

THE PRINCESS AND THE PAUPER

a Comedy in Two Acts

by Burton Bumgarner

*adapted from the novel by
Mark Twain*

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STORY OF THE PLAY

In this freely-adapted version of the Mark Twain novel, a young girl visits the White House on a tour with her school and is mistaken by the Secret Service for the mischievous daughter of the President. She is escorted to the family quarters, where she inadvertently meets the real First Daughter. On a lark, they decide to change places for twenty-four hours: the President's daughter goes to a housing project, and the student remains to spend a night in the world's most famous residence. Unfortunately, the President's daughter is not exactly street smart, and she encounters hostile store clerks, burned-out buildings, an insect-infested apartment, and gangs. The student finds out that the President's daughter was scheduled for a interview on national television, and she has to take her place. With a corrupt ambassador stealing White House china, a nervous wreck of a Press Secretary, a First Lady who just wants her daughter to conform, the student has her hands full. Will the lives of these two girls ever return to "normal"?

Dedicated to Guillermo, Misha and Maire Perdomo

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Flexible, approx. 12 m, 8 w, 6 flexible, much doubling possible)

ANGELA: The President's daughter.

ANGIE: Same age as Angela, lives in a public housing project.

PRESIDENT: President of the United States, Angela's father.

FIRST LADY: First Lady of the United States, Angela's mother.

PRESS SECRETARY: Press Secretary to the President; he's a nervous wreck.

MARTHA: A White House maid.

BRUNO: A Secret Service agent.

MRS. PERDOMO: Angie's mother.

DANNY: Angie's younger brother.

BUDDY: Danny's friend, Eddie Haskell type.

AMBASSADOR: Ambassador from El Menudo, corrupt.

TRANSLATOR: Translator for the Ambassador, also corrupt.

SAWYER FINN: Newscaster/journalist, speaks Spanish.

GUIDE: White House guide.

TEACHER: Angie's teacher from school.

CARLO (or CARLOTTA): A Spanish-speaking student.

OTHER STUDENTS: #4 is male.

3 GANG MEMBERS: #1 and #2 are dense, #3 thinks he's intelligent.

FIREMAN

TV CREWMAN

SECRET SERVICE AGENT

CASTING NOTE: *Many roles are flexible. Although the Press Secretary and Translator are written as male roles, and Sawyer Finn and Teacher as female roles, they can easily be changed to suit your casting needs. In addition, the roles of the Guide, Teacher, and Students, can be doubled with that of Gang Members, TV Crewman, Fireman, and Secret Service Agent.*

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TIME: Current day.

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This play may be performed on a bare stage with furniture, or with a set that depicts both the beauty and opulence of the White House and the meagerness and simplicity of an apartment in a public housing building. The contrasts should be strong. The White House setting is written on SR and uses a sofa, end tables, coffee table, and other accessories. This serves as the location for the first family's parlor, a public room that the tour passes through, a parlor in which the Ambassador and his Translator converse, and the Ambassador's hotel room. The apartment setting on SL has a small kitchen table and chairs, which are changed to tattered chairs and a television set during the play.

The two girls could bare some similarities (height, hair style, etc.) but it is not necessary. The characters see who they expect to see. Angie and Danny should appear to be able to speak some Spanish. Carlo (or Carlotta) and Sawyer Finn, the newscaster, should appear to be fluent in Spanish. The Ambassador and his Translator appear to communicate in Spanish without actually speaking it. If pronunciation is needed, and a Spanish teacher is not available, web sites are available which provide pronunciation guidelines. The Spanish is minimal and with practice actors should be able to deliver the lines with confidence and accuracy. The Spanish may be shortened and simplified if necessary.

PROPS

School books, winter coats, scarves, watches, gameboy, romance book, permission slip, paper, pen, guidebook, hand-held mirror, blanket, Pepto-Bismol, spoon, cell phone, cordless phone, Pop Tart, silverware, stack of towels, silk bathrobe, folded towel, microphone.

PROLOGUE

(AT RISE: Friday morning. LIGHTS up SR. UR is an elegant sofa, end tables, and Windsor chairs: a parlor of the White House. On an end table is a hand mirror and a book. If possible, a barrier with velvet hanging ropes and potted plants separate the parlor from the dreary apartment SL where Angie lives. Several presidential portraits may be on an USR wall. In this scene the actors freeze when there is action on the other side of the stage. We hear Angela's VOICE off SR.)

ANGELA: *(Offstage.)* PUT ME DOWN, YOU BIG DUMMY!

(Suddenly, BRUNO enters SR, carrying or dragging ANGELA, the President's daughter. She wears jeans and a T-shirt. The FIRST LADY frantically follows Bruno.)

BRUNO: She was crawling through the kitchen, ma'am.
The White House staff caught her just before she reached the service door.

FIRST LADY: *(Angry and frustrated.)* What is the meaning of this, young lady? You know better than to leave the family quarters without an escort!

ANGELA: I was just going outside! That's all!

FIRST LADY: *(Horried.)* You can't go outside! What's wrong with you?

ANGELA: Nothing's wrong with me! *(Struggling with BRUNO.)* Leave me alone! Put me down, you big dummy! You can't do this to me! I'll have you arrested!

FIRST LADY: Angela, stop it! Put her down, Bruno.

(BRUNO drops ANGELA onto the sofa. She sits with her arms crossed, and mopes. Bruno rubs his arms, bruised in the struggle. ALL SR freeze. LIGHTS up SL. There is a kitchen table, two chairs, and a stack of school books. ANGIE PERDOMO enters reading a book. She wears jeans and a T-shirt. She sits at the table.)

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(MRS. PERDOMO and DANNY enter, wearing winter coats and scarves. They stand behind Angie who doesn't look up.)

MRS. PERDOMO: Angie! What are you doing?

ANGIE: *(Not looking up.)* Reading a book.

MRS. PERDOMO: You're not ready for school! Where is your jacket and scarf?

ANGIE: *(Not looking up.)* In my room.

FIRST LADY: *(To ANGELA.)* You're not even dressed yet!

ANGELA: *(Looking at HER clothes.)* That's funny. I could have sworn I was wearing clothes a few minutes ago.

DANNY: *(Sarcastically to MRS. PERDOMO.)* She's probably reading one of those stupid romance stories! *(Falsetto voice.)* Oh, I'm so in love! Kiss me, darling! *(Wraps HIS arms around himself and makes kissing noses.)*

ANGIE: Leave me alone!

MRS. PERDOMO: *(To ANGIE.)* We don't have time for this! I have to catch the subway for work and you two have to be at the bus stop in *(Looks at HER watch.)* five minutes!

FIRST LADY: *(Frantic.)* We are to greet that ambassador! He'll be here at ten o'clock! And then you're to go to school!

ANGELA: There's no school today. It's some kind of teacher work day. *(To BRUNO.)* Give me my gameboy, you big dummy!

(BRUNO hands HER a gameboy from inside his coat pocket. Angela starts playing a game.)

MRS. PERDOMO: Have you two had any breakfast?

DANNY: Sure.

MRS. PERDOMO: *(Doubtful.)* What?

DANNY: Pop tarts! The breakfast of champions! *(Makes an arm muscle.)*

MRS. PERDOMO: Angie? How about you?

ANGIE: I'll go through the breakfast line at school.

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DANNY: *(With disdain.)* FREE breakfast!

ANGIE: It's better than being hungry.

MRS. PERDOMO: Hurry up so I can walk with you to the bus stop.

DANNY: *(Sarcastic.)* Are you afraid something will get us?

MRS. PERDOMO: In this neighborhood, I certainly am.

FIRST LADY: You can't walk around here dressed like that! I'll have Martha lay out a skirt and blouse. You are to change clothes and meet me downstairs!

ANGELA: *(Abusing the gameboy.)* Stupid game! Come on!

MRS. PERDOMO: Hurry up, Angie!

ANGIE: Okay. *(ANGIE returns to her book.)*

FIRST LADY/MRS. PERDOMO: Did you hear me?

ANGELA/ANGIE: What?

FIRST LADY: *(Grabs the gameboy.)* Why do you waste you time with this junk?

MRS. PERDOMO: *(Takes the book.)* What's so interesting?

ANGELA: It's not junk!

(FIRST LADY tosses the gameboy to the sofa. ANGELA picks it up and continues playing.)

MRS. PERDOMO: Harlequin Romance?

DANNY: Angie's dreaming about love again! *(Spanish.)* Angie aprecia el amor, romance, y besar! [Angie likes all that love, romance, kissing!]

ANGIE: Cállate, imbécil! [Shut up, moron!] *(Forcefully.)* It takes my mind off this place! All right?

(MRS. PERDOMO hands the book back to ANGIE.)

DANNY: *(Rolling HIS eyes.)* Like anything could make you forget it!

FIRST LADY: Five minutes, young lady! Or I'll have Martha dress you while the Secret Service holds you down!

(FIRST LADY and BRUNO exit.)

End of Freeview

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