

# BLACK HEARTS AND BEARDED LADIES

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

By Ray Sheers

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# BLACK HEARTS AND BEARDED LADIES

By Ray Sheers

*This is the first play in Ray Sheers' trilogy.*

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**(16 WOMEN, 10 MEN, VERY FLEXIBLE)**

- MINNIE FLOSS (F) ..... Sweet, but not too bright; an outlandish middle-aged woman. (212 lines)
- RUPERT FLOSS (M) ..... MINNIE's middle-aged husband. He's somewhat more alert and brighter than his wife, but not much. Together, they run the Sweetwater Inn, a run-down hotel/boarding house. (175 lines)
- MR. JACK MIMMS (M) ..... Eccentric lodger, rather a nerdy type. He wears glasses that have been taped together, suspenders, and a hat. He gardens, keeps parrots, and raises worms. (32 lines)
- LUNA (M/F) ..... Maid (or butler) at the Sweetwater Inn. She accepts the eccentricities of her employers and is a bit odd herself, eating the occasional fly or worm. She fits in well with this family. Change "LUNA" to "LOUIE" if butler. (47 lines)
- FRANKLIN (M) ..... MINNIE's likable brother who lives with RUPERT and MINNIE at the Sweetwater Inn. He's a freeloader in brightly colored, mismatched clothes. (41 lines)
- PICKLES (F) ..... FRANKLIN's wife. She also wears bright, quirky clothing. (15 lines)

STELLA (F).....RUPERT and MINNIE's unmarried daughter. She's the (only) normal family member. (52 lines)

DELIVERY MAN (M/F).....Rough and gruff delivery person. (5 lines)

CLARISSA (F) .....A fortune teller whose predictions sometimes come true; a brassy, loud, domineering type. She should wear a scarf and other gypsy-like garb. (14 lines)

GOLDA (F).....MINNIE's wealthy aunt, GOLDA's not someone to trifle with. She withers most people with her gaze alone. Her voice is capable of sending shivers up the spine of those in earshot. (65 lines)

FREDRICO VINYOFSKI (M).....A dark, mysterious stranger. He should impart an air of menace and villainy. (17 lines)

FREDDY (M) .....STELLA's fiancé. (6 lines)

**BEARDED LADY BANDITS**

EDITH GRIMM (F) .....(22 lines)

IRMA GRIMM (F) .....(21 lines)

OPAL GRIMM (F) .....(17 lines)

PEARL GRIMM (F) .....(10 lines)

Four (could be reduced to three) Bearded Lady Bandits staying at the Sweetwater Inn. They are crude, rude, and ruthless. These four work as a team, a malevolent unit. Reminiscent of the witches in Macbeth, they are convincingly evil, each with a fiendish laugh. They should wear dark, formal dresses and could have tattoos and wear bright boas.

WICKER (M/F) .....A nasty, corrupt real estate investor who wants to buy the Sweetwater Inn. (7 lines)

DETECTIVE BRADY (M/F) .....Police detective (15 lines)

LEO DAVINSKI (M) .....Police detective (6 lines)

FRANKENMIRTH (M).....An egotistical, greedy psychiatrist who is engaged to GOLDA. (13 lines)

**EXTRAS** (optional, for street robbery scenes)

GENTLEMAN .....(2 lines)

LADY .....(3 lines)

MAN .....(6 lines)

WOMAN 1 .....(1 line)

WOMAN 2 .....(1 line)

TEENAGER .....(No lines)

### SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

#### ACT ONE

SCENE 1: Town street (played in front of the curtain).

SCENE 2: Lobby of the Sweetwater Inn.

#### ACT TWO

SCENE 1: Lobby of the Sweetwater Inn.

SCENE 2: Bus stop (played in front of the curtain).

SCENE 3: Lobby of the Sweetwater Inn.

#### ACT THREE

SCENE 1: Lobby of the Sweetwater Inn.

### SOUND EFFECTS

1. Phone ringing
2. Knocking at door

### SUGGESTED MUSIC

If you decide to add music to your production, there should be a distinct contrast between that used for the robbery scenes and the music played for the hotel scenes.

**To introduce the Bearded Lady Bandits' Robbery Scenes:**

**ACT ONE, SCENE 1 and ACT TWO, SCENE 2:**

“Purple Haze,” Kronos Quartet CD Winter Was Hard, [Nonesuch 9 79181-2]

**To introduce ACT ONE, SCENE 2 and ACT TWO, SCENE 3:**

“Liebesfreud,” The Kreisler Album: Joshua Bell plays music by Fritz Kreisler, CD [London 444 409-2]

**For Mimm's Dance Scene:**

**ACT TWO, SCENE 3:**

“It Hurts Me Too,” From the Cradle by Eric Clapton, CD [Reprise 9 45735-2]

**To introduce ACT THREE:**

“Minuett,” The Kreisler Album: Joshua Bell plays music by Fritz Kreisler, CD [London 444 409-2]

**Rousing curtain call:**

“Rollin' & Tumblin’,” Eric Clapton Unplugged, CD [Reprise 9 45024-2]

**PROPERTIES**

Two packages wrapped in brown paper

Four beards

Guns with caps

Money; Wallet

Purses; Jewelry

Two gowns

Fabric and sewing supplies

Aquarium

Dartboard with plastic darts

Fish bowl

Plastic fish

Pitcher

Bell to ring for service (*Optional*)

Plastic worm

Flies (*Optional: could be imaginary*)

Music cases

Newspapers

Feather duster

Letter/letter envelope  
Cucumbers  
Empty mayonnaise jar  
Artificial flowers  
Vases  
Throw pillow  
Tea cup  
Glass  
Clean apron  
Blood-stained apron  
Medicine bottle  
Message tablet and pen  
Calendar  
Eyeglasses  
Coat rack  
Boom box

### **SPECIAL EFFECTS**

Brightly colored plastic goldfish are used in the fishbowl. If these are connected to weights (metal nuts work well) by fish line, fish will be suspended in the water and appear very lifelike. For the glass of water FRANKLIN gives to AUNT GOLDA, put a goldfish in the empty glass (arranged the same way). When he fills the glass from the pitcher, the fish at the bottom of the empty glass will rise when the water is added. Actor needs to hold glass up high so audience can see what's happening, but he should be looking elsewhere so it doesn't look deliberate on his part. Be sure to use a large, clear glass.

For the fortune-telling scene, a small table with a hole cut in the center for the blacklight fixture is easy and inexpensive to make. A blacklight bulb is fastened to the fixture and turned on when lights dim. Until this scene, this device is covered by a basket with artificial flowers. A hole in the bottom of the basket allows it to fit over the fixture. The light can be turned on off stage by using an extension cord. Other blacklights (or even strobe lights) can be used for this scene, if desired. For example, a fluorescent blacklight bulb over MIMMS' aquarium makes a nice effect, especially if blacklight sensitive tubing is glued to the interior of the aquarium, suggesting worms. A blacklight-sensitive skull could also be in the aquarium. These are unseen by the audience if a piece of black paper is attached to the outside of the aquarium. LUNA can easily remove this paper on her way to answer the door, since the stage is in almost total darkness. When CLARISSA leaves,

MINNIE should cover the “crystal ball” with CLARISSA’s brightly colored scarf so blacklight isn’t visible. (Blacklights get very hot, so use caution. Allow some space for the heat to escape by placing the glass on some wooden pegs attached to the top of the table.)

Plastic flies and worms (fishing lures are good) are used for LUNA’s unique dietary tastes. Gummy worms can be used for those that she actually eats. Those she shows the audience should appear real, however. The worms can easily be concealed behind the aquarium, rather than in it, if the aquarium is to be used with blacklights.

### NOTE ON STAGING

If possible in ACT ONE, SCENE 1 and ACT TWO, SCENE 2, have the BEARDED LADY BANDITS enter from the back of the auditorium (spotlight would be a nice visual effect) snarling and showing tattoos to the audience to the accompaniment of sinister music (see Suggested Music). The victims of the BANDITS should be unnoticed by the audience until all of the BANDITS have entered the stage. One of the BANDITS could snap her fingers for the music to stop.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

*Scene is played in front of the curtain. A wealthy COUPLE enters from right and proceeds left. The BEARDED LADY BANDITS enter from left. OPAL carries a violin case. The others carry guns.*

**EDITH:** Look, sisters! Two of them and four of us!

**LADY:** *(Sees their beards.)* Oh my God!

**OPAL:** Show her the guns, sisters. I don't believe she saw the guns.  
She saw the beards.

**GENTLEMAN:** Don't hurt us. Here, take our money. *(Giving her his wallet.)* Just don't hurt us.

**IRMA:** That's a good boy, Kermit.

**LADY:** His name is not Kermit.

**IRMA:** It is now, Miss Piggy.

**PEARL:** Come on, come on! The watch and ring! We don't have all night! *(He removes them.)*

**EDITH:** Lady, I want your wallet in the case.

**GENTLEMAN:** Do what she says, honey. *(She does.)*

**OPAL:** That's right, honey. Do what we say, 'cause the guns have bullets. Don't they, sisters? Did you remember the bullets?

**EDITH:** *(To IRMA.)* Did you remember the bullets?

*PEARL shoots the gun.*

**IRMA:** I remembered the bullets.

**IRMA:** Jewelry too. Come on. Let's go, Miss Piggy. Come on, the ring! The ring!

**LADY:** I can't get it off. I haven't had it off in years.

**OPAL:** Well then, we'll have to cut it off. Did you bring the knife?  
*(WOMAN gasps.)*

**EDITH:** Don't be silly, sister. We can't use a knife on her.

**IRMA:** A refined lady like her?

**OPAL:** We can't use the knife?

**EDITH:** Of course not!

**IRMA:** We'll use the ax. *(They laugh fiendishly.)*

**PEARL:** You haven't used the ax in a long time.

**IRMA:** I hope I'm not too rusty! *(LADY removes ring quickly.)*

**OPAL:** That's a good girl.

**PEARL:** Have a nice day -

**EDITH:** - and stay out of harm's way!

**IRMA:** Bye, Kermit.

**EDITH:** Bye, Miss Piggy.

*They all laugh malevolently as they back away. BLACKOUT.*

## ACT ONE, SCENE 2

*The lobby of the Sweetwater Inn. It's a hotel that's more like a boarding house. It's seen better days, and even at its best wasn't much. Like the hotel, its inhabitants have also seen better days. MINNIE FLOSS is center stage working on a gown. Her husband RUPERT is standing on a chair, wearing the gown so she can hem it. Fabric and sewing supplies are scattered everywhere. There are several aquariums and/or boxes filled with dirt. A plant stand with a fluorescent light is stage right. A dartboard also sits stage right. There are two chairs for conversation stage right, the one on the right has a high back. There is a fish bowl with goldfish on a table. Next to it is a pitcher of water. Other furniture and trimmings finish off the sitting room, including a desk upstage with key hooks, mail slots, and a bell to ring for service.*

**MINNIE:** Don't move, Rupert.

**RUPERT:** I've got an itch. *(He scratches, lifting the hem she's working on. She accidentally pokes him with a pin.)* Ouch!

**MINNIE:** I told you not to move.

**RUPERT:** Am I bleeding?

**MINNIE:** You'd better not get blood on my gown. Oh, I wish you were taller.

*Enter MR. MIMMS carrying a container with worms for the aquarium in which he raises earthworms. During the following conversation, he removes worms from the container and puts them into the aquarium, in view of the audience.*

**RUPERT:** How's the worm farm doing, Mimms?

**MIMMS:** They're breeding like rabbits. Great for the garden, don't you know? We'll need to plant more beans, Rupert.

**MINNIE:** Mr. Mimms, do you have to raise your worms here in the lobby?

**MIMMS:** Where am I supposed to raise 'em?

**MINNIE:** Well, how about your room?

**MIMMS:** Can't do that. I got no space now, what with the parrots and all. *(Pulls out a particularly large worm and displays it.)* Look at this beauty, will you!

**RUPERT:** *(Sarcastically.)* Oh, that is a beauty.

**MINNIE:** Will you hold still!

*Enter EDITH, IRMA, OPAL, and PEARL. Three carry violin cases, one a cello case. They enter from the street and walk across the stage to the dining room and the stairs which lead to the boarders' rooms. They look curiously at RUPERT wearing the dress. OPAL notices MIMMS and doesn't take her eyes off him. MIMMS continues to transfer worms from container to aquarium during the following conversation, but he is obviously interested in these ladies - OPAL in particular. He winks at her and smiles suggestively.*

**MINNIE:** Why, good morning, Edith, *(She nods.)* Irma, *(She nods.)* Opal, *(She nods.)* Pearl. *(She nods.)* Have you girls been working all night?

**EDITH:** We had a late gig.

**IRMA:** A wedding.

**OPAL:** Uh, yeah, a wedding.

**PEARL:** Lots of dancing.

**MINNIE:** You must be exhausted.

**EDITH:** You're not kidding.

**IRMA:** We need to freshen up before our, uh. . .

**OPAL:** . . .our next concert!

**PEARL:** We need to tune our instruments.

**MINNIE:** Well, you do that. I know how difficult an artist's life is. *(Indicates her dress on RUPERT.)* I design dresses, you know. Designing dresses is so taxing, but so rewarding. I'm sure it's the same for you. But really, girls, you must take care of yourselves. You work so hard, such long hours.

**EDITH:** For so little pay!

**IRMA:** But that's an artist's life for you!

**OPAL:** All work and no play!

**RUPERT:** Makes Jack a dull boy!

*MIMMS walks over to the SISTERS, wipes his hands on his overalls, and extends a hand to OPAL, which she shuns.*

**MIMMS:** Speaking of Jacks, that's my name. Jack Mimms. And I'm not a dull boy, heh, heh, heh. And you don't look like dull girls either, heh, heh.

**MINNIE:** These are the Grimm sisters, Edith, Irma, Opal and Pearl. They're musicians!

**MIMMS:** You don't say. Shucks, I thought they might be carrying machine guns in them cases. (*The SISTERS are obviously uncomfortable and want to get away from him.*) Say, I'm a bachelor.

**EDITH:** Yeah, well, nice meeting you. (*They exit.*)

**MIMMS:** They're kind of cute, in a funny kinda way, heh, heh. I didn't see any wedding rings on their fingers. I notice things like that, don't you know. (*Obviously wants to follow them.*) Well, it's time to feed the parrots.

**MINNIE:** We're so lucky to have such talented artists like the Grimms staying here with us.

**RUPERT:** I suppose. At least they pay their rent on time.

**MINNIE:** Like clockwork.

**RUPERT:** Unlike some other people.

*Phone rings. Enter LUNA, the maid.*

**LUNA:** Sweetwater Inn. Hello. Who? Vinyofski? I don't think so. Hang on. Mrs. Floss, we got anyone named. . .uh. . . (*Into phone.*) What'd you say his name was? Oh, yeah, Vin-yof-ski. We got any Vinyofskis here?

**MINNIE:** Well, let me see. There's you, me, and Rupert. Then there's Mr. Mimms, and of course, Stella and Franklin and Pickles. Then there's the Grimm sisters. Oh, and we mustn't forget that nice young man in Room 312. What's his name?

**LUNA:** (*Smiling romantically.*) Leo.

**MINNIE:** Leo?

**LUNA:** Leonardo Davinski.

**RUPERT:** Oh yeah, the guy who only comes out at night.

**MINNIE:** I believe he's an inventor. He works at night and sleeps during the day.

**RUPERT:** Well, I wish he'd invent a way to pay his rent.

**MINNIE:** Anyway, Davinski's the closest we have to Vinyofski, I do believe.

**LUNA:** *(Into phone.)* Nope, no Vinyofski here. We got a Davinski. What? All right, wait till I find a pen. Okay, yeah, he should be - not so fast - he should be careful because. . .what? Oh, he's being tailed. Did you say "tailed"? Spell that. Okay, is that all? Okay, but I'm telling you he ain't here. *(Hangs up.)*

**MINNIE:** Luna, dear, could you do something about the fly that keeps buzzing around? It's such a nuisance.

**LUNA:** *(To Minnie.)* You want I should kill it? *(To Rupert.)* That's a nice color on you.

**MINNIE:** I'd rather you just shoo it away. I do so hate killing things.

**LUNA:** *(With a rolled-up newspaper, she chases fly from one spot to another, obviously trying to kill it. She finally creeps up behind RUPERT and kills the fly on his head. He reacts.)* Got him!

**MINNIE:** *(Not noticing because she's inspecting her sewing.)* Oh dear, did you kill him?

**LUNA:** *(Looks at RUPERT's head.)* Nah, he'll live.

**MINNIE:** Good, there's far too much violence and brutality in the world.

**RUPERT:** *(Rubbing his head.)* You can say that again.

**MINNIE:** *(Concentrating on her sewing.)* Well, at least he's not buzzing around any more. You certainly have a way with bugs, Luna. *(LUNA smiles, appears to eat fly, and exits. Only RUPERT sees this.)*

**RUPERT:** Minnie, have you noticed anything unusual about Luna lately?

**MINNIE:** Rupert, you've gone and moved again. *(Sighing.)* I guess I'll have to call it quits for today. My concentration is broken anyway. *(LUNA returns with feather duster.)*

**RUPERT:** Can I take this thing off now?

**LUNA:** Not in front of me, I hope.

**MINNIE:** Oh, Luna, don't be a silly. He has clothes on under the dress. *(To RUPERT.)* You do, don't you, Rupert?

**RUPERT:** Of course I do!

**MINNIE:** And be careful with it. Here. Let me help you.

**RUPERT:** *(Stuck by a pin.)* Ouch! I'll do it myself. *(Grumbling.)* Darned pins everywhere! *(LUNA laughs and exits.)*

**MINNIE:** I'm going to have to work like a fiend if I'm going to wear this to the wedding.

**RUPERT:** Wedding? I thought we were married.

**MINNIE:** Not ours, you silly! Aunt Golda's, you remember. She's getting married again.

**RUPERT:** *(Goes to sofa and picks up newspaper.)* First I've heard of it.

**MINNIE:** Nonsense! I know I told you about it. *(Pause.)* At least I think I did. *(Pause.)* Maybe I didn't. Oh, dear, there's another fly. How are they all getting in?

**RUPERT:** Having no screens on the windows might have something to do with it.

**MINNIE:** I wonder if the worms are attracting them. Luna!

**LUNA:** Yes, Mrs. Floss?

**MINNIE:** Another insect intruder! *(LUNA looks confused.)*

**RUPERT:** Fly, Luna, a fly. *(LUNA smiles, licks lips, and goes for the newspaper. RUPERT moves away from her.)* So, Golda's getting hitched again. How many times does this make? Four? Five?

**MINNIE:** Six, I believe. She's had such awful luck with matrimony. Not like us.

**RUPERT:** Yeah, some people never learn. Imagine making the same mistake six times.

**MINNIE:** *(Confused.)* Oh, but they were all different men, Rupert. *(Laughing.)* She didn't marry the same man six times, you silly thing.

**RUPERT:** *(Obviously used to this sort of logic from MINNIE.)* I can't understand how she got one husband, let alone six. She's not exactly a raving beauty, as I recall. I remember her at our wedding. She had all the charm of a woodpecker. . . The wit of a pickle. . . *(Beginning to enjoy this.)*

**MINNIE:** Oh Rupert, really!

**RUPERT:** The drool and breath of a. . .

**LUNA:** St. Bernard!

**MINNIE:** Luna!

**RUPERT:** And those are just her good points. Wait till I get to her bad points. The brains of a. . .

**LUNA:** Fly! *(Kills fly and holds up newspaper. MINNIE gives her a dirty look.)* Uh, I got the fly. *(RUPERT laughs.)*

**MINNIE:** *(Transfers the dirty look to RUPERT.)* That will be enough, both of you. She is my only auntie and I love her dearly. The least we can do is be gracious and open our lovely home in honor of her wedding. It might be her last.

**RUPERT:** Don't bet on it. Wait a minute, did you say *our* lovely home? She's getting married here?

**MINNIE:** No, she's stopping here on her way to get married. I think. It was in the letter she sent. And, of course, I wrote and told her we'd be delighted to have her.

**RUPERT:** Delighted, huh? Where is that letter? I'd like to see it.

**MINNIE:** Oh dear, it's here someplace. *(Searches through desk.)* It had such a lovely stamp on it. A tulip. A lovely pink tulip. *(Romantically.)* Oh, Rupert. Remember when you used to bring me tulips?

**RUPERT:** Roses.

**MINNIE:** *(Still searching.)* I'm certain it was tulips. They smelled so wonderful.

**RUPERT:** Roses. Tulips don't smell. Roses smell.

**MINNIE:** Here it is. No, this is the letter from the government.

**RUPERT:** Government? What letter from the government?

**MINNIE:** Oh, you haven't read it? You know I never pay any attention to these government things any more. They're always so, I don't know, so depressing. So threatening and hostile.

**RUPERT:** Wait a minute. Are you saying we've been getting threatening and hostile letters from the government?

**MINNIE:** Didn't I mention them?

**RUPERT:** No, my dear, you didn't mention them.

**MINNIE:** This is the latest one, I think. *(Hands him the letter.)*

*RUPERT reads it. His eyes convey the message of shock and doom. He collapses into chair.*

**MINNIE:** See, it is depressing, isn't it? I always say life is too short to read those depressing letters, don't you think?

**LUNA:** *(Enters carrying cucumbers.)* We're having cucumber sandwiches for lunch. We were going to have tuna and cucumber sandwiches, but we're out of tuna.

**MINNIE:** Oh, cucumber sandwiches would be delightful, Luna. Are those from the garden?

**LUNA:** They sure are. Mr. Mimms says this year's crop is bound to be his best yet.

**MINNIE:** Mr. Mimms sure knows his veggies.

**RUPERT:** It would be nice if he paid his rent.

**MINNIE:** He's fallen on hard times.

**RUPERT:** He's not the only one. Well, at least he earns his keep with the garden.

**LUNA:** Lunch in fifteen minutes!

**MINNIE:** Don't be such a glum bunny, Rupert darling.

**RUPERT:** Glum? I'm not really glum. Do I look glum?

**MINNIE:** You do. You look positively glum.

**RUPERT:** Well, it probably has something to do with what I just read.

**MINNIE:** The letter.

**RUPERT:** From the government.

**LUNA:** Who wants mayonnaise on their sandwiches?

**MINNIE:** Oh, I'd love mayonnaise on mine. How about you, Rupert?

**RUPERT:** Mayonnaise! Minnie, this letter says that we have sixty days to pay our back taxes or the government will take our property! Do you know what that means?!

**MINNIE:** Is it bad?

**RUPERT:** It means the Sweetwater Inn will belong to the government and they will sell it to someone else. It means we're out on the street unless we can come up with thirty-two thousand dollars in sixty days.

**MINNIE:** Oh, dear, thirty-two thousand dollars? Can they do that? What kind of a government would do such a thing?

**RUPERT:** A greedy one.

**MINNIE:** A heartless one.

**LUNA:** Bad news! We're out of mayo. How about ketchup?

**RUPERT:** I lost my appetite.

**MINNIE:** Are you sure there's no mayo? Did you check way in the back on the second shelf? I was sure we had mayo. *(She exits. FRANKLIN, MINNIE'S brother, and his wife, PICKLES, enters.)*

**FRANKLIN:** Mornin', Rupert!

**RUPERT:** *(Checks watch.)* It's 11:49, Franklin.

**PICKLES:** Still mornin'.

**FRANKLIN:** Still morning for another, uh. . . *(Tries to calculate.)* few minutes.

**RUPERT:** Franklin, how much money you got?

**FRANKLIN:** *(Empties pockets.)* About two bucks. How much you got, Pickles?

**PICKLES:** About seven dollars, I think.

**FRANKLIN:** Why, you want a loan?

**RUPERT:** I was hoping you might pay your back rent. . .say thirty-two thousand dollars worth.

**PICKLES:** Whew! That's a bundle of bucks!

**FRANKLIN:** What are you talking about, Rupert?

**RUPERT:** In a nutshell, Franklin, eviction.

**PICKLES:** Eviction?

**FRANKLIN:** What? You're going to evict your own flesh and blood for a little back rent?

**RUPERT:** First of all, you're not my flesh and blood. You merely happen to be my wife's brother. . .who hasn't worked a day in his life, I might add.

**PICKLES:** He has too worked, haven't you, honey?

**FRANKLIN:** Yeah! I had a good job.

**RUPERT:** You mean your paper route? That was two years ago and you lasted three weeks.

**FRANKLIN:** I'm not a morning person.

**RUPERT:** I've noticed. Furthermore, we're talking about seven years back rent.

**FRANKLIN:** What about the family discount?

**RUPERT:** That includes the family discount. Oh, never mind. It's not your fault you're good for nothing. It's probably something in your genes.

**FRANKLIN:** (*Looks at his jeans.*) These are your jeans. Minnie said mine weren't decent, so she gave me a pair of yours

**PICKLES:** (*Hurt.*) Now I suppose you want them back, after I went and washed 'em.

**RUPERT:** (*Confidentially.*) Franklin, tell me, just between you and me, was your family struck by lightning on a family picnic? (*FRANKLIN looks puzzled.*) Hit by an asteroid? (*Even more confused.*) Did the water in the family well have a funny taste, like something might have died in it?

**FRANKLIN:** We didn't have a well. We came from Chicago.

**RUPERT:** No, Franklin, you keep the jeans. After all, you'll need something to wear to the wedding.

**FRANKLIN:** I'm already married. . .to Pickles. (*He and PICKLES smile at each other.*)

**RUPERT:** (*Sarcastically.*) No! You and Pickles? Married? The wedding I was referring to is your Aunt Golda's.

**FRANKLIN:** She's getting married again? Which one is this?

**RUPERT:** Six, according to the latest statistics.

**FRANKLIN:** She must be a millionaire by now.

**RUPERT:** A millionaire? What are you talking about?

**FRANKLIN:** You don't think she's marrying for love, do you? Six marriages. . .all to wealthy men, I'll bet. I've read about this sort of thing. It's a racket. I think she lures them into marriage with her money and then she takes all of theirs. Sometimes she probably bumps them off. She's one smart old bird, if you ask me. Don't get any ideas, Pickles.

**RUPERT:** Hmm. You really think she's got a bundle?

**FRANKLIN:** No doubt about it.

**RUPERT:** I wonder if she'd float me a small loan. . .say thirty-two thousand dollars.

**FRANKLIN:** Whew! What do you need with that kind of money?

**RUPERT:** The government is going to evict us for back taxes and sell the Sweetwater Inn if we don't pay-up in sixty days.

**PICKLES:** Can they do that?

**RUPERT:** They can do whatever they want. (*PICKLES goes to practice her darts.*)

**FRANKLIN:** Well, don't expect any help from Aunt Golda. She's the most tight-fisted, heartless old bird that ever laid an egg.

**RUPERT:** She lays eggs? Now that could be a real moneymaker.

**FRANKLIN:** And you don't want to ruffle her feathers or she'll peck out your eyes like a vulture.

**RUPERT:** We'll let Luna gather the eggs. Your aunt is stopping here on her way to the wedding.

**FRANKLIN:** Here?

**RUPERT:** That's odd, don't you think? I mean, she never even invited us to any of her other weddings before. She never even sent us a piece of wedding cake.

**FRANKLIN:** Say, when is this wedding?

**RUPERT:** We're not sure. Soon, I think, but Minnie misplaced the letter. Why?

**FRANKLIN:** Well, if there's a wedding, there's usually a lot of guests. . .right?

**RUPERT:** Yes. . .

**FRANKLIN:** Well, each of those guests usually brings a wedding present, right?

**RUPERT:** (*Getting interested.*) Right. . .

**FRANKLIN:** Some people even give money to the bride and groom, right? Let's suppose that there was a robbery at the wedding reception. A hold-up. There've been a lot of them lately. I'll bet a lot of these guests will have money in their purses and wallets, lots of jewelry, too. . .or we could get a hold of the guest list and rob their houses while they're at the wedding.

**RUPERT:** (*Seriously considering the idea.*) Hmm. . .thirty-two thousand dollars. . . (*Dismissing the idea.*) That's ridiculous! There must be some other way to raise that kind of money.

**MINNIE:** (*Entering, to PICKLES.*) Oh, Pickles, do be careful, dear. You don't want to hit anyone. (*To RUPERT.*) Wonderful news!

*RUPERT motions to FRANKLIN to keep their conversation secret.*

**RUPERT:** You found thirty-two thousand dollars in the refrigerator?

**MINNIE:** Good morning, Franklin.

**RUPERT:** *(Checks watch.)* Not anymore. It's quarter past twelve. Time flies when you don't work.

*PICKLES throws dart and it goes off stage.*

**PICKLES:** Oops!

*EDITH, IRMA, OPAL, and PEARL enter with their music cases.*

**EDITH:** *(Approaching PICKLES in a menacing way, holding dart as if threatening to throw it at PICKLES.)* Is this yours, dearie?

*PICKLES backs away from her.*

**MINNIE:** Oh my, why don't you practice somewhere else, Pickles? *(Removes dartboard and gives it to PICKLES who makes a wide circle around EDITH, obviously afraid of her.)*

**MIMMS:** *(Entering.)* Mornin', Pickles. *(He keeps watching OPAL, occasionally winking at her.)*

**PICKLES:** Mornin', Mr. Mimms.

**MINNIE:** Are you girls off to another performance already? I hope you've had time to rest.

**EDITH:** You work when you can.

**RUPERT:** *(To FRANKLIN.)* Did you hear that?

**MINNIE:** Well, I certainly admire your fortitude. Your stamina! Why, you just got back from your last performance and now you're off to another!

**IRMA:** It's a hard life.

**OPAL:** But it pays the bills.

**RUPERT:** That's the spirit!

**MINNIE:** Sometime you must play for us. We'd just love to hear your music.

**MIMMS:** You know any polkas?

**EDITH:** *(Ignoring MIMMS.)* Yeah, sometime we'll have to do that.

**IRMA:** When we're not so busy.

**PEARL:** Well, we're off.

**OPAL:** We wouldn't want to be late for our performance.

**MINNIE:** Shall we expect you for dinner?

**EDITH:** Unless there are complications.

**MINNIE:** Complications?

**OPAL:** Yeah, like uh. . .

**PEARL:** A lot of encores.

**MINNIE:** Oh, of course. *(They exit.)*

**RUPERT:** Well, Minnie, what was your wonderful news?

**MINNIE:** News?

**RUPERT:** When you came in, you said you had wonderful news.

**MINNIE:** Oh! I found the letter from Aunt Golda in the refrigerator - exactly where the mayonnaise should have been. She says she wants to have the wedding in this area because her fiancé is from here, so it'll be easier for his family and friends to attend the wedding. Isn't that nice? *(RUPERT and FRANKLIN exchange a glance.)*

**RUPERT:** What else does it say?

**MINNIE:** Well, let me see, she says she'll fly in from Boston at 12:30, United Flight 17, on the tenth of June, and she wants someone to pick her up. She'll be staying here until the wedding.

**FRANKLIN:** The mooch.

**MINNIE:** I just had the most delicious idea! Why don't I ask Edith, Irma, Opal, and Pearl if they could play at the wedding? Oh, that would be so special! A string quartet!

**LUNA:** *(Entering with a tray of cucumber sandwiches.)* Lunch!

**FRANKLIN:** Lunch? I haven't even had breakfast yet.

**MINNIE:** Luna, dear, what is the date?

**LUNA:** *(Checks calendar.)* What month is it?

**MINNIE:** June, I believe. It doesn't feel like July yet. It's always so awfully hot and sultry in July.

**MIMMS:** Great for the corn and watermelons!

**LUNA:** *(Turns pages.)* Let's see. Oh, here's the paper. It's the tenth of June, unless this is yesterday's paper, and then it would be the eleventh. . .

**MINNIE:** Oh my gracious! That means Aunt Golda is about to arrive at the airport any minute now. Or else she arrived yesterday! Quick! Rupert, you've got to meet her and bring her back here.

**RUPERT:** Me? Why me? The airport is an hour away!

**MINNIE:** Luna, check the calendar. That date rings a bell for some reason.

**LUNA:** *(Rings bell on desk and flips through the pages of the calendar, ringing the bell after each month.)* March, April, May, June, let's see, what date?

**MINNIE:** The tenth.

**LUNA:** It says "Freddy-dinner-7:00."

**MINNIE:** Freddy? I wonder who Freddy is. Oh well, whoever he is, we'll have to set another place at the table for him. With Aunt Golda, that's two more plates. *(Suddenly.)* I just thought of something! *(She goes to desk and opens drawer proudly.)* Look what I found! *(Holds up jar of mayonnaise. Luna takes jar, opens it, sniffs it, and gives a disgusted, sick look, and shakes her head. She lets MINNIE smell it. She reacts the same way.)* Oh dear, it's gone bad.

**RUPERT:** *(Getting his hat.)* It's probably an omen! *(Throws FRANKLIN his hat.)* Come on, Franklin, you're coming too.

**FRANKLIN:** Do I have to?

**RUPERT:** Of course! After all, she's your dear aunt. Why don't you join us, Mimms?

**MIMMS:** Okay. *(Remembering.)* Oh, Luna, I'm expecting a package of bat guano.

**LUNA:** Bat what?

**MIMMS:** Guano. Bat droppings. They scrape it from the walls of caves where bats live. It's great fertilizer!

**MINNIE:** Oh dear, does it smell?

**MIMMS:** *(Gets hat.)* Nah. . . *(To himself.)* At least, I don't think so. *(He exits with RUPERT and FRANKLIN.)*

*Phone rings.*

**LUNA:** Hello, Sweetwater Inn. . . No, he's not here. I told you, there's no Vinyofski here. What? *(Looks around.)* No, there's no package here for him. Why would there be a package if there's no Vinyofski? Who is this? Hello? Hello? *(She looks puzzled and hangs up.)*

**STELLA:** *(Enters from the same door RUPERT and FRANKLIN just exited.)* Hello, Mother, Luna.

**MINNIE:** Oh, hello, Stella dear. How nice of you to drop by. Is it your lunch hour?

**STELLA:** Yes, Mother, it is. I came to remind you that Freddy is coming to dinner tonight.

**MINNIE:** Yes, dear, we know. It's on the calendar.

**STELLA:** *(Relieved.)* Good, I was afraid you'd forgotten.

**MINNIE:** Why, isn't that silly? That's why we put things on the calendar, dear, so we don't forget. Isn't that right, Luna?

**LUNA:** That's right. Two extra plates on the table tonight.

**STELLA:** Well, I just wanted to make sure. But one plate will be enough, Luna. He's not that big of an eater.

**MINNIE:** Of course not, dear. You see, Aunt Golda is in town to get married and she'll be here for dinner, too.

**STELLA:** She's getting married again?

**MINNIE:** Number six.

**STELLA:** Imagine, I haven't even been able to get one husband and she's on her sixth!

**MINNIE:** Oh, you will, dear. You mustn't get discouraged. The right man will come along someday.

**STELLA:** I think he has.

**MINNIE:** Really? Who?

**STELLA:** Freddy, of course.

**MINNIE:** Oh, Freddy, of course. (*Realizing.*) Oh, that's who's coming to dinner!

**STELLA:** You did forget, didn't you, Mother?

**MINNIE:** I did not forget. It's right on the calendar. Show Stella the calendar, Luna. (*SHE does.*) See.

**STELLA:** (*Kisses her goodbye.*) All right, Mother. I'll see you at seven. Bye.

**MINNIE:** Goodbye, dear. We're looking forward to meeting your new companion.

**STELLA:** Oh, I may have to work a little late, so he might get here before me. I'm so glad you and Daddy will get to meet Freddy at last. He's pretty special to me and he's dying to meet you. I think he might pop the question tonight.

**MINNIE:** Question?

**STELLA:** I think he's going to propose!

**MINNIE:** Oh, that's wonderful, darling. I had no idea things had progressed so far, and we haven't even met him yet! We'll make him feel at home. Don't you worry. (*LUNA goes over to aquarium and looks for a worm.*)

**STELLA:** You won't forget now?

**MINNIE:** Of course not. Do you think I've got pudding for brains? Oh, that gives me an idea. Luna, let's have your lovely rice pudding for dessert. (*LUNA pulls up a worm and drops it into the fish bowl.*)

**STELLA:** Goodbye, Mother. (*She exits and DELIVERY MAN enters. They collide.*) Oh, sorry.

**DELIVERY MAN:** Watch where you're goin'. Geez, she almost knocked me over.

**MINNIE:** Oh dear, I'm so sorry. She's in love. Would you like a cup of tea?

**DELIVERY MAN:** Tea? No, no. I got no time. I got some packages here. Let's see. (*Examining packages.*) One's for Jack Mimms and one's for Mr. Vin. . . Vin.

**LUNA:** We got no Mr. VinVin here. (*She exits.*)

**MINNIE:** Is he Chinese?

**DELIVERY MAN:** How would I know if he's Chinese? Look lady, I got other packages to deliver. Just sign the receipt so I can get back to my truck before someone steals it, O.K.? This ain't the greatest neighborhood. There's been a lot of robberies around here, you know.

**MINNIE:** No, I didn't know. Are you sure you don't have time for a cup of tea?

**DELIVERY MAN:** No. No, thanks. Some other time maybe.

**MINNIE:** (*Looks at receipt.*) Oh, it's for Mr. Vinyofski. Isn't that who the phone call was for, Luna? Luna? (*Looks around, sees she's gone. Shrugs. Signs receipt.*) Well, you have yourself a nice day.

**DELIVERY MAN:** (*Unused to pleasantries.*) Yeah. . . yeah, same to you, lady.

**MINNIE:** (*Picks up newspaper and starts to read. LUNA enters with bouquet of flowers to put in the vase.*) Oh dear, there was another robbery in the neighborhood. The Bearded Lady Bandits, they call them. That makes thirteen robberies in the last month. It says these four bearded women have been robbing people at gunpoint. Can you imagine the odds against four bearded women finding each other in this huge country and becoming bandits together? What a strange coincidence!

**LUNA:** They're fake beards.

**MINNIE:** Oh, I don't think so. It doesn't say that here.

**LUNA:** They're not real bearded women. They wear fake beards to cover their faces. It's a disguise.

**MINNIE:** Do you really think so? How clever!

**LUNA:** (*Shakes her head in disbelief.*) I told Mr. Mimms we need some vegetables for dinner tonight. We don't have much else. (*Kills fly with her hand and puts it in her pocket.*) Except for flies. We got lots of flies. And worms. We got them, too.

**MINNIE:** (*Still reading, absently.*) Oh, that's nice.

**CLARISSA:** (*Entering with cane.*) Time for your reading, Minnie!

**MINNIE:** (*Putting down newspaper.*) Is it really Tuesday already? How the days do slip by. How have you been? (*Noticing.*) Oh my, what happened?

**CLARISSA:** I dropped my crystal ball on my foot and broke it. . .and my toe.

**MINNIE:** How awful for you! Isn't that something you could have seen in your crystal ball. . .before it broke, I mean? Isn't there some way you could have prevented it from happening?

**CLARISSA:** Predicting the future is one thing; preventing it is quite another.

**MINNIE:** I suppose. But doesn't that make it a bit difficult to look into the future, without your crystal ball, I mean?

**CLARISSA:** It's a handicap, but I work around it. It's like a broken toe. You can still get around. It just hurts like heck. Besides, when you have the power, it doesn't just go poof, you know, when the ball breaks. The crystal ball is a tool. I could use cards or tea leaves. You just learn to make do. Ah, this will do. *(She picks up the fish bowl, empties it into a pitcher on the table, and turns the fish bowl upside down.)* See. Now, let's get down to business. What would you like to know about this week? Romance?

**MINNIE:** Actually, we're all right in that department. Stella's got herself a boyfriend and it looks very promising. He might pop the question tonight.

**CLARISSA:** See, didn't I tell you?

**MINNIE:** His name is Freddy and he's coming to dinner. Would you like some tea?

**CLARISSA:** Got anything stronger? Something medicinal. . .for my pain.

**MINNIE:** *(Calling.)* Luna! *(She enters.)* Would you make some of your strongest tea for Clarissa? It helps with her pain, you know, if it's not too much trouble.

**LUNA:** No trouble at all. I just made some. *(Looks at goldfish in pitcher, shakes head.)*

**CLARISSA:** I could use something to put my toe on.

**MINNIE:** *(Places pillow under CLARISSA'S foot.)* How's that feel?

**CLARISSA:** It'll have to do. Now, let's get down to business. *(Pause.)* Uh, business?

**MINNIE:** Oh, I completely forgot. *(Goes over to desk for money to give to CLARISSA.)*

*LUNA enters with tea, watches CLARISSA take the money.*

**MINNIE:** Now, this is something Mr. Floss would not understand, so it's best we don't speak of it to him, Luna.

**CLARISSA:** (*Ominously.*) Sometime you must let me tell your future, Luna.

**LUNA:** I got better ways to spend my money. Besides, I *work* for my money. (*She exits.*)

**CLARISSA:** (*Bitterly.*) Impertinent little rodent! (*Sweetly.*) Now, let us proceed. (*Lights dim and "crystal ball" lights up.*) Oh. . .oh. . . oh, my powers of perception are particularly strong today.

**MINNIE:** It must be that new antenna we had put on the roof.

**CLARISSA:** (*Gasps.*) There's a terrible disturbance coming. Danger, life-threatening danger is knocking at your door. (*Loud knocking is heard.*)

**MINNIE:** Luna, could you see who's at the door? (*LUNA goes to door, but no one's there.*)

**LUNA:** (*Stumbling in the dark.*) Ouch! There's nobody here.

*More knocking. Actress playing LUNA should use this opportunity to go off stage to replace her apron with an apron covered in blood, unseen by audience.*

**MINNIE:** Close the door, Luna. And lock it, why don't you? (*Light in "crystal ball" turns red.*)

**CLARISSA:** I see blood, great quantities of blood. Murder will visit this house. He will be draped in black and black will be his hair. Beware! Beware! Beware!

*Television mysteriously turns itself on [with remote control]. Scene or music from Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day "Heffalumps and Woozles" appears on screen or is heard. LUNA starts to dance to the music. CLARISSA collapses, as if exhausted. LUNA, still dancing, steps on Clarissa's outstretched foot. CLARISSA yells. Lights come back on. Television goes off. CLARISSA is rubbing her foot, in pain.*

**LUNA:** Sorry, it was dark. I couldn't see.

**CLARISSA:** You imbecile!

**LUNA:** You want some ice?

*CLARISSA looks at LUNA'S apron, points, and opens her mouth as if to scream. LUNA looks down at apron.*

**LUNA:** Oh, yuck!

**CLARISSA:** (*Yells.*) BLOOD! (*SHE picks up her cane and starts limping quickly off stage.*)

**LUNA:** (*Finds her shoe and throws it after her.*) You forgot something!

**GOLDA:** (*From off stage.*) OW!

*LUNA and MINNIE exchange worried looks. MINNIE walks slowly and apprehensively to door while LUNA backs away. Enter AUNT GOLDA carrying a shoe.*

**GOLDA:** Do you treat all of your guests with such consideration? Or do you reserve such treatment for relatives?

**MINNIE:** Oh, Aunt Golda, I'm so sorry. We've had such a scare. Such an . . . experience!

**GOLDA:** Really? So have I. Not only was I stranded for hours at an airport terminal with all sorts of . . . riffraff, waiting, futilely as it turns out, for someone to come for me, but then I had to hire a cabdriver who spoke no English and who charged me an exorbitant fare, but who thankfully did not slit my throat. Then I arrive and almost get thrown down the stairs by a crazy woman with a cane. And then I get a (*Looks at shoe.*) cheap, smelly, size eight shoe thrown in my face. (*She throws shoe across stage.*)

**MINNIE:** Was it a nice flight?

**GOLDA:** Did I mention the hijacking?

**MINNIE:** (*Hugging her.*) Oh, Aunt Golda, it's so good to have you here at last. We're going to have a wonderful time together. Let me take your coat. Come and sit down. We have so much to talk about. Luna, please take Aunt Golda's luggage to Room 124. (*Noticing there isn't any.*) Oh, do you have any bags?

**GOLDA:** They're in the hallway. (*LUNA goes for them and takes them off stage as PICKLES enters.*)

**MINNIE:** Oh, Pickles, come and meet Aunt Golda. This is Franklin's wife, Pickles.

**GOLDA:** (*They shake hands.*) Pickles. How quaint!

**MINNIE:** Here, come and sit down. You must be exhausted.

*MINNIE leads GOLDA to stage right where there are two chairs. GOLDA will sit in the high back chair with her back to the door, so she's not visible to RUPERT, FRANKLIN or MIMMS. They enter, hanging their hats on the coat rack.*

**FRANKLIN:** Well, the old battleaxe wasn't there.

**RUPERT:** We looked all over. Up and down. . .

**FRANKLIN:** High and low. . .

**MINNIE:** Oh, dear. . . *(Tries to signal them to be quiet, but they don't notice.)*

**FRANKLIN:** Maybe the old cow decided we weren't good enough for her.

**RUPERT:** I thought you said she was a buzzard.

**GOLDA:** *(Rising.)* Well. . .which am I? *(Approaching FRANKLIN threateningly.)* A battleaxe. . .a cow. . .or. . . *(Grabbing his shirt and shaking him.)* a buzzard?!

**FRANKLIN:** *(Barely able to talk)* Uh, Aunt G-g-g-golda! *(She shakes him, lets him go, and he crumbles to the floor in terror.)*

**GOLDA:** I always told your mother you'd never come to any good. And I was right. I'm always right when it comes to judging character.

**RUPERT:** Franklin didn't mean anything. He hasn't been himself since. . .since, uh. . .

*Buzzing sound.*

**LUNA:** *(Enters with a fly swatter, tries to kill insect.)* Bee! We got a bee in here!

**RUPERT:** That's it! He was stung by a bee. We found out he's very allergic to bees. *(FRANKLIN nods furiously.)* Whenever he gets stung he does and says strange things. He can't be held responsible.

**FRANKLIN:** It's a terrible condition.

**MIMMS:** Last week, he got stung in the garden and he started to take off his clothes in the middle of the street, and then he started to recite poetry.

**PICKLES:** You did what?! *(LUNA aims and strikes again.)* Missed! *(FRANKLIN keeps avoiding the flying bee. RUPERT notices the blood-stained apron.)*

**RUPERT:** Is that blood? Fresh kill for dinner, Luna?

**PICKLES:** Poetry? What kind of poetry were you reciting, Franklin?

**MIMMS:** You don't want to know.

**PICKLES:** I didn't know you knew any poetry. You never recite poetry for me.

**MINNIE:** Why didn't anyone tell me about all this?

**RUPERT:** We didn't want to worry you.

**MINNIE:** Well, he shouldn't be let out with the bees. Why, anything could happen. Luna, please do something about that horrible apron after you get rid of the bee. Franklin is allergic to them. And Franklin, if you take off your clothes in the middle of the street again, I want to know about it. What will the neighbors think?

**GOLDA:** You know what I think? I think you're all crazy. . .every blasted one of you. Minnie, I need a glass of water to take my medicine. *(She looks in her purse and takes out medicine bottle.)* I'm feeling overwhelmed and stressed. . .

**RUPERT:** Me too.

**FRANKLIN:** Here, let me get you some water, Auntie. *(Rushes to pour her a glass from the pitcher with the fish in it. LUNA is the only one who sees what's about to happen. Her eyes open wide and she covers her mouth.)*

**GOLDA:** *(Starts to drink, stops, raises glass and looks closely at it. FRANKLIN realizes he's in trouble and starts to back away. She throws glass down.)* I'll kill him! I'll wring his bloody neck! I'll dismember him! Let me at him!

*MINNIE, PICKLES, and RUPERT try to hold her back as FRANKLIN cowers. MIMMS is amused by the whole thing. CURTAIN.*

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