

The Three Years Hill

by Maggie Lee

Cast of Characters

WOMAN: A mother

CHILD: Her child (maybe 10–12 years old)

Setting: Somewhere on a grassy hill with a gentle but noticeable slope in a park or other outdoor space

(WOMAN is sitting on a blanket, reading a magazine. CHILD enters, kicking glumly at a soccer ball.)

WOMAN

Hey sweetie. How was soccer practice?

CHILD

Fine, I guess.

WOMAN

I saw you were playing goalie during the scrimmage, I know you really wanted to try that for a while now. You looked great out there!

CHILD

No, I didn't. I totally sucked.

WOMAN

Well, it looked pretty non-sucky to me. Especially for your first try.

CHILD

That's just the thing. I'm so behind everyone else. Like, you know Jaye? They've been playing goalie since like forever, so they're really good. There's no way I'll ever catch up.

WOMAN

You don't need to catch up to anyone. As long as you're out there having fun, then that's what really counts.

CHILD

But isn't! Because if I suck at goalie, then I'll get stuck playing fullback all season, and then I'll never get picked for the school team, and then when I get to high school, I'll never make varsity, and then I won't have the right extra-curriculars for my college applications, and then I won't get into a good school, and then I'll be a total dumb loser failure, and then—

WOMAN

Whoa, hold on there! That's a lot of "and thens" that might not happen.

CHILD

But they totally will happen!

WOMAN

No one knows what's going to happen. That's what makes life so...interesting.

CHILD

I'd rather know things for sure than be "interesting."

WOMAN

Well, you'll always be interesting to me, no matter what. (*chuckles*) You know, this reminds me of a story my mom told me when I was about your age. I was just like you, always trying to plan ahead and worrying about what might go wrong.

CHILD

You were? What's the story?

WOMAN

Oh, it's a very old story. I'm sure you wouldn't be interested in hearing it.

CHILD

I might be. Come on, tell me.

WOMAN

Well, okay. Once upon a time in Korea, the land of the morning calm, there lived an old man in a small village. He made a good living growing melons and selling them at the market in the next town over. But he had one big problem. You see, to get to the market, he had to cross over the dreaded Three Years Hill.

CHILD

What's so scary about a hill?

WOMAN

Legend said that if you ever stumbled and fell while you were climbing it, you would be cursed with only three years left to live. How scary is that! So, the old man was always extra careful when crossing over the hill. But one morning...

(WOMAN becomes OLD MAN. She yawns and stretches.)

WOMAN (as OLD MAN)

What a great day to sell some melons. (*looks at watch*) Oh no, I overslept! I must get to the market right away! Hurry, hurry!

(OLD MAN grabs the soccer ball as a melon and starts to walk up the hill.)

WOMAN (as OLD MAN)

Aw kimchi-pants, I forgot my cane rushing out the door. Well, can't turn back now, or I'll be late. (*nervous*) I've walked up this hill a million times, I'll be fine.

(OLD MAN starts walking up the hill. He wobbles and almost slips and falls a couple of times from being so nervous but manages to save himself.)

WOMAN (as OLD MAN)

Whew! Almost made it over.

(as WOMAN)

Suddenly, out of nowhere, a friendly little fox appeared.

(CHILD becomes FOX.)

CHILD (as FOX) (*loud and obnoxiously friendly*)

Hey there, Old Man! How's it going? What have you got there? Is that a melon? Yum! It looks so delicious!

WOMAN (as OLD MAN)

Shhh! I'm trying to concentrate.

CHILD (as FOX)

Concentrate on what? On the melon? Gosh, it looks really slippery. Is it heavy? Can I help you carry it? I'm really good at helping!

WOMAN (as OLD MAN)

No, no, I'm fine, little Fox. Just go away and leave me alone...whoa, whoa, whoa!

(A little slapstick humor as OLD MAN almost drops his melon, juggling it. It looks like he has it under control, when it slips out of his grasp and starts to roll away.)

WOMAN (as OLD MAN)

Oh no! Get back here!

(OLD MAN chases after it, and ends up tripping and falling down, rolling all the way down the hill.)

CHILD (as FOX)

Oh wow. Are you okay, Old Man? That was quite a tumble!

WOMAN (as OLD MAN) (*crushed*)

Nooo! This is terrible! I just fell down the Three Years Hill!!

CHILD (as FOX)

Yeah, but you didn't get hurt. And it looked kind of fun, actually.

WOMAN (as OLD MAN)

You don't understand. My whole life, I've been so careful, and this one moment of carelessness has ruined everything. Now I am cursed forever!

CHILD (as FOX)

Cursed? Really? That sounds exciting! Are you going to turn into a newt?

WOMAN (as OLD MAN)

No. I only have three years left to live. That's what happens to people who fall down the Three Years Hill.

CHILD (as FOX)

Ohhhh! You mean THAT old curse? That's nothing to get upset about.

WOMAN (as OLD MAN)

What do you mean, nothing? I'm going to die in three years! Of course I'm upset!

CHILD (as FOX)

That's because you humans don't know the whole legend. You see, it's true that you'll only live three years after falling down that hill. But we animals know that if you fall down twice, you actually live SIX more years!

WOMAN (as OLD MAN)

Really? Then...I'm going to live?

CHILD (as FOX)

Of course! Just keep climbing and falling, and you'll never need to worry about a thing!

WOMAN (as OLD MAN)

Hooray!

(OLD MAN and FOX both run up the hill and roll down it gleefully. They become WOMAN and CHILD again, lying in the grass and laughing.)

WOMAN

And from that day on, the Old Man never worried about the Three Years Hill again, and he lived a long and happy life. The End.

CHILD

Mom. Is that a real story?

WOMAN

Of course it is. Look, I don't know if you'll be a good goalie or get on the varsity team or any of that stuff. But the important thing is to just keep climbing and falling for as long as you can. That's all any of us can do, really.

CHILD

And also...have fun while you're doing it?

WOMAN

Definitely. Hey, race you to the top?

CHILD

Okay!

(They both run to the top of the hill and disappear to the other side.)

END OF PLAY