

DANCING WITH JOY
(A Bodoni County Fable)
by Frank Gagliano

OVERVIEW

"DANCING WITH JOY." A BODONI COUNTY FABLE. As told by yours truly, Jonathan Overview—with the help of Eubie Copocolo, Joy, Old Matilda Trimble and The Bikini Poster Girl. *In which* Eubie meets Joy and, together, step into a travel poster and make love, and look for the Island of Despair.

*(JONATHAN clips on a garish bow tie
as EUBIE, wearing an even more garish bow tie,
enters, riding a small unicycle that is trailing tin cans)*

OVERVIEW

(Continued)

Eubie Copocolo always wears a bow tie. And Eubie Copocolo has the most zits of any 23-year-old that ever lived in Bodoni County. In addition--and Eubie will tell this to anyone who will listen--

EUBIE

*(Untying the tine cans
with great difficulty)*

I was kind of old before one of my testicles descended. But I took shots for that. And it was just a matter of time before my twin jewel stopped playing hide and seek and yo-yoed properly; so I didn't sweat that.

(Throws the tin cans off stage)

And I was neat! Inside and out! Always neat. And bow ties seemed the neatest. I went to Bodoni County Junior College for a year.

*(Two boys, not wearing bow ties run out
and steal EUBIE's unicycle. EUBIE shrugs)*

But nobody there wore a bow tie. So College wasn't for me.

OVERVIEW

What was for Eubie Copocolo?

EUBIE

(He walks in circles)

Travel to far off romantic places. Because, in truth, I have a turbulent, romantic soul. Seething. Full of angst-agony; excessive passion; exotic longings—all that.

(Stops walking in circles)

But fat chance I had of realizing my exotic angst-potential in Bodoni County. In Bodoni County I was "that neat nerd"--and in Bodoni County I would always be "that neat nerd."

(Two boys run out. One kneels)

*behind EUBIE and taps him on the shoulder;
the other gets in front of EUBIE and
pushes him over the kneeling boy.
From the floor, EUBIE shrugs)*

EUBIE

(Continued)

So one day I said to myself: "Eubie, you're waltzing out of this burg."

(EUBIE rises with great and clumsy difficulty)

OVERVIEW

He meant that metaphorically, of course. For when he did try to dance, Eubie resembled an arthritic duck with a double hernia and an inner ear problem.

EUBIE

So I pack; check out of the YMCA--and if you don't think living at the Y isn't a zits enhancer, you don't know our young Christian men! Then I say goodbye to the only person who ever cared for me, Old Matilda Trimble, the head of the orphanage.

*(OLD MATILDA TRIMBLE enters,
wearing a bow tie. She cries a little and says. . .)*

MATILDA

Oh, Eubie; life sucks!

OVERVIEW

Then she straightens her wig, and gives Eubie a new bow tie.

MATILDA

Here's a new bow tie; special for my Eubie.

*(OLD MATILDA TRIMBLE removes the bow tie
EUBIE is wearing and replaces it with
the "special" bow tie and exits)*

EUBIE

And it is a big one—neat of course—with red dots!

(He walks in circles)

Then I walk all the way down to the Greyhound and buy a one-way ticket to Corning, New York! Because I love glass;

*(Takes out colored marbles from
his pocket and plays with them on the floor)*

hear they have the best glass; plan to get a job as a Night Watchman at the Corning Glass Museum; and, for the rest of my life,

(Holds colored marbles to his eye)

EUBIE

(Continued)

I'd look at my world through the prettiest colors!

*(Puts marbles away as
members from the ENSEMBLE
run out and become a bus)*

OVERVIEW

But when Eubie gets right up to the bus—

EUBIE

I put a foot up and I can't put it down! On the step!

(The bus retreats)

I keep trying!

(The bus knocks him backwards)

And falling backwards! And everyone laughs!

*(The bus become people who
laugh at EUBIE without making a sound;
and mouth what EUBIE says)*

And says stuff like, "Is that a new nerd dance?" And those in the bus get ticky!

(Those on the bus get ticky)

Because they want the bus to go!

OVERVIEW

And those waiting behind Eubie get even tickier and begin to punch him and kick him and pull at his "special" bow tie!

*(They punch him and kick him
and pull his "special" bow tie--
let it snap back hard at his Adams apple)*

EUBIE

So I say, **what the hell!** I'll hitch out of town. But when I get to the outskirts **I still can't leave!** Something stops me again;

(The Bus ENSEMBLE become a wall)

some kind of a wall or something! And I keep throwing myself forward; but I keep --
bouncing! --back! to the Bodoni County line!

*(EUBIE throws himself against the human wall
and keeps bouncing off them)*

OVERVIEW

So Eubie gets the message. No escape.

(The ENSEMBLE EXIT. FAST!)

Some hidden power does not want Eubie Copocolo to leave Bodoni County. And it's back to old Matilda Trimble,

(MATILDA TRIMBLE enters)

who cries, says it is God's will,

MATILDA

(Through tears)

—and God's will often sucks, Eubie.

OVERVIEW

Then she straightens out the "special" bow tie she had given him,

(She does; then EXITS)

and let's him stay in an empty basement room of the orphanage.

EUBIE

(Fetal position, sucking thumb, ETC)

What to do?

OVERVIEW

Agonizes Eubie.

(A member of the ENSEMBLE becomes a newspaper boy, delivers a paper to EUBIE and waits while Eubie reads)

Then he sees this ad which says:

(Eubie mouths, while OVERVIEW recites)

"Night watchman wanted. Prestigious building. Featuring The Bodoni County Travel Agency. Perfect for someone who wants 'night's cloak' to hide him.' "

EUBIE

Just the job for me!

(Hands the newspaper back to the Newspaper Boy, who quickly EXITS; as Eubie walks in circles)

So I straightaway apply for the job and get it!

OVERVIEW

So Eubie night-watches

*(Overview hands Eubie a flashlight
as the LIGHTS GO TO BLACK and Eubie
switches on the flashlight and pans the
audience)*

and takes to staring at all the travel posters in the Bodoni County Travel Agency.

—**And then one night Joy comes into Eubie Copocolo's life.**

JOY

You there, Sir—with the zits and the bow tie?—kindly let me in.

EUBIE

(Catching Joy in the light of his flashlight)

She's tapping on the outside window in a friendly and smiley way;

(Lights increase)

and when I see her. . . my yo-yo's really bounce. She's cute and all; but, mostly, I love her because she's neat. She even wears a little bow tie on her prim blouse. I don't worry if she's a terrorist or anything. I just know that I have to find out who she is. So I let her in.

(Lights increase to romantic level)

JOY

My name is Joy. Say,

OVERVIEW

says Joy, **joyously**,

JOY

aren't you that nerd, Eubie!?

EUBIE

Yes.

JOY

(Joyously)

I thought so! —Say do you know the Winona Street Witch—Carmelita Strega? Well, she told me about this certain poster. Beach scene. If it has the serial number 262 49 32, it's a poster you can walk into. I've been looking all over town for that poster. Then I saw it here. Just now. As I was passing. God, I hope this is the walk-in poster!

*(TWO MEMBERS of the ENSEMBLE
enter carrying an empty poster frame.)*

The POSTER ENSEMBLE will move the empty poster frame as needed in the scene)

JOY

(Continued)

Can I get more light in here?

EUBIE

This late? Better not. —But you can use my flashlight.

OVERVIEW

And when Eubie gives her his flashlight, he feels. . . peculiar, somehow; intimate, as Joy fingers his flashlight—and examines the poster.

EUBIE

Listen, Joy. . .do you think you could love a man with zits? —**and** a neat bow tie?

JOY

Sure,

OVERVIEW

says Joy. —Who is having a tough time making out the smudged serial number on the poster.

JOY

As long as he had a turbulent, romantic soul. Seething. Full of angst-agony; excessive passion; exotic longings—all that.

EUBIE

Why, Joy, that's a verbatim transcript of my own inner assessment of myself.

JOY

Eubie, can you tell if that's a five or a six?

EUBIE

A six. Listen, Joy—this is important: . . .Why do you need to walk into the poster?

JOY

Because I can't get on busses. I keep falling backwards. And I've got to get out of Bodoni County!

EUBIE

Why, Joy! that's a verbatim transcript of my existential quandary! But, tell me, Joy—and this is really important—does your wanting to leave Bodoni County have anything to do with colored glass?

JOY

No. It has to do with the blues.

(LIGHT CHANGES TO BLUES LIGHTING

and Follow Spot catches Joy, stage Center)

—Eubie, I'm a born chanteuse. I sit on pianos and sing the blues. The only place I can chanteuse at in this town is "The Beer Belly." Yucko! There's a customer—every night? —when I'm lost in the smoky lyrics of a blues number?—this joker sucks on my ankle--right through my panty hose! Yucko ditto! —Listen Eubie—I can see your seething soul right through your bloodshot eyes, so I can tell you about it: I once saw this travel poster. Luxury cruiser. Night club aboard it. Gorgeous chanteuse with gorgeous gown; slinky black with a crimson dragon made of crimson sequins; slit up the side. Tall gentlemanly gentlemen stand around in tuxedos and sip martinis and champagne and try to keep their erotic thoughts secret—though their eyes, focused on the chanteuse—like yours focused on moi—reveal their simmering smolder. And it's all in glossy color and the chanteuse is caught in the moment of revealing an angst-spasm and —
Oh, look, Eubie!—

**(BLUES LIGHTING OUT AND BACK TO
NORMAL LIGHTING AS JOY MOVES
TO THE POSTER FRAME AGAIN)**

That last number *is* a 32! *This is the poster!* 262 49 32!

OVERVIEW

And she practically rips off her clothes! down to her delicate see-through undies! And Eubie is speechless!

*(A MEMBER of the ENSEMBLE runs out
with an overnight bag; hands it to JOY,
then exits)*

And Joy pulls from an overnight bag—and puts on—a crimson-dragon, black, slit-up-the-side, gown—identical to the one she described.

JOY

(Dressing)

Listen, Eubie; Carmelita Strega said there's a graveyard of dead poster scenes on an island called. . ."Despair." My chanteuse poster is *in* that graveyard; *on* that island. But to get there you first have to enter a current poster, with this number and—There! Now I'm ready. See you Eubie—and thanks for letting me in here.

(JOY climbs through the empty poster frame)

OVERVIEW

She is already into the poster and on the beach when Eubie's instinct says,

EUBIE

Joy! Wait! I'm coming, too!

OVERVIEW

And he dives into the poster after Joy!

*(EUBIE dives through the empty poster frame
as the POSTER ENSEMBLE exit with the frame)*

(Beach lighting)

OVERVIEW

(Continued)

A beach. White white sand. Lots of blue sky. A mountain in the background. A beautiful woman, very tanned with a white bikini and enormous breasts running down the beach;

*(BIKINI GIRL ENTERS;
running in place. Her top is in the
shape of a slim bow tie.)*

OVERVIEW

(Continued)

at the water's edge; kicking some blue-green splash about. Waving. Eubie takes Joy's hand and they run in the splash alongside the woman.

JOY

Say, how did you get that great tan?

BIKINI LADY

Always had it. Always will. It's my poster tan.

EUBIE

You seem so happy and excited. — I know! You're running and waving **to a lover!** down the beach.

BIKINI GIRL

No. There's no lover. I'm just running. And waving. That's what I do. Run. And wave. I'm a poster Bikini girl, with a poster tan, and all I do is run! And wave.

EUBIE

How come there are so few people on this beach!?

BIKINI GIRL

There are always few people on a beach in poster land!

(BIKINI GIRL and JOY Exit)

OVERVIEW

Then she's gone. And so is Joy! And Eubie panics!

EUBIE

Joy! Joy! Where are you!?

OVERVIEW

Off poster, Joy shouts:

JOY

(Off stage)

Here, Eubie! Off poster!—Turn left at the last palm tree in the foreground!

OVERVIEW

Which Eubie does and—LO!—suddenly everything is black; shiny black! The ground is a shiny black dance floor with silver sparkles flashing in it, and shafts of spot lights that hit and circle the floor. And there is a fanfare and Joy is in a hot shaft of light and opens her arms and says:

(Lighting--like OVERVIEW just said)

JOY

Eubie! I think we're in a limbo area between posters. And I'm sure we're meant to dance here. Yes, Eubie! Let's dance!

EUBIE

But I can't dance!

JOY

You must, Eubie! One must dance in this place. That's clear. But I can't dance by myself, Eubie.

OVERVIEW

God, Eubie is depressed. But then a wonderful thing happens! Eubie hears from inside his soul the voice of dear friend, Old Matilda Trimble:

OLD MATILDA TRIMBLE

(Voice amplified)

The bow tie, Eubie; the one I gave you? —Rub it!

OVERVIEW

And Eubie does and —LO!—his shoes grow pointy and tap heavy; and he glides over to Joy, takes her in his arms and —LO! again— they are Fred and Ginger! Gene and Vera Ellen! Juliette Prowse and anybody! —And first they waltz. Then they do the Peabody. Then it's a seamless transition to all the different ballroom dances that ever were. The

OVERVIEW

(Continued)

Tango. . . . The Rumba. . . . The Samba. . . . The Foxtrot. . . . the Limbo. . . —all of 'em!

(They dance them all!)

JOY

Poster coming up!

OVERVIEW

And this time it's a small island full of coconuts. From her overnight bag Joy takes out a little hammer and spike and taps holes in a coconut.

(JOY does all this)

Then she takes two straws out of the bag

(JOY does this)

and, like the boy and girl in *Our Town*, they sip coconut juice and make goo goo eyes at each other.

JOY

I feel a chanteuse inspired blues lyric coming on:

TIDES ROLL IN.

TIDES ROLL OUT.

AND MY LOVE AFFAIRS DO THE SAME.

WHY IS IT THAT NONE OF THEM LAST?

ARE MY LOVERS AT FAULT? OR AM I TO BLAME?

MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE I KEEP LOOKING FOR THAT FIRST ONE,

ON THE BEACH WHERE I PAID LOVE'S DUES.

PERHAPS I KEEP ON WANTING THE EXTRAORDINARY PLEASURE
OF FIRST-LOVE'S SAND DUNE BLUES.

SAND DUNE BLUES,

FIRST LOVE IN ITS RERUNS.

SAND DUNE BLUES,

HOT SAND ON MY HOT BUNS.

MEMORABLE DAY.

WE WENT ALL THE WAY!

SAND DUNE BLUES;

SAND DUNE BLUES.

SAND DUNE BLUES,

THE GLOW FROM CAMP FIRE'S EMBER.

SAND DUNE BLUES,

THE LOG THAT WAS HIS MEMBER.

MEMORABLE DAY,

WE WENT ALL THE WAY.
SAND DUNE BLUES.
SAND DUNE BLUES.

BUT IF IT WAS SUCH A MAJOR EVENT,
WHY CAN'T I RECALL MY FIRST-LOVE'S FACE?
PERHAPS MUCH OF THE TIME I WAS SITTING ON IT?
AH, YES--KNOWING ME, THAT WAS THE CASE.

SAND DUNE BLUES--SWEET PAIN OF FIRST DESIRE!
SAND DUNE BLUES--GETTING OFF FIVE TIMES
IN A FIVE-ALARM DESIRE FIRE!
MEMORABLE DAY.
MEMORABLE LAY!

SAND DUNE BLUES. . .
SAND DUNE BLUES. . .

OVERVIEW

And then, of course, they make love. And Eubie's world is a kaleidoscope of colors and colored prisms.

(Love and prisms and ETC. happen)

Then, when it all settles back to glossy poster color, Joy says,

JOY

Say Eubie, that was really *unique*— *wearing* a bow tie through it all! But now it's time to go!

EUBIE

But, I don't want to leave here. Not now. Not ever.

JOY

Ah, that's sweet, Eubie; but, I know who I am and where I belong. And I belong on my chanteuse poster.

Eubie

But I don't know who I am; or where I belong. I don't know my essence.

JOY

I'm all dressed now Eubie and need to high step it off to the Island of "Despair."
Coming?

(JOY tap dances around)

OVERVIEW

And Joy tap dances away off the poster.

(EUBIE follows)

And Eubie follows onto the black dance floor; and they tap on down the great black way.

JOY

Island ahead.

OVERVIEW

And there is nothing on the Island but pole structures that look like crucifixes. And crumpled up old posters all over the ground. And Joy pokes around and miraculously, immediately, finds the chanteuse poster.

(The POSTER ENSEMBLE enter with an empty frame)

JOY

Eubie, help me put it up.

OVERVIEW

And Eubie does. And it is wrinkled and faded; but it is clearly the chanteuse poster.

JOY

Now kiss me goodbye, Eubie.

OVERVIEW

So Eubie kisses Joy

(The POSTER ENSEMBLE frame her in the empty poster frame)

and she moves into the poster and—LO!—she slips into the figure of the chanteuse on the piano and she is caught forever, arms shooting over her head, in the high-angst moment of the blues. And Eubie is depressed and his feet start to tap dance away.

EUBIE

To where? Back to Bodoni County?

OVERVIEW

Then—LO!—Eubie hears Old Matilda Trimble's voice saying:

OLD MATILDA TRIMBLE

(Voice amplified)

Look for the stained glass poster, Eubie.

(Two more MEMBERS from The ENSEMBLE

*enter with another empty Poster Frame
and lay it on the ground--they move back.)*

OVERVIEW

And there it is. At his feet. A faded ripped poster of a stained glass window. And it is of the naked god Mercury.

EUBIE

With no zits and the most magnificent yo-yo's that ever were. And there are wings on his heels and a little World War I tin hat on his head and he's dashing through a meteor explosion of reds and blues and greens and magentas and oranges!

OVERVIEW

And Eubie's heart idles like a truck, he's so excited;

(The two Poster ENSEMBLE accomplish the following)

and, quickly, he puts up the poster facing the chanteuse poster--and suddenly panics:

EUBIE

Is this what I really want?

OVERVIEW

Then Eubie hears Old Matilda Trimble's voice:

OLD MATILDA TRIMBLE

(Off. Voice Amplified)

It's either this, Eubie; or return to Zitsville. —No, Eubie! There's no choice! And you know it!

*(The Two Poster Frame ENSEMBLE
frame EUBIE, opposite JOY's frame)*

OVERVIEW

So Eubie climbs into the poster and becomes the wingèd God Mercury! And he appears to be dashing toward the chanteuse poster—and will *always* appear to be dashing that way! And Eubie is finally happy; for he will now look on his Joy, forever and ever—there, on the Island of Despair.

EUBIE AND JOY

SAND DUNE BLUES.

JOY

ESCAPING FROM THE WORLD'S WOES.

SAND DUNE BLUES. EUBIE AND JOY

THE FREEDOM OF MY YO-YO'S. EUBIE

NEVER A TEAR, FROM YEAR TO YEAR. . . EUBIE AND JOY
SAND DUNE BLUES! SAND DUNE BLUES!

OVERVIEW

And so ends our fable!