

HEADIN' FOR A WEDDIN'

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By Le Roma Greth

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CAST OF CHARACTERS
(FIVE MEN, TEN WOMEN)

HOMER HOLLOWBONE (M)An awkward, good-looking eighteen year-old hillbilly boy. He wears faded blue jeans, a tattered shirt, and old shoes. *(214 lines)*

MAW HOLLOBONE (F).....A hard working drudge, speaks with a slow whine. Her hair is untidily tied back into a bun and streaked with gray. Her stomach protrudes, her shoulders slump. She wears a long patched cotton dress, a large apron, dirty white tennis shoes with sagging cotton stockings, and a sweater with large holes in each elbow. *(63 lines)*

PAW HOLLOBONE (M).....As lazy as MAW is industrious. The only time he becomes animated is when he teaches Gloria, his pet skunk, a new trick. He wears baggy trousers, a threadbare shirt, a batter hat which he never removes, and shoes. *(90 lines)*

SARAH JO HOLLOWBONE (F)The eldest daughter, nice-looking and quite clean. She wears a neat cotton dress and a hair ribbon. Her shoes are dilapidated and she wears no stockings. *(103 lines.)*

GRACIE MAY HOLLOWBONE (F) ...About fifteen, obviously dirty. Her dress is belt-less and soiled, her elbows and face grimy. She, too, wears old shoes without stockings. She is constantly scratching herself. *(124 lines)*

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FANNIE JANE HOLLOWBONE (F)...Fourteen, speaks only one line at the end of the play, but makes many appearances and is always working hard and very busy. She dresses like her sisters, though she is not as clean as SARAH JO or as dirty as GRACIE MAY. If possible, she wears imitation buckteeth. (*1 line*)

PEPPER HOLLOWBONE (M).....If possible, he is very small and thin. He wears baggy overalls, a shirt, and no shoes. If desired, he may wear a wig before the haircutting scene. If this is not practical, his hair may be combed over his eyes. (*No lines*)

SIS HOLLOWBONE (F)Looks like PEPPER. She, like PEPPER, is very dirty. She wears a dress and no shoes. In ACT ONE, she makes an appearance in long red or white underwear. (*No lines*)

GRANDPAPPY HANKLEY (M)A spry old chap who lives by hunting in the hills. He wears work boots, baggy trousers, a brightly colored flannel shirt over which is an old vest, partially buttoned. He also wears a heavy coat and some sort of old-fashioned cap on occasion. The hat must have two round holes in it. His hair is white and so is his beard. (*82 lines*)

WIDOW BLAIRHOUSE (F)A large woman with a booming voice. She wears a dress and shawl, but no apron. Her hair is turning gray. (*36 lines*)

BERTHA BLAIRHOUSE (F)A replica of her mother. Very loud. Her cotton dress is frilly with a wide skirt, which does nothing for her figure. She wears both a ribbon and flowers in her hair. She, too, wears shoes and arrives in ACT ONE wearing an old coat. (*97 lines*)

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SLIM BLAIRHOUSE (M).....BERTHA's handsome brother, although his face shows little character. Tall and thin, he is dressed like HOMER when he arrives, except for the addition of a heavy sweater full of holes and earmuffs. For his last entrance in ACT ONE, he dons a very nice suit with a white shirt and tie. He wears this outfit throughout the remainder of the play. (53 lines)

MELISSA DUGAN (F).....About eighteen, a pretty girl with the latest hairstyle, manicure, overall fashion, etc. For her entrance, she wears stylish boots, a fur coat, and a bandanna. (141 lines)

HORTENSE TODD (F).....An old maid, she's been trying to catch a man her entire life. She wears very drab clothing. Her hair is graying with odd-looking curls. Sometimes, she wears a dark coat and hat. (65 lines)

ISABEL TODD (F).....Hortense's sister, a tall, haughty business woman. Her hairstyle is severe, although modern. She wears a coat, suit, hat, and plain, though stylish, shoes. In ACT THREE, she changes to a tailored dress. A few pieces of expensive jewelry add to the picture. (77 lines)

PERSONAL PROPERTY

ACT ONE

HOMERPaper and pencil
FANNIE JANE/MAWFire wood
GRACIE MAYLong stick
SARAH JODish, scissors, cloth
FANNIE JANEShovel
MAWNeedle and thread
BERTHALarge bag with suit
MAWFrying pan
FANNIE JANEDishes
SLIMPie

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SARAH JO/GRACIE MAYBread, another pie, pot of soup, jar of pickles
PAWBlanket

ACT TWO

THE TODDSBlankets, Kleenex, two buckets of hot water
FANNIE JANEBucket of hot water, cloth
GRANDPAPPYBroom(s)

ACT THREE

MELISSASling
GRACIE MAYHot dog
MAW/FANNIE JANEFirewood
ISABELNylons and blouse
BERTHASoupbone
FANNIE JANESuitcases

***NOTE ABOUT THE “FEUD”:** HORTENSE, BERTHA, and GRANDPAPPY all use homespun weapons. Hillbillies argue with brooms, flyswatters, pots, pans, and anything else offbeat and near at hand. Be inventive!*

STAGE PROPERTIES

- Six old chairs
- An old table, preferably round
- A cot or bed
- Tattered sheet and covers for bed
- Burlap bags hung at the window

SETTING

TIME: The present.

PLACE: The main room of a poor mountain cabin in Virginia.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE: Late afternoon on a cold, February day.

ACT TWO: Same day. Early evening.

ACT THREE: The next morning.

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ACT ONE

SCENE:

The curtain rises on a room cold with winter and poverty. A door up right leads to the kitchen. Another door up left leads to the bedroom, which is shared by the entire family. Two chairs, their ancient paint peeling, stand at left center. In the upper left-hand corner of the room is a cot or old metal bed, the sagging mattress of which is covered with a sheet and patched coverlet. A round table at right center is unadorned and flanked by three more old chairs. Another chair, this one broken too badly to be used, sits up right. A window in the wall, right, has been decorated with burlap bags in an effort to keep out some of the biting winter draft. A door, left, leads out to the snow-filled world. If the director wishes to strive for realism, during ACTS ONE and TWO when the door is opened, an electric fan may blow snowflakes (soap chips) into the room. This effect is not necessary, however. Characters may also be sprinkled with soap flakes before entering through this door.

AT RISE:

HOMER sits at the table, right, busily writing a letter with a stubby pencil. He writes laboriously, pausing frequently to scratch his head or stare into space. PAW is seated in a chair, left center. He is slouching; his feet are propped on the other chair. His battered hat is pulled low over his eyes, and loud snoring indicates that he is sleeping. GRACIE MAY stands center stage violently scratching herself. FANNIE JANE and MAW enter through the door, left, each with an armful of firewood. FANNIE JANE, without pausing, busily crosses the stage and exits up right. MAW pauses behind the table, right center.

MAW: *(Mildly.)* Ya know yer Paw don't like no dancin', Gracie May.

GRACIE: I ain't dancin'! Hit be these danged critters!

MAW: Ain't they froze yet fer the winter?

GRACIE: Nope.

MAW: Effen ya wuz t' help Fannie Jane an' me git in the firewood, I bet they'd freeze. Hit be colder out then a hound dog's nose.

GRACIE: Druther keep the critters.

MAW: *(Sighing.)* Yer jest like yer Paw, ya never did like t' work none.

Enter SARAH JO through the door up right.

SARAH: Maw, be thar anything else ya want t' go inter the wash?

MAW: *(Thoughtfully.)* Paw an' Homer won't be takin' thar long underwear off till next spring. We only used the bed sheets three weeks... Nope, Sarah Jo. Thet'll be all. I'm goin' t' git this wood out so we kin git the fire goin' in the kitchen stove.

Exit MAW through the door up right.

SARAH: Poor Maw! She works so hard.

GRACIE: (*Roughly shoving PAW's feet off the chair and sitting in it herself. PAW continues to snore.*) Who don't?

SARAH: (*Coming down center.*) You, fer one! When wuz the last time you done somethin'?

GRACIE: (*Picking something off her arm, putting it on the floor, and stepping on it.*) Why, hit ain't more 'n three months since I brung water from the spring!

SARAH: Thet wuz used up a week after ya brung hit!

GRACIE: (*Shrugging.*) Effen you an' Homer wuzn't always washin' yerself, a bucket wud last three months.

SARAH: At least we ain't got critters. Gracie May, you find Sis. Maw wants t' sew her inter her long underwear.

GRACIE: Aw...

SARAH: (*Threatening.*) Git a-movin' af ore I git some water an' throw hit on ya!

GRACIE: (*Jumping to her feet.*) Ya wouldn't do thet!

SARAH: I shore would. An' git Pepper, too, while yer at it. He needs a haircut. (*Exit SARAH JO through the door right. GRACIE MAY scowls after her, then looks around the room.*)

GRACIE: Homer, have ya seen Pepper an' sis?

HOMER: Nope.

GRACIE: Help me look fer 'em, will ya?

HOMER: I'm busy.

GRACIE: (*Going to the window right and looking out.*) They ain't outside, thet's fer shore, 'cause they ain't got no shoes. Balls o' fire! Look at thet snow comin' down! Hit's been comin' like thet fer two days now.

HOMER: (*Looking up.*) Yep. Ain't hit purty?

GRACIE: Purty! (*Turning.*) Ya won't think hit's so purty effen our food don't hold out! Hit's been a cold winter so fer.

HOMER: Yep. Mighty good thing we all got shoes this year.

HOMER returns to his writing. GRACIE MAY goes to left center, raises PAW's hat and looks under it. PAW stops snoring and sits up sputtering.

PAW: Whut in 'tarnation be ya doin', Gracie May?

GRACIE: I wuz lookin' fer Pepper an' Sis.

PAW: Wal, they ain't under my hat!

GRACIE: Ya kin never tell. I seen 'em in worse places.

PAW: (*Yawning and stretching as GRACIE MAY looks under the table, right.*) Whar's yer Maw?

GRACIE: Fixin' t' do the wash.

PAW: Too bad we ain't got thet washin' machine yit. Hit'd make hit a sight easier. Maybe we'll have hit by the next time wash day comes around.

GRACIE: Ya've been sayin' thet fer twenty years, Paw.

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PAW: Huh? My, how time flies! Seems like only yesterday I heerd yer Maw say she wanted one of them contraptions.

GRACIE: 'Twhar yesterday an' every other day since ya got married.

Exit GRACIE MAY through the door up right.

HOMER: Hit wouldn't do ya no good t' buy one. Ya need electricity t' make hit run.

PAW: Even so, hit would look mighty purty sittin' over thar in the corner. Wouldn't wear out as fast, neither effen we couldn't run hit.

GRACIE: *(Reentering up right with a stick.)* I'll catch them little varmits! *(She goes to the bed up left and begins to poke under it with the stick.)* Come on out! Both of you!

Yells issue from beneath the bed. In a second, PEPPER and SIS crawl from their hiding place and dash about the room. GRACIE MAY drops her stick and grabs SIS.

GRACIE: Paw, git Pepper! *(PEPPER bumps into PAW's chair and they both fall to the floor.)*

PAW: Why should I grab him? I don't want him.

GRACIE: Maw wants ya t' cut his hair.

PAW: I'm tired.

GRACIE: Shore. But nobody else in the shack kin cut hair as good as you kin, Paw.

PAW: *(Flattered.)* Wal, effen ya put hit thet way. *(Rising with PEPPER.)* Sarah Jo!

HOMER: *(Mournfully.)* How kin a body concentrate in hyar? Ya make more noise then twenty hound dogs fightin' over one bone!

GRACIE: Whut ails ya, Homer? Yer actin' mighty peculiar lately.

PAW: Sarah Jo! Bring the crock!

GRACIE: I'll take this out t' Maw.

GRACIE MAY drags a reluctant SIS through the door up right. A moment later, SARAH JO enters with a dish about the size of PEPPER's head, large scissors, and a large, colorful piece of cloth.

SARAH: Hyar ya air, Paw, an' hit ain't none too soon neither. None of us has seen Pepper's face fer so long, we don't even remember whut he looks like.

PAW: *(Setting PEPPER in a chair left center while SARAH Jo ties the cloth around PEPPER's neck.)* Thet's bad. I ain't even shore this be Pepper.

SARAH: How so?

PAW: When the Fix family visited us last spring, they had a boy Pepper's size. I always kinda figured we got the kids mixed up.

SARAH: Maybe they'd have noticed effen thet happened. Ya shoulda rode down an' asked.

PAW: Wal, I wasn't shore, an' hit be a long ride.

He places the bowl or dish upside down on PEPPER's head and proceeds to cut off his hair. If no wig is used in this scene, the boy's hair should be combed to hide his face as much as possible and PAW merely snaps the scissors without really cutting the hair. Throughout the following scene, the haircutting continues.

SARAH: I'm shore Maw ud recognize Pepper. As soon as ya git finished, we'll ask her t' look at him.

Enter GRACIE MAY through the door up right.

GRACIE: Gosh, Sis is putting up a fight! She don't want to be sewed inter her long underwear this year.

SARAH: Maw should have done it months ago. Sis ain't old enough to go without long underwear yit.

Enter FANNIE JANE with a shovel through the door up right. She crosses and goes out the door left.

GRACIE: Now, whut's she going to do?

SARAH: Probably shovel some of the snow, so's she kin git at the woodpile better.

HOMER: *(Laying down his pencil.)* Talk! Talk! Talk! I never seen gals whut cud talk so much!

SARAH: Whut ails ya, Homer?

GRACIE: *(Coming right to the table.)* I got an idee!

HOMER: *(Suspiciously.)* Ya ain't been readin' my letters, Gracie May!

GRACIE: Letters! I knew he wuz writin' letters!

HOMER: Aw, mind yer own business!

GRACIE: *(Grabbing the letter HOMER has been writing and skipping left center with it.)* Jest 'cuz ya've been talkin' so mean, I ain't goin' to!

HOMER: *(Rising.)* Gracie May! Give me thet letter!

GRACIE: *(Looking at it and reading laboriously.)* "My dear, dear Little Flower..." Hey! Hit's to a gal! Homer's writin' to a gal!

HOMER: *(Rushing to left center.)* Give me thet!

GRACIE: *(Eluding him and coming quickly around the chairs left and pausing at center stage to read again.)* "How kin I tell ya all the things thet air in my heart? Yer sweeter then the honey in the garden hive. Yer..."

HOMER: *(Lunging after her again.)* Gracie May! *(GRACIE MAY dashes right center, climbs up on the table.)*

GRACIE: "Yer as dear to me as my horse." You ain't got no horse, Homer! "Yet as... *(Peering closer at the paper.)* E-lus-ive as the snow whut is fallin' outside my winder right at this minute." Whut's e-lus-ive?

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PAW: Use yer haid, Gracie May. Elusive as snow must mean as cold as snow. Snow ain't nothin' effen hit ain't cold.

HOMER clambers up on the table after GRACIE MAY, who blithely jumps down. HOMER jumps down after her.

HOMER: *(Appealing.)* Paw...?

GRACIE: Na! Na! Ya can't catch me!

HOMER chases her and grabs her arm. He takes the letter.

GRACIE: Aw, hit gits even mushier. Lemme finish hit!

HOMER: No!

GRACIE: Homer's got a gal! Homer's got a gal!

HOMER: *(Shoving the letter into his pocket.)* I ain't!

GRACIE: Effen ya ain't got a gal, who wuz ya writin' to?

HOMER: None of yer business.

PAW: *(Pausing.)* That's a good question, Homer. Who wuz ya writin' to?

HOMER: *(Going to the table right and sitting uneasily.)* Nobody, Paw.

PAW: Ya don't write letters to nobody, Homer.

HOMER: I... I do! I jest write fer the fun of hit. I... I make believe I have a gal.

PAW: Oh.

GRACIE: *(Skipping to left center.)* Homer told a lie! Homer told a lie!

HOMER: Gracie May, shet yer tator trap!

SARAH: Homer, ya ain't acted like yerself lately.

GRACIE: He's in love.

PAW: Wal, effen he's writin' to a real gal, I'd like t' know hit. A gal ud think a letter like that would mean ya aimed t' marry up with her, Homer.

HOMER: *(Somewhat alarmed.)* Ya... Ya think so, Paw?

PAW: Shore. Course, effen hit ain't a real gal yer writin' to...

GRACIE: Hit is! I seen him put the letters in envelopes an' give 'em to Sam, the postman!

HOMER: *(Scowls.)* Gracie May!

PAW: Who's the gal, Homer? Effen yer fixin' t' git hitched, we oughta know hit.

HOMER: I ain't fixin' t' git hitched! Least ways, I didn't mean the letters t' sound that way.

SARAH: Effen I got a letter frum a feller with all thet sweet talk inside, I'd figure he wuz aim-un' t' git hitched.

HOMER: Honest?

PAW: Who's the gal ya been writin' to, Homer?

SARAH: I bet I know!

GRACIE: Who?

SARAH: I seen her chasin' him at the church picnic last summer, and I figured then thet she'd catch him someday.

PAW: Wal tarnation! Who is it?

SARAH: Bertha Blairhouse, down by Cricket Creek!

HOMER: (*Dismayed.*) Oh, no!

PAW: (*Returning to his haircutting.*) Wal, thet ain't so bad, Homer. She's a robust, healthy young gal. I'll tell yer Maw t' speak t' the Widder Blairhouse fer ya. You an' Bertha kin git hitched come spring.

HOMER: I don't wanna marry Bertha Blairhouse! Paw, ya got hit all wrong...

PAW: (*Sternly.*) Effen yer writin' them mushy letters to Bertha Blairhouse, yer gonna marry her effen she wants ya! I ain't havin' no son of mine breakin' a young gal's heart. Effen hit be some other gal than Bertha, speak up an' we'll talk to her Maw an' Paw instead.

HOMER: I...I... (*Worried.*) Balls o' fire!

SARAH: What's wrong, Homer? Paw's fixin' everything fer ya.

HOMER: Bertha Blairhouse is a... (*Words fail him.*)

GRACIE: (*Mocking.*) She's yer leetle flower, Homer!

HOMER: (*Holds head in hands.*) Ohhhhh!

PAW: Hit's all settled then. I'll speak to her Maw as soon as the snow stops.

HOMER: (*Rising and rushing to the window.*) Hit's still snowin', ain't it?

GRACIE: Comin' down like a curtain.

HOMER: Gosh, I hope hit snows all winter!

SARAH: Homer, yer acting mighty funny fer how mushy thet letter sounded.

PAW: (*Removing the bowl from PEPPER's head and combing back his hair.*) Thar we be! All finished. Now thet wusn't so bad, wuz hit, Pepper? (*PEPPER rises, kicks him in the shins and runs out through the door up left.*)

PAW: (*Holding his shin and jumping around on one leg.*) Ow! Thet little varmit!

GRACIE: (*Eagerly.*) Shall I catch him fer ya, Paw?

PAW: Nope. Let him be. I'm goin' out t' the shed, I'll see effen Gloria still remembers thet trick I taught her last night.

GRACIE: Paw, don't ya git tard of smellin' a skunk?

PAW: Wal, I don't often git thet close to ya, Gracie May.

GRACIE: (*Scratching.*) Not me! I mean Gloria, the skunk in the shed!

PAW: Gloria's got a right wholesome smell most of the time. Thet reminds me, I better take a present out to her. Last time I come without bringing her nothing, she got so mad she... Wal anyway, I had to bury all my clothes, they stunk so bad.

Enter FANNIE JANE with a load of wood through the door, left. She crosses to the door up right and exits. PAW exits down left.

SARAH: I wish Paw ud be like other people an' have a hound dog instead of always teachin' thet skunk t' do tricks.

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SIS dashes through the door up right closely followed by MAW. SIS wears bright red underwear, obviously over her other clothing. The underwear is dyed red and is much too large for SIS. MAW carries a needle and thread. SIS runs around the cot and then quickly jumps under the covers. MAW goes over and stands behind cot with one knee resting on SIS to hold her down. SIS squirms and throws herself about.

MAW: *(Exhausted and exasperated, finally says.)* Now, hold still! Gracie May! Sarah Jo! You hold her arms so she can't get away agin.

GRACIE: Awww, Maw...

SARAH: Come on, Gracie May. It won't hurt ya none.

GRACIE MAY and SARAH JO each take one of SIS' arms and hold her. MAW kneels and apparently sews SIS into the underwear.

MAW: By next winter ya'll be old enough t' go without long underwear, Sis.

GRACIE: *(Relaxing her hold to scratch herself.)* I remember how them long underwear used t' itch me when I had to wear 'em. I wuz always scratchin'!

MAW: Too bad ya ain't never outgrewed hit.

HOMER: *(Still at window right.)* Maw, do ya think we'll be snowed in?

MAW: Effen hit don't soon stop, we won't be able to git out till the snow plow comes through.

HOMER: *(Half to himself.)* Effen I'm lucky, hit might be weeks afore the folks down by Cricket Creek kin git out.

MAW: Whut ails ya, Homer? I've been prayin' the snow would stop! I'm worried about Grandpappy out in the hills alone. An old man like him can't git around so spry in the snow. An' whut about the folks down Cricket Creek way? Whut effen they run out of grub? They are worse off 'n us becuz the snow plow don't come down thar.

HOMER: I know, Maw, but...

GRACIE: I know why he's wishin' fer snow, Maw! He...

MAW: *(Rising.)* Thar, sis! Go put yer clothes on. *(SIS scurries out the door up right.)*

GRACIE: Maw, I know why...

The door left opens. The WIDOW BLAIRHOUSE thunders in with BERTHA and SLIM trailing her. BERTHA carries a large paper bag with a suit of clothes.

WIDOW: Hi, Miz Hollowbone! Ain't I glad t' lay eyes on you!

MAW: *(Pleased.)* Widder Blairhouse! I wuz thinkin' about ya this mornin' when I wuz gittin' a tub of lard up out of the shed!

BERTHA: *(Running to HOMER at right center.)* HOMER! Ain't ya glad t' see me?

HOMER: H...Hi, Bertha!

GRACIE: Hi, Bertha!

SLIM: (*Sitting left.*) I'm tard.

MAW: How come ya come out in this hyar storm, Widder?

SARAH: Kin I take yer shawl, Widder Blairhouse?

WIDOW: Seem' as how we're fixin' t' stay a spell, I reckon ya might as well.

SARAH takes her shawl. SLIM hands his wrap to her.

BERTHA: Gee, Homer! Hit's been weeks since I seen ya! Why didn't ya come down t' Cricket Creek like ya promised?

HOMER: I didn't promise, I...

BERTHA: Why, shore ya did, Homer! Don't ya remember when I wuz shootin' mark an' accidently pointed the gun at ya? Ya said then ya'd be down t' see me.

HOMER: (*Groaning.*) I remember.

BERTHA: I got a surprise fer ya.

WIDOW: Me an' the young'uns wuz afraid t' stay at our cabin, Miz Hollowbone. Our firewood's low an' we ain't got no man around like you got. I wuz afeerd effen my roomatitis got me agin, we might freeze t' death down thar.

SLIM: The snow plow won't come as fur as Cricket Creek.

MAW: Yer welcome t' stay hyar! We'd love t' have ya!

SARAH: Shall I take yer coat, Bertha?

BERTHA: (*Who cannot remove her eyes from HOMER.*) Shore.

BERTHA hands her coat to SARAH JO, who exits up left with all the wraps.

MAW: Our supplies ain't too good, but after the snow plow comes through we kin git inter town t' git more.

WIDOW: Thet's whut I figured. I brung some money along.

SLIM: Thet snow's up to my waist already down around our cabin.

WIDOW: Don't know whut it'll be effen hit don't soon stop.

Enter SARAH JO and PEPPER through the door up left.

MAW: Now, who's thet little boy?

SARAH: Hit's the one Paw give a haircut to. We ain't seen his face fer so long, we couldn't tell whether hit wuz Pepper er not.

MAW: (*Peering down into his face.*) Wal, now, let's see... (*He kicks her in the shins and runs out the door up right.*)

MAW: (*Holding her injured leg.*) Yep. Thet's Pepper.

WIDOW: Uh, is Grandpappy around?

MAW: We ain't seen him.

WIDOW: I figured he might come down out of the hills an' stay here a spell. On account of the storm, ya know.

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MAW: Wal, now, he might at thet. How about a nice, hot cup of tea? Ya must be frozen after walkin' all the way up hyar!

WIDOW: Don't mind effen I do.

MAW: Come along to the kitchen then. We'll set out thar by the fire.

SLIM: Thet sounds swell!

SLIM rises and exits up right. MAW and the WIDOW move up right more slowly.

HOMER: (*Shoving BERTHA after them.*) Ya want a cup of tea, Bertha?

BERTHA: Oh, I don't know.

HOMER: Oh, ya must!

BERTHA: (*Coyly.*) Air you comin', Homer? (*Exit MAW and the WIDOW through the door up right.*)

HOMER: Nope. You jest run along.

BERTHA: But I got a surprise fer ya an' I don't think...

HOMER: Ya gotta drink a cup of hot tea, Bertha! I wouldn't want ya t' git sick!

BERTHA: Ya wouldn't?

GRACIE: Come on, Bertha. I got somethin' t' tell ya.

BERTHA: (*Reluctantly taking GRACIE MAY's arm.*) Be hit interestin'?

GRACIE: Reckon ya'll think so!

Exit GRACIE MAY and BERTHA, still carrying her bag, through the door up right. HOMER heaves a sigh of relief and drops into a chair at the table, right center.

HOMER: Wohhi-iii!

SARAH: (*Hands on hips.*) Homer, whut's eatin' ya?

HOMER: I can't tell ya.

SARAH: (*Kindly.*) Shore ya kin. Maybe it'll help.

HOMER: (*Looking up.*) Ya won't tell nobody?

SARAH: (*Sitting left center.*) Nobody but Gracie May an' I'll make her promise not t' tell.

HOMER: Wal, Sarah Jo, I don't want Pa t' talk ter the Widder Blairhouse! I wusn't writin' them letters t' Bertha. I don't even like Bertha!

SARAH: I don't like her mech myself, but thar ain't many single gals around these parts.

HOMER: Effen I wusn't never t' git hitched, I wouldn't git hitched t' Bertha. I wuz writin' them letters to another gal.

SARAH: (*Brightly.*) Then all ya have t' do is tell Paw who the gal is an'...

HOMER: (*Groaning and rising.*) Ya don't understand, Sarah Jo! This gal ain't from these parts! Her name's Melissa Dugan an' she's frum Rhode Island.

SARAH: Rhode Island! Thet's...thet's way up in New England! How'd ya evir meet a gal frum New England?

HOMER: (*Restlessly moving right.*) I ain't never met her.

SARAH: Homer, effen ya wusn't my own brother, I'd say ya wuz touched in the haid.

HOMER: (*Looking out the window right.*) Sarah Jo, when ya live in the hills like us, ya don't git t' go noplac er see purty gals — gals thet wear shoes! I...I always figured I'd like t' know a gal whut wore shoes all the time, even in summer.

SARAH: So whut?

HOMER: Wal, last summer one day Maw sent me inter the town fer some salt mackerel.

SARAH: (*Sitting up, very interested.*) I remember. They shore tasted good.

HOMER: They wuz wrapped in a newspaper an' on the way home I started readin' hit. We don't never git a newspaper hyar. (*Sighs dreamily.*) Melissa Dugan's picture wuz in the paper.

SARAH: An' ya mean ya've been writin' letters like a half-wit an' then tearin' 'em up?

HOMER: (*Turning.*) No! Thet ain't it at all. Her picture wuz so purty... She wuz a chairwoman fer some charity ball they wuz havin' in Rhode Island. Ya cud see by her clothes she wuz rich. So I writ t' her.

SARAH: (*Rising, astonished.*) Homer Hollowbone! Ya mean ya had the sass t' really send thet strange gal a letter?

HOMER: (*Bashfully.*) Yep.

SARAH: I bet she had a good laugh when she got hit!

HOMER: (*Coming to center stage.*) She never said she laughed at enny of my letters! I take good care with the spellin'. An' I use thet grammer book the school marm give me once.

SARAH: Ya mean she answers yer letters?

HOMER: Every one.

SARAH: (*Sitting down, left, dismayed.*) Great balls o' fire!

HOMER: (*Turning; worried.*) But hit kinda worries me about whut ya said about gittin' hitched. I hope she never thought I meant t' git hitched t' her.

SARAH: But why should a gal like thet who wears shoes an' everything, write t' you? You ain't nothin' but a hillbilly like us, Homer!

HOMER: (*Smugly sitting beside her, left center.*) She don't know I'm a hillbilly, Sarah Jo.

SARAH: Huh?

HOMER: She wouldn't have writ effen she knowed I lived in a place like this. She thinks I live in a purty, big house. I told her it had fifteen rooms.

SARAH: Fifteen rooms!

HOMER: Yep. An' I told her my Paw wuz rich an' we had fancy ridin' horses an' a fountain in front of our house an' all kinds of servants t' do our work. (*Dreamily.*) I told her next year I'd be goin' away t' college an' maybe next summer I'd go over to Europe.

SARAH: (*Rising angrily.*) Homer Hollowbone, ya ought t' be ashamed of yourself!

HEADIN' FOR A WEDDIN'

HOMER: *(Waking.)* Huh?

SARAH: Tellin' thet pore gal all them stories! None of 'em is true! Does she know anythin' at all about ya thet's true?

HOMER: She knows my name.

SARAH: I'm going to write t' her an' tell her whut yer doin'!

HOMER: *(Rising.)* Sarah Jo! Ya promised ya wouldn't tell nobody!

SARAH: All right, then. You do hit.

HOMER: *(Moving left, hands in pockets.)* Whut air ya so fussed up about? All I done wuz write t' her! It didn't hurt her none t' read the letters.

SARAH: How do ya know? All thet sweet talk! I bet she thinks yer aimin' t' marry her.

HOMER: Uh uh.

SARAH: Have her letters been gittin' more mushy hyar of late?

HOMER: *(Reluctantly.)* Wal...yeah.

SARAH: An' has she started talkin' about weddin's in her letters? An' furniture? An' houses?

HOMER: She mentioned them things once er twice but

SARAH: I thought so! Homer, how cud ya do sech an awful thing?

The door, left, bursts open and GRANDPAPPY HANKLEY enters, all bundled up.

GRANDPAPPY: *(Yelling.)* Hey! Whar's everybody?

SARAH: *(Running to him and embracing him.)* Grandpappy!

HOMER: *(Moving right; sourly.)* Hi, Grandpappy! *(Enter MAW up right; HOMER goes to the window.)*

MAW: Grandpappy Hankley! Wal, bless my eyeballs! *(Enter GRACIE MAY and BERTHA through the door up right.)*

GRACIE: Hi! Whut brung ya hyar, Grandpappy?

GRANDPAPPY: *(Moving to center stage.)* The storm. *(Moaning and holding his hip.)* I ain't as young as I used t' be. Don't reckon I'll live more'n another fifty years.

Enter WIDOW BLAIRHOUSE through the door up right.

WIDOW: *(Gushing.)* Wal, Grandpappy Hankley! I wuz jest askin' about ya!

GRANDPAPPY: *(Heading left.)* I'm goin'.

MAW: *(Grabbing his coat.)* No, ya ain't, Grandpappy! Yer stayin' right hyar till the storm lets up.

WIDOW: *(Crossing to grasp his arm.)* Ya bet ya air, Grandpappy!

GRANDPAPPY: Thar be worse things then the storm!

WIDOW: *(Simpering.)* Effen ya'd stopped at our cabin first, we wouldn't a come t' bother Miz Hollowbone. All we need is a man around the place.

GRANDPAPPY: I'm feelin' mighty old!

WIDOW: Set a spell. *(She shoves him into a chair, left center.)* Bertha, take Grandpappy's coat.

GRANDPAPPY: *(As the WIDOW practically forces him out of his coat.)* I shouldn't take hit off. I can't stay long.

SARAH: *(Taking the coat.)* I'll take care of hit. Let Bertha stay with Homer.

Exit SARAH JO up left with GRANDPAPPY's wraps.

HOMER: *(Dismayed.)* Sarah Jo!

BERTHA: *(Giggling.)* I bet yer glad we come, ain't ya, Homer?

MAW: Wal, dinner's almost ready. *(Bellowing.)* Fannie Janel! Put more water in the soup an' git the cow's brains on to fry!

GRACIE: Maw, effen we're havin' company, we ought t' use the table cloth.

MAW: Yep. *(Pointing up left.)* Use the one on this bed. Yer Paw always sleeps with his shoes on in the winter, so ours is kinda dirty.

GRACIE: Shore.

GRACIE MAY goes up left and begins to remove the sheet from the bed. The WIDOW sits beside GRANDPAPPY, pantomiming conversation.

MAW: I'll go help Fannie Jane with the vittles. *(Exit MAW up right.)*

BERTHA: *(Taking HOMER's arm.)* Effen hit whar summer time, we cud go fer a nice, long walk.

HOMER: You kin still go.

BERTHA: But I might git lost in the storm.

HOMER: *(Grinning.)* Yeah!

Enter SARAH JO up left.

GRANDPAPPY: *(Attempting to rise.)* Reckon I'll git a couple winks of shut eye.

WIDOW: *(Shoving him down again.)* Let's jest keep on talkin', Grandpappy. Whut have ya been doin' since I seen ya last?

GRANDPAPPY: Huntin'.

GRACIE MAY takes the bed sheet and arranges it over the table, right center.

GRACIE: Thar! Don't thet look dandy? *(She picks a very tiny object from the table cloth, puts it on the floor, and steps on it.)*

SARAH: *(Walking around the table.)* I always like Maw's sheet better. It got thet purty green patch on hit.

Enter PAW, very excited, through the door, left.

PAW: Guess whut!

HEADIN' FOR A WEDDIN'

HOMER: *(Shaking BERTHA and going left.)* Whut?

PAW: Gloria has learned t' play "My Country 'tis Of Thee" on thet little mouth organ I bought!

BERTHA: Gloria?

SARAH: Gloria is Paw's pet skunk.

GRACIE: *(Scornfully.)* Gee, Paw, who cares about a skunk playin' tunes on a mouth organ!

PAW: But Gloria's the only skunk in the whole world whut kin do hit, I bet!

SARAH: *(Kindly.)* Thet's fine, Paw.

PAW: *(Deflated.)* Don't nobody want to hear her?

HOMER AND GRANDPAPPY: I do!

GRANDPAPPY rises and he and HOMER make a dash for the door left. At that moment, MAW enters up right with a heavy frying pan which she bangs down on the table, right center. PEPPER and SIS follow her closely trying to grab a handful out of the pan. MAW keeps swatting them away. Behind MAW comes FANNIE JANE, staggering under a load of cracked and broken dishes. She takes them to the table, right center, and spreads them out.

MAW: Dinner's ready! Don't go no place!

SLIM enters up right, eating an entire pie, a very gooey one.

WIDOW: *(Rising.)* Slim Blairhouse, ya shouldn't oughta et thet whole pie yerseif!

SARAH JO and GRACIE MAY exit up right and reenter a moment later, one carrying another pie, a jar of large pickles, and a loaf of unsliced bread, while the other brings a large pot of soup. They place these items on the table.

MAW: Come an' git hit!!!!

There is a mad rush for the table, some bringing chairs and others just standing. GRANDPAPPY picks up the pot of soup and drinks from it until PAW grabs it and pours soup into some of the bowls. They tear the loaf of bread to bits, stuffing it greedily into their mouths. PEPPER and SIS each grab a handful of food and duck under the table to eat it. The others even grab food from each other's hands. All this, of course, is accompanied by a great deal of noise. In the midst of the commotion, MELISSA DUGAN enters through the door, left. She goes unnoticed by the busy eaters. Practically exhausted, she leans against the closed door for a moment, staring at them, then she advances into the room.

MELISSA: Uh, hello? *(They do not hear her.)* I said, "Hello!" *(No response.)* EXCUSE ME! *(There is dead silence as everybody stops what he or she is doing and turns to stare at the newcomer.)*

MAW: Why?

MELISSA: I...I'm sorry I barged in like this, but...oh, I'm so tired. *(She almost sags.)*

MAW: Git a chair fer her! *(GRANDPAPPY and HOMER rush to MELISSA with a chair and help her into it.)*

MELISSA: I'm sorry, I...

GRACIE: Who air ya?

Everybody forgets about the food. SARAH JO takes a huge pickle from the table and turns with the others to watch MELISSA. The WIDOW and BERTHA cross to the left. SLIM and Gracie move up center.

MELISSA: My name is Melissa Dugan and...

HOMER: *(Greatly startled.)* Melissa Dugan?

MELISSA: *(Puzzled.)* Yes. Do you know me?

HOMER: *(Almost hysterical.)* Oh, no! Never heerd of ya! Have you, Sarah Jo?

SARAH: Oh, no! No!

PAW: Whut whar ya doin' out in thet storm?

MELISSA: I was heading for a wedding...

HOMER AND SARAH JO: Headin' fer a weddin'!

MELISSA: Yes. You see, I've been corresponding with the most wonderful, educated, wealthy young gentleman... *(SARAH JO chokes on her pickle. PAW vigorously slaps her on the back.)* I know from the tone of his recent letters that he wants to marry me, but is just too shy to put it into words. So I drove down from Rhode Island. We'll get acquainted for a few days, then get married.

MAW: Ya drive down by yerself?

MELISSA: Oh, no! I've got two traveling companions. *(Rising.)* And they don't know anything about this countryside! They're lost in the storm. Please...will somebody go look for them? *(Looks around group.)*

PAW: Hit be worth a man's life t' go out in this hyar storm.

MELISSA: I know, but...

MAW: *(Pushing her into the chair again.)* Set. Ya look plumb tuckered out.

HOMER: *(Nervous.)* H...H...How did ya...manage t' find our cabin?

MELISSA: I got lost looking for my fiance's mansion...

HOMER: Yer "fiancé!"

MELISSA: Yes. And we couldn't find any gas stations. We ran out of gas and we would have frozen to death if we had stayed in the car. We got out and started to walk. But I lost the Todd sisters in the storm. I was almost exhausted when I saw the light from your cabin.

MAW: Todd sisters? Ya mean thar's gals lost out in thet snow?

MELISSA: Well, you might call them that.

HEADIN' FOR A WEDDIN'

PAW: Gals er no gals, ya ain't catchin' me gittin' lost in these hyar mountains in a storm like this.

GRANDPAPPY: Me neither. (*Sits at table, right.*)

MELISSA: But the Todd sisters.

MAW: Maybe they wandered down by Cricket Creek an' got in another cabin. I wouldn't worry about hit effen I wuz you. Yer welcome t' stay hyar till the snow plow comes through.

PAW: (*Sticking out his hand.*) We're glad t' have ya. Gloria'll be glad too! My name's...

HOMER: (*Hastily.*) She shouldn't stay hyar! We ain't got no private room fer her.

SLIM, unnoticed, takes the other pie from the table and exits up left, messily eating it.

GRACIE: Ennybody kin see she's one of them fancy gals.

BERTHA: (*Hostile.*) Yep. Shoes an' everything.

MELISSA: You wouldn't expect me to walk around in that snow without shoes, would you?

GRACIE: I bet ya even wear 'em when it ain't snowin'!

MELISSA: Well, yes, but...

HOMER: See! Thar'll be nothin' but trouble effen ya let her stay!

MELISSA: (*Angry.*) Are you suggesting that they turn me out in the storm just because I wear shoes?

MAW: Homer, thet ain't like ya.

MELISSA: Homer!

HOMER: (*Quickly.*) She said "roamer." They call me a roamer becuz I'm always goin' someplace.

MAW: Huh?

HOMER: Let me take her down t' the school marm's place! She got a swell spare bedroom! This young lady'll be more comfortable thar.

PAW: Yep. Reckon she would at thet.

MAW: (*Doubtfully.*) Maybe so. But cud ya find hit?

HOMER: Shore, Maw! I cud find hit with my eyes closed.

MAW: (*Going to the window, right.*) Ya'd have to. Hit be comin' down so thick I can't even see the sycamore tree.

HOMER: (*Gritting his teeth.*) I'll find hit...er die tryin'.

BERTHA: (*Crossing to grasp his arm.*) Oh no, ya don't! I ain't takin' no chances on loosin' ya.

HOMER: But, Bertha...

PAW: Bertha's right. Nobody should go out in this hyar storm. Ya kin stay hyar, Ma'am. Ya kin share sech as we have.

MELISSA: Oh, thank you! I'll try not to be any trouble.

PAW: Now thet thet's settled, I better git out t' Gloria agin. She don't like this hyar storm.

MELISSA: You mean this...Gloria is out in the storm?

PAW: Yep. In the shed.

MELISSA: Is it heated?

PAW: Nope.

MELISSA: How can you be so mean? Why don't you bring her into the house?

PAW: Maw don't like her in the house. Says she stinks.

MELISSA: That's terrible! (*Sniffing toward GRACIE MAY who is scratching again.*) Gloria isn't the only one with an unpleasant odor!

MAW: (*Shrugging.*) Wal, bring Gloria in effen ya like, Paw. I admit hit be a terrible day outside.

PAW: (*Happy.*) Reckon I will!

Exit PAW through the door left.

MELISSA: You still haven't told me your names...?

MAW: So we ain't. I'm...

HOMER: Maw! Don't ya think Melissa ud like a cup of tea? I bet she ain't had nothin' fer quite a spell.

MELISSA: Well, I am a bit hungry.

MAW: That's right. I better git a leetle snack fer ya. (*Loudly.*) Okay, young 'uns! Git thet table cleared off!

MELISSA: Shall I come out to the kitchen?

MAW: No, set whar ya air a spell. I'll call ya when I git hit ready.

Exit MAW through the door up right. SARAH JO, GRACIE MAY, FANNIE JANE, and BERTHA clear off the table, making trips out through the door up right and returning as often as necessary. FANNIE JANE, however, does most of the work. The others carry a dish or two but she is always loaded down. They return chairs to their original positions and the sheet to the bed up left. PEPPER and SIS remain under the table. The WIDOW crosses left with GRANDPAPPY.

WIDOW: Now thet we ate, would ya like t' play a game of Old Maids with me?

GRANDPAPPY: Nope.

WIDOW: Oh, I knew ya'd think hit whar a fine idea! (*Taking his hand.*) Let's go ask Maw whar she keeps her Old Maids.

GRANDPAPPY: Effen she got any more besides you, I'm a-gittin'!

WIDOW: (*Giggling.*) Whut a sense of humor.

GRANDPAPPY: (*Getting away from her.*) Glad ya like hit, but I gotta go now.

WIDOW: Go!

GRANDPAPPY: Yep. I better look fer them Todd sisters this hyar young gal wuz tellin' wuz lost.

MELISSA: (*Rising.*) Oh, would you?

GRANDPAPPY: Shore. I wuz goin' all the time.

MELISSA: We'll be glad to pay you anything...

GRANDPAPPY: 'Taint necessary. I'll git my things.

HEADIN' FOR A WEDDIN'

Exit GRANDPAPPY through the door up left. The girls have finished clearing the table and remain off stage. BERTHA is the last to leave.

BERTHA: (*Glaring at MELISSA.*) Reckon I might as well help with the dishes...seein' as how we'll have so much extra work waitin' on fancy visitors.

Exit BERTHA through the door up right.

HOMER: (*Grinning.*) Reckon she don't like you none.

MELISSA: (*Going to the table right and removing her wrap.*) It would appear she isn't the only one.

HOMER: Huh?

MELISSA: You certainly tried your best to get rid of me.

HOMER: (*Mournfully.*) Oh, Melissa.

MELISSA: (*Icily.*) Miss Dugan to you. (*She drops her bandana on the floor and stoops to retrieve it. She looks under the table and screams. She rises and rushes, still screaming, into HOMER's arms.*)

HOMER: What is it? Whut's wrong?

MELISSA: Under the table! There's a horrible monster with two heads under the table.

HOMER: Huh? (*He escapes MELISSA's grasp and looks under the table.*) Okay, kids. Git!

PEPPER and SIS scurry from beneath the table and exit up right.

MELISSA: (*Recovering.*) What was that?

HOMER: Them's jest Pepper an' Sis. Thar the youngest.

MELISSA: (*Sighing.*) Oh, if only we had been able to find the mansion! I asked all over but nobody seemed to know where it was. If only I were there instead of this...this... (*Words fail her.*) Do you know where the Hollowbone family lives?

HOMER: N...No. Never heerd of 'em.

MELISSA: You never heard of Homer Hollowbone?

HOMER: Nope!

MELISSA: (*Turning left.*) Oh, dear.

Enter PAW with a box with a small blanket in it through door left. He carries it as he would a treasure.

MELISSA: (*Sniffing.*) What is that odd odor?

HOMER: Thet's Gloria.

MELISSA: Gloria?

PAW: Yep. I'll git her t' do a few tricks fer ya then. Only ya'll have t' be careful not t' skeer her. (*Into the box.*) Nice little Gloria! Kootchie, kootchie, koo! (*To MELISSA.*) Best-trained skunk in the hills.

MELISSA: A skunk?

Exit PAW through the door up left. An instant later, GRANDPAPPY rushes in through the same door, holding his nose.

GRANDPAPPY: I'll find them two gals fer ya, Miss Dugan! I know these hyar hills better'n anybody else.

Exit GRANDPAPPY, in his coat, through the door left. SARAH JO enters up right.

SARAH: Maw has some grub ready fer ya, Ma'am. Effen ya don't mind, I reckon ya'll be more comfortable out in the kitchen by the stove.

MELISSA: Thank you very much. I am chilly.

SARAH: Ya kin bring yer coat an' hang hit up out thar.

HOMER: *(Rushing toward the coat.)* I'll carry hit fer ya!

SARAH: *(Grabbing him by the arm.)* No, ya don't! Let 'er carry hit herself. I want to talk to ya!

HOMER: *(Reluctantly.)* Wal, okay.

MELISSA gathers up her garments and exits up right. SARAH JO folds her arms beligerently and marches down center.

SARAH: Wal?

HOMER: *(Uncomfortably moving left.)* Wal, whut?

SLIM enters up left, gasping and staggering.

SLIM: Air...I gotta git air.

He exits through the door left. SARAH JO and HOMER watch him go.

SARAH: He musta scared Gloria.

HOMER: Maybe I better go help him.

SARAH: You stay right hyar! You an' me is gonna talk!

HOMER: Aw, Sarah Jo...

SARAH: Whut air ya gonna do about this gal?

HOMER: I...I don't know.

SARAH: Wal, I told Gracie May an' we wuz talkin' hit over. Ya can't let her go roamin' through these parts lookin' fer thet big house ya writ her about! Yer makin' a fool of her. An' she seems like a nice gal.

HOMER: *(Sitting left; very dejected.)* I know. Oh, Sarah Jo! Effen only I wouldn't have done hit! Effen only I hadn't writ t' her in the furst place!

SARAH: Wal, ya did, Homer. *(Going to him and resting a comforting hand on his shoulder.)* Lyin' an' tryin' t' hide things now'll only make hit worse. Ya gotta git her aside an' tell her the truth! Hit's the only way.

HOMER: *(Rising.)* I couldn't!

HEADIN' FOR A WEDDIN'

SARAH: Hit be the only gentlemanly thing t' do.

HOMER: (*Miserably.*) But she'll laugh at me! I couldn't bear hit, Sarah Jo!

SARAH: She'll find hit out anyway, Homer! This danged snow might keep fallin' fer a 'week...an' then we might be snowed in longer till the snow plow gits down hyar. Ya think she'll live hyar all thet time an' not find out our names? Fer all we know, maybe Maw told her yer name already. The only way ya kin save yer face at all is to tell her yerself.

HOMER: Yeah. I reckon yer right.

SARAH: (*Kindly.*) Let's go git Melissa and tell her now.

BERTHA: (*Off right.*) Oh, Homer!

HOMER: Hit be Bertha! (*Starts up left.*) Let's duck in hyar.

SARAH: But Gloria's in thar!

HOMER: I'd rather smell Gloria then Bertha!

Exit HOMER and SARAH JO through the door up left as BERTHA with her paper bag enters up right.

BERTHA: Oh, Homer... (*Pausing right center.*) I'd a swore I heerd him talkin' in hyar. (*Enter SLIM through the door left.*) Whut whar you doin' out in the storm?

SLIM: (*Sitting left.*) Breathin'.

BERTHA: Huh? (*Sniffing the air.*) I see whut ya mean. Is Gloria in hyar?

SLIM: Thet's me ya smell. I wuz snoozin' on the bed in thar (*Indicates up left.*) when Paw brung thet danged skunk in. It skeered the skunk when I got up an'...

BERTHA: And?

SLIM: And you ought t' know whut happened then!

BERTHA: Oh, yeah. Wal, ya better git them clothes burned afore Mammy smells ya.

SLIM: I can't. I ain't got no other clothes. (*His eyes fall on the paper bag.*) Er, have I?

BERTHA: (*Thrusting the bag behind her and retreating.*) Oh, no ya don't, Slim Blairhouse! These clothes air my surprise fer Homer.

SLIM: (*Rising.*) Why don't you give up, Bertha? He don't think nothin' of ya.

BERTHA: He will effen I keep bringin' him presents. This suit of clothes I got in the bag be the handsomest I ever seen in these parts!

SLIM: Yep. (*Crossing slowly to her.*) I'd look mighty swell in 'em. Like a city slicker.

BERTHA: (*Running around the table.*) Ya ain't gittin' 'em! I already told Homer I had a surprise fer him.

SLIM: (*Chasing her.*) The only surprise Homer wants frum ya is fer ya t' quit chasin' him fer a spell.

BERTHA: (*Dashing left.*) Hit ain't so!

SLIM: *(Catching her at left and grabbing hold of one handle of the bag.)*
Besides, this is mine as much as hit be yours!

BERTHA: *(Belligerently tugging at the bag.)* I shot the travelin' salesman what wuz wearin' hit, didn't I?

SLIM: Only in the leg! He'd have got clean away even I hadn't come along an' hit him over the head for ya. Gimme them clothes!

SLIM gives a savage yank, upsetting BERTHA and spilling the contents of the bag. Hastily he shoves his sister aside, gathers up the garments, and starts left.

BERTHA: Whar air ya goin'?

SLIM: Out to the shed! Hit be the only place whar a man kin have a leetle privacy!

Exit SLIM through the door left. BERTHA rises, bawling loudly.

BERTHA: Mammy!

Exit BERTHA, wailing loudly, through the door up right. HOMER peeps out the door up left, sees that the coast is clear and enters. SARAH JO backs in behind him, talking to PAW, offstage.

SARAH: Shore, Paw. We'll come back agin an' watch the rest of Gloria's tricks. She's a wonderful skunk. We'll be back.

SARAH JO closes the door and sighs with relief.

HOMER: Even that ain't a waste of time, I don't know what is! Teachin' a skunk all them tricks!

SARAH: We got other things t' think about, Homer. I'll send Melissa in from the kitchen. *(With determination.)* An' be shore ya tell her the truth!

HOMER just groans as SARAH JO exits up right. HOMER wanders forlornly to the window, right.

HOMER: I shore wish that snow ud stop! *(MELISSA DUGAN enters up right on his speech.)*

MELISSA: You're not the only one.

HOMER: Ya...think we're pretty awful, don't ya?

MELISSA: I'm sorry. I'm very thankful for your hospitality. I guess I would have died out in that storm if I hadn't found this place.

HOMER: *(Coming to her at right center.)* But ya still don't like us. We're poor an' we ain't got nothin'.

MELISSA: *(Avoiding him and moving right.)* It's not the poverty I object to. It's the dirt. And that...that skunk!

HOMER: Maw don't usually let hit in the cabin.

HEADIN' FOR A WEDDIN'

MELISSA: (*Looking out the window.*) Oh, my! I hope that old man finds the Todd sisters! They won't last long in that storm. They're a little older than I am.

HOMER: Hit's shore a bad storm all right. I bet lots of people are lost in hit.

MELISSA: (*Sighing.*) I wonder where my Homer is.

HOMER: Oh, I'm right... Oh! (*Moving center.*) Uh...about Homer, Miss Melissa...I got somethin' t' tell ya.

MELISSA: (*Turning.*) Yes?

HOMER: Reckon this might come as a surprise to ya.

MELISSA: (*Coming to right center.*) A surprise! You must know where Homer Hollowbone is!

HOMER: (*At center stage; uneasily.*) Wal, yep. Reckon I do. But he ain't all ya think. He writes better 'n he talks.

MELISSA: (*Coming to him eagerly.*) Oh, I don't care! Tell me! Where is he?

HOMER: (*Miserably.*) He's hyar...in this cabin.

MELISSA: (*Turning away joyfully.*) I knew it! Oh, I knew fate must have sent me here for a purpose.

HOMER: Huh?

MELISSA: (*Almost weeping for joy.*) And here I was blaming the storm for spoiling my plans. And it brought us together! Where is he?

HOMER: Whut are ya talkin' about?

MELISSA: (*Turning to him with a laugh.*) The storm, silly! This wonderful storm! I got lost! My dear Homer got lost! And we both ended up here! Where is he? I can't wait another minute to see him!

HOMER: (*Horrified.*) Oh, no, Melissa! Ya got hit all wrong! Ya see, I'm...

SLIM, looking handsome in the clothing of the traveling salesman, enters through the door left.

SLIM: Wal, hyar I am! How do I look?

MELISSA: Darling! You look just like I dreamed you would!

MELISSA dashes across the stage to SLIM and throws her arms around his neck. Both SLIM and HOMER are utterly astonished. At that moment, GRANDPAPPY HANKLEY enters, left. He is dragging the TODD sisters who are covered with snow and quite still. He has a rope tied around their waists, and they are stretched out on the floor behind him.

GRANDPAPPY: Wal, I brung 'em back alive!

The others stare at him as the curtain falls.

BY LE ROMA GRETH

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