

# BABY RUGBY

A play by Doug MacKenzie  
Debuted at the Armory for the Arts  
Santa Fe, New Mexico  
June 4, 1998

## THE PLAYERS

MISS MARGARET A. GOODTEDDY	the headmistress of Boxwood School
DOCTOR OTTO M. TWEETY	an instructor of English
ARABELLA FOX	the new girl who becomes the detective
MALVINA FARNSWORTH	an overbearing precieuse from Newport
DAPHNE STRAWBRIDGE	an overbearing precieuse from Palm Beach
TEMPE SOLOMON	a diffident techno-wienie from Richmond
TOPSY TYLER	a tomboy stoner from Pittsburgh
CRITTER BODINE	the janitor of Boxwood School
DARVISH VAN PEMPERHOVEN	a mad scientist suspected of murder
PUFFIN deBUTTS	the murder victim

## BABY RUGBY

### ACT ONE

### SCENE ONE

The curtain comes up on the office of Margaret Goodteddy. Miss Goodteddy is headmistress of Boxwood School. Boxwood is an exclusive girls' preparatory school located in present-day Connecticut. Goodteddy is seated at her desk CENTER RIGHT. She is absorbed with reading her mail. DOCTOR TWEETY enters from the only door UP LEFT. He pauses before taking a seat DOWN RIGHT. Tweety peruses *The Racing Form* as Goodteddy opens a letter.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

(Not looking up) You're here to see the Fuhrer?

DOCTOR TWEETY:

The who?

MISS GOODTEDDY:

(Distracted) You're not Eva Braun! You're an impostor. Do you realize I could have you shot? (Stares bemusedly). Doctor Tweety, do you know why I called you in here?

DOCTOR TWEETY:

No.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

This police report says you were taken into custody outside the Cockeyed Rooster Motel. In the company of one (Reads) Mojo Hashimoto, a known prostitute—

DOCTOR TWEETY:

Prostitute? (Stands up) This is an outrage. (Sits down) Mrs. Hashimoto is a licensed astrologer and a highly regarded trainee at Carmine's Tanning Salon. She and I were engaged in coordinating an activities calendar for our upcoming Bible camp.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Is one of those activities throwing liquor bottles?

DOCTOR TWEETY:

Well, we do have a horseshoe pitch. And a softball throw.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

(Flaring) Have you lost your mind? What the hell were you doing in that part of town at three o'clock in the morning, wearing women's underwear?

DOCTOR TWEETY:

Here's what happened. I was letting Chipper outside for a walk when a sudden gust of wind blew the door shut.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Locking you outside? In your polka dot bra and panties?

DOCTOR TWEETY:

They belonged to my niece. I must have mistakenly put them on in my haste to let Chipper outside. Then, Chipper found a ball. Only I didn't know it was a *Super* Ball. So, when I threw it, it just kept bouncing, for miles.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

I see. And you and Chipper chased after it? All the way to the Cockeyed Rooster? A distance of some sixteen miles?

DOCTOR TWEETY:

(Indignant) Chipper happens to suffer from insomnia. He is at present working his way through Princeton as a special advisor to President Clinton.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Wait a minute. Chipper's a cocker spaniel. Just tell me this. How the hell does a cocker spaniel manage to have a job and go to college?

DOCTOR TWEETY:

Well, he goes to night school.

ARABELLA:

(Enters UP LEFT) Miss Goodteddy?

MISS GOODTEDDY:

(Looking up) Yes?

ARABELLA:

I'm Arabella. Arabella Fox.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

You're the new girl. The transfer from Madeira?

ARABELLA:

Foxcroft.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Won't you have a seat?

ARABELLA:

Thanks. (She sits down CENTER LEFT)

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Welcome to Boxwood, Arabella. I understand you've had to transfer here to be near your father.

ARABELLA:

That's right.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

I know how difficult it must be for you to have to transfer this late in your senior year.

ARABELLA:

Well, in a way it's not so bad. I grew up in Southport.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

I don't mean to be blunt. (Sighs) But, tell me, Arabella, what is your father's prognosis?

ARABELLA:

Dad has inoperable pancreatic cancer.

MISS GOODFELLOW:

Oh, hard cheese.

ARABELLA:

I know. But Dad is facing up, like a centurion.

His spirit is quite undaunted.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

He must have enormous faith.

ARABELLA:

Dad has something greater than faith, Miss Goodteddy.

You see, my father is a Yale man. Skull and Bones.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Oh, good show. There's the old school tie. Your father has no fear of death because he is one of evolution's masterpieces—an Aryan, a pure Aryan. (Laughs maniacally)

ARABELLA:

(Laughs) Actually, my Dad is part Greek. So are you, Miss Goodteddy. I'll bet you didn't realize we were distant cousins.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Greeks.? In the Goodteddy gene pool? Impossible.

DOCTOR TWEETY:

There's nothing wrong with Greeks. Why, we are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion and our arts all have their roots in ancient Greece. "The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece! Where burning Sappho love and sung! Where grew the arts of war and peace! Where Delos rose and Phoebus sprung!"

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Keep out of this, you flatulent marsupial.

DOCTOR TWEETY:

Why, the Greeks were going to the theatre and discussing philosophy while your Teutonic ancestors were still living in caves. Eating mud.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

(Indicating the door.) Good day, Tweety. Thank you.

(Tweety exits UP LEFT)

ARABELLA:

Miss Goodteddy. I must ask you a favor. I'm afraid I won't be able to stay in Southport. My stepmother—

MISS GOODTEDDY:

(Drums here fingers) Oh.

ARABELLA:

(Entreatingly) You could put me up, in any old dorm room.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

I don't see how—

ARABELLA:

I could sleep on an army cot.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

I'm afraid, I—

ARABELLA:

I wouldn't be any trouble.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

There's only one dorm I could put you in. But I'm afraid it wouldn't suit you at all. It's practically a penal colony. The girls in it are incorrigible.

ARABELLA:

(Joyful) I'll take it.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Okay. Just one last thing, Arabella.

ARABELLA:

Yes?

MISS GOODTEDDY:

This may seem odd. I need you to act as a detective.

ARABELLA:

A detective?

MISS GOODTEDDY:

What I'm going to tell you is top secret. I don't want you to breathe a word of this outside this room. Do I make myself clear?

ARABELLA:

Yes, Miss Goodteddy You may trust me implicitly.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Here are the facts. We have a campus prowler, a nocturnal campus prowler.

ARABELLA:

You mean, like a pervert? Cool.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

This is no garden variety peeping Tom. Or a local boy on a panty raid. This fellow is more diabolical. He is after radishes.

ARABELLA:

Radishes?

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Radishes, turnips, carrots, kumquats, and kiwi fruit.

ARABELLA:

So, I gather you know who this prowler is.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

(Sharply) We know bloody well who it is. It is none other than Darvish Van Pemperhoven. We're afraid Darvish has become actively psychotic. His doctors suspect schizophrenia.

Or, too many EST meetings.

ARABELLA:

Do you know Darvish?

MISS GOODTEDDY:

No. But I knew his mother. Darvish's mother was a Von Bumpy-Rump. She squandered the entire family fortune on Scientology.

ARABELLA:

How long was she into Scientology.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Three weeks. But she got to meet John Travolta.

ARABELLA:

Cool.

(There is a sharp knock at the door, and MALVINA, DAPHNE, TEMPE, and TOPSY enter UP LEFT. Malvina is the obvious leader and the others trail her dutifully.

Malvina is a self-possessed young woman with the carriage of a Caesar and the impenitent hauteur of a Reichs fuhrer. All fall in CENTER LEFT at parade rest.)

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Angels and ministers of grace, defend us!

Not you dead end kids, again.

MALVINA:

(Smarmily) Good afternoon, Miss Goodteddy.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Shut up, Malvina.

MALVINA:

(Too cheerfully) Yes, Miss Goodteddy. (Curtseys)

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Arabella, meet your new roommates. They're all on probation.

(Flaring) I should have expelled you four losers when I had the chance.

Turning your dorm room into a beer garden! Hrrumph!

TEMPE:

Technically speaking, it was a rathskeller. Not a beer garden.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

When I want your opinion, Tempe, I'll ask for it.

TEMPE:

Yes, Miss Goodteddy.

DAPHNE:

(Airily) You're our new roomie. (Rolls her eyes) Well, well, well. You do seem like a sweet gal. (Yawns)

TOPSY:

She's probably a narc.

ARABELLA:

I am not.

MALVINA:

The Fruit Fairy struck again last night!

DAPHNE:

He plundered the kitchen. Down to the last grape.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Oh, goodness me. Who would do such a thing?

TEMPE:

Darvish Van Pemperhoven.

MALVINA:

Everyone knows it's Darvish.

DAPHNE:

Footprints lead to his house.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

But what can we do?

TOPSY:

Get him on the horn. Tell him to fork over our stash or we play baseball with his head.

ARABELLA:

It wouldn't work. Darvish is so intelligent he can't talk to anybody. And he's so well educated, he knows virtually nothing.

TEMPE:

Darvish is so brilliant, it's a miracle he can put on his underwear in the morning.

MALVINA:

Darvish is a product of his environment. Rumor has it, he was raised in the Gir Forest by a family of bandicoots.

TOPSY:

Bandicoots? What are bandicoots?

DAPHNE:

Aren't they like Mennonites?

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Well, whatever they are, they sound perfectly dreadful. I don't want you girls venturing near Darvish's house. The poor fellow may be estranged from his senses. He might try to lure you inside and turn you into sex zombies. (Each girl ponders this outcome with obvious relish. Goodteddy steams)

MALVINA:

This Darvish chap sounds intriguing. I say we invite him to Senior Supper.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

I'd sooner invite the Unabomber.

DAPHNE:

(Haughtily) I happen to know Darvish Van Pemperhoven.

TOPSY:

You chic thing, you.

DAPHNE:

I met Darvy at the Deb Ball. It was at The Plaza ballroom. He rushed up and asked me to dance. (Laughs affectedly) Of course, I didn't know him from Adam. But Peter Duchin was playing *Time After Time*. How could I resist?

ARABELLA:

(keenly) Was he a good dancer?

DAPHNE:

Fred Astaire. And, so handsome in his tailcoat. We glided around the dance floor like swans. It was magical. Like I'd tumbled down a rabbit hole into an enchanted palace.

TOPSY:

You were drunk.

DAPHNE:

I was not drunk. Darvish has that effect on people. He's one of the most charming fellows you'll ever meet— so witty, so gay, so full of life. I remember him as part-Errol Flynn, part-Wernher von Braun. Such an aristocrat. But with the common touch. Oh, when he flashes those wild eyes at you. (Closes her eyes and smiles)

TEMPE:

Then, what happened?

DAPHNE:

We drove around Central Park in his funny old car. It was a Stutz Bearcat that belonged to his grandfather. Darvish's grandfather invented the groundhog.

MALVINA:

(Bemusedly) The woodchuck?

DAPHNE:

Not the animal. The machine. The automated mining device that revolutionized diamond mining.

MALVINA:

(Arching an eyebrow) Why would he take you into Central Park? At night?

TOPSY:

He took her down to the lake and showed her the *Schwanz*.

(Cackles insanely)

MISS GOODTEDDY:

(Sharply) What was that, Tyler?

TOPSY:

(Guiltily) Nothing, Miss Goodteddy.

DAPHNE:

Meeting a boy like that is so life-affirming.

You just want to get married and have babies.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

(Imperiously) Man is the occupation of the idle woman. Before you surrender to biology, Strawbridge, first you must embark on a career.

DAPHNE:

I'll follow my heart. In Tahiti, Gaugin lived on "ecstasy, silence and art." I'll live on love. (Stretches provocatively)

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Then, you'll starve.

DAPHNE:

If I choose to starve for love, then starve it is.

MALVINA:

Choose! Love! My word! Dear girl, one doesn't choose love any more than one chooses to breathe. It's automatic. Your liking Darvish is not a conscious, rational decision. You're merely a hormonal robot following the blueprint of evolution. It's hardwired into your genetic code that you find a man to mate with. There's no choice, no free will. You're ensnared by your DNA, like a woodcock in a springe.

TOPSY:

Like a rat in a trap, man.

DAPHNE:

So, you think we're just cogs in the cosmic wheel?

Well, I don't. I happen to believe in free will.

MALVINA:

There's no free will. You don't change nature by being alive any more than you change the train by riding on it.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Aren't we forgetting what Nietzsche said.

(She pronounces it: "neet chee")

MALVINA:

Miss Goodteddy, if you insist on quoting Nietzsche, then I must insist you not mispronounce his name. It's "Neat shuh," not "Neat chee."

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Don't be absurd. I can mispronounce anything I choose.

After all, I'm an American.



(A knock on the door as Critter Bodine enters UP LEFT. He is bare-chested, in blue overalls. His tool belt bristles with tools. He carries a package wrapped in brown paper.)

CRITTER:

(Wryly) Here's a Christmas present for ya. (He displays the package and places it on the desk)

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Why, thank you, Critter. (Smarmily) I mean, "Charles."

CRITTER:

(Jauntily) Yes, indeedy.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Charles, I've got a little errand for you. I'd like you to go over to Mr. Van Pemperhoven's, and –

CRITTER:

(Suddenly frozen with fear as he crosses himself) Oh, Mammy!

MISS GOODTEDDY:

Why, Charles. You look like you've just seen a ghost.

CRITTER:

(Shaking his head) I ain't goin' nowhere near that crazy man's house, no way. There's a devilment going on up there. Devilment Christian folks weren't meant to see.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

I'm afraid I don't–

CRITTER:

(Lowering his voice conspiratorily) Two nights ago, Bubby Hardaway was diggin' for fishin' worms and he come across bones in that man's orchard.

ARABELLA:

Bones?

CRITTER:

Human remains. Fresh dug up. (Slight pause) I kid you not.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

(Fanning herself) Oh, dear.

CRITTER:

(Looking round wildly) Another thing. I know for a fact, he keeps a monster. You can hear it howlin' at night like all git out. It's enough to make your blood freeze. Lord have mercy.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

A monster? Oh, tut tut tut!

TEMPE:

Do you mean, a monster like Polyphemus?

DAPHNE:

Or, do you mean, a monster like Big Foot?

TOPSY:

Or like a big, hairy sea monster?

MALVINA:

(Languidly) Or, do you mean something really scary? (Slight pause) Like my waitress at Denny's? (Everyone laughs but Critter)

CRITTER:

(Peevishly) You laugh now. You'll be laughin' out of the other side of your face when you hear it.

MISS GOODTEDDY:

(Opening the package) I think someone has an overactive imagination. There hasn't been a monster in Connecticut since... (Screams in unholy terror) SNAKE! SNAKE!

CURTAIN