

LU AN HAMPTON LAVERTY OBERLANDER

by Preston Jones

Lu Ann (17) - Billy Bob (17)

The Play: This is play number two in Preston Jones's *A Texas Trilogy*, a series of plays all set in Bradleyville, a small town in West Texas. In the first act, Lu Ann is seventeen, in the second act twenty-seven, and in the third act thirty-seven. During the journey she has had two marriages: one ending in divorce and one ending in a tragic auto accident killing the husband. She has one daughter who, by the end of the play, is a teenager. Before the play is over, Lu Ann is left to take care of her alcoholic brother and her mother who has suffered a stroke. The play begins with the hope of an aspiring young lady eager to conquer the world and leave small-town existence to those with no dreams. As the play proceeds, and as life hands Lu Ann significant obstacles, we see her spirit weaken and finally cave in. Even though we see three periods of a particular life, we feel for the universal cycle of the life we all handle—from marriage, to raising children. The dramatic strength of the play lies in the spirit of its people and the attempted, but failed struggle to be successful, happy, and live a challenged and vital life. The fact that Lu Ann doesn't achieve what she wants provides a heartfelt glimpse at a universal human struggle.

The Scene: This is the first scene in the play. Lu Ann is a cheerleader for the local high school team. Billy Bob, Lu Ann's boyfriend, is on the basketball team. They've just returned from school after a pep-rally. Billy Bob's hair is dyed green.

Special Note: Please pay attention to the playwright's careful spellings indicating the regional dialect. If you follow these notations you will accomplish all the accent necessary to good character study.

LU ANN HAMPTON LAVERTY OBERLANDER

BILLY BOB: (*Offstage.*) Lu Ann! Lu Ann! Wait up, will ya! (*Following LU ANN on. BILLY BOB WORTMAN is tall and lanky. He wears a white shirt, Levi's, boots, and a letter sweater. His crew-cut hair has been dyed green.*)

LU ANN: Ma! I'm home!

[CLAUDINE: (*Offstage.*) About time!]

LU ANN: Well, ah thought ah would die! Ah jest thought ah would curl up and die right there on the gym floor. When the coach introduced the basketball team and you-all come out there with your hair all dyed green. Well, sir, mah eyes liked to jumped plumb outta mah head! Why, Mary Beth Johnson jest hollered. That's right, jest hollered right out loud.

BILLY BOB: It was Pete Honeycutt's idea.

LU ANN: Why ever'one jest laughed and shouted and carried on so. Eveline Blair came runnin' over to me shoutin', "Look at the basketball boys, look at the basketball boys!"

BILLY BOB: It was Pete Honeycutt's idea.

LU ANN: (*Gestures to porch—they go out.*) After the assembly we cheerleaders all got together and decided we'd do somethin' funny too.

BILLY BOB: Aw, like what?

LU ANN: Now wouldn't you like to know? Mr. Green-headed Billy Bob Wortman.

BILLY BOB: Aw, come on, Lu Ann, what are you-all fixin' to do?

LU ANN: Oh, ah don't know, somethin', somethin' real neat.

BILLY BOB: You cain't dye you-all's hair. Pete Honeycutt already thought that one up.

LU ANN: Eveline Blair thought up different shoes.

BILLY BOB: Different shoes?

LU ANN: You know, come to school wearin' one high-heel shoe and one saddle shoe. Somethin' *neato* like that.

BILLY BOB: Yeah.

LU ANN: Ah don't know, though, it might be kinda tricky doin' the Locomotive in a high-heel shoe.

BILLY BOB: Might be at that.

LU ANN: But it might be fun.

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BILLY BOB: Shore.
LU ANN: (*Sitting on swing.*) Maybe we can wear them out to the senior picnic.
BILLY BOB: (*Joins her.*) Shore!
LU ANN: We're still goin' in your daddy's Hudson, ain't we?
BILLY BOB: Well, uh, naw, we gotta use the pickup.
LU ANN: The pickup!
BILLY BOB: Yeah, my dad wants the car to go over to Big Spring.
LU ANN: But it's the senior picnic! Mah God, ah don't want to go to mah one and only senior picnic in a danged-old pickup.
BILLY BOB: Well, goshalmighty, Lu Ann, ah cain't help it.
LU ANN: What the heck good is it for your dad to have a bran'-new, step-down Hudson Hornet if we never get to use the danged old thing.
BILLY BOB: Seems like ever'thin' ah do is wrong.
LU ANN: Boy, that's the truth.
BILLY BOB: Gawlee, Ruthie Lee Lawell and Pete Honeycutt are goin' in his pickup.
LU ANN: So what.
BILLY BOB: Well, nuthin', ah jest mean that it don't seem to bother Ruthie Lee none.
LU ANN: Heck no, it don't bother Ruthie Lee none. Mah Gawd, she almost lives in Pete Honeycutt's pickup seat. I'll bet her bra spends more time on the danged gear shift than it spends on her.
BILLY BOB: (*Shocked.*) Lu Ann Hampton! You know that ain't true.
LU ANN: It is so, too. I seen 'em when they was parked out to the drive-in and she was danged near naked.
BILLY BOB: I never saw nuthin'.
LU ANN: 'Course you never saw nuthin'. You was too busy watchin' the movie. Mah Gawd, you was more worried about old Gary Cooper than Grace Kelly was.
BILLY BOB: Ah liked that movie.
LU ANN: Boy, you shore did.
BILLY BOB: Well, ah did.
LU ANN: No wonder Ruthie has so many chest colds in the winter-time.

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BILLY BOB: If Pete and Ruthie Lee was actin' like the way you said, that jest means they don't have respect for each other.
LU ANN: Or for Gary Cooper.
BILLY BOB: Reverend Stone says that goin' on like that is a sinful sign of no respect.
LU ANN: Oh, brother.
BILLY BOB: People that behave thataway out to drive-ins and such-like is behavin' plumb un-Christian.
LU ANN: Well, at least they were sharin' somethin' more than a danged ol' box of popcorn.
BILLY BOB: A true Christian is pure in mind and body.
LU ANN: I wish you'd stop preachin', Billy Bob. Mah Gawd, ever' time we have somethin' important to discuss, you come up with a danged sermon.
BILLY BOB: What in the world are we discussin' that's important?
LU ANN: Your daddy's step-down Hudson Hornet, that's what!
BILLY BOB: My daddy's... For cryin' out loud, Lu Ann, sometimes you drive me absolutely nuts!
LU ANN: Well, you don't have to yell, Billy Bob.
BILLY BOB: Ah told you, an' told you, an' told you that we cain't have the Hudson.
LU ANN: Well, why not?
BILLY BOB: 'Cause my daddy's got to go over to Big Spring!
LU ANN: Well, it seems plumb funny to me that your daddy picked the very day of the senior picnic to go over to Big Spring. Ah mean, doesn't he know that the senior picnic is jest about the most important event in our whole schoolin' career?
BILLY BOB: Ah don't know if he does or not, he jest...
LU ANN: Don't hardly seem fair to look forward to somethin' all these years only to have your daddy come along and mess it up.
BILLY BOB: Daddy ain't messed up nothin', he jest...
LU ANN: He's only doin' it for spite, Billy Bob.
BILLY BOB: No, he ain't, he's jest...
LU ANN: And spite in my book is jest plain sinful and un-Christian. (*She turns to go.*) Good night, Billy Bob.

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BILLY BOB: *(Grabbing her arm.)* Now wait a minute, Lu Ann. *(They are very close now.)* Oh, boy, uh, uh. Ah will talk to Dad tonight and ask for the car again, okay?

LU ANN: Swell, Billy Bob. *(She kisses him.)* Good night, now.

BILLY BOB: Good night. By gollies, Lu Ann, ah'm gonna make danged sure we git that car.

LU ANN: Fine.

BILLY BOB: Danged sure! *(He exits.)*

(LU ANN watches him for a moment and then enters the house.)

NICE PEOPLE DANCING TO GOOD COUNTRY MUSIC

by Lee Blessing

Jason (15) - Catherine (22)

The Play: It is a late afternoon in September in Houston, Texas. The title of the play is the name of a local bar—and an immediate indication of the kind of event Lee Blessing's play will detail. This playwright's plays are filled with unique people, richly drawn, and as much fun to play as to watch. This one-act play is a companion (forming the second part) to Mr. Blessing's *Toys for Men*, where some of the characters inhabit the same place. In *Nice People Dancing to Good Country Music*, we see the meeting of Eve Wilfong and her niece Catherine. Eve lives above the bar and is friends with many of its patrons. Catherine's problem is that she has just been expelled from the convent where she has been a novice nun. The circumstances are peculiar. Catherine was asked to leave the convent because she has an unsettling habit of blurting out inappropriate language (often off color) at inappropriate times. She is even given to making animal noises—and all of this without any intention of doing so. She can't control herself. Having been asked to leave the convent, she now has no direction in her life. Eve believes she just needs to settle down, meet someone nice, and get on with her life. In fact, Roy, one of the bar's patrons is real interested in her. However, before accepting his advances, Eve advises she learn about men from an expert, herself. Added to this mix, Eve's son, Jason, is visiting. Jason is on the brink of sexual awakening and this setting is full of the ingredients to make his visit a turning point in his manhood. The result is a delightful, often touching play. Mr. Blessing never provides a cliché, but rather offers a glimpse of an unusually universal microcosm of human relationships.

The Scene: Eve has gone downstairs to head off Roy, who seems determined to court Catherine. Eve feels she's not yeat ready. Jason has been causing trouble in the bar—picking at the patrons. He's come to the roof deck to escape. Catherine is there still attempting to sort out where she should go now that she's been expelled from the convent.