

**EASY BAKE**  
a play in one act

*Lights up inside a country home decorated with patterned textiles and a worn wooden floor. A long breakfast table once suited for hectic mornings and festive holidays rests center stage. JOANN (70s) sits in her favorite rocking chair facing the window offstage. Sun pours onto her lap. She sips something while doing the morning crossword. The radio plays Lawrence Welk's "Ain't She Sweet." JOANN hums along, "Ain't she sweet? See her walking down that street. Yes I ask you very confidentially, ain't she sweet? Ain't she nice? Look her over once or twice. Yes I ask you very confidentially, ain't she nice?"*

*JOANN is stuck on a word when FRANNY (13) bursts through the backdoor. She is wearing a hand me down Iowa State Wrestling sweatshirt and a short purple skirt. She has an Easy-Bake Oven nestled behind her back, its chord dragging behind her.*

JOANN

*(startled)*

Franny!

FRANNY

Hi Grandma.

JOANN

*(turning the radio off)*

What a surprise, I wasn't expecting you this afternoon.  
Figured you'd be in the barn gettin ready for the big day.

FRANNY

I need some eggs.

JOANN

Are you wearing a skirt?

FRANNY

*(she is)*

No.

JOANN

Oh.

FRANNY

Do you have any?

JOANN  
Any what?

FRANNY  
Eggs.

JOANN  
Eggs?

FRANNY  
Yes, eggs!

JOANN  
What do you need eggs for?

FRANNY  
Nothing.

JOANN  
You gonna throw them at something?

FRANNY  
No.

JOANN  
A house?

FRANNY  
No!

JOANN  
A person?

FRANNY  
NO!

JOANN  
Then *what?*

FRANNY  
Do you have any, or no?

JOANN

Francis, do I look like a chicken to you?

FRANNY

Sorry.

I only need two.

Please?

JOANN

I am not giving you any eggs until you tell me exactly what you plan on doing with them.

FRANNY

I want breakfast.

JOANN

It's 4pm.

FRANNY

Well, I just woke up.

*(beat)*

JOANN

So you're not going to tell me?

FRANNY

It's -

I need them for a project.

JOANN

Does this "project" involve whatever you're hidin' back there?

FRANNY

Back where?

JOANN

Behind your back.

*(JOANN gestures towards the Easy-Bake Oven)*

FRANNY

Oh.

Maybe.

JOANN

*(irritated)*

Jesus, Fran.

FRANNY

It's for school, okay?

JOANN

It looks like a toaster.

FRANNY

It's an oven.

JOANN

Let me see it.

*(FRANNY reveals the miniature oven)*

JOANN

Where in the world did you get that?

FRANNY

Wal-Mart.

JOANN

Did your Mama buy it for you?

FRANNY

No.

JOANN

Your Dad then?

FRANNY

I bought it.

JOANN

With what money?

FRANNY

.....

I used my jar.

JOANN

You emptied your jar?!

FRANNY

Yeah.

JOANN

To buy a toaster?!

FRANNY

It's an oven!!

JOANN

I thought you were savin' up to buy a BB gun!

FRANNY

I changed my mind.

JOANN

I thought you wanted to blast cans with your Grandfather!

FRANNY

Yeah, well -  
Sounds kinda lame.

JOANN

Kinda lame? Blowing things up? Who are you and what have you done with my granddaughter?  
Are you feeling alright?

*(JOANN somewhat playfully puts her palm on FRANNY's forehead as if to check her temperature.)*

FRANNY

I'm fine, okay? I just need some eggs.

*(teeny tiny pause)*

JOANN

Did you walk all the way here?

FRANNY

Yeah.

JOANN

You know the store would have been at least a half mile closer...

FRANNY

Yeah, well -

I already emptied my coin jar so -

JOANN

So now you are lying to me in my own living room.

FRANNY

I'm not lying!

JOANN

Then what in God's name are you doing here carrying around a mini oven instead of preparing for the fair?

FRANNY

I *am* preparing for the fair!

JOANN

I don't think pigs care much for toasted eggs.

FRANNY

They're not for my pigs, they're for me!  
To bake with.

JOANN

What?

FRANNY

I'm going to bake something.

JOANN

Why?

FRANNY

For the fair.

JOANN

To compete?

FRANNY

Yes.

JOANN

But what about your pigs?

FRANNY

I don't want to show pigs anymore.

JOANN

What? Why not?

FRANNY

I just don't like them.

JOANN

But you practically live in the mud with those things! They're your best friends!

FRANNY

They are *not* my best friends!

*(pause)*

I just want to try something new, okay?

*(JOANN looks at the Easy-Bake, she looks at FRANNY.)*

JOANN

So you want to do baking? Is that what this is?

FRANNY

Can I just have the eggs?

*(pause)*

JOANN

Alright.

FRANNY

Thanks.

*(FRANNY stands awkwardly at the door, clutching her oven. JOANN heads towards the fridge.)*

JOANN

You know your Dad's been tellin' me all about the team.  
Sounds like you got a pretty impressive bunch this season.

FRANNY

I guess.

JOANN

I've been meaning to get over to the barn to see 'em but it's difficult for me these days, with my bad knee and all.

FRANNY

Oh.

Sorry.

About your knee -

JOANN

He said you got a Chester White?

He brought me a photograph last week and I just about collapsed into my chair.  
Beautiful creature.

FRANNY

Yeah.

That's Barbie Que.

JOANN

If you ask me, a Chester should get you an automatic bypass to State.  
You just can't compete with that color.  
And one of your Berkshire's is fatter than a manatee, your Dad says.

FRANNY

I don't know, maybe.

JOANN

What's its name?

FRANNY

The Berkshire?

JOANN

Yes.



FRANNY  
Jimi Hamdrix.

JOANN  
*(chuckling)*  
It's a shame Jimi won't have the chance to shine.  
Your lot would've been the pride and joy of the club.

*(JOANN lets that sink in. She hands the eggs to Franny.)*

FRANNY  
Thanks.  
For the eggs.

JOANN  
So you're really going to use that little thing?

FRANNY  
Well -  
Yes.  
I've got a plan.

JOANN  
I thought you had a plan too, but it sure didn't involve mini skirts and mini toasters.

FRANNY  
I'm going to make the biggest and bestest cake you've ever seen.

JOANN  
Oh yeah?

FRANNY  
Mhmm!

JOANN  
How many layers?

FRANNY  
*(thinks for a bit)*

12.

JOANN  
12 layers?

FRANNY  
Yup.

JOANN  
In that thing?

*(FRANNY looks at her oven. "Oh.")*

FRANNY  
Well there are a lot of other things that I could make.

JOANN  
Like what?

FRANNY  
I don't know...  
Like Creamee Brulie?

JOANN  
Crème Brûlée?

FRANNY  
Yeah, that's what I said.

JOANN  
Well you need a blowtorch to do that, hon.

FRANNY  
Oh. Right.

JOANN  
But I'm sure you'll get it figured out.  
You seem to have already made up your mind anyways.

FRANNY  
I have.

JOANN  
Good luck!

*(FRANNY manages to hold the two eggs in one hand and her oven in the other. She turns to leave. She turns back.)*

FRANNY

Do you have a blow torch?

JOANN

I do.

FRANNY

Really?

JOANN

Sure.

FRANNY

That's cool.

*(FRANNY stands awkwardly at the door)*

FRANNY

Could you maybe show me how to use it?

JOANN

Is that what this is about? Using a blowtorch?

FRANNY

I just want to make the Crème Brûlée, okay?

JOANN

I just don't understand why // you would decided to -

FRANNY

Nevermind. I'll just figure something else out.

Thanks for the eggs.

*(FRANNY turns to leave. A beat.)*

JOANN

Alright, alright, alright. Hang on a minute.

*(FRANNY turns around hopefully. JOANN sighs heavily.)*

JOANN (CONT'D)

First things first we are going to need way more than two eggs. Grab the carton from the fridge and then I can show you how to separate the yolks.

*(FRANNY does as she's told. JOANN demonstrates with the eggs. Cracking, draining, separating, etc.)*

JOANN

See that? See how only the yellow part goes into the bowl? We need ten of those.

FRANNY

Okay!

*(FRANNY begins the process of adding 10 eggs. It should be slow and awkward)*

JOANN

I'm going to put a cream and vanilla mixture on the stove.

The key to this part is to make sure that it doesn't burn. We want to heat it just until we can see some bubbles forming near the sides of the pan.

You got that?

FRANNY

Bubbles, yeah.

*(FRANNY continues sorting yolks. JOANN turns the radio back on. It plays quietly. JOANN puts the mixture on the stove.)*

JOANN

Did you know that if you blast the radio in the barn during the days leading up to the fair, it helps the animals get accustomed to the loud noise?

That was a little trick I learned growin' up.

FRANNY

Oh, that's cool.

JOANN

Works like a charm. The judges were pretty impressed.

FRANNY

You showed your pigs?

JOANN

No.

No, I didn't.

That wasn't allowed.

FRANNY

*(noticing the pan)*

Oh, look, bubbles!

JOANN

Okay now we are going to scrape some vanilla bean seeds into that bubbly cream.

FRANNY

Can I do it?

JOANN

Sure.

*(FRANNY goes to scrape the vanilla bean)*

JOANN

You want me to finish the eggs?

FRANNY

No, no! I can do it.

JOANN

Alright.

*(JOANN goes back to stirring the cream. A long pause.)*

You know, the county fair used to be my least favorite weekend of the year.

FRANNY

Oh really? Why?

JOANN

I just remember all these people stuffed inside a couple of pop-up tents. It was unbearably hot and wickedly stuffy. The days seemed to drag on and on and on.

I always wished I could've been outside instead.

FRANNY

Why couldn't you be outside?

JOANN

In those days, all the girls had to do some sort of sewing or cooking project. So we stayed inside the tent.

FRANNY

Only the boys were allowed to show animals?

JOANN

That's right.

FRANNY

Oh.

That sucks.

But I bet the tent smelled amazing, right?

JOANN

Maybe so. But that's not the part I remember.

*(pause)*

Do they still do that end of the fair dance?

FRANNY

Yeah.

I mean -

idon'tknowit'sreallystupidsoidon'tcare.

But -

I think so.

JOANN

Gosh...

FRANNY

Did you ever go to it?

JOANN

I sure did. Everyone did.

I mean, back then, the whole fair was about gettin' to that dance.

The girls with the sweetest treats got the guys with the fattest pigs.

FRANNY

Isn't that how you met Grandpa?

JOANN

Sure is.

FRANNY

So you guys went to the dance together?

JOANN

We did.

*(JOANN stops stirring the mixture and moves to sit at the breakfast table.)*

It was a pretty magical night. We went with a huge group of friends.

My lab partner Charlie just about fell face first for my cousin Nina's Monkey Bread and I've never seen two people dance to "Jailhouse Rock" with so much passion.

You know, your Grandpa asked me to be his girlfriend that night.

But back then, it was all about that mushy gushy stuff.

*(FRANNY cracks the final egg)*

FRANNY

That's 10. What's next?

JOANN

Um well -

You need to add 1/2 cup of sugar to the yolk bowl and then combine that with the cream.

FRANNY

I've got the sugar!

JOANN

Okay, go ahead and add it.

*(FRANNY does)*

FRANNY

And combine it with the cream?

JOANN

Slowly, yes. Then it all has to go through a strainer.

*(JOANN watches as FRANNY slowly pours the egg yolks into the cream mixture)*

JOANN (CONT'D)

Hey, whatever happened to that neighbor boy who was always showing cattle? Timothy? Is that his name?

FRANNY

Beats me.

JOANN

You were pretty fond of him, weren't you?

FRANNY

What? No I wasn't!

JOANN

Well he was very handsome! And so were his cattle if I remember correctly.

FRANNY

Well, he has a girlfriend.

JOANN

Oh really, who?

FRANNY

You wouldn't know her.

JOANN

I might!

I still go to club meetings every once in a while. Is she showing cattle too?

FRANNY

Definitely not.

JOANN

Oh, that's a shame.

FRANNY

She's not even in 4-H.

JOANN

She's not?

FRANNY

No.

*(pause)*

She's a Girl Scout.



JOANN

A Girl Scout? They have Girl Scouts all the way out here?

FRANNY

Yeah!

*(pause)*

Like all the girls do Girl Scouts now.

JOANN

I thought they only had Girl Scouts in the city.

FRANNY

They have a troupe in the next town over.

JOANN

Eldridge?

FRANNY

Yeah.

JOANN

Well that's hardly a city.

FRANNY

They have a Culver's there!

And like 12 stop lights.

My mom says it's the next New York.

JOANN

So these girls drive all the way to Eldridge to do Girl Scouts?

FRANNY

It's not *that* far.

JOANN

But they have a perfectly great club right here in Clinton county.

FRANNY

Yeah, a club for farm kids...

JOANN

That's not true! Not anymore, anyways.

I mean the club has made so many wonderful changes. Especially for young women.

FRANNY

I guess.

JOANN

So all are the boys dating Eldridge Girl Scouts?

FRANNY

Not at all of them.

JOANN

Oh yeah? Like who?

FRANNY

I don't know.

*(pause)*

Like Timothy's brother.

JOANN

Evan?

FRANNY

Yeah.

JOANN

The one with the mullet?

FRANNY

Yeah, that's him.

JOANN

Well Evan ought to find himself a nice, strong farm woman.

Like you.

FRANNY

He's not interested in me.

JOANN

And how do you know that?

FRANNY

I just do.

JOANN

Well.

At least you're not a Girl Scout.

FRANNY

Yeah.

JOANN

4-H provides such a unique opportunity for young girls nowadays.

FRANNY

Yeah, I heard you Grandma.

JOANN

Well I'm just saying, it does.

FRANNY

Because we can show cattle?

JOANN

Or pigs!

FRANNY

Right.

JOANN

I mean, can you imagine if you weren't allowed to show Barbie Que or Jimi Hamdrix just because people thought it was unlady-like?

FRANNY

I guess not.

JOANN

You'd have to find some boy to show him for you.

FRANNY

Yeah.

JOANN

And then *he'd* win first *your* first place ribbon and take *your* pig all the way to state. And you'd just be stuck in the tent with a sweaty Crème Brûlée.

It'd be heartbreaking.  
I can promise you that.

*(a pause)*

FRANNY  
Okay, I think the cream is finished straining.

JOANN  
You know Fran, that Chester White could take the grand prize.

FRANNY  
What should I do with the cream?

JOANN  
And *you* could get to stand on the podium -

FRANNY  
Grandma -

JOANN  
as an inspiration to all little girls who want to show their own pigs too.

FRANNY  
Grandma, please stop!

JOANN  
Is it about selling them? Because you know you don't have to do Market showings. You could do Derby instead! No butchers. Sure you'd have to slim him down a bit but -

FRANNY  
It's not about Market.

JOANN  
So what is it?  
You want to be a Girl Scout or something?

FRANNY  
No.

JOANN  
You want to trot around and sell mint minties?

FRANNY

No!

JOANN

Because you took the 4-H pledge, you know!

FRANNY

You *always* did baking!

JOANN

I didn't have a choice!!!!!!

*(beat)*

JOANN

I just don't understand, Francis.

You've never enjoyed baking, you hate being inside -

Women before you have fought hard to give you the freedom to be outside with pigs - and you are going to give that up?

Do you have any idea how lucky you are? To have gotten to bring your own pigs to the fair year after year?

FRANNY

You don't get it, Grandma.

JOANN

What is there to get?

FRANNY

I'm tired of being the pig girl!

JOANN

I would've *killed* to be the pig girl!

FRANNY

But no one wants to take the pig girl to the dance!

*(beat)*

FRANNY (CONT'D)

I *was* in the barn.

I *was* playing the radio for the pigs.

But then Evan walked by  
with Timothy and his Girl Scout girlfriend  
And they were laughing.  
And pointing.  
And oinking.  
So I bought an oven, okay?

JOANN  
Oh, Fran.  
The dance is stupid.  
It's just like you said.

FRANNY  
Yeah, it is.  
But I still want someone to ask me.

*(a long beat)*

JOANN  
Has the mixture finished straining?

FRANNY  
I think so.

JOANN  
Okay!  
So now what we are going to do is pour it carefully into these ramekins and then pop them into the oven.

FRANNY  
Okay.

JOANN  
*(chuckling)*  
The big oven.

FRANNY  
*(chuckling with her)*  
Right.

*(FRANNY begins to pour the batter into the ramekins)*

JOANN

Oh, you know what? Hold on a minute.

*(JOANN goes into the closet and retrieves a large cardboard box. She takes out a bright purple ramekin.)*

JOANN (CONT'D)

Use these. They'll catch the judge's eye.

Works every time.

FRANNY

Thank you.

*(FRANNY gently distributes the batter amongst the purple ramekins. JOANN opens the oven and sets the containers inside, one by one. FRANNY watches. JOANN closes the oven.)*

JOANN

And now, we wait.

*(pause)*

Want to practice with the blowtorch? We could scorch some of this Wonder bread?

FRANNY

Really?!

JOANN

You bet.

FRANNY

Let's do it!

*JOANN reaches for a nearby cupboard and pulls out a massive blow torch. FRANNY grabs the loaf of bread. The lights slowly start to come down around them. JOANN plugs in the torch and hands it to FRANNY. She places her hands on top of her granddaughter's and gives her a nod. FRANNY and JOANN pull the trigger and release a massive burst of light. The bread sizzles. FRANNY screams with delight.*

END OF PLAY

