

SUMMER IN CRICKET COUNTY

by Eddie McPherson



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Summer in Cricket County

A homespun comedy/mystery dinner theatre

by Eddie McPherson

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Summer in Cricket County is a dinner theatre featuring a four-course meal. Consider serving picnic or country-type foods, as suggested below. The dramatic action is interspersed with the dining. The following will walk you through a basic overview of the evening:

Guests arrive

Appetizers and punch or iced tea (Nothing too fancy — something like crackers and cheese or veggies and dip)

Welcome by host/hostess and prayer.

Scene 1

Salad course — perhaps coleslaw

Scene 2

Entrée — e.g., fried chicken, biscuits, and green beans

Scene 3

Any type of pie for dessert and coffee

Scene 4

Guests depart

CAST

Country Bunch

ELKIN: Head of the country clan. He's levelheaded, but still simple and naive.

FESTER: Elkin's cousin. He may be played as a big, burly type or a small, meek-looking fellow. Either way, he's a loveable country bumpkin who prizes his ax.

GLENDA MAE: One in a set of highly energetic twins.

BRENDA MAE: The other twin. These girls are happy-go-lucky but will stand up for themselves at the drop of a hat.

GRANDMA: Cantankerous but loves her family.

MATER STONER: An incurable gossip who sees everyone's faults but her own.

LULA: Lifetime member of Mater's rumor club.

ELMER CRICK: Glenda Mae's hillbilly love interest who has eyes for Mimi.

ROSCOE SIMMS: Brenda Mae's hillbilly love interest who has eyes for Petunia.

PREACHER HOBBS: Respected pastor in Cricket County.

SHERIFF HOUND: Shows up with surprising news.

NOTE: Preacher Hobbs and Sheriff Hound may be played by the same actor. Or Sheriff Hound could be played by a female actor.

City Bunch

OSWALD TIPPINHIMER: Leader of the city bunch. Loves money and takes care of his country cousins' inherited millions.

PETE: Oswald's younger brother. Usually follows Oswald's lead.

MIMI: Spoiled and self-centered.

PETUNIA: A little more tolerant of the country than her sister.

Support Personnel

The following persons, though not part of the drama, are vital to the overall success of the evening.

KITCHEN HELPERS: Organizers and cooks to plan the menu and prepare the meal.

WAITERS/WAITRESSES: They serve the meal in courses and attend to the guests' needs. The cast can double as the servers if needed.

HOST/HOSTESS: Greets the guests and gives the welcome. He or she will bless the meal, or the pastor may be designated to do so. May also assist the kitchen staff.

PROPS

Ax, shoebox, various bowls and dishes, Cool Whip bowl, lawn chair, tissues, fly swatter, jar with butterfly inside, single flower, paper and pen, spoon and metal pan, two pairs of sunglasses, camouflage hat, necktie, two hand fans, small bucket/pail, boxing gloves (could be handmade), notepad (for Sheriff), gossip magazine.

SFX

Various wild and farm animal sounds. (These sounds could be pre-recorded or produced by actors Off-stage.)

Set

A picnic table sits against the Upstage wall center with walking room between the wall and the table. Lawn chairs are placed about. The entire stage is decorated with greenery (plants, ferns, small trees,

flowers, etc.) to represent a beautiful summer day in the country.

Costumes

The country bunch wear flannel shirts, blue jeans, cotton or gingham dresses, overalls, etc. The city characters wear preppie-type clothing. Mimi and Petunia may wear nice summer dresses. Pete and Oswald wear nice shirts and ties. Oswald should also wear a watch. Grandma might wear a flowered, somewhat gaudy dress with a bouffant or beehive hairdo or granny bun. She should also wear glasses. Lula and Mater dress along the same lines as Grandma. The Sheriff should wear an official-looking uniform. Make sure he's wearing a belt. Preacher Hobbs might wear a bolo tie to dress him up a bit, but not too much.

Synopsis

It's a hot summer Sunday afternoon and dinner-on-the-grounds at the humble little church house in Cricket County. Everyone gathers at the church's picnic table right after the morning service for a few hours of food and fellowship. But something's amiss.

Word is out that Fester has snuck into a local hardware store and stole an ax from its inventory. So the local sheriff shows up and stands lingering in the background. Is he there to take Fester away, or is Fester merely a victim of malicious gossip?

Other rumors get started as well: Is Grandma Taylor really going to croak? Are Mimi and Petunia attempting to steal Brenda Mae and Glenda Mae's hillbilly boyfriends away from them? Your audience will learn the answer to these questions, along with a lesson about the danger of irresponsible tongue wagging.

A note about scene divisions

This play is divided into four scenes to facilitate a dinner theatre production with a four-course meal. If you're performing the play as a non-dinner-theatre production, the blackouts aren't necessary and the show may be performed without breaks.

All Scripture taken from The King James Version.

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SCENE 1

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At Rise: It's an area of the church yard not far from the church itself. There's a small picnic-type table with a red and white checkered tablecloth draped over it. Lawn chairs sit about. Trees, bushes, and various types of flowers cover the stage. It's the peak of the summer season, so everything is very green. The appetizers and drinks may be placed on the tables ahead of time. After the welcome and prayer, the action may begin.

(LULA and MATER enter dressed to the hilt. They gingerly cross to Stage Left. We can tell right off they are harboring a secret.)

MATER: What do you have to tell me, Sister Lula?

LULA: Ain't you heard the latest, Sister Mater?

MATER: It depends on what it is, Sister Lula.

LULA: It's just awful, Sister Mater. *(Looks around to make sure no one is listening.)* I heard this morning that little Fester Taylor is a — *(She closes her eyes and looks pained.)* I can't say it.

MATER: Say it! Say it!

LULA: Fester Taylor is ... a thief. *(She pretends to cry.)*

MATER: The dickens, you say.

LULA: A bone-a-fied, law-breakin', Bible-ignorin' thief. It's the truth, as sure as I'm standing here.

MATER: Little Fester is the most honest boy I know.

LULA: They're usually the worst ones. Wait 'til you hear what he went and stole.

MATER: *(Covering her ears)* Don't tell me. I can't bear to hear another awful detail. *(Beat as she uncovers her ears)* Don't just stand there; what in the world did he steal?

LULA: The way I heard it, and my hearin' is pretty doggone good, Fester done went and snuck in to Goggans' Hardware Store and made off with a brand-spankin'-new ax.

MATER: All that breakin' and enterin' for a silly little ax? What a disgrace to his family. His poor grandma won't ever live down the shame.

- 1 LULA: She don't even know yet.
- 2 MATER: She needs to know.
- 3 LULA: It's *our* duty to make sure she knows.
- 4 MATER: That boy needs a good switchin'.
- 5 LULA: He shall be punished and punished again!
- 6 MATER: Spare the rod and spoil the child!
- 7 LULA: Exodus twenty-two, verse one: "If a man shall steal an ax ...
- 8 he shall restore five ... !"
- 9 MATER: That's a ox.
- 10 LULA: Beg your pardon?
- 11 MATER: The Good Book says: "If a man shall steal a ox ... he shall
- 12 restore five." Not ax.
- 13 LULA: But Fester didn't steal a ox.
- 14 MATER: You're right, sister. Ox, ax ... I'm sure the Lord won't mind
- 15 us changing his word just a tiny bit to make our point. (*With*
- 16 *a finger in the air*) If a man shall steal a ax ... he shall restore
- 17 five! Approved translation by Mater Stone and Lula Breech.
- 18 LULA: Preach it, sister!
- 19 MATER: Amen and amen!
- 20 LULA: The dirty sinners of this world need our prayers! (*FESTER*
- 21 *enters carrying an ax over his shoulder and holding a shoebox with*
- 22 *his other hand.*)
- 23 FESTER: Mornin', ladies — I didn't see y'all over here. I was just
- 24 takin' my firefly collection for a walk before church.
- 25 LULA: (*Standing closely to MATER*) Why look, Sister Mater, it's little
- 26 Fester Taylor ... with his hot ax thrown over his shoulder.
- 27 MATER: He ain't even ashamed of the crime he's committed.
- 28 FESTER: Grandma wanted me to see if y'all was comin' on in the
- 29 church house. She said she's been savin' a seat for her two
- 30 best friends in the whole world.
- 31 LULA: Ain't that sweet of her? In that case, shall we go forth into
- 32 the church house, Sister Mater?
- 33 MATER: We shall, Sister Lula, and I sure hope the preacher's
- 34 sermon is longer this week.
- 35 LULA: Longer?

- 1 **MATER:** Why, yes. I didn't get my full nap *last* Sunday.
- 2 **LULA:** (*Before she leaves*) By the way, Fester, you might want to plan
3 to be visited by Sheriff Hound later today.
- 4 **FESTER:** Why would the sheriff want to see me?
- 5 **MATER:** Why would the sheriff ... ? (*Pretending to start crying*) Still
6 pretendin' to be all innocent when he holds tight to the nasty
7 evidence itself.
- 8 **LULA:** He is sick with the disease called sin.
- 9 **MATER:** Be healed, little Fester. Be healed, thy wayward child.
10 (*They pretend to cry as they exit.*)
- 11 **FESTER:** (*Holding up his small cardboard box or tin can and shouting*
12 *after the ladies*) Didn't y'all want to see my firefly collection?
13 (*But the ladies are gone. FESTER shrugs. Off-stage, the CAST sings*
14 *"Shall We Gather at the River?" FESTER speaks to his fireflies.*)
15 Anyway, Emma and Ethel, today is dinner on the grounds —
16 we eat lunch right after the mornin' service. And this is my
17 ax. Ain't she a beaut? I cut things with it. Trees, stumps, things
18 like that. I even scared off a riled black bear with it once. I
19 held my ax up like this, and went *ahhhh!* (*Laughs.*) That bear
20 run off like a scalded dog. (*Quiet again*) I sure am fond of my
21 ax.
- 22 If I don't get to the church service, Grandma will skin me
23 alive. I'll just leave you two ladies here on the picnic table 'til
24 lunchtime. Now, don't be startin' no fires while I'm gone. (*He*
25 *laughs at his wit. He looks out to the audience.*) They're fireflies,
26 and I told 'em not to start any fires. Sometimes I'm funny like
27 that. (*He starts to exit, but stops and speaks to himself.*) The sheriff?
28 (*He scratches his head and then exits as he joins in on the song the*
29 *CAST is singing in the distance.*) Shall we gather at the riv-errrr?
30 (*And so on. The song builds in volume and intensity, then fades out*
31 *again. The stage lights dim, then blackout. House lights up as the*
32 *salad course is served.*)
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SCENE 2

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(Begin this scene shortly after all the guests have received their salads. BRENDA MAE and GLENDA MAE enter, each holding a covered dish.)

GLENDA MAE: Come on, Brenda Mae.

BRENDA MAE: I'm comin', Glenda Mae.

GLENDA MAE: *(Finding a place on the table)* Now, where can I set my dish so ever'boday can see it?

BRENDA MAE: Don't worry, your Elvis Jell-O mold is always the first to be ate up.

GLENDA MAE: I jes' hope this heat don't get to it first. Last year his sideburns melted before we ever started eatin'.

BRENDA MAE: I'll just put my deep-fried sushi right beside your Jell-O mold.

GLENDA MAE: Deep-fried what?

BRENDA MAE: Sushi. Cousin Mimi from the city gave me the recipe, but it left out one important step: It didn't tell me how to cook it. So I battered it up real good with cornmeal and deep-fried it in my iron skillet.

GLENDA MAE: That sounds real tasty.

BRENDA MAE: *(Taking a lawn chair that has been leaning against the table and unfolding it)* Now we can sit a spell, Glenda Mae, while ever'boday else gets out here.

GLENDA MAE: That sermon on Moses was really good this mornin', wasn't it, Brenda Mae?

BRENDA MAE: It sure was, Glenda Mae. Moses wandered in the wilderness for forty years 'cause God was testin' him.

GLENDA MAE: Between you and me, do you think Moses wandered all that time 'cause God was testin' him or 'cause, like most fellers, he refused to stop and ask for directions?

BRENDA MAE: That's a good point. *(They laugh.)* Speakin' of men, where is that Elmer and Roscoe? They was supposed to walk us out of the church house.

GLENDA MAE: *(Taking her own chair)* That sounds just fine to me,

- 1 Brenda Mae. It sure is a beautiful summer day. (*GRANDMA*
2 *enters carrying a large Cool Whip bowl. She places it on the table,*
3 *singing merrily.*)
- 4 **GRANDMA:** Shall we gather at the river? The beaut-ee-ful, the
5 beaut-ee-ful riverrrr ...
- 6 **GLENDMA MAE:** Grandma sure is in a good mood today.
- 7 **BRENDA MAE:** And look at that, she brought her fancy
8 dinner-ware.
- 9 **GRANDMA:** I always use my best for our dinner-on-the-grounds.
10 It's the only chance I get to show it off. But it's what's on the
11 inside of this Cool Whip bowl that's really special. You'll never
12 guess in a million years what it is.
- 13 **GLENDMA MAE:** Stewed squirrel?
- 14 **BRENDA MAE:** With red-eye gravy and tadpole rice?
- 15 **GRANDMA:** It's so good it makes you want to slap your mama.
16 And wasn't that a wonderful sermon this mornin'? Preacher
17 Hobbs really knows how to make you think about everlastin'
18 life.
- 19 **GLENDMA MAE:** He surely does. Grandma, do you spend much time
20 wonderin' about the hereafter?
- 21 **GRANDMA:** I sure do, child. Ever' time I stand in front of the
22 refrigerator with the door open, I have to ask myself, "What
23 am I here after?" (*Looking up*) It's goin' to be a scorcher today.
- 24 **BRENDA MAE:** It was so hot this mornin' that I fed my chickens
25 cracked ice so they wouldn't lay hard-boiled eggs. (*LULA and*
26 *MATER enter.*)
- 27 **GLENDMA MAE:** But it don't matter none, 'cause just one whiff of
28 them honeysuckles makes you forget all about your troubles.
- 29 **LULA:** Sister Mater, wasn't that sermon on Moses so inspired?
- 30 **MATER:** (*Wiping the corner of her eyes with a tissue*) It surely was.
31 His faith had to be real strong for him to build that ark like
32 he done.
- 33 **LULA:** I hope his preachin' didn't disturb your nap. (*They see*
34 *GRANDMA.*)
- 35 **MATER:** Look, there's Imogene Taylor.

- 1 LULA: Don't you know she would try to be the first in line to eat.
- 2 MATER: Did you notice that dress she's wearin'?
- 3 LULA: Bless her heart, she looks like she was poured into that
- 4 dress and forgot to say when.
- 5 MATER: She just don't have the figure to pull off that pattern.
- 6 (*GRANDMA approaches.*)
- 7 LULA: Oh, Imogene, I do like that dress on you.
- 8 MATER: It makes you look forty.
- 9 GRANDMA: Why, much obliged. I'll let y'all borrow it sometime.
- 10 (*She crosses to the table out of earshot.*)
- 11 LULA: Yeah, that's just what my scarecrow needs to wear in the
- 12 cornfield. (*LULA and MATER have a good laugh.*) You know,
- 13 ever' since she inherited all them diamond mines from her
- 14 dearly departed Uncle Zeke, she walks around all snooty,
- 15 like she's better than ever'body else.
- 16 MATER: And on top of that, she shows off a new Cool Whip bowl
- 17 ever' time we eat.
- 18 LULA: (*Holds her hand up into the air.*) **Vanity!**
- 19 MATER: Proverbs thirty-one, verse thirty: "Favor is deceitful and
- 20 beauty is vain."
- 21 LULA: Amen!
- 22 MATER: Hallelujah!
- 23 LULA: **We must pray for her soul!** (*This last line was fairly loud and*
- 24 *gets GRANDMA'S attention again.*)
- 25 GRANDMA: (*From the table, as she swats at flies*) **Y'all must be**
- 26 **tearin' somebody up pretty good over there.**
- 27 LULA: (*Taken aback*) **Why, Imogene Taylor!**
- 28 MATER: Are you accusing us of idle gossip?
- 29 GRANDMA: Heavens no. I'd say y'all's gossip gets around pretty
- 30 good.
- 31 LULA: (*Close to GRANDMA, changing the subject*) **I just love that**
- 32 **new bowl you're servin' out of, Imogene.**
- 33 MATER: You're just so blessed that you don't have to worry
- 34 about money no more.
- 35 GRANDMA: I miss poor Uncle Zeke, but he did make sure his

- 1 family was well took care of with his secret coal mines,
 2 diamond mines, and oil fields.
- 3 **MATER:** We're so proud of you. (*GRANDMA crosses out of earshot*
 4 *again.*)
- 5 **LULA:** She evens walks like she's better than ever'boday. (*They*
 6 *cross the stage, mocking GRANDMA'S walk. They sit or stand in*
 7 *their place Stage Right and whisper to one another. PETE and*
 8 *OSWALD enter.*)
- 9 **PETE:** (*Pulling at his collar*) Did we have to get so dressed up? It
 10 must be ninety degrees out here.
- 11 **OSWALD:** We *are* guests.
- 12 **PETE:** No one else is wearing a tie.
- 13 **OSWALD:** Stop complaining. Just as soon as Elkin signs these
 14 bank papers, we'll be heading back to the city.
- 15 **PETE:** Why did you have to pull the girls and me out here just
 16 to get a few papers signed?
- 17 **OSWALD:** Can I help it if I don't like to travel alone? Besides, if
 18 we don't help take care of our country cousins' financial
 19 matters, who will? They don't know how to handle lots of
 20 money.
- 21 **PETE:** I know, I know. But you'd think that with all the help we
 22 give them, they would offer to hand over some of Uncle
 23 Zeke's inheritance. They're worth millions.
- 24 **OSWALD:** Stop talking about it — it only makes us depressed.
 25 Where are Mimi and Petunia?
- 26 **PETE:** Beats me. They were probably attacked by a bobcat on
 27 their way across the church yard.
- 28 **OSWALD:** You talk like we're out in the middle of the wilderness.
 29 Just enjoy the peace and quiet of the countryside. (*Different*
 30 *animal sounds are heard from*
 31 *Off-stage: bobcats, wolves, dogs, screech owls, bullfrogs, crows.*)
- 32 **PETE:** If it gets any more peaceful, I'll have to buy some
 33 earmuffs. (*MIMI and PETUNIA enter, followed closely by ELMER*
 34 *and ROSCOE. Every step MIMI and PETUNIA take, ELMER and*
 35 *ROSCOE also take directly behind them.*)

- 1 MIMI: (*Stopping and clinging tightly to PETUNIA*) Are they still
2 behind us?
- 3 PETUNIA: I'm afraid to look. (*ELMER taps MIMI on the shoulder*
4 *and waves.*)
- 5 MIMI: They're still behind us.
- 6 ELMER: My name's Elmer. If you'd like to mosey over to my
7 truck later, I'll show you my hubcap wind chimes I'm puttin'
8 together. (*MIMI tries her best to ignore him.*) Ain't you goin' to
9 tell me your name?
- 10 MIMI: (*To PETUNIA*) I'm petrified.
- 11 ELMER: That's a real pretty name. (*Holds up a jar with a butterfly*
12 *inside*) I caught this here butterfly just for you, Petrified.
- 13 ROSCOE: (*Holds up a single flower to PETUNIA*) And this wild
14 flower is just for you, pretty city lady.
- 15 PETUNIA: (*Not looking at him*) I'm allergic.
- 16 ROSCOE: Allergic. I like that. I'm Roscoe. How would you like to
17 go on a cruise?
- 18 PETUNIA: Cruise?
- 19 ROSCOE: Yes, ma'am. We can take my new pickup truck and
20 circle the Dairy Queen a few times.
- 21 ELMER: When did you get a new pickup?
- 22 ROSCOE: Well, it's new to me. I was cuttin' the grass the other
23 day, and I found it.
- 24 MIMI: I'm sure you gentlemen have lots of deer to shoot or cows
25 to milk, so don't let us keep you.
- 26 PETUNIA: (*Scolding*) Mimi! Be nice. They're just trying to be
27 hospitable.
- 28 ROSCOE: I ain't never been to one.
- 29 PETUNIA: You've never been to what?
- 30 ROSCOE: A hospital.
- 31 PETUNIA: Hospitable, not hospital.
- 32 ROSCOE: Anyway, I ain't never been to one. Elmer, have you
33 ever been to a hospitable?
- 34 ELMER: Just that one time when I forgot my memory.
- 35 PETUNIA: Dear me, when did it happen?

- 1 **ELMER:** When did what happen?
- 2 **MIMI:** Is there anything you boys enjoy besides annoying out-of-
- 3 town guests?
- 4 **ELMER:** Yes, ma'am. We like to go frog giggin'.
- 5 **ROSCOE:** Ever Sunday afternoon, right after mornin' services.
- 6 **ELMER:** But today we can stay and eat and show you girls
- 7 around the church yard.
- 8 **MIMI:** You really don't have to do that.
- 9 **PETUNIA:** You boys just run along and do your frog
- 10 gargling ...
- 11 **ROSCOE:** Giggin'!
- 12 **PETUNIA:** And we'll be just fine.
- 13 **BRENDA MAE:** (*Approaching and grabbing ROSCOE by the elbow*)
- 14 Roscoe Simms, I'm just as mad at you as I can be.
- 15 **GLENDA MAE:** (*Grabs ELMER'S arm*) Why didn't you two wait to
- 16 walk us out of the service this mornin'?
- 17 **BRENDA MAE:** After all, that's what beaus are supposed to do
- 18 for their gals. (*ELMER is staring at MIMI.*)
- 19 **GLENDA MAE:** Elmer Crick, are you listenin' to a word I'm
- 20 sayin'?
- 21 **ELMER:** (*To ROSCOE*) Maybe Ms. Petrified and her friend
- 22 Allergic would like to go frog giggin' with us.
- 23 **ROSCOE:** (*To PETUNIA*) I'll even let you hold my giggin' spear.
- 24 **ELMER:** You might want to spray yourself down real good; the
- 25 chiggers are terrible down at the lake.
- 26 **PETUNIA:** (*Clinging to MIMI*) Mimi, I don't want anything to do
- 27 with frogs, spears, or chiggers. I just want to go home.
- 28 **GLENDA MAE:** (*Hands on hips*) Why, Brenda Mae, I do believe we
- 29 are bein' plumb ignored.
- 30 **BRENDA MAE:** Why, Glenda Mae, I reckon you've hit the nail
- 31 right on the kneecap.
- 32 **GLENDA MAE:** (*To ELMER*) Why you askin' my city cousins out
- 33 on a date?
- 34 **BRENDA MAE:** (*To ROSCOE*) Yeah, you've never asked us to go
- 35 frog giggin' before.

- 1 MIMI: They were just about to. Elmer, tell Glenda Mae you want
2 *her to go frog giggling.*
- 3 ELMER: Giggin'! But they never like to do what we like to do.
- 4 BRENDA MAE: You don't want us to go? Fine! We can get any
5 boy we please.
- 6 GLENDA MAE: Trouble is, we ain't pleased very many.
- 7 ELMER: *(To MIMI)* And besides that, they're always puttin' us
8 down.
- 9 MIMI: I think you're barbaric. Come on, Petunia.
- 10 ELMER: See, Glenda Mae, why can't you say nice things like
11 that? *(MIMI and PETUNIA cross and stand off to themselves*
12 *pantomiming a conversation. ELMER and ROSCOE cross and*
13 *stand not too far away from them. BRENDA MAE and GLENDA*
14 *MAE cross their arms and turn away from the boys. ELKIN enters*
15 *with FESTER.)*
- 16 ELKIN: I ain't never been so embarrassed in all my life.
- 17 FESTER: I said I was sorry, Cousin Elkin.
- 18 ELKIN: It was bad enough that you fell asleep, but did you have
19 to start snorin'?
- 20 FESTER: I was up late last night cuttin' that oak tree down with
21 my ax.
- 22 ELKIN: You snored all the way through Moses' trip through the
23 Red Sea.
- 24 FESTER: Like I said, I was tired.
- 25 ELKIN: You was dreamin' up a storm. The preacher was tellin'
26 us Ms. Winnie Potts caught laryngitis and couldn't sing her
27 usual solo, and you stood up in your sleep and yelled,
28 "Hallelujah!" *(OSWALD with papers and PETE approach.)*
- 29 OSWALD: Nice service, Elkin.
- 30 PETE: *(Patting FESTER on the back)* You have a good nap, Fester?
31 *(Laughs.)*
- 32 FESTER: I was only restin' my eyes.
- 33 ELKIN: Y'all are goin' to stay and eat with us, ain't you, Cousin
34 Oswald?
- 35 OSWALD: We'd love to, but we have a long drive ahead of us.

- 1 *(OSWALD produces the papers.)* If you could just sign these
 2 financial papers for the bank, we'll head back to the city.
- 3 **FESTER:** But y'all will miss all the tasty vittles: Corn mill puddin',
 4 riverside catfish, vinegar pie.
- 5 **ELKIN:** Now, Fester, don't tease. If they can't stay and eat, it ain't
 6 fair to tell 'em what they're missin' out on.
- 7 **OSWALD:** Let me find a pen; you can sign the papers and we'll
 8 be on our way.
- 9 **ELKIN:** Y'all are always in such a dog-fired hurry. Just relax and
 10 enjoy the sunshine. I insist you sit down and take a load off.
- 11 **OSWALD:** But —
- 12 **ELKIN:** Just throw your head back and relax. *(ELKIN pushes*
 13 *OSWALD'S head back.)*
- 14 **OSWALD:** Ouch! I think you broke something.
- 15 **ELKIN:** Shhhh — just be real quiet and take in all the sounds of
 16 a summer afternoon in the country. *(The animal noises are*
 17 *heard again Off-stage.)* Now, ain't that peaceful? *(LULA and*
 18 *MATER are off whispering. They look back at MIMI and*
 19 *PETUNIA and give them a look that could kill, then turn back and*
 20 *whisper some more.)*
- 21 **MIMI:** Why, Petunia, I do believe we are the topic of a secret
 22 conversation.
- 23 **PETUNIA:** What do you mean?
- 24 **MIMI:** Those two hillbilly women right over there are talking
 25 about us. *(She waves just as LULA and MATER turn to look at*
 26 *her. When they see her wave, they quickly turn back to one another.*
 27 *ROSCOE picks up a lid and peeks at a dish.)*
- 28 **GRANDMA:** Roscoe Simms, get away from that food; it ain't time
 29 to eat yet! *(Hitting a spoon against a pan)* Could I have
 30 ever'boday's attention? Hush up! I think all the food is here,
 31 but we don't want to start eatin' 'til Preacher Hobbs joins
 32 us.
- 33 **BRENDA MAE:** Where is the preacher, Grandma?
- 34 **GRANDMA:** *(Looking Off-stage)* He's still standin' over by the
 35 church house. He's chewin' the cud with Sheriff Hound.

- 1 GLENDA MAE: They've been talkin' ever since the service ended.
- 2 BRENDA MAE: It ain't like Preacher Hobbs to keep his
3 congregation waitin' this way.
- 4 GRANDMA: It must be somethin' mighty important.
- 5 LULA: It's somethin' important, all right.
- 6 MATER: Fester, I hope you brung your toothbrush with you.
- 7 GRANDMA: Why are y'all talkin' like you know somethin' we
8 don't?
- 9 LULA: We're just enjoyin' a nice Sunday afternoon, that's all.
- 10 MATER: Whatever law Fester might have broke ain't none of our
11 business.
- 12 LULA: *(Singing)* Shall we gather at the river?
- 13 MATER and LULA: The beaut-ee-ful, the beaut-ee-ful riverrrr.
- 14 GRANDMA: Why ain't y'all singin' your favorite hymn?
- 15 MATER: What's that?
- 16 GRANDMA: "I Love to Tell the Story."
- 17 ROSCOE: I think we should go ahead and eat, Grandma Taylor.
- 18 GRANDMA: *(With much frustration)* What part of *naw* don't you
19 understand, boy?!
- 20 ROSCOE: But I'm so hungry, I could ride a horse.
- 21 ELMER: I'm so hungry, I could ride a horse sidesaddle.
- 22 GRANDMA: Both of y'all, close your mouths. Your dumb is
23 showin'.
- 24 MATER: Remember, Fester, me and sister are prayin' for you
25 over here.
- 26 LULA: You see, we have a direct connection to the heavenly
27 hotline.
- 28 MIMI: If we're stuck here, then let's eat. Petunia, please inform
29 Oswald I'm famished.
- 30 PETUNIA: Oswald, Mimi's famished.
- 31 OSWALD: We'll pick something up on the road. *(Turns.)* Elkin, we
32 really need to get these papers signed, if you don't mind.
- 33 ELKIN: *(Grabbing a bucket)* But first I need to run down to the
34 creek and fetch some drinkin' water. I'll be right back. *(He*
35 *exits.)*

- 1 **OSWALD:** But Elkin! (*ELKIN is gone.*)
- 2 **MATER:** Glenda Mae, I'd be watchin' my back if I was you.
- 3 **GLEND A MAE:** Why's that, Sister Mater? (*LULA whispers in her*
- 4 *ear.*) What?! (*Stomps over to BRENDA MAE with her hands on*
- 5 *her hips.*) Brenda Mae, do you know what I done heard?
- 6 **BRENDA MAE:** What's that, Glenda Mae?
- 7 **GLEND A MAE:** Our prim and proper city cousins is tryin' to steal
- 8 our lovebirds away from us.
- 9 **BRENDA MAE:** They are? That ain't very neighborly a-tall.
- 10 **GLEND A MAE:** You know what we're goin' to have to do about
- 11 it, don't you?
- 12 **BRENDA MAE:** I sure do! (*Beat*) What?
- 13 **GLEND A MAE:** Fight fire with fire!
- 14 **BRENDA MAE:** I'll run get the matches. (*Starts to leave.*)
- 15 **GLEND A MAE:** (*Grabs her elbow.*) What I mean is we got to fight
- 16 for our men, such as they are. (*They glance over at ROSCOE*
- 17 *and ELMER. ROSCOE is wearing OSWALD'S sunglasses and*
- 18 *ELMER is trading his camouflage hat for PETE's necktie.*)
- 19 **ROSCOE:** Looks like it might be cloudin' up, Elmer.
- 20 **ELMER:** And this here necktie will go good with my purple
- 21 polyester suit.
- 22 **BRENDA MAE:** You're right, Glenda Mae. We've done reached to
- 23 the bottom of the barrel.
- 24 **GLEND A MAE:** They're still ours, so we got to win Twiddle Dee
- 25 and Twiddle Dum back over to our side.
- 26 **BRENDA MAE:** I got an idea. Come on! (*They cross to a couple of*
- 27 *lawn chairs and speak so ELMER and ROSCOE can hear them.*)
- 28 Oh, look at these here lawn chairs, just waitin' for two
- 29 country girls to rest their weary bones in.
- 30 **GLEND A MAE:** (*Loudly*) A real gentleman would know what to
- 31 do in such a situation. (*ROSCOE and ELMER cross to the two*
- 32 *chairs, pick them up and carry them to MIMI and PETUNIA.*)
- 33 **ROSCOE:** (*To PETUNIA*) Here you go, Allergic; plant yourself
- 34 right there.
- 35 **PETUNIA:** I *am* a little tired. Thank you, Elmer.

1 **ROSCOE:** I'm Roscoe.

2 **ELMER:** *(To MIMI)* Here you go, you little heifer. Park it.

3 **MIMI:** Might as well; looks like we're stuck here a while. *(She sits.)*

4 I appreciate it, Roscoe.

5 **ELMER:** Elmer.

6 **GLENDIA MAE:** Look at that, Brenda Mae; they're stealin' 'em
7 right out from under our noses.

8 **BRENDA MAE:** *(Crosses to LULA and MATER.)* Sister Lula, are
9 you sure our city cousins are tryin' to take our beaus away
10 from us like you said?

11 **LULA:** Good heavens, child, we've done told you more than we've
12 heard. It's up to you two to get them two bozos back.

13 **GLENDIA MAE:** *(To BRENDA MAE)* She's right, Brenda Mae!

14 **BRENDA MAE:** But how, Glenda Mae? *(They stand off to the side
15 in a huddle, coming up with their next plan.)*

16 **OSWALD:** *(Looking Off-stage, OSWALD speaks to PETE.)* It looks as
17 if the sheriff and the preacher are talking pretty intently
18 over there.

19 **PETE:** You think something important is going on?

20 **OSWALD:** I think so, but what could it be? Those two hillbilly
21 ladies seem to think it has something to do with Fester.

22 **PETE:** What if I were to nonchalantly wander over and listen in
23 on the preacher and sheriff?

24 **OSWALD:** You can't do that; it would be too obvious.

25 **PETE:** Not if I wear this. *(Puts on ROSCOE'S camouflage hat.)*
26 They'll never know I'm around. *(He salutes OSWALD.)* I will
27 check back shortly with the desired information. *(He sneaks
28 out.)*

29 **OSWALD:** Pete, that's a cap, not an invisibility cloak. Pete! *(But
30 PETE is gone.)*

31 **GRANDMA:** *(Approaching OSWALD)* What you yelpin' about over
32 here?

33 **OSWALD:** I'm sorry, Grandma Taylor. I'm just waiting for Elkin
34 to sign these papers.

35 **GRANDMA:** Who cares about a bunch of papers when a whole

1 table full of vittles is goin' to waste in this heat? It was so
2 hot this mornin', I saw a dog chasin' a rabbit.

3 OSWALD: What's unusual about that?

4 GRANDMA: They was both walkin'. (*Shouting*) Brenda Mae, bring
5 me a fan over here, child!

6 GLENDA MAE: (*Approaching with a hand fan*) Is anything wrong,
7 Grandma?

8 GRANDMA: This heat is killin' me.

9 BRENDA MAE: (*Approaching GLENDA MAE*) What's wrong,
10 Glenda Mae?

11 GLENDA MAE: Grandma says the heat is killin' her.

12 BRENDA MAE: (*Hands her another fan*) Here, Grandma, two fans
13 is better than one.

14 GRANDMA: Give me some breathin' room; I'm gettin' one of my
15 sick headaches.

16 BRENDA MAE: Ever'body just hush up! Can't you see Grandma
17 is dyin' over here in this heat? (*ROSCOE is peeking at some*
18 *food and is approached by LULA.*)

19 LULA: What's goin' on over there, Roscoe?

20 ROSCOE: Brenda Mae says Grandma Taylor is dyin' over there.

21 ELMER: And that she's gettin' a real bad headache.

22 LULA: (*Rushes over to MATER*) Sister, sister — I just heard the
23 most terrible news.

24 MATER: More news about Fester?

25 LULA: This news is brand new. I just heard that Imogene Taylor
26 is dyin' with some sort of brain disease.

27 MATER: No!

28 LULA: Ain't it awful?

29 MATER: But she's been lookin' so healthy lately.

30 LULA: Look at her, she's already gettin' the jerks. (*GRANDMA is*
31 *swatting at flies with her fans.*)

32 MATER: The jerks is the first sign. (*They cry into tissues as they*
33 *comfort each other. FESTER approaches.*)

34 FESTER: Ladies, are ya'll OK?

35 LULA: Should we tell him, sister?

- 1 **MATER:** You think he can take more bad news, what with the
2 law comin' and ever'thing?
3 **FESTER:** Bad news? What is it?
4 **LULA:** Honey, it seems your sweet grandma over there is ... how
5 can we put it delicate-like?
6 **MATER:** Your grandma could croak at any minute.
7 **FESTER:** Croak? Grandma? How do you know?
8 **LULA:** A little birdie told us. (*FESTER looks up to the sky.*)
9 **MATER:** And she already has the first symptom. (*FESTER sees*
10 *GRANDMA swatting at flies, this time without a fly swatter. LULA*
11 *and MATER cry as they help each other have a seat. FESTER*
12 *smiles and crosses to GLENDA MAE.*)
13 **GLENDA MAE:** Fester, why you lookin' giddy like that?
14 **FESTER:** It's so funny.
15 **GLENDA MAE:** What's funny?
16 **FESTER:** I was just thinkin'.
17 **GLENDA MAE:** You're right, that *is* funny.
18 **FESTER:** No, I was thinkin' how funny it would be to watch
19 Grandma's bullfrog impression. I just heard she was goin' to
20 do one any minute now.
21 **GLENDA MAE:** The way my day's goin', I could use a laugh.
22 Come on, Brenda Mae. (*They cross and stand on either side of*
23 *GRANDMA.*) She's already thinkin' like a frog. Look at her
24 goin' for them flies.
25 **GRANDMA:** What are you two gigglin' at?
26 **FESTER:** Grandma, you want me to tote you to the bank and
27 throw you in the creek?
28 **GLENDA MAE:** Yeah, you might be more at home. (*They laugh.*)
29 **GRANDMA:** Y'all leave me be. Can't you see I'm miserable in this
30 heat?
31 **FESTER:** Hey, Grandma. Ribbit.
32 **GLENDA MAE:** Ribbit, ribbit. (*They cross the stage, laughing.*)
33 **OSWALD:** (*Approaching*) What are you two laughing at?
34 **FESTER:** We're laughing at Grandma.
35 **GLENDA MAE:** She's warmin' up for her bullfrog impressions.

- 1 **FESTER:** She's real good at critter sounds. She can do hyenas,
2 roosters, crickets ... You name it.
- 3 **OSWALD:** (*Looking at his watch*) It might help pass the time. Mind
4 if I watch?
- 5 **GLENDA MAE:** Not a-tall; come on over. (*They cross back over and*
6 *surround GRANDMA, who begins swatting at the flies again.*)
- 7 **FESTER:** OK, Grandma — we're ready.
- 8 **GRANDMA:** Ready for what? (*MATER and LULA approach.*)
- 9 **MATER:** How's our poor patient doin'?
- 10 **LULA:** Look, her jerks are worse than ever.
- 11 **GLENDA MAE:** We're hopin' she'll croak soon so we can see it.
- 12 **MATER:** (*Shocked*) What did you say?
- 13 **FESTER:** Come on, Grandma — hurry up! We ain't got all day.
- 14 **LULA:** Sister, can you believe your ears?
- 15 **MATER:** I surely can't, sister.
- 16 **LULA:** (*To OSWALD*) Are you goin' to let them make a spectacle
17 of your poor Grandma Taylor this way?
- 18 **OSWALD:** What's wrong with it as long as it gives everyone a
19 good laugh?
- 20 **FESTER:** Shhhh. Ever'body be quiet. I think she's about to do it.
- 21 **MATER:** (*Hugging tightly to GRANDMA*) Oh, Imogene, you can't
22 leave us this way. You've got to hang on for poor little
23 Fester's sake.
- 24 **GRANDMA:** Where am I goin'?
- 25 **LULA:** If you ain't sure, we can get Preacher Hobbs to talk to you
26 about it when he gets here.
- 27 **FESTER:** Come on, Grandma! Do it, do it, do it!
- 28 **MATER:** (*Pushing FESTER back*) I've heard just about enough out
29 of you, young man. First a life of crime, and now blatant
30 disrespect for your elders.
- 31 **LULA:** Ever'body just hush up and let a old woman die in peace.
- 32 **GRANDMA:** Who's dyin'?
- 33 **MATER:** You are.
- 34 **GRANDMA:** (*Standing*) I ain't dyin'.
- 35 **LULA:** Yes you are! (*Pushes her back into her seat*)

- 1 GRANDMA: No I ain't! *(She stands.)*
2 LULA and MATER: Yes you are! *(They push her back down.)*
3 FESTER: Grandma, why didn't you tell us you was dyin'? I would
4 have bought you a card.
5 GRANDMA: If I was dyin' I would tell you I'm dyin', but I ain't
6 dyin' so I can't tell you I'm dyin'!
7 LULA: You *are* dyin'!
8 MATER: And if you get up again, I'll do you in myself!
9 GRANDMA: Where did y'all hear such a nasty rumor?
10 LULA: Roscoe told us.
11 ROSCOE: I heard it from Brenda Mae.
12 BRENDA MAE: I never said Grandma was dyin'.
13 GRANDMA: I hate to rain on ever'body's parade, but I'm here to
14 tell you I'm healthy as a horse. Now, get away from me!
15 MATER: *(Walking away, speaking to LULA)* That sure was tacky of
16 her to pretend to be dyin' that way.
17 LULA: Well, you know Sister Imogene always did like attention.
18 MATER: *(Shaking her head)* Vanity! Vanity! *(FESTER grabs his*
19 *firefly collection and seats himself in a chair. GLENDA MAE and*
20 *BRENDA MAE cross over and stand not too far away from*
21 *MATER and LULA. They pantomime a conversation. PETE enters*
22 *and pulls OSWALD Downstage.)*
23 PETE: Oswald, I think something serious may be up.
24 OSWALD: What's up?
25 PETE: Something serious.
26 OSWALD: I heard that part. Something like what?
27 PETE: The sheriff said someone reported that Fester stole an ax
28 from a nearby hardware store.
29 OSWALD: Fester who?
30 PETE: Our Fester.
31 OSWALD: I don't believe it.
32 PETE: Neither do I. But it doesn't matter if we believe it or not.
33 The sheriff believes it.
34 OSWALD: I don't care what you overheard. Fester Taylor is no
35 more a thief than the man in the moon.

- 1 **PETE:** He may be taking Fester in for questioning.
- 2 **OSWALD:** Fester will be humiliated. I intend on getting to the
3 bottom of this. (*ELKIN enters with a bucket of water and sets it*
4 *on the table.*) **Elkin!**
- 5 **ELKIN:** Here's some nice cold creek water. You mean we ain't
6 eatin' yet?
- 7 **PETE:** Elkin, we need to talk to you for a minute. How can I say
8 this? Elkin, I think the sheriff may be here to take Fester
9 away.
- 10 **ELKIN:** Sometimes Sheriff Hound gives Fester a ride when his
11 truck won't crank.
- 12 **OSWALD:** What we mean is he may be taking Fester to the big
13 house.
- 14 **ELKIN:** You mean that big house on Blackberry Road?
- 15 **PETE:** You don't understand, Elkin. What would you say if I were
16 to tell you the sheriff plans to send Fester up the river?
- 17 **ELKIN:** I'd say when did the sheriff get a boat?
- 18 **OSWALD:** (*Grabbing FESTER'S shoulders*) But Fester may be
19 charged!
- 20 **ELKIN:** Don't worry, he can outrun any old bull.
- 21 **PETE:** (*Desperate*) **Oswald!** (*They continue to pantomime a*
22 *conversation.*)
- 23 **LULA:** (*To GLENDA MAE*) Glenda Mae, get over here. Why are
24 you two lettin' your beaus treat you like ground-floor
25 tenants in a two-story outhouse?
- 26 **GLENDA MAE:** But what can we do?
- 27 **MATER:** If it was me, I'd be fightin' for my man.
- 28 **LULA:** We think we heard them sayin' somethin' about proposin'
29 marriage to your city cousins.
- 30 **GLENDA MAE:** Marriage? Brenda Mae, my heart is plumb broke
31 in two.
- 32 **BRENDA MAE:** Glenda Mae, my heart is broke in two too! (*They*
33 *run out, crying.*)
- 34 **OSWALD:** Elkin, we need you to listen closely to what we're
35 telling you. There's a good chance Fester might be arrested.

1 ELKIN: What are you tryin' to say?
 2 PETE: They might throw Fester in jail.
 3 ELKIN: Quit beatin' around the bush and spit it out.
 4 OSWALD: Pete, I think he's in denial. (*Shaking ELKIN*) Elkin, are
 5 you OK?
 6 ELKIN: I think I was in shock for a minute. This is the same thing
 7 that happened to our poor cousin Leonard last year.
 8 OSWALD: What happened?
 9 ELKIN: Leonard was throwed in jail for sometin' he didn't do.
 10 OSWALD: What?
 11 ELKIN: He didn't run fast enough.
 12 PETE: But we think there has got to be some mistake.
 13 ELKIN: There's no mistake. Cousin Leonard was a terrible
 14 runner.
 15 OSWALD: We're talking about Fester.
 16 PETE: But don't worry, we intend on getting to the bottom of this
 17 ridiculous accusation.
 18 ELKIN: Innocent, simple-minded Fester goin' to jail?
 19 PETE: We are not letting Fester go to jail.
 20 FESTER: (*Approaching*) Did I hear y'all talkin' about me?
 21 PETE: (*Surprised*) Fester?
 22 OSWALD: (*Acting innocent*) Uh, hey, Fester!
 23 ELKIN: (*Gives FESTER a bear hug.*) Oh, Fester, Fester, Fester! (*He*
 24 *cries on FESTER'S shoulder. Lights blackout. House lights come up*
 25 *as servers clear salad plates away and then serve the entrée.*)
 26
 27

28 SCENE 3

29
 30 (*ELMER and ROSCOE are standing at the table.*)
 31 ROSCOE: Elmer, we might as well take a load off 'til it's time to
 32 eat.
 33 ELMER: (*Looking at the table*) Why ain't there any pork and beans?
 34 What's dinner-on-the-grounds without pork and beans?
 35 Come on, people, work with me here! It's like I always

- 1 say — if you want fine dinin', go to Waffle House!
- 2 **ROSCOE:** (*To MIMI and PETUNIA*) Don't mind Elmer; he gets a
3 little crazy when he don't eat. (*To ELMER*) Settle down,
4 Elmer, or I'll tell them to give away your parkin' space down
5 at the junior high school.
- 6 **PETUNIA:** (*Pointing Off-stage*) Look over there, a pole cat fighting
7 with a gopher in the back of a pickup truck that's sitting on
8 cement blocks!
- 9 **ROSCOE and ELMER:** Where? (*ROSCOE and ELMER exit, running.*
10 *MIMI and PETUNIA run to OSWALD and PETE.*)
- 11 **MIMI:** Oswald, protect us!
- 12 **OSWALD:** I wonder if the boys are that dumb or if they're making
13 a special effort today. (*GLEND MAE and BRENDA MAE rush*
14 *in wearing boxing gloves.*)
- 15 **GLEND MAE:** (*Looking around*) OK, where are they?
- 16 **BRENDA MAE:** We're good and ready this time!
- 17 **GRANDMA:** What in the name of snuff are you girls a-doin'
18 wearin' them boxin' gloves?
- 19 **GLEND MAE:** Grandma, you know the code of the hills.
- 20 **BRENDA MAE:** If a woman steals the love of another, the
21 scorned woman has until sundown to win her man back.
- 22 **GLEND MAE:** And we're scorned women!
- 23 **BRENDA MAE:** I ain't never been so scorned!
- 24 **LULA:** I didn't know there was goin' to be a fight.
- 25 **MATER:** I would have brung some popcorn.
- 26 **BRENDA MAE:** (*To PETUNIA*) Cousin Petunia, you got to know
27 somethin': Even though you're family — I can't stand by and
28 let you rob me of my happiness. Now, stand up and fight
29 like a woman should!
- 30 **GLEND MAE:** (*To MIMI*) And take what she just said and
31 pretend I said it, and you'll have what I think too.
- 32 **PETUNIA:** I'm sorry, Brenda Mae, but I'm afraid ladies don't
33 fight.
- 34 **GLEND MAE:** I ain't askin' a lady to fight; I'm askin' *you*.
- 35 **BRENDA MAE:** 'Cause like we say in the country: Never eat a



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