The Marriage of Bette and Boo

By

Christopher Durang

Ryan sozzi
ryn_sozzi@tlu.edu
(830) 556-2759
Cast of Characters

BETTE BRENNAN:
MARGARET BRENNAN: Bette’s Mother
PAUL BRENNAN: Bette’s Father
JOAN BRENNAN: Bette’s sister
EMILY BRENNAN: Bette’s sister
BOO HUDLOCKE:
KARL HUDLOCKE: Boo’s Father
SOOT HUDLOCKE: Boo’s Mother
FATHER DONNALLY:
DOCTOR:

MATT: Son of Bette and Boo
ACT 1

Scene 1: The wedding

All the characters, in various wedding apparel, stand together to sing: the Brennan family, the Hudlocke family. Matthew stands apart from them.

ALL

(Sing.)
God bless Bette and Boo and Skippy, Emily and Boo, · Margaret, Matt and Betsy Booey, Mommy, Tommy too, Betty Betsy Booey Boozyey, Soot, Karl, Matt, and Paul; Margaret Booey, Joanie Phooey, God bless us one and all.

The characters now call out to one another.

BETTE.
Booey? Booey? Skippy?

BOO.
Pop?

MARGARET.
Emily, dear?

BETTE.
Booey?

BOO.
Bette?

KARL.
Is that Bore?

SOOT.
Karl? Are you there?

JOAN.
Nikkos!

BETTE.
Skippy! Skippy!

EMILY.
Are you all right, Mom?

BETTE.
Booey, I’m calling you!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MARGARET.
Paul? Where are you?

JOAN.
Nikkos!

BOO.
Bette? Betsy?

BETTE.
Boo? Boo?

Flash of light on the characters, as if their picture is being taken. Lights off the Brennans and Hudlockes. Light on Matt, late twenties or so. He speaks to the audience.

MATT.
If one looks hard enough, one can usually see the order that lies beneath the surface. Just as dreams must be put in order and perspective in order to understand them, so must the endless details of waking life be ordered and then carefully considered. Once these details have been considered, generalizations about them must be made. These generalizations should be written down legibly, and studied. The Marriage of Bette and Boo.

Matt exits. Characters assume their places for photographs before the wedding. Boo stands to the side with his parents, Karl and Soot. Bette, in a wedding gown, poses for pictures with her family: Margaret, her mother; Emily, her sister, holding a cello; Joan, another sister, who is pregnant and is using nose spray; and Paul, her father. Bette, Margaret, Emily smile, looking out. Paul looks serious, fatherly. Joan looks sort of grouchy. Lights flash. They change positions.

MARGARET.
You look lovely, Bette.

EMILY.
You do. Lovely.

MARGARET.
A lovely bride. Smile for the camera, girls.
(Speaking out to either audience or to unseen photographer.)
Bette was always the most beautiful of my children. We used to say that Joanie was the most striking, but Bette was the one who looked beautiful all the time. And about Emily we used to say her health wasn’t good.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

EMILY.
That’s kind of you to worry, Mom, but I’m feeling much better. My asthma is hardly bothering me at all today.
(Coughs lightly.)

MARGARET.
Boo seems a lovely boy. Betsy, dear, why do they call him Boo?

BETTE.
It’s a nickname.

MARGARET.
Don’t you think Bette looks lovely, Joanie?

JOAN.
(Without enthusiasm.)
She does. You look lovely, Bette.

MARGARET.
Where is Nikkos, dear?

JOAN.
He’s not feeling well. He’s in the bathroom.

BETTE.
Nikkos seems crazy.
(Joan glares at her.)
I wish you and Nikkos could’ve had a big wedding, Jonie.

MARGARET.
Well, your father didn’t much like Nikkos. It just didn’t seem appropriate.
(Emily coughs softly)
Are you all right, Emily?

EMILY.
It’s nothing, Mom.

JOAN.
You’re not going to get sick, are you?

EMILY
No. I’m sure I won’t.

MARGARET
Emily, dear, please put away your cello. It’s too large.

EMILY
I can’t find the case.
(Joan uses her nose spray.)

(CONTINUED)
BETTE.
I can’t wait to have a baby, Joanie.

JOAN.
Oh yes?

MARGARET
(Out to front again.)
Betsy was always the mother of the family, we’d say. She and her brother Tom. Played with dolls all day long, they did. Now Joanie hated dolls. If you gave Joanie a doll, she put it in the oven.

JOAN.
I don’t remember that.

BETTE.
I love dolls.

EMILY
Best of luck, Bette.
(Kisses her; to Joan)

MARGARET
I just hope he’s a good husband. Booey seems very nice, Betsy.

BETTE.
I think I’ll have a large family.

Lights flash, taking a photo of the Brennans. Lights dim on them. Lights now pick up Boo, Karl, and Soot, who pose for a picture.

KARL.
It’s almost time, Bore.

BOO.
Almost, Pop.

SOOT.
Betsy’s pretty, Boooey. Don’t you think Betsy’s pretty, Karl?

KARL
She’s pretty. You’re mighty old to be getting married, Bore. How old are you?

BOO.
Thirty-two, Pop.

(CONTINUED)
SOOT.
That’s not too old, Karl.

KARL
Nearly over the hill, Bore.

SOOT.
Don’t call Booey Bore today, Karl. Someone might misunderstand.

KARL.
Nobody will misunderstand.

Photo flash. Enter Father Donnally. The families take their place on either side of him. Bette and Boo come together, and stand before him.

FATHER DONNALLY.
We are gathered here in the sight of God to join this man and this woman in the sacrament of holy matrimony. Do you, Bette; .. ?

BETTE.
(To Boo.)
I do.

FATHER DONNALLY.
And do you, Boo; ?

BOO.
(To Bette.)
I do.

FATHER DONNALLY.
(Sort of to himself.)
Take this woman to be your lawfully wedded ... I do, I do.
(Back to formal sounding.)
I pronounce you man and wife.

(Bette and Boo kiss. Karl throws a handful of rice at them, somewhat hostilely. This bothers no one.)

JOAN.
Come on, Emily.

Emily and Joan step forward. Paul gets Emily a chair to sit in when she plays her cello. He carries a flute.

(Continued)
EMILY.
And now, in honor of our dear Bette’s wedding, I will play the cello.

Joan gets in position to sing. Paul holds his flute to his mouth. Emily sits in her chair, puts the cello between her legs, and raises her bow. Long pause.
I can’t remember it.

JOAN.
(Very annoyed.)
It starts on A, Emily.

EMILY.
(Tries again; stops.)
I’m sorry. I’m sorry, Bette. I can’t remember it.

Everyone looks a little disappointed and disgruntled with Emily. Photo flash. Lights change. Spot on Matt.

Scene 2: The honeymoon

MATT.
When ordering reality, it is necessary to accumulate all the facts pertaining to the matter at hand. When all the facts are not immediately available, one must try to reconstruct them by considering oral history-hearsay, gossip and apocryphal stories. And then with perseverance and intelligence, the analysis of these facts should bring about understanding. The honey moon of Bette and Boo.

Matt exits. Enter Bette, still in her wedding dress. In the following speech, and much of the time, Bette talks cheerfully and quickly, making no visible connections between her statements.

BETTE.
Hurry up, Boo. I want to use the shower.
(Speaks to audience, who seem to her a great friend.)
First I was a tomboy. I used to climb trees and beat up my brother, Tom. Then I used to try to break my sister Joanie’s voice box because she liked to sing. She always scratched me though, so instead I tried to play Emily’s cello... Except I don’t have a lot of musical talent, but I’m very popular. And I know more about the cello than people who don’t know anything. I don’t like the cello, it’s too much work and besides, keeping my
(MORE)
BETTE. (cont’d)
legs open that way made me feel funny. I asked Emily if it made her feel funny and she didn’t know what I meant; and then when I told her she cried for two whole hours and then went to confession twice, just in case the priest didn’t understand her the first time.
Dopey Emily. She means well.
(Calls offstage.)
Booey! I’m pregnant!
(To audience.)
Actually I couldn’t be, because I’m a virgin. A married man tried to have an affair with me, but he was married and so it would have been pointless. I didn’t know he was married until two months ago. Then I met Booey, sort of on the rebound. He seems fine though.
(Calls out.)
Booey!
(To audience.)
I went to confession about the cello practicing, but I don’t think the priest heard me. He didn’t say anything. He didn’t even give me a penance. I wonder if nobody was in there. But as long as your conscience is all right, then so is your soul.
(Calls, giddy; happy.)
Booey, come on!

Bette runs off
Lights change. Spot on Matt.

Scene 3: The honeymoon, continued

MATT.
The honeymoon of Bette and Boo, continued.

Exits. Enter Bette and Boo, wrapped in a large sheet and looking happy. They stand smiling for a moment. They should still be in their wedding clothes – Bette minus her veil, Boo minus his tie and jacket.

BETTE.
That was better than a cello, Boo.

BOO.
You’re mighty good looking, gorgeous.

BETTE.
Do you think I’m prettier than Polly Lydstone?

BOO.
Who?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BETTE.
I guess you don’t know her. I want to have lots of children, Boo. Eight. Twelve. Did you read Cheaper by the Dozen?

BOO.
I have to call my father about a new insurance deal we’re handling.
((Takes phone from beneath the sheets; talks quietly into it.)
Hello, Pop ...

BETTE.
(To audience.)
Lots and lots of children. I loved the movie Skippy with Jackie Cooper. I cried and cried. I always loved little boys. Where is my pocketbook? Find it for me, Boo.

_The pocketbook is in full sight, but Bette doesn’t seem to notice it._

BOO.
I’m talking to Pop, Bette. What is it, Pop?

BETTE.
(To audience.)
When I was a little girl, I used to love to mind Jimmy Winkler. "Do you want me to watch Jimmy?", I’d say to Mrs. Winkler. He was five years old and had short stubby legs. I used to dress him up as a lamp shade and walk him to town. I put tassels on his toes and taped doilies on his knees, and he’d scream and’ scream. My mother said, "Betsy, why are you crying about Skippy, it’s only a movie, it’s not real." But I didn’t believe her. Bonnie Wilson was my best friend and she got tar all over her feet. Boo, where are you?

BOO.
I’m here, angel. No, not you, Pop. No, I was talking to Bette. Here, why don’t you speak to her?
(Hands Bette the phone.)
Here, Bette, it’s Pop.

BETTE.
Hello there, Mr. Hudlocke. How are you? And Mrs. Hudlocke? Hello? Hello?
(To Boo.)
We must have been cut off, Boo. Where is my pocketbook?

BOO.
Here it is, beautiful.

(CONTINUED)
He gives her the pocketbook that izas been in full sight all along.

BETTE.
I love you, Boo.

Scene 5: Emily practices the cello

EMILY.
I can’t remember it.

She gets up and addresses her chair.
It starts on A, Emily.
(She sits down, tries to play.)
I’m sorry. I’m sorry, Bette. I can’t remember it.

Enter Joan with scissors.

JOAN.
It may start on A, Emily. But it ends now.

She raises scissors up. Freeze and/or lights change.

Scene 5: Bette and Boo visit their in-laws

MATT.
At the suggestion of Redbook, Bette refashions her wedding gown into a cocktail dress. Then she and Boo visit their in laws. Bette is pregnant for the first time.

Exits. Bette, Boo, Soot, Karl.

SOOT.
How nice that you’re going to have a baby. KARL. Have another drink, Bore.

BETTE.
(To Soot.)
I think Booey drinks too much. Does Mr. Hudlocke drink too much?

SOOT.
I never think about it. KARL. Soot, get me and Bore another drink.

Boo and Karl are looking over papers, presumably insurance.

(CONTINUED)
BETTE.
Don’t have another one, Boo. SOOT.
(Smiles, whispers.)
I think Karl drinks too much, but when he’s sober he’s really very nice.

BETTE.
I don’t think Boo should drink if I’m going to have a baby.

SOOT.
If it’s a boy, you can name him Boo, and if it’s a girl you can call her Soot after me.

BETTE.
How did you get the name "Soot"?

SOOT.
Oh you know. The old saying, "She fell down the chimney and got covered with soot."

BETTE.
What saying?

SOOT.
Something about that. Karl might remember. Karl, how did I get the name "Soot"?

KARL.
Get the drinks, Soot.

SOOT.
All right.

KARL.
(To Bette.)
Soot is the dumbest white woman alive.

SOOT.
Oh, Karl.
(Laughs, exits.)

BETTE.
I don’t want you to get drunk again, Boo.

BOO.
Bette, Pop and I are looking over these papers.

BETTE.
I’m your wife.

(CONTINUED)
BOO.
    Bette, you’re making a scene.

KARL.
    Your baby’s going to be all mouth if you keep talking so much. You want to give birth to a mouth, Bette?

BETTE.
    All right. I’m leaving.

BOO.
    Bette. Can’t you take a joke?

BETTE.
    It’s not funny.

KARL.
    I can tell another one. There was this drunken airline stewardess who got caught in the propeller . . . BETTE.
    I’m leaving now, Boo.
    (Exits.)

BOO.
    Bette. I better go after her.
    (Starts to exit.)

KARL.
    Where are you going, Bore?

BOO.
    Bette’s a little upset, Pop. I’ll see you later.
    (Exits. Enter Soot with drinks.)

SOOT.
    Where’s Booey, Karl?

KARL.
    He isn’t here.

SOOT.
    I know. Where did he go?

KARL.
    Out the door.

SOOT.
    Did you say something to Bette, Karl?

KARL.
    Let’s have the drinks, Soot.
CONTINUED:

SOOT.
    You know, I really can’t remember how everyone started
calling me Soot. Can you, Karl?

KARL.
    Go into your dance, Soot.

SOOT.
    Oh, Karl.
        (Laughs.)

KARL.
    Go get the veils and start in. The shades are down.

SOOT.
    Karl, I don’t know what you’re talking about.

KARL.
    You’re the dumbest white woman alive. I rest my case.

    Soot laughs. Lights change.

Scene 6: Margaret gives Bette advice

MATT.
    Bette goes to Margaret, her mother, for advice.
        (Exits. Bette, Margaret. Emily on the
        floor, writing a note. Paul, the father,
        is also present. )

BETTE.
    Mom, Boo drinks. And his father insulted me.

MARGARET.
    Betsy, dear, marriage is no bed of roses.

EMILY.
    Mom, is the phrase "my own stupidity" hyphenated?

MARGARET.
    No, Emily. She’s apologizing to Joanie again about
    forgetting the piece at the wedding. Joanie was very
    embarrassed.

BETTE.
    How can I make Boo stop drinking?

MARGARET.
    I’m sure it’s not a serious problem, Betsy.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BETTE.
   Poppa, what should I do?

PAUL.
   "W##hh, ah%% enntgh oo sh#$w auns$$dr ehvg#; ing% %#s ahm."
   Note to reader and/or actor: Paul is meant to be the victim of a stroke. His mind is still functioning well but his ability to speak is greatly impaired. Along these lines, I give him specific lines to say and be motivated by, but the audience and the other characters in the play should genuinely be unable to make out almost anything that he says—though they can certainly follow any emotional colorings he gives. I have found it useful for actors who read the part of Paul to say the lines written in the brackets, but to drop almost all of the consonants, and to make the tongue go slack, so that poor Paul’s speech is almost all vowels, mixed in with an occasional, inexplicable group of consonants. Paul’s first line up above—emphasizing that no one should be able to make out almost any of it—would be: "Well, I think you should consider giving things time."

BETTE.
   What should I do?

PAUL.
   (Angry that he can’t be understood.)
   On####t ump oo%% onoosns$$. Eggh ing ahm$.
   [Don’t jump to conclusions. Give things time.]

MARGARET.
   Paul, I’ve asked you not to speak. We can’t understand you.

EMILY.
   Mom, how do you spell "mea culpa"?

MARGARET.
   Emily, Latin is pretentious in an informal letter. Joanie will think you’re silly.

EMILY.
   This one is to Father Donnally.

MARGARET.
   M-E-A C-U-L-P-A.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:  

BETTE.
Boo’s father has given him a very bad example
(Joan, carrying a piece of paper.)
Oh, Joan, quick—do you think when I have my baby, it will make Boo stop...

JOAN.
Wait a minute.
(To Emily.)
Emily, I got your note. Now listen to me closely.
(With vehemence.)
I forgive you, I forgive you.

EMILY.
(A bit startled.)
Oh. Thank you.

JOAN.
(To Bette.)
Now, what did you want?

BETTE.
Do you think when I have my baby, it will make Boo stop drinking and bring him and me closer together?

JOAN.
I have no idea.

BETTE.
Well, but hasn’t your having little Mary Frances made things better between you and Nikkos?

JOAN.
Are you trying to make me feel bad about my marriage?

EMILY.
I’m sorry, Joanie.

JOAN.
What?

EMILY.
If I made you feel bad about your marriage.

JOAN.
Oh shut up.
(Exits.)

BETTE.
(To Margaret.)
She’s so nasty. Did you punish her enough when she was little?

(CONTINUED)
MARGARET.
She’s just tired because little Mary Frances cries all the time. She really is a dreadful child.

BETTE.
I love babies. Pappa, don’t you think my baby will bring Boo and me closer together?

PAUL.
Aszzs* ot uh er#ry owowd# eeah oo ah uh ayee, ehtte. [That’s not a very good reason to have a baby, Bette.]

Bette looks at Paul blankly. Lights change.

Scene 8: The first child of Bette and Boo

MATT.
The first child of Bette and Boo.

Exits. Enter Boo, Karl, Soot, Margaret, Emily with her cello, Joan, Paul. They all stand in a line and wait expectantly. Enter the Doctor, who is played by the same actor who plays Father Donnally.

DOCTOR.
She’s doing well. Just a few more minutes.
(Exits.)

EMILY.
Oh, God, make her pain small. Give me the pain rather than her.
(Winces in pain.)

MARGARET.
Emily, behave, this is a hospital.

BOO.
Pop, I hope it’s a son.

KARL.
This calls for a drink. Soot, get Bore and me a drink.

SOOT.
Where would I go?

KARL.
A drink, Soot.

SOOT.
Karl, you’re teasing me again.

(CONTINUED)
KARL.
   All right, I won’t talk to you.

SOOT.
   Oh please. Please talk to me. Booey, talk to your father.

BOO.
   Come on, Pop; We’ll have a drink afterwards.

SOOT.
   Karl, I’ll get you a drink.
   (To Margaret.)
   Where would I go?
   (To Karl.)
   Karl?

KARL.
   This doctor know what he’s doing, Bore?

SOOT.
   Karl? Wouldn’t you like a drink?

EMILY.
   It’s almost here.
   (Having an experience of some sort.)
   Oh no, no, no no no no.

MARGARET.
   Emily!

KARL.
   This Betsy’s sister, Bore?

BOO.
   Pop, I hope it’s a boy.

KARL.
   You were a boy, Bore.
   (Enter the doctor, holding the baby in a blue blanket.)
   This is it, Bore.

EMILY.
   In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

DOCTOR.
   It’s dead. The baby’s dead.
   (He-drops it on the floor.)

(CONTINUED)
EMILY.  
  (Near collapse.)
  Oh no!

JOAN.
  I win the bet.

MARGARET.
  I’m here, Betsy, it’s all right.
  (Paul picks up the baby.)
  Paul, put the baby down. That’s disrespectful.

PAUL.
  Buh uh yee

MARGARET.
  Don’t shout. I can understand you.

PAUL.
  (To doctor.)
  Uh ayee ah#$# ehh#! Yrr uh ahherrr, ann## oo ee, uh ayee
  ah#$# ehh#!
  [The baby’s not dead. You’re a doctor, can’t you see, the baby’s not dead.]

DOCTOR.
  (Takes the baby.)
  Oh, you’re right. It’s not dead. Mr. Hudlocke, you have a son.’

KARL.
  Congratulations; Bore.’

EMILY.
  Thank you, God.
  (Enter Bette)

BETTE.
  (To audience.)
  We’ll call the baby Skippy.

EMILY.
  It has to be a saint’s name, Bette.

BETTE.
  Mind your business, Emily.

MARGARET.
  Betsy, dear, Emily’s right. Catholic have to be named after saints. Otherwise they can’t be baptized.

(CONTINUED)
BOO.
  Boo.

MARGARET.
  There is no Saint Boo.

EMILY.
  We should call it Margaret in honor of Mom.

BETTE.
  It’s a boy.

EMILY.
  We should call hirn Paul in honor of Dad.

MARGARET.
  Too common.

SOOT.
  I always liked Clarence.

JOAN.
  I vote for Boo.

MARGARET.
  (Telling her to behave.)
    Joanie.

KARL.
  Why not name it after a household appliance?

SOOT.
  Karl.
    (Laughs.)

KARL.

BETTE.
  (To audience.)
    Matt. I remember a little boy named Matt who looked just like a wind-up toy. We’ll call him Matt.

BOO.
  It’s a boy, Pop.

EMILY.
  Is Matt a saint’s name, Bette?

BETTE.
  Matthew, Emily. Maybe if you’d finally join the convent, you’d learn the apostles’ names.

(CONTINUED)
EMILY.
Do you think I should Join a convent?

BETTE.
(To audience.)
But his nickname’s going to be Skippy. My very favorite movie.

Lights change.

Scene 10: Matt’s favorite movie essay; arts & crafts with Emily

MATT.
Shortly after Skippy’s birth, Emily enters a convent, but then leaves the convent due to nerves. Bette becomes pregnant for the second time. Boo continues to drink. If psychiatrists had existed in nineteenth century Wessex, Hardy might suggest Bette and Boo seek counseling. In stead he has no advice to give them, and in 1886 he writes The Mayor of Casterbridge. This novel is one of Hardy’s greatest successes, and Skippy studies it in college. When he is little, he studies The Wind in the Willows with Emily. And when he is very little, he studies drawing with Emily.

(Emily, Matt. Emily has brightly colored construction paper and crayons.)

EMILY.
Hello, Skippy, dear. I thought we could do some nice arts and crafts today. Do you want to draw a cat or a dog?

MATT.
A dog.

EMILY.
All right, then I’ll do a cat. (They begin to draw.)
Here’s the head, and here’s the whiskers. Oh dear, it looks more like a clock. Oh, Skippy, yours is very good. I can tell it’s a dog. Those are the ears, and that’s the tail, right?

MATT.
Yes.

EMILY.
That’s very good. And you draw much better than Mary Frances. I tried to interest her in drawing Babara the elephant the other day, but she doesn’t like arts and crafts, and she scribbled all over the paper, and then she had a crying fit.

(CONTINUED)
(Sits back.)
Oh dear. I shouldn’t say she doesn’t draw well, it sounds like a criticism of Joanie.

MATT.
I won’t tell.

EMILY.
Yes, but it would be on my conscience. I better write Joanie a note apologizing. And really Mary Frances draws very well, I didn’t mean it when I said she didn’t. She probably had a headache. I think I’ll use this nice pink piece of construction paper to apologize to Joanie, and I’ll apologize about forgetting the piece at your mother’s wedding too. I’ve never been sure Joanie’s forgiven me, even though she says she has. I don’t know what else I can do except apologize. I don’t have any money.

MATT.
Your cat looks very good. It doesn’t look like a clock.

EMILY.
You’re such a comfort, Skippy. I’ll be right back. Why don’t you pretend your dog is real, and you can teach it tricks while I’m gone.

Exits. Matt makes "roll over" gesture to drawing, expectantly. Lights change. Matt exits.

Scene 11: The second child of Bette and Boo

Enter quickly: Boo, Karl, Soot, Margaret, Paul, Emily, Joan. They stand in their same hospital positions. Enter the doctor with the baby in a blue blanket.

DOCTOR.
The baby’s dead.

Drops it on the floor.

MARGARET.
Nonsense. That’s what he said about the last one, didn’t he, Paul?

DOCTOR.
This time it’s true. It is dead.

BETTE.
Why?

(CONTINUED)
DOCTOR.
The reason the baby is dead is this: Mr. Hudlocke has Rh positive blood.

KARL.
Good for you, Bore!

DOCTOR.
Mrs. Hudlocke has Rh negative blood.

BETTE.
Like Kanga.

DOCTOR.
And so the mother’s Rh negative blood fights the baby’s Rh positive blood and so: The mother kills the baby.

EMILY.
(Rather horrified.)
Who did this??? The mother did this???

KARL.
You married a winner, Bore.

BOO.
The baby came. And it was dead.
(Picks up baby.)

SOOT.
Poor Booey.

BETTE.
But I’ll have other babies.

DOCTOR.
The danger for your health if you do and the likelihood of stillbirth are overwhelming considerations.

BOO.
The baby came. And it was dead.

BETTE.
Mama, tell him to go away.

MARGARET.
There, there. Say something to her, Paul.

Paul says nothing. Lights change.
Scene 12: Bette and Margaret visit

Emily in a rest home

MATT.
Bette and Margaret visit Emily, who is in a rest home due to nerves.
(Exits. Emily with her cello. Bette, Margaret. Bette seems very depressed, and keeps looking at the floor or looking off )

EMILY.
Oh, Mom, Bette. It’s so good to see you. How are you feeling, Bette, after your tragedy?

MARGARET.
Emily, don’t talk about it. Change the subject.

EMILY.
( Trying desperately to oblige.)
Um . . . urn . . . uh . . .

MARGARET.
(Looking around slightly.)
This is a very nice room for an institution. Bette, look up. Do you like the doctors, Emily?

EMILY.
Yes, they’re very good to me.

MARGARET.
They should be. They’re very expensive. I was going to ask your brother, Tom, for some money for your stay here, but he’s really not ... Oh, I didn’t mean to mention Tom. Forget I said anything.

EMILY.
Oh, what is it? Is he all right?

MARGARET.
I shouldn’t have mentioned it. Forget it, Emily.

EMILY.
But what’s the matter with him? Is he ill? Oh, Mom ...

MARGARET.
Now, Emily, don’t go on about it. That’s a fault of yours. If you had stayed in the convent maybe you could have corrected that fault. Oh, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to bring up the convent.

(continues)
EMILY.
That’s all right, Mom.
(Silence.)

MARGARET.
Besides, whatever happens, happens. Don’t look that way, Emily. Change the subject.

EMILY.
Urn ... uh ...

MARGARET.
There are many pleasant things in the world, think of them.

EMILY.
(Trying hard to think of something; then: )
How is Skippy Bette?

BETTE.
Who?

EMILY.
Skippy.

BETTE.
(To Margaret.)
Who?

MARGARET.
She means Baby Roo, dear.

BETTE.
Oh, Roo. Yes.
(Stares off in distance blankly.)

EMILY.
Is he well?

MARGARET.
(Telling Emily to stop.)
He’s fine, dear. Looks just like his mother. ... EMILY.

EMILY
He’s a lovely child. I look forward to seeing him when I finally leave here and get to go ...
(Getting teary.)

MARGARET.
Emily, the doctors told me they’re sure you’re not here for life. Isn’t that right, Bette?
(Whispers to Emily.)
(MORE)
MARGARET. (cont’d)
The doctors say Bette shouldn’t have any more babies.

EMILY.
Oh, dear. And Bette’s a wonderful mother. Bette, dear, don’t feel bad, you have the one. wonderful child, and maybe someday God will make a miracle so you can have more children.

BETTE.
(The first sentence she’s heard.)
I can have more children?

EMILY.
Well, maybe God will make a miracle so you can.

BETTE.
I can have a miracle?

EMILY.
Well you pray and ask for one.

MARGARET.
Emily, miracles are very fine .

EMILY.
Oh, I didn’t think, I shouldn’t have .

MARGARET.
But now you’ve raised Betsy’s hopes .

EMILY.
Oh, Bette, listen to Mom ... I’m so sorry.

BETTE.
I CAN HAVE MORE CHILDREN!

MARGARET
That’s right, Betsy. Emily, I know you didn’t mean to brig this up..

EMILY
I’m stupid..

MARGARET
But first you start in on your brother Tom who has a spastic colon and is drinking too much..

EMILY
OH NO!
CONTINUED:  

BETTE

(Very excited; overlapping with Margret.)

I CAN HAVE MORE CHILDREN, I CAN HAVE MORE CHILDREN, I CAN HAVE MORE CHILDREN...(ect.)

MARGARET

(Overlapping with Bette)

... and has been fired and there’s some crazy talk about him and som boy in high school, which I’m sure isn’t true, ans ecen if it is..

EMILY

Tom’s all right, isn’t he, it isn’t true...

BETTE

...I CAN HAVE MORE CHILDREN...

(Ect.)

MARGARET

I didn’t mean to tell you, Emily, but you talk and talk...

BETTE

...I CAN HAVE MORE CHILDREN, I CAN HAVE MORE CHILDREN...

EMILY

Oh, Mom, I’m so sorry I...

MARGARET

and talk about a thing until you think your head is going to explode...

EMILY

(Overlapping still)

I’m so sorry, I... WAIT!

(Silence Emily sits at her cello with great concrention, pick up bow.)

I think I remember it.

Listen, tries to remember the piece from the wedding, keeps trying out diffrent opening notes:

Margaret looks between the two girls.

MARGARET

I wish you two could see yourselves.

(Laughs merrily.)

You’re both acting very funny.

(Laughs again.)

Come on, Betsy.

Margaret and Bette exit, cheerful. Emily keeps trying to remember. Lights change.
Scene 13: Fr. Donnally gives Bette advice

Bette seeks definition of the word "miracle" from Father Donnally.

(Exits. Bette, Father Donnally. She kneels to im in the confessional, blesses herself.)

FATHER DONNALLY.
Hello, Bette, how are you?

BETTE
I’m feeling much better after my tragedy.

FATHER DONNALLY.
It’s a cross to bear.

BETTE.
Have you ever read Winnie the Pooh, Father? Most people think it’s for children, but I never read it until I was an adult. The humor is very sophisticated.

FATHER DONNALLY.
I’ll have to read it sometime.

BETTE.
Do you believe in miracles, Father?

FATHER DONNALLY.
Miracles rarely happen, Bette.

BETTE.
I do too! Thank you, Father. You’ve helped me make a decision.

Lights change.

Scene 14: Soot gives Bette advice

Soot gives Bette some advice.

(Exits. Bette, pregnant, Boo, Soot, Karl.)

BETTE.
And then Father Donnally said that I should just keep trying and that even if this baby died, there would be at least one more baby that would live, and then I would be a mother as God meant me to be. Do you agree, Soot?

(CONTINUED)
SOOT.
I’ve never met this Father Donnally. Karl, Pauline has a retarded daughter, doesn’t she? LaLa is retarded, isn’t she? I mean, she isn’t just slow, is she?

BETTE.
I don’t care if the child’s retarded. Then that’s God’s will. I love retarded children. I like children more than I like people. Boo, you’re drinking too much, it’s not fair to me. If this baby dies, it’s going to be your fault.

BOO.
I don’t think Father Donnally should have encouraged you about this. That’s what I think.

BETTE.
He’s a priest.
(To Soot.)
Did you ever see Jackie Cooper as a child? I thought he was much cuter than Shirley Temple, what do you think, Soot?

KARL:
Bore, my wife Soot hasn’t said one sensible thing in thirty years of marriage . . .

SOOT.
Oh, Karl ...
(Laughs, flattered.)

KARL.
But your little wife has just said more senseless things in one ten minute period than Soot here has said in thirty years of bondage.

SOOT.
Oh, Karl. I never was one for talking.

BETTE.
(To Karl.)
Look here, you. I’m not afraid of you. I’m not going to let Boo push me to a breakdown the way you’ve pushed Soot. I’m stronger than that.

SOOT.
Oh, my.
(Laughs.)
Sit down, dear.

KARL.
Tell the baby-maker to turn it down, Bore.

(CONTINUED)
BOO.

Bette, sit down.

BETTE.

I want a marriage and a family and a home, and I’m going to have them, and if you won’t help me, Boo, I’ll have them without you.

(Exits.)

KARL.

Well, Bore, I don’t know about you and your wife. Whatever one can say against your mother, and it’s most every thing,

(Soot laughs.)

at least she didn’t go around dropping dead children at every step of the way like some God damned giddy farm animal.

SOOT.

Karl, you shouldn’t tease everyone so.

KARL.

I don’t like the way you’re behaving today, Soot.

(Exits.)

SOOT.

(Looks back to where Bette was.)

Bette, dear, let me give you some advice. Oh, that’s right. She left.

(A moment of disorientation, looks at Boo.)

Boo, Karl’s a lovely man most of the time, and I’ve had a very happy life with him, but I hope you’ll be a little kinder than he was. Just a little. Anything is an improvement. I wish I had dead children. I wish I had two hundred dead children. I’d stuff them down Karl’s throat.

(Laughs.)

Of course, I’m only kidding.

Laughs some more. Lights change.

Scene 15: Matt talks about The Mayor of Casterbridge

MATT.

when Skippy is nine, Bette goes to the hospital for the third time. The third child of Bette and Boo.

Exits. Lights change.
Scene 16: The third child of Bette and Boo

Everyone assembles, except for Bette: Boo, Karl, Soot, Margaret, Paul, Joan, Emily. They wait. Enter the doctor. He drops the baby on the floor, exits. Pause. Lights change

Scene 18: Bette and Boo celebrate Thanksgiving

MATT.
Several months later, Bette and Boo have the two families over to celebrate Thanksgiving.
(Bette, Matt. Bette is on the warpath.)

BETTE.
(Calling off, nasty.)
Come up from the cellar, Boo. I’m not going to say it again. They’re going to be here.
(To Matt.)
He’s hidden a bottle behind the furnace.

MATT.
Please stop shouting.

BETTE.
Did you smell something on his breath?

MATT.
I don’t know. I didn’t get that close.

BETTE.
Can’t you go up and kiss him?

MATT.
I can’t go up and kiss him for no reason.

BETTE.
You’re so unaffectionate. There’s nothing wrong with a ten year old boy kissing his father.

MATT.
I don’t want to kiss him.

BETTE.
Well, I think I smelled something.
(Enter Boo.)

BOO.
What are you talking about?.

(CONTINUED)
BETTE.
    You’re always picking on me. I wasn’t talking about anything. Set the table, Skippy.
    (Matt exits.)

BOO.
    When are they all coming?

BETTE.
    When do you think they’re coming? Let me smell your breath.

BOO.
    Leave my breath alone.

BETTE.
    You’ve been drinking. You’ve got a funny look in your eye.
    (Enter Matt, holding some silverware.)

MATT.
    Something’s burning in the oven.

BETTE.
    Why can’t you stop drinking? You don’t care enough about me and Skippy to stop drinking, do you?

MATT.
    It’s going to burn.

BETTE.
    You don’t give me anything to be grateful for. You’re just like your father. You’re a terrible example to Skippy. He’s going to grow up neurotic because of you.

MATT.
    I’ll turn the oven off.
    (Exits.)

BOO.
    Why don’t you go live with your mother, you’re both so perfect.

BETTE.
    Don’t criticize my mother.
    (Enter Joan and Emily. Joan has a serving dish with candied sweet potatoes; Emily has a large gravy boat dish.)

EMILY.
    Happy Thanksgiving, Bette.
BETTE.  
Hush, Emily. You’re weak, Boo. It’s probably just as well the other babies have died.

EMILY.  
I brought the gravy.

BETTE.  
We don’t care about the gravy, Emily. I want you to see a priest, Boo.

BOO.  
Stop talking. I want you to stop talking.  
(Enter Margaret and Paul. Paul is holding a large cake.)

MARGARET.  
Hello, Betsy, dear.

BETTE.  
He’s been drinking.

MARGARET.  
Let’s not talk about it. Hello, Boo, happy Thanksgiving.

BOO.  
Hello.  
(Enter Soot and Karl. Soot is carrying a candelabra.)

SOOT.  
Hello, Margaret.

MARGARET.  
How nice to see you. Paul, you remember Mrs. Hudlocke?

PAUL.  
lese oo ee oo, issizzse uhoch##. Iht oo ab uhuull ineing uh arreeng ace###? [Nice to see you, Mrs. Hudlocke. Did you have trouble finding a parking place?]

SOOT.  
I guess so.  
(To everybody.)  
I brought a candelabra.

BETTE.  
( To Soot.)  
You’re his mother, I want you to smell his breath.
BOO.  
SHUT UP ABOUT MY BREATH!  
(Boo accidentally knocks into Emily, who drops the gravy on the floor.)

BETTE.  
You’ve spilled the gravy all over the rug!

EMILY.  
I’m sorry.

BETTE.  
Boo did it!

BOO.  
I’ll clean it up, I’ll clean it up.  
(Exits.)

BETTE.  
I think he’s hidden a bottle in the cellar.

EMILY.  
Joanie didn’t drop the sweet potatoes.

SOOT.  
Are we early?  
(Laughs.)

KARL.  
Pipe down, Soot.  
((Boo enters with a vacuum cleaner. All watch him as he starts to vacuum up the gravy.)

BETTE.  
What are you doing? Boo!

BOO.  
I can do it!

BETTE.  
You don’t vacuum gravy!

BOO.  
I can do it!

BETTE.  
Stop it! You’re ruining the vacuum!

SOOT.  
Oh, dear. Let’s go.  
(Laughs.)  
Goodbye, Booey.

(CONTINUED)
(Karl and Soot exit.)

JOAN.
I knew we shouldn’t have had it here.

MARGARET.
Come on, Betsy. Why don’t you and Skippy stay with us tonight?

BETTE.
YOU DON’T VACUUM GRAVY!

MARGARET.
Let it alone, Betsy.

BETTE.
You don’t vacuum gravy. You don’t vacuum gravy. You don’t vacuum gravy.

BOO.
(Hysterical.)
WHAT DO YOU DO WITH IT THEN? TELL ME! WHAT DO YOU DO WITH IT?

BETTE.
(Quieter, but very upset.)
You get warm water, and a sponge, and you sponge it up.
(Bette and Boo stare at one another, spent.)

EMILY.
Should we put the sweet potatoes in the oven? (Exit Matt.)

JOAN.
Come on, Emily. Let’s go home.

MARGARET.
Betsy, if you and Skippy want to stay at our house tonight, just come over. Goodbye, Boo.

EMILY.
(Calls.)
Goodbye, Skippy.
Margaret, Joan, Emily, and Paul exit.
Enter Matt with a pan of water and two sponges. He hands them to Bette. Bette and Boo methodically sponge up the gravy. Music to the "Bette and Boo" round in the background.

BOO.
(Quietly.)
Okay, we’ll soak it up with the sponge. That’s what we’re doing. We’re soaking it up.

(CONTINUED)
(They more or less finish with it.)
I’m going to take a nap.
(Boo lies down where he is, and falls asleep.)

BETTE.
Boo? Boo? Booey? Boo?
(Enter Soot.)

SOOT.
Did I lose an earring in here? Oh, dear. He’s just asleep, isn’t he?

BETTE.
Boo? Boo.

SOOT.
He must have gotten tired.
(Holds up earring, to Matt.)
If you should see it, it looks just like this one.
(Laughs.)
Booey?
(Laughs.)
I think he’s asleep. Goodbye, Booey.
(Exits.)

BETTE.
Boo? Booey?

MATT.
Please don’t try to wake him up. You’ll just argue.

BETTE.
All right. I won’t try to wake him.
(Pause.)
Boo. Booey.
(She pushes his shoulder slightly.)
Boo.
(To Matt.)
I just want to get through to him about the gravy.
(To Boo.)

Bette looks at Matt, then back at Boo. Matt looks at both of them, then out to audience, exhausted and trapped, but with little actual expression on his face. Lights dim. End Act I.
ACT 2

Scene 19: Boo takes a pledge in front of Fr. Donnally

Bette, Boo, Father Donnally down center. Matt to the side. All the others stand together as they did in the beginning to sing the "Bette and Boo" round. Music introduction to the round is heard.

BOO.

(Holding up a piece of paper.)
I pledge, in front of Father Donnally, to give up drinking in order to save my marriage and to make my wife and son happy.

FATHER DONNALLY.
Now sign it, Boo.
(Boo signs it.)

BETTE.

(Happy.)
Thank you, Boo.

(Kisses him, to Father Don natty.)
Should you bless him or something?

FATHER DONNALLY.
Oh, I don’t know. Sure.
(Blesses them.)
In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Am n.

BETTE.
Thank you, Father.

FATHER DONNALLY.
All problems can be worked out, can’t they?

BETTE.
Yes, they can.

Scene 21: Matt’s holiday essay;
Bette and Boo celebrate Christmas

Matt addresses the audience.

MATT.
Holidays, an essay by Matthew Hudlocke. Holidays were invented in 1203 by Sir Ethelbert Holiday, a sadistic Englishman. It was Sir Ethelbert’s hope that by setting aside specific days on which to celebrate things—the birth of Christ, the death of Christ, Beowulf’s defeat over Grendel—that the population at large would fall (MORE)

(CONTINUED)
MATT. (cont’d)
into a collective deep depression. Holidays would regulate joy so that anyone who didn’t feel joy ful on those days would feel bad. Single people would be sad they were single. Married people would be sad they were mar ried. Everyone would feel disappointment that their lives had fallen so far short of their expectations. A small percentage of people, sensing the sadism in Sir Ethel ert’s times; everyone else felt intimidated by this small group’s ex cessive delight, and so never owned up to being miserable. And so, as time went on, the habit of celebrating holidays became more and more ingrained into society. Eventually humorists like Robert Benchley wrote mildly amusing essays poking fun at the impossibility of enjoying holi days, but no one actually spoke up and attempted to abolish them. And so, at this time, the Thanksgiving with the gravy having been such fun, Bette and Boo decide to celebrate the holiday of Christmas by visiting the Hudlocke’s.

Maybe a bit of Christmas music. Emily sits near Karl and Soot. Boo is off to one side, drinking something. Bette is off to another side, looking grim, she is also looking pregnant. Matt sits on floor near Emily or Soot.

EMILY.
I think Christmas is becoming too commercial. We should never forget whose birthday we are celebrating.

SOOT.
That’s right. Whose birthday are we celebrating?

EMILY.
Our Lord Saviour.

SOOT.
Oh yes, of course. I thought she meant some relative.

EMILY.
Jesus.

SOOT.
It’s so nice of you to visit us today, Emily. I don’t think I’ve seen you since you were away at that . . . well, away.

(Laughs.)

EMILY.
Skippy asked me to come along, but I’m enjoying it.
KARL.
  Soot, get Bore and me another drink.

BETTE.
  IF BOO HAS ANOTHER DRINK I AM GOING TO SCREAM AND
  SCREAM UNTIL THE WINDOWS BREAK! I WARN YOU!
  (Pause.)

KARL.
  (Looks, at Bette.)
  You’re having another baby, woman?

BOO.
  I told you, Pop. Betsy has a lot of courage.

KARL.
  You trying to kill Betsy, Bore?

BETTE.
  Skippy will tell me If you have another drink.
  (Exits.)

KARL.
  You sound like quite a scout, Skip. Is Skip a scout, Bore?

BOO.
  What, Pop?

KARL.
  Is Skip a scout, Bore?

SOOT.
  I was a brownie.

  Re-enter Bette.

BETTE.
  Boo upsets Skippy’s stomach.
  (Sits down.)
  I’m not leaving the room.
  (Pause.)
  ..

SOOT.
  (To Emily.)
  My friend Lottie always comes out to Visit at Christmas
  time . . .

KARL.
  Her friend Lottie looks like an onion.

(CONTINUED)
SOOT.
Karl always says she looks like an onion.
(Doing her best.)
But this year Lottie won’t be out till after New Year’s.

KARL.
She may look like an onion, but she smells like a garbage disposal.

SOOT.
Oh, Karl. Because this year Lottie slipped on her drive way and broke her hip because of all the ice.

KARL.
And she tastes like a septic tank.

SOOT.
So, when Lottie gets here she’s going to have a cast on her ... Karl, where would they put the cast if you broke your hip?

KARL.
Lottie doesn’t have hips. She has pieces of raw whale skin wrapped around a septic tank in the middle.

SOOT.
Karl doesn’t like Lottie.

KARL.
That’s right.

SOOT.
Karl thinks Lottie smells, but I think he’s just kidding.

BETTE.
HOW CAN YOU SMELL HER WITH ALCOHOL ON YOUR BREATH?

BOO.
Oh God.

KARL.
What did you say, woman?

BETTE.
You’re too drunk to smell anything.

BOO.
Will you lay off all this drinking talk?

(CONTINUED)
KARL.  
(Holds up his drink.)
I think it’s time your next stillborn was baptized, don’t you, Soot?

SOOT.  
Karl ...

Karl pours his drink on Bette’s lap. Bette has hysterics. Lights change.

Scene 22: 20 years later, Boo has dinner with his son; 20 years later, Bette has dinner with her son.

MATT.  
Twenty years later, Boo has dinner with his son.  
(Boo, Matt.)

BOO.  
Well, how are things up at Dartmouth, Skip?

MATT.  
I’m not up at Dartmouth anymore. I’m at Columbia in graduate school.

BOO.  
I know that. I meant Columbia. How is it?

MATT.  
Fine.

BOO.  
Your mother and I got divorced, you know.

MATT.  
Yes, I know. We have discussed this.

BOO.  
I don’t understand why she wanted a divorce. I mean, we’d been separated for several years, why not just leave it at that?

MATT.  
She wants to feel independent, I guess.

BOO.  
I thought we might get back together. You know, I always found your mother very charming when she wasn’t shouting. A man needs a woman, son. I think your old man’s going to get teary for a second. Do you have any problems you want to talk over?  
(Blinks his eyes.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
BOO. (cont’d)
I’m just an old softie.

Matt steps out of the scene. Boo stays in place.

MATT.
(To audience.)
At about the same time, Bette also has dinner with her son.

(Bette, Matt.)

BETTE.
Hello, Skippy dear. I made steak for you, and mashed potatoes and peas and cake. How many days can you stay?

MATT.
I have to get back tomorrow.

BETTE.
Can’t you stay longer?

BETTE.
You never stay long. You’re the only one of my children that lived. You should see me more often.

(Matt looks aghast.)

MATT.
That’s not a fair thing to say.

BETTE.
You’re right. It’s not fair of me to bring up the children that died; that’s beside the point. I must take responsibility for wanting children so badly that I foolishly kept trying over and over, hoping for miracles. Did you see the article in the paper, by the way, about how they’ve discovered a serum for people with the Rh problem that would have allowed me to have more babies if it had existed back then?

MATT.
Yes I did. I wondered if you had read about that.

BETTE.
Yes I did. It made me feel terribly sad for a little while; but then I thought, what’s past is past. One has no choice but to accept facts. And I realized that you must live your own life, and I must live mine. My life may not have worked out as I wished, but still I feel a deep and inner serenity, and so you mustn’t feel bad about me because I am totally happy and self sufficient in my pretty sunlit apartment. And now I’m going to close my eyes, and I want you to go out into the world and live your life. Goodbye.

(CONTINUED)
(Closes her eyes.)

MATT.
(To audience.)
I’m afraid I’ve made that conversation up totally.
(They start the scene over.)

BETTE.
Hello, Skippy, dear. I made steak for you, and mashed potatoes and peas and cake. You know, you’re the only one of my children that lived. How long can you stay?

MATT.
Gee, I don’t know. Uh, a couple of days. Three years. Only ten minutes, my car’s double parked. I could stay eight years if I can go away during the summer. Gee. I don’t know.

Lights change.

Scene 23: Boo’s second pledge in front of Fr. Donnally

MATT.
Back in chronology, shortly after the unpleasant Christmas with the Hudlockes, Bette brings Boo back to Father Donnally.

Exits. Bette, Boo, Father Donnally. Bette in afoul temper.

BOO.
(Reading.)
I pledge in front of Father Donnally to give up drinking in order to save my marriage and to make my wife and son happy, and this time I mean it.

BETTE.
Read the other part.

BOO.
(Reading.)
And I promise to tell my father to go to hell.

FATHER DONNALLY.
Oh, I didn’t see that part.

BETTE.
Now sign it.
(Boo signs it. Crossly, to Father Donnally.)
Now bless us.

(CONTINUED)
FATHER DONNALLY.
    Oh all right. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy
    Ghost. Amen.

BETTE.
    Now let’s go home.
    (Bette and Boo cross to another part of
    the stage; Father Donnally exits.)
    Now if you give up drinking for good this time, maybe
    God will let this next baby live, Boo.

BOO.
    Uhhuh.

BETTE.
    And I’m going to go to Mass daily. And Emily is
    praying.

BOO.
    Uh huh.

BETTE.
    You’re not very talkative, Boo.

BOO.
    I don’t have anything to say.

BETTE.
    Well you should have something to say. Marriage is a
    fifty-fifty proposition.

BOO.
    Where do you pick up these sayings? On the back of
    matchpacks?

BETTE.
    Why are you being nasty? Have you had a drink al ready?

BOO.
    No I haven’t had a drink already. I just find it very
    humiliating to be constantly dragged in front of that
    priest all the time so he can hear your complaints
    about me.

BETTE.
    You have an idiotic sense of pride. Do you think he
    cares what you do? And if you don’t want people to know
    you drink, then you shouldn’t drink.

BOO.
    You are obsessed with drinking. Were you frightened at
    an early age by a drunk? What is the matter with you?

(CONTINUED)
BETTE.
What is the matter with you?

BOO.
What is the matter with you?

BETTE.
What is the matter with you?

BOO.
What is the matter with you?

This argument strikes them both funny, and thry laugh. Lights change.

Scene 24: Joan’s birthday

MATT.
Shortly after the second pledge, Bette and Skippy visit the Brennans to celebrate Joanie’s birthday. Boo stays home, drunk or sulking, isn’t clear.

(Margaret, Paul, Bette, Emily, Joan ’ comes downstage and addresses the audience.)

MARGARET.
All my children live home, it’s so nice. Emily’s here back from the rest home. And Joanie’s home because her marriage hasn’t worked out and somebody has to watch all those children for. her while she’s working, poor thing.

(Chuckles, pleased.)
The only one who hasn’t moved back home is Betsy, because she’s so stubborn.

(Laughs.)
Sometimes I’m afraid if I had to choose between having my children succeed in the world and live away from home, or having them fail and live home, that I’d choose the latter. But luckily, I haven’t had to choose. come on everybody, let’s celebrate Joanie’s birthday, and don’t anybody mention that she’s pregnant

BETTE.
Every time I look at you, you’re using nose spray.

JOAN.
You just got here...

BETTE.
But the last time I was here. You’re going to give yourself a sinus infection.
CONTINUED:

JOAN.
I already have a sinus. infection.

MARGARET.
The girls always fight. It’s so cute. Now, girls.

BETTE.
Well, you use too much nose spray. You might hurt the baby inside you.

JOAN.
Let’s drop the subject of babies, shall we?

BETTE.
I can’t imagine why you’re pregnant.

EMILY.
Happy birthday, Joan!
(Everybody looks at her.)
I made the cake. I better go get it.
(Exits.)

MARGARET.
Where’s Booey, Bette?

BETTE.
He’s home, drunk or sulking, Skippy and I can’t decide which. Where’s Nikkos, Joan?

JOAN.
Under a truck, I hope.

BETTE.
Well, you married him. Everyone told you not to.

MARGARET.
Let’s change the subject. How are you doing in school, Skippy?

MATT.
(Glum.)
Fine.

MARGARET.
Isn’t that nice?

BETTE.
Skippy always gets A’s. Is’ little Mary Frances still getting F’s? Maybe if you were home more, she’d do better.

(CONTINUED)
JOAN.
I can’t afford to be horny more. I don’t have a life of leisure like you do.
(Enter Emily with the cake.)

EMILY.
Happy birthday; Joan. · · ·

BETTE.
Hush, Emily. If I had several children; I’d make time to spend with them.

JOAN.
You have a home and a husband, and I don’t have either.

BETTE.
Well it’s your own fault.

EMILY.
Please don’t argue, Bette.

BETTE.
Why do you say "Bette"? Why not ‘Joanie”? She’s the one arguing.

EMILY.
Don’t anybody argue.

MARGARET.
Don’t excite yourself, Emily.

JOAN.
You see what your talking has done? You’re going to give Emily another breakdown.

EMILY.
That’s sweet of you to worry, Joanie, but I’m all right.

BETTE.
(To Joan.)
You’re just a neurotic mess. You’re going to ruin your children.

JOAN.
Well it’s lucky you only have one to ruin, or else the mental ward wouldn’t just have Emily in it.
(Emily has an asthma attack. )

MARGARET.
This cake looks very nice, Emily. Why don’t we all have some. I bet Skippy would like a piece.
Margaret cuts the cake and passes it around.

EMILY.
We fotgot to have Joanie blow out the candles.

JOAN.
There aren’t any candles on the cake.

EMILY.
Oh, I forgot them. I’m sorry, Joanie.

JOAN.
Why should I have candles? I don’t have anything else.

MARGARET.
Poor Joanie.

BETTE.
The dough’s wet. Don’t eat it, Skippy; it’ll make you sick.

EMILY.
It isn’t cooked right?

BETTE.
It’s wet, it’s wet. You didn’t cook it enough.

JOAN.
I don’t like cake anyway.

MARGARET.
Poor Joanie.

BETTE.
Everything’s always poor Joanie. But her baby’s going to live.

EMILY.
Oh, Bette.

JOAN.
Well maybe we’ll both have a miracle. Maybe yours’ll live and mine’ll die.

EMILY.
Oh, Joanie.

BETTE.
Stop saying that, Emily.

MARGARET.
Girls, girls. This isn’t conversation for the living room. Or for young ears.

(CONTINUED)
PAUL.

(Choking on cake.)

#%#%#GHGHR#%#%#*********#«Y#«Y#********

MARGARET.

Paul, stop it. Stop it.

Paul falls over dead. Lights change.

Scene 25: The funeral of Paul Brennan

MATT.

The funeral of Paul Brennan.

Paul in a chair with a sheet over him. Present are Matt, Bette, Boo, Margaret, Emily, Joan.

MARGARET.

Paul was a fine husband. Goodbye, Paul.

(Tear.)

BETTE.

Boo, thank you for being sober today.

(Kisses him.)

Look how happy it makes Skippy.

BOO.

Skippy’s drunk.

BETTE.

That’s not funny.

(Enter Father Donnally.)

FATHER DONNALLY.

Dearly bereaved, Paul Brennan was a fine man, and now he’s dead. I didn’t know Paul very well, but I imagine he was a very nice man and everyone spoke well of him. Though he wasn’t too able to speak well of them.

(Laughs; everyone looks faintly appalled.)

It’s going to be hard not to miss him, but God put his children on this earth to adapt to circumstances, to do His will. I was reminded of this fact the other morning, when I saw my colored garbage man collecting the refuse as I was on my way to say Mass. "Good morning, Father," he said, "Nice day." "And what’s your name?" I said. "Percival Pretty, Father," he said. I smiled a little more and then I said, "And how are you—Per cival?" And he said, "I’m doing the will of God, Father. God saw fit to take my little Buttermilk to Him, and now I’m emptying the garbage." "And who is little Buttermilk?" I said, and he said, "Why,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
FATHER DONNALLY. (cont’d)
Buttermilk was my daughter who broke her neck playing on the swings." And then he smiled. Colored folk have funny ideas for names. I knew one colored woman who named her daughter 'January 22nd." It wasn’t easy to forget her birthday!
(Everyone looks appalled again.) But I think Percival Pretty’s smile is a lesson for us all, and so now when I think of Paul Brennan, I’m going to smile.
(Smiles.) And then nothing can touch you.
(Shakes hands with Margaret.) Be strong, dear.

EMILY.
Thank you, Father, for your talk.

JOAN.
(To Paul’s dead body.)
I’ve turned against Greeks after Nikkos. You were right, Dad, you were right!

MARGARET.
Thank you, Joanie. That was a nice gesture.

FATHER DONNALLY.
Hello, Bette. Hello, Boo. You’re putting on weight, Bette.

BETTE.
It’s nothing.
(Sadly.) I mean, it will be nothing.

Lights change.

Scene 26: The fourth child of Bette and Boo

MATT.
Bette goes to the hospital for the fourth time, et cetera, et cetera.
(Exits. Karl, Soot, Boo in their hospital "waiting" positions. )

BOO.
Pop. Eventually there’s menopause, right? I mean, some thing happens, and then it stops, and ...

KARL.
Where are the Brennans? Have they lost the playing spirit?

(CONTINUED)
BOO.
  Bette wasn’t that way when I married her, was she?

SOOT.
  Karl, is there still a space between my eyes?

KARL.
  What did you say, Soot?

SOOT.
  Nothing. I’ll wait till I get home.
      (Smiles, feels between her eyebrows.)
    Lottie always said when your eyebrows start to kiss,
    you better watch it.

KARL.
  Your mother’s eyebrows are kissing, Bore.

SOOT.
  You make everything sound so dirty, Karl. I wish I
  hadn’t said that.

KARL.
  You want to hear a dirty story? Bore, are you
  listening? Once there was a traveling salesman, Soot,
  who met a girl in a barn who was more stupid than you.

SOOT.
  I don’t know this one.

KARL.
  The girl was an albino. Bore, you listening. She was an
  albino humpback with a harelip.

BOO.
  I’m going to get a drink.
      (Exits.)

KARL.
  And this albino humpback saw the traveling salesman
  with his dickey hanging out ...

SOOT.
  Karl, I have heard this one.

KARL.
  And she saw his dickey, and she said, "What’s that?"
  and he said, "That’s my dickey."

SOOT.
  Karl, you told this story to Lottie, and she didn’t
  like it.

(CONTINUED)
KARL.
And she said, "Why does it swing around like that?" and he said ... Soot, what’s the end of the story?

SOOT.
Karl, I never listen to your stories.

KARL.
WHAT’S THE ANSWER TO THE JOKE?

SOOT.
(Cries.)
Karl, I don’t know. Something about a dickey. Maybe Bore knows. Booey? I have to go home and take a bath. I feel awful.

Enter the doctor. He drops the baby on the floor, exits. Karl and Soot stare at it a moment.
Catholics can’t use birth control, can they?
(Laughs.)
That’s a joke on someone.
(Enter Boo.)

KARL.
You missed it, Boo.

BOO.
Did it live?

KARL.
Not unless they redefined the term.

SOOT.
Don’t tease Booey, Karl. Let’s distract him, see if here members the joke.

KARL.
You tell it, Soot.

SOOT.
No, I don’t like the joke. I just thought maybe he’d re member it.

BOO.
It didn’t live.

KARL.
Tell the joke, Soot.

BOO.
Pop, I don’t feel like hearing a joke.
CONTINUED:

SOOT.

Poor Booey.

BOO.

I should probably see Bette, but I don’t think I can face her.

SOOT.

Why don’t you go get a drink, Booey, you look awful. I’ve got to go home and check my forehead.

KARL.

Tell the damn joke, Soot.

BOO.

Pop, I don’t want to hear a joke.

SOOT.

It’s all right, Booey. I’ll tell it. Your father seems obsessed with it.

KARL.

(Rams his cigar in her mouth.)

Here, you’ll need this.

SOOT.

Oh, Karl.

(Laughs.)

All right, Booey, you ready?

BOO.

I don’t want to hear a joke.

KARL.

You’ll like it, Bore.

SOOT.

Now, Booey . . .

(Boo starts to exit; they follow.)

it seems there was this poor unfortunate, stupid crippled girl, and she met this salesman . . . . .

BOO.

Will you two shut up? I don’t

SOOT.

He doesn’t want to hear the joke.

KARL.

You told it wrong, Soot.
SOOT.

I’m sorry, Karl. I’m really not myself today.
(Touches between her ears.)
I’m sorry, Booey.

Scene 27: Fr. Donnally gives Bette advice again

BETTE.

(Calls.)
Father Donnally! Father Donnally ...
(Father Donnally enters into Bette’s space.)
Father Donnally, can you help me?

FATHER DONNALLY.

I’ll try. What’s on your mind, Bette?

BETTE.

I feel that I should be a mother; and don’t think it would be a sin for me not to try again. But I don’t think Boo wants me to get pregnant again.

FATHER DONNALLY.

What does your doctor say?

BETTE.

The problem is that all the babies die. I don’t see why I have to go through all this suffering. And Boo never helps me.

FATHER DONNALLY.

I give a retreat for young married couples every year in the parish. Why don’t you and your husband come to that? I’m sure it will help you if you’re having trouble on the marriage couch.

BETTE.

All right, I’ll bring Booey to the retreat. Thank you, Father.

FATHER DONNALLY.

You’re welcome, Bette.
(Father Donnally exits.)

Lights change.
Scene 28: Fr. Donnally’s marriage

The retreat. Present are Bette, Boo, Matt; also Margaret, Emily, Joan, the dead Paul (with sheet still over him), Karl, Soot. Enter Father Donnally.

FATHER DONNALLY.
In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. Good evening, young marrieds.
(Looks about himself for a moment.)
Am I in the right room?

EMILY.
I’m not married, Father. I hope you don’t mind that I’m here.

FATHER DONNALLY.
On the contrary. I’m delighted. I’m not married either.
(Laughs.)
Jesus Christ blessed the young wedding couple at Cana, and when they ran out of expensive wine, He performed His first miracle—He took vats of water and He changed the water into wine.
(Holds up a glass.)
I have some wine right here.
(Sips it.)

BOO.
(To Bette.)
He drinks. Why don’t you try to get him to stop drinking?

BETTE.
Be quiet, Boo.

FATHER DONNALLY.
(Laughs, nervously.)
Please don’t talk when I’m talking.
(Starts his speech.)
Young marrieds have many problems to get used to. For some of them this is the first person of the opposite sex the other has ever known. The husband may not be used to having a woman in his bathroom. The wife may not be used to a strong masculine odor in her boudoir. Or then the wife may not cook well enough. How many marriages have floundered on the rocks of ill-cooked bacon?
(Pause.)
I used to amuse friends by imitating bacon in a saucepan. Would any one like to see that?

(Continued)
He looks around. Joan, Karl, and Soot raise their hands. After a moment, Emily, rather confused, raises her hand also. Father Donnally falls to the ground and does a fairly good—or if not good, at least unabashedly peculiar—imitation of bacon, making sizzling noises and contorting his body to represent becoming crisp. Toward the end, he makes sputtering noises into the air. Then he stands up again. All present applaud with varying degrees of approval or incredulity.

I also do coffee percolating.

(He does this.)

Pt. Pt. Ptptptptptptptptptpt. Bacon’s better. But things like coffee and bacon are important in a marriage, because they represent things that the wife does to make her husband happy. Or fat. (Laughs.)

The wife cooks the bacon, and the husband brings home the bacon.

(Emily bothered by what he’s just said, raises her hand.)

I’m not ready for questions yet, Emily.

(Emily lowers her hand; he sips his wine.)

BETTE.

Put your hand down, Emily.

(Emily does.)

FATHER DONNALLY.

(To Bette.)

Thank you. Now I don’t mean to get off the point. The point is husband and wife, man and woman, Adam and rib. I don’t want to dwell on the inequality of the sexes because these vary from couple to couple—some times the man is stupid, sometimes the woman is stupid, some times both are stupid. The point is man and wife are joined in holy matrimony to complete each other, to populate the earth and to glorify God. That’s what it’s for. That’s what life is for. If you’re not a priest or a nurl., you normally get married.

(Emily raises her hand.)

Yes, I know, you’re not married, Emily. Not everyone gets married. But my comments today are geared to ward the married people here.

(Emily takes down her hand.)

Man and wife are helpmates. She helps him, he helps her. In sickness and in health. Anna Karenina should not have left her husband, nor should she have jumped in front of a train. Marriage is not a step to be taken lightly. The Church does not recognize divorce; it does permit it, if you insist for legal purposes, but in the eyes of the Church you are still married and you can

(MORE)
FATHER DONNALLY. (cont’d)
never be unmarried, and that’s why you can never
remarry after a divorce because that would be bigamy
and that’s a sin and illegal as well.
(Breathes.)
So, for God’s sake, if you’re going to get married, pay
attention to what you’re doing, have conversations with
the person, figure out if you really want to live with
that person for years and years and years, because you
can’t change it. Priests have it easier. If I don’t
like my pastor, I can apply for a transfer. If I don’t
like a housekeeper, I can get her fired.
(Looks disgruntled.)
But a husband and wife are stuck together. So know what
you’re doing when you get married. I get so sick of
these people coming to me after they’re married, and
they’ve just gotten to know one another after the
ceremony, and they’ve discovered they have nothing in
common and they hate one an other. And they want me to
come up with a solution.
(Throws up his hands.)
What can I do? There is no solution to a problem like
that. I can’t help them! It puts me in a terrible
position. I can’t say get a divorce, that’s against
God’s law. I can’t say go get some on the side, that’s
against God’s law. I can’t say just pretend you’re
happy and maybe after a while you won’t know the
difference because, though that’s not against God’s law,
not that many people know how to do that, and if I
suggested it to people, they’d write to the Bishop
complaining about me and then he’d transfer me to some
godforsaken place in Latin America without a shower,
and all because these people don’t know what they’re
doing when they get married.
(Shakes his head.)
So I mumble platitudes to these people who come to me
with these insoluble problems, and I think to myself,
"Why didn’t they think before they got married? Why
does no one ever think? Why did God make people
stupid?"
(Pause)
Are there any questions?
(Bette raises her hand, as does Emily.
Father acknowledges Bette.)

BETTE.
Father, if I have a little girl rather than a boy, do
you think it might live? Should I pray for this?

FATHER DONNALLY.
You mean ... a little girl to clean house?
BETTE. (Irritated.)
No. I don’t mean a little girl to clean house. I mean that the doctors say that sometimes a little girl baby fights infection better than a little boy baby, and that maybe if I have a little girl baby, the fighting between the Rh positive blood in her body and the Rh negative blood in my body would not destroy her, and she might live.
(Pause.)
Should I pray for this?

FATHER DONNALLY.
By all means, pray for it. Just don’t get your hopes up too high though, maybe God doesn’t want you to have any more babies. It certainly doesn’t sound like it to me.

BETTE.
But I can pray?

FATHER DONNALLY.
Yes. You can. No one can stop you.

BETTE.
That’s what I thought.
(Emily raises her hand.)

FATHER DONNALLY.
(Dreading whatever she’s going to say.)
Yes, Emily?

EMILY.
Do you think maybe it’s my fault that all of Bette’s babies die? Because I left the convent?

FATHER DONNALLY.
Yes, I do.

EMILY.
(Stricken.)
Oh my God.

FATHER DONNALLY.
I’m sorry, Emily, I was just kidding. Are there any questions about newly married couples?
(Pause; no one stirs.)
Well I don’t have time for any more questions anyway. We’ll take a short break for refreshments, and then Father McNulty will talk to you about sexual problems which I’m not very good at, and then you can all go home. Thank you for your attention. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.
(Starts to exit.)

(CONTINUED)
EMILY.
Father ...

FATHER DONNALLY.
I was just kidding, Emily, I am sorry. Excuse me, I have to go to the bathroom.
(Exits in a hurry.)

JOAN.
You know, he makes a better piece of bacon than he does a priest.

EMILY.
I don’t think he should joke about something like that.

MARGARET.
He’s a priest, Emily.

EMILY.
I know you’re right, Mom, but everyone should want to meet Our Saviour, that’s more important than having a shower ...

MARGARET.
Don’t talk anymore, Emily.

BETTE.
Did that make you feel better, Boo? Are you going to be easier to live with?

BOO.
(Sarcastic.)
Yes, it’s all better now.

BETTE.
Why won’t you let anyone help us?

BOO.
What help? He just said that we shouldn’t get married, and that if we did, not to bother him with our problems.

BETTE.
That’s not what he said at all.

MARGARET.
Bette, don’t talk anymore. Hello, Mrs. Bud Locke. Did you enjoy the talk?

SOOT.
I’m sorry, what?

(CONTINUED)
MARGARET.
    Did you enjoy Father’s talk?

SOOT.
    You know, I can’t hear you. I think I’m going deaf.
    God, I hope so.

MARGARET.
    What do you mean?

SOOT.
    I’m sorry, I really can’t hear you.
    (Laughs.)
    I haven’t been able to hear Karl for about three days.
    (Laughs.)
    It’s wonderful.

BETTE.
    You should see an ear specialist.

SOOT.
    What?

BETTE.
    Oh, never mind.

EMILY.
    Mom, don’t you think

MARGARET.
    Emily, I said not to talk.

BETTE.
    Well if you don’t want us to talk, what do you want us
to do?

MARGARET.
    Don’t be cranky, Betsy. We’ll just all wait for Father
    McNulty. Maybe he’ll have something useful to say.
    (They all wait. Soot smiles.)

SOOT.
    (To audience.)
    Little blessings.

    Laughs. Lights change.
Scene 29: The divorce of Bette and Boo

Matt addresses the audience. Bette, Boo and the dead Paul stay onstage.

MATT.

Twenty years later, or perhaps only fifteen, Bette files for a divorce from Boo. They have been separated for several years, since shortly after the death of the final child; and at the suggestion of a therapist Bette has been seeing, Bette decides to make the separation (Makes hitting motion.)

Scene 30: Matt has dinner with Karl, Soot, Margaret and Paul

Matt sits at a table with all four. Paul and Soot have their heads on the table, dead. Karl seems fairly normal and himself; Margaret is distracted and vague.

MATT.

Hello. Nice to see you all.

MARGARET.

Emily! Huh-huh-huh. Tom! Nurse! Huh-huh huh.

(Note: the "huh-huh-huh" sound is not like laughter, but is a ner vous tic, said softly and rather continuously throughout the scene. Technically speaking, it’s like a mild vocal exercise using the diaphragm, like an ongoing cough reflex with no real cough behind it. A tic.)

KARL.

You’re Skip, aren’t you?

MATT.

Yes. You remember me?

KARL.

Yes I remember you.

MARGARET.


KARL.

(To Margaret.)

Shut up.

(Continued)
MATT.
   (To Karl)
   What do you think I should do with my life?

KARL.
   Well, don’t marry Soot.

MATT.
   Yes, but you know

MARGARET.
   Emily! Huh-huh-huh.

MATT.
   Everyone I know is divorced except for you and Soot, and Margaret and Paul. Of course, Soot and Paul are dead, but you all stayed married right up until death. And I wondered what mistakes you thought I could avoid based on all your experience.

KARL.
   Don’t expect much, that’s for starters. Look at Bette and Bore. She kept trying to change Bore. That’s idiotic. Don’t try to change anybody. If you don’t like them, be mean to them if you want; try to get them committed if that amuses you, but don’t ever expect to change them.
   (Matt considers this.)

MATT.
   Do you agree with that, grandma?

MARGARET.
   (Seeing Matt for the first time, leaning over to him.)
   Go to the baperdy sun ride zone a bat.

MATT.
   Baperdy?

MARGARET.
   Lamin fortris trexin home. Emily!

KARL.
   It’s too bad Paul’s not still alive. It would be interesting to hear them talk together now.
   (Matt laughs at this.)

MATT.
   Grandma, try to be lucid. I think Karl’s advice makes sense, sort of, if you’re in a bad marriage. But what if you’re not in a bad marriage?

   (CONTINUED)
MARGARET.
    When the bob?

MATT.
    I said, do you agree with Karl? Or do you see some
    thing more optimistic?

MARGARET.
    I want Emily to clean the mirrors with milk of
    magnesia. I see people in the mirrors and they don’t
    go away.

KARL.
    At least that’s a complete sentence.

MATT.
    Emily’s not here right now.

MARGARET.
    Everyone’s so late. Dabble morning hunting back, Emily.
    Huh-huh-huh.

MATT.
    (Gives up. on Margaret; back to Karl.)
    You know, I didn’t know you and Soot back when you were
    young, or Margaret and Paul either, for that matter.
    Maybe your marriages were happy. I have no way of
    knowing.

KARL.
    I never expected much from life. I wanted to get my way
    in everything, and that’s about all. What did you ask?

MARGARET.
    Huh-huh-huh. Joan. Emily.

MATT.
    Why did you marry Soot?

KARL.
    No reason. She was much prettier when she was younger.

MATT.
    But surely you didn’t marry her because she was pretty.

KARL.
    Don’t tell me what I did.

MATT.
    And why did everyone call her Soot? How did she get the
    name Soot?

(CONTINUED)
KARL.
I don’t remember. Was her name Soot? I thought it was something else.

MATT.
I think her name was Soot. Do you thinink I misheard it all these years?

KARL.
I couldn’t say.

MATT.
Why were you so mean to Soot?

KARL.
Why do you want to know?

MATT.
Because I see all of you do the same thing over and over, for years and years, and you never change. And my fear is that I can see all of you but not see myself, and maybe I’m doing something similar, but I just can’t see it. What I mean to say is did you all intend to live your lives the way you,did?

KARL.
Go away. I don’t like talking to you. You’re an irritating young man.

Matt leaves the scene. Karl, Margaret, Soot and Paul.exit or fade into darkness.

Scene 31: Matt gives Emily advice

MATT.
(Trying to find his place. To audince.)
Back to chronology again.Bette had the first baby,that is, the first dead baby in 1951 or something. And then the second one in 1953 or 4 something, and then ...
(Enter Emily.)

EMILY.
Hello, Skippy, dear. How does this sound to you?
(Reads from a note.)
"Please forgive my annoying qualities. I know that I talk to much about a thing and that I make people nervous that I do so. I am praying that I improve that fault and beg that you be patient with me."

MATT.
Who is that to, Emily?

(CONTINUED)
EMILY.
I don’t know. Who do you think it should be to?

MATT.
I don’t know. It would be up to you.

EMILY.
Do you, think it’s all right?

MATT.
I don’t think you should be so hard on yourself, but otherwise I think it’s fine.

EMILY.
Oh, thank you.
(Exits.)

MATT.
Okay. Just as dreams must be analyzed, so must the endless details of waking life be considered. Having intelligence allows one to analyze problems and to make sense of one’s life. This is difficult to achieve but with perseverance and persistence it is possible not even to get out of bed in the morning. To sleep. To sleep, per chance to dream, to take the phone off the hook and simply be unreachable. This is less dramatic than suicide, but more reversible. I can’t make sense out of these things anymore. Um, Bette goes to the hospital for the third time, and there’s the second dead baby, and then the fourth time, and the third dead baby, and then some time after Father Donnally’s marriage retreat, Bette goes to the hospital for the fifth time. The last child of Bette and Boo.

Scene 32: The last child of Bette and Boo

Enter Boo. He and Matt are in their “waiting” positions, back in the hospital.

The doctor throws the baby, in a pink blanket, in from offstage.

DOCTOR.
(Offstage.)
It was a girl.
(Boo Exits.)

BETTE.
I feel alone, Boo. Skippy, are you there? Skippy?
(Enter Matt.)
CONTINUED:

MATT.
Yes.

BETTE.
Would you move this for me?
   (She indicates dead baby on floor. He gingerly places it offstage.)
   Your father’s gone away. All the babies are dead.
   You’re the only thing of value left in my life, Skippy.

MATT.
   (With growing anger.)
Why do you call me Skippy? Why don’t you call me Matt?

BETTE.
It’s my favorite movie.

MATT.
   My favorite movie is Citizen Kane. I don’t call you Citizen Kane.

BETTE.
Why are you being fresh?

MATT.
   I don’t know.

BETTE.
   I don’t want to put any pressure on you, Skippy dear, but you’re the only reason I have left for living now.

MATT.
   Ah.

BETTE.
   You’re so unresponsive.

MATT.
   I’m sorry. I don’t know what to say.

BETTE.
   You’re a typical Capricorn, cold and ungiving. I’m an Aries, we like fun, we do three things at once. We make life de cisions by writing our options on little pieces of paper and then throwing them up in the air and going "Wheeee!" Wee wee wee, all the way home. I should have had more babies, I’m very good with babies. Babies give to you, then they grow up and they don’t give. If I’d had more, I wouldn’t mind as much. I don’t mean to be critical, it’s just that I’m so very ...
   (Looks sad, shakes her head.)
I need to go to bed. Come and read to me from A.A. Milne until I fall asleep, would you?
MATT.
All right.
(Bette starts to leave.)

BETTE.
(Suddenly tearful.)
I don’t want to call you Matt.

MATT
That’s all right. It’s fine. I’ll be in to read to you in a minute, okay?

BETTE.
Okay.
(Bette exits.)

MATT.
So I read her to sleep from The House at Pooh Corner. And then I entered high school, and then I went to college, and then they got divorced, and then I went to graduate school. I stopped studying Thomas Hardy for a while and tried Joseph Conrad. Oh the horror, the horror. I’m afraid what happened next will sound rather exaggerated, but after she divorced Boo, Bette felt very lonely and unhappy for several years, and then she married another alcoholic, and then after two years that broke up, and then she got cancer. By this time I’m thirty, and I visit her once more in the hospital.

Scene 33: Matt visits Bette; Bette and Boo reminisce

Emily pushes Bette on in a wheelchair. Bette doesn’t look well.

EMILY.
Doesn’t Bette look well today?

MATT.
Very well.

EMILY.
Let’s join hands.
(Holds Matt and Bette’s hands.)
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. Heavenly Father, please lift this sickness from our beloved Bette. We place ourselves in Your hands. Amen.
(To Bette.)
Do you feel any better?

(Continued)
BETTE.
The pain is a little duller.

EMILY.
Well maybe I better go to the hospital chapel and pray some more.

BETTE.
That would be nice, Emily. Thank you.
(Emily exits.)
I’ve spent a lot of time in hospitals.

MATT.
Yes.

BETTE.
I sometimes wonder if God is punishing me for making a second marriage outside the Church. But Father Ehrhart says that God forgives me, and besides the second marriage is over now anyway.

MATT.
I don’t think God punishes people for specific things.

BETTE.
That’s good.

MATT.
I think He punishes people in general, for no reason.

BETTE.
(Laughs.)
You always had a good sense of humor, Skippy. The chemotherapy hasn’t been making my hair fall out after all. So I haven’t needed those two wigs I bought. The woman at Lord and Taylor’s looked at me so funny when I said I needed them because my hair was going to fall out. Now she didn’t have a good sense of humor. Emily brought me this "book on healing, all about these cases of people who are very ill and then someone prays over them and’ places their hand on the place where the tumor is, and there’s this feeling of heat where the tumor is, and then the patient gets completely cured. Would you pray over me, and place your hand on my hip?

MATT.
I’m afraid I don’t believe in any of that.

BETTE.
It won’t kill you to try to please me.
MATT.
   All right.
   (Puts his hand on her hip.)

BETTE.
   Now say a prayer.

MATT.
   (Said quickly as befits a parochial school childhood.)
   Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
   Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, amen.

BETTE.
   I think I feel a warmth there.

MATT.
   (Noncommittal.)
   That’s good.

BETTE.
   You’re so cold, you won’t give anything.

MATT.
   If I don’t believe in prayer, you shouldn’t make me pray. It feels funny.

BETTE.
   You’re just like your father so-unresponsive.

MATT.
   Let’s not argue about this.

BETTE.
   All right.
   (On a pleasanter subject.)
   Do you remember when you used to smell your father’s breath to see if he’d been drinking? You were such a cute child. I saw your father last week. He came to the hospital to visit.

MATT.
   Oh, how is he?

BETTE.
   Well he’s still mad at me about my second marriage, but in some ways he’s always been a sweet man. I think the years of drinking have done something to his brain though. He’ll be talking and then there’ll be this long pause like he’s gone to sleep or something, and then finally he’ll go on again like nothing’s happened.
(Enter Boo, holding flowers.)

BOO.

Bette?

BETTE.

Oh, Boo, I was just talking about you. Look, Skippy’s here

BOO.

Oh, Skip. How are you?

MATT.

I’m fine. Hi. How are you?

BOO.

You look good.

MATT.

Oh yes? Do you want a chair?

BOO.

What?

MATT.

I’ll get you a chair.

(He does.)

BOO.

Skip looks good.

BETTE.

Yes.

MATT.

Do you want to sit?

(Boo looks uncomprehending.)

I’ve brought you a chair.

BOO.

Oh thank you.

(Sits.)

BETTE.

The flowers are lovely.

BOO.

I brought you flowers.

BETTE.

Thank you.

(Boo hands them to her.)

(Continued)
BOO.  
(To Matt.)
Your mother still looks very pretty.

MATT.
Mother said you came to visit last week.

BOO
I came last week.

BETTE.
He repeats himself all the time.

BOO.
What?

BETTE
I said, you repeat yourself.  
(Boo looks annoyed.)
But it’s charming.
(To Matt.)
Your father flirted with the second shift nurse.

BOO.
Your old man still has an eye for the ladies. I was here last week and there was this . . .
(Long pause; he stares, blank.)

BETTE.
You’re too old for her.

BOO.
What?

MATT.
Maybe he’s gone deaf.

BOO.
No I can hear. I think it’s my brain.

BETTE.
Do you remember when you tried to vacuum the gravy?

BOO.
No.

BETTE.
Well you did. It was very funny. Not at the time, of course. And how you used to keep bottles hidden in the cellar. And all the dead babies.

(CONTINUED)
BOO.  
(Smiles, happy.)
Yes. We had some good times.

BETTE.
Yes, we did. And do you remember that time after we got divorced when I came by your office because Mrs. Wright died?

MATT.
Mrs. Wright?

BETTE.
You were at college, and I didn’t have her very long. She was a parakeet.
(Matt suddenly comprehends with an "ah" or "oh" sound.)
And I called her Mrs. Wright because she lived in a Frank Lloyd Wright birdcage, I think. Actually it was a male parakeet but I liked the name better. Anyway, I kept Mrs. Wright free on the screen porch, out of the cage, because she liked it that way, but she’d always try to follow me to the kitchen, so I’d have to get to the porch door before Mrs. Wright, and I always did. Except this one time, we had a tie, and I squashed Mrs. Wright in the door. Mary Roberts Rinehart wrote a novel called The Door but I like her Tish stories better. Well, I was very upset, and it almost made me wish I was still married to Boo so he could pick it up. So I went to Boo’s office and I said, "Mrs. Wright is lying on the rug, squashed, come help," and he did.
(To Boo, with great affection.)
You were very good.
(To Matt.)
But then I think he went out and got drunk.

BOO.
I remember that parakeet.

MATT.
Why did you drink?
(To Bette.)
Why did you keep trying to have babies? Why didn’t Soot leave Karl? Why was her name Soot?

BETTE.
I don’t know why her name was Soot. I never had a parakeet that talked. I even bought one of those records that say "Pretty blue boy, pretty blue boy," but it never picked it up. Boo picked Mrs. Wright up. As a joke, I called people up and I played the record over the phone, pretty blue boy, pretty blue boy; and people kept saying, "Who is this?" Except Emily, she tried to have a conversation with the record.

(CONTINUED)
I remember that parakeet. You shut the door on it.

We moved past that part of the story, Boo. Anyway, then I called Bonnie Wilson and I played the record for her, and she knew it was me right away, she didn’t even have to ask. It’s nice seeing your parents together again, isn’t it, Skippy?

(Taken aback, but then it is nice.)
Yes, very nice.

(To Matt.)
I was just remembering when you were a little boy, Skip, and how very thrilled your mother and I were to have you. You had all this hair on your head, a lot of hair for a baby; we thought, we have a little monkey here, but we were very happy to have you, and I said to your mother ...

(Pause; he has another blackout; stares . . )

Ooops, there he goes again. Boo? Boo?
(Feels pain.)
I better ring for the nurse. I need a shot for pain.

Should I go?

No. Wait till the nurse comes.

(Coming back.)
... to your mother, "Where do you think this little imp of a baby came from?"

We finished that story, Boo.

Oh.

I do need to catch my train.

Stay a minute. I feel pain. It’ll go in a minute.
(Matt smiles, looks away, maybe for the nurse. Bette closes her eyes, and is motionless.)

BOO.
Bette? Betsy?

MATT.
Is she sleeping?
(Matt with some hesitation feels for a pulse in her neck. Enter Emily.)

EMILY.
Oh hello, Boo. It’s nice to see you. Are you all right, Skippy?

MATT.
She died, Emily.

EMILY.
Then she’s with God. Let’s say a prayer over her.
(Emily and Boo pray by Bette’s body. Music to "Bette and Boo" round is heard softly. Matt speaks to the audience.)

MATT.
Bette passed into death, and is with God. She is in heaven where she has been reunited with the four dead babies, and where she waits for Boo, and for Bonnie Wilson, and Emily, and Pooh Bear and Eeyore, and Kanga and Roo, and for me.

Lights dim. End of play.