

# ***Bud, Not Buddy***

## **A Reader's Theater Script**

Excerpted from the book by Christopher Paul Curtis, published by Delacorte, New York, ©1999

Story © 1997, Christopher Paul Curtis. This script may be freely copied, shared, and performed for any noncommercial purpose, except it may not be posted online without permission.

**BOOK SUMMARY:** Ten-year-old Bud, a motherless boy living in Flint, Michigan, during the Great Depression, escapes a bad foster home and sets out in search of the man he believes to be his father – the renowned bandleader, H.E. Calloway of Grand Rapids.

**EXCERPT SUMMARY:** Bud goes to the Public Library to seek the help and advice of Miss Hill, a librarian. He learns she has married and moved away.

**READER AGES:** grades 5-8

**LENGTH:**

NARRATOR 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 – these may be combined or broken apart to add more reading roles

LIBRARIAN

BUD

---

NARRATOR 1: I pushed the heavy door open and walked into the library.

NARRATOR 2: The air in the library isn't like the air anywhere else. First it's always cooler than the air outside. It feels like you're walking into a cellar on a hot July day, even if you have to walk up a bunch of stairs to get into it.

NARRATOR 3: The next thing about the air in the library is that no other place smells anything like it. If you close your eyes and try to pick out what it is that you're sniffing, you're only going to get confused, because all the smells have blended together and turned themselves into a different one.

NARRATOR 3: As soon as I got into the library I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. I got a whiff of the leather on all the old books, a smell that got real strong if you picked one of them up and stuck your nose real close to it when you turned the pages.

Narrator 4: Then there was the smell of the cloth that covered the brand-new books, the books that made a splitting sound when you opened them.

NARRATOR 5: Then I could sniff the paper, that soft, powdery, drowsy smell that comes off the pages in little puffs when you're reading something or looking at some pictures, a kind of hypnotizing smell.

NARRATOR 6: I think it's that smell that makes so many folks fall asleep in the library. You'll see someone turn a page and you can imagine a puff of page powder coming up really slow and easy until it starts piling on the person's eyelashes.

NARRATOR 1: It weighs their eyes down so much that they stay down a little longer after each blink and finally makes them so heavy that they just don't come back up at all. Then their mouths come open and their heads start bouncing up and down like they're bobbing in a big tub of water for apples. Before you know it, ...woop, zoop, sloop...they're out cold and their face thunks down smack-dab on the book.

NARRATOR 2: That's the part that gets the librarians the maddest. They get real upset if folks start drooling in the books and, page powder or not, they don't want to hear no excuses, you gotta get out. Drooling in the books is even worse than laughing out loud in the library.

NARRATOR 3: Even though it might seem kind of mean, you can't really blame the librarians for tossing drooly folks out. We all know there's nothing worse than opening a book and having the pages all stuck together from somebody's dried-up slobber.

NARRATOR 4: I opened my eyes to start looking for Miss Hill. She wasn't at the lending desk so I left my suitcase with the white lady there. I knew it would be safe. I walked between the stacks to see if Miss Hill was putting books up. I went back up to the librarian at the lending desk. I waited until she looked up at me. She smiled.

LIBRARIAN: Yes? Would you like to retrieve your suitcase?

BUD: Not yet, ma'am. Could I ask you a question?

LIBRARIAN: Of course, young man. How may I help you?

BUD: I'm looking for Miss Hill.

LIBRARIAN: (surprised) Miss Hill? My goodness, hadn't you heard?

ALL NARRATORS: Uh-oh!

NARRATOR 5: That's Number 16 of Bud Caldwell's Rules and Things for Having a Funner Life and Making a Better Liar Out of Yourself, and it's one of the worst ones.

NARRATOR 6:                    RULES AND THINGS NUMBER 16  
                                  If a Grown-up Ever Starts a Sentence by Saying  
                                  "Haven't You Heard," Get Ready, 'Cause  
                                  What's About to Come Out of Their Mouth Is Gonna  
                                  Drop You Headfirst into a Boiling Tragedy.

NARRATOR 1: It seems like the answer to 'Haven't you heard' always has something to do with someone kicking the bucket. And not kicking the bucket in a clam, peaceful way like a heart attack at home in bed either, it usually is some kind of dying that will make your eyes buck out of your head when you hear about it. It's usually the kind of thing that will run you out of a room with your hands over your ears and your mouth wide open.

NARRATOR 2: Something like hearing that your grandmother got her whole body pulled through the wringer on a washing machine, or something like hearing about a horse slipping on the ice and landing on some kid you went to school with.

BUD: No, ma'am.

LIBRARIAN: There's no need for you to look so stricken. It's not bad news, young man. (quiet "librarian-type" laugh) Really, it's not bad news. Unless you had matrimonial plans concerning Miss Hill.

BUD: (confused) No, ma'am, I didn't plan that at all.

LIBRARIAN: (quiet laugh again) Good, because I don't think her new husband would appreciate the competition. Charlemae...Miss Hill is

currently living in Chicago, Illinois.

BUD: Husband? You mean she got married, Ma'am?

LIBRARIAN: Oh, yes, and I must tell you, she was radiating happiness.

BUD: And she moved all the way to Chicago?

LIBRARIAN: That's right, but Chicago isn't that far. Here, I'll show you in this atlas. (pause) Here we are. We're here in Flint, Michigan. And Chicago is here in Illinois.

BUD: How long would it take someone to walk that far?

LIBRARIAN: Oh, dear, quite a while, I'm afraid. Let's check the distance. (pause) OK, this is how one figures the amount of time required to walk to Chicago. (pause) Aha, it says in this book that the average male human gait is five miles an hour. OK, assuming that you could cover five miles an hour, all we have to do is divide two hundred seventy by five. (pause) Fifty-four hours! Much too long to be practical. No, I'm afraid you'll simply have to wait until Mrs. Rollins comes back to Flint for a visit.

NARRATOR 3: Shucks. Chicago might as well be a million miles away from Flint and Miss Hill might as well be a squashed, crunched-up mess in a washing machine when it came down to helping me now. I thanked the librarian for the bad news and went to sit at one of the big heavy tables so I could think what to do next.

NARRATOR 4: Going back to the Home was out. It used to be that we'd get a new kid every once in a while, but lately it seems like there's a couple of new kids every day, mostly babies, and they're most always sick.

NARRATOR 5: It's not like it was when I first got there, shucks, half the folks that run it don't even tell you their name and don't remember yours unless you're in trouble all the time or getting ready to move out.

NARRATOR 6: After while I got my suitcase and...

NARRATOR 1: ...walked into the regular air and...

NARRATOR 2: ...stinking smells of Flint.

NARRATOR 3: That library door closing after I walked out...

NARRATOR 4: ...was the exact kind of door Momma had told me about.

NARRATOR 5: I knew that since it had closed...

ALL NARRATORS: ...the next one was about to open.