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Dinosaur!

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DeVita, James. *Dinosaur!* The Dramatic Publishing Company, 1996. ISBN 0871297299. Contact publisher regarding price. 48 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelsen

Reading Level: Intermediate; Young adult;

Rating: Dependable;

Genre: Contemporary Realistic; Plays; Adventure Play; Fantasy Play

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Family--Juvenile drama; Paleontology--Juvenile drama; Magic--Juvenile drama;

Theme: When things are the hardest, we find what truly matters.

Production Requirements: Complex set/costumes, simple props. Call for large replicas of dinosaurs and parts of dinosaurs

Acts: 1

Run Time: 60 min

Characters: 5F, 2M

Cast: All adult except 1 F child

Time Period: Present day

Judith is a paleontologist who has one week left to prove the existence of the largest dinosaur ever heard of, the Megamaiassaur, before the board of the museum she works for pulls her funding. During this last week of digging, Judith's ex-husband sends their daughter, Mallory, to stay with Judith. Mallory figures out how to assemble the pieces of the Megamaiassaur's egg together which is enough evidence to convince the board. Unfortunately, the egg slips and breaks. Judith gets angry at Mallory and sends Mallory to her room. Mallory starts to play make believe and discovers a magical poem that transforms her to a place where actual dinosaurs live. She finds another poem that takes her back to the real world. Mallory tells her mother, but Judith doesn't believe Mallory. To appease her daughter, Judith asks Mallory to show her how the poem works. Mallory does so, and both are sent back into the prehistoric world. Mallory is too frightened to remember the poem that could take them back home, but after several obstacles that involve fighting off dinosaurs to save themselves, Mallory remembers the poem and they return safely. Upon returning, Judith realizes what is really important and she and Mallory start rebuilding their relationship.

Every character is given ample amount of time on stage which allows the audience to get to know each person and his/her distinct personality. For example, Mallory is a bratty, know-it-all, who does everything she can to get attention. Then there is Allen, who is new, doesn't know how to work with children, and is paranoid about allowing other people to touch his work no matter what it is. There is such a combination of personalities that it makes this play more realistic and brings in both some physical comedy as well as wit. The dialogue fits with each character as the scientists talk in complex terms and don't tend to be social but more secluded as their work requires. On the other hand Mrs. Boyd, Judith's assistant, always speaks very fast and in short concise sentences. The small dinosaurs that Judith and Mallory see are played by the other characters, doubling as dinosaurs. The major impediment to this play is the set. It calls for a large dinosaur footprint that it supposed to remain fairly hidden from the audience until the very end of the play. There is also the call for seeing part of the Megamaiassaur. Depending on the budget for the play, these production requirements may or may not be flexible depending on the director's vision. This play would be appropriate for children's theater, high school or for a community theater.