

# Betsy's Birthday Party

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



## Characters:

*Mrs. Ray*

*Mr. Ray*

*Julia*

*Betsy*

*Katie*

*Tom (small boy)*

*Narrator 1*

*Narrator 2*

NARRATOR 1: After Betsy and Tacy's first meeting (but before they came to be such good friends), there was a time of bad weather. It was filled with snowing and blowing, raining and sleeting. It seemed as though spring never would come.

NARRATOR 2: But up in the hills pasque flowers were lifting their purple heads; and down in the valley beside the frozen river, the willow twigs were yellow. Birds were back from the south, shivering red-winged blackbirds and bluebirds and robins.

NARRATOR 1: Betsy and Tacy peeped out their windows at them, and if they saw each other they made faces and pulled down the blinds. However, when it came time to make out the list Betsy's birthday party, Betsy's mother included Tacy.

MRS. RAY: Of course we'll invite the little girl from across the street. Julia, will you find out what her name is?

NARRATOR 2: Julia, who was eight years old and went to school, was acquainted now with Tacy's older sister. Katie was her name; she was eight, too. When she came back the next day at noon, she told her family what she had learned.

JULIA: Her name is Tacy.

BETSY: (surprised) Tacy! Tacy!

NARRATOR 1: Betsy felt herself growing warm. She knew then for the first time that Tacy hadn't been calling names when she put her head around the storm shed door, but had meant to say that she wanted to be friends after all.

MRS. RAY: It's an odd name. What does it stand for?

JULIA: Anastacia. She's Anna Anastacia.

NARRATOR 2: So Mrs. Ray wrote out the invitation, inviting Tacy to Betsy's birthday party. She invited Katie, too, to be company for Julia. She invited fifteen boys and girls in all.

MRS. RAY: I hope to goodness it will be nice weather. Then they can play out of doors.

BETSY: I think it would be much more fun if we could play out of doors.

NARRATOR 1: For the Ray house was small. But the sloping lawn was big, with maples and a butternut tree in front of the house, and behind it fruit trees and berry bushes and a garden, and Old Mag's barn, and the shed where the carriage was kept.

NARRATOR 2: She was excited about the party, for she had never had one before. And she was to wear her first silk dress. It was checked tan and pink, with lace around the neck and sleeves. Her mother had promised to take her hair out of braids for the party. She had promised to dress it in curls.

NARRATOR 1: Sure enough, on the night before the party, after Julia and Betsy had had their baths in the tub set out before the kitchen fire, Betsy's hair was rolled up on rags. There were curl-making bumps all over her head.

NARRATOR 2: And either because of the bumps or because the party was getting so near, Betsy could hardly sleep at all. She would wake up and think, "There's going to be ice cream!" And then she'd go to sleep again. And then she'd wake up and think, "I wonder if Tacy will come." And so it went, all night long.

NARRATOR 1: When she woke up finally it was morning, and the sun was shining so brightly that it had quite dried off the lawn, which had been free of snow for several days. Betsy flew downstairs to breakfast.

MR. RAY: (shaking his head) Dear me, Betsy can't have a party. She's sick. Look how red her cheeks are! Look at those bumps that have come out on her head.

NARRATOR 2: Betsy's father loved to joke. Of course there were bumps on her head, because the curls hadn't been unwrapped. They weren't unwrapped for hours, not until almost time for the party. Betsy's hair didn't take kindly to curls.

NARRATOR 1: But her hair was good and curly when the rags were removed. It stood out in a soft brown fluff about her face, which was round with very red cheeks and a smile which showed teeth parted in the middle.

MRS. RAY: When Betsy is happy, she is happier than anyone else in the world. (pause) And she's almost always happy.

NARRATOR 2: Betsy was happy today . . . although she had little shivers inside her for fear that Tacy wouldn't come. The silk dress rustled beautifully over two starched petticoats which were

buttoned to a muslin under-waist over woolen underwear.

NARRATOR 1: The legs of the underwear were folded tightly under her white party stockings and into the tops of her shoes. They made her legs look even chunkier than they were. She and Julia had hoped that their winter underwear would come off for the party. But their mother had said, "In April? Certainly not!"

NARRATOR 2: At one minute after half-past two, the children started coming. Each one brought a birthday present which he gave to Betsy at the door. Each one said, "Happy birthday!" and Betsy said, "Thank you!"

TOM: Now let'th thppeak pietheth.

NARRATOR 1: Tom meant to say, "Now let's speak pieces," but he couldn't, because he had lost two teeth and the new ones weren't in yet.

NARRATOR 2: Betsy kept waiting for Tacy to come. At last she saw her crossing the street, hanging on to Katie's hand. Tacy held her head down, so that her long red ringlets almost covered her face. You could hardly see what she looked like.

NARRATOR 1: She handed Betsy a package, looking down all the while. The present was a little glass pitcher with a gold painted rim. She wouldn't look up when Betsy thanked her. She wouldn't say, "Happy birthday!"

KATIE: (explaining) She's bashful.

NARRATOR 2: She certainly was bashful. She hung on to Katie's hand as though she were afraid she would be drowned if she let go. She wouldn't join in any of the games. She wouldn't even try to pin the tail on the donkey.

NARRATOR 1: The sun shone warmly so that they could play their games on the lawn. Betsy's mother gave prizes. To please the little boy named Tom she let them all speak pieces. He knew a piece . . . that was why he had been so anxious to have them spoken. His eyes shined like big brown stars.

TOM: Twinkle, twinkle, little thtar.

NARRATOR 2: But all the while Tacy kept her head snuggled against Katie's arm.

NARRATOR 1: At last Julia formed the children in a line. Betsy's mother would play a march on the piano, she explained. Betsy, because she was the birthday child, could choose a partner and lead the line. They would march into the house for their refreshments.

NARRATOR 2: The music started, and when Tacy heard the music she tossed back her curls a little. Betsy was sorry she had made that mistake about saying, "Don't call names!" so she chose Tacy for her partner. And Betsy and Tacy took hold of hands and marched at the head of the line.

NARRATOR 1: They marched around and around the house and in and out of the parlor and the back parlor. Betsy's mother loved to play the piano; she came down hard and joyously on the keys.

NARRATOR 2: Every once in a while Tacy would look at Betsy sidewise through her curls. Her bright blue eyes were dancing in her little freckled face, as though to say, "Isn't this fun?" They marched and they marched, and at last they were told to lead the way to the dining room. There the cake was shining with all its five candles, and a dish of ice cream was set out for every child.

NARRATOR 1: Betsy kept hold of Tacy's hand, and they sat down side by side. From that time on, at almost every party, you found Betsy and Tacy side by side.

NARRATOR 2: Betsy was given beautiful presents at that fifth birthday party. Besides the little glass pitcher, she got colored cups and saucers, a small silk handkerchief embroidered with forget-me-nots, pencils and puzzles and balls. But the nicest present she received was not the usual kind of present. It was the present of a friend. It was Tacy.



© Betsy-Tacy Society  
P.O. Box 94, Mankato, MN 56002-0094  
[www.betsy-tacysociety.org](http://www.betsy-tacysociety.org)  
Lois Lenski illustrations © used with permission from HarperCollins