

# THE BRIGHT SIDE OF BEING BLUE

By Carl L. Williams

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# THE BRIGHT SIDE OF BEING BLUE

*A One Act Comedy*

**By Carl L. Williams**

**SYNOPSIS:** A theatrical manager schemes to keep a country music star successful by making him unhappy so he will write more of his chart-topping sad songs. But the star is just too easy-going, especially after he falls in love with a bubbly country singer whose cheerfulness may ruin his career!

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(2 female, 2 male)*

GENE DELANEY (m) ..... A scheming manager who will do anything to keep his client a star.  
*(113 lines)*

LOIS DELANEY (f) ..... Gene's disapproving wife who tries to make her husband do right. *(89 lines)*

KYLE TUCKER (m) ..... A country music star who only succeeds when he writes sad songs. *(47 lines)*

MILLIE WYATT (f) ..... A bubbly country singer with an upbeat outlook on life and love. *(54 lines)*

**SETTING:** Delaney living room.

SCENE 1 – Afternoon

SCENE 2 – Afternoon one month later

**DURATION:** 25 minutes

## PROPS

- ☐ Guitar
- ☐ Harmonica
- ☐ Email printout
- ☐ Song lyrics page

## PRODUCTION NOTES

This play may be presented on a simple set with minimal furniture.

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

UpStage Theatre Comedy Festival, Houston, TX August 2011  
Winner of the Spotlight Award at The Old Opera House Theatre Company  
New Voice Play Festival, Charles Town, WV June 2012

SCENE 1

**AT RISE:** *GENE DELANEY, agitated, paces around his living room.*

**GENE:** *(To himself.)* It's terrible. Just terrible. What am I going to do? I have to do something.

*His wife LOIS enters from another room.*

**LOIS:** You're talking to yourself again.

**GENE:** Why shouldn't I? I'm the only one who ever listens to me.

**LOIS:** I listen to you, dear. I just don't pay much attention.

**GENE:** No one does. If they did, I wouldn't have so many problems, and neither would they.

**LOIS:** Are you referring to someone in particular, or addressing the universe at large?

**GENE:** Kyle's on his way over. Lois, what can I do?

**LOIS:** I'd recommend letting him in.

**GENE:** You know darn well what I'm talking about. His career is on the skids, and he's going to blame me, when it's his fault. His.

**LOIS:** Kyle has never blamed you for anything.

**GENE:** There's always a first time. It's the manager who gets the blame when the bookings go down...when the crowds start to dwindle.

**LOIS:** Sure, he's not as big a star as he used to be. But no one stays at the top forever, even in country music.

**GENE:** It's not like the old days...a guy with a guitar and a down-home twang and fans who would stick with you no matter what. Now when you go on stage you've got to have smoke and lasers and--and--saxophones! But that's not his real problem. I know what his real problem is. I've seen him go through these times before. His problem is...he's not unhappy enough.

**LOIS:** Not being unhappy isn't normally considered a problem.

**GENE:** It is when you're Kyle Tucker, the Country Balladeer and writer of some of the saddest country songs ever sung in a honky-tonk or played on the radio of a pickup truck rolling down the dusty back roads of America.

**LOIS:** I know your theory, Gene. I just don't buy it.

**GENE:** Kyle's biggest hits have always been tearjerkers. And he can only write sad songs when he's sad. He has to be miserable, and the more miserable he is, the better he writes and the more popular the song.

**LOIS:** If he's happy, leave him alone.

**GENE:** Kyle's never truly happy. It would ruin him to be happy.

**LOIS:** So it's bad to be happy and good to be sad?

**GENE:** For Kyle it is. And by extension, good for me, too. He needs another chart-buster like "My Friend Jim." He knocked that one out in no time at all after his dog died. It just broke your heart to hear him sing, "To everyone else he's just a dead old dog, but for ten good years he was my friend Jim." I mean, people actually cried!

**LOIS:** The more beer they drank, the more they cried.

**GENE:** As Kyle's manager, it's my duty to make sure he succeeds. I've got to help him. I've got to make him miserable!

*The doorbell rings.*

**LOIS:** I'll let him in, but I expect you to be encouraging. That's part of a manager's job, too, isn't it?

**GENE:** Everybody knows I'm a very supportive guy.

*LOIS lets in KYLE, who carries a guitar.*

**LOIS:** Hello, Kyle. How are you today?

**KYLE:** I'm doing all right, I guess.

**GENE:** Sorry to hear it.

**LOIS:** Gene.

**KYLE:** That's okay, Lois. I know he thinks I'm only up when I'm down.

**LOIS:** Professionally, maybe. But personal happiness counts for something, too.

**GENE:** Just don't try writing a check on it.

**KYLE:** Well, you know me. As long as I've got my guitar and somewhere to sleep out of the rain, I'm satisfied.

**GENE:** Country music isn't about satisfaction. It's about dissatisfaction. Unrequited love. Painful yearning. Heartbreaking loss.

**KYLE:** That's why I always carry my guitar. Just in case something tragic happens.

**GENE:** You can never tell when you'll get lucky.

**LOIS:** Don't you have anything new you've been working on?

**KYLE:** Let's see...*(Thumbs the guitar strings.)* Nope. Nothing in there.

**GENE:** The songs aren't in the guitar. They're in your head.

**KYLE:** Nothing in there, either.

**LOIS:** Have a seat. Before you came, we were talking about "My Friend Jim."

**KYLE:** Good old Jim. I'd sure like to know who shot him. I mean, who would do a thing like that?

**GENE:** *(Turns away with a guilty look.)* Yeah, who I wonder?

**KYLE:** I loved that old rascal.

**GENE:** But hey, at least you got a hit song out of it.

**KYLE:** True enough. It made me sit down and write out all my heartache.

**GENE:** *(To LOIS.)* See? Kyle knows what's good for him, and that's being down in the dumps.

**LOIS:** The dumps is no place for a person to live.

**GENE:** But he could visit there once in a while. Just a little visit, Kyle.

**LOIS:** Don't pay any attention to him. Would you like something to drink? A Coke or some iced tea?

**GENE:** How about some whiskey? I could bring you a double, maybe a triple.

**LOIS:** Getting drunk isn't going to help him.

**GENE:** It's worth a try.

**KYLE:** Thanks, both of you, but I'm not thirsty right now.

**LOIS:** So what have you been up to, Kyle?

**KYLE:** I've been keeping pretty much to myself lately. You don't get hurt that way.

**GENE:** That's why you have to get out more! Let's face it. If you don't come up with some new songs, you'll turn into an oldies act. You'll end up on PBS. Or even worse, doing one of those awful infomercials hawking your remastered classics.

**KYLE:** I don't know, Gene. Maybe I've run my course.

**LOIS:** Maybe he could write a song about that.

**GENE:** Don't get smart.

**KYLE:** No, wait. She may be right. A man who's been up high, but loses it all and finds himself way down low, where there's no hope, nothing to look forward to, nothing ahead but a final fading away.

**GENE:** Sounds terrific! Work on it, why don't you? In the meantime, you need to go out there and have some new experiences. Take some chances.

**LOIS:** But carefully.

**GENE:** Think how many songs you've gotten out of all the bad things that have happened to you.

**KYLE:** Lots of folks tell me their favorite was "The SOB Who Stole My SUV."

**GENE:** Top twenty on the country charts. That's what I'm talking about.

**KYLE:** At least I had insurance. There's no insurance for a broken heart. Like when I fell in love with Susie-Jane Jenny-Mae Walker.

**LOIS:** The only girl I ever heard of with a quadruple first name.

**KYLE:** She was from the deep South.

**GENE:** "The girl named Walker who walked out on me." A great line.

**KYLE:** She sued me for it. But changing the name wouldn't have worked. What could I have used instead of "Walker who walked"? "The girl named Runner who ran out on me"? "The girl named Hiker who hiked out on me"? "The girl named Skipper who skipped out on me"? It had to be Walker.

**LOIS:** I don't know. Skipper sounded pretty good.

**KYLE:** I was gonna follow up with "The Susie who Sued Me," but I was afraid she'd take me right back to court. (*A slow shake of his head.*) It took me a long time to get over Susie-Jane Jenny-Mae. Love is like the chicken pox. Easy to catch, hard to get rid of, and it leaves you marked.

**LOIS:** A sentiment I never read on a Hallmark card.

**KYLE:** Not that I've given up on love altogether. It's out there somewhere. I just don't know where.

**GENE:** Look, Kyle, we really need to concentrate on jump-starting your career. Could you at least try to fall into some kind of misfortune?

**KYLE:** I'll try, but I can't promise anything. *(Rises, picks up his guitar.)*

**LOIS:** You're not leaving already?

**KYLE:** Might as well. Nothing bad's gonna happen to me here.

**GENE:** I'm glad you dropped by so we could have this little discussion.

**KYLE:** Thanks for the pep talk.

**GENE:** Anytime. Why don't you stop by a bar on your way home?

**KYLE:** I'm not much of a drinker.

**GENE:** Work on that, Kyle. Work on that.

*KYLE exits.*

**LOIS:** You are truly incorrigible.

**GENE:** You know what your problem is?

**LOIS:** You mean besides being married to a ruthless promoter?

**GENE:** Your problem is you want everybody to be happy.

**LOIS:** How despicable of me!

**GENE:** Not everyone was meant to be happy. Some people just don't have it in them. They're naturally melancholy. They thrive on despair.

**LOIS:** They should marry promoters. That way they could experience despair all the time, and desperation, and uncertainty, and a continuing sense of angst.

**GENE:** You feel that way?

**LOIS:** No, you feel that way. You're always in a tizzy.

**GENE:** Lois, no one has said "tizzy" in fifty years. You have to stay current.

**LOIS:** So get Kyle a saxophone and start shooting lasers.

**GENE:** All that stuff is extraneous. What counts is the song. That's the soul of any performance. One heart singing itself out, and all those other hearts singing along in harmony with the emotion of the moment.

**LOIS:** Sometimes I think you're a hopeless romantic. Other times I think you're just hopeless.

*The doorbell rings.*

You expecting someone else?

**GENE:** (*Heads for the door.*) Maybe Kyle came back for that drink. For years I've tried to convince him he could find inspiration in dissipation.

*GENE opens the door. MILLIE WYATT enters.*

**MILLIE:** Hi, y'all!

**GENE:** Millie. Come on-- (*As MILLIE barges past him.*) --in.

**MILLIE:** Lois, honey, don't you look cute today!

**LOIS:** Thank you, Millie.

**GENE:** Lois always looks cute.

**MILLIE:** You sweet-talker! Does he sweet-talk you like that all the time?

**LOIS:** Only when we have company.

**MILLIE:** Then you oughta throw a big ole party every day just to keep him talkin'!

**GENE:** You don't need a party to keep you talking.

**MILLIE:** (*Good-hearted laugh.*) You got that right! There's nothin' I like better than talkin', 'cept singin' and laughin'--and of course lovin' whenever I get the chance! Haven't had the chance lately. But it's just a matter of time!

**LOIS:** I have never met a more positive person than you, Millie.

**MILLIE:** I am positively positive, and why not? With Gene managing my act, I been ridin' high on the air waves nigh on—well, no sense going into years, is there? Call it a long time and leave it at that.

**GENE:** Marvelous Millie Wyatt, the Country Songbird with a song in her heart. That's the key, just like I said, Lois. A song in the heart, singing out, bursting forth.

**MILLIE:** Like a mockingbird sittin' on a telephone pole! Just tellin' the world how much she loves it.

**LOIS:** And the world loving her back. Can I get you anything?

**MILLIE:** Somebody of the male species would be nice, maybe about yea high-- (*Indicates height with her hand.*) Matter of fact, I saw a likely-lookin' specimen of that variety headin' down the street with a guitar on his back, lookin' mighty like Kyle Tucker.

**GENE:** That was Kyle, all right. We had a little conference about his career.

**MILLIE:** Lordy, his songs will live forever. Long as people shed tears like dogs shed fur.

**LOIS:** Dogs like "My Friend Jim."

**MILLIE:** Must've been a sweet ole dog. Wonder who coulda shot him?

**GENE:** (*Quickly changes the subject.*) There's just no telling. So Millie...any reason for this unexpected but wonderful visit?

**MILLIE:** You bet! I've been thinkin' about changin' my music.

**GENE:** Changing it? What on earth for?

**MILLIE:** Aw, you know. People are always sayin' my songs are too sugary and light-hearted and perky and all that. They say they're not deep enough. Not true to life.

**LOIS:** Don't listen to them. Your songs are delightful. They always make me feel better. Such happy songs.

**GENE:** Lois is right. Happy has carried you all the way to the top. Just hearing the name Millie Wyatt makes people smile. You make them feel good.

**MILLIE:** And I feel good makin' 'em feel good. Just the same, I thought I might try mixin' in a few of those slow, drawn-out songs about trouble and torment and terrible, gut-wrenchin', soul-killin' wretchedness. You know...somethin' to get the folks all lonely and depressed.

**LOIS:** People feel lonely and depressed enough already.

**GENE:** Everybody does lonely and depressed, but very few do what you do, and nobody does it better.

**MILLIE:** (*Pulls out a harmonica.*) I could coax somethin' sad out of Henrietta if I tried.

**GENE:** But Millie...you make the audience laugh just pulling out that harmonica and calling it Henrietta.

**MILLIE:** Maybe you're right. Maybe I can't change. Maybe I'm stuck with being happy.

**LOIS:** We should all be stuck like that.

**MILLIE:** Now, Henrietta here is always happy. See how she grins?  
(*Holds the harmonica mouthpiece beside her own mouth, facing out, and grins.*) Try doin' that with a steel guitar.

**GENE:** Take my advice and don't change anything about either you or your act.

**LOIS:** I don't know why you'd even want to change.

**MILLIE:** Folks get tired of being themselves all the time. Least I do. Sometimes I wonder what it would be like to join up with somebody like Kyle Tucker.

**GENE:** The two of you singing together?

**MILLIE:** Singin' would be nice, too. (*Laughs.*) Yes, singin', Gene.

**GENE:** I just don't see it. I don't hear it. It wouldn't work for either one of you.

**MILLIE:** Maybe you're right. Maybe it'll go on bein' just me and Henrietta. (*Blows a note on the harmonica.*) See, I told you I could get somethin' sad out of her.

**LOIS:** I hope you don't talk to Henrietta when you're alone.

**MILLIE:** (*A trifle guilty-sounding.*) Talk to Henrietta? Why, that'd make me look sorta crazy, wouldn't it? Talkin' to Henrietta. Imagine that. (*Looks down a bit sadly at the harmonica.*)

**GENE:** Does Henrietta talk to you?

**MILLIE:** (*Brightens.*) Reckon what she'd say? Maybe "Have mercy, Millie Wyatt, and use a breath mint once in while!"

**LOIS:** That's funny.

**GENE:** Use it in the act.

**MILLIE:** I will! Come on, Henrietta. Time for you and me to mosey along. (*Pockets the harmonica and gets up.*)

**LOIS:** So soon?

**MILLIE:** Places to go, things to do. Lots to think about. Thinkin's not my strong point, so I gotta leave plenty of time for it.

**GENE:** Always a pleasure to see you, Millie.

**LOIS:** Because he never has to buy a ticket.

**GENE:** I would gladly pay to see Millie perform. Naturally, I'd deduct my own percentage.

**MILLIE:** You wanna say goodbye to Henrietta? (*Takes out the harmonica again.*)

**GENE:** I may talk to myself, but never to inanimate objects.

**MILLIE:** Henrietta's not choosy. She says goodbye to you. (*A quick breath into the harmonica.*) Bye!

**LOIS:** Goodbye, Millie!

*MILLIE exits. LOIS is still amused, but GENE looks concerned. LOIS notices.*

**LOIS:** Okay, now what's the matter?

**GENE:** What she said about joining up with Kyle.

**LOIS:** Oh, she wasn't serious. Millie's never serious.

**GENE:** I hope you're right. And I hope she doesn't talk it over with Henrietta.

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