

CIDER WITH ROSIE

by

LAURIE LEE

in a new adaptation

by

DANIEL O'BRIEN

3rd Draft

LIST OF CHARACTERS

ACTOR 1:

MARGE
HYSTERICAL WOMAN
BETTY GLEED
SIS ROBINSON
MISS FLYNN
VILLAGE GOSSIP #3
MRS MOORE
BOY #1
ALBERT DAVIES
LIZZY BERKLEY

ACTOR 2:

DOTH
GRANNY TRILL
CLARRY HOGG
SLOPPY ROBINSON
ROSIE BURDOCK
VILAGE GOSSIP #1
BOY #2
WILLIAM HOPKINS
HANNAH BROWN

ACTOR 3:

PHYL
GRANNY WALLON
CRABBY
VILLAGE GOSSIP #2
BOY #3
VINCENT
THE MAID
JO

ACTOR 4:

JACK
SIXPENCE ROBINSON
FATHER
UNCLE RAY
SINGING MAN #1
DANCING MAN
WALT KERRY
FRED BATES
MAURICE
JOSEPH BROWN
COWMAN #1
VICAR

ACTOR 5:

LAURIE
NUTMAN
BILL TIMBRELL
SAMMY ROBINSON
LESLIE
ALFRED HOPKINS

ACTOR 6:

TONY
STOSHER ROBINSON
SOLDIER
SINGING MAN #2
SPADGE HOPKINS
MR WELLS
THE SQUIRE
HAROLD
LANDLORD OF THE WOOLPACK
COWMAN #2

NOTES TO THE ADAPTATION

The story is that of the Lee family in the early part of the 20th century. Its inhabitants and events have been recorded for, and handed down to, posterity according to the vagaries of the writer's memories. Laurie and his siblings are only too happy to tell it as they remember it and to reclaim it as their own.

They all share comments, observations and sometime even whole speeches with us from an adult perspective. These direct address moments are marked as *[d.a.]* before the speech. For the rest of the time they are themselves as children or as other characters in the story.

Mother's voice is her children's shared, collective memory of her - too diverse and too valuable to be embodied. She is not represented in person. Her voice joins in the telling of the story. She is recognisable by the music which accompanies her speeches and perhaps, if necessary, by a physical signifier such as a shawl which can be passed around. The actual speaker of her words is indicated inside a square bracket.

It is intended that the sounds of the countryside are created by the performers, vocally or instrumentally, and this is indicated in the stage directions by underlined description of the sounds. They should only be live sound and never recorded. The adaptation assumes the Actor #6 plays most of the music.

I think some of the poems are recited rather than sung, but there is always music behind them. On some occasions I have indicated where the words are either spoken or sung. On most occasions I have, unhelpfully, left it to others to decide. I have included the whole poems not wanting to cut, but realise that some of them are far too long and will inevitably suffer that fate.

When the children speak as children they use the Gloucestershire accent at its broadest. As adults telling their story, the accent has become modified over the years. When they speak as characters in the story they use the appropriate accent. When writing I had envisaged the poetry which isn't sung being given in R.P. although I can conceive of moments where slipping back into a rural accent or something else used for comic value might be more appropriate, especially

where the verse isn't Laurie Lee's.

PROLOGUE

The adult Lee family gathers. PHYLLIS plays the violin. TONY plays the cello – it is a tune we are to hear later in the play when we first arrive at the cottage. LAURIE stands

LAURIE O the wild trees of my home,¹
 Forests of blue dividing the pink moon,
 The iron blue of those ancient branches
 With their berries of vermillion stars.

JACK I remember, I remember.

MARGE What?

ALL In that place of steep meadows
 The stacked sheaves are roasting
 And the sun-torn tulips
 Are tinders of scented ashes.

DOTH An' I.

MARGE What?

DOTH I remember too, I remember.

ALL But here have I lost
 The dialect of your hills,
 My tongue has gone blind
 Far from their limestone roots

MARGE I do remember, I remember.

LAURIE "Pack o' lies you know."

MARGE What?

¹ The Wild Trees by Laurie Lee

JACK "It's all a pack o' lies."

MARGE What?

DOTH "Ol' Laurie was right about ol' so 'n so up the road."

MARGE Yes!

JACK "He got 'im off to a tee."

ALL "Told a pack o' lies about I though."

They share a laugh

ALL Let me return at last
 To your fertile wilderness
 To sleep with the coiled fern leaves
 In your heart's live stone.

LAURIE *[d.a.]* The truth is that the words were written by someone I
once was and who is so distant to me now that I scarcely recognise him anymore.

*Music continues as the family speaks directly to the
audience whilst constructing a carrier's cart.*

LAURIE *[d.a.]* We belonged to a generation which saw, by chance,
the end of a thousand years' life.

JACK *[d.a.]* We witnessed the whole thing happen;

DOTH *[d.a.]* from the day we arrived on a carrier's cart through
white narrow roads ...

TONY *[d.a.]* ... rutted by hooves and cart-wheels, innocent of oil
and petrol ...

MARGE *[d.a.]* ... down which people passed rarely and almost never
for pleasure.

JACK *[d.a.]* In a world of silence, where the horse's eight miles an hour was the limit of our movements as it had been since the days of the Romans.

DOTH *[d.a.]* To a cottage that stood in half an acre of garden on a steep bank above a lake.

LAURIE *[d.a.]* I was three years old.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE - SUMMER

A carrier's cart trundles in.

MARGE Set 'em down there in the June grass...

The three girls set down the three boys on the ground.

LAURIE ...towerin' taller'n I.....each blade tattooed with tiger skins of sunlight.

JACK Taller an' I an' all.

TONY An' I.

PHYL Knife-edged...

DOTH ...dark...

MARGE ...thick as a forest...

DOTH ...an' alive with grasshoppers.

MARGE Chirpin'.

DOTH Chatterin'.

The clicking of Grasshoppers. LAURIE cries.

DOTH Loll, pet, wass the matter?

MARGE `Wildered, I reckon.

PHYL An' terrified.

LAURIE `M lost, n' the sun smacked me in the face...

PHYL He were lost in the grass.

The girls laugh.

LAURIE ...like a bully.

A hot June day.

MARGE A beautiful day - snow-clouds of elder-blossom.

LAURIE Oozin' heat.

DOTH A beautiful day - frenzied larks overhead.

JACK Squealy birds.

Birds scream about them.

PHYL Tearin' the sky apart.

JACK Springy insects.

LAURIE `M lost. An' I dunno where to move.

He cries.

JACK `M lost an' all.

TONY An' I.

All three boys cry.

MARGE There, there, it's all right, don't you wail no more.

DOTH Come down `ome and we'll stuff you with currants.

LAURIE `Ome? `Ome's not `ere Doth.

DOTH takes a step forward and introduces herself to the audience. Music plays under her introduction.

DOTH Doth. Dorothy. A wispy imp. Agile as a jungle cat, quick-limbed, entrancing, noisy. Pretty and perilous as a firework. Protect the boys with fire and spirit. A coil of smoke, a giggling splutter, a reek of cordite. Light the touch paper and retire immediately.

She turns back to LAURIE.

Yes boy. This is 'ome now. The cottage – our cottage.

LAURIE More berries first.

MARGE Red, black, yellow berries.

PHYL All tangled with the roses.

She pricks her finger.

Ow. You bugger you.

DOTH Strip the bushes.

TONY More.

MARGE I'll pick the red.

PHYL I'll pick the yellow.

DOTH Hole in my stockin'.

LAURIE Your skin's white, Doth.

He reaches for the bare flesh of her leg.

DOTH Gerroff! Your hands is black with berry juice.

MARGE Mine's red.

PHYL Mine ain't.

JACK More berries.

TONY An' I.

DOTH Like feedin' a family of fat cuckoos.

JACK introduces himself to the audience as music plays.

JACK The eldest boy cuckoo. Jack. Sharp. Bright as a knife. Living off each other's brains, Laurie an' I, we play, fight and rattle together.

A cuckoo's call.

LAURIE 'Ome.

MARGE Mother.

Musical leitmotiv introduces the first memory of MOTHER.

MARGE [*d.a.*] Our mother was extravagant and romantic, born to quite ordinary poverty.

JACK [*d.a.*] A buffoon, yet bright and dreamy.

PHYL [*contradicting*] She nourished a delicacy of taste.

DOTH [*d.a.*] A freak of intelligence.

LAURIE [*d.a.*] "A sensibility, a brightness of spirit, which ..."

TONY "though continuously ..."

They all recognise a perennial maternal complaint and imitate her.

ALL ..bludgeoned by the cruelties of my luck",

LAURIE [*d.a.*] ... remained uncrushed and unembittered to the all too bitter end.

A cuckoo's call again.

LAURIE 'Ome.

MARGE Mother.

PHYL The cottage.

LAURIE 'Ome.

TONY An' I.

JACK Our cottage. Rooks in the chimneys.

The call of rooks.

Frogs in the cellar.

The croak of frogs. JACK looks slyly at TONY.

Mushrooms on the ceiling.

TONY No.

JACK Foxes under the floor!

TONY No!

LAURIE Treasure in the walls.

THE GIRLS And all for three and sixpence a week.

THE BOYS Mother! Ma!

They rush to look for her.

THE GIRLS In the kitchen.

THE BOYS She ain't there.

They rush to another point on the stage.

THE GIRLS In the scullery.

THE BOYS She ain't there.

They rush to another point on the stage.

ALL In the garden....

LAURIE Buzzin' jungle.

Bees and wasps.

THE BOYS Mother! Ma!

ALL In the garden.

MARGE Pickin' flowers.

DOTH Pourin' `em into pots.

PHYL Trottin' from garden to kitchen...

JACK ... to garden to kitchen...

TONY ...to garden to kitchen...

LAURIE *[d.a.]* Always talking. To us. To herself.

MOTHER's musical leitmotiv plays.

LAURIE *[d.a.]* In trying to recapture the presence of our Mother we are pulling at broken strings. The years run back through the pattern of her confusions. Her flowers and songs ...

MARGE *[d.a.]* Her unshaken fidelities ...

DOTH *[d.a.]* Her attempts at order ...

PHYL *[d.a.]* Her relapses into squalor ...

JACK *[d.a.]* Her near madness ...

TONY *[d.a.]* Her love of man ...

LAURIE *[d.a.]* Her almost daily weeping for ... well. All these rode our Mother and sat on her shoulders like a roosting of ravens and doves.

They each invoke her memory in their own way, each having an individual memory of her.

MOTHER [P] Annie Light, daughter of the Berkley coachman. Half connected with the Castle gentry. Half forgotten blood-link. Lost in the mists of time. Who really knows how, my dears?

MOTHER [J] Mr Jolly took pains with poor me. 'Annie,' said 'e, 'you've got a lovely fist. You write the best essays in the class. But I 'ad to leave school at thirteen fer good to look after my five brothers. My mother were ill, see.

DOTH *[d.a.]* Scatter brained and half grown she grew into a tumble-haired adolescent, slap-dashing the housework in

fits of abstraction and sliding into trance over the vegetables.

MOTHER [D] When the brothers were big enough to look after themselves I went into domestic service.

MOTHER [M] Ladies never did more than pick at their food. Cook would send in some violet cakes, and they're be walnuts and fruit in brandy. You'd `ave wine of course, with every dish, each served in a different glass.

MOTHER [T] I love this world.

LAURIE *[d.a.]* Left the castle to run the Plough Inn with our grandfather.

MOTHER [D] That's where I learn't the frog-march, and there were plenty of those who got it.

MARGE *[d.a.]* Left the Plough to marry our father.

FATHER appears writing on a scrap of paper.

FATHER Widower with 3 children...

MARJORIE Marjorie,

DOROTHY Dorothy

PHYL and Phyllis

FATHER ...seeks housekeeper.

MOTHER [P] I fell in love with him immediately and remained in love forever. He was proud of me then.

FATHER Come on Nance. Take out your pins. Let your hair down – let's see it shine.

MOTHER [D] He loved my hair; it had golden lights in it then and it hung
down my back.

MOTHER [M] Sometimes when you children were in bed he'd clear all 'is
books away.

FATHER Come on Nance, I've 'ad enough of them. Come an' sing us
a song.

*Music develops into the song and they sing. They fetch great
bunches of flowers and place them around the stage in pots
and jugs as they sing the famous song² for her, though it
was written in the 1920's. Chronology is a memory thing.*

GIRLS Only a rose I give you.
ALL Only a song dying away,
 Only a smile to keep in memory
 Until we meet another day.

 Only a rose to whisper,
 Blushing as roses do,
 I'll bring along a smile or a song for anyone
 Only a rose for you.

² From the "The Vagabond King" (1925)