

LAWN BOY

A Reader's Theatre based on the novel by Gary Paulsen

Adapted by Bret Wheadon

CHARACTERS	PROPS
Lawn boy – 11 years old Mom – a teacher Dad – an inventor Grandma – sweet, but nutty as a squirrel Arnold – a stock-trader Pasqual – a laborer Rock – a tough guy Joseph Powdermilk Jr. - A boxer	Cardboard cut-out of riding lawnmower Pots and pans for banging Play money Hand towel Boxing gloves

LAWN BOY: I have no idea how all this will end. It's not like I had a big, hairy plan or anything – I mean, one day, I'm just a normal 11-year-old kid wondering how I'm going to spend my summer vacation, and the next, I've got employees, and I'm RICH! It all started on my 11th birthday when my grandma came over to visit...

GRANDMA: Happy Birthday! How's the birthday boy?

LAWN BOY: Hi grandma.

GRANDMA: Here's your birthday present! It used to belong to your grandpa. He was always tinkering with it.

LAWN BOY: A lawnmower? Gee... thanks.

GRANDMA: Oh, that reminds me! CSI is showing on Friday nights now, which makes it hard to go to my bridge club. Did you know that? Toodle-loo! (*Grandma leaves*)

LAWN BOY: "CSI?"

DAD: I'm sure there's a connection, although I don't know what it is. So... now you own a lawn mower!

MOM: It's not like we have much of a lawn... it just sort of springs up, withers, and dies each year. But it's the thought that counts. I remember my Dad mowing our lawn with it every year. (*Mom and Dad go inside*)

LAWN BOY: So the lawn mower just sat there. It was old, and looked tough and strong – like my Grandpa – and I liked to think that, since he worked on it, and used it, that he was part of it. So after a bit of tinkering with the mower, I got it started, and sheared off what little lawn we had, but then a strange thing happened; all of my neighbors wanted me to mow their lawns! So I started mowing more and more yards, and making good money too! I'd be getting thirty to forty dollars per lawn! And then, one day...

ARNOLD: Hey there! Hello! Are you the new lawn boy? How much for mowing my lawn?

LAWN BOY: Um... Would forty dollars be OK?

ARNOLD: Thirty-five would be better!

LAWN BOY: Well...

ARNOLD: The thing is, I'm a little short on cash right now – I'm a stockbroker, work the small board during the day, and I make a little money now and then. How about if we barter a bit? Do business in trade? I could open an account for you and buy you thirty-five dollars in stock!

LAWN BOY: What's stock?

ARNOLD: Shares in a company – and then, if the stock goes up – you make money!

LAWN BOY: And when if the stock goes down?

ARNOLD: Then you lose money. That's the beauty of it!

LAWN BOY: So, I guess you have to be smart and only buy stock that goes up.

ARNOLD: That's right! Do we have a deal?

LAWN BOY: Sure. (*Arnold leaves*). I mean, he looked honest, and I didn't really need the money – my pockets were bulging with money!

DAD: There's a new movie playing at the IMAX. It sure would be good to see it. (sighs)

MOM: Well, I don't know if your son will have the time – I hardly see him anymore. You're working awfully hard - is that grass in your hair?

LAWN BOY: I had grass EVERYWHERE. In my socks, on my toothbrush, in my breakfast cereal! I dreamed about endless lawns and even studied sports magazines just

to see how the field crews left patterns in the grass! But all that work was nothing compared to what was coming...

(Arnold re-enters)

ARNOLD: I was thinking about it, and you're right – forty dollars is fair – so, I bought you stock in a company that makes coffins!

LAWN BOY: Coffins?! I don't want any coffins!

ARNOLD: You're not going to GET any coffins. You've got four thousand shares in the Memorial Wooden Container Corporation.

LAWN BOY: Well good, because that's more trouble than I need right now.

ARNOLD: Is something wrong?

LAWN BOY: It's just that I've got more jobs than I can handle. I'm going to have to start turning people down. Plus, I've been carrying around all of this cash in my pockets, because I don't know where to hide it at home where my parents won't find it.

ARNOLD: What – will they steal it from you?

LAWN BOY: It's not that – I just want to make it a surprise at the end of the summer.

ARNOLD: Ah. Well, I might be able to help you. Why don't I invest your money, and you can keep just enough for essentials. That way, your money will make money while you work? I'll give you a receipt so it's all legal. As for your other problem, supply and demand! It's groovy man! I may know a man who can help you. His name is Pasqual. Come over tonight and I'll introduce you.

(Pasqual enters)

LAWN BOY: I told my parents that I had a meeting about more lawn jobs, and they extended my 'be out' time to 9:30. I went to Arnold's and met Pasqual. He had the reddest hair I've ever seen in my life! My Grandma always said:

GRANDMA: You can always trust a redhead. They may have fiery tempers, but they're good people at heart!

PASQUAL: Hi! I've got a cousin – Louis – he'll come by tomorrow morning with a truck and a mower. I'll do what silent work is needed at night. You pay Arnold, and we get half of what you make for each lawn.

LAWN BOY: Wait – I don't do anything – and I get HALF?!?

PASQUAL: That's how it works! you're the boss – you found the jobs, and you'll find more!

LAWN BOY: And so, we shook hands. And as I kept getting more jobs, Pasqual kept finding more family to help out! He had a REALLY big family! Meanwhile, Arnold had said he would invest most of the money I was making so that it would make more money while I worked.

ARNOLD: It's a good thing we have a rain day – it's time to look over all of your accounts. Right now, you have fifteen employees.

LAWN BOY: Wait – that can't be right! Fifteen?!?

ARNOLD: I now, right? This is so, so groovy! It's like watching a really good documentary about capitalism! Right now, the lawn-mowing phase of your operation has grossed out at just over eight.

LAWN BOY: Eight what?

ARNOLD: Eight thousand dollars.

LAWN BOY: EIGHT THOUSAND DOLLARS!!! *(To the audience)* OK - When I was eight – I had dreamed of one day becoming a star basketball player – but back then, I didn't have the money to buy a decent basketball. But how many basketballs could I buy with eight thousand dollars?! I was just three years older than I was then. I could buy all of the basketballs I wanted!

ARNOLD: I should remind you that there's the OTHER money I invested for you. You remember the stock I purchased for you?

LAWN BOY: The coffins – sure.

ARNOLD: Well, it turns out that they owned a lot of valuable land with hardwoods on it that they hadn't reported at first – when news of it got out, it sent the stock skyrocketing, and that caused MORE interest – so your forty dollar investment netted you an additional eight thousand dollars.

LAWN BOY: You mean I have eight thousand... ON TOP of the OTHER eight thousand?!?

ARNOLD: Well... Not exactly. I also invested some money in a software company called Walleye – I normally don't do these kinds of things, but the earnings looked good, and they had some new way of speeding up the internet – and well...

LAWN BOY: Oh. We lost?

ARNOLD: Oh my. No. The internet system they developed swept the country! Your stock split – then split again, then it hovered, and I finally sold the twelve thousand shares at four.

LAWN BOY: *(Confused)* Wait, so you sold twelve thousand shares for four dollars and fifty cents?

ARNOLD: No! You had twelve thousand shares at four dollars each!

LAWN BOY: Numbers. The numbers were there. Four times twelve – wait, no... *(unbelieving)* forty-eight THOUSAND dollars?!?

ARNOLD: I'm going to invest it all in solid, safe long-term stocks. You have had a VERY groovy month.

LAWN BOY faints

...

ARNOLD waving a towel in Lawn Boy's face

I'm sorry! I thought I'd prepared you for the news. Uh... by the way, there's one more thing... Uh... you're not going to faint again, are you?

LAWN BOY: I don't think so...

ARNOLD: I thought I'd try doing some investing for fun... but it didn't turn out like I thought. So you now own one-hundred percent interest in a boxer named Joseph Powdermilk, Jr.

LAWN BOY: I OWN HIM?!?

ARNOLD: No, of course not! But if he wins, you get half of his purse.

LAWN BOY: He has a purse? What kind of boxer owns a purse?

ARNOLD: That's his winnings. If he wins a fight, you get half. And he's coming over here right now – he said he wants to meet his sponsor.

(There's a knock at the door – Joseph Powdermilk Jr. Enters – he holds out his hand to Arnold)

JOEY: My name is Joseph Powdermilk Jr., and I want to thank you for being my sponsor.

ARNOLD: Wrong sponsor. That's him. *(Pointing to Lawn Boy. Joey turns to Lawn Boy)*

JOEY: My name is Joseph Powdermilk Jr., and I want to thank you for being my sponsor.

LAWN BOY: Nice to meet you...

(Just then, PASQUAL rushes in frantically)

PASQUAL: Come! You must come! There's a guy – Rock – he says he's going to take over the business! He says to bring the boss! Come right away!

LAWN BOY: But what can I do?

JOEY: I'll come. I'm good at this.

LAWN BOY: Good at what?

JOEY: *(Grinning)* Trouble.

LAWN BOY: So Joey squeezed into Pasqual's truck with Pasqual and me. We drove over to Pasqual's house and there was Rock, sitting in a pickup truck with two others, cleaning his fingernails with a knife. I couldn't believe what happened next. Joey took on three guys – he shoved two through a truck's windows and threw the last one into the truck bed – all without breaking a sweat!

JOEY: *(Holding ROCK by the shirt collar)* You do NOT threaten my boss or his workers, and you do NOT ask him for money. If you do, I'll come, and PINCH YOUR HEAD. Do you understand?

ROCK: Yeah! But this ain't over!

PASQUAL: *(To Lawn Boy)* He's like a force of nature!

LAWN BOY: Or an Earthquake... Hey, Joey – have you got a fancy name for when you box? We could call you "Earthquake!" What do you think?

JOEY: It sounds... like it isn't my name. WAIT! JOEY 'POW!' It's catchy, AND it's my name!

LAWN BOY: And just like that, I had a cool name for my boxer, and security for my business. I love it when things work out like that! A few days later, I got a strange call from Arnold:

ARNOLD: *(Rock stands by Arnold, who is frightened)* Hi. This is Arnold. I need you to come home. Right now.

LAWN BOY: When I went over to Arnold's house, I saw Rock peering out of the window – waiting for me! I didn't know what to do – I didn't have Joey's number, and I didn't think I could call the police – I mean, would they even believe me?

ROCK: *(Pretending to be the police)* Your stockbroker is being held captive by gangsters? Sure kid, we'll send over Superman and the tooth fairy to help out! *(He laughs evilly)*

LAWN BOY: I needed help! I needed someone smart who would really want to help me. I needed... my parents.

DAD: Hey son! Want some pancakes?

LAWN BOY: No time! I need you all to sit down!

MOM: You've been acting so strange lately.

GRANDMA: It's puberty. He's becoming a man. And I'm worried about what the hole in the ozone layer is doing to the rain forest...

LAWN BOY: AHHH! Look – my stockbroker is being held captive, and I can't call the boxer I own, because all his information is in Arnold's house!

DAD: Arnold?

MOM: You have... a stockbroker?

GRANDMA: *(Proudly)* His own boxer!

LAWN BOY: So, I told them everything, about Arnold, and the money, and Joey, and the trouble with Rock, and then I waited – these were the smartest people I knew – if they couldn't help me – no one could.

MOM: Let's get on the internet and see if we can find where Joey works out! *(She calls on her phone)* Hello, Mr. Powdermilk? We need your help... *(She listens, then turns to the rest of the family)* He's going over to Arnold's house!

DAD: Well, we're going too!

GRANDMA: Ooh! I call shotgun!

LAWN BOY: When we got to Arnold's house, Joey had just arrived. We watched as he went into the house, and then there were a couple of big BANGS! (*Pots and pans are banged loudly*) Oh no! He might have a gun! Later we learned it was just the sound of Rock having his head jammed into the dishwasher.

JOEY: (*Carrying ROCK by the scruff of his neck*) I told you that if you ever threatened my boss, or asked for money again, I would PINCH YOUR HEAD!

MOM: I'm sure he's learned his lesson this time. (*To ROCK*) Haven't you?

ROCK: (*Crying*) I have! Please don't pinch my head!!

JOEY: Well, all right. If you really think I shouldn't...

GRANDMA: Personally, I'd like to see you pound the snot out of him!

MOM: Please Mr. Powdermilk – just let him go.

JOEY: Well... OK. But if he ever comes back, I'll have to do things MY way.

(He lets ROCK go, and ROCK runs off)

LAWN BOY: And that's pretty much the end of the story. We went into the house and untied Arnold, who introduced himself to my Mom & Dad and told them he wanted to set up an account with them for all my money. That Saturday, we went to Joey's first boxing match...

(JOEY comes out wearing boxing gloves, his arms raised over his head, and Grandma blows kisses at him which causes him to blush. Then he pretends to throw a single punch)

And that was all! The match lasted three and a half seconds! That night, I dreamed about Joey winning LOTS of fights, until he became world champion! I was still dreaming when my phone rang early the next morning...

ARNOLD: Hey. It's me. "

LAWN BOY: (Sleepily) If he keeps wearing the red trunks, we're sure to win...

ARNOLD: Wake up! It's me, Arnold! You know that Walleye stock I said I sold?

LAWN BOY: Sure. That's the one that made me rich!

ARNOLD: Well, there was a mistake. The stock didn't sell like it said it did – some glitch in the system, and there have been some drastic changes in the market.

LAWN BOY: Oh no. How much... how much did we lose?

ARNOLD: Oh my, no. The company got taken over by a larger company, and the twelve thousand shares are worth forty dollars a share! This kind of growth is unprecedented! Now the markets are closed today, but as soon as they open on Monday, I strongly suggest we sell the stock and place it in something solid and long-term.

LAWN BOY: I was a little bit dazed but I DIDN'T FAINT. But, I went downstairs where Mom and Dad and Grandma were all having breakfast, and I gave them the news.

MOM: Morning, pumpkin! I'm surprised you're awake so early! What's up?

LAWN BOY: Arnold just called. He said my Walleye stock is now worth four-hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

(DAD faints)

GRANDMA: *(Waving a towel in DAD's face)* He's coming around. Grandpa always said: 'Take care of your tools... and they'll take care of you.'

THE END