

THE COUNTRY KITCHEN

By

David Cortesi

Adapted from the Memoir by Della T. Lutes

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## INT. THE KITCHEN - MAKING PUNKIN PIES

This mostly-wordless scene is the backdrop to the credits. The apparent lighting -- kerosene lamps and the wan winter-sunrise light from the large windows -- is low and warm, giving a rich but muted palette.

SUPER: Tuesday, January 1st, 1881

MIRY and MIZ LURY LANE are working at the central table, making pumpkin pies. DELLA watches earnestly. We also watch from DELLA's six-year-old eye-level and with a child's fascination with small detail as the two women work. Both move with the economy of motion gained from long practice.

At times in the following, MIRY opens the stove door; pokes the fire; shoves in a stick of wood from the wood-box.

MIRY flours the oilcloth, slaps down a ball of dough; rolls it out; spreads the pastry into a pie dish; trims the edge with a knife; pinches the rim into neat flutes; slides the crust into the oven to bake.

Meanwhile, MIZ LURY LANE takes eggs from a wire basket; cracks them into a bowl; beats vigorously. She adds milk; measures in powdered ginger and allspice; whisks. She get the steaming pot of stewed pumpkin from the stove and drains it into the sink; brings it to the table; mashes the pumpkin. MIRY brings two baked pie shells from the oven.

MIRY dips a fingertip in the custard, tastes.

MIRY

Just a lick more ginger, I think.  
Oh! I almost forgot the mince!

She hustles through the back door to the cooler on the porch and returns with a prepared mince pie.

MIRY

Della, sweetheart, open the oven?

DELLA proudly but carefully, using her apron to grip the hot handle, opens the oven door and MIRY slides the mince pie onto a shelf; slides out the baked pie shell.

MIZ LURY LANE

(whisking dollops of pumpkin  
into her custard)  
The' ain't no use with that, far's  
I can see -- the way Mister  
Thompson likes his punkin pie.

(CONTINUED)

MIRY

(tartly)

Well, after all, there's goin' to  
be a few other folks besides him.

MIZ LURIE LANE looks surprised at this; then both laugh. MIZ LURIE LANE carefully pours custard into one of the pie shells, then the other. MIRY carefully transports the pie to the oven which DELLA proudly opens for her.

2

INT. THE KITCHEN - HOW TO COOK A YORKSHIRE PUDDING

LIJE is heard stamping his feet on the back stoop. LIJE enters through the back door, saying

LIJE

Foo! It is bitter out there.

(noticing MIZ LURIE LANE)

Well, happy New Year to you, Miz Lane. Nice of you to help us out.

MIZ LURIE LANE

Mornin', mister Thompson. I'm happy to help MIRY with all these people you got comin'.

LIJE

Just a few, m' sisters and some cousins and nephews.

(sniffing)

They's certainly fine smells in here. Oh! Miry! You rememberin' to cook plenty of 'taters, now?

MIRY

I am; they're cookin' in with the roast the way you like.

LIJE

And a yorkshire puddin', right?

MIRY

The batter is restin' in the bowl right over there. I'll slide it in before the roast's done.

LIJE

Now I HEARD that the way to do was to bake it right in the pan, under the roast, so it picks up the juice.

(CONTINUED)

MIRY

The' ain't room in the roaster for it, dear.

LIJE

Well what you OUGHT to do is to put the roast up on a rack or something... Seems as if you could put a rack right under it...

(he reaches for the oven door to show what he means)

OUCH! Dod-BLAST the thing! Why couldn't you've TOLD me the dang thing is hot?

MIRY

(mildly)

Most folks 'd know an oven door 'd be hot when you're cooking. Anyway, I can't try any such schemes as roasting the beef on a rack. The juice 'd spatter all over and smell to heaven.

(giving LIJE a fond push toward the door)

Go put some yellow soap on that. It'll take the heat out.

LIJE exits, blowing on his fingertips.

MIRY

I suppose if I divide the batter up...

MIZ LURY LANE

Put little ones in the corners of the roaster?

MIRY

It'd get the juice, anyway.

3

INT. THE SITTING ROOM - SETTING THE TABLE

Center is a dining table covered by a heavy linen embroidered cloth on which MIZ LURY LANE and DELLA are laying out place settings.

MIZ LURY LANE

(looking at a plate appreciatively)

This is nice ware.

(CONTINUED)

DELLA

My grandma Bogardus gave us those.

MIZ LURY LANE

It's right pretty.

(raising her voice to reach  
the kitchen behind)

You cert'ny got nice things, Miz'  
Thompson. I never see nicer dishes.

MIRY (O.S.)

Thank you, Miz Lane. My mother gave  
us those for our wedding.

We watch: DELLA with great concentration lining up cutlery; MIRY proudly positioning her cut-glass goblets with the bellflower pattern--she gives one a quick polish on her apron; DELLA pouring salt from a period box into individual salt cellars; MIZ LURY LANE centering the 5-bottle caster; MIRY spooning brandied peaches from a mason jar into a pressed-glass serving dish.

4 INT. FRONT HALL - LIJE HEARS A SLEIGH

LIJE hears an arriving sleigh and quickly moves to the front hall,

LIJE

'Miry, we have company arrivin!

MIRY (O.S.)

I'll be right there!

5 EXT. FRONT PORCH AND YARD - GUESTS ARRIVING

LIJE comes out on the front porch as a sleigh arrives. Now we can see that the farm is covered in snow: heavy drifts along the fence between the yard and the narrow road, several inches on the roof curling down over the eaves, and beaten flat by people and horses in the yard and between the house and the barn.

In the arriving sleigh AUNT HANNER and AUNT SOPHRONY are in the back. Driving is Uncle FRANK, also on the front seat is his wife AUNT CATHERINE and sandwiched between them, their daughter AMELIA. All are heavily bundled against the cold with red cheeks from at least a couple of hours outdoors. Still in the seat, disentangling layers of lap robes,

(CONTINUED)

AUNT SOPHRONY  
'Lijer! Happy birthday, brother!

AUNT HANNER  
Mornin', 'Lije.

LIJE hurries out to help his sisters down. MIRY and DELLA arrive on the porch from the kitchen.

LIJE  
Hannah, you look well. Sophrony, blooming as always. Frank! Thanks for bringing your aunts. It wouldn't be a party without 'em!

FRANK  
Oh, no trouble, 'Lije. Their place is right on the way.

LIJE  
Catherine, let me help you down.

CATHERINE  
Thank you, 'Lijer. You remember our daughter, Amelia?

LIJE  
(courtly with the young girl)  
I certainly do! Welcome, Miss Amelia. You go say hi to Della, now.

AMELIA  
(with an embarrassed curtsy)  
Thank you Mister Thompson.

LIJE  
Oh, you call me Uncle 'Lijer!  
Della, come out and welcome your cousin.

DELLA comes out into the yard from the porch and greets AMELIA. They are nearly the same age and clearly well-acquainted.

AUNT HANNER  
Della, you look so sweet!  
(to LIJE)  
'Lijer, we brung a few things, help me get 'em out.

LIJE

Now Hanner, you know we're well fixed.

AUNT HANNER

You can always use a little more cider, we had such a crop of apples this fall, and we butchered a hog last week so I packed you a side of ribs, too.

She hauls a jug and a parcel (wrapped in grease-stained brown paper) out of the back of the sleigh and shoves them into LIJE's arms.

AUNT SOPHRONY is already to the porch,

AUNT SOPHRONY

'Miry, I can smell good things from clear out here! I hope you didn't put yourself out too much.

MIRY greets the aunts with hugs and cheek-kisses and escorts them into the house to hang their voluminous outer garments in the front hall.

FRANK and LIJE briskly unhitch the horses from the sleigh.

LIJE

Bring 'er this way...

FRANK

No, 'Lijer, you go on in. I can find the barn.

LIJE

It's no bother, I can -- well, looky here!

Another sleigh is turning in from the road. This is a two-person rig carrying AMABEL and driven by EPHRIAM. Close behind is yet another carrying Uncle MATT and Aunt MARTHA. FRANK, leading his horse on toward the barn, exchanges a wave with EPHRIAM who draws his rig up with a flourish. LIJE hurries over to greet them.

LIJE

Welcome, welcome!

EPHRIAM

Thank you Uncle 'Lijer, and happy new year.

(CONTINUED)

AMABEL  
 (coquettishly)  
 No, Ephr'm, it's happy BIRTHDAY!  
 (standing in the sleigh,  
 leaning out to give LIJE a big  
 hug)  
 Happy Birthday, dear Uncle Lije!

LIJE hands her down from the sleigh,

LIJE  
 Thank you my dear, and let me say  
 you are looking lovely today.

AMABEL  
 Why THANK you, uncle!

The third sleigh pulls in. We watch more greetings; more gifts being pushed into LIJE's and MIRY's arms; horses being unhitched and led off toward the barn to be stabled; people hanging wraps on overflowing hooks in the hall.

6 INT. KITCHEN AND SITTING ROOM - AMABEL AND THE ROCKER

AUNT SOPHRONY, CATHERINE, AMABEL, have crowded into the kitchen with MIRY and MIZ LURY LANE; DELLA and AMELIA watch shyly from the sitting room door. MIZ LURY LANE is stirring flour into foaming butter to cream the onions. AUNT SOPHRONY nods to her as she takes a proprietary peek into the numerous pots on the stove: potatoes, squash, onions are all boiling. AMABEL is plainly admiring the rocker by the window.

O.S., LIJE, Uncle FRANK, EPHRAIM and Uncle MATT are clumping onto the front porch from putting the horses away, knocking snow from boots.

CATHERINE  
 'Miry, what can we do to help?

MIRY  
 Not a thing, now. Miz' Lane come over early and we got things pretty well in hand already.

AUNT SOPHRONY  
 'Miry, I do think these onions are 'bout tender.

MIRY  
 Now, Aunt, you've got on your good dress, you just get away from those pots.

(CONTINUED)

MIZ LURY LANE

I'm just gettin' ready to cream  
them now, Miz Sophrony.

AMABEL

Oh, 'Miry, you have just the nicest  
little sewing place here, and this  
adorable rocker!

MIRY looks embarrassed. LIJE leans in from the sitting room,  
waving knitted socks.

LIJE

'Miry, look at these nice socks  
Hanner made me.

AMABEL

Oh! Uncle 'Lijer! I 's just telling  
'Miry what a beautiful rocker this  
is! It's so pretty and comfy. I  
don't s'pose Ephraim and me will  
ever be able to afford one so nice  
anytime soon.

LIJE

Well now Amabel, at least you can  
set in it today. And I'll tell you  
what, we'll just move it in the  
settin' room and you can set in it  
to eat!

LIJE moves into the kitchen and with some difficulty carries  
the rocker over his head out through the crowd to the  
sitting room where he sets it at the table on his left.  
Amabel follows and gives him a kittenish kiss on the cheek.

7

INT. THE SITTING ROOM - SETTIN' DOWN TO DINNER

The party are seating themselves around the table in the  
sitting room (AMABEL proudly in the rocker). It is a tight  
squeeze getting everyone into this modest room. AUNT HANNER  
and AUNT SOPHRONY, plumpish and not young, have some  
difficulty; LIJE and EPHRAIM hold their chairs. LIJE moves  
to the head of the table; MIRY enters from the kitchen with  
the roast on a platter and sets it in front of LIJE.

MIZ LURY LANE follows with serving bowls of roast potatoes  
and Yorkshire puds, reaching over and between diners to set  
them on the table. MIZ LURY LANE retires to the kitchen.  
MIRY takes her place at the opposite end of the table. All  
bow their heads and LIJE says grace, addressing God with  
authority tempered lightly with respect:

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

Our Father, we thank you for this bounty of good food, good health, and good fellowship you have bestowed on us. May you see fit to make this new year of eighteen hunderd and eighty-one be as fruitful for us all as the last. Amen.

The company murmer variously, "amen." LIJE commences carving slices from the roast with a practiced hand, saying

LIJE

All right, then! Let's eat. Start them 'taters round, Miry, and the gravy, too. Here you are, Hanner, I know you like the brown end.

With carving fork and knife, he extends a slice of well-done roast beef to AUNT HANNER, who holds out her plate to receive it.

AUNT HANNER

Thank you, 'Lije.

LIJE

...Sophrony...

AUNT SOPHRONY

Thanks. 'Miry, this looks beautiful.

LIJE

Cousin Amabel, I s'pose you like it more pink?

AMABEL

Just a teeny slice for me, thank you cousin.

LIJE

(carving)

All right, there you are, a nice little lady-like bit. You got some taters? Put some gravy on... 'Miry, where's the gravy?

MIRY

Now you know there isn't any.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

No GRAVY?

MIRY

You can't have that many potatoes and a Yorkshire puddin' big as a house all baked in the roaster, and get gravy too. They took up all the juice.

LIJE

Well, why in tunket didn't you TELL me so? What are we going' to eat on the potatoes?

MIRY

I didn't think you'd want anything on them, when they're baked right in the juice. But there's plenty of butter.

LIJE

(unvoiced humph and a momentary glare)

Well, there we are. Pass the butter round, Hanner. Joe, you like your meat rare or well done?

8 INT. THE SITTING ROOM - END OF THE DINNER

The party have progressed through the meal and are polishing up their second helping of pie.

LIJE

Ahh, I do like a good punkin pie.

AUNT HANNER

You always have! I recollect when you was a very small boy, Lijer, we were all at table and finished the punkin pie? And when 'Lije figgered out the pie was gone, he set up such a howl! You 'member this, Sophrony...

AUNT SOPHRONY

(nods with a smile)

AUNT HANNER

(to the company at large)  
Sophronia puts her fingers in her ears and says, "I wish't 'Lije had

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

AUNT HANNER (cont'd)  
 a punkin pie big 's this table and  
 he 's right in the middle of 't!"

General laughter.

LIJE  
 I ain't ashamed of liking 'Miry's  
 punkin pie. Looks like we're about  
 done, shall we move into the parlor  
 and be comfortable?

The party stand and work their way out of the confines of  
 the sitting room. As she passes MIRY,

AUNT SOPHRONY  
 That was a wonderful meal, 'Miry. I  
 don't know how you do it.

MIRY smiles modestly and nods. As the last diners cross into  
 the central hallway, MIZ LURIE LANE comes out of the kitchen  
 and she and MIRY begin gathering up plates.

MIZ LURY LANE  
 Let me do this, 'Miry, you go set.

MIRY  
 (with a wicked grin)  
 's all right, Lurie. I'd as soon be  
 useful in the kitchen than listen  
 to the relatives talk about what a  
 great man 'Lijer is.

9 INT. THE PARLOR - AFTER-DINNER CHAT

LIJE sits in his armchair, and his relatives make themselves  
 comfortable about the room. AMABEL settles into the coziest  
 spot near the fire. EPHRAIM stirs up the fire in the  
 fireplace. DELLA and AMELIA are cross-legged on the floor,  
 trying to keep out of the grown-ups' way.

EPHRIAM  
 Are you warm enough, dear?

AMABEL  
 Oh, yes, dear. Uncle 'Lijer, that  
 was such a nice dinner!

LIJE  
 Glad you liked it, dear, I like to  
 set a good table for my folks.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE enthrones himself in his armchair and surveys the roomful of relatives with satisfaction.

FRANK

'Lijer, I'll say you keep that barn of yours nice. When we put the horses up, I was thinkin', I 'most wouldn't mind sittin' out here with the horses, it's so warm.

AMABEL

Oh, Uncle 'Lijer takes care of everything he has!

LIJE

Well, thank you, my dear, I do like to keep the critters snug. But Frank, I saw you tuckin' in to that roast -- I don't think horse oats would'a suited you as well.

FRANK

Well, prob'ly not, but it's a snug barn for sure.

EPHRIAM

Uncle 'Lije, did I only see but one cow out there? Didn't you have a couple?

LIJE

I lost one! My best milker broke a leg and we had to shoot her. Fact, that's why we could be so free with the roast beef today. Come spring I have to look for another one.

AUNT SOPHRONY

Spring's gonna be early, almanac says. We got our first seed catalog in the mail already! 'Lijer, you gonna have peas before anyone else, like usual?

LIJE

I'm gonna try, but you know last year the preacher had peas almost as soon as me, dang him.

AUNT HANNER

He prob'ly prayed over 'em.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

I'll put my faith in good manure  
and some righteous weedin', just  
the same.

EPHRIAM

Uncle Matt, that horse you're  
drivin', she's new, ain't she?

MATT

Few months. I wanted to drive my  
girl here in style.

He grins at his wife MARTHA; she is embarrassed.

MARTHA

Matt, don't be silly. Uncle 'Lije,  
our old horse just wore out, poor  
thing, and had to be put down.

LIJE

Some mornin's I think I know how  
your horse felt. Be time to put me  
down, one day.

AMABEL

Oh, Uncle 'Lijer! You're not old!

General chorus of agreement with that. In the kitchen, to  
MIZ LURY LANE,

MIRY

I swear... all the fuss and  
feathers... sets him up so in his  
esteem, he ain't fit to live with  
for a week!

10

EXT. PORCH AND YARD - LATE AFTERNOON - GOODBYES

It is late on a midwinter afternoon: the low sun makes blue shadows and creamy highlights on the snowy yard; kerosene lamps glow through kitchen and parlor windows (Thomas Kincaid eat your heart out). FRANK and EPHRAIM are harnessing their horses to sleighs; MATT is just bringing his horse from the barn. The ladies have bundled themselves into coats, scarves, mittens in the front hall and are moving out to their respective sleighs, where they tuck themselves under robes for an hour's riding in cold air. MIRY and DELLA with shawls or coats draped over their shoulders are saying goodbye to everyone. LIJE bustles about bestowing gifts -- which he had stowed in a corner of the front porch for the occasion -- on each party.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

There you go, Hanner, you tucked in snug enough, now? I wanted to give you this jug of sauerkraut. I put this up myself, last summer.

'Phrony, you take care. Now, this is a tin of our best raspberries, they'll go good alongside that nice yellow cake you make. I'll just tuck it into the boot, here.

LIJE goes back to the porch to grab a sack of nuts. MIRY and DELLA are going from sleigh to sleigh saying more goodbyes.

LIJE

Catherine, you all set, then?  
'Melia, you stay wrapped up snug, now. This is a sack of nice butternuts; we got quite a bunch last fall so you may as well have the extra.

He turns toward the sleigh where EPHRAIM is just climbing in alongside AMABEL, rosy-cheeked in her robes and hood.

LIJE

Amabel, dear, you take care now -- oh! Ephr'm, you wait up just a bit now, I almost forgot!

LIJE bustles off into the house, leaving AMABEL and EPHRAIM puzzled. The big sleigh driven by FRANK with CATHERINE, AMELIA, AUNT HANNER and AUNT SOPHRONY swings around and out the front gate; everyone waves and calls. MIRY comes up and gives AMABEL and EPHRAIM a gracious farewell as LIJE comes out of the front door carrying MIRY's rocking chair over his head and stows it in the back of their sleigh.

LIJE

Here you go, Amabel, here's your chair! You said you didn't s'pose you'd every have one -- well, now you've got it. You set in it and enjoy yourself!

AMABEL stands up in the sleigh and embraces LIJE, saying over his shoulder,

AMABEL

Oh, THANK you uncle! Miry, I'm afraid you'll miss it, but if Uncle 'Lijer wants me to have it, well...

(CONTINUED)

LIJE gives a light slap to the horse's rump,

LIJE  
You best be gettin' on, the light's  
fadin'.

EPHRAIM, glad to end an awkward moment, shakes the reins and the sleigh moves out of the yard.

LIJE  
Well, let's not stand around in the  
cold, come on inside.

MIRY gives a wordless cry of mingled fury and hurt, bundles her apron in front of her face and runs into the house. LIJE looks puzzled, takes DELLA's hand and leads her toward the porch.

DELLA  
Daddy, why's mommy crying?

LIJE  
Guess it's been a long day for  
everyone. Let's go get warm.

11 INT. THE BARN - PREDAWN - MILKING

SUPER: Wednesday, February 6th, 1881.

We watch LIJE in barn, milking the one cow. It's pre-dawn on a January day, dark and cold (both LIJE's and the cow's breath steam). The only apparent light is a kerosene lantern. The only sounds are breathing (LIJE and the cow), shifting of feet (ditto) and the squirting of milk into the pail.

Outside, dawn is breaking as LIJE emerges from the barn with a pail of milk; it steams lightly as he carries it up the packed-snow path between barn and back door. Observe little caps of snow on fence posts and on dried cornstalks in the garden.

12 INT THE KITCHEN - MORNING - LIJE HAS AN ERRAND TO RUN

LIJE enters the kitchen with the milk pail. MIRY is putting a coat on, and carrying an egg basket.

MIRY  
I'm goin' to gather the eggs.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

Later on can you check the water  
for the stock?

MIRY

I can -- but where you goin' to be?

LIJE

I need to go to town. I want to get  
this year's almanac at the drug  
store.

MIRY

You're goin' to make that drive  
just for an almanac? Can it wait to  
next week, I'll need to go in for  
groceries?

LIJE

No it can't. There's something I  
ordered, should be at the station.

MIRY

Well, fine, if it can't wait.

LIJE

It can't.

13 INT. THE KITCHEN - MIDDAY - COVELL BORROWING

Gray midday light from the windows. MIRY is at the sink  
washing eggs. The rocker is absent but its place by the  
window, rag rug, and sewing box are just as before. DELLA  
runs in.

DELLA

Mommy!

MIRY

What is it, dear? Is your father  
coming already?

DELLA

No, there's someone at the back  
door.

There is a tentative rap at the back door. MIRY goes to open  
it, drying her hands on a dishtowel. On the back stoop she  
finds an ill-dressed girl child, carrying a small tin pail.

(CONTINUED)

COVELL CHILD

(in one continuous breath)

Please ma'am ma says can you lend  
her a cup o' m'lasses she wants to  
make 'lasses cookies?

MIRY

Oh, dear, I suppose so. Here, step  
inside while I get it.

MIRY takes the tin pail and pours a generous slug of  
molasses from a jug under the sink. The COVELL CHILD looks  
around curiously, and DELLA watches her. As MIRY hands the  
pail back she can't keep herself from fingering the child's  
threadbare shawl.

MIRY

My, is that all you got to go out  
in, in this weather?

COVELL CHILD

Y's'm. Thank you ma'am.

MIRY

Well, you run fast to stay warm,  
hear?

The COVELL CHILD exits saying

COVELL CHILD (O.S.)

y's'm. Thank you!

MIRY

(to herself)

Send a child a quarter mile in that  
scrap of a coat...

14

INT. THE KITCHEN - AFTERNOON - LIJE'S SURPRISE

MIRY is sitting at the kitchen table sewing, squinting in  
the fading afternoon gloom. DELLA is playing with her  
corn cob doll on the floor. The faint sound of harness and  
horse hoofs are heard and the family sleigh, driven by LIJE,  
passes outside the window.

MIRY

Here's your father back -- why on  
earth's he bringin' the sleigh to  
the front stoop?

She goes through the sitting room to the front hall just as  
LIJE opens the front door.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

Well, Miry, everything all right today?

MIRY

Everything's fine -- why'd you pull up here 'stead of the barn?

LIJE

Why! Because I had somethin' to unload, is why. This is it...

He steps back out onto the front porch and picks up a new rocker, and manouvers it through the door, down the hall,

LIJE

Back up now, watch out, give me a little room...

and into the kitchen, MIRY and DELLA close at his heels. LIJE sets the rocker under the window and steps back to admire it.

LIJE

There! I knew you was wantin' one and there she is. Sears and Roebuck's best. Go ahead, 'Miry, try her out!

MIRY touches the rocker, is impressed despite herself, sits tentatively in it, rocks a bit. LIJE waits expectantly.

MIRY

It feels alright. Feels good.

LIJE

Good! That's alright, then.

MIRY stands and kisses him.

MIRY

Yes. Yes, it is.

15

INT. THE KITCHEN - LATER - NO ALMANACS?

The family are finishing supper at the kitchen table. MIRY can be caught casting a proprietary glance at the new rocker in its place under the window.

MIRY

Oh, I 'most forgot! Where's the new almanac you went for?

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

Oh! Well, that's a story, too. The drugstore's already out of 'em. Can you feature that?

MIRY

How can that be? They been out what, a couple weeks?

LIJE

Well, they're free. Some people took more'n they share, I b'lieve. Dunno what a person wants with more than one almanac, but that's what I heard. Hang 'em in they outhouses, I bet, and not to read.

DELLA gets it; giggles. MIRY looks sharply at LIJE.

MIRY

Mind your talk, 'Lijer. Della, you go play with your doll, now.

LIJE

Well, it gravels me. I heard Micah Covell, that old cuss, took three-four of 'em.

MIRY

(pitching her voice to not be heard by DELLA)

Covell? One of their kids was here today, borry'n a cup of 'lasses, and the poor thing was wearin' shoes you could see through, 'n a rag of a cloak, it was just pitiful.

LIJE

Borrow'n? They borrow a lot.

MIRY

Second, no, third cup of somethin' this month...

LIJE

Borrowed a rake and some seed corn last spring, too, as I recall. Hmmm.

MIRY gets up and starts to pick up the supper dishes.

(CONTINUED)

MIRY  
Well, I'm thankful we don't have to  
live by borry'n.

LIJE  
B'lieve I'll go for a walk.

MIRY  
At this hour?

LIJE makes no reply, but leaves the kitchen by the back door, stopping in the back porch to pull on a hat, coat, and scarf.

16 INT. KITCHEN - EVENING - AN ALMANAC

MIRY is sitting in her rocker, sewing. A kerosene lamp is pulled close for light. DELLA is kneeling on a kitchen chair, tracing boundaries on the world map with a finger and whispering the names of capitol cities. We hear LIJE stamping off snow in the back porch. He opens the back door and stands, toeing off galoshes and stepping backward into the kitchen.

Closing the door, LIJE walks to the table, pulling the paper-bound almanac from the front of his pants. He slaps it on the table.

LIJE  
There we are!

MIRY  
An almanac? Where'd you get an  
almanac at this hour?

LIJE  
Covell's place.

He seats himself at the table, pulls the lamp closer, and opens the almanac.

MIRY  
Well, you have to say a little more  
than that.

LIJE  
(preoccupied)  
Borry'd it.

MIRY  
You borry'd it! You'll have to  
return it.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

(eyes her over the top of his  
glasses with a wolfish grin)  
Cert'n'ly I do. Will, too. Soon's  
that old cuss returns my rake and  
'bout a gallon of 'lasses.

17 INT. KITCHEN - 3PM ON A LATE WINTER DAY - A PARSNIP

SUPER: Monday, March 4th, 1881.

Outside it is gray and chilly, and though much of the snow has gone, the world is clammy and dim. Inside two kerosene lamps light the kitchen. DELLA is doing homework: with great effort and scrooching of her mouth, printing block letters. MIRY chops vegetables for the soup that is simmering in a big kettle at the back of the stove. She has diced an onion and two potatoes and is starting on a carrot.

MIRY

Della, sweet, I forgot the parsnip  
for the soup. Would you go pull  
one? I think there are a few left  
in the garden.

DELLA

(only too glad to leave off  
homework)  
Yes, mommy.

DELLA hops down and heads out the back door.

MIRY

Put on a coat, child!

DELLA ignores her and MIRY shakes her head with a fond smile. She scrapes chopped veg from her cutting board into the soup kettle; gives it a stir with the ladle; gets a 5-pound sack of barley from the bottom drawer of the armoire; scoops out a heaping cup in a tin measuring cup, adds to the soup; stirs.

18 EXT. THE GARDEN - DORMANT TOAD

LIJE is spading the garden patch that fills the space between the back door and barn. For a moment we watch the rhythm of his hands and shovel as he turns the soil; it is clearly a meditative practice for him.

DELLA runs out the back door, looks, spots LIJE and runs to him, taking a straight line over the freshly-spaded earth.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE  
Careful, child! Don't step on my  
seedbed.

DELLA  
Sorry, papa!

She detours onto unspaded ground.

DELLA  
Papa, mamma wants to know if there  
are any parsnips left?

LIJE  
I think there might be couple still  
over... about there. Maybe.

DELLA goes where he indicates and looks among the dried  
vegetation for parsnip tops. Suddenly LIJE spots something  
in the shovelful of earth he has turned over. He drops to  
his knees to poke in the earth with a finger.

LIJE  
What?! ... Well, I'll be...

DELLA has just pulled a big parsnip; carrying it she runs  
back to see what he's found: which turns out to be a large,  
hibernating toad. LIJE gently brushes a bit of soil from the  
animal.

DELLA  
Is it dead?

LIJE  
Don't think so, dawtie. Here...

With both hands he carefully lifts the toad with the clump  
of soil it's partly buried in, and sets it aside.

LIJE  
Just let the sun warm him a bit.  
(to the toad)  
Winter's over, old wart. You can  
wake up now.

DELLA squats down to keep a fascinated eye on the toad.

LIJE  
Weren't you on an errand for your  
mother?

DELLA is reluctant to leave the toad.

LIJE

Go on, dawtie. I'll keep an eye on him.

19 INT. THE KITCHEN - 9PM

DELLA pounds up the back stoop through the porch and into the kitchen carrying a large parsnip.

DELLA

Mommy, we found a toad!

MIRY

Close the door behind you, Della. You've been told.

DELLA

(hastily closing the door)  
Sorry.

MIRY

Wash the dirt off, please.

DELLA takes the parsnip to the sink and reaches up to operate the pump handle to get a stream of water to rinse the parsnip. MIRY watches patiently.

DELLA

Papa had to show me where it was. I don't think there's many left.

MIRY

(starting to dice the parsnip)  
That's how it is, tag-end of winter. But parsnips that have been froze in the ground are the sweetest ones... Did you finish your homework? It'll be supertime soon.

DELLA returns to her printing. LIJE enters through the back porch carrying a milk pail.

LIJE

Dinner 'most ready?

MIRY

'Bout half an hour for the soup to finish.

20

INT. KITCHEN - A BIT LATER - MORE ONION SETS?

LIJE and DELLA are companionably sharing the light on the table, DELLA with her reader and LIJE with his seed catalogs and an order form. MIRY is ready to set the table: just soup bowls and spoons, and milk glasses.

MIRY

Can you make a little room so I can set?

LIJE

(pulling his paperwork aside to make room)

Better put out a few more onion sets 'n we did last year, hadn't we, 'Miry? They didn't seem to carry over, way they ought to.

MIRY

If you set out a million they wouldn't carry over. I wisht you'd put in an extra row of beets, though, for greens.

LIJE

Mph. I'm goin' to put in some of these new early peas. I'd like to have some a LEE-TLE before the Fourth.

MIRY begins to ladle soup from the kettle on the stove into a tureen for serving..

MIRY

What you want is to be sure to get some before anybody else, that's all.

LIJE

I always have.

21

INT. THE KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER - WE REALLY NEED A COW

The family is finishing their supper of soup: LIJE tilts the tureen but it is empty.

LIJE

That was a fine soup, Miry, but it didn't last.

(CONTINUED)

MIRY

There's a bit more in the kittle.

She gets up, takes the tureen to the stove, drains the last bit of soup from the kettle.

LIJE

You see how much milk I brought in?

MIRY

Not very much. Is she drying up?

LIJE

'Fraid so. We really need another cow.

MIRY

Where would we get one?

LIJE

(pulling a folded letter from a hip pocket, hands it to her)  
Well, it 'pears from this note she sent me, that Hanner's willin' to sell a nice little Jersey.

MIRY

How much's she want?

LIJE

Fifteen dollars.

MIRY

That's not too much for a good cow. She don't say how old it is.

LIJE

Well, don't matter. I don't have fifteen dollars.

MIRY

You got some extra hay, would that sell?

LIJE

Wouldn't get but five, six for it, this time of year.

MIRY

We could maybe spare one of the hogs...

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

We need the meat. Anyway, Hanner  
and Sophrony have hogs.

MIRY

(struck with an idea)

I'll tell you: I've got something  
Hanner wants and it's worth fifteen  
dollars if it's worth a cent.

She bustles out of the room and can be heard running up the  
stairs to the second-floor bedroom.

LIJE

You do? What?

He shrugs and returns to filling out his seed order. MIRY  
returns with a cloth-wrapped bundle which she unwraps,  
carefully laying out a hand-made coverlet over the rocker.

MIRY

See that name? That's my  
great-grandma.

LIJE

(thoughtfully, fingering the  
edge with the date)

My! Seventeen ninety-six? 'Most a  
century old, Della.

MIRY

Hanner saw this one time and she  
was GREEN. Said she'd give anything  
in the world for one like it. But  
the' ain't another like it, nor  
never will be.

LIJE

But... You don't want to let this  
go -- do you?

MIRY

(briskly but with a catch)

We need a cow, don't we? If she's  
any good, the butter'll help. Just  
you make sure she's a good one,  
hear?

LIJE

Oh, I will. I will.

22

EXT. THE YARD OUTSIDE AUNT HANNER'S HOUSE - LATE MORNING

It is late winter; there is still dirty windrows of snow under the eaves of buildings but the ground is mostly clear. The Thompsons have come to the home of AUNT HANNER and AUNT SOPHRONY by carriage. The family horse is already hitched and LIJE is tying a young Jersey cow to the back of the carriage in preparation for the ride home. MIRY and DELLA are on the porch, saying goodbye to AUNT HANNER. AUNT HANNER is digging for something in her reticule.

AUNT HANNER

Miry, I can't say enough about that coverlet. It is just beautiful.

MIRY

Well, it was in my family a good long time but I know you'll take care of it.

AUNT HANNER

Oh, I will! But tell the truth...

She is interrupted by AUNT SOPHRONY pushing through the front door from inside the house, carrying a graniteware fry pot.

AUNT SOPHRONY

Oh good, you haven't gone! 'Miry, I want you to have this. I know you do a lot of fryin', and this new granite stuff is so nice.

MIRY

Oh, I couldn't take...

AUNT SOPHRONY

(pushing the pot into her hands)

Oh, yes you can! I've got another. You try it, anyway, if it don't do you can send it back some day.

(bustling down off the porch)

'Lijer, you takin' good care of our little jersey, now?

She joins LIJE at the sleigh. Meanwhile on the porch,

AUNT HANNER

Well! She was thinking the same's me: that coverlet is worth a lot more than that little cow. So here:

(CONTINUED)

She has brought a coin out: a \$5 half-eagle, handing it to MIRY.

MIRY

Oh, no, Hannah, this is too much...

AUNT HANNER pushes into her palm and folds her fingers over it.

AUNT HANNER

You take it. I just wouldn't feel right without you havin' a little more.

MIRY

(gesturing with the pot)

But...

AUNT HANNER

Oh, sure, that too. Not too much. So! Time to be going then, eh, 'Lijer?

LIJE

(climbing into pung)

B'lieve it is. Come on, Della, hop in.

DELLA and then MIRY climb aboard. MIRY tucks the blanket over their laps as LIJE slaps the reins and the horse sets off. AUNT HANNER and AUNT SOPHRONY watch them go.

AUNT HANNER

That was thoughtful, the pot.

AUNT SOPHRONY

Well, I thought... did you give her somethin' extra as well?

AUNT HANNER

A five dollar piece.

AUNT SOPHRONY

Hah! Well, not too much, neither.

AUNT HANNER

I'm goin' to have another look at it.

They turn to enter the house.

23 EXT. MIDMORNING IN SPRING, THE GARDEN PATCH

SUPER: Wednesday, May 8th, 1881

Spring is coming on; although the trees aren't fully leaved there are hints of green everywhere and LIJE's garden is full of rows of green shoots. There is brilliant sun and brisk breeze. MIRY and DELLA are finishing up hanging laundry on the line back of the house: MIRY shakes out each garment with a snap; DELLA hands her clothespins from a bag.

LIJE is inspecting his plantings. Suddenly he kneels down and peers, parting some tender leaves.

LIJE

Well, hello you old wart!

Across the yard, DELLA notices.

DELLA

Papa, what have you found?

LIJE

You best come see.

DELLA runs over and kneels beside him. We look up at them from a toad's-eye POV.

DELLA

It's the toad!

LIJE

See, he weren't dead. No,  
 (he restrains DELLA from  
 reaching to pick the animal  
 up)  
 leave him be. Old wart's fine  
 there. He's on the job, watching  
 for bugs.

He sits back on his heels, puts a arm around DELLA.

LIJE

There's something else remarkable.

DELLA

What?

LIJE

These here: radishes, big as your  
 little thumb already. And here,  
 green onions, near enough ready to  
 eat.

(CONTINUED)

(raising voice)  
'Miry! We can have a salad today!

MIRY  
Good, pick some.

LIJE  
(to DELLA)  
Been what, five-six months since  
you had somethin' green for dinner?

He starts to pull radishes, stops to brush one clean on his pants and eat it.

LIJE  
Tastes like spring.

24 INT. KITCHEN - MAKING FRIED CAKES

MIRY comes in from hanging the laundry and checks the new granite fryer, which is on the hottest part of the stove. (The old cast-iron frying kettle is visible on a shelf.) She pinches a wad of bread off a loaf and tosses it in the oil: it quickly turns brown.

In a short collage we watch her make the batter for fried cakes (see recipe).

Humming to herself, with practiced skill she pinches off lumps of dough "the size of two walnuts", rolls them in her palms, forms them into rings, and slips them into the hot oil. Once 3 or 4 are in the oil, each time she adds one, she takes her slotted spoon, flips one cake over, and takes one cake out, setting it on a growing pile on a plate.

LIJE bustles in through the back door, DELLA close behind, with double handful of radishes and green onions which he lays on the drainboard.

LIJE  
Ah, fried cakes! My favorite  
dinner.

MIRY  
They'll be ready by the time you  
are. Della, wash you hands, then  
you can set out plates.

LIJE reaches out to filch a cake from the pile, and MIRY jokingly goes to fend him off with her long-handled spoon, but he freezes:

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

What in tunket's THAT?

MIRY

What? Oh, this is the new granite fryer that Sophrony gave me.

LIJE

Well... But you can't make fried cakes in THAT!

MIRY

Why not? Lard's lard, and...

LIJE

You ALWAYS make fried cakes in the iron kittle. These things...

(he takes a bite of the cake  
he had taken, spits it out)

They ain't fit to eat!

MIRY

They're exactly like I been making three times a week long as we been married.

LIJE

They ain't the same. They can't be, out of that flimsy tin thing. Where IS the kittle? There!

He spots the iron kettle on a shelf and grabs it down.

LIJE

That's what makes the fried cakes I like.

MIRY

'Lijer Thompson! You fry cakes in lard, and it don't make any difference what the lard's IN, so long's it's hot enough.

LIJE

You needn't tell me about fried cakes! You only have to LOOK at these.

He takes another cake and waves it, takes a bite,

LIJE

It tastes of something. Something, something not right. Here, you taste it.

(CONTINUED)

MIRY takes a cake, takes a bite, and LIJE takes another.

MIRY  
Tastes just right to me.

LIJE  
I never expected in my time to have  
to eat such cakes. Might as well  
throw 'em to the hogs.

MIRY  
Well, looks like there won't be so  
many left to throw.

LIJE  
I know what fried cakes are, and I  
know they need to be made in THIS.  
HERE. KITTLE!

He puts the heavy iron kettle down on the stove with unnecessary force but it teeters and falls off the stove, banging on the floor. One of the ears that supports the handle bail breaks off.

LIJE  
Oh, NOW what?

He kneels down to pick up the damaged kettle: it dangles by one ear from the handle bail.

MIRY  
Well, that's that.

LIJE  
That is not "that." I will get you  
another kittle as good. And we will  
use it.

MIRY  
All right, you will. Let's eat  
dinner now, shall we.

She moves the plate of fried cakes to the middle of the dining table.

LIJE  
I'll just have bread and butter, if  
you don't mind.

25

EXT. THE YARD THAT AFTERNOON - OFF TO AN AUCTION SALE

DELLA is hunkered down in the garden. From a toad's-eye view under strawberry leaves we watch her watching Old Wart. Behind her, LIJE leads the horse and carriage out of the barn. DELLA hears this, turns, runs to him.

DELLA

Papa, where you going? Can I go?

LIJE

There's a moving sale on over toward town and I'm going to look for a kittle.

DELLA

Can I go with you? Please?

LIJE

Hmph. Ask your mother. If she say so...

DELLA tears off to the back door and through it.

26

INT. THE KITCHEN

MIRY is churning. DELLA zooms in the back door.

DELLA

Mamma, Papa's going to a sale and can I go with him?

MIRY

Oh, it's a hot day and, tsk, you look like a ragamuffin in that dress...

DELLA

(pouts)

awwww...

MIRY

All right, run quick and change into your pink dress.

(raising her voice as DELLA disappears through the sitting room door)

And put on a sunbonnet!

27

## EXT. THE COUNTY ROAD

LIJE and DELLA are on the front seat of the Democrat wagon, rolling at an easy pace down a shady lane. LIJE has the wagon configured for cargo, rear seat removed. The broken iron kettle is in the back, nestled in feed sacks. The road surface is dry, sandy dirt; a little dust rises from the wheels and the horse's hooves.

Ahead on the road, walking the same direction, is MICAH COVELL. LIJE brings the wagon to a stop beside him.

LIJE

Afternoon, neighbor. Where you headed?

MICAH

Afternoon, 'Lijer. I'm goin' to this moving sale they're havin'. You?

LIJE

Same place! Well, you might as well ride along, hadn't you? Della, you get in the back, let Mister Covell sit up here.

MICAH

Oh, that's all right, Miss Della, you stay put, I'll just set back here.

He jumps into the cargo space in the back and makes himself comfortable using the feed sacks.

LIJE

Suit yourself.  
(he starts the horse)  
You looking to buy anything in particular?

MICAH

Mebbe a pitchfork. Broke mine. The wife said, look for some dishes. What's this old broke kittle back here for?

LIJE

That's what I'm after. That was a great kittle, my wife made fried cakes in that for years. They just don't taste right to me from anything else.

(CONTINUED)

MICAH

Hunh. I mighta seen one of those.  
I'll keep my eye out.

LIJE

I'm set on findin' one.

The wagon rolls on down the lane.

28

EXT. ANOTHER FARMHOUSE WHERE A SALE IS IN PROGRESS

The wagon driven by LIJE with DELLA and MICAH pulls up in the road outside the yard where the sale is in progress. A couple of other wagons are there too, the horses tethered to the fence rail. MICAH hops down spryly and starts off, saying

MICAH

Thanks for the ride, 'Lijer, much appreciated. Don't wait for me, I'll just take a quick look and hike home along the back field way.

LIJE

That's fine, then. Here you go, dawtie...

He helps DELLA down, reaches in back and tucks the kettle under his arm, and together they walk in through a gate to where a family's goods are laid out along the porch and around the barn. One or two people are looking at the goods on offer. A WIDOW is sitting in a rocker in the shade of the front porch, fanning herself. LIJE makes his way toward her; in the background we might notice MICAH casting a sharp eye at the goods in view then going around the back of the house.

LIJE

Afternoon, ma'am. How are you this fine day?

WIDOW

As well as can be expected, I guess. 's been a lot to deal with lately.

LIJE

I understand you lost your husband...

(CONTINUED)

WIDOW

...yes...

LIJE

...but I didn't hear how it all came about.

WIDOW

Well, it seems to have been his heart, though he'd never been sick a day, he was drivin' the mower and just keeled over, the field half-mowed, and when he didn't come up to the house for dinner, I called and...

She rattles on with a well-practiced story and LIJE listens respectfully, nodding and saying uh-huh at appropriate points. With DELLA we spend a moment checking the goods spread out for viewing, including farm implements, a bed-frame, tools, harness, and smaller items.

WIDOW

...so the upshot was, I am selling ever'thing we had, even the kitchen, to buy a ticket back east to live with my sister.

LIJE

(jumping in quickly)

Now there, what I was wondering was, would you have had an iron kittle like this one?

WIDOW

Oh, yes, I think I did have an old kittle like that. I'm not even sure we put it out for sale, but you go 'round back, my niece's in the kitchen, bless her, and she'd know.

LIJE

I'll just do that, thank you. I wish you well, now.

WIDOW

Why thank you, sir...

LIJE

(ignoring her)

C'mon, dawtie, around back.

(CONTINUED)

They go around back of the house; LIJE goes up the back stoop and raps on the open door. The NIECE looks out impatiently. She's dressed for heavy housecleaning with a scarf around her head and a wet scrub-brush in her hand.

LIJE

'Scuse me, ma'am but the lady up front, your aunt?

(NIECE nods impatiently)

Said you would know if there's a kittle similar to this one that I could buy.

NIECE

Well, if that don't beat all.

LIJE

Sorry, I'm just looking to find...

NIECE

(interrupting)

No, there was one. But I just sold it not five minutes ago! Can't think why anyone wants an old iron kittle like that.

LIJE

That is... peculiar.

NIECE

I only took two bits for it. Looks like I should have asked for more. Anyway, it's gone. Was there anything else you wanted? I got to finish scrubbin' this kitchen.

LIJE

No. Thank you, nothing else. Good day. C'mon, dawtie.

LIJE and DELLA walk back toward their wagon, LIJE looking thunderous.

29

EXT. THE COUNTY ROAD, NEAR COVELL'S

LIJE and DELLA ride along toward home through the light of a late summer afternoon. As they approach the side lane that leads off to the Covell house, a small ill-dressed child who has been sitting on the fence, leaps down and runs very fast down the lane toward the house which is just visible through the trees.

(CONTINUED)

As the wagon draws level with the lane, MICAH COVELL comes walking up toward the road, carrying an iron kettle. He waves, shouting

MICAH  
'Lijer! 'Lijer Thompson, hold up!

LIJE brings the wagon to a halt just past the lane and MICAH catches up to it.

MICAH  
Phew! Hot. Afternoon, 'Lijer, miss Della.

LIJE  
Afternoon, Micah. See you got home all right.

MICAH  
Eh? Oh, yeah. It's an easy walk over the fields. I was wonderin', did you find that kittle you was lookin' for?

LIJE  
Why no, Micah, I did not. I see you have one, though.

MICAH  
Well, I was thinkin' I did, and when I got home I rooted around in the shed and found this one. It's pretty near what you was lookin' for, ain't it?

He hands the kettle to LIJE who turns it in his hands.

LIJE  
Yep. That's very like my old one.

MICAH  
Thought it was. I could let you have that.

LIJE  
Hmph. How much would you want for it?

MICAH  
My wife made me some great fried cakes outa that kittle. She was fond of it.

LIJE raises an eyebrow.

MICAH

Well... mebbe four dollars? It's in fine shape, hardly rusted at all.

LIJE

That's a lot for an old kittle. One of them new granite ones is only two, two-fifty.

MICAH

Yeah, but they don't make these any more, do they? Can't get a fryin' kittle like this any more. Maybe three dollars?

LIJE

How about two?

MICAH

Couldn't take less than three. Got to make up for those good fried cakes I won't have.

LIJE digs deep into a pocket, pulls out his coin purse, and slowly counts out the contents: it comes to...

LIJE

...two twenty-five, two fifty, oh, there's a nickel: two-fifty-five. What I got on me. Take it or leave it.

MICAH

Oh, well... I suppose.

LIJE hands him the coins, drops the coin purse in the kettle and hands the kettle to DELLA.

LIJE

Hang on to that kettle, dawtie, it's valuable. Micah, be seeing you.

MICAH

Afternoon, 'Lijer. My best to your wife, now.

LIJE only grunts and clucks to the horse, which starts off.

30 EXT. FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD, ALMOST TO HOME

DELLA  
Papa, you know what I think?

LIJE  
What, child?

DELLA  
I think Mister Covell was who  
bought that kittle before we could.

LIJE  
Do you?

DELLA  
mm-hmm.

LIJE  
You know what I think?

DELLA  
What, papa?

LIJE  
I think we don't need to talk about  
this with your mother. We went out  
for a kittle. A kittle we come home  
with. End of story. All right?

DELLA  
All right.

LIJE  
All right.

The wagon turns into the farmyard.

31 INT. THE KITCHEN - 6AM ON A SUMMER MORNING - LIJE WON'T GO

SUPER: Saturday, July 13th, 1881.

It is high summer "between haying and harvesting." Morning  
light pours through the kitchen windows. LIJE, MIRY and  
DELLA are finishing breakfast. DELLA is fidgeting, half out  
of her chair. LIJE has a couple-days stubble.

MIRY  
Della, I told you, we won't leave  
afore ten.  
(to LIJE)  
She's just over the moon about this  
church picnic.

(CONTINUED)

(fingering his sleeve)  
Is this the shirt you're going to wear? It's not very clean, and you should put on a collar, too.

LIJE  
I ain't goin'.

MIRY  
Oh, I hoped you would.

LIJE  
I told you I won't go, and I won't! You can take the mare and go if you're set on it. But you'll get bit with mosquitoes, and prob'ly sit down in poison ivy, and Stib Obart says Collins's grove is alive with moccasins.

MIRY  
Anything more? You don't suppose the mare'll run away with us, do you, and spill the dinner?

LIJE  
Huh!

LIJE shoves back his chair and starts for the back door, picking his hat off a hook.

MIRY  
I'll leave some dinner for you, but I wish you'd go along and have some ice cream and cake --

The screen door slams and we can hear LIJE's boots stamping away on the gravel path.

32 INT KITCHEN - LATER ON A SUMMER MORNING - DELLA'S PIECE

MIRY is tidying away the breakfast dishes. Two picnic baskets are on the table. DELLA is examining the world map.

MIRY  
Now, can you speak your piece one more time for me?

DELLA  
It's silly.

(CONTINUED)

MIRY

It's charming and suits your age.  
Now speak it for me, just to show.

From the kitchen shelf (above where the almanac hangs) MIRY picks up a copy of "Kavanaugh's Recitations" and opens it to a dog-eared page. She looks expectantly at DELLA, who sighs and assumes a formal elocution delivery stance:

DELLA

I am so small, I am afraid  
Because my voice is weak,  
That half the people in the house  
Can scarcely hear me speak.  
They say I...

MIRY

(interrupting)  
But if I do...

DELLA

Oh, yes. But if I do my very best,  
I can't do any more;  
And please remember... remember...

MIRY

...that a speech...

DELLA

That a speech  
I never made before.  
They say I can't expect to gain  
Much fame unless I try,  
But I think that I have said  
enough,  
So bid you all -- good-bye.

LIJE looks in through the back door.

LIJE

What time you goin' to get off?

MIRY

'Nother hour, I imagine. I got a  
bit of cooking to finish yet, and  
to change my dress.

LIJE harumphs and disappears, letting the screen door slap.

MIRY

He wants to go worse'n a dog, but  
he won't give in. There never was  
such a stubborn man!

33 INT. THE KITCHEN - LATER - STILL WON'T GO

DELLA is packing dishes into a picnic basket. MIRY removes a baking sheet of biscuits from the oven and slides them onto a rack to cool. She checks frying chicken parts and turns a few with a fork.

LIJE looks in through the back door.

LIJE  
Ain't you 'most ready, yet?

MIRY  
Almost -- I need to turn this  
chicken into a dish and pack the  
biscuits. 'Nother little while.

LIJE departs, letting the screen door slam.

MIRY calls after him,

MIRY  
'Lijer!

He pauses on the porch.

LIJE (O.S.)  
Well?

MIRY  
I'm goin' to leave your supper  
under a pan on the table. Fried  
chicken and some beans. But I hate  
to think of you eatin' alone...

LIJE (O.S.)  
Huh.

His steps fade away. MIRY shakes her head.

34 EXT. THE BACK STOOP - GETTING AWAY

LIJE comes out the back door carrying two baskets that are neatly covered with towels. MIRY and DELLA follow.

LIJE  
I'll bring up the buggy now.

MIRY  
Tuck those in careful. The one's  
just tablecloth and dishes, the  
other one's the victuals.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

Hmmp.

LIJE heads off to the barn; MIRY and DELLA wait. MIRY checks DELLA's attire, straightens her bonnet, kisses her. LIJE leads the horse with the buggy beside the stoop. He hands MIRY up to the seat, then lifts DELLA up beside her.

MIRY

You put both those baskets in?

LIJE

You got any bakin' sody in, case you get stung?

MIRY

Oh, tush. 'Lijer, one last time, you better come 'long. You got nothin' to hender.

LIJE

Nothin' to hender! I suppose I ain't got to -- to cut around the wheat field, to...

MIRY

You ain't got a thing to do today you couldn't do tomorrow. But if you won't go, you won't. So we best start, then.

[Q: did husbands and wives kiss in public, in 1881? A modern couple might exchange a goodby peck here, but I think that wouldn't be done then.] MIRY twitches the reins and the buggy moves off out of the yard and into the road. MIRY looks straight ahead, concentrating on her driving, but DELLA looks back and waves to her father, who finally deigns to give a stiff little wave.

35

EXT. COLLINS' GROVE - THE PICNIC STARTS

A clearing in a grove. Buggies are drawn up on the periphery and horses are tied in the shade. Grown-ups talking around the table and under the trees; children in best clothes play on swings and run about. The PREACHER and one SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER are conferring at the foot of the platform.

MIRY and DELLA drive up in their wagon. Several of the older boys are waiting at the grove entrance to do livery duties. One meets them, leads the horse by the bridle to a makeshift horse-block made from a stump.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNIE BRENT

Howdy, Miz Thompson. I've got your horse, you just go right on there. The program's 'bout to start.

MIRY climbs down and helps DELLA down.

MIRY

Thank you, Johnnie. Can you fetch our baskets in the back, up to the table?

JOHNNIE BRENT

Yes'm, sure will.

MIRY and DELLA hustle across the clearing; DELLA's head swivels to take in the long table piled high with baskets and covered dishes. As they near the platform, the SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER spots them and hurries over.

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER

Miz Thompson, how are you? Della, dear, you have a piece to say, don't you? So you need to sit right over here.

She firmly leads a nervous DELLA away from MIRY and to the bench where other children who are to say 'pieces' are lined up. MIRY looks for a seat and another housewife invites her to sit on a blanket in the front row.

The PREACHER takes the platform,

PREACHER

Shall we gather 'round, folks?  
We'll have just a short prayer and then we will have the pleasure of hearing elocution pieces by these fine young people.

As the PREACHER, in the background, begins a prayer, we watch JOHNNIE BRENT hustling from the buggy-parking area carrying one basket. He sets it on the table and hastens through the loose crowd around the platform as the PREACHER finishes:

PREACHER

...and bless our president Garfield and watch over all who serve our nation on land and sea, and may our recreation and fellowship today make us fit for your service. Amen.  
(looks around beaming as crowd murmurs 'amen')

(CONTINUED)

And now, I believe the choir has a number for us?

The choir, or part of it, half a dozen in all, step forward and begin a spirited, amateurish rendition of "Shall We Gather at the River." JOHNNIE BRENT hunkers down next to MIRY for a sotto-voce conversation,

JOHNNIE BRENT

Miz Thompson, I put your basket on the table, 'bout the middle there.

MIRY

Thank you, Johnnie... wait, you got two baskets, right?

JOHNNIE BRENT

No'm, the' was just the one.

MIRY

But I put TWO out...

JOHNNIE BRENT

No'm, I'm sure the's just the one an' I put 'er on the table. 'Scuse me, I gotta recite next.

JOHNNIE, trying to be inconspicuous, hastens to the bench of kids waiting to recite. MIRY is puzzled and perturbed and, as the choir is winding up, leans to her neighbor and says

MIRY

I dunno, I'm sure there was two baskets...

While on the platform,

PREACHER

Now, I b'lieve we are to hear from Johnnie Brent, about a certain wonderful machine, right, Johnnie?

JOHNNIE pops up from the bench and makes his way to the front of the stage and launches into "Darius Green and his Flying Machine" using large, self-conscious "elecutionary" gestures:

JOHNNIE BRENT

If ever you knew a Yankee lad /  
Wise or otherwise, good or bad, /  
Who seeing the birds fly, wouldn't  
jump / With flapping arms from  
stake or stump, / Or spreading the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNIE BRENT (cont'd)  
 tail of his coat for a sail, / take  
 a soaring leap from post or rail, /  
 and wonder why he couldn't fly /  
 and flap and flutter and wish and  
 try.

Meanwhile, MIRY, with many silent "excuse me" gestures gets up from the blanket and makes her way to the long picnic table; finds her one basket and peeks under the cover to find exactly what she knows is there: tablecloth and utensils only. Looking back at the platform, she can see JOHNNIE is only started on the long poem. We see her walk rapidly into the shade where the buggies are parked; peer into the back of her own; and visibly irked, make her way back to the table, where with her hand on the one basket she says to herself,

MIRY  
 He never put it in. He just set it  
 down somewhere and forgot it. All  
 our dinner!

She makes her way apologetically through the crowd toward the platform where JOHNNIE is getting good laughs and finishing confidently with big gestures.

JOHNNIE BRENT  
 Now he raises his wings, like a  
 monstrous bat, / Peeps over his  
 shoulder, this way and that, /  
 looking to see if there's anybody  
 passing by. / But there's none but  
 a calf and a goslin' nigh. / They  
 turn up at him a wondering eye to  
 see, / The dragon! He's going to  
 fly! / What a jump! Flop, flop, and  
 plump!! / To the ground, fluttering  
 and floundering, all in a lump / So  
 fell Darius, upon his crown / In  
 the midst of the barnyard he came  
 down, / Broken braces and broken  
 wings, / shooting stars and various  
 things.

MIRY is back in her place, and she exchanges an encouraging look with DELLA on her bench.

JOHNNIE BRENT  
 He hears the voice of his brother  
 crying, / "Say, Darius, how do you  
 like flying?" / Slowly, ruefully,  
 where he lay, / Darius just turned  
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNIE BRENT (cont'd)  
 a look that way. / As he wiped his  
 sorrowful nose with his cuff, /  
 "Well, I like flyin' well enough,"  
 He said, / "But there ain't such an  
 awful sight of fun in it when ye  
 come to light!"

The audience applauds lustily and JOHNNIE takes a red-faced bow.

PREACHER  
 Wonderful, wonderful. Mind how you  
 come to light! Well, now we have a  
 short piece by our youngest  
 speaker, Miss Della Thompson.

DELLA, who had lost herself in the tale of Darius Green, suddenly realizes it's her turn and is panic-struck. The SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER pulls her by the hand to the center of the platform. MIRY, seeing DELLA's state, comes to the front of the platform, and DELLA fixates on her mother's face.

MIRY  
 I am so small...

DELLA  
 I am so small...  
 (large gulp, gathers herself)  
 I am so small, I am afraid  
 Because my voice is weak,  
 That half the people in the house  
 Can scarcely hear me speak.  
 But if I do my very best,  
 I can't do any more;  
 And please remember... remember...

MIRY  
 ...that a speech...

DELLA  
 That a speech  
 I never made before...  
 (pause, then finishes with a  
 rush)  
 They say I can't expect to gain  
 Much fame unless I try,  
 But I think that I have said  
 enough,  
 Sobidyouallgoodbye!

General applause and "ain't she cute" reactions from the congregation esp. the mothers. DELLA leaps off the platform into MIRY's arms where she is comforted.

36

EXT. COLLINS' GROVE - PROGRAM OVER, FOOD AT LAST

The program over, people disperse to other amusements, like a noisy horseshoe-pit tournament, pushing children on swings, and small conversational groups. At the table, several women, including MIRY, MIZ LURIE LANE, and MIZ BOULDRY lay out dishes, and a cluster of children, including DELLA, hover around and try to see the goodies.

One housewife brings out and places a whole ham, which her husband begins to slice as she explains to her neighbors,

HOUSEWIFE

Well, I boiled it in sparklin' cider along with some raisins, and when it was just tender I covered it in brown sugar and mustard and baked it to set that. It's nothin' much...

Others lay out pans of baked beans with strips of salt pork, plates of hard-boiled eggs, loaves of bread. MIZ LURIE LANE is setting out a platter of chicken.

MIRY

I am so embarrassed! I had two chickens fried up in fresh butter, and a pan of raised biscuits, and -- two pounds of butter! It'll be melted to Kingdom Come by now.

MIZ LURIE LANE

Oh, don't you think of it. You just help lay the table and don't give it a thought.

MIZ BOULDRY is setting out a layer cake, one of several being set down the middle of the table. MIRY sets to helping arrange dishes.

MIRY

Well, it's shamin'. Look at those fine cakes. And I had a panful of sour-cream cookies, fit to melt in your mouth if I do say it.

MIZ BOULDRY

I guess we all know about your sour-cream cookies, Miz' Thompson. I wisht you'd give me the rule for 'em.

(CONTINUED)

MIRY

Oh, they're easy to make, I will.  
But who you s'pose made these  
friedcakes?

MIZ BOULDRY

Why, le's see -- I THINK that's  
Miz' Whittaker's crock. She makes  
about the best friedcakes I ever  
see.

MIRY uncovers a tin pan and sniffs.

MIRY

Oh dear. You'd know who brought  
this, all right.

MIZ BOULDRY looks at a sad little tart.

MIZ BOULDRY

(keeping her voice down)  
Dried apple pie!? This time of  
year! I'd think even that Covell  
woman'd know better.

MIRY

And that crust is so greasy it's  
like to slide off the table. I'll  
just tuck it in here...

The PREACHER comes up to ask,

PREACHER

Ladies, thank you for your efforts,  
and if you think we're about ready,  
I'll just call the folks together.

MIZ BOULDRY

We're all ready, Pastor.

PREACHER

(at the top of his lungs)  
HELLOOO EVERYONE! GATHER ROUND NOW!  
(to the boys, who arrive  
first)  
You boys go fetch that lemonade can  
and set it up here.

Several teenage boys including JOHNNIE BRENT lug a 10-gallon  
milk can of lemonade from the shade to the head of the table  
and JOHNNIE dispenses lemonade with a dipper.

(CONTINUED)

PREACHER

May the Lord make us grateful for all this splendid food made with such love and hard work, and bless it to our use, amen.

MIZ LURY LANE

Miry, you and Della sit down here and eat, the's plenty for all.

MIRY

Oh, I hardly feel like we have the right.

MIZ LURY LANE

Now, you always bring more'n your share. Won't hurt for once to eat off'n others.

The sound of a heavy wagon driven at breakneck pace has been growing through this dialog. As MIRY, reluctantly, and DELLA, ravenously are seating themselves, heads begin to turn to see the vehicle approaching up the rutted road.

It's LIJE, driving a rattling hay-wagon drawn by two draft horses; he stands legs apart like a Roman charioteer with straw hat on the back of his head. MIRY rises in shock and amazement and stares at him.

LIJE brings the wagon around with as much of a flourish as a hay-wagon can manage, leaps down, lifts the missing basket from the back and walks it to the table.

LIJE

Here, you went off and left this. I thought I better bring it up, even if I did have to spoil a day's work.

MIRY says nothing but takes the basket and sets out the plates of fried chicken, biscuits, and cookies. There's little room on the table now, but other wives are quick to help make room.

MERT OWEN

'Lijer, you might's well stay and have a bite now you're here.

LIJE glances at MIRY, who avoids his eyes and says nothing.

MIZ BOULDRY

Mister Thompson, you just set down there in Miry's place and we'll fix a place for her down here.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE  
 (after another look at MIRY  
 that gets no response)  
 Well, I s'pose I might's well, now  
 I have to spoil the day anyhow.

With which he sits down and tucks in as conversation grows around them.

37 EXT. THE BACK STOOP - COMING HOME

The hay-wagon driven by LIJE, with DELLA standing beside him holding on to his belt, turns into the yard followed by MIRY driving the wagon.

LIJE lets DELLA get down, then drives the wagon around behind the barn. MIRY pulls the buggy up to the back door and climbs down. She reaches into the back and takes out two baskets with used dishes and clothes, and stalks into the house, letting the screen door slam behind her.

38 INT. THE KITCHEN - CAUGHT

MIRY is drying the last of the dishes. LIJE comes through the back door. DELLA is with her doll at the kitchen table.

LIJE  
 There, all the horses'r put up.  
 Ought never to have lost this day,  
 but

He is interrupted by MIRY setting a plate down on the drainboard with a whack.

MIRY  
 (thin-lipped and measured)  
 I did notice you took time to shave  
 and put on a clean shirt!

LIJE  
 Well... no harm in a picnic. I best  
 get the milkin' done.

MIRY  
 Yes, you best.

LIJE exits with a guilty grin.

39 EXT. THE BACK YARD - THE COUNTY FAIR: PACKING THE WAGON

SUPER: Saturday, August 24th, 1881.

The Democrat wagon is at the back stoop, the rear seat removed to make cargo space. LIJE is carefully stowing an immense pumpkin in the back. DELLA is hanging over the back of the seat watching. MIRY comes out the back door with a bundle wrapped in a sheet.

LIJE

What'y'got there?

MIRY

My Log Cabin quilt. I worked on it all year and it's done and I'm enterin' it. You come see it in the Home Arts hall.

LIJE

What in time I want to go and see it hung up THERE for? Ain't I seen it around for a year? Anyway, what's a fancy quilt do that the old wool comf'table on my bed's not doing?

MIRY

My grandmother's coverlet was useful enough, I recall.

LIJE

Mph... All right, put it up there, behind the punkin.

MIRY stows her bundle carefully next to a big picnic basket.

40 EXT. THE COUNTY FAIR, OPEN AREA BETWEEN HOME ARTS AND AGRICULTURE

The bustle of people and sounds of a county fair are all around. MIRY and DELLA, coming out of the Home Arts hall, meet LIJE coming the other way.

LIJE

There you are! C'mon, you have to see this punkin of Frank's.

MIRY

Well, I want to see all the crops. I imagine yours done alright?

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

Not too bad, if I do say. Well,  
come on and you'll see!

MIRY

Just take my arm like a gentleman  
and we'll get there soon enough.

LIJE harumphs but takes her arm, and DELLA's hand, and the  
three thread the crowds toward the Agriculture Hall.

MIRY

You look into Home Arts?

LIJE

Had to, t' get to the machinery  
display.

(pause - MIRY looks expectant)

Saw you got a ribbon on your quilt.

MIRY

Just a red one. You saw Catherine's  
quilt got the blue AGAIN? She puts  
it in every year. She says it has  
750 pieces to it, and I don't doubt  
it.

LIJE

Dangdest piece of tomfoolery I ever  
see. Cuttin' up perfectly good  
cloth and sewin' it back together  
again. Might better go out and pick  
potato bugs.

41 INT. THE AGRICULTURE HALL

They three enter the hall where prime specimens of every  
type of crop are arrayed on tables and along the walls.  
First in the door is the corn display, LIJE's sheaf of  
stalks in the center, taller, with a blue ribbon. They pause  
to admire, LIJE with satisfaction and MIRY with dutiful  
interest.

LIJE

Some o' those others ain't bad  
either.

MIRY

Your corn's the best, no question.

(CONTINUED)

They walk a bit further to the area where pumpkins are laid out on a neat straw bed. LIJE's, which we might recognize from seeing it loaded on the wagon this morning, has a red ribbon. But LIJE is pointing to a much smaller one which nonetheless has a white ribbon.

LIJE

There, that's Frank's. 'Bout's big as a wash basin.

MIRY leans in to look at the entry card.

MIRY

'Lije, that's one these new pie punkins Frank's got. See,  
(points to the card)  
"pie punkin," and those never grow big.

LIJE

PIE punkin! As if anybody had to raise a special kind of punkin for pie! You been makin' punkin pie out of ordinary punkins since we got married, ain't you?

MIRY

That's no sign they couldn't be bettered. I've heard these are finer-grained and sweeter.

LIJE

Hmph. Tomfoolery, I say.

MIRY

Say it quiet, then, because here comes Frank right now.

Uncle FRANK and Aunt CATHERINE arrive accompanied by their daughters AMELIA and SARYETTE. AMELIA and DELLA immediately pair up and start whispering. They remain together, whispering and giggling, in the following. SARYETTE is 13-ish and trying hard to be a grown-up; unfortunately she is suffering in shoes that are too tight with heels higher than she is used to.

FRANK greets LIJE:

FRANK

'Lijer, you seen this Brahma bull yet? Biggest darn thing I ever see.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

Pish, animal that size ain't no use  
but to look at.

Simultaneously MIRY greets CATHERINE:

MIRY

Catherine, that quilt of yours  
looks just splendid.

CATHERINE

Pshaw, it's just big. But your Log  
Cabin is gorgeous.

LIJE

(to MIRY)

Frank and me are goin' to the  
livestock shed. We'll find you for  
lunch.

MIRY

That's fine.

CATHERINE

Go on, we have things to look at.  
Come along, girls.

The two women with three girls in tow begin walking back  
they way MIRY and LIJE had come, out of Agriculture and  
toward the Home Arts hall.

42

EXT. THE COUNTY FAIR, OPEN AREA BETWEEN HOME ARTS AND  
AGRICULTURE

MIRY notices SARYETTE's limp.

MIRY

Gracious, Saryette, what ails you?  
You walk like you're barefoot on  
stubble.

SARYETTE

(wincing)

I'm fine, Aunt Miry.

CATHERINE

It's her new shoes we bought just  
today. I told her, DON'T keep 'em  
if they hurt, but nothing would do  
but she must wear 'em. Saryette,  
they's a bench over there, go set  
and we'll find you for lunch.

(CONTINUED)

SARYETTE  
I'm FINE, thank you.

The women and girls continue into the Home Arts hall.

43 INT. THE HOME ARTS HALL

We take a slow look around at all the exhibits of sewing and baking and preserves. In one corner on a low stage four older women are working on a quilt in a big quilting frame: we see MIRY and CATHERINE stop to exchange a few words with them. SARYETTE limps behind.

DELLA tugs at MIRY's skirt.

DELLA  
Mommy, I'm hungry.

MIRY  
It'll be lunchtime soon, sweet.  
Look, here comes Uncle Matt and  
Aunt Martha!

Uncle MATT and Aunt MARTHA have entered the hall and join the group; there are general greetings.

MARTHA  
Catherine, 'Miry, so good to see  
you. Your quilts are beeYOOtiful.

MATT  
Think it's about lunchtime, don't  
you? I'm surprised 'Lijer ain't  
growling around for food by now.

MIRY  
I'm sure he's on the way... in  
fact, I think I see him.

LIJE is indeed looking in the doorway of the hall, and seeing the family cluster, he hustles to them.

LIJE  
Well, Martha, Matt, good to see  
you; Miry, don't you think it's  
about time we ate? I'm hungry as a  
polecat.

CATHERINE  
'Lijer, you're right, but where's  
Frank? I thought he was with you?

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

Said he was comin' to find you half an hour ago. Come along and let's eat, it's high noon. Frank'll find us all right.

The group heads for the exit.

44

EXT. NOON, THE PICNIC GROVE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE FAIRGROUND

The three families (LIJE, MIRY, DELLA; FRANK, CATHERINE, AMELIA, SARYETTE; MATT, MARTHA) move to their respective wagons. We follow LIJE and MIRY to their wagon.

MIRY

Just hand out them baskets, will you dear? Careful, that one's heavy.

LIJE leans into the wagon and swings out a picnic basket.

LIJE

(mischievously)

At least you didn't leave the basket of vittles to home this time.

MIRY

(tartly)

No danger, seein's how you come WITH us today.

LIJE chortles as at a good joke.

MIRY

Well, funny man, just bring along them baskets. Della, the picnic cloth is under the seat.

They and the other two parties converge on a spot under the trees. The wives spread out cloths on the grass and begin unpacking food. CATHERINE looks around.

CATHERINE

Amelia, help me get this blanket nice and smooth. And Frank...  
(looks around) where IS Frank?

LIJE

You got something in that basket that smells mighty good, Cathy.(sniffs) Roast pork, is it?

(CONTINUED)

CATHERINE

Your nose don't deceive you, it's pork loin. Frank killed a young hog for the thrashin' crew and I cooked up a roast for us. Saryette, go set under that tree and take those shoes off.

LIJE stands fidgeting while MIRY, CATHERINE and MARTHA unpack and lay out a succession of dishes from their baskets. MARTHA, setting jars of sauce, picallili, and vinegar alongside a big pan of baked beans, says teasingly

MARTHA

Made this chili sauce the way you like it, 'Lije, with lots of onion.

LIJE

Well, we're 'most ready to eat some, too. Shall we set?

MIRY

We're lacking Frank.

LIJE

Well... CRIMUS! We ain't goin' to wait for Frank. I'll go look for him, but when I come back -- we eat! Frank or no Frank!

LIJE strides off briskly toward the midway. Uncle MATT relaxes under a tree; the wives keep unpacking and arranging attractive pans and dishes of food. MIRY places a pan of chicken pie; MARTHA goes to rearrange it,

MARTHA

This chicken pie's hot yet, 'Miry; how'd you manage that?

MIRY

I didn't take it out of the oven till we's all ready to start; then I stowed it on a hot soapstone in the wagon.

Indicate a few minute's passage by quick dissolves of closeups of hands laying out food and cutlery; Della reaching for a pickle and getting her hand lightly slapped; the wives gracefully sitting on the grass and arranging their voluminous skirts.

(CONTINUED)

CATHERINE

(fretfully)

The pork's going to dry out and  
your beautiful chicken pie'll soon  
be cold, 'Mirry. Where in TUNKET can  
those men be?

DELLA and AMELIA look at each other in delighted shock at  
this daring use of bad language by a lady. SARYETTE looks  
bored.

MIRY

(feeling her pie pan)

It's hot yet. Oh! Here they come.

LIJE and FRANK arrive striding quickly. LIJE looks  
mischievous and FRANK looks a bit guilty.

MATT

Find him at the side show with the  
fat girl, 'Lije?

LIJE

I found him admirin' a pony...  
(FRANK starts and looks guilty  
as LIJE lets the pause  
stretch)  
...and if I hadn't'a come along  
he'd be riding the merry-go-round  
right now.

CATHERINE

The merry-go-round? Frank?

AMELIA

Merry-go-round! Merry-go-round! We  
want to ride the...

CATHERINE

You girls hush up, now.

LIJE

All in good time. Let's eat!

LIJE takes charge of serving out the chicken pie, first  
teasingly counting eaters to make sure the portions are  
even. "On each plate he skillfully placed a triangle of  
crust, and on it a slice of withe meat and a drumstick or  
other bit of the dark."

LIJE

(serving the 4th or 5th plate)

This chicken was a wonder! Seems  
like it had 'bout a dozen legs.

(CONTINUED)

(conspiratorially to AMELIA)  
'twas a CHICKAPILLAR!

AMELIA, DELLA dissolve in giggles, and the adults smile.

The camera continues to caress hands, plates, faces and food as the other dishes served out and the party settles in to serious eating under the dappled shade.

45 EXT. 1PM, THE PICNIC GROVE

Eating done, FRANK and MATT have lit up pipes. MIRY, CATHERINE and MARTHA are beginning to collect the plates and put them back in the baskets. LIJE is standing, fidgeting.

LIJE  
Well, what are you folks goin' to  
tend to, now we've et?

MATT  
I thought prob'ly we'd all want to  
go and see the races. Long's  
Frank's scruples'l allow it.

FRANK looks eager but LIJE speaks quickly,

LIJE  
Not Frank and me, you know Frank  
don't approve of gamblin'--

MARTHA  
You wouldn't HAVE to gamble, would  
you, just to see a horse race?

LIJE  
(sage and solemn)  
You wouldn't HAVE to, but you might  
be tempted. I'm thinkin' of that  
wooden horse...

DELLA  
(and AMELIA in chorus)  
The merry-go-round!

46 EXT. 2PM, THE COUNTY FAIR, MERRY-GO-ROUND AND ABOUT

We watch as FRANK, leading AMELIA, and LIJE, with DELLA, buy merry-go-round tickets and shepherd their daughters onto wooden ponies. Sounds: the steam calliope in the ride, "shouts of children as they chased pell-mell across the dusty lot..." [p165] and the distant sounds of farm animals in the livestock building.

47 EXT. 4PM, ON THE ROAD HOME

LIJE and MIRY are on the front seat of the democrat wagon, DELLA between them, dozing off in the crook of MIRY's arm.

MIRY

It took you a long time to find Frank before dinner.

She looks at LIJE, who only smiles.

MIRY

Well, where'd you find him?

LIJE

(chuckling)

Layin' a bet on Life-Saver, Hi Wiggins's hoss.

MIRY

Frank? With all his religious talk and scruples?

LIJE

Yep. I stood right behind him and he never knew. Heard him bet five to one. I believe the horse come in first, as well.

MIRY

Does he get something for that, then?

LIJE

Twenty-five dollars!

MIRY

Twenty-five!?! He must be over the moon.

LIJE

He don't know!

MIRY

How could he not know?

LIJE

I kep' him away from the track all afternoon! Kep' him buyin' treats for the girls, watching the stock judgin' -- 'til he had to leave or miss the milkin'.

(CONTINUED)

MIRY

So he don't know whether he won or  
lost? He must be itching to know!

LIJE

Yep. Serve him right, sanctimonious  
old Amen coot.

The wagon rolls on up the lane.

48 INT. THE KITCHEN - A FALL EVENING - THE SOW GIVES BIRTH

SUPER: Friday, September 6th, 1881

DELLA with great concentration is laying the table for  
supper; MIRY is mashing potatoes. LIJE is heard in the back  
porch, and enters.

LIJE

I put the milk in the cooler.

MIRY

I'll tend to it. Wash up, supper's  
ready.

LIJE

(washing in the sink)  
That fool sow gave birth finally.

DELLA

Oh! Can I go see?

MIRY sets the bowl of mashed potatoes in the center of the  
table.

MIRY

After supper. We're ready to eat  
now.

DELLA

aww...

LIJE takes his place and serves himself a heaping scoop of  
mashed potatoes.

LIJE

She'll be there after supper,  
child. Sit. Let me give you some  
spuds. Pass the butter, 'Miry.

(CONTINUED)

MIRY

You don't NEED no butter for your potatoes, 'Lije. There's a half a cup o' butter in there, and as much cream.

LIJE

Well, what if the' is? I can't SEE it, can I? I want to SEE my butter.

MIRY

There's butter on top, melted right into 'em. You can see that.

LIJE

I can't either. Not if it's melted. Pass the butter.

MIRY

Next time I just won't put any butter in it.

LIJE

What's the matter? We GOT butter, don't we?

49

EXT. THE BACK OF THE BARN - TWILIGHT

LIJE, carrying a lantern, and DELLA are in the shadowy barn, leaning over the rail of the pen where a large sow is suckling a heap of squirming piglets. The apparent light is the one kerosene lantern; long shadows cast by implements and horse tackle swing as it moves.

DELLA

Ooooh... how many are there?

LIJE

Let's count em. Let's see... one two three four five six seven, stop wigglin' you little fools, seven, eight, nine ten eleven, that's twelve over there. Oh, back here in the corner, number thirteen!

DELLA

So many! Can she take care of them all?

LIJE

Well, maybe not. She's only got twelve nipples, you can see this number thirteen is out in the cold.

(CONTINUED)

DELLA  
I want to help it...

She leans over, reaching to pull one of the others away.

LIJE  
's no point, dawtie. The others'l  
push it away as soon as you go. I'm  
afraid it won't make it.

DELLA  
(tearing up)  
Oh, poor little runt...

LIJE looks at her, looks back at the piglets.

LIJE  
Well, shoot. Here.  
(he scoops up the runt)  
Let's take it to the house, see  
what your mother says.

50 INT. THE KITCHEN - IT'S A RUNT

MIRY has just sat down in her sewing rocker. LIJE enters through the back door holding the tiny piglet. DELLA follows, weepy. LIJE lays the runt in MIRY's lap.

LIJE  
Runt. Thought maybe you'd like to  
put him in a box, or something.

MIRY  
(viewing the pathetic animal  
in her lap with distaste)  
Would I like...? Not very much!  
(she notices DELLA's pleading,  
tear-streaked face)  
Oh, well, I suppose... Here! get it  
away from my sewing!

MIRY places the pig back in LIJE's hands and gets up to collect a few clean rags from under the sink, saying

MIRY  
Della, get the jug and pour a  
splash of milk in the little  
saucepan and set it on the stove.

Dissolve to nestling the piglet in a wad of rags on a kitchen chair facing MIRY's rocker.

(CONTINUED)

MIRY

All right, Della, bring over that warm milk. 'Lijer, if you think you've got a likely box, maybe you would fetch it?

LIJE exits. With DELLA we watch carefully as she dips a finger into the milk and brings drop to the piglet's mouth; it suckles. Repeat with another drop.

MIRY

There we go... do you want to try it?

DELLA

May I?

MIRY

You'd better! I don't have time to do this six times a day.

51 INT. THE KITCHEN - EVENING AFTER SUPPER

SUPER: Monday, September 16th, 1881.

LIJE is reading a book at the table by the light of the lamp. MIRY is just finishing cleaning up after supper, drying a dish that she needs to put away. This entails her having to step over DELLA, who is crouched in front of the stove looking at Little Runt, in his box under edge of the stove.

MIRY

Della, please!

DELLA

Sorry momma.  
(she scrooches aside)  
Watch out, Little Runt.

MIRY

Della, I asked you earlier to tend to that animal. Do it now, please.

DELLA

Yes'm. Sorry.

DELLA urges the healthy piglet out of its box by the stove and carries the box out the back door, the piglet follows. We watch her shake out the packed straw and pig-poop on the compost heap at the edge of the garden; we watch her pull handful of clean straw from a pile inside the barn, pack it

(CONTINUED)

into the box, and return to the house, the piglet following her like a dog.

DELLA reenters the kitchen and sets the cleaned box by the stove. MIRY hands her a tin pan.

MIRY

Here's the scraps.

DELLA puts the pan down for the excited, greedy pig.

LIJE

That's right. Fat him up. We can have him for Thanksgiving.

MIRY

'Lijer, when you had roast pig at Frank's place last year, you didn't like it a bit.

LIJE

That was because Frank is tarnation stingy. Fed his pig on sour milk. Made it flabby and tough. Feed this critter up on sweet milk and good corn-meal mush. Get him nice and fat, and when the ole curmudgeon comes here for Thanksgiving we'll show him what a roast pig's like.

Through this speech, MIRY has been scanning her collection of recipe books on a high shelf. She selects two and sits at the table across from LIJE.

MIRY

I believe I'm going to have the Ladies' Aid meet here next Friday. I haven't had 'em this year.

(opens recipe book)

I ought to have 'em at least ONCE before winter.

LIJE

(not looking up)

Have 'em! But don't expect nothin' from ME.

MIRY

If I can expect NOTHIN' from you, I'll be thankful. You generally manage to mess up anything of that sort some way or other.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

I'm goin' t'the barn and stay there.

(beat)

What you goin' to give 'em to eat?

MIRY

I'm not sure. Just dinner -- they all have to get home by chore time. 'Lije, you can't go to the barn and stay all day. You'll have to eat.

LIJE

I'll go to the mill. I'll take me a lunch. I'd'ruther go without any dinner than be mixed up in the mudge you'll be in, gettin' ready, and the bedlam after they're here.

MIRY ignores this and begins musing on what to serve, flipping through the recipe books.

MIRY

I WOULD like to have something a little different...

(pulls a folded newspaper clipping from the book)

Ah! Eggs pickled in beet juice for ont thing. I clipped this one time and it sounds good.

LIJE

BEET juice!? What in tunket you want to spoil good eggs for, picklin' 'em in beet juice?

MIRY

And Dutch cheese and raspberry jam. I read they was good together.

LIJE

Well, what you goin' to give 'em to EAT? Eggs in BEET juice -- huh! And Dutch cheese -- that's a DINNER, is it?

MIRY

(with sudden discovery)

I'm going to have scalloped oysters!

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

(aghast)

Scalloped -- I DOTE on scalloped oysters!

MIRY

Well I know you do, but you aren't goin' to be there. I'll order two quarts.

LIJE

TWO QUARTS! How many women's that for?

MIRY

Eight. I'll have Miz' Lury Lane help me, and she won't mind bringing them out from town, I know.

LIJE

You expect eight women's goin' to eat up two quarts of oysters?

MIRY

Well, I can't tell. If there's any left--

LIJE harumphs and buries himself in his book.

52

EXT. THE BACK YARD - MORNING

It's a bright fall morning and once again MIRY is hanging laundry to dry. LIJE is returning from the barn with full milk pails, and LITTLE RUNT is following closely on his heels.

LIJE

Git out of the WAY, you cuss-fool!

He eases the pig aside with a gentle foot.

LIJE

Watch out, or you get your tarnation nose knocked off.

LIJE enters the back porch with the milk pails. After a minute he emerges with an apple, which he offers to the delighted piglet. Watching the animal eat,

(CONTINUED)

LIJE  
Goin' to look pretty good spread  
out on a dripping pan.

MIRY looks displeased. DELLA looks stricken; she runs to grab the pig and tries to hold him protectively, although Little Runt is no lap-pig and squeals and tries to avoid her embrace.

LIJE  
Miry, how DO you make the stuffing  
for roast pig?

MIRY doesn't respond except to set a clothespin with unnecessary vigor.

LIJE  
Hmm?

MIRY  
(reluctant)  
Oh, 'bout the same as for turkey.  
Little more sage, maybe.

LIJE  
Sage! You got sage, I suppose.

MIRY  
Picked and dried and put away long  
ago.

LIJE  
I suppose you've started to save up  
dried bread for it?

MIRY  
Good gracious! Its a pig, not a...  
not an elephant!

She shakes out a sheet and disappears behind it as she hangs it.

53 INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY BEFORE LADY'S AID

LIJE is sitting in the rocker, reading the paper. MIRY is working on preparations for the Ladies' Aid lunch: at the moment, lifting hard-boiled eggs from a pot with slotted spoon and laying them on a plate to cool. MIZ LURY LANE clumps up the back stoop; MIRY opens the back door and welcomes her into the kitchen. MIZ LURY LANE is carrying shopping bags containing the tinned oysters.

(CONTINUED)

MIRY

Miz' Lane, thank you for coming.  
I've got a fair bit to do.

MIZ LURY LANE

Goodness, Miz' Thompson, I'm happy  
to help. Oh! Hello, Mister  
Thompson. Hope you're doin' well?

LIJE eyes her over the top of the paper and nods,

LIJE

...Miz' Lane.

MIZ LURY LANE

Well, Miz' Thompson, I brung your  
oysters, anyway.

She unloads two tins from her bag onto the table. MIRY turns one to read the label. Behind her, LIJE also eyes the tins over the paper.

MIRY

That's fine, we'll all enjoy these.

MIZ LURY LANE

So, what can I do?

MIRY

Could you mix up a starter for  
salt-risin' bread? I set out  
everything,  
    (indicates a bowl and  
        ingredients on a counter)  
but I've got to make up a beet  
pickle for these eggs. I never did  
one before and I need to go from  
the receipt.

MIZ LURY LANE

Oh, sure.

She pulls a clean apron from her shopping bag. Tying it around herself she sets to work. MIRY opens and drains the juice from two mason jars of canned beets. Meanwhile,

MIZ LURY LANE

You're plannin' what now, the  
oysters, some fresh bread...?

MIRY

The oysters are the main thing, and  
some nice preserves, and these

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIRY (cont'd)  
eggs, and I mean to set some rolls.  
Potato rolls?

MIZ LURY LANE  
Don't know them. Potato?

MIRY  
Mashed potato in the dough, it  
makes 'em light. They're a bit of  
trouble, but they're good.

LIJE  
(rising up from the chair as  
if on springs)  
You're havin' oysters AND salt  
risin' bread AND 'tater rolls?

MIRY  
Certainly. Got to feed them right.

LIJE leaves the kitchen, grabbing his hat from the peg by  
the door.

LIJE  
(muffled, departing)  
Goin' to the barn.

MIZ LURY LANE  
Did I say somethin'?

MIRY  
Don't mind him. He loves oysters  
but he don't want to have to put on  
a clean shirt and make civilized  
conversation to get 'em.

54 EXT. THE BACK YARD, IMMEDIATELY AFTER

LIJE exits from the back door and down the stoop abruptly.  
In his new pen at the corner of the garden, LITTLE RUNT runs  
to the fence and grunts happily. LIJE stops, stares down at  
the happy young pig.

LIJE  
What do you know? YOU get fed no  
matter what.

55 INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY OF LADY'S AID

Every flat space is occupied with preparations. The bread loaves are in the oven; the potato rolls are rising on a baking sheet under a tea towel; several jars of preserved fruit are waiting to be spooned out into pressed-glass dishes that are stacked ready. MIRY is hard at work; DELLA, also wearing an apron, assists.

We watch MIRY's hands as she starts the teacakes: breaking an egg into a teacup, filling it level-full with sugar, turning it out into a bowl and whisking briskly.

MIRY  
(as she works)  
Della, you can grate some nutmeg.

She nods toward the armoire; DELLA fetches the patent nutmeg grater and, at MIRY's nod, operates it over the bowl as MIRY whisks. LIJE comes in through the back door, hangs his hat on the hook, leans over the operation.

LIJE  
What's this?

MIRY  
(busily whisking)  
Tea cakes.

LIJE  
Tea cakes?! You got rolls, bread,  
and tea cakes too?

MIRY  
(cool & brisk)  
That's right. I've got a lot to do  
this morning, so, shoo!

LIJE  
That's fine. I'll just set over  
here and read the paper...

He heads for the rocker but

MIRY  
Please, 'Lijer, read it in the  
parlor. I need the room.

Dissolve to: MIRY spoons dollops of tea-cake dough into a muffin tin. The last dollop in, she turns to the oven and, grabbing oven mitts, pulls out the salt-rising bread loaves in their loaf tins, sets them -- oh dear, there's no place to set the hot tins but the table:

(CONTINUED)

MIRY

Della, would you fold that towel  
and put it on the table?

As DELLA does so,

MIRY

Hurry, please, these are hot and  
the oven's coolin'... thank you,  
dear.

With the hot loaf tins safe on the table she can quickly slide the muffin tin into the oven and close it. Briskly she inverts the loaf tins and sets the two perfect loaves on a wire rack. Turning with that to take it to the back porch to cool, she bumps into LIJE who has come in through the door from the sitting room.

LIJE

You started the oysters yet?

MIRY

No I have not! How can I if you're  
interrupting all the time? Haven't  
you got something to do outside?

LIJE

I suppose I can get ready to go to  
the mill.

MIRY

Good.

Both try to exit the back door at the same time and get into an after-you-no-after-you contretemps, ending with MIRY good-naturedly pushing LIJE out the door.

56

INT. THE KITCHEN AN HOUR LATER

MIRY is sliding the baking dish of scalloped oysters into the oven. The loaves of salt-rising bread, the potato rolls, and the teacakes are out cooling; the kitchen table is littered with utensils and dishes. MIZ LURY LANE is setting out dishes in the sitting room. LIJE pokes his head in the back door, looking hopeful.

LIJE

Everything in hand, I suppose?

MIRY

(abstractedly)

Everything is done or pretty near.  
Oh! Your lunch is all put up; it's

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIRY (cont'd)  
 in that tin pail, just there by the  
 door.

LIJE gives her a reproachful look, picks up the tin, and exits. MIRY starts tidying up, as we hear from outside LIJE saying "g'lang" to the horse and the scrunch of carriage wheels on gravel as he rolls by the window.

MIRY  
 I'd'a like him here to unhitch  
 their horses, but he'd only be a  
 nuisance. Anyway, they all know how  
 to stable a horse.

57 EXT. THE FRONT PORCH AND YARD

Two carriages carrying four ladies each are rolling in. MIRY comes out in the yard to greet them, DELLA hanging back shyly on the porch. We watch and listen to enthusiastic greetings as the eight ladies clamber down and as AUNT HANNER and MIZ LURY LANE skillfully unharness the horses and lead them toward the barn while MIRY leads the guests inside.

58 INT. THE FRONT HALL AND PARLOR

The ladies come through from outside, laughing and talking; MIRY gathers their coats and takes them off to the spare bedroom.

MIZ BOULDRY  
 My land, Miz' Thompson, what you  
 GOT 't smells so good?

MIRY  
 Oh, just a few things for dinner  
 later. You likely smell the bread.

All the ladies pull starched white aprons out of their bags and, putting them on, settle in around the parlor to variously sew, knit and chat (the Ladies' Aid meets to do good works partly in the form of handicrafts). Two have brought a quilting frame and they set it up and begin "piecing" a partly-made quilt. Conversation ad-lib is continuous.

59

INT. THE SITTING ROOM - SETTIN' DOWN TO DINNER

The babble of happy gossip comes from across the hall in the parlor. MIRY comes from the kitchen with the baking dish of scalloped oysters and sets it in the middle of the table. Crowding the table and the top of the dresser are other dishes of preserves, plates of rolls and teacakes, beet-pickled eggs, etc. MIRY takes a quick look at the array and calls,

MIRY

All right, if you folks like, I think we can eat now.

The ladies with alacrity put down their projects and make their way to the table.

MIZ BOULDRY

Oh, 'Miry, those tea cakes look good!

MIZ LOU ESTY

And rolls too? When did you find time for all that?

AMABEL

(regarding the baking dish)  
Ooh, what's that?

AUNT SOPHRONY

Looks like scalloped... oysters, 'Miry?

MIRY

Scalloped oysters, that's right.

AMABEL

(very dubious)  
Oh, I don't think I...

AUNT HANNER

That's alright dear, I'll eat your share. Take a seat, won't you? We're waitin' to get in.

AMABEL

Oh! Sorry!

60 INT. THE KITCHEN DURING DINNER

DELLA is sitting at the kitchen table with her own plate: a roll, a teacake, a small serving of oysters. The door to the sitting room is just ajar and DELLA is rather distractedly eating as she tries to follow the multiple conversations she can just hear.

DELLA is startled when the back door opens slowly and LIJE pokes only his head through. He winks at DELLA and calls softly,

LIJE  
'Miry! Psst! 'Miry?

A scrape as a chair is pushed back, and MIRY steps through from the sitting room.

MIRY  
'Lijer? What you -- what in the world?

LIJE  
You got a bird cage, 'Miry?

He steps into the kitchen, holding something under his coat.

MIRY  
No I ain't got a bird cage. What you got there?

LIJE steps forward so as to be fully visible to the group in the sitting room.

LIJE  
I got a bird! I'll show you.

From under his coat, LIJE brings forth: a small black and white baby skunk. He sets it on the floor. The nearest ladies scream. AMABEL in particular shrieks and climbs up on her chair clutching her skirts.

MIRY  
(with a furious stamp of her foot)  
'Lije Thompson you take that animal out of here! You hear me? Take it OUT!

LIJE  
(innocently)  
Why 'Miry! I brought it for Delly. It won't hurt nobody, baby skunks ain't got no smell.

(CONTINUED)

DELLA is entranced by the little animal and starts to reach for it.

MIRY

Don't you TOUCH it! And if you don't get it out of here, 'Lije Thompson, THIS MINUTE! I'll-- I'll--

61 EXT. THE BACK YARD IMMEDIATELY AFTER

LIJE ambles through the back door, closely followed by DELLA. A babble of voices, some affronted and some amused, follows them. LIJE is snickering quietly to himself, which DELLA observes with wide eyes. He sets the animal down at the edge of the garden and it quickly disappears under the rhubarb. LITTLE RUNT follows it curiously, grunting.

LIJE

Found that out by the barn. Took it along with me for the ride. I thought they might like to see it. Don't you think it was purty, dawtie?

DELLA nods.

LIJE

C'mon, help me put the wagon away.

They walk off toward the barn, DELLA with one last peep under the rhubarb leaves, hoping to see the skunk.

62 INT. THE KITCHEN A FEW MINUTES LATER

In the sitting room adjacent, the Ladie's Aid party is having tea and tea-cakes. The rest of the serving dishes have been moved out to the kitchen table. LIJE and DELLA enter through the back door.

LIJE

Hmph. Looks like quite a bit of left-overs.

MIRY steps through from the sitting room, holding the door closed behind her.

MIRY

I hope you're satisfied, 'Lijer. You about spoiled everybody's appetite. You two may as well eat some of that.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE promptly sits down and happily surveys the dishes.

LIJE  
Wouldn't want good food to go to  
waste, now.

MIRY  
No fear of that 'round here.

She turns on her heel and reenters the sitting room, closing the door behind her firmly.

63 INT: THE KITCHEN, SUPPER AFTER LADY'S AID

Evening: post supper. MIRY is clearing the table. DELLA is reading her schoolbook. Throughout this conversation she watches her parents intently over the top of the book.

LIJE  
Thanksgiving's just a couple weeks  
now.

MIRY  
Hmm.

LIJE  
You plannin' to have anything  
besides roast pig?

MIRY  
Potatoes, and squash. Creamed  
onions, biscuits,--

LIJE  
I mean, any other meat?  
(pause - no response)  
I dunno as just the -- the -- pig'd  
be enough.

MIRY  
I didn't know as 't would be,  
seein' how your mouth's waterin'  
for it, so I thought I'd roast a  
turkey. That old tom's good and  
fat.

LIJE  
(elaborately casual)  
May be's well. When you want him  
killed?

(CONTINUED)

MIRY

Well, not yet! You can do it when  
you butcher the pig.

DELLA hides her face entirely behind her book and shrinks  
down in her chair.

LIJE

Hmmph.

He rises, takes his hat, and heads out the back door. We  
hear the snuffle and squeal as LITTLE RUNT in his pen greets  
him.

LIJE (O.S.)

What you makin' noise for, you  
cuss-fool.

LIJE steps partway back into the kitchen. The pig is  
snuffling at his heel.

LIJE

Tomorrow I'm building this fool pig  
a pen. Tired of him running his fat  
off.

LIJE exits again.

LIJE (O.S.)

Git out from my FEET, you runt.

The screen door slams behind him.

DELLA

Mommy, do you...

MIRY

(interrupting)

Are you finished with that chapter?  
I want to hear you read it out to  
me.

64 INT. THE KITCHEN - AFTERNOON - MONDAY BEFORE THANKSGIVING

SUPER: Monday, November 25th, 1881.

MIRY is hard at work making mince pies. She has rolled out  
the dough and is just to the point of cutting a circle and  
draping it over the pie dish when LIJE wanders in, reading  
an old book. She continues expertly forming two pie shells  
during this conversation. DELLA is playing at the window.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

You know this old receipt book?

MIRY

I should, it was my mother's. What of it?

LIJE

You use these receipts?

MIRY

I have. What do you want?

LIJE

Why, I don't want anything, 'Miry. What makes you ask that?

MIRY

Because when you talk smooth like that you're generally up to something.

LIJE

I found this receipt that maybe you'd... unless you've seen it?

MIRY

I guess I've seen everything in that book several times over. Which one?

LIJE

"English Way of Roasting Pig."

MIRY

Huh! I don't care about English ways of roasting pigs. American ways are good enough for me.

LIJE

Still, this is different. You listen...

(peers over top of book to see she's listening, then reads)

'Put some sage, a large piece of saltish bread, salt and pepper on the inside and sew it up. Observe to skewer the legs back' -- that's a queer way to put it, 'observe to skewer' -- 'or the under part will not crisp. Lay it to a brisk fire' -- one of those open hearths they used to have, I s'pose -- 'then rub

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LIJE (cont'd)  
 the pig with butter in every part.'  
 -- and so on, and then, here: --  
 Take off the head while at the  
 fire; take out the brains and mix  
 them with the gravy...' Gosh,  
 'Miry, sounds like some heathen  
 ritual!

MIRY  
 So it is, and nobody but a  
 heathen'd set and gloat over it!

LIJE  
 'Put the sauce in the dish after  
 the pig has ben split down the back  
 and garnished with the ears and the  
 two jaws...'

At this point DELLA, holding a hand over her mouth, dashes  
 from the room, out the back door.

MIRY  
 'Lije Thompson!  
 (collects herself)  
 'less you want to start being the  
 cook around here you can leave the  
 receipts to me. I've got work to do  
 now. Haven't you got some chores  
 you could be doing?

65 EXT. AFTERNOON - NEAR THE BARN - TUESDAY BEFORE THANKSGIVING

SUPER: Tuesday, November 26th, 1881.

Gray sky, winter light; it is near freezing and there may be  
 a few flakes of snow in the air (Della, p. 228, has enough  
 snow on the ground to justify use of the sleigh, but that  
 would make the scenery too much like the opening and closing  
 chapters. So: bare trees, everything else tones of brown and  
 gray.)

Outside the barn, LIJE has built a fire under a big black  
 kettle, for boiling water to scald and pluck the turkey. He  
 has about finished the job; the gutted and de-feathered  
 turkey is laid out on clean feed sacks. LIJE pulls off a  
 couple of stray feathers, hoists the bird by its feet,  
 regards it with satisfaction, then stumps off toward the  
 back door of the house.

Halfway there, he stops to look over the side of Little Runt's pen; the pig greets him with a snuffle and LIJE reaches down with his free hand to scratch it between the ears.

66 INT. THE KITCHEN - SHORTLY AFTER - HERE'S YOUR TURKEY

MIRY is in her rocker, sewing. LIJE enters carrying the dressed turkey by its feet.

LIJE  
Here's your turkey.

MIRY  
Could you hang him in the back porch, please? They want a day's hangin' and I plan to tend to him tomorrow.

LIJE  
Huh. Right.

He turns to go back out.

MIRY  
What about the pig?

LIJE  
Butcherin' a pig's beyond me. Stig Obart's goin' do him for me. I'll fetch the pig over to him after supper.

67 INT. THE KITCHEN - EVENING - TIME TO FETCH THE PIG

The three principals are at the table just finishing supper. LIJE, pushing back his chair,

LIJE  
Well, time to fetch that fool pig over t' Obart's.

He starts out the back door; DELLA gets down from her chair and starts after him.

MIRY  
Della, you don't want to...

DELLA  
Mama, I have to say goodbye!

68

EXT. THE BACK YARD - EVENING - LOADING THE PIG

LIJE pushes the back door open and DELLA pushes past his legs and runs ahead to the pen where LITTLE RUNT greets her. She vaults the railing and embraces the young pig. LIJE strides past on the way to the barn to get the horse and wagon. MIRY comes out on the back stoop.

MIRY

Della! You'll get filthy! You...

DELLA ignores her and MIRY, realizing she is making no impression, steps down and leans over the pen rail.

MIRY

Della, sweet, come out of there.

DELLA

(looking up, tearful)

Momma, do you remember how we fed him when he was just born?

MIRY

(sighs, smiles)

I do, sweet. Do you remember how he could fit under the stove?

DELLA

Remember how Poppa couldn't figure out what the noise was, and it was Li'l Runt under the stove, snoring?

MIRY

I do... Sweet, everything on this farm has a part to play. We put it all together, and we work hard to keep everything healthy and tended until it's time to... time to...

DELLA

Time to harvest?

MIRY

(nods, wiping the corner of her eye)

LIJE leads the horse and Democrat wagon up. He has a lantern; we are in the gloaming now.

DELLA

I know, Momma. I just needed to say goodby.

(CONTINUED)

DELLA gives the pig a quick last hug and climbs out of the pen.

MIRY  
Bye-bye, Runt.  
(to DELLA)  
Come on inside and let's change  
that dress.

LIJE  
(to the pig)  
Come on, you tarnation fool, let's  
go for a ride.

69 INT. THE KITCHEN - 9PM THAT NIGHT

MIRY mends in her rocker, DELLA plays with paper dolls at the table. It is very quiet; we can clearly hear the ticking of a clock.

The sound of the horse and the carriage wheels on the gravel are heard as LIJE passes the back door. DELLA and MIRY look at each other a moment and then return to their respective work. After a moment (compressing time here) we hear LIJE's boots on the back step.

LIJE (O.S.)  
Where you want him?

MIRY  
Put him on the table down cellar.

LIJE (O.S.)  
Right.

We hear LIJE's laden walk going down the cellar steps.

MIRY  
Bedtime, sweet. I'll read to you.

She rises and she and DELLA leave the kitchen, DELLA clinging hard to MIRY's waist.

70 INT. THE KITCHEN - THANKSGIVING MORNING EARLY

The cleaned carcass of a pig is in a roasting pan in the center of a table. MIRY is stuffing the cavity from a huge mixing bowl of stuffing. DELLA is watching in horrified fascination.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE enters, having just finished washing and shaving, his collar open, polishing his face and bald head with a towel, and immediately moves to supervise the pig prep.

LIJE  
You DO mean to rub it with butter,  
don't you?

MIRY  
(very tartly)  
Who said I don't? If you two will  
stand back and give me some room to  
work, I will.

With a folded piece of cheesecloth she begins rubbing butter from a small crock on the pig.

LIJE  
Are you goin' to "observe to skewer  
the legs back"?

DELLA  
Oh, papa!

MIRY  
I wish you'd get out the kitchen,  
'Lije Thompson! Go and DO  
something. Fill up the woodbox and  
the water pail. Oh, and section a  
squash for me.

LIJE, making placating gestures, starts out.

MIRY  
Then STAY out. You, too, miss. Fold  
them linens like I told you.

71 INT. THE SITTING ROOM - THANKSGIVING DINNER

Present are the AUNT HANNER and AUNT SOPHRONY, Uncle MATT and Aunt CATHERINE, AMELIA and SARYETTE. MIRY carries in a platter with the roasted turkey and places it at her end of the table -- general oohs and ahs.

She is followed by LIJE proudly carrying a platter with the roast piglet -- louder oohs and ahs -- and carefully sets it at his end of the table. Theatrically, he says

LIJE  
Oh, I think something is missing.  
Let me see...

(CONTINUED)

From his coat pocket he produces a pretty red apple, polishes it on his sleeve, and carefully slips it into the pig's mouth. Arranged by his place setting is a carving knife, steel, and large fork. LIJE picks up the knife and considers the pig:

LIJE

Now, how do I carve him?

MIRY

Tsk! 'Lije Thompson, we're not savages. Frank, would you care to ask the blessing?

FRANK

Oh, I... I don't want to hold you up. I know 'Lijer's been waiting to taste this pig.

LIJE

(beginning delicately to carve with the very sharp knife)  
Best way to honor the Lord is to fall to and eat. Pass up your plate, there, Cathy, for some of the best roast pig you'll ever taste. Miry'll tend to the turkey.

A montage of serving, now: LIJE's knife slicing off crisp skin and pink meat; someone's hand laying a dollop of feathery mashed potato on a plate; a scoop of stuffing; MIRY, with equal skill to LIJE's, slicing turkey breast; cooked squash with a dollop of melting butter and brown sugar. Over all the murmur of polite serving-talk: "oh, just a little," "my, don't that look tender, now," and etc. ad. lib.

Every guest's plate has been filled, but not the hostess's.

LIJE

Now, 'Miry, I'll cut you a nice juicy slice.

MIRY

(struggling not to cry)  
I don't care for any, thank you!

She begins to cry, and DELLA, while the guests look puzzled but consternated.

LIJE

Well! I been wonderin' if you was goin' to show some signs of feelin'. You just wait a minute.

(CONTINUED)

He stands, puts his napkin over the chairback, dashes out to the kitchen and out the back door.

AUNT HANNER  
What in the world...?

AMELIA  
(whispering, to DELLA)  
Why's your momma cryin'? Why are  
YOU cryin'?

MIRY  
(to her guests through  
sniffles)  
It was Little Runt. We fed him by  
hand -- he tagged us around -- I  
couldn't see how he COULD -- but he  
was dead set -- and I just ---

Her apologies are interrupted by noises off: heavy boots and clattering trotters and squeals. LIJE, half-carrying and half-herding Li'l Runt comes through the back door into the kitchen and poses in the door of the sitting room.

LIJE  
There! NOW what do you think?

Chairs are pushed back, people rise; DELLA dashes around the table to embrace the pig. LIJE, smoothing his beard and straightening his coat,

LIJE  
When I seen that 'Miry was bent on  
servin' roast pig  
(MIRY registers shock)  
I thought I better save this fool  
critter's hide. The cuss was always  
followin' me around, so when the  
time come, I didn't have the heart  
to -- anyway, I took one of the  
other ones.

To DELLA,

LIJE  
Now, daughter, you take that fool  
animal outside. Thanksgiving for  
him, but hogs don't celebrate it in  
the house.

DELLA leads the pig out through the back door as LIJE takes his seat at the head of the table.

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

Now, 'Miry, can I cut you a nice slice of this pork?

FRANK

'Lijer, you're a sentimental fool.

LIJE

Pass the cranberries, would you please Catherine?

72

INT. THE KITCHEN - 7PM ON A DEEP WINTER EVENING

SUPER: Wednesday, December 18th, 1881

At the table LIJE and DELLA are both at work by the light of the mantle lamp: DELLA with paste, scissors and colored paper is making a chain for decorating a tree; LIJE with a Waterman fountain pen writes in neat cursive on notepaper. All is silent except for the scratch and rustle of their work.

MIRY is heard in the back porch and enters through the back door. She is wearing a heavy cloak and a scarf, a few flakes of snow on her head and shoulders; she carries a wire basket of eggs and a lantern. She pauses for a moment and fondly regards the two. During the following she sets the egg basket on the drainboard, opens and blows out the lantern, takes off her coat and hangs it up.

MIRY

Well, you two are hard at work.

LIJE

Writing out invites to my family.

MIRY

For your birthday dinner?

LIJE

Of course.

MIRY

Of course. But before that we have Christmas day.

LIJE

I know.

MIRY

I don't want to do anything big, with your family coming for New

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIRY (cont'd)  
Year's. But I do like to have a few  
people over for Christmas.

LIJE  
I know you like to feed some folk  
for charity. Who this year?

MIRY  
It isn't charity! It's sharin' what  
we have with some who have less.

LIJE  
Well, who do you want to ask?

MIRY  
Miz' Lou Esty for one. Poor old  
widow, she doesn't have anywhere to  
go.

(pause: no reaction)  
She knows all the gossip, anyway.  
Boarding out all around like she  
does.

LIJE  
Oh! Well, let's have the gossip  
then.

MIRY  
And...

LIJE  
More?

MIRY  
David H.

LIJE  
David H.! What in tunket you want  
that old sot around for? On  
Christmas Day?!

MIRY  
When he's sober, he's a nice old  
man.

LIJE  
Not sure I ever seen...  
(Miry glances meaningfully at  
DELLA; LIJE catches himself)  
You already got Miz' Esty. If you  
want more company, why don't you  
ask the Covell urchins in for a  
square meal.

(CONTINUED)

MIRY

'Lijer, I'm glad you thought of that! I'll ask them tomorrow.

LIJE

Hmph! They'll probably ask to borry some goose grease, 'fore they leave.

MIRY

Just the same, it's a good thing to do.

LIJE

I suppose I'll have to fetch all these waifs and widows in the sled?

MIRY

I'll go, if you want to stay and cook the goose and all?

LIJE

Hmph! At least MY folks drive the'selves to dinner.

MIRY

We'll set 'em an example.

73

EXT. THE COUNTY ROAD - MORNING - SNOW

SUPER: Christmas day, 1881.

It's a bright morning in a snowbound landscape; low sun makes long blue shadows. The county road approaching the outskirts of Jackson, Michigan is well-rutted with the passage of horse-drawn sleighs but the snow on the fields and fences alongside is unbroken. LIJE, heavily garbed, drives the pung; his and the horse's breath steam.

Approaching a crossroad at the outskirts of town, LIJE sees ahead a man, heavily wrapped, walking toward him down the packed rut in the center of the road. Closer, this proves to be the skinny, bearded, red-eyed DAVID H. They meet at the crossroad.

LIJE

David, man, what in tunket are you doing out here?

DAVID H.

Morning, 'Lijer. I was up early and didn't want to sit around my room

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DAVID H. (cont'd)  
waitin'. Too many... well. Thought  
I'd come meet you.

LIJE  
Fine, saves me a bit of drivin'.  
Take the horse's head, will you,  
and we'll turn her around.

It is not easy to U-turn a sleigh but the width of the  
crossroad is just enough.

The sleigh is moving smoothly again; LIJE and DAVID H.  
sharing the front seat. LIJE looks sideways searchingly at  
the man beside him.

LIJE  
So... how are you feelin' this  
morning, David?

DAVID H.  
Sober, 'Lijer. Dead sober. Want to  
smell my breath?

LIJE  
Not at all! Just asking...

DAVID H.  
I know how you an' Miz' Thompson  
feel about liquor. You know, David  
H. can lay off it whenever he wants  
to.

LIJE  
Yes. Sure.

DAVID H.  
When the time comes, David H. will  
stop drinkin'. When the day comes,  
David H. will Put His Foot Down.

LIJE  
Put your foot down...

DAVID H.  
Yessir. One day, David H. will Put  
His Foot Down. Thing is, David H.  
has not put his foot down, yet.

LIJE  
Well, that's wonderful. Put your  
foot...

The sleigh passes on down the bright snowy road.

74 EXT. COVELL DRIVE, A LITTLE LATER.

The sleigh, now with MIZ LOU ESTY bundled up in the back seat, has halted in the county road where the drive to the Covell place starts. The Covell's drive is filled with snow broken only by a line of tracks where LIJE is slogging his way to the front door of the cabin.

LIJE stamps onto the front stoop of the shanty and the door opens on MICAH COVELL. Behind him there is a great bustle as his wife is bundling her three kids into coats.

LIJE  
Morning, Micah. Miz' Covell. Merry Christmas.

MICAH  
Well, Merry Christmas, 'Lijer. You look well, how's your good wife?

LIJE  
Just fine, thank you. I believe she...

MICAH  
(interrupting)  
You two eatin' lots of fried cakes now you got a kittle for 'em?

LIJE  
We're eatin' fine. 'Miry invited a couple of your young ones over for dinner, right?

MICAH  
She did, and we appreciate it very much. Here! You kids!  
(he hauls them out from behind him onto the stoop)  
You go with Mister Thompson and do just like he says, hear?

LIJE  
Right, we'll be goin'. You children follow me, I broke a trail here.

LIJE turns away without further conversation and heads back up the drive for the sleigh; the three children follow like baby ducks.

75 INT. THE FRONT HALL AND PARLOR A BIT LATER.

LIJE on the porch herds his sleigh-load of heavily-garbed guests through the front door in the tiny hall between the sitting room and parlor. MIRY, with DELLA shyly hanging back, greets them warmly; there is a flurry of taking off and hanging coats and scarves, shucking rubber boots.

LIJE  
(outside)  
I'll stable the horse, be right in.

MIRY  
Miz' Esty, welcome! So glad you  
could come!

MIZ LOU ESTY  
'Miry, it's so good of you to  
invite us all! Now, what can I do  
to help?

MIRY  
Not a thing, it's all in hand. Just  
go on into the parlor, I'll be  
right there. David H.!

DAVID H., after shucking his coat and knitted cap, is revealed to have spiffed himself up in an old and threadbare, but neat suit, shirt with celluloid collar, pomade on his gray locks and beard combed and trimmed.

DAVID H.  
Miz' Thompson. Merry Christmas,  
ma'am.

The three Covell children, EMMA C, 9, ANNA C, 7 and FRANK C, 5, are trying to be invisible.

MIRY  
And, let me see, you must be Emma?

ANNA C  
I'm Anna. She's Emma.

MIRY  
Oh dear, I'm sorry; well, Merry  
Christmas, Anna, Emma and... Frank,  
is it?

FRANK C  
(nods mutely)

(CONTINUED)

MIRY

Della, Emma and Anna and Frank  
would like to see our tree, don't  
you think?

DELLA (who should know EMMA at least from school) leads the three into the parlor.

In the parlor we discover a small Christmas tree, decorated with paper chains and strands of popcorn on thread, with a small blown-glass star on the top. Under the tree are four very shiny red apples and four oranges. Other set-dressing includes a bowl of walnuts and a nutcracker set; DAVID H. is already cracking a walnut, tossing the shell into the open fireplace; about to eat the liberated meat he suddenly remembers his manners and offers it to MIZ LOU ESTY who politely declines.

EMMA C, ANNA C, and FRANK C are awed by the tree. DELLA gives them a tour of its glories:

DELLA

I made these paper chains. My momma  
sewed the popcorn. But see the  
star? That belonged to by Grandma  
Bogardus. It's very old.

MIRY

(leaning in from the hall)  
Children, you may each have an  
apple and an orange. Della, pass  
them out? I'll be right back with  
cocoa.

DELLA ceremoniously hands an apple and an orange to each of the other three kids. FRANK C is puzzled by the orange.

DAVID H.

That's from Florida. Do you know  
where Florida is?

EMMA C

I do!

FRANK C. tries to bite the orange. MIZ LOU ESTY laughs.

DAVID H.

No, here, let me show you how to  
peel it.

76 INT. THE PARLOR, A LITTLE LATER

LIJE has come in and MIRY has joined the group to serve cocoa.

MIZ LOU ESTY  
That tree sure is pretty.

LIJE  
Hmph. Bringin' it in here, I almost broke the mirror, there.

DAVID H.  
Oh, breakin' a mirror's bad luck

MIZ LOU ESTY  
Oh, tush, no such thing. One time when we were movin' house, had a big bureau with a mirror on the wagon, hit a rut and SMASH, the whole thing, glass all over.

DAVID H.  
And what happened?

MIZ LOU ESTY  
Nothin' at all, naturally. Well, that fall I did lose Esty... but that don't count.

77 INT. THE KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER - RUM SAUCE?

MIRY is preparing brandy sauce for the pudding [recipe & methods TBS] when DAVID H. shyly pokes his head in the kitchen door.

DAVID H.  
Ah, that's where them good smells is comin' from.

MIRY  
(startled)  
Oh! David. Is there somethin' you wanted? Everything's almost ready.

Both of them realize that there's a brandy bottle on the table among the bowls and implements. DAVID H. takes a step further into the kitchen.

DAVID H.  
No, I just wondered if...

(CONTINUED)

MIRY firmly picks up the brandy bottle and shuts it into a cupboard.

MIRY  
I'm just finishing the pudding  
sauce. David, will you tell  
everyone they can come to table  
now?

DAVID H.  
Yes'm.

He turns toward the door; turns back.

DAVID H.  
Miz' Thompson?

MIRY  
Yes, David?

DAVID H.  
Miz' Thompson, if there was more  
women like you around, David H.  
might be able to Put His Foot Down.

MIRY  
(affectionately)  
David, thank you, but I'm sure you  
can do that anytime. You go call  
everyone to table, now.

78 INT. THE SITTING ROOM - CHRISTMAS DINNER

As in previous meal scenes, it's awkward getting everyone seated in the cramped sitting room. LIJE goes straight to his place at the head; DAVID H. gallantly helps the two smaller Covell kids into their chairs. MIRY enters from the kitchen with the roast goose on a platter and sets it before LIJE for carving. Seating herself,

MIRY  
Well. David, would you like to say  
grace?

DAVID H.  
(taken aback)  
I... well... I guess I'll just say  
what Mister Dickens wrote: 'God  
bless us every one.'

(CONTINUED)

LIJE

That'll do fine.

(picks up carving tools)

'Miry, you'll want a piece of white  
meat, I believe?