

THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

By Irene L. Pynn

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SYNOPSIS: This is the classic story of the Velveteen Rabbit, or how toys become real. It is a heartwarming, interactive play for children. This show was first produced by Attic Players in Tallahassee, Florida, in 1999. Eight actors play the roles of Old Horse, Boy, Mother, Jack-in-the-Box, Tin Soldier, Velveteen Rabbit, Doctor, and Fairy. While some roles clearly must be either male or female (Boy, Mother), others (Doctor, Velveteen Rabbit, etc.) may be played by either gender. Old Horse plays the main narrator, and will do most of the interacting with the audience. Fairy will also interact with the kids. Depending on the audience, this show should run about 30 minutes. It can be done on a small or large stage, with few props.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 1 male, 6 either; gender flexible)

OLD HORSE (f/m)	(56 lines)
BOY (m)	(32 lines)
MOTHER (f).....	(35 lines)
JACK-IN-THE-BOX (f/m).....	(22 lines)
TIN SOLDIER (f/m).....	(18 lines)
VELVETEEN RABBIT (f/m).....	(23 lines)
DOCTOR (f/m).....	(10 lines)
FAIRY (f/m)	(19 lines)

OLD HORSE: Welcome, kids! I'm the Old Rocking Horse, and today is my master's fourth birthday. He got me for his first birthday, and I've lived here his whole life. I've seen toys come and go for years, but this is my home, and I know I'm never leaving. My master is a wonderful boy who loves to play with us, but he sometimes puts old toys aside to make room for the new ones. On birthdays, the other toys get worried that our master won't love them anymore. They try to seem brand new and special and fancy, but that isn't what really matters. What they need to learn . . . is how to become "real."

BOY'S birthday party.

BOY: Oh, presents! What did I get? What did I get?

MOTHER: Not just yet! We still need to eat cake and ice cream. You have to save the best for last. Let's sit down for some dessert!

BOY: Well, okay, I guess. But I'll just be thinking about my gifts!

MOTHER: That's the point. It's more fun this way. Now, are you ready for "Happy Birthday"?

OLD HORSE: *(To the kids.)* Why don't we sing, too? Let's give my master a wonderful chorus today! One, two, three!

MOTHER, OLD HORSE: *(And kids.)* Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday, happy birthday. Happy birthday to you.

OLD HORSE: Great singing! Thank you!

MOTHER: Now, make a wish so you can blow out your candles!

BOY closes his eyes to wish

OLD HORSE: Let's all wish he has a wonderful day, okay? Close your eyes and wish for a perfect birthday. Did everyone wish? Great! Now, let's blow out the candles! *(Blows with BOY and directs kids to do the same. BOY blows out the candles.)*

MOTHER: *(Clapping.)* Hooray! *(She begins cutting slices for him – imaginary or otherwise.)*

OLD HORSE: *(To kids.)* Thanks again!

BOY: Thanks, Mom! But, how can we possibly eat all this cake and ice cream? There's so much!

MOTHER: Oh, we'll find a way, I'm sure.

BOY: Do we have to finish all of it before we can go open my presents?

MOTHER: No, just have a piece or two, and we'll save the rest for later.

BOY: Thanks, Mom! Let's go! (*Tearing apart gifts.*) WOW! The new Harry Potter book! Will you read it to me tonight? (*More gifts.*) A new video game? Awesome! (*More gifts – TIN SOLDIER has to be opened.*) Cool! The tin soldier I wanted! (*More gifts.*) No way! I didn't think I'd get this! (*More gifts.*) Thanks!

MOTHER: Calm down, now. You're making a mess.

BOY: Mom! I got everything I wanted! Everything!

MOTHER: You did? That's great. But you have one more present to open.

BOY: I do? Where?

MOTHER: Here. (*Hands him a package.*)

BOY: (*Opens it; Velveteen Rabbit comes out.*) A bunny!

MOTHER: It's a stuffed rabbit made of velveteen. He's very soft and perfect for cuddling during bedtime stories. Do you like him?

BOY: Of course I do! Thanks so much, Mom!

MOTHER: You're welcome. Happy birthday. Now, let's see if we can make that new video game work, okay?

BOY: YAY! (*Pulls Velveteen Rabbit with him off stage.*)

MOTHER goes with BOY and brings the other toys with her.

OLD HORSE: (*To kids.*) Here we go, again. The old toys are sitting in his room, worrying away that they aren't perfect enough, or new enough.

JACK-IN-THE-BOX: (*Hops on stage as OLD HORSE is speaking.*) Well, we don't really have to worry about that raggedy bunny, though, do we? I mean, I've been cleaning myself up all day long because I just knew he'd get a new book and a new video game and a new, (*Gulp.*) soldier, but that stuffed thing looks as old as you are.

OLD HORSE: Ahem.

JACK-IN-THE-BOX: Oh, sorry. I didn't mean anything by that. It's just that, well, you're the only toy that has grown old and not been thrown away. Anyone else who looks as old as you do is trash by now. That "velveteen rabbit," or whatever she called it, didn't even get to start off looking new.

OLD HORSE: When will you guys learn?

TIN SOLDIER: (*Marches onstage.*) Hello, fellows. I'm new here.

OLD HORSE: Welcome, Tin Soldier.

JACK-IN-THE-BOX looks TIN SOLDIER up and down, starts to cry, and hops offstage.

TIN SOLDIER: I'm afraid I'm not very liked yet.

OLD HORSE: No, don't worry about him. A lot of the toys are nervous about other toys taking their place. It's nothing to get upset about. Just let them know that you aren't trying to be newer or better, and everything will be fine.

TIN SOLDIER: Well, of course, I am a military soldier with very influential government ties. I can see why a toy of his position would feel inferior next to a soldier. After all, I am noticeably cleaner, for one. And I stand straight up with perfect posture, while he has clearly been used so much that he sags.

VELVETEEN RABBIT quietly comes onstage and stands near the OLD HORSE.

OLD HORSE: Welcome, Velveteen Rabbit. How do you like your new home?

VELVETEEN RABBIT hides, embarrassed

TIN SOLDIER: *(To Velveteen Rabbit.)* You too, eh? Well, I can't say I blame you. You're actually brand new and yet you look about four years old. Next to me, you're a torn toy, and I'm, well, I'd say I'm even real, next to you. Anyway, I'm off to explore the surroundings. See you chaps around. Thanks again for the welcome. *(Marches offstage.)*

OLD HORSE: Is anything bothering you, Velveteen Rabbit?

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Hi.

OLD HORSE: Hi. I'm the Old Horse. I've been here longer than anyone else, so if you have any questions, I'm the one to ask.

VELVETEEN RABBIT is too shy to speak.

OLD HORSE: Oh, this won't do. Let's get you a real welcome, okay? How about an enormous hug from my new friends? Kids! Could you help me make the Velveteen Rabbit feel more at home? Let's all spread our arms out wide and then wrap them around ourselves like this to give him a great, big, group hug. Okay? Here we go! *(OLD HORSE hugs Velveteen Rabbit.)*

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Oh, thank you. And thank you, kids. I feel much better now. I was so down before.

OLD HORSE: But why?

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Well...

OLD HORSE: Come on. I told you you can ask me anything, didn't I?

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Okay. Old Horse, what is "real"? The Tin Soldier said I'm just a torn toy and he is "real." I want to be "real," too.

OLD HORSE: Well, Velveteen Rabbit, the other toys seem to think,

BOY: *(Running on stage, pulling MOTHER behind him.)* Now let's get the Tin Soldier! Where's the Soldier? Where did I put him?

MOTHER: I think you put him over here, didn't you?

BOY: Over there! Quick! It's time to play!

MOTHER: Slow down! *(They run off stage together.)*

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Whatever "real" is, I'm obviously not it. The Tin Soldier seems like such fun. What could I do to make the master happy on his birthday? He doesn't even want to play with me.

OLD HORSE: Velveteen Rabbit, “real” isn’t about being new and shiny or perfect in any way at all.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Then what could it be? Is the Tin Soldier “real”?

OLD HORSE: Everyone has the chance to become real.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Are you “real,” Old Horse?

OLD HORSE: No, I’m not “real.” You see, not even those of us who have been here forever are “real.” It takes something very special for that.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: It does? What does it take?

JACK-IN-THE-BOX: *(Sobbing.)* Oh, he doesn’t even look at me anymore! He ran right past me, did you see? Did you see? I was sitting there in his room, and he went to the Tin Soldier, just like I knew he would! It’s over! I’m done-for!

VELVETEEN RABBIT: It’s okay, Jack-in-the-box, I think he’s just excited about the new toys on his birthday. I’m sure he still has real love for you.

JACK-IN-THE-BOX: *(Pause.)* Are you giving me advice? What are you, anyway, “velveteen?” What is that? You look like old rags and trash. How could you know what the master wants? How could you know anything about what is “real”?

VELVETEEN RABBIT hangs his head.

JACK-IN-THE-BOX: Oh, look. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it. I’m just really upset today about the whole birthday thing and how I’ll never be clean enough or bounce just right anymore. Let’s face it. I’m too old.

OLD HORSE: What do you think is wrong, Jack-in-the-box?

JACK-IN-THE-BOX: Well, for one, my springs are all worn out. Look! I don’t bounce up to surprise the master anymore. I just sort of flop over. *(Demonstrates.)*

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Um, maybe if your springs were tightened?

JACK-IN-THE-BOX: What?

OLD HORSE: A wonderful idea! Kids! Could you help me again? Jack-in-the-box needs his springs tightened so he can bounce up happily like he used to. Just hold up one finger like this, and now draw little circles in the air like this! (*JACK-IN-THE-BOX turns around as though the kids are twirling him on their fingers.*)

JACK-IN-THE-BOX: OH! I think it's working!

OLD HORSE: Perfect! Now, just a little more!

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Jack-in-the-box! You're looking much better already!

JACK-IN-THE-BOX: I am? I'm feeling much better! Okay, kids, that's plenty! Thanks so much! Now, let's try me out to see how I look! (*Squats down low and leaps up to show how springy his bounce is now.*) Hooray! Thank you, thank you!

VELVETEEN RABBIT: That was great!

JACK-IN-THE-BOX: It was, wasn't it? Oh, I can't wait until the master sees me now. I'm off to show him! Thanks again! (*Bounces offstage.*)

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I hope the master likes Jack-in-the-box better now. Maybe he'll even get to be "real."

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