

**THE LAST DAYS OF THE MORTEVILLE HISTORICAL
VILLAGE AND SHOPPE**

A comedy

by

Ron Burch

CHARACTERS (3M, 3W)

WELLS, a man in his early to mid 30s. Any race. Believes in the importance of this place. Of course, he has very little else in his life. Always tries to be positive.

BOB, a man in his 40s. Any race. Once dated Annie. Hates Annie.

ANNIE, a woman in her early 40s. Any race. Once dated Bob. Hates Bob.

PHILANDER, a bear of a man in his late 40s/early 50s. Any race. Doesn't have much to say and when he does, good luck figuring it out.

SAM, a woman in her late 20s/early 30s. Any race. New to the job. Hates job.

POLLY, a woman in her late 40s/early 50s. Any race. Free spirit. Believes in the historical lifestyle. Makes her own clothes. Prefers the "simple life."

LOCATION

The green room and grounds of the historical village near a small town.

TIME

Now and then.

NOTE

Part of the idea with this play is to make it an interactive experience. When the audience comes to the theatre, have the staff dressed in "historical clothing." Have a Shoppe area. Sell "Morteville Historical Village" t-shirts and other goods. Display pictures of the actors and the staff doing fun "historical" activities. In short, have fun with the concept and the play.

THE LAST DAYS OF THE MORTEVILLE HISTORICAL VILLAGE AND SHOPPE

ONE

Dark. A SPOTLIGHT lights up WELLS, a man in his early to mid 30s, dressed in historical garb.

WELLS

“ . . . And it was a cold winter the pioneers found themselves in, colder than any other winter they had known before . . . ”

SPOTLIGHT up on BOB, 40s, and ANNIE, 40s, also in historical clothing, who are “shivering” but not convincingly. For the roles in these little playlets, they should adopt “historical” voices.

ANNIE

I'm cold.

BOB

I'm colder.

WELLS

“And the settlers thought --”

BOB

We can survive this.

ANNIE

This is our new home.

They both now violently shiver; it's way over the top. Wells shakes his head.

WELLS

“But then Spring came.”

Bob and Annie react. They throw off “blankets” and welcome the sun.

BOB

I claim this land to be Morteville.

ANNIE

We will have many children here.

BOB

And grow crops and become farmers.

ANNIE

We will start a town where there never was one.

BOB

Over the endless fields and forests, the mighty, mighty forests that tower over all of us ...

(stepping forward)

... these forests of our people, of our state, of our nation --

ANNIE

(interrupting)

That will become fertile soil for farming.

BOB

And we will build our log cabin for our family.

ANNIE

All 17 of us. Even though I die horribly, painfully and bloody in childbirth.

BOB

And I remarry someone half my age. But that was the way. Of the frontier. The mighty frontier with its many dangers and threats --

Wells steps forward, interrupting

WELLS

So welcome to Morteville Historical Village! Where we do our best to explore the . . . inner lives of our historical characters. So enjoy yourselves where “history is of your making”

Spotlight down as they exit. Then lights up to reveal --

The “Green Room” of “Morteville Historical Village and Shoppe,” an historical restoration of an 18th-century village. The room contains a couple modern chairs, table, maybe a couch, a microwave, and whatever else fits. There’s also a small desk that belongs to Wells. A corkboard contains the job chart and other paperwork. There are two entrances/exits: one to the outside and one to the locker room/bathroom. The window faces the audience.

PHILANDER, a bear of a man in his late 40s/early 50s, sits at the table slowly eating his breakfast. WELLS enters. All of them wear historical clothing.

WELLS

(excited)

Morning, Philander. It’s going to be an awesome day. I was looking over the 1770 Court Records this morning and they got me all fired up.

Philander looks at Wells as he sits at his desk.

WELLS

Hell yeah!

Philander nods and goes back to his breakfast.

From off-stage we hear --

BOB (O.S.)

I don’t know what you’re talking about.

ANNIE (O.S.)

You know exactly what I’m talking about.

ANNIE follows BOB from the locker room.
They wear historical garb.

ANNIE

If you upstage me again, you prick, like you did at yesterday's show, I will shove a pitchfork up your ass.

BOB

I only upstaged you because, frankly, I'm better at this than you are.

ANNIE

Yeah, you're a better prick.

Wells stands.

WELLS

Whoa, whoa, whoa, calm down, you two. Annie, at work don't call Bob a prick. Outside of work, whatever you want.

ANNIE

Wells, I am tired of him thinking he's the only one who works here.

BOB

She always makes it personal.

WELLS

You weren't any better out there yesterday, Bob.

BOB

I thought I was pretty good out there. I had them during the mighty forest section --

WELLS

Bob, Annie, this is an historical village. We are here to educate them. Wear historically-accurate clothing. Show them how to how to milk a cow and what food our ancestors ate back when this town was young. Perform little shows to let them know how important and vital our history is. So just stick to the script and please don't do that in today's show.

ANNIE

All right, Wells, sorry. I just get caught up in the emotion of your script for some reason yesterday.

BOB

It's probably that your time of the --

ANNIE

Don't you say it.

BOB

Anyway, Wells, I was looking over that script last night. I have more changes that will really give it a punch.

WELLS

Is that what you're looking for, Bob, a punch?

BOB

(stepping back)

I have suggestions.

ANNIE

You always have suggestions: go faster, go slower, move your hips in a circle. That's why I dumped you.

BOB

You didn't dump me. I dumped you. You have to get over our bad break-up.

ANNIE

You had sex with another woman in the restroom while we were at a club.

BOB

I acknowledged that it was a bad break-up.

WELLS

Guys, calm down. We're already under enough scrutiny from Mr. Myers. He's really been keeping a close eye on us. I don't need you taking this out into the Historical Zone. We don't want a teacher complaining.

ANNIE

Don't worry, Wells. They like the shows.

BOB

Yesterday, two cute ones were watching me act.

ANNIE

Is that what you call it?

BOB

Out of all of us here, I am the one who performs with the Barn Door community theatre.

ANNIE

So?

BOB

So, I'm an actor and writer. Don't forget the rave review for my John Wilkes Booth one-man show.

ANNIE

It became a one-man show because you couldn't get anyone else to be in it. And your Mom's online review does not count as a "rave."

SAMANTHA, a woman in her late 20s/early 30s, enters. She wears contemporary clothes.

WELLS

Morning, Samantha. Everyone, this is Samantha. It's her first day.

Everyone says hello except Philander, who waves.

SAM

It's Sam.

ANNIE

Hi, Sam. I'm Annie. If you need anything at all, don't hesitate to ask.

SAM

Okay, thanks.

BOB

(slightly lascivious)

Same goes for me.

SAM

Uh huh.

WELLS

Sam's been in for the interviews and the "Getting To Know Your History" meeting so she's not completely at sea. Sam, any questions?

SAM

What time do I get to leave?

WELLS

Schedule's on the wall. Your first day is going to be so exciting you'll be all over social media bragging about it.

Sam looks at the schedule on the wall.

SAM

You gave me knitting?

WELLS

It's not knitting, Sam, it's the Spinning Jenny.

SAM

I thought I requested not to have knitting.

WELLS

I know but the schedule's tight right now. You'll love the Spinning Jenny.

SAM

Uh, no.

WELLS

Why not?

SAM

It's boring.

WELLS

No, it's tremendously exciting! The jenny was invented by James Hargreaves and the origin of the Jenny in the machine's name, it's thought, is that a daughter, or his wife, named Jenny knocked over one of their own spinning wheels. And it kept working as normal! Interestingly, the local church registers show that Hargreaves had several daughters, but none named Jenny and neither was his wife. So a more likely explanation of the name is that 'Jenny' is an abbreviation of 'engine'. Fascinating, right?

SAM
(she's texting)

Uh huh.

WELLS
I mean, knowing all that, who wouldn't want to spend all their time in the Spinning Room, getting to act out how life was lived in that time period?

SAM
I'm only here to work off my community service court order.

WELLS
I know but learning is fun. See how much fun you've had in your first few minutes even though you're serving time?

BOB
What'd you do to get sent to a place like this?

SAM
What did you?

(back to Wells)
Could I get something more fun, like, driving some horses in a bad ass carriage?

WELLS
We don't have a bad ass carriage.

SAM
If you had one, you'd probably get more people showing up.

WELLS
Actually, the media has lauded our efforts for documenting the town's entire history. Our Native American exhibits as well as the exhibits on our multi-racial, multi-ethnic communities have won national awards.

ANNIE
Wells did all that himself.

SAM
Oh boy.

WELLS

You should check out the press book. It's on the shelf next to the artificial sweetener if you want to see what has been said about us. "The Daily Currant" said we are a "must visit" and gave us four out of five currants. Only the stock car races get a higher rating.

SAM

Okay, so can you get someone else to do the Spinning Jenny? There must be others.

WELLS

Well, we're the paid staff in addition to Polly who must be on her way but our time is tight. We do have plenty of docents who help out for free.

BOB

But they're old and don't like to do anything except talk about their grandkids.

SAM

Okay, fine.

Sam goes toward the locker room.

WELLS

Make sure you stow all your "anachronistic devices" in your locker.

SAM

My what devices?

WELLS

You have your phone right there. You can't take it out in the "Historical Zone."

SAM

The where?

WELLS

Outside the Green Room here. We have to be historically accurate when we're out in the Village. It's one of the covenants. Any place outside this room is the "Historical Zone."

SAM

Why can't I listen to my headphones? No one else can hear it.

WELLS

Do you think they did that in the 1700s?

SAM

They would have if they had them.

WELLS

But they didn't.

SAM

Can I just keep my phone in my pocket and text?

WELLS

No.

SAM

Without anyone seeing?

WELLS

No.

SAM

What if I have the earphone inconspicuously wrapped around my ear?

WELLS

Sam, we have to present history exactly as it was. We must be authentic. I can't budge on that.

SAM

But why not?

WELLS

Because, historically, we're all "indentured servants," which is really quite fascinating --

SAM

Yeah, okay, whatever. Just not another lecture, please.

She exits.

WELLS

I think she's going to like it here. Okay, as soon as Polly arrives, we'll start the morning meeting.