

# **BLACK AND WHITE**



**Forrest Musselman**

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**BLACK AND WHITE** was first performed November 15, 2001, at The Studio Academy Charter Arts High School in Rochester, MN, as part of a collection of original one-act plays entitled "Caboodle." Crew members include Brianne Brutinel, Lindy Sexton, Laura Goetsch, Katie Koga, Beth Johnson.

**FATHER:** Lee Rinehart

**MOTHER:** Cassandra Sheppard

**SUSIE:** Jada Corson

**BOBBY:** Jordan Walker

**ALLEN:** Brandon Krom

## **BLACK AND WHITE**

**SPOOF.** Chock full of the “latest” catchphrases like “spiffy,” “keen,” “neat-o,” and “gee willikers,” audiences will love this spoof of 1950s TV sitcoms like “Leave It to Beaver” and “Father Knows Best.” After school, Mother greets Bobby and Susie with some fresh-baked cookies, and Bobby eagerly tells Mother about how he touched a sample of asbestos and played with some mercury in science class, passed around his gun in speech class, and learned about the benefits of aerosol cans. When Father arrives home, Mother greets him with a martini and Bobby begs Father to go fishing after dinner. Father reminds Bobby that he needs to pick up some more lead-based paint, spray the yard with DDT, burn the old tires, and reinforce the bomb shelter. However, Father suggests the family could go for a leisurely drive in the country in their Buick, which gets 12 miles to the gallon, but not before he gently reminds Susie that she’ll never have a career and that college is just a place for young women to find husbands.

**Performance Time:** Approximately 30 minutes.

## CHARACTERS

(3 M, 2 F)

**FATHER:** Stereotypical 1950s TV-sitcom father; wears a 1950s three-piece suit and hat.

**MOTHER:** Stereotypical 1950s TV-sitcom mother; wears a dress, apron, pearls, and high-heeled shoes.

**SUSIE:** 17, innocent daughter; dressed in 1950s teen clothing.

**BOBBY:** 15, innocent son.

**ALLEN SMART:** 17, neighbor boy and new kid at school whose father is a judge; wears jeans and a sweater with a school patch on it.

## **SETTING**

Late 1950s. Living room of an American suburban home. Everything presented onstage should be in black, white, and shades of gray to help give the illusion of a 1950s TV sitcom. Laugh tracks can be included.

## **SET**

**1950s living room.** The living room looks like it came straight from a 1950s TV sitcom. The front door is SR and several platforms lead down into the living room area. There is a coat rack near the door. A couch and chair are located directly DSC. A small dining room table with chairs is located upstage. A door SL leads to the kitchen. Various paintings adorn the walls. Everything is in black, white, and shades of gray.

## **PRODUCTION NOTE**

To help with the overall feel of the show, actors should exaggerate emotions consistent with TV family sitcoms of the 1950s and 1960s.

## **PROPS**

Tray	Newspaper
Plate of sugar cookies	Martini glass
2 Glasses of milk	Catalog
Radio	Table settings for four
Several old school books	people
Shotgun case	Napkins
Briefcase	Papers
Wrapped anniversary present	Dollar

## **SOUND EFFECTS**

- Laugh track (opt.)
- Doorbell
- Sound of an old cash register
- 1950s TV sitcom sounding music
- Elvis Presley song or another suitable song

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*"TELEVISION  
IS A COMMON FAD  
JUST LIKE HULA HOOPS.  
EVERYONE HAS TO HAVE ONE,  
BUT THEN THE INTEREST  
GOES AWAY.  
ITLL NEVER AMOUNT  
TO ANYTHING."*

—FATHER

## BLACK AND WHITE

(AT RISE: Living room, late 1950s. Music is playing softly. Mother enters, carrying a tray with a plate of sugar cookies and two glasses of milk. She sets them on the table and goes SR to turn off the radio. She continues humming to herself as she heads to the kitchen door. The front door opens and Susie enters. She is young and dressed in the latest 1950s-style clothing for teens.)

SUSIE: (Calls.) Mother, I'm home!

MOTHER: Welcome home, Susie. Where's your little brother?

SUSIE: Bobby should be here pretty soon. He stayed after to help Mr. Thompson clean the science room for extra credit.

MOTHER: Wonderful. How was school today?

SUSIE: Gee, Mother, must you ask the same question every day?

MOTHER: Of course. You're my daughter and I love you.

SUSIE: Oh, Mother. School was just spiffy! There was only one air-raid drill today, and I got an A+ on my home economics report.

MOTHER: That's wonderful, dear! What did your teacher say?

SUSIE: She said my report was very insightful and that I could be seen as a visionary.

MOTHER: Goodness! All that from doing a report on aerosol cans?

SUSIE: It's the wave of the future, Mother. It's going to make life so much easier.

MOTHER: I suppose you're right, dear.

SUSIE: These inventions are going to carry us far into the future, Mother. Take, for example, asbestos. It's a far easier way to insulate a house and keeps us warmer, therefore cutting costs on our electrical bill. Our science teacher was handing some around to us today in class. It doesn't even smell or anything.

MOTHER: Oh, Susie, you're so smart. What am I going to do with you?

SUSIE: Gee whiz, Mother, you're not going to cry again, are you?

MOTHER: No, I'm fine. Just eat your cookies, dear.

SUSIE: Yes, Mother. (*Takes a bite. Pause.*) Mother?

MOTHER: Yes, dear.

SUSIE: Do you think I'm pretty?

MOTHER: Well, of course, dear. Why do you ask such a silly question?

SUSIE: I don't know. It's just that the homecoming dance is coming up pretty soon, and...well, there haven't been any boys who have asked me to go with them yet.

MOTHER: Oh, don't be silly, dear. Boys are just shy, that's all. I'm sure there're two or three who are working up the nerve to ask you right now, right?

SUSIE: I guess so.

MOTHER: Are there any you'd like to have ask you out?

SUSIE: Well, there may be one. (*Stamps foot.*) Ooo, it just makes me so mad. I wish I could ask someone and get it over with.

MOTHER: Don't you dare talk that way! A lady never makes the first move. Never.

SUSIE: Yes, Mother. I'm sorry I was acting so radical.

MOTHER: It's okay. (*Pause.*) Don't worry, dear. Someone will ask you.

SUSIE: If you say so, Mother.

(*Front door opens and Bobby enters. He is carrying books and a shotgun case.*)

BOBBY: (*Calls.*) Mother, I'm home!

MOTHER: Hello, Bobby. How was school?

BOBBY: It was swell. I stayed after to help Mr. Thompson clean the science room. He was so impressed with me that he gave me some mercury to play with.

MOTHER: That's wonderful, dear. May I see it?

BOBBY: Naw, it slipped out of my hands and went down into the storm drain.

MOTHER: Oh. Well, it's good that you're helping out the teachers.

BOBBY: Now with the extra credit, I'm earning 110 percent!

MOTHER: Goodness! And how did your demonstration speech on cleaning a gun go?

BOBBY: Gee, Mother, it was keen.

MOTHER: I should say it was clean. After all, that's what the speech was about.

BOBBY: No, Mother, *keen*. "Keen" like in "neat-o"? The teacher even let me pass my gun around the class so that everyone could see it up close. It was the swellest demonstration speech out of the entire class.

MOTHER: Well, a smart boy like you needs nourishment to keep his brain working extra hard.

BOBBY: Sounds good to me. (*Spies cookies.*) Oh, boy, sugar cookies! My favorite!

SUSIE: Don't hog them all, Bobby. I might want some more.

BOBBY: Gee whiz, can't a fella eat in peace?

MOTHER: That's enough fighting, kids. I'll just bring you out some more.

BOBBY: Naw, that's okay, Mother. I want to get all my homework done before supper anyway.

SUSIE: That's a good idea. I think I'll do that, too. I'm sorry I snapped at you, Bobby.

BOBBY: That's okay. I still love you.

SUSIE: I love you, too.

(*Bobby and Susie hug, grab another cookie, take a bite at the same time, and exit to the kitchen. Mother smiles, takes the plate and glasses, and exits after them. Pause. Front door opens and Father enters. He is dressed in a three-piece suit and hat and is carrying a briefcase and a present. He takes off his hat and places it on the coat rack.*)

FATHER: (*Calls.*) Honey, I'm home.

(*Mother enters, almost running.*)

MOTHER: Welcome home, Father!

FATHER: Hello, dear.

MOTHER: Goodness, Father, you're three minutes late. What happened?

FATHER: Sorry, dear, but traffic was a little heavy. If I had a phone in the car, I would have called.

MOTHER: (*Giggles.*) A phone in the car! How absurd!

FATHER: How was your day?

MOTHER: It was lovely, dear. But enough about me. How was work at the office?

FATHER: Oh, you know, just a lot of paper shuffling. Thank golly it's Friday!

MOTHER: Oh, you and your little catch phrases. When are you going to give those up?

FATHER: When one of them catches on, I suppose. Say, aren't you forgetting something?

MOTHER: Of course not! Happy anniversary, dear!

FATHER: Happy anniversary. Here's your present. (*Hands her the present.*)

MOTHER: Father! I thought we agreed that there would be no gifts.

FATHER: Nonsense. You know I couldn't resist buying you a little something to show my love and appreciation.

MOTHER: You're such a sweet, dear man. What is it?

FATHER: It's a blender.

MOTHER: Oh, Father! You shouldn't have!

FATHER: Now you can make those special dinners twice as fast.

MOTHER: Oh, what would I do without you? Thank you so much.

FATHER: You're so welcome.

(Mother and Father kiss.)

MOTHER: Now, you just sit right down, and I'll get your drink.

FATHER: If you insist.

(Father moves to the chair where a newspaper sits. He picks up the newspaper and sits down. He begins to read. Mother enters from the kitchen carrying a martini.)

MOTHER: Here's your martini, dear.

FATHER: Ah, thank you. (Takes the martini and sips it.)

Mmmm, that's perfect, dear.

MOTHER: You would hope so... after 15 years.

FATHER: What would I do without you? Thank you so much.

MOTHER: You're so welcome.

(Mother and Father kiss. Susie and Bobby enter from the kitchen.)

SUSIE/BOBBY: Father!

FATHER: (To Susie.) Hey, pumpkin. (To Bobby.) Hiya, squirt.

BOBBY: Hey, Father. Do you think we could go fishing after dinner?

FATHER: I'm not so sure, squirt. Did you finish taking care of the lawn like I asked?

BOBBY: I finished spraying it with DDT this morning, and I even burned those old tires, too!

FATHER: Hmmm, I thought we could finish painting the garage tonight. I picked up some more lead-based paint.

BOBBY: Yeah, I guess.

FATHER: We need to finish reinforcing the bomb shelter, too.

[END OF FREEVIEW]