

## AND THEY DANCE REAL SLOW IN JACKSON

by Jim Leonard, Jr.

Elizabeth (15) - Skeeter (15)

**The Play:** A chilling memory play, the story deals with Elizabeth Ann Willow, a young girl confined to a wheelchair, crippled at birth from cerebral palsy. Through a fascinating series of both real and dream sequences, the play goes in and out of time to show Elizabeth living with this affliction in the fictitious small town of Jackson, Indiana. In addition to seeing Elizabeth with her mother and father, we also see her struggles with friends and the townspeople of Jackson (played by a chorus of four actors) as she attempts to live a normal life and be treated like any other person. Ultimately, the prejudices and unfeeling ignorance of the people of Jackson are more than Elizabeth can overcome, and she sinks into a reclusive state of madness.

**The Scene:** Skeeter Robins is one of the few young people in town who has shown Elizabeth kindness and accepted her, regardless of her condition. Except for the fact that Elizabeth is in a wheelchair, this is not unlike the first real talk between any fifteen-year-old girl and boy. As the scene begins, Elizabeth and Skeeter are arriving at Reverend Peester's home for confirmation class.

**Special Note:** The playwright specifically cautions that the only physical indications of Elizabeth's condition should be that she cannot move her legs. There should be no other attempt to portray her condition.

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*(Elizabeth enters on the above line as the Kid is crossing off. She's on the stage floor level, but there's no interaction whatsoever between Elizabeth and the Kid.) Elizabeth is fifteen now. When Skeeter turns to say "hi" he becomes himself at fifteen too.)*

ELIZABETH: Hi, Skeeter.

SKEETER: Hi. Uh, hey, you want some help with that thing?

ELIZABETH: I'm all right.

SKEETER: Sure? *(Skeeter wheels her around some small obstruction or something or just plain helps wheel her to the area that'll serve as the minister's house—not that she needs any help.)*

ELIZABETH: I'm fine, just—well, thank you.

SKEETER: *(Overlapping.)* No, here, let me give you a hand.

ELIZABETH: Thanks a lot, Skeeter.

SKEETER: *(Shrugs.)* S'nothing.

ELIZABETH: Where's Reverend Peester at?

SKEETER: He left. His wife's down in the basement, I think. In the reck room, I think. I hear she's been hitting the bottle down there. You want me to get her?

ELIZABETH: No!

SKEETER: Sure?

ELIZABETH: I just wondered where Mr. Peester was at.

SKEETER: Store.

ELIZABETH: Nothing's open on Sundays is it?

SKEETER: IGA is. Probably just Cokes and crap like that's all he wants. He'll be back in a minute, I imagine.

ELIZABETH: My mother says Coke's not very good for you.

SKEETER: Yeah?

ELIZABETH: It does something strange to your stomach, she says. It eats it away.

SKEETER: Yeah, my dad says the same thing about cigarettes and he smokes like a chimney.

ELIZABETH: Really?

SKEETER: No shit. Shoot I mean...

ELIZABETH: How long is this supposed to last tonight?

SKEETER: Dunno. Never been to a communion class before.

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ELIZABETH: Confirmation.

SKEETER: Huh?—

ELIZABETH: Confirmation.

SKEETER: Yeah, well Peester'll be back in a minute.

ELIZABETH: You're fifteen, Skeeter Robins?

SKEETER: Yeah, I am. Gonna get me a car in another year.

ELIZABETH: Same as me! Fifteen, I mean.

SKEETER: Yeah, I'm thinking I might get me one of them GTO's. A red one.

ELIZABETH: Like Billy Taylor's you mean!

SKEETER: Yeah, cherry bomb red! How you know what kind of car Billy drives?

ELIZABETH: I seen him out the window.

SKEETER: No shit?

ELIZABETH: He drives by all the time.

SKEETER: I seen you at your window sometimes.

ELIZABETH: I've seen you too, Skeeter.

SKEETER: You have?

ELIZABETH: *(Smiling.)* Sure.

SKEETER: *(Truly curious.)* Elizabeth, is your mom a bitch?

ELIZABETH: *(Surprised.)* No!

SKEETER: I just wondered. I mean it'd be kind of creepy being cooped up inside most of the time if she bitched at you. Man, I'd deep six myself if I had to spend too much time with my mom.

ELIZABETH: I get out of the house, Skeeter. I go to school you know. Five days a week.

SKEETER: Don't you hate school?

ELIZABETH: I love it.

SKEETER: You like going to school out at that looney bin place?

ELIZABETH: It's not a looney bin, Skeeter. We got teachers and class rooms and bath rooms and books; we just only don't have many students. See, me and Zelda Graves—you know she's my best friend—and we're in the same class. We both got Mrs. Fowler.

SKEETER: She a bitch?

ELIZABETH: Huh uh! She gives me A's.

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SKEETER: Good for you, Elizabeth.  
ELIZABETH: I got an A+ on my last report.  
SKEETER: Great.  
ELIZABETH: About Israel.  
SKEETER: Yeah?  
ELIZABETH: You want to hear about it? *(Skeeter shrugs.)* You sure?  
SKEETER: Yeah. Sure. Sure, go on and tell me about Israel, Elizabeth.  
ELIZABETH: *(Excited.)* Well, see in Israel—that's where Jesus was born—  
SKEETER: Yeah.  
ELIZABETH: And he lived over there on the desert and all...you could probably do all kinds of things out there because it's so flat, huh...? National Geographic had pictures of it, and they're growing farms in that sand ten times bigger than any farm in Jackson. At least that!  
SKEETER: Right over Calvary?  
ELIZABETH: Uh huh. They're growing wheat and corn right on it!  
SKEETER: Damn!  
ELIZABETH: This tall at least!  
SKEETER: Something, huh?  
ELIZABETH: Something!  
SKEETER: I might like living on a farm. Be kinda the way I figure it. Bet better'n Shepherd Street anyways.  
ELIZABETH: I like our street.  
SKEETER: Yeah, well you don't have to play ball on it! Shepherd Street ain't for shit when it comes to setting up bases, Elizabeth Ann.  
ELIZABETH: We play baseball out at the institute.  
SKEETER: *(Not believing her.)* Come on...  
ELIZABETH: Yeah, we do! We got enough room for bases at least, Skeeter Robins. Zelda, she's a pitcher, and I play short stop. You want to see something, you oughta see Zelda pitching when she's mad.  
SKEETER: That little shrunk up girl?  
ELIZABETH: She's not shrunk up, Skeeter! She's just little is all.  
SKEETER: I don't know. She looks to me like somebody left her in

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the dryer too long.  
ELIZABETH: Oh, Skeeter...  
SKEETER: Pretty hot with the ball, huh?  
ELIZABETH: Zalda's the best one on the team, I think.  
SKEETER: How's she, uh, how's she get it down there so's people can hit at it? In their chairs and all, I mean.  
ELIZABETH: *(Matter of fact.)* We got a rule that you gotta let the batter hit it.  
SKEETER: That's not baseball then!  
ELIZABETH: *(Challenging.)* Why don't you come look?  
SKEETER: Maybe I will!  
ELIZABETH: You wanta come tomorrow?  
SKEETER: Uh, tomorrow I gotta go to the doctor.  
ELIZABETH: How bout after that?  
SKEETER: After that I got the dentist.  
ELIZABETH: Oh...  
SKEETER: Yeah...I got rotten teeth. Too much Coke...  
ELIZABETH: I wish the minister'd get here...  
SKEETER: *(Gladly changing the subject.)* Hey, have you looked at these things? Some of em're longer than hell. You don't feel wretched do you?  
ELIZABETH: No.  
SKEETER: Yeah, well you will in an hour or so. *(He sits or kneels near her, showing her the little catechism book.)* Look at this one, will ya? It's just plain nuts is what it is. Whacky as shit!  
ELIZABETH: Like our baseball games, huh?  
SKEETER: I'm sorry...  
ELIZABETH: S'okay...  
SKEETER: I mean, I'm really sorry, huh?  
ELIZABETH: *(Forgiving.)* S'all right, Skeeter Robins.  
SKEETER: *(Renewed.)* Here's the question. It's right there after all that introduction type garbage...  
ELIZABETH: *(Reading.)* "How many things must you know that you may live and die in the blessedness of God's grace?"  
SKEETER: Yeah, yeah, that the one! Jesus, the guy who wrote these

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things must beat up on old ladies for fun! This stuff is warped!

ELIZABETH: (*Pleased.*) You want me to read it again? "How many things must you know that you may live and die in the blessedness of God's grace?"

SKEETER: Three. First, the greatness of my sin and...wretchedness! (*On the word "wretchedness" Skeeter tilts Elizabeth's chair up on its back wheels and goes running off stage with her like her chair is a car. She loves it.*)

ELIZABETH: Skeeter!

## ANTIGONE

by Jean Anouilh

translated by Alex Szogyi

Antigone (18) - Hemon (19)

**The Play:** Jean Anouilh's retelling of Sophocles' *Antigone* (the second tragedy in the Oedipus Cycle) was motivated by the Nazi occupation of Paris during World War II. The parallels between the tyranny of Hitler's rule and that of Creon's Thebes are at once evident. Eteocles and Polyneices, the sons of the late Theban King Oedipus, and the brothers of Antigone and Ismene, have recently killed one another in a civil war to gain control of Thebes. Their uncle Creon has become King. Creon has decreed that Polyneices, whom he believes provoked the war, be left unburied—his spirit left to roam eternally. Antigone considers this edict a sacrilege and defies her uncle by covering her brother's body with earth. When Creon learns of the deed, he is unyielding, and he condemns his niece to be buried alive. This act brings about the suicide of Creon's son, Hemon (Antigone's fiance), and Creon's wife, Eurydice. Creon is left to face the tribulations of life alone. Ultimately *Antigone* explores questions concerning human responsibility to family, government and personal honor.

**The Scene:** Antigone has sent for Hemon so that she can apologize for a quarrel they had the night before. Hemon does not yet know that she has defied Creon's edict and buried her brother's body. Antigone professes her love for Hemon and then breaks off their relationship, much to Hemon's bewilderment.

**Special Note:** A comparison of Alex Szogyi's translation of Anouilh's *Antigone* with Lewis Galantiere's version and Sophocles' original Oedipus' Cycle may prove helpful to a full exploration of the text.