

THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF

Audition Information

Plot Synopsis

Bill and **Sam**, two petty criminals looking for an easy two thousand dollars, hatch a plot to kidnap and hold for ransom **Johnny**, the 10-year-old nephew of **Ebenezer Dorset**, a wealthy banker in the community. They pick up the boy and take him to a cave hideout, but there the tables are turned. Calling himself "Red Chief" in a fantasy game of cowboys and indians, the boy drives both men crazy—but particularly Bill. With nonsensical prattle, childish demands and mild physical abuse, the boy demands that they entertain him. Unfortunately, Ebenezer Dorset, who knows that his nephew is a terror, rejects their demand and instead offers to take the boy off their hands only if they pay him \$250. Bruised, disheartened, and their hopes reduced by the trials of parenting, Bill and Sam hand over the cash and flee town, never to return.

Cast of Characters

★★★ = *Large role*; ★★ = *Medium-size role*; ★ = *Small role*

SAM BLAKE (★★★): a small and wiry but confident man, ≈ 30-55 years of age. A con-man and a hustler who works with his partner-in-crime, Bill, to kidnap Johnny/Red Chief and hold him for ransom. Sam sees himself as the “brains” of the duo, overseeing and coordinating all of the details of the kidnapping.

BILL DRISCOLL (★★★): a huge (and slightly overweight) lumbering man, ≈ 30-55 years of age. Despite his bearlike appearance however, he really is a sweet and gentle “teddy bear.” Alongside his partner-in-crime, Sam, they kidnap Johnny/Red Chief and hold him for ransom. Bill is relegated to be Red Chief’s caretaker while Sam attends to other aspects of their scheme. As a result, Bill ends up taking the brunt of Red Chief’s wild and fiery spirit. And yet, despite the abuse, Bill proves to be sympathetic to Johnny/Red Chief, serving as a sort of “father figure” to him.

JOHNNY DORSET/RED CHIEF (★★★): a small boy with a huge imagination and mischievous spirit, ≈ 8-12 years of age. He lives with his prominent and wealthy uncle, Ebenezer Dorset, who adopted him at a young age. Unfortunately, Ebenezer is a cold and negligent “father” to Johnny which probably contributes to his knack for unruly behavior. While he initially seems troubled and unsympathetic, as the play progresses, it becomes clear that Johnny is simply imaginative and starved for attention amidst a troubled childhood. While kidnapped, Johnny is kept under the care of one of the con-men, Bill, whom he subjects to many abuses.

EBENEZER DORSET (★★): a distinguished-looking man, ≈ 55-75 years of age. Ebenezer is a wealthy but stingy businessman who is known for taking advantage of people in distress. His selfish and aloof personality even extends to his nephew, Johnny/Red Chief, whom he has had guardianship over from a young age. Unconcerned for his Johnny/Red Chief's safety when he is kidnapped and held for ransom, Ebenezer cleverly negotiates a counter-plan in which the con-men would pay him money to return his troublesome nephew.

MRS. RUDGE (★★): Ebenezer Dorset's sour and cranky housekeeper, ≈ 55-70 years of age. In addition to her housekeeping responsibilities, she also serves as a surrogate nanny for Ebenezer's troublesome nephew, Johnny/Red Chief. Mrs. Rudge has no patience for Johnny/Red Chief since she is often the target of his mischief and disrespect. She strongly believes that she is both underappreciated and underpaid and frequently makes her feelings known to Ebenezer (but to no avail).

JANE CHANDLER: (★★): Ebenezer Dorset's younger sister, ≈ 40-55 years of age. Unlike her brother, Jane has a very pleasant personality. She can, however, be a bit head-strong. Recently widowed, she has made an executive decision to return to town with her three daughters (Abigail, Ellie, and Susan) and live with Ebenezer (much to his surprise and chagrin) in his palatial mansion. Based on the polite and proper behavior of her daughters, it is evident that she is a devoted mother, even if her youngest daughter, Susan, can be a spitfire at times.

ABIGAIL CHANDLER: (★): daughter of Jane Chandler, ≈ 15-18 years of age. She, along with her mother and two sisters, have returned to town to live with her rich uncle, Ebenezer, in his palatial mansion. While she may be a proper young lady, she is also more than capable of standing up for herself when the need arises.

ELLIE CHANDLER: (★): daughter of Jane Chandler, ≈ 12-15 years of age. She, along with her mother and two sisters, have returned to town to live with her rich uncle, Ebenezer, in his palatial mansion. While Ellie may be a "bookworm" and more serious than her sisters, she is quite capable of standing up for herself when the need arises.

SUSAN CHANDLER: (★): daughter of Jane Chandler, ≈ 8-12 years of age. She, along with her mother and two sisters, have returned to town to live with her rich uncle, Ebenezer, in his palatial mansion. Unlike her two older sisters who are very proper, Susan has a feisty spirit and can be a bit of a tomboy.

MARY ALICE: (★★): a curious and imaginative little girl, ≈ 7-10 years of age. Mary Alice is the perfect example of the stereotypical little girl - "sugar, and spice, and everything nice." She detests boys however, especially Johnny/Red Chief, because he's mean to her.

MRS. MILLER: (★★): Mary Alice's mother, ≈ 30-40 years of age. While Mrs. Miller is very friendly, she can be a bit nosey and enjoys gossiping about other people. Mrs. Miller despises Johnny/Red Chief because he's always antagonizing her daughter.

MISS OLIVER: (★★): an avid bird watcher, ≈ 65-85 years of age. A sweet little old lady who's never been married. While her favorite hobby is watching for rare birds alongside her dear friend, Miss Russell, she also enjoys meeting handsome men during their excursions.

MISS RUSSELL: (★★): an avid bird watcher, ≈ 65-85 years of age. A sweet little old lady who's never been married. While her favorite hobby is watching for rare birds alongside her dear friend, Miss Oliver, she also enjoys meeting handsome men during their excursions.

OFFICER JONES: (★★): a police officer, ≈ 40-60 years of age. As the town's sole officer of the law, Officer Jones has an air of self-importance and bravado despite his true insufficiencies.

When will auditions be held for *The Ransom of Red Chief*?

Sunday, August 23rd @ 2-4 p.m.
Monday, August 24 @ 6:30-8:30 p.m.

*Those interested in trying out for a role only need to attend one of the audition dates.

Where will auditions be held for *The Ransom of Red Chief*?

Auditions will take place on the J. Frank Hillyard Middle School auditorium stage
(226 Hawks Hill Drive, Broadway, VA 22815)

To access the building, please park in the parking lot behind the school and enter through Door #9.

How will auditions be conducted?

Upon arrival, all candidates will complete an audition form upon which they will indicate the roles that they are interested in auditioning for. Unlike professional auditions, there is no need to prepare a memorized monologue in advance. Instead, all auditions will be comprised of "cold readings" (reading and performing selected scenes from the script).

What are the expectations for all cast members of *The Ransom of Red Chief*?

- *Attend all scheduled rehearsals for your character. Rehearsals will be held on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings. Every effort will be made to keep rehearsals within a two-hour limit. Be aware, however, that the length of rehearsals may increase during the final two weeks of the rehearsal process.
- *Have no scheduling conflicts with the final three weeks of rehearsals and performances (November 1-22).
- *Meet all deadlines established by the director (line memorization, costumes, etc.)
- *Assist in locating and possibly purchasing some of the costume items for your character in the show.
- *Cast members between the ages of 8-12 must have a parent/guardian that remains with them during scheduled rehearsals.
- *All cast members, especially those under driving age, must find appropriate transportation to and from all rehearsals.