Characters

SHOPKEEPER

SIX GIRLS

NINE BOYS

OTHER CHILDREN

SETTING: *The I’m-Going-To-Be-Shop. Tables set upstage serve as counters, piled with a collection of items symbolizing various trades and professions. A stool is down right.*

AT RISE: THE SHOPKEEPER *enters and hangs up a sign reading,* THE I’M-GOING-TO-BE-SHOP. *After adjusting it, he picks up a large bell, moves downstage, and begins to ring bell.*

SHOPKEEPER: Hear ye! Hear ye! Announcing the opening of a new store in town! Come one,

come all, to THE I’M-GOING-TO-BE-SHOP! Now is the time to decide what you are going to be when you grow up. The world is waiting! (BOYS and GIRLS *enter left and right*.) Don’t delay, decide today! Now is the time for all good children to come to the aid of their country! (BOYS and GIRLS *look curiously at SHOPKEEPER and his shop.)* Don’t waste time! Time is for doing, not for wasting! Step right up, boys and girls. Pick your future from our enormous stock! Only one future to a customer, so choose carefully. No exchanges, no refunds, and we do not handle complaints. Take your time, browse as long as you like. Make your decisions while our great supply of futures is still fresh. (1st BOY *shakes SHOPKEEPER’S arm gently*.) Yes sir? You have a question, sir?

1st BOY: Yes, sir. I have a question.

SHOPKEEPER *(Politely*): And what, sir, might your question be?

1st BOY: My question, sir, is what the dickens is this all about?

SHOPKEEPER: A ridiculous question, if you will pardon my saying so. Why don’t you listen? I am simply announcing the opening of my new I’m-Going-To-Be-Shop.

1ST BOY: But what do you sell?

SHOPKEEPER: Well, I don’t exactly sell anything. At least not for money.

1st GIRL: (To 1st BOY): What in the world is he talking about?

1st BOY: I don’t exactly know. It seems to be some funny sort of store. (*They shake heads*.)

6th GIRL: Oh, good! Maybe I can do my Christmas shopping early.

5th GIRL: But he says he doesn’t sell anything.

6th GIRL (Puzzled): He doesn’t sell anything?

5th GIRL: That’s what he says.

ALL: He doesn’t sell anything?

5th GIRL (*Impatiently*): Look, talk to the Shopkeeper yourselves if you want to. I don’t know what it’s all about.

2nd GIRL (To SHOPKEEPER): Pardon me, sir –

SHOPKEEPER (*Graciously*): Certainly. You’re pardoned. What did you do?

2nd GIRL: Would you kindly explain just what your shop is all about? I see all sorts of things inside, and yet you say you don’t sell anything. It seems a very odd sort of shop.

SHOPKEEPER: That simply shows your limited experience! It’s all perfectly plain!

2nd GIRL (*Firmly*): Not to me.

ALL: Not to us, either.

SHOPKEEPER (*With a sigh*): Very well, then. Listen carefully. How many times do grown-ups ask you what you’re going to be when you grow up?

2nd BOY: All the time! My father’s friends are always asking me.

3rd GIRL: And my mother’s friends.

3rd BOY: And my uncles and aunts.

4th GIRL: And my grandfathers and grandmothers.

SHOPKEEPER: Quite so. And what do you tell them?

4th GIRL: I tell them I don’t know. Because I don’t.

2nd BOY: But the next time they see us, they ask us again.

SHOPKEEPER: Just as I thought. You see what a waste of time it is? Now, if you knew for sure

what you were going to be when you grew up, you’d have the answer all ready for them, and they wouldn’t have to ask you again, and you could get on with learning how to be whatever it is you want to be.

3rd BOY (*Considering*): That sounds sensible.

SHOPKEEPER (*With a small bow*): Thank you. (*Gestures toward shop*) So here in my new shop you can search around and find just the right thing to be when you grow up.

3rd BOY: And how do we pay you? You said you didn’t sell things for money.

SHOPKEEPER: I don’t. I sell futures, and you can’t buy futures with money.

5th GIRL: What do you buy them with, then?

SHOPKEEPER: Hope, hard work, and promises. You can pay me in promises.

6th GIRL: Pay you in promises? I don’t understand.

SHOPKEEPER: My, my. We are a little slow today, aren’t we? Let’s say you enter my shop. Right?

ALL (*Loudly*): Right!

SHOPKEEPER (*Jumping*): Heavens! Business is going to be good today! Very well. You enter my shop, and look around. Right? (*Quickly puts fingers in ears in expectation*.)

ALL: Right!

SHOPKEEPER: Then you look over all the futures, and pick out the one you like best. Right? (*Immediately claps hands over ears*.)

ALL: RIGHT

SHOPKEEPER: Good. Then you simply give me your promise that you will use that future wisely and well, so the world will be a better place. *Now* do you understand?

ALL (After a second’s pause): Oooohhh!

SHOPKEEPER (*With relief*): At last! Very well, then. In you go, and look over the merchandise.

Choose anything you like, providing you will be giving to the world, not just taking from it. (*Children move upstage and inspect articles laid on tables*.) No pushing or shoving, please. There is plenty of room for all. Don’t block the entrance, miss. Keep traffic moving freely, please. Don’t crowd! Take your time. (4th BOY *remains downstage and seats himself on stool*. SHOPKEEPER *walks over to him*.) You’re not interested in my shop?

4th BOY: Not very.

SHOPKEEPER: But what about your future? Everyone needs a future.

4th BOY: Mine is already planned.

SHOPKEEPER: Ah, I see. Very forehanded of you. And are you sure there’s nothing in my shop that would equip you better for the future you have in mind.

4th BOY (*Politely*): Nothing at all, thank you.

SHOPKEEPER (*Doubtfully*): Well, I suppose your future is your own business.

4th BOY (*Agreeably*): I suppose so, too. Thank you just the same.

SHOPKEEPER: Not at all. (*Moving away, murmuring to himself, puzzled*) Still, I wonder what

future I forgot. I thought I had everything! (*Some of the children now start to leave counters and move downstage, carrying the “tools of their trade.” All are pleased and excited, talking quietly together*. SHOPKEEPER *turns to 1st BOY*.) Well, sir. Did you find what you were looking for?

1st BOY: Yes, sir. I know exactly what I’m going to be.

2nd GIRL: So do I!

2nd BOY: I do, too!

3rd GIRL: And me!

SHOPKEEPER: Fine! I’m glad my shop was helpful. Suppose you tell me what you have

chosen. (The following couplets may be spoken, or sung to “Hush, Little Baby, Don’t You Cry.” As each says his line, he steps into place, gradually forming a long line across stage, with SHOPKEEPER at one end and 4th BOY at other.)

1st BOY: When I grow up I’m going to be

A fisherman in the deep blue sea.

1st GIRL: I’ll be a nurse who cares for the ill.

2nd BOY: I’ll be a doctor who prescribes a pill.

3rd BOY: A fireman who puts out the flames.

5th BOY: A football player who wins the games.

2nd GIRL: An actress in the very best shows.

3rd GIRL: A dancer spinning on her toes.

4th GIRL: A teacher loved by all her class.

6th BOY: A gardening man who cuts the grass.

7th BOY: An engineer in a Diesel train.

8th BOY: A farmer raising corn and grain.

5th GIRL: A secretary who types and files.

6th GIRL: An airline stewardess who flies for miles.

9th BOY: A policeman protecting everyone.

4th BOY: A Do-Nothing Frog who sleeps in the sun. (*There is sudden silence, and all turn to stare at him.)*

ALL: A what?

4th BOY: A Do-Nothing Frog.

ALL: A Do-Nothing Frog?

4th BOY: Yes. A Do-Nothing Frog.

5th GIRL: But why do you want to be a frog?

4th BOY: Frogs don’t have to go to school.

And they’re not punished if they break a rule.

3rd GIRL: But frogs don’t have any fun!

4th BOY: What’s fun?

6th GIRL: Fun? Why, everybody knows what fun is! (*All nod in agreement*)

4th BOY (*Persisting*): What is it, then?

6th GIRL: Well – it’s – it’s enjoying yourself! That’s what it is. (*Children nodding in agreement*.)

4th BOY (*Comfortably*): I’d enjoy sleeping in the sun.

9th BOY: But don’t you want to holler? And shout? And yell?

4th BOY: I’ll croak. That’s yelling for a frog.

3rd GIRL: Don’t you want to run around?

4th BOY: I’ll hop.

4th GIRL: But – what use would you be?

4th BOY (*Unconcerned*): Use? No use. I’d just be a Do-Nothing Frog.

8th BOY: Wouldn’t you do anything useful?

4th BOY: Oh, I might catch a few flies.

2nd GIRL: What would you do with the flies after you caught them?

4th BOY: I’d eat them.

GIRLS: Ick!

4th BOY (*Loftily*): Frogs don’t think so.

5th GIRL: Why do you want to be a frog? Frogs are ugly!

4th BOY: Not to other frogs. Anyhow, maybe frogs think people are ugly!

I’ll be a frog that hops and croaks,

And catches flies before they land on folks.

SHOPKEEPER (*Stepping forward*): See here, my young friend, don’t you think you’re being a little difficult? All these other boys and girls are planning a future that will make the world a better place, but you –

4th BOY: The world *would* be a better place without flies.

SHOPKEEPER: Oh, come, come! Catching flies is surely not a full-time career.

4th BOY: For a Do-Nothing Frog, it is.

SHOPKEEPER: But you’ll be putting some other hardworking frog out of business!

4th BOY (*Suddenly perturbed*): Oh, my! I wouldn’t want to do that! I like frogs! I like all animals. That’s why I wanted to be one.

SHOPKEEPER: You don’t have to be an animal because you like them. And I really don’t think the world would be a better place if you just hopped and croaked and sat in the sun all day.

4th BOY: And caught flies.

SHOPKEEPER (*Firmly*): It still isn’t enough. It may be the best a frog can do, but it isn’t enough for a boy.

4th BOY: But animals are so nice! I’d like to live with animals.

SHOPKEEPER: Live with animals all you like. I don’t mind. But when you grow up, the world will look to you to make it a better place.

4th BOY (*In amazement*): The whole world? All looking at me?

SHOPKEEPER: In a way, yes.

4th BOY (*Impressed*): Wow!

SHOPKEEPER: Now, wouldn’t you like to take a look around my shop? You may find just the right future.

4th BOY: Well, all right. But I did so much want to be a Do-Nothing Frog! (*He goes to counter and looks through articles.*)

SHOPKEEPER (*Shaking his head*): A very sad case! The whole world waiting, and he wants to be a Do-Nothing Frog!

6th GIRL: You mustn’t worry about just one boy.

SHOPKEEPER: Somebody must. It might as well be me.

2nd GIRL: We think your shop is a great idea, don’t we, everybody?

ALL: Yes!

1st GIRL: And you have our promises, Mr. Shopkeeper, sir. We all promise to make the world a better place when we grow up. We’ll give the world care.

3rd BOY: And safety.

5th BOY: And exciting sports.

2nd GIRL: And entertainment

3rd GIRL: And beauty.

4th GIRL: And good education.

6th BOY: And thoughtful service.

7th BOY: And better transportation.

8th BOY: And good food. (*4th BOY comes downstage carrying a hat*.)

4th BOY: And animals!

ALL: Animals?

4th BOY: Yes! I know what I’m going to be!

ALL: What?

4th BOY (*Triumphantly*): Be a keeper in a zoo! (*He plops hat labeled “Zoo” on his head*.)

All (*Pleased*):

He’ll be a keeper at the zoo!

That’s an excellent thing to do!

4th BOY: But I still bet frogs have fun!

ALL: Thank you, Mr. Shopkeeper! (*Shopkeeper bows*.)

Now we know

The futures that are waiting for us while we grow.

There’s a lot to learn and a lot to do,

4th BOY (*Stepping forward*): If you want to be the keeper of the City Zoo. (*Steps back*)

ALL:

And when anyone asks, “Now let me see,

What did you say you were going to be?”

Not a Do-Nothing Frog is what we’ll say.

4th BOY (*Stepping forward again*): Cr-r-roak-k-k!

ALL: But a Better-World Maker in every way! (*Curtain*)

*THE END*