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The Men's Cottage

Jennifer Eskelsen

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Goldberg, Moses. *The Men's Cottage*. Anchorage Press, Inc, 1980. \$35 for 1st performance, \$30 for 2nd performance, \$25 for each after 2nd performance. 25 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelsen

Reading level: Young adult

Rating: Significant shortcomings

Genre: Folklore; Plays; Fantasy plays; Occult plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Growing up--Juvenile drama; Family--Juvenile drama; Friendship--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Everyone has to grow up sometime.

Production Requirements: Open Stage. Simple costumes and props. Drums.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 45 min

Characters: 3M, 2F

Cast: 1F child, 1F adult, 1M child, 2M adults

Time Period: Native American Past

Gini Kanwa is in his preteens. His parents died when he was a baby and so he was raised by his uncle, Olunze, who is the chief of their tribe. Olunze has decided that it is time for his nephew to become a man and sleep in the Men's Cottage, where he will live until he finds a wife and moves out on his own. Gini Kanwa doesn't want to, since it means he will have to leave his grandmother and his best friend. Moreover, he will no longer be allowed to paint and make things. However, Olunze, as his guardian, makes him go through the ceremony. Gini Kanwa professes that he will not change who he is once he becomes a man, but after the ceremony he finds that, because of pressure from the other men to be a good hunter and so on, he can no longer find joy in what he used to love to do. It is because of this pressure from his uncle and the other men in the village that he turns his back on his friend because she is still just a child.

This play tends to show a stereotypical view of the Native American culture. The characters speak in disjointed sentences and don't have very much depth to them. Gini Kanwa is a strong-spirited kid who refuses to let this ceremony change him, but then his personality changes and goes the opposite direction, making him a cold and bitter man. The change is said to have been magical, but in the dialogue of the ceremony there isn't any sort of magical potion, spirit or anything that consumes Gini Kanwa, making it difficult to believe that he has suddenly changed everything about himself in the course of one night. This play brings up the issue that there are things that society deems to be for children and things that are deemed for adults only. Somewhere, the idea that adults can still do childish things gets lost, as does the feeling that it's fine for adults to enjoy playing games and making things. Somehow it is believed that those are no longer as important as work. This is a definite reflection on humanity. This play would be simple to produce. It could be very spectacular if one used specialized lighting that illuminates and emphasizes parts of the ceremony in particular. There is not a pressing need for any kind of an elaborate set; it would more than likely detract from the play. Consequently, this would be a good high school theatre production.