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BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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THE SUPERHERO DILEMMA

FARCE. The Smiths look like an average, ordinary family, but they are hiding a big secret. After noticing strange happenings at home, Cayenne, the youngest in the family, finally confronts her mother and discovers the truth about her family: Everyone is a superhero! Cayenne's father is "Purple Thunder," her mother is "Iron Cookie," and her two older sisters are "Wolfgirl" and "Nightmare." And in just two months, Cayenne will transform into the superhero, "Hot Coals Woman," complete with a red sequined bodysuit, a neon sign on her chest that flashes "Hot Coals Woman," and the ability to shoot lightning bolts out of her nose. Horrified at the thought, Cayenne is determined to remain a normal human in a family where "normal" is a dirty word, but first she must help her family defeat two escaped super-villains. Easy to stage with one simple set.

Performance Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

CHARACTERS

(3 M, 5 F)

HARRY SMITH: “Purple Thunder” superhero who masquerades as a ping-pong table salesman; his skin is bright red from sunburn; wears a tattered purple and pink “Purple Thunder” superhero costume with a shredded cape; male.

MILLIE SMITH: The superhero, “Iron Cookie”; loves to bake sugar cookies; female.

CHILI SMITH: Eldest daughter and the superhero, “Nightmare”; female.

PEPPER SMITH: Middle daughter and the superhero, “Wolfgirl”; female.

CAYENNE SMITH: 16, youngest daughter who doesn’t want to be a superhero; female.

TORNADO: One of the Blues Brothers, a super-villain and Purple Thunder’s arch enemy; wears a black suit, a white shirt, skinny black tie, dark sunglasses, a black fedora, and a gray cape; male.

HURRICANE: One of the Blues Brothers, a super-villain and Purple Thunder’s arch enemy, wears a black suit, a white shirt, skinny black tie, dark sunglasses, a black fedora, and a gray cape; male.

NEMESIS: Greek goddess of divine retribution and revenge; doesn’t like superheroes; wears a red jacket, black jeans, high heels and an ancient helmet; has wings and a “snake” wrapped around one leg; carries a sword and golden shield; female.

SETTING

The Smiths' living room.

SET

Living room: An ordinary living room with a sofa, a coffee table, an armchair, a standing lamp, an area rug, and a window.

PROPS

To Kill a Mockingbird or another novel
Plate of sugar cookies
Frying pan
Sword, for Nemesis
Golden shield, for Nemesis
Backpack, for Pepper

SOUND EFFECTS

Loud "thud"
Knock at the door

"SWEETIE,
WE JUST WANTED YOU
TO HAVE
A NORMAL CHILDHOOD."

—MILLIE

THE SUPERHERO DILEMMA

(AT RISE: The Smiths' living room. There is a sofa, armchair, coffee table, standing lamp, and an area rug. Cayenne, the youngest of the Smith daughters, is sitting on the sofa reading a novel. She looks annoyed and suddenly tosses the book backward over her head.)

CAYENNE: *(To herself.)* They had me read ["To Kill a Mockingbird"] in sixth grade, then they made me read it in eighth grade, and now I'm reading it again. Is there only one novel? *(Calls.)* Mom? *[Or insert the title of another novel.]*

MILLIE: *(Offstage.)* Yes, dear?

CAYENNE: Have you got a minute?

MILLIE: I'm making sugar cookies, Cayenne.

CAYENNE: You made sugar cookies yesterday.

MILLIE: The world can never have too many sugar cookies, dear.

CAYENNE: *(To herself.)* What is going on? *(Calls.)* Mom?

MILLIE: Yes, Cayenne?

CAYENNE: Come and talk to me!

MILLIE: *(Offstage.)* It doesn't hurt to read ["To Kill a Mockingbird"] more than once.

CAYENNE: I don't want to talk about ["Mockingbird,"] Mom.

MILLIE: Oh, good. I'll finish the sugar cookies.

CAYENNE: Mom, come in here!

(Millie Smith enters, carrying a plate of sugar cookies.)

MILLIE: I know how you love sugar cookies, Cayenne, so eat these old ones while I make new ones.

CAYENNE: Sit with me.

MILLIE: How lovely! None of my three teenage daughters has ever asked me to sit with them. *(Sits.)* I'm flattered. Eat a sugar cookie.

CAYENNE: Where were you last night, Mom?

MILLIE: (*Evasive.*) Where was I? Well, early in the evening, I made cookies, and then I made some more cookies, and then I went to bed.

CAYENNE: And did you stay in bed?

MILLIE: What a very odd question.

CAYENNE: Because I had this terrible, no-good dream where I was chased and eaten by a troodontid dinosaur—a very small but scary dinosaur called the “chicken from hell”—and I ran in to climb in bed with you, but you weren’t there and neither was Dad.

MILLIE: Goodness! Well, I did go down to the kitchen to check on the cookies.

CAYENNE: I checked the kitchen.

MILLIE: The bathroom, then.

CAYENNE: I checked the bathroom.

MILLIE: Well, Cayenne, possibly when you checked the kitchen, I was in the bathroom, and when you checked the bathroom, I’d gone back to bed.

CAYENNE: So where was Chili?

MILLIE: You sister Chili was in bed.

CAYENNE: Where was Pepper?

MILLIE: I’m sure I don’t know, dear.

CAYENNE: Nobody was in bed, and Dad’s window was open, which was weird.

MILLIE: You know perfectly well your dad is on a business trip.

CAYENNE: Ping-pong table salesmen don’t go on business trips. Where was everybody last night?

MILLIE: (*Sings.*) “Way down upon the Suwannee River...”

CAYENNE: Mom, you always sing that when you’re upset.

MILLIE: (*Fanning herself.*) Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear.

CAYENNE: “Oh dear” what, Mom?

MILLIE: (*Evasive.*) Nothing...

CAYENNE: It’s not nothing.

MILLIE: I knew it, I knew it. I knew this day was coming and I wasn't looking forward to it. I mean, well, it's a good thing and a bad thing and a thing-thing.

CAYENNE: Mom!

MILLIE: Have a cookie.

CAYENNE: I don't want a cookie, Mom.

MILLIE: Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. Well...oh dear.

CAYENNE: What?!

MILLIE: Have you ever looked behind your left ear in the bathroom?

CAYENNE: Mom, a human being can't look behind their left ear in a mirror!

MILLIE: Really? That's so interesting.

CAYENNE: Is there something behind my left ear?

MILLIE: (*Trying to change the subject.*) Do you know that 85 percent of people don't know there is baking soda in sugar cookies?

CAYENNE: Mom!

MILLIE: Yes, there is something behind your left ear.

CAYENNE: What? What is behind my left ear?

MILLIE: A blue dot.

CAYENNE: A blue dot?

MILLIE: Yes, a blue dot. Oh, I wish your father was here...

CAYENNE: Does that mean I'm sick?

MILLIE: No, Cayenne, it means you're... (*Dramatic pause.*) ...a superhero.

CAYENNE: I'm a what?!

MILLIE: Now you really must eat a sugar cookie!

CAYENNE: Whoa, whoa, whoa! You said, "superhero"?

MILLIE: Yes. I'm a superhero, your father is a superhero, and your sisters, Chili and Pepper, are superheroes.

CAYENNE: Very funny.

MILLIE: It usually starts when you're 14, but sugar cookies delay it. I didn't find out until I was 19...when I suddenly flew out a window.

CAYENNE: What are you talking about?

MILLIE: Don't be dense, dear. Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, Wolfgirl?

CAYENNE: Who's Wolfgirl?

MILLIE: That would be your sister Pepper. There are actually six Wolfgirls who run in a pack.

CAYENNE: Very funny.

MILLIE: I'm Iron Cookie, your dad is Purple Thunder, and your sister Chili is Nightmare.

CAYENNE: You are making this up?

MILLIE: *(To herself.)* Oh dear, I knew it would come to this. *(To Cayenne.)* Come to the window. *(Escorts Cayenne to the window.)* Now, then. Let's see. Look there... *(Points.)* ...right in front of the McMaster's house that has that horrible mulch...see that dreadful old [Pontiac Grand Am] they've had since [2008]? Well, I do enjoy the two-tone, white-and-aqua paint job. *(Sighs.)* Why aren't there two-tone paint jobs anymore? All right. Here we go. *[Or insert another car and year.]*

(Millie points out the window at the car and then slowly raises her finger.)

CAYENNE: Mom!

MILLIE: Maybe a little higher?

CAYENNE: *(Shocked.)* Holy bird poop, Mom, you just lifted that [Pontiac] ten feet in the air by pointing at it.

MILLIE: *(Proudly.)* Want to see it do figure eights?

CAYENNE: Mom!

MILLIE: I just hate all the cars being [black and silver] now. *[Or insert other colors.]*

CAYENNE: Mom, put the car down!

MILLIE: What, dear?

CAYENNE: You can't just leave that poor [Pontiac] upside down in the air!

MILLIE: Sorry, dear, I lost my train of thought.

CAYENNE: That is nuts! I am nuts! You are nuts!

MILLIE: For some reason [Teslas] are harder. *(Loud thud.)*

Oops, I put it down a little hard. *[Or insert another car.]*

CAYENNE: Mom!

MILLIE: Well, they can get another bumper.

CAYENNE: This is... *(Thinks.)* ...I don't know what this is.

MILLIE: Come and sit, dear.

(Mille and Cayenne sit on the sofa.)

CAYENNE: Are you telling me everyone in my family is a superhero?

MILLIE: Well, except for your Uncle Herbert, but he's a dentist and they just don't get it.

CAYENNE: Mom, Mom, Mom, Mom!

MILLIE: Would it help if I lifted a house for you?

CAYENNE: No, Mom!

MILLIE: I once lifted a house and there was a man standing there on the foundation wearing pink gloves and a top hat.

CAYENNE: I don't want to hear about it.

MILLIE: *(Cheerfully.)* Would you like a cookie?

CAYENNE: What is with the blue dot?

MILLIE: That is such a good question! I have no idea. It's just a superhero thing, dear. Now, remember, you don't get your superpowers until your seventeenth birthday, but that's only two months away.

CAYENNE: What powers?

MILLIE: Oh, you know, all the usual ones: super strength, invisibility, flying, X-ray vision, the ability to hit a jump shot from half court. Nothing surprising.

CAYENNE: I'll be able to fly?

MILLIE: Yes, dear, but it isn't like the movies. You do have to flap your arms.

CAYENNE: Does being a superhero make you smarter?

MILLIE: Unfortunately, it makes you dumber. I mean, have you ever heard a superhero say anything smarter than

“shazam”? Let’s just say that at superhero parties the conversation doesn’t sparkle.

[END OF FREEVIEW]