

CIVILIZING LUSBY

a tragedy with jokes by

John Morogiello

CIVILIZING LUSBY

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CIVILIZING LUSBY

Civilizing Lusby received its world premiere on April 5, 2024, at Best Medicine Rep Theater Company in Gaithersburg, MD (Kathleen Barth director) with the following cast:

KATE Josie Morgan
MARY Rebecca A. Herron
GOLDSBOROUGH Matthew Marcus
LYONS J. McAndrew Breen
PRESTON John Morogiello

Civilizing Lusby was read in 2013, at Abingdon Theatre Company off-Broadway (Jakob G. Hofmann director) with the following cast:

KATE Nora Achrati
MARY Susan J. Jacks
GOLDSBOROUGH Adam Segaller
LYONS Terence Aselford
PRESTON Rod Brogan

The script was also developed at the 2023 Best Medicine Rep Reading Series, 2015 Columbia Festival for the Arts, 2014 Great Plains Theatre Conference, 2014 Dramatists Guild Baltimore Footlights Series, and the 2013 Kennedy Center Page to Stage Festival (Guillotine Theatre).

Special thanks to Walter Byongsok Chong, Todd Olson, and Heather Helinsky.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

CHARACTERS

DECLAN LYONS--50, Irish, wealthy contractor for the Baltimore & Drum Point Railroad.

MARY LYONS--45, Lyons' wife, strict Catholic, also Irish.

KATE LYONS--18, their daughter, beautiful, flirtatious, spoiled, loves romance novels, speaks with an American accent.

GOLDSBOROUGH--26, son of bank owner financing the railroad, in love with Kate.

PRESTON--37, a waterman on the Chesapeake Bay. Has the letter D branded on his face.

A NOTE ON THE MUSIC:

The songs used in this play are close to the time in which the play is set, but not exactly. Both songs were taken from the digital collection of the Duke University Library. They are in the public domain.

Boat Song" words and music by W.H. Neidlinger, published by G. Schirmer, New York, 1890.

The Fisherman and His Child" words and music by C.A. White, published by White-Smith Music, Boston, 1885.

HISTORICAL NOTE:

After the American Civil War there were indeed plans to build a railroad between Annapolis, Maryland and Drum Point on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. The rail bed near Saint Leonard still exists as a hiking trail. During the planning stages, two men, hoping to become rich from the railroad's arrival, bought much of the land where stands present day Lusby. Everything else is an outright lie.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

CIVILIZING LUSBY

ACT 1
SCENE 1

Setting: A private lounge off the lobby of a hotel in St. Leonard, Maryland, 1868. It is comfortable, but not luxurious. A desk, a chair, a chaise, and an iron stove. Two doors, one leads to the lobby, the other, windowed, leads to the street. The room has been commandeered by the Baltimore & Drum Point Railroad Corporation. There is a map detailing the planned route of the railroad hanging upon the upstage wall. Upon the desk is something that looks like a large chess pawn. At rise: A young woman's laughter is heard from off. The girl, KATE, runs on through the street door. She closes it behind her and playfully ducks down beneath the window to hide from someone outside. She raises her head to peek through the window, laughing flirtatiously. As MARY and GOLDSBOROUGH approach the door, Kate laughs and makes a break for the other exit.

MARY. *(Entering, out of breath.)* Not a muscle, Kate!

GOLDSBOROUGH. Listen to your mother, Hon. *(Kate stops. She turns to Goldsborough coquettishly.)*

KATE. Why, Mr. Goldsborough. How are you this fine day?

GOLDSBOROUGH. May I inquire why those fellows were in discourse with you? I reckon Mr. Lyons will find it considerable to his dislike when he hears tell.

MARY. They were already mid-jaw as I caught up, Mr. Goldsborough. Make no mistake. There's many a time she's been warned by the like of me not to be talking to them what's laboring for you and her Da. But you know Kate and her bent for the mulish.

KATE. I'm not mulish. And you're a hard one to call me such in front of Mr. Goldsborough.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

GOLDSBOROUGH. I know you have your girlish fascinations, Hon. But I need you to promise that you will have no further social intercourse with the men.

KATE. What cause would I have to say so much as boo to them? Not a one, neither.

GOLDSBOROUGH. I m sitting on a promise.

KATE. And who might you be, to make such demands?

GOLDSBOROUGH. I am your father s partner.

MARY. Aye, and more than that to you too someday, if you tame yourself and look sharp.

KATE. Mother! (*LYONS enters from the outside door.*)

LYONS. The pride of the Lyons come down to see me!

KATE. Hello, Father.

LYONS. (*Kissing Kate and Mary.*) When did you get here?

KATE. No more n an hour.

LYONS. As long as that?

KATE. You can bet I found ways to entertain myself.

LYONS. I m certain you did, you crafty minx. Forgive me, I was on the road myself, just returned from the Calvert County seat.

GOLDSBOROUGH. What did they say?

LYONS. We ll talk later. My dear Kate didn t come all this way to see the men talk business.

KATE. I ll talk to the men about anything.

LYONS. (*Laughing.*) You hear that, Mary? As bold as Judas your daughter is.

MARY. And wrapped right round her little finger you are.

LYONS. None of that now. Tend to your daughter so I can talk shop with Mr. Goldsborough.

MARY. I been tendin' her nigh on eighteen years now, Declan Lyons, and you in your office with her coquetting away like a highborn puss. There s not a speck of dust she wants but you give it her. Well, I ve got wants too.

KATE. Mother—!

CIVILIZING LUSBY

MARY. I ll not be silent. There s but one bit of business made me come down from Bawlmer and I won t be seein' it undone by her flounchy airs.

LYONS. ...Mr. Goldsborough, it s a minute we ll be wanting.

(Goldsborough nods and exits into the hall.) Mary, you can t be talking to me that way in front of the banker s son. It s him that s keeping this project alive. I can t risk him taking offense nor seeing me anything less than absolutely in command. In the job and in the home.

MARY. And haven t I always been so, Declan, but for this once with our Kate and marriage and her dismissing advice to achieve it so mulishly which is meant for her own benefit?

LYONS. Aye, love. But why this once?

MARY. 'Tis Kate it is. There s not a man passes she doesn t smile upon.

KATE. That s not true.

MARY. No sooner did I remark upon it, as looking for you we were by the worker s camp, than she takes flight on Goldsborough s horse so a body can t catch her and her with a laugh.

LYONS. *(To Kate.)* You rode three miles on Goldsborough s horse?

MARY. *Careened*, she did, all the way back to Saint Leonard! We followed as best we could in the gig, with her smiling like May Day at each passing man.

KATE. I don t smile at *every* man.

MARY. Aye, there s one she ll not smile on: the likely one we come to fetch!

LYONS. Goldsborough?

MARY. Aye, him. Wee Kate is the last of our hopes, Declan. What good is the money if it s not passed down and the family expanded?

KATE. I ve ideas for the money, if you re looking.

MARY. Know your place! The serpent s tooth is what you are.

LYONS. All right, love. —Is t true? Are you smiling at men at the worker s camp?

KATE. Can t a girl smile when a man greets her?

CIVILIZING LUSBY

LYONS. That depends on the man, my dear. You don't waste a flash of your teeth on the camp men. You save it for a man with an income, or better yet an inheritance.

MARY. You save it for Mr. Goldsborough!

LYONS. There's many a time before the war I considered a laborer well enough for you, I confess it, and you bouncing on my knee. But now the money's come it brings on expectations, Kate, the like of which your Mam and I would never dream of grabbing hold of in Ballybrit. You're meant for something better.

MARY. You're meant for Mr. Goldsborough!

KATE. And what makes you think I can't do better than him, Mother?

MARY. Searching in the laborer's camp! That's gum!

LYONS. Don't you fancy him?

KATE. I allow I do. Not all to pieces, mind, but well enough, I reckon.

LYONS. Then don't you want to marry him?

KATE. I'm here, ain't I?

LYONS. Then what's the matter? ...Kate—?

KATE. Well: Why him?

LYONS. Why *not* him? He's handsome enough.

KATE. I'll own his face has a pleasant prospect.

LYONS. As does his bank book.

KATE. I could see myself taking them both in every morning. But—don't he never leave the bank to dirty his hands? They're softer than a fresh duvet.

MARY. And sure you'll appreciate soft hands on your wedding night.

LYONS. They're what mark him a gentleman.

KATE. Maybe I don't want a gentle man. Maybe I want adventure.

MARY. Adventure?! Try giving birth six times! There's not an adventure ever experienced by man to compare with it.

KATE. What kind of adventure is that? Hindered by a brood of children! It would kill me. I want to see the world.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

MARY. And so you will, Kate, in every smile and tear of the children you raise. Ballybrit, Baltimore, one place is as good as another as far as that goes. Geography is interchangeable. But the world, Kate, is seen at its best in the everyday discoveries of a child. Six times I've seen the world, now, and it's a glorious place it is. And when there's a little one of yours bouncin' on Goldsborough's knee, that's when I'll see heaven.

KATE. True or no, that won't scour, given there's no call to think he cottons to me.

MARY. Certainly he cottons to you. Don't he call you Hon?

LYONS. That just means he's from Baltimore, love. It's nothing.

KATE. Despite my many efforts, he won't signal his intentions. I've been smiling to beat the Dutch since autumn, in hope of making him jealous. If n he ain't, well, it's not my funeral. I will just keep smiling, no way you can fix it.

MARY. That's a different kettle of fish. If that rogue Goldsborough don't know enough to be jealous of a pretty girl, he don't deserve her.

LYONS. Now, love, don't get contrary. We don't really know what the young man's feeling. Shall I sound him out for you, Kate?

KATE. It's no matter to me if you do or you don't.

LYONS. No matter at all?

KATE. Nothing to be done. —Unless...

LYONS. Yes?

KATE. Unless you think I could convince Mr. Goldsborough to dirty his hands a shade. And, maybe, take me on adventures?

MARY. But of course you can. You can convince Mr. Goldsborough to do anything you like. He's only a man. They're simple that way. —No offense, Declan.

LYONS. None taken. (*Goldsborough enters furtively.*)

GOLDSBOROUGH. Excuse me, sir. The shack owner. He awaits you in the hall, sir.

MARY. (*To Kate.*) Come up to the room and unpack.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

KATE. This is the dullest spot on God's own earth. *(Mary and Kate exit into the hotel. Kate smiles at Goldsborough as she passes. He gives her a somewhat formal bow.)*

LYONS. She's a hellcat, Goldsborough. No doubt it's the demonstrative man will win her hand.

GOLDSBOROUGH. High spirits, sir, are indeed becoming. Though my horse may not agree. —What's the nubbin with Calvert County?

LYONS. They're withholding first payment for the railroad. Election's coming up. They aren't sure the local voter supports progress as much as we paid them to do.

GOLDSBOROUGH. If the county council pulls out, sir, the project dies. The other counties will follow.

LYONS. Pull out the contract again. Let's have a look.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Shall I dismiss the man in the hall, sir?

LYONS. Forgot about him. Why would he be waiting then?

GOLDSBOROUGH. No doubt to plead his case, sir, though he can have nothing fit to say that would sway our course, being little more than a corned bummer.

LYONS. Send him away. He's had the notice notice for a pair of days. The law gives him 'til noon tomorrow. Let it take its course.

GOLDSBOROUGH. And if he were to grow violent, sir?

LYONS. Here? In the hotel? How did his deportment strike you?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Singular, sir.

LYONS. All-fired?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Oddly —charming, sir.

LYONS. We've condemned his property, and he's charming?

GOLDSBOROUGH. I wish I could describe it otherwise.

LYONS. Might he listen to reason, if it came in monetary form?

GOLDSBOROUGH. He found our initial offers in that realm distasteful, sir. Turned each of them down going on a fortnight.

LYONS. Aye, but then he wasn't faced with imminent destruction. Many's the principled man who will barter once faced with the little end of the horn. That's the huckleberry above his persimmon.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

GOLDSBOROUGH. —And I reckon the county council, sir, would view our listening to a local s appeal with—appreciation.

LYONS. Send him in. (*Goldsborough opens the lobby door and speaks to the wings.*)

GOLDSBOROUGH. Mr.—? (*PRESTON enters.*)

PRESTON. Preston. And you be?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Goldsborough.

PRESTON. (*Tipping his hat.*) Howdedo. (*Preston looks around the room with a jaunty smile. He has a D branded on his right cheek. In his hand is a bill of property condemnation, torn in two. He spots Lyons and offers a friendly hand.*) Would you be the Lyons who tacked this here scrip on my door?

LYONS. I am.

PRESTON. Then howdedo. Preston. I come to place this back in the hands of its rightful owner. It s been torn in two a considerable chance, but that s on account of me getting all wrothy-like upon discovery of its portent. Apology accepted, Goldsby. But you can see still its got your name over it all writ and printed, so when I saw it I knowed it wudn t intended for myself at all, but nailed to the door upon some accidental purpose. In all my born days I ain t once taken what was rightfully not my own, and I ll be dad-blamed if I commence a life of purloinment at the present hour. Being an honest man of business, I am certain you agree and sympathize with the sentiments aforesaid. So let me jest plank what s yours and you can leave me what s mine and one don t hold nothin agin t other. Thank ye. (*Preston puts the notice on Lyons' desk and moves toward the outside door, ostensibly to exit.*)

LYONS. Mr. Preston, you can t be expecting our business concluded when I ve not said but two words.

PRESTON. Well, sir, there s hope and then there s expectation. I aimed for the first in my approach, but I own I planned for the last, as I m hoping I won t need to show. It s like anything, I reckon: with every oyster I shuck I could hope my life away, looking for that bodacious pearl that sets me up til judgment. But I don t expect it none, I just keep shucking. And neither

CIVILIZING LUSBY

do I nibble on any bait that looks to make that pearly promise. I gone and bit the hook once in this life and I reckon that s enough for any man. So when a crumb of good fortune drops of a sudden-like from God s supper plate to my mouth, I tell you its taste is all the sweeter. Like a tongueful of honeysuckle. And now I m done.

LYONS. ...Ever been to Blarney, Mr. Preston?

PRESTON. Is that Patuxent side?

GOLDSBOROUGH. It s in Ireland, sir.

PRESTON. Then I m afraid I must answer in the infirmative.

LYONS. (*Smiling.*) I must admit my first inclination was to dismiss you peremptorily. But upon hearing you speak, I find myself drawn in.

PRESTON. Ain t nothing you can do. Many a foe s made the same mistake.

LYONS. Mistake?

PRESTON. Of underestimation. There s some that might say it agin me, but I wasn t born in the woods to be scared by an owl.

LYONS. I thank you for the caution. Would you care for an anti-fogmatic?

PRESTON. A what?

LYONS. A drink?

PRESTON. I been known to suffer a smile in my time. Thank ye. (*Lyons signals for Goldsborough to pour them some whiskey.*) No more n a finger, now. My fice is waitin on me and I don t want a brick in my hat.

LYONS. You own a dog, then.

PRESTON. Indeed, sir, I do. Orneriest critter on four legs. And that s no boast.

LYONS. Oh?

PRESTON. Well, didn t I train him to be so? Blamed if I didn t. I ask you how a waterman can be expected to protect what s his without a mongrel fice as ornery as all wrath? He can t. (*Goldsborough hands them their drinks. Preston mutters a toast.*) Mud. (*Preston drinks alone. He notices the bank seal on the desk.*) That right there? Now that s what I call a powerful big pawn. I reckon you play chess with the big bugs.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

LYONS. That s not a pawn. It's a bank seal. I press it upon hot wax to signify official documents pertaining to bank business.

PRESTON. A similar game to chess, I reckon, but jest a mite more deadly.

LYONS. Deadly?

PRESTON. To one of us, mayhap, afore candle-lighting. Might be deadly to us all. (*Lyons crosses to the railroad plans.*)

LYONS. Brass tacks, Mr. Preston: I ve a railway to build.

PRESTON. The Bawlmer and Drum Point so it says on the marquee. A finer name I could not construct. (*Lyons points the locations out on the wall map.*)

LYONS. We hook up with the B & A in Annapolis, then come right down here through Saint Leonard and on to Drum Point. Your shack is right here, directly between where we are and where we need to be.

PRESTON. There is dead-on fame in not escaping the cartographer s eye. I d borrow it to get home if I couldn t espy my shack just barely two miles on through the window yonder. Course the question remaining unasked and unanswered is, What s in Drum Point?

LYONS. Money.

PRESTON. Last I heerd, you can t spend wilderness. Polite society frowns upon its use as legal tender. I suppose if it s fish or tobacco you re after, Drum Point will do you all right. But I can t see the use of a railroad for fish. That ain t a fish s way.

LYONS. Drum Point has deep water. It doesn t freeze during winter in this part of the bay. A train could carry coal all the way here from Washington County.

PRESTON. For the fish?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Of course not for the fish!

PRESTON. What s got yer knickers twisted, Goldsby? It s just a fish! — Forgive his intrusion, Lyons.

LYONS. A ship docking at Drum Point could unload cargo for the entire state at any time of the year, so long as there was a train to haul it away. Do you like it?

CIVILIZING LUSBY

PRESTON. I like it jest fine, seeing as it ain t been built. But I reckon a body is exceedingly taken by many things in the abstract that would be better off remaining so. Still it draws up nice, whether you build it or no.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Oh, it will be built, sir, and through your house. We have been promised capital not just from the state and from my father s bank, sir, but from the counties too, sir, of Anne Arundel and Calvert.

PRESTON. That is considerable coinage, Goldsby. Your pockets must be fuller n a trotline in fall. Here s somethin empty for you. (*Preston hands Goldsborough his empty glass.*) Let er rip. (*Lyons nods for Goldsborough to refill Preston s glass.*)

LYONS. We re not who you think we are, Mr. Preston. I don t own this venture. And Mr. Goldsborough? It s his father who owns the bank. We re here in Saint Leonard with one responsibility: to buy the land south of town for the right of way. And if it can t be bought willingly, to seize it through eminent domain. In that way, I m no different from a waterman who either catches the fish himself or steals the catch of his neighbor. (*Goldsborough hands Preston his drink.*)

PRESTON. I reckon that makes you the ornery dog, Goldsby.

LYONS. (*Smiling.*) You are a clever man, Mr. Preston. Just the sort of man who would seize an opportunity if it crossed his path.

PRESTON. In piscine form?

LYONS. In economic form. Want to know?

PRESTON. Do tell.

LYONS. There s money to be made. From the necessities arising from the railroad s presence. Hotels, livery, businesses, factories. South of Saint Leonard at the Drum Point wilderness. Right where I ve built the labor camp. I bought the land the camp is settled on. Not for the railroad. For myself.

PRESTON. Why?

LYONS. To bring civilization to this part of the state. It will arrive in the form of Lusby. (*Lyons directs Preston to his desk and unrolls a large drawing of the planned town.*) Hand me that. (*Preston hand Lyons the seal. Lyons uses it to keep the plans flat.*) There it is. Lusby, Maryland.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

PRESTON. Ain t that the beatin est thing I ever saw. You re gonna build a town.

LYONS. Once the railroad s up they ll all come soaring in, either to lease the land or buy it of me. And at three times the price.

PRESTON. Locals know bout this?

LYONS. A few. The serious ones who I think deserve to benefit.

PRESTON. What about Goldsby?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Of course I know about it!

PRESTON. Well, you re movin up right quick!

LYONS. As are you, Mr. Preston. Depending on what you plan to do with this information.

PRESTON. Haul up crabs.

LYONS. Yes, but once the railroad arrives, you could put them on the train and sell them anywhere in the country. You could invest in a new process being developed in Virginia, in which the crab meat is vacuum packed in tin, so it never spoils. You could export your crabs to Europe, to the whole world, using the ships at Lusby s docks.

PRESTON. Lay me down. I ain t some highfalutin' member of the codfish aristocracy. How can I be investing in a process if n the process don t invest in me none first?

LYONS. A fair question. I ll answer it with a story.

PRESTON. Hang a bit. *(Preston hands his empty glass to Goldborough and gestures for a refill.)* Go on. *(Swallowing his anger, Goldsborough refills Preston s glass, as Lyons talks.)*

LYONS. The man you see before you, Mr. Preston, is the product of America. When the missus and I set foot on these shores, there was never a man looked about him more sharply for societal and economic advancement than did Declan Lyons. I hadn t any luck, but for one day when a friend shows me a salt powder. Dropping a wee bit into a tumbler makes the water inside come alive with bubbles and foam that not only tickles your nose and delights your palate, but it heals your every ailment.

A healing draft will be wanted in the infantry," I says to myself, what with them blasting each other s brains out." So I up and make my case to

CIVILIZING LUSBY

Mr. Goldsborough senior at the Mercantile Trust and Deposit. And I leave his office with a pocketful of gold to the tune of three hundred dollars. That initial investment has since been transmuted into an enormous fortune thanks to Doctor Lyons' Effervescent Seltzer and Healing Elixir For The Afflictions of Wind, Watery Gripes, Fluxes and Other Disorders of the Stomach and Bowels.

PRESTON. Do tell. You re *that* Dr. Lyons?

LYONS. I am indeed.

PRESTON. Wasn t that the company went up for poisoning folks?

LYONS. ...I was fortunate enough to sell my interest in the concern before that fact became known. My partner was not so fortunate as that, however, and spent his final night on earth consuming the remaining inventory. But here s the nubbin: I took three hundred dollars and turned it into a fortune. And now I m about to turn it into my very own railroad town. So what is my point?

PRESTON. No idea.

LYONS. Industry, Mr. Preston. It s coming to Lusby. And I m prepared to provide you with the same opportunity to advance that was given me. With your permission and that of the Messrs. Goldsborough—junior and senior—I would like to revoke the notice of condemnation.

PRESTON. Permission granted.

LYONS. I will renew the offer of monetary remuneration for your home and land at fair market value. But in addition, I would like to extend to you, in the name of the Mercantile Trust and Deposit Corporation, a grant of three hundred dollars in gold, to be used as an initial investment in your fishing and canning venture.

PRESTON. Lay me down. —Goldsby! Mercantile Trust and Deposit s gonna plank me three hunderd in gold? —There s some as might consider that ironic. (*Mary runs on from the hotel.*)

MARY. Where is she?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Kate?

MARY. She s up and gone and no one in the hotel s seen so much as her shadow.

LYONS. (*To Goldsborough.*) Check the gig.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

GOLDSBOROUGH. My poor horse! (*Goldsborough exits through the street door. Mary sees Preston for the first time and screams.*)

LYONS. Upstairs, Mary. Goldsborough will find Kate.

MARY. Oh my God!

LYONS. Upstairs, I said. I'll look for her my own self as well.

MARY. The man's face is so catawumpiously chewed up—!

LYONS. Mary! —I apologize, Mr. Preston. Wait here, why don't you. (*Lyons escorts Mary off through the door to the hotel. Preston begins to sing.*)

PRESTON. SO LIGHTLY WE DANCE ON THE WAVE,

SO BOLDLY WE PULL GAINST THE TIDE,

EACH HEART IS SO LIGHT, SO BRAVE

WHEN HIS FAIR ONE IS BY HIS SIDE;

ROW, MERRILY ROW... (*As he sings, he removes a stick of dynamite from his coat and removes a floorboard. He connects the fuse of the dynamite to another fuse beneath the floor. As he replaces the floor board, the railroad plans catch his eye. Preston trails off as something in the plans catches his eye. He chuckles, pours himself a drink, and sits in the desk chair, facing the plans, with his back to the audience. Pause. Kate's laughter is heard from off. She runs on through the street door. Preston surprises her when he speaks. He remains seated facing upstage while talking to Kate. Perhaps, occasionally, he will turn his head showing us his left cheek. She does not see his right cheek.*) Beg pardon, Miss.

KATE. I didn't know anyone was here.

PRESTON. No, I reckon you didn't neither from the start I guv you, though I allow I'm one to make a black barr shy like a colt at a gunshot. I assure you my intention was not now, nor never, to put the skeer into a maiden in bloom such as you.

KATE. You have a singular mode of expression, sir.

PRESTON. It's been known to make a fish smile. I'm waitin' on Lyons, at present, like a warshed up oyster for the gulls. Know him?

KATE. He's my father.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

PRESTON. Yer the horse thief. I reckon wherever you re at, the others will follow, so please accept my invitation to make yourself comfortable. I d be much obleeged to behold your old man or Goldsby in corporeal form. You ain t caught sight of them during your exterior perambulations?

KATE. I did not. And they didn t catch me neither.

PRESTON. A conclusion I cannot contradict.

KATE. You re not a camp man?

PRESTON. You are correct in that assumption, Miss Lyons. Local boy made good.

KATE. Dressed like that, you don t look as though you ve made good at all.

PRESTON. Well, miss, there s them that s born hard and them that s born soft. Sadly, some of the unfortunate soft are forged harder than they previously were or ever wanted to be, upon the flaming hearth of experience.

KATE. Mr. Goldsborough should enter that forge, if he s fixing on me.

PRESTON. He the reason you broke reins?

KATE. I have no reins.

PRESTON. The wildest horse in Assateague don t run without a reason.

KATE. I was running from my mother.

PRESTON. For?

KATE. Excitement, I reckon. To cross her.

PRESTON. There s trouble comes from g hals as seek excitement.

KATE. What do you know about it. (*Kate turns away from Preston.*)

PRESTON. Excitement s one of them things as provides more pleasure from the twin vantages of anticipation and safety. If excitement came courting in Saint Leonard Town, a body would sour on it quicker n a landed perch in the sunlight. (*Preston turns fully downstage, revealing his right cheek. Kate still does not look at him.*)

KATE. Go on! I would welcome danger like the Ladies Auxiliary. This town is dull enough to beat the Dutch.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

PRESTON. There s some as might allow that something beneficial. If a body aims to disappear, there s many a worse neck of timber to do it in than Saint Leonard.

KATE. Couldn t I disappear in a jolly place like Baltimore just as easy as here? I could too. Not that I have a mind to. A girl like me wants to be seen. Baltimore is dull as anywhere when mother won t let me— (*Kate screams, having seen Preston s full face.*) Oh, it s too hideous!

PRESTON. I daresay it is, Miss. But it s a fathom worse from the perspective at which I view it.

KATE. What happened to your face? Is it a scar?

PRESTON. More like a reminder.

KATE. Of what?

PRESTON. Miss, my face ain t fit to be seen by a dainty young un, I know. But I endeavor to amend its limitations through buoyance of temper, which I recommend you do not test. (*Preston pulls a pistol from within his jacket and holds it in front of Kate s face. Beat. His tone of voice remains the same.*) Now you go on and fetch me Lyons.

KATE. (*Relishing the danger.*) I daresay you are a very dangerous man.

PRESTON. I daresay you re correct in that assertion, Miss. I ain t here to cut shines. I have seen the elephant.

KATE. What do you think my father would do if you were to shoot me?

PRESTON. Based on the way you behave in front of a revolver, I m a-guessin' he d finally get a good night s sleep. Now, I m a-gonna apologize for expressing my impatience with such a forthright flash of pistol.

KATE. No need to apologize.

PRESTON. You are a gracious and understanding member of your class and persuasion.

KATE. I like it. You provide me with the first excitement since my arrival. (*Pause. Preston lowers the gun, impressed.*)

PRESTON. Ain t you the beatin est girl I ever did see. —But admiration ain t interest. Go fetch the old man.

KATE. (*Insulted by his indifference.*) You re an impolite and ugly man who doesn t know nothing about the proper treatment of a lady.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

PRESTON. I acknowledge that corn, Miss. I am a man who seen trouble more than the standard ration. But there s an offer on the table, and see if I don t say my say full chisel. (*Mary enters from the lobby.*)

MARY. I should have known you d— (*She spots Preston and screams. Preston puts the gun away. He is not distressed by Mary s screams.*)

PRESTON. This aims to be a considerable situation.

MARY. Declan! Help!

KATE. Mother—

MARY. Are you hurt, Kate? Did he touch you? Declan! (*Preston calmly sits in the desk chair.*) Leave my daughter alone, you great soaplock!

PRESTON. Show me a boodle o' daughters and watch if I don t leave the shebang of em. (*Goldsborough enters hurriedly from outside.*)

GOLDSBOROUGH. What s going on? (*Mary drags Kate behind Goldsborough for protection.*)

KATE. Mother, stop!

MARY. Mr. Goldsborough, you saved us!

GOLDSBOROUGH. What s the matter?

MARY. That man. He pulled a revolver on my Kate!

GOLDSBOROUGH. Pulled a revolver?!

KATE. Not pulled. He showed it to me—

GOLDSBOROUGH. Showed it?

KATE. I asked to see it.

MARY. Why in the name of God s green earth would you ask that?!

KATE. I ve never seen one to touch before.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Did he threaten you?

MARY. He was screaming like all creation!

KATE. That was you, Mother.

MARY. (*Angry, then embarrassed.*) That s gum! I never—! Well— I m thinkin I might have supposed rashly.

GOLDSBOROUGH. So, this man did *not* threaten you, Hon? (*Kate shakes her head. Goldsborough looks to Mary.*)

MARY. But he *is* ugly.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Don t worry bout a thing, Hon. I will see to this.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

MARY. We are grateful, Mr. Goldsborough. —Kate?

KATE. (*Reluctantly.*) I don't deserve such repeated displays of your kindness. (*Preston lets out a wry guffaw. He maintains his cheerful demeanor despite the increased tension among the other characters.*)

GOLDSBOROUGH. This incident, Mr. Preston, may disincline us toward your suit.

PRESTON. Go to, Goldsby. Lyons is the biggest toad in this puddle. Your threats are as worthless as a Jeff Davis dollar.

GOLDSBOROUGH. I am the corporate representative of the Mercantile Trust & Deposit Company. I believe you know that name?

PRESTON. I am painfully familiar with that institution.

GOLDSBOROUGH. And I think you know, sir, that they have the money and the power to build whatever and wherever they wish.

PRESTON. (*Standing.*) I reckon they do too. —Exceptin' one place: through my house.

MARY. Careful, Mr. Goldsborough, he's got a revolver.

PRESTON. For protection, Ma'am. An' an' Arkansas toothpick and a pair of fists. I don't aim to use 'em less'n a body tries to take somethin' rightfully mine. But I'm pretty creative with 'em when struck by the Muse.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Do you threaten me, sir?

PRESTON. No more'n I threatened these womenfolk, and no less'n yer threatnin' me with yer notice o' condemnation.

GOLDSBOROUGH. (*Getting in Preston's face.*) And if I suggested, sir, that the bill I posted on your door, sir, is a threat to *you*, sir? A threat, sir, that will be carried out tomorrow morning, sir, at nine a.m. sharp, sir! What, sir, would you say to that?

PRESTON. I would say your threat suffers from too many 'sirs.'" (*Preston is deadly serious for the first time. Quiet, still, powerful.*) —Don't sway me from the sunshine, Goldsby. I am the northernmost point of my moral compass. And I will exfluncticate a regiment of Fancy Dans.

MARY. Mr. Goldsborough, don't do anything rash.

KATE. (*Thrilled.*) Leave them be, Mother. (*Goldsborough, seeing an opportunity to withdraw with dignity, turns on Kate.*)

CIVILIZING LUSBY

GOLDSBOROUGH. Hon, I must ask you to leave business to the menfolk.

KATE. I was! Fight him!

MARY. Kate!

GOLDSBOROUGH. (*Gesturing to the lobby door.*) ...Would you excuse us, Mr. Preston?

PRESTON. Happy to obleege, Goldsby. Controlling women s a fool s errand. Stick to fish. (*Preston exits into the lobby, tipping his hat to Kate before he leaves. Kate smiles.*)

KATE. (*A compliment*) He s terribly ugly, isn t he.

MARY. Enough to scare the Deuce himself, begging your pardon.

KATE. What was the mark he carried on his face?

MARY. Looked like the letter D, it did.

KATE. He told me he got it from an elephant.

MARY. Mary and Joseph, that s neither a gift nor a giver I hope to encounter.

GOLDSBOROUGH. I am certain the man said he had seen the elephant, Hon, not that an elephant gave it him.

KATE. What s the difference?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Seeing the elephant means you fought in the rebellion. —Up til now I had never before seen a branded man, but my father, I heard tell, saw them collected like cattle during the recent unpleasantness.

KATE. Branded? Whatever for?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Desertion, Hon. The Rebs used to do it. If they caught a man that had fled the ranks, they would heat an iron white hot and burn a D into the man s cheek. Mark him up good, so s he would display his shame for life. That man Preston is nothing more than an absquatulating reb!

MARY. Do tell! In Maryland!

GOLDSBOROUGH. This ain t Bawlmer, Mrs. Lyons. Rebs was all chased out o' there by Mr. Lincoln, God rest his soul. But when they left Bawlmer, they come down here to enlist for the south. There was many a man down Saint Leonard way whose heart did beat for secession.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

MARY. Swan to mercy! As low as that I never did see. First to betray your nation, and then to betray the ones as was betraying the nation in the first place! That s *twice* a traitor!

KATE. But that would make him not a traitor.

GOLDSBOROUGH. What!

KATE. If he betrayed the people who were betraying the constitution, then by logic he should be a patriot!

GOLDSBOROUGH. No, Hon.

KATE. Think about it!

GOLDSBOROUGH. I don t need to th—

MARY. You know that makes sense? By logic?

GOLDSBOROUGH. It doesn t make a lick of sense, by logic or what have you. Logic is a science that, as a general rule, neither befits nor becomes womenfolk. I must ask you to leave its exercise to the men.

MARY. We do apologize, Mr. Goldsborough.

KATE. But—

GOLDSBOROUGH. Feel no pity for that plug-ugly deserter, Hon; his den of secession is all that stands between us and a successful railroad venture. (*Lyons enters from the outside door.*)

LYONS. And you re here again, with me running through town like a convict on the lam.

KATE. Father, I met the most interesting man!

LYONS. Not now, Kate. Mary, mind your daughter tight like. The men ve got business, if n you don t mind. (*Lyons gestures for Mary to take Kate to the lobby.*)

MARY. I ll not be takin' her that way, and him in wait like a tiger on the prowl.

LYONS. Who?

KATE. The man I met. Such a delightful character, Father.

MARY. Aye, if it s danger you delight in.

LYONS. Preston?

GOLDSBOROUGH. He threatened Miss Kate with a revolver, sir.

KATE. That s gum!

CIVILIZING LUSBY

MARY. Kate!

KATE. It is!

MARY. Whether it is or not, a young lady should not be using such a word as that. Mr. Goldsborough, I apologize. I can't for the life of me guess where she heard—

KATE. From you.

MARY. That's gum! —Begging your pardon.

LYONS. What a waste of a day. Fetch him in. We'll fix his flint directly.
(Mary opens the hall door. Preston enters. He tips his hat to the ladies.)

PRESTON. I do thank you most kindly, Mrs. Lyons. Miss Kate.

MARY. Come along. *(Mary gestures for Kate and exits. As Kate follows, she turns back and smiles at Preston, who returns the smile. When Kate is gone, Preston smiles at Goldsborough. Goldsborough does not smile.)*

PRESTON. Considerable peart, that one. G'hal in check now, fellers?
(Lyons and Goldsborough decide to ignore the remark.)

LYONS. Three hundred dollars, Mr. Preston. Do you like that offer?

PRESTON. *(Jovially.)* Three hundred dollars. Woo-wee. I reckon as offers go that's about the worst one ever received my whole life.

GOLDSBOROUGH. You scoff at three hundred dollars, sir? It's twice the value of your entire property.

LYONS. Reject this offer, Mr. Preston, and we will condemn your home. A militia stands on my order to enforce that writ. I will come after you with everything.

PRESTON. And I'm prepared to defend what's mine with every weapon I got. But in a final stab at avoiding bloodshed, I'll tell you something you overlooked—just to show you there's no hard feelings and to recompense you for the smiles. See your plan here? I gave it a right good eyeballing afore you was where you see yourself now. See: My shack's dry this time of year, sure enough, but most other times it's situated on a right smart swamp.

LYONS. What do you mean?

PRESTON. I mean even if I slung your offer on my shoulder like a bundle and you built through my domicile, not six months later, that rail bed of

CIVILIZING LUSBY

yours would sink faster n an ironclad with a blowhole. Train or no. Blup! Right into the swamp.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Our surveyors, sir, are the finest in Baltimore.

PRESTON. Well, they did a fine job in Bawlmer. It s a beautiful city, with well-parceled land. But down here they should have set your right of way bout a mile westerly.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Who are you, to consider yourself a specialist on this subject?

PRESTON. Lieutenant A. C. Preston, sir, Surveyor and Topographical Engineer, Maryland Guard Company B, Twenty-first Virginia Volunteer Infantry, CSA! Ready to fight! Permission to be dismissed, sir! Permission granted! Sir, yes, sir! (*Preston salutes and marches off through the outside door.*)

GOLDSBOROUGH. I d no idea the mental effects of secession could be so devastating.

LYONS. Was it a surveyor he said he was?

GOLDSBOROUGH. No doubt his career was curtailed by the scar he bears.

LYONS. And what of our lot? Have they no mention in their surveys made of wetlands, and us about to lay great, iron tracks on that same patch of earth?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Our surveyors have not mentioned wetlands, sir, but I m more inclined to pitch tent in their camp than his. The sooner we re rid of that disgraced waterman the better.

LYONS. Pull reins, Mr. Goldsborough. You and I would be remiss if we didn t investigate his claim. If the track is destined to sink, there s a militia of investors liable to descend upon your Da s bank.

GOLDSBOROUGH. If I may take the liberty, sir, that is my father s concern. The surveyors have lain the route, sir. Who are we to question it?

LYONS. For the sake of the thriving metropolis of Lusby as will be, I need that railroad built square. My money s in Lusby.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Exactly, sir. And if we were to move the right of way a mile west, where would we be? The workman s camp, sir.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

Downtown Lusby—which the bank would purchase at ten cents on the dollar or condemn outright.

LYONS. You re willing to risk a run on your Da s bank? The bank that s raised and nurtured you since you was babby?

GOLDSBOROUGH. There will be no run, sir. If the railroad sinks, more money will be required to prop it up—a bridge. More money means more loans. More loans means more profits.

LYONS. You re as slippery as one of Preston s fish, Goldsborough.
(*Goldsborough bows, proudly.*) Still, it s best for both Lusby and the bank if this bridge is built first go-round, rayther than waiting on calamity. I m off to seek an answer from our survey team.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Very good, sir. And the militia must wait until dawn to visit Mr. Preston?

LYONS. Aye, we are legally bound to withhold the militia until morning. -Rayther a shame, really. If a crew of local men, or camp men, considered their interests threatened and did some harm to Mr. Preston this evening, we d be powerless to prevent it. (*Goldsborough smiles. Lyons opens the door to the lobby. Mary enters after he calls for her.*) Mary. —I m off to the right of way, back in a quarter hour s time.

MARY. Oh aye, Declan. (*Lyons grabs his hat and leaves through the outside door. Goldsborough crosses to his hat.*) Will you be following in his wake, Mr. Goldsborough?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Business of my own, Mrs. Lyons.

MARY. Can it wait five minutes upon business of *my* own?

GOLDSBOROUGH. What sort of business?

MARY. The sort they call of a personal nature.”

GOLDSBOROUGH. Concerning myself?

MARY. Aye.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Perhaps this evening—?

MARY. But five minutes of your time won t bring down a railroad.

GOLDSBOROUGH. —I am at your service.

MARY. Thank you. I always knew you was a good sort. It s my own Patrick you put me in mind of, God save him.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

GOLDSBOROUGH. Your son?

MARY. Oldest and favorite, as he then was, 'til conscription and confederate artillery robbed me of him, along with his four brothers.

GOLDSBOROUGH. The nation honors the sacrifice of your sons, ma'am. Each of them died in glory, in service to the Union. There is no more noble cause in Christendom.

MARY. Where did you fight then?

GOLDSBOROUGH. I didn't. My father bought a proxy.

MARY. Ah. We hadn't that luxury yet. —Wealth is a wondrous balm, Mr. Goldsborough, but it cannot smooth the loss of five sons.

GOLDSBOROUGH. I'm sorry.

MARY. Have you no brothers or sisters?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Not a one, ma'am. We're Episcopal.

MARY. (*Disappointed.*) Oh.

GOLDSBOROUGH. But you can't get far in Maryland without at least a passing regard for the Pope.

MARY. Oh aye. —It's all his hopes for the future your Da must be harnessing to you.

GOLDSBOROUGH. His expectations for me are indeed great, but so should every father's be, I warrant.

MARY. And mother's. Our Kate is all that's left us. I'll do anything to protect her and see she's situated right in this life. My expectations for her are just as great as any set forth by Declan for our sons, God rest their souls.

GOLDSBOROUGH. It does you credit, ma'am.

MARY. —What do you think of our Kate, Mr. Goldsborough?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Think?

MARY. Aye.

GOLDSBOROUGH. —She is pleasant company, certainly, when she has a mind to be. High spirited. Independent.

MARY. A proper husband could tame her of that, I swan.

GOLDSBOROUGH. I wish the man luck with that task, ma'am.

MARY. Is there nothing else you're thinking about her?

CIVILIZING LUSBY

GOLDSBOROUGH. I don't understand.

MARY. Not so much *think* about her—as feel.

GOLDSBOROUGH. ...Mrs. Lyons—

MARY. She's a pretty one, you can't deny.

GOLDSBOROUGH. All the laborers think so.

MARY. And you?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Well... I wish they didn't!

MARY. You're jealous then?

GOLDSBOROUGH. I wouldn't say—

MARY. Don't walk it back. Confess it: you're human. Aye, it's a failing, Mr. Goldsborough, one we all suffer from. But it's not a crime.

GOLDSBOROUGH. And what if I am jealous of the laborers? It's not likely to win me a smile from her.

MARY. You don't say.

GOLDSBOROUGH. My every effort to please is met with gall.

MARY. And you don't think that was her intention all along?

GOLDSBOROUGH. I couldn't say either way.

MARY. Of course you can't. You're a man. But I'm telling you it was.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Why would Kate want to make me jealous?

MARY. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Is this a family trait? Are all the Goldsboroughs so prone to idiocy?

GOLDSBOROUGH. You mean she—?

MARY. Why else?!

GOLDSBOROUGH. You know this?

MARY. Of course I know it, I'm her mother. Why else would we have come? What business has a pretty girl like Kate at Saint Leonard but to accept your proposal?

GOLDSBOROUGH. My proposal?! —Oh, but I haven't—

MARY. Not *yet* you haven't.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Yes, I see. But—

MARY. There's no but about it. Either you love my Kate or you don't. It's as simple as that.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

GOLDSBOROUGH. I wish it were. You see, my father—

MARY. What s he to do with it?

GOLDSBOROUGH. I mentioned his expectations, Mrs. Lyons. They need to be met.

MARY. What sort of expectations?

GOLDSBOROUGH. For the bank. For me. For the continuation of the family.

MARY. You re talking to a woman who bore six children, Mr. Goldsborough, who s the eighth of a brood of ten her own self. I assure you Kate s bred from fertile stock.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Mrs. Lyons—

MARY. *(Yelling off.)* Kate, get in here.

GOLDSBOROUGH. There s no need for Kate to— *(Kate has entered during the above.)*

KATE. No need for me to what?

MARY. Turn around, Kate. Thank you. There, Mr. Goldsborough. Have a look. Those are childbearing hips upon her.

KATE. Mother!

GOLDSBOROUGH. That s not what I—!

MARY. They re certain to furnish an army of Goldsboroughs for your Da s expectations. That is if you do your duty by her as God intends.

KATE. I shan t listen! *(Kate moves to exit. They all speak over each other.)*

GOLDSBOROUGH. Please, Hon, don t—!

MARY. Where are you off to?

KATE. You can t make me stay!

GOLDSBOROUGH. *(Silencing all.)* Miss Kate, may I have a word with you in private? ...Please. *(Kate turns to him.)*

MARY. *(Quietly, unable to contain herself.)* Ooooo, won t this be lovely!?

KATE. Private, Mother.

MARY. Sure an old woman won t get in the way. *(They glare at Mary, who eventually takes the hint and exits into the lobby, barely suppressing her glee.)*

CIVILIZING LUSBY

KATE. Very well, Mr. Goldsborough. Here I am. Though I can't imagine what could occasion your request.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Can't you, Hon?

KATE. Have you and Mother contrived to identify another flaw in me that requires correction?

GOLDSBOROUGH. On the contrary, Hon. She was talking of your strengths to beat the Dutch.

KATE. And you?

GOLDSBOROUGH. It did me good to hear them spoke.

KATE. You had not observed them on your own?

GOLDSBOROUGH. I saw them well enough. Every man had.

KATE. (*Slightly offended.*) Is that so?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Well, the camp men—

KATE. What *about* the camp men?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Nothing. Not a thing, Hon.

KATE. What's your point, Mr. Goldsborough?

GOLDSBOROUGH. I don't know that I quite have one at present.

KATE. Exactly. You're on safer ground taking the straight road. Stray from it and you'll sink in the marsh.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Undoubtedly you are correct.

KATE. Ain't I keen for a man who's direct?

GOLDSBOROUGH. —Are you?

KATE. (*Slightly annoyed.*) Yes!

GOLDSBOROUGH. Ah. (*He straightens and clears his throat. Kate sits and poses for the proposal for which she has always dreamed.*) Miss Lyons—

KATE. Kate.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Kate—Hon— Your mother—

KATE. Don't mention my mother.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Right. —I understand I have aroused—certain feelings in your breast—

KATE. It's *my* feelings you'll be talking about? It's another's I want to hear about.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

GOLDSBOROUGH. Whose?

KATE. Take a stab!

GOLDSBOROUGH. I m certain my father—

KATE. I don t care a hooter for your old man s rusty guts! I wanna hear *your* feelings! Ain t I waiting a month of Sundays for you to spit em out? I ain t, neither!

GOLDSBOROUGH. (*Affronted.*) Miss Lyons, I am trying to make you a proposal of marriage.

KATE. I know you are, you stammering saucebox! And I am trying to say yes! (*Beat. Goldsborough smiles.*) But only if you do it right! (*Kate calms down.*) A girl has dreams, Mr. Goldsborough. She plans for the important occasions in her life.

GOLDSBOROUGH. (*Seeking help.*) Are the plans written down?

KATE. Never mind. I ll navigate from the crow s nest. (*Kate poses again. She directs Goldsborough to kneel. He does so.*)

GOLDSBOROUGH. Kate— My *dear* Kate, from the moment I first spied you, I was enslaved. (*Kate makes a face. Goldsborough corrects.*) Enraptured—by your beauty, and the blunt force of your charm.

KATE. Blunt force?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Meaning strength. Power.

KATE. All right.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Like getting whacked with a cosh.

KATE. Let s go with effervescence.”

GOLDSBOROUGH. Effervescence—

KATE. —of your charm. Go on.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Yes. Well, ever since I saw them, Hon, I ve been dead set on stupid behavior.

KATE. Really?

GOLDSBOROUGH. *Dangerous* behavior!

KATE. Oh, Mr. Goldsborough! —I m afraid I don t know your christian name.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Cienega Creek. —I was named for a glorious victory in the Mexican War. The final revolt of the Pueblo Indians.

KATE. Cienega Creek...? Is there a shorter version for family?

CIVILIZING LUSBY

GOLDSBOROUGH. Sinny.

KATE. (*Doubtful.*) Sinny?

GOLDSBOROUGH. We can stick to Mr. Goldsborough, if you like.

KATE. No no. It will do. Go on—Sinny.

GOLDSBOROUGH. As I was saying, Hon, you've driven me to dangerous actions, like the great battle whose name I bear. Would you have mercy on a burning soul? Calm my wrath, Kate, by deigning to accept this rebellious hand in marriage.

KATE. Oh, yes! (*They embrace.*)

GOLDSBOROUGH. You've made me the happiest of men.

KATE. I've never seen such passion in you before. How could I say no to such fire?!

GOLDSBOROUGH. It was always there on the inside. Civility is a mask worn by many a torrid man.

KATE. I hope I haven't calmed your wrath too much by accepting you.

GOLDSBOROUGH. (*Relieved.*) I wouldn't have proposed at all had your mother not sworn you'd accept.

KATE. What?

GOLDSBOROUGH. She gave me a slam-bang guarantee.

KATE. And that's the only reason you proposed, because you knew I'd say yes?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Nothing pleases an investor like a guaranteed return.

KATE. You're marrying me because you think I'm *low risk*??? —What happened to all that talk of danger and rebellion?

GOLDSBOROUGH. So it was. You think my father wants me hitched to an upstart Irish Catholic? God, it will cause him no end of fury. I wouldn't be surprised if he cuts me out. Perhaps we should keep the engagement secret for awhile—

KATE. Marrying me is your idea of rebellion?!

GOLDSBOROUGH. Yes, but don't worry. I hedged the bet. I overheard your father speaking some weeks ago about his plans for Lusby. In light of

CIVILIZING LUSBY

it, I made a small land purchase myself. Just north of the workman s camp. If the old man cuts me, we can always live here.

KATE. I hate it here!

GOLDSBOROUGH. Naturally, I hope he ll come round once the children are born.

KATE. I m not having children with you and your silly name, or even to mollycoddle your closed-minded father. I never want to see you again!

GOLDSBOROUGH. Your tone is sharper than a bayonet.

KATE. Like you ve ever seen one to know!

GOLDSBOROUGH. What s the matter, Hon?

KATE. Don t Hon” me. I m not marrying a coward.

GOLDSBOROUGH. A coward? Says who?

KATE. Me, you, and the mirror. That s who.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Do tell!

KATE. Not proposing till you know I ll accept! Not telling Old Rusty Guts til there s children! If that ain t the yellow stripe, I don t know one from Adam.

GOLDSBOROUGH. (*Collecting his dignity.*) What are you trying to say?

KATE. Can t I make it any plainer? I can t, neither. You re just a slithering worm of a man.

GOLDSBOROUGH. Careful, Kate. Don t test my bravery.

KATE. What bravery? You didn t even fight the war. Paid a man to do it for you. How many elephants you see, huh?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Bravery takes many forms.

KATE. I don t see any of them forms in you. Swan to mercy, that deserter Preston has more spine than you.

GOLDSBOROUGH. A deserter??? Now you go too far! It s one thing to question past judgments of mine which I know to be correct, but I refuse to be equated with secession!

KATE. Then you better show more gumption than Jeff Davis stealing out of Richmond in a dress!

GOLDSBOROUGH. Very well. I shall. Wanna know?

KATE. Do tell.

CIVILIZING LUSBY

GOLDSBOROUGH. Your father ordered me to round up a posse and rough up the deserter.

KATE. You or some real men?

GOLDSBOROUGH. Me! —And them, of course. But mostly me. That's what I was fixing to do before your mother crossed my cart with her foolish marriage business. *(Kate scoffs.)* Now I'm thinking I may go it lonesome like.

KATE. Do it.

GOLDSBOROUGH. I reckon I might, too.

KATE. Stop reckoning and do it before I paint you yellow.

GOLDSBOROUGH. If I did: Would that— sway your thoughts more gently in my direction, Miss Lyons?

KATE. It don't affect me any way at all what you do.

GOLDSBOROUGH. I see. ...Still... I'm fixing to do it all the same.

(Pause. Kate pulls a small, single shot pistol from the desk and offers it to Goldsborough.)

KATE. What are you waiting for?

GOLDSBOROUGH. ...Nothing, I guess. *(Goldsborough takes the pistol. He walks to the outside door. He puts on a hat and turns back to Kate. She turns away from him.)* Goodbye, Miss Lyons. *(Goldsborough exits. Kate begins to cry.)*

KATE. Mama! *(Mary enters happily. She embraces Kate.)*

MARY. My baby's hitching up with a millionaire!

KATE. Oh, Mama, it's awful!

MARY. What did he do to you? Did he take a liberty? So long as he marries you, it's not a problem.

KATE. I turned him down!

MARY. You—???

KATE. I called him a coward and sent him off to get killed by the waterman!

MARY. Why the devil would you go and do that?

KATE. *(Shrugging pathetically.)* Why do I do anything?

MARY. *(Defeated.)* Christ Almighty, you're an overflowing handful.

KATE. Maybe I can catch him—!

CIVILIZING LUSBY

MARY. I m not having you run off again.

KATE. But he s getting away! Let me go to him.

MARY. And put you in the center of the hornet s nest? With your thirst for chaos? In thirty seconds them hornets d either kill you or make you their queen.

KATE. What do we do?

MARY. We find your father. He s at the surveyor s.

KATE. I know where that is. He s the handsome man that smiled at me.

MARY. Lead on. *(Kate and Mary exit as the lights fade.)*

END OF ACT 1

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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