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Corn Picker Safety Starts At Home

Mary Dean Williams
CORN PICKER SAFETY STARTS AT HOME

A Skit for Program Use at Rural Meetings.

Prepared by
The Indiana Farm Safety Council
In Cooperation with
Purdue University
Agricultural Extension Service
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A skit for program use at rural meetings. Can be read as unrehersed play.

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By

Mary Dean Williams, Women's Editor
INDIANA FARMERS GUIDE

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READING TIME: About 15 minutes. (Three acts.)

PLAYERS: The skit can be presented by men and women, or by women alone.

(Women can portray the masculine roles by lowering voices, wearing straw hats, etc.) It is suggested that parts be assigned for reading with vocal characteristics in mind.

CHARACTERS:
Mother (Ruth) -- an average farm homemaker.
Daddy (John) -- busy farmer.
Fred -- Sophomore at state "ag" school, home for week-end.
Jane -- Junior in high school.
Bobby -- 4-H boy of twelve.

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ACT ONE

SCENE: Living room of modern farm home. TIME: 9:30 on a Friday night.

MOTHER: Good for you, Jane. I'm glad you turned off the TV. We've had enough television for tonight.

JANE: It was a good program though, wasn't it? I believe daddy would have liked that better than the one last week, don't you?
MOTHER: Yes, I think so. It's one of his favorite programs.

FRED: Then why did he shove off so early tonight? I had something I wanted to talk over with him.

MOTHER: Because corn picking season is here and he needs all the rest he can get. Besides all the hard work, he's had a lot of worries lately too.

BOBBY: What do you mean, worries?

MOTHER: Well for one thing, we're all wondering what will be best for grandma when she is released from the hospital. She shouldn't be alone on the homestead. Then when the corn picker broke down today....

FRED: (interrupting) Is it going to act up again this year?

MOTHER: Sure hope not, but he said it wasn't a very good start. Having a breakdown the very first day, and the season just beginning.... well, that was probably the last straw! Let's all talk quietly and hope he gets a good night's rest.

JANE: Well, I for one have plenty to talk about. You know who asked me today for a date for the fall dance at school?

BOBBY: Now do tell! (aside) As if she wouldn't, without being asked!

JANE: Well, since you're so eager to hear -- none other than Dave Smith! And he's really hep! Mother, I'll simply have to get a new formal.

MOTHER: Another formal?
JANE: Of course! Why he could have taken any of the girls, absolutely any one -- but he asked me. I'll sure have to look sharp this time so he'll ask me for another date. You know (dreamily), he really is divine!

MOTHER: Well, I'm glad you have such an exciting date for the dance, Jane.

JANE: It's exciting alright. But I can't decide what color formal I want.

MOTHER: Now, Jane, I'm sure we can change your spring formal some way so it will look sharp enough for your handsome date. Let's look at a fashion magazine right now for ideas.

JANE: Oh mother, this is the first dance of the year!

MOTHER: I know, but you see daddy said this evening that the repairs on the old corn picker just about broke him. He said he must be saving for new machinery.

JANE: Oh, machinery again! Why I'm sure if daddy just knew about my date, he'd want me to have a new formal. He always says I'm his favorite daughter, being the only one.

MOTHER: Of course he'd want you to have it, but wanting to provide things and being able is not always the same thing. Repairs do cost a lot you know.

JANE: Can I help it if the old corn picker has to have repairs? Sometimes I wish my daddy worked on a production line! Maybe then I could have clothes like Nancy, the new girl. Her daddy works in town.

BOBBY: Well, Jane, you and your old production line can do without me! I'm sure glad we live on a farm. If we didn't, I couldn't have a 4-H steer.

MOTHER: You've done well with your livestock project, Bobby.
FRED: I'll bet he has grand champion at the Fair next year.

BOBBY: I'm not kicking about what I did this year! Being named reserve champ wasn't hard to take! Say, today I heard of a good chance to get another steer. Hope daddy wants to get it.

JANE: (sarcastically) Don't forget we're farmers and must have machinery!

BOBBY: Jane, what's your trouble? That is, besides wishing for dates. You're crazy to think there is any better place to live than on the farm.

FRED: Well, I suppose my opinion about life on the farm should be worth something. Don't forget that I got some good ideas in a course last semester.

BOBBY: You're not likely to let us forget that you're learning a lot at Purdue. I just wish I was old enough to go there too!

FRED: You will be —— just keep growing. And believe me, I've learned enough to know that the farmer who keeps his farming methods up to date can have the best life of all.

JANE: That is a matter of opinion.

FRED: Well, that's my opinion. But it does take know-how, and plenty of capital. (In a very superior voice) Guess I'd have to agree with mother that high school girls should go a little easy when it comes to demanding new clothes for every kid party!

JANE: Kid party! 'Well, I like that? (very sarcastically) Do you recall Mr. Smarty, that only two years ago when you took Sally Newcomer to this same high school dance that you insisted her corsage must be an orchid? Kid party!

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BOBBY: (gleefully) Gee, that's right. I remember about that.

FRED: Well, call it a high-school prom. It still takes money.

JANE: And how about a little more economy from you? Didn't I hear you ask daddy for an advance on your next month's allowance when you first got home? If my "kid" memory serves me right, I seem to remember you were going to get a part-time job after your first year.

FRED: Yes, I did plan to do that but seems I just don't get around to it.

JANE: I didn't think I'd heard much about it lately.

MOTHER: Now come, come, children. Let's talk about something else besides money. Those things may look pretty big to you, but they are not real worries. Some day you'll realize that daddy and I have problems much greater -- really, money can't solve everything.

JANE: If you're thinking about grandma, I'm sure she'll want to go back home and live alone.

MOTHER: Sure she'll want to, but she isn't able. Yet we want her to be as happy as she can. Worries like that just nag at your subconscious mind. I know it has been in your daddy's thoughts a lot lately.

FRED: He said something to me this evening about having another worry, but he didn't get to finish his story -- something about the farm, I think. What did he mean?
MOTHER: Oh, that new man, the one that bought the old Jones place, called and started haggling over the line-fence location. No wonder your daddy has looked tired and worried lately. I guess he is wondering what will happen next!

JANE: So am I .... hope it will be a phone call from Dave!

MOTHER: Now that proves we don't all have the same problems! But really, we must remember that our own troubles aren't the only ones in the world - or the most important.

JANE: Well, why don't we drown our troubles with cokes? C'mon boys, I'm hungry. We may raid the ice-box, mother.

MOTHER: Okay, help yourself. (reflectively, after the young people leave the room). Wish I hadn't started thinking about all our problems again. I'm glad John did go on to bed .... he's tired enough that maybe he can sleep .... that's one way to forget worries for awhile. My .... I hope I can persuade Jane to forget that new formal without too much disappointment. I'm glad Fred is getting the right perspective on country life. I know John will want to help Bobby swing his new livestock deal, but don't see how he can right now .... know he'll worry about it too if he has to refuse. He does try so hard to see that we all have what we need and want ... I guess sometimes he tries too hard. Oh, I forgot to shorten the sleeve of his new work shirt and the rest are all in the wash. Of course those shirts may shrink a little too ...... think I'll call it a day.

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END OF ACT ONE

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ACT TWO

SCENE: Breakfast table the next morning.

DADDY: Say, Ruth, I put on one of those new work shirts this morning. Everything else was in the wash. This sleeve might be a little long, but I'll get by. And those shirts might shrink some too.

MOTHER: Whatever you think. I meant to shorten them yesterday, but didn't get to it. If you try this and it seems too long, than I'll shorten the others. (Mother goes to kitchen)

JANE: (watching her chance to put in a few words while mother is gone) Speaking of clothes, daddy, I'll just die if I don't have a new dress for the fall dance next week. Dave Smith asked me to go with him and that calls for a new formal.

DADDY: A new formal! Why it couldn't have been longer back than last spring when we had this same talk, my favorite daughter!

JANE: (tragically) Spring ... of course! That's the whole point.

BOBBY: Must be quite a point, daddy, from that tone.

JANE: But of course! Who ever wore a spring formal to a fall dance? Only somebody who had the misfortune to live on a farm.

BOBBY: There she goes again, running down farm life. Say dad, I heard yesterday where we could buy a steer that would give me another chance at the championship next year. S'pose we can swing it? I'm a good investment, you know.

DADDY: Oh, I know that alright, but things are pretty tight right now. Let me think about some of these things today... maybe I can think of a way to make both of you happy. -7-
JANE: Gee, daddy, you're swell!

DADDY: As for me, I'll be happy if that corn picker holds out without more repairs. Do want to get off to a fast start this year. Yesterday was anything but that! Fred, old boy, you're awfully quiet this morning -- or is it just because the others didn't give you a chance?

FRED: To tell the truth, you went to bed so early last night I didn't have a chance to tell you about something that is on my mind. Let's take a break this morning and I'll tell you about the chance I've had to go halvers on an old jalopy.

MOTHER: (reentering the room) You still here boys? I guess Jane is the only one with a light appetite. Pass the pancakes to your daddy, Bobby. Should I make any more?

BOBBY: Not for me, mother, and I'm usually last to quit.

MOTHER: Say, John, have you come to any opinion about what is best for grandma? What must I tell Aunt Bessie if she calls?

DADDY: I wish I knew Ruth. She can't go back to the home place now, and I don't know what would be best for all concerned. What do you think?

MOTHER: I'm sure I don't know what to think? She's your mother ... you'll just have to decide on something, I guess, but I know that isn't easy to do. Oh, you're through eating? Don't you want the rest of your breakfast?

DADDY: No, I guess I'd better get to work. Want to put on some speed today to make up for yesterday. And besides ... I have a lot of thinking to do as I make the rounds. Better get at it. See you later, Ruth, Come on, Fred.

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END OF ACT TWO
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ACT THREE

SCENE: Living Room  TIME: Evening of the same day.

JANE: (Racing to phone as it rings) Mother? Oh, I'm so glad it's you. What about Daddy? (pause) What did you say? (pause) Yes, the boys are both here — we were waiting for you to call. You'll be home right away? We'll see you then...goodby. (TO BOYS) It's good news — daddy won't lose his arm, mother says.

FRED: Whew, what a relief! And what a day this has been! But if it comes out right, I'll never complain.

JANE: It certainly was lucky, Fred, that you were near.

FRED: Yes it was, for lots of fellows have lost hands, in less time than he was in the picker.

BOBBY: Just what did happen?

FRED: The husking rolls got clogged. Dad started to brush some of the shucks away to locate the trouble and his hand was caught before he realized what had happened.

JANE: You know I always thought daddy was so careful around machinery.

FRED: He thought he was being pretty careful... he thought those rolls were so close together that he couldn't possibly get caught between them.

BOBBY: Course he was in a hurry too. I remember he said at breakfast that he wanted to get off to a fast start today.

FRED: Yes, if he hadn't been in a hurry he probably would have shut off the picker. He thought he'd get by that one time. Then too, I expect he was trying to solve all our problems. You know the...
experts say that emotional factors have more to do with accidents than we realize. You see ......

JANE: (interrupting) You don't need to explain it to me. I know what you mean.

FRED: You're okay, Jane.

JANE: When they called me at school and told me that you and mother were taking daddy to the hospital, I kept hearing over and over in my mind what daddy said last spring.

BOBBY: What was that, Jane?

JANE: He said, "listen, Janie .... if a new formal is so important for this dance, why I expect your old dad will find a way" (her voice breaks). I guess he would have found a way to solve all our problems even if it did interfere with his work.

FRED: Yes, he always manged to see that we had the things we should have, and I guess alot of times it hasn't been easy.

JANE: Funny, how some things don't seem as important as they did when a really big worry comes along. If daddy can only use his arm, I'll never complain again about what I can't have. And Dave Smith can ask somebody else if he doesn't like what I wear! Gee, I wish mother would come.

FRED: There's the car now.

BOBBY: Wish I didn't want that steer so much ... but I do, and can't help it. Here's mother.

MOTHER: (sinks into chair, then begins) Well, children, it could have been much worse. Fred probably told you that after we got him to the hospital we had a long wait . while he was in the emergency room.

JANE: I'll bet that seemed like a long time.
MOTHER: Indeed it did. For awhile it looked mighty bad, but now it seems more hopeful — only time will tell. We certainly will have much to be thankful for if daddy isn't handicapped too much because of this accident.

FRED: You kept worrying because you hadn't shortened the sleeve, mother. What did you find out about that?

MOTHER: He said he should have shut off the power before trying to unclog the picker. Said it all happened so fast he couldn't say about the sleeve, but said that if he had shut off the power, there would have been no accident.

FRED: Well, I'm sure that relieved you.

MOTHER: Yes, and while I waited there, I did some serious thinking about accidents. I remembered that time when Jane was a baby and was so seriously ill, and I upset a kettle of boiling water and was so badly burned — I still have scars from that accident; then there was the time I fell down the back steps... that time I was worried half to death about meeting our bills, for it had been a poor crop season.

FRED: You probably were thinking more about that than about the steps.

MOTHER: I'm sure I was. And I could think of several other bad accidents and remember that there were similar circumstances. All these things came to me as I tried to understand why your daddy would have a corn picker accident like this. Now I think I know.

JANE: Go on, mother,

MOTHER: First of all, there was yesterday's delay. Even though it might have taken only a little more time to have turned off the power before trying to unclog the picker, he felt hurried and just didn't do it.
BOBBY: See, I told you kids he said he was in a hurry!

MOTHER: Yes, Bobby, he was in a hurry, but I think there was another reason why he didn't shut off the picker.

JANE: What do you mean, mother?

MOTHER: Most of all, I think that because your daddy is such a good family man that his mind wasn't even on what he was doing. He was thinking about all of our problems.

FRED: Before you got home we were talking about how many we gave him to solve this morning. Guess we didn't realize it then.

MOTHER: I'm sure you didn't. But with all those things on his mind, he did what came naturally when the picker clogged. "The emotional factor" they call it.

FRED: And they said it accounts for more accidents than we realize.

MOTHER: I'm glad you're all so understanding. You can help me try to keep our home life on an even keel and lift some of daddy's burdens ... not only in corn picking season, but all the time.

JANE: We'll try to help. (FRED and BOBBY nod agreement.)

MOTHER: Maybe this experience will prove the truth of a slogan I thought of on the way home from the hospital this evening: "CORN PICKER SAFETY STARTS AT HOME."