

“Last Kill and Testament”

by Butch Maxwell and Bert Furioli

Program Notes

The time: The Day after the death of Brandford Butterworth

The place: The Dye Funeral Home and Burns Crematorium

Branford Butterworth was a wealthy entrepreneur, whose company made a fortune in the toilet business. But in a bizarre incident, he was killed in an explosion when he was using a new prototype toilet. Police suspect foul play, but have no clear suspects.

Characters:

“Babs” Butterworth – widow of Branford Butterworth

Brett – eldest son of the deceased

Brice – other son of the deceased

Bruno – brother of the deceased

Ernie Shmendrick – attorney to Branford Butterworth

Fun Facts:

“Babs” Butterworth – only dates young men who are tall, dark and handsy.

Brett – is so depressed that he hangs around funeral homes to cheer himself up.

Brice’s OCD is so bad he won’t touch a doorknob without oven mitts

Brice invented the first totally secure toilet. It is called the “Lock and Unload.”

Bruno – invented the CIA’s latest weapon in the fight against terrorism: the stealth pogo stick

Ernie Shmendrick’s gambling habit is so bad, he lost \$10,000 in an underground game of “Go Fish.”

Audience Speaking Roles:

Detective Ketchum
Manuel, the gardener
Jeremy, the pool boy
Brock, the personal trainer
Audience Member 1
Audience Member 2
Audience Member 3
Big Lou
Little Lulu
Branford Butterworth
Morticia Gloombody (non-speaking)

ACT 1

ERNIE enters. He carries with him a briefcase, which he sets down.

ERNIE

Hey, how ya doin'? Ernest P. Shmendrick, esq. Attorney at law! My slogan is: "A man is innocent until he is proven broke." Whew! I'm a little short of breath. Just before I got here, I was running laps around the block. Who knew an ambulance could go so fast?

I gotta sit down.

(Sitting, briefly.)

Aw, cripe! That would feel a whole lot better if I had my doughnut. You know, a pillow with a hole in the middle for my tochus? I've got a terrible case of hemorrhoids! As if my clients weren't enough pains in my as—

(Catching himself, standing.)

—As I was saying, like you, I am here to mourn the passing of the late, great Branford B. Butterworth. That's right. The Commode King. You remember the commercials, right? "The Potty Palace — Where anybody can sit on a throne!" He was my client for the past 30 years, and I'm really going to miss billing him — I mean — I'm going to miss him!

(To a preselected audience member.)

So, how did you know the deceased?

DETECTIVE

(An audience member.)

I met him when I drew the chalk outline around his body.

ERNIE

You're a cop?

DETECTIVE

Detective Al Ketchum. I'm investigating. Homicide.

ERNIE

I thought Branford's death was an accident.

DETECTIVE

Let's just say it was a suspicious accident. He took a powder in the powder room. Blown to pieces on his one of his own toilets. And that story stinks.

ERNIE

Yeah, I guess for him, the **can** should've been a **can't**.

BABS enters. She carries a glass of wine and sips it throughout the scene.

BABS

(Going to a pre-selected audience member.)

Oh, look who has come to help me mourn the unexpected and tragic loss of my poor, rich husband – It's Manuel, my gardener.

MANUEL

(An audience member.)

Of course, I came here, Miss Babs. I will miss Señor Butterworth. He signed my paycheck each week.

BABS

Yes, my dear boy. And he had no idea of your – special duties. By the way, you can take Tuesday off. That's when Jeremy, the pool boy, works.

JEREMY

(An audience member.)

But we closed the pool on Labor Day.

BABS

Jeremy, dear, I'll find something else for you to do.

ERNIE

Ah ! The poor, mourning widow. I am so sorry for your loss, yada yada yada.

BABS

Oh, Mr. Shmendrick. I'm surprised to see you here. How are you going to turn this into billable hours?

ERNIE

You must have me confused with somebody who has ethics.

BABS

So you have Bran's will, don't you? Tell me – what, exactly, does the will say? I don't need all the details. Just tell me what he left to me.

ERNIE

I can't reveal any of the details of the will until the official reading – after the funeral. The estate could end up in binding arbitration.

BABS

Not until we establish a safe word.

(Pause.)

Surely you can give me a little preview of the will. A little peek-a-boo?

(Dramatically.)

Oh, boo hoo hoo. Can't you see how distraught I am?

ERNIE

I can see what a bad actor you are. Listen, the terms are very specific. No one is to know anything about the will in advance. So stop kvetching.

BABS

(Contemplating this.)

Well, if no one knows what's in the will, there's still time to – make accommodations in my favor. You could do that for me, couldn't you?

(Giving him a wad of cash from a garter under her skirt.)

Here's a little incentive.

ERNIE

For me?

(Counting the money.)

Oy vey, I haven't seen this much money since my bar mitzvah! This could go a long way toward getting me out of a jam.

BABS

And there's more where that came from.

(Pulling money from out of her bra.)

See?

ERNIE

You got any money that hasn't been in your underwear?

BABS

(Seductively.)

If the will is generous enough to me, I could let you get into my underwear.

ERNIE

No, I don't look good in spanks. Look, I can see what you're doing here, Mrs. Butterworth –

BABS

Oh, please. That makes me feel like I'm a bottle of maple syrup. Call me Babs.

ERNIE

Well, Babs, you're certainly a looker and all, but I've been being married for the past 35 years to the same woman.

BABS

I see. So, you're saying you don't want to cheat on her.

ERNIE

No, what I'm saying is, my sex drive died a long time ago.

BRICE enters on his cell phone.

BRICE

(On the phone.)

I am at the funeral home right now... Yes, of course we will be open for business as usual tomorrow. Father wouldn't have had it any other way. You know what he always used to say: "A day without toilets isn't worth a crap!"

(Hanging up.)

(To an audience member.)

Cousin Cecelia, thank you for coming. I know my father would have appreciated your being here, even if you are wearing a t-shirt that says "Makin' Bacon."

(To another audience member.)

And Uncle Ferris – It is so good to see you. Oh, dear –

(Adjusting audience member's hair.)

– I think your toupee is crooked.

BABS

Brice! I suppose you have nothing to do with your time, now that you no longer have your father's butt to kiss.

BRICE

Hello, Mother. I love what you've done with your hair. How do you get it to come out of your nostrils that way?

BABS

(Aside.)

How sharper than a serpent's tooth to have a thankless child. No wonder I tried to give him up for adoption.

BRICE

Frankly, I'm surprised you actually set aside your Belly Dance lessons to be at Father's funeral.

BABS

Actually, Brice, I just jetted in from Belize with Brock, my personal trainer.

(To an audience member.)

Say hello, Brock.

BROCK

(An audience member.)

Hello, Brock.

BRICE

Your promiscuity is exactly why father taught you nothing about his business –

BABS

Oh, nonsense, dear. Everyone sleeps their way to the top.

(To an audience member.)

You know what I mean – right, Brock?

BROCK

Hello, Brock.

BRICE

You know what Father's motto was? "In the toilet business, if at first you don't succeed – you're dumped."

(To Babs.)

Your behavior is exactly why he was grooming **me** to inherit the family business.

BABS

Your father hired you to keep you from whining.

(To Ernie.)

Did you know that Brice had colic until he was 12?

ERNIE

Oh, a real kvetsh maven, eh?

BABS

He wore diapers until he was 23.

BRICE

Mother! That's not so. I was only 21. Anyway, I am certain that Father intended for me to take control of his business. No one else in the family has shown any interest. Not you! Not my brother! Not even his own brother, Bruno, who quit the company 20 years ago.

BABS

Yes, and apparently your Uncle Bruno fell off the face of the earth. No doubt, your incessant whining was to blame.

BRICE

(Whining.)

I don't whine.

ERNIE

Wine? Good idea. Got any Manischweiz?

BABS

No, but my glass is empty. Have you ever noticed how wine improves with age? The older I get, the more I like wine.

[Exit.]

BRICE

(To Ernie.)

Mr. Shmendrick –

ERNIE

Please. Call me Ernie. Not that I'm being nice. But you pronounce Shmendrick like such a goy.

BRICE

Ernie – You've got to tell me. Did Father leave the business to me? Am I now the proprietor of potties? The liege of the loo? The tsar of toilets?

ERNIE

The Lord of the Latrine?

BRICE

The Prince of the Privy?

ERNIE

The Baron of the Bog?

BRICE

The Head of the Head?

ERNIE

I have no idea who inherits the business. And I am legally bound to keep the will in this sealed briefcase until the moment I read it to everyone –

(To audience.)

– which will be sometime after you folks eat your dinners.

BRICE

I had better inherit the company or I'll ask the court for redress. Seeing how you dress, I think I have a case.

ERNIE

Don't be such a plotz, Brice. I'm taking this case pro bono.

BRICE

Is that Sonny or Cher?

BRETT enters.

BRETT

It's a dark, dank, desperate world full of despair, depression, dread – and alliteration.

BRICE

Damn – there's my brother.

ERNIE

He seems to be taking your dad's death pretty hard.

BRICE

No, that's how he always is.

(To Brett.)

Hello, Brett. How are you today?

BRETT

Hopeless. Miserable. Despondent. The usual.

BRICE

This is Father's attorney, Mr. – er, call him "Ernie."

BRETT

Hello fellow sufferer.

ERNIE

Hello meshugener. I'm really not that emotional. I seldom become verklempt.

BRETT

I am very good at reading people's misery. For example –

(To audience member.)

I can see your despair.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1

Yeah, I just got my check.

ERNIE

Well, I'd like to stay and relive the bad old days, but I've got to go talk with my bookie. He's really mad at me. He called me the "A" word, the "B" word and the "Z" word. And I don't even know what that one is.

[Exit, taking briefcase.]

BRICE

So, are you going to be at the reading of the will?

BRETT

I suppose so. Even though life is hopeless. And a life without hope is like a day without sunburn.

BRICE

But, Brett, you made it very clear to Father that you rejected his values – and his fortune.

BRETT

Material wealth is a fleeting wisp of love in a world of – not love.

BRICE

Oh, for the love of –

BRETT

I've written a poem about the passing of Father. Would you like to hear it?

BRICE

Absolutely not.

BRETT

“Oh, gloomy, gloomy night

That took my father from my sight

And gave me such a horrid fright

Oh, gloomy, gloomy, gloomy night.”

BRICE

(Aside.)

I think that I shall never see – a poet stupider than he.

(To Brett.)

I hope you’re not planning to make a living from your poetry.

BRETT

No. The trust fund Father set up for me frees me to create art! But, then, why should I? Life is so unfair... war... poverty... Cinnamon Pop Tarts.

(With increasing intensity.)

Sometimes it all boils up inside me – and I just want to lash out!

(Closing in on Brice.)

Because life is full of random tragedy – senseless violence – indiscriminant disaster!

(As Brice fearfully retreats.)

The world is a dark place.

(With increasing intensity, closing in on Brice.)

Full of undifferentiating catastrophe – arbitrary calamity – pointless murder!

BRICE

Mommy?

BABS

(Enter, with a fuller wine glass.)

Don’t you dare hurt my child!

BRICE

Oh, thank heaven.

BABS

(Going to Brett, pushing Brice out of the way.)
Did this mean man make you sad, my dear boy?

BRICE

Mother! **He** was intimidating **me**! He had glowing eyes and an evil smile. He had – Crazy Face!

BABS

Oh, nonsense! Look at him!

(Pinching his cheek.)
He wouldn't hurt anything!

(Baby talk.)
Would you, my darling baby boy?

BRETT

It's not worth the effort, Mother. Nothing is. Nothing is a void that I avoid.

BABS

(To Brice.)
Did you upset him? Can't you see how easily he gets discouraged?

BRICE

Mother! He's always depressed! He's been this way for 30 years! He's the world's oldest emo!

BABS

All the more reason to take care of him. He needs encouragement!

(Pulling Brett's face to her breasts.)
And the sustenance of his family.

BRETT

(Protesting.)
Mmmfff!

BRICE

Let him go Mother!

(Pulling her away.)
You never held me like that.

BABS

You were a bottle baby. I took one look at you as a baby, and I took to the bottle.

BRICE

Mother, you'll be happy to know that Brett hasn't changed his mind about rejecting material wealth. So, I don't think he'll be vying for a piece of Father's estate.

BABS

It doesn't matter. As the widow, I will inherit everything – including control of the business. That's one of the perks of being a widow. That – and the pool boy.

BRICE

But that's not fair! Father would have certainly recognized that I was there for him all these years – working at the business. Why, it was I who came up with our latest innovation – the inflatable toilet! I called it – the Pump and Dump!

(Pause.)

Yes, it was my idea. And it turned this company around! The profits were rolling in like – like – rolls of toilet paper!

BRETT

Isn't the inflatable toilet what killed him?

BRICE

Uh, well... Yes... It was... It exploded while he was using it... Perhaps it was over-inflation. Or over-flatulation.

BABS

We tried to cover it up, but someone leaked the story. It was a matter of gross incontinence. Actually, the news just tinkled out, piddle by piddle. It was highly irregular, but in the end – quite moving.

BRICE

Well, we'll see who gets the company when the will is read. Betcha it's me! Betcha! Betcha! Betcha!

BRETT

Actually, Father only owned 50% of the company. The other half of it belongs to Uncle Bruno.

BABS

Yes, technically, your father's brother is still a partner, but Bruno went mad 20 years ago and disappeared. I am certain that we shall never hear from him again.

ERNIE

(Enter.)

Hey, look who I found!

[Exit after Bruno enters.]

BRUNO enters. He somersaults across the floor and stops near a preselected audience member.

BRUNO

(Whispering.)

What's the password?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

(Holding out glass.)

Refill?

BRUNO

Wrong.

(Turning away, then back again.)

I was never here.

(To Brett.)

What's the password?

BRETT

The futility of life?

BRUNO

No. That's last week's password.

BRICE

Uncle Bruno?

BRUNO

(Startled.)

Who's asking? Who sent you? The Illuminati? The Masons? The Cub Scouts?

BRICE

It's me! Brice!

(Holding up two fingers to his brow.)

Scouts honor!

BABS

Bruno! What are you doing here? I thought you were dead! But perhaps that was just wishful thinking.

BRUNO

I'm off the grid, under cover and over-estimated. I can't let them find me because they know what I know. And I know that they know what I know. And by now, they may know that I know that they know what I know.

BRICE

No!

BRETT

So?

BABS

Whoa! What are you talking about?

BRUNO

I'm putting my life in danger just by being here. But I had to pay tribute to my brother at his funeral. That, and pick up a couple of things from the dry cleaners. I had my bullet proof vest martinized.

BRETT

Why do you think your life's in danger? I mean, that **is so** deliciously depressing.

BRUNO

Let's just say that an international conspiracy of spies would like to see me neutralized, after what happened in Prague.

BABS

What happened in Prague?

BRUNO

I can't say. All I can tell you is – it involved a Soviet dentist and a case of Poly-Grip.

BRICE

So much for "What happens in Prague, stays in Prague."

BRUNO

Out of necessity, I am now a man of many disguises. I was Catlin Jenner for a few months, but the girdle gave me a rash. Anyway, I cleared the way here before I arrived. I met

with a Russian operative, a German agent and a Slovakian stripper.

(Going to Brice.)

By the way, do I have a tassel stuck in my teeth?

BABS

But why did you suddenly disappear twenty years ago?

SFX: Music – “I Want to Break Free”

BRUNO

(Speaking, over intro.)

I was bored. I needed a little adventure. Excitement.
Running our business – it was all so – so – mundane!

BRETT

(Speaking, over intro.)

The best things in life are mundane, at best.

BRUNO

(Singing.)

I had to break free – I had to break free
I had to break free from that life
Got a gun and a knife I just need that
I had to break free
Gosh knows – Gosh knows I had to break free

BRICE

(Singing.)

He’s losing his mind

BABS

(Singing.)

His marbles were gone for a long time
And this time I know he is mad

BRICE AND BRETT

(Singing.)

He’s losing his mind

BRUNO

(Singing.)

Gosh knows – Gosh knows I had to break free

[Brief instrumental]

BRUNO

(Singing.)

So fam'ly can't you see?
I had to break free – I had to break free
I had to break free, yeah!

BRICE

So – what? – You're a spy now? A singing spy? An off-key killer?

BRUNO

Not exactly. Let's just say that I know things that other people don't know – you know? For instance –

(Confidentially.)

– don't eat Cheez-Whiz for the next three months.

ERNIE

(Enter.)

Okay, okay, okay – Let's get this party started!

(Realizing.)

Er, I mean, uh –

(Still inappropriately enthusiastically.)

Let's get this **somber occasion** started.

Now, Branford was very specific about his wishes for the memorial ceremony. All he wanted from his loved ones was some heartfelt eulogies, which will be hard, because most of them don't have hearts.

Now, it's not often that one gets the opportunity to speak about someone intelligent, respected and admired. Unfortunately, tonight I have to talk about Branford.

The question people ask on occasions like this is for whom the bell tolls. And the answer is, of course, it tolls for Branford. Tolloed so much that he blew up on a toilet, landed in the parking lot and he mysteriously caught fire after the third car ran him over.

We're all going to miss him. He wasn't perfect. He was a heavy smoker, and drinker, and liar. He was not a proud man. He was not a smart man. Nor was he especially attractive, articulate, or even remotely respected. Neither was he particularly well-liked or hygienic. So I suppose, what I'm really trying to say is... There's cake back at the house

and if we hurry through the rest of the eulogies, we can probably catch the second half of the Steelers game. Babs?

BABS

I am so gratified to see so many of Bran's friends here to celebrate his death – I mean – his life.

(To a specific audience member.)

Aunt Lucinda! Excuse me, but I think a little bit of your face is showing through your make-up.

(Pause.)

Oh, don't be embarrassed. I was going to just give you a nasty look, but I see you already have one.

(Pause.)

You know, if laughter is the best medicine, your face must be curing the world.

(Pause.)

I'm not insulting you, dear, I'm just describing you.

(To a specific audience member.)

Oh, look – there's my niece, Jenny. Still no husband, Jenny? Well you know what they say – opposites attract. So I hope you meet someone who is good-looking, intelligent, and cultured.

BABS

(To a specific audience member.)

Speaking of dim, I see my sister-in-law Judy is here. You know, precious, brains aren't everything. In your case they're nothing.

(Pause.)

I don't know what makes you so stupid, but it's really working for you.

(Pause.)

I'm sorry, but I simply do not have the time nor the crayons to explain it to you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3

Did you know that your husband was having an affair with his secretary for the past ten years?

BABS

What? How do you know that?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3

I was his secretary.

BABS

That cheater! Why should he get away with doing that to me just because I did it to him? All right, who wants to help me go over there to his casket and hammer a broken broomstick through his cheating heart?

ERNIE

I think it's time for the sons to deliver their eulogies. Let's start with Brett. He can really relate to his dead father because they have the same blood pressure.

(Aside, if needed.)

Think about it.

BRETT

I'd like to deliver my eulogy in the form of a song.

SFX: Music – "Yesterday"

BRETT

(Singing.)

Yesterday, my poor father said he had to go
Number one or two, we'll never know
Oh, yesterday, did the toilet blow

Suddenly, he's not half the man he used to be
Blown to pieces in the lav'tory
Oh, yesterday was so crappy

Why he had to go, we don't know, he didn't say
He went to the john, now he's gone, since yesterday

Yesterday, Father blew into the Milky Way
From a blast he found to his dismay
Oh, that's what happened yesterday

ERNIE

Well, that was inspirational. He really puts the "fun" in "funeral." Okay, let's hear from the other son, Brice.

BRICE

I am frankly surprised to see so many of my Father's colleagues here.

(To a specific audience member.)

For instance, Miss Thistlewhistle, my father's accountant. My father liked the way you laughed as he chased you around his desk. And he liked the way you squealed when you caught him.

(Giving her a thumbs up, then to another audience member.)

And Gloria from Human Resources. She handled all the employees' complaints – like "The boss pinched my butt." And Miss Thistlewhistle's complaint – "Why won't the boss pinch my butt?"

(To another audience member.)

And then there's Big Bertha from Maintenance. She beat me up my first day of work. Said it was my hazing. I never knew the company policy said that employees are hazed daily for 30 years.

(Giving her a thumbs up.)

I've only got ten more years to go.

I'd like to take a moment to share my good memories of Father. But I can't think of any.

ERNIE

Thank you, Brice. You'll never be the man your mother is. And finally, let's hear from Bran's brother, Bruno.

BRUNO

All I've got to say is this – My brother is not really dead! That body is a clone – made of ice cream. It's an ice cream clone. It's all part of the international conspiracy to help the Trilateral Commission establish the New World Order. And it stinks.

(Going to an audience member.)

I will expose this plot just as I will expose the identity of this spy right here!

(To audience member.)

Admit it! You're not here for the funeral. You're here because you thought that this was a murder mystery with funny jokes. Well, you're wrong. There's nothing funny in this show.

SFX: Song – "You Can't Always Get What You Want"

ERNIE

(Speaking, over introduction.)

All right, Bruno. Oy vey, this family's gene pool could use a little chlorine. The brother is a delusional freak, one son thinks that life is bleak, the other is an incompetent geek and the widow is drunken chic. And I need money, 'cause I'm up the creek.

(To Brett.)

There's a poem for you.

BRICE

(Speaking, over introduction.)

You've got to hand it to my mother. She's got spunk, moxie and probably a few other STDs.