

LOVE & MARRIAGE, TEXAS STYLE

A **comedy** in two acts

Loosely adapted--**Texas** Style

by Elaine Edstrom

from

“Billy Bob” Shakespeare’s

The Taming of the Shrew

Time: April, 1910

Place: Tomball, Texas

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LOVE & MARRIAGE, TEXAS STYLE had its World Premiere during the opening of Houston Family Arts Center's Garza Mainstage venue on May 7, 2010 with the following cast and production team:

CAST

Mr. Barney McQuinn.....	Glenn Ropiequet
Greg Dawson.....	Marc Isaacs
Horace Genero.....	Brian Heaton
Caitlin (Caite) McQuinn.....	Saphra Arias
Travis Nelson.....	Katt Gilcrease
Luke Vincent.....	Zachary Lewis
Rebecca (Becky) McQuinn.....	Candyce Prince
Bronco Davis.....	Bradley Gaul
Peter Anthony.....	Joshua Clark
Dusty Garcia.....	Alan Kendall
Nadine Wilson.....	Brittany McLeod
Marcus the Great.....	Scott Thornton
Charlene.....	Stephanie Thaine
Mrs. Miranda Vincent.....	Karen Clayton

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director, Set and Costume Design.....	Elaine Edstrom
Stage Manager.....	Brendis O'Sullivan
Lighting Design.....	Lisa Garza
Sound Design.....	Tracy Clayton
Producer.....	Bob Clark

A WORD ABOUT "LOVE & MARRIAGE, TEXAS STYLE"

Directors often set Shakespeare's plays in different locales and time periods from which they had originally been written. TAMING OF THE SHREW has seen productions that have been completely transported to the movies and Musical Comedy stage. SHREW has also been set in America's Wild West several times. I know of theatres that did this in Idaho, Oregon, California and, of course here in Houston in 2002. In the early 1990's we set the Sacramento (California) Shakespeare in the Park's production in the mid 1800's and on the American frontier. In all of these Wild and Woolly West productions, because they were part of the various Shakespeare Festival productions, the Bard's words were always used verbatim. It was in our Sacramento production that it began grating on my nerves for, who in American history, ever spoke Elizabethan poetry or iambic pentameter?

In my Grad School days I had adapted MACBETH to modern day language very successfully and set it in modern day Scotland--receiving an "A" on the paper. After graduation I became too busy to really do much writing.

In 2000 I returned to doing more writing and in 2003 I decided to take SHREW and rewrite it using every day language, Texas idioms, and resetting the play in Tomball, Texas during the city's early days. I originally wrote the play as a vehicle for the company I was performing with at the time--Texas Theatrical Productions--but before we had time to produce it, it was 2004 and T.T.P. went into an extended hiatus (that is still in effect today).

The basic plot is the same as Shakespeare's but the characters are not. Nor do they speak any of the Bard's lines from SHREW. AND! I got rid of that very perplexing Prologue that really makes no sense but which Shakespeare, for some reason, tacked onto his play!

This play has cowboys and cooks and a banker, a storekeeper, a tavern owner--people one would meet on the streets of Tomball in 1910. I have added female characters and cut back the male characters to fit a cast of 5 women and 9 men--much better than the Bard's 2 women, 19 men and a bunch of servants that usually make up a cast that numbers 30 or more! And they "palaver" in good old "Texanese"!

The play should run two hours, with intermission.

Enjoy LOVE & MARRIAGE, TEXAS STYLE as much as I enjoyed writing it!

Elaine Edstrom

THE SET

This can easily be done on a unit set and it can be quite simple. All but one scene takes place in the town square and that can be very realistic looking or it can have a cartoon appearance. The “buildings” needed are spelled out in the script.

PROPS

This is not a large props show. And, again props needed are spelled out in the script.

COSTUMES

Costumes should be what was worn in the early 1900's. Nadine & Mrs. Vincent should be in the height of 1910 fashion but the others, with the exception of Caite who dresses in men's clothing (except, of course, in the last scene!), should be comfortable “small town” wear. The men should be in proper Western wear for the era.

Perusal
Only FOR
NOT FOR
PRODUCTION

LOVE & MARRIAGE, TEXAS STYLE Cast (in order of appearance)

Mr. Barney McQuinn—a widower with two daughters and the genial owner of McQuinn’s Mercantile. He loves his daughters but finds them very frustrating.

Greg Dawson--the town banker, a middle-aged widower who needs a wife and a mother for his unmanageable twins--he thinks Rebecca might fill the bill;

Horace Genero—genial owner of the Tomball Inn, he has an eye for pretty women and since Rebecca is pretty, he’d like to court her too.

Caitlin (Caite) McQuinn-- has a sharp tongue, is a card-carrying Suffragette and is facing spinsterhood at age 24...but her manner hides a true woman’s heart.

Travis Nelson-- the Vincent family’s foreman and the overseer of all their holdings. He’s always willing to go along with Luke’s crazy schemes!

Luke Vincent of Austin—may be a cowboy but he’s a romantic at heart. He’s in town to take over the new ranch his father has bought just outside of Tomball.

Rebecca (Becky) McQuinn—Caite’s younger sister, a flirt but always “a perfect lady” . She has every single man in town at her beck and call—including Daddy.

Bronco Davis—has been with the Vincent family for years and is to be the cook for their new ranch, he’s not too bright--but he is a great cook.

Peter Anthony of Palacios--is in town looking for a way to pay off the ranch mortgage his deceased gambling father burdened him with and is not adverse to marrying a woman with money, regardless of her looks or actions.

Dusty Garcia--head honcho at Peter’s ranch, the Diamond A, and also his practical-minded travelling companion. A bit older than Peter.

Nadine Wilson--a pretty young widow who has her eye on Horace--she runs a ladies’ boutique.

Marcus the Great--an actor of great repute...just ask him! Think Barrymore, Keane and Olivier...all rolled into one. He always speaks in a great Shakespearean voice!

Charlene--a cousin of Dusty’s--always willing to make a few extra dollars.

Mrs. Miranda Vincent--Luke’s very proper mother who she is married to a Texas State Senator...and everyone knows all Texas senators and their families are always proper and reputable!

THE SETTING

Place: Tomball, Texas
Time: 1910

ACT I

Scene 1: Tomball Town Square, an early Saturday morning in June, 1910

Scene 2: Tomball Town Square that afternoon

ACT II

Scene 1: Tomball Town Square, Sunday afternoon, a week later

Scene 2: A room in the Tomball Hotel a few minutes later

Scene 3: A room in the Tomball Hotel the next morning (Monday)

Scene 4: Tomball Town Square, that afternoon

Scene 5: Tomball Town Square, a few minutes later

Scene 6: Tomball Town Square, early evening the next day

LOVE & MARRIAGE, TEXAS STYLE

ACT I Scene 1

(General hubbub outside McQuinn's General Store. McQuinn, Caite & Rebecca on the porch. McQuinn is talking to Greg & Horace. Luke & Travis enter & stand listening...until Caite gives a shrill whistle thru her fingers & says:)

CAITE

Hey! I'm trying to read the newspaper here! *(All conversation ceases, they turn and look at her then McQuinn turns to Greg & Horace)*

MCQUINN

You heard me boyos! Y' ain't gonna change my mind! Rebecca ain't gettin' married until her sister's lasooed herself a husband--I promised their mama that on her death bed (may she rest in peace). Now, if either of you wanna court Caitlin, you have my blessings. Greg? How about it--you need a mother for them twins o' yours. Emma's been gone for nigh over a year and they're wilder'n mustangs. Caitey could tame 'em down in no time!

GREG

That wildcat of yours? Who'd tame her down first? No thanks! My eye's on Rebecca.

MCQUINN

How 'bout you, Horace? If you're so all-fired anxious to come courting, why not Caitey here?

HORACE

You've gotta be kidding! Not for all the hot sauce in Texas. I'd rather court a porcupine!

CAITE

Well then, hombres, we've nothing to worry about do we? Being hogtied to either of you is just about the last thing I want. If y'all ever so much as puckered up your lips at me, I'd whop your heads with a milk bucket and stomp on your fancy boots. You two're about as appealing to me as a case of measles! Jumpin' Jehosophat, Pa, you make me feel like a mare at an auction! I have no intentions on marrying--'specially either of those two!

HORACE *(To Greg)*

God deliver me from all such Irish hellions as that one! She's meaner than a grizzly with a toothache!

GREG

Amen.

CAITE

I heard that! That goes double for me, peabrains! I wouldn't even stoop to pass the time of day with you two--you're both stupider than a loco donkey.

TRAVIS (*aside to Luke*)

This is better'n watchin' Doc Perkins Medicine Show. That filly's either stark starin' loco naturally or she's been chewin' on mescatal!

LUKE (*to Travis*)

Yeah, Travis, but look at the other girl! She's just standing there all smiley and mild mannered and quiet like.

TRAVIS

Not to mention beautiful, eh Boss?

LUKE

She's as pretty a sight as a Jersey heifer in a field of bluebonnets!

TRAVIS

OK, OK! Stare at her like a poleaxed rabbit if'n you want...I won't say a word!

MCQUINN

Now Caitey, be reasonable--you're not as young as you used to be and it's high time you found yourself a husband.

HORACE (*to McQuinn*)

You're barking up a leafless live oak, Mr. McQuinn--you'll never get anyone in this town to tie the knot with Caite!

MCQUINN

I mean what I said. Caitlin gets married first. Becky dear, get inside and stop pouting. You know I'm doing this 'cause I promised your mama (God rest her soul). Besides, I know what's best for you. Why, you're the prettiest girl in Tomball--Hellsfire, in the whole state o' Texas! You have plenty of time to find a husband. And Caitlin's time is running out--she'll be twenty-five come August.

REBECCA (*sweetly*)

And that, dear sister, will officially make you an old maid like Agatha Macadoodle.

CAITE

Go suck an egg Becky!

REBECCA (*archly*)

Sorry, Caite, too expensive. Haven't you heard that they've gone up to fifteen cents a dozen?

CAITE (to McQuinn)

Are you sure I'm not adopted? (To Becky) I'M not worried about spinsterhood! I don't have to marry some man to survive! This is 1910 for God's sake...not the dark ages.

REBECCA (Saccharine sweet!)

Sister dearest, you are an idiot! (to McQuinn) I'll go in, Daddy. (Melodramatic sigh) I'll read my books and practice scales on the piano (sigh)...again...(another sigh) all by myself!

LUKE (to Travis)

Listen to her talk! All soft and gentle! Like an angel.

TRAVIS (to Luke)

Are you feelin' all right?

LUKE

(Sigh) Never better. I think I'm in love!

HORACE

Don't be so hard on Becky, McQuinn. (To Rebecca) Greg and I are sorry, Becky, if we upset you and made you sad. Please forgive us. (Rebecca heaves a sigh. Caite laughs)

GREG

Why lock up Rebecca, Mr. McQuinn, until (indicating Caite) that spitfire of a daughter of yours is married? It isn't fair to make Rebecca the sacrificial lamb to Caite's temper and loud mouth. I'll make a good husband for Rebecca because I'm older and wiser and my bank is profitable. Why last year I cleared \$5000.

CAITE

Well, whoopee for you! You're older all right--darn near as old as Pa here. You just want a free housekeeper and someone to watch out for those bratty twins o' yours--not to mention free conjugal rights!

REBECCA (gasping)

Oh! Caitlin! What you said! Daddy! Did you hear what Caitlin said! I think I'm going to faint!

CAITE

Oh come off it, Becky. You're not THAT naïve! You must've learned something about the birds and bees at that fancy boarding school in San Antone.

MCQUINN

That will be enough, Caitlin. Go inside Rebecca.

REBECCA (*pouting*)

Can't I have any visitors, Daddy? I get so lonely sometimes.

MCQUINN

Visitors?

REBECCA

You know, sweet daddy--someone I can talk with and discuss meaningful things...like music and books? I need someone who also cares for the genteel things in life. Cate's no company and, besides, she doesn't care about such things.

CAITE

Damn right I don't!

MCQUINN

Well....., I could hire a companion for you. She could keep you company until Cate's married. A sorta chap-a-rony for you.

REBECCA

Does it have to be a woman, Daddy? Couldn't you hire a man—a gentleman, of course-- so I'd have someone of the opposite sex to talk to (*Quickly*) Besides you, that is.

MCQUINN (*Clears his throat*)

I don't think that would be a very wise idea. A man is not a fit companion for a young girl.

REBECCA

Well, then, how about a teacher! A teacher to help me conjugate Latin verbs and improve my piano playing so I could sing soothing songs to you in the evening.

MCQUINN

A teacher, eh? Hmmmmmm!

REBECCA (*Begging prettily*)

Please, Daddy dearest, pretty please...with sugar and cream on it? Sugar and cream AND strawberries?

MCQUINN (*Relenting*)

Well alright. You are so like your dear mother (may the saints preserve her) that I can't resist such a sweet request.

CAITE

I think I'm gonna puke!

MCQUINN (*ignoring Cate*)

Horace, if you or Greg know of anyone who'd be interested in hiring on as Becky's teacher, send him over. Tell him I'll pay him well. Rebecca misses school now that she finished her time at Miss Lisa's boardin' school. *(To Caite)* And just think Caitey, you could join your sister for the lessons and it wouldn't cost me one cent extra!

CAITE

I'd rather eat a frog! I'm outta here. Devil needs a good hard gallop...and I need some fresh air!

MCQUINN *(Defeated sigh)*

Go for your ride, Caitey. Come Becky, you can make me a cup of coffee.

REBECCA

Yes Daddy dear! *(They exit)*

CAITE *(mimicking Rebecca)*

Yes Daddy dear! As you wish Daddy dear! God! What a namby-pamby suck-up I have for a sister. And she always was Pa's favorite. *(To Greg & Horace)* Either of you two want to arm wrestle? *(Pause--they back away)* I didn't think so. Don't take any wooden nickels! So long, suckers! *(She saunters off)*

GREG *(calling after her)*

I hope your horse pitches you into a cactus, you Irish hell-cat! *(To Horace)* You know she's a card carrying Suffragette don't you? God help us if women ever get the vote. Do you know she actually thinks that fat Republican Taft will get re-elected next year over a great orator like William Jennings Bryan?

HORACE

Are you serious? Taft hasn't done much with his first term, if you ask me. That just shows how crazy she is...why no red-blooded Texan would ever vote Republican! We're a Democratic state. Always have been, always will be, regardless of WHO's in Washington.

GREG

At last Friday's political rally I saw her marching down Main Street myself, carrying a sign that said "Taft's our Man" on one side and "Action Not Oration" on the other.

HORACE

Women! What the Hell do they know about politics? Next thing you know one of them will want to run for Mayor...or Governor!

GREG

Hah! THAT will never happen! Not in Texas!

HORACE

Well, like it or not, I suppose we'll just have to cool our heels until someone takes Caite the Curst out of circulation!

GREG (*Sigh*)

You're right there, Horace. I wonder where I can find a teacher McQuinn would hire.

HORACE

You know, I've been thinking. Up till now we've both been butting heads over Becky; but I think it's high time we started working together towards a common goal.

GREG

What kind of common goal?

HORACE

We gotta come up with a husband for that ornery over-the-hill sister of hers!

GREG

A husband! For Caitlain McQuinn you'll need to find a willing nutcase!

HORACE

A nutcase?

GREG

A nutcase! Do you think any man in his right mind would want to marry a she devil?

HORACE

Hell! She's a woman, ain't she? Even though she is a bit long in the tooth.

GREG

I'm not so sure about that. And then there's that Suffragette thing.

HORACE

Listen, Greg, we might not be able to stand her, but there are men in this world that would take on Satan himself--if there's enough money involved! And . McQuinn has said he'd give half Caite's inheritance money to her husband on the day they were married and the other half on the day his first grandkid is born.

GREG

Caite has an inheritance? Where'd you hear that?

HORACE

Becky told me. It's from their mama. And if Caite doesn't marry, the money goes to the Tomball orphan's fund when she dies.

GREG

How much is this reward anyway?

HORACE

Not reward. Inheritance!

GREG

For anyone marrying Caite, believe me, it would be a well earned reward!

HORACE

McQuinn promised to give \$3,000 at the wedding to any man that would take Caite off his hands!

GREG (*Whistles*)

Whew! \$3,000 is a chunk of cash! That's more than Doc Pullem, the dentist, made during all of last year. But, Hell, I'd rather be horsewhipped than marry her, money or no money!

HORACE

I'm with you there! We gotta find someone to hogtie Caite; to wed her, bed her, and rid the house of her! Come on! (*They exit*)

TRAVIS (*looking after them*)

Boss, do you think either of those two galoots are really in love with Miss Rebecca?

LUKE

Who knows? But I know I've been bitten.

TRAVIS

Say what?

LUKE

I'm in love! I never thought it possible . Not until I saw Miss Becky! It's love at first sight, Travis--I'm in love at first sight!

TRAVIS

Uh, boss, maybe your first sight of the girl took so long that ya didn't see what's at the root o' the problem surroundin' her!

LUKE

I saw that she was as pretty as a palomino filly in the sunlight, as shy as a rabbit, and as soft spoken as a Texas mourning dove.

TRAVIS

And her sister's like a mustang with a burr under its saddle--she's a cantankerous old mule! And not only that, until her father has gotten rid of her, the little palomino filly-of-your-desire hasta stay locked in the stable from all wannabe studs. Includin' you. We gotta come up with some sort of plan!

LUKE

You're right. And I know how! Isn't McQuinn planning to hire a teacher for Miss Becky?

TRAVIS

Yep! And I have a humdinger of an idea a-brewin' in m' fer-tile brain!

LUKE

So do I.

TRAVIS

Knowin' how your steel trap lawyer mind works, I'll bet we have the same idea.

LUKE

We might, Travis. What's your idea?

TRAVIS

You're gonna hire on as the teacher. Right?

LUKE

Right!

TRAVIS

It won't work, boss!

LUKE

Why not?

TRAVIS

How'll you get to meet her?

LUKE

Remember that older man named Greg? You know, the banker fella?

TRAVIS

The one all duded up in a suit and vest?

LUKE

That's him! We'll hunt him up, tell him we heard he was looking for a teacher, convince him that I'm a bonafide hot-shot scholar right out of college, and get him to introduce us to her daddy. The rest, as they say, is a piece of cake.

TRAVIS

I ain't so sure boss! Remember, you're supposed to be gettin' your dad's new ranch set up and runnin'. If you are off playin' teacher, who'll be at the ranch? Who'll hire the new hands? Who'll say howdy to the new neighbors?

LUKE

That's where you come in, Travis--you will.

TRAVIS

Me? Are you plum loco?

LUKE

It'll work out perfectly--as our foreman and overseer, you know all about my family! No one knows us here. As far as anyone knows, you could be Luke Vincent and I could be Travis Nelson.

TRAVIS

Did you forget that Bronco is comin' to the Tomball spread as the cook? He knows you 'n' he knows me, and as stupid as he is, he'll still be able to tell us apart!

LUKE

Don't worry about Bronco. I'll spin him a yarn that he'll believe. Here, trade hats with me--mine is new and yours looks much more disreputable--more in keeping with an out of work teacher!

TRAVIS (*as they trade hats*)

All right, boss, if you say so. After all, I did promise your dad to keep an eye on you and to keep you out of trouble, excessive saloons and the clutches of graspin' women!

LUKE

And so you shall...except for that wonderful Miss Becky who can grasp me any time!

(*Bronco enters*) Here comes Bronco now. Hey, Bronco! where have you been?

BRONCO

Where have I been? Hah! Where in thunderation have you been? I been lookin' all over for ya. Whoa, boss! What happened to yer new hat? What's goin' on around here?

LUKE (*putting arm around Bronco*)

Ah, Bronco, this is no time to kid around. It's dangerous here. A situation has come up and Travis is wearing my hat to save my life. And I, for my escape, have put on his. Are you following this?

BRONCO

Uh, yeah, Boss. I reckon I am.

LUKE

Ah! Ah! Not "Boss" now--now I am Travis and Travis is Luke and he is your boss.

BRONCO (*scratching his head*)

Uh.....I don't follow you, boss.

LUKE

It's simple. I was in a gunfight earlier today and sent a man to the local sawbones. It was a fair fight but I'm afraid that I have to hide out until the dust settles.

BRONCO (*looking around*)

I don't see any dust.

LUKE

Bronco, you have to help save my life by pretending Travis is me and I'm him. Call him boss, and help him out at the new spread while I take off for a spell--to save my life. Do you understand me?

BRONCO

No. Yes. (*Completely confused*) I don't know!

LUKE

It won't be for long. Just remember that, for now, I'm not Luke Vincent--he is--and he isn't Travis Nelson--I am. Think you can remember that?

BRONCO (*Scratches his head, thoroughly lost*)

I'll try t' remember.

TRAVIS

It's simple, Bronco, when there's people around, I'm Luke and you call me "Boss", but when we are by ourselves, then I'm Travis.

BRONCO

When the boss is gone, you're Travis 'ceptin' when folks are around--then you're Luke. (*Travis & Luke nod*) I got it. I think.

LUKE

Let's go Travis. There's one more thing you have to do before my plan can begin.

TRAVIS

What's that?

LUKE

Add yourself to Miss Rebecca's list of hopefuls. *(Holds up hand as Travis starts to speak)* Don't ask me why. I don't have time to go into it now but I have my reasons, and they're good. Come on, you two, let's vamoose and look for that Greg person at his bank. *(Exeunt with Bronco muttering "He's the boss when there's folks around; he's Travis when he's alone" over and over)*

(End of Scene 1)

**Perusal
Only
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Scene 2

(Peter & Dusty come out of Tomball Inn Door)

PETER

Shoot, Dusty, we've come all this way to visit with my old A & M pal, Horace and the cash register man says he's not around.

DUSTY *(Dryly)*

And here I thought we came up here because you were looking for a way to fatten up your family's wiped out bank account. Sir.

PETER

Don't be such a smart-ass, Dusty. You didn't have to tag along with me, you know.

DUSTY *(Resigned sigh)*

No, I could have stayed in Palacios and signed aboard a fishing boat. Except I hate fish!

PETER *(Laughing)*

Always complaining!

DUSTY

Anyway, my cousin Charlene lives here in Tomball. I ain't seen her in ages.

PETER

Wasn't she that scrawny little straw-haired monster that was always fighting with the boys?

DUSTY *(Chuckling)*

She's not scrawny any more and she's a terrific cook--in fact, she's the cook at this here Tomball Inn. I'll bet if we went back inside and talked with her she'd know where your old pal was. After all, he's the owner here.

PETER *(Spying Horace, who is coming up the street)* Never mind, here comes Horace now. *(Calls out)* Horace Genero, you old Beau Brummell of East Texas, you are just the man I'm looking for!

HORACE

Peter Anthony! What brings you up to Tomball from Palacios? *(They do an Aggie greeting, Horace does a series of Aggie blackflips and says:)* Hullaballoo! Caneck! Caneck! We're gonna beat 'em all to heck! Chig-gar-roo-gar-rem-gar-em! Routh Tough! Real Stuff! Texas A&M! *(They hug)*

PETER *(Laughing)*

Always the Aggie yell leader! I'm here to see you, Sport. You remember Dusty don't you? Of course you do!

DUSTY (*Tipping his hat to Horace*)
Mr. Genero. We're here to find some money for Mr. Peter.

HORACE
What?

PETER (*Laughing*)
Dusty's only partially right--we're also having a bit of fun.

DUSTY (*Aside*)
As long as it doesn't cost much.

HORACE
Well, all I can say is "Welcome alla mia casa, il mio sig molto honored Petruccio!"

DUSTY (*To Peter*)
Is he swearing at us?

PETER (*Laughing*)
No, Dusty, that's just an Italian's way of saying "howdy".

DUSTY
Sounded like swearing to me!

HORACE
I said "Welcome to our house, my much honored Mr. Peter."! (*To Peter*) I see you still remember your Italian.

PETER
I'd have never understood anyone at your place when we were kids if I hadn't learned the lingo. It was all your folks ever spoke. (*To Dusty*) Horace's father was a fisherman in Palacios. We grew up together.

HORACE
Pete was always escaping from his fancy rich-boy life. He'd come over to our place just to get away from his ol' cattle baron of a father. How is the old scoundrel anyway?

PETER
He passed away six months ago.

HORACE
Oh, I am sorry Pete.

PETER

Don't be. We never were very close.

HORACE

Well, at least he must have left you well fixed.

PETER

Don't I wish? The ranch was mortgaged to the hilt. It seems dear old Dad had a hidden vice. He was a secret gambler and all those "business" trips to New Orleans were simply to line the pockets of the gamblers on the riverboats. Which is why I'm here.

HORACE

Oh?

DUSTY

Mr. Peter is looking for a woman. A rich woman.

PETER

To misquote Shakespeare: "I've come to wife it wealthy wherever I can!" I thought that, you, being so successful up here, might know of some rich local widow --or even as far as Houston--that might be looking for a handsome, virile husband with a big mortgage...and a business proposition to make!

HORACE

How rich would she have to be?

PETER

I've managed to pay off all but \$3,000 of the mortgage. We've got a nice herd to sell this fall that'll pay off most of it, but this is only June and the bank says they've waited long enough. They've given me until the end of this month to pay off the balance.

HORACE

\$3,000 eh? I may know of someone.

DUSTY

The Boss don't care if she is as ugly as sin, with warts and crossed eyes--or if she's as old as the hills with wrinkles and no teeth. As long as she's rich enough to pay off the mortgage, he says he'll marry her.

HORACE

Well, that sounds a bit cold-blooded--not like you at all, Pete.

PETER

It'd be a business proposition, Horace, and I'll pay her back once the herd is sold.

DUSTY

And he'd still be married to her. I told him it was a dumb idea.

PETER

Listen, if that's the price I'll have to pay to save the ranch, I'll take it. You know that old saying "beggars can't be choosers"? Well, it's true in this case! Besides, it will be a business proposition--no romance involved.

DUSTY

And, God forbid, no hanky-panky!

HORACE

Well, Pete, if you're really serious about this, I just may know of someone!

PETER

I'm serious. I have to save the ranch. So--tell me about her. How do you know she'd be interested in my proposition?

DUSTY

More importantly, how old is she? And just how ugly is she?

HORACE

She isn't old or ugly. She's really sort of pretty--in a tomboy sort of way. She's twenty- four and has all her teeth. In addition, her father will give the man who marries her \$3,000 on her wedding day, another \$3,000 when his first grandchild is born and half interest in his store when he dies--the other half goes to her sister's husband.

DUSTY

Uh, what's wrong with her? There must be something wrong with her or her father wouldn't be so generous.

HORACE

Well, I won't hornswaggle you--she has a real problem. The she-cat's a bit on the wild side—and she's known clear to Houston for her Suffragette work. Plus she has a helluva temper besides being a regular tomboy. She wears men's overalls and cowboy boots most of the time! Oh, she can talk and act real proper if she wants too--but she never wants to! I hear the nuns at St. Mary Magdalene Academy breathed a sigh of relief when she finished up there!

PETER

Maybe she'll change once she's married

HORACE

That one? I wouldn't bet on it!

DUSTY

The boss has gentle-broke a lot of wild horses. A woman wouldn't be so hard--

would it boss? 'Specially one who's easy on the eyes!

PETER

I do have a way with wild things!

HORACE

You'll have your work cut out for you with this one. On top of everything else, she's as stubborn as a mule.

PETER

That shouldn't be a problem! Stubborn or not, this is a business proposition. Once married, I won't care how she might balk! And who can tell? Maybe we'll even get to like each other.

HORACE

That'll be the day!

PETER

So where does this prime piece of womanhood live?

HORACE

I don't know how "prime" Caitlin is (that's her name, Caitlin, but we all call her Caite) . After all, Pete, she IS twenty-four! Anyway, she lives with her father and sister, Rebecca, over their store (*Points*) there. You might as well know the rest of it, Pete, marrying Caite would be a godsend to me. I'd like to court Becky and McQuinn refuses to let me even see her until he marries off "Caite the Curst."

DUSTY

"Caite the Curst!" ?? You've gotta be kidding!

HORACE

That's her nickname around here.

PETER

Don't worry, Dusty, you know me! I'll have that one tamed and eating out of my hand in no time.

HORACE

Watch out that she doesn't bite that hand.

PETER (*To Horace*)

Introduce me to her, Horace, and I'll owe you big time. If you ever need me for anything, just call on me.

HORACE

Well, Pete, now that you mention it, there is one small favor you could do for me!

PETER

Anything for a friend! Just ask me!

HORACE

In order to see Becky, I plan to disguise myself as a music teacher. Remember how good I was in all the school plays?

PETER

Yeah, and that year you spent traipsing around the country with Haverley's Minstrals about drove your dad crazy.

HORACE

Ah! But I did learn about makeup, didn't I? Mr. McQuinn will never recognize me.

PETER

Where do I fit into this scheme of yours?

HORACE

Introduce me to McQuinn as a music teacher from Laredo that you've brought to teach music to his daughters. Then I'll have access to Becky and be able to see her while you take on Caite! Do you think you can handle the wildcat? She can be as mean as a grizzly with a toothache and can yell bloody murder when she's crossed.

PETER

Relax, Horace. What's a bit of yelling? I've heard pumas scream and coyote's howl in the Hill Country; I've been at bull fights down in Matamoros. Do you think a woman's puny scream, will bother me? *(A scream from the store—Caite's)*

CAITE'S VOICE *(Offstage)*

Come back here with my Stetson or, sister or no sister, I'll claw your eyes out!

PETER *(to Horace)*

Caite?

HORACE *(nodding)*

Caite!

PETER *(with a sigh)*

I see I have my work cut out for me! Come on Horace, let's get you into a suitable disguise. Are you coming Dusty?

DUSTY

I'm coming boss. Against my better judgment.

PETER

Buck up, Dusty, we're gonna capture Caite the Curst!

DUSTY *(as they exit into Inn)*

I wish I were as sure of "capturing" a good dinner!

(There is an offstage scream from Rebecca who then yells:)

REBECCA *(offstage)*

You lassoed me! Damn your wicked hide, you lassoed me!

CAITE *(as she backs onto street holding the end of her lasso)* Ah!ah!ah! Naughty, naughty, Rebecca! What would Daddy dearest say if he heard his precious little Becky dear use such language?

REBECCA *(Hanging onto doorframe)*

Caite! So help me God, if you don't let me loose right this minute, I'll snatch you bald!

CAITE *(Pulling on rope)*

Let *(pull)* go *(pull)* of the doorframe *(pull)* Becky! *(Becky lets loose, lands on her rear, grabs rope & holds on as Caite pulls her out)*

REBECCA

Damn you, Caite! Damn you to Hell and back!

CAITE

My, my! And everyone says I have a temper! *(Looks around)* You'd better calm down sister dear. In case you haven't noticed, you are smack dab in the middle of the square!

REBECCA *(Examining nails)*

I think I broke a nail...and it's all your fault!

CAITE

What? And you think that's gonna mar your beauty?

REBECCA

You're just jealous of me because I have boyfriends and you don't.

CAITE *(jerking on rope)*

I don't need a boyfriend but you sure seem to. Be honest, Becky, of all those men buzzing around you like honey bees to Mexican heather, is there one you

honest and truly like?

REBECCA

None.

CAITE

What about Horace? He bought one of those new Ford model T motor cars and was speeding down the road while I was out riding yesterday. Musta been goin' at least 20 miles an hour. I wanted to race him but Devil wouldn't go near that noisy piece of machinery.

REBECCA

He's as dull as dishwater! You can have him! I just keep that peacock around for laughs.

CAITE

Oh, maybe you want money more--how about Greg? He's a rich banker and he'd keep you in all the froufrou and ostrich feathers you could want!

REBECCA (*trying to loosen the rope*)

Not my type! And he's too old! He's forty if he's a day! Plus he's saddled with those icky five-year-old kids now that his wife up and died on him. Do I look like a stepmother?

CAITE

I never could understand why you kept him on your string. That dude looks at all women like a stud bull lookin' over a harem of heifers! (*Jerking rope*) Now, Give. Me. My. Hat!

REBECCA

Oh, you are so mean, Caitel! You're just doing all this to torment me. (*Struggles against the rope*) Let me go, damn your eyes, let me GOOOOOOO! (*She wails and throws herself on the ground in such a manner that Caitel's hat is beneath her*)

CAITE (*Pulling the rope tight*)

Get up you cry baby. (*McQuinn enters and crosses to Rebecca*)

MCQUINN

What's this? What's this?

REBECCA (*throwing her arms around his legs*)

Oh, Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!

MCQUINN (*helping Rebecca up & removing rope*)

What's gotten into you, Caitlin? What's sweet Rebecca ever done to you?

(Rebecca sneaks a look at Caite & sticks out her tongue and Caite flies at her)
Hold on there, Caitlin! Leave your sister alone. Go inside Becky. Have a cup of chamomile tea to calm your nerves.

REBECCA

Yes, Daddy dear. *(To Caite, sweetly)* I believe this is yours *(Hands her the hat)*
Really, Caitlin, you should be more careful of your things! *(Rebecca exits, but not before she sticks her tongue out and thumbs her nose at Caite--unseen, of course, by McQuinn!)*

MCQUINN

Ah Caitlin, my girl, stop picking on your sister. If you need something to do, go inside and finish up the inventory

CAITE *(Sarcastically. She jams hat onto her head)*

Yes, father. Of course, father! Whatever you say, father! But beloved Rebecca gets to have tea to calm her nerves! I must be married off so that Rebecca can have a husband. Rebecca, sweet, sweet Rebecca, is your treasure, your pet.

MCQUINN *(Roaring)*

Enough, now! Inside with you! *(Caite exits inside the store)* Why am I cursed with a stubborn female jackass for a daughter? Oh Maggie, Maggie, why did you take the easy out and die on me, leaving me with a female bobcat to raise?

(Enter Greg; Luke pretending to be the scholar, Mr. Crawford; Peter with Horace disguised as the music teacher, Mr. Lewis; Travis disguised as Luke and Bronco carrying a guitar and books.)

GREG

Good morning, Mr. McQuinn.

MCQUINN

Good morning, Greg. Are these all friends of yours?

GREG

Yes sir.

MCQUINN

Good morning, gentlemen.

PETER

And a good morning to you, too, sir. I hear you have a beautiful mild mannered daughter called Caitlin you want to marry off.

MCQUINN

Well, stranger, I have a daughter called Caitlin and it is time she was married.

HORACE (*Aside to Peter*)

Take it easy, Pete. Don't be so blunt!

PETER (*To Horace*)

I know what I'm doing. Stand aside and watch a master at work! (*To McQuinn*) I am a rancher from the Palacios area, Mr. McQuinn, and after I heard about your daughter--her beauty and her wit; her easy-going nature and bashful modesty; not to mention her calm temperament, I decided I wanted to get to know her better. I was told that Caitlin enjoys music, so I have brought my own music teacher here, to instruct her--at my expense. His name is Mr. Lewis and he is famous in Laredo for his guitar playing. Please accept my gift of this for your favorite daughter, Caitlin.

BRONCO(*Aside to Travis*)

It's getting mighty deep in horse droppin's around here!

TRAVIS

Shhhhh!

MCQUINN

Now that's right neighborly of you, mister, but I don't think your Mr. Lewis will interest Caitlin, much to my sorrow! But my younger daughter, Rebecca, would enjoy learning the guitar.

PETER

Very well, use my gift for the child, Rebecca, then--but it is sweet Caitlin I am interested in.

MCQUINN (*Suspiciously*)

Who'd you say you were, Mr. Smooth Talker?

PETER

My name is Peter Anthony. My father, Roscoe was well known throughout Texas and Louisiana. Our ranch outside of Palacios is the Diamond A.

MCQUINN

Ah yes, the Diamond A. I've heard of your ranch--and your father. How is he?

PETER

Dead, sir, leaving me as his only heir.

MCQUINN

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that; my condolences.

GREG (*Firmly barging in*)

With all due respect to your story and mission, Mr. Anthony, I would like to show Mr. McQuinn what I have brought him.

MCQUINN

Brought me? WHAT are you talking about, Greg?

GREG

I brought you a teacher for Miss Rebecca, sir, as you requested. *(He pushes Luke forward)* This is Mr. Crawford. He's a Rhodes scholar and has been studying in England. He knows French, German and other languages, as well as mathematics. *(Luke does a fancy bow with a flourish)* I told him you'd pay him well.

MCQUINN

Thank you, Greg, thank you! Welcome to Tomball, Mr. Crawford! *(Travis clears his throat)* Excuse me, son, but I don't think we have met.

TRAVIS

Well, sir, my name is Luke and I'm not from around here. But I've heard so much about your daughter, the fair and virtuous Miss Rebecca, that I would like your permission to court her. I was told your older daughter has to marry first, so all I ask is that you allow me to join the others who'll spark Miss Rebecca when the time's right. *(Luke clears HIS throat)* Oh yes, and I brought this small gift of Greek and Latin books.

MCQUINN

Luke? Luke who? You're another mighty smooth talker boyo. Where'd you come from? I don't know anything about you and here you're asking my permission to court my daughter.

TRAVIS

I'm from Austin, sir. My father is Senator Vincent.

MCQUINN

Senator Vincent's son? You are Luke Vincent?

TRAVIS *(with a look at Luke)*

That's what they say!

MCQUINN

Imagine! Senator Vincent's son, courting my daughter. Why, welcome, boyo, welcome. *(Calling inside)* Rebecca! Would you come out here, if you please? *(Rebecca enters immediately--as if she had been listening...which, of course, she was)* Oh! there you are! Mr. Vincent here has some Greek and Latin books for you and these other men *(indicating Luke & Horace)* have said they want to help you and your sister learn music, mathematics and languages. I've decided

MCQUINN *(Continued)*

to let them...and you can tell Caitlin that I said it was all right for the both of you to study with them.

GREG (*Very unhappy about being left out*)
What about me? After all, I found Mr. Crawford for you!

MCQUINN
Oh, all right, Greg. But don't get in the way and mind your manners. Take them all inside, Rebecca. Greg, you and me can play some checkers while the girls study.

REBECCA (*Smiling and with a curtsy*)
Yes, father dear! Here, I've brought you some lemonade. (*She hands him a glass of lemonade & exits with Travis, Greg, Bronco Luke and Horace in tow*)

MCQUINN (*Watching them exit*)
Fine girl! Fine girl! I wish her sister was more like her. (*Looks at Peter*) As for Caitlin, well, Mr. Anthony, I hate to admit it but you've been fed a pack of fibs about her.

PETER
Don't tell me she's already married?

MCQUINN
Oh, she's unmarried all right, and the bane of my existence. She has a temper that's hotter than a jalapeno pepper.

PETER
I like a woman with some spice.

MCQUINN
Just what is your interest in Caitlin? Why have you come all the way from Palacios just to meet her? (*Offers lemonade*) Lemonade? (*Peter shakes his head. McQuinn starts to drink.*)

PETER
Well, sir, I wish to marry her. (*On this, McQuinn chokes on his lemonade*)

MCQUINN (*coughing as Peter pounds his back*)
Marry her? Marry Caitlin? (*He wipes his brow, sets his glass down and sits in chair*)

PETER
Yes, sir. I really haven't much time to spare, Mr. McQuinn. I have to get back to my ranch as soon as possible, so I don't have a great deal of time to court the

girl. May I be blunt sir?

MCQUINN

Please do.

PETER

I hear you want to marry Caitlin off before you allow her sister to marry.

MCQUINN

That's right!

PETER

Then I'm the answer to your prayers.

MCQUINN

So you say.

PETER

Just think of this as a business deal.

MCQUINN

Business deal?

PETER

The word around town is that you will give the man that marries Caitlin \$3,000 on their wedding day. Is that correct?

MCQUINN

True. In addition, Caitlin will inherit one-half of my emporium here when I die.

PETER

Well then, in exchange for my marrying Caitlin, after I successfully court her of course, your part of the deal will be the \$3,000.

MCQUINN (*Sternly & a bit miffed!*)

I see. You want me to sell her to you. Strictly business. Like you're buying a cow or horse.

PETER

Not at all, I will honor her as my wife and be faithful to her. Who knows, we could end up being very fond of one another. What more could you want?

MCQUINN

All I want is for my daughters to be happy and secure. So, tell me son, what do you have to offer my daughter besides your name?.

PETER

Caitlin will inherit everything I own. By the time I die, I'll have transferred everything into her name and into the names of any children that we may have. Is that satisfactory?

MCQUINN

It is...on one condition.

PETER

What is that, sir.

MCQUINN

Much as I'd like to see her married and settled down, Caitlin has to agree to marry you. And she has very stubbornly vowed she wasn't interested in getting married to anyone.

PETER

Then there is nothing to worry about—she will agree. I can be just as stubborn as she can be. She'll agree to marry me because I don't intend to court her like some weak, city-bred, Eastern "gentleman". I plan on courting her Texas Style!

MCQUINN

Court her any way you want to, son, but be armed for some loud outspoken words!

PETER

Words don't hurt anyone. *(Horace enters with the guitar broken over his head. Bronco runs out and off yelling "That female's crazy as a coot.")*
What happened to you?

HORACE

Caitlin!

MCQUINN

Caitlin?!

HORACE

Caitlin! I only told her her fingering on the frets was wrong and then she yelled "Frets, you say? Well watch me fret and fume!" and she broke the guitar over my head calling me more names than any sailor on the docks.

PETER

By God! Isn't she a lusty filly! *(To McQuinn)* I must meet her !

MCQUINN

With my blessings. *(To Horace)* Come in with me Mr. Lewis. Stick to teaching Rebecca. She's a little more agreeable towards learning. *(To Peter)* Coming Mr. Anthony? Or shall I send Caitlin out to you?

PETER

Send her out, please. *(McQuinn & Horace enter store)* Yes, Miss McQuinn, I'll court you in a way you've never dreamt of! If you yell at me, I'll tell you that you sing as sweetly as a wild canary. If you frown, I'll tell you that you're as beautiful as a yellow Texas rose. If you won't talk to me, I'll compliment your great eloquence. If you tell me to go away, I'll thank you for asking me to stay. If you refuse to marry me, I'll simply ask you when the wedding will be. In short, I'll have you so confused you won't have time to think! *(Caitie appears at the door)*

CAITIE *(Exaggerated cowboy talk & swagger!)*

Are you the galoot that wants to palaver?

PETER

I sure do! Good morning, Caitie.

CAITIE

Whoa there, Buster! I'm Caitie to my friends. You can call me Caitlin.

PETER

Well, since I plan to be your friend AND husband, I'll call you Caitie. Pretty Caitie-the prettiest Caitie in Texas. In fact, Caitie, you're prettier than a Guadalupe bass swimming in a clear stream. *(Peter's thought: Now here is one gorgeous piece of female pulchritude! NOTE: During all "thoughts" [which are voice overs], all onstage action freezes)*

CAITIE

You are off your rocker, Bucko. Whatta ya really want? Whatta ya sellin'?

PETER

Why, after hearing how pretty and sweet and kind you were and your many praises sung all the way to Palacios, I decided to mosey up to Tomball to meet you and marry you.

CAITIE

Well, Buster, I can tell by just looking at you, that you are the "moseying" type...so let that moseying urge you had that brought you to Tomball, take you back to where you came from. *(Caitie's thought [NB: a sound cue recorded & played]: He's crazy but he sure is a handsome hunk o' man.)*

PETER *(Sitting on porch)*

Caitie my sweet, we need to talk this over. Come over here and sit by me.

CAITE

Why should I? And I'm not your sweet!

PETER

Because we're going to get married. And yes you are.

CAITE

Says who?

PETER (*Getting up and putting his arm around her--here starts the fighting—which Caite instigates!*)

Says me!

(Note: All through the following scene, Caite is fighting, biting, scratching, hitting and generally getting very physical with Peter--and he uses armlocks & other wrestling holds on her to fend her off and to subdue her)

CAITE

Me? Get married!? Ha!! Not to a worn out stud like you!

PETER

Now Caitey, you are getting a mite hot under the collar. You're starting to act real waspish and it doesn't suit you.

CAITE

If I'm waspish, you better watch out for my Texas-size sting! (*She bites him.*)
(Peter's recorded & played thought: Ouch! That hurt!)

PETER

That stung, Caite, but I'm an expert at plucking out Texas wasp stingers!

CAITE

Only if you know where to find them, Bucko! (*She dances away*)

PETE

Everyone knows that a Texas wasp's stinger is in its tail! (*He swats her rear*)
(Caite's recoded & played thought: He hit me!)

CAITE

You hit me!

PETER

You bit me! Come on Caite, I am a gentleman....

CAITE

That's what you say. (*Caite's recorded & played thought:* It's payback time, Buster. *She hits him*)

PETER

I swear, I'll hogtie you if you hit me again.

CAITE

You wouldn't dare!

PETER

Try me!

CAITE

You must think you are some big cock-a-the-walk rooster!

PETER (*Leering at her*)

A satisfied one if you'll will be my hen!

CAITE

I'd never choose you as my rooster—even though you sure do crow like one.

PETER

Come on Caite, don't look so sour-faced!

CAITE

I always look this way when I take a bite of a sour crabapple like you. (*She tries to bite him but he stops her in time and puts her into an armlock*)

PETER

Now listen to me, Caite, I'm not going to let you get away from me.

CAITE

Let me go! I'll make you sorry! I'm not called "Caite the Curst" for nothing!

PETER

"Caite, the Curst"?

CAITE

Oh, I know they call me "Caite the Curst" behind my back!

PETER (*all the time struggling with her*)

They're all wrong, Caite, Why, you're as gentle as a kitten. Even though they

told me you were rough and standoffish and sullen, I'm sure you're really full of fun and courteous to everyone. You may be a little retarded in your speech but it's as sweet as prairie flowers. I'm sure that, deep inside, you don't want to be cross and cranky but want to be soft and gracious. Do you know that I was told you limped and were cross eyed! What liars there are in this world! And so, sweet Caite, setting all this "palaver" aside and in plain terms, your father has agreed to our hitching up and whether you want to or not, I will marry you. I'm the man for you, Caite (*he kisses her; she hits him*). I'm the one that was born to tame you and bring you from being a wildcat to a pussycat. (*He kisses her again*) Here comes your father. Now hush and let me talk with him for I've made up my mind that we will marry. (*Caite stares at him, transfixed!*)

(*McQuinn, Greg and Travis enter*)

MCQUINN

Well, Mr. Anthony, how are you getting on with my daughter?

PETER

Fine and dandy, sir. I can see that we're going to be as happy as a pair of hound dog pups with two tails apiece to wag. (*Caite starts to say something so Peter kisses her*)

MCQUINN

And you, daughter?

CAITE

Don't call me your daughter? What kind of a father would wish me to marry someone that's half lunatic and half hare-brained Comanchero? (*Peter kisses her again & presses her head into his chest*)

PETER

As you can see, we have gotten along so well that we've agreed on next Sunday as our wedding day!

CAITE (*Punching him in the gut*)

I'll see you hanged on Sunday first.

GREG

She says she'll see you hanged first!

TRAVIS

If this is success then I'd sure hate to see failure!

PETER

Pay no attention to my charming bride-to-be, she's shy.

GREG (To McQuinn)

Since when?

CAITE (To Peter who has her in a headlock)

Louse!

TRAVIS

She doesn't sound too ready to get hitched to me.

PETER

I tell you, we've chosen next Sunday and it's mind boggling how much she has grown to love me in such a short time! Why, she can't keep her hands off me, see how she keeps hugging me and giving me kiss after kiss! Why, before I knew it, she'd won me over.

CAITE

You egotistical.....(Peter cuts her off with another kiss. [Caite's recorded & played thought: Ummmmm, not bad!])

PETER

See how it is with us? we can't get enough of each other. Break out a wedding feast, Father McQuinn, and invite the guests! And be sure that Caitlin is properly dressed!

CAITE (This got her attention!)

Properly dressed?

PETER

I'm marrying a woman--not a man. Wear a dress, my sweet. (To McQuinn)
Caite would like you to burn all her men's pants and flannel shirts.

CAITE (Starting to protest)

Why you.....(Peter cuts her off with another kiss [Peter's recorded & played thought: I could get used to these sweet lips mighty quick!] [Caite's recorded & played thought: a big:: Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!])

MCQUINN

I don't know what to say except "God bless your union, my boy!" It's a match!
And God help you!

PETER

Come, Caite, take a walk around town with me.

CAITE (She's dazed!)

What?

PETER

After all, we'll be married next Sunday! *(Peter kisses her and then drags Caite off by the hand)*

GREG *(Looking after them)*

I don't remember ever hearing of a woman being courted and getting engaged so hastily--not to mention crazily!

TRAVIS

Me neither. This puts a new meanin' on "Texas Style."

MCQUINN

Well, gentlemen, Since Caitlin is spoken for and will be married next Sunday, I guess y'all're free to court Rebecca. BUT!!!! When she decides which of you she wants, I'll want a written and notarized guarantee from that person that he'll be able to provide for my daughter in a manner I think suitable. Agreed?

TRAVIS & GREG

Agreed.

MCQUINN

Good! *(to Travis)* Now boyo, I've known Greg here for years and figure that, since he owns the Tomball bank, he'll be able to support Rebecca in a proper manner. But you gotta prove to me that you can support Rebecca better than he can. You have your father, the Senator, vouch for you--in person--before I allow you to marry her...if she should pick you, that is. Do you agree to that?

TRAVIS

I agree.

MCQUINN

Good. I'm goin' in now to tell Rebecca she's free to see you both. So long, boyos. *(He exits. Caite enters on the run, stops and glares at Greg & Travis as they doff their hats and say.)*

GREG & TRAVIS *(in unison)*

Hello there Miss Caite! Our felicitations!

CAITE

Don't either of you idiots say one more word to me. If you do I'll be on to you faster than buzzards on a gut-wagon! *(She exits, stomping, into the store)*

TRAVIS *(looking after her)*

That filly is as uppity as a Siamese cat and about as cold as a Basset hound's nose. God help her poor husband-to-be!

GREG

Well, son, it looks like I'm not going to have to worry--what with your father being all tied up in Austin. He won't be able to get here before I've swept Miss

Rebecca off her dainty little feet. And I will, you know! Good day! *(He exits)*

TRAVIS *(Calling after him)*

The Hell you say! *(Aside to himself)* This bluff has worked so far and I gotta help the boss out. It looks like its up to me to find a father for Luke to vouch for him. *(He scratches his head as he thinks)* Hold on there! I saw a poster at the livery stables that said Marcus the Great was performin' over in Spring. That old reprobate's a master of impersonation and I'll bet a dollar to a hole in a donut that, for an appropriate fee, the old ham will love to become "Daddy for a Day!" Hot Damn! Sometimes I amaze myself with my cunning! *(He exits whistling. Rebecca comes out onto the porch fanning herself and sits on a bench)*

REBECCA

La! But it is hot and stuffy inside the store. *(To Horace and Luke, who follow her out. Horace is playing the guitar)* Now, gentlemen, isn't it much nicer out here? I love it outside, don't you? My goodness, won't one of you say something? It seems I've done nothing but prattle on and talk for the last half hour!

HORACE *(To himself)*

She can say that again! *(He strums on the guitar)*

LUKE *(Sitting beside her)*

But, sweet pupil, I love hearing you talk. Especially when conjugating verbs. *(Rebecca giggles. Horace strums louder on the guitar.)* Hold on there, Mr. Lewis, that guitar strumming is getting on my nerves. It's too bad Miss Caitlin didn't break that one too!

HORACE

Is that so? Why you strutting popinjay, you've had Miss Becky conjugating verbs for the past half hour and now it's my turn to teach her.

LUKE *(Rising)*

Listen, you pompous ass, don't you know that music was invented to refresh the mind of man after his--or in this case, her--studies? So just wait your turn!

HORACE *(Nose to nose with Luke and Strumming on the guitar furiously)*

I'm not going to listen to your damnable verbs any longer!

REBECCA

Gentlemen! Gentlemen! Calm down! After all, it is my choice what I want to learn--and when! I'm no schoolgirl in a pinafore that has to be tied down to certain school hours, you know! I will learn my lessons when I want to and where I want to! So, sit down, both of you. Mr. Lewis, you sit over there and

REBECCA (*Continued*)

tune your guitar while Mr. Crawford sits here by me and we conjugate a few more verbs. By the time you have your instrument all tuned up and ready to go, Mr. Crawford will be done with me. I promise!

HORACE (*Still glaring at Luke*)

You saying your lesson with him will be over when I am in tune?

LUKE (*Also still glaring*)

That will be a cold day in Hell. Tune your instrument.

HORACE (*Muttering to himself*)

MY instrument is MORE than tuned up and ready!

LUKE

I heard that! Watch it! There's a lady present!

REBECCA

Now don't be naughty, Mr. Lewis! (*To Luke*) Come, sir, sit beside me. (*Luke does*) Now, where did we leave off? (*Horace begins to tune the guitar*)

LUKE (*Pointing to Latin book*)

Here Miss Rebecca: *Hic ibat* Simois, *hic est* Sigeia tellus, *Hic steterat* Priami regia celsa senis.

REBECCA (*batting her eyelashes at him*)

Oh my! That leaves me breathless. Would you conjugate them for me?

LUKE

My pleasure, ma'am. *Hic ibat*, as I told you before, *Simois*, I am really Luke Vincent, *hic est*, son of Senator Vincent of Austin, *Sigeia tellus*, disguised like this to capture your love, *Hic steterat*, and the Luke that comes courting you, *Priami*, is our foreman, Travis, *regia*, who is impersonating me, *celsa senis*, in order to fool your father!

REBECCA (*giggling*)

Oh, that is so clever!

HORACE (*breaking in*)

Miss Becky, my instrument is in tune.

REBECCA (*gazing adoringly at Luke*)

Lets hear it, Mr. Lewis. (*Horace plays the scales*) Oh no, Mr. Lewis. The highest tone is off pitch. Tune it again!

LUKE (*gazing back at Rebecca*)

Spit in the hole, man, and tune it again. (*Horace goes back to his tuning, grumbling*)

REBECCA

Now let's see if I have this right: *Hic ibat Simois*, I don't know you, *hic est Sigeia tellus*, I don't trust you, *Hic steterat Priami*, take care that he doesn't hear us, *regia*, do not presume, *celsa senis*, but do not despair.

HORACE (*breaking in again*)

Miss Becky, I know the guitar is in tune now. (*He strums on it*) See?

LUKE (*intently gazing at Rebecca as she gazes back at him*)

All but the bass.

HORACE

The bass is fine!

REBECCA

Fix the bass, Mr. Lewis

HORACE (*As he sits*)

The bass is fine! (*Horace's recorded & played thought: it's that base fellow over there daring to court my love that needs fixing! I see I'm going to have to keep an eye on him! You just watch your step fella!*)

REBECCA (*softly to Luke*)

In time I may believe you, right now though, I don't trust you.

LUKE

Then I'll just have to win your trust. (*He picks up her hand*)

REBECCA (*Trilling*)

Oh, Mr. Crawford!

HORACE (*striding up to the pair*)

All right, Latin teacher, you've had your time with Miss Becky. Now it's mine! Why don't you go take a hike and leave us alone. The music I want to make is not for three voices!

LUKE (*Through his teeth*)

I'll just bet it isn't

REBECCA

Mr. Crawford, Mr. Lewis, please!

LUKE (*to Rebecca*)

Miss Rebecca?

REBECCA

Exchange places with Mr. Lewis, please. It's his turn now! (***Rebecca's recorded & played thought:*** And I'll get rid of boring Horace once and for all!)

LUKE (*Standing & bowing*)

Your wish is my command. (*Rebecca giggles as Luke walks over to where Horace had been*) (***Luke's recorded & played thought:*** Well, I'll wait--but I'll watch that guitarist because, I think he's hoping to get a bit lovey-dovey with Miss Becky.)

HORACE

Now, Miss Becky, before you begin to learn the fingering on the guitar, you must first learn the rudiments of the art. I have discovered a new but effective way to quickly learn the scales. I've written everything down for you to read--a sort of music primer.

REBECCA

But I am long past the primer age.

HORACE

Still, won't you please read the primer of Horace? (*He winks at her*)

REBECCA (*reaching for the paper*)

Horace, eh? (*She giggles & returns his wink*) Oh, very well: "Do--I am the first note of all harmony. Re--I plead Horace's passion. Mi--Take Horace for a husband. Fa--Horace loves you with all his heart. Sol, la—Only one word have I. Ti, do--Show me pity or I die." (*Looks up & hands him back paper*) Is this your idea of a proposal? Well, I don't like it! It's the dumbest thing I've ever read Horace Genero! Call me old fashioned, but I don't believe a person should change true courting rules for odd inventions like this! (*She stands*) Now, if you gentlemen will excuse me, I have some things to do inside. I have my sister's wedding to prepare for, you know! (*Exits*)

LUKE

Well, with her gone, there's no reason for me hanging around. Guess I'll be moseying along for awhile. (*He exits*)

HORACE

Yes, "mosey" on, cowboy. It looks to me like you and Missy Becky have more than a passing fancy for each other and if she is willing to lower herself to your level and play patty-cake with you, you can have her! There are plenty of women in Tomball; so I guess it's time for me to look for another sweetheart. After all, I

have the reputation of picking classy women to spark in this town and I intend to protect that reputation!

(Peter appears dressed in an old Confederate army cap, Plaid shirt with sleeves in ribbons and turned inside out, mangy chaps over patched men's pants and mismatched cowboy boots. He is singing:)

<p>PETER <i>(1st)</i>: “You are my Sunshine, my only Sunshine. You make me happy when skies are grey. You’ll never know dear, how much I love you. Please don’t take my sunshine away!”</p>	<p><i>(2nd)</i>: “Oh, you beautiful doll, You great big beautiful doll, Let me throw my arms around you! I don’t want to live without you!”</p>
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HORACE
Oh migod! what is that? *(Calls to McQuinn)* McQuinn, you’d better come out here. You won’t believe your eyes. *(McQuinn appears in store doorway)*

PETER
Ah! Father McQuinn!

MCQUINN
What happened to you? Were you robbed? Did you have an accident?

PETER
Why, no Father McQuinn! I was just trying out my wedding clothes.

HORACE *(Choking)*
You are going to wear those clothes at your wedding?

MCQUINN
Come on, Peter. You’ve got to be joking. You can’t marry my daughter in those rags.

HORACE
He’s an eyesore, that’s what he is!

PETER *(To Horace, levelly)*
I really didn’t ask for your opinion, now did I?

MCQUINN
Well, I’m not going to let Caitlin marry you looking like that! Come inside the store—there’s some duds there that should fit you.

PETER

What? You'd cancel the wedding because of my clothes when you've let Caite run around all her life dressed like a man?

MCQUINN

Well, that was different. Everyone knows Caite and don't expect anything else out of her. But they don't know you and I won't be embarrassed by you in this town. So, I repeat, you won't marry my daughter looking like that.

PETER

Oh, you are wrong, there! It's me that Caite's marrying, not my clothes. However, I'll strike a bargain...you get Caite into a dress for the wedding and I'll get myself dressed up a little better. *(Caite enters)* And there she is! My bride to be! I'd be a fool to stand here talking with you when I have a chance to seal my engagement with a kiss. Come here my little Texas wildflower and give your husband-to-be a kiss!

CAITE *(Seeing Peter)*

Peter? Is that you?

PETER

It's me! Your eager bridegroom in the flesh! Ready with a Texas size kiss! *(He grabs her and kisses her.)*

CAITE *(Caitlin's recorded & played thought)*

Ohhhhh My!

PETER *(Peter's recorded & played thought)*

Oh yesssss!]

(And Caitlin faints dead away).

END OF ACT I