

# The Grateful Lodge

**A short stage play by: Peggy Barnell**

## **Summary:**

Bryan and Jill have come looking for adventure – a weekend of something different to expand the borders of their comfort zone and help them renew their focus on life and each other. Or at least that what Jill thinks Bryan’s motive is... But they all get some surprises when they arrive at the ‘great on-line deal’ Bryan found - including their quirky and unusual host, Señor Poppy.

## Characters:

Bryan: 35 - 60ish

Passive and soft-spoken, he's a cheerleader for his wife

Jill: 35 - 60ish

Angry and unhappy, and quick to let Bryan know he's letting her down - again.

Señor Poppy:

40 or older - BIG personality, loud, happy, an old hippy. A middle east or Spanish -type accent (or Australian or Irish?) would fit him well, along with rawhide clothing/moccasins, and long braided pony tails.

Setting:

The great outdoors

**(Scene opens with Jill and Bryan trudging along, uphill toward a crest. They both have on outdoor-type clothing with backpacks/gear, etc..)**

Bryan:

Come on, honey - we're almost there.

Jill:

This has got to be the stupidest thing I have ever agreed to.

Bryan:

But you did agree... That tells me something all by itself.

Jill:

I didn't know it was going to be a wilderness adventure. You said you put this on the VISA - a deposit, right? Not the whole amount? **(Stops to scan the area)** Where are we, Bryan?

Bryan:

Of course, the full amount. That's the way these things work. **(He's stopped to look around now, too)** It should be in sight soon... They said it was secluded - off the beaten path... We must be close.

Jill:

**(Holding up her cell phone at different angles)** I don't have a signal. We are certainly off the beaten path. This is scary. And I'm worried about the car. I don't like how we left it back there in the middle of nowhere.

Bryan:

Where's your sense of adventure? Come on, Jill, everything is fine, the car is fine. It's gonna do us good - away from the rat-race, a little time to relax and drink in some real nature.

Jill:

I have to go to the bathroom. **(pause)** Did you hear me, Bryan?  
I said I have to pee.

Bryan:

I heard you. I just don't have any great solutions at the moment, except –  
**(broad gesture –meaning the outdoors)**

Jill:

I can't believe you. And I can't believe I said 'yes' to this. I refuse to use weeds and leaves for restroom purposes. I'm hungry and I'm thirsty. I'm starting to get a headache.  
I don't like hiking uphill. My legs hurt.

Bryan:

Remember what the counselor said, honey. It's good for us to step out of our comfort zone.

Jill:

This is not 'a step' out of our comfort zone – it's a dive off a cliff!

Bryan:

Hey, over there! (**pointing**)

Jill:

(**Squinting**) Good Lord! A tee-pee? (**Turns to Bryan**) Is that a tee-pee?

Bryan:

(**Searching the horizon**) Well... I don't see any other buildings... They said it was rustic.

Jill:

Does 'rustic' mean no running water? Honestly Bryan, if you think for one minute that I'm going to --

Bryan:

Jill, please, don't jump to conclusions... We need to --

Jill:

You always do this. Arrgh! I didn't bring toilet paper - did you?

Bryan:

Jill. We're not even there yet!

**(A shout from a distance and a man appears up the hill)**

Señor Poppy:

Greetings! Welcome my friends, to The Grateful Lodge!

Jill:

Oh no! He's seen us.

Bryan:

Hello! (**Waving at the man, then back to Jill**) Don't be rude. You said you would give this place a chance. You can't judge a book by its cover.

Jill:

Ugh! I really hate it when you use clichés, Bryan. That's not a book - (**pointing toward the horizon**) it's a flippin' tee-pee!!

**(Under her breath)** What would one expect from a place called 'The Grateful Lodge'?  
Why, why, why, why... **(She's hitting herself softly in the head)**

**(The man is closer now, his voice is booming)**

Señor Poppy:

You must be little brother Bryan and little sister Jill!

Bryan:

**(Big wave)** Hello! **(To Jill)** Come on. It's too late to turn back now.

**(Enter Señor Poppy. He is dressed for the outdoors.  
He has a backpack or carries a bag)**

Señor Poppy:

**(Gestures grandly, laughing)** What a privilege to welcome you to The Grateful Lodge!  
**(He grabs Bryan and Jill in a slightly awkward bear hug – if possible lifts them/Jill off the ground)** You are my honored guests, and I am your humble teacher and host for this most-glorious weekend.

**(Bryan starts to speak, but Poppy quickly continues)**

Señor Poppy:

No, no formalities. We begin our time together with breaking of the bread and prayerful toast to the Wilderness Gods.

**(He is pulling out cups, bread, tablecloth, and a bottle of vodka while he speaks)**

Jill:

**(Looking at Bryan, distressed)** A toast? **(Looks at her watch)** Uh... it's, ah, 9:30 in the morning... Are the Wilderness Gods awake?

Señor Poppy:

**(laughs)** Little sister, there is no 'time' here. We celebrate with the wind. We listen through our hearts to the babbling brook and cooing dove. Today – now, is 'time' for celebration!

Bryan:

Wow, Mr... uh, Mr...

Señor Poppy:

No, no, little brother - I am Señor Poppy, though Padre Poppy is also acceptable.

Bryan:

Oh, OK. Señor... Uh, Padre Poppy... Uh... Thank you---

Señor Poppy:

Yes, yes! Thanks! Give thanks - for whatever you chose to focus on will always expand in your life!

**(Putting filled cups in their hands)**

Jill:

Uh, excuse me, but isn't that... didn't Oprah say that?

Señor Poppy:

**(Puts his fingers to Jill's lips for silence)**

Shh-shh, little sister. Quiet reflection is best beginning.

**(Gestures grandly, glass and bread and head held high with eyes closed, after a pause, he continues as Jill shoots eye-daggers at Bryan)**

Oh Mighty Powers, that gives strength to the buffalo and graceful beauty to the butterfly...

For each new morning with its light,  
For rest and shelter of the night,  
For health and food and love and friends,  
For everything thy goodness sends,  
We give you thanks.

Shalom.

**(Opens his eyes and breaks the bread, offering it around)**

Friendship bread.

Jill:

Friendship bread? **(steely gaze at Bryan)**

Señor Poppy:

A great beginning, yes?

Jill:

And Ralph Waldo Emerson...

**(She has whispered this under her breath, but Poppy hears it - he laughs loudly)**

Señor Poppy:

Yes, yes! We begin our most glorious experience with a toast, a prayer of gratitude, and later we will share the pipe of contentment. Drink!!

**(they all drink)**

Bryan:

Uh, MR... I mean, Padre... Señor Poppy... From your website, we weren't 100% certain what to expect, but it said ---

Señor Poppy:

Yes! Be grateful for what is unknown - for adventure and new experiences.

Bryan:

Absolutely, yes. But where is the staff, and the... uh, the facilities..?

Señor Poppy:

There is time enough for details!

Give thanks for a little, and you will find a lot.

Wear gratitude like a cloak and it will fill a corner of your life.

Little brother and little sister, you have come to The Grateful Lodge, for which I am grateful. Please, say to Señor Poppy of that for which you are grateful.

Jill:

**(Studying him)** Do you always talk in third person?

Señor Poppy:

**(Big laugh)** A sense of humor – that is good. Yes! I speak to you, while at the same time acknowledging the surrounding spirits of previous guests.

Jill:

Huh?

Bryan:

Okay, okay, I get it. I am thankful for... Making it through 10 years of marriage – and Jill agreeing to come with me this weekend.

Señor Poppy:

Wonderful! Now your turn, little sister.

Jill:

Uh... Uh... I, ah...

Señor Poppy:

Take your time. Think – there is something.

Jill:

I... am... thankful... for... Bryan's new job.

Señor Poppy:

Yes! Another.

Jill:

Look, if this is going to be---

Señor Poppy:

No, no - do not allow your mind to go toward the pit – you must to learn to be grateful, even for the things you perceive as darkness in your life.

Bryan:

Come on Jill, just do it.

Jill:

Ok. **(Pause)** I'm grateful for... the insurance company coming through after Bryan totaled the car.

Señor Poppy:

Well done! That is a beginning. Gratitude is the greatest of all virtues - and the grandfather to all other virtues. Now, tell Señor Poppy why you have come to The Grateful Lodge. What do you hope to find here?

Jill:

Uh... I...

Bryan:

We talked about this. Go ahead.

Jill:

I want him **(meaning Bryan)** to shut up about ---

Señor Poppy:

Ah-ah-ah. Re-frame it, little sister. And have another.

**(Filling her cup with more drink)**

Be grateful for your troubles and watch them become your blessing.

Jill:

Who said that?

Señor Poppy:

**(Proudly)** Señor Poppy said that!

Jill:

Ok. **(Big sigh, takes a drink)** I guess... it would be good to have... a little, you know, peace, in my marriage.

Señor Poppy:

Yes! You are on the right of the track - a wonderful student!

Jill:

I don't know about that.

Señor Poppy:

Señor Poppy knows! You will see: gratitude is riches. Complaint is poverty.

Jill:



A Señor Poppy quote?

Señor Poppy:

No - the prophet Doris Day.

Jill & Bryan:

Who?

Señor Poppy:

Never mind. It is simple. I am a life-long student of gratefulness. After much study, the student becomes the teacher. Simple is often wisdom, disguised. And wisdom embraces simple truth.

From the divine Albert Einstein: There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is miracle. The other is as though everything is miracle.

Señor Poppy will help you to see: the good in the bad, the happy in the sad, the gain in your pain.

**(Jill & Bryan are staring at Señor Poppy, slack-jawed)**

Señor Poppy:

Be grateful - not hateful. **(Big laugh)**

Jill:

Wow. Just - wow. **(she turn to her husband, expecting him to do something)** Bryan.

Bryan:

Señor Poppy, I'm not sure this is going to be a good fit for us. My wife really needs the ladies room, and this... This is... Well, it's just not what I, what we envis---

Señor Poppy:

No, no, wait, wait. You must give the way of gratitude a chance. We are just beginning our adventure!

Little brother Bryan, you have not yet shared what it is you came to seek at The Grateful Lodge. Please, tell Señor Poppy what it is you hope to find.

Bryan:

I... uh, well... **(He looks at Jill then at Poppy, chugs some of his drink)** Um, this seemed like it might be a good place to discuss some changes I see on the horizon – for us... You know, for our marriage.

Jill:

Huh?

Bryan:

**(more quickly now)** I was hoping we could look at this from a positive angle –you know, a grateful state of mind... I thought maybe this would be a good place to tell you that I want a divorce.

**(a moment of stunned silence)**

Jill:

What??

Señor Poppy:

Little brother...

Jill:

Wha...? Are you...? Bryan, what are you talking about?

Bryan:

I... look, I've thought about this long and hard.. **(He tries to take her hand, she pulls back)** Please listen to me, Jill. I am so grateful for you standing by me the past ten years. You didn't walk out – or give up, despite me losing the big... jobs, and totaling the car and the breakdown I had, and the bankruptcy... and, the other stuff. I really, I need to give you credit for that.. **(Pause)** But I finally figured out... It's not me, it's you.

Jill:

Huh?

Bryan:

**(Rushing on now)** It's obvious, you're a jinx of some kind. I see now that you're bad luck, Jill – this little black cloud that follows me wherever I go - and I've decided I can't take it anymore!

Jill:

I... wha? I...

Bryan:

**(Building steam, on a roll)** It's you! It's not me - it's you! You understand? Do you have any idea what a relief this was? It was an epiphany, really... I'm fine. I'm good. It's you and your never-ending, nagging and whining. When it comes right down to it – you're mean, Jill. You're just not a nice person. All these bad things that have happened to me – it's been that way since I met you – and it's all been magnified by your constant, negative attitude – like somehow I'm responsible for making your life good. Do you hear me? I'm not the problem - you're the problem!

Jill:

I... I...

Bryan:

**(rushing on now, animated)** I thought... I don't know. I hoped that if we came to The Grateful Lodge this weekend, you might somehow be in a better frame of mind to receive the news. Because despite everything, I don't want to hurt you. But this is all crazy **(gestures)** and you're crazy! **(points to Poppy)** quoting Doris Day and Oprah, and chugging Vodka and all that third person crap...

And I'm feeling kind of crazy right now! I thought that I – that we could somehow ease into this, and I see now that's not possible - but I know what I want. The counselor said to say what we want. **(gulp)** Señor Poppy, my wife really wants a restroom right now - and I really, really want away from you, Jill.

So, Señor Poppy, I'm grateful because I know what I want. And I'm sorry for calling you crazy. I'm sure you're a very nice---

Jill:

Wait a second. Wait just a minute. What happened to your mantra, “happy wife – happy life”?

Bryan:

I've had a new saying rolling around in my head the past few weeks:  
Gone the wife, brand new life.

Jill:

**(reaches out and pushes/smacks his chest)**

That is the biggest load of crap I have ever heard come out of your mouth!

Señor Poppy:

**(attempting to intervene)**

Little sister, please to not---

Bryan:

No, no, that's how I feel. And I believe I delivered it in an honest, civil manner, considering the content.

Señor Poppy:

If you love something, you must set it free. If it returns to you ---

Jill:

Shut up!!

Señor Poppy:

Little sister, please –

Jill:

I am not your sister! Stop calling me little sister!

Señor Poppy:

Please to listen. Before Señor Poppy was gifted with the vision of ‘The Grateful Lodge’ he was relationship counselor.

Jill:

He was... **(disgusted, condescending)** You are not a counselor!

Señor Poppy:

No, no, it is true – a therapist, a counselor for couples – for those such as you and little brother. Can you not see it? The Mighty Spirits have brought you here.

It is your destiny!

What you are doing, little sister... we often take for granted the very thing that most deserves our gratitude. You have listened to the lie that your husband is a foe, when in fact, he is your greatest friend and ally.

Bryan:

That actually made sense – and was appropriate.

Jill:

That doesn’t make sense! He does not make sense! None of this makes sense!!

**(pointing first to Bryan, then to Poppy, becoming increasingly frantic & angry)**

You’re an idiot – and you’re an even bigger idiot!! Who are you? And what kind of wack-job maniac runs a place like this?

**(the next few lines happen quickly, on top of each other)**

Bryan:

Jill, please, you can’t talk to him like---

Señor Poppy:

Dear little sister, let the poison out. Senor Poppy sees it has built up inside you like a venom. **(He is reaching his hands toward her)**

Jill:

I’ll tell you what’s built up inside me – Urine! Pee! Kidney excrement! Piss!

Comprende amigo??

And one way or the other, it is going to come out!!

Señor Poppy:

**(He has placed his hands on each side of her head and dramatically takes both hands off as he speaks)**

Let it out!!

Jill:

**(pulling his hands away)** Get your hands off of me!

And for the love of God, where is the toilet??

Bryan:

Señor Poppy, please, she really needs a bathroom.

Señor Poppy:

Oh... **(Comprehension dawning)** The water closet?? Little sister, why did you not to say so to Señor Poppy? **(He points)** Just over the crest, behind the teepee, is a trail. Follow it down the hill to the lodge.

Jill:

**(Starts to hurry away)**

Ae you kidding me?? You couldn't have told me that fifteen minutes ago?  
**(she exits in obvious distress, muttering - # \$ % \* & # % \*)**

Bryan:

You mean there's... there actually is a lodge? You have a lodge here?

Señor Poppy:

No, little brother. **(He is searching his pockets)** But please to listen to Señor Poppy - little sister is in desperate need of solitude, of meditation – and we must provide that for her.

Bryan:

What?

Señor Poppy:

**(Pulling keys out of his pocket, then pointing)** There is a four-wheeler just past those bushes. Come, Señor Poppy will deliver you to your transportation.

Bryan:

What about...? We... we can't just leave her here!

Señor Poppy:

Tomorrow Señor Poppy will send someone for her. Little sister will benefit from time alone with The Mighty Spirits of the night.

Bryan:

No... It doesn't seem... I mean, we can't---

Señor Poppy:

Little brother, that is a mean and spiteful woman. Señor Poppy has wrestled alligators and out run the black bear. But a woman like that makes him to tremble with fear.

Bryan:

But... But I can't...

Senor Poppy;

Suit yourself. But perhaps little brother should “be grateful” for an opportunity to run like the wind while you have the chance.

**(Senor Poppy exits. Bryan hesitates, looks toward the horizon where Jill disappeared, looks back toward Señor Poppy – then sprints after him)**

**Lights out / The end**

