

THE BARE TRUTH

A Comedy in Two Acts

by

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Cast of Characters

JACK BAXTER: A man, age 70.
BETTY BAXTER: His wife, age 68.
JAMES DEAN (J.D.) BAXTER: Their son, in his mid 40s.
TERRI BAXTER: J.D.'s wife, early 40s.
LLOYD MORTON: A man, 64.
EVE MORTON: His wife, 60.
JUDITH BAXTER SHORT: Jack and Betty's daughter, 42.
NICK TREADWAY: A man, mid 40s.

A Note On Casting: It is the author's wish that open casting - multi-racial, multi-ethnic - be encouraged. The author has no problem with surnames being altered to suit Asian or Latin actors taking roles in the play

Scene

The living room of Jack and Betty Baxter, in South Florida.

Time

The present.

ACT I

Scene 1: Friday afternoon.
Scene 2: Nine PM, the same day.
Scene 3: Sunday afternoon.

Act II

Scene 4: Monday evening, eight o'clock.
Scene 5: Wednesday, early afternoon.

ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING: JACK and BETTY's living room in South Florida. It opens on a lanai that runs the length of the room. A pool is located off stage, right, a continuation of the lanai that cannot be seen. The main entrance to the house is through a foyer, left, and cannot be seen. The kitchen is located offstage, down left. Bedrooms, baths, etc are offstage, right.

The room is simply but attractively furnished: sofa, armchairs and a lounge chair. A bar is located downstage of the kitchen entrance. It is a spacious room, with a few Ben Shahn prints on the walls, left and right. Sliding glass doors open to the lanai, giving the room an open, airy feeling. Palms and bottlebrush beyond the lanai contribute to the feeling of the room continuing to the outside world.

AT RISE: Friday afternoon: JACK, BETTY, LLOYD and EVE are having drinks. JACK and BETTY are casually dressed, well-tanned LLOYD and EVE even more so.

(J.D. enters, right, through the lanai.)

J.D.

You need to watch your sprinkler setting more carefully, Dad. Twenty minutes a zone, and you have five zones.

JACK

I'll keep an eye on it, J.D. Have you met Lloyd and Eve -?

J.D.

Sure, sure - the friendly neighbors. Good to see you.

LLOYD/EVE

Hello - Good to see you - How're you doing - (etc)

JACK

My son, the dentist - excuse me, oral surgeon.

BETTY

We are so proud of him.

J.D.

Cut it out, Mom. I've been practicing for over fifteen years. You'd think I just got out of dental school.

LLOYD

Say, Doc, I've got this problem with my teeth -
(he sticks his fingers in his mouth)

See? What I mean?

(removing his fingers)

I keep biting my tongue!

(he laughs)

EVE

Lloyd! Honestly!

J.D.

No, no, that's okay. I can fix that for you, Lloyd, if you don't mind eating through a straw.

LLOYD

You got me there, J.D.! Thanks, but no thanks!

EVE

A fix without teeth has no bite. A big-time gambler told me that.

(pause)

Something to do with horse racing.

BETTY

Where is Terri?

J.D

Oh, fussing with your garden, digging around.

BETTY

I wish she wouldn't do that.

J.D.

You're new to Florida, Mom, and she's an old hand at native plants -

BETTY

But really, dear, I can manage my own garden.

JACK

Yeah, you kids have better things to do than spend your time checking up on the old folks.

(Enter TERRI, main entrance, left)

TERRI

Betty, you really ought to hire a yardman. The Bougainvillea is going wild, and - Oh, hello - Lloyd isn't it? And Eve! How nice to see you.

EVE

Hello, Terri.

LLOYD

How're ya doing, kid? Good to see you again.

TERRI

You've become real friends of Mom and Dad, haven't you?

EVE

Well, we are next-door neighbors.

LLOYD

Might as well be friends.

JACK

Wouldn't want him for an enemy. It's been known to happen.

EVE

The couple in this house before you were - well, no, I won't say it. If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all, I always say.

LLOYD

Aloof, but very nosey.

J.D.

Is that why you have those high shrubs and palms between your houses?

EVE

Oh, those! We put those in years ago, to hide the pool.

LLOYD

Got them on the other side of the house, too.

EVE

And in back - to hide the pool from the dock.

TERRI

To hide the pool?

LLOYD

Yes, the pool is our Eden, our own Secret Garden.

EVE

We love to sun bathe.

LLOYD

Moon bathe, too - and swim, of course.

TERRI

It must be lovely. Are you just coming from a swim?

LLOYD/EVE

No.

EVE

(laughing)

I know, we always look like we're either coming from or heading to the pool. We're terrible, but that's how we are.

LLOYD

The ever-casual Mortons!

(They laugh, and hug each other.)

JACK

Drinks, anyone?

J.D.

No thanks, Dad, Terri and I have to be on our way.

TERRI

Melody will be home from school, soon.

J.D.

Ted has soccer practice. Team expects to take State this year. Won't see him till dinnertime.

TERRI

We'll be back, don't worry. Betty, I will bring you a short list of lawn maintenance people - really good people, and reasonable. Bye now!

J.D.

Oh, Dad, did you make the spare key yet?

JACK

Not yet, J.D., I'll get around to it.

J.D.

I can do it for you.

JACK

No, no, I'll do it.

TERRI

It's important, Jack - for emergencies.

J.D.

Home Depot, Loews - any hardware store can make a key.

JACK

It's on my to-do list, J.D. Top of the list.

J.D.

Okay, Dad.

TERRI

Bye-bye!

(Exit, TERRI and J.D.)

JACK

Top of the list, like hell.

BETTY

Now, Jack -

JACK

Now-Jack-nothing. That's all we need. J.D. would pop in here any time he feels the urge to check up on us - The old folks! You'd think a dentist wouldn't have so much free time.

BETTY

Oral surgeon, dear.

JACK

And Judith is just the same.

BETTY

Our daughter. She found this house for us; she's a realtor, a real estate broker. We told her we wanted to live on the water - with a dock, of course - and a pool.

JACK

Florida: if you don't play on the links, you play on the water. I don't play golf.

LLOYD

Never took to the game, myself. Now, tennis -

JACK

Don't play tennis either.

LLOYD

Neither do I.

EVE

Lloyd loves to watch others play. Oh, but we do play volleyball. Wonderful exercise, very aerobic.

LLOYD

So, it was Judith who found this gem for you?

JACK

Yes, and no sooner had she handed over the keys she told us she kept a spare one for herself - just in case.

LLOYD

For emergencies -

JACK

You got it. The old folks can't be trusted. They might go to bed and forget to put out the cat.

BETTY

And we don't have a cat.

JACK

So what I did was I had all the locks changed. She came over early one morning, and couldn't get in. Woke us up with the doorbell ringing and her pounding - very upset, of course. I told her we lost one of the keys and knew she'd be upset about that, so we had all the locks changed. Said I'd get her a spare as soon as I could.

BETTY

That was weeks ago.

JACK

She hasn't got it yet, and she's not going to.

EVE

We only met Judith briefly, shortly after you moved in. She seems all business - and a bit driven.

JACK

She's forty, divorced and raising a teenager. It doesn't get much worse than that.

BETTY

(warning him)

Jack...

JACK

On the other hand, she makes a lot of money.

LLOYD

Yes, money solves a lot of problems.

JACK

Don't get me wrong; Judith works hard - a real go-getter - gets that from me. I built a business from nothing -

BETTY

It was his father's business.

JACK

And it was nothing, believe me. Well, nothing to speak of - a small accounting firm. Took nearly fifty years to build it up, but when I sold my share - Ahh, I don't want to brag. Let's just say we did very well.

BETTY

Very well indeed, dear. You should be proud.

JACK

I am proud, and I'm proud of the kids, too. I just wish they'd back off.

LLOYD

I've got to hand it to you: taking a business, building it up and selling it - that's beyond me. Way out of my league.

BETTY

But you seem to have done so well.

LLOYD

I got lucky.

EVE

We won the lottery, up in New Jersey. Power Ball.

LLOYD

I don't pretend we deserve it, but there it is.

EVE

A lifetime of just getting by, and we hit the jackpot.

JACK

Well, I'll be... How did you ever -?

LLOYD

I picked the right numbers. It does happen; it happened for us.

EVE

And we were smart enough to invest wisely.

LLOYD

Or wise enough to invest smartly. Either way, we came up roses.

BETTY

I don't know what to say. Congratulations!

JACK

In all my years I never met a lottery winner.

LLOYD

You've met one now - two, in fact!

EVE

(snuggling up to him)

We count as one, darling.

LLOYD

I hope you won't hold it against me, Jack, or think less of me just because of a lucky break.

JACK

What are you saying! Of course not! I am absolutely amazed!

(The DOORBELL rings.)

BETTY

Oh, there's the door. I'll just see who it is.

(Exit BETTY.)

JACK

The lottery.

LLOYD

Power Ball. Only in America!

JACK

I'll be darned.

EVE

Say, if we're going to Romero's for dinner, we better get a leg on.

LLOYD

Eve and I need to head back to the house and change. You and Betty are fine as you are, but we are way too casual for Romero's. What do you say, Eve?

EVE

(laughing)

Talk about casual, they should catch us at home!

(Enter BETTY with JUDITH, who is smartly dressed for business. JUDITH leads the way, obviously in a rush.)

BETTY

Look who just dropped by for a visit.

JUDITH

I have a house to show in thirty minutes -

JACK

Judy! You've met our neighbors, the Mortons, Lloyd and Eve?

JUDITH

Yes! I believe so - the day you moved in -

EVE

We brought over a key lime pie -

LLOYD

Home made -

JUDITH

A pie, yes, good to see you again.

EVE

It's so nice to see you.

JUDITH

Yes, thank you - excuse me, I'm in a bit of a rush.

BETTY

She has a house to show.

JUDITH

In thirty minutes - or less. I'll make this quick. It's Lila. She didn't make the cheerleading squad and she's heart-broken.

JACK

But she's only - what? - a sophomore. You didn't make cheerleaders till you were a junior, sixteen years old.

JUDITH

I know, but she's heart-broken.

JACK

She's fifteen years old, Judy. She'll get over it.