

Clear as Day

*A comedy by
Michael Clossin*

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DEDICATION

Special thanks to Lizzie Warwick & Denise Kostbar.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Gracie, a singer popular on the retirement-home circuit, dreams of a farmhouse and a future with her long-time partner, George, a workaholic city dweller who takes her for granted. When she inherits a ramshackle farmhouse in Pickle Creek, Gracie leaves George behind to start a new life. She befriends her curmudgeonly neighbor Dot, who has been protecting the property from trespassing metal “detectorists” searching for a legendary horde of gold. With the help of handsome handyman Nate, Gracie begins renovating her home. When George finally follows her to the countryside, he finds Gracie thriving without him. *Clear as Day* is a romantic comedy filled with Jazz Age songs, witty dialogue, dancing, physical comedy, frantic chases, and slamming doors. As wishes come true and the real treasure is revealed, Gracie discovers that a happier future may be closer than she ever imagined.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 5 w, + 2 dancers)

GRACIE: 24, F, optimistically offbeat singer.
NATE: 30, M, handsome handyman.
DOT SPARKS: 72, F, cantankerous recluse.
CODY: 28, F, legal secretary/cosmetologist.
GEORGE: 26, M, self-absorbed stage manager.
HARPER: 26, F, sarcastic antiquarian.
HORACE HOUGHTON: 40, M, deceptive librarian.
DEPUTY VIOLET: 19, F, probationary deputy.
NON-SPEAKING DANCER: M
NON-SPEAKING DANCER: F

SCENES

ACT I: Gracie's Farmhouse. Autumn. Present day.

ACT II: Same, one week later.

SETTING

Living/dining room of an old farmhouse. FRONT door USC. SL of that door a couple steps lead up to a landing with a window--imaginary stairs continue offstage. Further DSL is a BATHROOM door. Between the landing and the bathroom is an old upright piano. A framed photograph of Gracie and George sits atop the piano.

The SR wall is pretty much a series of doors. Starting furthest upstage, the first door leads into the KITCHEN. The next door is a CLOSET—the door swings outward so it will slam against the wall. The third door is the FALSE door; it opens to a very solid dark wall. The fourth and last door DS leads outside—it is the BACK door.

Yellowed wallpaper. A very old phonograph. A table, a worn armchair. Shelves are filled with dusty trinkets, cigar boxes, coffee cans and jars containing rocks, marbles, arrowheads, pinecones and feathers.

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MUSIC

All songs (and some recordings) suggested in the play are in public domain.

The Best Things in Life Are Free

Buddy DeSylva, Lew Brown & Ray Henderson

It Had to Be You

Isham Jones & Gus Kahn

Yes, We Have No Bananas

Frank Silver & Irving Cohn

On The Sunny Side of the Street

Jimmy McHugh & Dorothy Fields

The 1928 recording of

The Best Things in Life Are Free

by Jack Hylton and his Orchestra is in the public domain.

There's a vocal recording of

On The Sunny Side of the Street by Harry Richman

that is fun, very 1920's and in the public domain.

The Haze Library on YouTube offers a royalty-free, instrumental recording of "*It Had to Be You*"

ACT I

(AT RISE: Gracie's farmhouse. GRACIE, in shorts and an oversized sweatshirt, voids the consumer warranty by standing on the top step of a three-foot ladder. She hums to herself as she tightens the shade of a pendant light in the center of the room. She climbs off the ladder and flicks a wall switch. The LIGHT illuminates.)

GRACIE: *(Sings.) It had to be you, it had to be you. I wandered around and finally found--*

(Happy, SHE retrieves her ladder. The LIGHT goes out. Frowning, she stops singing. She climbs the ladder, taps the shade and the LIGHT illuminates.)

GRACIE: *(Sings.) It had to be you, it had to be you. I wandered around and finally found--*

(SHE steps off the ladder. The LIGHT goes out. Exasperated, she grabs a hammer and, giving the light a death stare, menacingly starts to climb. The LIGHT instantly shines brightly and stays that way. Triumphant, she smiles. She pulls off the sweatshirt, revealing a faded "Circle City Civic" t-shirt underneath.)

GRACIE: *(Sings.) I wandered around, and finally found, that somebody who, could make me be true--*

(SHE tosses one sleeve over her shoulder and holds the other sleeve out with her arm, as if the sweatshirt was her dancing partner. She dances around the room as she continues to sing.)

GRACIE: *(Sings.) --could make me be blue, and even be glad just to be sad, thinking of you.*

(NATE, wearing a tool belt, appears on the landing. He aims a GoPro type camera at HER.)

GRACIE: *(Sings.) Some others I've seen, might never be mean, might never be cross, or try to be boss, but they wouldn't do— (SHE bangs her knee into a chair, which puts a temporary end to the singing.)* Ouch, dang it!

NATE: You know any songs from this century?

GRACIE: A few, but I love the old standards. Fortunately, so do the seniors in retirement homes, and they're my bread and butter.

NATE: That's where you perform? Retirement homes?

GRACIE: *(Rubbing her knee, SHE moves her ladder to a tall bookcase to dust and clean.)* Yep, I have for years. I'm at Autumn Leaves Healthcare tomorrow, then on Monday, I do two shows at River Valley. There's no river. There's no valley either, but I'll get to see Rose and Frannie.

NATE: Who?

GRACIE: Rose and Frannie. My fan club. They made their own fan club t-shirts with puff paints and they tip me with fast-food coupons and Werther's caramels. They love me.

NATE: I'm not surprised; you're like a Disney princess with tattoos.

GRACIE: I only have one tattoo. But it is a Disney princess.

NATE: Is that how you met old man Barlow?

GRACIE: Mr. Barlow was a resident of Pastoral Acres. After I'd play, he'd put a dollar and a scrap of paper in my hand. A song request for next time. I'd listen to his stories about war or tractors or deadly trees. Then one day it was just a dollar, no paper. I said, "Don't you have a request?" He said, "No kid, I won't be here to hear it."

(SHE dabs at her teary eyes with her t-shirt. NATE scrapes at the window frame with a putty knife.)

GRACIE: *(Cont'd.)* I thought he meant he was going on vacation.

NATE: Pretty crazy he left you this house.

GRACIE: I was flabbergasted. But I had always wished for a home in the country, so I guess it was meant to be. You know what they say, “Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth.”

(A slight pause.)

NATE: Horse.

GRACIE: Horse? Oh, I don’t think so. I couldn’t afford to feed one, let alone pay the vet bills.

NATE: We’re talking about horses now?

GRACIE: You brought it up.

NATE: I suppose I did.

GRACIE: Anyway, my wish came true. No matter what they tell you, it’s a whole lot easier to wish for something than actually work for it.

(NATE puts down the putty knife and opens the landing window.)

NATE: Well, if you wished for this stuck window to open, it just came true.

GRACIE: Fabulous. I’m lucky I ran into you, Nate. And you were so nice to offer me a discount.

(GRACIE crosses US to check out the window.)

NATE: It’ll be worth it if my YouTube channel works out. One guy wears a camera on his forehead while he whacks weeds. He makes ten grand a month on YouTube views alone and his landscaping business is on fire.

GRACIE: I have no doubt your show will be a big success. Wait. Listen. *(Whispers.)* Nate—listen. Outside.

NATE: What? I don’t hear anything.

GRACIE: I know. No car alarms, no sirens, no leaf blowers, no buses, no gunshots. Isn’t it wonderful?

NATE: I guess you don’t miss the city.

(SHE crosses back DS.)

GRACIE: Heck, no. I grew up in a small town. I always wanted to move back to one.

NATE: Where'd you grow up?

GRACIE: Lake Hills. There were no hills, it was flat as a pancake. No lake either unless you count Mudfish Pond. But Fred from Fred's Café invented the Lake Hills Coney Dog in 1958. It's our claim to fame.

(NATE leans on the rickety railing.)

NATE: What's the difference between the Lake Hills Coney Dog and a normal coney dog?

GRACIE: No sauce.

NATE: Isn't that just a hot dog?

GRACIE: Ohmigod, no. *(Laughs.)* So funny you think that.

NATE: Okay. So, uh...what's next on your to-do list?

(FX: The railing collapses into pieces, NATE struggles not to fall.)

GRACIE: How about the railing?

NATE: Good idea.

(HE exits up the stairs. GRACIE dusts the piano, then plays a couple chords.)

GRACIE: *Nobody else gave me a thrill, with all your faults, I love you still--*

(SHE picks up the photograph and stares wistfully at it.)

GRACIE: *(Cont'd.)* Oh, George. Why'd it have to be you?

(SHE's startled by a KNOCK on the front door. The door opens a few inches and sticks. CODY pokes her head in the opening.)

CODY: Hello? Ouch.

GRACIE: What're you doing?

CODY: Your door jammed. My head is stuck.

GRACIE: Your head is too big for that little opening.

CODY: Help me.

GRACIE: Lift up on the knob and hit the door with your shoulder.

(The door unexpectedly swings open, causing CODY--big hair, vintage sunglasses--to fumble a handful of paperwork as she struggles to keep her balance.)

GRACIE: *(Cont'd.)* Boy, now you've done it. *(SHE gathers the papers.)*

CODY: *(Sighs.)* Your deed was recorded incorrectly; Garland needs you to sign a corrective deed.

GRACIE: I didn't mean to insinuate that you had a big head. You don't, really. I think your head is fine. It's proportional to the rest of your body.

CODY: Sign please ... here, here, and here.

(CODY removes her sunglasses, leaves them on a table and hands GRACIE a pen. NATE appears on the landing, taking measurements.)

CODY: *(Cont'd. Nods.)* Boyfriend?

GRACIE: No thanks, I already have one.

NATE: I'm gonna run over to Falls City for new spindles, be back shortly. *(Notices CODY.)* Oh. Where'd you come from?

CODY: McFarland, Jones & Smith. Attorneys-at-law. There is no Jones or Smith. Mr. McFarland just thought it sounded more prestigious.

NATE: Nate. Nate Barnes.

CODY: Cody...just Cody. Actually, I'm between last names at the moment, not sure which way I'm going with that. You're not from around here.

NATE: Falls City. Met Gracie in the hardware store.

CODY: I saw that on Hallmark Channel.

GRACIE: Nate is helping me renovate the place so he can start his own YouTube channel. Cody is Mr. McFarland's legal assistant and a certified cosmetologist.

CODY: Hair, makeup, estate law. I'm running a two for one special on living trusts and hydrating hair masks.

(SFX: Loud banging and clanking. CODY is surprised; GRACIE and NATE are not.)

CODY: *(Cont'd.)* What in the world?

GRACIE: Water hammer.

CODY: What?

NATE: That noise. It's called a water hammer.

GRACIE: My well is broken. I don't have any water.

NATE: Pressure tank should've been replaced years ago.

(DOT SPARKS enters noisily, flinging open the DSR door. She wears work boots, bib overalls, and a frayed jacket. She moves in short, quick steps and carries a bucket of water.)

DOT: Dad blast it Gracie, I'm sorry. I thought to get back quicker but I saw Camo Man tryin' to sneak past my trail cam.

(SHE crosses to the closet, opens it, and throws her jacket on the floor.)

DOT: *(Cont'd.)* It weren't him. Turned out it were Henry Lopez puttin' out a salt block over on Wagoner's property. *(Notices CODY.)* You work for Garland McFarland.

CODY: Yes. I'm Cody, Um, well--just Cody.

DOT: Between names, huh?

CODY: Yes.

DOT: Been there. Dot Sparks. I live up there on Dead Mule Ridge, but you likely know that because you're the one what mails me the letters.

CODY: Yes, I'm afraid that's me. What's a camo man?

End of Freeview

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