

## Story Time at the Wilson House

### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Father	
Miss Forster	
Miles	Cowper poem
Maud	Kant (27); Seneca (29)
Mandy	Beeching poem
Misty	Steele (13); Franklin (7)
Maggy	Rossetti poem
Raymond	Franklin (6) Froude (35)
Malcolm	Franklin (4); Cervantes (34)
Max	Shakespeare (39); Pope (21)
Milton	Seneca (38); Paine (12)
Matthew	Whittier (37); Bias (11)
Mitch	Spurgeon (31); 1 Samuel (20)
Maurice	Rochefoucauld (32); Locke (15)
Melvin	Congreve (17); Bacon (2);
Mark	Blake poem
Mindy	Dickinson poem; Lucretius (25); Paul (14)
Mason	Burke (23); Tennyson (19)
Martin	Mann (16) ; Diogenes (1); Confucious (24)
McKinley	Wordsworth poem
Michael	Smith (36); Franklin (8)
Marcie	"I'm Nobody" poem

[All children upstairs except McKinley]

#### FATHER

What's all that noise going on up there! All of you, clean up! Miss Forster will be here in a minute. And when you come downstairs, file in line. I don't want you to look like the French mob about to hang Louis, like you ordinarily do with your babysitters. It scares them and they run out the door. And don't try to get the babysitter to allow you stay up past your bedtime. If you do, it's the gallows for you all! And remember it's No, Miss

Forester and Yes, Forster. Thank you, Miss Forster. [Sees McKinley.] What are you still doing here?

MCKINLEY

I've already washed up.

FATHER

Let me look at you. Mm. First time I think you've had your hair combed since you were born. Let me look at your hands. Amazing. Clean fingernails.

MCKINLEY

Is Miss Forster the lady who wears the fluffy...?

FATHER

Only to church. It was the formal fashion in her day. She wouldn't wear it to babysit. [Ring of doorbell.] That must be Miss Forster. [Opens door.] Miss Forster? So glad to see you. I thought you weren't going to make it. [Babysitter walks in wearing a leopard scarf.]

MCKINLEY

Dad, I thought that you said... [Motions with his hands indicating the scarf, but father shushes him.]

BABYSITTER

[Throws back the leopard scarf on her neck.] Why wouldn't I? So where is the little darling? [McKinley comes out.] Oh, here he is. And he is dressed so nicely! Old fashioned—that's what I like. But why aren't you still outside playing, dear. It's such a beautiful spring evening. And after all that snow we got this winter. And then the rain! I thought it would never end!

MCKINLEY

The Sun Has Long Been Set by William Wordsworth! [McKinley makes very dramatic motions as he recites the poem.]

The sun has long been set,  
The stars are out by twos and threes,  
The little birds are piping yet  
Among the bushes and trees;  
There's a cuckoo, and one or two thrushes,  
And a far-off wind that rushes,  
And a sound of water that gushes,  
And the cuckoo's sovereign cry

Fills all the hollow of the sky.

Who would go "parading"  
In London, "and masquerading,"  
On such a night of June  
With that beautiful soft half-moon,  
And all these innocent blisses?  
On such a night as this is!

BABYSITTER

That was just beautiful, just beautiful. Why, young man, you read my secret heart and made it public!

MCKINLEY

Thank you, Miss Forster. (I think.)

BABYSITTER

[Looks at the father admiringly] You have a fine boy here, Mr. Wilson. I'm sure I'm going to have a wonderful evening together with your little Ben.

FATHER

Ben?

BABYSITTER

His name is Ben, isn't it? At the church picnic last Saturday, your wife came up to me and asked me if I was interested in babysitting her little Ben.

FATHER

I think she said "little *band*."

BABYSITTER

You have more than one child?

FATHER

[Scratches his head] A few more. [Mark comes down.]

BABYSITTER

Another boy. And such a fine looking lad. Such a fresh face. It brings me back to my younger days when I looked after my sister's children in Minnesota. [Sighs.] But now those days are gone.

MARK

[Mark quote Blake using dramatic hand gestures]  
"The Echoing Green" by William Blake. [Clears his throat.] Ahem.

The sun does arise,  
And make happy the skies;  
The merry bells ring  
To welcome the Spring;  
The skylark and thrush,  
The birds of the bush,  
Sing louder around  
To the bells' cheerful sound;  
While our sports shall be seen  
On the echoing green.  
Old John, with white hair,  
Does laugh away care,  
Sitting under the oak,  
Among the old folk.  
They laugh at our play,  
And soon they all say,  
"Such, such were the joys  
When we all—girls and boys—  
In our youth-time were seen  
On the echoing green."  
Till the little ones, weary,  
No more can be merry:  
The sun does descend,  
And our sports have an end.  
Round the laps of their mothers  
Many sisters and brothers,  
Like birds in their nest,  
Are ready for rest,  
And sport no more seen  
On the darkening green.

#### BABYSITTER

Oh, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Wilson. My heart. [Puts her hands to her heart.] It flutters. It flies like a bird out of its cage. It is free. These literary words—I am speechless! [Speaks with definite praise] These two children are fine young men. And you don't have to feel embarrassed. Two children is not that large a family even these days. My parents raised five children in a two-bedroom house in Jordan, Minnesota—a 20-minute car ride from Lake Superior. I don't know how they raised us all. Five children—and only one bathroom. Can you picture four teenage girls sharing one bathroom?

FATHER

Miss Forster, let me be straight. My wife and I have *twenty* children.

BABYSITTER

I am sorry. What did you say?

FATHER

I said my wife and I—we have *twenty* children, Miss Forster. [Not understanding, Miss Forster is still shaking her head yes] I don't think you heard what I said. My wife and I have twenty children. Miss Forster, did you see our van on the curb of our street?

BABYSITTER

I saw a SEPTA bus, I think, Mr. Wilson. I thought to ask you what it was doing there, but I have been so enraptured by your children I forgot to ask.

FATHER

That's our van, Miss Forster. It's too small for us. We're looking to buy something larger. When you have a family as big as mine, you have to get a new driver's license for large vehicles.

BABYSITTER

(She laughs.) Mr. Wilson, you are a man with a good sense of humor. A man who says he has twenty children—even if he is telling the truth—must have a good sense of humor.

FATHER

And I am telling the truth to you, Miss Forster. But if you've changed your mind about the babysitting, I won't hold it against you.

BABYSITTER

Why, I sit behind you in church. I never saw twenty children with you. The church *only has* twenty children.

FATHER

They're all mine. They have to sit kind of scattered.

BABYSITTER

[In disbelief] Twenty? Why, I don't know what even twenty children looks like all together. Why, it sounds like an uncontrolled *mob*! Chaos, noise, disorder, broken vases! A mass of uncombed hair, dirty fingernails and hand-me-downs! A life spent in the car going to baseball games, music

lessons, and cub scout meetings. A cafeteria full of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches in paper bags lined up on the kitchen counter!

FATHER

[Laughs good-humoredly.] That's about it. I'll call them for you. [Moves to stairway.] Children, come downstairs! [Children come out very orderly with hands folded in front of them.] Introduce yourselves, children.

CHILDREN

[Children very politely stand in line and introduce themselves, shaking Miss Forster's hand while looking at her.] Mark, Martin, Melvin, McKinley, Maurice, Milton, Mitch, Mason, Max, Malcolm, Michael, Matthew, Mindy, Mandy, Maggy, Maud, Misty, Marcie, Raymond.

BABYSITTER

[Impressed by their orderliness] Why, Mr. Wilson, they're so neatly dressed, and their hair—it's all combed. And their finger nails—very clean!

MARK

They weren't five minutes ago.

MINDY

Sh, mark!

BABYSITTER

I've seen large families of seven or eight, Mr. Wilson, and I hardly ever see them with clean finger nails. [Noticing marcie in the front.] And who are you, young lady?

MARCIE

[Curtseys as she begins reciting the poem]

I'm nobody! Who are you?

Are you nobody, too?

Then there's a pair of us—

Don't tell! They'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!

How public—like a frog—

To tell your name the livelong June

To an admiring bog!

{Curtseys again.} That was a poem by Emily Dickinson.

BABYSITTER

Emily Dickinson—an *American* poet. Oh, if my father were only here! Although he was a man of business all his life—and a Republican—he loved the American poets—Whittier, Longfellow, Bryant, Frost, Dickinson, Herbert Hoover.

FATHER

Well, what do you say, Miss Forster?

BABYSITTER

Well, I don't know. [Thinks for a moment. The children fold their hand in piety.] They seem like such *nice* children. [Reluctantly] Well, okay.

FATHER

Oh good, good. [Quickly] Miss Forster, before I go then The five chickens are in the oven for dinner. And there are fifteen pounds of spaghetti in the cupboard. Those over twelve go to bed at 9:00. Those under twelve at 8:00, except the three youngest who go to bed at 7:15. As Benjamin Franklin said, "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise."

BABYSITTER

Oh, Mr. Wilson, I can tell you are a literary man just like your children! How quaint! It must come with the large family. Who quotes Benjamin Franklin these days? The last time I knew someone who quoted the classics was my father during the Great Depression. He was quite fond of Herbert Hoover. I remember one thing he used to say to me before going to bed when I was a little girl so tall [puts out her hands] "Blessed are the young for they shall inherit the national debt." Father had a sense of humor, you know. But I suppose Herbert Hoover wasn't so noble and literary as Wordsworth and William Blake. At least he wasn't English aristocracy.

MINDY

[Mindy makes dramatic motions in front of Miss Forster] "Autumn" by Emily Dickinson

The morns are meeker than they were,  
The nuts are getting brown;  
The berry's cheek is plumper,  
The rose is out of town.

The maple wears a gayer scarf,

The field a scarlet gown.  
Lest I should be old-fashioned,  
I'll put a trinket on.Emily Dickinson.

BABYSITTER

Didn't Miss Dickinson have a marvelous sense of humor. A little morose,  
but a good sense of humor.

FATHER

Miss Forster, here is my cell phone number if you need to reach me or my  
wife. If some reason the cell doesn't work, you can reach me at the Three  
Swans Restaurant. My wife is probably there already waiting for me. She  
was visiting her mother and it's just blocks away. Bye!

BABYSITTER

[Looking around in amazement at the children] Why, there's so many of  
you. [Examining the children's faces] Why it's a veritable multitude. And  
you all look just like your father—except *you*. What is your name again,  
little boy?

RAYMOND

Raymond.

BABYSITTER

I suppose you look like your mother.

RAYMOND

My mother tells me I look like great-granddad Raymond.

BABYSITTER

Well, I'm sure that your great-grandfather looks like a distinguished  
gentleman. Well, now that we're all here, would you like to watch some  
TV?

CHILDREN

We don't have a TV!

BABYSITTER

No TV! All the better for you. Such...such violence and vulgarity. Such...  
well, we won't say what we think. I'm beginning to like this family very  
much! Well, why don't we read a story. I brought a book. Do you all like to  
read?

CHILDREN

(All together and very loudly) Yeah!



BABYSITTER

Oh, I love old-fashioned children who like to read! Why, I had to beg my dear little pupils in Minnesota to read. But I guess you *can* always do too much reading, too. My sister read too much and ended up with refractive myopia. Everything in moderation, my father always said.

MILTON

A thing moderately good is not so good as it ought to be. Moderation in temper is always a virtue; but moderation in principle is always a vice. Thomas Paine.

BABYSITTER

I never thought of it that way. A heart that does not freely fly and flutter in fits of passion, I would say that is a vice. What is your name, young man?

MILTON

Milton.

BABYSITTER

Well, very good, Milton! The quotation is from the old patriot who wrote...what was it?

MARK

*Common Sense.*

BABYSITTER

That was it! My father was a great patriot too, you know. Every morning he raised the large flag in front of our house and lowered it in the evening, while my brother played America the Beautiful on his clarinet. And I remember distinctly when FDR was elected, he let Old Glory hang half-mast. Well! You children are really an amazement to me. Why, your education! Where do all you children go to school and learn about Thomas Paine and William Blake at so young an age?

MARK

We're homeschooled.

BABYSITTER

Homeschooled. I never heard of...Oh, no, that is incorrect. I did hear of one boy in Minnesota, not far from our house, who was homeschooled. Father never let me play with him. He was a bad one. He was expelled for setting a barn on fire and was not allowed to set foot in the school until he learned some morals. He used to say, "A good many things go around in the dark besides Santa Claus," he would tell me. He was quoting Herbert

when he said that. My father was a republican, you know. But I think I already told you that.

MARTIN

“Ten men have failed from defect in morals where one has failed from defect in intellect.” Horace Mann.

MELVIN

To give a man a full knowledge of true morality, I would send him to no other book than the New Testament. John Locke.

BABYSITTER

[A little overwhelmed] Why, boys...well said! [Pause] Well this boy—the town tried to reform him, fearing that he would ruin the whole town, but to no avail. Then when he reached the age of 18 he suddenly disappeared. Some thought that maybe had drowned in Lake Superior. But twenty years ago—imagine this!—I saw his name in the newspaper. He had won a race for *Congress* and became head of the Committee on Public Morals. From a poor troubled boy in Minnesota he became a very reputable, religious man of money and power. And now—*now* he’s in jail for bribery and lying under oath. And look what mess we’re in as a nation. I guess you can’t change society! But, oh, here I am talking about things much over your heads. Bribery, lying under oath, the decline of public morals, the ruin of a nation, now lost by swindling and cheating. What do you children know of all these things?

MASON

Howe’er it be, it seems to me, ’Tis only noble to be good. Alfred Tennyson.

MISTY

“A little neglect may breed mischief for want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; and for want of a horse the rider was lost. For want of a rider the battle was lost. For want of a battle a nation was lost.” Benjamin Franklin.

RAYMOND

“Human improvement is from within outwards.” James Anthony Froude.

MITCH

“When you see a man with a great deal of religion displayed in his shop window, you may depend upon it he keeps a very small stock of it within.” Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

MARTIN

“Aristotle was once asked what those who tell lies gain by it. He said, ‘When they speak truth they are not believed.’” Diogenes Laertius.

MILTON

Other men’s sins are before our eyes, our own are behind our back.  
Seneca.

BABYSITTER

[Takes an astonished breath.] Oh, oh. I am speechless. What can I say. How apt and pithy! Really! Those quotations speak to the point, all of them. Say that last one again...You. Other men’s sins—

MILTON

Other men’s sins are before our eyes, our own are behind our back.

BABYSITTER

Yes...yes! Here he was, a man decrying the sins of the nation, and all along he was taking bribes.

MINDY

[Piously] The love of money is the root of all evil. The Apostle Paul.

BABYSITTER

[Overwhelmed] Children, you amaze me. It makes me have faith in posterity to have children who have learned the wisdom of our elders.

MASON

People will not look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors. Edmund Burke.

BABYSITTER

Yes! Yes!

MILES

“When there is a lack of honor in government, the morals of the whole people are poisoned.” Herbert Hoover.

BABYSITTER

Which of you said that?

MILES

I did, Miss Forster.

BABYSITTER

And what is your name, young man?

MILES

Miles.

BABYSITTER

Miles, you just made my heart skip a beat. It flies and flutters like a caged bird set loose. So this all comes from homeschooling! Well, I would say that homeschooling is the choice of an idealist to achieve his idealism. For you indeed are *ideal* children! A parent no longer has to throw his children into the system and hope for the best! I used to work in the system. I was a public teacher for forty years in Minnesota! There were a full fifty students in the school and I had a class of seven. That was the system. And this... [Pauses and looks at Miles.] Miles, when you quoted Mr. Hoover, Father just entered this very room. If only he had the privilege to meet you all. You are all so—*so* clever!

MAURICE

The desire of appearing clever often prevents our becoming so. Francois de La Rochefoucauld.

BABYSITTER

And what is your name?

MAURICE

Maurice, Miss Forster.

BABYSITTER

And how old are you, Maurice?

MAURICE

Eleven, Miss Forster.

BABYSITTER

Not only clever, but so polite—always *Yes, Miss Forster and Thank you, Miss Forster*. Now, do you know who Francois de La Rochefoucauld was?

MAURICE

A French man?

BABYSITTER

[laughs] So clever, Maurice!

MAURICE

Thank you, Miss Forster.

MILTON

"Allow no man to be so free with you as to praise you to your face."  
Richard Steele.

BABYSITTER

You are right, young man! But know that this praise comes from a sincere old woman who is just astounded by what she sees. But you are right. Our speech should always be applied purposefully, sincerely, and appropriately, and never to appear what we are not. And certainly not for flattery. We should have a right word in season. My father was such a man. Just when FDR passed his New Deal, he quoted Herbert Hoover, "Prosperity is just around the corner." I don't quite know what he meant by that, as he said it with a gloomy countenance. Well, I suppose we can read a little before dinner. If we don't start now, we never will!

MALCOLM

By the streets of "By and By" one arrives at the house of "Never."  
Cervantes.

RAYMOND

Never leave that till tomorrow which you can do today. Benjamin Franklin.

BABYSITTER

Well children, why don't you sit along here. That's right. Good. Well the story is. [Looks at book and then at children] I don't know why I feel so silly now reading this. [Hesitates] It's just that now I've gotten to know you a little more. It seems to me I should have brought Father's favorite book *American Individualism* by Herbert Hoover. Well, I'll tell you anyway. It's *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. [Children cheer.]

BABYSITTER

You like the book? Marvelous!

MICHAEL

We should accustom the mind to keep the best company by introducing it only to the best books. Sydney Smith

BABYSITTER

Sidney Smith. I don't think I've heard of him. No matter. Let's start. [Looks at watch.] But oh, how time passes quickly. It's 7:30 already! The two youngest ones have to go to bed. We won't want to be disobedient to your father's wishes!

MITCH

To obey is better than sacrifice. 1 Samuel 15:22

BABYSITTER

You are so right. Now, who are the youngest?

CHILDREN

Milton, Marcie and Melvin. [Melvin, Milton, and Marcie step forward]

BABYSITTER

Okay, then. I see that you are in your jammies. Now get to bed. Along with you. [Children remain and Miss Forster looks confused.]

MINDY

Melvin and Marcie liked to be sung to before they go to bed.

MELVIN

Music hath charms to soothe a savage breast, To soften rocks, or bend a knotted oak. William Congreve.

BABYSITTER

Savage? Why there's nothing savage about you, you little lamb. [Looks around at the children.] What five year old quotes William Congreve? To tell you the truth, I'm not sure I know who he is. Well, I know one thing and that is that Mr. Congreve never met the Wilson children. I say, if the Wilson children are examples of what homeschoolers are, I would say that I think every homeschooler is a delightful little angel! So refreshingly different. And so educated and using their education to such use. Quoting the poets and Saint Paul of the Bible! And no TV. I never heard of such a thing! Now, Mindy, would you mind singing them a little song in their beds?

MINDY

If they'll go with me. They don't like to go to bed.

MELVIN

I want to hear the story.

MARCIE

I want to stay up.

MINDY

They like to listen to story books.

BABYSITTER

What is your name, young lady?

MINDY

Mindy.

BABYSITTER

You're such a nice girl. You speak up for your siblings.

MICHAEL

We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall hang separately.  
Benjamin Franklin.

BABYSITTER

That Benjamin Franklin again. Such a clever man—but no one is planning to hang anyone here, dear. Unless your father chooses to hang me for allowing you all to stay up.

MARTIN

Study the past if you would divine the future, Miss Forster. Confucious.

BABYSITTER

The Chinese sage! Well, you three are such well-behaved little children. I think your father won't mind. You've convinced me to allow you to stay up.

MINDY

[Aside, laughing to her sibling] A falling drop at last will carve a stone.  
Lucretius.

BABYSITTER

And we better begin. [Looks at time.] And it's already past 8:00. Your father wanted all those under twelve to be in bed.

MALCOLM

We can stay up longer. We're not tired.

BABYSITTER

Oh, it must be my age! I'm getting a little tired myself. A woman my age is liable to apt to fall asleep at this time. [Yawns.] Are you sure your father won't mind?

MAX

Cowards die many times before their deaths; The valiant never taste of death but once. William Shakespeare

BABYSITTER

Well, there's no conspiracy in this house, I'm sure. Unless it's a conspiracy against the babysitter to stay up longer. [Laughs. Begins to read.] Once upon a time there were three Bears, who lived together in a house of their own, in a wood. One of them was a Little Wee Bear, and one was a Middle-sized Bear, and the other was a Great Big Bear. [Voice starts to get sleepy.] They had each a bowl for their porridge; a little bowl for the Little Wee Bear; and a middle-sized bowl for the Middle-sized Bear; and a great bowl for the Great Big Bear. And they had each a chair to sit in; a little chair for the Little Wee Bear; and a middle-sized chair for the Middle-sized Bear; and a great chair for the Great Big Bear. And they had each a bed to sleep in; a little bed for the Little Wee Bear; and a middle-sized bed for the Middle-sized Bear; and a great bed for the Great Big Bear... [Babysitter is asleep.]

MANDY

Is she asleep?

MISTY

I can't tell.

MICHAEL

Miss Forster, are you asleep. [Pause.] She's sleeping sound as a rock.

MASON

Let's tie her up like we did our last babysitter!

MATTHEW

With what?

MAGGY

We used rope on Bobby Hunter's big sister Suzie. Remember, Daddy had given McKinley a book on knots and he used all ten of them on her arms and legs. But Suzie's claustrophobic and she screamed so loud that the police came.

MARK

But Father threw out the rope after that.

Martin

I think the police took it.

MCKINLEY

[Holding up scarf] What about this!



MISTY

Leave it up to you, McKinley Wilson, to invent such horrible mischief.  
[rather piously] *I* would never think up such a thing.

MCKINLEY

You're just being modest.

MISTY

[piously] A modest person seldom fails to gain the goodwill of those he  
converses with, because nobody envies a man who does not appear to be  
pleased with himself. Richard Steele. This thing can be put to better use!  
[Laughs then puts on the leopard scarf. Then, admiring herself in the  
mirror, exclaims] I look absolutely beautiful!

MCKINLEY

What happened to all the modesty?

MITCH

Come on, guys. Let's play outside while she's asleep.

MANDY

I'm going to ride my bike. Going Down Hill on a Bicycle by Henry Charles  
Beeching [Many acts out poem.]  
With lifted feet, hands still,  
I am poised, and down the hill  
Dart, with heedful mind;  
The air goes by in a wind.  
Swifter and yet more swift,  
Till the heart with a mighty lift  
Makes the lungs laugh, the throat cry:—  
"O bird, see; see, bird, I fly."  
"Is this, is this your joy?  
O bird, then I, though a boy  
For a golden moment share  
Your feathery life in air!  
Are you coming with me, Maud?"

MAUD

I'm too tired.

MANDY

That's a good pun. *Two-tired!*

MAUD

Very funny, Mandy. Remember what Mother said about riding your bike after dark.

MANDY

Mother would approve.

MAUD

You know she wouldn't. You can hardly ride five feet straight, Mandy, and when it's dark...

MANDY

Mother wants me to be healthy right?

MAUD

Yes.

MANDY

Well, riding a bike is healthful for one's body.

MAUD

"The first petition that we are to make is for a good conscience, the next for health of mind, and then of body." Seneca.

MANDY

Well, you can't have fun with a good conscience.

MAGGY

The neighbors will see us, and they know father and mother are away. And they know we're all such angels! [Folds her hands.]

MASON

Let's play raid the refrigerator. It was full this morning.

MILES

There's nothing in it now. Remember, we had lunch.

MITCH

Let's wrestle.

MARTIN

Let's just have fun.

MAUD

But Father may be home soon. And then what trouble we'll be in!

MAX

Father won't like this.

MATTHEW

*Father may be home soon! Father won't like this!* Oh, you two! Remember, the greatest misfortune of all is not to be able to bear misfortune. Bias.

MAX

But remember what happened last time? I'd rather play it safe.

MALCOLM

"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." Benjamin Franklin.

MAX

Suit yourself. Leave me out.

MICHAEL

You'll be the only one not enjoying the fun.

MAUD

"Seek not the favor of the multitude; it is seldom got by honest and lawful means. But seek the testimony of few; and number not voices, but weigh them." Immanuel Kant.

MITCH

I'll let you play my new video game.

MAUD

I don't like video games. Besides, our English teacher Mr. Walter says they cause brain damage.

MITCH

How about you, Max?

MAX

"An obstinate man does not hold opinions, but they hold him." Alexander Pope. I'm in. Let's go. [Children run around and make a lot of noise, pretending to be cowboys and Indians, playing video games, etc.]

[Father comes home unexpectedly early.]

FATHER

[Shouting.] What's all this noise going on? All of you, you should be in bed sleeping. Where's Miss Forster.

MAGGY

She's sleeping.

MAX

I told you that father wouldn't like this.

FATHER

And I don't. You should all feel ashamed of yourselves. Miles! Michael! Mason! You're older and should know better. All of you, what do you have to say for yourselves.

MATTHEW

Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these  
'It might have been!'" John Greenleaf Whittier.

MELVIN

"The good things which belong to prosperity are to be wished, but the good things that belong to adversity are to be admired." Francis Bacon.

FATHER

Everyone, to bed. Tomorrow, you'll get your punishment, and it won't be easy. And you better go up while your mother is still in the car. She might not be as lenient as I'll be. But not before you apologize to Miss Forster.

BABYSITTER

[Awakens sleepily.]. Oh, where were we, children? Oh, you're home already, Mr. Foster?

FATHER

My children want to apologize, Miss Forster.

BABYSITTER

But why? Oh, the little dears. They were so good, and attentive, too, while I read *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. They quoted the classic authors all night! And one of yours quoted...Herbert Hoover. [Children go up to Miss Forester to apologize and go up.]

CHILDREN

Sorry, Miss Forster.

BABYSITTER

Such dears. Such little lambs. They really were so good. You won't punish them now, will you, Mr. Wilson?

FATHER

Miss Forster, let me quote a favorite author of your father.

Miss Forster

Herbert Hoover? [Father nods.] Oh, please do.

FATHER

Words without actions are the assassins of idealism. Herbert Hoover.

BABYSITTER

You are a wise man, Mr. Wilson. Very wise.