

A CRICKET COUNTY CHRISTMAS WEDDING

by Eddie McPherson



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SYNOPSIS: It finally happened — Elmer Crick popped the question to Glenda Mae. There is only one thing no one seems to understand: Why does Elmer want to be married on Christmas Eve in the middle of a live Nativity scene in Grandma Taylor's diner instead of the spring of the year in an ice chapel where most couples choose to tie the knot? Bride-to-be Glenda Mae doesn't mind, but everyone else thinks it's a little strange and plans to get to the bottom of things.

Fresh from the city, Mimi and Petunia are upset that they weren't invited to plan the wedding, since they obviously could bring class and sophistication to the ceremony. Meanwhile, Pete and Oswald smell a rat and feel that Glenda Mae's fiancé only wants to marry her quickly so he can get his hands on her inherited millions.

Despite all this, the date has been set and the ceremony will take place inside Grandma Taylor's diner since the only church in Cricket County has Christmas Eve services that same night. In the meantime, Brenda Mae is a little sad that she hasn't found her Prince Charming and is worried that she will be alone the rest of her life — that is, until the man of her dreams shows up out of nowhere but then disappears without a trace. When everyone finds out Elmer's motives for wanting to have his wedding on Christmas Eve surrounded by the baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and the wise men, his character, his love for his God, and his deep affection for Glenda Mae are realized. Everyone is reminded about the love that Christ has for his bride the church, and his promise to one day return to take his bride home to live with him forever.

CAST OF CHARACTERS*(6 females, 5-8 males, 0-1 extras)***THE CITY BUNCH:**

- OSWALD (m) Leader of the city clan, he's always looking for a way to make a buck. *(64 lines)*
- PETE (m) Oswald's brother who wants to protect Glenda Mae from being taken by her future husband. *(51 lines)*
- MIMI (f) Her feelings are hurt that she wasn't invited to plan and direct Glenda Mae's wedding. *(53 lines)*
- PETUNIA (f) She wants to partner with Mimi to direct Glenda Mae's wedding and make it the affair of the year. *(44 lines)*

THE COUNTRY BUNCH:

- GRANDMA (f) She owns the diner. All she wants is a peaceful Christmas. *(113 lines)*
- FESTER (m) Naïve but has a big heart. He has been asked to be the groom's best man. *(50 lines)*
- GLENDMAE (f) Plans to be married on Christmas Eve to Elmer Crick. *(85 lines)*
- BRENDA MAE (f) Glenda Mae's "twin" sister (they look nothing alike) who dreams of her own Prince Charming. *(64 lines)*
- ELMER CRICK (m) Glenda Mae's simple-minded fiancé who has nothing to offer her but his undying love. *(74 lines)*

COUNTRY FOLK WHO VISIT THE DINER: *NOTE: Two actors (a male and female) could play all the visitors to the diner, or you may choose to use an actor for each character.*

- ORVEL POLK (m) He has had a crush on Grandma for sixty years. *(26 lines)*

- TALLAHASSEE (m)A plumber who stops in to fix
Grandma's sink. *(6 lines)*
- JAMES (m).....Shows up in Glenda Mae's daydream,
then in person. *(18 lines)*
- PHIL (m)A resident of the nearby nursing home.
(6 lines)
- DELPHIA (f).....Phil's wife, who tries to keep him in
check. *(7 lines)*
- PREACHER (m/f)Performs, in pantomime, the wedding.
(Non-Speaking.)

PRODUCTION NOTES

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE: Those who have been producing the Cricket County plays for years will notice that Elkin Taylor is missing in action. I tried to work him into the story, but he would never show up. The actor who usually plays the Elkin character may choose to switch and play Elmer in this play or maybe even the James character. I miss Elkin and plan to have him back in future scripts.

SET: The set is a country diner. The café is very old, but it's been kept up well. The Upstage wall (the wall closest to your Backstage) has a large window painted on it. The window is painted to make it look as though it looks out on the street. CRICKET COUNTY CAFÉ is painted backward on the window. Red and white checkered curtains (matching the tablecloths) hang on either side of the window. The door that leads to the outside is right of the window (right for the actors, not the audience). A small window is left of the large window. This is a real window that actors will appear behind. This smaller window looks into the kitchen. The door that leads into the kitchen is left of the small window. An undecorated Christmas tree stands somewhere in the café. A jukebox is painted on the Stage Left wall (unless you have access to a real jukebox, which would be cool). On the Stage Right wall is a door that leads to three places: the men's room, the ladies' room, and a storage room. You'll need two signs on the door — one that reads "Restrooms Inside" and another underneath that reads "Storage." You may choose to have a separate door beside the jukebox for the storage room. Either way will work.

PROPS: Two boxes of Christmas decorations; fake engagement ring (tiny stone); small magnifying glass; telephone, salt and pepper shakers, napkin holders, etc., for tables; dish towels; greasy bag; two Styrofoam cups of “coffee;” small sugar bowl; spoon; jackets, coats, scarves, purses, etc., for characters entering from outside; tinsel for the Christmas tree; basket of wrapped bricks (these act as Grandma’s wrapped fruitcake); toolbox; fake flower; bell for counter; menus; newspaper; pad of paper and pencil; ugly dress; dress box; large trashcan; small pocket tape recorder (doesn’t have to work); cookie jar; broom; hand truck (some folks call it a dolly); medium-sized cardboard box; axe; scotch tape; flyers with hand-drawn picture of James; clipboard; two bags of “groceries;” apple; small tub with “lard;” letter and envelope; folded map; small bouquet of poinsettias; mason jar; purse for Grandma; a makeup compact; breath spray; purple bathrobe; pink bath towel; wrapped gifts for the wise men; camera; manger with doll inside; veil; Bible; large sign that reads “One Week Later;” large sign that reads “Censored;” suitcase; bridal bouquet; bags of confetti (optional).

COSTUMES: The country bunch wears flannel shirts, blue jeans, cotton or gingham dresses, overalls, etc. Grandma, Glenda Mae, and Brenda Mae wear aprons. Grandma might wear her hair in a bouffant, beehive or granny bun. Tallahassee wears a jumpsuit. Orvel will need to go from raggedy overalls to a nice polyester suit for the end of the play. The city characters including James wear preppy-type clothing. Everyone who enters from outside wears some type of jacket or coat, scarf, purses for the girls, etc. All characters will need various bathrobes and towels to use in the Nativity scene.

SOUND EFFECTS: “Tennessee Waltz” by Patsy Cline or other similar-type song, Christmas music, ringing telephone.

ONE LAST NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT: I recently snuck into the back of a theatre where a Cricket County play was being staged. I was pleased overall with the show; however, there was one thing that made me squirm in my seat. The play moved too slowly. I wanted the action to race along at breakneck speed with one line butting up against another. Remember, these plays are farces. The entrances and exits should be quick. Allow the actor to begin speaking as soon as he or she enters, not when he or she reaches Center Stage. You can't imagine how minutes can add up when short pauses between lines are taken or slow entrances occur or a trip across the stage is slow when it's supposed to be quick. Enjoy the silliness, and your audience won't even think about squirming the whole time your cast is on stage. With that said, this show is written to last between 45 minutes and one hour. Have fun!

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SCENE 1

AT RISE: *BRENDA MAE and GRANDMA, both wearing aprons, are preparing to decorate the Christmas tree. GRANDMA has her box of decorations, but BRENDA MAE can't find hers.*

GRANDMA: *(Crossing to the tree Stage Left.)* Let's get this thing decorated before my afternoon rush hits.

BRENDA MAE: Yes ma'am, but I can't find my box of decorations nowhere.

GRANDMA: Well, it didn't grow legs and walk off.

GRANDMA begins decorating the tree while BRENDA MAE continues to look for her box. GLENDA MAE runs in from the kitchen, looking like she's been harboring a secret.

GLENDA MAE: Brenda Mae, it's 'bout time for me to get off work, and I've been waitin' all day to tell you somethin'.

BRENDA MAE: *(Continues looking around.)* Now where would I go if I was a box of decorations?

GLENDA MAE: Brenda Mae! If I don't tell you this very minute, I'll just bust. He popped the question!

BRENDA MAE: *(Still looking around.)* Glenda Mae, have you saw that box of Christmas decorations?

GLENDA MAE: He was workin' on his pickup truck, and he asked for me to give him the monkey wrench —

BRENDA MAE: *(Interrupting.)* I remember takin' it out of the attic...

GLENDA MAE: And he said the wrench was in his tool belt, and would I get it out of the garage for him —

BRENDA MAE: Maybe it's over here.

BRENDA MAE crosses to the jukebox, with GLENDA MAE on her heels.

GLENDA MAE: But when I fetched his tool belt, the wrench wasn't there a-tall. But there was this little box, and inside that little box was a ring. See? *(She sticks her hand in BRENDA MAE's face.)* It was a ring!

BRENDA MAE: *(Not paying GLENDA MAE any mind, she finds her box.)* Here it is. Glenda Mae, grab the end of that box for me.

GLENDA MAE: *(She does.)* Can you believe I'm finally gettin' hitched after all this time?

GRANDMA: *(Still decorating the tree.)* Glenda Mae, would you quit caterwallin' long enough to check the onion rings for a takeout order?

GLENDA MAE: *(Still excited, she lets go of her end of the box, causing a few decorations to spill out.)* Grandma, didn't you hear my news?

GRANDMA: Onion rings, then the news.

GLENDA MAE: Yes, ma'am! *(She runs excitedly to the kitchen.)*

GRANDMA: Good gravy — what's got her in such a tizzy?

BRENDA MAE: I ain't sure. Somethin' 'bout somebody poppin' the question and somethin' 'bout gettin' a ring and somethin' 'bout her finally gettin' hitched.

It dawns on them at the same time as they stare at each other.
GLENDA MAE re-enters.

GLENDA MAE: The onion rings is ready, Grandma.

GRANDMA rushes to one side of GLENDA MAE and BRENDA MAE to the other.

BRENDA MAE: Glenda Mae, is it true?

GRANDMA: Is my little grandbaby really gettin' hitched at last?

GLENDA MAE: *(Hands her on the hips.)* Who told you?

BRENDA MAE: You did, you silly willy dilly mckilly! *(Hugs her.)* What a happy, happy day!

GRANDMA: Let me see that ring, child. *(She takes GLENDA MAE's hand and pushes it far away from her so she can see the tiny, tiny stone better.)* Wait a minute; let me look through my bifocals. *(She brings GLENDA MAE's hand in closer to her eyes.)* Hold on— I got a magnifyin' glass in my pocket. *(She pulls a magnifying glass from her apron pocket and holds it up to the ring.)* Whooooo-eeee, would you look at that?

BRENDA MAE: Let me see. (*Grabs the magnifying glass and GLENDA MAE's hand.*) Glenda Mae, that's a mighty fine-lookin' ring Elmer done give you.

GRANDMA: When's the big day, honey child?

GLENDA MAE: Christmas Eve!

GRANDMA: Of what year?

GLENDA MAE: This year, you silly willy dilly mckilly.

BRENDA MAE: But that's just two weeks away!

GLENDA MAE: Grandma, the church house ain't available on account of the Christmas Eve service, so I was thinkin' maybe we could hold the ceremony right here in your diner.

GRANDMA: But honey, don't you want to get hitched in the spring of the year when the weather's nice and the honeysuckle is in full bloom?

GLENDA MAE: I would, but it's Elmer's idea to get married at Christmastime.

BRENDA MAE: What in sam hill for?

GLENDA MAE: (*Shrugs as she rushes to the phone on the counter.*) I don't rightly know. (*Begins dialing the phone.*)

BRENDA MAE: Who you callin'?

GLENDA MAE: Our cousins in the city. I've got to invite them to the weddin'. (*Into the phone.*) Hello, is this Cousin Petunia? This is your cousin Glenda Mae. Guess what? I'm a-gettin' hitched and I'm invitin' all of you to the weddin'. Hello? Hello? Who is this? Cousin Oswald? What happened to Cousin Petunia? She fainted? This here is Glenda Mae, and I was just tellin' her that my Elmer popped the question, and we're a-gettin' hitched on Christmas Eve, and I want y'all to be here. Hello? Hello? Who is this? Cousin Pete? What happened to Cousin Oswald? He fainted? This here is Glenda Mae, and I was just tellin' him about me gettin' hitched to Elmer Crick on Christmas Eve, and I'm invitin' y'all to come. Hello? Hello? Who is this? Cousin Mimi? What happened to Cousin Pete? He fainted? This here is Glenda Mae, and I was just tellin' him that I was gettin' hitched on Christmas Eve, and I want y'all to come to the weddin'. You're not goin' to faint on me, are you? Cousin Mimi?

BRENDA MAE: What's she doin'?

GLENDA MAE: (*Covering the mouthpiece.*) She's laughin'. (*Back to the phone.*) Hello? Hello? That's funny — she hung up.

BRENDA MAE: That wasn't very neighborly.

GRANDMA: I don't know why you think so much of them city cousins of yours. All they ever cared about was gettin' their greedy hands on all that money dear Uncle Zeke left us after his passin'.

BRENDA MAE: We don't know that for a fact, Grandma.

GRANDMA: Ever' Christmas it's the same ol' thing. (*Mocking the CITY BUNCH.*) "Let's get out to Cricket County and see how much money we can get out of our simple-minded country cousins this year."

GLEND MAE: (*Sad.*) But I did so want my city cousins to share this special day with me.

GRANDMA: I hate to break up this blissful moment with business, but somebody needs to bag up them onion rings.

BRENDA MAE: I will, Grandma.

She runs out as ORVEL POLK enters through the front door. He's about ninety-years-old but moves around like a young man. GLEND MAE works on the trees as GRANDMA fills up salt shakers.

ORVEL: Imogene, I'm here for my onion rings.

GRANDMA: Hold your horses. We got to bag 'em up first.

ORVEL: Nobody can make a onion ring taste like Imogene Taylor. What's your secret?

GRANDMA: Recycled grease.

ORVEL: (*To GLEND MAE, who is wiping down one of the tables.*) I've been after your Granny ever since we was in school together.

GLEND MAE: They had schools when you was little, Grandma?

GRANDMA: You keep up remarks like that, and you won't live to get married.

ORVEL: I asked her to the barn dance when we was sixteen, and she turned me down cold.

GRANDMA: And he's asked me ever' year since.

ORVEL: I'm not one to give up easy. So whaddaya say, Imogene? The barn dance this coming spring?

GRANDMA: Let me spell it out for you, Orvel Polk: N-a-w, naw!

BRENDA MAE: (*Enters with a greasy bag.*) Here's your onion rings, Grandma.

ORVEL: (*Taking the bag.*) Much obliged, Brenda Mae. I'll see you real soon, Imogene. (*He snaps his fingers and points at her and exits.*)

GRANDMA: (*Shouting after him.*) Not if I see you first!

BRENDA MAE: Grandma, why are you so mean to Mr. Polk?

GRANDMA: He gets on my nerves. Honey, men are like lava lamps. They're fun to look at, but they're not all that bright.

GLENDAMAE: I think he's nice.

GRANDMA: Then you marry him.

GLENDAMAE: Marry? Can you believe it? Brenda Mae, I'm finally gettin' married. (*They join hands and dance in a circle.*)

GRANDMA: Y'all can act a fool later. I need y'all's help in the kitchen.

BRENDA MAE: We're comin', Grandma.

They exit to the kitchen. ELMER and FESTER enter from outside, each carrying a cup of coffee.

ELMER: (*Shouting.*) Glenda Mae, are you here?!

GLENDAMAE: (*Reappears at the window.*) Here I am, you little love dove you. How about some sugar?

ELMER: Don't mind if I do. (*He crosses to her as she puckers up and closes her eyes tightly. He dips a spoonful of sugar from the sugar bowl on the counter and stirs it into his cup of coffee.*) What's wrong, Glenda Mae? You look like you smell a polecat.

GLENDAMAE: (*Mad.*) Elmer Crick, you're about as romantic as a stump. I wanted some sugar!

ELMER: (*Pushes the sugar bowl her way.*) Help yourself. There's plenty.

GLENDAMAE: You're impossible!

ELMER: What's got you riled?

GLENDAMAE: Never mind. It would take way too long to explain it to you. I'll be off the clock in a minute. Just wait there. (*She disappears into the kitchen.*)

ELMER: (*To FESTER.*) That woman can go from happy to mad faster than anybody I know.

FESTER: That's a woman for you. Me and my Cora Jean was havin' the best time the other day when I took her frog giggin', and I swear she went from sweet to ornery in two seconds flat.

ELMER: How come?

FESTER: Don't know. We was standing in the swamp up to our knees in murky water and out of the blue she asked me if the dress she was wearin' made her look fat, and I said compared to what?

ELMER: And she got riled?

FESTER: (*Whistles.*) Madder than a wet hen.

ELMER: Women sure is strange creatures.

FESTER: Like my daddy always said, "In the beginnin' God created earth and rested. Then God created man and rested. Then God created woman. Ever' since, neither God nor man has rested."

ELMER: I better get used to it, seein' that I'm about to make Glenda Mae mine forever.

FESTER: Whatever you say. She's goin' to be your ball and chain, not mine.

ELMER: Ball and chain? That sure sounds romantic.

GLENDAMAE enters with her jacket thrown over one arm and her purse on her shoulder.

GLENDAMAE: I'm ready, Elmer!

ELMER: Your handsome prince is waitin'!

GLENDAMAE: (*Runs to the window, excited.*) Where?

ELMER: (*Throws his arms out.*) Right here!

GLENDAMAE: Oh, you meant you. Let's go.

FESTER: Glenda Mae, did you ask Grandma about gettin' married here in the diner on Christmas Eve?

GLENDAMAE: She said we could. (*To ELMER.*) But ever'body's confused as to why you want to get married at Christmastime.

ELMER: It's sort of a secret.

GLENDAMAE: But when will you tell me?

ELMER: When you become my official ball and chain.

GLENDAMAE: (*Hands on hips.*) What did you say?

ELMER: (*Shouting.*) When you become my official ball and chain! That's my new pet name for you.

GLENDAMAE: Hush up, Elmer Crick. Sometimes I wonder why I'm marryin' you a-tall. (*Stomps toward the front door.*)

ELMER: Where you goin'?

GLEND A MAE: To the truck. And you'd better be takin' me somewhere nice tonight, or you'll be in the doghouse, mister. (*She storms out as ELMER calmly stands there.*)

FESTER: You'd better hurry, Elmer. You don't want to be in the doghouse.

ELMER: Fester, I've been in the doghouse so many times that when I meet another man, I don't know whether to shake his hand or sniff his tail.

GLEND A MAE: (*Off-Stage.*) Elmer!

ELMER: I'm comin', my little B and C. (*To FESTER.*) That's short for ball and chain. (*ELMER exits as GRANDMA enters from the kitchen.*)

GRANDMA: You boys goin' to eat somethin'?

FESTER: Elmer's takin' Glenda Mae to the turkey shoot. I'm goin' to hang out here for awhile.

GRANDMA: Good, you can help me. Not only do I have a diner to run, now I got a weddin' to plan. So much for peace onearth.

FESTER: What can I do for you, Grandma?

GRANDMA: While I decorate the tree, you can deliver my basket of fruitcakes over to the Prune Valley Nursin' Home.

FESTER: Yes, ma'am. Where is it?

GRANDMA: Just two miles down the road.

FESTER: I meant the basket of fruitcakes.

GRANDMA: Sittin' right over there.

FESTER crosses to the basket next to the counter and tries to pick it up, but it's too heavy. He tries again to no avail. He opens the basket, reaches in, and pulls out what looks like a wrapped brick. He takes a good look at it then hits it against the wall or counter or a table, making a banging noise.

GRANDMA: (*Busy at the tree.*) Come in!

FESTER: There ain't nobody at the door, Grandma. I was just —

GRANDMA: You're just lolly gaggin'! Now get goin'. Them folks at the nursin' home really like my fruitcake. That's the fifth basket I've sent over.

FESTER: *(Shrugs.)* Yes, ma'am. *(He places the fruitcake back inside the basket but still can't pick it up, so he drags it out the front door instead. BRENDA MAE enters from the kitchen.)*

GRANDMA: Brenda Mae, it's sure a mystery to me why Elmer Crick wants to get hitched on Christmas Eve of all times. Law, law, law. *(Notices BRENDA MAE's sad demeanor.)* What's the matter, honey?

BRENDA MAE: It sure is goin' to be lonely after Glenda Mae gets hitched. Me and her is used to doin' ever' thing together.

GRANDMA: I always thought you would be the first one to find a man and settle down.

BRENDA MAE: You and me both. I always dreamed of marryin' up with a feller from the big city. He would be swave and pretty and sweep me off my feet, and we would settle down and live happy ever after, right here in the heart of Cricket County.

GRANDMA: *(Laughs.)* Girl, you have always been a dreamer.

TALLAHASSEE enters wearing a jumpsuit and carrying a toolbox.

TALLAHASSEE: Imogene, I'm here to fix your plumbin'.

GRANDMA: It's the sink in the kitchen.

TALLAHASSEE: Which one?

GRANDMA: The only kitchen I got.

TALLAHASSEE: Which sink?

GRANDMA: *(Sets the box of decorations down and heads to the kitchen.)* Come on, Tallahassee — I'll show you. Brenda Mae, work on that poor tree.

BRENDA MAE is staring off into the distance.

Brenda Mae?

TALLAHASSEE: Did she get conked on the head with somethin'?

GRANDMA: She's day dreamin' again. Just leave her be. She'll snap out of it soon enough.

They exit to the kitchen. BRENDA MAE continues to stare out into the distance. "Tennessee Waltz" by Pasty Cline plays and the lights change. JAMES, BRENDA MAE's vision of the perfect man, enters and

stands on the other side of the stage. She sees him. He sees her and puts his arms out to her. She puts her arms out and they move to each other joining in the middle of the stage. He twirls and dips her. He picks her up and they dance across the stage. They stop. He places a flower between his teeth and they do the tango. He moves quickly to the opposite side of the stage, turns sharply, and motions her to come to him. As she begins to cross to him, the music fades. JAMES exits through the kitchen as TALLAHASSEE re-enters. The lights change if possible, and BRENDA MAE bumps into TALLAHASSEE.

TALLAHASSEE: Whoa there, little lady. It's just your old friend Tallahassee.

BRENDA MAE: Huh? *(She snaps out of her fog.)* I'm sorry, Mr. Tallahassee. I was just thinkin' 'bout somethin'.

TALLAHASSEE: Ain't no harm done. Got to run to my truck for a monkey wrench.

She laughs, shakes her head, and he exits. BRENDA MAE, still in quite a daze, looks around to see where JAMES may have gone. But then she realizes it was just a daydream and becomes sad. GRANDMA enters.

GRANDMA: Now, back to this Christmas tree. *(She crosses to it.)*

BRENDA MAE: *(Sits looking out at the audience.)* Grandma, am I ever goin' to find my Prince Charmin' like Glenda Mae found hers?

GRANDMA: Shore you will, honey-child. And when you finally meet him, you will know that he's the one for you.

BRENDA MAE: Grandma? I just had a vision of my true love. It's like he was right here in the diner.

GRANDMA: I had a vision of your granddaddy 'fore we ever met. I knew exactly what he looked like and how he smelled and ever'thing. Then one day, bam! There he was in flesh and blood. And I grabbed him up quicker than spit on a griddle.

BRENDA MAE: Shore enough?

GRANDMA: Shore enough.

BRENDA MAE: That's just what happened to me, Grandma. Much obliged. *(She runs out.)*

GRANDMA: You're welcome. Now you can help me decorate this here tree. Untangle that string of lights for me. *(She turns and sees that BRENDA MAE is gone.)* Or I could just do it all by my lonesome, like I always do.

She kicks the jukebox and it plays a merry Christmas tune. GRANDMA returns to the tree as the lights fade to a blackout.

SCENE 2

It's the next day, and the diner is empty. OSWALD comes crashing through the door followed by PETE, MIMI, and PETUNIA. They all wear coats, scarves, etc. The GIRLS wear their purses on their shoulders.

OSWALD: *(Shouting.)* Don't do it, Glenda Mae!

PETE: Don't do it, Glenda Mae!

OSWALD: Let's talk this through!

PETE: Let's talk this through!

OSWALD: Marriage isn't something you want to jump into!

PETE: Don't jump, Glenda Mae!

OSWALD: *(Shouting.)* Pete, be quiet!

PETE: *(Shouting.)* Pete, be quiet! *(Calmly.)* Oh, sorry.

MIMI: *(To PETUNIA.)* How dare these hillbillies go and plan a wedding without asking our opinions!

PETUNIA: After all, don't we have class?

MIMI: Don't we have style?

PETUNIA: We could make this wedding the most beautiful affair Cricket County has ever seen.

OSWALD: *(Rings the bell on the counter.)* Hello? Is anyone backthere?

PETE: I'll look in here.

He exits through the door to the restrooms. OSWALD rings the bell continuously.

OSWALD: Hello?! Hello?!

GRANDMA runs in and grabs the bell from OSWALD.

GRANDMA: What in sam hill? Give me that bell! What you tryin'to do, wake the dead?

OSWALD: Tell me it hasn't happened, Grandma Taylor! Tell me she hasn't gone through with it.

PETE: *(Runs back in.)* I don't see Glenda Mae anywhere!

GRANDMA: Glenda Mae? What you wantin' with my granddaughter?

MIMI: We heard she was getting married.

GRANDMA: Yep, right here in my diner on Christmas Eve.

MIMI: No! It's all wrong. A girl can't be married in a dilapidated greasy spoon like this. I won't allow it!

GRANDMA: *(Hands on her hips.)* What did you call my diner?

MIMI: *(Not backing down.)* A dilapidated greasy spoon.

GRANDMA: *(Relieved.)* There for a minute I thought you was puttin' it down.

OSWALD: Grandma Taylor, we can't let this wedding take place.

GRANDMA: What are you ramblin' about, city boy who only comes to the city when he wants to get his greedy hands on some of our money?

PETE: Oswald, can I see you a moment?

He pulls OSWALD Downstage while MIMI and PETUNIA pantomime a conversation and GRANDMA stands with her hands on her hips.

Oswald, we can't tell her why we're here.

OSWALD: Why not?

PETE: Think about it. They won't understand our motive. They already think we want in on their millions.

OSWALD: But we do want in on their millions.

PETE: We're here to protect Glenda Mae, but the fact is, we don't know for sure that her fiancé is after her inheritance.

OSWALD: Of course he is. Why else would he want to marry her so quickly?

PETE: Maybe he loves her.

OSWALD: I guess that's possible.

PETE: I say we hang around for a while, meet the fiancé, check him out, and go from there.

OSWALD: OK, I've got to calm myself down. (*They cross back to GRANDMA.*) We're back. (*She stares.*) Grandma, are you all right?

GRANDMA: (*Not budging from her stern stance.*) Just peachy.

PETUNIA: Grandma Taylor, is anything wrong?

GRANDMA: That's what I'm tryin' to figure out. Y'all never come out to Cricket County without you're a-wantin' somethin'. So what do you want? Spill the beans. Let the cat out of the bag. Let me have it.

PETUNIA: We received Glenda Mae's phone call yesterday inviting us to the wedding.

GRANDMA: Y'all ain't here for the weddin'. I can see it in your eyes.

MIMI: OK, we confess. Petunia and I are hurt because Glenda Mae didn't ask us to direct her wedding.

PETUNIA: After all, don't we have class?

MIMI: Don't we have style?

GRANDMA: I don't care if you direct the weddin' or not. I got enough to do around here.

MIMI: Really? Oh, you have made me so happy I could kiss you!

GRANDMA: (*Stopping her.*) Save your sugar for the mistletoe, honey.

OSWALD: (*Moving to GRANDMA.*) Grandma Taylor, what do you really know about this fellow Glenda Mae is marrying?

GRANDMA: Well, he's real simple-minded. (Long pause as they stare at each other.)

OSWALD: And?

GRANDMA: That's about it. Oh, and he's real good to Glenda Mae.

OSWALD: Is he signing a pre-nup?

PETE: Oswald! Not yet.

GRANDMA: A what?

PETE: Uh, he was wondering if anyone was getting Glenda Mae a teacup. You know, as a wedding gift.

GRANDMA: (*Starts wiping down tables.*) I don't rightly know. But if you're a-wantin' to get 'em a weddin' present, they're registered at Dollar Tree.

ORVEL enters and has a seat and holds a menu in front of his face. GRANDMA crosses to him as the CITY BUNCH huddles away from them, pantomiming a conversation.

GRANDMA: What can I get for you?

ORVEL: *(With the menu still in front of his face.)* I'll take the meat loaf, the mashed taters, *(Lowers the menu.)* and your phone number.

GRANDMA: Orvel Polk, how many times am I goin' to have to shoo you out of my diner?

ORVEL: Why won't you court me, Imogene Taylor?

GRANDMA: There is only two things keeping me from courtin' you,

ORVEL: *(Holds up a finger.)* common *(Holds up a second finger.)* sense. Now, if you ain't goin' to eat somethin', go home.

ORVEL: Dagnabbit! Are you goin' to play hard to get forever?

GRANDMA: Who's playin'? And speakin' of gettin', git! *(He runs out.)*

MIMI: If you'll excuse us, Petunia and I have a lot of plans to make. We will sit right over here.

She pulls a notepad and pencil from her purse, and she and PETUNIA cross to a table and sit down.

OSWALD: Grandma Taylor, we're wondering when we'll get the chance to meet the lucky groom-to-be.

GRANDMA: He should be here any minute. He always comes by as soon as Glenda Mae gets to work so they can see each other. *(Laughs.)* Young love.

PETE: Any minute, huh? Perfect. Do you mind if we hang around?

GRANDMA: Wouldn't matter a-tall if I did mind. *(As she exits to the kitchen, she mumbles to herself.)* Y'all come out here ever' year, tryin' to get your hands on our money. Never fails, year in and year out, always tryin' to get your hands on somethin'... *(She exits.)*

OSWALD: *(Turning quickly to PETE.)* Perfect timing. We'll get to check this guy out firsthand sooner than we thought.

PETE: Right. If we can't get our hands on their money, we sure won't let some stranger do it.

At that moment, JAMES from BRENDA MAE's daydream enters and looks around. He carries a folded newspaper.

OSWALD: *(Points privately at JAMES.)* Pete, speak of the devil.

PETE: That's our man all right. Look at him all dressed up, ready to pounce on his poor unsuspecting prey.

JAMES: *(To OSWALD.)* Excuse me. A table for one, please.

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OSWALD: Pretending to be a customer.

PETE: Clever fellow.

OSWALD: (*Crosses to him and pulls out a chair at a table.*) How is this table right here?

JAMES: That's fine, thank you. (*He sits.*)

OSWALD: (*Sitting at the table.*) Here's a menu.

PETE: (*Sitting on the other side of JAMES as he begins his interrogation.*) So, what do you do?

OSWALD: Where do you live?

PETE: How much money do you have?

JAMES: I'm sorry, but are you going to take my order?

OSWALD: Oh — want to play hardball, huh?

PETE: We tried to be nice.

OSWALD: We tried to be cordial.

PETE: So, let's just lay it all out on the table.

OSWALD: Spill the beans.

PETE: Let the cat out of the bag. (*They stare at him as he looks confused.*)

OSWALD: Well, what will it be?

PETE: Yeah, what will it be?

JAMES: A burger with fries?

OSWALD: She's not for you!

JAMES: Who's not for me?

PETE: This girl you're supposed to marry. It's just not going to work out.

JAMES: I'm getting a little tired of this. I don't know who you are or what business you have with me, but I would appreciate it if you would take my order and then kindly leave me alone.

GLEND A MAE enters through the front door as PETE quickly stands and places himself between JAMES and GLEND A MAE.

PETE: Glenda Mae, stay right there!

OSWALD: (*Rushes to GLEND A MAE's side.*) He's not right for you, Glenda Mae! Just trust us on this.

PETE: We know it will hurt at first, but your pain will vanish in time.

GLENDAMAE: *(Excited.)* Cousin Oswald! Cousin Pete! Y'all came out for my weddin' after all! That makes me so happy! *(Looking around.)* Have you saw my honey pie? He's supposed to meet me here.

PETE: Glenda Mae, he's right here. *(He steps aside, revealing JAMES.)*

GLENDAMAE: *(To JAMES.)* Howdy.

JAMES: Ma'am, is it possible I might get some service?

GLENDAMAE: Sure thing. Let me put down my stuff, and I'll be right with you.

OSWALD: Glenda Mae, aren't you going to at least kiss him?

GLENDAMAE: Kiss who?

PETE: Your fiancé.

GLENDAMAE: Heck yeah, just as soon as he walks through that there door. *(Shouting.)* Grandma, I'm here! Howdy, Cousin Mimi, Cousin Petunia. I'll be back directly.

She exits to the kitchen. OSWALD and PETE turn to JAMES and smile an embarrassed smile.

OSWALD: *(To PETE.)* Maybe we should wait on her fiancé outside.

PETE: I could use the fresh air. *(Turns to JAMES.)* Enjoy your meal, sir.

OSWALD: And merry Christmas. *(They exit out the front door.)*

PETUNIA: *(Standing beside the table she and MIMI have been sitting at.)* I'm so excited! This ceremony will be more elegant than the royal wedding.

MIMI: And the hillbillies will be so impressed, they will gladly pay us handsomely for our services.

PETUNIA: *(Scolding.)* Mimi, that is not why we're doing this.

MIMI: Of course it is.

PETUNIA: I don't want to hear one word about our cousins paying us for directing this wedding.

GLENDAMAE re-enters with a pad, pencil, and cup of coffee. She has flour on her face. She crosses to JAMES to take his order.

GLEND MAE: (*Sets the cup on the table.*) Here's you some fresh coffee, sir.

MIMI: (*Crossing to GLEND MAE.*) There she is, the future bride-to-be. Look — she already has that radiant bridal glow about her

GLEND MAE: No, ma'am, that's flour. I just sneezed in the biscuit bowl. (*To JAMES.*) What will you have?

The following conversation takes place with JAMES's finger in the air as he tries unsuccessfully to give his order to GLEND MAE.

PETUNIA: Glenda Mae, Grandma Taylor said we could help with the wedding plans.

GLEND MAE: That sure is neighborly of y'all.

PETUNIA: Do you have time to go over some of our ideas?

GLEND MAE: Not right this minute, but Brenda Mae's comin' by, and she can help you.

MIMI: You're going to just love what we have planned for your decorations.

GLEND MAE: Y'all decorate any way y'all want, just as long a sit includes the stable, a manger, angels, baby Jesus, and the three wise men.

PETUNIA: You must have misunderstood.

MIMI: We're talking about your wedding.

GLEND MAE: Me too. That's how Elmer said he wants it done.

MIMI: (*Shooting a curious glance at PETUNIA.*) Glenda Mae, this is your wedding.

The phone rings Backstage.

GLEND MAE: Yes ma'am, but it's Elmer's weddin' too.

PETUNIA: But you're the bride.

MIMI: Don't you want a say in how your ceremony is carried out?

GLEND MAE: It's just that gettin' married in the middle of alive Nativity seems to be real important to him.

PETUNIA: But why?

GLEND MAE: (*Shrugs.*) I don't rightly know. He said it was a secret.

MIMI: (*Rushes over and gives GLENDA MAE a pity hug.*) Don't you worry about a thing, you poor, pathetic, naïve, backward, plain Jane girl you. Cousin Mimi is here, and everything will be all right. I'll talk sense into that simpleton if it's the last thing I do.

GLENDA MAE: Talk sense into who?

MIMI: That simpleton. You know, the nitwit, the bumpkin, the clodhopper —

PETUNIA: Mimi, that's enough.

MIMI: (*Her arm still around GLENDA MAE's shoulder.*) This is going to be the prettiest wedding your unsophisticated eyes have ever seen. And because you're family, we're giving you half off our regular fee.

PETUNIA: Mimi!

MIMI: And by half off I mean free.

GLENDA MAE: Well, good luck tryin' to change his mind. I was hopin' to decorate in gabardine and kudzu, but there goes that idea.

JAMES: Miss, could you please take my order?

GLENDA MAE: I'm so sorry, sir. (*Points at his menu.*) Our specials are right there.

JAMES: (*To PETUNIA.*) Could I at least have some sugar for my coffee?

GLENDA MAE: Yes sir, right away. (*JAMES holds the menu up in front of his face. BRENDA MAE enters holding an ugly dress.*)

BRENDA MAE: Cousin Mimi, Cousin Petunia, welcome back to Cricket County.

MIMI: Brenda Mae, you must talk some sense into your sister.

BRENDA MAE: Talk sense into Glenda Mae? That will be hard to do.

MIMI: Because she's stubborn?

BRENDA MAE: 'Cause she was dropped on her head as a baby.

PETUNIA: She's allowing Elmer to have all the say in the wedding decisions. (*Points to the dress.*) What's that?

BRENDA MAE: It's Glenda Mae's weddin' dress. (*Holds it up to herself.*) What do you think?

PETUNIA: It's ludicrous.

BRENDA MAE: Thank you. I made it by hand.

GLENDA MAE: Brenda Mae, I done told you I can't wear that there dress. I got to dress up like Mary in the Nativity, remember?

BRENDA MAE: Drat — and I spent a whole two hours makin' it.

MIMI: Don't worry, Brenda Mae. I'll talk to Elmer and settle this craziness once and for all.

GRANDMA: *(Off-Stage.)* Glenda Mae, you got a order to fill!

GLEND A MAE: Comin', Grandma! *(She rushes and exits to the kitchen.)*

MIMI: Wait! Glenda Mae, we must settle this once and for all! *(Follows after GLEND A MAE.)*

PETUNIA: Mimi, wait for me! *(In a rush to catch up with MIMI, PETUNIA bumps into the jukebox.)* Ow! Mimi!

She rushes out to the kitchen. The jukebox plays "Tennessee Waltz." BREND A MAE looks up from the dress, wide-eyed. She slowly begins to dance around with the dress held up against her as she slips into her trance-like state once again. JAMES sits still, holding the menu in front of his face. After dancing for a moment, BREND A MAE snaps from her trance, crosses to the jukebox, and kicks it, causing the music to stop. She rushes to the counter.

BREND A MAE: Grandma, we need to take that record out of the jukebox! It's depressin'. *(Heading back to the table, she places the dress back into its box as she notices JAMES sitting behind the menu.)* Your food should be right out, mister.

JAMES: *(Drops the menu.)* I haven't even ordered.

BREND A MAE sees him and her mouth drops open. It's the man of her daydream.

BREND A MAE: Wha — wha — what are you doin' here?

JAMES: Patiently waiting for some sugar. You think you could help me out?

BREND A MAE: You — you want sugar? From me?

JAMES: If you don't mind. I've been waiting awhile.

BREND A MAE: *(Smiles.)* Grandma was right. The vision! I saw the vision. It was a sign. They ain't goin' to believe it. Hold that thought, mister! Grandma, Glenda Mae, come a-runnin'! Come a-runnin'! *(She runs out to the kitchen. JAMES shakes his head.)*

JAMES: *(To himself.)* I give up. I'll starve if I stay here.

He stands and exits out the front door, leaving his newspaper behind. Three seconds later, FESTER and ELMER enter.

FESTER: Hurry up and get in here, Elmer! It's freezin' out there!

ELMER: *(Heading to the restroom door.)* I'll be right back.

FESTER: Where you goin'?

ELMER: To the indoor outhouse. *(He exits through the door that leads to the restrooms.)*

FESTER: *(Sighs and notices the newspaper JAMES left behind.)* Yea! Somebody left the comics. *(He sits at the same table JAMES was sitting at and holds the comic page in front of his face. BRENDA MAE rushes in, dragging GLENDA MAE behind her.)*

GLENDA MAE: What in the world are you ramblin' about, Brenda Mae?

BRENDA MAE: It's just like Grandma said — the vision of my Prince Charmin' came true. I daydreamed about him, and then he came to me. It's a miracle!

GLENDA MAE: *(Looking around.)* I don't see nobody.

BRENDA MAE: *(Pointing over at FESTER.)* He's right over there behind that there newspaper.

GLENDA MAE: Brenda Mae, that's just a customer.

BRENDA MAE: No it ain't. Will you wait right here?

GLENDA MAE: Yeah. *(BRENDA MAE composes herself, crosses, and stands beside FESTER.)* I brought you that sugar you asked for. *(She closes her eyes and puckers up. FESTER doesn't respond.)* I said, here I am with your sugar. *(She puckers bigger but still receives no response from FESTER.)* The search for your sweetie pie is over. I'm right here! *(She bends closer, showing her biggest pucker yet.)*

FESTER: *(Dropping the paper.)* Brenda Mae, would you hush up? I can't concentrate on the funny paper.

BRENDA MAE: *(Confused.)* Fester? *(She grabs the paper out of his hand.)* What you doin' behind that newspaper?

FESTER: *(Grabbing the paper.)* Give me that! I ain't finished with "Li'l Abner."

BRENDA MAE: *(Looking frantically around.)* Where did he go?

FESTER: Who?

BRENDA MAE: There was a handsome man sittin' right there. (*Points to the chair FESTER is sitting in.*)

FESTER: I'm still here.

BRENDA MAE: No, it was a mysterious stranger. Where did he go? (*Grabs FESTER by the shirt collar and pulls him to her, nose to nose.*) What did you do with my Prince Charmin'?

GLEND A MAE: (*Rushing to them.*) Brenda Mae, just calm yourself down. You just thought you saw your true love. The song must have played on the jukebox, and you started with your day dreamin' again.

BRENDA MAE: (*Turns sad.*) I did? (*GRANDMA rushes in holding the wedding dress and followed by MIMI and PETUNIA.*)

GRANDMA: What in sam hill is all this caterwallin' in here? Y'all is goin' to scare off my customers.

FESTER: What customers?

GRANDMA: (*Turns sharply to FESTER.*) You stay out of it and go stir the squirrel gravy in the kitchen. (*FESTER exits to the kitchen.*)

GLEND A MAE: Brenda Mae was just day dreamin' again, Grandma.

BRENDA MAE: But he was real this time. I'm a-tellin' y'all the truth. (*She rushes out the front door.*)

GLEND A MAE: Brenda Mae, wait! (*To the GIRLS.*) I'll go talk to her. (*She exits quickly.*)

MIMI: But we must discuss the wedding!

The phone rings Backstage.

GRANDMA: There's another carryout order. I'm a-comin'!

She exits to the kitchen after handing PETUNIA the wedding dress.

PETUNIA: (*Holds up the dress.*) Have you ever seen anything so pathetic in your life?

ELMER enters.

ELMER: Howdy.

PETUNIA: Speaking of pathetic, Elmer, sit down. We want to talk to you.

ELMER: But I was goin' to —

MIMI: (*Shouting.*) Sit down!

ELMER: Yes, ma'am. (*He sits quickly. MIMI stands on one side of him and PETUNIA on the other.*)

PETUNIA: Why do you insist on decorating the wedding your way?

ELMER: Glenda Mae told me I could.

MIMI: But the bride is supposed to plan her own dream wedding.

ELMER: She is?

PETUNIA: Yes, and she told us that you are insisting on decorating the diner like the Nativity.

ELMER: Yes, ma'am.

MIMI: Elmer, as the official ceremonial coordinators, we refuse to allow such crass and uncouth embellishments as part of this matrimonial ritual. Now, what part of that did you not understand?

ELMER: Pretty much all of it.

PETUNIA: Why would you want such crude items as part of your wedding ceremony, anyway?

ELMER: Well, you see, it's sort of personal.

MIMI: Don't you think Glenda Mae has a right to know your reason?

ELMER: I was goin' to tell her when the time was right. But it's real important to me that Glenda Mae don't see me cry.

PETUNIA: Cry?

ELMER: I wouldn't be able to explain my reason without cryin'. If she sees me cry, I'm afraid she'll think I'm weak, and she'll be ashamed of me. That's why I ain't told her my reason yet.

PETUNIA: Then why don't you tell her in a letter? That way you won't have to say it face to face.

ELMER: A letter, huh? (*OSWALD and PETE enter sheepishly.*)

OSWALD: Psssst! Mimi, is he gone?

MIMI: Is who gone?

PETE: (*Looking around.*) Looks like the coast is clear.

OSWALD: (*Points to ELMER.*) Petunia, who is that?

PETUNIA: Elmer Crick.

MIMI: Glenda Mae's fiancé.

OSWALD: If you girls will excuse us, we need an audience with Mr. Crick.

PETUNIA: (*Handing him a piece of paper and a pencil.*) Here's some paper and a pencil for your letter, Elmer.

OSWALD: Blah, blah, blah. (*Ushering them toward the kitchen.*) Go see if Grandma needs help in the kitchen.

MIMI: But —

PETE: It won't take us long. (*PETUNIA and MIMI exit to the kitchen. ELMER starts to stand.*)

OSWALD: Wait a minute, mister. We have a few words to say to you.

ELMER: I sure am popular with you city slickers today.

PETE: We want you to know that we can see right through you.

ELMER: (*Looks down and touches his chest.*) You mean like one of them there X-ray machines?

OSWALD: We mean we're on to your unscrupulous and under handed ways.

PETE: Do you understand?

ELMER: (Nods his head "yes" but says...) Nope.

PETE: We know why you're marryin' Glenda Mae.

ELMER: Heck, that ain't no secret.

OSWALD: You mean everyone knows?

ELMER: Shore they do. I've told ever' body and their brother.

PETE: And you're not ashamed?

ELMER: Not a bit.

OSWALD: (*Pulls a pocket tape recorder from his jacket.*) Then we want you to admit it into this tape recorder. Go on, say it. Tell us the real reason you're marryin' Glenda Mae so we can nail you to the wall.

ELMER: Tell me when to go.

OSWALD: Three, two... (*He points to ELMER.*)

ELMER: (*Leaning in closely to the tape recorder and speaking rather loudly.*) Howdy there. My name is Elmer Crick, and the real reason I'm marryin' up with Glenda Mae Taylor is 'cause I love her with all my heart and all my soul!

OSWALD: (*Shutting off the tape recorder.*) No, no, no! We want the truth.

PETE: Now, we're doing this again, and this time you're going to admit that you're marrying Glenda Mae so you can get your hands on her money.

ELMER: You mean her piggy bank?

OSWALD: We mean the millions she inherited from our UncleZeke.

ELMER: Millions? What's that?

OSWALD: Glenda Mae inherited Uncle Zeke's diamond mines.

ELMER: Oh, I thought you said she inherited millions.

PETE: That's what the diamond mines are worth.

ELMER: Let me get this straight. Glenda Mae lost her piggybank in a diamond mine?

OSWALD: (*Frustrated.*) No!

ELMER: Oh, good.

PETE: This has nothing to do with Glenda Mae's piggy bank.

ELMER: She shore is fond of that piggy bank. She got it for Christmas when she was just a little girl.

OSWALD: Elmer, repeat after me. Glenda Mae is loaded.

ELMER: Glenda Mae is loaded...

OSWALD: Right.

ELMER: She is loaded with love for her piggy bank.

OSWALD: Elmer, are you joshing?

ELMER: No sir, I'm Baptist.

PETE: I think you're just pretending to be dumb.

ELMER: That's the first time I've been accused of that.

PETE: Of being dumb?

ELMER: No, sir — of pretendin'to be dumb.

OSWALD: Pete, he can't be acting dumb, because no one is that good of an actor.

GRANDMA: (*Enters holding the cookie jar.*) Elmer Crick, have you had your hands in my cookie jar again?

ELMER: Yes, ma'am. I owe you a dollar.

GRANDMA: I ain't never saw a growed man so fond of cookies. (*She exits with a huff with her cookie jar.*)

PETE: Elmer, will you accept our apologies?

ELMER: Ain't no harm done. If y'all will excuse me, I got to go find my sweetie pie. (*He exits to the restroom, shuts the door, then re-enters immediately and heads to the front door.*) Outside is this way.

He exits out the front door. ORVEL enters at the same time.

ORVEL: (*Rushing over to PETE and OSWALD.*) Hey, fellers. Would you want to do a favor for a old man? Tell Imogene that her Prince Charmin' has arrived to take her away from all this.

OSWALD: *(Yelling off toward the kitchen.)* Grandma Taylor, your Prince Charming is here to take you away from all this!

GRANDMA: *(Off-Stage.)* Tell him I ain't interested!

OSWALD: *(To ORVEL.)* She ain't interested!

ORVEL: *(Shouting to the kitchen.)* I'm just kiddin', puddin' cup! It's just good ol' Orvel Polk come to sweep you off your feet!

GRANDMA: *(Off-Stage.)* To do whatoff my feet?

ORVEL: Sweep! Sweep! *(GRANDMA throws a broom On-Stage and OSWALD catches it.)*

GRANDMA: *(Off-Stage.)* You can start with the sidewalk!

OSWALD: *(Hands ORVEL the broom.)* She said you can start with the sidewalk.

ORVEL: *(Grabs the broom and heads to the front door.)* Hot diggity dog, that's just her way of keepin' me around. I'm the best Christmas present she'll ever get. Yeeee-hawwww!

He exits. PETE and OSWALD collapse into chairs with heavy sighs as the lights fade to a blackout.

SCENE 3

PHIL and DELPHIA enter. PHIL pulls a hand truck behind him. He rushes to the bell and rings it nonstop until DELPHIA grabs it away from him like a mother from a child.

DELPHIA: Phil, stop it! I only brought you with me 'cause you promised to behave yourself.

PHIL: Sorry, Delphie. We don't get away from the nursin' home that often, so when we do, I just go crazy.

GRANDMA rushes in from the kitchen, wiping her hands on a dish towel.

GRANDMA: Fester Taylor, how many times have I told you not to play with that bell? Oh, howdy, Delphie.

DELPHIA: Sorry, Imogene. He just goes crazy when he gets a little taste of freedom.

GRANDMA: That's all right. Are y'all after another batch of fruitcake?

DELPHIA: Oh, yes. Your fruitcake sure is a hit at the Prune Valley Nursin' Home.

GRANDMA: That shore does my heart good. I already got it boxed up for you right there. *(Points to a medium-sized cardboard box beside the jukebox.)*

PHIL: Okey-doke. Here we go. *(He takes his hand truck and places it under the box.)* Backin' up. Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

GRANDMA: How in the world are all them folks eatin' up my fruitcake so fast?

PHIL: Oh, they ain't eatin' it, Miss Imogene —

DELPHIA: *(Interrupting him quickly.)* Hush up, Phil! We shore do thank you, Imogene. Well, we'd better get back —

GRANDMA: Wait a doggone minute. What do you mean they ain't eatin' my fruitcake?

DELPHIA: *(Hitting PHIL's arm.)* Phil, you got the biggest mouth this side of Tater Creek.

GRANDMA: What y'all been doin' with my fruitcake if y'all ain't been eatin' it?

PHIL: Well, they're sort of buildin' a storage shed with it.

GRANDMA: *(Shocked.)* Storage shed? With my fruitcake?

PHIL: Yes, ma'am. They said your fruitcake is a lot stronger than cinder blocks, and a heck of a lot cheaper, seein' how you're givin' it away and all.

DELPHIA: OK, Phil, you said enough. Get that fruitcake out to the truck.

PHIL: You got it. Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! *(He backs out the door.)*

DELPHIA: And quit that beepin'! *(Turns to GRANDMA.)* I'm sorry you had to find out this way, Imogene, but just know your fruitcake is goin' for a good cause. We've needed a storage shed for years. Merry Christmas!

DELPHIA exits as FESTER enters with his axe.

FESTER: *(Looking sad.)* Mornin', Grandma.

GRANDMA: Land sakes alive, I'm a mason and didn't even knowit.

FESTER: Grandma, I got some bad news. I went ice fishin' thi smornin'.

GRANDMA: (*Straightening the menus on a table.*) That don't sound so bad.

FESTER: The next part is the bad part. You see, I cut a hole in the ice with my axe, and then I took my fishin' pole, and when I bent over to put the hook in the lake, it fell in the water.

GRANDMA: The pole?

FESTER: No, ma'am.

GRANDMA: Your axe fell in the water?

FESTER: Grandma, I need you to focus.

GRANDMA: Honey, I'm focused. It's your story that's fuzzy.

FESTER: It's real simple. (*As though he were speaking to a child.*) I cut a hole in the ice with my axe, and then I took my fishin' pole, and when I bent over to put the hook in the lake, it fell in the water. What am I goin' to do?

GRANDMA: You're goin' to give me a headache if you don't tell me what fell in the water.

FESTER: (*Plopping down into a nearby chair.*) Elmer is goin' to kill me. How will I break it to him, Grandma? How? How? (*ELMER enters.*) I got to take some time to think this through.

GRANDMA: (*Seeing ELMER.*) Time's up.

FESTER: (*Stands quickly.*) Elmer, there's somethin' you need to know, and I need you to take it like a man.

ELMER: OK.

FESTER: Go ahead, Grandma.

GRANDMA: Me?

FESTER: He won't hit a old wrinkled-up woman with glasses.

GRANDMA: Well, OK. (*Takes hold of both of ELMER's shoulders and forces him to look her in the eye.*) Elmer, I need you to focus. Fester was cuttin' a hole in the ice with his axe, and then he took his fishin' pole, and when he bent over to put the hook in the lake, it fell in the water.

ELMER: (*Shocked.*) What? Fester, you lost Glenda Mae's weddin' ring?

FESTER: It was a accident, Elmer. I promise!

GRANDMA: Wait a minute, Elmer. How did you know what fell in the water?

FESTER: 'Cause he was focused, Grandma.

GRANDMA: Good heavens. I got to get back to the kitchen 'fore y'all's dumb rubs off on me. *(She exits.)*

ELMER: Fester, what am I goin' to do 'bout Glenda Mae's weddin' ring? Twenty-five dollars just don't grow on trees.

FESTER: Don't fret none. I'll take some of my inheritance money Uncle Zeke left me and buy you another one. I wonder if you can get anything decent for a million dollars.

BRENDA MAE enters carrying a stack of flyers.

BRENDA MAE: It shore is getting' cold out there. *(She begins taping the flyers on the wall.)*

FESTER: Brenda Mae, what you doin'?

BRENDA MAE: *(Sarcastically.)* I'm bakin' a cake. What's it look like I'm doin'? Here. *(She hands a flyer to FESTER.)*

FESTER: *(Reading it.)* Have you saw this man?

BRENDA MAE: I did not make up my Prince Charmin' the other day. He's roamin' around Cricket County, and I will find him again. I put a copy of this picture I drew in the Cricket County newspaper. See? *(She holds up a hand-drawn picture of JAMES.)*

OSWALD and PETE enter.

ELMER: Brenda Mae, Fester cut a hole in the ice with his axe, and then he took his pole and when he bent over to put the hook in the lake, it fell in the water.

BRENDA MAE: Fester Taylor, you lost Glenda Mae's weddin' ring?

FESTER: I told him I would buy him another one.

BRENDA MAE: The weddin' is only one week away. It's too late to get another one!

PETE: Now, now, Brenda Mae — perhaps there is time.

FESTER: Really, Cousin Pete? You think so?

PETE: *(Overhearing.)* It just so happens we have a few connections in the city.

OSWALD: We may be able to help you out.

FESTER: I would be forever in your debt, Cousin Oswald.



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