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GAME SHOW

**A Full-Length Comedy
by
LEW RILEY**



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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The Los Angeles Times

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a dizzy housewife/author;
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(GAME SHOW)

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GAME SHOW

A Play in Two Acts
For 5 Men and 5 Women

CHARACTERS

BRAD BOWERS King of the Mountain's emcee
HEIDI the Mountain Girl
LARRY STEELE the contestant coordinator
KATHY BURNS the production assistant
WILLIAM BARON the producer
BILL MCGUFFIE a sergeant in the army
ETHEL TINSLEY a housewife-author
NEDRA KREBS a senator's assistant
STEVE NYSTROM a student filmmaker
DOLLY PERKINS an older woman

TIME: The present, one afternoon.

PLACE: Backstage of the game show
"King of the Mountain."

* * * *

Note: Where outdated references are included, please feel free to make changes in the text. For example, television shows, movies, talk show hosts, and references to current events can be updated to make the play more timely. If you would like to see suggested updates by the author, please look up *Game Show* on our website: www.dramaticpublishing.com.

ACT ONE

IN FRONT OF CURTAIN: *HEIDI, "King of the Mountain's" Mountain Girl, bounces onstage.*

HEIDI. Hi, everyone...Oh, it was so-o nice of all you to come down here to our show. In case you don't already know, my name's Heidi and it's my job to assist King of the Mountain's fantastic MC, Brad Bowers... Today we've got five super contestants to play our game, but we always need more good contestants, so if you want to try out for King of the Mountain, see one of our ushers after the show and ask for an application. Okay? Super... Well, I'm sure most of you would rather see Brad Bowers than me. Right?... Well, I'm gonna introduce him any-ways. *(Semi-whisper.)* He just loves applause. *(Louder.)* And now here he is, the dean of game show hosts...your hero and mine, King of the Mountain's very own Braddd Bowers!!!

(As the AUDIENCE applauds, BRAD BOWERS enters L, a plastic smile fixed firmly on his face.)

BRAD. Thank you, Heidi, and thank you, folks. Thank you so much--oh, you're too kind, really. You don't have to. *(Points.)* Usher, throw her out; she's not clapping. Shame on you, Mother... You folks all know our Mountain Girl, Heidi, don't you... Take a bow, darlin'. *(HEIDI bows.)* Tell the people what you did over the weekend.

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HEIDI. You mean when you came over to my place?

BRAD (*frowning*). No, I mean the beauty contest.

HEIDI. Oh. Yeah. (*Brightening.*) I was just voted Miss Forklift.

BRAD. How about that, folks? Isn't that great? (*The AUDIENCE applauds.*) Today, Miss Forklift; tomorrow, Miss Universe... Thank you, Heidi... Now get lost. (*HEIDI quickly exits L.*) Before I say anything else, I have a couple of announcements... Is there a Mr. and Mrs. Daniels in the audience? (*Points.*) Yes, your baby sitter just called. Wants to know where you put the fire extinguisher... Just kidding. (*Looks at small card.*) Also, one of our ushers found five hundred dollars in the lobby. Would the person who lost the money please form a line over there. (*Points, then pauses.*) Well, I wanna thank all you people for coming down to see the show. I know you're all gonna enjoy "Face The Nation." Just kidding, sir; don't run away. You're in the right studio. You're going to see "King of the Mountain"--whether you like it or not... So how many of you fine people are from out of town? (*Points to member of AUDIENCE.*) Where from, sir/ma'am? (*AUDIENCE MEMBER replies with town, city or state.*) I'm sorry? (*AUDIENCE MEMBER repeats name.*) I said I was sorry. (*Points toward back.*) Where are you from, sir?... Kansas. Oh, yeah, I saw your tractor parked out front. Anyone else? Where?... New York City. Ah, good ol' New York, New York. The land of opportunity... If you're a bail bondsman... Hey, really, it's so nice of all you to take the time and effort to come here and see "King of the Mountain," one of the few good shows still on television... Isn't television getting awful?... In fact, TV's getting so dull,

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kids are doing their homework again. (*After polite laughter.*) What time should I set the alarm for?... Yes, as Heidi told you, I'm Brad Bowers, and I've been hosting "King of the Mountain" for the past seventeen years. Even though the salary's been good, (*Frowns.*) I've had to moonlight to make ends meet. Which reminds me, my latest movie, "The Love Doctor," has just been released and it's doing great at the box office, even though it's got mixed reviews. (*Pause.*) I love it and the critics hate it... No, seriously, I think it's my best work ever. How many of you have seen "Love Doctor?" (*Frowns.*) Well, maybe when you get out on parole. (*Points to a MAN in the AUDIENCE.*) You sir, you look just like my Uncle Murphy. What an uncanny resemblance... Oh, did I love my old Uncle Murphy. What a guy... He was making big, big money--until he got sent to San Quentin. Yeah, he was making the money a half inch too big... No, seriously, Murphy never went to prison, but his wife would have liked to send him to jail a few times... Why I remember one time, ol' Murphy came home without a cent of his paycheck and his wife yelled, "Murphy, what did you do with all the money?" and he said, "I was buying something for the house." "Well," she says, "What in the world could you possibly buy for the house that costs two hundred dollars"? Ol' Murphy looks at her and burps and says "Twelve rounds of drinks." But enough about my Uncle Murphy, let's talk about "King of the Mountain." Now we'd like you to be as enthusiastic as possible. Applaud as much as you like--but don't whistle. This isn't a burlesque show. Most contestants are very nervous because they're on national television

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and they love your support. But, please, whatever you do, don't yell out an answer. We'll have to throw the question--and you--out. You know we ask some very difficult questions on our show. (*Reaches into pocket.*) As a matter of fact, I have some from previous programs. I'll give you a couple; see how good you are... (*BRAD can either ask INDIVIDUALS or ask the AUDIENCE.*) Okay, which singing group has sold the most records worldwide? (*If the AUDIENCE MEMBER gets the question right--or even if he or she gets it wrong--BRAD has the option of giving him or her a small trinket or foodstuff.*) No, not the Beatles, it's ABBA... Never heard of 'em either. Okay, here's another one. How do you get rid of repulsive fat?... Right, you divorce him--or her... Okay, who was our only bachelor President?... Hey, that's right. Buchanan. You oughta be on our show... One more. Who's buried in Grant's Tomb?... Right. Grant. Hey, you're too sharp for me. (*Pause.*) Now remember, we want you to have a good time here at "King of the Mountain." Laugh, applaud, cheer all you want. In fact, let's practice applauding. This side of the room applaud. Good. Now this side. Terrific. Now all the women. Wonderful. Now all the men. Great... Now all those that aren't sure... Okay, now everyone say King of the Mountain. (*Frowns.*) You can do better than that. You know we put the loudest people on camera. Okay, what's the name of the show?

AUDIENCE. King of the Mountain!!!

BRAD. ...Beautiful. You'll be a great audience. See you in a bit. (*BRAD exits L.*)

SCENE: *Backstage of the game show "King of the Mountain." Two sofas are joined together at a wide angle, R, so the audience will be able to see the game show contestants when they sit down. DR is a table, supporting a coffeepot and snack foods. L is a desk with phone and chair. There are three exits: L onto the set, R to other areas of the studio and UL to a cloakroom. An "ON THE AIR" sign is positioned over the entrance to the set, an "APPLAUSE" sign hangs over the stage, and a monitor or television is visible onstage.*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *LARRY STEELE walks onstage R, holding a sheaf of papers. He is followed by KATHY BURNS, carrying a clipboard.*

LARRY. This is the contestants' home away from home. They stay here until it's time to play the game.

KATHY. Does it have a name?

LARRY (*pausing*). How about the contestants' waiting room?

KATHY. Catchy.

LARRY (*pointing UL*). You can hang your coat in the closet.

KATHY. Okay. (*As KATHY deposits her coat UL, LARRY walks over to the snack table DR and grabs a cookie.*)

LARRY (*as KATHY returns*). Your first duty, Kathy, is to meet our contestants when they arrive.

KATHY. Okay... Where do I meet them?

LARRY. Same place I met you. The studio gate.

KATHY. Okay.

LARRY. And once we have the contestants in our clutches, you're not to let them out of your

sight. Unless they're with me. The network wants to be absolutely sure no one cheats.

KATHY. Sounds like I'm gonna be a baby sitter.

LARRY. You might say that. But you'll find the contestants are most interesting. And you won't have to change diapers.

KATHY (*pausing*). Speaking of diapers, what if a contestant has to go to the bathroom?

LARRY. We don't mind, as long as you accompany him or her.

KATHY. Him? To the bathroom?

LARRY. To the bathroom door. Fortunately, the network doesn't require us to monitor bowel movements.

KATHY. How much can they win, anyway?

LARRY. What? You don't watch "King of the Mountain?"

KATHY. Uh, well, I would, but it's opposite my favorite soap.

LARRY. You're kidding?

KATHY (*wincing*). No, I'm hooked on "All My Children."

LARRY. Shame on you.

KATHY (*half-kiddingly*). Does that mean I have to quit?

LARRY. No. Not unless William finds out.

KATHY. Who's William?

LARRY. William Baron produces our show.

KATHY. Oh.

LARRY. And he'd have a fit if he found out one of his staff was improving the ratings of "All My Children."

KATHY. I'll remember that.

LARRY (*after short pause*). In answer to your question--\$25,000.

KATHY. \$25,000?

LARRY. The King of the Mountain wins \$25,000.

KATHY. Oh... That'd pay a few bills.
LARRY (*looking to left*). Ah, there he is.

(*WILLIAM BARON enters L, dressed Hollywood sloppy, in a sweatshirt, faded Levis and tennis shoes.*)

LARRY. Hello, William.

WILLIAM. Larry.

LARRY. William, I'd like you to meet our new production assistant, Kathy Burns. Kathy, this is "King of the Mountain's" producer, William Baron.

KATHY (*shaking WILLIAM's hand*). Glad to meet you, Mr. Baron.

WILLIAM (*obviously liking what he sees*). My pleasure... Are you planning a career in television, Kathy?

KATHY. Well, actually, I want to direct films.

LARRY. I've written a couple of screenplays.

KATHY. Really? I'd like to read them.

WILLIAM. Don't waste your time... You know there are very few female directors in the business.

KATHY. I hope to beat the odds.

WILLIAM. As a matter of fact, I've directed a number of films.

KATHY. You have?

WILLIAM. We'll discuss it when there's more time.

LARRY. Uh, yes, Kathy, you'd better fetch our contestants. We don't wanna keep them waiting.

KATHY. Oh, sure.

LARRY. You're clear on what you're supposed to do?

KATHY. Meet them at the studio gate and bring 'em here.

LARRY. Right. And give 'em each a name tag.

(Withdraws name tags from back pocket and gives them to KATHY.)

KATHY. Will do... Nice meeting you, Mr. Baron.
(WILLIAM smiles. KATHY exits R. WILLIAM moves to snack table DR for cup of coffee.)

WILLIAM *(almost a leer)*. My compliments to personnel.

LARRY. She's also sharp, William. Has a Master's degree in film.

WILLIAM. Big deal. That just means she can sit in a chair and watch movies... What about this week's contestants?

LARRY. They're all top-notch, William.

WILLIAM. I hope so. Our ratings just dipped again.

LARRY. We're still the highest-rated game show.

WILLIAM. Larry, please don't blow smoke at me. Sure, we're the highest-rated game show. Unfortunately, we're not opposite any other game shows; we're opposite two soap operas, including that wretched "All My Children." Which, by the way, picked up another tenth of a Nielsen.

LARRY. It did?

WILLIAM. Yes, it did. Thanks in large part to a lousy run of contestants.

LARRY. C'mon, William, we haven't had that many duds.

WILLIAM. Let's have a run-down. *(As LARRY describes each contestant, he hands WILLIAM a photo of that contestant.)*

LARRY. First we have Bill McGuffie. Seventeen years in the Army.

WILLIAM. What's his rank?

LARRY. His rank? Uh, I don't know--some kind of sergeant.

WILLIAM. Seventeen years in the Army--and he's only a sergeant?

LARRY. Helluva nice guy.

WILLIAM. Nice guys are a dime-a-dozen.

LARRY. He's a Vietnam vet.

WILLIAM. That helps. (*Hopefully.*) Wounded?

LARRY. Gee, I don't know.

WILLIAM. Too bad he's not black. We'd score with the patriots--and the minorities.

LARRY (*handing WILLIAM next photo*). Ah, my favorite contestant this week. Ethel Tinsley. Middle-aged housewife. As bubbly as they come.

WILLIAM. Bubbly, middle-aged housewife? Must be on pills.

LARRY. No, I think Ethel is naturally nutty. And she's written a book.

WILLIAM. Hmm, combination author-housewife-nut. Doesn't sound too bad.

LARRY. She's a "can't miss," William. (*Gives him next photo.*) And we've got another winner in Steve Nystrom, very young, very smart, and very good-looking.

WILLIAM. Yes, he is... Married?

LARRY. Also very single.

WILLIAM. Is he gay?

LARRY. I wouldn't know, William.

WILLIAM. Where's he from?

LARRY. Uh, North Hollywood.

WILLIAM. Fifty-fifty chance... (*This time LARRY doesn't hand WILLIAM a photo.*)

LARRY. We also have Dolly Perkins.

WILLIAM. No picture?

LARRY. Uh, I misplaced it. Anyway, Dolly's probably the smartest of the bunch.

WILLIAM. How old is Dolly?

LARRY (*quickly*). You'll love her, William-- outgoing, has a good sense of humor and--

WILLIAM. How old is she, Larry?

LARRY. Well, I'm not exactly sure.

WILLIAM. What did her application say?

LARRY. Uh, forty-five I think. (*Quickly hands WILLIAM last photo.*) Our last contestant, Nedra Krebs, works for Senator Jaffe.

WILLIAM (*brightening*). Really? Now that's an interesting occupation. We must be sure and let Brad know.

LARRY. I'll put it on one of his idiot cards.

WILLIAM. Be sure to write it in large letters. Brad still refuses to wear glasses.

LARRY. You think Brad's getting too old for the show? (*As WILLIAM moves toward exit R, he smiles and pats LARRY on the cheek.*)

WILLIAM. Larry, you know MCs--and producers--get better with age. Page me when you're ready for briefing.

LARRY. Sure, William. (*WILLIAM exits. LARRY heaves a sigh of relief, then walks toward the coffeepot.*)

(As he draws some coffee, KATHY enters R, followed by SGT. BILL MCGUFFIE, ETHEL TINSLEY, AND NEDRA KREBS. ALL are wearing name tags.)

KATHY. Here's your new home.

LARRY. Ah, greetings, contestants.

ALL. Hi, Larry. Hello, Larry.

ETHEL. Larry, would you please tell Bill the capital of Australia is Melbourne.

BILL. It's Sydney, right Larry?

LARRY. Don't ask me. I'm the contestant coordinator, not a contestant.

KATHY. I think they're both wrong. But I can't remember the capital.

LARRY. I thought Melbourne and Sydney were the only two cities in Australia.

NEDRA (*pulling an almanac from her purse*). If you can wait a second, I'll tell you the capital.

ETHEL. An almanac? In your purse?

NEDRA. Hey, when the stakes are \$25,000, I don't mind reading the almanac.

BILL. I'd rather read the phone book.

LARRY. Kathy, where are Dolly and Steve?

KATHY. I don't know. They weren't at the gate.

LARRY. Better go back and look for them; they might've got lost.

KATHY. All right. (*Exits R.*)

LARRY. Make yourselves comfortable. You can hang your coats in the closet. (*Points UL.*) And help yourselves to the refreshments. (*ETHEL and BILL move toward the closet UL to hang their wraps.*)

NEDRA (*announcing*). The capital of Australia is Canberra.

ETHEL. Never heard of it.

BILL. Any relation to Yogi Berra?

ETHEL. Are you sure, dear?

NEDRA. The almanac is always right.

ETHEL. Good thing the almanac won't be a contestant.

BILL. Hey, I've got a question for you. Which of the United States is farthest south?

ETHEL. Good question. I think it's Florida.

NEDRA. I know it's Florida.

BILL. Wrong.

NEDRA. What?

BILL. There's another state farther south. Look it up in your almanac.

NEDRA. I will. (*Flips to map section.*)

LARRY. Maybe Texas is farther south.