

Crooked Lives:
(And the Aftermath of a Man Called Beefy)

A humorous 10 minute stage play

By: Peggy Barnell

Characters

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| Bobby O’Riley: | Street cop – tough and grizzled |
| Candy: | Bobby’s girlfriend – a dizzy, gum-chomping blonde |
| Thelma: | Grieving widow – a rather mousey-type woman with a hidden wild-side |
| Wilson: | Thelma’s bodyguard – strong, silent type |
| Beefy: | The deceased – 40 or older, stocky build |
| Narrator | Male or female |

Setting/Props:

Morgan’s Funeral Home. An open casket is present, along with all the expected funeral setting accessories. The deceased lies in state in the casket (or something that looks like an open casket) – a portly 50ish male who looks... dead. It would be good if his body can be at least partially seen by the audience. A hanging, lighted neon sign would be a nice touch.

It should read:

Morgan’s Mortuary:

We care for your loved ones the way we care for our own.

A rope/cord is needed.

Two guns

**** The author recommends that this comedy be played in a 1940’s/Dick Tracy ** detective/crime show style, with some bad NY, crime-drama accents. Each character has a brief ‘soliloquy’ in which they step away from the action. The scene should freeze-frame while the actor addresses the audience, then begins again as if no interruption has occurred. Appropriate crime drama music would add effect at the opening, close and in appropriate scene spots, such as prior to or after the soliloquy.**

Scene opens with Noir-type saxophone music that opens playing loudly for 10-15 seconds, then continues softly as the narrator begins to speak.

Narrator:

This story is like a thousand others going on in this filthy city. Kingpin Beefy O'Reily is dead. His body lies in state at Morgan's Funeral Parlor, where a sparse few have come to pay their respects. You see, Beefy O'Reily had a lot more enemies than he had friends. His grieving

Scene opens with Bobbie and Candy preparing to enter the funeral parlor.

Candy

Oh, Bobby, don't make me go in there with you. Please, please, baby.

Bobby

We been over this. I need you to distract the body guard so's I can talk to the widow-lady and snoop around a little.

Candy

But funeral homes make me so nervous. (She looks around apprehensively) They just give me the creeps – all those dead bodies.

Bobby

This ain't no different than any other funeral home, babe. There's dead people in there. Get used to it.

Candy

All those poor people – dressed to the nines with nowhere to go. (Shudders) Hey, how's about I just stand here at the door and makes funny faces and wave at the bouncer, huh? That would distract him.

Bobby

I just want ya to distract the guy, Candy, not make him call the guys in the white coats to come after ya with a straight-jacket!

(Soliloquy # 1)

Bobby

The dead guy was a well-known gambler and bookie named Beefy LaChow. As a cop who walks the beat, I know what goes on in these here streets after dark. Everybody knows Beefy – crooked as my grandmother's front teeth, God rest her soul. Beefy got his

name on accounta his penchant for hamburger steaks. With all his loot he coulda dined on filet mignon every night, but he loved his hamburger steak – ordered it everywhere he went.

Beefy had lots of enemies – and I’m one of ‘em. See, Beefy stole my gal. Thelma and me, we had a good thing way back, till Beefy came along – the rat. So, what better revenge, huh? Beefy’s gone – time for me to step in and ignite an old flame. I’ll not only enjoy his lovely widow, but all his loot, too. (Evil laugh)

(He starts to return to the scene, but turns back as an
afterthought and continues)

Oh, and Candy, here? Gals like her are a dime a dozen. She don’t know my real plan. When she’s served my purpose, I’ll send her packin’.

(Back to scene)

Bobby

Now try to act like ya been somewhere. Let’s go in.

(They enter viewing area)

Thelma

Bobby O’Riley – as I live and breathe!

(Wilson steps up beside Thelma)

Bobby

Hello Thelma.

Thelma

It’s been a long time, Bobby.

Bobby

Yes. Yes, it has. I was sorry to hear about Beefy. My condolences.

Thelma

Thank you, Bobby. It’s been difficult – especially knowing the way it all happened.

Bobby

Yeah, a real shame.

Thelma

What I can’t understand it why – why would anyone want my Beefy dead?

Bobby

Maybe cause everyone hated his guts?

Thelma

Bobby, do you know Wilson, my body guard?

Bobby

Yes. Yes, I believe I do.

(He offers a handshake which Wilson ignores)

Well, Thelma, Wilson, this here is Candy, my gal.

Candy

Pleased to make your acquaintance – sorry it's cause your husband kicked the bucket though. (Directs her attention to Wilson, touches his biceps)

Boy, oh boy, ain't you the sugar lump?

Bobby

Give us a minute here, would ya?

(Candy and Wilson move away and engage in quiet dialogue after Thelma nods her approval to Wilson)

Thelma

I'm rather surprised you'd make an appearance here, Bobby... I mean, considering your relationship with Beefy. You wouldn't walk across the street to say hello when he was alive.

Bobby

Thelma. (He takes her hands in his) Thelma, have you forgotten? Because I haven't. You're the reason I never married. I mean, I couldn't – not after you, baby.

(Soliloquy # 2)

Thelma

I knew Bobby would come. It wasn't that long ago we shared something special – something most never find. (She let down her hair, shakes it out, straightens her bosom, makes a seductive pose, and looks toward Bobby) Passion, pure and simple. I know he might not look like it, but the man is a tiger – an unstoppable machine in the boudoir, if you know what I'm talking' about. But he's a street cop, a poor street cop – and a girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do. When Beefy came along, I knew I'd be set for life. But now... now I gotta play it cool, see? I let Bobby come after me, and I'll have everything I always wanted: Beefy's money in my bank account and Bobby's body in my bed! But Bobby can't know that it was me that pulled the cork on Beefy. Yeah, I poisoned his hamburger steak, and no one even suspected... (Evil laugh)

They say it's a man's world. Ha! Not if you're a real keen gal who knows how to play her cards right!

(She puts herself back together and re-enters the scene)

Thelma

I haven't forgotten, Bobby. A love, a passion like we shared doesn't come along but once in a lifetime. I know that now.

Bobby

I know this might not be the best time to say this, Thelma, but I ain't never stopped lovin' ya.

(Bobby leans in close so that she is arching slightly backwards against the casket.)

Thelma

(Panting a little) Oh, Bobby... Bobby, baby...

(As Wilson and Candy take notice, Bobby and Thelma become aware of the attention and they pull apart from each other. Wilson takes a step or two toward them)

Wilson

Everything OK, Ms. Beefy?

Thelma

Yes, Wilson. Everything's fine.

Candy

Ooooh, you're the beefy one, sugar – flex your arm muscles like that again!

Thelma

(Quietly) I love ya, too, Bobby. But we gotta be careful – watch our backs, you know? I have all of Beefy's money – more than we could ever need. It's in a safe place, and I want to share it with you, Bobby. How do you feel about a warmer climate?

Bobby

You mean, like Hell?

Thelma

No. Mexico is what I had in mind.

Bobby

I'd follow you anywhere, hot lips.

Thelma

OK, here's the plan. The coppers have been sniffin' around see, lookin' for clues. But I got the money in a safe place. It's all in hundred dollar bills – tucked in his vest pocket. (She points to the casket) At the funeral, I'll make like the grieving widow, wail and lay my head on Beefy's chest. You cover me from behind while I snatch the loot. Then as soon as the service is over, we're outta here.

Bobby

You had this all planned out... How'd you know I'd show up – or that I'd agree?

Thelma

I know ya, Bobby O’Riley. I know ya cause I love ya, ya big sexy lug – always have, always will.

(Wilson and Candy step forward. Candy pulls a gun. Her demeanor has completely changed)

Candy

Put your hands up – both a ya!

Bobby & Thelma

What... ? What the...

Bobby

Candy! Baby, what’s gotten into ya? Be careful with that thing!

Candy

Back off, Bobby, or I’ll blow a hole right through ya!

(Soliloquy # 3)

Candy

Crooked cops – they can be so stupid! But not me! (Flashes a police badge) Name’s Louise Helms – Detective Louise Helms, FBI. “Wilson” here is my partner - but me, I’m the brains. I’ve been trying to crack this case for the last twelve months – studying the crooked life of Beefy LaChow. I was just ready to move in on his operation when Beefy turns up dead – face down in his hamburger steak. Well, I guess he got what he had comin’. Now I get the pleasure of arrestin’ the bunch of ‘em.

(Back to scene)

Bobby

Candy, I don’t understand...

Candy

Course you don’t, Bobby, cause you’re just a stupid copper – but you’re goin’ to the slammer, just like Thelma here.

Thelma

You can’t prove anything on me... Wilson, do something – stop her!

Wilson

The gig is up, Thelma. And I’m not Wilson. You can call me Harry - Harry Stone, Special Agent. And that pendant I gave you – it’s a wire. We’ve been watchin’ you for a long time. There’s enough evidence to put you away for the rest of your life – unless a jury decides to fry you in the electric chair. (He laughs an evil laugh)

Thelma

(Pulls the pendant off, examines it, then throws it down)

What! Why you, you... bastard!

Bobby

Candy... baby... whoever you are... can't we talk about this?

Candy/Louise

Yeah, let's talk, Bobby. Let's talk about all those times you treated me like a bimbo – like some dumb floozy. And let's talk about all the under-the-table deals, kickbacks, bribes, protection money...

Wilson/Harry

Enough, Louise.

(He takes the gun from her and continues to hold it on Bobby and Thelma)

Get the evidence.

(Candy/Louise opens the casket and removes a stuffed envelope from the body, then steps back beside her partner)

Now, turn around and put your hands on the casket. Both a ya - now! And no tricks, or a blow your heads off!

(To Candy/Louise)

Are the plane tickets there, baby?

Candy/Louise

(Checks the envelope, holds up two tickets)

They're here, baby.

Wilson/Harry

Tie them up.

(Soliloquy # 4)

(This happens as Candy/Louise ties Thelma and Bobby's hands together and to the casket, or the body – whichever works)

Wilson/Harry

Yeah, we're cops. But we never said we were good cops. This was an opportunity me and Louise couldn't pass up. We're not just partners at work, if ya know what I mean. So we're blowing this stink-hole of a city to live in the lap of luxury in San Juan. It's gonna be great. Come on, baby, let's go.

(They exit as Thelma and Bobby, with their hands tied together, stare dumbfounded at each other from across the body of Beefy La Chow.

Beefy slowly begins to stir and move about in the casket as Thelma and Bobby rightfully freak out – though they remain tied together with their bound hands/arms stretched over the casket and/or Beefy)

Beefy

Shaa-dup, the both of yous!

(As Beefy struggles to a sitting position, pointing a gun he has had hidden at his side and address them, Bobby and Thelma clutch their respective chests and slump, lifeless – either to the floor or across the casket.

Beefy proceeds to climb out of the casket, checks each body briefly for a pulse, and then steps forward for soliloquy # 5)

Beefy:

Yeah, I faked my own death – pretty clever, huh? (turns to look briefly at Thelma) And she never even suspected - the lyin', cheatin' tramp. She thought I didn't know what she was up to. And Bobby, well I been watchin' my back ever since I stole his gal. But I out-smarted them all. (laughs) I cleaned out my bank accounts before anyone else could get to it – put it in a safe place. The bills they took – counterfeit, all of it. (Motions toward the exit where Louise and Harry left)

I was gonna off-them both, but I guess the shock of seeing me 'come to life' did 'em in. (laughs again) I hadn't counted on the other two... crooked cops... but what the hell? Now finally, I can go straight. It's what I wanted to do for so long, but ya just can't when you're job is being a mobster. (becomes slightly emotional) When ya have a reputation like mine, people just don't take ya seriously when ya wanna start walkin' the straight n narrow.

I'm gonna be legit – an asset to society – and make my mother proud for the first time. I'm gonna use my fortune to start fresh in my grandfather's company, in a new city – even use my real name: Phillip Morris. That way nobody will suspect that it's Beefy, back from the dead. Yeah, I'm gonna make sure we make tobacco the right way – the healthy way, so families everywhere will enjoy a good smoke, and not have to worry about how it's made.

Yeah, It's gonna be great.

(Beefy pulls out a pack of smokes and lights one up as the music begins. He turns to survey the casket and the dead bodies as the lights fade to black)

The End