

ROMEOGRE AND JULIE ETTA

by Leslie Cardwell and Jessica Stephens

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ROMEOGRE AND JULIE ETTA

A One Act Hillbilly Comedy Adaptation

by Leslie Cardwell and Jessica Stephens

SYNOPSIS: Julie Etta is a Hillbilly and Romeogre is an Ogre, which means they should not be friends. Except they are and now everyone knows it. As the school dance approaches, Hillbillies and Ogres alike consider the rules about how they're supposed to mix and wonder if they really make sense after all. This play addresses questions of social equality and peer pressure with nods to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(11 females, 7 males, 0-1 either; gender flexible)

MS. LITVINENKO (f) Owns a store that sells collectibles and stamps, she is a quirky Russian who gives good advice in her own way, and sometimes it is relevant.
(24 lines)

OGRES:

ROMEOGRE (m) A nice friendly ogre who happens to be friends with a hillbilly, but keep it on the down low. (39 lines)

MARIOGRE (m) Younger ogre who is into video games. (20 lines)

FABIOGRE (m) Younger ogre who obsesses about his hair and wants to look nice. (14 lines)

MERCUTIOGRE (m) Leads argument for separation from the hillbillies, vaguely hostile; is best friend of Romeogre. (31 lines)

CAMEOGRE (f) Sweet and gentle younger ogre.
(12 lines)

- WILLOGRE (f)..... Snotty cheerleader, Queen Bee type. (28 lines)
- PATTIOGRE (f) Pushy and bossy, she likes to be in charge. (26 lines)
- JUNOGRE (f) Pessimistic, always expects the worst. (14 lines)
- CLEOGRE (f) Bookworm, believes in integration of ogres with hillbillies but is scared to buck the system. (30 lines)
- HILLBILLIES:**
- FANNY BELLE (f) Ditzzy and sweet. (30 lines)
- JULIE ETTA (f)..... Social activist who campaigns for reform on several fronts. (51 lines)
- DORTHULA MAE (f)..... Queen Bee. (42 lines)
- GOLDIE MAY (f) Tomboy, slightly younger. (13 lines)
- JIMMY JOE (m)..... Into video games. (23 lines)
- JIMMY LOGAN FARGO (m)..... Musician, slightly younger. (16 lines)
- LEROY JAYROY (m)..... Tough guy. (21 lines)
- TRIXIE SUE (f)..... Obsessed with Dolly Parton, prone to emotional outbursts. (28 lines)
- SCHOOL ANNOUNCEMENT (m/f)..... Pre-recorded or offstage voice. (3 lines.)

DURATION: 60 minutes.

TIME: Present day.

SETTING: A small town.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

SCENE 1: Julie Etta's Bedroom, Romeogre's Bedroom

SCENE 2: School Courtyard

SCENE 3: School Courtyard, Julie Etta's Bedroom, Romeogre's Bedroom

SCENE 4: School Courtyard

SCENE 5: Stamp Store

SCENE 6: Classroom

SCENE 7: School Courtyard, Classroom

SCENE 8: Courtyard

SET

The set for this play can be simple. In the original production, we used benches for the courtyard and classroom, and just a few set pieces for the bedrooms.

Scenes 1-5 take place in a courtyard, Julie Etta's bedroom, and Romeogre's bedroom. The bedrooms can be dsr and dsl while the courtyard is center stage. Julie Etta's bedroom needs a bed, a small table and a bench. Romeogre's has a bed, a small table and a stool. The bedrooms can be taken off during the blackout after scene 3.

The courtyard can later be used as the classroom in scenes 6 and 7. With benches placed diagonally facing the audience.

The stamp store in scene 5 can be suggested by just a counter, which Ms. Litvinenko stands behind.

In scene 8, a table is upstage center for the refreshments, and everything else is divided. One side is decorated by the ogre group with white lights, tulle etc and the other side is decorated by the hillbillies with hay bales and bandanas. Nothing has to be too elaborate and the decorating takes place onstage.

PROPS**SCENE 1**

- ☐ Book
- ☐ Nail Polish
- ☐ Handheld Video Game/Controllers
- ☐ Comic Books
- ☐ 5 Ice Cream Cones

SCENE 2

- ☐ Binder (contains pages of protective sheets holding stamps)
- ☐ A Stamp in Protective Sleeve
- ☐ Backpack

SCENE 3

- ☐ Shopping Bags
- ☐ Outfit
- ☐ Handheld Video Game/Controller
- ☐ Book

SCENE 4

- ☐ Lunch Trays/Lunch Boxes

SCENE 6

- ☐ Backpacks

SCENE 7

- ☐ Paper (dance committee instructions)
- ☐ (2) Long List
- ☐ Notebook and Pen
- ☐ Backpacks

SCENE 8

- ☐ Boxes of Decorations
- ☐ Trays of Food
- ☐ Tulle
- ☐ White Christmas Lights
- ☐ Candles
- ☐ Several Bales of Hay
- ☐ Several Bandanas
- ☐ Masking Tape
- ☐ CDs
- ☐ CD player

COSTUMES

The play is set in the present. Both the hillbillies and ogres are human, the major difference between them being their social group and interests. The ogres are affluent and fashionable, while the hillbillies are home-grown. This difference can be indicated in costuming and speech; the ogres may also share a particular fashion such as colored hair or a similar hairstyle. The writers do not recommend costuming the ogres in full face paint as it might detract from the conclusion of the play which emphasizes the common ground the groups share.

For the dance, the ogres should be dressed in semi-formal or church attire. The hillbillies can be a mixture of formal and flannel. The boys can be in overalls while the girls are in pretty dresses with flannel shirts over them. The entrances for Scene 8 are staggered to allow each group time to change into their party clothes during the course of the scene. Cameogre teaching the boys to waltz can be extended to allow extra time for the girls to change. Note that the first time the characters enter during this scene, they are in the regular clothes.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Accents are not necessary, but they are helpful both for the actors and the audience. In the original production, the hillbillies all spoke with a thick Southern twang while the ogres used very proper English (*though not British accents*). This helped each group of actors lean in to their characters and gave the audience another way to differentiate the groups. It's helpful if Ms. Litvinenko has a Russian accent, but, again, it's not strictly necessary.

SOUND EFFECTS

- ☒ Dismissal Bell Ring
- ☐ Chime Sound (announcement alert)
- ☐ Ogre Music
- ☐ Square Dance Music
- ☐ Dance Music

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

Romeorge and Julie Etta was performed at Family Theatre in Columbus, GA in June 2013. With the cast as follows:

ROMEORE.....	Christopher Hughes
MARIORE.....	Aleksander Hughes
FABIORE.....	John Pollock
MERCUTIORE.....	Joseph Bryant
CAMEORE.....	Chloe Boyd
WILLORE.....	Hannah Dickens
PATTIORE.....	Hannah Hughes
JUNORE.....	Maddie Miller
CLEORE.....	Blythe Davidson
FANNY BELLE.....	Melanie Rigsby
JULIE ETTA.....	Catherine Boyd
DORTHULA MAE.....	Mary Grace Boyd
GOLDIE MAY.....	Ellie Lamb
JIMMY JOE.....	Joe Pollock
JIMMY LOGAN FARGO.....	Josiah Ford
LEROY JAYROY.....	Noah Johnston
TRIXIE SUE.....	Sarah Hatley
MS. LITVINENKO.....	Reed Cardwell

SCENE 1

AT START: *Lights up stage right. FANNY BELLE, DORTHULA MAE, GOLDY MAY, TRIXIE SUE are in JULIE ETTA'S house; there is a bed, a bench, and a small table; the girls are painting their fingernails, except for GOLDIE MAY, who is reading a book. It is the last weekend before school starts.*

FANNY BELLE: ...and my mama said that just because we have to go to school with them don't mean we have to mix with them, if you know what I mean. It's like oil and water, she said. Oil and water.

DORTHULA MAE: I just can't believe we have to ride the same bus and eat in the same cafeteria. Why can't we have two high schools? My daddy said he's going to run for the school board and get something done about this. By the time our little brothers Jimmy May and Gary May go to the high school, they won't have to deal with this.

GOLDIE MAY: I'm so glad I'm not in high school yet. I can't imagine having to go to school every day with them. They're so... weird. And different. I heard they can't even whistle. And they only have one toe on each foot.

FANNY BELLE: I heard they sleep standing up.

JULIE ETTA: Don't be ridiculous. They can whistle. And they wear flip flops, so obviously they have toes. And horses sleep standing up, not ogres.

TRIXIE SUE: They have amazing horses at Dolly Parton's Dixie Stampede.

DORTHULA MAE: Don't you start Trixie Sue. No one cares about Dolly Parton's horses. And Julie Etta, since when are you the defender of ogres? How do you know they can whistle? Are you some kind of ogre expert? You'd think you're an ogre-lover. Besides, I've never seen them in flip flops.

JULIE ETTA: *(Rolling her eyes.)* You've never seen them in flip flops so that means they never wear them. Is that what you're saying? You've never seen Italy either. Does that mean it don't exist?

FANNY BELLE: Of course Italy exists. That's where we get Italian [pronounced: EYE-talian] food! Duh! Like, we just had spaghetti last night.

DORTHULA MAE: Moving on to, you know, important things. What are you wearing to school Monday? I have the most adorable new overalls, and my lucky flannel shirt.

TRIXIE SUE: And don't forget some jewelry or maybe a scarf. As Dolly Parton said in her outstanding portrayal of Truvy in *Steel Magnolias*, "...it is our ability to accessorize that separates us from the animals."

DORTHULA MAE: For once, I agree with Miss Dolly. A nice scarf can really dress up any outfit.

TRIXIE SUE: I'm going to wear my favorite Dolly Parton t-shirt. And I have some new earrings. Did you know Dolly Parton never wears the same outfit more than once? Even if she's only worn it for a few hours. I tried that but my mama told me to get off my high horse and wash some clothes.

JULIE ETTA: I bet she did, Trixie Sue. I think I'm wearing my *Save the Whales* shirt.

DORTHULA MAE: No! You can't! Please don't start that weird stuff on the very first day. I don't want you sitting at my lunch table signing people up for like the Peace Corps and stuff. Eww.

JULIE ETTA: Who said I was sitting at your table? Maybe I'll just go and sit with the ogres. I hear that Willow chick is pretty popular.

DORTHULA MAE: Willogre? The cheerleader? No way. You cannot sit with her. You can't even talk to her. I forbid it! And besides, your mama and daddy would kill you if they found out you were hanging out with ogres. Your dad's head would explode.

ALL laugh except JULIE ETTA, who looks pensive.

JULIE ETTA: I know. I was just kidding. I could never be friends with an ogre. ...

Lights up center stage. CAMEOGRE, WILLOGRE, PATTIOGRE, JUNOGRE, CLEOGRE enter stage left, each with an ice cream cone. They cross to exit stage right as they speak.

WILLOGRE: ...and Mummy said that just because we have to have to go to school with them does not mean we have to mix with them,

if you know what I mean. It would be like serving caviar on a saltine cracker. (*Shudders.*)

JUNOGRE: This is going to be the worst year ever.

PATTIOGRE: I know. It's bad enough we have to take gym class with them, and eat in the same cafeteria. I bet they don't even shower after gym class.

JUNOGRE: I heard they only take a shower once a year, in May! That's why they all get married in June. (*Beat.*) To their cousins.

CAMEOGRE: Eww gross. I'm so glad I don't have to go to school with them. I thought middle school was bad, but high school sounds just awful! I heard that none of them have any teeth. I think they just yank them out when they're babies.

JUNOGRE: I heard their teeth rot out before they're five because they eat pure sugar from the sugar bowl and drink sweet tea in their baby bottles.

CLEOGRE: (*To herself.*) Ridiculous!

WILLOGRE: What's that Cleo?

CLEOGRE: (*Sighs.*) Nothing.

Blackout; after a beat, lights up center stage; JIMMY JOE, JIMMY LOGAN FARGO, and LEROY JAYROY enter stage right and cross stage left as they speak.

JIMMY JOE: Did you hear that that Mario kid beat my high score? My name has been at the top for two years. There's no way that little punk is taking me down.

LEROY JAYROY: Dude, you're the best. There's no way he's taking you down! No ogre is worthy!

JIMMY LOGAN FARGO: Leroy has to go to school with ogres this year. (*Laughs.*) I'm sure glad I'm not in high school.

JIMMY JOE: Just wait till next year, pipsqueak.

JIMMY LOGAN FARGO: Don't call me pipsqueak!

LEROY JAYROY: All I know is those ogres better steer clear of us. Just because we have to go to school together don't mean we're gonna be best buds.

JIMMY JOE: And if they so much as look at our girls, it's game over.

ALL exit. Lights up stage left, ROMEOGRE, MARIOGRE, FABIOGRE, and MERCUTIOGRE are in ROMEOGRE'S bedroom, there is a bed, a small table, and a stool; the boys are playing handheld video games and reading comic books.

MARIOGRE: ...and then I said, dude! I beat his high score! I've only been trying since I was a kid!

MERCUTIOGRE: So you mean since last year? *(Laughs.)*

MARIOGRE: You're so funny.

MARIOGRE shoves MERCUTIOGRE playfully.

MERCUTIOGRE: Maybe you and Jimmy Joe can be BFF's.

MARIOGRE: Me? Be friends with that rube? Not a chance. I hear they don't even know how to read. Their teachers just pass them every year to get rid of them.

FABIOGRE: *(Fixing his hair.)* I hear they put motor oil in their hair to slick it back. Used motor oil!

MERCUTIOGRE: I wouldn't doubt it! Do they ever even bathe?

ROMEOGRE: Of course they bathe. You act like they're all a bunch of dirty, backwards hicks.

MERCUTIOGRE: Yes, that sounds about right. My father told me to stay away from them. Just because we go to school with them, does not mean we have to mix with them. They can do their thing, and we can do ours. And never the twain shall meet. *(Beat.)* You aren't planning some kind of social revolution are you?

ROMEOGRE: Who me? Of course not. I was just messing with you. I could never be friends with a hillbilly.

Blackout.

SCENE 2

AT START: *ROMEOGRE is in the courtyard outside the school. JULIE ETTA makes a bird whistle from offstage, ROMEOGRE whistles back and JULIE ETTA enters with backpack.*

ROMEOGRE: Did you get away from your house okay?

JULIE ETTA: Yeah. It was rough, but I made it. I didn't know if my friends were gonna let me outta there. Dorthula Mae was all riled up about school startin'.

ROMEOGRE: My friends were the same. They were all so worried about having to mix with unwashed bumpkins... no offense.

JULIE ETTA: None taken. Mine were worried about having to share the cafeteria with a bunch of uppity bluebloods... no offense.

ROMEOGRE: None taken.

JULIE ETTA: It was awful. They said all kind of crazy things about ogres. They said you can't whistle.

ROMEOGRE: What?! That's ridiculous! I'm a great whistler.

JULIE ETTA: I know. I tried to tell them they were talkin' like fools but then they wanted to know how I knew ogres could whistle... it got kind of awkward for a minute.

ROMEOGRE: Sorry about that.

JULIE ETTA: Yeah, me too. Let's not talk about this anymore. Look what I brought! *(From her backpack, she pulls a binder filled with pages of protective, plastic sheets holding stamps. She flips to the last page of the book.)* I went to Ms. Litvinenko's shop yesterday and she just got a new batch of stamps. I wanted to get them all, but I decided on four.

ROMEOGRE: *(Looking at binder.)* These are great, Julie. I think you made good choices. Did you get to spend some quality time with our favorite stamp dealer?

JULIE ETTA: Be nice. She's sweet. Just a little... odd. I only had to listen to three stories about the motherland this time.

ROMEOGRE: Well, that's an improvement. I thought you said you bought four. I only see three here.

JULIE ETTA: That's cause' I saved the best for last. *(Pulling a stamp in a small protective case from her pocket.)* Check this out.

ROMEOGRE: Whoa! *(Takes the stamp from JULIE ETTA and admires it.)* The thirty-two cent screaming eagle with reversed color. I've never even seen one in person.

JULIE ETTA: And a misprint. Look there, below the eagle's left wing. Do you see it?

ROMEOGRE: Is that a...

JULIE ETTA: A pineapple. Yes, it is. This is a color reversed screaming eagle with a pineapple misprint. Only two known to exist and you're holding one of them.

ROMEOGRE: This is amazing. I cannot believe it!

DORTHULA MAE: (*Enters stage right.*) Neither can I. I absolutely can't believe my eyes. It sure looks like you two are all buddy-buddy, but that just can't be right.

TRIXIE SUE and FANNY BELLE enter stage right.

TRIXIE SUE: ...which is just ridiculous, because anybody who knows anything knows that Dolly's so much more than a singer. I mean, she's an actress, an author, a philanthropist...

FANNY BELLE: (*To TRIXIE SUE, as she notices JULIE ETTA and ROMEOGRE.*) Wait a second.

TRIXIE SUE: A philanthropist, Fanny Belle, as in someone who gives money to charity.

FANNY BELLE: I know that. I meant look at what's goin' on here. (*To DORTHULA MAE.*) What's wrong?

DORTHULA MAE: I'm just not sure. I found these two here, in secret, chattin' it up. Looks like they're friends.

FANNY BELLE: I'm sure that ain't what's goin' on here, is it Julie? (*To DORTHULA MAE.*) I mean, I'm sure there's a real good reason that those two are here. Like, maybe she's gonna hire him to do her math homework or somethin'. (*To JULIE ETTA.*) Go on, Julie, tell us what's really happenin'.

DORTHULA MAE: Yes. Explain yourselves. And what exactly is in that notebook?

FABIOGRE: (*Offstage.*) Oh, I think I see him up there.

FABIOGRE, MARIOGRE, and MERCUTIOGRE enter stage left.

MERCUTIOGRE: (*As he enters.*) Romeo, we've been looking for you for an hour. The game is about to start (*As he sees the HILLBILLIES.*) ...What's all this?

DORTHULA MAE: That's just what we're tryin' to find out.

MARIOGRE: Nobody asked you, hick.

TRIXIE SUE: Hey! Watch your mouth.

JIMMY JOE and LEROY JAYROY enter stage right.

LEROY JAYROY: Where'd you girls go? We thought y'all were gonna meet us to go giggin' frogs.

FANNY BELLE: Well, we ran into a bit of a situation. It seems Julie and this ogre are... um... friends... or somethin'.

FABIOGRE: What?! Not possible. There must be some other explanation. What's the real story, Romeo? (*Crossing to JULIE ETTA and taking the binder from her.*) Did she take this from you? What is it?

JULIE ETTA: It's mine. Give it back.

JULIE ETTA reaches to take the binder from FABIOGRE and he pushes her arm away.

LEROY JAYROY: (*To FABIOGRE.*) Hey! Keep your hands off her!

DORTHULA MAE: (*To FABIOGRE.*) Just what do you think you're doing, you oaf.

ROMEOGRE takes the binder from FABIOGRE and hands it to JULIE ETTA.

ROMEOGRE: Here. (*To OGRES.*) It's fine, guys.

JIMMY JOE: (*Crosses to ROMEOGRE and pushes him away from JULIE ETTA.*) Don't touch her!

MARIOGRE: (*Pushing JIMMY JOE.*) Back off, bumpkin!

ALL begin to argue loudly as the OGRE BOYS and the HILLBILLY BOYS square off for a fight; TRIXIE SUE sits on the ground and cries.

JULIE ETTA: Stop it! This is ridiculous! Why are you fighting? No one here has done anything to hurt anyone else. There's no reason for us to be fighting each other.

LEROY JAYROY: We have to protect you from them. Especially that one (*Points to ROMEOGRE.*).

JULIE ETTA: I don't need protecting from him.

JULIE ETTA takes a deep breath; ALL turn to look at her.

JULIE ETTA: He's my friend and he has been for a long time. We didn't want to tell anyone because we thought you'd react, well, like you reacted.

ALL gasp and look around in disbelief.

ROMEOGRE: We were afraid you wouldn't understand, but we should not have kept it from you. There is nothing wrong with us being friends.

MERCUTIOGRE: There most certainly is something wrong with you two being friends! It violates all the laws of nature. There's a reason that we're so different – we're supposed to stay separate. Have you ever heard of any good coming of mixing? Why do you think our parents do everything they can to protect us from them?

TRIXIE SUE: We ain't exactly linin' up to join your country club.

DORTHULA MAE crosses to JULIE ETTA and gently pulls her slightly downstage.

DORTHULA MAE: Julie, you know this isn't what we do. Are you tryin' to kill your mamma and daddy? They are important people. Don't you know this "friendship" is gonna make people talk? Is this some kind of rebellion?

JULIE ETTA: No, of course not. I wouldn't ever want to do anything to hurt my mama and daddy.

FANNY BELLE: (*Crosses to JULIE ETTA.*) And just what do you think they're going to feel like when they find out about this little situation?

MARIOGRE: (*To ROMEOGRE.*) And what about you? This has gone on long enough and it's obvious we can't trust you to make the right decision for yourself. We need to go talk to your parents.

DORTHULA MAE: Come on, y'all. (*To JULIE ETTA.*) We need to go talk to your folks. I'm sure they're gonna have somethin' to say about this.

ALL OGRES and ALL HILLBILLIES exit to opposite sides of the stage; blackout.

SCENE 3

AT START: *Lights up center stage; school courtyard; CAMEOGRE and CLEOGRE are seated.*

CAMEOGRE: So, what do you think will happen to them?

CLEOGRE: I don't know. All examples from literature and history indicate they'll be shunned if they decide to continue their friendship. You know, I don't see that they did anything so terrible, but everyone else seems to think it's the end of civilization. They're friends – what's the big deal?

WILLOGRE, PATTIOGRE, and JUNOGRE enter carrying shopping bags.

PATTIOGRE: The big deal is they crossed a line and it cannot be allowed. Do you really think what they were doing is acceptable, Cleo?

CLEOGRE: *(Her courage deflating.)* Ummm... I don't know.

CAMEOGRE: I just hate to see everyone so mad at them.

WILLOGRE: They deserve it. They made a choice and now they have to suffer the consequences. I'm bored. Let's talk about something else. Look at what I bought to wear for the first day of school. *(Takes an outfit from one of the shopping bags.)*

CAMEOGRE: That's cute! What did you buy, Juno?

JUNOGRE: I didn't buy anything. *(Indicating the bags she's holding.)* These are Willow's bags. I couldn't find anything I liked.

PATTIOGRE: Big shock there, Juno could not find anything that made her happy.

JUNOGRE: I can be happy. I just also happen to recognize the futility of so many things in life. I'm a realist.

CLEOGRE: What about you, Patti? Did you get anything?

PATTIOGRE: No. My mom won't let me buy clothes without her being there. She says I make "bizarre" choices.

JUNOGRE: She has a point.

PATTIOGRE: What is that supposed to mean?

CAMEOGRE: *(Keeping the peace.)* I think she means that you have a unique sense of style.

CLEOGRE: I'm sure that's what she meant.

WILLOGRE: Alright, girls, it's time to move on. Let's go back to my house and see which accessories I'm going to put with my new outfits.

ALL exit; Lights up stage right, JULIE ETTA'S bedroom where JULIE ETTA sits on the bed reading; as the lights rise, FANNY BELLE, DORTHULA MAE, TRIXIE SUE, and GOLDIE MAY enter.

TRIXIE SUE: Hey, Julie, can we come in?

JULIE ETTA: If you have to.

GOLDIE MAY: Come on, now. Don't be mad at them. They were just tryin' to help you. So you got grounded, big deal. A lot worse things could've happened if you'd kept being friends with that ogre boy.

FANNY BELLE: Exactly! Like social shame, mockery, rejection, cooties, ostriches...

TRIXIE SUE: Ostriches?

FANNY BELLE: You know, when everyone pushes you away, by yourself, and won't let you be part of the group.

DORTHULA MAE: You mean "ostracism."

FANNY BELLE: Do I? Alright then.

GOLDIE MAY: And she's right. Choosing an ogre for a friend means you won't have any other friends. Do you really want to start high school with no friends?

TRIXIE SUE: It would be an awfully lonely road with only one friend – and that being a boy. Who would you sit with on the bus? He don't live on this side of town. Who'd be your partner in gym? It's pretty hard to turn a jump rope by yourself.

JULIE ETTA: I wouldn't lose all my friends. I'd still have y'all

JULIE ETTA indicates FANNY BELLE, TRIXIE SUE, and DORTHULA MAE, who all avoid looking at her.

JULIE ETTA: Wait! You mean you wouldn't still be my friends if I decided to stay friends with Romeogre?

FANNY BELLE: We can't! My mama said there's a natural separation and if you choose to be friends with them, you're choosing to be enemies with us. And also she'd take away my phone.

JULIE ETTA: You can't be serious! We've been friends since elementary school and now I do one little thing you don't like, and you're ready to walk away.

DORTHULA MAE: Don't get mad at us, Miss Change-the-World. This is the way things are. You can't have everything you want. Life don't work that way. You've got to pick – us or the ogres.

Blackout stage right; lights up stage left in ROMEOGRE'S bedroom; MERCUTIOGRE and FABIOGRE watch MARIOGRE play a handheld video game calling out instructions about the game; ROMEOGRE sits away from them reading.

MERCUTIOGRE, FABIOGRE and MARIOGRE: (*Ad lib.*) Look out behind you; He's got a sword; Put up your shield; Across the bridge; Now!

MARIOGRE: Just... one... more... door... I made it! Level seven! I cannot believe it. I've been stuck on level six for months.

FABIOGRE: That was pretty extreme. Romeo, did you see that?

ROMEOGRE: Huh? Oh, yeah, good job, Mario.

MERCUTIOGRE: What's wrong with you? You're acting as if you don't even care that we're here.

ROMEOGRE: (*Without looking up.*) Yeah.

MERCUTIOGRE: What?!

ROMEOGRE: Sorry. No, I mean, it's fine that you're here.

FABIOGRE: It's "fine"? I only like to hear that word applied to my hair which, by the way, is responding very well to the new shampoo/conditioner/cream rinse system I've been using, thanks for noticing.

MARIOGRE: Are you still mad at us about the situation with that backwoods chick?

ROMEOGRE: Watch it, she's my friend.

MERCUTIOGRE: (*Rising.*) No, you watch it. Do you understand what you're doing when you say she's your friend? You're crossing the line that naturally separates us from them. Do you think anyone is going to follow you?

ROMEOGRE: I don't care if anyone follows me.

FABIOGRE: Really? You don't care if you're alone without any friends?

ROMEOGRE: I'll have a friend. Remember, whether you like it or not, Julie Etta is my friend.

MERCUTIOGRE: Not for long. There aren't many good things I can say about those hillbillies, but at least they have enough sense to keep their offspring out from under our feet. Do you think all of a sudden that girl's parents are going to take the leash off and let her be friends with you?

MARIOGRE: You basically have to choose between staying with us, where you belong, or being alone.

FABIOGRE: We would miss you, but this isn't a situation where we have any choice. We have to stay away from them.

ROMEOGRE: But why do we have to? It doesn't make any sense. If we would all just decide—

MERCUTIOGRE: (*Interrupting.*) There is only one decision. Do you want to be my friend or my enemy?

Blackout.

SCENE 4

AT START: *The school courtyard; FANNY BELLE, DORTHULA MAE, JIMMY JOE, and LEROY JAYROY are sitting in a small group eating lunch. MERCUTIOGRE, WILLOGRE, JUNOGRE, CLEOGRE and PATTIOGRE sit on benches on the other side of the courtyard.*

FANNY BELLE: ...and my mama said we were doing the right thing when we told Julie Etta's mom. She almost fell outta her chair when she found out those two had been sneaking around.

JIMMY JOE: My dad was furious. He said if she was his daughter, he would ground her till she's forty.

FANNY BELLE: Mama told me to watch myself. She said that Romeogre is just a wolf in cheap clothing. I told her "no mama, he wears nice stuff from the mall. Them ogres don't shop at the Walmart."

DORTHULA MAE: That would be "wolf in sheep's clothing."

FANNY BELLE: (*Shrugs.*) If you say so. I never got close enough to an ogre to look at the fabric content.

DORTHULA MAE: Fanny Belle, you are such a ditz, but we just love you. My mom just about went through the roof when she found out.

JULIE ETTA enters and walks up behind DORTHULA MAE with a lunch tray.

DORTHULA MAE: She said if God had intended for us to mix with them he would have made us all the same.

JULIE ETTA: *(Puts her lunch tray down angrily.)* He did make us all the same, Dorthula Mae. He made us all in His image. That's what my Bible says anyway. *(Stalks off, without her tray, and sits at another table alone.)*

LEROY JAYROY: Umm, is anyone going to eat that? *(No answer.)* I hate to see good food go to waste. Or even bad food. *(Grabs tray.)*

JIMMY JOE: Dude, I think you would eat anything that didn't crawl away. *(Looking at DORTHULA MAE'S tray.)* You gonna eat that?

ROMEOGRE enters near JULIE ETTA. They look at each other for a long time, but neither speaks. MERCUTIOGRE notices and comes up to rescue ROMEOGRE.

MERCUTIOGRE: Hey man. Come sit with us. Pattiogre was just giving us tips on conditioning our hair. Seems olive oil does nicely. *(Laughs awkwardly.)* Fabiogre probably uses it.

ROMEOGRE: Yeah. He's always obsessing about his hair.

ROMEOGRE looks at JULIE ETTA then follows MERCUTIOGRE to the table.

WILLOGRE: You know what else is good for your hair? Egg yolks.

CLEOGRE: And mayonnaise. I read a beauty book that only used common household ingredients for all your beauty needs.

PATTIOGRE: Eww, I can't stand mayonnaise. It's totally gross and makes you fat.

WILLOGRE: Well we're not making you a sandwich – just offering hair advice.

JUNOGRE: Oh no, I had tuna salad for lunch yesterday. I'm going to be fat!

PATTIOGRE: (*Ignoring JUNOGRE.*) Maybe you should give some hair advice to that Dorthula Mae. She has dull, limp hair. And split ends.

JUNOGRE: She does? I never noticed. But I count my split ends every night. I'm probably going to go bald.

WILLOGRE: (*Ignoring JUNOGRE.*) Can you believe she said she is going to try out for captain of the cheerleaders next year? As if any hillbilly will ever be captain!

ROMEOGRE: At least not while an ogre is the Cheer Coach. Coach Angelogre isn't exactly unbiased. Anyway, I think I lost my appetite. See ya! (*Exits*)

Lights change. ALL exit. Courtyard after school, same day; JULIE ETTA enters with JIMMY JOE and LEROY JAYROY.

JIMMY JOE: Man, I'm pretty sure I flunked that algebra test. I didn't remember any of the formulas. I can't believe how hard high school is.

JULIE ETTA: Didn't you study last night? The study guide covered all of them, and Mr. Rayburn went over them in class yesterday.

JIMMY JOE: Well I was planning to, but then Jimmy Logan came over to show me his new electric guitar. That thing is sweet! And Leroy Jayroy came over and we played video games and I forgot about the test.

LEROY JAYROY: Hey don't blame me. My mom made me study before I came over. I think I made at least a C-. Hey maybe you could ask Cleogre to tutor you. I hear she's a brainiac.

JIMMY JOE: You're such a comedian. I can see it now. "Mom, Cleogre is coming over after school to help me with algebra." She would throw something at me!

LEROY JAYROY: She would throw a punch at you. Miss Flossie Lou ain't no joke! Your mama has quite a left hook. Remember when she and Aunt Myrtle were in that chili cook-off and Aunt Myrtle accused her of using roadkill?

JIMMY JOE: I started running as soon as she said it cause' I knew it weren't gonna be pretty.

JULIE ETTA: I remember it took three deputies and the sheriff to pull them two apart. And they were both disqualified. I think Hettie Sue

Quattlebaum won that year. She was as happy as a pig dipped in mud.

JIMMY JOE: And do you remember the year that that uppity ogre woman had the nerve to enter the cook-off and her chili had beans in it!

LEROY JAYROY: I had forgotten that! She just walked right in there like she belonged!

JIMMY JOE: I thought Raylene Mansell was going to blow a gasket when she bit into it and tasted beans!

JIMMY JOE stops short when he sees ROMEOGRE enter stage right.

JULIE ETTA: (*Miserable.*) I gotta go. I'm supposed to meet Goldie May and Fanny Belle in town. (*Exits.*)

JIMMY JOE: (*To ROMEOGRE.*) You need to stay away from her.

ROMEOGRE: I'm just walking home. It's a free country.

JIMMY JOE: Yeah whatever, man.

ROMEOGRE and JIMMY JOE glare at each other as they move to exit; blackout.

SCENE 5

AT START: *MS. LITVINENKO'S stamp store. ROMEOGRE, MARIOGRE, JUNOGRE, CAMEOGRE and CLEOGRE are in the store. MS. LITVINENKO stands behind a table that holds a small display case. ROMEOGRE is haggling with MS. LITVINENKO, while the others are clearly bored.*

MS. LITVINENKO: Twenty-five dollars and that's my final offer. In Russia, we have saying. "When money speaks, the truth keeps silent."

ROMEOGRE: But Ms. Litvinenko it's not worth more than twenty. And I'll throw in my extra Bret Harte stamp; you can easily get five dollars for it.

MS. LITVINENKO: My dear, sweet Romeogre, the Bret Harte is so common, no one would want to buy it. In Russia we have saying,

"Your elbow is close, yet you cannot bite it." Besides, I have someone coming in later to look at this one, and they are willing to pay twenty-six dollars for it. So why I want to sell to you for twenty dollars? I have to eat you know, and pay rent, and—

CLEOGRE: (*Interrupting.*) Hey Romeo! Can we get a move on? The library closes at six and I need to get a book for my research paper.

MARIOGRE: But you said it's not due for another six weeks!

JUNOGRE: I'm sure I'll fail mine. I don't know how to write a research paper.

CAMEOGRE: You'll be fine. You still have plenty of time. I'm sure your teacher will cover everything you need to know. I can help you.

JUNOGRE: Would you? That would be great. You're so smart. I'm not the quickest bunny in the forest.

CLEOGRE: What a terrible thing to say!

ALL laugh.

MS. LITVINENKO: So what's it gonna be Romeogre? In Russia we have saying: "There was – there wasn't."

ROMEOGRE: I can't do it today. I'll have to come back when I get my allowance.

JULIE ETTA enters with GOLDIE MAY, FANNY BELLE, and JIMMY LOGAN FARGO.

MS. LITVINENKO: There's the buyer now. It's your friend Julie Etta. I'm sure you won't mind losing such a sweet stamp to your best friend. (*Pointedly, looking over her glasses.*) This stamp is hard to find, but a true friend is rare indeed. In Russia we have saying. "One does not regret giving one's own earring to one's dear friend."

Awkward silence.

CLEOGRE: Well, we better get going to the library. You coming Romeogre?

MARIOGRE: Let's go man. I'll buy you a cheeseburger at Johnson's.

ROMEOGRE: Yeah, I'll see you later Ms. Litvinenko.

MS. LITVINENKO: Goodbye kids. Stay out of trouble. And eat your vegetables.

ROMEOGRE, MARIOGRE, JUNOGRE, CAMEOGRE and CLEOGRE exit.

GOLDIE MAY: *(Kindly, trying to make JULIE ETTA more comfortable.)*

So why don't you show me the new stamp you were wanting, Julie Etta. Are you going to buy it today?

FANNY BELLE: Yeah, I know you have money from babysitting the twins.

JIMMY LOGAN FARGO: Dude, I need a babysitting gig, I want to buy a new amp, and I need some serious money.

JULIE ETTA: *(Smiling.)* Jimmy, who in their right mind would leave their kids in your care?

JIMMY LOGAN FARGO: Anyone who knows me! Right Ms. Litvinenko? You would leave your kids with me, wouldn't you? I mean, if you had kids.

MS. LITVINENKO: In Russia, we have saying. "The bird is known by its flight."

JIMMY LOGAN FARGO: I don't know what that means.

MS. LITVINENKO: "Every sandpiper praises his own swamp."

JIMMY LOGAN FARGO: Huh?

MS. LITVINENKO: "Every man to his business." *(Beat.)* "What Jupiter is allowed to do, cattle are not."

JIMMY LOGAN FARGO: Ummm

MS. LITVINENKO: "Every cricket must know its hearth." *(Beat.)* "Everything is good in its season."

JIMMY LOGAN FARGO shakes his head.

MS. LITVINENKO: "Every vegetable has its time."

GOLDIE MAY: May I try?

MS. LITVINENKO: Sure. Go right ahead.

GOLDIE MAY: Every musician is known by the instrument he plays.

JIMMY LOGAN FARGO: Oh I get it! So does that mean you would let me babysit?

JULIE ETTA: No, but she would let you play her guitar.

JIMMY LOGAN FARGO nods, *satisfied*.

JULIE ETTA: Ms. Litvinenko, I think I'm going to wait on buying that stamp. And... if someone else wants to buy it... I mean, you should sell it and get your money for it, you know?

MS. LITVINENKO: Yes dear, I know. In Russia, we have saying. "Friendship is friendship, but money has to be counted."

JULIE ETTA: Yes, I see. (*She doesn't.*) Well, bye for now. I'll see you later.

MS. LITVINENKO: Goodbye kids. Stay out of trouble. And eat your vegetables. (*Beat.*) Julie Etta. In Russia, we have saying. "Tell me who your friend is, and I'll tell you who you are."

ALL exit except MS. LITVINENKO; blackout.

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