

MY BEST TRIFLE DISH

A one-act comedy

By

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Cast

(4 males & 4 females)

EMMA.....wife/mother
MUM.....mother of Martin
MARTIN.....husband/father
JANET.....neighbour
CATHY.....daughter
MATT.....son
MARK.....son
TREVOR.....Cathy's boy friend

This plays allows the versatility of any age group to create it's performing cast. This can be done by –

A similar age group of people. Ideal for late teenagers to early twenty year old, of which first performed the play. In that case, some played their age group and others aged themselves up. For example, a twenty five year old female played the part of mum, (grandmother of the late teenagers). Likewise, a more senior cast would allow some cast members to age themselves down, even considerably, which would give great additional humour!

Alternatively, a normal realistic spread of performer ages allowing the siblings to being actual late teenagers. The siblings could also age well into their late twenties to early thirties, allowing the remaining cast to be up-aged to accommodate the age movement.

Whatever combination you choose, it's a play which can easily be cast and have a lot of fun with!

Synopsis

Set in the dining area of a farmhouse, it gives the situation of a husband and three siblings taking for granted comforts of the wife and mother in the home. For the first time in married life, husband Martin, after a days work on the farm, finds his wife Emma leaving for an evening out with some of her friends without him. After Emma's departure, the three siblings also arrive from their occupations hungry and eager to depart for their usual Friday nights revelry in a local town. This creates an evening of mayhem, as Martin decides to join his neighbour and friend whose wife has also gone out with Emma. Leaving the three siblings to fend for themselves only to discover there's no food prepared or clothes washed, ironed or mended. Taking hold of the situation, the three siblings decide it can't be all that difficult, or is it? Emma returns home after a non-eventful evening with her friends. Martin eventually arrives home, very drunk and worse for wear. As for the siblings, not all goes to plan and for Trevor it brings an unexpected surprise when Emma decides to make a trifle!

The set

A farmhouse dining area of the kitchen. This, at one time, would have been two rooms and from the removal of a wall, it has created one large room giving two separate distinct areas. That meaning no kitchen appliances or utilities are required. Just a few properties to allow the illusion of the kitchens existence going off stage.

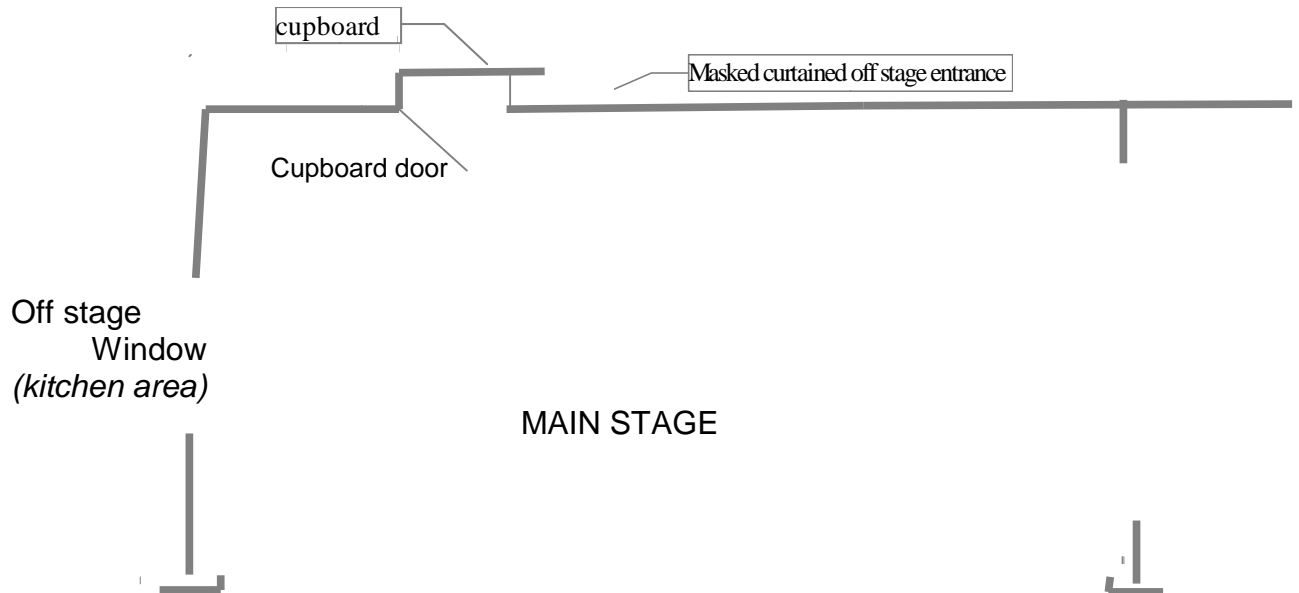
The set can be achieved in two ways:-

(Option one) Use a free standing operational window module and a freestanding full height operational cupboard. A black or coloured stage background with side flats for entrances and exiting.

(Option two) A more conventional but simple set as diagrammed. With an operational window and full height cupboard. This can also be achieved by a hinged folding set, by creating nooks, crannies' and recesses for stability. The first

performance used this method and allowed the set to be erected and dismantled in less than ten minutes. Making this set more interesting for festivals and competitions.

Basic set plan



The stage needs to be dressed with a table and dining chairs, two fireside or arm chairs, some general furniture and decoration. A magazine rack is set down stage next to a chosen arm chair where the smoke effect will be set to come from, (*see “special effects” section for options to achieve this*). Some simple items will need to be placed in the cupboard for effect. The cupboard will also need to be deep enough for a male character to stand inside and accessed from the back. Remember to set the stage so when the cupboard door is full open, no furnishings or obstacles interfere with the audience vision of it’s contents! All entrances and exits are done via the kitchen area.

Suggested music to open and close the scenes:- Home sweet home! (*There’s no place like home!*)

Running time - approximately 45 minutes

Time: The present day

Character descriptions and costume suggestions

The stated acted ages are only for guidance in the acting performance.

EMMA: Needs to be acted as a late forty to early fifty year old person. Wife of Martin and mother of Matt, Mark, and Cathy. She can speak with a local accent. Scene one, she needs to be costumed in a smart dress with accessories. She has make-up and tidy hair. In scene two, she wears a dressing gown and slippers. No make-up

and her hair can be a little untidy. Scene four she is dressed in typical clothing for a everyday working farmer's wife.

MARTIN: Needs to be acted as a forty to early fifty year old person. Farmer and husband of Emma, father of Matt, Mark, and Cathy. He can speak with a strong local accent, but needs to be understood and clear for the audience. Scene one, he dresses in dirty farmer clothing or overalls. Scene two, he has removed the overalls and maybe wearing a light weight casual coat over his working clothes. Scene four, vest and under pants, (*suitable for stage*), and reasonably clean wellington boots.

MUM: Needs to be acted quite elderly. Mother of Martin. Shoes or slippers with slightly wrinkled stockings or tights. A dress or skirt and top with jumper or cardigan. She could speak with a broad accent but needs an elderly tone. She walks quite stiffly and laboured.

JANET: Needs to be acted a lower age than Emma. She can be quite abrupt and harsh in her speech and body language. Smartly dressed, with matching accessories.

CATHY: Acted as teenager or early twenties in age. Scene one, requires dress to be quite smart. Scene two, needs to be clothing of which is reasonably snug fitting, with a crumpled flowing loose top over which can be discarded quickly in readiness for scene three. Scene three, the loose flowing top has been removed allowing the snug fitting clothing to create a silhouette that she makes. This gives the illusion of being semi or near undressed. Scene four, she wears a dressing gown and slippers.

MATT: Acted as late teenager or early twenties in age. Scene one, requires dress to be good casual, even a suit. Scene two, a different set of casual clothing, with a slight crumpled look. Scene four, clothing and general look of casual weekend wear.

MARK: Acted as late teenager or early twenties in age. Scene one, dresses in smart casual, could be more designer. Scene two, smart casual can show signs of being non-ironed. Scene four, he could look ruffled and wearing costuming to fit just getting out of bed.

TREVOR: Acted as late teenager or early twenties. Scene two for quick removal, he wears smart loose casual which could include a jacket, hoodie, or loose fitting top. Scene three, remove jacket, hoodie or loose top and bottoms to look semi naked and in preparation for scene four. Scene four, a flesh coloured G string, posing pouch or speedo type swimming trunks, whichever the actor feels most comfortable wearing.

Synopsis of scenes

Scene one.....6.00 pm Friday evening
 Scene two.....2.00 am Saturday morning
 Scene three..... early Saturday morning
 Scene four..... a few minutes later

Scene one**6.00 pm Friday evening**

The scene opens in bright light. Emma is dressed ready for an evening out. She is sitting at the table attending to her make-up and/or doing her hair. Mum is sitting in the armchair not next to the magazine rack; reading, knitting or sewing.

EMMA: I'll walk you home across the yard in a minute, mum?

MUM: There's no rush, Emma. Father will be asleep snoring the place down as likely as not. Always the same after he's eaten.

EMMA: *(stops what she doing and looks at mum)* You've already eaten?

MUM: You know I have food on the table at five o'clock sharp. Always have done and always will.

EMMA: *(returning to her preparations)* Martin and the kids are fendng for their selves tonight, I'm eating out for a change.

MUM: *(stirring)* Oh! What does Martin make of that?

EMMA: *(smirking)* He doesn't know yet!

A door is heard closing off stage followed by sound of washing hands in a bowl of water during the following dialogue.

MARTIN: *(off stage)* That cow is still not too good. Will 'ave to get the Vet out in the morning if 'er's no better.

EMMA: Have you given her anything?

MARTIN: Injection of that stuff the Vet leaves us.

EMMA: *(looking up; puzzled)* Stuff?

MARTIN: Long name, can't pronounce it. I call it stuff!

EMMA: *(returning to her preparations)* Thought that was some sort of vitamin jollop?

MARTIN: *(coming just on stage from the kitchen wiping his hands in a towel)* Well, it won't do no 'arm.

MUM: Got any left for your father, Martin. He needs a dose of something; the man has lost his zing!

EMMA: *(looking up. Intrigued)* Zing?

MUM: (*chuckles*) Takes him all night to do what he used to do all night!

MARTIN: (*alarmed*) Don't think cow stuffs any good for that, mother! Besides, it's not for 'uman consumption.

MUM: That makes no difference. I gave your father dried dog food for three months thinking it was deluxe breakfast muesli. Didn't do him no harm.

EMMA: (*alarmed*) How did that happen?

MUM: I thought that man in the market was selling breakfast cereal.

EMMA: (*astonished*) He sells loose pet food and you buy it by weight! It's a pet stall, mother !!!!

MUM: (*a firming*) I know that now! (*Plainly*). Father complained they had changed the recipe and I told the man about it. That's when I found out it were dog food.

EMMA: I worry about you sometimes, mother.

MUM: Well, don't. And if anything, it perked father up a bit. (*Chuckles*). Gave him quite a spring in his step and healthy shiny hair!

MARTIN: Does father know about it?

MUM: (*shamefully*) Goodness me, no. (*Firmly*). And I'd appreciate you not telling him too.

MARTIN: (*looking at Emma; puzzled*) What are you all dolled up for? Didn't know us be going out tonight.

EMMA: You're not. I am.

MARTIN: (*coming to the table*) Now what game be you playing?

EMMA: (*firmly*) I'm meeting up with Janet Dunstable and Ellie Slocombe. (*Proudly*). We're having a girls night out.

MARTIN: Why?

EMMA: We'd like to have a casual night of intelligent conversation over a glass of wine and a bite to eat.

MARTIN: (*offish*) And why am I not joining you? (*Goes into the kitchen taking the towel.*)

EMMA: Because on the odd occasions when you farming husbands do take us wives out, the evening

conversation is dominated with cows, pigs, sheep, hay, straw and tractors. (*Milder*). We ladies want to talk about intelligent things, feminine things and items of interest. (*Firmly*). And we are, tonight!

MARTIN: (*enters back on stage, without towel; startled*) Tonight! But that's today!

EMMA: (*rolling her eyes*) Yes, Martin. Today!

MARTIN: (*puzzled*) What's brought this on then?

EMMA: (*brightly*) Nothing. We just thought it would make a change.

MARTIN: (*sits in a arm chair and begins to look through a magazine*) Change my eye. I thought you women gossiped your female things at the woman's meetings once a month. Old George Bennett said 'e burst in on one of them meetings un-announced one day. Reckons it was like a lot of broody 'ens fighting over which nest to lay their eggs in. Says as soon as 'e was noticed, a deadly silence went 'round with sour looks of disgust. Reckons it was like stumbling into a top secret Government meeting.

MUM: (*looking up and pausing from her occupying interest; informatively*) Those meetings are not what they used to be, that's why I don't go anymore. In the old days we had cookery tips, flower arranging, crafts and educational topics presented to us. These days of modern living, it's all hygiene, how to diet, keep fit and other silly ideas. The last time I went, the guest speaker was a Pilates guru. She had us doing all sorts of weird things. Poor old Emily Johnson, she was eighty four at the time had to be taken to hospital with a broken hip after standing on one leg and losing her balance.

(*Resuming back to her interest; dismissing*). No, I don't miss those meetings one bit.

MARTIN: Not even all the gossip?

EMMA: (*abruptly to Martin*) We women don't gossip, Martin. (*To Mum.*) And although the meetings are more modern, they are informative and educational.

MARTIN: (*realizing and stops looking at the magazine*) Ah ha! That's what all this is about. You 'ad a woman's meeting only this week and probably some upstart putting daft ideas into your 'eads again.

EMMA: (*offish and firm*) Don't be so silly. (*Alert and questioning*). What ideas?

MARTIN: (*brightly*) What about that time that bloke came back from Africa and spoke at your meeting about it? You kept on about 'ow they manage on so little clean water for days afterwards.

EMMA: They do!

MARTIN: (*un-amused*) Then suddenly you decided for the next two weeks we each 'ad to survive on 'alf a bucket of water a day. It was middle of March and it felt like worst drought for centuries.

EMMA: (*turning towards Martin*) Your point being?

MARTIN: (*jokily*) Unless there's a great big pipe going from 'ere to there. Us going without didn't do they the slightest bit of good.

MUM: Mrs Tucker's son went to Africa and the water gave him the squits.

Martin looks at Mum in puzzlement.

EMMA: (*firmly puzzled*) He had a problem with his eye.

MUM: (*remembering*) Oh, that's right, it was a squint. Caused by a African mosquito which bred in the water they shouldn't drink.

EMMA: (*turning back and continues her preparations*) And it did no harm to ration our water usage, it was a good educational exercise for us all. Everyone takes too much for granted these days.

MARTIN: (*jovial*) Exercise. Now that was another caper. 'Ow about that time when you 'ad some keep fit instructor jolly at a meeting. You left 'ere wearing a Tee shirt and a thing so tight around your backside it shone brighter than the 'arvest moon. (*Laughingly*). I thought to myself, either whole lot would explode or the tension would make you stand up twenty times faster than when you bent over!

MUM: I couldn't agree more, Martin. (*Slight pause, to Emma*). Your behind did look like a sack of squirrels fighting for space.

EMMA: (*to Mum angrily*) My backside did not look like a sack of fighting squirrels!

MUM: But, Emma. There was lumps and bumps protruding and disappearing on every move you made.

EMMA: (*bitterly*) It was all your imagination. (*Turning to Martin; annoyed*). And for your information, those meetings opens our eyes to beyond the farmyard, Martin.

MARTIN: (*firmly*) Which brings us right back to this month's caper! (*Humoured*). Go on, enlighten me. I'm all ears. (*Begin to look through the magazine again*).

EMMA: (*telling*) In this time of equality and such like, we women are still expected to wait hand, foot and finger on you men. And not forgetting the grown up off-spring which finds it more comfy living at home rather than starting their own lives of independence. (*Informingly*.) Mrs Osmond, this months guest speaker, said, "that a study has shown this is very much the case in rural and farming communities." She went on to say, "country women should have time to themselves without their husbands". (*Firmly*.) So Janet, Ellie, and myself are doing just that tonight. (*Turning to Martin*). And as we're having pub grub, you and our offspring can cater for yourselves for once! (*Turns back to her preparations*).

MARTIN: (*not pleased, lowering the magazine*) Now look here a minute. They can't cook and I struggle to boil an egg.

EMMA: (*brightly*) So it will give you good practice to learn then, won't it? (*Getting up gathering her products etcetera*).

MARTIN: (*to Mum*) Mother! What's your plans for tonight?

MUM: (*dismissing*) Don't look at me. I've already cooked once today, I'm not cooking again. You're on your own with this one.

Off stage a door is heard opening, Janet Dunstable calls out.

JANET: Cooe. Only me.

MARTIN: That's all we need right now. A visit from misery guts!

EMMA: (*scolding*) Sssh. She's called to pick me up. (*Calling out*). Come in, Janet. I'm almost ready.

JANET: (*enters on stage*) John is in a right old mood with me going out tonight.

EMMA: Martin isn't exactly thrilled by the idea either.

MARTIN: It's not natural for a woman to leave 'er 'usband to fend for 'imself.

JANET: That's just what John said! (*Bitterly*). Men! (*Stern and forthright; wiggling and pointing her finger at Martin*). You're all the same, as long as it fits within your preferences it's all tickety boo. As soon as we ladies want to do something ourselves, all of a sudden it's not natural.

MARTIN: It's not! A woman should be by 'er 'usbands side. Not gallivanting about when the mood takes 'er. This 'ere jumped up jolly at the women's meeting 'as really put a right old caper in your brains. Give me five minutes with 'er, and I'll soon bring 'er back to earth and singing a different tune.

MUM: I totally agree with, Martin. I maybe be old fashioned, but a woman should be at her husbands side and not apart as given by these silly modern ideas.

JANET: Those days have gone Mrs Chapman. (*Positive and assured*). I told John, things are going to change, and change for the better. And it's starting from tonight with a relaxing social evening out with some of my best friends. So we are going to enjoy ourselves and not get bored to tears with farming chat from you men.

EMMA: (*brightly*) Hear that, Martin? We're going out to enjoy ourselves. (*Going to Gran, helping her out of the chair*). Come on Mum, I'll see you across the yard.

MUM: Thank you. These chairs are not good for ageing bones.

EMMA: But they're very comfy.

Mum moves towards the kitchen area.

MUM: And too low for me. (*Firmly to Janet*). I've never been bored to tears when my husband has taken me out, Janet. (*Slight pause with reflection*). Then, it's a rare occasion when he has taken me out and I always made the most of the occasion! (*Exiting.*)

MARTIN: Whims and fancies. That's all it is. Whims and fancies.

JANET: (*abrupt*) Get used to it, Martin. This will be a regular occurrence.

EMMA: Right then. (*Moving into the off stage kitchen area*). I'm ready, Janet. Let's go. (*Exiting.*)

Janet follows Emma off stage.

MARTIN: (*standing*) Now just you 'ang on a minute. I 'aven't finished my say in all this.

EMMA: (*from off stage*) It'll keep till after I return home. Bon appetite!

MARTIN: (*amazed*) Bon appetite! Bon appetite!! Don't start them fancy foreign words with me woman. (*Harshly*) Emma, get your body back 'ere this minute.