

Gladys Alyward: Reader's Theatre

Length: 45 minutes

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

Gladys

Storyteller

Chorus:

Mr. Robinson

Maid

Missus

Booking Clerk

Writer

Jeannie

Yang

Mandarin

Child

Doctor

Nurses

Missionary

Child Dealer

Chorus act both as a group, and as the above individuals.

These characters may play more than one part, paring down the number of cast needed.

Setting:

Stage and Prop Suggestions

Time in History

1902—1970AD

The year is 1936

Read the notes on Reader's Theatre that are provided with this script. (See accompaniments)

SETTING:

The stage is set as a small Chinese village town square or courtyard. A podium sits SL (draped in Chinese cloth) for the Storyteller. The RT begins with a Town Crier coming on stage, ringing a gong. In response to the gong, the Chorus (villagers) comes from all directions, talking amongst themselves about the Storyteller coming. When the Storyteller has entered, the villagers gather and sit in a semi-circle CS. The story is acted out in the centre of this circle (courtyard) as the Storyteller talks.

The story is divided into four major parts with each part broken down even further. As indicated in the script, the gong will ring and two people will carry a long banner across stage to title the story as it goes along. When the gong rings, the actors will change their positions.

When the villagers are not acting out a specific part, they will participate in the Chorus.

This RT is set up for one Storyteller, but you may put another podium SR and split the parts. Some blocking suggestions are included. Of course, because it is Reader's Theatre, there are many blocking options.

Dinner Theatre:

A dinner invitation could look like this:

Gladys Aylward

Respectfully requests your presence
for dinner and storytelling
at the Chinese Village Square
on Saturday, November 7th, at 6pm.

Costuming from the year of our Lord, 1936, is suggested.

The menu will be Chinese food.

The Village gates will be open to all
misfits, messengers, mavericks, and motivators.

The topic of discussion:

Tenacious Calling

Presented as an interactive Reader's Theatre
written by Norma Bennett

Gladys Alyward: Script

(gong rings—Storyteller bows to the audience, then to the villagers)

Storyteller: Welcome, most honoured of God, to the court of Ai-weh-deh. Ai-weh-deh. The Virtuous One. Tonight we tell the story of the small woman from England who, with her God, came to these isolated, northern, Chinese mountains. Ai-weh-deh. The Virtuous One. Gladys Alyward.

(GONG)

(BANNER:) PART I GETTING TO CHINA

(BANNER:) IN THE OFFICE OF THE CHINA INLAND MISSION

Mr. Robinson: You've been with us now for three months, I see, Miss Aylward?

Gladys: Yes, sir.

Mr. Robinson: Theology, now...?

Gladys: I wasn't very good at theology, was I?

Mr. Robinson: No, you weren't. Not good at all. You see, Miss Aylward, all these scholastic shortcomings are important, but most important of all is your age. If you stayed at the China Inland Mission Centre for another three years and then we sent you out, you would be about thirty by the time you arrived. Our experience tells us that after the age of thirty, unless pupils are quite exceptional, they find it extremely difficult to learn the Chinese language. In view of all this, you will understand, I'm sure, that there seems to be little point in your continuing with your studies here. We accepted you into

training, in good faith, and on trial. However, if you went on, it would be a waste of everyone's time and money. . ."

Gladys: I understand. Thank you for letting me come. It's not your fault.

Mr. Robinson: You mustn't be too distressed at this...er...setback. There is so much other useful work to be done in Britain by people like yourself. Have you any idea what you will do now?

Gladys: No.

Mr. Robinson: *(looking at his papers)*

I see you were in. . . er. . . service before you. . .

Gladys: I don't want to go back to being a parlour-maid unless I have to.

Mr. Robinson: No, I understand that. There is one other way you could help us, Miss Aylward.

Gladys: Yes? How?

Mr. Robinson: Two missionaries have just returned from China. An old married couple who need someone to look after them. They have borrowed a house in Bristol. Would you be prepared to consider the job?

Storyteller: Such a sad humiliation! Is this the closest she would ever get to China? She was a spinster at the age of twenty-six. There were fifty unemployed servants for every one available job. She had no choice. And yet...her heart was calling her to China.