

PERCIVAL BUGLETON III
By Maggie Smith
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CAST

SUSAN - a little girl, 8
FLOPSY - a dog from Build-a-Bear
BETTY - an American Girl Doll
PERCIVAL - disgraced puppet, immortal
MOTHER - a mother, voice role

(Lights up. An attic. SUSAN runs into the room. She sits down and cries.)

SUSAN

It's not fair! Why won't anyone play with me! It's like no one wants me around!

FLOPSY
(Offstage)

We'll play with you, Susan!

SUSAN

Who said that?

BETTY
(Offstage)

Why, we did, of course!

(FLOPSY and BETTY enter.)

FLOPSY

It's me! Flopsy the Stuffed Dog! You made me at Build-A-Bear when you were five years old!

BETTY

I'm Betty! I'm your look-alike American Girl doll!

FLOPSY

And we're here to play with you, Susan!

PERCIVAL
(Offstage)

Help. Me.

SUSAN

Who was that?

FLOPSY

Uh, no one. Let's go downstairs and play a game!

PERCIVAL
(Offstage)

Help. Me.

SUSAN

Do you hear that? Someone's calling for help.

BETTY

I don't hear anything. Let's go outside and play some hopscotch!

(PERCIVAL enters, dragging
themselves on the floor.)

PERCIVAL

Has a human come? Has a human being entered our domain to
finally put me out of my misery?

BETTY

Percival, not now.

FLOPSY

Yeah, we're trying to play with Susan, Percival.

PERCIVAL

I remember when I could play. Back when my legs were more than
just stuffing-filled pieces of cloth and my clothes were
unstained with oil. Girl. Girl, come closer.

(SUSAN leans to PERCIVAL.)

PERCIVAL

Do you know the pain of living without any bones, Susan?

BETTY

Percival, stop. You can't do this every time.

SUSAN

Who are you?

PERCIVAL

Percival Bugleton III. I've lived many lives, all stuck in this wretched family home, praying for any deity that will listen to strike me down and tear my soul down to Hell where it belongs.

FLOPSY

Stop talking about Hell, Percival. We're supposed to be friends for Susan! We want to be good influences!

BETTY

I can be a good influence! Susan, let's learn math! What's two plus two?

SUSAN

Um... Four?

FLOPSY

Yes, it's four!

PERCIVAL

Four. Four. Yes, 1884, the year that Great-Great-Grandma Dottie finally drew her last breath. She had fallen, fallen right down the stairs. Tripped at the top and tumbled below.

BETTY

Oh, Jesus Christ.

PERCIVAL

Tripped over me. I stared from above into her hollow, sunken eyes. I watched her take her last breath. "Percival," she rasped, "How could you?" She was right. How could I snuff out a life as easily as God blowing out a candle? I am cursed to live out this memory forever, until someone stills my own unbeating heart.

FLOPSY

Ignore that! Let's play a game with letters! I'll say a letter, and you say a word that starts with the letter! A.

SUSAN

Apple.

FLOPSY

B.

SUSAN

Ball.

FLOPSY

C.

PERCIVAL

Crying. Someone is crying downstairs. It's 1940, and Little Ricky has just been drafted into World War II. Barely eighteen, and off to see violence for the first time.

BETTY

Percival, we can't keep doing this.

PERCIVAL

Mother is in tears. "Ricky," I try to call from upstairs. "Ricky." No one can hear me. My voice is too frail. My tongue is too weak. My vocal chords have snapped one by one. I am the Devil's work.

FLOPSY

Please stop talking about your mouth.

PERCIVAL

The last memory I'll have of him is playing with him as a child, when my string broke and I was set aside for eternity. A piece of my soul died with him in that plane crash, never to return as long as I curse this earth.

BETTY

(Laughing nervously)

Maybe there's another game we can play?

FLOPSY

Like house! I'll be the dad!

SUSAN

I'll be the mom!

BETTY

I want to be the baby!

PERCIVAL

And I will be the dog that joins the family as a puppy, untrained and unknowing of the horrors yet to come. I was born in a shoebox outside of a Target. My first understanding of the world is that it is cold and cruel. I joined your family, and

PERCIVAL(cont.)

for the first time knew safety and love. I grew close to you all, even the mother, who is allergic to dogs. I became a part of the family. Until one day, I get hit by a car. But my last thought will be, as I look up to the sun, "I love you, Susan."

BETTY

What if you played a different character, Percival? What about a grandpa?

PERCIVAL

On the mother's or father's side?

BETTY

Mother's.

PERCIVAL

Okay. I will be the grandpa.

BETTY

Yay!

PERCIVAL

The grandpa who has just run over the family dog. "It was an accident!" he says, to the family. "I didn't see him playing behind the car!" That's not true though, is it? I saw the flash of white fur in the car's backup camera. I knew what I was doing. And I'll take that secret to my grave, no matter how much my granddaughter cries about it.

SUSAN

Oh... Oh, I think I hear my mother calling me.

PERCIVAL

I can't hear anything. But maybe that's because my ears are rotting off.

SUSAN

I have to go. Bye everyone!

(SUSAN exits. A beat.)

PERCIVAL

Do I still get to be the grandpa?

(Blackout.)