

PLAYS FOR
New Audiences

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

***The Tallest Tale
Competition***

by Dr. Craig Kosnik

The license issued in connection with PNA perusal scripts is a limited license and is issued for the sole purpose of reviewing the script for a potential future performance. All other rights regarding perusal scripts are expressly reserved by Plays for New Audiences, including, but not limited to, the rights to distribute, perform, copy, or alter scripts. This limited license does not convey any performance rights of any kind with this material. By accepting any perusal script(s), Licensee agrees to and is bound by these terms.

Cast List

Transition Characters (Phoenix, AZ 1922)

FANCY FREDDY (or FREDA) FLANDERS
GRUMPY GUNTHER (or GERTIE) GAWKINS
TILLIE TANSEY
TAMMI TANSEY
EDITOR TUCKER
ASSISTANT EDITOR REYNOLDS

Bess Call

NARRATOR (FANCY FREDDY)
BESS CALL
JOE CALL
NEWSBOY
MR. BIGGINS
MEN SIGNING UP
BUFORD BUMBLEBEE
OX
HAROLD
SNIDELY SNITCHERSON

Paul Bunyan

NARRATOR (GRUMPY GUNTHER)
PAUL BUNYAN
BABE THE BLUE OX
JOHNNY INKSLINGER*
PINECONE EVERGREENIA*
LAURENT LACROIX*
SLUEFOOT SUE JUNIOR*
SNIDELY SNITCHERSON *
SPARKLES*

**In the original production, these characters were portrayed by puppets to show the difference in size between Paul/Babe and everyone else.*

Casey Jones

NARRATOR (TAMMI)
NARRATOR (TILLIE)
SNIDELY SNITCHERSON
MOM
DAD
CASEY JONES
MISS BUTTERWORTH
SIM (offstage voice)
OBJECTS OF THE WORLD
COW

PROLOGUE

The play takes place on the street outside of the newspaper office of “The Phoenix Gazette.” [You may change the city name to your local city if you wish.] There is a podium USL and there are four chairs in front of the office window. There is also an easel SL of the podium that has a poster reading “Tallest Tale Competition: Today!” Our four storytellers are on the street as the audience enters. They will be free to interact with the audience until the play starts.

ASST. EDITOR REYNOLDS

Good morning, everyone! *(Reynolds acknowledges any greetings from the audience)* We are so excited that you can join us on this amazing day. I’m Assistant Editor Reynolds and I work for *The Phoenix Gazette*. Editor Tucker and myself have been planning this event for months and hope you will enjoy these great tales. Without further ado, let’s welcome Editor Tucker. *(Reynolds leads a round of applause.)*

EDITOR TUCKER

Thank you, Editor Reynolds for that warm welcome. *(The two shake hands. Editor Tucker turns his attention towards the audience.)* Good morning, everyone! *(Audience might greet him back.)* On behalf of our great newspaper *The Phoenix Gazette*, Assistant Editor Reynolds, and the city of Phoenix, I would like to welcome you all on this bright and beautiful morning of (the date), 1922, to the tenth annual Tallest Tale Competition! *(Reynolds leads a round of applause. Storytellers all applaud as well.)* We bring you only the best storytellers from across the United States. Each of these fine yarn-spinners have created new tales based on famous tall tale heroes that we all know and love. The winning storyteller will receive a check for \$1,000 dollars and their story will appear on the front page of the Sunday morning edition of *The Phoenix Gazette*! *(Some murmurs or ad libs from the storytellers.)* Please help me welcome our four awesome, amazing, and astounding storytellers. *(Murmurs or ad libs from the storytellers.)* First up, coming all the way from Fellsmere, Florida, please welcome Fancy Freddy Flanders. *(Reynolds leads the audience in a round of applause.)*

FANCY FREDDY

(Crosses to Editor Tucker and shakes hands) Why, it is a pleasure to see you again, Editor Tucker.

EDITOR TUCKER

The pleasure is all ours. In fact, we even have a special surprise for you! Editor Reynolds, if you’ll do the honors?

ASST. EDITOR REYNOLDS

Fancy Freddy, in honor of being chosen ten years in a row as a finalist of the Tallest Tale Competition, we from *The Phoenix Gazette* would like to present you with this commemorative plaque. *(Applause)*

FANCY FREDDY

(amazed) Why thank you, good sirs. This is, indeed, a most pleasant surprise. *(He sits in the seat closest to the podium and admires his plaque.)*

EDITOR TUCKER

Next up, from the lovely town of Gillsville, Georgia, please help us welcome Grumpy Gunther Gawkins. *(Reynolds leads a round of applause.)*

GRUMPY GUNTHER

(Crosses to Editor Tucker) Gillsville isn't lovely at all. You obviously haven't been there. *(Grumpy Gunther plops down on the second seat from the podium.)*

ASST. EDITOR REYNOLDS

(Thinking quickly) Well...we at *The Phoenix Gazette* think that Georgia is a lovely state. Let's hear it for Georgia! *(Round of applause)*

EDITOR TUCKER

Finally, from Turtletown, Tennessee, please give a hand to the talkative teenaged Tansey Twins—Tillie and Tammi! *(Reynolds leads a round of applause. Tillie and Tammi come to either side of Editor Tucker and give him a hug at the same time.)*

TILLIE/TAMMI

Thank you, Editor Tucker. It's an honor!

EDITOR TUCKER

At fifteen years old, Tillie and Tammi are the youngest storytellers we've ever had reach the final round of competition. It's quite an amazing feat, ladies.

TILLIE

Why thank you, Editor Tucker.

TAMMI

That's very kind of you.

TILLIE

Ever since we were six years old—

TAMMI

We hoped and dreamed that—

TILLIE

One day we would write a tall tale—

TAMMI

That would help us win the Tallest Tale Competition—

TILLIE

And that dream has finally come true! (*They both squeal.*)

TILLIE/TAMMI

Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!! (*They hug him again.*)

EDITOR TUCKER

Aw...you're welcome, girls. I'm glad that *The Phoenix Gazette* could help your dreams become reality. (*They curtsey and then sit in the third and fourth chairs.*) Let's give one more round of applause for all of our illustrious storytellers! (*Cheers and applause.*)

ASST. EDITOR REYNOLDS

Now let's get this competition started!! First up—Fancy Freddy!

FANCY FREDDY

(*He walks to the podium.*) Thank you so much, Editor Tucker (*shakes his hand*) and Assistant Editor Reynolds (*shakes his hand*). It's an honor to be here once again and to be able to tell this wonderful audience another fine tall tale. This year I crafted a story about Bess Call. Now, I bet that many of you have never heard of her, but she was the strongest farming woman there ever was—in fact, probably the strongest woman that ever existed. She could lift cows far above her head, snap trees right in two, and plow a field just by stomping though it. This is her story—enjoy!

BESS CALL'S WRESTLING DILEMMA

Bess Call and her brother, Joe, sit at the table quietly eating breakfast. It is a quiet morning.

NARRATOR (FANCY FREDDY)

A quiet morning at the home of Bess and Joe Call, the roughest, toughest sister-brother duo that ever existed.

BESS/JOE

(*Lifting cows or tractors above their head*) 997, 998, 999, and 1,000! (*They set the cows or tractors down.*)

JOE

Well, Bess, I think we're good for our mornin' exercises.

BESS

I would reckon yer right. *(They both sit.)* Now let's eat, before these flapjacks get too cold.

JOE

(Eating flapjacks) Boy, oh, boy, oh, boy, Bess. These are some of the best darn flapjacks I've ever eaten. You sure got our daddy's sense of cookin'! *(He goes to stab another bite of flapjacks, but his fork breaks.)* Gosh, darn it! I wish we had stronger forks. These titanium forks keep breaking every time I try to grip 'em.

BESS

Oh, hush, Joe! You're just a big clumsy man that doesn't know better. Let me show you how it's done. *(Bess goes to stab her flapjacks and her fork breaks too.)* Gosh, darn it! It looks like you were right. I think we was cheated on these titanium forks. *(She examines it)* I think these were made of straw and painted to look like titanium. Hmmmphhh.

JOE

Now, how're we gunna enjoy our flapjacks? *(He pouts)*

BESS

Well...you got two hands, don't you? *(She picks up her flapjacks and starts eating them.)* I'm not letting these go to waste!

JOE

(Slaps his thigh) Hoo-boy! Why I guess you're right...like always. *(He picks up his stack with his hands and starts to eat his flapjacks. They eat in silence as they finish their flapjacks.)* Mmmm-mmmm, those were tasty.

BESS

Thanks. *(Big sigh)* Boy, Joe, it sure has been quiet the last few months. I know that we have to keep the farm goin' and all, but I sure could do with a little excitement.

JOE

You know that I love the quiet life, Bess, but yer right, it has been just a little too quiet lately. I wish there was something that we could do. *(Big sigh)*

BESS

Well, wishin' isn't workin'! And these dishes aren't goin' to clean themselves and that field isn't goin' to plow itself neither. I think we'll just have to keep our wishes for a rainy day. *(They both sigh)*

JOE

Right as always, Bess. *(He stands up and starts to pick up the dishes, when a newsboy gallops by on a horse.)*

NEWSBOY

Hear ye, hear ye! Read all about it! Read all about it in the *Essex County Bugle*! Only one dime!

BESS

Say, kid. Come here.

NEWSBOY

Yes'm?

BESS

Is there any excitin' news in there that's worth me giving up one of my hard-earned dimes? Be truthful now.

NEWSBOY

I don't know. Maybe, ma'am.

JOE

Now, kid, it's best that you don't try her patience too much. She's likely to pick you up and tie you up into a pretzel—

BESS

And that breakfast weren't much, I'm still hungry, so I might dip you into some mustard and take a big bite out of ya'. *(She bares her teeth.)*

NEWSBOY

(He backs away and tosses the paper on the table) Oh, ma'am, please don't eat me. I'll even put my own dime in and give you the paper!

BESS

(Hearty laugh) Oh, boy, stop them knees from knockin'! I was only jestin' with ya'! *(She digs in her coin purse and pulls out a quarter.)* Just so there's no hard feelings, I'll even give you a quarter and you can keep the extra fifteen cents! *(She flips the coin to him and he catches it)*

NEWSBOY

Why thank you kindly, ma'am. *(He gives her a little salute)*

JOE

So, don't keep us waitin'. Is there any excitin' news that we just paid twenty-five cents for?

NEWSBOY

Oh yes, sir! Turn to page five! Mr. Biggins, the world-famous wrestling promoter, is coming to Essex! He's going to sign up at least a hundred men to take part in a wrestling competition. He said it's going to be the biggest event of the century!

JOE

Why thank you. I think I will turn to that article you speak of.

NEWSBOY

Thanks again, Mr. and Miss Call. *(He gallops off with his newsbag)* Hear ye, hear ye! Read all about it! Read all about it in the *Essex County Bugle!* Only one dime!

JOE

(Starts to open paper) Now, let's see here—

BESS

(Snatches the paper) Why! That boy was telling the truth! Mr. Biggins is going to be here tomorrow morning and is signing up at least 100 people to wrestle in a competition! Hoo-wee! That sure does sound like a nice break to the quiet we've been havin'. What do you think, Joe?

JOE

Hmmm, I think we should stop lollygaggin' about and clean these dishes and plow the field. That's what I think.

BESS

(Sighs) Why...why I guess yer right, Joe...

JOE

Darn-tootin', I am. We need to finish up here, so that first thing tomorrow mornin', we can go meet Mr. Biggins and sign up for that wrestlin' competition.

BESS

Oh, Joe! You sure are the best brother! *(She punches him in the arm, which sends him flying)*

JOE

And yer the best sister a boy can have. *(They exit)*

PURCHASE PERUSAL FOR FULL SCRIPT