

# Empty Nest

By

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## Synopsis:

A group of high school widely dispersed friends and their spouses or partners have a reunion at a bed and breakfast in a resort town. As they reminisce about the past, they consider what brought them together and symbolically grieve the loss of a friend to AIDS. They publicly deal with the suicide of the daughter of one couple. Privately they deal with other issues affecting them as their children have grown or they have either remained childless. However, the faces they put on for each other hide the problems big and small facing the couples.

## Scenes:

Scene 1: Greetings and Introductions: Friday Afternoon

Scene 2: Reminiscing After Dinner: Friday Evening

Scene 3: The Present: Saturday Morning After the Race

Scene 4: The Future: Saturday Evening After Dinner

Scene 5: Departures: Sunday Morning

## Setting:

A bed and breakfast known as Eagle's Nest located somewhere in a mountain resort. However, it is summer, not winter. The stage contains six areas. The largest area is center stage. It is the large living room of the B&B with a doorway to a dining room. A stairway leads up from stage left to three bedrooms visible from the front. Each has a distinctive décor related to some bird. Slightly raised stage right is the outdoor hot tub. It is accessed up a few stairs through a door from the main room. Down stage left is a front porch area. Note: If the production is being done in a limited space, the three bedrooms could be replaced with a single bedroom down stage left or right with the actors coming and going as the scenes change.

## Cast:

There are six couples, all in their late forties, all having graduated from high school 30 years earlier in Indiana. The first person listed in each couple is a reunion friend; the second name is the "tag-a-long spouse."

Nancy Wilson is a successful business manager for a retail chain. She stays fit and busy. She maintains a positive face in front of others, but is silently grieving the loss of their only daughter to suicide. Her marriage is on the rocks.

Greg Wilson is an athlete who makes a living running a sporting goods store, not the run of the mill mall store, but the upscale store where only serious or rich athletes purchase their equipment and running shoes. He runs in many ways. He only wears black clothing.

Bill Young is a deeply religious man. He is a professor at a small religious college. His career success means almost as much to him as his faith. Their daughter and son have married and left home.

Karen Young converted to gain approval from Bill's family, but has never fully embraced the faith. A stay-at-home mother their whole marriage, she spends her days cleaning and decorating. She has been caring for her aging parents.

Dennis James teaches high school in a Midwestern town. He dabbles in everything and strives to be good at whatever it is—running, teaching evaluations, or cards. Their children are working or in college.

Lisa James teaches elementary school. She is never satisfied with her efforts whether it is with her teaching or raising the children who are gone.

LeAnn Dice never married, but her significant other of 14 years is a regular companion even though they maintain separate living spaces most of the time. Her career has consisted of various jobs, with her four years in her current job in state government is the longest tenure of her career. She looks somewhat counter cultural, but more just out of date.

Larry Burgoon is an independent outdoorsman. He is older than the rest having recently retired. His appearance screams counter culture except that he is too soft spoken to scream.

Terri Williams married much later than the rest and never had children. She is a college administrator at a small private college that is always near the end of its financial resources. She spends her time courting rich alumni, like her husband.

Mark Atkins is a bank vice president who gave up his career in singing for the safety of a career in banking, but he must travel much of the time due to his status in the bank.

Dr. Darryl Chang is a successful doctor who is on his second marriage, although he never had children of his own. He is an avid Hoosier fan having lived in Indiana his whole life.

Sandy Chang mostly does volunteer work but had a career at one time. This is also her second marriage. She has grown children from a previous marriage and two grandchildren.

Sample Dialogue from:

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*Scene 3: The Present: Saturday Morning After the Race*

(The racers/joggers are in the hottub—Dennis, Greg, Darryl, Larry, LeAnn, and Nancy.)

Larry: Now this is the way to recover from a race.

LeAnn: You bet. Even if I did come in last in my age group.

Dennis: You didn't come in last. There were lots of walkers behind you.

Greg: And what about you? You just pulled away from me after the first half.

Dennis: I don't know. I guess training for a marathon makes a 5K race a snap even at this altitude. I surprised myself.

Darryl: Show off.

Dennis: You did what you thought you'd do, didn't you?

Darryl: Yes, but you made me feel like a slow poke.

Dennis: Being in the race is enough.

Nancy: But the winner for this group was Larry who came in fourth in his age group just missing a medal. Woo hoo—Go Larry. (General cheers.)

Larry: It just proves that if you stay at it long enough all the other runners slow down or quit. When I'm 75 I know I'll win my age group.

Darryl: That gives me hope. If I can just keep running for another 20 years.

Nancy: I'm going to stick to walking. It's the distance that counts, not the speed.

Greg: How did you get involved in running anyway?

Dennis: I think that now I just love the sense of accomplishment and the feel of being fit, but that's not what got me started.

Darryl: So what got you started?

Dennis: Vanity.

LeAnn: How so?

Dennis: After I turned about thirty I kept having to go up a size in pants every year. First my waist was 32, then 33, then 34. When I bought my first pair of 34 inch waste pants, I decided I needed to do something—either stop eating or start exercising. Running won out.

Nancy: And did it help?

Dennis: I'm still wearing 34s almost twenty years later.

LeAnn: I never thought you'd do something out of vanity. I'm not sure if I just gained or lost respect for you.

Dennis: What about you, Greg, how did you get involved in running anyway?

Greg: I ran track in high school and had a scholarship to college.

Nancy: That's what got my eye. I'd see him around campus in his tight little shorts every day and thought, there's somebody I'd like to meet.

LeAnn: You mean it wasn't the sweaty shirts?

Nancy: And the color. I just always had something for a man in black.

Darryl: Remember those ridiculous shorts we used to have to wear. It was all you could buy.

Larry: And Keds. Remember Keds? They were all you could buy when I was growing up.

LeAnn: You're dating yourself Larry. Keds were already passé when we were in high school.

Darryl: And now there are so many brands and styles, I don't even know where to begin. I should be asking you.

Greg: There are a lot of choices, but it all comes down to what works for you. And of course, which shoe gives the highest profit margin is the one that's really right for you.

Dennis: Spoken like a true capitalist!

LeAnn: I think I'm starting to turn into a prune. I better get out. (She gets out.)

Larry: Me, too. What else are we doing today? (He gets out.)

Darryl: Ask the cruise director.

Dennis: We don't have to do anything.

Nancy: Isn't it hiking?

Dennis: That's just a suggestion. Bill said he knew of some good trails for us to take if we want to.

LeAnn: Well, we want to. We brought our hiking boots just for the occasion.

Darryl: I'm hoping tennis shoes will do. That's all I own.

Dennis: Bill assured me that it's an easy trail. Boots are not needed.

LeAnn: Well, we take our hiking boots where ever we go because we only go places where we use them. We'll meet you after lunch ready to roll (LeAnn and Larry leave.)

Darryl: I better get going too. Sandy wanted to do some shopping before lunch. We can't arrive home without gifts for the grandchildren.

Dennis: You're the only grandparents in the group, you know.

Darryl: Don't remind me. It makes me feel so old. I went from no kids to grandkids overnight.

Nancy: How many do you have?

Darryl: Just two. Sarah's 2 and Jason's 6. I'm biased, but they're the cutest kids in the whole state of Indiana, maybe the whole Midwest. And smart—they're way above the average for their age.

Dennis: Uh-oh, now you got him started.

Darryl: All right. I won't bore you with stories of them just know. I'll wait until later, when I can show you pictures to go along. (He gets out.)

Dennis: And believe me, he's got pictures! Proud papa!

Darryl: That's starting to hurt.

Dennis: Just kidding. I think it's great, really. I hope to have some someday too-- just not too soon.

Darryl: Are either of your kids close to it?

Dennis: I don't know. Karl's been dating the same girl for two years. He's twenty two. Lisa thinks she'll be the one. We'll see. (He gets out.)

Darryl: And what do you think of her?

Dennis: It doesn't matter what I think of her. I don't get to pick.

Darryl: Yeah, but you do get to pick the gifts you shower the grandchildren with. And when you're worn out by them, you can just give them back to their parents.

Dennis: That sounds good.

Darryl: Believe me, it is. You two, as a doctor, I warn you not to stay in too long even though it feels great after a run. (joking)

Nancy: Don't worry. We won't. I'm about ready to get out.

Dennis: See you in a little while. (Dennis and Darryl leave. A long pause.)

Nancy: So are you disappointed?

Greg: That Dennis beat me? No. I just run for exercise, not for speed.

Nancy: That's not what I meant.

Greg: What then?

Nancy: That you won't have any grandchildren?

Greg: I've never thought of it. But I'm sure you have.

Nancy: No, I really hadn't until just now. We're never going to have grandchildren.

Greg: There's a lot we're never going to have now.

Nancy: I know. No wedding. No twenty-fifth birthday.

Greg: And maybe no thirtieth wedding anniversary either. (He gets out.)

Nancy: Please, don't say that.

Greg: Why not? I meant what I said last night.

Nancy: I know you did. And I'm sorry.

Greg: You're sorry about what?

Nancy: I'm sorry for what happened.

Greg: It wasn't your fault. I've already said that, over and over again. You don't have to say you're sorry. It's wasn't your fault.

Nancy: That's not what I meant. I know it's not my fault even if I can't quite make myself believe it. But about what you said, I'm sorry for what you've been through since then, for what I've done to you.

Greg: What are you saying?

Nancy: I'm sorry that I've ignored you. I'm sorry that I couldn't look past my own pain to notice yours. I'm sorry I made you feel like you couldn't cry in front of me. I just thought you didn't feel anything. I was wrong.

Greg: And I suppose that's supposed to make it all better. One apology and everything for the past two years is supposed to be hunky-dory.

Nancy: I know it doesn't make everything right. But it's a start. We can build on it. We can try to get back to where we were.

Greg: We can never get back to where we were. That place doesn't exist any more.

Nancy: Then maybe there's some new place we can get to together.

Greg: That's a nice thought, but may be too little too late.

Nancy: I want to try. Let's try.

Greg: And why should I believe that it's really going to be different?

Nancy: I've never lied to you. I may have ignored you and I know that I misread you, but I didn't ever lie to you.

Greg: We'll see. (He begins to walk away.)

Nancy:        That's it? We'll see?

Greg:         That's all I can promise right now—we'll see.

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