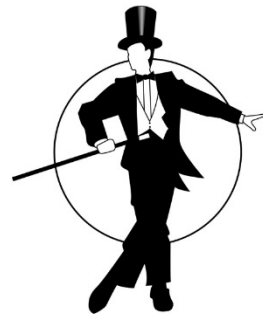


Thief!

Allan Bates



ArtAge
Publications



ArtAge supplies books, plays, and materials to older performers around the world. Directors and actors have come to rely on our 30+ years of experience in the field to help them find useful materials and information that makes their productions stimulating, fun, and entertaining.

ArtAge's unique program has been featured in *Wall Street Journal*, *LA Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *American Theatre*, *Time Magazine*, *Modern Maturity*, on CNN, NBC, and in many other media sources.

ArtAge is more than a catalog. We also supply information, news, and trends on our top-rated website, www.seniortheatre.com. We stay in touch with the field with our very popular e-newsletter, *Senior Theatre Online*. Our President, Bonnie Vorenberg, is asked to speak at conferences and present workshops that supplement her writing and consulting efforts. We're here to help you be successful in Senior Theatre!

We help older performers fulfill their theatrical dreams!

ArtAge Publications

Bonnie L. Vorenberg, President

PO Box 19955

Portland OR 97280

503-246-3000 or 800-858-4998

bonniev@seniortheatre.com

www.seniortheatre.com

NOTICE

Copyright: This play is fully protected under the Copyright Laws of the United States of America, Canada, and all other countries of the Universal Copyright Convention.

The laws are specific regarding the piracy of copyrighted materials. Sharing the material with other organizations or persons is prohibited. Unlawful use of a playwright's work deprives the creator of his or her rightful income.

Cast Copies: Performance cast copies are required for each actor, director, stage manager, lighting and sound crew leader.

Changes to Script: Plays must be performed as written. Any alterations, additions, or deletions to the text must be approved.

Permission to Film: You do not have permission to film, record, or distribute the play in any medium. You are also not allowed to post on electronic services such as, but not limited to, YouTube. Exceptions must be granted by written permission from the publisher.

Royalty: Royalties are due when you perform the play for any audience, paying or non-paying, professional or amateur. This includes readings, cuttings, scenes, and excerpts.

The royalty for amateur productions of this show is posted online. It is payable two weeks prior to your production. Contact us for professional rates or other questions. Royalty fees are subject to change.

Insert the following paragraph in your programs:

*Performed with special permission from ArtAge Publications' Senior Theatre
Resource Center at 800-858-4998, www.seniortheatre.com*

Thief! © 2015 by Allan Bates

THIEF!

By Allan Bates

CAST

THIEF: College student-age male, doesn't look like a thug, sniffles, and sneezes occasionally.

ROBERTA: 60s or older, sage, but slightly daft, wears a bathrobe.

THERESA: Her sister, somewhat like her.

HENRY: Their brother, rather dowdy.

Place

A family living room.

Time

The present. The middle of the night.

Production Notes:

The characters' daftness is a result of years of happy eccentricity, not a result of deteriorating mental ability.

THIEF!

At Rise: There are two rocking chairs on stage. HENRY and THERESA are rocking in them. At lights up, the actor playing HENRY addresses the audience:

HENRY: It's traditional in theatres these days for someone to come out on stage and tell the audience to turn off their cell phones. So, I'm here to tell you to turn off your cell phones. I'd like to add that before this play there's a pretty good blackout. That'd be a good time to reach over and kiss the person next to you if you want. But...you better make sure that person gives you a thumbs-up first. Wouldn't that be a good tradition to start in all theatres?

HENRY and THERESA blow kisses to the audience and move the rocking chairs from the stage, ideally, where they can still be seen throughout the play. They exit.

(Almost dark. (SOUND CUE: A slight noise of a window being opened) THIEF enters, turns on a flashlight and looks around. He goes to the chest, rummages in a drawer. Takes out assorted items including a tiny pitcher, tosses them aside. While rejecting the articles, he avoids making too much noise. Taking out a tray of silverware, he shines the flashlight on it. He crosses to set it on a chair when the silverware slips out of his hands and crashes to the floor. Turning, he jams his flashlight under his shirt and tries to hide. After a quiet moment, he gathers up the silverware.)

ROBERTA: *(offstage)* What's going on down there? Theresa, are you raiding the fridge again? Sis? Who's there? Some visitor? Some visitor entreating entrance at our chamber door? Some late visitor at our chamber door? *(Shouting)* You should check on that noise, Henry!

HENRY: *(offstage)* Can't. I gotta pee. It's the wind. Nothing more. Go back to bed.

ROBERTA: *(offstage)* Can't. I'm going down there.

(ROBERTA enters, carrying an improbable weapon, such as a hand-held mirror or a toilet brush, and a lighted flashlight. She wears a robe, and clearly has just come from bed. She shines the flashlight around. Seeing the THIEF, she shines the flashlight in his face. THIEF shines his flashlight on her. For an extended time, the action progresses through dueling flashlights.)

ROBERTA: Oh! Who are you? (*The THIEF tries not to look too scary. She is stern, not frantic.*) Just what are you up to, young man?

THIEF: Just...uh...Just uh...

ROBERTA: No you are not! Whatever you're trying to say, you're not "just uh" anything! You're a burglar! You're here to rob us.

THIEF: You're right. OK, you're right, I'm here to rob you. Put 'em up! I have a gun! (*He tries to look scary and fumbles through several pockets*)

THIEF: I said put 'em up!

ROBERTA: Put what up?

THIEF: Your hands, of course.

ROBERTA: My hands, of course. Of course I knew it was my hands. And of course that's the dumbest thing I ever heard. That's what the bad guys and cops say on TV when they can't think of anything else to say.

THIEF: Lady, this isn't TV. I have a gun. (*pulling out a gun*)

ROBERTA: Shoot if you must this old grey head.

THIEF: Of course I won't shoot you! Good Lord, woman. I'm here to rob you, not to kill you. I carry this gun because...because...

ROBERTA: Because what?

THIEF: Because...

Roberta turns on a dim light.

ROBERTA: Forget your "Because." You can't even—

THIEF: (*waving his gun*) See this? Look! This is a gun!

ROBERTA: "Shoot if you must this old grey head." Isn't that the most wonderful line of poetry? I read it years ago, and I've been wanting to use it ever since.

THIEF: Poetry? I didn't hear any poetry.

ROBERTA: Shoot if you must this old grey head! That's poetry! Pure poetry!

THIEF: I don't like poetry. Poetry makes me sick. Ever since third grade. O, Captain, my Captain, da dada, da dada, da dada, da dada. It just goes on and on.

ROBERTA: You've got to really listen to poetry. It doesn't just da dada da dada da dada. It...it....Listen to the whole line: "**Shoot** if you **must** this **old grey head**, but **spare** your **country's flag**, she **said**."

THIEF: I said I'm not going to shoot anyone, lady.

(THIEF puts the gun back in a different pocket)

ROBERTA: Don't like that one eh? You'll like this:
"**This** is the **forest** primeval, the **murmuring pines** and the **hemlocks**,
Bearded with **moss**, and in **garments green**..."

THIEF: Your bathrobe is orange, lady.

ROBERTA: Garments green is **not** my robe! I don't think you have **any** sensitivity to poetry. You're just an ignorant clob.

THIEF: I am **not** an ignorant clob. **Clod**. The word is clod. I'm a college student majoring in political science and getting pretty good grades, and I'm trying to earn a living by robbing people. Houses! I don't rob people! That's an entirely different line of work. I rob houses! I hate it when people come down from bed while I'm trying to rob them. To rob their houses! Do you know that the average college student graduates these days with more than twenty-five thousand in debt? Twenty-five thousand fu...! 'Scuse my French. Twenty-five-thousand-plus dollars in debt! Just think how many orange bathrobes that would buy.

ROBERTA: My robe is tangerine. Mistaking it for orange in this indistinct light is an honest mistake. "Indistinct in the twilight, **druids** of eld, with voices **sad** and **prophetic**..."

(ROBERTA turns up the lights full)

THIEF: Prophetic, for damn sure! If I can't pick up a few bucks robbing houses without ladies in orange bathrobes—

ROBERTA: Tangerine.

THIEF: Tangerine bathrobes coming to interfere, and if I can't find something here in your house worth more than these old knives and spoons, I'll go home—if they haven't already kicked me out of the dorm I call home because I'm way in debt there. Then I'll toss and turn the rest of the night worrying about my dorm fees and the eff-ing twenty-five-thousand-plus I'll owe before I get some crummy job like teaching school to kids, kids who just came from a poetry class and they're fed up to the ears with stuff they don't like and don't understand! And I'll be making a crummy salary that will never get me enough money to pay off my twenty-five thousand. Debt collectors or the government will be hounding me for the rest of my life while I'm trying to teach things the politicians want me to teach. Which will be about the elections that got them their high-paying jobs...or why we have nine Supreme Court justices and what the vice president does to earn his salary. Not my salary. His enormous salary.

ROBERTA: Or her salary. You aren't only a naughty thief, you're a male sexist fig!

THIEF: Pig. The word is pig. Male sexist pig. Really, lady, I'm a nice guy just trying to earn a living. If the vice president is a woman, a lady, even if she wears orange bathrobes—

ROBERTA: It's not a bathrobe. I'm not going to the bathroom. It's a night robe. Tangerine.

THIEF: Even if she wears tangerine. I'd vote for her.

ROBERTA: I'm certainly glad to hear that.

(ROBERTA starts to pick up a few items. She comes to the tiny pitcher.)

ROBERTA: Shoot!

(THIEF looks startled. ROBERTA notices.)

ROBERTA: I mean shucks. You broke the handle off of my cream pitcher.

THIEF: Oh. Sorry.

ROBERTA: Now would you please pick up the silverware and put it back where you found it? It's antique. Great Aunt Dorothea's personal silver setting. We could sell it anytime for hundreds of dollars if we wanted to.

THIEF: You could?

ROBERTA: Of course. Probably thousands. Now just pick it up before the rest of the family comes down. I told my brother I heard noise downstairs and he should check on it. He said he'd be right down just as soon as he went to the toilet.

THIEF: Lady, I'm getting out of here.

ROBERTA: You certainly are not! The moment you step out that door I'll call Sergeant Widowski who lives right across the street, and he'll arrest you immediately. Now you just pick up the silverware and put it back where it belongs.

(THIEF pulls the gun out of his pocket and brandishes it around)

THIEF: OK, lady, just give me your cell phone. I'm getting out of here.

ROBERTA: Cell phone? You think I have a cell phone? You go to the Kroger, and what do you see? Aisle after aisle of people who would just love to grab a package of pork chops and head straight home, but what do they do? They—

THIEF: Lady—

ROBERTA: They have to call their husband or their wife and ask, "Do you want center cut pork chops without bones or the ones with the bones?"

THIEF: Your cell phone, lady!

ROBERTA: Or they'll be in the middle of the baked bean aisle starting to reach for a can and the phone will ring, and after they answer it, they forget what they were supposed to get and pick out the wrong can, and the next thing you know, they have to go back to the store for the right can. Of beans!

THIEF: Then where's your landline?

ROBERTA: Landline. What's that?

THIEF: Your ordinary old phone! With a cord attached. It's called a landline!

ROBERTA: I don't call it a landline. I call it a telephone, and I won't show you where it is because you'd probably just yank out the cord. Don't think I haven't seen burglars on television!

THIEF: Thieves.

ROBERTA: Whatever. Then you'd take the phone with you and either sell it or throw it in the trash. And it's a perfectly good phone. Besides, the moment you step out that door I'm going to call 9-1-1, which is the police, and I'll call Sergeant Widowski too, and you'll be in really big trouble. Really, really big trouble. In the middle of a dark and gloomy night.

"The gloomy night is gath'ring fast,
Loud roars the wild inconstant blast;
Yon murky cloud is filled with rain,
I see it driving o'er the plain."

Would you like a cup of tea? I usually come down and drink a small cup when I wake up at night and can't sleep.

(THIEF puts his gun back in a pocket)

THIEF: No. No thanks. After I'm done here I'll need to get some sleep.

ROBERTA: It's herbal tea. I have quite a selection of very good herbal teas.

THIEF: Well...all right. A small cup of tea would taste good, thank you.

(ROBERTA exits. Quiet moment as THIEF looks out a window. Strange noise.)

THIEF: *(frantic)* What's that noise?

ROBERTA: *(offstage)* It's the microwave. I think we need a new one. I put the kettle on just in case.

THIEF: Oh. I thought it was maybe some sort of...Like a communication thing. You know.

ROBERTA: *(offstage)* Oh no, silly.

THIEF: Or a big dog sleeping in the kitchen.

ROBERTA: *(offstage)* How does Jasmine Dragon Phoenix Pearl sound?

THIEF: If that's the name of your dog, it sounds like a tiny mutt with a big bow on it that goes yip-yip-yip-yip and bites people on the ankles. So please keep it out of here.

ROBERTA: *(offstage)* That's the name of the tea.

THIEF: It sounds more dangerous than your dog. But I'll take a chance. The tea isn't chamomile, is it? You aren't trying to put me to sleep and then call the cops, are you?

ROBERT: *(calling offstage)* Henn-ry! *(no answer)* Henry! *(no answer)* Are you coming down? *(no answer)* If you don't come down right now, I'm coming up to get you.

HENRY: *(offstage)* What?

ROBERTA: *(off)* I said, if you don't come down right now, I'm coming up to get you. We have a burglar down here.

THIEF: Robber. A robber.

ROBERTA: *(offstage)* Sorry. A robber.

THIEF: Is this some trick to get me to sneak out of here before I finish my business?

(HENRY is still offstage. During all the shouting from offstage, THIEF is very nervous alone onstage.)

HENRY: *(offstage)* Oh yes. A robber. I forgot about him. I went back to bed.

THIEF: Would you mind calling me a thief instead of a robber? Robber sounds so much like Robin Hood. You know, so dramatic. I try to just do my work and go quietly home.

ROBERTA: *(offstage)* A thief. We have a thief down here.

HENRY: *(offstage)* Tell him to wait until I find my bathrobe. The blue one. Do you know where it is? It'll look better for company.

ROBERTA: *(offstage)* The blue one's in the laundry. Put on the green one. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks. Bearded with moss, and in garments green.

(ROBERTA sticks her head onstage)

ROBERTA: Oh, you should have seen Henry when he was younger, and Henry and Theresa and I went camping together. Usually with our church group. Henry was trying to grow a beard then. *(Calling)* Henry, would you like to go camping this weekend? I think I've found a young man who would carry our heavy tent for us. Seems like a nice young man, but he doesn't like poetry.

(ROBERTA exits again to the kitchen)

HENRY: *(offstage)* Doesn't like poetry! What kind of a cob is he?

THIEF: Clob. Clod!

ROBERTA: *(offstage)* We could teach him some poetry. Take along several of our favorite poetry books. *(ROBERTA pops back onstage)*

ROBERTA: Wordsworth! Wordsworth on the weekend in the woods. How lovely. Wordsworth wouldn't add too much weight to the backpack. *(to THIEF)* Are you free this weekend? Just imagine a lovely, peaceful stroll through the country. Then camping in a glen.

THIEF: I can't. I have a big exam on Monday.

ROBERTA: Just bring along your schoolbooks. We won't be reading poetry all weekend.

"I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils
Beside the lake, beneath..."
Oh, I do wish we lived closer to a lake!

(ROBERTA exits. HENRY enters.)

HENRY: We had a burglar here once before.

ROBERTA: *(offstage)* This boy isn't a burglar; he's a thief.

HENRY: Wasn't more than about fifteen years old. Turned out to be Sergeant Widowski's boy.

ROBERTA: (*offstage*) No, Henry, that was Officer Tobinski's boy. Remember? They lived right across the street from us and then they sold the house to Sergeant Widowski. But I don't think Sammy Widowski was a sergeant then.

HENRY: Are you sure? Or was it when the Sowinskis lived there in the Tobinski's house?

ROBERTA: (*offstage*) Might have been. I'll have to give Gladys Widowski a call and ask her.

THIEF: Where's your phone?

HENRY: Is this young man the burglar you're talking about?

THIEF: I am not a burglar!

HENRY: You came here to steal things, didn't you?

THIEF: Yes.

HENRY: Then you're a burglar...a thief.

THIEF: I am a thief. But I am not a burglar. Burglars break in and enter. Burglary is breaking in and entering with intent to steal. I have never broken anything when I entered a home. Never! And I never will. Do you see anything I broke?

ROBERTA: (*entering*) There's that small cream pitcher. You broke it.

THIEF: I'm sorry about that. But there was no intent involved in the breakage.

ROBERTA: I could have used the pitcher for the milk for your tea.

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!