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Dramatic Publishing

A Full Length Play

where the lilies bloom

By
Celeste Raspanti

Based on the book
by
Vera and Bill Cleaver

THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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WHERE THE LILIES BLOOM
A Full Length Play
For 7 Men And 9 Women and Extras

CHARACTERS

MARY CALL *head of the Luther family*
DEVOLA *older sister, pretty but naive*
ROMEY *their brother*
IMA DEAN *youngest sister*
KISER PEASE . *owner of Luther land and in love with Devola*
GOLDIE PEASE *his sister*
MR. CONNELL *owner of general store*
MRS. CONNELL *his wife*
MISS BREATHITT *schoolteacher*
GAITHER GRAYBEAL *student with crush on Mary Call*
ALMA GRAYBEAL *his sister*
LACEY, CHESTER, SAMMY LEE, HANNAH JO . . . *students*
PREACHER

Extras: wedding guests, students, townspeople.

TIME: *Present.*

PLACE: *North Carolina mountain valley.*

PRODUCTION NOTES

1. This play can be done very simply with a bare stage and a few platforms. Several well chosen props, costumes and accessories will suggest the kitchen, the general store, the school and the hospital. There are three general areas on stage—the Luther house, the town, the mountainside. The school, the general store and the hospital scenes take place in the town area. The burial plot and Kiser's house are on the mountainside. Any attempt to be factually realistic will only clutter the stage and distract the audience. The important element is the fluid movement from scene to scene which can be achieved with lights and/or music. The rule is simple. The audience will look where there is action and light. As one scene ends, audience attention will be quickly shifted to other areas with light, action, sound, or some combination of these elements.

2. The Great Smokey Mountains are important but they need only be suggested as being off in the distance and up high. Again, a director can do as little or as much as he wishes to recreate the mountain setting.

3. There is a great deal of folk music of the Appalachians in the public domain. Folk songs, fiddlers' tunes, square dances, can provide musical bridges for the scenes where the passage of time is suggested.

4. Any square dance music in the many collections of Appalachian music will provide music for the wedding scene. The wedding song could be, as suggested here, played on a harmonica. But it could just as well be played on a fiddle, a banjo, or a guitar. The resources of the cast will dictate the music.

5. The school scene, the general store and the wedding scene provide settings where extras may be added. Interesting and active additions could be made to these scenes with characters miming situations in keeping with the focus of the scene.

PROPERTY LIST

Act One—General:

Simple furniture to suggest kitchen, school and general store. Small plants. Baskets and bags for wildcrafting. Onions. Bath tub. Groceries and supplies. Wagon. Books and school materials.

MARY CALL: Shovel, book, pad and pencil.

DEVOLA: Basket of onions.

MR. CONNELL: Apron.

ROMEY: A pair of new shoes.

MRS. CONNELL: Basket of bread and jam.

Act Two—General:

Suggestions of wedding party. Wedding cake, etc.

DEVOLA: Shawl, garland of wild flowers for hair.

MARY CALL: Rope of flowers for Devola.

KISER: Wedding ring.

ACT ONE

SCENE: The stage is bare except for a platform down center off R. This is the kitchen and porch of the LUTHER house. Up R there is a suggestion of the Great Smokey Mountains silhouetted against the sky. The other acting areas—the schoolroom, general store, KISER's house and the hospital exist only when action enters the area. These are undefined spaces until the characters enter them and begin to speak.

OPENING: MARY CALL and ROMEY are silhouetted against the sky up R. They are both kneeling. Sounds of gravel and shovel are interrupted by the clear tok, tok, tok of a raven.

You saw him when we came here that he had picked it out, didn't you?

(ROMEY doesn't answer)

MARY CALL: Well, didn't you? You saw how he dug a hole and lined it with those old planks. Romey, this is where he wanted to be. You know that.

ROMEY: (Grudgingly) Yeah, I saw. I saw. I know.

MARY CALL: You bawling?

ROMEY: No.

MARY CALL: I didn't think you were. There's nothing to bawl about, is there?

ROMEY: No.

MARY CALL: (Finishing, picking up the shovel, smoothing the ground with her hands) Well, let's get done with it.

ROMEY: No, wait a minute. I want each of us to say some good things now, the things in our hearts that we remember about our father (He stands up with hands folded and head bent) He was gaysome sometimes before he took sick and when the notion struck him he could be as tough as whiteleather. He loved us all fair, though he never said so. He never whipped us and I was proud to have him for my daddy and now I hope he will be peaceful here.

MARY CALL: He will. He will.

ROMEY: It's your turn now.

MARY CALL: That's a fine saying. I can't think of anything more to say good about Roy Luther. (With a final touch to the earth, silently they both cover the spot with planks and mark it with rocks) The Lord is your shepherd now, Roy Luther. Be happy with Him and don't worry about us.

ROMEY: Amen. (He leaves, walking slowly down the hill)

MARY CALL: (Standing alone, she looks once more around the mountain) I don't know how I'm going to do it, Roy Luther. I'm scared. But I'm tough too. (She turns to the wide expanse of sky and calls out) Listen, you just hear now. I'm Mary Call Luther, and I'm tough. I'm so tough that if a bear came out of the side of the mountain over there I could knock him cold without even breathing hard. And that's all. And if anybody's got a better idea how I should handle this and all the other things left to me, just let them come and tell me about it. (She waits) But I don't hear anybody saying anything. (With a shrug and a strong, confident stride she starts down the mountain and the lights go down)

(Lights go down on the mountain and come up on the kitchen where DEVOLA and IMA DEAN are preparing breakfast. ROMY enters from the L with a water bucket. MARY CALL comes out of the back room, closes it carefully and locks it. She pulls a chair in front of it)

IMA DEAN: (She's on the porch, off the kitchen, looking under the house) Lay an egg! (Pounding the ground with

a stick) Lay an egg! That's what you're here for, so go ahead and do it, you dumb bird, you! I'm tired of messing around with you now. Lay an egg! Lay an egg!

MARY CALL: Ima Dean, leave that bird alone. You'll get clawed for sure—and it would serve you right. That rooster won't ever lay anybody any eggs—how many times do I have to tell you that? Come in here now.

IMA DEAN: He hates me. He don't ever give us anything for all we do for him.

DEVOLA: (Kindly) Come on in, Ima Dean. Mary Call's got something to tell us all. We'll get the eggs one of these days.

MARY CALL: Not from that rooster she won't.

DEVOLA: I know that—and you know that. But Ima Dean don't. Don't be so hard on her, Mary Call.

MARY CALL: Well, I've got to be...to the point. Romey, are you coming in here?

ROMEY: This bucket leaks. I'm trying to fix it. (He comes in with it)

MARY CALL: Devola, stop fussing with that corn meal.

DEVOLA: Roy Luther's waitin' for his breakfast, Mary Call. And I aim to give it to him.

MARY CALL: (Come over quietly, takes DEVOLA's hands off the stirring spoon, sets the pot down) Roy Luther's not eating breakfast this morning—or any more. Roy Luther's dead—gone. And we buried him last night. Wait, let me finish, we buried him last night, under the spruce tree on Sugar Boy mountain—just where he made his own grave—all dug out deep and fine.

DEVOLA: Ain't he to have no funeral?

MARY CALL: No, he wanted to be buried on Sugar Boy—and that's what we did.

IMA DEAN: He ain't going to be here no more?

MARY CALL: No, and he's not going to have any sickness anymore, not queasy and fevery. He's not suffering. That's better'n what he had here.

(IMA DEAN comes over to MARY CALL and puts her head against her skirt and cries a little)

MARY CALL: So it's all over—and he's happy where he is and we got to go on. We got to go on like nothing ever happened, understand?

IMA DEAN: Why?

DEVOLA: Come here, Ima Dean, I'll give you a little sugar. Eat it now. It'll make you feel better.

MARY CALL: Now, you got to listen to me. Romey and I had to do it—and by night so's no one would know.

DEVOLA: Why?

MARY CALL: Because if anyone knows, they'll come and get us.

DEVOLA: Why?

MARY CALL: Why? Honest, Devola, you don't see things standing on your foot. If anyone in town finds out Roy Luther's dead, they'll send the county over here and we'll be orphans—and they'll take us all and they'll send us to the county home—and we'll all be orphans.

DEVOLA: Why?

MARY CALL: (Exasperated) 'Cause when your ma and pa are dead, you're orphans and none of us is old enough to take the burden of this house and keeping us all together—that's what the county thinks—and they'll make us give up this house and go into town and be orphans.

ROMEY: What are we going to do about it? We can't stop being orphans.

MARY CALL: Well, we're not going on the county. Roy Luther didn't want that for us. He worked all his life to keep us off the county—and we're not going on the county now.

DEVOLA: Kiser Pease still wants to marry me, Mary Call. Oh, his house is so big and nice. If I was to marry Kiser Pease, we could all live in his house. He has hot water all the time. I just love hot water.

MARY CALL: Well, you're not marrying Kiser Pease. That's the last thing I promised Roy Luther—that I wouldn't ever let you marry Kiser Pease. So forget about the hot water in his house.

ROMEY: Well, what are we going to do? He's bound to find out Roy Luther's dead.

MARY CALL: That's the point. We all got to swear that we won't tell anyone and we'll just go on acting and living like he's here—in that room, behind that door.

ROMEY: What are we going to say when Kiser Pease comes calling for the rent?

MARY CALL: I'll say...well, I'll think of something. You just leave it to me. Hear? Do you understand, Ima Dean? You're not to tell anyone that Roy Luther's dead. Just say, he's very sick—too sick to talk to anyone and—I'll take care of the rest.

DEVOLA: But how are we going to pay the rent? We can't work the land...alone.

MARY CALL: Yes, we can...since Roy Luther's been sick, we've been doing it all anyways—if we owned the land and it was ours...

ROMEY: If wishes were horses, beggars would ride, pa says... I mean—said.

MARY CALL: Well, things is going to happen—and we're going to get along—and we're going to keep this all a secret. See that door there? No one is supposed to

open it—but me. Not you, Romey, not you, Devola, not you, Ima Dean. We're not going on the county—and that's the only way I know—for now—to keep us from it.

DEVOLA: If I was to marry Kiser Pease, Kiser would forget about the money we owed him for the land and give us the twenty acres and the house we're living in.

MARY CALL: Roy Luther already earned the land, Devola. Twenty times or more over. And Kiser might just as well give us the house. It's falling down. Nobody else would have it—but the old cheat won't.

DEVOLA: You don't like Kiser, do you, Mary Call?

MARY CALL: No.

DEVOLA: Why?

MARY CALL: 'Cause he's ignorant. Nobody but an ignorant person would have a witch's keyhole in his chimney—to let the witches out. And he's an old greedy gut. There isn't another man in the whole world would come in here and sharecrop for him the way Roy Luther did for so little—Kiser getting the hog's share and us having to settle for the meanest.

DEVOLA: I wish you wouldn't be so mad at everybody all the time. It makes you ugly. Kiser's lonesome. He told me how lonesome he was.

MARY CALL: Yeah. Well, it's his own fault he hasn't got anybody. I've heard him brag about how he ran all his kin off years ago.