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SF PERUSALS

The Triplets

A Bizarre Comedy

by John Reason



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THE TRIPLETS

An anteroom in the Town Hall of a large town. There is a conference table and chairs to one side. A trestle table with a white cloth is set for a buffet.

The time is the present. The room is decorated with streamers, and a banner from wall to wall reads: 'Happy Birthday to our Triplets - 18-- to 19--.'

At the start, PAULINE, ROBERTA and HAM are on stage. As the banner proclaims, they are 100 years old. They are also triplets. They do not look alike. They are, however, dressed alike in black leotards and white pumps - overlaid with 'Little Girl' flowered frocks and matching ribbons. HAM wears a mask and wig indicative of a beauty queen.

They are standing, in isolation, in different parts of the stage.

A long silence.
Nothing occurs.
Then PAULINE starts to snivel.
ROBERTA looks at her.
PAULINE stops.
Then HAM moves to the conference table and attempts to clamber on to it. She scrabbles across the top of table, her legs kicking. She stops, half on, half off. She breathes in and out deeply and noisily.
ROBERTA looks at her.
HAM stops 'breathing'.
Pause.

ROBERTA (suddenly) I'm going to have a vol-au-vent.

(She moves to buffet. Selects a vol-au-vent, turns to PAULINE.)

Want one?

(PAULINE shakes her head. ROBERTA bites into pastry. Swallows. Smacks her lips.)

Nice. This sort of thing isn't your style is it, Pauline dear? Delicacies. Airy, light ... this style isn't your thing.

(She eats. PAULINE snivels. ROBERTA looks at her. PAULINE stops.)

I shouldn't cry, dear. Don't cry.

(A weak effort from HAM once more. She groans. ROBERTA moves to her.)

Ham. You won't make it. Get down. You'll disintegrate. You're one hundred years old; you'll fall apart. (pause) You'll rupture something vital. You're not as young as you used to be. (ROBERTA moves away. Stares up at banner.) Come here, Pauline. Come and see how much we're loved. Look what they've done for us. I feel very proud. I could sing.

(She hums an age-old tune, but runs out of breath. She sits in a chair.
PAULINE moves down to her.)

PAULINE Roberta .... ?

ROBERTA Yes, dear ..... what a lovely old song that is ...

PAULINE I'm frightened ....

ROBERTA Mother used to sing that song, remember?

PAULINE I want to go home. That's all I want to do.

ROBERTA What a lovely old song that is ....

(Pause. PAULINE starts to snivel.)

Oh, Pauline, do stop it, Have a vol-au-vent. Do stop it; you'll dehydrate yourself. You won't look pretty if you cry. We mustn't let Ham take all the attention. By the way, dear, tell her to get off the table; it's newly polished, I swear. She takes no notice of me. I think she's forgotten me. Not surprising, I suppose. We all live so far away from each other.... we don't get to see each other at all. I don't think I've seen Ham since eighteen ninety-two. (calling) Ham, do get off that table. It's not yours. You'll scratch it. (to PAULINE) Now, what were you saying my dear?.... oh yes, it is a lovely old song. You're so right. (Pause. ROBERTA sways and hums for a moment.) God is always at Ascot. He sits in the enclosure.

(Pats PAULINE's hand. Whispers.)

He doesn't bet, though. Oh no.

PAULINE (determined) I'm going home, Roberta .... (Starts for door.)

ROBERTA Don't be silly. How far do you think you'll get, dressed like that? You'll be raped. You'll be ravished. Oh, the world's so wicked. Do come and sit down, my dear. You must wait for the Queen. The Queen's coming in a very little while. (desperately) Look what they've done for us.

(Pause. PAULINE sits in chair.
HAM starts to scramble again.
The other two watch her.
With grunts and wheezes, HAM, in the most

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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