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Dramatic Publishing

Odds in My Favor

A Full-Length Play

By
CHARLES BAKER



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(ODDS IN MY FAVOR)
ISBN: 978-1-58342-483-4

ODDS IN MY FAVOR
A Full-Length Play
For Seven Women, Ten Men, Extras

C H A R A C T E R S

KATHERINE EAGERTON the mother
JONATHAN EAGERTON the father
CHIP EAGERTON the seventeen-year-old son
AMANDA EAGERTON Chip's sixteen-year-old sister
MATTHEW EAGERTON Chip's thirteen-year-old brother
UNCLE DAVE Jonathan's slightly younger brother
JEANINE a friend of Matthew's
JEREMIAH Matthew's best friend
ROSEMARY a friend of Amanda's
BETHANY another of Amanda's friends
JACQUELINE Chip's girlfriend
HENRY a studious classmate of Matthew's
ROBERT another classmate of Matthew's
MIKE a tough classmate of Matthew's
MR. WORTHMORE a successful corporate official
MRS. WORTHMORE Worthmore's wife
FINKELMAN a high schooler with acting ability

Extras

TRACK ANNOUNCER	HORSEPLAYERS
BAG LADY	CLASSMATES
MAFIA-TYPE	GIRLFRIEND
OLD MAN	

TIME: The Present

PLACE: The Eagertons' home and a racetrack.

PRODUCTION NOTES

CHARACTERS:

Katherine Egerton — an attractive woman of forty. She is very stylish in everything she does, from her personal appearance to her manner. She is not a comic figure, but a stabilizing factor in the family.

Jonathan Egerton — successful in everything he has ever done in life. His appearance and manner reflect his belief that everything can be done if one works hard enough at it. His major interests in life are success, status and money. He is especially proud of his two oldest children who have already committed themselves to his lifestyle.

Chip Egerton — college-bound, All-American boy. He is very sports-minded, but he's not the typical "dumb jock." He is a good student who works at being successful.

Amanda Egerton — the image of her father. Unlike Chip, she has been spoiled a bit too much so she tends to over-react and threaten.

Matthew Egerton — quiet and withdrawn, especially in the presence of his father or his brother. He is small for his age and troubled by the life he leads at home.

Jeremiah — views the world much the same way as Matthew, but is more outgoing and personable. He enjoys joking around and he can bring out the best in Matthew.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Jeanine — also a bit small for her age. She is very polite and pleasant with a naturally sweet personality. She understands Matthew's situation and hopes to help him by being his friend.

Jacqueline — the perfect mate for All-American Chip. Popular, beautiful, intelligent and very concerned about her appearance, she really has no personality.

Rosemary and Bethany — carbon copies of Amanda. They are snobbish in everything they do and wear.

Henry and Robert — always seen as a pair. It seems as though they are identical twins, but they are not. They appear very studious.

Mike — a tough kid, probably from “the other side of town.”

Mr. Worthmore — like Jonathan, a successful business executive. Not nearly as serious or troubled as Jonathan.

Mrs. Worthmore — genuinely pleasant. She likes children and their activities.

Finkelman — a highschooler with acting skills clearly destined for bit parts. He is big and plays the tough guy role.

Uncle Dave — younger than Jonathan and, in every way, his opposite. He is concerned about all around him and especially those that need affection most. Money and status have never been his goals and he finds it awkward to be looking for money now. He enjoys life and wants others to enjoy it.

PRODUCTION NOTES

GENERAL:

Eagerton Living Room — Sofa, wing chair, coffee table, two end tables, lamps, rug under coffee table, fireplace, fireplace equipment, logs, mantle decorations, telephone, floral centerpiece for coffee table, fancy framed paintings, light Priscilla curtains for the window, stairway, and various bric-a-brac to decorate the room. One breakaway vase for the mantle (or clay pottery vase). The emphasis should be on elegance and good taste, not gaudy wealth. A piano is offstage. (If Uncle Dave and Matthew are actually accomplished pianists, a baby grand can be on stage and the musical selections may be staged accordingly.)

The Racetrack — Sixteen foot, two-tiered, white rail. (May be constructed by using four foot sections of two-by-four, a sixteen foot one-by-one, and a sixteen foot one-by-three on top.) Three or more park benches may be used, depending on the length of the stage and the availability of the benches. Litter (including track programs, newspapers, losing tickets and *Daily Racing Forms*.)

PERSONAL:

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE:

Jonathan — *Wall Street Journal*, briefcase or portfolio.

Katherine — cups, saucers, coffee server, tray, letter in envelope.

Chip — letter jacket or sweater, schoolbooks.

Amanda — blazer, purse, schoolbooks.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Dave – athletic bag, jacket, cap.

Matthew – cup and saucer.

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO:

Matthew – schoolbooks, lightweight jacket.

Jeremiah – schoolbook, hand-held electronic game.

Amanda, Rosemary and Bethany – blazers, schoolbooks, purses.

Dave – white handkerchief.

Chip – letter jacket or sweater, schoolbooks.

Jonathan – evening newspaper, briefcase or portfolio, keys.

ACT ONE, SCENE THREE:

Chip – newspaper.

Jacqueline – newspaper.

Robert and Henry – pocket calculators, pencils, note pads.

Classmates – lightweight jackets, binoculars, money.

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE:

Props to fit the extras as used.

ACT TWO, SCENE TWO:

Katherine – tray, paper plates, cream pie, serving knife, cups and saucers, napkins.

Jeanine – Raggedy Ann costume, large gift-wrapped box with bow.

Matthew – Raggedy Andy costume, large gift-wrapped box with bow.

Jeremiah – little boy's costume, lollipop.

Dave – athletic bag, jacket, cap.

Finkelman – sunglasses, little black book, cigar.

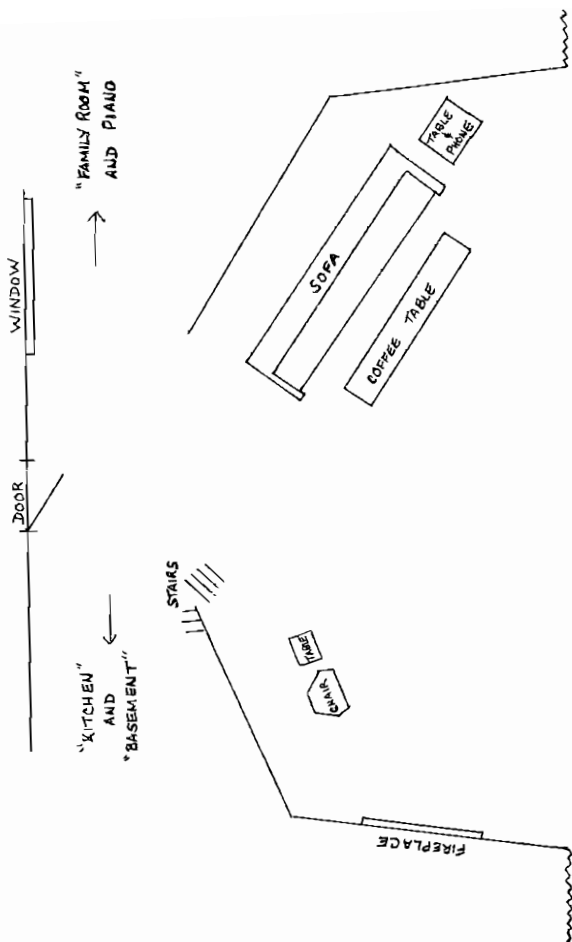
PRODUCTION NOTES

All music is suggested and may be changed according to the player's ability and availability. Classical music is always played by Matthew. He is always heard from offstage and the music is never over-powering except in Act One, Scene Two when Dave is playing just before the close of the scene. Dave's piano selections should be very much opposite to classical, very swing and loud. The musical number performed by Matthew, Jeanine and Jeremiah can be any popular number where the lyrics suggest that material things are not necessarily the most important things in life.

The cream pie incident in Act Two, Scene Two is not intended to be slapstick. It should be played as an act of frustration and should shock those involved. The audience will no doubt find it funny, but that is not its intention. (The pie may be made with a graham cracker crust, meringue base, and whipped cream top.)

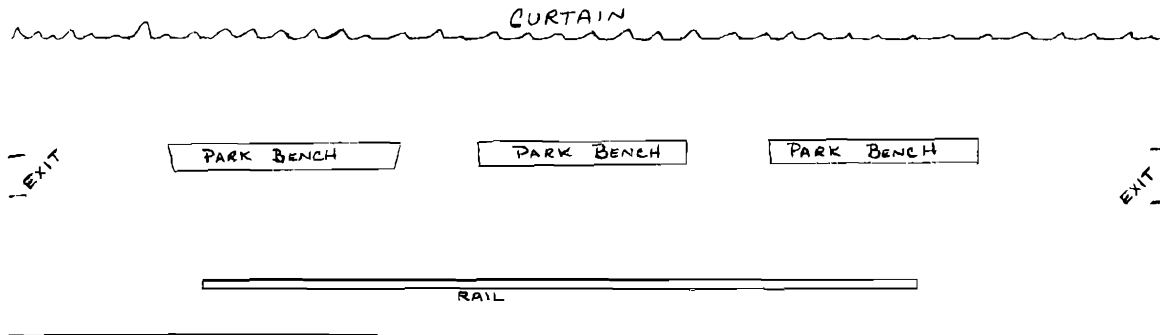
The lights are dimmed momentarily between the scenes in Act One. The actors should move on and off between scenes as they begin without delay. Lighting for the racetrack scene should be dim, with two follow spots highlighting the characters as they speak and enter.

Living room set should be as elegant as possible.



ACT TWO- Scene 1- The Racetrack

Scene played in front of curtain, with stage doors functioning as exits to betting areas. Stage apron is littered with track programs, cups, and many losing tickets.



ACT ONE

Scene One

Prior to the rise of the curtain, classical piano music is heard offstage. (Haydn's *Sonata in D* may be used.) It continues until the curtain rise is complete at which time a crash of frustration is heard on the piano. We hear MR. EAGERTON offstage L say "Play that piece again, Matthew, and this time concentrate!"

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: KATHERINE EAGERTON is seated on an elegant sofa pouring coffee from an obviously fancy warmer. The piano music continues offstage as JONATHAN EAGERTON enters rapidly from L with a leather portfolio tucked under his arm. He is obviously irritated.

KATHERINE. Jonathan, you don't have to hurry. You'll have plenty of time to catch the eight-forty-seven.

JONATHAN (sitting down next to KATHERINE). It's not catching the eight-forty-seven that worries me. I simply prefer to be on the seven-ten train.

KATHERINE. Well, frankly, it's your own fault. There was no need to carry on so late with the Franklins. I didn't think you'd work so hard to leave a junior executive with such a big impression.

JONATHAN. He may only be a junior executive now, but with

the MBA from Harvard that kid could be going right to the top. I just want him to remember who gave him his start. When the elevator is going to the top, it doesn't hurt to be on-board. (He sips from his coffee cup.)

KATHERINE. I suppose you're right, Jonathan. (She sighs.)

JONATHAN (moving across to the end table and picking up the *Wall Street Journal*). Have you heard today's weather forecast?

KATHERINE. Yes. The midwest should be unseasonably warm for a couple of days.

JONATHAN (gathering up the portfolio and the *Journal*). Good, I think I'll walk to the station today instead of having you or one of the kids drop me.

KATHERINE. No, why don't you let me drop you. I've got something I think you'll want to talk about.

(CHIP enters down the stairs. He carries some school books and has on a school jacket with four very prominent letters on it. He places the jacket on the chair and listens to his parents' conversation.)

JONATHAN. Uh-oh. I don't like that tone. What kind of trouble is Matthew into now?

KATHERINE. It has nothing to do with Matthew.

CHIP. That's a surprise. (He walks L to exit and looks into the family room area, then shouts.) Matthew, you can quit playing now. (He turns and looks at JONATHAN.) Okay, Dad? (The music stops.)

JONATHAN (mumbling). Okay, fine.

KATHERINE. Chip, we don't need you adding to the boy's problems. You are his brother and you could show some understanding.

JONATHAN. Chip's right. All he was saying is that it's a surprise that Matthew isn't into some kind of trouble.

KATHERINE. Well, this has nothing to do with Matthew or Chip! So, Chip, if you don't mind, your father and I have something to talk about. Go in there . . . (She motions toward the family room area.) . . . and get your brother and sister going. (CHIP exits L, reluctantly.)

JONATHAN. Okay, Katherine. So what's the big secret?

KATHERINE (sliding an envelope out from underneath the serving tray on the coffee table). Well, this came in the mail yesterday. (She hands it to JONATHAN.) It's from your brother David.

JONATHAN (surprised). What? We haven't heard from him since . . . (He pauses to think.) . . . since we lived in Atlanta and that was when I was with United Parts and Industries. (He is suspicious.) How could he have found us? We've lived in four places since then.

KATHERINE. He didn't. The post office did.

JONATHAN. You must be kidding. The post office can't find people at their present addresses, let alone forwarding addresses.

KATHERINE. The envelope was addressed to our old place in Atlanta . . . (She points to the envelope which JONATHAN holds.) . . . and it was forwarded to all of our other addresses. I couldn't believe it myself when the postman told me there was two-dollars and fifty-cents postage due on it.

JONATHAN. You shouldn't of paid it.

KATHERINE. Jonathan, I didn't know who the letter was from. There was no return address.

JONATHAN. Typical of David. (His irritation builds.) There was no return address because he had no address. (He gestures with his arms.) He was probably living on some beach or

sleeping in a park somewhere.

KATHERINE (chuckling quietly as if laughing at some sort of private joke). Well, David always was an independent sort.

JONATHAN. Independent, my rear. Don't cover up laziness by calling it independence.

KATHERINE. No, Jonathan. You've always been too hard on him. He's just different than you and you can't accept it.

JONATHAN. That has nothing whatsoever to do with it. By any standard, he's a classic loser. Let's drop the subject right now. (He hands the letter to KATHERINE.) Just throw the letter out and that'll be the end of that.

KATHERINE. You didn't let me finish! The letter was dated July and . . .

JONATHAN. So what? This is November. Any news in there is too old to do anything about. (He resumes his glancing through the *Journal*.)

KATHERINE (shaking her head and sighing). He says he's coming for a visit.

JONATHAN (putting down the paper). He what?

KATHERINE (adamantly). He says he's coming for a visit.

JONATHAN. Well, that's no problem. He'll never find us!

KATHERINE. What do you mean? (JONATHAN walks over to KATHERINE and takes the letter from her. He points to the address.)

JONATHAN. Remember the address on the envelope? Atlanta. We've had four different promotions . . . uh . . . addresses since then – New York, Chicago, New Jersey, *and* Denver. He'll never locate us. We have separate lives now and that's just the way they should stay – separate.

(CHIP enters from L.)

CHIP. Hey, Dad, you better check out Amanda. She says some weird lookin' guy was peering in the patio door.

JONATHAN. What! (He starts to shout.) Amanda! Amanda!

CHIP. Yeah. Matthew went outside to check it out.

(AMANDA enters calmly from L. She has a very haughty air about her.)

AMANDA (calmly). Dad, there was some man outside looking around. Who is he?

JONATHAN (turning to AMANDA). It was probably the pool pump repairman. He was due yesterday so it would make sense that he would show up twenty-four hours late.

AMANDA. This guy didn't look like a pool repairman to me.

(MATTHEW enters UC through the front door.)

MATTHEW (speaking directly to KATHERINE, softly). Mom, that guy Amanda saw is at the front door. He asked for you. (JONATHAN and KATHERINE exchange quizzical looks as KATHERINE moves to the door.)

JONATHAN (almost to himself as he sits down). No, it couldn't be.

(KATHERINE opens the front door and DAVE enters. He carries a gym bag and a sleeping bag. He smiles broadly and throws his arms around KATHERINE.)

AMANDA. Hey, it's the weirdo in the window.

JONATHAN (shaking his head in disgust). No, it's your Uncle David. (DAVE steps into the living room and extends his hand to JONATHAN. Rather than the usual handshake, DAVE

offers the "soul shake" which JONATHAN cannot figure out. JONATHAN sneers.)

DAVE (sliding his gym bag over Jonathan's still-outstretched arm). Johnny, ten years sure makes a difference. (He looks at CHIP and AMANDA who are both appalled at Dave's appearance.) But I'd recognize these two anywhere. They've got that same look you've got. (He slides the sleeping bag onto Jonathan's arm.) And Matthew here, I've already met.

JONATHAN (letting the baggage slide off his arm onto the chair without touching it). I suppose this is *all* . . . (He is disdainful.) . . . of your luggage?

DAVE. You know me, Johnny. I travel light.

KATHERINE. David, sit down. (She motions to the couch. To CHIP and AMANDA.) You two get going. Matthew, run in the kitchen and get Uncle David a cup. You'll want some coffee, Dave?

DAVE. That'll be fine, Kate. (AMANDA exits upstairs. CHIP and MATTHEW exit R to the kitchen area.)

JONATHAN (obviously irritated). David, I don't mean to be abrupt but I haven't much time right now. (KATHERINE moves toward the door with JONATHAN.) Find out what he . . . (He motions toward DAVE.) . . . wants. (They kiss good-bye.) Matthew . . . (He shouts toward the kitchen area.) . . . I want you on the bus on time today. 'Bye, Amanda, Chip.

AMANDA (offstage). 'Bye, Daddy. (JONATHAN exits shaking his head. KATHERINE moves downstage to the sofa and sits.)

KATHERINE. Well, David, to say the least this is quite a surprise. How in the world did you ever find us — it's been so long?

DAVE. Oh, it wasn't so hard. Johnny's made such a name for himself in the world of high finance. I stumbled on his name in

the *Wall Street Journal* and that's when I found out you were somewhere around here. After that, I just let my fingers do the walking . . . (He makes a hitchhiking motion with his thumb.) . . . if you know what I mean.

KATHERINE. What in the world were you doing reading the *Wall Street Journal*? The David I knew usually confined his reading to the *Daily Racing Form*.

DAVE. People change, Kate.

KATHERINE. Not that much, David.

DAVE. Cut the David stuff. That sounds too much like Johnny. He likes that formality and high-brow stuff. I don't. The name's Dave.

AMANDA (offstage). Mother! Mother! I can't find my navy blue blazer. (She comes to the head of the stairs.) I positively must have it for today. Do you know where it's at?

KATHERINE. Oh, excuse me, David. I mean Dave. I'll be right back. (KATHERINE exits upstairs. DAVE gets up and looks the place over. He strolls over to the fireplace and picks up a vase from the mantle. He examines it as if checking for its authenticity.)

(MATTHEW returns unseen with a cup and saucer in his hand. He watches DAVE.)

MATTHEW. I wouldn't touch that if I were you. It's an original if that's what you're trying to figure out. If you drop that one, you'll be out about a thousand dollars.

DAVE. Wrong. I won't be out a cent . . . (He pulls his pants pockets inside out.) . . . because I haven't got a cent.

MATTHEW. Wanna bet? If there's anything my dad knows, it's how to get money from a turnip.

DAVE. Yeah, I seem to remember him having that skill. (He

tosses the vase lightly in the air.) So this is an original?

MATTHEW. You bet. (Sarcastically.) Mr. Jonathan Jay Eagerton is an original and has nothing but originals, including Jonathan Jay Eagerton, Jr., otherwise known as Chip, the drip; Amanda Lucille Eagerton, the queen of the socialities; and me, Matthew James Eagerton, the only.

DAVE. You forget — I'm the uncle. I know who everybody is.

MATTHEW (flopping down on the sofa). You may know who they are, but you'll never know *what* they are.

DAVE. Good. Just what I need . . . (He still holds the vase.) . . . a wise-guy kid who speaks in riddles.

MATTHEW (good-naturedly). Oh, yeah. Well, here's a simple one for you. What's got two legs and is black and blue all over? (DAVE gestures by shrugging his shoulders.) You — after Dad beats all over your body when you drop that.

DAVE (smiling). Got it. (He gingerly replaces the vase on the mantle. Door chimes sound. MATTHEW moves toward the door.)

(AMANDA comes bolting in down the stairs.)

AMANDA. Don't you *dare* touch that door, you creep, Matthew. (In a very haughty voice.) It's bound to be the girls to pick me up. (She moves toward the door.)

DAVE (to MATTHEW). Pleasant sort, isn't she?

MATTHEW. Oh, that's her good mood.

AMANDA (overhearing Matthew's remark). Hey, Matthew, why don't you just shove . . .

DAVE (interrupting AMANDA). Uh, uh, uh, Amanda. Let's not get too carried away. (The door chimes sound again.)

AMANDA (moving toward DAVE, nastily). Look, Uncle Dave, don't start telling me what to do. I live here — you don't.

And, judging from the look on Dad's face when you arrived, you won't be visiting for long either. (She moves toward the door.)

DAVE (looking at MATTHEW). Is that her real personality or is she just trying to win me over with first impressions?

(AMANDA opens the door and JEANINE enters. She carries some school books with both hands, the books resting against her chest. She gives every appearance of being soft-spoken and polite. MATTHEW notices JEANINE and realizes that it is getting late. He bolts up the stairs without acknowledging her.)

AMANDA (calling after MATTHEW). Don't be afraid of her, Matthew . . . (Mockingly.) . . . she's only your little girlfriend from down the street. (JEANINE looks somewhat embarrassed. DAVE looks confused.)

(KATHERINE enters down the stairs.)

KATHERINE (looking at JEANINE). Good morning, dear. Was that you at the door?

JEANINE. I just stopped by to see if Matthew was going to take the bus today. I thought I might walk to the stop with him. (AMANDA mockingly exits R.)

KATHERINE. Well, let me get him, dear. (She exits R, calling MATTHEW.)

DAVE. Kate, he went up . . . (He realizes that KATHERINE hasn't heard him.) Oh, well. (DAVE moves toward JEANINE who is standing at C.) I don't think I caught your name? (He extends his hand gently.)

JEANINE. Jeanine.

DAVE. Right. I'm Uncle Dave.

JEANINE (questioningly). *Uncle Dave?*

DAVE. Yeah, Matthew's uncle. I hope to visit for awhile. You know – get to know my family.

JEANINE. *Your* family. (She is curious.) Don't you have one of your own?

DAVE. No, not me. Marriage isn't my number. I played that tune once before.

JEANINE. Played that tune? Are you a musician or something?

DAVE (somewhat surprised). Me? Uh . . . not any more. Why?

JEANINE. I just thought for a moment that the music thing might run in the family.

DAVE. What music thing?

JEANINE. Matthew's piano.

(CHIP enters from the kitchen at R.)

DAVE. You mean Matthew plays the piano?

JEANINE. He sure does. Mr. Rosati, the orchestra teacher, says that he's probably one of the finest young talents in the country.

DAVE. You must be kidding.

CHIP. No, she's not kidding. He really can play the piano and that's about the only thing he can do. I think my mother is looking for you. She's in the kitchen. Down the hall. (He points toward the kitchen area. DAVE exits, confused. CHIP plops down on a chair.) So, what's up, squirt? Come to give it another try with Matthew?

JEANINE. No, Chip, not really. It's just that someone ought to be friends with him. No one around here is.

CHIP. You and that Jeremiah are just wasting your time.