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*Dramatic Publishing*



# **BIG BUCKS**

A Full-Length Play

By  
**PAT COOK**



**THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY**



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PAT COOK

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(BIG BUCKS)

**BIG BUCKS**  
*A Full-Length Play*  
For Five Women and Three Men

**C H A R A C T E R S**

- BIG BUCK FEVER**                    a large bulldog of a man in his late forties. Brash and loud, he is the stereotype of the shady Southern gentleman
- MAMA FEVER**                        Buck's wife. A kindly but somewhat scatter-brained woman; in her late forties also
- MYRON FEVER**                        a bookish, jellyfish of a son, around twenty years old
- GRAMMA FEVER**                    a feisty, seventy-year-old grandmother who's more than a little athletic
- NANCY FEVER**                        a beautiful, shapely daughter, who's more than a little friendly
- MARVIN KRESHLER**                    a handsome and intelligent man in his middle twenties
- HILLARY KEITH**                        an attractive but business-oriented woman in her early twenties
- HILDEGARDE**                        a large maid who's been with the family for years and acts like it

Time: The present

Place: A large plantation somewhere in the deep South

## PRODUCTION NOTES

The setting for the entire play is the spacious living room of the large plantation belonging to the family of Big Buck Fever. The room has the usual furniture, consisting mostly of deep leather and wicker chairs and tables. There are three workable doors – the front door, located stage right, the hall door, located just to the left of upstage center and the kitchen door, located on the stage left wall. There are several guns, stuffed animal heads and family pictures scattered all over the walls. There is also, displayed quite prominently, a Confederate flag.

**ACT ONE**  
**SCENE ONE**

**AS LIGHTS COME UP:** MAMA FEVER is sitting in the rocking chair, knitting and singing “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.”

MAMA (singing).

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me home.  
Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me home.

(HILDEGARDE enters from the kitchen at L and dusts the furniture.)

MAMA (singing).

I looked over Jordan and whut did I see, comin’ for to carry me home?  
A band of angels comin’ after me, comin’ for to carry me home.

(HILDEGARDE joins in the singing on the second chorus.)

MAMA and HILDEGARDE (singing).

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me home.  
Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me home.

(MAMA launches into the verse again. MYRON, NANCY and GRAMMA enter from UC, singing “oohs” in harmony.)

MAMA (singing).

I looked over Jordan and whut did I see, comin' for to carry me home?

MYRON, NANCY, GRAMMA and HILDEGARDE. Whut?

MAMA (singing).

A band of angels comin' after me, comin' for to carry me home.

ALL (in great harmony).

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me home.

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me home.

(After finishing the song, they all congratulate each other.)

MAMA. That wuz the best we ever done, I do believe.

NANCY. We still got it.

MYRON. Sounded good to me.

GRAMMA. Boy, this family is boring.

NANCY. Who wuz singin' bass?

GRAMMA. I wuz.

NANCY. You?

GRAMMA. You didn't think it was this weak-willed, namby-pamby brother of yours, did you?

NANCY. I could only hope.

MYRON. That would make me mad, 'cept for one thing.

NANCY. Whut?

MYRON. Whut's namby-pamby?

GRAMMA. *You're* namby-pamby, that's whut's namby-pamby.

You got about as much backbone as there is in a pancake.

MYRON. Listen now, I'm beginnin' to resent all these sarcastic remarks you and ever'body else in this family hits me with.

That's about all I ever hear from you people. It's all the time, "You're weak," "You're a jellyfish," "You're a wimp."

(HILDEGARDE pushes MYRON over the couch as she exits to the kitchen at L.)

HILDEGARDE. Out of the way, wimp. (She exits.)

MAMA. I do dearly love singin'.

NANCY. Y'all used to sing all the time when you wuz a girl, huh, Mama?

MAMA. Jist about, girl.

NANCY. Whut wuz it like?

MAMA. Oh, we used to gather out on the veranda on them cool summer evenin's jist when the moon wuz comin' up and the smell of mimosa wuz driftin' along on the evenin' breeze and we'd sing our guts out.

NANCY. That's so romantic. Tell me agin how you met Daddy.

GRAMMA. Not that story agin. If I hear it agin, I'm goin' to beat up Myron.

MYRON. I can take you the best day you ever had, old lady.

GRAMMA. Sez you.

MYRON. You want to Indian wrestle?

GRAMMA. You're on, sponge. (They cross to a table and begin arm wrestling.)

NANCY. Go on, Mama, tell me the story. Gramma's goin' to beat up Myron anyway.

MAMA. Well, he wuz quite a handsome man in those days. All the girls thought so. He wuz tall, like he still is, a'course, and muscles? He could whup any three men, any day, any time, providin' they wuz drunk. Course that wuz back when bein' a man stood for somethin'.

NANCY. Whut about bein' a woman?

MAMA. We stood for a lot, too. With Buck, you have to. (GRAMMA flips MYRON out of his chair.)

GRAMMA. Had enough, washrag?

MYRON. Two out of three. (They start again.)

MAMA. Well, Buck would show up at the house, long about dark, all decked out in his best Sunday-go-to-meetin' blue jeans.

NANCY. Mama, Daddy don't go to church.

MAMA. Now you know good and well he does. Regular. Ever' Easter, when he's near one.



NANCY. I bet he wuz a handsome fella.

MAMA. I hope to kiss a skunk if he wasn't. I can still see him.

Out there on the porch. Jist standin' and whistlin' and kickin' the dogs. Lands sake, those were the days. (GRAMMA flips MYRON again.)

GRAMMA. Give up?

MYRON (getting up). Three out of five.

GRAMMA. Oh, you like it, huh? (They go at it again.)

NANCY. Daddy's sure been down at the city council a long time. You think he's goin' to be able to talk some sense into them?

MAMA. I direly hope so. 'Cause if he don't, we're goin' to lose this beautiful old plantation here. And this place has been in the family for generations.

NANCY. Why do they need an old freeway, anyway?

MAMA. I guess some people would consider that progress. But Buck ain't one to give up without a fight. I know him like I know myself. He's goin' to hold on to this place because he believes in the tradition of the family home, the tradition of the South and above all, not lettin' nobody git away with nuthin' without he makes a few dollars on the deal. (GRAMMA again flips MYRON.)

GRAMMA. You couldn't whup cream, you know that? One more time?

MYRON. No, I think I'll jist stay down here a while. It's kinda cool.

(BUCK enters through the front door at R.)

BUCK. I'm home. Home to hearth and family. Home from the hill. (He sings.)

Home, home on the range.

MAMA. We done already sung.

BUCK. Shoot! (He sees MYRON on the floor.) Myron, you been Indian wrestlin' Gramma agin?

GRAMMA. He tried. He's got about as much snap as a pussy willow.

BUCK. Now don't go flippin' my boy around like that, Gramma. When I git done my time here on earth, he's goin' to inherit all this empire. 'Course, he'll probably turn it into a flower shop.

MYRON. I *do* like hydrangies.

BUCK. Figures.

MYRON. Daddy, whut's namby-pamby?

BUCK. *You're* namby-pamby, that's whut namby-pamby is.

NANCY (rushing over, hugging BUCK). Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, I love you so much 'cause you're so strong.

BUCK. You've *got* to git out of the house more, Nancy doll.

MAMA. How'd it go at the city council, dear?

BUCK. Oh, they all listened with rapt attention. I tell you, it's amazin' the hypnotic power a man can have over an audience with jist a few well-chosen words and a chain saw.

(HILDEGARDE enters from L with a drink.)

HILDEGARDE. Here's your tonic, Big Buck.

BUCK. Thank you, Hildegarde. Jist the way I like it, I hope?

HILDEGARDE. Yes, sir. Only don't operate any heavy machinery after drinkin' it.

BUCK (walking to a window). I jist don't understand why anyone would want to demolish this place for some fancy highway.

MAMA. You do dearly love this place, don't you, sugar?

BUCK (pointing out the window). I tell you, Mama, we've got the prettiest and quietest place this side of the Mississipp'. So pretty and well-kept, it looks like a cemetery out there.

MAMA. You always did say the nicest things.

BUCK. Peace and fresh air. Jist smell that. (He takes in a deep breath and starts coughing.)

HILDEGARDE. Oh, good. They delivered the fertilizer for the

front lawn. (She exits L into the kitchen.)

NANCY. Daddy, Howard's comin' over and we're goin' swimmin'.

BUCK. Hold it. Which one's Howard?

NANCY. You don't know him. I met him at the picture show last night.

BUCK. Lands sake, the turnover in boy friends for you is astronomical. I can't keep 'em straight.

NANCY. I have trouble with that myself.

BUCK. So, y'all goin' swimmin', huh? Well, that's all right, but this time, wear a bathin' suit.

NANCY. Why, Daddy?

BUCK. Uh . . . well . . . the water's kinda cold.

NANCY. Okay, Daddy. (She exits L into kitchen.)

BUCK (to MAMA). Are you goin' to have a talk with her or whut?

MAMA. So you don't think they're goin' to go ahead with that freeway?

BUCK. I don't know. I think I made myself clear at the meetin'.

MAMA. I hope you weren't too forceful.

BUCK. I did not raise my voice once, I want you to know.

MAMA. You can have a pleasin' manner about you when you want to.

BUCK. I had them right in the palm of my hand. One of them around the throat and the other . . .

MAMA. Now, Buck.

BUCK. I wanted to make sure they heard me.

MAMA. I jist hope you weren't too harsh.

BUCK (crossing the room). You'd have been proud of me.

(He steps over MYRON.) Are you goin' to lie there all day? You're wrinkl'n' the rug.

GRAMMA. Well, that's it for me. (She gets up.)

BUCK. Whut's your problem now?

GRAMMA. Boredom. B-O-A-R-D-U-M. I am bored out of my skull. Nuthin' ever happens around here.

BUCK. Aw, go whittle somethin'.

GRAMMA. I think I'll go see if Hildegarde wants to Indian wrestle. (She exits L into kitchen. MYRON gets an idea and follows her.)

MAMA. Oh, there wuz a letter come for you today. I think it's from the guvmint.

BUCK. Ours or theirs?

MAMA. Theirs. It's from Washington. (BUCK picks up the letter from the desk.)

BUCK. Yankees. (He turns and looks lovingly at the Confederate flag.) I tell you it wuz a sorry day when we admitted we wuz part of the Union.

MAMA. You mean the Civil War?

BUCK. Heck, no. I mean when I let them draft me.

MAMA. Let them, nuthin'. It took four Marines to take you.

BUCK. Now, if they'd jist been a little drunk, it'd been a different story.

MAMA. I wuz so proud of you that day.

BUCK. I still think I could'a taken them if they hadn't brought in that tank. (He opens the letter.) Whut's all this about, anyway?

MAMA. I hope they're not tryin' to draft Myron.

BUCK. As whut? Somethin' to shoot from behind?

(The kitchen door flies open and MYRON falls out and onto the floor.)

MYRON. Four out of seven! (He re-enters the kitchen.)

BUCK (yelling into kitchen). Gramma, leave him alone. I ain't goin' to tell you agin. Go out and wrestle the horse if you want to.

MAMA. Lands, you still don't like the Union, do you?

BUCK. I'm still workin' on a way to secede. That's jist the kind of hairpin I am. Even when I'm doin' business, I check ever'body out. Like that ad says, I always look for the Union

label.

MAMA. Whut's in the letter?

BUCK. Oh, shoot! Accordin' to this the I. R. and S. wants to audit me. Holy pigs, what else can happen to me? I mean, here I am, tryin' to scrape out a modest livin' for me and mine, followin' the Golden Rule and not harmin' nobody and here they want to audit me. Me, who's lived as honest a life as a man can live. I wonder if they'll take a bribe?

MAMA. It'd be somethin' if we lost this place.

BUCK. It's my whole life, Mama. I'm just an average man and I like things the way they are. I don't mind progress as long as it don't change nuthin'. I like to think that our little family ain't no better or worse than anybody else. Jist your average, God fearin', well-rounded, family. (Offstage there is a loud crash and the sound of a horse whinneying.) With a grandmother than can whup Sugar Ray Leonard. (BLACKOUT.)

## SCENE TWO

SCENE: The next day, afternoon.

AS LIGHTS COME UP: MAMA is the only one in the room. She is sitting in the rocker, knitting. The doorbell chimes – the opening notes of “Dixie.” HILDEGARDE enters from L and crosses to the door. She stops and goes over to MAMA.

HILDEGARDE. I got it. (She crosses to the door at R and opens it.

(MARVIN stands in the doorway.)

MARVIN. Hello. Is this the Fever household?

HILDEGARDE. Well, it ain't the "House of Pies." Come in.

(MARVIN enters into the room.) Shut the door! Chimonee.  
Whut do you need?

MAMA (rising, crossing to them). Now, that's not bein' polite,  
Hildegarde.

HILDEGARDE. You got to watch out about strangers, Mama  
Fever. You can never tell where one has been.

MAMA. Why'nt you go and get us some refreshments.

HILDEGARDE. My cow, they let anybody in this house. (She  
exits L into the kitchen.)

MARVIN. Mrs. Fever?

MAMA. Please, ever'budy calls me Mama.

MARVIN. Well, Mama, I'm Marvin Kreshler. I'm from the  
I.R.S. Did you get our form letter?

MAMA. Oh, lands, yes. You want to audition my husband.

MARVIN. Uh . . . I think so. I'm here about his last four tax  
returns.

MAMA. Whut wuz wrong with them?

MARVIN. We didn't get them. And my department frowns on  
that sort of thing.

(HILDEGARDE enters L from the kitchen, carrying a glass of  
tea and a glass of some sort of gray matter.)

MAMA. Ah, here are our drinks. (HILDEGARDE hands them to  
MAMA and MARVIN.)

HILDEGARDE. Here's your iced tea, ma'am.

MAMA. Thank you, Hildegarde.

MARVIN. What's this?

HILDEGARDE. Oatmeal.

MARVIN. I don't think I'm thirsty.

MAMA. Hildegarde, fetch the man an iced tea.

HILDEGARDE. I don't know, ma'am. We so poor we barely can afford another glass. That tea bag is so thin now you can read a magazine through it. We sure are strapped for money.

MARVIN. You heard I was from the I.R.S.

HILDEGARDE. I was listenin' at the door. (She catches herself and snaps her fingers.) Aw, shoot!

(BUCK enters from R, carrying a shotgun.)

BUCK. I'm home. Home to hearth and family. Home from the hill . . .

MAMA. You did that already.

BUCK. Whut're you doin' outa your chair?

MAMA. We got company.

MARVIN. I'm Marvin Kreshler and I'm from the I.R.S.

BUCK. Lands, we let anybody in this house. Hildegarde, git me somethin' to drink.

MARVIN. How about a glass of oatmeal?

BUCK. You guvmint people are funny. Mama, we got some business to talk over. Why don't you and Hildegarde run off to the kitchen and listen at the door.

MAMA. Want me to take your shotgun?

BUCK. No, I may need it.

MARVIN. Is it hot in here all of a sudden? (HILDEGARDE and MAMA exit L into the kitchen.)

BUCK. Now, whut seems to be the problem? Guvmint need some money?

MARVIN. Always. But that's not why I'm here. Mr. Fever, you seem to be a little behind in your tax returns.

BUCK. Please, call me Big Buck. That's my name. That's the name of my place and that's whut I stand for. Big Bucks. It's a way of life, son. Ever'body I come in contact with is doin' well. They *have* to be doin' well or they don't come in contact with me.

MARVIN. Yes, I'm sure. But you see, Buck, I'll have to go over