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Dramatic Publishing

The Land of Little Horses

by

REBECCA GILMAN

Dramatic Publishing

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(THE LAND OF LITTLE HORSES)

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THE LAND OF LITTLE HORSES

A Play in Two Acts
For 5 Women and 2 Men

CHARACTERS

EVELYN..... 30s
JESSICA her sister, late 20s
JEAN LOUISE another sister, early 20s
DOT..... their aunt, 50s
MARIO Jessica's friend, late 30s-early 40s
CHARLES..... Evelyn's fiancé, 30s
LAURA..... the girls' mother, late-50s

TIME

The present.

SETTING

Act One: A living room.

Act Two: The same. About a week later.

ACT ONE

SCENE: A living room. The house is large and furnished with a clutter of antiques. Left, a staircase rises. Right, is a dining area with a door leading off to the kitchen. A small porch with an outside light can be seen right.

AT RISE: JEAN LOUISE sits at the table shuffling through a stack of index cards. The TV is on but there is no picture and the sound is down. DOT appears at the top of the stairs wearing a robe and slippers. As she comes down the stairs JEAN LOUISE watches her for a moment and then goes back to her cards. DOT crosses into the kitchen. She returns carrying a carton of milk and a saucer. She puts the saucer in front of JEAN LOUISE on the table and pours some milk into it. She then begins to circle the room, pouring milk into various potted plants as she goes. She crosses back to JEAN LOUISE and picks up the saucer with the milk. She exits back upstairs, pouring the milk on the floor as she leaves. JEAN LOUISE looks up for the first time. She picks a doily up off of the couch and goes over to the spill to mop it up. As she stoops, EVELYN and CHARLES appear on the porch. When she hears them JEAN LOUISE quickly stuffs the doily into a drawer or a vase and takes a baton down from the bookshelf and begins to twirl it badly.

CHARLES (*kisses EVELYN*). Can I come inside?

EVELYN. No.

CHARLES (*laughs*). No?

EVELYN. I just want to be alone, I think. You understand, don't you?

CHARLES. Of course I do. You'll call me from the office, won't you? First thing.

EVELYN. If you want me to.

CHARLES. I do.

EVELYN. All right then. Good night. Or good morning, I guess.

CHARLES (*kisses her again*). Do you think you can get through the day without me?

EVELYN. I'll try. (*She goes inside.*)

CHARLES. Call me! (*He blows her a kiss and exits. EVELYN closes the door behind her and stops, staring at JEAN LOUISE.*)

EVELYN. It's dark in here.

JEAN LOUISE. I know.

EVELYN (*turning on a lamp*). You shouldn't watch TV in the dark like that. It'll strain your eyes.

JEAN LOUISE. Who told you that?

EVELYN. Nobody. (*Pause.*)

JEAN LOUISE. Did you have a nice time with Charles?

EVELYN. Yes. (*She notices a suitcase by the stairs.*) Whose suitcase is that?

JEAN LOUISE. Jessica's.

EVELYN. Jessica's?

JEAN LOUISE. Yes. Jessica. She dropped it off earlier and went out again.

EVELYN (*crossing to the suitcase and lifting it*). It's heavy.

JEAN LOUISE. There's more upstairs. A couple of trunks.

EVELYN. Trunks? Did she come to visit?

JEAN LOUISE. She's been evicted. I told her she could stay here.

EVELYN. What happened this time?

JEAN LOUISE. I don't know. Where did you and Charles go tonight?

EVELYN. Couldn't she pay her rent? I would have loaned her money.

JEAN LOUISE (*throws her baton in the air and drops it*).

She didn't give me any details. She had to go out.

EVELYN (*turns on another lamp*). Out where?

JEAN LOUISE. I didn't ask. So you had a nice time?

EVELYN. Yes, Jean Louise, we had a nice time.

JEAN LOUISE. I've been up all night. Working. I watched TV for a while; one of those religious programs where they talk about Jesus and interior decorating. Chintz and God. It shut off though. Now there's just salt and pepper. I hate it when they sign off. (*Looks at EVELYN.*) So tell me about your date.

EVELYN. It was another date with Charles.

JEAN LOUISE. Just another date?

EVELYN. Yes.

JEAN LOUISE. Do you love him, Evelyn?

EVELYN. Why do you ask?

JEAN LOUISE. You've been seeing each other for so long.

EVELYN. That ought to answer your question then. (*Pause.*)

Did Dot get her medication?

JEAN LOUISE. At ten.

EVELYN. Then she's asleep?

JEAN LOUISE. Yeah.

EVELYN. I think I'll head upstairs.

JEAN LOUISE. Right away?

EVELYN. I still have to go in to the office today.

JEAN LOUISE. It's Saturday. Stay home for a while and let's chat.

EVELYN (*frustrated*). About what?

JEAN LOUISE. Oh I don't know. Girl stuff maybe.

EVELYN. You hate girl stuff and I don't have time. (*She starts upstairs.*)

JEAN LOUISE. Evelyn?

EVELYN (*stops*). Yes?

JEAN LOUISE. Did he ask you?

EVELYN. How did you know?

JEAN LOUISE. He told me. While you were upstairs getting ready for your date last night. He said he wanted me to know. As a future sister-in-law.

EVELYN. Well?

JEAN LOUISE. Well. What did you say?

EVELYN. I said yes.

JEAN LOUISE (*without enthusiasm*). You did.

EVELYN. Yes.

JEAN LOUISE (*flatly*). Congratulations.

EVELYN. Is that all you wanted to know?

JEAN LOUISE. I guess so.

EVELYN. All right then. Could you put on some coffee?
(*She exits.*)

JEAN LOUISE. Sure. (*JEAN LOUISE heads for the kitchen turning off all the lights that EVELYN turned on as she goes.*)

(*JESSICA enters. She is in a cocktail dress and carries her shoes in one hand. She is a bit disheveled but very beautiful nonetheless. She crosses to her suitcase and*

pulls out a skirt and a sweater and begins undressing. She continues to undress and then dress throughout the remainder of her scene, leaving clothing, including some pantyhose, scattered about the floor. JEAN LOUISE enters from kitchen.)

JEAN LOUISE. I thought I heard somebody.

JESSICA (*surprised*). Oh good. I thought you might be Evelyn.

JEAN LOUISE. She's upstairs.

JESSICA. She is?

JEAN LOUISE. She just got in too.

JESSICA. Oh yeah? Was she out with Charles?

JEAN LOUISE. Yeah.

JESSICA. Hey. Do you think they have sex?

JEAN LOUISE. On Friday nights.

JESSICA. I can't imagine it.

JEAN LOUISE. I don't want to try.

JESSICA. You don't think they'll get married do you?

JEAN LOUISE. No.

JESSICA. Did you tell her about me?

JEAN LOUISE. Yeah.

JESSICA. Did she have a fit?

JEAN LOUISE. Not a fit exactly. She thinks you skipped out on your rent.

JESSICA. It wasn't money. I just had a slight altercation with my landlord. And the man wouldn't listen to reason. He just stood there and spat.

JEAN LOUISE. It was a nice place.

JESSICA. I know. (*Beat.*) Hey, Jean Louise, how long do you think Evelyn will let me stay here?

JEAN LOUISE. I don't know why it would be up to her.

JESSICA. Because, the thing is, it would be so much easier if I could just hang out here for a while. I mean, of course I'd be willing to pay some rent or whatever. And I could help you out with Dot. Take her out to lunch or down to the park.

JEAN LOUISE. She goes to the park by herself now.

JESSICA. What's she taking?

JEAN LOUISE. Thorazine.

JESSICA. That's better, isn't it? Than the last stuff?

JEAN LOUISE. But there's no reason for you to worry about it. Just stay. Your old room is empty.

JESSICA (*not really listening, talking to herself*). It'd be silly for me to move again... sign a lease. Who knows what I'll be doing next. I might move to Chicago.

JEAN LOUISE. That's true.

JESSICA (*pauses in her dressing*). I'd rather just put on my pajamas, but I'm supposed to have breakfast with this guy in about five minutes.

JEAN LOUISE. The one you went out with last night?

JESSICA. Oh no. He was just some salesman from Indiana or Ohio. One of those states. He always comes in on Fridays to get certified checks.

JEAN LOUISE. Oh.

JESSICA. This breakfast guy is a different one. Actually, I'm sort of excited, you know? His name is Mario something and he's from somewhere in Italy. Florence maybe. He's really good-looking. And he wears great shoes.

EVELYN (*off*). Jean Louise? Have you seen my brush?
(*JESSICA looks frantic and begins pulling a brush and various cosmetics out of her purse.*)

JEAN LOUISE (*calls*). Not lately.

JESSICA (*quietly, handing the brush to JEAN LOUISE*). I borrowed it. I'm gonna split. (*She pecks JEAN LOUISE on the cheek and exits.*)

JEAN LOUISE (*calls*). Oh, here it is on the table.

EVELYN (*off*). Jesus.

(*EVELYN enters dressed in a conservative skirt and blouse and carrying a briefcase.*)

EVELYN. I didn't notice how late it was. Were you using my brush? Because I always keep it on my bureau.

JEAN LOUISE. I must have forgotten to put it back.

EVELYN. Do you need me to buy you a brush?

JEAN LOUISE. No.

EVELYN. Is that coffee ready?

JEAN LOUISE. Coming up. (*She exits. EVELYN begins brushing her hair and then notices JESSICA's mess.*)

EVELYN. What are all these clothes doing here?

JEAN LOUISE (*off*). They're lying on the floor.

EVELYN. I can see that. Whose are they?

JEAN LOUISE (*off*). Jessica's.

EVELYN. Is she gone already? I swear! She's like the messy fairy. (*She begins picking up clothes.*)

(*JEAN LOUISE enters.*)

JEAN LOUISE. It'll be a minute.

EVELYN. Couldn't she undress upstairs?

JEAN LOUISE. I suppose. But she was in a big hurry. Going out. Looking great as usual. How does she do that? You and I, we don't look so good in the morning.

EVELYN. I can't believe she's gone out already. Again.

JEAN LOUISE. She's having breakfast with an Italian.

EVELYN. Somehow I'm not surprised.

JEAN LOUISE. I'm gonna get Dot up.

EVELYN. Let her sleep.

JEAN LOUISE. No. She'll throw her schedule off again.

EVELYN. So what does it matter. It's not like she's late for an appointment.

JEAN LOUISE. You know how she is if she sleeps too much. She starts bouncing off the walls. It's annoying.

EVELYN. I thought she was getting better. (*Exits.*)

JEAN LOUISE. She is better if she can get out of the house and do something.

EVELYN (*off*). But I don't like the idea of her going out. She sneaks off to that bar.

JEAN LOUISE (*to herself*). So what if she does?

EVELYN (*off*). What?

JEAN LOUISE. I said, she promised not to go down there anymore.

(*EVELYN enters with coffee and a donut.*)

JEAN LOUISE. She's fifty-two, you know.

EVELYN. What has that got to do with anything?

JEAN LOUISE. I'm just saying, she's an adult.

EVELYN. But she doesn't function as an adult. She was released into my care, Jean Louise.

JEAN LOUISE. If she wants to go down and have a drink then let her.

EVELYN. Why does she have to go to an airport lounge? It's depressing.

JEAN LOUISE. She likes it. It makes her happy. Look, you only see Dot at her best. She behaves for you. All

day long she asks me, every twenty minutes, when will you be home? What did you wear to work? What time does the noon news come on? Can you believe that? The noon news.

EVELYN. What do you want me to say?

JEAN LOUISE. I don't know. (*EVELYN is silent.*) What will happen when you marry Charles?

EVELYN. I'll think of some way to help you.

JEAN LOUISE. Why?

EVELYN. Jean Louise, I don't want to get into this right now.

JEAN LOUISE. Fine. (*Pause.*) So. I don't see an engagement ring.

EVELYN. We're going to pick it out together this afternoon.

JEAN LOUISE. That's diplomatic.

EVELYN. Charles was afraid of offending my taste.

JEAN LOUISE. So how about it? Did he get down on his knees?

EVELYN. You don't want to know.

JEAN LOUISE. Sure I do. Come on.

EVELYN. Well, all right. He asked me at dinner.

JEAN LOUISE. What did he say?

EVELYN. He said, "Evelyn, the time has come."

JEAN LOUISE. The time has come? That sounds like he's dying.

EVELYN. This is why I didn't want to talk to you about it. You always make things seem cheap somehow. You always embarrass me.

JEAN LOUISE. I'm sorry, Evelyn, I don't mean to.

EVELYN. That almost makes it worse. (*Beat.*)

JEAN LOUISE. Mother will be happy.

EVELYN. I haven't called her.

JEAN LOUISE. What would happen if you didn't get married?

EVELYN. What?

JEAN LOUISE. What would happen?

EVELYN. I don't know. I never thought about it. We'll all get married, won't we? Jessica might get married several times. *(She laughs and JEAN LOUISE, surprised at her laughter, laughs too.)*

JEAN LOUISE. I think Jessica should get a job at the United Nations so she could date the world by representative instead of all at once. *(They laugh harder.)*

(DOT appears at the top of the stairs in a housedress and sneakers. Her appearance is neat but here and there is a loose wisp of hair that makes her seem frazzled.)

DOT. Jean Louise? What time does the *Jeopardy* come on?

EVELYN. Good morning, Dot.

DOT. Good morning, honey. Jean Louise? What station does the *Jeopardy* come on?

JEAN LOUISE. It comes on channel four. *(She gets up and crosses to the table where she gets a book and begins to read.)*

DOT. Well turn it on for me. I have to watch the *Jeopardy*.

JEAN LOUISE. You're not going to find it on today, Dot. It's Saturday. *Jeopardy* doesn't just appear on the screen whenever you turn on the TV.

DOT. But we have to watch it today because Jackie Kennedy is going to be on it.

EVELYN. Did you take your pill?

DOT. Yes, honey, thank you for asking. (*To JEAN LOUISE.*) Jackie Kennedy is making a special guest appearance on *Jeopardy* today. I just dreamed it.

JEAN LOUISE. Well if Jackie Kennedy is on then let's watch it. Put it on four, Dot, and let's see what Jackie's going to wear.

DOT (*crossing to the TV*). Well since it's a game show I guess she'd dress sort of casual, don't you think? In my dream I could only see her back but I could tell it was her. Do you want to know how?

EVELYN. How?

DOT. Can't you guess? She had on a pillbox hat. She stood right there in front of Alex Trebek and she shook his hand and the contestants bowed to her like she was a queen. (*She turns the channel on the TV.*) This isn't *Jeopardy*. (*She flips some more channels.*) None of this is *Jeopardy*. There's just a lot of cartoons on.

JEAN LOUISE. What did I tell you, Dot?

DOT. Now I wonder why it's not on.

EVELYN. It's Saturday, Dot.

DOT. You know I bet you're right. Jean Louise, I bet your sister is right. I bet *Jeopardy* isn't on because today is Saturday.

JEAN LOUISE. I bet that's it. (*Begins to read.*)

DOT. Why don't we go see a matinee? Evelyn? Why don't we call your mother and ask her to go see a movie with us?

EVELYN. Mother lives in Minneapolis now, Dot.

DOT. Oh yes. I forgot.

EVELYN. You're very jumpy this morning, Dot. Do you think you could sit down?

DOT (*laughs*). Why shouldn't I be able to sit down? My knees bend, don't they?