

Old Folks Rock: Thief!

Allan Bates





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THIEF!

by

Allan Bates

CAST

THIEF: College student-age male, doesn't look like a thug, snuffles, and sneezes occasionally

ROBERTA: 60s or older, sage, but slightly daft, wears a bathrobe

THERESA: Her sister, somewhat like her

HENRY: Their brother, rather dowdy

Place

A family living room.

Time

The present. The middle of the night.

Production Notes:

The characters' daftness is a result of years of happy eccentricity, not a result of deteriorating mental ability.

Roberta, Henry, and Theresa frequently speak from offstage, leaving Thief particularly awkward alone onstage.

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Setting: A chair or two, including a rocking chair; a chest, sideboard or side table with a drawer, a rug.

At Rise: Almost dark. (SOUND CUE: A slight noise of a window being opened) Thief enters, turns on a flashlight and looks around. He goes to the chest, rummages in a drawer. Takes out assorted items including a tiny pitcher, tosses them aside. While rejecting the articles, he avoids making too much noise. Taking out a tray of silverware, he shines the flashlight on it. He crosses to set it on a chair when the silverware slips out of his hands and crashes to the floor. Turning, he jams his flashlight under his shirt and tries to hide. After a quiet moment, he gathers up the silverware.

ROBERTA: (off) What's going on down there? Theresa, are you raiding the fridge again? Sis? Who's there? Some visitor? Some visitor entreating entrance at our chamber door? Some late visitor at our chamber door? (Shouting) You should check on that noise, Henry!

HENRY: (off) Can't. I gotta pee. It's the wind. Nothing more. Go back to bed.

ROBERTA: (off) Can't. I'm going down there.

Roberta enters, carrying an improbable weapon, such as a hand-held mirror or a toilet brush, and a lighted flashlight. She wears a robe, and clearly has just come from bed. She shines the flashlight around. Seeing the Thief, she shines the flashlight in his face. Thief shines his flashlight on her. For an extended time, the action progresses through dueling flashlights.

ROBERTA: Oh! Who are you? (The Thief tries not to look too scary. She is stern, not frantic.) Just what are you up to, young man?

THIEF: Just...uh....Just uh...

ROBERTA: No you are not! Whatever you're trying to say, you're not "just uh" anything! You're a burglar! You're here to rob us.

THIEF: You're right. OK, you're right, I'm here to rob you. Put 'em up! I have a gun! (*He tries to look scary and fumbles through several pockets.*)

THIEF: I said put 'em up!

ROBERTA: Put what up?

THIEF: Your hands, of course.

ROBERTA: My hands, of course. Of course I knew it was my hands. And of course that's the dumbest thing I ever heard. That's what the bad guys and cops say on TV when they can't think of anything else to say.

THIEF: Lady, this isn't TV. I have a gun. (*pulling out a gun*)

ROBERTA: Shoot if you must this old grey head.

THIEF: Of course I won't shoot you! Good Lord, woman. I'm here to rob you, not to kill you. I carry this gun because...because...

ROBERTA: Because what?

THIEF: Because...

Roberta turns on a dim light.

ROBERTA: Forget your "Because." You can't even—

THIEF: (*waving his gun*) See this? Look! This is a gun!

ROBERTA: "Shoot if you must this old grey head." Isn't that the most wonderful line of poetry? I read it years ago, and I've been wanting to use it ever since.

THIEF: Poetry? I didn't hear any poetry.

ROBERTA: Shoot if you must this old grey head! That's poetry! Pure poetry!

THIEF: I don't like poetry. Poetry makes me sick. Ever since third grade. O, Captain, my Captain, da dada, da dada, da dada, da dada. It just goes on and on.

ROBERTA: You've got to really listen to poetry. It doesn't just da dada da dada da dada. It...it....Listen to the whole line: "**Shoot** if you **must** this **old** grey **head**, but **spare** your **country's flag**, she **said**."

THIEF: I said I'm not going to shoot anyone, lady.

Thief puts the gun back in a different pocket.

ROBERTA: Don't like that one eh? You'll like this:
"**This** is the **forest** primeval, the **murmuring pines** and the **hemlocks**,
Bearded with **moss**, and in **garments green**..."

THIEF: Your bathrobe is orange, lady.

ROBERTA: Garments green is **not** my robe! I don't think you have **any** sensitivity to poetry. You're just an ignorant clob.

THIEF: I am **not** an ignorant clob. **Clod**. The word is clod. I'm a college student majoring in political science and getting pretty good grades, and I'm trying to earn a living by robbing people. Houses! I don't rob people! That's an entirely different line of work. I rob houses! I hate it when people come down from bed while I'm trying to rob them. To rob their houses! Do you know that the average college student graduates these days with more than twenty-five thousand in debt? Twenty-five thousand fu...! 'Scuse my French. Twenty-five-thousand-plus dollars in debt! Just think how many orange bathrobes that would buy.

ROBERTA: My robe is tangerine. Mistaking it for orange in this indistinct light is an honest mistake. "Indistinct in the twilight, **druids** of eld, with voices **sad** and **prophetic**..."

Roberta turns up the lights full.

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!