



## **R. Eugene Jackson**

Adapted from the 1910 short story by O. Henry

Norman Maine Publishing

Copyright © 2009, R. Eugene Jackson

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED**

The *Ransom of Red Chief* 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 Norman Maine Publishing Company, Sarasota, FL."

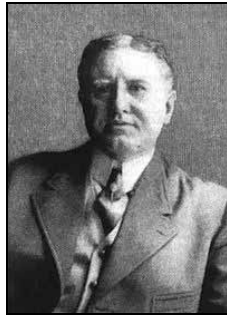
All rights including professional, amateur, radio broadcasting, television, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved by Norman Maine Publishing Company, [www.NormanMainePlays.com](http://www.NormanMainePlays.com), to whom all inquiries should be addressed.

**Norman Maine Publishing  
P.O. Box 1400  
Tallevast, FL 34270**

## The Ransom of Red Chief

**COMEDY/CLASSIC.** Adapted from the 1910 short story by O. Henry. Two bumbling con artists, Samantha and Bill, stop off in Summit, Alabama, to scam \$2,000 from unsuspecting townsfolk. But when they fail to swindle money from an elderly woman, Samantha and Bill decide to kidnap Jonni Dorset, the young daughter of a wealthy banker, and hold her for ransom. Bill and Samantha take the innocent-looking Jonni to their hideout in a nearby cave, but when Samantha leaves to deliver the ransom note, Bill is left alone to watch over Jonni, who has the time of her life riding Bill like a horse, feeding him sand, shooting him with toy arrows, and trying to scalp him with a tomahawk. By the time Samantha returns, Bill is reduced to a bruised, trembling, sobbing mess. Realizing no one in their right mind would pay \$2,000 to get this red-headed monster back, Bill and Samantha keep reducing the ransom. However, Jonni's parents have a big surprise for Samantha and Bill—these kidnappers will have to pay the parents to take this child back!

**Performance Time:** Approximately 75 minutes.



(O. Henry 1862-1910)

O. Henry is the pen name for William Sydney Porter, who was born in Greenboro, NC, and later lived in Texas and in New York City. After cash was found missing at the First National Bank in Austin, TX, where Porter worked as a teller, he was called to stand trial for embezzlement but fled to Honduras. In 1897 when Porter found out that his wife was dying, he returned to Texas, where he was convicted and sentenced to five years in prison for embezzlement, though his guilt was much debated. While in prison, Porter began to write short stories under the pen name of O. Henry. After serving three years in prison, Porter was released and changed his name to O. Henry. O. Henry's best known work is "The Ransom of Red Chief," which was published in his short story collection *Whirligigs* in 1910. O. Henry's stories are famous for their humorous depictions of ordinary people and use of surprise endings. The O. Henry Award was established in 1918 and is awarded annually for outstanding short stories.

## Characters

(5 M, 8 F, 2 flexible, opt. extras)

**JONNI “RED CHIEF” DORSET:** Scamp with a knack for getting into trouble; has red hair and freckles; flexible. (“Johnny” if played as a male.)

**BILL DRISCOLL:** Bumbling con artist; dressed as a hobo.

**SAMANTHA “SAM”:** Con artist; wears men’s clothing and is dressed as a hobo; flexible. (Sam if played as a male.)

**CONSTABLE BAKER:** Town’s inept constable; wears a gun belt below his oversized belly and a big badge pinned to his shirt; waddles when he walks and carries a toothpick in his mouth.

**MRS. TATUM:** Elementary school teacher.

**EBENEZER DORSET:** Jonni’s stern father; a wealthy banker.

**MARTHA DORSET:** Jonni’s mother.

**MISS MILSTEAD:** Frail, elderly woman; walks unsteadily with a cane and carries a big purse.

**ROSE:** Student.

**NAN:** Student.

**MARY:** Student.

**JENNIFER:** Student.

**MARGARET:** Student.

**ED WALKER:** Student.

**AMOS MURRAY:** Student.

**EXTRAS (optional):** As additional students.

**NOTE:** In the original story, the two hapless con men, Bill and Sam, and the impish Johnny are males. The director may change them back to male roles, if desired, by altering some lines and pronouns in the script. All characters except Bill and Samantha speak with a Southern accent.

## Setting

Early 1900s, spring. A schoolyard in Summit, Alabama.

**NOTE:** The original story takes place in the early 1900s. The director may update it to the present by making a few minor changes in the script.

## Set

**Schoolyard.** There is a sign on a wooden school building upstage that reads, "Summit Schoolhouse."

## Synopsis of Scenes

**Scene 1:** Schoolyard.

**Scene 2:** A cave entrance.

**Scene 3:** Schoolyard.

## Props

Sign that reads "Summit Schoolhouse"	Scissors
Large, dirty bag, for Sam	Bandana
Small shoulder bag, for Sam	2 Large feathers
Large, dirty bag, for Bill	Toy bow and arrow set
Wad of bills (\$600)	2 Stuffed birds
Small shoulder bag, for Jonni	Spelling book
Rocks	Rope
Cane	Large stick to use as toy rifle
Large purse	Men's handkerchief
Shiny object to serve as fake badge	Loaf of bread
Rope tied together with several large knots	Ransom note
Deflated volleyball	Black blanket
Toothpick	Torn, dirty shirt, for Constable
Gun belt	Armload of books
Pistol	Handcuffs
Large badge	Tattered pants, for Bill
Notepad	Toy tomahawk
Pencil	Branch
	Bushes
	\$20 bill

## Special Effects

Train whistle  
School bell that clangs  
Slide whistle

**NOTE:** Many sound effects can be downloaded from the Web free of charge.

## PRODUCTION NOTE

All fights and chases should be choreographed in advance and carefully rehearsed in slow-motion to prevent injury. For the performance, these scenes should be played a bit slower than real time so that the audience can see the action clearly and to prevent accidents.

„It I ooked I ike  
a good thing...  
But wait til I  
I tel I you.%

—Sam

## Scene 1

*(AT RISE: Early 1900s, a morning in May. A schoolyard in Summit, Alabama. There is a sign on a wooden school building upstage that reads, "Summit Schoolhouse." Sam enters SL, carrying a dirty bag that contains all her possessions plus a smaller bag that is slung over her shoulder like a purse. She wears men's clothing and is dressed as a hobo. Seeing no one, she looks off left and motions for Bill to enter.)*

SAM: All clear, Bill.

*(Bill peeks in. He is also dressed as a hobo and carries his own bag.)*

BILL: You sure?

SAM: See anybody?

*(Bill looks around.)*

BILL: Uh, no.

SAM: Then it's all clear.

BILL: Oh, yeah, okay. *(Yawns and stretches.)* So this is what Illinois looks like...

SAM: We're not in Illinois yet, Bill. We're in Alabama. *(She looks at the sign on the schoolhouse.)* Summit, Alabama.

BILL: Summit? Don't that mean the top of something?

SAM: Yes, it does.

BILL: Then we can't be in Summit. This land is as flat as a possum that's been trampled by a horse and run over by a buggy. And if everything is flat, there can't be a top. So we can't be in Summit. Now, ain't that right?

SAM: Except for one thing.

BILL: What's that?

SAM: *(Points to sign.)* That sign that says, "Summit Schoolhouse."

*(Bill sees sign.)*

BILL: Oh. Wish I could read as good as you do, Samantha.

SAM: How many times do I have to tell you...don't call me "Samantha." Just call me "Sam" for short.

BILL: You're not all that short.

SAM: Just...call me "Sam," will you?

*(A train whistle is heard in the distance.)*

BILL: Train's leaving.

SAM: There goes our ride.

BILL: When's the next one?

SAM: I don't know.

*(Sam and Bill put their bags down. Pause. Bill thinks.)*

BILL: Alabama?! What are we doing in Alabama? I thought we was headed for Illinois.

SAM: We are...as soon as we figure out a way to raise some money.

BILL: Well, that's simple. We work for it.

SAM: Work for it? Bill, we don't work. We're professionals. Only un-professionals work.

BILL: Then what do we do?

SAM: We cheat. We steal. We con. We scam. We trick people into giving us their money.

BILL: We don't work?

SAM: Absolutely not.

BILL: Sounds like work to me...

SAM: Well, it's not. So...we need a plan to bamboozle the good people of Summit, Alabama, out of 2,000 dollars.

BILL: Two-thousand dollars? Two-thousand? I can't even count that far. *(Pause.)* How much money do we have now?

*(Sam pulls out a wad of bills from her bag.)*

SAM: Six-hundred bucks.

BILL: Ain't that enough?

SAM: Not for this scam I've got lined up in Western Illinois.

If we pull that one off, we'll be rich.

BILL: Rich? Really?

SAM: No. Not really. But we'll have a lot more money than we do now.

BILL: I'd like to be rich. Then we wouldn't have to be hopping onto trains in the middle of the night and sleeping with the pigs and the cows. They stink.

*(Sam sniffs herself.)*

SAM: And so do we. We need to take a bath.

BILL: Why? The cows and pigs don't take baths.

SAM: That's true. They don't. Now, how do we raise 2,000 dollars in this little burg – without working?

*(Sam thinks. Bill thinks for a few seconds.)*

BILL: I have an idea.

SAM: Unh-unh. The last time you had an idea, we ended up in jail.

BILL: But the food was good.

SAM: If you don't mind a few bugs in your grits.

BILL: They didn't taste so bad.

SAM: Bill Driscoll!

BILL: Listen. Here's my plan: we go to the bank...and—

SAM: *(Likes the idea.)* Oh! And we rob it!

BILL: No.

SAM: No?

BILL: No. We ask for a loan.

SAM: We ask for a loan?

BILL: Oh, yeah.

SAM: Bill, the bank is not going to lend money to two drifters like us.

BILL: Well, then, we demand the money.  
SAM: They won't give it to us.  
BILL: Then we bust them upside the head and take it!  
SAM: You mean, we rob them.  
BILL: No. I don't like bank-robbing.  
SAM: If we bust them upside the head and take the money,  
that's bank-robbing!  
BILL: Oh. *(Pause.)* Okay, let's rob the bank.  
SAM: Bill, no. This is a small town. Small towns don't take  
kindly to having their banks robbed.  
BILL: Then let's rob the general store.  
SAM: No!  
BILL: The pharmacy.  
SAM: No!  
BILL: The barber shop.  
SAM: The barber shop?  
BILL: Yeah.  
SAM: Barber shops don't have 2,000 dollars to steal.  
BILL: Then they need to charge more for their haircuts.  
SAM: *(Swats him several times across the chest.)* Will you stop it!  
Just stop it, Bill.  
BILL: Stop what?  
SAM: Stop thinking. You're dangerous when you think.

*(Jonni runs on SR. She is a nine year-old scamp with red hair, freckles, enormous energy, and a knack for getting into trouble. She carries a small bag tied to a belt or over her shoulder like a purse. When she sees Bill's back, she stops and smiles mischievously. Jonni picks up a rock.)*

JONNI: *(Screams loudly as she tosses the rock at Bill.)* Aeiiii!

*(The rock hits Bill squarely in the back.)*

BILL: Owwww! *(He turns and sees her.)* Hey, kid. You just hit me with a little rock.

JONNI: Unh-unh. It was a big rock!

BILL: *(Angrily.)* Why, you little runt! I'll skin you alive! *(As he steps toward her, she sidesteps him and runs behind him, laughing.)* Huh? Where'd she go?

JONNI: Can't catch me!

*(Bill turns and sees her.)*

BILL: Wanna bet? *(He lunges for her, but she steps aside again, and he falls onto his belly.)* Oaaff! *(Jonni laughs and runs off SL. Bill pulls himself to his feet.)* You'll pay for that!

*(Bill starts after her. Sam holds him back.)*

SAM: Bill! Bill, hold on.

BILL: But I'm going to strangle that little brat!

SAM: Not now.

BILL: I'm going to twist her arms until they look like taffy!

SAM: Not now.

BILL: I'm going to pull that red hair out piece by piece!

SAM: Bill, not now! We've got more important things to do.

BILL: What's more important than giving her a good whooping?

SAM: Making money.

*(Pause.)*

BILL: Oh, yeah. Well, okay. *(He looks off left.)* Later for her.

SAM: *(Looks off right.)* Oh, look. Here comes a mark now.

BILL: Where?

SAM: There. A little old lady. Now, you know the scam...we'll trick her out of all of her money.

BILL: Okay. I got it. *(Straightens himself.)* I got it. *(Straightens himself again. Pause.)* I don't got it. What are we doing?

*(Sam hits Bill across the chest.)*

SAM: Just play along.

BILL: Owwww! That hurt.

*(Miss Milstead enters SR. She walks unsteadily with a cane and carries a big purse.)*

SAM: Pardon me, ma'am.

MILSTEAD: Yes?

SAM: I'm the county sheriff. *(Indicating Bill.)* This is my deputy. And here's my badge. *(She flashes something that is not a badge.)*

MILSTEAD: Wait. I didn't see your badge.

SAM: Okay. Here it is again. *(She flashes it quickly.)*

MILSTEAD: I didn't see it again.

SAM: Ma'am, we're in a hurry. The bank has been robbed, and we're looking for the money.

MILSTEAD: Robbed? Oh, my!

SAM: Do you have any cash on you?

MILSTEAD: I [shore] do. *[Sure]* It's in here somewhere. *(She pulls some cash from her purse.)* Here it is.

*(Bill steps in front of Sam and takes the cash from Miss Milstead.)*

BILL: We just need to check these big numbers on the front...

MILSTEAD: Give it back.

SAM: ...to see if they match the numbers on the stolen cash.

MILSTEAD: But that's my money.

BILL: *(Hardly checking the bills.)* And they match. This is part of the stolen money. Ma'am, we're gonna have to keep these bills until the trial. *(He starts to put them into his pocket.)*

MILSTEAD: Oh, no, you don't! *(She grabs the money from him.)* You...you brazen thief, you!

*(Miss Milstead whacks Bill with her purse.)*

BILL: Owwww!

MILSTEAD: Ya'll are not officers of the law. Ya'll are incompetent crooks.

*(Miss Milstead whacks Bill with her purse.)*

BILL: Owww! What have you got in that purse...bricks?

MILSTEAD: Trying to steal money from a poor, frail old lady!

*(Miss Milstead whacks Bill with her purse.)*

BILL: Owww! Frail?! You're strong as a horse!

MILSTEAD: Are you calling me a horse?!

*(Miss Milstead whacks Bill with her purse.)*

BILL: Owww! No. I didn't say you were a horse!

*(Milstead moves SL.)*

MILSTEAD: I'm goin' to report ya'll to Constable Baker. He'll teach ya'll a thing or two. *(She marches off SL. Shouts.)* Help! Heeeelp! Thieves! Heeelp!

SAM: *(To Bill.)* Now look what you've done!

BILL: What? What'd I do? That's the way we always do that con game.

SAM: No. I do the con game and you watch. That's the way we always do it. Now let's get out of here before she comes back with the constable.

BILL: Where to?

SAM: Into the woods. *(School bell clangs.)* That's the school bell. Hurry!

*(Sam and Bill grab their bags and exit DSR. After a brief pause, Boys and Girls enter from the schoolhouse. They call excitedly to each other. Some Students chase each other. A few Girls, including Jennifer and Margaret, pick up rocks and begin to play hopscotch.)*

*Some Boys, including Amos Murray and Ed Walker, toss a deflated volleyball back and forth. Rose carries a rope for jumping. She hands one end to Nan, and when they pull apart, they see that the rope is in two pieces. Note: But they do not show the knots in the rope to the audience at this point.)*

ROSE: *(To Nan.)* Oh, no! Not again!

NAN: It's in two pieces. How can we jump a rope that's in two pieces?

ROSE: It's you-know-who that did it. *(Mrs. Tatum, a teacher, enters SR. Rose and Nan rush to her.)* Mrs. Tatum? Mrs. Tatum, look what Jonni did. *(She holds up the two ends of the rope.)*

NAN: She cut our jump-rope in two again.

MRS. TATUM: Now, Rose, Nan, how do you know it was Jonni?

ROSE: Who else would do such a...a horrible, nasty thing?

NAN: It was Jonni, all right.

MRS. TATUM: *(Sighs.)* Probably so. Well, tie the ends together, and it'll still work.

ROSE: But that's what we did the last times she cut it. *(Rose and Nan stretch the rope between them so that Mrs. Tatum can see the rope is tied together with several big knots.)* See?

NAN: Knots, knots, and knots.

MRS. TATUM: *(Exasperated.)* Tie the ends together again and it'll work.

ROSE: *(Unhappily.)* All right.

*(Nan and Rose turn away.)*

NAN: Pretty soon, there won't be a rope left to jump.

ROSE: Yeah. We'll just be jumpin' knots.

*(Nan and Rose tie the rope together and allow other Girls, including Mary, to jump rope. Note: Jumpers may recite appropriate rhymes*

*as long as they don't detract from other actions happening onstage.  
Mrs. Tatum turns to the Amos Murray, who has a flat volleyball.)*

MRS. TATUM: Amos? Amos Murray, what happened to the volleyball? Why is flat like that?

AMOS: Jonni hit it.

MRS. TATUM: Hitting it wouldn't flatten it.

AMOS: It would if you hit it with a board that had a nail in it.

MRS. TATUM: That girl! *(To herself.)* What am I going to do with her?

AMOS: It don't throw too good now.

MRS. TATUM: Well, ya'll play with it as best you can.

AMOS: Yes, ma'am.

*(Amos and the other Boys continue their game with the flat volleyball. Constable Baker waddles on SL with a toothpick in his mouth. He wears a gun belt with a pistol below his oversized belly and a big badge pinned to his shirt. He burps and wipes his mouth with his sleeve. Mrs. Tatum approaches Constable.)*

MRS. TATUM: Constable Baker, what are you doing here at the school?

CONSTABLE: Well, Miz Tatum, I would-a been here sooner, but I had to a-rrest somebody in my official ca-pa-city as constable of Summit. *[He uses a long "a" in "a-rrest." ]*

MRS. TATUM: Whom did you "a-rrest"?

CONSTABLE: Well, I, uh, didn't exactly a-rrest nobody yet. But I thought about a-rrestin' somebody. I thought about it real hard. And I would-a done it, too, but I was afraid my chili might get cold.

MRS. TATUM: Your chili?

CONSTABLE: Yeah, well, I dropped by down to Mona's Café, you know, to see if they was havin' any trouble.

MRS. TATUM: And were they?

CONSTABLE: Naw. But I hung a-round...jist in case.

MRS. TATUM: They've never had any trouble at the café.

CONSTABLE: No, ma'am. But they might. And that chili shore was good.

MRS. TATUM: I see. But you didn't answer my question: Why are you here?

CONSTABLE: I'm here because I finished my chili, and now I'm gonna do my a-rrestin'.

MRS. TATUM: Here? On the school grounds?

CONSTABLE: Yes, ma'am. *(He pulls out his pistol.)* Old lady Milstead says two con men tried to steal her money. Right here. On this here site. Two of 'em. Two con men.

MRS. TATUM: Well, I haven't seen anybody here except the children, so you need to look elsewhere.

CONSTABLE: Elsewhere?

MRS. TATUM: Well, they're obviously not here.

CONSTABLE: *(Looks around.)* I don't see 'em.

MRS. TATUM: Because they're not here.

CONSTABLE: So I'll git to the other part of my a-rrestin' fer today.

MRS. TATUM: And what part is that?

CONSTABLE: It's that red-headed monster Jonni Dorset agin. She's been a-terrorizin' the whole town.

MRS. TATUM: You can't arrest her. She's a child.

CONSTABLE: But half the townfolk is a-complainin' 'bout her.

MRS. TATUM: You still can't arrest her. And put away that gun. It might go off.

CONSTABLE: It cain't go off. I ain't got no bullets. *(He puts the gun back into his holster.)* The mayor won't let me have none.

MRS. TATUM: Can't you do somethin' else?

CONSTABLE: Well, I'd buy some bullets, but he won't let me have no money, neither.

MRS. TATUM: I mean about Jonni.

CONSTABLE: The last time I did somethin' to her, I took her to jail to lock her up, but she stole my keys...and locked me

up. It was four days afore my wife missed me an' come down there an' let me out. Elsewise, I'd still be there.

MRS. TATUM: I'm sorry.

CONSTABLE: I still ain't got my keys back.

MRS. TATUM: Constable...

CONSTABLE: My wife had to use a sledgehammer to get that cell door open.

MRS. TATUM: Jonni is an average 9-year-old. She's just going through a phase. In a few years, she'll be over it and she'll be fine.

CONSTABLE: Maybe she'll be fine, but the town'll be a wreck. Half of it already looks like a tornado stormed through there. An' that tornado was little Jonni Dorset. Even her ma and pa cain't control her.

MRS. TATUM: I'm sure they can.

*(Jonni enters SL and looks around. Constable pulls out his pistol.)*

CONSTABLE: *(Points to Jonni.)* There she is now! The little rascal. I'll git her!

*(Constable moves a few steps toward Jonni. Mrs. Tatum holds him back.)*

MRS. TATUM: You'll do no such thing.

CONSTABLE: But it's my job.

MRS. TATUM: Have some more chili.

CONSTABLE: No, ma'am. A constable has got to do his duty, and his duty is to—. *(He stops.)* More chili? *(He moves left and stops.)* No, I cain't. *(He moves right and stops.)* More chili? *(He moves left and stops.)* Duty? *(He moves right and stops. Turns left.)* Chili... *(Turns right.)* ...duty... *(Turns left.)* ...chili.

*(As the Constable considers his options, Jonni approaches Mrs. Tatum.)*

JONNI: *(Sweetly.)* Mrs. Tatum, may I jump rope with the other girls?

MRS. TATUM: Of course, Jonni.

JONNI: May I play hopscotch?

MRS. TATUM: If you like.

JONNI: What about hide-and-seek?

MRS. TATUM: Recess is over in about five minutes. Until then, you can do anything you like.

CONSTABLE: "Anythang she likes"? That's a dangerous thang to say, ma'am.

MRS. TATUM: Nonsense, Constable.

JONNI: Okay, thanks.

*(Jonni approaches the Girls jumping rope.)*

MRS. TATUM: *(To Constable.)* You see? A normal, average little girl. I'll be right back.

*(Mrs. Tatum exits into the schoolhouse. The Constable puts his gun away and keeps his eyes on Jonni as she moves to the jump-rope.)*

JONNI: *(Very loudly.)* My turn!

NAN: No, it's not. Mary's jumping.

JONNI: *(Very loudly, to Girls.)* My turn!

ROSE: Jonni, go away.

JONNI: Here I come, ready or not!

*(Screaming loudly, Jonni leaps into the rope and jumps a few times before stopping. Rose, Nan, and Mary ad-lib their objections. Jonni purposefully tangles herself in the rope and laughs.)*

NAN: Stop it, stop it! Jonni, go away!

ROSE: Don't do that. We were having a good time till you came along.

JONNI: And now I'm having a good time.

*(Giggling, Jonni pulls a pair of scissors from her bag and cuts the rope. The other Girls scream at her. She laughs and puts the scissors into her bag. Mrs. Tatum returns from the schoolhouse, carrying a notepad and pencil.)*

NAN/ROSE: Mrs. Tatum! Mrs. Tatum!

MARY: *(Holds up the cut rope.)* Look what Jonni did!

NAN: She cut our rope. *(Cries loudly.)*

ROSE: Again! *(Cries loudly.)*

CONSTABLE: I gotta a-rrest that little varmit! *(He pulls out his pistol and approaches Jonni.)* Jonni Dorset, you're under a-rrest!

MRS. TATUM: Constable Baker!

CONSTABLE: Cain't stop me now, ma'am.

*(Constable moves closer to Jonni.)*

JONNI: *(Screams.)* Yeeiiii! He's going to shoot me! He's going to shoot me!

CONSTABLE: I ain't gonna shoot you.

JONNI: *(Shouts.)* He is! He is! He's got a gun and he's going to shoot me. Yeeiiii! *(She runs off SL.)*

CONSTABLE: I'm jist gonna a-rrest you! Wait up! *(He lopes off after her. Shouts.)* Don't run so fast!

MRS. TATUM: *(Calls after him.)* Not with the gun, Constable! Put the gun away!

NAN: What are we going to do about our jump-rope?

MRS. TATUM: Um, another knot should do it.

NAN: There's no room for another knot.

ROSE: She's a...a horrible, nasty person, Mrs. Tatum.

*(Still yelling, Jonni enters SL. She stops and picks up the rocks the jumpers were using.)*

JONNI: Wow! What a neat rock.

JENNIFER: That's mine.

*(Jonni looks at the second rock in her hand.)*

JONNI: This one, too?

MARGARET: Put that down. It's mine. Give it back, Jonni!  
Right now!

JONNI: I like them.

MRS. TATUM: Jonni!

JENNIFER: *(To Jonni.)* We're playing with those.

MARGARET: They're ours, Jonni. Give them back.

JONNI: Make me.

*(As Jennifer and Margaret step toward Jonni, the Constable appears SL with his gun now holstered.)*

CONSTABLE: *(Gasps for breath.)* There... *(Gasps.)* ...there you are! Now, you stop a-runnin' an' come... *(Gasps.)* ...come along with me to the... *(Gasps.)* ...the jailhouse. You hear me?

*(Constable waddles toward Jonni, waving his fists.)*

JONNI: *(Screams.)* Yeeiiii! *(To Mrs. Tatum.)* A big monster man is going to hit me! Don't let him hit me!

MRS. TATUM: He's not going to hit anybody, Jonni.

JONNI: He is! He is! Somebody save me! Yeeiiii!

*(Jonni runs off SR. Constable breathes heavily and stumbles after her.)*

CONSTABLE: Tell her to stop a-runnin'. I cain't run...like I used to. *(Exits SR.)*

JENNIFER: *(To Mrs. Tatum.)* She took our rocks, Mrs. Tatum. How can we play hopscotch without our rocks?

MRS. TATUM: There are lots of rocks, Jennifer. Get a new one.

JENNIFER: But I liked my old one.

NAN: *(To Mrs. Tatum.)* She cut our rope.

*(Nan and Rose wail loudly.)*

JENNIFER: *(To Mrs. Tatum.)* She took my favorite rock.

*(Jennifer and Margaret wail loudly. Jonni runs on SR and straight toward the Boys, who are tossing the deflated ball to each other. She grabs the ball and runs around the playground with the Boys chasing her.)*

MRS. TATUM: Jonni Dorset, you stop this instant! Stop that!

ED: *(To Jonni.)* Hey! Gimme that! Gimme that, Jonni!

MRS. TATUM: Jonni, please!

JONNI: *(To Ed.)* You want it? Here.

*(Jonni hits Ed with the ball.)*

ED: Owww! I'm not takin' that from a girl!

JONNI: Well, you just did.

ED: Oh, yeah?

JONNI: Yeah.

*(Ed leaps toward Jonni. As the other Children gather around and cheer, Jonni and Ed roll on the ground and scream at each other. Mrs. Tatum sets her notepad and pencil aside and steps in.)*

MRS. TATUM: *(Shouts.)* Ed Walker, Jonni Dorset! Break it up! No fighting. Do you hear me? Stop it!

*(Mrs. Tatum pulls Jonni and Ed apart. Constable enters SR and stoops over, panting heavily.)*

CONSTABLE: *(Gasping.)* She's... *(Gasps.)* ...she's gonna be the... *(Gasps.)* ...the death of me yet.

JONNI: *(Disappointed.)* Oh, Mrs. Tatum, I had him beat. I did.  
I had him beat.

ED: Didn't.

JONNI: Did too.

MRS. TATUM: Constable, I think we need your assistance  
here after all.

*(Constable gasps for breath but manages to cross to Mrs. Tatum.)*

CONSTABLE: I thought you said she'd grow out of this?

MRS. TATUM: And she shall. In the meantime, she needs a  
little discipline.

CONSTABLE: She needs *a lot* of discipline. An' I'm the one...  
*(Gasps.)* ...to give it to her. *(He grabs Jonni by the arm.)* Come  
on, Jonni Dorset. You an' me got some talkin' to do.

JONNI: But he started it.

ED: Did not.

CONSTABLE: Don't matter. You're a-comin' with me. *(He  
drags the yelling Jonni left and pauses. He continues to pant.)*  
After this... *(Gasps.)* ...I'm gonna need me... *(Gasps.)* ...a-  
nother bowl of that chili. Maybe two. *(He starts to exit SL  
with a complaining Jonni. To himself.)* Now whut did I do  
with them handcuffs?

*(Constable and Jonni exit. School bell clangs.)*

MRS. TATUM: All right, children. Children? *(Students listen  
to her.)* Recess is over. Time to go back in. We'll do our  
readin' first and then have our show-and-tell. Let's go.  
Inside. Come on. Let's go. Hurry along, everybody.

*(Students ad-lib complaints as they exit into the school. Mrs. Tatum  
glances off left and then follows the Children, leaving behind her  
notepad and pencil. Pause. Sam sneaks on SR carrying her bag and  
looks around. She beckons for Bill, who enters carrying his bag.)*

BILL: *(To Sam.)* They made me quit school in the second grade.

SAM: They made you quit school?

BILL: Yeah.

SAM: Why?

BILL: 'Cause I was 13 years old.

SAM: You were 13 years old in the second grade?

BILL: Yeah. Well, I flunked first grade six times.

SAM: Bill, nobody in the entire world has flunked first grade six times!

BILL: *(Smiles.)* Yeah, I know. Makes me kinda special, don't it?

SAM: Makes me have to think for both of us.

BILL: I did good in recess. I should have gotten an "A."

SAM: Bill, they don't give grades for recess.

BILL: Oh. No wonder I didn't get any "A's." *(Pause.)* One time a kid got lost, and they offered a reward for anybody who found him.

SAM: And you found him?

BILL: No. But I beat up the kid who did and stole the reward.

SAM: Reward? *(Thinks.)* Reward. Yeah. Now, there's an idea. I think I know how we can get our 2,000 dollars.

BILL: How?

SAM: We kidnap one of these kids and hold him for ransom.

BILL: But, Samantha, we ain't never kidnapped nobody before.

SAM: Doesn't matter. *(Corrects him.)* Call me "Sam." We can do it.

BILL: Which one? Which kid?

SAM: Doesn't matter. There's a whole bunch of them here. We just wait until they come outside again, and you snatch one.

BILL: I snatch one? Why don't *you* snatch one?

SAM: I came up with the idea, so you get to do the dirty work.

BILL: *(Grins.)* Yeah. I always like the dirty work.

SAM: That's why we make such a great team.

*(Panting, Constable drags himself on SL.)*

CONSTABLE: *(To Bill and Sam.)* Say, fellars...?

BILL: What? *(He turns and sees the Constable.)* Samantha...it's the sheriff! Hide! Quick!

*(Bill hides behind Sam.)*

SAM: You can't hide behind me.

*(Sam hides behind Bill.)*

BILL: Yes, I can. *(He hides behind her.)* I'm scared.

CONSTABLE: Ya'll seen a little girl... *(Gasps.)* ...with red hair... *(Gasps.)* ...run... *(Gasps.)* ...by... *(Gasps.)* ...here?

SAM: *(Quietly, to Bill.)* He's not after us. *(To Constable.)* Uh, hi, Sheriff.

CONSTABLE: I ain't no sheriff. I'm... *(Gasps.)* ...the constable... *(Gasps.)* ...of this here... *(Gasps.)* ...town. Constable Baker.

BILL: *(To Sam, smiles.)* Oh, then we're safe. *(To Constable.)* What's the difference between a sheriff and a constable?

CONSTABLE: There ain't none.

*(Bill hunkers down behind the nervous Sam.)*

BILL: *(To Sam.)* Like I said, it's the sheriff! Hide!

*(Nervous, Sam clears her throat.)*

SAM: Uh, Constable. Nice April morning, ain't it?

CONSTABLE: This is May.

SAM: Nice May morning, ain't it?

CONSTABLE: You seen her?

SAM: Seen who?

CONSTABLE: The red-haired little girl? I had her in my strong manly grasp, but she got away.

SAM: How did she do that?

CONSTABLE: She bit me. *(He shows them his hand.)* Right here. See that there red spot? Still hurts, too. Have you seen her?

SAM: No.

BILL: Yes.

*(Sam and Bill look at each other.)*

CONSTABLE: Well, ain't you have, or ain't you ain't?

BILL: Yes.

SAM: No.

BILL: *(To Sam.)* That sounds like the little brat who hit me with that rock.

SAM: Bill, don't.

BILL: *(To Constable.)* She went that way. *(Points SL.)*

CONSTABLE: I just came from that way.

BILL: Oh. Well, maybe she came from that way... *(Points SL.)*  
...and went that way. *(Points SR.)*

CONSTABLE: *Maybe?* You don't know which way she went?

SAM: That way. *(Points SR.)*

CONSTABLE: That way? *(Points SR.)*

SAM/BILL: *(They point SR.)* That way.

*(Constable starts to exit SR.)*

CONSTABLE: All right. Good. I got her now. *(Exits.)*

BILL: *(To Sam.)* I hope he catches her and spanks her good.

SAM: We should not be cooperating with the law, Bill.

BILL: Why not?

SAM: Because he could be coming back and asking us more questions.

BILL: No, he won't.

*(Constable enters.)*

CONSTABLE: Hey! *(With a yelp, Bill leaps behind Sam and hides.)* You fellars get off that train that just passed through here?

SAM: Uh, yes, Constable. We sat in first-class.

CONSTABLE: Well, that's interestin', 'cause that train ain't got no first-class. That's a freight train.

SAM: Oh. Well, I mean, we sat in the caboose, which is as good as first-class.

CONSTABLE: The caboose?

SAM: We're friends with the, uh...the caboose man.

CONSTABLE: I see. Ya'll plan on stayin' in Summit fer a while, are you?

BILL: Just till we can raise a big hunk of cash.

*(Sam elbows Bill.)*

SAM: *(To Constable.)* What he means to say is that we're staying just long enough to...uh, spend a little cash.

CONSTABLE: Say, you two ain't the fellers who tried to steal old lady Milstead's cash, are you?

SAM: Fellas? Constable, I'm a girl.

CONSTABLE: You are? Can you prove that?

SAM: Constable!

CONSTABLE: I mean, I knew that. I knew that right away.

SAM: So if it was two men, it couldn't have been us.

CONSTABLE: Oh. That's right. *(Pause. Thinks.)* You shore you're a gal? I mean, of course, you're a gal. I can see that. All right. *(Pause.)* We got a nice café just down the street. Great chili.

SAM: Chili? Sounds good.

BILL: Chili makes me throw up. *(Sam elbows him again.)*  
Owww!

CONSTABLE: Well, you've delayed me enough already. Got to catch that Jonni Dorset afore she sets the town on fire.  
*(Exits SR.)*

SAM: *(To Bill.)* You see? More questions. And he just might arrest us if you don't keep your mouth shut. Why did you tell him we were trying to raise some cash?

BILL: I like to be honest.

SAM: Well, stop it. Honesty can get us into a world of trouble.

*(Bill turns his back to SL.)*

BILL: Hey, Sam, I got another idea to raise the dough.

*(Jonni sneaks on SL. She wears a bandana around her head with a couple of feathers stuck in it and carries a child's bow and some toy arrows. She aims her bow at Bill.)*

SAM: Forget it. Don't tell me any more of your terrible ideas.

*(As she thinks, Sam moves to the right. Jonni fires an arrow into Bill's back and quickly hides. Note: For safety, the toy arrows must have blunt points, and Jonni must be careful to shoot lightly and into a clear target so as not to hurt anyone onstage.)*

BILL: Owwww! *(He looks behind himself and sees the arrow. He picks it up. Nervously, to Sam.)* Hey, Samantha? There any Indians around here?

SAM: What?

BILL: Indians.

SAM: Well, there used to be...Blackfoot, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw—

BILL: Well, one just shot me.

SAM: What? Nobody shot you.

BILL: Some Indian just shot me. Look at this.

*(Bill shows her the arrow.)*

SAM: An arrow. Where did you get that?

BILL: It hit me and fell on the ground.

SAM: Bill, the Indians who live here now are peaceful.

*(Sam turns to the right again. Jonni appears and fires another toy arrow into Bill's back and hides.)*

BILL: Ouch! *(He turns and sees the second arrow on the ground.)*

There. He did it again.

SAM: Who did what again?

BILL: Some Indian just shot me again.... *(He picks up the arrow and shows it to Sam.)* ...with another arrow. This place is dangerous. *(Looks around.)* See any Indians?

*(Jonni appears at left and laughs.)*

SAM: There she is! *(Points to Jonni.)* It was that little Indian girl. She's harmless.

JONNI: *(To Bill.)* Gimme back my arrows, paleface.

BILL: What?

JONNI: Those are mine. Gimme!

BILL: You again! You're the same kid who threw that rock at me. The Sheriff is after you, you know.

JONNI: Those belong to me.

*(Jonni grabs the arrows and she and Bill engage in a tugging match.)*

SAM: Oh, Bill, give her the arrows.

BILL: So she can shoot me again? Not a chance.

*(Bill tries to grab Jonni, but she backs away from him.)*

JONNI: Mine, mine, mine!

BILL: All right. Here. *(He tries to lure her to him.)* Come get them.

*(Jonni approaches Bill. Bill grabs her and picks her up. She struggles.)*

JONNI: *(Struggling.)* Put me down! I'm Red Chief! You can't treat a chief like this! Put me down!

SAM: Bill, what are you doing?

BILL: I just chose our ransom victim.

SAM: She's not a good choice.

BILL: Well, I've got her, so she's the one. *(He moves USR.)*

JONNI: You'll be soorry! *(As she is carried off USR, screams.)*  
Aeeiii!

SAM: *(Shouts.)* Bill, come back here. Bill! Your bag!

*(Sam points to the bag. Constable enters DSR, gasping for breath.)*

CONSTABLE: *(To Sam.)* She didn't... *(Gasp.)* ...come...  
*(Gasp.)* ...by here... *(Gasp.)* ...yet, did she?

SAM: Uh, no, Constable.

CONSTABLE: I thought I heard her... *(Gasp.)* ...screaming.  
*(He looks off SL and USR.)*

SAM: Oh. *(Trying to distract him.)* Oh, no. That was, uh, me.  
I was, uh, singing. *(Sings in a low voice.)* La la laaaa...

CONSTABLE: I heard a high voice. *(He looks off SL and USR again.)*

SAM: Oh, yes. I was practicing in my soprano voice. *(She grabs him and pulls him CS as she sings off pitch in a high voice.)*  
La la laaaa...

CONSTABLE: *(Holds his ears.)* Well, I have some ad-vice fer you.

SAM: Yes?

CONSTABLE: Don't sang. Don't never sang.

SAM: Why not?

CONSTABLE: Your voice is so bad, when them birds hear you, they'll fall out of their trees and die.

SAM: Oh, Constable...you exaggerate. *(A bird falls to the ground in front of them accompanied by the sound of a slide whistle. They look at the bird and then at each other.)* I've got to go. *(She picks up the two bags and turns right.)*

CONSTABLE: *(Calls after her.)* Take that dead bird with you. *(Sam reluctantly picks up the dead bird.)* Give it a decent burial. *(Sam exits USR, carrying the dead bird and the two bags. Calls after her.)* And if I catch you sangin' agin, I'll throw you in jail! *(Checks his pockets for keys. To himself.)* Or I would if I had my keys back. *(Looks around.)* Where is that dang girl?! I'm gonna cuff her this time fer shore.

*(Constable exits SL. Mrs. Tatum enters from the schoolhouse and picks up her notepad and pencil. Mrs. Dorset enters SR, carrying a spelling book.)*

MRS. DORSET: Mrs. Tatum?

MRS. TATUM: Oh...Mrs. Dorset. How nice to see you.

MRS. DORSET: Jonni forgot her spellin' book again. Would you mind givin' it to her?

MRS. TATUM: Well, uh, actually, Jonni isn't in school just now.

MRS. DORSET: Oh? Do you know where she is?

MRS. TATUM: Mrs. Dorset, I'm afraid she was being naughty again, so Constable Baker took her to... *(Mrs. Tatum pauses.)*

MRS. DORSET: To where?

MRS. TATUM: To jail, I'm afraid.

MRS. DORSET: To jail?!

MRS. TATUM: Yes. I'm sorry.

MRS. DORSET: Oh, I really don't know what to do with that girl, Mrs. Tatum! She's so...rambunctious, so full of fire. Mr. Dorset and I can hardly control her at home.

MRS. TATUM: It's just a phase. She'll get over it.

MRS. DORSET: Yes, but will *I*? (*Laughs.*) Sorry, I don't mean to trouble you with our problems.

MRS. TATUM: It's quite all right. I understand.

MRS. DORSET: I know you do. You've been very...patient...this school year. And we thank you for that.

MRS. TATUM: It's my job, Mrs. Dorset. She'll be fine. You'll see.

*(Ed enters from the schoolhouse, running.)*

ED: Mrs. Tatum? Mrs. Tatum!

MRS. TATUM: Yes, Ed. What is it?

ED: Somebody stole my show-and-tell.

MRS. TATUM: Your show-and-tell? What was it?

ED: A bow and arrows.

MRS. TATUM: Do you know who took them?

ED: No, ma'am, but I can guess. It was—

*(Mrs. Tatum quickly puts her hand over Ed's mouth.)*

MRS. TATUM: Don't say it. It's okay.

MRS. DORSET: My little Jonni? Oh, for goodness sake!

MRS. TATUM: Go on inside, Ed. I'll take care of it.

ED: Yes, ma'am.

*(Ed exits into the schoolhouse. Constable enters SL followed by Miss Milstead.)*

MRS. TATUM: *(To Mrs. Dorset.)* Here's Constable Baker now.

MILSTEAD: *(To Constable, shouts.)* Why haven't you caught them thievin' varmints yet?

*(Miss Milstead hits the Constable with her purse.)*

CONSTABLE: Owww! Miss Milstead, stop that now! I've been too busy a-rrestin' other folks.

MILSTEAD: Well, I want them in jail! Do you hear me? They tried to steal my money, and I want them in jail!

*(Miss Milstead hits the Constable again.)*

CONSTABLE: Owwww! Yes, ma'am.

MRS. TATUM: Miss Milstead certainly knows how to make good use of her purse!

CONSTABLE: I'll a-rrest them as soon as I can find 'em.

MILSTEAD: Well, you better find them soon!

*(Miss Milstead turns to leave but turns back to give the Constable one final swat with her purse.)*

CONSTABLE: Owwww!

MILSTEAD: You hear me?! *(Exits SL, grumbling to herself.)*

CONSTABLE: *(Calls to her.)* If you don't stop hittin' me, I'm gonna have to a-rrest you.

*(Miss Milstead re-enters.)*

MILSTEAD: Just you try it, buster! *(Exits in a huff.)*

CONSTABLE: *(To Mrs. Tatum.)* That's a dangerous woman goin' there.

MRS. DORSET: I hear you've put my little girl in jail.

CONSTABLE: Uh, no, ma'am.

MRS. TATUM: But I thought that's where you were taking her.

CONSTABLE: I was. But she, uh, escaped.

MRS. DORSET: A 9-year-old girl escaped from your jail?

CONSTABLE: Uh, no, ma'am. We didn't make it that far. She bit me and ran off. You want to see the wound? *(He shows her his hand.)* Right there. Those are her tooth marks.

MRS. TATUM: I can't believe it.

CONSTABLE: Well, believe it. It hurts real bad.

MRS. TATUM: I'm not talkin' about you, Constable Baker.  
I'm talkin' about little Jonni.

MRS. DORSET: I know what you mean. (*Dramatically.*) Is  
there anybody who can tame that girl?!

*(Lights quickly fade to black.)*

## Scene 2

*(AT RISE: The entrance to a cave, a few hours later, noon. Carrying a rope, Bill is chasing Jonni around the campsite. Jonni still has the feathers stuck in her hair and carries a stick she uses as a rifle.)*

BILL: Come here, you little brat! I'm going to tie you to a tree and use you for target practice!

*(Jonni evades Bill.)*

JONNI: You'll never capture Red Chief!

BILL: Why not?

JONNI: It's against Indian rules.

BILL: Oh, yeah? *(He leaps for her, but she is too fast for him.)*  
Ohhh!

*(Bill and Jonni come face to face.)*

JONNI: Red Chief clobbers paleface!

BILL: Oh, no, you don't! *(Jonni hits his leg with the stick.)*  
Owww! *(He falls.)* I'm gonna get you yet!

*(Bill crawls after Jonni.)*

JONNI: My trusty steed! *(She jumps on Bill's back and rides him like a horse.)* Giddy up, horse! Giddy up!

BILL: I'm not going anywhere. *(Jonni "spurs" him with a foot.)*  
Owww! *(He begins to buck.)*

JONNI: Yippee! Buck away, horse! I can ride him! Yippee!

BILL: I've had enough of this!

*(Bill leans over, tossing Jonni onto the ground.)*

JONNI: Great ride, Old Hank!

BILL: *(Grabs Jonni's leg as she tries to scoot away.)* Ah-ha!  
Gotcha now!

JONNI: *(Striking him with her stick.)* Let go! Let go!

BILL: Ow! Owww!

*(Bill releases Jonni.)*

JONNI: Paleface poor fighter. Red Chief show him how. *(She tosses the stick aside and jumps at him.)* Whee!

BILL: Whee yourself, you little wildcat!

*(Bill grabs her and holds her tightly while he wraps the rope around her and ties it.)*

JONNI: Stop! Stop that! I don't want to be tied up. Let me go. Let me go!

*(Bill finishes tying Jonni up and gasps for breath.)*

BILL: Unh-unh. You stay tied until we decide what to do with you.

JONNI: Old Hank doesn't fight fair.

BILL: No, but Old Hank wins the fight. *(He sits and moans.)*  
Owww! Sort of. I hurt all over.

JONNI: Don't be a sissy. It's just a few bruises.

BILL: A few?! *(He rolls up his sleeve, showing a big bruise.)* You see this? *(He gingerly touches it.)* Owww! *(He rolls up his other sleeve showing another bruise.)* And this? *(He gingerly touches it.)* Owww! *(He rolls up a pant leg and does the same.)* And this? Owww! And this and this? Owww, owww! *(He rolls up the other pant leg, but there are no bruises there.)* At least this leg is all right.

JONNI: Red Chief missed a leg? I'll get it next time.

BILL: If there's a next time, I'll tie you to a stake and use you as bait for the lions out there.

JONNI: *(Frightened.)* Lions? There are lions out here?

BILL: Dozens of them.

JONNI: *(Tries to be brave.)* Awww, I'm not afraid of lions.

BILL: And tigers.

JONNI: I'll shoot them.

BILL: And elephants.

JONNI: Elephants? There aren't any elephants in Alabama.

BILL: They escaped from the circus.

JONNI: *(Frightened.)* They did?

BILL: And they're on a rampage. They like to eat up little girls like you.

JONNI: Maybe I'll let you keep that one leg, Old Hank.

BILL: Thanks.

JONNI: If you keep the elephants away.

BILL: I'll see what I can do.

JONNI: But I'm gonna scalp you at daybreak. It's the honorable thing for an Indian Chief to do to his enemy.

BILL: Well, maybe you could be just a little bit dis-honorable.

JONNI: Nope. Gotta do it.

BILL: *(To himself.)* I was afraid of that.

JONNI: *(Smiles.)* Isn't this fun? I like camping out like this.

*(Bill pulls out a handkerchief from his pocket.)*

BILL: It'll be a lot more fun after I gag you. *(He moves to place the handkerchief into her mouth.)*

JONNI: *(Screams loudly.)* Nooooo! Don't! Nooooo! Aeeeeiiii!

*(Sam enters SR, carrying their two bags and pauses.)*

SAM: Bill? What are you doing?

*(Bill pauses.)*

BILL: I'm...well, I'm...I mean, I was going to—

JONNI: He's torturing me, Snake-Eye.

SAM: Snake-Eye? Who's Snake-Eye?

BILL: You are. And I'm Old Hank, the trapper.

JONNI: He beat me, Snake-Eye. And he tried to poison me, but I spit it out.

BILL: That's not so.

JONNI: And then he tried to feed me to the elephants.

SAM: Elephants? There aren't any elephants in Alabama.

JONNI: *(To Bill.)* I told you, I told you.

BILL: *(To Sam, signaling for her to agree with him.)* Except the ones that escaped from the circus...

SAM: What circus?

BILL: Samantha, just go along with me here.

SAM: *(Corrects him.)* It's "Sam." Untie her.

BILL: What?

SAM: Untie her.

BILL: You don't understand.

SAM: Well, never mind. I'll do it.

*(Sam unties Jonni.)*

BILL: *(Mimicking Jonnie.)* You'll be soorryyyy.

JONNI: *(To Sam.)* Thanks, Snake-Eye. He's kept me tied up for three days and three nights, and my tribe needs me.

BILL: *(To Jonni.)* It's only been an hour, little girl. *(To Sam.)* One hour and look at me. *(He shows Sam his bruises.)* I've got bruises on every part of my body. We need to take her home.

SAM: I thought you wanted to use her for the ransom. You're the one who chose her.

BILL: Well, now I want to un-choose her. If we keep her here, I'll keel over dead by dusk.

SAM: *(To Jonni.)* You want to go home, Jonni?

JONNI: Jonni? Who's Jonni? I'm Red Chief. Paleface should not forget that.

SAM: You want to go home...Red Chief?

BILL: *(Eagerly, to Jonni.)* Say yes, kid. Say yes, yes, yes. *(Pause.)* Please say yes. *(Pause.)* Pretty please?

JONNI: Nope.

BILL: *(Disgusted.)* Agghhh!

JONNI: Why would I want to go home? I don't have any fun at home. And I hate to go to school. I like it here.

BILL: But I don't want you here.

JONNI: *(To Sam.)* You're not going to make me go home, are you, Snake-Eye? Huh? Say you won't. You won't, you won't, you won't.

SAM: Well, not right away.

BILL: Sam!

SAM: We'll stay here in the cave for a while.

BILL: Sam! That will be pure torture.

SAM: We won't hurt her.

BILL: Not torture for her. Torture for me!

SAM: You'll live.

JONNI: Oh, good! I like to camp out. I've never had this much fun in my whole life!

BILL: Oh, no! *(Sits.)* She's gonna scalp me at sunrise.

JONNI: *(Indicating Sam.)* And I'm gonna burn her at the stake.

BILL: Won't that be hot!

SAM: Bill!

BILL: Do you hear what she's gonna do to us? And she's not kidding.

SAM: A few hours.

BILL: That's all it will take. Believe me.

SAM: Just look at her, Bill.

*(Bill glances at Jonni and she gives him an innocent look.)*

BILL: Those are deceiving looks.

SAM: The poor thing. Come here, Jonni.

JONNI: I want to stay with you, Snake-Eye.

SAM: I know you do, honey.

*(Sam pats Jonni on the head.)*

JONNI: And Old Hank.

BILL: Leave me out of this.

SAM: Let's have a bite to eat...and a powwow. How about that? Then we can discuss this whole matter.

BILL: I can go for the eating part.

*(During the following, Bill takes some bread from his bag, breaks it into several pieces, and parcels them out to Samantha and Jonni. Then he takes a piece for himself.)*

JONNI: Is this all we get? Bread?

BILL: It's all we have.

JONNI: Okay. *(She takes a big bite of bread and speaks in a muffled tone.)* I've never camped out before.

BILL: *(To Sam.)* What'd she say?

JONNI: *(Muffled.)* I said, I've never camped out before.

BILL: What?

SAM: *(To Jonni.)* Don't talk with your mouth full, honey.

*(Jonni spits out the bread.)*

JONNI: I said...

BILL: *(To Sam.)* Now she's wasting good food.

JONNI: ...I've never camped out before. I like this.

SAM: Now, Jonni—

JONNI: I'm not Jonni. I'm Red Chief.

SAM: Okay, Red Chief. You—

JONNI: I had a pet possum once. We played Indians, and I chased it all the way across the meadow. It got away, though.

BILL: Lucky possum.

JONNI: I hate to go to school.

*(Bill gets increasingly irritated during the following.)*

BILL: You already told us that.

JONNI: (*Ignoring him.*) I'm nine. At least I was at my last birthday. Did you know that rats eat eggs? They ate up 16 of Jimmy Talbot's aunt's speckled hen's eggs.

BILL: They must have been hungry.

JONNI: No. They did it out of meanness.

BILL: How do you know?

JONNI: Because they were rats, and rats are naturally mean.

Are there any real Indians in these woods?

SAM: Well—

JONNI: 'Cause I'd like to meet them if there are.

SAM: Well...

JONNI: (*To Bill, indicating bread.*) Got any gravy to put on this stuff?

BILL: Why do you want gravy?

JONNI: To make it taste decent.

BILL: Well, if you don't like it, you can—

JONNI: Do the trees make the wind blow?

BILL: Huh?

JONNI: We had five puppies. What makes your nose so red, Hank?

BILL: My nose ain't red.

JONNI: My pa has lots of money. Are the stars hot?

SAM: (*To Bill.*) Did she say her pa has lots of money?

JONNI: Lots and lots.

SAM: Hmm...

JONNI: I whipped Ed Walker twice on Saturday. And once today. Did you see me? I don't like boys.

SAM: I don't blame you.

JONNI: You ever catch a toad with a string, Snake-Eye? That's the only way to catch them—with a string. Do oxen make any noise?

SAM: Oxen?

JONNI: Why are oranges round?

BILL: Samantha, make her shut up. Will you make her shut up?!

JONNI: Have you got any beds to sleep on in this cave? I don't want to sleep on the ground.

BILL: Sam, I'm about to lose my mind.

JONNI: *(To Bill.)* I can help you look for it. Did you know Amos Murray has six toes? Just on one foot, though. His other foot has the right amount of toes.

BILL: *(More irritated.)* Samantha?!

JONNI: Monkeys and fish can't talk. I don't think they can talk. Do you think they can talk?

BILL: They don't have to. You talk enough for all the animals in the entire state.

JONNI: Shhh! *(She stands with her stick and moves to the side.)* I hear palefaces approaching. *(Pause.)* Nope. No palefaces this time.

BILL: Just us. *(Behind Bill, Jonni lets out a very loud Indian war whoop. Startled, Bill screams and tosses his bread into the air.)* Aeeiii! *(Tensely, to Sam.)* She's got to go. Do you hear me? This Indian chief has got to go. I can't take her anymore. She's driving me insane.

JONNI: Is that bad?

BILL: Yes! That's bad. It's the worst.

JONNI: I know some good Indian potions that will make you feel better.

BILL: No! No potions! I don't want any potions. I just want you out of here. Samantha?!

SAM: *(Trying to calm him down.)* Now, Bill...

JONNI: *(Corrects her.)* That's Old Hank.

SAM: Now, Old Hank, it's time to put my idea into motion.

BILL: I have a better idea. *(To Jonni.)* Can you swim?

JONNI: Nope.

BILL: *(To Sam.)* Then I say we toss her into the middle of the lake!

JONNI: But I would drown.

BILL: Yeah!

JONNI: *(To Sam.)* Old Hank is always funnin' me. He is funnin' me, isn't he?

SAM: I'm sure he is.

BILL: He ain't.

SAM: He is!

BILL: All right, all right. He is. What's the next part of your plan?

SAM: We send a letter to her parents demanding 2,000 dollars for her safe return.

BILL: Nobody's going to pay 2,000 dollars for this little devil. *(Jonni tosses a rock, which hits Bill.)* Owwww! *(Angrily.)* Just for that, add another 500 dollars to that ransom demand!

SAM: Okay, sure. Just calm down.

BILL: How can I calm down when she's trying to kill me?

JONNI: I'm not trying to kill you.

BILL: Then what do you call it?

JONNI: Practicing.

BILL: Practicing for what?

JONNI: For going on the warpath! *(She dances around chanting.)*

BILL: *(To Sam.)* You see? You see?

SAM: She's just playing, Bill. Leave her alone.

BILL: Leave her alone? I'm not bothering her. She's bothering me.

SAM: *(Rifling through her bag.)* I've got a pencil and paper in here somewhere. We'll write a ransom note, and I'll deliver it to her parents right away. *(She finds the pencil and paper.)* Here we are. *(Prepared to write.)* Now, what shall we say?

BILL: Say "Please come get your little brat before I do something I'll be sorry for."

SAM: *(Writes.)* "Dear Mr. Dorset."

JONNI: Are you writing a letter to my pa?

SAM: Yes.

JONNI: Let me write it. Let me! Let me! *(She grabs the paper and pencil.)* I need to practice my cursive.

BILL: You can't write your own ransom note.

SAM/JONNI: Why not?

BILL: Because you...I mean, it's not...well, you can't just...it's considered rude.

SAM: (*Ignoring him. To Jonni.*) Okay, write this: "We have your girl hidden away."

JONNI: (*Slowly.*) Wait, wait. You're talking too fast. "We..."

BILL: "We"? That's all you wrote?

JONNI: (*To Sam.*) What comes after "we"?

(*Bill snatches the paper and pencil from Jonni.*)

BILL: Here. Let me write the note. (*To Sam.*) Uh, what comes after "we"?

SAM: I'll write the note. (*She takes the paper and pencil from Bill and writes.*) "We have your girl hidden away. Pay a ransom of 2,000 dollars..."

BILL: Don't forget to add the 500 for hitting me with a rock.

SAM: (*Writes.*) "Two-thousand five-hundred dollars..."

BILL: No, wait. Nobody's going to pay that much for her. Make it 1,500 dollars.

SAM: (*She erases the "two" and replaces it with "one".*) "...one-thousand five-hundred..."

JONNI: Hey! I'm worth a lot more than that.

SAM: (*She erases part of it and writes.*) "Two thousand dollars..."

BILL: But that's where we started.

SAM: Yes, it is. (*Reads.*) "Pay a ransom of 2,000 dollars by tonight, or you will never see your little girl again."

JONNI: I'm not *little*.

SAM: Signed... (*Reads.*) "Two Desperate Men."

BILL: Two very desperate men.

JONNI: I would have said two million dollars.

BILL: Two million? There ain't that much money in the world!

(*Sam folds up the ransom note.*)

SAM: I'm going to take this ransom note into town and get it to Mr. Dorset. *(She stands and prepares to leave.)*

JONNI: Snake-Eye, can I play the Black Scout while you're gone?

BILL: No!

SAM: *(To Jonni.)* Of course. Mr. Bill will play with you.

BILL: Samantha, no!

SAM: What kind of game is it?

JONNI: Well, I play the Black Scout. *(She puts a black blanket around her shoulders.)* And I have to ride to the fort to warn the settlers that the Indians are coming.

SAM: I thought you were an Indian.

JONNI: I'm tired of being the Indian. *(She tosses her feathers aside.)* I want to be the Black Scout.

SAM: Well, that sounds harmless enough.

BILL: *(Suspicious.)* Harmless? Nothing this kid does is harmless.

SAM: I'll be back soon. *(She exits with the ransom note.)*

BILL: *(Calls after her.)* Sam, don't leave me alone with this...this...

JONNI: Black Scout.

BILL: *(Calls after Sam.)* ...Black Scout! *(Turns to Jonni.)* I'm afraid to ask...but what am I supposed to do in this game?

JONNI: You're the horse.

BILL: I'm not a horse.

JONNI: You are now. Get down on your hands and knees.

BILL: *(Almost weeping.)* Hands and knees?

JONNI: So I can ride you to the fort.

*(Bill gets down on his hands and knees.)*

BILL: How far is that?

JONNI: Ninety miles.

BILL: Ninety miles?!

JONNI: And we have ten minutes to get there.

BILL: Ten minutes to go ninety miles?!

*(Jonni grabs her stick and leaps onto Bill's back.)*

JONNI: So we have to go fast—real fast.

BILL: I can't go that fast.

JONNI: Yes, you can. *(She spansks Bill with the stick.)* Giddy up, horse! Let's go! Let's go.

BILL: Owwww! Okay, I'm going, I'm going. *(He increases his speed.)*

JONNI: Faster! Faster! We've got to save the settlers!

BILL: *(Whimpers.)* And who's going to save me?

*(As Jonni yells and whacks him on the behind to urge him onward, Bill, moaning with every step, carries Jonni off.)*

JONNI: Yippeeeee!

*(Lights fade to black.)*

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**