SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

This sample is an *excerpt* from a Samuel French title.

This sample is for perusal only and may not be used for performance purposes.

You may not download, print, or distribute this excerpt.

We highly recommend purchasing a copy of the title before considering for performance.

For more information about licensing or about purchasing a play or musical, please visit our website.

www.samuelfrench.com
www.samuelfrench.co.uk

SF PERUSALS

Green Grow the Lilacs

A Play

by Lynn Riggs

A Samuel French Acting Edition

New York Hollywood London Toronto

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that *GREEN GROW THE LILACS* is subject to a Licensing Fee. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. In its present form the play is dedicated to the reading public only.

The amateur live stage performance rights to *GREEN GROW THE LILACS* are controlled exclusively by Samuel French, Inc., and licensing arrangements and performance licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur Licensing Fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a licensing quotation and a performance license please give us the number of performances intended, dates of production, your seating capacity and admission fee. Licensing Fees are payable one week before the opening performance of the play to Samuel French, Inc., at 45 W. 25th Street, New York, NY 10010.

Licensing Fee of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

Stock licensing fees quoted upon application to Samuel French, Inc.

For all other rights than those stipulated above, apply to: Samuel French, Inc.

Particular emphasis is laid on the question of amateur or professional readings, permission and terms for which must be secured in writing from Samuel French, Inc.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced the following notice must appear on all programs, printing and advertising for the play: "Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc."

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

ISBN 978-0-573-60962-6 Printed in U.S.A. #493

To

BARRETT H. CLARK

PREFACE

This reading version of *Green Grow the Lilacs* is a little fuller, a little more complete, especially in Scenes Five and Six, than the version so admirably produced by the Theatre Guild.

It must be fairly obvious from reading or seeing the play that it might have been subtitled *An Old Song*. The intent has been solely to recapture in a kind of nostalgic glow (but in dramatic dialogue more than in song) the great range of mood which characterized the old folk songs and ballads I used to hear in my Oklahoma childhood—their quaintness, their sadness, their robustness, their simplicity, their hearty or bawdy humors, their sentimentalities, their melodrama, their touching sweetness.

For this reason it seemed wise to throw away the conventions of ordinary theatricality—a complex plot, swift action, etc.—and try to exhibit luminously, in the simplest of stories, a wide area of mood and feeling. This could only be done, it seemed to me, by exploring the characters as deeply as possible, simple though they appeared to be, hoping to stumble on, if lucky, the always subtle, always strange compulsions under which they labor and relate themselves to the earth and to other people.

In the interests of this design, I thought of the first three scenes as *The Characters*, the last three scenes as *The Play*. After the people are known (and I think they

are known by the end of Scene Three, or I should never permit the play to be published) I let them go ahead acting out their simple tale, which might have been the substance of an ancient song.

My beliefs anyway, I find, about the nature of true drama run counter to the current notions about it. Two people in a room, agreeing or not agreeing, are to me truly dramatic. The edges of their being can never be in accord; psychically, as well as physically, they are assailed by an opposing radiation. And the nature of the flow of spirit from each determines both the quality of their conflict, and the shape of their story. This flow may be violent or comic or tender; it may be one-sided, subtle, maddeningly recluse.

And the dramatist, it seems to me, has no business to interfere just for the sake of making a "play," in its present—and idiotic—meaning. That he may be tempted to do so is lamentable, but not surprising—the rewards are great. But if he takes his work seriously, he will face his problems in a limbo beyond the knowledge of applause. His role will continue to be humility and abnegation.

And sometime, his characters may do stirring things he could never have calculated. And sometime, if he is fortunate, he may hear from the people he has set in motion (as Shakespeare and Chekhov often heard) things to astonish him and things to make him wise.

LYNN RIGGS.

The following is a copy of the program of the first performance of "GREEN GROW THE LILACS," as produced at the Guild Theatre, New York, Monday evening, January 26, 1931.

THE THEATRE GUILD, INC.

PRESENTS

GREEN GROW THE LILACS

A Folk-Play in Six Scenes

By LYNN RIGGS

PRODUCTION DIRECTED BY HERBERT J. BIBERMAN

SETTINGS DESIGNED BY RAYMOND SOVEY

CAST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

CURLY MCCLAIN ..... *Franchot Tone*

AUNT ELLER MURPHY ..... *Helen Westley*

LAUREY WILLIAMS ..... *June Walker*

JEETER FRY ..... *Richard Hale*

ADO ANNIE CARNES ..... *Ruth Chorpenning*

A PEDDLER ..... *Lee Strasberg*

OLD MAN PECK ..... *Tex Cooper*

A COWBOY ..... *Woodward Ritter*

ANOTHER COWBOY ..... *Paul Ravell*
(*Courtesy of David Guion*)

AN OLD FARMER ..... *William T. Hays*

A YOUNG FARMER ..... *A. L. Bartolot*

MARTHY ..... *Jane Alden*

FIDDLER ..... *William Chosnyk*

BANJO PLAYER ..... *Everett Cheetham*

OTHER FARMERS ..... *Carl Beasley, Joe Wilson, Roy Ketcham, Gordon Bryant, Everett Cheetham, Elmo Carr, Tommy Pladgett.*

COWBOYS ..... *Slim Cavanaugh, Chick Hannan, Norton Worden, Jack Miller, Pete Schwartz, J. B. Hubbard.*

GIRLS ..... *Jean Wood, Lois Lindon, Orlanda Lee, Alice Frost, Faith Hope, Eleanor Powers, Peggy Hannan.*

Green Grow the Lilacs is laid in Indian Territory in 1900. Oklahoma, which was admitted to the Union as a state in 1907, was formed by combining Indian and Oklahoma Territories.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

SCENE 1—The Williams' farm houses.

SCENE 2—The same, showing Laurey's bedroom.

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

INTERMISSION

SCENE 4—The porch of Old Man Peck's house.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PEOPLE

CURLY MCCLAIN
AUNT ELLER MURPHY
LAUREY WILLIAMS
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 throwed 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 I'll 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 'leven verses and a chorus 'tween ever' verse. Fer as fur as I c'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 Off 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 muss up his curly hair, er keep him warm on a winter's night!

CURLY (*swelling up, defensively*)

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

AUNT 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

Purty 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

Anh! 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 heared my voice and knowed it was me.

LAUREY

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

CURLY

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

LAUREY

Bull-frog in a pond, I told you. But how'd I know it was you, Mr. Curly McClain? You 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 tell 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. 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' 'f 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 dyin' 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 *heared* no rules to be accordin' *to*. Guess 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 everlastin' good spankin', 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. (*Suddenly.*) Look here, Aunt Eller, I wanta know sump'n and if you lie to me, I'll ketch thirteen bulgy-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

Listen, whut 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 orta 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 fambly, 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 olack 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 to 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 of 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, be-*

yond 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 h'ard 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 mebbe 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 be-

fore 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 alwys so lazy, I must say.

LAUREY

Dance at yer weddin'.

AUNT ELLER

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

LAUREY

You don't?

AUNT ELLER (*wisely*)

Yes, I do.

LAUREY (*cryptically*)

I thought you did.

[*Silence.* AUNT ELLER *fills the vase.* LAUREY *combs her hair slowly, and begins to sing.*

One morning as I rambled o'er
The fields I took my way
In hopes of meeting my miner boy
And for a while to stray,

In hopes 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 Californie?

LAUREY

Who said anything about Californie?

AUNT ELLER (*whistles*)

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

LAUREY

Who is?

AUNT ELLER

Curly. Him and Jeeter.

LAUREY (*as if she hadn't heard*)

Bet they'll be a hundred people at Peck's. They'll come in buggies and surries, a-horseback, in the wagon, and some'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.*) 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?

FINISH READING THIS SCRIPT

Visit our website to purchase the full script or to explore other titles.

www.samuelfrench.com
www.samuelfrench.co.uk

To stay up to date on all that we are doing, follow us on social media:

*Titles for licensing are subject to availability depending on your territory.

SF PERUSALS