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Down in the dumps

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Roberts, Dan. *Down in the Dumps*. I.E. Clark Publications, 2002. ISBN 0886804698. Contact publisher regarding price. 17 pp.

Reviewer: Mindy Nelsen

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate;

Rating: Shortcomings;

Genre: Musicals; Plays; Contemporary Realistic Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Service--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Kindness brings people together.

Production Requirements: Very complicated and specific props, costumes, set and lighting and sound effects are suggested.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 30-40 min

Characters: 6-14

Cast: 2 must be male, 1 must be female, the rest are flexible.

Time Period: Present

When the owner of a local junkyard, old Mr. Pink, goes to bed, his junk yard becomes a magical playground for numerous neighborhood children. Their imaginations go wild as they sneak in to play every night. But their play time is interrupted when the city council threatens to shut Mr. Pink down because his junkyard doesn't comply with the city beautification act. Worried about not only their play space, but the old man who acts like he is bothered by their play, the children decide to sneak in one night and clean up the place. When Mr. Pink sees what they have done, initially he is upset and scares them all away, but after some thought, he is grateful and renames his junkyard the neighborhood playground.

The premise is sweet and uplifting. The cast is highly flexible with lots of potential, especially for Mr. Pink and the ringleader of the children's group, Patch. The characters are likeable, but they (for lack of time) develop and change too quickly to be considered moderately realistic. The dialogue consists of mostly predictable lyrics (this being a musical) that seem to get monotonous after a while. Though claimed to be an easy play to produce, the production requirements call for trash cans with wheels, paint, as well as specific lighting and set suggestions. This production could be simplified, but at the expense of the playwright's suggestions and vision. It proves to be unnecessarily complicated and specific for its intended value as a stage production.