

# DIVINITY PLACE

A Comedy

By Greg Jones Ellis

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## ACT ONE

### SCENE 1.

*(As the lights come up, we hear the following song being sung):*

“In the shade of the old apple tree,  
Sat two Irishmen drunk as can be,  
Said Pat to his friend,  
‘There’s a fly on the end  
Of my nose, won’t you chase it for me?’  
Now Mike was a regular guy  
So he picked up the axe that lay by.  
And he laid that fly flat.  
And they buried poor Pat  
In the shade of the old apple tree!”

(Laughter)

*(The lights are now up, revealing the parlor of 1330 Divinity Place. It is a typical row house in Philadelphia, circa August 1942. The singers are revealed to be six women, meeting for their monthly Friday night “club” – an excuse to get together and let their men – if they have them – do the same elsewhere.*

***Caputo**, very pregnant, started the singing in a broad, barrelhouse style. She was joined by her best friend **Jean**, their pal **Nicki**, and Jean’s sister **Marguerite**. They were hesitantly joined at the end, having been nudged into participation, by **Ceil**, the older cousin of Jean and Marguerite and the head of the household here on Divinity Place. **Jinx**, a plump little persimmon, who is engaged to Jean and Marguerite’s brother, has definitely not joined in, although she is very much present.*

*The girls are obviously having a good time, but it is 9:30, and it’s almost time to break up – this is 1942.*

*And Jean is having trouble sitting still.)*

JEAN

*(Laughing)* Oh, God, Caputo, did you and I catch hell from Sister Euphemia for that one!

CAPUTO

How the hell did I know her real name used to be Colleen Dougherty?

MARGUERITE

*(Laughing, but with an edge)* Yeah, and you two got away without a lecture.

JEAN

Poor Marguerite. Hey, Caputo and I got kitchen duty for a month.

MARGUERITE

Serves you right. You shoulda known better than to sing that within earshot of the sisters. At least half of them have the map of Ireland on their pusses.

JINX

Hey, don't make fun of us Irish.

MARGUERITE

We can always make fun of our own. Caputo can kid the dagos, can't she?

CAPUTO

*(Earnestly)* Of course.

JEAN

And, Nicki, what are you again?

NICKI

Thirsty. *(She drains the last of her drink.)*

*(Laughter. During all this, Ceil is picking up glasses, wiping rings on the furniture, etc.)*

JEAN

No, I always forget – I keep thinking you're Polish, but you're not, right?

MARGUERITE

Nope, she's a Polack. Right, Nicki?

NICKI

Latvian, actually.

CAPUTO

Latvian? What's that?

NICKI

Lithuanian, only better.

*(Silence. Nobody really knows what that means)*

MARGUERITE

But Catholic, anyway.

NICKI

I'm not sure.

MARGUERITE

What?

NICKI

Originally, I mean. My grandmother sent me out the home after my mother died.

CEIL

Well, wasn't she Catholic?

NICKI

I don't know. *(Pause.)* Jeez, I am – is that ok?

*(After due consideration, they shrug and move on).*

MARGUERITE

Mr. Kachevski out the home was Polish, though, right?

CAPUTO

God, I forgot all about him! *(To Jinx and Ceil)* He did the fix-it stuff around the grounds. Yeah. *(She starts to laugh again)* I remember him. He didn't speak-a de English so

good. This one (*points to Jean*) sent him downtown to the hardware store for a bucket of elbow grease!

*(General laughter.)*

JEAN

Ah, he was such a nice guy. But, I just couldn't resist.

MARGUERITE

That's your problem – no self-control.

JEAN

God, you sound just like them.

MARGUERITE

Who?

JEAN

The penguins. Gosh, Mr. Kachevski could fix anything, couldn't he?

MARGUERITE

How would you know?

JEAN

I'm engaged to the world's greatest mechanic, aren't I?

CAPUTO

Oh, yeah? How's he handle his tools?

*(Shocked laughter by most – Not Ceil or Jinx).*

JINX

I don't get it.

*(More whoops of laughter)*

JEAN

Oh, God. My poor brother. Sounds like he's not going to get it either.

*(Laughs)*

MARGUERITE

Don't worry, Jinx – we'll explain it all to you both before your wedding.

JINX

*(Warming to the topic)*. I can hardly wait. Ma has the dress pattern all cut out. She pinned me into it last night.

CAPUTO

*(Sotto voce to Nicki)* Pin shortage hits Philly.

JINX

*(Continuing)* We've got the veil from my Grandmother and the shoes. And my Dad is already practicing walking me down the aisle. *(To Jean and Marguerite, with too much sympathy)* I just wish your parents could be there.

JEAN

Well, they'll be watching.

JINX

I thank God every day my mother and father are alive to see me get married. I don't know what I'd do if I lost them. You girls are very impressive. Being able to joke about a place like....

CAPUTO

*(Flaring)* A place like what?

JINX

I don't know how I could face it.

CAPUTO

You'd get along.

JEAN

Look. Our parents died. Nobody else wanted us. We could have been split up; we could have been hired out. Instead, we had three meals a day, a high school education. I had a ball.

NICKI

And most of the nuns were swell.

CAPUTO

Except Euphie.

JEAN

Ah, Euphie could be a good egg. Remember when I took the sled out at night and gashed up my leg? She ran me all the way downtown in the middle of the night to have it stitched up.

MARGUERITE

And called me into her office the next day to tell *me* to look after you better! We weren't even in the same dormitory -- what was I supposed to do, run a bed check at two in the morning?

JEAN

Poor Marguerite.

MARGUERITE

Yeah, poor Marguerite. And now, when I go back to help at the card parties, all the nuns come up and ask me, "How's Jean?" I feel like telling them, "oh, she's just the same. Headed for hell."

CEIL

*(Interrupting)* I'll make the coffee. The boys'll be here soon.

CAPUTO

Ah, come on, Ceil. Have a highball. We'll help you clean up, honest. Here, there's just enough left. *(She picks up a pint bottle of whiskey, which sits next to a bottle of ginger ale, both nearly empty.)*

CEIL

Don't you have another one!

CAPUTO

I only had one. I've been drinking ginger ale all night.

CEIL

Well, you shouldn't have had even one. You don't want to bring a little drunkard into the world.

*(She exits to the kitchen, right.)*

MARGUERITE

*(Reaching for the bottle)* I'll finish it up.

*(Jean and Caputo look at each other meaningfully.)*

CAPUTO

What's Ceil so bent out of shape about?

JEAN

*(With affection.)* She was just born worried.

MARGUERITE

God knows she's had enough to worry about.

JEAN

Will you get off my back?

MARGUERITE

What'd I say?

JEAN

I meant that Ceil's had her share.



MARGUERITE

So did I!

CAPUTO

Whoa! Sisters! Round one over!

JEAN

*(Begins to giggle)* Sorry. I'm just a little keyed up.

NICKI

Uh-oh. What's up?

*(Jean giggles even more.)*

CAPUTO

Jeez. This has gotta be big.

*(Jean's giggles prevent her from talking.)*

NICKI

Let me guess. You joined the WACs.

CAPUTO

Are you kidding? Look at her. She's too pretty for the WACs.

JINX

Hey, my cousin Bernadette's going into the WACs

CAPUTO

Exactly.

NICKI

Well, you can't be going into the convent. Not with somebody like Buddy sniffing around you.

MARGUERITE

What's wrong with the convent?

CAPUTO

Oh, here we go.

MARGUERITE

Don't make fun. I may take the veil myself. (*General hooting from Caputo, Nicki and Jean.*) It's...

ALL

(*The girls all finish the rest of the sentence, each with her own take on it.*) the greatest thing a girl can do.

CAPUTO

(*Back to Jean*) Well, you don't look pregnant. I know about pregnant.

JEAN

(*Collecting herself, with a purposeful look, stands up.*) Everybody take a little ginger ale. (*She pours a little in each one's glass*) Just a little. We're having a toast. (*Calling*) Ceil, come back in here!

MARGUERITE

Let me make a toast.

JEAN

Nope. This is a special toast.

NICKI

This does sound good. So fancy with her toasts.

(*Ceil enters. Jean gives her a glass.*)

CEIL

No, now I said I don't want a highball. I'm making coffee—

JEAN

No, it's just ginger ale. Take it. (*She takes a deep breath*) Well...here's to my last night as Jean McManus.

*(They all look confused. Long pause...)*

CAPUTO

*(Finally catching on)* You don't mean—

JEAN

*(Blurting it out)* Buddy and I are getting married. Tomorrow.

ALL

Tomorrow!?

*(General hubbub. All together)*

MARGUERITE

NICKI

CAPUTO

CEIL

You've got to  
be kidding!

How 'bout that!

You dirty stinker!  
How could you

Oh, my!  
Oh, *oh!*