

HEADIN' FOR THE HILLS

by Le Roma Greth



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SYNOPSIS: Cornelia Wellington Heister and her sister, Dortha, are wealthy orphans whose only living relatives are a hillbilly family who run a general store in Lone Mule, Tennessee. Their father's will insists that the girls spend their summers in Lone Mule with their Uncle Cyrus Goolus or forfeit their share of the fortune. Being a bit spoiled and accustomed to luxuries, Cornelia in particular hates the arrangement and Uncle Cyrus is a miser who sees a chance to make himself some money. He decides to make life miserable for the girls so they'll run away and then he would inherit the entire fortune himself. In an avalanche of fun and laughter, he shows the girls the absolute worst of hillbilly living. They don't discourage easily, however, and Cornelia even finds herself the object of adoration of Slim Hawkenshaw and begins to realize that perhaps mountaineers are human beings after all and her own way of life isn't so superior. Luckily, Cornelia finds out about her Uncle's scam and decides two can play at that game! She and Dot pretend to go all out for the hillbilly life and even show Uncle Cyrus a thing or two. One interior set.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(13 females, 9 males, 3 either, extras)

CORNELIA WELLINGTON HEISTER (f). Seventeen, is a pretty girl with a rather haughty, spoiled manner. For the first act she wears a neat coat suit with suitable accessories. If desired, she may also wear this costume for Act II or she may change to a colorful print. In Act III she wears a party dress, later changing to a "hillbilly" outfit—no shoes, dirty patched dress. (237 lines)

DORTHEA WELLINGTON HEISTER (f)..Cornelia's lively thirteen-year-old sister, is a down-to-earth, good-natured character. For Acts I and II she wears a pretty, youthful frock. In Act III she changes to a tattered dress, no shoes. (129 lines)

CYRUS GOOLUS (m) The Proprietor of the only store in Lone Mule, Tennessee, is a tall, unkempt man of forty-odd years. His hair is uncombed; his face suggests "five o'clock shadow." His costume for Acts I and II consists of overalls, work shirt and heavy work shoes. For Act III he wears a tight-fitting suit, and a conspicuous bow tie. (183 lines)

BETTY BELLE GOOLUS (f) A teenager, is a typical product of the hills. She is extremely dirty and uncombed. She wears dungarees, shirt, no shoes. When she speaks, it is with a slow drawl. (91 lines)

"HAPPY" GOOLUS (f) Also in her middle teens, is a plump jolly person who is kind to everyone. She wears a patched dress, no shoes. In Act III she wears a neat cotton dress. (75 lines)

SKEETS GOOLUS (f) About twelve, is the youngest and the worst of the Goolus children. A hillbilly brat, she wears pigtails, no shoes, and a short, dirty dress. (60 lines)

- HANK GOOLUS (m) The only boy, full of dreams and ideas. He wears tattered trousers, a plaid, worn shirt, no shoes. *(114 lines)*
- WIDOW SQUIGGINS (f) Wants another husband so badly she'll take anything, even Cy. Her hair, streaked with grey, is piled untidily on top her head. She wears a cotton dress which fits her, later changing to one which does not. She also wears dowdy shoes. *(46 lines)*
- AUNT SUKEY (f) An "old maid" type is dressed in the same fashion as the Widow, except that everything she wears is clean and very neat. *(43 lines)*
- MISS OGGIE (f) She dresses, acts, and speaks very much the same as Aunt Sukey. *(45 lines)*
- SLIM HAWKENSHAW (m) A very tall, think hillbilly boy wears overalls, shirt, no shoes. He is quite shy—especially around Cornelia. *(86 lines)*
- MISS WINSLOW (f) From the city, is an attractive woman of twenty-five. She is dressed in a smart coat suit. *(40 lines)*
- HORSEFACE DILLY (m) A very rough, dirty hillbilly, is dressed in ragged pants, shirt, no shoes. *(48 lines)*
- JAKE SLASSER (m) Sleeps throughout the play. An old man with a long beard (optional). He is shoeless, wears overalls, and a battered hat low on his face. *(1 line)*

EMMY JEAN (f) A very small speaking part; a young hillbilly girl as dirty and ragged as the others. (16 lines)

ZEKE (m)..... Maw's son. Customer in the store; usual hillbilly character. (2 lines)

MAW (f) Zeke's mother. Customer in the store; usual hillbilly character. (12 lines)

MUSICIANS: Three or more hillbilly individuals who can play an off-key mountain tune.

1st MUSICIAN (m/f)..... (3 lines)

2nd MUSICIAN (m/f)..... (3 lines)

3rd MUSICIAN (m/f) (2 lines)

THE SQUIGGINS CHILDREN: A group of unkempt, countless brats. They wear anything as long as it is dirty. Speaking parts listed below.

SPECK (m)..... (11 lines)

1st GIRL (f)..... (4 lines)

2nd GIRL (f) (3 lines)

1st BOY (m) (10 lines)

2nd BOY (m) (1 line)

OTHER CHILDREN Who pay a penny to look at the "city slickers" may be some of the Squiggins children if desired. (Non-Speaking.)

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

HAND PROPERTIES**ACT ONE**

- ☐ Money in cigar box (Cy)
- ☐ Bucket filled with flowers (Happy)
- ☐ Old coin purse with coins (Widow Squiggins)
- ☐ Gun (toy rifle may be used) (Squiggins Boy)
- ☐ Suitcase, pan of food (Betty Belle)
- ☐ Bracelet (Cornelia)
- ☐ Bowl of “cat” food (Skeets)
- ☐ Gun (Toy rifle may be used) (Horseface Dilly)

ACT TWO

- ☐ Toothpick, Sunday funny papers (Cy)
- ☐ Book, cookpot with molasses, small empty jar, paper and pencil (Hank)
- ☐ Old coin purse with coins (Zeke’s Maw)
- ☐ Coin (nickel) (Emmy Jean)
- ☐ Chicken or stuffed bag (Speck Squiggins)
- ☐ Flowers (Slim)
- ☐ Tin can, pencil and paper (Cornelia)
- ☐ Gun (Squiggins Boy)
- ☐ Gun (Horseface Dilly)
- ☐ Mirror smeared with green paint, small paint can and brush, mask cut from school paper and painted green (Dorthea)

ACT THREE

- ☐ Towel and soap, red handkerchief (Cy)
- ☐ Razor (Hank)
- ☐ Large bottle perfume, paper money (\$2.00) (Cornelia)
- ☐ Toy snake (Skeets)
- ☐ Gun (Aunt Sukey, Miss Oggie)
- ☐ Handkerchief (Slim)

STAGE PROPERTIES

- ☐ Three straight-backed wooden chairs
- ☐ Barrel
- ☐ Clothes tree
- ☐ Two brooms
- ☐ Two wooden square tables
- ☐ Stool or chair behind counter
- ☐ Underwear including a set of longies on the counter
- ☐ Cook pots and frying pans, on counter
- ☐ A few toys, on counter
- ☐ Yard stick, on counter
- ☐ Dishpan with a few unbreakable items inside, on counter
- ☐ Unwrapped soap, on counter
- ☐ Cotton dresses, on clothes tree

ACT ONE

As the curtain rises, we see Cy Goolus' General Store in Lone Mule, Tennessee. A long counter, which can be created simply by using two square tables pushed together, stands up center. Behind it stands a stool or small chair. On the counter are displayed a variety of articles. There are cook pans and frying pans; a pile of underwear, among which is a suit of long drawers (preferable red); a few toys; some boxes of candy; a yard stick; a dishpan with plastic dishes; some unwrapped soap; and other miscellaneous items. Up right stands a clothes tree upon which hang a few dresses, cotton and out of style. Two brooms are standing up left, waiting to be sold. Down left is a straight-backed chair, which is tilted back against the wall. One Jake Slasser is sleeping upon it. Since Jake sleeps there throughout the play, he can be considered part of the furnishings. Down right two chairs and a barrel form a cozy nook where the local swains may gather to discuss the neighborhood girls. A door right leads into the Goolus living quarters; a door up center opens into the garden. The door at left leads out into the street.

Cy Goolus is behind the counter, seated upon the stool, counting money in an old cigar box which he holds upon his lap. Skeets Goolus is on her hands and knees, creeping along in front of the counter, carefully keeping low in order to prevent her father from spying her. When she reaches the vicinity of the candy box, she pauses and carefully raises her hand. It crawls across the counter and into the box. She touches a piece of candy. Without looking up from his money, Cy grabs a yardstick and sharply raps Skeets' hand. She springs up with a loud yell, thrusting her dirty, injured fingers into her mouth.

CY: That'll larn ya! Skeets! *(Injured.)* I jest wanted a little piece of candy, that's all. *(Still with his eyes on his money.)* Cain't be eatin' all the profits.

SKEETS: We ain't eatin' none of hit, Paw! Whut'd be the harm in havin' one little bite?

CY: Shet yer tator trap, cain't ya see I'm busy? (*Looking up.*) An' don't go thinkin' ya'll sneak a piece next time ya tend store, Skeets. I counted every blamed piece in them boxes an' effen any's missin', I'm gonna have the money fer hit!

SKEETS: Mary Lou, Chuck, Hairy, Amy, Juney, Glory, an' Alouisious shore air lucky!

CY: Why?

SKEETS: 'Cause they got married an' moved away from home!

CY: (*Happily.*) Yep. Got a good price fer every one of 'em too!

Skeets turns left with disgust and begins to suck her injured fingers again. Happy enters up center with a bucket filled with flowers.

HAPPY: Look whut I brung!

CY: Whut fur?

HAPPY: Why, t' sell! (*She places the bucket on the counter.*) Ain't they purty?

SKEETS: Who'd be wantin' t' buy flowers?

HAPPY: (*Laughing.*) Ya niver kin tell. 'Sides, hit'll brighten the store, fer when the cousins come. (*Worriedly, glancing around.*) I got suspicions they be expectin' somethin', better then this.

CY: Whut's wrong with this? Hit be the best store in Lone Mule, Tennessee!

SKEETS: Hit be the only store in Lone Mule, Tennessee!

HAPPY: When will they be arrivin' Paw?

CY: (*Shrugging.*) Don't know. Don't care. Ya know, Happy, I sold Mrs. Slasser thet bathtub this mornin'!

SKEETS: The one ya've been tryin' t' sell fer a year?

CY: (*Proudly.*) Yep.

HAPPY: But thet ain't right, Paw! Whut would Mrs. Slasser do with a bathtub? Them Slassers ain't tuck a bath in years.

CY: (*Rising; his money is neatly stacked and cigar box closed.*) I think she said somethin' about hit bein' good fer makin' cider.

HAPPY: (*Going down left as Skeets edges closer to the candy again.*) Speakin' of the Slassers, Paw—when do ya think Mr. Slasser is gonna wake up an' go home?

CY: *(Joining Happy before the chair down left. As soon as his back is turned Skeets begins stuffing candy into her mouth.)* Ought to be any day now. He'll be gittin' hungry soon.

HAPPY: Ya don't suppose he's daid, do you? He ain't moved in days.

Jake Slasser snores loudly.

CY: He ain't daid. *(Turning.)* Did ya fix thet room aside of yourn fer the visitin' cousins, Skeets?

SKEETS: *(Mumbles over mouthful of candy.)*

CY: Huh" Cain't hyar a word ya said.

SKEETS: *(Mumbles again and rushes out the door up center.)*

CY: *(Digging in his ear.)* Now, ain't thet funny? Do ya suppose my hearin's gone back on me?

HAPPY: *(Laughing.)* I don't reckon so, Paw.

Betty Belle enters slowly at right.

BETTY: *(Slowly.)* Hey, Pa...

CY: *(Moving to center stage.)* Betty Belle, seems ya git dirtier ever time I look at ya! Good thing yer Maw ain't alive t' see ya.

BETTY: Cain't expect all of us t' turn out clean. Ain't natural.

CY: Reckon not. Don't know how I'll evir git ya married off though an' yer comin' t' the age fer hit.

BETTY: Paw...

CY: Happy, you look after the store. *(Looks carefully around and holds his money close.)* I'm gonna bury my money again.

BETTY: Paw, I been tryin' t' tell ya thet the Widder Squiggins is a-comin'.

CY: Why didn't ya say so? *(He rushes out the door up center.)*

HAPPY: The Widder Squiggins! Has she got her young 'ums with her?

BETTY: Nope. *(Sitting on a chair down right.)* Think I'd be hyar effen she had?

HAPPY: *(Relaxing.)* Thet ain't so bad then. Them Squiggins kids be the most awful pack of bobcats in the valley.

HANK: *(Puffing as he enters left.)* The Widder Squiggins is a-comin'!

BETTY: We know hit.

HANK: Is Paw hid?

HAPPY: Yep. *(She takes her place behind the counter.)*

HANK: Phew! Thet'd shore be awful effen she'd evir git t' marry Paw.

HAPPY: She ain't catchin' Paw. He runs a mile when he sees her comin'.

BETTY: *(Holds up her arm and inspects a long, red gash.)* Gol darn thing smarts a bit.

HANK: Whut happened?

BETTY: I got too close when I fed thet wildcat you caught.

HANK: Gosh. I'll feed hit next time, Betty Belle.

BETTY: I'll jest stay further away, Hank. Hit's a mean critter.

Enter the Widow Squiggins through the door left.

WIDOW: Wal, good mornin', everybody!!

HAPPY: Good mornin', Widder.

WIDOW: Whar's yer Paw?

HAPPY: *(Vaguely.)* Oh, he's around somewhar. I'm tendin' store.

HANK: 'Scuse me, Widder.

BETTY: Same hyar.

Hank and Betty Belle exit through the door up center.

WIDOW: Seems like he ain't niver hyar when I come in.

HAPPY: He's a busy man.

WIDOW: *(Sighing.)* Handsome too. 'Morin', Mr. Slasser.

HAPPY: I ain't niver noticed.

WIDOW: *(Glancing around.)* Uh—Happy! Confidentially now, has he asked anybody t' go with him t' the hoedown?

HAPPY: I—uh—reckon not.

WIDOW: *(Happily.)* Wal, whar thar's life thar's hope!

HAPPY: Huh?

WIDOW: I heerd some talk ya wuz gittin' visitors from the city.

HAPPY: Yep. Cousins of ourn. Two gals.

WIDOW: Thet so?

HAPPY: They be orphans. Their folks died.

WIDOW: (*Dabbing her eyes.*) Sad, ain't it? Always reminds me of my poor Herbert when I hear of folks dyin' sudden.

HAPPY: Yer Herbert did go kinda sudden, didn't he? One of yer young 'ens tripped him so's he fell head furst in the well. Even then ya mighta saved him effen one of 'em hadn't slapped the lid on the well so's nobody cud hyar him yellin'.

WIDOW: Sech harmless fun the little dears wuz havin'! An' hit hadda turn out so tragic! These cousins—I reckon they be poor an' yer Paw'll hafta keep them out of the goodness of his heart.

HAPPY: They ain't poor. They're rich!

WIDOW: Rich! Then why be they comin' hyar?

HAPPY: (*Frowning.*) I don't rightly know.

WIDOW: 'Course thar ain't no place in the world better the Lone Mule, Tennessee, I always say. Still—you know how city folks air.

HAPPY: No, I ain't niver met none. Kin I do ya fer somethin', Widder?

WIDOW: (*Going to the clothes tree up right.*) I need a new dress, I reckon.

HAPPY: A new one? Ya jest got one last week.

WIDOW: (*Laughing indulgently.*) Thet one got burned up. My little angels wuz havin' fun and set it afire.

HAPPY: Ain't thet awful?

WIDOW: Oh, I wouldn't of minded mech, 'ceptin I wuz wearin' hit at the time. (*Taking a dress much too large and holding it in front of her.*) My! Ain't this one stylish!

HAPPY: Yep.

WIDOW: How much?

HAPPY: One ninety eight.

WIDOW: (*Hesitantly.*) Hit's a wee bit high. I ain't used t' buyin' sech fancy dresses.

HAPPY: But look at thet material, Widder. (*Slyly.*) Ya cain't expect men t' notice ya effen ya ain't dressed nice.

WIDOW: I'll take hit! (*She takes an old coin purse from her pocket and carefully counts out the change which she gives to Happy.*) Now then—yer shore yer Paw won't be back, Happy?

HAPPY: (*Taking the dress, bundling it into a ball and handing it to the Widow.*) Nope. He's out somewhar.

WIDOW: (*Sighing.*) Then I reckon thar ain't no use hanging around no more. When ya see him tell him I'll be back later—in my new dress!

HAPPY: I'll tell him.

Widow Squiggins exits through the door left. Cy cautiously looks through the door up center.

CY: Has she gone?

HAPPY: Yep. But she'll be back.

CY: Tarnation!

HAPPY: Paw—I think I heerd a car. Will ya take over? Maybe hit'll be the cousins.

CY: Why air you young 'uns so het up over the cousins?

HAPPY: Thar're city folks!

She runs out door up center. Cy shrugs and takes his place behind the counter. Offstage a mumble of voices which becomes clear.

CORNELIA: (*Off left.*) This is horrible! Parking the car half a mile away!

MISS WINSLOW: (*Off left.*) The street is far too muddy to drive any closer. Goodness! I'd be in up to my hub caps!

DORTHEA: (*Off left.*) How much further is it?

MISS WINSLOW: (*Reading.*) "Cy Goolus—General Store." This is it!

CORNELIA: This?

MISS WINSLOW: I'm afraid so.

CORNELIA: (*Wailing.*) Oh, it can't be! It looks like a pig pen!

Cy grins to himself and shrugs.

MISS WINSLOW: Hush! Someone will hear you. Let's see what it looks like inside. Sometimes a nice interior is hidden by rough exterior.

Enter Miss Winslow through the door left. Cornelia and Dorthea enter right behind her. They advance to left center and stand looking about. Dorthea's expression is one of interest; Cornelia looks shocked.

MISS WINSLOW: Mr. Goolus?

CY: Yep, that's me.

MISS WINSLOW: *(Rather haughtily.)* I'm Miss Winslow, secretary to the lawyer who is handling your half-brother's estate. You received our communications concerning your nieces, did you not?

CY: Yep.

MISS WINSLOW: Did you prepare a room for them?

CY: Yep.

MISS WINSLOW: *(Losing her temper.)* Can't you say anything but "yep"? These girls have traveled a thousand miles to come here! I should think your greeting could be warmer! After all, you'll be paid handsomely for their board.

CY: *(Rising slowly.)* Wouldn't be takin' 'em in effen thar wasn'tt' somethin' in it fer me.

MISS WINSLOW: *(To herself.)* He's tighter than last year's bathing suit.

CY: What's that?

MISS WINSLOW: Nothing. Un—Uncle Cyrus, this is your niece, Cornelia.

CY: Howdy, Corney!

MISS WINSLOW: *(Hastily.)* And this is your niece, Dorthea.

CY: Howdy, Dot.

DORTHEA: *(Happily.)* Gosh! Nobody ever called me Dot before! Glad to meet you, Uncle Cy.

CORNELIA: Really, Dorthea!

CY: Ya might as well meet my young 'uns—er whut's left of 'em anyhow. Got most of 'em married off already. *(Bellowing.)* Hey, kids! *(Silence.)* Wal, I better go round 'em up myself. They're kinda shy about strangers.

Exit Cy through the door up center.

CORNELIA: (*Stamping her foot.*) I can't stay here! I won't!

MISS WINSLOW: (*Putting an arm about her shoulders.*) I'm sorry, dear, but I'm afraid you'll have to. They're your only living relatives.

CORNELIA: How did we ever get such relatives?

MISS WINSLOW: It goes back a long way. Of course, I'm only your lawyer's secretary, but I know most of the story. Your father was Cy's half brother. Your grandfather spent a vacation in the hills when he was young and met a beautiful young girl named Laura Belle.

DORTHEA: Gee! That's romantic.

MISS WINSLOW: (*Laughing.*) Yes, it was. He married her and took her back to the city with him. He was very wealthy, you know, and he gave her everything she ever asked for. But Laura Belle got homesick. They had a child—your father—but Laura Belle just couldn't fit into city life.

DORTHEA: Poor Laura Belle.

MISS WINSLOW: Yes. She finally divorced your grandfather, moved back to the hills, married a poor dirt farmer, and lived happily ever after.

CORNELIA: How disgusting!

DORTHEA: And Uncle Cy was the son of Laura Belle and her second husband!

MISS WINSLOW: That's right.

Skeets enters through the door up center. They do not notice her as she glides to the right of the counter and crouches down to listen.

CORNELIA: I still don't see why we have to live with them!

DORTHEA: We only have to stay here in the summer, Cornelia. We'll be in boarding school in the winter and as soon as we're through school we may go to Europe to study.

MISS WINSLOW: That's right. It won't be too bad.

CORNELIA: (*Moving away quickly.*) You can say that, Miss Winslow, because you don't have to stay! Look at this place! Look at that! (*She indicates Jake Slasser.*) I won't stay! I won't! It's too awful!

MISS WINSLOW: (*Quietly.*) I'm afraid you'll have to.

DORTHEA: Why? If Cornelia hates it so much, Miss Winslow—

MISS WINSLOW: Listen, girls, it was your father's dying wish that you become acquainted with your only living relatives. His will stipulates that if either of you does not remain here every summer until you're through school, you forfeit your share of his fortune.

CORNELIA: What?

DORTHEA: You mean, if we don't stay we won't get any of Dad's money? We'll be penniless?

MISS WINSLOW: That's right.

CORNELIA: *(Crying.)* Oh it's horrible! Horrible!

MISS WINSLOW: Nonsense, Cornelia. Surely a few summers here in the hills won't be that bad. You might even grow fond of the place.

CORNELIA: No, I won't! I hate it! Please, Miss Winslow! Don't leave us here! If we must stay, you stay with us!

MISS WINSLOW: That's impossible, Cornelia. I have a job elsewhere.

CORNELIA: We'd pay you!

MISS WINSLOW: I wouldn't stay in this pig pen—*(Realizing what she is saying.)* Un—I mean, it's impossible, that's all.

DORTHEA: I think it'll be fun!

Enter Cy through the door up center. Happy, Betty Belle, and Hank trail him and stand awkwardly before the counter, staring bashfully at the floor.

CY: I couldn't find Skeets, the youngest one. She's as slippery as an iced cucumber. This hyar's Betty Belle. *(She curtsies without raising her eyes.)* Happy. *(She does the same.)* Hank.

HANK: Howdy.

Cornelia wails and bursts into tears. Happy looks up and goes to her.

HAPPY: Gosh cousin. Nothin's thet bad.

MISS WINSLOW: Well, there's no point in prolonging a painful parting. You'll receive your portion of your half-brother's estate, Mr. Goolus, after the girls have lived here for a summer. Try to remember that they aren't accustomed to this kind of life. Their bags are outside by the car. *(Reluctantly.)* Well, goodbye, girls.

DORTHEA: So long, Miss Winslow. And thanks.

Cornelia only cries harder.

MISS WINSLOW: Goodbye, everyone. *(Exits Miss Winslow through the door left.)*

CY: Wal, reckon we better git ya settled in yer room. We give ya one all to yerselves. Figured ya wouldn't want t' sleep in with Betty Belle. She smells kind strong till ya git used t' hit.

DORTHEA: Thanks. What about our suitcases? We didn't bring much—mostly sport clothes.

CY: Betty Belle, go git thar bags. *(Exit Betty Belle through the door left.)*

HAPPY: Ever see how a blacksmith puts a shoe on a horse? *(Cornelia shakes her head, wiping her eyes.)* Come on, I'll show ya. We got a blacksmith jest across the way an' it's mighty interestin' t' watch.

DORTHEA: Gee, I'd love to! Let's go, Cornelia! *(Exit Dortha, Cornelia, and Happy through the door left.)*

HANK: Kin I git back t' choppin' wood, Paw?

CY: Reckon. *(Hank exits through the door up center. Skeets rises from her hiding place right of the counter.)*

CY: Skeets! Ya been snitchin' candy again?

SKEETS: *(Smugly.)* I know somethin' you don't know.

CY: Whut?

SKEETS: I ain't tellin', lessen I git some candy t' munch on.

CY: How much candy?

SKEETS: Five pieces.

CY: Nothin's worth that mech. I'll give ya four an' hit better be good.

He counts out four pieces of candy. HE picks up a large piece, looks at it, returns it to the box and gives Skeets a small piece.

CY: Now then?

SKEETS: Wal, I snuck in whilst them city cousins wuz talkin' t' thet lady.

CY: She's got something t' do with thet lawyer feller.

SKEETS: The one they called Cornelia sez she ain't stayin'. Thet Miss Winslow sez she got to.

CY: Why?

SKEETS: 'Cause effen she don't, they got hit fixed so she won't git none of her Paw's money he left when he kicked the bucket.

CY: (*Slyly.*) Ya mean, effen somethin' wuz t' chase 'em away from hyar, they wouldn't git no money an' it might go t' the next livin' relative. Thet's me!

SKEETS: Thet's right. An' I still say hit's worth five pieces of candy.

CY: (*Automatically handing her the large piece. She grabs it and runs out the door up center.*) Effen, I could keep 'em from stayin', I'd be a rich man. Rich! No more pinchin' pennies...We cud have the best house n Lone Mule! An' a can an' maybe even a bathtub...

Enter Betty Belle through the door left. She is loaded down with suitcases.

BETTY: An' they said they didn't bring mech! This be only half. They musta juest throwed the stuff out of the car.

CY: Put thar bags in thet little room over the pig pen.

BETTY: Huh?

CY: Air ya half-witted? Ya heerd whut I said!

BETTY: (*Surprised.*) But we fixed thet cute little back room up fancy fer 'em. Ya bump yer haid every time ya stand up in thet room above the pig pen.

CY: Do as yer told!

BETTY: Shore, Paw. Only they ain't gonna like hit.

CY: An' carry the rest of thar bags around the outside.

BETTY: I cain't do thet without carryin' 'em right through the hog waller, Paw!

CY: Then carry 'em through the hog waller.

BETTY: Shore, Paw.

CY: An'fry up a mess of pig's lungs fer supper.

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BETTY: Paw, whut's got inta ya? Ya know ya don't like pig's lungs.
Ya tuck the switch t' me last time I fried 'em.
CY: An' I'll take the switch t' ya agin effen ya don't do whut yer told!
BETTY: Yes, Paw.

She hurries through the door up center.

CY: *(Chuckling.)* I know some others ain't gonna like fried pig's lungs neither.

He is still chuckling and rubbing his hands together as Miss Oggie and Aunt Sukey bustle in through the door left, fluttering and giggling.

MISS OGGIE: Ooooh! Thar ya air, Cyrus!

AUNT SUKEY: The Widder Squiggins said ya wuzn't no place around. *(Giggles.)* But we found you!

CY: *(Without enthusiasm.)* So ya did.

MISS OGGIE: She wuz so busy talkin' about the hoedown—

AUNT SUKEY: We jest couldn't git a word in edgewise!

MISS OGGIE: Thet's right, we couldn't. The way thet woman talks—

AUNT SUKEY: It's a sin and a shame, I always say.

CY: *(Clearing his throat.)* Uh—Yes. Whut kin I do fer you ladies?

MISS OGGIE: We heerd tell ya got some new yard goods fer makin' dresses.

AUNT SUKEY: The Widder Squiggins showed us thet store-bought dress ya sold her. She'll be the homeliest critter at the hoedown effen she wears hit.

MISS OGGIE: I always make my own dresses out of yore pretty goods, Cyrus.

AUNT SUKEY: *(Glaring.)* So do I!

MISS OGGIE: The Widder Squiggins ain't one fer makin' a home like us.

CY: *(Finding his shirt collar too tight.)* I got my bolts of goods hangin' out on the porch effen you ladies—

AUNT SUKEY: Air you goin' t' the hoedown, Cyrus?

CY: Wal—

MISS OGGIE: Oh, ya jest must! Hit'll be the biggest affair in these parts since old lady Hentzel's funeral.

Enter Cornelia and Dortha through the door left.

DORTHEA: You must admit the blacksmith's shop was interesting, Cornelia.

CORNELIA: *(Crossly.)* "Quaint" would be a better word.

CY: *(Relieved to have a legitimate diversion.)* Wal, howdy, Gals! Aunt Sukey, and Miss Oggie, these air my two orphan nieces from the West. Looks like they'll be stayin' a spell.

AUNT SUKEY: *(Hugging Dortha.)* Oh, I heerd tell all about you two pore souls. Lost yer Paw recent, didn't you?

CORNELIA: *(Coldly.)* Our father passed away, if that's what you mean.

MISS OGGIE: *(Dramatically.)* Oh, Cyrus! An' ya tuck 'em in out of the goodness of yore heart.

CORNELIA: He'll be well paid for it!

AUNT SUKEY: My! Ain't she the proud one though?

CY: *(At window up left.)* Oh, no!

MISS OGGIE: Whut ails ya, Cyrus?

CY: *(Rushing down stage.)* Ya must see Betty Belle's garden, ladies! She'll be hurt effen ya went without seein' hit!

AUNT SUKEY: Huh?

MISS OGGIE: But Cyrus! The yard goods---

CY: Later. Corney, you tend to the shop!

CORNELIA: Really, Uncle Cyrus! I'm not accustomed to—

CY: Hesh up! We all work t' earn our keep hyar-abouts an' you ain't no better than nobody else. Come along, Dot.

DORTHEA: Where?

CY: Skeets kin teach ya t' skin a hog. Ya ain't niver skun one, have ya?

DORTHEA: *(Gulping.)* Uh—no, I don't believe I have.

CY: Then come along.

CORNELIA: This is outrageous! You're being paid to keep us! We're not work horses!

CY: Effin ya don't like my way of doin' things, ya kin leave.

CORNELIA: B-But we can't leave. I mean—

CY: Then ya'll do as yer told er I'll take the switch t' ya.

DORTHEA: W-What?

CY: *(Turning to her.)* That goes fer you too, Dot. Now, git! *(Dorthea scurries out the door up center. Cy follows, followed by Aunt Sukey and Miss Oggie. Cornelia stands at center stage, glaring after them. She stamps her foot with anger.)*

CORNELIA: Oh! That—that person! I hate him! I---

She pauses, listening to noises off left. It sounds like an army approaching. There are screams and whistles; shouts and reports which sound like cap pistols firing. Hank's voice, off left, is heard shouting, "Run fer yer lives! The Squiggins family is headin' this way!" When the noise has reached its peak the door left opens and the Squiggins family pours in. They are the largest, dirtiest hillbilly family imaginable. Cornelia backs up to the counter and stares at them with amazement.

WIDOW: Wal, we're back agin! *(To a boy who has started to kick Jake Slasser.)* Charlie! Don't kick Mr. Slasser, ya might wake him!

1st GIRL: *(Pointing to Cornelia.)* Look, Maw! Thar's a new one.

2nd GIRL: A city one.

CORNELIA: I—I'm just tending store for my uncle. *(Yelling.)* Uncle Cyrus! *(No answer.)* Uncle Cyrus!

1st BOY: He won't come. He's a-skeered of us.

WIDOW: Now, don't you talk so about Cy! He's a fine man. He might be your new Paw some day!

1st BOY: *(Patting his gun again.)* I cain't hardly wait!

CORNELIA: You w-want to buy something?

1st GIRL: *(Grabbing Cornelia's arm.)* Hey! Look at this bracelet.

CORNELIA: Let go!

2nd GIRL: *(Also grabbing arm.)* I saw hit first!

1st GIRL: Did not!

2nd GIRL: Did too!

They scuffle and topple to the floor, pulling Cornelia down with them. The other children race about looking into everything. One upsets the dishpan filled with unbreakable dishes. They scatter over the floor. The 1ST Girl finally grabs Cornelia's bracelet and rises triumphantly.

1st GIRL: *(As she skips away putting on the bracelet.)* I got the bracelet! I got the bracelet!

WIDOW: Is Cy here?

CORNELIA: *(Sitting up; 2ND Girl rises and pursues the bracelet.)* W-What?

WIDOW: Cy niver stays home mech. Whut he needs is a bigger family and more of a home-life. Thar ain't nothin' like a peaceful home, is thar, kids? *(As a chorus of "No's" go up—two of the boys have started a boxing bout and 2ND Girl is now chasing 1ST Girl with a broom.)*

CORNELIA: Uncle Cyrus went away! I don't think he'll be back for a week!

1st BOY: She's lyin', Maw. *(Advancing with gun.)* Let me git the truth out of her!

WIDOW: Now put thet gun away, son. Ya mustn't scare folks so. Come on, kids! We'll find Cy later.

2nd BOY: Sneak up on him next time, Maw.

They exit through the door left, carrying some of the merchandise with them. Cornelia watches them go, a dazed expression on her face. Slim Hawkenshaw pokes his head through the window up left.

SLIM: They all gone? *(Cornelia screams.)* Shh! They might come back effen they hyar ya! *(He disappears for a moment, then enters through the door left.)* Howdy. Name's Slim Hawkenshaw effen hit's anything to ya.

CORNELIA: *(Rising and smoothing her hair; her arrogance returns.)* It's not. Who were those awful people?

SLIM: Widder Squiggins and her young 'uns.

CORNELIA: What does she want here?

SLIM: *(Scratching his head.)* Near as I cud evir figure out, she wants Cy Goolus: He runs ever time he sees her a-comin'.

CORNELIA: He—he must have seen them through the window. That's why he was in such a hurry to have me tend the store!

SLIM: Hit war a mean trick. He shoulda warned ya.

CORNELIA: I can understand his reluctance to be here, but why'd he have to pick me?

SLIM: (*Bashfully.*) Effen hit waar me, I'd pick ya enny time. Yore mighty purty.

CORNELIA: (*Absently.*) Thanks. (*Moves to Jake Slasser.*) What on earth is that?

Enter Dortehea, dirty and disheveled through the door up center. She rubs a grimy hand over her face, streaking it black, and drops wearily into a chair, right.

DORTHEA: Boy, what a dump! There's more work around here than in a concentration camp. (*Spying Slim who is still staring worshipfully at Cornelia.*) Who's your friend?

SLIM: Name's Slim Hawkenshaw effen hits anything t' ya.

DORTHEA: (*Shrugging.*) Maybe I can make it mean something. What are you doing this evening?

SLIM: I'm gonna skin a hog.

DORTHEA: That let's me out.

SLIM: (*To Cornelia.*) Un, Ma'am—Thar's gonna be a hoedown in a week er so an' I wuz wonderin'—Shucks! I mean—wal—

CORNELIA: (*Who hasn't been paying any attention to him, now turns impatiently.*) What on earth are you sputtering about?

SLIM: (*Shoving his hands into his pockets.*) Duh—I wuz thinkin' maybe...I mean, yore a gal an' I'm a feller, so...

CORNELIA: So what?

SLIM: So—(*Losing his nerve.*) I'm goin' home! So long!

Slim rushes out through the door left.

DORTHEA: Aw, Corney—

CORNELIA: Don't you dare call me that name!

DORTHEA: I meant Cornelia...You weren't very nice to that guy.

CORNELIA: (*Indifferently.*) Why should I be?

DORTHEA: Looks like he's got a case on you.

CORNELIA: I don't care what kind of a case he's got! All I want to do is get out of here!

DORTHEA: Why don't you relax? You might even start to enjoy life for a change!

CORNELIA: Just what do you mean by that remark?

DORTHEA: I was closer to Dad than you were and I got a pretty good idea why he sent us out here.

CORNELIA: Why?

DORTHEA: I think he figured we'd had too many fancy friends and fancy clothes. He wanted us to come down to earth for a change.

CORNELIA: But this place isn't even on earth! It's below that!

Enter Betty Belle up center.

DORTHEA: (*Sniffing the air.*) What's that horrible odor? Oh—Hello, Betty Belle.

BETTY: (*Sullenly.*) Hello, yerself.

DORTHEA: I was wondering if you'd show me the rest of your garden. What I saw of it looked awfully nice.

BETTY: You got eyes. Look fer yerself.

Exit Betty Belle, violently scratching herself, through the door left.

DORTHEA: (*Surprised.*) Now what do you suppose got into her? She was acting awfully nice when she helped Skeets show me how to skin that hog.

CORNELIA: Maybe it was that crack about the horrible odor.

DORTHEA: Naw. Betty Belle wouldn't mind something like that. She'd think it was a compliment.

CORNELIA: Oh, well! What does it matter?

DORTHEA: We ought to try to get along. We'll be here three months—and next summer.

CORNELIA: Don't remind me. (*Reluctantly.*) Well, I suppose we ought to get on with unpacking. Where's our room?

DORTHEA: Oh-Oh.

CORNELIA: Now what?

DORTHEA: I forgot that you hadn't seen our room yet.

CORNELIA: Have you?

DORTHEA: (*Nodding.*) Sort of. Of course, the smell was so bad it had my eyes watering. But I saw some of it.

CORNELIA: Go on.

DORTHEA: It's right over the pig pen.

CORNELIA: That's the last straw!

DORTHEA: What are you going to do?

CORNELIA: I'm going to have a heart-to-heart talk with that Uncle of ours!

Enter Miss Oggie and Aunt Sukey through the door up center.

MISS OGGIE: Yoo hoo!

AUNT SUKEY: We lost Cyrus. Whar do you suppose he got to?

MISS OGGIE: We turned around t' look at somethin' in the garden an' thet quick he wuz gone.

AUNT SUKEY: Somethin' very important must have called him away.

MISS OGGIE: Of course.

AUNT SUKEY: He loves our company.

CORNELIA: I bet.

MISS OGGIE: Oh, Sukey. Thar's thet proud gal agin.

AUNT SUKEY: Pride goes before a fall I always say.

CORNELIA: If you find my uncle, kindly tell him I want to talk to him—immediately.

MISS OGGIE: Oh, nobody talks thet way to Cyrus!

AUNT SUKEY: Oh dear me no!

MISS OGGIE: Maybe dear Cyrus found the sunshine too bright and went in the barn t' wait fer us.

AUNT SUKEY: Miss Oggie, thet's a swell idée.

MISS OGGIE: Let's look.

AUNT SUKEY: Yep.

They hurry out the door up center. A group of dirty, bedraggled individuals, led by Skeets who carries a bowl of "cat" food, enter through the door left and stand staring at Dorthea and Cornelia.

CORNELIA: Well—who are you people?

1ST: It kin talk.

2ND: I thought somebody said they had horns on thar haid an' green noses.

3RD: They shore ain't worth the penny apiece we paid t' see 'em.

CORNELIA: What is this?

SKEETS: Okay. Thet's all.

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3RD: I still say it ain't a penny's worth.

SKEETS: Thar real, honest-to-goodness city slickers. What more do ya want?

DORTHEA: Something tells me we're on exhibition.

CORNELIA: This is outrageous!

SKEETS: Okay! Clear out! Show's over.

Grumbling, they exit through the door left. Skeets closes the door behind them.

CORNELIA: I imagine you're the youngest Goolus. What do you mean by doing something like that?

SKEETS: Effen ya don't like it ya kin leave.

CORNELIA: I'm going to tell your father about this!

SKEETS: Paw won't pay no heed t' city slickers.

CORNELIA: Stop calling us that!

SKEETS: *(Handing Cornelia a dish of food she brought in with her.)*
Paw sez yer t' feed the cat.

CORNELIA: What cat?

SKEETS: *(Pointing right.)* In thar.

CORNELIA: Isn't that an awfully big meal for a cat?

SKEETS: Hit's a big cat.

CORNELIA: Well, wait right here til I come back. I have a few more things to say to you.

SKEETS: *(Grinning.)* Oh, I'll wait. I wouldn't leave now fer anythin'.

Exit Cornelia through the door right.

SKEETS: *(Quickly.)* Dot, ya better hustle out an' start hoein' the garden.

DORTHEA: What's the hurry?

SKEETS: Paw'll give hit t' ya effen ya don't hurry.

DORTHEA: *(Sighing.)* Okay.

Exit Dorthea through the door up center. Skeets sneaks to the door right and stands listening. Off stage Cornelia screams. There are thumps and bangs, more screams, then silence. Skeets hurries back to center stage and stands there innocently. The door right opens and Cornelia enters. There are scratches on her face (lines of lipstick.) and a long gash on her arm. Her hair is wildly scattered. Without a word she marches over to face Skeets.

SKEETS: *(After a moment of silence.)* I forgot to tell you it's a wildcat.

CORNELIA: Oh! This does it!

SKEETS: *(Hopefully.)* It does?

Enter Betty Belle up center with a pan containing small fried objects—possibly scallops.

BETTY: *(To Cornelia.)* Wal, yer startin' t' look more human. Want a taste?

CORNELIA: I hardly think so.

BETTY: Aw, go on. Paw had me fry these up special fer the company.

CORNELIA: Well... *(She takes one and delicately takes a bite.)*
Hmmm. What an odd taste.

BETTY: Don't you like it?

CORNELIA: I guess I'd get used to it.

SKEETS: *(Grabbing one and stuffing it into her mouth.)* I love 'em!
Thar ain't nothin' in the world like fried hog's lungs!

Skeets skips out through the door left.

CORNELIA: *(Weakly.)* Did she say—hog's lungs?

BETTY: Yep. We have'em often.

CORNELIA: *(Dropping her uneaten portion on the floor and wiping her fingers.)* What else do you have?

BETTY: Oh, pig's feet, fried rattlesnake—

CORNELIA: That's enough!

BETTY: Not quite. Sometimes fer dessert we have fish eye pudding.

CORNELIA: Ohhh!

BETTY: Be somethin' the matter, Cousin?

CORNELIA: This is too much! I'm going to find Uncle Cyrus!

Exit Cornelia through the door up center. Horseface Dilly enters through the door left.

BETTY: *(Placing her pan on the counter.)* Wal, effen hit ain't Horseface Dilly! Howdy!

HORSEFACE: Howdy, yerself.

BETTY: Ya come fer somethin' particular—er air ya out lookin' fer trouble?

HORSEFACE: Need some soap down at the cabin.

BETTY: Soap! Whut fur?

HORSEFACE: Makes good eatin'.

BETTY: Yeah? I'll have t' try some. *(She takes a lump of brown soap from the counter and hands it to him.)* Thet'll be a nickel.

HORSEFACE: I'll owe hit to ya.

BETTY: Oh no! Paw sez we ain't trustin' nobody.

HORSEFACE: *(Lifting his gun.)* I ain't trustin' nobody neither. Would yer Paw like t' argue about hit outside?

BETTY: *(Gulping.)* I—I don't reckon he would.

HORSEFACE: *(Menacingly.)* The last guy whut tried hit wuz buried jest yesterday.

BETTY: Yeah. Wal, I'll tell Paw ya wuz hyar.

HORSEFACE: *(Pausing.)* Ya know, Betty Belle, me an' my kinfolks have been takin' things out of this hyar store fer years an' not payin'.

BETTY: *(Nervously.)* Oh, think nothin' of hit, Horseface!

HORSEFACE: Yeah—but maybe yer right. Maybe we oughta do him a favor fer a change.

BETTY: Effen ya'd jest stay aways fer a spell, I reckon he'd be mighty happy.

HORSEFACE: Nope, it's have t' be somethin' bigger than thet. I heerd ya got some city cousins visitin'?

BETTY: *(Wryly.)* Yeah.

HORSEFACE: Aunt Sukey said they wuz mighty mean to' be around an' yer Paw ud be better off without 'em.

BETTY: Yep. I shore wish we cud git rid o' 'em.

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HORSEFACE: *(Satisfied.)* Okay.

BETTY: *(Suddenly suspicious.)* Whut do ya mean—okay?

HORSEFACE: Okay, I'll git rid of them fer ya.

BETTY: Ya mean...*(She makes a motion of cutting her throat.)*

HORSEFACE: Yep. *(He duplicates the motion.)*

BETTY: Oh, no! I mean—Paw don't want 'em killed! Thar's other ways thet ain't so messy.

HORSEFACE: Wal, I wuzn't figurin' t' do hit in the house. Maw always said never t' be untidy in the house.

BETTY: We don't want hit done no place! We got our own ways of gittin' rid of 'em, Horseface!

HORSEFACE: *(Shrugs.)* Okay, effen thet's the way ya feel. But effen them other ways don't work—jest let me know.

BETTY: I will. Thanks, Horseface.

Exit Horseface through the door left.

BETTY: Wal, I reckon I better git thet wildcat out t' hits new pen an' git about makin' supper. *(Picks up pan.)* Fried hog's lungs! *(Exit Betty Belle through the door right.)*

BETTY: *(Off right.)* Hi, Paw! Thanks fer putting the wildcat in hits pen fer me!

The door right opens and Cyrus peers cautiously into the room. He enters, then looks out the door right to see if he was followed. He backs slowly toward the center of the stage, his eye on the door right. Aunt Sukey enters through the door left, looks out to see if she overlooked Cy, then begins to back toward center stage, her eye on the door left. Miss Oggie appears at the door right. Cyrus turns sharply, determined to run away. At the same moment Aunt Suckey turns and they crash into each other.

AUNT SUKEY: Why, Cyrus!

MISS OGGIE: We wuz lookin' all over fer ya.

AUNT SUKEY: An' I bet ya wuz lookin' fer us!

MISS OGGIE: Funny how we missed each other, Cy. *(Unhappily.)*
Ain't?

AUNT SUKEY: (*Possessively taking one of his arms.*) I believe we wuz talkin' about the hoedown when we wuz interrupted.

MISS OGGIE: (*Taking the other arm.*) An' dear Cyrus had jest admitted that he wuz dyin' t' go.

CY: I'm dyin' all right!

AUNT SUKEY: (*Giggling.*) Oh, Cyrus! Ya say the nicest things.

MISS OGGIE: Yer only problem is findin' some body t' take, huh, Cyrus?

CY: (*Clearing his throat.*) I thought maybe I'd take my dotter, Betty Belle.

AUNT SUKEY: But, Cyrus! Betty Belle's getting' t' the age whar she'll be wantin' t' go out with fellers!

MISS OGGIE: So am I.

AUNT SUKEY: (*Releasing Cy's arm and glaring at Miss Oggie.*) Yer only six months younger then I am, so don't go givin' yerself airs, Miss Oggie!

MISS OGGIE: (*Also releasing Cy.*) But I ain't run through a couple husbands like you, Aunt Sukey!

Cy dashes out the door left.

AUNT SUKEY: Now, see whut ya done! He got away agin!

MISS OGGIE: Oh, Cyrus! Come on! He ain't got much of a head start.

They rush out left. Dortha and Cornelia enter through the door up center.

CORNELIA: It's obvious that they don't want us any more than we want to stay, Dortha.

DORTHEA: I still think it's kinda fun. Or maybe I should say it could be fun.

CORNELIA: Even that girl—Happy, didn't they call her? -- even she's giving us the cold shoulder now.

DORTHEA: Yeah, I noticed. And she was so friendly when we got here.

CORNELIA: We've got to find someway to get out of here and still get our money.

DORTHEA: Nice trick—if you can do it.

Enter Hank through the door left.

HANK: Horseface Dilly jest shot another feller.

Betty Belle appears at the door right.

BETTY: Did I hear ya say somethin' about Horseface Dilly?

HANK: Yep. He jest shot a feller up the street. Horseface offered him a bite of his soap an' the guy tuck too much.

CORNELIA: A bite of soap?

Cy rushes in the door up center, followed closely by Aunt Sukey and Miss Oggie.

CY: Out of my way!

CORNELIA: *(Stepping in front of him.)* Uncle Cyrus! I've got to talk to you!

CY: *(Yelling.)* I'm busy!

MISS OGGIE: *(Grabbing his shirt.)* Cyrus! About the hoedown—

CORNELIA: Uncle Cyrus! You've got to do something about the conditions around here—

The Widow Squiggins appears at the door left.

WIDOW: Ask anybody to the hoedown yit, Cy?

CY: No!

WIDOW: *(Brightly.)* Okay, kids! We got him cornered!

CORNELIA: Uncle Cyrus, about us—

CY: *(Patting her head.)* Forget it! We're one big happy family, Corney! One big happy family!

The Squiggins kids swarm in left. Cy runs right, closely followed by Aunt Sukey, Miss Oggie, and the Widow Squiggins. He wildly races about the stage, while the Squiggins children begin once more to tear the place apart. In the midst of the holocaust, the curtain descends.

ACT TWO

TIME: *The next morning.*

SCENE: *The same.*

The storeroom has been restored to order. As the curtain rises we discover that the stage is empty—except for Jake Slasser who still occupies his chair, left. A bright morning sun streams through the windows. Off stage a rooster crows. The door right opens and Cy Goolus enters, picking his teeth with a tooth-pick.

CY: *(Yawning and scratching his shoulder.)* Wal—another day, another dollar.

Enter Dorteia through the door right; Betty Belle follows her.

DORTHEA: What was that stuff we had for breakfast?

CY: Jest somethin' Happy dug up.

DORTHEA: Next time tell her to dig it up before it gets ripe. And to wash the dirt off.

BETTY: Hit whar worse then usual, Paw.

Dorteia sits down in a chair right and immediately begins to nod sleepily.

CY: Hesh up, Betty Belle. Vittles is vittles, aint' they?

BETTY: *(Doubtfully.)* Effen ya say so, Paw. Want me to' tend store?

CY: *(Going left and unlocking the door. He throws it open and stands breathing the air.)* Nope. I'll tend till Corney takes over. Whar is she?

BETTY: Last I seen her she wuz drinkin' somethin' she called bicarbonate of sody.

CY: Humph. Musta been somethin' she et. Hey, Dot!

DORTHEA: *(Starts and opens her eyes.)* Huh? What? What inning is it?

CY: Betty Belle, ya better find some work fer yer cousin. We wouldn't want her t' feel she wuzn't bein' useful, would we?

BETTY: *(Grinning.)* Shore wouldn't, Paw.

CY: Think ya kin find a nice clean job, Betty Belle?

BETTY: Shore kin, Paw.

CY: Ya kin tag along with Betty Belle, Dot.

DORTHEA: Ohh—I'm too sleepy!

CY: Cain't imagine why. Ya didn't git up till four thirty this mornin'.

DORTHEA: (*Groaning.*) Every other summer we slept till ten!

CY: Whut you need's a little exercise.

DORTHEA: I had enough exercise last night trying to keep from rolling off my side of that folding cot. You know how many times I bumped my head while I was getting dressed this morning?

Enter Zeke and his Maw through the door left. Without a word she leads him to the counter.

BETTY: Come on, Dot. Let's git.

Exit Betty Belle through the door up center. Dortehea yawns, rises and slowly follows her.

CY: (*Rubbing his hands together.*) Whut kin I do fer you folks?

MAW: Keep out of my way till I'm ready t' pay ya.

CY: Yes, Ma'am.

Maw roots about on the counter till she encounters a pair of long red underwear. Zeke, his mouth open, stands in the spot where she released his hand, staring straight before him. Maw takes the underwear and holds them up in front of Zeke.

MAW: Hmmm.

CY: Effen ya let me hold 'em at his shoulders, ya kin see about the length better.

MAW: All right. Ya might as well earn some of yer money, I reckon.

Cy stands behind Zeke and holds the red underwear at the boy's shoulders. Maw stoops and holds the legs against him. They are much, much too large.

MAW: Hit don't quite fit. Be this the only size ya got?

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CY: Yep. But them'll shrink. Wash 'em once an' thar're shore t' fit like a glove.

MAW: (*Undecided.*) I reckon I cud put in a tuck hyar an' thar effen they'd still be a little big. Huh, Zeke?

ZEKE: Duh...

CY: Whut'd he say?

MAW: Duh...

CY: Oh.

MAW: Wrap 'em up. We'll take 'em.

CY: (*Taking the underwear.*) Ya won't regret hit.

MAW: An' be shore t' wrap 'em in the Sunday funnies. We ain't seen Dick Tracy since we bought his last year's underwear.

CY: (*Going behind counter.*) Okay.

Hank, carrying a book, enters through the door right and sits in a chair. He begins to read. Cy wraps the underwear in some Sunday funny papers and hands the package to Maw.

CY: Sixty cents!

MAW: Sixty cents! Last year they wuz only fifty!

CY: Prices have gone up all over. Plain wrapped they're still fifty. Wrapped in Sunday funnies makes it a dime more.

MAW: (*Undecided.*) Whut do you think, Zeke?

ZEKE: Duh?

MAW: (*Digging into her old coin purse.*) I still say hit be robbery, but we'll take 'em.

She hands Cy the money. Miss Emmy Jean enters through the door left.

EMMY: Howdy.

MAW: Howdy, Emmy Jean. (*With a wrathful glance at Cy.*) An' effen ya wanna save money, don't git nothin' wrapped in Sunday funnies.

Exit Maw and Zeke through the door left.

CY: 'Mornin', Miss Emmy Jean. Hank! Hank! (*Hank looks up from his book.*) Ya kin wait on her whilst I look fer cousin Corney.

HANK: (*Laying aside his book and rising.*) Okay, Paw. (*Exit Cy through the door right.*)

HANK: Somethin' ya want, Emmy Jean?

EMMY: Maybe. (*Giggling.*) Whut air ya readin'?

HANK: Book on farmin'.

EMMY: I didn't know they writ books like thet.

HANK: Shore. They even got colleges ya kin go to t' larn about hit.

EMMY: My pappy sez ya kin larn everythin' thar is t' know about farmin' jest settin' watchin' the weeds grow. Hit's a good thing yer Paw wuz so busy he didn't notice ya wuz readin'.

HANK: He don't care.

EMMY: Shore, he does. He told my Pappy he'd sooner ya got married an' ud forgit yer outlandish idees. Effen ya cud find a gal with a nice dowry, o' course.

HANK: Emmy Jean, did ya come t' buy somethin'?

EMMY: Some merlasses, effen ya got some.

HANK: We got some.

Hank goes behind the counter up center. An ordinary cook pot containing a little molasses stands on the counter. Holding it so that the contents cannot be seen, Hank carries it and a small empty jar down right to the barrel. He lifts the lid, shoves the cook pot down into it, brings it out and pours the molasses into the empty jar.

EMMY: Mammy sez I'm as sweet as merlasses, Hank.

HANK: She ain't tasted none fer awhile.

EMMY: Don't ya think I'm sweet, Hank?

HANK: (*Shoving the jar of molasses at her and returning the cook pot to the counter.*) Five cents.

EMMY: (*Handing him a nickel.*) Takin' anybody to the hoedown, Hank?

HANK: Nope.

EMMY: Nope?

HANK: Nope.

EMMY: Is yer Paw takin' Aunt Sukey?

HANK: Not thet I know about. They wuz hyar last night a-chasin' him. Even the Widder Squiggins.

EMMY: How'd he git away?

HANK: Wal, Miss Oggie tripped an' the others fell on top o' her. Then Paw beat hit out the door.

Enter Dorthea through the door left. She is once more disheveled and very dirty. She enters in a crouching position and is obviously looking for something

DORTHEA: Here, Piggy! Here, Piggy! Nice Piggy!

EMMY: Whut's thet?

HANK: One of my city cousins.

EMMY: Looks kinda peculiar, don't she?

HANK: I ain't rightly noticed.

DORTHEA: *(Straightening.)* Have you seen a pig around?

HANK: Wal, hyar's Emmy Jean and over thar is Jake Slasser—

DORTHEA: *(Impatiently.)* No. I mean a real pig. You know—four feet, curly tail...

HANK: *(Grinning.)* Last I seen one wuz in the pig pen.

DORTHEA: One got a way from me. I guess I'll look in the garden. *(Crouching again as she crosses the stage.)* Here, Piggy. Nice, Piggy!

HANK: Good luck.

DORTHEA: Thanks. But I don't see why pigs have to be given a bath every day anyway!

Exit Dorthea through the door up center. Hank bursts out laughing.

EMMY: Whut's so funny?

HANK: Paw said they wuz t' be kept busy. I reckon washin' the pigs is Betty Belle's idée of a nice clean job fer 'em.

EMMY: Sech goin's on! Wal, Mammy's waitin' fer this merlasses. So long, Hank.

HANK: So long.

Exit Emmy Jean through the door left. Cy enters through the door right.

HANK: Did ya find cousin Corney?

CY: Yep. She'll be right hyar. Sell anything?

HANK: Nickel's worth of merlasses, Paw.

CY: Whar's the nickel?

HANK: *(Handing it to him.)* I wuz figurin' maybe I'd keep hit t' spend at the hoedown.

CY: Lazy varmit! We ain't got money t' spend on sech foolishness!

HANK: *(Taking book from chair down right.)* Okay, Paw.

CY: An' take thet book outside an' git rid of hit! I ain't havin' no young'uns of mine takin' stock in book larnin'!

Exit Hank through the door up center. Cy glowers after him then moves to the window, left.

CY: *(Doing a double take.)* Oh, no! *(He rushes to the door right.)* Corney! Corney! Heist yer lazy bones in hyar!

CORNELIA: *(Entering through the door right.)* Please stop yelling at me, Uncle Cyrus! I'm not your servant.

CY: I—I jest thought of somethin' I got to do right away. Ya'll have t' tend store.

CORNELIA: I told you I didn't feel well! That horrible concoction for breakfast on top of those fried pig's lungs we had for dinner last evening—Ugh!

CY: Thet wuz jest mush an' milk this mornin'.

CORNELIA: I've tasted mush before, but it never tasted like that!

CY: Wal, I won't make ya tend store long. Jest till I git through with my chores.

Exit Cy quickly through the door up center.

CORNELIA: He was in an awful hurry.... Just like last night when those awful people came! *(She rushes to the window, left and peers out.)* Oh, no! The Squiggins family! *(She dashes down left and stands at the door.)* He went that way. *(She points up stage.)* Just a second ago!

WIDOW: *(Off stage.)* Come on, gang! After him! *(The Squiggins family dash past the windows after Cy. Cornelia turns back toward center stage with a sigh of relief.)*

CORNELIA: He almost did it again. Boy, I hope they catch him!

Enter Speck Squiggins through the door left. He carries either a live chicken or a stuffed bag. He marches up to Cornelia.

SPECK: Hey!

CORNELIA: Oh! Who are you?

SPECK: Name's Speck Squiggins effen hits anythin' to ya.

CORNELIA: *(Backing away.)* One of the Squiggins kids?

SPECK: Yeah. Wanna make somethin' of it?

CORNELIA: Oh, no. Uh—why don't you go help your mother catch Cy Goolus?

SPECK: Aw, who wants thet old skinflint?

CORNELIA: Well, your mother seems to want him.

SPECK: Effen she evir gits him, we'll do away with him pretty quick, I betcha.

CORNELIA: Yeah—I bet.

SPECK: You in charge hyar?

CORNELIA: Until Uncle Cyrus returns.

SPECK: *(Thrusting the chicken or bag under her nose.)* Look!

CORNELIA: I'm looking.

SPECK: Yer new around hyar, so ya wouldn't know—but I got a deal with Cy. He gives me candy fer a chicken t' sell now an' then.

CORNELIA: I don't know anything about it, so you better wait until—

SPECK: I ain't got time! You give me the candy like Cy does, er I'll call the other kids in!

CORNELIA: Oh, don't do that!

SPECK: *(Thrusting the chicken into her arms.)* Hyar. *(He goes up center and begins stuffing his pockets full of candy.)*

CORNELIA: *(Weakly.)* That's enough!

He ignores her and continues to stuff. Finally he turns.

SPECK: T'anks.

He dashes out the door left just as the door right opens a crack. Cy's head appears. He looks cautiously around.

CY: Any Squigginsus around?

CORNELIA: One just left.

CY: *(Entering; he wipes perspiration from his forehead on his sleeve.)* I cain't understand hit! Thet Widder Squiggins must have six sets of eyes! How'd she know I lit out?

CORNELIA: *(Uncomfortably.)* I wouldn't know. Uh—What shall I do with this? *(She holds up the chicken.)*

CY: Why ask me?

CORNELIA: Well, that Speck Squiggins said you always traded him candy for a chicken and –

CY: Whut? *(He dashes up center and stares at the counter.)* My candy! Hit's gone! An' all thet profit...

CORNELIA: I'm sorry he took so much. I tried to stop him, but— Well, you know the Squiggins family.

CY: *(Turning.)* I also know whut they do with chicken thieves in these hyar parts.

CORNELIA: *(Gulping.)* Chicken thieves?

CY: Yep. I'd know Maw Slasser's white rocks any whar.

CORNELIA: But the boy said you always take chickens from him!

CY: I never donethet in my life! Them Squiggins kids is always stealing.

CORNELIA: But I didn't know it was stolen!

CY: Maybe ya did an' maybe ya didn't. I never did trust city folks.

CORNELIA: Uncle Cyrus—

CY: *(Lowering his voice menacingly.)* I jest hope nobody hyars about thet stolen chicken, Corney. It mightn't go good fer ya.

Exit Cy through the door up center.

CORNELIA: Oh, dear. *(Practically crying.)* Why'd we have to come to this horrible place anyway?

Enter Hank through the door up center.

HANK: It ain't sech a bad place once ya git used t' hit, Cousin Corney. Sometimes hit's right purty.

CORNELIA: I'd like to be back in civilization. At least there you don't get shot just because you don't know what's going on.

HANK: Why air ya holdin' thet chicken? (*Or "Whut's in thet bag?"*)

CORNELIA: ("A chicken.") I—I don't know what to do with it. Your father said it belonged to Mrs. Slasser.

HANK: (*Taking it from her.*) I'll throw it out the door. It'll find its way home. (*He goes to the door left; exits for an instant, then reenters without the chicken.*) Thar! That's done. How'd ya happen t' git the chicken, Corney?

CORNELIA: From one of the Squiggins kids. I didn't know it was stolen.

HANK: (*Comfortingly.*) Shore not.

CORNELIA: Hank—what do they do to chicken thieves?

HANK: Shoot 'em!

CORNELIA: What am I going to do?

HANK: (*Laughing.*) Nobody's going to say nothing about thet chicken, Cousin Corney. Don't worry so! It'll go home an' nobody'll know the difference.

CORNELIA: I hope you're right. (*Thoughtfully.*) Hank, why are you so nice to me? Everybody else has been acting as if Dorthea and I have poison.

HANK: (*Sitting down right.*) When ya live in the hills away frum everybody, sometimes it takes a little time t' git used t' strangers.

CORNELIA: Then why aren't you that way?

HANK: I read books more then the rest of the family.

CORNELIA: I didn't know that.

HANK: Lots of things about us ya don't know, Corney. These folks air mostly hard workin'. They're so hard-workin', they die awful young.

CORNELIA: Can't anything be done about it?

HANK: We need better farming conditions—the land's good.

CORNELIA: Well, why don't they have better conditions?

HANK: Nobody's hyar t' show 'em how. That's why I'd like t' do hit.

CORNELIA: Show them how to farm better?

HANK: An' how t' live better.

CORNELIA: (*Impressed.*) That sounds wonderful, Hank.

HANK: *(Dejected.)* Paw's right though. Thar're jest pipe dreams.

CORNELIA: Why?

HANK: I'll never be able t' go t' agricultural college an' really larn. I cain't git all of hit frum books. I'd hafta go see fer myself an' try things.

CORNELIA: Gosh, Hank...

Enter Slim Hawkenshaw through the door left.

SLIM: Howdy, folks.

HANK: Howdy, Slim. Goin' t' a funeral?

SLIM: Huh?

HANK: I notice ya got flowers.

SLIM: Duh—Yeah. *(He shoves them at Cornelia.)* I got'em fer you.

CORNELIA: Well, thanks. *(She smells the flowers.)* I'll go put them in water.

Exit Cornelia through the door right.

SLIM: *(Looking ecstatically after her.)* Gosh, ain't she purty?

HANK: She'll do in a pinch.

SLIM: She kin pinch me any time she wants.

HANK: *(Laughing.)* I thought ya wuz gonna be a bachelor, Slim Hawkenshaw!

SLIM: Hank, do ya suppose she'd go t' the hoedown with me?

HANK: I cain't think of no reason why not.

SLIM: *(Sighing.)* I kin.

HANK: Whut?

SLIM: I'm skeered t' ask her. I tried the first time I seen her, but the words jest kinda stuck in my throat. I ain't never talked t' gals mech.

HANK: Well, I ain't neither, but I reckon I cud ask one t' a hoedown effen I wanted.

SLIM: Ya cud? Ya will?

HANK: Will I whut?

SLIM: Ask yer Cousin Corney t' go t' the hoedown with me.

HANK: *(Backing away.)* Oh, no! I ain't askin' nobody fer ya! Thar's things a man has gotta do fer himself, an' thet's one.

SLIM: But I'll niver git t' ask her. My tongue gits all twisted around my eye tooth an' I cain't see whut I'm sayin'.

HANK: I wish I cud help ya, Slim, but I ain't takin' a chance of havin' her misunderstand. Then I'd have t' take her.

SLIM: Maybe ya cud write somethin' fer me! Then I cud jest read hit off.

HANK: Wal—

SLIM: Yer awful good at words, Hank! Yer readin' all the time.

HANK: Maybe I kin do thet...*(He takes a folded square of paper cut out of his paper.)* I'll write on the back of this.

SLIM: Whut is it?

HANK: A mean letter somebody sent t' Paw. Figured he cheated them.

SLIM: Did he?

HANK: Reckon so. He cheats everybody else. *(Taking a stubby pencil from his pocket.)* Now let's see....Thar' ain't nothin' more romantic then a poem an' gals always go fer romance.

SLIM: Even city gals?

HANK: They ain't no different then any other kind—'ceptin' they smell sweeter. *(Writing.)* "Roses are red; violets are blue—"

SLIM: Gosh, thet's purty! How'd ya think up sech purty words, Hank?

HANK: They yest come t' me. *(Finishes writing and hands the paper to Slim.)* Thar! Thet oughta put her in a good mood! Then ya won't have no trouble askin' her.

SLIM: *(Folding the paper and putting it into his pocket.)* But, Hank...suppose I still git tongue-tied.

HANK: Then ya kin go t' the hoedown alone!

SLIM: Hank, couldn't ya stoop down behind thet barrel an' say the words fer me effen I git stuck? I cud move my mouth as effen hit war me. Hank, I got fifty cents saved! Effen ya do hit, I'll give ya half t' spend at the hoedown.

HANK: *(Doubtfully.)* Wal...

SLIM: Ya know yer Paw won't give ya no money, Hank.

HANK: Okay, I'll do hit.

SLIM: I think she's comin'! Git behind the barrel! (*Hank stoops behind the barrel down right. Slim stands right center in front of the barrel, facing the door right. Cornelia enters with the flowers in a rusty tin can from right.*)

CORNELIA: I had an awful time finding something in which to put the flowers. (*Placing the bouquet on the counter.*) Where's Hank?

SLIM: He—Uh, had to go milk a pig. No! I mean, gather the cow's eggs. No! I mean—Oh, shucks.

CORNELIA: (*Laughing.*) Slim, you certainly do get your tongue twisted, don't you?

SLIM: Set down, Corney. I—I got somethin' t' read t' ya.

CORNELIA: (*Puzzled.*) Very well. (*She moves down right.*)

SLIM: (*Glancing over his shoulder.*) Oh, no! Don't set down thar! Ya gotta be further away! I mean—uh-shucks!

HANK: (*From behind the barrel.*) I want ya t' set in front of the flowers an' look purty.

SLIM: (*Relieved.*) Yeah, that's jest whut I wuz thinkin'. Ya kin set in front of the flowers an' look purty.

CORNELIA: I'm not deaf. You don't have to repeat everything twice.

Slim gets a chair down right and places it before the counter up center. Cornelia seats herself.

SLIM: (*Taking the paper from his pocket.*) This is a poem I writ.

CORNELIA: (*Amused.*) I didn't know you were a poet.

SLIM: (*Reading.*) "Listen, you homely, blue-nosed baboon, the next time I see yer ugly face stickin' out of thet store—"

CORNELIA: (*Rising.*) What?

SLIM: (*Confused.*) Oh, gosh! Thet ain't hit! Thet's something else! Gosh, I'm sorry!

CORNELIA: (*Reseating herself.*) You should be!

SLIM: Hyar it is! (*Reading.*) "Roses are red; violets air blue; this poem stinks; and so do you!"

CORNELIA: (*Rising.*) Slim Hawkenshaw, if that's your idea of a joke—

SLIM: (*Turning the paper.*) Hyar it is! Roses aire red; violets air blue; If you wuz a pickle; I'd love t' eat you." (*Looking up proudly.*) Thet's my poem. Ain't it purty?

CORNELIA: Are you serious?

SLIM: Corney, I—uh—gosh, aw hemlock! Duh—

HANK: I think yer the purtiest gal I evir met.

SLIM: Honest I do!

CORNELIA: (*Reseating herself.*) Is your voice changing?

SLIM: I—uh—

HANK: --got a cold!

CORNELIA: Oh.

SLIM: Whut I want t' ask ya, Corney—have ya evir been t' a dance with a —

HANK: (*Who has been inspecting the floor around the barrel.*) Termite!

CORNELIA: Oh, now, Slim. You're not that bad.

SLIM: (*Kicking the barrel.*) I got a question t' ask ya!

HANK: (*His mind elsewhere.*) How kin ya git rid of termites?

CORNELIA: Goodness, I don't know. Maybe DDT would do it.

SLIM: Will ya go to the hoedown with me?

CORNELIA: (*Rising.*) Why, thank you, Slim. I'd be delighted.

SLIM: Ya would?

CORNELIA: Certainly.

SLIM: (*Glancing over his shoulder.*) Let's git some fresh air!

He takes Cornelia's arm and ushers her out the door left. Hank rises.

HANK: (*Musingly.*) I wonder how come we got termites. (*Looking around.*) Hey, Slim! I wuz a lot of help, I'm gonna collect thet quarter!

Exit Hank through the door left. Enter Skeets up center. She glances about the stage.

SKEETS: Paw! Paw!

CY: (*Entering up center.*) Whut air ya yellin' about, Skeets?

SKEETS: Corney ain't tendin' store like ya told her, Paw! She left with nerry a soul t' look after things!

CY: (*Looking around.*) Yer right. She ain't hyar.

SKEETS: (*Moving to window, left.*) Effen one of us wuz t' leave the store without gittin' nobody t' tend, we'd git a beatin'!

CY: Maybe she jest stepped out fer a minute.

SKEETS: (*Staring out the window.*) Nope! Thar she goes down the lane with Slim Hawkenshaw.

CY: (*Dejected.*) This is gonna be harder then I thought.

SKEETS: (*Moving center.*) I thought ya wuz gonna chase ‘em away, Paw, so’s we cud git thet money.

CY: I’m tryin’.

SKEETS: Thar’re still hyar.

CY: I gotta think of somethin’ worse! Jest makin’ ‘em eat fried pig’s lungs ain’t gonna be enough.

SKEETS: Betty Belle said Horseface Dilly wuz around when she wuz tendin’ store.

CY: (*Taking his place behind the counter.*) Thet onrey polecat! He don’t niver pay nothin’!

SKEETS: He told Betty Belle he wanted t’ do ya a favor.

CY: Effen he jest stays away from hyar, it’ll be a favor.

SKEETS: Effen ennybody cud scare Corney an’ Dot away, it’d be him.

CY: (*Thoughtfully.*) Yeah...Effen he wuz t’ say he figured Corney wuz a chicken thief an’ threaten t’ shoot her effen she didn’t clear out...

SKEETS: She’s clear out fast enough!

CY: (*Rising.*) You, tend store till Corney gits back, Skeets.

SKEETS: Whar air ya headin’?

CY: Down the valley t’ see Horseface Dilly!

Exit Cy through the door left. Skeets goes to the door up center.

SKEETS: HEY, Dot! Whut air ya doin’?

DORTHEA: (*Off stage.*) I’m so tired, I don’t know any more.

SKEETS: Come on in. Paw sez yer t’ tend store.

Enter Dortha through the door up center. She immediately sits in a chair right.

DORTHEA: Don’t you ever work around here, Skeets?

SKEETS: When Paw’s lookin’.

Exit Skeets through the door right.

DORTHEA: What a kid!

Enter Hank and Happy through the door up center. They come down right.

HANK: *(Pointing to the floor.)* See. Termites.

HAPPY: Them ain't termites, Hank! Thar jest roaches!

HANK: Wal, whut do ya know! An' hyar I thought thy wuz sometin' we'd have t' git rid of!

DORTHEA: Hi.

HAPPY: Who let you in?

DORTHEA: Happy, you were nice to us when we came. What got into you?

Enter Corney and Slim through the door left.

CORNELIA: Gee, I forgot I was supposed to be tending the store! I hope no customers came while I was gone.

DORTHEA: They pushed it on me.

HAPPY: Come on, Hank. Let's git out of hyar.

DORTHEA: I still think you should answer my question, Happy.

CORNELIA: What question?

DORTHEA: I asked her why she was so nice to us when we came and now she doesn't even want to be in the same room with us.

HANK: Yeah, Happy. Whut did git inter ya?

HAPPY: You know, Hank.

HANK: Yep. Reckon I do.

CORNELIA: Well, how about letting us in on the secret?

HAPPY: Paw sez we got t' take a bath every day as long as you city cousins are visiting us!

DORTHEA: *(Laughing.)* Oh, no!

HAPPY: It ain't funny. Water's only good fer drinkin'.

SLIM: I niver heerd of bathin' more'n twice a year.

CORNELIA: *(Laughing.)* Well, Happy! You ought to be angry with your father rather than us, shouldn't you? We wouldn't make you bathe every day!

DORTHEA: Maybe can you figure out some way out of it.

HAPPY: (*Suddenly grinning.*) Wal—maybe I wuz bein' kinda silly.

SLIM: Couldn't ya jest splash yer hands in the water, so's yer Paw'd think ya wuz bathin'?

HAPPY: Nope. He looks behind yer ears after an' on the bottoms of yer feet.

CORNELIA: Well, why don't you just wash behind your ears and on the bottoms of your feet? That wouldn't be nearly as bad as bathing all over.

HAPPY: Say! I niver thought of thet.

HANK: Sounds like a swell idea!

SLIM: I shore wish ya'd treat Corney nicer. None of ya has been very cousinly.

HAPPY: No, I reckon we ain't been.

SLIM: (*Proudly.*) I'm takin' her t' the hoedown.

HAPPY: Wal, ain't thet nice.

HANK: Thet's swell. Maybe we kin all show our city cousins thet the hills ain't so bad, after all.

CORNELIA: You are, Hank. I—I'm sure I don't know why, but I'm beginning to like it here.

HAPPY: (*Moving to the window.*) It's shore mighty purty when ya look out the winder an' kin see down over the valley.

CORNELIA: Yes, it is. And you know, for the first time in my life, I'm beginning to realize there's more to life than going to parties and buying new clothes.

HAPPY: Thet don't sound like mech fun.

CORNELIA: It's not really.

DORTHEA: (*Rising.*) Corney, that's why Dad wanted us to come here! He knew we were missing something.

CORNELIA: Yes, I guess he did at that.

HANK: We cud make hit a better place hyarabouts. Thet land yonder in the valley is good effen folks jest knew how t' use hit.

HAPPY: Don't mind Hank. He's always readin' books an' gitin' ideas.

CORNELIA: Don't you believe in his ideas, Happy?

HAPPY: Paw don't an' thet's all thet counts. I don't know whut we cud do about 'em.

CORNELIA: Hank could go to an agricultural college.

HAPPY: How?

CORNELIA: Dortehea and I have plenty of money. I'm sure our lawyer would let us use some of Dad's fortune to finance Hank.

HANK: Ya—ya mean hit?

DORTHEA: Say! That's a great idea! Let's write to Miss Winslow!

HANK: When? When cud ya write?

CORNELIA: Right now! *(She goes up center and gets pencil and paper from the counter. She sits on the stool and studiously begins to write.)*

SLIM: See! Didn't I tell ya they wuz swell gals!

HAPPY: I jest thought of somethin'. Suppose—Paw won't let ya go, Hank?

DORTHEA: Oh, don't worry about that. There's always a way to do everything.

HANK: Shore. I'll go—somehow!

HAPPY: Wal, with all this stirrin' we better try t' keep Paw happy. I'm goin' t' feed the mules.

HANK: Whar is Paw anyway?

HAPPY: *(Shrugging.)* Off sellin' somebody somethin' they don't want, I reckon.

HANK: Reckon.

HAPPY: Hank, ya better git t' weedin' the potater patch afore he gits back.

Exit Happy through the door up center.

HANK: Reckon I better. Will ya mail the letter, Slim?

SLIM: You bet!

CORNELIA: *(Rising.)* It's finished! *(She goes center and hands an envelope to Slim)* Be sure and see that it gets off as soon as possible, Slim.

SLIM: Yep. So long.

Exit Slim and Hank through the door left.

CORNELIA: I feel good.

DORTHEA: It always feels good to do somebody a favor.

CORNELIA: Gee, Dot. I guess that's the first time I ever did something for somebody.

DORTHEA: I'd really enjoy it here if Uncle Cyrus wasn't such an old bear. Wonder why he's got it in for us?

CORNELIA: He's just naturally mean.

DORTHEA: Yeah, but sometimes I think he's overdoing it with us.

Enter Horseface Dilly through the door left. He is carrying a nasty looking gun.

CORNELIA: A customer...

DORTHEA: A tough customer if you ask me.

CORNELIA: *(Advancing with a smile.)* What can I do for you, sir?

HORSEFACE: *(Inspecting her.)* Git out of town.

CORNELIA: Did you say, "get out a towel"?

DORTHEA: I—think he said, "Get out town," Corney.

HORSEFACE: Thet's right.

CORNELIA: I don't get it. Who are you?

HORSEFACE: Name's Horseface Dilly.

DORTHEA: *(Giggling.)* It fits you!

HORSEFACE: *(Pointing the gun at her.)* Nobody alive laughs at Horseface Dilly.

DORTHEA: *(Ducking behind Cornelia.)* I—I s-see what you mean.

CORNELIA: Do you want to buy something?

HORSEFACE: Nope. Cy always gives me stuff. I don't pay fer nothin'.

DORTHEA: *(Nervously.)* How n-nice! Isn't that nice, Cornelia?

CORNELIA: Oh, yes. Very nice.

HORSEFACE: I heerd tell thar wuz an onrey chicken thief hyarabouts.

CORNELIA: A chicken t-t-thief?

HORSEFACE: Yep. A gal.

DORTHEA: There was! *(Pointing right.)* She went that way! She's six feet fall, wears a purple dress, green hat, and has red hair. You can't miss her.

HORSEFACE: *(Raising the gun and pointing it at Cornelia.)* Thet's right. I cain't miss her. *(Cornelia screams and ducks behind the counter. Dorteia is then facing the gun. She too screams and ducks behind the counter. Horseface lowers his gun and sneaks right around the counter. The girls meanwhile crawl left. They see each other and Horseface begins to pursue them around the counter. They all run. Finally Horseface breaks away and stands to one side, wiping the perspiration from his forehead with a very grimy handkerchief. He than watches the girls race around the counter. Cornelia, suddenly realizing they are no longer being pursued halts abruptly; Dorteia bumps into her.)*

DORTHEA: *(Rubbing her nose.)* Why don't you give a hand signal?

CORNELIA: *(Pointing to Horseface.)* He stopped.

HORSEFACE: Yep. Reckon I'm gittin' too old fer this sort of thing.

DORTHEA: Yes, you are. You look positively green around the gills.

HORSEFACE: Yep. I'd druther jest set an' shoot folks without chasin' 'em.

CORNELIA: I—I suppose that would be more pleasant.

HORSEFACE: Ain't as messy neither. Yer always fur enough away not t' git blood splattered all over ya. Ya know how hit is.

CORNELIA: Ye—no. I never shot anybody—*(Dorteia pokes her in the ribs.)* Uh—yes! We understand how you feel.

DORTHEA: *(Advancing toward Horseface.)* You poor fellow! Chasing us has brought on an attack.

HORSEFACE: Huh?

DORTHEA: *(Pushing him into a chair at right.)* Now, you just relax and you'll feel better.

HORSEFACE: *(Indignant.)* I feel swell! Wuz jest a might tard, thet's all.

DORTHEA: *(Mysteriously.)* That's always the first symptom. Have you looked in a mirror lately?

HORSEFACE: Ain't got no mirrors at home. Always give us Dilly's too mech of a shock t' look in one.

DORTHEA: That's understandable. *(She goes up left, gets a mirror from the counter, stoops and quickly swabs it with green paint from a small can beside the counter. She then brings it down right. Look into this mirror. (Horseface looks.)* What do you see?

HORSEFACE: Nothin', Hit's all green.

DORTHEA: You're worse than I thought!

HORSEFACE: Huh? Whut have I got?

DORTHEA: (*Returning the mirror to the counter.*) Ever hear of multiple greenosis?

HORSEFACE: N-No.

DORTHEA: (*At window up left.*) Come here. (*Horseface obeys.*) Now, then. Look outside. What color are those trees and that grass?

HORSEFACE: Why, green, of course.

DORTHEA: Green!

HORSEFACE: W-Why shore.

DORTHEA: You poor man!

HORSEFACE: Trees and grass is always green!

DORTHEA: You better sit down. (*She leads him down right to a chair.*) So you've had it all your life.

HORSEFACE: (*Getting really worried.*) My whole family sez trees and grass is green!

DORTHEA: They're just saying that so you won't realize your true condition.

HORSEFACE: Huh?

DORTHEA: Everybody knows trees and grass are lavender.

HORSEFACE: Lavender!

DORTHEA: Of course. Has no one had the courage before to let you know how bad off you are?

HORSEFACE: (*Beginning to cry.*) I-I've g-gone through m-my w-whole life an-an I ain't n-niver laid eyes on lavender grass!

DORTHEA: You've never seen the beautiful lavender leaves come out in the spring...

CORNELIA: (*Worried.*) Dortehea—

HORSEFACE: Is thar a cure?

DORTHEA: There might be—but it takes a long time.

HORSEFACE: Tell me! Whut is hit? I'll git well! I'll take the cure and surprise my family.

DORTHEA: You sure will, bud.

CORNELIA: Dortehea, don't you think--?

DORTHEA: I think we should help our dear friend here. Here's the only cure I know, Horseface, and with a case like yours that has gone so long, it might be a long time before you notice any results. For two hours a day you stand on your head and stare at a piece of lavender paper.

HORSEFACE: Fer two hours?

DORTHEA: Then for six hours a day, you walk around blindfolded to give your eyes a chance to rest and readjust themselves.

HORSEFACE: I ain't gonna do hit. Hit takes too mech time. I wouldn't git no chance t' kill folks thet way.

DORTHEA: Suit yourself. *(She goes to counter and with back to audience apparently quickly makes something. It is a home-made mask simply cut out of paper and painted green.)* But your condition will get worse all the time if you don't. Close your eyes and I'll show you how bad your multiple greenosis is.

HORSEFACE: *(Closing his eyes and rising.)* I ain't goin' through them shee-nan-igans till I see somebody with a green face!

Dorthea goes close to him, holding the green mask over her face.

DORTHEA: You may open your eyes now. *(Horseface opens his eyes and stares at Dorthea in horror, he lets out a loud scream and dashes off stage, left. Dorthea drops the mask and laughs loudly. Cornelia rushes to the door left and looks after him.)*

CORNELIA: He's still running.

DORTHEA: He'll be afraid to look anybody in the face for a month!

CORNELIA: Dorthea, you shouldn't have done it!

DORTHEA: Why not?

CORNELIA: Sooner or later, he's going to find out that trees and grass are green. Then he'll come back. And next time, you can bet, he'll pull that trigger.

DORTHEA: *(Hopefully.)* Maybe we'll be out of here by that time.

CORNELIA: We're not leaving for three months. And what about next year?

DORTHEA: Maybe we could explain that it was all a joke. You know, good clean fun?

CORNELIA: Humph.

DORTHEA: (*Dejected.*) Yeah. I see what you mean. (*Enter Hank and Happy through the door up center.*)

HANK: Whut wuz all the yellin' about?

HAPPY: We wuz afraid fer a minute Horseface Dilly had come around.

HANK: He might, effen hit got out about thet stolen chicken.

DORTHEA: (*Sinking into a chair down right, mournfully.*) Maybe our lawyer could get us off with ninety-nine years.

HAPPY: Huh?

DORTHEA: Never mind.

Enter Miss Oggie and Aunt Sukey through the door left.

MISS OGGIE: Whar's Cyrus?

AUNT SUKEY: We come t' warn him!

HANK: He ain't hyar.

MISS OGGIE: Oh dear! We better wait.

AUNT SUKEY: No respectable woman has a chance with thet Widder Swuiggins on the loose!

HAPPY: Whut's happened now?

MISS OGGIE: She's out t' git a partner fer the hoedown—

AUNT SUKEY: --An' she's picked Cyrus!

HANK: Paw ain't so easy caught.

MISS OGGIE: But she an' thet oldest boy is out—

AUNT SUKEY: --With a gun!

Enter Skeets and Betty Belle through the door up center.

SKEETS: Find Paw an' tell him thet—

HANK: We know all about hit. The Widder Squiggins is gunnin' fer a hoedown partner.

BETTY BELLE: As soon as he comes in, we'll hide him!

SKEETS: In the well! The Squiggins family niver gits near water.

Enter the Widow Squiggins proudly holding Cy's arm through the door left. Behind them stalks a Squiggins boy with a gun pointed at Cy's back.

CY: Guess whut!

DORTHEA: We know! You finally persuaded the Widow Squiggins to accompany you to the hoedown!

Miss Oggie and Aunt Sukey weep in each other's arms as the curtain falls. END OF ACT II.

ACT THREE

TIME: One week later; early evening.

PLACE: Same.

The curtain rises to reveal the general store, its merchandise neatly arranged for tomorrow's business. A lighted lamp now stands on the counter. Down right, a sad-looking orchestra is practicing for the hoedown. Their music is, to put it mildly, slightly off key. Down left, Jake Slasser still sleeps on. Cy enters angrily through the door right, slamming it behind him. Scowling, he is in his undershirt; a towel is thrown over his shoulders and a piece of soap is in his hand. Wordlessly he strides to door left and exits. Happy enters up center, dressed in her "best" cotton dress. She is, however, still barefoot.

HAPPY: (To musicians.) Thet's startin' t' sound purty good.

1ST MUSICIAN: (High voice.) Yep.

HAPPY: With yer music an' all thet cider an' cake, we oughta have a fine time at the hoedown!

2ND MUSICIAN: (Low voice.) Yep.

HAPPY: I kin hardly wait! These last two hours is the hardest!

3RD MUSICIAN: (Very low voice.) Yep.

Enter Betty Belle through the door left.

HAPPY: Hi, Betty Belle.

BETTY: I'm seein' things, Happy! Call a doctor!

HAPPY: Whut's wrong?

BETTY: I thought I seen Paw out at the pump takin' a bath!

HAPPY: (Disgusted.) Don't give me sech a turn, Betty Belle! Paw is out at the pump takin' a bath.



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HEADIN' FOR THE HILLS

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