The Broiler Queen: A Mid-Coast Comedy By Jonathan Mirin

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CHARACTERS

Harbor Master, Magical Being, Nautical Gear. Narrates, plays piano between scenes, plays various characters including Rosanna,

Chip Stevens, a young man from Camden, mid-20's, khaki pants, polo shirt, short hair

Sherry Hager, a young woman from Belfast, mid-20's, jeans, heavy metal t-shirt

William (Bill) Stevens, Chip's father, 50's, sport jacket, golf club,

Helen Stevens, Chip's mother, late 40's, not a hair out of place

Mike Hager, Sherry's father, 40's, works at Prime Portions Poultry on the water in downtown Belfast.

Rosanna, Sherry's Best Friend, cosmetologist and caterer, mid-20's

WHERE Belfast, Maine

WHEN June and July, 1986

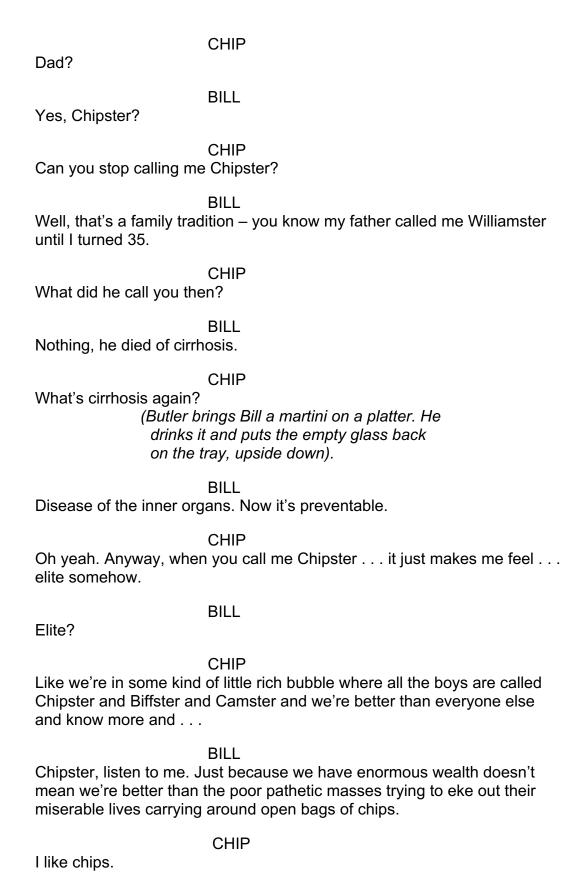
Audience enters. Appetizers. Performers mingle in character.

HARBOR MASTER

(wearing a minister's collar, rings nautical bell)

We're glad to welcome the extended families and friends of Chip and Sherry and on their behalf, we welcome you to beautiful Belfast. I know many have traveled from different parts of the country and even the world to join together these two wonderful young people in holy wedded bliss. (offstage scream). And we've put together a special retrospective about their relationship to help us all understand how we arrived at this special day. There are so many places we could start their story. The Big Bang. The most recent ice age. Sherry's great grandparents fleeing from Europe or Chip's Great Great Great Great Grandparents peacefully sailing to our shores from England but for now let's begin when Chip was 12 and playing golf with his father at a lovely seaside course just a few minutes from their summer estate in lovely Camden.

CHIP and BILL on the golf course in Camden.



BILL

So did my second wife. Nonetheless, there are reasons families like ours prefer to associate with other families like - ours.

CHIP

who are boring, inebriated and unsympathetic?

BILL

No, Chip, no, no, no . . . families who are prepared to lead. That's why I decided to run for Senate in the first place. I felt all of my privilege needed to translate into civic responsibility. And of course, I have been able to be a great service to my friends.

CHIP

You mean that whole cutting taxes for the rich thing?

BILL

If the rich don't cut taxes, who will?

CHIP

I never thought of it like that.

HARBORMASTER

Meanwhile, on a quiet Belfast street just an eggs throw from the Prime Portions Poultry Plant and not too far from the peaceful flow of the Pennagassawassy River -

SHERRY

(Sweeping up chicken feathers in the yard. MIKE walks out on his way to the plant).

Dad, got a sec -.

MIKE

(looks at his watch)

Ay – yuh. Got a whole 11 minutes. What's up?

SHERRY

Some kids are making plans – you know, for what they're gonna do next year.

MIKE

Ay – yuh.

SHFRRY

I know we talked about me helping on Carl's boat this summer.

MIKE

Ay – yuh. We did talk about that.

SHERRY

But after that, in the fall, I kinda thought maybe I'd go to college.

MIKE

Ay – yuh. College, sure. So you mean you don't want to be lobsterin' next summer.

SHERRY

Well, I don't know. But I probably don't want to lobster, process poultry, rake blueberries, have a paper route, cater, waitress, plow, babysit, shovel, break down boxes and do in-home care my whole life.

MIKE

You'd be surprised how mercifully short life can be when you're busy. Course, it's up to you. You not a little girl anymore who just babysits, has a paper route and plows.

SHERRY

And shovels.

MIKE

Where is that little red shovel anyway?

SHERRY

You gave it to Lisa's little girl.

MIKE

And she's makin' good money!

SHERRY

She's six.

MIKE

Learn while you earn. Where you going tonight?

SHERRY

Rosanna and I have a caterin' job in Camden.

MIKE

Need the car?

SHERRY

She's pickin' me up at Perry's.

(Night Ranger's 1984 song "Sister Christian" starts to play)

Not yet!



Sorry . . .

MIKE

Listen, sweetheart . . . I understand. And I guess I could rent your room if you leave.

SHERRY

Dad!

ROSANNA pulls up with a squeal of the brakes.

ROSANNA

I thought you said Perry's -

SHERRY

Sorry, we were just havin' a little talk.

ROSANNA

Hey Mr. Hager!

MIKE

Have a good night, girls. Drive safe.

"Sister Christian" starts again. They rock out in the car in slow motion while applying make-up, eating, painting their nails, putting on their catering clothes, etc. Get out and start serving snacks to the audience / guests at the party. WILLIAM backs into SHERRY while she is carrying a tray. Tray falls. Music stops. Lights on SHERRY and WILLIAM.

SHERRY

Oh, so sorry . . .

WILLIAM

You have to watch where you're going.

SHERRY

Hey - you backed into me.

WILLIAM

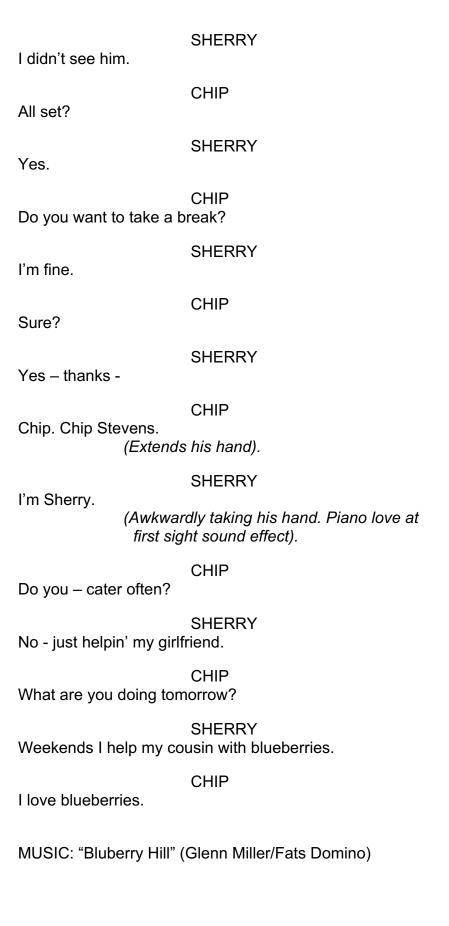
What?

CHIP

Father – please. Just go get cleaned up.

(to SHERRY, helping her pick things up).

So sorry about that. He's used to people moving out of the way.



(SHERRY and CHIP dance with blueberry rakes.).

We found our thrill on Blueberry Hill On Blueberry Hill when I found you The sun stands still on Blueberry Hill And lingers until our dreams come true

The wind over Waldo plays Love's sweet melody No more dropping hors d'oeuvre trays Cuz we're meant to be

Though we're [spoken: from different socio-cultural and socio-economic backgrounds] you fit my bill

For you are my thrill on Blueberry Hill

Even if we're apart, you're part of me still For you are my thrill on Blueberry Hill

Dinner at the Stevens Estate. Quiet Chewing.

CHIP

Mother?

WILLIAM

Yes, Chipster?

CHIP

Father?

HELEN

Yes, Chipster?

(HELEN and BILL look at each other.)

CHIP

I've met someone - very special.

WILLIAM AND HELEN

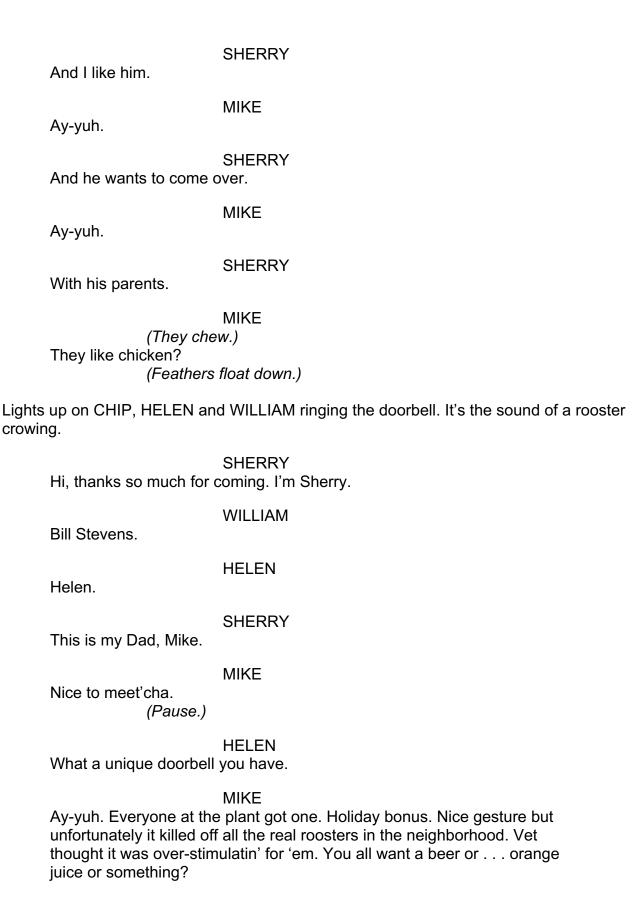
Yes, Chipster?

CHIP

And I think you'll like her very much. When you get to know her.

| Yes, Chipster? | WILLIAM AND HELEN |
|-----------------------------|---|
| And I'd like you to meet | CHIP her. And her family. |
| Yes. | WILLIAM |
| Chip. | HELEN |
| Tomorrow. | CHIP |
| Ster. | WILLIAM |
| I feel like I'm in a movie. | HELEN |
| Nightmare on Route 1? | WILLIAM |
| Who is she? | HELEN |
| meet Sherry with the fre | CHIP our mind with false assumptions, I'd prefer you esh, open, welcoming happy faces you reserve for vinning at golf and book club – respectively. |
| Did you say – | WILLIAM |
| Sherry? | HELEN |
| What's Sherry's family r | WILLIAM name? |
| Hager. | CHIP |
| Where did you meet Mis | WILLIAM ss Hager? |

| Camden. | CHIP |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Yacht club? | HELEN |
| Close. | CHIP |
| Country club? | WILLIAM |
| Closer. | CHIP |
| THE Club? | HELEN |
| We met right here at the | CHIP campaign kick off party. |
| WILLIAM I don't remember any donors with debutante daughter's named Sherry. | |
| CHIP Maybe when you meet her tomorrow you'll remember. We've been invited to her family's home for dinner – in Belfast. | |
| WILLIAM sticks fork into the side of his mouth. CHIP and HELEN try to get it out. Lights change to SHERRY and MIKE. | |
| Dad? | SHERRY |
| Ay-yuh? | MIKE |
| There's uh | SHERRY |
| Ay-yuh? | MIKE |
| A guy who uh – likes | SHERRY s me. |
| Ay-yuh. | MIKE |



WILLIAM

Anything alcoholic will be fine.

MIKE

One of those days, huh?

(Going to fridge).

WILLIAM

You could say that.

SHERRY

Dad, William is better known as Bill, Bill Stevens. Or Senator Stevens. I met Chip because I was catering for a fancy party about how awesome he is at their house.

MIKE

No shit. Bill Stevens in my house. I mean you're basically famous – or I guess infamous is more the word.

SHERRY

Dad -

WILLIAM

Well, I do my best to serve.

MIKE

But now Paul Flaherty's getting close in the polls. Says you're just working for the rich. What'd he call you – gravy on their golfclubs?

WILLIAM

A clumsy metaphor at best.

HELEN

Bill works hard on the behalf of all Mainers – from bank presidents to just regular folks plucking chickens beside the pristine Passashirassaspleag as it empties into our sacred blue coastal waters.

(Mike starts to choke).

Are you all right?

SHERRY

He'll be fine. Why don't you go lie down Dad.

CHIP

Shall I apply the Heimlich maneuver?

SHERRY

Really he's fine it's just - my mom, she um died last year in a bizarre accident at the plant and now every time someone says "pluck"

(Choking gets worse. To MIKE).

Sorry Dad, sorry, sit down!

HELEN

My lord, what happened?

SHERRY

(Handing her a newspaper, tending to MIKE)

HELEN

Belfast woman in critical condition after falling into plucker at Prime Portions Poultry.

(Coughing redoubles).

Oh dear. "Union blames unsafe working conditions." Well, this is something you should be doing something about dear.

WILLIAM

Perhaps we were on vacation. Of course, I would have sent a letter to the family.

MIKE

(hands him a letter, still coughing).

WILLIAM

"With my deepest condolences for your tragic loss" . . . Please understand that elected representatives have so many responsibilities my work would be absolutely impossible without a staff to address constituent tragedies.

MIKE

And this whole time I thought you actually cared.

CHIP

Well, now that we're all getting along, Sherry and I have some great news.

CHIP AND SHERRY

We're engaged!

(MIKE coughs again. WILLIAM is frozen.)

HELEN

But you just met –

SHERRY

And we can barely wait to get married because -

CHIP AND SHERRY

We're in love!

WILLIAM

Nothing personal Sherri, Mike – (to CHIP).

but if you marry this this this . . .

SHERRI

Strong, independent woman . . .

WILLIAM

I will have no choice but to cut you out of the estate plan.

HELEN

And we will no longer have Melinda clean your room.

Dream Sequence later on . . .

LOUDSPEAKER: And Belfast's Broiler Queen for the year 1984 is . . . Sherri Hager!

SHERRI

I am just so happy to be crowned the Broiler Queen amidst such an incredibly competitive field. And I am particularly happy to announce that just a few weeks ago, I became engaged to be married with Chip Stevens, the son of Senator and Helen Stevens. And I know Bill just happens to be here today. And so it is with great pleasure that I want to introduce to you Maine's voice in Washington, champion of the working class, and lover of chicken Bill Stevens!

Crowd: Bill Bill Bill Bill Bill

(SHERRY kisses him on the cheek. CHIP hugs him. Camera's flash.)