

FEUDIN', FIGHTIN' & FUSSIN'

by Le Roma Greth



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SYNOPSIS: Travel to Polecat County with the smug Mrs. Lucius Q. Snodgrass and her distinguished assistant, William Bishop III. They want to bring culture to Polecat County in the form of a library. With the exception of Widow Kendall and her family, the townsfolk don't want a library, they want a recreation hall. Mrs. Snodgrass announces to the community that it will be a library or nothing and struts away leaving Mr. Bishop in charge of the marketing and design plans. Intent on selling the idea of a library to Paw Fernheiser, the leader of the pro-recreation hall faction, Bill Bishop visits the Fernheisers and meets the love of his life, Lizzie Fernheiser. With stars in his eyes, Bill forgets about the library and agrees to build the new Polecat County Recreation Hall. When Widow Kendall finds out about their plans, the Fernheisers decide to hold her captive until the framing is complete. Everybody's happy except poor Widow Kendall and of course, Mrs. Snodgrass, who arrives to find the ugliest recreation hall this side of the Mississippi. Bill is fired on the spot and arrangements are made to tear down the hall until Lizzie comes to the rescue and saves both the recreation hall and her man, Bill. After all, reading is recreation, right? Now let's explain that to Mrs. Snodgrass.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8 females, 4 males, extras)

ZEKE KENDALL (m).....An eighteen year-old hillbilly boy. Zeke is neither too bright nor too handsome. He wears ragged pants, suspenders and a faded plaid shirt throughout the play. No shoes. *(89 lines)*

BETTY SU FERNHEISER (f).....This lively eighteen year-old hillbilly girl is in love with Zeke, but she's been unable to get him to "pop the question" in all the years they've gone steady. For Act One, Scenes 1

and 2, she wears what would be considered her “good” dress. It is obviously a hand-me-down, with a few sad ruffles hanging here and there. She changes to a cotton dress which has seen better days for Act Two, Scene 1. For Act Two, Scene 2 and Act Three, she may wear the first dress again. No shoes. Betty Sue’s wardrobe is not extensive. (125 lines)

MRS. SNODGRASS (f) A haughty, wealthy, middle-aged woman, Mrs. Lucius Q. Snodgrass is the Coughdrop Queen of America. Her company manufactures more cough drops than any other. For Act One, Scene 1, she wears an elaborate outfit complete with hat, enormous purse and gloves. In Act Two, Scene 2, she wears a different elaborate outfit. Act Three may find her in the same outfit as she wore in Act One, Scene 1. She is inclined to overdress. (63 lines)

WILLIAM BISHOP III (m) Mrs. Snodgrass’ good-looking twenty-five year-old assistant. He is inclined at times to assume an overly dignified attitude, but he can be influenced and when he meets Lizzie Fernheiser, he becomes confused and a little boyish. For Act One, Scene 1, he wears a dark dignified business suit with tie, etc. In Act One, Scene

2, his outfit is more casual—sport coat and pants, sport shirt without tie and rather colorful socks and shoes. Act Two, Scene 1, finds him in the same or similar outfit. However, in Act Two, Scene 2, he appears in a far-out hillbilly costume. He is shoeless with Bermuda shorts, a loud shirt, and a red handkerchief dangling from his pocket. During this scene, he changes to a shirt that is torn to shreds but has a large cardboard or paper daisy pinned to the front of it. His hair is parted in the center and slicked down for this entrance. He wears a business suit again in Act Three. (222 lines)

PAW FERNHEISER (m)..... A very slow-moving middle-aged hillbilly paw. He's got a sense of humor and, although he likes to take things easy, will work if he finds a project which HE feels merits his efforts. He wears dark, worn pants, cut off unevenly, heavy work shoes without socks, a faded shirt patched with different colors at the elbows and an old straw hat which he doesn't even remove when indoors. He too has a handkerchief dangling from his pocket. He may wear the same outfit throughout the play. (95 lines)

MAW FERNHEISER (f) Paw's wife still has quite a few sparks LEFT in her despite the hard work she's done in her lifetime. She wears a baggy cotton dress which has seen cleaner better days, black cotton stockings and run-over old oxfords. For Act One, Scene 1, she has prettied herself up by adding an old man's sweater with holes in the elbows, a purse, and an out-of-shape hat with a large flower which sticks straight up in the air and bounces breezily along. If desired, she may wear a different cotton dress in some of the scenes. (93 lines)

HONEYSUCKLE FERNHEISER (F) About fifteen, Honeysuckle must take a backseat until her older sisters are "married off," hence she is considered more of a child than her age would indicate. Her dress is more shapeless and shorter than Betty Sue's outfits. She is barefoot, dirty and doesn't care. For Act One, Scene 1, however, she wears a fancy hat. This may be any old hat, madly decorated with shabby flowers. During Act One, Scene 2, she changes into a "gym" suit she has rigged up. This could be an old-fashioned bathing suit or old blouse with knee-length bloomers. It could even be a set of men's long underwear with a

short skating skirt over the top.
In short, any ridiculous outfit
which might be worn in a gym
class will work. This outfit is
worn again in Act Three. (16
lines)

MAGNOLIA FERNHEISER (f).....About fourteen, her description
is exactly the same as
Honeysuckle's. She too needs a
hat and matching "gym" outfit.
(15 lines)

HYACINTH FERNHEISER (f).....About thirteen, her description
is exactly the same as
Honeysuckle's. She needs the
same clothing. (16 lines)

WIDOW KENDALL (f).....An aggressive lady with a mind
of her own, she is middle-aged
but can keep her sons in line.
She is slightly better dressed
than Maw Fernheiser. Her
cotton dress is newer and her
shoes not so run-over at the
heels. She wears a man's hat,
jammed sideways on her head
and a man's coat. No flowers
for the Widow. She feels
undressed without her gun. (33
lines)

HIRAM KENDALL (m).....This seventeen year-old boy is
his mother's shadow. He's
always following her around,
also carrying a gun. He's a lad
spoiling for a good fight or even
a fight that's not so good. He
glares at the world and, if
desired, can be made up to look
pretty much like a monster. He

wears an old shirt and pants.

(11 lines)

LIZZIE FERNHEISER (f)..... A pretty girl, Lizzie is even brighter than Betty Su, her sister. Lizzie, in fact, is full of ideas, but they aren't always good ones. One feels Lizzie could be at home anywhere and, although she is a hillbilly, her actions are quick and even suave. She is nineteen or twenty. For Act One, Scene 2, she wears a new dress that she has made for herself. This is cotton but can be quite attractive. For Act Two, Scene 1, she changes into an older dress. For Act Two, Scene 2, she may wear the Act One dress again, keeping it on for Act Three. She wears no shoes.
(188 lines)

EXTRAS..... There are two extras in regular clothing seated in the first row of the auditorium when the play begins. In Act Two, Scene 1 any number of extras in hillbilly clothing may be used.

NOTE: All characters and situations herein depicted are purely imaginary. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

SETTING: The living room of the Fernheiser cabin in the hills.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE, SCENE 1: A present afternoon in the spring.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2: Two hours later.

ACT TWO, SCENE 1: A few days later.

ACT TWO, SCENE 2: A few days later.

ACT THREE: The next day.

SOUND EFFECTS

- ☐ POUNDING AND HAMMERING (OFF RIGHT)

PROPS

ACT ONE, SCENE 1:

- ☐ TABLET PAGES CONTAINING WRITING (ZEKE)
- ☐ LARGE HANDBAG (MRS. SNODGRASS)
- ☐ BOOK-SIZED WAD OF TYPING PAPER (MRS. SNODGRASS)
- ☐ GUN (PAW)
- ☐ BOX OF COUGH DROPS (MRS. SNODGRASS)
- ☐ GUN (HIRAM KENDALL)
- ☐ GUN (WIDOW KENDALL)
- ☐ OLD, BATTERED PURSE WITH HANDLE (MAW)
- ☐ MAGNOLIA'S HAT (MAGNOLIA)

ACT ONE, SCENE 2:

- ☐ BOWL OF FLOWERS (ON TABLE)
- ☐ GUN (PAW)
- ☐ BOWL CONTAINING FOOD (ON SHELVES)
- ☐ POCKET KNIFE (ZEKE)

ACT TWO, SCENE 1:

- ☐ LARGE SHEET OF DRAWING PAPER WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT CONTAIN THE CRUDE SKETCH OF A BUILDING WHICH RESEMBLES A PIG PEN* (ZEKE)
- ☐ LARGE SHEET OF DRAWING PAPER WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT CONTAIN THE CRUDE SKETCH OF A BUILDING WHICH RESEMBLES A GREEK TEMPLE* (LIZZIE)
- ☐ PENCILS (ZEKE/BETTY SUE)
- ☐ LARGE CARDBOARD CARTON OR BOX (MAGNOLIA)
- ☐ SHOVEL (MAW)
- ☐ NUMBER OF SMALL BOARDS FOR USE IN CONSTRUCTION WORK (HONEYSUCKLE/HYACINTH/MAGNOLIA/EXTRAS)
- ☐ LARGE CARTON SUPPOSEDLY CONTAINING BOXES OF COUGH DROPS (HONEYSUCKLE)
- ☐ CARDBOARD BOX FULL OF BOOKS (HYACINTH)
- ☐ GUN (WIDOW KENDALL)
- ☐ GUN (HIRAM KENDALL)
- ☐ COOKPOT (ON SHELVES)

ACT TWO, SCENE 2

- ☐ MANY BOOKS (ON STAGE)
- ☐ GAG AND ROPES (ON WIDOW KENDALL)
- ☐ FANCY OLD DRESS (BETTY SU)
- ☐ SLING AND VARIOUS BANDAGES AS DESIRED (ON CAST)
- ☐ BEAT-UP SNEAKERS (BETTY SU)
- ☐ LARGE POCKET WATCH ON WIDE RED RIBBON (ON SHELVES)
- ☐ PIPE (ON SHELVES)
- ☐ BOUQUET OF FLOWERS (BILL BISHOP)
- ☐ GUN (BILL)
- ☐ GAG AND ROPES (HIRAM KENDALL)

ACT THREE:

- ☐ COOKPOT/SPOON (ON SHELVES)
- ☐ CARTON OF COUGH DROPS (ON STAGE UP RIGHT)
- ☐ SMALL BOXES OF COUGH DROPS WITH BRAND NAME SMUDGED (INSIDE CARTON)
- ☐ CHECKERBOARD (ON SHELVES)
- ☐ TWO STRINGS OF COUGH DROP BOXES TO TIE BACK CURTAINS (BETTY SU)
- ☐ CARDBOARD SIGN, POSSIBLE FRAMED IN COUGH DROP BOXES, WHICH SAYS "COUGH DROPS ARE MAN'S BEST FRIEND" (ZEKE)
- ☐ NECKLACE OF COUGH DROP BOXES (BETTY SU)
- ☐ RED AND BLACK COUGH DROPS OR SMALL CANDIES OF THOSE COLORS (LIZZIE)
- ☐ OLD CANDY DISH (ON SHELVES)
- ☐ PITCHER OF RED LIQUID (ON SHELVES)
- ☐ BUTTON BOX (ON SHELVES)
- ☐ JELLY JAR (ON SHELVES)
- ☐ SOUP TUREEN (MAW)
- ☐ CAKE (WIDOW KENDALL)
- ☐ "SNODGRASS COUGH DROPS" SIGNS (HONEYSUCKLE/HYACINTH/ MAGNOLIA)
- ☐ GUN (HIRAM KENDALL)
- ☐ COUGH DROPS (INSIDE GUN)

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

The curtain is closed and the auditorium lights remain on during the entire first scene. Two people without special clothing or special makeup are seated near center in the first row of seats. As the time for the play approaches, Zeke Kendall and Betty Su Fernheiser may be seen nervously peeping from behind the stage curtain. Betty Su seems to be looking for someone – as indeed she is, for her own family hasn't appeared. She is also very uneasy about speaking before people, since she is just a simple hillbilly girl. As the play begins, she enters upon the apron of the stage from the RIGHT, freezes at the sight of the audience, and just stands there, staring straight ahead, her mouth hanging open. Zeke enters behind her, carrying tablet pages containing her speech, and shoves her toward center stage.

ZEKE: Go ahead, Betty Su! It's time to give yer speech! *(Betty Su timidly creeps to center, where she stands staring at the people. Zeke motions her onward. Betty Su looks back at him, gulps loudly.)*

BETTY SU: Howdy thar, citizens of Polecat County! *(Her voice comes out high and squeaky because of her stage fright. She clears her throat and continues in a more normal tone.)* Citizens of Polecat County, hit's mighty nice to see ya all hyar today in the Pigs Knuckle Junction school buildin'. You'll have to excuse me. I ain't used to seein' so many of ya wearin' shoes. Howdy, Mr.—*(Any name will do; it could be the name of a locally known person in the audience.)* I see ya got yer mule out of the mud and got hyar after all! *(Looking around)* It's a right fine lookin' buildin' Pigs Knuckle Junction got, ain't it? Mebbe someday we kin have such a grand one back in Polecat County. In the meanwhile, y'all know why we met hyar. *(Forgetting her fright and becoming grandly dramatic)* Citizens of Polecat County! We have the greaaaaaaaat privilege today of meeting with one of the greaaaaaaaat ladies of our time. She's famous. She's even been writ up in magazines! A bountiful, generous lady sech as we pore folks don't often git the chance to meet. Y'all know who I mean. I'm speakin' of course of Mrs.—Ah—Ah—

ZEKE: (*Poking his head out from RIGHT, holding papers in his hand; following her speech*) Snodgrass! Mrs. Snodgrass! And yer gittin' hit all mixed up! There wasn't nothin' about Mr. _____'s mule in the speech we writ.

BETTY SU: (*Glaring at him as he ducks out of sight again*) Mrs. Snodgrass. As (*She's very careful with this long word*) a re-presentative of the Snodgrass Memorial Fund she's always goin' round helpin' out depressed areas. I didn't know we wuz one of em', but I reckon we are or she wouldn't be hyar. Anyhow, she's going to give Polecat County a real, honest-to-goodness, two-story, brick liberry building! Mrs. Snodgrass!

Betty Sue moves LEFT, clapping her hands and indicating the audience should do likewise. Led by the two "plants" in the first row, we hope they will. Zeke appears at RIGHT, holding back the curtain with a bare foot and trying to clap for Mrs. Snodgrass while he holds the many pages of the notes for Betty Su's speech. The papers go flying all over the place. Mrs. Snodgrass sails into view, beaming at the audience. Zeke bends over without bending his knees to pick up the papers and Mrs. Snodgrass bumps into him, sending him sprawling. Betty Su almost dies of mortification.

MRS. SNODGRASS: (*Nose in air, moving around Zeke and ignoring him.*) Thank you! Thank you, all! I'm touched that you had this gathering in my honor. But actually I want no thanks. My late husband, Lucius Q. Snodgrass, always felt the call to do good. The Snodgrass Memorial Library of Polecat County will be erected in his honor. Now I want you to meet my most valuable assistant, William Bishop III!

To more applause, William Bishop III enters at RIGHT. Zeke has finally gotten to his feet and has once more bent over to pick up the paper. Bill bumps into him and once more sends Zeke sprawling.

BETTY SU: Oh, Zeke! Why don't you git off stage?!

BILL: Oops! Pardon me.

This time Zeke angrily shoves the papers beneath the curtain and crawls out under it himself, his big dirty feet being the last thing to disappear.

MRS. SNODGRASS: (*Glaring at the disappearing feet*) As I was saying, the Snodgrass Memorial Fund was created to assist depressed areas, such as yours, to help themselves. I have just a very few words to say on the subject. (*She gets out of her enormous handbag a book-sized wad of typing paper; even Bill looks nonplussed. She begins to speak from her quantity of notes*) Depressed areas are usually not only economically depressed, but culturally depressed. There is nothing in the world that Polecat County needs more than a good brick library. Mystery stories, westerns, science fiction . . . Why, all kinds of culture may be obtained from a good library! (*There is a commotion at the rear of the auditorium as Paw Fernheiser, Maw, Hyacinth, Magnolia, and Honeysuckle enter there. Betty Su is still at the LEFT of the stage apron, self-conscious, not knowing what to do with her hands. Sometimes she uses them to scratch herself, at which times Mrs. Snodgrass glares at her. Betty Su waves to her family when she sees them.*)

HONEYSUCKLE: (*Loudly*) Whar we gonna set, Paw?

PAW: Hesh up!

BETTY SU: (*Yelling from the stage*) Ya missed my speech, Paw!

PAW: (*Yelling*) Yer sister Magnolia fell in the pig slop when she was feedin' the hogs and we had to clean her up afore we come!

MRS. SNODGRASS: (*Raising her voice in great dignity*) I shall try to rise above these unfortunate interruptions!

Paw Fernheiser, toting his gun, with Maw and the girls following him single-file, comes down the center aisle to the front, searching for a seat.

MRS. SNODGRASS: (*Trying to ignore them*) May I say in passing that these contributions by the Snodgrass Memorial Fund are made possible by that balm of mankind, that soother of suffering souls, Snodgrass' Cough Drops, the only cough drops that will cure your cough even if you don't have a cold! No other cough drop can make that statement! My dear late husband started the Snodgrass Cough Crop Company over thirty years ago and—

MAW: Thar ain't no seats down hyar, Paw!

PAW: Shore thar be!

MAW: Whar?

PAW: (*Waving his gun*) Why, all around hyar.

MAW: Yep. But them seats got people in um.

PAW: Thet's easy fixed!

MRS. SNODGRASS: You'll be really taken by the Snodgrass Memorial Fund. I mean, taken with the Snodgrass—

PAW: (*Poking his gun at the two plants in the first row*) Git! Git out of thet seat, ya ornery skunk! Out of hyar! (*The two frightened plants gather up their things and run with Paw chasing them just a little way, then coming back to sit down.*)

PAW: (*Looking up at Mrs. Snodgrass*) Go on with whut ya wuz sayin'. Me and Maw was jest gittin' settled hyar.

MAW: (*Sitting beside him*) Thet wasn't perlite.

PAW: Why? I didn't shoot 'em!

MAW: Nope. But ya might at least have thanked them nice folks fer so kindly givin' us their seats.

MRS. SNODGRASS: (*Weakly*) I'm sure all you refined people her in Polecat County will appreciate this library. You can have lectures and—

MAGNOLIA: Maw, whar air we gonna set?

HYACINTH: We cain't jest stand hyar! It ain't perlite when thet funny lookin' lady is jawin' away up thar!

HONEYSUCKLE: Cain't ya shoot a couple of folks so's we kin git some seats?

MAW: Honeysuckle Fernheiser! If I told ya once, I toll ya ten times – yer Paw don't shoot folks fer no cause! They got to be stealin' hogs or somethin' and thar ain't nobody hyar stealin' hogs.

MAGNOLIA: (*Pointing to a man in the audience*) He looks like he might.

MAW: Hesh up and set down! Up thar! (*Pointing to the stage*) The lady won't mind.

MRS. SNODGRASS: (*At the limit of her patience*) Would you – uh, people – mind – (*Magnolia, Hyacinth, and Honeysuckle scramble onto the LEFT side of the stage apron and sit with their legs dangling over the side of it. Betty Su joins them. If footlights make this impossible, let them sit "Indian" style on the apron.*)

MRS. SNODGRASS: Girls, what are you doing? Really, I – Oh, dear! (*Very much upset*) Mr. Bishop, will you take over and explain the contest? (*Trying to smile to audience*) My assistant, William Bishop III!

Mrs. Snodgrass moves to the RIGHT, takes a box of cough drops from her bag, and pops one in her mouth.

BILL: (*Doubtfully looking at the Ferheisers as he moves to center*) Thank you. It's a pleasure [there is a question in his voice] to be here and meet all of you charming – uh, meet all you people. What Mrs. Snodgrass didn't explain to you is this—the Snodgrass Memorial Fund will construct a library for you in Polecat County, hiring local labor, which will be paid the prevailing union wage rate. To stimulate interest in the library there will first be a contest to determine the design of the building—that is, what it will look like. All the young people—and you older people too if you're artistically inclined—will submit sketches showing what they think the Polecat County Library should look like! Mrs. Snodgrass will be leaving us— (*Paw begins to applaud loudly; Bill clears his throat*) Please, sir, you may applaud this fine lady later. As I said, Mrs. Snodgrass will be returning to the Snodgrass Cough Drop Company but I will stay here and supervise the contest and the construction of the library. Now then, are there any questions?

The Widow Kendall, accompanied by Hiram, enters the rear of the auditorium during Bill's speech but stands there quietly. Both Hiram and the Widow have their guns.

PAW: (*Rising*) Yep.

BILL: (*Brightly*) Yes, sir?

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PAW: Why air ya buildin' the liberry?

MRS. SNODGRASS: Of all the depressed areas we have assisted, this is the most depressing.

BILL: (*Trying to be patient*) I think we've explained all that, sir. Our dear and generous Mrs. Snodgrass' late husband wanted to be a philanthropist all his life. But since he was too busy making cough drops, he had to wait until he was dead to—I mean, after his death, Mrs. Snodgrass decided to —

PAW: Never mind all them fancy words. (*Paw scrambles onto the stage and approaches Bill with his gun*) I ax ya a simple question. Why air ya buildin' a liberry?

Bill backs toward the RIGHT; Mrs. Snodgrass crouches behind him.

MRS. SNODGRASS: P—Put that gun away!

BILL: We're only trying to do you people a favor—

PAW: Wal, ya ain't doin' us no favor by buildin' a liberry. Whut do we want a liberry fer?

HYACINTH: You tell 'em, Paw!

BILL: Why—Why—Er, to read—

PAW: But most of us cain't read! (*Addressing the audience*) Listen hyar, you varmints! Effen these folks is gonna spend thar money, ain't no sense them wastin' it on books. I don't reckon thar kin be more then ten books has been printed in this county and if anybody wants to read I'm shore he kin find one of them ten effen he looks hard enough. Whut we need ain't a liberry, it's a reecreation hall! Then we'd really have something!

BILL: A r—recreation hall?

MRS. SNODGRASS: A what?

PAW: A reecreation hall! A place whar the young folks kin play thet game whar ya have a big ball and throw it in some kind of basket. Some of us old codgers cud play checkers er thet new-fangled game called chess. How bout thet? We cud even have dances for the young folks and parties come Holler'een!

BILL: But you don't understand, sir. The Snodgrass Memorial Fund was created to spread culture. There's nothing cultural about basketball or dances.

PAW: Wal, ya better find somethin'—cul-tur-ell—about 'em!

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MRS. SNODGRASS: (*Coming around Bill to face Paw*) My good man, are you trying to tell me how to spend my money?

PAW: (*Shoving the gun into her face*) Yep!

Mrs. Snodgrass looks down the barrel of the gun and faints dead away.

BILL: Mrs. Snodgrass!

WIDOW KENDALL: (*Coming down the center aisle to the front; Hiram follows her*) Hold on thar!

PAW: Widder Kendall!

BETTY SU: (*Rising to yell behind curtain*) Zeke! Yer Maw's hyar!

BILL: (*Stooping beside Mrs. Snodgrass and fanning her with his hands*) Mrs. Snodgrass, are you all right? Have a cough drop!

PAW: Whut air you doin' hyar?

WIDOW: Same as you. I aim to speak my peace!

PAW: All right, go ahead. The lady in charge ain't talkin' right now anyhow.

WIDOW: (*Facing the audience*) I don't know whut Paw Fernheiser's been jawin' about, but I'll tell you this much . . . Polecat County ain't never gonna be nothin' without a liberry! We need a liberry! Do you want to be ignorant, stupid, feudin' hillbillies forever?

HYACINTH/MAGNOLIA/HONEYSUCKLE: Yep!

PAW: (*Jumping down from the stage in surprise and approaching the Widow*) Whut wuz thet you said?

WIDOW: (*Defiantly*) I said we need a liberry.

HIRAM: (*Pointing his gun toward Paw*) She says we need a liberry.

Zeke comes on stage from behind the curtain. Bill holds a cough drop box under Mrs. Snodgrass' nose.

ZEKE: Howdy Maw! Did ya git hyar in time to hear Paw Fernheiser tell about how we need a recreation hall?

WIDOW: Zeke, git down hyar with yer brother.

BETTY SU: Oh, Zeke! All of you . . . stop it!

PAW: We ain't havin' no liberry!

MAW: (*Rising to stand behind him*) You tell 'em, Paw!

MRS. SNODGRASS: (*Slowly coming to*) Ohhhhhh!

BILL: Wake up, Mrs. Snodgrass. Here, have another whiff of cough drops!

MRS. SNODGRASS: *(Breathing deeply at the cough drop box)* Ahh, I smell something wonderful—

MAGNOLIA: Wal, it shore ain't me, cuz I fell in the pig pen!

WIDOW: Zeke!

BETTY SU: *(Holding onto Zeke)* Paw—Widder Kendall! Please don't make such a fuss! We don't want another feud around hyar! Effen the Kendalls and the Fernheisers have a feud thar won't be nobody LEFT to go to the liberry!

PAW: You mean *recreation* hall!

WIDOW: Liberry!

BETTY SU: Mrs. Snodgrass! Please do something!

MRS. SNODGRASS: *(Dreamily sitting up)* I think I'll go whip up another batch of cough drops—

Zeke moves to join his mother. Honeysuckle trips him and he falls sprawling once more.

WIDOW: *(Raising her gun)* Thet does it! I always did say thar wuz too many Fernheisers in Polecat County!

MAW: *(Hitting her over the head with her purse)* Ya mean too many Kendalls!

WIDOW: Ouch!

Magnolia, Honeysuckle, and Hyacinth jump to their feet. Magnolia takes off her hat and jams it on Zeke's head.

MAGNOLIA: *(Laughing)* Don't he look purty! Now he's all ready to go to the liberry!

BETTY SU: Magnolia!

ZEKE: *(Getting to his feet)* Why you little polecats!

Zeke chases the three girls. They jump off the stage and screaming, run toward the rear of the auditorium where they exit. Zeke chases after them and also exits at the rear of the auditorium.

MRS. SNODGRASS: *(Coming to her senses and rising)* What's the meaning of all this?

PAW: We aim to have a recreation hall!

MRS. SNODGRASS: You'll have a library or nothing! *(Nose in air)*
The Snodgrass Memorial Fund has spoken! Mr. Bishop, take charge! Build them a library! *(Mrs. Snodgrass, with great dignity, exits to the LEFT of the stage.)*

BILL: *(Dismayed; looking at the hillbillies in front of him pointing their guns at each other)* Take charge?! What can I . . . ?

BETTY SU: *(Hurrying after Mrs. Snodgrass)* Mrs. Snodgrass! Wait up! Paw's bound to make trouble effen you don't change yer mind! *(Betty Su exits after Mrs. Snodgrass.)*

BILL: *(Trying to be firm)* All right, put those guns away!

HIRAM: Ya want me to wing 'im, Maw?

BILL: Oh, my goodness!

WIDOW: Nope! Wing Paw Fernheiser instead!

PAW: Now hold on thar! Effen we both pull the trigger at the same time, thar ain't nobody gonna win the feud.

HIRAM: I'm younger then you. I'll probably pull hit quicker!

PAW: Thet's whut I wuz thinkin'! *(Paw dashes up the center aisle toward the rear exit, with Hiram running after him.)*

HIRAM: Hold on thar! I never could hit a runnin' target!

MAW: Paw! Ain't you a man? How come yer runnin' from a Kendall? *(To Widow Kendall)* You shouldn't have sent thet mean little varmit of yours after poor Paw!

WIDOW: Who sez?

MAW: I sez!

Batting at the Widow Kendall with her purse, Maw chases the Widow up the center aisle with much yelling and commotion. They exit after Hiram and Paw. Alone on the apron of the stage, Bill has been watching all this with horror.

BILL: *(Suddenly realizing the audience is still there; he swallows hard)* Oh—Er—Uh, I guess that concludes our meeting for tonight. I – Uh, I must go now and build a library for these people.

With another look of dismay at the very thought, he exits through the center of the curtain. END OF ACT ONE, SCENE 1.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

It's about two hours later. The curtains open to reveal the living room of the Fernheiser cabin, way out in Polecat County. This is a plain, bare hillbilly home. At RIGHT center is a round table and three old chairs. On the table is a bright cotton cover, patched and frayed. At LEFT center is a bench without back or arms. Directly up center, a window looks out on a muddy yard surrounded by pig pens and chicken coops—none of which needs to be visible. Old curtains, or even burlap sacks tied like curtains, are on the window. Two weak-looking chairs sag before the window. In the LEFT wall is a door which leads to the rest of the cabin. In the RIGHT wall is a doorway without a door which leads to the front yard before which an old wagon road passes. Lizzie Fernheiser is at the table, RIGHT center, fussing with a bowl of spring wildflowers. Paw Fernheiser enters at RIGHT, still carrying his gun, but his head is down and a terrible scowl on his face.

LIZZIE: *(Cheerfully)* Paw! How did the meetin' go?

Ignoring her, Paw stomps across the stage and off LEFT. Lizzie goes to the window up center to look out, rather concerned. Maw enters RIGHT.

LIZZIE: *(Turning)* Howdy Maw. What's the matter with Paw?

MAW: *(Going LEFT)* Now how'd you know anything wuz wrong with yer Paw?

LIZZIE: *(Nodding to window)* He's headed fer the pig pen. He always goes to the hogs when he's got troubles. Says they understand him.

MAW: *(Turning to her)* Wal, him an' the hogs has got lots in common.

LIZZIE: Ya had a swell day fer the drive over to Pigs Knuckle Junction. I'm glad spring's hyar! Havin' the door off don't matter so much in spring.

MAW: We'll have to try to git yer Paw to put it back on afore next winter. (*Shivering*) Made sech a draft in hyar, not havin'a door on.

Magnolia, Hyacinth, and Honeysuckle enter at RIGHT, very excited. They remain RIGHT center.

MAGNOLIA: Lizzie, did Maw tell ya?

HYACINTH: We're feudin' with the Kendalls!

LIZZIE: Feudin!—Maw we ain't!!!

MAW: Yep.

LIZZIE: Oh, no! (*Looking out window again*) But effen we're feudin', why is Paw so upset? He likes feudin'!

HYACINTH: (*Giggling*) Hiram Kendall won first round an' chased Paw all the way to the buckboard!

HONEYSUCKLE: And Maw wuz chewin' Paw out all the way home cuz he run!

MAW: Hesh, gals! (*Going up center*) Lizzie, yer Paw's upset cuz he got the bright idea as how we ought to have a recreation hall and the Widder Kendall still figures we ought to have a liberry.

LIZZIE: And you started a feud over such a silly little thing?

MAGNOLIA: (*Running up center*) It ain't silly!

LIZZIE: I knew ya'd git into trouble if you went into town without me! I shouldn't have stayed home to finish my new dress.

MAW: You cain't say ya wuzn't ax to go.

LIZZIE: Oh, who wants to go to a meetin' without a new dress?

HONEYSUCKLE: I went and I ain't had a new dress in five years.

MAW: Wal, yer sister's different. She gotta catch a feller soon. Lizzie, yer gittin' mighty old.

LIZZIE: Oh Maw—we wuz talkin' bout the meetin'. I should have gone. I'm the only one around hyar thet gits idees about gittin' folks out of trouble instead of into it!

MAW: Now don't git so steamed up, Lizzie. It's only a little feud so far. (*Going LEFT*) C'mon, kids. Let's git some more of thet garden dug afore supper!

HYACINTH: (*Crossing LEFT center*) Cain't Paw do it?

MAW: (*Shocked*) Why, thet's work, Hyacinth! Have you lost yer wits? (*Maw, Honeysuckle, Hyacinth, and Magnolia exit LEFT. Betty Su unhappily sags in at RIGHT.*)

BETTY SU: Hi.

LIZZIE: Wal! Looks as effen you're right happy bout this feud!

BETTY SU: (*Crossing to sit on bench LEFT center*) You heerd about thet?

LIZZIE: Maw told me.

BETTY SU: Whut are we gonna do? If Paw'd shoot Zeke, I'd jest die!

LIZZIE: So would Zeke.

BETTY SU: Very funny.

LIZZIE: (*Coming down center*) Too bad Paw cain't git his recreation hall. If he wuz recreatin', he wouldn't have time for feudin'.

BETTY SU: (*Rising*) No use even thinkin' about thet. Mrs. Snodgrass gave all her orders an' LEFT. (*Going up center to point out through the window toward the RIGHT*) They're gonna build the liberry right across the road in thet field. A feller named William Bishop III is in charge—an' he's meaner then she is!

LIZZIE: (*Moving LEFT*) He must be awful.

BETTY SU: (*Coming down*) He is. You'll see. Said he wuz comin' out this afternoon yet to look over the ground.

Zeke appears at the door RIGHT.

ZEKE: Psst!

BETTY SU: (*Frantically*) Oh, Zeke! Ya shouldn't have come hyar!

ZEKE: (*Entering*) I reckon yer right, Betty Su, but I had to see ya.

BETTY SU: Whar's Paw?

LIZZIE: (*Thoughtfully pacing at LEFT*) Still out with the hogs.

ZEKE: (*Meeting her up RIGHT center*) I cain't jest not see ya no more, Betty Su. Why, I always thought you and me wuz—you know.

BETTY SU: (*Coyly*) Whut, Zeke?

ZEKE: (*Shuffling his feet*) Aw, you know.

BETTY SU: (*Desperately*) How do I know if you don't never say it?

ZEKE: (*Moving down center*) Wal, I wuz thinkin' next time the travelin' preacher hits these parts, we—we—

BETTY SU: (*Eagerly following him*) Yes?

ZEKE: We—we—

BETTY SU: Yes, Zeke? Yes?

ZEKE: (*Taking a deep breath and looking as if he'll really get it out this time*) We—

LIZZIE: (*Crossing to come between them*) Do you know whut I think?

BETTY SU: RIGHT now I wuz more interested in whut Zeke wuz sayin'!

LIZZIE: Fer once in his life, Paw's right!

BETTY SU: (*Sullenly breaking away to down RIGHT*) About whut?

LIZZIE: The recreation hall, of course!

BETTY SU: Cain't we talk about this some other time? Me and Zeke wuz havin' a private discussion.

LIZZIE: Oh, you can sweet-talk any time. Besides all that mush sounded pretty dusgustin' to me.

BETTY SU: (*Coming up to them at center*) Nobody ax you to listen!

LIZZIE: (*Imitating*) "Yes? Yes, Zeke, yes?"—If I had to coax a feller that way, I wouldn't want him.

BETTY SU: Yer jest jealous becuz no feller sweet talks you!

LIZZIE: (*Scornfully*) Me—jealous? Of you? Becuz you got Zeke?!

ZEKE: Uh, gals—

BETTY SU: I bet you wish you had him!

LIZZIE: I wouldn't want Zeke Kendall!

BETTY SU: Wal, then Hiram!

LIZZIE: Thet monster-man?

BETTY SU: (*Sing-song*) You can't git a feller! You can't git a feller!

LIZZIE: I never seen a feller I wanted, Betty Su Fernheiser! I could git any feller I thought wuz nice!

Zeke, shaking his head, moves down LEFT.

BETTY SU: Couldn't

LIZZIE: Could! I could take Zeke right away from you effen I wanted to!

BETTY SU: Ha!

LIZZIE: (*Going to Zeke menacingly*) Zeke, look at me—

ZEKE: (*Backing away*) Uh, Betty Su—

LIZZIE: Look into my big, beautiful, blue eyes—

ZEKE: (*Staring at her; getting a silly grin on his face*) I am—

BETTY SU: (*Crossing to swat Lizzie*) You let him alone!

Betty Su chases Lizzie to RIGHT center where they run around the table as Maw Fernheiser enters at LEFT.

MAW: Whut's goin' on in hyar!

BETTY SU: (*Pausing, sniffing*) She's after Zeke!

MAW: Wal, she's oldest. If Lizzie wants Zeke, ya gotta give him up, Betty Su.

ZEKE: (*Down LEFT*) But, Maw Fernheiser—

LIZZIE: Oh, don't worry! I don't want Zeke. I wuz only teasin'.

MAW: (*Crossing in to center*) Teasin'! Ain't we got enough trouble without you two startin' somethin'? If we don't git things fixed, we might have a big feud on our hands.

BETTY SU: (*Sitting at table RIGHT center*) And a liberry.

LIZZIE: Maw, Paw's right about that liberry. Folks hereabouts'll use a recreation hall more then they'll ever use a liberry.

MAW: I reckon.

BETTY SU: Zeke, yer fer the recreation hall too, ain't you?

ZEKE: (*Sitting at bench LEFT center*) Wal, my maw—

BETTY SU: I know whut yer maw wants, but whut about you?

ZEKE: Recreation hall!

HONEYSUCKLE: (*Poking her head inside the LEFT door*)
Recreation hall!

MAGNOLIA: (*Poking her head inside the LEFT door*) Recreation hall!

HYACINTH: (*Poking her head inside the LEFT door*) Me too!

BETTY SU: We're all agreed!

MAW: The Widder Kendall ain't!

LIZZIE: We kin handle her.

HYACINTH: Yahhhhhh! We'll git ready! Whut we need is gym suits!

MAGNOLIA: Thar oughta be somethin' in the shed we kin make gym suits out of!

Honeysuckle, Hyacinth, and Magnolia exit at LEFT.

LIZZIE: (*Thoughtfully; sitting up center*) The main thing we got to do is convince the William Bishop III.

MAW: (*Moving RIGHT*) How? Ya got to git one of yer bright idees, Lizzie.

BETTY SU: We kin git Paw to shoot 'im.

LIZZIE: No, Betty Su!

MAW: (*Looking out door RIGHT*) Wal, ya better think of somethin' quick. Hyar he comes up the road now.

BETTY SU: (*Rising and running to door RIGHT*) Whut's he comin' hyar fer?

MAW: Mebbe to try to talk Paw into the liberry.

LIZZIE: (*Rising and going to look out door with them*) I thought you said he wuz mean-lookin'.

BETTY SU: Wal, ain't he?

LIZZIE: I think he's might purty.

ZEKE: (*Rising and sniffing scornfully*) City fellers! Why, I bet he takes a bath twice a week. Sufferin' skunkcabbage! Don't them city folks catch somethin' thet way?

LIZZIE: (*Watching Zeke scratch himself*) Mebbe. But not whut you caught.

BETTY SU: He's lookin' at the field whar the thing's gonna be . . . Now he's headin' this way agin. He is comin' hyar!

LIZZIE: Quick, everybody! Set! Make believe we didn't see him comin'.

Maw goes up LEFT to the shelves. Zeke remains where he is, scratching away.

BETTY SU: (*As Lizzie shoves her toward center*) Why?

LIZZIE: Ya want him to think we're a bunch of dumb hillbillies gawkin' out the door like we never seen city folk afore? Now do somethin' natural!

MAW: (*Getting a bowl*) I'll act like I'm startin' supper.

BETTY SU: Whut air we havin' fer supper?

MAW: Fried brains.

BETTY SU: (*Going up LEFT to her*) Ummmm!

LIZZIE: Okay, Betty Su, you act as if you're helpin' Maw. Zeke, you do somethin' natural too.

ZEKE: (*Still scratching*) I am.

LIZZIE: Not thet! Jest set thar!

Zeke sits on bench LEFT center, stiffly and unnaturally, staring straight ahead, hands folded in his lap. Lizzie fusses with her bouquet on the table RIGHT center, one eye on the door, RIGHT. Bill Bishop appears there, rather uncertainly looking for a bell or at least a door upon which to knock.

BILL: Er—Hello?

LIZZIE: (*Turning with affected surprise*) Yes?

BILL: I was—uh, told this was the Fernheiser's cabin.

LIZZIE: Thet it be! Won't you come in?

BILL: (*Entering*) Thank you. I hope I didn't startle you. I was looking for a bell or a door so I could knock, but—

LIZZIE: At our place you jest got to holler. The door blew off last September.

BILL: Oh. How do you do, Mrs. Fernheiser! And Betty Su, Zeke.

MAW: Howdy! My! We shore air surprised to see you!

BETTY SU: YEAH! We never noticed you comin' up the road, round the bend, and stopping to look at the field across the way.

BILL: (*Moving center and frowning at Zeke who hasn't moved a muscle.*) Is something wrong with him?

LIZZIE: We always figured thar must be.

ZEKE: (*Talking without moving his jaw*) I'm jest actin' natural, Mr. Third.

BILL: The name's Bishop. William Bishop III.

ZEKE: When kin I stop lookin' natural, Lizzie?

MAW: Honest, Zeke, this bowl's got more brains than you.

BILL: The bowl has brains?

BETTY SU: (*Bringing it down and shoving it under his nose*) Lots more! See? We're having fried brains for supper!

BILL: (*Jumping back*) Oh!

LIZZIE: Did you ever eat brains? (*Bill violently shakes his head; she's very close to him*) Then why don't you try some? They're good—really good wit salt.

BILL: (*Looking at her*) Yes—salty brains.

LIZZIE: Please stay.

BILL: (*Still looking at her*) Well—all right!

LIZZIE: Won't you take off yer coat and set?

BILL: I'll sit but I'll keep my coat on, thanks.

LIZZIE: (*Thoughtfully*) You look warm.

BILL: (*Sitting at LEFT side of the table RIGHT center*) It was quite a hike from the highway. I hated to bring my new car up this road.

MAW: (*Coming RIGHT center as Lizzie beckons her*) Come now, take off yer coat! We want ya to be comfortable!

LIZZIE: (*Prodding Maw on*) Yep. Take yer coat off.

BILL: (*As Maw gets behind him and jerks off his coat despite his protests*) But I really would—Well, thank you.

MAW: Hyar, Betty Su, hang this on the nail stickin' through the wall from the goat pen. (*Betty Su takes the coat and exits LEFT. Lizzie crosses LEFT to whisper to Zeke, pointing at Bill's feet.*)

BILL: I stopped by because I wanted to speak to Mr. Fernheiser. Uh—is he about?

MAW: Shore. Don't be scared of him, young feller. His shotgun is worse than his aim.

BILL: I wanted to talk to him about the library. I'm sure I can convince him how much good it will do your community. (*Zeke gets down on the floor on his hands and knees and crawls toward Bill, looking at Bill's feet in serious contemplation.*)

LIZZIE: Thet's whut we wanted to talk to you about, too.

MAW: We wuz talkin' about it afore you come, Mr. Third.

BILL: Bishop.

MAW: I hate feudin'. Always did. But we got nothin' else to do in these hills for entertainment.

BILL: Yes, I can see that.

Betty Su reenters LEFT without the coat. She remains at LEFT.

MAW: I grew up half-orphan because of feudin', Mr. Third. I wuz thinkin' when Mrs. Snodgrass wuz talkin', how much good her money could do if we had a recreation hall to take folks' minds off feudin'.

BILL: But don't you think a library would— (*To Zeke, at his feet*) What are you doing?

ZEKE: Lookin' at yer shoes.

BILL: Why?

ZEKE: I wuz wonderin' how you stood 'em.

BILL: Why—easily.

ZEKE: Don't yer feet sweat?

BILL: Really, I—

BETTY SU: Especially on a hot day like this! Wouldn't you rather be barefoot like us?

BILL: Oh, I—

ZEKE: I bet yer feet are uncomfortable! You walked all the way up hyar from the highway! Why don't you take yer shoes off?

BILL: No, I—

MAW: Shore! Take yer shoes off an' let yer toes breathe fer awhile, Mr. Third!

BILL: (*As Zeke begins to remove his shoes*) No, Really! I don't want to!

MAW: Now, don't feel you need to be perlite around us, Mr. Third. Yer among friends.

LIZZIE: Come on, Maw!

BILL: (*Struggling*) No!

Lizzie and Maw help Zeke. Betty Su crosses to help.

ZEKE: (*Pulling off a shoe*) Mighty fancy foot gear!

BILL: Help!

MAW: (*Holding a leg while they remove shoes and socks*) Now, don't be bashful!

After the shoes have been removed they stand back beaming at him.

BETTY SU: Now, ain't thet better?

BILL: Please, people! I just want to talk to you! I don't want to eat brains and run around barefooted and—

LIZZIE: Why not?

BILL: Why not?! Well, I—I don't know.

BETTY SU: (*Throwing his shoes down in front of him.*) Hyar! Put yer shoes back on if yer too good to go barefoot like the rest of us!

BILL: I didn't mean it that way!

LIZZIE: Thet's the way it sounded.

BILL: All right. I'm comfortable. I like being barefooted. (*Stopping suddenly, holding his feet straight out and wiggling his toes*) Hey, I do like being barefoot!

MAW: (*Moving up LEFT*) I knew it! First time I seen you I said to myself, thar's one boy who'd like being barefoot!

BILL: Thanks! (*Suddenly clearing his throat and sitting straight in the chair*) We must discuss something—your library. You've got to have one.

Zeke and Betty Su cross LEFT center to sit.

LIZZIE: Why?

BILL: Because—There are a million good reasons!

LIZZIE: Name one.

BILL: (*He can't think of any*) Well—

LIZZIE: Mr. Third, you cain't force folks to take whut they ain't ready to take! We got some books at the school and the older folks cain't read anyways.

BILL: Yes, I guess a recreation hall would be better for this locality.

BETTY SU: (*Rising*) Wheeeeeee!

ZEKE: (*Rising*) Doggone!

BILL: (*Rising*) Now, wait a minute! I can see your point, but we've got to build a library! I can't let you build anything else!

LIZZIE: Why not?

BILL: I wish you'd stop asking those questions! You know well enough why not. Because of Mrs. Snodgrass! She doesn't like sports or dances. She doesn't like recreation halls!

LIZZIE: Mrs. Snodgrass LEFT, didn't she?

BILL: I know, but—

LIZZIE: Whut she don't know, won't hurt her, will it?

BILL: But she'd find out!

LIZZIE: How?

BILL: She always comes to inspect the buildings after they're completed.

LIZZIE: Couldn't you put knockout drops in her cough drops that day?

BILL: No!

LIZZIE: We ought to be able to think of some good way to keep her out of hyar. Mr. Third—

BILL: Call me Bill. Please. Or anything but Mr. Third.

ZEKE: I thought you said that wuz yer name.

BILL: No!

LIZZIE: Bill, I'll get an idée how to keep her away. I always get ideas.

BILL: I can't do it! Why, Mrs. Snodgrass would eat me alive.

LIZZIE: (*Going close to him*) Air you going to let Mrs. Snodgrass stand in the way of whut a whole county needs? We could have fun buildin' the recreation hall this summer! We could go down to the swimmin' hole after work. An' take walks together. (*She puts a flower from her bouquet in a buttonhole in his shirt*) Don't let that Mrs. Snodgrass order you to do somethin' you know ain't right! Help us, Mr. Third. We're appealin' to ya.

BILL: (*To himself*) Yes, you are appealing to me.

BETTY SU: (*Getting down on her knees at center while Zeke above her makes motions of playing a violin.*) Help us git a place fer dances. And games. And fer the older polecats.

BILL: (*Laughing*) Okay, okay! You win! It'll be a recreation hall!

BETTY SU: (*Jumping up*) Yippppppeeeeeee!

She and Zeke take hands and prance around the stage.

MAW: This calls for a celebration! I'm gonna make some hog jowls an' black eyed peas to go along with the fried brains!

LIZZIE: Oh Bill! Thanks!

BILL: But remember—we'll have to keep Mrs. Snodgrass from finding out!

LIZZIE: We will. Don't worry.

Paw enters at LEFT with his gun.

PAW: (*Raising gun to shoot*) Ah-Ha! Thar's the liberry-builder!

BETTY SU: Don't, Paw!

PAW: (*Advancing towards the petrified Bill*) No danged liberry-builder is comin' in my house. Now git!

MAW: Hold on thar, Paw! He ain't a liberry-builder. He's a recreation-hall-builder now! Ain't thet right, Mr. Third?

BILL: Oh, yes! (*Wiggling his toes*) Bill Third, recreation-hall-builder!

PAW: Ain't thet funny? I thought yer name was Bishop?

BILL: (*Defeated*) I answer to either.

LIZZIE: We talked him into it, Paw! Ain't you proud of us?

PAW: I shore am! (*Putting aside his gun and striding with hand extended*) Put 'er thar, Mr. Bishop-Third!

BILL: Just call me Bill.

MAGNOLIA: (*Off LEFT*) Hey, Maw!

MAW: Whut do you young 'uns want? Supper ain't ready yit.

HYACINTH: (*Off LEFT*) We got somethin' to show ya!

MAW: Wal, show me in hyar. I ain't leavin' the company.

Hyacinth, Magnolia and Honeysuckle dash in at LEFT wearing their 'gym' suits.

HONEYSUCKLE: We're all ready fer the recreation hall, Maw!
These be our gym suits!

ACT TWO, SCENE 1

It's a few days later. As the curtain opens, the sounds of banging and hammering are loud off stage RIGHT. Betty Su and Zeke are seated at the table RIGHT center busily drawing or appearing to draw upon a large sheet of paper. They pay no attention to the noise.

BILL: (*Yelling from RIGHT*) No! No, please! Stop hammering! Please stop hammering! (*Very loud*) STOOOOOOOOPPPPPPP! (*Immediate quiet results*) Now then, just dig! Dig the foundations, men. Don't put up any framework until we've decided on the architectural design of the building. Just dig!

Bill enters from RIGHT, mopping his brow. He is dressed in a sport shirt, slacks, and wears shoes.

BILL: (*Moving center*) Boy, are they eager beavers! They want to put the building up before the plans are drawn. Where's Lizzie?

BETTY SU: Dunno. Around.

BILL: Did any sketches come in? With a prize of twenty-five dollars you'd think somebody'd be sending in designs for the recreation hall!

ZEKE: Nobody's got paper to draw on.

BILL: Oh, I never thought of that.

BETTY SU: But we're drawing a design!

ZEKE: Together. It's my paper. Won it in an eighth grade spelling bee.

Magnolia enters RIGHT, carrying a large cardboard box. Bill has turned and moved LEFT.

BILL: (*Pausing to sniff the air*) What's that smell?

BETTY SU: Magnolia jest come in. Mebbe she fell in the pig pen again.

MAGNOLIA: I did not! Miz Maggie down by Stoneholler Creek sent this fer the new recreation hall.

BILL: (*Crossing to RIGHT center to look in the box*) Another contribution? (*Wrinkling his nose*) What is it?

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MAGNOLIA: Fertilizer. Fer the petunias yer gonna plant around the hall to make it look purty.

BILL: Fertilizer! Well, put it outside with the other contributions.

Magnolia exits RIGHT; Paw sticks his head inside the door.

PAW: Hey! Another load of lumber come. Whar do ya want it?

BILL: Put it beside the bricks.

PAW: Cain't. That's where the chickens are.

BILL: Chickens? What chickens?

Loud hammering starts again Offstage RIGHT. Bill rushes to the door.

BILL: (Yelling) Hey! HEY!! DIG!!!! Just DIG!

Noise stops and he does a double-take off stage.

BILL: There are chickens out there!

PAW: I tole ya. The Klinedoogle family sent them over.

BILL: As a contribution to the recreation hall? What are we going to do with chickens?

PAW: (Pityingly) You air dumb. They lay eggs.

BETTY SU: He's a city feller, Paw. Ya gotta overlook them things.

BILL: I know chickens lay eggs! But what do we want with eggs in a recreation hall?

ZEKE: To sell. So we kin git money fer equipment.

BILL: (Exasperated) Mrs. Snodgrass will—that's right. All she'll send is books. (Deciding) We'll keep the chickens.

PAW: But whut'll I do with this new load of lumber?

BILL: Put it out back behind this cabin temporarily.

Paw exits.

ZEKE: (Looking at their work on the paper admiringly.) Say, thet's gittin' real good! Betty Su, I never knowed we could draw so good!

Lizzie enters from LEFT.

LIZZIE: Guess whut?

At this point Hyacinth, Honeysuckle and Magnolia enter at RIGHT, each carrying a small board. They lead a parade of unclean, slovenly hillbillies who enter spaced rather far apart and each of whom carries a small board. This procession, minding its own business, slowly crosses the stage and exits LEFT.

BILL: *(Moving down center with her)* What?

LIZZIE: *(Holding on to something behind her)* I'm finished.

BILL: I'm glad. I missed you.

LIZZIE: Ain't you goin' to ask—finished with whut?

BILL: Okay, finished with what?

LIZZIE: *(Holding out a large sketch of a Grecian Temple)* This!

BILL: *(Blankly)* What is it?

LIZZIE: My entry fer the recreation hall sketch contest!

BILL: But—this doesn't look like a recreation hall, Lizzie. It looks like a Grecian Temple!

LIZZIE: *(Sitting at LEFT center on bench)* I know it's mighty fancy, but I thought if Mrs. Snodgrass ever seen it she'd think it wuz a liberry effen it looked real fancy outside.

The procession, led by Hyacinth, Honeysuckle and Magnolia, enters LEFT without boards and crosses to the RIGHT where they exit.

BILL: I know, but for a recreation hall we must—

ZEKE: We're finished, too!

BETTY SU: *(Proudly)* Yep! Thar she be!

BILL: *(Turning to them)* What does yours look look? The White House?

ZEKE: Nope, this wouldn't be white, more like a pastel shade of mud brown.

BILL: *(Moving RIGHT center, taking their sketch and holding it up)* It looks like a pig pen!

BETTY SU: You told us, Mr. Third, to copy the lines of some building we seen.

BILL: But I didn't mean a— (*Looking from one sketch to the other*) I came to build a library. I get talked into building a recreation hall that's going to end up looking either like a Greek Temple or a pig pen!

LIZZIE: Wal, mine's the most sensible!

BILL: Oh, sure—I can see it now. A Grecian Temple surrounded by pink petunias with a basketball net hung neatly between the Doric columns!

The pounding starts off RIGHT again as the procession enters at the RIGHT once more, led by Hyacinth, Honeysuckle and Magnolia. As before, they each carry a small board. Bill drops the sketches on the table and fights through the hillbillies to get to the door RIGHT.

BILL: (*Shouting*) Dig! I said, dig, men, dig! (*Distracted, he turns back into the room and blinks the procession into focus for the first time.*) What are these people doing?

HYACINTH: (*Pausing*) Carryin' boards.

BILL: (*Shouting*) I can see that, Hyacinth! But WHY?

HONEYSUCKLE: Paw said you wanted this load of lumber out behind the cabin.

BILL: I know but—! (*Realizing he is shouting, he tries to control himself and speaks in a normal tone of voice*) Carry them around the house, not through the house. And move a little faster! Take an armload at once! Not just one board!

MAGNOLIA: Okay.

BILL: Where's your father?

HYACINTH: I think he's takin' a nap.

BILL: (*Shouting again*) Well, wake him up! I want to talk to him! Now get out of here! All of you! Out!

The procession, with Honeysuckle, Hyacinth and Magnolia double time, off LEFT.

BETTY SU: (*Rising*) Jest calm yerself, Mr. Bill Third. I'll make sure they git Paw.

Betty Su exits RIGHT.

ZEKE: (*Rising and stretching with a big yawn*) Whut you need, Bill, is to take off yer shoes.

BILL: Now don't start that bit again!

LIZZIE: (*Rising and moving center*) Why don't you jest take it easy?

BILL: (*Coming to her*) Take it easy! How can I take it easy?! You people aren't even civilized!

ZEKE: (*Crossing to lie on the bench, LEFT center*) Till you git done jawin', I think I'll take a nap.

BILL: (*Throwing himself into a chair at the table.*) Oh, what's the use? Lizzie, did you figure out what we're going to tell Mrs. Snodgrass when she comes to see the library?

LIZZIE: It ain't even built yet. We kin worry about that later.

BILL: (*Groaning*) I'm worrying about it now.

LIZZIE: I wish you could be more like us, Bill.

BILL: I do too.

LIZZIE: You do? Then why'd you put on yer shoes again?

BILL: Well, after all, I am William Bishop III, Mrs. Snodgrass' assistant!

LIZZIE: (*Wistfully*) I liked you better with them off.

BILL: Lizzie, you confuse me.

LIZZIE: (*Sitting at the table*) In whut way?

BILL: I don't know, but everytime I'm around you I get confused. Everything gets confused. And I don't know why. (*Rising*) You make me feel like taking off my shoes again and going barefooted! (*Making an effort to control himself*) Oh, boy. I'd better get this job finished and get back to civilization. I'll go native if I stay around here very long.

LIZZIE: (*Rising and moving down RIGHT*) Would that be so bad?

BILL: (*Following her*) Terrible! I've got a responsible position in the Snodgrass organization. I've got to maintain dignity!

Honeysuckle enters at RIGHT with an enormous cardboard box.

HONEYSUCKLE: Folks down in the holler sent more chickens.

BILL: Well, don't bring them in here or through here.

HONEYSUCKLE: (*Pausing RIGHT center*) I ain't. These are cough drops.

LIZZIE: (*Crossing up to her*) Cough drops! Is that whole box full of cough drops?

BILL: (*Smugly*) Mrs. Snodgrass always supplies the depressed area families with a ten-year supply of Snodgrass Cough Drops.

LIZZIE: Whut air we gonna do with 'em?

HONEYSUCKLE: (*Placing the box on the floor up RIGHT*) Maybe the hogs'll eat 'em.

BILL: (*Aghast; going center*) You can't feed Snodgrass Cough Drops to the pigs!

LIZZIE: Why not? Would it make 'em sick?

HONEYSUCKLE: Oh, I almost forget! (*Coming down*) Mrs. Whipple, two cabins down the road, sent up fer Bill to stay with them until the buildin' is finished. They got an extray room in the cabin.

BILL: ME?! Live in one of these hillbilly cabins?

HONEYSUCKLE: She sez it's too mech fer ya to go twenty miles to that motel on the highway ever night.

BILL: Tell her thanks, but—no, thanks! Now run along Honeysuckle.

LIZZIE: Jesta minute, Honeysuckle. (*To Bill*) Ya scared?

BILL: What?

LIZZIE: That's why you don't want to stay at Whipple's. Yer scared ya cain't hold yer own!

BILL: I am not! And I can hold my own! You people aren't going to snow me or influence me. I am William Bishop III and I cannot be influenced by—by natives.

LIZZIE: Polecats.

BILL: Native polecats.

LIZZIE: Prove it!

BILL: Very well! Honeysuckle, I will stay at Mrs. Whipple's cabin! On behalf of the Snodgrass Organization I wish to thank her and her family. Tell her I'll move in this evening.

HONEYSUCKLE: Shore. But effen I wuz you, I wouldn't.

Honeysuckle exits RIGHT.

BILL: Is there something wrong with the Whipples?

LIZZIE: Oh, they ain't quite as clean and neat as us, but I'm sure she'll clear all the hogs out of the extra room afore ya move in.

BILL: They keep swine in the house?

LIZZIE: Nope . . . jest pigs.

Hyacinth enters at RIGHT carrying a heavy box of books.

HYACINTH: The postman brung this. It's another box from thet Mrs. Snodgrass only it ain't cough drops this time.

LIZZIE: (*Going to Hyacinth*) Books! Now why'd she send them?

BILL: She thinks we're building a library! Ohhhhhhh! (*Going up center*) Hyacinth, where's your father?

HYACINTH: (*Dropping box up RIGHT*) Betty Su's still trying to wake him up.

Hyacinth exits at RIGHT.

LIZZIE: (*Sitting up center*) I wonder if Mrs. Snodgrass'll send any more books. Effen she does, I got an idee how we kin raise money!

Paw and Betty Su enter at RIGHT. Betty Su moves up to sit beside Lizzie.

PAW: (*Yawning and scratching*) Ya wanted to see me?

BILL: Yes, I—

PAW: It be the middle of the afternoon.

BILL: What's that got to do with it?

PAW: (*At RIGHT center*) Ain't right to wake up a man in the middle of the day.

LIZZIE: Bill's got the sketches fer the recreation hall, Paw.

PAW: Ya have? (*Rushing LEFT*) Hey, Maw! Come out hyar! We're gonna see whut our recreation hall is gonna look like!

Maw enters LEFT. She and Paw remain there.

MAW: Whut?

LIZZIE: (*Rising*) I made a sketch!

BETTY SU: *(Rising)* So did me and Zeke! *(Going LEFT center to knock Zeke off the bench to waken him)* Zeke! He's gonna pick now!

ZEKE: *(On the floor)* Huh?

BETTY SU: The sketches! He's gonna pick!

ZEKE: *(Sitting up)* Shucks. I thought it wuz supper time.

BILL: *(Going to table RIGHT center)* Well, I didn't mean to make a ceremony of it! Actually, I have no choice. *(Holding up the pig pen sketch)* We can't use this. *(Holding up the Grecian Temple sketch without enthusiasm)* So we'll have to use this.

LIZZIE: I won!

PAW: *(Crossing to RIGHT center to take both sketches uncertainly)* Wal, now—

BILL: Look, Mr. Fernheiser, I've decided and we're not going to discuss it!

ZEKE: *(Rising sulkily)* I'm goin' home.

BETTY SU: Now, Zeke, don't be mad.

BILL: Get them started Mr. Fernheiser. Let's get this building off the ground!

PAW: *(Taking both sketches with him)* Yep! Up she goes!

Paw exits at RIGHT.

MAW: *(Moving down LEFT)* Hit be a great day fer Polecat County!

ZEKE: *(Pouting)* Oh, thet ol' recreation hall ain't gonna look like mech.

BETTY SU: Zeke, yer jest sayin' thet 'cuz yer jealous.

ZEKE: Wal, Lizzie only won because Mr. Third's sweet on her!

BILL: I am not! I mean, that isn't why she won!

ZEKE: If you wuzn't a city feller, I'd fight ya! But city fellers cain't fight!

Offstage RIGHT the banging noise begins and continues until the end of the scene.

LIZZIE: *(Going RIGHT center)* Make him take it back, Bill! Go ahead, fight him!

BILL: Fight? But I don't want to fight him!

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ZEKE: See? (*Taunting*) City feller! Coward! (*Bill swings at him and misses. They go into a clinch and fall to the floor at center as the Widow Kendall enters at RIGHT with her gun. Hiram and his gun are immediately behind her. They pause down RIGHT.*)

WIDOW: Hey, you critters!

LIZZIE: Widder Kendall!

Bill and Zeke stop fighting and sit there staring up at her.

WIDOW: Whut's this I hear up and down the holler? (*Accusingly*)
Yer buildin' a recreation hall instead of a liberry up hyar?

BETTY SU: (*up LEFT center*) Why, Widder, whutever give ya thet idee?

WIDOW: Everybody knows it! Zeke, why air ya playin' with these varmints? Git up hyar aside of yer own folks!

BETTY SU: Zeke!

Zeke rises and sullenly takes his place beside his mother; Bill also rises.

WIDOW: (*Raising her gun*) I come to see thet things is changed.
(*Moving up center*) We're havin' a liberry 'er my name ain't Widder Kendall!

BETTY SU: Whut air ya gonna change it to?

MAW: (*Yelling*) Paw!

BILL: Now let's not be hasty.

Hyacinth, Honeysuckle and Magnolia rush in at LEFT.

HYACINTH: Maw! Widder Kendall is headed this way with a gun!

MAW: Ya don't say!

Paw enters RIGHT.

PAW: Did somebody call?

WIDOW: Shoot him, Hiram!

Paw grabs Hiram's gun and they grapple. Hyacinth, Magnolia and Honeysuckle rush at Zeke, pulling him around. Maw moves up to battle Widow Kendall with a cooking pot she grabs off the shelves up LEFT. Betty Su is helping Maw by grabbing one of the Widow's arms. Lizzie crosses down to trip Hiram for Paw. Hiram falls flat. Paw sits on him, makes sure the gun is loaded and is about ready to shoot poor Hiram if only he'd hold still. Bill jumps up on the bench at LEFT center.

BILL: Stop! Please stop! The Snodgrass Foundation doesn't approve of fighting!

He pleads with them to no avail. The general commotion continues until there is a QUICK CURTAIN.

ACT TWO, SCENE 2

It is a few days later. The room is filled with books, piled on the floor, piled on the shelves up LEFT, and everywhere. Magnolia, Hyacinth, and Honeysuckle are taking the Widow Kendall for a walk around the room. The girls have on a few patches and bandages. The Widow has a gag tied over her mouth. Her hands are tied in front of her and Magnolia holds the rope as they lead her around. Through the gag, Widow Kendall is making growling, angry sounds.

HYACINTH: Now don't look so mad, Widder Kendall, you got to get some exercise.

HONEYSUCKLE: We got to keep you penned up until the hall is built, you know.

MAGNOLIA: *(Pausing with her near the window up center)* See how nice it's coming along! It's almost finished! *(This makes the Widow furious and she growls more loudly and strains at her ropes.)*

HYACINTH: She's gittin' mad. We better put her back in the shed with Hiram.

Zeke enters RIGHT, sees his Mother, and ducks out again. Hyacinth, Magnolia and Honeysuckle exit at LEFT with their prisoner. Zeke enters at RIGHT, slowly and sadly, his arm in a sling, looking after the Widow Kendall. Betty Su enters right behind him. She has a finger wrapped up.

ZEKE: (*Coming center*) I feel like a traitor.

BETTY SU: (*Following him*) Now, Zeke—

ZEKE: Wal, how would you feel if we had YOUR maw prisoner?

BETTY SU: We'll let her go as soon as the recreation hall is finished and she cain't make no trouble about it, Zeke.

ZEKE: (*Sniffing*) She won't never forgive me.

BETTY SU: Shore she will. You helped her fight us, didn't you?

ZEKE: (*Dejectedly, sitting LEFT center*) Mebbe I shoulda let you lock me up with Maw and Hiram.

BETTY SU: (*Sitting beside him*) I wish you'd stop frettin'. We're treatin' yer maw real good. We exercise her every day and she's eatin' high off the hog.

ZEKE: But whut's she gonna do to me when she gits out? And you?

BETTY SU: Why should she do anything to me?

ZEKE: 'Cause you're the reason I'm hangin' around the Fernheisers.

BETTY SU: Aw, Zeke—

ZEKE: I shore wish yer name wuzn't "Fernheiser."

BETTY SU: (*Shyly*) It could be somethin' else.

ZEKE: Whut?

BETTY SU: Kendall.

ZEKE: You mean you want Maw to adopt you?

BETTY SU: No!

Lizzie and Bill enter at RIGHT, Lizzie has a patch or two from the fight. Bill is now dressed like a hillbilly.

ZEKE: I smell somethin'.

BILL: It's me. The Whipples LEFT a couple of hogs in my room.

LIZZIE: (*Crossing to center*) Hey, why air you two sittin' in hyar jawin'? Some more tourists pulled up at the bookstand! They want reference books. Take 'em these. (*She shoves an armload of books at Betty Su who rises.*)

BETTY SU: Okay. Come on, Zeke.

ZEKE: (*Rising*) I still think mebbe you should lock me up.

BETTY SU: Who'd help me tend the bookstand?

BILL: (*Calling after them*) Get a good price for those books!

Zeke and Betty Su exit at RIGHT. Bill goes to the bench LEFT center and stretches out.

BILL: Time for my afternoon nap.

LIZZIE: Yer gittin' jest like Paw. Say—did I tell you I figured out whut we kin do when Mrs. Snodgrass comes down to inspect our buildin'?

BILL: (*Sitting up*) No! What can we do?

LIZZIE: Show her the liberry!

BILL: But we haven't got a library. We've got a recreation hall!

LIZZIE: (*At center*) Bill, we're sellin' books to tourists - to buy equipment fer the hall - but we don't have to spend the money until after she leaves. We ain't gonna sell all the books she sent neither. We'll pile 'em all around the building. She kin come and say her peace and if nobody don't tell her, she'll never know it ain't a liberry.

BILL: (*Rising to hug her*) That's a terrific idea! Lizzie—

LIZZIE: Bill—

He kisses her. Lizzie tears away, looks at him for a moment then dashes off LEFT. Bill goes after her a few steps as Paw enters at RIGHT.

BILL: Lizzie!

PAW: Hey, young feller! Whar ya been? We got the other column up in place!

BILL: (*Turning reluctantly*) What column?

PAW: The last column on the recreation hall, thet's whut column! Whut's the matter with you?

BILL: I guess I've got my mind on something else.

PAW: Come hyar and see how you like it. (*Bill goes to the window with Paw and looks out, then turns away with a groan.*)

BILL: Even if Mrs. Snodgrass does believe it's a library as Lizzie plans, she's not going to like it!

PAW: (*Critically looking out again*) Why not?

BILL: (*Coming down LEFT*) Look at it! It looks like a pig pen supported by Gretian columns!

PAW: Why, I thought thet wuz real smart of me to put both them designs together so Zeke wouldn't be mad an' upset.

BILL: I didn't care if Zeke Kendall was upset!

PAW: Wal, I did! (*Coming down center*) I aim to marry off Betty Su to him an' I ain't lettin' nothin' upset Zeke until it happens.

BILL: But couldn't you have calmed him without using his design? Mrs. Snodgrass won't like a library that looks like a pig pen. Especially a pig pen with Grecian columns!

PAW: (*Crossing to door RIGHT and dreamily looking out*) I think it's right purty. Sort of—

BILL: (*Moving center*) Early Polecat County?

PAW: Yup, that's it! Wal, back to work!

BILL: Wait a minute, Paw! May I call you Paw?

PAW: Shore—son.

BILL: I want to talk to you.

PAW: (*Coming in to RIGHT center*) We ain't rippin' down the building an' startin' over! I like it thisa way.

BILL: I wasn't thinking about the recreation hall. (*Taking a deep breath*) I was thinking of marrying Lizzie!

PAW: Thet's right nice. I—WHUT?!

BILL: Do you think she could be happy living in the city, Paw?

PAW: Don't you worry none 'bout Lizzie. She kin do anything! She's quite a gal!

BILL: You know it!

PAW: Say! This be great, young feller! Now if only I kin git Zeke to pop the question to Betty Su, I kin git her and Lizzie married off at the same time! Thet would saddle me with Hyacinth, Magnolia and Honeysuckle. (*Groaning, sitting RIGHT center at the table*) Whar will I ever git fellers fer them?

BILL: (*Pacing*) Paw, there's something that worries me.

PAW: Whut?

BILL: I'm not sure she'll understand my city ways at first. Since Lizzie is a shy country girl, I thought maybe I should—you know, court her the way young fellows court girls here in the hills.

PAW: Yep, that sounds like a good idee.

BILL: How does a young fellow court a girl here in the hills?

PAW: (*Rising*) Wal, son, let's head down to Whipples to put some bacon grease on yer hair to slick it down and I'll tell you all about it. One thing, they don't take 'no' fer an answer— (*Bill and Paw exit RIGHT. Betty Su enters LEFT, looking around.*)

BETTY SU: (*Calling*) He ain't hyar, Lizzie. (*Lizzie enters LEFT*)

LIZZIE: (*Looking around*) Air ya shore?

BETTY SU: See fer yerself. Besides, ya got to see him sometime or other.

LIZZIE: I know. Oh, I'm all mixed up!

BETTY SU: Whut'd he do?

LIZZIE: He kissed me! I got an idee thet he might ax me to marry up with him!

BETTY SU: Why, thet'd be grand! And I bet he won't be tongue-tied like Zeke with it comes to poppin' the question neither!

LIZZIE: But how'll I act? He's a city feller and I'm jest—

BETTY SU: Yer jest as good as he is!

Maw enters at RIGHT.

MAW: Thet Paw of yours! Never saw a man who could shinny out of work like him. Now he's tuck off somewhars agin!

LIZZIE: (*Going to her*) Maw, do you know anything about city ways of courtin'?

MAW: (*Coming center*) Wal, some. On our honeymoon yer Paw tuck me clean down out of the hills to Pine Creek City to see a movie-pitcher. Thet had some in it about city ways of courtin'.

LIZZIE: Whut does a gal do when a city feller comes courtin'?

MAW: Wal, first off, she got to wear shoes. Betty Su, git the shoes.

LIZZIE: (*Coming to Maw at center*) It seems downright high fallutin' to wear shoes in summer.

MAW: Oh, but you got to when a city feller comes courtin'. Lizzie, you don't think maybe our Bishop The Third—?

BETTY SU: Yep! Thet's just whut she thinks, Maw! (*Betty Su exits LEFT*)

MAW: Wal, you shore, Lizzie?

LIZZIE: Nope, but I want to be prepared. (*Crossing down LEFT*)
Whut else about city courtin', Maw?

MAW: In this movie pitcher, the gal had on a fancy dress and lots of standin' out petticoats.

LIZZIE: (*Sadly*) I ain't even got one petticoat.

MAW: (*Coming down center*) Umm—we could put on a fancy dress and leave this dress under it for a petticoat. Ya wouldn't know the difference. (*Yelling*) Betty Su! Bring the good dress out! (*To Lizzie*) I keep this dress in case of marryin' or courtin'. Bought it second hand in Pigs Knuckle Junction ten years ago.

LIZZIE: Whut else did this gal wear?

MAW: Jewels.

LIZZIE: We fer shore ain't got none of them.

MAW: We got one! (*Going back to the shelf up LEFT, she gets out a man's large pocket watch tied to a wide red ribbon*) Yer Paw's old watch! (*Betty Su enters LEFT with "the" dress; a short, gaudy, ill-fitting thing without a belt. She also carries sneakers.*)

BETTY SU: Hyar, ya air.

MAW: Start fixin', Lizzie.

LIZZIE: (*Sitting on bench LEFT center and putting on the sneakers*)
How does a city gal act, Maw?

MAW: Real proud and she don't say "yes" too easy. She lets the feller coax a good long time.

LIZZIE: Hemlock-hickory! I hope I kin do it!

BETTY SU: (*Helping Lizzie who rises, slip the dress over her head*)
When he sees how purty ya look, ya won't have no trouble at all.

MAW: (*Coming to place the watch around her neck, then standing back to view the effect*) Thar! Now set yerself, Lizzie, and me and Betty Su'll try to chase Bill Third in hyar.

LIZZIE: (*Sitting primly on the bench, hands folded in lap*) How's this?

MAW: No, no! City gals slouch down and smoke a cigarette!

BETTY SU: We ain't got no cigarettes, Maw.

MAW: (*Going up to shelves*) This'll have to do. Grandpappy don't use it no more.

BETTY SU: (*Moving to door RIGHT*) Wal, that's cuz he's daid.

Maw shoves an old pipe—unlit—into Lizzie's mouth. Lizzie slouches down uncomfortably on the bench.

MAW: Thet's fine. And watch how ya talk. Talk as proper as ya kin.
Now we'll try an find him.

BETTY SU: We don't need to. He's marchin' up the road now—with a shotgun!

MAW: Let's git out of sight! Stay jest like thet, Lizzie.

Maw and Betty Su exit at LEFT. Bill appears at right.

BILL: (*Roughly*) Hey, you! I'm comin' in! (*Bill stops to stare at Lizzie who pretends she is smoking the pipe. He wears a tattered shirt, large daisy, and carries a bouquet and a shotgun.*)

BILL: Lizzie—is that you?

LIZZIE: (*Speaking very slowly and strangely*) It is me, Will-yum Bishop-Third.

BILL: (*Coming forward to look at her*) I didn't know you smoked a pipe!

LIZZIE: Oh, shore indeed, Will-yum. I have smoked a pipe since I wuz ten years of age. (*Suddenly looking at him and straightening, forgetting herself*) Whut happened to you?

BILL: Me?

LIZZIE: You look kinda funny.

BILL: Oh—my shirt needs sewing. I guess I—uh, need a wife.

LIZZIE: Oh?...Whut's that funny smell?

BILL: Bacon grease.

LIZZIE: Huh?

BILL: (*Suddenly remembering himself, he strides forward and shoves the flowers into her face, speaking in a rough monotone.*) Here, you. I brung you some flowers.

LIZZIE: (*A bit startled as she takes the flowers but remembering her act*) Why, how nice of you, Will-yum. (*Taking what she considers to be a dainty sniff but which sounds more like a cow with asthma*) Ummm. They smell purttee.

BILL: (*Leaning on his gun and glaring down at her*) Gal, we're gittin' hitched.

LIZZIE: No, thank you, Will-yum.

BILL: I said, we're gittin' hitched!

LIZZIE: No, thank you, Will-yum.

BILL: I won't take no for an answer!

LIZZIE: No.

BILL: (*Trying to act tough, he drops the gun, picks it up again awkwardly*) Now, listen here, gal! I— (*Aside*) I don't know what to do now! (*Rushing to the door RIGHT*) Pst!

PAW: (*Sticking his head in door RIGHT*) Yeah?

BILL: (*Whispering*) She keeps saying 'no' and you said not to take 'no' for an answer! Whut do I do now?

PAW: Yer on yer own, son. Who knows how to make a gal say 'yes' if she don't want to? Thet's somethin' no city feller nor no country feller knows fer shore!

Chuckling, Paw withdraws at RIGHT. Bill sadly turns back into the room.

BILL: Lizzie, why won't you say 'yes'?

LIZZIE: I ain't supposed to yet. I mean, I are not supposed to as yet.

BILL: Why not? And why are you talking that way?

LIZZIE: Don't you know a city gal's actions when you see them?

BILL: I get it! You're trying to act like a city girl!

LIZZIE: (*Looking him over*) And don't tell me you're trying to act like a country boy!

BOTH: You're terrible at it! (*They laugh*)

BILL: (*Ruefully sitting beside her*) I guess I'm a failure as a country boy.

LIZZIE: I guess I ain't so smart as a city gal neither.

BILL: You could learn. I'm sure you could. Lizzie, you don't really smoke a pipe, do you?

LIZZIE: (*Putting it aside*) No! Thet pipe belonged to Grandpappy.

BILL: Lizzie, I'm serious—about wanting to marry you.

LIZZIE: But I—Bill, look at me!

BILL: I must admit, I have seen you looking prettier.

LIZZIE: I wanted to see effen I could act citified.

BILL: I'll help you, Lizzie! You'll be able to! I promise! *(They are about to kiss).*

BETTY SU: *(Off LEFT)* Ooh!

BILL: What was that?

LIZZIE: *(Puckering)* Pigs out back—

They are about to kiss again.

BETTY SU: *(Loud stage whisper; she appears at door LEFT)* Maw! Maw, come quick! It worked. He's gonna kiss her!

Maw appears at door LEFT and stands beaming.

BILL: *(Turning to look at them)* I—uh—

MAW: Go right ahead with whut you wuz doin'. Don't mind us.

LIZZIE: They're just my folks, Bill.

She puckers again and Bill, glancing over his shoulder, clears his throat and is about to give her a light peck when Zeke comes busting in at RIGHT.

ZEKE: We got a book around hyar called ROME MO'S JEWELS WERE ET?

BETTY SU: Hesh up, Zeke!

ZEKE: Oops!

BILL: Lizzie, couldn't we go somewhere else?

ZEKE: Oh, don't let me chase you out! I'll look for the book real quiet. *(He knocks over a pile of books).*

Bill shudders but attempts to kiss Lizzie again. Maw and Betty Su move up LEFT, watching with great interest. Paw rushes in at RIGHT.

PAW: Bill, I jest thought of somethin' ya kin say to her!

BILL: Never mind!

PAW: *(Up RIGHT)* Oh, I see ya thought of somethin' yerself.

Bill attempts to kiss Lizzie again when Mrs. Snodgrass enters at LEFT.

MRS. SNODGRASS: I'm utterly lost. I knocked but— (*Coming LEFT center as the others stare at her; she taps Bill's shoulder*) Pardon me—

BILL: Go away! I'm tired of these interruptions! I— (*He turns and jumps to his feet*) Mrs. Snodgrass! You—you're early! I didn't expect you—

MRS. SNODGRASS: (*Staring at him*) William! What have they done to you?

BILL: (*Trying to cover himself with his arms*) Nothing, I—I mean, I was just—trying to understand the natives.

ZEKE: (*Pouncing upon a book somewhere up RIGHT*) I found it! (*Loudly*) Boy, we're gonna have lots of money fer the new recreation hall with all them tourists buyin' these old books we wuz sent!

BETTY SU: Zeke!

MRS. SNODGRASS: What?

ZEKE: (*Hastily*) Excuse me! I got a customer. (*Zeke hurries out at RIGHT. Mrs. Snodgrass moves RIGHT. Bill jumps in front of her.*)

BILL: Wait, please! Don't go out!

MRS. SNODGRASS: He said—

BILL: He meant to say library!

MRS. SNODGRASS: (*Firmly*) Get out of my way, William. I want to see this library.

BILL: No, you don't! I mean—

MRS. SNODGRASS: Step aside, William! As a member of the Snodgrass Organization you should know better than to conduct yourself in this unseemly fashion. (*She points, and, head bowed, Bill steps aside. Mrs. Snodgrass marches to the door RIGHT and takes a long look outside. Everybody else is facing her, standing very still. She staggers backward with a scream.*) That isn't a library! It's a pig pen with Grecian columns!

BILL: (*Rushing to her*) It just looks like a pig pen! I mean, it's a typical design for this locality. It'll start a new architectural style for libraries, Mrs. Snodgrass. They'll call you the originator of the Early Polecat County style libraries. You'll be famous!

MRS. SNODGRASS: You have lost your senses!

LIZZIE: No, he's right! It'll be a fine liberry. All these books will be in it! You just got to look at it in the right light.

MRS. SNODGRASS: I think the right light would be total darkness! However, I guess for you people—

BILL: They love it. And they're all very enthusiastic about their library now!

HILLBILLIES: Yep! We shore are!

MRS. SNODGRASS: Well—

The Widow Kendall and Hiram suddenly charge in LEFT, disheveled and wild-looking as if they had a hard time escaping. They still have ropes dragging behind them and the gags hurriedly pulled aside.

WIDOW: Stop!

MAW: Widder Kendall!

WIDOW: Mrs. Snodgrass!

MRS. SNODGRASS: Keep that creature away from me!

WIDOW: They had me tied up! They wuz tryin' to keep me from talkin'. They ain't buildin' no liberry! Yer Mr. Third hyar is building a recreation hall fer 'em!

MRS. SNODGRASS: You mean that pig pen—that building isn't a library?

HIRAM: No!

BILL: Mrs. Snodgrass! I can explain!

MRS. SNODGRASS: How?

BILL: I don't know, but I'll think of something.

MRS. SNODGRASS: William Bishop, obviously you have turned traitor to the Snodgrass Organization! You have betrayed my trust! You are fired!

BILL: What?!

LIZZIE: (*Rising and going to him*) You cain't do thet! We wuz gonna be married!

MRS. SNODGRASS: Oh, yes I can! And I don't think he'd be fool enough to marry without employment. And with my influence I'll see that he is unemployed for a long, long time!

BILL: Fired—



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