

Bloomer Girls

A full-length play

By Emily Brauer Rogers

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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
MAGGIE.	Manager.	30's-50's.	Female.
LIZ.	Strongest player. Wants out.		
	Second base.	Teens-30's.	Female.
SARAH.	Pitcher.	Teens-30's.	Nonbinary.
DAISY.	New. Vaudevillian singer. Outfield.	Teens-30's.	Female.
CORA.	Feminist. First base.	Teens-30's.	Female.
GWEN.	Stubborn. Shortstop.	Teens-30's.	Female or Nonbinary.
VIVIANA.	Outfield.	Teens-30's.	Female.
CHRIS.	Best player on her team. Catcher.	Teens-30's.	Female.
COACH.	Coach.	30's-50's.	Female.
BASEBALL GODDESS	A goddess. A ringmaster.	Teens-50's.	Female.

This play is written so that it can be done with as few as five actors and as many as ten. If you want to double, these characters should then be played by the same actor.

Maggie./ Coach.

Daisy./ Chris.

Liz./ Viviana.

Sarah./ Gwen.

Cora./ Baseball Goddess.

Please consider identity conscious casting so that actors can bring their diverse experiences to these roles.

SYNOPSIS.

In the late 1800's, a ragtag women's baseball team travels west playing local teams. Half vaudevillian, but trying to prove their true athleticism and strength as women, they continue to try and overcome stereotypes and redefine who they are without raising too many eyebrows. Juxtaposed with the 1800s team, modern college softball players face similar struggles as they attempt to find room in a sport that divides them from men and still limits their options at the top of the game.

SCENES.

All scenes take place on a baseball diamond.

Top of innings always take place in 1893 and the Bottom of innings take place in 2019.

PRELUDE.

TOP OF FIRST INNING.

BOTTOM OF FIRST INNING.

TOP OF SECOND INNING.

BOTTOM OF SECOND INNING.

TOP OF THIRD INNING.

BOTTOM OF THIRD INNING.

TOP OF FOURTH INNING.

BOTTOM OF FOURTH INNING.

TOP OF FIFTH INNING.

BOTTOM OF FIFTH INNING.

TOP OF SIXTH INNING.

BOTTOM OF SIXTH INNING.

TOP OF SEVENTH INNING.

SEVENTH INNING STRETCH.

BOTTOM OF SEVENTH INNING.

TOP OF EIGHTH INNING.

BOTTOM OF EIGHTH INNING.

TOP OF NINTH INNING.

BOTTOM OF NINTH INNING.

PRELUDE

The Baseball Goddess in all her glory appears in a spot.
She's part ringmaster, conductor, and announcer.

BASEBALL GODDESS

Welcome one, welcome all, to the glorious game of baseball. It's the game of all games, the nine innings that will determine the win or the losses of all our players, the life and death of women, sports, women in sports and the all-American game played from the early 1800's to present day.

(in Announcer Voice)

It's time to PLAY BALL!

TOP OF THE FIRST INNING.

NOTE ON INNINGS: Top of innings always take place in 1893 and the Bottom of innings take place in 2019.

LIGHTS UP on MAGGIE, LIZ, SARAH, and DAISY sitting in a line with newspapers in front of their face. They pull them down to say their lines, whisper to someone next to them, and gossip--but they're acting like men. It's over-the-top and vaudevillian comedy.

SARAH

Did you hear?

MAGGIE

Did you hear?

LIZ

Did you hear?

DAISY

Did you hear?

LIZ

There's girls--

DAISY

There's girls--

SARAH

There's *girls*--

Playing baseball.

MAGGIE

Have you ever heard--

SARAH

Of such a thing--

LIZ

Women shouldn't--

SARAH

Be playing baseball.

MAGGIE

It's dangerous, right?

DAISY

I wouldn't want my daughter--

MAGGIE

My sister.

SARAH

DAISY

Let's just be honest. It's not a sport that women should be playing.

SARAH

Why? Because that's just not what women do.

LIZ

There's plenty that women can do. They have enough, do they really think they need to be playing baseball too?

DAISY

Do you know what it does--you know what it does, right? To their lady parts.

SARAH

Oh I've heard what it does.

LIZ

If they have any lady parts to begin with.

MAGGIE

We shouldn't let this indecency into our town.

DAISY

Soon women are going to get bigger thoughts. Think they can do this.

LIZ

Or that they can do anything.

SARAH

And then what will that mean?

LIGHTS change to DAISY, who seems a little overdressed to be playing baseball, sits with her glove waiting in the grass. LIZ should be teaching Daisy baseball, but instead she's smelling the ball instead.

DAISY

(singing)

*Then hurrah boys, hurrah,
For the Ball and the Bat,
That nerves us for action,
With muscles compact,
'Tis the pride of our nation,
The glory of all,
Then hurrah boys, hurrah--*

MAGGIE, the no-nonsense manager, interrupts Daisy's song and she stands following Maggie.

MAGGIE

Liz! I told you to stop sniffing those balls. It's crazy.

DAISY

Maggie, I've been wanting--

MAGGIE

In a minute, Daisy.

(to Liz)

Get up and do what I told you.

LIZ

I'm going to be gone in a few days.

MAGGIE

Until then, I'm paying you, so do your job.

LIZ

You know I have to smell--

MAGGIE

Sure, sure, find the spirit of the ball and all that jazz.

LIZ

If you'd take me seriously, you'd have a winning team.

MAGGIE

If you took your job seriously, I'd have a winning team.

LIZ

Don't be sore because I'm leaving.

MAGGIE

I'll be sore if I wanna be sore. You swore to me that you wouldn't let that man--

LIZ

His name is Francis. You never call him by his name.

MAGGIE

That *man* that pulls you away from the team.

LIZ

You knew I only had a little time left.

MAGGIE

You were mine for the year.

LIZ

Says who? You got money you're paying me so I'm yours for the year?

MAGGIE

Yeah, I'm paying you for these last days, so stop smelling the leather and get to work with her.

DAISY

(swinging a bat)

Are all the bats this heavy? You have something a little lighter?

LIZ

I ain't no miracle worker.

DAISY

Is that a no?

LIZ AND MAGGIE

No.

MAGGIE

Yeah, you haven't taught her one thing.

LIZ

Oh, she's got ideas of her own.

(to Daisy)

Show Maggie here how you want to run.

MAGGIE

Can't she just run?

DAISY

Sure, anyone can just run, but it's not entertaining. You want people to comment on how you run.

Daisy does a funny vaudevillian type run to the base.

DAISY

See?

MAGGIE

You can't run like that.

DAISY

But that's all they'll talk about.

MAGGIE

And I want them talking about the serious athletes my women are.

DAISY

No one cares about that. It's a show. For laughs.

LIZ

(barely containing her laughter)

I don't think you need me anymore.

MAGGIE

Show her how she should run.

LIZ

It's just--

Maggie throws her a glare and Liz realizes it's time to shut up and run. She takes a bat, pretends to swing, drops it, and gets to first base in no time.

DAISY

Wow.

MAGGIE

That's how I want you to run.

DAISY

But I thought you hired me for my showmanship?

MAGGIE

Sure and you can sing songs between innings and come up with funny bits once you're on base. But getting to base? You need to just be there. Practice. We'll watch.

Daisy starts running back and forth between home and first while Liz and Maggie watch.

LIZ

Scrapin' the bottom / of the barrel.

MAGGIE

Don't be talking to me when you're leaving.

LIZ

I am really thankful, Mags. You're like a mother and all.

MAGGIE

Sure. Yeah, some mother when y'all get up and leave me for the silliest boy that makes eyes at you.

LIZ

Probably how our own mothers feel.

MAGGIE

Yeah. But usually ball takes the place of the boys and your mothers all hate me. Not a fan of being on the other side.

LIZ

(yelling at Daisy)

Get down. Run like a bear's chasing you.

DAISY

I don't know what that means.

LIZ

Figure it out.

(to Maggie)

She'll know soon enough.

MAGGIE

Don't be scarin' her with our wilderness stories. Haveta keep her for at least twelve weeks.

LIZ

No way she's lasting that long.

MAGGIE

Dunno. Money's a pretty powerful motivator.

LIZ

You gotta love the game to do this.

MAGGIE

They all fall. Once they hear the crowd cheering. She'll fall in love.

Daisy trips and falls spectacularly on the ground.

LIZ

If you say so.

SARAH, another player, runs up to Maggie.

SARAH

Mags! Mags!

LIZ

(calling to Daisy who's brushing herself off)

Now that's running.

MAGGIE

What, Sarah?

SARAH

At the general store, was sending a letter back home and there's a posse of people surrounding the mayor trying to get him to cancel the game.

MAGGIE

Cancel?

SARAH

You know, it's indecent to have women play--

MAGGIE

So tired of the same old argument.

SARAH

You better go have that same old argument or there won't be a game.

MAGGIE

And none of us will have money.

SARAH

That too.

MAGGIE

You'd think by 1893 they'd have given up trying to say that women can't do the same--

SARAH

Especially out here in Colorado where the women run the farms while the men are in the mines.

LIZ

Seems to me the men are just in the general store chewin' the fat about what women can and can't do.

MAGGIE

You two wanna go have this argument for me?

SARAH

No, you're much better at it.

MAGGIE

(to Sarah)

Then help Liz here.

(to Liz)

And no sniffing the balls.

Maggie leaves to go face townspeople.

SARAH

(to Maggie)

The 1900's are going to be much better for us.

LIZ

Much better how?

SARAH

Look, Liz. Women are gonna have the right to vote. Any day now. And once they hear our voices, there'll be all sorts of things we can do. Play ball.

LIZ

We play ball now.

SARAH

Without the harassment. And we'll be able to wear what we want, say what we want, and have an equal voice to men. Their time is up.

LIZ

If you say so. The only thing better on my horizon is I'm getting out.

SARAH

Yeah, you gotta marry to get out. Not sure that's a better option.

LIZ

Shut it.

SARAH

You gonna teach her something besides running?

LIZ

She still has a lot there to learn.

(to Daisy)

Get down, dig down.

DAISY

My hair's in my eyes.

LIZ

Next time wear it up. You can't play baseball with hair all in your face.

SARAH

Or just cut it short like mine.

LIZ

Everyone thinks you're a man.

SARAH

What's wrong with that? I don't mind.

LIZ

Just not for me.

SARAH

You worried without your long locks, Mr. Fiancee'll leave you?

LIZ

No.

SARAH

Then let me chop it off right now.

LIZ

Stop touching my hair. I'm fine. Go out and toss the ball with her.

SARAH

Really?

LIZ

Yeah. Let's see if she can catch. Watching her run's just depressing.

(to Daisy)

Daisy! Come get your mitt.

Daisy comes in and Sarah has her glove too.

LIZ

Sarah's gonna throw you a few and see how well you do catching.

DAISY

All right.

Sarah throws Daisy a soft one which she easily catches.
She throws it back with some speed and spin.

LIZ

You done this before?

DAISY

Once or twice. With cousins.

They continue to throw and we see that Daisy does have an arm.

LIZ

Maybe you can make up your running with your arm.

DAISY

I'll get better at running.

LIZ

Hope so. Or you're going to have to hit it all outfield just to get on base.

DAISY

That's what I'm best at. Hitting.

Liz gives Sarah a look. Maybe Daisy isn't who she thinks she is after all.

SARAH

Maybe we won't miss you so much after all, Liz.

LIZ

Shut up and throw.

LIGHTS CHANGE. A note when the lights change, the other women remain on the field practicing, working, playing, but they're in the background.

BOTTOM OF FIRST INNING.

BASEBALL GODDESS transitions the team from one century to the next.

BASEBALL GODDESS

How did baseball start? Everyone thinks they know the history, but it's not that. The common man in search for entertainment prayed to the gods to bring some sport into the world. I was a small god, a godlette, shall we say, roaming the wheat fields assuming I'd become a nature goddess like my sisters before me. The second oldest has just become the Cicada goddess and I figured another small insect or animal was meant for me.

During this part, we see the women reenact in silhouette a baseball ballet that seems to interpret the creation of baseball.

But I heard this prayer carried by wind and decided to answer this simple request. From the earth I made the pitcher's mound and I decided the players would run counter-clockwise as if they were always trying to run against time, push back what marches on and yet if they could succeed, they'd return home. And each time you returned home, you got a point, but there could be strikes, outs, and penalties as you tried to surmount the obstacles built against you. I found a modest stick and rock and knew that these simple things could create a game of strategy and mystery to survive decades. That was my plan.

LIGHTS focus on GWEN, a modern day shortstop, who tries on a uniform of the Bloomer Girls.

GWEN

Shit! How'm I supposed to hit a ball in this?

CHRIS, already dressed, tries throwing.

CHRIS

Hit a ball? Can't even barely throw them.

GWEN

Mine has to be looser. You think the theatre department can do that?

VIVIANA enters.

VIVIANA

What, you gonna tell them all those brawny muscles can't be contained?

GWEN

Shut up. If I laugh, I'll probably rip the costume in half.

VIVIANA

(suggestively)

I wanna see that. Hey, whole college would probably want to see that.

CHRIS

Can't we just back out?

GWEN

Probably not. The donors that fund our programs came up with this idea. Or the people who raise money for the athletic--I don't know. Someone who's giving a lot of money so you know Coach won't--

CHRIS

Yeah. Yeah. Whatever she wants.

GWEN

We're not getting paid, so why do we have to do it?

CHRIS

Who's paying for your scholarship, genius?

GWEN

Whatever. I can't imagine anyone playing ball in these.

VIVIANA

We have to practice with baseballs.

GWEN

Baseballs. Really? How lucky were they?

VIVIANA

You mean how lucky were they to be stifled and have to play ball in this Victorian ridiculousness?

GWEN

No, they actually played baseball.

CHRIS

We play baseball.

GWEN

We play *softball*.

CHRIS

Same thing. Put me up against any man--

GWEN

Yeah, but they don't. They keep us separate and pretend that we have the less dangerous sport.

CHRIS

Fuck that. We all know we're just as tough.

GWEN

That'd be a perfect game for this fundraiser. Just have us play the boy's team and see how much we'd clobber them.

VIVIANA

Like the guys would go for that. They don't see us as equals. And neither does anyone else. You see the stands. Nobody's at our games.

CHRIS

Who cares? I mean what do I have to prove?

GWEN

What's your dream? After college?

CHRIS

Don't know.

GWEN

There aren't any major leagues for us. We're not--

Chris throws the ball up and catches it as the light changes to focus just on her.

CHRIS

Of course I know that I'm coming to the end of my dream. To the highest place I can go. Because there's the league, but what's the league in comparison to baseball? Maybe I can work in a front office. Personnel. Scouting. Coaching a college team. It's not the same. I started out with these boys, playing t-ball and then youth league until the boys went to Little League and I'm shuttled off to softball. And because I'm a girl I won't ever get to have the fame, the money, or the ability to play my sport to the highest level I can. But how many minor leagues and farm teams can these mediocre men get shuttled to?

The ball drops down and the light changes back.

VIVIANA

C'mon, we have to go learn the rules of the game.

CHRIS

The rules?

VIVIANA

Yeah, we can't just play how we've always played. We have to be authentic.

GWEN

I hate history.

VIVIANA

Makes you appreciate that we're modern women.

GWEN

Makes me appreciate my regular uniform.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

TOP OF SECOND INNING.

The Baseball Goddess wheels on a cannon and Cora enters stuffing in pamphlets to load the cannon. Then they light the cannon and it showers the audience with voting pamphlets.

Maggie comes in with a handful of pamphlets as the girls are on the field.

MAGGIE

We're not playing.

DAISY

I could use a few more days--

SARAH

It's not just about you, Dandelion.

DAISY

Daisy. It's Daisy.

LIZ

What? I need that money, Maggie.

MAGGIE

Yeah, we all need it.

LIZ

You promised. This town was set in stone.

MAGGIE

Liz, you want to go help? They're all up in arms--

SARAH

Over what?

MAGGIE

Pamphlets.

LIZ AND SARAH

Cora!

MAGGIE

Seems like her handiwork.

SARAH

Can't you tell her to stop with the votes for women? Or she'll be fired.

LIZ

C'mon, she knows she won't be fired. Mags is too desperate.

MAGGIE

Liz.

LIZ

Look, we all know how hard it is to keep enough players.

SARAH

Cora's gotta stop--

Cora enters.

CORA

Stop what?

SARAH

(waves a pamphlet in Cora's face)

These idiotic pamphlets of yours.

CORA

You can't tell me what to do. I have the right of free speech.

MAGGIE

Your free speech is encroaching on our business. My business.

CORA

I'm just letting women know about how they should fight for their right to vote. They don't get to hear the speeches like we have.

DAISY

(to Sarah)

What speeches?

SARAH

(to Daisy)

Cora's mother is an activist. Been dragging Cora to those events since she was a baby. She can tell you stories about Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

MAGGIE

Let's just stick to baseball. We've got a hard enough row to hoe without muddling it with women and voting.

CORA

It's not interfering with my game.

MAGGIE

It's interfering with mine. You can leave the pamphlets after we play.

LIZ

Are we going to play?

MAGGIE

Still up in the air. Mayor hasn't made up his mind yet.

LIZ

That's a relief.

MAGGIE

But that means all of you need to keep on the up and up. No trouble, nothing that draws any attention.

DAISY

I'm only here for the attention.

MAGGIE

Nothing that draws bad feelings. You can go sing your heart out in the town square if that makes you happy, Daisy.

DAISY

I'll keep it clean. Won't do any of the burlesque songs.

MAGGIE

Go get supper at the boarding house, girls. And I'll see if I can keep it all together. No matter what you're up at sunrise to practice. Daisy needs to learn.

Players groan.

DAISY

I learn better if I get a full night's rest.

MAGGIE

Then go eat and get to bed. Nothing else for all y'all to be doing around here except stirring up problems.

Maggie looks pointedly at Cora.

CORA

All right. Nothing more until after we've played.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

BOTTOM OF THE SECOND INNING.

BASEBALL GODDESS

(hawking food like ballpark vendor)

Popcorn, cotton candy, crackerjacks! Ice cold...lemonade. Frosty lemonade here. Some game here, but we're only at the bottom of the second. We're just getting started.

LIGHTS change as Gwen comes storming in.

GWEN

That's fucking bullshit. She can't--

Gwen hits a locker as Viviana follows behind her.

VIVIANA

Calm down, calm down.

GWEN

I'm not gonna be calm when--

Chris enters.

CHRIS

Just go and apologize.

GWEN

Apologize? No way. I'm not apologizing. And I'm not playing in that stupid game. Get these clothes off me.

VIVIANA

Don't tear them. Here, let me help.

Viviana starts to help Gwen.

GWEN

She can't do that you know.

CHRIS

She can do whatever she wants, she's the coach.

GWEN

But it's not fair, you know. You can't just say that those are the rules.