

SUNNY-SIDE UP!

By Shirley McNichols

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SYNOPSIS

Here's a high-spirited romp you'll want to serve anytime! Sammy Sunnyside, world renown comedian, wants to retire and give his famous joke chest to the most deserving of his relatives. The chest is almost priceless since it contains all of Sammy's comic material since his career began. Sammy and his shy but trusted attorney, Dagwood, dress themselves as kindly old ladies and show up at Sammy's birthday party attended by lots of other relatives and uninvited guests. In disguise they hope to find out who really wants to carry on Sammy's comical tradition or who just wants his gold mine to sell off.

But everything gets scrambled when a washed-up comedy team hired by the conniving cousins accidentally kidnaps Sammy instead of his sweet niece Rebecca, the most likely heir. In a hilarious series of setbacks and misadventures they continue to kidnap people in hopes of getting it right while the usually awkward Dagwood (still in a dress!) starts courting Rebecca. A host of other zany characters such as the quintessential detective and his assistant, the joke-writing Tweedy brothers, the singing Sylvester sisters, the down-home housekeeper, the sexy starlet, and the shady boyfriend, make this play a riot. In the end the scoundrels are finally brought to justice, marriage plans are made, wills are set right, and jokes are the special of the day!

CHARACTERS

(approx. 12 M, 15 W; 6 parts are flexible)

MORTIMER JONES: 30's, detective.

DR. HEATHCLIFF HARKNESS: 30's, Jones' assistant.

REBECCA SUNNYSIDE: 20's, sweet young lady in distress.

ROWEENA SUNNYSIDE: 20's, Rebecca's conniving, deceitful cousin.

OSWALD SUNNYSIDE: 20's, Roweena's not too bright brother.

SAMMY SUNNYSIDE (Clara): 80, recently retired, world-famous comedian. Uncle to the other Sunnysides.

DAGWOOD HERMSMIER (Mary): 20's, Sammy's attorney. Sweet on Rebecca.

JACK CLEAVER: Young man pursuing Rebecca.

MADOLYN MOROSE: 20's, Rebecca's best friend.

BENJAMIN MULETAIL: 20's, veterinarian; lives next door to Uncle Sammy.

MAXINE FREELANDER: 50's, Sammy's agent.

MARIE WHITLAW: 20's, Maxine's secretary.

LYLA LARUSO: 30's, Sammy's gorgeous fiancée; a gold digger.

ELMIRA CORNHUSKER: 50's, Sammy's housekeeper.

MELVINÉ: 50's Sammy's handyman and gardener.

BELINDA SYLVESTER: 20's, A singing Sylvester sister.

MARGARET SYLVESTER: 20's, another.

EMILY SYLVESTER: 20's, another.

JOE TWEADY: 20's, one of the Tweady brothers, a comedy/song writing team.

TOM TWEADY: 20 's, another.

LUKE TWEADY: 20's another.

***INSPECTOR BRUSH:** Bludentown Police officer.

***INSPECTOR FLOSS:** Another.

***BARNEY BARREL:** Comedian turned kidnapper.

***CLAUDIA BARREL:** Barney's partner.

***JUSTINE CARLSON:** Crack reporter.

***FRIEDA KRAMER:** News photographer.

***NOTE:** Can be played by either males or females, however, for Barney and Claudia, Barney should be played by the bigger person. Where age is not indicated it is irrelevant.

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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I, Scene 1: Sunnyside living room, 7:00 P.M.

ACT I, Scene 2: Same, hours later.

ACT II, Scene 1: Same, just after midnight.

ACT II, Scene 2: Same, dawn of the next morning.

PLAYING TIME: About 90 minutes. Includes a 10-minute intermission.

SETTING

The living room of Sammy Sunnyside's country estate. A fireplace is against the wall UC. Two stage sabers, which can easily be taken down and used, are crossed hanging on the wall above the fireplace.

USL is the front door while DSL is a sofa with a small trunk in front of it. The trunk should be covered with a cloth. DSR is a door to the kitchen. DSR furniture includes two chairs at either side of a small table which holds a phone. An USR entrance leads to the rest of the home. Plants, photos, wall hangings, and additional furniture may be added to give a homey effect.

PROPS

Pocket flashlight and umbrella for Jones. Small notepads for Brush, Floss, Jones, and Justine. Briefcase for Joe. Magazine on the set. Hanky for "Mary." Doughnut, banana, popcorn, grapes (or other foods of your choice) for Jones. Tea cup for Elmira. Bag containing 2 large pillow cases and rope for Barrels. Camera with flash for Frieda. Sheet music for Sylvester sisters.

SOUND EFFECTS

Thunder storm, doorbell, knocking.

ACT I
Scene 1

(Before the curtain opens, the SPOTLIGHT comes up DSR. DR. HEATHCLIFF HARKNESS addresses the audience in front of the curtain.)

HARKNESS: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I'm Dr. Heathcliff Harkness, swinging bachelor and English professor. You've probably heard of me. I did my dissertation on early American situational comedy on television. I left the university a few years ago in order to chronicle the adventures of the brilliant consulting detective, Mortimer Jones. After our first case together I knew my life would be forever changed. Yes, that first case was a doozy, though there have been many exciting and baffling cases since. For example, our most recent adventure, which I have titled, "The Case of the Absent Uncle," was quite a puzzler. It began when we received a call from one Jack Cleaver, no relation to the Beaver. The case concerned, not Mr. Cleaver himself, but his lady friend Rebecca Sunnyside. Well, her uncle actually. It all began one dark and stormy night in November... It was the evening of Sammy Sunnyside's 80th birthday. Rebecca, had planned a surprise party for her uncle. She had invited all the family members and close friends, but Uncle Sammy was overdue...

(AT RISE: The curtain opens on the semi-dark living room scene. A thunderstorm is raging. REBECCA, ROWEENA, and OSWALD SUNNYSIDE, MADOLYN, MAXINE, MARIE, and the SYLVESTER SISTERS are hiding. A DOORBELL rings. Rebecca pops up from behind the couch.)

REBECCA: Drat! Uncle's forgotten his key again. *(SHE calls off DSR.)* Elmira, get the door! *(The BELL rings again.)* Elmira, please, the door!

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ELMIRA: *(Enters DSR, dressed as a maid.)* Can't nobody do nothin' around here but me? Ya'll act like ya ain't got good laigs a yer own. *(SHE crosses to the front door at SL. She admits a WOMAN about 35, rather a "floozie.")*

LYLA: *(Sweeping in to CS, with a deep southern accent.)* Oh, I do hope I have the right address. It's so hard...

(EVERYONE jumps up from behind the sofa, chairs, etc. and yells...)

ALL: Surprise!!! *(LIGHTS gradually come up full.)*

LYLA: Oh, my! I certainly wasn't expecting this! Oh, that old Sammybear, surprising me! Where is he, that old sweet thang?

REBECCA: I'm sorry, miss. Uncle Sammy, uh, Mr. Sunnyside, isn't here right now. In fact, we thought you were him.

OSWALD: Yes, we've been crouched down behind this furniture for nearly two hours.

ROWEENA: Well, that's it! I'm not staying behind that chair for one more minute. Rebecca, I thought you said he'd be here by five?

MAXINE: It's 6:45 now. Where could he be?

REBECCA: I don't know. He's usually so prompt.

ELMIRA: Must of had a powerful lot of business with that slick a-turney a his.

MARIE: Should I make some calls Miss Freelander?

(MAXINE starts to speak but is cut off by ROWEENA.)

ROWEENA: *(Snobbishly.)* I hope you know, Rebecca, Oswald and I turned down an invitation to the Hemington-Smythes this weekend just to be here. *(To LYLA.)* By the way, who are you?

LYLA: I'm Lyla. *(SHE looks around at EVERYONE, as though they should know who she is.)* Don't tell me old Sammy bear hasn't told you? I guess he wanted it to be a surprise. I'm Sammy's fiancée! *(SHE holds up hand, displaying a large diamond ring.)*

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ROWEENA: Preposterous!

OSWALD: Absurd!

REBECCA: This is a surprise! What are you doing here?
Do you know where Uncle Sammy is?

LYLA: I expected he'd be here. He said it was his 80th birthday and he was going to celebrate the occasion by giving the most deserving person his famous joke chest! I've heard it's worth millions!

OSWALD: Don't go getting any ideas Miss Gold Digger...

LYLA: Laruso. *(Extending HER hand and politely correcting.)*

OSWALD: *(Ignoring LYLA'S hand.)* Uncle Sammy wouldn't give that chest to anyone who wasn't a blood Sunnyside!

REBECCA: Please! Let's not get into an argument about Uncle Sammy's possessions. The joke chest is his and he can do whatever he wants with it. What matters now is where is Uncle Sammy?

OSWALD: Uncle Sammy is out doing who knows what while his "loved ones" are stuck out here in the country at this dreary old estate hiding behind his dusty old furniture. I've got a leg cramp.

ROWEENA: Well, I've got a run in my stockings. Someone's going to buy me a new pair! *(SHE looks at REBECCA.)*

MADOLYN: Listen everyone, this isn't Rebecca's fault. She's as "concerned" as you are.

ROWEENA: Oh, what do you know about it. You're not even family, just Rebecca's silly roommate!

MAXINE: Well, I think we should call the police. Rebecca's right. This is not like Sammy. I should know. I've been his agent for thirty years. You know, with all the rumors about his joke chest I'm afraid there could have been some foul play! *(Turns to BELINDA, MARGARET, and EMILY.)* I'm sorry, girls. I know I promised to introduce you to the great Sammy Sunnyside tonight.

BELINDA: Don't worry about us, Maxine.

MARGARET: Mr. Sunnyside's safety is all that matters now.

End of Freeview

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