

~~EDITH. (Beat.) Debbie, you an' Winnie git th' table set while I cover th' windows. Timothy, git goin' an' tell Cuffy an' yer pops t' s'mon. It's time t' eat. An' shut th' door!~~

~~(UNEX exits)~~

Scene Three

(A few notes on the guitar, hums and sounds from the ENSEMBLE, and a stomp take us to where LLOYD, CUFFY, and FRANK are staring out across the horizon at the approaching dust storm.)

LLOYD. *(Peering in the distance.)* This is th' third one in two weeks. S'like God's boiling dirt.

CUFFY. Last one was a complete blackout.

FRANK. 'Nuff t' keep us outta school, at least.

CUFFY. Lord knows, you NEED t' be in school, Frank. Ha ha ha

LLOYD. Not much left t' salvage. These dirt storms keep a' comin' an' rip up what we're strugglin' t' grow in th' first place. I hadn't tole Edith, but these dust storms have put us behind a bit on th' mortgage.

CUFFY. Ya gotta tell 'er, Lloyd.

LLOYD. I know, I know. She's juss . . . she's got so much t' deal with. An' . . . an' I don't wanna make it worse. She's th' backbone a' this family. Ya know that? When I got runned over by that horse cart a few years back, an' broke my leg, she had t' git that job at th' post office to help cover th' bills. I cain't harvest like I used ta. An' Alvis is givin' us so much trouble. Rayboy bein' sick . . . I cain't put this on 'er, too, Cuff.

CUFFY. She's yer wife. She'll understand.

~~(UNEX runs in.)~~

~~UNEX. Ma says t' s'mon! Supper's ready.~~

~~FRANK. Heard you got in trouble at th' schoolhouse again, Unex.~~

~~UNEX. So'd Debbie! (Rushes at FRANK.) An' STOP CALLIN' ME UNEX!!~~

~~LLOYD. (Grabbing him by the scruff.) Well, you WAS an UNEXpected lil varmit. Ha ha ha. Sorry, son, but mos' ever'body knows you as Unex. Sometimes we cain't escape th' truth.~~

(Beat.)

~~LLOYD. Now, go on an' tell yer momma we're comin' t' t' (looking toward the storm.) but so's that dust storm, so tell 'er t' cover th' windows an' git th' wet rags ready.~~

~~UNEX. Alright.~~

~~CUFFY. (Scowling at his lack of manners.) 'Cease me, son?~~

~~UNEX. Yessir.~~

(He exits.)

LLOYD. Frank, head on after Unex an' make sure Gary Ray's good an' covered up.

FRANK. Yessir.

(He exits.)

CUFFY. Rayboy still got th' cough?

LLOYD. Rattlin' like an ole shutter. His lungs are too weak t' handle all this dirt 'n th' air. Doctor came last week t' take a look at 'im. Said t' just make sure he keeps his nose an' mouth covered up real good. Th' dirt's killin' 'im.

CUFFY. *(Looking out towards the storm.)* Then, this next storm might juss do him in.

END

Scene Four

(A few notes on the guitar, hums and sounds [or various shouts of the upcoming storm] from the ENSEMBLE, and stomps take us back inside the Loftin house. Winds are beginning to pick up ahead of the impending dust storm. The family is eating a meager meal in silence. The dust storm howls outside, shaking the shack from time to time. It's unsettling and keeps everyone on edge, though they try and maintain normalcy. EDITH and WINNIE continue to cover up doors and windows with damp towels to try and keep the dirt from coming in.)

EDITH. C'mon, c'mon! Y'all eat b'fore th' dirt gets in.

MIKE. Maybe th' dirt'll make th' beans taste better.

LLOYD. *(Sternly, pointing his fork at him:)* Michael Lee, you'd better be grateful you have sump'in t'eat at all.

MIKE. But we've had beans fer a week straight.

EDITH. Ya git what ya git an' ya don't throw a fit.

LLOYD. Ya hear yer momma, Michael Lee?