

S762(5)

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 Cheatham 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  
Jeeter Fry  
Ado Annie Carnes  
A Pedler  
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 focussing to keep alive a loveliness 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 settee, 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:

Voice:

As I walked out one bright sunny morning,  
I saw a cowboy way out on the plain.  
His hat was thrown back and his spurs was a-jingling,  
And as I passed by him, he was singing this refrain:

Ta whoop ti aye ay, 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 ay, 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.

(Their 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' whut 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?

CURLY

And you c'n 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. Whut 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 man 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 cain'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 et cat-gut.  
And even 'f I drunk the gall of a turkey  
gobbler's liver, I couldn't sing a-tall.

AUNT ELLER

Liar and a hypocrite and a shikepoke! Ain't  
I heared you? Jist now. You sing! Er  
run you off the place.

CURLY

I cain't sing, I told you! 'Ceptin' when I'm lonesome. Out in the saddle when it ain't so sunny, er on a dark night close to a fa'r 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 cain'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 seven verses and a chorus 'tween ever' verse. Fer as fur as I s'n make out, Laurey ain't payin' you no heed a-tall. You might jist 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 dehorned 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'eres else, don't she?

CURLY

How'd I know? Ain't looked at her nary 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 Ofn' Ox? You've got onto the wrong side of the wagon tongue!

CURLY

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



AUNT ELLER

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 miss 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? Whar'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 ELLER

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 ELLER

Party as a pitcher.

CURLY

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

AUNT ELLER (agreeing)

Couldn't stop a pig in the road.

CURLY

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

AUNT ELLER

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

CURLY

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

AUNT ELLER (triumphantly)

You better sing me a song then, like I told you to in the first place!

CURLY

Aw, whut'll I sing then?

AUNT ELLER

"A-ridin' ole Paint."

CURLY

And nen whut'll I sing?

AUNT ELLER

Lands, you better git one sung 'fore you start in  
on another 'n'

(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 hoolian.  
They feed in the hollers and they water in the draw,  
Their tails are all matted 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 bones 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 whur's Laurey at?

AUNT ELLER (pointing)

Settin' in there in her room a-sewin' er 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 whut 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 ast if Laurey  
ud go with me.

AUNT ELLER

And me, too, huh?

CURLY

Yeow, 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)

Who'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 knowed it was me'fore you opened the door.

LAUREY

No sich of a thing.

CURLY

You did, too! You heard my voice and knowed  
it was me.

LAUREY

I did not, I tell you! Heard a voice a-talkin'  
rumbly along with Aunt Eller. And heard 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 ain't  
so special. All men sounds alike to me.

CURLY (doggedly)

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

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 bran' new surrey with fringe on the top four inches long--and yeller! And two white horses a-rarin' and faunchin' 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, winkin' 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!

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 outa my head--

LAUREY

What! Made it up?

CURLY

Dashboard and all!

LAUREY (flying at him)

Oh! Git outa the house, you! Aunt Eller,  
make him git hisself outa here 'fore I take  
a stove arn 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 whut 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.

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 sump'n. A womern that won't let you tetch her 'th a ten foot pole like that is jist 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. Guss I better be movin' my camp some'eres else.

AUNT ELLER

No, look here, Curly. I've knowed Laurey 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 whutever I tell you about her way of feelin' is the truth. Er if it ain't, I'll give her a eve-lastin' good speakin', nen it will be! Fer I don't know whur 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 broncs all in one evenin', 'thout tetchin' leather er yellin' calf-rope. 'Member?

CURLY (feeling a little better)

Yeah, I remember. Mean as sin they was, too? That one-eyed un 'th the 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, onct I break 'em, they're purty apt to stay broke, fer a fact. (cryptically.)

You c'n count on a horse.

CURLY -- continued

(Suddenly,  
Look here, Aunt Eller, I wanta know sump'n  
and if you lie to me, I'll ketch thirteen  
biggy-eyed toad-frogs and put 'em in yer bed--

AUNT ELLER  
Laws a-mercy!

CURLY  
Er make you 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  
Listea, what low, filthy, sneakin' man 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 c'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?



AUNT ELLER

Ain't no one a--sparkin' her. Well, they is that ole widder man at Claremore, makes out he's a doctor er a vet'nary. And that fine farmer, Jace Hutchins, jist this side of Lone Ellum--

CURLY

That's whut 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 alwys 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 hisself. 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.

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  
some'eres, don't he?

AUNT ELLER

Out in the smoke-house.

CURLY

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

AUNT ELLER (slyly)

Thought you'd moved yer camp some'eres 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 er 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.

(He goes over and looks out after him.)

Why ain't he a-workin'?

AUNT ELLER  
It's Satiddy.

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

AUNT ELLER  
It's his house. Used t be the dog house.

CURLY (Chuckling)  
That's the place fer 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 sich 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 jist 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.

(He swings off the organ stool,  
miraculously healed, and makes for  
the door.)

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.

AUNT ELLER (puzzled)  
Whur Jeeter's at?

CURLY  
Yeow, whur Jeeter's at. Thought mebba 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

## SCENE TWO

Laurey'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. Nen I'd look like sump'n crawled out of a hole.

AUNT ELLER

I ain't got time to listen to sich 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 yistiddy. Them buttercups.  
In the meader back of the wheat field--walkin'  
in the tall grass and the sumakes, 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 always 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

Whut's that got to do with the White House and livin' in California?

LAUREY

Who said anything about California?

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'll come afoot. Gracie Denham will come all the way from Catoosie to be there, I bet. When she married Dan Denham, everbody 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

Whut's funny about it?

LAUREY

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

(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. Onct is quite a plenty. (She chortles 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 no way out of it, I reckon.  
Well, me'n Curly, we'll make out--

LAUREY (quietly, strangely)  
Onct 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-husterical 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 womern cried,  
and said whut 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

Whut 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. Sylvie Roberts has got  
a new kind of a shoe with high heels onto 'em  
like stilts--and I ain't got none.

AUNT ELLER

You'd shore look purty a-wearin' stilts--  
like a sandhill crane a-wadin' shaller water!  
That ain't whut's a-worryin' you, though --

LAUREY

I thought it was. Listen to that mockin'  
bird a-singin'!  
Ever' 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 'possums  
live, don't you? And the way we set around in  
the evenings in thrashin' time, a-eatin' mush-  
melons and singin', and oh! lots of things!  
Runnin' to the cellar in a storm, and them yeller  
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 air 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 ta lkin'  
about leavin' here?

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 outa 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

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LAUREY

Well, I told you, anyway--

AUNT ELLER

Git 'em ready!

LAUREY

You don't have to listen.

AUNT ELLER

Whut 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 whut you're a-meanin'.

LAUREY

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

AUNT ELLER

Not gonna look, I tell you!

LAUREY

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

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  
Whut'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

Onct 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, "Iknowed 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.

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  
YOOhoo! 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  
door 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  
if of red gingham, and very unbecoming.

LAUREY  
Hi, yerself. Ridin' a piece?

ADO ANNIE (non-committally)  
Rode over yere.

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 womern a  
egg-beater that wasn't no good? Ado Annie Carnes,  
I'm plum ashamed of you! You ort to be strapped.

ADO ANNIE

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.

LAUREY

Whut was you gonna ast me, then?

ADO ANNIE

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

LAUREY

Course I am.

ADO ANNIE

Well.

LAUREY

Don't I go to all the parties?

ADO ANNIE

I guess, You got fellers, lots of fellers.

LAUREY

Three hundred and fifty.

ADO ANNIE

Oh, you ain't!

LAUREY

Oh, I have.

ADO ANNIE

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

LAUREY

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 is that man! (She rushes to the door, in a fever of delight.) Aunt Eller, 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 freezin' to death 'cause of pedlers runnin' off and leavin' 'em 'thout no kindlin' er nothin'--

ADO ANNIE

Aw!

LAUREY

A man told me! Shore as shootin'!! He knowed a Eskimo womern that a pedler up there went off and left, and she had to sell her hair--a hundred

LAUREY--continued  
hairs at a time--jist 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 did?

LAUREY  
The womern!

ADO ANNIE  
My goodness!

(AUNT ELLER and the PEDLER come in.  
He is a little wiry, swarthy Syrian,  
neatly dressed, and with a red ban-  
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 Laurey!

(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

Growed up, and sich a be-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 er sump'n.

(But she is a little pleased, in  
spite of herself.)

PEDLER

Angel cake, that's jist whut you air! Angel  
cake, and jist hot outa the oven!

LAUREY

My, Listen at him! Shet 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, whut 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 things for to wear. Wouldn't have it.  
Whur is it?

PEDLER

You wait. I'll show you.

AUNT ELLER

Biggest liar I ever knowed! 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!

**AUNT ELLER**

Lands, 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 ecstasy)**

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 vine!

**AUNT ELLER (from her corner)**

Give her a cake of soap.

**LAUREY (her mood rising)**

Want things I c'n 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 cut glass sugar bowl. Want things I caint tell you about. Caint see 'em clear. Things nobody ever heard 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.

LAUREY (taking them)  
Jist whut I was a-wantin'---

PEDLER  
Try 'em on.

LAUREY  
Fer Ado Annie.

ADO ANNIE (overcome)  
Aw!

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 Egyp'! 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.

LAUREY

Let me see it. C'm here, 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, hidery 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, hidery 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, hidery 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 whut you're adoin' 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 came 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 Jeeter 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.

JENTER sits in a low chair looking at some post-cards, 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:

JEETER  
Well, cain't you open it?

(CURLY opens the door and comes in.)

CURLY  
Howdy--

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

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

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

JETER  
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?

JETER  
Yes, I did.

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

JETER (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.

JETER  
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.

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

CURLY (facetiously)  
Thought you was balin' hay.

JEEETER  
How's that?

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

JEEETER  
Cain't see that that's none of yore business.

CURLY  
I know you didn't steal it.

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

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

JEEETER  
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, Jeeter.

JEEETER  
I could--what?

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, er less, with good luck, you'd be dead as a door nail.

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

CURLY

The folks ud all getner 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 penitentiary 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.  
(Looking about the room.)

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

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

JEETER

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.

CURLY

Why, my name's Curly. Thought you knowed. Curly McClain. Born on a farm in Kansas. Cowpuncher by trade and by profession. I break brones, 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 womern, 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 sich a pitcher around.

JEETER

Whut's wrong with it?

CURLY

I never seen sich a pitcher! That ud give me idys, that would!

JEETER (at home now and at ease with his guest)  
Shucks, that ain't a thing to whut 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?

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

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

JEETER  
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.

JEETER  
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. JEETER  
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?

JEETER  
Good uns. Colt 45.

CURLY  
Whut do you do 'th pistols?

JEETER  
Shoot things.

CURLY  
Oh. You deal.

JEETER  
No, you deal.

CURLY  
Shore, I'll deal.

(he shuffles the cards and begins to deal.)

Is this draw?

JEETER  
Suit yerself.

CURLY  
Draw, then. With the Jick, and not the left Jack.  
It's yore 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, beatin'  
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'

CURLY--continued

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 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 black-jacks. I could smell them green walnuts, too, whenever old Dun ud tromp on 'em. Shore the purtiest mornin' in a long time! Felt like hollerin' and shoutin'. I raired 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 shet up in a dark hole bent over a table a-fingerin' a pack of cards '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 Jeeter, Jeeter frowning and strangely excited. Suddenly a dog begins barking angrily. Jeeter goes to the door quickly and looks out.)

JEETER

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 onct killed a girl.  
He'd been keepin' comp'ny w th 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  
the water all covered with blood, dead. They never  
did find out who done it. But I met up with a  
man onct 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 throwed 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.



JEETER

This man was a married farmer, and he knowed 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 throwed 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.)

CURLY

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 come here to work fer the Williams',  
whur did you work?

JEETER (hostile again)

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

CURLY

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

JEETER

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

CURLY

Whut'd they do?

JEETER

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)

Whut 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,  
fer 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 ruther go with you. I step out--cheerful as anything. You're welcome. (Thoughtfully.) Only--somebody ort to tell her whut you air. And fer that matter somebody ort to tell you onct about yerself.

JEETER

I've had jist about enough!

CURLY

If you'd like to do anything to me, now's the best chanct 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 knowed you fer 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 bresh some- 'eres and heard a rattlesnake many a time. Rattle, rattle, rattle!--he'd go, skeered to death. Skeered--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! Fer as long's you live in a hole, you're skeered, you got to have perfection. You c'n have muscles, oh, like arn--and still be as weak as a empty bladder--less'n you got things to barb yer hide with. (Suddenly, harshly, directly to Jeeter.) How'd you git to be the way you air, anyway--settin' here in this filthy hole--and thinkin' the way you're thinkin'? Why don't you do sump'n healthy onct in a while, 'stid of stayin' shet up here a-crawlid and festerin'!

JEETER

Shet up, you!

CURLY

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

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 skeerin' everybody to death! You've give that  
ole turkey gobbler conniption fits. Ort to give you  
a good Dutch rub and arn some of the craziness 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.

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 orta 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 knowed I could do it. You saw it, too, didn't you? Somebody's comin', I 'spect. It's my play, ain't it?

(He throws down a card. Jeeter looks at the floor. Laurey, Aunt Eller, and the Pedler, followed a moment later by Ado Annie, came running in at the door without knocking.)

AUNT ELLER (gasping for breath)

Whut'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?

Scene 3--15

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 pedler 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 dinguses 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. Steal 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?

JEETER (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. 'F you  
got it in Claremore, you know whut you pay? Twice  
my price, jist twice. 'F you could get it. That's  
a good frog-sticker, that is, and I'm sellin' it  
cheap to you, Mr. Jeeter--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 jist 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 home-made 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 wall 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.

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 an'  
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'ar  
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.

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 always 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?

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 JEETER, ADO ANNIE and LAUREY.

JEETER 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. Peck.

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.

JEETER (stopping her)

I wanta see you.

LAUREY (a little frightened)

Well, here I am, so look yer eyes full.

JEETER

Ado Annie, go inside.

LAUREY (grabbing her)

Ado Annie, you stay here a minute.

ADO ANNIE (pulling loose)

Shoot! I wanta see 'f I cain't git me a pardner,  
'fore they're all gone.

(She dashes in.)

JEETER

Whut'd you ast that Ado Annie to ride with us fer?

LAUREY

She didn't have no way to go.

JEETER

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

LAUREY

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

JEETER

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

LAUREY (impatiently)

Well, now 'at I am, whut'd you want?

JEETER

Nuthin'--but---

LAUREY

Well, fer land's-a-livin'!  
Of all the crazies!

(She makes for the door.)

SCENE IV--6

JEETER (getting in front of the door)  
Mornin's you stay hid in yer room all the time.  
Nights you set in the front room and won't git  
outa 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 whut you mean.

JEETER (as before)  
Last time it was winter 'the 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  
ast me 'f I had any fever and you put yer hand on  
my head to see. Why'd you do that? Whut'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 le' me alone!

JEETER  
You've kep' outa my way, and kep' outa 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)

LAUREY (in revulsion)  
Oh!

(She turns her head aside, frightened  
and shaken.)

JEETER  
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!

JEETER (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 tetch you!  
You're better, so goddamned much better!  
Yeah, we'll see who's better--we'll see who's  
better, Miss Laurey! Nen you'll wish 't you  
wasn't so free 'th yer airs, you're sich a  
fine lady--!

LAUREY (suddenly so angry, all her fear vanishes)  
Air you makin' threats--to me? Air you standin'  
there 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  
a mangy 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. Jeeter! You ain't a h'ard  
hand fer me, no more! You c'n 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!



JEETER (standing quite still, absorbed, dark, his voice low)  
Said yer say. Brought it on yerself. (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?

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!

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

A MAN (coming out boisterously)  
Here, 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 before,  
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)  
Whoa, whoa, back, Maud! My, you're like a gang of mule colts! Quiet down, cain't you, they ain't no a-stoppin' you! Wanta tell you sump'n!

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

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 cain'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?

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-  
thing 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 prairie!  
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 manny!

OLD MAN PECK (humorously)

Aw, I'm bashful 's a blushin' bride! Anyways,  
all I know is sad songs, make you cry. No, cain't  
I git someone else--how 'bout you, Lizzie?

CROWD

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

OLD MAN PECK

Tell you whut 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

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

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."

Then tears filled the eyes of the blue-eyed boy  
And his kind heart filled with pain--  
"I'll do your bidding, my comrade 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 come to the crest of the hill  
Where the Indians shot like hail,  
They poured death's volley on Custer's men,  
And scalped them 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."

Sump'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 she earth or change she sky,  
Yet will I love her till I die.

CROWD (applauding)

Sing another'n, Curly.

You shore fooled us. Funny song fer you to be a-singin'!

Now, Aunt Eller--

Aunt Eller, come on, you, it's yore time.

AUNT ELLER

Ketch me a-singin'! Got a frog in my throat--  
I'm t'ard, too. Got a kotch in my leg and  
cain't sing. Land's alive! Whyn'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--

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'eat'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 keer for me,  
But my thoughts are always of him  
Wherever he may be.

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



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 Godamighty--!

LAUREY

Don't mind me a-cryin', I cain't he'p it--

CURLY  
Jesus! Cry yer eyes out--!

LAUREY  
Oh, I don't know whut 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--

CURLY (grinning at her, understandingly)  
You do, do you?

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

CURLY  
Laurey, now looky here, you stand over there  
right whur you air, and I'll set over here--  
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 Eller 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 fer  
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 what! 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 wanta 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!

(He leads her over, and lifts her up on the stove. Then he lets down the oven door and sits on it, at her feet.)

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 the 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?"

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)

Anh, 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 anywhurs near no Sweet Williams and  
wild roses. No sir! No sich luck! I'll find  
myself 'th my face plowin' up a patch of cuckle  
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, whut'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, eh, 'th red stripes onto it, and  
'nitals stitched inside of a bleedin' heart on the  
corner? Whut's the use of gettin' married, don't

Scene 4--22

CURLY -- (continued)

git a saddle blanket er 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 hissself 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 whut 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 skilletts, and I don't know whut'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.)

LAUREY

Whut'reyou 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! Whut'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 feller like you, Curly?

AUNT ELLER (appearing)

Land sakes, I feel turrrible! 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--

Laurey clinging to him. (He lifts the bottle, darkly, insultingly, and hurls it across the yard, where it breaks with a loud crash. Curly starts toward him angrily, 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.)



CROWD (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 sickle. 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 fer  
shore nobody seen us gittin' hitched.

LAUREY

They mighta s'pected sump'n, though.  
(Her voice low.) That's the ketch about  
gittin' married--

CURLY (reassuringly)

But here we air, honey. Married--and  
putt' 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 womern--"?

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.)

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,  
nen the truck garden and the timber. Ever'thing  
laid out fine and jim dandy! 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 stubble, and disappear. There  
is a moment of silence.

(Then there is a subdued titter, followed  
by shishing 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 instru-  
ments--tin lids, pots, washboilers, cow  
bells, gourd rattles, tambourines, pans  
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 "shivoree", 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! Whee! (Hushing them.)  
Quiet down now! They'll hear you 'fore they  
git to the house!

9th MAN  
Tee hee! Bet they'll go to bed in the dark!  
(Laughter)

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

1st MAN  
Sh!

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

3rd MAN  
Whee! 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 ELAM  
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!

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 came on!

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

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

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

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 yander towards  
the Verdigrée River!

(He goes out.)  
(A young farmer, flushed and drinking,  
staggers darkly out of the gloom.)

YOUNG FARMER  
Bridegroom a-waitin' and a-waitin'! Don't you  
wait now, Mr. Bridegroom! The moon's a-shinin'!  
Yer time has come! 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.)



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, beating 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 foot 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  
Wathh it!

10th MAN  
Put yer foot in the right place.

CORD ELAM  
Don't wanta fall and break yer neck--cheat  
pore Curly outa 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.)  
'Fyou 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.

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 cain't he'p it--

(He takes her in his arms. The  
men break out into derisive and  
lascivious guffaws, and begin the  
deafening noises agin, 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 mens 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, sugar, all  
safe and proper, to sich a fine purty man with  
curly hair and a dimple on his chin! Whee! 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 idys, 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! Fer 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 Jeeter.)

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 Jeeter's hand.)

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

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

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 whimpers and lies very still.)

CURLY  
Now, now--Christ--

(He shakes his hand, crazily, helplessly, in horror.)

Look at--look at him! Fell on it--Stuck  
it th'ough his ribs!

(He backs away, shaken, horrified. Some of the men bend over the prostrate man.)

YOUNG FARMER  
Pull that knife out!

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

9th MAN (wildly)  
Anh, it's went right th'ough his heart--

4th MAN  
Whut'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 man staggers 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 smake him!

3rd MAN  
Hold on to him careful, there!

5th MAN  
Godamighty! Whut a thing to happen!  
(They carry him out.)

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 fer 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

whyn't they do sump'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 SIX

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.

AUNT ELLER (in astonishment)  
In the name of Doodlebug--whut air you a-doin'?

ADO ANNIE (looking up from her work)  
Makin' a button-hole, cain't you see?

AUNT ELLER  
A round button-hole?

ADO ANNIE  
Course.

AUNT ELLER (amused)  
Whyn'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 ner 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 whut I said.

AUNT ELLER (slightly irritated)  
I heared 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 floursacks 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.

AUNT ELLER

Anh, but trouble starts nohow, so you might  
jist as well git married as to not.

ADO ANNIE (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 yer face. Wish't they'd git  
it over with, that's whut 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 ain'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. Them town fools!  
First the shivoreein'--that was bad enough. And on  
top of it--Jeeter. Now Laurey all broke up, and  
Curly settin' in the cooler at Claremore. Shore a  
happy weddin', I must say. Why, them two ain't rally  
married yit.

ADO ANNIE (her mouth open)

Ain't they married, Aunt Eller!

AUNT ELLER

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

ADO ANNIE

Naw, 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 roas'n'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?

(The door slides back and Laurey stands  
there in the lamplight, looking  
very pale and changed, years older,  
a woman now.)

LAUREY

I cain't sleep--so--they ain't no sense in goin' to  
bed. (She comes down into the room.) Whut're you  
makin', Ado Annie?

ADO ANNIE

Me a dress. Ain't it purty?

LAUREY

Yes. (Gravelly.) Aunt Eller, did they--Whut 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.

LAUREY

Curly ort to a-let 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 nuthin', 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 nuthin' 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 everybody feels about shivoreein'. They got a right to it somehow. And a thing like this a-happenin' in the middle of a shivoree--why, it looks bad, that's all. But Curly'll go free. Why, it's only been three days. They jist got to git everthing straight.

(She gestures to indicate freedom and happiness for them both.)

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 outa 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 fergot it, I tell you! 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.

LAUREY (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 naw--

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 there--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 naw. 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 Lem 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 yeller  
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 womern. 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 sich 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 sich 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.



LAUREY  
I don't want it.

AUNT ELLER  
Eat it, I said.

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

AUNT ELLER  
Now, who could that--(She stands up, looks at  
Laurey, questioningly.) This hour of night--  
(Laurey stands up, quite still, straight  
and pale.)

LAUREY  
Curly--

AUNT ELLER  
Couldn't be Curly, 'th ole Shep a-actin' up like  
a--He's stopped barkin'.  
(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  
tranced state--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.  
(She picks up a shovel standing in the  
fireplace. She calls out sharply.)

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! Whutta you mean tryin' to skeer us wall-eyed?

ADO ANNIE (astonished)

Why, it's Curly!

AUNT ELLER (gaily)

Naw! It's Sandy Claus, cain't you see nuthin'! They've let him off! I knowed they would, I knowed it, I knowed 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 they? Curly! Tell me and be quick, I--

CURLY

No. They ain't let me off.

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 heard 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 acrost the back of the--

AUNT ELLER

Whut air you jabberin' about? (Light dawning on her.)  
Oh! I mighta knowed a curly-headed cowhand like him ud come to a bad 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 plumb 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 Eller, 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?

CURLY  
My wife.

AUNT ELLER  
Yeow? Well, call her that 'f it does you any good.  
How fur 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.

LAUREY  
Nobody could he'p 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. Fer whut if they'd send me up, and I not see you fer 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 might 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. Whutever happens--whatever 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, shet 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 agsin, 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 growed up--like everbody else. (With conviction) I'll put up with everthing 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 went 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-needin' clean clothes, I reckon, ~~set~~ 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 womern into it that smokes and  
cusses like a mule driver. Caught her stealin' from  
the Turf Exchange. Don't know whut's got into  
Indian Territory nohow! They puttin' everbody in  
jail--women and all!

LAUREY  
I think you like yer ole jail!

CURLY  
Jist rairin' to git back. Cain't wait! Lay back on  
that arn cot and dream about featherbeds!

LAUREY (softly, happily)  
Ever time I pass by the barn lot, ole Dun lopes  
acrost and nickers at me, fer all get-out! Shows  
his teeth. He's astin' 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'owin' the rope, and start in to git my hands blistered  
a new way! Oh, things is changin' right and left!

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, new stock,  
to keep up 'th the 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 (wryly)

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'?



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. Whutta you want around here?

OLD MAN PECK (coming in, his eyes going to Curly)  
Curly knows whut I want. I've come fer 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 them 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 fer Curly, Aunt Eller. We 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 mighta knowed! Say, you're a purty nuthin'--a ole pig-stealer like you tryin' to represent the govament!

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 womern, 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 f'er Curly.  
We cain'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  
cain'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, 'f you won't listen to me, I plumb warsh  
my hands of 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 cuntry 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 musta 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 wanta 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 knowed you'd see daylight, I knowed it, I knowed it!

OLD MAN PECK (self-consciously, not looking at Curly,  
and twirling his hat in his hands, sheepishly.)  
I was young onct myself. (He hugs Aunt Eller.)

AUNT ELLER  
Why, you ole devil! Tell yer wife on you!

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, owlshly)

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

## 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-rope--to yell calf-rope signifies defeat.
- to change the green lilacs to the red, white and blue--means, "I'm going to join the army."
- string-haltered--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 pack 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.
- shivoree--a corruption of the French charivari, a wedding celebration.
- the A. H. T. A.--the Anti-Horse Thief Association.