

MARGARET
A Betsy-Tacy Reader's Theater Script
Adapted from "Betsy - Tacy"
by Maud Hart Lovelace



CHARACTERS:

Betsy, 5 years old

Tacy, her friend

Mrs. Ray, her mother

Mr. Ray, her father

Julia, her sister, 7 years old

Narrator 1

Narrator 2

NARRATOR 1: That summer Julia and Betsy went for a visit to Uncle Edward's farm. They had a good time too. They saw the cows milked and they helped to gather eggs and they played with chicks and ducklings and they rode on the big farm wagons. But at last the time came to go home, and Betsy was glad. She wanted to tell Tacy all about it.

NARRATOR 2: Betsy's father didn't come to get them. Uncle Edward drove them home. They drove into town and up Hill Street and up to the very end of Hill Street. Betsy was looking everywhere for Tacy; she wanted to tell her all about the farm.

NARRATOR 1: But before she could find Tacy she saw her father. He was standing on the porch waving to them.

MR. RAY: Hurry! I've got a surprise.

NARRATOR 2: And Uncle Edward began to laugh, and stopped the horse. And Julia and Betsy scrambled over the wheel and out of the buggy and ran up the steps of the little yellow cottage, to the porch where their father was waiting.

NARRATOR 1: He was smiling all over his face, and he hugged them and kissed them.

MR. RAY: Guess what's waiting for you inside the house.

NARRATOR 2: Betsy thought and thought. And she knew they had a cat, so she was going to say, "A dog!" But Julia cried out first.

JULIA: Robert Ray Junior!

NARRATOR 1: Her father laughed out loud at that, and he gave her a squeeze.

MR. RAY: Guess again.

JULIA: A little sister!

MR. RAY: That's right. A little sister! And we can't very well call a girl Robert, so you and Betsy have to find a name for her. You can name her all by yourselves.

NARRATOR 2: Betsy's father led the way into the house. For some reason he went on tiptoe. And he led the way into the parlor and into the back parlor and into the new downstairs bedroom, and there was Betsy's mother lying in bed. And resting on her arm was a little red-faced baby. A woman wearing a white apron stood beside the bed.

MRS. RAY: Julia! Betsy! Come here and kiss me, and see your baby sister.

NARRATOR 1: Julia and Betsy tiptoed toward the bed. The room smelled of medicine, and the woman with the white apron was strange, and Betsy felt too. And she didn't at all like the looks of her baby sister! But her mother was gazing at them with such shining eyes... Betsy couldn't bear to hurt her feelings. So she didn't say a word.

NARRATOR 2: Julia actually liked the baby. You could tell she did. She "Oh-ed" and she "Ah-ed."

JULIA: Oh, let me hold her. *May* I hold her, papa?

NARRATOR 1: She lifted up one of the tiny hands.

JULIA: Isn't she darling?

NARRATOR 2: Betsy was disgusted with Julia. Julia never did have much sense, she thought to herself. When nobody was looking she slipped into the kitchen and out the back kitchen door.

NARRATOR 1: She had thought that the first thing she would when she got home would be to run over to Tacy's, but she didn't want to go to Tacy's now. She wanted to get away where nobody could see her, and for a very special reason. She went out past the back yard maple and through the garden and the little orchard and past the buggy shed and into the barn. Old Mag was there munching hay. And Betsy went into a corner of the barn and sat down and began to cry.

NARRATOR 2: She didn't know why she was crying except everything was so queer. Her mamma in bed, a strange woman around, the room smelling of medicine and that *unnecessary* baby.

BETSY: It's a perfectly *unnecessary* baby. *I'm* the baby.

NARRATOR 1: And the more she thought that, the harder she cried, and the farther she scrunched away into a corner of the barn.

NARRATOR 2: Bye and bye Tacy came in. Tacy hadn't seen Betsy go into the barn. She just seemed to know that Betsy was in that barn, as Betsy had known that Tacy would come outdoors early the morning after Baby Bee's funeral. Tacy came in, and she came straight to the corner where Betsy was sitting, and she sat down beside her and put her arm around her. She held Betsy tight. Betsy went "sniff, sniff," "sniff, sniff," every two sniffs farther apart, until at last she

wasn't crying any more. She was just sitting still inside Tacy's arm.

TACY: Most everybody has babies, you know.

BETSY: Do they?

TACY: Yes. Look at our house. First I was the baby, and then Paul came. And then Paul was the baby, and then Bee came. And then Bee died so now Paul's the baby again. But I expect there'll be another baby most any time. You can't keep on being the baby forever.

NARRATOR 1: Somehow that made Betsy feel better, to know that Tacy used to be the baby and now wasn't the baby any more. Tacy got along all right. And if this was something that happened to everybody, having a new baby come to the house now and then, why it just had to happen to her.

BETSY (in a low voice): Our baby's funny looking.

TACY: All babies are at first. They get pretty after a while.

BETSY: My mamma seems to think it's pretty right now.

TACY: Of course. Mammams always do.

BETSY (slowly): Julia didn't mind at all. She liked the baby light away.

TACY: Well, but she's the oldest. The oldest is always different.

NARRATOR 2: Betsy rubbed her fists into her eyes to dry them. She leaned back against Tacy's arm and smelled the smell of the barn.

NARRATOR 1: All of a sudden she thought how odd it was that Tacy should be talking like this. Usually she did most of the talking. But now Tacy was doing the talking. She was trying to comfort Betsy just as Betsy had comforted her after little Bee died. And she *had* comforted her. All the sore hurt feeling was gone.

TACY: I'll help you wheel that baby out in the carriage. We'll wheel her to the chocolate-colored house.

NARRATOR 2: Betsy sat up happily.

BETSY: That will be fun. And my papa said that Julia and I could name her.

TACY (excited): *Name the baby?*

BETSY (proudly): That's what he said.

TACY: Why, I never named a baby in my life! What will you name her?

NARRATOR 1: Betsy thought a moment.

BETSY: Rosy would be a nice name. Come on, let's find papa and tell him.

NARRATOR 2: So Betsy and Tacy took hold of hands and skipped down to the house.

NARRATOR 1: Mr. Ray was looking for Betsy.

MR. RAY: I was wondering where you had gone to. Come on in, we've got to name the baby.

BETSY: Tacy and I have thought of a name. It's Rosy.

MR. RAY: Rosy! Rosy! It's certainly a beautiful name.

NARRATOR 2: And later he and Betsy and Julia sat down in the kitchen. They drew their chairs into a circle and talked importantly in whispers. But the baby wasn't named Rosy after all. For Julia wanted to call her Ginivra.

NARRATOR 1: Betsy wouldn't have Ginivra, and Julia wouldn't have Rosy. Julia wouldn't have Rosy Ginivra, and Betsy wouldn't have Ginivra Rosy.

MR. RAY: See here. How about Margaret?

NARRATOR 2: Betsy liked Margaret better than Rosy. Julia liked Margaret better than Ginivra. They all thought that Margaret was a beautiful name. So they named the baby Margaret.

NARRATOR 1: And Tacy was right about the baby getting pretty. She grew prettier every day.



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