KANSAS PLAYS

by

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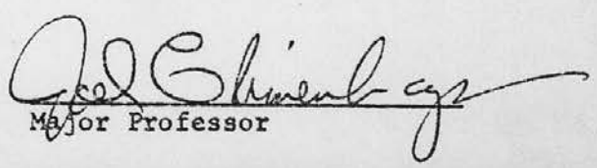

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FOREWORD

The Report of this project includes: 1) a summary of five years of study; 2) five plays; 3) an appendix that will be composed of illustrations and copies of relevant theater programs, photographs and news releases.

I have written nine plays in the five years of attending K-State classes. Five have received special treatment in the Speech Department. The plays which I am submitting as part of this report are those five, which are as follows:

ONLY GOOD BUSINESS, produced in the Purple Masque Theatre in April 1981.

THE DUST STORM WEDDING, produced in the Purple Masque Theatre in October 1981, entered in the January 1982 ACTF contest.

MR. STRANIHAN IS DYING, received a special reading in December, 1979 by the Writers' Stage of the Department of Speech.

TOO MUCH PRIDE, a one-act play, was read in the Lunch Bag Theatre in 1980.

JUST A SONG AT TWILIGHT, a one act play, was read at the Senior Center in Manhattan and in the Holidome at a Kansas State Seminar in April, 1983.

IN APPRECIATION

When I enrolled in a playwriting class at Kansas State University I intended to learn about new trends in playwriting, investigate the market for plays. I simply wanted to write a few plays that would show Kansans in dramatic situations "as we were" and "as we are." I did not foresee that many talented people would have to work so many long hours with those plays to turn them into productions. I did not fully understand the "blending of talent" that creates "togetherness" in the theatre, and is an art in itself.

I am grateful to the teachers in the Speech Department, who have guided my efforts in learning: Joel Climenhaga, Norman Fedder, Lydia Aseneta, Wallace Dace, Harold Nichols. I appreciate the encouragement Norma Bunton has given me from time to time over the years.

I have enjoyed the exchange of helpful criticism, the creative efforts of students in all the classes. I appreciated the efforts of those who helped in the Reader's Theatre when two of the plays were read aloud.

Joel Climenhaga directed both Purple Masque productions. C. J. Prusick worked as his assistant. Charlotte MacFarland wrote the music for a song and dance sequence; Kate Anderson directed the dance. Lydia Aseneta and Zoe Climenhaga helped with costuming in both plays. Mary Nichols directed publicity. Many worked on properties, make-up, lighting, set construction, costumes, sound effects, publicity, art used on posters and for programs. Experienced K-State Players who took part in

Only Good Business gave the play a professional quality. Many inexperienced actors worked with experienced players in The Dust Storm Wedding and gave that production a professional quality. I am indebted to them all.

The one act Just a Song at Twilight was a special kind of Reader's Theatre, directed by Norman Fedder, involving students and Senior Citizens. It was presented in the Manhattan Senior Center and at a Seminar in the Holidome as an example of Intergenerational drama to be sponsored by Senior Centers. It was also another example of the magic that is created in a special blending of talent that is "theatre."

I am not only thankful for all the help I have received in this learning experience but for the "togetherness" I have shared with so many gifted people.

KANSAS PLAYS

Introduction

In the summer of 1978, following the death of my husband, I returned to an avocation I had followed most of my life -- free-lance writing for publication. Since my graduation from Washburn College in 1932 I had tried many forms of writing and found only one that would sell; I could write feature stories and be paid for them if I carefully studied the market and slanted my articles to the Editors' needs.

I followed this part-time career for many years and sold to national magazines such as Parents Magazine, Your Health, Brides Magazine, and Woman's Day. The Kansas City Star bought many that were rejected by the magazines; they were printed on the woman's page in Sunday issues.

I enrolled in various correspondence courses over the years, trying children's stories, short stories, even a mystery novel. Creative writing that I worked at simply never found a market. After a while I gave up writing features and devoted my time to enjoying life with my husband and children. I belonged to many organizations, among them the following: The American Association of University Women, Delta Kappa Gamma, The Kansas Authors Club, and The Kansas Federation of Women's Clubs. All of these were adult education organizations and encouraged women to study and make the most of their talents.

As an officer in the Kansas Federation of Women's Clubs I stressed The Arts, encouraging women through articles in organization magazines to write and market their writing. I suggested that they return to college if they needed to learn what was being sold and how to write it.

So I took my own advice when I returned to college in the fall of 1978. I had not written a play since 1931; I had always wanted to return to playwriting but the possibility of selling a play had discouraged me. Now I wanted to explore the play-market, find out if there was a market, return to creative writing.

I had begun to write folksy, nostalgic features for the Junction City Republic in June of that summer. Some of these were to inspire the plays I would write in the next five years. The Kaw Theater Feature started my playwriting.

My husband and I had managed a theater in Marion, Kansas from 1937 to 1942; our adventures in the theater business should make a play, I thought. Since most theater exhibitors aren't interested in writing plays, I felt I had original material; the small town motion picture business hadn't been over-written. I had considered various titles, such as IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED and THE SHOW MUST GO ON. After the play was written and read in playwriting class I thought of a title: DOUBLE ON THE BUTTER.

Too much conversation in the first act made a slow beginning. Things began to happen in the second act. The third act had a little twist that carried the play to a pleasant ending. There were thirty-five to forty people in the cast; I was slanting it to high school play production markets. I hadn't yet learned that most high schools want

to put on the plays that have been on Broadway, that few of them order those nice little plays from catalogues put out by French and Baker. This change in high school play production had taken place within the period from 1965 to 1969. Our own Junction City high school was putting on plays such as OKLAHOMA, MY FAIR LADY, and THE KING AND I.

Maybe there are still a few little high schools putting on those plays we used to choose for the Senior Play, but French and Baker had cut down their buying so the chance of selling them a high school play -- even a good one -- was pretty small.

I began to understand the market situation. It was as bad or worse than it had been in 1931. I turned my attention to other possibilities than publication. The many Little Theater groups over the country were producing original plays -- sometimes. Universities had workshops and produced original plays as they had when I attended Washburn and had three one-act plays produced. The K-State Players might produce one of my plays -- if I could write a good one.

I saw my first student-written Purple Masque production in October of 1978, A COMATOSE CIRCUS by Teresa Haffener Frost. I was impressed with the sensitivity of the playwright in developing this sad story of a young mother mourning her baby. I thought the costuming of the toys that came alive to comfort her showed creativity. I thought the whole production showed care and a blending of talents to make an impressive production. But I couldn't imagine where the young playwright would sell her play.

I listened to the plays being developed in the playwriting classes taught by Professor Joel Climenhaga and that same problem of marketing

the plays continued to haunt me. I had immersed myself in the commercial market for so long that I thought everyone must surely be slanting their plays to a market. I knew that the styles of writing had changed drastically since I had attended Washburn but I wasn't prepared for the kind of plays that were being written and produced sometimes in the Purple Masque.

They weren't Eugene O'Neill type plays and they weren't Thornton Wilder type plays. They weren't Lillian Hellman type plays and they weren't Lorraine Hansberry plays. They were Harold Pinter type plays and Samuel Beckett plays but I did not know at the time the influence these avant garde playwrights had had upon the younger generation, most of the young students in the playwriting class.

They were certainly meaningful plays, as the depressing side of life was explored in detail. I felt somewhat lost with the type of plays I would have to write because I knew I could not write from their point of view. I had finished DOUBLE ON THE BUTTER and wrote another play that first semester that came about because Dr. Karl Menninger had visited Junction City and made a talk at a Mental Health Society meeting. An article I wrote for the Republic about taking Mental Hygiene from Dr. Menninger in 1928 at Washburn was the basis of the next play named at first THE IVORY TOWER.

Barry Stevens, a director of the Ft. Riley theater at that time, knew I was taking playwriting and had told me he was looking for a Kansas one act to enter in competition. He suggested that the material in the article might make a play. I wrote the one act that I thought reflected our college society in 1928; it was in the spirit of College Humor Magazine.

The play, which was renamed AND PASS THE CHOCOLATES, reflected a self-centered college crowd, the youth that would become "the establishment" -- a most disliked crowd of people in the sixties. One young man in the playwriting class could barely conceal his disdain. I thought it was a good piece of writing that showed 1928 from several angles, but also indicated somehow that I was completely out of tune with modern playwrights. Barry Stevens evidently thought so too as he didn't use it as an entry in a contest.

I wasn't discouraged in the least; I signed up for another playwriting class with Professor Climenhaga and started a new play. At first I had only a good title THE DUST STORM WEDDING. Sometimes I think the title was the best thing about the whole play; it has box-office appeal. This play of about 58 pages was read aloud in class and approved. After it had been rewritten several times, it was produced by the K-State Players in the fall of 1981, entered in the American College Theatre Festival competition of 1982. But this first reading was in 1979 and I would write several more plays before THE DUST STORM WEDDING was produced.

I was encouraged by the complimentary remarks of everyone at the reading. When Professor Climenhaga suggested that I might start work on a Master's degree in Theatre I was delighted with the idea. I wanted to continue to write plays and be with other playwrights. I wanted coaching and encouragement and most of all I wanted deadlines. If I said I would write a play and turn it in for semester credit, I knew I would come up with a play -- somehow -- worked over, rewritten, pulled into shape, but a play that could be read to the class. By starting a Master's program, I would be in a positive position -- just another

student learning to be a playwright. I didn't think too much of other requirements for a degree because I intended to sign up for as many hours of playwriting as I could and become better with each effort.

To conclude my semester work in the spring of 1979 I wrote TO MEET THE DEVIL. The tragedy brought about by the Cult leader Jim Jones, several years ago, inspired many of us to write plays that were more or less patterned to the centuries-old Faustian plot, but would not be called true Faustian drama. It was read in a 1980 spring class to other student playwrights and was rather severely criticized. Like all the plays I have written, I felt that I could rewrite it and turn it into a good play if anyone liked it and wanted to stage it. Hope springs eternal for a playwright.

A serious thought had inspired this play but somehow, in the writing, the serious thought got lost. I began to realize that all my plays started with serious thoughts and turned into comedies and that it was more interesting to show people as I invariably see them, funny even in the most tragic circumstances. I began to realize too that I always had an eye for a possible audience and wanted people to enjoy my plays. I wanted the serious thought to be sugar-coated.

Enrolled in Dr. Norman Fedder's class in the fall of 1979, I was advised of a contest to find a play slanted to the handicapped or retarded. I was in the process of plotting a play called MR. STRANIHAN IS DYING. This play started with a serious thought, also. I deplored the modern method of dying in hospitals by inches, of a dying man having to fight his way to death through the determination of nurses and doctors to keep him alive as long as possible, even though his death was inevitable. The very thought that inspired The Living Will signed by so many

elderly people was the basis for this play. I set it in 1923 when a man could lie down and die without interference from a hospital system that wanted to make money by keeping the dying alive and hospitalized as long as possible. The title came from my memory of a childhood directive. Someone had told the neighborhood children not to play Run Sheep Run in the neighborhood of the Stranihan house because MR. STRANIHAN IS DYING and shouldn't be disturbed by the noise of children at play. Mr. Stranihan was a very old man and the hero in my play is a man in his forties. I made him a polio victim and the part is one for a handicapped actor. This play became a folksy drama with some of the same characters that I used in THE DUST STORM WEDDING. It became a gentle little comedy and ended with Mr. Stranihan recovering to go on living with a long-lost love. I did get a few sugar-coated remarks into the play about what dying would be like at some far distant time when science could keep people alive indefinitely.

This play was slanted to the contest but not really reaching what the judges wanted. I knew that I was not writing what <u>they</u> wanted but what <u>I</u> wanted to write. It was judged a good play, however, and given a special reading at the end of the semester. If I were to rewrite this play I know all kinds of things I could do to it to make it better. I was beginning to realize that almost any play needed rewriting and re-writing again.

In December of 1979 a play by Velina Houston called NOBODY LIKE US was featured in the Purple Masque Theater. It was an entry in the American College Theatre Festival in January of 1980 but didn't win a prize. Velina would win the Lorraine Hansberry award for another play she would write while attending the University of California. NOBODY

LIKE US would pave the way for better writing. The encouragement she got from the workshop at Kansas State University would keep her going until she could write something that would win in the American College Theatre Festival.

I had taken nine hours of playwriting and written four full-length plays and one one-act play in three semesters. In January 1980 I enrolled in Dr. Fedder's class in Religion and Theater, as well as in another semester in Advanced Playwriting with him. That semester I rewrote TO MEET THE DEVIL and wrote a one-act play TOO MUCH PRIDE. I could see that there was a possibility of success for writers who were willing to write religious plays but I seemed to be turning toward history of Kansas plays rather than plays that would be sent to a religious writers market. TOO MUCH PRIDE was set in Victoria, Kansas in 1907 and was plotted to show why a pioneer wife belonging to the Catholic church could resist the temptation to buy a piano for herself in order to give money for a new Catholic church. This play was read in the Lunch Bag Theatre and criticized by those who heard it. From the sentences the students wrote I had the feeling I had succeeded in giving the play a real western Kansas atmosphere.

Since I have lived in eight different towns in Kansas, in almost every district, I felt that my plays would have to be about Kansas. In fact, I really didn't want my plays to be about anything other than Kansas; I felt that most Kansans would be interested in them. A regional playwright is lucky if he or she can write a play that will be universally appealing. I am sure that the successful playwright touches "the great common heart of us all." I hoped to write a Kansas equivalent to Wilder's OUR TOWN. At least, by 1980 I had learned enough to realize my

limitations as to type of play and possible potential as a regional playwright.

Playwrights that I could relate to were Preston Jones of Texas and William Inge of Kansas. Of course, Preston Jones had worked in the Dallas Little Theater as a director and manager while he wrote his plays. William Inge had met Tennessee Williams and been helped by him. I could see that it would take an unusual bit of good luck to get a play published. I had had one published of the plays written while I was a student at Washburn and until now I hadn't realized how lucky I had been to have had my play chosen to be included in a book of plays by college students. One of the ways to market a play was to win a contest. I subscribed to the newsletter published to advise playwrights of contests. Most of the contests were University contests open only to college students. I entered many of these contests with the plays I had written and became aware that my competition was strong. Thousands of plays were being entered in some of the contests, hundreds in others.

My competition must be college students of the age I was when I attended Washburn. Although I somewhat resented the fact that my chances of winning were very slim -- even if I wrote a good play -- I felt pride in the fact that we have educated young people to a degree that they can write so well. After all, I had been an English teacher in Quinter High School in 1932, urging my students to make the most of their talents. I had spent much of my adult life encouraging adults to continue their educations, develop their talents. The fact that the grandchildren of my high school students might be giving me competition is something to

think about. We have created a most literate society in Kansas; we have created a most literate society in the United States.

This philosophy of acceptance made the rejection slips a little easier to take. When I attended a play in Kansas City during the summer of 1980 I had no idea for a new play and had about decided to concentrate on classes to complete my Master's degree, enjoy the lectures, and forget about writing any more plays. The play I saw gave me an idea for a modern play about the theater business. I consulted with Dr. Fedder, told him my plot and we discussed the complications, characters, setting. Having written DOUBLE ON THE BUTTER had prepared me for starting this play about a worn-out old lady theater manager struggling to keep her movie house running in a bad neighborhood. I called it A LOT OF GUMPTION.

That fall semester of 1980 I was taking a course under Dr. Fedder in Theater for Special Populations and enjoying an entirely new kind of learning experience as I worked with handicapped young people.

It wasn't until the next semester that Professor Climenhaga read the play about the little old lady theater manager and offered to produce it during the spring semester, if I would add about thirty pages to the script and make some changes that he thought would improve it. I worked the play over and it was given a special reading and criticized; I consulted with both Dr. Fedder and Professor Climenhaga about making changes. I could hardly believe my good fortune; I was actually going to have a play produced in the Purple Masque by the K-State Players.

The serious thought behind this play did not get lost. My elderly herione hated the pornography and perversions accented in modern films, tried to book re-runs of "nice" pictures like MARY POPPINS for her screen. She considered old John Wayne movies most suitable for her audience.

The comedy was renamed ONLY GOOD BUSINESS and went into production in April. Some of the best K-State players were chosen to take the parts. I didn't help at all with this production. I didn't even attend rehearsals until the play had begun to shape up. I knew that it would be an acceptable production because I had seen this department make something from much weaker scripts. I knew that everyone would help put the play together, combining talents as they had in all the other Purple Masque productions. Charlotte MacFarland wrote the music for a song and dance number. Kate Anderson directed the dancing sequence. Dean Kennedy and Ernie Joehne did the theater lobby carpentry work. All of the various talents in the department were blended into making this production everything I could have wished. Under all the frivolity, the truth as I saw it came through. I think this is the best play I have written.

During the spring semester of 1981 I was taking a class in Advanced Playwriting and a Seminar in Theater; both classes were with Professor Climenhaga. I wrote a full length play about the English Colony at Victoria called WIND ALONG THE WASTE; suggestions were made for its improvement. I learned that my play THE DUST STORM WEDDING had been chosen for production in the fall and as an entry in the American College Theatre Festival Competition. Instead of rewriting WIND ALONG THE WASTE, I re-wrote parts of THE DUST STORM WEDDING.

I enrolled in a class on the History of Costume with Lydia Aseneta and offered to do the costuming for my play. It was an interesting and exciting semester. I made a scrapbook to show my costume plans, went hither and yon in search of the right costumes. There were fourteen characters to be dressed and it was fun as well as work finding 1910 styles for the women. Lydia helped me, choosing various items from

the K-State theatre collection. I had borrowed from friends and family, as well as the Junction City Little Theatre Company. I felt that the costumes were representative of the time and flattered the actors. It was wonderful to be a part of putting this play together.

THE DUST STORM WEDDING depended upon many talents for its success. I especially appreciated the sound effects with the constantly blowing wind heard throughout the play. I thought it had a good chance of winning in the contest and I think if the judges had been over fifty years of age it might have had a better chance. This was an old-fashioned play that would have been appreciated more if it had not been compared to the very modern meaningful plays now being written. It didn't win the district award and it was criticized because the tape of the play that went into the judging didn't do it justice. I am contended with it though. I think the various people who had a part in the production did a marvelous job.

Thinking about these two plays after they were produced I am in doubt about my writing. Were the plays <u>really</u> good plays or were they amde into good plays by all the talented people working on them? Would they stand up if less talented people produced them? No one has chosen the plays for production so I haven't had a chance to find out how they would show up under less favorable circumstances than in a University theatre.

There are many Little Theatre groups over Kansas; there are many Little Theatre groups over the United States but most of them choose to produce tried and true plays -- Broadway productions. Occasionally you hear that some Little Theatre group will produce an original play

if they can find one they like. For example, the Red Barn Players in Kansas City have done this upon occasion. Most of them are like the Junction City Little Theatre group; they feel that if they produced one play by an amateur they would have to produce many more since almost everyone working in Little Theatre groups has written a play or is about to write one. They feel safe when they choose a play by Neil Simon and will continue to produce only the plays that have been proven on Broadway.

It seems that the university theaters over the United States are doing more for new playwrights than any other theater organizations. Certainly most of the contests for new plays are at universities, most often for plays written by college students. Speaking from experience, the workshop theater at K-State brings the playwright the experience of reworking a play to make it into a satisfactory production. In THE DUST STORM WEDDING I watched rehearsals just long enough to realize that the last act was too long and boring, asked to rewrite it before the actors began to learn their lines, rewrote and brought it back into rehearsal in three days. The writer is on the spot to tailor the play and make it better. It's an exciting experience to rework lines and have actors and director improve the production as they use the newly written material.

Coming to playwriting from other forms of writing I had not realized the togetherness that is involved in putting a play into production. I had not realized or appreciated the many talents that blend together to produce a play. I have appreciated every suggestion and helpful hint along the way. I know that one must be open to suggestions and ready to accept guidance all along the line of production.

Before each production in the Purple Masque a presentation is made to the Appreciation of Theatre class that meets in McCain Auditorium

once a week. Twice I appeared with Professor Climenhaga for a question and answer period before this class. Excerpts from each play were presented by the casts. The students enrolled wrote criticism and handed them in for class grading. It seemed a nice experience for the cast members; for me it was frightening and thrilling. I had appeared on platforms many times in my life as a clubwoman, presided at my own convention in the smaller Student Union Auditorium, but never spoken from such an impressive platform before so large an audience. It was a bonus thrill added to that of having the plays produced in the Purple Masque Theatre to almost full houses.

Enrolled in Miss Aseneta's class I was part of the costume crew that worked on MAN OF LA MANCHA. For a week before the play was ready for an audience we worked with the cast, providing the costumes and checking them in after the night rehearsals. This was an exciting play to help with; the music drifted downstairs to the sewing room where I was on duty, waiting for actors to get help with costumes, ready for any emergency that might arise in the department. Others in the class had duties as they were scattered in various areas off stage and in other dressing rooms.

Learning about costuming was a most interesting course. Viewing all the costumes that had been made for various productions was certainly an education in theater. The many artistic costumes that have been designed by Miss Aseneta made me aware of yet another facet of theater.

During the spring semester of 1982 I studied a text entitled Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre, read plays written by American playwrights from colonial days to the twentieth century and

completed a one-act play for a workshop in theater. Both classes were with Professor Climenhaga.

This one-act play was named THE IWW SCARE and was a short play inspired by the movie REDS that I had seen at Christmas time in California. Seeing the movie reminded me how Kansas had reacted to unions in the 1920's; I wanted to write a play to show why we react as we do to many ideas that come into our farming state from the East and West coasts. It would explain why we are opposing the Wolf Creek nuclear power plant, have protested our Salt Mines at Lyons being used to store radioactive waste from all the nuclear power plants over the United States. I wanted to show why Kansans still react violently and seem to respond to that old colonial slogan 'don't tread on me.'

This folksy little one act was set in Wakeeney and passed along to Dr. Fedder when Professor Climenhaga went on leave of absence in 1982 fall semester and 1980 spring semester. I didn't write any plays in 1983. I took a course in Romantic Theatre and followed it with a course in Aesthetics of the Theatre. Both classes were taught by Dr. Wallace Dace. Although neither course was intended specifically to teach playwriting, I learned playwriting from the lectures, analyses of plays, and special research. I audited a class in Avant Garde Theatre taught by Dr. Harold Nichols in the spring of 1983 and finally began to understand exactly what the most modern playwrights have been trying to say in their plays that seemed until then far-far-far away and too far-out.

During this spring semester Dr. Norman Fedder was working with a class of students studying ways to introduce theatre to groups of senior citizens. He chose my play THE IWW SCARE because I was the only senior

citizen to have been recently enrolled in his playwriting class. We renamed the play JUST A SONG AT TWILIGHT and worked with it in the Senior Center of downtown Manhattan. One senior citizen offered to take a part in the play which was to be presented in Reader's Theatre style and meant to lead the way to more productions by those in the center interested in starting a group of Senior Center Players.

I attended rehearsals and learned something of directing this type of rehearsal as we cut parts from the script, worked action and dialogue into a dramatic production. The Red Barn Senior Acting Group from Kansas City had been invited to take part in a seminar meeting at the Holidome for lectures on various kinds of learning necessary to working with Senior Center groups over Kansas.

At the Seminar the Red Barn players put on three plays and we put on JUST A SONG AT TWILIGHT. We all attended a reception in the Senior Center at the conclusion of the meeting and exchanged ideas on promoting the organization of Reader's Theatre for Senior Citizens.

I am concluding my courses to fulfill the requirements for a Master's degree by taking Greek Theatre with Dr. Wallace Dace. The classes in theatre history have been fascinating and I feel that I have covered much of the history from 500 B.C. to modern times; still there are unexplored areas and classes planned for future years that sound intriguing. So I'll probably enroll in more classes in the years ahead.

In the spring of 1982 I was invited to join Phi Kappa Phi because I had made a straight A record; I wear the Phi Kappa Phi pin with pride. I am completely convinced that going to college is the secret of remaining

ing active and youthful in outlook for anyone who enjoys adult education and the stimulus of associating with others who are interested in continuing education.

There are so many interesting activities associated with the college. If you are on campus you are made aware of plays in production at McCain Auditorium, in the Purple Masque Theatre. You know about the Landon lectures and make plans to attend. You browse through the beautiful college library and take out books if you have a student identification card. The Student Union Bookstore is another place to spend time. The moving picture theater in the student union offers movies from the past into modern times.

I wasn't a stranger to K-State when I enrolled in 1978. I had visited the campus for fraternity parties when I attended Washburn College in Topeka and had danced in the Wareham Ballroom when the hotel was new. I was chairman for the Kansas Federation of Women's Clubs Fine Arts Festival in 1962 when Seaton Hall put our paintings on exhibit and the art teachers did the judging. I came to games and attended all sorts of activities as a parent through the fifties and sixties. In 1972 our Federation of Women's Clubs held its convention in the Student Union and had headquarters in the Ramada Inn. I helped plan the convention at which I presided and still hear compliments about the good time we had that April in convention. (I must admit that many of the memories center around the food served throughout the convention by the Student Union staff.)

So -- after all this I'm looking forward to being an alumni of K-State. And hopefully continue to take classes into the future.

I'm not writing a play at the moment but I have several that should be rewritten. And I have an idea for a play about a little old lady who decided to go back to college and renew her youth; I think the over-fifty crowd would love it.

ONLY GOOD BUSINESS

A Play in Three Acts

SETTING: The second show is just starting at the KANZA THEATER on this warm June evening. The movie is TRUE GRIT and the lobby displays are in the form of big posters. John Wayne's picture and the title of the picture are everywhere a poster can be fastened . . . on the front of the concession stand, on bill-boards at the stage front on either side, on the wall at either side of the large, flat wooden Indian head above the door that leads to the theater basement. On the front of the cashier's cage is a hand-printed sign "This Theater will be closed for Remodeling the rest of this month. Come see JOHN WAYNE in ROOSTER COGBURN on July 1".

The concession stand is at left front of stage, with a counter and popcorn stand brightly lighted. The exit at the left back leads to the theater office and projection stairway. There are wide entry doors with velvet curtains closed to conceal the theater proper at each side of the back wall. A divan is placed against the wall on one side of the closed basement door, a table with a chair on the other side.

The cashier-cage is at right front. A dangling bulb on a light cord lights the booth. At the top of the cage, pasted to the glass, is a sign that gives the ticket prices; these prices are low for 1980. Children are admitted for $.25; adults are admitted for $1.00. A strip of paper across the case reads "Bargain Prices" with the admission card fastened just under it.

An Indian head cut from cardboard decorates the top of the popcorn machine; another Indian head decorates the top of the cashier's cage. The decorative motif of the theater carries out the Indian theme with an Indian design painted tastefully on the walls at back and sides of the room. Flashing lights off stage give the illusion of marquee lights twinkling outside the theater. The light switches are located at the right front of the theater beside the door entrance. Exit sign marks the door opposite on the left front of stage.

Note: If a much simpler theater lobby is desirable for production of the play, it will work very well. The play was produced very effectively on a small stage with a center theater door, two side doors, one at right and one left back. The one at right led to the basement lounge, the one at left to office, stairs to the projection booth.

TIME: June 7, 1980 between 9:00 and 11:00 p.m.

PLACE: The action of the play takes place in the lobby of the KANZA THEATER located on Main Street in Kaw City, Kansas, a small town close to Fort Flint, an army post, and a large town Blueridge, dominated by a state university. Main Street in Kaw City is not as prosperous as it had been before several shopping centers were built around town. The block in which the Kanza Theater stands is now the favorite gathering place of the men who come into town from the Army Post. Several taverns are located across the street from the theater . . . the Red Demon Club, The Cockroach Inn, and Twilight Zone. The most famous of these, the Red Demon Club, is opposite the Kanza Theater. A restaurant, the Cozy Corner Cafe is next to the Red Demon Club and lends a touch of respectability to that side of the street. On the corner next to the theater is the Yellow Cab office. A liquor store is on the other side of the theater with a Used Car lot lighting up the block opposite The Cockroach Inn and Twilight Zone.

In years past the town has been infamous for a Red Light District known as East Fourth Street. Urban Renewal has renewed the area of East Fourth Street, turning the notorious part of town into a beautiful park; the City Commissioners have been given credit for promoting the destruction of a blight on Kaw City that had earned it the name of SIN CITY. The shacks on East Fourth Street have been leveled but the business that had thrived on East Fourth has moved onto Main Street; now a new Red Light District has sprung up in the middle of the business district . . . in a block where the finest theater and the best restaurant continue to do business, advertising fine food and good movies.

The owner of the restaurant is Mrs. Glen Walters . . . Ruby to her friends, and everyone is a friend. She and her husband had started the business as a hamburger stand in the depression years and built it into a fine restaurant over many good years. A widow now, she continues to enjoy being in business on Main Street even though the block has become the center of the honky-tonk activity. Mrs. Claude Miller is another widow, hanging onto a run-down theater building and a business that is barely paying expenses. She and her husband had built the Kanza Theater in the depression years and enjoyed prosperity long enough to make a fortune. Now she continues in the theater business and hopes that somehow a miracle will take place . . . Kaw City will clean up Main Street and people will start coming to the Kanza Theater again to see good clean movies like they made in the old days. Veeda is still showing those clean movies.

Hermoine Emerson is the faithful employee of Veeda Miller. She had started as an usher when the theater was opened, been promoted to the concession stand where she has worked ever since. She helps Veeda by opening the theater every evening, starting the popcorn machine, turning on the marquee, getting the music going. She has grown old working for the Millers

CAST OF CHARACTERS

HELEN DURAND	beautiful model and Hollywood starlet who has come back to Kaw City for her tenth high school reunion.
ELSIE PRINCE	sells tickets at the KANZA THEATER. Old, plump, loyal.
HERMOINE EMERSON	manages the concession stand at the theater but also assists in every other job that is required in the management of a run-down motion picture theater that is barely making ends meet. She is old, black, loyal.
VEEDA MILLER	owns the KANZA THEATER and operates it with the help of Elsie, Hermoine, a part-time janitor and a machine operator. She is Helen's aunt, a good woman.
SHAWN ARNOLD	drives a Jaguar car and is looking over the town.
RUBY WALTERS	owns the COZY CORNER CAFE next to the RED DEMON CLUB.
SLICK BENDER	"manages" Lilith and Eve, solicits business for them and makes sure they don't loaf around town when there's money to be made. He is a local pimp.
LILITH the tarts	beautiful, young and black, enjoying her work and the money she makes as a whore on Main Street in Kaw City. Her name is Jean Grover but she has chosen the name of Lilith for professional reasons.
EVE	beautiful, young and white, enjoying her work and the money she makes as a whore on Main Street in Kaw City. Her name is Marie Sloan but she has chosen the name Eve for professional reasons
DON HARBISON	the County Attorney who is trying to clean up Main Street. He had loved Helen when they were in high school and still loves her.

and now does as much to keep the theater up as Veeda. She is a handsome, matronly black woman, well aware of her importance in helping with all the work of theater management.

Elsie Prince is homely and elderly and has also grown old with the theater, working as the cashier. She too enjoys being a part of the business world, even though it has become a less respectable part of the business world than when she started. She enjoys having a seat that looks right out on the excitement of the worst block on Main Street and while secretly relishing the goings-on, deplores the situation to her friends. While her husband plays poker most evenings at the Elks Club, Elsie "lives" for the evening hours when she sells tickets at the theater.

Helen Durand is beautiful, voluptuous and looks the part of "sweet eighteen" in her ten year old gown that is fluffy, frilly and feminine.

Ruby Walters has dyed hair and dresses very stylishly as befits a member of the Country Club, the owner of a restaurant that still does a good business in town . . . in spite of the location.

Shawn Arnold is handsome but heavy . . . about thirty pounds too heavy. He enjoys good food and all the luxuries his prosperity has brought him. He is middle-aged.

Slick Bender wears a sporty suit styled in the Spanish caballero mode. His hat is wide brimmed. The clothes are very becoming to him; he is a handsome black man completely convinced that he is serving the community in his business of providing entertainment for the army men.

Lilith and Eve are beautiful and very young . . . dressed in short skirts and V neck blouses that show their beautiful figures to perfection. They wear very high heels and net stockings.

Don Harbison looks the ambitious small town County Attorney. He wears a white coat and dark trousers; a red carnation (the class flower) is pinned to his coat lapel. As president of the high school class of 1970, he is very busy seeing that the reunion is on schedule, but he can take time for a passing glance at the part of town he is trying to clean-up. He is very handsome and it is easy to see why Helen is still thinking about him . . . after all these years. He and Helen make the perfect pair . . . . love's young romantic dream as it was dreamed in years gone by.

Veeda Miller is in her late sixties and looks her age. She is a dignified, thin, white-haired woman who carries herself proudly. She is a <u>good</u> woman, convinced that good is good and bad is bad . . . there is no in-between.

ONLY GOOD BUSINESS

ACT I

(It is 9 o/clock in the evening on June 7, 1980. The second show at the Kanza Theater is just beginning. Hermoine, the concessions-stand manager wears a bibbed white apron over her neat print dress; she is sweeping up some spilled popcorn near the ticket-taker's stand. On the stand is an aluminum popcorn bowl; Hermoine puts the swept-up popcorn into this bowl. Elsie, the cashier, is counting money in the cashier's cage, preparing to close the box-office. Helen enters and stands before the cashier's cage. She is dressed in a frilly full-skirted dress and has her hair tied back in a bustle of curls with a ribbon to match the dress. She bends over and peers in at Elsie.)

HELEN

Hi Elsie. Remember me?

ELSIE

HELEN. My goodness. You surprised me.

(She puts money aside and leaves the booth to come out and meet Helen.)

You look wonderful. Not a day older than when you graduated from high school.

(puts her arms around Helen; they kiss)

My goodness. And here you are home for your 10th reunion. Veeda's been talking of nothing else for days.

HELEN

Oh Elsie. It's so good to be home. Kansas is so beautiful . . . especially in June.

ELSIE
(stepping back to look at her again, draws her across lobby toward Hermoine who has set dust-pan and broom by concession stand)

Hermoine. Here's our little Helen back . . . .

HERMOINE
(taking Helen into her arms)
Honey, you just don't know how we missed you 'round here! All this time.

(standing back to look at her)

You look just as pretty as ever, Miss Helen. All dressed up for the party.

HELEN
And you . . . . Hermoine . . . . you look just like you always did . . .

(turning back to Elsie)

You too, Elsie. You haven't changed a bit. Oh . . . I'm so glad you look the same.

(looking about the lobby)

Nothing has changed. It's as though I'd left . . . only yesterday . . . and . . .

ELSIE
Oh, Veeda's kept up the theater just as good as she could. I guess she wrote you about business . . . the way it's been falling off . . . .

HERMOINE
(cheerfully)
But we been keeping up everything . . . .

ELSIE
We try to act like business is just as good as it ever was . . . .

HERMOINE
You know how this block has just gone down something terrible?

HELEN
(looking out toward the street)
Aunt Veeda wrote about how all the joints had moved onto Main Street right across from the theater.

ELSIE
When East Fourth Street was torn down . . . . just leveled to the ground . . . that was the beginning of the trouble . . . .

HERMOINE
It wasn't any time at all and those people that had been on East Fourth Street . . . just moved right up here on Main Street.

ELSIE
All those awful people who ran the honky-tonks down there just rented the empty buildings in this block and moved right in . . . .

HELEN

I know. I heard. It's a shame.

(looking out into the street)

I guess they never should have torn down East Fourth Street.

HERMOINE

Of course nobody thought the whole caboodle would move right up here onto Main Street.

(The three of them have moved to the front of stage and are looking out of the window at the troublesome night-clubs across the street.)

ELSIE

Some people thought it was a mistake from the first. They kept warning everybody how tearing up that awful slum part of town would only make things worse . . . . they'd just scatter all over town . . . .

HERMOINE

This is the worst block in town now.

ELSIE

It's a problem to the police.

HELEN

It doesn't look very wild this evening. Hardly any traffic at all. Almost no one on the street.

ELSIE

It's too far past Pay Day. The soldiers spent all their money last weekend.

HERMOINE

You remember how this town just went wild on Pay Day?

HELEN

I remember that Pay Day was always the time thing's got exciting . . . even down here at the theater . . . . fight's starting in the street . . . drunks getting out of hand . . . the Military Police coming to help . . . .

ELSIE

Muggings and stabbings and all sorts of crime up and down the alleys . . .

HERMOINE

It's worse now. On Pay Day big fancy cars . . . Cadillacs and Lincolns . . . drive into town . . . .

ELSIE

Kansas City pimps drive their big fancy cars into town loaded with city whores. They stay a few days and then leave.

HERMOINE
They've gone now. All we got left this time of month are the locals.

HELEN
I used to think this town was just awful. I was embarrassed to admit I lived in Kaw City.

ELSIE
I guess it's disappointing to come back and find things worse than ever.

HELEN
No. I've seen some places that are much worse.

HERMOINE
(shocked)
You have?

HELEN
Yes. I have. Much worse.

ELSIE
You went to Kansas City to take that modeling course.

HERMOINE
Didn't you like Kansas City?

ELSIE
Or San Francisco? Didn't you like San Francisco?

HELEN
(reaching out to hug Hermoine)
I'm just so glad to be home I could cry. This seems . . . just . . . . great . . . . after those big cities.

ELSIE
You really mean it, don't you? You're glad to be home.

HELEN
I really mean it.

(Hermoine has gone back behind the concession stand and Elsie has moved back to lean on the counter.)

ELSIE
(coyly)
I guess the real reason you're glad to home could be because you've made up with your old sweetheart. Right?

HELEN
(laughing)
Right. Don's picking me up here at the theater in a few minutes. I can't wait to see him.

ELSIE
Well . . . Don Harbison was a good boy . . . and he's a good man. He's come a long way in these ten years . . . .

HERMOINE
He's the best county attorney this town's had in a long time.

ELSIE
We're counting on him to clean up Main Street.

HELEN
(moving impatiently across lobby toward theater entrance)

Where's Aunt Veeda? I told her I'd stop by to show her how the dress looked, but Don will be here any minute. He'll be in a hurry to get back to the party.

HERMOINE
Miss Veeda's up in the office.

(taking the broom and dust-pan from beside concession counter as she hurries back to door at left side)

I'll have her down here in nothing flat . . . just wait . . . .

ELSIE
We just got so excited seeing you. Honestly . . . we thought you'd be changed . . . being a successful model . . . and even a movie starlet . . . .

HELEN
(nervously)
I hope I haven't changed. I hope I look the same . . . exactly the same . . . .

ELSIE
You do. In that dress. You look exactly like you did when you graduated from high school. So young and sweet . . . and innocent . . . .

HELEN
As a model . . . . and as an actress . . . . I've always tried to look . . . innocent. You could say it's my stock in trade . . . sort of . . . .

(crossing stage to look into the street again, a worried expression on her face)

ELSIE
Veeda's been real proud of your success.

HELEN
I know. She met the plane this afternoon and talked all the way back to Kaw City. Told me she was glad I'd been such a success as a model and in the movies . . . but hoped I was ready to settle down now.

ELSIE
We've been thrilled that you've made up with your old boy friend.

HELEN
Yes, it started when he wrote me about the high school reunion. We just kept on writing . . . . and now . . . .

(turning to twirl across lobby)

Well . . . here I am . . . .

ELSIE
And you're going to be his date to the party at his house?

HELEN
His mother offered to have the first get-together for our class.

ELSIE
The Harbison house is plenty big enough to hold everybody.

HELEN
I've been to lots of parties there. It'll sure be like old times.

(as Veeda hurries through the door at back left)

Aunt Veeda. Well . . . . how do I look?

(She twirls about to show the full skirt of the dress.)

Does it fit the way it should?

VEEDA
(standing back to admire it)
Exactly. Not every girl could get into the same dress she wore ten years ago when she graduated from high school.

ELSIE
(stepping forward to pat dress, smooth down a ruffle)

Veeda kept it in a plastic bag in the front clothes closet all these years. Said it was the prettiest dress you ever had.

HELEN
It is. Don loved it. When I saw how nice it looked I just thought . . . it might erase the years . . . . and we'd be back again . . . . as we were . . . .

(laughing, somewhat embarrassed)

I hope it isn't too corny to be going to my 10th high school reunion in the same dress I wore when I gratuated from high school.

VEEDA
I knew you'd look beautiful in it.

ELSIE
So young and sweet . . . .

HELEN
(almost definatly)
Well . . . . as I said . . . that's my special look . . . . sweet innocence . . . .

VEEDA
(moving forward to touch the dress, pull out the skirt admiringly)
I wanted you to look that way when you see Mrs. Harbison. She's made some catty remarks over the years . . . about you going into modeling and then into . . . movies . . . .

HELEN
Oh?

ELSIE
She's always acted like no girls good enough for her Don.

HELEN
From Don's letters I think he's no longer under his mother's thumb.

ELSIE
He's certainly making a name for himself in this town . . . . as County Attorney . . . .

VEEDA
He's going a long way . . . . Don is . . . .

ELSIE
We depend upon him to keep things calm here on Main Street. He works closely with the police department.

HELEN
He wrote that the police were keeping a close watch on these joints across the street.

ELSIE
They kind of have to take it easy over Pay Day. You know . . . we don't like to make Fort Flint mad. We have to make the soldiers welcome . . . and all . . . .

VEEDA
Those GI's spend a lot of their paychecks here in Kaw City. They buy a lot of clothes, and food . . . cars, too.

HELEN
(laughing)
And a lot of beer in those clubs across the street.

VEEDA
(with disapproval)
That kind of money we don't need.

ELSIE
Veeda's real bitter about the joints in this block . . . .

HELEN
I don't blame you Aunt Veeda. It's practically ruined your nice theater business.

(She goes to her aunt and puts her arms around her.)

ELSIE
People are afraid to come here to the show. The town people . . . that is . . . .

VEEDA
Well, we're holding our own. We have a pretty good crowd in there tonight. Children mostly of course.

HELEN
(anxious to get away, moves toward door, front right)

I wonder what's keeping Don? He said he'd be here soon after nine.

VEEDA
(moves to window to look out)
That's his car now. We get used to seeing him drive up in front of the theater and park. He checks around on all the joints most every night . . .

HELEN
He does?

ELSIE
And it's made a difference. Things are getting better since he's made up his mind to clean up this block . . . .

VEEDA
(as Don comes in door)
Well . . . . don't you look nice . . . . all dressed up . . . .

HELEN
(stepping toward him)
Don . . . . . .

DON
(looking at her in amazement)
Helen . . . . . .

(They step toward each other and he takes her hand in his.)

I can't believe . . . . you look exactly the same . . . .

HELEN
(wistfully)
I'm ten years older Don . . . .

DON
So am I. And I look it. But you . . . you're ten years more beautiful . . .

HELEN
(laughing as she steps away from him and twirls about to show her dress)

Even my dress is ten years older. Do you recognize it?

DON
(somewhat puzzled, looks at the dress)

The dress . . . . no . . . . yes . . . . . I guess . . . . .

(aside to Veeda)

Am I supposed to remember . . . . a dress?

VEEDA
(happily)
It's the same dress she wore when you took her to that high school party in May 1970.

DON
(bemused)
Now I remember. You were the most beautiful girl at that party. And you're even more beautiful now . . . if that's possible . . . .

HELEN
Notice . . . . I'm wearing your class ring . . . .

(She shows him the ring on her third finger, left hand.)

DON

Really? Yes . . . . . I see . . . . . .

HELEN

It was in my jewel box on the dresser in my old room at Aunt Veeda's. It's still too big. The same string is wound around it . . . that you put there to make it fit . . . .

DON

(He is holding her hand and turns the hand over to inspect the string.)

Yes . . . it's the same . . . .

HELEN

(lightly)

I always considered it an engagement ring . . . .

DON

So did I. I always thought I'd replace it with a diamond . . . . but then you went away . . . . and I went to college . . . . . .

VEEDA

(brightly)

Well . . . . here you are back together again after all this time . . . . and you really look exactly as you did ten years ago . . . . standing here in the lobby . . . holding hands . . . . .

HELEN

(brought back to reality)

We are <u>acting</u> like a couple of teen-agers . . . .

(dropping his hand, steps back)

Hadn't we better go to the party? Isn't it getting late?

DON

(as one who is enchanted . . . trying to shake off the spell)

Oh . . . . yes . . . . yes . . . . they're expecting us. Everyone's waiting to see the class movie star. Let's go . . . .

VEEDA

(going to the front window)

Everything's pretty quiet here on Main Street tonight. Guess you needn't worry about those clubs you're always checking on . . . .

DON

(realizing that she may be reminding him of his duty)

Oh . . . yes . . . . the clubs. I intended to check on them . . . . . especially the Red Demon Club.

HELEN

Now?

DON
(reluctantly)

It'll only take me a second. I like to give them the idea I might pop in anytime . . . . . .

(hurrying to the door)

I'll be right back.

HELEN

He seems more serious . . . . older . . . .

(laughing)

But just seeing him again made my heart start to pound. When he walked through that door I felt exactly the way I used to feel when I saw him . . .

ELSIE
(who has made herself comfortable on the couch)

We could see that. And it was the same with him, I bet. He looked like he was just as deep in love with you as ever.

VEEDA
(taking Helen's hand, patting it)

I think everything's going to work out just fine for you and him.

HELEN

I <u>hope</u> so.

VEEDA
(coyly)

You know . . . I've been laying awake nights planning your wedding . . . .

HELEN

Oh Aunt Veeda. It's been <u>ten years</u> since I went away. So many things have changed. Maybe he won't . . . . . .

VEEDA

No <u>maybe</u> about it. I could see how the both of you feel. It was plain as the nose on your face.

ELSIE

You'd have it in the Methodist church, wouldn't you?

VEEDA

Oh yes. By candlelight. In the evening.

HELEN
(dreamily)

I always dreamed of marrying Don in a candlelight wedding.

ELSIE
Would you be having it this summer . . . you think?

VEEDA
Why wait? The setting sun hits those stained glass windows just right around seven . . . . .

HELEN
(laughing uncertainly)
You're getting way ahead of me. We may not feel so right for each other . . . . after a few days.

VEEDA
Yes you will. You're in <u>love</u> . . . .

ELSIE
Sure looked that way . . . . when you saw each other . . . .

VEEDA
I've been thinking about the music. Hermoine sings for lots of weddings. She could sing "I Love you Truly" . . . . or "Oh, Promist Me" . . . .

ELSIE
I always liked "Because" . . . .

(She hums or sings a little of the song.)

VEEDA
Hermoine sings that. She sang it at the Meadors wedding. It brought tears to my eyes.

HELEN
I'd like to have Hermoine sing at my wedding . . . only don't say anything to her about it yet . . . Let's just wait and see how things work out . . . . with Don and me.

VEEDA
(laughing)
All right. I guess we are getting the cart before the horse . . . .

HELEN
It's dear of you . . . Aunt Veeda . . . . to plan just the kind of wedding for me Mama and Daddy would have given me . . . .

VEEDA
It's not just for you, honey. It's for Don too. It'd be good for his career . . . having a real nice wedding . . . .

HELEN
We used to talk about it . . . in high school.

VEEDA
Mrs. Harbison would like to have her only son married in a real fancy wedding . . .

HELEN
Maybe I'm too old to get myself up in a white gown and veil . . . . and too much has happened . . . . and . . . . a white gown . . .

VEEDA
You're not old. You wouldn't need to choose a real frilly dress . . . one kind of sedate would be fine . . . kind of regal . . . maybe . . . .

HELEN
(hedging a bit)
It would cost quite a bit . . . . Aunt Veeda . . . .

VEEDA
(magnanimously)
Don't worry about cost. Your Mama and Daddy would have wanted you to have the nicest kind of wedding . . . and now it's going to be my pleasure . . .

HELEN
(leaning over to kiss her aunt)
All right. I'll have just the kind of wedding I've always wanted . . . if only Don . . . . asks me to marry him . . . .

VEEDA
(coyly)
And sure looks like that'll be tonight . . . .

ELSIE
(moving wearily across stage to get into cashier's cage)

Well . . . . I guess I better finish counting the money . . . . almost time to close the box-office.

(Hermoine comes back into lobby from door at left back, carrying a basket filled with spray cans.)

HERMOINE
I just brought all the exterminating stuff I could find in the storeroom . . . like you said, Miss Veeda.

(putting basket on concession stand)

Mighty powerful poison in those cans. You sure you want to go ahead with it tonight?

VEEDA
Yes. I'm sure. It's got to be done. The cockroaches are taking over down front . . . . and the rats . . . .

HERMOINE
I just scared one off the candy boxes in the storeroom . . . .

VEEDA
That's what I mean. And a little girl came out early this evening . . . said she saw one running down the aisle . . . .

HELEN
You're still doing your own exterminating, Aunt Veeda?

HERMOINE
(proudly)
Of course she is! No one knows how to do it better.

VEEDA
It's a good time to do it while you're here. I can close the theater for three weeks . . . . give myself a nice vacation to enjoy your visit, honey.

(as Don comes back through door at right front)

Now here's Don back. You two run along and have a good time. You look just like you're eighteen years old going to a graduation party. Helen, your folks would be proud of you . . . if they were still alive . . . .

DON
(to Veeda)
Everything was quiet across the street. I just stepped in and bought a package of cigarettes but I intend to come back again on the way to the Country Club and look in on them . . . . a little after ten . . . .

(Don is not a smoker and he drops package of cigarettes into a sand-jar with distaste.)

VEEDA
Good. Come in the theater for a minute when you do.

HELEN
(as Don reaches for her hand and they move to the door)

Byeee . . . now . . . . Aunt Veeda . . . Hermoine . . . Elsie . . . be seeing you . . . .

(They go out door.)

HERMOINE
(watching them, a wistful expression on her face)

They make a handsome couple . . . . don't they?

VEEDA

They sure do.

HERMOINE

They just as much in love as ever, you think?

VEEDA

Sure looks like it. Oh . . . . I just hope that's how it is . . . .

HERMOINE
(turning back to the basket on counter)

You want me to take some of these cans down to the basement?

VEEDA
(going to counter, looks into basket, takes out one can and reads small print)

I just want to read over the instructions again . . . kind of refresh my memory . . . particularly on this room fogger. I hope I've got enough to fill this whole theater with fumes.

HERMOINE

You got a lot of cans. Ought to kill every bug and rat in this whole block.

VEEDA
(still reading instructions)

That's what I have to do.

HERMOINE

I got all the little kids counted and know just where every one of 'em is sittin'. I aim to take every one of 'em out the side door myself and lock the door so's nobody can sneak back in.

VEEDA

Good . . . .

HERMOINE
(goes to ticket-stand and takes bowl of popcorn she has swept from the floor)

You want to pour the poison for the rats over this popcorn now? I took what was left in the popcorn machine. You got enough poison for that much?

VEEDA
(taking bottle from basket)

I'll use this whole bottle. The corn'll really soak it up. Then you can put it where we've been putting the popcorn every night to attract the rats. Right under the table.

HERMOINE

You sure got 'em used to comin' there for a little snack every night.

VEEDA

That's the idea.

(She pours from the poison bottle into the container of popcorn Hermoine holds for her.)

They'll get a surprise tonight when they start to nibble. This is good old strychnine I bought years ago. Hard to get nowadays.

(Shakes bottle to get out every drop.)

Set it right where the pipes go into the wall. I know that's where they crawl in. They'll crawl out the same way. Got to get outside . . . think they got to get into fresh air . . . . kind of asphyxiates 'em . . . in no time at all . . . .

HERMOINE
(with satisfaction)

Yes'm. <u>This sure will fix 'em</u>.

VEEDA
(as Hermoine starts across lobby to basement door)

Be careful. Don't spill any of it.

(Hermoine carries it carefully, walking slowly, holding the popcorn container before her.)

ELSIE

I'm ready to close the box-office now. It's time.

VEEDA
(watches Hermoine go through door into basement)

Yes, Elsie.

(Elsie comes from cashier's cage with report, tickets and money bag in her hands.)

VEEDA (continued)

We might as well close now.

(Elsie goes to ticket-taker's stand where Veeda joins her as they look over the receipt page.)

We haven't sold a ticket for a good half hour, I guess.

ELSIE
(looking into the street, points her finger)

I've been watching a man out there, acts like he wants to buy a ticket but can't make up his mind.

VEEDA
(steps forward and looks into street)

Yes. I see him. He does act like he's interested in this movie. But if he is, why doesn't he come on in? Must see we're about ready to close up . . . .

ELSIE

Real nice dressed fellow. Handsome in a stocky way. Maybe if I get back inside the booth he'll make up his mind to buy a ticket.

VEEDA

No. He's moving back toward that fancy blue car over by the curb. I expect he's just one of those country club types looking us over . . . doing a bit of slumming down here on Main Street . . . . laughing about how it serves us right for tearing down East Fourth Street . . . and bringing 'em all right up here into the good part of town . . . . .

ELSIE

You don't think he could be a dope-peddler . . . .

VEEDA

Oh . . . . no . . . .

ELSIE

Or a pimp?

VEEDA

Oh . . . . no . . . .

ELSIE
(with fear in her voice)

Or the Mafia from Kansas City?

VEEDA

Oh . . . . <u>no</u> . . . .

VEEDA (continued)

(taking the receipt page, studies it)

I can't be worrying about him . . . now. Whatever he's up to . . . it's none of our business . . . .

ELSIE
(goes back to booth and turns out light)
Maybe so. But he keeps watching this theater like he's interested in it.

VEEDA
(looking into the money bag)
We didn't do too bad tonight.

ELSIE
Lots of little kids, as usual. I told their folks they'd have to be on time to pick them up when the show's over. Can't have 'em waiting around in the lobby 'till all hours.

VEEDA
(starts toward back left exit)
You stand there and watch the lobby for a few minutes, will you Elsie. While I take this money to the office and put it in the safe.

(She goes out as Hermoine comes back into the lobby, closing basement door behind her.)

HERMOINE
I reckon we got enough poison down there on that popcorn to kill every rat in this town. Miss Veeda really knows how to kill rats and roaches.

ELSIE
She knows what she's doin' all right. She's every bit as good as any of those exterminators that charge you an arm and a leg.

HERMOINE
(as she moves back to concession stand)
She's been doin' it a long time. Still . . . she's gettin' old . . . acted kind of scatter-brained these last few days . . . forgetting' to turn off the office light the other night. And plumb forgot to order popcorn from Theater Supply. I had to go to buy popcorn at the grocery store before we opened tonight.

ELSIE
She's been so excited about Helen coming from California. She's so proud of that girl she's fit to be tied . . . .

HERMOINE
Might pretty girl . . . from the time she was just a little tyke. A sweet, good girl too.

ELSIE
I guess she's done real well as a model in California. And starting to succeed in the movies . . . .

HERMOINE
Got something to brag about . . . comin' home to her high school reunion . . .

ELSIE
I notice how the ones are doing real well always come back to their high school reunions. The ones who aren't makin' it stay away . . . make some excuse . . . .

HERMOINE
I've known one or two girls got too fat. They couldn't take off enough weight to look like they used to look and just never showed up.

ELSIE
Well, Helen sure never put on any weight. Wearing that dress was a good way to prove it.

HERMOINE
Of course models have to watch what they eat. Starve themselves . . . from what I've heard . . . .

ELSIE
(walking to the window to look out)
That fellow's still standing out there looking at the theater. I sure can't figure him out.

HERMOINE
You mean that fellow by the fancy car? I think that's a foreign car.

ELSIE
I thought maybe he was going to buy a ticket to the show. He kept looking at this theater like he wanted to come in. My stars, I believe he's made up his mind. He <u>is comin' in</u>.

HERMOINE
(scurrying back behind concession stand)
Sure is.

(Shawn Arnold comes on stage at right front and pauses in front of the cashier's cage, reads the sign.)

ELSIE
Sir, we're not selling any more tickets. We closed the box-office. Show's been on about half an hour or more . . . . . .

SHAWN
Oh, I've seen this show . . . years ago. What is this? A fourth or fifth run movie house?

HERMOINE
Miss Beeda just picks the shows she likes and buys them for this theater. This used to be a first run movie house. She's seen all the shows in the last fifty years. She just buys the ones she really liked when she ran them brand new.

ELSIE
She's partial to John Wayne. We play a lot of his pictures.

SHAWN
(amused)
I see.

ELSIE
We always have business. Some of those boys from the Fort like to see a good show and have a place to sit down when they come to town. They're not particular.

HERMOINE
We always have a lot of little kids come to our shows. We can depend on that. They like the shows Miss Veeda chooses.

SHAWN
Seems to me this is a good location for a movie house that shows X-rated pictures. Or even XX rated ones.

HERMOINE
Miss Veeda won't show dirty pictures in this theater.

ELSIE
Back in the old days when we were a first run movie theater . . . we showed the best pictures to be had . . . . GONE WITH THE WIND, THE WIZARD OF OZ . . .

HERMOINE
That was before they tore down East Fourth Street. The honky-tonks were on East Fourth. Town people came here to the Kanza Theater reglar.

ELSIE
Decent folks are afraid to come down town at night now . . . what with the prostitutes walking the streets . . . and the pimps . . . and dope peddlers . . . .

(Suddenly she realizes that she may be talking to one involved in crime.)

That is . . . . excuse me . . . maybe I shouldn't have mentioned . . . . I guess I spoke out of turn . . . you see . . . .

HERMOINE
She just meant we got a real rough town here now, Mister. Our Main Street ain't what it used to be . . . .

SHAWN
(amused)
I can see that.

HERMOINE
We couldn't help but notice your car that's parked out in front. What kind of car is that?

SHAWN
It's a Jaguar.

ELSIE
That's what I thought it was. I've only seen one or two in town before. The pimps from Kansas City drive big fancy cars . . . . Cadillacs and Lincolns . . . Mercedes-Benz . . . . Jaguars . . . .

(putting her hand over her mouth)

Oh . . . . I didn't mean . . . . no comparison intended . . . it's just . . .

HERMOINE
What can we do for you, Mister?

SHAWN
(walking to concession stand)
I came in for a candy bar. Got any without calories? I've got to go on a diet . . . . starting next week . . . .

(laughs merrily, looking greedily at candy bars)

You don't carry a big stock of candy bars. Probably don't do enough business to carry all the popular brands. Oh well . . . . I'll take an Almond Joy.

HERMOINE
We let our stock run down because we're closin' up for a few weeks.

(hands him candy bar and takes money)

SHAWN
Pretty slow on the street tonight. I guess there aren't many soldiers in town.

(begins to eat candy with obvious pleasure)

ELSIE
Pay Day's the time they come in. We're between Pay Days. Not much business in this block except when the soldiers got money to spend.

HERMOINE
There's a lot goin' on in other parts of town this week end.

ELSIE
Several of the high school classes are having reunions. And then there's a convention of dentists meeting at the Hilton.

HERMOINE
Not that any of those folks would be comin' on Main Street anymore. Afraid to.

SHAWN
You folks don't seem to be afraid . . . running a show here in this rough part of town. Aren't you afraid of being robbed?

ELSIE
Veeda . . . . Mrs. Miller . . . . would just hand over the money if someone tried to rob her. It wouldn't be worth the trouble most nights . . . .

SHAWN
Just as I thought. It's a wonder anyone comes in this place at all. You should be running X rated movies at least. Skin-flicks would be better.

HERMOINE
Don't let Miss Veeda hear you suggest she show dirty movies. She feels real strong about those things.

SHAWN
(going to look at sign on cashier's cage)
So you're going to close this theater for the rest of the month. Remodeling the place?

ELSIE
We always say that. Maybe we will get around to doing a little painting before we open up again. Veeda may want to freshen things up a bit.

SHAWN
Why are you closing? Running out of John Wayne pictures?

HERMOINE
(with dignity)
Miss Veeda's got a lot of good pictures booked for when we open up.

ELSIE
It's none of <u>your</u> business, Mister. But we're closing this theater so as to exterminate bugs and rats. Some buildings here on Main Street has to have exterminating done now and again . . . .

SHAWN
Oh sure. I can see this theater is a real worry . . . . to all of you . . .

HERMOINE
We're doin' all right. We been in business a long time and we know everything there is to know about . . . .

SHAWN
You think this evening would be a good time to talk to your boss? I've got some ideas that could turn this theater into a little gold mine.

(Veeda enters from left back carrying a bundle of advertising posters.)

ELSIE
Here she is now. You can feel her out. Veeda, here's a man would like to talk to you.

SHAWN
We've met before, Mrs. Miller. Do you remember me?

VEEDA
(coming forward, puts the posters on the concession counter, looks sharply at Shawn)
You do look familiar. Seems like I've seen you somewhere before.

ELSIE
I guess this gentleman wants to talk business with you, Veeda. I'll just go on in the show and look at some of the picture until Nick comes for me.

(going toward right exit at back)
Hermoine, would you mind calling me when you hear Nick honk his horn out front.

HERMOINE
Sure will, Miss Elsie.

SHAWN
(offers his hand and Veeda takes it, still puzzled)
My name is Shawn Arnold. Ten years ago I met you and your husband at SHOWARAMA in Kansas City.

VEEDA
(shaking his hand with cordiality)
Oh yes. But that's so long ago. It's hard to remember all the people we met. We used to enjoy SHOWARAMA.

SHAWN
It was a great place to make contacts.

VEEDA
What company were you with? Metro? Universal? Warners? We used to buy from the best. And Buena Vista. That was my favorite.

SHAWN
I wasn't with any of those companies. I sold a special kind of picture that's grown in popularity since those days.

VEEDA
What kind of pictures did you sell?

SHAWN
I sold adult films. I still do. I make and sell films strictly for adults.

VEEDA
You don't mean those filthy pornographic pictures that show in theaters the police are always raiding in Kansas City?

(stepping back from him with revulsion)

SHAWN
People want to see pictures like that.

VEEDA
I saw one once. Something about Vixons. My husband and I went to see what it was all about. I was embarrassed to be seen coming out of the theater.

SHAWN
That's an old one all right. One of the first. They're getting a lot better now.

VEEDA
You mean dirtier?

SHAWN
We're making an art of production. Beautiful scenes. Good dialogue.

VEEDA
I don't mind telling you that I'm shocked by those pictures.

SHAWN
A lot of people like to be shocked.

VEEDA
Not nice people.

SHAWN
Our pictures are true art. You've heard of OH! CALCUTTA, haven't you?

VEEDA
I've heard of it all right. And when it played over in that college town down the highway I went to see it. A lot of naked dancing that was supposed to fool you into thinking you were patronizing the arts.

SHAWN
The critics thought it was a beautiful example of erotic art.

VEEDA
It didn't fool me. I was ashamed for all of those people in the theater.

SHAWN
A full house for every showing, I'll bet. You could have full houses in your theater if you ran the right pictures.

VEEDA
I can't afford to buy first runs anymore. Town people who used to come to the shows are afraid to come downtown at night.

(bitterly, gesturing toward the clubs on the other side of the street)

Surely you noticed we're in the middle of a rough block.

SHAWN
Yeah. I've studied your whole situation. This is the perfect location for a theater that shows adult films.

VEEDA
(angrily)
I wouldn't even show pictures that are rated R in this theater. Let alone those filthy movies you're selling . . . . . .

SHAWN
You'd draw business from that college town. You could have those college kids lined up for a block if you ran something . . . different . . . in the way of a movie. And the soldiers . . . . they'd stampede the place . . . .

VEEDA
I think those filthy movies are the ruination of young people today. We used to have laws in Kansas . . . .

SHAWN
I know about those old fashioned laws here in Kansas. Fortunately this state's much more tolerant now.

VEEDA
Young man, how did you get into this dirty business?

SHAWN
It's a long story.

VEEDA
You look like a decent young man. Did you ever belong to a church or go to Sunday School when you were a child?

SHAWN
No. I'm from Los Angeles . . . .

VEEDA
Hollywood?

SHAWN
Yes. I was a child actor in Hollywood. I was learning to sing and dance. I was going to a school for child actors.

VEEDA
Were you one of those poor children whose mothers dragged them from place to place trying to get them in a movie?

SHAWN
You guessed it, Mrs. Miller. My mother was ambitious. I knew that to eat you had to work. And I worked.

VEEDA
You never had time to play?

SHAWN
I looked upon work as play. Yes, my mother was ambitious for my good. She kept me toeing the line for my own good.

VEEDA
Did she punish you?

SHAWN
Not very severely. She did lock me in a dark clothes closet a time or two if I didn't learn my lines . . . but I wanted to succeed as much as she wanted me to succeed . . . .

VEEDA
I'm sorry for you.

SHAWN
(laughing)
You needn't be. I'm making a lot of money now. I'm a success. I make film that is considered . . . . artistic . . . . on the order of OH! CALCUTTA . . . . sort of . . . .

VEEDA
I'm sorry for you.

SHAWN
And I'm sorry for you. Running a theater that's obviously going broke. Mrs. Miller, I'm only trying to help you . . . .

VEEDA
You're in partnership with the devil, young man.

SHAWN
Mrs. Miller, I'm afraid you are just a bit old-fashioned. It's only good business to keep up with the times, to play up to date pictures in your theater.

VEEDA
I'm playing good clean pictures in this theater.

SHAWN

I was afraid you might feel this way about buying my pictures . . . any pictures that would attract a crowd . . . . adult pictures for adults . . .

VEEDA

You guessed right if that's what you thought.

SHAWN

Oh, it wasn't a guess. Before you opened up I ate dinner across the street and asked some questions about this theater. Your friend who runs the restaurant told me how you always run good, clean pictures . . . especially pictures starring John Wayne.

VEEDA

Ruby talks too much. I suppose she told you everything worth knowing about this town.

SHAWN

(He has seated himself on the divan and is carefully unwrapping his candy bar.)

She told me about the class reunion being held tonight. About your beautiful niece who came back for it especially to make up with her old high school boy friend.

VEEDA

Ruby does talk too much.

SHAWN

I was interested. I might make a movie out of the idea of a high school reunion. I write my own scripts. Yes, she gave me some good ideas.

VEEDA

Well, Mr. Arnold. You can take your ideas on out of here. I intend to keep running my theater just the way I've been running it.

(turning to the advertising posters she has laid on the counter)

I'm pretty busy tonight and can't waste any more time, if you'll excuse me.

SHAWN

(getting up from the couch, walks across lobby)

All right . . . . Mrs. Miller. I'll go. But . . . . I'll be seeing you.

(He bites into his candy bar and pauses at the John Wayne poster by the cashier's cage . . . then goes out shaking his head.)

HERMOINE
Shall I put up those new posters now, Miss Veeda?

VEEDA
(unrolls the posters and smooths them with her hand)

Might as well.

HERMOINE
That was a real pushy salesman, Miss Veeda.

VEEDA
Well, he couldn't sell me. Not any of the trashy pictures he's peddling.

(taking one poster, holds it up to look at it)

Ruby shouldn't talk to every stranger that comes in her restaurant. I'm going to tell her so.

HERMOINE
I reckon you told her about that several times.

VEEDA
I'm always telling her.

(putting down poster on counter, moves to window at front and looks across the street)

She's closing up now. I'm going to be real cross with her this time. Even if she is such a good friend.

HERMOINE
(starting to take old advertising posters from the various frames in the lobby)

Yes'm.

VEEDA
It sort of gives me the creeps for that man to know about Helen and how she came back to this high school reunion hoping to make up with her old boyfriend.

HERMOINE
I 'spect you want Miss Helen to come back to Kaw City and settle down.

VEEDA
I sure do. She's spent ten years running around the country trying to get to be a famous model . . . then these last few years . . . trying to get to be a famous movie star. Well, she ought to settle down and get married while she's still young enough to have a family.

HERMOINE
I guess it's pretty hard to get famous doing anything these days . . . .

VEEDA
That's right. And although she always wrote real hopeful letters . . . . I never saw her picture in any magazine. Or heard of her being seen on TV.

HERMOINE
Maybe out in California she was on TV.

VEEDA
I don't know. I guess so.

(There is the sound of loud clapping from the area of the theater. Veeda hurries to the door leading into theater.)

Film's broke, I guess. I'll go quiet them until the operator gets it spliced.

(She vanishes through curtains. Hermoine moves to entrance to put a poster in the frame and Ruby comes in past the cashier's cage.)

HERMOINE
(as Ruby enters)
Good evening, Miss Ruby.

RUBY
Hi Hermoine.

(stops in front of John Wayne poster at entrance to theater)

Another John Wayne. I wish Veeda would book some modern pictures. I'd really like to see Ann Margret in MIDDLE AGED CRAZY.

HERMOINE
Miss Veeda says she can't afford to book first runs.

RUBY
Probably right. Nobody in town would come down here to this theater to see them.

HERMOINE
Most town folks are scared to come down here into this block at night.

RUBY
Most town folks are chicken.

(She has moved into theater and is looking out front windows at the joints across the street.)

RUBY (continued)

You and I and Veeda and Elsie seem to do all right. We come down here every night and nothing's happened to us . . . . yet . . . . . .

HERMOINE
(proudly)
Us women folks has a lot of gumption.

RUBY
That's right, Hermoine. And maybe you've got more gumption that any of us. I've heard some of these young blacks getting smart with you . . . calling you an Oreo . . . . taunting you for catering to Veeda . . . .

HERMOINE
Miss Veeda's my friend. My best friend . . . you could say. And I'm her best friend.

RUBY
Yes, we're all good friends . . . you and Veeda and Elsie and me . . . we've got to stick together with these young pimps . . . and dope peddlers . . . here all around us . . . .

HERMOINE
I'm not afraid of any of them pimps. The local ones at least. Some of 'em was little boys used to come to this theater reglar. I sold 'em popcorn.

RUBY
And gave 'em popcorn sometimes. Or weinie sandwiches . . . if they looked like they were starving . . . .

HERMOINE
You did the same . . . . over at your restaurant . . . .

RUBY
Yes . . . . we've all looked out for the poor little kids . . . .

HERMOINE
Some folks think the world's comin' to an end . . . everybody gettin' so wicked . . . neglectin' their childrun . . . drinkin' and fornicatin' . . . .

RUBY
I guess we just got used to how things went down hill in this town. It happened so gradual we just never thought much about it.

HERMOINE

(She has been agitatedly fanning herself with a paper fan during this conversation, as she stands behind the concession stand.)

It's not just in this town. It's all over the country.

RUBY

From what I hear.

HERMOINE

I guess it was a real mistake to tear down East Fourth Street. That's what started our Main Street on the down hill slide.

(She emphasizes the last three words by hitting the counter with fan three times.)

RUBY

Putting in those shopping centers around town was what really started it.

HERMOINE

That's what emptied the buildings on Main Street all right.

RUBY

Oh . . . it's just everything together, but tearing down East Fourth Street started this block going bad.

HERMOINE

(calming down, starts fanning herself again, looking into the street)

Sure nothin' much happenin' tonight . . . . real slow . . . .

RUBY

Nothing much happening except that movie producer looking over our little honky-tonk block.

(Veeda comes back as Ruby moves to the couch and Hermoine starts straightening the candy boxes in the case.)

VEEDA

Ruby, why did you have to tell that movie producer all of our business?

RUBY

(innocently)

I just treated him friendly like I do all my customers, Veeda.

VEEDA

You're too friendly. You're going to get into trouble sometime telling everybody that comes in your restaurant anything that pops into your head.

RUBY

It pays to be friendly in my business. You aren't friendly enough, Veeda. People think you're real cold to them. They tell me.

VEEDA

I'm cold to parents who dump their kids for the evening and come back drunker than hoot owls to pick them up, hit the little kids if they're tired and crying . . . . yes . . . . I'm real unfriendly to those folks.

RUBY
You're a good woman, Veeda. Don't take what I said unkindly. I know how you stand up for those little kids. Stop people from bein' mean while they're here in your theater.

VEEDA
I have to be careful though. I have to handle people just right or they might take it out on the kids when they get 'em home.

RUBY
I guess you'll be mighty glad to get this place closed up and take a rest while Helen's here.

VEEDA
It's a good time to be closed. No business anyway this time of month.

RUBY
I'm having the exterminators come and do my building. That way I'll be killin' the bugs on my side of the street while you're killin' them on this side.

VEEDA
I had the janitor drill a lot of new holes in the floor from the basement. Fumes ought to drift all over this theater from all the cans we'll open up.

RUBY
Well . . . . you've done it often enough. I guess you know what you're doing.

VEEDA
It'll sure be nice to get it done and all closed up, forget it for the rest of June. Just sit around and visit with Helen.

RUBY
(jumping up and going to join Veeda, helping her get a poster into place)

She got in on the plane all right?

VEEDA
Just in time to get dressed and go to the reunion party at Don Harbison's house.

RUBY
Had she changed much? Was she as pretty as ever?

VEEDA
She looked <u>beautiful</u>. Came in here to show me how she looked before she went to the party.

RUBY
I sure hope everything works out. I mean . . . . her making up with Don . . .

VEEDA
I could tell Helen's still crazy about him. I've got my fingers crossed.

RUBY
I'd like to see Helen . . . and the rest of them at the reunion. How about you and me goin' out to the Country Club and lookin' in at the dance? I could stand a drink after this long day. We could just sit in the bar.

VEEDA
Ruby, you know I don't drink. And I sure wouldn't be seen sitting at the bar in the Country Club.

RUBY
(patiently)
I know you belong to the Temperance League and won't drink liquor, but you could have a Shirley Temple.

VEEDA
It's the principle of the thing. I don't even want to be seen in a bar.

RUBY
I'd sure like to see how Helen and Don look together dancing. They used to be a real romantic couple.

VEEDA
If he still feels about her like she feels about him, they'll be on their way to the altar.

RUBY
Funny how she wants to give up her career as a model and movie actress.

VEEDA
I think she realized she's not getting any younger.

RUBY
And Don's liable to make up his mind about one of those girls he's been dating . . . .

VEEDA
He's played the field all right. Never seemed <u>serious</u> about anybody though.

RUBY
Probably couldn't get Helen out of his mind.

VEEDA
She's back just in time . . . . if you ask me. She's going to sing a song to open the dance tonight.

RUBY
She is? What's she goin' to sing?

VEEDA

THE WAY WE WERE.

RUBY

She's really goin' to try to turn time back ten years, isn't she?

VEEDA

It's a good tune to start the dance with.

RUBY

Seems funny to me that Helen never found anybody to fall in love with there in California. In ten long years?

VEEDA

Oh, I think she found several men she was interested in . . . but couldn't see any future with any of them . . . .

RUBY

Well, she'll sure be able to see some future with Don Harbison. He'll end up governor of this state if I'm any judge.

VEEDA

He's ambitious all right. He'd be perfect for Helen. If only . . . .

RUBY

I expect she never met any like him in California. I hear anything goes out there . . . . regular Sodom and Gomorrah . . . . San Francisco and Los Angeles.

VEEDA

Helen never told me much about the men she was dating.

RUBY

I guess it's not so easy nowadays . . . getting ahead as a movie star. Not so easy in the old days either.

VEEDA
(sighing as she finishes putting up posters)

I would like to hear Helen sing THE WAY WE WERE.

RUBY
(excitedly)

We ought to get out there to the Country Club so we can listen from the bar.

VEEDA

We'll see. Why don't you go on in and see the show for awhile? When Helen and Don come back . . . . I'll make up my mind.

RUBY

They're coming back here to the theater on the way to the Club?

VEEDA
Yes. I'll give it some thought between now and then.

(Elsie comes into the lobby from back left, walking stiffly, as though she is almost too weary to move)

ELSIE
Hasn't Nick honked the car horn for me yet?

HERMOINE
Haven't heard anybody honk.

(moves to look out Exit door)

ELSIE
(joining Hermoine at the door)
No. He's not there. Maybe I'll have to catch a ride with you or Veeda if he doesn't show up. I'll bet he's got in a card game at the Elks and forgotten all about me.

RUBY
You're welcome to ride with me. I'm tryin' to talk Veeda into going out to the Country Club and have a drink after the show closes, peek in at the reunion dance. Like to go along?

ELSIE
That sounds nice. If Nick never shows up.

VEEDA
I'd like to see them dancing.

(wistfully)

I'd like to see how they all look together after ten years. I just loved that bunch of little kinds.

ELSIE
They grew up comin' to this theater. I'd like to see how they look now.

RUBY
If Nick comes maybe you better tell him to go on without you. Come with me and Veeda to the club.

VEEDA
(persuaded)
Well . . . . I think I will go to the club with you. But I won't sit at the bar.

RUBY
We can sit at a table and even if the door's closed into the ball-room we can take a peek in there once in awhile. They won't know we're there.

ELSIE
Might as well go in and watch old John Wayne again. That little girl in this show is real cute.

RUBY
I'll sit with you for awhile. Until it's time to go out to the Club.

(Ruby and Elsie go back into the theater. Veeda gathers up some of the spray cans from the basket on counter and starts off stage left back.)

VEEDA
Hermoine, if those tarts Eve and Lilith as they call themselves come in here . . . don't let them linger in the lobby.

HERMOINE
They always ask to use our restroom.

VEEDA
They don't want to use the restroom. They just want to go in the theater and see if there's any young soldiers looking at the show.

HERMOINE
Yes'm. I know that's what they're up to. Tryin' to entice some nice young soldier who's sittin' quiet tryin' to have a nice time in Kaw City.

VEEDA
I like to protect my customers from any annoyance . . . so you've got to stop those girls from going in there.

HERMOINE
I'll tell 'em they can't go back to the restrooms 'cause you're puttin' the bug poison in 'em right now.

VEEDA
That's what I'm doing. Putting out the cans so we can get 'em started after we get everyone out of the building.

(She carries cans off stage through left back entrance to the theater. Hermoine gets big John Wayne poster and fastens it to front of concession counter.)

HERMOINE
(talking to herself as she stands back to admire it)

That looks real nice. Ought to bring in the customers once we open up again.

(As she stands admiring poster, Slick comes into theater, pauses at cashier's cage and peers cautiously into the lobby.)

HERMOINE (continued)

Yes sir, that oughta bring 'em in.

SLICK

You talkin' to yourself again, Old Woman?

(Hermoine turns quickly.)

HERMOINE

The box-office is closed, Boy. You ought not to come sneakin' up on me like that.

SLICK

I'm not sneakin' up on you, Old Woman. I'm just lookin' for that no-good Eve and Lilith. Figured they'd be hidin' out here in the theater. Lookin' at this old John Wayne show agin'.

HERMOINE

(going back behind counter)

Haven't seen either of them this evenin'.

SLICK

(going toward theater door at back right)

I'll just have a look in there. See if you're tellin' the truth.

HERMOINE

They're not in there. I told you. Miss Veeda said not to let them into the theater this evenin'. And that means you too, Slick.

SLICK

(coming to lean on the counter)

I know she hides 'em sometimes in this theater.

HERMOINE

Miss Veeda feels real sorry for those little girls.

SLICK

Yeah. I know. Always tryin' to get 'em jobs and back into her Sunday School class. Always preachin' at 'em . . .

(laughs boisterously)

She's a <u>crazy old woman</u>.

HERMOINE

She don't want you hangin' around here, Slick. She's got no use for pimps.

SLICK

You're tellin' <u>me</u>. I know she <u>hates pimps</u>.

HERMOINE
Miss Veeda don't allow herself to hate folks, Slick, but if she could hate anybody she hates pimps.

SLICK
I heard her say she thinks we're workin' with the devil.

(with a shout of laughter)

Crazy old woman.

HERMOINE
You better get on down the street.

SLICK
That Ruby . . . . now she's just a little better. Told me Miss Veeda said she'd like to see all us pimps stood up in a row and shot down by the police.

HERMOINE
I never heard Miss Veeda say that. Miss Ruby talks a lot. She mighta made it up.

SLICK
(aggrievedly)
I thought that was mighty unkind of Miss Veeda talkin' like that. I'm runnin' a business just like she's runnin' a picture show.

HERMOINE
It's a sinful business you're runnin'.

SLICK
Some folks think different.

(going back to door leading to the basement)

I think she lets 'em hide down in the basement sometimes when they feel like loafin'. Down there in her private sittin' room.

HERMOINE
Don't go down there. We got spray cans of fumigatin' stuff set around. You might start one of 'em off accidentally.

SLICK
(opening door to look down the stairs, switching on the light, looking down)

You sure them two bitches not hidin' down there?

HERMOINE
I haven't seen either of 'em tonight.

SLICK
(closes door, comes back to counter)
SHIT. SHIT . . . SHIT . . . SHIT . . . that's what you're full of Old Woman . . . and lies . . . .

HERMOINE
(drawing herself up with dignity, speaks in a reprimanding tone)

Watch your language, Boy. Miss Veeda don't allow no vulgar talk in this theater.

SLICK
What's old lady Miller goin' to do? Wash my mouth out with soap?

HERMOINE
You better go now, Slick. Before she comes back in here. She don't like you hangin' around in this lobby.

SLICK
(pointing at candy in counter)
I'll buy a candy bar, Old Woman. Then I'll go. If you say they ain't here tonight . . . maybe they ain't . . . but I'll be back. In case they do come in here to loaf around.

HERMOINE
I s'pose you want a Milky Way like always?

SLICK
Right.

(Puts down money and picks up candy bar as Veeda comes back into lobby. Then he turns to basement door again.)

I just better have a look down in that basement . . . just to make sure them bitches ain't hidin' out on me.

(Veeda goes to the basement door and pulls it wide open for him.)

VEEDA
You just do that. Go down there in the basement and see for yourself.

SLICK
I'll just do that.

(He goes through the door and down the steps.)

VEEDA
(closing the door after him, reaches up for the hook that locks the door)

Shall I lock him down there, Hermoine?

HERMOINE
It'd serve him right, but you don't want to rile him, Miss Veeda.

VEEDA
(steps back from door)
He'd just holler and scream so somebody would come out of the theater and make us let him out.

(Slick opens door, steps back into lobby.)

SLICK
Why'd you close that door, Mrs. Miller?

(goes to hook and inspects it)

You wasn't thinkin' of lockin' me down there, was you?

(glowering at her; Hermoine speaks quickly)

HERMOINE
No. Of course not. But you saw how things were down there, didn't you?

SLICK
(to Veeda, ignoring Hermoine's remark)
You better never get no ideas about lockin' me down there in your basement . . . .

VEEDA
You didn't see anything of your girls down there, did you?

SLICK
(calming down)
No. You wasn't tellin' no lies this time. Real neat place you got down there . . . movie books to read . . . easy chairs . . . even popcorn to eat while readin' . . . .

HERMOINE
(anxiously)
You didn't touch anything down there, did you? You didn't eat any popcorn?

SLICK
Touch anything? I touched the magazines . . . . opened one . . . .

HERMOINE
The popcorn . . . you didn't eat any popcorn?

SLICK
No. But my shoe hit that bowl of popcorn under the table and I set it up where it belonged . . . by the magazines . . . .

HERMOINE
But you didn't eat any?

SLICK
I ain't so fond of cold popcorn. You used to feed me that when I was a little kid . . . comin' in here . . . starved for any food. I ate too much of it . . . in those days . . . . can't stand it now . . . .

VEEDA
(bitterly)
You were a starved little neglected child and we saw that you got fed. We saw that you got into trade school and learned to be a carpenter . . . when you got grown.

HERMOINE
And look how you're repayin' us for helpin' you.

VEEDA
Why aren't you working for Kaw City contractors like you started to do when you finished trade school?

SLICK
I'm in business for myself now because I can make money . . . real money . . . more than I could get poun' nails . . . doin' odd jobs for some fellow didn't want to hire me in the first place . . . because I'm black . . . .

VEEDA
Carpenters work is good honest work that won't land you in jail. And that's where you're headed for now . . . . Slick Bender . . . . with your so-called business. You've got to prove you're a good carpenter . . . better than the other men.

SLICK
(loudly)
I'm makin' good money and buyin' old houses and usin' my trade to fix 'em up so when that county attorney closes down this block I'll have somethin' to fall back on. I'll be in the landlord business, not beggin' some contractor to hire me and make me prove I'm better than his other men . . .

HERMOINE
(grudgingly)
Well . . . I'm glad you're not squandering your money . . . even if it is sin money you and those little girls are gettin' . . . .

SLICK
I'm makin' Lilith and Eve put their money in old houses. Even if they don't want to . . . . I'm makin' 'em do it . . . . so they'll have somethin' saved back.

VEEDA
(wearily)
I suppose to your way of thinking you're doing the right thing . . . but you're not. You're following a wicked path.

SLICK

It's only good business . . . to make money where there's money to be made. If you can't make it honest . . . you make it any way you can . . . .

(laughs boisterously)

We're just makin' hay while the sun shines . . . as you white folks are so fond of sayin'.

VEEDA

I've heard enough of your talk for tonight. Get out of my theater.

SLICK

I'm goin' now, but I'll be watchin' this place. I know you let them girls hide down in your basement readin' those movie star magazines . . . .

(swaggers out door past cashier's cage)

VEEDA

That rat . . . that slick rat. Did you notice how he caught on to my closing that door on him?

HERMOINE

I reckon he's learned to watch people real careful . . . brought up like he was . . . . starvin' and dodgin' blows . . .

VEEDA

It doesn't excuse him. We gave him a chance to make something of himself. I'd like to lock him up down in that basement and leave him there until he starved to death.

HERMOINE

But you wouldn't do that, Miss Veeda. You're a good woman.

VEEDA

No. I guess I wouldn't do that to him, but I'd like to.

HERMOINE

It's just his business to run herd on Lilith and Eve. You can't hardly blame him for mindin' his business. He is savin' his money and makin' them save theirs . . . . buyin' property and fixin' it up . . . .

VEEDA

He's a procurer. And they're prostitutes. And it's a sinful business. I wouldn't be surprised if the whole caboodle are on drugs. He's probably turned those nice little girls into dope-fiends.

HERMOINE

(worriedly)

I sure hope not. But a lot of 'em are . . . .

VEEDA

Yes. I'll just bet they <u>are dope-fiends . . . those girls</u>. He's got them enslaved. He's just a devil with them in his clutches.

HERMOINE

They <u>want</u> to be in his clutches. They <u>all like</u> the business they're in.

VEEDA
(with resignation)

I know. I shouldn't interfere. I know what the score is, but I'm just too old-fashioned to get used to the way things are nowadays.

CURTAIN ON ACT I

ACT II

(It is 10 o'clock in the evening on June 7, 1980 and the second show is half over. Hermoine has finished putting up the advertising in the lobby and is polishing the glass in the concession counter. Veeda enters from back right, parting the curtains and pausing to look back into the theater.)

VEEDA
This is a good show. I wish I could get more exactly like it.

HERMOINE
You got some good ones comin' up. MARY POPPINS and LILIES OF THE FIELD.

VEEDA
I'm going to run matinees every day when we have MARY POPPINS the middle of July.

HERMOINE
That ought to bring in a bunch of little kids. Got nothin' much to do in the afternoons when school's out. Their mothers come too sometimes . . . .

VEEDA
Right. And our air conditioning system is still real good. Parking lots are several blocks away though . . . too far from the theater . . . .

HERMOINE
Be a good thing if the city bought up all those buildings across the street and made a parking lot.

VEEDA
That's what I'm hoping for. Then we'd be sitting pretty. I could really get this theater doing business again.

HERMOINE
I reckon the city thinks they already spent enough on parkin' lots.

VEEDA
I know. I guess all I can count on is Don Harbison getting Main Street so cleaned up it'll be like old times.

HERMOINE
Times has sure changed. That Slick Bender was real sassy to you, Miss Veeda.

VEEDA

Arrogant as usual.

HERMOINE

You don't want to rile him, Miss Veeda. He could be real mean . . . .

VEEDA

I know. Sometimes I think he'd like to kill me. Just as . . . . God forgive me . . . . I'd like to kill him . . . .

HERMOINE

It's only natural for you to feel that way Miss Veeda. But he's a dangerous man . . . . if he's on dope . . . . like we been thinkin' . . . .

VEEDA

I'm sure you're right . . . and strung out sometimes . . . . like they say . . .

HERMOINE

That's when he'd be the meanest . . . .

VEEDA

And got those two little girls on dope too. That's the worst part of it . . .

HERMOINE

He knows you talk to them about gettin' away from him . . . takin' respectable jobs . . . comin' back to your Sunday School class . . . .

VEEDA

I know I'm wasting my breath . . . but I'm trying . . . .

HERMOINE

He don't like it when you talk to him like a Sunday School teacher. He might do you harm sometime . . . if he was in a mean mood . . . .

VEEDA

I know I ought to be careful.

(looking toward chasier's cage as Lilith and Eve enter)

Oh . . . . Oh . . . . here <u>they</u> come . . . .

HERMOINE

(coming forward, making shooing motions)

Out. <u>Out</u>. The <u>both</u> of you. Slick's just left here about ten minutes ago lookin' for you two. Accused us of lettin' you rest down in Miss Veeda's hidey-hole.

EVE
(coming forward, pertly)
Don't worry, Hermie. We know where Slick is. We been watchin' him. He just went in the Red Demon.

LILITH
And we come in here to rest our feet. We been walkin' all over town.

VEEDA
(coldly)
You girls just go right on out and keep walking. I don't want any trouble in here tonight. My niece and her boyfriend are supposed to come in here any time now. He's the county attorney. I don't want him to see you hanging around in here. This is supposed to be a decent movie theater.

EVE
It's a decent picture show all right. Too decent. Never show any late pictures. Always G . . . or PG. Who wants to see John Wayne all the time.

VEEDA
On your way girls.

LILITH
(going to counter)
I could use a candy bar. One of those Almond Joys.

HERMOINE
All right. I'll sell you a candy bar and then you get going. We don't want any trouble in here tonight.

(hands her a bar and takes money)

EVE
We're lookin' for somebody. We heard a man was in town who makes moving pictures. Those kind with naked women dancin'. We want to meet him.

VEEDA
How'd you hear about him?

LILITH
Miss Ruby told us about him.

VEEDA
Ruby talks too much.

HERMOINE
(looking out front window)
Oh-oh . . . . I think I see Slick comin' out of the Red Demon Club. He's comin' back across the street. Quick . . . out . . . .

(gesturing toward front exit door)

VEEDA
No. He'll beat you girls up if he catches you loafing. Quick . . . hide in my basement lounge . . . .

(opens door to basement)

EVE
Call us when he's gone, will you?

(They start toward basement door.)

VEEDA
Don't touch any of the cans and stuff on the table. Just sit in the chairs and wait. I've got all my bug and rat exterminating stuff lined up ready. And don't eat the popcorn. It's got rat poison on it. Even a bite of it would kill you.

LILITH
(drawing back)
Maybe it's dangerous to go down there now.

VEEDA
No. I start the automatic room-foggers just before I lock up and leave tonight. It's safe enough now. Hurry. He's crossing the street.

(They go downstairs and Veeda closes door.)

HERMOINE
You takin' a chance hidin' his women from him down there in your lounge. He knows you let 'em hide down there.

VEEDA
I'll handle that rat. He's looked down there once tonight. He won't go down there again . . . particularly since he thinks I'd like to lock him down there.

(She steps briskly forward as Slick comes in.)

I suppose you're still looking for Jean and Marie?

SLICK
(glowering)
I'm lookin' for Lilith and Eve.

VEEDA
They're still Jean and Marie to me. I don't call them by those silly names you and them made up.

SLICK
Are you hidin' 'em in here again?

VEEDA
If I were it'd be my business . . . .

HERMOINE
(quickly)
Did you look down yonder at the Twilight Zone? Seems like there's kind of a crowd gathered 'round there tonight.

(goes to look past cashier's cage)

Yes, sir. I wouldn't be surprised if they went that way.

SLICK
I'm on my way down there. Just wanted to make sure they hadn't come in here after I left.

VEEDA
I would hate to have to call the police because there are unwanted people in this theater lobby.

SLICK
(stepping forward, meancingly)
You planning to call the police, Mrs. Miller?

HERMOINE
(anxiously)
Yes sir, I expect that's just where they went. You just might hurry down there if you want to catch up with 'em.

SLICK
If you know what's good for you, you better never call the police to put me out of this theater, Mrs. Miller.

VEEDA
Are you threatening me, Sir?

HERMOINE
Seems like I see two girls just goin' in the door. I think it could be them.

(She pulls at Slick's arm and gestures in the direction of TWILIGHT ZONE.)

Take a look right down there. That fancy foreign car's parked in front of it. There's a Hollywood movie maker in town tonight . . . owns that car. Eve and Lilith might be wantin' to meet him.

SLICK
Yeah. I talked to that John over at the restaurant earlier. Miss Ruby told me about him. He's got money . . . real money. Maybe those two are tendin' to business after all.

(He goes across lobby and out door.)

HERMOINE
Whew . . . . Miss Veeda . . . . for a little I thought you was gettin' cross-wise with him.

VEEDA
His eyes looked shiny. Did you notice? Maybe he's on some kind of high. That's how you're supposed to be able to tell . . . if their eyes look shiny . . . .

HERMOINE
You're lucky if he's full of dope. It's when they run-out they get dangerous, real dangerous . . . . .

(grumbling to herself she goes behind counter again)

VEEDA
I guess I better get those girls upstairs and out of here.

HERMOINE
You could let 'em out the back way. Out the exit door. Then they could kind of drift down the alley and over to TWILIGHT ZONE.

VEEDA
(going to door and calling down)
Jean. Marie. The coast's clear. Come on up. Slick's gone into the Twilight Zone Club.

(The girls come upstairs.)

EVE
Mrs. Miller, we don't go by those names anymore. We got new names. I'm Eve. Jean is Lilith. We've told you several times before.

VEEDA
Silly names. I don't know when you girls are going to wake up to the path you've taken and straighten up. I could get both of you jobs right here in town. Respectable work.

LILITH
We're doin' good, Mrs. Miller. We're makin' upwards of a thousand dollars just on a weekend.

EVE
We've got a little night-club act worked out. We've got our eye on better things.

VEEDA
You could have a job working in the dime store, Marie. And I've talked to the manager of the Country Club about your waiting on tables, Jean.

LILITH
People who stand all day waiting on tables and working in stores . . . get varicose veins.

EVE
We can't take any chance of bringing on varicose veins. Our legs is our fortune.

VEEDA
You're both going down a path right into hell. I'm trying to stop you. You were nice little girls five years ago. Going to Sunday School. Living right.

EVE
Times have changed, Mrs. Miller. Things are just like in those shows you won't run here in the Kanza Theater. People like to look at those shows because that's the way things are now.

VEEDA
Nice people still like to look at good clean shows.

EVE
All the people we know are lookin' for adult entertainment. And we're helpin' to provide it.

LILITH
This town needs girls like us. We keep the soldiers comin' in to spend their money.

VEEDA
(impatiently)
I don't want to hear any of those old arguments about how you prostitutes are necessary to a town near an army base.

EVE
Just the same it's the truth. We're keepin' all the good women in this town from gettin' raped.

VEEDA
I'd just like to see this whole block cleaned completely up. Let the soldiers go to some other town for a change.

LILITH
They never should have tore down East Fourth Street.

VEEDA
Yes. They should. That was a blight on this town.

EVE
We got a good act worked up to do in the nightclubs . . . me and Lilith. It's a song and dance number.

LILITH
A man wrote the words for us and the music. It's called . . .

EVE
It's called THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE TORE DOWN EAST FOURTH STREET. What do you think of that?

VEEDA
(wearily)
I'm not surprised. But I want you girls to skeedaddle out of here now. Before that rat Slick comes back and finds you here. He acted real hateful this last time he came in.

LILITH
Slick can be real hateful. Maybe we better get on down the street.

EVE
We're lookin' for a man.

VEEDA
You're always looking for a man. Go on. Get out. Look for men somewhere else.

EVE
But this is a special man. The man who owns that foreign car out there.

(She points at car parked down the street past cashier's cage.)

HERMOINE
That's a Jag-war car. Likely the man who owns it is in the Twilight Club.

LILITH
We already been there.

EVE
Miss Ruby told us that man was a movie producer from Hollywood. We want to meet him.

VEEDA
Well, he's not in here.

(Elsie comes into the lobby as loud clapping is heard from the theater area.)

ELSIE
The picture's off the screen, Veeda. Film must have broke again. Guess you better go get everybody calmed down 'till the operator gets it fixed.

VEEDA
(distractedly)
Those old machines. They just keep breaking the film.

(She hurries back through exit back left.)

ELSIE
We're playing such old shows the film's worn out before we get it.

HERMOINE
Yes'm. I guess that's the trouble all right.

ELSIE
And the machines are a lot of junk . . . something always going wrong . . . .

HERMOINE
Miss Veeda can't afford to buy no new ones . . . the way business is.

ELSIE
(coming forward to look into the street)
That's right. We're just breaking even now.

(peering into the darkness)

You didn't hear any honkin' out here?

HERMOINE
No. Nobody honked a horn all evenin'. Not that I heard.

ELSIE
I guess Nick did get in a poker game at the Elks. No telling when he'll think about me.

HERMOINE
You can ride home with any of us . . . once we get closed . . . .

(Elsie goes slowly back into the theater. Lilith and Eve are watching the street and suddenly they hug each other.)

EVE
That's him. The movie man. And he's comin' in here. He's comin' right in here.

LILITH
We can do our dance for him.

HERMOINE
Miss Veeda told you girls to get on down the street, didn't she?

EVE
Please Hermie. This is our big opportunity. If we can get jobs and go to Hollywood . . . . .

LILITH
It'd be a step up. Miss Veeda wants us to get out of our business here on Main Street . . . . .

HERMOINE

She sure does.

(as Shawn Arnold comes back in door past cashier's cage)

There's a couple young ladies wanting to meet you, Sir. This is Lilith and Eve. I guess I missed out on your name when you told it to Miss Veeda.

SHAWN

I'm Shawn Arnold. And what can I do for you girls?

LILITH

We heard you make moving pictures.

EVE

We heard you're from Hollywood.

SHAWN

Yes. I make pictures in Hollywood . . . and a few other places . . . .

LILITH

Me and Eve want to audition for you.

EVE

We've got a cute dance worked up.

SHAWN

I'm not exactly looking for starlets at the moment.

LILITH

Please sir. We could do our dance for you right now. Right here in the lobby.

EVE

It's real cute. We do it all the time in the Red Demon Club across the street. It kind of advertises our business.

SHAWN

Say . . . maybe I heard of you early this evening. You work with a big handsome black fellow dressed in Spanish type clothes?

LILITH

Yeah . . . he's our . . . . us . . . manager. His name's Slick Bender. He takes part in our dance act sometimes . . . .

SHAWN

I met him in the restaurant across the street. He told me about you girls.

EVE

Yeah. Slick's always thinkin' about gettin' us business . . . .

SHAWN
He told me about you . . . in case I was interested . . . .

LILITH
Can we show you our dance now? The one we do in the Red Demon Club?

SHAWN
Maybe you ought to do it over at the Red Demon for me. Later. If I have time to see you.

LILITH
They got other people in the act tonight.

EVE
There's no time like the present. Come on Lilith.

LILITH
It's called THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE TORE DOWN EAST FOURTH STREET.

EVE
Usually as we dance we do a kind of strip tease. Shall we do that?

HERMOINE
Not here. Not here.

EVE
If we could . . . .

LILITH
Please. Please. Just let us do our number. We'll keep our clothes on.

(Lilith and Eve begin their song and dance number. They are not trained dancers. The song has been written by one of their admirers in the RED DEMON CLUB. The music is humdrum, but the exuberance and beauty of the two girls carry the number.)

THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE TORE DOWN EAST FOURTH STREET

They shouldn't have tore down East Fourth Street
They tried to spoil all the fun
Folks said there was sin on East Fourth Street
They hoped to put sin on the run.

CHORUS

The cops and the girls and the guys play a game
Of chasin' and hidin' and racin'
It adds to the fun playin' RUN SHEEP RUN
It adds to the fun of embracin'.

They shouldn't have tore down East Fourth Street
That sure spread the sin around.
The clubs that refused to take defeat
Just moved onto much higher ground.

CHORUS

They shouldn't have tore down East Fourth Street
Where knife fights could end in blood.
Good folks got up-set; the street was beat
And pounded right down into mud.

CHORUS

They shouldn't have tore down East Fourth Street
They tried to spoil all the fun.
Rich folks got their club away up North
Begrudge us our place in the sun.

CHORUS

The cops and the girls and the guys play a game

(Suddenly Slick appears in front of the box office popping in from the street.)

SLICK
I caught you. The two of you foolin' around in this picture show.

(The girls rush to him pleading.)

EVE
Slick . . . please . . . we're just givin' a audition to this man . . . the movie maker . . . .

LILITH
He's thinkin' of puttin' us in a movie. Now you're here . . . you can be in our act like you are over to the Red Demon. You just stand around like you do there . . . and we dance for you . . . .

SLICK
What crazy thing you doin' in this lobby? The cops can see you plain as day . . .

EVE
We're not doin' anything. We're just singin' an' dancin'. We ain't strippin'.

SLICK
Get outa here. The both of you. Git on about your business.

EVE
(with dignity)
Slick, I want you to meet this man . . . the movie-maker. I forget your name. This is Slick Bender. He's our . . . uh . . . . manager . . . .

SHAWN
(stepping forward offers his hand)
Shawn Arnold. I'm glad to see you again. You talked with me over at the restaurant. You told me about these girls. Remember?

SLICK
Yeah. I remember.

SHAWN
The girls are telling the truth. They're giving me kind of an audition. The act they do over at the club . . . .

SLICK
Yeah . . . .

SHAWN
They're pretty good. They're beginning to give me some ideas for a movie . . .

EVE
Slick's <u>good</u> in the part he does. He just stands around and pretends to let us interest him in our business . . . .

LILITH
He's real good. He adds a lot to the act.

SHAWN
If you want to take part in this audition . . . do your stuff . . . .

HERMOINE
<u>Keep it decent</u>. KEEP IT QUIET.

EVE
Slick's standin' over there watchin' us but he kinda moves forward as we sing . . . actin' like we're really attracting him . . . .

(They begin their song and dance again. It is an amateur act in the extreme. Slick emotes in an exaggerated way, pretending to be overcome by passion, joining them finally in what might be considered a clumsy mating dance.)

(Use as much of this song and dance number as desirable. Original production used only a verse or two and chorus repeated . . .)

THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE TORE DOWN EAST FOURTH STREET

They shouldn't have tore down East Fourth Street
They tried to spoil all the fun
Folks said there was sin on East Fourth Street
They hoped to put sin on the run.

The cops and the girls and the guys play a game
Of chasin' and hidin' and racin'.
It adds to the fun playin' RUN SHEEP RUN
It adds to the fun of embracin'.

They shouldn't have tore down East Fourth Street
Cause sex was there being sold.
We've got it for sale on old Main Street
It's better than ever we're told.

The cops and the girls and the guys play a game
Of chasin' and hidin' and racin'.
It adds to the fun playin' RUN SHEEP RUN.
It adds to the fun of embracin'.

They shouldn't have tore down East Fourth Street

(As they dance seductively around the lobby Veeda comes through door at left with papers in her hand.)

VEEDA
What is this? You three here in my theater lobby. Making noise and . . . .

(They freeze.)

Are you in here trying to entice someone from my theater?

SLICK
(He is ingratiating . . . rather than arrogant.)

We're auditioning, Mrs. Miller. Only doing a business deal.

VEEDA
Only business, my foot. I know you three and your tricks.

LILITH
Honest, Mrs. Miller. We was just . . . .

HERMOINE
That's right, Miss Veeda. They was just showing Mr. Arnold how they could dance. Didn't mean no harm . . . . this time . . .

SHAWN
That's right, Mrs. Miller. They thought I might use them in a movie.

EVE
Did you like it? Did you like our song and dance act?

SHAWN
Yes. You were good. Very good. You gave me some ideas.

VEEDA

I'll bet.

HERMOINE

They have a good act, Miss Veeda. They might be just right for Hollywood.

SHAWN

Hold on. I haven't yet said I could use . . . .

EVE

The three of us would do anything you wanted us to do . . . . anything . . .

SHAWN
(thoughtfully)

Well . . . . I'm beginning to get some ideas . . . you two and that big black . . . .

VEEDA

I'll bet. Mr. Arnold, I don't want you to work these young girls into your filthy moving pictures. They might decide to go straight if they stay here in Kaw City.

SHAWN

Mrs. Miller, I am a practical man . . . thinking of ways to give the public what they want . . . .

VEEDA

Folks were satisfied with nice uplifting shows until you depraved people got to teaching them that filth was . . . . being peddled . . . .

SHAWN

That's the point. They were satisfied with dull uplifting films until we brought out more interesting true to life movies . . .

VEEDA

Showing the worst side of life . . .

SHAWN

That all depends. On how you look at life . . . .

VEEDA

I'm not going to argue with you. I know what I think.

EVE

Mr. Arnold, did you really like our act?

SHAWN

Yes, I did.

SLICK

These girls got some silly idea you might use them in a movie.

SHAWN
It's not a silly idea. I've got a hunch about you three. I act fast when I get an idea. Yes . . . I'll make a quickie and use you in it . . . .

EVE
(stunned)
You mean it?

SHAWN
I'll make a quickie in Kansas City where I have a studio . . . .

LILITH
In Kansas City? We thought you was a Hollywood movie-maker . . .

SHAWN
I am. I have studios in several places. We'll make this first picture in Kansas City . . . . and if you're good . . . . who knows . . . .

EVE
We'll be good . . . . like I said. We'll do <u>anything</u> you want us to do.

SHAWN
I might even sell the three of you for a center page spread to HOOKEM MAGAZINE.

SLICK
Maybe you'd take us on to California . . . .?

SHAWN
I just might. To San Francisco. You'd learn <u>a lot</u> in San Francisco . . .

HERMOINE
They'll be leaving town . . . that'll be good . . . .

VEEDA
(astonished, speaking to Shawn)
I can't believe this. You're going to take these three amateurs and make a movie with them . . . .

SHAWN
Why not? Movies with young people like this are what the theater business is all about these days . . . .

EVE
You didn't get to see the end of our act . . . . it's <u>really exciting</u> . . .

SHAWN
I didn't see the end, but I can guess that part. I have some ideas for a way of ending the dance . . . that you wouldn't have been able to do in the Red Demon Club . . . .

EVE
(with enthusiasm)
Yeah! We could have made it a lot more exciting if we didn't always have to worry about cops and that snoopy county attorney comin' in on us . . . .

HERMOINE
(happily)
We'll be rid of them Miss Veeda . . . . have some peace around here of an evening . . .

VEEDA
(brightly)
What would you girls say if I offer to send you to secretarial school in Topeka. You could become stenographers.

LILITH
Stenographers?

VEEDA
(eagerly)
Stenographers make good money. Work nice hours. I'd pay all your expenses . . . if you're interested . . . .

EVE
Mrs. Miller, I took typing in high school and got a D in the course.

VEEDA
You might do better now that you're older. Stenographers do very well. Maybe you could even work up to being a court reporter.

EVE
(doubtfully)
We don't like court rooms.

LILITH
We seen enough of court rooms to last us all our lives.

SHAWN
I'm afraid they aren't interested in going to secretarial school, Mrs. Miller.

VEEDA
(sighing)
I suppose not . . .

SHAWN
(to Eve, Lilith and Slick)
Why don't you three just go on now. Take my card. Come to Kansas City next week. I'll put you up at a good motel. And we'll talk money. I think I can make you happy with the money I'll pay you . . . .

(handing Slick his card)

SLICK
You mean it, Mr. Arnold? We'll be making good money . . . lots of money . . .

SHAWN
Yes, I mean it. You have something . . . a certain innocence in spite of your profession . . . very intriguing. You should be very interesting to watch on film . . . doing what comes naturally . . . .

VEEDA
(bitterly)
Lots of fun to corrupt the innocent, isn't it, Mr. Arnold.

SHAWN
(laughing)
Well . . . . I wouldn't call them exactly innocent . . . but they are young and very good looking . . . . and they haven't been around much . . . except here in Kaw City . . . .

VEEDA
I don't want them to go with you to Kansas City, Mr. Arnold. I want them to stay right here in Kaw City. These young people could be reformed . . . with the right guidance and counseling . . . .

SHAWN
You mean you think they might be better off in a reform school?

VEEDA
Yes . . . . I'm afraid I do think just that . . . if they refuse to listen to good common sense . . . .

(The three move hurriedly toward the door and Shawn turns to them.)

SHAWN
Yes. Go along now. I'll see you in Kansas City.

(They disappear quickly out the door and Shawn turns to Veeda.)

I want to talk to you, Mrs. Miller.

VEEDA
(coldly)
We've had our talk, Mr. Arnold. I want nothing to do with you or your filthy pictures. You're corrupting people . . . that's what you're doing . . .

ELSIE
(comes from theater, moves to look out window)
I guess Nick's forgotten about me. I think I will stay on and ride out to the Country Club with you and Ruby.

VEEDA
(absently)
All right. Why don't you go back in and see the rest of the show now?

(Eve has come back into the lobby, sidling past the box-office. Lilith follows her. Elsie has gone into theater.)

EVE
We didn't get to thank you, Mr. Arnold.

LILITH
We'll sure be there . . . in Kansas City . . . . next week . . . .

VEEDA
(impatiently)
I want to tell you girls something. The county attorney is due to come in this theater any minute now. I'm getting tired of protecting you and standing up for you. If he sees you hanging around here . . . .

EVE
We ain't scared of him . . . .

LILITH
He's been real hard on us girls . . . but we're not scared of him . . .

(They begin to back up toward the door.)

EVE
Maybe we better get along down the street . . . . . .

(They wave coyly at Shawn as they depart.)

See you later . . . . . .

SHAWN
I gather the county attorney will be escorting your niece Helen.

VEEDA
(startled)
Why . . . . what . . . . you don't know my niece, Helen, do you?

SHAWN
Yes. I know Helen. That's one of the reasons I'm in town . . . . really . . . I'm . . . . her agent . . . . and . . . .

VEEDA
(horrified)
You . . . . you <u>couldn't</u> be her agent . . . that fellow who . . . .

SHAWN
I expect Helen's mentioned me in her letters . . . from time to time . . .

VEEDA
You just couldn't be the man she thought she was in love with . . .

SHAWN
Still is . . . . I have reason to believe . . . .

VEEDA
Oh. Several years ago she wrote me she was going to marry her agent . . .

SHAWN
Well . . . . people don't always get married these days . . . .

VEEDA
Then . . . . you've been wasting her time . . . all these years . . .

SHAWN
I've helped her to build a career. We've been as good as married . . . . very close . . . .

VEEDA
(shocked)
You mean . . . you've been living together . . . .

SHAWN
(glancing at Hermoine who is busy at the popcorn machine but hearing it all)

I think we shouldn't discuss our relationship right here . . . .

VEEDA
You're right. Hermoine, will you go up in the operator's booth and tell him . . . to . . . . turn up the sound a little . . . .

(Hermoine comes around the counter, looking sympathetically at Veeda.)

HERMOINE
Yes, Miss Veeda. If you need me . . . I'll be back . . . . shortly . . .

VEEDA
(numbly)
Take your time, Hermoine.

(Hermoine goes out left side exit.)

SHAWN
(walking toward the window near left front exit, looks down the street)

Helen should be along any time now . . . . with her high school sweetheart.

VEEDA
(sinking down in chair beside the ticket-takers stand)

I didn't dream . . . . that you . . . .

SHAWN
Take it easy, Mrs. Miller. I've helped your niece to become a great success.

VEEDA
You know about Helen and her high school sweetheart?

SHAWN
Of course.

VEEDA
You aren't going to try to break them up, are you?

SHAWN
What an old fashioned way to put it.

VEEDA
You are a rat, Mr. Arnold. A dirty rat.

SHAWN
Helen and I have been very happy together . . . until lately . . . until she got the invitation to this high school reunion . . . and started writing to her old boyfriend . . . .

(Suddenly Ruby appears from the theater.)

RUBY
What's happened to the sound? It's blasting our ears off in there.

VEEDA
Oh . . . . I guess they've turned it up too loud . . . .

RUBY
You here, Mr. Arnold? You going to sell Veeda some of your pictures? That'd sure pep things up around here.

VEEDA
Ruby . . . . Mr. Arnold and I are talking business. Could you . . . would you go up and tell the operator he's got the sound too loud . . . .

RUBY
(reluctantly)
Well . . . my feet are tired . . . and those steps to the booth . . . . Why don't you use your buzzer? Old Jim getting deaf?

VEEDA
It's not working . . . something went wrong with it last night. When . . . when you come back we'll talk about us all going out to the Country Club.

RUBY
Oh . . . . something's always breaking down in this theater . . . Well . . . I'll run up there this once. I guess I can give you that much help . . . .

(Ruby goes out door at left back.)

SHAWN
(watching the street)
There's an old Ford Granada pulling up in front of the theater now. Green car. Yes, Helen's getting out of it . . . and coming in . . . . The boy-friend's going across the street.

VEEDA
He's checking up on the Red Demon Club . . . . just letting them know he's around watching them. He makes it a practice to drop in on those clubs every now and then.

(Helen comes into the theater.)

SHAWN
Hello . . . . Helen . . . .

HELEN
Shawn . . . . what are you doing here?

SHAWN
Just getting acquainted with your Aunt Veeda.

HELEN
You followed me.

SHAWN
Of course.

HELEN
I've made up my mind. I'm never going back to Hollywood. I'm going to marry Don.

VEEDA
(hopefully)
Then you still love each other . . . it's the same as it was ten years ago . . . .

HELEN
(defiantly, speaking to Shawn)
Yes. Don still loves me.

SHAWN

It will be nice to meet Don.

VEEDA

You can leave now, Mr. Arnold. I'm never going to buy your filthy pictures. And Helen is through with you. You heard her . . . .

SHAWN

But I'm not through with Helen.

HELEN

I'm sorry Shawn . . . . .

SHAWN

I brought the contract for you to play a lead in a Universal Picture. You've been waiting for this chance . . . a big part . . . .

VEEDA

She's through with being an actress. You heard her. There's nothing more to be said . . . . . .

HELEN

I've thought it all through . . . . and the part is so . . . . . so . . . . repulsive . . . .

SHAWN

It's a big part. You've worked hard to get a part like this. It will lead to much bigger parts . . . . . .

HELEN

I just can't play a part like that . . . . it's too . . . . horrible . . .

SHAWN

Many a star has gone right up the ladder playing a part like this . . . .

HELEN

I've made up my mind. I love Don and we're going to be married . . . .

SHAWN

You forget, Helen. I have a contract with you. You are the star of Erosian pictures and . . . .

VEEDA

(horrified, turning to Helen)

Erosian pictures? You didn't play in his films, did you? Oh Helen . . . in his filthy pictures . . . .

HELEN

Don't worry, Aunt Veeda. I took another name and I wear a wig . . . and my make-up is so heavy . . . and I have a double for some parts in the pictures. No one would ever know me.

VEEDA
(stunned)
You took another name . . . . a stage name . . . . .

SHAWN
Of course . . . . she's known as TOOTSIE TICKLE in the comedies.

HELEN
And Guinevere de Lancelon in the more dramatic pictures.

VEEDA
You didn't tell Don . . . . he doesn't know you played in those pornographic moving pictures . . . .

HELEN
No. And he doesn't need to know . . . .

SHAWN
Of course those parts she played are the reason for her being offered a lead in an important picture. Don't forget that . . . .

VEEDA
If you didn't use your own name . . . he'll never need to know . . . .

HELEN
I've made up my mind, Shawn. Nothing you say will make me change my mind. Stay and meet Don if you want to. I've told him I have an agent in Hollywood and that we've been . . . . engaged . . . . and that I've been offered a part in a Universal picture . . . . .

VEEDA
I think it would be less awkward if you would leave, Mr. Arnold.

SHAWN
No. I want to meet Don. I think it will be interesting.

(glancing toward door as Don enters)

And here he is now . . . . . .

HELEN
(going forward to meet Don who takes her hand, looks lovingly into her eyes)

I've been somewhat surprised . . . you see . . . . my agent needed to talk with me about that part . . . .

VEEDA
(brightly)
And he came all the way to Kaw City . . . . to find Helen . . . .

HELEN
(leading Don toward Veeda and Shawn)
Don. This is Shawn Arnold. Don Harbison.

DON
(does not offer his hand, speaks coolly)
Helen's been telling me about the contract you're trying to talk her into signing . . . .

SHAWN
Oh . . . . she's been eager enough to have a chance like this . . . at a really good part . . . .

DON
The part of a murderous hooker?

HELEN
I told him the part was . . . . repulsive . . . .

DON
I think Helen has decided that she can't sign a contract for a part like that . . . besides . . . .

HELEN
I've told Don I intend to give up my career as an actress and a model . . .

SHAWN
Helen and I have a few details to work out in regard to her giving up her career so abruptly . . . .

VEEDA
But there isn't time now . . . .

SHAWN
Helen has a contract with Erosian pictures to make four more pictures . . . .

VEEDA
I think you and Helen should hurry on out to the dance now. You can talk business another time . . . .

DON
EROSIAN PICTURES? Isn't that the company that makes those pornographic pictures we're always on the look-out for here in Kansas? Yes . . . .

SHAWN
Kansas has had some rather puritanical laws about movies. Actually Erosian makes very artistic pictures . . . .

DON
(to Helen)
You didn't tell me this . . . . I had no idea . . . .

HELEN
The parts weren't very important . . . and I took a stage name . . . . and I have a double who plays in some scenes . . . .

DON
(angrily)
A stage name . . . . and acting in movies that are . . . . breaking down the morals of the whole country . . . .

SHAWN
Now wait . . . Harbison . . . . you don't know much about the business of making movies . . . . do you?

DON
I know that the pornographic film . . . . and the magazines are turning young people into crooks that are filling the courtrooms. Violence and perversions in films are teaching lessons in crime . . . .

SHAWN
You aren't going to blame the moving picture producers for all the crime that's taking over in this country, are you?

DON
They're a big part of the trouble. There's filth being spread everywhere.

VEEDA
(piously)
That's what I've been telling Mr. Arnold. But you and Helen haven't time to discuss the problems of our country now . . . . it's time to go.

SHAWN
(ignoring her)
It's an art to put together a sophisticated picture to interest sophisticated people. I make artistic pictures to interest art lovers.

HELEN
(eagerly)
Shawn does try to make an art of movie-making. He's always talking about what a jig-saw puzzle he's putting together . . . .

SHAWN
And Helen is a real actress.

(He steps close to Helen and brushes back her hair, caressing her as he points to her face.)

She has facial expressions that you wouldn't believe . . . .

HELEN
Shawn directs the shots and I follow his instructions. I can show any kind of . . . emotion . . . .

HELEN (continued)

(Realizing that she may be describing the picture making sessions too well, she hesitates, pulling away from Shawn.)

I mean . . . uh . . . . I've learned a lot about acting with Shawn as my . . . agent . . . .

DON
(with distaste)

I'll bet.

HELEN
(pleading for Don's understanding)

All moving pictures that are made now have scenes in them that would have made our mothers and fathers blush. But that's the way pictures are being made . . . . . .

VEEDA
(wanting to end this discussion and get Helen and Don on their way)

You haven't time to discuss the way pictures are being made nowadays. Shouldn't you be leaving for the Country Club?

(She takes Helen's arm and Don's, trying to steer them to the door.)

HELEN
(taking Don's arm and moving toward door)

Yes . . . Don . . . . you're supposed to welcome the class . . . and I'm supposed to sing. Let's go.

SHAWN

All right. After you've done the song, you can come back here and continue this discussion, Helen.

DON
(shaking off her hand, looking at her coldly)

Maybe you'd better come on in your Aunt's car, Helen. I'll go on and you can come out a little later. When you've finished with . . . your agent . . .

HELEN
(shrinking back)

Well . . . . if you say so . . . .

VEEDA
(cheerfully)
She'll be right along. I'll see to that . . . in plenty of time to sing . . . five or ten minutes . . . .

(Don goes out door hurriedly and Helen returns looking crushed.)

HELEN
Now . . . . he knows . . . .

(She is almost in tears.)

He knows all about my acting career . . . .

SHAWN
An ill-tempered man. Certainly a narrow-minded man.

VEEDA
No. He's a good man . . . a man who's standing up for decency . . .

SHAWN
I can understand his position . . . a hypocritical politician trying to please the public . . . probably ambitious to be governor of Kansas.

HELEN
I'm <u>not going</u> to sign the contract to play a hooker in a Universal picture.

SHAWN
But why not? It's an identical role to the one you played in BLUSH PURPLE.

VEEDA
BLUSH PURPLE . . . oh . . . I've been reading revues of that picture in Box Office magazine. It's . . . . .

SHAWN
Getting very good revues. A very artistic picture. I'm proud of it . . . and Helen . . . . Helen got a sable coat out of work she did on <u>that</u> picture . . . .

VEEDA
Awful. Sadistic. Masochistic . . . . dripping in blood. And the star . . . Oh . . . . Helen . . . . .

HELEN
(flouncing across the stage defiantly)
No one will ever know. No one would recognize me if they <u>saw</u> the show . . .

SHAWN
Unless some publicity is released about the star being a native Kansan . . . and then you know how the newspapers dig into these things . . . .

(Ruby comes back on stage from the projection booth, entering at left back.)

RUBY
Old Jim's having a terrible time splicing the film in the last reels.

(sees Helen)

My goodness . . . . Helen. Well . . . I'm glad to see you . . .

(rushing over to Helen, warmly hugging and kissing her; she stands back to look at her)

You look wonderful . . . beautiful. Veeda told me about the dress you were going to wear. You really look . . . just like you did when you graduated ten years ago.

HELEN
Oh . . . thank you, Ruby. You look great.

(Ruby is flattered, patting her hair into place in back.)

VEEDA
(anxiously)
She's just on her way out to the Club now. Don had to go ahead to welcome the class and she just stopped by for a minute . . . but she's on her way . . . .

(giving Helen a nudge)

Go ahead, dear.

RUBY
(coyly to Shawn)
You making any headway with Veeda? Getting her to buy your pictures?

SHAWN
Could be.

VEEDA
(anxious to get both Ruby and Elsie out of the theater before they learn the truth about Helen's career)

Ruby . . . why don't you go on out to the Club now . . . get Elsie and just go right on so you'll be there in time to hear Helen sing . . . .

RUBY
All right. But what about you? Aren't you coming? Can't you leave for just a little while?

VEEDA
No. I have business to talk with Mr. Arnold. Elsie is sitting in the back row. Use the side door . . . you'll get out quicker.

RUBY
I hope you don't mind, Helen. We're just going to sit in the bar. I sure would like to hear you sing.

SHAWN
So would I.

VEEDA
(impatiently)
Go get Elsie, Ruby. Go on, Helen.

RUBY
(to Shawn, flirtatiously)
If you want to hear Helen sing . . . I'll repeat my invitation when you were eating pecan pie in my restaurant . . . .

SHAWN
(coming to attention at the mention of pie)
I remember you invited me to be your guest at the Country Club . . . if I had time . . . . while I was eating that delicious pecan pie in your place . . .

RUBY
(preening)
Come along after you finish talking business with Veeda. We'll show you a real good time . . . me and Elsie. And Veeda . . . if she can make up her mind to come into that . . . .

(laughing merrily)

den of iniquity . . . . later . . . .

(She goes back through curtains into theater.)

HELEN
(going to Shawn, pleading)
You see, Shawn . . . I'm the star of the evening . . . .

SHAWN
I see you are.

HELEN
(wistfully)
Everyone knows I've had some success in Hollywood . . . and even though they know nothing about my pictures . . . they think . . . I'm on my way to the top . . . .

SHAWN
And you are. In this part you're being offered . . . .

HELEN
It wouldn't lead to anything . . . .

SHAWN
It might lead to Broadway. A play on Broadway. You've always wanted . . .

VEEDA
(quickly)
Broadway's nothing anymore. Just a bunch of pornographic bookstores and skimpy underwear shops. Weird people walking all over on the streets . . .

HELEN
Broadway's Broadway . . . and always will be. But I don't expect to get there.

SHAWN
As a matter of fact you are there . . . already. BLUSH PURPLE is showing at an adult movie house near TIMES SQUARE.

VEEDA
(explosively)
That's just where it belongs. Filthiest spot in the whole United States.

SHAWN
(ignoring Veeda and her put-down of Broadway)

Helen, I'm working on a part for you in a legitimate play.

HELEN
(bitterly)
You've said that for six years. Just as you said you'd marry me . . . .

SHAWN
(sincerely)
I'll marry you, Helen. Come back with me to Hollywood. Things will be different . . . .

HELEN
I've made up my mind, Shawn. I am going to marry Don. I'm coming back to live in Kaw City and lead a normal life. Have children. Go to PTA meetings. Teach a Sunday School class . . . .

(She is near tears.)

SHAWN
(slyly)
Maybe your square high school sweetheart won't be wanting to marry a "porn" star . . .

HELEN
We've still got that feeling we had when we were eighteen . . . and at twenty-eight . . . that's a miracle. (desperately) We love each other.

SHAWN
I'm writing a script now . . . a romantic movie about that kind of love . . . imaginary as it really is . . . .

HELEN
It's too late for us, Shawn. You've written plays before that started out with romantic parts for me . . .

SHAWN
This one is better . . . .

HELEN
You always start out that way . . . but pretty soon you get some twist or other into it . . . and I have to take off my clothes . . .

SHAWN
But . . . . you're so beautiful without your clothes . . .

VEEDA
MY GOODNESS. I can't believe you'd take off all your clothes in those . . .

SHAWN
What did you think?

VEEDA
Never mind . . . . Helen . . . you've got to go now. They'll be expecting you at the Country Club . . . to sing THE WAY WE WERE.

HELEN
(starting for door at right)
All right. You wait here, Shawn. I'll be back as soon as I sing. We'll continue this discussion . . . .

(She goes out.)

VEEDA
Now, Mister. How much money do you want?

SHAWN
What do you mean?

VEEDA
I know black-mail when I see it.

SHAWN
This time . . . you're wrong.

VEEDA

I don't have a lot of money. But I have some. This place used to make money, good money. My husband and I were conservative. When he died I just kept on being careful . . . and I would give you money . . . if you'd cancel your contract with Helen . . . .

SHAWN

I'm sorry for you, Mrs. Miller. You are too old to be running this theater. Too old and too old-fashioned. The whole set-up is ridiculous.

VEEDA

I'm not going to argue with you, Mr. Arnold. What do you want to do now? Sit in on the show or go up to my office . . . or walk the streets?

SHAWN

I'll sit in on the show until Helen comes back . . . .

VEEDA

You ought to think about making a show like TRUE GRIT or LILIES OF THE FIELD. Pictures like that might come back into style.

SHAWN

They never went out of style. It's just that . . . people who enjoy shows like that . . . stopped going to the movies. They sit home looking at TV.

VEEDA

(sadly)

That's right. Everybody over thirty-five years old. If people who liked good decent picture shows had kept coming to them . . . the producers would have kept making more of them.

SHAWN

You're probably right, but they did stop coming and the people who come to shows now want to see the kind of shows that are being made . . . R and X and the kind I make.

VEEDA

You're corrupting people with those shows. You're exploiting people who act in them and corrupting them at the same time. You're corrupting the people who watch the shows.

SHAWN

No lectures, please. The people who work for me, including Helen, like to make money. You can go broke in this run-down theater showing worn out pictures to a bunch of kids. I'm going to give people what they want.

VEEDA

(impatiently)

Well . . . I've got plenty to do before I close up. I'll call you if Helen comes back.

VEEDA (continued)

(Hermoine comes in from side door and starts toward the concession stand.)

Here's Hermoine now. We've got plenty to do before we close this place tonight.

SHAWN

Good. She can sell me a box of popcorn. I like to sit in a show eating popcorn. Double on the butter, please.

(Hermoine is behind counter and Shawn goes to lean on it.)

HERMOINE

I'm sorry, Mister. I cleaned out the popcorn machine right early tonight. Getting things all tidied up so we can have it neat in here while we're closed.

SHAWN

My mouth was all set for a nice box of popcorn soaked in butter . . . but . . . oh well . . . I ought to quit eating so much. I'm getting too fat.

(He looks unhappily in at the candy.)

HERMOINE

We got these salted peanuts . . . and candy bars . . .

SHAWN

(patting his stomach)

Ought to quit this nervous nibbling . . . but oh well . . . . give me a sack of those peanuts. And one of those Milky Way candy bars.

(As Hermoine gives him candy and peanuts and he gets his money to pay her.)

Hermoine. That's a funny name you got. Who thought that up?

HERMOINE

(with dignity)

My mother was a school teacher . . . liked Greek mythology. Named me Hermione, but the little kids came in here couldn't say it right . . . got it turned into Hermoine . . . or Hermie . . . .

SHAWN

I see . . . running this baby sitting service over the years . . . .

HERMOINE

We've seen a lot of little kids grow into nice people. Grew up looking at Roy Rogers and Mickey Rooney, James Stewart, Shirley Temple, Bill Robinson, Ronald Reagan, Jeanette McDonald, Sidney Poitier . . . . in real nice pictures.

SHAWN

Yeah. Adult fairy tales. Well . . . you run this concession stand pretty well. And I expect it just about keeps this theater going . . .

HERMOINE
(sulkily)

We do all right. We make ends meet.

VEEDA

I'll call you if Helen comes back. Sit in the back row.

SHAWN

WHEN SHE COMES BACK.

VEEDA

I don't think Helen will come back. I think she'll stay out at the Country Club with Don. She's through with you.

SHAWN
(impatiently)

Helen loves me. She's just sick of the way things have gone for the last six years.

VEEDA

She's sick of you and the whole dirty business you're in. She's going to marry Don Harbison and live a normal life . . . .

(Shawn gestures angrily with his hand and, pushing the curtains aside goes into theater as Veeda continues to talk.)

Have children, reach a Sunday School class, join the PTA after awhile . . .

AS SHE TALKS THE CURTAINS CLOSE ON ACT II

ACT III

(Thirty minutes have passed and Hermoine is tidying up the lobby in preparation for closing the theater. Veeda is adjusting one of the advertising posters near the cashier's cage. There is a sound of clapping from the theater as Shawn saunters out, pausing to light a cigarette.)

VEEDA
(looks up at him, letting the poster dangle from the frame)

Did the film break again?

SHAWN
(smugly)
Sure did. Kids are starting to stomp and clap.

VEEDA
(hurries to the curtain and calls in)
WE'LL GET IT FIXED. JUST BE A MINUTE.

(turning to Hermoine)

Go help Jim get it going again, Hermoine, please . . .

(Hermoine hurries out side back)

SHAWN
(sauntering back into the lobby)
You ought to hire a manager to run this place.

VEEDA
Mr. Arnold, I've been thinking . . . I want to talk to you about your plans for this evening.

SHAWN
You do?

VEEDA
You're planning on going out to the Country Club and let Don see you sitting around . . . . waiting for Helen . . . .

SHAWN
If she doesn't come back here to the theater.

VEEDA
I don't want you to go near that Country Club.

SHAWN
Why not?

VEEDA
That's a private party out there . . . that class reunion.

SHAWN
You heard your friend Ruby ask me to be her guest in the bar. Why shouldn't I accept her invitation?

VEEDA
I'll tell you why. Helen and Don are getting back to where they were ten years ago . . . can't help being in love . . .

SHAWN
Helen and Don have gone opposite ways in these last ten years. They're no longer compatible.

VEEDA
They're in love. And that's all that counts . . . .

SHAWN
(speaks slowly, trying to control impatience)

Life is not a dream of romance.

VEEDA
(gently)
It can be. Life is just as romantic as two people think it is . . . .

SHAWN
Even if Helen and Don are feeling sentimental at the moment, tomorrow they will realize . . . . they have no future together . . .

VEEDA
Maybe they have . . . a future together . . . if you get out of town and leave Helen alone . . .

SHAWN
I have a contract with Helen. She's the star of Erosian Pictures. I've worked hard to get her a part in a big new picture that will make her a bigger star . . . in one of the biggest companies . . . .

VEEDA
Forget it. She isn't going to sign that contract.

SHAWN
Oh yes . . . . I think she will . . . .

VEEDA

No. She's going to marry Don.

SHAWN

Tomorrow, when Don thinks about Helen and remembers his ambitions he'll treat her as he did when he discovered that she's the star in erotic films.

VEEDA

Those horrible movies.

SHAWN

They make money. Lots of money.

VEEDA
(slyly)

Money is what you're interested in, isn't it, Mr. Arnold? I have a proposition for you that will make you just a little more money.

SHAWN

You have?

VEEDA

I'll buy some of your filthy pictures . . . the cleaner ones. None with Helen in them of course.

SHAWN
(astonished)

You will? Well . . . you're finally beginning to catch on to what this business is all about now. Talking like a shrewd exhibitor . . . .

VEEDA
(unhappily)

I think I could slip one in between LILIES OF THE FIELD and MARY POPPINS. Maybe I could get by with it. Maybe no one would notice. And if they did I could act like Film Delivery left the wrong picture and I didn't know anything about it but I had to run it . . . .

SHAWN

You want to do a good business on it, don't you? Make some money?

VEEDA

No. I don't. I want you to get out of town and leave Helen alone and if I buy your pictures you'll have to agree to that.

SHAWN
(laughing)

Mrs. Miller, you're trying to buy me off again. I'm a rich man. I can't be bought.

VEEDA
(pleading)

Then in the name of decency, will you leave . . . give her a chance with Don?

SHAWN
(drawing picture from inside coat pocket)
Helen belongs to me. I made her a star. I want to show you something . . . a picture of Helen in BLUSH PURPLE. It's a beautiful movie . . . very artistic . . .

VEEDA
(takes it in her hand and looks at it)
Oh . . . . Oh my . . . . . .

SHAWN
Even with the wig and heavy make-up I think you can tell it's Helen . . . .

VEEDA
(staring at the picture . . . speaks angrily)

This is a disgrace . . . carrying around a picture of Helen without any clothes on . . . .

SHAWN
Actually she's wearing a net body-stocking . . . films better . . . makes flesh look more glamorous . . . .

VEEDA
(numbly)
Why did you show me this?

SHAWN
I'm showing you this because I want you to face the truth. Helen is <u>not</u> coming back to live in Kaw City and marry her high school sweetheart. She's going back to Kansas City with me . . . and continue her career . . . . .

VEEDA
(whimpering)
How . . . . how will you get her to go with you?

SHAWN
If I go to the Country Club and pass this picture around among the boys at the bar . . . . .

VEEDA
(shocked, sinks into chair by ticket stand)

Oh . . . . . among her friends who are here at the reunion?

SHAWN
Yes. The boys will be gathered around the bar between dances.

VEEDA
(suddenly tears the picture across, then keeps tearing it until it is in tiny pieces)

You can't . . . . now . . . . .

SHAWN
Mrs. Miller, I have more pictures in my car . . . better ones . . . . many poses . . . showing Helen in different moods . . . . .

VEEDA
More pictures?

SHAWN
Beautiful pictures . . . artistic . . . .

VEEDA
(almost in tears)
If I lease this theater to you . . . . if I turn it over to your company so you could run your adult films here . . . . would you leave Helen alone and leave town now . . . . go away tonight . . . . . .?

SHAWN
You'd give up your business here . . . retire . . . let me send in a manager?

VEEDA
Yes . . . . anything . . . . only you wouldn't run any picture with Helen in them . . . . just other pictures . . .

SHAWN
Mrs. Miller, your proposition is . . . touching. But no, I don't want your theater. I only wanted to help you to pull your business out of the red, make it a success. I want to help you.

VEEDA
(dully)
To help me . . . . . .?

(Veeda appears in a daze. She has dropped the pieces of the picture into her lap. Hermoine suddenly appears at back side and hurries into lobby.)

HERMOINE
Some of the last reel is too old to go through the machine. Old Jim's working with it but we just couldn't splice it together right. He's about to switch to the end. I'm going down front and be ready to get all the little kids out the side door.

VEEDA
Yes, do that Hermoine. If anyone complains, give them a pass.

(Hermoine goes back into the theater. Shawn has sauntered over to the window and looks into the street.)

SHAWN
A car's pulling up in front. I guess it's Helen.

(disappointed)

No. It's your friends . . . Ruby and Elsie . . . .

(They hurry into the lobby and Veeda comes out of her daze enough to pick the pieces of the picture from her lap. She puts them into her skirt pocket.)

RUBY
Veeda, you're just missing everything . . . . sticking around here.

ELSIE
You ought to come back to the Country Club with us right now. Let Hermoine close the place.

RUBY
We came back to get you. You can just drop everything and come with us.

(Suddenly notices how dejected Veeda looks.)

Say . . . . you look tired, Veeda. You ought to break over and have a cocktail out at the Club. Perk you right up.

VEEDA
(pulling herself together, getting up from the chair)

You know I wouldn't do that, Ruby. I am tired, but I'll be all right! What's going on out at the club?

RUBY
Well . . . . first . . . we got there just in time to hear the welcoming speech Don gave. Oh . . . . it was good . . . nostalgic . . . all that . . .

ELSIE
I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he'd end up Governor.

RUBY
Anyway . . . after he made this good welcoming speech he introduced Helen.

VEEDA
(eagerly)
How did she act? Toward Don, I mean.

ELSIE
Oh . . . . just nonchalant. They weren't acting lovey-dovey, if that's what you mean . . . .

RUBY
No. In fact he was very off-hand about the whole thing . . .

VEEDA
What do you mean?

RUBY
He didn't call her the movie star of the class or anything like I thought he would. Just said, "And here is Helen Durand who'll sing for you".

VEEDA
Oh . . . . just that . . . .

ELSIE
Of course Helen took over like a real pro and told them she'd chosen a song that would put them in the mood . . . .

RUBY
And then the band played a few measures. When the class heard what the song was going to be they all cheered and clapped.

VEEDA
(wistfully)
It must have been exciting . . . .

ELSIE
Oh . . . . it was . . . and then it got real quiet and Helen began to sing . . . .

VEEDA
What was Don doing . . . standing close by the platform . . . giving her a big hand?

RUBY
I was disappointed in Don. He just walked off and left her standing there by herself after he'd introduced her . . . .

ELSIE
We thought maybe he didn't want to seem to be hogging the limelight . . .

VEEDA
Yes . . . . I hope . . . .

RUBY
So Helen just stood there and sang . . . and gave it everything she could . . . You know Helen can <u>really</u> sing . . . .

ELSIE
Everybody stood close and listened. Pretty soon you could tell it was really getting to them. Some of the girls began to dab at their eyes with their handkerchiefs.

RUBY
And Helen . . . . Oh, she's quite an actress all right . . . tears began to run down her face . . .

ELSIE
But she didn't sob or anything and she kept on looking . . . SO BEAUTIFUL.

RUBY
She just kept singing with the tears running down her cheeks . . . and I swear there wasn't a girl in that room who wasn't reaching for her handerkerchief.

ELSIE
Even the men got kind of funny looks on their faces . . . . .

SHAWN
That <u>must</u> have been a dramatic moment . . . the girls crying and Helen singing . . . and the men . . . .

(They recognize the amusement in his voice and turn to him.)

RUBY
Oh . . . I suppose we are acting kind of silly . . . going on this way . . .

ELSIE
But it was so dramatic . . . the whole class there sharing their memories . . . . and the music so beautiful . . . .

VEEDA
(ignoring Shawn)
How did Don take it? Was he touched?

RUBY
After the song everyone just rushed up to Helen and hugged her and made over her . . . .

ELSIE
And all the men wanted to dance with her . . . .

RUBY
And the band leader asked her to sing some more songs . . . .

ELSIE
So that's how it's going. Helen is singing every now and then. It's just making the party.

VEEDA
But if she's singing she's not getting to dance . . . with Don . . . .

ELSIE
Well, he went out to the bar with some of the men and let her dance with the other fellows who asked her.

VEEDA
(dully)
I see. Helen's sort of providing the entertainment and . . . .

RUBY
But finally Don came back from the bar and began to dance with some of the girls . . . Eloise Bagden . . . you remember Eloise?

VEEDA
Yes . . . . I remember Eloise. Is she still fat?

RUBY
No. She slimmed down. You'd never know her. She looks great.

ELSIE
Anyway . . . Don came out of the bar and asked her to dance. Helen was dancing with Ricky Danielson . . . you remember Ricky?

VEEDA
Yes. I remember him. Kind of a short skinny kid.

ELSIE
Well . . . he's still short and skinny but can he dance . . . .

RUBY
They were whirling all over the place and when the music stopped they were near Eloise and Don. Ricky said how he hadn't danced with Eloise yet and how they'd trade partners next dance . . . .

ELSIE
The orchestra began to play a slow piece and Don put his arm around Helen . . .

RUBY
It made me get goose-bumps.

ELSIE
It was just as though she was a magnet and he couldn't help himself. He looked into her eyes . . . .

RUBY
And they began to dance. The rest of the class saw them dancing together . . . and they kind of dropped back to watch . . . .

ELSIE
It was kind of like those movies where Jeanette McDonald looked into Nelson Eddy's eyes . . . .

SHAWN
(who has been wandering about the lobby, looking into the concession case and has bought another candy bar, unwraps it slowly, speaks again with amusement)

My . . . that must have been romantic . . . .

RUBY
(laughing, collects herself)
I guess we do seem silly . . . going on like this . . .

ELSIE
But Helen and Don were the most romantic couple in high school. They were so much in love it just thrilled you to see them walking along holding hands . . .

VEEDA
They were . . . . they had <u>true love</u> . . . . .

ELSIE
And you've just got to come out there and see them, Veeda. Your dreams are going to come true . . . about Helen and Don.

VEEDA
(crossly)
I don't think you two should be out there spying on them. It's a private dance.

RUBY
Oh, we're not the only ones there in the bar. There's the late golfers and old Mr. Sanders who always goes out to the club for a night-cap.

VEEDA
The late golfers who play 'till dark and <u>drink</u> until midnight. Old Sanders is a <u>lush</u>.

RUBY
Well . . . . I'm glad they're there. It makes us just part of the crowd.

VEEDA
I hope you didn't make yourselves conspicuous peeking around the door . . .

RUBY
We didn't have to peek. We sat down at a table close to a door that was open part way.

ELSIE
We could see everything without anyone seeing us while we were sitting there sipping our drinks . . . . .

RUBY
Stop acting stuffy, Veeda. You know you're just dying to see Helen and Don dancing together.

VEEDA
Yes. I'd like to see them . . . .

SHAWN
I'd like to see them too. It sounds very . . . interesting . . . .

RUBY
(coyly)
You're invited to come back with us you know. I'll buy you a drink.

SHAWN
I think I'll take you up on that.

RUBY
(going to back curtain to peek into the theater)

Why the show's over. Hermoine's just shooing a bunch of little kids out the side door. The theater's almost empty. Come on with us now, Veeda, right now. Let Hermoine do the closing up.

VEEDA
No. I can't now . . . . . .

SHAWN
(to Ruby as he starts toward door)
I'll get in my car and follow you two on out to the club . . . .

VEEDA
(quickly putting out her hand to stop him)
No, Mr. Arnold. We haven't quite finished our business talk.

SHAWN
We haven't?

VEEDA
Go on back to the club . . . Ruby . . . . Elsie . . . .

(She takes them by the arms and walks them toward the door.)

You don't want to miss any more of the dance. I'll come along later.

RUBY
Well . . . . if you're sure . . . you have to talk business now . . . . .

VEEDA
(gayly)
Business before pleasure you know.

RUBY
(looking back at Shawn)
OK, we'll go on, but you come out there. Bring Veeda when she gets the show closed.

(She waves coyly at him as they hurry out door right front.)

VEEDA
(turning back to Shawn as they go out door. She suddenly seems unsure of herself . . . an old woman fumbling for words.)

I just wanted to . . . . . to tell you how sorry I am I've spoken so sharply to you. I realize that you really have been trying to help me make money in this theater.

(She sinks into chair by the ticket-stand.)

You mean well but I just can't come around to think as you think about . . . show business. I admit I'm old fashioned . . . . and I can't get used to the modern way you young people are doing things these days . . . .

(rubbing her forehead in a bewildered way)

And there's so much to do here in the theater of an evening . . . when we close up . . . . for a month . . . . and I'm pretty tired . . . . .

SHAWN
(sympathetic)
I understand.

VEEDA
You do?

SHAWN
Sure. I know there's a lot of work to closing up a theater. Why don't you let me help you get closed up, Mrs. Miller?

VEEDA
That's kind of you, Mr. Arnold. You've offered your help several times this evening. Now I'm going to accept your offer. Because I've about run out of steam.

SHAWN
What do you want me to do?

VEEDA
Oh . . . . there are several things . . .

SHAWN
Did you have some kind of exterminating plan for this evening?

VEEDA
Yes. Yes. The room-foggers . . . .

SHAWN
How do you work them?

VEEDA
Oh . . . . you just take the cap off the can and press a little lever. That starts them.

SHAWN
Where are they?

VEEDA
Oh. Three are back stage. Three are down in front of the stage.

SHAWN
I'll do them. I'll get them started.

VEEDA
It's kind of you, Mr. Arnold.

(Shawn hurries out through the curtains into the theater and Veeda sits on in the chair. She reaches her hand into her pocket and takes the pieces of the picture from it, stands and starts dropping them one by one into the ticket-slot. Hermoine comes back into the lobby.)

HERMOINE
I got all the little kids out the side door. I checked and double-checked to make sure nobody was left . . .

VEEDA
(absently)
Fine. Fine.

HERMOINE
(looking sharply at Veeda)
You kinda tired, ain't you, Miss Veeda?

VEEDA
Yes, Hermoine, This has been . . . a long evening . . . .

HERMOINE
I'm tired too, Miss Veeda. Seems like running this picture show is gettin' to be almost too much for us . . . .

VEEDA
Sometimes I think so . . . .

HERMOINE
Maybe you could sell this place to that Mr. Arnold . . . since he thinks it's such a gold mine . . . .

VEEDA
(looking up sharply at Hermoine)
What did you say, Hermoine?

HERMOINE
I just thought maybe you could sell this theater to that Mr. Arnold . . . and let him run it anyway he wanted to . . . .

VEEDA
(completely herself again)
What? Sell my theater to <u>that rat</u>?

HERMOINE
(taken aback)
Well . . . times <u>has</u> changed Miss Veeda. Maybe you and me is getting kind of old and tired . . .

VEEDA
Nonsense Hermoine. <u>Not me</u>. <u>And not you either</u>.

HERMOINE
I only thought . . . for a minute there . . . you looked kind of beat . . .

VEEDA
It's just that tonight has been a long, hard night. I've got my second wind now though . . . .

HERMOINE
(sighing)
All right. Let's get this fumigatin' finished. I've already started the ones in the rest-rooms.

VEEDA
There's one in my office, too.

HERMOINE
Jim'll set off the one in his operator booth.

VEEDA
Yes. Then both of you go out the side door and lock it after you. I'll get them going around here . . . and close up . . . .

HERMOINE
You goin' to catch a ride home with me . . . seein' as Miss Helen never brought your car back?

VEEDA
Yes. Yes. When you get outside you can wait for me. I'll be right along.

HERMOINE
You feel all right now, Miss Veeda?

VEEDA
Yes. I'm all right now . . . just a little tired. Be glad to get closed up.

HERMOINE
All right. I'll hurry. Probly Old Jim's got the room-foggers started already . . . but I'll make sure everything's done right . . . .

VEEDA
Yes . . . . and wait outside in your car for me . . . .

(Hermoine disappears at back left as Shawn comes in from back right.)

SHAWN
All set. I think I got all of them started off . . . .

VEEDA
Now . . . there's just the basement ones to get started.

SHAWN
How many you got to start down there?

VEEDA
(moving with exaggerated weariness, goes to the table, picks up two cans)
There are two on the table. And I've got two more . . . just to do a thorough job.

(opens the door and switches on light)

It'll only take me a few minutes . . . but those steps are steep and I have to go carefully . . . and I'm a bit slow these days . . . .

SHAWN
Let me take them. I'm getting good at setting them off.

(He reaches for cans and she gives them to him.)

VEEDA
Well . . . . if you really want to. Oh . . . I don't like to impose but . . .

SHAWN

I'm glad to do it for you. Only take a minute . . . .

(He starts for the open door.)

VEEDA

All right. There are two already down there on the table by the magazines.

SHAWN

Don't worry. I'll find them.

VEEDA

It's kind of you to help me, Mr. Arnold.

SHAWN

I'm really a good guy, Mrs. Miller.

(He disappears down the stairs and Veeda quickly closes the door after him, reaches for the hook and fastens it in place. Then she hurries to the front of the lobby, turns out the lights in the lobby and stands by the door to the entrance at right where she switches off the lights that control the marquee.)

HERMOINE
(calling from off stage in area of the exit door at the other side of the lobby)

Got it all locked up back here. Everthin's goin' fine. Jim come out with me.

VEEDA

I got everything done up here. I'm closing up. You wait in your car for me. I'll be right along.

HERMOINE

You got the basement taken care of?

VEEDA

Sure did.

(She stands at door, lighted by the street light. Suddenly there is a pounding on the door leading to the basement.)

SHAWN

Mrs. Miller. Mrs. Miller, this door is stuck. You'll have to let me out. Mrs. Miller . . . . . Mrs. Miller . . . . . .

(The pounding continues and the stage remains dark.)

HERMOINE

You ready now, Miss Veeda?

(Veeda does not answer; the pounding continues.)

SHAWN

Please Mrs. Miller. PLEASE LET ME OUT.

HERMOINE
(still speaking from area of left front exit)

Miss Veeda, is there anything wrong?

VEEDA
(as the pounding continues and Shawn begins to cough)

No. I forgot something. I'll have to turn on the lights again.

(She switches on the lobby lights and goes across the lobby to the basement door . . . unlocks it and opens door.)

Come out, Mr. Arnold.

SHAWN
(staggers out coughing, looks at Veeda in horror)

Mrs. Miller. <u>You locked that door</u>. <u>You intended to kill me</u>.

VEEDA

Yes. Yes, I did. I'd like to kill you Mr. Arnold. But I . . . couldn't . .

SHAWN

You couldn't? You couldn't . . . .

VEEDA

I couldn't . . . because I suddenly remembered you used to be a little boy . . . locked in a dark closet by an ambitious mother . . . and I couldn't do it . . . to a child . . . .

SHAWN

You're <u>crazy</u>. You know that, don't you?

VEEDA

No. I'm not crazy. I just think you're an evil man who's corrupted Helen . . . . exploited her. Now you're working Jean and Marie into your filthy business . . . . Eve and Lilith as they call themselves . . . .

SHAWN
(speaking as to an insane person)
Mrs. Miller. I'm just a good businessman who makes the most of any . . . opportunity. Those two hookers begged for a chance to work with me.

VEEDA
You're an evil man. Get out of my theater.

SHAWN
(loosening his tie, opening his shirt)
Whew . . . . those fumes are getting to me. I can hardly breathe . . . .

VEEDA
Oh . . . nonsense . . . you didn't breathe enough fumes to hurt you . . . in that short time. Those room-foggers take a while to get going good . . .

SHAWN
Just the same . . . I've got to get outside . . . . into the fresh air . . .

VEEDA
GET OUT THEN. Go on out and get in your Jaguar and go to the Country Club. Ruin everything for Helen and Don.

SHAWN
(hand to his throat)
I'll do just that, Mrs. Miller. But first I'm going over to the Red Demon for a beer . . . . wash that horrible taste out of my mouth . . . . . .

(He starts for the door, then turns back.)
He continues, loud and angry)

This is a run-down lousy theater. YOU ARE A CRAZY OLD WOMAN. Everything is punk about this place. Even your popcorn is lousy . . . . .

VEEDA
(furious)
MY POPCORN IS GOOD.

SHAWN
Not what you had set down by the magazines in the lounge. Too salty . . . bitter . . . awful. I ate a handful or two before I realized you used rancid butter . . . . . .

VEEDA
The popcorn . . . . in the lounge . . . . . downstairs?

(She hates him and she couldn't kill him in cold blood but since fate has played a hand in the game, she rejoices and her voice reflects her joy.)

YOU ATE THE POPCORN?

SHAWN

Good-night Mrs. Miller.

(He shudders, as he hurries to door.)

Awful . . . . . uuuugh . . . . . .

(He goes out door.)

VEEDA
(moving toward light switch, her step brisk)

GOOD-BY, MR. ARNOLD. GOOD . . . . BY!

(She switches off lights in the lobby, leaving the stage dark.)

HERMOINE

Everything OK, Miss Veeda? You got everything taken care of?

VEEDA

Yes . . . . Yes . . . . Hermoine. Everything's taken care of now.

CURTAIN

THE DUST STORM WEDDING

A Play in Three Acts

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by: Chloris Killian

TIME: March 21, 1910 between 10 a.m. in the morning until 3:30 p.m.

PLACE: Parlor of the Holmes family in Wakeeney, Kansas.

SETTING: The parlor of the Holmes family is decorated for a wedding on this first day of spring. The parlor is a shallow basement room, five feet below ground level with a big bay window suitable for keeping plants through the winter. This window with a multitude of plants is at right front and leads to the side yard by means of several steps. Five steps lead from the sitting-room off stage to the door that opens into the parlor, right back.

An upright piano occupies the wall space at back center with a bookcase between the piano and door. A double doorway with doors that roll closed is at left side front and leads off stage into a bedroom. A long table is along wall at right back, a small table is at right front with a rocking chair near it. A big base-burner stove sits on a decorative tin rug protector at left center near the wall; a new coal bucket sits beside the stove.

Several dining-room chairs are arranged around the stove. More dining-room chairs sit against the wall at back between the piano and the what-not that occupies a corner at left. A hall tree is at left front of stage. Several folding chairs are leaning against the wall between the door at back and table back right.

The piano stool that sits before the piano is ornate, adjustable and the most elegant piece of furniture in the room. Coal oil lamps are on the piano and table at right back. Coal oil lamps are fastened to wall at right front and above hall tree. A mirror is set into hall tree.

Not visible on the stage is a heat vent over the stove in the ceiling that allows heat to rise into the bedroom over the parlor. The grill, when open, also lets conversation taking place in the parlor to be heard in the room above.

COSTUMES: The men wear business suits with vests. Suits were not so different in 1910: present day suits may be worn. The women's dresses are in the style of 1910. Delia and Eva wear pretty house dresses and change to their wedding finery for the last act. Nancy, Bertha and Minnie wear the dresses that Delia has made them for the wedding. Margaret Preston and Isabelle Carter are in much more elaborate costumes than the other women. They wear hats, in spite of the wind--and are fashion plates of the time. Minnie wears an elaborate hat that she has created for herself; she is going to be a milliner and has let her imagination rule. The hat is truly creative millinery. It looks like a shock of wheat, flattering to Minnie.

SOUND-EFFECTS: The wind is howling around the house throughout the play; sometimes an unusually strong blast rattles the window at right side. Doors bang back stage. Sometimes the wind catches a can or other object that goes rattling down the sidewalk off-stage at right. At least once during the play the tin roof of the tank house behind the house clatters as the wind catches it.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

EVA HOLMES	the beautiful bride
DELIA HOLMES	mother of the bride
ANDREW FROELICH	the handsome groom
NANCY SITTON	the pianist, the bride's best friend
DALBERT HOLMES	brother of the bride, the best man
BERTHA MASON	sister of the bride, matron of honor
EARL MASON	brother-in-law of the bride, groomsman
MINNIE FROELICH	sister of the groom, maid of honor
WILLIAM HOLMES	father of the bride
THE REVEREND TOLLIVER	who will perform the ceremony
RANDOLPH PRESTON	soloist, law student at Washburn College
MARGARET PRESTON	Randolph's mother, the town social leader
ISABELLE CARTER	Randolph's visiting girl friend from Topeka
JACK WILLIAMS	owner of the town barber-shop

SCENES

The action of the play takes place in the small western town of Wakeeney, Kansas . . . in the parlor of the Holmes house.

ACT I

10 o'clock in the morning on March 21, 1910--the wedding day of Eva and Andrew.

ACT II

12 o'clock--noon of the same day.

ACT III

3 o'clock in the afternoon of the wedding day.

THE DUST STORM WEDDING

ACT I

(The stage is empty as the curtain goes up. Eva enters from the stairway at back carrying her wedding gown on a hanger. She goes to stand before the window where her wedding ceremony will be performed. Holding the gown against herself, she stands where she will stand when she takes her vows.)

EVA

I Eva, take thee Andrew, to have and to hold . . . .

(Smiling with happiness she looks about the room, touches a geranium plant blooming in the window. The windows rattle as an unusually strong gust of wind hits the house. Eva leans closer to the window, peering out.)

EVA

Wind, wind, go away, come again some other day . . . PLEASE.

(Will enters carrying a book, overhears her remark directed at the wind.)

WILL

There's hardly been a day since we came to Kansas that I didn't wish the wind would stop blowing.

EVA

There <u>are</u> days when just a gentle breeze blows. I wanted that kind of wind for my wedding day.

WILL

I wished for <u>no wind</u> at all on your wedding day. But . . . if wishes were horses we'd all ride.

EVA

Maybe it'll blow up a good rain. We do need rain to lay the dust. It's the dust and the wind together that make it so bad . . .

WILL

If I'd known how much dust and wind there would be in Western Kansas, I'd thought twice about getting in that covered wagon train to come west . . . thirty-two years ago.

EVA

I'm glad you came, Pa. If you hadn't I'd never have been born here. I'd never have grown up here to meet Andy . . . and be getting married.

(Forgetting her worry about the wind, she returns to her happy mood, holding the dress before her, twirls across the stage in a little dance.)

EVA

And Oh, Pa . . . I'm so happy . . . . I'm so happy.

WILL

I know you are, daughter. I hope you'll always be just as happy as you are on this day. And . . . I brought you a little wedding present to help you be happy.

(She stops her dance and sees the book he is holding out to her.)

EVA

It's one of your books . . . one of the books you got from England in the barrel.

WILL

It's one of the books of poetry.

EVA

I'll always think of you, Pa . . . when I read . . . .

WILL

I always say there's nothing in life that a verse of poetry can't help. If you're happy or if you're sad . . . you can always find a poem to suit your mood.

(Walks to front of table and puts book down.)

WILL

I've written in the fly-leaf that it's a wedding present to you and Andy.

EVA

We'll really treasure it, Pa.

WILL

Well, Andy isn't much of one for reading poetry. In fact, I kind of get the feeling he thinks reading <u>anything</u> is kind of a lazy way of using time.

EVA
(defensively)
Andy's such a go-getter he hasn't taken much time for anything but his work his whole life long . . . but don't worry Pa . . . . I'll read him a few poems as time goes along.

WILL
He's a good man. He has a knack for making money all right. Some folks in town say he's got the Midas touch.

EVA
(happily)
Oh, he has. He has. He does think a lot about how to make money but he's been real poor all his life up to now. And . . . well, he thinks he can see lots of ways to get ahead if he works hard and I help him every way I can.

WILL
We've all been pretty poor, Eva. But if I just get my inheritance from England . . . it'll be another story . . . .

(Delia appears in the door carrying hangers with a woman's robe and night-gown, a man's robe and nightshirt.)

WILL
Here's Ma now . . . with another wedding present.

DELIA
Hang up your wedding gown before you get it wrinkled, dear. I spent an hour pressing those ruffles this morning and I want them to look just perfect when you walk into this room from the bedroom.

EVA
Oh Ma! Is this your surprise? Is this what you've been sewing late every night for the last month?

DELIA
Hang up your wedding dress there on the rack. Then I'll show you.

(Eva hurries to the hall-tree, hangs up her gown and hurries back to where her mother is standing.)

EVA
It is a surprise. A real surprise.

EVA
(taking the woman's negligee set and admiring it)
Oh, they're beautiful. No princess ever had a more beautiful wedding gown. And now you've made these elegant night things too.

DELIA
(pleased and happy for her daughter, proud of her own handiwork)

They turned out real pretty . . . if I do say so. I got Delineator patterns for them. They're the latest thing.

WILL
(smiling, but feeling a bit left out of this woman-talk)

I guess I'll be getting back upstairs. Maybe there are a few things that need doing.

DELIA
(quickly, turning to him)
Yes, Will. We're going to need some more coal for the kitchen range. And some kindling. Then I'l like two more jars of pickled beets brought up from the cellar . . . .

WILL
I'll do it right now. Soon as I . . . .

(Will opens book that he has laid on the table. Starts to read, sits down in chair and continues to read as they talk.)

EVA
(hanging her negligee set on hall-tree, turns back to take the other set from her mother)

Andy will be so pleased. It looks perfect. He thinks everything you do is exactly right anyhow.

DELIA
I hope he'll always think so. It'd be a rare thing if I get a son-in-law that really likes his mother-in-law.

EVA
Andy knows how hard you work to make money for all of us. Running this boarding-house, sewing for people . . . nursing if anyone gets sick and needs you. Then this job you just took on . . . selling the California Perfume Company products. When will you ever find time?

DELIA
This new job will be pure pleasure. I see a lot of people all the time. Once they know I sell those nice things it'll be easier than falling off a log. They'll just about sell themselves.

EVA

You haven't had much time to sew for anyone these last few months . . . . getting ready all the clothes for my wedding.

DELIA

I want to be proud of it. I want everything to look <u>just perfect</u>. The dresses have turned out real nice . . . yours and Bertha's and Minnie's and Nancy's. I'll take a lot of pleasure when I see you all looking pretty in things I made.

EVA

Nancy said she'd be coming early to practice on the piano. She has to ride in when her father brings the cream and eggs to town. She should be here any minute, I'd think.

DELIA

Well, carry all your things into the bedroom now. And give your dress plenty of room in the closet . . . so's those ruffles don't get crushed.

EVA

(hanging the man's robe set on the hall-tree, stands back to admire it)

I just can't get over how pretty you made them.

DELIA

I'm glad you're pleased. Maybe you ought to pack your robe set and Andy's in your suit-case right now. Before Nancy gets here and you get so busy you won't be able to do it neatly . . . so they won't wrinkle.

EVA

I can't see why Nancy has to practice again. She's played this piano so often. But she seems nervous lately.

DELIA

Playing for a wedding would make anyone nervous. And maybe . . . .

EVA

(thoughtfully, going to piano, touches keys)

I don't think she's nervous about playing for the wedding. It's something else . . . .

DELIA

Nancy's kind of a moody girl.

EVA

And . . . she's been even more that way lately. All month whenever we've been together she's acted so <u>sad</u>. I'm just afraid she's had a quarrel with Randolph.

DELIA
I know there's some trouble brewing. His mother told me he's met a new girl in Topeka.

EVA
Mrs. Preston told you Randolph had a new girl? Ma, why didn't you tell me . . . .

DELIA
(quickly)
She only told me last week when she came back from visiting Randolph in Topeka.

EVA
She's always visiting him there at Washburn . . . . checking up on him.

DELIA
Yes. Margaret says she's a lovely girl . . . elegant is the word she used.

EVA
If she's so elegant she won't be impressed with Randolph. He dresses worse than any man in town. His mother never gives him money for clothes.

WILL
(looking up from his book)
That's right. For a banker's son he looks real shabby, as a rule. But now . . . must have got himself a new suit for the wedding . . . . somehow.

DELIA
(noticing that Will is wasting time, reading instead of working)
Will, I thought you'd gone to get the pickled beets.

WILL
(turning a page)
Plenty of time. I just wanted to read a little before . . . .

DELIA
Will--please.

WILL
(getting up reluctantly, putting book on table)

Randolph looked pretty spiffy when he got off the train last night, hanging on to that little college girl he brought to visit. Made a handsome couple.

EVA
What? What are you talking about, Pa?

DELIA
Oh . . . then she did come home with him?

EVA
Ma . . . . you knew that Randolph was bringing a girl home with him?

DELIA
I didn't know for sure. Margaret told me she asked her to come visit sometime . . . when Randolph came home.

EVA
Oh Ma! What will we do?

DELIA
Do? Why, I told Margaret she could bring her to the wedding if Randolph brought her home this time. What could I say when Margaret asked me?

EVA
Oh . . . Ma!

DELIA
It was Margaret's idea to have her come visit . . . and I didn't think the girl would accept the invitation . . . . to come clear out here on the plains . . . so soon.

WILL
Pretty little thing . . . . not much bigger'n a minute. Wind would have blown her away if Randolph hadn't kept a good hold on her.

DELIA
Why didn't you tell me this last night, Will? That they came in on the train?

WILL
Delia, you were so busy sewing . . . late . . . and I just didn't think . . . .

EVA
I don't know how we can break this news to Nancy. She was counting on making up with Randolph when he came home for my wedding . . . and now . . . .

DELIA
Eva, I don't want you worrying about Nancy making up with Randolph. You knew from the start Mrs. Preston didn't think Nancy was good enough for her son.

EVA
But they're in love.

DELIA
Nancy's been chasing Randolph from the first and you know it. Just last month she made a trip on the train to Topeka to see him. That was a real forward thing to do.

EVA

But they love each other.

DELIA

Mrs. Preston isn't going to let that little romance go a step farther. That's why she went to Topeka . . . to put a stop to it.

EVA

I don't see how Randolph could do this to Nancy. Bringing a girl home . . .

DELIA

Margaret met the girl and asked her to come visit. Randolph had to bring her. You know he's always been tied to his mother's apron strings.

EVA

But this girl, surely he can't be interested in this girl.

WILL

Real pretty little girl . . . acted interested in Randolph all right.

EVA

And if Mrs. Preston makes up her mind that Randolph is going to break up with Nancy . . .

WILL

She'll get her way . . . . she always does.

DELIA

Eva, this is none of your concern. Margaret told me she didn't want Randolph to come home to your wedding in the first place . . . for fear Nancy would . . . .

EVA

Would what? Persuade him to at least get engaged?

WILL

She let Randolph say he'd sing at your wedding and come home for it . . . because you were such close friends--ever since you were babies . . . . living right across the street from each other.

EVA
(going to hall-tree and taking wedding gown from hook)

I counted on Nancy and him making up today. I planned to give them plenty of time together when they were rehearsing the music.

DELIA

It's really none of your business, dear. I don't want you concerned about this.

WILL
(starting for door)
That's right, daughter. This is your wedding day and you shouldn't be bothered about other people . . . or their worries.

EVA
I guess that's why Nancy's been crying so much lately and acting so sad. She starts to cry whenever she talks about Randolph, whenever I talk about my wedding. Whenever we're together and talk about anything she just turns her head away and tears begin to run down her face.

DELIA
Reverend Tolliver is real sweet on Nancy. He's a nice young man.

EVA
But Reverend Tolliver is going into the mission field. I don't think Nancy wants to be a missionary.

DELIA
(firmly)
He'd make Nancy a good husband just the same . . . . her a musician and him a preacher. The way she plays the organ and piano would be a real help to him.

WILL
(He has gone to window and is looking out.)

Wind's getting worse, I think. Probably have quite a time getting kindling from the wood-shed . . . .

DELIA
(impatiently)
Please do it now, Will. We'll need more coal down here too.

(Delia turns to stove and opens the door.)

EVA
I've seen Reverend Tolliver looking at Nancy when she plays LEAD KINDLY LIGHT before the service starts. Yes, I really think he's smitten. But it's silly to talk this way. She loves Randolph . . . . and . . . .

DELIA
(takes coal bucket and puts coal into stove)

There, that ought to keep this room nice and cozy. I'll open the grill upstairs and let a little heat up there into the bedroom so if anyone needs to fix up a little it'll be warm enough for them.

(Delia hands the empty coal bucket to Will and pushes him toward stairs at back. He goes up the stairs and Delia walks to the window, shaking her head.)

DELIA
This wind. THIS EVERLASTING KANSAS WIND.

(Eva has taken her wedding dress from the hall-tree and is looking at it.)

DELIA
We'll have to dust again. It's just as thick over the furniture as if we hadn't done the whole room early this morning.

(Eva goes into the bedroom with the dress and Delia follows her to the double doors.)

DELIA
Fetch me that dust-rag I hid back in the closet in the slop-jar. I can give everything another going over right now.

(She moves the chairs that sit before the stove and runs her finger over them. Shaking her head as Eva comes back into the room with the dust-rag.)

EVA
Don't worry about it. Everyone who's coming to this wedding is used to high winds and dust. They won't even notice a little dust that's settled on the furniture.

DELIA
(starting to dust the table at front)
You and Andrew are so happy you won't know the difference but other people might think I'm a poor house-keeper.

EVA
(remembering that it <u>is</u> her wedding day and that she <u>is</u> happy)

We are . . . we are . . . we <u>are</u> happy.

(A voice is heard at the top of the stairs.)

VOICE OF ANDREW
Eva, are you there?

EVA
Yes, Andy . . . down here in the parlor.

(Eva runs to the door and meets him coming down the stairs. He is carrying an enormous armload of white carnations.)

EVA
Oh, Andy. Oh . . . . they're beautiful.

DELIA
White carnations. It's exactly what we need to make this wedding perfect.

EVA
You said you'd buy the wedding flowers but I didn't expect . . . .

ANDY
They came in on the train and I brought them right out. The bouquets and single carnations for the men are in boxes on the screened porch. These are to decorate here by the window . . . if that's where . . . .

(He lays them on table at back right.)

DELIA
So many. It'll make this room into a fairy land . . . and the carnation smell . . . . Andy, I'm afraid you've spent more than you should on these.

ANDY
Minnie and my father came in on the train too . . . from Victoria. They're at the hotel. Minnie will come over in plenty of time for the rehearsal.

DELIA
We're setting out a snack at noon. Come then prepared to stay. All the family will be here. My Sunday School class are bringing sandwiches and coffee.

EVA
Does Minnie feel any better about us getting married?

ANDY
She's shaking in her shoes. But it's got nothing to do with you, Eva. She's scared for me as if I'd joined the devil instead of the Methodist Church. My Father doesn't say much. He thinks I had a right to leave the blacksmith shop and start the pool hall here. He loaned me the money.

EVA
Minnie thinks you should have stayed in Victoria, run the blacksmith shop with your father, married a nice Catholic girl, worked in the Democratic party and minded the priest.

ANDY
And now she calls me a fallen away Catholic . . . but don't let this worry you . . . . I think a man has a right to choose the wife he wants, the church he'll join, the business he wants to run and the political party he intends to support.

DELIA
(somewhat smugly)
Everyone is talking about a Catholic man joining the Methodist church.

EVA

I'd have joined your church if you'd asked me to . . . . . I guess.

DELIA

I wouldn't have wanted you to Eva. I'm glad Andy decided to come to us.

ANDY

Only Minnie is concerned. All those years she knew our mother was more Lutheran than Catholic, but Minnie's real narrow-minded. She's sure I'm lost.

EVA

Doesn't it worry you a bit, Andy?

ANDY

No. I left Victoria two years ago . . . after my mother died. When the priest tried to tell me I should marry Elsie Deitz and work with Paw in the blacksmith shop just as I'd always done, I decided to leave. He's a bossy one--Father Edward--but a good man. It's just that he thinks that he should rule the roost in the parish.

EVA

And your mother stood up to him?

ANDY

Yes. Maw stood up to him many a time.

EVA

I've heard that people were really scared to go against him.

ANDY

Everybody but my Mother.

DELIA

The big new church they're building at Victoria is something never seen before out west here . . . .

ANDY

I take pride in helping to get it started. Every man in the parish furnished a wagon load of stone . . . and labor . . . . I worked my share all right . . . and now I'm ready to work for the Methodist Church here.

EVA

Reverend Tolliver likes you. Of course he won't be here long. He's going to be a missionary. He'll give us a beautiful service today. I like the way he speaks . . . his voice as he says the words.

DELIA

He does have a way with words . . . .

(Delia leans over to smell the carnations on the table.)

DELIA
I'd better go get some vases and water . . . arrange these right now.

(Delia hurries up the stairs and Eva walks into Andy's arms . . . putting her head on his shoulder. He kisses her hair.)

ANDY
Only a little while . . . only a few hours . . . . and you'll be mine.

EVA
To love and to cherish . . .

ANDY
That reminds me . . . . I've the train tickets.

(Andy steps back and takes the tickets from his inside coat pocket.)

EVA
It seems so extravagant . . . and so fancy . . . . a honeymoon in Denver.

ANDY
It's not extravagant--because it's partly business. I'm going to hire a baker.

EVA
Then you've decided for sure . . . . you're going to start a Bakery.

ANDY
Yes. In the building where the Hardware store was. I can rent it. It'll be a respectable business you can take pride in . . . you and your Mother.

EVA
She didn't like you selling beer in the pool hall. Methodists don't believe in drinking.

ANDY
I got a good price for the pool hall. Anyway, that business had no future. Bakeries are going to do good business. They're something new.

EVA
It's the coming thing. We can look at the fancy bakeries in Denver.

ANDY
And get ideas on putting in a soda fountain too. Later a candy kitchen.

EVA
We'll have fun running it. People will come in the evening and sit and have ice-cream. It will make this town up-to-date as Salina or Hays.

(Eva takes Andy's hand, draws him to the hall-tree.)

EVA

I want to show you something.

(She shows him her night-gown and robe.)

EVA

For me . . . .

(She shows him the men's set.)

For you . . . .

ANDY

Eva . . . .

(He pulls away from her and shows her the train tickets which he holds in one hand.)

ANDY

I bought us something better than a sleeper . . . . a <u>private</u> drawing room.

EVA
(stepping close to him again)

Oh Andy. You've splurged . . . buying us a DRAWING ROOM. Oh, I can't wait . . . . I wish we were on that train right this minute. Riding across the plains . . . . wearing these night things . . . in our . . . private drawing room.

ANDY
(taking her into his arms once more)

Only a few more hours . . . .

EVA
(stepping back from him, suddenly remembering)

Things are getting so complicated . . . .

ANDY

What things? Everybody upstairs seems to be working on the food. Isn't the wedding going along . . . smoothly?

EVA

It's the people who will be here.

ANDY

You can't let people bother you.

EVA

I know . . . . I shouldn't let anything bother me today . . . . but . . . Oh, Andy . . . Randolph brought a girl home with him from Topeka!

ANDY

Well . . . what difference?

EVA

And Nancy was hoping to make up with him.

ANDY

Oh yes . . . Nancy. Well, she's been chasing Randolph ever since I've known her . . . and him . . . .

EVA

But . . . Nancy loves him. Randolph loves her.

ANDY

Maybe. I never did think that was going to work out. Mrs. Preston has big plans for Randolph. Big plans.

EVA

But I'm so sorry for Nancy.

ANDY

(drawing her close again)

Darling, don't think about Nancy . . . . and Randolph. Think about us.

(Looks into her eyes.)

ANDY

And how we'll soon be man and wife . . . tonight . . . riding across the plains on the train.

(Kisses her again.)

EVA

Oh, yes . . . .

(Delia's voice is heard off stage in the sitting room area.)

VOICE OF DELIA

Nancy, come right in. I'm glad you're early. You'll be able to practice before anyone else gets here.

VOICE OF NANCY

Is Randolph . . . . is he here yet?

VOICE OF DELIA

No. No. He's not here yet, Nancy. But Eva's been expecting you. Come right on down stairs.

(Delia comes down stairs carrying vases, followed by Nancy wearing hat and coat. She wears long scarf tied over hat.)

ANDY

Hello Nancy.

(He puts tickets back into his pocket.)

ANDY

I guess I'd better get along now. I'll bring Minnie and my father back at noon.

(Nancy nods a greeting to Andy and begins to take off her scarf that has held her hat on her head. Eva follows Andy to door, holding his hand. She puts her finger to her lips and puts the finger on his lips.)

EVA

Until noon . . . .

(He goes up stairs and she turns to Nancy who is putting her music on the piano.)

EVA

Let me take your coat and hat. It's warm in here since we built up the fire.

NANCY

It feels good. That wind cuts right through you.

(Nancy takes off her coat and hat and hands them to Eva.)

NANCY

I dressed for the wedding but I'm afraid you got this dress a little small, Mrs. Holmes. When I put it on this morning I could barely squeeze into it.

EVA

Oh, I see. I thought it was exactly right when you tried it on in January.

DELIA
(standing back to look at gown)

Yes. It's too tight. You've gained a little weight, dear. Eating too much these cold months, I expect.

NANCY

Yes . . . . I guess.

DELIA

I can fix it easily though . . . . two darts there in the bodice. I'll let them out.

NANCY

Shall I take it off now?

(Nancy starts for bedroom.)

DELIA

Yes. Eva, your old robe is there in the bedroom closet. She can slip into it and I'll get this dress fixed in a jiffy.

(She has been thinking of alteration but suddenly remembers.)

DELIA

Oh no . . . I forgot. I took that old robe upstairs when I cleaned the closet. Maybe . . . maybe she could slip on your new robe, Eva . . . . if you wouldn't mind, dear.

EVA

No. Of course I wouldn't mind. Nancy's my best friend . . . .

(Giving her a squeeze, she walks with her to hall-tree and takes clothes from rack. She is still carrying Nancy's hat and coat and is loaded with clothes as they move into the bedroom. Mrs. Holmes separates the carnations at the table, back right. Humming happily, singing in snatches. I LOVE YOU, TRULY. As she works Will comes down the stairs. He has coal bucket in one hand and a book in the other. He puts the coal bucket by the stove and stands a minute while he opens the book, finding the place he has marked with a slip of paper.)

WILL

I've just had an idea for the wedding. I remembered this poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. It's about love and all the ways . . . .

DELIA

Now, Will. They've got everything planned.

WILL

I know. But this beautiful poem would fit in just fine right after Randolph sings I LOVE YOU, TRULY . . . . and it would be real suitable--make the ceremony last a little longer, add a touch of class.

DELIA
(patiently)

How does it go?

WILL
(eagerly)
Just let me read it to you.

(He opens the book where he has his finger marking the place.

DELIA
(calling out to Eva in the bedroom)
Eva, Pa has a poem he wants to read at the ceremony. Maybe you'd better hear it and see what you think.

WILL
(as Eva appears in the doorway)
It's such a beautiful poem. I just thought it would add a fitting touch to the wedding.

EVA
(patiently)
You do read poetry so well, Pa . . . . but I don't know. No one else has a poem read at their wedding . . . and maybe . . . .

WILL
(hurriedly)
Just let me read it to you. It's exactly right for a wedding. I'd be sitting here in the rocker where I'm going to stand when you come out of the bedroom.

(He sits in rocker at front right.)

WILL
When Randolph finishes the song Nancy could keep on playing softly the same music . . . . and then I stand . . . .

(He stands.)

WILL
I begin to read these words "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. I love thee to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach . . . ."

EVA
(with resignation)
All right, Pa. I know the poem. Yes, I think it will <u>be lovely</u> if you read it.

DELIA
(doubtfully)
I guess it'll be all right . . . although no other wedding ever . . . .

(Nancy has come to stand in the doorway. She is wearing Eva's bridal robe and carrying her dress.)

DELIA

Nancy . . . . my goodness.

(Delia walks around Nancy to admire robe.)

DELIA

My, I did do a good job on that robe if I do say so . . . .

NANCY
(beginning to cry)

It's a beautiful robe . . . Mrs. Holmes . . . . just beautiful.

EVA

What in the world's the matter, Nancy? You're supposed to cry at the wedding . . . not now. Does wearing my wedding negligee make you sad? You look <u>beautiful</u> in it.

NANCY

I don't know what's the matter with me lately . . . . I just start to cry over nothing . . . I never know when . . . .

DELIA
(coming forward briskly)

A wedding makes folks over-sentimental. I'll take your dress and open those seams so it will fit just fine.

(Takes dress from Nancy.)

NANCY

I feel so queer. Dizzy all of a sudden.

DELIA

You do look pale.

NANCY
(hand over her mouth)

I think . . . . I feel like I'm going to throw up.

EVA

Oh Nancy . . . go back and lie down for a little. I'll get a wet wash-rag to lay on your head.

DELIA
(lays dress across chair, goes to Nancy)

Here, let me help you. Eva, get that slop-jar out of the closet.

(Looking back at Will as they walk.)

DELIA

Maybe she's just not had any breakfast. Will, you go into the kitchen and bring . . . some soda crackers and a glass of milk.

DELIA
(quickly to Eva as they move to door)
Let's get that robe off her first . . . before anything happens to it.

WILL
(as he meets Bertha on the stairs)
Nancy had a dizzy spell. Too much rushing around this morning.

BERTHA
Oh? A dizzy spell? That's too bad.

DELIA
(coming back into room from the bedroom)
She'll be all right soon as she gets a little something to eat. No breakfast before she started out, I expect. I'm glad you're here, Bertha.

BERTHA
Earl and I just walked over from his mother's house. The wind's so strong it almost took us off our feet. We met Andy going on back downtown. Said he'd just left the flowers for the wedding. They're beautiful.

(Bertha touches carnations on table then runs her fingers over table surface.)

BERTHA
I'll get some vases and arrange them. Then dust . . . .

DELIA
Yes, that's exactly what needs doing. Give everything a good going over again.

BERTHA
You like Andy, don't you, Ma? You're satisfied he's the right husband for Eva?

DELIA
Yes. I really do like him. He's a <u>go-getter</u>. Generous too, bringing all these flowers. So many . . . .

BERTHA
(touching a carnation, speaks wistfully)
I hear he made plenty of money when he sold the pool hall.

DELIA
Yes. He's well fixed.

BERTHA
I saw all the flowers and boxes on the back porch with big bouquets for us to carry. Single carnations for the men . . . . real fancy.

DELIA

He wants it to be a beautiful wedding. I just hope he never regrets leaving his church and joining ours.

EVA

He didn't ask Sis to join his, did he?

DELIA
(gloating)

No. He said he wanted to be a Methodist.

BERTHA

I heard he got good and tired of the way the priest at Victoria kept coming over to their house to reason with his mother because she said the Lutheran church was just as good a church as the Catholic.

DELIA

It went deeper than that. It kind of stuck in Andy's craw that a man of God would keep badgering her and holding her up to scorn in the parish just because she didn't see eye to eye with him on every least thing. After she died, I guess that's when he made up his mind to leave the church.

BERTHA

I heard his mother was a proud woman with a mind of her own.

DELIA

She'd been real happy with the church in Pennsylvania . . . had five children when they decided to take a homestead here in Kansas. They came out in '78 same as us. Probably she was homesick for her folks in Germany and it pained her when the priest kept ding-donging away about lost souls.

BERTHA

I heard she was well educated, a high born German who gave herself airs.

DELIA

Probably too well educated to suit the priest. I don't see why a Protestant always has to leave her church when she marries a Catholic.

BERTHA

Well, it's always that way. Andy's the first Catholic I ever knew had the nerve to leave the church and become a Protestant.

DELIA

He's a welcome addition to our church.

(Will appears on the stairs with a tray of food.)

WILL

You look pretty, Bertha. My beautiful daughters . . . you were just babies such a short time ago.

BERTHA
And you were reading us stories and saying poems to us . . . .

WILL
Remember Little Orphan Annie? "Little Orphan Annie came to our house to stay. An wash the cups an' saucers up and brush the crumbs away."

BERTHA
"And shoo the chickens off the porch, and dust the hearth and sweep. An' make the fire, an' bake the bread, an' earn her board and keep."

WILL
Your mother always said she felt she was Little Orphan Annie.

BERTHA
She was always working while we were listening . . . cooking for all the boarders and us. By the way, what do you hear from the lawyer in the East about the money you're supposed to inherit from England?

WILL
(with enthusiasm)
A letter came last week. From cousin Edwin in Detroit. They've sent a lawyer right to England and directly to Yorkshire to find out what's what. It looks very hopeful now. Cousin Edwin thinks we'll each get fifty thousand dollars . . . at least that much.

BERTHA
Oh Pa, if only it could be true. You'd be rich.

(She has finished arranging the flowers and now begins to dust.)

BERTHA
You could set Del up in his own tailoring shop. If he only had a shop of his own he wouldn't find so much time to waste . . . . playing cards . . . gambling . . . .

WILL
Yes. That worries me a lot. He's taken to thinking he has a knack for playing cards. I'd sure use some of the money to set him up in a fine tailoring shop.

BERTHA
Maybe Ma could save up a little from all she does, but it wouldn't be enough. Even with the nursing she does when she's needed . . . . and sewing for several of the women in town who can afford to pay her. And now canvassing with this new line of perfumes and such for the California Perfume Company. I don't see how she does it all.

DELIA
(popping in from the bedroom)
I heard you mention the Perfume Company. I bought from myself for the wedding party presents. Guess what kind of toilet water I chose for you?

BERTHA
I love Trailing Arbutus. Oh Ma, you always do everything exactly right.

DELIA
I've got them all wrapped and ready. There on the what-not. Your's is tied with blue ribbon.

BERTHA
That's the nicest kind of present you could give.

(Finishing the dusting, Bertha shows Delia the dust cloth.)

BERTHA
I <u>think</u> I've dusted everything. Where shall I put this?

DELIA
Take it along upstairs. Look around and see if you can find any place needs a little going over. I've got tea towels laid over all the dishes to keep them clean, but the furniture . . ... you just can't keep <u>every-thing</u> covered.

WILL
This room looks fine now. With the carnations and the geraniums in bloom. Maybe . . . .

(He goes to the window, takes a potted geranium and carries it to the coal bucket where he sets it. The leaves and vines in the pot trail down and make the bucket attractive.)

WILL
There . . . that adds a touch. Turns that ugly bucket into something pretty.

BERTHA
(laughing)
Oh Pa, you could always think of some way to turn an eye-sore into some-thing beautiful.

DELIA
Like training vines over the out-house?

BERTHA
Yes. When those trumpet vines bloom the out-house is pretty as a picture.

WILL
If you <u>think elegant</u> you <u>are elegant</u> I always say. It's all the way you look at things.

BERTHA
I bet you got that thought out of a book.

DELIA
(somewhat wearily)

I bet he did.

WILL

I did . . . . as a matter of fact.

(Holds up book of poems proudly so Bertha can see the title.)

WILL

Daughter, I decided to give this nice book of poems to Eva for a wedding present.

(Adds without enthusiasm.)

WILL

And Andy of course. Although he doesn't care much for poetry.

BERTHA
(surprised, reaches for her bag which she has set on a chair)

That's funny, Pa. You and I had the same thought . . . .

(She draws book from bag.)

BERTHA

I'm giving Eva a book for a present. It's not for Andy though. Just Eva.

WILL
(takes book and looks at title)

"Orange Blossoms" by T. S. Arthur.

(Opens book to read fly leaf.)

WILL

"Orange Blossoms" fresh and faded. Hmmmmmm.

BERTHA

It's a book with advice for brides.

DELIA

I've heard of it but I haven't had time to read it.

WILL
(glancing over the chapter titles)

Here's a chapter on "Can you Afford it?" Hope you read that one yourself, Bertha.

BERTHA
(sulkily)

A wife has to make a good show of her husband's success. I . . . .

WILL
You're kind of extravagant sometimes, daughter.

BERTHA
(with haughtiness)
I know what I'm doing.

WILL
(turning pages)
Well, anyway, I can see there's lots of good advice in here. Shall I lay it by this poetry book?

BERTHA
No. I want to give it to her at the wedding feast . . . . kind of make a joke of it.

(Will gives her book back and she puts it in her bag.)

DELIA
We're wasting time. There's so much left to do. You said you'd decorate the cake.

BERTHA
I bought a little bride and groom for the top. I'll be along soon as I say hello to Eva and Nancy.

(Will and Delia go upstairs. Eva comes from bedroom.)

BERTHA
How's the blushing bride?

(They embrace.)

EVA
Just fine. I'm glad you're here early. There's so much to do yet.

(Eva notices the coal bucket.)

EVA
I heard Pa talking about prettying up even the coal bucket.

(She giggles.)

EVA
It does look <u>elegant</u>, doesn't it?

BERTHA
(smiling)
Leave it to Pa to think of something like that.

(A loud knocking is heard at the door front right.)

BERTHA

Someone's at the front door.

EVA

No one is supposed to use that door on a windy day.

BERTHA
(looking out window to see who is knocking)

It's a man.

EVA
(following her to look out)

It's that new fellow in town started the barber shop. Dal's friend.

BERTHA

Oh? The one who Dal plays cards with? The gambler?

EVA
(with disapproval)

Yes. He's kind of a hoodlum.

(The knocking is heard again, louder.)

BERTHA

We'll have to let him in, I guess. Or he'll knock down the door.

EVA
(going to door, opens it and looks out)

This screen is hooked in two places, Mr. Williams. I'll have to unfasten both hooks before I can let you in. We never use this door on a windy day.

(She unhooks door; Jack Williams walks in with a whish of wind that also carries a few stray leaves into the room. Wind catches the door and bangs it once before Eva can re-hook it.)

JACK

I guess I should have gone to the back door . . . but there were so many women goin' in and out.

(He is wearing a cap and he removes it now, smiling uncertainly at the two women.)

JACK

I hope I'm not intrudin . . . . heard you was having' a weddin' today.

EVA
(with coolness)
Yes. This is my wedding day, Mr. Williams. What can I do for you?

JACK
(looking around room with admiration)
That's nice. Carnations. You've made this parlor into somethin' real . . . . beautiful.

EVA
(pleased)
We're just having a little home wedding. But we've tried to make everything as pretty as we could.

BERTHA
We didn't count on a dust storm.

JACK
Oh, yeah. The dust storm makes everything harder to do . . . I guess.

EVA
Did you want to see someone, Mr. Williams?

JACK
(he has gone to smell a carnation)
Oh yeah. I'm lookin' for Dal.

EVA
Maybe he went downtown to pick up the mail. Did you look downtown?

JACK
I looked <u>all</u> over town. He was supposed to meet me at the Barber Shop first thing this mornin'.

EVA
(patiently)
We've had a lot of things to do today. Ma may have sent him to the church for more folding chairs.

BERTHA
(pointedly)
We're awfully busy this morning. Why don't you go over to the church and see if he's there?

JACK
Methodist church?

EVA
Of course.

JACK
He said he'd meet me with the money he owes me.

BERTHA
Money? Dal owes you money . . . . money he lost gambling, I suppose?

EVA
(angrily)
Have you and Dal been gambling again?

JACK
(amused at her anger)
Of course.

BERTHA
And he lost money? How much?

JACK
A hundred dollars.

EVA
(shocked)
A hundred dollars? Why, that's a fortune.

BERTHA
How could Dal lose a hundred dollars?

JACK
Bad luck. He's been having a run of bad luck lately.

EVA
(with righteous indignation)
Well, it serves him right. I hope he has nothing but bad luck from now on . . . . with cards. Then he'll have to stop gambling.

JACK
Oh, his luck'll change. He'll be winnin' big again one of these days.

EVA
If Dal lost a hundred dollars gambling he's probably out trying to borrow it . . . this morning.

BERTHA
That's a lot of money to borrow.

EVA
He's usually asking Ma to loan him money when he gets behind.

BERTHA
I expect she's spent all her spare cash on this wedding.

EVA
(troubled)
Yes. A hundred dollars. My!

JACK
I gotta have it this morning. Plannin' on takin' the train to Kansas City this afternoon.

BERTHA
Well, Mr. Williams, Dal isn't here and we're very busy.

EVA
(opening the door, unhooking the screen)
Why don't you go over to the Methodist church and look for Dal?

JACK
(putting on his cap)
Sure. I'll do that.

(Goes quickly out door and Eva fastens screen again, closes door.)

BERTHA
What will he do when he finds Dal?

EVA
Don't ask me.

BERTHA
Does he come here often? Looking for Dal.

EVA
Yes. As a matter of fact. Likes to drop in around meal time.

BERTHA
Do you think he was hinting that he'd like to be invited to your wedding?

EVA
Maybe. But, we've already got quite a crowd and . . . .

(She looks towards bedroom uneasily.)

BERTHA
Well, I wonder if Nancy is feeling better? Be terrible if the piano player got down and couldn't play . . . .

(She starts toward bedroom as Nancy appears in the doorway.)

NANCY
I'm alright now.

EVA
Good. You've got your color back. You do look pretty in my robe, Nancy.

NANCY
I don't know what came over me. But I feel just fine now.

(Giving her attention to Bertha.)

NANCY
You look lovely, Bertha. Your mother made us all such pretty dresses, almost as pretty as Eva's.

EVA
(sentimentally)
I wanted them to be just as pretty as you'd ever had in your whole life. Something to remind you of this day . . . . whenever you wear them.

BERTHA
(picking up the dust rag)
I think I've got everything dusted--oh--I forgot the piano.

EVA
Give me the dust rag and I'll finish. I heard you say you had the cake to decorate yet.

BERTHA
(giving her the dust cloth)
Yes, I'll do that now.

(She goes up stairs while Nancy goes to the piano and twirls the stool to make it the right height.)

EVA
Ma will have your dress done in two shakes of a lambs tail. You'll be all fixed up again before Randolph gets here to practice . . . . but Nancy . . . I think I ought to tell you . . . .

NANCY
Is Randolph's mother doing anything to help with the wedding?

EVA
Yes. Ma asked her to pour tea when we serve the cake. She's bringing over her silver tea service. But Nancy . . . .

NANCY
(with bitterness)
She'll like that . . . . sitting queenly and dignified, her red hair done up high on her head. She'll pour the tea from her silver pot . . . . lording it over everybody . . . . acting like she's the main one at your wedding.

EVA
(laughing uneasily)
It's just her way, acting so high and mighty, and she <u>has been</u> acting that way. You see, last week when she went to Topeka . . . .

NANCY
(bitterly)
She's never thought I was good enough for her son.

EVA
Even Ma says she's spoiled Randolph. Him being an only child, I guess she couldn't help but give him a lot of attention. And when she went to Topeka . . . .

NANCY
She's got quite a hold on him . . . . and she intends to break us up for good.

EVA
Nancy, what's the matter between you and him? You haven't had a fight, have you?

NANCY
No. Not exactly.

EVA
You went to Topeka a month ago to see him. Ever since then . . . . you've acted so sad . . . . .

NANCY
(beginning to cry)
Oh Eva, I'm in trouble . . . . bad trouble.

EVA
Don't cry, dear. I'm sure if you're quarreled with him, you'll make it up . . . only things aren't going just as we planned because when Mrs. Preston was in Topeka she met . . . .

NANCY
(sobbing)
Eva, I'm in the family way and Randolph . . . . Randolph won't marry me.

EVA
(shocked)
Nancy . . . . you mean . . . . you mean you're going to have a baby? Oh no! How can you tell?

NANCY
I can tell. And I'm afraid your mother may have guessed it . . . . the way I felt faint and sickish this morning.

EVA
I never thought a thing about it and I'm sure Ma . . . . she has so much on her mind. What do you mean Randolph won't marry you?

NANCY
I went to Topeka and when I got there I went and got a marriage license. I thought when I told Randolph, if I had the license he'd take me to a Justice of Peace . . . . and . . . oh . . . Eva . . . . .

(She begins to sob wildly.)

EVA
(smoothing Nancy's hair, speaks distractedly)

He wouldn't go through with it?

NANCY
He said I was making it up, that he was sure I wasn't going to have a baby . . . . and if I was . . . . maybe it was someone else's.

EVA
Who . . . . . who did he mean?

NANCY
Reverend Tolliver. He said I'd been flirting with Reverend Tolliver after church. He'd heard about me at choir practice, how Reverend turned the pages of the music for me and all. His mother told him it looked like Reverend was sweet on me.

EVA
Oh, I knew there was nothing to that as far as you're concerned. I knew you were just being nice to Reverend. We all were.

NANCY
Randolph told me to go home and he'd see me when he got here for your wedding . . . . and Eva . . . . my dress, that was why I couldn't fasten it at the waist.

EVA
And getting sick this morning. Oh, Nancy . . . . what will you do?

NANCY
(hopelessly)
I don't know. I wish I was dead.

EVA
Oh no, Nancy, you don't wish that. Ma will know what to do . . . she always knows what to do about everything. We'll have to tell her of course.

NANCY
(desperately)
I've got to talk to Randolph first. When he comes to rehearse this noon, will you see that we're alone down here . . . . all alone? Don't let anyone else come down here to interrupt us. Maybe . . . oh surely he knows it's true and he'll . . . .

(Again Nancy bursts into tears.)

EVA

Of course. Of course. You'll be married and no one will be the wiser. Lots of babies come at seven months . . . . or even six.

NANCY

If only . . . . we can hurry.

EVA
(firmly)

Practice the piano pieces now and I'll finish the dusting. Don't think about it anymore . . . . and stop crying. Your eyes will be red. You want to look pretty when you see Randolph.

(Suddenly she remembers what she must tell Nancy.)

EVA

Only Nancy, I've been trying to tell you that Mrs. Preston went to Topeka . . . .

(Nancy begins to play MELODY OF LOVE and Delia comes down the stairs, the dress over her arm.)

DELIA

Nancy, I'll have to have you try this on once before I sew it on the machine.

(Nancy stops playing and gets up, takes dress from Delia.)

NANCY

I'll just slip it on in the bedroom.

EVA
(seeing that her mother looks a bit distracted)

Ma, why don't you sit down and rest a little? You've been going pell-mell since dawn. You look tired.

(As Nancy takes dress into the bedroom, Delia sinks down in a chair next to the stove, sighing, spreads her hands out to warm them.)

DELIA

I <u>am</u> tired all of a sudden.

EVA

Is anything wrong? The ladies from your Sunday School class are working in the kitchen, aren't they?

DELIA

Wrong? Oh no, the wedding is coming along fine but Eva, I could hear you and Nancy talking down here . . . through the grill . . . .

(She points to the ceiling heat vent.)

DELIA

You know how everything that's said down here carries upstairs when the grill's open to let the heat into that room. Pa had just come upstairs to tell me more women had come to help . . . . and we both heard every word you said down here.

EVA

(with resignation)

Then you know. We forgot about the grill. It's just as <u>well</u> you know.

DELIA

I'm <u>shocked</u>. And Pa's awful sorry to hear it. We guess she's almost three months gone. I should have suspicioned . . . . her feeling queezy and the dress too tight. But I just wasn't thinking too good this morning about anything except making this a pretty wedding.

EVA

(going to bedroom door)

Nancy, Ma and Pa heard us talking.

NANCY

(coming out with dress on, goes to stand near Delia)

What will I do, Mrs. Holmes?

(Delia takes straight pins from her collar where she has them pinned, looks at the waist of the dress.)

DELIA

Do? Well, Nancy you'll have to get married and right soon.

NANCY

(beginning to cry again)

But Randolph, he said he wouldn't marry me. He didn't think it was true about the baby on the way.

DELIA

Randolph is a spoiled child. And his mother is dead set against him marrying you. But Randolph has <u>acted real smitten when he's been with you</u>, Nancy.

NANCY

Oh yes. <u>We are in love</u>. He does love me. He did until I got the license and wanted us to get married by the Justice of Peace . . . . in Topeka . . . last month.

DELIA
He's real tied to his mother's apron strings. Since his father died and left her in charge of the money and all their property.

NANCY
She keeps Randolph working for her, running around collecting rents and looking at how the tenants are keeping their farms . . . . but she doesn't pay him much.

DELIA
I know. She says she's teaching him to handle money properly and she doles it out to him very carefully. Kind of keeps control of him that way.

NANCY
He hasn't worked for anyone but her . . . . except last fall he got a job in Topeka part time to buy me this ring he gave me for Christmas.

(She shows them the ring on her finger.)

EVA
I didn't know he earned the money for it himself. Doing what?

NANCY
Working in a clothing store, selling clothes to men. He was real good at it, too. All his college friends came in and bought from him. Earned a suit for himself. He looked real nice at Christmas. You remember?

(Nancy begins to cry again.)

NANCY
He looked so handsome I just . . . .

DELIA
I thought when I saw the ring right after Christmas that things were getting serious with you two.

NANCY
(crying)
That's what I thought. I thought it was kind of an engagement ring, even though he never said it was . . . . or said anything about us getting married . . . sometime . . . . just that he loved me.

DELIA
(with practicality)
Well . . . . earning the money to buy that ring proves he can work and make a living if he should decide to marry you. If his mother cuts him off and he has to leave school.

NANCY
(stops crying)
Randolph is real set on getting to be a lawyer. He'd have to give that up if he left Washburn.

DELIA

I suppose so. Washburn College is a pretty expensive school. I expect it costs a lot of money to go there.

EVA

Maybe Mrs. Preston would put a good face on the whole thing and keep on giving you and Randolph money for him to finish college and get to be a lawyer.

NANCY

I don't think Randolph can bring himself to cross his mother . . . .

DELIA

(thoughtfully)

If Randolph won't marry you, I guess you'll have to find someone that will . . . .

NANCY

Why, what do you mean?

DELIA

Reverend Tolliver acts like he's completely taken with you, Nancy. If you'd just give him a bit of encouragement.

EVA

Oh Ma . . . . you can't be suggesting Nancy should marry Reverend Tolliver when she loves Randolph.

NANCY

No, Mrs. Holmes . . . . I <u>couldn't</u> do that.

DELIA

You could have a good life with the preacher. He's a nice young man . . . . sort of innocent, but <u>that's</u> to your advantage. I hear he's likely to get into the mission field . . . . real soon. He's asked to go to Africa.

NANCY

You mean . . . marry him, go off to Africa and have a baby and not tell anyone anything about it . . . . even Reverend Tolliver?

DELIA

Lots of babies are born early. In Africa they probably wouldn't know the difference. They probably don't know a full term baby from one that comes early.

NANCY

You mean, get him to propose and accept his proposal and marry him and never tell him a thing?

DELIA

It could appear to be very romantic, spur-of-the-moment sort of thing . . . . him about to leave for Africa . . . and all . . . .

EVA
(shocked)
Ma, how can you be suggesting Nancy do this deceitful thing?

DELIA
(firmly)
If she has no choice she must do it.

NANCY
(thoughtfully)
I could tell Randolph that's what I plan to do if he doesn't marry me.

DELIA
Yes, that's what I mean. Give Randolph a chance. He might grow up if he thinks you'll marry Reverend and go to Africa to have his son.

EVA
His son?

DELIA
It's best to think it's a son. Maybe Randolph will think twice about giving up his son.

NANCY
I see. Yes. I see what you mean.

(Delia finishes putting the pins into the dress.)

DELIA
You can slip this off now. I'll finish the stitching upstairs. You're going to look just beautiful in it, Nancy. When Randolph comes to practice you're going to look the prettiest you've ever looked in your whole life.

EVA
You just hold that thought, Nancy.

DELIA
And Nancy, I'm going to give you your present right now, ahead of time, for serving in the wedding. Eva, get that package back there on the what-not . . . . the one tied with the green ribbon

EVA
(stepping back to get the package)
Ma's giving all of us girls toilet water . . . . from the California Perfume Company she canvasses for.

(She brings back package and gives it to Nancy.)

NANCY
I don't know what to say . . . . you're all so good to me . . . . .

(She opens the package.)

NANCY
Lily-of-the-valley. That's my very favorite.

DELIA
(pleased)
I heard you say that when you were looking over the samples at Christmas time.

NANCY
You just think of <u>everything</u> . . . . and know exactly what to do about <u>everything</u>, Mrs. Holmes.

EVA
Now, you go back into the bedroom and lie down for awhile, Nancy. Just rest for a bit. You've got plenty of time to practice. A little nap will make you look fresh as a daisy. You're going to look so beautiful Randolph will do anything you want.

NANCY
I'll just hold on to that thought and stop worrying . . . if I can.

DELIA
There's one more little thing that you should know, Nancy.

NANCY
What's that?

DELIA
Eva tried to tell you but she couldn't seem to get the words out of her mouth.

EVA
Mrs. Preston went to Topeka last week to visit Randolph . . . . checking up on him like she does.

DELIA
Randolph introduced her to a girl he's been taking around to some of the parties . . . .

NANCY
What? A girl . . . .

EVA
Just some girl he met and had a few dates with.

DELIA
Only the girl just happens to be exactly the kind of girl she wants Randolph to marry . . . . a judge's daughter.

EVA
And you know how Mrs. Preston works, how quickly she makes up her mind and takes over.

DELIA
She asked this Isabelle Carter to come visit, when Randolph came home this week to sing for Eva's wedding.

NANCY
Oh no. He couldn't bring a girl home with him . . . . <u>this time</u>.

DELIA
<u>He did</u>. He couldn't do anything else. His mother asked her to visit and he had to bring her with him on the train. They're here and you'll be meeting her.

EVA
Of course we had to ask her to the wedding.

NANCY
Is she pretty?

DELIA
We haven't seen her yet. Will saw her . . . said she was a small sized girl . . . . wore pretty clothes.

NANCY
(beginning to cry again)
Oh . . . . . .

DELIA
(giving her arm a little shake)
Now Nancy, you've got to pull yourself together. This girl doesn't mean a thing to Randolph . . . . yet . . . . I'm sure.

EVA
You've got to go in that bedroom and take a little rest if you can. Then fix up your face . . . . use some of my California Perfume things there on the dresser and make yourself look pretty.

DELIA
He'll forget all about this little girl.

EVA
You've got to put on an act, Nancy.

NANCY
(beginning to understand)
Yes. <u>I will have to put on an act</u> . . . .

(going toward bedroom)

NANCY

And look my very best

(She disappears into the bedroom.)

DELIA
(going to the window to look out)

I hope the wind dies down a little bit around noon. There are so many people coming with food.

VOICE OF MARGARET PRESTON

Are you down there, Delia?

EVA

It's Mrs. Preston. Don't let her come down here, Ma.

(Margaret Preston comes down stairs, sailing into the room like the self-assured person that she is.)

MARGARET
(seeing the carnations)

Oh it's lovely, lovely! Eva . . . and you the beautiful bride to have such a wedding day . . . . with a dust storm.

DELIA

I'm glad to see you Margaret. You're a little early.

MARGARET

Oh, I brought our guest from Topeka, Randolph's friend, Isabelle. You know I told you about her coming to visit.

DELIA

Oh, yes.

MARGARET
(calling up the stairs)

Bring Isabelle down here, Randolph. It's so pretty and I want her to meet the bride.

(Randolph and Isabelle come down the stairs; Isabelle is clinging tightly to Randolph's arm.)

MARGARET

This is Isabelle Carter. Delia. And Eva, the blushing bride.

ISABELLE

Oh, it's so nice of you to ask me to your wedding and I . . . .

(She presses a handkerchief to her nose.)

RANDOLPH
Hello Mrs. Holmes. Hello Eva.

(Isabelle sneezes, delicately.)

MARGARET
It's the dust. It seems to be getting to her.

ISABELLE
I was all right at first and I thought the wind was exciting . . . .

(She sneezes again.)

DELIA
The dust gets to some people. Let's all go upstairs. I think this room is one of the worst places in the house for catching the wind.

EVA
Yes. Ma, why don't you take Mrs. Preston and Miss Carter upstairs to look at my wedding presents.

DELIA
And Randolph can stay down here to rehearse the wedding music.

MARGARET
Oh no. Not now.

EVA
But Nancy is here waiting to practice and they could just as well . . . .

RANDOLPH
(eagerly)
Nancy's here . . . . waiting to practice?

DELIA
And it will only take a few minutes.

RANDOLPH
Where is Nancy?

(Nancy steps from the bedroom, dressed in Eva's negligee--looking a bit flushed, but perfectly poised. She is carrying her dress which she hands to Delia.)

NANCY
I'm right here, Randolph. Sorry I'm not dressed but Mrs. Holmes is going to have to take a few stitches in my dress . . . . and I'm wearing . . . . modeling Eva's bridal negligee. Isn't it pretty?

(Turns about to show robe.)

RANDOLPH
(going to her, taking her hand)
You look very pretty, Nancy . . . . Nancy . . . beautiful . . . . . Nancy, I want you to meet . . . .

(Draws her toward Isabelle.)

MARGARET
(looking with coolness at the negligee)
This is Isabelle Carter, Nancy. We invited her to come home with Randolph so she could see what western Kansas is like. And get acquainted with some of Randolph's friends.

NANCY
(stepping away from Randolph and offering her hand to Isabelle)

It's nice to have you here, Isabelle.

MARGARET
We just stopped in for a minute. We've got to hurry on.

RANDOLPH
Maybe you and Isabelle would like to look at the wedding presents for a little while so Nancy and I could practice.

ISABELLE
Oh, I'd like to watch you practice, hear you sing, Randolph.

EVA
I'd like to show you our beautiful wedding presents, upstairs.

(She takes Isabelle's arm, steering her to the stairs.)

MARGARET
If we could only take the time, we would stay and look at the presents but we have to hurry on.

DELIA
We'll just leave these two to practice.

MARGARET
Randolph was going to the pharmacy to buy something for Isabelle to keep her from sneezing.

ISABELLE
You see . . . .

(She sneezes again, delicately.)

There is something I can use to stop my sneezing.

MARGARET
A salve. It's especially made for people to use when they're extra sensitive to dust.

DELIA
I've heard of it.

RANDOLPH
(helplessly)
I'll go and get the salve and then I'll be back to practice.

(He goes to the piano and looks at music.)

RANDOLPH
I see you've got the pieces here.

(Turns back to Nancy, gives her a loving look. His back is to his mother and Isabelle.)

MARGARET
(taking his arm)
We'll hurry along now. We've so much to do before this afternoon. And Cook will be serving our lunch before long.

(She pulls him toward door, pushing Isabelle and Randolph up the stairs.)

MARGARET
Go on. I want a word with Delia.

DELIA
Yes, Margaret.

MARGARET
(points to space in front of window)
You need a little altar here. Make it look more like a church.

DELIA
It's going to be a simply ceremony. The minister will stand here.

(She gestures to show where he will stand.)

DELIA
And the wedding party here.

MARGARET
(critically looking over the room)
I've a little table you could use as sort of an altar. One of the men from the church could come get it.

DELIA
(firmly)
It would take up too much room. This is just a simple little Methodist ceremony, Margaret. We don't go in for form like you do in the Episcopal church.

MARGARET
I know. Still . . . . .

(She eyes the stove.)

MARGARET
That big old stove takes up so much room. It's a pity Will didn't build a fireplace there against the wall.

DELIA
That stove has to heat this room and the bedroom.

(Points at vent.)

DELIA
It heats the bedroom upstairs too. We <u>have to have</u> it. Even if it's kind of ugly.

EVA
(recognizing a sharpness in the tone of the two women)
Now, it's perfectly fine the way we have this room fixed up. Once we get the folding chairs in, the room will look much more like a chapel.

DELIA
Yes, when we get the folding chairs in here . . . . you'll see then, Margaret.

MARGARET
(offended, nose in the air)
Then you don't want my pretty little table to use as an altar?

EVA
No. But if you brought your silver tea set we'll <u>love</u> using <u>it</u>.

DELIA
And you are going to pour, aren't you Margaret?

MARGARET
(distracted by their cajoling words)
Yes. I'll pour. But I think I should bring my lace cloth for the tea table.

DELIA
I was going to use the one I embroidered especially for this, but alright, shy don't you bring your lace one when you come back for the wedding?

MARGARET
We'll come early so Randolph will have plenty of time to practice.

(She turns to Nancy.)

MARGARET
Maybe Isabelle should sit in here and watch while you're going over the music. We don't want her to feel neglected.

DELIA
(taking Margaret's arm and guiding her toward door)

Come upstairs and see how Bertha has decorated the cake.

(She takes Nancy's dress from back of chair.)

DELIA
I'll have your dress sewed and back in a jiffy, dear.

EVA
(following them to door)
Yes. Why don't you take this time to run over the music by yourself, Nancy.

(As they go up the stairs, steps close to Nancy.)

EVA
He'll be back before long and I'll take care that Miss Isabelle Carter is busy upstairs while you're practicing.

(Nancy seats herself at the piano and begins to play as Eva goes up the stairs. She starts out firmly playing MELODY OF LOVE--gets to the end of the piece, starts the second verse and puts one hand to her mouth, lets the music trail off and end. She sits her back to the audience with her face in her hands as . . . .

THE CURTAIN CLOSES ON ACT I

ACT II

(It is 12:00 noon when the curtains part. The stage is empty but voices are heard at the top of the stairs.)

VOICE OF ANDREW
Minnie, why don't you bring your plate down here? We can sit awhile and you can see how it's all fixed up for the wedding.

(He comes downstairs with his sister following. They carry plates of food. Minnie is wearing her remarkable hat.)

MINNIE
It's real pretty, Andy. The flowers help a lot.

ANDY
I'm glad you decided to be a bridesmaid. You look real nice in that dress Mrs. Holmes made. Only, I wish you'd take off your hat now.

MINNIE
(going to hall-tree to look in the mirror)

You don't like my hat?

ANDY
Everyone had been staring at it. Didn't you notice?

MINNIE
(preening)
Of course I noticed. Hats are supposed to attract attention.

ANDY
It goes with the dress in a way . . . but . . . .

MINNIE
Don't worry. I intend to take it off for the ceremony.

ANDY
The other women all have hats with ribbons and flowers.

MINNIE
Ordinary hats. This hat is called Kansas Wheat. It advertises my profession.

ANDY
(trying for a lighter touch, teasing)
I didn't know you planned on being a wheat farmer.

MINNIE
Don't be silly. I'm a bonafide milliner now. Got my diploma last week.

ANDY
Have you got a job yet?

MINNIE
Not yet. But I will have. I was the most creative of anyone in the class at Russell.

ANDY
What became of that fellow you were dating in Russell? You still going with him?

MINNIE
(tossing her head
No. We broke up.

ANDY
He seemed like a good sort, handsome too.

MINNIE
I . . . . I don't want to talk about it.

ANDY
Why not?

MINNIE
I thought I was in love with him and then . . . . Paw and Father Edward . . . .

ANDY
Don't tell me you let Paw and Father Edward break you up?

MINNIE
Oh, I knew they were right about George. He wouldn't listen to reason about our church. He wouldn't leave his church.

ANDY
Baptist, wasn't he?

MINNIE
Yes.

ANDY
He wanted you to leave your church and join his?

MINNIE
We never should have started going together. I knew it was a mistake.

ANDY
(sadly)
He was doing alright running an elevator. Really cared about you, Minnie. You should have used your own judgment.

MINNIE
(whimpering)
I couldn't. I wouldn't go against Paw and Father Edward.

ANDY
I know. And those Baptists are really set in their ways. I guess he wouldn't think of letting his children be brought up in our church.

MINNIE
He was a Mason, too. I didn't know that when we started going together.

ANDY
It's too bad. I'm sorry to hear you broke up with him. Maybe you'll meet someone else you can care about.

MINNIE
Maybe. But I haven't yet and it's been months . . . . since . . . . I heard he was going with a girl in Russell . . . . thinking of getting married.

ANDY
(sincerely)
But now you've got your diploma and going to be a milliner, a career woman. I know you'll get a job Minnie. And I know you're creative. And I'm glad you're here at my wedding and going to be bridesmaid for Eva and me.

MINNIE
I don't know what Father Edward will say when he finds out about Paw and me being here at your wedding and me being the bridesmaid.

ANDY
You'll have some kind of penalty I'm sure.

MINNIE
Oh Andy, I wish you were saying your vows in our church at Victoria and that Eva had joined our church instead of you joining hers.

ANDY
Now, let's don't go into that again, Minnie. I've joined Eva's church. She's going to stay a Methodist.

MINNIE
(sits down carefully and starts to eat)
You know what I think.

ANDY
I know what you think, Minnie. You've made it perfectly plain.

MINNIE
You won't be married in the eyes of the church. And your children . . . .

ANDY
We'll be married true enough before God and these witnesses by a Methodist minister.

MINNIE
Maybe . . . . maybe you'll change your mind and decide to come back to the church and bring Eva in and get married over again.

ANDY
Don't count on it, sister.

MINNIE
You're just like Maw. Bull-headed.

ANDY
I got tired of those fights Maw was always having with the priest.

MINNIE
(sighing)
I got tired of them too.

ANDY
Seemed kind of pitiful the way she argued with him about the Lutheran church being a Christian church and the people in it as good as the Catholics.

MINNIE
She shouldn't have argued with him. She should have kept her ideas to herself.

ANDY
He didn't like her because she had a good education. Even if she got it in Germany, it was good.

MINNIE
He thought she had too much pride. And pride is sinful.

ANDY
I don't think it's sinful to hold up your head and claim to be as good as the next fellow. And that's what I'm going to do.

MINNIE
You were always a bold one, Andy. I guess you're bold enough to be a fallen out Catholic and not let it bother you but it bothers me.

ANDY
I think all this fighting over which church is the true church has got to stop. It's unchristian.

MINNIE
But the Catholic church <u>is</u> the true church . . . . it says so in the Bible.

ANDY
The Methodists don't think so . . . . not that the Methodists are all perfect either. I saw two nice ladies from the Aid Society making fun of a woman who belongs to the Dunkard church over in Quinter. She was walking around on the street downtown the other day, dressed in her long black dress, wearing the little bonnet they always wear.

MINNIE
They do dress in a ridiculous way.

ANDY
Just the same, those Methodists shouldn't have made fun of that woman.

MINNIE
I'd probably have laughed too.

ANDY
Maybe someday all the people in all the churches will respect each other and be willing to make allowances . . . . behave like Christians.

MINNIE
Paw gave up on you a long time ago, Andy. Said you had queer ideas about religion.

ANDY
I know. <u>He's</u> not mad at me for leaving the church.

MINNIE
He's mad at your about something else though.

ANDY
(patiently)
Selling the pool hall?

MINNIE
No. He thought you were smart to do that. He thinks you're smart in <u>business</u>.

ANDY
They why is Paw mad at me?

MINNIE
For leaving the Democratic Party and joining the Republicans.

ANDY
Trego County is a Republican county.

MINNIE
All our friends in Ellis County are Democrats.

ANDY

But I'm living in Trego County.

MINNIE
(shocked)

Surely you wouldn't change your politics just to be popular!

ANDY

Why not? I'm going to be in business here for a long time probably.

MINNIE

You mean you'd forsake your principals and join those Republicans just so . . . . I can't believe it.

ANDY

I'm going into the Bakery business. And I want to sell a lot of bread.

MINNIE
(slyly)

I suppose the Holmes family are Republican.

ANDY

Yes. They are . . . . as a matter of fact.

(Minnie looks about, gets up, puts plate on table and steps closer to Andy who has finished food and put plate on table.)

MINNIE

I don't suppose I should say this Andy but this Holmes family are peculiar.

ANDY
(bristling)

What do you mean by that, Minnie?

MINNIE
(smugly)

Oh Eva's alright, I guess. Although everyone's betting she'll spend every cent you make on clothes. She's so pretty she's bound to be vain.

ANDY

Her mother makes her clothes. Eva and Bertha wear pretty clothes because she knows how to sew.

MINNIE

Oh I know that. Mrs. Holmes is the best of the lot. She supports the family.

ANDY
(shrugging)

Mr. Holmes is alright. He works whenever there's a plastering job.

MINNIE
If he can get his nose out of a book.

ANDY
(lamely)
He's a good man. Enjoys books. Maybe he does waste too much time reading . . . but . . . .

MINNIE
(slyly)
And are you going to pay your brother-in-law's gambling debts?

ANDY
(vehemently)
NO. Eva and I have decided on that. We're going to help Dal get started in business. Help him to help himself.

MINNIE
That Dal is a compulsive gambler. You can't reform him.

ANDY
(sighing)
Now Minnie, why don't you take these plates upstairs and see is you can help Mrs. Holmes with the work.

MINNIE
(picking up dishes)
And tend to my own business?

ANDY
Yes.

MINNIE
Alright, Andy. I've just told you what everyone says about the Holmes family. And furthermore . . . . .

(A loud knocking is heard at the door.)

ANDY
People aren't supposed to use this door on a windy day. It's hard to open.

(Goes to door and calls out.)

ANDY
Just a minute.

VOICE OF JACK
I've got some folding chairs from the church. There are two hooks.

(Minnie puts down plates and goes to help Andy.)

ANDY
This is a bad door on a windy day.

(Between them they get the door open and Jack comes inside with the wind, carrying three folding chairs. They quickly get the door hooked and closed again.)

MINNIE
(who has clutched at her hat)
My, that's quite a load to have carried from the church.

ANDY
(takes one of the chairs from him)
This is my sister, Minnie. Jack Williams. Runs the barber shop here in town.

(Jack puts other chairs against the wall beside door, takes off his cap and offers his hand.)

JACK
Pleased to meet you.

MINNIE
How did you ever get so many chairs carried all the way down the street against the wind?

JACK
(patting her hand with other hand, smiling flirtatiously)
It wasn't easy.

(Noticing her hat.)

JACK
My, how did you ever get over here to the house wearing a hat like that in the wind?

MINNIE
(bristling, jerking her hand away)
I wore a scarf over it, tied tight, like all the women do.

JACK
Women in Kansas City wear fancy hats like that. No wind there most of the time, of course.

ANDY
That's right. You are from Kansas City, aren't you?

JACK
Right. Going to Kansas City this afternoon on the train. If I find Dal . . . . and get the money he owes me.

MINNIE
He's upstairs eating lunch. Shall I call him?

JACK
(turning to her, smiling)
That is a pretty hat you have on. Something different, not just flowers and ribbons . . . . the usual things. That's a real Kansas hat. Wheat.

ANDY
Dal owes you money?

MINNIE
You're the first man had the good sense to understand this hat, admire it.

ANDY
Lost it in a poker game, I suppose?

JACK
I've been around a little more than some of the men here in town.

MINNIE
I'm a milliner and I've been trying to tell everybody that women want hats that attract attention.

JACK
City women do. City women hunt for hats that catch the eye.

MINNIE
Have you had lunch, Mr. Williams? They're serving upstairs and I'm sure you've earned a good lunch . . . . carrying those chairs.

(She takes his arm.)

ANDY
You'll find Dal upstairs.

(They start upstairs as Will's voice is heard at the top of the stairs.)

VOICE OF WILL
Let's go downstairs into the parlor. There's a good place to eat and be comfortable out from under foot of these women running around up here getting ready for the wedding feast.

(Will, Dal and Earl come down the stairs with plates.)

DAL
(greeting his pal with pleasure)
Jack, there you are . . . . been looking all over town for you.

JACK
(happy to see his friend)
Just been invited to lunch. Been carrying church chairs for the wedding.

DAL
Go right on up into the dining room. Got your favorite pie.

MINNIE
(coyly)
This man has earned several pieces of pie. Carrying those chairs from the church . . . . fighting the wind.

(They go up the stairs.)

WILL
Andy, we've been talking upstairs about you selling the pool hall business. Earl here wondered if you'd want to come to Salina and get a job clerking in the store where he works.

ANDY
I don't think so, Earl. I've decided to start a Bakery here in town.

EARL
A bakery? Women bake their own bread around here. Seems like that's a poor business for a small town.

ANDY
It seems to be catching on everywhere. Some women enjoy buying bread instead of having to bake all the time.

DAL
Lazy women. I've heard there are women in the cities never bake another loaf of bread once they get started to buying it in a bakery.

ANDY
That's what I'm counting on.

WILL
You planning to hire a baker at first and learn how to do it . . . . bake bread?

ANDY
Bread, and cake and cookies, cinnamon rolls . . . . everything they make in those city bakeries.

EARL
Seems like quite a job to learn all that. You could get a job in Salina real easy clerking in a store. Particularly since you speak German. Bertha and I like living in Salina real well. It's a lot nicer than this town. We're thinking of buying a house.

ANDY
Maybe you ought to save your money and start a store of your own.

EARL
Why would I want to do that?

ANDY
Maybe the time will come when you won't like to work for someone. Maybe you'll want to be the boss.

EARL
(laughing as though he thinks Andy is talking nonsense)

I like working for Mr. Butler. He pays me a good salary. It's better than being a carpenter like my father was. Good steady work, in a nice store.

ANDY
And you've saved enough to buy a house . . . . got money in the bank?

EARL
We've saved a little. I was going to talk to you about that. I hear you're in the money now. Sold your pool hall for a good sum.

ANDY
Yes.

EARL
I'm going to need some money. You might like to loan me several thousand at good interest.

ANDY
I'll need all the money I have to get my bakery started. You <u>should have saved your money</u> until you have <u>enough</u> to buy a house. Seems like you're planning to live beyond your means.

EARL
(annoyed)
Maybe you ought to start a blacksmith shop. You <u>know</u> that business.

ANDY
I don't think the blacksmith has a trade in the future.

(Finding this conversation more and more ridiculous, Earl can barely conceal his contempt for Andy's ideas.)

EARL
You really have funny ideas, Andy. Going to start a fly by night business like a bakery when you don't even know how to bake and turning your back on a sure-fire one like your father made a living at.

ANDY
It just doesn't seem like a business that's going to prosper, now that gas buggies are being seen around.

EARL
That's another wild idea you got. Believe me, Andy, you ought to take some good advice. Forget the bakery business, either go back to being a blacksmith or come to Salina where I'll help you get a job clerking.

WILL
(mildly)
Maybe Andy's right. Maybe gas buggies <u>are</u> going to take the place of horses.

EARL
(slapping his knee, overcome with these ridiculous ideas, laughs merrily)

You better loan me all your money. At least it'll be safe. You're sure going to lose it. I can see that, Andy.

DAL
(joining in Earl's laughter)
I think Earl's right. Horses are going to be with us a long time. The blacksmith will be the most needed man in town.

EARL
It's hard work though. Maybe you don't want to work as hard as your father had to work and you . . . . while you were his boy.

ANDY
I expect to work hard in the bakery.

WILL
(tactfully changing the subject)
Once our money comes from England and the estate's settled we can loan you some for a house in Salina, Earl.

EARL
(without enthusiasm)
That'll be nice. But we intend to buy right away. There's an elegant place for sale near the park.

(Delia is heard to call those down in the parlor.)

VOICE OF DELIA
Yoo-hoo, you folks down in the parlor. Don't forget there's pie upstairs here for dessert, apple, rhubarb and cherry. The ladies from my Sunday School class just brought it in . . . . still warm from the oven.

WILL
I'm going to get myself a piece of rhubarb pie.

EARL
Cherry for me.

(They go upstairs and leave Dal and Andy alone.)

DAL
I wanted to speak to you alone, Andy.

ANDY
Sure, what's on your mind?

DAL
I need a loan of money. A small loan.

ANDY
How much?

DAL
Fifty dollars.

ANDY
I drew some money for the trip to Denver with Eva. I took out extra in case she saw something she fancied in the city store. I guess I could spare fifty . . ... if you have to have it.

DAL
I might as well tell you. I do have to have it. I got in a card game last night with Jack. He's here to collect his money and I've only got half what I owe. He's going to Kansas City today and needs it.

ANDY
Jack already mentioned that you owed him money. I don't approve of gambling Dal and I have no intention of paying your gambling debts. It's been rumored around town that you and Jack have a little gambling casino back of his barber shop and that you're getting to be a pretty fancy gambler. Is that true?

DAL
(enthusiastically)
Sure. Usually I do well at cards. I'm ahead of the game most of the time. Had a bad run of luck last night. I'll probably make it all back next time I get in a game. I'm even thinking of becoming a professional gambler. There's a big future in it if you go to a city . . . Kansas City, maybe.

ANDY
But you've learned a good trade . . . . tailoring, and your father says he's going to set you up in a tailoring shop when he gets the inheritance from England.

DAL
(snorting his disdain)
That's probably never going to happen. We've heard about that inheritance for years from Pa. And lately we've heard that it's almost impossible to get money from England. Fees and court costs and lawyers get it all. We were lucky to get the barrel of dishes and books about a year ago.

ANDY
(thoughtfully)
You <u>are</u> a good tailor. That suit you have on. I've never seen a finer suit.

DAL
(preening to show Andy the details of the suit)

Glad you like it. I did think it turned out right well. These button-holes and the lapels. See the cuffs and this vest.

ANDY
(admiring the suit)
I've noticed <u>all</u> the things about it that makes it nobby. I'd like a suit like that. Where did you buy the material?

DAL
At old man Martin's shop . . . . where I work. He's got this same piece in blue and brown and grey. I liked the grey for spring.

ANDY
I'd like a suit like that in blue. Could you make me one?

DAL
Sure. Matter of fact I just sold Randolph Preston a suit like this. In brown.

ANDY
Randolph? How could he afford a tailor made suit? Never had a dime of his own.

DAL
Saw him in the Pharmacy Shop. Guess he's trying to spruce up some seeing he's courting that college girl he brought home with him.

ANDY
I heard he brought a girl home.

DAL
Seems his mother's set on him marrying well. Gave him a wad of bills would choke a cow. Mrs. Preston wants him to look as rich as he is to impress the girl.

ANDY
And he ordered a suit from you right off?

DAL

Sure did. Gave me fifty dollars. Peeled it right off the roll like he'd been used to spending money like water. Did something to Randolph . . . . having a little money to spend. Guess his mother figured as much. Gave him confidence.

ANDY
(thoughtfully)

Mrs. Preston makes up her mind to something she knows exactly how to push people around, get 'em to do what she wants.

DAL
(laughing)

I'd hate to be her son . . . . . or the girl that marries him.

ANDY

Real bossy woman. Sure got him tied to her apron strings.

DAL

I need the money for the suit right now. Will you pay me ahead?

ANDY

Sure. You're a good tailor, Dal. You'll do fine in your business.

DAL
(shrugging)

I'll never get my own business. And I'm good at cards as well as tailoring.

ANDY

I'm taking over the old hardware store building for a bakery. There's a nice space for a tailoring shop in a front side room that I don't need. I'll set you up in business.

DAL
(amazed)

You will?

ANDY

We'll do it in a business-like way of course. Sign papers and make it a legal loan.

DAL

That'd be the way to do it.

ANDY

I won't charge you interest on the money.

DAL

You won't?

ANDY

No. You're Eva's brother. Going to be my brother-in-law.

DAL
Well, sure but business is business . . . . even among relatives.

ANDY
I figure your tailor shop will bring people into my bakery.

DAL
That's a thought.

ANDY
And maybe the bakery will attract people to your business.

DAL
(with enthusiasm)
You've got a midas touch, Andy. Everybody says so.

ANDY
We'll do real well on Main Street. I'm sure of it.

DAL
Ma has a tape measure and sewing stuff in the bedroom upstairs. Come on up there and I'll take your measurements for your suit.

(Eva comes downstairs with a tray.)

EVA
You didn't come for your pie so I brought it. The apple is a favorite of you both.

DAL
(taking his pie, handing Andy his piece)
Good. Andy's just hired me to make him a suit like this one of mine.

ANDY
And help him get started in a tailoring shop next to our bakery.

DAL
What do you think Sis?

EVA
Andy and I've already talked about it. You've a gift for tailoring. You came by it honest . . . . Ma has a knack too.

ANDY
(both men have started on their pie)
This town is sure to grow bigger. We'll be on Main Street with our businesses. We'll make real money as the town grows.

DAL
Maybe more men will want tailor-made suits when they see yours and mine, and Randolph's.

ANDY
I wanted one when I saw yours. That's the way it works and . . . .

EVA
(interrupting)
Reverend Tolliver just got here. He's having lunch upstairs with Nancy. He'll be coming down in a few minutes to see our arrangements. Oh Andy, it won't be long now . . . . .

ANDY
(putting his arm around her lovingly)
Dal's going to measure me for my suit up in your mother's sewing room. You think blue just like the material in his suit will look good?

EVA
(giving him a loving look)
You'll look handsome in blue . . . . to match your eyes.

(She looks into his eyes, touches his face with loving fingers as Nancy and the Reverend Tolliver descend the stairs.)

NANCY
(brightly)
You love birds! I wanted to show Reverend the way you've got the room fixed up for the wedding.

REV. TOLLIVER
Down here you can hardly hear the wind blowing. Upstairs in the sitting room and the dining room it sounds like the roof's about to blow off.

EVA
It always sounds loud in the dining room. That screened porch to the side door causes it, rattling and banging. Pa's got to do some work on it this spring . . . . tighten it up somehow.

REV. TOLLIVER
(going to window to look out)
Do you think there's going to be a cyclone?

ANDY
(surprised)
A <u>cyclone</u>?

REV. TOLLIVER
I've heard there are a lot of cyclones in this part of Kansas.

DAL
(reassuring)
Oh, there are cyclones sometimes, but usually later in the spring. This is just a good hard wind.

NANCY
The Holmes family have a fine cyclone cellar out back behind the kitchen, just in case. Fixed up real nice . . . . benches . . . . nice soft old quilts and blankets in case you have to stay awhile.

EVA
Now don't you worry, Reverend. This isn't going to be a cyclone, just a dust storm. We get used to lots of wind this time of year on the plains, wind and dust. We think nothing of it blowing like this for days . . . . you'll get used to it after awhile.

REV. TOLLIVER
(happily)
I won't have time to get used to it, I guess. I got my letter, it came just this morning. I'm going into the mission field. Be leaving next month . . . . in three weeks to be exact.

NANCY
(thoughtfully)
So soon? In just three weeks?

EVA
I think it's wonderful for you to get into the mission field since you really want to. Will it be in Africa?

REV. TOLLIVER
Very likely.

NANCY
I didn't have time to practice my music this morning. We got so busy. Maybe now I could take a few minutes if . . . .

(She turns to Reverend Tolliver.)

NANCY
If you could oblige me and turn the pages of my music.

EVA
That will be fine. I'll take these dishes back to the kitchen.

DAL
And I'll take those measurements now for Andy's new suit . . . . upstairs.

(They go out, but Andy carries his pie plate while Dal puts his on the tray for Eva to carry.)

REV. TOLLIVER
Since I call you Nancy, don't you think you could call me Harold? Reverend seems so . . . . sort of formal . . . . and . . . . .

NANCY
(coyly)
Of course, Harold. I've really wanted to call you Harold from the first time I met you.

REV. TOLLIVER
You have? Why didn't you?

NANCY
It seemed a bit forward. I thought we should get better acquainted before I took such a liberty . . . . maybe . . . . .

REV. TOLLIVER
(taking her hand)
Do you think there's enough time to get better acquainted in the three weeks I have left here in this town?

NANCY
(resolutely, turning to her music)
Well . . . . well, I'm going to play I LOVE YOU, TRULY. You can stand here and . . . . and see when it's time to turn the pages . . . . if you don't mind, Harold.

REV. TOLLIVER
Nancy, it's a nice song to start with.

(Nancy sits on piano stool, fluffing her dress prettily around her and starts to play as the Reverend Tolliver stands ready to turn the pages. As Nancy plays Eva returns to the room.)

EVA
(seeing the two absorbed in the music)
Oh! I hate to interrupt, Nancy. But Randolph just got back. He wants to practice the song before he eats lunch.

NANCY
(turning brightly to Eva)
Well, that's fine. Reverend, I mean Harold, is going to turn my music pages. I don't know who we'll have to do that during the ceremony.

EVA
(taking it all in)
Oh, yes, the pages of music when Randolph sings before the ceremony and for us to walk in. Let's see . . . . Mrs. Jamison will be coming for the wedding. She's used to helping out in the Sunday School, playing the organ. She could sit in that chair beside the piano and be ready to turn the pages.

(Turning back to the stairs.)

EVA
Come right down, Randolph. Nancy's here and Reverend.

(Randolph comes down the stairs, looks at Nancy in a nervous way; takes her hand as she stands beside piano stool.)

EVA
Reverend and Nancy were just practicing for the wedding . . . .

VOICE OF MARGARET
Randolph dear. You were supposed to carry this little table downstairs with you. Come back and get it.

RANDOLPH
Hello Nancy. Hello Reverend.

VOICE OF MARGARET
Randolph, did you hear me?

(Coming down the stairs with Isabelle following.)

MARGARET
Eva, I just had to see how that little table would fit into this room. So I had Randolph carry it over.

RANDOLPH
(giving Eva an apologetic look)
I'll get it if you think . . . .

EVA
(tactfully)
Bring it down, Randolph. Your mother has gone to so much trouble.

ISABELLE
If you're going to practice, I'll just sit down here and listen.

(Goes to Will's rocker and seats herself, prettily fluffing out her skirt.)

MARGARET
(studying the room)
Now, if we put the table here and move some of these geraniums here beside the table . . . .

(Taking cloth from her purse as Randolph appears with table.)

MARGARET
Put it right there, Son. And I'll put this little altar cloth on it. Now . . . . we need a Bible . . . . .

EVA
(sighing)
There's one on top of the bookcase.

(She gets it and puts it on the table.)

MARGARET
That looks much better. Makes the room look more like a chapel. Don't you like it better, Eva?

EVA
(who would not dare disagree)
I guess if there isn't room for so many chairs . . . . some of the guests can stand.

MARGARET
Yes. The men can stand.

EVA
(moving geraniums from window to floor beside table)

Now, we can all go upstairs and leave Randolph to practice his song.

(Eva goes to Isabelle.)

EVA
I want to show you my wedding presents and you haven't had a chance to see them.

ISABELLE
(as Eva takes her hand, drawing her up)
Well . . . . if you really have the time.

RANDOLPH
You'll be able to hear my singing anywhere in the house, Isabelle.

NANCY
That's right. Harold was going to turn the pages for me while I practiced the wedding march . . . . but now . . . . .

EVA
(helpfully)
Only now, Randolph can turn the pages because after I show Mrs. Preston and Isabelle upstairs to look at the wedding presents . . . . Andy and I want to go over the words of the ceremony with Reverend to make sure we know what to say.

MARGARET
I want to put my lace cloth on the table and get my silver service set out. Yes . . . . that table looks perfectly elegant there. A big improvement.

(Margaret goes upstairs and Eva brings Isabelle across room, uses her other hand to steer the Reverend along.)

EVA
Now you two can practice in privacy.

NANCY
(giving Harold an affectionate pat)
Oh yes. I'll see you later, Harold.

(They go upstairs leaving Randolph alone with Nancy.)

NANCY
Aren't you going to kiss me?

RANDOLPH
(groaning)
Oh yes, Nancy. You look so . . . . beautiful.

(They embrace passionately.)

RANDOLPH
I do love you, Nancy.

NANCY
But you brought Isabelle to visit.

RANDOLPH
My mother asked her.

NANCY
I know. And of course you had to be polite.

RANDOLPH
You know she means nothing to me.

NANCY
I know. But if your mother wants you . . . . to marry her . . . . <u>you will</u>.

RANDOLPH
(taking her into his arms again)
Nancy . . . . is everything alright with you?

NANCY
(brightly)
Do you mean by that . . . . am I still in the family way?

RANDOLPH
I certainly hope <u>you're not</u>.

NANCY

But I am. Nothing's changed.

RANDOLPH
(sinking to chair, his head in his hands)

I can't marry you.

NANCY

I didn't think you could. Or would.

(Going to him she lifts his head, leans over to kiss him on the lips.)

NANCY

Don't worry. It will all work out. Your son will have a father.

RANDOLPH
(surprised)

What do you mean?

NANCY

I mean I will marry someone and your son will have a father.

RANDOLPH
(with hurt in his voice)

You mean you're in love with someone else?

NANCY

Not exactly, but I can't afford to marry for love now. I think I can marry very well and soon.

RANDOLPH
(astounded)

Who will marry you?

NANCY

Reverend Tolliver . . . . Harold.

RANDOLPH

I know he's sweet on you. I could see that when I came in. But marrying you . . . . in a hurry like you'd have to . . . . .

NANCY

It will suit Harold's plans to marry me within three weeks. He's going to be a missionary and go to Africa. He has only three weeks left here in town.

RANDOLPH
(dazed)

To Africa? So far?

NANCY
It will be an advantage to be far away in this instance.

RANDOLPH
Will you tell him about the baby?

NANCY
No. I don't think I will. I'd rather he'd think it's his son.

RANDOLPH
(shocked)
How can you be so deceitful?

NANCY
I have to be. I have to find a father for my son.

RANDOLPH
But I'm the father.

NANCY
I'm glad to hear you say so.

RANDOLPH
But I can't marry you. My mother wants me to finish law school before I marry.

NANCY
(lightly)
I know. Well, do you want to practice your song now?

RANDOLPH
Nancy, what did you do with that marriage license you got in Topeka?

NANCY
I have it. I carry it . . . .

RANDOLPH
Maybe you'd better give it to me now. I'll destroy it. If anyone saw it laying around . . . . they would wonder why . . . . .

NANCY
(briskly)
I carry it in my handbag and I have my bag with me all the time. No one will ever see it laying around.

RANDOLPH
May I have it now?

(Going to get her bag from the top of the piano where she has put it. She takes license from her bag and hands it to him.)

NANCY
Yes. You may as well. It's no good to either of us now.

RANDOLPH
(looking at it)
I'm sorry, Nancy.

NANCY
It's alright, Randolph. Would you like to have your ring back too? The one you gave me for Christmas?

RANDOLPH
(insulted)
You're making me feel like a heel. Of course I don't want the ring back. It was a Christmas present.

NANCY
Well . . . . it might be something you could keep for awhile to remember me by.

RANDOLPH
(dazedly)
So far away. Africa.

NANCY
I'll have a happy life in Africa as a missionary wife. Your son will have a nice life growing up in Africa.

RANDOLPH
(folding up license)
I wish you wouldn't keep talking about our son.

NANCY
Why not? It's a fact. We <u>are</u> going to have a son and you'll never see him . . . . probably.

RANDOLPH
(sadly)
You'll be coming home sometime.

NANCY
Oh, sometime . . . . maybe . . . . maybe we'll meet sometime in the years ahead. Don't count on it though. It's probably best we <u>never</u> meet again.

RANDOLPH
Yes. I guess so.

NANCY
(seating herself on piano stool, fluffing her skirts daintily)
Are you ready to sing now, Randolph?

RANDOLPH
Yes. Yes, I guess so. Have you my music? Yes, I see you have . . . . play a few bars . . . .

NANCY
(gesturing)
You'll stand there on the other side of the door . . . . in front of the table.

(He moves as though in a daze to the place at right corner near the long table.)

NANCY
Yes. There. Ready?

RANDOLPH
Yes.

(She begins to play I LOVE YOU, TRULY and Randolph in a croaking voice begins to sing--then he stops, pulling Nancy up from the stool, kissing her urgently.)

RANDOLPH
I can't. I can't let you marry him.

NANCY
I love you Randolph. I love you.

(They embrace passionately and as they stand clinging to each other a sneeze is heard from the center of the room above the stove. The two are too concerned with each other to notice, but another louder sneeze attracts their attention and Randolph looks around room.)

RANDOLPH
Did you hear someone sneeze?

NANCY
(dreamily, putting her lips up for another kiss)
Sneeze?

(Another sneeze is heard to come from the vent above the stove.)

RANDOLPH
Is someone in the bedroom?

NANCY

No. Everyone is upstairs.

RANDOLPH

I thought I heard someone sneeze.

(Goes to look into the bedroom, then stands looking about the room again, puzzled but thinking of going into Nancy's arms again, returns to her.)

NANCY
(offering her lips

You imagined it.

(They stand locked in an embrace and are oblivious to Isabelle who comes down stairs to the parlor, stands looking at them.)

ISABELLE

Randolph.

(Nancy and Randolph jump apart.)

RANDOLPH

Oh . . . . Isabelle . . . . I didn't . . . hear you . . . . come down the stairs.

NANCY
(trying to regain her composure)

We were just . . . .

ISABELLE
(crisply)

I could see.

RANDOLPH

You see . . . . Nancy and I . . . . .

ISABELLE

I heard everything you said to each other. I was upstairs . . . . looking at the Haviland China in the bedroom and I <u>heard every word you said</u>.

NANCY

Then you know that Randolph and I . . . . .

ISABELLE

Yes. I want to go home, Randolph.

(Suddenly she sneezes, putting her handkerchief over her nose quickly.)

NANCY
The dust is bad in this room.

RANDOLPH
You want to go back to my house . . . .

ISABELLE
No. I want to get on the train and go back to Topeka.

RANDOLPH
But, you can't do that Isabelle . . . . you're our guest.

ISABELLE
I want to catch that train to Topeka.

NANCY
I'm sorry . . . . that you heard us talking.

ISABELLE
I'm sorry for you, Nancy. I'm sorry for both of you.

RANDOLPH
My mother . . . . if you leave how can I explain to her . . . . .

NANCY
Pretend you didn't hear us talking . . . . put on a good face for the wedding.

ISABELLE
No. I won't. I hate this awful place . . . . the dust blowing . . . . the house rattling . . . . my sneezing.

(She sneezes again.)

RANDOLPH
I'm sorry that . . . .

ISABELLE
I wouldn't live out here on these awful western Kansas plains . . . . for all the tea in China.

NANCY
We're used to the dust and the wind.

ISABELLE
If I were you, Nancy . . . . I'd marry Reverend Tolliver and go to 'Africa. It's bound to be better than this jumping off place.

NANCY
Oh, you get used to it.

ISABELLE
This spineless mama's boy will never marry you. Marry the Reverend.

NANCY

But . . . . .

ISABELLE

I'm going to catch that train. Shall I ask your mother to find someone to take me to the depot?

RANDOLPH

No . . . no . . . . I'll take you.

NANCY
(going to front door, opens it and starts to unhook screen)

Go this way. No one will notice that you're gone.

RANDOLPH
(turning back helplessly)

My mother . . . . if she misses us.

NANCY

Take Isabelle to the train, Randolph.

(To Isabelle, taking her hand.)

NANCY

Good bye Isabelle.

ISABELLE

I hope it works out.

(Sneezing as she goes out the door.)

ISABELLE

I wouldn't have married him anyhow. He's not my type.

RANDOLPH

Let me help you up these steps.

(They go out door, Isabelle clutching her hat, fighting the wind. The screen door bangs once and Nancy fastens it, shuts door, returns to the piano, sits down and begins to play MELODY OF LOVE. This time she plays very well.)

MINNIE'S VOICE
(from top of stiars)

If you want to carry those chairs downstairs it would help.

(Jack comes downstairs bringing two more folding chairs.)

JACK
Hope I'm not bothering you, but Mrs. Holmes said to start lining up the chairs.

NANCY
(getting up from piano stool as Minnie comes down stairs)

No. I guess I've practiced enough for awhile.

JACK
Sky looks awful black out south . . . . some of the men been worrying.

MINNIE
(going to mirror in hall-tree)
You really like my hat, don't you?

JACK
(having set up several folding chairs in front of small table)

Best looking hat I've seen since I came to town . . . .

(The Reverend Tolliver comes down stairs.)

REV. TOLLIVER
(nervously)
Maybe there <u>is</u> going to be a cyclone.

(Increased wind sounds here.)

REV. TOLLIVER
(going to Nancy)
I wanted to be sure you were safe in case . . . .

NANCY
(taking his arm)
I'm through practicing. Why don't we go look at the clouds?

REV. TOLLIVER
(happily)
Exactly why I came to find you.

(She takes his arm, snuggling up against him, and they go back upstairs.)

MINNIE
(going to help Jack set up the chairs)
People always act this way when there is a dust storm.

JACK
You're not worried?

MINNIE
No. I looked at the clouds. I'm not worried.

JACK
Neither am I.

MINNIE
(glancing at the watch she wears around her neck on a chain)
Do you know what time it is, Jack?

JACK
(setting up a chair)
Yes.

MINNIE
It's time to get ready for the wedding. Aren't you going to miss your train?

JACK
Yes.

MINNIE
(going back to give hat another look)
You aren't going to Kansas City?

JACK
(going to stand behind her, puts his arms around her)
No. I'm going to stay here. I've been invited.

MINNIE
(turning coyly to face him)
You shouldn't do that.

JACK
No?

MINNIE
No.

JACK
Or this?

(Kisses her.)

MINNIE
(drawing back after a little)
No.

JACK

Or this?

(Kisses her again.)

MINNIE
(laughing after a little)
It's not proper. I've just met you.

VOICE OF ANDY
I think I saw Jack going downstairs with the folding chairs.

(Dal and Andy come downstairs with more chairs, see the couple standing near the hall-tree mirror. Minnie turns to it again.)

DAL
I've got the money I owe you, Jack. You're going to miss your train unless you hurry.

(Going to Jack, takes folding men's purse from pocket and hands Jack bills.)

DAL
No trouble at all getting it together.

(Consults his pocket watch.)

DAL
Better get going. You'll have to run.

JACK
(takes money)
Decided not to go. Your mother asked me to help with the chairs and stay for the wedding.

DAL
Good. We could have a game another night. Maybe tomorrow night.

JACK
If you had the money?

DAL
Right. I need about fifty dollars to get into the game.

ANDY
(having put chairs in place)
Seems a good time for you to give up cards, Dal. You're going into business. A business man shouldn't be involved in gambling.

JACK
Friendly little game of cards never hurt anyone. Maybe you ought to join our little club when you get back from your honeymoon, Andy.

ANDY
(sternly)
I wouldn't gamble. That's a sucker's game.

MINNIE
(a bit cattily)
Andy only gambles big money in business deals.

ANDY
(with indignation)
Using good judgment in business deals can hardly be called gambling.

JACK
(to Dal)
Tell you what I'll do, Dal. I need another suit.

DAL
Sure. You could use one in brown, be the color for you.

JACK
Right. And I'll pay you fifty dollars right now to make me one.

MINNIE
(to Andy)
I've sold several hats this afternoon. To the other women who are helping with the wedding feast.

ANDY
(surprised)
You have?

MINNIE
You were wrong about this hat.

ANDY
Was I?

MINNIE
I'm going to make a sunflower hat for Mrs. Pendarvis, and a wild rose hat for Mrs. Kraus. And you know those little daisies that are starting to bloom right now . . . . I can duplicate those daisies in silk.

ANDY
Maybe you ought to go into business right here in town.

DAL
You can use part of my tailoring shop. Rent you a part of it.

ANDY
(with enthusiasm)
Sounds like a good idea.

JACK
(handing money to Dal)
A suit like you have on. Two pairs of pants . . . . trousers.

DAL
I'll win that other fifty back from you . . . . next time we play. Ma thinks we need some more chairs from the church.

JACK
Let's get them then.

(They start up the stairs, leaving Andy with Minnie.)

ANDY
(to Minnie)
I hope you're not encouraging that hoodlum Jack Williams.

MINNIE
(admiring her hat in the mirror)
He doesn't act like a hoodlum. Why should you call him that?

ANDY
He's a compulsive gambler.

MINNIE
Maybe he isn't. Maybe all he needs is the influence of a good woman.

(She speaks lightly, turning back and forth before the mirror.)

ANDY
Don't be fooled by his smooth talk. He's kind of a masher.

MINNIE
I think he's . . . . very handsome. And what if he is a masher?

ANDY
He's a heathen, too. Doesn't belong to any church.

MINNIE
All the better. He could join my church.

ANDY
(in disgust)
You can't reform a man like that . . . .

MINNIE
We'll see.

VOICE OF MARGARET
Randolph . . . . Randolph, are you down there?

ANDY
No.

(Margaret comes downstairs, looking about.)

MARGARET
I can't find Isabelle anywhere. She was upstairs looking at the wedding presents.

ANDY
I saw Randolph and her walking to town awhile ago.

MARGARET
(obviously relieved)
Oh . . . . probably going to the Pharmacy again.

MINNIE
That poor girl certainly found the dust impossible.

MARGARET
She'll get used to it.

MINNIE
I sort of have the impression she doesn't like western Kansas very well.

MARGARET
Oh . . . . she'll get used to it. I did.

(She surveys the room with a critical eye.)

MARGARET
I should have had Randolph bring that big fern over from my sun parlor. Set it right in front of that ugly stove.

MINNIE
I think the room looks fine as it is . . . .

MARGARET
(going toward stairs)
I'm going to make that suggestion to Delia. It would certainly help to hide . . . .

ANDY
Don't go to all that trouble, Mrs. Preston. I think the room looks real nice just the way it is.

(Takes out his pocket watch as Margaret goes upstairs paying no attention to Andy.)

ANDY

Only a couple more hours.

MINNIE

I just wish you and Eva would plan to come to Victoria and be married all over again, once you get back from your honeymoon. You really won't be married you know, not in the eyes of the church.

(Andy puts his hand up as though to stop her . . . . shaking his head.)

MINNIE

You know, you really should think of the children.

ANDY
(patiently)

Yes, Minnie.

MINNIE

They're so smug. That's what I can't stand.

ANDY

Who?

MINNIE

All the women in this house who are helping with this wedding. They are so smug. They're practically crowing because they've captured a Catholic, got him to join their church.

ANDY

Maybe we've been a little bit smug when we converted a Methodist or Baptist or Lutheran in the past.

MINNIE

And your mother-in-law to be is the smuggest of them all.

ANDY
(reflectively)

She's worked awful hard to build up this little church group. They all have. We've a strong church in Victoria, a fine church. I think they can spare one member to work in another church and help build it.

MINNIE

Oh, you always have a way with words, Andy, of turning things around so they seem to make sense. But I just know you're going to see the light one of these days and come back to our church, bring Eva in, get married again. Because all this today doesn't mean a thing . . . . not a thing. You're just not married at all if you aren't married . . . . . .

(The train whistle cuts into Minnie's nagging and drowns her words as the curtains close.)

THE CURTAIN CLOSES ON ACT II

ACT III

(The curtain parts to show Will seated in the rocking chair right front of stage. Nancy is at the piano, Randolph in a chair facing the stove, warming his hands. The Reverend is seated on folding chair at right corner back. Minnie, Bertha and Eva are in the bedroom getting ready for the wedding rehearsal. Andy, Dal and Earl are upstairs in the sitting room. It is three o'clock in the afternoon and there are several coal oil lamps lit, sitting about the room on the tables, because the dust storm is still making the windows rattle and the light that comes into the room through the window panes is dim. Will is reading a book by the light of the lamp on the table near him.)

NANCY
You don't mind if I run over this piece once more? Eva chose it for the processional instead of the formal wedding marches. It's their favorite song, her and Andy's.

REV. TOLLIVER
(getting up to stand beside her at the piano, looks at music)
MELODY OF LOVE. It's one of my favorites too. Such beautiful words. I used to enjoy singing it.

NANCY
(coyly)
Would you like to sing a duet with me?

REV. TOLLIVER
Let's try it.

NANCY
Alright. I'll play a few bars first.

(They sing MELODY OF LOVE by Tom Flazer, music by H. Engelmann; they sing nicely together and Randolph tries to make as much noise as he can throughout the performance.)

NANCY AND REV. TOLLIVER
(singing)

Hold me in your arms dear, dream with me
Cradled by your kisses tenderly
While a choir of angels from above
Sings our melody of love.

Heart to heart forever, lips entwine
I am yours and you are mine, all mine
Heaven wrote the music up above
For our melody of love.

(While they are singing Randolph gets up and opens the stove door, picks up coal bucket after removing geranium, puts more coal in--noisily, slams door shut loudly, puts coal bucket back, puts geranium in it, walks to mirror and straightens his tie, walks back to the stove, gets the poker, opens door again and pokes fire, slams door again. He could then glance over at the wood box, go to it, raise lid, get kindling, come back and noisily put small pieces of wood in, maybe shake down the ashes or fool with the damper. Finally as the song ends he stands smugly in front of the stove again, back to the stove, arms crossed. Will, who has not noticed all the noise created by Randolph while the duet was being sung, glances up, puts down his book on the table.)

WILL

My, that sounded fine.

RANDOLPH

Sounded off key to me.

WILL

Why no, I thought . . . .

RANDOLPH
(impatiently)

I wonder why we can't start the rehearsal, stop fooling around, get it over with, it's getting late.

REV. TOLLIVER

There's plenty of time.

(He pulls the chair from right corner and puts it next to the piano stool so he can sit closer to Nancy at the piano.)

REV. TOLLIVER
A bride always needs to take pains to get herself fixed up just right.

WILL
Reverend, I hear you're all set to go to Africa to be a missionary.

REV. TOLLIVER
I've got my notice. I'm to leave here in three weeks, take a training course for a week or so and go right to my mission.

NANCY
(with enthusiasm)
It sounds so exciting. Africa will be an adventure.

WILL
You'll probably have to put up with primitive conditions but it will be a great adventure.

REV. TOLLIVER
Mr. Holmes, I guess you had to put up with primitive conditions when you came west to homestead, didn't you, Sir? When you were young . . . .

WILL
Why, yes . . . yes . . . . I see it's sort of the same thing you're doing an adventure in distant places. Just like we . . . .

RANDOLPH
(he is at hall mirror again, straightening his tie)
You'll probably get boiled in a kettle by the head hunters there in Africa.

REV. TOLLIVER
Why no. That only happens in those new funny paper strips they now have . . . . I'm sure.

WILL
Of course.

REV. TOLLIVER
(trying to ignore Randolph and his rudeness, continues a polite conversation with Will)
You came west in a covered wagon, Mr. Holmes?

WILL
From Davenport, Iowa. We started in March with others who were coming. 1879 it was. We had our wagon and two horses, Nero and Ned. And a cow, Ellie.

REV. TOLLIVER
You took a claim south of town?

WILL

Near Trego Center. It was a bare section of land we homesteaded. There was a hill or two though. At first we lived in a dug-out with a sod house built out in front of the cave.

REV. TOLLIVER

I don't think the missionaries have such primitive conditions to put up with . . . . not where I'm being sent.

RANDOLPH

They probably tell all missionaries they're being sent to nice places. Then they end up in the jungle.

WILL

Our little house was snug enough before the first snow fell in November.

REV. TOLLIVER
(feebly)

At least we don't have to worry about snow in Africa.

RANDOLPH

You'll probably live in a mud hut in a jungle. Wild animals all around . . . . lions . . . . and big SNAKES.

NANCY

Snakes?

REV. TOLLIVER

I'm sure Africa is getting to be a pretty civilized place these days.

WILL

We had wild animals prowling around our dug-out . . . . coyotes. And we had snakes . . . . rattlers.

RANDOLPH

Wild animals would be all around. Lions carry off children . . . . and eat them.

REV. TOLLIVER

Those are just stories people tell. Africa is pretty civilized these days, I'm sure.

WILL

There were a lot of us taking claims in those years . . . . out here in Western Kansas. We got used to the coyotes howling. We kept a sharp eye out for the rattlers.

REV. TOLLIVER

I guess all you homesteaders helped each other.

WILL

We sure did. And then we got some money from back East from our relatives so we could buy shells for my gun. Killed a lot of prairie chickens and rabbits.

REV. TOLLIVER
You ate a lot of rabbit from what I've heard.

WILL
Sure did. Delia got so she was perfect at makin' rabbit stew. Well, we stuck it out and got our land though we mighty near quit and went back East before we got it proved.

REV. TOLLIVER
You did? You almost gave up your claim? What happened to . . . .

WILL
We were nearly through that first winter when we decided we'd made a bad mistake. We hated to give up because Delia's folks and mine hadn't wanted us to come in the first place. They'd been real set against our coming out here on what they called a wild goose chase.

REV. TOLLIVER
But they sent you money. They must have . . . .

WILL
They didn't want us to starve before we came to our senses and decided to give up on homesteading.

REV. TOLLIVER
You almost quit but something changed your mind?

(Nancy and the minister are holding hands as they sit side by side. Randolph has crossed the room and is standing in front of the altar, arms still crossed, looking at them in disgust.)

WILL
That first winter about had us tuckered out. Bertha was just a baby when we'd come out the spring before. Then in February Delia got in the family way with Dal. It was March, we decided to pack up and go back East.

REV. TOLLIVER
I can imagine how you would feel pretty discouraged and pretty homesick.

WILL
We packed up the wagon and were going to go on the first day of spring . . . . just thirty-one years ago. The wind came up in the night and blew the wagon mighty near to pieces. And we . . . .

REV. TOLLIVER
It must have been a wind like what's blowing now.

(Looks fearfully toward window.)

WILL

About like this. We took it for a sign from God we'd better not give up and quit. Anyway, by the time we got our stuff picked up from off the prairies and got the wagon fixed again, spring had come. Things looked brighter. So then . . . .

REV. TOLLIVER

And you stayed until you'd proved your claim?

WILL

That's right. It was Randolph's father bought the land from us so we could move into town. Build this house . . . . .

REV. TOLLIVER

Oh? The Prestons were homesteading out here too?

RANDOLPH

(haughtily)

NO. My family had money to invest. My father came out from Philadelphia and started a bank. Then he sent for my mother. She came on the train to a house he'd had built and ready for her.

WILL

Having a nice house made things a little easier for Mrs. Preston. She was a young bride, though, not much used to housekeeping. Delia kind of taught her how to manage. Then when Randolph was born, Delia was the one who helped the Doctor. Yes sir, Delia was the first one to hold Randolph in her arms. We think of Randolph as partly ours . . . . .

RANDOLPH

(speaking with boredom)

I'm sure the minister <u>isn't interested in our family history</u>.

WILL

Your father's death made us all close. He'd be proud of you, Randolph. When you were born he was so happy to have a son he went all over town passing out cigars. Never saw a man so proud.

REV. TOLLIVER

I guess every man is proud to have a son.

(Randolph turns his back on them and looks out of the window.)

REV. TOLLIVER

Well, your story about pioneer life makes my trip to Africa look simple. I've been feeling a little skittish about going. You see, my folks really don't want me to be a missionary. But I feel I <u>have</u> to do it . . . . just as you must have felt about coming out here to take a claim, Mr. Holmes.

RANDOLPH

(turning quickly)

You ought to take your parents advice. Parents usually . . . .

WILL

No. A man has to stand on his own two feet and make his own decisions. You'll do just fine, Reverend. Everything will turn out alright for you . . . . following in the path that seems right for you to take.

REV. TOLLIVER

Well, homesteading turned out alright for you. And you . . . .

(Randolph moves to the chairs by the stove, bustling about room, straightens chairs, pulls the one he has used to face stove into line, glances at the chair the minister is using.)

RANDOLPH

Maybe we ought to get this room back in order and right now . . . .

REV. TOLLIVER

Oh there's no hurry. Plenty of time to get these chairs arranged.

(He turns to Nancy, gives her a loving glance, then looks back to Will.)

REV. TOLLIVER

Your adventure to these far places of western Kansas turned out fine, didn't it?

WILL

It sure did. And now my grandfather in England died a few years back, leaving some money. Looks like one of these days we're going to come into some real riches.

RANDOLPH

(speaking scornfully)

I don't like throwing cold water on your dreams, Mr. Holmes, but we've been studying about this sort of thing in law school. It's hard to get money from England. Even if you can prove your right and all. You've hired a lawyer, I guess.

WILL

We did that first thing, a young fellow from Detroit. There are about seven of us who stand to inherit. We've each paid him a hundred dollars. He's going to England right away and see what's what.

RANDOLPH

Seven hundred dollars? That's just about enough to start a nice vacation isn't it? And in England. I'd like that!

REV. TOLLIVER

I believe you did get a barrel of dishes and books some time back, these books you were showing me here in the bookcase.

(He gets up and walks to bookcase, takes out a book, Randolph grabs his chair and puts it in line of chairs, room center.)

WILL

Right there. A whole set of Shakespeare. And several books of poetry. This one I'm reading here is a wedding present to Eva and Andy.

(He holds up book he has been reading. Reverend takes book from case to examine.)

REV. TOLLIVER

It means a lot to read the books your grandfather read. And have the same dishes they used way back then.

WILL

Delia sets a lot of store by a blue milk glass compote you'll see on the dining room table tonight when we sit down to the bridal feast. We know we're the rightful heirs to an estate or we'd never have got the barrel of things in the first place.

REV. TOLLIVER

You'll probably get some money, but even if you never get any at all you've done alright. You have a lot to be thankful for. When your covered wagon got blown to pieces by the wind I guess it <u>was</u> the will of God that you stay in this place and help build it up.

WILL

(somewhat doubtfully)

I guess we've done alright. I guess a man has to follow his best judgment and trust in God. I always liked that poem about a man being the master of his fate, the captain of his soul.

RANDOLPH

(angrily)

But Mr. Holmes, sometimes a man can't be the master of his fate, the captain of his soul as you so poetically put it.

WILL

Why . . . . but . . . . .

RANDOLPH

He may have obligations that keep him from doing what he'd like to do . . . . from going on slap happy adventures.

WILL

I guess homesteading was kind of a slap happy adventure but I knew in my heart it was the right thing for us to do . . . . coming to Kansas.

RANDOLPH

Your parents didn't think it was a wise thing to do.

WILL

I hated to go against my folks and Delia <u>really</u> hated to go against hers. But there comes a time when you have to make your own decisions, do what is right for you.

REV. TOLLIVER

Sometimes you even seem to have to make a decision that goes against common sense . . . . as other people see it.

WILL

A man just has to be honest with himself and do what he knows is right.

REV. TOLLIVER

That's how I feel about it. I know I've been called to the Mission Field.

(Nancy gets up from piano stool; Randolph is standing near piano, between her and the minister who is putting book back.)

NANCY

I wonder if the girls are ready. We should get started on the rehearsal. The wedding guests will be coming soon and we won't be ready to let them come down here into the parlor.

(Walks coyly past piano stool and Randolph to the bedroom door, close enough to brush him with her skirt, walks to front left of stage.)

NANCY

Are you about ready, Eva?

MINNIE

(coming from bedroom)

We're all ready. I'll call the men.

(She crosses room to stairs, calling up to those in the sitting room.)

MINNIE

Andy . . . . Dal . . . . Earl, we're ready to rehearse now if you want to come down here.

VOICE OF DELIA

I'm bringing the flowers now. Might as well have everything just like it's going to be for the ceremony.

(She appears in the doorway with three bouquets, single carnations for Andy, Earl, Dal, Will, Randolph and the minister . . . a corsage for Nancy. She carries them on a tray and puts the tray on the table beside Will. Men follow her downstairs.)

DELIA
(handing a bouquet to Minnie and one to Bertha as she enters from bedroom)

Here you are dear. And this other one's for Bertha.

MINNIE
Shall I pin carnations on the men?

DELIA
That'll be fine. And you help too, Bertha. And I have a corsage here for Nancy.

(The two pin carnations on men. Will steps back to front right with book. Dal has moved near what-not stand, Earl at window. Nancy is still near stove at left front. Nancy steps forward as Delia seats herself on chair by stove. Earl is smoking cigar, scattering ashes into the house-plants. Dal looks into stereoopti-can set. Randolph stands in front of door, minister still in front of bookcase. Andy in front of piano.)

VOICE OF MARGARET
Randolph . . . . Randolph . . . . are you down there?

RANDOLPH
(steps back a little, looks up stairs)
Yes. Mother.

MARGARET
(she comes hurrying down the stairs)
I can't find Isabelle. Did she go back to our house?

RANDOLPH
No. No, Mother. She went back home.

MARGARET
What do you mean . . . . home? You mean she went back to our house?

RANDOLPH
No. She went back to Topeka.

MARGARET
(stunned, she moves to center stage)
How could she do that?

RANDOLPH
I put her on the afternoon train.

(He follows her to center.)

MARGARET
How could you do that, Randolph? Without telling me.

RANDOLPH
She couldn't stop sneezing. She decided to take the train home . . . . away from the dust storm.

MARGARET
(angrily)
She shouldn't have done that. You shouldn't have let her go.

RANDOLPH
She wanted to go, Mother. And I wanted her to go.

MARGARET
(angrily)
You wanted her to go?

RANDOLPH
Yes I wanted her to go. She didn't feel at home here.

MARGARET
But she would have. I have all sorts of things planned for tomorrow.

RANDOLPH
She didn't like western Kansas.

DELIA
(mildly)
Some people don't like it here, Margaret.

MARGARET
They can get used to it.

(She flounces to stairs, then turns back. She glares at Randolph.)

MARGARET
You shouldn't have put her on the train without telling me.

RANDOLPH
It wouldn't have made any difference. Isabelle has a mind of her own. And Mother, I have a mind of my own. And I felt it best for all concerned . . . . .

MARGARET
I could have persuaded her. You should have told me before you put her on the train.

RANDOLPH
Well, she's gone. And we're having the wedding rehearsal now . . . .

(He turns his back on his mother. She angrily taps him on the shoulder.)

MARGARET
(her voice rises)
You should have told me . . . . YOU SHOULD HAVE COME TO ME INSTEAD OF DECIDING FOR YOURSELF.

Delia
(tactfully, standing beside her chair)
Margaret, I think you're right about the potted fern you have in your sun parlor.

MARGARET
(startled)
What?

DELIA
(walking to space directly in front of the stove)
It would look nice right here. We could use that table.

(Pointing to one by the rocker.)

MARGARET
It's too late now.

DELIA
No, it isn't. You could get it and bring it over right away.

MARGARET
The wind would blow it to pieces.

DELIA
It would only be in the wind a minute. You could tie a scarf over it, just like we do our hats.

MARGARET
It's so heavy.

DELIA
That strong man . . . . Jack Williams . . could carry it for you. Just across the street. He's upstairs. Get him to go with you.

MARGARET
Well, I guess I could hurry over and bring it right back.

DELIA
(with enthusiasm)
I can see it now . . . . it would just <u>make</u> the room.

MARGARET
(smugly looking at small table that has become an altar)
You like the way I arranged the altar?

DELIA

It's perfect.

MARGARET
(looking at the stove with distaste)

Alright. I'll go get the fern. It will help to hide that ugly stove.

(Hurries up the stairs.)

DELIA
(turns to Nancy who is at front left stage)

Now, Nancy. I was about to pin this corsage on you.

(Nancy steps forward for Delia to pin carnation corsage. Delia sits on chair to pin the corsage at waist of the dress then moves center stage, going back toward piano.)

NANCY

It's beautiful. And so fragrant . . . .

(Nancy glances about the room at all of them, past Randolph in front of stairs at the Reverend who moves towards her.)

NANCY

It's getting to seem more like a wedding every minute.

REV. TOLLIVER
(taking her hand)

You look beautiful.

NANCY

The carnation fragrance from so many flowers . . . .

(There is a crash of tin in back of the house and Bertha who is beside rocker rushes to the window. Will moves to look out.)

BERTHA

That sounded bad. Maybe we ought to go to the cellar.

REV. TOLLIVER
(pulling Nancy toward the stairs)

Yes. Maybe we should.

(Randolph blocks their way.)

NANCY

We could, if you want to.

(Randolph spreads arms to keep them from going. Glares at the Reverend.)

RANDOLPH

No one's worried about the storm but you, Reverend. I think we ought to get on with the rehearsal.

DELIA
(calmly)

Yes. That was just a piece of tin blew loose, likely the big piece Will had nailed down on the roof of the chicken house.

DELIA
(to Reverend)

Don't worry, Reverend. The women upstairs are keeping watch for cyclone clouds. They'll let us know if there's anything looks bad.

NANCY
(still holding the Reverend's hand)

Well, I guess they would let us know in plenty of time.

REV. TOLLIVER
(laughing nervously as they move in front of piano)

All you folks just trust in God. You aren't really worried about the storm. You even act like you kind of enjoy it.

DELIA

Oh sure, we do trust in God. And I guess we do kind of enjoy the different kinds of Kansas weather He sends us. Even the dust storms.

NANCY

You see, it's all kind of exciting, you never know what's going to happen.

REV. TOLLIVER
(sighing)

That's exactly why I've been worried. And . . . .

NANCY

The storm just makes the wedding more exciting. It's fun to be together in a storm worrying a little but talking together while we worry. We watch the clouds and enjoy the party. When we were singing you didn't think about the storm.

DELIA
(brightly, she is near stove, front)

We all heard you and Reverend singing that duet together from upstairs. Your voices matched just beautiful. It sounded like you were born to sing together. You'll have to work up something to sing in church next Sunday.

REV. TOLLIVER
I guess we could find time to get some practicing in between now and then.

(Looking into Nancy's eyes.)

REV. TOLLIVER
I see what you mean about the storm making the wedding exciting . . . . the storm and our singing together.

DELIA
(pursuing her thoughts; they are not listening)

I'd like to hear you sing ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS. That'd be a good one to sing just before you tell the congregation about your plans to leave for the mission.

NANCY
(smiling into the eyes of the Reverend, she speaks coyly)

Do you think we could find time to practice ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS?

REV. TOLLIVER
(completely charmed)

Yes, I think we could.

RANDOLPH
(with sarcasm)
Hadn't we ought to get on with the rehearsal? Or are we going to stand here all day and talk about singing duets?

NANCY
(recovering herself, looks at Randolph)
Oh yes, I guess you are anxious to get the rehearsal over with and the wedding so you can get back to Topeka.

DELIA
(hurriedly, moves to table center where tray rests)

My goodness, time is slipping away from us. You should get on with the rehearsal.

(She rubs her finger over the table as she picks up the tray and Eva's bouquet. Stops to glance at the window.)

DELIA
I haven't had time to dust again. And there's some dust settled, but I guess it will have to do. The sky is so gray it's a good thing we decided to light the lamps.

(Delia starts towards bedroom door. Minnie has been primping in front of mirror throughout action.)

DELIA
Now where's Eva? She ought to be ready.

(Eva steps from bedroom, looking the radiant bride in her dress and veil.)

EVA
Here I am, Ma.

DELIA
(overwhelmed by her daughter's beauty)
Baby, you look so beautiful. Just like an angel.

(Turning to Nancy.)

DELIA
Doesn't she look beautiful? Just the way a bride should look?

NANCY
(her voice breaking as she fights back tears; steps forward to embrace Eva)
Oh yes. She does . . . . just beautiful.

(Patting her shoulder, Delia turns to the others.)

DELIA
You do look pretty. I'll go now so you can get the rehearsal done.

(She goes upstairs with the tray.)

BERTHA
(to minister)
I think we all know what to do. We've talked about it but we want you to have the final say.

REV. TOLLIVER
(taking charge officiously)
Well, first Andy, you and Eva sit down in those chairs.

(He indicated chairs in front row.)

REV. TOLLIVER
It's not proper for the bride and groom to go through the rehearsal. You just have to watch and learn from watching.

EVA
Oh, I had never heard that before.

ANDY
We can just as well rehearse. What difference does it make?

REV. TOLLIVER
(firmly)
We want to do everything proper, don't we? It's customary for a couple not in the wedding party to go through the motions . . . .

EVA
You mean we have to bring someone from the dining room to rehearse for us?

REV. TOLLIVER
If need be.

BERTHA
Randolph and Nancy aren't really <u>in</u> the wedding. After Randolph sings and she plays a little of the wedding march she could come over here to the bedroom and pretend she's the bride.

EVA
(quickly)
Yes. That's a good idea.

NANCY
(shrinking back)
Oh, I couldn't . . . .

RANDOLPH
(surly)
I don't see why someone has to stand up there instead of Andy.

REV. TOLLIVER
(patiently)
It's really the proper thing.

NANCY
(resigning herself)
Alright. I'll be the substitute bride. Will you be the substitute groom, Randolph?

RANDOLPH
(unhappily)
I guess so. Do you want me to sing first?

REV. TOLLIVER
We'll go over just a few bars of music. You've practiced already and . . . .

VOICE OF MARGARET
We've got the fern from my house. We'll bring it right down there.

VOICE OF DELIA
Oh maybe you ought to wait. They're having the rehearsal now.

VOICE OF MARGARET
What difference does it make? Go ahead Mr. Williams, carry it right on downstairs.

VOICE OF DELIA
Maybe I'd better go down . . . .

REV. TOLLIVER
It's alright, Mrs. Holmes. Let Mr. Williams bring the plant downstairs.

JACK
(as he comes downstairs carrying huge fern)

It's kind of heavy. Where shall I put it?

MARGARET
(following him)
Will, move that table from over there by your rocker. Put it right in front of the stove. Right here.

WILL
I was keeping my book there but I guess I can put it in the rocker beside me.

(He takes book from table, puts it in chair and carries table to the spot Margaret has indicated.)

WILL
This where you want it?

MARGARET
(officiously, straightening the doily)
Put it right down on that doily.

(As Jack puts plant on table she stands back to view it, steps forward and straightens a frond. Minnie is watching from hall mirror area.)

MARGARET
It looks fine.

(Glancing around the room, seeing the wedding party ready for rehearsal.

MARGARET
Oh yes. We'll go right along. So you can have rehearsal now.

(She goes quickly up the steps, calling back.)

MARGARET

Come on, Mr. Williams.

(Making no move to follow, steps up and rearranges some of the fronds on the plant; Minnie steps forward to help him.)

JACK

Glad to get it down on the table. It's a heavy one.

MINNIE

It was nice of you to carry it for Mrs. Preston.

JACK
(looking at her with admiration)

Say now . . . . you really look pretty carrying that bouquet.

(Looking at the bridal party as they stand about the room.)

JACK

All of you.

BERTHA

Really Mr. Williams . . . . you're not supposed to look at us yet. Not until you come down for the wedding.

JACK

Oh . . . . well . . . . .

(Somewhat crestfallen he starts for the stairs.)

DAL

Maybe Jack could turn the pages of the music. He reads notes, sings in a barber shop quartette when he's in Kansas City.

MINNIE

You do? You didn't tell me that.

JACK
(turns beaming)

Oh, I'd like to help any way I can . . . .

NANCY

How about it, Eva. He could stand over here by the piano. Rehearse with us.

EVA

All right. That'll be fine. If you want to oblige us, Mr. Williams.

JACK
(with enthusiasm)
Yeah, I sure would like to be a member of a wedding party, this wedding party, I mean.

(Looks at the altar. Speaks to the Reverend.)

JACK
Kind of puts a fellow in the mood to get married.

(Turning back to Minnie.)

JACK
Sure does. Does it put you in the mood to get married, Minnie?

REV. TOLLIVER
(seeing the chance to put a little solemnity into the rehearsal)

Marriage is a sacred ceremony. Not to be taken lightly.

JACK
Oh, I wasn't takin' it lightly, Reverend. I'm mighty impressed with the pretty way you're putting' this room together . . . . kind of like a church.

RANDOLPH
Can't we get on with the rehearsal?

JACK
(turning back to Minnie)
Say, Minnie. Is this the kind of wedding you'd like to have?

MINNIE
(firmly)
No, Jack. I'd want to be married in our new church at Victoria. A beautiful new Catholic church.

JACK
Say . . . . I've heard about that church.

MINNIE
If you come and visit me in Victoria . . . . I'll show you around and . . .

JACK
Say . . . . I'll take you up on that.

RANDOLPH
(almost groaning with impatience)
This is all . . . . all very romantic but can't we get on with the rehearsal?

REV. TOLLIVER
(smiling at Nancy)
I guess I can't blame you Mr. Williams for being impressed with the room and the bridal party. We're all impressed.

NANCY
Jack, you can come stand here by the piano and get ready to turn the music pages when it's time.

(Jack moves back beside Dal who is still absorbed in looking at stereoptican slides. He shows one to Jack.)

BERTHA
We're all ready to start, Reverend.

REV. TOLLIVER
Fine. You two . . . . Minnie and you can go back into the bedroom now. Dal and Earl can go stand on the stairs where Randolph will join them after he sings. Mr. Holmes, you told me you had a verse of poetry to read just before the wedding march starts.

WILL
That's right.

(After moving table he has gone back to front right of stage and rehearsed his lines, silent. Moving his lips as he holds book, making some gestures. Now he moves to his chair and sits.)

REV. TOLLIVER
You can say that piece right after Randolph finishes singing, don't hurry it though . . . . take your time.

WILL
I'll say it real solemn.

REV. TOLLIVER
When you finish the poetry you stand by your chair and wait to join the bride. That'll be Nancy this time of course. All right. Get ready to start.

(The girls have gone into bedroom; the men are on the stairs. Randolph is positioned to sing, standing in front of bookcase.)

NANCY
(turning her stool around to face piano)
I'll play the song for Randolph now.

(Nancy begins to play. Randolph stands and sings several lines of the song, singing with feeling.)

REV. TOLLIVER
(interrupting)
That's fine. That's enough for now. You can go stand in front of Dal. At the ceremony I'll stand in front of you as we come down the stairs. I'll do that now as Mr. Holmes speaks his piece.

(He moves to stand in doorway in front of Randolph. Jack whispers to Nancy asking a question about procedure. Nancy hushes him.)

WILL
(stands and speaks in his best orator's voice; Nancy softly plays I LOVE YOU TRULY)

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace
I love thee to the level of everyday's quiet need . . . .

REV. TOLLIVER
That's fine, Mr. Holmes. You needn't go on now.

(Poem can be cut off at first line.)

WILL
(aggrieved)
But it's a very beautiful poem . . . .

REV. TOLLIVER
(patiently)
This is just the rehearsal. You can say it all for the wedding, of course.

(Will puts the book in chair reluctantly.)

REV. TOLLIVER
Now, Nancy can play a few bars of the music for the wedding march when the wedding party enters. Then go over to the bedroom to march in behind the matron-of-honor. The men will come first as Nancy is playing.

(Nancy plays. The minister who stands in front of Randolph leads the way back to the window area where he takes his place with back to window. The men follow. Nancy stops playing and crosses room to bedroom.)

REV. TOLLIVER
I'll hum the music for the ladies to enter. Dum-dum-dum . . . .

(Gestures with his hand. He hums and Minnie comes to stand in her proper place with Bertha following. Then Nancy walks to where Will stands and is joined by him to escort her to the altar.)

REV. TOLLIVER
That's fine. You did it exactly right. Now I'm going through the entire ceremony so Eva and Andrew can see exactly how it's done.

RANDOLPH
(suddenly)
May I ask a question?

REV. TOLLIVER
(impatiently)
Yes.

RANDOLPH
If another couple wanted to get married could they stand up in front of you here?

REV. TOLLIVER
(surprised)
What <u>are</u> you talking about, Mr. Preston?

RANDOLPH
I mean. If I wanted to get married right now and had a license, could you turn this rehearsal into the real thing?

REV. TOLLIVER
(coldly)
I don't think we have time to joke about getting married right now.

RANDOLPH
I'm not joking. Would you do it?

REV. TOLLIVER
(with patience)
<u>If</u> you had a license and <u>wanted</u> to get married, I could marry you <u>any time</u> . . . . now or <u>whenever</u>.

RANDOLPH
(drawing license from his coat pocket)
Then could you marry Nancy and me right now?

REV. TOLLIVER
(taking license, looks at it in a dazed fashion)
Why, I never heard of such a thing . . . .

NANCY

Randolph, are you sure?

RANDOLPH

Yes, I'm sure. I love you truly, Nancy.

(Turns to Eva and Andy.)

RANDOLPH

If it's all right with you . . . Eva . . . Andy? Us getting married at your rehearsal?

ANDY
(surprised)

Why I guess it is. If Eva thinks . . . .

EVA
(jumping up to kiss Nancy)

Oh yes, darling. It's all right. Just fine. Go ahead, Reverend Tolliver.

WILL

And I . . . . I'll give the bride away.

REV. TOLLIVER
(showing dejection but knowing he must recover and carry on his ministerial duties)

I guess . . . . I guess it's legal all right.

(He puts the license on the altar before him, speaking in a dull voice.)

REV. TOLLIVER

Yes. It's legal. Have you . . . . have you a ring?

RANDOLPH

Well . . . . I . . . . .

NANCY
(quickly)

Yes, I have the ring.

(She takes the ring from her finger and holds it up.)

NANCY

Randolph gave it to me for safe keeping and I've been wearing it since Christmas.

(She hands the ring to Dal.)

BERTHA

Well, I never.

WILL

Shhhhhhhhhh.

REV. TOLLIVER
(drawing himself up, he begins to speak in his most solemn, ministerial manner)

Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the presence of God and these witnesses, to join this man and this woman in Holy matrimony. Our savoir has declared that a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife.

(Lights dim as voice of minister speaks.)

REV. TOLLIVER
He has instructed those who enter into this relation to cherish a mutual esteem and love; to bear with each other's infirmities and weaknesses; to . . . .

(Complete darkness on stage as voice dies out as . . . .)

THE CURTAIN CLOSES ON ACT III

MR. STRANIHAN IS DYING

A Play in Two Acts

Time: June 1, 1923 between 6:00 and 8:30 p.m.

Place: The action of the play takes place in a small western Kansas town--population 1,000--prosperous because it is the county seat surrounded by wheatland. The year is 1923; the war is over and times are pretty good for the residents of WaKeeney. Many of the townfolk are old settlers who have homesteaded the land in the area and moved into town, going into business or letting someone else farm their land. These old settlers hold an esteemed place in the society of the town whether or not they have prospered; there is a lot to be said for arriving first in any frontier community.

Setting: The play takes place in the side yard that connects the Holmes and Stranihan properties. The Holmes house is at right. Several steps from the kitchen extend onto a path that runs around the house past a window to the right front exit leading to the front of the house. The Stranihan house is at left with Ed Stranihan's bedroom window toward the back and a side door to the Stranihan house about mid-stage left.

A fence stretches across the stage at back center and roses are growing along it; some are trained to climb over the fence. A pile of gardening tools are stacked together at left side near the fence--watering can, hoe and clippers.

A lawn table with two chairs are slightly off center near front of stage. A lawn bench is at left front of stage, near the Stranihan house which is presumed to extend back stage to the front of the house as in the case of the Holmes house.

Off stage at back right is a barnyard and the exit to this barnyard as well as the cyclone cellar behind the house is around the corner of the Holmes house, past the fence and to the right.

The sun is going down but still far above the horizon and the stage will be well lighted from the setting sun throughout the play.

Lighting of Stage: Since Kansas sunsets are colorful and the Holmes house faces west, some interesting lighting effects might be used throughout the play.

CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

RUTH FROELICH	The eleven year old daughter of Andy and Eva Froelich, granddaughter of Will and Delia Holmes. Ruth wears her dark hair in a dutch bob.
DELIA HOLMES	One of the old settlers, having homesteaded land at Trego Center with Will her husband. They have long since sold their land, moved into Wakeeney and built a house where Delia takes in roomers. She also serves in the community as a practical nurse, sews for women who can afford to pay a seamstress, but uses her spare time tc canvas for the California Perfume Company. She is president of the Methodist Ladies' Aid Society, teaches an adult Sunday School class and is Vice-president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union.
WILL HOLMES	A carpenter, plasterer and handy-man who will work if you can locate him. Will is still waiting to inherit a part of a fortune from England where his grandfather died and left a good-sized estate. Patiently he does what he is called upon to do but spends as much time as he possibly can reading books, magazines and newspapers; he encourages his granddaughter Ruth to do the same.
EVA FROELICH	Daughter of Will and Delia, mother of Ruth, wife of Andy. She helps run the bakery that she and Andy own, teaches a Sunday School class and is the Worthy Matron of the Eastern Star.
BILLY ELVERT	A handsome ten year old who is "slow" in school and backward in other ways, but has a natural gift for music and can sing like an angel. He plays a drum.
DALBERT HOLMES	Owns a tailoring shop on Main Street where his wife does most of the work. Dal has a flair for cards and gets in a card game as often as he can.

ARTHUR KING	A fourteen year old who had a bad case of measles when he was a baby, other children's diseases as a small child. He has suffered with health problems of various sorts, wears a brace on one leg and is subject to fainting "spells", convulsions and lapses of memory, but Mr. Stranihan has taught Arthur to play the flute so well that he is becoming a musician of distinction.
ALICE PRESTON	The red-haired, beautiful and vain daughter of State Senator Randolph Preston and his wife Nancy. Alice is a talented violinist and Mr. Stranihan has encouraged her to believe she can become famous as a musician. Alice is twelve years old, wears her hair in curls that fall gracefully around her shoulders.
JACK WILLIAMS	Known as Black Jack Williams, he is the only barber in town, runs a small-town gambling room behind his basement barber shop where his good friend Dal can always find a game. Black Jack has friends in Kansas City who like to play cards and he can arrange a game for his Wakeeney friends if they can get some real money together and go with him to Kansas City.
ROSEMARY SAWYER	The first and only love of Ed Stranihan. She married Clem Sawyer and has had a busy life raising six children and helping to earn money to keep them fed and clothed. She still remembers her first love and thinks their life would have been perfect together--if only he had not got infantile paralysis when he was eighteen years old.
SENATOR RANDOLPH PRESTON	A most important young man in Wakeeney, proud of his beautiful daughter, concerned for his wife Nancy who has had ill health since their daughter's birth. He is also concerned for his beautiful secretary who is married to Elmer Bellamy and has become suddenly ill.
EDWARD STRANIHAN	A dying man. He has lived a good life in spite of being made a cripple at the age of eighteen when he almost died of infantile paralysis. He has become a music teacher for the town, organized the City Band, directed the Methodist Church choir and Sunday School Choir. Now in middle age his strength is failing and his will to live has ebbed away. He is on his death bed, seeing his friends to say goodby, hearing their words dimly as he drifts toward unconsciousness.
BESSIE, THE COW	Heard off stage, but does not appear. She is mentioned now and again by the characters on stage.

SCENES

The action of the play takes place in a small western town of Wakeeney, Kansas, in the side yard connecting the Holmes and Stranihan houses.

ACT I 6:00 P.M. on June 1, 1923

ACT II 7:30 P.M. on June 1, 1923

MR. STRANIHAN IS DYING

ACT I

(Ruth is sitting on the back steps of the Holmes house, reading a magazine. Delia comes to the back door and opens the screen door, coming down the steps.)

DELIA

Well, it's turned off nice after all. I thought for a while there this afternoon we were going to have a cyclone. The sun's going to set real pretty.

RUTH

(not looking up, continuing to read)

Uh-huh. The clouds are most all gone and the wind too.

DELIA

(going to inspect the roses on the back fence)

The wind tore the leaves off these yellow roses. They were about gone anyhow. I wonder if that storm moved on north and caused a cyclone up in Nebraska.

RUTH

(looking up)

Alice Preston said when she went back to Washington D.C. with her folks everyone acted like we had lots of cyclones here in Kansas. Almost every day.

DELIA

I've only seen a few near the ground in all these years since we came west though we've had lots of scares. Maybe that old Indian Legend is true about WaKeeney never going to be hit by a cyclone.

RUTH

People there in Washington asked Alice if she ever knew any people that got scalped by Indians here in Western Kansas.

DELIA

(as she waters roses with watering can)

Those people in the East are silly. They still think Indians are everywhere out here and cyclones happen along real often.

RUTH

Did you ever think you were going to get scalped by an Indian, Gramma?

DELIA

Will and I saw a few Indians when we first came here to homestead. Once we heard there was a Indian scare up at Hoxie. For a few days we were real worried, but none of them showed up here. Nobody I ever knew got scalped.

RUTH
(turning back to her magazine)

I'm reading about Indians in this story. I'm at a real exciting place. The Aztec ruler is about to sacrifice a beautiful maiden on a stone altar.

DELIA
(turning to her, puts down the watering can and comes to stand, looking down with anxiety at her grandchild)

Ruth, are you reading that ghost story magazine your Grampa brought home?

RUTH
(defensively)

Grampa says these stories are real educational. You learn a lot when you read them.

DELIA

Those stories are too old for a child. The Youth's Companion came yesterday.

RUTH

I already read it. Gramma, please, just let me finish this one more page before you ask me any more questions.

DELIA
(sighing, turns back to the roses as Ruth concentrates on reading)

I'm thankful these pink roses are just coming on. There'll be plenty of nice flowers for Ed's funeral . . . if . . . . but I won't think of that . . . . we've just got to keep him from dying.

(Ruth does not look up. Cow-bells sound off stage and Delia looks up over the fence in the direction of the barnyard off-stage to the right.)

Ruth, you'll just have to stop reading for a minute and run out to the barnyard. The cowherd is bringing the cows from pasture and I don't know if Will left the gate open when he went to work at noon.

RUTH
(not looking up, answers absently)

I think he did Gramma. I think I noticed it standing open.

DELIA

You know how provoked Bessie gets if that gate isn't open for her when she comes down the alley with the herd.

RUTH
That crazy cow. I don't blame Grampa for hating to milk her.

DELIA
I wonder what's keeping Will. He should be through that plastering job by now. I want him to milk early so I can take a cup of warm milk in to Ed. I know I can coax him to sip a little of it.

RUTH
Is Mr. Stranihan going to die tonight?

DELIA
He could die tonight. The Doctor thinks he's slipping away from us in spite of everything we can do.

RUTH
Gramma, how do you know Mr. Stranihan is dying?

DELIA
(sighing)
I've seen a lot of people die, Ruth, and I know the signs.

RUTH
You mean he's gasping his last breath?

DELIA
No, he's still breathing normal but he's losing ground fast . . . not eating and not drinking but a sip of something now and again. He's just sinking lower every hour.

RUTH
What's a sure sign a person is dying?

DELIA
When they begin to pick at the bed-covers . . . . their fingers just kind of pick around aimlessly . . . . that's a pretty good sign.

(She goes to the window of the house next door and calls in.)

Mrs. Gibson! I'll be in to relieve you real soon. As quick as Will comes home and does the milking.

RUTH
Mr. Stranihan is old. He's old enough to die, I guess.

DELIA
No, he's not old. Only middle aged. He just looks old because he's had a lot of suffering.

(She goes back to work on roses along the fence.)

RUTH
I know. Sometimes when he leads the band his face kind of crinkles as though he hurts when he turns back and forth too quick.

DELIA
Yes, he's had to watch how he moves so as not to bring on pain. He's had to do that ever since he had the infantile paralysis. He managed all right though . . . . all those years with those braces on his legs.

RUTH
He got awful sad when his mother died last winter.

DELIA
That was what started him on this down-hill slide. Since his mother died . . . . it's as though he's given up . . . . <u>doesn't want</u> to live anymore.

RUTH
You mean he <u>wants</u> to die?

DELIA
Yes. It's as though he's just made up his mind to lie down and die. Of course he did have some awful colds this spring and got weak as a kitten.

RUTH
You kept taking over things for him to eat . . . . like chicken soup and chicken pie . . . . .

DELIA
Yes, but he just picked at his food. Dr. Herrick says he can't do anything more for him. He's just lost the will to live.

RUTH
This Weird Tales Magazine has stories about people who live in the future. <u>Scientific</u> stories.

DELIA
I've heard Will talk about what's going to happen in the future . . . . man flying to the moon and such nonsense.

RUTH
People aren't going to be able to just lie down and die easy in the future . . . . even if they're old and tired and suffering.

DELIA
(wearily)
Well, this is now . . . . and I'm trying to think of some way to pull Ed back. I wish I <u>knew something scientific</u> to keep him from dying . . . .

RUTH
You asked a bunch of people over to say goodby to him this evening.

DELIA
Yes, I did. I asked the church choir that he's been directing to come and sing to him . . . . "Rock of Ages" and "In the Garden".

RUTH
I guess he loved his mother so much he just can't bear to live without her.

DELIA
His mother loved him so much she just gave her life to taking care of him. He'd have died when he was eighteen if she hadn't been so determined to keep him alive. And I worked right along with her to save him.

RUTH
I don't see how a baby's disease could kill a grown man.

DELIA
(sighing)
Infantile paralysis has killed a lot of children and young people and even some older folks. Ed was the handsomest young man in town . . . . the apple of his mother's eye . . . . when he got that terrible disease.

RUTH
Did Arthur King have infantile paralysis?

DELIA
No, Arthur had a bad case of measles when he was a year old. Went into brain fever. Had some other diseases afterwards too. It all left him different . . . . subject to spells and crippled in that one leg. I asked Arthur over to tell Ed goodby . . . . and maybe play a little on his flute so Ed can see what a good musician he'd made of Arthur.

RUTH
Arthur practices a lot on his flute. He thinks Mr. Stranihan is a great music teacher. I guess he plays the flute a lot because he can't run and play like us other kids. It gives him something to do.

DELIA
Ruth, how does it say in that Weird Tale Magazine the scientists could keep people from dying?

RUTH
They'll use scientific things . . . . tubes running into people's veins to feed them and make them keep from getting weaker . . . . electric wires attached to them to shock their hearts into beating some more when their hearts try to stop.

DELIA
(horrified)
Well . . . . . I guess I wouldn't want to try anything like that on a patient I was taking care of . . . .

(Bessie, the cow, is heard to moo backstage, in the area to right where the barnyard is located)

RUTH

That's Bessie.

DELIA

Ruth, that gate <u>is</u> closed. Run quick and open it for her. She gets real upset if the gate isn't open when she comes home from pasture.

RUTH

<u>Crazy</u> cow.

(Reluctantly she rises from the step, carefully folds her magazine and puts it under the step.)

DELIA

Hurry. If she gets upset she'll hold back her milk and Will gets real aggravated when she . . . .

RUTH

Bessie doesn't like Grampa and Grampa doesn't like Bessie.

(Cow moos again, plaintively. Will comes on stage from right front entrance. He is wearing work clothes that are spattered with plaster.)

WILL

That's Bessie complaining again. What's the trouble? Did I forget to leave the gate open?

DELIA

Yes, you did. Hurry Ruth.

(Ruth goes back to exit at back right, slipping past fence and around corner of Holmes house.)

Will, you're later than usual. We've already eaten a snack. It's just sandwiches and lemonade that'll hold over a little longer . . . . if you milk first.

WILL

(sinking into lawn chair, takes off hat and wipes his head with a red bandana handkerchief)

What's the hurry? That silly cow will be upset now. She'll get over it if I take a half hour before I milk.

DELIA
Might as well do it now and get it over with. Besides, I want a cup of nice fresh milk straight from the cow to take in to Ed Stranihan.

WILL
You have faith in fresh milk for a sick man. I think a little glass of brandy would perk him up better.

DELIA
(with indignation)
Don't let anybody else hear you say that, Will. You know I'm going to be president of the WCTU next year. I'd as soon give Ed Stranihan poison as give him booze.

WILL
All right. All right. But let me rest a <u>minute</u> anyway. Spent all day plastering that high ceiling in Benson's new house. I <u>need</u> a little rest before I tackle the milking.

DELIA
(sighing)
I'm sorry, Will, to be pushing you. I can see you're tired. Rest a little and have a glass of lemonade, <u>then</u> do the milking. I just had the thought that Ed might sip a little milk . . . . and the sooner I get it to him the better . . . . .

WILL
Stranihan show any sign of improvement?

DELIA
No. He's worse. He's sinking fast. If I can't get him to perk up and at least take a little nourishment, he'll be beyond help. He always liked milk fresh from the cow.

WILL
Why not let the poor devil slip away in peace?

DELIA
Now Will, you know I can't let a man just lay down and die without doing everything I can to pull him back . . . .

WILL
Why not? He's suffered along all these years, dragging himself around with crutches and those heavy leg braces . . . . after his mother and you got him up and made him exercise. Pitiful . . . . the way he tried to please you both . . . .

DELIA
(triumphantly)
But he made it . . . . he got over most of the paralysis and walked again. And he's had a good life . . . . a useful life . . . . .

WILL

I don't see why everytime anyone gets to dying you have to get in a tug of war with God.

DELIA

I'm not in a tug of war with God. It's just that I feel I have to keep people from dying if it's not their time to die . . . . and they've got more things to do in this world.

WILL

As long as his mother was alive he was willing to make the effort. Now she's dead. I guess he wants to follow her and I think he has a good right to.

DELIA

But we need him. This town needs him.

WILL

Another music teacher may come along in time.

DELIA

Nobody could take Ed's place. It isn't just teaching music. He's brought out the good in everybody he's worked with. He's helped people find their talents and make something of themselves . . . . even if they were worse handicapped than him.

(Ruth comes back through the exit at back right.)

RUTH

Bessie went right in through the gate and over to her water barrel.

WILL

Acting huffy, I suppose.

RUTH

She was swishing her tail the way she does when she thinks we neglected her.

DELIA

She'll get over it. Ruth, why don't you finish your piano practice right now before you start reading another story.

RUTH

Gramma, if Mr. Stranihan dies there won't be any piano teacher in town and I'll have to stop taking lessons anyhow.

WILL

That's right, Delia. It's just wasting time.

DELIA

Oh, you two! You both think there's nothing in the world more important than reading . . . . and that's how I think you both waste time.

(As Will turns to go up the back steps Delia sees a magazine stuck into his back pocket.)

DELIA
Will, is that a new magazine I see there in your pocket?

WILL
(taking magazine from pocket)
Yes. I didn't buy it though. Mrs. Benson gave it to me. Said they'd finished with it. See, Ruth, the latest Redbook.

DELIA
Please Will, do the milking now. Then clean up and have supper and read.

WILL
(resigned)
All right, Delia. But I'll sit inside and drink a little lemonade first.

(Ruth has settled back on the step and opened her magazine again. Will goes into the house.)

RUTH
Gramma, hadn't you ought to be next door taking care of Mr. Stranihan?

DELIA
Mrs. Gibson is sitting with him now. All the neighbors are taking turns sitting with him.

(She goes back to work a little in the rose bed.)

I'd cut a bouquet of these pink roses and take them in to him, but he made such a fuss the other day when he saw they were starting to bloom.

RUTH
(looking up absently)
That was the day you had Grampa help you lift him into his wheelchair and you brought him outside here into the yard?

DELIA
Yes. I thought the fresh air would do him good.

RUTH
I heard you tell Grampa he had a conniption and began to talk about his true love . . . . Rosemary . . . . and how they were going to get married . . . .

DELIA
He began to cry. He said the pink roses were blooming that year when they graduated from high school and got engaged . . . . and it was right then I decided to write that Rosemary a letter and get her to come out here and see Ed.

RUTH
(astonished, puts magazine on steps)
You wrote Rosemary a letter? You wrote Mr. Stranihan's old sweetheart a letter and asked her to come see him here in WaKeeney?

DELIA
Yes. I did.

RUTH
But how did you know where she lived?

DELIA
I called up her best friend from high school days . . . . Margie Elliot . . . . lives in the country . . . . she told me all about her.

RUTH
Where does Rosemary live now?

DELIA
She lives in Kansas City. Works for the Coates Hotel as a chamber-maid. Margie didn't know her true address because she'd moved so much in Kansas City. From pillar to post, I expect.

RUTH
How did you know where to send the letter then?

DELIA
I sent it to her in care of the Coates Hotel. I even sent her the money from my California Perfume Company profits so she could buy a train ticket to WaKeeney. I told her Ed was dying and remembered her and wanted to see her . . . .

RUTH
You think she'll come to see Ed?

DELIA
I hope so. It's almost my last resort. Margie said Rosemary was awful poor and she'd had a hard life. She's been a widow quite a few years now.

RUTH
She ran off and married someone else when she was engaged to Mr. Stranihan, didn't she?

DELIA
Yes, she did. She broke Ed's heart. When he was down flat in bed with paralysis after he'd had that awful disease . . . . .

(Suddenly she comes across to the steps and calls in to Will through the screen-door.)

DELIA (continued)
Will . . . . the milk crocks are set out in the cyclone cellar like they always are . . . . ready for the milk. I've put a stack of clean dish towels handy there.

WILL
(comes to the door and opens it, peering out, speaks patiently)
I know, Delia. You tell me this every night. Strain the milk through a clean tea-towel . . . . then cover the crocks with the other clean towels.

DELIA
It's the flies I worry about.

WILL
Nobody can prove flies cause infantile paralysis.

RUTH
Besides, there aren't many flies yet, Gramma.

DELIA
Yes, but even one . . . . you never know . . . . and it's summer . . . . it'll be another summer to worry and fret . . . . .

RUTH
Every year you worry, Gramma . . . . about flies and swimming in the crik and eating uncovered food at picnics . . . . even church picnics.

WILL
(from the doorway, holding open the screen door)
I can't find the milk-pail.

DELIA
It's right there by the kitchen sink where I always leave it.

WILL
I guess I might as well milk and get it over with.

DELIA
When you get through bring me some warm milk in that little pitcher I left down in the cyclone cellar beside the milk crocks.

WILL
Delia, I'll bring you all the warm milk you want but you won't make Stranihan want to live unless you give him something to live for.

DELIA
But I am. I'm getting all his favorite pupils over here to perform. The ones he's done the most for.

WILL

To remind him what a good teacher he is?

DELIA

Yes. Show him how much he has accomplished . . . . over the years.

WILL

He feels like a bystander. He's just stood by and watched others live their lives.

DELIA

He's helped so many who were handicapped one way or another. Everybody who had a weakness he's tried to help . . . . .

WILL

Only his mother truly loved him and she's gone now.

DELIA

Well, this farewell party might help . . . . and I've got another something up my sleeve that might put some heart in him . . . .

WILL

What could that be?

RUTH

I know.

DELIA

That's going to be our secret . . . . until it happens . . . .

WILL

Probably some home remedy like rhubarb sauce . . . or sassafras tea . . . . Well, the party's a good idea anyway . . . as he lays dying . . . a kind of farewell . . . . .

(Eva comes into yard from right front carrying a bakery tray with white paper over it.)

And here's Eva now with part of the refreshments. I can smell those cinnamon rolls from here.

(He goes over, lifts paper and takes one of the rolls, starts to eat it.)

DELIA

Ruth, you go help Grampa find the pail. I thought I put it by the sink. But maybe I left it in the summer kitchen under the table. Yes . . . . I think that's where . . . or in the pantry . . . .

(Ruth gets up patiently, putting down her magazine, goes to her mother.)

RUTH
May I have one too, Mama. I didn't eat much supper. They smell so good.

EVA
Of course, dear.

(Ruth takes cinnamon rolls.)

Did you have time to practice your piano lesson here at Grandma's?

RUTH
I was going to do it, but . . . . I'll go help Grampa find the milk pail . . . .

(Ruth hurries up the steps and into the kitchen.)

DELIA
I kept reminding her but she wanted to read that magazine she had . . . . Weird Tales . . . . I don't think that's suitable reading for a child, Eva.

EVA
Pa thinks it's all right. He says she'll be better prepared for the world of the future.

(Eva moves to lawn table.)

Can I just put these here for you to take into the Stranihan kitchen when you go next time?

DELIA
Yes. I'm going over in a minute to see how he is. I'll get things ready for serving while I'm there. Mrs. Boxler is going to help. She's bringing the ice tea.

EVA
It's a nice evening for everyone to come over. When will the choir get here?

(Puts tray on table and sits in chair.)

DELIA
(coming to sit in other chair)
Can you stay for a little? The choir'll be along soon.

EVA
No, I can't. But I wanted to tell you. Dal got back from Kansas City and brought our car home safe and sound.

DELIA
Good. Did he unload the bolts of material for the Tailoring Shop first?

EVA
He didn't bring any material and he acted like he was in a real hurry to leave. Said he had to come over here and see you about something.

DELIA
Maybe he's heard Ed is dying and wants to say goodby.

EVA
He acted real agitated. I asked where the woolens were and he said he'd talk to me later. Then he handed me the keys to the car and went on into his shop next door.

DELIA
I hope that boy isn't in any trouble again.

EVA
He's not a boy. He's a man. And I'm getting sick of the trouble he brings on himself with his card-playing.

DELIA
I hope he's not lost the money he took to Kansas City to buy the woolen goods for the shop. They've got lots of orders for winter suits. They've got to get started sewing.

EVA
It's my guess he got in a poker game in Kansas City and lost the money.

DELIA
He took <u>five hundred dollars</u>.

EVA
Well, I just wanted to tell you before he gets here. I'm not going to help him out of trouble one more time. And I hope you won't help him either.

DELIA
This time he can get himself out of his own trouble.

EVA
(getting up, puts her hand on Delia's shoulder)
Good. I wanted to hear you say that. We'll stick together. Whatever trouble he's in, let him get out of it by himself this time.

DELIA
Must you go back so soon? Can't you stay to sing with the choir?

EVA
No, we're real busy at the soda fountain. It's such a nice evening, people are walking downtown and coming in to have sundaes. Andy is alone right now. When we close at nine we'll drive the car past and pick up Ruth.

DELIA
I'm glad Dal got the new Ford car home safe. You and Andy were good to loan it to him.

EVA
I don't intend to ask Andy for more money to pay any more gambling debts for Dal.

DELIA
You're right. He can take his medicine this time . . . . whatever it is.

(A drum is heard from the barnyard area, coming closer.)

That'll be Billy Elvert with his drum. Coming to play for Ed.

(Eva goes to path and starts toward front exit as Ruth comes out screen-door.)

RUTH
Aren't you going to stay, Mama?

EVA
No, I can't. You help Grandma all you can. She's got her hands full with so many people who'll be coming around here tonight.

(Eva goes off stage at front right and the sound of the drum becomes louder as Billy approaches across the back yard.)

RUTH
I hear Billy coming.

DELIA
He plays his drum real well. Ed helped him learn something that he can be proud of.

RUTH
He's a dumb kid. He's still in the first grade at school.

DELIA
He's a slow child all right. His father and mother are cousins. That's what causes him to be slow-witted. But he's got a gift for music and a talent like that is all you need in this world.

RUTH
Yeah. He sings real good.

DELIA
Now you be nice to Billy, Ruth. Remember, you're the hostess.

RUTH
Yeah. I know Gramma. Don't run away from him when we play games.

DELIA
That's right. But you won't be playing running games tonight.

RUTH
I know. With Arthur coming over, we couldn't play running games anyhow. We'll just sit on the lawn and tell stories.

DELIA
That'll be fine.

(Billy appears around the back fence and comes past the kitchen steps beating his drum. Delia raises her voice.)

I'm glad you're here Billy. I'm going to take you right in to see Mr. Stranihan. You'll be the first of the children to give him a little concert.

BILLY
(ending his piece with a flourish of drum beats)
All right. I'm ready.

DELIA
(picking up tray of cinnamon rolls)
If you want to you can play your drum so he'll know we're coming in to see him.

BILLY
OK.

(He begins to play a march and they go into the Stranihan house by way of the side door, middle left of stage, Delia leading the way. Ruth sits down on the steps and picks up her magazine, but looks up with resignation when Dal appears from back exit, coming around fence.)

RUTH
Hi, Uncle Dal.

DAL
Hello, Ruth. I'm looking for Ma. Is she in the house?

RUTH
No, Gramma's just gone into Mr. Stranihan's house with Billy Elvert. You can hear Billy playing his drum for Mr. Stranihan.

DAL
(impatiently)
I heard Stranihan was dying. Kind of a funny way to treat a dying man, making a lot of noise in his bedroom.

RUTH
It's Gramma's idea. She asked a lot of people over to say goodby to Mr. Stranihan and show their appreciation for the music he'd taught them.

DAL
Ma gets these sentimental ideas.

RUTH
Gramma kind of hopes the farewell party will perk him up so he'll want to keep on living.

DAL
He hasn't had much to live for. Just doing what his mother wanted him to do all these years. If that girl he was in love with had stayed around until he got better and could have married her . . . . .

RUTH
I heard his girl friend ran off with someone else while Mr. Stranihan was paralyzed and no one thought he'd ever get better.

DAL
Yeah. She ran off with a brick-layer. It was a mean thing to do, but I guess she couldn't face up to marrying a cripple.

RUTH
You could go in and tell Mr. Stranihan goodby if you want to.

DAL
No. I'm in too much of a hurry right now.

(He moves nervously to the corner of the house right front and appear to be looking down the street. He comes back to the steps.)

Ruth, why don't you go in and tell Ma I want to see her. You can stay inside to keep Billy company while he gives his drum recital.

RUTH
(slowly getting up from the steps)
I always get to run the errands for everyone.

DAL
That's a good girl. I've got something real important to tell Ma.

(Ruth disappears through door of the Stranihan house. Drum music continues in background while Ruth stays inside and Delia comes back through door into the yard.)

DELIA
Dal, I'm glad you're back safe and sound from that long trip.

DAL
The trip went all right. I got the car back to Eva and Andy.

DELIA
It was nice of them to loan it to you.

DAL
(he steps close to Delia and speaks in an agitated way)
Ma, I need someplace to hide.

DELIA
Hide? What do you mean? Hide?

DAL
Where no one can find me.

DELIA
Who are you hiding from? What have you done now, son?

DAL
Nothing really! I just won some money and left the game while I was ahead.

DELIA
Well, for once you won and quit while you were ahead. Good for you!

DAL
No, it's not good. The fellows I was playing with don't like that. Black Jack got me into the game and they hold him responsible.

DELIA
What can they do?

DAL
They can beat me up if they find me. Maybe kill me.

DELIA
Kill you? My land, what kind of people did you meet in Kansas City? Hoodlums?

DAL
You might call them that. They make a living playing cards and they don't plan to lose.

DELIA

Well, you usually lose.

DAL

I did at first. I got a losing streak and I lost almost all of the five hundred dollars I took to buy the woolens.

DELIA

Dal, you weren't using the money from your business to gamble?

DAL

Yes. When I'd almost lost it all I got to winning again.

DELIA

Son, you promised me you'd stop playing cards. You promised your wife you'd stop playing cards.

DAL
(impatiently)

I know, Ma. But Black Jack was there in Kansas City too.

DELIA

Dal, you didn't take Black Jack with you in Andy's new Ford car?

DAL

Sure, Ma. He asked to ride to K.C. with me and I took him. We're old friends. I couldn't turn him down.

DELIA

If I'd known that I'd have been worried to death. Jack Williams is a no-good.

DAL

Jack's OK. He just likes to have a good time. But right now he's mad as a wet hen and he's lookin' for me. Where can I hide Ma?

DELIA

Hide? For how long?

DAL

Just for a few hours, maybe. 'Til those fellows cool off.

DELIA

They're coming here?

DAL

Most likely.

DELIA

You left Jack in Kansas City?

DAL

I had to. I just said I had to keep a date with the woolen salesman and I'd be back. And I left and got in the car and came home with the money.

DELIA

Do you have the money now?

(Dal takes out his pocket-book and shows her the bills.)

My land. Give it to me. I'll keep it safe for you.

(Dal hands her his pocket-book.)

Now go down in the cyclone cellar and hide behind the milk table. There are old quilts on the floor for when we have a cyclone scare and have to stay for awhile.

DAL

I know about the quilts. But what will you do when Jack comes here lookin' for me?

DELIA

Never you mind about Jack. I'll take care of him. Go now . . . . hurry . . .

(She puts the pocket-book into her big apron pocket--gives it a pat and puts a handkerchief in on top of it.)

Oh . . . . wait . . . . Dal. First go in and see Ed Stranihan. Tell him you remember how nice it was to play in the city band a few years back. Tell him you're thinking of coming back and play your horn again . . . . if only he gets better . . . .

DAL

Now, why should I lie to him like that? I hated playing in the band. He knows I hated it.

DELIA

I just thought . . . . maybe he'd be encouraged to . . . .

DAL

Let the poor fellow die, Ma. Stop hanging on to him.

DELIA

He means a lot to this town. He's done so much good . . . . .

DAL

So he deserves to die if he's tired of living. If he's still alive and breathing when I come out of the cellar . . . . maybe then I'll go see him and tell him goodby, but I won't say I'm thinking of coming back into the band.

DELIA
(dejected)

All right, Dal. Go on . . . .

(He goes out back right, past the rose bushes. Delia stands watching him, shakes her head and goes to the pile of tools that are set to one side of the fence, chooses a clipper. Then she begins to clip the pink roses until she has a small bouquet. Arthur King comes around the front corner of the house carrying his flute.)

ARTHUR

I'm here, Mrs. Holmes. I've come to say goodby to Mr. Stranihan.

DELIA
(turning with the bouquet in her hand, puts the clippers back with the other tools)

I'm glad to see you Arthur. Do you want to sit down and rest for a little? That's quite a walk from your house.

ARTHUR

No. I'm OK. I took my time.

DELIA

Billy is inside now. Playing his drum for Mr. Stranihan.

ARTHUR

I hear him. He's just finishing that tune.

(Drum sound stops and does not continue until Ruth comes out door.)

DELIA

I guess we might as well go in there now.

(Going to table where an empty vase rests.)

I'll just get a little water for these.

(She goes bcak to the fence and fills vase with water from watering-can, puts bouquet on lawn table.)

Now. Those flowers will look real nice on this table for the time being. Maybe I'll take them in to Ed . . . . later . . . . .

ARTHUR
I thought I'd play my recital piece for him. He said I did it real . . .

(Arthur puts his hand to his eyes.)

Mr. Stranihan has been my best friend . . . my very best friend . . . . if he dies . . . I'll never have anyone who understands . . . . .

DELIA
I know. You were just a little baby when you caught the measles and got so sick . . . . and the brain fever came on . . . . .

ARTHUR
My mother told me how you came and helped her all the time.

DELIA
We thought you were going to die. And then afterwards you were so frail . . . . and caught other things . . . . and your leg went bad . . . . and you began to have convulsions sometimes . . . .

ARTHUR
But I'm lots better now. I hardly ever have a spell.

(Ruth comes from the Stranihan house and walks over to stand with them. Billy is playing another tune on his drum.)

RUTH
I heard you talking out here. I was watching Mr. Stranihan's face when Arthur was talking. I saw his eyes open.

DELIA
(hopefully)
He opened his eyes? Did he look better?

RUTH
No. He looks like he's getting worse, but I think he wants to have Arthur come in there.

DELIA
I hoped it would perk Ed up if all his best pupils came in and played for him. And if it didn't perk him up . . . . at least it would be nice to have them give him a kind of send off into the other world . . . . with music he'd taught them.

RUTH
You ready to play the flute now, Art? I'm getting kind of tired of that drum music.

ARTHUR
Drum music can get tiring, but Billy is giving him a real recital. And Billy plays the drum pretty well.

RUTH

You can sit down on a chair while you play. I expect you're kind of tired after walking over here. You don't feel like you're going to have one of your fainting spells, do you?

ARTHUR

I feel OK. My leg hurts a little so I'll sit down while I play.

RUTH

I've been reading about the future. There won't be any measles or infantile paralysis in the future. There'll be vaccinations for all kinds of diseases.

ARTHUR

That won't help me any.

RUTH

Scientists will be doing all kinds of experiments on people and maybe they'll operate on you. Maybe they'll operate on your brain so you won't get those fits you have sometimes.

DELIA

Ruth, you got those ideas from that Weird Tale Magazine.

RUTH

Yes, but it might come true, Gramma.

DELIA

So might those fairy stories you used to read when you were little.

ARTHUR

I read them too. I wish . . . . I wish wishes could come true and my leg would get strong like my other leg and I wouldn't have those spells where I faint . . . .

RUTH

Maybe those scientists that are going to discover things about bones and brains will know how to cure you before you get real old, Art.

DELIA

I wish wishes could come true too, Arthur. But . . . . in the meantime you're lots better than you were . . . .

ARTHUR

Yes. I get around OK. And my leg doesn't hurt like Mr. Stranihan says his legs hurt.

DELIA

And you're turning into a real musician.

ARTHUR

Well, I practice a lot.

DELIA
You go on in and play for Ed now. Tell Billy he can sit down in the parlor and take a rest for awhile.

RUTH
I think Billy's going to be glad to stop playing for awhile. I hear him doing that same piece he started with. I think he's done it three times already.

DELIA
Now would be a good time for you to go in our house and finish your practice. Then maybe you'll have a piano piece to do for Ed . . . . later in the evening.

(Arthur goes into Stranihan house.)

RUTH
I don't think my playing would perk Mr. Stranihan up. He always looked kind of tired when I got through my lesson.

(She turns back to her magazine.)

But I will practice . . . . just as soon as I finish this story, Gramma.

(Ruth settles down on the step and Delia goes back to the fence, gets the hoe from pile of tools and begins to cultivate roses. Will comes around house from back right.)

WILL
Why is Dal laying down in the cyclone cellar behind the milk table?

DELIA
Why didn't you ask him?

WILL
I did. He said he was playing Hide and Seek.

DELIA
(dryly)
He is. He's hiding from Black Jack Williams.

WILL
Have they had another quarrel over cards?

DELIA
Worse than that.

WILL
How much money did he lose this time?

DELIA
This time he won. And brought the money home.

WILL

He did?

DELIA

And I've got it. Right here.

(She takes pocket-book from her apron pocket and opens it, shows Will what is inside.)

WILL

What a lot of money.

DELIA

Eight hundred dollars. Five hundred was from the business to buy woolen goods in Kansas City.

WILL

That extra three hundred dollars will come in handy at his Tailoring Shop.

(Arthur has begun to play his flute for Mr. Stranihan.)

DELIA

I plan to take the money into Kansas City and buy the goods for the shop myself.

WILL

When?

DELIA
(unhappily)

If Ed dies . . . . if I can't save him . . . . after we get him laid away, I guess.

WILL

I suppose you can't leave until he dies . . . . .

DELIA

Or gets better . . . .

WILL

Will you go on the train?

DELIA

Maybe Eva and Andy would drive into Kansas City in their new car. And we could ride along.

RUTH
(looking up from her magazine)

I'd like to go too. Can I, Gramma?

NANCY
I don't know what to say . . . . you're all so good to me . . . . .

(She opens the package.)

NANCY
Lily-of-the-valley. That's my very favorite.

DELIA
(pleased)
I heard you say that when you were looking over the samples at Christmas time.

NANCY
You just think of <u>everything</u> . . . . and know exactly what to do about <u>everything</u>, Mrs. Holmes.

EVA
Now, you go back into the bedroom and lie down for awhile, Nancy. Just rest for a bit. You've got plenty of time to practice. A little nap will make you look fresh as a daisy. You're going to look so beautiful Randolph will do anything you want.

NANCY
I'll just hold on to that thought and stop worrying . . . if I can.

DELIA
There's one more little thing that you should know, Nancy.

NANCY
What's that?

DELIA
Eva tried to tell you but she couldn't seem to get the words out of her mouth.

EVA
Mrs. Preston went to Topeka last week to visit Randolph . . . . checking up on him like she does.

DELIA
Randolph introduced her to a girl he's been taking around to some of the parties . . . .

NANCY
What? A girl . . . .

EVA
Just some girl he met and had a few dates with.

DELIA
Only the girl just happens to be exactly the kind of girl she wants Randolph to marry . . . . a judge's daughter.

RUTH
(who has been listening while she appears to have been reading)

I read a story about a man who liked to play cards. In the future there'll be whole cities just built for people to play cards together.

DELIA
(startled and rueful that Ruth has been overhearing this conversation, but interested in what she has said)

I suppose these cities will be built on Mars . . . . or some such place . . . . .

WILL

No. I read that story too. They'll be built for gambling where men like Dal and Jack can go and live.

DELIA

Will they die there?

WILL

Yes. Eventually they'll all kill each other.

DELIA
(shuddering)

My land, I'm glad I live now. And I'll take care of Mr. Jack Williams when he comes here looking for Dal.

WILL

You're going to stop him from beating up Dal, aren't you?

DELIA

Yes. I guess so. Dal's my boy, after all.

WILL

You always spoiled him.

DELIA

I guess so. Just like Linda Stranihan spoiled Ed and Margaret Preston spoiled Randolph.

WILL

Mothers. Every one of those fellows would have more gumption if you mothers hadn't stood between them and trouble all their lives.

(Alice Preston appears around the corner of the house carrying her violin in a case.)

ALICE

Am I too early?

WILL

No. Just in time.

(He goes up steps and to kitchen screen door.)

I guess I'd better take time to eat my supper now before the choir gets here.

(He goes into the house.)

DELIA

My goodness, you do look pretty Alice. Is that a new dress?

ALICE

Yes. Daddy just brought it from Topeka when he got home this afternoon.

RUTH

(putting down magazine and coming forward)
You always wear green dresses, Alice.

DELIA

It's because green dresses look best with red hair. Her Grandma always wears a lot of green. Alice comes by that hair honestly.

RUTH

Accordion pleats. I wish you'd make me a dress with accordion pleats, Gramma.

DELIA

I will. If your mother buys the material. What color do you want, Ruth?

RUTH

Pink, I think.

ALICE

Blue would be better. Your skin is kind of sun-burned. Blue would look best.

DELIA

Maybe when we all ride into Kansas City we can pick the material. You can decide on the color then, Ruth.

ALICE

Oh, are you going to Kansas City?

RUTH

Yes, we're going in our new Ford car.

ALICE

I love Kansas City. We're going there in our Packard car when the lawyers have a convention next month. Daddy's going to make a speech.

DELIA
Are you ready to go in and play for Mr. Stranihan?

ALICE
Yes.

(Alice goes to lawn bench, takes violin from case, puts case on bench, violin under her chin, posing prettily. She goes about tuning violin.)

RUTH
(watching enviously)
Sounds like that one string is off.

DELIA
It sounds all right to me. Arthur is playing his flute now but he'll be through with that piece before long.

ALICE
I hear him. Poor Arthur. He makes the best of being a cripple . . . and having fits . . . . .

DELIA
He's getting better. He'll probably outgrow those spells he has. And Ruth's been telling me that there'll be ways to help people who are crippled in the future.

ALICE
I suppose she read that in her Weird Tale Magazines. Ruth's always telling strange things she's read in those magazines. My grandmother thinks Ruth ought not to be allowed to read such stories.

DELIA
(getting more than bored with Alice and her critical remarks)
Will's quite a reader and he thinks Ruth is mature enough to read anything she can understand.

RUTH
Most of the future will be good, Gramma, but people will hate some of the things the scientists do.

DELIA
Like what?

RUTH
Like keeping people alive when their brains are dead, old people and young ones who've been in accidents.

DELIA
I've heard Will talk about that. And I don't believe doctors will ever be cruel like he says they'll be in the future.

RUTH
They'll have to be. There'll be a law that no doctor can let any person die if they can possibly be kept alive.

DELIA
I'd keep Ed Stranihan alive if I could.

ALICE
Is he going to die tonight?

RUTH
He might.

DELIA
You go in now, Alice, and play your very best . . . . that one called Liebestraum. It might make Ed perk up.

RUTH
It'll make him cry. He'll remember his lost love.

ALICE
That girl he loved was mean to run away with another man but I suppose he still loves her . . . . and longs for her . . . .

DELIA
I hope so.

ALICE
Was she pretty?

DELIA
Yes. She was a pretty little thing.

RUTH
I wonder if she's still pretty?

DELIA
I expect so. Ladies keep themselves looking pretty good in these modern times. My California Perfume products keep women looking pretty way past their prime.

ALICE
She ran away from him after he got paralyzed, didn't she? When she was still engaged to him?

DELIA
Yes. She met a young fellow who was working here on the grade school building, laying bricks. I guess they fell in love.

ALICE
My grandmother says they eloped but didn't live happily ever after.

(Alice finishes tuning the violin and runs through the scale.)

ALICE (continued)
I guess I can go in now to play for Mr. Stranihan. Maybe I will play Liebestraum. I know it by heart. I only know a few pieces by heart.

RUTH
Maybe he'll want to remember his lost love while you're playing it. If I was at death's door I think I'd want to remember something nice that happened to me when I was young.

DELIA
You can play until the church choir gets here, Alice. Soon as Arthur quits.

(A train whistles off in the distance and Bessie the cow moos plaintively.)

RUTH
Bessie hates that Union Pacific train whistle.

DELIA
(suddenly remembering, hurries to the steps and calls in through screen door to Will)

Will, where is that pitcher of milk fresh from the cow you were going to bring me?

WILL
(coming out from the kitchen through screen door with pitcher)
I didn't forget. I carried it up from the cellar in the milk pail. But why you think this fresh milk will appeal to a dying man is more than I can say.

(He hands her the pitcher.)

DELIA
Ed always liked it. Bessie's milk is rich enough to taste good. She may have her faults but her milk is the best.

WILL
Crazy cow . . . . always mooing when she hears that train whistle.

(Takes out his pocket watch and looks at the time.)

Train's right on time.

(The train whistles again, very near. The cow moos again.)

WILL (continued)
Getting ready to pull out fast tonight. If there was anybody on board catching a ride from Kansas City they had to get off quick.

(The train whistles again, in the distance and the cow moos once more.)

There she goes.

DELIA
(starting for the Stranihan house with the pitcher of milk)
Come on, Alice. I'll try to get Ed to sip a little of this milk before you give your violin concert for him.

(They disappear into the Stranihan house and Will sinks down on the step beside Ruth.)

WILL
Which story you reading now?

RUTH
The one about how old people are kept alive by all those mechanical things. Most of them want to die and beg the doctors to let them die, but the doctors just keep doing tests on them . . . . and keep them alive with the machines.

WILL
That has a good ending . . . . when the young nurse who feels sorry for them . . . . .

RUTH
Grampa . . . don't tell me . . . .

WILL
Oh . . . all right. There's Delia in there trying to keep a poor fellow from dying. She won't succeed though. Not this time.

RUTH
Gramma doesn't give up very easy . . . . once she makes up her mind to do something.

WILL
She might as well. Trouble with Stranihan he never had enough to worry about . . . . just himself and how he felt.

RUTH
He worried about our music lessons.

WILL
I mean real worries, real trouble. Not getting married and having trouble with a wife bossing him around and kids doing things you'd rather they wouldn't.

RUTH
I thought trouble was what wears people out, kills them.

WILL
No. Trouble kind of keeps people going. The challenge of getting out of it. Yes. If you ask me, Stranihan never had enough trouble in his life. He's dying of boredom as much as anything else.

RUTH
Well, he's not dead yet and maybe a miracle will happen. Gramma's praying for a miracle. And she's going to have the choir say a prayer. Then the minister will say a prayer.

WILL
It might work. It'll take a miracle to pull him away from death. I think Delia's about run out of ordinary cures like getting him to drink warm cows milk and having a farewell party of his friends to make him feel appreciated.

RUTH
You think Gramma likes trouble?

WILL
She'd never admit it, but yes, I think Delia enjoys trouble so she can get around it, figure some way out of it.

RUTH
Kind of like a game.

(Suddenly a man rushes around the corner of the house right front. It is Jack Williams. Jack is a big fellow and looks angry. When he sees Ruth and Will he stops short.)

JACK
Oh . . . . good evening, Mr. Holmes. I'm looking for Dal. He anywhere around here?

WILL
(cagily)
Well now . . . . have you looked at his house . . . . or the Tailor shop?

JACK
No. I just got off the train and come right here. I figure you and Mrs. Holmes always know where Dal is.

WILL
Yes, we generally do. At least Delia does. She's in looking after Stranihan right now. You know Ed's on his death bed?

JACK
(with indifference)
Yeah. I heard that.

WILL
You care to go in and say goodby to him? We've been asking folks to come by this evening for that purpose.

JACK
Naw. I don't know him very well. His Ma cut his hair for him. And anyway, he couldn't walk down the stairs to my basement barber shop.

WILL
I guess that's right. Delia's been going in and cutting his hair since his mother died. She's a pretty good barber.

JACK
I know. She cuts yours. She used to cut Dal's I guess. Where is Dal by the way? I need to see him.

WILL
Well, Delia'll be out pretty quick. She may be able to tell you where Dal is. Ruth, why don't you go tell Ma someone's here to see her . . . . Jack Williams.

RUTH
All right, Grampa.

(Patiently Ruth lays down her magazine, starts for the Stranihan side door but Delia comes out before she gets there.)

DELIA
I heard voices out here. I figured someone had come to tell Ed goodby. That's why you're here, isn't it Mr. Williams?

JACK
Naw. I come to see if you know where Dal is.

DELIA
(growing suddenly aggressive)
Dal? What do you want with Dal? Getting up a card game again, Jack? Got a bunch of the boys down in that back room behind your barber shop ready for poker and that dice game you play?

JACK
Naw. I just come in on the Union Pacific passenger train.

(aggrievedly)

Dal drove off in his car and left me stranded in Kansas City.

DELIA
It's not his car. He only borrowed it from Eva and Andy. He drove to Kansas City on business . . . . to buy woolen material for his tailor shop. I expect he got so busy he forgot you were with him.

(The violin is heard from the house as Alice begins to play Liebestraum.)

DELIA (continued)
Yes, he must have forgot all about you.

WILL
That's about right. He probably forgot you rode in with him.

(Delia turns to Ruth who has not gone back to her reading but stands beside Delia with Will, waiting to see what Black Jack Williams is going to do.)

DELIA
Why don't you run inside and do your piano practicing now, Ruth, while Alice is playing her violin for Ed. And Will, since you brought the milk pail in, why don't you run some water in it from the pump, rinse it out. I don't like to have it just sitting around drawing flies.

WILL
I've only seen two flies so far this summer.

DELIA
They'll multiply fast if food sits around uncovered. A milk pail draws them faster than anything.

WILL
All right, Delia.

(Realizing that Delia wants to get Ruth away into the house so she can talk to Jack Williams privately.)

Come on, Ruth. I guess you're finally going to have to practice the piano like you've been promising to all evening.

(They leave Delia in charge of the conversation and problem, go into the house through the screen-door.)

DELIA
And now, Jack Williams, we'll have a little talk about your <u>barber</u> shop and the young men you lure into that back room <u>behind</u> the shop to play cards.

JACK
(defensively)
If you're referrin' to Dal, he don't need no lurin'. He could teach me a few tricks about shufflin' and dealin' if he cared to.

DELIA
(ignoring the inference that Dal is a fast shuffler)
I don't think that card playing room is any credit to this town.

JACK
(sulkily)
The men in this town like to have a place where they can go and relax. If I charge a little somethin' to play cards there, it don't do any harm.

DELIA
I've heard you charge a little something. You charge a quarter to anyone who wants to gamble with cards in your back room.

JACK
The barber shop business ain't very good in this town with women like you cuttin' their men's hair. I need to do a little somethin' extra to make a livin'.

DELIA
I've heard all about your connections in Kansas City. If any of your gambling customers have enough money to lose you can get them into a really good game in Kansas City.

JACK
That's right. I have some friends who'll give a good card player a real good game.

DELIA
You knew Dal was going into Kansas City with money to buy wool goods for the tailor shop so you made up an excuse to beg a ride with him in the Ford car and entice him into that place where you go to meet your friends and play cards.

JACK
Dal never needed any enticin'. He wanted to see how he could do against real good players.

DELIA
He lost his money . . . . the five hundred dollars he took to buy the bolts of material.

JACK
Well, he had a losin' streak for awhile.

DELIA
Just for awhile?

JACK
About the time he'd said he'd have to leave to meet this wool salesman he begun to win the money back. He got several hundred dollars ahead.

DELIA
And he had to leave when he was ahead?

JACK
That's right. But he said he'd be right back and play some more . . . . win some more.

DELIA
Then what happened?

JACK
He never come back. My friends said I was to blame for bringing him there and if I didn't get that money he'd won back they'd figure I owed it instead of him.

DELIA
And you'd have to pay them some money because they didn't intend anyone to ever go away a winner?

JACK
Well, most folks do just keep playin' until they lose all they've got. Most fellows think it's excitin' to play . . . so they just keep playin' and if they play long enough they run out of money . . . . so the game has to end.

DELIA
I've heard all about this game in Kansas City. Our Methodist Ladies' Aid Society studied a lesson on big city sin . . . . gambling and other things that men get lured into doing.

JACK
The ladies in this town put a damper on the fun that folks could be havin'. That's why the men all like to go to Kansas City for a good time.

DELIA
A lot of ladies in this town are getting provoked with you luring their men into your back room to lose money gambling.

JACK
Well, they have a good time losin' it.

DELIA
Mr. Thompson lost their rent money last month and Mrs. Thompson had to borrow some money from her father or they'd have been put out of that nice little house they rent from Martin Jacobs.

JACK
Carl Thompson did get a real bad run of luck. And Mr. Jacobs is a hard-boiled landlord . . . . wants his money cash on the barrelhead right when it's due.

DELIA

And Jeff Mudock came in there with the money he was supposed to use to buy some chicken-feed at the Elevator. He lost the money and Mrs. Mudock had to beg the Elevator manager for credit until her spring fryers are ready to sell in a couple of months.

JACK

Those things do happen. A fellow can get a real good run of cards and win money. Or he can have a real bad run of cards sometimes.

DELIA

You know that I'm president of our Ladies' Aid Society and a Past Worthy Matron of the Eastern Star?

JACK
(uneasily)

Yes, Mrs. Holmes. I know you belong to a lot of women's societies. I saw you lead the women in those parades down Main Street when women was pesterin' everbody to let them vote in elections.

DELIA
(triumphantly)

We won. We're all voting now.

JACK

Yeah!

(Seeing that he isn't getting any place talking with Delia, Jack turns to leave.)

Well, if Dal's not around I guess I'll get along home. I'll see him later.

DELIA

Just a minute, Mr. Williams. The women in this town could easily be persuaded to sign a petition and get your card room closed.

JACK
(startled and aggrieved)

But I make a part of my livin' with that little recreation room.

DELIA

It's no credit to this town. It lures men into losing their hard-earned money that's needed by their families for food and rent.

JACK
(sulkily)

<u>Sometimes</u> they win. I've heard fellows say they was goin' to buy a box of candy and take it home to the little woman.

DELIA
(not being put off)

I think I understand how this game room of yours works. Sometimes men <u>do</u> win and get to thinking they're pretty good at cards. Then you offer

DELIA (continued)
to take them in to Kansas City where they can get a really good game. If they can dig up enough money to play a good while and stay in a nice hotel for a day or so.

JACK
We usually stay at the Coates House.

DELIA
I've heard all about it. All the women in town know about those trips. This gambling den you've got behind your barber shop is just a way to lure fellows into Kansas City where they can lose big money.

JACK
You've got this all wrong, Mrs. Holmes . . . . my card room. It's just a kind of club where fellows can have fun.

DELIA
I'm thinking of getting the women together and having a drive to stop gambling in this town.

JACK
You can't stop gamblin'. It's a thing men enjoy.

DELIA
I can stop it in this town. I can get your room closed up and you run out of town.

JACK
Mrs. Holmes, I'm a good friend of Dal. All I want to do is find him and tell him there's no hard feelin's because he quit while he was ahead and come back here to WaKeeney leavin' me high an' dry in Kansas City.

DELIA
Well, I think the barber shop business is going to get better. Maybe a lot of women will be having their hair bobbed short and need to come to your barber shop. I hear that style seems to be sweeping the country.

JACK
Hasn't caught on here yet.

DELIA
It might. I wouldn't cut my hair short in that ugly way, but some young women might want to . . . . just to keep in style.

JACK
Yeah . . . . maybe . . . . I better be gettin' along. If you see Dal tell him I got no hard feelin's.

(He starts again for right front exit.)

DELIA
Sure you don't want to come in and say goodby to Ed Stranihan. He tried to get you into the city band awhile back. Maybe you could go in and say you'd been thinking it over and might be interested in learning to play a horn or something in case he should take a turn for the better . . . . .

JACK
Naw . . . . I don't want to say nothin' to Stranihan . . . . but say . . . someone is comin' to say goodby to him . . . . a old woman from Kansas City. Rode in with me on the Union Pacific just now.

DELIA
An old woman . . . . my land . . . . I can't imagine who . . . . .

JACK
I've known her for quite a while. She's been a chamber maid at the Coates House long as I been stayin' there.

DELIA
A chamber maid at the Coates Hotel?

JACK
I felt sorry for her . . . . seemed like she was always havin' a toothache and draggin' herself around miserable. Her old man's been dead for years . . . . fell off a scaffold on a building he was workin' on.

DELIA
A chamber maid at the Coates Hotel? It wasn't . . . . it wasn't Rosemary Sawyer by any chance?

JACK
Yeah. Rose Sawyer . . . . that's her name. She's had a real hard scrabble makin' enough to feed herself and the six kids she had. I always felt sorry for the poor old thing.

DELIA
But Rosemary Sawyer . . . . she's <u>not</u> an <u>old</u> woman. She's <u>just middle aged</u>.

JACK
She <u>looks</u> like a old woman. A old <u>wore out</u> woman. Teeth missin' and wrinkles make her <u>look old</u>.

DELIA
Well . . . . my land . . . . I never thought she'd be an old woman <u>already</u> . . . . .

JACK
She sat with me on the train and said how she got a letter from a friend in WaKeeney to come home and say goodby to her old sweetheart who was dyin'.

DELIA
And she got off when the train pulled in?

JACK
Sure. Said she was goin' to the courthouse basement to tidy up in the ladies' toilet.

DELIA
But . . . . I never counted on her looking like an old woman. I never thought . . . . .

JACK
She talked a lot about the hard life she'd had . . . . and cried some too when she told how she run out on Ed Stranihan when he was lyin' paralyzed with infantile paralysis.

DELIA
It's her . . . . yes . . . it must be true . . . . but how can I let her see Ed if she's so changed?

JACK
You want him to die happy?

DELIA
Well, not exactly. I want him to perk up and realize he's got something worthwhile to live for . . . . the people he teaches to make music . . . . and then I thought if he saw his old sweetheart . . . .

JACK
When he sees this old woman he'll be glad he never got tied up with her. She's a fright . . . .

DELIA
(sadly)
She used to be so pretty.

JACK
Well' she's comin' up here any minute now . . . . . soon as she gits herself tidied up from the train ride. You can see for yourself.

DELIA
I don't know <u>what</u> to do. <u>I</u> was the one who wrote her the letter and told her to come . . . . even sent her the money.

JACK
(surprised)
You did? That was a real <u>romantical</u> thing to do, Mrs. Holmes.

DELIA
Yes. But now I think it was a real <u>mistake</u> to do it. I just can't let her in to see Ed if she looks the way you say . . . . like an old woman . . . . the shock might be just the thing to send him on . . . . .

JACK
(smugly)
Yeah! Well, Mrs. Holmes, I'll just leave that little problem in your hands.

(with bitterness)
You seem to have a way of gettin' into everbodies business and workin' things around so they come out the way you want them to.

DELIA
(bristling)
All I want is for people to behave themselves and do their duty and make the most of their lives no matter what obstacles they come against.

JACK
Yeah!

(sidling away)

DELIA
And that reminds me, Jack Williams, it just came into my mind when you were telling how sorry you were for Rosemary that you're off on the wrong foot in this town.

JACK
(somewhat proudly)
I'm standin' on my own two feet in this town, tryin' to make a livin' the best way I can.

DELIA
You're riling some people who'd be your customers in the barber shop if they didn't think you was a Kansas City hoodlum.

JACK
(sulkily)
Those respectable people do their own barberin', I told you.

DELIA
If you'd turn over a new leaf they might decide to spend some money with you.

JACK
(sarcastically)
Turn over a new leaf? Now how do you figure I should do that?

DELIA
I invite you to come to Sunday School and join my adult Sunday School class. I've been teaching that class a long time and people will respect my judgment if I introduce you as a new member I invited to join.

JACK
(angrily)
You tryin' to take me under your wing like I seen you doin' to a lot of people in town?

DELIA
No. I'm just telling you, Jack Williams, if you want to stay in this town and build up a good business in your barber shop you'd better come to Sunday School next Sunday morning and join my class.

JACK
Well . . . . I'll be a . . . . .

DELIA
(briskly)
Think it over. Sleep on it. Looks like you're in bad with that bunch of hoodlums in Kansas City. Maybe you just better stick here at home for awhile and tend to your barbering. You could turn that back room into a women's barber shop. I've been reading about them coming into fashion along with bobbed hair. They call them Beauty Parlors.

JACK
(sulkily)
I'll be gettin' along.

(As he nears the corner of the house . . .)

I see your daughter Eva comin' along.

DELIA
Eva? I guess she's decided to come sing with the choir after all.

(Jack goes out right exit. His voice and that of Eva are heard off-stage.)

VOICE OF JACK
Nice evenin', Mrs. Froelich.

VOICE OF EVA
Yes it is.

(Eva comes into view from right front carrying a pasteboard ice-cream container.)

EVA
Ma, I just thought I'd run up with some ice cream for those children.

DELIA
That'll be a real treat. Yes, you can sit it right against the ice in the ice-box. It ought to hold fine. They're almost through their recital for Ed.

EVA
What did Black Jack Williams want around here? Don't tell me he came up to tell Ed goodby.

DELIA
(evasively)
No. He was looking for Dal and I just took time to have a little visit with him. I invited him to join my Sunday School class.

EVA
That hoodlum! How could you?

DELIA
I think that young fellow needs a good influence in his life. And you never can tell . . . . .

EVA
He'll never come to Sunday School. I'll bet on that.

DELIA
He might. He just might. I think his back's against the wall right now. He just might decide to turn over a new leaf.

EVA
As I was passing by old man Bellamy's house, Dr. Herrick came rushing out and wants you to go right over there. Marilyn Bellamy has gone into early labor and she's threatening to miscarry.

DELIA
(startled)
That baby's not due for two months.

EVA
Old man Bellamy's fit to be tied. He's sitting out on the front porch in the swing, twisting his hands together, acting like an old fool.

DELIA
He's been so excited about his young wife getting pregnant.

EVA
(with a meaningful look at Delia)
His young wife that's been Senator Randolph Preston's secretary for the last three years.

DELIA
(sharply)
I don't believe all that gossip, Eva. An old man can father a child. It's possible.

EVA
When his first wife was married to him thirty years and died childless? And this new wife's been married to him five years and never got pregnant . . . . until . . . . .

DELIA
I'm not going to believe evil when there's no proof . . . . .

EVA
All I'm saying is what everybody's saying . . . if that baby is born with red hair like runs in the Preston family . . . . .

DELIA
Dr. Herrick wants me now? This evening when he knows I'm busy with Ed on his deathbed?

EVA
I'll take over here. Andy'll just have to handle the soda fountain business by himself. You go on. Dr. Herrick needs you.

DELIA
Yes. And Elmer Bellamy needs me to comfort him in case . . . . it'll be a shock to him if his wife loses this baby.

(As Delia starts for right front exit the curtain closes on Act I.)

ACT II

(The stage is still brightly lighted for the sun has not yet set. It is 7:30 in the evening. Three children are seated on the lawn at back near the Holmes house kitchen door-steps. Arthur sits on the steps. They are eating ice cream from cereal bowls. Eva and Will are seated in the lawn chairs. The Methodist Church choir is singing inside the Stranihan house. "Rock of Ages" is faintly heard in the background as the choir sings it with feeling.)

WILL

They sound good. Don't they?

EVA

Beautiful.

WILL

I miss your alto voice in there.

EVA

I just couldn't be inside singing and out here serving the children their ice cream at the same time.

WILL

I wonder if all this is having any effect on Ed.

EVA

I went in for a minute when the preacher was praying. Ed looked ghastly. He didn't even open his eyes.

WILL

I wonder if he drank any of that milk Delia was so set on getting into him.

EVA

Ma held him up and made him sip a little through a straw.

WILL

I think Delia's beat this time. Ed's made up his mind to die.

EVA

I guess he's just worn out with suffering.

WILL

Anyhow, he had plenty of money all his life. He never had to worry where his next meal was coming from.

EVA
Seems everyone of those Stranihans left some money to Ed. Yes, he's well fixed. His father and mother had plenty to begin with. Then all those aunts and uncles felt so sorry for him when they knew he'd be crippled for life. Everyone of them left him something.

WILL
I know it's small consolation to have money if you've got bad health . . . still it's nice to have money.

EVA
You ever hear anything more about your inheritance, Pa?

WILL
(with discouragement)
Sometimes I think I'm never going to get a dime from that money that was left by my grandfather in Yorkshire, England.

EVA
People do say that the war and taxes kind of ate into estates in Great Britain.

WILL
Most likely those shyster English lawyers are living high on what should have come to me and the others who stand to inherit.

EVA
(trying to cheer him up)
You might be surprised someday, Pa. Your lawyer in Detroit is still working on it, isn't he?

WILL
He says he is. We sent him another twenty-five dollars a while back.

(He sighs.)
I guess we're doing all right anyway. You and Andy are at least.

EVA
Yes, we're doing real well with our bakery and saving a lot of money.

WILL
I wonder who Stranihan is leaving his money to.

EVA
Ma thinks maybe the Methodist Church choir fund and the City Band fund. He's got a few personal gifts in his will but no one knows who'll be remembered.

WILL
You don't say. I never heard that before. Maybe he's leaving Delia a little something for nursing him off and on over these years. Of course she got paid right along . . . . but . . . .

EVA

I wouldn't count on much. He has a lot of friends you know.

WILL

How'd you come to hear this?

EVA

Randolph told Nancy and Nancy told me. Randolph wrote Ed's will for him just this last winter after his mother died.

WILL
(looking happy)

Hmmmmmmmm, since Ed seems determined to die . . . . I sure think it'd be nice to get a little inheritance.

EVA

And then, maybe you'll be surprised someday and get the money that's supposed to come to <u>you</u> from your grandfather's estate in England.

WILL

I <u>can't</u> give up hope. It seems better to <u>keep on hoping</u> than to tell myself I'm foolish to expect more from England than those dishes and books we got years ago.

EVA

You just <u>keep on</u> hoping, Pa. These law things always do take a long time to unwind.

WILL

Yes, I know. Particularly since it's over in England. I heard the crown gets a big cut out of every estate that amounts to anything.

EVA
(as the children finish their ice cream, she stands and goes over to them, taking the dishes)

Why don't you children go around on the front lawn and tell stories now, or play quiet sit-down games.

RUTH

We want to come back after the choir's gone and sing some of our children's choir songs for Mr. Stranihan.

EVA

I know. I think that'll be real nice. I'll call you when they're all gone.

ARTHUR

Ruth is going to tell us some new ghost stories she read in Weird Tales Magazine.

WILL

Don't scream when she comes to the scarey parts. That wouldn't sound good with Mr. Stranihan breathing his last. We want to keep it real peaceful.

RUTH

We'll keep quiet.

(They file along the path and go to front lawn by way of the right front exit. Ruth goes out, then comes back again.)

A lady is coming up the front walk.

EVA

There is? Well, tell her to come around here to the side yard . . . . whoever it is.

(Ruth goes out right exit and her voice is heard directing the visitor)

VOICE OF RUTH

My Mama and Grampa are in the side yard sitting.

VOICE OF ROSEMARY

I came to see Ed Stranihan. But I heard the singing in his house. I thought I'd better come talk to Mrs. Holmes. He isn't dead yet, is he . . . . Ed?

VOICE OF RUTH

No, he's still alive. Go on around and tell Grampa you want to see him.

(Rosemary Sawyer comes around the house. She is stooped and aged in appearance, dressed in old clothes. She wears an old straw hat and some of her hair is straggling down under the brim. She does look a "fright" as Jack has observed.)

ROSEMARY

(speaking shyly as she pushes nervously at the straggles of hair, trying to push them up under the hat)

Mr. Holmes. You probably don't remember me. But I'm Rosemary Sawyer. Used to live here in WaKeeney. Mrs. Holmes wrote me a letter saying how Ed Stranihan was dying.

WILL

(astonished)

She did? Delia wrote you a letter?

ROSEMARY
Sent me the money to come on the train to tell Ed goodby. You remember when Ed and I used to go together?

WILL
Sure, I remember you went with Ed Stranihan when you were both in high school. So Delia thought you ought to come back to see him before he dies?

ROSEMARY
Yes. We were engaged to be married you know.

EVA
I'm Eva Holmes Froelich. You probably remember me as a little girl who watched as you and Ed went strolling down the street of an evening. I thought you were the handsomest couple.

ROSEMARY
Yes. I remember a pretty little tyke lived here.

(wistfully)
You're still pretty. I guess your life's been nice here in WaKeeney.

EVA
Yes. It's been real nice. That was my little girl you spoke to at the front of the house.

ROSEMARY
I have six children . . . . only two at home yet.

EVA
We heard you lost your husband a few years back.

ROSEMARY
Ten. He fell off a scaffold. Clem worked hard . . . real hard, but with all those kids to feed we never got ahead. We didn't have such an easy life or maybe I'd have stayed prettier. I know Ed won't rekanize me.

(dejected, she stands drooping)

Mrs. Holmes wrote he was awful sick . . . . on his deathbed . . . . I'd have liked to look pretty seeing him for the last time . . . . but I had to come like I was . . . . .

EVA
Ed's changed a lot too, you know and I'm sure he'll be glad . . . .

WILL
Maybe you ought to rest a bit before you go in to see Ed . . . . sit for little.

EVA
You do look tired. Why don't you sit down and rest until the choir has finished singing and have had their refreshments? I know you'll want your meeting with Ed to be private.

ROSEMARY
I'd have fixed up some if I'd had time before I left Kansas City. But I just up and took off when I got the letter this morning. The desk clerk handed it to me when I went past him on my way upstairs in the hotel. Mrs. Holmes said she didn't know where to send it but the place she heard I was working.

WILL
Delia has some pretty romantic ideas. I guess she thought you'd want to see your old sweetheart before he died.

ROSEMARY
I had to see him . . . . I was afraid I'd never get here in time . . . .

EVA
I know. You wanted to tell him goodby.

ROSEMARY
(sinking into lawn chair, beginning to cry)
I had to tell him I still love him. I always went on loving him.

WILL
(uneasily, but trying to think of something comforting to say)
We never forget our first loves. No one does.

ROSEMARY
He was my own true love. And we'd have been married but he got so sick . . .

EVA
We heard he was given up for dead at first. And then when he got better he was paralyzed.

ROSEMARY
It was then I asked myself if I could marry him and take care of a helpless man for all my life.

EVA
I . . . . it was a hard decision . . . . I'm sure . . . . .

ROSEMARY
I met Clem Sawyer that fall. He came here to work on the new grade school building. We got to going together. I'd go see Ed of course, but he was always flat in bed with his mother waiting on him, taking care of him. Everyone said he'd never walk again.

WILL
He sure did surprise everybody. When he got better and could be in a wheelchair.

ROSEMARY
I thought I'd fallen in love with Clem so when he wanted me to run off and get married . . . . I did.

EVA

Yes . . . . . I can see how . . . .

ROSEMARY

But I wasn't married long before I knew I never loved . . . . . I still loved Ed . . . .

EVA

That was a sad thing . . . .

ROSEMARY

By then I had two kids. And we were moving all over the country to keep up with Clem's work. I worked too, chamber-maid work in hotels. I got good at it, could work wherever I happened to light.

WILL

That was hard work.

ROSEMARY

It didn't matter if I was in a family way. I had four kids while I was workin' in hotels, Dallas and San Antonio, Oklahoma City and Kansas City.

WILL

But you finally settled in Kansas City?

ROSEMARY

Clem had his accident there. And I was working in the Coates Hotel. I just kept that job, been there ever since.

(She leans forward, her head on her hand, closing her eyes and swaying a little.)

EVA

(going to her in concern)

You look so tired, Rosemary. Why don't you go inside for awhile and lay down on the bed in Ma's room. It's just through the front door to the right.

ROSEMARY

I would like to lay down for a minute. I got to feeling faint there for a little . . . . just sitting . . . . .

WILL

Maybe I could bring you a sandwich and a glass of milk.

ROSEMARY

Oh, that would be so kind, Mr. Holmes. I haven't had a bite to eat since breakfast. Except some candy mints Mr. Jack Williams happened to have in his pocket. He was riding on the same train and when I told him I was from WaKeeney he was sure surprised.

WILL

I guess Jack Williams hangs out around the Coates Hotel when he's in Kansas City. Is that how you came to know him?

ROSEMARY
I've seen him come and go for years. He was always real kind to all us maids at the hotel, leaving a little money sometimes or some fruit he had left.

EVA
I guess even Jack Williams has a good side . . . . if you get to know him.

WILL
I'll take you to Ma's bedroom now, if you want me to.

EVA
And when you've rested, if you want to fix up a little, there's a wash-basin and a pitcher of water.

WILL
Say, maybe you'd enjoy putting on a little of that California Perfume Delia sells. She's got plenty of samples on her dresser.

ROSEMARY
That would be nice, Mr. Holmes. Oh, if she has rose perfume . . . . I'll choose rose. That's what I always wore when Ed and I was courting.

EVA
I know she's got rose perfume. And say . . . . there's a curling iron laying across the lamp chimney. If you want to touch up your hair with a curl or two.

ROSEMARY
(taking off her hat, touches her hair)
That would be a <u>good</u> idea. I haven't much curl left, I guess.

(She pats her frazzled hair.)

WILL
I'll show you to the bedroom and get the sandwiches so you can eat something now. It'll be a good half hour before the choir's had their refreshments and gone.

(He starts ahead to right front exit.)

ROSEMARY
(following him)
It's so good of you . . . . so good of you both . . . .

(They go around corner of the house, front right and Eva sinks down onto the bench at left front as Ruth comes from the front yard at front right.)

RUTH
Alice's father is coming down the street to get her. She just can't go home yet, Mama.

EVA
No. Of course not. I'll explain to Randolph when he gets here.

RUTH
Alice is a big pain in the neck but she can sing better than anyone except Billy.

EVA
I know Alice is a little trying at times, but you must overlook the way she brags and . . . .

RUTH
She's so uppity. Always standing around posing, trying to look pretty.

EVA
You'll be just as pretty when you're a little older, Ruth.

RUTH
No, I won't. I'll never have red hair and that white skin.

EVA
Red hair and white skin is a special hereditary gift of beauty in the Preston family. But you'll be just as pretty in your own way.

RUTH
How? How can I be just as pretty?

EVA
Don't worry. I know lots of ways to make people look pretty and so does Gramma.

RUTH
Gramma's going to make me an accordion pleated dress like Alice has on.

EVA
Yes, we'll make you some real pretty clothes. Ma will make you beautiful clothes as you grow older. She always has, hasn't she?

RUTH
Yes, but . . . . .

EVA
(as Randolph Preston rounds the corner of house right front)
Randolph! It's good to see you. Ruth has been worrying because she wants Alice to stay on for awhile.

RANDOLPH
I came to get her, but I suppose if there's a reason.

EVA
After the choir leaves the children are going to sit our here on the lawn and sing some of their Sunday School songs. Alice has such a good voice . . .

RUTH
Please, Mr. Preston, PLEASE. It's awful important.

RANDOLPH
Oh, I suppose so. Yes, sure, if it's awful important.

RUTH
(screaming out to the others and rushing out front right exit)
You can stay longer, Alice. Your Daddy says you can stay on until after we sing for Mr. Stranihan.

EVA
(going to lawn chair)
Sit down, Randolph. You can take a little time to visit, can't you? It's been a long time since we had a chance to talk. How's Nancy?

RANDOLPH
Not so good. She would have come for Alice tonight but she has another of her headaches. Went to bed with a cold cloth on her forehead.

EVA
It seems something could be done for those headaches.

RANDOLPH
She's been taking Lydia Pinkhams Vegetable Compound.

EVA
That's a good one to take.

(coyly)
The only trouble with it is, they say there's a baby in every bottle.

RANDOLPH
I wish it were true. I hope we'll have another child. At least one . . . . a boy . . . . .

EVA
I know you want a son. Nancy and I are still young enough to have more children. I'm taking Lydia Pinkhams too . . . . in hopes . . . .

RANDOLPH
Of course Alice is a real joy to us . . . . just as Ruth is to you and Andy. Still . . . . we ought to have more than one child apiece.

EVA
Your mother has been real good to take care of Alice when Nancy has been ailing.

RANDOLPH
Yes. My mother dotes on Alice. Spoils her, I'm afraid.

EVA
She looks like your mother. Alice will be a beautiful woman.

RANDOLPH
Yes. I'm afraid she already knows it. It's good Ed Stranihan got Alice interested in being a violinist . . . . it gives her something else to think about . . . . besides being pretty.

(He laughs.)

EVA
(sighing)
Poor Ed. He's had such a good influence on so many people. I don't know what we'll do without him in this town.

RANDOLPH
(getting up from lawn chair)
Sad. Well . . . . . I'm really tired tonight so I guess I'll get along home. Had a big week in Topeka with committee meetings . . . . and we started out in the car before dawn this morning. It's a long trip.

EVA
It is a long drive but you have such a nice car . . . . a Packard is about as good a car as you can get.

RANDOLPH
It runs well. We make pretty good time on the road. Drove forty miles an hour most of the way.

EVA
I'll walk Alice home when the children are through with their singing. I want to go back to the bakery and help close up anyway.

RANDOLPH
Andy is doing real well in his bakery. He really has made a lot of money over these years since you got married. People in town says he has the Midas touch. You could afford a Packard car.

EVA
A Ford is good enough for now. Andy likes to save and loan out money. He likes to make investments in land, too.

RANDOLPH
Well . . . . as I say . . . . he has the Midas touch.

EVA
Randolph, you really should go in and say goodby to Ed Stranihan, since you're here.

RANDOLPH
(reluctantly)
I guess I ought to. He helped campaign for me whenever I ran for an office.

EVA

And a lot of the choir voted for you. As soon as they stop singing, Ma and Mrs. Boxler and I are going to serve ice tea and cinnamon rolls. Then would be a good time for you to go in and see Ed, have some little refreshment with the choir. The preacher's there too.

RANDOLPH
(wearily sinking down onto the lawn chair again)

I guess I should wait and go in. How much longer you think they'll be singing?

EVA

Not long. They've been singing quite a while now. I hope Ma gets back soon. She ran over to the Bellamy's. Dr. Herrick needed her.

RANDOLPH

The Bellamy's? What's the matter over to the Bellamy's? Old man Bellamy took sick? Maybe had a stroke?

EVA

No. Nothing like that. Mrs. Bellamy's about to have her baby.

RANDOLPH

She is? But it's too early. She . . . .

EVA

She's threatening to miscarry . . . .

RANDOLPH

But that's terrible. She stopped working for me as secretary months ago so she could rest a lot. I wonder what . . . . .

EVA

Dr. Herrick was pretty anxious. He came out to the gate when I went by and told me to get Ma to come help.

RANDOLPH
(very much disturbed, but trying not to show it)

How's old man Bellamy taking it?

EVA

He's very upset. He was sitting on the porch in the swing . . . . about to cry . . . .

RANDOLPH
(in a dull voice)

I guess he's been pretty excited about . . . . about a baby . . . . after all these years . . . .

EVA
(slyly)

Yes, it's a real blessing.

RANDOLPH
If the baby's born now . . . . it'll probably die . . . .

EVA
Maybe Mrs. Bellamy was wrong about when the baby was due. Maybe it is near full term.

RANDOLPH
She thought . . . that is . . . . she said maybe it would be born in the late spring . . . that is . . . . and then she changed her mind.

EVA
Sometimes it <u>is</u> rather confusing to a woman if she's not sure when she got pregnant.

RANDOLPH
Your mother will know what to do . . . . if the baby is weak . . . . and small . . . . .

EVA
Ma's helped with almost everyone that's been born in Trego County the last forty years . . . . . I've heard her tell about <u>your</u> birth many a time.

RANDOLPH
I've heard her describe me as little and red faced with red hair.

(cautiously)
I guess she knows a lot about what goes on in town, doesn't she?

EVA
She does, but Ma doesn't gossip much. Even though she does know a lot about this town. Mostly she won't lower herself to gossiping about people.

RANDOLPH
That's good.

EVA
She feels responsible for people . . . .

RANDOLPH
In this case . . . . I don't think she's responsible . . . .

EVA
What do you mean?

RANDOLPH
(impatiently)
Nothing. I hope that's the last song the choir is going to sing.

EVA
(as Delia comes around the corner of the house--front exit)
Well . . . . here's Ma now . . . and just in time. I was afraid we'd be serving refreshments without your help.

RANDOLPH

The baby. Did it . . . . .

DELIA

A nice little boy . . . . not too small . . . . I think Marilyn Bellamy was wrong about when that baby was due . . . .

EVA

That's good. Then it will live?

DELIA

I think it'll be fine. We put it in a basket with hot water bottles around it but I think . . . .

RANDOLPH

How big is it?

DELIA

About six pounds . . . I guess . . . . not full term maybe but not far from it . . . . if I'm any judge.

EVA

What does it look like?

DELIA

Well now . . . . a little baby doesn't look like much . . . . I couldn't see . . . .

EVA

What color hair does it have?

DELIA

It doesn't have much . . . . but what it has . . . . is sort of reddish.

EVA

Red hair?

RANDOLPH
(quickly)

Marilyn told me she had red gold hair when she was born. Turned dark later.

DELIA

Elmer Bellamy says he has a second cousin had real red hair. Looked just like this little baby when he was born. He got out a old tin-type picture to show me.

EVA

He did? Well, I guess old man Bellamy must be pretty proud.

RANDOLPH

Yes. He must be. At his age getting a son . . . . .

DELIA
(the choir has stopped singing)
I believe that choir has finished their program. We'll have to run right in and serve the refreshments or they'll leave. Why don't you go in and get things started, Eva. Pass the napkins. Have them sit in the parlor.

EVA
Sure. And Randolph is coming in to say goodby to Ed.

DELIA
I'm going to sit down and rest a minute.

(She sinks down into lawn chair.)
It's been a real busy evening . . . . especially the last half hour . . .

RANDOLPH
I'll be in to talk with Ed when you get the serving started.

(He sits down in chair opposite Delia. Eva goes into Stranihan house.)

DELIA
It's nice you dropped by to see Ed. It'll mean a lot to him. He always thought a good deal of you, Randolph . . . . getting to be a lawyer and then a judge and finally a state senator.

RANDOLPH
Well . . . . . I was always fond of Ed . . . .

DELIA
Marilyn Bellamy got through this labor in fine shape.

RANDOLPH
I'm glad to hear that.

DELIA
The baby is little and red faced with red hair. He looks exactly like you looked when you were born Randolph.

RANDOLPH
(ashamed and proud at the same time)
Then I might as well admit to you . . . . the baby is mine . . . . my son.

DELIA
No. <u>He's old man Bellamy's son</u>. <u>You</u> are the only person I'm ever going to tell what I just told you.

RANDOLPH
But . . . . .

DELIA
You are a man of position in this town, Randolph. And this foolish love affair with your secretary could tear you down, ruin you in politics.

RANDOLPH
I know . . . . but I love Marilyn . . . . .

DELIA
And you love Nancy, your wife.

RANDOLPH
Yes.

DELIA
And you love Alice, your daughter.

RANDOLPH
Naturally.

DELIA
And you know that your mother lives on her pride in all of you.

RANDOLPH
(uneasily)
Yes. My mother is very proud.

DELIA
I'm telling around town that the Bellamy baby looks exactly like the second cousin of Elmer Bellamy. He has a tin-type he'll be showing people.

RANDOLPH
Is it a colored tin-type?

DELIA
There's a faint color . . . . enough to show the baby had reddish hair.

RANDOLPH
Elmer Bellamy has been telling everyone he got some medicine from that medicine show that was here last summer. Made a new man of him.

DELIA
I've heard he's been telling that to everyone. I'm glad he believes it. I'm going to tell everyone that I've heard of things like that happening when people try a new kind of tonic.

RANDOLPH
Certainly will make the medicine shows popular from now on . . . . and the tonic.

DELIA
It will and it won't.

RANDOLPH
So you're going to lie to protect my reputation.

DELIA

Yes, I am, but just this once. I wish you'd behave yourself from now on, Randolph, and be a credit to your mother.

RANDOLPH

I usually do my duty to my family and my constituents.

DELIA

I know you do. I just can't understand why you boys who've had every advantage have to handicap yourselves with one kind of vice or another.

RANDOLPH

I wouldn't call it vice exactly . . . . falling in love . . . . .

DELIA

It's adultery.

RANDOLPH
(shrugging)

Oh well . . . . .

DELIA

There lies Ed Stranihan . . . . dying. He lived his whole life trying to make the best of a handicap that came to him because of infantile paralysis.

RANDOLPH

That handicap of being crippled had one advantage. He couldn't run into temptation as easily as an able-bodied man.

DELIA

But he could have sat around feeling sorry for himself . . . . never making any effort . . . . .

RANDOLPH
(tired of the lecture)

I think I'll go in and see him now. I am especially grateful that he got Alice interested in the violin. He's given a lot of time to her.

DELIA

That a good thing to talk about. You might say how you wonder if any one else will be able to teach her as well.

RANDOLPH

I'll do that. It's true enough.

DELIA

Yes. He'll be proud and flattered that you came . . . . if he's not too far gone to know you.

RANDOLPH
(taking her hand)

I thank you, Mrs. Holmes.

DELIA
I'm sorry about the baby. Sorry that you can never claim your son.

RANDOLPH
Well . . . . it would be awkward . . . . .

DELIA
Maybe Nancy will give you a son someday.

RANDOLPH
Maybe.

(Looking defeated he moves to the door of the Stranihan house and goes inside. Delia gets up from chair and goes to porch steps, calls into the house.)

DELIA
Will, are you in there? Can you hear me?

VOICE OF WILL
Yes. I'm here at the kitchen table. Just reading a story in my new magazine.

DELIA
(patiently)
I wonder if you ought to go down and tell Dal he can come up out of the cyclone cellar now.

(Will comes to door, opens it, comes down steps.)

WILL
I figure it will do Dal good to just stay there awhile thinking he's going to get a beating from Black Jack . . . . or even murdered by those Kansas City hoodlums.

DELIA
You may be right. But he did bring the money home instead of going back to lose it all. He may be trying to turn over a new leaf.

WILL
Maybe. But it'll be good for him to think awhile about how he plans to keep that leaf turned over.

DELIA
Maybe Black Jack Williams is going to turn over a new leaf too.

WILL
You handled Black Jack real well, Delia. But I doubt you can reform him with Sunday School lessons.

DELIA

I can try.

WILL

There's another problem for you to solve now.

DELIA

What?

WILL

Rosemary Sawyer is here. You never told me you sent money for her to come tell Ed goodby. That was a real crazy idea, Delia.

DELIA

I know. I just got the idea and did it . . . . I know it seems sort of . . . . . scatterbrained to think that seeing his old love would perk a dying man up enough to want to get well . . . .

WILL

It's a scatterbrained idea all right but anyway she's here . . . . taking a rest down in your bedroom, prettying herself up a little to see Ed.

DELIA

Prettying herself up?

WILL

(looking around to be sure no one hears him, speaks in a confidential tone of voice)

She looked so pitiful . . . . old, ugly . . . . her teeth gone bad . . . gray hair in a tangle. Eva and I felt so sorry for her . . . .

DELIA

I suppose she was worn out from the trip on that train.

WILL

She looked worn out all right. But she came to see Ed. She cried when she told Eva and me how she never stopped loving Ed and how sorry she was she ran out on him.

DELIA

It'll shock Ed to see his sweetheart of long ago looking like an old worn out woman.

WILL

I'm not so sure about that. If a man once loves a woman he always sees the young face underneath the wrinkles . . . . when that woman grows old and ugly.

DELIA

That's a nice thought, Will. But maybe he'll feel revengeful and mad at her for running out on him.

WILL

He might. But more likely he'll be in a forgiving mood. Since he's on his beathbed.

DELIA

Yes, I guess he will forgive her on his deathbed. It sounds like you're telling me one of those stories you're always reading, Will.

WILL

Lots of stories are true to life. Anyway, when the choir leaves you'll have to let her go in to see him.

DELIA

In those Weird Tales Ruth reads she said someday they'll shock people with electricity to keep them alive. Maybe a shock of seeing his old sweetheart in bad shape is just what Ed needs.

WILL

We told Rosemary to use some of your California perfume to fix up. Curl her hair on the curling iron.

DELIA

That was the right thing to do, but perfume and curls don't help much if you've lost your looks like you say she has.

WILL

I don't think it <u>can</u> help <u>much</u> but she'll feel better if she thinks she's fixed herself up a little before she goes in to see her old beau.

DELIA

Yes. When a woman looks in a mirror and puts on a little face powder, fixes her hair . . . . sometimes . . . . she sees the young face she used to have smiling back at her . . . . .

WILL

And comes away thinking she's still young and pretty . . . .

DELIA

That's what keeps us going along real sprightly when we get to looking old.

WILL

I guess I'd better go call her now.

(He starts around to front of house by right exit . . . looks around corner, then steps back, looking at Delia.)

She's sitting out on the porch in the swing, listening to the story Ruth's telling, watching the pretty sunset. Be extra nice to her, Delia.

DELIA

(indignantly)

Of course I'll be nice to her. I'm always nice to people. You tell me one time I haven't been kind when people needed my help.

WILL

Yes. But this time I know you're disappointed she didn't come back looking almost as pretty as when she went away . . . . and sometimes being disappointed makes you kind of stern . . . . .

DELIA

Stern?

WILL

And this little woman kind of reminds me of a cat that's been dumped and finally finds its way home, thin and tired but still hoping . . . . .

DELIA

Stern . . . you think. Will, it's just that I get tired sometimes . . . . of sympathizing with people who brought a lot of trouble on themselves with their own foolishness.

WILL

Like Rosemary?

DELIA

Yes. I guess she made her bed and then had to lay in it . . . . to her regret.

WILL

But now . . . . all she wants is to see her true love and tell him she's sorry.

DELIA

Of course I'll treat her nice, Will. I wrote to her about Ed, didn't I? And sent her money to come. It was all my idea however it turns out.

WILL

The children will want to start their singing before long. I'll send Rosemary around here and go on to where they're sitting, see how the ghost stories are coming along.

(He goes off stage right front and his voice carries back to Delia.)

VOICE OF WILL

I see you're all ready and enjoying a rest in the swing. You look mighty nice.

VOICE OF ROSEMARY

Thank you, Mr. Holmes. This rose perfume and the face powder made me feel more like myself. I appreciated getting a chance to fix my hair after that long trip.

VOICE OF WILL

Everybody needs a chance to fix up after a long train trip.

VOICE OF ROSEMARY
I enjoyed the sandwich and milk you brought me. I feel a lot better.

VOICE OF WILL
You go right around and sit for a little with Delia. I told her you were here waiting to see Ed.

(Rosemary comes from right front. She still looks worn and bedraggled, but she has fixed herself up as much as she can with face powder, the curling iron and perfume. She walks with a springier step and carries herself with more assurance. It is as though she thinks of herself as the young girl Ed had loved when he was just 18.)

DELIA
(going to her, takes her hands in loving welcome)
Rosemary, I'm glad you came to tell Ed goodby. When I wrote the letter I hoped you'd want to come.

ROSEMARY
(dreamily)
Sitting there in the swing . . . . I closed my eyes and pretended I had never left, that I was back there in the past when Ed and I were engaged. I always loved this town . . . . I kept remembering it over the years . . . it seemed like it was a heaven on earth . . . . especially when the sun is setting with all those pretty colors.

DELIA
I'm glad you remembered WaKeeney that way. We do have a lot of pretty sunsets.

ROSEMARY
I used to watch you and Mr. Holmes sitting in that swing . . . . when Ed and I would walk by here of an evening . . . .

DELIA
It's the same swing . . . . Will's kept it in real good shape . . . .

ROSEMARY
I had to come back, Mrs. Holmes. I had to come and tell Ed I'm sorry I ran off and left him . . . . when he was so sick . . . .

DELIA
He was sick a long time.

ROSEMARY
(beginning to cry)
And I couldn't face marrying him if he was going to be crippled.

DELIA

Ed took a long time to get better, but he finally got to walking again with braces on his legs. He's had a good worthwhile life as a music teacher. He's been a wonderful help in this town . . . . .

ROSEMARY

(trying to control herself, wipes the tears away with her hand)

I mustn't cry and mess up my face after I got it powdered. And I guess I forgot to bring a handkerchief . . . .

DELIA

(taking handkerchief from her pocket)

Here's one of mine. Just wipe the tears away and keep a stiff upper lip. Be glad you got here in time to tell him how you feel.

ROSEMARY

(patting her face, carefully)

I'm glad he made such a success of his life . . . . in spite . . . . in spite of everything . . . . .

DELIA

I guess you've had a pretty busy life yourself, living in Kansas City.

ROSEMARY

Yes. Me and Clem finally landed in Kansas City with our six kids. After living in a lot of big cities.

DELIA

I heard you lost your husband some years back.

ROSEMARY

Clem's been dead so many years . . . . I've almost forgot what it's like to have someone . . . . of course I had the kids . . . . .

DELIA

Pretty grown up by now, I guess.

ROSEMARY

Only two at home.

DELIA

Raising a family of six is something to be proud of. And you a widow when they were still a care.

ROSEMARY

(sighing)

Yes. I'm proud I could work and keep us all fed. You might say I've had a hard row to hoe, Mrs. Holmes.

DELIA

It's <u>right</u> that you came to see Ed. He'll be able to die easier . . . . knowing that you always loved him . . . . and are sorry you left him . . .

ROSEMARY
(fervently)
I'll <u>always love him</u> to my dying day.

(The children come around the house right front with Will following.)

DELIA
I think the choir's leaving by the front door right now. You children can start your singing of the Sunday School songs if you're ready.

WILL
They can sit down on the grass here under Ed's window and sing. He'll be able to hear them real well.

DELIA
I guess Eva and Mrs. Boxler managed the refreshments without my help .. . . they can clean up the kitchen alone, too. I think I'll just sit out here and rest for a little longer . . . . .

(Moves back to lawn chair, but does not sit down.)

WILL
(coming to join her, lowers himself into other chair)
I'll sit too for a spell.

ROSEMARY
Shall I go in now?

(Delia moves back to the window and peers in as though seeing into the Stranihan bedroom.)

DELIA
Yes. In a minute. I think the preacher's just telling Ed goodby and saying a last little prayer.

ROSEMARY
(glancing at roses on the fence)
Mrs. Holmes, could I ask a favor? One more favor?

DELIA
Of course.

ROSEMARY
Could I have some of those pink roses to carry in to Ed? You see they meant a lot to us. It was when the pink roses bloomed we got engaged.

DELIA

That's exactly what I guessed.

(Glancing at table between lawn chairs.)

Right there on the table is a bouquet I just picked. Take it to Ed.

(She picks up vase and hands it to Rosemary who puts her face close to the roses.)

ROSEMARY

Ummmmmmmm, nothing smells like these pink roses. I hope Ed remembers how it was with us when the roses bloomed . . . . .

DELIA

He remembers all right. He got tears in his eyes the other day when I brought him into the yard and he saw the roses beginning to bloom.

ROSEMARY

If only . . . . he can forgive me . . . . .

DELIA
(looking in Ed Stranihan's bedroom window)

Go right in and find out. No one's there now. The preacher just left.

(Rosemary goes into Stranihan house by side door.)

RUTH

Is that Mr. Stranihan's sweetheart from long ago?

DELIA

Yes, it is.

RUTH

She looks awful <u>old</u>.

DELIA

She feels young inside and that's what counts.

(turning to the children)

Are you children ready to sing songs now?

RUTH

Yes, but we want to start with a little prayer circle first. Is that all right, Gramma? We learned how in Sunday School.

DELIA

That'll be nice.

(She goes to chair and sits down.)

RUTH

Everybody sit down except when you get up to give your prayer. I'll go first.

(The children are seated as they were when they were eating the ice cream. Ruth solemnly stands facing the Stranihan bedroom window.)

Dear Lord, please take care of our music teacher when he gets to heaven. And let him teach music to the angels up there if he wants to. Amen.

(She sits down.)

Now you, Arthur.

ARTHUR
(standing with difficulty)

Our Father who art in heaven, please don't take Mr. Stranihan away from us to heaven. Please make him well enough to continue to teach music right here in WaKeeney. But thy will be done. Amen.

RUTH
(as Arthur again seats himself on the steps)

I guess you enjoy taking lessons from Mr. Stranihan, don't you, Arthur?

ARTHUR

Yes. And he's my best friend.

RUTH

It's your turn, Alice.

ALICE
(stands and folds her hands in a saintly pose, looking upward)

Dear God, I thank you for giving me a good music teacher so I could become a violinist. Please spare him now so he can go on teaching me until I become famous. Amen.

RUTH

You certainly are asking a lot, Alice. You'll have to spend most of your time practicing if you intend to become famous.

ALICE
(loftily)

Mr. Stranihan says I have a natural talent as a violinist. I won't have to work as hard as some people because I have a talent for it.

RUTH

It's your turn now, Billy, but I'll say a word to God to explain how you mean your prayer.

(Ruth stands to address God. Billy stands too.)

RUTH (continued)
Dear Lord, Billy is going to say a prayer as though Mr. Stranihan is saying it. Billy is saying the prayer for him because he's probably forgotten this little prayer he used to say when he was young and only knows grown up prayers now. Amen.

BILLY
Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
If I should die before I wake
I pray the Lord my soul to take. Amen.

RUTH
Now let's sing our favorite song he taught us. Sing loud so he can hear us clear into the bedroom.

(They begin to sing "Brighten the Corner Where you Are" so loud and off-key that the noise is ear-splitting. Bessie the cow is heard to moo plaintively off in the area of the barnyard.)

DELIA
(standing up, goes to them, puts up her hand for them to stop)

Children, children, stop. You're singing away too loud. Even Bessie thinks you're singing too loud.

RUTH
That crazy cow doesn't like loud singing.

WILL
That's right. And we have to humor Bessie.

DELIA
Mr. Stranihan will still hear you in his bedroom if you sing softer.

RUTH
There's no use singing unless he can hear us out here.

DELIA
I know he can hear you if you just sing like you would when he's leading you. Try it. The window's partly open.

RUTH
We need more people to sing. Then we could sing better.

DELIA
All right. Will and I'll join in.

WILL
I know that song as good as any of you.

(They begin to sing again; the second verse this time. It sounds better. As they complete the verse a voice is heard to come from the window.)

VOICE OF ROSEMARY
Mr. Holmes. Mrs. Holmes. Come in here. Quick.

DELIA
(jumping up)
I'm afraid he's slipped away.

WILL
Poor soul. May he rest in peace.

(They hurry through the door of the Stranihan house.)

RUTH
I think that means Mr. Stranihan is dead. We ought to sing "Jesus Loves Me".

(They begin to sing and are through the first verse when in the Stranihan doorway appears Delia with Will following. Will holds open the screen door so Rosemary can bring Ed Stranihan outside in his wheelchair. Ed has on a long night-shirt and is wearing bedroom slippers. Both he and Rosemary, while looking old and worn have a look of happiness on their faces. A kind of glow seems to surround them.)

DELIA
(standing back anxiously as Rosemary maneuvers the chair over the threshold. She speaks to the children who have gathered around.)

Your singing sounded so good Mr. Stranihan wanted to come out and tell you so.

RUTH
We tried to do it the way you taught us.

ED STRANIHAN
(speaking with a slight quaver in his voice, but with conviction)

ED STRANIHAN (continued)
It sounded fine . . . . fine and I wanted . . . . I wanted my darling Rosemary to meet you. She listened while you were sitting on the lawn a little while ago telling ghost stories.

ARTHUR
(shyly)
Yes, we saw her sitting in the swing.

(to Rosemary)
I'm Arthur. This is Billy and Alice. You already talked to Ruth.

DELIA
Mr. Stranihan is feeling better. Your singing sounded pretty good but he wants to hear you sing "Brighten the Corner" once more.

WILL
He thinks if he leads you it will sound even better.

RUTH
All right.

ED
Softly now.

(He begins to wave his arms directing them and this time they sing the song very well. The curtain goes down as they finish the first verse.)

END OF ACT II

TOO MUCH PRIDE

A Play in One Act

Research material for the play from:

Land of the Post Rock by Grace Muilenburg and Ada Swineford

Conquering the Wind by Amy Brungardt Toepfer and Agnes C. Dreiling

Victoria, Kansas was named by George Grant, a Scotchman who promoted a colony of English in Ellis County in the 1870's. His colony failed because the young Englishmen of high-born families did not want to work as hard as they needed to work in order to make a success of farming on the high plains. The failure of the English colonists became the success story of the Volga Germans who came into the county in the 1870's and were willing to work as hard as they had to work for success. The high plains were a paradise to them compared to the rugged Russian territory they had occupied for a hundred years after they had left Germany in the 1700's at the invitation of Catherine the Great of Russia.

"When the German-Russian settlers came to Kansas they presented a serious problem to the then bishop to whose diocese western Kansas belonged. The bishop, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Fink, was hard pressed for priests at the time without having to provide for those additional thousands of souls. In Pittsburg, Pennsylvania the Capuchins had recently established their first province in America. Since they had come from Germany and all spoke German it was only natural that the Bishop appealed to the provincial, the Rev. Fr. Hyacinth, O. M. Cap for help. The negotiations took nearly two years and on May 15, 1878 the first two priests of that order arrived. Of a

stern discipline and a firm manner they carried out their duties with a firmness that matched the patriarchal rule prevailing in the German-Russian family structure.

Isolated as the people were from outside and worldly influences it was a natural position for the priests to return to virtual medieval Catholicity. The priest was consulted on all family matters. He was thedisciplinarian in school, the arbiter of feuds and squabbles and the director of community conduct and behavior. More frequently than not the Capuchin father was called when there was trouble rather than the sheriff who was the only form of law the county provided.

It was, however, this sternness that guided the religious formation of the young people. Attendance at church was obligatory and failure to appear at the sacraments brought forth a visit from the pastor. No back-sliding was permitted and careful attention was paid to all religious customs and holidays.

The priests also were German, often having been educated and ordained in the old country. While the Capuchins established a seminary in Herman, Pennsylvania and later opened a minor seminary in Victoria, it was many years before native priests could be educated and trained."

William Heyl--in this play called William Froelich--came from Herman, Pennsylvania with five children and his well-educated wife who had come to Pennsylvania on a visit from Germany, met William and converted to her husband's faith.

The medieval form of Catholicity carried on in Ellis County found a few members of the church rebellious. Anna Barbara (Von Hoffman) Heyl was one of these; she argued with the priests and since she had been well educated in Germany, refused to fit herself into the traditional role of humble "woman" with "kinder, kuchen and kirk" her only interests.

In the period from 1890 until 1908 when St. Fidelis, the Cathedral of the Plains was started, eight Catholic churches had been built within a fifteen mile radius of Victoria. All the churches were built of the post-rock limestone found in unlimited supply along Big Creek. Since the building stone was plentiful, this area is noted for the beautiful limestone buildings of all kinds. The houses were built of stone but in most cases humble and small. The churches still stand--a monument to the priests who built one after another--keeping the pioneers busy and proud in achieving artwork to reflect their faith in God.

St. Fidelis was started in 1908, finished in 1911. Anna Barbara Von Hoffman Heyl died in 1908 following an operation for gallstones. The surgery was done in Kansas City, Kansas at St. Margaret's hospital. Surgery was a real gamble at this period of time in Kansas.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ANDY — the youngest son is about eighteen years old, handsome, dressed neatly in a suit of clothes with his coat on the back of a chair, his sleeves held with elastic sleeve holders. He wears a tie. He is dressed in good clothes suitable to a young man who works in a dry-goods store at Russell, a good-sized town several miles east of Victoria.

WILLIAM — the village blacksmith is about sixty-five, dressed in work clothes of the period. He has been the blacksmith for Victoria since the year of 1876 when he came with his family to take land near the small town of Victoria, Kansas.

ANNA — the wife of William, mother of Andy, Ed and Matt. She is a thin woman, dressed neatly in a housedress of the period. She holds herself proudly and has an air about her of being in complete command of the home, the situation. She acts like a Queen in humble surroundings.

MATT — several years older than Andy and dressed in working clothes. He has a good job working in the stone quarry on Big Creek and has come in for the evening to Victoria for supper at the home of his parents.

ED — is twenty-five years old, works at the stone quarry and is glad of the work. Both he and Matt have come into town on the last load of stone delivered to the church on this May day in 1907.

All of the family are exceptionally handsome and have an air of self assurance, pride; they laugh easily and exude self-confidence. Although they live in a simple way, they give the impression of living graciously in a palace. They have been accused of thinking themselves superior, too proud, too self-confident; this has not dampened their spirits and they have continued to behave as though they are kings and queens of the universe.

TIME: 5 o'clock in the evening on a May day in 1907.

PLACE: The parlor of the Froelich home in Victoria, Kansas.

SETTING: The Froelich house is a small house of five rooms. The setting for the play is the living-room furnished with a dining room table at center, five chairs around it. There is a desk at right back with chair, a sofa at left back, a rocking chair or two at right side, a library table with an easy chair at left front of stage. All the furniture is Mission style popular in the last part of the nineteenth century.

It is a Catholic home and there are religious pictures on the wall, a cross. On the library table is a stereopticon set, a large picture album.

The dining room table is set for supper with plates, silver, water glasses for five people. A large water glass holds a bouquet of wild flowers and is at center front of table where the audience can plainly see the flowers--small blue and white daisies (anemones) and yellow dandelions.

TOO MUCH PRIDE

(Andy is sitting on one of the straight chairs playing his harmonica as the Curtains part. He is playing "Turkey in the Straw" and beating time with his foot. As he finishes the piece William comes through the front door at right.)

WILLIAM

That sounds real good. I could hear you playing clear down at the Blacksmith Shop. Kind of took the tiredness out of my legs as I walked along home.

ANDY
(with quick sympathy)

You have a hard day, Pa?

WILLIAM

No harder than usual. But I'm getting old and I've got a few aches and pains. Not so spry as I was in '76 when we came pioneering to Kansas.
(He sinks into the rocking chair.)

ANDY

I shouldn't have left you to go work in the store at Russell.

WILLIAM

Yes, you should. There's not so much work at the shop anymore. And you've got to get ahead, learn something better than being a Blacksmith here in Victoria.

ANDY

I'm learning a lot about working in a store. I could have one of my own if I can save enough money. I'd want it in a bigger town than Victoria though.

WILLIAM

You planning to play your mouth harp in the contest next week?

ANDY
(wiping the instrument and playing a few notes of Turkey in the Straw)

Sure am. I'm gettin' pretty good. There's a prize of $25.00 to the one that comes out first.

WILLIAM
Jake Deines is practicing his mouth harp day and night. I can hear him over to the elevator. Not much doing over there these days and he's got plenty of time.

ANDY
He's won the contest the last five years, but I'm going to win it this year.

WILLIAM
You're getting real good. You just might, seeing as you've got a few new pieces worked up that he's too old fashioned to learn.

ANDY
If I can win the contest, I'll get a lot of jobs playing at dances.

WILLIAM
You need a fiddle or a squeeze box.

ANDY
I've got a dulcimer picked out in the music store at Russell. I'd get it now if I didn't have to pay all that money for the new church.

WILLIAM
(sighing)
I had a few things in mind to buy to . . . .

ANDY
Ma's birthday's coming up the end of the month. I guess you been thinking about that.

WILLIAM
Yes. I'm glad you're working at the store in Russell. You can buy that silk for a dress she's been wanting . . . . I'll give you the money.

ANDY
I can get it cheaper than it sells to other people. That's one of the good things about working there. Mr. Denton is real nice about letting us buy things for what it costs him . . . .

WILLIAM
He told me you was one of his best clerks.

ANDY
Talking English and German makes it easy to wait on folks. I'm even picking up some Bohunk. And a lot of Swede's are moving in up north. Maybe I can learn enough of that language to sell what's needed.

WILLIAM
I can talk to Bohunks and understand Swenski's.

ANDY
Mostly just Rooshans come to the store there in Russell.

WILLIAM
You know they don't like to be called Rooshans.

ANDY
I know, but it gets to be a habit calling them that.

WILLIAM
They're just as German as we are.

ANDY
Most of them, but now and then there was a mixed marriage in the hundred years they spent over in Russia. There's some pure Russian blood mixed with German.

WILLIAM
They're strong people. They had to be to stand what they had to stand in that Volga country. Good strong stock.

ANDY
(wiping his harmonica, puts it back in its case and puts it in his hip pocket)
Smells like Ma made chicken-pie for supper. Nobody makes chicken pie as good as she makes it.

WILLIAM
She was talking about it this morning. Said it was a good time to kill that old black hen.

ANDY
The old black hen? My pet?

WILLIAM
She wasn't laying anymore. All spring she was going around sitting on the eggs other chickens laid. Trying to hatch herself some chicks.

ANDY
(sadly)
I loved that little old black hen. I raised her from a little chicken. She always came when I called her.

WILLIAM
I know. But she'd had her day. No use feeling sad. She's better off dead.

ANDY
I guess.

WILLIAM
It was good you could get away from the store tonight. How come Mr. Denton let you off?

ANDY
I said I had to come home. Had to go to church tomorrow.

WILLIAM
You been a real credit to us in that store. Denton told Sam Dreiling you're the best worker he ever had.

ANDY
He said it was a reward for good work I'd done . . . . letting me off early on Saturday to catch the train home. I take pride in doing a good job.

WILLIAM
Where is Ma?

ANDY
She's out gathering the eggs.

WILLIAM
How's she feel?

ANDY
She feels all right, I guess. I offered to get the eggs but she said she enjoyed it. Told me to sit and practice my mouth harp. She likes to hear "Turkey in the Straw" while she's taking care of the new little turkeys.

WILLIAM
(laughing with Andy)
One thing we've never lacked here in Kansas is plenty of fun.

ANDY
Yeah. We laugh a lot. Some folks like to make fun of us for always making jokes and laughin' about everything.

WILLIAM
(seriously)
They say we'd find something to laugh about at our own funerals.

ANDY
I'm tryin' to think about what funny thing I'd have to say at mine.

WILLIAM
(still in a serious mood)
I guess we can afford to joke because we haven't <u>had</u> any funerals.

ANDY
Yeah. We're a tough bunch. You were worried when you came out here to Kansas . . . . about whether you'd all sicken and die . . . .

WILLIAM
We were afraid we'd caught that disease they were all dying of back East . . . . consumption . . . .

ANDY
I guess none of you'd caught it. Kansas must have kept you healthy.

WILLIAM
Two more sons and a daughter came along out here in Victoria. You the last boy . . . . handsome and healthy as any . . . .

ANDY
Maybe we're healthy because we laugh a lot. I think Ma's right when she says the Heavenly Father likes us to look on the bright side of things.

WILLIAM
She's argued with Father Edward on that plenty of times. He said she wasn't reflectin' enough on her sins . . . . that she acted too proud . . . . held her head high.

ANDY
The folks who go around with long faces always seem to sicken and die quicker than the ones who act jolly.

WILLIAM
I've noticed that. The ones who never laugh are always ailin'. One leads to another I guess. If you don't feel good, you don't feel like laughin'.

ANDY
I've been sick with things a time or two. Seemed like a laugh helped more than complainin' and feelin' sorry for myself.

WILLIAM
Your mother makes a joke right in the middle of a bad spell with her side. Gets us all to laughing and she can't help laughin' too.

ANDY
Yeah. But those bad spells with her side . . . . she said she'd been havin' more lately.

WILLIAM
That's one of the reasons I wanted you to come tonight. I'm real worried about her.

ANDY
I was worried when I saw her this afternoon. She was sittin' in her rocker lookin' real serious. I saw her from the door before she saw me. When she saw me she jumped up . . . and then she grabbed at her side . . . but she smiled and said how glad she was I'd come . . . .

WILLIAM
I know the way she does. And she's gettin' thin. She looks real peeked. I think she's gettin' that pain in her side . . . more often . . . .

ANDY
Calls it just a catch . . . . but maybe it's more than that . . . .

(Delia starts towards bedroom door. Minnie has been primping in front of mirror throughout action.)

DELIA
Now where's Eva? She ought to be ready.

(Eva steps from bedroom, looking the radiant bride in her dress and veil.)

EVA
Here I am, Ma.

DELIA
(overwhelmed by her daughter's beauty)
Baby, you look so beautiful. Just like an angel.

(Turning to Nancy.)

DELIA
Doesn't she look beautiful? Just the way a bride should look?

NANCY
(her voice breaking as she fights back tears; steps forward to embrace Eva)
Oh yes. She does . . . . just beautiful.

(Patting her shoulder, Delia turns to the others.)

DELIA
You do look pretty. I'll go now so you can get the rehearsal done.

(She goes upstairs with the tray.)

BERTHA
(to minister)
I think we all know what to do. We've talked about it but we want you to have the final say.

REV. TOLLIVER
(taking charge officiously)
Well, first Andy, you and Eva sit down in those chairs.

(He indicated chairs in front row.)

REV. TOLLIVER
It's not proper for the bride and groom to go through the rehearsal. You just have to watch and learn from watching.

EVA
Oh, I had never heard that before.

WILLIAM

Yes. They sent enough to have their share of stone delivered from the quarry to the church. So did you.

ANDY

That's the only way we could do it . . . . seeing as we aren't here to do the work ourselves.

WILLIAM

I'll have to do the same. Yes, we've got the money all right. Only I've been thinking about something else we ought to do with that much money.

ANDY

You said you wanted to be among the first ones to pay everything our family owed.

WILLIAM

(getting up, goes to door at back)

I'll tell you about my plan later. When the others get here. I think I hear your mother in the kitchen now. Ma . . . . you all right?

(Anna comes to back doorway carrying eggs in a basket.)

ANNA

Sure, I'm all right, Bill

(Puts basket on chair and pats his cheek.)

You're treating me like some kind of invalid lately.

(turning to Andy)

You're father's been worrying over my side pains, but I'm still sprightly as ever. Look at the eggs I got tonight. Had to crawl under the roosts to get some. The turkey began to lay a few weeks back. Look at that big egg.

ANDY

I hope the turkey liked to hear my playing TURKEY IN THE STRAW on my mouth harp.

(They all laugh.)

ANNA

The biscuits are getting brown on the chicken pie. I hope Ed and Matt get here soon.

WILLIAM

Some of the men from the quarry came into town before I left the shop. A wagonload of stone drove up onto the lot beside the church.

ANDY

Likely Ed and Matt came in on that load of stone. They'll be plannin' to stay all night here, won't they? Go to the barn dance tonight?

WILLIAM

We all plan to go to the dance.

ANNA

I hope they come soon. I'll put these eggs away down cellar and by then . . .

ANDY

Let me take them, Ma.

ANNA

(handing him the basket)

Yes, Andy. That'll save me a step or two. I can start to dish up. At least some things. I fixed a big bowl of cabbage slaw.

ANDY

(taking basket and going through front door)

Be back in a jiffy.

WILLIAM

Be careful. Watch that last step in the cellar.

ANNA

Yes. Go slow. Don't break the eggs.

(Anna sits on divan with a sigh.)

I'm getting old I guess. Can't do a thing but what I'm played out.

WILLIAM

(coming to stand over her)

Your pain again?

ANNA

No. No pain. Just tired. I guess I need a spring tonic, something better than rhubarb sauce.

WILLIAM

You ought to try some of that new tonic they advertise at the drug-store in Hays.

ANNA

Maybe I will.

(glancing over at the table)

The table looks real nice, doesn't it? Set up with the good china.

MARGARET

Come on, Mr. Williams.

(Making no move to follow, steps up and rearranges some of the fronds on the plant; Minnie steps forward to help him.)

JACK

Glad to get it down on the table. It's a heavy one.

MINNIE

It was nice of you to carry it for Mrs. Preston.

JACK

(looking at her with admiration)

Say now . . . . you really look pretty carrying that bouquet.

(Looking at the bridal party as they stand about the room.)

JACK

All of you.

BERTHA

Really Mr. Williams . . . . you're not supposed to look at us yet. Not until you come down for the wedding.

JACK

Oh . . . . well . . . . .

(Somewhat crestfallen he starts for the stairs.)

DAL

Maybe Jack could turn the pages of the music. He reads notes, sings in a barber shop quartette when he's in Kansas City.

MINNIE

You do? You didn't tell me that.

JACK

(turns beaming)

Oh, I'd like to help any way I can . . . .

NANCY

How about it, Eva. He could stand over here by the piano. Rehearse with us.

EVA

All right. That'll be fine. If you want to oblige us, Mr. Williams.

WILLIAM
It's right that the church should be so much nicer than our homes. I'm thankful we could do our share.

ANNA
We've always done our share all right. Only sometimes I wish we hadn't sold the land. If we'd just hung on to it and got the new wheat started. Folks who hung on to their land are doing real well . . . .

WILLIAM
It was a mistake all right. The red wheat that the Rooshans brought was just the crop for out here in the west . . . .

ANNA
Remember how we all laughed when they got off the train.

WILLIAM
They remember how we laughed. Every now and then one of them reminds me how we stood around with the English and watched them come in on the trains, and laughed at how they were dressed.

ANNA
The English were friendly to us. And the Roosians never have been . . . . very . . .

WILLIAM
They're coming around to it . . . . finally . . . .

ANNA
The English gave up so easy . . . . all the hard work it took . . .

WILLIAM
The English were led by George Grant to come to Victoria . . . .

ANNA
And the Rooshans were led by God . . . .

WILLIAM
That's what Father Edward always said . . .

ANNA
He was right, I guess. Father Edward took them over and made them his people . . .

WILLIAM
He did a fine job with the church. He had to be firm with folks. I know you never liked him . . . .

ANNA
No. I never liked him. But he was a good man. I'll agree with you on that.

WILLIAM
(getting up and going to the door)
I see them coming now. Matt and Ed . . . . Strolling along like they've got all the time in the world . . .

ANNA
(joining him at the door)
They're fine strong men. I'm proud of them.

WILLIAM
They're probably talking about going to the dance later. Matt has his eye on Katie Dreiling.

ANNA
She's a fine girl.

WILLIAM
You feel like going? You sure?

ANNA
Sure. Why not? It's fun to watch even if I'm not quite spry enough to dance every dance the way we used to.

WILLIAM
I'm glad we're not Methodists or Baptists. Some of those church people think it's a sin to dance.

(patting her cheek lovingly)

I hear some Lutherans don't think much of dancing . . .

ANNA
I know. I'm glad I'm a convert when it comes to dancing . . . . if that's what you're asking.

WILLIAM
Anna. I don't know why you've had to hold up your head and be so obstinate all your life. It's made things so hard for you . . . . and us . . . .

ANNA
I was never in doubt about the church. I love the church.

WILLIAM
I know. It's just the priests. You never liked the way they tried to tell you what to do.

ANNA
How to think. They always seemed to want to stand between me and God.

WILLIAM
We've had a stern bunch of priests out here in western Kansas. They sent the old ones out here.

ANNA
That Father Edward. I was so thankful when he finally retired . . . .

WILLIAM
He was a serious priest, all right.

ANNA
I never heard him laugh.

WILLIAM
He had no sense of humor. But some folks are that way.

ANNA
When I married you Bill, I was so much in love with you I wouldn't have cared if you had asked me to be a Hindu. When you asked me to join your church I couldn't see any reason not to.

WILLIAM
Even though your mother was against it and said that you'd find out later the difference between the Lutherans and Catholics.

ANNA
I didn't think it mattered a bit. They were Christian churches with the same God. I didn't think it mattered about Martin Luther. All that old history didn't seem a bit important.

WILLIAM
You were sincere when you joined my church.

ANNA
I loved you so much, Bill. You loved me so much. That's all that seemed important.

WILLIAM
(putting his arm around her . . . drawing her close)
That's always been the important thing . . . .

(opening the screen door)

You're right on time for supper. Just on time.

(Matt and Ed come in the door. They are big men, strong and handsome. They wear working clothes and are still covered with dust from the quarry.)

MATT
It'll take us a little time to wash up. Where's Andy? I thought he was here.

ED
(going to door at left of stage)
Can we wash in our room. Or do you want us to clean up in the kitchen?

ANNA
I put water in your pitcher on the wash-stand. I knew you'd both come in needing to wash. Just don't take too long.

WILLIAM
(glancing out door)
Andy's out by the chicken-yard. He'll be along now he sees you're here.

(turns back to the room as the two men go into the bedroom at left exit)

ANNA
They look fine, don't they? Those big men.

(laughing)

They were such pretty babies.

WILLIAM
You raised a fine family, Anna. Even if the priest thought you were raising them to be too proud . . . the whole eight of them . . . .

ANNA
Don't talk about the priest. Thinking about him spoils everything . . .

(sinking down in chair again)

Our marriage . . . our love . . . . not everybody gets a good marriage like we've had . . . all these years . . . .

WILLIAM
Never getting tired of each other . . . .

ANNA
That's what I think the priest envied . . . .

WILLIAM
Don't say that, Anna. Priests don't think of love like we do . . . between husband and wife . . . .

ANNA
They aren't supposed to . . . but they do . . . .

WILLIAM
We always showed that we loved each other. And were so proud of the babies . . .

ANNA
The babies were all so healthy . . . and they came so easy when they were born . . .

WILLIAM
I was always so proud of you . . . . when the babies came . . . .

ANNA
I thought they were miracles from God . . . not born in sin . . .

WILLIAM
Anna . . . . Anna . . . . forget your ideas for now . . . . just enjoy this nice supper you've fixed . . . forget the priest . . . . and all your arguments over the years . . . .

ANNA
I know. I don't know what's got into me lately. Thinking and brooding . . .

WILLIAM
I just thank God who's been so good to us.

ANNA
I thank Him every minute of my life.

WILLIAM
People in town never understood you. They still think . . . .

ANNA
I know what they think . . . that I'm a proud, strong-minded woman who argues with the priest . . . and deserves all the reprimands . . . the treatment I've had over the years . . . .

WILLIAM
You've held your head high and took all the snubbing like a queen who didn't notice the peasants . . . .

ANNA
Too proud, they said. Yes, I'm proud. I've a right to be proud. I'm proud of lots of things but my pride's honest. I thank God he's given me a life of things to be proud of . . .

WILLIAM
That's what you could never get the father to understand . . . .

ANNA
I think they could understand all right. They just liked to have someone to pick on . . . make an example of . . . . a convert who didn't quite convert . . . a woman who had been too well educated . . . .

WILLIAM
You always rose to the bait . . . when they talked with you . . . trying to explain how you were supposed to feel. You always had to show that you had a good education, that you'd attended the Queen's school in Berlin.

ANNA
The real trouble with those priests was they hadn't a sense of humor. Never smiled . . . .

WILLIAM
Father Edward had to keep a firm hand on the parish . . . .

ANNA
I know. One hearty laugh . . . one smile would have lowered him in our eyes . . . undermined his authority . . . . he thought . . . .

WILLIAM
My cousins in Pennsylvania were always laughing a lot. They had a jolly way of looking at everything. Of course when they went into the church . . . they had to act sober . . . . but they could laugh and cup-up . . . sometimes . . . .

ANNA
None of them were ever sent out here to Kansas. Only the strictest ones were ever sent out here to Kansas; the meanest most domineering . . . .

WILLIAM
They've done a good job though. Keeping us all close in the church. Building up the community . . . building all the churches . . . . starting the seminary . . .

ANNA
I guess . . . . I've been the only real outsider . . . .

(She gets up from the rocker as Ed and Matt come back into the room.)

You boys look a lot better with all that rock dust washed off . . . Now, I guess we'd better call Andy. I can't think what's keeping him out there with the chickens . . . .

MATT
Here he is . . . comin' up the path . . .

(holds screen door open for Andy)

Come in, little brother.

ANDY
Ma. My little Black Hen was setting on a nest in the hen house. You didn't kill her.

ANNA
No. I couldn't. Pa and I talked about it this morning. But when I went out there . . . . I got some eggs and made her a nest . . . .

WILLIAM

But I thought . . . .

ANNA

I couldn't kill Andy's pet hen.

MATT

He's a grown man now. He's not your baby any more.

ED

He knows the facts of life.

ANNA
(smiling)

The little black hen loves Andy and Andy loves it. No, she'll have to die of old age in our chicken-coop. I'll never serve her up for supper.

ANDY
(going to her, kisses her on the cheek)

Thanks Ma.

ANNA

The food's about ready. I'll call you to bring your plates from the table in just a few more minutes . . . .

(She goes into the kitchen.)

MATT

I heard you and Ma talking about how mean she's been treated by the priests . . . how she's never been let to feel she really converted . . . .

ED

She never did . . . but she's been the best Christian in this town . . .

WILLIAM
(sighing)

She's always been a Lutheran at heart and proud of it. No . . . she never really converted but she always went along with it . . . and never acted resentful about the snubs . . . . until lately . . .

ED

She looks sick . . . . so thin . . . .

MATT

She's not herself . . . but she still holds herself up . . . . proud . . . .

WILLIAM

She's not sick exactly . . . but she's . . . . different . . . . not laughing so much . . . brooding . . . . and she does get those catches in her side more often than she used to . . .

ED
How's she feel about the new plans for the church?

WILLIAM
We've been talking' about the new church for a good many years now. She thinks it'll be something to be proud of . . .

MATT
(smiling)
There we go again . . . proud of it . . . she says . . . . and the priests are always ding-donging about her pride . . . how she's too proud.

WILLIAM
Pride in the church is different from being proud that your family were the German nobility.

ANDY
I have to admit that I've always been glad Ma made a lot of being part of a noble family. Gave us something to kind of cling to . . .

MATT
Yeah. When I'm out cutting rock and extra tired, it kind of helps to remember we had a grandfather in Germany who was a Baron. I can't see how it's a sin to take pride in something like that.

ED
Makes you happy to think you come from respected people, high born folks . . .

WILLIAM
On my side too. I'm proud that our family helped to start the Catholic seminary in Herman, Pennsylvania when they came over from Germany . . . .

ED
I know. We come from good people. I'm proud . . . . but I try to act . . humble . . .

MATT
Is Ma still fighting with the priests? About having too much pride?

WILLIAM
No. And that's what worries me.

ANDY
That ought to make you happy. She's finally seen the light. Humbled herself?

WILLIAM
Last Sunday she admitted to the new young priest that she was envious.

MATT
Ma must be sick. She never would let herself sink to envying before.

ANDY
Always taught us to hold ourselves above envy, remembering that we were of noble blood and must always act with honor . . . set a good example . . . .

WILLIAM
She told the priest she envied the Herman Deitz family their new piano.

ANDY
Ma's always hankered for a piano. We always planned to get one if we could get enough money saved back.

ED
There was always something we had to help with . . . in any of the church plans . . . .

MATT
Our family helped with the church building all over the county but it's been a good thing for everybody. The rock quarry business is doing fine. All of us who work there earn good money. The carpenters and stone masons keep busy. Everybody makes a living from all the building that's going on.

ED
We've built some fine churches in this county . . . .

ANDY
In fifteen miles you can see the churches . . . St. Francis at Munjor, St. Catherine at Catherine, St. Mary's at Gorham . . .

WILLIAM
St. Anthony at Schoenchen, Sacred Heart at Emmeram, St. Joseph's at Hays . . .

MATT
And St. Joseph's at Liebenthal . . . .

WILLIAM
St. Anne at Walker . . . .

ANDY
I guess we've shown everybody what the German catholics can do when they set their mind to it . . . .

WILLIAM
And their backs . . . .

ANDY
People in the years to come will tell about how the English playboys came to Ellis county and played so hard they played themselves out and had to call it quits . . . . all but a few . . . .

WILLIAM
Yes. But they were people I liked. You boys liked them too. They added a gracious touch to the town. And the ones who stayed . . . they're good people . . . well liked . . . .

ANDY
I know. They live in their nice houses and add a touch of class . . . .

MATT
I heard you danced with the pretty daughter of Charles Smith again and again last week . . . at the barn dance . . . . Eloise Smith . . .

WILLIAM
I meant to warn you, Andy. Don't get interested in an Episcopalian. It just won't work. Get interested in one of the girls from our own church.

ANDY
You married a Lutheran. I guess it worked all right for you. She converted . . . .

WILLIAM
She's caused me a lot of trouble . . . .

ANNA
(from the doorway, bringing a glass pitcher filled with water from the kitchen)
Trouble you say, Bill? I've cause you a lot of trouble?

WILLIAM
Now don't get riled about me saying that Anna. You know what I mean. You've never been real happy about being a convert . . . .

ANDY
How you getting along with the priest these days, Ma?

ANNA
I'm getting along real well with this new young priest. He reminds me of you, Andy. Anyway, I figure it's time I simmered down. I might die one of these years and I hate to think how much Pa'd have to pay for prayers . . . .

MATT
Pa says he's worried about you . . . making a proper confession after all these years . . . . gettin' along better with the priests . . . .

ED
Admitting to envy . . . not just bragging about how well you're managing your life and your family . . . .

ANNA
You fellows think it's funny . . my always bickering with the priest . . .

WILLIAM
Where's your sense of humor, Anna? You always made kind of a joke . . . your arguing with the priest . . . telling him how Lutherans think . . . telling him you could talk to God without his interference . . . .

ANNA
Well, I didn't like the way Father Edward always wanted me to grovel at his feet because I was too proud. I need my pride to get through life. He just wanted to break my spirit so he could dominate my very soul . . .

ANDY
Ma, you not feeling so good lately? You're worrying us. Maybe you ought to see a Doctor . . .

WILLIAM
I think what Ma needs to chirk her up is a piano. That's what she told the priest she was envious about.

MATT
We've been talking about getting Ma a piano for a good many years now . . .

WILLIAM
And we kept putting it off for this and that . . . .

ANDY
We never seemed to get the money together . . .

WILLIAM
We've got it now.

MATT
We have?

ANDY
I thought we were as hard up as ever . . . .

ED
Where'd you get money, Pa?

ANNA
He's day dreaming. We haven't got any money.

WILLIAM
We've got the money for the payment on the new church. We've got enough money to buy a fine new piano . . . the very best . . . .

ANNA
You would use the money you've got gathered together from Triffin and Clarence . . . and you, Andy, Matt . . Ed . . . . our money that we've got . . . counting every penny . . . .

WILLIAM
We've always given to the church . . . . been proud to help . . . . sacrificing all these years . . . . been proud to be the first to come up with money . . .

ANNA
Yes. We've been proud to come up with the money . . . right along with the richer people . . . .

WILLIAM
We never hung back. We always come up with what was our part . . . and more . . .

ANNA
And we never let it show that we made sacrifices . . . that we did without . . . .

WILLIAM
We always gave like we were as rich as any one else . . . . proud to give . . .

ANNA
And the church is like our home . . . we go into it twice a day . . . and it's beautiful . . . .

WILLIAM
This new one we're going to be building will be even more beautiful . . . a cathedral . . . a true cathedral . . . and we'll give our part to build it all right. We just won't be one of the first to put up the money . . .

ANNA
But you've always been one of the first . . . . you've taken pride in that . . .

WILLIAM
And this time . . . it seems like it's more important for us to take pride in something for our home . . . a piano for you to play, Anna . . . .

ANNA
(She has been pouring the water in the glasses. Now she puts pitcher on the table and moves to left side of stage where table sits.)

I could move this table over into the corner. I've always thought a piano right here would look so fine . . . .

ANDY
And you've kept up your practicing . . . playing over at the church . . .

ANNA
Yes. I've always enjoyed playing the organ and piano at the church.

ANDY
I guess we all got our gift of music from you, Ma. You should have had a piano of your own long ago.

ANNA
Yes. But I have treated the piano and organ in the church . . . like they were my own . . . .

WILLIAM
Maybe having a piano right here in the parlor will make that pain in your side go away . . . .

ANDY
It'll chirk you up. You can sit playing day and night . . .

ANNA
Maybe . . . . I need chirking up . . . . but . . .

WILLIAM
Shall we bring our plates into the kitchen now?

ANNA
(picking up water pitcher)
I'm almost ready . . . . In a few more minutes.

(She goes out into the kitchen.)

ANDY
So that's what you had on your mind . . .

MATT
I'm kind of surprised, Pa

WILLIAM
I'm real worried about Ma. I just got to thinking things over . . . and it came to me how we'd been talking about getting Ma a piano . . . for years . . . .

ANDY
It worries me too . . . Ma sure acts different this time . . . not laughing and making jokes . . .

WILLIAM
We went through so many hard times . . . laughing and making jokes . . . we never noticed the hard times . . . .

MATT
We always made a joke of it . . . doing without . . . . making do with what we had . . . .

WILLIAM
Thanking God that he was talking care of us . . . keeping us well . . . and able to meet every hardship that came our way . . . with strength and endurance . . .

MATT
Holding up our heads . . . and smiling . . . .

ANDY

I guess we had pride right along . . . but we knew how to conceal it when we went to church . . .

MATT

The priests never thought we acted too proud . . . just Ma . . . .

WILLIAM

Father Edward didn't seem to care if men were proud. He just hated to see women acting proud . . .

ED

Yes. I guess that's it. He liked to see women acting humble, knowing their place . . . .

ANNA

(coming back into the room with dish of pickled beets)

Yes. He always wanted women to remember they were daughters of Eve . . . naturally sinful . . . created to tempt men into evil ways . . . .

WILLIAM

He was kind of hard on women . . . I always thought he was unfair, showing a sort of prejudice against women . . . kind of mean . . .

ANDY

Us boys got on to the knack of confessing . . . something or other . . . saying what he wanted to hear . . . acting real humble and sorry . . . sincere . . . .

MATT

Sometimes I had to put on a act. I always liked to confess lust . . . he enjoyed hearing me confess how I was lusting after the girls . . . I always thought . . . at least that's how Father Edward acted . . . .

ED

Yes. I guess I can get a little lustful at the dance tonight . . . so I'll have something to confess tomorrow morning . . . .

ANNA

(with sarcasm)

Only be sure you don't feel lustful toward a Catholic girl. Just a protestant.

ED

Right. If I felt lustful toward a Catholic girl I might find myself getting married . . . and I'm not ready.

MATT

Ed and I are going to buy a piece of land near Hays and start a rock quarry of our own when we get a little money saved . . . .

ANNA

Good. I'll be proud to see you get started in your own business.

WILLIAM

Anna. You're feeling better. You sound just like your old self . . . . real aggressive.

ANNA

Right. You've given me a present, Bill. You showed me how much you loved me . . . offering to give me the piano . . . using the money you have for the new church . . . .

WILLIAM

We all love you, Ma.

ANNA

That's all I need. I raised you well . . . . a family of good children, with spirit. I'm proud of every one of you.

WILLIAM

It's all right to take pride in our children . . .

ANNA

And it's all right to take pride in being one of the first to give the money for the new cathedral . . . .

WILLIAM

We'll give it . . . we'll be just a little slow . . . .

ANNA

No. We'll give it tomorrow morning . . . just as we planned . . .

ANDY

But the piano . . .

ANNA

I'm too proud to buy the piano . . . with the money we've got together to give to the church . . .

WILLIAM

But you'd be proud of a piano . . . .

ANNA

Not as proud as standing up straight and giving that money . . . for the church . . . . a cathedral that will show what we can do out here on the western Kansas plains . . .

WILLIAM

I thought . . . .

ANNA

You know I'm too proud to let you bring yourself down before the congregation . . . putting off giving the money for the new church . . .

WILLIAM

But . . . I'm willing . . . .

ANNA

I'm not. We'll hold our heads high and be among the first to give all the money . . .

ANDY

I guess it'll surprise the folks back East . . . when the big cathedral is done.

ANNA

A hundred years from now people will be talking about this new church . . . this fine cathedral . . . and they'll wonder how we managed . . . .

WILLIAM

They'll guess it took sacrifice . . . .

ANNA

And a lot of pride . . .

WILLIAM

But <u>it's all right to take pride in building a cathedral</u> . . . .

ANNA

Yes. Now come into the kitchen. Pick up your plates and bring them along. We've always had enough to eat. And we've always had reason to hold our heads high. And we've got God to thank for it all . . . . . .

CURTAIN

JUST A SONG AT TWILIGHT

A One-Act Play

TIME: March 16, 1924

PLACE: A small town in Western Kansas.

SETTING: The sitting-room in the home of the Andy Froelich family. There is an upright piano at back left beside a door that leads to the kitchen. A steam-type radiator is along wall between kitchen door and another door at back right that leads to the basement. Front door is at right front with big window along right wall. A comfortable divan is at side front left of stage, a center table center of stage, several comfortable chairs in the room. On the center table is a bowl of oranges. A corner cupboard is at left back, large enough to hold guns. Sewing basket with socks to be darned is on small table beside one of the chairs. A hall tree stands at right front of stage between front door and window.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

RUTH FROELICH	about twelve years of age
DELIA HOLMES	Ruth's grandmother
THE MAN, ED SLOAN	a young hobo on his way to California
ANDY	Ruth's father, Delia's son-in-law

JUST A SONG AT TWILIGHT

(Ruth is sitting in a big easy chair reading a book. Delia enters from door back left calling Ruth as she enters.)

DELIA

Ruth! Ruth!

(Sees Ruth in chair.)

Oh good, you're here in the house. Your Papa telephoned from the bakery to make sure you stay inside.

RUTH

I'm reading a real good book, Gramma.

DELIA

I'm glad you <u>are</u> this afternoon. Stay right here where you'll be safe.

RUTH

Safe? What you mean, Gramma? Is there going to be a cyclone?

DELIA

There's a <u>man-hunt on in town</u> and there's liable to be some <u>shooting</u> before it's over. One of those no-good <u>I won't work bums</u> got off the freight train this afternoon and the whole town's up in arms.

RUTH

An IWW? A Wobbly? One of those men who're going to burn down the town?

DELIA

We're afraid so.

RUTH

Like started the fire in the lumber yard last week?

DELIA

Same kind. Almost got the job done last Wednesday night. The station-master, Mr. Larabee, saw him drop off the train. Got a good look at him too.

RUTH

Why didn't he run after him right then and tell him to get back on the train?

DELIA

He wishes now he'd done just that. By the time he got the freight unloaded and back in the depot he didn't see the fellow around. Figured he'd gone on into town and plans to wait until night comes before he starts another fire.

RUTH
Mr. Larabee's kind of old to go chasing after anyone. Probably couldn't have caught him if he'd tried.

DELIA
Mr. Larabee's old and he doesn't think fast enough any more, but when he got to thinking it over he put two and two together and went right down town to the sheriff's office. The sheriff got a bunch of the men together and they're going to search this town until they find him. Likely they'll kill him if they catch him.

RUTH
Kill him? Kill him dead?

DELIA
(worried)
I hope it won't come to that. They don't really know if this fellow is one of those I.W.W.'s and going to set the town on fire. They just think he is because of what happened last week. Maybe if the men catch him they'll see he's just one of those poor fellows who ride the freights hoping to drop off in some town where he can find a job.

RUTH
You feed a lot of those poor bums, Gramma. And so does Mama. I heard they leave a mark somewhere around on fences where other bums who come along can tell where to get a free meal.

DELIA
Likely we've got one on a fence around our house. And you've got one on your fence too. But I can't stand to turn away a man who's down on his luck and hungry.

RUTH
Who'd the sheriff get to help him find this man?

DELIA
Some of the men along Main Street.

RUTH
Betcha Charlie Hinkle's one of 'em.

DELIA
Well . . . . yes . . . . .

RUTH
I hate Charlie Hinkle. I hate him. All us kids hate him. He killed our little pet collie.

DELIA
That was a stray dog. Charlie said she was getting into his chicken coop.

RUTH
We were feeding her and trying to find someone who'd adopt her.

DELIA
Everybody in this neighborhood has too many pets already.

RUTH
Charlie Hinkle should have been arrested for shooting our dog. If we'd have found her a home and she'd really belonged to somebody they'd have had him arrested.

DELIA
Ruth, I'm tired of hearing about that stray dog that Charlie Hinkle shot.

RUTH
He should have shot her dead when he shot her . . . . not just left her half-dead there in the gutter for us kids to find when we came home from Sunday School.

DELIA
Yes. I know. He should have finished her off.

RUTH
She was laying there in the gutter when we found her and her eyes looked at us . . . . just pleading . . . . .

(Her voice breaks with emotion.)

DELIA
Now Ruth. Don't get started on that again. You kids went to the justice-of-peace and tried to get Charlie arrested. The whole town's still talking about it . . . . laughing really . . . . .

RUTH
We thought Mr. Acre was our friend. That's why we went to him.

DELIA
(patiently)
He is your friend. He's an old friend of the family. And he told you the truth when he said Charlie was kind of trigger-happy but he couldn't arrest him for shooting a stray dog that got in his chicken-house.

RUTH
Papa says Charlie's a real mean man . . . . . trigger-happy . . . . .

DELIA
Yes. And that's why I want you to stay here in the house this afternoon. Don't go out for any reason at all.

RUTH
All right. I didn't want to go out anyway.

DELIA
And if you see people running across the yard stay away from the window. There might be shooting . . . . and some of those men aren't very good shots . . . . .

RUTH

Is Papa with the men?

DELIA

Your Papa phoned me about it but . . . . no I think he's staying at the bakery . . . . tending to business.

RUTH

He was just as mad as anyone when that I.W.W. burned down the lumber yard. And he talks real loud whenever he gets to thinking about men telling him what he's going to pay the bakery help.

DELIA

Everybody in Kansas is talking real loud against the I.W.W. But nobody knows for sure a I.W.W. started that fire in the lumber yard. All people know is they saw a bum in town going around asking for a meal. Then that night the fire started in the lumber yard.

RUTH

But at the restaurant where they fed him? Didn't he say he was I.W.W.?

DELIA

Yes. When he'd got through eating a big meal he made a kind of little speech and said times would be better when the labor unions got in control.

RUTH

He was kind of an old man, wasn't he?

DELIA

Yes. He had white hair and he looked old. He was kind of a know-it-all . . . . talked like a preacher. Got quite a crowd around him before Bill Ellis told him to hold his meeting somewhere else . . . . and get out of his restaurant . . . . .

RUTH

(smartly)

I read the Kansas City Star every day. I know all about the I.W.W. Those letters don't really mean I WON'T WORK. They mean International Workers of the World. I feel sorry for those people in the East.

DELIA

(shocked)

Don't let your Papa hear you say anything about feeling sorry for those bums.

RUTH

But they're not bums. They're poor factory workers who get paid sweat-shop wages and barely make enough to eat. The bosses ought to pay those poor people a honest wage.

DELIA

(She has been looking over a work-basket of socks, running them over her hand to find holes, putting the ones to be mended in one pile, the good in another.)

You read too much Ruth. I've said that to your mother more than once.

RUTH

Grampa and I talked it over lots of times. He thinks those IWW's have a right to a honest wage. He thinks plasterers like he is ought to get more money for the work they do.

DELIA

Now Ruth. You and your Grampa ought to keep those ideas to yourselves. You're beginning to sound like those "reds".

RUTH

You mean like the Russian Revolutionaries?

DELIA

I don't want to discuss it any further, Ruth. Just stay inside and let grown-ups take care of grown-up affairs.

RUTH

(getting up and going to the window)

I wouldn't want to go outside for long anyway. It's too cold. The wind's too cold. I hope tomorrow'll be nice for our St. Patrick's day party . . . so we can play outside some.

DELIA

(following her to the window)

St. Patrick's Day . . . . and the garden's not spaded. I've been after Will all month . . . . every day.

RUTH

Why do people have to plant potatoes on St. Patrick's Day?

DELIA

They do better.

RUTH

Maybe Grampa'll have time this afternoon.

DELIA

If he gets back early enough from plastering. But he'll be tired . . . . I wish I knew some hired man from the country who'd be willing. Some farmer who . . . .

(Taking shawl from hall-tree front right.)

DELIA (continued)
I think I'll just run over home a minute and see if your Grampa's back from work yet. I'm coming right back. Get those biscuits made for the chicken-pie.

RUTH
(sniffing)
I can smell the chicken boiling all over the house. Makes me hungry.

(Turning back to chair and book.)
Grampa and I are going to see the picture show right after supper. It's another Ruth Roland serial . . . . and a William S. Hart picture. Ruth Roland was hanging off a cliff just holding onto a tree when it ended last time . . . . .

DELIA
(sighing)
I know. That'll give Will another excuse for not working in the garden. He'll want to clean up for the show soon's he gets home. But if he could just dig for an hour . . . . . we could plant half the potatoes at least.

(Going out door.)
Remember. Stay inside. And why don't you practice your piano lesson now . . . . that new piece, "Just a Song at Twilight".

(Delia exits.)

RUTH
Aw, Gramma.

(Ruth carries book to the window to look out but goes to the front door to open it for Andy who hurries in wearing his bakery apron over pants and shirt; he wears a cap on head and overcoat unbuttoned.)

Papa. I saw you coming up the front walk. You were running . . . . almost . . . .

ANDY
The wind was blowing me along. Almost took me off my feet. Just came home to get my rifle.

RUTH
You going on that man-hunt?

ANDY
(startled)
How'd you know about that?

RUTH
Gramma told me why I was to stay inside . . . . might get shot . . . . .

(Andy has gone to cupboard at corner of room, takes key from his keyring and unlocks cupboard, takes out rifle.)

ANDY

There's not going to be any shooting. After I phoned your Gramma I went out and found the men . . . . talked them into unloading their guns. Said I'd join them if there wouldn't be any shooting. Some of those men are careless . . . . shouldn't be allowed to handle a loaded gun. Might shoot an innocent person . . . . a child . . . . .

RUTH

Why are you taking your gun then?

ANDY

We just want to scare this fellow got off the train. Teach those bums a lesson.

RUTH

It's only one fellow got off the train . . . . .

ANDY

Yes, but they tell each other. If those I WON'T WORK bums know they can't stop off in this town . . . . we won't have any more fires started.

RUTH

You think this one's here to start another fire?

ANDY

I don't know. I don't know if that lumber yard fire was started by one of them last Wednesday . . . . .

RUTH

Somebody found a broom soaked with tar in the alley back of the lumber yard . . . .

ANDY

Yes. But later old widow Barnes said she used that broom to tar a pig-pen roof.

RUTH

They thought that old man who talked in the restaurant might have used it to start the fire. It had a burned place on it.

ANDY

She explained that. Put it in a trash fire.

RUTH

I guess it didn't burn clear up and someone carried it off.

ANDY
No one knows who started that fire but people are saying the IWW's are going to win out in Kansas and unions are going to rule the roost in the whole country . . . . if they have to burn down every town to get their way . . . . .

RUTH
It'll be just like Russia . . . . .

ANDY
Not if we can help it. As long as there's a native Kansan alive they'll fight to keep those IWW's out of this state.

RUTH
(piously)
Well, I guess you're right Papa. I guess a man has a right to pay folks who work for him just what he can afford to pay. But Grampa says those people in sweat-shops back East . . . . .

ANDY
(not listening to her--speaking loudly)
If I hire a baker I'll tell him what I can afford to pay him. No bunch of IWW's are going to tell me what to pay.

RUTH
(doubtfully)
Then you think if he doesn't want to work he can go on down the road?

ANDY
Right. It's the American way. We all worked for somebody to start.

RUTH
I know. You saved your money and got in business for yourself.

ANDY
Only trouble is these fellows over in Russia are trying to come over here with their crazy ideas.

RUTH
I guess we can't stand for that.

ANDY
Not here in Kansas, we won't. No sir, we're pioneer stock out here. Going to stand up for what's ours.

(He has been examining the gun while they talk. Now he stands and starts for the door.)

You stay inside here, Ruth. I'll be back for supper in a couple hours. Your Gramma's making chicken pie for all of us.

RUTH
She's got the chicken boiling now.

ANDY
(sniffing)
Smells good. I could smell it outside the door before I came in.

RUTH
You think the man hunt'll be over soon?

ANDY
Be over by supper if we can scare that fellow back onto the train goes through about five-thirty.

RUTH
I'll tell Gramma you came by for the gun.

ANDY
Tell her I got the gun but no shells. She was worried about some innocent by-stander getting shot. Made me think . . . . .

RUTH
Gramma doesn't believe in taking a chance of anybody . . . . getting shot. Even a IWW.

ANDY
I know.

RUTH
Gramma's always talking about the Ten Commandments.

ANDY
That's right. She reminded me on the phone to tell the men THOU SHALT NOT KILL.

RUTH
(aggrievedly)
She just means people when she says that. She doesn't mean animals . . . . like our little collie . . . .

ANDY
Now Ruth, if you get to thinking of that little dog again you'll start crying . . . . and you're eyes'll be red when you go to the picture show . . . .

(opening front door)
Tell your Gramma when she comes back we aren't even thinking about killing this bum. Just going to scare him good.

(Andy goes out front door with gun. Ruth goes back to chair and settles into it. There is a timid knock at the back door and Ruth gets up to look out of the window, looking back right.)

RUTH
(goes to back left door and calls out)
Who's there? Is there someone knocking?

(There is no answer and Ruth goes back to the window. Shakes her head and returns to her chair. A knock is heard on the front door . . . a little louder and she looks up impatiently.)

Good night. Somebody's always interrupting my reading . . . . .

(Puts book down and slowly goes across room. Louder knock is heard.)

I'm coming.

(She opens door left front.)

Did you just knock on the back door?

MAN
Yes. I'm looking for the lady of the house. I smelled the food cooking . . . . and thought . . . . . she'd be in the kitchen.

RUTH
I looked out the window and couldn't see you.

MAN
Oh . . . . I was standin' behind the bushes there . . . . kind of inspectin' 'em. I'm a gardener . . . . kind of . . . . a farmer . . . .

RUTH
A gardener? Oh . . . . a farmer?

MAN
Little girl. Could I come in a minute . . . . out of the wind . . . . and speak to your . . . . the lady of the house?

RUTH
Well . . . . .

MAN
That wind cuts through a person. Right here by the door . . . . it's worse . . . . .

RUTH
All right. Come in. But my mother isn't here right now and my grandmother . . . . .

(as man steps into room)
What's your name? You live out in the country?

MAN
(looking about the room)
Nice house. Real nice and warm. My name's . . . . Edwin Sloan. Folks call me Ed.

RUTH
What do you want with Mama?

MAN
Like I said. I been lookin' over the neighborhood. Thought your bushes . . . . could stand a trimmin' . . . . .

RUTH
Grampa trims those bushes for us . . . . when he gits around to it.

MAN
See a lot of gardens spaded up. You got a garden to spade?

RUTH
No.

(thinking)
But Gramma does.

(brightly)
And maybe you're just the one to help spade it right now . . . . so she can plant the potatoes tomorrow. She's been wishing a farmer would come along to give her and Grampa a hand . . . .

MAN
(sniffing)
My . . . . this house smells good. Like . . . . heavin'. Is that chicken I smell cookin'?

RUTH
Gramma's making chicken pie for supper.

MAN
I'd spade all of a garden for some chicken soup . . . . and a piece of bread.

RUTH
Are you hungry?

MAN
I haven't had nothin' to eat for two days little girl.

RUTH
(shocked)
You haven't? Where . . . . have you been?

MAN
In a box car ridin' across . . . the . . . . just ridin' along . . . . .

RUTH

On the train?

MAN
(looking toward radiator, shivering)

Could I warm my hands on that radiator a minute? I'm so cold . . . . so cold . . . . .

RUTH

Why . . . . sure . . . . you haven't any gloves on . . . . .

(He goes to radiator and stands with hands spread out.)

MAN

Feels good. I'm chilled through . . . . .

RUTH

You aren't a farmer from around here like I thought. You're . . . . a bu . . . . . a tra . . . . . a fellow drifting through . . . .

MAN
(timidly)

Yes Ma'am. Afraid I am. Down on my luck. Just travelin' through . . . . on my way to Californy.

(hand to head)

Little girl. I feel kind of weak. All of a sudden . . . . .

(He reaches for chair beside radiator and drops into it . . . quickly.)

RUTH
(aghast)

You look . . . . like you're . . . . going to faint . . . .

MAN

A cup of coffee? A glass of milk . . . . . maybe . . .

RUTH

Oh yes . . . . just sit there . . . . .

(Ruth runs to kitchen, Man rubs hand over head, sits up, staring around room somewhat wildly.)

MAN

Nice room . . . . warm . . . . be warm in Californy . . . . gotta get there . . . . .

(Ruth comes back with a glass of milk.)

RUTH

Here . . . . take this and drink it . . . . . slowly. Gramma always says . . . . just sip it . . . . to fellows who come for a hand-out . . . . .

MAN

Thank you . . . . .

(He sips milk slowly and Ruth stands looking at him.)

RUTH

You feeling any better now?

MAN

Yes. Feelin' warmer too.

RUTH

Gramma always feeds bums. So does Mama.

MAN

I could tell . . . . .

RUTH

Gramma says there's a sign on our fence. Is that how you could tell . . . . or is it a secret . . . . .

MAN

I smelled the food cookin' and I just thought . . . . .

RUTH

I guess you aren't allowed to tell people if there's a sign on their fence . . . . .

MAN

I'm feelin' better now. A lot better.

RUTH

If we feed you a good meal then you'd help Grampa dig the garden?

MAN

Sure.

RUTH

Gramma'll be back in a minute to fix you something. But you don't look very strong. Spading's hard work.

MAN

I'm very strong.

RUTH

How old are you?

MAN
I'm eighteen. I finished high school . . . . almost . . . . . I had to go to work when things got bad . . . . but now . . . . .

RUTH
You're going to California?

MAN
Thing's are better out there. My sister lives there.

RUTH
Everyone's going to California these days.

MAN
There's work out there. My sister can get me a job in a cannin' factry. She says.

RUTH
You worked in a factory? Where you came from?

MAN
I worked odd jobs in a factry. Shoe factry.

RUTH
Kind of a errand boy work?

MAN
It was in New York. Yeah. I guess you could say I did errand work. Anything that needed doin' . . . . haulin' trash . . . . cleanin' up . . . .

RUTH
You never worked on a farm?

MAN
Oh . . . . yes . . . . upper New York. When I was a little kid . . . . helped pick grapes . . . . . You think your Gramma'll be back . . . . any minute?

RUTH
Yes. But I can get you a piece of bread and butter now.

(She goes to kitchen and man gets up and moves to piano, touches a key.)

MAN
Nice piano. Always wanted to learn to play the piano.

(Moves from piano to the window and is looking out as Ruth comes back with slice of bread.)

RUTH
(handing him bread)
Just eat it slowly. Be better if you just eat a little at a time.

MAN

Thank you.

(He begins to eat slowly. Trying to control himself, chewing carefully, taking little bites.)

My . . . . that tastes good. Fresh bread.

RUTH

My Papa's a baker. He owns a bakery. He made it.

MAN

That's nice. Always sure to have bread to eat . . . .

(pointing out of window)

I been watchin' . . . . there's some men with guns comin' down the street . . . . .

RUTH

(startled, looking out window)

There <u>is</u>. <u>It's them</u>. <u>The man-hunt</u>. And there's that mean Charlie Hinkle leading the way . . . . but Papa's not with 'em.

MAN

What they doin'?

RUTH

They're hunting a man. The IWW who got off the train a little while ago.

MAN

Nobody got off the train but me. I'd a seen anyone dropped off.

RUTH

(looking at him sharply)

You're not a IWW, are you?

MAN

What's a IWW?

RUTH

Don't you know what a IWW is?

MAN

I never heard of one.

RUTH

Some people say it stands for I WON'T WORK but it really stands for International Workers of the World.

MAN

Oh?

RUTH

You aren't one of those?

MAN

I want to work and . . . . .

RUTH

Did you join a shoe-makers union when you worked in New York . . . . in that factry?

MAN

No. But I marched in their parades.

RUTH

That makes you one . . . . kind of . . . . .

MAN

What?

RUTH

A IWW.

MAN

(looking out window, points)

Those men are comin' into your yard.

RUTH

Across the tulip bed . . . and into . . . . where the jonquils are coming up . . . . .

MAN

They're huntin' under the bushes.

RUTH

They're hunting <u>you</u> I think.

MAN

<u>Me</u>?

RUTH

If you're the only one got off the train.

(She pushes him away from the window.)

Stand back. They might see you.

MAN

But I ain't done nothin'.

RUTH

They think you're here to burn down the town.

MAN

Gosh! Why'd they think that?

RUTH

'Cause last week there was a IWW in town who said the organization would win . . . . in every state, in every small town if they had to burn down a few buildings to convince people.

MAN

Sounds like some of those fellows at the factry. Yeah. I heard some fellows talkin' like that at the factry.

RUTH

But you weren't one of them?

MAN

I got let out at the factry. Times are too bad to keep me on. They said.

RUTH

That's good.

MAN

Good? Little girl, you ever been hungry in your whole life? I mean . . . . really hungry . . . . so your stomach feels so empty . . . . and hurts . . . . .

RUTH

(looks sympathetically at him, touches his arm)

Do you feel a little better now . . . . with the milk and bread? Gramma will get you more when she comes . . . . .

MAN

Sure. I know I ought not eat too much too fast. But I want you to know . . . . it wasn't good to be let out at the factry . . . . or to have to bum my way . . . . .

RUTH

Oh . . . . I didn't mean it was good you lost your job. I mean it's good you didn't join the IWW.

MAN

(looking fearfully out window)

They can't come in here, can they?

RUTH

No. And here comes Gramma. She's looking awful cross 'cause they're tramping down jonquils.

MAN

Yeah. She looks mad all right.

RUTH
Gramma takes pride in those jonquils. She had Grampa plant the whole bed for a Easter present. Said they'd come up year after year . . . . long after she and him was dead.

MAN
(looking fearfully out window)
That one man's talkin' back to your Gramma.

RUTH
That's Charlie Hinkle.

MAN
He's wavin' his gun.

RUTH
Never mind. He won't scare Gramma.

MAN
But it might go off. He's handlin' it so careless.

RUTH
There aren't any bullets in it. There aren't any bullets in any of the guns.

MAN
No bullets?

RUTH
My Papa got all the men to take the bullets out of their guns.

MAN
(doubtfully)
Still . . . . .

(looking relieved)
Whew . . . . you're Gramma's pointin' them out of the yard.

RUTH
She'll come in now and get you something to eat . . . . something hot . . . .

MAN
And then what? What'll I do? If those men are hunting me . . . . what'll I do?

RUTH
Gramma'll think of something.

MAN
I didn't do nothin' . . . nothing at all but hop a freight train . . . . and everbody does that . . . these days . . . .

RUTH

I know.

(Door in kitchen slams.)

VOICE OF DELIA
(speaks from kitchen but comes into sitting room)

Ruining the flower beds with their big feet. I told them.

(She enters. Sees Ed.)

RUTH

Gramma, this is Ed . . . . .

MAN

Ed Sloan.

DELIA

Oh?

RUTH

He's lookin' for work.

DELIA

You from around here?

MAN

No. I'm just goin' through . . . . I'm willin' to spade a garden for a meal.

DELIA
(tactfully)

Oh? Down on your luck? Bumming your way across the country?

RUTH

Gramma, he's the IWW they're hunting.

DELIA

My stars.

MAN

Only I'm not one and I didn't do nothin' but catch a ride on a freight train.

DELIA

You're the IWW? You're the man they're hunting?

RUTH

But he says he isn't a IWW. He's just going to California to see his sister who'll get him a job in a canning factry.

DELIA
Everybody's going to California these days. Every hobo who's out of work.

(peering at him)
You look awful young to be bumming your way across the country . . . . awful young and awful small. Youngest tramp I've seen . . . . .

MAN
I'm eighteen . . . . and I'm stronger'n I look to be . . . . .

RUTH
I thought he could help Grampa dig the garden.

DELIA
Well, Grampa's digging now but I don't know . . . .

MAN
I'll do any work for a meal. I had milk and bread already. But maybe . . .

(timidly)
That chicken smells so good . . . .

RUTH
I said you'd fix him something.

DELIA
Yes. Come on in the kitchen.

RUTH
But if he helps Grampa in your yard those men are liable to see him . . . .

DELIA
We'll worry about that later. Now . . . . the thing to do is get <u>you</u> fed.

(She takes his elbow and shows him into the kitchen. Ruth returns to the window.)

RUTH
Here comes Papa with another bunch of men.

(She goes to door and opens it for her father.)

Charlie Hinkle and his bunch just went down the street. Papa what you going to do with the IWW if you catch him?

ANDY
We decided to put him in jail.

RUTH
<u>But why</u>?

ANDY
Only safe thing to do.

RUTH
But maybe he isn't planning to set any fire . . . . here in town. Maybe he isn't even a IWW.

ANDY
Best place for any bum riding across the country is in jail . . . .

RUTH
But . . . but some of those men are just looking for work. They don't mean any harm.

ANDY
Can't take a chance. Besides, he'll get good care in jail.

RUTH
But for how long would you keep him in jail?

ANDY
Just 'til he cools down. Gets those revolutionary ideas out of his head.

(going to window)
You say Charlie Hinkle and his bunch already looked in this neighborhood?

DELIA
(entering from kitchen)
I just drove the lot of them off the jonquil bed.

ANDY
Which way'd they go?

DELIA
(gesturing)
On down the street.

ANDY
We'll catch up and confer. Do the other end of town. Likely he's gone over to the Methodist church block.

DELIA
Maybe. Hobos usually think to stop at a parsonage.

ANDY
You and Ruth keep your eyes open. If you see anyone skulking around you could . . . .

RUTH
But if it's just a innocent bum you're chasing Papa . . . . .

ANDY
Ruth, you keep on reading your book and let us grown-ups worry about grown-up affairs.

DELIA
Maybe he is just a innocent hobo on his way west . . . . .

ANDY
Most of those fellows got ideas in their heads to tear down the government of this country. Can't take any chances . . . . .

(hurries out door left)

DELIA
(Ruth and Delia go to the window and watch Andy join the men.)

The town's up in arms after that lumber yard fire.

(sighing)
If your Papa won't listen to reason . . . . no one would . . . . .

RUTH
And they've got a man-hunt all over town.

DELIA
No use putting that young fellow in jail. When he's got a sister in California going to get him a job.

RUTH
We could get him a job around here for awhile. Act like he's somebody come to visit you and Grampa. He could earn money to go on to California.

DELIA
Yes, a nephew from back East. I got plenty of those.

RUTH
Sure.

DELIA
That's what we'll do. I'll just say he come to visit. He can work now for us in the yard. And I can get him odd jobs here and there.

RUTH
He said he was a gardner. A farmer.

DELIA
Almost everybody in town needs help in their yards right now.

(Ed enters from kitchen.)

My . . . . you ate fast. Maybe too fast. Where you going?

MAN
Gotta git that digging done fast so's I can catch the next train to Californy . . . . .

RUTH
We thought of a way to help you.

MAN
I heard you. All about puttin' me in jail . . . . for awhile . . . .

DELIA
No. We won't let them put you in jail. There's no point in that.

RUTH
We thought of a way to help you earn money so you could get to California . . . .

DELIA
Riding the train on a paid fare . . . .

MAN
(sulkily)
I heard you talkin' . . . .

DELIA
We want to help you . . . .

MAN
If I don't get on right away the job'll go to someone else . . . in the cannery . . . .

DELIA
Probably another job'll come up . . . .

MAN
(looking fearfully toward window)
Stay here in a town where men go around huntin' fellows with guns . . . .

RUTH
Oh, it's not like that at all. This is a real nice little town.

MAN
Awful flat land around here . . . . .

DELIA
(proudly)
This is the high plains of Kansas . . . .

MAN
'Ridin' along on the freight I never saw any trees for a long way. Except a few growin' in little towns . . . . like here . . . .

DELIA
Of course it's flat land without trees. This is wheat land in Kansas . . . good rich wheat land.

MAN
I don't like it. Seems kind of spooky . . . .

RUTH
It's beautiful here in Kansas. When the wheat gets growing real good . . . and then turns yellow . . . .

DELIA
You get so you like havin' plenty of elbow room . . . .

MAN
(almost scornfully)
You got plenty of <u>that</u> . . . . .

DELIA
(proudly)
This land was settled by pioneers.

MAN
(defiantly, facing up to her)
I don't want to stay here a minute longer'n I have to. In Californy it's warm . . . . all the time. And there's orange trees everywhere. A fella can just reach up and pick a orange off a tree anytime he's a mind to . . . .

RUTH
(wistfully)
I heard that about California. It does sound nice.

DELIA
But you have to be practical about getting to California. We're going to help you get there . . . . by getting you honest work so you can ride the train on a paid fare.

MAN
Please Ma'am . . . . just help me get back on the next train . . . . and on my way . . . .

DELIA
There's a train goin' through pretty soon. Passenger, but they got a few freight cars usually . . . . .

RUTH
Will you have to join one of those unions to get a job in a factry in California?

MAN
I don't know. Maybe.

DELIA
(firmly)
You shouldn't do that. Those unions are out to overthrow the United States government. Make this country into a place just like Russia.

MAN
I don't know nothin' about that Ma'am. If I got to join a union to get a job, I'll hafta join one, I guess.

RUTH
But . . . . .

DELIA
I've heard those unions are awful strong . . . . in big cities . . . . like Los Angeles . . . .

MAN
I guess . . . . but my sister'll look out for all that. She'll know what to do.

DELIA
You could be a scab.

MAN
What's a scab?

RUTH
(doubtfully)
I read about them. And Grampa said if he was back East he wouldn't want to be a scab. A scab is a man who won't join a union and works for the bosses when no one else will. Grampa said he'd never be a scab. He'd join a Union.

DELIA
(sharply)
Your Grampa reads too much. I hope he doesn't say anything like that in this town. About joining a Union.

RUTH
Grampa says the laboring man has to have something they can depend on . . .

DELIA
RUTH. DON'T TALK LIKE THAT.

RUTH
But Grampa did say it . . . . .

DELIA
Will better remember what side his bread's buttered on . . . . in <u>this town</u>.

RUTH
Grampa says the bankers and rich folks . . . . .

DELIA
RUTH!

RUTH
(sulking)
All right. But that's what he says . . . . just the same . . . .

DELIA
(agitated, turns back to the young man)
Kansas is one state isn't going to have any unions.

RUTH
Why?

DELIA
(with patriotic fervor)
Because this state was settled by pioneers and they got a lot of gumption. We're going to uphold the government and put down these reds who're going to destroy the very foundation of this country if we don't watch out . . . .

MAN
I guess I better get to diggin' . . . . and pay for my meal . . . .

RUTH
Yes Gramma, he better get over to help Grampa with the garden so we can get to the picture show tonight . . . .

DELIA
(going to the window)
My stars, here they are . . . . coming back down the street again . . . . looking under all the bushes . . . . the bunch your Papa's with . . . . .

MAN
(backing off)
Please Ma'am . . . . don't let 'em get me . . . .

DELIA
Don't worry. We'll take care of you, son.

(She goes to basement door and opens it.)

Hide down there in the cellar 'til I send them on their way.

(The young man quickly goes through door and Delia closes it as Andy opens the front door.)

ANDY
Didn't see anyone in the yard? Did you?

RUTH
It's almost supper time, Papa. How much longer you going to hunt?

ANDY
The bunch I'm with's quitting right now. Nobody's seen hide nor hair of any bum and we've looked all over. I'm thinking Mr. Larabee didn't

WILL
You care to go in and say goodby to him? We've been asking folks to come by this evening for that purpose.

JACK
Naw. I don't know him very well. His Ma cut his hair for him. And anyway, he couldn't walk down the stairs to my basement barber shop.

WILL
I guess that's right. Delia's been going in and cutting his hair since his mother died. She's a pretty good barber.

JACK
I know. She cuts yours. She used to cut Dal's I guess. Where is Dal by the way? I need to see him.

WILL
Well, Delia'll be out pretty quick. She may be able to tell you where Dal is. Ruth, why don't you go tell Ma someone's here to see her . . . . Jack Williams.

RUTH
All right, Grampa.

(Patiently Ruth lays down her magazine, starts for the Stranihan side door but Delia comes out before she gets there.)

DELIA
I heard voices out here. I figured someone had come to tell Ed goodby. That's why you're here, isn't it Mr. Williams?

JACK
Naw. I come to see if you know where Dal is.

DELIA
(growing suddenly aggressive)
Dal? What do you want with Dal? Getting up a card game again, Jack? Got a bunch of the boys down in that back room behind your barber shop ready for poker and that dice game you play?

JACK
Naw. I just come in on the Union Pacific passenger train.

(aggrievedly)

Dal drove off in his car and left me stranded in Kansas City.

DELIA
It's not his car. He only borrowed it from Eva and Andy. He drove to Kansas City on business . . . . to buy woolen material for his tailor shop. I expect he got so busy he forgot you were with him.

DELIA

The stock-yards?

MAN

I guess. Sheds and fences . . . . other side from the depot . . . .

DELIA

I want to get you a sack of food to see you through.

MAN

But the diggin' . . . .

DELIA

Never mind that. There isn't time. The coast is clear now the men've gone home to supper. You can just slip along this back alley . . . goes right through to the stock yards . . . .

(She gestures out window toward alley. Then turns to go to the kitchen.)

I got a big old laundry sack you can use to carry things.

(She goes into the kitchen.)

RUTH

Gramma'll fix you up fine.

MAN

I'm sure thankful I came to this house . . . . you and her . . . . been so good to me . . .

RUTH
(wistfully)

I wish I could go to California. It sure sounds nice. Pick oranges right off a tree.

(She goes to bowl of oranges on table.)

But we got them in the store here in Kansas. Put these in your coat pockets.

(She gives him two oranges and he puts them in his pockets as Delia comes back with laundry sack and paper sack.)

DELIA

You got a water bottle?

MAN

Yeah. With my stuff. I hid it by one uh those sheds.

DELIA
(putting blanket in laundry bag and paper sack, hands him the gloves)

There y'are. Ought to be a lot better off now riding along on that train . . .

RUTH

Yes.

DELIA
(reaching into her apron pocket pulls out some change)

I just happen to have three quarters here on me. Planned to put it in my mite box for home missionary work but now . . . . I guess you better take it . . . have a little money to see you through . . . . .

MAN

You folks is the kindest folks I ever met . . . .

DELIA
(piously)

I would have put that money in the mite box this evening . . . . but I guess this is as good a way to do missionary work as any . . . . .

RUTH
(as train whistles in the distance)

Listen. That's it. That's the train.

DELIA
(rushes to the door and opens it)

Sure enough. You'll have to hurry. It'll stop a little while, though . . . . let off passengers . . . . put off the mail bag . . . .

(She pushes him through the door.)

Goodby Ed. God bless you.

RUTH

Goodby Ed.

MAN
(going)

Thank you. Thank you.

DELIA
(closes the door and they go to watch from the window)

Well . . . . we did our best for him.

(sighing)

Poor kid. There's a lot like him drifting around these days.

RUTH

He didn't really want to stay and live here for awhile.

DELIA

Probably just as well. It'd have been a lot of work for us, putting him up and getting him jobs . . . .

RUTH

And he SMELLED. Did you notice that, Gramma? He smelled awful.

DELIA
(sadly)

Yes. Yes he did. Poor fellow. But there wasn't time to clean him up. Time went by so fast . . . . after he got here . . . . .

(Train whistle sounds again closer.)

Well, it's only two blocks to the depot. He'll make it alright. Got that money in case they catch him and ask for his fare. Three quarters ought to get him to the next town anyway.

RUTH

How'll he get on? Catch hold of the train when it's going?

DELIA

Oh . . . . likely it'll be starting slow, hardly moving as it goes past the stock yard. He'll catch onto it then . . . .

RUTH

I never saw anyone catch a ride on a box-car.

DELIA

I have. And if they've done it often enough they do it real graceful . . . .

RUTH

I hope he knows how.

DELIA
(pointing to the piano)

I'll bet you haven't touched a finger to the piano today.

RUTH

I practiced fifteen minutes this morning.

DELIA

Got time right now for another fifteen minutes. I'm going to mix up the biscuits. Be real nice to hear you play while I'm working in the kitchen.

RUTH

Oh. All right.

(Reluctantly she goes to the piano; the train whistles again, sounding very near.)

I guess it's here and stopping at the depot. You think he made it to the stock-yard by now?

DELIA

I expect so. I hope so. Poor kid . . . . just a boy.

RUTH
He'd have been handsome . . . . if he'd been clean . . . . with a haircut . . .

DELIA
Play that new piece your music teacher got you started on . . . . JUST A SONG AT TWILIGHT. I like that . . . . and it's a nice time of day to play it. It'll be twilight before long.

RUTH
(sitting on stool, turns pages)
Yes, I kinda like that one too.

(She begins to play.)

DELIA
(stands watching as the train whistles again)
My . . . . they aren't taking much time tonight.

(She goes to the piano, standing behind Ruth and begins to sing as Ruth plays poorly; Delia sings rather poorly.)

Just a song at twilight. When the lights are low. While the flickering shadows softly come and go.

(Ruth stops playing and turns to her grandmother.)

RUTH
Gramma, I can't play if you sing . . . . I can't play good enough for people to <u>sing</u> when I play . . . .

DELIA
(embarrassed, steps away)
Oh, all right. I just thought . . . . .

(Train whistles.)
There's the whistle again. I guess they're pulling out. Probably he's getting on about now.

(Train whistles again.)
Yes, I guess he's on his way to California.

RUTH
(getting up from the piano stool)
I ought to get cleaned up so I'll be ready to go to the picture show after supper.

DELIA
Wash your face and hands. Comb your hair.

DELIA (continued)
(seeing that Ruth has left the piano)
But you haven't practiced fifteen minutes yet. Play that piece again.

RUTH
Oh, Gramma . . . . .

(She goes back to piano stool, sits down and begins to play the same piece, very poorly.)

DELIA
(standing at library table, touches oranges in bowl absentmindedly)
He was kind of loaded down with that laundry bag but I guess those hobos are used to getting on trains. When they're running along beside the train they kind of jump up and catch hold . . . . .

(She leaves table and goes to window.)

Yes, I guess he's on his way by now.

RUTH
This <u>is</u> kind of a pretty piece . . . . .

(She continues to play as Delia looks from window.)

DELIA
Your Grampa'll have to take time to wash up before he comes over, change his clothes. Dress up a little if he's going to the picture show.

RUTH
This'll be the fifth part of the serial. I can hardly wait.

DELIA
My stars, here's your Papa back already . . . . and I haven't got the biscuits started . . . .

(Andy pushes open front door, comes into room. He still has on his bakery apron and is wearing his overcoat open, cap he has worn earlier.)

ANDY
There's been a terrible accident . . . .

(Ruth stops playing and turns on the piano stool)

DELIA
An <u>accident</u>? What happened?

ANDY

By the train tracks.

DELIA

What happened?

ANDY

That IWW . . . . the one we been hunting . . . . .

DELIA

Oh my . . . . what happened?

RUTH

Was it a bad accident?

ANDY

He's dead. Fell under the wheels . . . . trying to get on the train . . . .

DELIA

Oh my.

RUTH

Oh . . . . .

ANDY

He had hold of a rung on the ladder. He'd have made it all right if it hadn't of been for Charlie Hinkle.

DELIA

What . . . . Charlie Hinkle?

ANDY

Shot him. Shot him in the hand that had hold of the ladder.

DELIA
(dazedly)

But I thought you said everybody was giving up on the man-hunt. Going home to supper.

ANDY
(bitterly)

That's what I thought. The bunch I was with did go home.

DELIA

We saw them breaking up . . . . going off . . . .

ANDY

But that bunch Charley Hinkle was with just wouldn't give up. Went down to the train and when it started to pull out they saw this fellow hangin' on the side . . . . .

DELIA

You said everybody took the shells out of their guns . . . . earlier . . . .

ANDY
I thought everybody agreed to do that.

RUTH
Oh Papa . . . . . Charlie Hinkle killed him.

ANDY
Well . . . . Charlie didn't exactly kill him. This fellow had on some black gloves. His hand kind of stood out like a bulls-eye on a target.

DELIA
And Charlie Hinkle just had to shoot at his hand, didn't he?

ANDY
Yes. Charlie's trigger-happy. Said he didn't mean any harm . . . . just wanted to scare the fellow. Didn't really mean to hit him . . . . .

DELIA
Should have unloaded his gun like everybody else did . . . .

ANDY
Well . . . . you know Charlie . . . . .

DELIA
Yes . . . . we know Charlie . . . . just likes to kill things . . . . just likes to shoot . . . .

RUTH
I hate that Charlie Hinkle. He likes to kill things. Shoot things to death.

ANDY
Now Ruth. He didn't mean to kill the fellow. He didn't really . . . . . shoot him to death . . . .

DELIA
What you mean . . . . he didn't kill him? He's dead, isn't he?

ANDY
Oh yes . . . . he's dead alright. Lost hold of the ladder and fell right under the wheels of the train . . . .

(sinks into chair)
Awful . . . . cut him right in two . . . . . a young fellow too . . . . .

RUTH
Oh Papa . . . . .

DELIA
Terrible . . . . terrible . . . . .

ANDY

Somebody had fed him here in town. And gave him food. He had a sack with a old blanket. Orange in his pocket . . . . squashed it . . . the wheels . . .

RUTH

Oh . . . . Papa . . . . .

(beginning to cry)

We just wanted to help him . . . .

DELIA

We just wanted to help him get to California.

ANDY

So it was <u>you two</u> . . . . . fixed him up . . . . .

DELIA

We fed him and gave him the old blanket. He was wearing your old black gloves . . . . the ones you didn't like . . . . .

ANDY

Made a target for Charlie . . . . sure enough . . . . .

DELIA

We just wanted to help him . . . . .

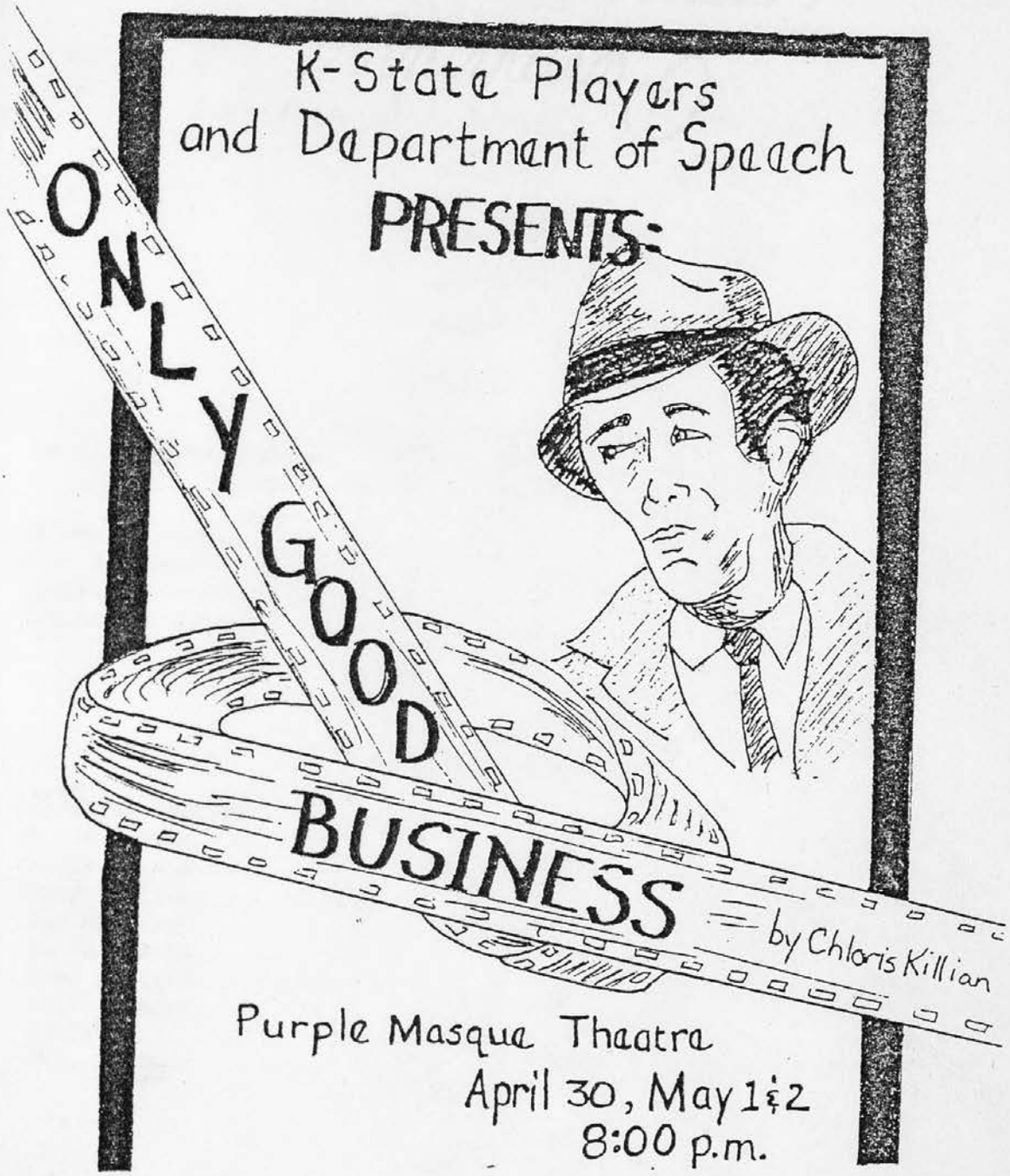
RUTH

(crying)

I hate that Charlie Hinkle . . . . I HATE HIM. <u>I HATE HIM</u>. He shot our little collie too . . . . just shot her in <u>cold blood</u> . . . . .

CURTAIN

APPENDIX


K-State Players
and Department of Speech
PRESENTS:
ONLY GOOD
BUSINESS
by Chloris Killian
Purple Masque Theatre
April 30, May 1&2
8:00 p.m.

THE K-STATE PLAYERS AND THE DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH

present

ONLY GOOD BUSINESS

by

CHLORIS KILLIAN

A comedy in three acts

Directed by Joel Climenhaga

Purple Masque Theatre Kansas State University Manhattan, Kansas

April 30, May 1, 2, 1981 8:00 p.m.

Stage Manager. . . . . .Greta Climenhaga
Set Designer . . . . . .Dean Kennedy
Lighting Designer. . . . . .Terri Lynn Lee
Technical Directer . . . . . John Uthoff

CAST
(in order of appearance)

Hermoine Emerson. . . . . .Vicki-Elaine Felder
Elsie Prince. . . . . Sharon Rhine
Helen Durand. . . . . Janie Hougen
Veeda Miller. . . . . .Darla Germeroth
Don Harbison. . . . . .David Ollington
Shawn Arnold. . . . . .John Rahe
Ruby Walters. . . . . .Lorie Fazekas
Slick Bender. . . . . .Vincent Bly
Lilith. . . . . Mona Lucas
Eve. . . . . Julia Talge

Time; last year . . . Place; Kaw City, Kansas
Act I - 9:00 on a Saturday evening in June
Act II - One hour later
Act III - A half hour later

The action of the play takes place
in the lobby of the Kanza Theater.

There will be a ten minute intermission between acts.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Assistant Stage Manager. . . . . C.J. Prusik
Lighting Control. . . . . Penny Cullers, Randy Clark
Properties. . . . . .Tom Paden
Set Construction. . . . . Dean Kennedy, Ernie Hoehne
Make-Up. . . . . .Marcia Hoover, Ian Snider, Make-up class
Publicity Advisor. . . . . .Mary Nichols

NO SMOKING is permitted in the Purple Masque Theatre. No cameras or recordings are allowed during performance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Killian & Company, Insurers,
Junction City Kansas
Pier I Imports
Walmart
Wareham Theatre
KSAC
K-State Union
Junction City Daily Union
Junction City Republic
The Manhattan Mercury
Kate Anderson
Zoe Climenhaga
Doug Hoseney
Bob Howard
Charlotte MacFarland
Bill Murat
Dick Wheeler

K-State produces local writer's play

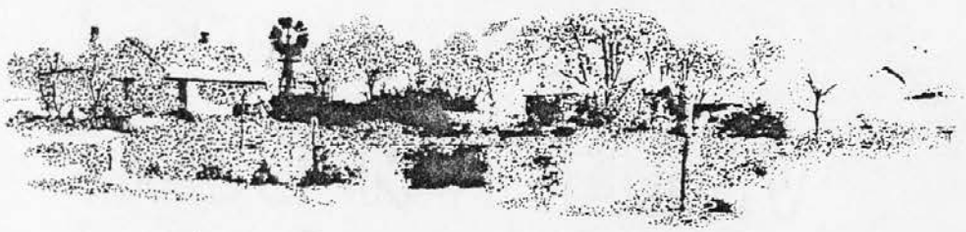
An original play by Junction City's own Chloris Killian will be presented by the Kansas State Players on April 30, May 1 and 2 at 8 p.m. in KSU's Purple Masque Theatre.

The show, "Only Good Business," is created in the comedy tradition of "Arsenic and Old Lace," with conflicts resulting between an elderly woman who owns a movie theater and refuses to show porno flicks and an agent who has certain ideas which he claims are good for business.

Joel Climenhaga, who was a guest director here last year for Little Theater will be the director. Admission is $1 for adults and 50-cents for students and may be purchased through the speech department at 532-6875.

THE DUST-STORM WEDDING

By Chloris Killian



Directed by Joel Climenhaga

Presented by the Playwright's Workshop

Theatre Program, Department of Speech

in cooperation with the K-State Players

at Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas

~1981~

The Playwright's Workshop and Theatre Program of the Department of Speech,
in cooperation with the K-State Players, presents . . .

THE DUST-STORM WEDDING

by

Chloris Killian

A folk comedy in three acts

in the Purple Masque Theatre

Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas

on October 22 & 23 at 8:00 p.m. and on October 24 at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.,
in the year of Our Lord, 1981...

()()()

Director	JOEL CLIMENHAGA*
Assistant to the Director	C. J. PRUSIK
Set Designer	DEAN KENNEDY
Costume Designer	CHLORIS KILLIAN
Lighting Designer	DAVE TOMPKINS*
Stage Manager	SKIP RUFF

()()()

CAST (in order of appearance)

Eva Holmes	DONNA GERBER
William Holmes	JOE SVOBODA
Delia Holmes	LISA KRUEGER
Andrew Froelich	JEFF MILLER
Nancy Sitton	TAMMY HOLBERT
Bertha Mason	CAROL HOLSTEAD
Jack Williams	JAY COHEN
Margaret Preston	KATHERINE PARKER
Randolph Preston	BOB SCHEIBLER
Isabelle Carter	NANCY BEEMS
Minnie Froelich	JANIE HOUGEN
Dalbert Holmes	ROBERT GARRETT
Earl Preston	IAN SNIDER
Reverend Tolliver	TY FIRMIN

SETTING: The parlor of the Holmes house, in a small town in western Kansas.

Act I March 21, 1910, the wedding day of Eva and Andrew.
Ten o'clock in the morning.

Act II Noon of the same day.

Act III Three o'clock in the afternoon of the same day.

There will be a ten-minute intermission
between each act...

The use of cameras and tape recorders is not allowed in the theatre. Smoking is permitted only outside the theatre building.

PRODUCTION STAFF . . .

Technical Director	ERNIE HOEHNE
Assistant Stage Managers	KATHERINE PARKER, IAN SNIDER
Prop Mistress	TERRI MYERS
Prop Crew	C. J. PRUSIK, LEA SHROYER
Light Crew	JULIA GILBERT, SUSY WITTUM
Sound Operator	MARIA FERGUSON
Costume Crew	DEIDRA HINSON, CHLORIS KILLIAN
Makeup Crew	VICKIE LASHBROOK, TOM PADEN*, MARGARET SCHARTZ, IAN SNIDER, HEIDI THOMAS, KENT WOERNER
Publicity Manager	MARY NICHOLS*
Publicity Crew	BARBARA BARNES, KATIE DEBO*, ALISON FLEMING, SONIA OVERHOLSER
House Manager	DEBBIE CASTLE
Box-office	SONIA OVERHOLSER
Set Construction	ROBERT AUCHTER*, MARY ANN FLEMING*, ERNIE HOEHNE, CAROL HOLSTEAD, DEAN KENNEDY, MIKE MUSICK, MIKE WEBER
Light Rigging	ROBERT AUCHTER*, GAIL KASL, DEAN KENNEDY, KATIE SINNETT, DAVE TOMPKINS*
Poster and Program Cover Design	DOUG COONROD
...	
Department Technical Director	JOHN UTHOFF*
Department Costumer	LYDIA ASENETA*
Scene Shop Graduate Assistants	ROBERT AUCHTER*, MARY ANN FLEMING*
Costume Shop Graduate Assistant	EVANGELINA NOVERO

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Members of the Theatre Faculty at Kansas State University are individually members of the American Theatre Association, the Mid-America Theatre Conference, and the Association of Kansas Theatre

()()()

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . .

Lydia Aseneta*	Junction City Little Theatre
Joe Bowman	Junction City Public Library
Virginia Brown	Junction City Republic
Zoe Climenhaga*	Junction City Union
Cohen's Chicken House, Junction City	Killian & Company, Insurers
Graphic Arts class, Department of Art	Patsy Killian
David Harmes	David MacFarland*
Keith Heyl	Cathy McMillin
Melanie Hoyle	Ralph Titus

()()()

* Denotes membership in the Kansas Gamma chapter of Theta Alpha Phi National Honorary Fraternity of Theatre Arts...

COMING PRODUCTIONS...

MAN OF LA MANCHA	November 19, 20, & 21 in McCain Auditorium
LOOK BACK IN ANGER	December 3, 4, & 5 in Purple Masque Theatre

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT . . .

Chloris Killian saw her first plays professionally produced in the Little Theatre of Mulvane Museum on the Washburn University campus. The year was 1931. One of the plays was later chosen for publication in TESTED ONE-ACT PLAYS. ... Married, with two children, she wrote and occasionally sold features to nationally distributed magazines and newspapers over the next four decades. An interest in 'continuing education for adults' led her into clubwoman activities and a chairmanship in the General Federation of Women's Clubs, where she wrote articles encouraging creative writers to return to college when they needed more knowledge of markets and techniques. ... In 1978 she took her own advice, enrolling at Kansas State University to learn up-to-date methods and current market trends. Under the tutelage of Joel Climenhaga and Dr. Norman J. Fedder, she has written six full-length and two one-act plays as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's degree. ... Her play ONLY GOOD BUSINESS was produced in the Purple Masque Theatre in April of this year. This production of THE DUST-STORM WEDDING is being entered in this year's American College Theatre Festival Competition.

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ON PRODUCING NEW PLAYS . . .

"...Every play in the theatre was a new play once. When it was new and unknown probably only a few would give it any consideration at all. Most people are just plain cowards about having anything to do with new plays and with good reason. A new play, never done before, is the boldest kind of adventure. It involves a great deal of expense and talent to bring it to life. ... The only thing more difficult than doing new plays, if you love theatre, is living with yourself if you don't. What are you if you let someone else do all the experimenting and discovering?

I just don't know why theatre people settle for only tried and proven works, except that they're mostly not able to trust their own judgement and take a chance."

- from a letter written by Dr. George Savage to Joel Climenhaga, dated 1970.

+++

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR . . .

Since first appearing 42 years ago in a high-school production of Lord Dunsany's A NIGHT AT AN INN, Joel Climenhaga has been active in educational, community, and professional theatre. During his career he has participated in more than 450 productions -- as actor, director, playwright, or technician, as well as in a supervisory capacity on student productions. ... He has directed 112 productions, of which THE DUST-STORM WEDDING is the 76th new play. A teacher for the past 26 years, he believes educational theatre remains the most productive force in theatre.

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AMERICAN COLLEGE THEATRE FESTIVAL XIV

Presented by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Alliance for Arts Education. ... Produced by the University and College Theatre Association ... Sponsored by The AMOCO Companies ...

THE DUST-STORM WEDDING is an Entry in the American College Theatre Festival XIV.

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Accent

"The Dust-Storm Wedding," a play written by Chloris Killian, graduate in speech, opens at 8 tonight in the Purple Masque Theatre. The play draws upon Killian's past experiences.

Local playwright's show on KSU stage

For the second time this year, students at Kansas State University are producing a drama written by Chloris Killian of Junction City.

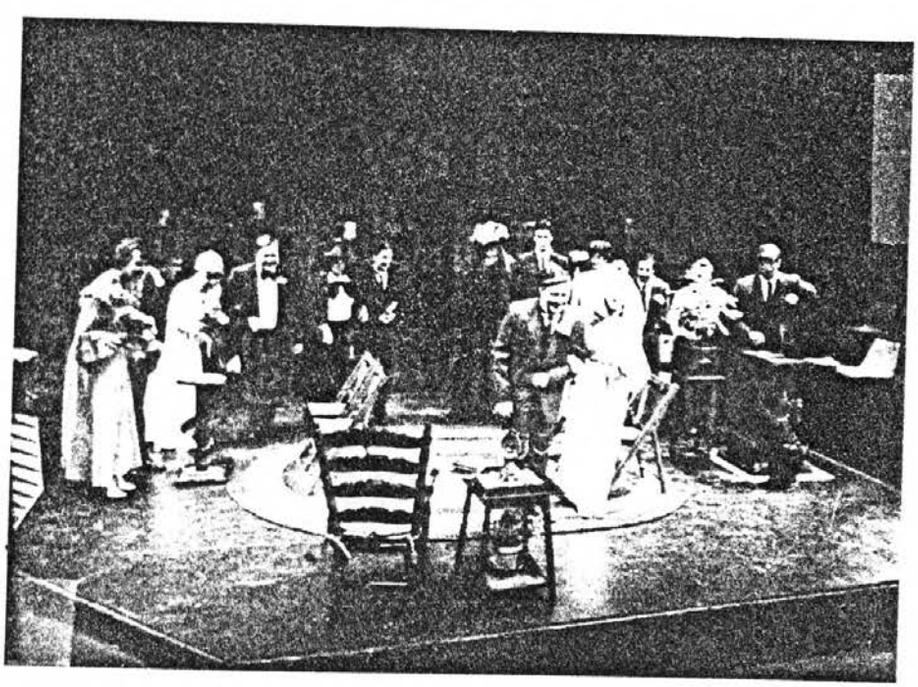
"The Dust-Storm Wedding" will be performed in the Purple Masque Theatre on Oct. 22-24 at 8 p.m. by the Kansas State Players as a Playwright's Workshop production. A matinee is set Oct. 24 at 2 p.m.

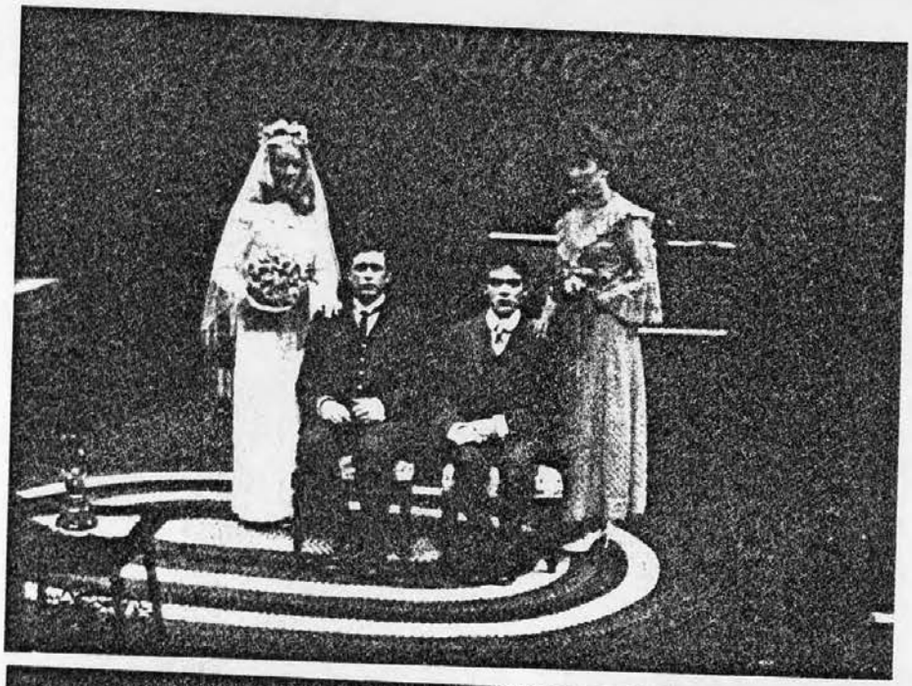
"Chloe" says she now is involved as a "go-fer" for the production, helping find many of the costumes which are necessary for the production that takes place in a small western Kansas town in the early 1900's.

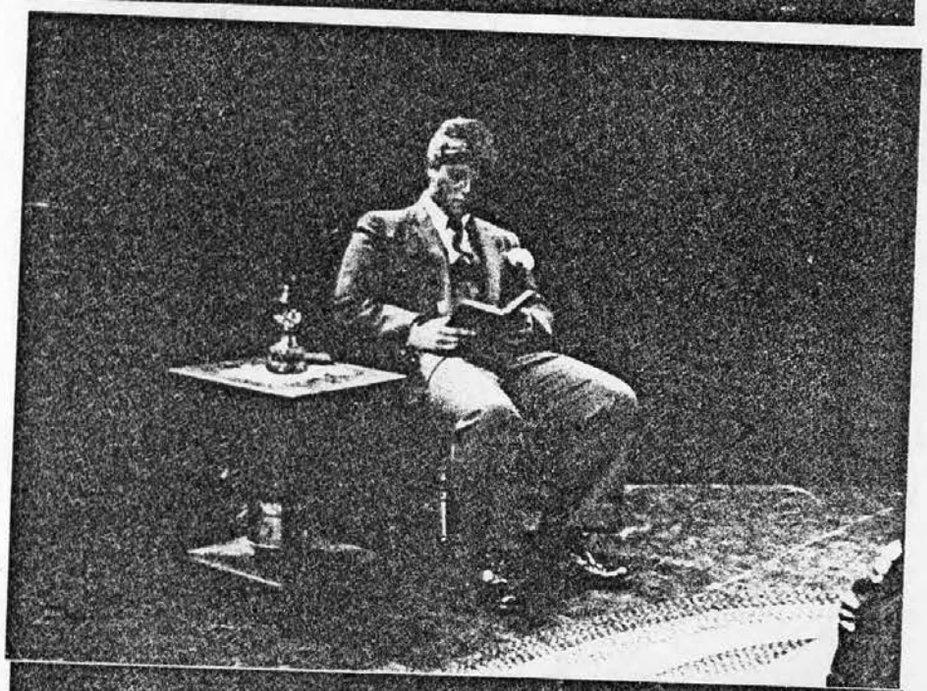
The show revolves around a bride-to-be played by Donna Gerber and her fiancee played by Jeff Miller through the day of their wedding. The meshing of family and friends together for the big event presents a hodge-podge of problems among the eccentric relatives.

Ticket reservations can be made Monday through Friday, 9 until noon and 1 to 4 p.m. by calling 532-6875. Tickets are $2 for the public and $1 for K-State students.

The show is being directed by Joel Climenhaga of the speech department at KSU. He also directed Killian's spring show.







Playwright revives art with return to school

Killian examines one of the hats she made for the production. Throughout the preparation of the play, she stressed authenticty of the early 1900s look, dealing with props as well as costumes.

Story by Kelly Blair

Photos by Allen Eyestone

As a child living in WaKeeney in the 1920s, Chloris Killian, graduate in speech, wrote plays and staged them with some of the neighborhood children.

"I suppose that is what gave me the idea I was a writer," she said.

Killian is the author of "The Dust Storm Wedding" which will be presented by the K-State Players in the Purple Masque Theatre tonight, Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. A Saturday matinee will be performed at 2 p.m.

Killian has spent a lifetime trying various forms of writing, ranging from children's stories to how-to articles. After graduating from Washburn University with a degree in English she set out to make a living with her pen.

"I had the idea I would write for a living. Fortunately I got a college degree that entitled me to be a schoolteacher," Killian jokingly said. "I didn't try to write plays because plays were as hard to sell then as they are now—almost impossible."

Feature articles for magazines such as Woman's Day and Better Homes and Gardens proved to be an outlet for Killian's writing abilities, besides teaching English and history in Quinter.

"I wasn't able to sell my creative writing and a novel. I found it just a little bit frustrating and I gave up writing in about 1952," she said.

Her energy was then focused on activities in the Federation of Women's Clubs in Kansas which encourages adults to further their education and literary efforts, according to Killian. After climbing to the executive positions of the organization she became the lingual arts chairman on the General Federation of Women's Clubs Board. Here she found herself encouraging other women "to return to college in order to keep abreast of the times and the types of writing that sells.

"I took my own advice to come back to college," Killian said. "Writing has changed a great deal in the last 10 to 20 years. So several years ago (1978) I decided to go to K-State. I decided I wanted to write again and I thought, 'Of all the types of writing I would enjoy the most, I would like to go back into playwriting,'" she said.

So at age 66, Killian enrolled in the Playwright's Workshop course which is designed to bring original theatrical works to the stage, according to Joel Climenhaga, associate professor of speech and workshop instructor.

When Killian submitted a play to Climenhaga in 1978, he said, "I have tried all my life to be honest, particularly in play writing, and I told her, 'Mrs. Killian this is a very bad play, but you have an interesting ear for dialogue.'" Since then Killian has written six full-length plays.

This is the second Killian play to be staged at K-State and Climenhaga has directed both productions. "Only Good Business" was staged last spring with a theme based on the deterioration of a small theatre in the red-light district of a military town. The ideas for both productions were derived from Killian's life in Kansas.

"The Dust Storm Wedding" takes place in Killian's hometown of WaKeeney in the early 1900s. Killian and the K-State Players attempt to accurately portray life in the tiny western Kansas communities, including unquestionable moral standards and religious bickering. Killian helped costume the characters in order to achieve an accurate atmosphere.

"It's a play based on imaginary facts," she said. "We try in this play to show the way people were then. I always felt Kansans were intellectual people. We've always had a society that was trying very hard to be examples."

Killian hopes to obtain her master's degree in speech in 1982, and says she will probably continue taking courses for enjoyment.

"But I'm planning on coming down for your Ph.D (ceremony) in '85. Mom, we're counting on you," Winky Wilson, Killian's daughter from California, said with a laugh.

"It's an advantage to be old when you're writing because you can look back over your life and pick out pieces and bits and write from experience," Killian added. "The older you get, the more you know and the more things you can write about."

"The Dust Storm Wedding" will be videotaped and sent to the American College Theatre Festival to represent K-State in the original work category. If the play is chosen by a panel of judges it will be presented at the regional festival. If it wins the regional standings it will be presented in the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., according to Climenhaga.

"The environment with a class and the input when it is produced is so valuable to the writer," Killian said. "I agree with the professors that plays aren't written but rewritten. It's like a jigsaw puzzle that you put together."