

Script and Production Notes for The Magic Bullets

PRODUCTION NOTES

When deciding whether to use a **play vs. video** format, consider that a play absolutely requires much practice and memorization of lines. This method is more likely to yield the desired effect of having students become so thoroughly familiar with the plot that they will never forget it.

The prologue and epilogue featured in our original video are didactic in the extreme! After more research, **we recommend against using them** either when the video is shown to children or when students perform the play. However, both are included in the video and at the end of the script.

The script is copyrighted, but the author releases it for use at no charge to non-profit groups. Feel free to make minor changes in it to suit your group, so long as you keep in the spirit of the thing, but contact the author for major changes. Please do give the author credit during your production.

The music featured in the video is copyrighted by Tom Waits and by Island Records and was used with permission. We feel that this particular music added a great deal to the play, and it is likely that permission would be extended to your group, as well. If you would like to use music from "The Black Rider," contact the author and we'll do our best to set that up.

If you are working with older students, you may wish to let them hear various cuts from the CD and turn them loose to create their own weird music. In this case, please do let them listen to more of the music than was used in the video. Many cuts from the CD are chilling and would inspire your students to create their own spooky soundtrack from simple materials and basic instruments.

If you use any copyrighted music, take care to receive permission. If you make a video, protect yourself by getting a simple film release participation form signed by the parents of the actors who will be filmed.

We used period costumes, because it helps keep oppositional students from seeing the story events as being directed at them and therefore rejected by them. I do have some costumes I will loan out; contact me as soon as you know the date they'll be needed.

We suggest that you **use anachronisms** to help keep the viewers' interest (picking out "mistakes"), to subtly tie the story to today's world, and because you will probably end up having anachronisms in there anyhow (eyeglasses, etc.)

Feel free to change **the gender of the characters**. The guards can be male or female, you can have a Queen and/or King, William's best friend can even be a girl, or Kate could take those lines with minor changes in dialogue.

The set can be anything from a few trees and a target to something elaborate. Imagination makes the set come alive for the viewer.

Use of rifles in the play is vital, because our students already understand that misuse of firearms often has immediate and disastrous results. The play works, in part, by transferring this knowledge to drug use. But **check with your principal** before you bring reproduction rifles onto school grounds. A play is make-believe, involving the willing suspension of disbelief, and "rifles" can be made of wrapping paper rolls, dowel sticks, etc.

For information or assistance, please contact Ida Domazlicky, Jefferson School, 520 S. Minnesota, Cape Girardeau, MO 63701; (573) 334-2030; idad@igateway.net

The Magic Bullets

By Ida Domazlicky
(Copyright 2000)

Adapted from "The Fatal Marksman," by Thomas de Quincy

CHARACTERS/NARRATOR(S)

Robert, the Royal Huntsman
Anne, Robert's wife
Kate, their daughter
William, Kate's boyfriend
Roland, a suitor of Kate
Hans, William's friend
George, Hans's older brother
Pegleg, a magician
King
4 Royal Guards

SETTING

Germany, in the 1700's

SCENE I

Robert is talking quietly with Roland at the picnic table. Anne is watching William and Kate, who are off to one side talking and holding hands.

>>> Anne begins back of Robert and Roland, back left, watching W & K. When Roland leaves, she begins (shy sidle) showing uncertainty and finally decision. Angling toward R, she takes 3 quick steps, pauses, looks thoughtfully at K & W. Nods head, walks decisively around and in front of R. to sit next to him.

Robert: Roland is a fine young man. He'll make Kate a good husband.

Anne: But husband, look there. (points to Kate and Wm.)

Robert: You know well, wife, that the man who marries Kate will inherit my position. Roland is an excellent marksman. What is William? A student, that's all. Kate cannot marry him.

(Kate and William amble toward her parents.)

Anne: They're coming this way. If you won't allow them to be together, tell them now and get it over with.

William: Very well, wife. (Puts down his musket. Anne looks on disapprovingly.)

Kate: We're going to walk in the woods, Papa.

Robert: Wait, daughter. There is something you must know.

Kate: What is that?

Robert: Roland was here and asked for your hand in marriage.

Kate: But I want to marry William!

William: And I want to marry Kate, sir!

Robert: William, you are a fine young man. But the man who marries Kate will become the Royal Huntsman after me. Roland is a skilled hunter. That is the end of it.

William: Sir, if I may...

Robert: Speak, William.

William: It is true I was raised in town. But I spent summers on my grandfather's farm. In my hometown, I am considered a first-class hunter.

Anne: Is this true, William? You are not just saying so for the sake of winning Kate?

William: It is true, Ma'am. I can prove it to you now.

(Robert hands William his musket.)

Robert: Do you see the apple in the top of that tree? Hit it.

William: Gladly, sir.

(William loads the rifle and tamps it with the rod, aims and fires. The apple falls. Anne and Kate hug one another; Robert smiles.)

Robert: Well done, William! Come hunting with me tomorrow. The King will be here in just two weeks. We must be sure you are in your best form.

(William hands back the musket.)

William: Thank you, sir. I will be here at sunrise.

(Robert and Anne leave happily.)

Kate: You are wonderful! Will you shoot that well for the King?

William: I will, if it means winning you. For you, I would shoot the moon right out of the sky!

Kate: And you won't let me down?

William: Never.

MUSIC as scene changes: "I'll Shoot the Moon"

SCENE II

(William, Hans, and George talk at the picnic table by lantern light.)

>>> W. is in center back, sitting on table seat. H is to L, standing, fiddling with something in his hands. G is seated to W's right, on table.

Hans: I don't understand why you're so worried. You know you are a good hunter.

William: But when I shoot with Kate's father, I'm so nervous I miss shots. I think he's beginning to doubt me. How much worse will it be when I shoot for the King next week?

Hans: Just relax. Depend on your skill to get you through this.

William: Do I have a choice? I have to shoot well for the King, or I'll lose Kate forever! But I cannot relax with it.

Hans: I have an idea! Tomorrow, you and I will go to the field where the King will test you. You can practice there until your heart is calm.

George: There is another way.

Hans: What way is that?

George: Wait in the woods for the magician they call Pegleg. When he comes, ask him for the Silver Bullets. They never miss.

>>>H leans in toward G., hands on table angrily.

Hans: I can't believe my own brother is saying this! There's no such thing as magic! Having Silver Bullets might make you FEEL like you're doing everything right, but they can't guarantee you'll never miss your target.

George: I only tell you what I know. And if you ask, Old Pegleg will give you a free sample to try. Then you'll see I'm right.

William: If indeed the Silver Bullets cannot miss their target, then it is Black Magic. You gain the skill, but you pay with your soul.

>>>G. is beginning to be irritated. He half-turns and leans in toward W. Speaks close to W's face.

George: (shrugs) Do I look like I paid with my soul?

>>>H. straightens, draws shoulders back, shocked.
W. watches each speaker carefully.

Hans: You've used the Silver Bullets yourself?

>>> George returns to sitting position facing camera. He is bragging.

George: How do you think I won the state marksman contest last month? I used the Silver Bullets, and I won. Since then, I have friends in every house and girls at my feet.

>>>Turns suddenly and points finger at W.

And I paid with cash, not with my soul.

>>> As G and H watch him carefully, W. stands and paces two steps toward back left, stands with his back to both of them for a moment. Turns slowly as if unsure, then decides and steps quickly back to G.

William: Where did you say to find Old Pegleg?

>>>H drops item on table in anger.
W seems not to hear, just keeps on looking at G.

Hans: You're not really going to do this!

George: Go to the crossroads by the mill. You won't have to look for him. Pegleg will find you. (stands to leave) You won't be sorry. (George exits stage.)

W and H watch G leave. Then, as W continues staring, H walks around behind him. Stands to W's left and leans into W's line of sight to catch his attention.

Hans: I know he's my brother, but he's crazy! Using Silver Bullets is too dangerous. You don't need THAT kind of help!

>>>W sits slowly, sighs. He looks down/left at the table. He speaks without looking up at H.

William: I probably won't use them.

Hans: I hope not. >>> H pauses, looking at W, but W does not answer.

>>>W. sits sideways on the bench a comfortable distance from H. Keeps his eyes thoughtfully on W's face.

Hans: Meet me tomorrow at the field?

>>>W. begins polishing his gun and does not look up at H when he answers.

William: I'll be there.

>>>H stares at W for a moment, then gets up and walks off to L. W. continues polishing his musket thoughtfully.

>>>After a few seconds he stops polishing and nods his head.

He stays seated, face illuminated by the firelight. He shows uncertainty and determination, a touch of desperation.

>>>(Hans exits. William picks up his musket and polishes it, thinking. He stands.)

William: Just this once can't hurt anything. I'll use Silver Bullets until I've passed the King's test, then I'll quit. I don't see any problem with that. That way, I'll be sure to marry Kate.

SCENE III

>>> (V maneuver) Wm. Walks quickly from L forward to Center back, looks around, walks slowly to R front, then speaks.

(William paces nervously back and forth at the crossroads in the dark. He checks his watch.)

William: It's past midnight. That old man is not coming.

Pegleg: Were you looking for me?

>>> (short circular standoff) P. advances from back center around clockwise toward front, just off center. W. counters this exactly, moving around toward back center as if trying to escape. Stops when W. and P are directly opposite each other just off center middle.

William: Do you sell Silver Bullets?

Pegleg: I do. (He pulls a pouch from his shirt.) Are you buying?

W is suddenly uncertain. He stares at the ground, then asks P:

William: I'm not sure. How do I know they really work?

Pegleg: The first one is always free. Here.

>>>P holds out a single silver bullet in his outstretched hand. P stays rooted to the spot, waiting for W.

>>>W takes 2 or 3 slow steps toward P, reaches out his hand.

(Hands William a Silver Bullet.) See that owl up there against the moon?

William: That? No one could hit a target like that at night. It's too far away.

Pegleg: With the Silver Bullets, nothing is impossible. Try it yourself.

(William packs his musket, aims, and shoots. The owl falls heavily.)

>>>W takes 2 steps backward (angle back L, away from P. but facing camera) and glares suspiciously at P.

William: I can't believe it. The bullets really are magic!

>>>P. nods once, smiling. He waits, smiling all the while. He is already sure W will take the bullets.

>>> W. stares at P for the space of three breaths, then speaks as if backed into a corner.

W: How much do they cost?

Pegleg: For only \$25 dollars, you get 60 Silver Bullets.

>>>P holds up the full bag of bullets.

>>>W can't take his eyes from the bullets. He steps R center, to P.

William: And I will hit whatever I aim at?

>>>P. lowers the bag of bullets to where it is hidden in his cloak.

>>>W. looks at him in confusion, and a little fear that P has decided not to sell him the bullets.

Pegleg: Ah, there is one small thing. Of the 60 Silver Bullets, 57 of them are yours. They will hit what you choose. But three, three are mine. Those were made for special targets.

>>>W leans in to look P in the face. He is trying to figure out what trick P is pulling on him.

William: What targets will your three hit?

>>>P turns toward camera and steps one step toward center right. He is smiling. His face is only half visible to W. His back is partly to W.

>>>W leans slightly forward and around, trying to see P's face better.

Pegleg: That is for me to know. And why quibble over such a small thing? 57 of the 60 will hit where you aim. The odds are greatly in your favor.

>>>W is suddenly angry. He half believes now that the bullets are worthless and this is just a scam to get his money. Takes one step forward and speaks angrily.

William: You would not cheat me here?

>>>P. turns sharply on his heel to face W. He pounds the ground with his stick as he roars:

Pegleg: I cheat no one. I do exactly as I say I will.

>>>W stands his ground but is beaten.

William: Very well, then. I'll take the 60. (He hands Pegleg the money.)

Pegleg: My pleasure, I assure you. (Bows deeply to William and vanishes.)

>>>W. looks around briefly for P, but can't see where he went. He looks down at the bag in his hand.

>>>W pours some of the bullets into his hand, raises his hand to face level. The bullets shine in the moonlight. W. is at first frowning, but as the bullets shine, a low smile spreads across his face, and he nods. He closes his fist over the bullets like a man who knows he has power and smiles proudly up at the night sky, almost defiant.

(William pours some of the bullets into his hand, where they shine in the moonlight. He smiles, sure now that he will win Kate.)

SCENE IV

>>> W is sitting on the table where G sat in their previous discussion. H is sitting where W sat. W holds his palm flat open with 3 bullets showing.

(William and Hans are at the picnic table. William is showing Hans his remaining Silver Bullets.)

William: George was right. I hunted all week with Kate's father and missed only one shot.

>>>H. is interested, looks from the bullets to W's face.

Hans: How many are left?

>>>W puts the 3 bullets back in their bag and slides it under his belt/cloak.

William: Only nine. But I'll be sure to save a few to prove to the King what a good marksman I am.

Hans: And are you alright? Pegleg took only money from you and nothing more?

>>>W slides down front side of table, turns to face H like telling a secret to a good friend. He is amazed and happy.

William: (laughs) I've never been better. Like I told you, George was right about these Silver Bullets.

(Robert comes to the table and puts his hand on Hans's shoulder.)

>>>R. is walking like carrying the weight of the world. His hand on H's shoulder is heavy and motionless.

Robert: My young friend, I have sad news for you.

>>>H stands and half-faces R.
R. leaves his hand on H's shoulder.

Hans: (alarmed) What news?

Robert: Your brother George is dead. Hunters found him at the crossroads, nearly torn to pieces and telling a story that did not make sense.

>>>H is dazed. His mouth hangs open as he stares miserably at R.
>>>W is shocked, but he also is now worried about himself. Maybe he is next?

William: What did he say?

>>>H sits suddenly and buries his face in his arms.
>>>R withdraws his hand and looks at H sympathetically.
R. speaks to W.

Robert: He said something about Silver Bullets, and how he tried to quit. He said he was not strong enough. He said the old man Pegleg became a vicious beast and tore him to pieces. But you know that can't be true. He was delirious. It was probably a bear that killed him.

>>>R leans down and puts his hand gently across H's back as if to help him stand.

Robert: (to H) Now come with me. Your mother and your father are nearly destroyed with grief. They need you.

>>>H stands as R helps him stay balanced. H's face is wet with tears. The two slowly walk to L.

(Robert leads Hans away. William's face reflects shock, for he knows George's story is true.)

(Hans breaks free of Robert and runs back to William.)

>>>W. is still seated at the table, facing forward.
H. bends down, almost in his face.

Hans: Get rid of those bullets now. Now!

>>>W nods. He is terrified and sad.

William: I will, I promise.

(Robert and Hans exit the stage.)

(William looks around frantically and finds a place to dig. He buries the bag of Silver Bullets in the hole and piles dirt on top, stands and begins to walk away.

>>>He takes two steps away from camera, then stops. (Camera on his boots?) He turns slowly and slowly walks back to the buried bag.)

Then he goes back and digs up the bag. He pulls out two Silver Bullets and holds them up.

William: These are for Kate, to be sure I win.

>>>W reburies the remaining bullets in the bag and walks quickly off to catch up with Hans and Robert.

(Pegleg's face appears through the bushes, laughing, as he watches W leave.)

SCENE V

>>>>A target is set up near the picnic table, which is covered with a white cloth, upon which is a wedding cake. The King and Robert are talking jovially (not heard by audience). Anne is adjusting Kate's wedding veil. In front center, William secretly shows Hans two Silver Bullets.

Hans: I thought you got rid of those!

William: I did. But I saved these for today. After today, I'll never use them again.

Hans: That's what you told me last week!

William: This time I mean it. This is the last time. After today, I'm done with them!

Hans: You don't need them! Throw them away now!

William: (hesitates, then hands one Silver Bullet to Hans) I'll keep only the one. You can get rid of this one for me.

Hans: NO! Give me both!

King: Master William! The time has come to win your bride. Are you prepared?

(Hans backs away. William turns to the King and bows.)

William: Yes, my lord, I am ready.

King: Very well then. Do you think you can hit this target?

(King's men set up a target nearby.)

William: So close, my lord? I could hit that in my sleep.

Hans: (in an urgent whisper) William, don't use the Silver Bullet!
You don't need it! Don't!

(William ignores Hans. He loads the Silver Bullet, tamps down the shot, aims and shoots.)

Behind him, Kate screams and falls to the ground, dead. Anne and Robert run to their daughter. Anne wails.)

Robert: She is dead!

King: The bullet must have ricocheted off a tree. My condolences to you. Guards, take the poor girl's body to her house.

(King, two guards with body leave, followed by Robert and Anne leaning on one another in grief. Two guards remain at attention. Pegleg walks into the glade from the other direction.)

William: (to Pegleg) You said I could not miss my target with the Silver Bullets !

Pegleg: Ah no, not precisely. I said that with 57 of the Silver Bullets you could not miss your target, but that three would hit my targets. That particular bullet there (nods toward where Kate was carried out), that was one of mine.

William: You killed her! (Raises his weapon to strike Pegleg, but he is stopped by the guards. He fights them and is dragged away screaming that Pegleg killed Kate.)

Pegleg: (as if talking to himself) Crazy fool! He killed her himself.

(Hans, who has been hiding behind a tree, comes out to confront Pegleg. He is clearly terrified.)

Pegleg: (grinning, happy to see Hans) Ah, young man! Could I perhaps sell you a Silver Bullet?

(Hans opens his hand, and the last Silver Bullet shines in the light.)

Pegleg: Ah, I see you already have one. Well. When you need more, come to the Crossroads. I will meet you there.

MUSIC: "Oily Night" comes up.

(Pegleg disappears, leaving Hans trembling but unable to let go of the Silver Bullet.)

MUSIC overwhelms everything. Curtain.

THE END

NOTE: We recommend against using the prologue and epilogue.
Prologue by Narrators I and II:

Narrator I. Things are getting a little strange about now. Your friends are acting kind of weird, too. All of a sudden, everybody wants to be popular, and you're not quite sure how to handle that. The rules change every couple of days.

Narrator II. But you figure you can handle it, right? You've never been in any serious trouble. Your grades are OK. You'd just like to get a break now and then, just find a way to take off the pressure and feel like you're part of the group again.

Narrator I. But maybe you're not quite as smart as you think you are. It's awfully easy to start depending on something to get you through the day. It doesn't have to be drugs. It can be almost anything. That's what William found out way back in the 1700's.

Narrator II. You see, William was in love with Kate. Kate's father was the Royal Huntsman for the Queen. Back in those days, there were no grocery stores. If the Queen was to have any meat on the table, Kate's father was the one who got it there.

And the man who married Kate would have to take over when the old man retired. If William wanted to marry Kate, he would have to prove that he could handle the job. That's where the story starts...

Epilogue

Narrator I: Back when Kate and William were alive, nobody used drugs. But they knew something even then that we still need to learn.

Narrator II: Whether it's trying out magic bullets or trying out drugs, it's easy to get hooked. You may THINK you're making your life better. But it won't be long until you realize that your only good days are when you're using. You've got a habit that you can't break, no matter HOW much you want to.

Narrator I: By the time you understand that, you aren't in charge of your own life any more. Your habit is controlling you.

Narrator II: And then people get hurt. The people you LOVE the most get HURT the most.

Narrator I: So don't kid yourself that drugs will make your problems any better. And don't try to fool yourself that nothing bad will happen to you and your family if you just try drugs once or twice.

Narrator II: You know better than that. Remember William, and remember Kate. And maybe YOUR story will have a happy ending.