

# IT'S COLD IN THEM THAR HILLS

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By Le Roma Greth

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**HEUER PUBLISHING LLC**

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## IT'S COLD IN THEM THAR HILLS

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### CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 MEN, 8 WOMEN)

**PA**.....Pa appreciates a good nap. His hair is graying. He wears pants held up by gaudy suspenders and, if possible, red flannel underwear over which is no shirt. (96 lines)

**MA**.....A slow-moving, tired old woman who somehow gets things done. She wears a long wash dress and flowered apron. Her gray hair is unattractively pulled straight back and wrapped in a bun. She wears old shoes. (30 lines)

**SNODDY**.....Their oldest daughter, nineteen and not at all pretty. Her hair is untidy to the point where it looks as if it's never been combed. She wears a dingy wash dress, belt-less. She is barefoot. (41 lines)

**PRISSY LOU**.....Neat and pretty seventeen-year old. She wears a wash dress, clean and tied with a belt. Her shoes are old. Her main joy in life is reading. (26 lines)

**MANDY**.....A very happy sixteen-year old. She wears a wash dress like her sisters and no shoes. (5 lines)

**BECKY MAE**.....Fifteen and sweet. She also wears a wash dress. (9 lines)

**SARRAY** ..... Fourteen-year old; lazy and indolent.  
She is dressed like the others. (18 lines)

**NEELIE ANN** ..... The youngest. She would be a brat if she  
had the ambition. Wash dress, no shoes.  
(4 lines)

**ZEKE** ..... A boy of the hills, bashful and awkward.  
He wears pants that are too short for  
him, a plaid shirt, no shoes, and a heavy  
scarf around his neck. (12 lines)

**BILL VANDEMERE** ..... A good-looking city boy who knows  
how to dress. (34 lines)

**MRS. VANDEMERE** ..... Bill's elegant mother, clad in a coat, suit,  
hat, etc. She is haughty and dignified.  
(16 lines)

**PREACHER** ..... A preacher of the hills. He speaks better  
than the others. He wears shoes and a  
conventional, dark suit. (9 lines)

## SETTING

The "parlor" of a mountain cabin.

**TIME:** Afternoon in late spring. The present.

## STAGE PROPERTIES

Wooden bench, right center

Table/chairs, left center

Table cloth, on table

Two occasional chairs

**PROPS**

Book - - Prissy Lou

Green leaves, cooking pot - - Sarray

Wood or twigs - - Ma/Becky Mae

Flower - - Mandy

Shotgun - - Pa

Apple - - Zeke

Cracked basin - - Becky Mae

Pie - - Sarray

Small bouquet of real or artificial flowers - - Sarray/Becky Mae

Piece of curtain - - Snoddy

Slip of paper - - Pa

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**SETTING:**

*The curtain rises to reveal the “parlor” of a mountain cabin. It is an uncomfortable room, lacking the refinements of civilization. At right center is a bare wooden bench. Behind it, in the wall right, is a door leading to the rest of the cabin. Up right is an occasional chair; another is up left. Directly up center is a door leading outside into a weed-choked yard. At left center is a table covered with a torn checkered table cloth. On the table is a tin can containing a few wilted flowers. Three chairs are scattered around the table. A window is in the wall left.*

**AT RISE:**

*PA is discovered stretched out on the bench right, snoring loudly. PRISSY LOU is seated at the table, left, reading a book. NEELIE ANN and SARRAY are seated on the floor, center, with a pile of green leaves between them. They are picking over the leaves very slowly and throwing them into a battered cook pot. MA enters through door up center with BECKY MAE right behind her. They both are carrying an armload of wood. MA pauses, contemplating PA. She abruptly drops her wood and goes to the bench, shoves him, then returns and picks up the wood and exits with BECKY MAE through the door right. The others ignore them.*

**PA:** *(Picking himself off the floor and rubbing his back.)* Thet woman can't bear t' see nobody rest no more! Now whut d' ya suppose she wants?

**SARRAY:** She's been actin' weird lately, Pa. Can't figure her out!

**NEELIE ANN:** I wisht we was finished picking over this dandelion! We got most enough fer supper anyhow. Ma was mighty mean t' make us young'ums do hit.

**SARRAY:** Almost froze gettin' hit too! Hit's been mighty cold this hyar spring. Almost wisht I had shoes.

**PA:** Ya kin take turns with Prissy Lou wearin 'em effen ya want to. *(Sinking down on the bench again.)* Hit ain't fittin' fer nobody t' do as mech work as Ma wants done these days.

*Enter MANDY through the door up center. She has an utterly silly expression on her face. She holds a small flower at arm's length.*

**PA:** Now whut in 'tarnation's got into you, Mandy?

**MANDY:** *(In a happy daze.)* He picked thet flower fer me, Pa! An' he put it in my hand hisself!

**NEELIE ANN:** So what?

**MANDY:** *(Haughtily.)* You wouldn't understand, Neelie Ann! You're just a young'un *(Running to table left.)* Prissy Lou! Press my flower in yer book so's I kin keep it always to remind me of - - HIM!

**PA:** *(To SARRAY.)* Who's him?

**SARRAY:** Young Jod Hinklebelter down the road. Mandy's got a case on him, I reckon.

**PRISSY LOU:** *(To MANDY.)* No! Ya cain't use my book theta way! It ain't fittin' t' use books theta way!

**MANDY:** *(Glaring.)* Oh you and yer old books! I'm agonna tell Ma yer readin' agin an' - -

**PA:** Now, looky here! Don't you two go scrappin'! I'd as soon raise a pack of onrey polecats as a tribe of female young 'uns!

*Enter MA through door right.*

**MA:** Git! All of you! You young'uns is gonna make the supper.

**SARRAY:** But Ma - -

**MA:** Git! Afore I takes down thet shootin' iron!

*Exit SARRAY and NEELIE ANN with their greens and cook pot.*

*MANDY and PRISSY LOU, with book and flower, follow them through door right.*

**PA:** *(Whining.)* I reckon ya got somethin' fer me t' do too, Ma?

**MA:** Nope.

**PA:** Then why'd ya wake me up?

**MA:** I been hankerin' t' have a talk with ya, Pa. I reckon ya noticed I ain't been myself. I'm worried!

**PA:** Ya been as onrey as a new colt in spring, Ma. We kin talk sittin' down, I suppose?

**MA:** *(Wearily settles into chair at table, left.)* Pa, Mandy's sweet on John Hinklebelter.

**PA:** Reckon.

**MA:** He aims t' marry up with her.

**PA:** Wal, we won't have t' feed 'er then. She's sixteen - - plenty old enough t' git hitched.

**MA:** I ain't agonna have hit!

**PA:** (*Surprised.*) Ya out of yer head, woman?

**MA:** If Mandy was t' git married afore Prissy Lou an' Snoddy, they'd never have a chance. They be older than she is!

**PA:** (*Worried.*) Effen they wasn't t' git hitched, we'd have t' support 'em fer the rest of our born days!

**MA:** Keerect!

**PA:** All the boys hereabouts is sweet on Prissy Lou. The only trouble is - - she's taken so much to this confounded book larnin'!

**MA:** We got to start at the beginning, Pa, an' git the oldest one hitched first.

**PA:** (*Groaning.*) Snoddy?

**MA:** Yep! It's yer duty as a Pa t' git a husband fer Snoddy! She be gittin' up in years, Pa. She's nineteen!

**PA:** Thet old already? Why, she's almost an old maid!

**MA:** (*Rising.*) Ya don't have t' do no work, Pa, all ya have t' do fer a spell is think about gittin' Snoddy hitched.

**PA:** (*With panic.*) But who'd want t' hitch up with Snoddy? I'd as soon hitch up with Old Man Dougle's black-haired mule!

*Enter SNODDY, very, very dirty through the door up center.*

**SNODDY:** (*In her usual whine.*) Wuz anybuddy mentionin' my name?

**PA:** (*Wincing and turning away.*) Reckon we wuz.

**MA:** (*Surveying SNODDY.*) Looks kinda hopeless, don't it, Pa?

**PA:** Kinda.

**MA:** Wal, do the best ya kin.

*MA shuffles slowly through the door right.*

**PA:** Snoddy, how come ya got so dirty?

**SNODDY:** Been playing with my pet hog, Hubert.

**PA:** In the pigpen?

**SNODDY:** Sure. Whar else would I play with him?

**PA:** Wal - -

**SNODDY:** I could bring him in hyar. Hit be cold out thar in the hog pen - - but Ma don't like it effen he comes in. (*Giggles.*) Reckon Hubert don't like it neither. He don't rightly hold with you folks. Likes me, though! Reckon he thinks I'm another hog!

**PA:** Smart pig!

*Enter ZEKE through the door up center. He stands there bashfully looking at the floor, his hands clasped behind him and twiddling his toes.*

**SNODDY:** Hit be Zeke!

**ZEKE:** Duh - -

**PA:** Ya look cold, Zeke. Shouldn't be with thet nice scarf on!

**ZEKE:** Duh - -

**PA:** Effen yer lookin' fer Prissy Lou, an' I reckon ya are, she be in t'other room.

**ZEKE:** Duh - -

*Exit ZEKE through the door right.*

**SNODDY:** Ain't he purty? Why does he hafta be hankerin' after Prissy Lou 'stead o' me?

**PA:** Wal - - thet's just one o' them things.

**SNODDY:** He don't never say a word. Jest follows Prissy Lou around like an' old hound dog.

**PA:** Bashful type.

**SNODDY:** Reckon.

**PA:** Snoddy, be ya hankerin' t' git yerself a husband?

**SNODDY:** Shore!

**PA:** (*Sighing.*) Wal, yer Ma sez I got t' git ya one. Pick one out.

**SNODDY:** (*Near window left.*) Kin I pick any one?

**PA:** Shore thing.

**SNODDY:** (*Pointing out the window.*) I want him!

**PA:** Jest a minute! (*He dashes off stage right, returns a second later with his gun and joins SNODDY at the window.*) Now then - - which one?

**SNODDY:** (*Pointing again.*) Thet purty dude in them fancy clothes!

**PA:** (*Pointing gun out window.*) I'll wing him jest enough t' bring 'im down. Then we'll go out an' collect 'im. Ought t' be as good as new purty soon.

**SNODDY:** (*Grabbing hold of the gun.*) Be ya out of yer head, Pa?

**PA:** Hit be the only way t' git a husband fer ya, Snoddy!

**SNODDY:** (*Determinedly.*) Nope! I want one fair an' square!

**PA:** Fair an' square?

**SNODDY:** Yep. We kin trick him into marryin' me any way a'tall, but I ain't agonna marry up with nobody that's got t' be shot t' make 'im do hit!

**PA:** (*Laying gun on table.*) But nobody in his right mind would - -

**SNODDY:** Would whut, Pa?

**PA:** Never mind.

**SNODDY:** (*Grasping his arm.*) Git thet dude fer me, Pa! Please! I tuck a shine t' him!

*Knock on door up center.*

**MA:** (*Appearing at door right.*) Be somebody at the door?

**PA:** Effen they ain't, we got termites agin. (*He goes to door up center and opens it to reveal BILL and MRS. VANDEMERE.*) Howdy!

**SNODDY:** It's him! It's the dude! An' he's come t' our door!

**MA:** Hesh, Snoddy!

**BILL:** Pardon us, sir, but we are lost. My mother and I had located a lovely tourist cabin on the map, but, well, we can't seem to find it. I was wondering if you could help us.

**PA:** This is a tourist cabin!

**MRS. VANDEMERE:** You must be jesting!

**PA:** Naw. Come in! Come in!

**MRS. VANDEMERE:** (*To BILL.*) Come, William. I think we better get back to the car. I wouldn't stay in an - - er, establishment like this!

**BILL:** But, Mother, we've got to spend the night someplace. It's getting very late and - -

**PA:** Right you are, son! An' thet ain't all! See them clouds over yonder mountain? Rain clouds they be. Last time it rained hereabouts, that thar road wuz washed clean off the mountain! Some city slickers was a-drivin' on hit thet time an' nobody never heerd tell of 'em fer two months. Then we found out they wuz washed clean out t' the Atlantic Ocean an' wuz picked up by a fishin' boat!

**MRS. VANDEMERE:** What a fantastic story! Come, William.

**SNODDY:** (*Grabbing PA's arm.*) You cain't let him git away, Pa!

**PA:** (*Quickly.*) That ain't all. Drivin' in these hills at night kin be dangerous. Thar's bears an' wild cats an' - -

*Meanwhile, the other girls have gathered at the door right with MA and are staring curiously at the newcomers. PRISSY LOU comes forward.*

**PRISSY LOU:** Whut's got into ya, Pa? Tellin' such wild tales! Ain't been no wild cats huarabouts fer nigh unto two years! (*To the VANDEMERE.*) But thar is danger. The Hawkenshaw boys down yonder in the valley don't take none t' strangers. You wouldn't be the first tourists what got stopped on the road at night. Mrs. Hawkenshaw dresses real purty always from sech goings-on. Sometimes I think she puts the boys up to hit!

**MRS. VANDEMERE:** Oh, dear! I wish we'd never decided to take this trip! If only your father were still alive, William!

**BILL:** If you'll take my advice, Mother, you'll stay here for the night. Tomorrow we'll head for the main highway and stay on it hereafter!

**MRS. VANDEMERE:** Well, I guess we'll have to - -

**PA:** Come in! Come in!

*They enter and stand uncertainly upstage looking about. ZEKE enters door right and stares. He is loudly munching on an apple.*

**MA:** I'll fix up the bed real purty fer ya.

**MRS. VANDEMERE:** Oh, driving makes one so tired and dusty! I'd like to wash up if you don't mind.

**NEELIE ANN:** Why? It ain't Saturday.

**MA:** Hesh up, Neelie Ann! City folks does things different!

*BECKY MAE rushes offstage right.*

**SNODDY:** (*Sliding toward BILL.*) My name's Snoddy.

**BILL:** Really? Quite distinctive, I should say.

**SNODDY:** Huh?

**BILL:** That means, well, it means it's a nice name.

**PRISSY LOU:** He's making fun of you, Snoddy! Don't listen to him.

**BILL:** Oh, I say - -

*Enter BECKY MAE through door right with a cracked basin. She rushes eagerly to MRS. VANDEMERE and shoves it into her hand.*

**MRS. VANDEMERE:** Oh! What's that?

**BECKY MAE:** Ya said ya had a hankerin' t' wash. That's the basin!

**MRS. VANDEMERE:** You mean - - (*Dismayed.*) you don't have a bathroom!

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