

LOCKWOOD, cont'

(still looking above him and around) Nothing more lonely than an empty stage in an empty opera house on the dark winter prairie where darkness--

(The wind and voices crescendo again.)

. . darkness . . can enter the mind . . and take permanent residence.

(LOCKWOOD, trembling, fumbles to light a lantern. He sets the lantern down and it casts both light and shadows on the stage.)

There should always be light here. . . Something bright . . .

(Beat)

. . music!

*(We hear cheerful piano music--**Fairy Dell Polka, 1878, by A.M. Shuey**--, soft at first then louder.)*

. . . drama . . .

VOICE OF KING LEAR

(off) When we are born, we cry that we are come to this great stage of fools.

LOCKWOOD

. . . comedy . . .

(Laughter is heard off.)

And in 1876, the year of the bank raid, we had the Swedish Lady Quartette . . .

(Voices singing off.)

. . They drove the shadows away!

(Pause. Sound effects cease.)

JUDITH

(off) Ephraim! E -e-e-e-prha-a-a-aim! . .

(Pause)

JUDITH, cont'

Ephraim! I need you down in the store.

LOCKWOOD

(calling) Yes Judith!

JUDITH

Mrs. Ricker is here to pick up her flannel and you haven't unloaded yesterday's delivery!

LOCKWOOD

I'll be right down!

JUDITH

Did you bring in the firewood?! It's freezing down here!

LOCKWOOD

I'll get it!

JUDITH

I've got to get ready to go to the bank!

(JUDITH enters.)

What are you doing up here?

LOCKWOOD

Working.

JUDITH

In the dark?

LOCKWOOD

Judith . . . I've been thinking . . .

JUDITH

No performance tonight I hope.

LOCKWOOD

This time and this place . . . the people . . .

JUDITH

You'll never get the renovation finished.

LOCKWOOD

. . . each one a bright light . . .

JUDITH

And if you don't get the renovation done I'll never have you back in the store.

LOCKWOOD

. . . but I wonder . . .

JUDITH

(hearing noises from the store below) The store is filling up!

LOCKWOOD

. . . someday . . .

JUDITH

(calling) I'm coming!

(JUDITH exits.)

LOCKWOOD

. . . will all of this be forgotten?

(One last gust of wind and voices.)

JUDITH

(off) Ephraim!

(Music: Fairy Dell Polka. Segue to next scene.)

(Scene 2: Lockwood Dry Goods Store, interior. A counter, shelves with bolts of cloth, clothing items, and other goods. There is a wood stove with chairs gathered around it. JUDITH stands behind the counter as several people line up for help. ALBERT is working as a stockboy.)

JUDITH

This blue gingham will make a darling dress for Emily. Good morning Mrs. Wilson. Oh, you wanted the cheesecloth. Ephraim will get that for you. Mr. Lockwood! Good morning Mr. Newson. Ephraim?!

(MR. LOCKWOOD enters with WILLIE, EDITH, and FRANK.)

MR. LOCKWOOD

. . . The biggest extravaganza of all time!

WILLIE

Will it be ready?

MR. LOCKWOOD

The added seats. The galleries. It will all be done in time for the gala opening.

WILLIE

I'll have to write my cousin Agnes. I've told her the entertainment she has in New York can't beat what we have here in Northfield.

MR. LOCKWOOD

The new Lockwood Opera House will rival any opera house she's visited in New York City. We've had Forbes and Plunkett, the Uncle Tommer's regularly and --my favorite: The Swedish Lady Quartette. If only I could get them back again . . . And, I'm going to improve the ventilation.

FRANK

No more fainting? (*fakes a faint*)

WILLIE

Mr. Lockwood, I have a proposal. For such an important occasion . . .

FRANK

The grand, gala opening--

EDITH

Re-opening--

LOCKWOOD

The grand, gala re-opening of the Lockwood Opera Hall! Behind us, eight memorable years of exceptional entertainment . . . before us, a hundred and eighty more years of splendiferous spectacle and delectable diversion!

EDITH

Will it last that long?!

(MAIA, who is in the store with her mother, approaches LOCKWOOD. He kneels down to her level.)

LOCKWOOD

Little Maia! How are you today?

(MAIA curtsies. LOCKWOOD gives her some candy.)

MAIA

Thank you Mr. Lockwood.

LOCKWOOD

This is a wonderful time. Let's preserve it forever!

(POSTAL CARRIER delivers a letter to LOCKWOOD and one to WILLIE.)

WILLIE

For something this big . . . you can't settle for just any old traveling theater company.

FRANK

Some of those actors are pretty stiff. Might as well use a coat tree!

LOCKWOOD

Ladies and gentlemen, never fear! Lockwood will not disappoint! Out of the last eight years, who has been the greatest talent--in singing, dancing, and comic acting?

(Others have started to gather around, including FANNY and COLONEL BAKER.)

FANNY

(starry-eyed) Frederick Bryton!

LOTTIE

(also remembering this good-looking performer) Oh yes!

COLONEL

He was good, yes, as were the multiple entertainments of those years but nothing can beat the good old days of the Lyceum and I mean back in 1857 when we heard local debaters and speakers the likes of John North and Austin Willey, Shortt, Scriver, Hobbs, Hoskins, Miss Hull (now Mrs. Stewart of course) and Miss Willey (now Mrs. Skinner) and "Miss Amy and

COLONEL, cont'

brothers," one of the brothers being, if memory serves me right and it usually does, Cyrus P. Walbridge, since mayor of St. Louis, AND the circuses! . . .

(Early in this rant, we see, from eyes glazing over, that the citizens are tired of the COLONEL'S endless reminiscing. The next lines of the COLONEL will be spoken over by the dialogue that follows it.)

. . . All wagon shows in those days, Don Costello, the veteran showman, spreading his canvas and lining up the yellow wagons . . .

LOCKWOOD

Not Bryton.

EDITH

(realizing) I know! You mean to bring back the little dynamo!

(LOCKWOOD, with ALBERT'S help, shows a large playbill he has made.)

LOCKWOOD

(reading) The Lockwood Opera House Gala Re-Opening: A Grand Musical, Dramatic and Spectacular Entertainment! Featuring Lockwood's Brightest Star, the Renowned and Remarkable Midget, General Tom Thumb!

(Large applause by the gathered group and ad. lib. excited conversation. Meanwhile, LOCKWOOD has opened his letter. He reads it and sits down weakly.)

TOWNSPERSON

What's wrong Lockwood?

LOCKWOOD

(reading from the letter) "This is to notify you that Mr. Stratton"-- that's Tom Thumb-- "as of 1878, has retired from public performance."

(Sighs of disappointment from the crowd.)

FANNY

Don't worry, Mr. Lockwood. Midget or no midget, we will have a spectacular entertainment. Come on Lottie.

END EXCERPT

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