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*Dramatic Publishing*

# BATHERS

A One-act Play  
by  
JAMES I. SCHEMPP



**Dramatic Publishing**  
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(BATHERS)

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# BATHERS

A Drama in One Act  
For Three Women

## CHARACTERS

MONICA . . . . . 19 years old, athletic, stocky build, red hair.  
She is from the South.

CHERYL . . . 20 years old, slender, lithe body, long black hair.  
She is from California.

CLAIR . . . . . 19 years old, compact body, dark brown hair.  
She is from the Midwest.

TIME: The present.

SETTING: The locker room of a swimming facility on the  
day of a major competition.

## BATHERS

SCENE: *The locker room of a swimming pool on the day of a major competition.*

AT RISE: *CLAIR is standing center, facing upstage, doing calisthenics; she swings her body at the waist in a half circle so that she first faces around to the right then to the left. She lifts her hands over her head on each turn and her hair, which is hanging loose, flows with the exertion. Immediately downstage of CLAIR, MONICA is lying on a bench, with her head to the left. She is using a gym bag as a pillow and her hair is covered with a towel. Her eyes are closed. Her left hand is thrown over her head and her right hand grasps the towel lightly to hold it in place. CHERYL is seated on the floor, to the left of MONICA, with her right leg extending toward center stage and her left knee drawn up. She is braiding her hair and looking off to the left as the scene opens. (In general, the composition of the three very closely resembles the painting "Bathers" that Picasso did at Biarritz in 1918.) An announcement is heard coming over the Public Address System.*

P.A. VOICE. Your attention, please. This is the second call for the women's hundred meter free-style. All swimmers are asked to report to the timer's table for the women's one-hundred meter free-style. This is the second call.

MONICA (to CHERYL, without opening her eyes). So, how soon do y'all reckon we have to get goin'?

CHERYL. That's only the second call.

MONICA. How much time before we gotta actually report for our heat?

CLAIR. Last call will probably be in about ten minutes. We should probably get there before that.

CHERYL. No sweat. They won't disqualify you for being two minutes late to last call, for crying out loud! *(A beat as CLAIR finishes her exercise and changes to stretching her legs. CHERYL finishes her hair and watches her. MONICA sits up and throws her towel over her shoulders. A pause.)*

MONICA. I just hate this waitin' before the last call! *(Pause.)* Don't you all think the worst part of a swim meet is the waitin'? *(Pause.)* My stomach gets all tied up in knots, I start gettin' short of breath. I just hate it!

CHERYL. You gotta relax, Monica. You gotta learn to center your being, y'know?

MONICA. Maybe I oughta do something else to distract myself. *(Looks in her bag.)* Oh, shoot! You got any body oil I could borrow, Cheryl? I ran outta mine. I was gonna get some before I came to the pool, but it just totally slipped my mind.

CHERYL *(reaching into her bag)*. Sure. Here. Johnson and Johnson all right?

MONICA. Uh-huh. *(A pause as MONICA begins to apply oil liberally over her body, rubbing it in well as she speaks.)* Johnson and Johnson is what my daddy used to buy for me back when I was first startin' to compete. My first meet—it was in Paducah...

CHERYL *(interrupting)*. Where?

MONICA. Paducah! That's in Kentucky, y'know?

CHERYL. No, I didn't know.

MONICA. Well, it is. Anyway, my daddy got Johnson and Johnson baby oil for me to use in my first meet. I won a

gold that day. I always used Johnson and Johnson after that. It was my good luck charm. Then I forgot about good ol' Johnson and Johnson. *(Pause.)* Hey! Maybe this is gonna change my luck again! What d'ya think, Cheryl?

CHERYL. Why are you babbling on? Are you nervous?

MONICA. Lordy, yes! Aren't you?

CHERYL. Relax, kid. Save your energy for the meet.

MONICA. How in the world can you possibly relax when the pressure is buildin' up around you all the time? How can you do that? It's an amazement to me that anyone can relax when there's so much ridin' on what happens out there today.

CHERYL. You gotta center yourself.

CLAIR. What exactly does that mean, Cheryl? I've never been totally clear on that.

CHERYL. It means, like, "digging down to the center of your being and concentrating on your oneness with the universe."

MONICA *(tries this for a beat, then gives up)*. I just can't concentrate when I'm this nervous. I just know I'm goin' to get out there and make a fool of myself again. *(To CLAIR.)* How 'bout you, Clair? You gettin' "centered"?

CLAIR. I'm trying to "center" on my left leg. I have to get this hamstring stretched out or it's going to hold me back again. *(Continues her stretching exercises as MONICA applies oil to her legs. Another pause which MONICA finally breaks.)*

MONICA. Well, here we are again. The three of us together like it's been for the past what...four years? Three and a half? *(Pause.)* Do y'all know Coach calls us the Three Musketeers of the swimmin' team?

CHERYL. Why's that?

CLAIR. All for one and one for all? Always together!

MONICA. Yeah. We're always together 'cept at the finish line. Then y'all are up there number one and number two, and I'm chuggin' along number fifty-three.

CLAIR (*making light of it*). Oh, it's not that bad, Monica.

MONICA. I don't win anymore, that's for sure! Maybe I'm gettin' too old for this.

CHERYL. I think you talk yourself out of winning, y'know that?

MONICA. I don't talk myself outta nothin'! I truly believe I can't win.

CLAIR. Sure you can! You have the best form on the team.

MONICA. But I just don't have the winner's edge anymore! I don't know why, but I lost it. What am I doin' wrong? How d'you do it, Cheryl?

CHERYL. What's that?

MONICA. You started winnin' your heats. You used to take second, now you're comin' in first. How'd you do that?

CHERYL (*breezy, tossing it off*). Concentration. Positive Mental Attitude! (*MONICA is still applying oil to her body, working it in. She ponders CHERYL's statement a moment then turns to CLAIR.*)

MONICA. How's your knee? Still giving you trouble?

CLAIR. No pain, no gain. I think I can make it.

MONICA. See? There ya go! If I bugged up my knee, I'd be out for a month. Clair's back in a week.

CLAIR. You have to *work* to win. You have to *need* to win.

MONICA. Y'all know how much I need to win! I gotta make a good showin' in this meet or I'm outta the runnin'!

CHERYL. Bummer.

MONICA. Yeah! You said a mouthful. I been workin' for this too long. It just plain kills me not to win.

CLAIR. Me too.



MONICA. And I know it kills my daddy, too. He don't say nothin', but...

CLAIR. Are you kidding? He's there cheering for you every time, no matter what.

MONICA. Oh, I know that's just an act. Every time I miss out on the medals, I know it just eats away at him a little bit more.

CLAIR. You really think so?

MONICA. And at this meet...you know the stakes.

CLAIR. The Olympic team.

MONICA. That's the payoff. That's what my daddy really wants. That's what I really wanna give him.

CHERYL. Well, kid, the only way you're gonna do that is by finishing with a medal. First three places only.

MONICA. And right now, this very minute, I don't think I'm gonna make it! (*CHERYL, trying to avoid the notice of the others, takes a small prescription bottle from her gym bag, removes a pill, picks up a bottle of water that's on the bench and is about to swallow the pill. She doesn't, not wanting the others to see her in this action. She continues the conversation and looks for a chance to take the pill.*)

CHERYL. You need the right mental attitude. If your mind and body are aligned, you can do anything, y'know? That's why I finally started beating you, Clair. Know that?

CLAIR. What's that, Cheryl?

CHERYL. The reason I've started to beat you. The reason I beat you last week in Indianapolis.

MONICA. Lordy! Don't remind me of that meet! I've never been so embarrassed in all my natural life!

CLAIR. Don't worry about it, Monica. Anyone can fall off a starting platform. It wasn't the end of the world.

MONICA. I know, but it was in front of all those people!

CHERYL. Hell, you didn't even hurt yourself.