

GRITS AND GRAVY

By Burton Bumgarner

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By **Burton Bumgarner**

SYNOPSIS: In a desperate attempt to save money and boost ratings the President of the Letz Eat Television Network, Robert Gourmet sends his reporters to the small town of Magnolia Blossom, Alabama, to cover the town's annual Grits and Gravy Festival. Held annually at the local truck stop, this extravaganza features a pageant with three very competitive contestants, whose talents include taxidermy and putting a Corvette engine on a John Deere tractor. Citizens, visitors, reporters, and network viewers and actors all combine to tell a truly hilarious tale of small town quirkiness, network mismanagement and fried food.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8 females, 5 males, 10 either, extras)

ROBERT GOURMET (m) President of the Letz Eat cable television network. *(70 lines)*

ANDI PASTO (f) Office manager of the cable network. *(63 lines)*

MELISSA MARINARA (f) A writer and reporter. *(50 lines)*

ACTOR 1 (m/f) Performs shows and commercials. *(5 lines)*

ACTOR 2 (m/f) Performs shows and commercials. *(11 lines)*

BIFF WELLINGTON (m) A producer and reporter. *(58 lines)*

SUE FLAY (f) A director and reporter. *(53 lines)*

MAYOR AYER (m) Mayor of the town of Magnolia Blossom. *(122 lines)*

CITIZEN 1 (m/f) Citizen of Magnolia Blossom. *(15 lines)*

CITIZEN 2 (m/f) Citizen of Magnolia Blossom. *(15 lines)*

CITIZEN 3 (m/f) Citizen of Magnolia Blossom. *(12 lines)*

CITIZEN 4 (m/f) Citizen of Magnolia Blossom. *(12 lines)*

INEZ FRYBURGER (f) Owner of the local truck stop. *(70 lines)*

ACTOR 3 (m/f) Performs shows and commercials. *(11 lines)*

ACTOR 4 (m/f).....Performs shows and commercials.
(11 lines)

BARBARA BAKER (f).....A traveler from New York. (69 lines)

BENNY BAKER (m).....Married to Barbara. (57 lines)

LUCY LOX (f)A mechanic and a pageant contestant.
(25 lines)

LEROY LIMBURGER (m).....A truck driver passing through town.
(57 lines)

VIEWER 1 (m/f).....Watches the network at home. (25 lines)

VIEWER 2 (m/f).....Watches the network at home. (25 lines)

ANN CHOVIY (f).....A wanna be actor and pageant
contestant. (31 lines)

HOLLY HASH (f)A taxidermist and pageant contestant.
(36 lines)

DURATION: 90 minutes

SETTING

The setting is Magnolia Blossom Truck Stop in the small town of Magnolia Blossom, Alabama, and other locations. The Truck Stop is also the Social Club, the café and the town's only motel. Upstage are three café tables with chairs. On one of the tables are two plates, a toaster with two Pop Tarts and a Pop Tarts box altered to read "Toaster Tarts". A newspaper is on the counter. Signs upstage read "Welcome to the Magnolia Blossom Truck Stop", "Friendliest Truck Stop in Alabama", "Great Fried Food", etc. Shelves of junk food, canned food, magazines, newspapers, etc., may also be upstage. Downstage right is a desk and two chairs. This is the corporate office of the Letz Eat Network in New York. A phone is on the desk. A sign or logo may be on or behind the desk: Letz Eat Network, Robert Gourmet, President.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: Andi, Robert, Melissa, Biff, Sue, Actors 1, 2

SCENE 2: Ayer, 4 Citizens, Inez, Extras

SCENE 3: Actors 3, 4

SCENE 4: Barbara, Benny

SCENE 5: Ayer, Lucy

SCENE 6: Inez, Leroy

SCENE 7: Ayer, Ann

SCENE 8: Inez, Leroy

SCENE 9: Ayer, Holly

SCENE 10: Viewers 1, 2

SCENE 11: Ayer, Andi, Melissa, Biff, Sue

SCENE 12: Inez, Leroy, Robert, Andi, Actors 1, 2, 3, 4

SCENE 13: Barbara, Benny, Inez, Andi, Melissa, Sue, Biff, Citizens 1, 2, 3, 4

SCENE 14: Ayer, Leroy, Inez, Barbara, Benny, Ann, Lucy, Holly, Robert, Melissa, Biff, Sue, Viewers 1, Viewer 2

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: Robert, Actors 1, 2, 3, 4

SCENE 2: Viewers 1, 2

SCENE 3: Ayer, Benny, Barbara, Leroy, Lucy, Ann, Holly

SCENE 4: Melissa, Andi, Biff, Sue, Inez

SCENE 5: Robert, Andi

SCENE 6: Ayer, Leroy, Barbara, Benny, Biff, Lucy, Ann, Holly, Citizen 1, Citizen 2

SCENE 7: Sue, Melissa, Inez, Biff, Ayer

SCENE 8: Biff, Barbara, Benny, Melissa, Lucy, Leroy, Ann, Holly

SCENE 9: Viewer 1, Viewer 2

SCENE 10: Robert, Andi, Actors 1, Actor 2

SCENE 11: Leroy, Barbara, Benny, Inez

SCENE 12: entire cast

PROPS LIST

- ☐ Signs (“Welcome to the Magnolia Blossom Truck Stop”, “Friendliest Truck Stop in Alabama”, “Great Fried Food”, “Letz Eat Network”)
- ☐ Shelves ala convenience store (Optional: Canned food, Junk food, Magazines)
- ☐ 3 café tables and chairs
- ☐ Office desk and chair
- ☐ 2 plates
- ☐ Toaster
- ☐ Pop Tarts and Pop Tarts box altered to read “Toaster Tarts”
- ☐ Newspaper
- ☐ Office telephone
- ☐ Large can with label altered to read “Lard in a Can”
- ☐ Cell phones
- ☐ Stackable or folding chairs (for each town council member)
- ☐ Sucker or candy on a stick
- ☐ Cat costume (cat ears and whiskers)
- ☐ Luggage
- ☐ Salad bowl, glasses, bowls for food (real food unnecessary)
- ☐ TV remote
- ☐ Handheld microphones for reporters (do not need to be live)
- ☐ Cheese balls
- ☐ Paper for invoice
- ☐ Safari attire
- ☐ Hawaiian attire
- ☐ Handcuffs and jump suit
- ☐ Baby pacifier
- ☐ Filing folders, papers
- ☐ Sardine can
- ☐ Bag of sugar
- ☐ Hot sauce bottle
- ☐ Spoons
- ☐ Stack of photos
- ☐ Teddy bear

- ☐ Tool belt with hammer, screwdriver and pliers
- ☐ Hard hat
- ☐ Apron and Burger King crown
- ☐ Fast food bag with small wrapped items to represent food, and a single French fry
- ☐ Shot glass
- ☐ Coffee cups
- ☐ Soda bottles or cans
- ☐ Chef's hat
- ☐ Police whistle

COSTUMES

Costumes can be as over the top but should be manageable. The following are suggestions.

ROBERT GOURMET: Coat, tie, toupee (Donald Trump look)

ANDI PASTO: Professional attire

MELISSA MARINARA: Professional attire

ACTOR 1: Safari hat and attire; Tool belt and hard hat; Everyday clothes

ACTOR 2: Camouflage or other type of hunting attire; Apron; Hawaiian attire

BIFF WELLINGTON: Professional attire

SUE FLAY: Professional attire

MAYOR AYER: Casual country - plaid shirt, jeans or overalls

CITIZENS 1-4: Casual attire

INEZ FRYBURGER: Greasy apron, waitress attire

ACTOR 3: Casual; Solid jumpsuit and handcuffs; Chef's hat

ACTOR 4: A cat costume: head band with cat ears, whiskers, tail; Casual; Baby attire

BARBARA BAKER: Polyester look

BENNY BAKER: Casual tourist

LUCY LOX: Overalls or greasy work clothes

LEROY LIMBURGER: Work attire

VIEWERS 1 & 2: Hippie attire

ANN CHOY: Casual attire

HOLLY HASH: Preppie attire

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

SETTING: *Magnolia Blossom Truck Stop in small town of Magnolia Blossom, Alabama, and other locations. The Truck Stop is also the Social Club, the café and the town's only motel. Upstage are three café tables with chairs. On one of the tables are two plates, a toaster with two Pop Tarts and a Pop Tarts box altered to read "Toaster Tarts". A newspaper is on the counter. Signs upstage read "Welcome to the Magnolia Blossom Truck Stop", "Friendliest Truck Stop in Alabama", "Great Fried Food", etc. Shelves of junk food, canned food, magazines, newspapers, etc., may also be upstage. Downstage right is a desk and two chairs. This is the corporate office of the Letz Eat Network in New York. A phone is on the desk. A sign or logo may be on or behind the desk: Letz Eat Network, Robert Gourmet, President.*

AT RISE: *ROBERT GOURMET is seated at the desk talking on the phone.*

ROBERT: *(On phone.)* We had a couple of shows that didn't work out. Our ratings are down.

ANDI PASTO enters and stands beside the desk.

ROBERT: And that ongoing government investigation doesn't help. But that's no reason not to advertise with us! You might find better cable networks, but you won't find cheaper ones! *(Yells.)* Please! DON'T DO THIS TO ME! He hung up. *(Pounds desk with fist.)* Why is this happening?

ANDI: Excuse me, Mr. Gourmet.

ROBERT: *(Startled.)* Miss Pesto. What do you want?

ANDI: One of our writers, Melissa Marinara wants to see you. I'll show her in. *(ANDI exits, unseen by ROBERT.)*

ROBERT: I don't want to see anybody. Tell her I'm in the hospital.

ANDI enters with MELISSA.

MELISSA: Hey, boss. How's it going?

ROBERT: (*Startled.*) Not so good. One of our chefs insulted one of our sponsors.

ANDI: Harriet the Healthy Hostess.

ROBERT: Our sponsor just introduced a brand new product: individual servings of lard in a can. Just the thing to take on those long trips in the car, or when you're hiking in the woods.

MELISSA: Maybe Lard in a Can could sponsor a different show. Like Varmint Victuals (*Pronounced "vittles".*) with Varmint-master Vinny Vincinni.

ROBERT: Yeah. The guy who shows viewers how to catch squirrels and groundhogs and make delicious meals.

TV CREW freezes. ACTOR 1 enters downstage holding a 12 oz. can with a label that reads "Lard in a Can".

ACTOR 1: (*To audience, ala TV commercial.*) I lead a very busy life, so I'm always looking for ways to make meals that are quick and delicious. One of the best products I've found is Lard in a Can. Twelve ounces of delicious and refreshing pork fat. But don't take my word for it. Let's ask Letz Eat Network's Vinny Vincinni, host of Varmint Victuals (*Pronounced "vittles".*)

ACTOR 2 enters wearing camouflage or other type of hunting attire and carrying a cooking pot with lid.)

ACTOR 2: Lard in a Can is about the easiest way to cook when you're out in the woods scavenging around for something to eat. Just pop open the can, dump it in a pot and hold it over the campfire. (*Removes pot lid and offers it to ACTOR 1.*) I just cooked this up this morning. Wanna a bite?

ACTOR 1: (*Looks in the pot. Repulsed.*) No thanks. (*To audience.*) Lard in a Can. By the six pack, twelve pack, or by the case.

ACTOR 2: (*To audience.*) It's real good.

ACTORS 1 and 2 grin and freeze for a count, then exit.

MELISSA: Why would Lard in a Can sponsor Harriet the Healthy Hostess? She's all about clean alternatives to high fat food.

ROBERT: Because they didn't know better. The Letz Eat Network is all about making money! How can we make money if Harriet tells her viewers not to buy our sponsor's product?

ANDI: Vinny's going to work for Animal Planet. And Lard in a Can canceled their commercials. *(Exits.)*

ROBERT: That was our biggest contract.

MELISSA: Our biggest contract was Lard in a Can?

ROBERT: That and Cat Food on a Stick. What else can go wrong?

ANDI enters with BIFF WELLINGTON. ROBERT doesn't see BIFF.

ANDI: One of our producers, Biff Wellington, wants to see you.

ROBERT: Tell him I'm busy!

ANDI: Uh ... maybe you could tell him yourself.

ROBERT: Oh. Hey there, Biff. What's up?

BIFF: We got a problem. You know that show with Albert the Angry Chef?

ROBERT: Yeah. The guy who gets mad and throws food and cooking utensils at the audience.

BIFF: He threw a dozen eggs into the audience and hit a little old lady in the schnauzer.

ROBERT: You mean it hit an old lady in the face?

BIFF: No. In the schnauzer. She was holding her dog. We need a show to replace Albert the Angry Chef. The old lady put Albert in the hospital. And the animal rights people are after us again.

ROBERT: Oh, man! All I'm trying to do here is run a cheap cable network! Why does it have to be so complicated?

ANDI: I'll call our attorneys. *(Exits.)*

ROBERT: Now I have to fill Harriet's and Albert's time slots. Do you have any idea how long it took me to find those two lunatics?

MELISSA: Uh ... not very?

ROBERT: Yeah. But I might not be so lucky this time.

ANDI and SUE FLAY enter.

ANDI: One of our directors, Sue Flay wants to see you.

ROBERT: That woman drives me crazy! Tell her I'm out of town.

ANDI: Uh ... I don't think that will work.

ROBERT sees SUE.

ROBERT: Oh. Hey there, Sue. What's up?

SUE: It's Freda's Thirty Second Meals.

ROBERT: I told her it takes longer than thirty seconds to cook chicken. Did someone else get sick?

SUE: No. A house-husband in Hoboken tried to make her habanero haddock and hit his head.

ROBERT: He hit himself in the head with a fish?

SUE: He hit his head on his hibachi when he hacked a habanero with a hatchet.

MELISSA: Why was he trying to hack up a hot pepper with a hatchet?

SUE: Heck if I know.

ROBERT: Who would be crazy enough to try one of Freda's recipes?

SUE, MELISSA, BIFF, and ANDI: A house-husband from Hoboken.

ROBERT: Enough with the alliterations! Why do we care if a guy in New Jersey hits his head on his hibachi?

SUE: He's suing the network for assault with a deadly fish.

ROBERT pounds his head and fists on the desk.

ROBERT: We have got to come up with an idea to save this network, or we'll all be washing dishes at the Pancake House!

SUE, MELISSA, BIFF, and ANDI: GROSS!

BIFF: Man, I hate syrup.

MELISSA: Especially when it's stuck to other people's dishes.

ROBERT: We've got to think.

ROBERT stands and paces. Others pace close behind him.

ROBERT: Think. Think! THINK!

ROBERT puts his hand on his forehead. The OTHERS mimic him. ANDI crosses downstage to answer her cell phone.

ANDI: Hello? ...Oh, hi Mom... How are things in Magnolia Blossom? ...Is everyone there getting ready for the big Grits and Gravy Festival? ...I won't be able to make it this year. We've got some trouble here at the network. Tell everyone I said hello. Bye now.
(Hangs up.)

ROBERT: I've got it!

ROBERT stops. They bump into him.

SUE, MELISSA, and BIFF: Sorry.

ROBERT shoves them away.

ROBERT: What do people want?

MELISSA: World peace?

ROBERT: I mean on TV.

BIFF: Mindless violence?

SUE: Silly and salacious sit-coms?

ROBERT: Think "reality"!

MELISSA: News reports that aren't so depressing?

ROBERT: I'm talking about reality TV! Shows where real people make fools of themselves. And what do networks want?

MELISSA: World peace?

ROBERT: Shows that are cheap. And the cheapest shows are reality shows ... which basically have nothing to do with reality.

ANDI: What kind of reality show can we do on the Letz Eat Network?

ROBERT crosses to ANDI. The OTHERS follow.

ROBERT: So, Miss Pasto. Tell us about your hometown. What's it called? Orange Blossom?

ANDI: Magnolia Blossom. It's just a little town in Alabama.

ROBERT: What's this I hear about a festival in Peach Blossom?

ANDI: The Grits and Gravy Festival. There's the Grits and Gravy Pageant, the Grits and Gravy Gala Ball, the Grits and Gravy cook off.

ROBERT grins. ANDI frowns.

ROBERT: Sounds like reality.

ANDI: No! Don't even think about it! I will not let a TV crew make people in my hometown look foolish! Magnolia Blossom is about family and friends and growing up in a place where people care about each other! The people of Magnolia Blossom made me what I am today!

ROBERT: Which is an office manager for a third rate cable network. Tell us, Miss Pasto. Have you ever considered scraping maple syrup off dishes day after day?

ANDI bows her head.

ROBERT: You guys pack your bags. You're going to Apple Blossom.

ANDI: It's Magnolia Blossom!

ROBERT: Whatever. You're going to represent the Letz Eat Network at the annual Whatever Blossom Grits and Garbage Festival!

ALL but ANDI exit.

ANDI: (Sadly.) It's Magnolia Blossom. (Exits.)

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT START: *The desk is moved center facing right. Members of the Town Council (CITIZEN 1-4 and INEZ), enter right and bring chairs. They place the chairs in two lines facing the desk. They sit. MAYOR AYER enters left, crosses to the desk and sits.*

AYER: I call this meeting of the Town Council to order. This first order of business, in fact the only order of business, is the annual Magnolia Blossom Grits and Gravy Festival which is scheduled to get under way shortly. This is an important event in our community. It brings in visitors from as far away as fifty miles. Are our streets and sidewalks clean?

CITIZEN 1: They never were dirty.

AYER: Are the decorations up?

CITIZEN 2: We don't have any decorations.

AYER: We did last year.

CITIZEN 3: We used holiday decorations. Santa wore overalls and a straw hat, and we spray painted the reindeer and the elves to look like grits.

AYER: As I recall they didn't look like grits.

CITIZEN 4: The artificial snow sorta did.

AYER: What about the Grits and Gravy cook off?

INEZ: (*Stands.*) The truck stop kitchen is all ready. (*Sits.*)

AYER: The Grits and Gravy Gala Ball?

INEZ: (*Stands.*) The truck stop café is all ready. (*Sits.*)

AYER: We'll have out of town guests. How about lodging?

INEZ: (*Stands.*) All four rooms at the Truck Stop Motel are ready. (*Sits.*)

AYER: What about the mice?

INEZ: (*Stands.*) The mice are ready. (*Sits.*)

AYER: That brings us to the Grits and Gravy Pageant. We need at least three judges.

ALL turn their chairs around so that their backs are to AYER, who crosses right to face the Council. ALL turn their chairs facing left.

AYER: Come on! Why are you doing this to me?

CITIZEN 1: Cause no one wants to be a judge.

AYER: What's the big deal about being a judge? You just do the interviews, judge the talent, taste the grits and gravy, and vote for the queen.

CITIZEN 2: Tell us, Mayor. Where are the judges from last year?

AYER: Well, let's see. I believe Jimmy Jonga moved to Birmingham, Weldon Burger moved to Mobile, and Sarah Soda hasn't been around.

CITIZEN 3: She's afraid to come out of her house.

AYER: I know some of the contestants get a little worked up over the pageant.

CITIZEN 4: They don't just get worked up. They get dangerous!

AYER: They should show a little consideration and community spirit.

CITIZEN 1: They should, but they don't!

CITIZEN 2: And this year Holly Hash is going to be one of the contestants!

ALL: Ooooo!

AYER: Here's what I'm going to do. I'll put all your names in a hat and draw three...

ALL stand and exit, taking their chairs with them.

AYER: Now wait a minute! Where's your community spirit? Your sense of civic duty?

CITIZEN 3: It comes in second to our sense of survival.

AYER: Wait! Don't do this to me! *(Cell phone rings. AYER answers. On phone.)* Hello? ... What's that? ... The Letz Eat Network? Never heard of them ... You want to come to Magnolia Blossom and cover the Grits and Gravy Festival? Well, sure! We'd love to have you! We don't care how crummy your network is! *(Hangs up.)* Wow! A cheap cable network is going to cover our festival! This is big! Now if I can just find some judges.

AYER exits. The desk is returned left.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT START: *ACTORS 3 and 4 enter downstage. ACTOR 3 carries a sucker or some other candy on a stick. ACTOR 4 wears cat ears on a headband, whiskers, and crawls on the floor like a cat.*

ACTOR 3: Are you a cat lover like me? I just love my cat, Theodore.
(Pets ACTOR 4.)

ACTOR 4: Leave me alone.

ACTOR 3: And when Theodore needs a little treat I give him Cat Food on a Stick. *(Holds the sucker under ACTOR 4's nose.)*

ACTOR 4: Uh oh. Something's up! This can't be good!

ACTOR 3: Cat Food on a Stick has all of Theodore's favorite flavors: fish, chicken and lamb.

ACTOR 4: *(Sniffing at the sucker.)* Oh man. That's nice.

ACTOR 3: Plus a secret ingredient. *(Aside to audience.)* Cat nip.

ACTOR 4: Really nice! *(Lays on back and kicks feet in the air.)*

ACTOR 3: With Cat Food on a Stick I can get Theodore to do anything. Like climb down out of a tree, or get in his crate for that trip to the animal hospital.

ACTOR 4: NO! NOT THE ANIMAL HOSPITAL!

ACTOR 3: Come on, kitty. Time for your vaccinations.

ACTOR 3 leads ACTOR 4 off stage with the sucker.

ACTOR 4: Curse you, Cat Food on a Stick!

ACTORS 3 and 4 exit.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

AT START: *Two chairs are brought center. Two suitcases are placed behind the chairs. BARBARA and BENNY enter and sit in the chairs. They wear tacky tourist clothes and are in their car on the way to Disney World. BENNY drives.*

BARBARA: We've been on this little dinky road for hours. Shouldn't we be on a highway?

BENNY: I told you, I'm taking the scenic route! Would you just let me drive?

BARBARA: We should have flown.

BENNY: Did you see the price of airline tickets? Besides, this way we can see the country. Look at that view! Trees and more trees and ... even more trees. And what's that over there? *(Points left.)*

BARBARA: That's a shrub.

BENNY: I tell you Barbara, this road trip to Florida is the best idea I've ever had.

BARBARA: You're afraid of flying, aren't you?

BENNY: Basically.

BARBARA: And you refuse to drive on interstate highways.

BENNY: I hate 'em.

BARBARA: Do you know where we are?

BENNY: Of course I know where we are! We're between New York and Disney World.

BARBARA: I mean which state?

BENNY: Last time I looked we were in Georgia, which, if I recall, means the next state is Florida.

BARBARA: About an hour ago we passed a sign that said Welcome to Alabama which, if I recall, is NOT one of those states you drive through between New York and Florida ... unless you're lost!

BENNY: I'm not lost, Barbara! Just a little misguided.

They lean forward and backward as if the car has stopped.

BARBARA: Why are you stopping in the middle of the road?

BENNY: I believe we are out of gas.

BARBARA: (*Frantic.*) Out of gas? How could we run out of gas?

BENNY: The car drank it all.

BARBARA: Weren't you watching the gauges?

BENNY: I was watching the trees. We don't have a lot of trees in New York City.

BARBARA: Benny, we're in the middle of nowhere! People like us don't belong in the middle of nowhere! We need concrete, and subways, and really tall buildings!

BENNY: (*Takes a cell phone from his pocket.*) I'll call Triple A. (*Starts to dial, then pauses.*) Do you know their number?

BARBARA: We don't belong to Triple A. And I'm seconds away from strangling you!

BENNY: I'll call my mom.

BARBARA: And tell her what? That we're lost in Alabama, would she come get us?

BENNY: You're right. She gets lost in New Jersey. Maybe I'll call Uncle Henry.

BARBARA: It doesn't matter who you call, Benny! We're lost!

BENNY: Hmm. Do you have any ideas?

BARBARA: Start walking.

They take the suitcases and cross left.

BENNY: (*Look upward.*) Wow! Look at the trees!

She kicks him in the shin and exits. He yells in pain, and exits after her, limping in pain. Off stage.

BENNY: THAT REALLY HURT, BARBARA!

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

AT START: *MAYOR AYER and LUCY LOX enter downstage. She is dressed in a mechanic's jump suit.*

AYER: Hey, Lucy! I got a favor to ask. Would you consider being a judge for the pageant? We're going to be on the Letz Eat Network and I need some really first class judges!

LUCY: Holly Hash and Ann Chovy brought their cars in today for an oil change.

AYER: That's got to be good for business. Listen, this is gonna put Magnolia Blossom on the map!

LUCY: They look down their noses at me because I'm a mechanic!

AYER: That's a shame. Now about the pageant...

LUCY: Rebuilding transmission is an art!

AYER: It sure is.

She starts to speak. AYER places his hand over her mouth.

AYER: The Letz Eat Network is coming to Magnolia Blossom to cover the Grits and Gravy Festival! Ain't that great?

She pulls his hand away from her mouth.

LUCY: All they could talk about was the pageant! We already know the winner! Holly Hash! She's won every competition in the region. She was Little Miss Magnolia Blossom, she was Miss Teen Magnolia Blossom, and she was the Magnolia Blossom High School Homecoming Queen.

AYER: Don't forget the Magnolia Blossom Amateur Taxidermist of the Year. Listen, I need judges...

LUCY: I think I'll enter the pageant. I've got talent. I'll put a Corvette engine on a John Deere tractor.

AYER: That would make plowing go a lot faster. Wait. If you're in the pageant you can't be a judge.

LUCY: It would be a shame if Holly won another competition just because her parents are the richest people in town. It might cause people to take a closer look at the town ... the mayor in particular.

AYER: I don't think anyone around here would do anything like that. They never have.

LUCY: They might this time!

AYER: Hey! What are you talking about?

LUCY exits.

AYER: Wait! I can't afford to make Holly's family mad! *(Exits.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 6

AT START: *LEROY enters, crosses to the table and flops down. INEZ enters and crosses to LEROY. She holds an order pad and pen.*

INEZ: Hey there. How about some lunch?

LEROY: What you got?

INEZ: Fried chicken, fried pork chops, and fried meatloaf.

LEROY: What about veggies?

INEZ: Fried okra, fried cauliflower, fried peas and fried spinach.

LEROY: Fried spinach?

INEZ: I don't recommend it.

LEROY: I've been eating at truck stops for the past four days. My digestive system would appreciate something that isn't fried.

INEZ: This is the South. We fry everything. Even stuff we don't eat.

LEROY: How about a house salad?

INEZ: *(Writes on pad.)* You want gravy?

LEROY: Gravy on salad?

INEZ: You're not from around here, are ya?

LEROY: How about salad dressing on the salad?

INEZ: I can do that.

LEROY: Do you have anything low fat?

INEZ: (*Laughs.*) Are you kidding?

LEROY: Okay. Ranch. And an iced tea to drink. I assume that isn't fried.

INEZ: Don't assume anything.

She exits. LEROY looks around, takes the newspaper and reads. He freezes.

ACT ONE, SCENE 7

AT START: *MAYOR AYER and ANN CHOVI enter downstage.*

AYER: Hey, Ann. Did you hear the news? The Letz Eat Network is coming to Magnolia Blossom to cover the Grits and Gravy Festival! Ain't that great? I'm looking for some judges for the pageant and I thought you'd be perfect!

ANN: I've spent all day with Holly Hash and I'm exhausted. All she can talk about is how great that trophy is going to look next to all the others she's won.

AYER: This television thing could be big!

ANN: It's her hair, her dress, which of her stuffed animals she should use in the talent division. I'm sick of her!

AYER: But she's your best friend.

ANN: She has never complimented anything I've ever done!

AYER: That's because you're too busy sucking up to her.

ANN: I'll show her! I'll enter the pageant. Why should Holly Hash win every competition in town?

AYER: That could cause a little strain on your friendship.

ANN: She'll think I'm entering to make her look good. Only I'll win! I have talent! Remember that play we did in high school? What was that thing called?

AYER: It was called "Hamlet". And it was ... unfortunate.

ANN: Well, ever since then I've known I'm an actress.

AYER: You were a nervous wreck!

ANN: I may have had a little stage fright...

AYER: What you had was stage barf!

ANN: I'm over that now. And I'm ready to do a dramatic monologue from Shakespeare... or "Titanic" (*Or other current popular movie.*). And you're going to make sure Holly doesn't win.

AYER: Why would I do that?

ANN: Because someone from Magnolia Blossom just might tell a reporter from the Letz Eat Network that the pageant is fixed!

AYER: Fixed? That's not fair!

ANN exits.

AYER: Oh, man! (*Exits.*)

ACT ONE, SCENE 8

AT START: *INEZ enters with a glass and a plate. She serves LEROY.*

INEZ: Here you go.

LEROY: (*Looking at bowl.*) What's that?

INEZ: Fried cheese balls. Everybody loves 'em.

LEROY: I wanted a salad.

INEZ: Are you going to taste 'em?

LEROY: Okay. (*He tastes a cheese ball.*)

INEZ: What do you think?

LEROY: Delicious. (*He drinks his tea and makes a sour face.*)

WOAH! What did you put in this tea?

INEZ: Sugar. Does it need more?

LEROY: It's sweet enough.

INEZ: It should be sweet. I use four pounds of sugar for every gallon of tea.

LEROY: I can tell.

INEZ: My mama taught me to use lots of sugar in my iced tea, and to always use fresh vegetables.

LEROY: Freshness is important.

INEZ: When it comes to good home cooking freshness is essential. Your salad will be ready as soon as the lettuce thaws out.

INEZ exits. LEROY returns to his newspaper.

ACT ONE, SCENE 9

AT START: *MAYOR AYER and HOLLY HASH enter downstage.*

AYER: I guess you wouldn't be interested in the Letz Eat Network.

HOLLY: Why would I care about a crummy cable television network?

AYER: They're coming to Magnolia Blossom to cover the Grits and Gravy Festival.

HOLLY: *(Excited.)* Really? I'll be on national television when I win the pageant!

AYER: You said they were a crummy cable network.

HOLLY: It's national television!

AYER: What if you ... you know ... don't win?

HOLLY: Don't be silly. I always win. I'm very strong in the talent department.

AYER: How is that taxidermy course going?

HOLLY: I've passed groundhogs and raccoons, and I'm ready for the really challenging work now.

AYER: Well, deer season's just around the corner.

HOLLY: I heard my friend Ann Chovy is entering the pageant. That's just to make me look good.

AYER: I'm sure that's her intention. But what if someone else won? What would be the harm in that? You win everything else in town.

HOLLY: Tell me, Mayor Ayer, are you familiar with the term 'recall'? It's how voters get rid of their elected officials when those officials don't do what they're supposed to do.

AYER gasps.

HOLLY: This network thing could really work out well for me. It could lead to a whole new career!

AYER: Stuffing animals on TV?

HOLLY: Broadcast journalism! I could be the next Katie Couric!
[Insert well-known female television journalist.]

AYER: That would be something. (*Aside.*) Something I can't begin to imagine.

HOLLY: Make sure the judges are ... (*Grins.*) fair. (*Exits.*)

AYER: Oh, man! If Holly Hash doesn't win the Grits Queen Pageant I'll get voted out of office. If Holly Hash wins I'll get voted out of office. I'll have to get another job. I could end up cleaning dishes at the pancake house. (*Shivers and exits.*)

ACT ONE, SCENE 10

AT START: *VIEWER 1 enters downstage right with a TV remote. He aims it at the audience and "turns on the TV", then sits on the floor. VIEWER 2 enters and sits beside him.*

VIEWER 2: Is it time for "Power Rangers?" [*Insert popular children's television show.*]

VIEWER 1: Almost.

VIEWER 2: What are you watching?

VIEWER 1: I thought it was the Food Network with all the great chefs and cooks and stuff. But I'm not sure.

VIEWER 2: What's that guy doing?

VIEWER 1: He just threw a carton of eggs at the audience and now an old lady is beating him up with one hand.

VIEWER 2: Cool. What's in her other hand?

VIEWER 1: A little dog.

VIEWER 2: Are you sure this isn't the Comedy Channel?

VIEWER 1: Yeah. That's Channel 52. This is way up in the 400s.

VIEWER 2: Hit Info.

VIEWER 1 hits the remote. Both VIEWERS squint to read the screen.

VIEWER 1: Albert the Angry Chef. Today Albert makes an omelet and insults the audience. The Letz Eat Network. I've never heard of it.

VIEWER 2: Me either. Find "Power Rangers".

VIEWER 1: Wait. The audience is ganging up on Albert. They're really mad.

VIEWER 2: Here come the police.

VIEWER 1: And the paramedics. It looks like Albert sustained some injuries.

VIEWER 2: The little dog looks okay.

VIEWER 1: You wanna watch "Power Rangers"?

VIEWER 2: Not yet. You got any snacks?

VIEWER 1: Let's go look.

They exit. INEZ enters with a salad bowl and serves LEROY.

INEZ: Here's your salad. It might still be a little cold. I'm not real good with food that isn't fried.

LEROY: *(Picks up a fork and stabs at the bowl.)* It's still frozen.

INEZ: *(Takes the bowl.)* Sorry. I'll pop it in the microwave. *(Exits.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 11

AT START: *MAYOR AYER and ANDI enter downstage. ANDI is holding her nose.*

AYER: I hope your crew wasn't too uncomfortable. Three hours in the back of Bobby Joe's pick-up truck can be a little rough.

ANDI: It was a little rough.

AYER: *(Sniffs and makes a sour face.)* I told Bobby Joe to clean the truck out before he drove to the airport. I guess he didn't think it was worth the trouble.

ANDI: Bobby Joe's still raising pigs.

AYER: Yep.

ANDI: *(Sniffs her clothes and makes a sour face.)* There's something I need to warn you about. The network is really looking for one of those exploitation-type shows.

AYER: Well, no one is happier to be exploded *(‘Exploded’ is correct.)* than us! You think if this show goes over real big they might could find a job for me? Something that doesn't involve maple syrup?

ANDI: They want to make us look silly.

AYER: We ARE silly.

ANDI: But we only look silly to each other. Mr. Gourmet is going to make us look silly to the whole world.

AYER: Look, Andi. I have bigger worries than how stupid I look. I'm supposed to line up the judges for the Grits and Gravy Pageant. And no one will do it!

ANDI: Why not?

ANDI: You remember Holly Hash.

ANDI: Unfortunately.

AYER: She's in the pageant. If Holly wins the title, I'll be voted out of office. If she loses, I'll be voted out of office.

ANDI: Being the Mayor of Magnolia Blossom can't be that great.

AYER: It beats washing dishes at the pancake house, which is about the only other job I'd get.

ANDI: Magnolia Blossom has a pancake house?

AYER: No. I'll have to move to Mobile.

MELISSA, BIFF and SUE enter. Their hands are over their noses.

BIFF: Man, that was gross!

MELISSA: Is it safe to breathe now?

SUE: I don't feel so good.

BIFF removes his hands and sniffs around. As he sniffs near MELISSA and SUE he covers his nose again.

BIFF: Is there a car wash around here?

AYER: A car wash won't take the smell out of Bobby Joe's truck.

BIFF: The car wash is for us! We smell like pigs!

AYER: Sorry about that. Bobby Joe was the only one around who could drive all the way to the airport. Everybody else is getting ready for the festival.

MELISSA: Can we please go to the hotel? I need to soak in a tub of bleach and then burn my clothes.

AYER: They got your room ready.

SUE: You mean rooms. As in four rooms.

AYER: The motel only has four rooms. And three are already taken. You should have made your reservation sooner.

MELISSA: Wait a minute! I can't stay in a room with these people!

ANDI, SUE, and BIFF: (*Offended.*) These people?

AYER: It won't be just these people. There's a family in there from Mobile. The festival really brings folks to town.

ANDI: What about the camera crew?

AYER: They're staying in the lobby. (*Exits.*)

BIFF: He can't be serious!

ANN: The Magnolia Blossom Truck Stop Motel is kind of small.

BIFF, MELISSA, and SUE: NO WAY!

ANDI: Well, maybe Bobby Joe has a spare room at the pig farm.

MELISSA: Let's check out the motel.

BIFF and SUE: RIGHT! (*Exit.*)

ACT ONE, SCENE 12

AT START: *INEZ enters and crosses to LEROY.*

INEZ: How's that salad?

LEROY: Cold.

INEZ: A little gravy'll warm it up.

LEROY: I think I'll be heading up the road.

INEZ: I hope you aren't in a hurry.

LEROY: Why?

INEZ: Because you're not going to be able to move your truck until after the festival.

LEROY: (*Alarmed.*) WHAT? (*He jumps up and exits, then returns.*) My truck is surrounded by carnival rides! It's going to take hours to clear a path for my truck!

INEZ: I'll get some gravy for that salad. (*Exits with bowl.*)

LEROY: I can't believe this!

LEROY exits. ROBERT enters, crosses to his desk and picks up his phone. ANDI enters downstage right on her cell phone.

ROBERT: So, Andi. How are things down in Muscle Blossom?

ANDI: It's Magnolia Blossom. They put us all up in one motel room, along with a family from Mobile.

ROBERT: You'll get to know each other a little better. Listen, how soon can you start with this live coverage of the Guts and Glory Festival?

ANDI: It's Grits and Gravy. And it's not really the kind of thing that belongs on TV.

ROBERT: It has to go on TV. We had another show canceled. Claude the Carnivore. It seems the Environmental Protection Agency has a little issue with people eating endangered species. Right now we're showing reruns of Hank the Hamburger Man.

ANDI: That's the worst show we ever ran!

ROBERT: Tell me about it. How many times do viewers want to watch a guy put catsup and mayo on a burger? Our advertising agency quit. We're having to do our own in-house commercials. You guys start interviewing people! *(Hangs up.)*

ANDI: But we've just spent three hours in a pig farmer's truck. Can't we clean up first? Hello? Mr. Gourmet?

ANDI hangs up, sighs, exits. ACTORS 2, 3 and 4 enter and cross to ROBERT.

ACTOR 2: Hey, boss. We're ready to shoot that commercial for Toaster Tarts.

ROBERT: *(Looks at his watch.)* We're going to have to go live! Hurry up! Hank the Hamburger Man is about to add the pickles!

ACTORS move the café table with the toaster and two chairs center. ACTORS 3 and 4 sit at the table. ACTOR 2 stands behind them holding up the box.

ROBERT: Okay. You're on live!

The acting is contrived.

ACTOR 2: I want my kids to start the day with a delicious and nutritious breakfast.

ACTOR 3: *(Like a young child.)* Mom! We want Toaster Tarts!

ACTOR 4: *(Like a young child.)* Hurry up, Mom! We just love our Toaster Tarts!

ACTOR 3 places pop tarts on the plates.

ACTORS 3 and 4: Mmmm!

ACTOR 2: Toaster Tarts come in four delicious flavors: licorice, sardine, onion and chopped liver.

ACTOR 3: Mine's sardine!

ACTOR 4: Mine's onion!

ACTORS 3 and 4 bite their pop tarts and try to chew. Their faces show looks of disgust.

ACTOR 2: Toaster Tarts. A delicious and nutritious breakfast.

ACTOR 2 holds up the box and freezes with a contrived smile. ACTORS 3 and 4 freeze with looks of disgust on their faces. After a count, ROBERT yells.

ROBERT: Cut!

ACTORS 3 and 4 run off stage with their hands over their mouths.

ROBERT: You guys didn't look all that excited about the product. We gotta sell these things so we can stay on the air.

ACTOR 2: Have you tried Toaster Tarts?

ACTOR 2 shoves a pop tart in ROBERT's face. He sniffs, makes a sour face and shoves it away.

ROBERT: Man! That smells like an old pizza.

ACTOR 2: *(Sniffs a pop tart, makes a sour face.)* I think the chopped liver smells the worst.

The table and chairs are moved upstage.

ROBERT: You guys memorize the next commercial. I have to dig out more reruns. I hope the crew down in Membrane Blossom sets up really fast.

They exit.

ACT ONE, SCENE 13

AT START: *BARBARA and BENNY enter dragging their luggage. Exhausted, they cross to a table and sit.*

BARBARA: Don't talk to me, Benny.

BENNY: I didn't say anything.

BARBARA: I wanted to warn you before you spoke.

BENNY: I'm sorry, Barbara. How many times do I have to say it?

BARBARA: I do NOT want to hear your voice! Do you understand?

BENNY starts to speak.

BARBARA: Just nod your head. Do NOT use your voice!

BENNY nods. INEZ enters and crosses to BARBARA and BENNY. She holds an order pad and pen.

INEZ: Hey there. How about some lunch?

BENNY: Sure. What you got?

BARBARA: *(To BENNY.)* Do not talk! *(To INEZ.)* What are you serving?

INEZ: Fried chicken, fried pork chops, and fried meatloaf.

BARBARA: What about veggies?

INEZ: Fried okra, fried cauliflower, fried peas and fried spinach.

BARBARA: I'll have a glass of water. He'll have the fried spinach and no water.

INEZ: I don't recommend the fried spinach.

BARBARA: Good. He'll have a double order.

INEZ exits.

BENNY: I don't like spinach.

BARBARA: I know. And I'm going to make you eat every slimy, deep-fried morsel! Now, do NOT talk to me!

BENNY: I said I was...

BARBARA: (*Interrupting.*) BENNY!

BENNY lowers his head.

BARBARA: I just drug my luggage down a dinky little road for five miles.

BENNY: Two miles.

BARBARA glares. BENNY cowers.

BARBARA: And the only ride we were offered was in a smelly pickup truck that was already full of people. And I'm missing Disney World!

ANDI enters wearing headphones. MELISSA, SUE and BIFF enter with hand held microphones.

ANDI: Mr. Gourmet is desperate for live shots of the Grits and Gravy Festival.

SUE: My clothes still smell like a garbage can.

MELISSA and BIFF: Mine too!

ANDI: (*To MELISSA.*) You lead off. (*To SUE and BIFF.*) You two go interview people.

BIFF: People won't get close enough for us to interview.

ANDI: Just do the best you can. Hurry!

SUE and BIFF exit. ANDI hands MELISSA the microphone.

MELISSA: I don't want to lead off! I don't want to be here!

MELISSA tries to give the microphone back. ANDI won't take it.

ANDI: (*Listening on headphones.*) We're going live in ten seconds.

MELISSA: (*Becoming frantic.*) I don't want this job! I want to work for a real network! Like the Sports Channel, or the Comedy Channel... or the Tragedy Channel! Not a rinky-dink channel like Letz Eat!

ANDI: Six seconds.

MELISSA: (*Even more frantic.*) This isn't fair! I went to broadcast journalism school! I had dreams and ambition! I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING IMPORTANT WITH MY LIFE! DO YOU HEAR ME?

ANDI: You're on.

MELISSA: (*Suddenly calm.*) Hi. I'm Melissa Marinara and welcome to the Letz Eat Network's live coverage of the Grits and Gravy Festival in beautiful Magnolia Blossom, Alabama. This annual event celebrates the grace and the beauty of ... well ... grits. Our reporters Sue Flay and Biff Wellington are working the crowds. Sue? What can you tell us?

SUE enters with CITIZENS 1 and 2 downstage left. SUE holds a microphone.

SUE: (*To audience.*) I'm talking with ... (*Holds mic toward CITIZEN 1, who doesn't respond. To CITIZEN 1.*) Do you have a name?

CITIZEN 1: Yep.

CITIZEN 2: Me too. (*Beat.*)

SUE: Well?

CITIZEN 1: You asked if I have a name. I answered.

CITIZEN 2: Me too.

SUE: Okay. Have you lived in Magnolia Blossom a long time?

CITIZEN 1: Yep.

CITIZEN 2: Me too.

SUE: What do you do for a living?

CITIZEN 1: Work.

CITIZEN 2: Me too.

SUE: What do you do when you're not working?

CITIZEN 1: Rest.

CITIZEN 2: Me too.

SUE: Are you excited about the Grits and Gravy Festival?

CITIZEN 1: Not really.

CITIZEN 2: Me either.

SUE: Is there anything you'd like to tell us about the Grits and Gravy Festival?

CITIZEN 1: Not really.

CITIZEN 2: Me either.

SUE: (*Struggling.*) How did the festival begin?

CITIZEN 1: I don't know.

CITIZEN 2: I used to know, but I forgot.

SUE: Is there anything you'd like to say to the viewers of the Letz Eat Network?

CITIZEN 1: Yep. (*Sniffs around SUE.*) You don't smell too fresh.

CITIZEN 2: You sure don't.

CITIZEN 1: I'd better get back to work.

CITIZEN 2: Me too.

CITIZENS 1 and 2 exit.

SUE: There you have it, Melissa. I'm laboring in a labyrinth of lunacy with no level of light on the large-scale landscape.

MELISSA: Well, Sue. That's almost interesting. Why don't you knock off the alliterations and find citizens you can actually interview?

SUE: I'll look for a likely lead. (*Exits.*)

MELISSA: (*To SUE.*) Lovely. (*To audience.*) Let's see if Biff Wellington has found a citizen who is moderately interesting. Biff?

BIFF enters downstage left with CITIZENS 3 and 4. He holds a mic.

BIFF: Melissa, I'm standing in front of the Magnolia Blossom courthouse with...

CITIZEN 3: (*Interrupting.*) That's not the courthouse.

CITIZEN 4: The courthouse is down the street.

BIFF: But the sign says courthouse.

CITIZEN 3: That's not the courthouse.

BIFF: What is it?

CITIZEN 4: It's the hardware store.

BIFF: But it's an old historic building on the town square surrounded by majestic trees. The only thing down the street is a shopping center.

CITIZEN 3: They switched places.

CITIZEN 4: We don't have all that much crime, and we needed a bigger hardware store.

BIFF: What about tax records, marriage records, birth records?

CITIZEN 3: They're in the hardware store.

CITIZEN 4: With the garden tools.

BIFF: What can you tell us about the Grits and Gravy Festival?

CITIZEN 3: It messes up traffic.

CITIZEN 4: Can't get a parking place at the hardware store ...or the courthouse.

BIFF: What is it about grits and gravy that makes people want to celebrate?

CITIZEN 3: I don't know.

CITIZENS 3 and 4 sniff the air and make sour faces.

CITIZEN 4: Somebody needs to take out the garbage.

BIFF: *(Steps away. To CITIZEN 2.)* Sorry. *(To audience.)* Well, Melissa. That's how things look in front of the courthouse.

CITIZENS 3 and 4: Hardware store.

BIFF: Whatever.

BIFF and CITIZENS exit.

MELISSA: Well, Biff. That's a pretty lame report. *(Uncomfortable.)* And now I guess we have to find something else to talk about. Let's stroll around the town and ... uh ... look at stuff. *(Exits.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 14

AT START: *AYER enters upstage, followed by LEROY.*

AYER: Why should I move the roller-coaster? You were foolish enough to park your truck under it!

LEROY: I didn't park my truck under it! I parked and they put it on top of my truck! I've got perishable cargo in that trailer!

AYER: What kind of perishable cargo?

LEROY: Uh ... paper products.

AYER: Paper isn't perishable!

LEROY: Yes, it is! Paper is made from trees, and trees are plants, and plants are organic and therefore perishable! So get that carnival junk out of my way! I have to get on the road!

INEZ enters carrying two soup bowls and a glass. She serves BENNY and BARBARA.

INEZ: Water and fried cheese balls.

BARBARA: We didn't order cheese balls.

INEZ: Everybody gets cheese balls. Fried spinach will be out in a minute. *(Exits.)*

AYER: *(To BARBARA.)* Ooo. You ordered the fried spinach? You're gonna be sorry.

BARBARA: *(Indicating BENNY.)* HE'S gonna be sorry.

BENNY tries to take a cheese ball. BARBARA takes the bowl away from him.

BARBARA: Give me that!

BENNY: *(To AYER.)* Our car ran out of gas.

AYER: Where are you folks from?

BENNY: New York City.

AYER: Why am I not surprised?

BARBARA: Benny missed a turn. We're stuck here.

AYER: You couldn't pick a better time to be stuck in town. We're having the annual Grits and Gravy Festival.

BARBARA: We don't want to be stuck here! We want to get to Disney World!

HOLLY and ANN enter.

HOLLY: *(Angry.)* You don't really think you can win the pageant do you?

ANN: Why not?

HOLLY: You don't have any talent!

ANN: Neither do you! Unless you consider stuffing road kill talent!

LUCY: (*Enters.*) I got your cars ready. Here are your bills. (*Hands HOLLY and ANN bills.*)

HOLLY and ANN: (*Looking at their bills. Horrified.*) FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS! WHAT FOR?

LUCY: Fifty-three dollars for the parts and labor, and four thousand nine hundred and forty-seven dollars for being rude and annoying! By the way, I've entered the pageant. And I intend to win.

AYER: (*Struck with an idea, to BENNY, BARBARA and LEROY.*) Okay. Here's the deal. You folks want to get out of town, and I need some judges for a pageant. You help me out, and I'll help you out.

LEROY, BARBARA, and BENNY: Pageant?

BENNY: What kind of pageant?

AYER: The Grits and Gravy Pageant. You conduct a couple interviews, taste some grits and judge some talent. It's a piece of cake.

They freeze. ROBERT enters and sits at the desk. ANDI enters downstage left. They talk on cell phones.

ROBERT: So, Andi! So far we've had interviews with the most boring people on the planet and a tour of the hardware store. I need something interesting!

ANDI: I told you this wasn't a good idea!

ROBERT: Then you need to make it a good idea! Interview somebody interesting!

MELISSA: (*Enters and crosses to LUCY; to audience.*) I'm talking with Grits and Gravy Pageant contestant Lucy Lox.

BIFF: (*Enters and crosses to ANN; to audience.*) I'm talking with Grits and Gravy Pageant contestant Ann Chovy.

SUE: (*Enters and crosses to HOLLY; to audience.*) I'm talking with Grits and Gravy Pageant contestant Holly Hash.

MELISSA, BIFF, and SUE: What about this pageant?

LUCY, ANN, and HOLLY: I'm gonna win!

They freeze. INEZ enters with a plate.

BENNY, LEROY, and BARBARA: A PAGEANT?

BARBARA: What can be so hard about judging a pageant?

INEZ: You have no idea. Here's your fried spinach.

She serves BENNY. ALL turn away repulsed.

ALL: GROSS!

ALL freeze. VIEWERS 1 and 2 enter and sit on the floor downstage right.

VIEWER 2: This is—like—the worst TV show I've ever seen.

VIEWER 1: It's really bad. Let's find "Power Rangers".

VIEWER 1 aims the remote. VIEWER 2 grabs the remote.

VIEWER 2: NO! I WANNA SEE WHAT HAPPENS!

Blackout.

END OF ACT ONE

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