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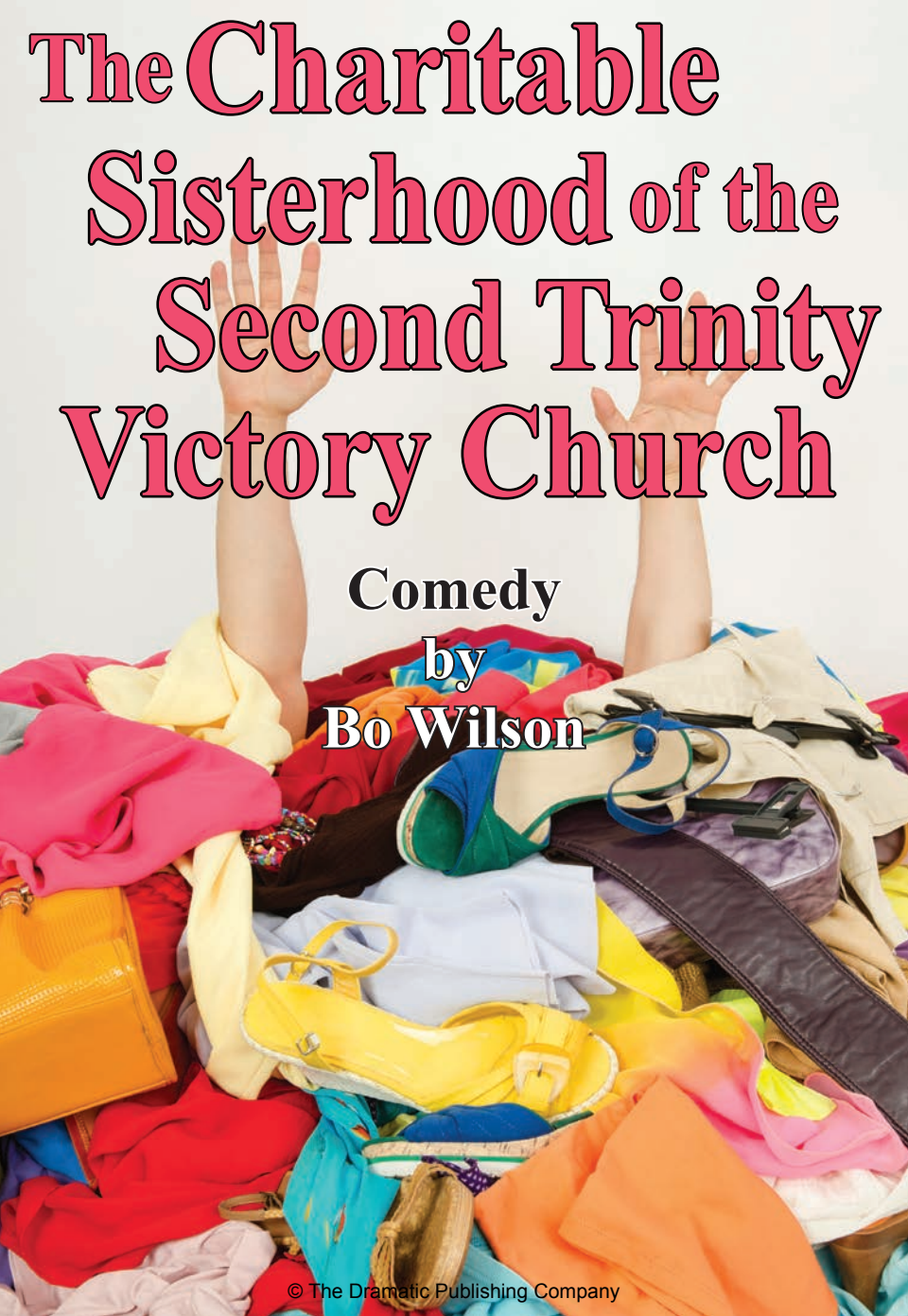
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Dramatic Publishing



The Charitable Sisterhood of the Second Trinity Victory Church

Comedy
by
Bo Wilson

“A stormy night, washed-out roads and an ensemble of five actresses ... make for a delightful evening of theatre.” —*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

The Charitable Sisterhood of the Second Trinity Victory Church

Comedy. By Bo Wilson. Cast: 5w. The roads are flooded, the bridges are washed out, and less generous souls are staying safely indoors, but it takes more than a little rain to keep the ladies of the Charitable Sisterhood from fulfilling their sworn mission. Bea Littleton is the pastor's wife; Lorraine Jensen is the tireless mother of nine; Tina Yates is the transplanted Yankee; Janet Murchison is the newest arrival. When these ladies meet to organize a relief effort for homeless Guatemalans, they are greeted with a small mountain of community donations—but one woman's junk is another woman's treasure, and that pile of stuff in this little church basement is hiding a thing or two. Come sit in on this month's meeting in the basement of the Second Trinity Victory Church; our five angels of mercy will leave you breathless with laughter as they do their best to help the victims of global disaster, spiritual deprivation and, most of all, one another. A hilarious and heartwarming play! “The humorously unwieldy title ... might suggest another church lady play, but the charitable sisters are more like the women of *Steel Magnolias*, with a few unexpected twists.” (*Richmond Times-Dispatch*) *Unit set. Approximate running time: 1 hour; 30 minutes. Code: CQ1.*

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By

BO WILSON



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BO WILSON

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“The Charitable Sisterhood of the Second Trinity Victory Church was originally produced by Virginia Repertory Theatre, Richmond, Va.”

The Charitable Sisterhood of the Second Trinity Victory Church was originally produced by Virginia Repertory Theatre at Hanover Tavern on July 18, 2014.

Director Bruce Miller
Set Design Terrie Powers
Costumes Marcia Miller-Hailey
Lights B.J. Wilkerson

Cast:

Tina Yates Jan Guarino
Lorraine Jensen Debra Wagoner
Bea Littleton Catherine Shaffner
Janet Murchison Donna Marie Miller
Riley Reynolds Louise Keeton

The Charitable Sisterhood of the Second Trinity Victory Church

CHARACTERS

TINA YATES: 40s. Originally from Walbrook, just outside Baltimore. She enjoys her role as the local Yankee.

LORRAINE JENSEN: 40s. She's lived here all her life. She has nine children, at last count.

BEA LITTLETON: late 40s to early 50s. The wife of Pastor Hiram Littleton and happy to let you know it.

JANET MURCHISON: 30s. Attractive, cultured, newly arrived from Georgia and still settling in.

RILEY REYNOLDS: Late 20s. We'll get her story in a bit.
Voices of **RADIO ANNOUNCER** and **DEPUTY**.

SETTING

A Friday afternoon, spring, 1977.

We're in the basement of the Second Trinity Victory Church, just outside Pennington Gap, Virginia.

MUSIC NOTE: Throughout the piece, the radio announcer introduces various songs that fade out as the scene continues. Producers are free to choose any music that might reasonably be found on a mountain religious station of the period and to adjust the announcer's text accordingly.

The Charitable Sisterhood of the Second Trinity Victory Church

ACT I

(IN BLACK: the sound of steady rain with distant thunder. We hear a radio broadcast, and as we're listening, the darkness fades, very slightly, as we sneak in the very faint light of an exit sign somewhere upstage and the spill that outlines a doorway on the other side of the stage.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (*V.O.*). ... But President Carter says he will not be deterred on this keystone of his domestic agenda. Turning now to local news, we've got another WRSN storm alert. We're getting reports from all the surrounding counties: rain, rain and more rain. There are flash flood warnings in effect for Wise and Lee counties, Big Gap, Little Gap, Little Big Gap and the whole area from Rose Hill all the way up to Dryden, and unless you faithful are busy building an ark, best stay inside, check your flashlights, get out the candles and make sure you got plenty of batteries for your transistor radio so you can stay tuned to thirteen-twenty, WRSN—Risen Radio. Now set your ears all the way back to nineteen and fifty eight, here are the Merritt Sisters, singing "How Great Thou Art."

(The hymn begins and fades down as lights rise to dim.

From the spill of light from the hallway, we can see that we are in the large "Fellowship Hall" in the basement of Second Trinity Victory Church. It's a typical representative of its species—a large, institutionally tiled open space

-serving several functions that vary from day to day. It is that area into which one more group can always be fit, stretching its capacity exactly enough to accommodate whatever the community needs from it.

Right now, most of its folding chairs are folded and placed in long rows that lean precariously against the back wall, with only two or three open and scattered around. Tables have been collapsed, and the center of the space has been given to an unstable mountain of old moving boxes, oversize bags, hampers and other vessels. Some have been strained past bursting, and their spillage reveals a jumble of clothes and toys and bedclothes and towels and camp gear and medical supplies and packages of food and plastic jugs of water and on and on and on. It's as though someone took a few dozen garages and attics, turned them upside down and shook them, leaving the results for someone else to clean.

Moving toward us from offstage, we hear TINA YATES.)

TINA (*offstage*). Hellooo?

(Entering the space is TINA. She is dressed in a dripping raincoat and holding an equally drippy furled umbrella.

She holds for a beat before calling out.)

TINA (*cont'd*). Bea?

LORRAINE. Tina Yates?

(They're calling across space, and they can't see each other very well at all.)

TINA. Yes, who's that?

LORRAINE. It's Lorraine Jensen!

TINA. Hi!

LORRAINE. Hi! (*Pause.*) Marco!

TINA (*beginning to shuffle carefully*). Polo! Why are you way over there?

LORRAINE. I was trying to find the stupid light switch, I will never understand why they had to put it clear on the other side of the room ...

TINA. Marco...

(The LIGHTS come on brightly.

LORRAINE gives a little wave.)

LORRAINE. Polo!

(LORRAINE notices the pile. Both ladies regard it, awe-struck, walking around it slowly.)

LORRAINE. TINA.

Oh my lord in heaven ... Wowwwwwww ...

LORRAINE. It looks like my sister's garage just ... threw up. Did you have a hard time getting here with the storm?

TINA (*trying to find a place for her dripping raincoat and umbrella, finally giving up and putting them down on the floor close to the wall*). It's unbelievable out there.

LORRAINE. It's unbelievable in here, just look at all this ...

(LORRAINE reaches out to touch some item, but TINA stops her.)

TINA (*whispers*). Careful! You don't wanna bring it all down on top of you ...

LORRAINE (*spying a sweater or similar top, holding it up*). Oh now this is kind of cute actually ...

TINA. We're sposedta sort through ... all this?

LORRAINE. Sortin' through all the crap is the first step of any charity drive, don't you know that?

TINA. This is my first one. I did a couple of bake sales earlier this year, and I helped with the car wash last summer but ... *(She is peering into the pile, noticing something.)*

LORRAINE. The first thing you learn? When you say “charity drive,” folks think you said “junk wagon.” They just use us to clean out their attics, bless their hearts ... *(She is eyeing the pile suspiciously.)* There better not be any rats or woodchucks in there ...

(TINA has pulled out a shoe, from which trails a taut shoestring that vanishes into the pile. She looks at LORRAINE, who shrugs—it’s a mystery! TINA continues to pull and there slowly emerges the shoe’s mate, itself lashed to something ... and TINA pulls, slowly and steadily, shoe by mismatched shoe, extracting a seemingly endless parade of tied-together footwear. LORRAINE watches.)

LORRAINE *(cont’d)*. Someone was bored ...

(The extraction continues.)

TINA. Or has a weird sense of humor ...

(And continues.)

LORRAINE. It looks like you’re pulling out giblets.

(TINA successfully extracts the last shoe, and drops the entire amazing series into a big pile, a modest satellite to the main mountain of stuff.)

TINA. I guess that can be the start of the shoe pile. *(She makes to approach the pile again.)*

LORRAINE. So hang on, you’ve never actually done anything that Bea was in charge of?

TINA. I don't think so. Helen Jarvis ran the bake sales, and that nice man with the limp?

LORRAINE. Calvin.

TINA. Right, he did the car wash. And after that was when Bea had me in to her office for coffee and told me that I was officially the newest member of the Charitable Sisterhood, she gave me this little pin and everything. (*Shows a small pin on her blouse and notices LORRAINE.*) You didn't wear yours?

LORRAINE. Honey, I'm lucky if I can find enough plates for dinner, I don't know *where* that thing went. Oh, but don't tell Bea!

TINA. I won't.

LORRAINE. So you've never actually *worked* for her.

TINA. For Bea? No. (*Turning her attention to the pile.*) I guess we'd better go ahead and—

LORRAINE. *I* guess we'd better wait for Bea.

(LORRAINE has found a lawn chair on the pile and is opening it and sitting. Ahhh. Here's a woman who can make any chance to sit down a weekend at the beach.)

TINA. It feels wrong to just sit here.

LORRAINE. Says you. This is the first thing like peace I've had all week.

TINA. I feel lazy if I'm not doing something.

LORRAINE. Ha! You don't have any kids, am I right?

TINA. That's right.

LORRAINE. You want one of mine? In fact, don't stop at one, take three or four.

TINA. You have, is it eight?

LORRAINE. Nine. Conor, Chloe, Kyle, Cole, Kerry, Kenny, Cody, Cory, Carly and Kit-Kat.

TINA. That's 10.

LORRAINE. Kit-Kat's the hamster. Sounds backward doesn't it? One hamster and nine kids ... Except ... I *think* the hamster is missing. Or maybe it's Cody.

TINA. You don't know whether your son is missing or not?

LORRAINE. The only time you see 'em all in one place is if there's cake. (*Quick beat as she ponders and then realizes.*) Or a turtle.

TINA. Well ... you're very ... blessed.

LORRAINE. That's what Conrad keeps saying.

TINA. Which one is Conrad?

LORRAINE. The husband one. He says, "We're so *bless-ed!*!" Then he leaves. For what *he* calls "work."

TINA. Yeah ... (*Beat. She's having trouble being idle.*) Still ... (*Beat. It's getting worse.*) We can't just ... sit here.

LORRAINE. Oho, yes we can.

TINA. But we could—

LORRAINE. Anything we do before Bea gets here? She'll just make us undo.

TINA. It can't hurt to set up some tables. (*Moves toward them.*)

LORRAINE. I wouldn't.

TINA. Why not?

LORRAINE. When Bea Littleton is running something, it never pays to have *initiative*. If she was in charge of extinguishing a fire, and you managed to put it out before she got there? She'd make you light it and get it going all over again so you could put it out *her* way.

TINA. So even just tables, a couple of tables, that would be ...

LORRAINE. A mistake. Yes ma'am.

TINA. But ... there's ... *stuff*. A big pile of stuff. And it's gonna need places to sort it, and—

LORRAINE. I'm not saying it's not the *right* idea. Just sit tight till it can be *her* idea.

TINA. She wouldn't come down against *tables* ...

LORRAINE. You wouldn't think so, would you? I know.

(A quick beat as TINA fights opposing urges—listen to advice vs. get something done. LORRAINE lifts her hand in surrender.)

LORRAINE *(cont'd)*. Go ahead. Do whatcha gotta do.

(TINA moves to the tables.)

LORRAINE *(cont'd, speaking to no one)*. This is how we learn ...

TINA. Wow, these are heavy ... *(She is moving one into place, holding it on its side to unfold the legs.)*

LORRAINE. You're gonna do all that work and pinch your fingers, and then we're just gonna have to take 'em all down again, and then in a little bit, she'll magically have the idea.

She'll say, "Ladies, here's what we need to do,"

that's how she starts off when she's announcing anything you already knew 10 minutes ago,

"Ladies, here's what we need to do:

We need to set up a few *tables*, let's look sharp now!"

And then there we all are, doing whatever we did once all over *again*.

So what I'm saying is: Just wait. Save yourself some—*there she is*, hi, Bea!

(BEA LITTLETON has stepped in.)

BEA. Mrs. Yates? What are you doing with that?

LORRAINE (*watching, rapt*). Tell her, Mrs. Yates.

TINA. Please call me Tina.

BEA. What's that you're doing, Tina?

(*Beat.*)

TINA. I was ... folding this table up, to get it out of our way.

BEA. Well, now, hold on just a minute, let's us just *think* about things! What I see here is an enormous pile of stuff, and we're gonna need places to put it, to get it all organized.

So ladies, here's what we need to do: We need to set up a few tables, not take 'em down. Let's look sharp now!

LORRAINE (*rising from her chair*). You see, Tina, Bea is a woman who just ... *sees* it. She's got a vision.

BEA (*pleased*). Thank you, Lorraine, I appreciate you.

(*TINA has returned to her table efforts, and BEA takes approving note of the pile.*)

BEA (*cont'd*). Oh, good, Calvin got the rest of the donations in here this morning.

LORRAINE. There wasn't enough already??

BEA (*truly taking them in for the first time*). For heaven's sake, look at this floor, it's *soaked* ... (*She has grabbed an article of clothing from the pile, and steps on it, shoving it with her foot as a mop.*) You just have to know that any little puddle one of these volunteers is going to come along and slip, fall down and clonk their head, and our insurance will just go through the roof ...

LORRAINE (*following BEA's gesture, looking upward*). And then even *more* rain will just come pouring in ...

(*BEA is making a show of patient waiting. LORRAINE shrugs.*)

LORRAINE (*cont'd*). It's a vicious cycle, is all I'm saying.

BEA. If you'd rather not be here, if you'd rather just—

LORRAINE. No, please! Don't send me home, I'll be good!

(BEA gives a look then returns to mopping as LORRAINE speaks.)

LORRAINE (*cont'd, to TINA*). You have no idea what it's like when nine children can't even go outside.

BEA. Oh, Tina, I see you wore your Sisterhood angel pin, good for you. And Lorraine ... ?

LORRAINE. Oh, I didn't want it to get messed up, I figured we'd be, you know, all this stuff, and I ...

TINA (*to the rescue*). Are we expecting many others?

BEA. Well ... I had hoped for a better turnout ...

(BEA is folding LORRAINE's lawn chair and putting it back on the pile as she speaks.)

BEA (*cont'd*). I had maybes and probably's from about 16 ladies but that was before the floods came.

(TINA is still struggling with the table. It's slowly becoming a little ridiculous.)

BEA (*cont'd*). I think that table will work better if the legs are open and it's right-side-up.

LORRAINE. That's what I mean, she just *sees* it.

BEA. You know, Lorraine—in Ephesians we're told, "Let there be no foolish talk nor crude joking."

LORRAINE. Romans says, "Be not wise in thine own sight."

(Beat.)

BEA. Romans says that, really?

LORRAINE. 12:16.

BEA. Not bad.

LORRAINE. Thank you.

TINA. Can someone help me?

(TINA is losing her fight with the table. BEA walks to the table and very casually performs a series of quick, deft motions: presto, it's a table, and she's off to the next task.)

TINA *(cont'd)*. That was like magic.

LORRAINE. Oooo, Tina, you called Bea a witch ...

TINA. I did *not*!

BEA *(has gotten another table with TINA)*. Lorraine, do you think you could set up a few chairs?

LORRAINE *(the first chair she goes for is the lawn chair that is rapidly becoming "hers")*. I don't think we oughta get our hopes up, I think it's gonna be just us ...

TINA. It is pretty bad out there ...

BEA. Yes, I suppose it is pretty bad out there. Folks might feel like they don't wanna leave their houses to help the folks down there in Guatemala who had three *weeks* of rain, which swept *their* houses right off the face of the *Earth*!

LORRAINE *(picking an item out of the pile)*. But a Scooby Doo lunch box is what they need to save 'em?

BEA. Lorraine? *(Her smile is dangerously patient.)* Who are we?

(LORRAINE sighs and then mumbles something.)

BEA *(cont'd)*. I'm sorry?

LORRAINE. The Charitable Sisterhood of Second Trinity Victory Church.

BEA. And we are here for what?

LORRAINE. To serve those in need at times of need, whatever they need.

BEA. That's right. It does *not* say, "To stay in our houses if we might get rained on."

Lookit both of *you* ladies!

You walked through that door looking like the wreck of the Hesperus!

(TINA and LORRAINE exchange a look.)

BEA *(cont'd)*. But you came! You're here!

The saying is "come H or high water," and you dared the high water and here you are, *that* is what the Charitable Sisterhood is all about.

LORRAINE. "Come H or high water?"

BEA *(by now tables and chairs are set up)*. All rightly!

Ladies, here's what we need to do:

Just grab a piece of this pile, put it onto your table and then start sorting.

LORRAINE. Sorting how? Burn or not burn?

BEA. The only question right now is,

is this a thing homeless people in a hot humid place need right away?

LORRAINE *(lifting a lunch box)*. So we're saying no ...

BEA *(finishing exasperatedly)*. No Scooby Doo, that's right.

LORRAINE. I'll just keep this for Connor ...

BEA. Let's look sharp!

(They all get busy piling things onto three tables. TINA pulls out a winter coat, something parka-style, clearly for bitter cold.)

TINA. I saw in Vogue this is what everyone is wearing in the jungles this summer.

LORRAINE. It's like nobody cares what the sign says:

“Help the flood victims in Guatemala.”

I mean, *one* water ski?

TINA. You ever notice, there are no cold Gua's ...

BEA. No cold what?

TINA. No cold Gua's. Guatemala, Guadalajara ...

LORRAINE. Guadalcanal

BEA. Maybe Gua means hot.

LORRAINE. They're Guadforsaken.

TINA. Guad give me strength.

(TINA and LORRAINE are giggling, but they fall silent under BEA's reproachful stare.)

BEA. We harness the generosity of others, ladies!

We use our patience and our wisdom for seeing which parts of their generosity to keep ...

LORRAINE. And which parts of their generosity are ridiculous, bless their hearts ...

TINA *(holding up a fairly hideous creation)*. Which kind of generosity are we calling a rooster lamp?

BEA. Oh isn't that *adorable!*

(TINA looks around quickly—what could BEA mean? And just that fast, BEA has liberated the lamp from TINA's hands.)

LORRAINE. She collects roosters.

BEA. You didn't know that? Oh I know *exactly* where this can go ...

LORRAINE. Don't the people in Guatawhatsis need light in this, their time of darkness?

BEA. Oh, a thing like this would only get in their way ...