

# THE OL' HOMESTEAD

Or

## Foreclosed With a Smile

By Sherry Roseberry

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## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(In order of appearance)*

**SAUNDERS:** Crooked Lawyer.  
**EGAR DUNTLEY:** Villain.  
**DELLA WATERS:** Accomplice.  
**MISS LILY LANG:** Heroine.  
**FAIRFAX FINCH:** Hero.  
**JESSICA GRANT:** Maid.  
**BOY:** Errand boy.  
**EUNICE KEARNEY:** An old, deaf lady.  
**WOODLEY MORTON:** A smitten old man.  
**RUFORD LANG:** Lil's younger brother.  
**RUFUS LANG:** Lil's youngest brother.  
**INA JONES:** A sister in second childhood.  
**IMOGENE JONES:** Another sister in second childhood.  
**DORIS FINCH:** A little sister of our hero.  
**AUNT AGATHA:** Poor but snobby aunt.  
**COUSIN CLAUDETTE:** Poor, homely cousin.

## **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

### **ACT I**

Scene 1 - A warm spring day, in Saunders' office.

Scene 2 - An hour later in the Lang living room.

### **ACT II**

Scene 1 - Little time has elapsed.

Scene 2 - Later that afternoon.

Scene 3 - That night when everyone is asleep.

### **ACT III**

Scene 1 - The next day.

Scene 2 - Later that afternoon at Saunders' office.

### **SETTING**

Two scene changes - Saunders' office and Lang living room. Use the same backdrop but different decor of late 1800s. The office contains a desk with papers on top, several chairs, and a hat rack with derby perched on top. A small settee is SR. The living room contains a couch CS with a rocking chair to the L. A potted plant sits on an end table near right side of couch. A hat rack is by the door USR and a desk with drawers USL, small desk CSL. Door to bedrooms CSR, door to veranda DSL, door to kitchen USL.

### **PROPS**

Desk papers; cleaning paraphernalia for Della; needlepoint with one large, straight needle and one large, bent needle; "dough" for Jessica's hands; hammer, saw and boards for Fairfax; telegram; coin; newspaper; football; white handkerchief; apple; plate of cookies and glass of milk; candle or oil lamp; eye glasses for Woodley; flowers in a vase; deed and pen; and pitcher and glasses.

Play appropriate melodramatic piano music, bird whistle (*filled with water*), and door chimes where noted.

## **COSTUMES**

- SAUNDERS - Wears a cut away suit, fancy vest and watch chain and derby hat.
- DUNTLEY - Wears the traditional villainous cape and hat. Wears a white bandage on his nose in Act II.
- DELLA - In Act I wears a hair cap, droopy skirt and blouse, worn-out apron and boots that are too big with hardly any shoe laces. In Act II, she wears a disguise consisting of a small coat, dark dress, pert hat and valise and cane. Her hair is gray and she is stooped a little. At night, she wears a long nightgown, night cap, and slippers.
- MISS LIL - Wears a simple, light colored, long dress, big bow in hair. In Act III she wears a Sunday-best dress.
- FAIRFAX - Wears bib overalls, hat, and no shoes. In ACT III he wears all white, a suit if possible.
- JESSICA - Wears a full dark skirt, white blouse, apron, and dusting cap.
- MESSENGER BOY - Wears a cap, knee pants, long socks, long sleeved shirt, suspenders.
- EUNICE - Is very old with dingy gray hair that has worked itself out of a bun at the nape of her neck. She wears an old baggy sweater and worn dress which is too short, and old socks which flop loosely around ankles. She carries an ear trumpet with her at all times. (*Can use long funnel for oil.*)
- WOODLEY - Wears baggy bib overalls over undershirt, and bedroom slippers. A belt is pulled tight with the end hanging loose. His hair is shaggy, salt and pepper.
- RUFUS and RUFORD - Wear knickerbockers, long sleeved shirts rolled to elbows, long white socks, and suspenders.
- INA and IMOGENE - Wear girlish clothes, shawls and perky hats on snow white hair full of fashionable ringlets.
- DORIS - Has long gold ringlets, short dress, long socks, a Shirley Temple type.
- AGATHA and CLAUDETTE - Wear expensive but warm clothing. Claudette's clothes are too small and too short. Her hair is braided over wires so they curl up on end and are tied with bows.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: SAUNDERS is asleep, snoring, on the settee. There is a loud KNOCK at the door. SAUNDERS jumps up and pretends to be busy at the desk as DUNTLEY, wearing traditional hat and cape, enters. PIANO - villain music.)*

DUNTLEY: I have it! I have it! *(Waving paper.)*

SAUNDERS: *(HIS hair disheveled.)* You have what, my good man?

DUNTLEY: I have proof that there is oil on the Lang property. I will be rich. RICH!!!

SAUNDERS: We! Remember, I was the one who stepped in the soggy mess.

DUNTLEY: Yes - quite right - we. *(To audience.)* The idiot is too stupid to realize just who he is dealing with. No matter, he will find out soon enough. *(To SAUNDERS.)* Now what did you find?

SAUNDERS: *(Looks through papers.)* I found nothing that will be of help to us. Robert Lang, Esquire, left nothing for his family to worry about. All debts were taken care of and a small nest egg was left for his daughter, Miss Lil, *(PIANO - a few light, airy notes.)* and his two sons.

DUNTLEY: Are you sure?

SAUNDERS: Positive. I've looked through everything. I was just finishing as you came in. *(Looks swiftly at the audience daring them to tell the truth.)*

DUNTLEY: Drats! *(Paces.)* How will I be able to get my hands on that property if I, er - we - can't foreclose. *(Stops.)* How are the taxes? Is she able to keep up with present debts?

SAUNDERS: *(Settles back in chair.)* She seems to be doing very well considering her boarders.

DUNTLEY: Boarders?

SAUNDERS: Yes. *(Stands, moves to front of desk.)* Mr. Lang had an old house on the, ahem, aforementioned property. He rented rooms to elderly people. After his death the house burned to the ground.

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SAUNDERS: *(Cont'd.)* Miss Lil took in those who couldn't find another place to stay. *(PIANO - Miss Lil's music.)*

DUNTLEY: Double drats! *(HE starts to pace again, thinking hard. SAUNDERS starts to pace right behind him.)* I have it! *(About turn and crashes into SAUNDERS.)* Out of my way! *(Shakes free.)*

SAUNDERS: Do you have an idea?

DUNTLEY: Yes. *(Chuckles.)* Plan A. I will buy it from her. At a very modest price, of course.

SAUNDERS: And if she won't sell?

DUNTLEY: Simple - Plan B. I will woo the girl and make her my blushing bride. Then I will own the oil and all that comes with it. *(Rub fingers together to indicate money.)*

SAUNDERS: Better figure out Plan C, because Plan B won't work. Miss Lil has already lost her heart to a strapping young man with high ideals, Fairfax Finch. *(PIANO - hero music.)*

DUNTLEY: *(Sneers at audience.)* Well then, I DO have a plan. We will steal the deed.

SAUNDERS: How? We just can't walk in and take it. We won't have an opportunity to look for the necessary papers.

DUNTLEY: Precisely. That's why we find someone in need of lodging. Someone who is down on luck, needing money desperately, and someone who is *(Chuckle.)* a little short on horse sense.

SAUNDERS: But where will you find someone who is down on luck, needing money, and not too bright to figure out what we are doing?

*(Just then DELLA enters with all her cleaning paraphernalia.)*

DELLA: *(Hardly glances at MEN.)* I'm 'ere to clean.

*(SHE goes DSL and plops her brushes and brooms as She prepares her bucket of water to mop taking a big swig of alcohol. The TWO MEN stare at her as she busies herself until she gets the funny feeling she is being watched.)*

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*(She glances up, stares at the audience, then over to the watching men then, with eyes wide, looks back to the audience. She glances back at the men and sees Duntley motioning to her. She looks all around then points to herself and mouths, "ME?!")*

DUNTLEY: *(With sickening charm.)* Yes, you, my little petunia.

DELLA: *(Unsure, SHE advances, glancing around to make sure HE is talking to her.)* Did I do somethin' wrong?

DUNTLEY: No, no, my dear. You have done nothing wrong. We merely need someone who can think for herself. Someone who isn't afraid to work for money. *(Moves to other side of HER.)* That someone, my dear, is you!

DELLA: Me! What can I do for you?

DUNTLEY: We need you to find us a little piece of paper called a deed.

DELLA: A deed. Is it yours?

DUNTLEY: No, it belongs to someone else.

DELLA: Someone else? Oh, no I won't. That's stealing!

DUNTLEY: No dear lady, we only mean to borrow it for a little while - ah - as a joke.

DELLA: Oh, well, that's different! *(SAUNDERS and DUNTLEY exchange meaningful looks over HER head.)* But I can't help you anyway - I'm too busy as it is.

DUNTLEY: Even for four hundred dollars? *(Both DUNTLEY and DELLA are shocked at the mentioned price.)*

DELLA: Four hundred dollars? *(SAUNDERS mouths the same to DUNTLEY.)*

DUNTLEY: All right, if you won't do it for four hundred, how about five hundred? *(SAUNDERS is about to protest but is stopped by DUNTLEY'S uplifted hand.)*

DELLA: Wow! For five hundred dollars I'd run up and down the middle of main street in my winter undies. *(DUNTLEY is nauseated at the thought.)*

DUNTLEY: My dear, you won't have to go so far. We just want you to procure a room at Lily Lang's place and look through her papers for the deed to her house.

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