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Dramatic Publishing




A PLAY IN ONE ACT

Louder, I Can't Hear You

by
BILL GLEASON



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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LOUDER, I CAN'T HEAR YOU
A Play in One Act
For Three Men and Three Women

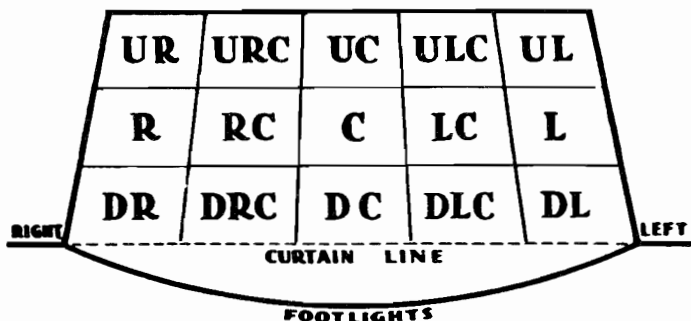
CHARACTERS

MARGE	<i>Mother</i>
ANN	<i>Daughter</i>
OSCAR	<i>Father</i>
JUNIOR	<i>Son</i>
NURSE	<i>Nurse</i>
DOCTOR PHILLIPS	<i>Doctor</i>

TIME: *Present.*

PLACE: *The Browns' home.*

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: UR for *up right*, RC for *right center*, DLC for *down left center*, etc. A territory designated on the stage refers to a general area, 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.

Scene One

SCENE: On the right half of the stage is the Browns' kitchen. UR are typical kitchen appliances such as a stove, refrigerator, sink and cupboards. There may also be a work table or counter top on which sits a radio. RC is a table and four chairs. Salt and pepper shakers on the table. The entrance and exit is R.)

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: Lights come up on right side of stage only. MARGE has been preparing breakfast. Her hair is in rollers and her clothes are ragged-looking. She reaches for the radio and turns it up. She sits at the table drinking a cup of coffee. We hear voices from the radio. LILY's voice is nasal and flat; emotionless. ROGER's voice is like a disc jockey's.)

(NOTE: Throughout this entire scene MARGE acts like a zombie. She speaks in a monotone and looks as though the load of being a mother and housewife has finally crushed her flat.)

LILY. Roger, Roger, Roger. Why is it that you never even look at me any more. I'm your wife! Your lover! To have and to hold forever!

ROGER. Frankly, Lily, I'd rather not talk about it right now.

LILY. Roger, Roger, Roger. Is it because I went

to the costume party last week as Lady Godiva and everyone thought I came as a stretch-mark? Is that it, Roger?

ROGER. No, Lily. It runs much deeper than that.

LILY. Is there someone else? Is it your secretary, Lola LaFlame, maybe?

ROGER. No, Lily. It's not Lola.

LILY. My breath, my cooking, my mother? What? For God's sake, tell me! I can't go on like this.

ROGER. Well, if you insist, Lily.

LILY. Oh, I do. I do! Is there anything about me you don't like, Roger?

ROGER. I wouldn't say it quite like that.

LILY. Then you mean . . .

ROGER. That's right, Lily. It's everything about you I don't like. But there's no reason we can't still be friends.

LILY. I think I'm gonna be sick.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE. Tune in next week for another inspiring episode of "Country Mother," brought to you by . . .

(MARGE goes and turns off radio, still drinking coffee as doorbell rings. She exits briefly and reenters with a special delivery letter.)

MARGE. I wonder what this could be. (She tears open letter and begins to read.) "It is with great pleasure that we inform you of your appointment by the Ladies Auxiliary of Barren Ground as the Barren Ground Mother of the Month." (Overjoyed.) I won! (She covers up her mouth and looks around furtively. She dances and whispers.) I won. I won. I won. I won. (Clasps letter to breast.) Mother of the Month! I can't believe it! (There is a noise off R as ANN approaches. MARGE stuffs letter inside

her gown.) I'll wait until they all get down for breakfast before I tell them. (She crosses to stove and continues to prepare breakfast.)

(ANN enters R, carrying a newspaper, sits at table and begins to look through newspaper.)

ANN. Morning, Mom.

MARGE. Good morning, dear.

ANN (crisp dialogue). Make my bacon where it's kinda hard. Okay, Mom? I don't like it when it's droopy, y'know. Bobby Anderson, you know, the quarterback -- he might ask me to the dance this Friday, and if he does I'll have to get a new dress because he's seen all my other ones. I think he'll ask me, too, 'cause Jennifer Colgate said that his sister said he kinda likes me and that he might take me to the dance. (Deep sigh.) The only thing is, if he does ask me, I'll have to break up with Alan -- so I hope if he does ask me, he does it by Tuesday. It wouldn't look good to break up with Alan on Friday and go to the dance with Bobby on Saturday. Is my bacon ready yet? (Looking at paper.) My horoscope says that there is going to be a new man in my life. I'll bet it's Bobby Anderson. He's really dreamy. Don't forget to make my bacon hard, Mom. I don't like it when it's all droopy and greasy. (Deep sigh.) Tony Archer told me that grease on food causes heart attacks because grease isn't poly-unsaturated, unless you buy it that way, I think. Is our grease poly-unsaturated, Mom? It's also bad on your complexion. (Feels face.) Especially at my age.

OSCAR (off R). You creep! You lousy bum!

MARGE (without looking up). Your father's up.

ANN. I think everything should be poly-unsaturated.

Do you buy poly-unsaturated meat, Mom?

OSCAR (off R). Don't tell me, buddy! I know just what you can do with that lawnmower! Yeah! You heard me right the first time!

MARGE. Get your father a plate. (ANN rises to get a plate from cupboard.)

ANN. I think fish are naturally poly-unsaturated. (Thinks.) That must be why cats don't have heart attacks. (Puts plate on table and sits.)

OSCAR (off). I'll bluebird of happiness you right in the chops, buddy!

ANN. Is my bacon ready yet, Mom?

(OSCAR enters R.)

OSCAR. I wish somebody would tell me why I don't call the cops on that creep. Every Saturday when I can get a little extra sleep, the drill sergeant next door has to crank up that monster lawnmower. What time is it, anyway? Six? Seven? That creep!

ANN. Ten-thirty, Dad.

OSCAR. Remind me to call the cops after breakfast. And don't make my bacon crisp. It's enough to drive a man to drink!

ANN. Dad, what do you think about poly-unsaturates?

OSCAR (imitating lawnmower). Rrrrrrrrr! (To ANN.) Polly who? (To MARGE.) Get me up at six tomorrow, Marge. I'm going to crank up Junior's trail bike by that guy's bedroom window. (Wild grin.) Good moooooorrrring! Time to rise and shine! (Imitates sound of a revving motorcycle as he holds on to imaginary handle bars.)

ANN. Poly-unsaturates!

OSCAR. I don't know Polly what's-her-name.

Remember, Marge, not too crisp on the bacon.

ANN. No, Dad! Like fats! You know.

OSCAR (to MARGE). Speaking of fat, are your brother's kids still coming here tomorrow?

That'll just top my weekend off.

ANN (screaming). Oh, I think I have a blemish!

(Jumps up and runs off R.)

OSCAR. That oldest kid, what's his name?

MARGE. Teddy.

OSCAR. Teddy, yeah! If he steps on my foot just one time tomorrow, I'm gonna beat him with my golf club. (Acts like child.) Uncle Oscar, ya' got a bug on your shoe! (Slams down foot. Normal voice.) Teddy, ya got a bug on your pants! (Swings imaginary golf club.) Fore!

(ANN enters R and sits.)

ANN. What am I going to do? I've got one! Right on my chin!

OSCAR. That's even better! Right on the chin!

(Throws two short punches.) Isn't this fun, Teddy? (Two more punches.) Fun, fun, fun!

ANN. Now Bobby Anderson will never ask me out! I just look horrible!

MARGE. Get your brother -- breakfast.

ANN (tilting head to OSCAR). Can you see it, Dad? Do I look ugly?

OSCAR. See what? I told you not to worry about your braces.

MARGE. Ann, your brother.

ANN (rising angrily). Oh! Nobody listens around here! (Exits R.) Junior!

OSCAR. What did she say? (Looks through newspaper on table.) Where's the TV schedule?

MARGE (passing plates to table). You're sitting on it.

OSCAR (still looking). Funnies, sports, fashion, editorials -- where's the TV schedule?

MARGE. You're sitting on it.

OSCAR. We must have some weirdo in the neighborhood that creeps around in the morning and robs the TV schedules out of the papers. (MARGE starts to speak, but just shakes head and goes back to work. OSCAR starts acting weird.) Ooooooh! (Looks left and right.) It's the Browns' newspaper! (Wild laugh.) I'll bet it's got a TV schedule in it! And it's mine! (Wild laugh.) All mine! (To MARGE.) Where's the TV schedule?

MARGE. You're sitting on it.

OSCAR. This house is impossible! (Rises and moves toward R.) Ann! Junior! Where's my TV schedule? (Moves back to chair and sees TV schedule.) Ha! I was sitting on it! (MARGE shakes her head as OSCAR sits and reads.)

(ANN and JUNIOR enter R and sit.)

JUNIOR. Hey, Dad! Ann's got acne!

OSCAR. Great! Coffee, Marge.

ANN. Shut up, stupid! Just shut up!

JUNIOR. I said acne, Dad! You know . . . (Blows air into his cheeks.)

ANN. Mom, make him shut up!

OSCAR. You're making a mountain out of a molehill, son. (Laughs, then looks at schedule.)

MARGE (sitting). Eat.

OSCAR (angrily). Four o'clock!

ANN. Mom, you gave me droopy bacon.

OSCAR. How can I watch the game if it comes on at four? I'll be playing golf!

MARGE. Eat.

OSCAR. These networks are out to destroy the game of golf, putting a championship game on at four, when most people want to play golf. (Eats.) This bacon is crisp, Marge. You know I don't like it crisp. (MARGE silently switches Oscar's and Ann's plates.)

ANN (trying bacon). This is how I like it, crisp!

JUNIOR (to ANN). Chuck told me you're out to get a date with Bobby Anderson.

ANN (innocently). Why, you know I'm going steady with Alan.

OSCAR. Maybe it'll rain! Then I'll be forced to stay home and watch the game. (To JUNIOR.) Pass the salt.

JUNIOR (passing pepper). That never stopped you before! You were going steady with Bill Katz when you went out with Alan the first time.

OSCAR (shaking pepper on plate). This is the pepper!

ANN. Liar! (To MARGE.) Mom, tell him to stop lying!

OSCAR. I'm not lying. (Shaking pepper on table.) Doesn't that look like pepper to you? (MARGE, not able to contain herself any longer, pulls the letter out of her gown and waves it in their faces.)

MARGE. I've got a big surprise for everyone! Something that's very important to me.

OSCAR. If you're thinking about that hysterectomy, we still can't afford to . . .

MARGE. No, silly. This is something much more important than that. I've won something!

JUNIOR. A dune buggy?

MARGE. No, it's not a dune buggy. It's . . .

ANN. Money? Can I buy some new . . .

MARGE. No, it's not money. It's more important than that!

OSCAR. A free operation? Get the hyster . . .

MARGE. No! No! No! Just listen for a minute. (Deep breath.) The Ladies Auxiliary has named me the Barren Ground Mother of the Month! (Long silence.)

JUNIOR (reserved). Gee. That's great. (To OSCAR.) Pass the pepper, Dad.

OSCAR (passing pepper). That's our Marge. We'll have to take you out to dinner or something. (Picks up TV schedule and begins to read.)

ANN. That's neat, Mom, but can I buy some dresses anyway? I won't spend very much.

MARGE (hurt). But I said Mother of the Month Award . . .

OSCAR (looking at TV schedule). "Back to Bataan"!

MARGE. But doesn't that mean anythi . . .

ANN. Can I be excused, Mom? I'm not really all that hungry.

MARGE (flat). Excused.

JUNIOR (to ANN). I'll take your bacon.

ANN (grabbing up bacon). No, you won't! (Rises.) Here, Taffy. (Whistles for dog.) Come here, girl. (As she exits R, taking bacon with her:) Congratulations, Mom.

OSCAR (excitedly). That's the one where John Wayne gets killed!

JUNIOR. Can I have your bacon, Mom?

OSCAR (looking at watch). It's on right now! (Rises; to MARGE.) Congratulations, honey. (As he exits R:) I sure would have enjoyed pancakes this morning.

JUNIOR (reaching for Oscar's plate). Never mind, Mom. I'll take his bacon. (Rises.) I'm goin'

to play ball. I'm glad you won. See you later.
(He tastes bacon and stops.) Ugghh! (Drops
bacon back on plate.) Too greasy for me.
(Exits R.)

MARGE (slumping down in chair). Mother of the
Month! Big deal.

OSCAR (offstage). Will you shut that stupid
lawnmower off! I'm trying to watch television
in here! (Pause.) The nerve of some people!
No consideration for the other guy. (Pause.)
Hey, Marge! How about some popcorn?
(MARGE drops head down on table.)

LIGHTS DOWN

CURTAIN

Scene Two

SCENE: On the left half of the stage is the nurse's desk, waiting room and doctor's office. There may be some physical barrier between the nurse and doctor, but it is not necessary if time or equipment presents a problem. Nurse's desk and chair are UL. There is a coffee cup in one of the desk drawers. An extra chair may be against the wall UL. Doctor's desk and chair are LC. There is also an extra chair facing the desk.)

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: The lights come up on left side of stage only. Both DOCTOR and NURSE are on stage. The NURSE is primping herself (fixing her lipstick, hair, etc.). The DOCTOR is seated facing the audience and is biting his fingernails. MARGE walks into waiting room from Las if she is nervous and unsure of herself. The NURSE continues to primp with a hand mirror or compact. MARGE walks up to nurse's desk and stands for several seconds before NURSE looks at her.)

NURSE (still primping). Good morning. May I help you?

MARGE. I came to see the doctor.

NURSE (still primping). Doctor?

MARGE. Yes. Dr. Phillips. Isn't he expecting me? (DOCTOR rises and moves DC and acts as if he is looking in a mirror. He does facial contour exercises and begins to comb his hair, still doing facial exercises.)

NURSE (brushing her hair). Dr. Phillips? Oh, yes, Dr. Phillips. Of course, he's here.

MARGE. I, uh, called earlier for an appoint . . .

NURSE (interrupting). Why shouldn't he be here? He's a doctor.

MARGE. Well, that's why I came. (DOCTOR, still looking in mirror, opens shirt and begins to flex muscles.) To see the doctor.

NURSE (putting on lipstick). Doctor?

MARGE. Dr. Phillips!

NURSE. Oh, yes! He's in. Have a seat. (MARGE sits.) Have you got an appointment? (Puts on eye shadow.)

MARGE (impatiently). My name is Margaret Brown. I came to see Dr. Phillips and I have an appointment!