

LAUREY. (*Going on with her packing.*) So that's the Cummin's girl I heard so much talk of.

CURLY. You seen her before, ain't you?

LAUREY. Yeow. But not since she got so old. Never did see anybody get so peeked-lookin' in sich a short time.

AUNT ELLER. (*Amused at LAUREY.*) Yeah, and she says she's only eighteen. I betcha she's nineteen.

(She exits into the house.)

CURLY. What ya got in yer hamper?

LAUREY. 'At's jist some ole meat pies and apple jelly. Nuthin' like whut Gertie Cummin's has in *her* basket.

(She sits on the arm of a rocking chair.)

CURLY. You really goin' to drive to the Box Social with that Jud feller?

(Pause.)

LAUREY. Reckon so. Why?

CURLY. Nuthin'... It's jist that ev'rybody seems to expec' *me* to take you.

(He sits on the other arm of the rocker.)

LAUREY. Then, mebbe it's jist as well you ain't. We don't want people talkin' 'bout us, do we?

CURLY. You think people *do* talk about us?

LAUREY. Oh, you know how they air - like a swarm of mudwasps. Alw'ys gotta be buzzin' 'bout sumpin.

CURLY. (*Rocking the chair.*) Well, whut're they sayin'? That you're stuck on me?

LAUREY. No. Most of the talk is that you're stuck on me.

[MUSIC NO. 12 "PEOPLE WILL SAY WE'RE IN LOVE"]

CURLY. Cain't imagine how these ugly rumors start.

LAUREY. Me neither.

WHY DO THEY THINK UP STORIES THAT LINK
MY NAME WITH YOURS?

Scene Two
The Kitchen Porch of Skidmore's Ranch House

(The kitchen porch of Skidmore's ranch house. There are a few benches on the porch and a large coal stove. At Rise: The music for the dance can still be heard offstage. Immediately after the curtain rises, JUD dances on with LAUREY, then stops and holds her. She pulls away from him.)

LAUREY. Why we stoppin'? Thought you wanted to dance.

JUD. Want to talk to you. What made ya slap that whip onto Old Eighty, and nearly make her run away? Whut was yer hurry?

LAUREY. 'Fraid we'd be late fer the party.

JUD. You didn't want to be with me by yerself – not a minnit more'n ya had to.

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

JUD. You wouldn'ta been, if ya coulda got out of it. Mornin's you stay hid in yer room all the time. Nights you set in the front room, and won't git outa Aunt Eller's sight... Last time I see ya alone it was winter, with the snow six inches deep in drifts when I was sick. Ya brung me that hot soup out to the smoke house and give it to me, and me in bed. I hadn't shaved in two days. You ast me 'f I had any fever and ya put yer hand on my head to see.

LAUREY. *(Puzzled and frightened.)* I remember...

JUD. Do ya? Bet ya don't remember as much as me. I remember eve'ything ya ever done...every word ya ever said. Cain't think of nuthin' else... See? ...See how it is.

(He attempts to hold LAUREY. She pushes him away.)

I ain't good enough, am I? I'm a h'ard hand, got dirt on my hands, pigslop. Ain't fitten to tetch ya. You're

better, so much better. Yeah, we'll see who's better – Miss Laurey. Nen you'll wisht you wasn't so free with yer airs, yer sich a fine lady...

LAUREY. (*Suddenly angry and losing her fear.*) Air you making threats to me? Air you standing there tryin' to tell me 'f I don't 'low you to slobber over me like a hog, why, you're gonna do sumpin 'bout it? Why you're nuthin' but a mangy dog and somebody orta shoot you. You think so much about being a h'ard hand. Well, I'll just tell you sumpin that'll rest your brain, Mr. Jud. You ain't a h'ard hand fer me no more. You c'n just pack up yer duds and scoot. Oh, and I even got better idys'n that. You ain't to come on the place again, you hear me? I'll send yer stuff any place you say, but don't you's much's set foot inside the pasture gate or I'll sic the dogs onto you!

JUD. (*Standing quite still, absorbed, dark, his voice low.*) Said yer say! Brought it on yerself. (*In a voice harsh with an inner frenzy.*) Cain't he'p it. Cain't never rest. Told ya the way it was. You wouldn't listen –

(He goes out, passes the corner of the house, and disappears. LAUREY stands a moment, held by his strangeness, then she starts toward the house, changes her mind, and sinks onto a bench, a frightened little girl again. There is a noise offstage. LAUREY turns, startled.)

LAUREY. Who's 'at?

WILL. (*Entering.*) It's me, Laurey. Hey, have you seen Ado Annie? She's gone agin.

(LAUREY shakes her head.)

LAUREY. (*Calling to him as he is on his way out.*) Will! ... Will, could you do sumpin fer me? Go and find Curly and tell him I'm here.

(CURLY enters.)

I wanta see Curly awful bad. Got to see him.