

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG BAD BOOK?

A Family Musical in One Act

book and lyrics by Maryanne Melloan Woods

music and lyrics by Jack Mitchell

adapted from the book by Lauren Child

Revised First Draft  
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NOTE: The play is performed by a cast of five adult actors, two men and three women. All the actors play multiple parts except the lead, Herb. The three women are designated as A (Actor)1, A2 and A3, or the name of whatever character they're playing. When they're not playing characters, A1, A2 and A3 wear simple black clothing. When the character of Ezzie is not on stage, that actor becomes A4.

Scenery changes are handled either by the actors flipping backdrops, back wall projections or whatever alternative stage magic the designers might dream up.

ALSO: Herb and Ezzie play age eight. Ezzie/A4 should be Black, as in the book.

PLACE: Herb's house.

SCENE: A MUSICAL FLOURISH AS HOUSE LIGHTS DIM.

Herb, wearing pajamas, walks across the stage reading a picture book. A1 crosses in front of Herb, addressing the audience.

A1

Herb was a boy who loved books.

(A2 crosses from the other direction.)

A2

He loved them so much that...

(A1 and A2 become a table and chair as A3 speaks. Herb sits on A2 and eats sloppily from a cereal box while still reading.

A3

...he read them while he was eating...

(Herb stands up and grabs an imaginary toothbrush. A1 becomes a mirror. Herb brushes his teeth while still reading. A3 makes water and "splat" sounds as Herb slobbers water and toothpaste on to his book.)

A2

...while he was brushing his teeth...

(A2 and A1 become a bathtub around Herb, who sits down, still reading.)

A3

...while he was taking a bath...

(A3 blows (actual) soap bubbles around Herb, who is clearly getting his book wet, happily splashing and reading. A2 and A1 making splash noises.)

A1

Even tho' his Mom told him *not* to.

(A2 becomes MOM)

MOM

Herb, don't *do* that to your books! What if your sister wants to read them?

(A1 becomes Herb's little sister Grace)

GRACE

Yeah, what about when it's *my* turn?!

(Herb doesn't listen -- he's reading.)

HERB

Uh-huh, uh-huh...

A3

One night when Herb's friend Ezzie was sleeping over, Ezzie told him:

(Ezzie, also in pajamas, crosses by Herb, holding a crusty, messed-up looking picture book at arm's length.)

***CUE DEMO 1 - "I LOVE MY BOOKS TO PIECES"***

EZZIE

Wow, Herb, you sure make a mess of your books!

A1

To which Herb replied:

(Herb sings.

NOTE: During the song, A1, A2 and A3 act out the scenarios Herb describes, both with and without Herb, sometimes with props.)

HERB

I TAKE THEM EVERYWHERE  
BUT NOT 'CAUSE I DON'T CARE  
I JUST HAVE TO KNOW WHERE THE STORY GOES,  
AND I CAN'T PUT IT DOWN 'TIL I'M DONE

HERB (CONT'D)

(to audience:)

Ya know?

I LIKE THE SCARY ONES BEST!  
LIKE SPOOKY GHOSTS OR A RAMPAGING T. REX!

OR IF A VAMPIRE BAT GOES AND FIGHTS A ROBOT CAT,  
I READ 'TIL I SEE WHO WON!

I KNOW THERE'S LOTS OF TEARS AND MANY CREASES  
BUT I LOVE MY BOOKS... TO PIECES!

(Ezzie holds up two other books.)

EZZIE

If you love your books so much, why did you draw all over this one?  
Or cut *holes* in this one?

HERB

WELL SOMETIMES I JUST KNOW  
HOW A STORY SHOULD GO  
AND IF THE BOOK DOESN'T DO IT, THEN I HAVE TO SEE TO IT  
WITH MARKERS, SCISSORS, GLUE OR SOMETIMES STICKERS

SOME SAY I'M STYLISTIC  
MY ART TEACHER SAYS:

A1

(as art teacher)

You're so artistic!

HERB (cont'd)

AND SOMETIMES IT'S JUST FUNNY DRAWING FANGS ON A BUNNY  
OR HAVING KING KONG EAT A SNICKERS!

EZZIE

(unsure)

Well...

HERB

MY DAY IMPROVES AND MY HAPPINESS INCREASES  
WHEN I LOVE MY BOOKS... TO PIECES!

(yearning)

AND EVERY TIME THAT I BEGIN ONE  
I DREAM SOMEDAY I COULD BE IN ONE

FIGHTING A FIRE-BREATHING DRAGON  
OR FLYING TO MARS IN MY WAGON

BUT SINCE I CAN'T TAKE THAT VACATION  
I TRY TO USE MY IMAGINATION

I'LL BATTLE CAPTAIN HOOK (*WHA!-WHA!-WHA!*)  
INSIDE THE PAGES OF A BOOK!

EZZIE

I guess that makes sense...

HERB

OH I KNOW THAT THEY'RE WORSE FOR WEAR  
BUT THE BOOKS DON'T CARE  
I THINK THEY'LL FORGIVE ME IF I ALWAYS TAKE THEM WITH ME,  
EVEN IN THE RAIN OR TO THE BEACH

GOTTA KNOW MR. FOX'S TRICKS  
AND WHAT THE SORTING HAT PICKS  
SO I'LL TAKE THEM TO SCHOOL, OR A PLAYGROUND OR THE POOL  
AS LONG AS I HAVE ONE WITHIN REACH

I KNOW THERE'S TONS OF SMEARS AND ICKY GREASES  
BUT I LOVE MY BOOKS  
I LOVE MY BOOKS  
I LOVE MY BOOK  
... TO PIECES!

(Herb finishes with a flourish. A2 calls from off-stage, as MOM.)

MOM (O.S.)

Are you boys still up? It's time for bed now, I mean it!

HERB

*Aw, Mom!*

(Mom appears)

MOM

Come on now, you boys have Ezzie's birthday party tomorrow at Laser Attack.

HERB AND EZZIE

(excited)

*Laser Attack!!*

MOM

So it's lights *out*.

(She flips a switch; LIGHTS DIM as she exits. A1 and A3 roll out yoga mats, which become beds for Herb and Ezzie. Herb and Ezzie get into bed. Ezzie turns over to go to sleep, but Herb discovers a book near his bed.)

HERB

Hunh, fairy tales. I haven't read this one in a *long* time.

(He blows dust off of it.)

HERB (cont'd)

But I used to *love* it. It's got all the classic stories, like...

(Ezzie lets out a loud SNORE. Herb looks over at his friend.)

HERB (cont'd)

Oh. 'Night, Ezzie.

(He opens the book. But time has caught up with him too, and after a couple of beats his eyelids start to droop. LIGHTS SLOWLY DIM as Herb falls asleep with the book spread out on his chest. IN DARKNESS, Ezzie moves offstage, taking his yoga mat and the fairy tale book. NEW SCENERY suggests a simple cabin in the woods. LIGHTS UP. A1, aka GOLDBLOCKS, but with BLUE HAIR, is now standing where Ezzie's bed was. Goldilocks lets out a loud, angry SHRIEK, waking Herb up.)

GOLDBLOCKS

What are you doing here? How dare you be on this page! *I* am the star and I say you are *not allowed* in this story!

HERB

(confused)

Where am I?

GOLDBLOCKS

On *my* page!

HERB

And why is my bed so lumpy? It's usually *just right*.

(Goldilocks stamps her foot.)

GOLDBLOCKS

*Ergh*, don't *tell* me that! I'm supposed to find that out!

HERB

But who are you? And what are you doing in my room?

GOLDBLOCKS

Your room? This isn't even your story! I'm *Goldilocks*, of course, and this is *my* story!

(Herb looks at her stunned.)

HERB

Wait a minute -- I'm *in* "Goldilocks and the Three Bears?"

GOLDBLOCKS

Yeah, that's my point, genius.

HERB

(thrilled)

That's *amazing!*

(looking at her)

But isn't your hair supposed to be...

(She cuts him off sharply.)

**CUE DEMO 2 - "BLUE-HAIRED GOLDBLOCKS"**

GOLDBLOCKS

Don't say it!

(She starts to snap her fingers. Then says to Herb:)

GOLDBLOCKS (CONT'D)

*A-hem.* Snap along please.

(Herb snaps along with her as she starts to sing: )

GOLDBLOCKS (CONT'D)

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A CLASSIC  
A GIRL THAT EVERYBODY KNOWS

GOLDBLOCKS (CONT'D)

KNOWN FOR HER SENSE OF ADVENTURE  
AND HAIR SO BRIGHT AND GOLDEN, IT PRACTICALLY GLOWS!

AND THEN SOME NIMROD OPENS YOUR BOOK  
AND WITH A COUPLE OF MARKER STROKES  
TURNS YOU FROM A HERO  
INTO A WASHED-UP FAIRY TALE JOKE!

OH IF I EVER CATCH THAT KID  
WHO'S AS DUMB AS A BAG OF ROCKS

I'LL SHOW HIM JUST HOW STINKIN' MAD  
HE'S MADE THIS BLUE-HAIRED GOLDBLOCKS!

(a bluesy lament: )

OH I'M A BLUE-HAIRED GOLDBLOCKS!  
IT'S ME, THE BLUE-HAIRED GOLDBLOCKS...

(Herb's got an inkling what's going on and is starting to feel guilty.)

HERB

Maybe he didn't mean any harm...

GOLDBLOCKS

Didn't mean any harm? He's ruined my career!

HERB

Your career..?

GOLDBLOCKS

Yes!

(sings)

I WAS A GREAT INVESTIGATOR  
THE GREATEST, THEY SAID, OF THE LOT

HERB

Investigator?

GOLDBLOCKS

OR MAYBE LIKE A QUALITY CONTROL MANAGER  
CHECKING IF THINGS WERE TOO HOT  
OR TOO COLD, OR TOO HARD OR TOO SOFT

Y'know, important work, people!

NO MATTER WHAT YOU CALL MY JOB  
I DID IT WITH ULTIMATE FLAIR  
BUT MOSTLY WHAT MADE ME A SUPER-STAR  
WAS MY TRADEMARK GOLDEN HAIR!

IF I EVER CATCH THAT NO-GOOD KID  
WHO'S SNEAKY AND SLY AS A FOX  
I'LL SHOW HIM WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU MESS WITH GOLD  
AND MAKE A BLUE-HAIRED GOLDBLOCKS!

(Ugly crying) *OH I'M A BLUE-HAIRED GOLDBLOCKS...*



(She composes herself and snaps her fingers for her jazzy back-up singers: A2 and A3, now wearing blue wigs)

GOLDILOCKS (CONT'D)

*Back-up!*

I'VE BEEN GOING ABOUT MY BUSINESS  
DOING WHAT I DO BEST  
SNEAKING INTO STRANGERS' HOUSES  
TASTIN' THEIR FOOD AND TAKIN' A REST

BUT NOW I KNOW MY HEART'S NOT IN IT  
I'M FINDING IT HARD TO CARE  
'CAUSE NOTHING REALLY MATTERS,  
LIFE IS NOT THE SAME  
WITHOUT MY GOLDEN HAIR!

HERB

Why do you care so much about having golden hair?

GOLDILOCKS

*Hello*, it's how I look on all my merch!

HERB

Your "merch?"

GOLDILOCKS

My swag, my tee shirts -- look it up on goldilocks.com.org! It's all *useless* now!

HERB

Well, if it's any help, I think the blue looks good on you.

GOLDILOCKS

(sniffles)

Really? You think so?

HERB

Yeah, whoever did it, did a good job. Like, colored in the lines.

(Goldilocks stares at him, suddenly suspicious.)

GOLDILOCKS

Wait a second...

GOLDILOCKS

(sings)

WHY ARE YOU STANDING UP FOR HIM?  
THE VILLAIN WHO TURNED ME BLUE  
I'M GETTING A SNEAKING SUSPICION

THAT THE VILLAIN, THE CULPRIT, THE BAD GUY, THE BOY WHO MADE  
BLUE-HAIRED GOLDBLOCKS...  
...MIGHT BE *YOU!*

(She points an accusatory finger at him. The music stops and both actors freeze. Hold for a beat, then Goldilocks says, to audience:)

GOLDBLOCKS (cont'd)

Amlright?!

(After musical button/applause: )

HERB

I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about.

(Then Herb runs to the far side of the room, miming going downstairs while calling out: )

HERB

Ezzie?! *Mom?!*

(Goldilocks disappears around the back of the set and is replaced with three bears, possibly with bear heads and stickers on their chests that say "Hello, I'm Papa/Mama/Baby." Ezzie is now Papa Bear. A2 and A3 are Mama and Baby Bear. There's a real cabinet behind them with a plastic pitcher on it.)

NOTE: Baby Bear should be played more as a sullen teen than a baby.

HERB

(amazed)

Are you guys the Three Bears?!

PAPA BEAR

(politely)

Yes, we are bears and there are three of us.

MAMA BEAR

(irritated)

Great. Another "visitor."

HERB

Sorry, but it's not my *fault*. I mean, I didn't come here on purpose.

PAPA BEAR

It's okay. It could happen to anyone.