

GINGER

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By Robin Pond

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SYNOPSIS: Two baker/scientists, Day and Oos, are hard at work in their kitchen/laboratory, creating a gingerbread man. But something goes terribly wrong with their recipe/formula, and the resulting gingerbread person lacks the proper shape. Day and Oos attempt to rectify their error and get back to plan, but their creation refuses to be rectified. Finally, Day and Oos become reconciled to the realization that, if they are to succeed at all, they must accept change as a part of their process.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(TWO MEN, ONE WOMAN)

DAY.....A baker/scientist, probably male, dressed in a lab-coat, displaying the rigidity of thought and curmudgeonly attitude that comes from long being in a position of authority

OOS.....A baker/scientist, probably male, dressed in a lab-coat, physically dissimilar to Day, but possessing the same general attitudes and characteristics

GINGER (f)A young female, dressed in brown; a free spirit

PRODUCTION NOTES

Day and Oos are the ying and the yang of a single character. They complete each other's thoughts and share a common world view. Ginger's lively demeanor is in sharp contrast to the dour assertiveness of Day and Oos.

The rhythm of the language in this play supports the message. Performers should not be afraid to emphasize this rhythm. By contrast, the rhyme should remain subtle, so as to not dominate.

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Ginger's physicality is an important element in the play. The challenge to the performers is to convey the physicality while maintaining the rhythm of the language.

The props noted in the text of the play should be viewed as suggestions rather than necessities, although it is helpful if some, such as the cookie cutter, appear in some form. The physical layout may be altered to reflect the constraints of the space and the creativity of the production. For example, in the production at the Inspirato Festival in Toronto, there was no physical table and the oven (black box) was replaced with a frame, so that Ginger was visible center-stage from the beginning. The frame was then lifted away from her, as opposed to her being lifted out of the oven.

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DAY is kneading dough on a table. OOS is staring into a large black box, an oven, the back of which is to the audience. Behind them is a banner, on which is written "Day 6."

DAY: Make a man. Make a man. Quick as we can, with cream butter and sugar mixed up in a pan. Make a man. Make a man. Quick as we can, with precise specifications, completely to plan. We'll roll it, and roll it, and determine its fate, with yearnings, and longings, and loving, and hate.

OOS: Clone a man. Clone a man. Nothing's to chance, not artistry, nor sophistry, nor ability to dance. Twenty-three chromosomes lined up in pairs, with gender, and diseases, and colors of hairs. We know it. We control it. It's simple to see, with each gene encoding the recipe.

DAY: With ginger, and currants, and whipped egg white, and a cup of molasses to make it taste right -

OOS: And sugar and spice, and everything nice -

DAY: And a puppy dog's tail, to make sure it's a male. We've patted it, and patted it, and declared it to be, and now it's in the oven, and we're ready to see if it's a perfect specimen.

OOS: An immaculately-crafted gingerman.

DAY: (*Drawing in a deep breath.*) Ahhh . . . Take a breath. Take a breath. This delicious scent, the sweetness, and the spices, all heaven sent. Take a breath. Take a breath. Let your nostrils explore. There's nutmeg, and ginger, and butter, and more. There's cinnamon, and cloves, and finely ground flour, heated in an oven for over an hour.

OOS: (*Drawing in a deep breath.*) Ahhh . . . Drink it in. Drink it in. Breath it right in -

DAY: The luxurious aroma of original sin.

OOS: Aw success. Aw success. To give ourselves notoriety.

DAY: And suggest a new society. We'll bake it, and study it, and publish results -

OOS: And soon be able to fix people's faults.

DAY: (*Reaching into the oven.*) Reach in now. Reach in now. Grab a side -

OOS: Wait a bit. Wait a bit. Let's not forget. It's hot. You'll need an oven mitt.

DAY: Get them then. Get them then. Let's not delay. Our fame and fortune is just moments away.

They both put on oven mitts.

OOS: Okay.

DAY: Okay.

They reach back into the oven.

DAY: Grab it now, grab it now, lift up an end. Keep it quite level, don't let it bend.

They lift GINGER out of the oven and carry her to the table.

DAY: Easy now, easy now, lower with care. Wait - something's not right - look at its hair.

OOS: It's fearful. It's fearful. How can it be? This lacks the proper symmetry. Abnormal bulges, and bumps, and curves, it has more shape than a gingerman deserves.

DAY: I told you. I told you. But you wouldn't listen. You added more sugar, to make the glaze glisten. With a little more sugar, and a little more spice, you insisted on making everything nice.

OOS: Hold it now. Hold it now. Don't hang this on me. You're the one in charge of the recipe. With the Adenine, and Guanine, and Thymine too, the responsibility rests with you.

DAY: It's your fault!

OOS: Is not!

DAY: Is too! But I'm not wasting my time arguing with you. Go dig over there, in all that clutter, and bring me our standard cookie-cutter.

OOS goes to find the cookie-cutter. DAY leans over the table and inspects the subject.

DAY: With a nip, and a tuck, and a trim or three, we'll bring back the needed conformity.

GINGER sits up and stretches. DAY jumps back, startled.

GINGER: Awww . . . Wake me up. Wake me up. All in a whirl. It's a strange new world for a gingerbread girl. But I'm feeling refreshed, fresh-baked, and what's more, there's a whole wide world for me to explore.

She jumps down off the table.

DAY: Wait a bit. Wait a bit. You should lie down. Your dough's too warm to be strolling around. I insist. I insist. You've got to stay. I can't permit you to wander away.

OOS returns with a large cookie-cutter.

GINGER: (*Eyeing the cookie-cutter.*) I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I don't really know. But I think it's best for me to go. You've got plans, and purpose, and a master design. But I'd rather that my life were mine. I don't want trimming, or smoothing, or reshaping my dough, so I really think that I should go.

DAY: (*Lunging at Ginger.*) Grab her.

GINGER jumps to the side and DAY goes sailing past her.

OOS: (*Lunging.*) I've got her.

OOS also misses.

DAY: Don't let her escape. She's an aberrant snip -

OOS: And not the right shape.

For the next sixty to seventy seconds, the cooks ineptly continue to try to catch GINGER, pleading with her to submit to their will. But she taunts them and evades them easily.

GINGER: (*Laughing, taunting, and dodging around them.*) Run, run, as fast as you can. You can't catch me. I'm Ginger, I am . . . Grab at me, clutch me, do your best, but I won't agree to be like the rest . . . Pursue me, and chase me, and track me down too, but I'm always a step ahead of you . . .

DAY: (*Pursuing her.*) You're blurring our image . . .

OOS: You've corrupted our mold . . .

DAY: So you must be reshaped . . .

OOS: And do as you're told.

GINGER: Run, run, as fast as you can. You can't catch me. I'm Ginger, I am . . . You can plan, and devise, with your recipe, and still not determine who I have to be . . .

DAY: You must be who you are in the master design . . .

OOS: So come back to the table before it's too late . . .

DAY: Your position is plotted in space and in time . . .

OOS: So come back to the table and stop tempting fate.

GINGER: There's still more mysteries in heaven and earth, then you can plan for in a preconceived birth . . . So run, run, as fast as you can. You can't catch me. I'm Ginger, I am . . .

GINGER finally runs off to the side of the stage.

DAY: (*Breathing heavily.*) Give it up, give it up. There's really no hope. The project's ruined, derailed -

OOS: (*Also breathless.*) It's out of scope.

DAY: (*Waiving his arms around.*) Pack it up, pack it up. Close it all down. There goes the fame, and fortune, and renown. No praise, no applause, no Nobel prize. Nothing but disdain in our colleagues' eyes.

OOS: Damn it all. Damn it all. Cast it all out. Our research is faulty. Our theory's in doubt. What are our students now to believe, having seen paradise, only to leave? What are our students now going to say, having known success, and been driven away?

DAY: (*Sniffing.*) The scent in the air is no longer sweet. It stinks of ignominious defeat.

OOS: (*Sniffing.*) The warm aroma that hangs in the air now reeks of desperate despondent despair.

GINGER returns cautiously.

GINGER: You didn't fail. You didn't fail. Can't you see? It can't be failure if you've made me. I'm different. I'm special. I yearn to be free. I'm a successful bundle of originality.

OOS: It won't do. It won't do. Nothing personal, you know. You're a wonderful result -

DAY: As mutations go -

OOS: But it can't do. It can't do. Don't you see? Any recipe -

DAY: Needs to have predictability.

GINGER: *(Moving between the cooks, putting a hand on each.)*

Accept it. Accept it. You've got to give in. Being a little bit different isn't really a sin. Accept it. Accept it. Find a new solution, a recipe enhanced by evolution. Through exploring, and adapting, and a bit of rearranging, even our very genomes keep changing.

DAY: Let us fix you.

DAY clutches at *GINGER's* arm, but she pulls free and he falls at her feet.

OOS: Let us fix you. Don't be afraid.

OOS clutches at *GINGER's* arm, but she pulls free and he also falls at her feet.

DAY: *(Looking up at Ginger.)* Your lot can be recast.

OOS: *(Looking up at Ginger.)* Your body remade.

GINGER: *(Stretching out her arms, placing one hand on Day's head, and the other on Oos' head.)* Accept me. Accept me. I'm determined to be free. You've no choice but to fix your recipe. With nature and nurture and fortuitous evolution, we can mix up a much more desirable solution.

DAY: But such a scrumptious resumption -

OOS: Would require too great an assumption.

GINGER: Think of the assumption as a human exemption. Allow us to fail as a step to redemption.

OOS: I don't know. I don't know. There won't be a script. We'll be searching for results we can't really predict.

GINGER: Take my rib. Take my rib. The future will be fed from my gingerbread. Clone your creation as a gingerman of the next generation. With the sweat of his brow, we'll commit here and now, to rely on human inspiration.

The cooks look at each other.

DAY: (To Oos.) Well you know. Well you know. We've got nothing to lose, if we allow our subjects the right to choose. With yearning, and some learning, and a world to explore -

OOS: They might have the ability of becoming much more.

The cooks hesitate for a second, and then scramble up on to their feet. DAY rushes back to the table and starts kneading some more dough. OOS returns to the oven and resets the dials.

GINGER: So make a man, make a man, quick as you can. With hopes and potential mixed up in a pan.

DAY: Make a man, make a man, we'll make a new batch -

OOS: With a world of possibilities from which he can hatch.

DAY: We'll roll it, and roll it -

OOS: And then let it be.

GINGER: And then he'll be free, just like me. We'll experience and grow and slowly mature -

DAY: And rely on chance -

OOS: 'Cause nothing's for sure.

GINGER: And maybe, when the time's expedient, we can add another new ingredient.

Fade to black.

THE END