
CROSS TIMBER ADVENTURES

A PLAY

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A Play

Based on *Brothers of the Cross Timber*

By
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Cross Timber Adventures

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Cross Timber Adventures

SETTING

Romulus, Oklahoma circa 1910s

CHARACTERS

Mr. Brooks

Local sharecropper and Gill's father. Usually has a silver coin he likes to flip.

Lance Carrington

Friend of Gill and Arty whose father is a bootlegger. Wears a floppy hat.

Arthur (Arty) Martin

Overly confident friend of Gill

Gilbert (Gill) Brooks

Boy aged 12 to 17.

Gwendolyn (Gwen) Peaudane

The attractive friend to the three boys who appears slightly older than the boys.

Marilee Martin

Arty's sister. Dresses don't fit so well and wears glasses.

Leland Holiday

Constable of Romulus and part-time bootlegger. Carries a pistol and wears spurs.

Mr. Martin

Prosperous landowner and Arty's father.

Act I

Scene 1

(Nighttime in the small town of Romulus in front of the Peaudane Hardware Store.)

(Mr. Brooks enters stage looking around as if walking in the forest.)

MR. BROOKS

Ahhh...the Cross Timbers. A forest so thick and so mysterious Washington Irving called them the Cast Iron Forest when he passed through here. The Cross Timbers are not the most impressive forest, I guess, but—it's rugged and tough—just like the people living here. Trees so close together, you can't ride a horse through 'em.

I cleared 40 acres of Cross Timber to farm it with my family. The land's not mine, but what it produces is. Being a sharecropper ain't the easiest of lives, but you learn to appreciate the little things—like the quiet of the evening.

(Mr. Brooks looks around as if he has heard something.)

I think my quiet is about to end. That's my boy Gill coming with his two friends—Arty and Lance. The good book says, "There are friends, who pretend to be friends, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." I didn't make that up. I heard the preacher read it himself and preachers don't lie—at least not generally speaking. My boy Gill has two friends that are closer than brothers. They're in that awkward time of life where they're too old to be boys and not quite men. I wish I could tell them to be boys as long as possible—enjoy the adventures of their youth.

(Mr. Brooks looks off stage as if he has seen someone.)

The thing about the young folks is they forget us old folks were young once. They forget we like our own adventures. I'm going to disappear for a while and watch the boys with you.

(Mr. Brooks exits.)

(Lance rushes in with a watermelon he has stolen. Arty and Gill follow, but empty handed.)

LANCE

Where's your melons, boys?

ARTY

You nearly got us shot!

LANCE

Old Haskell couldn't hit a barn if it was painted red and ten steps in front of him.

GILL

That shotgun sounded pretty close to me! I feel bad about stealin' Haskell's melons. My dad'd skin me if he finds out.

LANCE

A stolen melon taste that much sweeter.

(Lance pulls out a knife and cuts into the melon.)

ARTY

(Arty takes the first piece.)

It does make it taste sweeter.

GILL

You think Haskell's still after us?

LANCE

Naw. I doubt he could get through the Cross Timber in the daylight, much less the dark. Don't worry about Haskell; it's his cousin Leland Holiday I worry about. He's mean as a rattlesnake and sneakier than one too.

ARTY

Don't worry so much Gill. Haskell ain't coming.

(Hands Gill a piece of watermelon.)

Have a taste.

GILL

You need to be careful with Leland Holiday. I've heard stories.

LANCE

They're all true. He's got his hands in a lot of things in this county. Worst of all, Leland's got that badge. There's not always a lot of difference by the law and outlaws around here.

ARTY

(Arty looks up at the sky.)

The sky's alive tonight, ain't it?

LANCE

Nothin' like it.

ARTY

What's you doin' tomorrow, Gill?

GILL

Weedin' the cotton fields.

(Gill thinks for a moment.)

Oh—and I have to dig a cellar. My ma is scared something fierce of tornados.. You want to help?

ARTY

You won't catch me diggin' in the dirt. You're on your own. Pa will probably have me tendin' to the mules.

GILL

Must be nice havin' a team of mules do most your work.

ARTY

The mules help, but they take a lot of care and a lot of my time. Pa's been looking at a tractor.

LANCE

A tractor! What for? You already got the best team of mules money can buy and four brothers to boot.

ARTY

Pa's always plannin' for the future.

(Lance shakes his head.)

Where are you headed tonight, Lance?

LANCE

Don't know. Probably just head to the rail bridge over the Salt Creek and sleep there tonight. It's too late to head home and warm enough to sleep under the stars.

GILL

You can sleep at my place.

LANCE

Thanks Gill, but your brother Lloyd snores something awful. I'll come stay when the weather turns cold.

ARTY

You boys comin' to town Saturday?

GILL

Sure. I've been working part time at the Peaudane Hardware store. I'll probably have to pick out a shovel to dig that cellar.

LANCE

I got some business with Dad, first, but I'll try to make it to town.

ARTY

Business?

LANCE

Yeah, I'm helping him out.

ARTY

Where?

LANCE

Violet Springs

ARTY

Violent Springs, you mean. That's the worst bootlegging town around.

LANCE

You're not wrong about that.

GILL

I've heard about that place. My uncle Horace got stabbed there once.

LANCE

I knew your uncle Horace. At least Horace was a happy drunk. Not all are. Some of 'em can get pretty mean. I was sorry to hear he died.

ARTY

You're bootlegging with your dad?

LANCE

I'm helping him out—tryin' to keep him out of trouble. It's been hard for him since Mom's gone.

ARTY

Your mom's been gone since you were five.

LANCE

That's why Dad needs me.

ARTY

If you boys manage to make it to town, you might get to see me escorting Gwen Peaudane this Saturday.

GILL

Gwen! Why do you think that's going to happen?

ARTY

Her dad and my dad are friends. She's the prettiest girl in the county. It makes sense she'd be with me.

LANCE

Kinda like opposites attract?

GILL

Gwen's got beauty and brains—what exactly do you have to offer, Arty?

LANCE

He's got plenty of audacity, but I'm not seeing much else. What on earth makes you think Gwen has any interest in you?

ARTY

You boys have your fun. We'll see who has Gwen on his arm.

LANCE

Aww, we're just funning you Arty. I'll have to admit you have a confidence in yourself that's hard to explain. But—I'll also have to warn you that I've had my eye on Gwendolyn Peaudane myself. You might have a little more competition than you think.

GILL

(Speaking to Lance.)

Gwen wouldn't be seen with the likes of you! You either, Arty. She's about the sweetest, kindest girl in the world. She'd see right through the both of you!

ARTY

Don't tell me you have your cap set on Gwen, too?

GILL

I sure do.

ARTY

You got bigger problems than dreaming about Gwen Peaudane. My little sister, Marilee, has her eye set on you. Marilee's homely as a muddy puddle and has the personality of a opossum. In fact, if you put glasses on a opossum, it'd look a lot like Marilee. But—she has an uncanny knack of getting what she wants—and she wants you!

GILL

Take that back!

ARTY

Don't have to, cause it's the truth.

GILL

I've been working at the Peaudane Hardware Store every Saturdays since spring. Gwen brings me lunch sometimes. She's real friendly to me.

ARTY

You're a stock boy at her brother's store. Gwen's nice to everyone. She has higher aspiration than sticking around here with a stock boy.

LANCE

Like with you?

ARTY

I could see Gwen with a fella like me—livin' in a big town like Shawnee. Maybe ownin' us a little business. My dad'd help me get a start.

LANCE

Always your daddy doing something for you..

ARTY

Now guys. Let's not get testy about some girl—especially one that neither of you have a chance with.

(Lance and Gill take offense.)

You boys know I'm kidding. Heck, I wouldn't want to be with Gwen if she'd settle of the likes of either of you. You guys are my best friends, and I want it to always be that way.

(Arty thinks for a moment.)

Guys! We need to make a pact.

LANCE

A what?

ARTY

A pact...an agreement that we'll be friends forever. We need to promise that every ten years we'll meet back here.

LANCE

Let's make it at our rock on Salt Creek.

ARTY

Salt Creek it is—no matter what.

GILL

Sounds good to me.

LANCE

Ya'll are about all I count as family. I'll be there. It's just—I hope you're okay seeing me come back with Gwen.

ARTY

We'll see who Gwen's with Saturday. But, it's settled! We'll meet at our rock on Salt Creek—no matter what—in ten years!

LANCE

Consider it done.

GILL

Ten years it is.

(The boys exit.)

Scene 2

(Outside of the Peaudane Hardware Store in Romulus in the day.)

(Gill sweeps in front of the store.)

(Gwen enters.)

GWEN

Morning, Gill.

GILL

Good morning, Gwen. Looks like the town's going to busy today.

GWEN

It does. You working hard this morning?

GILL

Well, yeah, but—you know I'm going to do more than just be a stock boy someday?

GWEN

I have no doubt about that. My brother says you're smart and industrious. He speaks highly of you.

GILL

Really?

GWEN

Really.

(Marilee enter.)

MARILEE

Hey, Gwen.

(Marilee moves closer to Gill.)

Hey, Gilbert.

GILL

(Disinterested and frustrated by Marilee's interruption.)

Hey, Marilee. You seen Arty around?

MARILEE

He'll be in town later.

GWEN

You want to go down to the fabric store and look at ribbons, Marilee?

MARILEE

Sure.

(Marilee and Gwen exit.)

(Gill continues sweeping.)

(In a moment, Marilee and Gwen rush back and are obviously upset.)

GILL

What's wrong?

(Gwen seems too frightened to reply.)

MARILEE

Have you seen my father?

GILL

No. What's happening?

MARILEE

It's Leland Holiday. He's threatening to throw Lance in jail!

GILL

What for?

MARILEE

He got into a fight with Haskell Holiday—about stealing some watermelons.

GILL

Oh.

MARILEE

I've got to find my father!

(Marilee exits. Gwen holds on to Gill's arm for protection.)

(Leland Holiday enters dragging a handcuffed Lance with him.)

(Arty follows.)

ARTY

Let him go! Lance didn't do nothin' but come to town. Haskell threw the first punch.

LELAND

Not what I heard!

ARTY

Come on, marshal. We just swiped one watermelon. It wasn't even a big one.

LANCE

This isn't about melons, Arty.

LELAND

You need to shut up!

(Leland gives Lance a shake and Arty steps in to help.)

(Leland releases Lance for a moment and grabs Arty.)

MR. MARTIN

What's going on, here!

(Mr. Martin enters using a commanding voice.)

(Marilee follows her father.)

(Mr. Brooks enters.)

LELAND

This don't concern you, Mr. Martin.

MR. MARTIN

I think I have a vested interest! That's my boy you're manhandling.

(Leland let's go of Arty.)

LELAND

I don't have no problems with your boy, Mr. Martin. Except for the company he keeps.

MR. MARTIN

Exception noted! Arthur, get to the wagon. You're going home. You too, Marilee.

ARTY

But, Pa—I had plans today.

MR. MARTIN

Your plans have changed.

MARILEE

I have plans, too, Daddy.

MR. MARTIN

I've got to get Arthur home, and I can't leave you in town alone.

MARILEE

Gilbert can take me home after work. He lives right down the hill from us.

MR. MARTIN

I know where the boy lives. I rent his family the property.

(Mr. Martin thinks for a moment.)

Okay. Gilbert, you get Marilee home before dark, or I'll come after you.

(A confused Gill nods.)

ARTY

That ain't fair!

MR. MARTIN

Marilee didn't steal any watermelons I know of.

(Mr. Martin starts to exit with Arty.)

LANCE

Thanks, Arty. Sorry I got you into this.

(Arty nods.)

MR. MARTIN

(Speaking to Leland.)

I'll deal with Arthur at home.

ARTY

What about Lance? Let him go.

(Leland looks at Mr. Martin.)

MR. MARTIN

I don't have any business with that one.

(Mr. Martin exits with Arty.)

(Leland smirks and drags Lance away.)

(Leland leers at Gwen as he leaves which causes her to cling tighter to Gill's arm.)

MARILEE

That's not fair.

GWEN

Leland Holiday scares me.

GILL

Me, too.

MARILEE

(Marilee does not seem to share the same anxiety about Leland.)

I've got to talk to Daddy. He can get Lance out of jail once I convince him.

(Marilee exits.)

(Gwen continues to hold onto Gill.)

GILL

It's kinda nice to have you hold onto my arm like this.

(Gwen realizes she has been holding onto Gill and lets him go.)

GWEN

Do you think Lance will be okay?

GILL

Sure. He's Lance. You know Lance. He can take care of himself.

GWEN

Lance and his dad are in competition with Leland Holiday's bootlegging. I worry about what Leland Holiday is capable of.

GILL

I have faith in Marilee's ability to irritate her Father into doing something. That girl could aggravate the patience out of a preacher. She'll talk her father into helping Lance.

GWEN

I hope you're right. I'll see you around, Gill.

(Gwen starts to leave.)

Enjoy your walk home with Marilee.

(Gwen exits.)

(Mr. Brooks approaches Gill after everyone has left carrying a small box.)

MR. BROOKS

Quite a day, isn't it?

GILL

Hi, Dad. I guess you saw the commotion.

MR. BROOKS

Enough.

(Gill continues sweeping.)

You got something to tell me—about watermelons?

GILL

I'm sorry, Dad. We just took one and didn't think it would cause all of this.

MR. BROOKS

That's okay. I've feasted on a few watermelons that weren't technically my own. What happened today had nothing to do with watermelons.

GILL

So I've heard.

MR. BROOKS

I don't have anything against Lance, but you need to stay out of bad situations.

(Gill nods.)

I came by to remind you that I still need that cellar dug.

GILL

Pa, why do we have to dig a cellar every place we move?

MR. BROOKS

Your mother wants it. You'll learn soon enough that women may be small in stature, but they run the world. I like it that way. I keep your mother happy, and my life is easy.

GILL

But, Pa. It'll take weeks to dig a cellar.

MR. BROOKS

Get Arty and Lance to help.

GILL

Like I'd have any luck getting Arty Martin to dig in the dirt.

MR. BROOKS

It would do the boy good to do some digging in my opinion. Teach him some much needed humility.

GILL

I'm not real good at getting Arty to do much of anything.

MR. BROOKS

Maybe you need another method. Sometimes it's easier to lead a horse to water than trying to beat it there.

GILL

I don't think I could drag Arty to work even with the help of a horse.

MR. BROOKS

(Mr. Brooks laughs.)

You're probably right.

(Mr. Brooks looks at the box he's been carrying.)

GILL

What's that?

MR. BROOKS

Oh, nothing.

(Mr. Brooks continues to study the box.)

GILL

Looks like something.

MR. BROOKS

Just some things that belonged to your Uncle Horace.

GILL

Uncle Horace?

MR. BROOKS

(Nods.)

You know, your Uncle Horace was quite a scallywag when he was younger.

GILL

I just thought he was a drunk.

MR. BROOKS

I can't argue that, but he wasn't always that way.

GILL

I've heard Mom talk about him.

MR. BROOKS

(Moves in closer.)

I bet your mother hasn't told you everything. He used to ride with Jesse James. You know when Horace came to Oklahoma from Missouri he had to ride five miles to the south of the family. They were worried the law—or worse might come after him.

GILL

Jesse James?

MR. BROOKS

The one and only. You know, some people think Jesse is still alive—right here in Oklahoma. They say all that talk of him being shot was just a ruse. They say he hid his treasure in Indian Territory—that he's changed his name and his looks so he can search for it.

GILL

You mean his treasure could be right here in Oklahoma?

MR. BROOKS

Sure. This place used to be a haven for outlaws. But Oklahoma's a big place. There's no way you stumble across a treasure like that unless you had some inside knowledge or a map. Oh well, I guess we'll never know. Would you mind hanging on to his. I've got some errands in town. Just bring it with you when you're on your date with Marilee.

(Mr. Brooks hands Gill the box.)

GILL

I don't have a date with Marilee. I just have to walk her home. It's a favor.

MR. BROOKS

(Laughs)

Remember what I said. Woman run the world. I wouldn't underestimate Marilee Martin. She's not quite finished out like that Peaudane girl, but she's going to turn heads when she does. You might want to stake your claim while she's still interested.

GILL

I'm not interested in Arty's kid sister.

MR. BROOKS

Bring the box with you anyway.

GILL

I will

(Mr. Brooks exits.)

(Gill starts back to work, but drops the box and its contents. When he picks it up he discovers a map.)

(Marilee enters.)

MARILEE

Hi Gilbert. What you got there?

GILL

A map.

MARILEE

What of?

GILL

I'm not sure.

(Lights go out.)

Scene 3

(Outside at night.)

(Gill enters followed by Arty and then Lance.)

ARTY

Let me see it again.

(Gill hesitates before handing over a map.)

This thing has to be real. This map could make us rich!

GILL

Don't tear it. It doesn't really belong to me. It belongs to Horace.

ARTY

Your Uncle Horace is dead and gone. There's no reason we shouldn't use this map to find the treasure. How about you, Lance? You in?

LANCE

I'm always up for an adventure, but something about this map doesn't add up.

ARTY

What do you mean? This thing could be a goldmine.

LANCE

Maybe, but I knew Horace a little when I was a kid—he was a customer. No offense Gill, but your uncle never seemed too bright. If he rode with the James gang and had this map, why didn't he dig up this treasure himself? I never knew Horace to have more than two dimes to his name and when he had that, he was buyin' liquor.

GILL

I don't know.

ARTY

Maybe Horace was waitin' until all the old gang was gone. Maybe he was so drunk all the time he forgot about the map.

LANCE

Maybe.

GILL

Uncle Horace was always forgetful.

ARTY

Anyway, it won't hurt to look for it. What do we have to lose?

LANCE

Time.

GILL

I got time.

LANCE

Let's take a look.

(Arty spreads out the map to study it.)

ARTY

Looks real to me.

GILL

Is that the South Canadian?

LANCE

Could be.

ARTY

That's Salt Creek! It has to be.

LANCE

Yeah.

GILL

It is!

ARTY

You follow the creek up through the marsh and then through some woods.

GILL

That's got to be close to Romulus.

LANCE

It'd be real close if that's Salt Creek.

ARTY

That's definitely Salt Creek!

GILL

I know where those woods are. That's—that's on Dad's land.

ARTY

I know that part of the field well, but that's on Martin land!

GILL

My dad's got it leased right now.

ARTY

But my family owns that whole section where the treasure is buried.

LANCE

Guys, don't fight. We don't even know if there is any treasure.

ARTY

Oh, it's there! I'm positive.

(Arty looks over at Gill.)

This treasure doesn't belong to anyone but us. Let's make a deal and split it three ways. Fifty, fifty, fifty!

GILL

I'm not sure about your math, but we split anything we find three ways.

LANCE

I'm in. I don't have nothing to lose, but time.

ARTY

The map says it's buried about eight feet in the ground. Let's see where we need to dig.

(They look at the map again.)

GILL

I know exactly where that is.

LANCE

How are we going to dig a hole eight feet into the ground and not have the whole town know what we're up to?

(They looked puzzled for a moment.)

GILL

I know! I know! I have a solution! My dad has been naggin' me for weeks to dig a cellar. This spot's not too far away. I bet I can talk him in to diggin' it here.

ARTY

You think you can talk him into it?

GILL

I'm positive.

ARTY

Don't know if you boys heard or not, but I'm escorting Gwen to the County Fair.

GILL

Gwen told me I could ride the train up there with her.

LANCE

Me too.

GILL

She even asked my brother Lloyd if he was going.

ARTY

That's not the same thing. I'm going to show Gwen the ropes at the fair—and I'd appreciate it if you two would respect my privacy with her.

LANCE

Your privacy? Sounds like Gwen asked half the town if they were riding the train to the fair. If I can come up with a dime for train fare, I'll be there too. Can you loan me a dime, Arty.

ARTY

You don't have train fare? That means you might not be able to go.

LANCE

I've got train fare, but I just wanted dime from you anyway.

ARTY

I'm serious, fellas. I need some time alone with Gwen.

LANCE

Tell you what, Arty. Your dad bailed me out of the watermelon trouble with Leland Holiday. I'll let Gwen alone—at least for that day.

ARTY

Thanks, Lance.

(Marilee enters)

(Arty quickly puts the map away.)

MARILEE

What are you up to Arthur Martin?

ARTY

Why don't you stop botherin' us?

MARILEE

I don't have to.

ARTY

Leave us alone. We've got important things to discuss.

MARILEE

What kind of important thing?

ARTY

Ain't none of your business.

MARILEE

Momma's told you not to say ain't. Besides, I didn't come to talk to you. I came to see Gilbert. Gilbert, I wanted to thank you for escorting me home the other evening. It was divine.

ARTY

No one wants to hear your old stories you old cow—not even Gill.

MR. MARTIN

(From off stage.)

Marilee!

(Lance takes the opportunity to exit.)

(Mr. Martin enters.)

You know it's not proper for you to be talking to boys after dark.

MARILEE

I was just talking to Gilbert to see if he was going to the fair this weekend.

MR. MARTIN

You better get home, Gilbert Brooks.

GILL

Yes sir.

MARILEE

(Grabs Gill by the arm.)

Are you going to the fair, Gilbert?

GILL

I guess so.

MARILEE

Good! You can ride up on the train with Gwen and me.

MR. MARTIN

Marilee, you can't invite a boy to the fair.

MARILEE

Of course I can—I think I just did.

GILL

Mr. Martin. I was going to the fair. This is the first I've heard about Marilee going as well.

ARTY

She's not going!

MARILEE

Am too!

ARTY

You're too young, and you'll ruin everything for me

MR. MARTIN

Ruin what, Arthur?

MARILEE

He thinks he's going to the fair with Gwen.

MR. MARTIN

I see. Well, maybe it is a good idea if you tag along, Marilee. Keep an eye on Arthur for me.

ARTY

Dad!

MR. MARTIN

That's the last word on the matter, Arthur. You can take your sister or stay home.

ARTY

Yes, sir.

MR. MARTIN

You need to get to the house, both of you.

ARTY

Can I have just a minute to say goodbye to Gill?

MR. MARTIN

No more than a minute, or you'll be staying home from the fair.

(Mr. Martin exits and takes Marilee with him.)

ARTY

You've got to help me out, Gill.

GILL

How?

ARTY

Gwen's going to the fair with me.

GILL

Gwen asked if I would go to the fair with her.

ARTY

She asked if you were taking the train up there, but I've been planning this out for a while. I need you to distract Marilee—and maybe Lance. I know it won't be pleasant, but I need you buddy.

GILL

Sounds like Marilee's going regardless, but I'll let Gwen decide who she'll spend time with.

ARTY

If you want to play it that way.

GILL

That's how it's going to be.

ARTY

I got to run, but see if you can get your dad to let us dig on that spot on the map. See if he'll move that cellar a few feet. It won't be suspicious. And above all keep it a secret. Especially from Marilee.

GILL

I'm not telling your sister anything!

(Arty and Gill exit.)

Scene 4

(Daytime at the Pottawatomie County Fair.)

(Mr. Martin enters with Mr. Brooks.)

MR. MARTIN

You going to be able to bring in a crop this year, Brooks?

MR. BROOKS

Sure. The cotton's looking good.

MR. MARTIN

Cotton's not looking good anywhere.

MR. BROOKS

We'll manage. You still willing to sell that patch of land I'm renting from you.

MR. MARTIN

As soon as you can save up the down payment, I'll put in a good word with the banker for you.

MR. BROOKS

I'd appreciate it.

(Leland Holiday enters.)

LELAND

Mr. Martin—Brooks.

MR. MARTIN

What are you doin' in this part of the county, Marshal.

LELAND

Checking out the fair and keeping an eye on some potential trouble makers. Speaking of which, I noticed that Carrington boys been hanging around your place, Brooks.

MR. BROOKS

Lance has been staying at the house some now that the nights are colder. His father—

LELAND

His father is a criminal and a bootlegger. The boy's trouble too. I'd be mighty careful—if I was you.

MR. BROOKS

Is that a threat, Leland?

LELAND

More of an observation. I notice he's been digging around your place. He wouldn't be looking to hide any of that bootleg liquor his daddy makes, would he?

MR. BROOKS

I wouldn't know much about bootlegging, but the boy's been helping me with a cellar.

LELAND

I'd watch him. He's as shifty as his old man. You see any illegal liquor, you let me know.

(Leland Holiday exits.)

MR. MARTIN

If anyone would know about bootlegging, it'd be Leland Holiday and his brother Haskell. How is the cellar digging going at your place?

MR. BROOKS

Good. The wife gets scared if there's even one dark cloud in the sky. Won't let me have a minute of rest until a cellar's dug. The boys picked out the perfect place. Lance has been helping out. Arty's even been coming down to dig.

MR. MARTIN

My Arty?

(Mr. Brooks nods.)

How'd you manage that? I have a hard time getting him to do the work he's supposed to.

MR. BROOKS

Don't exactly know, but the boys seem motivated.

MR. MARTIN

And your son, Gilbert. He's a smart boy?

MR. BROOKS

The teachers think so. They say I should let him go to Tecumseh for High School next year. They say he's got a good head on his shoulders.

MR. MARTIN

Seems sensible. My daughter Marilee has a little crush on him. Some time away might be prudent.

MR. BROOKS

Young people ain't supposed to be prudent all the time, are they?

MR. MARTIN

(Frowns.)

Why don't we go take a look at those new Iron Bull tractors and let the young people have the fair to themselves for a while?

MR. BROOKS

Sounds good to me.

(Mr. Martin and Mr. Brooks exit.)

(Gwen enters with Marilee.)

(Lance enters after them.)

GWEN

(Speaking to Lance.)

You made it! It was good to see you at church services Wednesday night.

LANCE

I've been staying with Gill's family and they go. It...It was good...I mean the services and all.

GWEN

It was a good lesson, don't you think?

LANCE

Very good. I liked the part about Joseph. Had all that opportunity to do the wrong things but did the right thing. I liked when the preacher said, "Doin' the right thing's not always easy, but it's always the right thing to do." Made some sense, I guess.

GWEN

Do you believe it?

LANCE

What?

GWEN

Do you believe in doing the right thing?

LANCE

I...believe it, I guess. But...I've been a little short in practice.

GWEN

Practice makes perfect.

(Arty and Gill enter.)

ARTY

(Arty looks around the fair.)

Ain't this something? We're not in the Cross Timbers anymore.

GILL

I'd always heard about Benson Park, but this place has everything. Did you know they have a swimming pool inside a building?

ARTY

Of course. Try not to act like you're from sticks, Gill.

(Arty walks toward Gwen.)

There you are Gwen. I've been looking everywhere for you.

GWEN

I've been talking to Lance—about church stuff.

ARTY

Church stuff? What's Lance know about church stuff?

LANCE

Not much, but I've been going with Gill.

(Marilee steps close.)

MARILEE

Gwen, there's some dress patterns over here I'd like your opinion about.

GWEN

Sure

(Gwen and Marilee move away from the boys.)

ARTY

I knew that stupid Marilee would ruin everything. Where did you get off to, Lance?

LANCE

I saw Leland Holiday snooping around and decided to stay out of his sight. Then I ran into Gwen and Marilee.

ARTY

Gill, go and distract Marilee.

GILL

No way. I'm going to ask Gwen if she'd like some ice cream.

LANCE

I almost forgot.

ARTY

What?

LANCE

About our talk the other night and how I'd help you out. I said I'd leave Gwen for you to have to yourself—for today.

ARTY

You see how that's workin' out with that four-eyed sister of mine botherin' poor Gwen.

LANCE

I think I can help. Do you have anything with writing on it?

ARTY

I got a flyer for the fair.

(Lance takes the flyer from Arty.)

LANCE

This'll be perfect! Your sister, she's smart, ain't she?

ARTY

She does good in school...but only because she's got no personality.

LANCE

Don't matter. I'll have Gwen over here in two shakes.

(Lance walks over to Gwen and Marilee.)

(After a moment, Gwen walks to Arty and Gill while Marilee points to the flyer for Lance.)

ARTY

Hello, Gwen.

GILL

Hey, Gwen.

GWEN

Did you guys know?

ARTY

Know what?

GWEN

Poor Lance can't read.

(Arty and Gill laugh.)

GWEN cont.

It's not funny. Lance whispered to me that he had never been to the fair and was having trouble reading the advertisement. He asked if Marilee could tutor him.

GILL

Lance can read—he can read real good.

ARTY

Shut up, Gill. Gwen's right. It's good that Lance finally asked for some help—from Marilee.

(Arty moves close to Gwen.)

Gwen?

GWEN

Yes.

ARTY

They have an indoor swimming pool right here at the fair park. How about we go swimming. They rent suits.

GWEN

Not with you two. It wouldn't be dignified to swim with boys.

ARTY

It wouldn't be with me and Gill. It would be just me and you.

GILL

We can swim back home anytime, Arty.

ARTY

Not inside, we can't.

GWEN

My mother would not tolerate mixed swimming.

ARTY

Oh—There's a shooting gallery down at the arcades. I could win you a prize.

GWEN

I hate gunfire. It's too loud.

GILL

They have a wood floor set up where you can roller skate. That's nice and peaceful—and modest.

GWEN

I might twist an ankle or get the hem of my dress caught in the wheels.

ARTY

How 'bout a boat ride? They rent row boat on this little lake they've built on Squirrel Creek.

GILL

Sounds good to me.

(Arty glares at Gill.)

GWEN

Well—if you'll promise we won't tip over, I'll let you row me around the lake—both of you.

(Gwen exits while Gill and Arty fight for position to take her by the arm.)

(Marilee enters.)

(Gill enters.)

MARILEE

Hey, Gilbert!

(Gill pretends not of hear.)

Gilbert!

(Gill finally acknowledges Marilee and walks toward her.)

Where's Gwen?

GILL

I don't know. With Arty I suspect. They ditched me.

MARILEE

Oh. She was going to go with me to see the sewing and look at some fabrics.

(Lance enters.)

LANCE

What'cha been doing?

GILL

Not much. Gwen's pretty particular about her entertainments.

LANCE

That's too bad. Marilee and I have been all over the park.

MARILEE

We went skating. I nearly fell, but Lance caught me.

LANCE

We saw you guys in the boat, but lost you after that.

MARILEE

We had ice cream, and I've been showing Lance the baking.

LANCE

This girl knows her baked goods.

MARILEE

I can't believe Gwen's not here. She promised to meet me.

GILL

She's with Arty.

MARILEE

That's odd. She doesn't even like Arty that much.

GILL

What?

MARILEE

Gwen's just bein' nice to Arty to make our parents happy.

LANCE

If you'd bother to spend some time with Marilee, you'd learn she knows quite a lot.

GILL

Come on, Marilee. Tell me more about Gwen.

MARILEE

I know who Gwen really likes, but we can't talk about that now, because here they come.

(Gwen enters followed by Arty.)

GWEN

Marilee!

MARILEE

Hey, Gwen.

GWEN

Where have you been?

MARILEE

(Glances at Lance.)

Oh, you know, I've been around the park.

GWEN

Are you ready to see the sewing?

MARILEE

Sure!

GWEN

How 'bout you guys?

LANCE

I think the cookin' display was enough for me. I'm goin' over to see if I can win some prizes.

ARTY

Come on, Gill. Let's go with Lance for a while.

GILL

I wouldn't mind seeing some sewing with Gwen—and Marilee.

MARILEE

(Marilee walks up to Gill to adjust his collar and hair.)

Go on with the boys, Gilbert. I'll tell you all you want to know about my sewing later.

(Gill pulls away from Marilee and the others smirk.)

I'll be seeing you, Gilbert.

(Marilee and Gwen exit.)

ARTY

I'll be seeing you—Gilbert.

GILL

Cut it out, Arty

ARTY

I wish I could cut my eyeballs out rather than see you flirt with my sister. It's disgusting.

GILL

I'm not flirting with her! I don't encourage her at all.

ARTY

Marilee doesn't need any encouragement. I'd rather eat boiled toenails than have her after me.

LANCE

Did ya' boys have a good time—with Gwen?

ARTY

I did...with what time I had. I spent the last hour looking for Gill. Gwen made me.

GILL

Really?

ARTY

When Gwen couldn't find him, we went looking for Marilee.

(Lance laughs at Arty's failed romance.)

Shut up. At least I didn't get stuck with that stupid sister of mine. I'm surprised you didn't jump in the lake and drown yourself, having to listen to her constant chatter all day.

LANCE

Marilee's not that bad. You ought to listen to her sometime. She knows more than you think.

ARTY

I doubt that!

LANCE

Listen to yourself. You don't know how to take advantage of what's in front of you.

ARTY

What do ya' mean?

LANCE

Who's Gwen's best friend?

ARTY

Marilee, I guess.

LANCE

Exactly! And girls talk all the time...you might wanna be nicer to Marilee if you want her to talk nicer about you.

ARTY

What do you mean? Has Marilee been talkin' bad about me?

LANCE

I mean Marilee, knows exactly who Gwen likes.

ARTY

What?

LANCE

I'm just saying I had an interesting day with Marilee.

ARTY

Tell me!

(Lance just smirks.)

GILL

Come on! Tell us who Gwen likes. I gotta know.

LANCE

A gentleman never tells.

ARTY

Good thing you're no gentleman!

(Lance reaches into his pocket and pulls out a small prize.)

ARTY

What're ya' going to do? Give that to Gwen?

LANCE

I might give it to Marilee.

ARTY

What, are you sayin'...you're sweet on my kid sister? I'd actually like to see you show up to call on Marilee. Dad'd have a stroke.

LANCE

You're probably right, but Marilee's gonna do what she's gonna do.

ARTY

So you do like Marilee!

LANCE

Like I said, a gentleman never tells... It's just... you ought to listen to your sister every once and awhile. She might help you understand some things.

(Marilee and Gwen enter walking quickly.)

ARTY

Here comes your girl.

(Arty nudges Gill.)

LANCE

(Lance looks at Gwen as she walks up to him.)

I think you might be right.

ARTY

I meant Gill's girl—Marilee!

GWEN

Lance! You need to get out of here!

LANCE

What? Why?

MARILEE

Leland Holiday's coming this way. We heard him bragging to some low fellows that he was going to "mess you up."

(Leland Holiday enters.)

(Gwen clings to Lance's arm.)

(Lance starts to leave.)

LELAND

Stop right there, Carrington!

(Lance stops.)

(Gwen puts herself behind Lance.)

LELAND cont.

I see you have your whole gang here. I've been mighty interested in the hole you're diggin' on the Brooks place.

GILL

We're—we're digging a cellar for my ma.

LELAND

A cellar. And these two misfits are helping you with that? Don't add up to me. It makes more sense to think you're making a hidy-hole for some of that bootleg liquor your daddy runs in my territory.

LANCE

This is between you and me, Leland. Leave everyone else out of this. You don't have any interest in them.

(Leland walks slowly around Lance and close to Gwen.)

LELAND

I wouldn't say that. From where I stand, there's a lot of interest to be found here.

ARTY

Leave Lance alone. We haven't been bothering any one.

LELAND

Shut up, Martin! Your daddy's on the other side of the park. He won't be bailing you out this time.

(Leland reaches out and grabs Gwen and pulls her toward him.)

(Lance and Arty react, but Leland pulls his pistol.)

I wouldn't try it if I was you.

LANCE

Leave her be!

(Leland aims his pistol at Lance.)

(Lance steps back.)

LELAND

Shut up, you no-account, white-trash, son of a bootlegger! Your days of being an irritant to me are coming to an end. Go ahead, Carrington. I know you want to take a punch at me. I don't need much of an excuse to put a bullet in you. I think this girl's folks would be on my side.

(Gwen makes a move to break away from Leland's hold and forces his hand holding the pistol up in the air.)

GWEN

Run, Lance!

(Leland's pistol goes off.)

(Lance runs off stage.)

(Leland pushes Gwen away and fires another shot at Lance who is now off stage.)

(Mr. Martin and Mr. Brooks enter.)

MR. MARTIN

What's going on here?

LELAND

I was trying to arrest Lance Carrington on charges of the distribution of illegal contraband and various other crimes against society. He resisted, and I had to fire a warning shot.

ARTY

That's not what happened!

LELAND

Mr. Martin, your boy is running with a bad character. If you want to keep him out of trouble, I'd suggest you get control.

MR. MARTIN

Arty, come with me, right now! You too Marilee.

(Arty and Marilee obey.)

(Arty takes hold of Gwen's arm and leads her away as well.)

(Mr. Martin, Arty, Marilee, and Gwen exit.)

LELAND

Brooks, I have to be careful with Martin, he's got some influence around here. But—you need to watch yourself. I know you've been harboring that Carrington boy. If he comes around again, I won't be responsible for any collateral damages—to your boy.

MR. BROOKS

Come on, Gill. Let's get home.

(Mr. Brooks and Gill exit.)

(Leland Holiday looks in the direction of Lance's exit. He smiles with satisfaction.)

(Lights out.)

End of 1st Act

ACT 2

Scene 1

(Arty and Gill digging for the treasure.)

(Mr. Brooks enters to narrate.)

MR. BROOKS

Looks like the boys are making good progress on my cellar, but—I think they'll need a little more motivation. Lance has gone missing. He skedaddled after his run in with Leland Holiday at the county fair. Smart boy. Leland's mean through and through—and although he's the law in this town, I don't trust him anymore than I would a snake not to bite me. My boy, Gill, is a good boy. A smart boy. He's not cut out for this cotton farming. I know it, but it's hard to let him go. I'm sending him off for more schooling next year. For now, he's learning bookkeeping from Guy Peaudane at the hardware store. The work seems to suit Gill, but I suppose he goes there just as much to spy on that Gwen Peaudane as he does to work. Speaking of work, I better check on my cellar.

(Mr. Brooks walk to the boys.)

Looking good, fellas. Another two feet and I think you'll have it.

ARTY

Two feet!

GILL

We'll get it Dad.

MR. BROOKS

It's got to be another two feet before we can lay the timbers for the roof. Your mother will want to be below ground. We'll use your diggings for cover over the timbers. It'll make a good place to store our canned goods as well.

MR. BROOKS Cont.

(Mr. Brooks looks around.)

Looks like we got about another hour of daylight. The days are getting shorter. I'll see you at the house, Gill.

GILL

I'm staying the Peaudane's store tonight, Dad. Remember.

MR. BROOKS

Yeah, I forgot. Why is it Guy Peaudane has you working at night?

GILL

He's gone to Oklahoma City for a few days on business and needs someone to watch over the place.

MR. BROOKS

Probably a good idea. There's plenty of thievery that goes on in these parts. I guess some things never change.

ARTY

What do you mean?

MR. BROOKS

Boys this was outlaw territory not twenty years ago. There weren't much law here and outlaws from Texas, Kansas, Arkansas, and—Missouri held up here all the time. From what I hear about these border towns like Corner, Keokuk Falls, and Violet Springs things haven't changed much. You boys stay away from those places, you hear.

GILL

Yes, sir.

(Arty nods.)

(Mr. Brooks exits.)

(Arty quits digging.)

ARTY

I'm done.

GILL

What?

ARTY

I'm done digging.

GILL

But the treasure.

ARTY

I'm starting to wonder if there ever was any treasure.

GILL

You heard what Dad said. This was outlaw country. And the map.

ARTY

Maybe we misread the darn thing.

GILL

If you quit, I get to keep the whole thing for myself. Lance has already bailed on us.

(Gill starts digging as Arty relaxes.)

(In a moment, Gill stops and reaches down for something. Arty doesn't pay much attention at first, but then gets interested.)

ARTY

What is it?

GILL

(Looks at a coin.)

A silver dollar!

ARTY

Let me see.

GILL

It's old.

ARTY

The date says 1874. Didn't that book you borrowed say something about a bank robbery in 1874?

GILL

Yeah, in Muncie, Kansas, but it wasn't a bank it was a train depot. \$55,000 was stolen from the depot. Most of it from the Kansas City mint.

ARTY

\$55,000 and this coin is from the same date! You found this thing nearly five foot below ground. It didn't get there cause someone dropped it. Somebody put it here!

GILL

The treasure.

ARTY

\$55,000! We're rich.

(Arty jumps back into help.)

Let's get to work.

GILL

Okay, but I got to head to the hardware store before dark. You're coming, aren't you?

ARTY

I was, but that was before. We could be rich by morning.

GILL

I promised Guy Peaudane I'd keep an eye on the place. Besides, Gwen will bring me supper.

ARTY

You think her bring you supper means anything?

GILL

No, but—I promised I would be there.

ARTY

Okay. Let's dig for another half hour. If we hadn't hit it big by then, you can go.

(Gill nods and the two work feverishly as the light dim to dark.)

Scene 2

(In front of the Peaudane Hardware Store in the evening.)

(Gill enters and sits on a step in front of the store.)

(Gwen enters carrying a basket of food.)

GWEN

Hey, Gill. I brought you supper.

GILL

That was nice of you.

GWEN

(Gwen takes a seat beside Gill.)

It wasn't a problem. I'm not nearly as good a cook as Marilee, but it'll keep you from starving.

(Gill takes a bite and you can tell the meal is less than tasty.)

GILL

Not many people can cook like Marilee Martin. I guess when you cook for all those brothers of hers and the field hands the Martins have you'd get good at something. It's going to be dark, moonless night. At least it's not too cold.

GWEN

Where's Arty? I thought he would stay with you tonight.

GILL

Oh—he got tied up and interested in something else.

GWEN

Typical Arty. You found your treasure yet?

GILL

What? What treasure?

GWEN

Lance told me all about it.

GILL

Oh.

GWEN

Don't worry. I won't tell. Believe me, I'm good at keeping secrets. I've kept them my whole life.

GILL

I don't think Lance ever thought there was any treasure.

GWEN

You're right.

GILL

Then why did he keep digging?

GWEN

He knew your dad needed a cellar. Lance really likes your family. He appreciates all you've done for him.

GILL

We don't have much compared to a family like yours or—the Martins.

GWEN

You share what you have. That's what's important.

(Gwen hesitates slightly before saying.)

Have you heard from Lance?

GILL

Not directly. I heard some fellas in the store talking about seeing him up north near Keokuk Falls. I hope he's staying out of trouble.

GWEN

Me too.

GILL

(Gill studies Gwen for a moment.)

He's the one, isn't he?

GWEN

What?

GILL

Lance is the one of us you like.

GWEN

Yes. I have for a while.

GILL

But what about Arty? Your families are friends, and he's always taking you to places.

GWEN

Arty's already in love with someone else.

GILL

Who?

GWEN

Himself.

GILL

(Laughs.)

I can't argue that. I guess—I guess I never really had a chance with a girl like you.

GWEN

You're too good for someone like me. Besides, you already have a girl.

GILL

What? That's news to me.

GWEN

Marilee?

GILL

Marilee! Arty's kid sister! I don't think so. I'm headin' off to school soon anyway. But Marilee?

GWEN

Marilee's going to surprise you some day. She's about the only friend I got, and I've learned she's a girl that knows how to get what she wants. She's got a plan for her life—and you're it.

GILL

I might have some say in that.

GWEN

You think so?

(A voice off stage calls for Gwen to come to the house.)

I've got to go. Gill, if you see Lance, tell him to be careful. I know some things—and he's in danger.

GILL

From Leland Holiday.

GWEN

That man makes me uneasy. The way he looks at me—scares me.

(Gwen reaches into her basket and hands Gill a pistol.)

Guy told me to give this to you. It's just a single shot pistol, but it's loaded. He's had a few break-ins the past months. If you hear anything, he said to fire a shot in the air and help will come.

GILL

I know how to handle a pistol.

GWEN

Goodnight, Gill.

GILL

Goodnight, Gwen—I hope we both get to see Lance soon.

(Gwen leaves.)

(Gill forces himself to take a few bites of food, but then gets comfortable and falls asleep.)

(The sound of glass breaking startles Gill awake. Gill fires the pistol by accident. A thud is heard and possibly the sound of gurgling blood.)

Oh lord, I've shot him!

(Gill gets up to search the area, but can find one one.)

(Leland Holiday walks up behind him.)

LELAND

What's going on here?

GILL

I shot him!

LELAND

Shot who?

GILL

I don't know. Someone was trying to break-in, and I shot him.

LELAND

(Does not seem to be alarmed and does not draw his pistol. The inference is that Leland is the person that broke the glass.)

Let me have a look.

(Leland looks over the scene. In a moment, he begins to laugh.)

GILL

What's so funny?

LELAND

You! You shot him alright.

GILL

Who?

LELAND

That barrel of molasses. You put a hole clean through it and now that barrel's bleeding molasses all over the store's floor!

(Gwen enters.)

GWEN

(When Gwen sees Leland she stops.)

What's going on?

LELAND

This kid vandalized your store.

GWEN

He was guarding it.

LELAND

Guarding it! I'm the marshal of this town. Your brother doesn't think I can do my job?

GWEN

I don't know.

(Leland takes a step toward Gwen.)

I'll go get my father.

(Gwen exits.)

LELAND

Pretty little thing, isn't she?

GILL

I guess so.

LELAND

Your friend Lance thinks so. You seen him recently?

GILL

No.

LELAND

He can't stay away from me forever. I'm betting he can't stay away from that sweet little Peaudane girl either. If he shows up, you better watch yourself or—you might end up like that barrel of molasses.

(Leland exits.)

(Lights dim.)

Scene 3

(Daytime outside the Peaudane Hardware Store.)
(Gill is still at the store from the night before cleaning.)
(Arty enters.)

ARTY

What happened here?

GILL

I spilt some molasses last night.

ARTY

That's not what I heard. People are saying you shot—a barrel of molasses—clean through the heart! Leland Holiday's down at the café calling you the Great Molasses Killer of Romulus.

GILL

Very funny. Did you find anything last night?

ARTY

Dirt! I dug until past midnight and didn't find anything. Your dad's cellar's almost deep enough, though. What are we going to do if we haven't found it by then?

GILL

I don't know. Keep digging?

ARTY

I just knew I would find it last night. And look at the excitement I missed. Did you get to see Gwen? Did she say she missed me?

GILL

Yeah, Gwen brought me supper. We talked a little, but not so much about you.

ARTY

Why not? She had to be disappointed when I didn't show.

GILL

I don't know. Gwen seems to have a lot of her mind these days. She don't seem to be too attached to her folks. She's afraid of Leland Holiday and—and she worries about Lance.

ARTY

I worry about that rascal, too.

GILL

You don't understand, Arty. Gwen worries about him like you—well like you worry about her.

ARTY

(It takes Arty a moment to understand.)

Wait a minute. You can't be telling me that she has feeling for Lance.

GILL

That's exactly what I'm trying to tell you. She has for a while, I think.

ARTY

That can't be. Gwen's my girl. Her family will want her with me. She'll want to be with me.

(Arty fumes for a moment.)

Lance Carrington has poisoned her against me.

GILL

You know that's not the case. Lance would never do either of us wrong.

ARTY

He would for Gwen! He's poisoned her against me, I tell you! Don't worry, I'll fix this.

(Arty rushes off.)

GILL

Arty! I don't think you understand!

(Arty has left and Gill says the rest to himself.)

She likes you—but loves Lance.

(Gill continues his sweeping.)

(Gwen enters.)

GWEN

Good morning, Gill.

GILL

Morning, Gwen.

GWEN

Looks like you got everything back in order.

GILL

I'm real sorry about the floor. I scrubbed it, but the molasses has left its mark.

GWEN

Looks like that part of the floor is polished. Maybe we should spill molasses over the whole thing. Of course, we'd have to give you more than one bullet for that.

GILL

I guess you heard about me shooting the molasses barrel?

GWEN

I think everyone has, Gill. Don't worry. It'll make a great story for you someday.

GILL

Maybe, but for now, everyone's making fun of me.

GWEN

Let them laugh. Why should that bother you?

GILL

It shouldn't, I guess.

GWEN

Will you be here for a few minutes?

GILL

Sure. I'm heading home in a while. Maybe catch a nap. I—I didn't get much sleep last night.

GWEN

I have someone you want to meet. Be nice to her.

(Gwen leaves.)

GILL

Of course. What's her name?

(Gwen has already left before Gill can get his answer.)

(Marilee enters looking quite different than before. She wears a new dress that makes her look more mature than before, her hair is groomed, and she's not wearing her glasses.)

(Gill does not seem to recognize Marilee at first, and Marilee can't really see Gill without her glasses.)

(Gill finally recognizes Marilee.)

Marilee?

(Marilee squints for a moment before putting her glasses back on.)

MARILEE

Hello, Gilbert.

GILL

Hello—Marilee. What are you doing here?

(Gill steps closer.)

MARILEE

I've come to see you. Gwen told me you would be here today.

GILL

You came to see me? You're the friend Gwen wanted me to meet?

MARILEE

Yes.

GILL

It's nice to see you. I mean I see you all the time, but I've never seen you like this. It's—It's great to see you.

MARILEE

It's good to see you, too.

(There's a moment of awkward silence in the conversation.)

GILL

You look—

MARILEE

Yes?

GILL

You...have you done something with your hair?

MARILEE

No...not really. Well, maybe a little.

GILL

You're—

MARILEE

I look more...filled out? This dress Gwen has been helping me make really shows off that I'm a woman now.

GILL

Yeah...among other things—I mean your clothes, the hair—if you hadn't put on your glasses, I'm not sure I would have recognized you.

MARILEE

I hate these glasses, but I can't see four feet without them.

GILL

It's okay. They look fine—I just—I just can't get over how different you look.

MARILEE

Is it a good different?

(Gill is confused about how to answer.)

You wouldn't know. You never pay any attention to me.

GILL

That's not true, I—I just never notice you this way before.

(Gill grimaces at his awkward reply.)

MARLEE

What way, Gilbert?

GILL

Why do you call me Gilbert? I mean everyone, even my mother calls me Gill.

MARILEE

I don't know. I've always liked the way Gilbert sounds I guess. Does it bother you?

GILL

No—I don't think it does—any more.

MARILEE

Are you going to ask me?

GILL

Ask what?

MARILEE

Are you going to ask to walk me to my house on your way home?

GILL

Marilee, could I walk you home?

MARILEE

I thought you would never ask.

(Gill and Marilee exit. Marilee reaches out to hold Gills hand.)

Scene 4

(A few days later outside the Peaudane Hardware Store.)

(Arty enters.)

(Gill enters with Marilee on his arm.)

MARILEE

I'm going to check on Gwen. I'll see you later, Gilbert?

GILL

You sure will.

ARTY

I don't know if my mind can process this.

GILL

What's that?

ARTY

You with my sister. I saw you two on the front porch last night. You didn't kiss her, did you?

GILL

No.

ARTY

(Looks suspiciously at Gill.)

But you wanted to?

GILL

As if you gave me a chance. You kept pestering me to go dig some more. I think Lance was right. I don't think there ever was any treasure.

ARTY

I don't want to hear about Lance. Not after what he's done to me.

GILL

What do you mean by that?

ARTY

Stole my girl. Poisoned her against me.

GILL

Lance Carrington is the best friend you've ever had. Better than me. He let you have all day with Gwen at the fair. He'd never say a bad word about you Arty—and you know it.

ARTY

Still, something happened, but—I took care of things.

GILL

Took care of what?

ARTY

Nothing.

GILL

I know you, Arty, and I know that look in your eye. What have you done?

ARTY

I took care of Lance poaching on my girl. That's all.

LELAND

(Leland enters dragging a beat up Lance with him.)

You sure did!

GILL

Lance!

LANCE

I'm okay, Gill. The marshal and me have just been having a little conversation.

ARTY

(Speaking to Leland.)

You weren't supposed to hurt him.

LELAND

I didn't hurt him—much. Like the boy said, we were having a conversation.

GILL

(To Arty.)

You told him were Lance was?

ARTY

Yeah, but I just wanted him to scare Lance away for a few weeks until I could fix things with Gwen.

(Leland pushes Lance toward Arty and Gill.)

(Leland draws his pistol on the three boys.)

(Marilee enters, but stays out of sight as she watches Leland.)

LELAND

Things are fixed real good now. I had a nice talk with Lance and seems you boys have been holding out on me.

ARTY

What do you mean?

LELAND

The map. Where is it?

ARTY

I don't know what you're talking about.

(Leland steps up to Arty to reach into his pocket and retrieve the map.)

LELAND

This map, knucklehead. The map that shows were the stash was hidden. Empty your pockets. All of you.

(Gill, Arty, and Lance empty their pockets. Leland takes the coin Gill had found.)

LELAND cont.

So you're telling me there's no map and no prospects of treasure? Do you boys take me for a fool! This silver dollar is dated 1874 and is minted in Kansas City. Awfully convenient coincidence. Now I'm a fair map reader, but why don't we save some time and just tell me where it's at.

ARTY

That treasure is ours.

LELAND

Wrong, wrong, wrong! That treasure is stolen property and as the law in this town, I'll be taking custody of any contraband.

LANCE

You mean for yourself!

LELAND

Me and the law are one in this town. Now, where is that treasure?

GILL

We haven't found anything yet, but we think it's on my dad's place. We've been telling him we're digging a cellar for my mom.

LELAND

(Smiles.)

I wondered what you pea brains were up to. I figured old Lance here was making a place to store illegal liquor. Liquor that his daddy shouldn't be selling in this part of the county—in my part of the county.

(Leland motions with his pistol.)

Now move.

(Arty, Gill, and Lance leave with Leland following behind them.)

(Marilee exits in the opposite direction.)

Final Scene

(At the dig site.)

(Arty, Gill, and Lance are digging. Leland watches over them.)

LELAND

Put you backs into it!

ARTY

We have been!

LELAND

We got to be getting close. No outlaw would bother to dig much deeper than this.

LANCE

I tried to tell you, there's no treasure.

LELAND

(Agitated.)

Get out of there! I don't trust you delinquents. For all I know you hit that treasure box an hour ago and hid it from me.

(Arty, Gill, and Lance quit digging and Leland takes over.)

(Leland works feverishly for a few moment.)

(Mr. Martin enters with Marilee and Gwen.)

MR. MARTIN

What in all creation is going on down here?

(Leland puts down his shovel to face Mr. Martin.)

LELAND

I'm putting these boys through a little work reform program.

MR. MARTIN

Including my boy?

LELAND

I thought it would teach them some discipline and respect for the law.

MARILEE

Leland Holiday beat up Lance and took a treasure map from Arty. He pulled his pistol on them and forced them here.

LELAND

What? You're mistaken, young lady. You must be confused.

MR. MARTIN

Is that true, marshal? My Marilee is rarely—confused
(Leland straightens himself up to face Mr. Martin.)

LELAND

So what if it is? I'm the law in this town.

MR. MARTIN

You *were* the law. That will change once I convene the town council to fire you! I suspect most of the thieving that's been going on around here is you and your brother. It was awful suspicious to me that you were the only man walking the streets the night of the break-in at the hardware store. I know for a fact you've been selling that bootleg liquor you make. A man in Asher nearly died from that poison you distill.

LELAND

(Leland steps up to Mr. Martin and pulls his coat back to show his pistol.)

That would all be a fine accusation, but it looks like I got the biggest gun in this crowd.

(As Leland looks around to gloat, Mr. Martin pull his pistol.)

MR. MARTIN

You may have the biggest gun, but it's not anywhere near the fastest.

MR. MARTIN

Lance, I suspect you know your way around a firearm. Would you relieve the Mr. Holiday of his?

(Lance removes the pistol from Leland and also finds a knife hidden.)

LELAND

You can't get away with this.

MR. MARTIN

I already have. I've sent for the sheriff in Tecumseh, and he's got a warrant for you on charges of bootlegging and endangering the public health. He'll be here by morning. In the meantime, I'm making a citizen's arrest. You'll get a comfortable bed—in the town's jail.

ARTY

Where did you learn to do that?

MR. MARTIN

I haven't always been an old man, Arty. Before I met your mother, I rode with Heck Thomas, Chris Madsen, and Bill Tilghman as a deputy.

ARTY

The Three Guardsman!

MR. MARTIN

That's right. The three toughest lawmen the territory ever saw. When Marilee came to tell me what was going on, I thought my old pistol might come in handy.

(Mr. Brooks enters.)

MR. BROOKS

What's going on down here? I've never heard such a ruckus in the middle of the night. It's near Halloween and the wife thought there were haunts down here.

MR. MARTIN

Looks like you might be a rich man, Brooks.

MR. BROOKS

What do you mean?

MR. MARTIN

Leland Holiday stole a treasure map from the boys. Seems there was a robbery a few years back and the loot's buried here.

MR. BROOKS

It's your land, Mr. Martin. Wouldn't anything found be yours?

MR. MARTIN

This land in leased to you fair and square. Anything you can get from this ground belongs to you. Unless, of course, you've dug deep enough to hit oil.

ARTY

But dad, I did most of the digging.

MR. BROOKS

I appreciated it, Arty. It would of taken Gill months to do all this work. My wife will be good bit easier to live with now that this cellars dug.

LELAND

You fool! Don't you know that you standing on a fortune. We got to be within a few inches of it.

MR. BROOKS

Treasure? How could that be?

GILL

I found the map in Uncle Horace's things, Dad. I'm sorry I kept it from you. I thought we could find the treasure and things would work out.

MR. BROOKS

Things always work out for us, Gill—as long as we have each other. I just can't imagine Horace would have anything of value, much less a treasure map. The man never had a nickel to his name that he didn't spend on homebrewed whiskey.

LELAND

(Leland reaches for something in his pocket. Mr. Martin alertly watches him.)

Then explain this!

(Leland hands the coin to Mr. Brooks.)

It's a coin dated 1874 and minted in Kansas City. The James gang robbed a train depot that year in Muncie Kansas. I looked it up.

MR. BROOKS

Where did you get this coin?

(Leland does not answer.)

GILL

He took it from me. I dug it up while we were looking for treasure.

MR. BROOKS

That's my lucky coin. I'm much obliged to have it back.

LELAND

You mean there's no treasure.

MR. BROOKS

Unless you consider a nearly finished cellar a treasure, then no. Of course, this hole in the ground will make the wife feel a bit better when the storms come, so I guess in a way, it is a treasure to me.

MR. MARTIN

Let's go, Holiday. I have a room ready for you in the jail.

LELAND

You're making a big mistake, Martin. I've got influential friends that will have me out of this jam in no time.

MR. MARTIN

I don't doubt that, but you have no influential friends left in Romulus. You'll have to run your scams somewhere else. For tonight, you won't be bothering any one. I'll let the sheriff and the county judge sort things out from there.

(Mr. Brooks looks at Marilee, who has worked her way over to stand by Gill.)

Arty, take Marilee home. It's getting late.

MARILEE

That's okay Daddy. Gill will see me home.

MR. MARTIN

It's late and I'm not comfortable with you being with a boy after dark. I mean it, Marilee. You head home with Arty.

(Marilee walks over to Gill and gives him a kiss in front of her father.)

MARILEE

I'll be seeing you tomorrow—Gill.

(Gill nods. Arty reacts. Marilee obeys her father and walks over to let Arty take her home.)

MR. MARTIN

Can't say I'm comfortable with that either.

MARILEE

Get used to it Daddy. I'm still your little girl, but I'm also a young woman now.

(Marilee exits with Arty.)

(Mr. Martin escorts Leland off stage.)

(Gwen motions with her head for Lance to take her away off stage. They slip off together.)

(Mr. Brooks and Gill are left on stage.)

GILL

You set us up didn't you? This whole treasure map thing was just a prank.

MR. BROOKS

I guess it depends on your definition of a prank.

GILL

There never was any treasure, was there?

MR. BROOKS

You're a smart boy. I'm guessing tonight's not the first time that idea occurred to you.

GILL

No—I figured it was too much coincidence that Horace's treasure map was right where Mom wanted her cellar dug a few weeks ago. I'll have to admit, I started to believe when I found that coin.

MR. BROOKS

That reminds me. I've been intending to give you this silver dollar for a while now. It should be fair pay for your efforts.

(Mr. Brooks flips the coin to Gill.)

GILL

Lance was never fooled, but he helped anyway. Arty—well Arty’s had a lot of disappointment today.

MR. BROOKS

Arty’s likely to have a lot of disappointments, until he learns a little humility. Let’s hope that’s sooner than later.

GILL

Why did you do it? Didn’t you know I would have dug the cellar for you? You didn’t have to trick me.

MR. BROOKS

You’re a good boy. I know you would have done the work. You’re getting older now, and you’ll soon learn life can get tedious when you’re grown up. You’re still enough of a boy to enjoy a good adventure. I thought I would give you one. You’ll have to admit, it made the work a little more fun.

GILL

It did, but I think Marilee Martin is determined to make a man out of me.

MR. BROOKS

(Mr. Brooks laughs.)

Marilee still looks like a girl, but she has the mind of thirty year old woman. I have no doubt that girl will take you on many more adventures than I’ll ever be able to create.

(Mr. Brooks looks around for a moment.)

You know, Gill. These Cross Timbers are as old and tough as any forest could be. They become a cast iron prison for some people—people like me. I believe in you. You’re smart, and I know you’re going to do some great things in your life. Enjoy your time in school next year in Tecumseh. Learning is something you’ll do your whole life, but that school will give you a good start.

GILL

Do you think there’s any chance there’s outlaw treasure buried here in the Cross Timber somewhere?

MR. BROOKS

I have no doubt about it, son—but treasures are to be found every day, if you look hard enough. I'll be dead and gone someday, but I have a hope that you'll maybe tell your kids—or even grandkids about some of the things we've done—some of the adventures we've had just like today. That's a treasure that can't be lost. Make your memories today, Gill. You'll have them always, that way.

(Mr. Brooks and Gill exit.)

THE END

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