



Albert T. Viola

Adapted from the 1922 story by Margery Williams
Jingles by Carolyn Wells and limericks by Edward Lear

Big Dog Publishing

Copyright © 2009 by Albert T. Viola

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Velveteen Rabbit or How Toys Become Real is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and all of the countries covered by the Universal Copyright Convention and countries with which the United States has bilateral copyright relations including Canada, Mexico, Australia, and all nations of the United Kingdom.

Copying or reproducing all or any part of this book in any manner is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this book may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, or videotaping without written permission from the publisher.

A royalty is due for every performance of this play whether admission is charged or not. A "performance" is any presentation in which an audience of any size is admitted.

The name of the author must appear on all programs, printing, and advertising for the play. The program must also contain the following notice: "Produced by special arrangement with Big Dog Publishing Company, Sarasota, FL."

All rights including professional, amateur, radio broadcasting, television, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved by Big Dog Publishing Company, www.BigDogPlays.com, to whom all inquiries should be addressed.

Big Dog Publishing
P.O. Box 1400
Talleast, FL 34270

The Velveteen Rabbit Or How Toys Become Real

CLASSIC. This adaptation of Margery Williams' story contains all the warmth and charm that made the original tale a classic. The Velveteen Rabbit is given to a Boy as a Christmas present but is laid aside and soon forgotten amongst all the Christmas activities. One night, when the Boy cannot find his favorite china dog to sleep with, Nana gives him the Velveteen Rabbit as a replacement. The Boy adores the stuffed rabbit and the two become inseparable. As time goes by, the Velveteen Rabbit becomes shabbier and shabbier. His fur becomes dirty, his tail starts to fall off, and the pink gets rubbed off of his nose, but the Skin Horse assures the Velveteen Rabbit that these are signs of the Boy's love and that some day a toy can become Real if the owner truly loves it. When the Boy becomes sick with scarlet fever, the Doctor orders that the Velveteen Rabbit be burned along with the Boy's other toys. As the Velveteen Rabbit waits to be burned, he cries one single tear and a Fairy appears. The Fairy transforms the Velveteen Rabbit into a Real rabbit and she takes him to live in Rabbit Land with the other Real rabbits.

Performance Time: Approximately 30 minutes.



About the Story

Margery Williams (1881-1944) was born in London and moved to the United States in 1890. Williams published her first book, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, in 1922, and it became an instant classic. Williams went on to write several other books and short stories for children including *Poor Cecco*, *The Little Wooden Doll*, and *The Skin Horse*. Themes of death and change are prevalent in Williams' works as she was greatly influenced by her father's untimely death when she was just seven years old.

Characters

(1 M, 3 F, 25 flexible, opt. extras)
(16 speaking roles; doubling possible)

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Stuffed toy rabbit with brown velveteen fur and white spots, whiskers made of thread, and pink sateen ears; flexible.

BOY/GIRL: Receives the Velveteen Rabbit as a Christmas gift; wears pajamas; flexible.

SKIN HORSE: Boy's oldest toy; has a brown coat with bald patches and some of his tail hair is missing; flexible.

NANA: Maid; wears a maid's uniform and an apron with a pocket.

SAILBOAT: Toy sailboat with a sail, mast, rudder and shiny hull; flexible.

LION: Wooden lion who thinks he's an agent for the government in charge of taking a toy census; flexible.

A BLOCK: Toy block who recites alphabet rhymes.

B BLOCK: Toy block who recites alphabet rhymes.

C BLOCK: Toy block who recites alphabet rhymes.

FAIRY: Fairy of nursery magic; wears a pearl colored dress with a ring of flowers around her neck and some flowers in her hair; female.

REAL RABBIT 1: Real rabbit who lives in a nearby wood; flexible.

REAL RABBIT 2: Real rabbit who lives in a nearby wood; has brown fur; flexible.

MOTHER: Boy's mother; wears a bathrobe.

FATHER: Boy's father; wears a bathrobe.

DOCTOR: Family doctor; flexible.

FRIEND: Boy's friend; flexible.

CLOWN 1, 2: Toy clowns that perform tricks, non-speaking; flexible.

TOY SOLDIER 1-4: Non-speaking; flexible.

GYMNAST/TUMBLER: Performs cartwheels, tumbling tricks; non-speaking; flexible.

COWBOY/COWGIRL: Wears a cowboy outfit and carries a rope; non-speaking; flexible.

FIRE TRUCK: Toy; non-speaking; flexible.

TEDDY BEAR: Toy; non-speaking; flexible.

TOP: Toy top that spins; non-speaking; flexible.

CHINA DOG 1, 2: Toy dogs; non-speaking; flexible.

EXTRAS (Optional): As additional Toys and Real Rabbits.

NOTE: For flexible roles, change names and pronouns accordingly.

Set

Living room. There is a Christmas tree with holiday lights.

Wrapped Christmas presents surround the tree. There is a Christmas stocking hanging on the wall or fireplace.

Boy's bedroom. There is a small bed and a blue toy box.

Woods/Garden/Rabbit Land: There is a backdrop of trees and plants. There are tall fern-like plants for the Real Rabbits to hide behind and some flowers.

Synopsis of Scenes

Scene 1: Living room, Christmas, evening.

Scene 2: Boy's bedroom, midnight.

Scene 3: Boy's bedroom, moments later.

Scene 4: Boy's bedroom, evening, several weeks later.

Scene 5: Boy's bedroom, spring, evening.

Scene 6: Woods near the Boy's home, summer.

Scene 7: Boy's bedroom, weeks later, autumn.

Scene 8: Garden outside Boy's home, that evening.

Scene 9: Rabbit Land, a short time later.

Scene 10: Woods near the Boy's home, the following spring.

Props

Christmas tree with lights	be a large cutout. Must
Wrapped presents	be large enough to hide
Christmas stocking	inside it or behind it.)
New stuffed rabbit	Stairs for giant toy box
Shabby stuffed rabbit	(Optional, depending on
(Identical to new stuffed	giant toy box design)
rabbit but has no	Anchor on rope, for Sailboat
whiskers, a torn tail, nose	Toy lion
is brown, fur is dirty, pink	Stick swab
sateen lining on ears is	Medical bag
dirty.)	Sack
Cup of coffee	Books
Toy train engine	Toys
Blue toy box with lid	Sack (Large enough to cover
Blanket	Velveteen Rabbit)
Clipboard	Bouquet of carrots
Pencil	Hula hoop
Giant blue toy box with lid	Jump rope
or door that opens (Can	Ball

Sound Effects

Bells jingling	Childlike atonal music
"Jingle Bells" (Instrumental)	Loud noise
"Jingle Bells"	Soft padded sound for Real
Clock ticking	Rabbit footsteps
Grandfather clock striking	
midnight	

**“There was once
a velveteen rabbit,
and in the beginning,
he was really splendid.”**

—Skin Horse

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Boy's living room, Christmas. Sound of jingling of bells and then an instrumental version of "Jingle Bells" is heard. Spotlight on Skin Horse, who enters SR and crosses to CS.)

SKIN HORSE: *(To audience.)* Listen, listen to the bells! It's Christmas! *("Jingle Bells" continues in the background.)* And the kitchen in the house where I live always smells fabulous during the holidays—a turkey roasting in the oven, cinnamon, hot chestnuts, and fruit bowls full of oranges and tangerines. And there is nothing more Christmassy than the smell of a real pine Christmas tree. *(Lights come up slowly on a pine Christmas tree decorated with holiday lights. There are presents around the tree.)* It is my favorite time of year, not only because of the smells, but it is a festival of peace and love and there are lots and lots of presents and toys! *(Skin Horse takes a step forward.)* My name is the Skin Horse. I was a Christmas present once...a long, long time ago. I am now the oldest toy in the nursery. *(Lights up full. Skin Horse crosses to the Christmas tree. There is a Christmas stocking with a stuffed rabbit peeking out of the top.)* I have seen so many Christmases it is hard to remember all of them. But I would like to tell you about one of the most remarkable Christmases I can remember. I'll start from the beginning. One Christmas long ago, there was once a Velveteen Rabbit, and in the beginning, he was really splendid. *(Boy rushes into the room, goes to his Christmas stocking, takes out the toy rabbit, and begins to play with it. Boy squeezes the stuffed rabbit, smells it, and rubs its velveteen fur against his cheek.)* He was fat and bunched as a rabbit would be... *(Boy begins to count the spots on the rabbit.)* ...his coat was spotted brown and white... *(Boy feels rabbit's whiskers.)* ...he had real thread whiskers, and his ears were lined with pink sateen. For at least an hour the Boy loved him. *(Father and Mother enter*

wearing bathrobes. Father is carrying a cup of coffee. Mother goes to the tree, falls to her knees, picks out a present from under the tree, and hands it to Boy. Boy sets the velveteen rabbit on the floor and begins to open the present. It is a toy engine. Boy hugs Mother. Boy continues to open presents.) But there was also the unwrapping of parcels, aunts and uncles coming to dinner, and the excitement of looking at all the new presents, so the Velveteen Rabbit was forgotten. Soon, Christmas Day was over.

(A slow version of "Jingle Bells" is heard. Boy, sitting on the floor, stretches his arms, yawns, and falls asleep by the Christmas tree. Father comes in and picks up the Boy and carries him to his bedroom at SL. Father places Boy in his bed and pulls a blanket over him. Nana, the maid, enters. She picks up the presents and the stuffed rabbit, crosses, and places the presents in the Boy's room. Nana looks at the stuffed rabbit, the last toy in her hand, and holds it up. Nana opens the blue toy box and tosses the rabbit inside. Blackout.)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: Boy's bedroom, midnight. Stage is dark. The ticking of a grandfather clock is heard. The clock begins to strike midnight. As clock chimes sound, lights come up slowly CS on a huge blue toy box [a giant replica of the Boy's toy box]. Skin Horse enters.)

SKIN HORSE: *(To audience.)* It's midnight. The time for the magic of the nursery to begin. *(Childlike atonal music can be heard. The lid of the Blue Toy Box opens. Clown 1 sticks her head out of the toy box and proceeds carefully down the stairs in front of the box [stairs are optional depending on toy box design]. Clown 1 looks in both directions and then checks the area to make sure there are no humans around. Clown 1 rushes back up the stairs and signals for the other Toys to come out. The following Toys emerge from the box: Velveteen Rabbit; Clown 2; Sailboat; Lion; Soldiers 1-4; Alphabet Blocks A, B, and C; Gymnast/Tumbler; Cowboy; Fire Truck; Teddy Bear; Top; and China Dogs 1-2. Toys begin to play. Clowns 1, 2 perform clown tricks. Gymnast performs cartwheels or tumbling tricks. The other Toys play tug of war with a rope, hula hoops, jump rope, hopscotch, etc. Shouts.)* Attention all Toys! *(Toys gather and form a semi-circle around the Skin Horse, who stands in front of the big toy box. Toys sit on the floor.)* I would like to welcome all the new Christmas toys to the nursery. I'm the Skin Horse, the senior toy in this nursery. Since some of you are new presents, I have a present for you in the form of a poem called "Christmas Gifts." *(Toys applaud and look at each other with excitement. Recites.)*

"Ten Christmas presents standing in a line;
Robert took the bicycle, then there were nine.
Nine Christmas presents ranged in order straight;
Bob took the steam engine, then there were eight.
Eight Christmas presents – and one came from Devon;
Robbie took the jackknife, then there were seven.
Seven Christmas presents direct from St. Nick's;

Bobby took the candy box, then there were six.
Six Christmas presents, none of them alive;
Rob took the Velveteen Rabbit, then there were five.
Five Christmas presents yet on the floor;
Bobbie took the soldier cap, then there were four.
Four Christmas presents underneath the tree;
Bobbet took the writing desk, then there were three.
Three Christmas presents still in full view;
Robin took the checkerboard, then there were two.
Two Christmas presents, promising fun,
Bobbles took the picture book, then there was one.
One Christmas present – and now the list is done;
Bobbinet took the sled, and then there was none.
And the same happy child received every toy,
So many nicknames had one little [boy].” [girl]
(Toys applaud.) Thank you. You are here because you were
presents to one boy. Just like the poem reads, you were
brought to bring the Boy joy and happiness as he grows. So
be ready to go anywhere if he chooses you...whether it be in
the wood, bracken, back yard, on a trip, and if you are lucky,
to snuggle with him in his warm bed. Any questions, just
ask me. Till then, have fun and keep the noise down. We
don't want to wake anyone, or we'll all be in trouble. You
are now free to play.

(Sailboat moves around the stage as if sailing.)

SAILBOAT: *(Sings to the tune of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.”)*

“Sail, sail, sail your boat
Gently with the breeze
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
If there's no wind, try a sneeze.”

(Sailboat approaches Velveteen Rabbit.) You're a funny-looking
one. I've never seen anything like you before.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I'm new. I'm the Velveteen Rabbit.

SAILBOAT: I know.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Are you a real sailboat?

SAILBOAT: If real is having a hull, spars, rigging, rudder, and sails, you are looking at the real deal.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: The real deal?

SAILBOAT: I'm fully loaded, and the wind is my friend who keeps me sailing. (*Examines Velveteen Rabbit.*) I don't see a stick-out handle or wind-up crank on your back or hear anything buzzing inside you. What keeps you moving?

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I don't know. Maybe the sawdust?

SAILBOAT: (*Stage whisper.*) Not so loud! Sawdust stuffing is out of date and is never, ever mentioned in modern circles.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I won't mention it again.

SAILBOAT: Now, what you think of my great hull? That's the main part of me. I'll drop anchor so you can rub your hand across it. But be careful, I don't want any scratches. (*Drops his anchor over the side.*)

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I'll be very careful. It gleams and is so shiny.

SAILBOAT: (*Proudly.*) It's absolutely smooth as glass. I glide across the ocean like a slippery eel. This is my beautiful mast... (*Indicates mast.*) ...and attached to it are my sails. (*Indicates sails.*) I'll sail around you, but don't get too close because my rudder... (*Indicates rudder.*) ...which is in the back, may hit you and could get damaged. And that would be disastrous as well as costly.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Of course. Please sail around me. (*Sailboat puts his anchor back on deck and circles the Velveteen Rabbit.*) What do you do when you sail?

SAILBOAT: I rap with the wind, and when I reach the horizon, I get a glimpse of tomorrow and a look at yesterday. I whisper secrets to waves.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: What kind of secrets?

SAILBOAT: You really want to hear one?

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Yes. Please...?

SAILBOAT: Promise not to tell anyone because it's a secret. It's something I saw yesterday.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I promise.

SAILBOAT: Okay, come closer so no one will hear.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: *(Stage whisper.)* What did you see?

SAILBOAT: *(Stage whisper. Recites.)*

"I saw an old man in a boat
Who said, "I'm afloat, I'm afloat!"
When I said, "No, you ain't"
He was ready to faint
That unhappy old man in a boat."

Ha, ha, gotcha with that one, didn't I? You didn't think I was going to tell you any real secrets, did you? You've nuttin' but stuffin', and you're a little slow of thinking, too! Ha, ha! *(Sailboat sails DSR, turns around, and crosses in front to address audience with a farewell limerick.)*

"There was a young lady of Portugal
Whose ideas were excessively nautical
She climbed up a tree
To examine the sea
But declared she would never leave Portugal."

Ha, ha! *(Sailboat starts to exit. Sings.)*

"Sail, sail, sail your boat
Gently with the breeze
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
If there's no wind, try a sneeze."

(Sailboat exits. ABC Blocks approach the Velveteen Rabbit.)

ABC BLOCKS: We're the A-B-Cs. Do you know yours?

VELVETEEN RABBIT: What are A-B-Cs?

A BLOCK: *(Recites.)*

"A is for apt alligator
Who wanted to be a head waiter
He said, "I opine
In that field I could shine,
Because I am such a good skater!"

B BLOCK: *(Recites.)*

"B is for beggarly bear

Who carefully curled his hair;
He said, "I would buy
A re-spotted tie
But I haven't a penny to spare!"

C BLOCK: *(Recites.)*

"C is for cool chimpanzee
Who went to an afternoon tea.
When they said, "Will you take
A caraway cake?
He greedily took twenty-three!"

ABC BLOCKS: *(Start to run off.)*

"Once you learn your A-B-Cs
You, too, can write poetry."
Ha, ha, ha!

(ABC Blocks exit. Holding a clipboard and pencil, Lion approaches Velveteen Rabbit.)

LION: Excuse me, I'm Timothy the Lion, and I'm a special agent for the United States government.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Oh my!

LION: You are new in this nursery, aren't you?

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Yes, I am.

LION: I need to register you.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: All right, I guess.

LION: I have a few questions here. Name?

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Name?

LION: Yes, that means what you are called.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Velveteen Rabbit.

LION: Rabbit? You don't look like a rabbit to me. You don't even look real. Age?

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Age?

LION: That means how old you are.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I don't know.

LION: You don't look a day over one year. I must say, you are strange looking. Are you a citizen of this country?

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Well...I...

(Skin Horse approaches.)

SKIN HORSE: He's with me, Agent Timothy. He's all right.

LION: Just doing my duty, Skin Horse.

SKIN HORSE: I know, and you do it well.

LION: Can't be too careful these days. I'll put him on the census. Have a good day.

SKIN HORSE: Thank you, Agent Timothy.

LION: You're welcome. *(Exits.)*

SKIN HORSE: *(To Velveteen Rabbit.)* Don't mind Timothy.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: He seems very nice. He must be very, very important.

SKIN HORSE: He is a nice fella, but he really isn't a special agent.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: He's not?

SKIN HORSE: I'm afraid not. He was made by a group of disabled veterans, and for some strange reason, he puts on an air of importance and pretends he's connected with the government.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Oh, my.

SKIN HORSE: We all just go along with him, and he seems happy about it.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Mr. Skin Horse, I have a question I would like to ask you.

SKIN HORSE: What is it?

VELVETEEN RABBIT: What is "Real"?

SKIN HORSE: Real?

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Yes, *Real*. Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?

SKIN HORSE: Real isn't how you are made. It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time—not just to play with but *really* loves you—then you become Real.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Does it hurt?

SKIN HORSE: Sometimes, but when you are Real, you don't mind being hurt.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Does it happen all at once, like being wound up bit by bit?

SKIN HORSE: It doesn't happen all at once. You become. It takes time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out, and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all because once you are Real, you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I don't mean to hurt your feelings, but I suppose you are Real?

SKIN HORSE: *(Smiles.)* The Boy's uncle made me Real. That was a great many years ago. But once you are Real, you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I guess it will be a long time before the magic called Real happens to me.

SKIN HORSE: You'll know when it happens. You begin to grow shabby and lose your eyes and whiskers.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Isn't there any other way of becoming Real without all those uncomfortable things?

SKIN HORSE: I'm afraid not. You have to feel before you can become Real. I've seen toys come and go, especially those mechanical toys that arrive with sharp edges and all the fancy bells and whistles. They don't last long.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: They don't?

SKIN HORSE: No, they don't. As I said, it takes a long time and lots of love. *(A loud noise is heard. Toys stop what they are doing and look frightened. Shouts.)* Sound the alarm, Timothy! Now! *(To Toys.)* Everyone, take cover. It's Nana, the hurricane from Savannah! Back in the box!

(Lion enters.)

LION: *(To Toys.)* Hurry! I will be last to get in the box. I'll stand guard till all is safe!

(Lights start to fade as Toys disappear into the toy box. The toy box lid comes down, leaving the Lion and the Velveteen Rabbit behind. Lion and Velveteen Rabbit quickly lie down on the floor. Blackout.)

[END OF FREEVIEW]