



2014

A Village Fable by James Still

Rebeca Diane Wallin
rebecawallin@yahoo.com

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Author: Still, James

Title: A Village Fable

Year of Publication: 2001

Publisher: Dramatic Publishing Co

ISBN: 158342055x

Number of pages: 66

Rating: Excellent

Reading/Interest Level: Intermediate; Young Adult

Keywords: Fables; John Gardner; Suicide; Self-acceptance; Plays; Bullying; Diversity

Production Requirements: Minimal set requirements, lighting, period costumes, sound system for music

Number of Acts: 1

Estimated Runtime: 60 minutes

Number of Characters: 10 plus ensemble

Cast Requirements: 5 men, 4 women, 1 either, doubling possible

Time Period: medieval

Review:

Based on the book *In the Suicide Mountains* by John Gardner, the play follows the lives of three characters who for different reasons are social outcasts trying to fit in. Chudu the goat-man is feared because of his frightening appearance though he is a kind soul who wants to help others. Armida is a young girl who does not want to change herself to win a husband. Prince Christopher cannot please his father by becoming a great warrior, preferring to play the violin instead. Eventually all three decide that suicide must be the answer and meet as they are racing to a cliff in the mountains inhabited by the fearsome six-fingered man. By facing the evil man together they discover the power of their unique strengths and reasons to choose life instead.

This script artfully weaves the three characters' stories creating a spellbinding effect with strong characters, dialogue that could be described as poetic prose and strong music and lyrics. Themes of self-acceptance and the social isolation created by bullying and fear of diversity are strong and artfully carried through. The fairy tale like qualities of the show may seem to be suitable for young children but subject matter makes it unquestionably suitable for a teenage and older audience. Choices to turn to suicide are made and only an older audience will fully grasp the message that suicide should not be an option. Other subject matter such as a mother accidentally chopping her daughter's head off and the cannibalistic six-fingered man also point toward an older audience. Options for minimalistic set requirements make the script a good touring candidate.

Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin

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