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Holiday in the Rainforest

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Love, Douglas. *Holiday in the Rainforest*. HarperCollins Publishers, 1994. ISBN 0060242760. \$ Amateur productions are authorized, provided that it is free of charge. If admission is charged, contact the publishers. 40 pp.

Reviewer: Heidi Schiers

Reading Level: preschool, primary

Rating: shortcomings

Genre: Humorous plays; Plays; Adventure play; Fantasy play

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Rainforest; Environment; Recycling

Theme: Environmental Awareness

Production Requirements: No lighting or sound. The director can probably add this as far as he/she is feeling creative. Basic props are specified on pg. 7.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 25-30 minutes

Characters: 16

Cast: 6 women, 6 men; with role doubling. Some characters can be either

Time Period: Present

The Kane family decides to go on a family vacation in order to outdo their neighbors, the Montroses, who have recently returned from a trip to Central America. They visit the rainforest, and in the course of their vacation, they meet strange characters like Ray the all purpose motel manager, owner, night help and bellboy; Melvin the Alligator; and Rontihowa and Antelo - the stone people. When the Kanes reach the rainforest, they find no trees. They set out over the mountain in search of the trees and help the stone people turn back into people. In the process, they learn to recycle.

Instead of a full, complete play consisting of a developed plot, strong or complex characters, and action rising to a climax, "Holiday in the Rainforest" seems to be a set of loosely constructed, vaguely humorous scenes. This play could be shown to a first or second grade audience, working well in conjunction with a lesson plan or discussion about the environment and recycling. A very young audience, preferably having little or no former knowledge concerning the environment, is recommended, because the moral is forced down the audience's throat in a dumbed-down, nearly condescending manner. Children up to the ages of ten could have an enjoyable time performing in it, perhaps in a classroom setting. The play makes use of ridiculous exaggeration in order to demonstrate the Kane family's lack of awareness concerning the environment and depletion of the rainforest. This is apparent in episodes such as when George Montrose is reading the newspaper, and as he finishes each page, he crumples it up and puts it into a plastic bag. Shortly after, the Kanes discover that vast quantities of trees have been cut or burned down, in order to print newspapers. The heavy moralization also occurs in the dialogue between Frannie and Manny as they throw away various waste products.

"Where does all of the garbage end up, anyway?"

"In the garbage truck!"

Rontihowa and Antelo had turned to stone because they lost their homes and their hope when they saw so many animals become sick due to clear-cutting. Yet when the Kane family arrives, suddenly a butterfly has the bright idea to summon its colorful bird and butterfly friends, and the color immediately revives the stone people. Frannie and Manny are glad to have helped, although they did not do a thing. The obstacle is overcome a little too easily, and the majority of the play consists of the Kanes wandering around the rainforest searching for trees. The characters are weak. Ray does not contribute to moving the plot forward, serving only as a bit of irrelevant entertainment. Manny Kane's motivation is that he wants to "rough it," Frannie wants to impress

her neighbors, and the kids just want to go home. Granted, in the end they do change; they learn that all living things should live together with respect, including plants and animals. Nothing heartwarming or particularly moving occurs in the script which could cause audiences to reflect and ponder upon the message, except perhaps Frannie's astounding discovery, "Pictures and showing off to neighbors, that's silly. What is important is the rainforest and all of its creatures!" Perhaps it will incite some young spectator to action, who will begin to recycle newspapers and become a shining example to everyone around.