

# **RETURN TO CHUMLEIGH TOWERS**

A Play

by

**Alison Davidson**

**SchoolPlay Productions Ltd**

15 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU

**[www.schoolplayproductions.co.uk](http://www.schoolplayproductions.co.uk)**

# THE CHUMLEIGH TOWERS TRILOGY

Copyright Alison Davidson 1993

This play is fully protected by copyright.

*It is an infringement of the copyright to give any public performance or reading of this play in its entirety or in the form of excerpts without the prior consent in writing of the copyright owners.*

*No part of this publication may be transmitted, stored in a retrieval system, or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, typescript, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owners.*

All rights are strictly reserved. Any enquiries about performing rights, professional or amateur, should be directed, before rehearsal, to

**SchoolPlay Productions Ltd,  
15 Inglis Road,  
Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU.**

No performance may be given unless a licence has been obtained.

ISBN 978 1 872475 58 5

Printed and published by  
**SchoolPlay Productions Limited,**  
15 Inglis Road,  
Colchester, Essex, CO3 3HU

## RETURN TO CHUMLEIGH TOWERS

### CAST

**Narrator**

**Polly Brown**

*A Scholarship Girl*

**Lois Stanhope-Lacey**

*The School Snob*

**Mona Murgatroyd**

*Her sneaky hanger-on*

**Felicity Fawcett-Majors**

*The nicest girl in the school*

**Madge Merriweather**

*Felicity's loyal chum*

**Sophie Carruthers**

*Captain of Cricket*

**Brad**

*The handsome Stable-lad*

**Miss Fancourt-Favisham**

*The Headmistress*

**Girls**



## RETURN TO CHUMLEIGH TOWERS

by Alison Davidson

*Staging: This Play was originally written for a Proscenium Stage. All the action took place on the Apron, giving a comic-strip, two-dimensional effect, until the Fire Scene when the Main Curtains drew back for the first time, to reveal a pile of stage blocks representing the Sanatorium. This is not necessary, but ideally the "Sanatorium" (a Stable Table would be adequate) should be concealed until it is required, perhaps behind a screen.*

*When the action begins, POLLY is on Stage alone. NARRATOR reads schoolgirl comic aloud, SL.*

**Narr:** At first Polly Brown, the humble scholarship girl, thought that she would never fit in at Chumleigh Towers. (*Enter FELICITY*). However, she soon won the friendship of Felicity Fawcett-Majors - - -

**Fel:** (*Grips POLLY'S hand. To AUDIENCE*). - - The nicest girl in the school - - -

*(Enter MADGE).*

**Narr:** - - And of Madge Merriweather - - -

**Madge:** (*Throws arm round FELICITY'S shoulders. To AUDIENCE*). - - Felicity's loyal chum - - -

*(Enter BRAD).*

**Narr:** - - And of Brad - - -

**Brad:** (*To AUDIENCE*). - - The handsome stable-lad - - -

**Narr:** And when she won the Colonel's Cup and beat Lois Stanhope-Lacey - - -

*(Enter LOIS).*

**Lois:** (*Poses. To AUDIENCE*). - - The school snob - - -

*(Enter MONA).*

**Narr:** - - And Mona Murgatroyd - - -

**Mona:** (*Poses. To AUDIENCE*). - - Her sneaky hanger-on - - -

**Narr:** - - - She was soon the most popular girl in the school.

*(On rush other girls. They pose adoringly round POLLY).*

**Girls:** Oh, Polly you are wonderful!

**Narr:** Alas, her new-found happiness was not to last....

*(Enter MISS FANCOURT-FAVISHAM. She holds out her hand accusingly at POLLY, who looks appalled. FELICITY and MADGE gaze at each other, anguished. LOIS and MONA gloat. The other GIRLS turn contemptuously away from POLLY. TABLEAU).*

**Fel:** Polly Brown, a thief! Oh no!

**Lois:** Blood will tell. What can you expect of a scholarship girl?

**Poll:** It isn't true! I'm not a thief! I know the evidence is black against me, but oh, Miss Fancourt-Favisham, you must believe me!

**Miss F-F:** Polly Brown, I have written to your parents and asked them to remove you from this school. From Sunday you will no longer be a Chumleigh Towers girl.

*(Enter SOPHIE).*

**Sophie:** *(Captain of Cricket and instantly recognizable as such because she wears full cricket rig).* And don't expect to play in the cricket match tomorrow. Lois Stanhope-Lacey, the school snob, will take your place. There's no room in the Chumleigh Towers team for a thief.

*(MISS FANCOURT-FAVISHAM and LOIS leave. LOIS will not be seen again until the Sanatorium episode. The other GIRLS lie down. If this is traditionally staged, POLLY can peer through the main curtains behind her, and then turn back to the AUDIENCE, to report on the scene in the Quad. Otherwise she just looks off to the wings).*

**Narr:** That night Polly could not sleep. *(POLLY tosses and turns dramatically, then gets up).*

**Polly:** Branded a thief! Even Felicity and Madge believe it. I have only one friend in the world, Brad, the handsome stable-lad. What a true chum he is. Why, who is that in the quad? Oh gosh, it is Lois Stanhope-Lacey, with rouged cheeks and painted lips. How awful! She must have broken bounds to go dancing. What would her parents say? Oh no, there is a boy with her and he

has his arm around her waist. What a cad he must be. Now the light is falling upon his face. *(With horrified recognition)*. Oh, how dreadful! Oh, Brad, how could he! I'll never see him again! *(Throws herself tearfully down again)*.

**Narr:** Polly passed a wretched night. But the morning was to bring unexpected news....

*(All GIRLS get up. SOPHIE, MADGE, FELICITY, MONA, pull on white jumpers, mime strapping on pads, etc.)*.

**Sophie:** *(To POLLY)*. Lois Stanhope-Lacey has sprained her ankle. You'll have to play in the match after all. *(POLLY is radiant)*. But don't expect much support from the rest of us. *(POLLY droops)*. The team hasn't a lot of time for thieves.

*(POLLY puts on white jumper. SOPHIE, FELICITY, MADGE, MONA, move forward)*.

**Narr:** As the team gathered outside the pavilion, a great cheer went up.

**Girls:** Hurrah!

**Polly;** *(Rushes up to join them)*. Sorry I'm late.

**Girls:** Boo!

**Polly:** Oh gosh, how awful. But the only thing that matters is that Chumleigh Towers should win the match.

**Narr:** But soon things were looking black for Chumleigh Towers.

*(SOPHIE comes centre stage front, faces AUDIENCE, mimes standing at wicket. She has bat, but there is, of course, no ball. The Bowler is supposedly behind the AUDIENCE. MONA MURGATROYD, the other batsman, goes down centre gangway to back behind AUDIENCE, to where the other wicket would be)*.

**Sophie:** Sophie Carruthers, cricket-captain and the finest bat the school had ever known - - - *(She hits out, watches the supposed flight of the ball apprehensively)*.

**Girls:** - - Caught first ball by silly mid-off! Oooh!

**Fel:** *(Takes bat and SOPHIE'S place at wicket)*. Felicity Fawcett-Majors - - - *(She hits out)*.

**Girls:** - - Clean-bowled! Oh no!

**Madge:** *(Takes wicket)*. Madge Merriweather - -

**Girls:** - - Leg before wicket! Crumbs!

**Polly:** *(Takes wicket). And Polly Brown - - (She hits out. MONA charges up gangway, pushes her off the wicket).*

**Girls:** - - Run out by Mona Murgatroyd. Serves her right!

**Narr:** But Sophie Carruthers was not Captain for nothing.

**Sophie:** Nil Desperandum, girls! Their innings now. Chumleigh Towers isn't beaten yet!

**Narr:** Polly's head went back and her eyes flashed sudden fire. *(They do).*

**Poll:** Sophie's right. What a fine Captain she is. Nil Desperandum, Polly!

*(She comes centre, "bowls" through AUDIENCE at imaginary Batsman. MADGE goes down behind AUDIENCE to become Wicket Keeper).*

**Narr:** Their opening batsman....

**Madge:** Huzzat!

**Miss F-F:** Out! - -

**Girls:** Hurrah!

**Miss F-F:** - - Bowled Polly Brown.

**Girls:** Boo!

*(SOPHIE takes over bowling. POLLY moves SL to field. The action is mimed. SOPHIE bowls).*

**Narr:** Their captain....

**Miss F-F:** Out! - -

**Girls:** Hurrah!

**Miss F-F:** Thrown in, Polly Brown.

**Girls:** Boo!

**Narr:** But still the score mounted, until....

**Girls:** The last ball of the match. They need one to tie, two to win, Sophie to bowl, Ooooh!

*(In slow motion, SOPHIE "bowls", winces at the evident result. POLLY, in slow motion, leaps down into the AUDIENCE, chasing the imaginary ball).*

**Girls:** Oh gosh, a loose one! She's hitting it straight to the boundary. Oh no!

**Narr:** But who is this slight figure, racing over to intercept?

**Girl 1:** She'll never do it!

**Girl 2:** No-one could run that fast.

**Girl 3:** The match is lost.

**Girl 4:** No, wait! (*POLLY leaps. dramatically catches ball*).

**Girls:** Hurrah!

**Miss F-F:** The match has been won for Chumleigh Towers with a catch by Polly Brown!

**Girls:** Boo!

(*MISS FANCOURT-FAVISHAM leaves. Everyone else but POLLY lies down. POLLY returns to stage*).

**Narr:** Poor Polly was to endure a restless night.

**Poll:** (*Paces*). The girls hate me, Miss Fancourt-Favisham thinks I'm a thief, Brad had his arm around Lois and tomorrow I leave Chumleigh Towers for ever. Sometimes it's hard to be plucky. Why, what is that glowing in the darkness? What is that crackling noise? What is that smell of smoke? Gosh, wake up, everybody, Chumleigh Towers is on fire!

(*GIRLS leap up, line up, down on AUDIENCE level, if this is possible, so Sanatorium looks as high as possible. MISS FANCOURT-FAVISHAM rushes on*).

**Narr:** Within seconds the school had lined up in the quad and Miss Fancourt-Favisham was completing the roll-call.

**Miss F-F:** Madge Merriweather!

**Madge:** Adsum!

**Miss F-F:** Lois Stanhope-Lacey? (*Pause*). Has anyone seen Lois Stanhope-Lacey?

**Madge:** Miss Fancourt-Favisham, Lois sprained her ankle. She is spending the night in the san!

**Miss F-F:** In the san? But the san is already a great mass of flames!

**Girls:** Miss Fancourt-Favisham, Look!

(*Curtains open [screen is removed to reveal blocks] table representing Sanatorium, with Lois standing on top of it, waving frantically [slow motion is effective] and mouthing [silent] appeals for help. She has a couple of folded sheets up there with her and a few tendrils of ivy trail downward. Large cut-out flames waved by stage-hands concealed behind them are comic and effective*).

**Miss F-F:** Great heavens, she is trapped and the fire brigade cannot get here for half an hour!

**Girl 1:** None of the ladders is long enough!

**Girl 2:** The stair-case has collapsed!

**Fel:** Miss Fancourt-Favisham, look at that rope of ivy. Someone could climb up it and save her!

**Girls:** Oh, how terribly dangerous!

**Mona:** Send Brad. He is only the handsome stable-lad. It wouldn't matter as much as if one of us got killed.

**Fel:** No, we need the lightest girl in the school.

*(ALL look expectantly at MONA).*

**Madge:** *(Meaningly).* And the closest friend of Lois Stanhope-Lacey!

**Mona:** *(Screams).* No! don't look at me! I can't! I might get hurt! I'm afraid!  
*(Throws herself at HEADMISTRESS' feet, sobbing and whimpering).* Please, Miss Fancourt Favisham, don't make me go up there!

**Madge:** Mona Murgatroyd, you coward! We knew you were a sneak and a toady, but we didn't know you were yellow!

**Girls:** Miss Fancourt-Favisham, look!

*(During all this, POLLY has slipped unobtrusively away and is about to climb the ivy).*

**Girl 1:** It's Polly Brown!

**Girl 2:** Gosh, how awfully brave!

**Girl 3:** Go it, Polly!

**Narr:** Foot by foot, Polly swarmed up the ivy! Would it hold? *(POLLY reaches the top).* It held!

**Girls:** Hurrah!

*(POLLY joins LOIS on Blocks / Table).*

**Lois:** Polly! But why have you come? Oh, Polly, we're going to die!

**Polly:** Pull yourself together, Lois. Remember, you're a Chumleigh Towers girl. We need a rope. Where are the sheets? *(She holds up sheets, throws them down behind Blocks / Table, draws up concealed rope of knotted sheets).*

**Narr:** To tear up the sheets and knot them together was the work of an instant!

**Poll:** I'm going to lower you down to the ground. *(LOIS whimpers).* There's nothing to be afraid of.

**Lois:** There is, there is! I can't do it; I'm afraid! *(Falls to knees, embraces POLLY'S knees).* I'm too rich to die!

**Narr:** As Polly struggled to the window, the watching girls held their breaths. But

when she lowered the fainting Lois to safety (*POLLY pushes LOIS over edge*). A cheer broke out.

**Girls:** Hurrah!

**Girl 1:** Now you, Polly!

**Girl 2:** Hurry, Polly, you haven't much time!

**Narr:** A queer little smile touched Polly's lips. (*It does*).

**Poll:** I wish they'd believed I'm not a thief. But if i don't make it, they'll see I'm not a coward, though I am a scholarship girl. (*Jumps down behind Blocks / Table. There is moment's suspense, then she reappears, coughing*).

**Girls:** Hurrah!

**Girl 1:** Well done, Polly!

**Girl 2:** Our heroine!

**Miss F-F:** Polly Brown, you may be a thief but your gallantry has made up for that. You shall stay on at Chumleigh Towers.

**Lois:** Miss Fancourt-Favisham, I must speak! Polly is not a thief. I put the money in her pocket so she would be expelled and I would play in the match. Oh, Polly, can you forgive me?

**Poll:** Oh, Lois! (*Throws her arms round LOIS*).

**Girls:** Isn't Polly a brick!

**Brad:** And I was only supporting Lois because she had sprained her ankle. You will always be my best chum.

**Poll:** Oh, Brad! (*Throws her arms round BRAD*).

**Girls:** Isn't Polly wonderful!

**Poll:** Thankyou Miss Fancourt-Favisham, for letting me stay on. Now with my true friends, Felicity Fawcett- Majors - -

**Fel:** - - The nicest girl in the school - -

**Poll:** - - And Brad - -

**Brad:** - - The handsome stable-lad - -

**Poll:** I can look forward to many more terms of fun and excitement at Chumleigh Towers.

**All:** Hurrah!

## CURTAIN

*If the full Trilogy is being performed, this is the recommended time for the*

## INTERVAL