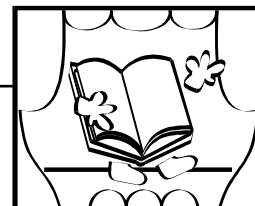


Readers' Theater



Graceling

by Kristin Cashore

(Arranged for Readers' Theater by CYRM Committee Members, for classroom use only.)

Characters:	Helda	Katsa	Narrator 1
	Narrator 2	Narrator 3	Narrator 4

Narrator 1: Helda had come to work in Randa's nurseries around the same time Katsa began to dole out Randa's punishments. It was hard to know why she'd been less frightened of Katsa than others were.

Narrator 2: Perhaps it was because she had borne a Graceling child of her own. Not a fighter, only a swimmer, a skill that was of no use to the king. So the boy had been sent home, and Helda had seen how the neighbors avoided and ridiculed him simply because he could move through the water like a fish.

Narrator 3: Or because he had one eye black, and the other blue. Perhaps this was why when the servants had warned Helda to avoid the king's niece, Helda had reserved her opinion.

Narrator 4: Oh course, Katsa had been too old for the nurseries when Helda arrived, and the children of the court had kept Helda busy.

Narrator 1: But she'd come to Katsa's training sessions, when she could. She'd sat and watched the child beat the stuffing out of a dummy, grain bursting from cracks and tears in the sack and slapping onto the floor like spurting blood.

Narrator 2: She'd never stayed long, because she always needed to return to the nursery, but still Katsa had noticed her, as she noticed anyone who didn't try to avoid her. Had noticed and noted her, but hadn't troubled herself with curiosity. Katsa had had no reason to interact with a woman servant.

Narrator 3: But one day Helda had come when Oll was away and Katsa was alone in the practice rooms. And when the child had paused to set up a new dummy, Helda had spoken.

Helda: In court they say you're dangerous, My Lady.

- Narrator 4: Katsa considered the old woman for a moment, her gray hair and gray eyes, and her soft arms, folded over a soft stomach. The woman held her gaze, as no one other than Raffin, Oll, or the king did.
- Narrator 1: Then Katsa shrugged, hoisted a sack of grain onto her shoulder, and hung it from a hook on a wooden post standing in the center of the practice-room floor.
- Helda: The first man you killed, My Lady, that cousin. Did you mean to kill him?
- Narrator 2: It was a question no one had ever actually asked her. Again the girl looked into the face of the woman, and again the woman held her eyes. Katsa sensed that this question was inappropriate coming from a servant. But she was so unused to being talked to that she didn't know the right way to proceed.
- Katsa: No. I only meant to keep him from touching me.
- Helda: Then you are dangerous, My Lady, to people you don't like. But perhaps you'd be safe as a friend.
- Katsa: It's why I spend my days in this practice room.
- Helda: Mastering your Grace. Yes, all Gracelings must do so.
- Narrator 3: This woman knew something about the Graces, and she wasn't afraid to say the word. It was time for Katsa to begin her exercises again, but she paused, hoping the woman would say something more.
- Helda: My Lady, if I may ask you a nosy question?
- Narrator 4: Katsa waited. She couldn't think of a question more nosy than the one the woman had already asked.
- Helda: Who are your servants, My Lady?
- Narrator 1: Katsa wondered if this woman was trying to embarrass her. She drew herself up and looked the woman straight in the face, daring her to laugh or smile.
- Katsa: I don't keep servants. When a servant is assigned to me, she generally chooses to leave the service of the court.

Narrator 2: Helda didn't smile or laugh. She merely looked back at Katsa, and studied her for a moment.

Helda: Have you any female caretakers, My Lady?

Katsa: I have none.

Helda: What is your age, My Lady?

Katsa: I am nearly eleven.

Helda: My child, My Lady, would you allow me to serve you, on occasion? When you need service, and when my presence is not required in the nurseries?

Katsa: I don't need servants, but I can have you transferred from the nurseries if you're unhappy there.

Helda: I am happy in the nurseries. Forgive me for contradicting such a one as yourself, My Lady, but you do need a servant, a woman servant. Because you have no mother or sisters.

Narrator 3: Katsa had never needed a mother or sisters or anyone else, either. She didn't know what one did with a contradictory servant; she guessed that Randa would go into a rage, but she was afraid of her own rages.

Narrator 4: She held her breath, clenched her fists, and stood as still as the wooden post in the center of the room. The woman could say what she wanted. They were only words.

Narrator 1: Helda stood and smoothed her dress.

Helda: I'll come to your rooms on occasion, My Lady?

Narrator 2: Katsa made her face like a rock.

Helda: If you ever wish a break from your uncle's state dinners, you may always join me in my room.

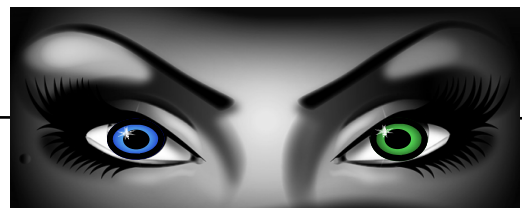
Narrator 3: Katsa blinked. She hated the dinners, with everyone's sideways glances, and the people who didn't want to sit near her, and her uncle's loud voice. Could she really skip them? Could this woman's company be better?

Helda: I must return to the nurseries, My Lady. My name is Helda, and I come from the western Middluns. Your eyes are so very pretty, my dear. Good-bye.

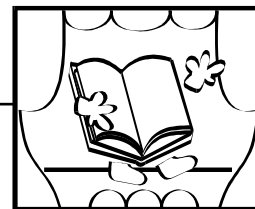
Narrator 4: Helda left before Katsa was able to find her voice. Katsa stared at the door that closed behind her.

Katsa: Thank you.

Narrator 1: There was no one to hear, and though she wasn't sure why her voice seemed to think she was grateful.



Readers' Theater



Beastly

By Alex Flynn

(Arranged for Readers' Theater by CYRM Committee Members, for classroom use only.)

Characters: Kyle Kendra Narrator 1 Narrator 2

Kyle: (*Loudly*) What are you doing here?

Narrator 1: Kyle wasn't really surprised. He had been expecting her since the dance. He just didn't know when or how.

Narrator 2: She stared at him. He noticed her eyes again, the same bottle color as her hair and had a weird thought: what if it was natural, the hair as well as the eyes?

Narrator 1: Crazy!

Kyle: Why are you in my house?

Narrator 2: She smiled. Kyle noticed for the first time that she held a mirror, the same one she'd had the first day on the benches. She peered into it as she chanted.

Kendra: Retribution. Poetic justice. Just desserts. Comeuppance.

Narrator 1: Kyle just stared. In the moment she spoke, she didn't look as ugly as he had remembered her. It was those eyes, those glowing green eyes. Her skin glowed too.

Kyle: What do you mean, "Comeuppance?"

Kendra: It's an SAT word, Kyle. You should learn it. You will learn it. It means well-deserved punishment.

Narrator 2: Punishment. Over the years, lots of people – housekeepers, Kyle's teachers – had threatened him with punishments. They never stuck. Usually Kyle could just charm his way out of them. Or his dad could pay someone off. But what if she was some crazy psycho?

Kyle: Look, about tonight. I'm sorry. I didn't think you were really going to show up. I knew you didn't really like me, so I didn't think you'd get your feelings hurt.

Kendra: I didn't.

Kyle: Didn't what?

Kendra: Like you. Or get my feelings hurt.

Narrator 1: Kyle gave her his "good kid" look and as he did he noticed something weird. Her nose, which he had thought was long and witchlike before, wasn't. Must have been the shadows Kyle thought.

Kyle: Oh. Good. So we're all squared?

Kendra: I didn't get my feelings hurt because I knew you'd blow me off, Kyle, knew you were cruel and ruthless and that, given the opportunity, you would hurt someone...just to show you could.

Narrator 2: Kyle continued to look at her, he met her eyes. Her eyelashes looked different. Longer. He shook his head.

Kyle: That's not why.

Kendra: Then why?

Kyle: What's going on here?

Kendra: I told you. Comeuppance. You will know what it is like not to be beautiful, to be as ugly on the outside as on the inside. If you learn your lesson well, you may be able to undo my spell. If not, you will live with your punishment forever.

Narrator 1: Kyle saw her cheeks redden. Something was weird – how could she transform like that? He was getting freaked out, but he couldn't back off. He couldn't be afraid of her.

Kyle: You know my dad's got a lot of money – connections too.

Kendra: So?

Kyle: So I know it must be hard being a scholarship student at a school like Tuttle, but my dad can sort of grease the wheels, get you what you want. Money. College recs, even a shot on the evening news if I asked him. What, did you have on a disguise before? You're actually pretty hot, you know. You'd be good on TV.

Kendra: Do you really think so?

Kyle: Sure I....

Kendra: (*Begins to laugh*) I don't go to Tuttle. I don't go to school at all or live here or anywhere. I am old as the ages and young as the dawn. Otherworldly beings cannot be bribed.

Kyle: So you're saying you're a...a...witch?

Narrator 1: Her hair flowing around her face seemed now green, now purple, now black, like a strobe light. Kyle realized that he was holding his breath, waiting for her answer.

Kendra: Yes.

Narrator 2: Kyle now thought that she truly was crazy.

Kendra: Kyle Kingsbury, what you did was ugly. And it wasn't the first time. All your life you've gotten special treatment because of your beauty, and all your life you've used that beauty to be cruel to those less fortunate.

Kyle: That's not true.

Kendra: Maybe. But in sixth grade you had a party at Gameworks and invited the whole class – except two kids, Lara Ritter and David Sweeney. You told them they were too ugly to be allowed in. Do you think that's funny?

Narrator 1: Yeah, kind of thought Kyle.

Kyle: That's still a long time ago. I had problems then. That was the year my mom left.

Narrator 2: Kendra seemed inches taller now.

Kendra: Last year, Wimberly Sawyer had a crush on you. You asked for her number, then had all your friends torment her with obscene phone calls until her parents got the number changed. Do you know how embarrassing that was for her? Think about it.

Narrator 1: For one second Kyle imagined it, what it would be like being Wimberly, telling my dad that everyone at school hated me. And for one second Kyle couldn't bear to think of it. Wimberly hadn't just changed her number. At the end of the year, she'd left Tuttle too.

Kyle: You're right. I was a jerk. I won't do it again.

Narrator 2: Kyle almost believed it. She was right. He should be nicer. He didn't know why he was mean and cruel sometimes. Sometimes he'd tell himself that he was going to be nicer to people. But always, in an hour or so, he'd forget, because it felt good to be on top of them all. Maybe a psychologist, one of those guys on TV, would say he did it to feel important, because his parents didn't pay attention to him or something.

Narrator 1: But that wasn't it, not really. It was just, like, sometimes he just couldn't help it.

Narrator 2: In the living room, the grandfather clock started to strike midnight.

Kendra: You're right. You won't do it again. In some countries, when a man steals, they cut off his hand. If a man rapes, he is castrated. In this way the tools of crime are removed from those who commit them.

Narrator 1: The clock was still striking. Nine. Ten. The room was glowing and almost spinning.

Kyle: Are you crazy?

Narrator 2: The clock finished striking. Kendra touched his shoulder, turning him away from her so that he faced the mirror over his bureau.

Kendra: Kyle Kingsbury, behold.

Kyle: What have you done to me?

Narrator 1: His voice was different. It was a roar.

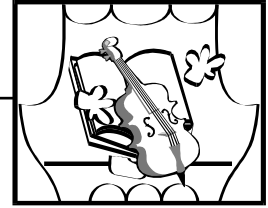
Narrator 2: Kendra waved her hand with a shower of sparks.

Kendra: I have transformed you to your truer self.

Narrator 1: He was a beast.



Readers' Theater



If I Stay by Gayle Foreman

(Arranged for Readers' Theater by CYRM Committee Members, for classroom use only.)

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Characters:	Mia	Male Paramedic	Female Medic	Narrator
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Narrator: 9:23 AM

Mia: Am I dead? At first it seemed obvious that I am. That the standing-here-watching part was temporary, an intermission before the bright light and the life-flashing-before-me business that would transport me to wherever I'm going next.

Narrator: Except the paramedics are there now, along with the police and the fire department. Someone has put a sheet over Mia's father. And a fireman is zipping her Mom up into a plastic bag. Mia hears him discuss her with another firefighter, who looks like he can't be more than eighteen.

Male Paramedic: She was probably hit first and killed instantly, explaining the lack of blood. Immediate cardiac arrest – when your heart can't pump blood you don't really bleed. You seep.

Mia: I can't think about that, about Mom seeping. So instead I think how fitting it is that she was hit first, that she was the one to buffer us from the blow. It wasn't her choice, obviously, but it was her way. But am I dead? The me who is lying on the edge of the road, my leg hanging down into the gulley, is surrounded by a team of men and women who are performing frantic ablutions over me and plugging my veins with I do not know what.

Narrator: The police have lit flares along the perimeter of the scene and are instructing cars in both directions to turn back, the road is closed. The police politely offer alternate routes, back roads that will take people where they need to be.

Mia: And even though they don't know who we are or what has happened, they pray for us. I can feel them praying. Which also makes me think I'm dead. That and the fact my body seems to be completely numb, though to look at me, at the leg that the 60 mph asphalt exfoliant has pared down to the bone, I should be in agony. And I'm not crying, either, even though I know that something unthinkable has just happened to my family.

Female Medic: Her Glasgow Coma is an eight. Let's bag her now!

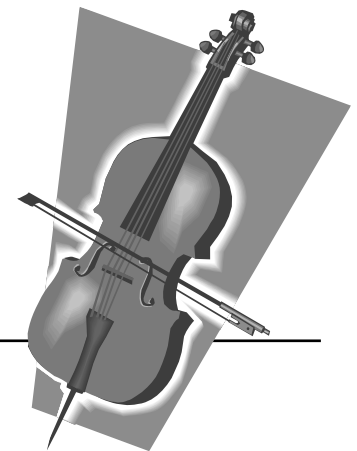
Male Paramedic: What's the ETA for Life Flight?

Female Medic: Ten minutes. It takes twenty to get back to town.

Male Paramedic: We're going to get her there in fifteen if you have to speed like a demon!

Mia: I can tell what she is thinking. That it won't do me any good if they get into a crash, and I have to agree. But she doesn't say anything. Just clenches her jaw. They load me into the ambulance; the female medic climbs in with me. She pumps my bag with one hand, adjusts my IV and my monitors with the other. Then she smooths a lock of hair from my forehead.

Female Medic: You hang in there!



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