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Dramatic Publishing

Father Knows Best

A comedy

Adapted by

Kristin Sergel

From the radio play by

Edward James

Father Knows Best

Comedy. Adapted by Kristin Sergel. From the radio play by Edward James. Cast: 7m., 10w. Getting her first date with Ralph wasn't easy and Betty's afraid it'll be her last. After reading a newspaper story about teenage elopement, Father has decided he'd better get acquainted with the young man first. He asks the family what's so awful about spending an evening at home? Nothing—but it seems that Bud, Kathy and even Mother have made plans to go out. Aggravated, Father puts his foot down and they all stay home. The town's social life is suddenly centered on the Anderson household. The excitement and humorous complications grow and then, in the final scene, Father discovers that while he may know best, the young people know a little, too. *Approximate running time: 1 hour, 40 minutes. One int. set. Code: F13.*

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Father Knows Best

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

KRISTIN SERGEL

ADAPTED FROM THE RADIO PROGRAM

OF THE SAME NAME

BY

EDWARD JAMES



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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(FATHER KNOWS BEST)

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Father Knows Best

A Comedy in Three Acts

FOR SEVEN MEN AND TEN WOMEN

CHARACTERS

JIM ANDERSON.....	<i>Father</i>
MARGARET ANDERSON	<i>Mother</i>
BETTY.....	<i>their older daughter</i>
KATHY	<i>their younger daughter</i>
BUD.....	<i>their son</i>
JANIE	}..... <i>Betty's girl friends</i>
RAMONA	
PATTY.....	<i>Kathy's best friend</i>
REPAIR MAN.....	<i>from the washing machine company</i>
RALPH.....	<i>Betty's current fellow</i>
MR. BRINKWORTH.....	<i>Ralph's father</i>
OFFICER JOHNSON.....	<i>from Missing Persons</i>
BUD'S FRIEND.....	<i>from the basketball team</i>
MRS. WEMBLEY	}..... <i>of the Garden Club</i>
MRS. JONES	
MRS. WOOLSEY	
PERKINS.....	<i>a police matron</i>

PLACE: *The combination living- and dining-room in the Anderson home.*

TIME: *The present. Spring.*

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE: *Afternoon, around 4:00 P.M.*

ACT TWO, *Scene One: After dinner, the same day.*
Scene Two: An hour later.

ACT THREE: *Very early the next morning.*

NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

FATHER: He is a youthful-looking man in his early forties, still good-looking and trim of figure. His attempts to cope with the family problems are sincere, but they just don't work out. His "calm" attitude is particularly goading, especially when everyone else is in a dither. He wears a business suit throughout the play, also a hat when he first appears.

MARGARET: She, too, is in her early forties and, like Father, still trim of figure and attractive. Her attitude toward the family is more realistic. She copes with them when she can; when she can't, she appeals to Father—not too hopefully. On her first appearance in Act One she looks a wreck. She wears coveralls, and has a bandanna tied about her head. There are smudges of grease on her face. Later, she changes to a house dress and apron and the grease smudges are removed. She wears the same house dress for the rest of the play, removing the apron during Act Two, Scene One.

BETTY: Betty is eighteen. She combines her mother's good looks and her father's tenacity. She appears first in Act One wearing school clothes. Later, as she is getting ready for her date, she wears a robe. On her final entrance in Act One she is dressed for her date in a becoming sports outfit. She wears an attractive informal dress and a light coat in Act Two, Scene Two, and in Act Three she again wears school clothes. Most of the time, she wears becoming glasses.

RAMONA: She is a vain, pretty girl of Betty's age, who is forever fussing and primping. She wears school clothes, with a jacket or sweater.

JANIE: She is around the same age as the other two girls, a plain-looking, rather serious, studious girl. She, too, wears school clothes, with a jacket or sweater.

BUD: Bud is an active, athletically inclined boy of fifteen. As yet, girls are still in the "pain in the neck" category. He wears school clothes with a jacket throughout the play, except for his first appearance in Act Three, when he wears pajamas. Later, he wears his school clothes again.

KATHY: She is an alert, extremely self-possessed little live wire of ten, who often knows exactly how to get around Father. She wears school clothes throughout the play, except in Act Two, Scene Two, when she wears pajamas.

PATTY: Patty is also ten, a bright, precocious child who has a crush on Bud. She wears school clothes throughout the play.

REPAIR MAN: He could be almost any age. He has a bored, indifferent air and speaks in a flat, weary voice. He wears white coveralls and a cap.

RALPH: Ralph is Betty's age, a nice-looking, levelheaded fellow. He wears his best sports clothes in Act Two (both scenes) and wears slacks and a sweater in Act Three.

MR. BRINKWORTH: He is a dignified, prosperous-looking man in his late forties or early fifties. He wears well-tailored business suits, and may change for Act Three.

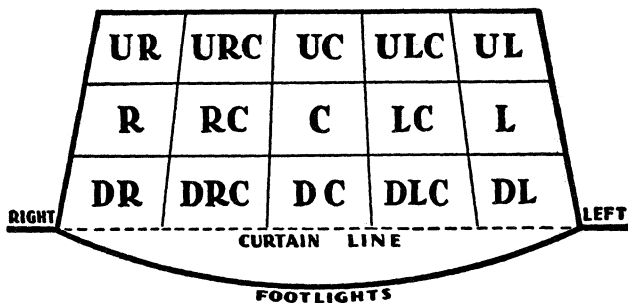
OFFICER: He is a moderately good-natured man who goes about doing his duty as he sees fit. He wears a uniform.

BUD'S FRIEND: He is Bud's age, active and noisy. He wears school clothes.

MRS. WEMBLEY, MRS. JONES and MRS. WOOLSEY: Mrs. Wembley is the leader of the trio. Neither one of the other two ladies dares make a move or offer an opinion without first consulting Mrs. Wembley; then they echo her sentiments. All three women wear flowered print dresses and flowered hats.

PERKINS: She is a small, middle-aged woman, with a cheery voice and a deceptively motherly air. She can, when the occasion warrants, move with alacrity, and she has a grip of iron. She wears a plain suit and hat and flat-heeled shoes.

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS

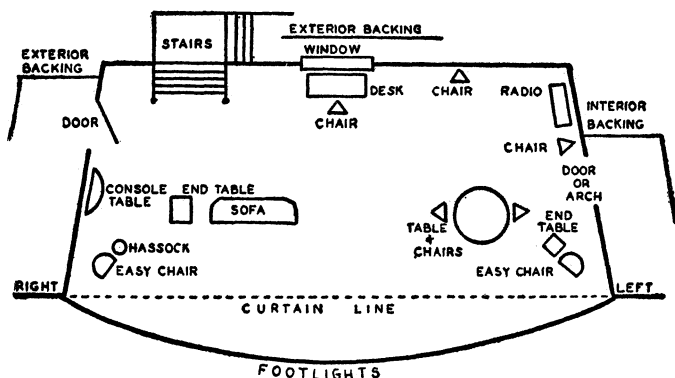


STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

STAGE CHART



PROPERTIES

GENERAL: Drapes on window; desk and chair; desk accessories, including telephone; sofa; end table and lamp right of sofa; console table, with mirror on wall above it; vase of flowers or ornament on console table; easy chair and hassock; radio; dinette-type table and four matching chairs; easy chair; end table and lamp near it; pictures, potted plants, bric-a-brac, etc.; on dinette table: sparkling white tablecloth, tall white candles in shining silver holders, tall vase with ivy, small white card, silverware and china, miniature 'bride and groom'. **ACT ONE:** schoolbooks and girls' jackets and sweaters strewn about; four soft-drink bottles (one on desk, empty); large hoop-earring in chair by desk; slip of paper with message by telephone; newspaper on end table by sofa. **ACT TWO, SCENE ONE:** on desk: seven small toy soldiers, clock, arithmetic book, car keys. **ACT TWO, SCENE TWO:** papers scattered all over desk, insurance policies, contract, etc.; Bud's arithmetic book on desk. **ACT THREE:** insurance contract on desk.

RAMONA: Make-up kit, comb, handbag.

JANIE: Book, handkerchief.

BETTY: Wrist watch, dish towel, apron, rag, cup of coffee.

MARGARET: Pliers, wrench, oil can, fluffy white net material, carpet sweeper, handkerchief.

FATHER: Briefcase with papers, small notebook and pencil, wrist watch, fountain pen, wallet with bills.

BUD: Schoolbooks, candy bar, basketball.

KATHY: Small suitcase containing books, roller skates, old jump rope, ball and crumpled pajamas; stuffed animal; schoolbooks; bowl of ice cream and spoon.

PATTY: Small suitcase, schoolbooks, bowl of ice cream and spoon.

RALPH: Handkerchief.

REPAIR MAN: Tool kit, slip of paper and pencil, wrench.

OFFICER: Small pad and pencil.

BRINKWORTH: Fountain pen.

PRODUCTION NOTE

Nothing adds more to the polish of a production than the quick picking up of cues. Unless there is a definite reason for a pause, train your actors to come in with their speeches "on the heels," so to speak, of the preceding speeches. When a production lags, audience interest likewise will lag.

It is always advisable during the last week of rehearsals to hold one or more sessions during which the actors merely sit around in a circle and go through lines only with the express purpose of snapping up cues.

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The combination living- and dining-room in the Anderson home, a bright, cheery, chintzy room. A door in the L wall leads to the kitchen and the rear of the house. The front door is U R, while upstage in the rear wall, U R C, can be seen a few steps and a landing of the stairs to the upper floor of the house. Also in the rear wall, U C, is a window, with Mr. Anderson's desk and chair in front of it. On the desk, among other things, is a telephone. At R C, facing the audience, is a sofa, with an attractive end table and lamp right of it. Against the wall downstage of the door U R is a small console table with a mirror on the wall above it. Below the console table is an easy chair, with a hassock near by. Upstage of the door L is a radio. There is a small dinette-type table at L C, with a chair on either side of it. Two other matching chairs are against the walls, one U L C, the other left of the radio. There is another easy chair D L, with an end table and lamp right of it. A few tasteful pictures, some potted plants and a few pieces of bric-a-brac complete the setting. The table at L C has a sparkling white tablecloth on it and has been partially arranged to represent a table that might be seen at a wedding reception. There are tall white candles in shining silver holders, a tall vase with ivy, some of Mrs. Anderson's best silverware and china and a miniature bride and groom.]*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *It is around four o'clock of a Friday afternoon. BETTY ANDERSON, age eighteen, is having a chat-session with two of her girl friends, RAMONA and JANIE. Their schoolbooks, jackets and sweaters are strewn all over the floor and on the furniture at R and R C stage. RAMONA is seated on the hassock, which she has pulled over in front of the console table R. The contents of her make-up kit are*

spread out in front of her on the table and she is vigorously combing out her hair while glancing in the mirror above. JANIE is sprawled out on the floor at C stage, reading aloud from a book. BETTY is lying on the sofa, her head toward R stage, staring into space, not really listening. All have bottles of soft drinks within easy reach, and there is an empty bottle on the desk U C.]

JANIE [*reading as curtain rises*]. "—and a body of ten or fifteen thousand guards will strike terror into the most numerous populace—[*Takes a swallow of her drink.*]—whose licentious fury was the first symptom of the decline of the Roman Empire——" [*Looks up. BETTY sighs, takes a sip of her drink, changes her position and continues to stare into space.*] You're not listening.

BETTY [*miles away*]. Yes, I am.

JANIE. All right. What was the first symptom?

BETTY. The first symptom?

JANIE. Yes.

BETTY [*rapidly*]. Chills—fever——

JANIE [*disgustedly*]. The Praetorian Guards. Ten thousand furious, licentious men. [*RAMONA stops combing her hair for the first time and turns.*]

RAMONA. Were any of them cute?

JANIE [*what an idea!*]. Cute? They were Romans.

RAMONA. Spider Callahan has a Roman nose. He's cute.

BETTY. He gives me the creeps. [*Shudders.*]

RAMONA. So? That's why they call him Spider. [*Turns back to mirror.*]

JANIE. Is anybody interested in graduating, or would you like to repeat?

RAMONA [*happy sigh*]. Graduation! I can hardly wait!

BETTY. It'll be wonderful!

RAMONA [*turning, looking rather wild with a lock of hair hanging over one eye*]. Imagine—being turned loose on the world!

JANIE. Yeah.

BETTY. What if it's the other way around?

JANIE. You'll never find out if you get another zero on a history quiz.

RAMONA [*startled*]. A zero? Betty?

JANIE [*nodding*]. A goose-egg.

RAMONA. Now I've heard everything.

BETTY [*airily*]. I suppose it's useless to remark that I did not know the answers.

JANIE. Glad you kept them secret. We wouldn't want confidential information about the Roman Empire to leak out.

BETTY. Oh, stop!

JANIE. Actually, she did know the answers.

RAMONA. Then why——

JANIE. She couldn't read the questions.

BETTY [*sitting up*]. How do you know?

JANIE. Betty Anderson, as your dearest friend, I know your vision is not 20-20. You can't read the blackboard from the eighth row unless you wear your glasses.

BETTY [*sbrugging*]. I guess not.

RAMONA. Why didn't you tell the teacher you forgot your glasses?

JANIE. Because they were in her purse.

BETTY. Janie . . .

JANIE. Why would a girl flunk an exam rather than put on her glasses—what *possible* reason?

RAMONA [*as BETTY looks embarrassed*]. Oh-h-h. Who is he?

BETTY [*all innocence*]. Who?

RAMONA. The boy in your history class?

BETTY. Never mind.

RAMONA. Must be some crush. I *feel* for you.

BETTY [*irked*]. Thanks.

JANIE [*rising from floor*]. If he only knew what a sacrifice she made.

RAMONA. We ought to tell him.

BETTY. You wouldn't dare!

RAMONA. It brings out the best in people—knowing they're loved.

JANIE [*moving back of sofa*]. He might even *notice* Betty.

BETTY. He does notice . . . I've caught him twice—looking at me.

JANIE. Probably had that prickly feeling on the back of his neck.

BETTY [*to JANIE*]. Ever since they took off your braces, you've been acting nasty!

[*Telephone rings.*]

RAMONA. There! Maybe that's him—ready to say he's madly in love with you.

BETTY [*rising, crossing U C to telephone*]. Probably a wrong number.

RAMONA [*as BETTY is about to lift receiver*]. Hey!

BETTY. I have to answer.

[*Telephone rings again.*]

RAMONA. Don't you let it ring three times—in case it's a boy?

BETTY. What for?

RAMONA. *Don't* be so available!

[*Telephone rings third time.*]

RAMONA. Okay.

BETTY [*shaking her head, bewildered*]. Hello? . . . *Who?*

. . . It is! . . . [*Starts to smile jubilantly.*] Yes, it's me.

. . . [*Sits at desk.*] You're kidding! . . . [*RAMONA and*

JANIE shake their heads.] Yes. I'd love to. . . I'll be ready.

. . . 'Bye. [*To GIRLS; she is still seated.*] It was him! It was Ralph!

RAMONA. That's the one?

JANIE [*nodding*]. Maybe that zero was an investment.

BETTY. He asked me to go dancing—tonight. [*Rises and comes down to C.*]

RAMONA. *Tonight?*

BETTY. Should I wear a formal, or look casual?

RAMONA. He's pretty casual, 'phoning at the last minute. . . .

JANIE [*coming around right of sofa and sitting on sofa*]. Are you sure you can go?

BETTY. Of course I'll go!

JANIE. Don't you have to ask your folks?

BETTY [*the idea!*]. Ask my folks?

JANIE. I have to get *permission* for dates.

BETTY. Not me. I'm eighteen—that's old enough to be drafted!

JANIE. Wish my father would see it that way.

BETTY [*perching on left arm of sofa*]. Dad's very reasonable. Anyhow, he trusts me.

JANIE. Imagine a parent being reasonable!

BETTY [*glancing at wrist watch*]. Gosh—it's four o'clock! Just three hours to get ready. [*Jumps up and starts toward stairs.*]

RAMONA. Thought you were going to look casual?

BETTY [*pausing on stairs*]. Takes hours—getting that casual look! [*Dashes up stairs.*]

JANIE [*put out, looking over at RAMONA*]. Well!

RAMONA. Are we supposed to go home, or stick around and scrub her back?

JANIE [*rising, crossing C*]. Personally, I'm going to finish my Coke. [*Picks up bottle from floor.*]

[MR. ANDERSON (FATHER) *enters U R, home from the office.*]

FATHER [*cheery greeting, calling toward stairs*]. Margaret—I'm home! [*Turns, sees two girls, looks taken aback, then picks his way through mess of books and jackets to right of sofa.*]

JANIE [*starting to gather her things*]. Hello, Mr. Anderson!

RAMONA [*starting to sweep her make-up into her handbag*]. Oh, Mr. Anderson! . . .

FATHER. Hello, girls. [*Takes hat off, crosses U C, puts briefcase and hat on desk.*]

JANIE [*gathering books and placing them on end table right of sofa*]. We've been studying. . . .

RAMONA [*as FATHER sits at his desk*]. Betty just went upstairs.

[*FATHER looks questioningly, then rises, picks up a large hoop-earring from chair and holds it up.*]

JANIE [*seeing it, hastily taking it*]. Oh, thank you! [*RAMONA has found her jacket.*]

FATHER. Not at all. [*Begins to take papers out of briefcase.*

JANIE *grabs Coke bottle off desk. She and FATHER both observe ring it has left. JANIE wipes it hastily with her handkerchief.*]

JANIE. We were just leaving. [*FATHER nods pleasantly.*]

RAMONA [*as they head for door U R*]. Good-bye, Mr. Anderson! [*FATHER nods again and smiles after them as RAMONA and JANIE go out U R.*]

FATHER [*turning in his chair, calling toward L*]. Margaret—

great news! Know that new factory that's opening up? Who d'you think's going to get their insurance accounts? . . .

[*Happily looks over documents on desk.*] Fire—Accident—

[*Rubs his hands gleefully, getting progressively happier at each one.*]—Theft—Flood Damage—Employer's Liability.

. . . Don't start spending the commission. I'm trading in the car! . . . [*Puzzled at getting no answer.*] Margaret?

[*MARGARET comes in L, looking a wreck. She has on coveralls and a bandanna, and carries a pair of pliers, a wrench and an oil can.*]

FATHER [*meeting her in front of table L C*]. Where have you been?

MARGARET [*crossing R C, sinking onto sofa*]. The basement.

FATHER. What were you doing in the basement?

MARGARET. Jim—do you think a machine could have a soul?

FATHER [*crossing C*]. A soul? Nonsense!

MARGARET [*nodding*]. Our washing machine does.

FATHER [*not getting it*]. Oh? . . .

MARGARET [*grimly*]. It watches me—sorting out the clothes. It thinks, "I'll get her for this."

FATHER [*simply*]. Why don't you get it fixed?

MARGARET. The repair man was here yesterday. It worked—for *him*.

FATHER. Call him back.

MARGARET. It's no use. He turns it on and it works—then he *looks* at me. [*Getting excited.*] I can't stand any more of those looks! [*Tosses pliers, wrench and oil can on floor near sofa.*]

FATHER [*sitting beside her*]. Now don't get hysterical!

MARGARET [*carried away*]. I'm going to take the clothes down to the river and pound them on a rock.

FATHER [*patting her hand*]. Margaret!

MARGARET. It's either that—or a new washing machine.

FATHER [*rising, taken aback*]. New washing machine?

MARGARET. The next commission you get—

FATHER [*changing his tone, moving toward c*]. Dear, how'd you like to take a little trip this summer—maybe drive up to Canada?

MARGARET [*firmly*]. *Not* a new car, Jim. A washing machine.

FATHER. Oh! . . .

MARGARET. That monster in the basement has paid me off for all my sins.

FATHER. Well—maybe we can manage both. If this factory insurance comes through—

MARGARET. It better.

FATHER [*rubbing his hands in anticipation*]. Mr. Brinkworth's coming over here tonight.

MARGARET. Who?

FATHER. Brinkworth. The man who's opening the factory—

MARGARET. That's the man who called.

FATHER. Called? Today?

MARGARET. He said you expected him.

FATHER [*moving toward her*]. Yes, yes? . . .

MARGARET [*flatly*]. He isn't coming.

FATHER [*let down*]. What?

MARGARET. His son has a date, and he's letting him use the car. He was very sorry.

FATHER [*starting to boil*]. Sorry! . . . [*Paces L C.*]

MARGARET. The message is there beside the 'phone. [*Nods U C.*]

FATHER [*pacing D R*]. That's fine. Just *fine!*

MARGARET. He was sorry.

FATHER. What if the place burns down?

MARGARET. Now, Jim——

FATHER [*pacing D L*]. Let it burn, long as Junior has his fun! . . .

MARGARET. One day doesn't make so much difference.

FATHER. I resent our going without the essentials of life because of some young fool and his date.

MARGARET. You're just hungry.

FATHER. Starved!

MARGARET [*struggling out of sofa*]. I'll go start dinner.

FATHER [*surprised*]. Start dinner? [*Comes C.*] Isn't it ready?

MARGARET. Why—no!

FATHER. What have you been doing all day?

MARGARET [*half to herself, dumbfounded at question*]. What have I been doing?

FATHER [*looking at her critically*]. Say, you look terrible!

MARGARET [*through clenched teeth*]. I look terrible. [*Crosses past him to L C.*]

FATHER. Feeling sick, or something? [*Sits on sofa, picks up newspaper from end table by sofa and starts to open it.*]

MARGARET [*witheringly*]. I feel wonderful. What shall I do first—cook dinner—or change into a crisp, white pinafore?

FATHER [*intent on paper*]. What's that?

MARGARET. Never mind.

BETTY [*from upstairs*]. Mother-r-r! Do I have a slip ironed?

MARGARET. Look in your drawer.

BETTY [*upstairs*]. Which one?

MARGARET [*exasperatedly*]. *Don't be so helpless!*

FATHER [*gently admonishing tone*]. I wish you wouldn't shout at the children. [*MARGARET tears off her bandanna with a*

despairing gesture and stalks out L. FATHER *calmly reads paper, oblivious.*]

BETTY [*upstairs*]. Never mind, Mother—I found one!

[BUD *enters* U R, *carrying his books.*]

BUD [*making straight for door* L]. Hi, Dad! [*Calls.*] Got anything to eat?

FATHER. Just a minute, Bud. [BUD *stops in front of table* L C.] You'll have to wait like the rest of us.

BUD. That's what I figure. [*Takes large candy bar from pocket and unwraps it. He drops his jacket on floor at C, then his books, and sprawls out, using jacket as a pillow. He opens a book and starts to read and munch his candy bar. FATHER pays no attention but continues to read paper.*]

[KATHY *runs in* U R, *out of breath.*]

KATHY [*rushing down to right of sofa*]. Daddy!

FATHER. Hi, puss! [KATHY *gives him a warm hug.*]

KATHY [*as he resumes reading paper*]. Daddy, I want to ask you something.

FATHER. M-m-m?

KATHY [*a bitter tone*]. You'll say no.

FATHER [*with half-interest*]. Maybe . . .

KATHY [*emphatically*]. You *will!* I know it!

FATHER [*piqued*]. Well, don't be so sure.

KATHY [*wildly hopeful*]. Then I can? *Really?*

FATHER [*after slight hesitation*]. Yes, go ahead.

KATHY [*giving him a kiss*]. Yippee! [*Dashes upstairs.*]

BUD [*with disgust*]. Always—she gets her way.

FATHER. Well, a perfectly reasonable thing like—[*Stops, realizing he doesn't know what KATHY wanted.*] Perfectly reasonable. [*Goes back to his paper.*]

[BETTY, *wearing a robe, comes down the stairs.*]

BETTY [*coming behind sofa to left of it*]. Dad.

FATHER. M-m. . . .

BETTY. I need your advice.

FATHER. What is it, Betty?

BETTY. Do men really dislike nail polish? [*Glances at her nails, which are not made up.*]

FATHER [*looking up*]. Oh, for heaven's sake——

BETTY. According to a recent poll, they *do*.

FATHER. Well, then? . . .

BETTY. They *say* they dislike it. Then they turn around and date a girl with nail polish.

FATHER. That sounds pretty conclusive.

BETTY. Suppose they don't date a girl *because* of her nail polish?

FATHER. You want my advice?

BETTY. Yes.

FATHER [*facetiously*]. Play it safe. Put nail polish on *one* hand.

BETTY. You don't even *care*! [*Flounces up stairs again, haughtily.* FATHER *shrugs and resumes reading.*]

BUD. Hey, get this! Dad? . . .

FATHER [*with a sigh, looking up*]. Well?

BUD [*reading*]. "If it takes three men working eight-hour shifts four days to dig a ditch fifty-three feet by six feet by three feet . . ." Got that?

[MARGARET *enters* L. *She has discarded her coveralls for a house dress and apron. She carries a large quantity of fluffy white net material.*]

MARGARET. It won't be long now. [*Pauses above table L C, glancing critically at it.*]

FATHER [*to* BUD]. It takes three men four days to dig a ditch.

BUD. You left out something.

FATHER. I did not.

BUD. It's important.

MARGARET. The shovel?

FATHER [*slightly miffed*]. Margaret, we *assume* they had a shovel.

MARGARET. It would be just like you to dig a ditch without a shovel. [*Starts to arrange fluffy white net on table.*]

FATHER [*to BUD, exasperated with MARGARET*]. Read the rest of the problem.

BUD. “. . . how long would it take four men working six-hour shifts to dig the same ditch?”

FATHER [*looking up at ceiling*]. Four men—six hour shifts . . .

MARGARET. I don't understand why they want to dig the same ditch.

BUD [*to FATHER*]. Got the answer?

FATHER [*piqued*]. No.

BUD [*holding out book*]. Want to see it?

FATHER. No! I want to read my paper!

BUD [*indignantly*]. Okay.

FATHER. After a long day I feel entitled to a few simple pleasures.

BUD. O-kay!

FATHER [*taking up paper, then putting it down*]. That is, if nobody minds. [*MARGARET shakes her head as BUD is about to protest. He returns to his book, and she continues fussing with table. She has rearranged candlesticks several times, and is fussing with some ivy which she is trying to make trail artistically out of a tall vase.*]

FATHER [*finally, annoyed with her fussing*]. Can't we eat without all that fuss?

MARGARET [*intent on table*]. Hm . . . Oh, this isn't for *us!* We're eating in the kitchen tonight.

FATHER. Then what's it for? What about dinner?

MARGARET [*patiently*]. It's cooking. I can't hurry it any more. [*Nods toward table.*] This is my Garden Club table—for the show tomorrow.

FATHER [*groaning loudly*]. Garden Club!

MARGARET. It's an honor. I was floored when they asked me to do this one. [*Picks up a small white card from table, reading.*] “'Tis Thy Wedding Day.”

FATHER. Whose wedding day?