

# MABEL AND THE TALKING CAT

a one-act play

TARA MEDDAUGH



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*Mabel and the Talking Cat* is included in the collection, *When Fairy Tales Falter*.

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## EXCERPT

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## EXCERPT

*Mabel and the Talking Cat* was first performed June 11, 2022 in Harrison, NY, as part of *When Fairy Tales Falter: The Devious Duckling and Other Untold Adventures*. It was produced by Free Space Theater with the following cast:

Mabel.....Missy Flower

Patches.....Buchanan Highhouse

Directed by Nathan Flower

## EXCERPT

## MABEL AND THE TALKING CAT

Character Breakdown

MABEL	Female, 30s-60s. Knows loss and carries that with her, but also carries hope, especially today. Treasures her friendship with Patches. Humble upbringing, but almost stately regardless (perhaps has the air of a proper English dialect—even if she doesn't). Strong in her convictions.
PATCHES	Male/female, middle aged. Under typical circumstances, Patches may have the slinky, slow, calculated demeanor of a cat, which may come off as a bit “bored.” But when needed, Patches is ready to perk up ears, plan and assist best friend, Mabel. Patches has seen a thing or two and cares deeply for Mabel.

Setting

Outdoors. A garden near a small cottage. In a land where fairytales happen.

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## EXCERPT

## EXCERPT BELOW

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AT RISE: MABEL, a gentle woman in her 40s-60s, is outdoors near her garden, picking berries. A cat, PATCHES, around a similar age in cat-years, slinks over to Mabel. The two are longtime friends.

PATCHES

Don't pick those berries yet. They're not ripe.

MABEL

They'll ripen indoors.

PATCHES

They're never as good. You know that, Mabel.

MABEL

Very well.

(stops picking berries)

It's apples I truly want today anyhow.

(points to a tree)

Would you mind terribly? The ones at the top look the nicest.

PATCHES

You're really going to ask me to climb an "apple tree?"

MABEL

You don't need to use quotes. It's a real apple tree.

PATCHES

I feel like a...bear...when I do these favors.

MABEL

Bears are noble creatures.

PATCHES

Meh.

(starts to climb the tree, then looks to Mabel)

Only for you.

MABEL

Thank you, Patches.

(pause)

How was your morning nap?

PATCHES

Agh. Do you know my 9<sup>th</sup> daughter's family just moved in? That's three cat families now, all living in the same barn loft. I barely sleep a wink with half the lot whistling through their noses whilst they sleep.

MABEL

But don't you like cuddling up?

PATCHES

A bit, of course; I'm not troll. But I'm sick of so many kittens dropping mouse bits on my head and sticking their tails in my mouth. Are these the apples you want?

MABEL

Yes—and a few on the branches over there. You see how no birds have gotten them?

(PATCHES nods)

PATCHES

(tossing a few)

Catch.

MABEL

I still wish, one day, they'd come around to see me as you do.

PATCHES

I can tell they admire you, Mabel. Just from a distance. And they can't talk, like me. So.  
(tosses another down)

MABEL

I know...I know...We must be patient. I...

PATCHES

Cats are nothing if not patient. How many apples do you want?

MABEL

I need about half a dozen.

PATCHES

Half a dozen? Has—oh Mabel!!! Has Albert returned? Has he—

MABEL

No, no, no. Although I'm sure he will.

PATCHES

I have no doubt.

MABEL

These apples are for...Oh, Patches! It's too exciting! I can't wait any longer! Come down here and I'll tell you!

PATCHES

Just two more and we've got 6. Here you go!

(PATCHES tosses apples down. MABEL picks up the apples from the ground)

Look how brilliant you are, picking those up! If I had opposable thumbs like you, I should rule the land!

MABEL

Leaders succeed with far less.

(PATCHES is down)

PATCHES

So are you going to eat 6 apples tonight all by yourself?

MABEL

No...I'm making an apple pie.

PATCHES

Ah. Then I'll enjoy sniffing it on your window sill.

MABEL

I'd be happy to give you a slice.

PATCHES

Thank you for your human hospitality. However, pies are much too stationary for me. Plus, they don't have a face. But I'm very happy for your exciting "pie news!"

MABEL

It's not so much the pie that is exciting...as it is who will be eating the pie.

PATCHES

Someone besides you then? Has anyone else even been in the cottage since Albert went out?



MABEL

No. It's been almost a year.

PATCHES

Well? I'm on thorns and quills over here. Who is it?

(pause)

MABEL

A child.

(pause)

A girl!

PATCHES

Oh my!

MABEL

She's three years old, I'm told.

PATCHES

And that's very young for a human, right?

MABEL

Yes.

PATCHES

Perfect age for a visitor then! No worldly pollution yet. And so—so sweet, and funny and stumbly before they open their eyes! They're adorable when they're young! That's why I keep having babies.

MABEL

Well, as you know, I haven't been afforded that opportunity myself. To...have babies. Which is fine. It's all right. But this girl has no parents now. So...if all goes smoothly tonight...

PATCHES

What?

MABEL

She will become my family. Mine and Albert's—when he returns. He'll love her—I know he will. And she'll live here. Always.

PATCHES

Mabel...this is...this is such wonderful news of...of giant beanstalk proportion!

MABEL

I don't want to be too presumptuous, but I've already purchased a frock for her. It's sky blue with butterflies on the sleeves and a layer of lace on the top. She'll be here just as the sun is setting!

PATCHES

That's so soon, Mabel!

MABEL

It is—will you, will you stay with me? I'm incredibly nervous!

PATCHES

Of course I'll stay with you!

MABEL

I've also purchased matching bonnets—for her and me! Can you imagine a three-year-old in a white lace bonnet?

PATCHES

She will look like a cloud from Heaven, Mabel...A little girl...at your cottage...to climb the apple tree with me...And I'll show her how many mice I can catch in one night!

MABEL

I do hope she'll like me.

PATCHES

Why wouldn't she? You're the most delightful human I've ever met. And I know you'll be a superb mother!

MABEL

It's just—I haven't been around children in such a long time. I worry...but the witch assured me this girl is—

PATCHES

The witch?

MABEL

She's the one bringing the girl.

PATCHES

Oh...

MABEL

What?

(pause)

PATCHES

I hate to...remind you, but...there is the...teeny possibility...and by “teeny” I mean 100% chance...that when a witch does something nice for someone...well...

MABEL

Say it.

PATCHES

She always asks for something in return.

(pause)

MABEL

But she hasn't asked.

PATCHES

Yet.

MABEL

This isn't like that.

PATCHES

No? Because bringing you a child when you cannot bear one yourself seems like a very... transactional...witchy thing to do.

MABEL

But I'm already doing her a favor. She has a whole castle of children she's taken, and she can't simply tend to all of them herself.

(pause)

PATCHES

And that doesn't give you pause?

(pause)

Mabel?

(pause)

This isn't a good witch.

(pause)

What is she capable of?

**END OF EXCERPT**

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## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT



Tara's plays have been presented by theater companies such as Fusion Theatre, Mosaic Theater Company of DC, The Directors Company, Le Petit Theatre de Terrebonne, Theatre One, Tutti Bravi Productions, Westchester Collaborative Theater, Possibilities Theater, Tagragg Productions, One Armed Man, Oracle Theatre, Inc, The Acme Theatre Company, The Harlequin Players, Woman Seeking..., and numerous schools, universities and colleges including Gardner-Webb, Prince Williams, and Colgate. Her work has showcased at festivals such as the Artists of Tomorrow Festival in NYC, The Bangkok Community Theatre Fringe Festival, the Pittsburgh New Works Series and the Last Frontier Theatre

Conference in Alaska. Tens of thousands of teachers, actors and students world-wide have utilized her monologues for competitions, course material, auditions, performances, and showcases. Tara has taught Playwriting at Carnegie Mellon, the Pittsburgh Public Theatre, and for The Westport Country Playhouse, and she has led Creative Dramatics Workshops for children in underserved areas throughout New York and New Jersey. Additionally, she has script consulted on several animation and VR projects. Tara's work has been published by YouthPLAYS, Smith & Kraus, Oxford Press South Africa, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA), Limelight Editions/Applause Acting Series, The Hunger Journal, Meriweather Publishing, Applause Theatre & Cinema, Performer Stuff and Ace-Your-Audition. She is a recipient of the Shubert Fellowship in Dramatic Writing, the Sloan Screenwriting Fellowship, the New Works for Young Women [Actors] Award, The Write Stuff Award, and is a member of the Dramatist's Guild. Tara holds her MFA in Dramatic Writing from Carnegie Mellon University.

For more information about Tara Meddaugh or her work,  
visit her website at [www.tameddaugh.com](http://www.tameddaugh.com).

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