

# ***THE HOUSE that SARAH BUILT***

*By  
Christina Hamlett*

## **Performance Rights**

To copy this text is an infringement of the federal copyright law as is to perform this play without royalty payment. All rights are controlled by Eldridge Publishing Co., Inc. Call the publisher for further scripts and licensing information.

On all programs and advertising the author's name must appear as well as this notice: "Produced by special arrangement with Eldridge Publishing Company."

## **Eldridge Publishing Company**

histage.com

© 1994 by Eldridge Publishing Company

Download your complete script from Eldridge Publishing  
<http://www.histage.com/playdetails.asp?PID=2179>

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**  
(6 M, 7 W. Extras as Indians.)

**SARAH WINCHESTER:** Eccentric and wealthy widow.

**MADAME LAMOUSE:** Sarah's spiritual advisor.

**CARLOTTA:** Sarah's maid.

**HENRY:** Sarah's butler.

**LUCAS:** Sarah's foreman.

**CHORUS:** Comprised of 4 maids, and 4 workmen.

**INDIANS:** 4-6 in feathers and war paint.

**CIRCA** - The turn of the century.

**SETTING**

All action takes place in Sarah's house, which was under construction in San Jose, California, between 1884 and 1922. The set is comprised of the following sections which are lit during individual scenes: DSR is a seance table and two chairs; UPS are three identical doors, behind which are a brick wall, a window and total blackness; DSL is a freestanding staircase that goes to a flat platform. Note: as accompaniment to the rhymed meter of the play, a director may choose to incorporate the beat of sticks, drums, or simple piano to simulate the sound of constant hammering.

### **COSTUMES**

Sarah is elderly and wears expensive, Victorian dresses. Madam Lamoose is a flamboyant, heavily made-up gypsy with lots of scarves and jangling jewelry. Carlotta and the four Maids wear gray and white uniforms and starched hats. Henry wears a butler suit. Lucas and the Workmen wear overalls. The Indians wear buckskin, feathers and war paint.

### **PROPS**

Crystal ball and business card for Lamoose; blueprints for Sarah; (optional) feather dusters for maids and hammers, saws, etc. for workmen.

### **LIGHTING**

Each of the three areas on stage is individually highlighted.

**SCENE 1**

*(AT RISE: LIGHTS come up DSL on the CHORUS of MAIDS, CARLOTTA and HENRY on the stairs and platform.)*

ALL: Rap, tap, rap, tap - will it never cease?  
Rap, tap, rap, tap - not a moment's peace!  
Rap, tap, rap, tap - always something new,  
Rap, tap, rap, tap - but it's never through!

MAID 1: She treats us all so kindly,

MAID 2: It's foolish to complain,

MAID 3: Yet all this constant pounding will drive us quite  
insane!

HENRY: Our lady's name is Sarah, a widow all alone.

CARLOTTA: She came into the valley to build herself a  
home.

MAID 4: Some say that she's eccentric,

MAID 1: Some say she's really sweet.

MAID 2: And all of them are wondering when this house will  
be complete!

ALL: Rap, tap, rap, tap - hammers day and night!  
Rap, tap, rap, tap - how it grows in height!

HENRY: They say that Sarah's haunted by the ghosts of  
spirits past,

CARLOTTA: And her only chance of living is to build a  
house to last.

MAID 3: A house of such proportion that folks will stop and  
stare.

MAID 4: And as they watch, they'll ask themselves,

ALL: What's going on in there???

MAID 1: Rap, tap, rap, tap

MAID 2: Stop her if you can.

MAID 3: Rap, tap, rap, tap

MAID 4: Here's how it all began -

*The House That Sarah Built*

- 5 -

*(LIGHTS go down on CHORUS and come up DSR where SARAH is consulting with MADAME LAMOOSE.)*

SARAH: *(Anxiously.)* Do you see them, Madame LaMoose? Do you see my beloved husband and little Annie?

LAMOOSE: *(Clucking HER tongue as she gazes into crystal ball.)* Tsk, tsk. My vision into the spirit realm is clouded today.

SARAH: Can't you do something?

LAMOOSE: *(Mysteriously.)* Perhaps. *(Spits on one of HER scarves and rubs the ball.)* Ah, much better! *(Peers intently.)* Hmm ... hmmm ...

SARAH: What is it?

LAMOOSE: *(Shaking HER head.)* It is not a lucky sign, Mrs. Winchester. I see danger. Much, much danger.

SARAH: Danger? From whom?

LAMOOSE: Indians.

SARAH: Indians? But there aren't any Indians in New Haven, Connecticut!

LAMOOSE: Shhh! Listen! *(The faint sound of TOM-TOMS starts and will grow louder.)* They are the spirits of those killed by your husband's rifle. The Winchester Rifle.

SARAH: But what does that have to do with me?

LAMOOSE: The spirits are angry with you for the fortune you came to possess. *(Peers closely at ball.)* A very large fortune, I see. Very large indeed.

*(The TOM-TOMS have grown louder. Stealthily, the INDIANS creep on stage to sneak up on SARAH.)*

SARAH: But I'm just an old lady. What would the Indians want with me?

LAMOOSE: Hmm ... hmmm. This does not look good, Mrs. Winchester. The spirits demand a high price to leave you alone.

SARAH: But that's ridiculous! *(Turns to get out of chair and screams when SHE sees the INDIANS; she immediately addresses MADAM LAMOOSE.)*

*The House That Sarah Built*

- 6 -

SARAH: *(Cont'd.)* How high a price would make them happy?

LAMOOSE: *(Consulting crystal ball.)* I see a house in the West. A small house at the start. Eight rooms, perhaps. And then it begins to grow. Larger and larger every day until it exceeds your wildest imagination.

SARAH: A house that grows? I don't understand.

LAMOOSE: You will build this house, Mrs. Winchester. And you will not stop building this house until the day you draw your last breath.

SARAH: And if I do everything you say, the Indian spirits will leave me alone?

LAMOOSE: They'll be gone like that! *(Snaps HER fingers and the INDIANS all exit.)*

SARAH: Thank you, Madam LaMoose! Is there anything else I should know?

LAMOOSE: *(Withdraws a business card from the sleeve of HER blouse.)* I have a brother in San Jose who's an architect. Look him up.

*(LIGHTS go down on seance corner and up DSL. Again, we see the chorus of MAIDS and BUTLER.)*

ALL: Rap, tap, rap, tap - so it did commence.

Rap, tap, rap, tap - sparing no expense!

MAID 1: She bought a crew of workmen and years' worth of supplies.

CARLOTTA: And every day of carpentry contained a new surprise.

MAID 2: She had a special purpose for every board and nail. A house of maze and tunnels to confuse the spirit trail.

HENRY: She kept the blueprints secret, which add to suspense.

CARLOTTA: Except each new addition made very little sense!

*The House That Sarah Built*

- 7 -

*(LIGHTS go down on chorus and come up on SARAH as she is crossing the stage with LUCAS the foreman. Sarah is carrying an open scroll of blueprint, which Lucas refers to during their scene.)*

LUCAS: Not to contradict you, ma'am, but this latest plan of yours just doesn't hold water.

SARAH: I'm not asking it to hold water, Lucas. I'm asking it to hold windows. An entire wall of them. What's so difficult about that?

LUCAS: *(Points to blueprints.)* The problem's right here, ma'am. If you put your windows along this wall, there's no view.

SARAH: So?

LUCAS: Well, most people like a view to look out on. Put your windows in that wall and the only thing they look into is the next room!

SARAH: I like windows, Lucas. Lots of windows. I want 10,000 of them at least. Now how is my fireplace coming along?

LUCAS: Which one? So far, we've built 47 of them.

SARAH: *(Points to blueprint.)* This one. The Italian marble.

LUCAS: I've been meaning to talk to you about that, ma'am. There's a slight problem.

SARAH: Problem?

LUCAS: Your plans don't seem to allow for a chimney. Now if you'll let me take out this section in the floor above -

SARAH: I don't want a chimney in that one, Lucas. Don't you know that a favorite way for spirits to enter a house from the outside is down through a chimney? *(Grins in satisfaction.)* The absence of one will trick them! Now, is there anything else?

LUCAS: *(Clears throat.)* Well, tomorrow is Christmas, ma'am and I was wondering -

SARAH: I'm a step ahead of you, Lucas! Your workmen will all be receiving a tidy bonus plus baskets of Christmas dinner for their families.

LUCAS: That's very generous, ma'am but I was wondering if-

### **End of Freeview**

Download your complete script from Eldridge Publishing  
<http://www.histage.com/playdetails.asp?PID=2179>

Eldridge Publishing, a leading drama play publisher since 1906, offers more than a thousand full-length plays, one-act plays, melodramas, holiday plays, religious plays, children's theatre plays and musicals of all kinds.

For more than a hundred years, our family-owned business has had the privilege of publishing some of the finest playwrights, allowing their work to come alive on stages worldwide.

We look forward to being a part of your next theatrical production.

Eldridge Publishing... for the start of your theatre experience!