

Earnestly Earnestine

*By
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STORY OF THE PLAY

Seafood tycoon Willard Witherspoon has been looking for his great-niece Earnestine since she was lost with her parents in the Amazon eighteen years earlier. Though her parents died, Willard has good reason to believe that Earnestine survived. And when a letter arrives confirming the fact that an Earnestine was adopted from a long-since-closed orphanage, Willard's hopes soar. Unfortunately, the name of the adoptive parents has been lost.

Undaunted, and with the help of his secretary, Dudley, and his housekeeper, Beulah, Willard launches a search for his Earnestine so he can leave his fortune to her when he dies. After a media announcement, Earnestines appear from every corner of the country creating a nightmare at Witherspoon Manor. Dudley convinces Willard to have the Earnestines send in résumés, and then narrow the field.

Willard finally settles on four Earnestines to invite to his mansion for the weekend. Earnestine Sweet is a model and actress whose stage mother Dee Dee is definitely in control. Earnestine Tilly is a shy school teacher, while Earnestine McCoy is a lively massage therapist. Earnestine Krupp is a waitress whose boyfriend Dewey is determined to make his mark as an artist—just as soon as Earnestine can pay for his one-man gallery show.

Although Willard interviews the Earnestines and gives them various tests to see if any of them are really his great-niece, he also hires a detective, Nelda Crane, to do some undercover work. As the weekend progresses, it becomes apparent who the real Earnestine is, but when Nelda produces the results of a DNA test, the unexpected result almost breaks hearts and scuttles a budding romance. However, quick-thinking Dudley manages to reveal the importance of being the real Earnestine.

Earnestly Earnestine

- 3 -

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 9 w)

EDNA BRADSHAW: A customer at Dave's Diner.

EARNESTINE KRUPP: 20, waitress.

DEWEY ROYAL: 20s, an artist and Earnestine's fiancé.

WILLARD WITHERSPOON: Late 60s, a business tycoon.

EARNESTINE DELANE: 20, first Earnestine candidate.

DUDLEY FAIRCHILD: 30, Witherspoon's secretary.

BEULAH BINNS: 50s, the housekeeper.

EARNESTINE SWEET: 20, a model and actress.

DEE DEE SWEET: 40s, her mother.

EARNESTINE TILLY: 20, a schoolteacher.

EARNESTINE MCCOY: 20, a message therapist.

NELDA CRANE: 30s, a private eye.

(Doubling: Because Earnestine Delane only appears in Scene 2, the role could be doubled with that of Edna, Dee Dee or Nelda.)

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I

Scene 1: Dave's Diner, evening.

Scene 2: Witherspoon Manor, the study, several days later.

Scene 3: The study, several days later.

Scene 4: The study, an hour or two later.

Act II

Scene 1: The study, that evening.

Scene 2: Dave's Diner, the following day.

Scene 3: The study, several hours later.

SETTING

Dave's Diner: Played before the curtain. Small tables, one left, one right. Table right set with one chair, table left with two chairs.

Study at Witherspoon Manor: Fireplace up center with a giant, very fake-looking stuffed fish hanging above the mantel. On the fish is written "Old Man and the Seafood." To the right of the fireplace is a large window with floor-to-ceiling curtains open enough so we can glimpse trees and bushes outside. To the left of the fireplace is a desk with a chair behind it. A letter, a heavy book and a small photograph (facing upstage) sit on desk. To the right of the fireplace are two comfortable chairs with a small table between them. A throw and pillow are on one of the chairs. Fisherman prints and pictures decorate the walls, and the room has a decidedly masculine appearance. The SR entrance leads to the front of the home while the SL entrance leads to the rest of the manor.

See end of script for Costume and Props notes.

ACT I
Scene 1

(Played before the curtain: Dave's Diner, evening. Both tables are covered with checkered tablecloths. Table at right has a stack of dirty dishes sitting on it. AT RISE OF LIGHTS: EDNA sits nervously at table right checking her watch, downing the last drop of her coffee, waiting for her check. She occasionally reads the newspaper she is holding. At table left, DEWEY sits casually sketching. EARNESTINE KRUPP, wearing an apron and nametag, enters right.)

EDNA: Excuse me! Miss!

(KRUPP ignores EDNA, moving to DEWEY.)

KRUPP: Hi, Dewey! Dave said you were here.

EDNA: Miss?

DEWEY: I had to come see my favorite girl!

KRUPP: I don't get off for another hour.

DEWEY: Just tell Dave you got a headache.

KRUPP: We're too busy. What're you drawing?

DEWEY: That lady over there.

(DEWEY points into audience, then holds up the picture so all can see a terrible Picasso-like, but childish, drawing.)

KRUPP: Oh, Dewey!

DEWEY: I've tried to capture her ... complexity.

KRUPP: She's complex, all right.

DEWEY: Yeah ... there's just something ... paradoxical about her -- the way she smiles and yet looks like she's frowning.

KRUPP: That's Mrs. Williams. She has trouble keeping her false teeth in.

DEWEY: Well, there's still a certain ... I don't know ... primitive quality about her.

Earnestly Earnestine

- 6 -

KRUPP: She's the lady who lives in the underground house ... you know ... she was on that Travel Channel show "The Weirdest Homes in America."

DEWEY: Yeah?

KRUPP: You didn't even know her and you just ... sensed all that about her. You're a genius, Dewey. A real genius.

DEWEY: Too bad the world doesn't recognize it!

KRUPP: As soon as you have your first show the world will be at your feet.

DEWEY: You mean that?

KRUPP: With all my heart!

EDNA: Excuse me! I need my check.

KRUPP: Duty calls!

(KRUPP backs to right, pulls check from her apron and drops it. The check falls to the floor rather than on EDNA'S table.)

EDNA: Thanks!

(EDNA picks up bill as KRUPP moves back to DEWEY who's now back to sketching.)

DEWEY: You know, Earnestine ... it wouldn't cost all that much to put together a gallery showing. I mean ... you've probably got enough in your cookie jar to cover it.

KRUPP: Oh, Dewey, I don't even have cookies in my cookie jar.

DEWEY: C'mon! I know you got something stashed away for a rainy day.

KRUPP: It's not raining, Dewey.

DEWEY: *(Hurt.)* Don't you want to marry me?

KRUPP: *(Quickly, brightly.)* I do! I do!

DEWEY: *(With a smile.)* Sounds like you've been practicing! *(Sadly.)* But until my ship comes in

KRUPP: Can't you show the gallery owners your paintings? I'm sure they'll see how talented you are

DEWEY: Look, Earnestine, I want my ship to come in by itself. You can't expect me to go drag it into dock.

End of Freeview

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