

The Real Housewives of Cricket County

A one-act play

By Eddie McPherson

CAST:

7 Women, 6 Men, Optional extras

- Polly Hunter..... A Cricket County housewife; Hosts the quilting party
- Harold Hunter.....Polly’s husband
- Bodean Snout.....Another housewife
- Chigger Snout.....Bodean’s husband
- Hattie Freeman.....Another housewife
- Charles Ray Freeman.....Hattie’s husband
- Imogene Taylor.....Also known as Grandma Taylor
- Fester Taylor.....Polly’s and Harold’s nephew. Simple, young and in love
- Dora Lee Grit.....Fester’s love interest. She can’t wait to become a housewife
- Gretchen Flat.....Another housewife
- Armen Flat.....Gretchen’s husband
- Monica Northcutt.....Highbrow housewife from the city
- Reginald Northcutt.....Monica’s husband
- Optional Extras.....Other housewives & husbands who come to the quilting party. None speaking

SYNOPSIS:

The simple housewives of Cricket County are in for a treat. Monica Northcutt from the city is moving in down the road and ready to teach them the ways to a healthy, happy marriage. They want so much to be like her that they organize a quilting party and invite Monica and her high society husband to attend. They also invite their own husbands so they can learn from the Northcutts as well.

But when the three-year-old muscadine juice is mistakenly poured into the fresh drinking water, the truth about how the husbands and wives feel about one another comes out and that can’t be good. Or can it? Old fashioned common sense is what the folks in Cricket County live by and the Northcutts end up learning a few surprise lessons themselves.

PRODUCTION NOTES:

The play takes place in a cabin in Cricket County. It's pretty old but has been kept up very nicely. The door that leads outside is upstage left. There's a large window to the left of it. Another door that goes to the rest of the cabin is upstage right. There's a wooden table that can be set aside for the quilting scene. The window that Polly looks out through in scene one is in the invisible fourth wall looking out over the audience. When the Northcutt's are getting ready at their house for the quilting party they stand in front of the permanent set and look into invisible mirrors. The lights should be taken off the set behind them if possible and a spot used on the Northcutts.

PROPS:

Stick, plastic whittling knife, binoculars, walkie talkies (these could be homemade), hand mirror, two dolls wrapped in blankets, shoebox, note cards, handkerchief, toilet plunger, small toolbox, covered Cool Whip bowl, empty coffee cup, homemade scarecrow, necktie, large envelope and card, fur wrap, small potted flower, glass jug with a cork, lots of ugly and gaudy jewelry, large belt buckle bearing a picture of Johnny Cash, two lawn chairs, piece of beef jerky, galvanized pail with ladle, small bouquet of wildflowers, paper cups, large quilt, small pad of paper and pencil, needles and thread, small radio.

COSTUMES:

The Cricket County men wear overalls and/or polyester pants pulled way up with ropes for belts. The Cricket County women wear gingham or simple cotton floral pattern dresses. They wear no makeup except for the quilting scene.

The Northcutts dress sophisticated and smart.

For the quilting scene: Polly wears an ugly dress and LOTS of makeup.

Gretchen sports a rather frumpy dress with lots of frills, bows and doodads sewn to it. A large, tacky bow tied into her hair matches (or maybe shouldn't match) the ones on the dress. She wears sloppy makeup.

Bodean is decked out in gaudy jewelry. Six or seven broaches are pinned to her dress, bright colored fishing lures dangle from her ears. Different styles of necklaces and bractettes clank against each other and a belt buckle bearing a portrait of Johnny Cash wraps around her waist.

Hattie's dress is also tacky, but what really stands out (literally) on her is her hair. It's big and teased and frizzy. The actor playing Hattie may choose to wear a wig for this scene.

Grandma wears a floral print moo moo.

The men may wear the same clothes as earlier but add an ugly, oversized necktie.

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!

THE REAL HOUSEWIVES OF CRICKET COUNTY

By Eddie McPherson

(At Rise: We're in POLLY'S and HAROLD'S cabin in Cricket County. HAROLD enters with a stick and a whittling knife and sits at the table stage right. POLLY is standing downstage past the table and looking out over the audience as though she is peering out the window. She holds a pair of binoculars up to her eyes.)

POLLY: Harold, get yourself over here and look at this.

HAROLD: Get away from that there window, woman!

POLLY: (ignoring him and still looking) I can't believe my six eyes. Why, that little sneak. Whooooooeeeeee, there she goes. (She picks up a walkie-talkie and speaks into it.) Honeysuckle to Magnolia Blossom. Come in, Magnolia Blossom.

BODEAN: (She enters extreme stage left with her walkie. She's in a different location.) Go ahead, Honeysuckle.

POLLY: Child, you won't believe what I'm a lookin' at outside my window.

BODEAN: Polly Hunter, what you gawkin' at?

POLLY: Well, I was watchin' Edna Stump walkin' up the dirt road past my house and she stopped real suspicious-like, stood up against a big oak tree and helped herself to a dip of snuff.

BODEAN: The dickens you say. She never seemed the type.

POLLY: You can't tell the size of turnips by lookin' at their tops. Better go. I need both hands on my binoculars. Honeysuckle, signin' off.

BODEAN: Over and out. (BODEAN exits as POLLY places their walkie on the table where HAROLD sits.)

HAROLD: Who you talkin' to on that there walkie doohickey?

POLLY: My network. (leaning in toward the window) There she goes again!

HAROLD: I don't think that's very neighborly – spyin' like that.

POLLY: I have to find my fun where I can. Like my mama always said: When life gives you scraps, make a quilt.

HAROLD: It sure is embarrassin'.

POLLY: (crossing to her husband) You know you love me.

HAROLD: I ain't got no choice. I've invested too much time in you to trade you in now.

POLLY: Lucky for you, cause they don't make 'em like this anymore. (She primps in a hand mirror.)

HAROLD: You're right about that. I tell ever'body I meet, I says to them I says, "That woman of mine would give you the hair off her back."

POLLY: I love you too, my crazy little kudzu. (She hugs him from the back.)

HATTIE: (offstage) Yoo hoo! Anybody home?

POLLY: In here, Hattie! (HATTIE, holding her own walkie, enters with her husband CHARLES RAY. CHARLES RAY holds a wrapped up baby in each arm.)

HATTIE: Ooooo, child I just heard the news. Where did it happen?

POLLY: (pointing out the window) Underneath that giant Oak tree yonder.

HAROLD: You mean to tell me in less than five minutes all of Cricket County has heard about Edna Stump dippin' snuff under our Oak tree?

HATTIE: (holding up her walkie) What do you think these things are good for?

POLLY: Don't mind him, Hattie. He don't understand the fine art of adventure-livin'.

HAROLD: (to CHARLES RAY) Can you believe these women we married?

CHARLES RAY: Well...

HATTIE: Charles Ray, be careful 'bout what you say; I'm a standin' right here.

CHARLES RAY: (has it memorized) I'm a happily married man. I love my wife. I'm lucky to have her.

HATTIE: Now sit down before the babies start to cry. (CHARLES RAY sits immediately.

HATTIE turns to POLLY.) Bless his heart, the engine's runnin' but there ain't nobody drivin'.

POLLY: (laughs) The way you two go on at each other.

HATTIE: It's all in fun. He goes on about me too, don't you, honey? Go ahead, say somethin' funny about me. (He shakes his head.)

HAROLD: Come on, Charles Ray, it's just for fun.

POLLY: Harold, you stay out of it.

HATTIE: Ain't that sweet, he can't think of one mean thing to say.

CHARLES RAY: (suddenly) She's so stuck up she wouldn't go to a funeral unless she could be the corpse. (HAROLD laughs.)

HATTIE: Okay, Charles Ray, I think you made your point.

CHARLES RAY: (His demeanor changes suddenly.) I'm a happily married man. I love my wife. I'm lucky to have her. (He rocks the babies quickly.)

POLLY: Oh, Hattie. You got your hair teased.

HATTIE: Do you like it?

POLLY: I think you're a sight for sore eyes.

HATTIE: (flattered) Much obliged.

POLLY: Harold, tell her she's a sight for sore eyes.

HAROLD: Huh? Oh, yeah, Hattie, you're a real eyesore.

POLLY: Harold!

HAROLD: (innocently) What?

HATTIE: Well, I just wanted to drop by and see the famous snuff-dippin' tree. Come on, Charles Ray, there's supper to cook, babies to bathe and dishes to wash.

POLLY: That's a lot to get done in one afternoon.

HATTIE: Awe shucks, Charles Ray don't mind. And after all that, he still has time to rub my feet. Let's go, Charles Ray, 'fore the babies start to cry. (CHARLES RAY stands as HATTIE turns to POLLY.) Now you let me know if there is anything else to report. My walkie is charged and ready to go.

POLLY: I will. I will.

HATTIE: Bye. (She and CHARLES RAY exit. POLLY shakes her head.) She sure does have that Charles Ray waitin' on her hand and foot.

HAROLD: He's henpecked.

POLLY: Maybe it's because he loves her. (She picks up her binoculars and returns to her window.) I'll just stand here and look out my window so I'll have somethin' to share on my eight o'clock report. Wait a cotton pickin' minute. Who in sam hill is that? (GRANDMA steps out with her own walkie and speaks into it.)

GRANDMA: Metamucil to Magnolia – Come in, Magnolia.

POLLY: (grabs her walkie as she continues looking through the window) Go ahead, Metamucil.

GRANDMA: I was wonderin' if you wanted some of these frog legs I cooked up. My customers didn't order any a tall today.

POLLY: Maybe later. Grandma Taylor, get over here quick! I just spotted somethin' through my binoculars that you got to see for yourself!

GRANDMA: Don't pop your girdle, child. Let me close up the diner and I'll be right over!
(She exits.)

HAROLD: (to POLLY) What you gawkin' at now?

POLLY: Well, I really ain't sure a tall. (There's a knock at the door.) Come in! (FESTER runs in looking nervous.)

FESTER: Howdy, Aunt Poly! Uncle Harold!

POLLY: Fester, what you doin' here so early in the afternoon?

HAROLD: Ain't you supposed to be at work?

FESTER: I had to close up the hardware store real quick-like.

POLLY: Fester, child, you look like you saw a ghost.

FESTER: Aunt Polly, I done been shot.

POLLY: (rushes to FESTER) What?!

HAROLD: (jumps up) I'll get the rubbin' alcohol!

POLLY: (to HAROLD) Grab my crocheting needle- I'll have to dig out the bullet! (turns to FESTER) Was it a rifle or shotgun?

FESTER: (calmly, looking out to the audience in a daze) It was a arrow.

ARMEN: But bow season's months away.

HAROLD: Where did you get shot? (FESTER places his hand over his heart and pats it. POLLY moves FESTER'S hand and has a look.)

POLLY: There ain't a bit of blood.

HAROLD: Fester, what are you tryin' to tell us?

POLLY: (grabs his shoulders and shakes him) Hurry up and get to the tail of the dog, boy!

FESTER: I've done been shot by that there feller they call Cupid.

HAROLD: Cupid?

POLLY: (hands on her hips, frustrated) Don't that just dill my pickle! Fester – you done scared us half to...(just sinking in) Wait a minute; did you say Cupid? I ain't believin' it, Fester's done went and fell in love with a girl?

HAROLD: What's her name?

FESTER: Dora Lee Grit.

POLLY: Fester, are you sure this is real love?

FESTER: As sure as rats run the rafters.

HAROLD: Where did y'all meet?

FESTER: At the hardware store where I work.

POLLY: How long have you knowed her?

FESTER: What time is it?

HAROLD: (glancing at his watch) Four o'clock.

FESTER: Half an hour. See, she walked in the hardware store lookin' prettier than a store-bought doll. (in one breath) She was in need of a toilet plunger and I asked her if she believed in love at first sight and she said no so I said we don't have a toilet plunger at this location but we do at our south location so she said okay I'll get one there then she left.

HAROLD: South location? But Fester, we only have the one hardware store in Cricket County.

FESTER: Right.

POLLY: Harold, are you confused?

HAROLD: As a termite in a yo yo.

FESTER: Well, I was thinkin'...

POLLY: Could have fooled me.

FESTER: That Cupid feller must have reared back that string on his bow like this right here (demonstrates) and let go causin' that there arrow to catch me right here in this lonely heart of mine.

POLLY: That don't explain where you sent her away, Fester.

FESTER: I sent her here hopin' she believes in love at second sight. Ever'body knows you two has got the most perfect marriage in all of Cricket County. You've got to help me know what I should say to her.

POLLY: Calm down, child, good heavens, we'll think of somethin'.

FESTER: But she'll be here any minute askin' for a plunger and I won't know what to say to her – my brain will get froze up.

HAROLD: Son, your brain never thawed out.

POLLY: All we got is that toilet plunger we bought thirty years ago.

HAROLD: Polly, you go fetch the plunger while we talk man to man.

POLLY: Man to man? Oh, you mean Fester. I'll be right back. (She exits.)

HAROLD: (retrieving an old shoe box) Fester, son, you just happened to come to the right place.

FESTER: What you got in the box?

HAROLD: Fester, this here is love poetry I wrote to your Aunt Polly back when we was courtin' over thirty years ago.

FESTER: Gollee, Uncle Harold – that sure is a romantic notion.

HAROLD: (pulls out an old yellowed card from the box and reads it) Listen to this: Your eyes look at me like two blue bowlin' balls covered in hog lard. (to FESTER) Her eyes always glistened like that. (reads from another card) Your breath comes at me smellin' like a gentle rose on a spring mornin'.

FESTER: Spring mornin', that's real good, Uncle Harold.

HAROLD: (another card) Your golden locks of hair shine like a wet bird dog after pullin' itself from a slimy swamp. Your hips remind me of an hourglass except soft and timeless. "Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely." (Song of Solomon 4:3 NIV). – That's straight from the Good Book.

FESTER: Golleeee.

HAROLD: (reads from another card) Those who speak ill of you are never allowed to come near me because they're ugly and putrid in my sight. (wipes his forehead with a handkerchief) Now that's how you woo a woman, Fester.

FESTER: You're a master at it.

HAROLD: Remember, Fester behind ever romantic poet stands a good woman.

FESTER: Yes sir.

HAROLD: Just make sure your wife don't find out about the good woman. (pause, FESTER stares at him) That was a little marriage joke.

FESTER: Oh.

HAROLD: Come on, I'll help you write these down on some note cards.

FESTER: I'm much obliged to you. (POLLY enters holding an old plunger.)

POLLY: Where you boys off to?

HAROLD: Just lendin' that cupid feller a helpin' hand. (HAROLD and FESTER exit.)

POLLY: But what do I tell that little girl when she gets here?

FESTER: (sticking his head back in) Just tell her I think her golden locks of hair shine like a wet bird dog after pullin' itself from a slimy swamp. (He disappears again.)

POLLY: Now, why does that sound familiar?

DORA LEE: (sticking her head through the front door) Excuse me?

POLLY: Come in, child. Come in.

DORA LEE: (entering) Somebody gave me this here address – you see, I'm in great need of a toilet plunger.

POLLY: Why look at you, you're as pretty as Fester said.

DORA LEE: I beg your pardon?

POLLY: Yes ma'am, you sure look like the marryin' kind to me.

DORA LEE: Marryin' kind?

POLLY: I do approve of a girl a gettin' married. And do you know why? 'Cause Im married.

DORA LEE: Yes ma'am.

POLLY: (getting dreamy eyed) I had always dreamed of that special day all through my childhood. Gettin' proposed to by the perfect beau. All the excitement of plannin' the weddin'- I was registered at Dollar General- I had always dreamed of havin' the ceremony in my mama

and daddy's back yard between the puppy's doghouse and the 1956 Ford tractor. There was a patch of yard that the goats kept nice and trimmed. Oh, it was the perfect day. (snapping out of her fog) I'm sorry, honey, I'm gettin' all sentimental.

DORA LEE: That's okay. I think it all sounded real nice. So, how much is it?

POLLY: How much is it?

DORA LEE: The toilet plunger.

POLLY: Oh. Uh, it's free. You're our 10th customer this week which means you win a free antique toilet plunger. Congratulations.

DORA LEE: Gollleee – I ain't never won nothin' in my life. Much obliged. And thank you for the marriage talk. It really got me to thinkin'. (turns and exist)

POLLY: You're welcome, honey. Remember that bein' a housewife is the highest callin' in the world! (She realizes she just let DORA LEE go.) Wait, come back! You got to fall in love at second sight! (But DORA LEE is gone.) Fester's goin' to have my hide.

GRANDMA: (offstage) Polly, you home?

POLLY: In here, Grandma Taylor!

GRANDMA: (entering with a covered Cool Whip bowl) There you are. Here's your frog legs. You won't believe the news I heard on the way over here. It seems a brand new couple has moved to Cricket County.

POLLY: I knew it! I seen their fancy car drive up the dirt road just minutes ago.

GRANDMA: The way I heard it, they're from the big city. Somewhere way up north.

POLLY: Up north? That's practically another country. When did you meet 'em?

GRANDMA: I ain't met 'em yet. I got the news on my walkie.

POLLY: I sure missed the scoop this time. (GRETCHEN enters extreme stage left or right wearing camouflage and carrying her walkie. She's somewhere down the road.)

GRETCHEN: Sassafras to Metamucil. Come in, Metamucil.

GRANDMA: (into her walkie) Metamucil here. Go ahead Sassafras.

GRETCHEN: Just wantin' to inform you the foreigners is headin' y'all's way.

GRANDMA: (looking out the window) I see 'em a comin'! Metamucil out. (GRETCHEN exits. GRANDMA turns to POLLY.) How do I look? Is my girdle showin'?

POLLY: No, but your panty hose is a little wrinkled.

GRANDMA: I ain't wearin' pantyhose.

POLLY: Then you look just fine. (There's a knock at the door.) Come in. (MONICA walks in dressed to the nines. Her hair and makeup are exquisite. Her handsome, well-dressed husband enters with her. POLLY and GRANDMA stare in awe.)

MONICA: Good afternoon, ladies.

GRANDMA: (wide eyed) Tie me to an anthill and fill my ears with jam.

DORA LEE: They're the prettiest things I ever saw.

POLLY: If that ain't true then grits ain't groceries and eggs ain't poultry.

MONICA: Excuse me?

POLLY: I'm sorry. Come in! Come in!

MONICA: I'm Monica Northcutt and this is my husband Reginald.

REGINALD: It's so very nice to meet you. (He shakes their hands and they swoon.)

MONICA: We have moved into the house down the road.

GRANDMA: Oh, honey, we know, we know. You have moved into the old Wilson place; your husband is in real estate; you're a proud housewife who raised three younguns and ya'll are richer than clabbered cream.

MONICA: Have we met?

GRANDMA: No ma'am, but I don't go nowhere without my walkie.

POLLY: (to MONICA pushing GRANDMA to the side) Don't mind her. Welcome to Cricket County – we're so glad to have you here. Won't you plant yourself?

MONICA: I beg your pardon?

POLLY: Won't you have a seat?

MONICA: Thank you, but I don't have time for idle chit chat.

GRANDMA: Did you hear that? Idle chit chat.

POLLY: That sure is some fancy talkin'.

REGINALD: We were wondering if we could borrow some tools. Mine haven't arrived on the truck yet.

POLLY: Why sure you can; just take the whole tool box. Around here we believe in share and share alike. It's in the shed out back.

REGINALD: Thank you so much. I'll get it. (He bows slightly and exits.)

POLLY: (to MONICA, looking to impress her new neighbor) Now, if y'all need anything a tall while movin' in, just give us a call. My Harold is a good handyman and I can cook like there's no tomorrow.

GRANDMA: Don't listen to her. When she cooks even the cockroaches eat out. You want a good meal, you stop by my diner. I'll conjure up some of my Tuna Noodle Surprise.

POLLY: The surprise is that it glows in the dark and melts the silverware.

GRANDMA: At least I don't burn my salads.

POLLY: At least flies don't go to my kitchen to commit suicide.

MONICA: Ladies, ladies, please! You mustn't squabble in front of guests.

GRANDMA: (becoming as proper as she knows how) She's right, Polly. We're actin' plum...I mean oh, so silly.

POLLY: (to MONICA) What do people in the city talk about in front of company?

MONICA: (pretending she's joking) Usually the first thing that happens is someone compliments my looks.

GRANDMA: (looking over the top of her glasses at MONICA) Now that you mention it, your face is like fine porcelain.

MONICA: Why, thank you. It's amazing what surgery can do for us girls these days.

GRANDMA: You had to have surgery on your face?

POLLY: Did you get kicked in the teeth by a mule?

GRANDMA: Your doctors did a fine job patchin' you up.

MONICA: I had a face lift.

GRANDMA: Yep, that's what a good kick from a mule can give you?

MONICA: It's what women do where I'm from to keep their husbands from roaming.

POLLY: I do declare and all this time I've just been chainin' Harold to the kitchen stove.

MONICA: It's called plastic surgery. I've had my nose raised, my chin tightened, my tummy tucked and my thighs trimmed.

POLLY: You must really have one mean mule.

MONICA: (becoming impatient) It has nothing to do with mules. The procedures are done by doctors who specialize in those sorts of operations.

GRANDMA: Do you think they could do anything for me?

MONICA: Honey, I said they were doctors, not magicians.

POLLY: Grandma, quit foolin' yourself. (to MONICA) Bless her heart, she's so old she can remember when the Grand Canyon was just a ditch. But me on the other hand.

GRANDMA: (to POLLY) You listen here!

MONICA: Ladies! Ladies! How can you be friends if you dislike one another so much?

POLLY: Dislike each other? Why, Imogene Taylor is one of my nearest and dearest friends.

GRANDMA: We're real protective of each other out here in Cricket County.

MONICA: You could have fooled me. (FESTER and HAROLD enter from the back of the house as REGINALD enters from outside carrying a toolbox.)

FESTER: I thank you again, Uncle Harold. Aunt Polly, ain't my little honey pie got here yet?

POLLY: She did, but she was in a hurry, honey. Don't fret none, I put in a good word for you.

FESTER: Much obliged.

HAROLD: I'm tryin' to help Fester snag his nag like I snagged mine.

FESTER: I even come up with a poem of my own: I don't smoke and I don't chew and I don't kiss on girls who does. I'm still workin' on the rhymin' part. Well, I'd better go if I'm goin' to snag me that girl 'fore the week's done. I sure hope she's into the simple, stalker types. Bye, y'all.

POLLY: Good luck, Fester! (FESTER exits. She turns to HAROLD) Honey, I want you to meet our new neighbors. This is Monica and her husband Rocky.

REGINALD: (shaking HAROLD'S hand) Actually, my name is Reginald.

ARMEN: Welcome to Cricket County Oregano.

REGINALD: Reginald.

HAROLD: No, I'm Harold. Do y'all need any help movin' in?

MONICA: That won't be necessary. We have hired professional movers.

REGINALD: It's been nice meeting all of you but we still have much work to do.

GRANDMA: (to MONICA) Now, you take care of that pretty face of yours.

REGINALD: And thanks again for the tools.

HAROLD: Don't mention it, Oregano.

REGINALD: Reginald.

HAROLD: No, it's Harold. (The NOTHCUTTS exit.) I think he must be hard of hearin'.

POLLY: (to GRANDMA) Did you see them pearls around her neck?

GRANDMA: Did you smell that sweet perfume she was a wearin'?

POLLY: Did you see that pretty husband of hers?

HAROLD: Wait a minute – what's that critter got that I ain't got?

POLLY: Nothin', honey, you got ever'thing he's got. (pats his stomach as she and GRANDMA have a good laugh) And a whole lot more.

GRANDMA: I sure would like to learn her beauty secrets.

POLLY: Me too. We should get all the housewives together for a quiltin' party and invite the Northcutts. We can pick that citified brain of hers and maybe she can learn us how to get pretty and sophisticated like she is.

GRANDMA: I'm game 'cause I'm tired of lookin' like this.

POLLY: Right, and we're tired of lookin' at it.

GRETCHEN: (offstage) Knock, knock.

POLLY: Come in, Gretchen. (GRETCHEN enters still wearin' her camouflage and holding her walkie and an empty cup.)

GRETCHEN: (looks around as she speaks) Polly, I was wonderin' if I could borrow a cup of sugar for my applesauce cake.

GRANDMA: You can cut out the act – she's done gone.

GRETCHEN: (becomes herself) I told you to hang on to her 'til I got here. (into her walkie) Sassafras to Kudzu - abort mission – I repeat, abort mission.

GRANDMA: What did you want us to do, hog-tie her to a chair?

GRETCHEN: Just 'til I got here. (HATTIE and BODEAN enter dressed in camouflage and holding their walkies.)

HATTIE: What happened, Imogene?

BODEAN: Why did we abort our mission?

GRETCHEN: She done went home.

GRANDMA: Oooooooooooooo, you should have saw her. She was prettier than a thirty-pound bass.

POLLY: The skin on her face was as smooth as a china doll.

GRANDMA: And she talks so fancy.

POLLY: She's had a face lift, her nose raised, her chin tightened, her tummy tucked and her thighs trimmed.

HATTIE: Bless her heart, she didn't get kicked by a mule, did she?

GRANDMA: No, silly girl – she had all that done to make herself look young and fresh.

POLLY: To keep her husband from roamin'.

BODEAN: Wouldn't it be easier just to chain him to the stove?

POLLY: That's what I said.

BODEAN: I want a face lift!

GRETCHEN: I want a tummy tuck! I ain't reached my back pockets in years.

POLLY: All of you just hush up. This is Cricket County. There ain't no doctors within a million miles of here who can do work like that.

GRANDMA: She's right, but that don't mean we can't do other things.

POLLY: We're goin' to invite the Northcutts to a quiltin' party right here this Thursday night and all of y'all is invited too.

HATTIE: That will give me time to poof my hair a little more.

GRETCHEN: Oh, this is goin' to be so much fun!

BODEAN: Wait a minute, do we have to bring our husbands along?

HATTIE: I never thought about that.

POLLY: They'll never be able to carry on a decent conversation with Oregano.

BODEAN: Bless their hearts, if you offered them a penny for their thoughts, you'd get back change.

POLLY: But don't y'all see? While we're learnin' from Ms. Monica, the boys could be learnin' from Oregano.

GRANDMA: That ain't a bit fair! I ain't got no husband. My Elrod died thirty years ago.

POLLY: That's okay, Grandma Taylor, you can come anyway.

GRANDMA: And make Ms. Monica think I'm too old to have a walkin', breathin' ball and chain. No thank you.

GRETCHEN: But you've just got to come to the quiltin' party – it won't be the same without your borin' stories.

GRANDMA: (gets an idea) Oh, I'll be comin' alright – and I will have a husband on my arm. (She giggles under her breath.)

POLLY: This is goin' to be more fun than mud wrestlin' in the bog. Just think, after all these years we'll know what it feels like to be beautiful and sophisticated like the rest of the world!

GRANDMA: Goodness gracious, it's been a long time since I've had a better half. I'd best go practice. Metamucil checkin' out. (She exits running.)

POLLY: Then it's all set. The First-Tuesday's Quilter's Club will meet on Thursday instead of Monday. (The WOMEN clap with glee as GRANDMA sticks her head back in the door.)

GRANDMA: (to GRETCHIN) What do you mean my stories is borin'? (Bluegrass music plays as the lights fade to a quick...)

BLACKOUT

SCENE 2

(Music out. At Rise: It's the following Thursday - the afternoon of the quilting party. The cabin is empty at the moment. FESTER sticks his head inside the door.)

FESTER: Hello? Is anybody home? (There's silence. He enters carrying a home-made scarecrow and sets it in a chair center stage.)

FESTER: (speaking to the scarecrow) Here you go. Now, just sit yourself down in this here chair. There you go. You pretend to be that pretty Dora Lee I met the other day and I'll pretend to be me. (Takes his cards HAROLD helped him make and glances at the first one. He then holds the cards down to his side, stands up straight and clears his throat.) Pretty Dora Lee, your eyes look at me like two bowlin' balls covered in...covered in...I can't remember without lookin' at the cards. (He looks.) Covered in hog lard, that's it! I'd better keep these real close or I'll mess it up good. (DORA LEE enters wearing a blue dress and carrying the plunger she had before.)

DORA LEE: Excuse me. (This startles FESTER. He drops his stack of cards causing them to scatter over the floor. He immediately hits the floor and scoops them up.)

FESTER: Oh. I'm sorry, I didn't hear you come in.

DORA LEE: I went to the main branch but nobody was there so I come to this one.

FESTER: (stands with this cards held against his chest) Oh yeah, the hardware store closes early on Thursdays.

DORA LEE: (holds out the plunger) I wanted to return this. I think its plugin' days is over.

FESTER: I'm real sorry you wasn't satisfied with your purchase.

DORA LEE: (sees the back of the scarecrow) I didn't know you had a customer.

FESTER: Who him? That's just my buddy...His name is, Uh...Buddy. We was just shootin' the breeze. What's that you say, Buddy? You got to go? (to DORA LEE as he points somewhere away from the scarecrow) Look over there! (When DORA LEE turns away, FESTER takes the scarecrow and tosses it out the window or through the door. DORA LEE turns back. FESTER waves out the window or through the door.) You come back to see us now! Tell Mrs. Buddy I said hey! (He turns to DORA LEE.) Well, this is the second time you seen me. Are you feelin' anything?

DORA LEE: Well...

(FESTER rushes downstage and speaks to himself) Okay, Fester, just stay calm – you've got ever'thing you need right here. (holds up the cards and speaks to the audience) Mr. Cupid, I hope you're close by 'cause I'm as nervous as a tic on dip day. (He crosses to DORA LEE.) I'm back.

DORA LEE: As I was sayin', I was wonderin' if I could get another plunger.

FESTER: (takes the plunger and sets it on the table) I got somethin' I need to say to you.

DORA LEE: But my sink ain't drained in days.

FESTER: (not hearing her) Just sit yourself down in this here chair and relax. (He stands behind and to the left or right of her with his cards.) Now, I have been admirin' you from a distance and now it's time to tell you how I truly feel about you.

DORA LEE: It is?

FESTER: (out of nowhere) It's your breath!

DORA LEE: What about my breath?

FESTER: (reading first card) Your breath comes at me smellin' like (next card) a wet bird dog after pullin' itself from a slimy swamp. I mean (next card) Your hips remind me of (next card) two blue bowlin' balls covered in hog lard. (She looks down at her blue dress.) What I meant to say was, "Your lips are... (next card) never allowed to come near me because they're ugly and putrid in my sight. That's straight out of the Good Book...I mean... (throws the cards on the table) Ah, heck, forget them things! What I'm a tryin' to ask you is would you like to go on a date with me? Tonight? Here? At a quiltin' party with all the Cricket County housewives?

DORA LEE: (Harboring a poker face this whole time, she suddenly erupts with a big smile.) That's the most romantic thing anybody ever' said to me. (She gives him a big hug.) My mama will be so happy!

FESTER: Your mama?

DORA LEE: She was afraid I was goin' to be a old maid. She'll be tickled to death to know I will soon become the next Cricket County housewife!

FESTER: (taken aback) Housewife?

DORA LEE: I won't even need this here plunger no more since you'll be takin' care of them kind of things once we're married.

FESTER: M - Married?

DORA LEE: I'll be sure and watch real close tonight so I will learn how a good housewife is supposed to treat her husband.

FESTER: Hu...husband?

DORA LEE: I better run home and get ready. I'm much obliged to you for proposin' to me like this. You can pick me up at my house – it's the little white one over on Blueberry Hill. Until then, sweetheart. (She blows him a kiss, giggles and exits. FSETER stands wide-eyed facing the audience.)

FESTER: Propose? (He looks around) Cupid, you rascal!? What have you done to me? (He pulls at his collar as bluegrass music plays and the lights fade to a ...)

BLACKOUT

Thank you for reading this excerpt. If you are interested in reading the whole play, you may order a script from the publisher at www.contemporarydrama.com