

DODGE

A one-act comedy by
Ed Shockley

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Elves:

DODGE, elf who works hard at not working.

GRAND ELF, father of Swallow and Dodge.

TORTLE, slow-thinking elf.

HOLMSTEAD, character worthy of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

SNIDE, a dour elf.

SWALLOW, gullible little sister of Dodge.

BLOSSUM

Gnomes:

FROST

SNOWFLAKE

CRYSTAL

GNOME KING

A chorus of any size fills out the cast and can collectively or individually take selected lines designated GNOMES or ELVES.

SCENE 1

(Autumn leaves fill the stage. ELVES are busy painting green leaves gold.)

GRAND ELF: Where is Dodge?

TORTLE: We sent her to get more Autumn for our brushes.

GRAND ELF: How long has she been gone?

SNIDE: What time is it?

GRAND ELF: Middle night.

TORTLE: What day?

GRAND ELF: Tomorrow?

SNIDE: What month?

GRAND ELF: Ow.

TORTLE: Is there a month called Ow?

GRAND ELF: It follows Clout.

(The other Elves move away.)

TORTLE: Ow follows Clout?

(Grand Elf bonks Turtle on the noggin.)

Ow.

SWALLOW: Maybe someone should go look for my big sister.

SNIDE: Why?

SWALLOW: She may be in trouble.

SNIDE: Only if she caused it.

SWALLOW: What has Dodge ever done to you to make you hate her so?

SNIDE: Nothing at all...except leave me stuck in a tall tree atop mount Ararat with an armful of starlight.

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SWALLOW: She forgot to grab the bag.

SNIDE: Set me off riding a Nor'easter wind like a rodeo cowboy because she hadn't tied down her corner of the storm.

SWALLOW: That was unfortunate but her rope was frayed and she went searching for another.

TORTLE: There was the time she nearly got me eaten when she failed to signal the bear's return while I was busy setting his hibernation clock.

SWALLOW: She felt very badly about that but explained to me that she had just eaten a tiny thistle berry and could not whistle despite every effort.

GRAND ELF: Be that as it may, if we don't get these leaves painted golden double quick then the winter gnomes might overtake us.

TORTLE: Remember the last time that happened?

SNIDE: Remember? They marched halfway into summer.

TORTLE: Killed all those gigantic roaring lizards.

SNIDE: I say it was for the best. All that stomping and growling was driving me bonkers.

TORTLE: And the smell!

SNIDE: Not swell.

GRAND ELF: Well, if we run out of paint before the leaves are done then you can bet they will be about their snowflakes as fast as you can say, "Blizzard."

(Enter GNOMES in formation.)

GNOMES: Blizzard!

TORTLE: No fair!

GRAND ELF: We're still painting.

(A Gnome hits him with a snowball.)

FROST: Gnomes rock!

SNOWFLAKE: Gnomes rule.

GNOMES: Gnomes rock and rule!

GRAND ELF: You're killing all of the flowers.

SNOWFLAKE: That's the idea.

ELF: Then the trees will lose their limbs from the weight and...

GNOMES: And when the bough breaks the cradle will fall!

BLOSSUM: I've always wondered what that baby was doing up in a tree in the first place.

(Grand Elf clouts Blossum.)

GRAND ELF: Focus, Blossum.

GNOMES: We live to freeze

And murder leaves

We love to frost

And know the cost

The denless bear

The playful squirrel

Both live in fear

Of winter's rattle.

Summer lolls

And Autumn trots.

Our bell tolls

And stomachs knot

We live to freeze

And murder leaves

We love to frost

And now you've lost!

(The Gnomes pelt the Elves. Exit Elves.)

GRAND ELF: We have to find Dodge and paint the leaves quickly or the age of ice will be upon us again.

(End Scene I.)

SCENE 2

(A clearing in the forest.)

DODGE: Dodge, you scamp. Sometimes you must speak out loud to your river's reflection in order to find an elf of ample cleverness to appreciate your novel genius. Just today, in point of fact, you have dreamed a scheme to free you from the tiresome task of painting Autumn leaves. They've sent you fetching for the colors and you've absconded with the paint, leaving bits of cloth and broken bushes as if there was a terrible row. They'll think some wind giant or summer sunbeam desperate for a final dance upon the curling surf has taken you and all the colors so as to delay the coming of fall. I need only to hide these canisters then turn up days hence looking haggard to escape weeks of terrible tedious work.

I love to frolic, snack and snooze
Avoiding labor with my wit.
The shortest path is one I choose
When I can get away with it.
Let others larder winter stores
And sweat beneath a pounding sun,
I'll fill the glen with snorting snores
Then raid a barn when gathering's done!

Dear me! Here come my cousins searching sooner than I had expected. Scurry, Dodge, for if you're found your scheming comes to naught.

(Dodge grabs the cans and exits. Enter Elves.)

SWALLOW: It is as I feared.

TORTLE: He is not here.

SWALLOW: Worse, he's victim of abuse.

GRAND ELF: The Autumn paints?

TORTLE: All gone.

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SNIDE: Stolen.

TORTLE: But who?

HOLMSTEAD: And why?

GRAND ELF: It's obvious.

SNIDE: The winter Gnomes.

ELVES: The Winter Gnomes...

GRAND ELF: They want to rule the seasons.

SWALLOW: Why of course.

GRAND ELF: And so...

SWALLOW: And so?

SNIDE: They've taken Dodge.

TORTLE: Who's taken Dodge?

GRAND ELF: The Winter Gnomes.

SWALLOW: Dodge is an Elf, not a Gnome.

GRAND ELF: Of course she's an Elf.

SWALLOW: I'm perfectly certain of that fact because we're sisters.

TORTLE: Although there have been cases...

GRAND ELF: We are not discussing parentage.

SWALLOW: Then what are we discussing?

GRAND ELF: Where she has gone with the Autumn colors.

TORTLE: Well, she's not here.

SWALLOW: That's perfectly obvious.

HOLMSTEAD: And she is not there in the fields.

SWALLOW: Are you sure?

SNIDE: They are overrun with ghastly Gnomes.

GRAND ELF: And so we must conclude that they have seized her and our Autumn colors as part of an effort to overturn the order of things.

SWALLOW: A revolution.

TORTLE: Machination.

BLOSSOM: Evolution.

TORTLE: Infiltration.

SNIDE: A really cruddy bit of underhanded behavior.

GRAND ELF: And so we go and prepare for war!

ELVES: War!

Whenever reason loses season

We seize weapons

To War! To War!

Whenever malice fills our chalice

We seize weapons

And march! huzzah!

Whenever ranker rules.

Whenever ill will swells.

Whenever tempers fail to cool.

We'll fill the hills and dells

With smashing fists,

With curdling cries,

Break crown and wrists,

Till someone dies!

To war! To war! To war!

Huzzah!

TORTLE: What exactly is a huzzah?

(Grand Elf gives Turtle a wedgie.)

Huzzah!!

(The Elves march off chanting. Holmstead is left in the wake and begins examining the site. Enter Swallow.)

SWALLOW: Aren't you coming, Holmstead?

HOLMSTEAD: Don't think so.

SWALLOW: We're going to rout the Gnomes.

HOLMSTEAD: Gnomes aren't easily routed but run along if you're so inclined.

(Pause.)

SWALLOW: What're you doing?

HOLMSTEAD: Searching for clues. Ah, see here?

SWALLOW: What? I see nothing.

HOLMSTEAD: Precisely. And the absence of evidence is often more telling than a smoking gun.

SWALLOW: Really?

HOLMSTEAD: No, but would you rather I say that the whole affair doesn't respect the rules of logic and will likely end in the destruction of life as we know it?

(Pause.)

SWALLOW: So what does the non evidence tell us.

(End Scene 2.)

SCENE 3

(Dodge hides in a pet store.)

DODGE: This is the last place anyone would think to look since everyone knows that Elves are afraid of dogs and cats, snakes and rats, parrots...rabbits...box turtles...owls and brown—

(A monkey chatters.)

—furred, long tailed monkeys. I can't believe I've started a war. All I wanted was a good day's sleep. Now my friends will get clouted, either they or the Gnomes routed, and I must stay hidden until I can dream up a lie to explain my absence.

(A cat hisses. Dodge cringes.)

This is unbearable...oh, elves also fear bears... I shan't close my eyes a blink until this affair is resolved... Wolves, they scare elves also...I could say that I'd gotten away but they'll capture a spy and he will deny my tale... Whales set most elves to flight... I might convince the clan that I'd run afoul of man... All manner of fowl fright us, turkey, chicken, geese... Yes, I was caught by a man who mistook me for a wee Leprechaun. He demanded gold and so I was forced to surrender the paints or go join the blessed saints... Haints, haunts, ghosts and ghoulies send elves nearly bonkers with fright... But besides those few things we fear nothing at all except snails when they are large and white moths at night. Oh, here come, Holmstead and Swallow.

(Dodge hides behind a bird cage. Enter Holmstead and Swallow.)

SWALLOW: This is not a place for elves.

HOLMSTEAD: Indeed it is not.

SWALLOW: So why look for Dodge here?

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HOLMSTEAD: Because we have followed footprints and bits of cloth hung on brambles, scents, signs and insinuations for every twist in our journey until now here we find...

SWALLOW: Yes, yes?

HOLMSTEAD: Once again nothing.

SWALLOW: Nothing.

HOLMSTEAD: The trail ends without producing a body or a bucket.

SWALLOW: And that is good, yes.

HOLMSTEAD: Do you want the truth?

SWALLOW: Will I like it?

HOLMSTEAD: Perhaps not.

SWALLOW: Then perhaps no.

HOLMSTEAD: The fact that the trail ends , there are no clues and we are in the unlikeliest spot to find an elf is fortuitous...

SWALLOW: Fortuitous?

HOLMSTEAD: Ducky.

SWALLOW: Because?

HOLMSTEAD: Because...it allows us to start the search anew.

SWALLOW: Bravo! *(Pause.)* So what do we do?

HOLMSTEAD: Look about.

SWALLOW: It's a pet shop.

HOLMSTEAD: Observant.

SWALLOW: And elves are afraid of dogs and cats...snakes...rats... *(To audience:)* Help me out here... *(Audience calls out animals and Swallow repeats.)* And most of all *(Name someone from the immediate community:)*_____.

HOLMSTEAD: Wonderful, Swallow!

SWALLOW: I did my best.

HOLMSTEAD: Better than your best, you've given me a plan. Dodge cannot be here because elves are afraid of dogs, cat, snakes, rats, yadda yabba dabba do and so we will return to the forest and begin our search anew.

SWALLOW: That seems extreme.

HOLMSTEAD: Trust me.

SWALLOW: Quite.

(Holmstead takes Swallow by the hand and marches loudly to the door then opens and closes it without leaving.)

HOLMSTEAD: Moooo!

(Dodge comes running out.)

DODGE: And milk cows. Elves most definitely are shaken by mooing, chewing, milk cows... Uh, Holmstead, I presume.

SWALLOW: Howdy, Dodge.

DODGE: I know this looks bad but it is not what it seems.

SWALLOW: Of course it's not. You wouldn't run off with the Autumn paints and hide in a pet store while countless elves are beaten senseless by hairy chested Gnomes.

DODGE: Heaven forbid.

HOLMSTEAD: And so you are here because...

DODGE: ...because...the...paint was...not quite right and...required a dip of peacock feather tip to mix it consistent with the brights of years past.

SWALLOW: See, a perfectly obvious explanation.

HOLMSTEAD: So go ahead and pluck your feather then let's get back and stop a war...well?

DODGE: The peacock is a rather large bird and he might be disagreeable to surrendering a beautiful feather.

HOLMSTEAD: As well he should but you have come to get one and so save our kind from great suffering.

SWALLOW: You don't imagine that Dodge is afraid of a gigantic sharp beaked, razor taloned, bird, do you?

DODGE: Me afraid, pshaw!

SWALLOW: Why Dodge has told me of times when the sky turned black at noon and famished felines circled round, fangs exposed, and what do you suppose she did?

HOLMSTEAD: Tied their tails together in a knot then trotted off home...lucky guess. But time is wasting. Pluck your feather and let's burn leather.

DODGE: I'm going.

(Holmstead turns Dodge around. Next Holmstead makes the sound of a rooster. Dodge leaps offstage. The sound of mauling. Feathers fly, then Dodge returns holding a peacock feather in her mouth.)

SWALLOW: My hero.

(End Scene 3.)

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