

IT'S NOT MY TURN TO LOOK FOR GRANDMA!

The Play

based on the book of the same title, published by Knopf
by April Halprin Wayland

Author's note: If you are comparing this play to the published book, you will notice some slight differences – a few words added or changed.

Characters:

NARRATOR (this part may be divided between two narrators)

MA

WOOLIE

MACK

GRANDMA

DIRTY OLD DOG

OLEANNA

DUCKS

MONROE

PORCUPINES

RACCOON

POSSUM

MISCELLANEOUS ANIMALS (as needed)

for smaller cast, animals may be large drawings on poster board or models

Setting: small family farm.

SCENE 1: Back porch and roof of farm house and vegetable garden

SCENE 2: Farm house kitchen

SCENE 3: Back porch and roof of farm house and vegetable garden

SCENE 4: Hall closet

SCENE 5: Back porch and roof of farm house and vegetable garden

SCENE 6: Farm yard near haystack

SCENE 7: Back porch and roof of farm house and vegetable garden

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SCENE 8: One end of farm yard

SCENE 9: Whole farm yard

SCENE 1: Back porch and roof of farm house and vegetable garden

MA is chopping firewood with all her might. No one else is in sight, although other sounds may be heard -- perhaps someone whistling, the creak of a rusty old swing, birds, a dog scratching, the sound of a neighbor's tractor starting up, a rooster crowing, other farm sounds...

NARRATOR:

Dawn was just cracking over the hills. Ma was splitting kindling on the back porch.

MA:

Woolie! Where in the hickory stick is Grandma?

WOOLIE:

(appears out of nowhere)

Dunno. It's not my turn to look for Grandma!

NARRATOR:

It was Mack's turn.

MA:

Maaa-ack!

Mack appears and sets off, perhaps pantomiming a run without going anywhere, depending on available stage space.

NARRATOR:

Ma sent him a-lookin'. Mack looked and he looked and he sure did look, and well, friends and neighbors, he finally found Grandma and her dirty old dog... [PAUSE]

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SCENE 2: Farmhouse kitchen

NARRATOR:

...telling jokes and soaking their bones in the stewpot on the kitchen stove.

Grandma and her dog are in a big stewpot, seated as if they are in a Jacuzzi. Grandma is yakking it up and laughing, her dog is howling appreciatively.

MACK:

(out of breath and amazed at where she is)

Grandma! Come tell us stories while we split kindling.

GRANDMA:

Tell tales? Too busy.

NARRATOR:

So Mack leaned in and listened hard. Then he ran back...[PAUSE]

SCENE 3: Back porch and roof of farm house and vegetable garden

NARRATOR:

...and told a tall tale of his own to Woolie and Ma as the wood chips flew.

Ma and Woolie finish chopping and Mack finishes stacking the wood. They each pick up a hoe, a trowel or other garden tool, and walk down the back porch steps to the vegetable garden. Ma starts hoeing with a fury.

NARRATOR:

Noon was sizzling like an egg in a cast-iron pan. Ma is whacking weeds in the garden.

MA:

Woolie, where in turnip tarnation is Grandma?

WOOLIE:

(hard at work in the garden)

Dunno. It's not my turn to look for Grandma!

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NARRATOR:

It was Oleanna's turn.

MA:

Oooleannnnnnna!

Oleanna appears.

NARRATOR:

Ma sent her a-lookin'. Oleanna looked and she looked and she sure did look, and well, friends and neighbors, she finally found Grandma, her dirty old dog, and all of her ducks...[PAUSE]

SCENE 4: Hall closet

NARRATOR:

...in the hall closet, painting the coats new colors.

OLEANNA:

(peering in)

Grandma! Come paint our portrait for posterity.

GRANDMA:

(without stopping)

Paint a picture? Too busy.

NARRATOR:

So Oleanna opened her eyes wide and watched the colors fly. Then she ran back...[PAUSE]

SCENE 5: Back porch and roof of farm house and vegetable garden

NARRATOR:

...and painted a picture of Mack and Woolie and Ma watering the peas and the pumpkins.

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Oleanna sets up an easel and paints them in the garden. Then, Ma and Woolie and Mack and Oleanna put away the easel and take out the ladder, squares of roofing material, hammers and nails. They lean it against the back porch roof, and climb up. Ma begins pounding with a vengeance.

NARRATOR:

Afternoon clouds scrambled in the sky. Ma was hammering on the roof.

MA:

(she bends another nail)

Woolie, where in the no-good nails is Grandma?

WOOLIE:

Dunno. It's not my turn to look for Grandma!

NARRATOR:

It was Monroe's turn.

MA:

Monroooooe!

Monroe appears.

NARRATOR:

Ma sent him a-lookin'. Monroe looked and he looked and he sure did look, and well, friends and neighbors, he finally found Grandma, her dirty old dog, all of her ducks, and those nasty porcupines of hers...[PAUSE]

SCENE 6: Farmyard near haystack

NARRATOR:

...sliding down the haystack two by two.

MONROE:

(shading his eyes -- and amazed at what Grandma is up to now)

Grandma! Come test the roof with one of your jigs.

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GRANDMA:
(without stopping)

Do a dance? Too busy.

NARRATOR:
So Monroe figured out what to do. He copied the twist Grandma turned each time she reached the haystack bottom and added two do-si-dos of his own...

SCENE 7: Back porch and roof of farm house and vegetable garden

NARRATOR:
...then he climbed the roof and danced across the singles while Oleanna and Mack and Woolie and Ma followed behind him patching up the holes.

Monroe climbs the ladder followed by Ma and Woolie and Mack and Oleanna. He dances across the roof, occasionally putting his foot in a hole. The others position a square over the new hole and hammer it down. They finish the roof and climb down, putting everything away and then go inside the house. Ma comes out with her fiddle and begins to tune it. Oleanna brings out a washtub bass, perhaps. Monroe and Mack also bring out instruments. Woolie doesn't come back out.

NARRATOR:
Shadows were eating up the day. Ma was tuning her fiddle in the yard.

MA:
Woolie, where in the Talladega two-step is Grandma? And there ain't nobody left, Woolie, so don't you be a-tellin' me it's not your turn.

NARRATOR:
Woolie didn't answer.

MA:
Woooooolie!!!!!!

WOOLIE:

*(coming out of the house in such a hurry
that he slams the screen door loudly)*

Yes'm!

NARRATOR:

Then Woolie looked and he looked and he sure did look and well, friends and neighbors, he finally found Grandma, her dirty old dog, all of her ducks, those nasty porcupines of hers, a raccoon, and a possum...[PAUSE]

SCENE 8: One end of farmyard

NARRATOR:...

sitting around the table playing nine-card stump.

Grandma and her animals were hidden from view behind some bushes and trees. Now the audience sees them—perhaps a bush gets up and moves--they are sitting around an old industrial wooden spool turned on end, used as a table.

WOOLIE:

(whispering, as he peers over her shoulder)

Grandma, play that four of hearts. And we need you and your banjo bad.

NARRATOR:

Grandma slammed down her cards. All of the animals stopped their jabbering. It was quiet as a mosquito on skis.

GRANDMA:

Never too busy for a banjo band!

NARRATOR:

Grandma got out her banjo on the spot and invited all of the animals to join her...[PAUSE]

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SCENE 9: Whole farmyard

NARRATOR:

...Ma and the kids put on those freshly painted coats, and didn't they look grand? Then Woolie said:

WOOLIE:

Let's sing the Chickadilla Song!

NARRATOR:

So they did, and it went like this:

ALL:

I lift my shovel, Chick, early in the day,
Cover those middles with new-mown hay.
Feed the chicks and hear them a-squawkin',
A possum in the grain bag and everyone's a-talkin'.
Chickadilla, chickadilla, tickle on the riprap.
Chickadilla, chickadilla, scratching at the gate.
Chickadilla, chickadilla, scatter scoot, skit-scat!
Sun's coming up, Chick, you're making me late!

I hack away the weeds in the black-eyed peas,
Whitewash the trunks of the walnut trees,
Take a drink of water from the hose by the oak,
Then run to the river for a hound dog soak.

Chickadilla, chickadilla, tickle on the riprap.
Chickadilla, chickadilla, feather on the wing.
Chickadilla, chickadilla, scatter scoot skit-scat!
Sun's going down, Chick, it's time for a sing!

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NARRATOR:

And Grandma and her kin kept hollering out songs until their hollering brought on night.

[PAUSE]

Just like it always did.

[PAUSE]

The end.

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