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*The Three Old  
Women's Bet*

*A Blue Ridge Mountain Folktale  
by R. Rex Stephenson*

**Dramatic Publishing Company**  
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(THE THREE OLD WOMEN'S BET)

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

- Narrator** Tells the story.
- Willameana** Wife of the silversmith that always fears being robbed.
- Regina** Wife of the man who must always look nice.
- Darcy** Wife of the man who always believes he is sick.
- Elijah** Husband of Darcy
- Ralph** Husband of Regina
- Freemont** Husband of Willameana
- Minister**
- Minister's Wife**

## ABOUT THE PLAY

Darcy, Regina, and Willameana are three overly competitive country housewives and sisters who can only seem to agree on one thing—they've married the three biggest fools on the face of the earth. Of course, determining which of the three is the *most* foolish is a whole other quandry all together. In this play, they set out to do just that. They agree to put together a bet at the expense of their husbands which evolves into 25-30 minutes of revelry and side-splitting laughter as each of the men is tricked into various acts of humiliation. A must-see comedy for audiences of all ages.

# THE THREE OLD WOMEN'S BET

Adapted by R. REX STEPHENSON

NARRATOR. There was once three old women, who lived in Davis Holler, which is in the middle of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Now you probably have never heard of it, but don't really make any difference. As hollers go, it was nice. Anyway, these three old women couldn't agree on anything. One was named Regina May, [*REGINA enters.*] the other Willameana, [*WILLAMEANA enters.*] and the third one was called Darcy Allen. [*DARCY enters. ALL give hugs and pantomime showing affection.*] Not that they weren't the best of friends, but they couldn't be together more than [*NARRATOR checks watch*] twenty seconds before they'd start...

WILLAMEANA. You know I'm the best housekeeper in Davis Holler.

DARCY. Next to me.

REGINA. You two can't hold a candle to me. You could eat off my floor.

DARCY. You'd have to 'cause there wouldn't be any clean dishes.

REGINA. How can you say that, Darcy Allen? No one has finer dishes than I have. Mine came all the way from New York City.

DARCY. Well, my dishes came all the way from England.

WILLAMEANA. That's nothing. Mine came all the way from China.

*[ALL break into a pantomime argument; NARRATOR comes forward.]*

NARRATOR. These women could argue about anything.

WILLAMEANA. You know there ain't anybody in this holler that can spit further than I can.

DARCY. Course if you don't count me, you're probably right.

REGINA. You talk about spitting. Back when I use to chew tobacco, why when I wanted to call my husband in for dinner, I'd walk out the back door and give a spit to the dinner bell with such force it would ring it.

WILLAMEANA. And don't tell me, it were a half a mile away, right?

REGINA. Let's just see. [*ALL walk to front lip of stage.*] You ready, girls? Let's spit!

*[They draw back as if to spit into the audience.]*

NARRATOR. *[stopping them]* Ladies, maybe we should postpone the spitting contest till later. There's gotta be something you agree on.

WILLAMEANA. *[talking to narrator]* That's true. I think we agree that we are married to the three most foolish men that the world has ever produced.

NARRATOR. Now that would cover a whole lot of men.

DARCY. Let me go get mine. I'll show you. *[She exits.]*

REGINA. Come on, Willameana. Let's get ours. 'Cause I know ours are more foolish than hers.

*[REGINA and WILLAMEANA exit; DARCY enters with her husband.]*

DARCY. *[to husband]* How ya feeling today, Elijah?

ELIJAH. Not too good. I'm feelin' poorly again today.

DARCY. Me, too. I think I've gotten some poison ivy and my leg itches.

ELIJAH. Do you know, that's funny; mine itch, too,

DARCY. And mine's kinda crept all the way up underneath my arms to the back of my neck.

*[As DARCY pantomimes the route of the poison, her HUSBAND does the same on his body.]*

ELIJAH. Mine, too. Before I get to farmin', I better go see the doctor.

DARCY. You better hurry. It might spread down your back.

*[ELIJAH hobbles off scratching at his back, legs, and underarms; he presents an amusing figure as he exits.]*

REGINA. *[enters with husband, RALPH]* Is that what you're going to wear to work, Ralph?

RALPH. Well, don't I look alright?

REGINA. I've seen you look better.

RALPH. Should I go change? I want to look nice. Don't I look nice?

REGINA. I guess it's fine. Only Ralph, you usually...

RALPH. *[interrupting]* I know, I need a new necktie. I'll go down to the store right now and buy me a brand new necktie. A carpenter has to look good.

*[RALPH exits; DARCY and REGINA look on from Upstage.]*

WILLAMEANA. [*enters with HUSBAND*] Sure is a pretty day. We got not a care in the world, do we husband?

FREEMONT. Nope. Not a care in the world. I'm sure glad I changed every lock on our door yesterday.

WILLAMEANA. I'm glad you did that, Freemont. That makes what, three times this week?

FREEMONT. A body can't be too careful, Willameana.

WILLAMEANA. 'Cept you know I heard that there Yale kinda lock on the back door is not guar'nteed to last more than five years.

FREEMONT. Well I didn't know that. I'm off to the store, to buy a new lock. No man's house can never be too secure. Nobody ever accused Freemont T. Wipperwill of not having a secure house.

*[FREEMONT exits; LADIES move forward.]*

NARRATOR. [*crossing to them*] Well, they are all foolish. You all were right about that.

ALL. Yep, I agree with that. Sure do. No problem there.

WILLAMEANA. 'Cept, which one is the *most* foolish?

DARCY. Mine, naturally. He has twelve different ailments a day. Did you know that Doc Brown gave him his own private examination room?

WILLAMEANA. But my husband's afraid of his own shadow.

REGINA. That don't compare with a man who changes his clothes nine times a day. Mine has to be the most foolish.

DARCY. No, mine!

WILLAMEANA. No, mine!

*[There is chaotic shouting about whose husband is the most foolish.]*

NARRATOR. Ladies. Ladies. Let's have some peace and some quiet. I have an idea. Let's have a bet, a contest really, to see...

*[LADIES interrupt him.]*

ALL. Who has the most foolish husband.

WILLAMEANA. Great idea.

DARCY. But who will judge?

NARRATOR. I have a plan for that. So let the bet begin.

*[WILLAMEANA and REGINA exit; DARCY pulls from her apron a little piece of paper.]*

DARCY. *[to herself]* This little piece of paper is all I should need to win this bet.

*[ELIJAH enters.]*

ELIJAH. Well, Doc says there's nothin' the matter with me, praise the Lord. I guess I am ready to take on the world and go out and hoe some corn.

DARCY. *[holding up the note, a bit of sorrow in her voice]* Oh, is that what he told you?

ELIJAH. Yep, that's what he said. You know, I probably feel the best I've ever felt in my entire life.

DARCY. Good, I'm glad to hear it. *[She walks away and says to herself, but loud enough for him to hear.]* I guess Doc decided not to tell him.

ELIJAH. Doc decided not to tell me what?

DARCY. Nothin'. Are you sure you're feeling alright?

ELIJAH. *[crossing to her]* Well, now that you mention it, I am feeling a little peaked.

DARCY. Stick out your tongue. Further. Further. Now open your mouth. Say, "awww." *[He does so; she turns and walks away.]* Tsk, tsk, tsk.

ELIJAH. *[He follows her with mouth still open trying to talk, making his words barely understandable.]* What's wrong with me?

DARCY. What?

ELIJAH. *[He shuts his mouth.]* What's wrong with me? And who is that letter from?

DARCY. I don't know if I should tell you. It just breaks my heart. *[She starts to cry.]*

ELIJAH. What? What?

DARCY. *[sobbing]* Oh, the sorrows of widowhood.

ELIJAH. I knew it. I am dyin', ain't I? I'm dying'. I knew it all along. Doc just didn't want to tell me.

DARCY. I just can't bear to say it.

ELIJAH. How long do I have? Six months? *[DARCY looks away.]* One month? *[She looks away again.]* A fortnight? *[She looks away again.]* A week? Only a week.

DARCY. *[hugging him as she fights back false tears]* My poor, poor husband. *[starts to cry]* You'd better go lie down.

*[ELIJAH limps off stage, a completely broken man; there is a great sorrowful moan heard from him as he finally exits. REGINA enters.]*

REGINA. It grieves me to say it, but that was as fine a job as I've ever heard. Why, in a week your husband will be on his deathbed.

DARCY. Oh, no. It will be better than that.

REGINA. *[speaking to Darcy]* Now, I need you to help me out a bit. 'Cause I'm goin' to do something to prove that my husband is more foolish than yourn. All you gotta do is to agree to everything I got to say.

*[RALPH enters.]*

RALPH. I got the new tie. How do I look?

REGINA. Purty good, purty good. 'Cept it don't match your shirt.

RALPH. I knew that. I knew that. I'll go change right now.

REGINA. Before you go, could you help Darcy and me? I'm gettin' ready to make you a brand new suit of clothes. Darcy, would you go off there and bring it out?

DARCY. *[whispering]* Bring out what?

REGINA. That box that's yonder.

*[DARCY exits.]*

RALPH. A new suit of clothes, for me?

REGINA. Yep, made from the finest virgin wool in existence.

DARCY. *[entering with box]* Is this the one you wanted?

REGINA. Yep. Set it down there on the floor. Let me pull out some of this virgin wool. Just to see here if my man wants it in its natural color or if it needs dying. *[She holds up nothing; talking to Darcy.]* Isn't it beautiful?

DARCY. *[pretending to see the invisible material]* Ohh yes, beautiful. And the color, the color is um, is um, brown? A beautiful brown.

RALPH. *[quite confused]* I don't see...

REGINA. And did I tell you the most interesting thing about this beautiful brown virgin wool?

RALPH. But I don't see...

REGINA. That if a man has ever told his wife a lie, he can't see it.  
Can't see a thing.

RALPH. It's beautiful. The most beautiful brown I have ever seen.

REGINA. Here, hold it. Feel the softness. Darcy, help me.

*[DARCY and REGINA make a big to do about picking up this material. They position themselves on opposite sides of Ralph.]*

RALPH. Oh, it's soft and beautiful.

REGINA. Don't touch it so hard; you might tear it. *[RALPH jumps back.]* Now you go change your shirt and be off to work. And in two days time I'll have you the finest suit of clothes that's ever been made.

*[RALPH exits.]*

WILLAMEANA. *[entering]* Why, the two of you are about the cleverest wives that ever lived. I'm going to have to go some to win this bet.

REGINA. That's true. Do you want to give up now?

WILLAMEANA. No way, but can I borrow your letter from the doctor? And if the two of you would lend a hand, I might just be able to win this bet.

*[FREEMONT enters.]*

FREEMONT. I got us a new lock. And while I was there, I got some more silver. You know I have that big bowl to make for Mrs. Johnson.

WILLAMEANA. You got more silver? Did you hear that, Regina?

REGINA. Yeah, got more silver. *[confused]* Is that good or bad?

WILLAMEANA. *[whispering]* That's bad.

REGINA. Oh Lordy, I wish you hadn't of done that. That's bad.

FREEMONT. Well, why is it bad? A silversmith's got to have silver.

WILLAMEANA. Darcy just brought me this letter from the Post Office. Hit come from my sister.

DARCY. Yep. Got the letter right here.

FREEMONT. What's the letter got to do with silver?

WILLAMEANA. *[crosses over and gets letter]* Well, according to my sister, the notorious Growling Grizzly Gunther Gang has broke out of jail and they are heading this way.

FREEMONT. The Growling Grizzly what?

WILLAMEANA. You know. The worst group of silver thieves in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

DARCY. Oh, yep. They're bad.

REGINA. They'll rob a silversmith blind.

FREEMONT. *[very distraught]* Oh, pity me. Pity me. What am I going to do?

WILLAMEANA. Well, you better be vigilant and stand guard over that silver.

DARCY. Yep, you better stand guard.

FREEMONT. I will. I'll do it.

WILLAMEANA. And we may not have anything to worry about. 'Cause according to my sister, the Growling Grizzly Gunther Gang is terrified of dogs.

FREEMONT. That's a relief. 'Cause we got old Shep. The best barkin' hound dog in this valley. But I better stand guard anyways.

*[exits]*

NARRATOR. *[coming forward]* Now our three women had set their trap. And those poor husbands had falled into it hook, line, and sinker. If I told you what happened next, you wouldn't believe me. I am going to have to show you.

*[WOMEN exit; we see FREEMONT carrying a shovel, marching back and forth like a sentry. ELIJAH enters with cane and blanket around him and as he talks to Freemont, FREEMONT continues marching back and forth.]*

ELIJAH. *[very weak voice]* I wanted to say goodbye. By the end of this week I'll be meetin' my Maker.

FREEMONT. That's terrible. That's just awful. What's wrong with ye?

ELIJAH. Can't ya stand still and talk to me?

FREEMONT. No. I have to be vigilant. The uh, um...the Green Grizzly Gopher Gang, or something like that, is fixing to rob me of all my silver.

ELIJAH. Can't you just stop for a second? I am probably drawing my last breath.

FREEMONT. *[stops]* So what's wrong with ye?

ELIJAH. Everything. The Doc gave me a week to live and that was two days ago, so I only got...*[pauses and counts on fingers]* five days left...at the most.

*[RALPH comes bouncing in carrying an empty coat hanger.]*

RALPH. I got somethin' to show you. I've got somethin' for you all to see.

FREEMONT. Calm down. We've got a dyin' man here.

RALPH. I heard that. That's why I want to show you something. You see, my wife is making me a brand new suit of clothes, and I'll be able to wear it to your funeral. I thought maybe you would want to see it now since you won't get to see it then.

ELIJAH. Well, that's mighty thoughtful of ya.

FREEMONT. Hurry up and show it to us. I've got to get back to sentry duty. That Growin' Green Gardenin' Gang could be here any second.

RALPH. My wife jest got the vest done, so help me on with it. *[holds up the empty hanger]*

ELIJAH. I don't see nothin', but then it's probably because I'm dyin' and about to lose my eyesight.

FREEMONT. Well, I'm afraid I don't, uh, see it, either.

RALPH. I forgot to tell you. If you've ever told your wife a lie you won't be able to see it.

ELIJAH. Oh, now I see it. Oh yes, it's a pretty...

RALPH. Brown.

FREEMONT. Yes, a beautiful brown. You're going to look right sportin' at that funeral. I wisht I had one of those.

ELIJAH. Oh, I'd love to be buried in that.

RALPH. I know I'll take the cake as the best dressed one at the funeral.

ELIJAH. I don't think we are gonna give prizes. I better get back home. I know my time's comin' and I want to die in my own bed.

*[ALL exit. WILLAMEANA, DARCY, and REGINA enter.]*

WILLAMEANA. We have done it! We have done it!

DARCY and REGINA. Yes we have!

NARRATOR. I would have to agree, ladies. You have done it.

WILLAMEANA. I think you'd have to admit there ain't a woman alive that can't make a man look foolish.

NARRATOR. *[comes forward]* I'm not going to answer that. But who's ahead in the contest?

REGINA. I think you'd have to admit that I'm ahead.

NARRATOR. Now I don't want to start a squabble, but I think I'd have to admit you are ahead.

WILLAMEANA. Yes, but I ain't done yet.

DARCY. And neither am I.

REGINA. Well, if you're not willing to accept defeat at this time, why don't we make a little wager? Let's raise the stakes.

NARRATOR. Well, what do you have in mind, Regina?

REGINA. I think the two that lose should have to clean the other ones' house for a week.

DARCY and WILLAMEANA. We'll take that bet.

REGINA. And I think I've figured out a way, if the two of you lose, it won't be *you* that will be cleanin' my house.

WILLAMEANA. What do you mean?

DARCY. I think I know what she is talking about. Those that lose will have their *wives* do the cleaning. I'll see you, ladies. I got to initiate step two of my plan. [*gets chair and moves it Stage Left. Yells to Elijah offstage.*] Husband, dear husband. Come and talk to me, honey.

ELIJAH. [*enters hobbling*] What do you want, wife? I'm right here at death's door.

DARCY. Sit, honey. My word, I've never seen anybody look so pitiful in all my life. This may well be our last conversation. Oh, I don't think I can bear it.

ELIJAH. Well, what about me? I'm the one that's dyin'.

DARCY. I don't think I can bear it. Talk to me, hun, talk to me.

ELIJAH. I am talking to you, talking to you. Using up my last ounce of energy talkin' to you.

DARCY. Oh you look so peaceful. But you've done gone stone white. Oh, oh.

ELIJAH. What oh? What oh? Talk to me!

DARCY. [*takes his hand and starts feeling his pulse*] Oh my, he's off to meet his Maker. [*She walks away sobbing; ELIJAH jumps up and follows her.*]

ELIJAH. What are you talking about, off to meet my Maker? I'm here.

DARCY. [*walks back to the chair and talks to it*] My poor, poor husband carried off to his reward. Now he is with the angels. I mean, I hope he is with the angels.

[*ELIJAH comes back.*]