

THE HAPPINESS TREE

(An allegorical comedy)

by

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THE HAPPINESS TREE

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A fee will be charged for this licence which must be paid prior to the first performance otherwise the licence is automatically cancelled and the performance becomes illegal.

THE HAPPINESS TREE

CHARACTERS

(Male or female with doubling)

Storyteller.....
Mr Poor.....
Mrs Poor.....
John Poor.....
Josephine Poor.....
Doctor's Receptionist.....
Ill Woman.....
Rich Woman.....
Rich Child.....
Doctor.....
Manager.....
Office Clerk.....
John's Mate.....
Funeral Director.....
Court Clerk.....
Justice Rich.....
Barrister Rich.....
Barrister Very Rich.....
Speaker.....
Mr Rich.....
Mr Always Rich.....
Paper Vendor.....
Constable 1.....
Constable 2.....
Sergeant.....
Teacher.....
Pupil 1.....
Pupil 2.....
Madeleine.....
Club Bouncer.....
Clubber 1.....
Clubber 2.....
Pusher.....
TV Presenter.....
Major Flogham.....
Marina Flatchest.....
Professor Bickerstaff.....
Ivor Trydem.....

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Storyteller..... Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin ... once upon a time in a far off distant land there lived some people called the Arcadians. Life in Arcadia was not all sweetness and light, the majority of the people were poor and had to work hard all their lives to earn enough to bring up their children and pay for the little extras in life that we all appreciate - like bread, potatoes, a roof over your head, that kind of thing.

..... The people were happy in their work, they appreciated that they were poor but were willing to accept their lot because they knew that that was the way it was, the way it always had been and the way it probably always would be.

..... There were a few rich people in Arcadia but the poor people didn't mind that, because there had always been the rich who were obviously better than them. They had wealth, position and power and most of the rich had had rich parents themselves so it was the accepted way of things.

..... When the rich went by in their ornate carriages the poor people would stand on the side of the road, touch their forelocks and wave and cheer heartily saying, "Look! Aren't we lucky to have such people to look up to, don't they look nice?"

..... But there were some things that the poor people found hard to bear...

..... (Lights rise on the Poor Household)

Mr Poor Good morning Mrs Poor, and how are you this fine morning?

Mrs P Very well thank you

Mr P Are the children risen?

Mrs P They are, my dear. They are making their poor beds, washing in the poor bathroom and putting on their poor clothes

Mr P Good - when they arrive we shall have breakfast

Mrs P Poor breakfast

Mr P Of course

John Poor Good morning father

Mr P Good morning John ...and how are you this fine morning?

John I am poor father

Mr P I know that

John When I went to bed I was poor and I have woken poor

Mr P But apart from that are you well?

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John Oh yes father, very well – but very poor

Mr P Never mind, here comes your sister

Josephine Good morning father

Mr P Good morning Josephine - and how are you this fine day? (He quickly interrupts her) No - don't tell me, I think I can guess

Mrs P (Enters with tray) Good morning children

Both Morning mama

Mrs P How are you?

Mr P Don't ask

John I'm very hungry

Josephine And me

Mrs P I'm afraid there isn't much to eat

Mr P It's to be expected. Before we begin let us give thanks for the little that we have (He puts his hands together and the others do likewise) Heavenly Father, the food we have is meagre, our appetites are large but we are grateful for the little that we have. We give thanks to you for what you have provided, safe in the knowledge that when we die and leave this poor existence on earth we shall be richly rewarded in the other place

Josephine It is a comfort to have religion

Mrs P Indeed it is

..... (They begin to eat)

John Permission to speak father

Mr P Go ahead

John Whilst lying in my poor bed last night I had an idea. Your employer is wealthy and we are poor

Mr P Yes?

John Forgive me father, but could you not ask him to provide you with more wages?

Josephine Shame on you

Mrs P Let the boy speak

John I'm sure he would not mind

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Mr P Its something I never thought of - ask him for more wages? Perhaps I will

Mrs P You're not getting ideas above your station husband?

Mr P No dear but the boy may be right - we have nothing to lose

Mrs P Josephine, you have not eaten your gruel

Josephine I don't feel well mama

Mrs P Then we shall have to take you to the doctor

Josephine Is that really necessary?

Mrs P It is

 (Change of scene - the doctor's waiting room - enter woman very ill)

Receptionist (To woman) Yes?

Ill Woman (Coughing) I want to see the doctor

Receptionist Are you ill?

Ill Woman Of course I'm ill, if I wasn't ill I wouldn't need the doctor

Receptionist Are you a private patient or one of the others?

Ill Woman I don't have any money

Receptionist Then the doctor will see you in six months time.

Ill Woman But I'll be dead by then

Receptionist Then you won't need a doctor - Next?

 (Enter rich woman with child)

 (Fawning) Good morning Mrs Rich, how nice to see you

Mrs Rich We've come about the child

Receptionist Ah yes - you're private aren't you?

Mrs Rich Of course

Receptionist The doctor will see you right away

 (Enter Mrs Poor and daughter)

Receptionist (Looking down her nose) Can I help you?

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Mrs Poor We'd like to see the doctor

Receptionist You have the appearance of being a poor person. Are you poor?

Mrs Poor Yes. Poor but honest

Receptionist I thought so – I'm sorry but the doctor can't be bothered with the likes of you - he'll see you in six months time

Mrs Poor (Pleased) Did you hear that, daughter; the doctor will see us in six months. How fortunate

..... (Enter doctor, mother & child)

Doctor There we go, Mrs Rich. Your child is fine

Mrs Rich Thank you doctor. However can I thank you?

Doctor In the usual way

(He opens his wallet with a flourish and Mrs Rich puts notes in it in one movement)

Mrs Rich Bye then

Doctor Goodbye

Mrs Poor Sorry to disturb you doctor but can I ask a question?

Doctor Of course, questions are free

Mrs Poor Why can't you see us now?

Doctor You appear to be poor

Mrs Poor Yes

Doctor Then you can't pay, can you?

Mrs Poor No, but we're honest

Doctor If I took in all the people who couldn't pay then I should end up like you and that would never do, would it?

Mrs Poor I suppose not, sorry for asking

Doctor That's quite all right

..... (Mrs Poor and daughter exit)

Foolish woman. (To receptionist) If anyone wants me I'll be on the golf course

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Storyteller And Mrs Poor went away safe in the knowledge that in six months time she would indeed have the privilege of being seen by the doctor and glad she was for this.

 Meanwhile in the place where Mr Poor worked he had decided it was time to do as his son had asked

 (Manager's Office with huge desk - sound of knocking on the door)

Manager Come in

Mr Poor Sorry to disturb you Sir

Manager Who the devil are you?

Mr Poor Mr Poor

Manager Mr Poor?

Mr Poor Yes. I work for you

Manager If you work for me, why aren't you working now?

Mr Poor I've come to ask you a question

Manager Is that allowed? Just a moment (speaks into intercom) Miss Peabody, I've got a Mr Poor here who says he wants to ask me a question. Are they allowed to stop work and ask questions? (Muttering off) They are? Well I never (To Mr Poor) O.K. Ask away

Mr Poor My family and I were gathered round our poor breakfast table this morning -

Manager Not eating too much I hope

Mr Poor No sir - when my son, John Poor, made a suggestion. He suggested that when I got to work I should perhaps ask you if I might have a little more money to live on

Manager A little more what?

Mr Poor Money, the money you make from what we manufacture

Manager If I gave you more then I'd have less

Mr Poor Yes sir

Manager And you'd be richer and I'd be poorer

Mr Poor Only a little

Manager Afraid I can't see the logic in that - you'd better get back to your workbench

Mr Poor Yes sir

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Storyteller And so it was that Mr Poor went home that night heavy hearted to his poor, poor family and his poor, poor fireside

 (The Poor Household)

Mrs Poor Welcome home Mr Poor

Mr Poor (Nodding) Mrs Poor

Josephine Father

Mr Poor Josephine

Mrs Poor How was your day?

Mr. Poor Need you ask? Any news of our sickly daughter?

Mrs Poor (Brightly) Yes, the doctor says he'll be able to see her in six months time

Mr Poor That's something I suppose

..... (Enter John Poor)

John Good evening father. Did you ask your boss for more money?

Mr Poor I did

John And did he give you more?

Mr Poor What do you think? But at least he spoke to me, I should be grateful for that

John So what are you going to do now?

Mr Poor I shall thank the good Lord that I am blessed by having such a thoughtful and considerate manager.

Storyteller Now you might think that in this land of Arcadia things did not bode well for the Common Man but you'd be wrong because if he felt an injustice had been done then he could always go to the courts ...

.....
..... (Courtroom)

Clerk Order, order! Please be upstanding for his honour Mr Justice Rich

..... (Enter Justice Rich, bows all round etc)

Justice (To Clerk) What do we have today?

Clerk The case of Mr Ungrateful Poor versus Mr Rich

Justice Mr Poor, are you represented?

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Mr Poor I ... er?

Barrister Rich I represent Mr Poor Sir

Justice You do?

Barrister Rich Yes sir

Justice Are you mad?

Barrister Rich No sir, I have a problem that won't go away - the doctor says its a bad case of something called "conscience"

Justice Well I hope you're soon better. And who represents Mr Rich?

Barrister V Rich I do, your honour

Justice Don't I know you?

Barrister V Rich I'm your brother Sir

Justice So you are. How silly of me. Now then how far have we got?

Clerk Sir, Mr Poor alleges that Mr Rich controls the whole of society, that in the distant past Mr Rich's ancestors took away the countryside that was made by the Almighty for the benefit of the poor, put fences around it and now refuses to allow any of Mr Poor's family access to it

Justice Do I hear right? Mr Rich is being sued?

Clerk Yes Sir

Justice How is this possible?

Barrister Rich Legal Aid sir

Justice I see ... and how long has this case been running?

Clerk Since time immemorial sir

Justice Then its time it was sorted - not guilty!

Clark But you haven't heard the evidence yet sir

Justice No matter - Mr Rich can't be guilty can he? (To Barrister Rich) I'd like to have a word with you afterwards

Storyteller Thus it was that justice was meted out in the land of Arcadia, for without justice there can be no ... justice

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John Poor How did you do father?

Mr Poor I lost

Mrs Poor At least you got justice

Mr Poor I did

John Poor What happens now?

Mr Poor Justice Rich says that we must pay the bill of Barrister Rich

John And how will we do that?

Mr Poor We will have to sell the house

Mrs Poor Isn't that rather drastic?

Mr Poor It's what you must be prepared to do when you have access to ... "justice"

Mrs Poor I was forgetting

Storyteller And so Mr Poor sold his meagre cottage to pay the bill of Barrister Rich and he and his family roamed about the country living hand to mouth, mouth to hand

Mr Poor (Seeing son ferociously devouring large hand) What are you doing?

John Living hand to mouth

Storyteller But as you might expect, living hand to mouth is no way to make ends meet and as time went by Mr Poor's daughter grew weaker and weaker

Mr Poor (To daughter who is watering plants with Mrs Poor) What are you doing daughter?

Josephine Growing weaker

Storyteller Until at last she could finally grow no weaker

Josephine Aah ! (she passes out)

Mr Poor Is she dead?

Mrs Poor Do you want me to fetch a doctor?

Mr Poor Don't bother

Mrs Poor What shall we do?

Mr Poor Bury her I suppose