

# EXPIRATION DATE

By Jerry Rabushka

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# EXPIRATION DATE

*A One Act Comedy*

**By Jerry Rabushka**

**SYNOPSIS:** The perfect sibling rivalry – Traci loves to break the rules, and sister Salty loves to tattle on her. But is Traci going too far? When she eats mayonnaise a day after its expiration date, three ghoulish “Spirits of Expiration” appear to teach her a lesson: she has to live a day behind everyone else. This means late homework, missed dating opportunities, and... why isn't she at her birthday party? Traci might be a day behind, but you'll want to get this script...today! (Or we're tattling.)

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(5 females, 3 males, 2-4 either, 0-10 extras;  
gender flexible, doubling possible)*

|                   |                                                                                                      |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| TRACI (f).....    | A high school student who just can't follow the rules. Well she could, but she won't.<br>(110 lines) |
| SALTY (f).....    | Traci's younger sister, middle-school aged, a very experienced tattler. (53 lines)                   |
| MOM (f) .....     | Mother to Tracy and Salty.<br>(28 lines)                                                             |
| DAD (m).....      | Father to Tracy and Salty.<br>(8 lines)                                                              |
| EMMA (f).....     | A student. Traci's friend.<br>(16 lines)                                                             |
| BOYER (m) .....   | A student. A boy Traci dates, or... not, since she can't ever show up. (26 lines)                    |
| FIONA (f) .....   | A student. A fair-weather friend of Traci's, but the weather's nice. (6 lines)                       |
| WILSON (m/f)..... | One of Traci's teachers – and a very strict grader. (12 lines)                                       |

HANSON (m/f)..... Traci and Salty's Boss, 20 years later. (12 lines)

**SPIRITS OF EXPIRATION:** Ghoulish, ghastly creatures with ghoulish, ghastly magical powers.

EXPIRA (m/f)..... Pronounced: expire-ah (39 lines)

CALIFORNIA (m/f) ..... (45 lines)

ROTROT (m)..... (28 lines)

**EXTRAS:**

PARTY ATTENDEES (m/f) ..... Optional, in scene 4.  
(Non-Speaking)

**CAST DOUBLING POSSIBILITIES**

WILSON can double as DAD or FIONA

HANSON can double as BOYER or EMMA

**DURATION:** 35 minutes.

**TIME:** Present day and 20 years in the future.

**SETTING:** Family Home, School, and Work Office

**SET**

The family kitchen is the main setting; this can be depicted by a table and chairs. Realistic appliances and cabinets are not necessary. They can be drawn or painted as part of the set if desired. Other settings include offices and hallways which can be depicted by desks and chairs. Or of course, more elaborate design can include posters, wall hangings, etc. For fast set changes, pretty much every scene can be depicted by a moving tables, chairs, and desks around, or some scenes can easily be done on a bare stage.

**COSTUMES**

Present day attire for most of the characters. The spirits are ghoulish, so they can be in zombie makeup, stringy hair, tattered capes and clothing, etc. The final scene takes place about 20 years later so TRACI and SALTLY would dress older, for an office environment.

## PERFORMANCE NOTES

Start the play off high energy! The two sisters have had this conflict for quite some time, and we need to establish this relationship quickly and... at a high volume. Notice too how SALTY likes to tattle on everyone she can, from the beginning to the end of the play.

While the spirits are “gruesome” in some ways, they are comedically so, and also have a human side, as we see at the end of the play when they’ve make a “big mistake.”

## PROPS

- ☐ Some groceries and kitchen items, for example onions, loaf of bread, sandwich fixings, jar of mayonnaise, and cooking utensils.
- ☐ Backpack, school supplies for studying (*books, pencils, etc*)
- ☐ A cup (*for scene 2*)
- ☐ Traci’s assignment (*papers stapled together*) and pen for teacher (*scene 2*)
- ☐ For the birthday party: wrapped or bagged presents, party décor.
- ☐ Plastic gift cards or gift certificates.
- ☐ Theater tickets.
- ☐ Papers, folders, etc. for office and school work.
- ☐ Tabloid magazine (*People, the Enquirer, for example*)
- ☐ Posters (*optional*), to decorate the teacher’s office, and the office in the final scene.

## SOUND EFFECTS

- ☐ Thunder
- ☐ Refrigerator Door
- ☐ Party Music
- ☐ Knock at the Door

## SCENE 1

**AT RISE:** *TRACI and SALTY are in their kitchen. It's after school, but before dinner. There should be some groceries on the table, for example butter, onions, bread.*

**SALTY:** *(Very high energy and upset, because she is involved in business she shouldn't be.)* Stop it! Stop it! I'm telling.

**TRACI:** You're always telling. What am I doing?

**SALTY:** You know exactly what you're doing, stop it! *(Calling offstage.)*  
Mom she's doing it again!

**TRACI:** Now you stop it!

**SALTY:** You just keep doing it when you know better! You're going to break it. *(Calling offstage.)* Mom, Tracy's putting onion peels in the garbage disposal again!

**TRACI:** *(Imitating her.)* Mom, Salty's tattling again! *(More to herself.)*  
And again.

**SALTY:** I wouldn't have to tattle if you didn't keep doing everything you're not supposed to, now would I? *(Bratty.)* Can't answer, can you, because you keep me very busy.

**TRACI:** Not an answer you'd survive, no. *(Waving onion peels around and in SALTY'S face.)* Into the disposal they go.

*TRACI laughs like a comic book villain, and SALTY shrieks in horror.*

**MOM:** *(Enters, already annoyed.)* Traci, how many times have I told you not to put onion peels in the garbage disposal?

**TRACI:** And how many times have I done it and it doesn't break? Everyone gets into a tornado about onion peels and egg shells. This isn't 1980 anymore. Sometimes kitchen appliances actually work as intended.

**SALTY:** She always breaks the rules and you let her get away with it! *(This is big news.)* Yesterday she drank soda at 11:55 am and she's supposed to wait until noon.

**MOM:** Traci... Only fast girls and bad boys drink soda before noon.

**TRACI:** She's always snooping on me. *(To SALTY.)* One day you're going to get in trouble for all this tattling.

**SALTY:** No I won't. But you will. Hopefully.

**MOM:** Maybe if you'd stop doing everything you're not supposed to she wouldn't have to snoop and tell.

**TRACI:** Would you rather I smoked and drank and ran around with college boys? Because as soon as I'm 18 it's boys and cigarettes and soda in the morning.

**SALTY:** (*Clapping her hands together.*) That'd be awesome. You'd get in so much trouble!

**TRACI:** I can't get in any more trouble than grinding up an eggshell.

**SALTY:** (*Picks up the butter.*) Look, someone left the butter out on the table. I didn't do it.

**TRACI:** (*Puts it back down.*) Everyone leaves butter on the table.

**SALTY:** I told her to put it away but she refused.

**MOM:** (*Snatches the butter.*) Not in my house! Butter gets put away! (*Moves butter to the refrigerator or offstage, SFX: Slamming refrigerator door.*) Traci, you're always testing the limits. You know the rules but you keep trying to break them one at a time. One day it's going to backfire and you'll just have yourself to blame.

**SALTY:** And I'll be there cheering it on.

**TRACI:** Can you all calm down? Emma's coming over and we're going to study.

**SALTY:** No you're not, you're going to listen to music and talk about boys.

**TRACI:** We're going to study. Who made you such a muckraker?

**MOM:** No talking about boys until you study.

**TRACI:** But boys are what we study. I'm dedicated to learning as much on the subject as I can. (*SFX: Knock at the door.*) Please don't embarrass me.

**MOM:** As long as I make the house payment around here, I can say what I want.

**TRACI:** Stop it!

**MOM:** (*Making fun of TRACI.*) Ooooo Miss Onion Peels wants me to stop. You stop!

*TRACI, practically exhausted at this point, opens the door to let EMMA come in. This can be played as if she's coming through a back kitchen door.*

**TRACI:** Emma, I'm so glad you're here. Can I move in?

**EMMA:** (*Enters with some school supplies or backpack; she's been through some family ordeal as well.*) I could hardly get out. My mother wanted me to take out the garbage. It took me 30 minutes of arguing before I could get out of it.

**MOM:** Why didn't you just do it?

**EMMA:** Who has time? Plus it's trash. Eeeewww.

**TRACI:** My mom doesn't get it. She was born the age she is now. (*Threatening.*) And my sister doesn't want to get any older.

**MOM:** You'll have time, Traci, because I expect our trash out by the end of the day.

**TRACI:** Salty, mom wants you to take out the trash!

**MOM:** No, I specifically want you to do it. And I'm going to inspect it to make sure it has eggshells and onion peels in it.

**SALTY:** Good luck getting past the fish she put in there. Without putting it in a plastic bag. But I don't have to tattle, you'll all find out soon enough.

**MOM:** Traci, everything's a game with you. (*Exits.*)

**TRACI:** I wish Dad was home, he lets me get away with everything.

**SALTY:** Not any more, I told mom.

**TRACI:** I'm starving. Do you want a sandwich, Emma?

**EMMA:** Sure, thanks. We're having meat pudding for dinner. Another reason I wanted to come over.

**TRACI:** Mom can I make Emma and me a sandwich?

**MOM:** (*Poking in.*) Sure, and make one for your sister too.

**TRACI:** Why do I have to make one for her?

**MOM:** Because I said so. And because I don't want to do it myself. (*Exits.*)

**TRACI:** Fine. Whatever.

**SALTY:** Nyaah. Make me a sandwich and maybe I'll stop tattling.

**TRACI:** I'll stuff your face with peanut butter so you can't talk for an hour.

**EMMA:** Let's eat so we can study up some boys!

**TRACI:** Okay, Emma... (*Hunts around the kitchen.*) let's see... we're having lettuce, tomato, cheese, hard-boiled eggs and (*Right at SALTY.*) onion slices, on some 100% whole wheat bread. (*Again to SALTY.*) All that whining and you still get a sandwich out of it.

**SALTY:** (*Holding up the bread and spinning it around.*) The bread's "day old."

**TRACI:** The lettuce is a week old, yet I live.

**EMMA:** We freeze our bread. It's year old. Frosty, yet soggy.

**SALTY:** Wow, I'm glad I live here.

**EMMA:** You don't know how privileged you are.

**TRACI:** Well Salty, if you're going to eat, you're going to help.

**SALTY:** Mom didn't tell me to help. *(Calling offstage.)* Mom!

**TRACI:** *(Pushing some things to the side.)* Oh, look, there's not enough for you.

**SALTY:** Fine, I'll go back to playing the oppressed little sister.

**TRACI:** Get the mayo.

**SALTY:** I have to do everything. *(Gets some mayonnaise, she can go into an onstage refrigerator, or go offstage and bring it back.)*

**TRACI:** It's practice for when I go off to college. Though I don't know what you'll do without me to tattle on.

**SALTY:** *(Looks at the jar with concern.)* Look, this is expired. We can't use it.

**TRACI:** *(Overreacting.)* Oh no we're all going to die! You can't do anything around here without someone finding that fatal flaw.

**SALTY:** It's mayo! If it's gone bad, it's bad. Verrrry bad. Like life insurance bad.

**TRACI:** Give me that! *(Looks at the jar.)* It just expired yesterday. It's fine.

**SALTY:** *(Upset.)* No! There's no in between with mayonnaise. It's either live... or die. We're past the "use by" date!

**TRACI:** It's a day. What difference can it make?

**SALTY:** I'm not eating it.

**TRACI:** Emma and I will have some, and if we live, then you can eat it.

**EMMA:** Nope, I'm out. Unfortunately, she's right. Mayo is good or mayo is bad. It's not a "best by" date, it's a "use by" date. Overnight, gremlins and goblins creep in and ruin it with a death ray.

**TRACI:** No they don't!

**EMMA:** I heard about someone who ate out of date mayonnaise and she had to repeat tenth grade.

**SALTY:** I know someone who had old cereal and her parents got divorced.

**EMMA:** I know someone who poured old milk in their old cereal. *(Pantomimes pouring the milk.)* It was a beautiful service.

**TRACI:** I live in the wimpiest universe known to human-kind. Here, I'm not scared. (*Spreads some mayo on some bread, puts on a couple of ingredients, and picks it up.*)

**SALTY:** Nooooo!

*TRACI takes a bite, EMMA is frightened, SALTY over-reacts.*

**EMMA:** Well, nice knowing you.

**SALTY:** Mom, she's eating it!

**MOM:** (*From offstage.*) Traci, stop it!

**TRACI:** If I die, bury me in aisle three.

*Everyone watches her.*

**TRACI:** What?

**SALTY:** Just waiting. Because one day you're going to pay for your attitude. Very soon I hope you realize that for once I'm right and you're wrong, but if not, that hope will keep me alive for a hundred years.

**TRACI:** And that's a century of wasted time if there ever— (*They notice the stage darken, or lights flash beyond their control.*) what's that?

*THUNDER and LIGHTNING effects, plus the stage should now be a harrowing dark color, as EXPIRA, CALIFORNIA, and ROT-ROT come on stage in ghoulish costumes and makeup. [Think Halloween, zombie makeup, capes, robes, scarves, long stringy hair, etc.]. They don't all have to enter from the same spot, and can come through windows, doors, out of closets, etc.*

**SALTY:** Oh nooooo!

*EMMA and SALTY huddle in a corner, but TRACI keeps eating.*

**SALTY:** I told you!

*SALTY tries to escape, but she's held back by one of the spirits.*

**EXPIRA:** Stay here, little Salty girl. You'll want to see what happens!

*EMMA is frightened, while TRACI tries to put on a good face.*

**EMMA:** Traci, aren't you scared?

**TRACI:** Of what? There's plenty to eat, since you're all playing a game of "mayonnaise police."

**SALTY:** Of that it just got dark and all these creepy things are here. You really need some social skills. Mom! You better get in here now!

**MOM:** *(Enters.)* What is it, can't I have a minute to... Traci did you eat that mayo! How many times have I told you to check the expiration date...

**EXPIRA:** *(Approaching MOM, spooky.)* Yes. Mom, she did eat the mayo. She checked the date, but she ate it anyway.

**CALIFORNIA:** *(Hissing.)* Your daughter did that!

**MOM:** What's going on?

**CALIFORNIA:** They told her not to. Her sister tried to dissuade her.

**ROTROT:** Her friend tried to deter her.

**MOM:** Traci who are these people?

**EXPIRA:** Even the label tried to help her, but did she listen?

**CALIFORNIA:** Did she ever listen?

**MOM:** Uh...no. The last time she listened was when I potty trained her, finally, at age four. But more importantly, *(Getting a backbone.)* ...who are all of you and how did you get here?

**CALIFORNIA:** Oh of course she wants to know that. *(With a low bow.)* Introductions, please...

*They each introduce themselves with a flourish, and surround TRACI harrowingly.*

**EXPIRA:** I'm Expira, because she likes things that expired.

**CALIFORNIA:** I'm California, because she's in a very unusual state.

**ROTROT:** I'm RotRot. I'm what happens next.

*EXPIRA, CALIFORNIA, and ROTROT come together up front.*

**EXPIRA:** We're the Spirits of Expiration. Some spirits are for inspiration, but we're the opposite. We come when it's too late.

**ROTROT:** We've come to teach Traci a lesson.

*EXPIRA, CALIFORNIA, and ROTROT grab TRACI and bring her up to them, and finally TRACI is a little bit frightened. As she tries to escape, they block her.*

**SALTY:** This is cool! This is vindication! A hundred years sooner than expected.

**CALIFORNIA:** She thinks she's getting away with this.

**ROTROT:** She thinks she can break the rules.

**CALIFORNIA:** Onions in the disposal.

**ROTROT:** Boys before homework.

**EXPIRA:** Soda before noon.

**ROTROT:** Swimming right after lunch.

**CALIFORNIA:** Skipped Chapter 8 in *A Tale of Two Cities*. It might have been one city, three cities, she'll never know.

**EXPIRA:** And the biggest rule break of all...

**EXPIRA, CALIFORNIA, and ROTROT:** She ate expired mayonnaise.

*SFX: Thunder and Lightning.*

**CALIFORNIA:** She put it on a sandwich after the use by date.

**ROTROT:** As if it was a suggestion, not a rule.

**TRACI:** It was only a day out of date! What's the worst that can happen?

**EXPIRA:** Oh, you asked a very important question.

**CALIFORNIA:** We'll show you the worst.

**ROTROT:** Because from now on, you're going to be a day behind everyone else. You'll see the difference a single day can make. You're... expired!

*EXPIRA, CALIFORNIA, and ROTROT laugh [laughter can echo off stage with sound effects, etc], and the others scream with fear, more thunder and lightning and EXPIRA, CALIFORNIA, and ROTROT go away. Everyone on stage is knocked to the ground by all this, and slowly recovers.*

**MOM:** *(Getting up.)* Now you've done it.

**EMMA:** Traci now what? That was really horrific. Like a movie come to life.

**SALTY:** Horrific, but not my problem.

**TRACI:** *(After a pause.)* Whatever. I'm having another sandwich. *(Picks up the mayonnaise and gloats, but reads the label.)* Better use it, it expires today.

## SCENE 2

**AT START:** *At school in WILSON'S office. This can be a desk piled with books and folders and decorated with some inspirational or educational posters if available. WILSON is already seated and doing some paperwork.*

**EXPIRA:** *(To audience, with exaggerating hand gestures.)* Oooh, "I'm having another sandwich," she said. "The expiration date doesn't matter," she said. "I don't have to listen to my mother," she said. Why, she's nothing but a mouthful of sass and vinegar. *(Motioning the audience to "come along.")* She's about to find out why all that was a really bad idea. I'm going to step back and watch with silent glee. Won't you join me... in a cup of glee?

*EXPIRA sips from a cup, while TRACI enters with her recent assignment, upset about her grade.*

**TRACI:** Mrs. [Mr.] Wilson...

**WILSON:** *(Already knows what's coming.)* Fancy meeting you here, Traci. I didn't realize you knew where my office was.

**TRACI:** Mrs. [Mr.] Wilson, I need to talk to you about this paper! How did I get a C?

**WILSON:** It was late. You had a B but it was a day late so I knocked it down to a C. I explained my late paper policy before the semester was five minutes old.

**TRACI:** It was not late, I turned it in on the 6<sup>th</sup> like you said.

**WILSON:** You turned it in on the 7<sup>th</sup>. You would have gotten an A reduced to a B, but all your dates and numbers were wrong. By one. It's as if you tried to be mistaken.

**EXPIRA:** (*Sipping again.*) She didn't try to be wrong. She's just a little bit behind.

**TRACI:** I did not. All of that's a lie!

**WILSON:** I'm your instructor. Are you calling me a liar?

**TRACI:** I'm calling someone a liar. I checked all my dates and years and times meticulously.

**WILSON:** (*Shows TRACI a notebook.*) This is my attendance chart. You weren't even here on the 6<sup>th</sup>. You and that very bad boy Johnny Bostwick. Unfortunately for Johnny, it means detention.

**TRACI:** (*Defiant.*) I don't get C's.

**WILSON:** Well... OK. Have it your way.

**TRACI:** I knew you'd understand.

**WILSON:** (*Makes a mark.*) Now it's a D.

**TRACI:** (*Mortally offended.*) Mrs. [Mr.] Wilson that's not fair!

**WILSON:** Perhaps next class we can have a fresh start. On Monday.

**TRACI:** Tomorrow's Friday.

**WILSON:** Tomorrow's Saturday. You can come in if you like, but I'm having a spa day. It looks like you need the class time. I don't get it Tracy, you're just a little off. It's like your internal clock has been set back or something. Of course, if you had read the instructions and followed them, all this could have been avoided.

**EXPIRA:** But she can't, can she? After all... she's expired! (*Exits.*)

**WILSON:** Now if you'll excuse me, I have more papers to grade. Who needs situation comedy with papers like this? But if I were you, I'd work hard to raise that D.

**TRACI:** (*Over the top and whiny.*) But. Mrs. [Mr.] Wilson...

**WILSON:** I said, if I were you... now I'm not you, for which I thank my lucky stars, but if I were, that's what I would do...

**TRACI:** (*Still out of control.*) I heard you. What is wrong with everyone? If I bring home a D my mother's going to make me eat vegetables at dinner! (*Runs off stage.*)

**WILSON:** (*Picks up a paper, reads it and laughs hysterically.*) The state of education today... so remote.

**SCENE 3**

**AT START:** *In a hallway, outside, or some common area at school. Can be played on a bare stage in front of a curtain.*

**CALIFORNIA:** *(Enters.)* Now things are going to get even worse... now it's going to hit her where it hurts.

*TRACI enters and sees BOYER who is just coming on stage from another entrance, not looking for TRACI. TRACI flags him down.*

**TRACI:** Boyer! Boyer, I can go.

**BOYER:** Go to what?

**TRACI:** The dance. I can go to the dance. Remember you asked and you said you needed to know by today.

**BOYER:** *(Confused.)* I... needed to know by yesterday.

**TRACI:** You said Thursday.

**BOYER:** Today's Friday.

**TRACI:** How can it be Friday? Mrs. [Mr.] Wilson said the same thing.

**BOYER:** *(Confused.)* It was Friday when I got up. It's been Friday all day. Usually when it starts out as a certain day, it stays that way until the next.

**TRACI:** No, it's Thursday. Everybody thinks it's Friday. I bet my sister thinks so too.

*CALIFORNIA approaches TRACI and BOYER, who is a bit perturbed at this.*

**CALIFORNIA:** You're the one who didn't think a day makes a difference. When it matters, which is when the mayonnaise is expired. *(To BOYER, confidentially.)* She thought it didn't matter.

**TRACI:** Be quiet. Eeeewww.

**BOYER:** *(Not sure what he's seeing.)* What is that?

**TRACI:** It's California.

**BOYER:** I didn't know California was that ugly.

**TRACI:** Me either. You'd think a state with 35 million people and Beverly Hills trendsetting could do better. It keeps following me around telling me about rules. I don't know what it is.

**CALIFORNIA:** Yes she does, but she doesn't want you to know she knows.

**BOYER:** Did you really eat expired mayonnaise?

*CALIFORNIA nods, sadly.*

**BOYER:** Eeewww gross. You're going to get sick any minute.

**TRACI:** I'm fine!

**BOYER:** You think you're fine. You should have seen my cousin Gretchen when the cream cheese went bad. We called her wretchin' Gretchen. For a week. But in any case...

**CALIFORNIA:** This should be good.

**BOYER:** In any case, you're creepy.

*CALIFORNIA steps back, insulted.*

**BOYER:** Traci, I told my Aunt Eloise I would take her to see *Mamma Mia*.

**TRACI:** But we were supposed to go to the dance.

**BOYER:** I didn't hear from you. I called and texted and contacted you on six social media platforms. And I didn't want to ask anyone else, so when Aunt Eloise threw *Mamma Mia* into the mix I said "Gimme Gimme Gimme."

**TRACI:** That's not fair.

**CALIFORNIA:** Of course it's not fair! That's the whole idea! That's what happens to girls who break the rules.

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