

Lumping in Fargo

A musical by

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Composed by Michael Hooker

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The play is set, abstractly, in twenty-first century Fargo, North Dakota, USA, where the ten characters were raised and reside. Five actors play all the characters, as indicated (yet a production could have a bigger cast and no doubling):

LEOPOLD WALLERSHEIM (38-45), white, highest upper-class possible in Fargo, multi-millionaire (inherited), cultured, university educated in New England, awkwardly distinguished, nineteenth-century style, eccentric Gothic.

ELVIRA (4), Leopold's female poodle, a very sexy, agile dog in twenty-first century retro Gothic, eighties new wave, grunge, style.

VERNA MARY ECKLAND (36), white, broker of fine things (antiques, jewelry, collectables)/interior decorator, attractive, buxom, country club style, with floozy qualities, University of Minnesota educated.

CATHY LYNN BOMMERBASCH (24-26), white, lumper (mover of objects, like furniture), cowgirl/farm style, high school graduate.

JERRY LEE HEILMAN (36), white, lumper, cowboy/farm style, high school graduate.

LINDA LOU HEILMAN (17), daughter of Jerry Lee, conservative, contemporary style, different from her dad and sister, Betty Sue, could be played by actor playing Verna Mary.

BETTY SUE HEILMAN (13), daughter of Jerry Lee, naive and eager, could be played by actor playing Elvira.

GHOST OF SALLY MAE HEILMAN (dead at 28), a video-projected image or imaginatively represented with voice-over, etc., or could be played by the actor playing Verna Mary.

JUDGE BIRNBAUM (38-45), conservative, could be played by the actor playing Leopold.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY LEHMANN (30), conservative, could be played by the actor playing Cathy Lynn.

There is no need for actual props -- they could be represented imaginatively -- unless indicated by capital letters, as in GUN.

There could be no major costume changes.

The actors could never leave the stage.

Some suggestions for staging are given throughout.

1 WALLERSHEIM MANSION -- AFTER MIDNIGHT

1

(A tempestuous winter storm booms.

ELVIRA enters, walks, and attaches her COLLAR to a CHAIN that is attached to a visibly situated POLE. She dances to 1980s style New Wave music.)

ELVIRA

(sings -- WINTER AND ROUGH WEATHER)

Under the greenwood tree,
Who loves to lie with me,
And turn his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither, come hither.
Here shall he see,
The doggy wondrous, me. The doggy wondrous, me.
No enemy,
But winter and rough weather.

(LEOPOLD WALLERSHEIM emerges spectacularly, accompanied by a radical variation in the same musical score.)

LEOPOLD

(sings)

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, pour, pour
Till you have drenched our spires, and you have drowned
the cocks!
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving lightning bolts,
Singe my head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity of the world!
Crack Nature's moulds, all germs of matter, rock
That amalgamates ungrateful man!

(Music transitions back. Only Leopold, here and throughout, can hear Elvira speak or sing words.)

ELVIRA

(sings)

Who doth ambition shun,
And loves to live in the sun,
Welcomes the food he gets,
And pleased with what he eats,
Come hither, come hither, come hither, come hither.
Here shall he see,
The mighty poodle, me. The mighty poodle, me.
No enemy,
But to winter and rough weather.

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(Music changes again as Leopold resumes singing.)

LEOPOLD

(sings)

Let the great Gods,
That keep this dreadful patter over our sweet heads,
Find out their enemies now. *

(to the audience)

Tremble, tatter, thou rake,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhipped of Justice; hide thee, thou bloody hand,
Thou perjured, and thou simulator of virtue
That art incestuous; wretch, to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming
Has practised on man's life and hand; *
Pent-up guilts; rive your concealing continents,
And cry these dreadful summoners grace.
I am a man more sinned against than sinning,
Without a single smile to smile withal.

ELVIRA

(sings)

Basta! Basta! Basta! (howls)
'Tis nonsense thou speaks,
Endless dribble, for weeks.
If ever thine Elvira knows,
It's the dank trails on which Leo goes.

LEOPOLD

(speaks)

Thou speakest to me, dog? I, with the melancholy soul,
Who loves thee, my poodle pal, but is himself loveless
Alone in an up-roared cosmos, incomplete; smog-enveloped
By treasures rare; from which he wouldst happily depart
For an iota of blissful romance upon a naked knoll.

ELVIRA

If only I couldst a merry world make for thee; at your
good service, I will always be.

(Elvira sits obediently and proud. Leopold gently strokes her head.)

2 HEILMAN HOME -- SAME NIGHT

2

(JERRY LEE HEILMAN sleeps restlessly on the sofa, holding his HAT
against his chest. Ominous music. Storm outside continues.

The GHOST OF SALLY MAE HEILMAN appears in his dreams.)

JERRY LEE

Who's there?! What, this thing appears again tonight?

(The Ghost of Sally Mae turns towards Jerry Lee.)

JERRY LEE (cont'd)

It comes upon me. Art thou any thing? Art thou some god,
some angel, or some devil? Speak to me what thou art!

(The Ghost of Sally Mae gets closer.)

JERRY LEE (cont'd)

Heck! In the same figure like my wife that's dead.
Speak to me. By heaven, I charge thee, say something.
Speak!

(The Ghost of Sally Mae departs.)

JERRY LEE (cont'd)

(waking up)

Stay, no, speak, speak; I charge thee, speak!!! What art
thou that usurped this time of night?

(muttering)

Speak. Gosh darn it, speak.

(Jerry Lee perfunctorily puts his cowboy hat on his head.)

LINDA LOU

Alack! Dad, as an owl's night-shriek, you hast awaked
from a terrible dream. I'm none other than Linda Lou,
thine eldest daughter. Jeez, dad, thou are truly
disturbed by something fierce--

(Enter BETTY SUE HEILMAN.)

BETTY SUE

Daddy, daddy, this night has been most unruly: where we
lay, our windows clamor for liberty; and, from this
living room, lamentings wailed, dashing in the air;
strange screams; manifest disorder. Pray tell, art thou
unharmd?

JERRY LEE

Be collected, Betty Sue. No more amazement. Tell thy
piteous heart there's no harm done.

(Linda Lou exits.)

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BETTY SUE

O, woe the night!

JERRY LEE

No harm. No harm. I have done nothing but in care of thee, of thee, my dear one; thee, my daughter, who art ignorant of so much; nought knowing of whence I am, nor that I am no more better than Jerry Lee, a simple lumper, living in a poor cell, and I no greater father than I am.

BETTY SUE

More to know, I? This with my thoughts did never meddle.

JERRY LEE

'Tis time I should inform thee farther. Lend thy hand, and pluck my magic hat from me.

(Betty Sue takes his hat from his head and places it beside her.)

JERRY LEE (cont'd)

(referring to the hat)

So: lie there, my art, for when I wear thee, I can fit large objects into small spaces, and now from some I must emancipate. Wipe thine eyes, Betty Sue; have comfort. Thou heard me cry; thou saw me stirred. Sit down; for thou must now know more.

BETTY SUE

You have often begun to tell me, but stopped, and left me to a bootless inquisition, concluding, "Stay: not yet."

JERRY LEE

The hour's now come; the very minute bids thee open thine ear; I prithee, be attentive. Canst thou remember a time when thy mother lived? I do not think thou can, for then thou was not yet four years old.

BETTY SUE

'Tis true, daddy, but I can.

JERRY LEE

By what: another person, from Linda Lou, or from photos? Of any thing the image tell me, that thou hath kept with thy remembrance.

BETTY SUE

'Tis far off, and rather like a dream than an assurance that my remembrance warrants. Had I not a big white room full of toys and dolls, with flowers on the walls; and a real pony that Linda Lou and I often rode and cared for?

JERRY LEE

Thou hadst, and plenty more, Betty Sue. But how is it that this lives so freshly in thy mind? What seest thou else in the dark backward and abysm of lost time? If thou remembrest aught else, from before thou came to this makeshift apartment, please, I long to know?

BETTY SUE

If by "aught else" thou thinks on my mother, I sorrily do not.

JERRY LEE

Ten year since, Betty Sue, ten year since, thy mother, my Sally Mae, was a young doctor, and a queen to us all.

BETTY SUE

And she took ill, and died?

JERRY LEE

Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and she said thou wast her treasure. Thy father was a lumper still, who carried on his back proudly the weight of thy mother's education; and his only vice, worse issued from his own father, thy grandfather, though never to you known, was his love of drink.

BETTY SUE

O the heavens, daddy! I never knew. What came of it?

JERRY LEE

Something most dreadful: With too much drink, and burning cigarette betwixt my fingers, I nestled with our couch, myself disposed to senselessness, and instantly slumbered there; yet, the cigarette did not; so, too, too fast, by this hot ember and a dim-witted man, ablaze our house went.

BETTY SUE

O, no, my heart bleeds to think of what you shall next speak.

JERRY LEE

Linda Lou, on this God forsaken earth just seven years, from the attic window, with the old rope ladder, to the willow tree, carried thee to safety. Her own rememberance, brave creature, by the trauma silenced.

BETTY SUE

Of my mother, what came of her?

JERRY LEE

The blessed angel descended the fiery stairs, to find me where she knewest I lay drunk, asleep. But her cries, and then her blurred figure, moved beyond the inferno. Unable to cross the scolding threshold, I bolted around to the house's back entrance, her screams leading my way, but the house collapsed inward before she could be reached. O, what form of prayer can serve my turn? Forgive me thy mother's death? I beg you.

BETTY SUE

O abominable! I forgive you, daddy, for both what thou could not tell me, and for falling sway to the devil's drink.

(They hug, crying.)

JERRY LEE

Blessed child. Bless thee.

3 WALLERSHEIM MANSION

3

(Leopold and Elvira are relaxing, sharing a BOTTLE OF BOOZE, when VERNA MARY ECKLAND enters.)

VERNA MARY

How now good Mr. Wallersheim? I have urgently come, as soon as the heavens permitted travel. The Louis XVI pieces have arrived! The lumpers await delivery at your command. Their truck is presently within your gates. O, art thou ecstatic, sir? Art thou prepared to Louis-the-sixteenth your library? Sir, dost thou hearest me? Respond, if thou wouldst please, the lumpers wait most readily on thine order.

LEOPOLD

Ye hath not greeted Elvira!

VERNA MARY

O, o, pardon me. I beg your forgiveness.

LEOPOLD

(referring to Elvira)

She's a little more than kin, and less than kind.

(Elvira yanks her chain so that it pulls Verna Mary's legs out from under her and she falls.)

LEOPOLD (cont'd)

Zounds, that wast unexpected. How fares you?

(Verna Mary gets up.)

VERNA MARY

Why, what a monstrous mongrel bitch--

(Elvira yanks her chain so that it pulls Verna Mary's legs out from under her again and she falls.)

LEOPOLD

Egads, nature seems in your opposition.

VERNA MARY

Pray, do not mock me. That dog must be--

LEOPOLD

A bawd must be mocked, who's very existence mocks decency, or else decency cannot raise its own head.

VERNA MARY

I am no bawd, sir. What you want awaits outside, Mr. Wallersheim.

LEOPOLD

Is a bawd nought what runs on others' melancholy, fueled by their desperation, empowered farther by their artless needs, and able to map the future by their blood-sucking addictions? Art thou not this?

VERNA MARY

I am here to please you, sir.

LEOPOLD

To but briefly satisfy a disease thou knowest to be insatiable, to but feed the infection thou knowest to consume me, to but lethally impoverish so thou canst bountifully thrive. This is your sickness, is it not?

VERNA MARY

'Tis not.

LEOPOLD

Art thou not making capital out of thine unreasoned faculties? Melancholy man, a subject predisposed for the taking, am I not?

VERNA MARY

I do not know, Mr. Wallersheim. Nay, I think thou art not. Shall I summons the lumpers? A demilune bookcase, a gilt wood console, two exquisite armchairs, and a chaise longue long for your illustrious occupation.

LEOPOLD

Very well; because, Ms. Verna Mary Eckland, it pleaseth
you.

(Verna Mary whistles. Before moving the furniture, Jerry Lee and
CATHY LYNN BOMMERBASCH butt heads three times on purpose for good
luck. Upbeat, sarcastic music begins as if out of a brisk wind let
in by the entering lumpers.)

ELVIRA

(sings -- HEIGH HO THE HOLLY)

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude.

(Jerry Lee and Cathy Lynn carry in the furniture, piece after
piece. Leopold turns away shyly.)

JERRY LEE & CATHY LYNN

(sing)

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude.

ELVIRA

(sings)

Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.
Heigh-ho, sing heigh-ho, unto the green holly,
Most friendship is feigning, most loving merely folly. *
Heigh-ho, sing heigh-ho, unto the green holly.

CATHY LYNN

(sings)

Thy tooth is not so keen,

JERRY LEE

(sings)

Because thou art not seen,

JERRY LEE & CATHY LYNN

(sing)

Although thy breath be rude.
Heigh-ho, sing heigh-ho, unto the green holly,
Most friendship is feigning, most loving merely folly. *
Heigh-ho, sing heigh-ho, unto the green holly.

JERRY LEE

(sings)

Freeze,

CATHY LYNN

*

(sings)
Freeze,

JERRY LEE & CATHY LYNN

(sing)
Thou bitter sky,
That dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot.
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp,
As friend remembered not.
Heigh-ho, sing heigh-ho, unto the green holly,
Most friendship is feigning, most loving merely folly.
Heigh-ho, sing heigh-ho, unto the green holly.

*

(Jerry Lee and Cathy Lynn exit.)

LEOPOLD

(to Elvira, referring to Cathy Lynn's voice)
So sweet and musical, as bright as Apollo's lute.

*

(sings)
Heigh-ho, sing heigh-ho, unto the green holly,
Most friendship is feigning, most loving merely folly.
Heigh-ho, sing heigh-ho, unto the green holly.

*

(As a dance, Verna Mary lovingly guides Leopold through trying out each piece of furniture, and he obliges.)

Aided by Leopold, Elvira also tries out the furniture, which disgusts Verna Mary. Seeing her reaction, Elvira urinates on a piece. This humors Leopold, but further disgusts Verna Mary.)

4 WALLERSHEIM MANSION - OUTSIDE - CONTINUOUS

4

JERRY LEE

I pray thee Cathy Lynn, sweet my friend, be merry.

CATHY LYNN

Dear Jerry Lee, I show more mirth than I am mistress of, and yet thee would I were merrier? Unless thou could teach me to forget about that eccentric man, thou must not learn me how to remember any extraordinary pleasure. He did not cast a glance in my direction; I hadst not a chance to inhabit his thoughts.

JERRY LEE

I knowest not how to comfort thee. He will employ thee back again, and find thee most fit for business, sure as Verna Mary's pockets never fill.

CATHY LYNN

Well, I will forget the condition of my estate, to rejoice in yours. How art thy shining stars, Betty Sue and Linda Lou?

JERRY LEE

They art of a sweetness perfect beyond what the golden sun gives to those fresh morning drops upon the rose; but still, it seems, there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it hath become a prison.

CATHY LYNN

Prithee, how so, dear friend?

JERRY LEE

Heck, I could be bound in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space were it not that I have bad dreams.

(Betty Sue, wearing a SCARF, and Linda Lou enter, dancing. They vie for Jerry Lee's attention and love. He clearly privileges Betty Sue. Linda Lou is quite aggressive, driven by profound motives.)

The Ghost of Sally Mae asserts itself, attempting to defray and mitigate the tension, before eventually channeling the girls away from Jerry Lee's vision.

She gazes back at Jerry Lee.)

JERRY LEE (cont'd)

Look thee how pale she glares. Her form and cause conjoined, preaching to stones, would make them capable. Do not look upon me, lest with this piteous action you convert absolutely my stern effects. Then what I must do will want true color -- tears perchance for blood.

CATHY LYNN

Jerry Lee! Art thou possessed?

(Ghost of Sally Mae vanishes.)

JERRY LEE

Why, look thee there; look how it steals away. My wife, as beautiful as when she lived!

CATHY LYNN

Strange infirmity.

JERRY LEE

Look where she goes; out some portal.

CATHY LYNN

O Jerry Lee! Methought Sally Mae rested in thy heart,
but now she is a coinage of thy mind distraught.

JERRY LEE

She comes more and more regularly, murdering my sleep.
That I essentially am not in madness, I know, but
madness in me creeps, like only God knows, Cathy Lynn.

CATHY LYNN

O horrible, Jerry Lee. I prithee thou must not let this
persist, but seek professional help. Tell me, wilt thou?

JERRY LEE

I will; yah betcha, I will.

CATHY LYNN

Thank you.

JERRY LEE

(aside)

Yah, tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow.

*

6 WALLERSHEIM MANSION

6

(With lighting, thunder, and rainstorm defining the atmosphere,
Leopold and Elvira play fetch with a ball or bone. They are having
fun together, sharing a BOTTLE OF BOOZE as well.

They sing a duet -- NOTHING ILL COME NEAR TO THEE.)

ELVIRA

Fear no more the heat of the sun.

LEOPOLD

Because the sun shines no more.

ELVIRA

Nor the furious winter's rages,
Thou thy worldly task hath done,
Home art gone and taken thy wages.

LEOPOLD

Golden lads and girls all must,
As the house cleaners, come to dust.

ELVIRA

Fear no more the frown of the great,
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke.

LEOPOLD

(striking her playfully)
Methinks not.

ELVIRA

Arrrrrrrrgh. Woof, woof.
Care no more to clothe and eat,
To thee the reed is as the oak:
The scepter, learning, physique, must
All follow this and come to--

LEOPOLD

--to dust.
Fear not censure rash, fear not slander.

LEOPOLD

Fear no more the lightning flash.

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LEOPOLD (cont'd)

Nor the all-dreaded thunderstorm.

ELVIRA

Thou hast finished joy and moan.

LEOPOLD & ELVIRA

All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee and come to dust.

ELVIRA

No exorciser harm thee!

LEOPOLD

Nor no witchcraft charm thee!

ELVIRA

Ghost amuck forbear thee!

LEOPOLD

Nothing ill come near thee!

(Verna Mary enters, careful not to be positioned in tripping distance of Elvira's chain. Elvira jumps out of her way, playing on Leopold's last line. Leopold and Elvira laugh. The storm shortly tapers off.)

VERNA MARY

Good evening, Mr. Wallersheim.
(to Elvira)

Dog.

LEOPOLD

Dog? Didst thou call me a dog?

VERNA MARY

Definitely not. Greeted the dog, I did. As you like,
sir.

(shyly, perhaps an aside, and unnoticed, except
perhaps curiously by Elvira)

And, as I like you.

(Elvira darts full speed down stage past Verna Mary until her
chain runs out, and she is flung violently backwards by her neck.)

VERNA MARY (cont'd)

My God! I knew she was not in her perfect wits, but
this?!

(Leopold attends to Elvira.)

LEOPOLD

How dost, my girl? Art thou dead? As a dog, dead; quiet
as this winter night.

VERNA MARY

O, woe. A calamity of nature.

LEOPOLD

(examining Elvira)

Broken neck, methinks. Good night. Good night, sweet
princess; may flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.

VERNA MARY

O, woe. I am sorry now that I did ever scorn her.

LEOPOLD

Best, best friend, everyday I will remember thee.

VERNA MARY

Methought her only a jest in the shape, sound, and fury
of a dog. Poor, poor Elvira.

LEOPOLD

She should have a good Christian burial. Will thou
arrange this?

VERNA MARY

Uh... Yah, betcha, she can, with full regalia and pomp.

LEOPOLD

Most wondrous! Whatever the expense, thou art without limits.

VERNA MARY

For the princess, a royal funeral, it is, then, one hundred percent authentic!

LEOPOLD

Splendid! O, but there's a rub, I fear: she wilfully sought her own salvation, didst she not?

VERNA MARY

O, 'tis not a rub, but a misapprehension to be rubbed out; she did not. Christian rights are to her owed.

LEOPOLD

How can that be, unless she choked herself in her own defence? It must be *se offendendo*; it cannot be else. For here lies the point: If I hang myself wittingly, I performed, and such action requires knowledge of the act: I will be hung.

VERNA MARY

Nay, she was choked.

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LEOPOLD

Art thou, at this, my darkest hour, making sport with me?

VERNA MARY

Nay. If thou seest the spider steeped, forgets thou hast, and drinks from the cup, thou did not the spider wilfully drink.

LEOPOLD

Darn tooting. Thou art a shrewd bawd.

(Elvira suddenly gets up, and struts off.)

VERNA MARY

O, thou knave, rascal, mutt. 'Tis wonder, and most unfortunate, that thy life and wits at once had not concluded all.

ELVIRA

Arrrrrrrrgh. Rrrrrrrrrgh.

LEOPOLD

(sings -- FOOLS)

Fools had never less...never less grace in a year;
For business makes...business makes bawds grow foppish,
(MORE)

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LEOPOLD (cont'd)

And know not how...know not how their wits to wear,
Their manners are so apish.

*

VERNA MARY

'Tis enough; you insult me without all reason.

LEOPOLD

But what is your affair on the Wallersheim estate?
We'll teach thee to drink happy before thou departs.

VERNA MARY

We've an appointment. The lumpers await within the gates
with your George III commode, your Chippendale
sideboard, and your Duke of Beaufort badminton cabinet.

LEOPOLD

Very well; send for the lumpers.

(Verna Mary whistles. Jerry Lee and Cathy Lynn butt their heads
together three times, and then carry in the commode, singing and
laughing. Leopold turns away from the lumpers, and pets Elvira,
who watches them.)

JERRY LEE

(sings -- The LUMPERS SONG)

He that hath riches, and an itsy-bitsy wit,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
Must make content with his mighty fortunes fit,
Though the rain it raineth every day.

CATHY LYNN

(sings)

Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the early morning bedtime,
And I a fair maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.
Then up he rose, and donned his clothes,
And opened up the chamber-door;
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never departed more.

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LEOPOLD

Elvira, hear thee not that, 'tis a nightingale in our
realm?

ELVIRA

Hear her I dost, but she just a lumper be; notes may
above station fly, but lips are tied to their feet.

(Jerry Lee and Cathy Lynn fetch the sideboard.)

JERRY LEE

Why friend, dear Cathy Lynn! Cupid have mercy;
not a word, not a glance?

CATHY LYNN

Not either. Not one to throw at a dog.

JERRY LEE

No, thy voice is too precious to be cast away
upon curs. Come, I prithee, levitate me with melody.

(As they return with the sideboard.)

VERNA MARY

Listen, lumpers! If thy singing not be retired, upon my
word, you shall be fired.

CATHY LYNN

Sorry, Ms. Eckland.

(to Jerry Lee)

O how full of briers is this working-day world!

JERRY LEE

They are but burs, friend, thrown upon--

LEOPOLD

(without turning around)

This be your only warning: more singing, or be gone, and
always away.

VERNA MARY

Yes, sir, Mr. Wallersheim.

(to Jerry Lee and Cathy Lynn)

Thou must not disagree with Mr. Wallersheim; sing, sing,
sing. Lumpers, come on now, sing.

(Leopold still does not look at them.)

CATHY LYNN

(nervously, the song that comes to mind)

By Jesus and by Saint Charity,
Alack and fie for shame,
Young men will do it if they come to it
By Cock, they are to blame.
Quoth she,
"Before you tumbled me,
You promised me to wed."
He answers,
"So would I a-done, by yonder sun,
If thou hadst not come to bed."

*

(Jerry Lee and Cathy Lynn fetch the badminton cabinet.)

Leopold moves to a spot from which he can observe them.)

CATHY LYNN (cont'd)

My passions crazed my wits; and I turned a witless fool.
Canst believe you me -- that nasty song I sung?

JERRY LEE

O a good wish upon thee! Thou art no fool. But turning
these jests out of service, let us talk in good earnest.
Is it possible, over so short a space, you should fall
into so strong a liking with Leopold Wallersheim?

CATHY LYNN

Sure as I am Cathy Lynn, unfeigned and devout.

JERRY LEE

Then sing for thy lord, whence we return with this bin,
thy finest ditty, and his mule-headed heart thou shalt
win.

LEOPOLD

What lady's that which doth enrich the semblance of
yonder -- whatever that object be?

ELVIRA

Badminton cabinet. 'Tis what it is, a badminton cabinet.

LEOPOLD

Yah, sure. But what is she?

ELVIRA

A lumper wench, Fargo born and bred, that gives movement
to objects, but goes nowhere herself.

LEOPOLD

(sings)

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright.
It seems she hangs on the cheek of the night *
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.
So shows a snowy dove trooping with a crow,
Over her fellow lumper lady doth glow. *
The measure done, I'll watch her till she stand,
And touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.
Did my heart love till now?
Forswear it, sight.
For I never saw true beauty till this night.

(Jerry Lee and Cathy Lynn enter with the badminton cabinet. She is
singing ethereally without discernible lyrics, a sort of melodic
scatting.)

LEOPOLD (cont'd)

(to Cathy Lynn, but softly so that she cannot hear him)

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again: mine ear is much enamoured of thy note; so is mine eye enthralled to thy shape; and thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me on the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

(Cathy Lynn and Jerry Lee set the cabinet down for a moment to rest. Leopold makes his move.

The following dialogue is sung by Leopold and Cathy Lynn as a duet -- A KISS: PART 1.)

LEOPOLD (cont'd)

If I profane with my unworthiest hand,
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.
A kiss, a kiss.

CATHY LYNN

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.
A kiss, a kiss.

LEOPOLD

Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

CATHY LYNN

Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

LEOPOLD

O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do: They
Pray: grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

CATHY LYNN

Saints do not move, though grant for prayer's sake.

LEOPOLD

Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.

(He kisses her.)

LEOPOLD (cont'd)

You kiss by the book.

VERNA MARY

Excuse me, sir; Mr. Wallersheim, I crave a word with you.

LEOPOLD

What?! What urgency? Art thou her mommy?

VERNA MARY

Nay, not I. But she a working lumper be, and this eve demands a final delivery.

(to Cathy Lynn and Jerry Lee)

Get thee to the truck, I prithee; this night has grown old.

(Jerry Lee and Cathy Lynn exit reluctantly, as if from a miraculous dream.)

CATHY LYNN

Can I go forward when my heart is here?

Turn back, dull earth, and find thy center out.

(She keeps walking.)

VERNA MARY

Good night, sir. Dog.

(Verna Mary exits. Leopold runs past her, after Cathy Lynn.)

LEOPOLD

Please, go no further.

(Cathy Lynn turns.)

CATHY LYNN

So sorry am I, sir. I didst not know with what spirits I was bewitched. If I did offend thee--

LEOPOLD

Thou seest me, sweet nightingale, where I stand, such as I am; though for myself alone I would not be ambitious in my wish to wish myself much better, yet for thee, I would be trebled twenty times myself, a thousand times more handsome, ten thousand times more rich, that only to stand high in your account, I might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends exceed account: but the full sum of me is sum of something: which, in gross, is an unschooled man, unpracticed in love; yet happy that he is not so old but he could still learn: happier than this, he is not bred so dull but he can learn; happiest of all, is that his gentle spirit commits itself to yours to be directed so that he will learn, if you so desire it. Myself, and what is mine, to you is now forever converted. I give you all that is me with this ring, which when you part from, lose, or give away, let it reveal the loss of your love, and be my unfortunate cue to pine for all my days.

CATHY LYNN

Sir, you have bereft me of all words, only my blood speaks to you in my veins, and there is such confusion in my powers, as after some oration fairly spoke by a beloved prince, there doth appear among the buzzing, pleased multitude, where every something being blended together, turns to a wild of nothing, save of joy expressed, and not expressed: but when this ring parts from this finger, then parts life from hence, o then be bold to say Cathy Lynn is dead!

(She kisses him.)

VERNA MARY

Cathy Lynn.

CATHY LYNN

Dear love, adieu.

VERNA MARY

Cathy Lynn!

CATHY LYNN

A thousand times good night.

(She exits.)

LEOPOLD

(sings -- A KISS: PART 2)

A thousand times the worse, to want thy light.
Love goes toward love as schoolboys from their books,
But love from love, toward school with heavy looks. A
kiss. A kiss!

*
*

(Leopold and Elvira waltz briefly. Verna Mary returns.)

7 WALLERSHEIM MANSION - CONTINUOUS

7

ELVIRA

Something wicked this way comes.

LEOPOLD

Welcome back, Ms. Verna Mary Eckland. How might we oblige thee?

ELVIRA

How now, you midnight hag?

LEOPOLD

Nay, none of that, girl.

VERNA MARY

Excuse me. None of what?

LEOPOLD

Nothing. 'Tis nothing, but what it's not.

ELVIRA

Woof, woof. Arrrrrrgh.

LEOPOLD

Shush. Shush, girl.

VERNA MARY

Don't "shush" me. Why didst thou to the lumper bestow thy most precious and rare jewel? Over half your collection, sir, its value doth soar. By what delusion, pray, tell me, did thou give it to a whor--?

LEOPOLD

Hold thy tongue. I pray thee, chide me not. 'Tis her I love.

VERNA MARY

"Love"? Methinks, sir, you should have little reason for that. And yet, to say the truth, reason, lust, and love keep little company together nowadays.

LEOPOLD

Miracle, eh. My gentle joy.

VERNA MARY

But no--

(sings -- PAINTED LOVE)

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
Love can transpose to form and dignity:
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind;
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste:
Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste.
And therefore is Love said to be a child,
Because in choice there is no oft beguiled.
Like a child wants new at every turn,
You make quick your heart a stomach churned.

*
*

LEOPOLD

So quick, yet true, I love her dearly, ever, ever dearly.

VERNA MARY

But, sir, my own love's not quick; 'tis slow burning, to a marvelous and inexhaustible ember.

LEOPOLD

Prithee, your meaning, Ms. Eckland?

VERNA MARY

Sir, thou art my true-love.

LEOPOLD

Me? How can this be?

VERNA MARY

'Tis why I serve thee, seekst to please thee, endure winter, rough weather, and the dog.

LEOPOLD

Surely you jest. I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.

VERNA MARY

Thou draws me. The collection is thy way, and why upon thee I attend day after day.

LEOPOLD

(aside, to Elvira)

Heck. 'Tis a nightmare.

(to Verna Mary)

Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair? Or, rather, do I, in plainest truth, tell you I do not and cannot love you?

VERNA MARY

And even for that do I love you the more.

(She gets on all fours.)

VERNA MARY (cont'd)

I am your poodle; and, Mr. Wallersheim, the more you beat me, I will fawn on you. Use me but as your poodle, spurn me, strike me, neglect me, lose me; only give me leave, unworthy as I am, to follow you. What worser place can I beg in your love and yet a place of high respect with me than to be used as you use your dog?

LEOPOLD

I do not use my dog. Thou hast lost thy wits, and must find them; depart at once, or I, from thee, wilt never again purchase table, nor couch, nor chair, nor jewel, nor a smile betwixt thyself and my poodle pal. Be gone.

VERNA MARY

Why then my love adieu.

LEOPOLD

Adieu.

VERNA MARY

So adieu good Mr.... Monsieur Melancholy, I shall call thee.

LEOPOLD

Very well; adieu.

(Verna Mary exits.)

ELVIRA

Yah, betcha, she art mad, as a loon. Wert this gossip known to thee: you "beat me," "spurn me," "neglect me," "lose me"? Sirrah, "I am your poodle."

LEOPOLD

Unknown to me, it wast.

ELVIRA

Awh, jeez, Leo, wontcha "use me." O, prithe, "use me," "strike me," "beat me."

LEOPOLD

Very well; some tails are good to chase, and beat.

(Leopold beats Elvira playfully, chasing her.)

ELVIRA

O, o, ooh, awww, rrrrrr... more, more...

8 HEILMAN HOME

8

(Jerry carries a GUN, and eventually puts it to his head. The Ghost of Sally Mae observes unnoticed.)

JERRY LEE

(spoken -- underscored by JERRY LEE'S TORMENT:
PART 1)

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them.
To die -- to sleep,
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished.

(Jerry attempts to shoot himself in the head, but because he flinches, he only grazes his head, leaving himself wallowing in despair. The Ghost of Sally Mae appears to Jerry Lee, then disappears.)

9 SOMEWHERE IN FARGO

9

VERNA MARY

For bail, two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. 'Tis quite a sum.

CATHY LYNN

Yah, Verna Mary, for but three months, when Jerry Lee's trial wilt surely be over.

VERNA MARY

For three months, well.

CATHY LYNN

For the which I shall be bound.

VERNA MARY

Thou shall be bound, well; and your paychecks, I withhold.

CATHY LYNN

Yah, as immediate payment, until after the trial when all shall be restored. May you help me? Shall I know your answer?

VERNA MARY

Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to bail out thy lumper friend, Jerry Lee Heilman, and thou art bound.

CATHY LYNN

Your answer to that?

VERNA MARY

Thou art a good lumper, and a good woman.

CATHY LYNN

Have you heard anything to the contrary?

VERNA MARY

Ho no, no, no, no: my meaning in saying thou art good, is to have you understand me that thou art sufficient. Yet, I cannot abide thee. Sorry. Please, for this, entreat thy newfangled love, Mr Leopold Wallersheim.

CATHY LYNN

I cannot. 'Tis a private matter; and, understand thou must, to mingle love with money can muddy the waters on which true love flows.

VERNA MARY

My humble apologies. Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars is above your means and assets, and the outcome to this case is considerably above prediction.

CATHY LYNN

Content in faith, please seal to such a bond, and I'll say there is much kindness in thee.

(A Pause.)

VERNA MARY

You press me far, Ms. Bommerbasch, and therefore I will yield.

(Indicating the ring given to her by Leopold.)

VERNA MARY (cont'd)

For collateral, I'll take this ring from you, which you shall forfeit should my money you fail to return. Do not draw back your hand, I'll take no more or less, and you, for the sake of your friend Mr. Heilman, shall not deny me this; a reasonable security.

CATHY LYNN

This ring good Ms. Eckland? It is the sign and object of mine and Leopold's selfsame devotion, given to me by Leopold at the very time when our souls eternally linked became. I will not forsake and shame my love and bond to present you this!

VERNA MARY

I will have nothing else but only this. And now methinks I have reason to doubt your intentions.

CATHY LYNN

There's more depends on this than on the value, and only for this I pray you pardon me.

VERNA MARY

I see Ms. Bommerbasch you are liberal in your beliefs and ways; you taught me first how I can be known for kindness, and now methinks you teach me how a kind person, by kindness most unreasoned, should be answered.

CATHY LYNN

Good Ms. Eckland, this ring was given me by my true-love, and when he put it on my finger, he made me vow that I should neither sell, nor give, nor lose it.

VERNA MARY

That scuse serves many to save their gifts, and if Mr. Leopold Wallersheim be not a madman, and knows well I have deserved this ring, he would not hold out enemy forever for giving it to me. Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Well, peace be with you!

(Walks away.)

CATHY LYNN

Ms. Eckland, wait. I wilt give thee the ring.

VERNA MARY

Yah, a fair offer; witless lumper, thou art surely not. But the terms must altered slightly be, for you cannot for me work, and be to me bonded. Employment of this kind could lawfully indicate payment in course, and courses could be, in good faith, understood to be many, one day being the first, installed again each day after, the second, third, fourth, and so on, and on, and on, the ring turned hostage thus.

CATHY LYNN

But how shall I earn money--

(Cutting her off.)

VERNA MARY

Such a contract I cannot accept, Ms. Bommerbasch. If the two hundred and fifty thousand dollars is by court returned to thee, I receive payment in full, according to the bond, not a dollar more or less, and thou shall have thy ring. Interest will not be charged; hence, my reputation fast-growing of kindness can further nourished be. The principal for the ring is all I want and expect. Agreed?

CATHY LYNN

Agreed.

(They shake hands.)

10 COURTROOM

10

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

By authority of the City of Fargo, North Dakota, this court is now in session. Mr. Jerry Lee Heilman, you have been charged with the molestation and rape of your thirteen year old daughter, Betty Sue Heilman.

(to Defence Attorney Lehmann)

Advocate Lehmann, how does your client plead?

DEFENSE ATTORNEY LEHMANN

Not guilty, your honor.

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

Summons I the first witness, Linda Lou Heilman, seventeen year old sister to Betty Sue.

LINDA LOU

Yah, your honor.

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

Do you swear to tell the truth, and only the truth, so help you God?

LINDA LOU

Yah, sure, yah betcha I do, so help me God.

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

'Tis thee that to the police revealed the crime?

LINDA LOU

Yah, by heavens, my duty 'twas--

(sings -- SINFUL GIRL: PART 1)

O Betty Sue, whom thy father liking took,
And her to incest did provoke.

Bad child, worse father, to entice his own
To evil should be done by none.

But private custom what they did begin

Was with practice accounted no sin.

Such rare beauty of this sinful girl

Hast made many princesses by a father's rule,

To seek her as a bed-fellow,

In marriage-pleasures play-fellow;

Which to allow he gave a token,

To keep her still, and not outspoken.

That whoso asked her about his wife,

She nothing spoke for fear of strife.

To part with the tiara upon her head,

And her father from her bed,

Would leave a girl wishing she wert dead.

*

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

Second witness, and alleged victim, Betty Sue Heilman.

BETTY SUE

Yah, here, your honor.

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

Do you swear to tell the truth, and only the truth?

BETTY SUE

Yah, so help me God.

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

Did this man, your father, Mr. Jerry Lee Heilman, violate your person, as never a father shouldst?

BETTY SUE

Prithee, your honor, make not too rash a trial of him, for he's gentle, and not fearful.

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

Pray, young lady, answer the question, and only the question.

BETTY SUE

Your honor, I love my father more than word can wield the matter; dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty; beyond what can be valued rich or rare; no less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour; as much as child ever loved, or father found; a love that makes breath poor and speech unable; beyond all manner of so much I love my father. He did not violate me.

*

LINDA LOU

She lies!

(sings -- SINFUL GIRL: PART 2)

Yah, that incestuous, that pederast beast,
With witchcraft wit, and traitorous gifts,
O wicked wit, and gifts with the power
So to seduce, he won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming-virtuous sister,
Demolishing goodness to dirty, shameful dusts.

*

DEFENSE ATTORNEY LEHMANN

Pray, honorable Judge Birnbaum, this charge seemest by rivalry born, by indirections besmeared, and most untruthfully surfaced: sisterly love oft the Janus-faced minion of sisterly hate.

LINDA LOU

Hold thy tongue! Defender of evil, you--

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

Hold your tongue, young lady. Silence. Prithee, Betty Sue Heilman, dost thou swearest no violation beset thee? Didst thou ever feel discomfort, of a nature sexual, nakedly in thy father's presence? Swearest to speak truly, as God wills it, and not by the love of thy father or by discontent with thy sister. Speak but for truth. Doth thou swearest?

GHOST OF SALLY MAE

(voiceover, heard only by Jerry Lee)

Swear.

JERRY LEE

What?!

BETTY SUE

"Swear"?

GHOST OF SALLY MAE

Swear.

BETTY SUE

On whether I felt discomfort whilst naked before my father?

GHOST OF SALLY MAE

Swear.

JERRY LEE

Yah, swear, Betty Sue, thou must. Swear!

BETTY SUE

Yah, I swear, I hath had discomfort, yet by no fault of my sweet father.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY LEHMANN

(sings -- A FATHER AND HIS DAUGHTERS)

Father and daughters, and mother not,
In modest apartment dwell,
A father, and his daughters.
Father on a cot, and sisters not
But together at odds in a single cell,
A father, and his daughters.
In modest apartment dwell,
A father, and his daughters.
A single plot in an invisible spot,
But together only they can tell,
A father, and his daughters

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(MORE)

DEFENSE ATTORNEY LEHMANN (cont'd)

In what space doth a father bathe,
In what space doth he cook for them
In what space doth a father clothe
In what space doth he think of them
In what space doth a father speak to girls subjects
coming of age.
On what ever alabaster page,
Canst the natural be verily writ,
(MORE)

DEFENSE ATTORNEY LEHMANN (cont'd)

Without in black ink, is a father seeming unfit?
Seeming unfit, a father and his daughters.

[INTERMISSION]

11 WALLERSHEIM MANSION

11

(With lighting, thunder, and rainstorm defining the atmosphere,
Leopold and Elvira play hopscotch, sharing a BOTTLE OF BOOZE.)

ELVIRA

(sings -- CHANDELIER)

The poor soul sat sighing, by a chair for thee,
His head in his hand, his elbow on his knee,
Sing by all lights chandelier, chandelier
The room's histories ran by him, and echoed his moans,
His tears fell from him, which softened their groans,
Sing by all lights chandelier, chandelier
And lay by these:

My dear sing if you're near (if you're near if you're
near)

Sing by all lights, lights, lights,
all lights chandelier, chandelier

Prithee, hurry thee: she'll come anon:

Let nobody blame her, her scorn I approve--

Sing by all lights chandelier, chandelier

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*

LEOPOLD

Nay, that's not next. Surely, thou canst do better than
that, eh.

ELVIRA

(hearing something)

Woof, woof!

LEOPOLD

Hark! Who's that that enters?

ELVIRA

It is the wind.

LEOPOLD

How's this?

(sings)

I called my love false love; but what said she then?

If you court more women, she'll couch with more men.

Sing by all lights chandelier, chandelier

*

ELVIRA

Oh misery.

(Verna Mary enters, wearing the ring.)

LEOPOLD

Ms. Eckland, delighted to see you, I am!

VERNA MARY

You are, sir? But, methought you--

LEOPOLD

Yah, betcha, am I. What treasures for us hath you tonight, hovering within my gates? My thumbs nearly twiddled off, the time betwixt visits could've been not short enough.

(Leopold looks out a window.)

VERNA MARY

O, your flattery, sir, such surprise, and most truly a pleasure--

(Indicating out the window.)

LEOPOLD

What art those?

VERNA MARY

Why, your Danish Baroque trunk-bench and your Elizabethan throne chair and library table--

LEOPOLD

Who art the people?! Where is Ms. Cathy Lynn Bommerbasch?

VERNA MARY

O, o, the female lumper?

LEOPOLD

Yah.

VERNA MARY

You don't know?

LEOPOLD

Nay.

VERNA MARY

Yah, I see. The love birds left town, and me left without good lumper legs on which--

LEOPOLD

Love birds? Speakest plain, please.

VERNA MARY

The lumpers, Cathy Lynn Bommerbasch and Jerry Lee Heilman, the very same lumpers who to you brought so many fine pieces, they departed Fargo together; "flew the coop," as they boasted, "once and for all." This ring that was yours they sold me; for a pretty penny indeed, and fat with cash eloped, they did; methinks they went to Las Vegas; where lumpers go, and the like, for happy nuptials.

LEOPOLD

That is my ring.

VERNA MARY

I knowest, the very same one I sold to you not a year ago; it was given to Charles the Second's queen, Catherine of Braganza, by the Earl of Rochester, John Wilmot.

LEOPOLD

Go away, please.

VERNA MARY

But your furniture, sir?

LEOPOLD

Prithee, away, now. Alone must I be. Go.

VERNA MARY

If it's what pleaseth thee. So adieu.

(Verna Mary exits.)

12 SOMEWHERE IN FARGO

12

(Linda Lou and Betty Sue dance tempestuously, with Jerry Lee between them. Jerry Lee steps out from the fray. Underscored by SIBLING TEMPEST.)

13 COURTROOM

13

JERRY LEE

Yah, your honor; I speaketh the truth, and nothing but truth, when I confess to showing my daughter, Betty Sue, who I couldst never harm, and love beyond love, for she is one of my two lights in this world, the other being her sister Linda Lou, who I too love beyond love, as a father should; no more nor less. The truth your honor is that I showed Betty Sue images of female genitalia that I from the internet downloaded and for her printed.

(MORE)

*

JERRY LEE (cont'd)

I wanted to help her as best a father can. It wast the time when a young girl to adolescence graduates and begins her body to leave the marks of a child turned ripe for motherhood; my best, did I, to educate her on a topic in large part to myself unknown.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY LEHMANN

Recall, your honor, if you please, that my client did his daughters raise alone, ever since in a horrible fire tragically deceased his wife. Before your honor is a kind and gentle man; his way as both father and mother to his children discovered as discovery warranted. He is a simple lumper who has literally carried the lives of his offspring on his back without the aid of a good woman, nor a mother at the bedsides of his children.

*

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

I see: by these actions an innocent lamb wast unwittingly, and darkly transformed; a victim made by accidental deeds? (to Betty Sue) Is that so girl, by misprision discomfort arose in thee?

BETTY SUE

Yah, your honor, believe you me, methinks any girl wouldst be transformed such, in such a way, under such circumstance.

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

For the final time, Ms. Linda Lou Heilman, to thou must I ask, did thy father, Mr. Jerry Lee Heilman, ever make you of discomfort, by nature sexual, so help you God?

*

*

LINDA LOU

No, your honor; but there need not be repetition for a crime to have occurred.

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

I am aware of that, young lady.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY LEHMANN

There are discomforts, your honor, that are simply part and parcel of life, most unavoidable; neither here nor there, in terms of purpose or blame. Betty Sue's story is like that of all girls to a degree, and more like motherless daughters, even those with such a caring and loving father as Jerry Lee Heilman.

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

A responsible father would have deferred such eduction to the proper authorities: doctors and teachers;

(MORE)

JUDGE BIRNBAUM (cont'd)

other women family. Irresponsibility, no matter the ignorance, is dangerous, and therefore so art its perpetrators. Farther to the case, dangerous dispositions, a life improperly contained, are hazards to all good people.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY LEHMANN

My client, Mr. Jerry Lee Heilman, is a good person, and no evidence presented, nor couldst presented be, to the contrary.

14 HEILMAN HOME

14

(Jerry Lee with GUN, eventually putting it to his head.)

JERRY LEE

(spoken -- underscored by JERRY LEE'S TORMENT:
PART 2)

To die, to sleep;
To sleep, perchance to dream -- ay, there's the rub:
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause -- there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.

(The Ghost of Sally Mae appears.)

GHOST OF SALLY MAE

My daughter, O my daughter!

(The Ghost of Sally Mae vanishes.)

JERRY LEE

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a gun?

(The Ghost of Sally Mae appears.)

GHOST OF SALLY MAE

My daughter, O my daughter!

(The Ghost of Sally Mae vanishes.)

15 WALLERSHEIM MANSION

15

(With lighting, thunder, and rainstorm defining the atmosphere, Leopold and Elvira lounge around, sharing a BOTTLE OF BOOZE.)

ELVIRA *
(sings, and dances sadly -- DUCDAME) *
Thus it goes.

LEOPOLD *
Thus it goes. *

LEOPOLD AND ELVIRA *
If it do come to pass
That any man turn ass,

LEOPOLD *
Leaving his wealth and ease,

ELVIRA *
A stubborn will to please,

LEOPOLD *
Ducdame, ducdame,
Here shall he see
He see gross fools as is he,
Ducdame, ducdame,
If he comes, he will come to me.

ELVIRA
A lovely tune, sure. Yet I am but unsure; what's that
"ducdame"?

LEOPOLD
Jeez, 'tis a Greek invocation, to call fools into a
circle.

ELVIRA
Fools, us art, then? Art not. Knowest, Leo, I grieve
dearly for thee.

LEOPOLD
Knowst I well, Elivra. Thou art my dearest friend. I'll
go sleep if I can; if I cannot, I'll rail against all
the first-born of Egypt.

ELVIRA
(passing the bottle to him)
Drink first, my pal. Melancholy, we shalt drown thee;
lumper girl, we shalt forget thee; Leo, we shalt free
thee.

(MORE)

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ELVIRA (cont'd)

(sings)

For no more dames, shall we make fish;
Nor fetch in firing, at requiring;
Nor scrape onions, nor wash dish;
Nor put down the toilet seat:
Bold, bold, bold, bold Leopold be,
For no more dames:
Thought is always free, and so are always thee.

*

LEOPOLD

Bravo! Elvira, bravo! Already, methinks, me feels some levity.

(sings)

And she will not come again?
Cathy Lynn will a-not come again?

ELVIRA

(sings)

No, no, she is dead,
To thy heart, she be dead,
Gone away on someone else's cart,
She never will again come
She is gone, she is really gone.

*

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LEOPOLD

And we no more bemoan the loss of Cathy Lynn.

*

ELVIRA

(speaks)

God a-mercy on her soul. Come on, Leo. Sing.

*

LEOPOLD

(sings, to a different tune)

O mistress mine, where are you roaming?
O stay and bear, your true-love's coming,
Sing both high and low.
Trip no further, pretty sweeting:
Journeys end in lovers' always meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know.
O mistress mine, where are you?

*

*

(Entering, Cathy Lynn butts her head three times against the palm of her hand.)

LEOPOLD (cont'd)

This cannot be. This visit I do accept most thankfully.

CATHY LYNN

Prithee, forgive me, Leopold, my dearest love. Your forgiveness I beg, and kindness, all. The fate of Jerry Lee me so consumed, and for so long was missing thee; I hath grown most ashamed, unable to meet your disappoint--

LEOPOLD

From thou, not a word? Months, and not a word? And now, I see, not a ring.

CATHY LYNN

'Tis an extraordinary circumstance: I am to blame; I must be plain with you, to part so with your true-love's first gift, a thing stuck on with oaths upon your finger, and so riveted with faith unto your flesh.

LEOPOLD

I gave my love a ring, and made her swear never to part with it, and here she stands: I dare be sworn for her she would not leave it, nor pluck it from her finger, for all the wealth that the world masters.

CATHY LYNN

My love, my sweet love, I gave thy ring away unto a cause that begged it dire, and by God deserved it too.

LEOPOLD

What cause gave you the ring which you receiveth of me?

CATHY LYNN

If I could add a lie unto a fault, I would deny it: but you see my finger hath not the ring upon it; it is gone. And yet I the cause canst utter, for thy heart it forbids, and requests thee to excuse it. Words of this matter, my love, only further fuel the pain's flames.

LEOPOLD

Even so void is your false heart of truth, with smoke and no fire betwixt thee. By heaven I will never come to you until I see the ring!

CATHY LYNN

(sings -- THE RING)

Sweet Leopold, if you did know to whom I gave the ring,
And would conceive for what I gave the ring,
And how unwillingly I left the ring,
When nought would be accepted but the ring,
You would abate the strength of your displeasure.

LEOPOLD

(sings)

If you had known the virtue of the ring,
Or half his worthiness that gave the ring,
Or your own honour to contain the ring,
You would not then have parted with the ring:

(spoken)

What man is there so much unreasonable
(If you had pleased to have defended it
With any terms of zeal): wanted the modesty
To urge the thing held as a ceremony?
Elvira, my exemplar friend, reminds me what to trust,
And I shall die for it, swore you,

(MORE)

LEOPOLD (cont'd)

But now some other hath the ring, possesseth
The love for which the ring once stood,
Itself truth be told an artifact now forgotten.

CATHY LYNN

No, by my honour sir, and my soul,
No man hath it, but does a woman, falsely
Who did insist, not for what it stands--

LEOPOLD

A woman, Cathy Lynn. Interesting, eh. Torture my ears no
more, and be gone!

CATHY LYNN

No, I beg thee, pray, hear me!

LEOPOLD

Be gone!

(She walks, and then turns back.)

CATHY LYNN

Jerry Lee is dead!

LEOPOLD

Dead? Dead?

CATHY LYNN

He wast tried for the most horrid crime: incest with his
youngest, the beautiful Betty Sue; and, in his desperate
and oppressed universe, as its walls narrowed upon him,
with most violence, he took from us his life.

LEOPOLD

Good. Be gone, lumper girl, and always away.

(Leopold walks away, turning his back. After a few beats, Cathy
Lynn exits. Elvira looks on with helpless astonishment.)

ELVIRA

(aside)

Poor Leo. What can I do? Next, fear I, he will send me
away. He likes to send people away. (beat) If something
emerges from nothing, or else wherefore does something
come, with nothing left, what can that something be?

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

Mr. Jerry Lee Heilman.

JERRY LEE

Ay, your honor.

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

Do you know that all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players?

JERRY LEE

Not certain I understand your meaning, your honor.

*

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

Mr. Heilman, we all have our exits and entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts; his acts being seven ages.

JERRY LEE

Yes, your honor.

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

At first the infant, mewling and puking in the nurse's arms. Then, the whining school-boy with his satchell and shining morning face, creeping like a snail unwillingly to school. And then the lover, sighing like a furnace, with a woeful ballad made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then, a worker, full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard, jealous in honour, sudden, and quick in quarrel, seeking the bubble reputation even in the establishment's mouth. And then, the justice, in fair round belly, with eyes severe, and beard of distinguished cut, full of wise saws, and modern instances, and so he plays his part. This is the part I am playing.

JERRY LEE

Yes, your honor.

*

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

The sixth age of man shifts into the lean and slippered geriatric, with spectacles on nose, and pouch on side, his youthful hose well saved, a world too wide for his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice, turning again toward childish treble, pipes and whistles in his sound. Finally, the last scene of all, that ends this strange eventful history, is second childishness and mere oblivion, sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

JERRY LEE

I see, your honor.

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

You see? What saw you in the face of your precious child when you turned her soul toward darkness, suffocated her laughter, and stole her hope? What role in the ages of man was yours, Mr. Jerry Lee Heilman? What was that of the helpless lamb, Betty Sue, that she must play the victim to such wretchedness?

JERRY LEE

No role. No role, your honor. I did not perform this role you script, and neither did she.

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

Thou art hereby sentenced to one year probation and public registration for a period of ten years as a sexual offender. Be forewarned: probation violation in the forms of unscheduled, not monitored, or illicit contact with thy daughters Betty Sue and Linda Lou Heilman, now wards of the City of Fargo, North Dakota, will result in mandatory imprisonment for the space of five years.

BETTY SUE

O, daddy, no. No!

(The Ghost of Sally Mae enters, as always, seen only by Jerry Lee.)

JERRY LEE

Heck! Prithee, see there! Behold! Look! Lo! The ghost of Sally Mae appears. It's there. (to the Ghost of Sally Mae) How say you? Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too. If charnel-houses and our graves must send those that we bury, back, our monuments shall be the maws of kites.

JUDGE BIRNBAUM

What?! Quite unmanned in folly? A plea of insanity; this will not fly.

(to invisible guards)

Guards, from the courthouse Mr Heilman take, or I shall declare contempt; then to jail he will go. Send him out.

18 HEILMAN HOME

18 *

(Jerry Lee with GUN, putting it to his head.)

JERRY LEE

(spoken, underscored by JERRY LEE'S TORMENT:
PART 3)

Who would burdens bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?

(The Ghost of Sally Mae appears and vanishes.)

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied over with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

(The Ghost of Sally Mae reappears, and observes.)

Soft you now,
The fair Betty Sue! Linda Lou, in thy prayers
Be all my sins remembered.

(Jerry Lee shoots himself in the mouth, effectively committing
suicide. The Ghost of Sally Mae gestures goodbye to him.)

19 HEILMAN HOME

19

BETTY SUE

I cannot hate thee worser than I do. Thou art a
murderer! Horrible murderer!

LINDA LOU

The truth, I dost know, Betty Sue.

BETTY SUE

The truth, I knowest, and 'tis not what thee speaks.

LINDA LOU

(indicating the scarf worn by Betty Sue)
From the scarf, by truth, 'tis how I know. Take heed, I
prithee.

BETTY SUE

O, evil, the river through your veins must be damned. My
God, thou cannot destroy this, too, memories sweet I
carry around my neck and against my bosom; a comfort I
can wear most proudly, given to a devoted daughter from
her loving father.

LINDA LOU

O, Betty Sue, with the scarf he did gratify and sanctify
his incestuous works; with it he gave the recognizance
and pledge of love.

BETTY SUE

Stop thy tongue! Or I will cut it out!

LINDA LOU

He first gave the scarf to me, but I rejected it; I saw
you with it; you wear it. It is the same scarf; a token
antique and special his mother to him gave -- correct?

BETTY SUE

What of it?

LINDA LOU

Not of it, but for it, you lied.

BETTY SUE

For the scarf, or thy father, you say, I lied?

LINDA LOU

With him, on him, what you will.

BETTY SUE

Stands before me not a human, but a monstrous creature:
Devil incarnate.

LINDA LOU

You don't understand, Betty Sue, he raped me. He raped
me at night; whilst thou slumbered there, to his bed he
stole me away, my mouth covered by his rough hand. Like
a baby you slept. After school, while you had a play
date at the houses of Tommy, Peggy Gail or Mary Ann, he
raped me.

BETTY SUE

I don't believe you.

LINDA LOU

Tell me, did he tell you, an Egyptian to his mother gave the scarf? She was a charmer, and could read thoughts. She told grandma, while she kept it, it would make her amiable, and subdue her husband entirely to her love: but if she lost it, or made a gift of it, his eye should hold her loathly, and his spirits should hunt after new fancies. She dying, before thou was born, gave it to her son, our father, and bid him, when his fate would have him wive, to give it her. And he did so, but when our mother died, and among her surviving belongings was this scarf, he saved it for you.

BETTY SUE

Go on. What else about the scarf?

LINDA LOU

'Tis true, there's magic in the web of it, he said; a sibyl, that had numbered in the world the sun to make two hundred compasses, in her prophetic fury sewed the work; the worms were hallowed that did breed the silk, and it was dyed in mummy, with the skilful conserve of maidens' hearts. So, this scarf, he told me, and you, is for beautiful maidens.

BETTY SUE

O my God. How horrid, our father, my daddy. Our daddy. How awful! Linda Lou, so sorry I am. Pray, forgive me. Forgive me, please. You are my sister; my only sister; my only family; and I have been blind, blind so, to everything of which you speak. But, in thinking back, the signs haunt my remembrance: you missing from our bed; your sadness; your discomfort in close quarters with our father. On, now, on I could go. O, how thou hast suffered. I am sorry.

LINDA LOU

Thou hast done no wrong. 'Twas unspeakable, and lacked I strength and courage. I needed you to be his victim; yet, afraid and ashamed was I still; compounded, forsooth, by the burgeoning fact that he spared thee. Until now, at risk of losing forever your love, a doom cast beyond reversal, I could not speak. I am sorry. O, how I love you, Betty Sue.

BETTY SUE

I love you, sister.

(They embrace, crying.)

20 WALLERSHEIM MANSION

20

(With lighting, thunder, and rainstorm defining the atmosphere, Leopold and Elvira play jacks or dice, sharing a BOTTLE OF BOOZE. They sing a duet -- FIE: PART 1.)

LEOPOLD & ELVIRA

Pardon us dear goddess of the night,
Those that slew thy virgin knight;
For thee which, with songs of woe,
Round about her tombs they go.
Midnight glow, assist our moan,
Help us to sigh and groan,
Graves, yawn and yield their dead,
Till death be uttered,
Heavily, heavily.

*
*
*

(Verna Mary enters.)

VERNA MARY

(sings)
Fie on sinful fantasy, fie on lust and luxury,
Lust is but a bloody fire kindled with unchaste desire
Fed in heart whose flames aspire
As thoughts do blow them higher and higher
Pinch him fairies mutually, pinch him for his villainy
Pinch him, burn him, turn him about
'Till candles starlight and moonshine all be out

*
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*

VERNA MARY (cont'd)

(says)
Your constant woes echoed sadly in my ears,
Through which they accrued to surprise my heart.
It, pale with envy and bloodless vengeance,
With new warmth unnumbed each feeling part.
Thus, head to toe, here stand I trembling with ecstasy,
Since cheering up your senses all will follow,
I come to tell you mine were unnourished fantasy,
My actions childish errors, for which I request your
pardon.
And by which I happily deliver to you--

*

LEOPOLD

Ms. Verna Mary Eckland, what can we do for thee?

(He passes her the bottle, and she takes a swig.)

VERNA MARY

A toast, methinks, is in order.

LEOPOLD

Yah, betcha, love is dead!

(He drinks.)

LEOPOLD (cont'd)	ELVIRA & JERRY LEE	
(sings -- FIE: PART 2)		
Come away	Come away	*

LEOPOLD (cont'd)	*
Come away death,	*
And in sad cypress let me be laid.	
Fie away, fie away breath,	
For I am slain by a fair and very cruel maid:	*

LEOPOLD (cont'd)	ELVIRA & JERRY LEE	
My shroud of white	Shroud of white	
Stuck all with yew,	Prepare it	
My part of death	Aah	
No one so true	Did share it	
Not a flower	Not a flower	*
Not a flower so sweet	Not a flower so sweet	

LEOPOLD (cont'd)	*
On my black coffin let there be strewn--	*

LEOPOLD & ELVIRA & JERRY LEE	*
Not a friend, not a friend, not a friend great	*
My poor corpse where my bones shall be thrown	*
A thousand sighs to save	*

LEOPOLD	*
Lay me, lay me, lay me o'where,	*
Sad true lover never find my grave	*

LEOPOLD & ELVIRA & JERRY LEE	*
To weep there.	*

VERNA MARY	*
(says)	*
Nay, love be alive and well -- and here.	

(Verna Mary whistles. Cathy Lynn butts her head three times against the palm of her hand as she enters.)

VERNA MARY (cont'd)	
Truth be told, Mr. Wallersheim, at a grim hour of desperation and need, I from Cathy Lynn this ring wrongly took, in an agreement by coercion met, and on misfortune prospered. I now return the ring, and to you,	*
entreat I, may your forgiveness embrace good Cathy Lynn, and my business, once again: rich love deserves rich things.	

(She gives Cathy Lynn the ring.)

LEOPOLD

It does, for sure, as ever the sun doth shine, for true
love must never be blind.

(The storm stops, and the sun shines.)

LEOPOLD (cont'd)

(sings -- CUCKOO)

When daisies pied and violets blue
And lady-smocks all silver-white
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
Do paint the meadows with delight.
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus to see,
Cuckoo, Cuckoo,
O word of fear,
Unpleasing to the married ear!

*

*

When shepherds pipe on oaten straws,
And merry larks are ploughman's clocks,
When turtles tread, and rooks, and daws,
And maidens bleach their summer smocks,
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,
Cuckoo,
Cuckoo,
O word of fear,
Unpleasing to the married ear!

*

But I no fears harbor: I love thee, Cathy Lynn: Wilt
thou marry me?

CATHY LYNN

Yah, betcha. I will; for thou my true-love be.

*

*

(They kiss.)

*

CATHY LYNN (cont'd)

*

Dearest Leopold, I have but one request: can we adopt Jerry Lee's daughters, Betty Sue and Linda Lou, lavish them in love, and support them in all they want to be and do?

LEOPOLD

Yah, betcha, we can, and we will.

(to Verna Mary)

Please accept this ring as a symbol of my gratitude for bringing Cathy Lynn back to me.

(From his finger, he hands a ring to Verna Mary.)

VERNA MARY

Thank you, Mr. Wallersheim.

LEOPOLD

Call me Leo.

VERNA MARY

Leo.

(Leopold kisses Cathy Lynn, and begins to dance with her. A song -- WHITHER I GO.)

LEOPOLD

(to each other; sings)

Get you hence, for I must go.

*

CATHY LYNN

Where it fits not you to know.

(Jerry Lee, who has been dead on stage for some time, chimes in.)

ELVIRA

Whither?

VERNA MARY

O whither?

JERRY LEE

Whither? Whither I go.

ELVIRA & VERNA MARY

Go.

*

CATHY LYNN

It becomes thy oath full well,
Thou to me thy secrets tell.
Me too.

*

ELVIRA

Me too.

*

*

LEOPOLD *
Me too. *

CATHY LYNN & LEOPOLD
Let me go thither.

CATHY LYNN, LEOPOLD & ELVIRA *
Thither with you.

LEOPOLD
Or thou goest to the grange or mill:
If to either, thou dost ill.

ELVIRA *
Neither. *

CATHY LYNN
What neither?

JERRY LEE
Neither.

ELVIRA, JERRY LEE & CATHY LYNN
Neither.

LEOPOLD *
Thou hast sworn my love to be; *

CATHY LYNN *
Thou hast sworn it more to me: Then

ELVIRA, JERRY LEE & CATHY LYNN *
Then whither goest? Goest? Say whither I go?
Yah betcha now!

CATHY LYNN & LEOPOLD *
Into winter, or rough weather,

ELVIRA
Woof, Woof, rrrrffff, rfff, yowl

CATHY LYNN & LEOPOLD *
Summer sun, and spring too,

CATHY LYNN *
Whither I go, I go with

ALL *
You. *
Whither I go, *

CATHY LYNN & LEOPOLD
I go with you.

VERNA MARY & ELVIRA & JERRY LEE
Go with you.

*

ALL (cont'd)

*

WHITHER!

*

(All but Elvira exit.)

21 SOMEWHERE IN FARGO

21

(With chain attached, Elvira runs at full speed downstage, but stops suddenly just before the chain runs out.)

ELVIRA

Ha!
If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear, eh.
They, no more yielding than your dreams,
Do not reprehend:
Unless it is yourself you wish to pardon.
And, as I am an honest bitch,
If we have an unearned glitch
Now to escape the serpent's tongue,
Nevertheless, you will make amends;
Else Elvira a liar call.
So, good night unto you all.
Give us your applause, if we be friends,
If not, fuck you.

(The End.)

BOW

ALL

(sing -- LUMPING IN FARGO)

Lumpin' in Fargo
Lumpin's the best part of the day
(Girls) Even when the days ain't that sunny

Lumpin' in Fargo
That's just our North Dakota way
(Guys) Even when ya ain't got a honey
Lumpin' in Fargo
Yah betcha, that we're all here to stay

(MORE)

ALL (cont'd)

We don't make a whole lotta money
Some say we talk kinda funny
In Fargo (fargo, fargo, fargo)
Lumpin's the best part of the day