

NOTES

Small towns have forever served as a safe-haven for quirky characters. *Believing in Bruce* is a character-driven comedy that satirizes society's need to firmly believe in something. This contemporary one-act play may be performed by a male—or with careful editing, a female—and may be entered in Humorous Interpretation; however, this selection could easily be adapted into a Duo Interpretation or Duet Acting and be performed by either two males or a male and female. While this play contains a wealth of off-the-wall, over-the-top characters found in small towns all across America, it is important to keep Bobby Joe honest and realistic; after all, this is his story. Bobby Joe may, of course, be as country or 'simple' as the performer desires; however, it is important for Bobby Joe's demeanor to greatly contrast with all of the other quirky townspeople. This script allows for a great deal of creative blocking, so have fun! After all, it isn't often someone finds a real, LIVE ghost in his backyard!

Cast of Characters:

Bobby Joe

Clara Beth, a local townspeople

Daryl, a neighbor

Bruce, Bobby Joe's next door neighbor and partner in crime

Curtis, the local radio disc jockey

Tabitha Palmer, a local news reporter

Irma Mudd, a local townspeople

Ed Crump, a local townspeople

Jolene, a local townspeople

Buford, a young boy

Debbie Lou, the local ingénue

Bobby Joe: (*To audience*) Okay, I've got to tell you something. It's a secret. Can you keep a secret? Never in my wildest dreams did I truly believe that I would be a rich man. I mean, *never!* Oh, I've thought up some hum-dingers in my day, but never in my mind would I have thought I could come up with a product that would cost me virtually nothing—nothing at all—and then turn that 'nothing' into the gold mine it has become. Believe it or not, that's what I thought—until I met Bruce.

Bruce moved next door to me about six years ago. He's been like a brother to me—sort of like a partner in crime. (*Laughs*) Truer words have never been spoken! That's what he is. Bruce is my next door neighbor, the brother I never had—and my partner in crime!

Now, before I start my story here, let me make one thing perfectly clear. Everything you've ever heard about me or Bruce is probably true! Bruce and I are always coming up with some sort of crazy scheme to make money. Take, for example—our door-to-door shrimp business. Now, you may or may not know this—but fresh shrimp costs a lot of money! So we went to the store, bought us some of those cheap, frozen *fish bits*, let them thaw out—then—went around town *selling* them to people—people who *thought* they were buying fresh caught shrimp. Mind you—we don't live anywhere near an ocean—or a lake—or even a swimming pool for that matter. Regardless, one thing I told Bruce I would never do is out-right lie to anyone's face. It's bad enough to *scam* your neighbors—but to verbally *lie* to someone? I won't do it. Bruce said he wouldn't do it either. And if you know Bruce, and many of you do—you know he's as good as his word.

Clara Beth: So, you boys are selling shrimp?

Bobby Joe: Howdy, Ma'am, we're selling *seafood*.

Clara Beth: Well, it says right there on the side of your bucket—S-H-R-I-M-P.

Bruce: (*Looking at the bucket*) Yes—you're right, that's what it says alright.

Clara Beth: (*Looking into the bucket*) I thought shrimp had a—I don't know—more curly cue-ish shape to their bodies.

Bobby Joe: Curly cue-ish?

Clara Beth: Yeah, you know—like crescent rolls.

Bruce: Oh, well—these are *round*.

Clara Beth: I don't think I've ever seen round shrimp before!

Bobby Joe: To tell the truth—I haven't either.

Clara Beth: Well, it certainly smells *fishy*—so I'll take five dozen!

Bobby Joe: (*To audience*) The thing is—Bruce and I never *said* they were shrimp. We happened to have a bucket that said 'shrimp' on the side. Trust me, it's the only bucket either of us even owned—which I suppose—gave us the idea in the first place! I'll tell you one thing—the people in our town *really* love their seafood! Okay—I know—you want to know about the *ghost*, right? Well—actually—it's a very funny story.

One day, one of my neighbors, Daryl, came into my backyard—well, he was chasing his little dog that had gotten loose. Anyway, I was inside the house—when all of a sudden—I hear this commotion!

Daryl: Bobby Joe! Bobby Joe, get out here quick! There's a brown ghost floating around in your backyard! Hurry up, before he flies away!

Believing in Bruce

By Gregory T. Burns

Bobby Joe: (*To audience*) So I ran outside to see the ghost! Only—I don't see a ghost. What I see—is Bruce—attached to some elastic-harness-*rope* concoction he bought from some circus supply store he found on the Internet! Anyway, there he was—swinging and swaying back and forth—and up and down. Oh, and Bruce had a big, old, brown blanket over his head. It was almost dark at the time—and Bruce set the contraption up way out in the back part of my backyard—way back along the fence row—right there between my two birch trees. I guess, to the untrained eye—I could see how Daryl might have *thought* Bruce was a ghost.

Daryl: You are one lucky guy, Bobby Joe! Man—I bet people would pay good money to see something like that! Well, now that I've caught Little Miss Pookie-Wookie—I'd better high-tail it back home. We're having seafood tonight. I sure hope the Missus is frying up some of your fresh caught shrimp!

Bobby Joe: (*To audience*) What Daryl said stuck with me—like a bad nightmare. Then I told myself to forget the dog's *name* and focus on what was important! Daryl said, "I bet people would pay good money to see something like that." Shoot—it was just Bruce up there playing around with his new circus apparatus—which by the way—guaranteed the user that it would significantly increase the chances of working full-time in the circus industry. Still, if swinging around my backyard wearing a brown blanket over his head made Daryl believe he was seeing a *ghost*—maybe the other people around these parts would believe it, too. After all, Daryl, with his two-year degree from the local junior college, was one of the most well-educated guys *around* these parts!

Bruce: (*Reading from a pamphlet*) See, Bobby Joe, it says right here in this instruction manual: *Cover your head with a sheet or blindfold. Covering your head will help you get over your soon-to-be-acquired vertigo.* Well, my only sheet was on the bed and I don't own a blindfold—so I thought I'd use that old blanket my aunt sent me last Christmas.

Bobby Joe: (*To audience*) And thus—Bruce—the real, live, *brown* ghost was born. Now, if you know Bruce—and many of you do—you surely must know that Bruce has wanted to work in a circus for years!

Bruce: Bobby Joe, I know some people think it's a pipe-dream, but someday—*someday* I'm going to work for a circus—and I'm going to marry a circus show girl! We'll save up all of our money—then—after about twenty years or so, we'll *quit* the circus. We'll call up HGTV and