

# The Good Years

Penny Petersen





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## THE GOOD YEARS

By Penny Petersen

### CAST

4 Women, 4 Men, 3-6 Mimes (One acts as Narrator, others change scenery and bring props. Could be done with 3 or 4 mimes if stage hands are used to move furniture and some props.)

LIBBI: A widow

LARRY: A widower

GRACE: Libbi's daughter

DON: Libbi's son-in-law

DOLORES: Larry's daughter

STEVE: Larry's son-in-law

ACTRESS: A leading lady in the local community theatre (Gretchen)

ACTOR: A leading man in the local community theatre (Harold)

NARRATOR: One of the Mimes. Delivers prologues to Act I, Act II & Epilogue

SUMMARY: *The Good Years* can best be described as a 'turn-around' of the popular play *The Fantasticks* in subject matter and style. It pits two daughters against their widowed parents, Libbi and Larry. Their efforts to fix up their parents include a "chance" meeting, a fake robbery, a clown, and some bowling buddies. All result in disaster. A nightmare, an actor in drag, and Mimes add to the hilarity. In keeping with the non-realistic style, the mimes represent Fate, and influence the action. At one point, a wedding is planned until some unexpected information causes a ruckus and Larry gets cold feet. Finally, with the help of the mimes, forgiveness prevails and all is well.

NOTE: The Mimes are a 'Theatrical' convention meant to stress the non-realistic nature of the presentation. None of the characters are aware of the Mimes, but the Mimes often communicate their feelings to the audience. There is no sense of the characters noticing the Mimes. Scene changes are all done in full view of the audience with only the drops and a few pieces of furniture representing different places. SL, SC & SR must have their own area lighting as well as being used together. Also, a single spot from above is needed DL, DC & DR. Mime places a sign designating location with music behind.

NOTE: Although lighting cues are listed, the show is designed so that it could be Done in any setting & without lights. Actors simply turn their backs to indicate Non-focus. Sounds could be simplified to bells for phone etc. Scenes are numbered for rehearsal purposes. Action is continuous.

Time & Place:

*An active retirement country club, anywhere, any time.*

*Set: Empty stage. Scenery consists of a series of small drops which are changed according to location. There are 7 painted drops. Two unpainted drops are on the reverse of GRACE's & DOLORES'. Each drop is hung on two posts. Drops indicate where the action takes place. Minimal furniture (bench, 3 chairs, 2 small tables) become different set pieces). See lists and sketches at end for specifics.*

ACT I

*At Rise: NARRATOR/MIME enters & speaks to audience. Spotlight, DC. Center Drop is the show title, SL & SR drops are unpainted fabric.*

PROLOGUE—NARRATOR: *(spoken as in a Shakespeare play)*

Just what is life? Why are we here?  
What part is love? What part is fear?  
What causes smiles? What brings a tear?  
Things are not always as they appear.

Do we control it? Do we create?  
The things we crave? The things we hate?  
And when it's time to choose a mate?  
Do we control? Or is it fate?

Humm, we'll see.

We'll try to tell this story true  
With props and music, just for you  
But settings here are mighty few  
So use your imagination too.

My friends and I will just appear  
With prop or hat or sound to hear  
In the end, we hope it's clear  
Even though we're not Shakespeare.

But, now, let's pause so you can greet  
The people who you soon will meet.

*(GRACE and DOLORES enter DL and pantomime a discussion about fixing up their parents. They don't notice narrator or audience.)*

This is Grace and her friend Dolores. They are plotting against their parents. Oh, not in a bad way, but you'll soon see.

*(MIME brings on chair SR and sets it with back to center. LIBBI enters and sits in chair reading a travel magazine.)*

Here we have Libbi. She's Grace's mother. She's been widowed for seven years and spends most of her time traveling with lady friends. Grace wants her to get married again, but Libbi is too independent. Grace would like to change that.

*(MIME brings on chair SL and sets it with back to center. LARRY enters carrying a saxophone or other instrument and sits in chair. He pantomimes playing.)*

The musician right there? That's Larry. He's the father of Dolores. He's a widower. A bit of a ladies' man, he plays in a band and goes dancing. But he won't make a commitment. Dolores would like to change that.

*(DON and STEVE enter carrying bowling bags SR They pantomime.)*

These guys don't know what they're in for. Don is Grace's husband and Libbi's son-in-law. He's a frustrated husband because his wife likes to shop. Anybody know all about that? Here we have Steve. He's Dolores' husband and Larry's son-in-law. He's a pretty sensitive guy, but stern. Larry is his favorite person.

*(MIMES appear dragging ACTOR and ACTRESS right down center.)*

These two are actors with the local community theatre. They don't like being onstage without their costumes and make-up.

*(NARRATOR-MIME gestures at MIMES who let go of actors. Actors scurry backstage. A dismissive gesture and the rest of the cast exits.)*

So, we begin, the end is true  
The story calls, we bid adieu.

*(N/M exit. Center spot out. DR spot up. DOLORES and GRACE enter DR spot. They have escaped and are talking in the restroom. They pantomime hand washing.)*

DOLORES: Did you ask her?

GRACE: (*not happy*) Yeah.

DOLORES: Well, what did she say?

GRACE: She said, (*mimicking*) "No way. I'm much too old for birth control."

DOLORES: What?

GRACE: That's her way of saying "No."

DOLORES: If she'd just meet my dad! He's perfect for her.

GRACE: He's perfect period! If I were twenty years older, I'd go for him.

DOLORES: You're just saying that.

GRACE: No. I mean it. We've got to get them together.

DOLORES: But how? (*MIME enters next to DOLORES and snaps fingers. No response. Snaps again, then backs up, staying onstage.*) I know! We'll trick her into it.

GRACE: Trick her?

DOLORES: We'll make the meeting an accident.

GRACE: Not bad. But how would we do it?

(*MIME moves next to DOLORES and motions with hand*)

DOLORES: I've got it. I'll volunteer Dad to help pack food baskets after church. You volunteer your mom. You give them something to do together, like sorting the canned goods, then, wallah! They'll have to talk. They're too polite not to.

GRACE: What if it doesn't work?

DOLORES: What have we lost? A little time!

GRACE: They don't have much time. *(pause)* But her doctor did say, "She could live to be 103."

DOLORES: That would give them a few good years together.

GRACE: *(MIME does the "Cut" sign. GRACE looks around.)* We better get back. Mom will wonder why it took so long.

*(Spot down. GRACE & DOLORES exit. Scene church music plays as MIMES change scenery. Title drop goes off and Church drop on in Center. A lunchroom table is placed UC. Two sacks of canned goods and three empty boxes on table. When they empty sacks, a MIME brings another.)*

### SCENE 1

MIME places sign: "CHURCH – A Week Later"

At Rise: *MIME music. GRACE enters church scene in apron from UR. Lights come up.)*

GRACE: Come on, Mom, we've gotta sort these cans before noon.

*(LIBBI enters in matching apron and they begin sorting cans and putting like kinds in small boxes.)*

LIBBI: Wow, We've got lots of corn.

GRACE: It's always that way.

LIBBI: I don't think we have enough boxes for all these cans.

GRACE: I'll get some more. The extras are in the back room. *(She starts to leave, then fakes surprise as LARRY enters.)* Oh, here comes Larry. Maybe he can help.

*(LARRY enters and stands looking. LIBBI doesn't look up.)*

LARRY: You're doing a nice job.

LIBBI: *(doesn't look up)* Thanks.

LARRY: I'm Larry.

LIBBI: *(still not looking up)* Hi.



LARRY: *(coming closer)* I'll gladly help.

LIBBI: I've almost got it.

LARRY: Isn't there anything I can do? *(DOLORES peeks around DR drop.)*

LIBBI: Not right now. My daughter should be here shortly with some more boxes. *(Looking up for the first time, she sees LARRY. There's an immediate attraction. She wipes hands on her apron and reaches to shake his hand.)* Sorry, what did you say your name was?

LARRY: Larry. It's really Laurence, with an au, but everybody calls me Larry. *(he shakes her hand then keeps holding onto it)*

LIBBI: Glad to meet you, Larry. I'm Libbi. It's really Elizabeth, but everyone calls me Libbi.

LARRY: Libbi? That was my grandmother's name. She was an Elizabeth too, but she spelled Libby with an "i". *(LIBBI finally pulls her hand away)*

LIBBI: So do I. It was a nickname. I wanted to be different, so I spelled it with an "i."

LARRY: Ah, you're spunky.

LIBBI: Here, you can help with these. Fruits, veggies and beans in separate boxes. *(Flustered, he sorts them backwards. She stares at him, and embarrassed, he looks down. She gives him the once over. When he looks up and catches her staring at him, she's embarrassed and looks down. He gives her the once over. Both like what they see, but seem at loss for words. They stare at each other. The spell is broken as DOLORES, enters carrying boxes.)*

DOLORES: Sorry it took so long. I had to go help Grace. She couldn't find the boxes.

LARRY: That's OK. Libbi seems to have things under control.

LIBBI: I thought there was a whole crowd coming.

DOLORES: There should be. Hold down the fort, I'll see where they are. *(DOLORES crosses DR. Spot up. GRACE enters. Lights dim SC. LARRY and LIBBI exit to change for drive-in scene. MIMES change drop. Church drop down. Drive-in drop up. DOLORES and GRACE talk in loud stage whispers DR.)* You should have seen it! It was as if "God Almighty" came down and touched their foreheads. They talked politely. Then

there was this long stare. Then she blushed. Then he looked at his shoes. Then they both stumbled to make awkward conversation.

GRACE: You're kidding. My mother? My "I don't need anybody" mother? (GRACE *nods*) I'll be darned.

DOLORES: My dad's usually got a good line for everything. But he stopped dead in his tracks.

GRACE: But they talked?

DOLORES: Yeah, they talked. He found out that she spelled Libbi with an "i" just like my great-grandmother. And she started telling him what to do...

GRACE: Ah, a preview of coming attractions...(mimicks) "Here, Larry, you can put the dishes in the dishwasher, and then empty the garbage...please...dear!"

DOLORES: Stop being so negative. It was charming. And chemistry is good.

GRACE: That's true. (MIME enters and makes shuffling sounds with feet) I hear the rest of the crew. We'd better get going. (GRACE & DOLORES exit. Spot DR out.)

## SCENE 2:

MIME places sign: "DRIVE-IN – Two weeks later"

*At Rise: MIME music while MIME places sign. Lights up dimly over whole stage. Two MIMES enter. Each pushes a desk chair on wheels. The two chairs represent a car. LARRY sits in the driver's seat and holds a steering wheel which he turns as they enter. LIBBI sits beside him in the second chair. The MIMES push the chairs DC. The chairs are 8 inches apart. They face front as if waiting for a movie to begin. Another MIME enters and hands popcorn to LIBBI, takes steering wheel and exits. Two MIMES onstage at either side of the Drive-in drop for future moves.*

LARRY: A step into nostalgia for our two-week anniversary, and it's only 15 minutes until the feature starts.

LIBBI: I didn't even know this was here. There aren't many drive-ins left.

LARRY: Patti and I used to bring the kids here. When was the last time you went to a drive-in?

LIBBI: I only went a few times. I wasn't allowed. My dad said it was where boys got girls in trouble. He called it the 'Passion Pit.'

LARRY: Really? (*evasively*)

LIBBI: Yeah, Right! Like you never heard that before? So why did you go?

LARRY: (*evasively*) Uh...They had the best Milk Duds?

LIBBI: Come on! All the boys went there to make out.

LARRY: Well, I have to admit, I used charm, persuasion, milk duds, begging, but nothing ever worked. Did you and Charlie ever go to the drive-in?

LIBBI: After we dated for quite a while.

LARRY: And did he try to get you in trouble?

LIBBI: (*nervous*) How can you say that? We were married forty-nine years. (*getting agitated*) We had our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary all planned. Then there we were, eating lunch on the porch and 'poof' a second later he was gone.

LARRY: That must have been awful.

LIBBI: It was a shock! But, I'm glad he didn't suffer.

LARRY: I wish Patty had gone like that.

LIBBI: What happened?

LARRY: Lung cancer. We didn't know smoking was bad back then.

LIBBI: I'm sorry.

(*There's a long pause. Neither knows where to go from here.*)

LARRY: So, how did you meet Charlie?

LIBBI: I worked as a receptionist at my dad's Ford dealership. Charlie came in to buy a Fairlane. Before Dad let me go out with him, he checked with the minister and his former Scoutmaster. Dad even called the librarian, to see if Charlie ever checked out any dirty books. He hadn't. How about you and Patty?

LARRY: We met at a dance. Oh, what a dancer! Everybody wanted to dance with Patty.

LIBBI: I have two left feet.

LARRY: Nobody has two left feet. I'll teach you.

*(MIMES push the chairs closer together)*

LIBBI: Are you sure you could teach me?

LARRY: 100% guaranteed.

LIBBI: Sounds like fun. *(pause)* I could be jealous of Patty.

LARRY: And I could be jealous of Charlie, having you for forty-nine years. *(MIMES push the chairs until touching.)* But now, let's talk about us. Us could be a good thing, you know. *(LARRY puts his arm around LIBBI with help of a MIME. He pauses as if thinking about it, then puts his hand on her knee and pats.)* I really like you and...

*(LIBBI draws in her breath in surprise, jumps away and spills the popcorn. It goes everywhere.)*

LIBBI: Oh! I'm so sorry! I'm not usually such a klutz! *(she starts picking up the popcorn)*

LARRY: Sorry I startled you.

LIBBI: Sorry about the mess.

LARRY: It's OK.

LIBBI: I'm a little nervous. It's been more than fifty years since I had a real date.

LARRY: Are you frightened?

LIBBI: A little, I guess.

LARRY: Why?

LIBBI: I feel strange.

LARRY: Yeah. Me too.

LIBBI: (*surprised*) You're scared too?

LARRY: Sure. I haven't come on to a woman in any serious way since I was twenty. Then it was a game. It was fun. Now, I feel a bit ridiculous.

LIBBI: You're not ridiculous! Grace would laugh her head off if she could see me now....

LARRY: I see you. You look beautiful.

*(They look at each other. Both recognize a special moment. Neither knows what to say. LIBBI scoots her chair a little closer to LARRY)*

LIBBI: I was wondering, would we have liked each other when we were young?

LARRY: Probably not. I was a real smart aleck. I made all A's but I got expelled for smoking twice and once for playing rock music in the band room.

LIBBI: Oh, That wasn't good! So what did you end up doing?

LARRY: I was a design engineer at Motorola. Then after hours, I jammed with some other musicians at work. We played music for the company president once.

LIBBI: I took nursing. My mom said, "You can get a job anywhere and it's good money." I'd rather have been a travel agent.... seeing Venice instead of bed pans. *(he laughs then gingerly puts his arm around her)* *(pause)* Libbi, do you think you could go for an old geezer like me?

LIBBI: *(MIME nudges LIBBI. LIBBI moves toward LARRY.)* I think I already do.

**END OF FREEVIEW**

***You'll want to read and perform this show!***