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Allie Oop's Last Fantastic Day

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CRACKED

by Gwydion Suilebhan

Genre: Comedy

1 Female

Synopsis: Just another episode of a run-of-the-mill cooking show transforms into an intricate, otherworldly grief ritual as the program's hostess — or is she some kind of middle-class priestess? — devises increasingly elaborate ways in which to defer the simple act of cracking an egg. When it's finally time for the demonstration, will she actually be able to just... let go?

COMMENCEMENT

by Clay McLeod Chapman

Genre: Drama

1 Female

Synopsis: One actress plays three women drawn together in the grim aftermath of a high school shooting - the mother of the shooter (*staph infection*), one of the shooter's victims (*early release*), and the mother of that victim (*keynote speaker*). It is a deep exploration of the lives of three women that, according to SEE Magazine "... will leave you wringing your hands in helpless empathy."

ALLIE OOP'S LAST FANTASTIC DAY

A Solo Play
By Kirt Shineman

CHARACTERS:

SUE—a late 30-somethin', mother

ROGER—(unseen) Sue's husband (A recording of nonsense sounds.)

HEE-HOO—(unseen) Sue's clown friend (Her voice is a recorded slid whistle.)

DR. CUTTER—(unseen) Sue's doctor (His voice is a recording of a tambourine and a real voice.) The voice should be SUE's but recorded.

SETTING:

The setting is a bathroom vanity with drawers, a make-up mirror, a chair in front of the vanity, a hand-held phone near the bathroom door, a dirty clothes hamper, and a toilet closet door. What bathroom where? Sue's bathroom in the United States. When? Now. Her telling never leaves the bathroom. She is aware she is telling and the audience is there being told.

Scene One: the start of school and end of summer.

Scene Two: immediately after scene one in the hospital.

Scene Three: over a few months in various treatment centers

Scene Four: the end of the school year, the start of summer.

SCRIPT NOTES:

The play is naturalistic at its core no matter what the degree of clown stylization is used. The character, her situation, the conflict, her relationships, is based on three-dimensional reality. Sue is a real person; Allie Oop is her real clown persona. Respect her. Don't judge her or her choices. Her events, her choices, her clowning should be played real, not abstract, not absurd, not experimental, but honest.

ALLIE OOP'S
LAST FANTASTIC DAY

Scene One:

(We hear circus music. SUE, in pajamas and a bathrobe, walks with purpose into the bathroom, with a [cordless] phone. The phone is ringing. She holds the phone away from her like it is a baby with an atomic diaper.)

SUE

I'm going to do this first!

(The phone rings a second time. SUE looks at it like it farted and left a nasty smell.)

(Quietly to the phone) What is waiting a few more hours?

(The phone rings. SUE looks at it like it cussed.)

Shut up! *(Beat. She hangs up the phone. She picks it and slams it down, or she clicks it on and turns it off.)* Roger, don't you dear pick up the phone! I will when I will! Sooooo, just don't do it. If it's anything serious Miss-Have-A-Fanstastic-Day will call back!

(SUE quickly locks the door. Over the music Roger protests about SUE's decision. On the bathroom counter is a CD player; Sue turns it off – music goes out.)

Roger! Stop It! I'm fine, Mister Worry-wart. Have faith! His eye is on the sparrow. I am going to do this and then we'll see how I'm feeling, and really, I'm feeling fine. My —

(Roger mumbles from beyond the door, his mumble is a clown noise. Is the lock enough to keep him out? She drags the hamper against the door. She puts the phone on top of the hamper.)

I can't hear you? I'm getting ready! *(Beat.)* If you try, and stop me, you'll be eating Brussels sprouts, and corn beef hash, or cold cereal for dinner. Or I'll just take your manhood and stick it in the freezer for a month. You'll get no sex from me! *(Beat. To herself in the mirror.)* I will keep my promise. Even if it kills me! *(Beat.) (Quietly)* I will.

(Roger mumbles from beyond the door, his mumble is a clown noise.)

(Almost to herself) It's nothing. Just cramping, or constipation, or pestilence or too much cheese. *(Beat)* You've got nothing to worry about. *(Beat)* Anyway Roger you get cramps just thinking about leaving the state. *(Mimicking Roger)* "Ow Sue. Sue. Su-we-sue. Suuuu-iiiiieeee!" Like I'm some average pig. I'm no average pig. You think you can make me stay. But, no. I'm not waitin' around, worryin', anticipatin'. *(Beat.)* Let you coddle me with tea and heating pads? No way. It's Leo's first day of his last year of school. And you can't make me stay. It's Leo's senior year and his eighteenth birthday. Soooo! Allie Oop's doin' her thang. *(Sung and danced)* Rally! The entertainer! Bumm-bumpd-bum-bum-bum-bum. *(Beat. Phew, she's tired.)* For me clowning's a cure. And it's got fewer side effects than an Ambien Prozac martini cocktail.

(To Roger who is on the other side of the bathroom door) Rog, are you gonna sit out there a bug me this whole time? *(Beat.)* You can. If you want. You could also put the cream pies in the cooler, so when Hee-Hoo gets here I'm ready. *(Pause.)* She's coming early 'cause she want to know what the doctor said, but the doctor hasn't said anything so I'm going to do what I've promised to do. *(Pause)* And this is my last chance... I mean, I've got to hurry. I've only got thirty minutes to change this mess into Allie Oop!

(Roger mumbles from beyond the door, his mumble is heard as a clown noise.)

Roger, I'm not missing it! I've always clowned on the first day of school, and it's his birthday. And his senior year, it is triply important. Doesn't matter if he's a six foot tall. Doesn't matter if he's the school Indian leg wrestling champ. Doesn't matter if he knows every Jerry Sheman or Herwoman song by heart. He's my son, and this is our—

(Roger mumbles from beyond the door, his mumble is heard as a clown noise.)

I know he's not six-feet tall. Give me credit. I may not be smart; I don't know when a book is any good, or which star is which, or the difference between a BA and a BS, but I do know my son. *(As she pulls out her make-up)* I'm not saying you don't, but... I'm as dedicated to this as much as Tom Jones was to the people of Jonestown. *(As Tom Jones singing)* "What's new pussycat; how about some coo-ooo-ool-aid?"

(Roger mumbles from beyond the door, his mumble is heard as a clown noise.)

Quit?! I'm not going to quit. I've not lost. Quit? Okay I may give up every diet I start. Only diet I've ever finished was a Diet Shasta. I quit reading the newspaper. It's got too many words. And I quit high school. But I was pregnant with Leo. Quit him? *(Shrugs.)* I haven't lost. That means I've failed. Did that, and never again. I won't fail Leo... Now Leo may have failed pre-school. But that was my fault.

(SUE laughs. She speaks more to herself as she gets ready. She talks to the mirror.)

How does one flunk pre-school? His report card looked like the thermometer at the North Pole. Way below zero. So many dashes it was

Morse-code: dash-dash-dot-dot-dot. All unsatisfactory. He's smart now, but then he spent so much time in time-out from the second he got to school he just moved his backpack to the corner. He spent so many months staring at the corner he didn't even know what teacher looked like! Fail preschool? All he had to know was his numbers and his alphabet, in order. Or know his colors. (*She arranges the white face paint, and red and black face-sticks.*) Colors like white, black, and red. The basics. He probably failed because I used to sit him in front of the TV so I could do all of the chores you required.

I didn't use the TV to baby-sit. Even Hee-Hoo says there's nothing wrong with The People's Court, the shopping channel, or PBS! It's a good way to learn. Anyway, how could I know what PBS was teachin' him. At least I didn't know until the school called. I wasn't sittin' by the phone waitin' for... news. Not that that's what I'm doing now. I'm not. You are. And where were you, Roger? I had to be the one to go and talk to the teacher.

After the school called I was the one to drive to Sunny Day—A-O-K' Pre-school, and sit in a chair for a five year old with Miss Partly Cloudy-Day towering over me?

(*As TEACHER*) — Sue, we're sorry ... I don't know how to say this, but...

The ideas raced through my head. Did Leo bite a kid? Oh no, don't tell me he hit a girl with a bat? Did he take off all his clothes and run naked through the jungle-gym.

(*As TEACHER*) — Sue, it's worse than that. He's color blind.

(*As SUE*) — Oh my Lord! No, he is not!

(*As Teacher*) —Yes, he is. He failed the test. There are many careers he can't do now.

(*As SUE*) — Can't be a painter 'cause he couldn't tell white from egg shell.

(*As TEACHER*) — Can't be a doctor because he can't tell blood from urine.

(*As SUE*) — Can't be a piano player since he can't tell the difference between the black keys and the white keys! Dear no! This is horrible!

I grabbed Leo by the ear, like any mother would, and dragged him to the car. I'm old fashioned that way. I wasn't goin' to hurt him. Not in front of Miss Partly Cloudy. I'd do it when we got home. And Leo, in the car, sittin' in those birth control bucket seats we had, and I couldn't understand how our son's color blind. I drove like a spaz-demon. When I came to a stop-light, I slammed on the breaks almost makin' us fly into the next life. We sat there, and I cried. All of the beautiful colors he's never goin' to see. All the wonderful color of roses- A clown's nose! The autumn leaves... In my day-dreamin', the stop-light changed. Leo yelled out—

(As LEO) —Mom! The light! It's green!

I burned rubber, pullin' a U-ie back to Sunny Day A-O-K Pre-school. I dragged him by the scruff of his neck, like any mother would, back into the classroom.

(As SUE) —Miss Partly Cloudy! Re-test him!

And they did! Leo wasn't color blind, just too smart for his britches. That PBS show? It'd talked about how in color blindness green was orange, and red was brown, and yellow was white. And Leo thought it'd be cool to fool the testers at Sunny Day. When I asked Leo why he did it, you know, messed up the test. And he said—

(As LEO) —'Cause.

(As SUE) — Leo? Cause why?

(As LEO) —So I'd be special. Handicapped.

(As SUE) —Why'd you want to be handicapped?

(As LEO) —So you'd notice me, Mommie.

(As SUE) —But I do notice you, Leo.

And that's when Leo, my boy, at only five years old, broke my heart. Little tears just filled his eyes. His little chin quivered, and he looked at me.

(As SUE) —You can tell Mommie.

And he cried, no sound, just tears.

(As SUE) —Leo? Why would you think I didn't notice you?

(As LEO) —'Cause Mommie. You forgot.

(As SUE) —Forgot what?

(As LEO) —You forgot. Today’s my birthday.

Oh.

(As LEO) —Yeah. Miss Partridge, remembered. We had cupcakes. But you forgot.

I had.

(As SUE) —Leo, let me give you the skinny on this. From here on out, I’ll never miss your birthday. Never. Ever. Deal?

(As LEO) —Deal, Mommie.

(SUE returns to her vanity and begins to outline her clown face.)

Now that was a fantastic day, Roger. This is our deal. You’re the one who came up with the idea. To make sure I don’t ever forget it, cause “You’re prone to do that.” You suggested it. And this—his last year at home... You’re the one who suggested I go to Florida for those six months and studied at Barnum Bailey’s clown college to learn clown history, clown stunts, clown economics, clown stocks and bonds. Of course I quit, Roger, but not before I invented Allie Oop. And my clown friends are counting on me. And the cream pies! What would I tell Bam-Bam-Bimbo and Hee-Hoo? Those two hookers are from the worst little whore house in Texas. Or how would I explain canceling to Booz-O. Ever notice how she smells like a mix of Listerine and Yukon Jack? If you keep me from doing this you’ll have to talk to our dearest African-American friend, Klu Klux Klown. And you better do it before they get here and cram into Hee-Hoo’s purple Pinto, all show and no go, as you’d say. You explain it to the high school seniors why there are no cupcakes and cookies. They think of us as tradition. They’re looking forward to all the cakes and pies and sodas. Oh! And you’d have to explain it all to the PTA president. She’s coming with her little dogs all dressed like clowns. I’ve told you! She’s Mrs. Green Jeans.

I know, I know, you think Leo hates every minute of it. He doesn’t. It’s a gas! *(She takes a big break and finds her breath.)* Okay. Okay. How about if I make you a deal? After. I’ll swing by Doctor Cutter’s office. If he hasn’t called back by then, after I’ve fulfilled my duty

... (Long pause.) Then I will be ready to know.

(Silence.)

As Allie Oop I have strength. (Beat) As her I can turn ugly things into beautiful things. I turn: (Words in brackets are mimed nonverbally. She is clowning. She changes “pains into smiles.” These need clean separation.)

[Pain into laughter.]

[Tears into hope.]

[Silence into happiness.]

I need to stick with this.

(Silence.)

I need to trust God will take care of me. This is my chance to confirm my faith. My chance to clown with God. He gets to play with us once in a while. To see what we can take. Like the five tornados. The one's that just hit Ohio last week. See, when we break God's laws- it actually causes cycles of nature to go bazzerk. It's like we have disrupted the laws of God, so he sends natural illness, unnatural diseases, all types of disasters. It's too true. Upset God by, oh, I don't know, allowing candy-asses to serve in the Army, or skirts to run for president, or Hawaiians to immigrate. If we let those things happen we'll see natural disasters, thousands of dead birds and fish in Arkansas. We'll see the weather go crazy, major storms, flooding, earthquakes, tornados, our bodies fight us from the inside. God said so— Hosea 4. “And this has happened!” That's what it says! We're supposed to learn something. Not just pop like a balloon He's twistin' and turnin' us into somethin' amazin', so we can say, “Forgive me, Lord.” And God, says, “Mercy!” And then it all stops. Until we're ready for more folly. I can't explain all of it clearly, but as Allie Oop, and through history jesters told kings the truth, in a fun way or they lost their heads. (She pulls out her wig cap and puts it on.) Bein' a clown I can take life in stride. Recognize the

folly. Laugh. God's good-will may look like silly folly to us, or even like evil, or meanness- but... Matthew twenty-four, seven, "The bodies will attack each other." But he has a plan, a purpose, a point. He has to. So that even when it looks like it's all fallin' out. Like the last time...

I hadn't prepared you, Roger, or Leo, and I'm sorry. When I came out of the shower in my towel, you squealed like a skirt.

(As ROGER) —Ahhh! Honey! You look like you just walked out of Schindler's List.

That's what you sounded like, Rog. You're slow to notice. I could've had a sex change and suddenly you'd be like, "Honey, somethin's different." You would, Rog. Remember that time you asked what I was goin' to wear to the company Christmas party, and I said the dress I wore to Tom's Retirement. You didn't know which dress. I could've worn my go-go outfit with fringe and you'd never remember that's what I wore when you first saw me workin' at the Lucky Girl's A Go-Go. Roger? The Lucky Girl's A Go-Go? I learned to dance from a Puerto-Rican! Taught me how to cheer up the men.

(She turns on the CD to "Alley Oop". SUE dances like the go-go girl she once was.)

(singing) Oop Oop Oop Oop Oop! Alley Oop! Oop Oop Oop Oop Oop! Alley Oop! There' a man in the funny papers we all know/ He lived way back a long time ago./ He don't eat nothin' but bear cat stew,/ Well, this cat's name is Alley Oop. Oop Oop Oop Oop Oop! He's the toughest man there is alive. Alley Oop!/ Wearin' clothes from a wild cat's hide./ Alley Oop!/ Oop Oop Oop Oop Oop! (After a fast wiggle, she grabs her side in pain, but whispers.) OWWW! My go-go days are gone-gone.

(Sue turns the music off. She checks the phone.)

Ms. "Have a fantastic day" is going to call back. (With emphasis but not

anger) She'll call AFTER I'VE DONE WHAT I NEED TO DO. After. But I have faith its nothing. "Have a fantastic day." Nurse practitioners are messengers, and they come in all shapes and types. Here. (*Announcing*) The Nurse Practitioner with good news! (*SUE bounds into the room miming a scroll of great news like the "publisher's clearance house".*) Yeah! (*Announcing*) Nurse Practitioner with not-so-good news! (*SUE skulks into the room miming a scroll of mediocre news.*) Ooo-loll-ooow? (*Announcing*) Nurse Practitioner with horrible news! (*SUE tiptoes into the room, trying to hide, and slides the scroll of bad news across the floor like it's a ticking bomb, and she runs.*) Yikes! YOU'RE GONNA DIE! (*Announcing*) Nurse Practitioner with incomplete news! (*SUE treads in, and she finds a spot, stand still, unrolls the scroll and mouths news, but stops and shrugs.*) Meh!

(Hee-Hoo is heard as a slide whistle.)

SUE

Oh Hee-Hoo? You're here! You're early. Is Roger still there? (*Beat.*) No? Well, be my best friend and keep him away from the door. He can go get the...

(Hee-Hoo is heard as a slide whistle.)

SUE

Oh good. He's worried. Of course I understand. The check-up was yesterday. I think the pain is just cramps. But I went to get checked none-the-less. I spent thirty minutes layin' there, holdin' my breath when told to. Lettin' it out when told to. Layin' still like a mummy. And when Miss-Have-A-Fantastic-Day said I was done, and all the clicks and whirls stopped, I sat up. She patted my shoulder,

(As MISS HAVE-A-FANTASTIC-DAY) —Have a fantastic day.

Time's a wastin', Sue. Go out! Have your last fantastic day.

Hee-Hoo, fantastic days are for goners. Was she sayin' I should pull out my bucket list? Get tickets on a celebrity cruise with Roger? I wanted to

cuss at her. But I didn't. I said, "I'll pray for you." All she could say was-

(*As MISS HAVE-A-FANTASTIC-DAY*) —We'll have your results next week. The lab'll call Cutter. His office'll call you.

Hee-Hoo, Dr. Cutter is cold. Glacier hands. I told him. Freezin'! So he's started wearing leather driving gloves. Now when he touches me I expect him to say-

(*As the doctor checking Sue like a race car driver*) —Dynamic curves. Sleek lines. Nice chassis. Clean camshaft. Oh, a few marbles on the track. Here's the turbulence blockage. These bumps and grooves disrupt the flow of air to make you run smoothly. You're a classic. Case.

(*Hee-Hoo is heard as a slide whistle.*)

Oh, I know. Like a classic. Like a fantastic case! I know what the lab-tech meant. Have a fantastic week, waitin', stewin', goin' crazy wonderin', imaginin'... I'm not imaginin' the worst. I'm going through with my promise: never to forget Leo's birthday. I can't let him down. I can't.

(*Hee-Hoo is heard as a slide whistle.*)

You know I can't let you in. Not until I'm done. Clown Rule! (*Pause.*) Hee-Hoo, you know, I used to have to let Leo watch. He'd sit on the hamper. I learned if he didn't see the process ... I mean, I'd walk into this bathroom, close the door... Go in as Sue, and thirty minutes later come out as Allie Oop. And Leo freaked. He ran into the bathroom, yellin'.

(*As LEO*) —Mommie! What did you do with my Mommie! Cryin', screamin', all theatrics. I don't know where he got that. Not from me. I've only missed once, Hee-Hoo. The time I was tryin' to multi-task. You know, be modern. I'd just finished my face, and powdered. At the same time I was tryin' to make cookies. For Leo's class

birthday party. I'd put the all the cookies in and raced back in here to do my make-up. Rogers was already at work. Then Leo yelled from the stairs.

(LEO) —Mom! MOM! And I's like

(SUE) —WHAT?

(LEO) —MOOOOM!?

(SUE) —WHAAAAT LEOOOO?!

(LEO) —COME HERE!

(SUE) —I CAN'T!

(LEO) —OKAY!

(SUE *powders her face. Clouds of face powder fill the room.*) I was in the middle of powderin'. Powder fillin' the room, but it wasn't. It's smoke.

I went racin' to the kitchen, and it was filled with smoke. I grabbed a towel and opened the oven. While I was pullin' out the cookies, the towel hit the gas, catches fire. Shoooot! And I tossed the towel. Burnin' my hand. But the tossed towel flies and hits the curtains. Woosh! Rats! Right? Curtains go up in flames in seconds. So quick. And then. Swoosh!

There went the cabinets! Quick! As fire can spread. I couldn't even get to the phone. So I did what every smart Mother would do. I ran. Past Leo, standin' there watchin' the kitchen burn. I ran past him screamin' like I was possessed.

(SUE) —GET THE HELL OUT! GET OUT NOW!

(SUE *narrating*) And I ran across the street to old man Jones. Poundin' on the door.

(SUE) —Jones! Call the fire department! JONES!

(SUE *narrating*) Old man Jones was hard of hearin'. Finally, Jones came to the door.

(*As Old Man Jones, just staring at SUE's boobs.*) —Sue. What's all the commotion?