

# ***The Money*** *in* ***Uncle George's*** ***Suitcase***

*By Pat Cook*

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### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

When Uncle George invites his whole family up for a weekend of fun at his rustic cabin, he actually wants them together so he can read his will. But between the bequeathing and his rambling stories, George drops the bomb that somewhere on the property is a suitcase holding four hundred and eighty thousand dollars! What follows is a hilarious farce of pettiness, slander, and greed. The relatives end up wrestling each other, falling down the stairs, and getting stuck in the furniture. "Yep, we're gonna have lots of fun!" says George as he's seen carrying a shovel out the front door. But George's gift is much more important than mere money, even though the relatives don't see it that way - at first.

### **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

#### **Act I,**

Scene 1 - The present, a summer afternoon.

Scene 2 - Hours later, just after dinner.

#### **Act II,**

Scene 1 - A half an hour later.

Scene 2 - About an hour later.

Scene 3 - The following morning.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(3 m, 5 w)*

**“UNCLE” GEORGE (Porge) PLUNKETT:** A relaxed, very congenial man around 60. A woodsman from the cherished past, he spins his tales like campfire smoke.

**MITCH BRYANT:** Joanne’s husband, in his late 30s. He sees life through a wise crack.

**JOANNE BRYANT:** George’s niece, a loving, caring woman, also in her late 30s.

**CHELSEY BRYANT:** Joanne and Mitch’s daughter, around 13 and smarter than most.

**MARGARET (Peg) BLANKENSHIP:** George’s younger sister, a rather suspicious woman in her late 50s. She’s the mother of Joanne.

**MAMIE JO DURANT:** Margaret’s younger sister, in her mid 50s and something of a take-charge individual. She’s the mother of Gloria.

**ANDREW SHUMWAY:** Gloria’s husband, a rather slick urbanite, about 40 and something of a con man.

**GLORIA SHUMWAY:** George’s other niece, a bit of a snob in her late 30s.

## **SOUND EFFECTS**

Mitch falling down stairs, car horn, two suitcases falling downstairs (one after the other), dogs barking, door slam, dog’s yelp, noise upstairs, shovel and Mitch falling down stairs, Andrew falling down stairs.

## **PROPS**

Eight different suitcases and a make-up case, note in an old battered suitcase in couch, two archery bows.

George - Carving wood and pocket knife, small carved wooden dog, will in desk, long-handled shovel.

Mamie - Scrapbook.

Joanne - Dish towel.

### **COSTUMES**

All wear present day fashions appropriate for their character's age and personality. George is always in well-worn flannel shirts and jeans and in Scene 2, Gloria wears a chic outfit, meant obviously for a much more formal dinner. In addition, Mitch needs a second shirt, a tattered shirt, and an ill-fitting flannel shirt and jeans. Mamie and Mitch also need nightclothes and robes.

### **SETTING**

The living room of George's rustic lake house is chock-full of pictures of fish and fishermen, trophies, mounted fish and lures, and hunting and fishing equipment. On the UPS wall is a large arch, through which, SL, is the front door and entrance to the house. Also inside the arch, SR, is a staircase leading to the bedrooms and a door on the back wall, which leads to the cellar. Outside the door, on the wall and visible to the audience, is the light switch for the cellar. Just past the stairs, also SR, is a hall, leading off to the kitchen. Inside the living room is another door, on the SR wall, which leads to the dining room. On the SL wall is a fireplace and a window. Above the fireplace is a large empty plaque which, at one time, held a stuffed moose head.

The furniture in the room is worn and comfortable. A 3-cushion couch sits DS just off center, near the fireplace. All the supports beneath its center cushion are removed so a suitcase can fit inside and so that anyone sitting there without the suitcase sinks down. (Note: Prior to the last scene, actors never sit on the middle cushion, only on the end ones.) A large, overstuffed wing chair sits near its SR arm. There is a large desk against the SR wall, with a very old large radio on it. Against the back wall is a bookcase and reading chair and lamp.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: UNCLE GEORGE is sitting on the couch, fast asleep. After a slight pause, he wakes.)*

GEORGE: So, anyway...there was six of us when we started out. Now, I know you're gonna say that there's usually six men actin' as pallbearers, one for each casket handle. That's the way it is, the way it's always been. Anyway, as I said there was six of us when we started out. There was me, Clancy Hardison and Hannibal Bob Dogerty on the port side going up that hill, and Slim Brophy, his uncle and Big Tiny Johnson on starboard.

Now, I done already mentioned that Slim, he's got a wooden leg. If I didn't, well, he does. And, I don't know, whoever picked out these pallbearers either had a good sense of humor or a pint of something before they did the choosin'. Anyway, Big Tiny, as you probably know, weighs ... well, nobody has been able, really, to accurately gauge the man's weight on accounta most scales don't go up that high or if they do, he won't get on them. And Clancy Hardison ain't as big as my leg.

So we starts up the hill, you know, pretty as you please, with all the mourners waitin' at the grave site just at the bottom on t'other side. So, anyway, the first one to drop out was Clancy, about halfway up, complainin' about pains in his chest. So, that left me and Hannibal to tote our side, Clancy left there restin' on a tombstone. Then, just before we got to the top, Big Tiny, he's blowin' like a dirigible with a leak, he lets go and lays flat down, leavin' his side to Slim and his uncle, I forget his name right now.

So, anyway, we managed to haul that box to the top of the hill, it gettin' heavier with each step. I think it was made outta walnut and weighted at the bottom so's it don't tip over. Slim give us the high sign and we set the thing down there at the top.

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GEORGE: *(Cont'd.)* I could see the mourners there at the bottom, nobody payin' us no mind, which was probably good.

I looked back down at where we'd been and there I could still see Clancy, fanning hisself and cursin' so's nobody could hear, and Big Tiny, well, I could see his belly, stickin' up like a bluff wearin' a vest. That's when that coward, Brophy's uncle, I can't think of his name, that's when he says he'll go ahead and tell them we're on our way. *(MITCH enters through the arch from the kitchen and looks in. He listens a minute, unseen by GEORGE.)* So that left Slim totin' his side and me and Hannibal Bob on t'other. Slim, he looks at me and suggests that maybe we could just slide the casket down that side of the hill, since there was slick river rocks all the way and it would glide along, like a tomat (tomato) box on rollers, if we would tie a piece of cord on t'other end and sorta let it out like a trout line.

Well, me and Hannibal didn't think that would be appropriate. *(MITCH rolls his eyes and exits the way he came.)* I mean, you can't just lead out a coffin like you was trollin' for perch. Anyway, we decided to hoist 'er up again, Slim makin' comments as to how the casket was probably made outta better lumber than his leg. A'fore we started, he rolled up his pant leg on accounta his pants was gettin' up with the gears on his prosthesis leg.

Anyway, we hoisted 'er up and took another run at it. Well, he was right about those slick rocks on accounta we started losin' our footin'. Finally, it got to the point that we had to set the thing down and the three of us easing 'er along, down the hill, on the pebbles, pickin' up speed as we went along. I swear, if we hadn't collided with another tombstone, we woulda all ended up in the grave, Slim, Hannibal Bob, me, casket and all. *(MITCH enters quietly and sits in the chair next to the couch.)*

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