

Law & Elvis

A comedy in one act
By Jeff Zimmer

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DEDICATION

To my niece Samantha whose love for a certain police procedural show is only exceeded by my love for her and for all things Elvis.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Based on a real-life 1977 incident in which three oddball characters tried to steal the late Elvis Presley's body out of the cemetery, "Law & Elvis" is also a screwball parody of the long running "Law & Order" TV series. Approximately 35 minutes.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

The show was first performed at ELATE's (Emmanuel Lutheran Actors' Theatre Ensemble) Lincoln Stegman Theatre in North Hollywood several years ago as part of a three one-act show titled "Elvis: RIP It Up." The show included the following cast:

Leroy Wes Adelman
Billy Joe..... John Henry Thomas
Zydigo Andrew Piecka
Clyde Bernie Baima
Elliott Roger Eschbacher
Olivia Nikki Bedwell
Hatfield Felicia Tweedy
Judge Jim Ritter
McCoy Steven Kirk
Brenda Kristen Olson
Yolanda Debbie Lowe
Dumpling..... Therese Hawes
Gailey Michael Oberholtzer
Janko Sara Locke
Regan Roberta Fasso-Locke
Directed by Jeff Zimmer. Produced by Virginia Tweedy.

The playwright thanks the ELATE for producing "Law & Elvis" and Roger for suggestions before, during, and after this show.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 m, 4 w, 5 flexible)

(4 m, 3 w, 3 flexible w/ doubling)

LEROY: A spirited young man of about 26.

BILLY JOE: Leroy's not-very-bright cousin, about the same age.

ZYDIGO: (Flexible) A dirty, unwashed swamp rat of indeterminate age. Speaks in an incomprehensible-sounding gibberish that has the flavor of a heavily French Cajun or Creole dialect of Louisiana. Only Billy Joe can understand what Zydigo's saying.

CLYDE: (Flexible) No nonsense night watchman.

OLIVIA MCGRUDER: Detective determined to find out the truth.

ELLIOTT LOUD: Olivia's hard charging partner. If he and Olivia have a passing resemblance to a certain *Law & Order* detective team, all the better.

JANKO: (Flexible) Uniformed officer and then bailiff.

REAGAN: (Flexible) Second uniformed officer.

ANGIE HATFIELD: A beautiful model-like attorney that possibly only exists in TV shows.

MR. MCCOY: The tough prosecutor.

JUDGE: (Flexible) Strong, unquestioned ruler of the courtroom.

BRENDA: Leroy's girlfriend. Sexy in her Daisy Dukes, she's not quite trailer trash but is trailer trash adjacent.

YOLANDA: Billy Joe's aunt. Played by the same actor who plays Billy Joe wearing a white wig.

GAILEY: (Flexible) A well-dressed attorney in a business suit.

LULU DUMPLING: A vain, man-hungry, older woman. Has a hook for her right hand.

SCENES and SETTING

The action should flow quickly from one scene to another. The settings are simple.

- A cemetery at night - a few gravestones.
- An interrogation room - simply a chair.
- Courtroom - a raised table on a platform and a chair for the judge to sit on.
- McCoy's office - a table and a chair.
- Brenda's apartment - chairs.
- Yolanda's house - two chairs.
- Courtroom for the trial - add chairs for the attorneys, a bench for the defendants and a witness chair.
- Bar - a table and a few chairs.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Night in a Tennessee cemetery. The show opens in pitch darkness. A recorded announcer's voice cuts through the darkness.)

ANNOUNCER: (V.O.) In the criminal justice system, the law is represented by two separate, but equally important groups: the police, who investigate the crime, and the district attorneys who prosecute the criminals. These are their stories.

(SFX: Music sting! Crickets chirping. The STAGE LIGHTS rise to a minimum level revealing a gravestone or two. It's night. Three figures enter carrying shovels, a pick, flashlights and a map. They are LEROY, a young man of about 26; his not-very-bright cousin BILLY JOE, about the same age; and ZYDIGO, a dirty, unwashed swamp rat of indeterminate age and gender. Leroy's flashlight cuts through the darkness and onto the map he's holding.)

LEROY: It's got to be around here somewhere.

(LEROY points the flashlight at ZYDIGO as he speaks.)

ZYDIGO: *(Incomprehensible Cajun gibberish.)* Creepy!

LEROY: What did he say?

BILLY JOE: Zydigo says he feels like we're being watched. Like we're on a stage and a bunch of people are looking at us.

LEROY: Don't be ridiculous. Nobody goes to the theater anymore.

ZYDIGO: *(Incomprehensible Cajun gibberish.)*

(BILLY JOE and ZYDIGO laugh.)

BILLY JOE: Good one, Zydigo!

LEROY: Billy Joe, how is it you understand his talk?

BILLY JOE: Got used to it last summer when we was both working for the state of Louisiana. You know that Johnny Cash song was wrong. There *are* some good chain gangs.

ZYDIGO: *(Incomprehensible sounds of agreement)*

LEROY: Ssh! Do you hear something?

(THEY snap off their flashlights. A beam of light from another more powerful FLASHLIGHT moves towards them. It catches them all looking like deer in the headlights, incredibly guilty looking, then passes by. The light suddenly jerks back to them, revealing the three have now covered themselves with the map, hoping they won't be noticed. The light is being held by CLYDE, a night watchman.)

CLYDE: Who are you and what are you doing here?

(The GUYS look at each other guiltily.)

BILLY JOE: Um... You talking to us?

CLYDE: *(Sarcastic.)* No, I'm talking to the guy buried in the grave you're standing on.

(ALL look down and then leap back, trying to get off the grave.)

LEROY: Oh! *(To grave.)* Sorry. *(To CLYDE.)* We apologize, Mister—We'll just run along now and let you two talk.

(THEY turn as if to leave.)

CLYDE: Don't you move, or this shotgun will change you all from visitors to *residents*.

(BILLY JOE turns on his FLASHLIGHT, illuminating CLYDE and his shotgun.)

BILLY JOE: You the caretaker?

CLYDE: No, I'm the welcome wagon. I say again: what are you boys doin' out here?

(The THREE look at each other.)

LEROY: Huntin' lightnin' bugs?

CLYDE: With a shovel and a pick?

BILLY JOE: They got some *really* big ones around here. Gotta bat 'em down. *(Demonstrates.)* Got one!

ZYDIGO: *(Grabs the downed lightning bug and gobbles it up then licks his fingers. Cajun gibberish.)* Flavorful!

CLYDE: Don't gimmie me that. Looks more to me like somebody was thinkin' about doing a little grave robbin'.

LEROY: *(Mock surprise.)* What? Grave robbers? Us? No!

CLYDE: Yes! They just laid Elvis to rest a few days ago right over yonder in the mausoleum. *(Points in the direction the group just came from.)*

LEROY: *I told you that tweren't no gift shop! (HE whacks BILLY JOE on the arm.)*

CLYDE: Were you boys tryin' to rob a grave? Maybe *Elvis'* grave?

(BILLY JOE and LEROY look at each other guiltily and don't answer, so ZYDIGO steps forward.)

ZYDIGO: *(Lengthy Cajun gibberish.)* Elvis?

CLYDE: What did he say?

BILLY JOE: He said, "Elvis who?"

(SFX: Music sting. BLACKOUT.)

Scene 2

(LIGHTS up on the interrogation room - later. LEROY sits while detectives OLIVIA MCGRUDER and ELLIOTT LOUD question him. Elliott carries a large sidearm in his shoulder holster. Uniformed officers JANKO and REAGAN stand by.)

OLIVIA: Okay, Leroy. Tell it to us again, from the top.

LEROY: I told it to you five times already!

ELLIOTT: *We don't believe you!*

LEROY: Okay only *four* times!

ELLIOTT: That's better. You know what I think? I don't think you were trying to rob a grave.

LEROY: Good.

ELLIOTT: I think you were out to steal Elvis' body.

LEROY: *What?*

ELLIOTT: I think you were going to steal his body and hold it for ransom and sell it back to the family!

LEROY: *No! That's crazy!*

OLIVIA: I think you were going to ask for a million dollars.

LEROY: *A million dollars!*

OLIVIA: The Presleys would pay it, wouldn't they, Elliott?

ELLIOTT: You bet they would. And you couldn't be charged with murder or kidnapping because he's already dead.

ELLIOTT: That was the plan, wasn't it, Leroy? *Wasn't it?*

OLIVIA: Low risk, high reward. It's a good plan.

(LEROY thinks about it a moment. The COPS stare at him.)

LEROY: ...You're right.

ELLIOTT: *As usual!* So, you admit you were going to King-
nap Elvis' body?

LEROY: No, I admit it's a good plan! Let's do it! I'll split it with you 35% each! 35-35-35!

OLIVIA: *Officers!* Get him out of here!

(JANKO and REAGAN grab LEROY by the earlobes.)

LEROY: *(As he's dragged off.)* Ow! Ow! Ow! Hey, let go. I can cut you in too!

(JANKO and REAGAN exit with LEROY in custody.)

OLIVIA: What do you think, Elliott?

ELLIOTT: He thinks we're stupid, Olivia.

OLIVIA: That's what I think.

ELLIOTT: You think we're stupid?

(OLIVIA does a take to the audience. SFX: Music sting! BLACKOUT.)

Scene 3

(LIGHTS up a little later. OLIVIA and ELLIOTT now play bad cop / bad cop as they browbeat BILLY JOE, who sits in the chair.)

OLIVIA: Come on, Billy Joe, fess up. You weren't in that graveyard to hunt lightning bugs, were you?

ELLIOTT: Confess!

OLIVIA: You planned to break into that crypt and steal Elvis' body, didn't you?

ELLIOTT: Confess!

OLIVIA: You were going to take it and hold it for ransom, weren't you?

ELLIOTT: Confess!

BILLY JOE: I ain't talkin' until I see a lawyer.

OLIVIA: A lawyer? He wants to see a lawyer. Wait just a minute. *(OLIVIA steps to the back of the room to get something out of her purse.)*

ELLIOTT: You want to see a lawyer. *(Grabs BILLY JOE.)* Scum like you always hide behind lawyers. Well, if that's what you want, you'll get the best public defender in Memphis.

BILLY JOE: Matlock?

End of Freeview

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