



HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND THEN KILL THEM

BY HALLEY FEIFFER



DRAMATISTS
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HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND THEN KILL THEM

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The world premiere of HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND THEN KILL THEM was presented by Rattlestick Playwrights Theater (David Van Asselt, Artistic Director) on October 23, 2013. It was directed by Kip Fagan, the set designer was Andromache Chalfant, the costume designer was Jessica Pabst, the lighting designer was Tyler Micoleau, the sound designer was Daniel Kluger, and the production stage manager was Michael Denis. The cast was as follows:

ADA Katya Campbell
SAM Keira Keeley
DORRIE Jen Ponton

HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND THEN KILL THEM was developed, in part, with assistance from The Orchard Project, a program of The Exchange (www.exchangenyc.org)



HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND THEN KILL THEM was developed, in part, at SPACE on Ryder Farm.

CHARACTERS

ADA

Ages 10–29; played by one actress.
Beautiful, charismatic, alcoholic.
Wants to be an actress but her obsession
with alcohol holds her back.

SAM

Ages 9–28; played by one actress.
Ada's sister. Less beautiful than Ada;
plucky, strong-willed, whip-smart.
Wants to be a graphic novelist but her obsession
with her sister holds her back.

DORRIE

Ages 10–29; played by one actress.
Insecure, hugely self-conscious,
desperate to give and receive love.
Possessed of one of the purest hearts there is.
Her sole purpose is her devotion to Ada and Sam.

PLACE

Present day. A suburban American town
not far from New York City.

NOTES

The set should be spare and minimal. All design elements should have a neglected quality. Ellipses in the text indicate a character having a thought — they do not necessarily need to translate into significant pauses.

HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND THEN KILL THEM

Scene 1

Darkness. The voices of three girls scream “CHILDHOOD!!!” We hear a cheerful and heartwarming song like Randy Newman’s “You’ve Got a Friend in Me” playing, and then ... the sound of hands slapping against each other. Lights creep up on Ada and Sam — ten and nine years old — in their kitchen. They wear matching school uniforms. Ada’s skirt is rolled up higher than Sam’s. Ada wears a string of beads around her neck. Sam has a pencil tucked behind her ear. They play a hand game — very intensely, and very rapidly. They play it as if their lives depended on it. We see that the music is playing from a transistor radio on the kitchen counter. The room has two doors — one leading off to the rest of the house and one down to the cellar. The back wall of the kitchen is lined with shelves, which are filled with bottles of seemingly every kind of alcohol. Lying out on the kitchen table is a sketchbook and a pencil. After several rounds of the hand game, Sam messes up, and the game falls apart.*

ADA. You messed up, that was six.

SAM. I’m sorry, I thought it was five.

ADA. Yeah, I could see you did. *(Beat.)*

SAM. Do you want to play again...?

ADA. No. I don’t. *(Beat. Then — Ada uses a chair to get up and stand on the table.)* Can you turn off the radio and get the flashlight? I would like to practice my mon-o-logue. *(Sam nods; scurries*

* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page.

over to the radio, turns it off. She opens a cupboard and removes a large, unwieldy flashlight. Scurries back over to the table and squats down, shining the flashlight up on to Ada, as if it were a footlight on a stage.) Okay, say: “ ... and ... Action!”

SAM. ... and ... Action! (*Ada suddenly strikes a pose — twists her body into some sort of highly unnatural, dramatic position.*)

ADA. (*Performatively.*) I just ... can't help ... but think ... I am ... extremely ... beautiful. (*A beat. She changes her “blocking”: strikes a sort of sexy pose.*) Sometimes...? While brushing my teeth? Or picking a blackhead?? Out of my nose??? I'll step back, and look at my face in the mirror, and I'll see ... me...! (*She strikes a sort of modern dance-y pose.*) And I'm always ... so pleasantly ... surprised...! (*She strikes a sort of heroin-chic pose.*) Because I'm ... gorgeous. (*She holds her absurd pose. A beat. Then —*)

SAM. (*Applauding.*) Yaaaay...!

ADA. (*Hopping off the table.*) What did you think of the changes?

SAM. They're really strong.

ADA. I'm still working on it. (*Ada hops off the table. Sam turns off the flashlight, and looks at Ada, admiringly.*)

SAM. Can I draw you for a second?

ADA. Fine. But just for a second. I find posing for your drawings very boring. (*Sam beams, grabs her sketchbook off the table and her pencil from behind her ear, and hunkers down. Ada strikes a brand new dramatic pose. Sam begins to sketch her.*)

SAM. (*Sketching with incredible seriousness.*) You've always been so pretty, Ada.

ADA. I hate it when you tell me that, Sam.

SAM. I know, I know — I didn't forget. I just like telling you.

ADA. But I hate it *soooooo* much.

SAM. I know. (*Beat.*) But do you really? (*Beat. Ada considers ...*)

ADA. Sometimes I like it.

SAM. I thought so...!

ADA. I mean I like it when *other* people do it.

SAM. Oh.

ADA. But I don't really like it when *you* do it.

SAM. Yeah.

ADA. There's something really creepy about the way you say “soooooo pretty.”

SAM. Uh-huh ...

ADA. It's like you're a Frenchman trying to seduce me, or something.

SAM. (*Mortified.*) Totally. Yeah. (*Sam's eyes start to well up. She rubs her eyes, vigorously.*)

ADA. Are you okay?

SAM. My contact lenses are clouding up.

ADA. I told Mom you were too young to get contacts.

SAM. I'm just a year younger than you.

ADA. But mine are purely cosmetic. (*Ada begins practicing ballet moves. Doing a relevé.*) I like to fantasize about how one day? I'm not gonna have to be here, posing for your gay drawings.

SAM. (*Rubbing her eyes.*) Huh.

ADA. (*Doing a plié.*) I'm gonna be off at college, riding a bike and eating in the dining hall and having sex with my professors, et cetera.

SAM. (*Snorts.*) You're gonna be a slut.

ADA. (*Doing an arabesque; with great pride.*) Mm-hmmmmmm! (*Ada quits dancing, grabs a chair from the kitchen table and pushes it over to the shelves on the back wall; she stands on the chair and examines the bottles of alcohol. Sam continues to sketch her. Ada takes a shining blue bottle of gin off a shelf and turns it around in her hands, admiring it. She screws the top off the gin bottle and smells it.*)

SAM. What are you doing...?

ADA. I like the way it smells.

SAM. I think it smells terrible.

ADA. I think it smells like being an adult. (*She screws the top back on the gin bottle and places it back on the shelf.*)

SAM. (*Still sketching Ada.*) Hold still ...

ADA. Euuugh, stop drawing me — I can feel your beady little eyes boring a hole into my psychic en-er-gy. (*Sam puts down her sketchbook and pen, rubs her eyes.*)

SAM. Fine.

ADA. (*Turning to Sam.*) Will you bruise me so Mom will pay more attention to me?

SAM. Where do you want me to bruise you?

ADA. (*Rolling up the sleeve of her shirt.*) Here. On my arm.

SAM. How???

ADA. Just wrap your fingers around it and squeeze, really really tight.

SAM. (*Nervous.*) Okay ... (*She sticks the pencil behind her ear, wraps her fingers around Ada's arm, and squeezes, really tight.*)

ADA. Ooh. Thank you.

SAM. (*Squeezing Ada's arm as hard as she can.*) Is this good...?

ADA. (*Wincing a bit at the pain.*) Yes. Please stop asking me to val-

i-date you.

SAM. Sorry. (*She squeezes harder.*)

ADA. Ow! That's good. Stop. (*Sam releases her grip on Ada's arm. They look at it.*)

SAM. You think that'll bruise?

ADA. I hope so. (*Beat.*) Can you open the cellar door? For some vent-il-ation?

SAM. That doesn't make any sense.

ADA. Just *do* it. It's hot in here.

SAM. Fine. (*She opens the cellar door. It opens onto a dark, long, spooky-looking staircase.*)

ADA. Ahhhh. That's better.

SAM. (*Shudders.*) Ugggggh. I hate that spooky staircase. (*Sam sits back down, removes her pencil from behind her ear, and starts drawing something from her imagination.*)

ADA. What are you doing.

SAM. (*Distracted.*) ... what...?

ADA. WHAT ARE YOU DOING???

SAM. Oh! I'm ... drawing...?

ADA. What are you drawing.

SAM. Something ... from my imagination...?

ADA. Well stop.

SAM. Why?

ADA. 'Cause I'm bored!

SAM. Ada ...

ADA. (*Matter-of-factly.*) You can't *draw* stuff from your *imagination*, anyway. You can only draw stuff that's in *front* of you. If you draw stuff from your imagination, it always looks fake, and dumb. And fake.

SAM. P.F. Touchane draws stuff *only* from his imagination. He's the best artist in the world.

ADA. I don't even know who that is. (*Beat.*) Will you let me brush your hair?

SAM. Fine. (*Sam stops drawing. Ada opens up a drawer and removes a hairbrush. She moves behind Sam and starts to brush her hair. Sniffs the air.*) It smells like cigarettes in here ...

ADA. (*Matter-of-factly.*) I was smoking.

SAM. WHAT!??

ADA. (*With a nonchalant shrug.*) I tried it.

SAM. *WHEN!?!?!?*

ADA. When you were at softball practice. (*Beat.*)

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Left to their own devices by their alcoholic mother, Ada and Sam cultivate an insular world into which they soon draw a third wheel — a pockmarked, limping wallflower named Dorrie. In the years spanning childhood to young adulthood, these three troubled girls learn to lean on each other completely, finding ways to fill each other up and tear each other down. But when a horrible accident upends their reality, they find they must decide whether to continue to foster their codependent cycle, or to break free, with or without each other's aid.

"Feiffer is building a reputation for fearlessness, and it's on full display here."

—**The New York Times**

"Great stuff."

—**Time Out (New York)**

"If you're gonna go weird, you have to commit to it. Thank God for the warped creative mind of playwright/actress Halley Feiffer, who harnesses the weird to full, gory effect in HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND THEN KILL THEM, an uproarious and deeply unsettling ... dark comedy. This one embraces the weird and manages to make the audience squirm in gleeful horror."

—**TheaterMania.com**

Also by Halley Feiffer

I'M GONNA PRAY FOR YOU SO HARD

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