

BREAK a LEG

A backstage farce in two acts

By Eddie McPherson

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DEDICATION

*To Kenny, a great writer and brother.
And Angie, thanks for your input and endless support.*

STORY OF THE PLAY

Trudy, new to the theatre scene, has just been hired as stage manager for an upcoming play at a small community theatre. The problem is Trudy is inept, clumsy, and more than that, she's a jinx. The cast agrees that Trudy is a modern-day gremlin who is cursing the show they are rehearsing and decide she must go once and for all. So, why doesn't the director fire her? Because Trudy is the owner's only niece.

Realizing throwing her out isn't an option, they resolve to de-hex her instead in order to make the theatre a safe haven once again. An old book of theatre superstitions is brought in, and the reverse-the-curse shenanigans and laughs begin.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I

Scene 1: A rehearsal day at the theatre.

Scene 2: Later that evening.

Scene 3: A short time later.

Act II

Scene 1: Several days later at dress rehearsal.

Scene 2: A short time later.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(6 m, 8 w, 1 flexible)

Top Dogs:

SANDERS BEEKER: Director of the current production.
MRS. BRAKES: Owner of the Ritz Theatre.

Actors and Actresses of the Ritz Theatre:

CONNIE: A popular actress.
SHEILA: Madly smitten with Trebor.
TREBOR: Equally smitten with Sheila.
PATRICK: A popular actor.
HARRY: Another.
TONY: A novice actor.
ERIN: Another.
MIA: Another.

Befuddled Backstage Crew:

TRUDY: A dreamy-eyed stage manager.
BUTRAM: A wannabe actor.
ELIZABETH: Trudy's dim-witted friend; looks like Trudy.
DIXIE: Another.

GHOST: A friendly specter.

SETTING

The stage of a small, community theatre.

SOUND EFFECTS

Car horn	Doorbell
Small barking dog	Crashing pots and pans
Reverberating bong	Cat's meow
Duck quacking	Rooster crowing
Generic bell	Thunder
Wind blowing	

(It would be funny to create some of these sounds yourself.)

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PROPS

Blanket-wrapped teddy bear	Suitcase
Table lamp	Ashtray
Framed pictures	Fireplace poker
Long-stemmed plastic flower	
Sofa pillows	Fake tree
Couple of trench coats	Dust rag
Telephone	Banana
Fruit bowl	Broom and dustpan
Apple	Broken chair
Scripts	Piece of paper for resume
3 pairs of ugly black-framed glasses	
Small shirt, pants, dress	Ledger
Peacock picture	Fedora
Sunglasses	Cigarette
White doctor's jacket	Toy doctor's case and
Stethoscope	Measuring tape
An old, large book	Crutches and cast (Connie)
File folder with papers	Several white poster boards
Marker	Remote control
Box tied with string	Wrapped peacock picture
Eviction notice	Make-up compact
Official document	Small basket
Office swivel chair	Flashlight
Large stick with string and attached bottle of water	
Tube of lipstick	

PRODUCTION NOTES

Act I is set up as a play rehearsal. Folding chairs sit about the incomplete living room set. A few pictures hang on the upstage wall but must be designed to fall off easily. A sofa with cushions is CS and a coat rack is upstage. There are two doors: one stage left in the upstage wall, and one stage right. A large window is UPS. In Act II, the set is complete and nicely decorated.

This is a farce. The acting is over-the-top and when the actors are portraying their characters in the play within a play, they're melodramatic. Keep the action moving and the blackouts short.

Act I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: We're watching a rehearsal for an upcoming play.)

CONNIE: *(Standing CS acting somewhat melodramatically. SHE holds a "baby" {a teddy bear wrapped inside a blanket}. She speaks to PATRICK, who stands a few feet away.)*
Stephen, you can't do this to me!

PATRICK: You're wrong, Paula. I'm a man and do anything I choose!

CONNIE: But she'll never make you happy the way I have. She can't kiss you the way I can. She can't hold you the way I do.

PATRICK: She has one thing that you don't have.

CONNIE: Beauty? Gorgeous body?

PATRICK: Money!

CONNIE: But she doesn't love you!

PATRICK: With that much money, who cares?

CONNIE: Though I don't have a penny to my name, please say you'll stay with me!

PATRICK: *(Retrieving a suitcase from behind the sofa and crossing to SR.)* She's waiting for me outside, Paula. Make this easy for yourself and turn away as I walk out that door, never to return!

CONNIE: *(Holding out the baby.)* Before you go, at least kiss our baby one last time. Your flesh and blood! Your namesake!

PATRICK: Of course. *(Takes the baby.)* I can't leave without my only son to inherit the money my new woman is bringing me. Besides, you have Puddles to keep you company.

CONNIE: No! You can't have my baby! Besides, Puddles is only a blind poodle dog.

(SFX: A car horn sounds.)

PATRICK: My new love is becoming impatient. Good-bye, dear Paula.

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CONNIE: *(Picking up a table lamp and holding it over her head.)* If you try and leave with my baby, I will be forced to do something crazy!

(TRUDY enters and looks at a couple of pictures on the back wall, crosses to them and begins straightening them. CONNIE and PATRICK pay Trudy no mind.)

PATRICK: Don't be silly; that lamp is a genuine Tiffany lamp. It's worth thousands.

CONNIE: *(Gently puts it down and picks up an ashtray.)* Then I'll stop you with this ashtray!

PATRICK: Put that down! I bought that in Paris. It's priceless.

CONNIE: *(SHE puts it down and picks up a fireplace poker.)* This wrought iron poker should do the job just fine.

(SFX: A car horn sounds. TRUDY takes the poker from CONNIE and replaces it with a long-stemmed plastic flower that droops when held upright.)

PATRICK: *(Taken aback but remaining in character, pretending CONNIE is still holding the poker.)* You don't have the nerve to hit me with that thing.

CONNIE: You have given me no choice! If I can't have you, no one can!

(TRUDY takes the baby from PATRICK, sets it on the sofa, and straightens the blanket it's wrapped in. She replaces the prop by putting a pillow from the sofa in Patrick's hands. SFX: A car horn sounds outside.)

TRUDY: *(Shouting to offstage.)* HE'S COMING! *(SHE exits through the open SR door and slams it behind her.)*

PATRICK: *(HE holds out the pillow, speaking to CONNIE very dramatically.)* Take a good look at your son! Do you want him growing up having to visit his mommy in the state penitentiary? Look at him, Paula! Look at him!

End of Freeview

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