

SPIT'N MISS IT RUN

A HILLBILLY FARCE IN TWO ACTS

By Dan Neidermyer

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SPIT'N MISS IT RUN

By Dan Neidermyer

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 MEN, 15 WOMEN or 1 MAN, 19 WOMEN, FLEXIBLE)

Spit'n Miss It's Bluford brood:

PA (ZEB BLUEFORD) Quite stubborn even cantankerous, but
all in all, a lovable father. *(123 lines)*

MA (BERTIELOU BLUFORD) ..She stands up to Pa while carin' for
everybody else. Doubles as Mountain
Man #2. *(19 lines)*

IMAJEAN The oldest of the Bluford kids. *(59 lines)*

SARALOU The next oldest. *(9 lines)*

ELAM 'nd then they had a boy. *(40 lines)*

GERTIANNE Really packs a wallop. *(14 lines)*

HENNASUE The youngest of the Bluford girls, but
still a force to be reckoned with.
(15 lines)

HITHON The cute freckle-faced one who's just
gotta larn to catch a greased pig at the
Buzzard County Fair. *(23 lines)*

SELBY CURTIS The youngest barefooted youngun.
(24 lines)

Related to the Bluford brood:

EMMAMAESUE Zeb Bluford's big sister. *(36 lines)*

XLYN BASCOBERT.....Peddler man who's probably Bluford kin
somehow. Doubles as Mountain Man #1.
(24 lines)

There's more!

Cousin Klem Klemmer's four girls:

LUVA.....The oldest. (14 lines)

DORCAS.....Athletic, a little. (12 lines)

SADIELOU.....Real purty to look at. (4 lines)

CHERRYBELLE.....'nd even purtier. (5 lines)

'Nd would ya believe there's still more . . .

Second cousins-once removed, Staford's twin girls who don't look anything alike:

EFFYJEAN.....The older by two and a half minutes or
so. (9 lines)

EFFYJANE.....The younger by two and a half minutes
or so. (8 lines)

The College Recruiters:

ROSEMARY APPLGATE.....Recruiter for Spit'n Miss It college 'nd
sometimes disguised as Hobo #1.
(49 lines)

HILDA HOGEWASH.....Co-recruiter for Spit'n Miss It College
'nd, sometimes disguised as Hobo #2.
(38 lines)

FLORENE HENDERSHOTT.....Tryin' to put a basketball team together
fer Spit'n Miss It College's archrival
Crabtree U 'nd sometimes known as
Germella Sutton. (51 lines)

NOTE:

With a few simple changes, ya could make everybody but Pa (Zeb Bluford) a girl, if ya wanted to. Or any other combination that works best fer yer production.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE: A steamy July afternoon.

ACT TWO: That night, way later.

SETTING

Bluford's backyard, an area purty-near filled with junk of most any kind.

TIME: One week before the Buzzard County Fair. Otherwise, now.

SET

Whatever junk ya can find or already have that suits yer eyes. Some barrels, old washtub, broom, clothesline with ratty clothes, jugs, maybe a lantern, bales of hay and don't forget, a couple of basketballs.

PROPS:

Purty simple to git.

Basketball

Dime

Quarter

Wheelbarrow

Wristwatch

Empty cardboard box of some sort ta put in the wheelbarrow.

Some keys fer a parked van.

Well-worn, beat-up suitcase that has the words "Pedlar Man" pasted on the side.

Cheese cutter (*Or something that passes fer one.*)

Fly swatter (*Same as above.*)

Reporter's notepad. (*Steno pad.*)

Camera (*Never used.*)

Gruesome masks. (*Homemade or just hankies over half the face.*)

Some more beat-up old suitcases 'nd duffle bags that might look heavy to lift
'nd heavier ta carry.

COSTUMES

Just get some mileage out of yer old hand-me-downs. Straw hats, tattered overalls, soiled handkerchiefs. (Afternoons in Spit'n Miss It Run are awfully hot.) Grubby shorts, tank tops and two-sizes-too-big high-top sneakers for the Bluford Girls. The other hillbillies are shoeless.

SOUND EFFECTS

Gunshots high up into the air.

Chickens (*Could be a person, though.*)

Sounds of the night. (*Crickets, tree frogs, er whatever.*)

Sounds of the night. (*Definitely should be a person.*)

Loud wailin'. (*Definitely should be a person.*)

Dogs barkin'. (*Any kind.*)

Engine being turned up.

Engine being revved up.

Van drivin' off.

ACT ONE

AT RISE:

The four BLUFORD sisters are scrimmagin' in their backyard against Cousin Klem Klemmer's four girls. Hard 'nd fast, back 'nd forth.

LUVA: *(Yellin' at her sister.)* Over har, Dorcas! Shoot it over har!

DORCAS: *(Dribblin' fast the other way.)* Gosh no, Luva! I jist got my hands on it.

DORCAS KLEMMER is bein' guarded purty close by IMAJEAN, GERTIANNE, 'nd SARALOU BLUFORD. Actually, encircled would be a much better description. As LUVA KLEMMER shouts:

LUVA: Yer gonna lose it, Dorcas!

DORCAS: I ain't givin' it up, Luva. Not ta no one 'fore I dribble at least once or twice! Came across the run ta play, not ta be passin' all the time!

'Nd that quick:

IMAJEAN: *(Grabs the ball faster than a hornet.)* Shoulda passed, Dorcas!

GERTIANNE: *(Racin' after her sister.)* Or stayed home!

IMAJEAN: *(Shoutin' her excitement, she pushes the basketball down through little SELBY CURTIS's extended arms 'nd clasped hands, makin' a hoop.)* Yes! Slam-dunk!

CHERRYBELLE: *(Bound 'nd determined.)* Yer last, too!

CHERRYBELLE grabs the rebound, dribbles a few yards, then quickly throws the ball to her sister, SADIELOU, who catches it and runs real fast!

DORCAS: Over har, Sadielou! I'm open! I can't git any more open than this!

GERTIANNE: *(Runnin' circles around DORCAS.)* Says who?

DORCAS: *(Droppin' down, a quick crawl through GERTIANNE's legs.)* Like I yelled, Sadielou! I'm open! I'm o - -

But that quick, GERTIANNE catches up to DORCAS and wraps her legs around her, squeezin' the very breath out of her. DORCAS has had just about enough. DORCAS shoves GERTIANNE good 'nd hard across the makeshift backyard basketball court just as SADIELOU passes the ball to LUVA.

LUVA: *(Grabs the ball and runs.)* Thanks, Sadielou! Finally, I git ta shoot!

LUVA shoots. The ball is in the air, headin' toward little SELBY CURTIS, the hoop, who is movin' back and forth dependin' on which way the ball is movin', when IMAJEAN does a flyin' leap for the ball and amazingly catches the ball mid-air. Then all four of Cousin Klemmer's girls become a flying wedge, tryin' unsuccessfully to block yet another of IMAJEAN's spectacular shot.

IMAJEAN/GERTIANNE/SARALOU/HENNASUE: Slam-dunk!

IMAJEAN: Yes!

LUVA: *(Shoutin' as she picks up SELBY CURTIS 'nd starts runnin' off with the hoop, causin' a heated exchange.)* Yer all BALL HOGS!

HENNASUE: No fair! Movin' the hoop in play!

LUVA: *(The game comes to a halt.)* Ball hogs!

IMAJEAN: That's what a team is supposed to do.

LUVA: Not against yer own cousins!

GERTIANNE: Larn ta play better, crybabies!

IMAJEAN: Bring thet hoop back here! 'Nd now!

LUVA: *(LUVA drops SELBY.)* Maybe we could if'n we got the ball once in a while. You guys belong in some kind professional league . . . more competition thar.

IMAJEAN: We're tryin'.

HENNASUE: But ya know Pa. He don't want us walkin' off the property fer no reason at all.

DORCAS: Not even ta play basketball?

SARALOU: Not even ta go ta town fer hog 'nd chicken feed.

IMAJEAN: Yet at the same time, we're Blufords. Every last one of us. 'Nd that means only one thing ta Pa - - WIN!

SADIELOU: But ya don't have ta win every cotton-pickin' time against yer own cousins, do ya?

IMAJEAN: Pa would feel real bad if'n we didn't.

Suddenly, in the distance, high into the air, a gunshot!

SARALOU: *(Looking off in the direction of the noise.)* By jingo, they must be comin'.

HENNASUE: 'Nd Pa must be tryin' to scare 'em off before they gets even close ta up here.

LUVA: Who's comin'?

IMAJEAN: *(Keepin' her eyes peeled.)* I told 'em how many times, "Keep yerselves hid when you both get anywheres near here."

"Near here" is the property line of the BLUFORD place which is actually just a bit to the north of Spit'n Miss It Run.

DORCAS: What's goin' on har?

IMAJEAN: You guys best be gettin' across the run right quick before Pa sees ya.

Another gunshot into the air 'nd all the KLEMMERS are doin' just that, gettin' themselves on home, lickety-split!

GERTIANNE: Sounds like Pa's shot came from down near the run. He'll see their van fer sure down thar. Aw, drat! Pa's gonna be makin' more noise than a stuck pig.

HENNASUE: We shoulda just snuck off in the dark like I wanted to.

IMAJEAN: 'Nd traipse through the woods at night, makin' everybody's dogs bark?

HENNASUE: It woulda been better than havin' their backsides fulla buckshot!

GERTIANNE: 'Course, Pa doesn't have the best of aims in the world. So maybe it's - -

HENNASUE: Their heads thet's gonna be fulla buckshot.

IMAJEAN: *(Motioning to her brother.)* Little Selby Curtis, git over here!

SELBY CURTIS: No, I ain't!

IMAJEAN: No, I ain't what?

SELBY CURTIS: No, I ain't!

IMAJEAN: (*Produces one from her pocket.*) Not even fer a dime?

SELBY CURTIS: Not even for a dollar!

IMAJEAN: Selby Curtis Bluford, do you want all the kids at school ta know yer sisters can beat ya up . . . blindfolded?!

SELBY CURTIS: How're they gonna find that out?

IMAJEAN: (*Turns to each of her sisters.*) Listen. (*As she says each sister's name, they just keep talkin' 'nd talkin'.*) Gertianne - -

GERTIANNE: That little Selby Curtis, I cain just pick 'im up 'nd throw 'im all over the place - - (*She ad-libs, continuing until shushed by IMAJEAN in the future.*)

IMAJEAN: Saralou - -

SARALOU: That little Selby Curtis, I cain twist his arm around back 'nd all the way over his head 'nd he cain't do a thing about it 'cause . . . (*She ad-libs, continuing until shushed by IMAJEAN in the future.*)

IMAJEAN: Hennasue - -

HENNASUE: That little Selby Curtis, I can wrestle him ta the ground with my eyes closed 'nd my feet tied behind my - -

IMAJEAN: (*Motions to her sisters to shush.*) See what all the kids at school's gonna know about you, Shelby Curtis?

SELBY CURTIS: (*Defiant.*) I'm not old enough ta go to school yet.

IMAJEAN: So all thet time, you'll have this hangin' over yer head until you do. 'Nd when you do go ta school, you'll walk in and all the kid'll say - -

IMAJEAN/GERTIANNE/SARALOU/HENNASUE: (*Singing.*) Little Selby Curtis gets beat up by his sisters!

SELBY CURTIS: Won't hurt me none.

IMAJEAN/GERTIANNE/SARALOU/HENNASUE: 'Nd why not?

SELBY CURTIS: 'Cause everybody knows I got gorillas fer sisters!

Off in the distance, another gunshot high into the air.

IMAJEAN: Quick, Selby, run down the holler 'nd see whet's goin' on!

SELBY CURTIS: What's it worth ta ya?

IMAJEAN: (*Indicatin' her sisters.*) Our futures!

GERTIANNE: (*Crosses to SELBY.*) 'Nd maybe yers!

SELBY CURTIS: Okay, okay. I'm off 'nd runnin' 'nd lookin' 'nd listenin'. *(As he runs off.)* Don't forgit ya owes me a dime.

IMAJEAN: *(Shoutin' after him.)* Meet us at the old hidin' place in ten minutes when ya knows somethin'.

HENNASUE: What're we gonna do, Imajeane?

IMAJEAN: Not cave in, fer one thing.

GERTIANNE: But gittin' our way with Pa ain't near as easy as Selby Curtis. Pa don't see us as gorillas.

SARALOU: That's the trouble. Pa sees us as his little girls still. With pretty pigtails 'nd store-bought ribbons.

HENNASUE: He won't never let us go ta college. He'd have to die first ta let us go.

GERTIANNE: But we cain go fer free jist by playin' basketball good.

IMAJEAN: Pa jist ain't bein' reasonable 'bout this. Thet's why we gotta take this matter inta our own hands. Are you with me, sisters?

From the loud, "All fer one and one fer all" ad-libbed agreement, guess they must be!

IMAJEAN: Now, a beeline to the hidin' place 'til we gets kidnapped.

They all run offstage real fast in one direction, when suddenly from the other direction still back in the wings, very loud protesting.

SELBY CURTIS: I cain't, Hithon! I cain't! Not if I knows what's good for me!

HITHON: You will, Selby Curtis! You will, you will, you will, you will!

Caught between what his sisters wanted a moment ago 'nd what his brother wants now, little SELBY CURTIS crawls onstage on all fours, squealing like a pig, followed closely by his brother.

SELBY CURTIS: "Oink! Oink!"

HITHON: Git back here! I's gonna catch you.

HITHON reaches out to catch the slippery oinker, only to have him slide through his graspin' fingers.

HITHON: When I gets my hands on you - -

The threat goes nowhere 'cause as he throws himself on top of SELBY, now a practice greased pig for the Buzzard County Fair, the youngest BLUFORD slips right out from under the fallin' down HITHON, stands up, and runs offstage as fast as he can move.

HITHON: *(From the floor.)* If'n you was a real pig instead a jist a practice pig, I'da fer sure had ya thet time! *(To himself.)* I ain't never shoulda listened to my big brother! Never! Uh-uh!

ELAM: *(Poppin' up from behind some knee-high junk.)* 'Nd why not?

HITHON: 'Cause ya tells me all the time I was growin' up, "Only thing ya needs ta know in life is how to tree a possum." So's I grewed up 'n look what I'm doin' now, practicin' fer the greased pig competition next week.

ELAM: 'Nd ya better keep practicin' from the looks of it. Ya knows what Pa sed the other night. He means it, too.

HITHON: Pa'd never turn me loose into the hills ta fend fer myself the rest of my natural born life, all alone, feedin' on berries 'n roots, sittin' there like black bear bait.

ELAM: Ever known Pa ta go back on his word, even once?

HITHON: So what am I gonna do, Elam?

ELAM: Git yer hands on thet county fair greased pig next week, thet's fer sure. 'Nd win yerself 'nd this here family a blue ribbon. Or else. *(He snarls ferociously, imitating a black bear, as he pounces on HITHON. The two brothers go at it for a while, hittin', pokin', pullin', making a heck of a lot of noise.)*

Suddenly, from off in the distance, another loud gunshot high into the air.

ELAM: *(Abruptly stops wrestling with HITHON.)* Oh-oh! Pa must be after somebody!

HITHON: Long as it ain't me - -

From the wings, in the distance:

MA: One of these days yer gonna kill somebody doin' thet!

PA: I ain't tryin' ta hurt nobody. I'm tryin' ta scare 'em off. Right quick!

MA backs onstage, shoutin' into the hills toward PA:

MA: All anybody's ever got ta do is git one good look at yer face, Zeb, that'd scare anybody into runnin' off right quick! 'Nd they'd never come back here neither.

PA backs onstage, still lookin' into the hills.

PA: I notice you haven't run off yet, Bertielou.

MA: Shoulda done so long ago, the way ya's been actin' lately. Makes me downright fidgety, seein' the way ya keeps goin' on 'nd on 'bout our daughters runnin' off ta college 'nd 'bout winnin' the blue ribbon at the county fair.

PA: You want them college 'cruiters ta cross our property line, come up har to our place 'nd cart off Imajean, Saralou, Gertianne, 'nd Hennasue?

MA: Maybe Imajean, Saralou, Gertianne, 'nd Hennasue want to git carted off, Pa. Ever thought of thet?

PA: Who's side you on, Bertielou?

MA: This ain't about pickin' sides.

PA: We worked too long 'nd too hard to feed 'n grow 'em up, Bertielou, ta jist up 'nd let 'em run off with some darned college 'cruiters.

ELAM: It's re-cruiter, Pa. College recruiters.

PA: (*Turnin', sniffin'.*) Thought you was out shovelin' the barn clean. Don't smell like you did much work to me.

ELAM: How you expects me ta shovel 'nd keep an eye on Imajean, Saralou, Gertianne, 'nd Hennasue at the same time? 'Specially when Hennasue don't wanna be kept an eye on. She done bit me twice.

PA: Bite her back!

MA: Ya need ta protect yer sisters, Elam, yer their big brother!

ELAM: Them sisters of mine, Ma, they don't need no protectin'. Zeke down at the feed store asked me jist last week when my sisters was gonna start tourin' as professional wrestlers. He sed he'd travel most anywhere to see 'em wrestle. So I invited him up to our place. Imagine that, Pa, people'd travel ta see the Bluford girls wrestle!

PA: Not while I'm alive, they won't. I didn't raise any younguns fer people to gawk at. 'Nd that settles it. Now back ta bitin' Hennasue.

ELAM: I's headin' back thet way, Pa, right now.

PA: (*Turns his attention now to HITHON.*) 'Nd what's you been doing since sun-up?

HITHON: Practicin' catchin' a greased pig.

PA: Good. 'Cause ya knows whet I says about thet to ya, Hithon.

HITHON: "Bring home the blue ribbon from the Buzzard County Fair next week or else."

PA: Or else what?

HITHON: Or else I'm black bear bait.

PA: Do I needs ta repeat it?

HITHON: No, Pa. (*Runnin' off in the same directions SELBY took.*) Git back here, Selby Curtis!

PA: (*Turnin' to the light of his life.*) Ya don't seem too worked up over what's tryin' to take place right under yer very nose, Bertielou.

MA: We didn't raise our girls to be stay-at-homes, Zeb.

PA: Not run-offs either.

MA: Imajean, Saralou, Gertianne, 'nd Hennasue never once run off on you 'nd me, Zeb. 'Nd you know it.

PA: 'Nd my girls better not . . . ever! Or else - -

However, his threat never sees the light of day, because from offstage, a huge:

SELBY CURTIS: OINK! (*As if now he's a stuck pig.*) Let me go, Hithon, I gotta go.

PA: (*Rushin' offstage, toward the sound.*) Don't butcher 'im, Hithon!

MA: (*Follows PA, trying to calm him down.*) Leave 'em be, Zeb, they're just playin'.

Rushin' onstage from the other direction, second cousins once-removed EFFYJEAN and EFFYJANE, Stafford's twin girls who don't look anything alike.

EFFYJEAN: (*Shoutin'.*) Somebody's gotta stop that pig from squealin' so darned loud!

EFFYJANE: Cousin Zeb?! Ya har?

EFFYJEAN: (*Calling out.*) Cousin Zeb!

PA: (*Entering.*) Why, if it ain't our second cousins once-removed, Effyjean 'nd Effyjane. Stuford's twins, good ta see ya.

EFFYJEAN: It ain't good.

EFFYJANE: Pa's mad. Real mad.

PA: Real mad?

EFFYJANE: If he was a coon dog, he'd be foam'in' round the mouth.

PA: Who ruffled his feathers?

EFFYJEAN: Yer pigs were makin' so much noise this mornin', Susie, our brood sow's got herself all worked up 'nd done trampled two of her little wootzs - -

EFFYJANE: - - Inta little sausage links.

PA: Don't make me feel good none ta hear that so early in the mornin', Effyjean 'nd Effyjane, but run on home 'nd tell yer Pa Zeb Bluford don't have no pigs atall.

EFFYJEAN: Pa already gots thet figured out.

EFFYJANE: He says it's yer boys playin' tricks on our pigs!

EFFYJEAN: 'Nd if it don't stop - -

EFFYJANE: Right now - -

EFFYJEAN: Pa says he's gonna be makin' a few little sausage links hisself - - outta two Bluford boys!

EFFYJANE: If'n ya catch his drift!

PA: Ya two get on home now 'nd tell Stuford if'n he even touches a Bluford, he'll never feel the last of it.

EFFYJEAN: Which means?

PA: Between my foot 'nd my buckshot, I'll be makin' his loins tender. Now git on home 'nd tell yer Pa that, will ya?

EFFYJANE: (*Crosses to exit.*) We'll tell him.

EFFYJEAN: (*Exciting.*) But I don't think Pa's gonna be too happy ta hear it.

Just then, there is another loud squeal from offstage, 'nd PA runs off to check on it. Meanwhile, from the opposite side of the stage, singing at the top of her lungs while pushing a wheelbarrow that should have been pitched long ago:

EMMAMAESUE: *(Any tune will do, but countrified.)*

YESTERDAY, HE UP 'ND LEFT ME - -

SAD DAY, BAD DAY - -

'CAUSE HE SED - -

. . . SAD DAY, BAD DAY.

I LOOKED LIKE THE LAST ROSE OF SUMMER,

THET SHOULDA BEEN PRUNED BEFORE IT BLOOMED.

During this little ditty, HITHON and SELBY CURTIS enter, SELBY down on his hands and knees crawlin' real fast like and HITHON not far behind until EMMAMAESUE notices them and jumps right in front of SELBY.

EMMAMAESUE: *(Fumin' mad.)* JIST WHAT I THOUGHT! Yer practicin' ta catch the greased pig at the county fair, aren't ya, little Selby Curtis?! Ooh, this makes me so mad!

SELBY CURTIS: I's not the one practicin'! Not me!

EMMAMAESUE: *(Grabbin' SELBY and HITHON by the ear.)* One of ya Bluford's thinkin' of takin' the greased pig catchin' first place ribbon away from me this year, is ya? Thet what yer thinkin'?

HITHON: *(Squealin'.)* One of us gotta think thet, Emmamaesue!

EMMAMAESUE: *(That sets her off.)* Gotta?! 'Nd jist why?

PA: *(Enters.)* Better, that is, if'n one a my boys wants ta be fed at my table two weeks from now.

EMMAMAESUE: Yer behind this, Zeb Bluford, aren't ya? Turnin' yer own younguns into porkers jist so's ya thinks ya cain - -

PA: I don't think nothin', Emmamaesue. Not about you. I's got my family's future ta think about now, 'nd this year at the Buzzard County Fair, we're takin' home the - -

EMMAMAESUE: *(Lets SELBY and HITHON go, crosses to PA.)* Ya takes away my first-place-greased-pig-catchin' blue ribbon, Zeb, 'nd you'll be in hot water.

PA: What'd ya come over har this mornin' fer anyways?

EMMAMAESUE: Don't think ya cain change the subject, baby brother. Yer makin' plans ta take away whet rightfully belongs ta me. 'Nd I don't like it.

PA: I don't remember you ownin' the Buzzard County Fair, Sissysue.

EMMAMAESUE: I got my nine-years-in-a-row-blue-ribbon ta protect. Now, I needs ta borrow two of yer chickens fer a couple days.

PA: 'Nd if I say, "Ya cain't have none?"

EMMAMAESUE: Ya could, Zeb, ya could say thet. But ya won't. Not if'n ya wanna see any of yer four daughters agin.

PA: (*Turns to exit, laughin' to beat the band, as SELBY and HITHON sneak off in the opposite direction.*) It's a wonder ya ain't floatin' in the clouds, Emmamaesue, 'cause if I remember correctly, hot air rises.

EMMAMAESUE: Real nice talk from a brother. A brother who thinks his girls is hidden safe way up har in these hills, away from all those college basketball peoples. Ha, think agin, Zeb!

PA: (*Gettin' concerned.*) Ya know somethin' I don't, Sissysue?

EMMAMAESUE: Whar should I start?

PA: Somethin' funny goin' on today. I cain feel it. There's plans been made around har I should know about, Emmamaesue?

EMMAMAESUE: (*The cat who just gobbled up the mouse.*) Let's put it this way, Zeb, do I git the two chickens fer a couple days, or do I try ta git my hands on Spit'n Miss It Run College basketball tickets this fall?

PA: (*Burnin' under the collar.*) I don't allow thet kind of talk on my property, ya hear me, Emmamaesue?

EMMAMAESUE: Come on, Zeb. Why'd ya hang up thet thar basketball hoop if'n ya didn't want them four girls of yers growin' up shootin' hoops?

PA: Grab yer chickens, Emmamaesue, then git yerself on home. My girls ain't bein' no showoffs fer nobody nowhere.

EMMAMAESUE: 'Nd remember this too, Zeb, one a yer boys better come in second in the greased pig catchin' contest at the county fair, or else!

PA: Ya either catch the pig or ya don't. How cain ya come in second?

EMMAMAESUE: (*As she exits.*) Bingo, baby brother!

PA: *(After a moment's reflection.)* Dern, if'n she ain't close to bein' right, though. Why did I ever hang up that basketball hoop? They've been shootin' baskets since they was knee high to a grasshopper. 'Nd all that time, I thought I was doin' somethin' good ta keep my family on the farm here in the hills! Have I been a fool or what?

MA: *(Entering.)* Expectin' an answer ta that, Zeb?

PA: Not right off the bat.

From the wings, extremely loud:

EMMAMAESUE: Come back here, you dern cluckin' chickens or next Thanksgiving there's gonna be a change in menu!

PA: *(Lookin' offstage, shakin' his head.)* Guess she ain't got the touch fer catchin' chickens like she does catchin' greased pigs.

Hurrying onstage, two HOBOS/COLLEGE RECRUITERS (ROSEMARY APPLGATE and HILDA HOGEWASH). Everything they own in the whole wide world is wrapped in large red hankies hangin' from the end of two long sticks slung over their shoulders. From the looks of 'em both, they've been on the road for quite some time. They might even be homeless, at least that's what they want you to think. The following lines are delivered fast and furious.

ROSEMARY: Mister! Mister!

HILDA: She's crazy! She's crazy!

ROSEMARY: Can you help - -

HILDA: - - us?

PA: What in tarnation's got into ya both, whoever you are?!

ROSEMARY: That woman - -

HILDA: Who is she?

ROSEMARY: Running around - -

HILDA: - - like a chicken with its head - -

ROSEMARY: - - cut off!

HILDA: She tried to grab - -

ROSEMARY: - - us!

HILDA: Both of us!!!

PA: Emmamaesue? Shucks, don't pay her no attention, none at all.
The chickens don't, and I sure don't.

ROSEMARY: Where are we?

PA: Where ya wanna be?

HILDA: Not here, by the looks of things. I believe we is lost.

PA: 'Nd what brings ya lost strangers traipsin' around up here?

ROSEMARY: Just jumped outta the boxcar when the B & O slowed down almost to a stop to make the horseshoe bend comin' into Turkey Junction.

MA: Turkey Junction, huh! Now, thet is a long ways off from here.

PA: Two, three days walkin', fer sure, if ya keeps yer feet movin'.

HILDA: Even more when you've got no idea where you're going.
Just kinda wandering around.

PA: Lucky fer ya both ya didn't both git yer backsides shot up. Some of the people in these hills is right down rude ta strangers like yerselves.

MA flashes PA a look like, "Look who's talking!"

ROSEMARY: We pretty near did get shot at, right, Heinz?

HILDA: Not ten minutes ago, Sam. Sure sounded like it, anyway.
More 'n once.

PA: See?! What'd I jist git done tellin' ya?

MA: Best think agin, Zeb, befer ya goes openin' yer mouth 'nd tellin' all the world the truth 'bout someone we BOTH know!

PA: Like I was jist 'bout to say, it's open season up on this side of Spit'n Miss It Run on pigeons 'nd polecats.

ROSEMARY: Never heard of that season before.

PA: Could be, but it's real big up here in these hills. Real big. Yep, pigeons 'nd polecats. One stinks up yer roof, the other stinks up yer place. 'Nd they both stinks ya up without warnin'.

HILDA: Have ta remember that the next time we're up in this neck of the woods.

PA: Yep! Stand clear of the stink! Thet's a fact of life ya'll want to bring to the front of yer mind whenever yer up this way.

ROSEMARY: Where are we? So's we can tell folks the next place we go where we were last.

PA: Spit'n Miss It Run.

HILDA: Almost did.

PA: Named after my great-granddaddy on my mother's side, once or twice removed, dependin' on which kinfolk ya talk to.

ROSEMARY: So you're one of the Spit'n Miss Its?

PA: Come from a long line of 'em. All the way back to my great-granddaddy, Horace Eppensteiner, like I jist sed. Real lover of chaw tobacco, he was. Drove my grandma Nellianne purty near lulu. 'Cause she'd keep movin' the spit bucket closer 'nd closer to him, 'nd do you think he could hit it? Nope! Now it's an old tradition.

ROSEMARY: Must make fer some real sloppy floors 'round these parts.

PA: Yep! Even have an event at the Buzzard County Fair every yar, from it. They sets up a big tub. All those entered stand shoulder-ta-shoulder behind a yellor line, 'nd on the count of six, they spit away. 'Nd the furthest one away from the tub wins the "Spit'n Miss It" blue ribbon.

HILDA: Might hang around to enter that event myself.

PA: I'd advise ya not to, missy. Thet thar is my event.

SELBY CURTIS runs onstage. Fun and games are over. He's shoutin'.

SELBY CURTIS: They's lost, Pa! Elam sent me ta say they's lost!

PA: Who, Selby Curtis Bluford?

SELBY CURTIS: (*Eyes the two strangers.*) If I say now, I won't be able ta sit down 'til next month.

PA: If thet's the case, 'nd the "they's lost" is the "they's" Elam was supposed to keep his two eyes on, then I gots bizness to attend ta. Excuse me, but I never did catch yer names?

HILDA: (*Pointing to ROSEMARY.*) Sam.

ROSEMARY: (*Pointing to HILDA.*) Heinz.

PA: Ya comin', Bertielou?

MA: Who's gonna be neighborly to Sam 'nd Heinz if I leave?

PA: When yer closest blood kin's jist run off or worse yet, been stolen, there's no time ta be neighborly ta the likes of Sam 'nd Heinz here.

SELBY CURTIS: Come on, Ma.

PA: Let's go, Bertielou.

SELBY runs off, PA and MA close behind.

ROSEMARY: *(Sitting down, dropping her disguise.)* This is a lost cause.

HILDA: *(Peering off in the distance.)* Better stay in your disguise a while longer.

ROSEMARY: Why? Nobody's here.

IMAJEAN: *(Poppin' up from behind some junk.)* That's what you think! *(Scares ROSEMARY half-to-death, who screams.)* Shh! Want my pa ta come back?

ROSEMARY: *(Regaining her composure, no longer in disguise.)* Where did you come from, Imajean Bluford?

IMAJEAN: Shucks, Miss Applegate, shootin' hoops ain't the only thing we Bluford girls can do good. When my sisters 'nd me saw ya both trampin' up the hill, we paid Selby a dime - -

ELAM: To lie fer ya!

IMAJEAN: Elam! Shet yer tater trap er - - *(Crossing to him, threatening.)* yer goose is cooked, ya hear? To say nothin' of yer behind bein' kicked all the way from Spit'n Miss It Run to Gravel Switch.

ELAM: *(Not scared of his sister.)* How long ya think you cain git away with all of this?

IMAJEAN: A lot longer than you might live if'n ya even dares ta open yer mouth!

ELAM: When Pa gits wind of this, he's gonna go right outta his mind worryin' 'nd thinkin' his four daughters have been plum stolen off. I owe it to Pa to tell him.

IMAJEAN: You don't owe anybody nothin'. *(Turning to the HOBOS/COLLEGE RECRUITERS.)* Where ya got the van parked?

ROSEMARY/HILDA: About a mile straight that way. *(On the words "that way," both HOBOS/COLLEGE RECRUITERS point in a different direction.)* No, that way. *(This time, each one points in the direction the other HOBO/COLLEGE RECRUITER pointed first.)*

ROSEMARY: (*Decisively.*) Down along the run, near the bridge, like we agreed.

IMAJEAN: So we'll hafta run right through here, faster than lightnin'.

ELAM: Thet's stupid, Imajeane. Pa's gonna catch ya fer sure if ya run straight through here. Geez, what're ya gonna use fer brains when ya gits ta this here college?

IMAJEAN: If I wasn't in duck soup right now up to my ears, I'd take the time ta show ya, Elam. Now look, smartypants, lead Pa on a wild goose chase way over ta the other side of the mountain so he won't see us leavin' - -

ELAM: 'Nd why should I do thet?

IMAJEAN: Whet's a brother for?

ELAM: Not ta be taken orders from a sister who's gonna git us ALL in duck soup!

IMAJEAN: If Saralou, Gertianne, Hennasue, 'nd me, if the four of us, your sisters, Elam, can be successful on the Spit'n Miss It College basketball court, the same might happen fer you.

ELAM: Whet's I need ta go ta some college for? I'm happy here.

IMAJEAN: Maybe no one told ya this before, Elam, but life's more than treein' possums and going to the Buzzard County Fair.

ELAM: What's been good enuf for six generations of Blufords here in this run is good enuf fer - -

IMAJEAN: You 'nd Pa don't think the world's ever gonna touch Spit'n Miss It Run, but it already has. We got electricity, mail delivered to our front porch, 'nd we don't hafta make our way ta the outhouse anymore!

ELAM: That's spoiled livin'!

IMAJEAN: But Saralou, Gertianne, Hennasue, 'nd me wanna chance to see a little bit more, to be a little bit more - -

ELAM: Why? When all yer ever gonna do anyways is jist up 'nd git married. So why go to - - now, wait a minute, wait jist a blamed minute. I jist thought all thet through agin real quick, 'nd who in thar right minds is gonna marry MY sisters? Any of 'em? So, yeah, yous better all up 'nd git yer brains full of somethin' at college after all.

IMAJEAN: *(Drawin' aim on him.)* Ya know, Elam, ya gots a real messed-up view of what being a girl is all about. 'Nd if I wasn't so busy makin' plans to leave with Miss Applegate, I'd show ya. *(Crosses to exit, stops for a moment, apparently thinking twice about leaving.)* Now, wait a minute, wait jist a blamed minute. I jist thought all thet through agin real quick, 'nd I think I will take the time ta change yer view - -

'Nd with that, she turns and runs toward ELAM. 'Nd before he knows it, she trips him, fast and hard. ELAM falls flat on the floor.

ELAM: *(From the floor and on his way down.)* Zeke down at the feed store sure was right last week. Ya should be professional wrestler, Imajeon, people'd pay a lot of good money ta see ya in the ring.

ROSEMARY: And on the court.

HILDA: But not if we don't get going. Surely your Pa won't be gone for much longer.

IMAJEAN: Help us, Elam. Throw Pa off the chase.

ELAM: I'll be switched if he finds out I helped ya run off.

IMAJEAN: Don't let him find out, then.

ELAM: 'Nd maybe I cain stop the rain from fallin' down, too, huh, Imajeon?

IMAJEAN: Miss Applegate, once the four of us starts makin' a beeline through the woods towards your van, there's no time to look at the scenery. We gotta keep runnin', 'nd ya both best be ready to go when we git thar 'nd jump in.

ROSEMARY: You sure you want to do this, Imajeon?

IMAJEAN: Would we have gone ta all this trouble - -

ELAM: Threatened me within an inch of my life - -

IMAJEAN: 'Nd paid Selby Curtis a dime, if'n we didn't?

HILDA: Legally, I think Spit'n Miss It College could be knee-deep in hot water if it becomes known we're the ones who kidnapped the four Bluford girls and turned them into the entire Spit'n Miss It College basketball team.

IMAJEAN: Who's gonna care but Pa? 'Nd when he gits hisself over ta our first fer-real game, 'nd he sees his four daughters bringin' victory ta Spit'n Miss It Run, he's gonna jump fer joy 'n be real proud. Real proud.

ELAM: Think again, Imajean.

ROSEMARY: That's assuming, Imajean, we can get you through practice and to the first game without Zeb Bluford finding out and yanking you out of college.

IMAJEAN: It's now or never, Elam.

ELAM: Maybe I oughta jist run off with ya, Imajean. This is worse than stirrin' up a hornet's nest.

IMAJEAN: Gotta larn ta be tough sometime.

ELAM: Thar must be a better way, though.

IMAJEAN: Then yer in?

ELAM: (*Heading off in the direction last taken by PA.*) You owe me, Imajean. Big time.

IMAJEAN: (*Shoutin' after ELAM.*) Give us at least thirteen 'nd a half minutes before ya lets Pa anywheres near the run.

ELAM: (*From offstage, as he's running.*) I'll try.

IMAJEAN: (*To the HOBOS/COLLEGE RECRUITERS.*) Head back to yer van 'nd git it goin'. (*Running offstage.*) See ya in five er six.

ROSEMARY: I don't know, Hilda, something about this whole arrangement seems fishy.

HILDA: Maybe because it's illegal as all get out.

ROSEMARY: We could lose our jobs over this?

HILDA: Worse has been known to happen to college sports recruiters.

ROSEMARY: What could be worse?

HILDA: JAIL!

ROSEMARY: Yep, that's worse. Why're we doing this?

HILDA: Four reasons: Imajean, Saralou, Gertianne, and Hennasue Bluford. On the basketball court, they're a powerhouse. The Bluford girls just might give Spit'n Miss It College its first victory in thirty-plus years.

ROSEMARY: And if they don't?

HILDA: It's curtains for the Spit'n Miss It College girls basketball program.

ROSEMARY: You mean (*Pause.*) we help kidnap the four Bluford girls, maybe lose our jobs and go to jail in the process OR we don't help kidnap the girls, Spit'n Miss It College discontinues the program, and we lose our jobs anyway. Either way, we'll soon be collecting unemployment.

HILDA: Slam-dunk!

ROSEMARY: Not a happy thought.

HILDA: On the other hand, what these four Bluford girls can do with a basketball is amazing, the gymnasium will be packed, and Spit'n Miss It College will be rolling in the money. And to the Spit'n Miss It faculty, staff, and administration, we'll be stars.

ROSEMARY: We better get back to the van, mission impossible is about - -

Suddenly, from the four corners of the BLUFORD backyard, the four KLEMMER GIRLS, each at a different corner, peek out trying to get the HOBOS/COLLEGE RECRUITERS' attention by whispering "Psst, psst!"

HILDA: What was that?

And there it goes again, from all corners, "Psst!"

ROSEMARY: (*Whirling around to look at all four corners.*) Hope it's not what I think it is!

HILDA: Which is?

ROSEMARY: Snakes!!

LUVA: (*Comes out a bit cautiously.*) You both up har lookin' fer basketball players?

DORCAS: Are you who we think you are?

SADIELOU: (*Steps out slowly.*) 'Cause if you are, ya oughta see - -

CHERRYBELLE: US!

CHERRYBELLE rushes up to the HOBOS/COLLEGE RECRUITERS and signals for the others to rush out and surround the two HOBOS/COLLEGE RECRUITERS, all talkin' a mile a minute, all at the same time:

LUVA: If we git the ball, we don't miss a shot!

DORCAS: Folks from three mountains over head our way every weekend jist ta see us shoot hoops!

CHERRYBELLE: Ya think them Bluford girls play good, ya ain't seen nothin' yet!

And with that, SADIELOU turns ROSEMARY into a hoop by lifting up the recruiter's arms and clasping her hands together way out in front of her. ROSEMARY looks at HILDA, bewildered. And suddenly, it's a game! Sort of. They dribble left (but lose the ball), they pass right (but can't catch), and yes, they try to fast break (but botch that up purty bad, too)!

HILDA: Thank you, girls, but we really have to - -

LUVA: But we barely even got started.

HILDA: I think we get the picture.

DORCAS: Ain't ya interested in us?

ROSEMARY: College ball is quite competitive - -

SADIELOU: We could make a purty good second string.

CHERRYBELLE: 'Nd great bench warmers!

HILDA: I'm sorry, but we simply don't have scholarship money for second string.

LUVA: But we got somethin' the Bluford girls don't.

ROSEMARY: What's that?

DORCAS: A Pa who won't shoot your backsides full of buckshot!
(*The girls shoot DORCAS a look.*) Well, not your backsides, anyway.

HILDA: Which reminds me. (*Moving to exit.*) We can't keep anyone waiting.

ROSEMARY: (*Also moving to exit.*) So good to have met all of you.

LUVA: Ya ain't seen the last of us.

DORCAS: Not by a long shot.

The four KLEMMERS rush around the piles of junk, and they're off even quicker than ROSEMARY and HILDA can pick their way through the yard. What happens next is a comedy of errors! ROSEMARY and HILDA cross to exit, stage right just as EMMAMAESUE, pushin' her wheelbarrow filled with a box (apparently filled with several chickens), enters, stoppin' the two HOBOS/COLLEGE RECRUITERS in their tracks.

EMMAMAESUE: 'Nd what do we's got here? Two thieves makin' off with somethin' of my baby brother's maybe?

ROSEMARY: *(Back in disguise.)* Jist passin' through, ma'am. Didn't mean ta step in yer path.

EMMAMAESUE: Passin' through my brother Zeb's property, that is. Why?

HILDA: It's the land we had ta tramp over furst ta git ta where we're going.

EMMAMAESUE: *(Mighty suspicious.)* 'Nd where's that?

HILDA: Jist over the run a piece.

EMMAMAESUE: Thet's my land!!! Better think agin. Both of ya. 'Nd right quick.

ROSEMARY: Guess we'll be headin' in the other direction, then.

EMMAMAESUE: Which is my grandpappy's place, so - -

HILDA: *(Looks into ROSEMARY's eyes, befuddled.)* We ain't got no place to go.

EMMAMAESUE: Bingo! Ya thievin' hobos!

ROSEMARY: But we gotta get goin' anyway, ma'am, 'nd right now.

ROSEMARY and HILDA make a run for it, toward stage left. Pursued right fast by EMMAMAESUE pushin' her wheelbarrow 'nd hollerin'.

EMMAMAESUE: Ya done anything to my brother Zeb's place, ya do anything to mine, ya do anything to me grandpappy Eppensteiner's, yer gonna wish ya'd stayed on the main tarby road ta do yer trampin'.

Just as ROSEMARY and HILDA are about to exit stage left, followed by the hollerin', wheelbarrow-pushin' EMMAMAESUE, little SELBY CURTIS, on all fours crawls in snortin'.

SELBY CURTIS: Oink, oink!

HITHON: (*In hot pursuit.*) Git back here! I's gotta larn ta catch ya or else I lose my meal ticket.

Reacting immediately, ROSEMARY and HILDA reverse direction, headin' for EMMAMAESUE and her wheelbarrow. At about the same minute, IMAJEAN, SARALOU, GERTIANNE, 'nd HENNASUE run onstage from downstage, stage right. They're sprinting right through the middle of their backyard, as discussed earlier, darting in and around ROSEMARY, HILDA, SELBY, HITHON, EMMAMAESUE and her wheelbarrow. The following lines are delivered almost simultaneously:

ROSEMARY: Imajeane! Saralou! Yer leavin'.

HILDA: Gertianne! Hennasue! Without us - -

HITHON: When I gits my hands on you - -

SELBY CURTIS: Oink, oink! Fat chance!

Which stops IMAJEAN, which stops SARALOU, GERTIANNE, and HENNASUE.

IMAJEAN: Oink? Oink? (*Grabs SELBY by the neck.*) Thought you was keepin' an eye on Pa fer us.

SELBY CURTIS: I was, but first Elam made me do one thing, 'nd then Hithon made me do another. So I cain't be doin' three things at once, 'nd Pa - -

HITHON: (*Jumps and lands right on SELBY.*) Gotcha!

EMMAMAESUE: Imajeane! Saralou! Gertianne! Hennasue! Stop those two! They's trespassin' tramps stealin' things from yer Pa.

SARALOU: They sure is! They's stealin' us!

With that, IMAJEAN, SARALOU, GERTIANNE, and HENNASUE get back to the business at hand and grab ROSEMARY and HILDA and start pulling them off stage left just as the sophisticated GERMELLA SUTTON (FLORENE HENDERSHOTT in disguise), a budding investigative reporter complete with reporter's notepad, camera, and

horn-rimmed glasses enters stage left, which completely stops the mini-mob in their tracks.

FLORENE: *(Persnickety.)* Pardon me.

IMAJEAN: *(Definitely not stoppin'.)* It's okay.

EMMAMAESUE: *(To FLORENE.)* Stop 'em! Stop those kidnappin' tramps!

FLORENE: Kidnappers?!!

GERTIANNE: *(Stops to explain the situation, briefly.)* She's got it all wrong!

EMMAMAESUE: *(Finally nabs one of the HOBOS/COLLEGE RECRUITERS.)* I don't think so.

IMAJEAN: *(Starin' her down.)* Emmamaesue, if ya want that blue ribbon next week, ya'll - -

Just as ELAM runs on stage left and smacks into all of them.

ELAM: *(Shouting real loud.)* He's on his way! Pa's headin' this way! 'Nd he knows somethin's up!

Complete chaos. IMAJEAN, SARALOU, GERTIANNE, and HENNASUE reverse direction, ROSEMARY and HILDA follow right behind, and EMMAMAESUE won't let any of them out of her sight.

EMMAMAESUE: Git back here, ya kidnappers!

ELAM: *(Yells to his sisters.)* Git outta here fast. If ya don't, Pa's gonna find out without my ever openin' my mouth!

SELBY CURTIS: *(Falls in right behind one of the HOBOS/COLLEGE RECRUITERS.)* Don't leave yer hoop behind! Pa's gonna be real mad at me!

HITHON: Git back here, Selby! I need more practice! The Buzzard County Fair is this weekend!

Everybody's chasin' everybody and everybody's trying to get away from everybody else! And caught in the very middle of 'em all, standing:

FLORENE: Is this the Bluford place? I'm looking for the Bluford place. I am looking for Zeb Bluford.

When off in the distance, another gunshot, high into the air and quite loud, frightening everyone on stage. It can only mean one thing: PA's close by! For a second, everybody stops, freezes, thinks again, looks around, then dives for a hidin' place behind whatever knee-high junk they can find. Leavin' FLORENE HENDERSHOTT stranded, asking:

FLORENE: Where can I find Zeb Bluford?

ELAM: *(Popping up from behind some junk.)* Lady, he's about to find you! *(Quickly ducks back down behind the junk.)*

But EMMAMAESUE ain't movin'. She plants herself 'nd waits, definitely not afraid of her baby brother! Even as he stomps in, blue in the face.

PA: Emmamaesue, have you seen 'em?!

EMMAMAESUE: *(Playing cool as a cucumber.)* Have I seen who?

PA: Imajean, Saralou, Gertianne, 'nd Hennasue, that's who!

As PA speaks their names, the junk piles which IMAJEAN, SARALOU, GERTIANNE, 'nd HENNASUE are hidin' behind slowly, almost imperceptibly, start to move, headin' offstage, obviously trying to get away from their fire-breathing PA.

FLORENE: *(Extends her hand.)* Excuse me, I'm Germella Sutton, hunting for - -

PA: Hunting? I don't have time to go - -

EMMAMAESUE: I saw two tramps, Zeb, 'nd from the very first minute I laid my two eyes on 'em. I said to myself. "Those two tramps is trespassin', they's up to no-good!"

The two junk piles which ROSEMARY and HILDA are hidin' behind slowly, almost imperceptibly, start to move, headin' offstage, obviously tryin' to get away from PA quick, but doing it slowly.

PA: What kind of no-good?

EMMAMAESUE: You still gonna let Hithon enter the great-pig catchin' contest next week?

The junk pile which HITHON is hidin' behind begins movin', almost imperceptibly, offstage, obviously trying to get away from PA like the others. NOTE: All of the junk piles mentioned above continue to move slowly, simultaneously offstage as:

PA: What was those two tramps snoopin' fer, Emmamaesue?!

EMMAMAESUE: What about Hithon?

PA: I don't got the time now, Emmamaesue, to play ring-around-the-run with ya. What was those two tramps doin' on my property?

EMMAMAESUE: 'Course I know, but knowledge costs these days. Yer boys stays outta the greased-pig chasin' contest, 'nd I tells ya all I know.

PA: Emmamaesue, you don't know nothin' 'bout nothin'.

EMMAMAESUE: *(Insulted, pushing her wheelbarrow offstage.)* Find yer own daughters then!

FLORENE: *(Persistent.)* I couldn't help overhearing, sir. Is it like this every day?

PA: I cain't pass the time o' day with ya right now, lady. Someone's jist ran off with my four daughters er seven younguns. I don't know which.

By now, all the slowly movin' piles of junk are close to being offstage, when XLYN BASCOBERT, Buzzard County's peddler, enters, carrying a well-worn suitcase marked "Pedlar Man."

XLYN: Zeb! Zeb Blueford! Ya ain't gonna believe what I gots!

PA: I ain't got no time ta look at whatever yer tryin' ta sell me now, pedlar man.

XLYN: *(As he holds up a set of keys.)* Look! Thar's a van parked down near the run's bridge. 'Nd I gots the keys!

On the word "keys," all of the slowly movin' piles of junk stop!!!

CURTAIN.

BY DAN NEIDERMYER

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