't have to worry about cyclones here in New York.

**FRANK:** Afraid of cyclones, are you?

**MATILDA:** Any sensible person would be.

*(The cry of a baby is heard. MAUD puts down her embroidery.)*

**MAUD:** Mama's coming, Harry.

**FRANK:** You sit, darling, I'll look after him.

*(MAUD smiles and goes back to her embroidery. FRANK puts down his paper, crosses to the bassinet, and picks up the baby.)*

**FRANK:** There, now, Harry. Papa is here... Shh...

*(He bounces and sways with the baby, who keeps crying.)*

**MAUD:** Tell him a story.

**FRANK:** A story? Would you like that, Harry? *(The baby giggles.)* Should I tell you about the magic land? That's your mother's favorite story... But there's something she doesn't know. The only way to get to the magic land is... *(He turns to MATILDA:)* by cyclone!

**MATILDA:** Hmph! The nerve!

**FRANK:** One day, a young boy from the plains of Kansas was caught in a terrible storm. It was very dark, and the wind howled horribly.

*(The projection fades from a nineteenth-century living room to a great tornado. A howling wind is heard under FRANK's narration. The lights dim slightly. Though FRANK is holding little HARRY, he directs most of his story to MATILDA to frighten her.)*

**FRANK:** As the north and south winds met where his family's house stood, a great cyclone arose, mighty and terrible enough to crush anyone and anything in its path... As his little house rocked back and forth, the poor boy clung to his bed for safety. All of a sudden, his house lifted right off its foundation and into the sky. Higher and higher it rose until it was at the very top of the cyclone!

**MATILDA:** *(Standing in a huff, frightened but mostly aggravated:)* Such nonsense! I'm going to bed!  
*(She exits. FRANK smiles triumphantly as the cyclone fades. The lights brighten, the wind sounds cease, and the projection turns back to the living room.)*

**FRANK:** The little boy was very frightened. But before long the house set down with a soft thud. He had been blown into the midst of a magic land. He walked out of his front door and into the most beautiful country he had ever seen, full of trees and flowers, colorful birds, and delicious fruits...

**MAUD:** And a road made from golden bricks, don't forget.

**FRANK:** Of course I couldn't forget the shining yellow brick road, paved in gold. The little boy decided to walk down the road and see where the path would take him... And oh, what adventures awaited him in the magic land! *(He smiles down at the baby.)* There, he's asleep...  
*(He lays HARRY in the bassinet.)*

**MAUD:** I really wish you would write that story down, Frank. I think people would love it.

**FRANK:** Me becoming a writer is about as likely as a cyclone in Syracuse.

*(Lights go down center stage and up stage left on MRS. BAUM. The bassinet is removed from the set.)*

**MRS. BAUM:** Frank himself was like a cyclone. He rarely stood still and was always full of new ideas. When a promotion at the market never came, Frank took several odd jobs to make ends meet. He was a store clerk, then an oil salesman, and even dabbled in chicken breeding.

And our family kept growing. Harry was soon joined by a brother. Robert Stanton Baum was born on February 1, 1884. Our bank accounts may have been close to empty, but oh, my dear, our hearts...and our house...were full. And take it from an old lady, that's what truly matters.

*(Lights up on the Baum living room several years later. MAUD is waiting for her husband on the couch. FRANK comes through the door in his coat, weary after a long day.)*

**MAUD:** You're late.

**FRANK:** *(Taking off his coat and hanging it:)* One of the roosters got out of his cage and ran right into Moorehead's Feed Store. It took an hour for us all to chase him down and get him back to his coop. I swear, Maud, if it isn't one thing it's another.

**MAUD:** I don't know why you keep at it. You're miserable at that farm.

**FRANK:** It brings in money, Maud.

**MAUD:** I just wish you would find something that makes you happy...

**FRANK:** Providing for you and the children makes me happy.

*(He kisses her on the cheek. MAUD makes a noncommittal noise and gives him a look. Then she says...)*

**MAUD:** Go wash up and change your clothes. Mother is joining us for supper.

**FRANK:** Again?

**MAUD:** She's got no one else, Frank.

*(HARRY and ROBBIE, now young boys, come rushing in.)*

**HARRY:** Papa!

**ROBBIE:** We thought we heard you.

**FRANK:** Boys!

*(He hugs them both.)*

**ROBBIE:** We missed you, Pa!

**FRANK:** I missed you.

**MAUD:** I need to check on the roast. Make sure you all wash up before dinner. I mean it.

**FRANK:** We will, we will.

*(MAUD exits. FRANK stands and puts his work bag by the door and the mail he was carrying on the coffee table.)*

**HARRY:** Grandmother Gage is coming for dinner.

**FRANK:** Yes, I heard.

**ROBBIE:** Can we just lock the door and pretend we're not home?

**FRANK:** Oh, how I wish...

*(FRANK sits back and rubs his temples.)*

**HARRY:** What's wrong, Pa?

**FRANK:** I feel a headache coming on.

**ROBBIE:** Is it 'cause of Grandmother Gage?

**FRANK:** *(Chuckling:)* Yes, but don't tell your mother.

**HARRY:** I bet there are no grouchy grannies in the magic land.

**ROBBIE:** Yeah! No grouchy grannies allowed!

**FRANK:** *(Sitting up:)* Now, see, that's where you're wrong, boys.

**ROBBIE:** Really?

**FRANK:** Oh, yes. There are dark, evil things there, hidden in the lands to the East and West.

**ROBBIE:** Like what?

**FRANK:** Those lands are cursed with witches!

**HARRY:** Witches?

*(FRANK nods as ominous music begins to play.)*

**FRANK:** These witches were so wicked that everyone in the land cowered in fear of them. The worst was the Wicked Witch of the West.

*(There is a knock at the door.)*

**HARRY:** I'll get it!

**ROBBIE:** No, me!

**HARRY:** I said it first!

*(MAUD enters.)*

**FRANK:** It's Grandmother Gage... Or maybe the Wicked Witch!

**HARRY:** *(To ROBBIE:)* Okay, you can get the door.

**ROBBIE:** No, you said it first...

**HARRY:** But...

**MAUD:** I'll get the door. I don't know what you're all so scared of...

*(MAUD opens the door. MATILDA stands there in all black, wearing a crooked black witch's hat. The sound of thunder is heard. The projection becomes a scary witch or malevolent-looking dark forest.)*

**FRANK:** *(Whispering to the boys:)* The Wicked Witch of the West was hideous to behold, with one bulging eye and a crooked nose.

**MAUD:** Hello, Mother.

*(They kiss each other on each cheek.)*

**MATILDA:** You look well.

**MAUD:** Please, come in.

**FRANK:** *(Whispering to the boys:)* She could reduce a man to dust just with a stare... And all the people in the magic land knew she had enslaved the poor citizens of the West.

*(HARRY and ROBBIE hide behind FRANK.)*

**MATILDA:** And where are my grandchildren?

**MAUD:** Boys, say hello to Grandmother Gage.

**FRANK:** *(Whispering:)* And worst of all, she had giant, terrifying, flying monkeys to do her evil bidding!

*(HARRY and ROBBIE run screaming from the room. The music stops, the projection changes back to the living room, and MATILDA removes her hat.)*

**MATILDA:** Goodness gracious! What was all that?

**FRANK:** *(Smiling mischievously:)* Boys will be boys...

**MATILDA:** Such manners were not tolerated in my day. Must be the Baum side of them...

**MAUD:** Here, Mother, let me take your coat.

*(Beneath her witch's coat, MATILDA is wearing a plain, normal dress. MAUD hangs her coat and hat.)*

**MAUD:** Have a seat. Dinner will be a while yet.

*(MATILDA looks at the worn couch, dusts it off, and then sits.)*

**MATILDA:** You need to get a maid in here, Maud.

**MAUD:** You know very well we can't afford a maid.

**MATILDA:** If you had married that Charles Godfrey boy, you could have a maid, cook, butler, and then some.

**MAUD:** Mother...

**MATILDA:** I'm just saying...

**MAUD:** Frank, dear, why don't you sit with Mother and visit for a while?

**FRANK:** (*Whispering:*) Must I...?

(*MAUD swats him with a dish towel and pushes him in the direction of the couch before exiting.*)

**FRANK:** How have you been?

**MATILDA:** Quite well. I've just finished a draft of my latest essay on women's suffrage. They'll be publishing it in the *National Citizen*.

**FRANK:** That's great news.

**MATILDA:** I'm surprised you think so.

**FRANK:** Of course I do. I'm a supporter of a woman's right to vote.

**MATILDA:** Really? You support our movement of advancing the place of women in our society?

**FRANK:** Wholeheartedly.

**MATILDA:** Then tell me, Frank, why did you take a promising young woman away from her scholarly path and turn her into nothing more than a housewife!

**FRANK:** Here we go...

(*MAUD reenters.*)

**MATILDA:** Here we go indeed. Maud could have...

**MAUD:** Mother, Frank, that's enough... We are going to have a nice family dinner if it kills us.

**FRANK:** It just might...

**MAUD:** Why don't you come help me in the kitchen, Mother?

**MATILDA:** Hmph...

(*She gives FRANK one last glare and follows MAUD offstage.*)

**FRANK:** You can come out now, boys.

(*ROBBIE and HARRY cautiously enter the room.*)

**FRANK:** I'm sorry if I scared you.

**HARRY:** You didn't scare us!

**ROBBIE:** Yeah, we aren't scared of nothing!

**FRANK:** Is that so?

**HARRY:** Uh-huh... Though, um, maybe I could sit next to you at dinner, and not next to the Wicked... I mean, Grandmother Gage?

**ROBBIE:** Me too! Can I sit next to you too, Pa?

**FRANK:** And who will sit next to your grandmother?



**ROBBIE:** Maybe she could eat her dinner in the shed...

**FRANK:** *(Laughing:)* You know, boys, you don't have to be scared of all witches.

**HARRY:** We don't?

**FRANK:** Not all witches in the magic land are wicked and ugly. The witches that live in the North and the South are as good as they are lovely.

*(Soft music begins to play. MAUD enters. She is dressed all in pink, looking beautiful. The projection fades into a rainbow.)*

**FRANK:** In the North there lived a witch called Glinda. She was the most powerful of all the witches, but she was benevolent and kind to everyone. And she was the most beautiful woman in all the land. Everyone couldn't help but love her.

**ROBBIE:** And she was a good witch?

**FRANK:** *(Looking at MAUD and smiling:)* The very best...

**MAUD:** What are you all smiling at?

**FRANK:** Nothing, nothing... Just telling the boys a story.

*(MAUD shakes her head but smiles back. She exits back to the kitchen and the projection shifts back to the living room.)*

**FRANK:** Okay boys, run along and wash up for dinner.

*(The boys exit. FRANK begins rummaging through the mail on the coffee table. He calls to MAUD offstage.)*

**FRANK:** We got a letter from your brother, Maud.

**MAUD:** *(From offstage:)* What does he say?

*(FRANK opens the letter. THOMAS enters in spotlight far stage right.)*

**THOMAS:** Dearest Maud, hello again from the Dakota Territory! I hope things are well with Frank and the boys. Everything is more than fine here. I seem to have caught the western fever! The town of Aberdeen is booming. A man can really be somebody out here, make a name for himself!

Sarah sends her love. We hope you all can come visit us one day. If you do, Sarah asks that you please bring some sewing supplies from home. Aberdeen is the bees' knees, but we don't have much in the way of fabric stores.

All my love, Thomas.

*(Spotlight dims and THOMAS exits. MAUD, dressed once again in her normal clothes, enters, followed by MATILDA.)*

**MATILDA:** I still can't believe my baby boy and his wife moved halfway across the country. How could he desert his dear mother in such a manner?

**MAUD:** He didn't desert you, Mother. He went out west to find work. And he seems to be quite happy.

**MATILDA:** Hmph... I haven't seen Thomas or Sarah since Harry's christening.

**MAUD:** I miss them too. They've never even met Robbie. And they have a little girl of their own now, Dorothy...



**MATILDA:** A grandchild I've never even met...

*(FRANK has been studying the letter all this time.)*

**FRANK:** You know... I think we should go to Aberdeen, Maud.

**MAUD:** Do you mean it? Oh Frank, that would be wonderful! I would love to go for a visit.

**FRANK:** I don't want to go to Aberdeen for a visit... I think we should move there.

**MAUD:** What?

**MATILDA:** Have you lost your mind?

**FRANK:** *(Taking MAUD's hands in his:)* You know I hate working at that farm, Maud. And your brother said it himself, a man can really be somebody out in the plains! I could give you and the boys a better life.

**MAUD:** But Frank...

**FRANK:** *(Continuing:)* And thanks to this letter, I know exactly what to do. I'll open a store, Maud. No, not a store, a bazaar filled with the most wondrous things! I'll bring all the fancy eastern luxuries of New York to the hardworking people of Aberdeen. There's no way it can fail!

**MAUD:** This is an awfully big decision, Frank... I don't know... We need to talk about this.

**MATILDA:** There's nothing to talk about. You will NOT be moving to the Dakota Territory. If you move so far west, I'd never be able to visit!

**FRANK:** *(Looking at MATILDA with a wide smile and calling offstage:)* Pack your bags, boys! We're moving to Aberdeen!

*(Lights down.)*

**End of Act One.**

## Act Two: Aberdeen

### Scene 1

*(Train station in Aberdeen, Dakota Territory, 1890.)*

*(Lights up stage left on MRS. BAUM.)*

**MRS. BAUM:** I tell you, dear, once Frank Baum got an idea in his head, there was almost no talking him out of it. Just two weeks later, we packed up our little family and took the long train ride to Aberdeen. We arrived on a steamy July day in 1892 to a world unlike anything we were used to...

*(Lights down stage left and up center stage on the Aberdeen Prairie. The projection shows a beige, flat expanse. A train whistle is heard in the distance. Townsfolk walk here and there on the street. FRANK, MAUD, HARRY, and ROBBIE enter holding suitcases.)*

**FRANK:** Smell that prairie air, boys! *(He takes a deep breath and sighs happily.)* There's no place like home!

**HARRY:** Everything is so flat...and gray...

**ROBBIE:** There aren't any trees...

**MAUD:** Lord, what have we done...

**FRANK:** Come on, family! Where is your sense of adventure? This is going to be great for us! Just wait until Baum's Bazaar opens... Then you'll see.

**MAUD:** Is it too late for me to click my heels together and be magicked back to New York?

**FRANK:** Have a little faith, dear.

**HARRY:** Where's the store gonna be, Pa?

**FRANK:** *(Pointing:)* Right there on Main Street. Front and center for the whole town to see.

**MAUD:** Frank, are you sure about this? Is this really your dream? Running a store?

**FRANK:** It'll be great, Maud. Don't worry.

*(He kisses her cheek.)*

**THOMAS:** *(Entering, all smiles:)* Maud Baum, as I live and breathe... Is that you, little sister?

*(MAUD drops her suitcase and runs to him. THOMAS gives her a bear hug.)*

**MAUD:** Oh, Thomas! It is so good to see you!

**THOMAS:** You too, Maudie. *(He lets her go and shakes FRANK's hand.)* How ya been, Frank, old boy?

**FRANK:** Just fine, Tom. Glad to be out here. Ready to make a name for myself.

**THOMAS:** Well, Aberdeen is just the place to do it! *(He turns to HARRY and ROBBIE.)* And who might these strapping young men be?

**MAUD:** This is Harry and Robbie. Boys, this is your Uncle Thomas.

**THOMAS:** Put 'er there, boys! *(He heartily shakes both their hands, much to the boys' delight.)* You all must be famished. Come on, Sarah's got her special one-pot coyote chili on the stove.

**HARRY:** Coyote...?

**THOMAS:** You'll love it. Come on, everyone!

*(As they all cross the stage, the background changes from the prairie to the front room of a shabby farmhouse. SARAH enters, wearing an apron.)*

**SARAH:** There you all are! Oh, I am so thrilled you're here. Maud, it's been too long!

*(The two women embrace.)*

**MAUD:** It has. *(She turns to her children.)* Harry, Robbie, this is your Aunt Sarah. I expect you to mind your manners while we're living in her house.

**SARAH:** Oh, I'm sure they will. They seem darling.

**FRANK:** *(Laughing:)* Don't let them fool you...

**SARAH:** *(Smiling and hugging him:)* Frank!

**FRANK:** Good to see you, Sarah.

**SARAH:** You poor things must be exhausted. Let's go have supper and then you can all get some rest. Come on, the kitchen's through here...

*(She begins to lead everyone offstage.)*

**ROBBIE:** Is there really coyote in the chili?

**SARAH:** Thomas Gage, what have you been telling these poor children?

*(THOMAS just laughs as everyone but FRANK exits.)*

**FRANK:** I'll be right there.

*(He begins to gather everyone's scattered suitcases in a pile. DOROTHY slowly enters the room, holding her little stuffed dog tightly. FRANK turns around and sees her. He stops suddenly, then smiles.)*

**FRANK:** Well, hello there.

*(DOROTHY shyly waves.)*

**FRANK:** Who might you be?

*(She looks down at her feet and shuffles them.)*

You must be shy.

*(She nods.)*

Well, that's okay. Let me see if I can guess who you are... Hmm... Are you a princess?

*(She shakes her head no, but smiles widely.)*

No? I'm surprised. Hmm... A queen, then?

*(She shakes her head again.)*

Wrong again I see... Oh, I know. You're the mayor of Aberdeen, aren't you?!

*(She giggles and finally speaks:)*

**DOROTHY:** I'm Dorothy.

**FRANK:** That was going to be my next guess! *(He removes his hat and bows.)* Pleased to meet you, Dorothy. I'm your Uncle Frank.

**DOROTHY:** Hi, Uncle Frank...

**FRANK:** And who is this?

*(He points to the stuffed dog.)*

**DOROTHY:** This is Toto, only, he's not a real dog. Papa says I can't get a real dog 'cause we can't afford another mouth to feed. Toto is just a stuffed dog.

**FRANK:** Well, stuffed or not, he seems like a fine fellow. *(He takes one of the plush dog's stuffed paws.)* Pleased to meet you, Toto.

**DOROTHY:** *(Giggling:)* You're not like other grown-ups.

**FRANK:** That, my dear, is the finest compliment I have ever received. *(He smiles.)* Come on, would you like to go meet your aunt and cousins?

**DOROTHY:** *(Hesitating:)* I don't know...

**FRANK:** *(Kneeling down to her level:)* I promise there's nothing to be afraid of. Aunt Maud is the nicest person you'll ever meet. And your cousins are loud, but they're good boys. And I'll stay right by your side, okay?

*(He offers her his hand. She takes it.)*

**DOROTHY:** Okay, Uncle Frank.

*(He smiles and leads DOROTHY offstage, calling...)*

**FRANK:** Maud, boys! Look who I found!

*(Lights go down center stage and up stage left on MRS. BAUM.)*

**MRS. BAUM:** Frank loved Harry and Robbie. He was an amazing father. But I knew he secretly always wanted a daughter. Before long, Dorothy and her Uncle Frank were thick as thieves. He doted on the little girl. Thomas was equally delighted to finally have some boys around the house. We all quickly became one big happy family. And it was good there were so many of us. We needed all hands on deck while working to open Baum's Bazaar.

*(Lights down.)*

## Scene 2

*(Baum's Bazaar in Aberdeen, 1891.)*

*(Lights come up center stage on Baum's Bazaar, still a work in progress. SARAH, MAUD, and THOMAS are hard at work. FRANK is seated behind the counter, writing something. THOMAS lifts two crates.)*

**THOMAS:** Two more racks of water goblets, coming through.

**MAUD:** Set them over by the cigars for now, Thomas.

**THOMAS:** Yes ma'am.

*(After a moment, LENNY nervously enters and approaches the counter.)*

**LENNY:** Is you Mr. Baum, sir?

**FRANK:** I am.

**LENNY:** Hi there, Mr. Baum, I'm Lenny. Lenny Sprocket.

*(He takes FRANK's hand and shakes it vigorously. FRANK pulls his hand back but smiles.)*

**FRANK:** Easy there, Lenny...

**LENNY:** I heard you was looking to hire some help.

**FRANK:** I sure am.

**LENNY:** Well, Mr. Baum. I'm sure hurtin' for a job. It would be mighty fine if you hired me.

**FRANK:** Well, let's see. Have you gone to college, Lenny?

**LENNY:** Um, no...

**FRANK:** That's all right, neither did I. What grade did you get through, son?

**LENNY:** Well, only to about the fifth grade, but I don't think it holds me back none.

**FRANK:** Hmm...do you have experience working with the public?

**LENNY:** The public?

**FRANK:** You know, people.

**LENNY:** Oh sure, I know people. I see people every day. Why, youse is people, Mr. Baum!

**FRANK:** Okay, let's start over. Lenny, can you lift and move heavy crates?

**LENNY:** Well sure! My mama always said my brains was in my muscles.

**FRANK:** Good enough for me, welcome to the team.

**LENNY:** You really mean it? No foolin'?

**FRANK:** No fooling, Lenny. When can you start?

**LENNY:** Well, right now, Mr. Baum!

**THOMAS:** Over here, Lenny. You can help me unload the hobby horses.

**LENNY:** Y'all are selling horses? Is this a stable of some kind?

**FRANK:** No, Lenny, it's a store. And it will be the finest store this town has ever seen.

**THOMAS:** Damn straight!

**FRANK:** A hobby horse is a toy for children.

**LENNY:** Ohhh, I see.

**THOMAS:** Do you?

**LENNY:** No, but I can unload the crate...

*(LENNY and THOMAS set to work. SARAH brings some paperwork over to FRANK.)*

**SARAH:** Where should I put this bill, Frank?

**FRANK:** Over there in the filing cabinet. The top is A through N, and the bottom is O through Z.

**SARAH:** So... Up top? F for fans? Or C for Chinese?

**FRANK:** C.

**MAUD:** You ordered more Chinese paper fans? Frank, we already have a case full. How many paper fans do you think the ladies of Aberdeen need?

**FRANK:** It'll be fine, Maud. They'll fly off the shelves, you'll see.

**MAUD:** How will we pay for them until that happens?

**FRANK:** The bank loaned us the money. We'll be able to pay it all back by the winter, I promise.

**MAUD:** You said no more loans... We're already so far in debt.

**FRANK:** This was the last one, I promise.

*(As MAUD gives FRANK a glaring look, DOROTHY skips into the store.)*

**DOROTHY:** Mama, can I have a drink? It's hot out there.

**SARAH:** You went out front hours ago. Where have you been?

**DOROTHY:** Just down the road. Robbie and Harry and me were playing hopscotch with some other kids from school.

**SARAH:** Don't spend so much time in the sun, darling. It's not good for you. How are you feeling?

**DOROTHY:** Fine, Mama. Just thirsty.

**SARAH:** *(To MAUD:)* She doesn't do so well in the heat. Or the cold for that matter... *(She pours DOROTHY a glass of water from a pitcher on the counter.)* Here, now drink this and stay inside for a spell.

**DOROTHY:** Yes, Mama. *(She takes a drink and crosses to her uncle.)* What are you doing, Uncle Frank?

**THOMAS:** Yeah, you're sitting on your hide while we do all the heavy lifting.

**FRANK:** I'm creating an advertisement for the store.

**DOROTHY:** Can we hear it?

**FRANK:** *(Standing, ready to perform:)* Come one, come all, to Baum's Amazing Bazaar! Come peruse, ponder, and purchase to your heart's content! We have household goods and luxuries for adults and children alike! Our store carries crystal table lamps, marble vases, tea sets from the Orient, foot warmers, knife rests, gilded mirrors, golden toothpicks, cloth flowers, high-quality cigars, Chinese paper fans, toy trains, porcelain dolls, unicycles, bicycles, tricycles, and more! Experience the lavish amenities of New York City right here in Aberdeen! Run, don't walk, to Baum's Bazaar today!

**DOROTHY:** Wow!

**THOMAS:** I'm sold.

**SARAH:** You're a wizard with words, Frank.

**MAUD:** That's what I keep telling him.

**FRANK:** It's nothing, just an advertisement.

**MAUD:** You should hear the wonderful fairy stories he tells the boys.

**DOROTHY:** You tell stories, Uncle Frank? How come you've never told me any?

**FRANK:** I haven't? How remiss of me. I will correct the error of my ways as soon as we're home tonight, I promise.

**DOROTHY:** Oh, okay... *(She smiles mischievously.)* Or...you could tell me a story right now!

**SARAH:** Dorothy, don't pester your uncle.

**DOROTHY:** I'm not pestering, am I, Uncle Frank?

**FRANK:** *(Laughing:)* Of course not! You know what, I could use a break... *(He stands and stretches.)* Go get your cousins and your friends.

**DOROTHY:** *(Excitedly running to the door and calling out:)* Harry! Robbie! Get everyone! Uncle Frank is going to tell us a story!

**FRANK:** *(Following DOROTHY to the door:)* Come inside, children.

*(HARRY, ROBBIE, and their friends enter.)*

**FRANK:** Dorothy here has reminded me it's been some time since I talked about the magic land.

*(The CHILDREN sit on crates and barrels, eager for a story. Even the adults listen in—especially LENNY.)*

**HARRY:** Those stories are the best!

**FRANK:** Once upon a time, there was a little boy who flew on a cyclone to a magic land, far beyond our world.

*(The projections change from a general store to the magic fairyland.)*

**FRANK:** He set out on an adventure following a golden paved road through the land. The boy encountered all sorts of creatures that lived here.

**ROBBIE:** *(To his friends:)* There were wicked witches.

**HARRY:** And good witches.

**CHILD 1:** Witches can be good?

**FRANK:** In the magic land they can.

**CHILD 2:** What's the name of the magic land, Mr. Baum?

**FRANK:** The name?

**CHILD 3:** Yeah, it can't just be called "the magic land"...

**FRANK:** Oh, yes... Of course it has a name... Um... *(FRANK gets up and starts to look around, he whispers quietly to himself:)* The land of crystal... *(He shrugs:)* Not bad, but I can do better. Crates...barrels...hobby horses... No. The land of...uh...lamp?

**CHILD 3:** Mr. Baum?

**FRANK:** I'm thinking, children...trying to remember... *(He crosses to the filing cabinet, still whispering to himself:)* Come on, Frank... The land of filing cabinet... A through N... O through Z... O. Z. Oz... *(He turns back to the CHILDREN and speaks louder.)* Oz! The Land of Oz!

**CHILD 1:** Oz!

**CHILD 2:** The Land of Oz!

*(The projection changes to word "Oz," large and glittering.)*

**MAUD:** Oz... Oh Frank, that's wonderful!

**DOROTHY:** Tell us more, Uncle Frank!

**CHILD 3:** Yeah, did the little boy ever meet the witches?

**HARRY:** What about the talking animals?

**CHILD 1:** Is the road really made of gold?



*(The CHILDREN erupt into a cacophony of questions about Oz, each child talking over the other. FRANK just looks at all the CHILDREN with a bright smile, reveling in the chaos. After a moment, lights go down center stage and up stage left on MRS. BAUM and PEGGY.)*

**MRS. BAUM:** Thanks to an old filing cabinet, the Land of Oz was born. No longer would it simply be a nameless magic land. Now it had a name: Oz. I was more certain than ever that Frank was destined to be more than a shop owner. A creative mind like that couldn't go to waste...

*(She looks pointedly at PEGGY...)*

**PEGGY:** Why are you looking at me like that?

**MRS. BAUM:** Oh, no reason...

**PEGGY:** Did Mr. Baum start writing the Oz books then?

**MRS. BAUM:** No. Not yet, anyway. The new store kept him far too busy. The opening day of Baum's Bazaar brought the whole town to Main Street. Frank even hired a band to play outside the store as people came to see the wonders he had put on display...

*(Lights down stage left. A musical fanfare is heard as lights come up on the now completed and opened Baum's Bazaar. The projection is once again a general store. Several TOWNSPEOPLE are perusing the aisles. MAUD, SARAH, THOMAS, LENNY, and FRANK help potential customers.)*

**THOMAS:** *(Calling out to the shoppers:)* Japanese woven baskets! The finest you can get this side of the ocean!

**MAUD:** *(Also trying to get some customers' attention:)* We've got manicure sets for the ladies and candies for the kids!

*(ROBBIE sneaks by and tries to steal some candy. MAUD swats at him.)*

**MAUD:** Robbie, put that back!

*(He takes his stolen treat and runs to where the other CHILDREN are admiring the toys.)*

**TOWNSPERSON 3:** *(Picking up a flower:)* Look at these, dear! Cloth flowers! Aren't they lovely?

**TOWNSPERSON 5:** We got real flowers in the backyard at home...

*(He takes the flower, puts it back, and guides her to another part of the store.)*

**TOWNSPERSON 1:** *(Browsing the aisle and spotting the toothpicks:)* Why would someone need a golden toothpick?

**LENNY:** I dunno, to pick a gold tooth?

**TOWNSPERSON 1:** You're not the sharpest tool in the shed, are you, son?

**BERNICE:** *(Touching the sleeve of a robe:)* Would you look at that! It's silk!

**BERT:** It's expensive...

**SARAH:** Well of course it is, it comes all the way from India. These robes are all the rage in New York...

*(People keep milling around, looking at all the finery. Customers enter and exit. After a while, THOMAS crosses to talk to FRANK at the counter.)*

**THOMAS:** No one seems to be buying anything, Frank. They're all just looking...



**FRANK:** They'll buy soon, they're just...overwhelmed. They've never seen most of the amazing wares we sell. Their eyes can't take it all in. But they'll buy... Mark my words, they'll buy... Give it time.

**THOMAS:** We don't have a lot of time. The bank's breathing down our necks.

**TOWNSPERSON 2:** I'll take this silver candlestick, please.

**FRANK:** See! Our first sale! *(He takes the candlestick and punches some numbers into the register.)* That will be five dollars, please.

**TOWNSPERSON 2:** No, it's five cents.

**FRANK:** Ma'am, this is real silver. It's a bargain at five dollars.

**TOWNSPERSON 2:** That young man told me it was five cents. I'm not spending a penny more!

**FRANK:** Oh, yes... Well... The customer is always right, of course. Um Thomas, will you please continue ringing up this fine lady?

**THOMAS:** Five cents, Frank?

**FRANK:** I'll handle it. *(He crosses to LENNY.)* Lenny, a word?

**LENNY:** Sure thing, Mr. Baum!

*(FRANK guides him to the candlesticks.)*

**FRANK:** You told one of our customers that this candlestick cost five cents.

**LENNY:** Sure did! No need to thank me. Helping customers is part of my job. She's the "public."

*(He gives FRANK a knowing wink.)*

**FRANK:** Lenny, this isn't five cents.

**LENNY:** It is, sir. *(He points to the sign.)* Look, it says "five" right there!

**FRANK:** That's a dollar sign. It means it's five dollars. Not five cents.

**LENNY:** Are you sure?

**FRANK:** Positive.

**LENNY:** Aww dang it, Mr. Baum... I saws the five and, well, I guess I just assumed...

**FRANK:** You need to learn the simple difference between dollars and cents, Lenny. We can't afford to sell products below cost.

**LENNY:** I won't do it again, Mr. Baum. I promise!

**FRANK:** It's fine, Lenny. Why don't you go check on the band. See if they need any refreshments.

*(LENNY nods and leaves the store. FRANK shakes his head.)*

*(Lights down center stage and up stage left on MRS. BAUM.)*

**MRS. BAUM:** Frank was right, the store did succeed, but only for as long as the town was prosperous. Aberdeen could really have been one of the great cities in America, but everything changed just a few months later. A devastating drought hit the Dakota Territory hard. Crops were dying and farms were failing. People could barely afford food, let alone luxuries. Every business in Aberdeen was affected, and Baum's Bazaar was no exception.

*(Lights come up on a much emptier store. LENNY stands behind the counter while FRANK rearranges items on the shelves. Finally, a doorbell jingles as THOMAS enters stage right. FRANK turns around with a big smile, assuming he's about to welcome customers.)*

**FRANK:** Welcome to Baum's...! Oh. It's you.

**THOMAS:** Well, hello to you too.

**FRANK:** I didn't mean it like that. I was just hoping you'd be a customer.

**THOMAS:** How many have we had today?

**FRANK:** One...

**THOMAS:** One?! That's it? Frank, it's almost noon!

**FRANK:** I know, I know...

*(The doorbell jingles again.)*

**THOMAS:** It's Dorothy. Don't get all excited again.

*(DOROTHY enters, clutching Toto.)*

**FRANK:** Of course I'm excited! It's my favorite niece!

**DOROTHY:** I'm your only niece, Uncle Frank.

**FRANK:** All the more reason you're my favorite.

*(DOROTHY giggles.)*

**FRANK:** But what are you doing out of bed? I thought you had a cold?

**DOROTHY:** I'm feeling much better.

**THOMAS:** *(Putting his arm around his daughter:)* Her fever seems to have broken, and she begged me to bring her today. She said she had something important to do.

**FRANK:** And what might that be?

*(DOROTHY enacts zipping her lips, locking them, and throwing away the key.)*

**THOMAS:** She wouldn't tell me either.

**FRANK:** *(Smiling at DOROTHY:)* Very mysterious...

**LENNY:** *(Crossing to the group:)* Morning, Mr. Gage. Morning, Miss Dorothy.

**DOROTHY:** Hi, Lenny!

**THOMAS:** How's the back looking, Lenny?

**LENNY:** A bit of a mess, I must say...

**THOMAS:** *(Sighing:)* That's what I thought. *(He turns to DOROTHY:)* Why don't you go on and play with the toys while I sweep up the back room, darlin'. Someone should get some use out of 'em before we go belly up...

*(DOROTHY nods and THOMAS exits stage left.)*

**DOROTHY:** You think Papa's right, Uncle Frank? Will the store close?

**FRANK:** 'Course not. Everything is gonna work out just fine. *(He goes to the candies and hands her a sweet.)* Here.

**DOROTHY:** I'm not supposed have sweets before supper.

**FRANK:** I won't tell if you won't.

*(She smiles and accepts the candy. After a moment, she begins coughing.)*

**FRANK:** That doesn't sound good. You sure you're feeling better?

**DOROTHY:** Mama and Papa are always worrying about me. It's just a cold.

**FRANK:** You do seem to get a lot of them.

**DOROTHY:** I'm fine, Uncle Frank. Honest.

**FRANK:** Well, you make sure to take care of yourself, all right?

**DOROTHY:** I will... Hey, Uncle Frank? Can Toto have a sweet too?

*(FRANK laughs and hands her another sweet. A moment later, THOMAS sticks his head out from the back.)*

**THOMAS:** Hey Frank, where did you put the broom?

**FRANK:** In the corner, where it always is.

**THOMAS:** I don't see it.

**FRANK:** *(Sighing:)* I'll show you. *(To DOROTHY:)* You go on and play.

*(He and THOMAS exit stage left.)*

*(DOROTHY goes to the corner of the store and begins to play quietly by herself. A moment later the doorbell jingles and MRS. BOLGER enters stage right.)*

**LENNY:** How do, Mrs. Bolger!

**MRS. BOLGER:** Just fine, Lenny, just fine. And yourself?

**LENNY:** Happy as a clam, Mrs. Bolger.

*(FRANK enters from the back room.)*

**FRANK:** I thought I heard the doorbell... Ah, Mrs. Bolger! Fine day, isn't it?

**MRS. BOLGER:** Indeed, Mr. Baum.

**FRANK:** Did you ask Mrs. Bolger if there was anything you could help her find, Lenny?

**LENNY:** Oh... I plum forgot. Again.

**MRS. BOLGER:** No harm done. I am looking for some stove polish, though. I just ran out.

**FRANK:** Well, you're in luck! We should have had a crate full delivered yesterday. If you would follow me to aisle two. Oh.

*(They get there, and the shelf is empty. FRANK calls out:)*

Hey, Lenny? Did you unload all the crates yesterday?

**LENNY:** *(Yelling back:)* Sure did, Mr. Baum!

**FRANK:** That makes no sense... Let me look into this for you, Mrs. Bolger. In the meantime, can I interest you in our new line of porcelain China?

**MRS. BOLGER:** If I spent that much on dishes, Ray would eat his hat.

**FRANK:** We just got some new silks. Stunning patterns. All the rage in New York City.

**MRS. BOLGER:** I have plenty of dresses.

**FRANK:** Perhaps a tin of the finest tea from India?

**MRS. BOLGER:** I just need the stove polish, Mr. Baum.

**FRANK:** Right. Just a moment. *(He goes back to the counter.)* Lenny, where are all the cans of stove polish? The shelf is empty.

**LENNY:** I sure don't understand it, Mr. Baum. I know I placed an order for more stove polish, I just know it.

**FRANK:** Are you sure? Check the orders.

**LENNY:** *(Beginning to look through the paperwork on the counter:)* I remember it clearly, Mr. Baum. On Tuesday last you says to me, you says, "Lenny, I need you to order twenty-four more cans of stove polish 'cause they is flying off the shelves. But only get two more cans of the hair grease 'cause theys isn't selling as well." And then I says, "Will do, Mr. Baum!" Then I remember you told me three more times 'cause you were worryin' I'd mess it up.

**FRANK:** It seems I was right.

**LENNY:** But I didn't mess it up this time, Mr. Baum! Not this time! I swears it! I try to concentrate real hard when you says something to me, 'cause I respect you an awful lot.

**FRANK:** I appreciate that, Lenny.

**LENNY:** Look! Here it is, Mr. Baum! A copy of the order form I filled out! It says right here, twenty-four more cans of hair grease and just two cans of stove polish... Oh... Oh, no. I reckon I did mess it up after all. Aww, shucks!

*(THOMAS enters and quietly observes the scene from the back door stage left, crossing his arms and shaking his head. MRS. BOLGER has made her way to the counter.)*

**MRS. BOLGER:** So, that's a no on the stove polish?

**FRANK:** I'm afraid so, Mrs. Bolger.

**MRS. BOLGER:** I'll just have to see if Hatfield Grocer has any in stock. Good day.

**FRANK:** Good day to you, Mrs. Bolger.

*(She exits stage right and FRANK puts his head in his hands.)*

**FRANK:** There goes another sale. It's like watching money walk right out the door.

**LENNY:** I'm awful sorry, Mr. Baum. Please don't fire me! I love working at this here general store. I don't know what I would do without this job. I promise to try harder, I do.

*(DOROTHY wanders closer to the counter.)*

**FRANK:** I never said I was going to fire you, Lenny.

**LENNY:** I don't know what's wrong with me. It's like my head is full or straw or somethin'.

**DOROTHY:** Like a scarecrow.

**LENNY:** Maybe you should just put me out in a cornfield. Though I probably wouldn't even scare the crows. I can't do nothing right...

**FRANK:** Don't say that.

**LENNY:** *(Frowning, feeling sorry for himself:)* It's no use, Mr. Baum. Can I... Can I take my break now?

**FRANK:** Sure.

*(LENNY sadly exits.)*

**FRANK:** Poor Lenny... What am I gonna do with him?

**THOMAS:** What you can do is fire him.

**DOROTHY:** Don't say that, Papa!

**FRANK:** I like Lenny; he's a good kid.

**THOMAS:** But dumb as a stump.

**FRANK:** Have a heart, Thomas.

**THOMAS:** What I have is common sense. Common sense says this store won't last another month unless you make some changes. Starting with Lenny. He's costing us money we can't afford to lose.

**FRANK:** Things will pick up as soon as this blasted drought is over.

**THOMAS:** Sarah also tells me you're letting people buy things on credit.

**FRANK:** How can I turn people down when we're one of the only stores left in town? People need things, Thomas.

**THOMAS:** We need money. You and I put everything we had into Baum's Bazaar.

**FRANK:** They'll pay us back when the rains come.

**THOMAS:** Your big heart is gonna lead to this store going under.

**FRANK:** And your lack of a heart makes you no better than a tin can.

**DOROTHY:** You don't have a heart, Papa?

**THOMAS:** 'Course I do, darlin', but it's only for you and your Mama.

**FRANK:** Give Lenny another chance, please.

**DOROTHY:** Please? I like Lenny.

*(THOMAS looks back and forth between his brother-in-law and daughter. Finally he sighs and touches DOROTHY on the shoulder.)*

**THOMAS:** Fine. But one more. Just one!

*(He exits to the back room again, broom in hand.)*

**DOROTHY:** I feel bad for Lenny, Uncle Frank.

**FRANK:** Me too. I don't understand how a man can be so sweet but so incredibly simple.

**DOROTHY:** Maybe his head really is full of straw...like... Like a talking scarecrow!

**FRANK:** *(Laughing heartily:)* A talking scarecrow... What a sight that would be! *(He thinks.)* You know where a talking scarecrow might feel right at home?

**DOROTHY:** *(Gasping with delight, knowing a story is coming:)* Oz!

**FRANK:** *(Nodding:)* The magic Land of Oz...

*(LENNY enters as the Scarecrow, along with a FARMER. They act out what FRANK describes. The projection changes from a general store to a vast cornfield. Parts of an old fence with cornstalks are put on stage to create the scene.)*

**FRANK:** One day, in Oz, a farmer decided to make a scarecrow to help keep the crows away from his crops. The farmer made the scarecrow's head, and first painted on his ears. Suddenly the scarecrow could hear the breeze blowing past his head, the crows cawing out in the field, and the little farmer humming to himself while he worked. The farmer then painted the scarecrow's eyes. The scarecrow found himself looking all around with a great deal of curiosity. After all, this was his first glimpse of the world. Finally, the farmer painted a mouth, but the scarecrow did not speak. He didn't know what a mouth was for. The farmer stuffed the scarecrow's head with straw, but forgot to give him a brain.

The farmer then put the scarecrow on a pole in his cornfield and left, satisfied with his work.  
*(The FARMER exits.)*

It was a lonely life to lead, for his empty head had nothing to think of. And he found that without brains, he was no good at scaring away the crows.

**DOROTHY:** Poor Scarecrow...

**LENNY:** If I only had brains in my head, Brains are the only things worth having in this world. I don't want people to call me a fool. And if my head stays stuffed with straw instead of with brains, how will I ever know anything at all?

**DOROTHY:** Will he ever get any brains?

**FRANK:** Possibly. You never know what can happen in Oz! Maybe the little boy from Kansas could...

**DOROTHY:** Wait, Uncle Frank. I need to talk to you about something.

*(LENNY exits. The fence is removed and the projections turn back to the general store.)*

**FRANK:** This sounds serious.

**DOROTHY:** I think... I think your story is missing something...

**FRANK:** What would that be.

**DOROTHY:** A girl! Every story I read is about adventures some dumb boy goes on, like *Treasure Island* or *Peter Pan*. It's always a boy hero... But not *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*! That book has a heroine! A girl! Have you read it?

**FRANK:** I have...

**DOROTHY:** Of course you have. You read more than any grown-up I know. Did you like it?

**FRANK:** I loved it, in fact.

**DOROTHY:** Me too! I think it's the best book ever! So that got me thinking... You should send a little girl to Oz, Uncle Frank. Your story needs an Alice.

**FRANK:** *(Laughing:)* I will take that into consideration.

*(The doorbell jingles as MAUD enters stage right, carrying a wrapped package.)*

**FRANK:** Maud! I didn't know you were coming by today.

**DOROTHY:** Auntie Maud! You're finally here!

**FRANK:** Finally?

**MAUD:** Sorry I'm late.

**DOROTHY:** I kept it a secret all day, Auntie Maud!

**FRANK:** What secret? Wait, is this the “very important thing”?

*(DOROTHY smiles and nods.)*

**FRANK:** So, you two are in cahoots?

**DOROTHY:** We got you a present!

**FRANK:** You did?

**MAUD:** We did. Here, Dorothy.

*(She hands DOROTHY the package. DOROTHY excitedly gives it to FRANK.)*

**FRANK:** It’s not my birthday...

**MAUD:** This is something special. Something that couldn’t wait until your birthday.

**DOROTHY:** Open it, open it!

**FRANK:** *(Unwrapping the package:)* What a fine-looking journal! Thank you, ladies.

**DOROTHY:** It’s not just a journal, Uncle Frank. It’s for Oz!

**FRANK:** Oz?

**MAUD:** It’s about time you wrote down the story of Oz, Frank. You’ve been telling bits of it for years now.

**DOROTHY:** You can add the new story about the scarecrow! And the little GIRL from Kansas.

**MAUD:** It’s a girl now, is it?

**DOROTHY:** Well, not yet, but soon I hope...

**FRANK:** Ladies, I’m no writer.

**MAUD:** Of course you are, Frank. I knew it the moment I met you.

**DOROTHY:** You tell the best stories, Uncle Frank!

**FRANK:** Maud, can I see you over here for a moment?

*(He takes her toward the counter, away from DOROTHY. They begin arguing in whispers.)*

**MAUD:** What’s the problem?

**FRANK:** You know very well what the problem is. This. *(He holds up the journal.)*

**MAUD:** You love telling stories, Frank. It’s what you’re meant to do, I know it. You’re never happier than when you’re...

**FRANK:** Maud, I don’t have time for this. I have a store to run.

**MAUD:** Do you? Look around, Frank... It’s only a matter of time before we close. We can all see it. Why can’t you?

**FRANK:** I guess I just have a little more faith than the rest of you.

**MAUD:** It’s not about faith. It’s this drought. Most stores in town have already gone under.

**FRANK:** None of you understand. Once the rains come...

**MAUD:** What if the rains never come, Frank. What then? Wouldn’t you rather be doing something you love? You’re meant for more than this...

*(The doorbell jingles and TOWNSPERSON 5 enters.)*



**FRANK:** If you'll excuse me, I need to work. At my actual job.

*(He goes toward the customer when DOROTHY steps in his way.)*

**DOROTHY:** Are you gonna write down the story, Uncle Frank?

**FRANK:** I... I'll think about it.

*(FRANK walks to the back of the store to help TOWNSPERSON 5. DOROTHY and MAUD stand together downstage.)*

**DOROTHY:** Whenever a grown-up says, "I'll think about it," it usually means no.

**MAUD:** Give it time. Uncle Frank will come around.

**DOROTHY:** You think so?

**MAUD:** I do.

*(DOROTHY coughs.)*

**MAUD:** Goodness.

*(She hands DOROTHY a handkerchief. And then touches her forehead as THOMAS enters.)*

**THOMAS:** Is she all right?

**MAUD:** She feels warm again.

**THOMAS:** *(Taking DOROTHY's hand:)* Come on, honey. Let's get you home.

*(Lights go down on the store and up on MRS. BAUM and PEGGY stage left.)*

**MRS. BAUM:** In the end, the demise of Frank's store was inevitable. Baum's Bazaar held out as long as it could, but Northwestern National Bank closed on the store in January. The first Prairie Boom was over. Frank and I discussed moving back east. Thomas and Sarah even considered joining us, but Dorothy's cold was getting worse. She had always been a sickly child, but this time...this time seemed different.

**PEGGY:** No...not little Dorothy.

**MRS. BAUM:** Frank refused to leave Aberdeen while Dorothy was so ill. He heard the owner of the Aberdeen newspaper decided to retire. So, with the very last of our funds, Frank bought the Aberdeen *Saturday Pioneer* so we could try to make ends meet. The people of the Dakota Territory may have been poor, but they still wanted to be informed.

**PEGGY:** A newspaper! Does that mean he was finally writing?

**MRS. BAUM:** I was hopeful, but no. I soon realized newspapers required reporting, not creative writing. There are no witches in the weather reports.

*(Lights down.)*

### Scene 3

*(A newspaper office in Aberdeen, 1893.)*

*(Lights up stage right. FRANK and LENNY are seen working at desks, several newspapers surrounding them. FRANK keeps glancing at the clock. The projection shows a newspaper office.)*



**LENNY:** The boys and I were done our routes by nine this morning, Mr. Baum. It was our fastest time ever!

**FRANK:** That's great, Lenny.

**LENNY:** You know, Mr. Baum, I think I finally found something I's good at.

**FRANK:** Good, good...

**LENNY:** You keep looking at the clock. You all right?

**FRANK:** Just eager to get home.

**LENNY:** Dorothy still doing poorly?

**FRANK:** We've had so many doctors come to see her, but she...she just...

*(FRANK puts his head in his hands.)*

**LENNY:** Gosh, I'm awful sorry, Mr. Baum. Why don't you go on home? I can close up.

*(A bell rings as though a shop door opened. BERNICE and BERT enter.)*

**BERNICE:** Yoo-hoo, anyone here?

**BERT:** Look alive, boys! I got some news for the newspaper!

**LENNY:** Sorry, folks. Now's not a good time.

**FRANK:** No, no, it's fine, Lenny. *(FRANK wipes his eyes quickly.)* What can I help you with, Mr....?

**BERT:** Bruno, Bert Bruno.

**FRANK:** *(Writing:)* Bert...Bruno... I'm Mr. Baum, the owner of Aberdeen's *Saturday Pioneer*. What can I do for you, Mr. Bruno?

**BERT:** Well, me and my sweetheart Bernice here is getting hitched Friday next, and the whole town's invited. It's gonna be Aberdeen's biggest party of the season, Mr. Baum, and I think the newspaper should be reportin' on it.

**FRANK:** Of course, of course. I'll report on it myself.

**BERT:** Would you look at that, Bernice. The owner of the paper himself will be reportin' on our nuptials. I told you, nothing's too good for my girl.

**BERNICE:** Oh, Bert!

**BERT:** We'll see you then, Mr. Baum. Old Bethlehem Church, two o'clock.

**FRANK:** I'll be there.

*(FRANK waves as BERT and BERNICE exit. LENNY whistles.)*

**LENNY:** That there is one uuugly woman.

**FRANK:** *(Chiding LENNY:)* Lenny...come on now. All brides are beautiful.

**LENNY:** Clearly some more than others... *(He shakes his head.)* And what are you doin' sayin' you'll report on their wedding? Don't you want to be with your niece?

**FRANK:** All the other reporters are on assignment that day, Lenny. This is what a good boss does. I gotta cover things when others can't.

*(HARRY and ROBBIE run into the scene.)*

**HARRY:** Papa! Mama says you gotta come quick!

**FRANK:** *(Standing, worried:)* What is it?

**ROBBIE:** It's Dorothy...

*(Lights down.)*

#### **Scene 4**

*(A small farmhouse in Aberdeen, 1893.)*

*(Lights up stage right. The stage is split in half. Stage right is the porch, stage left is DOROTHY's bedroom. Just the porch is lit at the moment. The projection shows a small farmhouse. THOMAS is leaning on a porch railing, holding a little stuffed dog. The door to the house opens. The DOCTOR steps out as THOMAS quickly wipes his eyes.)*

**DOCTOR:** Mr. Gage?

*(THOMAS turns around to the DOCTOR.)*

**DOCTOR:** I'm sorry, Mr. Gage. There's nothing else I can do for the child. But I've made her as comfortable as possible.

*(THOMAS shakes the DOCTOR's hand.)*

**THOMAS:** Yeah, thanks, doc.

*(The DOCTOR nods sadly. He puts on his hat and exits. THOMAS puts his hands on the porch railing, puts his head in his hands, and begins to cry softly. He hugs the little stuffed dog to his chest. Then, he angrily kicks over a potted plant, his shoulders moving up and down as he breathes heavily, full of anger. After a moment, FRANK comes outside from the front door.)*

**FRANK:** You all right, Thomas?

**THOMAS:** What do you think?

**FRANK:** Right... *(FRANK looks down and put his hands in his pocket.)* What happened to the plant?

**THOMAS:** Nothing. Just leave me alone.

**FRANK:** I would, except...well...she's asking for you.

**THOMAS:** *(He looks at FRANK, his eyes full of heartbreak. He says softly...)* I can't.

**FRANK:** What?

**THOMAS:** I can't go in there.

**FRANK:** You have to, Thomas. She needs you.

**THOMAS:** Just go back into the house, Frank.

**FRANK:** Not without you.

**THOMAS:** Damn it Frank, I'm serious! Get out of here!

**FRANK:** Look, I understand this is hard, but you...

**THOMAS:** Oh, you understand this is hard? Have you ever lost a child, Frank?

**FRANK:** You know I haven't.

**THOMAS:** Then don't presume to know what I'm going through!

**FRANK:** I love her too...

**THOMAS:** But you're not her father!

**FRANK:** That's right, I'm not. You are. And right now she needs her father to hold her hand and tell her everything is going to be okay.

**THOMAS:** Dorothy is going to fall asleep any moment now, and she's NEVER going to wake up. How am I supposed to go in there and tell my little girl that everything's okay, when nothing will ever be okay again?!

**FRANK:** I realize this is breaking your heart, but...

**THOMAS:** I have no heart.

**FRANK:** You have a big heart. You love your family more than anything.

**THOMAS:** I have no heart. Dorothy is taking it with her... My chest is empty.

**FRANK:** *(Putting a hand on THOMAS's shoulder and looking at him sadly:)* Thomas...

*(MAUD comes out onto the porch. She has clearly been crying.)*

**MAUD:** What is taking so long?

*(THOMAS turns away. FRANK goes to MAUD and speaks softly.)*

**FRANK:** Give us a minute, Maud.

**MAUD:** Is he coming?

**FRANK:** I... I don't know.

**MAUD:** It won't be long now. Thomas will never forgive himself if he isn't...

**FRANK:** I know, I know. Just go back to Sarah and Dorothy. I'll be there in a minute.

*(MAUD casts a worried glance at THOMAS and then goes back inside.)*

**FRANK:** Maud says it won't be long. I'm going in there. Are you coming?

*(THOMAS begins to panic, knowing what's about to happen. He grips FRANK's upper arms and shakes him slightly.)*

**THOMAS:** I can't do it, Frank. I can't. Listen to me!

*(In turn, FRANK grips THOMAS's arms. He tries to comfort his brother-in-law.)*

**FRANK:** Okay, okay. It's all right.

**THOMAS:** *(Turning away, distraught:)* Nothing is all right. I can't watch my daughter die! Please don't make me.

**FRANK:** I won't. I won't.

*(He hugs THOMAS tightly. After a moment, THOMAS breaks the embrace and looks at FRANK.)*

**THOMAS:** You have to be with her for me... Hold her hand for me... Please, Frank. Do what I can't.

**FRANK:** I will.

**THOMAS:** Here. *(He holds out the dog.)* Make sure she has Toto. She...she can't sleep without Toto.

*(FRANK nods sadly. He takes the stuffed dog and begins to exit. THOMAS falls to his knees and lowers his head in grief.)*

*(Lights go down stage right and come up stage left onto DOROTHY's bedroom. DOROTHY lies on a little bed in the center of the room. She is pale. Every now and then she coughs into a handkerchief. SARAH sits on a chair at her left bedside. An empty chair sits to her right. MAUD stands next to her sister's chair. DOROTHY starts to cough.)*

**SARAH:** *(Grabbing a glass of water off the bedside table as DOROTHY coughs:)* Here, darling. Take a drink of water.

**DOROTHY:** But it hurts my throat.

**SARAH:** The doctor said it will make you feel better.

*(DOROTHY takes a few difficult sips.)*

**SARAH:** There... That's my girl.

*(She wipes the sweat off DOROTHY's brow and kisses her forehead.)*

**DOROTHY:** Where's Papa?

**SARAH:** He'll be here any minute now. Don't you worry.

*(FRANK enters sadly. He carries the stuffed dog. He goes to sit in the other chair.)*

**SARAH:** No, I'm saving that seat for Thomas.

*(FRANK gives SARAH a meaningful look and then sits in the chair. SARAH turns away and puts her hand over her mouth to control a sob, understanding now that THOMAS isn't coming. MAUD holds her.)*

**MAUD:** It'll be all right, Sarah.

**DOROTHY:** Is Papa coming, Uncle Frank?

**FRANK:** He... He... *(He looks in the little girl's eyes and can't bring himself to tell her.)* He wanted me to give this to you.

*(He hands her the stuffed dog.)*

**DOROTHY:** Toto! Look, Mama! I thought I lost him.

**SARAH:** *(Smiling through her tears:)* Well, here he is. Back where he belongs.

*(DOROTHY goes into another coughing fit. SARAH gives her another drink of water and dabs her forehead with a cloth.)*

**DOROTHY:** *(Struggling, in pain:)* It hurts. Where's Papa?

*(SARAH, MAUD, and FRANK look at one another. FRANK then turns to DOROTHY, determined to distract her.)*

**FRANK:** Hey, Dorothy, what if I told you a story? Would that help?

**DOROTHY:** About Oz?

**FRANK:** Yes!

**DOROTHY:** *(Smiling weakly:)* Those are my favorite stories.

**FRANK:** Good. Because I have a secret to tell you.

**DOROTHY:** You do?

**FRANK:** You were right all along. There's actually a little girl who once went to Oz.

**DOROTHY:** *(Gasping in delight:)* I knew it!

**FRANK:** Yes, and her name was Dorothy.

**DOROTHY:** Like me!

**FRANK:** And she lived with her aunt and her uncle in the prairies of Kansas.

*(DOROTHY smiles at first FRANK and then MAUD and takes both of their hands for a moment.)*

**FRANK:** One day, after a long drought, the rains finally came. But with them came a giant cyclone. The cyclone swept up the little girl and whisked her away to the magic Land of Oz!

**DOROTHY:** *(Holding up her toy:)* And Toto too?

**FRANK:** And Toto too.

**DOROTHY:** Did Dorothy and Toto meet the little people? And the Scarecrow?

**FRANK:** Yes, she made many new friends in Oz. Including a man made of tin.

**DOROTHY:** Tin?

*(THOMAS enters stage right as the Tin Man. As FRANK tells his story, THOMAS acts out chopping trees and then freezing. A large tree is brought on next to THOMAS and the projection shows a cabin in the woods, surrounded by trees.)*

**FRANK:** Yes. He was made entirely of tin. He didn't start that way. He was once a regular man who chopped wood for a living. But he transformed after the Wicked Witch of the West placed a curse on him!

**MAUD:** Nothing scary, Frank.

**DOROTHY:** It's okay, Aunt Maud. I'm brave.

**MAUD:** You're the bravest little girl I know.

**DOROTHY:** *(Turning back to FRANK:)* Keep going! What happened next?

**FRANK:** The cursed man was forced to go to the tinsmith for a cure. The only thing the tinsmith could do was build the man a new body, made entirely of tin.

**DOROTHY:** Every part?

**FRANK:** Every part except one. The tinsmith forgot to give the Tin Man a heart. His chest... *(He turns and looks sadly at THOMAS.)* His chest was empty.

**DOROTHY:** That's sad.

**FRANK:** Yes... Very... *(He turns back to DOROTHY.)* But, other than the missing heart, he didn't mind having a body made of tin. He shone so brightly in the sun that he felt very proud. There was only one danger—that his joints would rust; but he kept an oil can with him at all times just in case. However, there came a day when he was chopping wood in the forest and became caught in a rainstorm. *(The gentle sound of a soft rain is heard.)* He had forgotten his oil can back at his cottage.

**DOROTHY:** Oh no!

**FRANK:** Before he realized the danger, his joints had rusted, and he was left to stand in the woods, frozen forever.

**DOROTHY:** Poor Tin Man. Frozen. And I can't imagine not having a heart.

**FRANK:** Well, sometimes a heart can break so completely, that it feels like it's gone forever.

*(DOROTHY coughs some more and shivers.)*

**DOROTHY:** I'm tired, Mama.

**SARAH:** I know.

**MAUD:** *(Touching DOROTHY's forehead:)* She's burning up.

**DOROTHY:** Uncle Frank, will the Tin Man be okay?

**FRANK:** I... I don't...

**MAUD:** I'm sure he will.

**DOROTHY:** I bet Dorothy will help him.

**FRANK:** I think she's the only one who can.

**DOROTHY:** You have to write it down, Uncle Frank. The Tin Man and the Scarecrow and all of it.

**FRANK:** Don't worry about that now. Just try to rest.

**DOROTHY:** No, it's important. Promise me. Promise me you'll write the story of Oz.

**FRANK:** I...

**MAUD:** Frank...

**FRANK:** I promise, Dorothy.

*(DOROTHY has one more coughing fit. SARAH holds the cup to DOROTHY's mouth.)*

**SARAH:** Here, Dorothy. Drink.

**DOROTHY:** *(Weakly:)* I can't, Mama. Please, no more. I just want to sleep. I'm so tired...

**SARAH:** No, Dorothy, please!

**MAUD:** Sarah, she's in pain. Let her go.

*(SARAH covers her mouth with her hand.)*

**DOROTHY:** *(Weakly:)* I can't keep my eyes open...

**FRANK:** Shh, it's okay. You can sleep, darling. *(He brushes her hair back from her forehead.)*  
Don't be afraid.

**DOROTHY:** I'm not afraid, Uncle Frank. *(She rests her hand on FRANK's cheek.)* I'm going to Oz...

*(Two spotlights shine on both the frozen THOMAS and DOROTHY. DOROTHY closes her eyes. Her hand falls gently to the bed as she passes away. The projection changes to a soft, pastel rainbow or heavenly clouds. SARAH lowers her head onto the bed and cries, gripping DOROTHY's other hand. MAUD begins to cry and embraces SARAH. FRANK brings DOROTHY's fallen hand to his lips and kisses it sadly. All other lights fade except for the two lone spotlights on DOROTHY and THOMAS. The lights shine through the dark for a moment, and then blackout.)*

**End of Act Two.**

# END PREVIEW

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