

# SWEETHEART

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A ten-minute dark comedy by  
Danny Rothschild

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

MOTHER, 48, wears the pants, somewhat neurotic, upper class. Happy.

FATHER, 50, useless, calm, quiet, repeats what's been said. Happy.

SISTER, 19, tomboy, very un-girly, resembles her mother. Happy.

BROTHER, 12, resembles the father, useless, repetitive. Happy.

GIRL, 8, fragile, sweet, small, shy. Not quite as happy.

## SETTING

A middle-class suburban home, one rainy spring night.

## TIME

The mid-50s.

## NOTE TO THE DIRECTOR

The play should have an absurdist quality to it. Everything is slightly exaggerated and overdone. Maybe their make-up is all done up to make them look like dolls, or perhaps their pajamas are too crisp and perfect. The heart at the end is represented by an alarm clock.

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*(Lights rise on a king bed. MOTHER and FATHER enter from opposite sides of the stage, Father wearing a pastel blue pajama suit and Mother wearing a pastel pink nightgown. They stare at each other, and then turn in sync to face the audience. Both have large smiles on their faces. After a short pause, they both climb into bed, still in sync. In the background, you hear the sound of pouring rain and thunder. Father picks up a book from the bedside table, and Mother looks out the window.)*

**MOTHER:** *(She speaks softly and sweetly:)* What a lovely day it was today, wouldn't you agree?

*(Father doesn't reply.)*

Honey?

**FATHER:** *(Without glancing away from a book:)* Yes my dear?

**MOTHER:** I said, what a lovely day it was today. Wouldn't you agree?

**FATHER:** *(Still reading his book:)* Oh yes, I would have to agree. Lovely, lovely day.

*(Thunder roars outside.)*

**MOTHER:** I didn't much care for dinner though... *(Pauses to think, then turns to her husband:)* What did you think?

**FATHER:** *(Still not glancing away from his book:)* Oh no, I didn't much care for dinner at all.

**MOTHER:** The neighbors are rather bad when it comes to cooking.

**FATHER:** Yes, they are rather bad when it comes to cooking, aren't they.

**MOTHER:** Next time let's be sure to have them over for dinner at our house. It's a much more pleasant space, and we're much better cooks. I mean really.

**FATHER:** *(Still reading the book:)* Oh yes, of course dear. We are much better cooks. I mean really.

**MOTHER:** And can you believe we had to ring the doorbell twice before they answered?

**FATHER:** We had to ring it twice!

**MOTHER:** I mean, really. Who waits until the second ring? Such dreadful taste.

**FATHER:** Dreadful, yes, what dreadful taste.

**MOTHER:** *(Her smile returns to her face as she continues to look out the window:)* But all in all, quite a lovely day!

**FATHER:** Yes, it was quite a lovely day, wasn't it?

*(There is a flash of lightning.)*

**MOTHER:** I hope tomorrow is just as lovely.

**FATHER:** Just as lovely, yes, or lovelier!

**MOTHER:** *(Giggles to herself:)* Oh I am sure it will be. Everyday this year just keeps on getting better.

*(There is a long pause. A flash of lightning followed by loud thunder.)*

Honey?

**FATHER:** *(Turns the page and continues reading:)* Yes my dear?

**MOTHER:** I love you. And I love our family. And I am very, very happy.

*(Father closes his book and sets it back on the bedside table. He turns to Mother.)*

**FATHER:** Oh, I am so glad to hear that, dear. I love you. And I love our family. And I'm very, very happy too.

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*(They kiss each other goodnight and Father turns off the lamp. In the midst of the rain, a strange weeping noise is heard.)*

**MOTHER:** *(Sitting up, a bit anxious:)* Did you hear that strange sound? What was that?

**FATHER:** *(Turning the lamp back on:)* I'm not quite sure. What was that?

**MOTHER:** *(Climbing out of bed:)* We better check on the children, and make sure they are happy.

**FATHER:** Oh yes, we better check on the children, dear.

*(Father follows her and they both exit SR. GIRL enters in her yellow flowery nightgown, and gets in bed, pulls the sheets up to her neck. She is shivering. Mother and Father enter from SL, smiles plastered on both their faces.)*

**MOTHER:** Is everything alright? Why are you awake? It's past your bedtime.

**FATHER:** Is everything alright? It's past your bedtime.

**MOTHER:** You should be asleep! And why are you shaking? Stop that.

**FATHER:** Is everything alright, sweetheart?

**MOTHER:** Why are you shaking? I said stop that. Do you hear me? Stop that!

*(SISTER enters, being just woken up from the noise.)*

**SISTER:** What's going on? What's the matter with her?

**MOTHER:** *(A bit nervous. Voice raised, and uncertain:)* Nothing. Nothing! Nothing's "the matter with her." She's perfectly fine. She's perfectly happy.

*(BROTHER enters, nervous, pacing around the room back and forth.)*

**BROTHER:** What's going on? What's wrong with her?

**MOTHER:** Hush! Don't say that. Nothing is wrong with her!

**FATHER:** Are you alright, sweetheart?

**BROTHER:** Why is she shaking like that? That's not normal.

**MOTHER:** She's perfectly fine, she's perfectly normal!

*(Sister moves forward and strips the sheets off her younger sister, who is lying in the fetal position, clutching her knees, shivering even more than she had before. Tears start staining her pillowcase.)*

**SISTER:** What's wrong with your eyes?

**BROTHER:** What in the world is that!?

**MOTHER:** *(Examining the girl's face more closely:)* Oh no! Don't you bring those tears in here! Not in this house!

**FATHER:** Are you alright, sweetheart?

**BROTHER:** Is she crying?

**MOTHER:** No! Don't say that! Of course she's not crying, there's just something funny with her eyes.

**SISTER:** No, look! I can see it! She's crying! Why is she crying? *(Turning to the girl, shouting a bit:)* Why are you crying!

**MOTHER:** I said she's not crying!

**BROTHER:** *(Worried:)* Will...will she be okay?

**MOTHER:** *(Anxious:)* Of course she'll be okay! She's perfectly okay already!

**FATHER:** *(Still same tone of voice:)* Are you alright, sweetheart?

**MOTHER:** Yes, she's alright! Stop asking that damn—I mean darn—question! Can't you see she's perfectly happy?



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*(She kneels down next to the bed, eyes the same level as her little girl. She speaks the following lines somewhat neurotically:)*

You are alright, aren't you? Why are you acting so strangely! Stop that crying! Why aren't you asleep? You should be asleep by now! You should be sleeping so that tomorrow you can wake up to the happy birds singing and you can have a perfectly happy day!

**GIRL:** *(Quietly whispers:)* I'm...I'm afraid.

*(There is a long silence.)*

**MOTHER:** ...You're what?

**GIRL:** I'm afraid, Mother.

**SISTER:** Afraid? You can't be afraid! Being afraid of things makes you unhappy.

**MOTHER:** What's there to be afraid about? Are you afraid of the dark?

**BROTHER:** *(A bit uncertain, taking it personally:)* Why would she be afraid of the dark? There's no such thing as being afraid of the dark. I don't know anyone that's afraid of the dark.

**GIRL:** *(Still whispering:)* I'm scared of the loud banging outside, and the really bright flashes. *(Pause.)* My heart is beating very, very fast.

**MOTHER:** *(Getting angry again:)* Are you telling me that there's something wrong with your heart?

*(She starts a nervous giggle that becomes somewhat uncontrollable. Father sits down at the foot of the bed, holding his head in the hands.)*

**GIRL:** It's beating very, very fast, and I can't fall asleep.

*(There is a moment of silence. Girl holds her hands over her chest.)*

**BROTHER:** Maybe we should call the doctor?

**MOTHER:** No. Nobody needs to know about this. We can mend this ourselves.

*(Sister steps forward, puts her ear next to her heart.)*

**SISTER:** Let me take have a listen!

*(There is a long pause. Sister looks up with a concerned face.)*

Something's not right.

*(Beat. After a second, everyone starts talking over each other. The room gets louder and louder.)*

**BROTHER:** Is she going to be okay?

**MOTHER:** She'll be fine. We'll fix this. It's simple! *(Turns to the Girl:)* We'll just play some happy music and you are going to think happy thoughts.

**FATHER:** Yes, sweetheart, think happy thoughts.

*(Mother turns a radio on from the bedside table. Cheerful MUSIC, perhaps "Put on A Happy Face," plays for a minute while the others stare in suspense. Outside the THUNDER only gets louder, and the Girl keeps shivering.)*

**BROTHER:** I don't think it's working.

**MOTHER:** Of course it's working. It's just going to take a few minutes.

**SISTER:** *(Takes a step towards the Girl:)* What's wrong with you! What's wrong with your heart!

*(Turns radio off. Starting up a nervous laughter.)*

**MOTHER:** We've got to do something about this. Don't you think?

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**FATHER:** Yes, yes, of course. We must do something about this.

**BROTHER:** Is she going to be okay?

**MOTHER:** She has a faulty heart. We'll just...we'll just have to replace it.

**FATHER:** A faulty heart! That's it. We'll just replace it.

**MOTHER:** (*Increasingly more neurotic:*) We can't have this in our home, not in our house. This is not how we do things.

**BROTHER:** Is she going to be okay?

**GIRL:** (*Quietly, can barely be heard:*) I'm afraid...

**SISTER:** There's nothing to be afraid about! Stop shaking!

**BROTHER:** I'm worried about her...

**MOTHER:** (*Loud enough to get everyone to stop talking:*) YOU ARE NOT WORRIED YOU ARE PERFECTLY FINE. (*Short pause.*) Everyone just stay quiet. (*Long silence. Turns to the sister:*) Go down into the kitchen, bring me the carving knife.

*(Everyone freezes. Sister exits. Footsteps are heard running down the stairs.)*

**GIRL:** Why is she getting a knife?

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