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Family Plays

LANTERN IN THE WIND

Drama by
Tim Kelly

LANTERN IN THE WIND

Lantern in the Wind, written with the unfailing craftsmanship of Tim Kelly (author of *Dracula*, *Sweeney Todd* and *The Fall of the House of Usher*, among others) is a one-act play which is short, simple to produce, and completely captivating.

Lantern in the Wind was unanimously chosen as the winner of the 1979 Texas Community Theatre Original One-Act Play Contest. The judge's report praised the play's "strong characters, believable dialogue, great audience appeal and a good climax. The idea and its execution are remarkably interesting."

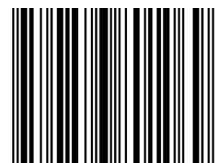
Drama. By Tim Kelly. Cast: 3w. The central character is Etta Place, "once a schoolteacher, later a bandit, always a friend of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid." The play is set in a lonely mountain cabin in Utah. The other characters are Etta's cousin Clara, a hard-crusted pioneer woman, and Florence Kilpatric, a female newspaper reporter in the days when female newspaper reporters were rare, but nevertheless highly skillful in probing into the emotional side of the news. The play rings true, as *Point West Magazine* pointed out, "Kelly probably knows the Southwest as well as any writer today ... His people are genuine, his ear for their conversation right on target ... He translates his subject into vivid imagery." The play was premiered, along with two other winners, in September 1979 by Stage Center in Bryan-College Station, Texas. Kelly is one of America's most prolific authors, with more than 100 plays published by all the major play publishers. Is the story in *Lantern in the Wind* true? Are all the tales and exploits of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid true? Who can tell for certain what is real and what is legend? *Approximate running time: 20 to 25 minutes. Code: LH5.*

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Lantern in the Wind

LANTERN IN THE WIND

A Play in One Act

by

Tim Kelly

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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TIM KELLY

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(LANTERN IN THE WIND)

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LANTERN IN THE WIND

Characters

- Etta Place *Once a school teacher, later a bandit; always a friend of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*
- Clara *Etta's cousin, a crusty pioneer type*
- Florence Kilpatric *A newspaper woman*

TIME

About 1915. Late autumn

PLACE

A mountain cabin somewhere in the state of Utah

NOTES ON THE PLAY

Butch Cassidy . . . the Sundance Kid. The very names ring with the drama, the excitement, the lawlessness, and the romance which have made the American West and its people the subject of so many, many plays, stories, and movies.

“Lantern in the Wind,” written with the unfailing craftsmanship of Tim Kelly (author of *Dracula, the Vampyre Play; Sweeney Todd, Demon Barber of the Barbary Coast; The Fall of the House of Usher*, etc.) gives us now a play which is short, simple to produce, and completely captivating.

Its central character is Etta Place, “once a school teacher, later a bandit, always a friend of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.” The play is set in a lonely mountain cabin in Utah. Its other characters are Etta’s cousin Clara, a hard-crusted pioneer woman, and Florence Kilpatrick, a female newspaper reporter in the days when female newspaper reporters were rare, but nevertheless highly skillful in probing into the emotional side of the news. The play rings true because, as *Point West Magazine* pointed out, “Kelly probably knows the Southwest as well as any writer today . . . his people are genuine, his ear for their conversation right on target . . . he translates his subject into vivid imagery.”

“Lantern in the Wind” was unanimously chosen as the winner of the 1979 Texas Community Theatre Original One-Act Play Contest. The judges’ report praised the play’s “strong characters, believable dialogue, great audience appeal, and a good climax. The idea and its execution remarkably interesting.” The play was premiered, along with two other winners, in September, 1979, by StageCenter in Bryan-College Station, Texas. Kelly, whose home is in Hollywood, is one of America’s most prolific authors, with more than 100 plays published by all the major play publishers.

Is the story in “Lantern in the Wind” true? Are all the tales and exploits of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid true? Who can tell for certain what is real and what is legend!

PRODUCTION NOTES

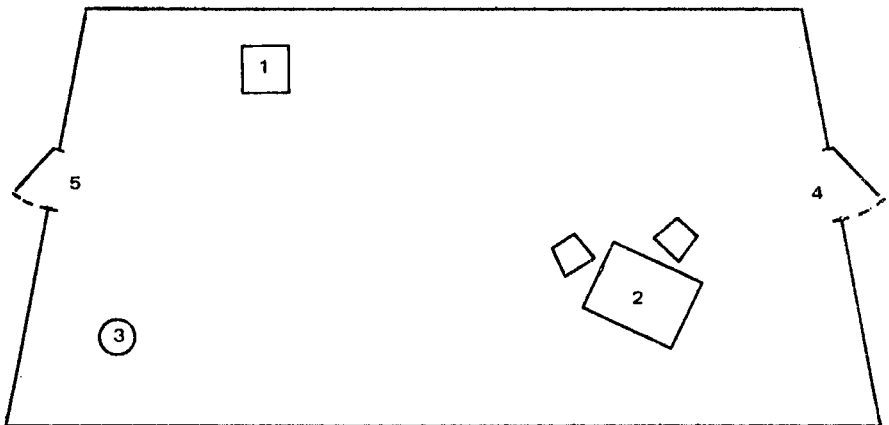
Properties

Picture frame, lantern, pistol—on Up Right table
 Shawl, watch on chain—Etta (brought on from Left wing)
 Pan with potatoes & other vegetables; knife—Clara (brought on from Right wing)
 Handbag with newspaper clippings, notebook, pencil—Florence (from Left)
 Cup of broth—Clara (from Right)

Costumes

All three actresses should wear long dresses. **Etta** might wear an ankle-length wrap-around skirt, a blouse with a touch of frill, and Western boots. In addition to the shawl, she may also wear a coat or jacket, perhaps with Western styling. She should look attractive. **Clara**, the pioneer woman, by contrast is plain and worn. Her costume reflects her life—a homspun, poorly fitted, faded long-sleeved dress. **Florence** might wear a tailored suit—long skirt, plain blouse, fitted jacket. A hat would also be appropriate. Since female newspaper reporters were a rarity in 1915, she would probably try to look as much like a man as possible (obviously, other interpretations of her character are the prerogative of each producer).

The Set



- 1—Small wooden table at Up Right Center
- 2—Larger table, with two chairs, at Down Left Center
- 3—Stool or chair
- 4—Entrance from outside
- 5—Entrance into other rooms of the cabin

The entrances may be doors or openings in the stage curtains. Additional set decorations may be added. The decor should be very rustic—a pioneer mountain cabin.

LANTERN IN THE WIND

By Tim Kelly

The setting is a mountain cabin. It is primitive and isolated. At Down Left Center is a table with two chairs. At Down Right is a chair or, perhaps even better, a stool. At Up Right Center is another table, smaller than the first. On this table we find a revolver, a picture in a frame, and a lantern. Entrance into the cabin from outside is at Stage Left; exit into other parts of the cabin is at Stage Right.

AT RISE: Nothing for a moment, and then—the voice of ETTA calling from off Left.

ETTA. Clara! *[Pause]* Clara! *[Pause]* Clara, it's me . . . Etta! *[Another pause and ETTA PLACE sweeps into the cabin from Left. She is a handsome young woman, strong, clever, intensely female. She wears a shawl over her shoulders but shivers with the cold]* Brrr. The wind cuts right through you. *[Looks around the cabin]* Clara? *[No response. ETTA moves Right, calls offstage]* Clara, you in there? *[Again—nothing. ETTA shrugs, takes off her shawl, puts it over the back of a chair at the Left table. She thinks of something and a smile breaks on her face. She moves to the Up Right table and picks up the framed photograph. Softly, lovingly]* Hello, my darling. *[She kisses the photograph]*

[CLARA enters from Right. She is about Etta's age but hard, unsentimental—a true pioneer type]

CLARA. So it was you howlin' and not the wind. *[CLARA holds a pan of vegetables in one hand, moves to the chair or stool Down Right, sits]*

ETTA. Yelled loud enough to wake the dead.

CLARA. No you didn't. No one yells that loud. *[Takes a potato from the pan, holds it up]* Ain't that a beauty? Old miner way down the mountain grows vegetables under a pane of window glass. Seasons don't matter much to him.

ETTA. *[Moves left of Clara]* You shouldn't say "ain't."

CLARA. If I was you, I'd forget I'd been a school teacher once. You don't exactly hold up the profession in good light.

ETTA. You're as hard as you ever were, Clara.

CLARA. *[She takes out a small knife and begins to peel the potato.*

She speaks slowly and deliberately] I like my life the way it is. I do what I want when I want, and don't have to answer to anyone for my ways.

ETTA. There's no softness in you.

CLARA. Maybe.

ETTA. I'd go crazy living up here away from most everyone and everything.

CLARA. I've seen enough of the world. I'm content. [*A guarded glance at Etta*] Are you? [*ETTA doesn't answer*] You stayin' for supper?

ETTA. Yes.

CLARA. You picked the right time.

ETTA. Oh?

CLARA. Did bakin' this mornin'. Peach pie. 'Course the peaches was canned.

ETTA. [*Corrects her*] You mean the peaches *were* canned.

CLARA. That's what I just got through sayin'. [*ETTA sighs, moves to the table, sits*] Don't know how you and Butch ever got along so good, Etta. I hear tell his grammar would make Will Shakespeare retch. [*She goes on peeling. ETTA sits very erect. She wears a watch on a gold chain around her neck, checks the time*] 'Course the Sundance Kid weren't no better. [*Again, CLARA steals a glance to see if Etta is reacting. She is plainly trying to get some reply, but ETTA remains unmoved*] Who's it to be this time?

ETTA. Hmmmmm?

CLARA. You heard me. Some fella from one of them European magazines?

ETTA. [*Quietly*] No.

CLARA. Someone out from the East? New York, maybe? [*No response from Etta*] Chicago?

ETTA. Can't I visit my own cousin without having her suspect me of something?

CLARA. 'Course you can. Only you never do. Only time you use this cabin is when you're playin' your cat-'n'-mouse. [*Thinks*] You sure this one will be able to find the cabin? Don't forget the one who got lost and almost froze to death.

ETTA. I haven't forgotten. This one's out for blood. She's quick, eager, bursting with imagination. She won't lose me.

CLARA. Oh, it's a lady, huh? When she gonna get here?

ETTA. *[Checking her watch again]* About now.

[CLARA shakes her head at Etta's confidence; then she hears a noise and looks back at Etta curiously, as if Etta were clairvoyant or something. FLORENCE KILPATRIC, a newspaper woman, storms in from Left. She is enthusiastic, impressionable, tenacious. She is breathing heavily, both from her long trek up the mountain and with frustration. There is anger in her voice]

FLORENCE. That was a dirty trick, Etta Place!

ETTA. *[She stands, pretending to be shocked]* How did you know I'd be here?

FLORENCE. *[Steps behind chair at Left table]* I followed you.

ETTA. *[Fakes alarm]* Followed me?

FLORENCE. *[Shivering, rubbing her arms to warm herself]* Half froze myself climbing up the hillside. *[Still panting, taking a deep breath, almost a sigh]* I'm out of breath. *[She sits at table]*

ETTA. You had no right—

FLORENCE. No right! You promised me an interview tonight. You promised to come to my hotel. Instead of that, you sneak off!

ETTA. You were watching me every minute.

FLORENCE. What if I was?

CLARA. *[Correcting her grammar]* "Were."

FLORENCE. What?

CLARA. *[Imitating Etta's school-teacher mannerism]* What if you were.

[During the exchange between Florence and Etta, CLARA had been quietly peeling vegetables. Only now that she has spoken does the NEWSPAPER WOMAN notice her]

FLORENCE. Who's that?

CLARA. *[Still peeling]* Nobody special.

ETTA. *[Gesturing toward Clara]* This is my cousin Clara. *[FLORENCE nods]* Clara, this is Miss Florence Kilpatric. She writes for a St. Louis magazine.

FLORENCE. Not a "magazine." It's a journal.

CLARA. What's the difference?

FLORENCE. "Journal" is more genteel.

CLARA. How come anyone who writes for a "genteel journal" is interested in a galoot like Butch Cassidy?

FLORENCE. [*Cautiously*] What makes you think I am?

CLARA. Ha! When there's a reporter in these parts he's here for one reason—or, in your case—*she's* here for one reason.

FLORENCE. Which is?

CLARA. To get a story about Butch Cassidy, or the Sundance Kid, or the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang, or— [*She breaks off*]

FLORENCE. Or? [*CLARA looks at her cousin*]

ETTA. [*Quietly*] Etta Place.

FLORENCE. *Cherchez la femme.*

CLARA. Huh?

FLORENCE. It's French.

CLARA. I didn't think it was Chinese.

ETTA. It means "find the woman."

FLORENCE. Find the woman and you find the man.

CLARA. What man?

FLORENCE. I think that's something Etta can tell me.

ETTA. Clara, I wonder if you'd mind leaving us alone?

FLORENCE. Do you suppose I might have a cup of coffee?

CLARA. No.

FLORENCE. What?

CLARA. I said "no." No coffee.

FLORENCE. Tea, perhaps?

CLARA. Nope. No tea, either.

ETTA. My cousin doesn't drink stimulants.

FLORENCE. Anything hot would be appreciated.

CLARA. [*Stands*] Broth.

FLORENCE. I beg your pardon?

CLARA. I said "broth." Hot beef broth.

FLORENCE. [*Somewhat intimidated by Clara*] Yes, yes. Anything. Thank you so much.

[*CLARA grunts something unintelligible, exits Right with the pan of vegetables*]

FLORENCE. [*Eager*] I was getting too close for comfort, wasn't I? [*ETTA moves to the Up Right table, picks up the photograph as FLORENCE goes on*] My questions about Butch Cassidy put you on guard.

ETTA. You're clever, Miss Kilpatric.

FLORENCE. I flatter myself.