BREAK a LEG
A backstage farce in two acts

By Eddie McPherson

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DEDICATION

To Kenny, a great writer and brother.
And Angie, thanks for your input and endless support.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Trudy, new to the theatre scene, has just been hired as stage manager for an upcoming play at a small community theatre. The problem is Trudy is inept, clumsy, and more than that, she's a jinx. The cast agrees that Trudy is a modern-day gremlin who is cursing the show they are rehearsing and decide she must go once and for all. So, why doesn’t the director fire her? Because Trudy is the owner’s only niece.

Realizing throwing her out isn’t an option, they resolve to de-hex her instead in order to make the theatre a safe haven once again. An old book of theatre superstitions is brought in, and the reverse-the-curse shenanigans and laughs begin.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I
Scene 1: A rehearsal day at the theatre.
Scene 2: Later that evening.
Scene 3: A short time later.

Act II
Scene 1: Several days later at dress rehearsal.
Scene 2: A short time later.
CAST OF CHARACTERS
(6 m, 8 w, 1 flexible)

Top Dogs:
SANDERS BEEKER: Director of the current production.
MRS. BRAKES: Owner of the Ritz Theatre.

Actors and Actresses of the Ritz Theatre:
CONNIE: A popular actress.
SHEILA: Madly smitten with Trebor.
TREBOR: Equally smitten with Sheila.
PATRICK: A popular actor.
HARRY: Another.
TONY: A novice actor.
ERIN: Another.
MIA: Another.

Befuddled Backstage Crew:
TRUDY: A dreamy-eyed stage manager.
BUTRAM: A wannabe actor.
ELIZABETH: Trudy’s dim-witted friend; looks like Trudy.
DIXIE: Another.

GHOST: A friendly specter.

SETTING

The stage of a small, community theatre.

SOUND EFFECTS

Car horn
Small barking dog
Reverberating bong
Duck quacking
Generic bell
Wind blowing
Doorbell
Crashing pots and pans
Cat’s meow
Rooster crowing
Thunder

(It would be funny to create some of these sounds yourself.)
PROPS
Blanket-wrapped teddy bear  Suitcase
Table lamp  Ashtray
Framed pictures  Fireplace poker
Long-stemmed plastic flower
Sofa pillows  Fake tree
Couple of trench coats  Dust rag
Telephone  Banana
Fruit bowl  Broom and dustpan
Apple  Broken chair
Scripts  Piece of paper for resume
3 pairs of ugly black-framed glasses  framed glasses
Small shirt, pants, dress  Ledger
Peacock picture  Fedora
Sunglasses  Cigarette
White doctor's jacket  Toy doctor's case and
Stethoscope  Measuring tape
An old, large book  Crutches and cast (Connie)
File folder with papers  Several white poster boards
Marker  Remote control
Box tied with string  Wrapped peacock picture
Eviction notice  Make-up compact
Official document  Small basket
Office swivel chair  Flashlight
Large stick with string and attached bottle of water
Tube of lipstick

PRODUCTION NOTES

Act I is set up as a play rehearsal. Folding chairs sit about the incomplete living room set. A few pictures hang on the upstage wall but must be designed to fall off easily. A sofa with cushions is CS and a coat rack is upstage. There are two doors: one stage left in the upstage wall, and one stage right. A large window is UPS. In Act II, the set is complete and nicely decorated.

This is a farce. The acting is over-the-top and when the actors are portraying their characters in the play within a play, they’re melodramatic. Keep the action moving and the blackouts short.
Act I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: We're watching a rehearsal for an upcoming play.)

CONNIE: (Standing CS acting somewhat melodramatically. SHE holds a “baby” {a teddy bear wrapped inside a blanket}. She speaks to PATRICK, who stands a few feet away.) Stephen, you can’t do this to me!

PATRICK: You’re wrong, Paula. I’m a man and do anything I choose!

CONNIE: But she’ll never make you happy the way I have. She can’t kiss you the way I can. She can’t hold you the way I do.

PATRICK: She has one thing that you don’t have.

CONNIE: Beauty? Gorgeous body?

PATRICK: Money!

CONNIE: But she doesn’t love you!

PATRICK: With that much money, who cares?

CONNIE: Though I don’t have a penny to my name, please say you’ll stay with me!

PATRICK: (Retrieving a suitcase from behind the sofa and crossing to SR.) She’s waiting for me outside, Paula. Make this easy for yourself and turn away as I walk out that door, never to return!

CONNIE: (Holding out the baby.) Before you go, at least kiss our baby one last time. Your flesh and blood! Your namesake!

PATRICK: Of course. (Takes the baby.) I can’t leave without my only son to inherit the money my new woman is bringing me. Besides, you have Puddles to keep you company.

CONNIE: No! You can’t have my baby! Besides, Puddles is only a blind poodle dog.

(SFX: A car horn sounds.)

PATRICK: My new love is becoming impatient. Good-bye, dear Paula.
CONNIE:  (Picking up a table lamp and holding it over her head.) If you try and leave with my baby, I will be forced to do something crazy!

(TRUDY enters and looks at a couple of pictures on the back wall, crosses to them and begins straightening them.  CONNIE and PATRICK pay Trudy no mind.)

PATRICK:  Don’t be silly; that lamp is a genuine Tiffany lamp. It’s worth thousands.
CONNIE:  (Gently puts it down and picks up an ashtray.) Then I’ll stop you with this ashtray!
PATRICK:  Put that down! I bought that in Paris. It’s priceless.
CONNIE:  (SHE puts it down and picks up a fireplace poker.) This wrought iron poker should do the job just fine.

(SFX:  A car horn sounds.  TRUDY takes the poker from CONNIE and replaces it with a long-stemmed plastic flower that droops when held upright.)

PATRICK:  (Taken aback but remaining in character, pretending CONNIE is still holding the poker.) You don’t have the nerve to hit me with that thing.
CONNIE:  You have given me no choice! If I can’t have you, no one can!

(TRUDY takes the baby from PATRICK, sets it on the sofa, and straightens the blanket it’s wrapped in.  She replaces the prop by putting a pillow from the sofa in Patrick’s hands.  SFX:  A car horn sounds outside.)

TRUDY:  (Shouting to offstage.) HE’S COMING! (SHE exits through the open SR door and slams it behind her.)
PATRICK:  (HE holds out the pillow, speaking to CONNIE very dramatically.) Take a good look at your son! Do you want him growing up having to visit his mommy in the state penitentiary? Look at him, Paula! Look at him!
CONNIE: (Drops to HER knees, sobbing.) You win, Stephen! Go! Get out of here before I change my mind and do away with you for good!

PATRICK: You’ve made the right choice for yourself and the baby. Good-bye, you pathetic woman.

(HE turns and runs into the closed door. Without missing a beat, he opens the door and starts to exit again but runs into a plastic tree TRUDY is bringing through the door.)

CONNIE: (Pointing and sobbing.) Get out of my life! Get out of my life for good!

(TRUDY brings the tree on stage then closes the door again.)

PATRICK: (Out of character.) Believe me, I’m trying. (SFX: A car horn sounds. PATRICK shouts to offstage.) I’m coming!

CONNIE: Get out! Get out! Get out!

(PATRICK turns and runs into the closed door again. This time he hurts his knee and hops around on one foot. TRUDY sets the tree against the upstage wall. Patrick exits, limping. Trudy takes the bear and walks around the stage trying to decide where it should be placed.)

CONNIE: (Continues dramatically.) Oh, how can he leave me this way? How must I carry on? How must I survive this terrible plight?

(SFX: A doorbell rings.)

CONNIE: (Continued.) Come in!

HARRY: (Entering.) Paula, I was driving by and I heard you crying. Is there something I can do?

(TRUDY takes HIS coat off and hangs it on the coat rack. He ignores this, remaining in character.)
End of Freeview

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