GREEN GROW THE LILACS

A Folk-Play in Six Scenes

By LYNN RIGGS

Production directed by Fred Morrow
SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1 -- The Williams' farm houses.

Scene 2 -- The same, showing Laurey's bedroom.

Scene 3 -- The same, showing the smoke house.
   (The time of Scenes 2 and 3 is simultaneous)

Intermission

Scene 4 -- The porch of Old Man Peck's house.

Scene 5 -- The hay-field back of Williams' house, a month later.

Scene 6 -- The living-room of the Williams' house, three nights later.

The songs in Green Grow the Lilacs are old and traditional. The specific acknowledgments concerning the arrangements used are to:

Margaret Larkin for "Sam Hall", "Hello", "Girls", "I Wish I was Single Again" and "Home on the Range". (From her collection "Singing Cowboy", published by Alfred A. Knopf.)

Oscar J. Fox for "Goodbye", "Old Paint" (Published by Carl Fischer).

Everett Cheetham for "Strawberry Roan" and "Blood on the Saddle".

The Company of "Green Grow the Lilacs" for "Chisholm Trail" and "Next Big River".

The other songs are from the original script of the play.
PEOPLE

Curly McClain
Aunt Eller Murphy
Laurey Williams
Jeezer Fry
Ado Annie Carnes
A Pedlar
Cord Elam
Old Man Peck
and Others of the Countryside

SCENES

Scene 1 -- The "front" room of the Williams farmhouse, a June morning.

Scene 2 -- Laurey's bedroom.

Scene 3 -- The smoke house.

Scene 4 -- The porch of Old Man Peck's house, that night.

Scene 5 -- The hayfield, a month later.

Scene 6 -- The "front" room, three nights later

The action of the play takes place in Indian Territory in 1900.
SCENE ONE

It is a radiant summer morning several years ago, the kind of morning which enveloping the shapes of earth—men, cattle in a meadow, blades of the young corn, streams—makes them seem to exist now for the first time, their images giving off a visible golden emanation that is partly true and partly a trick of imagination focusing to keep alive a loneliness that may pass away.

The unearthly sunlight pours through the crocheted curtains of a window in the living room—the "front room"—of a farm house in Indian Territory. It rests upon, and glorifies, scrubbed floors of oak, bright rag rugs, rough hide-bottomed hairy chairs, a rock fireplace, a settle, an old organ magnificently mirrored, ancestral enlargements in their gilt and oval frames. A double sliding door of pine, now closed, is at the back of the room; other heavier doors of oak lead to other parts of the house and to the outside. Somewhere a dog barks twice and stops quickly; reassured, a turkey gobbler makes his startled, swallowing noise.

And, like the voice of the morning, a rich male voice outside somewhere begins to sing:
As I walked out one bright sunny morning,
I saw a cowboy way out on the plain.
His hat was threwed back and his spurs was a-jingling,
And as I passed by him, he was singing this refrain:

Ta whoop ti aye ey, git along, you little dogies,
Way out in Wyoming shall be your bright home—
A-whooping and a-yelling and a-driving those dogies,
And a-riding those bronchos that are none of my own.

The people all say we’re goin’ to have a picnic,
But I tell you, my boy, they’ve got ’er down wrong.
For ’f it hadn’t a-been for those troublesome dogies,
I never woulda thought of composing this song.

Ta whoop ti aye ey, git along, you little dogies,
Way out in Wyoming shall be your bright home—
A-whooping and a-yelling and a-driving those dogies,
And a-riding those bronchos that are none of my own.

(Before the first verse is finished, part of the singer comes into sight at a window—a tall, waggish, curly-headed young cowboy in a checked shirt and a ten-gallon hat. He looks about the room singing. Just as he finishes he withdraws; hearing footsteps. A moment later, AUNT ELLER MURPHY, a buxom, hearty woman about fifty, with a tall wooden brass-banded churn in her arms, comes in from the kitchen. She puts the churn down quickly by the fireplace, goes over to the window and looks out, squinting. She grins, good-humoredly.)
AUNT ELLER
Oh, I see you, Mr. Curly McClain! Don't need to be a-hidin' 'hind that horse of your'n. Couldn't hide them feet of your'n even if yer head wasn't showin'.
So you may as well come on in.

(She turns away from the window, takes off her apron, and comes back into the room. Curly appears again at the window.)

CURLY
Hi, Aunt Eller.

AUNT ELLER (shortly)
Skeer me to death! Whut're you doin' around here?

CURLY
Come a-singin' to you only you never give me no time to finish.

(T heir speech is lazy, drawling, not Southern, not "hick"—but rich, half-conscious of its rhythms, its picturesque imagery.)

AUNT ELLER
Go on and finish then. (She smiles at him)
You do sing purty, Curly.

CURLY
Nobody never said I didn't.

AUNT ELLER
Yeah, purty. If I wasn't an old womern, and if you wasn't so young and smart-alecky—why, I'd marry you and git you to set around at night and sing to me.

CURLY
No, you wouldn't, neither. If I was to marry—anyone—I wouldn't set around at night a-singin'. They ain't no tellin' what I'd do. But I wouldn't marry you ner none of yer kinfolks, I could he'p it.

AUNT ELLER (wisely)
Oh! None of my kinfolks neither, huh?

Scene 1--3
CURLY
And you can tell 'em that, all of 'em.
Includin' that niece of your'n, Miss
Laurey Williams, if she's about anywhurs.

AUNT ELLER
Mebbe I will, and mebbe I won't. What you doin'
over this-a-way, Curly? Thought you was over
at Skidmore's ranch, tother side of Justus.
Well, air you comin' in or gonna stay there
like a Jack-in-the-box?

(Curly vaults into the room
He wears dark trousers stuffed
into high boots. His heavy
rowelled spurs clink against
the floor.

CURLY (deliberately)
Aunt Eller, if you was to tell me whur Laurey
was at—whur would you tell me she was at?

AUNT ELLER
I wouldn't tell you a-tall, less'n you
sung me another song.

CURLY
Must think I'm a medicine man a-singin'
and passin' the hat around, the way you
talk! Got to save my voice, got to
take keer of it, so I'll have it. Don't
want to do the way ole men Comer done
When he was a kid he squalled so much,
and when he was growed he sung so much,
now he's a ole man he can't git a squawk
out of him, nary a squawk. 'Cept a
whistle. And a whistle don't mean nuthin'—
the way a song do.

AUNT ELLER (unimpressed)
Sing me a song, Curly McClain.

CURLY
Aw, I cain't sing now! I told you. Not
if I tried and tried, and even at cat-gut.
And even 'f I drunk the gall of a turkey
gobbler's liver, I couldn't sing a-tall.

AUNT ELLER
Lier and a hypocrite and a shikapoke! Ain't
I heared you? Jist now. You sing! Er
run you off the place.

Scene 1--4
CURLY
I can't sing, I told you? 'Ceptin' when I'm lonesome. Out in the saddle when it ain't so sunny, or on a dark night close to a fair when you feel so lonesome to God you could die. Looky here, you're old, my, you're old, you'd orter be so smart! Whur you been, anyhow, whose side meat you been eatin' all yer life, not to know nobody can't sing good 'ceptin' when he's lonesome?

AUNT ELLER
Lonesome? Then if I was you I'd be a-singin' and a-singin': then, a long song, with forty leven verses and a chorus 'tween ever' verse. Fer as fur as I can make out, Laurey ain't payin' you no heed a-tall. You might jest as well be ridin' the rails as ridin' that range of your'n. So sing yer head off; you lonesome dogie. 'Cause you shore have got into a lonesome side-pocket 'thout no grass, you denorned maverick, you?

CURLY
Whut'd I keer about that?

(He takes cigaret papers out of his hat-band. Bull Durham from his shirt pocket, and begins to roll a cigaret, with elaborate unconcern.)

AUNT ELLER
She goes around with her head some'ers else, don't she?

CURLY
How'd I know? Ain't looked at her mery a time since Christmas.

AUNT ELLER
'Twasn't yore fault though, if you didn't. (Jeering, good-naturedly.)

She don't see you, does she? Mr. Adam's Off-Ox. You've got onto the wrong side of the wagon tongue!

CURLY
Go on, you mean ole women! Brand a steer till you burn a hole in his hide!

Scene 1--5
AUNT ELLE LER
Mr. Cowboy! A-ridin' high, wide and handsome, his spurs a-jinglin', and the Bull Durham tag a-whippin' outa his pocket! Oh, Mr. Cowpuncher! 'Thout no home, ner no wife, ner no one to muss up his curly hair, er keep him warm on a winter's night?

CURLY (swelling up, defensively)
So she don't take to me much, huh? Whur'd you git sich a uppity niece 'at wouldn't pay no heed to me? Who's the best bronc buster in this yere state?

AUNT ELLE LER
You, I bet.

CURLY
And the best bull-dogger in seventeen counties? Me, that's who! And looky here, I'm handsome, ain't I?

AUNT ELLE LER
Purtty as a pitcher.

CURLY
Curly-headed, ain't I? and bow-legged from the saddle fer God knows how long, ain't I?

AUNT ELLE LER (agreeing)
Couldn't stop a pig in the road.

CURLY
Well, what else does she want then, the damn she-mule?

AUNT ELLE LER
I don't know. But I'm shore sartin it ain't you.

CURLY
Ahh! Quit it, you'll have me a-cryin'!

AUNT ELLE LER (triumphant)
You better sing me a song then, like I told you to in the first place!

Scene 1--6
CURLY
Aw, what'll I sing then?

AUNT ELLER
"A-ridin' ole Paint."

CURLY
And now what'll I sing?

AUNT ELLER
Lads, you better git one sung 'fore you start in
on another'un!

(BUT CURLY has already leaned
against the wall with his head
thrown back, and his feet crossed,
and begun to sing in his rich, liquid,
mock-heroic voice.)

CURLY (singing)

A-ridin' ole Paint and a-leadin' old Dan,
I'm goin' to Montana for to throw the hooligan.
They feed in the hollers and they water in the draw.
Their tails are all wetted and their backs are all raw.

Ride around the little dogies, ride around them slow,
For the fiery and the snuffy are a-rarin' to go.

Ole Bill Jones had two daughters and a son,
One went to Denver and the other went wrong,
One was killed in a pool room fight,
But still he goes singing from morn till night:

Ride around the little dogies, ride around them slow,
For the fiery and the snuffy are a-rarin' to go.

When I die take my saddle from the wall,
Put it on my pony, lead him out of his stall,
Tie my horses to the saddle, turn our faces to the west,
And we'll ride the trail that we love best.

Ride around the little dogies, ride around them slow,
For the fiery and the snuffy are a-rarin' to go.

Now whar's Laurey at?
AUNT ELLER (pointing)
Settin' in there in her room a-seacin' or sump'n,
when she orta be in here a-churnin' like I told
her. Ain't you gonna sing another song?

CURLY
Ain't you a bother though—keep on a-pesterin'!
You go and tell Laurey to drop a stitch, and
see what Sandy Claus brung her.

AUNT ELLER
Meanin' you, I guess. Whut'd you want with her?
Curly, nohow? I'm her aunt, so you better tell
me first, and see if I like the looks of it.

CURLY
You're jist nosy. Well, if you have to know
my business, ole man Peck over acrost Dog Crick's
givin' a play-party and I come to see if Laurey
ud go with me.

AUNT ELLER
And me, too, huh?

CURLY
Yew, you too. If you'll go and knock on the
door there, and bring Laurey out whur a man
c'n git a look at her.

AUNT ELLER (knocking)
Laurey! Peck's is givin' a play-party.

LAUREY (inside)
Whut's givin' a play-party?

AUNT ELLER
Ole man Peck acrost Dog Crick.

LAUREY
Cain't hear a word you say. Who?

AUNT ELLER (shouting)
Come on out. Someone's come to see you.
He'll tell you.
LAUREY
Who's come to see me? Who's givin' a party?

AUNT ELLER
Well, open up the door, you crazy youngun.
I cain't holler my head off.
(The door slides back, and LAUREY comes out. She is a fair, spoiled, lovely young girl about eighteen in a long white dress with many ruffles. She sees CURLY.

LAUREY
Oh! Thought you was somebody. (To Aunt Eller)
Is this all that's come a-callin' and it a'ready ten o'clock of a Satiddy mornin'?

CURLY (sullenly)
You knewed it was me'fore you opened the door.

LAUREY
No sich of a thing.

CURLY
You did, too! You heared my voice and knewed it was me.

LAUREY
I did not, I tell you! Heared a voice a-talkin' rumbly along with Aunt Eller. And heared someone a-singin' like a bull-frog in a pond--

CURLY
I don't talk rumbly. And I don't sing like no bull-frog--

LAUREY
Bull-frog in a pond, I told you. But how'd I know it was you, Mr. Curly McClain? You sin't so special. All men sounds alike to me.

CURLY (doggedly)
You knewed it was me, so you set in there a-thinkin' up sump'n mean to say. I'm a good mind not to tell you nuthin' about the play-party now. You c'on jist stay at home, for yer tongue. Don't you tell her whur it is, Aunt Eller.

Scene 1--9
CURLY -continued
Me 'n you'll go and leave her at home.

LAUREY
If you did ast me, I wouldn't go with you.
Besides, how'd you take me? You ain't bought a new buggy with red wheels onto it, have you?

CURLY
No, I ain't.

LAUREY
And a spankin' team with their bridles all jinglin'?

CURLY
No.

LAUREY
'Spect me to ride on behind ole Dun, I guess.
You better ast that ole Cummins girl you've tuck sich a shine to, over acrost the river.

CURLY
If I was to ast you, they'd be a way to take you, Miss Laurey Smarty.

LAUREY
Oh, they would?

CURLY
A brun' new surrey with fringe on the top four inches long—and yeller. And two white horses a-rarin' and taunchin' to go. You'd shore ride like a queen settin' up in that carriage? Feel like you had a gold crown set on yer head, 'th diamonds in it big as goose eggs.

LAUREY
Look out, you'll be astin' me in a minute.

CURLY
I ain't astin' you; I'm tellin' you. And this yere rig has got four fine side-curtains, case of a rain. And isinglass winders to look out of. And a red and green lamp set on the dashboard, wakin' like a lightnin' bug!

LAUREY
Whur'd you git sich a rig at?—(With explosive laughter.) Anh, I bet he's went and h'ard it over to Claremore, thinkin' I'd go with him!

Scene 1--10
CURLY
"s all you know about it--

LAUREY (jeering)
Went and h'ard it! Spent all his money
h'arin' a rig, and now ain't got nobody
to ride in it.

CURLY
Have, too! Did not h'ar it. Made the whole
thing up outs my head--

LAUREY
What? Made it up?

CURLY
Dashboard and all!

LAUREY (flying at him)
Oh! Git outs the house, you? Aunt Eller,
make him git h'self outs here 'fore I take
a stove arm to him? Tellin' me lies--!

CURLY (dodging her)
Makin' up a few--Look out, now? Makin' up a
few purties ain't agin no law 'at I know of.
Don't you wish they was sich a rig, though?
Nen you could go to the party and do a hoe-
down till mornin'? If' you was a mind to. Nen
drive home 'th the sun a-peekin' at you over the
ridge, purty and fine.

LAUREY
I ain't wantin' to do no hoe-down till mornin'.
And what would I want to see the sun come up
fer, a-peekin' purty and fine--alongside of you,
anyhow?

AUNT ELLER
Whyn't you jist-grab her and kiss her when
she acts that-a-way, Curly? She's jist achin'
fer you to, I bet.

Scene 1--II
LAUREY (with mock fury)
Oh! I won't even speak to him, let alone 'low him
to kiss me, the braggin', saddle-awk'ard, wish-'t-
he-had-a-sweetheart bum!

(She flounces into her room and bangs
the sliding door.)

AUNT ELLER (turning to Curly, sagely)
She likes you—quite a little.

CURLY
Whew! 'F she liked me quite a lot, she'd sic the dogs
onto me, or shoot me full of buckshot!

AUNT ELLER
No, come 'ere, Curly, while I tell you
sumpin'. A woman that won't let you
etch her 'th a ten foot pole like that
is jist a-ayin' fer you to git closer'n that
to her.

CURLY
Mebbe. But they's women and women. And
some of 'em is accordin' to the rules, and
some of 'em ain't never heard no rules to
be accordin' to. Guess I better be movin'
my camp some'eres else.

AUNT ELLER
No, look here, Curly. I've known Laury
all her born days, ain't I? and since her
paw and maw died five year ago, I been paw
and maw both to her. And whatever I tell
you about her way of feelin' is the truth.
Er if it ain't, I'll give her a ev'y 'astin'
good speakin' men it will be. Fer I don't
know whar her eyes was set in her head 'f she didn't
see you, you purty thing, right from the start.
the time you come over of a Sunday a year ago
and broke them three bronzes all in one evenin',
'thout tetchin' leather er yellin' -alf-rope.
'Member?

CURLY (feeling a little better)
Yeah, I remember. Mean as sin they was, too.
That one-eyed un' th' star in his forehead
liked to set me over his head right smack into them
Lilac bushes the first crack outa the bucket,
didn't he? Yeah, once I break 'em, they're purty
apt to stay broke. For a fact. (cryptically)
You c'n can't on a horse.

Scene 1--12
CURLY — continued

(Suddenly)

Look here, Aunt Eller, I wants know sump'n
and if you li' to me, I'll ketch thirteen
'Igy-eyed toad-frogs and put 'em in yer bed——

AUNT ELLER
Laws a-marcy?

CURLY
Er make yo' chew Indian turnip till yer
tongue feels like a thousand needles run
through it and no way of pullin' 'em
out——

AUNT ELLER
Feel 'em a'ready.

CURLY
Liste, what low, filthy, sneakin' men has
Laurey got her cap set fer?

AUNT ELLER
You.

CURLY
Now!—

AUNT ELLER
Fer a fact, I'm tellin' you! From the way
she flew at you jist now, I got my mind all
made up. 'F she don't git you, Curly, she'll
waste away to the shadder of a pin point.
Yes, sir. Be put in a sateen coffin dead
of a broke heart.

CURLY (Ironically)
I wouldn't want her to do that. I'd consider
lettin' her have me, 'f that ud keep her from
dyin'.

AUNT ELLER (wisely)
She's a young girl—and don't know her mind.
She don't know her feelin's. You o'n he'p her,
Curly—and they's few that can.

CURLY
They must be plenty of men a-tryin' to spark her.
And she shorely leans to one of 'em, now don't
she?

Scene 1—13
AUNT ELLER
Ain't no one a-sparkin' her. Well, they is that ole widder man at Claremore, makes out he's a doctor or a vetinary. And that fine farmer, Jace Hutchins, jist this side of Lone Ellum--

CURLY
That's what I thought?

AUNT ELLER
Not to say nuthin' about someone nearer home that's got her on his mind most of the time, till he don't know a plow from a thrashin' machine--

CURLY
Who'd you mean by that?

AUNT ELLER
Jeeter.

CURLY
Jeeter who?

AUNT ELLER
Don't you know Jeeter Fry, our h'ard hand?

CURLY
What? That bullet-colored growly man 'th the bushy eyebrows that's always orderin' the other hands how to work the mowin' machine er sump'n?

AUNT ELLER
Now you don't need to go and say nuthin' agin him! He's a big help around here. Jist about runs the farm by himsel'. Well, two women couldn't do it, you orts know that.

CURLY
Laurey'd take up 'th a man like that?

AUNT ELLER
I ain't said she's tuck up with him.

Scene 1--14
CURLY
Well, he's around all the time, ain't he?
Eats his meals with you like one of the family, don't he? Sleeps around here somewhere, don't he?

AUNT ELLER
Out in the smoke-house.

CURLY
Laurey sees him all the time, then, don't she? Why, you say so in the first place. Whur is this Jeeter, till I git a look at him and mebbe black his eyes for him?

AUNT ELLER (slyly)
Thought you'd moved yer camp somewhere else?

CURLY (with exaggerated bravado)
My camp's right here till I git ready to break it. And moreover—-whoever puts his foot in it's liable to git shot fer a stinkin' skunk or a sneakin' wildcat.

(As if waiting for this declaration the front door bangs open, and the bullet-colored, growly man, with an armful of wood for the fireplace, comes in. He throws the wood in the wood-box, and turns to Aunt Eller)

JEETER
Whur's Laurey at?

AUNT ELLER
In her room there.

(Jeeter gives a surly grunt by way of response, and without another word goes out again, leaving the door wide open behind him)

CURLY
Now is that Jeeter?

AUNT ELLER
Yeah.

CURLY
Thought it was.

Why ain't he a-workin'?

Scene 1--15
AUNT ELLER
It's Satiddy.

CURLY
Oh? I'd forgot. He's went in the smoke-house.

AUNT ELLER
It's his house. Used to be the dog house.

CURLY (Chuckling)
That's the place for him! (The sliding door opens a crack and Laurey sticks her head out)

LAUREY
I forgot to tell you, Aunt Eller, you'll have to do the churnin' yerself, less'n you c'n git someone to do it fer you.

AUNT ELLER
Why, you lazy youngun. I'll do no sith a thing! I got dinner on the stove--

LAUREY
It takes time fer a girl to git herself fixed up. It looks to me like. I'm goin' to a party tonight.

AUNT ELLER
To a party?

LAUREY
Well, stand there 'th yer mouth open? Didn't I tell you?--At ole man Peck's over acrost Dog Crick.

AUNT ELLER
Now whoever went and--Did you, Curly?

LAUREY
I heared about it a week ago. Jeeter told me. I'm goin' with Jeeter. (She withdraws. Curly stands very still)

CURLY (after a moment)
Ever hear that song, Aunt Eller?
AUNT ELLER (frowning)
A thousand pins it takes 'em to dress--

CURLY (grins, ruefully)
Now wouldn't that just make you bawl?

(He goes over, touches a few chords on
the organ soberly, and then recovering,
seats himself, and after a moment begins
to sing half-satirically. But by the
time he has reached the first chorus, the
song with its absurd yet plaintive charm
has absorbed him. And he sings the rest
of its sentimental periods, his head back,
his eyes focussed beyond the room,
beyond himself--upon the young man having
his sad say, the young man who'll go into
the army, by God, and put an end to his
distemper, his unrequited fervor.)

CURLY (singing)
I used to have a sweetheart, but now I've got none.
Since she's gone and left me, I care not for one.
Since she's gone and left me, contented I'll be,
For she loves another one better than me.

Green grow the lilacs, all sparkling with dew,
I'm lonely, my darling, since parting with you,
And by the next meeting I hope to prove true
To change the green lilacs to the red, white and blue.

I passed my love's window, both early and late,
The look that she gave me, it made my heart ache.
The look that she gave me was harmful to see,
For she loves another one better than me.

Green grow the lilacs, all sparkling with dew,
I'm lonely, my darling, since parting with you,
And by the next meeting I hope to prove true
To change the green lilacs to the red, white and blue.

I wrote my love a letter in red rosy lines,
She sent me an answer all twisted in twines,
Saying "Keep your love letters and I will keep mine,
Just write to your sweetheart and I'll write to mine."

Green grow the lilacs, all sparkling with dew,
I'm lonely, my darling, since parting with you,
And by the next meeting I hope to prove true
To change the green lilacs to the red, white and blue.

Scene 1--17
AUNT ELLER (following him over)
Now don't you be discouraged none, Curly.
Laurey's good. She's got sense. She
don't let you know too much—keeps you guessin'?
And you shore got her to wonderin', too!
You're shore a pair—full of life—made
for each other! Got to have each other.
Got to. (She laughs) Thought I'd die when
you made up all that about the rig and
told her—

CURLY (whistles softly)
Jesus! 'He turns round with a grin.)
Well, we got a date together, you and
me, Aunt Eller.

AUNT ELLER
We have?

CURLY
We shore have. We goin' to that party
we've heared so much about.

AUNT ELLER
How we goin'? Curly? In that rig you made
up? (She chuckles.) I'll ride a-straddle
of them lights a-winkin' like lightnin' bugs, myself.

CURLY
That there rig ain't no made-up rig, you hear
me? I 'heard it over to Claremore.

AUNT ELLER
Lands, you did!

CURLY
And when I come callin' fer you right after
supper, see that you got yer beauty spots
fastened onto you proper, so you won't lose
'em off, you hear? Now then. (He strides away to the door
again, enigmatically.)

I think I'll jist go out here to the smoke-house
a while.

Scene 1--18
AUNT ELLER (puzzled)
Whur Jeeber's at?

CURLY
Yeow, whur Jeeber's at. Thought mabbe I'd
play a game of pitch with him, 'fore I mosey on
home. You reckon he'd like that?

(He goes out the door. Aunt Eller
stares after him, figuring out
things.)

CURTAIN
LBurey's bedroom, behind its sliding doors is small, primitive, but feminine. There's a bed, covered with a beautiful crazy-quilt, a dresser, very ornate, with little souvenir shell boxes, combs, hair receivers, hair-pins, a vase of buttercups and daisies, etc. There's a small table with pitchers of water under it, and comfortable chairs. A small window looks out into the brilliant day. At the left is a door which goes out to the swept yard in front of the kitchen. The walls are papered, and several small photographs are tacked up--one of a man on horseback, obviously for the first time, one of a young girl with enormous sleeves in her dress.

Laurey is combing her hair. She seems, in this setting, younger, more glowing, more complete than before, as if the room were necessary to her. It is immediately after Scene One. Aunt Eller has come in from the door at the left to see what Laurey is up to.
AUNT ELLER
Is that all you got to do?

LAUREY (Abstractedly)
When I was a little girl I had my hair in pig-tails. It hung down and down, till
I'd wrap it around my head. Men I'd look like sump'n crawled out of a hole.

AUNT ELLER
I ain't got time to listen to such craziness.

LAUREY
When I got a little older, I cut it off. Maw licked me.

AUNT ELLER
Well, she'd orta licked you.

LAUREY
Why?

AUNT ELLER
Fer cuttin' yer hair off. Don't you know that ain't right?

LAUREY
I ast you fer a answer and all I git is another question.

AUNT ELLER
Oh, I'm goin' back in the kitchen. You ain't started on that churnin'. I jist come in to see what you was up to so long. Here I find you a-primpin' and a-talkin' crazy.

LAUREY
Wait a minute. Why don't you set down here a minute?

AUNT ELLER
They's work to do. Ain't time to set.
LAUREY
Then redd up that table if you won't set.
And put some fresh water onto them flowers I
picked day before yestiddy. Them buttercups.
In the meader back of the wheat field--walkin'
in the tall grass and the sumakies, you know
what I seen? A snake 'th its tail in its mouth--

AUNT ELLER
And a terrapin carryin' a elephant, too, didn't
you?

LAUREY
Won't hurt you none to put some water on them
flowers.

AUNT ELLER (acquiescing, judicially)
Well. You ain't alwys so lazy, I must say.

LAUREY
Dance at yer weddin'.

AUNT ELLER
I don't know whut's got into you, though.

LAUREY
You don't?

AUNT ELLER (wisely)
Yes, I do.

LAUREY (Cryptically)
I thought you did. (Silence. Aunt eller fills the
vase. Laurey combs her hair slowly, and begins to sing.

One morning as I rambled o'er
The fields I took my way
In hopes of meeting my miner boy
And for a while to stray,
In hope of meeting my miner boy,
My hope, my joy, my own.
My heart was blessed, it could find no rest
for the thoughts of my miner boy.
The mother to her daughter,
"I'll comfort you to your room,
You never shall marry a miner boy,
It will certainly be your doom.
They're never, never satisfied,
But always on a drunk.
And all they have in this wide wide world
Is a satchel and a trunk."

The daughter to her mother,
"What makes you be unkind?
I never shall marry another one
But the one that suits my mind.
His trousers are made of corduroy,
His jacket of true blue.
I'd rather marry a miner boy
As to reign with the waters true."

Then fill your glasses to the brim,
Let's all go merry round,
And drink to the health of the miner boy
Who works down in the ground,
When work is o'er comes whistling home
With a heart so full of joy,
And happy, happy is the girl
That marries a miner boy.

Would you marry a miner boy, Aunt Eller?

AUNT ELLER
I don't know no miner boys.

LAUREY
Oh, 'f you did, you would, I bet. (After a moment.)
Wish 't I lived in the White House, and
had diamonds on my shoes, and a little nigger boy to
fan me--when it was hot. Does it git hot
in the White House, Aunt Eller?

AUNT ELLER
How do I know?

LAUREY
Er I wish 't I lived in Virginia or Californie.
In Californie, they's oranges growin', and
snow fallin' at the same time. I seen a
pitcher of it. In the verdigree bottom the
other day, a man found thirty-three arrow
heads --thirty-three--whur they'd been a
Indian battle--
AUNT ELLER
What's that got to do with the White House and livin' in Californie?

LAUREY
Who said anything about Californie?

AUNT ELLER (whistles)
Land's alive! (After a moment) Curly's out in the smoke-house.

LAUREY
Who is?

AUNT ELLER
Curly. Him and Jeeter.

LAUREY (as if she hadn't heard)
Bet they'll be a hundred people at Peck's. They'll come in buggies and surries, a-horseback, in the wagon, and some'11 come afoot. Gracie Denham will come all the way from Catoosie to be there, I bet. When she married Dan Denham, everybody thought--"Goodbye, good times"--fer Gracie. She Fooled 'em, though. How big is Indian Territory, Aunt Eller?

AUNT ELLER
Oh, big.

LAUREY
It's a funny place to live, ain't it?

AUNT ELLER
What's funny about it?

LAUREY
Well, take me, if paw and maw hadn't come here, I'd a-been livin' in Missouri now, 'sted of here. I'd a-had education, I'll bet.

(Scene 2--5)

(ADDENDUM)

{She puts down her comb and stares thoughtfully out the window.}
LAUREY--continued
I lied about the White House, Aunt Eller.
I'd ruther be married to a man--if he was
a real good man--than to live in the old
White House.

AUNT ELLER (chuckling)
Hope you do one of the two!

LAUREY
Wouldn't you, Aunt Eller?

AUNT ELLER
I've done about all the marryin' I'm gonna
do. Onot is quite a plenty. (She shortles with delight.)
Less'n I marry Curly and bring him up right.
Me and Curly, we're a-goin to that there--
party--

LAUREY (jumps up, runs over and begins shaking the astounded
Aunt Eller)
You ain't, you air not! He ain't got no way
to take you to no party. You got to go with
Jeeter and me--

AUNT ELLER
Curly's h'ard a rig. That un he told you
about. (Laurey drops her hands, backs
away, and looks at Aunt Eller
with such an amazed and start
expression, that the older woman
cries out:)

Why, you look so funny!--Like you'd saw sump'n.
(Laurey goes over to the window,
hangs on to the curtains.)

Besides, you turned him down. (Teasing her.)
If you jist got to go with Jeeter,
they ain't ho way out of it, I reckon.
Well, me'n Curly, we'll make out--
LAUREY (quietly, strangely)
Once I passed by a farm house and it was night.
Paw and maw and me was in a covered wagon on
our way to here. And this farm house was
burnin' up. It was burnin' bright, too.
Black night, it was like I said. Flames
licked and licked at the re-hot chimbley and
finally it fell, too, and that was the last
of that house. And that was turrible! I
cried and cried.

(A sudden slightly-hysterical note in
her voice.)

And the farmer's wife jist set there by the
side of the road, moanin' and takin' on. Had
on a sunbonnet, a _sunbonnet_, and it night!
She kept sayin' over and over—"Now my home's
burnt up. 'f I'd jist a-give him a piece of
cold pork or sump'n. If I'd jist a-fed him!—"

(She shakes her head, as if
shutting it out.)

Now ain't that silly!—Don't you listen to a
word I said. Ever onct in a while sump'n makes
me think about it, the way that woman cried,
and said what she did. Don't you pay no
attention to me—

AUNT ELLER
I b'lieve to my soul you got sump'n worryin'
on yer mind. Never seen you ack before like
a chicken 'th its head cut off, Laurey.

LAUREY (flippantly)
Worried to death.

AUNT ELLER
What about? Now tell yer ole Aunt. Whut is
it, honey?

LAUREY
Ain't got a thing to wear tonight.

AUNT ELLER
You make me so mad—!

LAUREY
Well, I ain't. That ole flowered dew-dad
of a dress looks like sump'n the cat drug in.
And my sash is tore. Sylvia Roberts has got
a new kind of a shoe with high heels onto 'em
like stilts—and I ain't got none.

Scene 2—7
AUNT ELLER
You'd shore look purty a-wearin' stilts—
like a sandhill crane a-wadin' sheller water!
That ain't what's a-worryin' you, though—

LAUREY
I thought it was. Listen to that mockin'
bird a-singin'!
E'er' mornin' he sets in that ellum and sings
like a tree full of birds all by hisself.

AUNT ELLER
He's lonesome.

LAUREY
He's hungry.

AUNT ELLER
Well, it's the same thing.

LAUREY (with real passion)
If we ever had to leave this here place, Aunt
Eller, I'd shore miss it. I like it. I like
that thicket down by the branch whur the 'possum
live, don't you? And the way we set around in
the evenings in thrashin' time, a-satin' musk-
melons and singin', and oh! lots of things!
Runnin' to the cellar in a storm, and them yellor
trumpet tomaters even, you make jam out of, and
the branch and the pond to skate on—They's only one
thing I don't to say like. And that's Sunday in
fall, when it's windy, and the sun shines, and the
leaves piles up thick agin the house. I'm 'fraid
of my life to go from here to the kitchen—like
sump'n was gonna ketch me!

AUNT ELLER
Well, you ain't a silly.

LAUREY
But I'd shore hate to leave here, though and,
go some'eres else—like to a town or some place—

AUNT ELLER
Well, the ole Scratch! Whut makes you keep talkin'
about leavin' here?

Scene 2--8
LAUREY
What if we had to?

AUNT ELLER
Won't have to. We got money in the bank.

LAUREY
Bank might break.

AUNT ELLER
Well, let it. It's gonna be another good year for corn and oats, like it's been now for three year--

LAUREY
What if sum'n happened?

AUNT ELLER
Like whut?

LAUREY
Oh, things change. Things don't last the way they air. Besides, whut if they'd be a prairie f'ar--like the one that burnt up a thousand acres by Chamber School House five year ago?

AUNT ELLER
Ain't apt to be no prairie f'ar.

LAUREY
Or a cyclone ud come, like that un did at Sweetwater. Made hash outs three whole sections.

AUNT ELLER
Cain't stop a cyclone by worryin'.

LAUREY
No? Well, whut if Jester ud set the house on f'ar?

AUNT ELLER
Jester set the--Whut in the name of Jerusalem air you talkin' about? Jester set the--My goodness, git yer things ready, gonna start you right off to Vinita to the crazy house!

Scene 2--9
LAUREY
Whut if we had to?

AUNT ELLER
Won't have to. We got money in the bank.

LAUREY
Bank might break.

AUNT ELLER
Well, let it. It's gonna be another good
year fer corn and oats, like it's been now
fer three year--

LAUREY
Whut if sump'n happened?

AUNT ELLER
Like whut?

LAUREY
Oh, things change. Things don't last the way
they air. Besides, whut if they'd be a prairie
f'ar--like the one that burnt up a thousand
acres by Chamber School House five year ago?

AUNT ELLER
Ain't apt to be no prairie f'ar.

LAUREY
Or a cyclone ud come, like that un did at
Sweetwater. Made hash outs three whole sections.

AUNT ELLER
Cain't stop a cyclone by worryin'.

LAUREY
No? Well, whut if Jeeter ud set the house on f'ar?

AUNT ELLER
Jeeter set the--Whut in the name of Jerusalem air
you talkin' about? Jeeter set the-- My goodness,
git yer things ready, gonna start you right off
to Vinita to the crazy house!
LAUREY
Well, I told you, anyway--

AUNT ELLER
Git 'em ready!

LAUREY
You don't have to listen.

AUNT ELLER
What if I'd put rat poison in the turnip greens? Now whut on earth would Jeeter want to set the house on f'ar fer?

LAUREY
I jist said he might.

AUNT ELLER
Might take a notion to rope a freight train, too. Fiddlesticks! I got my dinner on the stove a-cookin'. (She makes for the door, slows her pace, and turns around again.) Now, whut do you mean, anyway--Jeeter set the house on f'ar?--

LAUREY
They's a horse and buggy turnin' off up the road this-a-way.

AUNT ELLER
I won't look till you tell me what you're a-meanin'.

LAUREY
It's a roan horse 'th a long tail. He's string-halted. Look at the way he walks--

AUNT ELLER
Not gonna look, I tell you!

LAUREY
You know what a f'ar is, don't you? And you know Jeeter?

Scene 2--10
AUNT ELLER

That's jist it.

LAUREY (gravely, queerly)
Sump'n funny about him. Sump'n black a-pilin' up.
Ever since a year ago. Wump'n boilin' up inside
of hime--mean.

AUNT ELLER (relieved)
Ist that it? Well, I guess you don't mind
that so much--goin' to parties with him, and all.

LAUREY (Her face white--in a low voice)
I'm afraid to tell him I won't, Aunt Eller. 'F I
done what I wanted to, I' f'ar him off the place
so quick! Whut're we gonna do, Aunt Eller? He'd
do sump'n turrible, he makes me shiver ever' time
he gits close to me-- (With a frightened look around, as
if he were in the room.)

Have you ever looked out there in the smoke-house--whur
he sleeps?

AUNT ELLER
Course I have, plenty of times.

LAUREY
What'd you see?

AUNT ELLER
NUTHIN'--but a lot of dirt. Why, whut's out there?

LAUREY (her voice tight with excitement--creating it)
I don't know, sump'n awful. I hook my door at
night and fasten the winders agin it. Agin it--and
the sound of feet a-walkin' up and down out there
under that tree, and around the corner of the house,
and down by the barn--and in the front room there!

AUNT ELLER
Laurey!

LAUREY (as before)
I wake up and hear the boards creakin', I tell you!
The rafters jist over my head here shakes a little--
easy. Next mornin', he comes to his breakfast and
looks at me out from under his eyebrows like sump'n
back in the bresh some'eres. I know what I'm talkin'
about--
AUNT ELLER
Why, I didn't have an idy you felt that-a-way about him! Why, we'll run him off the place if you're skeered of him--

LAUREY (with deep premonition)
Don't you do it! Don't you say nuthin' to him! That's whut skeers me--he'd do sump'n, I tell you! He'd set the house on f'ar, like I told you!

AUNT ELLER
Land's sakes! Jist let me ketch him at it!

(She laughs)

Now you've went and made all this up, and I don't believe a word of it--

LAUREY
You'll find out some day--

AUNT ELLER
Once when you was a little girl you know what you done? Looked outa the winder and seen a cow standin' in the tool shed, and you said to yer maw, "I knowed it, I knowed it! I knowed the cow ud eat the grindstone up!" Didn't you? But the cow didn't, though!

LAUREY (smiling with great relief)
No, the cow didn't.

AUNT ELLER
Well, then! You didn't know's much's you thought you did. (She goes and looks out the window,)
Now who'd you reckon that is drove up?

(A dog begins barking angrily)

Why, it's that ole pedler! The one that sold me that egg-beater. Jist let me git my hands onto him--'f I don't fix him--! (She rushes toward the door.)

LAUREY
He's got someone with him. Why, it's Ado Annie Carnes! Now ain't she a sight! Ridin' around with that ole pedler.

(Scene 2--12)
AUNT ELLER
I'll th'ow him in the branch, that's whut
I'll do to him! You know whut he done?
Told me that egg-beater ud beat up eggs,
and wring out dish rags, and turn the ice
cream freezer, and I don't know whut all--
(She dashes out the door.)

LAUREY (leaning out the window)
YOohool Ado Annie! C'm here. And bring yer
pedler man in too, 'f you ain't afeard I'll take
him away from you. (She snickers with delight.)
I want to buy some things
(She flies to the dresser, catches up her
hair in the back, straightens her dress, and
by the time Ado Annie Carnes appears in the
doors humming softly to herself, apparently
having forgotten her uneasiness of the
moment before.

ADO ANNIE (coming in)
Hi.

(She is an unattractive, stupid-looking
farm girl, with taffy-colored hair pulled
back from a freckled face. Her dress
is of red gingham, and very unbecoming.

LAUREY
Hi, yerself. Ridin' a piece?

ADO ANNIE (non-committally)
Rode over yore.

LAUREY
Well, set. Whur's yer pedler?

ADO ANNIE (Hiding a grin)
Aw, he ain't mine. He's out there fightin'
with Aunt Eller 'bout that ole egg-beater.

LAUREY (teasing her)
Now listen here, have you tuck up with a
pedler that ud sell a pore old women a
egg-beater that wasn't no good? Ado Annie Carnes,
I'm plum ashamed of you! You ort to be strapped.
"Ain't tuck up with him. Rode a piece in his ole buggy for I was comin' over here, anyway, to ast about--to ast you sump'n."

"What was you gonna ast me, then?"

"'F you was goin' to that there party over to Peck's."

"Course I am."

"Well."

"Don't I go to all the parties?"

"I guess, You gotfellers, lots of fellers."

"Three hundred and fifty."

"Oh, you ain't!"

"Oh, I have."

"I kinda wondered 'f you wouldn't take me."

"Me, take you?" (She becomes strange and thoughtful.)
ADO ANNIE
Well, someone's takin' you, ain't they? You could take me along.

LAUREY
Why, my goodness! (She beams ecstatically.) Why, I'd jist love to have you, Ado Annie! You git yerself over here to supper all diked up and fancy, and I'll see that you got a way to go, all right. I'll put myself out!—(She has another brilliant idea, which amuses her very much.) Oh, and I'm gonna buy you sump'n so purty the fellers'll all fall over a wagon tongue a-lookin' at you! Whur in that man! (She rushes to the door, in a fever of delight.) Aunt Ellor, Aunt Eller! Quit a-botherin' that man from his business! I want to buy some of his dewdads. (To Ado Annie, with mock gravity) You don't want to git to like a pedler man too good, Ado Annie. You hear me? They got wives in ever' state in the union'.

ADO ANNIE
Oh, foot!

LAUREY
They have! And other places besides. Why, Alaska's jist full of women a-livin' in ice-houses, and frezin' to death 'cause of pedlers runnin' off and leavin' 'em 'thout no kindlin' er nothin'—

ADO ANNIE
Aw!

LAUREY
A man took me! Shore as shootin'!! He knew a Makino woman that a pedler up there went off and left, and she had to sell her hair—a hundred

Scene 2--15
LAUREY—continued
hairs at a time—just cut it right off—
to keep from starvin' to death. Finally,
she looked like a ole shave head, bald-
headed as a turkey buzzard, and she tuck
cold and died.

ADO ANNIE
Who dii?

LAUREY
The women!

ADO ANNIE
My goodness!

(AUNT ELLER and the PEDLER come in.
He is a little wiry, swarthy Syrian,
neatly dressed, and with a red band-
danna around his neck. He is very
acquisitive, very cunning. He sets
down his bulging suitcases, his little
beady eyes sparkling professionally.
He rushes over and, to LAUREY'S alarm,
kisses her hand.)

PEDLER
My, oh, my! But you are grown lady,
Miss Lauroy!

(He gives a grunt of surprised plea-
sure. His speech is some blurred Euro-
pean tongue with Middle Western varia-
tions, from dealing almost entirely with
farmers.)

LAUREY (backing away)
Heavens and earth!

Scene 2—16
PEDLER
Grown up, and s'ich a bo-youty, too!
My, oh my! I don't see you in a whole
year. Last time you was little, like
that, all sunburnt and bony, and now
you've turned into a be-youtiful young
lady. Yum, yum!

(He kisses her hand again.)

LAUREY
Quit it, a-bitin' me! 'F you ain't had no
breakfast go and eat yerself a green apple.
Lands a goodness! You'd think I was angel
food cake or sump'n. (But she is a little pleased, in
spite of herself.)

PEDLER
Angel cake, that's jist what you air! Angel
cake, and jist hot outa th' oven!

LAUREY
My, Listen at him! Shut up yer mouth, and
show me sump'n. Is that the way he talks
to you, Ado Annie?

ADO ANNIE
Aw, he don't talk to me!

LAUREY
Mercy, what does he do to you!

Scene 2--17
PEDLER
Now Aunt Eller, jist listen at the way she does me--

AUNT ELLER (snapping at him)
I aint yer Aunt Eller! Don't you call me Aunt Eller, you little wart! I'm mad at you.

PEDLER
Don't you go and be mad with me. Tell you what, I'll give you sump'n--give you another egg-beater.

AUNT ELLER
Don't you go and say egg-beater to me again!

PEDLER
Well, I'll give you sump'n--sump'n purty.

AUNT ELLER
Whut'll it be, and it'd better be good?

PEDLER
You wait. Sump'n purty for to wear.

AUNT ELLER (snorting)
Foot! I got th'ings for to wear. Wouldn't have it. Whur is it?

PEDLER
You wait. I'll show you.

AUNT ELLER
Biggest liar I ever knewed! You'll be tellin' me next you got it hid some'eres, tied onto the horse's belly band--

PEDLER
That's whur it is, exactly! You guessed it!

Scene 2--18
AUNT ELLER

Land, you big--I won't listen at you, won't stay
in the same room whur you're at. (She marches out
of the room and slams the door. Then she opens it
and comes back in.) Thought I was gone, didn't you?
Well, I ain't. I'm gonna stay right here, fer spite.
Not gonna leave you and two girls in no bedroom, all
by yerselves.

(She sits down, in the corner.

LAUREY (in a kind of abstracted e@stasy)
Want some hair-pins, a fine-tooth comb, a pink un.
Want a buckle made out of shiny silver to fasten
onto my shoes! Want a dress with lace! Want pe'--
fume, face whitenin'! Wanta be purty, wanta smell
like a honeysuckle vins!

AUNT ELLER (from her corner)
Give her a cake of soap.

LAUREY (her mood rising)
Want things I c'in see and put my hands on. Want
things I've heard of and never had before--pearls
in a plush box, diamonds, a rubber-t'ard buggy, a
out glass sugar bowl. Want things I caint tell you
about. Caint see 'em clear. Things nobody ever
heared of. (Passionately, in a low voice.) Not
only things to look at and hold in yer hands. Things
to happen to you! Things so nice if they ever did
happen yer heart ud quit beatin', you'd fall down dead.
They ain't no end to the things I want. Everything
you got wouldn't be a starter fer me, Mister Pedler
Man! (Breaking off.) So jist give me a bottle of
shoe blackin', and make it quick!

PEDLER (on his knees, at his suitcases, handing them
out)
Some nice garters? Silk in 'em, real silk, too, and
bows on 'em! Look at 'em. Made in Persia. Brought
to this country--

AUNT ELLER (satirically)
Brought to this country at great riskin' of life and
limb--like them Monsters from Madagascar. (She giggles)
Lemme look at 'em.

Scene 2--19
LAUREY (taking them)
Just what I was a-wantin'---

PEDLER
Try 'em on.

LAUREY
For Ado Annie.

ADO ANNIE (overcome)
Aa!

PEDLER
Four bits apiece.

LAUREY
Four bits a pair.

PEDLER
Apiece.

LAUREY
Keep 'em, then.

PEDLER
Oh, take 'em.

LAUREY (taking them)
Here, Ado Annie. Put 'em on when no one ain't a-lookin'. (To the Pedler.) You got any face whitenin'?

PEDLER (finding it)
The best they is, Miss Laurey. Liquid powder. Smells like the Queen of Egypt! Put it on you, they can't no one stay away from you. Reg'ler love drops! And only six bits a bottle—with a sponge throwed in.

Scene 2--20
LAUREY
Le mitigation. C'mere, Ado Annie. (She puts Ado Annie in a chair) Now be still,
I'm gonna try it on you. Now don't scrooge around like you had a ring worm or sump'n.
Gonna hide them freckles 'f I have to put it on a inch thick.

(She begins putting the liquid powder on a sponge and dabbing at Ado Annie's face. Aunt Eller leans back in her chair and begins to sing, in derision.

AUNT ELLER (singing)
Young men they'll go courting they'll dress up so fine,
To cheat the poor girls is all their design,
They'll hug and they'll kiss and they'll cheat and they'll lie,
They'll keep the girls up till they're ready to die.
Sing down, hidy down!

Those girls will get angry, they'll rise up and say:
"I am so sleepy, I wish you'd go 'way."
Those boys will get angry to hear the girls' scorn--
Before they'll go home, they'll sleep in some barn.
Sing down, hidy down!

Oh, early next morning those laddies will rise,
Brush off the straws and rub up their eyes,
They'll saddle their horses and away they will ride
Like all true lovers dressed up in their pride.
Sing down, hidy down!

Let us turn from those boys and turn from those lads
And turn to those girls which are twice as bad.
They'll flour up their faces and comb up their hair
Till they look like an owl in the bresh, I'll declare!
Wo, larry, wo!

It's two long hours they'll stand at the glass,
And a thousand pins it will take them to dress,
They'll dress up so neat, and vanish away,
The devil himself couldn't look half so gay.
Wo, larry, wo!

You can tell a good girl wherever she goes--
No foolish marks about her clothes,
No ribbons or rings or any such things,
But an old straw bonnet tied under her chin.
Wo, larry, wo!
Of all the good lives 'tis bachelor's best.  
Be drunk or be sober, lie down and take rest,  
No wife to scold, no children to squall--  
How happy's the man that keeps bachelor's hall.  
Wo, larry, wo!  

(She gets up from her chair to see what Laurey is doing.)  

Let's see what you're a-doin' to her.  

(She turns Ado Annie about in her chair, and bursts into a loud guffaw.  
Ado Annie's face is plastered with white.)  

Mercy! She's plum whitewashed you. Look like a nigger angel turned all white and shinin'.  
Whur's yer wings at, Angel?  

ADO ANNIE (scrubbing at her face)  
I'll take ever' bit of it off! Won't have no sich of a mess on me. I'm goin' right home! You've made a plumb sight outa me!  

(She makes for the door, flustered to death.)  

LAUREY (holding on to her)  
Don't you b'lieve her, Ado Annie! Why, you look purty as one of them rider ladies in the circus--'cept fer not havin' on no pink tights. Well jist look in the lookin' glass, you don't b'lieve me.  

(There is a muffled pistol shot somewhere outside. They all start violently.)  

AUNT ELLER  
Now, whut in the name of--  

PEDLER  
Shootin'--  

ADO ANNIE  
I'm goin' home--  

LAUREY (her face white)  
Wait a minute! Whur was that shot, Aunt Eller? It wasn't out there--out there--?  

AUNT ELLER  
Sounded like it come from the smoke-house--  

LAUREY  
Don't you say it! It couldn't be, couldn't!
AUNT ELLER
It was, I tell you. (There is another shot.

LAUREY (shaken with fear)
Curly!

AUNT ELLER (looking at her in alarm)
Why, you're 's white as a sheet, Laurey!

LAUREY (rushing toward the door)
Why'd you let him go out there whur Jester is!

AUNT ELLER
It couldn't be nuthin', honey!

LAUREY
We got to go see! (She hurries out the door, Aunt Eller
and the Pedler following. Ado Annie
takes out her garters, puts them on
hastily, and flies out after them.)

CURTAIN
SCENE THREE

It is immediately after Scene One—at the same time as Scene Two.

The smoke-house is a dark, dirty building where the meat was once kept. But now, the floor is full of holes; at night the field mice scurry about the room. The rafters are worn and decayed, smoky, covered with dust and cobwebs. On a low loft, many things are stored—horse-collars, plowshares, bridles, jars of fruit, a saddle, binder twine, a keg of nails. Under it, the four-poster bed is grimy and never made. A pair of muddy shoes and a pair of gum boots are lying on their sides under the bed. On the walls, of unpainted two-by-twelves, soiled clothes are hanging, also tobacco advertisements, an enlisting poster, a pink cover off the Police Gazette, a large framed picture of Dan Patch, several postcard pictures of teams pulling heavy loads of logs, etc. In one corner, there are hoes, rakes and an axe. In another, a bale of hay covered with a red saddle blanket. In the room also, a tool box, several rough chairs, a table, a spittoon, a wash-stand, several farm lanterns, a rope, a mirror for shaving. A small window lets in a little light, but not much. The door at back is closed.

JEETER sits in a low chair looking at some postcards, leaning forward now and then to spit at the spittoon. He is about thirty-five, with a curious earth-colored face and hairy hands. He wears heavy brogans, a greasy pair of trousers, two shirts open at the neck, and both dirty. He is always absorbed, dark, and sullen. Hearing a knock, he shifts about in his chair, spits again, shoves the pictures quickly back into his pocket, and says crossly:

Scene 3--1
JEETER
Well, cain't you open it? (CURLY opens the door and comes in.

CURLY
Howdy--

JEETER (unpleasantly)
Is that your plug tied to that peach tree?

CURLY
If you mean that horse, that's my horse. He ain't no plug.

JEETER
Plug or no plug, you mighta tied him some'ares else.

CURLY
They ain't nary a peach on that tree.

JEETER
And they won't be, if everbody's gonna tie his saddle horse to it.

CURLY
I'll go and move him.

JEETER
'S too late, pardner. I done moved him.

CURLY
Whur'd you put him at?

JEETER
Turned him a-loose.

Scene 3--2
CURLY (unruffled)
That's all right.

JEETER
He's prob'ly tuck off up the road by this time, and serve you right.

CURLY
Left the reins a-draggin', didn't you?

JEETER
Yes, I did.

CURLY
Well, that's a cow pony, that is. He'll stand all day if the reins is down.

JEETER (disappointed)
You orten't to go around a-tyin' him to peach trees.

CURLY
You know, I don't know a peach tree from a corn stalk.

JEETER
Better learn, then. Whut'd you want around here, any-how?

CURLY
I done got th'ough my business--up here at the house. I jist thought I'd come in and see you.

JEETER
I ain't got time to see no one. I'm a-takin' a bath.

CURLY (facetiously)
Thought you was balin' hay.

Scene 3-3
JESTER
How's that?

CURLY
I say, that's a good-lookin' rope you got there. (He points)
Buy it at Claremore?

JESTER
Can't see that that's none of your business.

CURLY
I know you didn't steal it.

JESTER  (Shortly)
That rope was give to me. It's a used un.

CURLY
Or to spin, then.  (He goes over, takes it down and
begins spinning it.)
You know Will Parker?

JESTER
Never heard of him.

CURLY
Ole man Parker's boy up here by Claremore? He can
shore spin a rope. Chews gum when he spins it. Gum
ain't healthy, I always say.  (Holding on to one end of the rope,
he tosses the other over a rafter,
and catches it. He pulls down on
both ends, tentatively.)
'S a good strong rafter you got there. You could
hang yerself on that, Jester.

JESTER
I could--what?

Scene 3--4
CURLY (cheerfully)
Hang yerself. It ud be easy as fallin' off a log!
Fact is, you could stand on a log--er a cheer if you'd
ruther--right about here, see, and put this here around yer neck. Tie that good up there first, of course.
Then, all you'd have to do would be to fall off the log--er the cheer, whichever you'd ruther fall off of. In five minutes, or less, with good luck, you'd be dead as a door nail.

JEETER (suspiciously)
What'd you mean by that?

CURLY
The folks ud all gether around and sing. Sad songs, of course. And some of 'em ud say whut a good man you was, and others ud say what a pig-stealer and a hound dog you was, and you'd orter been in the peni-tentiary long ago, fer orneriness.

JEETER
You better be keerful, now!

CURLY
I ain't sayin' it. I'm sayin' they'd say it. You know the way people talks--like a swarm of mud wasps.

So this is whur you live? Always like to see whur a man's a-livin' at. You got a fine place here, Mr. Jaeter. Matches you.

JEETER
(He grins mischievously. JEETER gets up, goes over close to him, dangerously.)

I don't know who you air er nuthin'--but I think you'd better tell me whut you come bustin' in here fer, makin' free 'th my things and talkin' the way you talk.

Scene 3-5
CURLY

Why, my name's Curly. Thought you knewed. Curly McClain. Born on a farm in Kansas. Cowpuncher by trade and by profession. I break broncs, mean uns. I bull-dog steers. I ain't never been licked, and I ain't never been shot. Shot at, but not shot. I got a good disposition, too, and when anything seems like to me it's funny, why I let loose and laugh till my belt breaks in two and my socks falls down. Whut on earth air you doin' 'th a pitcher of Dan Patch?

(He points to the picture)

JEETER (nonplussed)

Got a right to have a pitcher of Dan Patch, ain't I?

CURLY

Yeah, and you shore have. And that there pink pitcher there, now that's a naked womem, ain't it?

JEETER

Yer eyes don't lie to you.

CURLY

Plumb stark naked as a jaybird! No. No, she ain't, not quite. Got a couple of thingumabobs tied on to her.

JEETER

That's a cover off the Police Gazette.

CURLY

Wouldn't do fer me to have such a pitcher around.

JEETER

What's wrong with it?

CURLY

I never seen such a pitcher! That ud give me idys, that would!
JEETTER (at home now and at ease with his guest)
Shucks, that ain't a thing to what I got here!
(He draws out his postcards.)

CURLY (covering his eyes)
I'll go blind! Whew! Lose my eyesight in a minute!
I wonder now if we couldn't have a little game of pitch?

JEETTER
Look at this here un. That's a dinger, that is!

CURLY (looking at it gravely)
Yeah, that shore is a dinger.

JEETTER
The girls these is tuck of can shore make it interestin' for a man! God, cain't they! Over at Tulsa. I had me another whole pack of these—but I lost 'em—

CURLY
That's too bad. That was sump'n to lose.

JEETTER
YEAH, stole off me over to a dance at Bushyhead. Shore, I'll play a game of pitch with you, all right. Here, set down.

(They sit at the table. JEETTER fishes in the drawer and pulls out two pistols and a pack of dirty Bicycle playing cards, and lays them on the table.)

CURLY
You--you got pistols, too?

JEETTER
Good uns. Colt 45.

CURLY
What do you do 'th pistols?

Scene 3--7
JEETER
Shoot things.

CURLY
Oh. You deal.

JEETER
No, you deal.

CURLY
Shore, I'll deal. Is this draw?

JEETER
Suit yourself.

CURLY
Draw, then. With the Jack, and not the left Jack. It's your first bid.

JEETER
Two.

CURLY
Three.

JEETER
It's your'n.

CURLY
Spades. (He takes up the deck again.) How many?

JEETER
One. (Curly deals one to Jeeter, two to himself, picks up his hand. They begin to play.)

CURLY
(With lyric warmth—for he is stating something about his own life—and his feeling about life)

Outside, the sun's jist crazy 'th the heat, bestin' on the prairie and the corn stalks. Passed a field in the bottom this mornin' whur the backwater had been. Ground all cracked and blistered and bakin'
in the sun. Likin' it, though! Likin' it good. The crawfish put up their pinchers and hustled about, 'cause their holes is all goin' dry. Seen fields of wheat and oats--fine as a fiddle! The crarifish put up their pinchers and hustled about, 'cause their holes is all goin' dry, a fiddlef The crows went to hunkin' at me when I rode th'ough the Dog Crick timber, and I could see hundreds of squirrels friskin' in the blackjacks. I could smell them green walnuts, too, whenever old Dun ud tramp on 'em. Shore the purtiest mornin' in a long time! Felt like hollerin' and shoutin'.

I raised away back in my saddle and ole Dun stepped out a-prancin' and we come th'ough Claremore like a streak of forked lightnin'! An' it's shore a funny end to a fine purty mornin' to find yerself shot up in a dark hole bent over a table a-fingerin' a pack of cords 's greasy 's a ole tin spoon, ain't it? Yeah, that's the way it is, though, in this here life. Got to git used to it. (He begins to sing.)

Oh, my name it is Sam Hall, it is Sam Hall,
My name it is Sam Hall, it is Sam Hall,
My name it is Sam Hall, and I hate you one and all,
I hate you one and all, damn yer eyes!

To the gallows I must go, I must go,
To the gallows I must go, I must go,
To the gallows I must go, for I've killed a man you know,
Because he loved her so, damn his eyes!

I must hang till I am dead, I am dead,
I must hang till I am dead, I am dead,
I must hang till I am dead, for I killed a man, they said, And I left him there for dead, damn his eyes!

I saw Mollie in the crowd, in the crowd, I saw Mollie in the crowd, in the crowd, I saw Mollie in the crowd, and I hollered right out loud: "Hey Mollie, ain't you proud, damn yer eyes!"

(As he sings the game goes slower and slower, Curly interested in the song and in Jester, Jester frowning and strangely excited. Suddenly a dog begins barking angrily. Jester goes to the door quickly and looks out.

JESTER
Who would that be, I wonder? In a buggy.
Got a girl with him. Oh! (He is relieved)
It's that Syrian peddler. Yeah, that's who.
(He closes the door and comes down again. After a moment.)

Did that--did that Sam Hall kill the feller?
(Curly nods.)
He'd orta killed the girl, too.

Scene 3--9
CURLY
They wouldn't a-been much fun in that.

JEETER
Fun! Whut was fun about it, anyway!

(Strangely, darkly, his tongue unloosed.)

I knowed a fellor oncet killed a girl.
He'd been keepin' comp'ny with her and aimed to marry her. One day he found her up in the barn loft with another man. He didn't do nuthin' at first. But this girl lived on a farm with her folks. One night her paw and maw couldn't sleep fer the dog a-barkin' so. Next mornin' the old man went down to feed the stock like he always did, and when he come to the horse troft, he seen sump'n white a-layin' there. It was his daughter, in her nightgown, layin' there in water all covered with blood, dead. They never did find out who done it. But I met up with a man oncet on the road-gang a-makin' that road from here to Collinsville, and he told me he done it. Only---you know what he done? Made out this murder tuck place ten year ago back in Missouri. It didn't, though! It was up here by Sweetwater not two year ago---and I'd saw all about it in the paper! But I didn't let on. Whut a liar he was!

CURLY
And a kind of a--a kind of a murderer, too, wasn't he?

JEETER (absorbed)
I couldn't make out why he cut her throat and then threwed her in the horse troft, too. Less'n--he thought--why, that's why! He'd got blood all over him, and he couldn't stand havin' blood on him, so that's why he done it! I knowed another case, too, of a man got a girl in trouble--

CURLY
I was jist goin' to ast you 'f you didn't know some other stories.

Scene 3--10
This man was a married farmer, and he knew this girl. It had been goin' on a long time till the man it looked like he couldn't live 'thout her. He was kinda crazy and wild if she'd even speak to anyone. One night, it was moonlight, and they'd met out back of an old mowin' machine left in the meader a-rustin'--
She told him about the way she was, gonna have a baby. He went jist hog-wild, and found a piece of old rope in the tool box of the mowin' machine, tied her hands and feet with it, nen threw her up on top of a stack of hay, and set f'ar to it. Burned her to death! Do you know why? He didn't keer about her goin' to have the baby, that wasn't it. He jist didn't know how he was goin' to live 'thout havin' her all the time while she was carryin' it! So he killed her. Yeow, it's funny the things people do, like that.

(Curly gets up, goes over, throws the door open. A shaft of brilliant sunlight pours in, alive with millions of dust motes.)

Git a little air in here. (He goes back and sits down.) Yore mind seems to run on two things, don't it? Before you came here to work fer the Williams', whur did you work?

I don't know as that concerns no one but me.

That's right, pardner. That's yore look-out.

I'll tell you, though. Up by Quapaw. And before that over by Tulsa. Bastards to work fer, both of 'em!

What'd they do?

Always makin' out they was better. Yeah, lots better! Farmers they was, like me, wasn't they? Only not half as good.
CURLY
And whut'd you do--git even?

JEETER (looks up at him, suspiciously)
Who said anything about gittin' even?

CURLY
No one, that I recollect. It jist come
in my head.

JEETER
Oh, it did? (He gets up, goes over and shuts
the door, turns in the gloom, comes
and sits down again, and looks at
Curly)

What was that business you had up here
at the house?

CURLY (after a moment)
I don't know as that concerns you, does it?

JEETER
It does, though! If it's anything to do with
this farm.

CURLY
I forgot you owned it.

JEETER
Never mind that! It couldn't be to buy hay,
er you got plenty of hay.

CURLY
How'd you know that?

JEETER
You work for Skidmore, don't you, tother side
of Justus?

CURLY
Thought you didn't know me.

JEETER
I know you, all right. If he's sent you over
to buy up the oat crop, why it's done spoke fer.
CURLY
Glad to find that out.

JEETER
We ain't got no cattle to sell, ner no cow ponies, you know that. And the farm ain't fer sale, and won't be.

CURLY
You shore relieved my mind considerable.

JEETER
They's only one thing left you could come snoopin' around here fer. And it ud better not be that!

CURLY (easily)
That's exactly whut it is!

JEETER (white with anger)
Better not be!

CURLY
It is, I tell you.

JEETER
I wouldn't come on the place if I was you! I wouldn't come here--

CURLY
Whut'll happen if I decide that's jist the right thing fer me to do?

JEETER
I'd git on my horse and go quick! Don't you come around that girl, you hear me?

CURLY (scornfully)
You shore got it bad. So you're takin' her to that party tonight? Jesus! She's got a taste. I don't know as it's worth fightin' about if she'd rather go with you. I step out--cheerful as anything. You're welcome. (Thoughtfully.) Only--somebody ort to tell her whut you air. And fur that matter somebody ort to tell you onct about yerself.

Scene 3--13
JEETER
I've had jist about enough!

CURLY
If you'd like to do anything to me, now's the best chance you'll ever have. (Softly) You got two pistols, good uns, all loaded and ready to bark. They's a axe a-standin' in the corner. A bright bright sickle, right off the grindstone hangs over there on a nail and shines. Yer hoes is sharp, yer razor's got two edges onto it, and nary a one of 'em is rusty. And it ain't very light in here, is it? Not half light enough. A feller wouldn't feel very safe in here 'th you, 'f he didn't know you. (Acidly.) But I know you, Jeeter. I've known you for a long time.

JEETER (half rising)
You don't know a thing about me--

CURLY
The country's full of people like you! I been around. (His voice rises dramatically.) In this country, they's two things you c'n do if you're a man. Live out of doors is one. Live in a hole is the other. I've set by my horse in the brush some- 'ores and heared a rattlesnake many a time. Rattle, rattle, rattle!--he'd go, skaered to death. Skaered--and dangerous! Somebody comin' close to his hole! Somebody gonna step on him! Git his old fangs ready, full of pizen! Curl up and wait! Per as long's you live in a hole, you're skaered, you got to have per- fection. You c'n have muscles, oh, like arm--and still be as weak as a empty bladder--less'n you got things to borb yer hide with. (Suddenly, harshly, directly to Jeeter.) How'd you git to be the way you are, anyway--settin' here in this filthy hole--and thinkin' the way you're thinkin'? Why don't you do sump'n healthy oncet in a while, 'stid of stayin' shot up here a-crawlin' and festerin'!

JEETER
Shut up, you!

CURLY
You'll die of yer own pizen, I tell you!

Scene 3--14
CURLY
See that knot-hole over there?

AUNT ELLER
I see lots of knot-holes.

CURLY
Well, it was one of them.

AUNT ELLER
Don't tell me you was shootin' at a knot-hole!

CURLY
I was, though.

AUNT ELLER (exasperated)
Well, ain't you a pair of purty nuthin's, settin' here a-pickin' away at knot-holes 'th a pair of ole pistols and skerin' everybody to death! You've give that ole turkey gobbler conniption fits. Ort to give you a good Dutch rub and arm some of the cinziness out of you! Come 'ere, you all, they ain't nobody hurt. Jist a pair of fools a-swappin' noises.

ADO ANNIE (dumbly)
Did someone shoot, Aunt Eller?

AUNT ELLER
Did someone shoot!

ADO ANNIE
Whut'd they shoot at, Aunt Eller?

AUNT ELLER
Yer grandmaw, silly! (She goes out)

ADO ANNIE
My lands! (She follows her out. Laurey and the Pedler stand in the door.)

LAUREY (after a moment)
Curly.

Scene 3-16
JEETER
Anh!

(He seizes a gun in a kind of reflex, a kind of desperate frenzy, and pulls the trigger. The wall across the room is splintered by the shot.)

CURLY
Jesus! What was you shootin' at, Jeeter?

JEETER (His hands on the two pistols, hoarsely)
Never mind, now!

CURLY (in a high excitement, but apparently cool and calm)
You ought feel better now. Hard on the wall, though. I wish 't you'd let me show you sump'n. Jist reach me one of them pistols acrost here a minute-- (Jeeter does not move, but sits staring into Curly's eyes.)

They's a knot-hole over there about as big as a dime. See it a-winkin'? I jist want to see if I c'n hit it.

(He leans over unhurriedly, with cat-like tension, picks up one of the pistols, turns in his chair, and fires at the wall high up. He turns in triumph.)

Didn't make a splinter! Bullet right through the knot-hole, 'thout tetchin', slick as a whistle, didn't I? I knewed I could do it. You saw it, too, didn't you? Somebody's comin', I 'spect. It's my play, ain't it?

(Aunt Eller looks at the floor. Laurey, Aunt Eller, and the Pedler, followed a moment later by Ado Annie, come running in at the door without knocking.)

AUNT ELLER (gasping for breath)
What's this? Who's been a-shootin'? Skeer the liver and lights out of a feller! Was that you, Curly? Don't set there, you lummy, answer when you're spoke to!

CURLY
Well, I shot onct.

AUNT ELLER
What was you shootin' at?
CURLY
Yeah.

LAUREY
Did you hit that knot-hole?

CURLY
How's that?

LAUREY
I say, did you hit that knot-hole?

CURLY (puzzled)
Yeah, I--I hit it.

LAUREY (cryptically)
Well. That was good, wasn't it? (She goes out, smiling. The pedlar bounds into life and comes forward with great animation)

PEDLER
Well, well. Mr. Jeeter! Don't trouble yerself. Fine day, and a good crop comin'. You too, Mr. Curly. (Lowering his voice.) Now then, we're all by ourselves, I got a few little purties, private knick-knacks for to show you. Special for the men folks. (He winks mysteriously, and draws out of his inside coat pocket a thin flat box and opens it out on the table.)

Yes sir, special. The things you cain't get and 've got to have. All them little things a man needs in his business, eh? (He points) Jist look at them things. Agin the law, ever one of 'em! There's brass knucks, lay a man out jist like he was dead in one good hard hit. Fit any knuckle and break any head. And--in the little package, well, I won't tell you!--Jist open her up, and you'll see--The little disguises that you got to have. Fancy Lots of colors and jiggers onto 'em. French! Yes, sir! French--right out of Paris. And jackknives and frog-stickers. Steel and never rusty. Kill a hog or a bastard eh, it's all the same to them little ones! And postcards! Kansas City Best. Made right. Take 'em away, they're hard on the eyes! And here's dice, playing cards. Everything you need, everything a man could want. Look 'em over and if they's any little thing you need, jist point, jist make the signs, and I'm right here--Now then, how's that?
JEEPER (rousing himself)
How much is that frog-sticker?

PEDLER (taking out a long wicked-looking knife and opening it)
That frog-sticker. That's reasonable, reasonable. I won't charge you much for a knife like that. If you got it in Claremore, you know what you pay? Twice my price, jest twice. If you could get it. That's a good frog-sticker, that is, and I'm sellin' it cheap to you, Mr. Jeeper--fer a man hadn't ort to be without a good frog-sticker, it ain't safe, he might need it. He never knows when. Don't see nuthin' to interest you, Mr. Curly?

CURLY (slowly)
I was jest thinkin' myself--that mebbe--jist fer the looks of the thing--and to kinda have it around--I might consider--buyin'--if they're good and not too high--and can be depended on--a nice hard pair of them brass knucks you got there--

(He reaches over and picks them up.)

CURTAIN
SCENE FOUR

Lead her up and down the little brass wagon,
Lead her up and down the little brass wagon,
Lead her up and down the little brass wagon,
For she's the one, my darling!

One wheel off and the axle draggin',
One wheel off and the axle draggin',
One wheel off and the axle draggin',
For she's the one, my darling!

Spokes all broke and the tongue a-waggin',
Spokes all broke and the tongue a-waggin',
Spokes all broke and the tongue a-waggin',
For she's the one, my darling!

Blistered brakes and sides all saggin',
Blistered brakes and sides all saggin',
Blistered brakes and sides all saggin',
For she's the one, my darling!

The party is in full swing in the back yard of Old Man Peck's place across Dog Creek. There are a few benches on the porch and a large coalstove. A primitive, rough-hewn built-in cabinet runs along one end of the porch and on it are piled all manner of miscellaneous things—ropes, cans of nails, a vinegar bottle, sacks of salt and sugar, home-dried apricots and peaches, a guitar, a fiddle, jars of homemade preserves. On the walls are hanging strings of popcorn on the cob, red peppers, onions hanging by their tops, the dried pelt of a possum, etc. Kerosene lanterns hung to the well light up the yard. Light streams out from the house. Around the corner of the house can be seen the stone well with its wide arch of iron and its pulley, a tremendous walnut tree and the night sky.

The farm boys and the cowboys have forgotten their corn plowing, their day in the hay field, their day on the range. They have put up the mules, doused themselves at the pump, bolted a supper of fried salt pork, potatoes and gravy and hot biscuits, and now in their store clothes and their chaps and their overalls they grin and sweat and stomp, their voices loud and harsh in the singing. Those who are not playing at the moment lounge in the doorway, chewing tobacco and smoking; some have gone out behind the barn or to their buggies and saddle pockets for a shot of liquor.

Scene 4--1
Most of the girls are dressed in white and wear bright bows. Some have tiny watches pinned to their dresses, and carry handkerchiefs. Old Man Peck is clapping his hands. He is an old timer, grizzled and genial, about seventy. He has gone to play-parties and dances now for fifty years, and knows every trick, every extra stomp, every variation in the songs, every sly elaboration of the do si do.

The voices crack on the high notes, the feet pound, hands clap, the jars on the high cabinet rattle, dust clouds the air. "The Little Brass Wagon" ends in a burst of high, excited, exhausted laughter. Immediately, on a peak of gaiety, hardly stopping to mop their brows, the men begin getting partners for a square dance, calling loudly, grabbing the girls carelessly around the waist and getting slapped for their temerity.
OLD MAN PECK (Leaping out into the middle of the floor and holding up his hands)
Hey! Boys and gals! Git in the kitchen fer the candy pullin'... (The crowd breaks, and dashes in the house noisily. Old Man Peck is about to follow)

AUNT ELLER (calling from the darkness off left)
Lands sake, I'm all tangled up in it.
Curly, help me, cain't you?

CURLY (off)
Well, be still, quit a-buckin' up.

AUNT ELLER
Mr. Peck! Mr. Peck, you ole fool, come en' help a lady, cain't you!

OLD MAN PECK
Is that you, Aunt Eller? Whut's the matter?

AUNT ELLER (entering with Curly)
Matter! Say, do you have to have barbed w'er layin' around all over the yard? Gettin' me all tangled up in it; 'F it hadn't a-been fer me I'd a-lost a leg. Whur's Mary?

OLD MAN PECK
Oh, I got the ole womern out in the smoke-house.

AUNT ELLER
Doin' all the work, I bet.

OLD MAN PECK
Yep, that's right. You're kinda late, aint you?

AUNT ELLER
Got here quick 's I could make it. Say, is this whur the party's at--out here in the yard?

OLD MAN PECK
It's too hot in the house.

Scene 4--3
AUNT ELLER
Well, it's kinda purty out here, I must say.
Here—hand this up.

OLD MAN PECK (taking the lamp she holds out)
Whur'd you get that?

AUNT ELLER (grinning)
Pulled it off the dashboard. Guess I'll
go in and take off my fascinator.
(Taking Curly by the arm.)
How'd you like my feller I went and ketched?

CURLY (smiling, and taking her by the arm)
How'd you like my girl I went and ketched?

OLD MAN PECK
Both of you is all right, I reckon. Whur's
Laurey at?

CURLY (pausing as he realizes what this means)
Laurey, ain't she here yit?

OLD MAN PECK
Course not. Thought you was gonna bring her.

CURLY (concerned)
They ort to be here, Aunt Eller. Whutta you
reckon's happened? They started 'fore we did--
half a hour before.

AUNT ELLER (quieting him)
Aw, they're jist poky. They're drivin' Old
Eighty, and that fool mare is alwys wantin' to
graze 'long side the road. Now don't look so
worried, Curly, they'll git here. Come on in,
and le's see who's come with who.
(They go in. A burst of greeting
floats out.)

SHORTY (a cowboy, staggers in, drunk)
Say, Mr. Peck, is that yore big old white
cow standin' out there by the grainary?

Scene 4--4
OLD MAN PECK
Hi, Shorty. Yeah, she's mine. Give two gallon and a half a day.

SHORTY
Whew, she like to skeered me to death. Thought she was a ghost—till she said Moo.

OLD MAN PECK
You must be drinkin' a little, Shorty.

SHORTY (speaking as he makes for the door)
Me? I ain't drinkin'. I'm drunk. (He goes into the house.)

OLD MAN PECK (spying JESTER, ADO ANNIE and LAUREY. JESTER is carrying a lighted lantern which he hangs up)
Oh, here you air. We been wonderin' whur you was.

ADO ANNIE and LAUREY
Hi, Mr. Pock.

OLD MAN PECK
Most everybody's here that's comin', I 'spect. I got to go out to the smoke-house, and see about the ice cream freezin'. Go on in, and git yer pardners for the next set. (He disappears around the corner of the house. LAUREY starts in the house.

JESTER (stopping her)
I wants see you.

LAUREY (a little frightened)
Well, here I am, so look yer eyes full.

Scene IV--5
JESTER
Ado Annie, go inside.

LAUREY (grabbing her)
Ado Annie, you stay here a minute.

ADO ANNIE (pulling loose)
Shoot! I want to see if I can't get me a pardner, 'fore they're all gone. (She dashes in.)

JESTER
What'd you get that Ado Annie to ride with us fer?

LAUREY
She didn't have no way to go.

JESTER
That ain't yore lookout. Why don't you want to be with me by yerself?

LAUREY
Why, I don't know what you're talkin' about! I'm with you by myself now, ain't I?

JESTER
You wouldn't a-been, you coulda got out of it.

LAUREY (impatiently)
Well, now 'at I am, what'd you want?

JESTER
Nuthin'--but--

LAUREY
Well, fer land's-a-livin'! (She makes for the door.) Of all the crazies!

SCENE IV--6
JEETER (getting in front of the door)
Mornin's you stay hid in yer room all the time.
Nights you sit in the front room and won't git
out'a Aunt Eller's sight-- (In a strange hoarse excitement.)
Ain't saw you by yerself in a long time! Why
ain't I? First time was last year's thrashin'. You
was watchin' the chaff fly and them knives a-cloppin'
at the bundles. I come around the corner of the
stack and you stood there a-wavin' yer sunbonnet to
keep some of the dust offen you, and you said to me
to git you a drink of water. I got you a drink of water.
I brung you the jug around. I give it to you. I did
give it to you, didn't I?

LAUREY (frightened)
I don't know what you mean.

JEETER (as before)
Last time it was winter 'th' snow six inches deep
in drifts when I was sick. You brung me that hot
soup out to the smoke-house and give it to me,
and me in bed. I hadn't shaved in two weeks. You
ask me 'f I had any fever and you put yer hand on
my head to see. Why'd you do that? What'd you
tetch me for!

(he suddenly seizes her in his arms,
his voice thick with excitement.)

You won't git away from me--!

LAUREY (trying to free herself)
You better lo' me alone!

JEETER
You've kep' out'a my way, and kep' out'a my way---

LAUREY
Quit it, quit it--!

JEETER
Cain't think of nuthin' else! It's killin' me.
Lay awake at nights. God damn you, quit a-tryin'
to git away--I got you now--- (He holds her closer)

Scene IV--7
LAUREY (in revulsion)  
Oh!  
(She turns her head aside, frightened and shaken.)

JEBT2.R  
So goddamned purty!  
(She frees an arm and strikes him in the face, with desperate strength. He releases her, and stands uncomprehending, tranced. She backs away, watching him.)

LAUREY (almost hysterically)  
Now le' me go, le' me outa here 'fore I holler and tell on you!

JEBT2.R (after a moment, slowly)  
You hit me--(Breaking out, violently.)  
Like 'em all! I ain't good enough, am I? I'm a h'ard hand, ain't I? Got dirt on my hands, pig slop--Ain't fitten to tutch you! You're better, so goddamned much better! Yeah, we'll see who's better--we'll see who's better, Miss Laurey! Man you'll wish 't you wasn't so free 'th yer airs, you're sick a fine ludy--!

LAUREY (suddenly so angry, all her fear vanishes)  
Air you makin' threats--to me? Air you standin' thare tryin' to tell me 'f I don't 'low you to slobber over me like a hog, why you're gonna do sump'n about it! Why, you're dog and somebody'd orta shoot you! (With enormous scorn.) Yeah, I ort to 'low you yer own way, I reckon. Sich a great, big, fine strappin' man so full of dazzle I ort to git down on my knees to him! Christ all hemlock! (Sharply, her eyes blazing,) You think so much about bein' h'ard hand. Well, I'll jist tell you sump'n that'll rest yer brain, Mr. Jee'ter! You ain't a h'ard hand fer me, no more! You o'rn jist pack up yer duds and scoot! Oh, and I even got better idys 'n that! You ain't to come on the place again, you hear me? I'll send yer stuff any place you say, but don't you 's much 's set foot inside the pasture gate or I'll sic the dogs onto you! Now then, next time you go makin' threats to people, you better think a few thinks first and spit on yer hands fer good luck!

Scene 4--8
JEETER (standing quite still, absorbed, dark, his voice low)
Said yer say. Brought it on youself. (In a voice
harsh with an inner frenzy.) Cain't he'p it, I tell
you! Sump'n brung it on you. On me, too. Cain't
never rest. Cain't be easy. That's the way it
is. Ay, I told you the way it was! You wouldn't
listen--

(He goes out, passes the corner of
the house and disappears. Laurey
stands a moment, held by his strangeness
then she starts toward the house, changes
her mind and sinks onto a bench, a
frightened little girl again. Ado
Annie bounds out of the house,
excited. She sees Laurey.

ADO ANNIE (worried)
Laurey, I got sump'n to tell you.

LAUREY (standing up quickly)
Ado Annie, is Curly in there?

ADO ANNIE
Yes he's in there, but...Laurey, now look,
Laurey, it's turrible--I gotta tell you--

LAUREY (starting swiftly towards the house)
Don't bother me.

ADO ANNIE (catching at her)
Now, Laurey, please, my lands, it's all yore
fault, so you gotta tell me whut to do.

LAUREY
Well, whut is it?

ADO ANNIE
Them ole garters is s' tight they 'bout
cut my laigs plum in two.

LAUREY
Well, take 'em off.

ADO ANNIE
Take 'em off? Have my stockings rollin' down
onto my shoes? Wouldn't I be a purty sight?

Scene 4--9
LAUREY
You'd have all the boys a-runnin' after you right, you done that.

ADO ANNIE
You shore?

LAUREY
Shore, I'm shore.

ADO ANNIE
Aw, I wouldn't do it fer nuthin'.

LAUREY
Well I told you whut to do, you won't mind me. (She makes for the door)

ADO ANNIE (stopping her)
Laurey! Them ole boys worries me. The minute I got in the house they started grabbin' at me. Whut'd they mean a-tellin' me, "Come out 'hind the barn 'th me?" That ole Payne boy said that.

LAUREY
Whyn't you ast him whut he meant?

ADO ANNIE
I was skeered he'd tell me.

LAUREY
Fiddlesticks! (She starts again for the door, turns quickly, struck with an idea.) Ado Annie, will you do sump'n fer me?

ADO ANNIE
'F it ain't too hard.

LAUREY
Go in there and find Curly, and tell him to come out here. I want to see him, I got to see him!

Scene 4—10
(A man runs out of the house calling out "Whoo! Here's my girl! Come on here, Ado Annie, I'm goin' to swing you till you're dizzy as a loon!"
He whirs her around and around.
Laurey, distressed, starts for the house.)

A MAN (coming out boisterously)
Hero, Laurey's my partner. Come on, Laurey, you promised me away back last August, purt' near.

(He swings her into position for the next dance.)

OLD MAN PECK (coming from the house)
Git yore pardners like you done befo',
Two big rings in the middle of the floor.

(The others all sweep out, paired off and take their places for the square dance.)

CROWD (falling into position)
I hope there'll be a big fight!
Be lots of work for the shoemaker, tomorrow!
Watch her honey, watch her close,
When you meet her, double the dose!
Eight hands up, and circle to the west!

(They start to dance.)

OLD MAN PECK (stopping them before they begin)
Whoo, whoo, back, Maud! My, you're like a gang o' mule colts! Quiet down, can't you, they ain't no a-stoppin' you! Wanta tell you sump'n!

CROWD
Let 'er rip, grampaw!
Sey yor say and git it outa you 'fore you choke on it! Open up her mouth and holler yer head off, see 'f I hear!

OLD MAN PECK
Now then, listen to me a minute! We gonna have a little singin' to give us a rest. You all'll be so broke down in a minute you'll be blowin' like a thrashin' machine. Quiet down now, see 'f we can't git somebody to sing sump'n. Time we sing a little bit, got a s'prise for you. You all know whur the smoke-house is, don't you?

Scene 4--II
CROWD
'hind that ellum out there.
Shore, we know. Settin' on its foundation!

OLD MAN PECK
Well, I got the ole womern out there a-turnin'
the ice cream freezer, and a-makin' popcorn balls.
And jist as soon as we sing a little bit, every-
thang ort to be ready. Er 'f it ain't ready, take
a scantlin' to the ole womern, I will, and blister
her good! Now then, who'll give us a song?

CROWD
Sing one yerself, Mr. Peck.
You ain't winded, air you?
Sing one of them ole ballets--
Sing "The dyin' Cowboy." Oh, bury me not
on the lone praires!
Sing that there un 'bout the blind child,
while we cry and take on, the pore little
son of a gun, didn't have no mummy!

OLD MAN PECK (humorously)
Aw, I'm bashful 's a blushing bride! Anyways,
eall I know is sad songs, make you cry. No, cain't
I git someone else--how 'bout you, Lizzie?

CROWD
The sadder the better!
Go on, you start things, git everbody limbered up--!

OLD MAN PECK
Tell you what I'll do, then! Sing you "Custer's
Last Charge" an' 'f I ketch airy grin on any of
you, gonna do sump'n, I'm tellin' you. And you
better keep quiet and respectable-like, 'cause this yere is
a serious place.

CROWD
Get to it, Mr. Peck!
Serious 's a church
Got my mouth sewed up like a button hole.
Sh!

Scene 4--12
OLD MAN PECK (singing in a high, thin voice)
'Twas just before brave Custer's charge,
Two soldiers drew the rein,
In parting words and clasping hands,
They may never meet again.

One had blue eyes and curly hair,
Just nineteen years ago,
With rosy cheeks and down on his chin,
He was only a boy, you know.

The other was a tall and a dark slim form
With eyes that glittered like gold,
With coal-black hair and brown mustache,
Just twenty-five years old.

The tall dark form was the first to speak,
Saying, "Charley, our hour has come,
We will ride together up on yonder's hill,
But you must ride back alone.

"We have rode together on many a raid,
We have marched for many a mile,
But, comrade dear, I fear the last
Has come with a hopeless smile.

"I have a face, it's all this world to me,
And it shines like a morning's light,
Like a morning's light it has been to me
To cheer my lonesome life.

"Like a morning's light it has been to me
To cheer my lonesome life,
And little did I care for the flow of fate
When she promised to be my wife.

"Write to her, Charley, when I am gone,
Send back this fair-formed face,
And gently tell her how I died
And where is my resting place.

"And tell her I'll meet her on the other shore,
In the bordering land between
Yes, heaven and earth, I'll meet her there,
And it won't be long, I mean."

Scene 4--13
Then tears filled the eyes of the blue-eyed boy
And his kind heart filled with pain--
"I'll do your bidding, my comrades dear,
Though we never meet again.

"If I get killed and you ride back,
You must do as much for me,
For I have a praying mother at home,
She is all the world to me.

"She has prayed at home like a waiting saint,
She has prayed both night and morn,
For I was the last the country called,
She kissed and set me on."

Just then, the orders came to charge,
An instant with clasped hands,
Then on they went, then on they rode,
This brave and devoted band.

They rode till they came to the crest of the hill
Where the Indians shot like hail,
They poured death's volley on Custer's men,
And Scalped then as they fell.

They turned from the crest of the bloody hills
With an awful gathering gloom,
And those that were left of the faithful band
Rode slowly to their doom.

There was no one left to tell the blue-eyed girl
The words that her lover said,
And the praying mother will never know
That her blue-eyed boy is dead.

(The crowd applauds and exclaims.)

CROWD
Shore a good un!
Sings plumb like a church choir, don't he?
Whur's Curly McClain?
Git him to sing.
Here you, Curly, you c'n sing--one of them
cow-puncher ones.
CURLY (appearing from the crowd)
Well, hand me down that guitar, will you?

(Someone gets the guitar off the

cabinet, and hands it to him. He
drags forward a stool and sits down.)

CROWD
"Railroad Man."
"Levee Dan."
"Whistlin' Rufus."
"The Girl I Left Behind Me."
"The Pore Lost Dogie."
"Shoot the Buffalo."
Swap'n lively!
"The Mohawk Trail."

CURLY (he strums a few notes, and begins to sing, very simply)
There is a lady, sweet and kind,
Was never face so pleased my mind,
I did but see her passing by,
And yet I love her till I die.

Her gestures, motion, and her smiles,
Her wit, her voice, my heart beguiles,
Beguiles my heart I know not why,
And yet I love her till I die.

Cupid is winged and doth range
Her country so my love doth change,
But change one earth or change she sky,
Yet will I love her till I die.

CROWD (applauding)
Sing another', Curly.
You shore fooled us. Funny song for you to be a-singin'!
Now, Aunt Eller--
Aunt Eller, come on, you, it's yore time.

AUNT ELLE
Kotch mo a-singin!'! Got a frog in my throat--
I'm t'ard, too. Got a knob in my leg and
cain't sing. Land's alive! Thyn't you git
Ado Annie--? Here, Ado Annie, sing one of
them songs of your'n.

(They drag Ado Annie forward, squirming.)

CROWD
Here, quit it a-pullin' back, you don't git out of it--

Scene 4--15
ADO ANNIE (awkwardly, standing first on one foot, then on the other)
Done forgot! Done forgot!

CROWD
Well, hurry up and remember--

ADO ANNIE
Don't know none, nary a one. Done forgot ever one, I tell you!

CROWD
Well, whistle then, you got to do sump'n.

AUNT ELLER
Forgot yer foot! Sing that un about when you was young and single--

ADO ANNIE
Shoot! My th'ost's plumb sore--

AUNT ELLER
Sump'n else 'll be sore you don't start.
Hurry up, now--

ADO ANNIE (singing in a flat mournful voice)
When I was young and single,
At home by my own f'ar side,
With my loving brother and sister,
My mother she never would chide.

Then there came a young man
His smiles enticed me.
--And I was young and foolish
And easy led astray.

I don't see why I love him,
He does not koer for me,
But my thoughts are always of him
Wherever he may be.

They tell me not to believe him,
Say "He don't koer for you."
How little I think that over
Thon words would ever come true!

Scene 4--16
Some say that love is pleasure.
What pleasure do I see?
For the one I love so dearly
Has now gone back on me!

The night is dark and dreary,
A little incline to rain--
O God, my heart is weary
For my lover's gone off on a train!

OLD MAN PECK
All out fer the smoke-house now! Git some
ice cream in you, you feel better! Got vanilla
and strawberry both, so don't be bashful!
(The crowd begins to stream noisily out, disappearing past the corner of the house.

LAUREY (catching Curly away from his partner, and dragging him back till the others are all gone)
Curly!

CURLY (astonished)
Now what on earth is ailin' the belle of Claremore?
By gum, if you ain't a-cryin'!
(Laurey runs over to him, leans against him.

LAUREY
Curly--I'm 'fraid, 'fraid of my life--!

CURLY (in a flurry of surprise and delight)
Jumpin' toadstools!
(He waves his hat, then throws it away wildly, and puts his arms around Laurey, muttering under his breath.)

Great Lord--!

LAUREY
Don't you leave me--

CURLY
Great God Almighty--!

LAUREY
Don't mind me a-cryin', I can't hel' it--

Scene 4--17
CURLY
Jesus! Cry yer eyes out--!

LAUREY
Oh, I don't know what to do!

CURLY
Here. I'll show you. (He lifts her face and kisses her. She puts her arms about his neck. He exclaims softly.)

Laurey, Laurey--! (He kisses her again and again, then takes a step away from her, disengaging her arms gently.)

LAUREY (in alarm)
Curly--

CURLY
My goodness! (He shakes his head as if coming out of a daze, give a low whistle, and backs away.)

Whew! 'Bout all a man c'n stand in public--! Go 'way from me, you!

LAUREY
Oh, you don't like me, Curly--

CURLY
Like you? My God! Git away from me, I tell you, plumb away from me! (He strides across the room and sits down on the stove.)

LAUREY (crying out)
Curly! You're settin' on the stove!

CURLY (leaping up)
Godamighty! (He turns round, puts his hand down gingerly on the lids.)

Aw! 'S cold 's a hunk of ice! (He sits down again.)

LAUREY (pouting)
Wish 't ud burnt a hole in yer pants--

Scene 4--18
CURLY (grinning at her, understandingly)
You do, do you?

LAUREY (turning away, to hide her smile)
You heard me.

CURLY
Laurey, now looky here, you stand over there right whur you air, and I'll set over her-and you tell me whut you wanted with me.

LAUREY (grave again)
Well--Jeeter was here. (She shudders.)
He skeered me--he's crazy. I never saw nobody like him--

CURLY (harshly)
Whut'd he do? Aunt Ellar told me all about the way you felt--whyn't you tell me--why didn't you? Whut'd he do?

LAUREY
Tried to kiss me--Wouldn't let me out of here. Said he'd tried to see me all by myself for months. He talked wild--and he threatened me.

CURLY
The bastard!

LAUREY
I f'ard him! Told him not to come on the place again. I got mad to see him standin' there like a black cloud, and I told him whut! I wish 't I hadn't--a! They ain't no tellin' whut he'll do now! 'F I'd jist a-kep' my head! Now whut am I gonna do!

CURLY
You f'ard him?

LAUREY
Yes, but--
CURLY
Well, then! That's all they is to it! He won't do nuthin'! Tomorrow, I'll git you a new h'ard hand. I'll stay on the place myself tonight, 'f you're nervous about that hound-dog. (Putting an end to it.) That's the end of Jeeter, and about time. Now quit yer worryin' about it, er I'll spank you. Hey, while I think of it--how-- how 'bout marryin' me?

LAUREY (flustered)
Gracious, whut'd I wants marry you fer?

CURLY (getting down off the stove and going to her gravely, like a child)
Laurey, please, ma'am--marry me. I--I don't know whut I'm gonna do if you--if you don't.

LAUREY (touched)
Curly--why, you--why, I'll marry you--'f you want me to--

CURLY (he takes her in his arms, kisses her gently)
I didn't think you would, I didn't dream you'd ever--!

LAUREY
Sh!

CURLY (humbly)
I ain't got no right to ast you--a good-fer-nuthin' cowpuncher like me--

LAUREY
Don't say things like that.

CURLY
If I'd ever a-thought--! Oh, I'd orta been a farmer, and worked hard at it, and saved, and kep' buyin' more land, and plowed and planted, like somebody--'stid of doin' the way I've done! Now the cattle business'll soon be over with. The ranches are breakin' up fast. They're puttin' in barbed w'ar, and plowin' up the sod fer wheat and corn. Purty soon they won't be no more grazin'--thousands of acres--no place fer the cowboy to lay his head.
LAUREY
Don't you worry none, Curly--

CURLY
Yer paw done the right way. He knowed. He could see ahead.

LAUREY
But Pap ain't alive now to enjoy it. But we're Alive, Curly, Alive! Enjoy all we can! Case things happen.

CURLY
Nuthin' cain't happen now--nuthin' bad--if you--if you love me--and don't mind a-marryin' me.

LAUREY
Sh! I'll marry you. Somebody's comin', don't you reckon?

CURLY
I don't keer. When will you marry me?

LAUREY
Oh, purty soon. I'll have to ast Aunt Eller, first.

CURLY
I'll ast her myself! (Gaily.) Oh, I 'member the first time I ever seen you! You was pickin' blackberries long side the road here years and years ago--you was a little tyke. (He laughs.) You'd been a-eatin' berries as fast as you could pick 'em, and yer mouth was black as a coal shovel! --'F you wasn't a sight!

LAUREY (embarrassed)
Curly!

CURLY
Nen I seen you onct at tho Fair--a-ridin' that little gray filly of Blue Starr's, and I says to someone--"Who's that little thing with a bang down on her forehead?"

Scene 4--21
LAUREY
Yeow, I 'member. You was ridin' broncs that day, and one th'owed you.

CURLY
Did not th'ow me!

LAUREY
Guess you jumped off, then.

CURLY
Shore I jumped off.

LAUREY
Yeow, you shore did!

CURLY (lyrically, rapturously)
Ahh, and I seen you once—the Sunday a year ago, I'll never forget. I come over to break them broncs. You'd been out a-pickin' flowers next to that sorghum mill standin' in the cane patch. And you had a whole armful of Sweet Williams and wild roses and mornin' glories, and I don't know what all. My, I nearly fell off my horse a-lookin' at you! And I thought to myself—"if this yere bronc th'ows me, I won't land anywhere near no Sweet Williams and wild roses. No sir! No such luck! I'll find myself 'th my face plowin' up a patch of cuckie burrs and jimson weeds—er most likely a ole cow pile!"—

LAUREY
Curly! The way you talk!

CURLY (as before)
Be the happiest man a-livin', soon 's we're married! (frowning.) Oh, but I'll shore be a unsettled man, though, you're so blame purty, worried somebody'll run off with you! 'F I ever have to leave home to be gone all day, gonna shore tie you up to the hitchin' post, so you'll be there 'gin I git back, you hear? (He shakes her playfully.) Ain't gonna take no chances! (Mischievously.) And looky here, what're you gonna give me fer a weddin' present? Well, you gonna marry a good-fer-nothin' cow hand, 'thout a red cent in his breeches, 's yer own fault, they come high! How 'bout a pair of spurs? Er a nice new saddle blanket, oh, 'th red stripes onto it, and initials stitched inside of a bleedin' heart on the corner? Whut's the use of gettin' married, don't
CURLY -- (continued)
git a saddle blanket or sump'n purty out of it!--

LAUREY
Curly! Now I'll know why you married me--to git a saddle blanket!

CURLY
Yewo, out in the open, that's me! A man's got to watch out fer hisself even 'f he has to marry him a homely critter like you--'th a face like a windmill, make you dizzy to look at it! Come 'ere and kiss me, why don't you?

LAUREY (gravely, touching his hair shyly)
I jist set here and listen at you, and don't keer what you say about me. Say I'm homely 's a mud fence, you want to--why then, I am homely 's a mud fence. 'F you say I'm purty, why I'm purty as anything, and got a voice like Jenny Lind. I never thought of anything like this! But I always wondered and wondered, after the first time I ever seen you--(Her eyes fill with tears, absurdly.)—And here we set, you and me, on the kitchen stove like a pair of skillets, and I don't know what's come over us to act so silly--and I'm gonna cry in a minute--and It's all yore fault, you orten't to a-made love to me this-a-way--

(Curly jumps up, puts his arms around her.)

CURLY
Laurey--Cry 'f you want to, then. (He kisses her tenderly.) Laurey, sweet--(After a moment.) Now, then. (Crying out, suddenly.) Why, my lands of goodness! I plumb forgot! You ain't had nothin to eat! No pop-corn er ice cream er nuthin'! You pore thing! Wait a minute. I'll git you sump'n 'fore it's all gone! (He runs and looks down the well, and comes back quickly very much amused.) Hey! Look in the cupboard there and see 'f you cain't find two glasses.

(He goes back to the well and can be seen hauling up a rope.)

Scene 4--23
LAUREY
What're you up to, Curly?

(She flies to the cupboard, finds some glasses. Curly has drawn up a small tin bucket, detached it from the rope, and come back, the bucket dripping. He sets it down on the stool, takes off the cover.)

CURLY
Cream! Good ole rich cream, right outa the well! Cold as Ice! Freeze yer wish-bone, might' nigh, a-slidin' down yer throat!

(Laurey brings the glasses. He pours them full. They are dinking when the crowd, already paired off, sweeps down into the yard hilariously.)

CROWD (calling out in excitement)
Hey! What's this!
Two little love birds!
Jist a-dyin' to git on the nest, too, from the look of 'em!
Gonna be a weddin'--
Gonna be a shivoree--
How'd a girl ever take to a fellar like you, Curly?

AUNT ELLER (appearing)
Land sakes, I feel turrible! I went and ketched me a feller and here he is makin' up to another girl!

A MAN
Let's start the lovin' couple off right!

(Jeeter has leaned against a post and stands brooding. He has been drinking and has a bottle in his hand.)

JEETER (with dark scorn)
Yay, start 'em off right! To the bride and groom--

(He lifts the bottle, darkly, insultingly, and hurls it across the yard, where it breaks with a loud crash. Curly starts toward him angrily, high. Old Man Peck, seeing the situation, grabs the hands of the people nearest him, and they form a circle which quickly grows, shunting Curly and Laurey off from Jeeter on one side of the yard. Someone begins to sing; the crowd joins in. Laurey and Curly are hoisted up on chairs, the circle around them.)

Scene 4--24
GROWD (singing)
Gone again, skip to my Lou,
Gone again, skip to my Lou,
Gone again, skip to my Lou,
Skip to my Lou, my darling!

Cain't git a redbird, bluebird'll do,
Cain't git a redbird, bluebird'll do,
Cain't git a redbird, bluebird'll do,
Skip to my Lou, my darling

My girl wears a number ten shoe,
My girl wears a number ten shoe,
My girl wears a number ten shoe,
Skip to my Lou, my darling!

Flies in the buttermilk, two by two,
Flies in the buttermilk, two by two,
Flies in the buttermilk, two by two,
Skip to my Lou, my darling!

CURTAIN
SCENE FIVE

A July moon is over the hayfield, making silver tents of the mounds of unbaled hay which recede in irregular formation far into the distance, crossing a low hill. A gaunt wire rake with enormous wheels stands at one side. The sky is powdered with stars, but low clouds drift often in front of them and the moon, blotting out the stubble. A soft summer wind, creeping about the meadow, lifts the spears of grass that have escaped the scythe. A low hay stack, very near, has a ladder leaning against it.

After a moment, Curly and Laurey steal into sight, looking around cautiously. They stop, move forward a little, breathless, begin to speak in hushed voices.
CURLY (softly)
D'you hear anything?

LAUREY (softly)
No.

CURLY
Listen. (They listen. Then he turns to her with relief.)
Not a sound. We've give 'em the slip.

LAUREY
Sh! Whut was that? (There is not a sound.)

CURLY
Don't hear nuthin'.

LAUREY (relieved)
Jist the wind, I guess.

CURLY
Listen. We'll leave Old Eighty standin' whur we tied her. We cain't drive up to the house, 'cause 'f anybody's watchin' out fer us, they'd see us. We'll sneak acrost the hayfield and th'ough the plum thicket--and go in the back door. Come on now. Watch whur you step.

LAUREY (Taking his hand, stopping him, hesitantly)
Curly,--if they ketch us, whut'll happen? Will it be bad?

CURLY (soberly)
You know about shivorees, honey. They git purty rough.

LAUREY
I'm afeard.

CURLY
Don't be afeard, honey. Aunt Eller says for shore nobody seen us gittin' hitched.

Scene 5--2
LAUREY
They migh't s'pected amp'n, though.
(Her voice low.) That's the ketch about
gittin' married--

CURLY (reassuringly)
But here we air, honey. Married—and
purt' nigh home. And not a soul in sight.

LAUREY (after a moment of registering this, relievedly)
Yeah. We fooled 'em, didn't we?

CURLY
Shore we did.

LAUREY
Course. (Her voice full of wonder.) Curly—we're--
we're married now.

CURLY (softly)
Yeah. Plumb hitched.

LAUREY
Was you skeered when the preacher said that
about "Will you take this here woman--"?

CURLY
Skeered he wouldn't say it.

LAUREY
I was skeered you'd back out on me.

CURLY
I couldn't back out on you--'f I wanted to.
Could you me?

LAUREY (smiling tenderly)
Not if I tried and tried. (They kiss, and embrace
for a moment. Then still
holding her hand, Curly
turns, looking out over
the moonlit field.)

Scene 5--3
CURLY (lyrically, feeling the moment)
Look at the way the hayfield lays out purty in the moonlight. Next it's the pasture, and over yander's the wheat and the corn, and the cane patch next, next the truck garden and the timber. Ever'thing laid out fine and jimmandy! The country all around it—all Indian Territory—plumb to the Rio Grande, and north to Kansas, and 'way over east to Arkansaw, the same way, with the moon onto it. Trees ain't hardly a-movin'. Branch bubbles over them limestone rocks, you c'n hear it. Wild flower pe'fume smellin' up the air, sweet as anything! A fine night fer anyone to remember fer a weddin' night! A fine night—fer anyone.

(Caught up in the spell of the night and their feelings, they move softly away across the bubble, and disappear. There is a moment of silence.)

(Then there is a subdued titter, followed by shushing sounds, then more titters and mothered laughter. There pop into sight on top of, and from behind the stacks, dozens of men carrying noise-making instruments—tin lids, pots, washboilers, cow bells, gourd rattles, tambourines, pens iron triangles, whistles, drums. They are an excited, huddled, whispering group, nervous at their long wait for the return of the bride and groom from town, disturbed and hysterical with conjecture on the marital scene they have come to despoil. Veterans of the "shivorse", hardly a bridal couple within twenty miles around, for years and years, has escaped their bawdy ministrations. They look off toward the retreating and oblivious couple, holding their voices down.)

1st MAN
Sh! They'll hear you!

3rd MAN (satirically, mockingly)
"Fine night to remember fer a weddin' night!"

(Laughter)

5th MAN
Fine night fer anyone! Wheel (Hushing them.)
Quiet down now! They'll hear you 'fore they git to the house!

Scene 5--4
9th MAN
The heel. Bet they'll go to bed in the dark.
(Laughter)

10th MAN (severely)
Be careful! They'll hear us, you hoodlums!

1st MAN
Shut up!

7th MAN
Can't you keep yer mouth still a minute!

3rd MAN
Wheat! High ole doin's!

5th MAN
Ketch 'em in the act!

YOUNG FARMER
Whut're we waitin' fer?

OLD FARMER
Give 'em time to git to the house, cain't you?

CORD BLAM
Don't want to give 'em too much time!

10th MAN
Wish't I us in his shoes. Godamighty!

3rd MAN
He shore got him sump'n there!

1st MAN
Couple of sections!

2nd MAN
Grazin' and timber and plowed land!

4th MAN
Money!

Scene 5--5
6th MAN
Scads of it in the bank, and more comin'!

5th MAN
And God! She's a purty un, too!

3rd MAN
Got a face fer kissin'!

7th MAN
Hands white as snow!

5th MAN
And that ain't all, brother!

YOUNG FARMER
No, and that ain't all! Jesus! Wish't I uz in Curly's shoes! 'F I uz Curly, ud be in my bare feet by this time!

1st MAN (in great excitement)
Look! They's a light!
(The crowd in an excited frenzy begins jumping off the stacks.

3rd MAN
In the bedroom!

4th MAN
Look at the way them curtains blow!

2nd MAN
Lace curtains!

3rd MAN
Blowin' out like a shirt-tail a-poppin' in the breeze!

CORD ELAM
Wonder what they're a-seein', them curtains!

1st MAN
Bridal couple! Onct in a life-time--

3rd MAN
by theirselves!

Scene 5--6
4th MAN
Night come on!

YOUNG FARMER
Ay, the good ole black night—'th nobody to spy on you, nobody to see what you're up to!

8th MAN
Look at them shadders a-movin'!

1st MAN
It's them, they're there! See that there uno!

2nd MAN
Gittin' ready!

3rd MAN
Got to hurry now, 'come on! Give 'em a s'prise!

CORD ELAM
Don't fergit now, right by this here stack whur the ladder is, like we said!

3rd MAN
Don't make so goddamned much noise!
(They go out. An old man stumbles into the moonlight, shaking his head, dismally.)

OLD MAN
Listen at the ole owl a-hootin' in the timber,
and that there coyote away off yonder towards
the Vordigree River!
(He goes out.)
(A young farmer, flushed and drinking, staggers darkly out of the gloom.)

YOUNG FARMER
Bridgroom a-waitin' and a-waitin'! Don't you wait now, Mr. Bridgroom! The moon's a-shinin'!
Yer time has came! Yes, sirree, bob! No time to wait now. Time to git goin'. See that there bride a-glimmerin' there in her white! Waitin' fer you.
Been a-standin' there with her hair down her back and her lips a-movin'! Git next to her, brother! Gonna be high ole times, gonna be Jesus into yer heart!
(The sound of raucous noise and excitement begins. Cord Elam runs from around a stack shoving the Young Farmer out of the way.)

Scene 5-7
CORD ELAM
Git outa the way now, Homer! (To the approaching noisy party.)
Hey! Over this-a-way. Yere's the place!
(The noise of the shivoree grows louder and louder. Voices rise out of the bedlam, in sharp exclamations and cries.)
(A few men drag Curly in, struggling and angry, his hair in his eyes. His shirt has been ripped off in the struggle.)

CURLY
God damn you, leave her alone! Don't ary son
of a bitch put his hands onto her, I'll kill him--!

A MAN
Aw, nobody's a-hurtin' her, Curly--

CURLY
Better hadn't. I tell you. Make 'em git away
from her, plumb away from her!

A MAN (shouting off)
Git away from her, you all! Bring her on in!
(Curly relaxes, but his captors still hold him tightly.)
(A wide circle of men, shouting, whistling, bosting their various noise implements, advances across the stubble.
In the middle of the group, walking alone, pale and shaken is Laurey, in a nightgown, her hair down about her shoulders. The crowd goes over to the floor of the ladder and stops.)

5th MAN
Quiet down now, a minute! (To Laurey) Right
up the ladder with you, you purty thing!
(The noise stops.)

6th MAN
Go on, boost her up!

7th MAN
Right up on the stack--!

8th MAN
Make out it's a bed, why don't you!
(Laurey looks around at Curly, then climbs up the short ladder, the crowd shouting at her.)

Scene 5--8
9th MAN
Watch it!

10th MAN
Put yer foot in the right place.

CORD ELAM
Don't wanta fall and break yer neck--cheat pore Curly outs his rights!

10th MAN
All right, Curly--

6th MAN
You're next.

10th MAN
Bring him on over here. (The men holding Curly lead him over to the foot of the ladder, and let go of him. The Crowd begins to call out in more jubilant, crazier derision.)

1st MAN
Go, on, Mr. Bridegroom, there's yer bride!--

3rd MAN
Purty's a new bronc a-standin' and a-lookin', cain't hardly keep off her!

7th MAN
Mane like silk and eyes a-shinin'!

CORD ELAM
Git on, there, cowpuncher--! (After a moment, Curly starts up the ladder, the crowd continuing to shout.)

'Tyou ain't a world-beater fer bashful!

3rd MAN
Better be glad we didn't ride you on no fence rail!

1st MAN
Th'ow the ladder down when he gits up.

Scene 5--9
10th MAN
Try to git off, you'll break yer neck, so
watch out!
(Curly reaches the top.
Someone throws the ladder down)

CURLY (deeply troubled)
Laurey, honey--(She looks at him, in dumb misery.)
I'd give my eye-sight, honey--! Try to stand
it--I done all I could. I can't he'p it--

(He takes her in his arms. The
men break out into derisive and
lascivious guffaws, and begin the
deafening noises again, circling the
hay stack, kicking up their heels, in
an orgy of delight.

3rd MAN
Give us a little kiss, honey lamb, do a man
good, taint a-askin' much!

CORD ELAM
Give us a lick and a promise--Quick's these
bad ole mans goes away,--they ain't no a-tellin',
no, sirree!

5th MAN
'Taint right to stand there like that--Blush
to look at you!

7th MAN
Ain't no right to be in no nightgown!

10th MAN
Go on, Mr. Moon Man, hide yer face fer shame!

YOUNG FARMER
How's it feel to be married, Laurey, aiger, all
safe and proper, to aich a fine purty man with
curly hair and a dimple on his chin! Whoa! Got
you whur I want you--!

1st MAN
Scrunch you to death, purt' near!

CORD ELAM
Bite them shoulders--
3rd MAN
Eat 'er alive!

5th MAN
Yay, Curly, and it's one more river to cross!
(One of the men cries out, excitedly, snickering.)

A MAN
Hey, Curly! Hey, Laurey! One baby!
(He tosses a grotesque straw baby high in the air and onto the stack)
Two!
(He tosses another quickly.)
Three!
(He tosses another.)

ANOTHER MAN (holding up admonishing hands, grinning delightedly)
Hold it! Not so many! That'll give Curly idye, that will!
(There is raucous laughter, and beating of instruments.)
(The glow and smoke of something burning which has already crept quietly over the hayfield, now leaps up. A hay stack is burning.)

CURLY (startled, pointing)
Look! For God's sake, that hay stock's on fire!
(The men rush toward it.)

Get us a ladder someone, quick! The whole hayfield 'll be on fire!
(Suddenly a dark figure comes into sight, carrying a flaming torch. It is Jeezer.

JEETER (crying out)
Yanh, you thought you had it over me so big, didn't you? And you, too, Missy! Wanted sump'n purtier to sleep with. Yanh, you won't be a-havin' it long. Burn you to cracklin's!
(He springs forward like a maddened animal to apply the torch to the stack. Laurey screams. The Men start rushing back, as Curly leaps down, knocking the torch out of Jeezer's hand.)

CURLY
Godamighty!
(Theysstruggle.)
(The crowd exclaims.)

1st MAN
It's Jeezer Fry! Thought he'd flew the country!

Scene 5--11
3rd MAN
Drunk as a lord--

3rd MAN
Godamighty, he's crazy drunk!

5th MAN
He was sweet on her too, they tell me. Stop him, somebody!

7th MAN
Man seen him last week 'way off in Joplin.

8th MAN
Jeeter, you goddamned--
(A Man beats at the torch with his bare hands, till ANOTHER MAN runs up and smothers it quickly with his coat. Someone picks up the torch, stamping out the flames, and runs out to the branch with it.)

(Jeeter has backed away in the struggle and drawn out a knife. He throws himself upon Curly. The crowd mutters in excitement and fear. The men struggle over the knife, their arms gripping each other desperately. Suddenly, Jeeter trips and they go down on the stubble. Jeeter groans and whimper s and lies very still.)

CURLY
Now, now--Christ--

Look at--look at him! Fell on it--Stuck through his ribs!
(He shakes his hand, crazily, helplessly, in horror.)

YOUNG FARMER
Pull that knife out!

MAN
What's the matter?
Don't you touch it!
Turn him over--
He's breathin', ain't he?
Feel his heart.
How'd it happen?

Scene 5--12
9th MAN (wildly)
Ahh, it's went right through his heart--

4th MAN
What'll we do? Ain't he all right?

10th MAN
'S he jist stunned?

CORD ELAM (pushing into the crowd)
Git away, some of you! Lemme look at him.

(He bends down, the men crowding around. Curly has slumped back against the stack, like a sick man. Laurey stands dazed, watching. After a moment, standing upright.)

Cain't do a thing now. Try to git him to a doctor, but I don't know--

9th MAN (hysterically)
Pull the knife out, cain't you? Leave a knife stuck in a--!

(He springs forward.)

CORD ELAM (grabbing him)
You can't pull it out, you fool! Git away from there! (The men stagger away, weakly.) Here, you, some of you! Carry him down to the branch. Quick! I'm 'fraid it's too late!

(The men lift Jeeter up.)

10th MAN
Handle him easy!

6th MAN
Don't shake him!

3rd MAN
Hold on to him careful, there!

5th MAN
Godamighty! Whut a thing to happen!

(They carry him out.)

Scene 5--13
CORD ELAM (To Curly)
I don't know, Curly. You better give yerself up, I 'spect. They ain't no a-tellin'. You better go in with me, as I go, and tell 'em how it was. Tonight. It might go hard with you, you don't. (Curly stands, dazed, as if unhearing.)
'D you hear me, Curly? You know the way ever'body feels about shivoreein'. You got to take it right.

CURLY (in desperation)
But f'ar--f'ar! He was tryin' to burn us up!

CORD ELAM
I know. But you got to tell the law. It'll be easier that way. I'll come back for you.
(He goes out toward the branch.)

LAUREY (in a fever of horror)
Curly, Curly--

CURLY (hardly able to speak)
Laurey--

LAUREY
Is he--is he--?

CURLY
Don't say anything--

LAUREY
It cain't be that-a-way!

CURLY
I didn't go to.

LAUREY
Cain't be! Like that--to happen to us!

CURLY
Sh! Be quiet!
LAUREY
why'n't they do sum'n? Why'd they let him--lay
there--? Cain't git over the way he--

CURLY
Laurey, Laurey!

LAUREY (in mounting hysterical feeling)
He laid there in the stubble, so quiet, 'th his
eyes open, and his eyeballs white and starin'! He
laid there in the stubble--'th his eyes open--!

(She buries her face in her hands,
shuddering.)

(Curly turns away, numb, speechless,
his shoulders hunched up, like one
shielding himself from the wind.
The howl of a coyote drifts in on
the summer air--near and desperate
and forlorn.)

CURTAIN

Scene 5--15
A few nights later ADO ANNIE and AUNT ELLER are sitting in the front room, sewing. An oil lamp makes an amber pool of light about them. The sliding doors are closed, but a thin crack of light comes from underneath. ADO ANNIE, with a piece of plaid across her knees, is snipping at it with scissors. AUNT ELLER is very busy over a flour sack; she pushes her iron spectacles up off her nose and looks over at ADO ANNIE.

ADO ANNIE (in astonishment)
In the name of Doodlebug—what are you a-doin'?

AUNT ELLER (looking up from her work)
Makin' a button-hole, can't you see?

AUNT ELLER
A round button-hole?

ADO ANNIE
Course.

AUNT ELLER (amused)
Why'n't you make a square one? Er I tell you—make one looks like a four-leaf clover, why don't you?

ADO ANNIE (shortly)
Guess I know how to make button-holes.

AUNT ELLER
Yeah, you shore do. Cuttin' a round hole in that plaid.

(They sew in silence. After a moment aunt Eller glances up toward the closed door, and says.)

She ain't went to bed yit.

ADO ANNIE
'S nine o'clock about.
AUNT ELLER (shaking her head)
Worried about her. She don't eat nor sleep
sence Curly was tuck away.

ADO ANNIE
She'll git pore she don't eat.

AUNT ELLER
Well, course she'll git pore.

ADO ANNIE
That's what I said.

AUNT ELLER (slightly irritated)
I eared you say it.

ADO ANNIE (blandly)
Well.

AUNT ELLER
Looky here, Ado Annie Carnes, don't you ever marry.

ADO ANNIE (self-consciously)
Gracious, who'd I marry?

AUNT ELLER
Don't you ever! I did. And look at me. (Half-seriously.)
First yer man—he'll die—like mine did. Nen the baby—
she'll die. The rest of yer younguns 'll grow up
and marry and leave you, the way mine did. Nen you'll
be all by yerself. Time you're old as me, you'll be
settin' around, jist the way I am, 'th a wooden leg
and a bald head, and a-rippin' up old floursecks to
make yerself a pair of drawers out of.

(She holds up her work for Ado Annie to see)

ADO ANNIE (overcome with mirth)
Hee! Hee!

AUNT ELLER
Trouble shore starts, you git married. Look at
Laurey. Better not git married, I tell you.

ADO ANNIE
Well, I won't then, if you say so.

Scene 6--2
AUNT ELLER
Ain', but trouble starts nohow, so you might jist as well git married as to not.

(Aunt ELLER (bewildered)
Well, which'll I do, then?

AUNT ELLER
Both! I mean--I don't keer! (Her voice sinking to a grave half-whisper, as she says what is really on her mind.)

They cain't stick him--

ADO ANNIE
Stick who?

AUNT ELLER
Curly. They cain't stick him. Self-defense. Plain's the nose on yor face. Wish't they'd git it over with, that's what I wish--

ADO ANNIE
Did--did Curly kill Jeeter--'th that old knife?

AUNT ELLER
Naw! 'Course not! Jeeter fell on his ole knife--and died. And he ort to 'a.

ADO ANNIE
They cain't no fair a-holdin' Curly fer it, then?

AUNT ELLER
'Course it ain't fair! It's jist the law. They got to have their old hearin' first. Then town fools! First the shivoreein'--that was bad enough. And on top of it--Jeeter. Now Laury all broke up, and Curly settin' in the cooler at Claremore. Shore a happy weddin', I must say. Why, then two cain't really married yet.

ADO ANNIE (her mouth open)
Ain't they married, Aunt ELLER!
AUNT ELLER

Well, they're married, all right, but they ain't—My, if you don't know what I mean, I shore ain't—gonna tell you! (She gets up, and goes over to the window.) Looks blackened up over yonder. "More rain, more rest, more niggers from the West." Hope it don't come a rain or a big wind-storm 'th all that forty of wheat in the shock. Or to a-stacked it, I reckon. (She turns back.) Does yer Maw need you tomorrow, Ado Annie?

ADO ANNIE

New, she said I could stay all week, 'f you ud feed me.

AUNT ELLER

I'll feed you, all right. Grease-eye gravy and cracklin' corn-bread! And roses'ears. Tomorrow we'll start in to can them peaches—clings and all. 'Spect we better be gittin' to bed. Only, I kinda hate to go to bed 'th Laurey still—(She taps softly at Laurey's door, and calls gently.) Laurey—

LAUREY (after a moment, inside)

Yes.

AUNT ELLER

Ain't you gone to bed yit, honey?

LAUREY

I can't sleep—so—they ain't no sense in goin' to bed. (She came down into the room.) What're you makin', Ado Annie?

ADO ANNIE

Me a dress. Ain't it purty?

LAUREY

Yes. (Gravely.) Aunt Eller, did they—What did they say?

AUNT ELLER

I told you, honey. Jist said the hearin' was comin' up tomorrow. Now, I don't want you to worry about it no more. They'll let him off, all right, they got to. 

Scene 6--4
LAUREY
curdy ort to a-leat me went into Claremore with
him like I wanted to—to testify for him.

AUNT ELLER
Don't you know they wouldn't a-let you say
muthin', Laurey? You're his wife, ain't you?

LAUREY (slowly)
Yes. I'm his wife.

AUNT ELLER
Well. (Laurey sinks back in her chair with
a disheartened little moan.)

LAUREY
Oh, I don't see why—I don't see why—when ever'
thing was so fine, this had to happen!

AUNT ELLER (comfortingly)
Oh, Laurey—now muthin' ain't happened.

LAUREY (distressed)
Ain't no tellin' whut they'll do to him! And
he couldn't he'p it. He couldn't. (Seeing it again)
It was over in a minute, and Jeeter lay there—dead.
He'd a-killed Curly. He tried to kill him.

AUNT ELLER (soothingly)
Now, now—

LAUREY
Why'd they have to th'ow Curly in jail? Anyone
could see how it happened—

AUNT ELLER
Shore they could, honey. But you know the way ever-
body feels about shivering. They got a right to it
somehow, And a thing like this a-happenin' in the
middle of a shivering—why, it looks bad, that's all.
But Curly'll go free. Why, it's only been three days.
They jist got to git ev'rything straight.
(Shes geries tbes to indicate freemess and
happiness for thom both.)

Scene 6--5
LAUREY
You shore, Aunt Eller?

AUNT ELLER
Course I am!

LAUREY
I cain't stand to think of Curly bein' in jail!

AUNT ELLER
Why, it won't be no time now, till it's all over with--and forgot.

LAUREY (strangely, a new element coming into her concern)
No, not over with, not forgot. You didn't see. Other things. Things you cain't git cute yer mind. (She shudders)

AUNT ELLER
What is it, honey?

LAUREY
Over and over! The way them men done. The things they said. Oh--why'd it have to be that-a-way!

AUNT ELLER
Don't let yer mind run on it. Men is always like that at shivorees. Sump'n gits into 'em.

LAUREY
The one time in a body's life--!

AUNT ELLER
Sh! I know. It musta been bad.

LAUREY
Cain't forget it, I tell ya! I've tried and tried!

AUNT ELLER (gravely, wisely)
Don't try, honey. Don't try. They's things you cain't git rid of--lots of things. Not if you live to be a hundred. You got to learn. You got to look at all the good on one side and all the bad on the other, and say: "Well, all right, then!" to both of 'em.

Scene 6--6
LAREY (unheeding)
--On top of everthing!--

AUNT ELLER (with great compassion)
Yeah, you've had yer troubles. I know, Laurey,
But they's been good things, too. Think about that.
You ain't had to slave away a-workin' fer others,
the way some girls has to do,--things like that. You've
had you a good home--

LAUREY (her mind temporarily diverted to another trouble)
Paw and maw--

AUNT ELLER
Yeah, right when you needed 'em most, both gone.
But you lived on, didn't you? You been happy since,
ain't you? Course. You been strong about it.
Why, when yer Paw died--and you thought the world of
him--you was all by yerself here--and you stood it.
When they sent fer me to Pryor, 'fore I could git
here, why he was dead, and in his coffin.

LAUREY (raising her head, and looking back into the room)
It set right thare--on two cheers. The head towards the door.

AUNT ELLER
Yeah. (Quietly, without self-pity, stating the fact.)
When yore Paw died, and laid there--it was my brother
in his coffin, too. Oh, and they's lots more, Laurey!
I couldn't tell you all. Yer Uncle Jack, the children,
both of my sisters, my paw and maw. Troubles thick and
fast, you got to put up with. My husband--yer Uncle
Jack. When he died. 'D you know how? A crazy way to
die. No use in it! He'd bought some hogs off Lem Slocum,
and they turned out to be full of cholery--and all died.
Jack walked over jist acrost the pasture to see Len about
it. Didn't show up and it got night. I tuck a lantern and
went out to see. When I come to the worm fence, I found
him, in a corner, all huddled down, all bloody from a gun-
shot. Laid there all doubled up--dead--in a patch of yellow
daisies. Lem Slocum musta shot him, I didn't know who
done it. All I knowed was--my husband was dead.
Oh, lots of things happens to a woman. Sickness, bein'
pore and hungry even, bein' left alone in yer old age, bein'
afraid to die--it all adds up. That's the way life is--
cradle to grave. And you c'n stand it. They's one way.
You got to be hearty. You got to be.
LAUREY (moved)
Oh, Aunt Eller, I'm such a baby--!

AUNT ELLER
There, there!

LAUREY
Ashamed of myself! I want to be the way you air.

AUNT ELLER (breaking off)
Fiddlesticks! Fat—and old? You couldn't h'ar me to be the way I am! Why, in a year's time, you'll git so t'ard even of lookin' at me, you and Curly'll run me off the place, 'th a tin can tied onto my tail--

(Laurey half-smiles at the spectacle and leaning over, gives Aunt Eller an affectionate hug.)

LAUREY (through tears)
Oh, whut ud I do 'thout you, you're such a crazy!--

AUNT ELLER
Shore's you're borned!--

LAUREY
I never could live. I never could. (Rising, happier.) I'll go to bed now.

AUNT ELLER
And sleep, huh?

LAUREY (smiling)
Tight.

AUNT ELLER
And eat hearty from now on, huh? Fried chicken and everthing?

LAUREY
Tomorrow.

AUNT ELLER
Tomorrow, yer foot! (She gets an apple out of a basket on the organ.) Here, eat that. 

Scene 6--8
I don't want it.

Laurey takes it, nibbles at it. A dog begins to bark. They all stop abruptly, listening.)

Now, who could that—(She stands up, looks at Laurey, questioningly.) This hour of night—

(Laurey stands up, quite still, straight and pale.

The dog's barks stop suddenly. Aunt Eller goes over to the window. Ado Annie has put down her work. All three women are in a breathless trance—suspended, curiously conjecturing.)

It's pitch black—

LAUREY (with quiet conviction)
'S Curly come back.

ADO ANNIE (with a nervous giggle)
Ole Shep stopped a-barkin' like he was shot!

AUNT ELLER (angrily—because of her nervous apprehension)
Sh! Be still, cain't you!

LAUREY
It's Curly!

AUNT ELLER
'Taint no one. That dog's jist got the colic, I bet.

(There is a noise of someone trying the door.)

What's that!

ADO ANNIE (rising)
I'm goin' home.

AUNT ELLER
Be still.

(Scene 8--9)
AUNT ELLER--(continued)
Now then. Whoever's there, answer, and answer quick!
(The door opens quickly, and Curly, dishevelled and worn, appears there.)

CURLY
Laurey!

AUNT ELLER (joyfully)
Why, it's Curly!

LAUREY
Curly!

(She runs to meet him half-way across the room as he comes forward. They go into each other's arms, and cling to each other.)

AUNT ELLER (with extravagant delight)
My, oh my! Look what the old cat's drug in! Thought we had him safe in jail and here he turns up like a bad penny! Laws a me! Whuttya you mean tryin' to skeer us well-eyed?

ADO ANNIE (astonished)
Why, it's Curly!

AUNT ELLER (gaily)
Now! It's Sandy Claus, cain't you see nuthin'! They've let him off! I knewed they would, I knewed it, I knewed it!

(Curly backs out of Laurey's arms, looks round quickly.)

LAUREY
Curly! Whut is it!

CURLY
Whut was that noise?

LAUREY (with premonitory alarm)
Whut's the matter? Everything's all right, ain't it? They've let you off, ain't thoy? Curly! Tell me and be quick, I--

CURLY
No. They ain't let me off.

Scene 6--10
LAUREY
Curly! (Running to him.) They couldn’t a-sent
you up! It wasn’t yore fault. They couldn’t,
I won’t let ‘em—I won’t, I--

CURLY
Sh! (As they become silent.) They’re after me.

(He goes swiftly across and pulls
down the window shade.)

AUNT ELLER
Never heared of sich a--Who’s after you, the old Booger Man?

LAUREY
Curly!

CURLY
When I clumb th’ough the fence jist by that little
bridge, I seen lights ’way over towards Claremore.
I knowed they’d got onto which way I was headin’, so
I run across the back of the--

AUNT ELLER
What air you jabberin’ about? (Light dawning on her.)
Oh! I mighty knowed a curly-headed cowhand like
him ud come to a bed end! He’s went and broke outa
jail.

CURLY (quickly)
I had to see Laurey. I had to! I knowed she’d be
a-worryin’ about ever thing, and I couldn’t stand
it her a-worryin’ and nobody to help her none--

(He takes Laurey in his arms again.)

AUNT ELLER (severely)
Worryin’! I ort to take a hick’ry to you and beat
you plum to a frazzle! Here you’d a-got off
tomorrow, you crazy youngun—everbody said so.
Now you’ll prob’ly git sent up fer five year fer
breakin’ loose—and I hope you do!

LAUREY
Aunt Eiller, they cain’t send him up, they cain’t!

AUNT ELLER
Oh, cain’t they? You wait and see. (To Curly)
 Didn’t you know they’d know whur you was headin’
fer, and find you ’fore a cat could lick his front paw?

CURLY
I didn’t think.

AUNT ELLER
I reckon you hain’t got nuthin’ to think with. (Giving him a swat.)
I’d like to give you a good beatin’! (Smiling at him tolerantly.)
Aw, I reckon you jist had to see yer girl, didn’t you?

Scene 6--II
CURLY
My wife.

AUNT ELLER
Yeah? Well, call her that 'f it does you any good. How far back was it you seen 'em comin' after you?

CURLY
'Bout half a mile.

AUNT ELLER
You got jist about two minutes to tell Laurey "Good-bye" then.

CURLY
They won't ketch me! Hide me till mornin', Aunt Eller. I cain't let 'em take me now, Aunt Eller!

AUNT ELLER
You'll stay right here till they come! You've already caused enough trouble to last us all out of doomsday. Now then. Ado Annie, come on out in the kitchen, and git yerself sump'n to eat. Bet you're hungry.

ADO ANNIE
I Hain't hungry, Aunt Eller. I jist had a piece of--

AUNT ELLER
Not hungry! Why, you're all fallin' to staves. Feel ever' rib you got! (She shoves Ado Annie out and follows her. As she goes out.) They'll come any minute now.

CURLY (after a moment, not knowing how to begin)
You all right, honey?

LAUREY
Yes. I guess. (She puts her hand to her forehead as if brushing away her darkness.) I git to thinkin'.

CURLY (gently)
I know. Me, too. Thinkin' and thinkin' about you--and be bringin' sich trouble on you. All my fault.

Scene 6--12
LAUREY
Nobody could help it.

CURLY
Listen, Laurey. (She goes to him, questioningly, disturbed at
something in his manner.) I had to see you 'fore the hearin'
tomorrow. That's why I broke out. For what if they'd send
me up, and I not see you for a long time?

LAUREY
Curly! It couldn't be. Don't you say that.

CURLY
Anything can be. You got to be ready.

LAUREY (alarmed)
Have you heared anything, Curly? Tell me, whut'd you hear?

CURLY
Nuthin', honey. Ain't heared nuthin'-but good.

LAUREY (with glad relief)
Oh, it's all right, then!

CURLY (gravely)
That ain't it. I'm shore myself, honey. Er I was shore,
till I broke out. I never thought whut that night do.
But sump'n's always happenin' in this here world. Cain't
count on a thing. So you got to promise me sump'n.
Whatev' ever happens--Whatev' ever it is--you got to bear up,
you hear me? (Smiling.) Why, I'm a purty one to go
a-losin' sleep over, ain't I?

LAUREY (ruefully)
Oh, a fine start we got, ain't it? (With an effort, painfully working
it out in her mind. Oh, I've worried about you, shut up in
that filthy jail--

CURLY
Don't mind about that.

LAUREY
--And I've thought about that awful night, too, till
I thought I'd go crazy--
CURLY
Pore Laurey.

LAUREY
Looked at it time and again, heard it—ringin' in my ears! Cried about it, cried about everthing! A plumb baby! And I've tried to figger out how it ud be if sump'n did happen to you. Didn't know how I could stand it. That was the worst! And men, I tried to figger out how I'd go on. Oh, I've went th'ough it all, Curly, from the start. Now I feel shore of sump'n, anyway—I'll be grewed up—like everybody else. (With conviction) I'll put up wi' ev'rything now. You don't need to worry about me no more. Why, I'll stand it—if they send you to the pen fer life—

CURLY (with mock alarm)
Here! Don't know's I like that very well!

(Laurey bursts out into a peal of amused, hearty, infectious laughter.)

LAUREY
The look on yore face! 'S the first time I laughed in three days!

CURLY (his old self again)
I ain't goin' to no pen fer life—a-poundin' up rocks, and a-wearin' stripes around my legs!

LAUREY
Wouldn't you look purty!

CURLY (with delight)
You air a devil, ain't you? I don't think you even like me.

LAUREY (playfully)
Like you? Oh, I like you a little bit.

(They stand looking at each other, shyly, happily.)
Whur on earth'd you git them clothes you got on?

CURLY (gaily)
Old Mah Peck want and got 'em fer me. Shore a good old man! Thinks the world of you. Shirt come outa Rucker's Dry Goods Store. Brand new, too! He thought I must be a-noedin' clean clothes, I reckon, shot up in that ole jail! My, they's things a-crawlin'
CURLY -- (continued)

there, got legs on both sides! Cell next to min's got a couple of horse thieves into it, the A. H. T. A. caught up by Sequoyah. They gimme a blanket and one of 'em said, "Tain't so purty-fer-nice but it's hell-fer-warm."

LAUREY (amused)
Curly!

CURLY
'Nother coll's got a womn into it that smokes and cusses like a mule driver. Caught her stealin' from the Turf Exchange. Don't know what's got into Indian Territory now! They puttin' everbody in jail--woman and all!

LAUREY
I think you like yer ole jail!

CURLY
Jist rearin' to git back. Cain't wait! Lay back on that arm cot and dream about featherbeds!

LAUREY (softly, happily)
Ever time I pass by the barn lot, ole Dun lopes acrost and nicker's at me, fer all get-out! Shows his teeth. He's satin' about you, I reckon.

CURLY
Oh, he's apt to fall dead of the heaves when he hears about me--settin' in jail 'stid of on the range! Feels like I ain't set in the saddle in a month of Sundays! Listen, Laurey. I been a-thinkin'--Everthing from now on is gonna be different.

LAUREY
Different?

CURLY
It come to me settin' in that cell of mine. (Dreamily, out of a visionary absorption--like a song, growing in intensity.) Oh, I got to learn to be a farmer, I see that! Quit a-thinkin' about dehornin' and brandin' and th'ownin' the rope, and start in to git my hands blistered a new way! Oh, things is changin' right and left!

Scene 6--16
CURLY--(continued)
Buy up mowin' machines, cut down the prairies!
Shoe yer horses, drag them plows under the sod!
They gonna make a state outa this, they gonna put
it in the Union! Country a-changin', got to
change with it! Bring up a pair of boys, 'em stock,
to keep up 'th de way things is goin' in this
here crazy country! Life jist startin' in fer me
now. Work to do! Now I got you to he'p me--I'll
'mount to sump'n yit! Come here, Laurey. Come
here, and tell me "Goodbye" 'fore they come fer me and
take me away.

LAUREY (wrily)
All we do is say "Howdy" and "So long." (Gravely.)
Goodbye, Curly. If you come back tomorrow, I'll
be here a-waitin'. If you don't come back, I'll
be here a-waitin' anyhow.

CURLY
I'll come back, honey. They couldn't hinder me 'th
bird-shot!

LAUREY
Promise me.

CURLY
Oh, I hate to go away and leave you! I cain't.
(He takes her in his arms, hungrily.
After a moment, there are voices
and sounds of an approaching party.
The couple listen breathlessly.)

They're here. Oh, I cain't go, I cain't leave you!

LAUREY (anguishedly, clinging to him)
I cain't let you go. (Aunt Eller comes in.)

AUNT ELLER (gravely)
Well, here they air, I guess. They's a whole
crowd. I seen the lanterns. You all ready, Curly?

CURLY (in anguish)
I guess--I--

AUNT ELLER (tenderly)
Goodbye, honey. I'm sorry it has to be like this.
(There is a knock at the door. Aunt Eller
goes over and calls, her hand on the latch.)
Who is that a-knockin'?

Scene 6--17
VOICE (outside)
It's me, Ed Peck--and I got to see you about--

AUNT ELLER (opening the door, in astonishment)
Why, Mr. Peck! Come on in. Whatta you want around here?

OLD MAN PECK (coming in, his eyes going to Curly)
Curly knows what I want. I've come for him.

AUNT ELLER
YOU have? You ain't no marshal.

OLD MAN PECK
I know. But Mr. Burnett, the federal marshal, deputized me and some of the boys to come out and find Curly and bring him back. Come on, Curly.

AUNT ELLER
Well, I must say! Sidin' with the federal marshal!

OLD MAN PECK
I ain't sidin' with him, Aunt Eller. Curly's hearin' ain't come up yit, and he hadn't no right to run off this-a-way.

AUNT ELLER
No right! Say, looky here, he wanted to see his wife. That ain't agin the law in this country, is it?

OLD MAN PECK
No. But breakin' outa jail is agin the law.

AUNT ELLER (disgusted)
Well, of all the--When'd you go and git so respectful of the law? Looky here, if a law's a good law--it can stand a little breakin'. And then out there--Who's out there? Hey, you all! (She has gone to the window and thrown up the shade.)

Go on home. Nobody's wantin' you around here!

VOICES (outside)
We've come for Curly, Aunt Eller. He got to take him back. (Snickering) He's a plumb criminal, he is, breakin' outa jail this-a-way!

AUNT ELLER
who's that? That you, Zeb? I mighty knowed! Say, you're a purty nuthin'--a ole pig-stealer like you tryin' to represent the govment!
VOICE (outside, offended, protesting)
Who's a pig-stealer?

AUNT ELLER
You air, Mr. Zeb Walkley.

VOICE
I ain't, either!

AUNT ELLER
You air! Why, you gittin' so that--'stid of talkin'--you plumb grunt like a ole sow! And say, Dave Tyler--you'll feel funny when I tell yer wife you're carryin' on 'th another woman, won't you?

VOICE (outside)
I ain't carryin' on 'th no one.

AUNT ELLER
Mebbe not. But you'll shore feel funny when I tell yer wife you air.

VOICES
Now, Aunt Eller, we've come for Curly. We can't stand here and listen to you--Send him on out!

AUNT ELLER (indignantly)
Oh, you'll listen to me! I'm gittin' mad! You can't take Curly, that's all they is to it!

VOICES
We got to, Aunt Eller. He'll git off tomorrow, won't he? Make him come on out, and le's git started!

AUNT ELLER (severely)
All right, if you won't listen to me, I plumb warsh my hands off all of you. I thought you was a fine bunch of neighbors. Now I see you're jist a gang of fools. Tryin' to take a bridegroom away from his bride! Why, the way you're sidin' with the federal marshal, you'd think us people out here lived in the United States! Why, we're territory folks--we ort to hang together. I don't mean hang--I mean stick. What's the United States? It's jist a furrin' country to me. And you supportin' it! Jist dirty ole furriners, ever last one of you!
VOICES (outside, grumbling, protesting)
Now, Aunt Eller, we hain't furriners.
My pappy and mammy was both borned in Indian Territory! Why, I'm jist plumb full of Indian blood myself.
Me too! And I c'n prove it!

AUNT ELLER (full of guile)
Well, maybe you ain't furriners. I must've made a mistake.
(Slyly, smiling.) Anyway, I ain't astin' you to let Curly off. That's up to them ole United Statesers at the hearin'. I mean--you don't have to take Curly back tonight. Take him in the mornin' jist as well.

VOICES (uncertainly)
Well, I don't know--
I ain't no furriner!

What does Mr. Peck say?
He's the boss. Ast him.
I wouldn't wanna stand in the way of lettin' Curly--

AUNT ELLER (triumphantly, to Mr. Peck)
See there! They said it was all right to let him stay tonight.

OLD MAN PECK
No, they didn't.

AUNT ELLER
Did too! Cain't you hear nuthin'? I'll take a black-snake whip to you'.

OLD MAN PECK (sheepishly)
Well, I--If my men is gonna back out on me this-a-way--I reckon I better let Curly stay.

AUNT ELLER (overjoyed)
I knew you'd see daylight, I knewed it, I knowed it!

OLD MAN PECK (self-consciously, not looking at Curly, and twirling his hat in his hands, sheepishly.)
I was young once myself. (He hugs Aunt Eller.

AUNT ELLER
Why, you ole devil! Tell yer wife on you!

Scene 6--20
CURLY
'D you want me to stay, Laurey? (She backs away, flushed and embarrassed and joyous at the same time, flings an arm about his neck and kisses him quickly, whirls over to Old Man Peck, gives him a quick hug and flies into her room. Curly grins and starts after her.

OLD MAN PECK (as Curly reaches the door)
Curly. I'll be here right after breakfast to fetch you.
I'll be here bright and early.

(Curly goes in. The door shuts.)

AUNT ELLER (slyly, owlishly)
Well, not too early. (Then gravely.) Younguns has a turrible time, don't they? (She throws it off.)
Oh, well--they git to be old timers soon enough. Too soon.
(She shows Mr. Peck out with a lantern. She marches over to the window, calling out)
Hey, you all! Go on home. They ain't nuthin' you c'n do around here. Curly's stayin'!

(She jerks the shade down.)
(The voices outside exclaim delightedly and move away. From the bedroom has come the sound of Curly beginning to sing softly, "Green Grow the Lilacs."

AUNT ELLER (going to the window)
Mr. Peck! (With delight.) Listen to that fool cow-puncher! His weddin' night--and there he is singin'!

CURTAIN

THE END

Scene 6--21
Glossary

dogies—specifically, an orphaned calf, but used often, affectionately, as a synonym for cattle.
shikepoke—a mythical Middle West bird, whose activities (unprintable) are embarrassing to everyone.
A term of opprobrium.
side meat—bacon
maverick—an unbranded, and hence ownerless, calf or steer.
off-ox—the ox on the off-side (the right side) of the wagon tongue.
bronc buster—a rider of bucking bronchos.
bull-dogger—one who leaps off a running horse, swings on the horns of a bull or steer, and throws and ties him.
stove arm—that is, stove iron, or handle for lifting the lids.
tetchin' leather—to ride a bronc without touching leather is to ride without hanging on to the saddle horn or any other part of the saddle.
yellin' calf-ropes—to yell calf-ropes signifies defeat.
to change the green lilacs to the red, white and blue—means, "I'm going to join the army."
string-halted—a corruption of spring-halted, a convulsive movement of the hind legs of a horse.
Dan Patch—a celebrated racing horse, a pacer.
jick—the joker in a deck of cards.
bottom—that is, river bottom, the low land along a river.
backwater—the water backed up, from being unable to empty into a swollen stream now higher than its tributaries.
shivores—a corruption of the French charivari, a wedding celebration.
the A. H. T. A.—the Anti-Horse Thief Association.