

CREAM GRAVY PILED RIVER

by TIMOTHY D. STARNES

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Cast of Characters

<u>The Announcer:</u>	M/F - Any characteristics.
<u>Father Seacrest:</u>	M - Any characteristics. Optimally an older man.
<u>Sister Blanche:</u>	F - Any characteristics. Optimally an older woman.
<u>Mr. Parish:</u>	M - Any characteristics. Optimally an older man.

ACT I: "AMERICA'S QUIZ KITCHEN"

Set: A podium and table set up with various ingredients and cooking implements.

The lights come up suddenly.

The announcer rushes in from stage left, gesturing at the audience.

ANNOUNCER:

Happy Sunday, and welcome to America's Quiz Kitchen, live!

The announcer motions for the audience to clap, but resorts to pressing a button on their podium, creating a canned clapping sound from overhead.

ANNOUNCER:

Today we have a couple of special guests, a Mr. Seacrest and Ms. Blanche, co-owners of the world famous Count Cluckin' chain of famous fast-fried chicken restaurants!

Father Seacrest and Sister Blanche rush onstage to their workstation.

ANNOUNCER:

To remind you all at home, filmed in front of a live studio audience!

There is a buzzing from overhead.

ANNOUNCER:

Break, break, two minutes for commercial!

The announcer rushes to speak with Father Seacrest and Sister Blanche.

ANNOUNCER:

Alright, you two - you have ten minutes to complete your recipe and have it plated to serve for your judge.

FATHER SEACREST:

May I ask who the judge is?

ANNOUNCER:

You may... *(They grit their teeth)* not. That is a surprise to be unveiled in... *(They check their watch)* Three minutes. You are allowed any ingredients here on your table and can help each other out as you see fit or unfit.

The announcer spins to face the audience.

ANNOUNCER:

And for you all - you'll be asked at multiple points in the program to decide the next step in the recipe - what ingredients are added or left out. That will be judged in the moment, via cheers. *(She leers back at Father Seacrest and Sister Blanche)* Got that?

FATHER SEACREST:

Then how is this a competition based on our time-tested recipe and skills?

ANNOUNCER:

It isn't about that - we have to keep our numbers up for sponsorships. Do you want a show to come onto and the best in as-seen-on-TV knives to use?

Father Seacrest opens his mouth to answer but is interrupted.

ANNOUNCER:

-Exactly, thought so!

SISTER BLANCHE:

As the matron of the convent when I was a girl used to say, there's no coupons for the clearance section. This is what we get for coming on public television.

FATHER SEACREST:

If we lose, this isn't going to be a great commercial, you know. I'll lose all of my free time trying to do a press circuit to form a distraction. No more woodcarving and model airplanes for me for ten years.

SISTER BLANCHE:

I sure hope your airplanes are good at night, if we lose, because you aren't going to be getting anything from me, and there will be no pocket money for anyone else, either.

FATHER SEACREST:

Well that's rather cruel.

SISTER BLANCHE:

So is signing me up to be embarrassed on national public television!

FATHER SEACREST:

Oh, we'll be fine, just don't freak out and we'll breeze right on through this!

SISTER BLANCHE:

Me? I think you need to be talking to yourself. You're the one who has to take nerve pills for the parish fall festival every year.

FATHER SEACREST:

I told you, it all has to do with the---

Father Seacrest is cut off as the announcer starts.

ANNOUNCER:

It is now time for the choosing of the first ingredient! Audience, if you will! It is time to vote! Please cheer for your choice!

CHOICE:

Carrots OR Drain Cleaner (+1)

NOTE FOR THE TRUE STAGE MANAGER: Some choices will carry a "point" total. Add these up for varying endings at the end of the skit.

CHOSEN: CARROTS

ANNOUNCER:

A great choice! However, are they going for chicken and dumplings or fried chicken? Perhaps this is an Asiatic fried chicken? Tempura, anyone?

FATHER SEACREST:

Ok, these people really don't know what they are doing.

SISTER BLANCHE:

Scratch dinner at the audience's house. Got it.

FATHER SEACREST:

You've got that right. You also realize - we don't stand a chance. (*He turns to the audience*) You all need to get a grip!

The announcer runs and blocks him to the audience.

ANNOUNCER:

-And you need to get back to cooking!

RESUME FLOW ON PAGE 6.

CHOSEN: DRAIN CLEANER (+1)

ANNOUNCER:

A... Different - choice! Someone has obviously switched out the ingredients.

The announcer steps to the edge of the stage, calling backstage.

ANNOUNCER:

Where is the stage manager? Can anyone find him?

No response.

ANNOUNCER:

I really don't want to keep going with this!

No response.

The announcer leans back in and continues the show.

ANNOUNCER:

I have no choice but to accept the vote!

MR. PARISH:

I'm suddenly not all that hungry.

ANNOUNCER:

Well, if you don't eat, we can't get a score, and if we don't get a score, we lose viewers, and if we lose viewers, we lose our sponsorship, and then our show gets canceled.

MR. PARISH:

Well with the current state of affairs, that wouldn't be the worst thing for me.

ANNOUNCER:

Oh, yes, yes it would.

FATHER SEACREST:

It would be for us too! (*Sister Blanche punches him*)
Just think of... The viewers! The longtime fans of short form educational programming!

ANNOUNCER:

You wouldn't want word, that you, the owner of a multinational fast food mega-corporation, doesn't support public arts, would you?

MR. PARISH:

Well, I suppose not...

RESUME FLOW ON PAGE 6.

The announcer takes center stage again, observing the action.

ANNOUNCER:

Well, audience at home, we seem to have quickly come to our first commercial break of two! We will be back in exactly two minutes!

The announcer goes offstage, shouting at Father Seacrest and Sister Blanche.

ANNOUNCER:

I'm going to go and track down the stage manager, no more tampering with the stage while I'm gone!

FATHER SEACREST:

Oh I'll tamper with you alright.

SISTER BLANCHE:

Father Secrest!

FATHER SEACREST:

Oh, you know what I mean. Get up there and switch out the mayonnaise for the dish soap, I have something else to do!

Sister Blanche darts to replace the two, while Father Seacrest approaches Mr. Parish.

FATHER SEACREST:

Don't really want to eat any of this, do you? How about you eat my rubbed butt. How about that?

MR. PARISH:

My research and development team have tried it. It is absolutely generic.

FATHER SEACREST:

Oh, generic? I won't be showing you generic today, buddy!

MR. PARISH:

As a priest, shouldn't you be teaching tollerance and turning the other cheek?

FATHER SEACREST:

Save it for Sunday school, this is real business, jerk.

MR. PARISH:

Let me guess, you'll jerk my chicken.

FATHER SEACREST:

Yes, I'm sure going to, by its featherless little neck, unless you back off of us.

MR. PARISH:

And if I don't?

FATHER SEACREST:

Then bottoms up and we'll see you at the funeral home, bottle of eye drops in hand for fake crying and a few dollar bills printed off a computer printer for the collection plate - in an envelope with your grandmother's name on it.

MR. PARISH:

She's been dead fifty years.

FATHER SEACREST:

Exactly. You just think about all this.

The announcer rushes back onstage.

ANNOUNCER:

Still no stage manager.

Taking their spot, they spin toward the audience.

ANNOUNCER:

-And welcome back, happy Sunday from America's Quiz Kitchen! Today in the quiz kitchen we have Father Seacrest and Sister Blanche, from the order of the Carmelites, owners of the Count Cluckin' chain of fast-fried chicken restaurants! This morning's judge is Colonel Parish, purveyor of Smoggy Farms, a fellow fast-fried chicken franchise establishment!

SISTER BLANCHE:

I'd rather be in the deep fryer than dealing with this right now.

ANNOUNCER:

It is time to choose the second ingredient! We have spiced breading and... Dish soap?

SISTER BLANCHE:

It's on them (*she points to the audience*) and not us.

CHOICE:

Spiced Breading OR Dish Soap (+1)