Scrambled

By Pat Cook

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DEDICATED

To Rose Ann
Who inspired this play, and came up with the title, too!

STORY OF THE PLAY

Purdy, who runs her Showtime Café famous for such dishes as “Fistful of Dollar Pancakes” and “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Ham,” is getting ready for a food critic, hoping for a great write-up. But that’s the least of her worries when she learns her old boyfriend is back in town. She and Austin made a pledge that if they weren’t hooked up with anyone else in twenty-five years they’d get together. Amelia and Celia, two gossips, have it all over town in no time! Jeanie, the teen who works for Purdy, thinks it’s so romantic and soon she and Cody Barnes get engaged! Cody’s not too sure how that happened, and he’s been acting like a zombie ever since. Suddenly everything is in a twirl. Will the teens really get married? Will Purdy and Austin get together? And will the critic -- if he *ever* shows up -- love the café’s food? Oracle, almost a fixture at the place, says, “You know people in love. They walk around in a daze never know what’s going on. My dad had a word for them: scrambled!”

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(6 m, 8 w)

PURDY WADE: Smart café owner in her early 40s.
ORACLE MATHIAS: 65-year-old worldly wise man.
JEANIE: Naïve 18-year-old waitress.
AMELIA BICKLE: Elderly and nosey town gossip.
CELIA PARKER: Amelia's equally nosey sister.
CODY: Jeanie's rambunctious boyfriend, 18.
MILES: Glib salesman, early 40s.
MAG HOCKNER: Seen-it-all café cook.
T.J.: Cody's best buddy, also 18.
GRANT MORTON: Lively city boy, in his 30s.
CONNIE MORTON: Grant's long-suffering wife, 30-ish.
LUCY ROHOWER: Small town doctor, around 35.
TWYLA: Jeanie's best friend, in her late teens.
STRANGER: Mysterious visitor, in his early 40s.

A NOTE ABOUT THE PLAY:

It is desirable that the actors playing MILES and the STRANGER resemble each other somewhat in age, height, build, etc. Also, a brief historical note. "Loves' Lookout" mentioned in the play actually existed a few miles north of Jacksonville, Texas. This recreational area consisted of a stone amphitheatre, an Olympic-sized swimming pool, a concession stand and arcade and picnic area. While the park is still there, sadly, the theatre, pool, concession and arcade have long since closed and been torn down.

Time: The present, early summer.
Place: Purdy's Showtime Café.

The setting for this little yarn is Purdy's Showtime Café. This down-home establishment would seem at first glance to be a simple, small eatery like so many others in the South. However, on further inspection, amid the usual advertisements for soft drinks and tasty burgers, notions and knickknacks, are various photographs of famous entertainment folk, some actual glossies, some cut-outs from magazines, but all framed with love and placed around the walls.

There are four doors utilized in the floor plan for the café. The first, located DSR, leads into the kitchen. On it is emblazoned the word "IN." The second door, located on the USR wall, leads from the kitchen. Of course, this one sports the word "OUT." The third door, labeled "RESTROOMS," is located on the US wall between two booths. The fourth door is located between two large, slightly smudged picture windows on the SL wall and leads outside. There are wooden blinds over the picture windows. There is a serving window located between the two kitchen doors, through which orders are made and retrieved for waiting customers.

There is a serving counter running parallel with the SR wall, in front of which are located several stools. On the DS end of the counter rests a cash register, several open boxes of mints, a dusty tip jar and a dispenser of toothpicks. On the other end of the counter is a rack of chips. Along the top of the counter are various sugar, salt and pepper shakers and menus. Along with the two booths on the US wall there are several other tables and mismatched chairs located around the area. On each table are placed cutlery, all wrapped haphazardly in paper napkins, sometimes two settings, sometimes four, depending on the size of the table.

On the DSR wall is a wall phone, next to a small chalk-board with accompanying chalk.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: It is a lazy summer afternoon and PURDY is on the phone, talking to her mother, as usual. ORACLE, clad in his overalls and plaid shirt, is sitting at a DSL table, reading a paperback copy of "The Farmer's Almanac" and drinking a cup of coffee while JEANIE wipes the counter. Sitting in the USL booth facing SR is AMELIA, sipping a cup of hot tea daintily. There is another cup of tea across from her.)

PURDY: No, Mother. No, will you listen to me for a minute? No, I'm not trying to hide anything! Of COURSE, I'd tell you if I knew anything! Mother, just listen! We are NOT being invaded by giant spiders! If we were, don't you think it would be on the news?

(This causes ORACLE to lower his book, AMELIA to lean over and JEANIE to stop wiping the counter to listen.)

PURDY: *(Cont'd.)* Mother! Listen, what channel are you watching?

(SHE looks over at the others and rolls her eyes. JEANIE and ORACLE exchange glances and, along with AMELIA, resume their activities.)

PURDY: *(Cont'd.)* Uh huh, channel three? Mother, that's a MOVIE CHANNEL! Didn't you wonder why it was in black and white?

(JEANIE picks up a coffeepot from under the counter and moves to ORACLE.)

PURDY: *(Cont'd.)* You WHAT? You figured you lost all color in your vision at the same time as we were attacked by large tarantulas? Mother, I have to go.

PURDY: *(Cont'd.)* There's a food critic in the county and, on the off chance he might stop in here, I want to be ready for him.
JEANIE: *(To ORACLE.)* Want a rerun, Mr. Mathias?
ORACLE: Just top it off, if you would be so kind, Jeanie darling.
JEANIE: *(Pours the coffee.)* I swear, sometimes I think that Miss Purdy's mom is losing her mind.
ORACLE: What's all this about a food critic?
JEANIE: Oh, Lou Beth over in Pluke called us earlier today and said Chester Lord was in her place yesterday.
ORACLE: He's the one who writes that column on Southern cooking for all those newspapers, doesn't he?
JEANIE: *(Nod.)* Yes sir. It's called "Eats." Anyway, Miss Purdy is thinking that he's liable to show up here.
AMELIA: *(To herself.)* That should be interesting.

(ORACLE resumes his book as JEANIE moves back behind the counter and returns the coffeepot.)

PURDY: Yes, Mother, I'll see you tonight; we'll talk then. Bye-bye. *(SHE hangs up the phone and moves behind the counter.)* I swear, that woman is missing some shingles.
JEANIE: We heard. Giant spiders this time, huh?
PURDY: *(Nods.)* She believes EVER'thing she sees on the TV.
ORACLE: You might keep an eye on her tonight, Purdy.
PURDY: Why for?
ORACLE: I think they're running "Independence Day."
PURDY: Oh, Holy Hannah! She'll call saying Martians have landed on our roof!
JEANIE: She really watches TV a lot, doesn't she?
PURDY: Only movies and the news. And lately she can't seem to tell them apart. She's the one got me hooked on movies and such? *(Indicates the Café.)* That's how I come up with this "Purdy's Showtime Café."
JEANIE: *(Looks around.)* And all those pictures and autographs. *(SHE points to a glossy of Elvis Presley.)* You got Elvis's autograph, wow. Is it real?

End of Freeview

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