

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Casserole

By

PAM HARBAUGH

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play that are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.
--

©MMXXII by
PAM HARBAUGH

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(CASSEROLE)

ISBN: 978-1-61959- 282-7

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

In addition, all producers of the play must include the following acknowledgment on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and on all advertising and promotional materials:

“*Casserole* was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by Boise Little Theater in Boise, Idaho.”

Casserole received its premier production at Boise Little Theater in Boise, Idaho, on Oct. 18, 2020.

CAST:

CLAIR WILSON..... Jeanna Vickery
LEONARD WILSON Brad Wm. Ooley
ERICA WILSON..... Lindsay Eng
PENNY CAUFIELD..... Katie Kruse
ZACHARY SIMMONS Omar Orbay
NICHOLAS David Ybarra

PRODUCTION:

Director Wendy Koeppel
Asst. Director/Stage Manager Jay Parker
Properties Joanna Marshall & Gary Miller
Costumes Elizabeth Greeley & Cast
Lighting Design John Myers
Sound Design Gregg Irwin
Scenic Design..... Wendy Koeppel

For John ...

Casserole

CHARACTERS

CLAIR WILSON: 54-year-old housewife with a strong western Wisconsin accent. She loves to putter around the house, cook and clean. She's a bit messy-looking, with strands of hair occasionally popping out of her otherwise tidy "do." She has a huge heart, exudes love and affection and surprises others with her wisdom, much of it derived from watching *Ellen*.

LEONARD WILSON: 57-year-old manager of Delshire's department store, a venerable establishment in downtown Eau Claire. He is orderly, neat, responsible and practical. Although he frequently sounds gruff, there is a deep current of love for Clair.

ERICA WILSON: 29-year-old artist now living in New York City. She's independent and spirited and, at heart, very much like her mother, Clair. She's also very protective of her mother and loves Penny.

PENNY CAUFIELD: 32-year-old successful marketing professional with her own business in New York City. She is tall, fierce, graceful, confident and protective with a Rosalind Russell flair. Penny is also a trans woman. She is NOT to be played by a man. If you can't find a trans woman actress to play the part, then use a cis woman.

ZACHARY SIMMONS: 35-year-old head editor of Williamsburg Publishing. A hipster, his dark, polished-looking hair is very neat but a little bouffant. He likes to think of himself as being droll.

NICHOLAS: 30-year-old freelance photographer/videographer. He, too, is a hipster and sports a close-cropped beard and moustache. His favorite piece of clothing is a black T-shirt that reads "IRONIC T-SHIRT." Preferably cast with a person of color.

SETTING

The Wilson's home in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The time is from the morning to the evening of July 3, 2015.

The home is bright, clean and cheery. A large desk at the side of the room has neat and organized piles. A framed Norman Rockwell print hangs over the desk.

There is a sitting area next to a dinner table. A bottle of Windex, a rag and a pair of yellow rubber gloves are on the dinner table. The sitting area has a couch, a chair and a coffee table, and, if enough room, a side table. The dinner table sits in front of shelves that hold knick-knacks, including a vase of colorful plastic flowers and a collection of casserole dishes.

There are three exits: a front door leading to the outside, a door to the kitchen, and a door leading to a hallway to the bedrooms and bathrooms.

PRODUCTION NOTES

There are a few times when a character exits into the kitchen where noisy offstage action takes place. At the same time, another character enters from the front door into the living room. Please use tight timing to overlap these two actions so the stage is not left empty.

In dialogue, a / indicates dovetailed speech. Next line should begin overlapping at the /.

Directors and actors may update the hipster jargon as they see fit.

Casserole

ACT I

Scene 1

(CLAIR, wearing an apron, sits at a desk gluing a handle back on a casserole dish. She's getting Elmer's glue all over the neat piles of paper and the newspaper. LEONARD, dressed in a suit and tie, enters and acts dismayed at what he sees.)

LEONARD. Clair! What are you doing?

CLAIR. Fixing the handle on this casserole dish ... *(Finishes repairing the dish.)* There! Good as new. Anything worth keepin' is worth fixin'.

(CLAIR crosses to the collection of casserole dishes where she puts back the dish. LEONARD sits at the desk.)

LEONARD. Awww ... for cripes sake. Ya got glue all over the newspaper.

CLAIR. Leonard, while you're over there, can ya find that recipe for me? You know, the one for root beer and raisin meatloaf? I clipped it out and put it on the desk ... *(Crosses to the desk.)* Whereabouts could it be? *(Fussing around his neat desk.)*

LEONARD. Sooooooo, I took all your clippings and project ideas and recipes and organized them in this little box ... so ...

(He hands her a little recipe box.)

CLAIR (*pleased*). Oh, Leonard. That's a humdinger of a gift.
Thank you!

LEONARD. I know how busy you get with the church 'n all. So ... it's just a couple, two, three things ... see, the coupons here, church notices ... gardening tips, recipes are in here ... mostly casseroles ...

CLAIR. There it is! Pastor Steven wants me to bring my new hot dish to the potluck. I was looking everywhere for it. You are a wonder of organization, dontcha know.

(LEONARD starts straightening up the mess she made.)

LEONARD. Thank you. I do take pride ... (*Patronizingly, he shows off his excellent order.*) See? These are paid bills, these are bills / that have to be—

CLAIR. Ope. I'm so glad you said that. I almost forgot.

(She reaches into her pocket and retrieves a letter.)

CLAIR (*cont'd*). This came in from Delshire's. I don't get your discount any longer?

LEONARD. Let me see. Hmmm ... hmhhh ... no dear, this is for families of *non-managers*.

CLAIR. Thank heavens!

LEONARD. Tsk, tsk, tsk. This was sent last month, Clair. (*Back to bragging about his desk.*) Here's information about the new line of Florsheims comin' in. These are newspaper clips about Norman Rockwell I think Erica will find interesting.

CLAIR. She won't like that.

LEONARD (*pointing to framed poster above his desk*). That is real art.

CLAIR. She'll know you're trying to influence her.

LEONARD. That's what fathers do. Here are the newsletters and such from Rotary Club. Our to-do list. And here's junk mail / I've got to—

CLAIR. Oh Leonard, throw / it away.

LEONARD. No. I have to make sure it's not important.

CLAIR. How can junk be important.

(CLAIR grabs the junk letters and is about to toss them into the wastebasket when she sees a letter addressed to her.)

CLAIR *(cont'd)*. This one's for me.

LEONARD. Junk, Clair. If it were important, I would give it to you.

CLAIR. It's from Williamsburg Publishing, Leonard!

LEONARD. You don't need any more cookbooks. You've got all these recipes ... and besides that, you're the best cook in Eau Claire.

(She opens the letter and reads.)

CLAIR. Oh my gosh ... it's ... they're interested in ME. They want MY recipes for a book ... "saw your recipe in the *Valley Gazette* ... would like to talk to you ... we want to call it *The Midwest Chef*." Oh my gosh ... Leonard. Leonard. Oh my gosh.

(She keeps reading.)

CLAIR *(cont'd)*. "I'm meeting a former professor of mine at the University of Wisconsin in Eau Claire Saturday, on the Fourth of July, and, if convenient, would like to invite myself to dinner ... " *(To LEONARD, very satisfied she*

knows the distinction.) He means “supper,” dontcha know ... These New Yorkers. Wait! That’s tomorrow. When was this sent? Leonard! ... Last month? It’s been on your desk all that time?

LEONARD. It had your name on it. I thought it was junk mail.

CLAIR. Give me the phone. I’ve got to call this Mr. Simmons.
Oh my gosh ...

(CLAIR dumps the junk mail onto LEONARD’s lap and on top of work he’s doing. LEONARD hands her the phone, she dials.)

CLAIR *(cont’d)*. Hello ... Mr. Simmons, please ... This is Clair Wilson from Eau Claire, Wisconsin? Yes, I’ll hold ... Thank heavens he’s still there ... Oh, my, Mr. Simmons. Hello. Ya know, I just now got your letter. I must say, I’m so flattered ... Umm hmm ... Um hmm ... I’m sorry ... Well are you still coming to town? Umm hmmm. Oh my yes, we’re free tomorrow night. We’re free every Saturday night, even on our nation’s Independence Day. *(Shoots an unkind look toward LEONARD.)* Umm hmmm. Photographs? Gosh, I don’t know. And a what? A video? ... Oh sure. Yes, I would be delighted to make that for you. Yes, and some of my other “especialites” *(Pronounced “especialit-ays” followed by a funny giggle, indicating a mix of embarrassment and flirtation.)* If you get yourself a pen and paper, I’ll give you our address ... Oh, of course you have it already. *(The same giggle.)* See you at six p.m. sharp tomorrow night. Toodle-oo!

LEONARD. Geez Louise. What have you gotten us into? Saturday night is my relaxing night! And it’s the Fourth of July for heaven’s sake. I’m going to be extra tired after the sale. All those people! For cripes sake, Clair.

(CLAIR runs to her husband and hugs him.)

CLAIR. Leonard. You won't believe this. Mr. Simmons saw my recipe for Mayonnaise Casserole in the *Gazette* / and he—

LEONARD. Ah c'mon. How would he ever see that?

CLAIR. I think he went to the university. He's meeting some old professor in that creative writing thing they have. And I betcha that professor saw my recipe and sent it to him. Oh, my ... tomorrow is going to be THE best day.

(CLAIR goes to the box LEONARD organized for her and starts pulling out recipes.)

CLAIR *(cont'd)*. And he wants me to make all my favorite recipes, and he's going to take some photographs and even some kind of video or something. He probably wants to talk about it with his colleagues, dontcha know. Oh dear ... what should I make? I've got the Cowboy Cornbread Trifle or the Root Beer Raisin Meatloaf ... It's the Fourth tomorrow ... I can whip up some M&M Macaroons and just use the red and blue M&Ms.

LEONARD. Now Clair, don't go getting head over heels about all this. There's no contract. There's no up-front money. Don't go off like some flibbertigibbet.

CLAIR. You're right. *(Breathing deeply.)* I need to calm down and get my head on straight.

LEONARD. Make a good first impression. Fix your hair, wear something ... professional, and for heaven's sake, get organized.

(He hands her back all the junk mail she's piled upon his desk.)

CLAIR. Yes. You're right.

LEONARD. I always am.

CLAIR. Always. Yes. You know. I'll come down to Delshire's later today. Maybe a new shirt / and some slacks.

LEONARD. Not today. We're getting ready for the Fourth of July sale. I don't like you to come there when I'm so busy. I won't even get home until nine tonight.

CLAIR. Do you want me to keep supper / hot for—

LEONARD. And don't worry about new clothes. Wear that new pair of shoes I brought home for you last week. They're sensible, clean ... responsible. You can always tell everything you need to know about a person by lookin' at their shoes. You have a lot of work to do here. *(Kissing her on the head.)* Now you get organized. See you at noon for dinner.

CLAIR. Chicken pot pie?

LEONARD. We had that for supper yesterday.

CLAIR. I'll freshen *(Pronounced "frayshen.")* it up for ya.

(He sighs loudly, grabs his wallet, tucks it into his pocket then exits through the front door. CLAIR goes through recipe box.)

CLAIR *(cont'd, quietly, to herself)*. This is going to be the best day.

(Beat.)

CLAIR *(cont'd)*. Can't sit still ... c'mon, Clair. Get organized.

(She picks up the Windex and rag and puts on her yellow rubber gloves.)

CLAIR *(cont'd)*. There! Now ... let's make this place sparkle, then we'll make our shopping list.

(She immediately begins humming “Bringing in the Sheaves.” She begins singing and cleaning plastic flowers. Then cleans casserole dishes.)

CLAIR *(cont’d)*.

BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES,
BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES

(She stops suddenly, then with a wicked little giggle.)

BRINGING IN THE CHEESE
BRINGING IN THE CHEESE
I SHALL MAKE THE CASSEROLE
WITH MAYONNAISE AND CHEESE!

(A knock at the door. ERICA walks in slowly. She wears black jeans, a chic black T-shirt and a brown leather jacket, a thick watch, silver bracelets and necklaces. Her hair is short.)

CLAIR *(cont’d)*. Oh! Oh my ... oh my, oh gosh ... Erica! Oh boy, what a surprise. Good heavens. You’re in town. My little girl.

(CLAIR pulls ERICA in and gives her a big hug.)

CLAIR *(cont’d)*. I’m so surprised to see you. Did you tell your dad? He sometimes forgets to—

ERICA. No, Mom. I didn’t tell anyone I was coming. It was a spur-of-the-moment thing.

CLAIR *(taking off the rubber gloves)*. When did your plane get in. I coulda picked you up.

ERICA. I drove.

CLAIR. All the way from New York City!?

ERICA. It’s not a bad drive. It’s pretty this time of year, all those wildflowers by the road.

CLAIR. So your bags are in the car? Let’s go get ’em.

ERICA. No, we got in late last night and got a hotel room.

CLAIR. Nonsense. You're gonna stay—"we"?

ERICA. Yeah, Mom. I met someone really, really special. I wanted you to meet ... this person ...

CLAIR. Is he in the car? Back at the hotel?

(CLAIR runs to look out the window.)

ERICA. At the hotel. But I wanted to talk to you first ... before you two met. Is Dad around?

CLAIR. He already left for Delshire's. They've got that Fourth of July / weekend sale.

ERICA. Weekend sale. I figured he'd be sorta busy. So, I brought you this. My latest. I made the colors match the couch so maybe he'll want to keep this one up.

(ERICA pulls out a large modern painting wrapped in brown paper. Although it has the same dimensions as the Norman Rockwell print hanging over the desk, the modern work shows a big fury "exploding" on the canvas. CLAIR excitedly opens it.)

CLAIR. My, my! This is wonderful, Erica! Uhhh ...

(ERICA turns it around, right side up.)

ERICA. It's a self-portrait, Mom.

CLAIR. Well alrighty then. But we'll keep that to ourselves. Your father doesn't have to know that. We'll tell him it's ... a painting of ...

ERICA. Freedom.

CLAIR. Alrighty then. Here, you hang this up, and I'll get you some coffee. I just put on a fresh pot.

(CLAIR begins to exit before ERICA speaks.)

ERICA. Sounds great. And do you have any cinnamon butter crumb?

CLAIR *(offstage)*. You betcha!

(ERICA hangs the painting, putting the old Norman Rockwell print to the side of the couch. She sits, obviously uncomfortable. She gets up, pokes around at old family pictures, old figurines. Holds up a picture frame made of popsicle sticks.)

ERICA. I can't believe you keep this out in full view. Not exactly my best work.

CLAIR *(still offstage)*. What did you say, dear?

ERICA. This kindergarten project of mine. I thought you only brought it out when I came home for a visit. Not that I would blame you.

(CLAIR returns with a tray loaded with coffee cups, creamer, sugar, spoons, napkins and coffee cake on plates. She sets it on coffee table.)

CLAIR. Heavens, Erica. I love that precious little picture of you. It's your first piece of art. And now you're a big artist in New York City.

ERICA. Trying to be ...

CLAIR. You will be. Don't you worry. I know it. *(Taking the photo from ERICA.)* See that sweet little pink dress? You called it your / spinning dress.

ERICA. Spinning dress. Yes.

CLAIR *(cleaning the picture with her apron)*. You'd go around in circles so fast until it stuck straight out, like some

ballerina. You loved that dress. You were such a little girl. Pink satin bows, pretty little socks with lace trims. I still have the dress, you know.

ERICA. You're kidding.

CLAIR. Oh yes. I'm going to turn it into a quilt. Or maybe I'll save it until you have a little girl of your own. And now that you've met someone ...

(ERICA puts down her coffee and sits next to CLAIR on the couch. She takes CLAIR's hands in her own.)

ERICA. Mom. I've got something I have to tell you.

CLAIR *(excited)*. Oh gosh ...

(ERICA lowers her head. CLAIR lifts ERICA's chin up and, by habit, tucks her daughter's hair behind her ear. ERICA looks up at her mother, tears filling her eyes.)

ERICA *(a big breath)*. I'm ... Mom, I'm gay.

(CLAIR looks at ERICA, transfixed for a long moment.)

CLAIR. Oh.

(CLAIR turns away from ERICA, and we can see a multitude of memories on her face—skinned knees, first bicycle, homework assignments, ballet recitals, ponytails, first bra, first date, first school dance ... and that spinning dress. CLAIR looks back at the picture.)

CLAIR *(cont'd)*. But the spinning dress ...

(Beat. ERICA lets her mother absorb this. A close moment, filled with silence that articulates surprise, denial, acceptance. Big human concepts. It is a huge moment for both CLAIR and ERICA.)

ERICA. Are you OK?

CLAIR (*regaining her composure*). Oh ... my dear, dear Erica. (*Hugging her daughter.*) My baby ... are you OK? No one's tried to hurt you, have they? I know there's a lot of mean, mean people out there.

ERICA. Don't worry, Mom. New York is very diverse.

CLAIR. You're healthy?

ERICA. Never better.

CLAIR (*hugging ERICA again*). I love you just the way you are.

ERICA. You sound like Mr. Rogers now.

CLAIR. He was the best, wasn't he?

ERICA. You always sat down with me to watch him.

CLAIR. Mmm hmm.

(*Beat.*)

CLAIR (*cont'd*). Does this mean no wedding?

ERICA. Everyone can get married now.

(*Small beat.*)

CLAIR. Does it mean no grandchildren?

ERICA. No, Mom. You'll have grandchildren, I hope.

(*Smaller beat.*)

CLAIR. Oh ... (*Suddenly.*) Does this mean I can't go to Chick-fil-A any longer?

ERICA (*cynically*). We'll see ...

(*Beat.*)