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Dramatic Publishing

Baker's Dozen

One Act Comedy
by
Pat Cook



The Dramatic Publishing Company

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(BAKER'S DOZEN)

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for
MIKE,
KAY
and
GWEN,
who raised us all

BAKER'S DOZEN

A Play in One Act
For Three Men and Three Women

CHARACTERS

JEFF the Narrator, in his forties
JEFFY a 13-year-old version of the Narrator
JIMMY Jeffy's 17-year-old brother
MOTHER in her mid-forties
MARSHA Jeffy's 15-year-old sister
JUSTINE Marsha's friend

TIME: Two weeks at the end of summer and the
beginning of the school year, 1960

PLACE: The bedroom shared by Jeffy and Jimmy Baker

BAKER'S DOZEN

AS THE LIGHTS COME UP: *JEFF walks onto the set and looks around, nodding appreciably.*

JEFF. Yeah, this is exactly the way my room looked. How many years has it been now? *(He thinks, then looks up at the AUDIENCE. He turns to address them.)* I grew up in this room in a large wood and brick house on Elm Street. *(He smiles.)* Yes, Elm Street, do you believe it? It was a large house, well, it was large to me. There were three bedrooms. My mother had one bedroom, my sister had one bedroom and I had one bedroom. *(He crosses to the desk and opens a drawer, taking out a man's pipe.)* Daddy died when I was eleven, before I got to know him. You know, as a person not just a father. *(He replaces the pipe and shuts the drawer.)* They said it was a heart attack, well, he always had high blood pressure. He took those nitro-glycerine pills, he always had them in his pocket. I remember we, the guys and me, would always walk softly around him. We were afraid he was going to explode. *(He crosses to Jeffy's bed and reaches under it, removing a hardback diary.)* And here it is. This is a log I kept. Now, this wasn't a diary. No, no. Men didn't keep diaries, they kept logbooks.

(He opens it and, walking R, starts reading it. JIMMY enters through the door.)

JIMMY. Where is it? Where is it? *(He looks around the room.)*

JEFF *(looking up)*. Oh yeah, I had an older brother, too. His name was Jimmy. He lived in my room with me, only he liked to call it his room. He had seniority but it was about to collapse because he was a senior and next year he'd be going off to college. *(He looks at the AUDIENCE.)* That was the summer I was thirteen, but I wouldn't tell anybody. I hated that year, that number. Thirteen. Just the sound of it was unlucky. Anybody asked, I told them I was a Baker's Dozen and let them figure it out from there. *(He thinks.)* That was also the summer I learned not to take things... or people for granted. *(JIMMY crosses to the door and yells.)*

JIMMY. Jeffy!

JEFF *(correcting him)*. Jeff.

JIMMY. Jeffy!

JEFF. Jeff!

JIMMY. Hey, dork!

JEFF *(to the AUDIENCE)*. I should've quit when I was ahead.

(JEFFY enters through the door.)

JEFFY. That's my name, dear.

JEFF *(smiling)*. He hated that.

JIMMY *(pulls JEFFY into the room)*. Hey, you like amphibians?

JEFFY. Huh?

JIMMY. Frogs! *(He punches JEFFY in the shoulder hard.)*

JEFFY. Ah!

JIMMY. I *told* you not to call me that.

JEFFY (*rubbing his arm*). Sorry, darling. (*JIMMY punches him again.*) Ah!

JEFF. When you punched somebody in the arm, you called it a "Frog". (*He shrugs.*) Don't ask me.

JIMMY. Where's my basketball?

JEFFY. I sold it! For a million dollars! Everybody wants Jimmy Baker's basketball. (*JIMMY grabs JEFFY by the throat. JEFFY tries to speak through a squeezed wind-pipe.*) I don't know where your basketball is.

JIMMY. You lying?

JEFFY. No, no, I swear! (*JIMMY lets go of JEFFY.*)

JIMMY. You better not be. (*He goes to the closet.*)

JEFF. My brother was into basketball, starting line-up at the High School. I was just getting interested in girls. Frankly, if there was a toss-up between basketball and girls, I didn't see any contest. I mean, *anybody* could get a basketball. (*JIMMY finds the ball and closes the closet door.*)

JIMMY. Hold your arms out.

JEFFY. Naw, naw! *Uh uh.* (*He tries to leave but JIMMY grabs him.*)

JIMMY. Come on, stand on the chair and make a hoop. (*He pulls out the desk chair and forces JEFFY to stand on it.*)

JEFFY. You got a goal outside in the yard!

JIMMY (*playfully*). Get up there, come on. You gonna be a dork all your life?

JEFFY. Do they get girls?

JIMMY. Get up there, will you. I got practice in a few minutes. (*JEFFY reluctantly makes a hoop with his arms.*)

JEFFY. Mother told you not to dribble in the house.

JIMMY. Dork!

JEFFY. Darling! (*JIMMY hits JEFFY in the side of his head with the basketball.*) Ow!

JIMMY. I told you not to say that, now didn't I?

JEFFY (*yelling*). Mother, Jimmy hit me in the head with the basketball!

MOTHER (*offstage*). Did you break his glasses?

JEFFY and JIMMY. Nooo!

JIMMY (*dribbling the ball*). You couldn't break those coke bottles with a sledgehammer.

MOTHER (*off*). Don't dribble in the house. (*JIMMY quickly grabs the ball and holds it out of fear.*)

JEFFY. I can't help it I'm blind!

JIMMY. You can help being a dork.

JEFFY (*yelling again*). Mother, Jimmy called me a dork!

MOTHER (*off*). I'm going to come in there and whip the both of you with the belt in about one minute!

JEFFY. I'd kinda like to see that, wouldn't you?

JEFF. I wasn't really blind, just very near-sighted. On a sunny day you could burn wood with my glasses.

(*MARSHA enters the room.*)

MARSHA. Mother sent me in here to tell you two to stop it.

JIMMY. Stop what?

MARSHA. Whatever. (*She looks around the room.*) Ooh, yuck! It's like a pigsty in here. (*JEFFY climbs off the chair.*)

JIMMY. Yeah, you should know. (*He sees JEFFY off the chair.*) Hey?

MARSHA (*to JIMMY*). You like amphibians?

JIMMY (*off-guard*). Huh?

MARSHA. Frogs! (*She punches him hard in the arm.*)

JIMMY. Hey! (*JEFFY laughs and MARSHA and JIMMY both punch him in both arms.*)

JEFFY. Oooh! (*He rubs both arms simultaneously.*)

JIMMY (*to MARSHA*). You going out for the girls team?

MARSHA. Yeah, but I've been having trouble with my
crip shot.

JIMMY. Ah, that's easy. Here. (*He pushes JEFFY back to
the chair.*) Make a hoop.

JEFFY (*whining*). No, wait!

JIMMY. Look, I'll explain it to you. You make a hoop or
I'll kill you.

JEFFY. Is that your best offer?

JIMMY. In a word, yes. In two words, yes yes. (*MARSHA
and JIMMY force JEFFY back on the chair.*)

MARSHA. Hold your arms together like this. (*She starts
to demonstrate.*)

JEFFY. I know how to make a hoop! (*He starts to make a
hoop, then drops his arms in disgust.*) Look, one of my
goals in life is *not* to be a goal.

JIMMY (*appreciating this*). Hey, that's pretty good. (*He
drops the concern.*) Hoop! (*Somewhere in the house, a
phone rings.*)

MARSHA (*to JIMMY*). Now, then, how do you hold the
ball? (*JIMMY grips the ball and shows her.*)

JIMMY. It's easy, anybody can hold a ball. Like this, see?
Then you aim... and... (*He starts to shoot but sees
JEFFY with his arms at his sides. He stares at JEFFY
who, reluctantly, makes a hoop. JIMMY shoots and, with
some maneuvering by JEFFY, the ball goes through the
hoop and bounces to the floor.*) See?