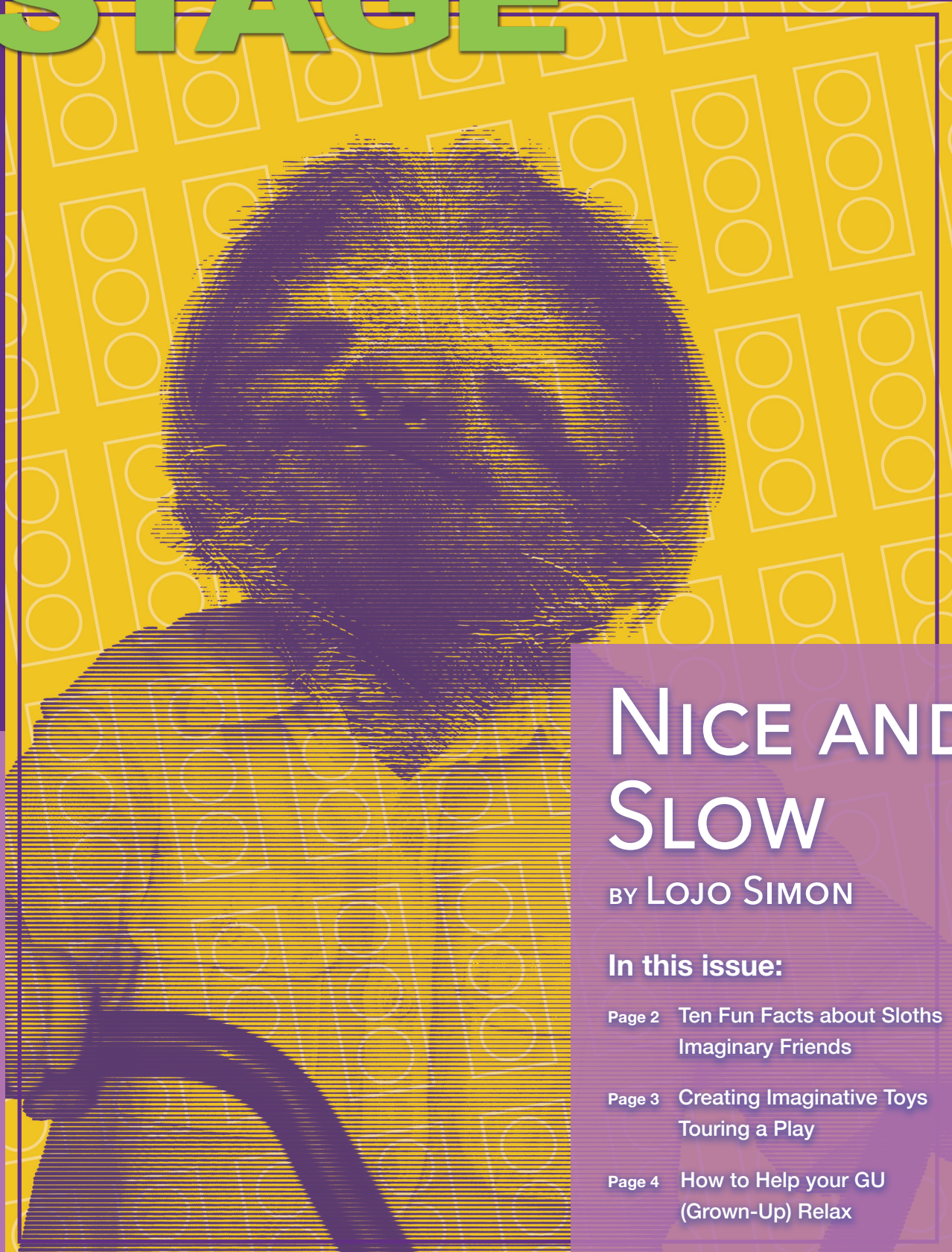


# teaching STAGE

SPRING 2017  
VOLUME VIII, ISSUE 4



## NICE AND SLOW

BY LOJO SIMON

### In this issue:

- Page 2 Ten Fun Facts about Sloths  
Imaginary Friends
- Page 3 Creating Imaginative Toys  
Touring a Play
- Page 4 How to Help your GU  
(Grown-Up) Relax

## TEN FUN FACTS ABOUT SLOTHS

1. Sloths have a hard time moving on land but are amazing swimmers.
2. Sloths spend most of their time in trees.
3. Sloths sleep about ten hours a day.
4. Their primary predators are eagles, snakes, and jaguars.
5. Three-toed sloths can turn their heads almost 360 degrees.
6. Sloths can live to be up to 40 years old.
7. Sloths can extend their tongues ten to twelve inches.
8. Sloths are the slowest mammals on the planet.
9. Sloths' diet mainly consists of leaves.
10. Sloths only come down from their trees about once a week.



THE SLOTH.



## IMAGINARY FRIENDS

Did you know that about one out of every three children has an imaginary friend? These friends can be human beings, fantasy creatures, or even animals like the sloth! Just like real friends, imaginary friends don't always get along with their humans. Even though Sam and Sloth are best friends, they still argue, create mischief, and get each other into trouble. However, having an imaginary friend is not a bad thing. Children who have imaginary friends tend to be more creative than those who don't.

Creativity is very important not only for children but also for adults. Anything can be an art if you use your creativity! Pablo Picasso once said, "Every child is an artist, the problem is staying an artist when you grow up."

As children grow up, it is important for them to cultivate their creativity. Engineers, artists, designers, and even firefighters need creativity to solve new problems. Many schools and districts who have stressed STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) are now adding the arts to STEM to create "STEAM." The arts stimulate the creativity that is necessary to apply STEM skills in the workplace.

## TOURING A PLAY

Touring a play to schools requires a lot of preparation. Telling the story of a lazy sloth keeps a lot of people busy.

The script of *Nice and Slow* was refined during a one-week workshop with playwright Lojo Simon, who lives in California. The script was the winner of UVU's 2015 Old Miner Children's Playwriting Contest and gave the playwright the chance to come to campus, make changes to the script during rehearsal, see how children would respond to the play, and hear the play presented in a staged reading.

Our UVU student actors have rehearsed six hours a week since the first of January. The stage manager takes careful notes during rehearsals and communicates with the designers and makers of the costumes, props, and set pieces.

On performance days, the van has to be loaded before students go to their morning classes. Every prop, costume, and set piece has to be checked and double-checked to make sure the cast has everything they need to perform. The student actors have to get into their costumes and makeup before traveling to the school. When they arrive, the stage manager checks in at the office and the cast moves the set pieces into the performance space in one trip.

Each school's performance space is different. Some schools have a stage at one end of a multi-purpose room while others have a platform and some require the actors to perform at floor level. The audiences may be large or small and may be seated on the floor or in chairs. Most performance spaces in schools only have fluorescent or natural lighting, so actors have to move into place without blackouts or curtains. During the performance, the stage manager plays sound cues at just the right level so that the sounds can be heard without covering the actors' lines.

The student actors have a four-hour window to get into costume and make-up, travel in a van, set up at the school, perform, take down the set, return to campus, get out of costume and makeup, and put everything away. Most of the student actors spend at least twelve hours a week in other classes in addition to doing homework. Some of them also work part-time jobs.

## CREATING IMAGINATIVE TOYS

Children today spend more and more time in front of screens: televisions, computers, video games, and even smart phones. One problem with "screen time" is that it prevents children from engaging in physical play.

In the show, Sam has a very active imagination and finds many fun things to do in his room that don't involve using electronics. He plays with his imaginary friend, the sloth. They create a car and get pulled over by a cheetah cop. Sam also imagines a couple of shadow characters we call "morphs" who take on different roles in his imaginative play. *Nice and Slow* shows children how much fun they can have when they exercise their imaginations through creative play.



# HOW TO HELP YOUR GU (GROWN-UP) RELAX

Does your GU sometimes stomp around the house, yell at you to pick up your toys, have loud phone conversations, and have a hard time smiling? 😞

- Then the first thing you need to know is IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT!
- Your GU might be feeling **STRESSED** because he or she forgot to SLOW DOWN!
- Sometimes when GUs are stressed, it is because they are worried about taking care of their family and work responsibilities and they have a lot on their minds. Here are some things you can do to help your GU.

- 1 **TALK** to your GU and **ASK** how they are feeling. GUs love to talk about themselves and will probably be grateful you asked.
- 2 **ASK** your GU if you can do something to help.
- 3 **SMILE** at your GU and ask them a riddle, such as:

What animal should you not sit next to when you're taking a test?  
A cheetah! 😂

A sloth calls the police to report that he was robbed by a band of turtles. When the police asks him to describe the attack, he replies, "I... don't... knooooow... It... all... happened... so... fast..." 🐢



GUs sometimes need a child to tell them that it is okay to **SLOW DOWN** and smell the roses. 🌹

*The Sloth*

## CREDITS

Teaching Stage is published by the Noorda Theatre Center for Children and Youth at UVU. This issue was edited by Dr. John Newman with contributions from the cast and stage manager: Tyler Botill, Abby Heywood, Amanda Hobbs, Megan Olsen, Lisa Thurman, and Lucas Stewart. Graphic design by Jason Warren and J. Rich. Images courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

**UVU**  
UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY  
**NOORDA REGIONAL THEATRE**  
CENTER for CHILDREN & YOUTH