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The Three Old Women's Bet

Mindy M. Nelsen

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Stephenson, R. Rex. *The Three Old Women's Bet*. I.E. Clark Publications, 2002. ISBN 886804906.
Contact publisher regarding price. 16 pp.

Reviewer: Mindy Nelsen

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate;

Rating: Shortcomings;

Genre: Humorous Plays; Plays; Western Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Marriage--Juvenile drama; Friendship--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Competition is fun, if you are the one that wins.

Production Requirements: Moderately simplistic properties and set. Production could be done with a bare stage.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 25-30 min

Characters: 9

Cast: 4 male / 4 female, 1 character could be of either gender.

Time Period: The turn of the century

Three women, friends it may seem, though they are constantly in arguments, live with their husbands in a backwards town in the Blue Ridge Mountains. They are always in complaining competitions: whose life is harder, whose house and cooking are better, whose husband is the stupidest. And it is with this last argument that we begin the play. Assisted by the narrator, these women set out to prove that they have the stupidest husband by playing numerous pranks on their spouses (convincing one to act like a dog and protect his house, another that he is wearing a fine suit when he is running around in his long johns and the final that he has passed away and can't move on until after his funeral). The winner's house will be cleaned for a month by the other two. At the end, one wins, but all three women go off together, leaving their husbands to clean the houses.

This play would be fairly easy to produce and has characters who are distinct and diverse. This adds to the development of the story and moves the play along smoothly. Nevertheless, the overall theme of the play is unclear. The women are terrible to each other and treat their husbands even worse, and in the end, they triumph with their wits, but most likely have not learned anything from the experience. Though select parts are humorous, the overall feeling is that these women are selfish and self-absorbed. The characters and plot lack significant dimension and depth. The husbands are portrayed so foolishly that they don't realize even after the play is done what has happened and no one leaves a changed or affected person.