

Story Time at the Wilson House

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Father	played by Lucas Mohan
Miss Forster	played by Anna Walter
Miles	played by Joshua Duan
Micky	played by Brendan O'Hara
May	played by Catherine O'Hara
Maud	played by Lydia Knutson
Mandy	played by Sally Kaplan
Margot	played by Margot Mohan
Maggy	played by Alahna Sheridan
Raymond	played by Mateo Strid
Malcolm	played by Nate Wallacavage
Max	played by Liam Garecht
Milton	played by Ben Shapren
Michelle	played by Kathleen Kelly
Molly	played by Ava Sheridan
Maurice	played by Mark Giannotti
Melvin	played by Finn McCowan
Morris	played by Oliver Haselbarth
Mindy	played by Julianne Kelly
Martin	played by Liam Garecht
McKinley	played by Bruno Haselbarth
Mason	played by Nicholas Wargo
Michael	played by Michael Ginannotti
Marcie	played by Nora Dougherty

[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 Forster" 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

"Lines Written in March" by William Wordsworth! [McKinley makes very dramatic motions as he recites the poem.]

The cock is crowing,
The stream is flowing,
The small birds twitter,
The lake doth glitter,
The green field sleeps in the sun;
The oldest and youngest
Are at work with the strongest;

The cattle are grazing,
Their heads never raising;
There are forty feeding like one!
Like an army defeated
The snow hath retreated,
And now doth fare ill
On the top of the bare hill;
The Ploughboy is whooping—anon—anon:
There's joy in the mountains;
There's life in the fountains;
Small clouds are sailing,
Blue sky prevailing;
The rain is over and gone!

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. [Morris comes down.]

BABYSITTER

Another boy. And such a fine looking lad. Such a fresh face. [Puts her hands on the shoulders of the two boys.] So this is your little band.

FATHER

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

BABYSITTER

I am sorry. What did you say?

FATHER

We 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 the thought of babysitting your little Ben, 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. However, I think you are pulling my leg. I sit behind you in church and 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 twenty children even looks like all together. Why, it sounds like an uncontrolled *mob*! A mass of uncombed hair and hand-me-downs! A life spent in the car going to baseball games, music lessons, and cub scout meetings!

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.] Morris, Martin, Melvin, McKinley, Maurice, Milton, Molly, Max, Malcolm, Michael, Michelle, Mindy, Mandy, Maggy, Maud, Margot, Marcie, Micky, May, Raymond.

BABYSITTER

[Counts silently as the children introduce themselves.] Didn't you say you had *twenty* children, Mr. Wilson?

FATHER

Last time I counted, that was the tally.

BABYSITTER

Math was not my strong subject, but if I am not mistaken, I count *twenty-two*.

FATHER

There must be some mistake. [Inspects line of children.] You two—for some reason you don't look familiar. Did you say your names were "Micky and May"?

MICKY

I'm Micky Reese. I'm a friend of Max. And this is my sister.

MAY

My name is May Reese, Mr. Wilson. I'm a friend of Mindy.

MICKY

Max said that he asked you, Sir, if my sister and I could stay overnight. He said that you said it was okay.

FATHER

I had a feeling you had a different pedigree than my children. You're too polite.

MAY

The pedigree of honey
Does not concern the bee;
A clover, any time,
to him is aristocracy.
—Emily Dickinson

FATHER

Yes, we shouldn't turn our noses up at common things—that's the truth! I can't lie about that.

MAY

Aristotle was once asked what those who tell lies gain by it. He said, "When they speak truth they are not believed."

FATHER

Another poem and quotation? You may not look like my children, but you certainly *talk* a lot like them. But I won't hold that against you. You are both welcome here. [Looks at Miss Forster proudly.] See there, Miss Forster. I *knew* I had twenty children.

BABYSITTER

How admirable, Mr. Wilson! You do keep a close watch on your flock!

FATHER

I have to, Miss Forster. When April comes along, I am forced to make an accurate account.

BABYSITTER

When April comes along? I am not sure I comprehend you, Mr. Wilson.

FATHER

April 15—you know *tax day*.

BABYSITTER

Well, Mr. Wilson, you have twenty *adorable* deductions. They're so neatly dressed, too. Their hair, it's all combed—and their finger nails, very clean!

MORRIS

They weren't five minutes ago.

MINDY

Sh, Morris!

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

[Curtsies 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

Miss Forster.

BABYSITTER

Yes, dear?

MINDY

I know a poem by Emily Dickinson, too. Would you like to hear it?

BABYSITTER

Of course, my little lamb chop.

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.

MOLLY AND MAGGY

Miss Forster, Miss Forster.

BABYSITTER

Yes, my dears?

MOLLY AND MAGGY

Could we recite a poem for you, too?

BABYSITTER

Well, of course you can, dearies.

MOLLY AND MAGGY

[Reciting alternately]

The goldenrod is yellow,

The corn is turning brown,

The trees in apple orchards

With fruit are bending down;

The gentian's bluest fringes
Are curling in the sun;
In dusty pods the milkweed
Its hidden silk has spun;
The sedges flaunt their harvest
In every meadow nook,
And asters by the brookside
Make asters in the brook;
From dewy lanes at morning
The grapes' sweet odors rise;
At noon the roads all flutter
With yellow butterflies—
By all these lovely tokens
September days are here,
With summer's best of weather
And autumn's best of cheer.

BABYSITTER

Why, I recognize that poem. It's by Helen Hunt Jackson! I like Miss Jackson's poem, but I do *not* like her opinions. Autumn is not the best of seasons with its nippy air. It chills me to the bone just thinking of it. And all those leaves to rake!

MORRIS, MARCIE, AND MICHAEL

(Recited alternately.)
Spades take up leaves
No better than spoons,
And bags full of leaves
Are light as balloons.

I make a great noise
Of rustling all day
Like rabbit and deer
Running away.

But the mountains I raise
Elude my embrace,
Flowing over my arms
And into my face.

I may load and unload
Again and again
Till I fill the whole shed,
And what have I then?

Next to nothing for weight;
And since they grew duller
From contact with earth,
Next to nothing for color.

Next to nothing for use.
But a crop is a crop,
And who's to say where
The harvest shall stop?
—Robert Frost

BABYSITTER

Robert Frost agrees with me on this one. And what a sense of humor! No, boys and girls, summer's my season.

MELVIN

Summer is gone with all its roses,
Its sun and perfumes and sweet flowers,
Its warm air and refreshing showers:
And even Autumn closes.

Yea, Autumn's chilly self is going,
And winter comes which is yet colder;
Each day the hoar-frost waxes bolder,
And the last buds cease blowing.

FATHER

[Interrupts.] Now, children. Don't pester your babysitter any more of your poems.

MILES

But Father, "The art of poetry is to touch the passions, and its duty to lead them on the side of virtue." —William Cowper

FATHER

Who taught you that?

MILES

Mr. Walter.

FATHER

Well, I'll have to have a talk with him. He's sowing seeds of disobedience. Now, enough of your poems and quotations. You'll get to recite them on Mr. Walter's Speech Night. Miss Forster, here is my cell phone number if you need to reach me or my wife. If some reason the cell phone 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. He was an insurance salesman.

BABYSITTER

Well, I'm sure that your great-grandfather was 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! [Sighs with delight.] Why don't we read a story, children. 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* read too much, 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. 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?

MORRIS

Common Sense.

BABYSITTER

That was it! My father was a great patriot too, you know. Every morning he raised a 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. And my dear brother's son Elmer follows in his grandfather's footsteps. Every morning he raises a large flag in front of his house in rural Idaho. Except he does not put up the old Stars and Stripes. He raises a flag that says, "Let's go Brandon" — or is it "Let's go Bradley"? It must be Bradley, as I have a second cousin named Bradley, and I think my brother used to shoot rabbits with him on his back porch. Well, Brandon or Bradley — what difference does it make? It's no matter. But you *children!* Why, you are really an amazement to me. Your education! Where do all you children go to school and learn about Thomas Paine and William Blake at so young an age?

MAURICE

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.

BABYSITTER

Horace Man must have been speaking about this boy. He had no defect in his intellect, for sure, but as for morals—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—well *now* he's in jail for bribery and lying under oath. And look what a 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?

RAYMOND

"Human improvement is from within outwards." James Anthony Froude.

MARGOT

"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.

MAX

“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.

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.

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

Thirteen, 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

Please 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. When he used to talk about FDR passing the New Deal—that was in the 1930's, before my day, dears —, he had some right words, which I will not repeat just now. And nearly a half a century later, I heard my nephew Elmer use father's exact words when he read in the newspaper that our current President wanted to forgive student debts. You remember Elmer, my nephew, from rural Idaho who is the spitting image of my father?

MAURICE

What did your nephew say, Mis Forster?

BABYSITTER

I dare not repeat all of it, children, but it began with the word *hate*.

MAURICE

I had no time to hate, because
The grave would hinder me,
And life was not so ample I
Could finish enmity.

BABYSITTER

You are right, Maurice. We should have no time to hate. Hate is a strong word for a strong emotion. My Republican father always said it should be reserved for horrible things—egregious things, like deceit, theft and the Democrat Party. [Pause] 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! Now, get to bed—the sun will be up even if you don't want it to!

MASON

So, like the sun, would I fulfill
The business of the day;
Begin my work betimes, and still
March on my heavenly way.

CHILDREN

Mason, Marcie, Maggie and Molly. [Maggie, Molly, Mason, 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.

BABYSITTER

That's so nice. Music hath charms to soothe a savage breast, as they say, but my voice now sounds like a crow—at least that is what my friend Millicent says. 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. It is good of you to 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.] Why, it's already past 8:00! How time flies, or as those clever Romans used to say, "Tempus Fugit!"

MARGOT

Tempus Fugit by Christina Rossetti
Lovely Spring,

A brief sweet thing,
Is swift on the wing;
Gracious Summer,
A slow sweet comer,
Hastens past;
Autumn while sweet
Is all incomplete
With a moaning blast,--
Nothing can last,
Can be cleaved unto,
Can be dwelt upon;
It is hurried through,
It is come and gone,
Undone it cannot be done,
It is ever to do,
Ever old, ever new,
Ever waxing old
And lapsing to Winter cold.

BABYSITTER

What a lovely poem. And what is your name, dear?

MARGOT

Margot.

BABYSITTER

What a lovely name. Well, Margot, it is true that time flies. But as my Great Aunt Sarah, who lived to be nearly 110, used to say to herself days before every birthday, "Time passes, but we mustn't be cowards in facing our twilight years!"

MAX

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

BABYSITTER

You know, my great aunt could have learned from you, young man. On Great Aunt Sarah's seventieth birthday, she started to cry and carried on so, she couldn't blow out the candles on her cake. That's because she was expecting that death was around the corner on account of her aches and pains. But father—whose aunt it was—used to tell us at home it was pure hypochondriacal delusion. And you know, father was right, as he was

always right. Aunt Sarah ended up crying every year in front of her birthday cake for nearly 40 years, until her last birthday. Even when it was *proven* to her time and time again that death had not been around the corner, on her last birthday she still couldn't blow the candles. But that was not because she was upset and carrying on, but because there was no breath left in her. She died there in right front of the cake with 110 candles burning. Just like that. (Snaps her fingers.) My father said that his aunt could have lived another 5 or so years if her grandchildren had had the sense not to put 110 candles on the cake. It was seeing a blazing reminder of her age, he said, that caused the hypochondriacal woman to die so suddenly. [Children look at one another.]

But how I talk on so. Let's 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 . . . and a great big fuzzy, wuzzy bubba bear . . . [Babysitter is asleep.]

MANDY

Is she asleep?

MARGOT

I can't tell.

MICHAEL

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

MALCOLM

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

MICHELLE

With what?

MINDY

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.

MAURICE

But Father threw out the rope after that.

MARTIN

I think the police took it.

MCKINLEY

[Holding up scarf] What about this!

MARGOT

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.

MARGOT

[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?

MOLLY

Come on, everyone. 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.

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

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

MILES

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

MALCOLM

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.

MICHELLE

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.

MALCOLM

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.

MALCOLM

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.

MINDY

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! Maurice! Malcolm! You’re older and should know better. All of you, what do you have to say for yourselves.

MICHELLE

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. Forster?

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 Forster 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.

BABYSITTER

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.