

Kalispell

A Play

by Kim E. Ruyle

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Kalispell

Cast of Characters

<u>BUD HAMILTON</u>	70s, the family patriarch. Hard-working. Bigoted. Tough. Protective.
<u>CORA HAMILTON</u>	70s, the family matriarch. Blindly loyal to Bud. Dotes on her children.
<u>CLEVE HAMILTON</u>	40s-50s, oldest son. Alcoholic. Seeks approval of others but is a disappointment to everyone, especially Bud.
<u>BRUCE HAMILTON</u>	40s-50s, 2nd son. Single, successful plastic surgeon living in Seattle. An articulate metro-sexual experiencing a mid-life crisis.
<u>JEFFREY HAMILTON</u>	40s-50s, 3rd son. Successful fashion designer living in New York City. Like Bruce, a metro-sexual, but married with kids.
<u>CLIFFORD HAMILTON</u>	40s-50s, 4th son. Former car salesman turned church pastor in Missoula and televangelist host of religious sportsmen's show.
<u>CLAIRE HAMILTON</u>	40s, daughter. Feminine but tough. Runs a construction company. Avid sportswoman. Occasional lounge singer.
<u>DRAGOS IBANESCU</u>	30s, Romanian immigrant and proprietor of the Sit-a-Spell Cafe'.
<u>TULLIA IBANESCU</u>	30s, wife and partner in café business with Dragos.
<u>TIFFANY</u>	30s, attractive tart. Director of <i>God, Geese, and Grizzlies</i> .
<u>DOUBLING</u>	If desired, Tullia and Tiffany can be played by the same actor.
TIME:	About now.
SETTING:	Near Kalispell, a small city of about 20,000 in western Montana.
SETS:	1) Sit-a-Spell Café. A rustic café. An upright stuffed bear greets customers as they come through the main entrance. 2) Living area of a modern log home. Couch, chairs, and a coffee table strewn with <i>Outdoor Life, Guns & Ammo</i> , etc. A countertop with liquor bottles. Perhaps an antlered deer head on the wall. The kitchen is off-stage right. A staircase upstage to bedrooms. 3) Television studio. Desk, chair, backdrop (e.g., wildlife photos surrounding Jesus on the cross), single TV camera and studio lighting. To one side of the studio is a small room for makeup and to serve as a green room. 4) Woods. Evergreens, a boulder, and well-marked electric fence 5) Hospital room. A bed with raised head. Adjacent single chair.

SYNOPSIS

The insane dynamics and dysfunction of a western Montana logging family are laid bare over a Thanksgiving holiday. A volatile redneck patriarch, a doting matriarch, and five grown children are forced to confront their biases, and broken relationships with a series of crises that careen between tragic and hilarious.

SCENE BREAKDOWN

Act 1 Scene 1:	Sit-a-Spell Café.
Act 1 Scene 2:	Home of Bud and Cora.
Act 1 Scene 3:	Home of Bud and Cora.
Act 1 Scene 4:	Sit-a-Spell Café.
Act 1 Scene 5:	Woods.
Act 2 Scene 1:	Home of Bud and Cora.
Act 2 Scene 2:	Home of Bud and Cora.
Act 2 Scene 3:	Hospital room.
Act 2 Scene 4:	TV studio.
Act 2 Scene 5:	Hospital room.
Act 2 Scene 6:	Home of Bud and Cora.
Act 2 Scene 7:	Sit-a-Spell Café.
Act 2 Scene 8:	Home of Bud and Cora.

RUNNING TIME

About 115 minutes.

PRODUCTION NOTES

- 1) Rather than a full-size bear in the café, a large stuffed teddy bear set on a counter can be used with a twin teddy bear, head missing and stuffing protruding from the neck, hidden behind the counter.
- 2) There are several instances of Romanian slang used by Tullia:
 - “Bulangi,” roughly translated as “jackass;” pronounced, “bu-lan-gwee.”
 - “Iubi” is a term of endearment; pronounced, “eeyou-bee.”
 - “Dormi cu” is slang for lovemaking.
3. An .mp3 recording of an original song, *Never Got into My Heart*, is available to be played in Act II.

ACT I
Scene One

About 8 a.m. on Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving. Bud and Cora sit at a table in the Sit-a-Spell Café. Dragos, serves coffee.

BUD

No, no, no! Don't call it football. Football's a real sport. Soccer's just a kid's game.

Bruce stealthily enters. Hides behind stuffed bear.

DRAGOS

Bud, have you ever watch ESPN? Have you ever go to Europe? Have you ever go out of Montana?

BUD

Why the hell would I wanna leave Montana?

DRAGOS

Montana big. World bigger. Bud, I tell you, football – you call soccer – biggest sport in world.

BUD

Ha! Biggest sport in Budapest, maybe.

DRAGOS

Bucharesht. I come from Bucharesht, not Budapesht.

CORA

Bud, you know that. Dragos is from Romania, not Poland.

DRAGOS

On exiting.

No, no. That Hungary. Budapesht is Hungary.

CORA

I'm confused. I thought he was from Romania. Did he mean he's from Hungary?

BUD

All the same to me.

BRUCE

Springing from behind bear.

Grrrrrrrr!

Bud pulls pistol from vest as he spins and fires wildly. Bruce hits floor as the bear's nose explodes. Bud jumps to his feet, covers Bruce with pistol while holding arm up, a protective gesture for Cora. Bruce slowly raises his head to see if it's safe.

BRUCE (CONT.)

Pa! Ma! It's me! Bruce. Uh... Happy Thanksgiving.

Bud holsters gun, waves arms, sputters profanities. Cora leaps to her feet and clutches her chest.

CORA

Brucie! Oh! My boy! Oh, my boy!

Dragos bursts from kitchen with Tullia on his heels.

DRAGOS

Bud! Bud! Tell me you not shoot again a Dragos customer!

BUD

Hell no. Just one of my goddamn kids trying to scare the bejesus out of us. Uh, I might have nicked your bear. Nothin' that can't be patched up.

Bud sits, nonchalantly sips coffee. Dragos helps Bruce stand. Tullia gathers up fur. Bruce and Cora embrace. Bruce looks for a hug from his pa. Bud ignores the outstretched arms.

BRUCE

Happy Thanksgiving, Pa. Thanks for not shooting me.

BUD

The hell you mean comin' in here like that? Screamin' like a goddamn immigrant gonna terrorize the place.

BRUCE

Sorry, Pa. I was just trying to have some fun.

BUD

Real fun. Thought you weren't comin' til tomorrow.

BRUCE

I came early. To surprise you.

BUD

Surprised us all right. About gave your ma a heart attack.

CORA

It's a wonderful surprise. And Brucie, I'm so glad you weren't hit by your father's hollow point.

BUD

I pulled up when I recognized him, Cora.

BRUCE

Thanks for that, Pa. I'm sorry to startle you.

Turning to Dragos.

And very sorry about the bear.

DRAGOS

Not first time Bud shoot gun in my store. Right here, Bud shoot hat off head of Mexican.

Bruce turns to look at Bud in horror.

BUD

Don't look at me that way. Guy was an illegal immigrant and a menace.

Turning to Dragos.

Someday you'll thank me for watchin' out for ya. That little Mexican was comin' in to rob and shoot up the place. He was pullin' a pistol from his coat.

TULLIA

Bulangu! No, no! Not pistol! Salsa! Man only come to sell salsa! But he illegal and don't press charge on Bud.

Tullia glares at Bud. Dragos grabs Bruce's hand.

DRAGOS

Hello. I am Dragos Ibanescu and I come from –

BRUCE

Bucharest, Romania.

DRAGOS

Yes! How you know?

BRUCE

I was hiding behind the bear before Pa drew down on me and opened fire. Good to meet you, Dragos. I'm Bruce Hamilton.

DRAGOS

This my wife, Tullia.

Tullia places fur in apron, shakes Bruce's hand.

BRUCE

A pleasure to meet you, Tullia.

DRAGOS

You say Bruce? Is boy you tell about?! That make living from woman titties?!

BUD

Yeah, he's the one.

TULLIA

Marching indignantly on exit to kitchen.

Men! Like pigs for titties.

CORA

Bud! Don't be so crude. You've offended Tullia.

DRAGOS

No, no. It okay. Tullia very much know how I like the titties.

Cora, exasperated, drops to chair.

BRUCE

Never mind, Ma. I've grown accustomed to Pa casting aspersions.

BUD

Fuckin' fruitcake can't even speak English.

CORA

Bud!

DRAGOS

I tell you, I think you have very good job. I get for you breakfast, then you tell about the titties.

CORA

Dragos!

DRAGOS

What you want for eat? Eggs? Ham?

BRUCE

Fresh fruit and yogurt would be great. Thanks.

BUD

Fruit. See what I mean?

DRAGOS

Fruit? Uh, yes. Okay. I get the fruit.

CORA

Bud?

Bud just glares at Bruce while Dragos scurries off.

BRUCE

Don't you get it, Ma? Pa's told Dragos that I make a living by sculpting breasts. Now he's implying that I'm a fruit.

CORA

Fruit?

BRUCE

That I'm gay.

CORA

Oh, Bud. How could you?

BUD

Still deny it?

BRUCE

Deny it? You know, Pa, I'm a professional living in Seattle. Not that you'd understand, but it's a large, progressive city. And there wouldn't be a lot of stigma if I came out of the closet. Might even help my practice. Maybe I could become plastic surgeon to the gay community.

BUD

Yeah? Then why don't you?

BRUCE

Because I'm not gay. Really, I'm not.

BUD

Never been married.

BRUCE

True.

BUD

Dress like a fag.

Bruce takes a moment to consider his snazzy shirt and blazer.

BRUCE

Sometimes, I guess. True.

BUD

Don't like sports.

BRUCE

Well, I don't like NASCAR or cage fighting. True.

BUD

Never hunted when you were a kid. Always reading or playing that goddamn cello.

CORA

I loved it when Brucie played.

BUD

Kid played cello like nobody's business but never learned to shoot a gun. Tell me, Cora, what kind of boy in Montana picks a cello over a Winchester? Goddamned sissies, that's who.

BRUCE

Why don't you give me some shooting lessons so I can join the Thanksgiving hunt tomorrow? Maybe we can do some father-son bonding in the woods. Pa, what do you think?

BUD

Oh, Christ. You hear that, Cora? Numskull wants to go huntin' with me. Musta asked him a hunderd times he was a kid did he wanna go huntin'. Never did. Not one damned time. You really think I'm gonna go in the woods with someone who doesn't know the first thing about firearm safety and risk gettin' my head blown off?

Bruce and Cora steal a glance at the defaced bear.

BRUCE

Okay, Pa. Maybe next year.

Tullia enters with meal for Bruce, sits next to Cora. Bruce nibbles and Bud sips coffee as Tullia makes plans with Cora while shooting daggers at Bud.

TULLIA

Maybe next time Bud not shoot bear and not shoot hat of little Mexican. Maybe he shoot person for real. Maybe tomorrow we must have funeral and not the Thanksgiving.

CORA

Oh, no Dear, of course we'll have Thanksgiving. All the children will be home, and you and Dragos must come and join us. It's my very favorite holiday.

TULLIA

Yes, nice to have dinner with the children. But Dragos and me must be here early for the breakfast. Hunters eat many pancakes and sausages before going out to shoot the deers.

CORA

Well, you come when you can, Dear. We never sit down to eat until everyone's back from hunting, probably about five.

TULLIA

I bring stuffed cabbages and special *savarina* for dessert.

Bud groans, makes a face.

CORA

Oh, that will be wonderful, Dear. And we'll have turkey, all the trimmings, and pumpkin pie.

BUD

Now you're talkin'.

TULLIA

I say you are brave lady, Cora Hamilton.

Tullia exits as Cleve enters. He's got a two-day stubble, wears coveralls, and sports greasy hands. Bruce rises to embrace but restrains himself to avoid the grease. Instead, they shake hands.

CLEVE

Bro! Good to see you!

BRUCE

Cleve! Good to see you, too! Whoa! What's that I smell on breath so early in the morning?

BUD

Smell on Cleve? The fuck you think you smell? Sure as hell ain't Old Spice.

CORA

Bud! Your mouth!

CLEVE

Don't smell nothin' 'cept gunpowder. Pa playing villa-janty again?

BRUCE

You mean vigilante?

Nods toward the bear.

I think he was just warming up for the Thanksgiving hunt.

CLEVE

Oh, no shit.

BUD

This is the earliest you been up in a month. Or did you even make it to bed last night?

Cleve takes seat. Tullia appears, pours coffee, quickly exits.

CLEVE

No, Pa. I've been workin'. Workin' hard. Up late in the office workin' on our business plan and up early this mornin' gettin' the skidder runnin'.

BUD

Business plan?! Christ, Cleve, what the hell you cookin' up now?

CLEVE

Pa, we need a plan for the bank. How long you think that skidder's gonna keep runnin'? We can't move logs without a skidder, and the bank ain't gonna lend money without a plan.

BUD

Listen to me, Boy. We don't need another goddamn bank loan. It's my company, and dealin' with the bank's my responsibility. They're not gonna deal with you.

CLEVE

Pa, I'm just trying to –

BUD

And we don't need a new skidder! That skidder's got plenty a life left in her. And long as we're talkin' 'bout the skidder, you got no goddamn business turnin' wrenches when you been drinking. That's the problem with the skidder. The mechanic and operator is a goddamn drunk.

CORA

Oh, Bud.

CLEVE

Forget it, Ma. A little nip in my coffee on a cold mornin' and it must mean I'm a drunk.

BRUCE

You still running the same skidder? That's impressive. Must be, what, ten years old now?

CLEVE

Fifteen. Comin' up on fifty thousand hours. Can you believe that? All that poundin' in the woods. Don't remember how many times I changed cable, rebuilt the winch. Hell, how many times I rebuilt the engine. Pa loves that piece a crap, but I'm sick a workin' on it.

BUD

Love's got nothin' to do with it. Still got plenty a life in her.

CLEVE

Yeah, well you should a got rid of it this spring when it –

BUD

THAT'S ENOUGH, BOY!

Stands, reloads pistol, and throws bills on table.

Let's go, Cora.

Showing tenderness now, Bud helps Cora with coat.

CORA

Let me just have a moment with the boys, Dear.

Bud hesitates, then turns to exit.

CLEVE

Pa! Before ya leave, Mr. Strong over to the bank called and wants to meet. Said it's important. I told him meet us here at the café at ten this mornin'. I know I'm wastin' my breath, but I can handle this ya just give me a chance. I can, Pa. Anyway, I'm gonna be here at ten o'clock.

Bud storms out. Cleve slumps, shakes his head.

CORA

Boys, go easy on Pa. He's worked so hard and he's worn out. He's not as calm as he used to be.

BRUCE

Okay, Ma. I guess I'll see you at the cabin.

CORA

I love you, Brucie.

Cora gives Bruce a hug and exits. Bruce sits.

BRUCE

Sounds like the business is in trouble. How serious?

CLEVE

Tough time to be in the logging business, Bro. Pa has no idea. Not like it used to be. Housing's depressed. Damn government a total pain in the ass.

BRUCE

How long do you think he's going to hang on? You know, to keep control?

CLEVE

'Til he's in the grave or his hand is forced. Or he's thrown in jail for shootin' an immigrant. I tell you, Bro, he's losin' it.

BRUCE

Born in the wrong century. Might have fit in back in the Wild West.

CLEVE

Yeah, when a man got credit for shootin' immigrants.

BRUCE

Credit? You mean for shooting Indians? Cleve, in the Wild West, we were the immigrants. But still, a hundred and fifty years ago, I think Pa would have fit right in.

CLEVE

Or maybe however long ago it was people lived in caves. You know, when men drug women around by the hair.

BRUCE

Pa's traditional, but he's a *protector* of women. Part of the tradition, I guess.

Beat.

So why are you meeting with Mr. Strong here instead of the bank?

CLEVE

My idea. Figured he'd be easier on Pa in here. Maybe Pa'd do a better job controllin' hisself.

BRUCE

If the control he exercised in here this morning is any indication, you might be disappointed.

CLEVE

We're in deep shit, Bro. Never heard Mr. Strong so serious. Kinda like when the teacher in junior high would lean down and whisper, *You're wanted in the principal's office.*

BRUCE

Actually, don't remember ever being called to the office.

CLEVE

Course not. You ever got called to the office, it was probably to get some kinda ass-kissin' award. Me? I got called to the office, it was for an ass-whippin'. God, I can't believe how they used to beat my ass with those wooden hack boards.

BRUCE

So, you're in deep shit with the bank?

CLEVE

Pa wanted to keep it from you and Jeffrey, but you'll find out sooner or later.

BRUCE

What?

CLEVE

We had a skidder roll-over this spring. Rolled over and pinned the operator in a creek. Guy woulda been okay 'cept he couldn't keep his head above water.

BRUCE

What? He drowned?

CLEVE

Drowned. Yeah. Now there's a big lawsuit and we weren't carrying enough insurance. You know Pa. Hell, we were 'bout bankrupt before the lawsuit. Now, I don't think we got a choice.

BRUCE

Oh, my God! Why didn't anyone say anything?

CLEVE

Pa's in denial. Thinks we'll work our way outta this and his two city sons won't find out.

BRUCE

But why?

CLEVE

Respect.

BRUCE

Respect? I'm not following.

CLEVE

All Pa ever wanted from you was respect. Thinks you don't respect him. You know, goin' to college. Movin' to a big city. A big shot thinkin' Pa's life ain't as important as yours.

BRUCE

Oh, my God! Do you know how ridiculous that is? Pa's never shown me an ounce of respect. No acknowledgement for anything I've achieved. Talk about lack of respect.

CLEVE

Yeah, well, I'm just tellin' how I see it. Maybe you should ask yourself do you really respect him. Anyway, I need to get goin', get ready for the meeting with the banker.

BRUCE

Wait a minute, Cleve. How are you? Really. How are you?

CLEVE

Oh, yeah. You know. Never better.

BRUCE

And the drinking?

CLEVE

Okay. Yeah, but look, I've got to get cleaned up for the banker. I'll catch you later at the house.

Cleve exits. Dragos enters, sits, stares at bear.

DRAGOS

Your father is, uh...

BRUCE

Crazy?

DRAGOS

Yes, maybe little crazy. And sometimes he very smart.

BRUCE

He's got some hard edges, Dragos.

DRAGOS

Yes, but more. How you say? A riggle.

BRUCE

A riggle?

DRAGOS

Yes. Mystery.

BRUCE

Oh, a riddle.

DRAGOS

Yes, yes! A riddle. Every day he come in store and drink coffee and talk bad about immigrants. Say bad to everyone about Mexicans. Say immigrants ruin country. But he every day drink my immigrant coffee and he every day very nice to me. A riggle. No, no! A riddle.

BRUCE

You're a smart man, Dragos.

DRAGOS

Yes. I must always learn much to keep a smart man. So now you tell me how you fix the titties.

BLACKOUT

END OF SCENE

ACT I
Scene Two

An hour later in the living room of Bud and Cora. Bruce, sits on sofa, flips through magazine. Jeffrey enters with suitcase. Bruce rises to embrace him.

JEFFREY

I know, I know. I'm late.

BRUCE

Jeffrey, what happened? I was expecting you at the café this morning.

JEFFREY

I'm sorry. Holiday travel's a nightmare.

BRUCE

Flight canceled?

JEFFREY

Not exactly. I got held up at the studio, missed my flight, and had to fly into Missoula. Got in late and then drove up this morning. Not early enough, I guess. Sorry to leave you hanging.

BRUCE

Well, you're here now, and it's good to see you. Coffee?

JEFFREY

Sure. And, Bruce, it's good to see you, too.

Bruce exits. Jeffrey sits, projects toward kitchen.

JEFFREY (CONT.)

Anyway, I drove straight to the café hoping to be in on the surprise but must have just missed you. They said all the Hamiltons had just left.

Bruce returns and pours coffee.

BRUCE

Ah, yes, the surprise. Pa was in rare form. You missed the... God. You missed some excitement.

JEFFREY

So, they had no idea we were coming in a day early?

BRUCE

Otherwise, there's no good way to explain the gunfire.

JEFFREY

Pa?

BRUCE

A wild shot, fortunately. But I'll tell you, he cleared his holster like Wyatt Earp.

JEFFREY

Please tell me no one got hurt.

BRUCE

A stuffed bear will never be the same. Such a disturbing image. Can't get it out of my mind.

JEFFREY

Ahh, the mutilated bruin! Couldn't miss it. My first thought – call it a really strong hunch – was that Pa was involved. What an arse. So where is everyone?

BRUCE

Pa's meeting with a banker, and Ma's doing some last-minute shopping for Thanksgiving.

JEFFREY

How is Ma?

BRUCE

Older. Ma is Ma.

JEFFREY

Cora the Lion Heart. How about Cleve? Have you seen him, yet?

BRUCE

He and Pa got into a tiff at the café.

JEFFREY

Did they exchange gunfire or was it just a simple bare-knuckle brawl?

BRUCE

I think Cleve's really trying, but it's a lost cause.

JEFFREY

A chip off the Old Man's block.

BRUCE

Not exactly. He's inherited many of Pa's flaws but few of his redeeming qualities.

JEFFREY

Redeeming qualities? You must mean skills. Pa's got skills. He can size up a stand of timber with a glance. Sharpen a saw faster than he can brush his teeth.

JEFFREY (CONT.)

But, Bruce, those aren't redeeming qualities. They're skills.

BRUCE

Yeah. Maybe you're right.

Beat.

So how are things in the Big Apple? How's Carol? The kids?

JEFFREY

Everyone's fine. Spending Thanksgiving in Connecticut with the in-laws.

BRUCE

You should be so lucky.

JEFFREY

What? And miss the Thanksgiving hunt?

BRUCE

You know, I asked Pa if I could go along this year.

JEFFREY

On the hunt?! Are you serious?

BRUCE

Cleve isn't the only one who's trying. I'm trying, too. Trying to connect with Pa. I've been thinking about it a lot. But if we ever do connect, I guess it won't be during a hunt. Pa said he wouldn't feel safe with me in the woods.

JEFFREY

My God, Bruce, you'd be the one in jeopardy! The deer are safer in the woods than you when Pa's on the loose.

BRUCE

If Clifford and Claire can hunt with Pa, why can't we?

JEFFREY

Pa's used to hunting with them. He sees us differently. Pa sees Clifford and Claire as hunting Buddies. Well, the term *Buddies* might be too strong. I'm not saying he likes them. But at least he tolerates them. He doesn't even tolerate us, let alone like us. Hell. I don't know, maybe he even hates us. And I guess I feel pretty much the same way about him.

BRUCE

Wow! That's a strong word. You actually hate him? You really think he hates us?

JEFFREY

At best, he's ashamed of us. At worst, he sees us as devils with forked tails and horns. Maybe not antlers, but horns nonetheless, and Pa would see either one of us as fair game. No, Bruce, don't go into the woods with that arse when he's carrying a loaded gun.

BRUCE

Well, I think you're wrong. But don't worry. We'll stay in by the fire, drink brandy, and play chess. Maybe Scrabble.

JEFFREY

Ready to get your butt kicked?

BRUCE

Dream on, Brother. But hey. How's the fashion design business? Won any more awards lately?

JEFFREY

I'd totally love my work if it wasn't for the clients. Want to guess what made me late for my flight? A Broadway diva demanding last-minute alterations. She's hosting some charity event this weekend and didn't like the way her ass looked in her gown.

BRUCE

Oh, I know exactly what you mean. I hear it all the time. *Dr. Hamilton, can you lift my bottom? Tighten my butt? Take the dimples out of my butt? Can you make my butt smaller?*

JEFFREY

Yeah, but how many women want their butt to look bigger?

BRUCE

What they say and what they mean are often different things.

JEFFREY

No, I kid you not. Her exact words were, *I love the gown, but it doesn't do enough to highlight my booty*. She actually wanted the gown to make her ass to look bigger.

BRUCE

See, that's a perfect example of what I mean. She didn't say bigger, did she? She said highlight her booty. Plastic surgeons call that buttocks augmentation, and it's a lot more complicated than just making the butt bigger. It's making it bigger in the right places, getting the right shape, getting the right relationship to the rest of her body. Sculpting the perfect ass is tricky business.

JEFFREY

So, you do this procedure? You augment asses?

BRUCE

Not my specialty, but I'm thinking to do more of it. Everyone does breast augmentation. Butt augmentation is the cosmetic surgery du jour. Right now, I'm behind the curve.

JEFFREY

So, you need to get ahead of the curve.

Excited, stands to gesture.

Your tagline! Ahead of the curve! Apply for the trademark as soon as you get back to Seattle. Billboards all over the city. *Dr. Bruce Hamilton's Ahead of the Curve Ass Clinic.* Or... *See Dr. Hamilton when your Booty needs Boosting.* Or maybe *Dr. Bruce for Bodacious Buttocks.*

They share a hearty laugh.

BRUCE

Pretty damn good with alliteration, aren't you?

Claire enters. Bruce and Jeffrey leap up for hugs.

JEFFREY

Claire! How are you? Love the coat. Serviceable for winter but very, very chic.

CLAIRE

Well, thank you, Jeffrey. You're not the only one in the family with a flair for fashion, you know. And look at you, Bruce! You're looking pretty spiffy, too.

BRUCE

God, it's great to see you. How are you?

Claire hangs her coat and sits with Jeffrey. Bruce gets coffee.

CLAIRE

Healthy, happy, and busy. Couldn't be better, really, unless I could find a way to see my two favorite brothers more often. I'm so glad you both came this year.

JEFFREY

Ready for the big hunt tomorrow?

CLAIRE

Locked and loaded, as they say. Clifford's getting ready, too. Saw him at Mac's Hunting Supply praying over his ammo.

JEFFREY

Seeking divine guidance for bullet selection or asking a blessing for a quick kill?

CLAIRE

Neither. I think it was all just for the camera.

Bruce returns with coffee, takes a seat.

BRUCE

What do you mean? Posing for store security?

CLAIRE

Don't tell me you haven't heard about Clifford's newest venture! He's going on cable TV. He had a small crew in the gun shop filming a segment for his new show.

JEFFREY

My God, his dream of televangelism finally comes true!

CLAIRE

He got creative to get the deal. His concept is to combine a sermon with an outdoor sports show.

BRUCE

So instead of watching shows like *Hunting with Big John* or *Doug's Fishing Clinic*, the devout sportsman can tune into the *Hunting and Praying with Pastor Clifford Show*.

JEFFREY

You know these shows?

BRUCE

Using my imagination.

CLAIRE

Well, you're pretty much on target. The show's called *God, Geese, and Grizzlies*.

JEFFREY

No shit!? You're not kidding are you!?

CLAIRE

First show airs Saturday. Clifford's really pumped.

JEFFREY

He's got sponsors?

CLAIRE

Some regional sponsors. Sport shops in Kalispell and Great Falls. I don't think Nike or Coca Cola have signed, yet.

BRUCE

Are they filming the Thanksgiving hunt tomorrow?

CLAIRE

Are you kidding? One shot of Pa would sink the show before it gets off the ground.

JEFFREY

Framing scenes like a director.

The possibilities! Look how adorably Pa flips off the camera! Oh! Catch a glimpse of Pa in the background defecating behind a tree! Or God forbid! Pa confronts a party of Mexican hunters!

BRUCE

An overnight cult classic! Thanksgiving Day Massacre, Part Two.

JEFFREY

Bruce was thinking about joining you tomorrow in the quest for venison.

Claire gasps, gives a horrified look.

BRUCE

It was a thought.

CLAIRE

Well, if you really want to go hunting, Bruce, I can get you set up. But it's best if you and I hunt together and let Pa and Clifford go their own way.

BRUCE

Thanks, Claire. You're such a sweetheart. But my objective was to do some bonding with Pa, and he's not up for that.

CLAIRE

Bonding with Pa? Wait a minute. Let me try to get my head around that concept.

JEFFREY

Bruce is in midlife crisis and looking for a challenge. I'm encouraging him, for his own safety, to pursue something safer than bonding with Pa. How about chainsaw juggling?

BRUCE

I know it won't be easy.

CLAIRE

You've got a good heart, Bruce.

JEFFREY

A feeble and disturbed mind, but a good heart.

BRUCE

Doesn't anyone else think ahead, try to imagine Pa's funeral and life without him?

JEFFREY

No.

CLAIRE

Of course, I do. But I think about losing Ma a lot more.

JEFFREY

God, this is getting maudlin. Can we change the subject?

BRUCE

Okay. New topic. Cleve said the business is facing bankruptcy.

CLAIRE

He did? He told you? Did he tell you everything?

Clifford enters. All ad lib hellos and hugs.

BRUCE

Clifford! We were just talking about you.

JEFFREY

Our very own TV star! Talent runs so deep in this family.

CLIFFORD

The credit's not mine. It's all by the grace of God.

JEFFREY

Oooh, a TV star and modest, too.

CLIFFORD

Okay, Jeffrey. I haven't even got my coat off, but let the mocking begin.

JEFFREY

You know I'm just kidding around, Clifford. I'm proud of you. Here, let me take your coat.

CLIFFORD

Please don't patronize me, Jeffrey.

JEFFREY

Come on. I was just joking around.

CLIFFORD

Don't. We haven't seen each other for a couple of years, and we can't even get through hello before you start mocking. When you mock me, you mock my Calling and mock God Himself.

JEFFREY

God, Himself?!

BRUCE

Hey, let's just start over. Clifford, how are you?

CLIFFORD

I'm fine, Bruce. Thanks for asking. And how are you?

BRUCE

I'm fine, too. Thanks for asking.

JEFFREY

Well, now we're on a roll. Let's see, you're fine, Bruce is fine, I'm fine, and Claire's fine, too. Now that we're all caught up, let's do this again in a couple of years.

CLAIRE

Dear, God.

JEFFREY

I'm sorry, but doesn't anyone else abhor the pretense?

CLIFFORD

I do abhor pretense, Jeffrey, but you immediately went on the attack. So why don't *you* drop the pretense? The truth is, you think I'm a phony. You always have.

JEFFREY

You want truth. Okay. The truth is –

BRUCE

Wait! Let's just back this up a bit and take the focus off the two of you for a minute.

JEFFREY

Well?

BRUCE

Okay. I'll start. First, I love you all and I'm really glad to see you.

JEFFREY

Ouch! Oh, the brutal truth. Enough! I can't take any more.

CLAIRE

Let him talk, Jeffrey.

JEFFREY

You're right. Continue. Let the chips fall where they may.

BRUCE

I don't know. Maybe I am going through a mid-life crisis. Lately, I've been taking stock and thinking a lot about the relationships in my life.

CLAIRE

I didn't know you were in a relationship, Bruce. Is it serious?

BRUCE

No. Not that kind of relationship. I mean with my family. In particular, with Pa.

JEFFREY

You can't have a relationship with an arse.

CLIFFORD

God is working in your heart, Bruce. You need a relationship with Him first. Then you can work on your other relationships.

BRUCE

So, you think Pa loves and respects you because of your relationship with God?

CLIFFORD

Yes, I do.

JEFFREY

I don't.

CLIFFORD

What? Don't think Pa loves and respects me? Or you don't value my relationship with God?

JEFFREY

I'm not going to criticize your relationship with God if it makes you happy. But Pa's respect and affection for his children only indicates the degree to which he considers us to be like him.

BRUCE

So, he has five kids, and he wants five Bud clones?

CLAIRE

That doesn't bode well for me, then.

BRUCE

Doesn't bode too well for any of us. Least of all for Jeffrey and me. We don't live in Montana. We have professions Pa thinks are contemptuous. He thinks I'm homosexual, for God's sake.

CLIFFORD

Please don't use God's name in vain. And Bruce, God can heal sexual deviation.

BRUCE

Oh, my God! You, too!

CLIFFORD

Bruce, the Lord's name.

CLAIRE

Jeffrey designs clothing. Does he think Jeffrey's gay, too?

BRUCE

Jeffrey's got a wife and kids. But I shouldn't have to get married to prove I'm heterosexual.

CLAIRE

Well only Jeffrey and Clifford are married with kids, and I doubt Pa thinks that I'm gay. And no way he thinks Cleve's gay.

BRUCE

I'm sure you're probably right, but that doesn't mean Pa has even one ounce of respect for Cleve.

JEFFREY

What about Claire?

BRUCE

I'm not sure what Pa thinks about Claire.

JEFFREY

Shouldn't be hard to figure out. He's more transparent than glass. His every thought shines through plain as day.

CLAIRE

So, I guess what you're saying is that Pa doesn't even give me a second thought.

JEFFREY

The rest of us should be so lucky.

BLACKOUT

END OF SCENE