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*Dramatic Publishing*

# **OLD DRY FRYE**

**Adapted by Larry and Vivian Snipes  
Loosely based on the book  
by Paul Brett Johnson**

**“Cause the preacher man  
has a fierce hankerin’  
for fried chicken.  
Everybody knows  
Old Dry Frye.”**

# OLD DRY FRYE

*Folktale. Adapted by Larry and Vivian Snipes. Loosely based on the book by Paul Brett Johnson. Cast: 2m., 1w., with doubling plus 3 puppets, or up to 13 (6m., 6w., 1 either gender) with roles distributed.* This adaptation illustrates the traditional folktale of *Old Dry Frye*, the late preacher man with the ravenous appetite who comes back to haunt his flock! This is commedia American-style with energetic humor, physical gags, bumbling brothers, a cluck-talking chicken and a series of uproarious adventures taken on by 13 vibrant characters that can be played by as few as one woman and two men. Little Old Lady and Little Old Feller settle down for some tasty fried chicken when they hear the ghostly voice of Old Dry Frye comin' across the wind. As Little Old Lady sets off for the creek to wash another plate, we are taken back in time to an earlier day when Old Dry Frye used to come regularly to Sunday dinner. Folks always set an extra plate because everybody knows about Old Dry Frye and his voracious appetite. As Old Dry Frye visits his flock—always at dinner time—the families of Troublesome Creek try unsuccessfully to hide their food from him. One day, the preacher man chokes on a chicken bone and keels over—kerplop! The whole community then passes the remains of Old Dry Frye off like a hot potato, trying to shed the body, lest one of them gets stuck with the blame for his “passing.” Physical humor, call and response, and delightful dialect move this play from soup pot to apple crumble, with a laugh a minute. *Production notes are available in the script containing details on setting, costumes, casting and props. Great roles for versatile actors. Flexible staging. Suitable for touring. Costumes: American Southern rural, realistic or fantasy. Approximate running time: 60 minutes. Code: O78.*

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Old Dry Frye



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# Old Dry Frye

Adapted for the stage by  
LARRY & VIVIAN SNIPES



**Dramatic Publishing Company**  
Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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To all who shared their talent, time  
and sweat on this journey.

## ORIGINAL PRODUCTION CREDIT

**OLD DRY FRYE** was adapted by Larry and Vivian Snipes for performances by Lexington Children's Theatre. They opened their touring production September 29, 2007, and their home stage production on October 28, 2007. The play was directed by Vivian Snipes.

Original Cast:

Adam Montague

HIRAM FELLOWS, TIM, POSSUM,  
PA HARTLEY

Casey Holloway

HAZEL FELLOWS, JIM, WIDDER ROSE,  
DOTTIE SUE, MA, HAILEY, HOLLY,  
HAL HARTLEY and DOG

James Hamblin

OLD DRY FRYE

Scenic Design

Jamie Clausius, Carolyn Voss

Costume Design

Kirsten Aurelius

Lighting Design

Carolyn Voss

Stage Management

Anne C Meacham

Technical Director

Russell Mendez

Puppetry Design and

Construction

Carolyn Voss, Lindsay Schmeling,  
Terry Snyder

Scenic Artists

Jamie Clausius, Carolyn Voss,  
Kiersten E Moore

## SETTING

In and around Troublesome Creek, which is very close to Lost Creek, and just around the corner from Hippo, Raven, Beaver and Mousie, Kentucky



## CAST OF CHARACTERS

Little Old Lady Fellows (LOL)  
 Little Old Feller Fellows (LOF)  
     Tim Johnson  
     Jim Johnson  
     The Possum  
     Widder Rose  
 Dottie Sue – a chicken  
     Ma Hartley (Ma)  
     Pa Hartley (Pa)  
     Hailey Hartley  
     Holly Hartley  
     Hal Hartley  
     Hal's dog  
 Old Dry Frye (ODF)

All roles can be played by as few as 2 males and 1 female or as many as you like. When playing with as few as three performers, the role of Old Dry Frye is played throughout by one performer and the remaining roles can be divided by 1 male and 1 female. Stage directions in this script were written with three performers in mind. Dottie Sue, the possum, and Hal's dog were puppets, though they would not have to be if using a larger cast. If additional performers are used, some entrances can be taken earlier as long as the important information in the covering monologue is conveyed.

## CASTING FOR 3 ACTORS

ACTOR 1:           ODF  
 ACTOR 2:           LOF, TIM, PA, also puppeteer for the POSSUM  
 ACTOR 3:           LOL, JIM, ROSE, MA, HAILEY, HOLLY, HAL, also puppeteer for  
                           DOTTIE SUE and HAL'S DOG

(See page 47 for additional information for costuming three actors.)

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

Much of the dialogue is intended to overlap, especially in the first section where ODF's words are carried on the wind. Should you find it necessary to add or delete a few of Old Dry Frye's "Everybody knows Old Dry Frye," please feel free to accommodate your production. We feel it is important to leave how much and how often to overlap sentences and telescope dialogue to a director's discretion.

It is also important to note that the words, "the preacher man" are always to be followed by, "Everybody knows Old Dry Frye." We encourage you to explore the number of different ways to express the characters' feelings about the preacher man when you say this call and response. It is intended that they are not said the same way every single time. It is certainly your choice whether to involve the audience or not. Once the characters are saying "Everybody knows Old Dry Frye" within the context of the story we chose to use direct address on the response line. Some days the audience would join the chant, other days they did not. We did not actively pursue their participation.

## **PRODUCTION LISTS**

See lists for properties, setting, and costuming beginning page 46.

## OLD DRY FRYE

Adapted by Larry and Vivian Snipes

*(SETTING: The simple setting includes a large background drop that represents the countryside around Troublesome Creek, perhaps a series of hills fading into the distance with a road winding between them. The road winds past a country church and its graveyard. Smaller bi-fold flats are arranged stage left and right to provide additional locations such as the creek and a house on the hillside. These flats also offer additional space for quick changes and prop storage. Downstage of the central drop are a large tree, a wheelbarrow, a wooden bucket, two crates, a table top and a section of fence. All but the tree are mobile and can be used in multiple arrangements to establish a variety of locations. The playing area is surrounded by short split rail fences to define the performance space and aisles for the actors.)*

*AT RISE: The crates are set in configuration for a kitchen table. LOL enters the playing area softly singing "Oh My Darling, Clementine." She carries three plates, three mugs and perhaps napkins which she piles on the table. LOL exits then enters carrying a large pitcher. If her song finishes, she continues to hum to herself while finishing setting the table.)*

LOL: *(Sings)*                      *Oh, my darlin', Oh my darlin'  
Oh my darlin' Clementine,  
You are lost and gone forever,  
Dreadful sorry Clementine*

*(LOL raises the pitcher and pours a mugful. LOF enters, stretches and yawns.)*

LOF: Morning Lil' Ole Lady.

*(LOL hands LOF his mug and pecks him on the cheek.)*

LOL: Morning Lil' Ole Feller. *(Returns to table and begins to set out the dishes.)* Breakfast is just about scrambled up.

*(LOF crosses a few steps downstage then stands looking out toward the audience. He is "staring out the window" overlooking the valley. He sips from his coffee mug, stretches and yawns again. As LOF speaks LOL begins to set a third place setting but notices that the plate is dirty. LOL tries to wipe the plate clean, but can't. LOL spits on the plate and rubs it with her apron, but it won't come clean. LOL looks at the plate, looks at LOF, looks at the plate again, then looks at the table, shrugs her shoulders and takes the dirty dish and third place setting off the table exiting behind the stage right flats into the "kitchen" just as LOF finishes his next line.)*

LOF: Will you just look'a yonder. *(Smiles)* My, my, my, this here is shore 'nough the purtiest little valley I ever laid eyes on. Mmm-hmm.

*(As soon as LOL exits the stage ODF calls hauntingly from backstage. His words waver and echo as if carried on the wind from a great distance. They are continuous and overlap LOF's and LOL's dialogue. At first we might not even want to hear every word clearly. Over the course of the scene ODF's refrain will grow in intensity, volume and clarity so as to make us imagine he comes closer and closer, ready to wreak vengeance.)*

ODF: *(Off)*  
Everybody knows  
Old  
Dry  
Frye.

LOF:  
What's that? Oh. What  
do I hear? Hazel? Hazel!  
Did you hear that Hazel?

*(Turns to look at LOL but she is gone)*

ODF: *(Off)*  
Everybody  
knows  
Old  
Dry  
Frye.

LOF:  
Hazel! Hurry up and get  
out here. Can ya hear it  
Hazel? Hazel! Get back  
out here. Hurry!

*(LOL enters and crosses to LOF)*

ODF: *(Off)*  
Everybody  
knows  
Old  
Dry  
Frye.

LOL: What in tarnation  
has got you so excited?  
I was just about to cook  
us up a mess a—

LOF: Quiet!

*(ODF's refrain finishes simultaneously with LOF's "Quiet!")*

LOF: Listen!! *(They listen. It is silent.)*

LOL: I don't hear nothing —

LOF: Don't hear nothing —

LOL: And if'n you want to eat, you'd best —

LOF: Would'ja hesh up and listen! I think I hear — *(A beat. He gulps.)* the preacher man.

*(In the following dialogue, ODF's speech overlaps LOF and LOL. It is slowed down and drawn out – as if echoing on the wind and reverberating through the mountains.)*

ODF: *(Off)* Everybody knows

LOL: *(Hears ODF on the whisper of the wind)* Oh! Mercy me!

ODF: *(Off)* Old

LOF: Did you remember to set out an extry plate?

Dry

LOL: I didn't have a clean one.

Frye.

LOF: Do you really want a visit from the prea —

ODF: *(Off)* Everybody

LOL: *(Exits into the kitchen.)*  
Don't worry, I'll take care of it. Troublesome Creek ain't far.

Knows

LOF: Perhaps I'd better go.

*(LOL grabs the dirty plate and reenters.)*

ODF: *(Off)* Old

LOF: He's liable to be here any minute.

*(LOF tries to take the plate from LOL. A tussle ensues. As LOL describes swimming in the creek LOF daydreams of how pleasant that would be, thus loosening his grip on the plate so LOL can grab it when needed.)*

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Dry.  
Frye.

LOL: There is no way I'm lettin' you get anywhere near that creek. You'll get down there and get distracted, an' the next thing you know you'll be down to yer skivvies swimmin' in the water and I'll be settin' here with — the preacher man.

ODF: *(Off)* Everybody knows

*(LOL and LOF are startled by ODF's voice. LOL grabs the plate out of LOF's hands.)*

ODF: *(Off)* Old

LOL: I'll go. *(Exits behind the creek side of the drop.)*

Dry.  
Frye.

LOF: Then do wha-cha got to do and do it quick like.

Every-  
body

LOL: *(Off)* I'm a'goin' as fast as I can ...

Knows

LOF: I'll keep my eyes peeled.

Old

Dry  
Frye.

LOF: Oh, mercy me. How could we forget! Hit's a simple thing. You have a meal, you set an extry plate. Ya fix enough food to feed whoever comes to the door. Share the wealth, look out fer the good o' all mankind. An extry plate, that's all it takes. Lord knows, if we didn't learn nuthin' else we learnt that from the preacher man.

Everybody  
knows  
Old  
Dry  
Frye!

ODF: *(Off)* Everybody knows Old Dry Frye!

*(If doubling roles, LOF can go on as long as needed about the attributes of setting out a plate while LOL changes costume to Hal Hartley, ensuring that the last of his speech ends with “the preacher man” so as to prompt ODF’s response.)*

*(Hal’s dog starts barking from offstage. Dog and Hal enter. It should appear that Dog is dragging Hal behind him. Dog is a puppet on his arm. Hal manipulates and makes all of the sounds for the dog, but it is a separate entity.)*

HAL: *(Dog barks and howls. He is chasing the ghost.)* Hey, Mr. Fellows. *(Dog barks at LOF.)*

LOF: Howdy, Hal. *(Dog licks LOF who pushes him away.)* Howdy Dog.

HAL: Down Dog. *(Dog barks and backs off.)* Sit dog. *(Dog sits.)* Good dog. *(Dog pants.)* Isn’t it excitin’! *(Dog pants.)*

LOF: Excitin’?

HAL: You know—he’s coming.

LOF: Now Hal, he hain’t been round cheer...

HAL: Haint! You said haint! The haint is comin’ fer sure! I am finally gonna get to see the preach —

LOF: Don’t say it, Hal.

HAL: I hain’t never seen him, not dead anyways. Even my old dog hain’t never seen him. Have you seen him, dog? *(Dog barks, “Yes I have.”)* Well I hain’t, and I sure want to see the —

LOF: Now Hal, not ever’body wants to be reminded of —

HAL: I hain’t seen him since he disappeared on that mean ole horse of yourn —

LOF: *(Sternly)* And you ain’t gonna see him today neither! Now you run along home Hal Hartley.

HAL: Yes sir, Mr. Fellows. *(As he exits)* Come on, dog. *(Dog barks.)* Say hey to *(A beat; Hal turns back to LOF.)* the preacher man.

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*(If doubling, actress exits and changes back into LOL to enter as quickly as possible.)*

ODF: *(Off)* Everybody knows

Old

Dry

Frye.

Everybody

Knows

Old

Dry

Frye.

LOF: What a mess we done kicked up all because we didn't have a clean plate. Land sakes! We didn't mean to upset all o' Troublesome Creek. *(Raising his arms and speaking to the heavens)* It was a accident! *(Returning to his earthly worries)* It ain't like he was gonna waltz in here and sit down at this very table this very morning for "breakfast with the preacher man."

ODF: *(Off)* Everybody knows

Old

Dry

Frye.

LOF: Come to think on it, 'twas mighty polite of him to drop in and visit oncet a week. Real social like. Always gave us somebody to talk to. Even if'n he did eat ya out of house and home, he certainly kept an eye on his flock, did the preacher man.

ODF: *(Off)*

Everybody knows

Old

Dry

Frye.

LOL: *(Off)*

Hiram? Hiram! I got it.

*(Enters waving the clean plate)* It's all clean, Hiram.

ODF: *(Off)*

Everybody knows

Old Dry Frye.

LOF:

Hurry! Hurry, get it on the table.

ODF: *(Off)* Everybody knows



*(LOL places the plate on the table. ODF's voice begins to recede. It soon fades on the wind.)*

ODF: (Off) Old  
Dry

LOL: Listen. (A beat) Is he  
going t'other way?

Frye.

LOF: I think so.

*(LOL and LOF realize ODF's voice is gone.)*

LOF: Whew, that was close.

LOL: You can say that again.

LOF: Whew, that was close.

*(There is much relieved laughter in the next section as LOL and LOF believe they have escaped a fate worse than death.)*

LOL: You sound jest like one of them Johnson Brothers.

LOF: Do you `member how tightfisted they were?

LOL: Remember! How could I forget? This whole town was nothing but a bunch of skinflints. The Johnson Brothers, Widder Rose, the Hartleys —

LOF: And don't forget us, we weren't no beacon of charity our ownelves.

LOL: At's right, we're all changed 'cause of the preacher man.

BOTH: Everybody knows Old Dry Frye.

*(LOL and LOF make the sign of the cross then spit through their fingers to ward off the devil. Then they begin to settle in around the breakfast table.)*

LOL: He was the chicken-eatingest sermonizer that ever set fire to a pulpit.

LOF: An' if you was having fried chicken for Sunday dinner —

LOL: You might as well set out an extra plate —

LOF: 'Cause here would come Old Dry Frye —

LOL: With his nose twitching —

LOF: And his false teeth a-snapping —

BOTH: You could count on it.

LOF: Why — why hit seems just like yesterday. You was about to whip up a mess of your fine ham 'n biscuits...

*(Their actions establish that we are flashing back to the not too distant past. LOL puts on an apron and carries herself with a more youthful bearing.)*

LOL: And you was heading out to feed that mean spirited horse of ourn.

*(LOF becomes much spryer and goes behind the drop momentarily. LOF enters with the mean old horse, crosses to the fence and commences to feed the horse. The horse is none too happy about any of it. We are now in the past.)*

LOL: Well, I'll be. We are plum out o' hog meat. Hiram, how am I gonna make us up a mess o' ham 'n biscuits if'n I hain't got no hog meat?

LOF: I do love myself some o' your ham 'n biscuits. *(A beat)* You shore do make the finest in the whole county.

LOL: Yes I do, WHEN I have the ham.

LOF: And your turnip greens with fat back, and southern fried chicken, but nothing — nothin' compares to your country ham and biscuits, mmm-mmm! Those are blue ribbon worthy—what do you mean WHEN you have the ham?

LOL: I mean what I mean. We are plumb out of hog meat.

LOF: Out of hog meat, well I just better get my own self down the road and grab us a bag of hog meat, 'cause I sure do have a hankering for some of your fine ham and biscuits, 'cause I like 'em better'n your fried chicken!

LOL: Not so loud, you never know when “you know who” will hear you.

LOF: Who?

LOL: I reckon you know who I’m talking about. “Everybody knows...”

ODF: *(Entering)* You bet your sweet patootie they do. Did I hear somebody mention ham ‘n biscuits and *(Reverently)* fried chicken?

LOL & LOF: *(Resigned)* Mornin’ Preacher Man.

ALL: Everybody knows Old Dry Frye.

ODF: *(Cheerful)* Mornin’. Mornin’.

*(During the following speech ODF works to insinuate himself at the table. He crosses toward the table to investigate. LOL and LOF do their best to keep him away from the table. LOF sits on the crate/bench and intentionally doesn’t make enough room for ODF. ODF picks up the pitcher, smells it then starts to pour a mug, but LOL grabs it away and sets it out of reach. ODF takes a napkin off the table. LOF grabs it and puts it in his lap. Any action that makes LOL and LOF appear stingy is encouraged. ODF is fairly unobservant of their actions as he is so intent on finding food.)*

ODF: Now as y’all know, I am extra fond of *(Reverently)* fried chicken, but as I like to say, brethren, waste not, want not. It’s a blessing to see you’uns this fine sunny mornin’. Seems to me like it’s right nigh time for a tasty breakfast. Ya’ll know how I like to eat, especially my Sunday favorite, *(Reverently)* fried chicken. *(He looks to LOL as if to ask if they have any, LOL shakes her head, “No.”)* That bein’ said, let no culinary opportunity go unexplored. Did I hear mention of ham ‘n biscuits? I sure could use a mess of fresh ham ‘n biscuits right about now and I know you make the best in the whole blessed county, sister.

LOL: Well, I do! *(Pleased with the compliment, she looks to LOF and is quickly knocked out of her reverie. LOF is shaking his head and waving his hands indicating, “We don’t want to share!”)* **If’n** I got the hog meat to cook. But — I am sad to say we are slap out. My old man here, was just about to run off to fetch me some. *(She crosses to LOF and pushes him gently off the crate, steering him in the general direction of the “barn.”)*

LOF: That's right, it purt near slipped my mind. I wuz just about to head out. Now, where is that feed sack?

ODF: Feed sack?

LOL: I think they's one in the smoke house.

LOF: I looked in there earlier but didn't see one.

LOL: Well, I imagine you wuz lookin' with your man eyes. (*Crossing to LOF*) Come on we'll go have another look see "together."

*(LOL and LOF exit behind the drop stage left.)*

ODF: (*Chuckling to himself.*) Ain't they cute. I'll reckon he might be back with that hog meat in a month of Sundays. That old feller sometimes likes to sneak off for a snooze under a tree or a dip in the creek. I'll just slip in the kitchen and have a look-see. There might just be some tasty morsel what needs eatin'.

*(ODF exits as the LOF and LOL enter with an empty feed sack. They stay toward stage left beside the creek bi-fold drop.)*

LOF: I reckon you wuz right. It wuz right there in plain sight.

LOL: I reckon as how. Don't just stand there flappin' your gums, get on with you — and stay away from the creek. (*She pushes LOF toward the path to town.*)

LOF: But you know how much I like to swim in the creek on a hot day like today.

LOL: Yes sir-ree, I do, 'cause you always come back home drippin' wet and muddier than a hog waller. Now you stay outa that creek Hiram Fellows.

LOF: I'll do my best. (*Exits leaving LOL on stage*)

LOL: (*Shouting after him*) You see that you do! (*To herself*) Land sakes that man takes to that creek more'n a hog takes to mud.