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*Dramatic Publishing*



# SUCCESS

A One-Act Play

By

**JOHN O'BRIEN**



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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(SUCCESS)

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*“Success is counted sweetest  
By those who ne'er succeed.”*

**Emily Dickinson**

*SUCCESS*

A One-Act Play  
for Three Men, Eight Women

**CHARACTERS**

*AISLE*

ANDY . . . . . trim, handsome, around thirty  
ROSALIE . . . . . Andy's wife, same age  
MA . . . . . Andy's mother, around sixty  
PA . . . . . Andy's father, around sixty-five

*BROTHERLY LOVE*

FRANCIS . . . . . Andy's corpulent brother, thirty-eight  
MA . . . . . now age seventy

*KING OF THE HILL*

GAIL, CHARLENE, PAULA, DEBBIE, JOSEPHINE,  
BERNADETTE . . . . . Andy's young friends  
ANDY . . . . . still trim and handsome, now fifty

**TIME:** The next twenty years

**PLACE:** A kitchen/A study/An empty apartment

*AISLE*

SCENE: A kitchen.

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: The stage is dark. We gradually become aware that someone is doing a softshoe dance. ANDY, the dancer, stops to take a drink from a small bottle he carries with him. ROSALIE enters L, carrying a birthday cake with lighted candles.

ANDY (still in his hat and coat). Hey. (The lights come up full.)

(MA and PA appear at R. ANDY is stunned.)

ROSALIE. Surprise.

MA. Happy birthday, son.

ANDY. Thanks, Ma.

PA. Happy birthday, my boy.

ANDY. Thanks, Pa. (ROSALIE puts the cake on a table.)

ROSALIE. Huff and puff.

ANDY. Sounds like a vaudeville team. (He blows out the candles.)

MA. That's my son.

PA. That's my boy.

ANDY (to ROSALIE). Thanks, angel.

PA. Andy and Rosalie.

MA. His beautiful bride.

PA. I wish she had a kid sister.

ROSALIE. I'm not a bride anymore, Ma.

ANDY. Why?

PA. So we could fix her up with Francis.

MA. Don't pick on Francis.

ANDY. Francis will never get married, Ma.

MA. And why not?

PA. A speech from the birthday boy. Everybody be quiet.

ANDY. Thanks.

PA. That's all?

ANDY. Thanks very much.

PA. A great actor and all he can say is "Thanks very much."

MA. Could you do better?

PA. Sure.

MA. Do it.

PA. Thanks for coming.

ROSALIE. He's too surprised to talk.

ANDY. This is bad for my heart.

MA. You're only thirty years old.

ANDY. Only?

PA. I remember the night he was born.

ROSALIE. He's too old to play Romeo.

ANDY. You'll *never* be too old to play Juliet.

ROSALIE. Don't bet on it.

PA. That's my boy.

MA. He always had the words.

PA. Both our boys have the words.

ANDY. I speak them. Francis writes them.

MA. Don't pick on Francis.

ANDY. Nobody's picking on anybody.

ROSALIE. Have some cake.

ANDY. Thanks. (ALL eat in silence.)

PA. What's the matter, did you forget your lines?

ANDY. No, Pa. I forgot my parents.

MA. Now you remember.

ANDY. Now I remember.

ROSALIE. They came all the way by bus.

ANDY. You must have been riding all day.

MA. Half a day.

PA. Pittsburgh is not on the moon.

ANDY. Some people think it's not on the earth.

MA. It's home.

ROSALIE. It used to be our home. (She kisses ANDY.) I never  
kissed a thirty-year-old man before.

ANDY. I'll take your word for it.

PA. We're both lucky. We got good wives.

ANDY. Not lucky, Pa, smart.

MA. How's your play?

ANDY. Looks like rain.

PA. We got in too late to see it tonight.

MA. Is that the name of it?

PA. Can we get tickets for tomorrow?

ANDY. No, Ma, that's not the name of it.

ROSALIE. What's the matter?

ANDY. I was trying to change the subject.

PA. Is it that bad?

ROSALIE. It's good.

ANDY. It was.

PA. We can't see it tomorrow?



ANDY. There's no tomorrow.

MA. There's always a tomorrow.

ANDY. Not in show business.

ROSALIE. What happened?

ANDY. Money.

ROSALIE. You were supposed to run another two weeks.

ANDY. We were too weak for two weeks.

ROSALIE. I'm sorry.

ANDY. Breaks of the game.

PA. Do they pay you for the two weeks?

ANDY. Pay?

PA. Money.

ANDY. No.

MA. What's the matter with your union?

ROSALIE. This play was non-union.

PA. You a scab?

ANDY. No, Pa, it's not like that. I didn't put anyone out of work. Sometimes I do non-union plays, that's all.

PA. What does the union say?

ROSALIE. They don't know.

ANDY. When I work non-union, I use a different name.

MA. What's wrong with your name?

ANDY. Nothing's wrong with my name.

MA. It's a good name.

ROSALIE. All names are good names, Ma.

PA. What's the name?

ANDY. Matthew.

PA. Matthew what?

ANDY. Rockwood.

MA. Rockwood?

PA. What kind of name is that?

ANDY. No kind, Pa.

PA. What kind is no kind?

ANDY. I made it up.

PA. He's a writer.

MA. How much did they pay you?

ANDY. Who?

ROSALIE. She means for the play.

ANDY. Not much.

MA. How much is not much?

ANDY. It looks like rain.

ROSALIE. He was doing this play for nothing.

MA. Nothing?

PA. Who works for nothing?

MA. Nothing for nothing.

PA. After ten years, you work for nothing?

ANDY. Is this a party or an investigation?

ROSALIE. He was doing it for experience.

MA. Ten years isn't enough experience?

ANDY. There's never enough experience.

PA. What was the play?

ANDY. It was a short play.

ROSALIE. By Eugene O'Neill.

ANDY. It was called *Ile*.

MA. Is it about marriage?

ANDY. How did you know?

ROSALIE. She's thinking of the aisle of a church.

ANDY. No, Ma. This *Ile* is the way sailors say oil.

PA. I never heard a sailor say that.

ANDY. They do in the play.

PA. That's the trouble with plays.

ANDY. What is?

PA. They're not real.

MA. Is it a serious play?

ANDY. Very serious.

MA. That's good.

ROSALIE. Why?

MA. Andy is my serious son.

ROSALIE. He can be funny.

MA. Francis is the comedian in the family.

ROSALIE. Andy can be a riot.

ANDY. Anybody want to start one?

MA. I know my own sons.

PA. What's it about?

ANDY. What?

PA. *Ile.*

ANDY. It's about a sea captain in the days of the whalers. He's determined to get whale oil. His wife is on board with him. She begs him to turn the ship around and go home.

PA. Why should he? It's his job.

ROSALIE. Because the ship is blocked by ice and can't go forward.

MA. So what happens?

ANDY. When he sees how important it is to his wife . . .

ROSALIE. Because he loves her . . .

ANDY. He agrees to go back. But then the ice breaks.

ROSALIE. And he breaks his promise to his wife.

ANDY. And his wife breaks down.

PA. I take back what I said.

ANDY. What did you say?

PA. That it wasn't real.

MA. Did you see the play?

ROSALIE. The first weekend. After that, I had to work.

PA. How's the restaurant?

ROSALIE. Busy.

MA. Are you on your feet all day?

ROSALIE. I'm used to it.

PA (to ANDY). What are you going to do?

ANDY. When?

PA. Tomorrow.

ANDY. Keep waiting.

PA. For the ice to break?

MA. For another play that doesn't pay? While your wife works in a restaurant?

ROSALIE. Ma, don't.

ANDY. That's our business, Ma.

PA. My son, you are thirty years old.

ANDY. I can count.

MA. Do you know how old your father is?

ANDY. Sure.

PA. How old?

ANDY. Sixty-three?

MA. Sixty-five.

ANDY. What's the difference?

PA. You have your business. I have mine.

ANDY. That's right.

PA. And I want to quit.

ANDY. You?

PA. I am getting old.

ANDY. Quit?

ROSALIE. Your father wants to retire.

ANDY. How do you know?

MA. We told her.

ANDY. What's going on here? This isn't a party, it's a conspiracy.

PA. Andy, we came to ask you to come home.

ANDY. I am home.

MA. Home to Pittsburgh.

ANDY. Pittsburgh's not my home. Did you ask them to say this?

ROSALIE. Yes.

MA. It's been ten years, my son.

ANDY (to ROSALIE). Thanks.

PA. Ten years.

ANDY. I can count.

ROSALIE. Can you?

ANDY. All I need is time.

ROSALIE. Time is life.

ANDY. I can make it.

ROSALIE. Andy, I want babies.

ANDY. I know that. Give me one more year.

PA. You can have the business tonight.

ANDY. I'm no good in a gas station.

MA. A house, my son, a garden . . . not this . . . place.

ANDY. A place doesn't matter to me, Ma. All that matters is my work.

ROSALIE. All?

ANDY (to ROSALIE). We could have talked alone. (To MA and PA.) You didn't have to gang up on me. (To ROSALIE.) You used to believe in me.

ROSALIE. I still believe in you, Andy. I just stopped believing in what you're chasing. If we had a family and each other, that would be enough.