

# WHO GETS CHARLIE?

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By Mike Willis

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## WHO GETS CHARLIE?

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**SYNOPSIS:** *Who Gets Charlie?* is a ten minute memory play about life. It is easily staged and casting is very flexible. Every grade school class has a Charlie, the uncoordinated kid who is always picked last for playground activities. As Mike sits on stage waiting to speak at the funeral of his friend Charlie, his mind wanders back to their experiences together on the grade school playground. Charlie is ever-present on stage, but does not speak. The expression “kids can often be cruel without really meaning to” comes to light in this play and it leaves you with the feeling that, “if I could only do that over again, I’d...” This play was inspired by true events.

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2-8 MEN, 0-3 WOMEN, FLEXIBLE)

MIKE (M).....A young man, 16-25 years old.

CHARLIE (M).....A boy, twelve years old. Non-speaking.

### THE KIDS

STEVE (M).....A boy, ten to fourteen years old.

JIM (M).....A boy, ten to fourteen years old. Non-speaking.

GENE (M).....A boy, ten to fourteen years old. Non-speaking.

MARY (F).....A girl, ten to fourteen years old. Non-speaking.

JOHN (M).....A boy, ten to fourteen years old. Non-speaking.

LINDA (F).....A girl, ten to fourteen years old. Non-speaking.

SUSIE (F) .....A girl, ten to fourteen years old. Non-speaking.

PAT (M).....A boy, ten to fourteen years old. Non-speaking.

JACK (M).....A boy, ten to fourteen years old. Non-speaking.

### NOTES

*Who Gets Charlie?* is an extremely flexible play. The setting can be as simple as a bare stage. There are three casting options for the play. *Who Gets Charlie?* can be performed with as few as two characters appearing on stage, Charlie and Mike. If this casting option is chosen, the voice of Steve can be recorded and played through a sound system or an actor or technician can recite Steve's lines from off stage. The play can also be performed using Charlie, Mike and Steve on stage. The third option uses all of the characters. The play is not gender specific and many of the names can be changed to fit casting needs.

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THIS PLAY IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF CHARLES  
GALLAGHER (1949-1969)

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**SETTING:**

*The stage is bare. There is a lone chair placed DSL. The chair faces out and sits in a pool of light. A baseball glove, a basketball, and a football lay on the floor UCS.*

**AT RISE:**

*MIKE enters from SL and crosses to the chair and sits. He is a young man, sixteen to twenty-five. He is wearing a dark sports coat and tie. MIKE takes off his coat and drapes it on the chair, then closes his eyes. A school bell rings and excited voices can be heard off stage. The KIDS rush onstage and assemble CS. There are nine of them and they are all between ten and fourteen years old. STEVE, the team captain, is carrying a baseball bat and a ball.*

**STEVE:** Hey you guys, be quiet and let's choose teams. (*Indicating stage right.*) Everyone stand over there. Mike, you and I will be captains.

**MIKE:** (*Looking straight out from his chair, remembering.*) Okay. (*Pause.*) I've got Jim.

*JIM leaves the group of KIDS, crosses to MIKE, and stands behind him. MIKE remains sitting on the chair, looking out.*

**STEVE:** I'll take Gene.

*GENE leaves the group of KIDS and crosses to stand behind STEVE. CHARLIE, a young boy of twelve, enters carrying a baseball and wearing a baseball glove. He sits on the stage DSR apart from the group and begins tossing the ball into the glove. CHARLIE is dressed for school in jeans and a button down shirt. He drops the ball and it rolls onto the stage floor. He scrambles awkwardly after it and retrieves it. CHARLIE begins tossing the ball into the air.*

**MIKE:** (*Remembering.*) Mary.

*One by one, as their names are called, the KIDS cross to stand by their captains, STEVE or MIKE. MIKE continues sitting and staring out, remembering.*

**STEVE:** Susie. Go ahead and take two this time.

*CHARLIE drops the ball again and with a frustrated sigh, he picks it up and crosses DSR and sits.*

**MIKE:** All right, I'll take John and Linda.

**STEVE:** Pat and...let's see, uh, Jack. I guess that about does it. (Seeing CHARLIE.) No, wait, uh...what about Charlie? Who gets Charlie?

*As his name is called, CHARLIE smiles and stands in anticipation of being chosen.*

**MIKE:** Your turn, Steve, I had him yesterday.

**STEVE:** Not so fast. I'll trade. You take Charlie and I'll give you Susie. You'll have two more players than me.

**MIKE:** Naw...naw, that ain't gonna happen. We'll flip a coin. I'll take heads.

*STEVE takes out a coin and flips it.*

**STEVE:** Tails, I win. We'll bat first.

*STEVE exits SL and his team follows. MIKE's team exits SR. MIKE comes out of his trance, rises slowly, and crosses CS, calling to CHARLIE. MIKE is now back in grade school.*

**MIKE:** Ooh... Okay, uh... Hey Charlie, c'mon, you're on my team today.

*At the sound of his name, CHARLIE's face brightens with a big smile and he rushes awkwardly CS and joins MIKE, who takes the baseball from CHARLIE and tosses it off SL after STEVE.*

**MIKE:** Now look, Charlie... I want you to go out and play right field. If the ball comes out there, I want you to do whatever you can to stop it, okay? (*CHARLIE nods.*) After you stop it, you just throw it to me, ya got that? (*CHARLIE nods again*) All right then, look alive out there.

*CHARLIE moves awkwardly far SR and MIKE crosses to DSL. They both face off SL.*

**STEVE:** (*Off stage.*) Come on, Gene, get a hit. Charlie's in right field, try to hit it there.

*There is the sound of a ball being hit and a baseball rolls across the stage and right past CHARLIE, who turns and chases after it off SR. MIKE crosses CS, calling.*

**MIKE:** C'mon, Charlie, throw it here. C'mon, hurry up.

*CHARLIE reenters from SR and as he tries to throw the ball, he stumbles and the ball drops to the floor and rolls slowly towards MIKE at CS. MIKE hurriedly picks up the ball and looks off SL to make a throw, but it is too late.*

**STEVE'S TEAM:** (*Off stage.*) That a way, Gene, home run! Way to go! That's where we want to hit it.

*MIKE slams the ball into his glove in disgust.*

**MIKE:** Charlie, no... Charlie! All you had to do is get the ball to me. Charlie...

*CHARLIE gets up slowly, looks at MIKE, and then crosses DSR and sits on the floor. MIKE watches CHARLIE, then slams the ball into his glove again and angrily tosses it off stage. MIKE crosses to his chair down SL and sits. The lights rise on the chair and MIKE closes his eyes.*

**MIKE:** (*Quietly remembering.*) It's okay, Charlie. We'll get 'em next time.

*CHARLIE looks at MIKE with a faint smile.*

**STEVE:** (*Off stage.*) How about we play some hoops today?

*CHARLIE picks up the basketball that is UCS and starts to dribble around. He is a poor ball-handler and the ball gets away from him and rolls DSL, next to where MIKE is sitting in the chair. CHARLIE stops the ball by MIKE and sits on the floor next to him.*

**STEVE:** (*Off stage.*) Well, what do ya say? How about some hoops? There are six of us, we'll go three on three.

*MIKE rises and crosses CS with the basketball. He dribbles the ball, then turns and looks out.*

**MIKE:** There are seven of us. You didn't count Charlie. Who gets Charlie?

**STEVE:** You can have him and we'll spot you five baskets and go to ten.

**MIKE:** (*To himself.*) That won't be enough.

*MIKE, returning to his grade school years, calls to CHARLIE.*

**MIKE:** Okay, Charlie. You're with me today.

*CHARLIE rises and crosses CS to MIKE, a big smile on his face for having been chosen.*

**MIKE:** Charlie, if for some reason the ball should come to you, I want you to pass it right away. I mean, just get rid of it. Throw it to someone on our team...right away. Ya got that? (*CHARLIE nods.*) If there isn't anyone on our team close, then call for a time out. Whatever you do, don't dribble the ball, okay? (*CHARLIE nods.*) Good, and don't shoot either.

*MIKE tosses the basketball off SL.*

**MIKE:** All right, let's go. Bring the ball down.

*There are a few off stage dribbles, and the ball comes bouncing onstage to CHARLIE. CHARLIE holds the ball and looks around desperately for someone to pass to, but can't find anyone. MIKE moves around the stage calling.*

**MIKE:** Here, Charlie, here. Call time out! Charlie!

*In a panic, CHARLIE starts to dribble the ball.*

**MIKE:** No, Charlie...don't dribble!

*The ball bounces off CHARLIE'S leg and goes off stage.*

**MIKE:** (*Frustrated.*) Charlie...I told ya not to... What's the use? That's it for today. I've had enough...we're done for today, Charlie.

*CHARLIE picks up the football that is on stage and crosses UR and begins tossing it in the air. Mike sits in the chair DL and closes his eyes. The lights rise slightly on the chair. CHARLIE starts tossing the football and walking though an imaginary game, hiking the ball and attempting to pass it. He drops the ball a number of times. After a minute of this, MIKE rises quickly and shouts off SL. He is back in grade school again.*



**MIKE:** All right, we'll play, but only if Charlie is on your team. Now, just tell me who gets Charlie? You do, right? Everyone knows you don't have a chance of winning with Charlie. It's your turn, I've had him two days in a row now, and...

*CHARLIE has walked up behind MIKE, who now turns and sees him standing there. CHARLIE and MIKE look at each other and CHARLIE drops his head, his feelings hurt. MIKE has a look of embarrassment on his face.*

**MIKE:** Look, Charlie...I... Well...all right, okay... You can be on my team again today.

*CHARLIE raises his head and shakes it no.*

**MIKE:** What? You sayin' you don't want to be on my team?

*CHARLIE shakes his head, "No," again and slowly walks off SR. MIKE watches him go. MIKE returns to the chair DL and sits. The light comes up on the chair. There is a short pause and MIKE takes his suit jacket off the chair back and puts it on. MIKE rises, looks around and starts to exit SL. As MIKE starts to exit SL, CHARLIE enters SR holding the football and stops to watch MIKE. MIKE, feeling he is not alone but not able to see CHARLIE, turns and crosses back CS.*

**MIKE:** *(Calling softly.)* Charlie? Charlie...are you there? Charlie, if you're there, give me a sign. Charlie?

*CHARLIE tosses the football and it bounces off MIKE'S leg. MIKE bends down and picks the ball up.*

**MIKE:** (*Struggling for the words.*) I was hopin' you'd be there, ya see... I need to talk to ya, Charlie. I don't have much time. Your friends...my friends, well, our friends, they're waitin' for me in the church. They want me to say a few words about you. And...I just wanted to talk to you first. I thought that might be best. Ya see, since your accident, I been doin' a lot of thinking and remembering how it was in school. How out on the playground when we had pick-up games we'd all argue about...who got Charlie, ya know and...I still remember your smile and how excited you'd get when we finally figured out whose team you would play on. You'd watch us bickering back and forth about who got Charlie and you'd just sit there, hoping... (*MIKE takes the football and crosses to the chair and sits facing out.*) You never complained... You just wanted to be one of us, and well... It got me to thinkin' about what I should say in church today, and I just thought I should say it to you first. Remember how us captains chose sides for a game? We were always shouting out, trying to get the best players, the ones we wanted first? Well, I think life must be like one of those games, Charlie. I think there must be some major league captain out there somewhere, and he must have looked down on all of us and said, "Today we're gonna play us a big game...and that big game is called life, and since it's such a big game, I'm takin' the best player first." ...and that's why he chose you, Charlie. (*Pause.*) That's what I think.

*CHARLIE moves up behind MIKE at the chair and puts his hand on MIKE's shoulder as the lights fade to BLACKOUT.*

**THE END**