

GARY'S METAMORPHOSIS

By Greg Cummings

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SYNOPSIS: Gary is a procrastinator. A high school student who reads all required texts the day before the test. Last night he read Kafka's "The Metamorphosis." This morning he's a bug.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 2 males)

GARY (m) Teenager, procrastinator, “imaginative.”
 FATHER (m) Bemused, then begrudging, then
 frustrated, then resigned.
 MOTHER (f) Always doting, always cheery, trying for
 that perfect family.
 SISTER (f) Younger than GARY, sincerely just
 trying to understand things.

SETTING: The family kitchen.

TIME: The present. Breakfast, on a school day.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Though broadly comic, Gary's *Metamorphosis* addresses some of the basic themes of Kafka: the disconnect between mind and body, sympathy vs. revulsion, feeling imprisoned, and the notion that the absurd is taken for granted.

PROPS

- ☐ Megaphone or personal microphone
- ☐ Two backpacks
- ☐ Bowl of fruit with at least one apple
- ☐ Newspaper
- ☐ Book list inside Gary's backpack
- ☐ Two bowls of oatmeal
- ☐ Box of oatmeal
- ☐ Bowl of Lucky Charms
- ☐ Box of Lucky Charms
- ☐ Car horn (off stage sound effect)

SET

A kitchen table with four chairs.

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SETTING: *The family kitchen. Darkness.*

AT RISE: *We hear GARY'S voice, amplified (via personal microphone, megaphone, whatever).*

GARY'S VOICE: *(Matter-of-factly.)* "One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a horrible vermin."

Pause. Lights up on a kitchen table. Gary's FATHER eats his breakfast and reads the newspaper. Gary's SISTER eats a bowl of cereal. Gary's MOTHER makes oatmeal. There is a bowl of fruit on the table. From offstage right we again hear GARY'S amplified voice.

GARY'S VOICE: *(Matter-of-factly.)* "One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a horrible vermin."

FATHER: *(Sotto voce to Mother.)* Seriously, what's wrong with him?

SISTER: Gary's a vermin, Daddy.

MOTHER: He's not a vermin, honey.

SISTER: He just said he was a vermin. Daddy, what's a vermin?

FATHER: *(Reading the newspaper.)* It's a bug.

SISTER: Gary's a bug, Mommy!

MOTHER: Your brother is not a bug, sweetie.

SISTER: But he just said he was a bug.

MOTHER: He's not a bug! Eat your Lucky Charms! *(Calling off right.)* Gary, your oatmeal's ready!

SISTER: How come Gary gets oatmeal?

FATHER: *(Reading, smirking.)* Bugs like oatmeal.

MOTHER: Enough! *(Calls off right.)* Gary? *(To Father and Sister.)* You know he was up late studying. He has a test on Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" for his English class today.

FATHER: *(Reading.)* I know he never reads anything until the night before a test, and the next morning we always get this nonsense.

SISTER: Daddy, what's a *(Struggling.)* meta... meta... metamor... pho...

FATHER: *(Reading.)* Metamorphosis. It means "change."

SISTER: Gary changed into a bug, Mommy!

MOTHER: Your brother didn't change into a...

From offstage right, we again hear GARY'S amplified voice.

GARY'S VOICE: (Matter-of-factly.) "One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams he found himself transformed..."

FATHER: (Interrupting.) Gary! Get down here!

MOTHER: Shhh! You know he's sensitive!

FATHER: I know if that boy makes me late for work again... (Finishes reading, puts down the paper, and calls off right.) We leave in two minutes! (Puts on his coat and starts to exit left.)

SISTER: But Daddy, I haven't finished my Lucky Charms!

MOTHER: (To Father.) Darling, you can't go yet.

SISTER: (Eating, singing happily.) Gary's a bug! Gary's a vermin! Gary's a bug! Gary's a vermin!

FATHER: (Sotto voce to Mother.) Seriously, this can't be healthy.

MOTHER: Humor him. He's just going through a phase.

SISTER: Can I "go through a phase," too, Mommy?

FATHER: No!

MOTHER: (To Sister.) We'll see, sweetie. (To both.) Everybody ready?

THEY know the drill: ALL line up and face stage right to greet Gary. MOTHER double-checks their postures. From offstage right, we again hear GARY'S amplified voice.

GARY'S VOICE: (Matter-of-factly.) "One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams..."

FATHER: (Interrupting.) Oh, for the love of...

MOTHER: (Interrupting.) Gary, dear, we're all ready for you!

GARY slowly enters from stage right. He wears a makeshift bug costume clearly made from items in his room. Possibilities include: sunglasses, computer cord antennae, winter boots, furry winter gloves, a Silly String spider web, a bug mask made from Post-its. He sincerely believes that he is a vermin.

GARY'S backpack is slung over his shoulder. MOTHER, FATHER, and SISTER applaud and act like he's a bug.

SISTER: *(Trying to be the great little sister.)* Wow, Gary! You sure are a great vermin today!

MOTHER: *(Doting.)* Yes, really, sweetie! Nice job. *(Nudges Father.)*

FATHER: *(Muttering to himself.)* Unbelievable.

MOTHER: *(To Gary.)* Now eat your oatmeal.

GARY: *(Matter-of-factly.)* I'll be in the car.

GARY starts to exit left.

MOTHER: Oh, at least take an apple.

GARY puts his backpack on the floor and takes an apple from the fruit bowl. GARY exits left, trying to eat the apple through his vermin "costume."

MOTHER: *(To Sister and Father.)* Good job, everybody! Now, off you go!

SISTER: *(Crossing to Gary's backpack.)* Boy, I sure liked Gary's vermin a lot better than his Jane Eyre! *(Tries to zip up Gary's backpack.)*

MOTHER: *(Kissing her on the forehead.)* Me, too, sweetie, me, too! *(To Father.)* Don't worry, darling, the semester's almost over.

FATHER: I don't know how much more of this I can... *(To Sister.)* What's next on his reading list?

SISTER: *(Reading a note in Gary's backpack.)* "Lord of the Flies."

FATHER: *(Sighs.)* Of course it is.

From off stage left, Gary honks the car horn. SISTER kisses MOTHER, and exits left with Gary's backpack, and her own. MOTHER comforts FATHER with a gentle hug. FATHER, weary, exits. Pause.

MOTHER eats Gary's oatmeal. She smiles, satisfied that she's the best mom that she can be. Sound of the car pulling away, and the car horn again. MOTHER looks past the audience and waves goodbye to her family.

Fade to black.

THE END

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