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Family Plays

Southern Fried Cracker Tales

**Adapted by
Judith Kase-Polisini**

**Music by
Theodore Hoffman**



Southern Fried Cracker Tales

*First presented as a touring production
of the University of South Florida Theatre Department.*

Musical. Adapted by Judith Kase-Polisini. Music by Theodore Hoffman. *Cast: 2m., 4 to 10+ either gender.* Adapted from Southern folktales, this emerges as a remarkably playable story theatre production filled with music, dance and mime. Producers may select from among stories unified by folk dances. The musical works equally well with school-age actors and or with adults. Storytellers introduce the colorful characters that all share in the energetic fun: Daddy Mention and Sourdough Gus, a mysterious Great Conjur-Alligator-Man of Florida, an absurd Talking Mule, the scatterbrained Georgia Piney Woods Peddler, a sinister Mister Fox, the droll Twist Mouth Family and a ludicrous Pudding That Broke Up the Preaching. An author's note is available in the script containing details on set. Individual plays may be used singly. *Simple unit set. Suitable for touring. Folk dance costumes. Approximate running time: 45 minutes. Code: SV6.*

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Southern Fried Cracker Tales

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An assortment of American Folk tales adapted by

JUDITH KASE-POLISINI

With music by

THEODORE HOFFMAN

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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JUDITH KASE-POLISINI

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(SOUTHERN FRIED CRACKER TALES)

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“Produced by special arrangement with
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Southern Fried Cracker Tales

Author's Notes

This is a "story theatre" play. Members of an ensemble company play various roles in each story and serve as dancers and vocal chorus when necessary. Each folk tale is introduced by a Storyteller, who may be played by one actor. A more interesting way to do this is to have a different actor serve as storyteller for each story.

A square dance theme provides a bridge between stories to unify the production. Directors may select their own folk dance music or use the scores which can be provided. Directors are encouraged to feature special talents of the ensemble company not used in the stories, such as singing and dancing. For example, in one production, an actress sang a ballad which created the mood leading into "Mister Fox," and in another, special tap dance talents were used for a clogging number.

The play is intended to be acted on a bare stage, in front of a curtain or neutral backdrop. Whenever specific scenic pieces are mentioned, they are usually pantomimed by the actors. Each story should flow into the next, so there should be no break or blackout or delay while a crew brings in or removes furniture. This can be done very smoothly by having actors bring in their own furniture, and removing it at the end of a scene. So, occasionally one or more stools might be brought on stage, or two 2' ladders with a short or long 1' X 2' board spread between them to make a table for actors. Whenever this is done, an actor usually brings on the prop **as he or she speaks the first line in a scene** so that there is no wait for a scene change between stories.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

DADDY MENTION AND SOURDOUGH GUS

Storyteller
Daddy Mention
Customer
Moonlight Cooligan
Alligatorface McNutt
Sourdough Gus

THE GREAT CONJUR-ALLIGATOR-MAN OF FLORIDA

Storyteller
Jasper
Uncle Monday
Indian 1
Indian 2
Chorus
Woman
Man

THE TALKING MULE

Storyteller
Mule
Pa
Ma
Boy
Girl
Dog

THE GEORGIA PINEY WOODS PEDDLER

Storyteller
Annabelle
Peddler
Horse
Barefoot woman with cow
Cow

Man
Mule
Barefoot boy with dog
Dog
Red head
Rattler
Railroad ties man

MISTER FOX

Storyteller
Mister Fox
Polly
Parrot (puppet)
Girl
Man #1
Woman #1
Man #2
Woman #2
Ensemble for party

THE TWIST MOUTH FAMILY

Storyteller
Father
Mother
Sister
Brother
College boy

THE PUDDING THAT BROKE UP THE PREACHING

Storyteller
Ma Tolliver
Saphronie
Hitty
Lucy
Sally Rufus
Lem
Preacher

SOUTHERN FRIED CRACKER TALES was first presented as its annual school touring show by the University of South Florida Theatre Department in 1976. Original members of the cast included:

Marianne Barber
Theodore L. Brozanski
Alita Dewey
Steven Albert Hein
Robert S. Huggins
Ann K. James
Carol Jean Kennedy
Mindy Lang
Melissa Littlefield
Betty Locklear
Cliff W. Martin III
Don L. Stover
Louis Telzer

- ALL:** Story Theatre. (*UNFREEZE, finish arm and arm to corner, come home.*)
- (Couple 1 and 3 begin do-se-do, come home on 8, FREEZE.)*
- MARYANN:** Stories can be told through Characters. (*UNFREEZE, All continue to dance each as a specific type of character - human or animal.*)
- (Couple 2 and 4 do-se-do to corner, FREEZE on 4.)*
- DON:** Now you put together some characters and some action and you got a scene . . . (*All UNFREEZE, STOOP. Don and opposite Man take pose of opposers in center of circle as all STOOP.*)
- (Fists up ready to fight.) You take that back! You jes take that back what you jes said.*
- MAN:** Not until you say "uncle." You're jes braggin anyway, you cain't hurt me you low down craw bellied alligatorfaced coward!
- (All RISE. Finish do-se-do in corners, turn to partner for allamand, take hand and FREEZE. . .*
- COUPLE in center, Girl acts coy.)*
- BOY:** *(Goes to girl.)* Come on, Marylou, pucker up there and give me a great big kiss.
- (He puckers, she puckers.)*
- ALL:** That's too much action! *(Finish allamand.)*
- (During allamand.)*
- TED:** That's too much theatre!

ROBERT: X-rated drama is what it is!

(All meet partners after allamand, get 1/4 way home, FREEZE.)

ALL: SOUTHERN FRIED CRACKER TALES! *(FREEZE, STOOP.)*

ANN: *(To partner)* Southern fried cracker tales? Whoever heard of fryin' crackers?

ANN'S PARTNER: What do you want to do? Should we simmer them? Ha, ha.

DON: Don't simmer them! They might get too hot! Haw haw haw . . .

DON'S PARTNER: Don't be smart. We'll take characters and action from Southern folk stories, throw 'em in a pot, mix 'em up good . . .

DON: Add some spice? *(All do 4 steps in place, STOOP.)*

ANN: I still say you don't fry crackers . . .

ANN'S PARTNER: You can if they're Florida crackers . . .

DON: Or Georgia crackers . . .

ROBERT: How 'bout Mississippi crackers? *(All UNFREEZE, resume round, bring partner home.)*

ALL: SOUTHERN FRIED CRACKER TALES! *(All bow to partner.)*

ANN: I still say you don't fry crackers . . .

ANN'S PARTNER: If it'll make you keep quiet we'll bake them then.

ANN: Who ever heard of bakin' crackers - I mean Florida crackers . . . I mean bakin' people?

MELISSA: Did you say bakin' people? That reminds me of a story I know . . . Are you ready everybody?

(All to move to small circle.)

MELISSA: The name of this story is . . .

ALL: *(To audience)* DADDY MENTION AND SOURDOUGH GUS . . .

(All break from circle to edge, sit and watch, except Daddy Mention who begins walking around the circle and whistling as Storyteller begins the scene.)

DADDY MENTION AND SOURDOUGH GUS

STORYTELLER: Over in Florida most all folks would tell you 'bout Daddy Mention if you could get them in the 'propriate mood fer it, for he was most well known in the swamps and pinewoods as well as down to the fishin' villages. He lived na'tral like, if you knows what I mean, livin' off the land and enjoyin' life in every way he could - - that is, in every way except workin' which Daddy Mention didn't like to do a'tall . . . Which is probably why Daddy Mention was well known to most Florida lawmen, especially the sheriffs who couldn't seem to ketch up with him. No doubt 'bout it. Daddy Mention was a bodacious man - - strong as John Henry, slippery as a Florida blacksnake and smarter by far than any of the sheriffs who were after him . . .

(Enter Daddy Mention one side, pantomimes chopping down a big tree - - it falls, he yells "Timber" - - then walks to meet customer down the road on other side.)

DADDY MENTION: Mornin' Eldridge. How you doin'?

CUSTOMER: Jes fine. Nice weather we're having.

DADDY MENTION: Finest I've seen in many a year. I hear you're building yourself a new barn.

CUSTOMER: Yeah, hits comin along slow but I'm short on timber right now . . .

DADDY MENTION: Funny you should mention timber. Why just today I was comin through the swamp over to the east of the lake, I noticed a right big cypress had just fallen - - probably hit by lightenin in last night's storm . . .

CUSTOMER: Where'd you say it fell?

DADDY MENTION: Well, I can't exactly remember but if you're interested I reckon I could find it for a price . . .

CUSTOMER: Including delivery?

DADDY MENTION: To the edge of town . . . You know how those sheriffs are about me . . .

CUSTOMER: How much. . .

DADDY MENTION: Well, includin hauling and all, it'll be about . . . *(His voice fades out as he pantomimes surreptitious exchange of money and sneaks off . . . as Voice continues. . .)*

STORYTELLER: For a long time the sheriffs were looking for Daddy Mention. Now it seems they liked to go hunting as well as Daddy Mention did. One day all three sheriffs were out in the same woods hunting quail. One was named Moonlight Cooligan.

(Enter Moonlight, hunting.)

And one was named Alligatorface McNutt.

(Enter Alligatorface, hunting.)

STORYTELLER: And the third had the sourest, longest face in all Florida

(Enter Sourdough, hunting.)

and the sourest, meanest disposition to go along with his face. He had never laughed from the day of his birth and he dreamed every night of dark, dank dungeons. He was called Sourdough Gus.

SOURDOUGH: *(Hunting.)* Sourdough had it in for Daddy Mention and had sworn if he ever got him behind bars,

(Enter DADDY MENTION, with fishing rod, whistling, settles down to fish.)

He'd keep him there till doomsday. *(Mimes hunting.)*

(Moonlight from one direction "stumbles" on Daddy Mention, quietly backs away, backs into Alligatorface McNutt, motions him to whisper . . .)

MOONLIGHT: Guess who's down by yonder stream a fishin . . .

ALLIGATORFACE: Who?

MOONLIGHT: Just guess!

ALLIGATORFACE: I can't guess.

MOONLIGHT: Just try one guess.

ALLIGATORFACE: Will you quit this. All right. I guess Sourdough Gus is down there.

MOONLIGHT: No. Guess again.

THE GREAT CONJURE-ALLIGATOR-MAN OF FLORIDA

(Enter Conjure Man, sets up conjure materials. Different people come to him for healing as storyteller begins.)

STORYTELLER: Long ago there was a great conjure man from Africa. He was a good conjure man and a good friend to animals, most of all alligators, and he could change himself into one whenever he wanted. He said the alligators were his brothers. Well, he was sold as a slave to a master in Carolina but soon escaped to Georgia and then Florida. There he became a great conjure man, helping those in need everywhere. They called him Uncle Monday because they said he was as fresh every day of the week as a man is on Monday after a good Sunday rest.

JASPER: Momin, Uncle Monday.

MONDAY: Mornin, Jasper.

JASPER: Could ya take a look at this here foot? Stepped on a burr other day and it's been smartin somethin awful . . .

MONDAY: Let's take a look here *(He begins ministering.)*

(Enter Indian mother with baby, shows Monday, he treats the baby, mother exits.)

STORYTELLER: Uncle Monday was friendly with all folks, specially the Seminole Indians who were fighting the white folk who were trying to drive them out of Florida.

(We see Monday join two or three Braves getting ready for the battle, then exit.)

He became a fearless and wise warrior and aided them in their combats, but the Indians kept losin battle after battle. Finally they were defeated and had to retreat back to Maitland Lake, determined to hold their ground against the white man.

MONDAY: Ain't no good fightin them white men no more.

INDIAN 1: We have no choice.

INDIAN 2: They destroy our villages.

INDIAN 1: They take away our land.

INDIAN 2: We try to make peace with white man.

INDIAN 1: Then maybe he leave Seminole alone.

MONDAY: Well, I ain't waitin around to be a slave again. I ain't never goin to be a slave. I'm goin back to the swamp to my alligator friends where there's peace. . .

INDIAN 1: We will make a feast of farewell . . .

(Pantomime feast drums and music are heard.)

STORYTELLER: When night came, all the Indians were there beating their drums and chanting their Indian songs. They danced their war dances. But the one who danced the

most was the black conjure man from Africa. He danced slowly and he danced fast.

(Monday dances and begins conjure moans.)

He leaped high roarin and shouting words none understood and he whirled and twisted, around and up and down . . .

CHORUS:

VOICE 1: Then the Indians saw a thing by the light of the fire they had never seen!

VOICE 2: That wild dancing man from Africa began to change

VOICE 3 & 4: He began to change.

He was turning kind of brown.

STORYTELLER: His face got longer and longer coming to a point.

VOICE 5: The sides of his mouth got kind of thick-lippy
Hanging down, and his teeth got long and pointed

VOICE 1: His legs and arms got smaller and thick and long claws
were coming from them.

ALL: He kept on dancin and dancin and dancin and his body
was growing thick and long

VOICE 1: And scales were coming out on his back

VOICE 2: And a long tail like an alligator's tail was growing from
his back

ALL: The conjure man kept dancin and dancin
and leapin and leapin
and flappin around until he was the
biggest alligator that ever was
bellowin like thunder
as he danced and leaped

(All keep up bellowing and roar as storyteller continues.)

THE TALKING MULE

SCENE: Mule in barn with other barnyard animals on one side of stage, kitchen on the other side. Morning sounds outside and in.

STORYTELLER: Feller one time had uh mule by the name o Bill . . .

MULE: *(Entering.)* Naaaaaa.

STORYTELLER: You're not going to believe this, but this here mule talked . . .

MULE: Naaaaaa.

STORYTELLER: See what I mean? One mornin the feller I mentioned rose late and during coffee . . .

PA: *(Enters stretching.)* Mornin Ma. Right fine day it is.

MA: Here's yer coffee. Drink it while it's still hot now . . .

BOY: *(Enters stretching.)* Morning.

MA: Sit down 'n eat yer eggs . . . it's late.

BOY: Can I have some milk?

MA: In time. Eat yer eggs first . . .

BOY: I hate eggs . . . *(Slips eggs to dog.)*

PA: Now you mind yer Ma, Boy. I seen that. Come here dog . . .

DOG: Ruff, ruff . . .

BOY: *(Shows empty egg plate.)* Now can I have some milk, Ma?

MA: Here boy.

PA: Soon's you finish drinkin that milk you go on down to the barn and bridle up that ol Mule, Bill. Go on now and bring that mule up here fer me.

BOY: Yes, Pa. *(Exits to barn.)*

DOG: *(Begins to follow.)* Ruff, ruff . . .

PA: You stay, dog. Sit, now.

MA: Have some more coffee, Pa.

PA: Don't mind if I do, Ma.

BOY: *(At barn, gets bridle, holds up to mule.)* Come here, Bill . . . Get yerself over here.

MULE: Naaaaaaa.

BOY: No use talkin' back like that. Pa wants you now. So you come on around, Bill.

MULE: Come on around, you say. Every dad blasted mornin it's the same thing. Fore I finish a good night' sleep you come in here saying "Come round, Bill."

BOY: *(Frozen at first with fright, finally unfreezes and yells as he runs back to the house.)* Paaa! Hey Paaaaaa! Maaaaa . . . Guess what I just saw . . .

PA: You calm down boy, you ack like a bee's got you.

BOY: More like what I heard . . . *(Jumps up and down; at this dog joins excitement.)*

MA: Stop jumpin, Boy. Cain't you see it 'cites the dog here?

THE GEORGY PINEY WOODS PEDDLER

STORYTELLER: Down Georgia way lived this Piney Woods Peddler going up and down roads and rivers, through creeks and woods and swamps wherever he could find someone to swap somethin with. He would trade most anythin . . . that is he would trade most anythin cept his darlin daughter Annabell fer he loved her dearly. He would do anythin fer his Annabell and like some daughters we all know, she sometimes got a bit spoiled. Like fer instance the day she asked fer the dollar . . .

ANNABELL: Pappy, will you git me a shiny silver dollar to buy me somethin pretty fer my trousseau?

PEDDLER: I'll sure ruff see what I kin do bout that, pretty Annabell. So he mounted his horse and went down the road singin.

With a wing wang waddle
an' a great big straddle
an' a Jack-fair-faddle
tis a long way from home.

BAREFOOT WOMAN WITH COW: Howdy, Peddler. How'r you today?
How's yer pretty Annabell?

COW: Moooooooooo.

HORSE: Naaaaaaaaaay.

PEDDLER: Trade ye mah horse
Trade ye mah ring
Trade ye all an' everything
For a shiny silver dollar
My daughter to bring.

WOMAN: Got no silver dollar. Fact got nothing but this good fat
cow . . .

COW: Moooooooooooo.

WOMAN: Tell you what. I'll trade you my fat cow fer your horse.

STORYTELLER: Which they did. And the Piney Woods Peddler went
on down the road, singin his song, smellin the wild roses
which grew by the road, with his new fat cow following
behind.

PEDDLER: (Songs.)
With a wing wang waddle
an' a great big straddle
an' a Jack-fair-faddle
tis a long way from home.

COW: Moooooooooooo.

MAN AND MULE: Howdy, Piney, whar'd ye get that cow?

PEDDLER: Trade ye mah cow
Trade ye mah ring
For a shiny silver dollar
My daughter to bring. Trade ye mah cow

COW: Moooooooooooo.

MAN: Got no shiny silver dollar to trade but wisht I had. Tell
you what. I'll swap this glossy black mule for your fat
cow.

STORYTELLER: Which they did. And so the Georgia Piney Woods Peddler went on down the road, listening to the buzzing of bees and barkin of bull gators and singin his song.

PEDDLER: With a wing wang waddle
an' a great big straddle
an' a Jack-fair-faddle
tis a long way from home.

BAREFOOT BOY WITH DOG: Howdy, mister, how you doin today.

DOG: Ruff, ruff.

MULE: Naaaaayyy.

PEDDLER: Trade ya mah mule
Trade ye mah ring
Trade ye all an' everything
For a shiny silver dollar
My daughter to bring.

BOY: This is a good huntin dog, but I kin see it would be good to ride a bit on that shiny black mule so you can have him if you want to swap . . .

STORYTELLER: Which they did. So that George Piney Woods Peddler went down the road with his dog.

DOG: Ruffff, ruffff.

STORYTELLER: And the old man singin his song again . . .

PEDDLER: With a wing wang waddle
an' a great big straddle
an' a Jack-fair-faddle
tis a long way from home.

STORYTELLER: Then this here red haired man came carryin a fine cypress wood stick.

MISTER FOX

STORYTELLER: Once there lived a lovely young woman named Pretty Polly who was being courted by a slick looking feller called Fox. Now whenever Fox came to call, Polly felt uneasy, but folks kept remindin her that she was an orphan girl and Fox was a ketch even for a girl with kin. Everyone seemed to admire his fancy clothes and dandy ways and before Polly knew it, folks were talking about her engagement to Mister Fox. Meanwhile, Mister Fox got impatient with Polly . . .

FOX: Now you look here, Polly, I been courtin you here every Saturday night since last Spring. It's time you come to visit my house up yonder on the ridge . . .

POLLY: I couldn't do that. It wouldn't be right.

FOX: You meet me next Saturday, you hear?

POLLY: But I couldn't. I don't know where you live.

FOX: Got some extra bakin flour?

POLLY: Yes, I have some bakin flour. Why?

FOX: Bring it here.

POLLY: *(Gives him sack of flour.)* It's just plain flour. I was going to use it for bread next week but . . .

FOX: I'll give you some bread next week. Now, I'm going to spread a little of this here flour and make a path for you to follow to my house, like this, you see?

POLLY: Yes, I see, but I couldn't . . .

FOX: Don't you argue with me. You follow this path to my house Saturday, you hear? If you don't you'll be sorry. *(Exits making trail of flour.)*

STORYTELLER: Well, Polly, she didn't want to go but she was afraid not to go, so the next Saturday she followed the trail and it brought her to a rickety house way way back where nobody could find it . . . She knocked on the door, but nobody answered. She knocked again and waited and still had no answer and just as she turned away and was about to leave she heard a noise . . .

PARROT: Squaaaaak.

POLLY: Quietly, Polly tried to open the door and found that it was not locked. Inside, she saw a lovely Parrot near a staircase . . .

PARROT: Squaaaaaak.

POLLY: Why, hello there . . .

PARROT: Hello. Hello. Hello.

POLLY: No one seems to be home. I wonder what is up these stairs?

PARROT: Awwwk. Squaak. Take care! Beware! You can't go back if you go there!

POLLY: All right. I won't go inside. I'll just open the door like this and see what is inside the . . . *(Gasps.)* She runs down the steps . . .

STORYTELLER: It was like a bloodbath in there . . . bodies of women all over, some with heads cut off . . .

(Offstage sound of woman shuffling to get away.)

STORYTELLER: Suddenly she heard a noise. It seemed like it was a woman screaming . . .

POLLY: She rushed to the window and peeked out just in time to see Mr. Fox dragging a woman. He seemed riled up. Oh what'll I do now? *(Looks around, sees stairs.)*

PARROT: Pretty lady, ol Fox is outside
Get under these stairs and hide, hide, hide.

POLLY: Will you tell him where I am if I hide here?

PARROT: Get under the stair, don't be so slow
Or he'll capture you too before you can go.

THE TWIST MOUTH FAMILY

SCENE: Inside house of Twist Mouth Family. Tables, chairs, lantern or candle. (Note that an actor can have fun playing the role of the candle.)

STORYTELLER: Way back in the woods far from any town or village was a family of folks with funny faces . . .

FATHER: The father's lower lip stuck out like this . . .

MOTHER: The mother's upper lip hung down over the lower so she looked like this . . .

SISTER: The daughter's mouth twisted over to the right like this so she had to say everything out to the right side . . . She even had to sing out of the right side. (*Sing "Carry Me Back to Old Virginy" . . .*)

FATHER, MOTHER, GIRL: Down where the (*Keeps singing song.*)

BROTHER: The younger brother's mouth didn't stick up like the father's or down like the mother's or to the right like the daughter's. His mouth twisted to the left, like this . . .

COLLEGE BOY: But the oldest boy had a regular mouth just like anyone else except of course his relatives.

STORYTELLER: One day it came time to decide who would go to college and the family talked it over . . .

SISTER: I want to stay here, ma, and get a job at the supermarket and get me some new clothes . . .

BROTHER: Yeah, she wants to stay here close to her boyfriend, ha, ha, ha.

SISTER: Ma, make him quit that!

MOTHER: Leave her alone.

FATHER: Quit arguin! Now, what about you, son (*To younger brother*).

BROTHER: I got no use for college, Pa. If I finish my high school course in auto repair, Mr. Benson says he'll give me a good full time job at his service station.

MOTHER: He is right good at car fixin, Pa. Look how he fixed ours up just last Saturday . . .

PA: Yeah, saved us some money, I reckon . . .

SISTER: Yeah, and then it broke down again last Tuesday . . .

BROTHER: I ain't finished the course yet. Ma, make her quit!

MOTHER: You quit, too.

FATHER: What about you, son? Do you want to go to college?

COLLEGE BOY: Yeah, I reckon I'd like that, Pa. I been workin hard for good grades and I think I can get accepted . . .

BROTHER: What you going to do with a college education?

COLLEGE BOY: I reckon I'll be a teacher . . .

FATHER: A teacher? Why would you want to be a teacher?

SISTER: So he can boss kids around, that's why!

BROTHER: I know plenty of teachers can't fix a car . . .

FATHER: Ain't no money in teachin son. Why don't you be an engineer . . .

MOTHER: Yeah. Engineers make money . . .

FATHER: Teachers are poor. They don't make money. Why not be a doctor . . .

COLLEGE BOY: I reckon I'll be a teacher anyway . . .

(Boy exits. Rest of scene freezes.)

STORYTELLER: So the young man went off to college. Time passed and soon it was time for him to come home for spring vacation . . .

(Sister and Brother look down road waiting for College Boy.)

SISTER: *(To younger brother)* Wonder what he'll be like back here again. Think goin to college will change him any?

BROTHER: I heard folks change a lot when they go to college.

SISTER: How do you mean . . .

BROTHER: For one thing, they grow beards . . .

SISTER: Don't be silly . . .

BROTHER: For another, they start loafing around more.

SISTER: What do you mean?

BROTHER: I hear they don't have to go to class if they don't want to . . .

SISTER: I don't believe you . . . Here he comes *(Runs to meet College Boy, hugs him, brother shakes hand, Mother and Father welcome.)*

STORYTELLER: So they asked the College Boy lots of questions. . .

THE PUDDING THAT BROKE UP THE PREACHING

STORYTELLER: There never was a more astonishing pudding than the one Ma Tolliver beat up for all-day preaching that went on down in Possum Hollow Church on Thanksgiving Day. Folks came down to preachings from all over the countryside in those days, from Sandy Creek and Turkey Bottom and Huggin's Crossroads. They brought their dinners with 'em and between sermons and singing that went on morning and afternoons they spread their victuals on the ground picnic fashion and had a real slapbang good dinner. Ma Tolliver prepared for the feast . . .

MA TOLLIVER: (*Place pudding on stove.*) I darn near forgot the salt! Saphronie! I forgot the salt in the pudding and I'm out here picking a turkey with my fingers all stuck full of feathers. Run in the kitchen for me and put in a good pinch of salt.

SAPHRONIE: Lawsy, ma, I'm a-ironing a dress for the big doings tomorrow. If I stop now my iron'll get all cold.

STORYTELLER: And she went on ironing as hard as she could. Ma hollered to the next oldest girl.

MA TOLLIVER: Hitty, you run in the kitchen and put some salt in the pudding for me.

HITTY: I declare to goodness, Ma. I can't do it. I've just been to the witchwoman to get her to take the warts off my hands and she's smeared axle grease over both my hands and told me not to wash it off till I saw the evening star over my left shoulder. I can't pick up a pinch of salt with axle grease all over my hands.

STORYTELLER: By this time Ma was might nigh wore out with hollering but she decided to try once more.

MA TOLLIVER: You, Lucy! Can't you run in the kitchen and put some salt in the pudding for me.

LUCY: Golly, Ma, I'm a-lying here in bed with cucumber peelings all over my face a-trying to bleach off the freckles before tomorrow. I can't get up now!

STORYTELLER: Ma shouted to the youngest girl.

MA TOLLIVER: Sally! Git yourself into the kitchen and throw some salt in the pudding for me!

SALLY: Goodness sakes, Ma, I'm working like fire to get my hair rolled up on old stockings, so I'll have curls for the doings tomorrow. I ain't got time to salt the pudding!

STORYTELLER: Since there weren't any more girls to ask, Ma hollered at her son. But Rufus was too busy.

MA TOLLIVER: Rufus, please go into the kitchen and throw a spoonful of salt into the pudding.

STORYTELLER: He was a young fellow, just beginning to cotton to girls and do a little courting.

RUFUS: I cain't, Ma, I'm full of bear's grease. Been slicking down my hair with it, and now I'm a-greasing my Sunday-go-to-meeting boots. I can't put any salt in any pudding now.

STORYTELLER: By that time all the children were used up, and Ma began to holler at her old man.

MA TOLLIVER: Lem, can't you put a spoonful of salt in the pudding?

LEM: Shucks, Ma, I'm a-cleaning my gun for tomorrow. S'posing a nice fat rabbit ran across the road whilst we're a-going. If my gun wasn't ready we'd miss a good rabbit stew for supper. Got my hands full of gun soot. I can't take care of your pudding now!

MA TOLLIVER: Oh, tarnation! I'll do it myself.

STORYTELLER: So she washed the feathers off her hands, and into the kitchen she marched. She got a good big pinch of salt, went over to the hearth where the pudding was boiling away in a pot swung over the fire, and threw it in.

Well, after a while Saphronie got her dress all done up, and she got to feeling a little ashamed that she hadn't done what Ma had asked her to. So she went over to the salt box, got a big pinch and threw it into the pudding.

Hitty got to feeling bad about refusing Ma, too.

HITTY: I reckon I could manage to get some salt in that pudding if I tried.

STORYTELLER: So she went into the kitchen, picked up a spoon with her black greasy hands, dipped up a good big dose of salt, and stirred it into the puffing.

Then Lucy, lying back on the bed with her face covered with cucumbers, got to thinking that she hadn't done right, not to help her ma when she was asked. So she got up, went to the hearth, and put some more salt in to the pudding.

No sooner had she got out of the way, than Sally came into the kitchen with her hair done up in knobs all over her head. She got a good-sized pinch of salt and dropped it in the pudding.

Then Rufus got to thinking about it after he'd finished his boots. So into the kitchen he went and dipped up a good big tablespoonful. Being a man, he didn't know much about such things, and he thought you had to put as much salt in a pudding as in a pot of stew.

Pa's conscience got to hurting him, too, and as soon as his gun was all shined up and loaded, he clumped into the kitchen, dipped up a heaping spoontful of salt, and threw it over into the pudding.

At last the pudding was done. Ma took it off the fire. It turned out of the pot as pretty as you please.