

Swamp Romp

A comedy in two acts

By Burton Bumgarner

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Life is anything but dull in the Great Okeeadokia Swamp. At Lester's Bog Mart Convenience Store, locals gather to purchase supplies, check out video rentals (there are three available) or try Lester's delicious "Almost Fresh Catfish" or "Kind of Fried Chicken." The local book club has been working on *War and Peace* for months, and they're up to page 5. Local resident Everett Mudd is trying to make a low-budget independent horror film which he wants to enter in the Sundown Film Festival. Five biology students become lost in the swamp when their professor is paralyzed after being bitten by the toxic Okeeadokia toad. The students, all from the big city, learn the hard way that nature isn't always kind. Add a trio of travelers whose car breaks down in the swamp, the laziest volunteer fire department in history, and some really scary reptiles and we have swamp life at its silliest.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(7 m, 9 w, 6 flexible)

DR. MARSH: A biology professor.

5 STUDENTS: Male and female.

LESTER: A convenience store clerk.

MRS. MOSS: President of the local book club.

SANDY: A book club member.

LILY: A book club member.

ERIN: A book club member.

DARYL: A volunteer fireman.

EARL: A volunteer fireman.

ETHEL: A volunteer fireman.

RHONDA: A volunteer fireman.

EVERETT MUDD: Wants to direct movies.

LORAIN: Everett's cousin and actress in his movie.

JUNIOR: Another actor in Everett's movie.

REED: A businessman from New York.

MISS BULRUSH: Reed's assistant.

MISS CATTAIL: Reed's assistant and niece.

POLICEMAN / ALLIGATOR *(optional)* *Either or both of these two roles may be played by one of the biology students.*

(See rehearsal notes at end of script.)

COSTUMES

Dr. Marsh should wear appropriate attire for hiking through a swamp (bush hat, boots, etc.) Students could wear t-shirts with college letters or logos. As they become lost in the swamp, their attire and appearance should become more deplorable, as should the attire and appearance of the business travelers, Mr. Reed, Miss Bulrush and Miss Cattail.

At the end of the show an actor dressed as an alligator with a shoe in its mouth may enter, cross center, bow to the audience, and exit before the final blackout.

SETTING

The Bog Mart, a convenience store in the Great Okeeadokia Swamp in South Georgia. In addition to a convenience store, the Bog Mart serves as the local library and video store. Shelves of canned goods are upstage. A desk or checkout counter is upstage left facing right. A land line phone is on the counter. Hand-painted signs that say "Lester's Kind of Fried Chicken," "Not Quite Live Bait," "Almost Fresh Catfish," "Video Rentals," "Public Library," etc., may adorn the upstage backdrop. Downstage right is a small shelf of books and a semicircle of chairs. This is the library.

The canoe scene may be performed by Marsh seated in an office chair on wheels. Marsh may either steer with his feet and paddle with a tennis or badminton racket, or a real canoe paddle. If the wheels on the office chair permit, he may be pulled across stage with a rope by someone offstage right, or another actor may enter pushing the chair. The sillier the better.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: PROFESSOR MARSH enters followed by five STUDENTS. He turns and faces the students.)

MARSH: All right, students. We're about to head into the Okeeadokia Swamp, one of nature's true marvels. We will observe botanical and zoological wonders that exist nowhere else on earth. We will study an amazing ecosystem beginning with the tiniest cells of algae and working up to fish, birds, mammals, and giant reptiles. Does anyone have any questions before we begin this wonderful adventure? *(STUDENT 1 raises his hand.)* Yes?

STUDENT 1: How negatively will it affect our grade if we turn around and go back to school?

MARSH: Extremely negatively. *(STUDENT 2 raises his hand. OTHERS begin swatting at flying insects.)* Yes?

STUDENT 2: Why can't we have a biology lab indoors ... with air-conditioning?

MARSH: Because this is a field lab ... meaning you go out into the field.

STUDENT 3: This isn't a field! It's a swamp!

MARSH: That's very observant of you.

STUDENT 3: Do I get extra credit for being observant?

MARSH: No. Any more unenlightened questions before we press on?

STUDENT 4: Will this field trip pull up my grade?

MARSH: Possibly. Any other inane questions?

STUDENT 5: What are these flying things that keep biting me?

MARSH: *(Swats a mosquito and looks at his hand.)* Class: Insecta; Order: Diptera; Suborder: Nematocera. Over 3500 species in three subfamilies. Dating back to the Jurassic Era, they are believed to have made their first appearance in South America.

STUDENT 1: Can you give a simple answer we'll understand?

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MARSH: Mosquitoes. Spanish for "little flies." Irritating, aren't they?

STUDENTS: YES!

MARSH: Did you use your insect repellent?

STUDENTS: Insect repellent?

MARSH: Did you read the syllabus for this class?
(*STUDENTS hang their heads in embarrassment.*) It clearly stated that insect repellent was necessary for field trips.

STUDENT 2: Are mosquitoes dangerous?

MARSH: Malaria, yellow fever, West Nile virus ... they carry all kinds of deadly diseases. Surely you've encountered mosquitoes.

STUDENT 3: I never knew what they were called.

STUDENT 4: I went to camp when I was a kid. We had mosquitoes there. I remember them.

STUDENT 5: This is remedial biology. We shouldn't be out here.

MARSH: You're probably right. (*Relieved, STUDENTS turn left to exit.*) But if you want to pass my course you'll follow me. (*STUDENTS moan.*)

STUDENT 1: What about the bugs?

MARSH: They'll follow you, too.

STUDENT 2: Do you have any insect repellent?

MARSH: I do. I used it this morning before I left home. Come along. (*Exits.*)

STUDENT 3: Man, I hate nature!

STUDENTS: ME TOO!

STUDENT 4: This isn't so bad. You guys are wimps. We had it a lot worse at camp.

STUDENT 5: I'd do anything for a really big can of Raid.

(*STUDENTS grudgingly exit after MARSH.*)

End of Scene

Scene 2

(Moments later. LESTER, the store clerk, and MRS. MOSS, a customer, enter. Lester stands behind the counter. DARYL, EARL, RHONDA and ETHEL, the volunteer firefighters, enter and begin searching the shelves. Lester is assisting Mrs. Moss. He places her purchased items in a paper bag.)

DARYL: Hey, Lester. You get any new videos in?

LESTER: Nope. Just old ones.

EARL: Hey, Lester. You got any fresh fish?

LESTER: Nope. Just fish that isn't fresh.

RHONDA: Hey, Lester. You got any live bait?

LESTER: Nope. Just bait that isn't live.

ETHEL: Hey, Lester. When are you getting some new fishing magazines? *(Holds up a magazine.)* This one's all about catching fish that are now extinct.

LESTER: Why should I get new magazines? I haven't sold the old ones yet.

DARYL: *(Holds up a jar.)* What's this stuff?

LESTER: Marinara sauce. It goes on pizzas.

EARL: What's pizza?

RHONDA: Those flat things with mozzarella cheese and gator meat.

ETHEL: *(Looking through another magazine.)* Hey, Lester. According to this magazine the new 1979 Chevys are out.

LESTER: *(To MOSS.)* There you go, Mrs. Moss. That'll be ten bucks.

MOSS: Just put it on my bill, Lester.

LESTER: Yes ma'am. Are you ever going to make a payment on that bill?

MOSS: I made a payment about three months ago.

LESTER: Actually it was three years ago. But who's counting?

MOSS: My thoughts exactly.

LESTER: Say, could I interest you in some fried chicken? I made it myself. I'm told it's almost as good as gator.

MOSS: I'm not really into exotic foods. Just give me the basics.

End of Freeview

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