

**SANDBOX**

by Mark S. Meritt and Todd Stern

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

DEAN  
GABBY  
JOEY  
LIBBY  
NEAL  
MR. TALLMAN

**AUTHORS' NOTE:** The children in this play represent different strands of American society, and the dramatic action is symbolic of the conflicts between these groups. We have overestimated the intelligence of five year olds to communicate these conflicts within the context of the play.

## SANDBOX

*A typical sandbox in the playground of a typical suburban development. It is the last day of the summer before kindergarten starts, and some friends will be spending the day together. The sandbox at C is the only object on the stage. There is a bucket inside. Silhouettes of trees are projected onto an upstage scrim. JOEY and NEAL are playing with toy cars in the sandbox as the lights come up. JOEY is dressed in T-shirt and blue jeans. NEAL wears shorts.*

NEAL: My car goes faster than your car.

JOEY: Well my brother gave me this car, and he used to play with it all the time.

NEAL: Well I've had this car longer than you've had that car.

JOEY (*after a pause*): My brother gives me all his old toys.

NEAL: Look, Joey. Look at how fast it goes. Everybody has this car.

JOEY: Well, he only had this one.

*(LIBBY and DEAN enter from L. DEAN is carrying a box. LIBBY wears a T-shirt under overalls, and no socks under worn sneakers. DEAN has docksiders and a baseball hat.)*

LIBBY: Hey, guys.

JOEY and NEAL: Hey, Libby.

NEAL: Hey, Dean.

JOEY: Hey, Dean, did you bring your cars?

DEAN: Yeah, I brought them all! I got the one with the red stripes, I got the one with the big engine, I got the minivan, I got the trucks, I got the drag racer, I got the Super Duper Laser Car, I got everything.

JOEY: Alright!

LIBBY: Can I play with the one with the big engine?

DEAN: Yeah.

JOEY: Can I have the truck?

DEAN: Sure. You want one, Neal?

NEAL: No, I like mine.

LIBBY: This one can go over mountains and rocks and in the woods and underwater and everywhere I want it to.

NEAL: Mine can go really fast on a highway.

LIBBY: But mine can go anywhere. I can go to Paris and Africa and China and underwater-

NEAL: I don't want to go to China. I like it here.

LIBBY: It's nice here, but I could see all the fish and lobsters and snails.

JOEY: I have a fish tank.

NEAL: I don't like fish.

DEAN: Well, I can't go underwater, but my minivan has a TV.

*(GABBY stomps in from L. She wears long, gaudy earrings and has pig tails.)*

GABBY *(to offstage Mom)*: No, Mommy, I won't get sand in Barbie's hair. I promise. And don't forget to tell me when it's three o'clock so I can watch "Guiding Light."

ALL: Hi, Gabby... *(etc.)*

GABBY: Hi! Oh, you're playing cars? I could go home and get my Barbie SuperVette, do you want me to? It's really big and really pink, but I guess I shouldn't bring it 'cause I might get sand in it, so I'll just play with yours. But I really don't like cars. Can we play something else?

NEAL: No, I still want to play cars.

LIBBY: What do you want to play, Gabby?

GABBY: Something else.

NEAL: I've got all my toy soldiers here.

GABBY: We could play... Hollywood!

NEAL: Hollywood?

GABBY: I could be Madonna and Dean, you could be Sean Penn.

JOEY: Who could I be?

NEAL: Nobody. I don't want to play Hollywood.

GABBY: You can be Kirk Cameron. And wait! Neal should be Sean Penn. You look more like him. Dean can be, uh, Michael J. Fox. And we can all play pretend.

*(DEAN ignores GABBY, continuing to play on his own.)*

LIBBY: Can I be Cher?

GABBY: Yeah, sure! You can be anyone you want to be.

LIBBY *(singing from "Free to Be You and Me")*: "Anyone you want to be."

NEAL: I don't want to be Sean Penn. I don't even like Madonna. I don't like playing Hollywood.

GABBY: You don't like Madonna? But she's so pretty, and she has lots of make up, and she's on the radio, and she's a movie star! I want to be a movie star!

NEAL: I don't want to be a movie star.

JOEY: Me neither. My daddy doesn't like the movies.

GABBY: But movie stars have cars, and big houses, and jewelry, and earrings, and fancy dresses. Can't we keep playing Hollywood? Pretty please?

DEAN: Hey, guys, look!

NEAL: What is it?

DEAN: It's a house! It's just like my house. Here's my garage, and here's my bedroom, and there's my piggy bank in the window. Isn't it neat? *(to GABBY)* Look, look!

LIBBY: That's really neat!

JOEY: I'm gonna build my house all by myself, and it's gonna be

just right.

NEAL: Me too!

GABBY: Well, I'm still Madonna. *(She starts to hum "Material Girl".)*

LIBBY: Come on, Gabby, help me build my house.

GABBY *(with a sudden burst)*: "You know that we are living..."  
*(She fades back to a hum.)*

*(The kids build their houses silently, except for GABBY who continues to hum a little, until she fades to silence with eyes glued to LIBBY's house.)*

GABBY: Your house should have a big porch.

LIBBY: Why?

GABBY: So I can bring all my Barbie stuff over to play.

LIBBY: But we could play Barbie at your house.

GABBY: You're house should have a VCR, and a big stereo, and a microwave oven, and lots of toys.

DEAN: My house has that. And as soon as it's done, you can all come over and play with my toys and we can watch the VCR.

JOEY: Do you have "Peter Pan" on tape?

DEAN: This house has everything on tape.

LIBBY: My house doesn't have a lot of VCRs or tapes or stereos, but it's gonna have one big room where everyone can play together.

GABBY: Play with what?

LIBBY: We could color with my crayons and we could use my fingerpaints.

NEAL: Do we have to fingerpaint?

LIBBY: You can use the crayons.

GABBY: I don't fingerpaint. But I'll bring over all my dolls and my records and we can do that.

DEAN: When I'm done with my house, I'm gonna build another one.

NEAL: Me too!

DEAN: We can all build more houses. We can build the whole neighborhood.

LIBBY: Yeah! And we can build the playground, too!

JOEY: The whole neighborhood? That's a lot of houses. And I like mine. I don't want to build anymore.

NEAL: Me neither.

LIBBY: Why not?

JOEY: We can only play in one house at a time anyway. We can all play in my house.

NEAL: All the houses are supposed to look the same. And look, Dean. Your house is bigger than mine already.

DEAN: Yeah, I guess it looks kind of silly.

LIBBY: It might get boring building the same house over and over anyway.

GABBY: I'm gonna wear my new jean jacket tomorrow.

NEAL: But it's still summer!

GABBY: But it's the first day of school.  
LIBBY: I can't wait for kindergarten.  
DEAN: I got a new pair of Reeboks. I'm gonna wear them tomorrow.  
JOEY: My mom's gonna make me a great tuna sandwich for lunch.  
NEAL: I don't like fish.  
JOEY: Well, we had tuna casserole last night, too.  
NEAL: I'm gonna have a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, with three chocolate chip cookies and an orange. My mom says everyone should have an orange.  
DEAN: I don't know what I'm having for lunch, but my parents are taking me out to Japanese food tonight.  
NEAL: Japanese food? Blaaah!  
LIBBY: My mom never took me out to Japanese food. I wonder what it tastes like.  
NEAL: Probably really gross.  
GABBY: My parents took me out to Japanese food once, and it was really gross.  
LIBBY: I hope we learn about trees and animals.  
DEAN: I want to meet a lot of kids. I hope they like my new lunch box.  
NEAL: I liked nursery school.  
LIBBY: But don't you want to learn about trees?  
NEAL: I liked playing with blocks. What if I don't like the teacher? What if I get hungry before lunch time?  
JOEY: My brother said they still have blocks in kindergarten. And you can play with my blocks.  
DEAN (to NEAL): Joey's coming over my house after school tomorrow to play. You can come over, too, if you want.  
LIBBY: Hey, Gabby. Do you want to come over to my house after school tomorrow?  
GABBY: That's okay. My mommy's buying me the new Ken doll tomorrow as a first-day-of-school present, so I'm just gonna play with him after school. You can come play Barbie with me, though.  
LIBBY: Okay. Can I bring my fingerpaints?  
GABBY: Okay, but I'm not gonna play with them.  
DEAN: I can't wait to fingerpaint in school.  
NEAL: Maybe we could play Cowboys and Indians too.  
JOEY: I've been working on a really neat fingerpainting at home, and it's really neat, so I'm just gonna work on that.  
LIBBY: You can work with me tomorrow, and we could make a really big one together.  
DEAN: Wait a minute! I got an idea! We don't have to keep all these little houses. (*He knocks over his sand house*) We could all build one really big, humongous house! We could build a sandcastle!  
GABBY: But we're not even at the beach!  
DEAN: We don't have to be. A sandcastle can be anywhere. All the kings could live there. And they could have queens, and jacks, and princes, and princesses. And there could be really

big, bright red carpets and lots of gold and treasure.

GABBY: Yeah! Earrings, and necklaces, and bracelets, and all the queens will wear lots of pretty makeup and fancy dresses.

DEAN: And the kings could rule all the kingdoms.

NEAL: Right from the same castle! They can plan the whole kingdom. They can decide anything. They can make all the laws, and they can say who's good and who's bad, and they can make sure everything is okay.

DEAN: And even some people could live there, too.

NEAL: But it might get crowded.

LIBBY: But if we make it big enough, everyone can live there. With the kings! They could all talk to each other, and even the kings would talk to them.

JOEY: And at the end of the day, when they get home from work, they could all have dinner together, and the kings could eat with everyone.

NEAL: But they can't eat at the round table. Only the knights and the kings can eat at the round table.

DEAN: So the kings are there, and the people are there, and there are stores where they can buy their food for dinner. And there can be other kinds of stores, too! Big stores!

GABBY: Like Macy's!

DEAN: Yeah! And everyone could buy everything, and they'd never have to leave to sandcastle.

GABBY: It's like a big mall!

DEAN: Okay, first we have to build the towers.

NEAL: They should be really tall, so we can see everyone who comes inside and everything around the castle.

GABBY: Yeah. We can keep all our toys inside them, too.

DEAN: Okay. *(to JOEY and NEAL)* You guys make one over there, *(to LIBBY)* you make one over there, and you make one over there. I'll make a really tall one over here.

*(They've begun to work.)*

GABBY: I'll make mine really fat so we can put a lot of stuff in it.

JOEY *(to DEAN)*: Make sure the bottom of that tower is really strong.

DEAN: Hey, Gabby, what's wrong?

GABBY: I never made a tower before. Can you help me, Libby? Pretty please?

LIBBY: I never made one either, but I'll try.

NEAL: Wow, Gabby. That's a really thick tower. I think ours should be that thick, too, Joey.

*(They finish the towers.)*

DEAN: Now we have to build some walls, so the towers don't fall down.

NEAL: They should be really tall, and thick, to protect all the people inside.

LIBBY: But if everyone lives in the castle anyway, what are they afraid of?

JOEY: I don't think there should be any walls. If anyone else wants to come into the castle, they can.

NEAL: But there'll be doors.

DEAN: Why don't we build them only kind of high?

LIBBY: Okay.

NEAL: Okay, but high enough so the castle doesn't look stupid.

JOEY: I'll make a really big pile of sand over here.

DEAN: You guys build those walls, and I'll build this one at the front of the castle.

*(They begin the walls.)*

LIBBY: Don't forget the doors. You want some help, Joey?

JOEY: That's okay. I can do it.

NEAL: I think we need a little more sand.

JOEY: I'll make the pile bigger.

GABBY: These walls are all brown. They should have some paint. They'll look nicer.

LIBBY: I could get my fingerpaints later.

*(They finish.)*

NEAL: We need a moat.

GABBY: What's that?

LIBBY: It's like a river around the whole castle. I don't think we need one. How will anybody get in?

DEAN: People can swim and go fishing.

GABBY: Like at the beach.

NEAL: It'll keep out animals and robbers. And we can make a drawbridge so people can get in.

DEAN: I think we need a moat, too. Joey, could you go to the pond and fill up that bucket?

JOEY: Sure.

*(JOEY exits R with the bucket.)*

DEAN: Let's scoop out some sand all the way around the castle.

*(They do.)*

NEAL: I didn't know the sandbox was this deep.

LIBBY: Look. I got it right around the corner.

JOEY *(entering from R with bucket)*: I got the water. *(He pours it into the moat.)*

LIBBY: Now we need a bridge.

DEAN: Yeah. We can make a drawbridge with some sticks.

NEAL: Yeah.

*(An OLD MAN enters from R, carrying a lounge chair. He takes in a good, deep breath of fresh air, crosses L. He opens his chair at UL and sits down.)*

LIBBY: I don't think we should have a drawbridge. We should have a regular bridge, so nobody has to wait to get in.

GABBY: But the robbers could get in, too.

NEAL: Yeah. We need a drawbridge.

LIBBY: Okay.

DEAN: I'll go get some sticks.

JOEY: No, it's okay. I'll get them.

LIBBY: You got everything, Joey. I'll get them. *(She gets them from R.)*

JOEY: Why don't we put some houses inside?

NEAL: First we should build the king's house.

DEAN: Yeah. It should be right in the middle.

JOEY: Where will all the people live?

NEAL: There'll be some room left.

GABBY: And where are the stores?

DEAN: The king's house won't be that big. We'll put all the houses and stores and horses in the castle.

LIBBY: I don't think we have enough sand left for the houses.

DEAN: Well, we have walls and towers, so we can pretend everything else is there.

GABBY: Yeah, we can pretend.

JOEY: So now what?

DEAN: Now we can play with it.

NEAL: Yeah. Everyone starts at the other kingdom.

GABBY: What other kingdom?

NEAL: It's a pretend other kingdom.

GABBY: Oh!

NEAL: And they all want to move to this kingdom because it's a really good one.

LIBBY: Yeah. So they come from everywhere.

*(The kids starts making slow, pushing motions in the sand, as if a lot of people were going to the castle.)*

JOEY: "Hi, we're here to come into the new kingdom."

NEAL: "Come on in."

LIBBY: "Let's go! Let's all go!"

ALL *(cheering)*: "Yeah! Hurray!"

NEAL: Now we need some laws, so nobody does anything wrong.

GABBY: How do we make laws?

JOEY: I guess we can just pretend they're already there.

DEAN: Yeah. So then it's nighttime and they all go to sleep.

ALL: "Good night"... *(etc.)*

NEAL: Then they all wake up and go to church. And while they're in church, some bad guys go up to the castle. *(He takes a bunch of his toy soldiers and puts them in a pile in front of the castle.)*

JOEY: Who are the bad guys?

NEAL: They're just bad guys.

LIBBY: So what do we do?

NEAL: First we have to make the walls thicker.

LIBBY: But there's not enough sand.

NEAL: So we'll pretend. Then, the king sends his knights out to fight the bad guys. Here. You be the knights, Libby.

LIBBY: I don't want to.

DEAN: Come on, Libby. I'll be the knights with you.

LIBBY: Okay.

NEAL: Now we have to fight.

*(He picks up a soldier, flies it over to one of Libby's soldiers, and lands it, making an explosion sound.)*

NEAL: Now he's dead.

GABBY: So bring him to the hospital.

NEAL: You can't. He's dead.

LIBBY: I don't want to play soldiers.

DEAN: Come on, Libby. Look.

*(DEAN kills one of NEAL's soldiers the same way.)*

NEAL: See?

LIBBY: Okay.

*(LIBBY kills a soldier. NEAL then kills another one of LIBBY's.)*

LIBBY: Why'd you do that?

NEAL: This is a war. *(He kills another.)* You can't just kill one. *(He kills another.)*

*(DEAN kills one, then LIBBY does. Each of them kills a few more.)*

GABBY: Stop it.

LIBBY *(as she kills one)*: I don't want to play anymore.

NEAL *(killing one)*: Come on.

*(All three continue to kill the others' soldiers. The children manipulate their soldiers faster and faster. LIBBY says "I don't want to play anymore" more frequently. GABBY says "Stop it" louder and louder each time. DEAN stops when he realizes that LIBBY really doesn't want to play, but it's too late, as LIBBY continues to direct her energy against NEAL's troops. When LIBBY*

*says her line for the last time, she gives NEAL's troops one final blow, and he has lost. At that precise moment, GABBY yells.)*

GABBY: Stop it! *(She begins to cry.)*

LIBBY *(after a short pause)*: I really don't want to play anymore.

JOEY: Come on, Gabby, it's just pretend.

*(GABBY begins to stop crying. NEAL sits somewhat stunned that he lost.)*

JOEY: We don't need an army. We can just play in the castle. Dean, you can be the king, and Libby can be the queen. And I'm going to be a farmer, and I'll make the food so we can all have dinner. I'm gonna plant things, and mow the lawn, and rake the leaves all day long.

GABBY *(still sniffing a little)*: Who can I be?

JOEY: Anyone you want.

GABBY: I don't want to be a farmer. Can I have a store?

JOEY: Yeah. And when you're done at the store, we can all have dinner.

GABBY: Can we all talk, too?

JOEY: Yeah.

GABBY: What's for dinner?

JOEY: Applesauce. "So what did you do today, Mr. King?"

*(They pretend their hands are people, using their finger to walk.)*

DEAN: "I sat in my throne, and I talked to the queen, and I played soccer. What did you do, Mr. Farmer?"

JOEY: "I planted a lot of apple trees, so we could have dinner."

LIBBY: "That sounds like fun. Why don't we try that tomorrow?"

DEAN: "Sure. I've never seen anybody plant an apple tree before."

GABBY: So now what?

JOEY: Now it's tomorrow. "Watch, Mr. King. You take the lawn mower, and you push it, and the grass gets shorter."

DEAN: "Then you plant the trees?"

JOEY: "Yeah."

LIBBY: "Can I try, Mr. Farmer?"

JOEY: "Yeah. Hold it right here."

NEAL: If you're mowing the lawn, who's being king and queen?

DEAN: We're still the king and queen.

LIBBY: "Thank you, Mr. Farmer. That was fun. And when you're done working, you can come to our dance tonight. Everyone's invited!"

GABBY: "Oooo! I'm gonna wear a fancy dress!"

LIBBY: Now we're at the dance, and everyone is there. The king,

and the queen, and all the farmers, and everyone.

GABBY: Where are the knights?

DEAN: They're dancing.

GABBY: Where's the princess?

NEAL: They don't have one.

GABBY: Can I be the princess? Pretty please?

LIBBY: Yes.

GABBY: Oooo!

JOEY: "Miss Princess, would you like to dance?"

GABBY: "Yes, Mr. Farmer. La, la, la... All that dancing made me tired. I'm gonna go for a walk. Do you want to come, Mr. Farmer?"

JOEY: "No, thanks. I'm gonna stay and dance."

GABBY (to DEAN and LIBBY): "Do you want to come?"

DEAN: "No, thanks. You can go by yourself, Princess Gabby."

GABBY: "Here I am, I'm the princess. I'm so beautiful, and I have the fanciest dress." Can I be a damsel in distress?

NEAL: What's that?

GABBY: It's like a princess who somebody captured. You can capture me. Come on, Neal. "Here I am, I'm all alone in the biggest tower, and nobody's here."

NEAL: Okay.

*(NEAL picks up one soldier, leads it up to the tower, captures the princess. He takes her outside the castle to the edge of the sandbox.)*

GABBY: "Help me! Help me! I'm a damsel in distress! Somebody help me! Where's my knight in shining armor?"

*(DEAN, LIBBY, and JOEY continue to dance and sing "La la.")*

GABBY: "Isn't anybody going to save me?"

DEAN: The music's too loud. We can't hear you.

*(LIBBY and JOEY sing a little louder and giggle.)*

GABBY: Come on. Somebody has to save the princess from the bad man who captured her.

DEAN: Okay, I'll do it.

*(DEAN leads the king outside the castle to the princess and the bad man.)*

DEAN: "Ah, ha! So you're the bad man who captured the princess? Take that!"

*(DEAN squashes his hand all over NEAL's hand. NEAL, back in good humor, feigns a pretend death, groaning melodramatically.)*

GABBY: "Oh, thank you! Thank you! Now I'll go fix my makeup, and put on the fanciest dress, and I'll be the prettiest girl at the dance!"

LIBBY: "Mr. King, would you like to dance after your hard trip?"

DEAN: "No, I'm kind of tired after rescuing Princess Gabby."

LIBBY: "Would you like to dance, Mr. Farmer?"

JOEY: "No, I danced a lot tonight."

GABBY: "Here's my new dress. Does anybody want to dance?"

LIBBY: "All the boys are tired."

NEAL: "I'm not."

LIBBY: "But you're a bad guy. I think the dance is over."

GABBY: "Awwwww."

JOEY: "Now what do we do?"

NEAL: "We could go swimming in the moat."

GABBY: "Yeah!"

LIBBY: "Nah."

DEAN: "Wait. I know what we can do. The dance is over, so Neal, you're a good guy now. Mr. Farmer, you go home. We'll stay here in the big house. Let's all put on our pajamas and go to sleep. Tomorrow's gonna be a big day."

NEAL: "What's tomorrow?"

DEAN: "The kingdom is gonna make a plan. So now it's tomorrow. Let me get out my appointment book."

GABBY: "What's that?"

DEAN: "It tells you all the stuff you have to do today. My dad's got one. First, I have to meet with all my chiefs."

NEAL: "Can I be a chief?"

DEAN: "Yeah. We have to talk about the kingdom."

LIBBY: "Can I listen?"

DEAN: "I guess so. Chief Neal, do we have enough apples?"

NEAL: "Let me ask Mr. Farmer. Joey, do we have enough apples?"

JOEY: "Yeah."

DEAN: "Good. Do we have enough stores?"

NEAL: "Let me ask the princess. Princess Gabby, do we have enough stores?"

GABBY: "Yeah, I guess."

DEAN: "Good. How are all the people doing?"

NEAL: "Let me ask the queen. Queen Libby, how are all the people doing?"

LIBBY: "Great."

DEAN: "Good. Everybody in the kingdom, listen! Our kingdom is doing fine!"

ALL (*cheering*): "Yeah!"

DEAN: "Now I have to meet the other kings."

NEAL: "I didn't know there were other kings."

DEAN: "Yeah. There are. Neal, you be another king for a minute. Hello, King. How are things going?"

NEAL: "Okay, Mr. King."

DEAN: "Do you have enough apples and stores and people?"

NEAL: "We don't have any apples. We eat oranges."

DEAN: "No apples?"  
NEAL: "No apples."  
DEAN: "Uh, oh! Everybody in the kingdom, listen! Our friends don't have any apples. I think we should be nice and share our apples with them. Don't you?"  
ALL: Yeah!  
DEAN: "Mr. Farmer, can you plant some more apple trees for our friends?"  
JOEY: "Yeah!"  
LIBBY: "Do you want some help, Mr. Farmer?"  
JOEY: "Yeah. I want to make sure our friends have enough apples."  
LIBBY: "I'll mow the lawn a little."  
DEAN: "Do you want to help, Princess Gabby?"  
GABBY: "Nah."  
DEAN: "Okay. How are the apples, Mr. Farmer?"  
JOEY: "They're fine."  
LIBBY: "I finished mowing the lawn."  
DEAN: "Okay, it's lunch time."  
JOEY: "Good. I'm really hungry from planting all those apple trees."  
DEAN: "But you have to keep planting them. The other kingdom needs a lot of apples."  
JOEY: "But I'm hungry."  
DEAN: "You can have an apple."  
JOEY: "I can't eat lunch with my family? I can't eat lunch with you guys?"  
NEAL: "We'll save some for you, Mr. Farmer."  
GABBY: "Why don't you get some water, so the trees'll grow faster. Then you can come eat with us."  
JOEY: "Okay."

*(JOEY picks up the bucket. As he does, the bucket hits the big tower, knocking half of it down. NEAL, DEAN, and LIBBY overlap somewhat.)*

NEAL: Aw, Joey, you knocked down the tower.  
DEAN: I made that tower!  
LIBBY: Now the sandcastle's broken.  
JOEY *(after a short pause)*: Sorry.  
GABBY: That's the way the cookie crumbles.  
NEAL: Now what?  
DEAN: I don't know.  
LIBBY: Why don't we try to fix it?  
GABBY: But it took so long. I don't want to do it all over again.

*(NEAL picks up a bunch of sand and plops it down on top of the broken tower. It doesn't work. They sit silently, looking around at each other for a few seconds. DEAN then begins to*

*build a house, similar to the one he built earlier.)*

GABBY (*after a pause*): Can't we have another dance at the castle? I really-

ALL: Gabby.

*(As the group falls silent and DEAN abandons his house, the OLD MAN gets up and crosses to the sandbox, leaning over to look at the castle.)*

OLD MAN: Nice sandcastle you got yourselves there. You might want to put a little more sand around the bottom, though.

JOEY (*glumly*): Hi, Mr. Tallman.

TALLMAN: You kids look a little sad. What's wrong?

DEAN: Joey knocked down the sandcastle.

TALLMAN: Just looks like a tower to me.

NEAL: That was the biggest tower.

DEAN: I built it.

GABBY: And I built this one. With Libby.

TALLMAN: Well, that looks like a mighty fine tower... Why, you know what that reminds me of? Back when I was a young man, me and some buddies got into business together. We were going to build backyard train tracks. You see, me and my buddies would find a family with kids like you, and build some real train tracks in the backyard. Then, we'd get a train that really worked, but it was a lot smaller than a real one, you see. That way, the kids could ride it around their backyard.

LIBBY: Where did you find the small trains?

TALLMAN: That was the problem, you see. There weren't too many small trains around. So I thought, why can't we build our own? The other guys wanted to keep looking, but I knew we could do it. It took us four whole months to find all the parts and try to put them together. Every night, we stayed up late, each building one part of the train. And finally, the big day came. The family was there, and my buddies were there, and there was that train, right on the driveway. For a couple of seconds, it seemed to be going okay. Then all of a sudden, a couple of screws started popping out, and there were these weird buzzing noises. Next thing I knew, the train just fell apart. The kids were heartbroken. Then I thought. Nobody knew anything about what the other guys were building. So we all sat down again, and figured out a whole new train. This time, we helped each other right up to the end. We took our shiny, new train, and brought it back to that driveway. And each time that train went around that driveway, the smiles on those kids faces got bigger and bigger.

JOEY: Do you still have those trains?

TALLMAN: That was the only one we ever made. But that was enough, because after that we knew we could do it.

DEAN: What happened to your friends?

TALLMAN: Well, we all did different things. We knew we couldn't build trains for the rest of our lives. But that was okay. Nothing was stopping us from doing something else. Everyone did different things, and we never worked together after that. But whenever any one of us had a new idea, no matter how strange it was, we all came out to watch. *(pause)* You kids start school tomorrow, don't you?

NEAL: Yeah.

LIBBY: I'm gonna learn about trees and animals.

TALLMAN: What do you want to learn about, Neal?

NEAL: Aw, I don't know. I hope it's the same stuff we did in nursery school, though.

TALLMAN: You can't stay in nursery school forever.

NEAL: I know.

TALLMAN: See how old I am? I've been learning for sixty years, and hardly know anything.

LIBBY: Really?

TALLMAN: There's so much to know, and sometimes I get scared because I don't know what I'm gonna find, but it'd be a shame not to look. *(pause)* Well, I better be going. I got a train to catch. *(He winks.)*

GABBY: Bye, Mr. Tallman.

ALL: Bye.

*(TALLMAN exits R.)*

NEAL: Maybe school's gonna be okay.

DEAN: Maybe we can build another sandcastle sometime.

LIBBY: I know I'm gonna like school.

JOEY: Hey, Neal. I'll trade you my tuna fish sandwich for your peanut butter and jelly?

NEAL: Tuna fish? Maybe.

GABBY: I think my mom's calling me. It's probably three o'clock.

DEAN: Yeah, I guess I gotta go, too.

GABBY *(exiting L)*: Bye, guys.

DEAN *(following)*: Bye.

JOEY: I'll see you guys in school.

LIBBY: Bye.

*(JOEY exits L.)*

LIBBY *(about to exit L)*: See you tomorrow.

NEAL: Yeah.

*(LIBBY exits. NEAL follows. The lights fade, keeping the broken sandcastle visible for a few seconds. Curtain.)*