



**Dwight Watson**

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**BIG DOG PUBLISHING**  
**P.O. Box 1401**  
**Rapid City, SD 57709**

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*This play is dedicated to Jamie  
with special remembrances  
of Robert C. and Betty Ritchie*

**Dapple Gray** was first produced at Wabash College, Crawfordsville, IN: Kaizaad Navroze Kotwal, production stage manager; Rob Hartz, scene design; and Laura Conners, costume design.

**PARALEE MARCH:** Jamie Ritchie Watson

**CATHERINE MARCH-WRIGHT:** Dana Warner Fisher

**CHARLES MARCH, JR:** Brian W. Buckley

Dapple Gray

## Dapple Gray

Selected play, American Theatre of Actors Director's Festival, 2002  
Winner, Actor and Playwrights' Initiative Playfest, 1994

**COMEDY/DRAMA.** After numerous therapy sessions, Catherine and Charles have finally figured out the reason for their horrible headaches—their mother Paralee! But how can they delicately tell their mother that she is the cause of their migraines? Why, organize a family picnic, of course! At the picnic, Catherine and Charles try to find the perfect moment to tell Paralee that her meddling ways have got to stop, but with Paralee's gift for gab, it's hard to get a word in edgewise.

**Performance Time:** Approximately 75-90 minutes.

## Characters

(1 M, 2 F)

**PARALEE MARCH:** Graying widow; moves with determination and speaks with unreserved confidence; looks like she spends plenty of time in local craft shops; wears a sweatshirt with a mallard duck stenciled on the front and a pair of sweatpants the color of dyed Easter eggs.

**CATHERINE MARCH-WRIGHT:** Paralee's daughter and a new mother; wears a flowered print jumper.

**CHARLES MARCH, JR.:** Paralee's unmarried son who works as a clerk at a local hardware store.

## Setting

The present. A park, late spring. A wooden picnic table is located near a few trees. A tree stump sits several feet away from the table. A grassy area circles the table and stump, and the first flowers of the season are popping up.

## Synopsis of Scenes

**ACT I:** A park on a bright sunny day.

**ACT II:** The park, a few minutes later.

## Props

Golf ball	Knife
Baby carriage	Fake tree
Picnic table	Bowl of dip
Diaper bag	Magazine article
Tablecloth	Purse, for Catherine
Baby doll	Napkin
Baby blankets	Tree stump
Picnic basket	Mustard
Cooler	Park bench
Thermos	2 Shopping bags
Shoulder bag with a mallard stenciled on the side	Container of Wet Wipes
Paper plates	Ragged stuffed gray pony
Silverware	Bowl of potato salad
Bag of potato chips	Gaudy fake flower arrangement
Bottle of pickles	Bottle of aspirin
Carrots	Bottle of Tylenol
Celery	Framed photo decorated with Campbell's Soup labels
Relish tray	

## Sound Effects

Baby crying  
Car horn



Dapple Gray

"There's pain in  
Daddy's stories,  
and relief  
in our mother's lies."

— Charles

## Act i

*(AT RISE: A park on a bright sunny day. The park is peaceful and clean. The quiet is interrupted by the sudden appearance of a golf ball, which bounces onto the picnic area, rolls, and then stops near the table. Catherine enters from the opposite direction of the golf ball. She is pushing a baby carriage with her child sleeping inside. Dressed neatly in a flowered print jumper, she stops at the table and places the diaper bag on the bench and a folded tablecloth on the table. She searches for a shady place to leave the baby carriage. She decides on a spot, and then lifts the sleeping child from the carriage. The baby is rapped tightly in blankets. Caressing the child, she moves past the stump and studies the landscape. She has strong memories of this place—strong memories and impressions which light up her eyes, and eventually, force her to speak.)*

CATHERINE: *(To baby.)* On the other side of that hill, past the grove of trees, is a cemetery. Yes. The cemetery begins where the city park ends. Your granddaddy, Charlie March, is buried there. You didn't know that? Well, it's true. Your granddaddy, Charlie March, would have liked you. Look carefully. From here you can see the tops of a few grave markers. *(Strolls slowly in the other direction.)* At the other end of the park is the YWCA, where we had our high school dances. When I was 16—a sophomore—I left a "Y" dance with Walter Scott. Don't ever tell your father. He might not understand. Besides, there are things that only you and I need to share. Walter was the high school basketball star. Your granddaddy used to love to watch him play. I used to love to just watch him. *(Walks back to the carriage.)* Basketball was everything to Walter Scott. A metaphor for his life. He didn't walk or talk—he dribbled. *(Lays the sleeping child in the carriage and covers her with blankets, then moves to the table and begins to unfold the tablecloth.)* Walter lured me away from the dance of the Young Women's Christian Association. We made our way past that grove of

trees, and there we lay down in the autumn leaves on the fringes of granddaddy's cemetery. And on that patch of earth, which has long since been turned over to the resting place of someone—someone I never knew—Walter kissed me.

PARALEE: *(From offstage, piercing the mood.)* Katydid!

*(Catherine rushes to adjust the infant's blanket.)*

CATHERINE: *(To baby.)* Shhhh.

PARALEE: *(Offstage.)* Katydid!

CATHERINE: *(To baby.)* Here comes your grandmother. Not a word.

PARALEE: *(Offstage.)* Katydid! Katydid!

CATHERINE: *(Waving.)* Here, Mother. We're over here.

PARALEE: *(Offstage.)* Yes, I see you now. I've got the picnic basket and everything else out of the car, Katydid. There's no need for you to make another trip. *(Paralee enters. Always the mother, she moves with determination and speaks with unreserved confidence. She is by no means slow, but at the moment, she is somewhat overheated. Paralee is the picture of a graying woman who spends plenty of time in local craft shops. A mallard duck is stenciled on the front of her sweatshirt; her sweatpants are the color of dyed Easter eggs. Burdened by a picnic basket, cooler, thermos, and shoulder bag—with a stenciled image of a mallard on the side—she stops a few feet from Catherine.)*

Whew! Well, don't just stand there! Give me a hand!

CATHERINE: Oh, I'm sorry. *(Takes the picnic basket, cooler, and thermos, and places them on the table.)*

PARALEE: *(Irritably.)* You know, Katydid, there are picnic tables right next to the parking lot.

CATHERINE: Yes, I know.

PARALEE: We could've backed the car right up to one of those tables, opened the trunk, and kept half of this junk in the trunk.

CATHERINE: That's too easy. March family picnics are rare. So when we decide to have one, we must carefully consider the spot.

*(Catherine begins unpacking the basket—paper plates, utensils, potato chips, pickles, etc. Paralee looks around.)*

PARALEE: If you say so. I haven't been on a picnic in this park in well over 25 years. Since you were just a little girl, Katydid.

CATHERINE: Where's Grandma March?

*(Paralee points off SL and then sits on the bench.)*

PARALEE: In my car. Let me catch my breath, and I'll go back after her.

CATHERINE: Is she still sleeping?

PARALEE: *(Exasperated.)* Yes, child. She's been asleep since we left the house. Her lungs were working so hard—she was snoring so heavy and sucking up all the air in the car, I felt if we didn't get here soon, we'd both die from lack of oxygen.

CATHERINE: Maybe she's better off resting, Mother. Are the windows rolled down? *(Moves to the baby carriage.)*

PARALEE: All the way.

CATHERINE: Well, in that case, don't bother her. Let her rest.

PARALEE: Do you think it's safe?

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**