

SWAMP CASTLE: A FAIRLY TOLD TALE

By Michael Soetaert

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A Ten Minute Comedic Skit-Play

By Michael Soetaert

SYNOPSIS: Swamp Castle...more accurately, Landfill Castle. And Sewage Treatment Plant Castle. And let's not forget the methane. Which is all very profitable, if not a bit odiferous. Only the King of Swamp Castle is shoveling it in and moving to Florida, leaving the kingdom to one of his three sons...but which one? *Swamp Castle*, a ten minute comedy.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 male)

- KING** (m)Burly and bearded. He's never been to University, and he doesn't care. His clothes are a bit worn, but not from neglect. The guy is not afraid of hard work. Kingly cape and crown, to say the least. *(13 lines)*
- PRESCOTT** (m)The eldest son. Dresses like a court dandy – a lot of ruffles and general silliness. He is highly educated and doesn't try to hide it. Has a boorish, Ivy League accent. Comon, let's face it. The guy's a snob. *(52 lines)*
- DUTTON** (m).....The middle son. Really, aside from birth order and major in college, it would be hard to tell Prescott from Dutton in a brightly lit room. *(36 lines)*
- BRYCE** (m).....The youngest son. What I said about the other two brothers - ditto. *(43 lines)*

SET

A room in the castle. Lots of stones and arches and really big wooden beams. There is a window DC that needn't be practical. A big wooden table with benches and so forth, or not. Really, this all could be done on an empty stage, but some nicely painted flats would add a lot.

PROPS

- A small suit case - King
- Travel Magazine, 3 pieces of straw, playing cards, dice - Prescott
- Playing cards, dice – Dutton
- Playing cards, dice - Bryce

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AT RISE: *The KING and his eldest son, PRESCOTT, are UC. The KING is looking out the UC window while PRESCOTT, obviously bored, is thumbing through a travel magazine.*

KING: *(With a great sweeping motion.)* There, my son. As far as you can see. That's our land, it is. *(He takes a deep snoot full of air and then thumps his chest.)* Ah, raw sewage! That's the smell of prosperity, it is. And the way the methane on the Royal Landfill glows in the evening... 'tis a thing of beauty. They said I was daft making my kingdom into a landfill. But now people pay me to fill in my swamp. How daft was that?

PRESCOTT: *(Putting down his magazine.)* I have an idea, Pops. Let's just number your stories. It would save us both a lot of time and bother. We can call this one, "One."

Beat.

KING: You know, Prescott, I've always told you that some day this would all be yours.

PRESCOTT: If you mean daily, yes.

KING: Well, son, that day has come. I've had enough. I'm ready to shovel it in and the leave the family business to my eldest son.

PRESCOTT: *(Shocked.)* But...but I don't want it.

KING: Well, now. Bless your heart.

PRESCOTT: But...father-

KING: Let me tell you a thing or two, Mr. Fancy Pants. You may not like the smell of manure, but that's what put you through that fancy college and bought those fancy clothes. And the same goes for your two fancy brothers. Well, let me tell you something that they didn't teach at that fancy school: Even the best gold mine is going to run out of ore some day. But a sewage treatment plant...when we're finally out of sewage, that means it's the end of the world. Not much point in worrying then. So it's settled.

PRESCOTT: Settled? What's settled?!

KING: The entire kingdom, including this castle, is yours. And a strong castle it is! They don't build 'em like this anymore. This castle will still be standing here when even our own kin have forgotten who we are.

PRESCOTT: But, Pops, our castle in the middle of a dump!

KING: And if it weren't for that dump, you'd be nothing more than a commoner. And you know who we have doing the real work out there? Scrubbing out the pipes, shoveling out the holding tanks, swinging from a rope over raw sewage, really for no reason at all? Them's commoners, they are. Now you tell me. Would you rather be smelling it from up here, or down there?

BRYCE: But why does it have to be me?

KING: Because you're the oldest! The Kingdom always goes to the oldest.

During the following line, BRYCE and DUTTON will enter Left.

PRESCOTT: Well, I think it's dreadfully unfair. Dutton and Bryce both get to profit equally from the Kingdom, but neither of them have to actually do anything.

DUTTON: I beg to differ.

PRESCOTT: Oh? That you don't profit from the kingdom?

DUTTON: No. Heavens no! What I disagree with is that it is unfair. It's your birthright! What could be more fair than that?

BRYCE: Pardon me, dear brother, but what is this all about?

PRESCOTT: Our father, the King, has decided to abdicate the throne.

KING: If that means "retire," then indeed I have.

DUTTON: Well, good for him.

BRYCE: Yes, father. Congratulations. And I'm sure that Prescott will make a fine king.

PRESCOTT: Why are we assuming that I must be King?

BRYCE: You said it yourself, dear brother. You're the eldest.

PRESCOTT: That has never gotten me any advantages before. Why should it now?

DUTTON: Honestly?

PRESCOTT: I wouldn't have it any other way.

DUTTON: OK, then. Had father a decent kingdom, perhaps one considerably upwind, then I daresay there wouldn't've even been a discussion. Bryce and I would've been lucky to draw a pauper's pension.

PRESCOTT: Come, now, I would've given you more than that.

DUTTON: As far as I'm concerned, you can keep it all. I have no intention of working here for the rest of my life.

KING: For the rest of your life? When do you plan on beginning? You haven't worked a day in your life as it is! None of you have.

BRYCE: Be that as it may, Father, but if none of us is actually required to do any of the work—

KING: Work? You don't even know how to pronounce the word!

BRYCE: Be that as it may, if none of us is actually doing anything of importance at this locale, then why are we here at all?

PRESCOTT: I could rule in abstentia!

BRYCE: Let's not get sidetracked. Who will inherit the kingdom is not nearly as important as whether that person actually needs to be here. I mean, just because a King owns a stable doesn't mean he has to sleep there.

KING: If his entire kingdom was a stable, he would. How can a king rule his kingdom if he's not there? And if the King's not here, then bloody well none of the peasants are going to be here, either, and without peasants, who's going to do this disgusting job?

DUTTON: So one of us must stay—

KING: By the Saints! That fancy education is starting to pay off! Ay, one of you must stay, and I don't care who. But it's sure the heck not going to be me, I can tell you that. I've had this smell up my nose for over 50 years now, and I'm ready for a vacation. I'm moving to Florida. *(Picks up his grip; as he's leaving.)* I'll send you a postcard.

The KING exits Left, leaving his SONS to stare after him in shock as they realize he's truly not kidding.

PRESCOTT: *(After a beat.)* Well, I guess that's it, then.

DUTTON: Pardon, me, dear brother, but what is what?

PRESCOTT: We must decide who will run the Kingdom.

BRYCE: Dear brother, I thought that had already been decided on the occasion of your birth.

DUTTON: I can understand your reluctance to spend the rest of your life in the middle of a sewage treatment plant, dear brother, but what's to stop us from leaving you here?

PRESCOTT: What's to stop me from sending you money?

BRYCE: Our brother does have a point, Dutton. So, Prescott, what do you propose?

PRESCOTT: We could take turns.

DUTTON: Take turns?

BRYCE: You know...share?

DUTTON: Oh, yes. Share! What a novel idea.

PRESCOTT: We could each do it for a year at a time. That means we'd each get two years off.

DUTTON: Your mathematical skills haven't languished in the least.

BRYCE: (*Suspicious.*) Who would go first?

PRESCOTT: I thought we'd start with the youngest.

BRYCE: Why, that's quite magnanimous of you to want me to go first, but if we're going by age, why don't we start with the eldest?

PRESCOTT: We always start with the eldest. I thought it would be nice to start with the youngest for a change.

BRYCE: I disagree.

PRESCOTT: Then the only logical solution, it seems, is to have Dutton go first. After all, he falls in the middle.

BRYCE: Simply brilliant.

DUTTON: Wait. I have a better idea. Why don't we do it by class rank?

BRYCE: For which year?

DUTTON: Then how about GPA?

PRESCOTT: Cumulative or by subject matter?

DUTTON: Perhaps we can let the person who was class president decide.

PRESCOTT: Why not a member of Sigma Epsilon Chi?

BRYCE: Why not the Assistant to the Water Boy?

PRESCOTT: Enough already!

BRYCE: Why do you always get to say it's enough?

PRESCOTT: Because I am the oldest.

DUTTON: Then why don't you go first, too?

PRESCOTT: What would be the fun of that? I know, we'll draw lots. That's the only fair way. (*Picking up three straws and snapping one off short.*) Whoever gets the short straw goes first. Comon, little brother, you go first.

BRYCE: I'll have no part of it. Whoever goes first is going to be stuck here forever, and we all know it.

DUTTON: How dare you impugn my good name, dear brother.

BRYCE: Don't forget, dear brother, but I know exactly just how good your name is.

PRESCOTT: As do we all. The problem with growing up together in a lonely castle without any real friends...friends that didn't have to be paid...is that we all know just how dishonest each of us truly is. The only fair way to decide is to have a contest.

BRYCE: Bravo, dear brother. Might I suggest we each answer a question on, say, Neo-Classical Mythological Morphology?

DUTTON: Your suggestion is not surprising, dear brother. After all, isn't that what you read for at University?

BRYCE: Why...so it is.

DUTTON: Then might I suggest we each answer a question on Astrological Alchemy?

PRESCOTT: Oh, please. If we all must submit a question from our majors, then I'll be forced to think up something on English Literature, and I'd rather not. It was so dreadfully dull the first time around.

BRYCE: Well, then, how about a test of athletic prowess?

PRESCOTT: Splendid! I propose polo!

DUTTON: With a horse?

PRESCOTT: Of course with a horse.

DUTTON: I was hoping for something a little less strenuous.

PRESCOTT: It's really not that bad. The horse does most of the work.

DUTTON: I was thinking about a rousing round of croquet.

BRYCE: How about lawn darts?

DUTTON: Is that even a sport?

BRYCE: You didn't hear me complain about croquet.

PRESCOTT: I know! We could draw cards! High card wins.

DUTTON: Brother! I think that's an excellent idea. (*Taking a deck of cards out of his pocket.*) You don't mind if I use my own deck?

BRYCE: (*Taking one out, too.*) Or I use mine?

PRESCOTT: No, not at all. (*Also taking out a deck.*) It seems we each have our own. Gentlemen...on the count of three. One...two...three.

ALL turn over the top card, and each is an ace.

BRYCE: *(Not surprised.)* Why, we seemed to have tied. Shall we try again?

ALL will turn over another Ace.

PRESCOTT: Maybe we should all draw from the middle for a change.

ALL will pull out an ace.

DUTTON: *(To BRYCE.)* Isn't that the same ace you drew the first time?

BRYCE: Hard to tell. They all look alike to me.

PRESCOTT: Gentlemen, this is impossible. We will never have a winner unless we are all using the same deck.

BRYCE: Here, dear brother, you can use mine.

PRESCOTT: How generous, my dear Bryce, but I would prefer to use my own.

DUTTON: I'm sure you would.

BRYCE: *(Taking out a pair of dice and rattling them in his hand.)*
Dice?

DUTTON and PRESCOTT will each take out a pair of dice and shake them as well. After a beat they'll ALL put them away.

BRYCE: How about flipping a coin?

PRESCOTT: Just out of curiosity, does any of us actually possess a coin that has two different sides?

DUTTON: Why, dear brother! What are you implying?

PRESCOTT: I'm implying that we are all a bunch of cheats.

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