
THE BROKEN STATUE

A PLAY

THE BROKEN STATUE

A Play
Full Cast Jewel Version

By
Bob Perry

The Broken Statue

Copyright © 2011 by William Robert Perry

All rights reserved. No part of this play may be used or reproduced by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or by any information storage retrieval system without written permission of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

While some characters and events in this piece may be historically accurate, this is a work of fiction. Characters, names, incidents, organizations and dialogue in this novel are either the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

CONTENTS

The Broken Statue: A Play

Full Version

(18 to 21 cast members including children.)

And

The Broken Statue: A Play

Small Cast Version

(12 to 13 cast members and shorter performance time.)

SETTING

Ponca City, Oklahoma circa 1911 to 1943

CHARACTERS

Boy 1/Cricket
Boy 2/Young Walt
Old Charlie
Mary
E.W. Marland
Young Charlie
Young Walt Johnson
Virginia Marland
Daniel Craigan
Mrs. Dingle
Mrs. Berry
Cricket
Young George
Young Lydie
Charlie
Lydie (Pronounced “Ly-de”)
Walt Johnson
George
Elizabeth
Jody/Gardener

Act I
Scene 1

(Old Charlie and two boys enter and look around. Boys look at Old Charlie who points. Boys respond and 'dig' for a few seconds. They stop and look at Old Charlie who points center. Boys run and dig again, but find nothing. They look at Old Charlie again who points to the platform, where there is a lump of dirt. Boys run up, look at the mound, get on their knees, move dirt around and start to dig slowly. There's a clank, then another clank.)

BOY 1

I've hit something!

OLD CHARLIE

(Old Charlie motions boys away. He gets on his knees next to the mound in front of him. He bends down and peeks in the mound.)

Could it be?

(He looks at both boys.)

This really could be it!

(The boys jump up and dance a little jig with each other as Old Charlie drops to the ground on his back, smiling and breathing hard. Both boys drop by him.)

BOY 2

Charlie, are you all right?

OLD CHARLIE

(Sits up on his knees)

As fit as a worn-out fiddle, but don't tell my granddaughter I'm rolling around down here, will ya?

(Old Charlie digs in the dirt, the boys next to him, so close as he digs more, that he looks at them and they back off a little. Old Charlie stops when he has his hands around part of the statue.)

BOY 1

What is it?

OLD CHARLIE

(Hands in the dirt, gently brings up a part of the statue.)

Part of her face.

(Boys yell, dance a jig, and celebrate.)

BOY 2

I bet she was a looker, Charlie.

OLD CHARLIE

She was beautiful, but she was more than that.

(Notices audience and stands.)

My name is Charlie McDonagh, by the way. I probably should have introduced myself by now, but my name and my story aren't really important.

(Boys continue to dig.)

I was simply a witness and bystander to extraordinary events and even more extraordinary people. By the end of our dig, we found over seven hundred pieces to this broken statue. Each piece was carefully cataloged, photographed, and examined. At a local monument company, plans were made to reconstruct a memorial to a life past and a way of life long gone. The statue had been lost for over forty years.

(Mary enters.)

MARY

Grandpa.

OLD CHARLIE

That's Mary, my granddaughter. She's probably going to let me have it for digging up this statue. I'll let the boys get the rest of it out of the ground.

MARY

Grandpa, why are you wearing yourself out digging for an old statue?

OLD CHARLIE

(To the audience.)

Told ya.

(Talking to Mary.)

It's a part of our town's history. Something lost so long, then found...young folks don't appreciate history.

(Mary stands unconvinced with folded arms.)

MARY

There's got to be more than that.

OLD CHARLIE

(Looks away before talking.)

Well...I knew her.

MARY

Why haven't you told everyone?

(Old Charlie looks at the ground, hesitant to answer.)

Did you know her well?

OLD CHARLIE

I knew her quite well at one time.

MARY

Did you know her "quite well" before you met Grandma?

OLD CHARLIE

It was nothing like that. We were young and her life was...complicated.

MARY

So...you know the story of the statue?

OLD CHARLIE

I do...such a tragedy.

MARY

Why?

OLD CHARLIE

I saw it happen like a spectator in a theater. The characters were noble yet flawed. Eventually forces outside their control crushed them. Poor girl, she had so much and wanted so little. She was beautiful, but she was more than that. She had her own kind of strength. You know that grit you need to get through life. The broken statue is like her broken life...and the broken lives of so many others.

MARY

Can you tell me the story?

OLD CHARLIE

The story of the statue is about opportunities and opportunities lost. It begins with Ernest Whitworth Marland or as folks around here called him, E.W..

(Old Charlie and Mary exit.)

Scene 2

(Young Charlie enters. A train whistle gets his attention as visitors arrive in Ponca City. E.W. Marland steps off the train nicely dressed, full of confidence and personality.)

E.W.

Young man, do you know this town?

YOUNG CHARLIE

Sure do, sir.

E.W.

(Studies the young boy for a moment.)

Then maybe you could tell me the location of a good hotel.

YOUNG CHARLIE

Yes, sir. Are you here to see the 101 Ranch?

E.W.

I definitely want to see the ranch, but I'm here on business and prefer a place in town.

YOUNG CHARLIE

(Confused.)

Business?

E.W.

Yes. Oil business.

YOUNG CHARLIE

The best hotel is the Arcade.

E.W.

That sounds fine, thank-you.

YOUNG CHARLIE

I can show ya the way. It's right down the street.

E.W.

(Amused at the young boy's enthusiasm.)

That would be outstanding.

(Young Charlie grabs a bag and leads E.W.. Charlie hints with his body language that he would like a tip. E.W. looks pleasantly at the young boy.)

What's your name young man?

YOUNG CHARLIE

Charlie...Charlie McDonagh

E.W.

(E.W. bends down to talk to Young Charlie.)

Well Charles, I don't have a nickel for you today, but I will give you a tip: never miss an opportunity to make a new friend.

(Young Charlie looks confused at not getting the money. E.W. laughs.)

Don't worry Charles; I will make it up to you later. We'll take a trip to the 101 Ranch. You are, after all, my first friend in Ponca City.

(E.W. exits. Young Charlie is joined by Young Walt.)

YOUNG WALT

Has that fancy fellow been around?

YOUNG CHARLIE

Mr. Marland? Naw, not today...Haven't seen him in a while.

(Train whistle off stage.)

YOUNG WALT

Train's here.

YOUNG CHARLIE

Yep.

(Virginia Marland enters.)

YOUNG WALT

She looks like a good tipper. Let's see if she needs help.

(Boys comb DINGLE with fingers.)

Ma'am, could we help you with your bags?

VIRGINIA MARLAND

That's very kind, but my husband should be here to meet me. I have quite a lot of baggage to be delivered to the hotel.

(E.W. enters behind Young Charlie.)

E.W.

Charles, you aren't trying to court my wife, are you?

YOUNG CHARLIE

I...I...I just thought...

VIRGINIA MARLAND

Ernest, don't tease them. They were only trying to help.

E.W.

(Laughs good-naturedly.)

Virginia, this is my good friend, Charles. He knows I was just playing.

(E.W. hugs his wife, lifting her off the ground.)

VIRGINIA MARLAND

Ernest, you're embarrassing me!

E.W.

Don't worry dear, you're not back east. You'll find people here are much more relaxed and informal.

(Virginia Marland straightens herself.)

Virginia, meet Mr. Charles McDonagh.

VIRGINIA MARLAND

How do you do, Mr. McDonagh?

E.W.

And who's your friend, young Charles?

YOUNG CHARLIE

This is Walt. We was just seein' if folks needed any help.

E.W.

Virginia, I have a porter from the hotel to move our things, but we surely have something for these boys to carry.

VIRGINIA MARLAND

I think I have something right here.

(Mrs. Marland hands the boys a small bag.)

Here you go.

(Young Charlie and Young Walt fight for control of the bag while E.W. and Virginia continue.)

E.W.

What do you think of Ponca City?

VIRGINIA MARLAND

It's ...provincial.

E.W.

Provincial? Would have thought charming, quaint, or picturesque more appropriate.

VIRGINIA MARLAND

There's nothing wrong with this place; it's just not our place. I appreciate your needing to come for a visit, Ernest, but seriously, when are we going home?

E.W.

This may be home for us. I've been riding around the countryside and the formations look very promising.

VIRGINIA MARLAND

I thought you were going back to Pittsburgh to practice law?

E.W.

I don't want to practice law. When I'm looking for oil, I'm producing something of value.

VIRGINIA MARLAND

Lawyers make a nice living.

E.W.

It's not about the money. When I'm practicing law, I'm working on other people's accomplishments, not mine. It's...hard to explain.

VIRGINIA MARLAND

Don't explain. I'm here for better or worse.

E.W.

Speaking of here, welcome to the Arcade.

(Young Charlie and E.W. exit. Young Walt starts to exit, but is stopped by Virginia.)

VIRGINIA MARLAND

Young man...your name is Walt, right?

(Young Walt nods.)

Do you like to read?

(Young Walt shrugs.)

I have a copy of *Tom Sawyer*.

(Virginia hands a book to Young Walt.)

YOUNG WALT

Thanks!

VIRGINIA MARLAND

When you finish it, come see me and I'll get you *Huck Finn*.

(Virginia exits. Young Walt reads his book.)

(Young Charlie enters to see Walt reading.)

YOUNG WALT

I sure like that Mrs. Marland.

YOUNG CHARLIE

Yeah.

YOUNG WALT

She gave me a copy of *Tom Sawyer* and gittin' me a copy of *Huck Finn*.

YOUNG CHARLIE

You read?

YOUNG WALT

Mrs. Marland says I'm a good reader...says I got...potential.

YOUNG CHARLIE

I guess.

YOUNG WALT

Ya want'a see something?

(Young Charlie looks suspiciously at Young Walt.)

Look what I got.

YOUNG CHARLIE

(Young Charlie looks with some interest.)

What is it?

YOUNG WALT

Tobacco.

YOUNG CHARLIE

Where'd you git it?

YOUNG WALT

Found it.

YOUNG CHARLIE

What'cha gonna do with it?

YOUNG WALT

We're goin' to try it. Come on. Don't want anyone but us using this.

(Young Charlie and Young Walt move.)

YOUNG CHARLIE

Do you even know how?

YOUNG WALT

Sure, you just take a bite and chew.

(Young Walt grimaces.)

It's smooth.

(Young Walt hands a suspicious Young Charlie a piece.)

Ain't you goin' to try some?

(Young Charlie does not reply.)

Well, come on...are ya chicken?

YOUNG CHARLIE

No!

(Young Charlie takes a bite and gags. Young Walt grins.)

YOUNG WALT

Taste good don't it?

(Young Charlie nods and both boys continue to chew. Young Charlie is the first to spit out his chew, but both boys end up leaning over, sick at their stomachs with loud groaning noises.)

That wasn't too bad.

(Young Charlie is not yet able to respond.)

It kind'a tasted better on the way out.

(Young Charlie shakes his head at Young Walt's humor. The boys rest for a while. Soon the sound of an automobile can be heard from off stage. Both boys look in the distance off stage.)

Let's catch a ride.

(Boys wave frantically as noise gets louder.)

Watch out!

(Boys dive to simulate the car almost hitting them.)

YOUNG CHARLIE

That guy nearly ran over us!

(Young Walt throws a rock at the passing automobile.)

I think you hit him...He's stopping.

(Young Walt and Young Charlie look at each other and shout together.)

YOUNG WALT

YOUNG CHARLIE

Run!

Run!

(Boys turn to run before Daniel Craigan shouts.)

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Stop! Stop, I said!

(Both boys obey.)

Which one of you little tramps threw that rock?

(Neither boy answers.)

Tell me now or you will both get a beating!

YOUNG WALT

We...what rock? We didn't throw no rock.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Little liar.

YOUNG WALT

We was just trying to hit a bird over there.

(Craigán walks menacingly toward the boys.)

Please mister, you don't have to—

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Little white-trash liar.

(Daniel Craigán hits/pushes Young Walt to the ground before turning to Young Charlie.)

Since neither of you were man enough to take responsibility, you'll get worse.

(Young Charlie braces for the blow.)

E.W.

Take responsibility for what, Craigán?

(Craigán looks puzzled at E.W.'s appearance.)

DANIEL CRAIGAN

E.W. Marland?

E.W.

Do we have a problem?

(Young Walt sits up wiping his face.)

Are you all right, son?

(Young Walt nods without making any eye contact.)

DANIEL CRAIGAN

What are you doing in this godforsaken country Marland?

E.W.

Most recently, watching a snake in the grass slap a kid!

DANIEL CRAIGAN

The kid threw a rock at me.

E.W.

He's just a kid! Besides, I doubt he did anything. Knowing you, he should've hit you in the head!

DANIEL CRAIGAN

I can't believe you're here. Heard you'd gone to Pittsburgh.

E.W.

You heard wrong.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Heard you lost everything during the panic of '07. I tried to tell you that you were getting too full of yourself.

(E.W. listens silently.)

You should've gotten on board with that Morgan deal.

E.W.

Morgan and the other bankers are thieves.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Wasn't thievery, it was timing. If you hadn't been so bent on proving how much smarter you were than the whole finance industry, they might have given you a heads-up about what was really happening.

E.W.

I didn't need any favors, just the financing to expand.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Well, you got the financing.

E.W.

They called my note.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

That they did. J.P. Morgan made a fortune off that panic. Those on board with Morgan made a fortune too.

E.W.

The cream eventually rises to the top. I'm doing fine.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Doing what—rustling cattle? You'd better smarten up, Marland. You may fool the hicks out here, but you and I know the money people back east make the real deals.

E.W.

Things are different here.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Things aren't different anywhere. It's who you know, not what you know. By the way, I bought your well for 30 cents on the dollar and it's still pumping 20 barrels a day for me.

E.W.

(E.W. steps toward Daniel Craigan.)

Maybe I need to show you how things are different. Maybe you would like to hit someone closer to your own size.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

I don't have any problems with you, Marland, just trying to give you a little guidance.

(Daniel Craigan steps cautiously away and exits.)

E.W.

(Looking at Young Walt.)

You all right, son?

YOUNG WALT

Yes, sir.

E.W.

What's your name again?

YOUNG WALT

Walt. Walt Johnson. I read books with your wife.

YOUNG CHARLIE

We're sure glad to see you, Mr. Marland.

E.W.

(E.W. smiles before turning back to talk to Young Walt.)

Thought I had seen you around. You almost hit him, didn't you?

(Young Walt sheepishly nods.)

I admire your spunk, kid, but you've got to be careful who you pick your fights with.

YOUNG WALT

Who was that guy?

E.W.

That's Daniel Craigan.

YOUNG CHARLIE

Do you know him, Mr. Marland?

E.W.

Yes, we were competitors back in the oil fields of West Virginia. Craigan's smart...ruthless, but smart. You boys stay away from him. What are you doing out here anyway?

YOUNG CHARLIE

(Boys answer at the same time.)

Nothin'.

YOUNG WALT

Fishin'.

E.W.

Nothing and fishing? Looks like you're fishing with nothing.

(Young Walt looks sheepish, realizing he has no tackle.)

Boys, you need to learn to tell the truth. Every time you tell a lie, it's like pulling a thread on a piece of fabric...pretty soon it all comes unraveled.

YOUNG WALT

We were chewin' tobacco.

E.W.

Let me see it.

(Young Walt hands E.W. the tobacco.)

How about I trade you boys this tobacco for some candy when we get back to town?

(The boys nod in agreement.)

(Gets on one knee to talk to Young Walt.)

Son, you got courage. You stick with the truth and that courage will take you far. Would you boys like to ride back into town on my horse?

(The boys agree and start to walk with Marland off stage.)

One thing's for sure. I'm not the only one here looking for oil.

(All three exit stage.)

Scene 3

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry enter whispering and gossiping to each other.)

(Virginia Marland enters.)

MRS. DINGLE

Mrs. Marland...how are you doing?

VIRGINIA MARLAND

Fine. How are you doing, Mrs. Dingle—Mrs. Berry?

MRS. BERRY

I'm doing well.

MRS. DINGLE

Very well, thank you...We saw you talking to *that Johnson* boy earlier today.

VIRGINIA MARLAND

Yes. He's so sweet. So much spirit to him. I've been helping him with his reading and he's doing so much better.

MRS. DINGLE

Every teacher in town...retires before he reaches their grade. His mother is...well, I don't like to talk, but—

MRS. BERRY

She has quite a reputation.

VIRGINIA MARLAND

I don't like to judge people by their reputations.

MRS. DINGLE

Oh, I agree. I just thought you should know what kind of boy has been hanging around you. I would be very careful.

MRS. BERRY

Yes, be very careful.

VIRGINIA MARLAND

I like Walt. He's not pretentious like some people and he's got that special something. He reminds me of Mr. Marland. In fact, I sometimes call him "Little E.W."

MRS. DINGLE

(Rolls her eyes and sighs heavily.)

You're loyal to your husband and I don't like to talk, but—

MRS. BERRY

Some people have been talking.

VIRGINIA MARLAND

Some people?

MRS. DINGLE

Some people say he can't pay his bills and he's likely to skip town. You know me...I don't like to gossip, but—

MRS. BERRY

Some people are gossiping.

VIRGINIA MARLAND

You *ladies* have my permission to tell "some people" that E.W. Marland will pay every penny and then some! He's been a little down on his luck, but he'll pay everyone.

MRS. DINGLE

Oh...I never doubt—

VIRGINIA MARLAND

And tell "some people" that Walt Johnson will surprise a lot of people some day. He's clever and has a good heart. It matters more where a young man is going than where he comes from!

MRS. DINGLE

I see.

VIRGINIA MARLAND

Do you? Have a pleasant day, Mrs. Dingle—Mrs. Berry.
(Virginia Marland exits.)

MRS. DINGLE

She told you, didn't she?

MRS. BERRY

Me?

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry exit.)

Scene 4

(Nighttime Young Charlie and Young Walt.)

YOUNG CHARLIE

Why'd we come to an Indian Burial ground, anyway? It must be midnight. You can talk me into more trouble.

YOUNG WALT

Listen! Did you hear that?

YOUNG CHARLIE

(Young Charlie stops but hears nothing.)

Don't do that! You made me jump out of my skin.

YOUNG WALT

Shut up and listen.

YOUNG CHARLIE

(Whispering.)

I don't hear anything.

YOUNG WALT

Isn't that kind of strange?

YOUNG CHARLIE

Don't know. You'd think we'd hear tree frogs or crickets.

YOUNG WALT

I thought I heard footsteps.

YOUNG CHARLIE

Maybe we better head back.

YOUNG WALT

(Young Walt listens for a moment.)

No... it's nothing, just our nerves. Let's go.

YOUNG CHARLIE

See that?

YOUNG WALT

Oh no! It's Craigan's car! Let's get out of here!

(Boys start to run, but E.W. Marland appears, causing them to scream.)

YOUNG WALT / YOUNG CHARLIE

Aghh!

E.W.

What the devil are you boys doing out here?

YOUNG WALT

Running from Craigan!

E.W.

Craigan? Where did you see him?

(E.W. looks around nervously.)

YOUNG WALT

His car is parked on the trail.

E.W.

Oh. I don't think Craigan's out here tonight.

YOUNG CHARLIE

What're *you* doin' out here, Mr. Marland?

E.W.

That's a good question, but I'd like to know what you guys are doing here at night?

YOUNG WALT

We were...camping.

YOUNG CHARLIE

And we decided to go for a walk.

YOUNG WALT

Yeah...And we got turned around.

YOUNG CHARLIE

And then—

E.W.

At a burial site—at night? Sounds like quite a story.

YOUNG CHARLIE

What's Mr. Craigan doing out here?

E.W.

(E.W. looks at Young Walt.)

Mr. Craigan's in town and I believe he's engaged for the evening. I...*borrowed* his car to check on some formations. How about I give you boys a lift back to town...And let's make a deal—don't tell anyone you saw me here and I won't tell anyone you two were raiding an Indian burial ground.

(The boys nod.)

YOUNG CHARLIE

You won't tell my folks?

E.W.

Your secret's safe with me...Walt, I think you need to stay the night with Charlie.

YOUNG WALT

Okay.

(Walt exits, but Young Charlie stays behind.)

YOUNG CHARLIE

Walt, go on and I'll catch up with you in a minute.

(Young Charlie turns to Mr. Marland.)

What *are* ya doin' here, Mr. Marland?

E.W.

Well, Charles, I am looking for oil.

YOUNG CHARLIE

What for?

E.W.

I'm going to find it, bring it out of the ground and sell it.

YOUNG CHARLIE

What for?

E.W.

People need it. You can make a lot of money selling oil.

YOUNG CHARLIE

Like a hundred dollars?

E.W.

(Laughs.)

Is a hundred dollars a lot of money?

YOUNG CHARLIE

I guess that would be more money than a feller could spend!

E.W.

What would you do with a hundred dollars, Charles?

YOUNG CHARLIE

I'd buy me a horse. I'd buy one for Daddy, too and Momma, I would git her a new dress...from a store and buy my brothers and me all the candy we could eat.

E.W.

That's a lot. If you found oil, Charles, you would have all that and more. Can you count to a hundred?

(Young Charlie nods.)

Imagine counting to one hundred ten times, that would be a thousand. If you could count to one thousand, then count to one thousand one thousand times you would count to a million.

YOUNG CHARLIE

(Trying to pretend to understand.)

That'd be a bunch.

E.W.

Yes, it would

YOUNG CHARLIE

What'd you buy with a mill'un dollars, Mr. Marland?

E.W.

You can buy anything. Houses, carriages, land...more oil wells. When you have a million dollars, they call you a millionaire. A millionaire can change lives for the better for lots of people. He can create jobs and wealth. A million dollars will buy the power to make a difference.

(E.W. hesitates.)

I was a millionaire once.

YOUNG CHARLIE

I thought you was rich, Mr. Marland.

E.W.

“Was rich,” is right. I made a fortune, but lost a fortune, too.

YOUNG CHARLIE

Where'd you lose it at?

E.W.

Well, it was really taken from me.

YOUNG CHARLIE

Was you robbed?

E.W.

Yes...robbed. The bankers robbed me, actually. You have to be careful with bankers, Charles. They want their money back at the most inopportune times. Money's fine, but there's nothing like bringing in a well. It makes you feel...complete.

(E.W. looks around before continuing.)

Let's get back to town, Charles.

(Young Charlie exits.)

(E.W. stays on stage, lighting becomes day.)

(Daniel Craigan enters.)

DANIEL CRAIGAN

How deep have you gone on that well?

E.W.

We're making progress.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

We're at 900 feet. There's no oil this side of the river.

E.W.

There's oil. I'm seeing good formations in places.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

That a fact. Don't guess you would share where?

(Both men smile knowing E.W. will never share that information.)

Think I'm going to try my luck over on the Osage Reservation. Phillips is hitting wells all over that place.

E.W.

Might be smart.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

But you don't think so do you, Marland?

E.W.

That land's pretty leased up.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Well, these Indians are less than sophisticated. You give them enough social lubricant and they're fairly agreeable.

E.W.

You'll do anything for a buck.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Almost anything...there's a difference.

(E.W. begins to leave.)

How deep have you drilled?

(E.W. refuses to answer.)

A thousand feet? Twelve hundred?

(E.W. does not respond.)

If you've gone twelve hundred feet, we both know you got a dry hole.

E.W.

I passed twelve hundred feet three weeks ago.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

(Laughs.)

You got a dry hole...I mean another dry hole. Why don't you get smart? Come work for me. You know oil, but I have some cash. This doesn't have to be a competition.

E.W.

I'll wash the hotel dishes before I become partners with you.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Does the wife know? Does the hotel know you have enough money to drill? They're probably wondering how far your line of credit will stretch.

E.W.

Don't worry about my bills or my character, Craigan. Unlike some, I'm not out to profit at the expense of everyone else.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Don't figure I'll have to worry about you much longer. One more dry hole will do you in.

E.W.

There's oil under this ground and I'm going to find it. I swear I will!

(E.W. exits stage. Lights fade)

(Sounds of drilling and a gusher. Shouts of workmen.)

OFF STAGE VOICE 1

It's Marland.

OFF STAGE VOICE 2

He's found oil!

OFF STAGE VOICE 1

Lots of it!

OFF STAGE VOICE 2

Ponca City will never be the same!

Scene 5

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry enter.)

MRS. DINGLE

Did you see the dress Mrs. Marland wore yesterday?

MRS. BERRY

Excessively ritzy!

MRS. DINGLE

I always knew Mr. Marland would make it big.

(Mrs. Berry looks suspiciously at her.)

I do feel sorry for poor Virginia, though.

MRS. BERRY

Why?

MRS. DINGLE

I don't like to talk, but—

MRS. BERRY

Oh come on...it's just us two here and we both know you love to talk.

MRS. DINGLE

Poor Virginia can't have children.

MRS. BERRY

I do like to talk and heard today that Virginia has found two children!

MRS. DINGLE

What do you mean...“found two children?”

MRS. BERRY

A niece and nephew have come to live with them.

MRS. DINGLE

My word...Is there nothing the Marlands can't procure. What are their names?

MRS. BERRY

George and...Lydie, I think...Yes, George and Lydie Roberts from Pennsylvania.

MRS. DINGLE

Interesting. How old are the children?

MRS. BERRY

George, I believe, is nearly fourteen and Lydie's younger.

MRS. DINGLE

Nearly grown...we'll have to meet them.

MRS. BERRY

They're right inside.

MRS. DINGLE

I mean socially...and alone.

MRS. BERRY

Where we can question them about what goes on inside the Marland house?

MRS. DINGLE

Exactly.

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry exit the stage.)

(Young Charlie, Young Walt, and Cricket enter.)

(Virginia Marland enters.)

VIRGINIA MARLAND

Charles!

YOUNG CHARLIE

Yes, ma'am.

VIRGINIA MARLAND

Walt. Cricket. I would like to introduce you to my niece and nephew.

(Young George enters.)

This is George Roberts—George, where's Lydie?

YOUNG GEORGE

Over there somewhere.

VIRGINIA MARLAND

Lydie dear, come here, please!

(Lydie enters as the center of attention.)

This is my niece, Lydie. I thought maybe you could take them into town and introduce them around...Lydie's your age, I believe. They'll be staying with us for a while.

YOUNG CHARLIE

Sure.

VIRGINIA MARLAND

Thank you. I'll be inside unpacking their bags.

YOUNG WALT

What kind of name is Roberts?

YOUNG GEORGE

I don't know; it's just my family name.

YOUNG WALT

Is it Irish or German or some made up name?

YOUNG GEORGE

I don't really know. Does it matter?

YOUNG WALT

Guess not.

YOUNG LYDIE

What kind of name is Walt Johnson?

YOUNG WALT

I think it's Scottish or something.

(Young Walt turns to avoid further questioning.)

CRICKET

I guess you're one of those rich fellas from back east.

(Young George looks at Young Lydie then laughs.)

Did I say something funny?

(Cricket gets in a fighting posture.)

YOUNG WALT

Settle down, Cricket.

YOUNG GEORGE

That's okay. I'm not a rich kid. That's why I laughed. Back home in Flourtown, we're not what you would call 'well to do' people. Aunt Virginia bought us these fancy traveling clothes for the trip.

YOUNG WALT

(Looks over Young George carefully.)

Well, George from Flourtown...You look like an okay guy to me. Welcome to our gang.

YOUNG GEORGE

Thanks, guys.

(Young George goes around and shakes everyone's hand. Young Walt walks over to Young Lydie.)

YOUNG WALT

(Looking at Young Lydie.)

You, however, are another problem.

YOUNG LYDIE

What kind of problem?

YOUNG WALT

This is a pretty rough gang. We spit and fight and cuss when we want. We don't need no girls around. Girls don't like us and we don't like them.

YOUNG LYDIE

I...I

YOUNG WALT

I...I nothing. We don't need or want no girls, so go find some of your own kind.

YOUNG LYDIE

I...I

YOUNG GEORGE

Walt...We don't know anyone here and Lydie—well, she always hangs out with me.

YOUNG WALT

She'll just get in the way, George.

YOUNG GEORGE

No she won't. I promise. Look—she can run as fast as a boy and she never says much. Just let her stay with us and she'll be fine.

(Young Walt looks over Young Lydie carefully.)

YOUNG CHARLIE

She'll be fine, Walt...I'll keep an eye on her.

YOUNG WALT

Just so she knows not to get in the way.

(The boys nod while Young Lydie moves closer to Young Charlie.)

CRICKET

You know what we should do?

YOUNG WALT

What?

CRICKET

I heard the old cemetery at Sacred Heart Mission is haunted.

YOUNG WALT

Really. That sounds like our kind of place.

YOUNG LYDIE

Don't you think it would be—

YOUNG WALT

See...this is why we can't have no girls—

CRICKET

Yeah!

YOUNG LYDIE

Don't you think it would be spookier at night?

CRICKET

At night...I don't know—

YOUNG WALT

Charlie, can you get out of the house tonight?

YOUNG CHARLIE

Sure.

YOUNG WALT

George. How about you...are you in?

YOUNG GEORGE

Yeah...I think we can sneak out.

YOUNG LYDIE

We can be there.

YOUNG WALT

Cricket?

CRICKET

I...I'll try, but I don't know.

YOUNG WALT

You'll be there or be a called a yellow-bellied, scaredy-cat till the day you die. We'll go at dark. Let's get ready.

(Young Walt, Young Charlie, and Cricket let Young Lydie exit first. Young Lydie exits running, followed by Young George.)

CRICKET

That girl can run!

YOUNG CHARLIE

Fast as a boy!

YOUNG WALT

Hurry! We can't be beat by a girl!

*(Young Walt, Young Charlie, and Cricket hurriedly exit.
Lights turn to night.)*

(Young Walt enters, followed closely by Cricket and Young George. Young Lydie enters at the back of the pack with Young Charlie.)

CRICKET

We got to get out of here.

YOUNG CHARLIE

Come on guys, we need to see what's out here.

(Flash of lightening causes Young Lydie to hold tight to Young Charlie's arm.)

YOUNG GEORGE

That one's pretty close.

CRICKET

That was too close.

YOUNG CHARLIE

(Young Charlie is eager to stay because Young Lydie is holding his arm.)

We'll be fine, guys.

YOUNG WALT

I don't know.

(Another lightening flash.)

I think we better get this girl home.

YOUNG LYDIE

I'm not the one scared.

YOUNG WALT

None of us are scared...we...just don't want to get wet.

YOUNG LYDIE

Please yourself...I'm not the one afraid of a little weather...or a ghost.

CRICKET

But...but...but...I am. Let's go, Walt.

YOUNG WALT

We got to get back.

(Group walks across stage and meets a drunken Daniel Craigan. The group screams at the surprise.)

DANIEL CRAIGAN

You!

(Daniel Craigan points at Young George.)

Yeah, you. You're that kid staying with Marland.

YOUNG GEORGE

Yes, sir.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Your uncle's trying to ruin me.

(Young George listens in silence.)

He's got every good lease from those stinking Indians and libeled me to where they won't even talk to me.

(Daniel Craigan pushes Young George to the ground. Craigan then grabs Young Lydie roughly by the arm.)

And you little—

(Young Walt charges Daniel Craigan and tackles/knocks him to the ground. Young Walt takes Young Lydie by the arm and leads her to safety. The gang moves with them, while Daniel Craigan stumbles off stage.)

YOUNG GEORGE

Who was that guy?

YOUNG WALT

That's Craigan.

YOUNG CHARLIE

We've had run-ins with him before.

YOUNG GEORGE

You leveled him good!

YOUNG WALT

I guess so.

YOUNG GEORGE

I thought we were in real trouble back there.

YOUNG WALT

(Turns to Young Lydie.)

Are you okay?

(Young Lydie nods.)

YOUNG GEORGE

We've got to get in before the Marlands notice we're out.

YOUNG WALT

(Looking at Young Lydie.)

We'll be seeing you tomorrow—both of you.

YOUNG LYDIE

Good night, Walt.

YOUNG WALT

Good night.

(Young Lydie and Young George exit stage.)

YOUNG CHARLIE

That was exciting.

YOUNG WALT

Yeah. You know that Lydie. She's—all right.

(Young Walt walks off.)

YOUNG CHARLIE

Yeah—She's all right—for you.

(Lights fade.)

Scene 6

(The gang has transformed to adults.)

OLD CHARLIE

(Off stage narration.)

E.W. Marland ignited an oil boom that changed Ponca City forever. The Marland magic benefited almost everyone. At one point, E.W. Marland controlled ten percent of the oil production in the world. Our old gang grew up. Walt went to work as a gardener to support his ailing mother. George was into polo ponies. Lydie blossomed into the most chased-after debutante in the state. I even grew up...a little. Lydie and I remained close friends...but Lydie and Walt were becoming more than friends.

(Charlie enters followed by Lydie.)

LYDIE

If it isn't Charlie McDonagh.

CHARLIE

Well, how's it going, Miss Marland?

LYDIE

Just Lydie to you.

CHARLIE

You know, you've grown into quite a young lady?

LYDIE

Who can still—

LYDIE

Out run
Out ride
And out shoot, you!

CHARLIE

Out run
Out ride
And out shoot, me!

CHARLIE

What are you doing out today?

LYDIE

I came to see you.

CHARLIE

Really? I'm flattered.

LYDIE

Have you seen Walt lately?

CHARLIE

Now I'm not so flattered. I haven't seen him in a few days.

LYDIE

He hasn't been at work since Monday. The gardener said he came by early to say he was sick.

CHARLIE

That's odd.

LYDIE

What? That he came by to tell his boss he was sick?

CHARLIE

No, that you're so interested in one of the hired help.

LYDIE

Charlie... You know how I feel about Walt.

CHARLIE

I know... I was just teasing.

LYDIE

I'm worried. I've never been to his house before and I'm embarrassed to say I don't even know where he lives.

(Charlie looks away without answering.)

Charlie? Would you take me, please?

CHARLIE

All right.

(Charlie and Lydie move as lighting becomes gloomier.)

You stay here. I'll go see about Walt.

(Charlie moves to see Walt while Lydie paces nervously.)

WALT

Who is it?

CHARLIE

Charlie.

WALT

(Walt enters slightly agitated.)

What are you doing here, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Lydie said you have been sick the past two days.

WALT

No...no...I'm fine. It's my mom...she's...she's not well.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry. Is there anything I can do?

WALT

No, but thanks for asking.—How's Lydie?

CHARLIE

She's fine. I left her outside.

WALT

What! You brought Lydie here!

(Lydie moves from across stage. Walt turns away.)

CHARLIE

Lydie! What are you doing here? I said to stay across the street!

(Lydie looks around at the dire surroundings.)

LYDIE

Walt!

(Walt continues to walk away.)

Walt?

(More silence.)

WALT

You have no right coming here. No right to be here.

(Charlie and Lydie look at each other.)

I didn't want you to see...

(Walt looks away embarrassed.)

LYDIE

It's all right, Walt. It's okay...It doesn't matter...It doesn't matter to me.

WALT

I know, but I didn't want you to see this place. It's...

LYDIE

It's just a neighborhood, Walt. It's just four walls where you live. It's not what you are. Trust me, I've seen worse.

WALT

Mom...she's not well. All she does is stare at the wall all day.

LYDIE

I'm sorry. Is there—

WALT

Yeah. Let's get out of here for a while and walk to the train station.

(Walt suddenly realizes Charlie is there.)

You can come, too.

CHARLIE

Thanks. But I've got stuff to do.

(Walt and Lydie exit the stage holding hands. It is obvious they are a couple.)

Scene 7

OLD CHARLIE

(Old Charlie enters with Mary.)

Prosperity embraced Ponca City with the exception of Walt Johnson and his mother.

MARY

What happened?

OLD CHARLIE

Walt's mother passed away in the winter. Like many others, she led an unexceptional life. There had even been rumors about a dubious past. The only apparent mark Mrs. Johnson made in the world had been her son. Walt moved into one of the maintenance shacks behind the Marland house—too old to be an orphan and too young to be on his own, but those were the cards dealt him. Everything in Walt Johnson's life seemed hopeless, but still he maintained a persistent and unrelenting belief in himself.

E.W. Marland continued throwing his lavish parties at the Grand Mansion. Business associates, townspeople, and state leaders were invited. George and E.W. tried to protect Lydie from interested suitors and Walt Johnson, in particular, was not welcomed.

(The party is set. Lydie enters with Charlie.)

LYDIE

Who sent you, George or Mr. Marland?

CHARLIE

George. Hope you don't mind.

LYDIE

I wonder why you are willing to continually do the Marland men's dirty work—keeping any young man away by asking me to dance. If Mrs. Marland was feeling well, she could make them behave.

CHARLIE

So you do mind?

LYDIE

Not at all...these people can be tremendous bores. All that last man could talk about was himself.

CHARLIE

You were putting on a good act.

LYDIE

Thank you. I don't like some of these new people. They're arrogant know-it-alls.

CHARLIE

Oh, I hate those kinds of guys.

LYDIE

You know what I mean. You're not arrogant, just irritating.

CHARLIE

People that think they know everything are a real irritant to those of us that do know everything.

LYDIE

(Lydie laughs.)

Well, I'm glad George trusts you to protect me; I do need someone around who can still make me laugh. *(In a more serious tone.)* How's Walt?

CHARLIE

It's been tough. He misses his mom, and works all the time.

LYDIE

I wish he could be here tonight.

CHARLIE

Me, too.

LYDIE

George is impossible with him, and Mr. Marland's not much better. They throw these big bashes for me, then browbeat any boy that shows any interest.

CHARLIE

It looks like you're showing a lot of interest tonight.

LYDIE

It's just an act...mainly to keep those two off track.

I love living in Ponca City. I could have never dreamed I could live like this, but sometimes it's so inconvenient. Don't you wish it could be like that first summer, when we did what we wanted without staged entertainment?

CHARLIE

Sometimes.

LYDIE

I'd like to go swim in the river or even take a midnight walk to Sacred Heart. I would like to just sit on the bridge with Walt and talk without all these distractions.

CHARLIE

I guess you're still kind of hung up on Walt?

LYDIE

Of course...He's not like these pampered gentlemen. Walt's genuine—my knight in shining armor. You still see him, don't you, Charlie? Does he ever mention me?

CHARLIE

Only every other word.

LYDIE

How about you...are there any young ladies you're telling him about?

(Charlie blushes and turns away.)

There is! Who is it?

CHARLIE

I was on my way to ask Elizabeth Cassidy if she would like to dance.

LYDIE

Elizabeth! She would be perfect for you. You should definitely ask her to dance.

CHARLIE

You're mocking me, right?

LYDIE

Oh no...Elizabeth's a sweet, dear girl. She would be perfect for you. I'll introduce you.

(Lydie introduces a reluctant Charlie and Elizabeth before exiting.)

CHARLIE

So...it's...did you hear the one...

(No response from Elizabeth.)

It's a wonderful party.

ELIZABETH

Yes.

CHARLIE

Your father's the dentist, right?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

CHARLIE

Would you like to dance?

ELIZABETH

(Elizabeth looks uneasy.)

No...No, I can't.

(Elizabeth walks off.)

CHARLIE

Maybe some punch...horseshoes...anything?

(Charlie exits.)

(Lydie has been watching Charlie and Elizabeth. Walt enters behind Lydie, touches her waist and the two hug.)

(E.W. enters to catch them hugging.)

E.W.

What is going on here?

WALT

Good evening, sir...

E.W.

Shut up!

(Points at Walt.)

Lydie, what are you thinking? Your reputation will be ruined if somebody sees you rubbing up against this boy.

LYDIE

But...

E.W.

But nothing. There's no discussion here. Go to the house.

(Lydie sulks. Walt begins to leave.)

Stop! We have some things to talk about.

(Walt stops as Lydie walks away.)

You're out of line, young man. She's only seventeen and you're...

WALT

Eighteen, sir.

E.W.

You're a hired hand working at this house. This is unacceptable. What if one of the guests had been here to see this—incident, instead of me? It's not personal, but you'll never be worthy of her. Lydie's being prepared for a life that you cannot imagine. You'll cripple her ability to find the kind of family that will generate a legacy...a family heritage.

(Walt listens quietly but defiantly.)

Stay away from Lydie.

WALT

I can't do that. You see, Lydie and I are in love.

E.W.

What?

WALT

We're in love. We have been for a while and we'll be married after I save some money.

E.W.

(E.W. laughs in disgust and disbelief.)

That's impossible. I would never allow such a thing. Lydie would be completely disowned. Trust me, you will never marry Lydie Marland. You don't even know what love is.

WALT

I'll be marrying Lydie Roberts. We've talked it over. We won't need your money. I'll make it on my own.

(E.W. doesn't know how to respond.)

If you knew Lydie...If you ever listened to her, you would see she doesn't care about the money, or this life you've invented for her! She's a good person, with a kind heart, and that's good enough for her. You're the one trying to cripple her ability to be happy.

E.W.

First, you're fired. You get whatever things you keep in the shack and leave tonight. Secondly, you're never to set foot on this property, or any Marland property for that matter. If you do, I'll have you shot!

(Walt marches out followed by E.W. Marland.)

Scene 8

(Walt and Charlie enter.)

WALT

We're back where we began...in front of the train station.

CHARLIE

I can't believe they drafted you into the army.

WALT

I'm eighteen, it'll be okay.

(Walt looks around.)

We've had a lot of good times hangin' out at this train station. I always liked it here...It's the gateway to the world.

CHARLIE

You be careful. It's war over there.

WALT

You don't have to worry about me.

(Walt looks around for any sign of Lydie.)

I need to go. I need to get out of here.

(Walt continues to look around for Lydie.)

Do you think she'll come?

CHARLIE

If it's within her power, she'll be here, but Lydie doesn't always have the final say in her life.

WALT

You don't understand, Lydie's one determined woman.

(Conductor calls "All aboard." People in the station start talking and looking at the entrance of Lydie from off stage.)

LYDIE

Walt! Walt! Don't go.

WALT

I have to go.

LYDIE

Be careful.

WALT

Charlie's already told me to do that.

LYDIE

(Lydie looks at Charlie and then back to Walt.)

You be careful for me.

WALT

I will...for you. I will be back for you.

LYDIE

I'll be waiting.

WALT

I'll hold you to that.

LYDIE

Listen to me, there's not one thing you can do that will change that war, so be careful and don't be a hero.

WALT

I don't know. A hero might look pretty good to a French girl.

LYDIE

Don't be a hero and don't even look at any French girls.

WALT

I won't be looking at anything but the North Star, because I know you'll be walking in the night and looking at it, too.

LYDIE

Look at that star every night and know I'm thinking of you.

WALT

That's a deal.

LYDIE

Take this.

(Lydie hands Walt a picture of herself.)

WALT

Your picture! This is better than any star. I'll look at it every night, too.

(Conductor calls "last call all aboard.")

LYDIE

I love you, Walt Johnson.

(Lydie and Walt kiss.)

(Walt stumbles off stage to catch the train.)

WALT

And you know I love you, Lydie.

(Walt hurriedly exits through the train station. Charlie and Lydie wave at the train leaving.)

LYDIE

Do you think he'll be okay?

CHARLIE

He's Walt...He'll be fine.

(Lydie exits.)

(Charlie on stage alone for a moment before someone hands him a letter. Lydie enters.)

CHARLIE

Lydie, I have a letter from Walt.

LYDIE

Read it to me, please. I think Mr. Marland intercepts all of my letters.

CHARLIE

Charlie,

I'm in the trenches. Nights are dark, wet and stormy. It's cold and I shiver all the time. I hear a lot of French cursing, but don't understand it. The trenches go for miles. Stray bullets hit all around. The French soldiers have a strange look in their eyes. It's like they're looking a mile away, staring into nowhere. It's like their bodies are empty. I've seen

terrible things here. Things I cannot describe. Do whatever you can to stay out of this place. It's hell on earth. Tell Lydie I look at her picture every day.

Your Friend, Walt Johnson

LYDIE

My poor Walt.

(Lydie leaves somewhat dejected. Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry enter.)

MRS. DINGLE

Did you see the papers?

MRS. BERRY

Oh my, yes...They had a sale at the furniture store downtown.

MRS. DINGLE

Not that, you ninny—about the Johnson boy.

(Charlie moves closer to hear.)

MRS. BERRY

Oh my...what has he broken this time?

MRS. DINGLE

He hasn't broken anything...he's off to war.

MRS. BERRY

Oh.

(Charlie motions to Lydie. Lydie enters.)

MRS. DINGLE

Listen to this: "Local Boy a Hero!" I always knew there was something special about that boy!

MRS. BERRY

Of course you did.

(Charlie grabs a paper and rejoins Lydie.)

LYDIE

What does it say?

CHARLIE

Walt's a hero. Everyone's talking about it. He's getting a medal!

LYDIE

He told me he would be careful and look at him now!

CHARLIE

It doesn't surprise me.

LYDIE

Charlie, Walt and I are engaged.

CHARLIE

What!

LYDIE

There's no ring or anything, but before he left, we promised each other we would be married.

CHARLIE

Does Mr. Marland know?

LYDIE

Heavens no, but I hope someday they'll be great friends. They're so much alike.

CHARLIE

I guess I can see that.

LYDIE

I miss him so much.

CHARLIE

If I know Walt...he's thinking the very same thing about you.

(Charlie exits leaving Lydie alone.)

(Walt enters. Lydie and Walt embrace before exiting.)

(Old Charlie enters.)

OLD CHARLIE

Walt Johnson left as a boy from the wrong side of the tracks, but he returned a hero. Walt and Lydie's secret engagement was still a secret to everyone in town. Walt was still not welcomed at the Grand Mansion. While Mr. Marland was busy building a vast oil empire, Daniel Craigan barely managed to survive with only occasional successes.

(Daniel Craigan and Walt Johnson visit and shake hands.)

Craigan's luck was about to change. Walt Johnson was smart and energetic. He started out as an underpaid hand on one of Craigan's wells, but soon advanced. The boy who had once taken Craigan to the ground was now a man making him a lot of money. It seemed everything Walt touched turned to black gold. Craigan started drilling gusher after gusher, even with the most used up and antiquated equipment. The Craigan Oil Company would never be a serious competitor to Marland Oil, but Walt Johnson was making a name for himself inside and outside of Ponca City.

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry enter for a party.)

MRS. DINGLE

This stands to be a grand party, Mrs. Berry.

MRS. BERRY

A grand party indeed.

MRS. DINGLE

It's too bad Virginia is under the weather. I don't like to talk, but—

(Mrs. Berry rolls her eyes.)

I hear Virginia is not doing well at all...she hardly ever gets out anymore.

MRS. BERRY

It's lucky for Mr. Marland that Lydie takes care of things...she's quite an accomplished hostess.

MRS. DINGLE

I do believe everyone, and I mean everyone, is here tonight. Senators, congressmen...I even saw Governor Robinson earlier.

MRS. BERRY

(Mrs. Berry looks around.)

Not everyone's here...I haven't seen that handsome Walt Johnson tonight.

MRS. DINGLE

I don't expect to see him here.

MRS. BERRY

I don't know; I hear he's never far from Lydie.

MRS. DINGLE

Tell me what you know.

MRS. BERRY

I don't like to talk, but—someone said Lydie was at church sitting by Walt Johnson.

MRS. DINGLE

That could be a coincidence.

MRS. BERRY

They were holding hands...right in church!

MRS. DINGLE

Well, I never—

MRS. BERRY

I don't expect you ever have!

MRS. DINGLE

I hear he brought in another well for Mr. Craigan last week.

MRS. BERRY

People say he's got a nose for oil.

MRS. DINGLE

I always believed in that young man and I am confident he's smart enough to stay away from Mr. Marland.

MRS. BERRY

Don't be so sure.

MRS. DINGLE

Why not?

MRS. BERRY

Because he's coming up the walk.

(Walt enters.)

(E.W. enters with George beside him.)

E.W.

What do you want?

WALT

I've come to see you, sir. Would you like to talk here, or in your study?

E.W.

I don't see that you have any business in my house, or at this party for that matter, so I guess you can say what you will...then leave.

WALT

I've come to ask your permission to marry Lydie.

E.W.

That's preposterous. What makes you think she has any interest?

(Lydie moves from the crowd to stand by Walt.)

LYDIE

It's true, Mr. Marland. I do love him. We've been secretly engaged since before the war.

(E.W. stands in stunned silence.)

WALT

I've saved some money. It may not be much to you, but it'll get us a comfortable start. Craigan's being bought out by a group from Bartlesville, and I'm moving after I finish this last well. I won't go without Lydie, if she'll have me.

(Lydie's body language says the answer will be yes.)

I'll be back tomorrow afternoon for an answer.

E.W.

(Speaking to Walt.)

You have no idea who you're dealing with!

(Addressing the others.)

I'm going back to the party and leave this dreamer to his pathetic little job with Craigan Oil.

(Walt squeezes Lydie's hand as she gives him a kiss on the cheek. E.W. extends his hand.)

Lydie, come with me.

(Lydie exits reluctantly with E.W.)

(Charlie enters.)

WALT

I guess you heard.

CHARLIE

Oh, I think the whole county has heard by now.

WALT

Marland blew up. Lydie wanted to elope, but that wouldn't be right. I still think Marland's a good guy and I wanted to give him a chance to do the right thing.

CHARLIE

He must have come undone.

WALT

Pretty much—made a comment about my 'pathetic' little job with Craigan.

CHARLIE

What *are* you doing working for Craigan? He's drunk half the time and barely keeps his equipment operational.

WALT

Craigan's the price I have to pay for Lydie. She's coming with me to Bartlesville. I have no idea what Marland will do. I hope he gives us his blessing, but I don't see that happening.

CHARLIE

I don't see E.W. Marland giving in to an ultimatum.

WALT

Me either.

CHARLIE

You want to eat supper?

WALT

Naw...I want to finish this last well before we leave town. I'll be seeing you.

(Walt and Charlie shake hands.)

(Lights fade.)

Scene 9

(Lydie on stage.)
(George enters.)

GEORGE

Morning. That was quite a scene you put on last night.

LYDIE

Have you seen Mr. Marland this morning?

GEORGE

Thought he'd be the last person you would want to see.

LYDIE

I want to talk with him.

(Sound of an explosion or thunder off stage.)
What was that?

GEORGE

I have no idea. Listen, Sis, you can't really be thinking of marrying Walt Johnson?

LYDIE

I'm beyond thinking about it. He makes me happy, George...and I'm not ever really happy anymore unless he's around. I wanted to see Mr. Marland...they're so much alike...surely, he can see Walt's potential.

GEORGE

I don't know.

LYDIE

I've got to try.

GEORGE

Well...you'll have to pick another morning. He headed out before dawn.

LYDIE

So early?

GEORGE

I guess he had things to do.

LYDIE

That's odd.

GEORGE

(Starts to leave.)

Look, Sis...good luck, no matter what...I know I've not been much help to you, but I do want you to be happy...and I'm sure Mr. Marland wants that, too.

LYDIE

Thanks, George.

(George exits and leaves Lydie alone.)

JODY

(Jody enters.)

Miss Marland?

LYDIE

Oh! You startled me.

JODY

I'm sorry. I'm Jody, from the sheriff's office. Is your father around?

LYDIE

No. I haven't seen him all day. Is everything all right?

JODY

There's been an accident at Craigan's well. You probably heard the explosion. We're going to need some of Marland Oil's equipment. I was hoping to catch your father.

LYDIE

Was anyone hurt?

JODY

One killed...and one hurt real bad.

LYDIE

Which one was hurt real bad?

JODY

Walt Johnson. I'm afraid it's real bad.

LYDIE

I've got to see my Walt! I have to know he's okay. I've got to see my Walt!

JODY

(Jody restrains Lydie.)

You can't go right now, Miss Marland. The doctors...they...well, they say there's no hope. They don't see how he's survived this long. I'm afraid he's—not going to make it.

LYDIE

They don't know Walt...I know he'll be all right. They just don't know my Walt.

JODY

The doctors are doing their best. You'll not help anything being in there.

(Lydie collapses.)

JODY

George...anyone...come help me!

(George enters.)

GEORGE

What is it? What's happened?

LYDIE

There's been a terrible accident.

GEORGE

The explosion we heard earlier?

JODY

Craigan's well blew.

LYDIE

Walt's hurt.

JODY

He's hurt real bad.

GEORGE

Let's get you upstairs...I'll call the doctor for you.

(George leads Lydie off stage.)

LYDIE

What am I going to do? What am I going to do without Walt!

(George and Lydie exit.)

(Jody exits.)

OLD CHARLIE

(Old Charlie enters with Mary.)

Walt had been to war and seen unspeakable horrors. He knew he had no chance, but, for Lydie, he fought on for three days. Lydie spent those miserable hours hoping—praying for a miracle.

Walt Johnson died at nine o'clock, on a Saturday morning, on April 19. To this day, I cannot think of him without shedding a tear in my heart.

MARY

Do you need to stop for a while, Grandpa?

OLD CHARLIE

Yes, sweetheart. Let's take a little break. When we come back, I'll finish the story. You see—Lydie was the daughter of the most powerful and richest man in Oklahoma. Then she married him.

MARY

(Pulling Old Charlie off stage.)

Let's hurry, Grandpa! I want to hear the rest.

INTERMISSION

Act II
Scene 1

OLD CHARLIE

It took a long time to get over Walt Johnson's death. I was struck by how quickly everyone else got on with life. The oilfield was a dangerous place where men risked life and limb on a daily basis. People were hardened to the personal tragedies that happened routinely in this harsh environment. It shouldn't have been a surprise when others took this loss in stride, but Walt Johnson had been my friend.

Lydie also struggled with the loss. She disappeared into the confines of the Grand Mansion and went away to school for a while—no one saw her for months. E.W. did not have time to reflect on the misfortunes of the past as he continued building his empire. Time passed, and I got on with living life. I ended up marrying Elizabeth and she made a home out of our house by putting all the little details together that only she could appreciate. I was a fledgling new lawyer, with an office downtown and hungry enough to take almost any case. Things eventually got back to normal as the gossip about Walt Johnson's death spread around our small town.

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry enter with glasses of Champagne.)

MRS. DINGLE

It looks like the whole town is in the ballroom tonight.

MRS. BERRY

Another grand Marland party.

(E.W. walks by to greet the two women.)

E.W.

Mrs. Dingle...Mrs. Berry. As always, a pleasure to have you grace the party.

MRS. DINGLE

Thank you.

MRS. BERRY

Thank you indeed.

(E.W. walks off.)

MRS. DINGLE

I don't expect he would be so friendly if he knew what I think I know.

MRS. BERRY

Oh, I do know you don't like to talk, but please tell me what you think you know that Mr. Marland won't like if you knew...or whatever you just said.

MRS. DINGLE

I think it's mighty suspicious what happened to poor Walt Johnson.

MRS. BERRY

You mean—

MRS. DINGLE

I have my intuition.

(Mrs. Berry quickly drinks her Champagne.)

Mr. Marland didn't like the boy and left early that morning. No one knows where he was at—

MRS. BERRY

And no one around here would dare ask!

(Mrs. Dingle puts down her glass of Champagne and turns away from Mrs. Berry.)

MRS. DINGLE

Makes one wonder.

(Mrs. Berry drinks Mrs. Dingle's glass of Champagne while Mrs. Dingle is looking away.)

MRS. BERRY

Indeed, and doesn't Lydie look radiant tonight?

MRS. DINGLE

Yes, she is so helpful. I don't like to talk, but—

MRS. BERRY

You mean there's a "don't like to talk" about Lydie?

MRS. DINGLE

She looks radiant because she has a new beau, and someone said she was at Charles McDonagh's house the other day.

MRS. BERRY

I say—

MRS. DINGLE

Exactly.

(Mrs. Dingle picks up her glass to take a drink, but she is surprised that it is empty.)

(Lydie enters.)

Lydie, you look beautiful tonight.

LYDIE

Thank you. Have you seen Charlie?

(Charlie and Elizabeth arrive. Lydie immediately leaves the two women to greet them. Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry give each other a look.)

You made it!

ELIZABETH

Everything is beautiful.

CHARLIE

I don't think I've ever seen this many people here before.

LYDIE

Everyone wants to be at the Oilman's Ball, I think. I don't know half of them.

(E.W. steps up to address the crowd.)

E.W.

Welcome to my home.

(Everyone applauds.)

By the look of things, we've about outgrown the Grand Mansion. I've just returned from an extended vacation in Italy and have brought a few of its treasures back to Ponca City. As I look around, however, I find no walls suitable for their hanging, and not enough room to

accommodate my many friends and associates. So tonight I have invited you here to make an important announcement.

MRS. DINGLE

Do you think they're leaving Ponca City?

E.W.

(E.W. ignores Mrs. Dingle's interruption and continues.)

While in Florence, I was privileged to stay in a palace of magnificent and inspiring beauty. Tonight, I would like to announce that this palace will be reborn, in even more splendor, in Ponca City. It will be our palace on the prairie.

(Everyone applauds and congratulates the family.)

LYDIE

Charlie, there's the band, and they're going to play a waltz. Could you dance with me for old time's sake?

CHARLIE

I don't really dance anymore, Lydie.

LYDIE

Don't be silly.

CHARLIE

Honestly, I don't think I remember how.

LYDIE

Oh, please, Charlie. There's really no one else I want to dance with tonight. Elizabeth won't mind. You two might not have ever met if we hadn't been dance partners.

ELIZABETH

Go ahead, Charlie, I could use a good laugh.

(E.W. enters.)

E.W.

Charles, my first friend in Ponca City. I've got someone I'd like for you to meet. You ladies won't mind? Could you come now, Charles?

CHARLIE

Sure. It will keep me from embarrassing myself.

(E.W. and Charlie exit, leaving Elizabeth and Lydie.)

ELIZABETH

Lydie, may I speak with you?

LYDIE

Of course.

ELIZABETH

I've noticed a change in you since you've come back.

LYDIE

Really? I hope it's for the good.

ELIZABETH

I'm not sure.

LYDIE

Is anything wrong, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

I know Walt's death affected you. It took Charlie a long time to recover and I suspect you took it hard also. It's been my experience that a woman who has lost a man is only satisfied when she's found a new love. Since you've returned from Italy, you've been playful, cheerful, and flirty.

LYDIE

I think the trip to Florence...

ELIZABETH

Are you in love with my husband?

LYDIE

What?

ELIZABETH

Are you in love with my husband?

LYDIE

Yes, I suppose I am, but only as a dear friend. He only has eyes for you, Elizabeth. Charlie's helped me through some difficult times. When Walt died, I think a part of me died with him. I spent weeks, that turned into months, that turned into two years where I just struggled to move each day. I struggled to find a reason to go on. Your Charlie...and I emphasize *your* Charlie, was the one person that was able to get me going again, who convinced me that I had to move on. I don't have many people I can trust.

(Lydie becomes anxious, nervous manner.)

I'm so sorry.

ELIZABETH

You must think me insecure.

LYDIE

I must be more discreet in the future. I probably need to stay completely away. People in this town will talk....just like they talk about Mr. Marland.

ELIZABETH

I think I need to apologize.

(Elizabeth looks off stage to see Charlie.)

Oh, Charlie is waving at me, Lydie. I must go.

(Elizabeth takes Lydie's hands.)

Thanks for the talk. Come see me...I mean that.

(Lydie smiles and nods.)

Thank you for inviting us. Do come by and see us anytime.

LYDIE

I will.

(Elizabeth hugs Lydie and then exits.)

(Lydie is left on stage painfully alone. Her polite smile when Elizabeth exits transitions to sad and insecure as she exits.)

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry enter.)

MRS. DINGLE

I don't like to talk—

MRS. BERRY

But?

MRS. DINGLE

Mr. Marland has not been too particular about his party guests tonight.

MRS. BERRY

I think everyone in the state is here! Isn't that the bootlegger with the mayor?

MRS. DINGLE

It's bad enough to let the politicians and bootleggers in, but that Daniel Craigan is lurking about.

MRS. BERRY

This is the Oilman's Ball and he is an oilman.

MRS. DINGLE

Not a very scrupulous one. I've heard stories.

MRS. BERRY

Oh, do tell!

MRS. DINGLE

Well! He's already had too much to drink. He had a fight in the garden before the party even started...and have you noticed how he's been looking at Lydie and following her about.

MRS. BERRY

No...

DANIEL CRAIGAN

(Daniel Craigan enters...startling the two women.)

Good evening, ladies.

MRS. DINGLE

Good evening, Mr. Craigan.

MRS. BERRY

Mr. Craigan.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

You seen Marland around?

MRS. DINGLE

Not in a few minutes.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

How about that Lydie?

MRS. DINGLE

Mr. Craigan!

DANIEL CRAIGAN

With Johnson gone, she'll need a lot of company.

MRS. DINGLE

I've never heard such a vulgar insinuation!

MRS. BERRY

Neither have I!

DANIEL CRAIGAN

(To Mrs. Berry)

I bet you haven't.

(To Mrs. Dingle)

But I'm not so sure about you.

(Mrs. Dingle marches off, Mrs. Berry follows.) (Lydie enters with glass of champagne.)

Things must be a little lonely for you these days.

(Lydie doesn't respond.)

Come on missy, your "daddy" has cost me plenty through the years.

With Johnson gone, you must need a little...company.

(Lydie turns to go. Daniel Craigan grabs Lydie to turn her around. She throws champagne in his face.)

E.W.

Get your hands off her!

DANIEL CRAIGAN

I was just trying to give her some attention.

E.W.

Get out!

DANIEL CRAIGAN

What about that famous Marland hospitality? Always so polite and well-bred...that is, when you're not trying to squeeze every oilman that dares compete with you out of business.

E.W.

You've had too much to drink. I let you come this evening because you are supposed to be an oilman and a gentleman, but you can leave now! Escort yourself out or I'll do it for you.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

I'm not leaving. This girl and me were fixing to dance.

(Daniel Craigan grabs for Lydie. E.W. pushes Craigan, and forces him off stage.)

E.W.

Get out of here!

(Men help Craigan off stage.)

Are you okay, Lydie?

(Lydie nods nervously and leaves with the protective E.W.)

Scene 2

(Old Charlie enters.)

OLD CHARLIE

Construction started on E.W. Marland's Palace on the Prairie with a scope and scale reminiscent of one of his great refineries. The details of the mansion consumed much of E.W.'s time and most of Lydie's. It would be months before I saw her again. Virginia Marland was almost a forgotten part of E.W.'s past success. Her health steadily declined and she died before the Palace on the Prairie was completed. Lydie was spending countless hours guiding the artisans through their tasks to make sure every detail was authentic on the new mansion. For E.W., there was little time to mourn—he had a business to run. Storm clouds of destruction gathered, although they were still invisible to him.

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry are on stage talking to each other.

Charlie enters to hear their gossip.)

MRS. DINGLE

Hello, Mr. McDonagh.

MRS. BERRY

Hello, Mr. McDonagh.

CHARLIE

This is awkward...I didn't mean to eavesdrop.

MRS. DINGLE

Eavesdropping is very bad.

MRS. BERRY

Very bad indeed...Almost as bad as gossiping.

(The two women look at each other.)

CHARLIE

Again, I apologize, but I thought I heard something about a board.

MRS. DINGLE

Geraldine Adam's husband went aboard a ship last month.

MRS. BERRY

Oh...and Mr. Peters had to use a board on his son the other evening.

MRS. DINGLE

And Mrs. Peabody gets so bored at the preacher's sermon that she falls asleep.

MRS. BERRY

Mr. Jones is resigning from the school board.

CHARLIE

Again, I'm sorry...I'm really sorry.

(Charlie begins to walk away.)

MRS. DINGLE

(Almost as an afterthought.)

Of course...those men were in town who said...now what was it?

MRS. BERRY

She doesn't like to talk...there was a man named Morgan who said he was going to take over the board.

CHARLIE

This is very important...What board?

MRS. DINGLE

I remember now. They weren't going to take over; they were going to get control.

CHARLIE

Get control of what!

MRS. BERRY

The board, of course.

CHARLIE

Thank you.

MRS. DINGLE

Would you like to know more about Mrs. Peabody?

CHARLIE

Not now.

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry exit.)

(Lydie enters.)

CHARLIE

Lydie!

LYDIE

What is it, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Do you know where Mr. Marland is?

LYDIE

Yes...Why the interest?

CHARLIE

I need to see him, and I need to see him tonight.

LYDIE

He's not in tonight and he won't be available until tomorrow, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Lydie, I have some important information about Marland Oil.

LYDIE

Surely it can wait until the morning.

CHARLIE

I don't think so. Something's going on at the Marland Oil board meeting tomorrow.

LYDIE

He's playing cards.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

(Charlie starts to rush away.)

LYDIE

Wait...Mr. Marland doesn't like to be interrupted, especially when he's playing poker.

CHARLIE

Believe me, he'll want to hear what I have to say. It's a matter of grave importance to Marland Oil—

LYDIE

Let me get him. You won't be able to get in without causing a commotion.

(Lydie leaves and returns with E.W. following her.)

E.W.

What the devil is this about, Lydie?

(This should be the first time E.W. treats Lydie as an equal adult instead of a child.)

LYDIE

Charlie needs to see you.

E.W.

You know I don't like to be disturbed on card night.

LYDIE

It's about Marland Oil, and if Charlie thinks it's urgent, I think you should listen.

E.W.

What is it, Charles?

CHARLIE

There's a rumor that J.P. Morgan is in town.

E.W.

Morgan's in town?

CHARLIE

(Charlie nods.)

There's talk of getting control of the Marland Oil board of directors...taking control away from you.

E.W.

(E.W. is stunned, but quickly recovers.)

This is serious. I knew Morgan had been rattling his saber, but this...It'll be okay. I still think I have enough votes, but I need to get busy. Charlie would you mind escorting Lydie home? I'm getting my staff together and I think we'll be working through the night.

(Charlie and Lydie begin to exit.)

And Charles, my good friend...you may have saved my company.

(Lights fade.)

Scene 3

(Old Charlie enters.)

OLD CHARLIE

It was the beginning of the end for Marland Oil. Who's to say what the reasons were, but E.W. blamed the eastern bankers. The spring foxhunt was a pleasant distraction from the distasteful battle for control of Marland Oil. Lydie rode a tall, dark horse named Rosenbar. Lydie had me ride a horse that was short, old, and lazy. We ended up at the gang's old hang-out, Red Bud Creek Bridge.

(Charlie and Lydie.)

LYDIE

How can someone live in Oklahoma and ride so poorly?

CHARLIE

Some of us find a car more comfortable. What are we doing here?

LYDIE

This has always been one of my favorite places. I've traveled the world and seen many great places, but I always find this place...familiar. You and Walt brought George and me here on our very first day in Ponca City. Do you remember, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Sure...I remember.

LYDIE

This is where Walt asked me to marry him.

(Charlie is uncomfortable talking about Walt.)

As a lawyer, you have something called client-attorney privilege, don't you?

CHARLIE

Yes. If a client tells me something, I'm ethically obliged to keep that information confidential.

LYDIE

(Lydie hands Charlie money.)

Will twenty dollars buy me client-attorney privilege?

CHARLIE

(Charlie refuses to take the money.)

Lydie, what's wrong? Are you in some kind of trouble?

LYDIE

Charlie. I'm getting married... You're surprised, I see.

CHARLIE

I...I am...I had no idea, Lydie. That's great. I had no idea you were even seeing anyone.

LYDIE

I don't think anyone does.

CHARLIE

What do George and Mr. Marland think?

LYDIE

(Lydie takes a deep breath.)

George doesn't know.

CHARLIE

Is it that Jo Davidson? Elizabeth told me—

LYDIE

It's not Jo... You can't tell anyone. You can't even tell Elizabeth. You will promise, won't you?

CHARLIE

Sure.

LYDIE

Charlie, I'm marrying Mr. Marland.

(An awkward silence as Charlie doesn't know how to react.)

(Charlie just stares at her.)

Charlie? Please don't... please don't look at me that way. I can't bear you looking at me that way. I expect it from everyone else, but not you. Please...it's too much.

CHARLIE

How, Lydie? He's your father.

LYDIE

He's not really my father, Charlie. You know that...I was the niece of Mrs. Marland. I'm no blood relation to Mr. Marland. You know, Charlie...You know better than anyone that he never really treated me like a daughter.

CHARLIE

But he is old enough to be your father and you are Lydie Marland...you are legally his daughter.

LYDIE

He's not that old. I'm 28...lots of 28-year-old women would marry a handsome millionaire of his charms, and you know that he seems much younger than his age.

(Charlie still does not know how to respond.)

I'm 28 years old, Charlie, and I have no one. You have Elizabeth. I have nobody. I want a family I can call my own before I'm too old. I've never talked to my friends in Ponca City about my life in Flourtown before coming here. We were poor for sure, but there were other things...bad situations back there that...that are better forgotten. I have always felt safe with Mr. Marland. I need to feel safe. I need to belong to someone.

CHARLIE

Lydie, this will cause a stir you know.

LYDIE

I know. People are such gossips, but...he needs me...and I need him. I need you, Charlie...I need you to tell me things are going to be all right. I really have no one else to speak to. If I can do this thing, I need you to believe in me.

CHARLIE

Do you love him?

LYDIE

(Lydie turns away before answering Charlie.)

I respect him...I think I love him, Charlie. I'll never feel like I did for Walt, but yes, I love him and I feel as close to him as any man I've met since. This will be a practical solution to my happiness and I feel I can make Mr. Marland happy, too. He desperately needs someone since Aunt Virginia passed. You know him, Charlie...you know how charming and kind he can be. I feel we will be a happy couple. I think I can be a good partner for him. You need to know that he's always been proper toward me and I respect him very much.

CHARLIE

How will you do it? I mean will you have a big wedding?

LYDIE

Heavens no, I would never want so much publicity. We're leaving in a couple of weeks to go to Flourtown to have the adoption annulled, then we will be married there...by a justice of the peace, I assume.

CHARLIE

Lydie, I'm happy for you. I've seen a change in you...a vibrancy since you have returned from Florence that makes me think you must be in love. Elizabeth thought as much the first time she saw you back in Ponca City. I hope you will be happy.

LYDIE

Me to...We need to be getting back. I'll wager the poor fox has been killed or gone forever by now.

(Lights fade.)

Scene 4

(Old Charlie enters.)

OLD CHARLIE

In two weeks, Lydie Marland had an extraordinary day. She started the day as Miss Lydie Marland, transformed by a judge to Lydie Roberts, only to be wed as Mrs. Lydie Marland. After an extended honeymoon through Canada, Lydie moved into the Palace on the Prairie to live out her fairy-tale dream. The dream didn't last long, however. Soon after the Marlands arrived back in town, E.W. lost control of his beloved Marland Oil. The couple had to abandon the Palace on the Prairie and move into a more modest dwelling on the estate. Never one to give up, E.W. Marland ran for and won a congressional seat representing north central Oklahoma in Washington. Two years later, E.W. was poised to run for Governor of Oklahoma. As the politics heated up...so did the gossip.

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry.)

MRS. DINGLE

Can you believe?

MRS. BERRY

Can you imagine?

MRS. DINGLE

Mr. Marland could actually be governor.

MRS. BERRY

With this depression going on...we need something.

MRS. DINGLE

But Lydie...can you believe—

MRS. BERRY

Can you imagine?

(Charlie walks close to the women.)

MRS. DINGLE

Especially after what happened to poor Walt Johnson.

MRS. BERRY

It makes sense now.

(This statement gets Charlie interested.)

MRS. DINGLE

I don't like to talk, but—

MRS. BERRY

I know exactly what you mean.

CHARLIE

Excuse me, ladies.

MRS. DINGLE

Hello, Mr. McDonagh.

MRS. BERRY

Hello, Mr. McDonagh.

CHARLIE

Do you think it's appropriate to gossip in the middle of town?

MRS. DINGLE

Oh no...Gossiping is very bad.

MRS. BERRY

Very bad indeed.

MRS. DINGLE

I always say that I don't like to talk—

CHARLIE

But it seems to come out anyway?

MRS. BERRY

We weren't gossiping.

MRS. DINGLE

We would *never* do that.

CHARLIE

But ladies, I just heard you talking about Mr. Marland and Walt Johnson. Walt was a good friend of mine and Lydie still is. I prefer that you...

MRS. DINGLE

We weren't gossiping—

MRS. BERRY

We were just rehashing some facts.

CHARLIE

(With a dubious tone.)

Facts?

MRS. DINGLE

Yes.

MRS. BERRY

Yes indeed.

MRS. DINGLE

Penelope Peabody...you know the woman who falls asleep in church *every* Lord's day?

MRS. BERRY

She has a friend—

MRS. DINGLE

Who has a son who worked for Sheriff Finchem—

MRS. BERRY

Back when the accident occurred.

MRS. DINGLE

E.W. Marland was at Daniel Craigan's well-site not an hour before the explosion. He and poor Walt had an argument—

MRS. BERRY

And then KaBoom!

CHARLIE

You're telling me E.W. Marland was at the well-site the morning of Walt's accident?

MRS. DINGLE

Absolutely...In fact, Mrs. Peabody's friend's son is right over there. He'll tell you.

(Charlie excuses himself and moves across stage to talk to the man.)

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry exit.)

CHARLIE

Hello...Are you the son of a friend of Mrs. Peabody?

(Charlie grimaces at the introduction.)

JODY

I'm Jody.

CHARLIE

Jody...Good to meet you. This sounds crazy, but I was talking to Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry. They were telling me this wild tale that E.W. Marland was at the well-site the morning of Walt Johnson's accident.

JODY

He was there—

(Hesitates then thinks.)

But I really can't talk about a case.

CHARLIE

I understand, but Walt was a close friend of mine. Did you actually see Mr. Marland there?

JODY

(Jody looks around nervously.)

Of course not...we got the information from Daniel Craigan. He's the one that made the report.

CHARLIE

Did the Sherriff investigate...I mean what was done?

JODY

(Nervous and agitated.)

Like I said, I can't really talk about a case, and talking about E.W. Marland is not good business around here.

CHARLIE

Listen. Marland may be the next governor; he's married to a friend of mine; and you're insinuating he was at a potential crime scene. You can tell me now or answer to a subpoena.

JODY

I don't know nothing...If you want to know what happened that morning, talk to Craigan.

CHARLIE

Craigan?

JODY

He's moved to Texas—But you didn't hear it from me.

(Jody exits abruptly, leaving Charlie behind. Lights fade.)

Scene 5

(Daniel Craigan sitting at a table while Charlie introduces himself and has a seat. Daniel Craigan is slightly drunk.)

CHARLIE

Mr. Craigan?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

(Looks at Charlie suspiciously.)

Do I know you?

CHARLIE

Charles McDonagh...from Ponca City.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Yeah...they call you Charlie...Charlie McDonagh.

CHARLIE

Yes.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

You were friends with Johnson?

CHARLIE

Yes, we were good friends. Could I have a moment of your time?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Sure...have a seat.

(Charlie sits down.)

Want something to drink?

CHARLIE

No...I just wanted to talk to you about Walt Johnson.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Johnson was a smart kid...smart and ambitious.

CHARLIE

Yes, I think he would have done well if it hadn't been for the accident.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

(Takes another swig of his drink.)

Yeah, the accident.

CHARLIE

Were you there that morning?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

We were pushing to get that well done. We pushed too hard.

CHARLIE

What was Mr. Marland doing there?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Marland...I don't know exactly. Yeah, he was there. I'd been at the site all night, Johnson came about midnight to relieve me, but I stayed out there to sleep.

CHARLIE

I heard that Marland and Walt argued.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Argued...I don't remember that. It was loud—everyone shouts at a well-site.

(Craigán thinks and then gives an insincere laugh.)

You think Marland had something to do with Johnson's death?

CHARLIE

I think...I think it's odd that Walt and Mr. Marland had a confrontation the night before Mr. Marland shows up at a well-site that's not his, to have another argument the morning of Walt's death.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Marland...he's always at the wrong place at the wrong time.

CHARLIE

So you think maybe he—

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Listen, kid, I don't like Marland and he don't like me. I bet even you can figure that out. Believe me, I would be the last person to help Marland. He's arrogant and thinks he's some kind of nobility. He can find oil like it's a gift from God. I'll grant you that. Johnson had the gift, too. In fact, Johnson and Marland were a lot alike, except Johnson was a good Joe. Marland's got the worst timing in the world. He didn't know when to sell in 1907 and, even though I tried to tell him, he didn't figure out some of his own people were taking his company and giving control to Morgan.

CHARLIE

So you don't think he had anything to do with Walt's accident?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

I was there. Johnson and Marland didn't have an argument. They talked, but neither one of 'em shouted or cursed or anything. I don't know what they were talking about, but they shook hands when Marland left and Johnson was in a great mood after that.

CHARLIE

You say it was a friendly conversation?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

I wouldn't say friendly, but it was mutual. It wasn't heated.

(Charlie thinks silently.)

Listen, kid. It's the oil patch. Accidents happen. This was a bad one, but it was just an accident. Believe me, I'd love to stick this on Marland just to bring him down a notch or two, but Marland liked the kid.

CHARLIE

How do you know that?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

He told me.

CHARLIE

When?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

At Johnson's funeral. Johnson was marrying his daughter.

CHARLIE

How do you know that?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Johnson told me after Marland left that day at the well. He told me he wouldn't be leaving for Bartlesville, after all. Said he was staying in Ponca City to get married.

CHARLIE

Thanks...Thanks, Mr. Craigan.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

What's the hurry...have another drink with me.

CHARLIE

No thanks...I have a train to catch.

(Charlie exits.)

Scene 6

(Lydie enters. E.W. follows her.)

E.W.

Lydie, are you okay?

LYDIE

The room was stuffy—I couldn't breathe.

E.W.

(E.W. moves closer to Lydie to comfort her.)

I didn't notice, but I guess the luncheon was crowded today.

LYDIE

I know this is a big day for you, and I'm sorry to be such a distraction. I'll be all right in a minute or two.

E.W.

It's not every day your husband announces that he's going to be governor.

LYDIE

It'll take more than announcing you'll be governor. We'll have to campaign. I'm afraid you'll be away too much.

E.W.

We ran the campaign for Congress and won with no problem.

LYDIE

Everyone in Kay County knew you. This is a statewide race.

E.W.

So, we'll get to meet new people.

LYDIE

That's what worries me.

E.W.

People will fall in love with you, Lydie—just like I did.

LYDIE

You know there's more to it than that.

E.W.

You're not worried about our age difference, again? I am not ashamed to have a pretty, intelligent wife who happens to be a few years younger than I am.

LYDIE

People will talk. I hear the things they say behind my back.

E.W.

(E.W. steps close to Lydie and holds her shoulders gently.)

I'm going to win this governor's race, Lydie, and you'll be the finest first lady this state's ever seen. I don't care a whit what people think.

LYDIE

That's the difference between us, Ernest. You don't worry about anything and I worry about practically everything. I'm afraid of what people will say about us...how they might use me to hurt you.

E.W.

(E.W. laughs good-naturedly.)

I'm used to dealing with oilmen and politicians. Public opinion can't be any more scandalous than that bunch.

LYDIE

It's a little overwhelming, I guess.

E.W.

You're doing fine, Lydie. Just fine.

LYDIE

I do like taking care of you.

E.W.

I don't know what I'd do without you.

LYDIE

(Gently pulls a piece of lint off his jacket.)

You'd have lint on your jacket, that's for sure.

E.W.

That's not what I mean.

LYDIE

I know. Thank you for letting me take care of the little things, though.

E.W.

I've got a surprise for you.

LYDIE

A surprise?

E.W.

Remember Jo Davidson?

LYDIE

Of course. I saw a lot of him when the mansion was built. Such an energetic fellow—I wonder how he's doing?

E.W.

You'll find out.

(Lydie looks puzzled.)

Jo's coming to work on a special project for me.

LYDIE

I thought everything was done at the mansion.

E.W.

It is, but Jo's going to carve three more statues—one of me, one of George, and one of you.

LYDIE

A statue of me?

E.W.

Yes!

LYDIE

What would I wear? How should I wear my DINGLE? Should I wear jewelry? I won't have time to pose.

E.W.

Jo doesn't have anyone pose. He likes to work from casual observation and talking with people. He got to see plenty of us during the construction and he's excited about the project.

LYDIE

I don't know.

E.W.

Too late. I've already told Jo to order the limestone—the finest he could find. He's sculpted some of the most famous people in the world. It's only fitting that he does our statues.

LYDIE

Where will you put them?

E.W.

(E.W. smiles.)

The statues will go outside. Mine will be in front of the office downtown and George's will go to the west of the house...and for your statue, I have a special spot selected on the north vista. I'll be able to see it every morning from the breakfast room.

LYDIE

You spoil me.

E.W.

That's my intent.

(E.W. talks in a more serious tone while standing close to Lydie.)

Listen, Lydie, I know this campaigning won't easy on you. You're a private person, but people are counting on us in this campaign. Times are tough and I can help—but I need you to stand with me.

(Pause.)

I love you more than anything in this world.

LYDIE

And I love you too, Ernest...I always will.

(E.W. and Lydie kiss, initiated by E.W.)

(Lydie smiles coyly.)

Mr. Marland, what will people say if they find their future governor kissing during his big luncheon?

E.W.

Mrs. Marland, I couldn't care less!

(E.W. offers Lydie his arm.)

May I escort you back to our party?

LYDIE

Mr. Marland, that's a capital idea. I'll go with you anywhere you want to go.

(E.W. and Lydie exit stage arm in arm.)

Scene 7

(Old Charlie enters.)

OLD CHARLIE

E.W. Marland believed in the rugged toughness of the Oklahoma people. He won the governorship in a hard-fought campaign serving as governor during the darkest days of the great dust bowl with Lydie as his gracious first lady. The newspapers fell in love with Lydie, as E.W. had predicted. They called her a princess. Although Lydie was a shy person who fiercely valued her privacy, she attended many functions and posed for countless pictures to the delight of the press. She even lent her sense of style to the Governor's Mansion while in Oklahoma City. Lydie and E.W. kept the Palace on the Prairie open during the governorship. They hosted parties and fox hunts in the grand manner that was the Marland style. E.W. struggled to get his agenda implemented, but still proved he had the old Marland magic when oil was discovered in the front lawn of the state capitol during his term of office. E.W. had been to Washington, D.C. as a congressman and wanted badly to return as a senator. He ran twice for the United States Senate, but came up short both times. E.W. and Lydie returned home to Ponca City. E.W. had to sell the great house he had built to the Carmelite Fathers. The couple moved into a more modest house that had been the chauffeur's quarters when the mansion was built. Lydie was happy to be home with her husband and out of the public eye in their cozy new cottage. E.W. Marland's company was out of his control, his political career was finished, and much of his previous wealth was gone—but as always, Mr. Marland had big dreams of rebuilding Marland Oil. Time was not on his side this time.

(Lydie attends to a sickly E.W. sitting in a chair.)

(Charlie enters and looks around.)

LYDIE

Charlie!

CHARLIE

How's Lydie?

LYDIE

I'm fine.

CHARLIE

It's good to see you. I guess you and Mr. Marland are settled in?

LYDIE

Yes, we're doing fine. The cottage is very comfortable.

CHARLIE

Is everything all right?

LYDIE

Yes...things are fine...it's just...Charlie, could you come see Mr. Marland right now. He hasn't felt well for several months and has been cooped up inside. I think he would really appreciate your company.

CHARLIE

Of course.

LYDIE

He enjoys visiting so much and frankly not many people have been to see him lately. I'd really appreciate it.

(Lydie hesitates.)

Charlie, before we go in, I need to tell you something. He's—Mr. Marland's had a stroke. He may not quite be like you remember but—he'll love seeing you.

(Charlie and Lydie move across stage to an ailing E.W.)

(Marland sitting up in a chair.)

CHARLIE

Good afternoon, Mr. Marland.

E.W.

Charles...Look Lydie, it's my first friend in Ponca City.

CHARLIE

I guess I did meet you coming right off the train.

E.W.

Yes, you did. Lydie, Charles carried my bags to the Arcade Hotel my first day. He thought I would give him a nickel, but all I had for him was advice.

CHARLIE

Never miss an opportunity to make a new friend.

E.W.

You remember after all these years!

CHARLIE

But you did take me to the ranch.

E.W.

We did have a great day at the 101 Ranch, didn't we? That's the trip I met Joe Miller.

(E.W. looks sad.)

I always liked talking things over with Joe. I liked the way he thought. I sure miss him.

(E.W. talks to Lydie.)

This kid and Walt Johnson were always into something. I was coming back from the field one day when that Johnson kid hurled a rock at Craigan's car. I knew Craigan was a hothead, so I rode as hard as I could. Before I got there, Craigan had slapped the kid silly. Do you remember?

CHARLIE

I could never forget.

E.W.

That Johnson kid would never back down from anything. I had to step in between them or I think the kid would have fought Craigan.

CHARLIE

We caused a lot of trouble, I guess.

E.W.

You were just being boys.

CHARLIE

It was a great place to be a kid.

E.W.

It's been good to me. I've lived well and made plenty of friends. As soon as I feel better, I'm going to get more active about developing some properties around here.

LYDIE

It's time to take your medicine.

CHARLIE

I should be going.

E.W.

It was good to see you, Charles...don't be a stranger, please.

CHARLIE

I'll be seeing you.

(Charlie walks away.)

LYDIE

Thanks, Charlie.

CHARLIE

No need to thank me...You know I thought I was doing the old man a favor by visiting him, but his optimism is contagious. How are you doing?

LYDIE

Fine. It's nice being isolated, but Mr. Marland does enjoy the company. Thanks again.

CHARLIE

Any time.

(Charlie exits.)

(Lydie returns to E.W.'s side.)

E.W.

Lydie, I love you more than anything in this world.

(E.W. touches Lydie's face. Lydie exits.)

(Old Charlie enters.)

OLD CHARLIE

(Light slowly fades on E.W. Marland.)

E.W. Marland came to Ponca City with big dreams. On October 3, 1941, the dream was over.

E.W. Marland died in the arms of his beloved Lydie...of a broken spirit some said. I like to think he had given all that he had to give.

Marland was a man most people liked. He had been a risk taker and innovator. He was the epitome of the oil wildcatter and entrepreneur. He had made and lost a fortune, but he had made numerous fortunes for others. Most people who knew him were better for it and that is saying a lot for anyone's life. For E.W. Marland the dream was over. For Lydie, the nightmare was just beginning.

Scene 8

(Charlie is on stage.)

(Lydie enters.)

CHARLIE

Lydie?

(Lydie walks a few steps as if she might walk away before stopping.)

What are you doing? I haven't seen you in ages.

LYDIE

I'm out for a walk, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I see. You always did like to walk in the evenings. I noticed your statue is missing. Have the monks who bought the mansion moved it?

LYDIE

(Lydie laughs insincerely.)

They found it a little too...provocative, I think.

CHARLIE

It was a good likeness.

LYDIE

Mr. Marland always liked it. They discreetly asked if I had some place to store it.

CHARLIE

Where did you put it?

LYDIE

I didn't. I paid a gardener five dollars to destroy it.

CHARLIE

Destroy it!

LYDIE

I told him to break it, smash the face first.

CHARLIE

Lydie, that statue should have been preserved.

LYDIE

I saw no point. The woman in the statue doesn't exist anymore. I'm not sure she ever did. I had it destroyed and taken away, because the image disturbed me.

(Charlie sighs.)

All my men have left me, Charlie. My dear Mr. Marland's gone. George has moved away. I have no one, Charlie, just memories.

(Silence.)

I'm so alone. I don't think anyone's as alone as I.

CHARLIE

Lydie, I can't imagine the loss you're feeling now, but I think you need to talk to somebody. You've got to get on with your life.

LYDIE

Some days I long to let it all go and let other people untangle the messes, but that would be just one more way I failed Mr. Marland and everyone else who ever cared for me. I'm not as brave as people think. Nobody can make it alone and now I'm all alone. I'll never understand why they treated Mr. Marland like they did. All he wanted was to help people, but they wouldn't let him alone. They kept coming back, over and over again, for their pound of flesh. And now they'll be getting it from me.

CHARLIE

Who are *they*?

LYDIE

It's good you don't know all that's gone on, Charlie. They tried to ruin Mr. Marland in that last election and they used me to do it. You can't imagine the horrible things they said about Mr. Marland...the horrible things they must think about me.

I'm leaving Ponca City, Charlie.

CHARLIE

What?

LYDIE

There's nothing here for me but gossip and bad memories. I just want to be left alone...and I will be.

(Lydie leaves.)

CHARLIE

But Lydie...Lydie.

(Charlie exits.)

Scene 9

(Old Charlie enters. Two men bring on stands of flowers as Old Charlie begins to speak.)

OLD CHARLIE

And that's what happened. In February, in 1953, Lydie left Ponca City. She loaded up her Studebaker, with some clothes, paintings, and \$10,000 in cash. Lydie drove out of town and vanished for 22 years. The *Saturday Evening Post* wrote an article about it in 1958, but for most, Lydie Marland faded from memory. Oh, there were reports. She was seen in New York City, San Francisco—someone said they saw her working at a motel in Independence, Missouri, and she marched in war protest in Washington. No one but Lydie knows the true story of those mysterious years—no one. In 1975, at age 75, Lydie moved quietly back to Ponca City. E.W. Marland's Palace on the Prairie was for sale and Lydie helped convince the citizens of Ponca City to purchase the property from Felician Sisters by writing an impassioned letter. She moved back into chauffeur's quarters, where she lived the rest of her life. She developed a few friends in her neighborhood and, although she was never again socially active, she was interested in other people and would sometimes walk up to the great mansion as a tour was being given, much to the delight of the many guests visiting the mansion.

(Old Charlie collects himself.)

Lydie Marland passed away July 25, 1987, at 87 years of age. She was laid to rest next to her beloved Mr. Marland in the family's mausoleum. A memorial service was held in the Inner Lounge of her great Palace on the Prairie, where all those magnificent foxhunts and parties had happened. My Elizabeth was gone from me by then, having passed away the previous winter. I went to Lydie's service alone. I thought Lydie's story was over, but there was one last surprise to her extraordinary life.

(A man comes up to Old Charlie.)

GARDENER

Mr. McDonagh?

OLD CHARLIE

Yes.

GARDENER

I know you was a friend of Mrs. Marland.

OLD CHARLIE

I was.

GARDENER

There's something been bothering me for a long time. I've kept it to myself, 'cause Mrs. Marland told me to, but now she's gone and I think someone should know.

OLD CHARLIE

Know what?

GARDENER

I'm the one that broke up that statue. I hated doin' it, but Mrs. Marland said, "Break it, smash the face first, then throw the pieces in the river."

OLD CHARLIE

You're the one that destroyed her?

GARDENER

Only thing is, I didn't exactly do what Mrs. Marland said.

OLD CHARLIE

What do you mean?

GARDENER

I had to break it 'cause she was watching. Broke the face first, just like she said, but it was a pretty statue and I didn't wanna just dump it in the river, so I—buried it.

OLD CHARLIE

You know where Lydie's broken statue is?

GARDENER

It's been a long time, but I know pretty close where the spot is.
(Hands Old Charlie a map.)

OLD CHARLIE

Oh, thank you. Thank you!

(Bring statue to stage and take off flower stands, leaving the statue. Old Charlie turns to look at the statue.)

(Mary enters.)

MARY

(Softly)

Grandpa?

(Louder)

Grandpa?

(Shouts)

Grandpa!

OLD CHARLIE

Humm?

MARY

It is a beautiful statue, Grandpa. It's great that they're putting it back together. Why do you come every night to look at her?

OLD CHARLIE

The statue being put back together symbolizes the true spirit of the kind of people E.W. Marland admired. People who would put the pieces of their lives back together again and again, just like the pieces to Lydie's broken statue.

MARY

Was any of that story true?

OLD CHARLIE

Only the unbelievable parts.

(Adlib as they exit.)

THE END

SMALL CAST VERSION

THE BROKEN STATUE

A PLAY

SETTING

Ponca City, Oklahoma circa 1911 to 1943

CHARACTERS

Mary
Old Charlie
Mrs. Dingle
Mrs. Berry
E.W. Marland
Walt Johnson
Charlie
Lydie
Daniel Craigan
George Marland
Elizabeth
Jody/Gardner

Act 1
Scene 1

(Old Charlie and his granddaughter in the evening.)

MARY

Where did they find it, Grandpa?

OLD CHARLIE

The statue?

MARY

Of course, the statue.

CHARLIE

They dug it up in a vacant lot here in Ponca City...the statue's been lost for years.

MARY

Why do you come look at it every night? What's so special about this piece of rock?

OLD CHARLIE

It's a part of history. Something lost so long and then found...it's exciting. I want to see them put the pieces back together.

MARY

Grandpa, you come every night. There's got to be more.

OLD CHARLIE

Well...I knew her.

MARY

You knew the woman in the statue?

(Old Charlie sheepishly nods.)

Why didn't you say so? Why haven't you told everyone? Did you know her well?

OLD CHARLIE

I knew her quite well at one time.

MARY

Did you know her “quite well” before Grandma?

OLD CHARLIE

It was nothing like that. We were young and her life was...complicated.

MARY

So...you know the story of the statue?

OLD CHARLIE

I do...such a tragedy.

MARY

Why?

OLD CHARLIE

I saw it happen like a spectator in a theatre. The characters were noble yet flawed. Eventually forces outside their control crushed them. Poor girl, she had so much and wanted so little. She was beautiful, but she was more than that. She had her own kind of strength. You know that grit you need to get through life. This broken statue is like her broken life...and the broken lives of others.

MARY

Sounds interesting. How does it begin?

OLD CHARLIE

The story of the statue is about opportunities and opportunities lost. It begins with Ernest Whitworth Marland or as folks around here called him, E.W..

(Mary exits. People in 1920's period wardrobe prepare for a party.)

E. W. Marland came to Ponca City before World War 1 with big dreams that ignited an oil boom. E.W. and his wife Virginia owned a large mansion off Grand Avenue that included an eight acre garden and a golf course on the grounds. The Marlands had everything they could want in life except children, so they adopted Virginia's nephew and niece, George and Lydie Roberts. E.W. controlled 10 percent of the petroleum production in the world back then and was famous for his extravagant lifestyle, elaborate foxhunts, and the lavish parties he threw at his Grand Mansion.

(Old Charlie exits as Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry enter with E.W. Marland who directs preparations for a party. Walt Johnson works as a laborer as people arrive.)

MRS. DINGLE

E.W. Marland, this looks to be your biggest party yet!

E. W. MARLAND

Everyone seems to find an invitation to the Oilman's Ball.
(Charlie McDonough enters.)

MRS. BERRY

Hello, Charlie McDonough

CHARLIE:

Mrs. Dingle, Mrs. Berry.
(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry exit. Lydie Marland enters.)
How's Miss Marland this evening?

LYDIE

Just Lydie to you.

CHARLIE

I can't get used to the new name either. You'll always be just Lydie to me. Looks like it'll be quite a party.

LYDIE

I think so. I'll see you Charlie. Maybe we can dance later.
(Lydie exits. Charlie exits. Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry enter.)

MRS. DINGLE

I don't like to talk—

MRS. BERRY

But?

MRS. DINGLE

Mr. Marland has not been too particular about his party guests tonight.

MRS. BERRY

I think everyone in the state is here! I've seen our congressman and the governor's over there! Isn't that the bootlegger with the governor?

MRS. DINGLE

It's bad enough to let the politicians and bootleggers in, but that Daniel Craigan is lurking about.

MRS. BERRY

This is the Oilman's Ball and he is an oilman.

MRS. DINGLE

Not a very scrupulous one. I've heard stories.

MRS. BERRY

Oh do tell!

(Daniel Craigan walks up.)

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Good evening ladies.

MRS. DINGLE

Good evening Mr. Craigan. It's quite an evening.

MRS. BERRY

Quite an evening indeed.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

I guess. You seen Marland around?

MRS. DINGLE

I saw him earlier.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

How about that sweet little niece of his?

MRS. DINGLE

Mr. Craigan, you know Lydie's been adopted by the Marlands.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Don't care too much about their relationship, but I'd like to know Marland's "daughter" a little better.

MRS. DINGLE

Mr. Craigan! I've never heard such a vulgar insinuation!

MRS. BERRY

Me either.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

I bet you haven't.

(To Mrs. Berry)

But, I'm not so sure about you.

(To Mrs. Dingle)

(Mrs. Dingle marches off, Mrs. Berry follows. Daniel Craigan exits.)

E. W. and George Marland approach.)

GEORGE

Who's that with Lydie?

E.W.

I can't believe it! It's Daniel Craigan.

GEORGE

Want me to look into it?

E.W.

A good idea.

(E.W. exits.)

(Charlie enters.)

GEORGE

Charlie, do you see that guy with Lydie?

CHARLIE

It's Daniel Craigan.

GEORGE

Mr. Marland won't approve of Lydie socializing with him. It's bad enough I have to chase Walt Johnson away. Go get Lydie away from him.

CHARLIE

I think sometimes you invite me to these parties just to keep other guys away from Lydie.

GEORGE

That's exactly why you're here...Now go.
(Charlie shrugs and walks toward Lydie.)

CHARLIE

Hello Lydie.

LYDIE

Charlie. You've come to dance.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Wait just a minute, me and this girl are just getting friendly.

LYDIE

I promised Charlie this dance.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

(Daniel Craigan is irritated by the interruption.)
(Daniel Craigan speaks to Charlie.)

This isn't over.

LYDIE

If you'll excuse me, Mr. Craigan, I need to talk to Mr. McDonagh.

(Daniel Craigan reluctantly exits.)

Thank goodness you rescued me.

CHARLIE

George sent me.

LYDIE

Mr. Craigan is a crude and despicable man.

CHARLIE

I'd agree

LYDIE

You know him?

CHARLIE

Walt and I ran into him a few times when we were kids. He's a mean one.

LYDIE

I don't like the way he looks at me. Besides that, he's an arrogant know-it-all.

CHARLIE

I hate that kind of guy.

LYDIE

(Lydie playfully punches Charlie's arm.)

You know what I mean. You're not arrogant, just irritating.

CHARLIE

People that think they know everything are a real irritant to those of us that do know everything.

LYDIE

(Lydie laughs.)

Well, I'm glad George trusts you to protect me, I do need someone around who can still make me laugh.

(Lydie speaks in a more inquisitive tone.)

How's Walt?

CHARLIE

He's managing—working all the time, and taking care of his mother.

LYDIE

I wish he could be here tonight.

CHARLIE

I saw him working earlier.

LYDIE

You know what I mean. George is impossible with him and Mr. Marland's not much better. They throw these big bashes for me then browbeat any boy that shows any interest.

CHARLIE

It looks like you're showing a lot of interest tonight.

LYDIE

It's just an act...mainly to keep those two off track.

I love living in Ponca City. I could have never dreamed I could live like this, but sometimes it's so inconvenient. Don't you wish sometimes it could be like that first summer when we did what we wanted without staged entertainment?

CHARLIE

Sometimes.

LYDIE

I'd like to go swim in the river or just sit on the bridge with Walt and talk without all these distractions.

CHARLIE

I guess you're still kinda hung up on Walt?

LYDIE

Of course...He's not like these, pampered gentlemen. Walt's genuine—my knight in shining armor. You still see him don't you Charlie? Does he ever mention me?

CHARLIE

Only every other word.

LYDIE

(Lydie beams at Charlie's comment.)

And how about you...are there any young ladies you're telling him about?

(Charlie blushes and turns away.)

There is! Who is it?

CHARLIE

I was on my way to ask Elizabeth Cassidy if she would like to dance before George collared me.

LYDIE

Elizabeth! She would be perfect for you. You should definitely ask her to dance.

CHARLIE

You're mocking me, right?

LYDIE

Oh no...Elizabeth's a sweet, dear girl. She would be perfect for you. I'll introduce you.

(Lydie introduces Charlie and Elizabeth. Lydie watches them start their dialogue and then exits.)

CHARLIE

It's a wonderful party.

ELIZABETH

Yes.

CHARLIE

Your father's the dentist in town, right?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

CHARLIE

Would you like to dance?

ELIZABETH

(Elizabeth looks uneasy.)

No...No I can't.

(Elizabeth walks off.)

CHARLIE

Maybe some punch, horseshoes...anything?

(Charlie follows Elizabeth off stage.)

(Lydie enters with a class of Champaign in her hand.)

(Mr. Craigan, enters and tries to grab Lydie.)

LYDIE

Get your hands off of me!

(Lydie struggles to break free for Daniel Craigan's grip.)

You're a vile, coarse man.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Come on missy, your "daddy" has cost me plenty through the years. I think some time with old Daniel Craigan might even things up a little.

(Daniel Craigan holds Lydie by the arm.)

(Walt enters to separate Lydie from Daniel Craigan.)

WALT

Get your hands off her!

(The commotion causes E.W. and George to enter.)

E.W.

What's going on here! Get off him and get back to work!

(Walt releases Daniel Craigan.)

WALT

He was bothering Lydie!

E.W.

(E.W. speaks to Walt.)

That will be all.

(Walt exits and is followed by Lydie.)

What do you have to say for yourself, Craigan?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

I thought your niece or daughter or whatever you call her these days looked a little lonely...I was just trying to give her some attention.

E.W.

You're a brute and bully...always have been. Get out. You're not welcome here anymore.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

What about that famous Marland hospitality? Always so polite and well-bred...when you're not trying to squeeze every oilman that dares compete with you out of business.

E.W.

You've had too much to drink. I let you come this evening because you are supposed to be an oilman, but you can leave now! Escort yourself out or I'll do it for you.

(Daniel Craigan leaves.)

E.W.

The show's over...let's all get back to the party.

(E. W. exits. Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry enter.)

MRS. BERRY

That Johnson boy has sure grown up.

MRS. DINGLE

Yes...Yes he has.

MRS. BERRY

I haven't seen his mother in a while.

MRS. DINGLE

Oh Mrs. Berry...you're so naïve. I don't like to talk—

MRS. BERRY

But...

MRS. DINGLE

His mother has quite a reputation...I understand she's one of Daniel Craigan's...women.

MRS. BERRY

You don't say!

MRS. DINGLE

You know me, I don't like to talk.

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry exit.)

(Walt and Lydie enter together and embrace before E.W. Marland enters and interrupts them.)

E.W.

What going on here?... You!

WALT

Good evening sir...

E.W.

(Speaking to Walt.)

Be quiet!

E.W.

Lydie, have you lost your mind? Your reputation will be ruined if someone saw you here rubbing up against this boy.

LYDIE

We were just taking a walk.

E.W.

A walk! Is that what they call it now?

LYDIE

But...

E.W.

But nothing, There's no discussion here. Go to your room.

(Lydie exits. Walt begins to leave.)

E.W.

Stop! We have some things to talk about.

(Walt stops as Lydie walks away.)

I've never seen such behavior young man. She's only seventeen and you're...

WALT

Eighteen, sir.

E.W.

You're a hired hand working at this house. You must understand this is not acceptable. What if one of the guests had been here instead of me to see this behavior?

I have nothing against you son, but you'll never be worthy of Lydie. Your family...your family has a reputation that would make a roughneck blush. Lydie is preparing for a life that you cannot imagine. You'll cripple her ability to find the kind of family that will generate a legacy...a family heritage.

(Walt listens quietly but defiantly.)

I just want you to know that you can't see Lydie. I think it best if you don't speak to her again—ever.

WALT

I can't do that...Lydie and I are in love.

E.W.

What!

WALT

Lydie and I are in love. We have been for a while and we'll be married after I save some money.

E.W.

(E.W. laughs in disgust and disbelief.)

That's not possible. I would never allow it. Lydie would be completely disowned. Trust me son you will never marry Lydie.

WALT

We've talked it over. We don't need your money. I'll make it on my own.

(E.W. doesn't know how to respond.)

If you really knew Lydie...If you ever listened to her, you would see she doesn't care about the money or this life. She's a good person, with a kind heart, and that's good enough for her. You're the one trying to cripple her ability to be happy.

E.W.

First, you're fired. Second, you're never to set foot on any Marland property again. If you do, I'll have you shot! *(Lights fade.)*

Scene 2

(Lydie and Charlie enter. It's the next day.)

LYDIE

It was terrible. I've never seen Mr. Marland so angry.

CHARLIE

Walt told me. He said Mr. Marland was going to have him shot if he came back on the grounds.

LYDIE

Mr. Marland told me that if I ever saw Walt again he would ship me back to Pennsylvania as far away from "that boy" as possible.

CHARLIE

What are you going to do?

LYDIE

I don't know. I can't live without him, but I don't want to let down Mr. Marland, either. Mr. Marland was so disappointed last night. I tried to reason with him and talk about Walt's good qualities. They're both so much alike, but Mr. Marland would only talk about the future and being practical. I don't know what to do. I'm a mess.

(Lydie looks off almost talking to herself.)

I wish I'd never come here. I wish Walt and I could have met and just been a regular couple somewhere else. Charlie you know him. Walt can do anything he wants in life. He's got greatness in him. I don't understand why Mr. Marland can't see it.

CHARLIE

People see what they want to see.

LYDIE

I suppose.

(In a more playful tone.)

How did the dance go with Elizabeth?

CHARLIE

You set me up. She turned me down flat.

LYDIE

She turned you down because her church doesn't dance. They don't believe in music or something. I had to talk for hours just to get her to come to the party.

CHARLIE

Thanks for the warning.

LYDIE

Don't worry, Elizabeth really likes you. She asked me to see if you would invite her out sometime or maybe go to a church meeting. I think you should, you would be a cute couple.

CHARLIE

I'll see.

LYDIE

I'm worried about Walt. I've never been to his house. I don't even know where he lives.

(Charlie looks away without answering.)

Charlie, do you know where Walt lives or not?

CHARLIE

Yes...but...it's not in the best part of town.

LYDIE

I don't care, take me.

(Charlie and Lydie walk to lighting that becomes darker and gloomier at Walt's home.)

CHARLIE

Stay here and I'll get Walt.

(Charlie moves away from Lydie. Walt enters and does not see Lydie immediately.)

WALT

Charlie? What are you doing here?

CHARLIE

Lydie's worried about you.

WALT

How's Lydie?

CHARLIE

She's fine. I left her across the street.

WALT

You brought Lydie here!

(Lydie moves closer to Walt. Walt turns his back on them.)

CHARLIE

This may not be a good time, Lydie.

(Lydie looks around and follows Walt while Charlie stays in the background.)

LYDIE

Walt?

(Walt does not acknowledge her.)

Walt, talk to me. What's wrong?

WALT

You have no right coming here. No right to be here. I...

(Walt looks away embarrassed.)

LYDIE

It's all right Walt. It's okay...It doesn't matter...It doesn't matter to me.

WALT

I didn't want you to see this place. I never wanted you to see how we live.

LYDIE

It's just a neighborhood, Walt. It's just four walls where you live. It's not what you are. Trust me, I've seen worse.

WALT

Mom...she's not well. All she does is stare at the wall.

LYDIE

I'm sorry. Is there anything I can do?

WALT

Yeah. Let's get out of here for a while and take a walk.

(Walt suddenly remembers Charlie is there.)

You can come too.

CHARLIE

Thanks. But I've got some things to do.

(Walt and Lydie exit the stage.)

(Charlie walks alone a few seconds until Lydie comes back to him crying.)

CHARLIE

What's the matter?

LYDIE

Walt's been drafted.

CHARLIE

What?

LYDIE

Walt's been drafted into the army.

CHARLIE

When?

LYDIE

He leaves next week. I begged him not to go. I told him I would run away with him, but he said he had to go. Said it was his duty.

CHARLIE

Do you think—

LYDIE

Do I think Mr. Marland had something to do with his being drafted...it's possible. He certainly could have gotten that done, but I don't know.

(Lights fade.)

Scene 3

(Walt and Charlie in front of the train station with townspeople around.)

WALT

It's just you and me again—like when we were kids. We've had some great times at this train station.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

WALT

I like the train station...It's like a gateway to the world.

CHARLIE

Be careful over there.

WALT

Ah...you don't have to worry about me.

(Walt looks around for any sign of Lydie.)

CHARLIE

I still think the Marlands had something to do with this.

WALT

It don't matter. Do you think she'll come?

CHARLIE

If it's within her power she'll be here, but Lydie doesn't always have the final say in her life.

WALT

You don't understand, my friend, Lydie's one determined woman.

(Conductor calls "All aboard." People in the station start talking and looking at the entrance of Lydie from off stage.)

LYDIE

Walt! Don't go.

WALT

I got to go.

LYDIE

Be careful.

WALT

Charlie's already told me to do that.

LYDIE

(Lydie looks at Charlie and then back to Walt.)

Be careful for me.

WALT

I will...for you. I will be back for you.

LYDIE

I'll be waiting.

WALT

I'll hold you to that.

LYDIE

There's not one thing you can do that will change that war so be careful...don't be a hero.

WALT

A hero might look pretty good to a French girl.

LYDIE

Don't be a hero and don't even look at any French girls.

WALT

I won't look at anything but that North Star, because I know you'll be walking in the night, looking at it too.

LYDIE

You know me pretty well. You look at that star every night and know I'm thinking of you.

WALT

That's a deal.

LYDIE

Take this.

(Lydie hands Walt a picture.)

WALT

Your picture. This is better than any star. I'll look at it every night too. I wish I had a picture for you.

(Conductor calls "last call all aboard.")

LYDIE

I'll carry you in my heart. I love you, Walt Johnson.

WALT

You know I love you, Lydie.

(Walt starts to leave and then stops to kiss Lydie.)

(Walt exits. Charlie and Lydie left behind.)

LYDIE

You think he'll be okay?

CHARLIE

He's Walt...He'll be fine.

(Charlie and Lydie walk about town.)

OLD CHARLIE

(Old Charlie.)

Walt went to war while Lydie and I stayed behind. Lydie continued going to her parties and doing all the times required to be E.W. Marland's daughter, but her mind was always on her Walt, who was so far away in Europe. Walt sent letters regularly. I met Lydie often during that time to share those precious letters.

For me, I finally broke the ice with Elizabeth Cassidy and we soon became a couple of our own.

(Old Charlie exits.)

(Charlie and Lydie enter.)

(Mail carrier hands Charlie a letter.)

CHARLIE

It's a letter from Walt.

LYDIE

Read it! What does it say? I haven't seen a letter in weeks. Mr. Marland keeps intercepting them.

CHARLIE

He's safe...but it sounds rough over there.
(Charlie hands the letter to Lydie and she studies it.)

LYDIE

My poor Walt.
(E.W. Marland enters. Lydie hides the letter.)

E. W.

Lydie, time to go.

LYDIE

Yes, Mr. Marland.
(E.W. and Lydie exit leaving Charlie alone.)
(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry enter.)

MRS. DINGLE

Did you see the papers?

MRS. BERRY

Oh my yes...A big sale at the furniture store downtown.

MRS. DINGLE

Not that...you ninny...about that Johnson boy.
(Charlie hears and gets a paper.)

MRS. BERRY

Oh my...what has he broken this time?

MRS. DINGLE

He hasn't broken anything...he's a hero! The paper says, "Private Walter Johnson, of Ponca City, Oklahoma, mounted a supply pony with six French soldiers and charged a machine gun position." They're giving him a medal.

(Lydie enters and Charlie brings paper to her.)
(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry exit.)

LYDIE

What does it say?

CHARLIE

Four French soldiers were killed, but Walt and two others continued the attack. Walt's horse was shot out from under him, but they secured the position and fired until the machine gun overheated and jammed. Then they used rifles and pistols to hold off the Germans. He's been awarded a medal from the French Army. Walt's a hero. The whole town is talking about it.

CHARLIE

I can just imagine Walt charging head long into the whole German army.

LYDIE

Seriously, do you think he's all right?

CHARLIE

I'm sure he is. Walt would say, "Don't worry."

LYDIE

He always says, "Don't worry," but worry's all I do.

CHARLIE

We've got to think the best.

LYDIE

You're right. That's what Walt would do. I'm being selfish going on about my worries all the time. How's Elizabeth? She never comes around to see me.

CHARLIE

Elizabeth's fine. I see her every day. We're going to be married.

LYDIE

Charlie! You two will be perfect...Walt and I are engaged.

CHARLIE

What!

LYDIE

There's no ring or anything, but we promised each other before he left that we would marry, no matter what.

CHARLIE

Does Mr. Marland know?

LYDIE

Heaven's no. Things have been going better at home, since I've quit my flirting, Mr. Marland is much less suspicious. I'll tell him, but Mrs. Marland has been so sick and I don't want to burden him now. I hope Walt and Mr. Marland will be great friends someday.

CHARLIE

Maybe.

LYDIE

Do you think Walt will come home now?

CHARLIE

It's possible. He's a hero. They might send him back to recruit or sell bonds or something. Anyway, that war over there can't last much longer.

LYDIE

I hope so. I miss him so much. I'm tired of looking at the North Star thinking of him...I want to look into his eyes.

CHARLIE

If I know Walt...he's thinking the very same thing.

(Walt enters and runs to Lydie. Walt and Lydie hug. E.W. enters and see them, but exits without saying anything. Walt kisses Lydie.)

(Old Charlie and Mary enter.)

MARY

Mr. Marland approved—of Walt Johnson?

OLD CHARLIE

I don't know if I can answer that fully.

MARY

What do you mean, Grandpa?

OLD CHARLIE

Walt left as a boy from the wrong side of the tracks and returned a hero. Walt and Lydie's secret engagement was still a secret to everyone in town. Walt was still not welcomed at the Grand Mansion. While Mr. Marland was building a vast oil empire, Daniel Craigan barely managed to survive with only occasional successes.

(Daniel Craigan and Walt Johnson dressed in work clothes visit and shake hands.)

Craigan's luck was about to change, however. Walt Johnson started out as an underpaid hand on one of Craigan's wells but soon advanced. It seemed everything Walt touched turned to black gold. Walt was smart and energetic. Craigan started drilling one gusher after another even with the most used up and antiquated equipment. The Craigan Oil Company would never be a serious competitor to Marland Oil, but Walt Johnson was making a name for himself inside and outside of Ponca City.

(Mary and Old Charlie exit.)

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry enter wearing party dresses.)

MRS. DINGLE

This stands to be a grand party Mrs. Berry.

MRS. BERRY

A grand party indeed.

MRS. DINGLE

It's too bad Mrs. Marland is under the weather. I don't like to talk, but—

(Mrs. Berry rolls her eyes.)

I hear Mrs. Marland is not doing well at all...she hardly ever goes out anymore.

MRS. BERRY

Lucky for Mr. Marland that Lydie takes care of things...she's quite an accomplished hostess.

MRS. DINGLE

I do believe everyone and I mean everyone is here tonight. Senators, congressmen...I even saw Governor Robinson earlier.

MRS. BERRY

(Mrs. Berry looks around.)

Not everyone's here...I haven't seen that handsome Walt Johnson tonight.

MRS. DINGLE

I don't expect to see him here.

MRS. BERRY

I don't know, I hear he's never far from Lydie.

MRS. DINGLE

Tell what you know.

MRS. BERRY

I don't like to talk, but—someone said Lydie was at church sitting by Walt Johnson.

MRS. DINGLE

That could be a coincidence.

MRS. BERRY

They were holding hands...right in church!

MRS. DINGLE

Well, I never—

MRS. BERRY

I don't expect you ever have!

MRS. DINGLE

I hear he brought in another well for Mr. Craigan last week.

MRS. BERRY

People say he's got a nose for oil.

MRS. DINGLE

I always believed in that young man and I am confident he's smart enough to stay away from Mr. Marland.

MRS. BERRY

Don't be so sure.

MRS. DINGLE

Why not?

MRS. BERRY

Because he's coming up the walk.

(The people make a path as Walt enters the stage to face E.W. Marland.)

E.W.

What do you want?

WALT

I've come to see you, sir. Would you like to talk here, or in your study?

E.W.

I don't see that you have any business in my house or at this party for that matter, so I guess you can say what you will...then leave.

WALT

I've come to ask your permission to marry Lydie.

E.W.

That's preposterous. What makes you think she has any interest?

(Lydie moves from the crowd to stand by Walt.)

LYDIE

It's true Mr. Marland. I do love him. We've been secretly engaged since before the war.

(E.W. stands in stunned silence.)

WALT

I've saved some money. It may not be much to you, but it'll get us a comfortable start. Craigan's being bought out by a group from

Bartlesville and I'm moving after I finish this last well. I won't go without Lydie, if she'll have me.

(Lydie's body language says the answer will be yes.)

I'll be back tomorrow afternoon for an answer.

E.W.

You have no idea who you're dealing with! I'm going back to the party and leave this dreamer to his pathetic little job with Craigan Oil.

(Walt squeezes Lydie's hand as she gives him a kiss on the cheek. E.W. extends his hand.)

Lydie, come with me.

(Lydie exits reluctantly with E.W. leaving Walt alone.)

(Charlie enters.)

WALT

I guess you heard.

CHARLIE

I think the whole county's heard by now.

WALT

Marland blew up. Lydie wanted to elope, but that wouldn't be right. I still think Marland's a good guy and I wanted to give him a chance to do the right thing.

CHARLIE

He must have come undone.

WALT

Pretty much—made a comment about my 'pathetic' little job with Craigan.

CHARLIE

What *are* you doing working for Craigan? He's drunk half the time and barely keeps his equipment operational.

WALT

Working for Craigan's the price I have to pay for Lydie. I made some money and enough of a reputation to get a better job over at Bartlesville.

CHARLIE

What's going to happen?

WALT

Lydie's coming with me to Bartlesville. I have no idea what Marland will do. I hope he gives us his blessing, but I don't see that happening.

CHARLIE

I don't see E.W. Marland giving in to an ultimatum.

WALT

Me either

CHARLIE

Do you worry—I mean about keeping Lydie in a standard she's used to?

WALT

Lydie and I have talked about it. You probably don't know much about Lydie before she came here.

CHARLIE

Not really.

WALT

She doesn't like to talk about it. She hasn't always been rich. Sometimes money costs too much. Lydie will like living a more ordinary life. When you own a lot of stuff, the stuff owns you. Lydie feels trapped sometimes.

CHARLIE

You want to eat supper?

WALT

Naw...You know Charlie, you always help me dream big and believe in myself...that's a lot to do for any person to do, but...I'm heading out to the well. I want to see if I can finish this one before I get Marland's answer tomorrow.

(Walt starts to step away.)

We've had some great adventures. I wouldn't be the same person I am today without you and I've always depended on you like a brother. A person's as small as their fears, or as big as their greatest aspiration. You always let me dream big and believe in myself, Charlie...and that's a lot to do for any person. I'll see you around.

(Walt exits.)

(Charlie exits.)

Scene 4

(Lydie alone before George enters.)

LYDIE

Good morning, George.

GEORGE

Good morning, sis. That was quite a scene yesterday.

LYDIE

Have you seen Mr. Marland this morning?

GEORGE

Thought he'd be the last person you'd want to see.

LYDIE

I wanted to talk with him.

(Sound of an explosion.)

What was that?

GEORGE

I have no idea—thunder maybe? Listen, you can't really be thinking of marrying Walt Johnson?

LYDIE

I'm beyond thinking about it. He makes me happy George...and I'm not ever really happy anymore unless he's around. I wanted to see Mr. Marland...They're so much alike...surely, he can see Walt's potential.

GEORGE

I don't know.

LYDIE

I've got to try.

GEORGE

Well...you'll have to pick another morning. He headed out before dawn.

LYDIE

So early?

GEORGE

I guess he had things to do.

LYDIE

That's odd.

GEORGE

(Starts to leave.)

Sis...good luck, no matter what...I know I've not been much help to you, but I do want you to be happy...and I know Mr. Marland wants that too.

LYDIE

Thanks George.

(George exits and leaves Lydie alone.)

JODY

(Jody enters.)

Miss Marland?

LYDIE

Oh! You startled me.

JODY

I'm sorry. I'm Jody, from the sheriff's office. Is Mr. Marland around?

LYDIE

No. I haven't seen him all day. Is everything all right?

JODY

There's been an accident at Craigan's well. You probably heard the explosion. We're going to need some of Marland Oil's equipment. I was hoping to catch your father.

LYDIE

Was anyone hurt?

JODY

One killed...and one hurt real bad.

LYDIE

Which one was hurt real bad?

JODY

Walt Johnson. I'm afraid it's real bad.

LYDIE

I've got to see my Walt! I have to know he's okay. I've got to see my Walt!

JODY

(Jody restrains Lydie.)

You can't go right now, Miss Marland. The doctors...they...well, they say there's no hope. They don't see how he's survived this long. I'm afraid he's—not going to make it.

LYDIE

They don't know Walt...I know he'll be all right. They just don't know my Walt.

JODY

The doctors are doing their best. You'll not help anything being in there.

(Lydie collapses.)

JODY

George...anyone...come help me!

(George enters.)

GEORGE

What is it? What's happened?

LYDIE

There's been a terrible accident. Craigan's well blew.

LYDIE

Walt's hurt.

JODY

He's hurt real bad.

GEORGE

Let's get you upstairs...I'll call the doctor.
(George leads Lydie off stage.)

LYDIE

What am I going to do? What am I going to do without Walt!
(George and Lydie exit.)
(Jody exits.)

OLD CHARLIE

(Old Charlie enters stage with Mary.)

Walt had been to war and seen unspeakable horrors. He knew he had no chance, but for Lydie he fought on for three days. Lydie spent those miserable hours hoping—praying for a miracle.

Walt Johnson died at nine o'clock, on a Saturday morning, on April 19. To this day, I cannot think of him without shedding a tear in my heart.

MARY

Do you need to stop for a while, Grandpa?

OLD CHARLIE

Yes, sweetheart. Let's take a little break. When we come back, I'll finish the story. You see—Lydie was the daughter of the most powerful and richest man in Oklahoma. Then she married him.

MARY

(Pulling Old Charlie off stage.)
Hurry up Grandpa! I want to hear the rest.

INTERMISSION

Act 2
Scene 1

OLD CHARLIE

It took a long time to get over Walt Johnson's death. I was struck by how quickly everyone else got on with life. The oilfield was a dangerous place where men risked life and limb on a daily basis. People were hardened to the personal tragedies that happened routinely in this harsh environment. It should not have been a surprise when others took this loss in stride, but Walt Johnson had been my friend.

Lydie also struggled with the loss. She disappeared into the confines of the Grand Mansion and no one saw her for months. E.W. did not have time to reflect on the misfortunes of the past as he continued building his empire. Storm clouds of destruction gathered, although they were still invisible to him.

Time passed and I got on with living life. My wife Elizabeth made a home out of our house by putting all the little details together that only she could appreciate. I was a fledgling new lawyer with a shingle hung in an office window close to the courthouse and hungry enough to take almost any case. Things eventually got back to normal and normal in Ponca City in those days included grand Marland parties and gossip—especially about Walt Johnson's death.

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry at a party.)

MRS. DINGLE

It looks like the whole town is in the ballroom tonight.

MRS. BERRY

Another grand Marland party.

(E.W. walks by to greet the two women.)

E.W.

Mrs. Dingle...Mrs. Berry. As always, a pleasure to have you grace the party.

MRS. DINGLE

Thank you.

MRS. BERRY

Thank you indeed.

(E.W. leaves.)

MRS. DINGLE

I don't expect he would be so friendly if he knew what I think I know.

MRS. BERRY

Oh, I do know you don't like to talk, but please tell me what you think you know that Mr. Marland won't like if you knew...or whatever you just said.

MRS. DINGLE

I think it's mighty suspicious what happened to poor Walt Johnson.

MRS. BERRY

You mean—

MRS. DINGLE

I have my intuition. Mr. Marland didn't like the boy and left early that morning. No one knows where he was at—

MRS. BERRY

And no one around here would dare ask!

MRS. DINGLE

Makes one wonder.

MRS. BERRY

Indeed and doesn't Lydie looks radiant tonight?

MRS. DINGLE

Yes, she is so helpful. I don't like to talk, but—

MRS. BERRY

You mean there's a "don't like to talk" about Lydie?

MRS. DINGLE

She looks radiant because she has a new beau and someone said she was at Charles McDonagh's house the other day.

MRS. BERRY

I say—

MRS. DINGLE

Exactly.

(Lydie enters.)

MRS. DINGLE

Lydie, you look beautiful tonight.

LYDIE

Thank you. Have you seen Charlie?

(Charlie and Elizabeth arrive. Lydie immediately leaves the two women to greet them. Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry give each other a look.)

LYDIE

You made it!

ELIZABETH

Everything is beautiful.

CHARLIE

I don't think I've ever seen this many people here before.

LYDIE

Everyone wants to be at the Oilman's Ball, I think. I don't know the half of them.

(Other cast members enter for the party.)

(E.W. steps up to address the crowd.)

E.W.

Welcome to my home.

(Everyone applauds.)

By the looks of things, we've about outgrown the Grand Mansion. I've just returned from an extended vacation in Italy with Lydie and have brought a few of its treasures back to Ponca City. As I look around, however, I find no walls suitable for their hanging and not enough room to accommodate my many friends and associates, so tonight I have invited you here to make an important announcement.

MRS. DINGLE

Do you think they're leaving Ponca City?

E.W.

(E.W. ignores Mrs. Dingle and continues his speech.)

While in Florence, I was privileged to stay in a palace of magnificent and inspiring beauty. Tonight I would like to announce that this palace will be reborn in even more splendor in Ponca City.

(Everyone applauds and begin to exit until Charlie, Lydie, and Elizabeth are left on stage.)

LYDIE

(Lydie appears cheerful.)

Charlie, the band's playing a waltz. Could you dance with me for old time's sake?

CHARLIE

I don't really dance anymore, Lydie.

LYDIE

Don't be silly.

CHARLIE

Honestly, I don't think I remember how.

LYDIE

Oh, please, Charlie. There's really no one else I want to dance with tonight. Elizabeth won't mind. You two might not have ever met if we hadn't been dance partners.

ELIZABETH

Go ahead, Charlie, I could use a good laugh.

(EW enters.)

E.W.

Charles, my first friend in Ponca City. I've got someone I'd like for you to meet. You ladies won't mind? Could you come now, Charles?

CHARLIE

Sure. It will keep me from embarrassing myself.

(E.W. and Charlie exit, leaving Elizabeth and Lydie.)

ELIZABETH

Lydie, may I speak with you?

LYDIE

Of course.

ELIZABETH

I've noticed a change in you since you've come back.

LYDIE

Really? I hope it's for the good.

ELIZABETH:

I'm not sure.

LYDIE

Is anything wrong, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

I know Walt's death affected you. The whole town knew it. It took Charlie a long time to recover and I suspect you took it hard also. It's been my experience that a woman who has lost a man is only satisfied when she's found a new love. Since you've returned from Italy, you've been playful, cheerful, and flirty. I hear things.

LYDIE

I think the trip to Florence...

ELIZABETH

Are you in love with my husband?

LYDIE

What?

ELIZABETH

Are you in love with my husband?

LYDIE

No...well...Yes, I suppose I am, but only as a dear friend. He only has eyes for you, Elizabeth. Charlie's helped me through some difficult times. When Walt died, I think a part of me died with him. I spent weeks that turned into months that turned into two years where I just struggled to move each day I struggled to find a reason to go on. Your

Charlie...and I emphasize your Charlie, was the one person that was able to get me going again, who explained to me that I had to move on. I don't have many people I can trust. (*Lydie's demeanor transform to an anxious, nervous manner.*) Maybe it was a bad idea for me to want to dance with your husband tonight, but I've danced with him so many times before. I was dancing with him the night he asked me to introduce you two. It's so difficult for me to have friends, especially male friends, my own age. It seems sometimes like everyone I know is older. I'm so sorry.

ELIZABETH

(Light laugh.)

You must think me insecure.

LYDIE

I must be more discreet in the future. I probably need to stay completely away. People in this town will talk...just like they talk about Mr. Marland.

ELIZABETH

I think I need to apologize.

(Looks off)

Oh, Charlie is waving at me, Lydie. I must go.

(Takes Lydie's hands)

Thanks for the talk. Come see me...I mean that.

(Lydie smiles and nods)

Thank you for inviting us. Do come by and see us anytime.

LYDIE

I will.

(Elizabeth hugs Lydie and then exits.)

(Lydie is left on stage painfully alone. Her polite smile when Elizabeth exits transitions to sad and insecure.)

(Lydie exits.)

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry enter.)

MRS. DINGLE

I don't like to talk—

MRS. BERRY

But?

MRS. DINGLE

That Daniel Craigen's here and he's already had too much to drink. He had a fight in the garden before the party even started...and have you seen the way he's been looking at Lydie and following her about.

MRS. BERRY

Poor Lydie...she seems so lost.

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry exit.)

(Lydie enters followed by Daniel Craigen.)

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Things must be a little lonely for you these days.

(Lydie doesn't respond.)

With Johnson gone, you must need a little...company.

(Lydie turns to go. Daniel Craigan grabs Lydie to turn her around. She throws champagne in his face.)

E.W.

Get your hands off her!

DANIEL CRAIGAN

I was just trying to give her some attention.

E.W.

Get out!

DANIEL CRAIGAN

I'm just trying to keep your "daughter" company.

E.W.

You've had too much to drink. I let you come this evening because you are supposed to be an oilman and a gentleman, but you can leave now! Escort yourself out or I'll do it for you.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

I'm not leaving. This girl and me were fixing to dance.

(Daniel Craigan grabs for Lydie. E.W. punches Craigan, knocking him to the ground.)

E.W.

I've wanted to do that for a long time. Get him out of here!

(Men help Craigan off stage.)

Are you okay, Lydie?

(Lydie nods nervously and leaves with the protective E.W.)

(Old Charlie enters.)

OLD CHARLIE

Construction started on E.W. Marland's Palace on the Prairie with a scope and scale reminiscent of one of his great refineries. The details of the mansion consumed much of E.W. Marland's time and most of Lydie's. It would be months before I saw her again. Virginia Marland was almost a forgotten part of E.W.'s past success. Her health steadily declined and she died before the Palace on the Prairie was completed. For E.W. there was little time to mourn—he had a business to run. Lydie was spending countless hours guiding the artisans through their task to make sure every detail was authentic on the new mansion.

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry are on stage talking to each other. Charlie enters to hear their gossip.)

MRS. DINGLE

Hello Mr. McDonagh.

MRS. BERRY

Hello Mr. McDonagh.

CHARLIE

This is awkward...I didn't mean to eavesdrop.

MRS. DINGLE

Eavesdropping is very bad.

MRS. BERRY

Very bad indeed...Almost as bad as gossiping.

(The two women look at each other.)

CHARLIE

Again, I apologize, but I thought I heard something about a board.

MRS. DINGLE

Geraldine Adam's husband went aboard a ship last month.

MRS. BERRY

Oh...and Mr. Peters had to use a board on his son the other evening.

MRS. DINGLE

And Mrs. Peabody gets so bored at the preacher's sermon that she falls asleep.

MRS. BERRY

Mr. Jones is resigning from the school board.

CHARLIE

Again, I'm sorry...I'm really sorry.

(Charlie begins to walk away.)

MRS. DINGLE

(Almost as an afterthought.)

Of course...those men were in town who said...now what was it?

MRS. BERRY

She doesn't like to talk... but there was a man named Morgan and he said his group was going to take over the board.

CHARLIE

This is very important...What board?

MRS. DINGLE

I remember now they weren't going to take over they were going to get control.

CHARLIE

Get control of what!

MRS. BERRY

The board, of course.

CHARLIE

Thank you...I've got to go.

(Charlie exits the stage.)

MRS. DINGLE

Would you like to know more about Mrs. Peabody?

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry leave.)

(Lydie enters with Charlie.)

CHARLIE

Lydie!

LYDIE

What is it, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Do you know where Mr. Marland is?

LYDIE

Yes...Why the interest?

CHARLIE

I need to see him and I need to see him tonight.

LYDIE

He's not in tonight and he won't be available until tomorrow, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Lydie, I have some important information about Marland Oil.

LYDIE

Surely, it can wait until the morning.

CHARLIE

I don't think so. I think Randle Haman is going to try something at the Marland Oil board meeting tomorrow.

LYDIE

Mr. Marland's playing cards.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

(Charlie starts to rush away.)

LYDIE

Wait...Mr. Marland doesn't like to be interrupted, especially when he's playing poker.

CHARLIE

Believe me, he'll want to hear what I have to say. It's a matter of grave importance to Marland Oil—

LYDIE

I know, but let me go with you. You won't be able to get in without causing a commotion.

(Charlie and Lydie move to indicate they're at the hotel.)

They'll be in 211?

CHARLIE

How do you know?

LYDIE

I just know.

(Lydie exits and returns with an agitated E.W. with her.)

E.W.

What the devil's going on, Lydie?

(This should be the first time E.W. treats Lydie as an equal adult instead of a child.)

LYDIE

Charlie needs to see you.

E.W.

You know I don't like to be disturbed on card night.

LYDIE

(Lydie speaks to E.W. in an adult, almost scolding tone, to subtly indicated a change in their relationship.)

It's about Marland Oil and if Charlie thinks it's urgent I think you should listen.

E.W.

What is it Charles?

CHARLIE

I caught wind of a rumor that J.P. Morgan is in town.

E.W.

Morgan's in town?

CHARLIE

(Charlie nods.)

there's talk of getting control of Marland Oil...taking control away from you.

E.W.

(E.W. is temporarily stunned, but quickly recovers.)

This is serious. I knew Morgan had been rattling his saber, but I had no idea Randle was involved...It'll be okay, I still think I have enough votes, but I need to get on the phone. Charlie would you mind escorting Lydie home? I'm getting my staff together and I think we'll be working through the night.

(Charlie and Lydie begin to exit.)

And Charles, my good friend...you may have saved my company.

(Lights fade.)

Scene 2

OLD CHARLIE

It was the beginning of the end for Marland Oil. Who's to say what the reasons were, but E.W. blamed the eastern bankers. The spring foxhunt was a pleasant distraction from the distasteful battle for control of Marland Oil. Lydie rode a tall dark horse named Rosenbar. Lydie had me ride a horse that was short, old, and lazy. We ended up at the gang's old hang-out, Red Bud Creek Bridge.

(Charlie and Lydie.)

LYDIE

How can someone live in Oklahoma and ride so poorly?

CHARLIE

Some of us find a car more comfortable. What are we doing here?

LYDIE

This has always been one of my favorite places. I've traveled the world and seen many great places, but I always find this place...familiar. You and Walt brought George and me here on our very first day in Ponca City. Do you remember, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Sure...I remember.

LYDIE

This is where Walt asked me to marry him.

(Charlie is uncomfortable talking about Walt.)

As a lawyer, you have something called client attorney privilege, don't you?

CHARLIE

Yes. If a client tells me something, I'm ethically obliged to keep that information confidential.

LYDIE

(Lydie hands Charlie money.)

Will twenty dollars buy me client attorney privilege?

CHARLIE

(Charlie refuses to take the money.)

Lydie what's wrong? Are you in some kind of trouble?

LYDIE

Am I in trouble? I think I am trouble.

(Lydie works up the courage to speak.)

Charlie. I'm getting married... You're surprised I see

CHARLIE

I...I am...I had no idea Lydie. That's great, I had no idea you were even seeing anyone.

LYDIE

I don't think anyone does.

CHARLIE

What do George and Mr. Marland think?

LYDIE

(Lydie takes a deep breath.)

George doesn't know.

CHARLIE

Is it that Jo Davidson? Elizabeth told me—

LYDIE

It's not Jo... You can't tell anyone. You can't even tell Elizabeth. You will promise, won't you?

CHARLIE

Sure.

LYDIE

Charlie, I'm marrying Mr. Marland.

(An awkward silence as Charlie doesn't know how to react.)

You can't tell anyone Charlie. I took a risk telling you, but I had to talk to someone. You're always so easy to talk to.

(Charlie just stares at her.)

Charlie? Please don't... please don't look at me that way.

CHARLIE

I...I don't know what to say.

LYDIE

Charlie, I can't bear you looking at me that way. I expect it from everyone else, but not you. Please...it's too much.

CHARLIE

How Lydie? He's your father.

LYDIE

He's not really my father Charlie. You know that...I was the niece of Mrs. Marland. I'm no blood relation to Mr. Marland. You know Charlie...You know better than anyone that he never really treated me like a daughter.

CHARLIE

But he is old enough to be your father and you are Lydie Marland...you are legally his daughter.

LYDIE

He's not that old. I'm 28...lot's of 28-year-old women would marry a handsome millionaire of his charms and you know that he seems much younger than his age.

(Charlie still does not know how to respond.)

I have no one, Charlie. You have Elizabeth. I have nobody. I want a family I can call my own before I'm too old. I've never talked to my friends in Ponca City about my life in Flourtown before coming here. We were poor for sure, but there were other things, bad situations back there that...that are better forgotten. I have always felt safe with Mr. Marland. I need to feel safe. I need to belong to someone.

CHARLIE

Lydie, this will cause a stir you know.

LYDIE

I know. People are such gossips but...he needs me...and I need him.

CHARLIE

Do you love him?

LYDIE

(Lydie turns away.)

I respect him...I think I love him Charlie. I'll never feel like I felt for Walt, but yes, I love him and I feel as close to him as any man I've met since. That's why I came here to tell you. I knew if I could convince you here in this place...in this place where I sense so strongly my feeling for Walt...that my love for him might be genuine.

This will be a practical solution to my happiness and I feel I can make Mr. Marland happy too. He desperately needs someone since Aunt Virginia passed. You know him Charlie...you know how charming and kind he can be. I feel we will be a happy couple. I think I can be a good partner for him. You need to know that he's always been proper toward me and I respect him very much.

CHARLIE

How will you do it? I mean will you have a big wedding?

LYDIE

Heavens no, Mr. Marland would never want so much publicity. We're leaving in a couple of weeks to go to Flourtown to have the adoption annulled, then we will be married there...by a justice of the peace I assume.

CHARLIE

Lydie, I'm happy for you. I've seen a change in you...a vibrancy since you have returned from Florence that I think you must be in love. Elizabeth thought as much the first time she saw you back in Ponca City. I hope you will be happy.

LYDIE

Me to...We need to be getting back. I'll wager the poor fox has been killed or gone forever by now.

(Lights fade.)

Scene 3

OLD CHARLIE

In two weeks, Lydie Marland had an extraordinary day. She started the day as Miss Lydie Marland, transformed by a judge to Lydie Roberts only to be wed as Mrs. Lydie Marland. After an extended honeymoon through Canada, Lydie moved into the Palace on the Prairie to live out her fairy-tale dream. The dream didn't last long, however. Soon after the Marlands arrived back in town, E.W. lost control of his beloved Marland Oil. The couple had to abandon the Palace on the Prairie and live in a more modest dwelling on the estate. Never one to give up, E.W. Marland ran for and won a congressional seat representing north central Oklahoma in Washington. Two years later, E.W. was poised to run for Governor of Oklahoma. As the politics heated up...so did the gossip.

(Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry.)

MRS. DINGLE

Can you believe?

MRS. BERRY

Can you imagine?

MRS. DINGLE

Mr. Marland could actually be governor.

MRS. BERRY

With this depression going on...we need something.

MRS. DINGLE

But Lydie...can you believe—

MRS. BERRY

Can you imagine?

(Charlie enters and walks close to the women.)

MRS. DINGLE

Especially after what happened to poor Walt Johnson.

MRS. BERRY

It makes sense now.

(This statement gets Charlie interested.)

MRS. DINGLE

I don't like to talk, but—

MRS. BERRY

I know exactly what you mean.

CHARLIE

Excuse me ladies.

MRS. DINGLE

Hello Mr. McDonagh.

MRS. BERRY

Hello Mr. McDonagh.

CHARLIE

Do you think it's appropriate to gossip in the middle of town?

MRS. DINGLE

Oh no...Gossiping is very bad.

MRS. BERRY

Very bad indeed.

MRS. DINGLE

I always say that I don't like to talk—

CHARLIE

But it seems to come out anyway?

MRS. BERRY

We weren't gossiping.

MRS. DINGLE

We would *never* do that.

CHARLIE

But ladies I just heard you talking about Mr. Marland and Walt Johnson. Walt was a good friend of mine and Lydie still is. I prefer that you—

MRS. DINGLE

We weren't gossiping—

MRS. BERRY

We were just rehashing some facts.

CHARLIE

(In a dubious tone and body language.)

Facts?

MRS. DINGLE

Yes.

MRS. BERRY

Facts.

MRS. DINGLE

Penelope Peabody...you know the woman who falls asleep in church every Lord's day?

MRS. BERRY

She has a friend—

MRS. DINGLE

Who has a son who worked for Sheriff Finchem—

MRS. BERRY

Back when the accident occurred.

MRS. DINGLE

E.W. Marland was at Daniel Craigan's well-site not an hour before the explosion. He and poor Walt had an argument—

MRS. BERRY

And then KaBoom!

CHARLIE

You're telling me E.W. Marland was at the well-site the morning Walt died?

(Jody enters.)

MRS. DINGLE

Absolutely...In fact, Mrs. Peabody's friend's son is right over there. He'll tell you.

(Charlie excuses himself and moves across stage to talk to Jody.)

CHARLIE

Hello...Are you the son of a friend of Mrs. Peabody?

(Charlie grimaces at the introduction.)

JODY

I'm Jody.

CHARLIE

Jody...Good to meet you. This sounds crazy, but I was talking to Mrs. Dingle and Mrs. Berry. They were telling me this wild tale that E.W. Marland was at the well-site the morning of Walt Johnson's accident.

JODY

He was there—

(Hesitates then thinks.)

But I really can't talk about a case.

CHARLIE

I understand, but Walt was a close friend of mine. Did you actually see Mr. Marland there?

JODY

(Jody looks around nervously.)

Of course not...we got the information from Daniel Craigan. He's the one that made the report. He was the only person there.

CHARLIE

Did the Sherriff investigate...I mean what was done?

JODY

(Nervous and agitated.)

Like I said, I can't really talk about a case and talking about E.W. Marland is not good business around here.

CHARLIE

Listen. Marland may be the next governor, he's married to a friend of mine, and you're insinuating he was at a potential crime scene. You can tell me now or answer to a subpoena.

JODY

I don't know nothing...If you want to know what happened that morning talk to Craigan.

CHARLIE

Craigan?

JODY

He's moved to Bartlesville—But you didn't hear it from me.

(Jody exits abruptly leaving Charlie behind. Lights fade.)

Scene 4

(Daniel Craigan sitting at a table while Charlie introduces himself and has a seat. Daniel Craigan is slightly drunk.)

CHARLIE

Mr. Craigan?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

(Looks at Charlie suspiciously.)

Do I know you?

CHARLIE

Charles McDonagh...from Ponca City.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Yeah...they call you Charlie...Charlie McDonagh.

CHARLIE

Yes.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

You were friends with Johnson?

CHARLIE

Yes, we were good friends. Could I have a moment of your time?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Sure...have a seat.

(Charlie sits down.)

Want something to drink?

CHARLIE

No...I just wanted to talk to you about Walt Johnson.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Johnson was a smart kid...smart and ambitious.

CHARLIE

Yes, I think he would have done well if it hadn't been for the accident.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

(Takes another swig of his drink.)

Yeah, the accident.

CHARLIE

Were you there that morning?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

(Daniel Craigan nods.)

We were pushing to get this well done—We pushed too hard.

CHARLIE

What was Mr. Marland doing there?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Marland...I don't know exactly. Yeah he was there. I'd been at the site all night, Johnson came about midnight to relieve me, but I stayed out there to sleep.

CHARLIE

I heard that Marland and Walt argued.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Argued...I don't remember that. It was loud everyone shouts at a well-site.

(Craigan thinks and then gives an insincere laugh.)

You think Marland had something to do with Johnson's death?

CHARLIE

I think...I think it's odd that Walt and Mr. Marland had a confrontation the night before Mr. Marland shows up at a well-site that's not his to have another argument the morning of Walt's death.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Marland...he's always at the wrong place at the wrong time.

CHARLIE

So you think maybe he—

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Kid, I don't like Marland and he don't like me. I bet even you can figure that out. Believe me, I would be the last person to help Marland. He's arrogant and thinks he's some kind of nobility. He can find oil like it's a gift from God. I'll grant you that. Johnson had the gift too. In fact, Johnson and Marland were a lot alike, except Johnson was a good Joe. Marland's got the worst timing in the world. He didn't know when to sell in 1907 and even though I tried to tell him, he didn't figure out some of his own people were taking his company and giving control to Morgan.

CHARLIE

So you don't think he had anything to do with Walt's accident?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

I was there. Johnson and Marland didn't have an argument so much as a discussion. They talked, but neither one of 'em shouted or cursed or anything. I don't know what they were talking about, but they shook hands when Marland left and Johnson was in a great mood after that.

CHARLIE

You say it was a friendly conversation?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

I wouldn't say friendly, but it was mutual. It wasn't heated.

(Charlie thinks silently.)

Listen kid. It's the oil patch. Accidents happen. This was a bad one, but it was just an accident. I would love to stick this on Marland just to bring him down a notch or two, but Marland liked the kid.

CHARLIE

How do you know that?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

He told me.

CHARLIE

When?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

At Johnson's funeral. Johnson was marrying his daughter.

CHARLIE

How do you know that?

DANIEL CRAIGAN

Johnson told me after Marland left that day at the well. He told me he wouldn't be leaving for Bartlesville after all. Said he was staying in Ponca City to get married.

CHARLIE

Thanks...Thanks Mr. Craigan.

DANIEL CRAIGAN

What's the hurry...have another drink with me.

CHARLIE

No thanks...I have a train to catch.

(Charlie exits.)

Scene 5

(Lydie enters, followed by E.W..)

E.W.

Lydie, are you okay?

LYDIE

The room was stuffy—I couldn't breathe.

E.W.

(E.W. moves closer to Lydie to comfort her.)

I didn't notice, but I guess the luncheon was crowded today.

LYDIE

I know this is a big day for you and I'm sorry to be such a distraction. I'll be all right in a minute or two.

E.W.

It's not every day your husband announces that he's going to be governor.

LYDIE

It'll take more than announcing you'll be governor. We'll have to campaign. I'm afraid you'll be away too much and—people are such busybodies.

E.W.

We ran the campaign for Congress and won with no problem.

LYDIE

Everyone in Kay County knew you. This is a statewide race.

E.W.

So, we'll get to meet new people.

LYDIE

That's what worries me.

E.W.

People will fall in love with you, Lydie—just like I did.

LYDIE

You know there's more to it than that.

E.W.

You're not worried about our age difference, again? I am not ashamed to have a pretty, intelligent wife who happens to be a few years younger than myself.

LYDIE

People will talk. I hear the things they say behind my back.

E.W.

(E.W. steps close to Lydie and holds her shoulders gently.)

I'm going to win this governor's race, Lydie and you'll be the finest first lady this state's ever seen. I don't care a whit what people think.

LYDIE

That's the difference between us, Ernest. You don't worry about anything and I worry about practically everything. I'm afraid of what people will say about us...how they might use me to hurt you.

E.W.

(E.W. laughs good-naturedly.)

I'm used to dealing with oilmen and politicians. I don't think public opinion can be more scandalous than that bunch.

LYDIE

It's a little overwhelming, I guess.

E.W.

You're doing fine, Lydie. Just fine.

LYDIE

I do like taking care of you.

E.W.

I don't know what I'd do without you.

LYDIE

(Gently pulls a piece of lint off his jacket.)

You'd have lint on your jacket, that's for sure.

E.W.

That's not what I mean.

LYDIE

I know. Thank you for letting me take care of the little things, though.

E.W.

I've got a surprise for you.

LYDIE

A surprise?

E.W.

Remember Jo Davidson?

LYDIE

Of course. I saw a lot of him when the mansion was built. Such an energetic fellow—I wonder how he's doing?

E.W.

You'll find out. (*Lydie looks puzzled.*) Jo's coming to work on a special project for me.

LYDIE

I thought everything was done at the mansion.

E.W.

It is, but Jo's going to carve three more statues—one of me, one of George, and one of you.

LYDIE

A statue of me?

E.W.

Yes!

LYDIE

What would I wear? How should I wear my hair? Should I wear jewelry? I won't have time to pose.

E.W.

Jo doesn't have anyone pose. He likes to work from casual observation and talking with people. He got to see plenty of us during the construction and he's excited about the project.

LYDIE

I don't know.

E.W.

Too late. I've already told Jo to order the limestone—the finest he could find. He's sculpted some of the most famous people in the world. It's only fitting that he does our statues.

LYDIE

Where will you put them?

E.W.

(E.W. smiles.)

The statues will go outside. Mine will be in front of the office downtown and George's will go to the west of the house...And for your statue, I have a special spot selected on the north vista. *(Affectionately.)* I'll be able to see it every morning from the breakfast room.

LYDIE

You spoil me.

E.W.

That's my intent.

(E.W. talks in a more serious tone while standing close to Lydie.)

Listen Lydie, I know this marriage isn't easy on you. You're a private person, but people are counting on us in this campaign. Times are tough and I can help—But I need you to stand with me. *(Pause.)*

I love you more than anything in this world.

LYDIE

And I love you too, Ernest...I always will.

(E.W. and Lydie kiss initiated by E.W.)

(Lydie smiles coyly.)

Mr. Marland, what will people say, if they find their future governor kissing during his big luncheon?

E.W.

Mrs. Marland, I could care less! (*E.W. offers Lydie his arm.*) May I escort you back to our party?

LYDIE

Mr. Marland, I'll go with you anywhere you want to go.
(*E.W. and Lydie exit stage arm in arm.*)

Scene 6

OLD CHARLIE

E.W. Marland believed in the rugged toughness of the Oklahoma people. He won the governorship in a hard-fought campaign serving as governor during the darkest days of the great dust bowl with Lydie as his gracious first lady. The newspapers fell in love with Lydie, as E.W. had predicted. They called her a princess. Although Lydie was a shy person who fiercely valued her privacy, she attended many functions and posed for countless pictures to the delight of the press. She even lent her sense of style to the Governor's Mansion while in Oklahoma City. Lydie and E.W. kept the Palace on the Prairie open during the governorship. They hosted parties and fox hunts in the grand manner that was the Marland style. E.W. struggled to get his agenda implemented, but still proved he had the old Marland magic when oil was discovered in the front lawn of the state capitol during his term of office. E.W. had been to Washington, D.C. as a congressman and wanted badly to return as a senator. He ran twice for the United States Senate, but came up short both times. E.W. and Lydie returned home to Ponca City. E.W. had to sell the great house he had built to the Carmelite Fathers. The couple moved into a more modest house that had been the chauffeur's quarters when the mansion was built. Lydie was happy to be home with her husband and out of the public eye in their cozy new cottage. E.W. Marland's company was out of his control, his political career was finished, and much of his previous wealth was gone—but as always, Mr. Marland had big dreams of rebuilding Marland Oil. Time was not on his side this time.

(Lydie attends to a sickly E.W. sitting in a chair.)

(Charlie enters.)

LYDIE

(Lydie walks to Charlie.)

Charlie!

(Charlie looks around.)

CHARLIE

How's Lydie?

LYDIE

I'm fine.

CHARLIE

It's good to see you. I guess you and Mr. Marland are settled in?

LYDIE

Yes, we're doing fine. The cottage is very comfortable.

CHARLIE

Is everything all right?

LYDIE

Yes...things are fine...it's just...Charlie, could come see Mr. Marland right now. He hasn't felt well for several months and has been cooped up inside. I think he would really enjoy the company.

CHARLIE

Of course.

LYDIE

He enjoys visiting so much and frankly not many people have been to see him lately. I'd really appreciate it.

(Charlie and Lydie move across stage to an ailing E.W. Marland sitting up in a chair.)

CHARLIE

Good afternoon Mr. Marland.

E.W.

Charles...Look Lydie, it's my first friend in Ponca City.

CHARLIE

I guess I did meet you coming right off the train.

E.W.

You did. Lydie, Charles carried my bags to the Arcade Hotel my first day. He thought I would give him a nickel, but all I had for him was advice.

CHARLIE

Never miss a chance to make a new friend.

E.W.

You remember after all these years!

CHARLIE

But you did take me to the ranch.

E.W.

We did have a great day at the 101 Ranch, didn't we? That's the trip I met Joe Miller.

(E.W. looks sad.)

I always liked talking things over with Joe. I liked the way he thought. I sure miss him.

CHARLIE

I remember. That's the night you found out I was part Indian.

E.W.

That was good information to have. You should know by now Charles that I didn't leave very much to chance. I was an old lawyer like you are now. I knew it was better to know the answers to questions before you asked them. Your mother's relation to the Ponca was a good connection for me. It's sad to see how the 101 Ranch has declined. It was a true Oklahoma treasure.

(Charlie nods in agreement. E.W. speaks to Lydie.)

This kid and Walt Johnson were always into something. I was coming back from the field one day when that Johnson kid hurled a rock at Craigan's car. I knew Craigan was a hot head so I rode as hard as I could. Before I got there, Craigan had slapped the kid silly. Do you remember?

CHARLIE

I could never forget.

E.W.

That Johnson kid would never back down from anything. I had to step in between them or I think the kid would have fought Craigan.

CHARLIE

We caused a lot of trouble, I guess.

E.W.

You were just being boys.

CHARLIE

It was a great place to be a kid.

E.W.

Craigian was always in my business. I guess I was always worrying too much about him. He tried to warn me about Haman and Morgan you know?

CHARLIE

No.

E.W.

I was always so focused on Craigan and Morgan that I didn't see what Randle Haman was doing right in my own backyard! I thought he was my friend. Emotional thinking will blind you every time.

(Charlie nods in agreement.)

Sometimes you get so blinded by the battle you forget the war you're fighting. I have no regrets though. I've lived well and made plenty of friends. As soon as I feel better, I'm going to get more active about developing some properties around here.

LYDIE

It's time to take your medicine.

CHARLIE

I've got to be going.

E.W.

It was good to see you Charles...don't be a stranger.

CHARLIE

I'll be seeing you.

(Charlie walks away before Lydie catches him.)

LYDIE

Thanks Charlie.

CHARLIE

No need to thank me...You know I thought I was doing the old man a favor by visiting him, but his optimism is contagious. How are you doing?

LYDIE

Fine. It's nice being isolated, but Mr. Marland does enjoy the company. Thanks again.

CHARLIE

Any time.

(Charlie exits.)

(Lydie returns to E.W.'s side.)

E.W.

Lydie, I love you more than anything in this world.

(E.W. touches Lydie's face. Lydie lights fade on the couple.)

(Old Charlie enters.)

OLD CHARLIE

E.W. Marland came to Ponca City with big dreams. On October 3, 1941, the dream was over.

E.W. Marland died in the arms of his beloved Lydie...of a broken spirit some said. I like to think he had given all that he had to give.

Marland was a man most people liked. He had been a risk taker and innovator. He was the epitome of the oil wildcatter and entrepreneur. He had made and lost a fortune, but he had made numerous fortunes for others. Most people who knew him were better for it and that is saying a lot for anyone's life. For E.W. Marland the dream was over. For Lydie, the nightmare was just beginning.

Scene 7

(Charlie is on stage.)

(Lydie enters.)

CHARLIE

Lydie?

(Lydie walks a few steps as if she might walk away before stopping.)

What are you doing? I haven't seen you in ages.

LYDIE

I'm out for a walk, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I see. You always did like to walk in the evenings. I noticed your statue is missing. Have the monks who bought the mansion moved it?

LYDIE

(Lydie laughs insincerely.)

They found it a little too...provocative, I think.

CHARLIE

It was a good likeness.

LYDIE

Mr. Marland always liked it. They discreetly asked if I had some place to store it.

CHARLIE

Where did you put it?

LYDIE

I didn't. I paid a gardener five dollars to destroy it.

CHARLIE

Destroy it!

LYDIE

I told him to break it, smash the face first.

CHARLIE

Lydie, that statue should have been preserved.

LYDIE

I saw no point. The woman in the statue doesn't exist anymore. I'm not sure she ever did. I had it destroyed and taken away, because the image disturbed me.

(Charlie sighs.)

All my men have left me, Charlie. My dear Mr. Marland's gone. George has moved away. I have no one, Charlie, just memories.

(Silence.)

I'm so alone. I don't think anyone's as alone as I.

CHARLIE

Lydie, I can't imagine the loss you're feeling now, but I think you need to talk to somebody. You've got to get on with your life.

LYDIE

Some days I long to let it all go and let other people untangle the messes, but that would be just one more way I failed Mr. Marland and everyone else who ever cared for me. I'm not as brave as people think. Nobody can make it alone and now I'm all alone. I'll never understand why they treated Mr. Marland like they did. All he wanted was to help people, but they wouldn't let him alone. They kept coming back, over and over again, for their pound of flesh. And now they'll be getting it from me.

CHARLIE

Who are *they*?

LYDIE

It's good you don't know all that's gone on, Charlie. They tried to ruin Mr. Marland in that last election and they used me to do it. You can't imagine the horrible things they said about Mr. Marland...the horrible things they must think about me.

I'm leaving Ponca City, Charlie.

CHARLIE

What?

LYDIE

There's nothing here for me but gossip and bad memories. I just want to be left alone...and I will be.

(Lydie leaves.)

CHARLIE

But Lydie...Lydie.

(Charlie exits.)

Scene 8

(Old Charlie enters. Two men bring on stands of flowers as Old Charlie begins to speak.)

OLD CHARLIE

And that's what happened. In February, in 1953, Lydie left Ponca City. She loaded up her Studebaker, with some clothes, paintings, and \$10,000 in cash. Lydie drove out of town and vanished for 22 years. The *Saturday Evening Post* wrote an article about it in 1958, but for most, Lydie Marland faded from memory. Oh, there were reports. She was seen in New York City, San Francisco—someone said they saw her working at a motel in Independence, Missouri, and she marched in war protest in Washington. No one but Lydie knows the true story of those mysterious years—no one. In 1975, at age 75, Lydie moved quietly back to Ponca City. E.W. Marland's Palace on the Prairie was for sale and Lydie helped convince the citizens of Ponca City to purchase the property from Felician Sisters by writing an impassioned letter. She moved back into chauffeur's quarters, where she lived the rest of her life. She developed a few friends in her neighborhood and, although she was never again socially active, she was interested in other people and would sometimes walk up to the great mansion as a tour was being given, much to the delight of the many guests visiting the mansion.

(Old Charlie collects himself.)

Lydie Marland passed away July 25, 1987, at 87 years of age. She was laid to rest next to her beloved Mr. Marland in the family's mausoleum. A memorial service was held in the Inner Lounge of her great Palace on the Prairie, where all those magnificent foxhunts and parties had happened. My Elizabeth was gone from me by then, having passed away the previous winter. I went to Lydie's service alone. I thought Lydie's story was over, but there was one last surprise to her extraordinary life.

(A man comes up to Old Charlie.)

GARDENER

Mr. McDonagh?

OLD CHARLIE

Yes.

GARDENER

I know you was a friend of Mrs. Marland.

OLD CHARLIE

I was.

GARDENER

There's something been bothering me for a long time. I've kept it to myself, 'cause Mrs. Marland told me to, but now she's gone and I think someone should know.

OLD CHARLIE

Know what?

GARDENER

I'm the one that broke up that statue. I hated doin' it, but Mrs. Marland said, "Break it, smash the face first, then throw the pieces in the river."

OLD CHARLIE

You're the one that destroyed her?

GARDENER

Only thing is, I didn't exactly do what Mrs. Marland said.

OLD CHARLIE

What do you mean?

GARDENER

I had to break it 'cause she was watching. Broke the face first, just like she said, but it was a pretty statue and I didn't wanna just dump it in the river, so I—buried it.

OLD CHARLIE

You know where Lydie's broken statue is?

GARDENER

It's been a long time, but I know pretty close where the spot is.
(Hands Old Charlie a map.)

OLD CHARLIE

Oh, thank you. Thank you!

(Bring statue to stage and take off flower stands, leaving the statue. Old Charlie turns to look at the statue.)

(Mary enters.)

MARY

(Softly)

Grandpa?

(Louder)

Grandpa?

(Shouts)

Grandpa!

OLD CHARLIE

Humm?

MARY

It is a beautiful statue, Grandpa. It's great that they're putting it back together. Why do you come every night to look at her?

OLD CHARLIE

The statue being put back together symbolizes the true spirit of the kind of people E.W. Marland admired. People who would put the pieces of their lives back together again and again, just like the pieces to Lydie's broken statue.

MARY

Was any of that story true?

OLD CHARLIE

Only the unbelievable parts.

(Adlib as they exit.)

THE END

If you enjoyed *The Broken Statue play*,
look for these Bob Perry novels:

The Broken Statue
Mimosa Lane
Brothers of the Cross Timber
Guilt's Echo
The Nephilim Code
Lydie's Ghost

www.bobp.biz