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MYSTERY AT CLETUS MANOR



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written by

Tyler Leavitt

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Synopsis

Mystery at Cletus Manor is a hillbilly filled who-dun-it. When Cletus winds up missing, his new wife Splenda, insists on pronouncing him dead; therefor allowing the Will to be read. Interested parties from throughout Cletus's life, including rival singing groups, an ex-wife and a mysterious distant uncle show up to be a part of the event. With an investigation underway relationships are tested and the past is dug up leading to hilarious interaction riff with hillbilly humor.

Cast of Characters

MRS. TYPO	Lawyer in charge of the Will
JANE-BO	Hillbilly maid
VIVIAN MURKY	Reporter from the *Daily Blab*, female
SPLENDA	Wife to Cletus
DIAMOND	Splenda's spoiled daughter
CRYSTAL	Splenda's spoiled daughter
STEWART	Splenda's brother
GENE	Girlfriend of Stewart
PENNY	Assistant to Mrs. Typo, female
COOTER	Hillbilly nephew to Cletus
JOE-SUE	Ex-wife of Cletus
JOE-JOE	Daughter of Joe-Sue and Cletus
JOE-MARIE	Daughter of Joe-Sue and Cletus
IVAN	Splenda's German personal trainer, male
DALLY DOSS	Music star, female
REAL-DEAL	Manager of Dally Doss
DEE	Caterer for the reading of the will
BILLY	Lead singer in Billy and the Swamp Feet, male
HILLY	Member of Billy and the Swamp Feet
WILLY	Member of Billy and the Swamp Feet, female
FRILLY	Member of Billy and the Swamp Feet, female
GRANDPA JOE	Absent minded, hillbilly grandpa to Cletus
UNCLE BILLY	Mysterious distant Uncle

ACT I

Scene 1

Setting: Inside a large living-room in a mansion. There is a fireplace stage right and an old grandfather clock center. There is a sofa at an angle to the left. An overstuffed chair right of the fireplace. To the left of the clock there is a desk with a chair. Far stage left is a small table with three chairs around it. There is a throw rug center stage. The décor is in contrast to the opulent nature of the room. There are several small animal heads on the wall over the fireplace. The furniture is as mismatched as possible.

At Rise: MRS. TYPO sits at the desk. She is dressed in a business outfit. There is a briefcase on the desk. MRS. TYPO sift through some paperwork. JANE-BO enters. She is dressed in an old, wrinkled maid outfit.

JANE-BO

Mrs. Typo, there be a person here's to see you.

MRS. TYPO

Who is it Jane?

JANE-BO

Bo.

MRS. TYPO

Who's Bo?

JANE-BO

My name… it's Jane-Bo, not Jane, not Janie, not Beverly…

MRS. TYPO

I've never called you Beverly.

JANE-BO

Just in case you were thinking about it.

MRS. TYPO

Very well. Who is here to see me?

JANE-BO

Oh yeah, there's a Vivian Murky here. She looks a little shifty.

MRS. TYPO

What kind of shifty?

JANE-BO

How many different types are there?

MRS. TYPO

Five.

JANE-BO

Well, she looks the worst, not as bad as a lawyer but bad.

MRS. TYPO

You do realize that you just insulted me.

JANE-BO

I did well shoooooot. How?

MRS. TYPO

I'm a lawyer.

JANE-BO

Sorry there, Mrs. Typo, yous got to tell me these things.

MRS. TYPO

Could you just send her in.

JANE-BO

Sure will, but be careful.

(JANE-BO exits and VIVIAN MURKY enters. She is dressed in a business suit.)

VIVIAN MURKY

Mrs. Typo.

MRS. TYPO

Yes.

VIVIAN MURKY

I'm Vivian Murky. I'm a reporter from the *Daily Blab*. I'm here to do a story on the late Cletus. He was such an important and interesting man.

MRS. TYPO

I'm not sure if the family will want a story done.

VIVIAN MURKY

Why do they have something to hide?

MRS. TYPO

Of course not.

VIVIAN MURKY

Good. So, let's start with how Cletus got all his money.

MRS. TYPO

He was the inventor of Mud, Moss and More.

VIVIAN MURKY

The foot deodorizer?

MRS. TYPO

Yes, the greatest foot deodorizer ever invented.

VIVIAN MURKY

And how did he invent it?

MRS. TYPO

Well, one day while on his morning walk through the woods of Tennessee. He stepped into a pile of mud, moss and more. Now Cletus had the worst smelling feet in the entire state. I mean the weather man would warn people during certain weather patterns that they would be down wind of the smell.

VIVIAN MURKY

Sounds pretty bad.

MRS. TYPO

Oh, his whole family has horrible smelling feet. Anyways, after he stepped into that stuff his feet didn’t smell, so he packaged it and sold it.

VIVIAN MURKY

What was the ‘more’?

MRS. TYPO

He never said. He took the secret to his grave.

VIVIAN MURKY

So how did he die?

MRS. TYPO

Well, it was a very interesting situation, you see he was in the middle of…

(SPLENDA enters. She is dressed in the latest fashion. She is followed by DIAMOND and CRYSTAL, also dressed very fashionably, they are her daughters.)

SPLENDA

Typo, Typo, is everything ready?

MRS. TYPO

Yes Mrs. Cletus.

SPLENDA

Good. I don't want there to be any mess ups. This reading of the Will must be sensational.

MRS. TYPO

You want the reading of the Will to be sensational, it's not a party.

DIAMOND

Well, it should be.

CRYSTAL

Our daddy would have wanted a party.

SPLENDA

Who is that?

MRS. TYPO

Oh, I'm sorry this is Vivian Murky, from the Daily Blab.

CRYSTAL

I read that magazine every day.

VIVIAN MURKY

Really.

DIAMOND

That’s because it takes her so long to read.

CRYSTAL

What are you saying?

DIAMOND

I’m saying that you don’t know how to read.

CRYSTAL

Well, what does that mean?

DIAMOND

It means what I just said, you don’t know how to read. You’re not too bright.

CRYSTAL

My name is Crystal because I am so bright.

SPLENDA

Girls.

DIAMOND

You’re name’s Crystal because you’re so transparent.

CRYSTAL

You made that word up.

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ACT II

Scene 1

Setting: same as Act I

At Rise: Everyone is just as they were at the end of act one. When the lights come up everyone reacts, adlibbing lines according to their character.

SPLENDA

What's the meaning of this? Is this some type of joke?

IVAN

Vhat kind of joke?

SPLENDA

A sick joke.

COOTER

More like, why'd the chicken cross the road?

GENE

Why?

COOTER

To steal the Will.

STEWART

A chicken didn't steal the Will.

PENNY

The person would have to be.

VIVIAN MURKY

What do you mean?

PENNY

Well, whoever stole the Will, didn't want us to read it. But instead of publicity saying something, they stole it… they were a chicken.

JOE-JOE

So a chicken's the thief?

JOE-MARIE

But which chicken?

JANE-BO

Maybe it was the ducks?

JOE-SUE

We done got rid of those ducks.

STEWART

It wasn't a duck.

IVAN

So vas chicken?

BILLY

Whoever it was, he sure is foul.

GRANDPA JOE

Can't count chickens but always count cactus.

HILLY

So, was it a chicken or a duck?

DALLY DOSS

Are you serious?

WILLY

She's about to get all up in your business, so you best duck.

DIAMOND

We're back to the duck.

DEE

I can't get more duck.

REAL-DEAL

Who wants duck?

CRYSTAL

Are those feathers the Will?

GENE

Maybe it was a chicken and a duck.

FRILLY

Naw, most chickens and ducks are moral enemies.

UNCLE BILLY

Maybe it wasn't a chicken or a duck. Maybe it was one of you.

(Everyone gasps.)

COOTER

What are you trying to say?

UNCLE BILLY

I'm saying that I think one of you stole the Will.

SPLENDA

Who are you?

UNCLE BILLY

Uncle Billy, five times removed.

JOE-SUE

You do look a little familiar.

UNCLE BILLY

Yea, I haven't been around for a while.

JOE-MARIE

How longs a while?

UNCLE BILLY

A little shy of never.

STEWART

Maybe you did it.

UNCLE BILLY

What?

STEWART

I mean none of us know you. And you're the one that suggested it.

UNCLE BILLY

If I had done it, why would I say something?

WILLY

To throw us off the track.

HILLY

I say we shoot him.

BILLY

Kick him.

FRILLY

Drown him in Jell-O.

COOTER

Now everyone calm down, just calm down. We go and down a man in jell-o.

MRS. TYPO

I should say not.

COOTER

For one, we ain't got enough Jell-o and to make enough would take too long.

MRS. TYPO

That's not what I meant.

VIVIAN MURKY

We should really call the police.

GENE

Don't do that.

JANE-BO

Why not?

STEWART

Yeah, what are you hiding?

GENE

It's nothing serious.

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DIAMOND

Duh, I'm better then you.

CRYSTAL

Mom!!!

SPLENDA

Stop fussing… she's correct.

COOTER

No, if we split up more might go missing.

VIVIAN MURKY

This is great. Third page between weather and washing machine ads, here I come.

(JOE-SUE enters.)

JOE-SUE

Where's that Dee? All the food gone.

SPLENDA

What?

JOE-SUE

The food, it's all gone. You have something to do with this, husband stealer?

SPLENDA

Unfortunately, no.

JOE-JOE

(from offstage)

We found 'em momma.

SPLENDA

The Will?

MRS. TYPO

Penny?

JOE-JOE

The perpetrators.

(JOE-JOE enters with BILLY, FRILLY, HILLY, WILLY and DEE. All of them are stuffed. JOE-MARIE follows them in.)

JOE-MARIE

Sure did, found them stuffing their faces.

DEE

I can explain.

JOE-SUE

It's gona be awfully difficult with my first in yur mouth.

BILLY

It was my fault. We haven't eaten for some time, we were expecting the contract to happen so we could get some better grub. But when it didn't we jist had to eat.

HILLY

We're awfully sorry.

WILLY

Real sorry.

FRILLY

But we'll be even more sorry in the morning.

JOE-SUE

I can't believe this.

DEE

I'm sorry too. I couldn't control myself.

JOE-MARIE

It sounds like they mean it ma.

JOE-JOE

Sure does.

JOE-SUE

I'm gona have to think about it.

(DALLY and REAL DEAL enter.)

DALLY DOSS

Wild animals are loose somewhere on the premises.

IVAN

Maybe animals eat Penny.

JOE-SUE

What happened to Penny?

MRS. TYPO

She's missing.

DIAMOND

There's wild animals? Protect me, Ivan.

CRYSTAL

Protect me.

DIAMOND

Protect me.

CRYSTAL

Stop it.

IVAN

Ladies, I strong… protect both.

REAL-DEAL

Whatever it was it's huge. You should see the kitchen.

COOTER

That was jist the starving artists.

(STEWART enters, followed by GENE.)

STEWART

Naming our children after farming equipment is out of the question… oh look everyone's here.

SPLENDA

What's the meaning of this.

GENE

Stewart declared his love towards me.

SPLENDA

Stewart, explain yourself.

STEWART

I had to… to make sure I was taken care of.

JANE-BO *(entering)*

I know I gets the impressive amount of minimum wage, but I ain't getting near that kitchen.

JOE-SUE

I'm sorry about that, Jane-Bo. We have five who would love to help clean up.

UNCLE BILLY *(entering)*

What's all the noise about.

MRS. TYPO

He did it.

UNCLE BILLY

Did what?

MRS. TYPO

Took Penny.

UNCLE BILLY

What are you talking about?

MRS. TYPO

Penny went to see you and then disappeared.

UNCLE BILLY

I never saw her.

GRANDPA JOE *(entering)*

I can fly if wear the right shoes.

MRS. TYPO

He did it.

UNCLE BILLY

I didn't do anything.

COOTER

Stop it. Everyone jist stop. Now we need to get to the bottom of this. First the Will goes missing, then Penny. Somehow, they must be connected. But until we discover how, I'm afraid it will remain a mystery.

(COOTER learns against the clock and it opens revealing PENNY tied up. COOTER continues to talk.)

COOTER

Excuse me, now the real question is who had most to gain.

GENE

Cooter…

COOTER

… not now Gene, I'm trying to monologue. Everyone in here had something to gain by that Will disappearing, maybe Penny found something out.

JOE-SUE

…Cooter honey you need to—

COOTER

I don't mean to be rude but I'm trying to do something here. Penny found out a secret. Now that secret was so important someone killed her.

JOE-JOE

Killed her?

COOTER

Had to, had to git ride of all the evidence. Penny's body is probably out on the river somewhere, gator food.

JOE-MARIE

Cooter.

COOTER

You know it's really getting annoying everyone calling my name when I'm trying to monologue. I mean I need to monologue. Ain't nobody gonna know anything unless I monologue.

EVERYONE

Cooter.

COOTER

What?

VIVIAN MURKY

Behind you.

(COOTER turns. Then turns back.)

COOTER

Or Penny was tied up and placed inside a secret passageway.

(TYPO unties PENNY.)

MRS. TYPO

Who did this to you?

PENNY

It was—

COOTER

Can I guess?

PENNY

I was standing there tied up for forever while you monologued.

COOTER

Good point, continue.

PENNY

It was Uncle Billy.

GENE

What do you have to say for yourself?

UNCLE BILLY

I did it. I'm sorry. I was only trying to figure out who loved me for me.

JOE-SUE

What do you mean? None of us know you.

UNCLE BILLY

Some of you should.

(UNCLE takes off his shoe. Everyone reacts.)

JOE-SUE

Cletus?

JOE-JOE

Pa.

JOE-MARIE

Pa.

JOE-SUE

But why?

UNCLE BILLY

I needed to know who my family truly was, with all this money and power, I began to lose sight of what really mattered.

SPLENDA

So good to see you again dear.

UNCLE BILLY

Consider us over Splenda. You can have your Ivan and everything else too. We're going back to the woods.

VIVIAN MURKY

I don't understand.

GRANDPA JOE

Allow me. Through faking his own death Cletus discovered that money doesn't buy happiness, only love does that. So, by learning that he's willing to go back to the woods and leave all the cares and trouble of this new life behind him.

VIVIAN MURKY

That was beautiful.

GRANDPA JOE

Not as beautiful as a turkey doing the two step. Hit it.

(Billy and the Swamp Feet start to play and everyone breaks into dancing.)

GENE

Wait a second. Since everyone here, lets have the wedding.

STEWART

What?

(Music starts again.)

(The End)



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