

## KNOCK KNOCK

by Jules Feiffer

## ACT I

Abe and Cohn have been living together for over twenty years, and for over twenty years they have been bickering. Abe was a stockbroker, Cohn a musician. Now they are retired, spending all their time together, and the bickering goes on incessantly. Abe says to Cohn: "You're rigid. I'm flexible." Cohn calls Abe "mindless." To Abe anything is possible: frogs turning into princes, genies rising out of lamps. So Cohn, the disbeliever, fed up with Abe's irrationality, rubs a lamp to demonstrate that there are no genies and then wishes for "somebody with a brain I could talk to!" In an instant the wish is granted and Abe is replaced in his chair by a bearded "wise man." Thus the tone is set for the strange meanderings of this fanciful and fantastic play that soon brings Joan of Arc onstage as a housemaid, that has strange voices calling out riddles from nowhere, and that has the walls of the house disappear in a flash before the characters' (and the audience's) eyes.

The following excerpt is the opening scene of the play.

*At rise: Cohn, overweight and fifty, is at the stove, reading from a cookbook and mixing ingredients into a pot. He is humming a Mozart aria. He hums, cooks, tastes. Across the room, Abe, underweight and fifty, lies in his chair staring into space. He lights a cigar and meditates.*

ABE: It's getting better.  
COHN, *tastes*: Who says?  
ABE: I say.  
COHN, *mixes*: With what evidence?  
ABE: My eyes are my evidence.  
COHN, *turns to Abe and raises two fingers*: How many fingers?  
ABE: Five.  
COHN: Some eyes. *Goes back to his cooking.*

ABE: All right, two.  
COHN, *slams down the pot and turns to Abe*: So if you can see two, why do you say five?  
ABE: I prefer five.  
COHN: That's not a reason.  
ABE: Why does there always have to be a reason?  
COHN: Abe, I've known you for twenty-five years and for you there's never a reason.  
ABE: And you? You're better off?  
COHN: I don't invent.  
ABE: I beg your pardon. Neither do I.  
COHN: What kind of fool am I living with? You just made up five.  
ABE: I didn't make it up.  
COHN: Not a minute ago.  
ABE: No.  
COHN: I was holding up two (*holds up two fingers*) and you said I was holding up five! *Holds up five fingers.*  
ABE: You *are* holding up five.

*Cohn quickly puts down his hand.*

COHN: What's the use?  
ABE: Cohn, I'll tell you something—you're rigid. I'm flexible.  
COHN: Mindless.  
ABE: You only believe in what's in front of your nose. That's not mindless?  
COHN: I don't make things up.  
ABE, *points to curtained doorway*: What's that?  
COHN: Don't bother me. *Abe continues to point.* It's my bedroom! *Goes back to his cooking.* Pest!  
ABE: I don't see any bedroom.  
COHN: You know it's my bedroom!  
ABE: I beg your pardon. All I see is a curtain. *Cohn goes and pulls back the curtain.* Ah hah! A bedroom! *Abe rises, crosses to the doorway, and pulls the curtain back into place.* A curtain. *Pulls the curtain back and forth.* A bedroom. A curtain. A bedroom. A curtain. A bedroom. Is it still a bedroom when you don't see it?  
COHN: It's always a bedroom!  
ABE: So for you it's always a bedroom and for me it's always five fingers. *Cohn slams the plate down on the table, pours stew*



into it, and begins to eat. Abe joins him at the table, studies the blank sheet in his typewriter, punches one key, and nods seriously at the results. I'm right, so I don't get any stew?

COHN: You want stew? Here! Hands him pot.

ABE, looks into pot: It's empty.

COHN, points to empty pot: What's that?

ABE: A pot.

COHN: You saw me cook stew in it? Abe nods. You saw me pour stew out of it? Abe nods. So eat your stew. Abe, unhappily, watches Cohn eat. Cohn wipes his mouth and points to the empty space in front of Abe: Eat! That's steak. That's potatoes. That's salad. That's beer. Hearty appetitel

ABE: That's vicious.

COHN, smiles, self-satisfied: Abe, you can pull the wool over your eyes but you can't pull it over mine. I know you every step of the way. I know you inside and out.

ABE: I'm hungry.

COHN: So make something.

ABE: You know I don't cook. I burn everything.

COHN: Don't.

ABE: My mind wanders. Cohn gets up, crosses to stock shelf, takes down a box of spaghetti, sets a plate in front of Abe, and pours the uncooked spaghetti into the plate. It's not cooked.

COHN: I say it's cooked. Two fingers. Five fingers. Eat your spaghetti. Abe looks disconsolately at the plate, picks the spaghetti sticks up in his hand, and begins to eat them. Cohn watches for a moment, then relents. He takes the plate away from Abe and pours the spaghetti into a pot of water on the stove. When will you learn?

ABE: To be like you? I beg your pardon, is that such a blessing?

COHN: Don't get personal.

ABE: I don't like being made a fool of.

COHN: You asked for it.

ABE: I know I'm right. Cohn groans. You can win the argument but it doesn't mean you're right. Inside I know who's right.

COHN: You think so?

ABE: I know so. With my ex-wife, I also lost all arguments. But you told me I was right.

COHN: With her you were right.

ABE: So if I lost with her and was right, you have to admit that when I lose with you I also could be right. It's consistent.

COHN: Abe, I'm going to tell you a little story. A parable. After I finish, you tell me what it means to you. O.K.?

ABE: Before I eat?

COHN: Here. Cuts him a slice of cheese. Abe wolfs it down. Once there was this beautiful, innocent, young maid, golden locks, of eighteen, who lived in a dark forest in the country with her very proud, strict parents, and it was her habit to sit by a pond day in and day out, and moon and mope about the moment when love would first enter her life. One day this lovely young thing is daydreaming by the pond when a frog hops out of the water and into her lap. The beautiful maid recoils. "Don't be frightened," croaks the ugly little frog, "I am not what I appear to be. I am in truth a handsome young prince cast under a spell by a wicked witch and this spell can only be broken when some fair maid takes me into her bed and spends the night by my side." So the girl calms down and decides why not? So she brought the frog home and she took it to bed with her and the next morning she woke up—and lying next to her was this tall, handsome, naked young prince. And that's the way she explained it to her parents when they walked in on the two of them. What's the moral of the story?

ABE: The moral is, you're a very cynical man.

COHN: You want dinner? Then discuss it intelligently.

ABE, leaves the table and returns to his own chair: The moral is, you take a classic fable with charm and beauty, that deals with dreams and imagination, and you change it into men's-room humor. That's the moral. What you reveal of yourself. Leaves his chair, crosses to the typewriter, punches a key, and sits back down again.

COHN: You would believe the girl's story?

ABE: I beg your pardon, I wouldn't be her prosecutor. I leave that to you.

COHN: Supposing you're the girl's father?

ABE: I would face the problem with compassion.

COHN: First admitting it's a problem!

ABE: A man in bed with my daughter? At first—until the situation's cleared up, I have to admit it's a problem.

COHN: Then she tells you the story of the frog.



ABE: Which clears up everything.  
 COHN: You believe about the frog?  
 ABE: What's important is, she believes about the frog. We didn't bring her up to lie.  
 COHN: You'd rather have her crazy than lie.  
 ABE: Why is that crazy?  
 COHN: Or hallucinating.  
 ABE: Because her mind can conjure with change—with ugliness turning into beauty—you call that hallucinating? And what *you* see—only beauty turning into ugliness—you call that reality? I beg your pardon, Cohn, you're living in a stacked deck. You give me a choice, I prefer frogs into princes over princes into frogs.  
 COHN: Even if it's not so.  
 ABE: How do we know? All I'm saying is, we don't know.  
 COHN: Do we know that you're Abe and I'm Cohn?  
 ABE: In this life.  
 COHN: In this life. But in another life, maybe I was Abe and you were Cohn?  
 ABE: It's possible. Anything's possible.  
 COHN: —or that I was Mozart and you were Thomas Jefferson?  
 ABE: It's unlikely. But it's possible.  
 COHN: —or that I was Moses and you were Christ?  
 ABE: It's possible.  
 COHN: Abe, I'm going to give you a chance to listen to what you just said: It's possible you were Christ.  
 ABE: I didn't say probable. I said possible.  
 COHN: And it's possible that if I rub this lamp a genie will come out?  
 ABE: All I'm saying is, we don't know, do we?

*Cohn rubs the lamp.*

COHN: Now we know.  
 ABE: I beg your pardon, we know about one lamp. We don't know about all lamps. Also, we don't know that a genie *didn't* come out. We don't know that there isn't a genie in this room this very moment. And that he isn't saying, "Master, I am the genie of the lamp and I have three wishes to grant you and anything you wish will come true." Maybe he's there and maybe we've been taught how not to see genies in our time. Or hear

them. Or take advantage when they offer us three wishes. That's all I'm saying. That it could be us, not him.

COHN: Who?

ABE: The genie.

COHN: Abe, if I had three wishes, you know what would be my first wish? That instead of you to talk to, to drive me crazy for another twenty years, I had somebody with a brain I could talk to! That's what I wish!

## COUNT DRACULA

by Ted Tiller

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### Act II

This relatively recent version of the classic tale of Count Dracula is set in Dr. Seward's Asylum for the Insane in the north of London during the first half of the twentieth century. Mina Murray, Dr. Seward's ward, has been ailing of late. Concern for her health and bafflement over her strange symptoms (bite marks on her neck) have led the Doctor and Mina's fiancé to call in Professor Van Helsing, a specialist in rare diseases. Other household worries include Dr. Seward's demented sister, Sybil, and Renfield, a schizophrenic inmate who is in cahoots with the "bloodthirsty" count.

In the following scene Dracula commands Renfield to help him carry out his plot to get Mina completely under his control. In the previous moment, Dracula hypnotized Sybil and sent her to her room to await instructions.

DRACULA, turns sharply to Renfield who crumples to his knees: Now, you! I have work for you.

RENFIELD: Master, I thought you had renounced me. I ran through the valley, beat on your door, but you would not let me in.