



COINCIDENCES WILL HAPPEN

By Colin Barrow

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**A comedy play
by
Colin Barrow**

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THE SET

The sitting room in Emma's house. The play can easily be stage without a box or built set and stage on a bare stage. If you doing the bare stage option, you can use a chosen stage entrance as the room entrance. The majority of the furnishings look tired and could do with some updating. However, there can be a few newer items that pop out in stark contrast, Likewise, the decor (*if using a built set*) should also look in need of redecorating. A table would be beneficial as would a coffee table. Seating for five people would be required, this can be any chairs of your choice and available space. The remainder furnishings are to your own discretion and available stage space

SYNOPSIS

The opening of this comedy play (*April*) begins with Emma and her parents, Joyce and Peter arriving back from the wake after John's funeral, Emma's late husband. They are joined by her brother Gary and two best friends Carol and Sue. Joyce is very disapproving of the funeral and its service and makes no bones about speaking her thoughts about it. Emma soon realises that she'd have sooner returned back to the house alone. It's not long before Patrick, (*Vicar*) appears. Joyce and the Vicar go into battle over the funeral service. The story soon develops over the duration of months with intrigue, by suggestion, of John's suspected infidelity and a new and budding romance between Emma and Patrick. Emma discovers that she has two sets of jewellery missing, both comprising of a necklace and earrings. Having searched the house from top to bottom, it's a mystery as to what has happened to them. In the meantime, Gary who already has eleven children by three women has moved onto pastures new, but who is this mystery lady? The final scene, the following February, is supposed to celebrate Emma's birthday, but before the party starts, the twists and revelations bring it to an abrupt argumentative end!

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Running time:- One hour fifty minutes - two hours (*Excluding the interval*)

Era: The present day

CAST

3 male 4 female

JOYCE..... Emma's mum
PETER.....Emma's dad
EMMA.... Daughter of Joyce and Peter
GARY..... Son of Joyce and Peter
SUE..... A friend of Emma
CAROL..... A friend of Emma
PATRICK..... Vicar

CAST DISCRIPTIONS AND GUIDELINES

Costuming is to your choice and availability. The play begins in April with cast returning from a funeral where colour (all or some) has been requested, except Joyce who insists on black. The play then progresses through to the following February and with this in mind, seasonal clothing will help dictate what type of clothing should be worn. The red and blue necklace and earrings set are worn by Sue and Carol and depending what the costuming is will decided which colour set they wear.

JOYCE: Emma's mother and should be played sixty years plus. She is a curt and hard speaking woman with a manner to match. A great amount of humour comes from this character because of her views, attitude and abruptness.

PETER: Emma's father and should be played sixty years plus. He is a kind, downtrodden man living an insufferable life with Joyce. However, he does have his moments of up-man-ship that delivers some comedy.

EMMA: Daughter of Joyce and Peter and should be played thirty years plus with a compatible age with her parents. Recently widowed and have moments to show emotion. Her normal manner is more like her father of kind, caring and genial.

GARY: Son of Joyce and Peter and should be played thirty years plus with a compatible age with his parents. Quite laid back but like the ladies. Again, more like his father than mother in manner.

SUE: A friend of Emma and should be of similar age to Emma, could work a touch older or younger if needed. Quite a normal everyday person. Will require one of the sets of necklace and earrings which is bold and impressive but not valuable. Padding to reassemble a pregnancy that the baby is due any day

CAROL: A friend of Emma and should be of similar age to Emma, could work a touch older or younger if needed. A little smarter in appearance to Sue and perhaps a little more educated in manner. Will require one of the sets of necklace and earrings which is bold and impressive but not valuable. Padding to reassemble a pregnancy that the baby is due any day

PATRICK: A Vicar and needs to be played by a male and should be of compatible age with Emma. Quite an ordinary man, but has an edge of firmness when needed. His costume should show on a few scenes his profession (*a clergy shirt*) but some scene particularly act two, scene three he can wear normal everyday casual

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

Scene one.....April
Scene two.....May
Scene three.....Early July

ACT TWO

Scene one.....October
Scene two.....January
Scene three.....February eighteenth

COINCIDENCES WILL HAPPEN!

ACT ONE
SCENE ONE
APRIL

The stage is dressed quite simply with serviceable furniture but much has seen better days. This is similar to any décor and possessions. A few newer items could be present in stark contrast. A vase of spring flowers would help indicate the time of year. The stage could be of a traditional box set design with, door, fireplace and a window. Or a blank stage, with furnishings set appropriately with a common stage entrance as the door way. Seating for five people to suit your stage size and availability. A table and coffee table would also be useful. A drinks tray with a few part-filled bottles, one of which is Sherry and a few odd glasses. Other furnishings to your discretion

All have just returned from a funeral and dressed accordingly, but the request has been for people to wear colour or some colour. Joyce insists that at a funeral all should wear black, and does so.

The stage opens in darkness with suitable music that is gentle but not morbid. The lights come up after which a door opening is heard off stage and a murmur of ad-lib voices.

Emma, Joyce and Peter enter. Throughout this scene Emma shows emotion of varying degrees depending on the dialogue and situation

Joyce: *(heading for a comfy chair)* I've been to some funerals in my time, but that has to be one of the strangest. *(Sits)*

Emma: *(firmly)* Oh, Mother. I told you the other day that John had set his wishes down and wanted them carried out as per his instructions.

Peter sits

Joyce: *(quickly responding)* I couldn't care less what his wishes were, he's not here to argue the toss on what should have been amended.

Emma: But he was here to make his funeral plans before he died of cancer. And I had no intention of changing them.

Joyce: I say you should have.

Emma: *(with inner feeling)* This is supposed to be the day I say goodbye to my husband with fond memories. Not memories of your disapprovals.

Joyce: *(looks at Peter)* And I suppose as her father you're going to sit there and say sod all?

- Peter:** It's not for any of us to say what should be or not, especially if it was John's wishes. *(To Emma)* I think you did John proud, Emma.
- Emma:** *(pats Peter on the shoulder)* Thanks, Dad.
- Joyce:** *(to Peter)* I'd have guessed you would take her side. *(Casually looking about)* Wearing colour at a funeral I can just about stomach, but I still remain traditional black on that front. But to be carried-in with the Troggs blaring out 'Wild Thing' at full volume and leaving with Meatloaf rasping out 'Bat out of Hell' is not my idea of funeral music. And what was the thing we all tried to sing and couldn't?
- Emma:** *(moves away)* I can't remember, it's a hymn the vicar chose.
- Joyce:** *(quite forthright)* Better if he chose something we ruddy knew, at least that way we'd have a chance to make some noise. *(With disapproval)* And was it John's idea to not have a hearse and use the crappy old van of his he used for work?
- Emma:** *(turns to face Joyce)* Yes. And before you say anything, the bearers were John's choice too. *(Turns away again)*
- Joyce:** *(up-beat)* But they were tanked up with booze! *(With some disapproval)* If banging out a lump of masonry from the door arch with the coffin wasn't bad enough, when they lowered him into the pit they just let go the ropes! *(More brightly)* That coffin went down faster than a rabbit down a hole! And it was stuck up one end and leaning on its side.
- Peter:** I don't see why you are making such a fuss. You didn't like John, "glad he's gone," you said.
- Emma:** *(turns and moves toward Joyce)* Mother! What a thing to say about my husband!
- Joyce:** *(abrupt)* I'm not making a fuss, just stating a fact. *(More natural)* Anyway, it wouldn't bother me what sort of funeral he had if it wasn't for some of my relations and friends attending. But as they were attending, I felt embarrassed.
- Peter:** Sometimes I'm ashamed to call you my wife!
- Joyce:** *(quite firmly)* You've known all along I didn't like the man. I said to his face that I didn't trust him and that my daughter could have done much better for herself. And now he's dead, I still don't trust him. *(With sarcasm)* Wouldn't be surprised if all manner of things come to light.

Peter: (*quite firmly*) Really, Joyce. You can't say things like that. He made Emma happy and that's what counts.

Emma: Yes, Mum. John made me very happy.

Joyce: (*looks about*) And live hand to mouth in near squalor. He couldn't even manage to give me grandchildren.

Emma: He had a very low count.

Joyce: (*with a slight curtness*) If he stopped wearing those tight jeans in the sun and cooking his genitalia, there might have been a chance. (*A softer reflection*) On the other hand, it might be a blessing in disguise he has left no offspring like himself.

Peter: Gary has given us ample grandchildren.

Joyce: (*responds quickly*) Eleven from three different women!

Emma: Where is Gary? I thought he was coming back here?

Peter: He said that he was staying until all had gone from the wake.

Emma: That's good of him.

Joyce: (*with some distaste*) And was that pub John's choice too?

Emma: Yes. Why?

Joyce: (*not impressed*) Not very good was it? When the food was ready, after everyone grabbed a sandwich or sausage roll there wasn't even a crumb left for a Sparrow!

Emma: It's very difficult to know how many to cater for. John had a lot of friends.

Joyce: (*quickly*) Several of which were women! (*To Peter*) Who was it that one you were happily talking too?

Peter: Which one?

Joyce: The one with her skirt up to her backside and face made up like and extra from a sleazy film set.

Peter: I think that was Julie, or it might have been Rachel. I can't really remember. I think John was the plumber she called when she had a problem.

Joyce: *(with sarcasm)* And I bet he was more than happy to deal with her problem too!

Emma: *(with sharp retaliation)* You are so quick to see the worst in people, Mother. John wasn't like that, and you know it.

Joyce: And who was that other trollop that was all lips and eye's with wispy hair that looked like an Afghan hound that's been in a wind tunnel?

Emma: *(with a little brightness)* Oh, I expect you mean Sarah. She works behind the counter at the plumbing suppliers.

Joyce: *(offish)* Better if she worked behind a brick wall where nobody could see her!

A door is heard off stage

Gary: *(calls out off stage)* We're here.

Emma: *(calling back)* We're in the sitting room.

Sue and Carol enter

Sue: Sorry we're a bit late. Gary said he'd give us a lift if we stayed 'till he had finished.

Emma: That's okay, Sue. Please sit down and I'll put the kettle on and make a cup of tea.

Carol: You sit down, Emma. We'll make the tea.

Emma: That's very kind of you.

Joyce: I'll make the tea. *(Stands)* I can't stand tea made with a bag in each mug or pot made for six and only using two tea bags. *(Moves toward the door)* I hate to think how she made that tea down the pub. Tasted like something left over from the week before. I had to have a Gin and Tonic to get rid of the taste.

Sue and Carol sits

Peter: You had more than one Gin and Tonic!

Joyce: That's because it took more than one to get my spit back to normal. *(Exits)*

Gary: *(off)* I bet you're loving this, eh, Mother? Always loved a good funeral to disapprove at!

Joyce: *(off)* I'd would expect a remark like that from you.

Gary enters

Gary: How are you bearing up, sis?

Emma: *(sits)* I'm okay. And I'd be better still if mother didn't keep opening her mouth and stirring the proverbial.

Peter: You should both know by now that your mother's never happiest unless she's upsetting someone or airing her opinion about the worst.

Gary: But not today!

Emma: It's okay, Gary. The truth of the matter is, John died two weeks ago. That's when I lost him from my life. Today is just a closure of that event. Well - almost closure.

Gary: *(pats Emma on the shoulder)* You know I'm here whenever, sis.

Carol: We all are!

Emma: I know, Carol. You have all been so good to me.

Carol: *(reflecting)* John was a special man. *(Quickly including Emma)* That is to say, both of you are special. Or should that be, were and are? It gets confusing when one is in the past and the other in the present.

Emma: Don't worry. I know what you mean.

Sue: To be honest, I still can't believe we shan't see John again.

Carol: Nor I. *(A little subdued)* Makes you think doesn't it. Any of us can be here today and gone tomorrow.

Emma: I can't pretend we didn't have our differences. But there's a lot to be said for love.

Peter: I couldn't agree more, Emma. Your mother has, and always will be, a doom and gloom merchant with a tongue that can slice steel. But deep down she has love and heart of gold. The problem is, we rarely see it.

Joyce enters with a box containing a bought mass-produced cake

Joyce: Is this cake for now or are you keeping it for some sort of celebration?

- Emma:** *(looks quickly at Joyce and the box)* Oh, it's for now. I thought I ought to have something to offer people.
- Joyce:** I don't know how many you expect it to feed? These things are all box and packaging. It says sufficient for twelve portions, but in truth that's only providing everyone only has one bite!
- Gary:** *(slightly scolding)* Oh, Mother! *(Nods a little toward Emma)* Try and be a bit more sensitive.
- Joyce:** *(as if to exit)* I'll do my best with it. *(Stops, turns)* Course, you know it will taste vile? These things are all sugar and dry as Scorpions arm pit. *(Exits)*
- Gary:** Take no notice, sis.
- Emma:** I don't.
- Sue:** Is any of John's relations coming back here?
- Emma:** Not that I'm aware. He only had distant cousins with him being an only child. And even with those, he had very little to do with.
- Carol:** John was such a placid man, and yet, if you had a meal out, he was a nightmare.
- Emma:** *(quickly alert)* How do you know what he was like when out for a meal?
- Carol:** *(a little taken aback)* Because sometimes we came with you!
- Emma:** *(easing back)* Oh yes. Sorry I forgot.
- Sue:** I wonder what he was like at those weekends away with the SPOT's
- Peter:** *(at a loss)* Spots?
- Emma:** Society for the Protection of Toads.
- Peter:** You know, I'd forgot he was keen on saving toads and all that guff.
- Emma:** I went once and was bored to tears. I said to John, "he can go away on those weekends whenever he wants. He can go out at all hours of the night observing toads and rescuing them from crossing roads and being squished flat. But he can do it himself because I'm staying home!"

Peter: Did any fellow members come to his funeral?

Emma: (*reflecting*) I don't think there was. Well, nobody said that's who they were.

Carol: I expect members are scattered far and wide. (*To Emma*) Did John ever mention any friends in particular from SPOTs?

Emma: Not really. Just a few random names of who he met and chatted to. But as far as I'm aware he never had what you might call, buddy friends within the group.

Carol: There you are then. If he had no buddy friends, none would want to attend today.

Sue: Especially if he caused embarrassing scenes at hotels or where ever they ate on these weekends. I've never known a man complain about food being too cold, or his steak was not pink, or his plate was warm for a cold salad, or the meat hadn't been rested, or I don't why this is on my plate as it has no place being there. And that's was after he'd stated his observations on the wine!

All lightly laugh

Emma: He didn't use to be like that. It only came on since watching cookery competitions on the telly!

Carol: I shall miss John deeply. He had a way of brightening your day when it was dark and dismal.

Gary: He certainly had a way to wrap all you women around his little finger.

Sue: I don't know what you mean?

Gary: Oh, come off it. You know very well what I mean. He had a knack that melted any half decent woman right into the palm of his hand. All he had to do was look at them with his twinkling eyes and that cheeky smile of his and you women went weak at the knees.

Peter: Wish I had that knack. Perhaps then I would have met a female less mouthy and curt than your mother!

Emma: (*taken aback*) Dad! Gary and me would not exist if you and Mum didn't get it together!

Gary: If they didn't get it together, you wouldn't be here to know any different.