

STORYTIME

Written by

Cynthia Garbutt

186 High Street
Willesden Green, London NW10 2PB
Mobile: 07879 00 9483
Email: cynthiagarbutt21@yahoo.com

STORYTIME Fade in.

INT. MORNING. PUBLIC LIBRARY - CHILDREN'S SECTION.

A sizable group of parents and preschoolers ready for Storytime Hour. LOUIS the Librarian is at the head of the circle. Introductions already been made. DEV, LI, OLA and JUNO are sat upright in their prams with their parents, sat at opposite LOUIS.

LOUIS: British, male, 40, monotone posh accent, going through the motions.

OLA: Latina ethnicity, girl, age: 4, sharp-witted, spontaneous (think: Stewie, more clean-mouthed)

DEV: Asian ethnicity, boy, age: 4, liberal, philosophical (think: mini-Vitruvius)

LI: Far Eastern ethnicity: girl, age: 4, stealth, cunning (think: mini-Laura Croft)

JUNO: Central African ethnicity, boy, age: 4, analytical, rational (think: mini-Dr. Spock)

LOUIS

Whoever are new here, and eager for Storytime to begin, I know you're highly anticipating a full hour's worth.

Sound: A few youngsters cheer.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Especially after suiting up your rug rats and dragging yourselves out of your cozy hovels on this cold and rainy Monday morning, down here to this archaic and outmoded edifice of codices and lexicons. (Beat) Truly sorry to disappoint, but its actually only a miserable half-hour.

Sound: Brief mumbling from the crowd.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

What can I say, austerity measures and all that. (Beat) For those of you that can't wait till its over, you'll simply have to grin and bare it.

OLA turns to JUNO.

OLA

This geezer sounds like some ol' has been, school- master.

JUNO
That missed his true calling.

LOUIS pulls out his Storytime programme and reads from it.

LOUIS
(melodramatic)
With deep consideration and personal debate I maintain this weekly schedule. (Beat) We start off with a song, to get you warmed up. Followed by a nursery rhyme, which *tout ensemble*, you will repeat after me, word-for-word, until you little children know it by heart. Then my specialty, a pre-selected, (absolutely no requests allowed) favourite children's story and finally we round things out with another song. The End. (Beat) You all go home and I'm left here to pick up the pieces.

LI turns to DEV puzzled.

LI
Hmm. (Beat) He's mental.

DEV
Yes, he's definitely got abandonment issues. I should pull him aside for a chat, afterwards.

LOUIS peaks over the top rim of his eyeglasses and looks at LI and DEV, then clears his throat.

LOUIS
(very upbeat)
So let's begin! It's Sing Along Time. Shall we begin with: Three Blind Mice. For those of that know it, fine. You others - lipsync. Here we go...

LOUIS starts off disharmonic singing. Most of the crowd sing-along, on-and-off key, after a beat.

OLA
Is this the best they can do? Where are the odes to carefree days of play and youth.

DEV

Sad really. Besides, the entire group, seems to be euphonically challenged.

LI

Now, I'm feeling a bit guilty and regretting that I played a mind game on my dad to get him to call and reserve us a spot. For this?!

OLA, DEV

Same here!

JUNO

Guilty.

OLA

My mums had tossed the brochure in the shredder.

DEV

I did it because I felt very drawn to be here. For some strange reason I know there's something special about this place.

JUNO

The coordinates indicate powerful energies, just under our feet.

DEV

So, we are all meant to be here, right now.

JUNO

Without a doubt.

Pause.

OLA

There's one thing I am doubting, though.

DEV

What's that?

OLA

The entertainment value for the effort that we've all already expended, psychically.

LI

Yeah! You're right! I only use my mind bending when I know its absolutely necessary. (Beat) Its exhausting. Considering the mental condition of the people we're dealing with. Dense!

OLA

And this song is so evil. And they wonder why Generation Zeders have no sense of compassion.

DEV

Don't blame them. Its generations and generations of childhood trauma. No one wants to break the cycle.

Song ends.

LI

Thank goodness that's over!

JUNO

Yes, that cacophony of disharmonic voices, was testing the limits of my ability to endure major unpleasantness.

LOUIS picks up his massive dust covered, worn and tattered children's nursery rhymes book and sets it on his lap, then opens the book.

LOUIS

And now for the second segment: Rhyme-time. We'll begin with: Jack and Jill, listen first and then slowly. Until we all get it. Got it! Now repeat after me. (Beat) Shall we.

LOUIS looks up at the audience carefully, making sure everyone's paying attention.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

(baby talk)

Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water. Jack fell down and broke his crown and Jill came tumbling after.

DEV

They call that tone motherese.

LI

My mother's been talking to me like that, since the day I was born. It drives me mad!

OLA

You mean, "Goo-goo-ga-ga." Baby talk. I despise it.

DEV, LI & JUNO

We all do! What do they think we are - BABIES!

LOUIS slowly repeats one line of verse at a time, very slowly. Everyone follows along except DEV, JUNO, LI and OLA.

OLA

Oh brother, let the yawning commence. Jack and Jill, that one makes no sense at all. Why would you put something that everyone needs so badly, like a well, uphill in the first place?

LI

Yeah. (Beat) OK, so Jack is a klutz. So let the girl have some sense for once. But then she follows him - and falls head over heels, down the same bloody hill - (that they shouldn't have had the well on in the first place) after him.

OLA

A klutz and an idiot, working together. Result: disaster.

Anxious pause.

DEV, LI & JUNO

Hmm!

LI

Well, we can't fake this part. It's the dreaded audience participation bit.

DEV

And he's watching us four like a hawk.

JUNO

Well, I never signed up for this nonsense, in the first place.

LI

Its a riddle, an enigma.

DEV

Or a dilemma. With the predicament Jack and Jill are in, I'd say.

OLA

This is boring. Let's blow this joint. Shall we?

DEV, JUNO, LI & OLA (CONT'D)

Immediately!

DEV, OLA, JUNO and LI slowly climb out of their prams unnoticed and stand huddled together, just behind their parents.

LI

So, where to, guys?

JUNO

I've heard that sometimes, in the adult section, people actually find some truth and understanding, within the myriads of plain books without pictures, on all those shelves.

OLA

And none too soon. He's about to start: Storytime, the high point of his performance.

DEV, JUNO, LI and OLA exit the children's section, walk through the aisles of book stalls, a bit bewildered and lost.

LOUIS (O.S.)

And now for one of my beloved long time, favourites and definite crowd pleaser: Cinderella!

JUNO

Oh, my oldest sister told me about that one. (Beat) Honestly, the day they make shoes out of glass, consumer demand for the unique and hard to find, has gone too far.

OLA

A glass slipper! The innuendo of that one shouldn't even be in a story for children.

Long pause.

DEV, JUNO, LI AND OLA (CONT'D)

Where in this black-hole are we?

DEV, JUNO, LI and OLA slowly pass a woman librarian. She's overheard them talking.

LIBRARIAN

You guys must be looking for the stargate.

DEV, JUNO, LI and OLA stop in amazement and relief.

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)

It's actually the entrance to the adult section. It's to the left and straight ahead.

DEV, JUNO, LI AND OLA

Finally! An adult that KNOWS!

DEV

Namaste!

LIBRARIAN

Namaste.

LIBRARIAN continues tidying books on the shelf. DEV, JUNO, LI and OLA carry on walking in the direction toward the Adult Section. LI starts singing, "Three Blind Mice."

JUNO

Li. Would you please cease and desist with the singing of THAT song.

LI

Sorry, but I'm still stuck on the image of three visually impaired rodents running around in a panic, with their tails whacked off - song.

OLA

Yeah, I'm with you on that one. I can't get the stupid lyrics out of my mind. (Beat) And how it got to be a classic, totally escapes me!

JUNO

An earworm.

OLA

Earworm? Explain.

JUNO

Otherwise known as musical imagery repetition. Or in this case, involuntary musical imagery.

OLA

Oh, you mean suck stupid song syndrome. (Beat) I think they got more than their tails lopped off, though. Otherwise, why all the fuss.

JUNO

Yes, quite logical.

DEV

(Beat) Who were the whackees? And who was the head whacker?

LI

Yeah! There's always the - head whacker. The whackers, whackers are the fall guys aka scapegoats.

JUNO

And, why the whacking?

DEV, JUNO, LI & OLA

Yes! Why the whacking.

OLA (CONT'D)

Let's find out! Shall we!

DEV, JUNO, LI and OLA stop just in front of the Adults Section and look up at the sign: "Adult Section. You must be 16 or older (or accompanied by a guardian) and have an adult membership card to get inside." They look at each other, ignore the rule and continue.

DEV, JUNO, LI & OLA (CONT'D)
 (chuckling)
 A card! A guardian! They're lusting
 over a girl's glass slipper.

DEV, JUNO, LI and OLA looking back toward the Children's
 Section.

DEV, JUNO, LI & OLA (CONT'D)
 Who cares! We're on a mission!

JUNO
 Adults preoccupy themselves with
 too much needless signage, that
 they don't read anyway.

DEV, JUNO, LI and OLA walk into the section and are magically
 transformed into adults in the 15th century Reformation
 period in England. Live action characters: Queen Mary,
 Anglican bishops Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley and Thomas
 Cranmer the Archbishop of Canterbury.

EXT. NIGHT. ANGLICAN CHURCH RECTORY.

Re-inactment of the events leading to the execution and the
 execution of the three bishops by Queen Mary.

CUT TO: BACK TO
 SCENE.

INT. DAY. LIBRARY - ENTRANCE TO ADULT SECTION.

JUNO
 Well, I think our truth finding
 mission confirmed all our
 premonitions.

DEV, LI & OLA
 Absolutely!

LI
 The Reformation was a needless,
 total chaotic mess!

JUNO
 An enormous waste of human life.

DEV
History. Mostly human tragedy, is
destined to repeat itself when its
supported by a society without
higher consciousness.

OLA
(jokingly)
Three blind mice. And that's what
they call entertainment. For kids!

DEV, JUNO, LI and OLA laughing.

JUNO
No honestly. (Beat) Just wait till
THEY enlist us in school. We'll be
remote day tripping, everyday.

DEV
No wonder, by the time we're all
grown up, our brains shall have
turned to mush.

THE END.

GROWING UP. Fade in.

EXTERIOR. AFTER LUNCH. SCHOOL YARD.

MEGAN: protagonist. Age: 6 smart, assertive girl.

MEGAN (V.O.)
This summer we moved to a new
neighbourhood and a bigger house.
It needs fixing up. Dad's doing it.
My brothers and me are helping out.
(MORE)

MEGAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But best thing about it - it's got
a huge oak tree out back.

CUT TO:

GIRLS PLAYING YARD GAMES.

MEGAN
Well, now I'm here, first day at
Edison. (Beat) No friends, yet.

GIRLS PLAYING VARIOUS SCHOOL YARD GAMES.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
Look at them. How are you suppose
to play, wearing clothes like that.
My mother, she sews all my clothes.
That way I don't have to wear stuff
like that - baby doll clothes.
(Beat) I like: double dutch, but
that gets boring, jumpin' up-and-
down so for four corners. Bamboo
dance is kinda fun. Except when
your ankle gets caught, OUCH! And
look at that. She only got her out,
so she can get her friend in.
Where's the sport in that?

BOYS PLAYING.

MEGAN (CONT'D) (O.S.)
My favorite game is marbles. And I
know none of those girls have ever
touched, let alone played marbles.

CUT TO:

MEGAN curious about the boys playing marbles. AMAY enters.
AMAY Age: 5 smart, very talkative, girly-girl.

AMAY
Hi! You're new here, aren't you?

MEGAN
Yes. I went to St. Mary's for
kindergarten. We moved, so I come
here now. Even though it's not
Catholic. But we don't go to church
anymore, anyway. (pause) I'm Megan.

AMAY

I'm Amay. Nice to meet you. (Beat)
I saw you in the cafeteria. I'm in
first grade. Mrs. Noland is my
teacher.

MEGAN

I'm in first grade, too. Miss
Rollins, is my teacher.

AMAY

We're right across the hall from
each other. I like your outfit.
It's so cool. Like what my older
sister wears. She's in junior high.

AMAY (CONT'D)

(points to Megan's pouch)
What's in there?

MEGAN grabs her bag of marbles, tied to her belt loop.

MEGAN

This! My marbles. Do you play?

AMAY

Marbles! What's marbles?

MEGAN

(head talking)
See, what did I tell you.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Open your hand, I'll show you.

MEGAN unties her pouch and pulls out a marble, places it
gently in the palm of AMAY'S hand. AMAY looks at it.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

That's called a cat-eye. Hold it up
to the light.

MEGAN starring at the boys. AMAY puts the marble between her
two fingers. Then holds it up, spins it between her fingers.

AMAY

It's pretty. So what do you do with
them?

MEGAN

I'll tell you later.

CUT TO:

MEGAN exits, running. She turns intermittently and shoots back to AMAY.

AMAY

Megan you're not suppose to go over there!

MEGAN

Why not?

AMAY

Cause it's the boys side. And girls can't play with them.

MEGAN

Why not? I play with boys all the time. And I win, too.

AMAY (O.S.)

Megan come back! You're gonna be in big trouble!

BOYS PLAYING MARBLES.

ADAM shooting. After a beat MEGAN enters unnoticed.

ADAM: Age: 6 group leader, cool, competitive, playing

TONY: Age 5 Adam's mate, practical joker, not playing

WILLIAM: Age: 5, class clown, playing

TED: Age 6, intellectual, handsome, playing

ANDY: Age 6 chubby, strong, easy-going, playing

TONY

Smack it! Adam. Come on!

ADAM

All these - gonna be mine.

MEGAN

You're not gonna knock anything, anywhere.

BOYS turn and look at MEGAN.

BOYS

Hey! What are you doin' over here? Marbles is for boys - only.

MEGAN

No it's not! Bet I can put all of you out. With what I've got.

TED

Oh, yeah! With what?

WILLIAM
You're just a girl. You don't even
know how to play.

MEGAN
Yes I do. And by the looks of
things, better than you.

MEGAN reaches into her pouch, pulls out a steel aggie.

ADAM
Hey! Where did you get that? Who
gave it you?

MEGAN
Nobody. I won it, fare and square!
From beating a boy, just like you.

CUT TO:

MISS ROLLINS' MOUTH, SHE'S MARCHING TO THE SCENE FROM AFAR.
MISS ROLLINS: mid 20s, average build, by-the-book.

MISS ANNETTE ROLLINS
Megan Rendon!

BACK TO: SCENE

WILLIAM
Mustn't be any good. Either that,
or they let you win, cause you're a
girl.

MEGAN
You don't know what you're talking
about. I won this off Timmy. He's
five, he lives next door and he's
good. I won it cause I'm better
than him. And I know I'm better
than you.

WILLIAM
So you beat a five year old. So
what! I'm six. You think you can
beat me? Prove it!

MEGAN
Right here! After school on Monday.
Before my Mom comes to pick me up,
3:05.

ALL BOYS
You're on!

WILLIAM

And that steel aggie of yours - mine. My pouch, is gonna be so heavy, it might make a hole in it. I think I'll have to buy new one, tomorrow.

MEGAN

William, don't be wasting your money. That raggedy pouch you've got, suits you.

MISS ROLLINS grabs MEGAN by the arm and pulls her away.

WILLIAM

Easy peezy, Japaneezy... Girls!

EXT. MONDAY AFTER SCHOOL. BOYS' SIDE OF SCHOOL YARD.

MEGAN and ADAM playing marbles MEGAN'S won load marbles off the other boys, they're stood watching on. MEGAN and Adam have 2 marbles each. ADAM misses, MEGAN'S turn.

SYLVIA RENDON (Megan's mother): Age: mid 30s, average build, intelligent, hard working, economical, adaptable

SYLVIA RENDON (O.S.)

(shouting from afar)

Megan! Come on honey! I've been in the car waiting for you.

MEGAN

Yes, Mother! I'm coming! (Beat)
Sorry boys I've gotta go.

MEGAN jumps up, quickly dusts off and hurriedly collects her things.

ADAM

We can play tomorrow, after school.

MEGAN

I'll let you know. (Beat) Thanks for the game boys. And a special thank you, for all my new marbles William. Why, my pouch is so full I can't even tie it on my belt loop. Hope I don't get a hole in it. My Mom will be making me a bigger one anyway. Or maybe I'll buy one, for a change. Where'd you get yours?

WILLIAM collects his books and exits. BOYS laughing loudly.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
Easy peezy, Japaneezy, easy peezy,
Japaneezy.

CUT TO:

MEGAN meets up with SYLVIA, shows her the pouch. SYLVIA
praises her, then holds the pouch.

THE END.