

Sweeping

A one act play for children

By Douglas Evans

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Charlie, third grader

Martin, Charlie's classmate

Elise, Charlie's classmate

Mr. Franklin, school custodian

Carolyn, Charlie's classmate

SETTINGS

On sidewalk outside third-grade classroom during chore time.

PRODUCTION NOTES:

CHARACTERS: 5 characters 3 male, 2 female

PLAYING TIME: 15 minutes

PROPS:

Straw broom
Handkerchief

SETTING:

On sidewalk outside third-grade classroom during chore time.

COSTUMES:

Students wear modern school clothing
Mr. Franklin, the custodian, wears jeans and a flannel shirt.
A handkerchief is stuffed in his back pocket.

LIGHTING: no special lighting

SOUND: School bell

MUSIC: no special music

SCENE 1

Time: Third-grade class chore time.

Setting: Sidewalk outside the third-grade classroom. The classroom door is offstage right.

At Rise: CHARLIE stands on sidewalk, leaning on a straw broom.

CHARLIE

This is torture. Out of all the classroom jobs, I got the worst one. Sidewalk sweeper It's my turn to sweep the sidewalk outside the door. It's going to take forever.

(CHARLIE grips the broom handle with one hand and starts lazily sweeping.)

CHARLIE

Why can't I clean the fish tank? Why can't I water the plants or feed the class snake? Anything job is better than sweeping.

(MARTIN enters stage right. He watches Charlie sweep and shakes his head.)

MARTIN

Charlie, that's not the right way to sweep. That's...poking the ground. You've got to hold the broom with both hands. Here, let a pro show you.

(MARTIN takes the broom. He swishes it across the sidewalk.)

MARTIN

(still sweeping)

See? Both hands. Left, right. Easy. Like this.

CHARLIE

Very impressive. You do that very well, Martin. Keep going. I'm learning a lot.

(MARTIN takes a few more sweeps and hands broom back to CHARLIE.)

MARTIN

There you go. That's how a pro sweeps. Lesson over.

(MARTIN exits stage right. CHARLIE leans on broom again.)

CHARLIE

I still hate sweeping. Every few months it's my turn again. Why can't I clean the whiteboard or straighten the bookshelf.

(Charlie spreads his legs and moves the broom back and forth between them. ELISE enters stage right. She watches Charlie and shakes her head.)

ELISE

Charlie, what are you doing? You look like you're playing croquet, not sweeping. Here, give me the broom and watch.

(ELISE takes broom. She switches the broom across the sidewalk.)

ELISE

(still sweeping)

See, you move the broom left and right. Left and right. Smooth and steady

CHARLIE

Wow. You really know your stuff, Elise. Show me some more. I'm beginning to see how it's done.

(ELISE sweeps another strip of sidewalk and hands broom back to CHARLIE.)

ELISE

All yours. Now I must get back to *my* class job. This week I get to clean the hamster cage. Lucky me.

(Elise exits stage right. Charlie sighs and leans on broom again.)

CHARLIE

Nothing is worse than sweeping the sidewalk. It's torture. Even cleaning hamster poop is be better than this. This job never ends

(Charlie begins pushing the broom forward as if it were a push broom. MR. FRANKLIN, the custodian, enters from stage left. The custodian watches CHARLIE sweep. He wipes his brow with a handkerchief. Then he shakes his head.)

MR. FRANKLIN

Whoa, whoa. Who taught you to sweep like that? That's how you ruin a good broom. It's not a push broom. Try holding it like a hockey stick. Let me show you.

(MR. FRANKLIN takes the broom and gives it a few sharp sweeps.)

MR. FRANKLIN

(still sweeping)

See, you want to sweep like you're taking a slap shot. Pow!

CHARLIE

Hockey style--got it. Thanks, Mr. Franklin.

(MR. FRANKLIN takes two more sweeps and hands broom back to CHARLIE.)

MR. FRANKLIN

Keep it up, Charlie. You'll be an expert sweeper in no time.

(MR. FRANKLIN exits stage left. CHARLIE leans on broom again. He looks over the sidewalk and shrugs.)

CHARLIE

The sidewalk is almost clean. Just a few more feet.

(CHARLIE grabs the broom by the bristles and whisks it back and forth like an umpire dusting off home plate.

CAROLYN enters stage right. She points to CHARLIE and burst out laughing.)

CAROLYN
(still laughing)

Look at you Charlie. You look silly. You don't even know how to sweep.

(CHARLIE stops sweeping and holds out broom.)

CHARLIE
You're right, Carolyn. Could you show me how it's really done?

(CAROLYN takes broom and begins sweeping.)

CAROLYN
Watch. You hold the broom in the middle of the handle and sweep back and forth. Back and forth. See how I do it. Back and forth. Back and forth.

CHARLIE
I see. I see. I was sweeping all wrong.

CAROLYN
(still sweeping)
No problem, Charlie. Just do it right. If you're going to do a class job you should do it correctly.

CHARLIE
Right. I should do it right.

CAROLYN
That's the whole point of classroom jobs...to learn responsibility.

CHARLIE
Responsibility...right.

CAROLYN
Now I have to finish straightening the art cupboard.

(CAROLYN hands back broom and exits stage right. CHARLIE leans on broom and studies sidewalk.)

CHARLIE

(studying the sidewalk)

Well, look at that. The sidewalk is all clean. My job is done.

(CHARLIE puts broom on shoulder.)

CHARLIE

Sweeping is still the worst classroom job ever. And in a few months it will be my turn again. By then, I bet I'll have forgotten how to do it. I hate to sweep.

(With broom on his shoulder,
Charlie exits stage right
whistling.)

End of Play