

One Mean Blueberry Pie
C. Denby Swanson
© 2004

For inquiries please contact
C. Denby Swanson
512-626-7853
cdenbyswanson@gmail.com

TILDY
FLOYD
LALA
JUBA LEE

A small town during a county fair

1 TILDY's kitchen.

(TILDY is making a pie.)

TILDY

Women make patterns on the crust of a pie in order to identify themselves. When the pies are all spread out on the table at the fair, you'll know whose is whose. It's the symbol of the pie maker.

FLOYD

Like a brand on cattle.

TILDY

Exactly.

FLOYD

This yours?

TILDY

That's mine. T for Tildy.

(TILDY shoos FLOYD away from the pie.)

FLOYD

I love pie.

TILDY

I know you do, Floyd.

FLOYD

Did you make this one for me?

TILDY

I always make pie with you in mind.

FLOYD

I always think of you when I brand cattle.

TILDY

Aw.

FLOYD

We should get married.

Married? TILDY

Yes. FLOYD

Floyd, no. TILDY

I love pie. FLOYD

I know. TILDY

I love you, Tildy. FLOYD

You love pie more. TILDY

Well. FLOYD

Well, what? TILDY

Kinda. FLOYD

Keep your eyes open. See people for what they are. TILDY

That's dumb advice. FLOYD

I see you for what you are, Floyd. You owe me the same consideration. TILDY

We should get married. FLOYD

Floyd. TILDY

FLOYD

I think we should.

(He reaches toward a dangling piece of crust. TILDY brushes his hand away.)

TILDY

I'm entering the pie competition this year.

FLOYD

You make a mean blueberry pie, Tildy.

TILDY

So you've said.

FLOYD

We'll get married someday and you'll make pie for me and I'll raise cattle for you and we'll be happy.

TILDY

Happy.

FLOYD

You make me happy.

TILDY

Pie makes you happy.

FLOYD

I could eat pie every meal of the day, every day of the week. But only your pie.

TILDY

Only my pie.

FLOYD

I could eat your pie right now.

TILDY

Floyd.

FLOYD

Just one little bite of pie -

(He reaches for the pie. TILDY nails his hand with the wooden spoon.)

Ow! Tildy!

FLOYD

This pie is for the fair, Floyd. You can't have it.

TILDY

But -

FLOYD

I'm making it for the fair. Listen when I talk to you.

TILDY

But I thought you said you were making it -

FLOYD

I said I always make pie with you in mind.

TILDY

(Pause.)

Oh.

FLOYD

Which means that you're in there, in the pie, even if the pie itself is not yours.

TILDY

I guess that's good. Is it good?

FLOYD

It is.

TILDY

I'd more have the pie was in me than me in the pie, though.

FLOYD

You can't have everything you want.

TILDY

Why not?

FLOYD

See people for what they are, Floyd, and you'll be okay.

TILDY

FLOYD
Well, I see you for being a bride.

TILDY
Floyd.

FLOYD
I see you for being my wife.

TILDY
Floyd.

FLOYD
I see you for making your blueberry pies for me, forever and ever, all day long

TILDY
Well. This one is for the fair.

(Pause.)

FLOYD
You never make pie just for me. Do you.

(Pause.)

FLOYD
See people for what they are. Is that what you said?

TILDY
It's a lesson I learned.

FLOYD
Do you make pies for someone else?

TILDY
This one is for the fair.

2 The fair.

(The pie competition table at the fair, decorated but empty. A picnic basket to one side.)

JUBA LEE

Lord, today we thank you for our many gifts. We thank you for the legacy of mothers and daughters passing on such tasty recipes as what makes these here pies, one generation after another, one fair after another, one pie competition after another, pie after award-winning pie. Lord, we thank you for these women and their ability to read and measure and add and stir.

(LALA giggles.)

JUBA LEE

Quiet. I'm blessing the food.

(LALA can't be quiet.)

JUBA LEE

Lord, we want to thank you for ovens and the heat with which they bake. Lord, we thank you, Lord, for window sills on which the women can place their pies to cool, we thank you for wood and nails like the ones with which your Son was crucified but which now support pies.

LALA

People are going to start bringing things in any minute.

JUBA LEE

Have I said amen yet?

LALA

Hurry up.

JUBA LEE

We thank you for the coolness, for the breeze that cools the pies. Lord, we thank you for temperature in general, both hot and cold. Hallelujah.

LALA

We thank you for temperature?

Say hallelujah. JUBA LEE

Blasphemer. LALA

Say hallelujah. JUBA LEE

No. Blasphemer. LALA

Say it. JUBA LEE

(He chases her. He catches her. He kisses her. It's a good, long, sexy kiss.)

Where was I. JUBA LEE

Hallelujah. LALA

Right. Lord, your world is a pie. JUBA LEE

I am going to hell. LALA

Yes. Lord, your world is a *pie*. And we, your people, are its ingredients. JUBA LEE

But when I go I want to be pie champion. LALA

Pie Champion. JUBA LEE

Uh huh. LALA

We are your crust, Lord, we are your filling, your award winning, championship-pie pie filling, Lala's filling, a filling drives me to such unholy thoughts, I swear - JUBA LEE

LALA

Juba.

JUBA LEE

Make us pure and sweet, like your sister in Christ Lala, and help us feed those who are hungry, those who want for the taste of your eternal love.

(He grabs LALA and nuzzles her neck.)

JUBA

Mm. I want for the taste of your eternal love.

(They kiss.)

(They kiss intensely, ecstatically.)

(TILDY enters, carrying her pie. She watches them for a moment. Then she sets down her pie. With force.)

(At the thud on the table, the couple disengages.)

JUBA LEE

Tildy.

TILDY

Juba Lee Henry. Imagine my surprise.

JUBA LEE

Imagine mine.

TILDY

Loraine.

LALA

Hey, Tildy.

TILDY

Ya'll sure are here early.

LALA

We were just – praying.

TILDY

Praying?

LALA

Juba Lee is a preacher after all. We were praying for the pies. For the pie contest. For the pie contestants.

(Pause.)

TILDY

Praying sure did put a lot of wrinkles in Loraine's pretty dress.

(LALA presses out the mussed edges. She puts her hair back in place.)

(TILDY sets up her pie on a stand. She keeps it covered with a sweet little dishcloth. JUBA LEE watches her intently.)

TILDY

I'm entering my pie in the pie contest.

JUBA LEE

Your pie just about gave me a heart attack.

TILDY

Well, I'm sure sorry, Juba. I didn't mean for it to near give you a heart attack.

LALA

I don't think the pie judging starts for a while yet.

TILDY

The early bird, as they say.

LALA

There's lots of fair left to do.

TILDY

My fair is right here in this room.

LALA

I bet the potato sack races are still going on.

TILDY

Potato sack races.

LALA

They are so much fun.

Do you have a lot of experience? TILDY

What? LALA

In the sack. TILDY

Tildy. JUBA LEE

Potato sack. Juba, take a look. TILDY

(TILDY coyly raises the little cloth over her pie on the stand.)

That's your pie? JUBA LEE

It is. TILDY

The crust looks – JUBA LEE

Different. TILDY

Yes. JUBA LEE

Whole new recipe. TILDY

And the filling? JUBA LEE

Blueberry. TILDY

You make a mean blueberry pie, Tildy. JUBA LEE

That's what I've been told. TILDY

My entry is lemon. LALA

Lemon. TILDY

A prize winner. LALA

Sure enough. TILDY

Lemon. LALA

You know, you look like a lemon pie person. TILDY

Sweet and creamy? LALA

Lala. JUBA

I was going to say tart. TILDY

What? LALA

Lemon is more like a tart than a pie. TILDY

(LALA might actually go for TILDY in this moment, but JUBA LEE prevents something as unseemly as a fight.)

How's Floyd? JUBA LEE

What? TILDY

Floyd. JUBA LEE

Floyd Scruggs? LALA

Fine. TILDY

You're seeing Floyd Scruggs? LALA

Something wrong with Floyd Scruggs? TILDY

No. LALA

Floyd is fine. TILDY

Pie making is so much like life, you know? LALA

Is it. TILDY

Yes. Some of us pick our fruits and others have to gather what grows close to the ground. Which is your kind, Tildy? LALA

Lala, you've got quite the reputation. TILDY

Aw. That's so sweet coming from you. LALA

As a pie maker, of course. TILDY

Of course. LALA

I do make a good pie. But the way I make it, it isn't about the fruit. Not so much about the fruit itself. It's about something else. A shared moment. A summer moment. It's about a particular time, a moment in summer, when the sun is ripe and sweet, the grass is deep, the soil smells warm and fresh, and all you want to do is lay outside on a blanket, TILDY

having your hair stroked by the person you love. I make my pies about that particular feeling.

LALA

Must be some special pie.

TILDY

Juba knows. He knows my pie.

LALA

Juba?

(Pause.)

JUBA LEE

Better get your pie out of the basket, Loraine. People going to be shoving each other for a place at the table here soon.

TILDY

Lemon is a long shot.

LALA

Oh?

TILDY

They rarely give first place to tree fruits.

LALA

I hadn't heard that.

TILDY

Fair warning.

LALA

It could be a tree-fruit kind of year.

TILDY

Tree fruits make second place pies.

LALA

Guess it all depends on the tastebuds of our judge.

TILDY

I guess it does.

Tildy. JUBA LEE

What. TILDY

This year it's me. This year I'm the judge. JUBA LEE

(Big long pause.)

You don't say. TILDY

Summer was nice. It was a nice summer. JUBA LEE

Yes. TILDY

3. Tildy's kitchen. Last summer.

(TILDY is making a pie.)

JUBA LEE

Blueberry pie has a top crust.

TILDY

Sometimes. Sometimes it has a lattice. Strips of dough that lace over.

JUBA LEE

But you like to put a whole top on it.

TILDY

I like to sign my pies. See?

JUBA LEE

T for Tildy.

TILDY

Yes.

JUBA LEE

You make a good pie.

TILDY

And J for Juba Lee.

JUBA LEE

It smells so good.

TILDY

Do you like them together like that?

JUBA LEE

I like your pie a lot.

TILDY

J and T. Do you like them together? I like the way they intertwine. They look like ivy. Growing up a wall together. Don't you think?

JUBA LEE

I see it.

TILDY

You know what. They look like us. They look like us yesterday afternoon, all green and unfurled, little leaves stretched in the sun. J and T. I think that's going to be the way I sign my pies from now on.

(Pause.)

TILDY

Don't you think that's how I should sign my pies?

JUBA LEE

I have to go.

TILDY

Go?

JUBA LEE

I have to see a parishioner.

TILDY

A parishioner.

JUBA LEE

The Lord has his demands.

TILDY

His –

JUBA LEE

And I have my calling.

TILDY

Your –

JUBA LEE

It was a nice day. A nice summer day. But I am a minister's son, and I have my calling.

TILDY

Your *calling*?

JUBA LEE

If only I hadn't heard the Word at such a young age, I'd have a lot more freedom to – well, the ministry, you know, it is a golden cage, a blessed, cage, of course, it's just that there are parishioners I need to see.

TILDY

Juba Lee, I am the parishioner.

JUBA LEE

What?

TILDY

Yesterday you told your daddy that you couldn't run the Bible study group because you had to see a parishioner. The parishioner you had to visit is me. You had to visit me.

(Pause.)

TILDY

'Course I've got flour all over the front of my dress now –

JUBA LEE

Tildy.

TILDY

Why don't you stay.

JUBA LEE

I can't.

TILDY

There's pie.

JUBA LEE

I know, I've stayed so long solely because –

TILDY

Because of the way I make a pie? You're staying because of the pie?

(Pause.)

JUBA LEE

Tildy, I wish -

TILDY

What.

JUBA LEE

I wish you would look at me –

TILDY

I am looking at you Juba, I am looking at you and I see sunlight and green grass –

JUBA LEE

You have to learn, you have to see people for what they are.

TILDY

I have to what?

JUBA LEE

Like I see you.

TILDY

How do you see me?

JUBA LEE

I see you –

TILDY

Leaves intertwined –

JUBA LEE

I see you for –

TILDY

Stretched out in the sun –

JUBA LEE

Oh, Tildy. That's not what I am. I'm sorry that wasn't clear.

TILDY

The J and the T, together.

JUBA LEE

Nobody can make a pie like you. It is a sure sign of a good heart.

(Pause.)

TILDY

What?

JUBA LEE

You are kind, you are giving, generous, sincere –

TILDY

My pie shows that I have a good *heart*?

JUBA LEE

You have a number of very fine qualities.

TILDY

My good heart wasn't what you commented on yesterday.

JUBA LEE

You are a terrific cook.

(Pause.)

JUBA LEE

Forgive me.

TILDY

Did I imagine – this whole – did I make up –

JUBA LEE

It was sincere.

TILDY

Was.

JUBA LEE

I came here today to tell you that – that –

TILDY

You came to my house.

JUBA LEE

I did.

TILDY

You came to my house to tell me that you don't – you aren't –

JUBA LEE

Yes.

TILDY

You have been here all afternoon.

JUBA LEE

You were baking.

(A knock at the kitchen door.)

‘Scuse me. FLOYD

(It’s FLOYD.)

Tildy. FLOYD

Floyd. TILDY

I’m sorry, am I – Oh. Juba. FLOYD

Floyd. JUBA LEE

I don’t mean to intrude. FLOYD

It’s alright. We were just – TILDY

At the end of a – JUBA LEE

We were – TILDY

I’ll come back. FLOYD

A conversation. JUBA LEE

I’ll come back. FLOYD

We were – Juba was – TILDY

I was just taking my leave. JUBA LEE

Your kitchen smells really good. FLOYD

I was making a pie. TILDY

I love pie. FLOYD

Tildy makes a really good – JUBA LEE

I love pie. What kind? FLOYD

Blueberry. TILDY

In that case. FLOYD

(FLOYD sets down a large bucket.)

I brought you down some eggs, Tildy. FLOYD

Eggs. JUBA LEE

Figured you could put ‘em to use. FLOYD

You brought her eggs. JUBA LEE

Extras. FLOYD

Well bless your little heart. TILDY

They’re in the small bucket. Don’t touch the large bucket. FLOYD

So, yes. FLOYD

(Pause. FLOYD eats.)

Tildy, I think you are the best pie maker in the county. FLOYD

Aw. TILDY

It's true. I think it's true. FLOYD

Well. TILDY

The entire county. FLOYD

Floyd. TILDY

Don't you, Juba? FLOYD

Yes. Of course. JUBA LEE

First prize. FLOYD

That's so sweet. TILDY

You make a really fine crust. JUBA LEE

I put my heart in it, Juba. I think that's the secret. TILDY

Tildy makes one mean blueberry pie. FLOYD

JUBA LEE

Yes. Yes, she does.

FLOYD

Shame you have to go, Juba. Shame you have to miss this pie.

JUBA LEE

I have to see a parishioner.

FLOYD

Oh. You mean Lorraine?

(Silence.)

JUBA LEE

Lala is – Lorraine is a parishioner.

(TILDY turns away.)

TILDY

I'll fix you a slice for the road, Juba Lee.

JUBA LEE

I'd like that.

(TILDY cuts a piece of pie. She puts it on a nice plate.)

TILDY

The eggs are in the small bucket?

FLOYD

Yes.

TILDY

Alright.

(She steps over to FLOYD's large bucket and scoops a handful of pesticide on top of the pie.)

FLOYD

Wait, Tildy, that's –

(TILDY covers the poisoned slice with a sweet little dishcloth. She holds it out to JUBA LEE.)

TILDY

Here.

(Pause.)

(He takes it. He holds it. He stares at TILDY.)

(JUBA LEE leaves.)

(Pause.)

FLOYD

I – I – I’ve been out up in the fields in the with the cows and maybe I should just –

TILDY

Wash up, Floyd. And then have some damn pie.

FLOYD

Alright.

(TILDY holds the scoop of pesticide in one hand and reaches out to touch her pies with the other.)

4. The local cemetery.

(TILDY stares down at the mound of freshly disturbed dirt. She holds something small in her hand.)

(A noise from off, TILDY hides the object behind her back.)

(LALA arrives. She's wearing all black. They regard each other for a moment.)

Lovely dress. TILDY

Thank you. LALA

(Pause.)

You weren't at the funeral. LALA

No. TILDY

(Pause.)

I sent Floyd. TILDY

I saw him. LALA

I thought it would be awkward if I – TILDY

Awkward. LALA

I just didn't want it to be awkward. TILDY

(Pause.)

I came to pay my respects. TILDY

Respects. LALA

Yes. TILDY

Hard to believe. LALA

Well. So is a heart attack. He was so young. TILDY

He was with me. He picked me. LALA

I know. TILDY

He loved me. LALA

I know. TILDY

You don't have any business coming here. LALA

I wanted to pay my respects. This will be the only time. TILDY

You're not his widow. LALA

No, but neither are you. TILDY

I'm closer. I'm closer to being, I was close to it. LALA

You don't have to worry, Loraine. TILDY

I don't? LALA

I'm with Floyd. TILDY

(Pause.)

I'm sorry. I'll go. TILDY

(TILDY stands.)

What's that in your hand? LALA

What? Nothing. TILDY

In your – What is it – LALA

Harmless, it's – TILDY

Harmless? What is it? LALA

I mean – TILDY

Harmless? Why would you use that word? LALA

It's just a simple – TILDY

The poor man is dead – LALA

I know, I brought – TILDY

What. *What did you bring?* LALA

(TILDY holds out her hand.)

It's a measuring cup. TILDY

A measuring cup LALA

From my kitchen. I use it for baking. TILDY

I know what you use a measuring cup for. LALA

Of course you do. TILDY

A measuring cup from your kitchen. LALA

Yes. TILDY

And you brought it to the cemetery. LALA

Yes. TILDY

I don't understand. LALA

(TILDY pours the sparkling white contents of the measuring cup onto the grave.)

It's sugar. Just sugar. TILDY

(End.)