

# CHEERIO, Y'ALL

**-OR-**

## ***Ivory Keyes Goes Overseas***

*A melodrama-mystery*

***By Whitney Ryan Garrity***

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**DEDICATION** - for Khrys

### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Ivory Keyes, the sharp-tongued, shoot-from-the-hip piano player from the "Calamity Gulch" trilogy, is back in her own brand-new adventure. When Ivory learns that her uncle, Lord Ebony Keyes, has died, she and Sheriff Prettyfoot travel to England to claim the inheritance.

The family solicitor, Basil Q. Wainscoting, Esquire, plots to keep the estate to himself by proving Ivory to be "unvirtuous." His plans are foiled when his handsome nephew, Heathcliff, a poet, falls instead for pretty secretary, Paisley Fairfax. Before too long, a storm is raging outside and a murder has been committed inside.

Everyone has their own ideas as to "who-dun-it." Was it the butler? Or the mysterious lady in black? Even Ivory herself is a suspect! Can Sheriff Prettyfoot solve the crime and clear Ivory's name? Will Paisley find true love - and her true identity? Will Heath ever find a rhyme for "purple"? These and other questions are answered in this fast-paced, single-set, comedy. Full evening.

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### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(4 m, 6 w)*

**LORD EBONY KEYES:** The dearly departed.

**PERCY:** The most efficient butler.

**GUSSIE:** The coquettish maid.

**DOTTIE:** The grief-stricken cook.

**IVORY KEYES:** Lord Ebony's American niece, from Calamity Gulch.

**PAISLEY FAIRFAX:** Lord Ebony's pretty secretary.

**SHERIFF PRETTYFOOT:** An Indian maiden who acts as the sheriff in Calamity Gulch.

**BASIL Q. WAINSCOTING, Esq.:** The family solicitor.

**HEATHCLIFF WAINSCOTING:** Basil's handsome nephew.

**LADY FLAVIA FORTNIGHT:** A mysterious woman in black.

### **THE SET**

The tastefully decorated drawing room of Lord Ebony Keyes' English manse. A portrait of Lord Ebony hangs over the large fireplace USC. French doors lead out into a garden from either side of the fireplace. Arched doorways SL and SR lead into other areas of the mansion.

A comfortable sitting area occupies CS. A rolltop secretary's desk and chair are set SR, a wastepaper basket is DS of the desk.

**Setting:** Lord Ebony's estate, England.

**Time:** One dark and stormy night, at the turn of the century.

**Props:** Portrait of Lord Ebony Keyes, vase of flowers, wastepaper basket, handkerchief, papers on desk, hats, feather boa, several suitcases, meat cleaver, briefcase, small notebook, pencil, cravat, overcoats, reticule, veiled black hat, compact, tray with four glasses of lemonade, gloves, piece of paper with note on it, toy pistol.

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## **ACT I**

*(AT RISE: The LIGHTS fade up to reveal LORD EBONY KEYES leaning against the mantel. He displays the very same melancholy pose and expression depicted in his portrait. He notices the audience and moves DS to address them.)*

KEYES: Oh, forgive me. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, welcome. Please permit me to introduce myself. I am Lord Ebony Keyes and this is my home - Lord Ebony Keyes' Stately Manor - rather catchy that, eh? Most regrettably, I fear I will be a somewhat negligent host this evening. For, you see, it appears that, at present, I am quite dead. Oh no, please do not distress yourselves. It was nothing so ghastly as murder. No, I simply retired for the evening, one night, about a month ago, and ... *(Pantomimes dying elaborately.)* Or rather something like that! It also appears that my only living relative is one Miss Ivory Keyes, an American ... *(Reacts with distaste.)* ... from a place called Calamity Gulch. *(Chuckles.)* Rather amusing that, eh wot? Of course, my competent staff has sent for her and preparations for the arrival of Miss Ivory Keyes are underway. Rather rotten luck she should have to arrive here in England on such a dark and stormy night, but ... *(Shrugs.)* that's the stuff these tales are made of. Eh, wot? *(Looks around warily.)* Ah, but I hear my good man, Percy, approaching. I best be off. After all, with my being dead and all, my appearance might give Percy something of a fright! Cheerio for now, eh then.

*(LORD EBONY KEYES exits SL. PERCY scurries on from SR. He is a young, handsome butler in an immaculate uniform. Percy moves about the room, fussing with various furnishings and bric-a-brac. He spots a vase of flowers DSL and goes to it. After examining it closely, he turns the vase very slightly to the right and steps back to check the result. Dissatisfied, he turns the vase to the left and steps back once more.)*

*(Percy is still dissatisfied when inspiration strikes. He removes a single flower from the vase and returns it to its original position. He steps back and nods satisfactorily, then moves to the wastepaper basket and deposits the flower as GUSSIE, the young and attractive maid, enters saucily from SL.)*

PERCY: Has the master bedroom been prepared, Gussie?

*(GUSSIE sidles up to PERCY. She speaks with a heavy cockney accent.)*

GUSSIE: And jest wot would you be 'avin' me prepare it for, eh then, lover?

PERCY: *(Indignant.)* Please! You know perfectly well why it is to be prepared. And it has nothing to do with ... with what you are thinking!

GUSSIE: Ya know, Percy. Yer much too 'andsome a bloke to be such an ol' fuddy-duddy. But, yes. Yes, the master bedroom is positively bloomin' spotless - along with the rest of the upstairs. I saw to it me-self. So ... wot 'ave you 'eard about the new mistress of the manor?

PERCY: Not too terribly much, I'm afraid. I do know that she's an American ... *(PERCY and GUSSIE react with distaste.)* ... from a place called Calamity Gulch.

GUSSIE: Calamity Gulch?! Cor, it sounds like a bad reaction to Dottie's kidney pie, if you ask me!

PERCY: Precisely why nobody asked you, Gussie. I am certain that it's a perfectly charming place and that Lord Ebony's niece is a perfectly charming young lady. And she should be arriving with Miss Fairfax at any moment. *(Calling off.)* Dottie!

*(DOTTIE the middle-aged cook, enters from SR. She wipes her eyes with a handkerchief, obviously distraught.)*

DOTTIE: Yes, Percy. You called?

PERCY: Yes, Dottie. Is everything ready in the ... (*DOTTIE wails woefully.*) ... Good heavens, woman! What is the matter?

DOTTIE: It's Lord Ebony! He's ... (*Sobs.*) ... he's ... (*Sobs again.*) ... dead!!

GUSSIE: (*Rolling HER eyes.*) Cor, she's at it again!

PERCY: (*Joining DOTTIE and placing HIS arm around her shoulder comfortingly.*) There, there, Dottie. It's been a month now. It's time to get on with things. Stiff upper lip and all that.

DOTTIE: He took me in, he did. Give me a job when no one else would. Treated me like I was a lady. And now, he's ... (*Sobs.*) ... he's ... (*Sobs again.*) ... dead!!

PERCY: (*Becoming impatient.*) Yes, I know. It's all too much to bear. Why don't you go back to the kitchen and check on that delicious dinner you're preparing for Miss Keyes and our other guests?

DOTTIE: (*Gamely.*) Yes, sir. Right you are, Percy. Stiff upper lip and all that.

(*PERCY gives DOTTIE a shove and she exits SR, sniffing.*)

GUSSIE: Cor, that woman! When will the cryin' end? Ev'ry bloomin' meal she's served for the past month 'as been positively soggy!

PERCY: Perhaps once this Miss Keyes settles in as the new mistress, Dottie will be more at ease.

GUSSIE: I s'pose that Wainscoting'll be coming to make sure ev'rything is all legal-like and such.

PERCY: Yes, Mr. Wainscoting and his assistant will be arriving shortly, I expect. We'll get everyone settled in for the night and have the reading of the will tomorrow morning.

GUSSIE: I don't mind tellin' you, I'm not sure I trust that Wainscoting bloke. Makes my skin break out all over in goose-flesh, 'e does!

PERCY: Well, I'm inclined to agree with you there, Gussie. I do not particularly like the man myself.

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