

The Electric Preacher

A Monologue by Dan Kehde

Selected from his collection, "1400 Boxes of Jello and Other Monologues"

Cast: 1

Length: 8 pages of dialogue (2155 words)

Performance time: About 7 minutes

The Story

A young man talks about his good friend Bucky who tried to become a "healer" as well as a preacher at tent revivals. After considerable practice, Bucky learns a trick involving a few wires to get a spark of reaction. Trouble is, one night Bucky steps into a puddle of water and gets a shocking reaction himself!

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THE ELECTRIC PREACHER

Now, don't get all offended by this. Nobody's gonna start shootin' the tires off'n each others' pickups on account of this. Understand? And Bucky Olafson, he's got the biggest Ford dealership now this side of the Ohio for four counties easy, so he's got no reason to get out of sorts with me telling this now. I don't even think he's preachin' anymore, is he? I don't think so.

Now, I was there, you can ask Bucky, but I was one of his handlers – it's whatcha call the guys that stand on either side of the preacher when the folks start comin' up? Bucky was doin' all right even then, and him just starting out too, but those first few years were tough going. I'd be out at Uncle Jack's till suppertime and then have to clean up and be at the church – where ever it was – and sometimes it was clean over in Pulaski County someplace – in time to set up before the folks arrived. Bucky, he and his cousin – you ever meet him? His name was Pesky or something like that – squirrely little guy, had that thing wrong with him where he'd kind of twitch off to one side every once in a while, you ever seen that? Anyway, he and Bucky would go down there early in the day and get some of the church folks to help set up the tent. That way the rest of us could keep our jobs and Bucky could keep most of the money. Which was all right with me, you know. Bucky earned every cent he made out there, believe me.

Now Bucky, he was a first-rate preacher man. He could get them folks so riled up and feeling the spirit of the Lord that

they'd see Jesus Himself in every cloud and shadow and tree limb for weeks after. You know that feeling, right? Bucky was a good revival man. And the more he preached, the more folks'd come down out of the hollers to hear him. Good folks, too, poor folks but good ones. We'd be fed of an evening, I'll tell you. Some nights that tent would so full they'd be sitting in their folding chairs well out into the field, and Bucky, he might walk away with maybe ten bucks total. But they'd all bring food and set it out on tables along behind the church and we'd eat five kinds of bean salad and taters and ramps and pork and every way you could fix chicken.

Along about that time, Mr. Oral Roberts became a big-time TV preacher. And down in Cedarville we got us our first TV station, WCVT, which would run his hour every Saturday afternoon, twixt the Gillette Pro Bowling Tour and the Louisiana Hayride. Bucky loved Oral Roberts the way you love Mickey Mantle or Joe Montana. He was his idol. He'd invite us down to the store on a Saturday and he and all of us handlers would sit right there in the store window and watch as hundreds of folks would line up in front of Mr. Oral Roberts to be healed by the power of the Lord. You seen it, right? And each one would come up and Mr. Oral Roberts he'd place his hand on the person's forehead and yell out "Heal!" and the poor soul would fall to the ground just a shakin' and then lie there, all still.

"How does he do that?" Bucky would say.

"Power of the Lord," someone would answer.

"Amen." And Bucky'd just shake his head.

Now, like I said, Bucky was a good preacher and there was no one ever been to one of his services that ever left feeling like he hadn't shaken hands with the Lord Himself in one way or another. But, as the summer passed, I could see it in Bucky's eyes that he wanted to be a healer just like Mr. Oral Roberts. Yessir. He'd even practice on us sometimes, to see if he could do it.

"Jesse," he'd say as we were all sitting down to one of those fine dinners after the service, "Jesse, I think I've found it. Come on."

"Aw, Bucky, not again. My chicken'll get cold."

"Come on, you coward."

"Aw, Bucky."

And he'd take me over behind a tree or someplace and put his hand on my shoulder and look up just like he was gathering all the power that the Almighty could pass down, and he'd take the heel of his right hand, just like Pastor Roberts, and he'd push against my forehead and yell, "Heal! Heal! Healllllll!"

"Anything?" And I'd shake my head. "Can I go eat my chicken now?" But I felt sorry for him. I know what he felt. He felt like if he was such a good Christian preacher why didn't God give him this power.

"Jesse," he'd say, "maybe I got the gift and I just don't know how to use it." And then sometimes, "Do you think it's a trick?"

And I didn't answer. You gotta believe in some things and in some things you don't. And that's gotta be up to you, and I ain't about to tell a preacher exactly what I do and don't believe, not unless I want to spend the rest of the night being convinced of what I don't and being talked out of what I do. But then, one night, about the middle of August, Bucky got the sign.

It was Saturday and we'd just spent the hour with Pastor Roberts and Bucky was gettin' real upset over how he still couldn't make folks fall on the floor and shake and all. But his mom'd made us up some barbecue and we'd promised not to make a mess out of the window display so she'd let us sit back up in the window to watch the hayride and, I think, just kind of calm Bucky down.

Now his dad was the town repairman back then – folks would bring in toasters and clocks and radios and such and Tom'd try to fix 'em – he was pretty good at it too, one of those town geniuses who never got past seventh grade – and his workbench was along the wall about halfway back so he could watch the store and still work at the same time. Well, it seems like Edna Greeley had bought one of the new TV's from Tom a few months before and just couldn't seem to get it to work right and had had little Eddie cart it back into the shop to see if Tom could fix it. So Tom was back there working on the thing while we were all up front in the window watching the hayride and eating barbecue when Tom puts a screwdriver in the wrong place and POW! and he flies across the room, lands flat on his back and starts to shake all over.

And Bucky's mom runs over to her husband and is screaming, "Call an ambulance, call an ambulance!" while Bucky is busy shaking the old man and yelling, "Dad, wake up, wake up, you've got to tell me how you did that!"

Now I'm not quite sure, but it seems to me Tom was laid up in the hospital over to Edgerton for a week or two, and so Bucky spent a whole lot of time in the store and especially at the old man's workbench. It wasn't but a week or two after that, right around the end of August, that Bucky suddenly got the power, if you know what I mean. "Jesse," he says to me, "I got the power this time. Come on."

"Bucky, I'm not finished with my bean salad."

"The Lord won't wait for bean salad, come on."

Only this time he took me back into the tent to a place beside the altar and he had me stand on a piece of carpet I'd never seen before. "You ready?" There were a couple of folks still lingering around the back of the tent. "I'm hungr ..."
And he put his palm on my forehead and I was out cold.

"Jesse, Jesse, wake up. Wake up!"

"Bucky, what in the world did you do to me?" And then I heard voices coming from the back of the tent. "He's a healer. He's a healer. Everyone come quick."

Well, they got me back on my feet just in time to start lining folks up to be healed by Bucky's strange new power. They just dropped their plates and came running right back in. I've got to tell you it was just like Pastor Oral Roberts.

End of Freeview

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