

# **The McMillan Way**

*A drama in four acts*

*by*

*Andrew D. Doan*



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*To Danielle—Keep on dreaming.  
and  
To my children—Take the job.*



## Plot Synopsis

Mallard, Ohio is a town roaring into the future. At least, that's how mayoral candidate Lester McMillan sees it. It's 1920. The War is over. The Flu is gone. Women can vote. Automobiles, radios, and telephones are changing the way of life for good. He's determined to lead his rural community toward progress. Not everyone around, however, is ready to jump on board—including some in his own family. Embracing the future can be a frightening prospect. His oldest daughter, Rosie, comes to understand this when she's surprised by an offer to leave town and pursue her ambitions. Lonnie, a family friend, also grapples with the risks of moving into the unknown when he returns to Mallard after an extended absence. Both of them must face their fears and decide whether they will take that all-important step forward. Their story is poignant and instructive for young and old alike!

This four act play is ideal for high schools, colleges, and community theater groups. A simple setting with memorable characters and a lively plot make for a production that will delight audiences of all ages. *The McMillan Way* is a new play with a familiar family touch!



# THE MCMILLAN WAY

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

(17 male, 10 female, plus extras)

Rosie McMillan –	<i>A young woman in her early 20's</i>
Lonnie Dawes, Jr. –	<i>A young man in his early 20's</i>
Lester McMillan –	<i>Rosie's father, owner of McMillan's Diner</i>
Pauline McMillan –	<i>Rosie's mother</i>
Aaron –	<i>Rosie's boyfriend, 19 years old</i>
Sam McMillan –	<i>Rosie's oldest brother, 16 years old</i>
Olive McMillan –	<i>Rosie's sister, 13 years old</i>
Eddie McMillan –	<i>Rosie's youngest brother, 10 years old</i>
Barton Fisk –	<i>Lester's campaign manager, early 20's</i>
Robert –	<i>Sam's friend</i>
Randall Huffman –	<i>Mayor of Mallard</i>
Miriam –	<i>Pauline's friend</i>
Winston –	<i>Eddie's friend</i>
Lonnie Dawes, Sr. –	<i>Lonnie's father</i>
Willard –	<i>Telephone company employee</i>
Officer Greene –	<i>Mallard policeman</i>
Victoria –	<i>Sam's girlfriend</i>
Helen –	<i>Townsperson</i>
Mildred –	<i>Townsperson</i>
Harriet –	<i>Townsperson</i>
Frank –	<i>Townsperson</i>
Tom –	<i>Townsperson</i>
Anne –	<i>Townsperson</i>
Ethel –	<i>Older lady</i>
Ernest –	<i>Older gentleman</i>
Train Conductor	
Traveler	
Townfolk as needed	

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Setting: McMillan's Eatery and Filling Station in Mallard, Ohio  
Time: Fall, 1920

Act I – *A Tuesday afternoon in early September*

Act II – *A Saturday afternoon several weeks later*

Act III – *The following evening*

Act IV – *Tuesday, November 2, 1920*

*The McMillan Way* premiered on May 16-18, 2019  
at the Amato Center for the Performing Arts in Milford, NH.  
The play was produced in conjunction with  
South Merrimack Christian Academy of Merrimack, NH  
and was directed by Andrew Doan with the following cast and crew:

Rosie McMillan –	<i>Isabelle Laughlin</i>
Lonnie Dawes, Jr. –	<i>Luke Heisler</i>
Lester McMillan –	<i>Cole Rasmussen</i>
Pauline McMillan –	<i>Emily Hubbard</i>
Aaron –	<i>Zachary Safford</i>
Sam McMillan –	<i>Jonathan Cohn</i>
Olive McMillan –	<i>Lianna Ross</i>
Eddie McMillan –	<i>Gavin Ross</i>
Barton Fisk –	<i>Blane Burbach</i>
Robert –	<i>Caleb Stevens</i>
Randall Huffman -	<i>Declan Lister</i>
Miriam –	<i>Serena Azevedo</i>
Winston –	<i>Eldan Doan</i>
Lonnie Dawes, Sr. –	<i>Joshua Stevens</i>
Willard –	<i>David Boutchia</i>
Officer Greene –	<i>Jonathan Peters</i>
Victoria –	<i>Chloe Metaxotos</i>
Helen –	<i>Meghan Stephenson</i>
Mildred –	<i>Alexandra Ekberg</i>
Harriet –	<i>Brynn Rechtsteiner</i>
Frank –	<i>Nicholas Paul</i>
Tom –	<i>David Azevedo</i>
Anne –	<i>Noelle Clark</i>
Ethel –	<i>Lily Small</i>
Ernest –	<i>Jonathan Conyers</i>
Train Conductor –	<i>Seth Kalgren</i>
Traveler –	<i>Joshua Hicks</i>

Townsfolk

*Evelyn Doan, Jordan LaSalle, Alyssa Laughlin,  
Noah Lockwood, Christian Specht*

Sound –	<i>Matthew Peters</i>
Lights –	<i>Lydia Conyers</i>
Production Assistant –	<i>Grace Lister</i>
Production Assistant –	<i>Olivia Paul</i>
Composer/Music Supervisor –	<i>Paul Thompson</i>
Graphic Design –	<i>Sean Fesko</i>

Scenic Design –  
Costume Design –  
Casting Consultant –  
Dramatic Consultant –  
Production Supervisor –

*Bevin Anderson*  
*Phyllis Naegeli*  
*Rebekah Hubbard*  
*Erika Nevue*  
*Danielle Doan*

*Visit [www.andrewddoan.com](http://www.andrewddoan.com) to find other plays,  
books, stories, and poems by this author.*

## PROLOGUE

*This scene can be performed either on far stage right/left or downstage of the closed curtain. The setting is a small railroad station. Set dressing includes a small bench and perhaps a luggage cart of some sort. Above the bench a large sign indicates the location of the station—MALLARD.*

*A lone traveler sits on the bench and reads a newspaper. Several pieces of luggage are on the bench next to him. A train whistle sounds and steam from a train drifts in as a conductor shouts from offstage.*

Conductor: FIVE MINUTES! FIVE MINUTES! DEPARTURE FOR  
CIRCLEVILLE AND POINTS EAST!

*Lonnie enters from offstage slowly and looks around with a frown. He's carrying a small suitcase or other ragged piece of luggage. He's acting hesitant and suspicious of his surroundings. The traveler looks past his newspaper and watches Lonnie for a bit before calling out.*

Traveler: Are you lost?

Lonnie: *(Caught off guard by the question.)* Excuse me?

Traveler: You look a little confused, and I thought you might be lost.

Lonnie: Oh. No. I'm not.

Traveler: It's just that with all these stops—on the train, off the train, on the train, off the train—pretty soon one station looks like the next which looks like the next and so on and so forth until a person can just plain forget where they are! *(He smiles gregariously.)*

Lonnie: *(Still very reticent.)* I guess so.

Traveler: *(Not noticing that Lonnie isn't interested in talking.)* Of course, I guess if you get right down to it, it doesn't really matter if you know where you are just as long as you know where you're headed! Wouldn't you say?

Lonnie: *(Looking increasingly annoyed.)* Sure.

Traveler: *(Not missing a beat.)* Me? I'm headed to Pittsburgh. You ever been to Pittsburgh?

Lonnie: Um. Yes, actually. I was there for a while a few years ago.

Traveler: *(Coming out of his seat with excitement and leaving the newspaper on the bench.)* You were? That's amazing! What are the chances the two of us would ever meet? Me headed to Pittsburgh and you have already been there. *(Lonnie shrugs.)* Well, tell me—how is it? Is it nice?

Lonnie: Sort of.

Traveler: Boy, I can't wait. You know, I've never even been out of the state of Ohio before! This will be my first time! Can you imagine that?

Lonnie: Yeah.

Traveler: I never dreamed someone like me would ever get to a place like Pittsburgh. What an adventure this will be! *(Consulting a pocket watch.)* To speak of it, I better scoot myself to that train over there. If I'm not on board soon they'll leave without me! Then I'd be stuck here in...*(He consults the sign behind the bench.)*...in Mallard! Can you imagine such a thing?

Lonnie: *(Nods and rolls his eyes.)*

Traveler: *(Gathers his luggage and grabs the newspaper. He extends it to Lonnie cheerfully.)* Here you go!

Lonnie: *(Taken aback.)* Oh! No, thank you, I—

Traveler: Oh, don't worry! It's not mine. I found it on the bench over there when I got here. *(Lonnie takes it reluctantly.)* It's old news. From a few days ago. *(Lonnie scans it and the man looks over his shoulder for a bit.)* These are the days, huh? Such interesting times! Who would've imagined 10 years ago that women would be lining up to vote and you'd have to go to Canada to get a good drink, huh? *(Lonnie doesn't respond, but the man doesn't notice.)* Well, wherever you end up—may the wind be always at your back! *(He slaps Lonnie lightly on the back before exiting.)*

*Lonnie continues looking at the newspaper absentmindedly as the train whistle sounds and the conductor begins calling out again.*

Conductor: ALL ABOARD! ALL ABOARD FOR CIRCLEVILLE! *(He pokes his head around the corner and sees Lonnie.)* Son? *(Lonnie doesn't respond.)* Son?

Lonnie: *(Snapping to attention.)* Yes?

Conductor: You coming with us? Time's a wasting! Your ticket is good as far as Stuebenville, as I recall.

Lonnie: Um...*(He looks around with obvious uncertainty.)*...um...no. This is my—I mean!—This is—*(Finishes weakly.)* I'm staying here.

Conductor: Okay! Good day to ya! We're movin' on! *(He exits.)* ALL ABOARD! ALL ABOARD!

*Lonnie looks in the direction of the train as the whistle sounds again and the engine revs up. For a moment, he makes a move as if he'll run to jump on the departing train, but then he stops short. As the sound of the train fades, he glances around a bit more looking very unhappy. Finally, he tosses the newspaper and walks in the opposite direction of the train track as the overture music fades in...*

# ACT I

*As the curtain opens, we find ourselves in a roadside restaurant and gas station in rural Ohio. Located on stage right is a high counter with five stools in front. On top are a cash register and a display case for freshly baked pie slices. Behind the counter is a food preparation area with various dishes and glasses visible and a stairway leading off stage to the family residence upstairs (not visible to the audience). To stage right of this is a swinging door that leads to the kitchen, and to the right of that is an exterior window.*

*The upstage wall contains (from stage right to left) another exterior window, a telephone, a screen door, a large record player, and a wide picture window that gives the audience a clear view of the gas pumps outside and the town skyline beyond that. The stage left side of the room contains multiple tables and chairs for patrons of the restaurant.*

*No one is visible at first, but lively music sounds from the record player. A few moments after the curtain is opened, a man in coveralls and a hard hat appears behind the screen door and stands expressionless. Several moments later, Pauline enters from the kitchen carrying a pie fresh from the oven. She begins cutting slices and placing them into the display case. She hums along cheerfully with the music until she finally notices the workman. Startled by the sight of him, she drops a pie slice onto the ground.*

Pauline: Oh! Hello!

Willard: *(Monotone and deadpan.)* Hello.

Pauline: *(She rushes over to turn off the record before cleaning up the mess. As she picks up pie fragments from the floor, she sizes him up.)*  
How are you today?

Willard: Fine.

Pauline: *(Continues cleaning up but watches him cautiously.)*  
Wonderful! Can I get you something? Maybe some pie? *(Realizing that she's extending the crumbled piece from the floor.)* Not this piece, of course!

Willard: Nope.

Pauline:     *(Stepping toward the window next to the screen door.)* Do you need a fill up?

Willard:     Nope.

Pauline:     *(Looks around awkwardly.)* Well, is there some way I can help you?

Willard:     I doubt it.

Pauline:     I see. *(She begins to grow nervous and uncomfortable with his presence. She is just about to say something more forceful to him when Lester descends from the 2nd floor.)* Ah! *(She meets him at the foot of the stairs and whispers to him.)* Les, there's a strange man here and he's making me a bit jittery!

Lester:     Really? *(Looks around the room.)* Where?

Pauline:     *(Nods her head in the direction of the screen door where Willard is still standing.)*

Lester:     *(Watches her nodding and looks around again, but doesn't recognize the problem.)*

Pauline:     *(Her nodding grows more pronounced and urgent. She whispers between pursed lips and points subtly in Willard's direction.)*  
Over there!

Lester:     *(Pointing directly at Willard.)* There?

Pauline:     *(Exasperated.)* Yes!

Lester:     *(Breaks into a wide smile and a hearty chuckle.)* That's not a strange man. *(Crosses to the screen door.)* That's Willard.

Pauline:     Willard?

Lester:     Yes, Willard. Say "Hello," Willard.

Willard:     Hello.

Pauline:     *(Motions to Les to step back toward her. He complies, and she speaks softly but urgently.)* Why is Willard standing at our door?

Lester: Oh! Of course! How silly of me. (*Steps back toward the door.*) Willard is here to install our telephone line!

Pauline: Oh. The telephone.

Lester: Yes, the telephone. The first one in the county! Isn't it just thrilling?

Pauline: (*Moves behind the counter and resumes her pie slicing.*) Yes. It's thrilling dear.

Lester: Pauley, I don't think you're as thrilled about this as I am.

Pauline: Oh, I'm thrilled. Positively thrilled.

Lester: You don't sound thrilled.

Pauline: Les, I'm very excited. You've talked about it for months, and now it's here. This moment is very...

Lester: Thrilling!

Pauline: Yes. I'm glad for you.

Lester: (*Stepping toward her.*) But there's something else. Something you're not telling me.

Pauline: (*After balking a bit.*) I'm not sure we need a telephone. Most everyone we know lives right here in Mallard. It's a nice gadget, but I don't even know who I would call!

Lester: Gadget. Gadget? How can you call it that? We're not talking about some dime store novelty for kids, Pauley. This is a revolutionary invention! This so-called "gadget" has the potential to change our lives. Of course we need it. It's one of our most important stepping-stones into the future!

Pauline: Ok, Mr. McMillan, you can simmer down a bit. This isn't a campaign rally. I'm not one of your voters, so there's no need for a stump speech here.

Lester: You're not voting for me?

Pauline: I mean—I'm not one of your *potential* voters. You don't have to win me over. You already have my vote.

Lester: Well that's nice to hear. It wouldn't do for the wife of Mallard's next mayor to throw her support to the other side, now would it?

Pauline: No, I suppose not.

Lester: (*Notices Willard who has remained rooted to his spot.*) Ah, Willard! You're probably getting tired of standing there.

Willard: Not really.

Lester: Nonetheless, I imagine you're eager to get out there and finish the job.

Willard: I suppose.

Lester: Well, then...(*Waits by the screen door, but Willard doesn't move.*)

Willard: Did you mean right now?

Lester: Yes.

Willard: Oh. (*Turns to leave.*)

Pauline: Willard? (*Willard turns back toward her.*) I hope I didn't seem rude earlier. Why didn't you mention you were here to install the telephone line?

Willard: (*Shrugging.*) You didn't ask. (*Exits.*)

Lester: I'll keep an eye on him. (*Follows after Willard.*)

Pauline: (*Turns the record back on and exits into the kitchen.*)

Miriam: (*Appears outside the window near the kitchen door. She slides it open and pokes her head in to look around the empty room.*) Pauline? Pauline? Are you here?

Pauline: (*Enters from the kitchen carrying another slice of pie without noticing Miriam at the window.*)

Miriam: (*Shouting over the music.*) Hello, Pauline!

Pauline:     *(Startled, she drops the piece of pie.)* Oh! Miriam! It's you!

Miriam:     Well, of course it's me. Who else would be standing here?

Pauline:     *(Turning off the record and cleaning her mess once again.)*  
You'd be surprised. How are you today?

Miriam:     I'm just fine, I suppose. My hay fever is acting up again.  
These warm September afternoons send my nose into conniptions!

Pauline:     *(Joining Miriam at the window. The two women peel apples, snap green beans, or do something similar as they talk.)* Sorry to hear that.

Miriam:     I noticed Lester and some other fella out front just now. The other man was climbing on the roof like some circus performer!

Pauline:     Oh, that's Willard. He's here to install our telephone line.

Miriam:     A telephone! Pauline, that's wonderful.

Pauline:     *(Half-heartedly.)* Yes, it's just peachy.

Miriam:     How can you be so drab about it? This is big news!

Pauline:     Is it?

Miriam:     Why, yes. I think so. I've been begging Phil for months to get one installed at our place.

Pauline:     He's not sold on the idea?

Miriam:     Not at all. He has a whole list of excuses. Too expensive. Too complicated. He doesn't even know who he would call. Have you ever heard anything so ridiculous?

Pauline:     Once or twice.

Miriam:     I keep telling him to stop being such a fuddy duddy and get with the times!

Pauline:     A...fuddy duddy?

Miriam:     Sure.

Pauline: What's that?

Miriam: Oh, Pauline! Sometimes you're downright naïve. Haven't you heard the kids saying that? A fuddy duddy is a...well, you know, a—

Pauline: No, I don't know.

Miriam: It's a...a grumpy goose. A stick-in-the-mud!

Pauline: Oh, I see.

Miriam: Anyway, I keep pestering Phil about it, but so far he won't budge.

Pauline: Well, for your sake, I'm sorry. It sounds like you really want a telephone.

Miriam: I sure do! Can you imagine how different our lives would be if we had one?

Pauline: Different?

Miriam: Sure! Different and...better!

Pauline: You really think so?

Miriam: You bet! Once I get one we can call each other and talk anytime we want to! I won't have to trudge over here each afternoon.

Pauline: But I love our little chats by the window! I look forward to it everyday.

Miriam: Oh! Me too! But won't it be fun to talk on the telephone instead?

Pauline: Maybe.

Miriam: Instead of writing long letters to relatives we can just call 'em up and talk for hours and hours. We can call important people too!

Pauline: Like who?

Miriam: Like...oh, I don't know. The governor!

Pauline: The governor? You really think Governor Cox will want to talk to us on the telephone?

Miriam: Maybe. It might help him win a few more votes for president! *(Another thought springs to mind.)* Oh! And think about this. We can share news a lot faster too!

Pauline: You mean news like all the town gossip?

Miriam: Well, of course, but I'm talking about bigger news—real news! Imagine if we'd had a telephone around during the war.

Pauline: The war? Heavens, Miriam! Why would you bring that up? The war was—it was just awful, that's what it was. I don't see how a telephone would have made it any better.

Miriam: *(A bit wounded.)* I was just trying to make a point, Pauline.

Pauline: I know. I'm sorry. You're probably right. Telephones are quite the gadget—invention. I guess I can be a bit of a...fuddy duddy from time to time. I usually like to keep things just the way they are.

Miriam: You can't keep things the way they are forever, Pauline.

Pauline: I know. *(Trying to steer the conversation in a new direction.)* So, what's the latest from around town? Even without a telephone, I'm sure you've heard something here or there.

Miriam: Well, of course I have! Just wait till you hear it!

Pauline: *(Not matching Miriam's enthusiasm.)* What is it?

Miriam: You'll never guess who's back in town.

Pauline: Who?

Miriam: Guess!

Pauline: But you just said I'll never guess it.

Miriam: Oh! Pauline! Sometimes you're such a...a...

Pauline: Fuddy duddy, I know. Who is it?

Eddie:       *(Silently opens the screen door just enough to slip through and enter on his hands and knees. As the ladies talk he crawls along in front of the counter.)*

Miriam:      Well, Cal over at the hardware store told all his buddies at the barbershop that he saw him walking into town early this morning—just after daybreak!

Pauline:      Who is it? *(Notices movement on the floor as she speaks. Leans forward slightly to get a better view.)*

Miriam:      Well, according to Cal—

Pauline:      *(Spotting Eddie.)* Will you excuse me for just a moment, Miriam? I think I have a rodent problem I need to deal with right away.

Miriam:      Really?

Pauline:      *(Points toward the front of the counter where Eddie is crouching.)* We'll have to finish talking later.

Miriam:      *(Confused and a bit disappointed.)* Oh. I suppose so, but I really want to tell you who Cal saw this morning. It's big news!

Pauline:      We'll talk later, I promise.

Miriam:      All right. Bye, Pauline.

Pauline:      Goodbye. *(Miriam exits as Pauline grabs a broom from inside the kitchen door and begins stepping stealthily around the counter.)*

Eddie:        *(Looks in the opposite direction from which his mother is approaching. Thinking the coast is clear, he turns around only to find himself facing a broom-wielding woman with a stern look on her face.)*  
Oh! Hi mom!

Pauline:      Hello.

Eddie:        What are you doing?

Pauline:      I should ask you the same question.

Eddie:        Me? I'm just...sitting here.

Pauline:      On the floor?

Eddie: Yes.

Pauline: Why?

Eddie: I...like it?

Pauline: No other reason?

Eddie: (*Feigning a look of intense concentration.*) Not that I can think of.

Pauline: Well, I suspect there's more to this story, but I need to get the rest of the pies out. I'll let you off the hook for now.

Eddie: Phew! Thanks! I mean—what hook? What story?

Pauline: Don't you have some homework to get done before supper?

Eddie: (*Stands.*) Yes, but I wish I didn't. We've only been in school for a week, but Miss Wyatt is already giving arithmetic work! What a lousy thing to do.

Pauline: You watch your attitude, young man. Where are your books?

Eddie: Out by the fuel pumps.

Pauline: Seems like a great place for them to be.

Eddie: Really?

Pauline: (*Shaking her head and rolling her eyes.*) Please just bring them in and get started on your work.

Eddie: Okay. (*Just as he's about to push open the screen door, an older couple—Ernest and Ethel—enters.*) Hello.

Ethel: Good afternoon, sir.

Eddie: I'm not a sir. I'm just a kid! (*Exits through the screen door.*)

Pauline: (*Turns to greet the visitors.*) Hello! Welcome to McMillans! How can I help you?

Ethel: My husband and I are passing through on our way to Toledo. We're a bit hungry and thought we might stop in for a bite to eat.

Pauline: Well, you've come to the right place. *(She ushers them to one of the tables.)* How's this?

Ethel: Whatdya think, Ernest?

Ernest: This is just fine.

Ethel: *(Cheerfully.)* We'll take it!

Eddie: *(Reenters with school books in hand. Sits on the stool at the far down right corner and begins working on his arithmetic.)*

Pauline: Wonderful. Are you folks hungry for dinner? Dessert? Something to drink?

Ernest: Some water would be wonderful, thank you.

Pauline: Sure thing.

Ethel: And I think we're just looking for a quick snack of some sort. Your sign out on the highway mentioned pies?

Pauline: *(Beaming.)* Yes, ma'am! Our pies are quite popular around here.

Ernest: What kinds do you have?

Pauline: Let's see, today we've got chocolate, cherry, banana, and boysenberry pie—that's our specialty.

Ethel: That sounds delightful. I'd love a piece, thank you.

Ernest: Make that two, please.

Pauline: Coming right up! *(Crosses to Eddie on the stool.)* Eddie, will you please pour some water for our guests? *(Exits to the kitchen.)*

Eddie: *(Drops his pencil dramatically.)* You betcha! Anything beats dumb ol' arithmetic! *(Moves behind the counter and pours water from a pitcher into two tall glasses. He delivers the glasses just as Mildred and Harriet enter through the screen door.)* Hi ya, ladies!

Both Women: Hi, Eddie!

Harriet: Does your mom have today's pies out yet?

Eddie: You betcha! She's settin' em out just now. (*Returns to his homework.*)

Harriet: Great! I'm starving!

Mildred: Me too! (*Both women claim a stool at the counter leaving an empty stool next to Eddie.*)

Pauline: (*Enters from the kitchen with two pieces of pie.*) Afternoon, ladies! I'll be right with you. (*She begins crossing toward the older couple, but Winston bursts through the screen door and collides with her. The pie pieces drop to the floor.*) Oh, for heaven's sake! Not again!

Eddie: (*When he sees Winston, his eyes grow wide. He begins packing up his books and creeping toward the kitchen.*)

Winston: Oh! Mrs. McMillan! I'm so sorry! I didn't see you there.

Pauline: (*Cleaning up the soiled pie.*) Well, I'm not surprised to hear it, Winston. You blazed in here in an awful big hurry!

Winston: Yes, ma'am. I'm here to—(*Spots Eddie.*)—to speak with Edward about...about our arithmetic homework.

Pauline: Oh. (*Looks in Eddie's direction.*) Well, you're in luck. Eddie was just getting started on his. Weren't you, Eddie?

Eddie: (*Stops just short of the kitchen.*) Uh...yes! I was!

Pauline: Great! You and Winston can both work on it together right there at the counter. Won't that be nice, Eddie?

Eddie: (*Laughs nervously.*) Uh...yes. It will! (*Moves back to his stool reluctantly.*)

Winston: While I'm here, I'd love to have a piece of pie. (*Looking at the soiled pie on the plate.*) Not that one, of course.

Pauline: No. Of course not. Why don't you have a seat? I'll finish helping these folks over here, and then I can get to you. Will that work?

Winston: That sounds just delightful, Mrs. McMillan. (*Sits on the stool directly next to Eddie who inches away in order to be as far from Winston as possible.*)

Pauline:     *(To the older folks in the booth.)* I apologize. I've hit a bit of a snag with your pie. I'll be back in a jiffy.

Ethel:       Don't hurry! We're just fine. It's a delightful little place you've got here.

Pauline:     Thanks! I'll get those new pieces for you both. *(Exits into the kitchen.)*

*As Eddie and Winston talk over the next few moments, the older couple converses quietly while Mildred and Harriet do the same at the counter.*

Winston:    *(A complete change of tone from when he was speaking to Pauline.)* All right, Eddie McMurflin! You know why I'm here.

Eddie:       *(Not looking up from his work.)* I do?

Winston:    Of course you do. I found the little gift you put in my lunch pail this morning.

Eddie:       Was it still alive?—I mean, what are you talking about?

Winston:    You know what I'm talking about, McDerfin!

Eddie:       My name is McMillan.

Winston:    Your name is whatever I say it is! That was a lousy prank you pulled and I'm gonna make you pay for it.

Eddie:       How you gonna do that?

Winston:    See this fist? I'm gonna ram it down your throat and then I'll —*(Lonnie enters through the screen door carrying his tattered bag. He looks around tentatively and picks a seat at a table in the far down left corner. As soon as Winston hears the door squeak, he snaps into his polite mode. He looks down at Eddie's papers.)*—I'll tell you that you need to remember to add the tens digit before you add the hundreds digit. Remember what Miss Wyatt said? Silly Edward! So forgetful!

*Over the next few lines, Harriet and Mildred repeatedly look over their shoulders in Lonnie's direction. They whisper to each other with disapproving looks on their faces. Ethel and Ernest notice Lonnie, but have no reason to disapprove. Eddie and Winston alternate between working on arithmetic and sneering at each other. Winston thrusts a fist toward Eddie just as Pauline enters from the kitchen with yet two more pieces of pie.*

Winston:     *(Quickly hiding his fist and spreading the charm on thick.)* Oh, hello, Mrs. McMillan!

Pauline:     *(Confused by his enthusiastic greeting.)* Hello, Winston. I'll have your piece in just a moment. *(She pauses before crossing in front of the screen door to make sure it's safe for her to proceed. Once she's convinced that it's okay to move, she walks quickly toward the older couple with extra care not to drop the pieces of pie.)* Here we go. Sorry again for the delay. *(Successfully delivers their food.)*

Ethel:        Oh, that's fine. Doesn't this just look delicious?

Ernest:       It sure does!

Pauline:     Well, thank you. We try to give folks our best. We want them walking away full and happy so that they'll come back!

Ethel:        How long has this place been around?

Pauline:     My husband's father started it over 40 years ago. That was way back when there was a hitching post out front instead of a fuel pump.

Ernest:       Times certainly have changed, haven't they?

Pauline:     Yes, they have—for better or for worse. Anyway, I hope you both enjoy the pie. Let me know if you need anything else.

Ethel:        Will do!

Pauline:     *(Crosses behind the counter.)* Okay, now what can I get for you three?

Winston:     I'd love a piece of chocolate, ma'am.

Pauline:     *(Retrieving a piece from the display case.)* One chocolate... here you go. *(To Mildred and Harriet.)* And what about you two?

Mildred: Do you know who that is? (*Points toward Lonnie in the corner.*)

Pauline: (*Glances at Lonnie who is slouching and turned away from the counter.*) No, I don't think so. Why?

Mildred: It's Lonnie Dawes!

Pauline: Is it? (*Looks at the slouched young man more closely.*) Why, I believe you're right. It's Lonnie.

Harriet: I heard he came into town early this morning.

Pauline: (*Glancing at the window and recalling her conversation with Miriam.*) So that's who it was.

Mildred: How's that?

Pauline: Oh, nothing.

Mildred: Well, what are you going to do about him?

Pauline: I'm not sure what you mean.

Mildred: You're not going to let him eat here, are you?

Pauline: Why wouldn't I?

Harriet: Don't you know about him?

Mildred: Yeah, he's not welcome in most places around town.

*Eddie and Winston start to listen more closely at this point.*

Harriet: After what he did, I'm surprised he's brave enough to even show his face in Mallard.

Eddie: What did he do?

Pauline: (*Firmly.*) Nothing. (*Softening her tone a bit.*) Well, nothing that we know of for sure. It's all just rumor and speculation.

Eddie: What is?

Mildred: It's more than just rumor, Pauline. Everyone knows about it. Either Lonnie or his dad were involved. Or maybe both of them!

Harriet: Probably both of them.

Pauline: No one knows for sure. Like I said, it's all just nasty gossip that gets passed around town.

Mildred: Well gossip or not—our family nearly went broke because of him and his dad. We had to start all over from scratch.

Harriet: Yeah. A lot of people in town can say the same thing. He ruined things for a lot of people.

Eddie: How'd he do that?

Mildred: Even if he wasn't involved, he's still a lowdown, sneaky person. He used to steal things from the market nearly every week!

Pauline: How do you know that?

Mildred: Mr. Harris always suspected it but never caught him in the act. I just can't figure out why you'd want him here, Pauline! *(Says this loud enough for Lonnie and the older couple to hear.)*

Pauline: *(Trying to calm the situation down.)* Listen, why don't you enjoy your pie and let me worry about Lonnie, all right?

Mildred: No thanks. I don't have much of an appetite just now. *(Starts toward the screen door.)* You comin' Harriet?

Harriet: Yup. *(Both women exit in a huff.)*

Eddie: What's got them so worked up, mom? What'd Lonnie do that's such a big fuss?

Pauline: *(Visibly bothered by the conversation that just took place.)* We can talk about it later. You just keep working on your schooling. *(Steps toward Lonnie but changes her mind and exits to the kitchen.)*

Eddie: *(Looks at Lonnie with curiosity before returning to his schoolwork as Winston enjoys his pie.)*

Ethel: *(She has just finished up her snack, but her husband is still eating. She stands, stretches, and saunters over to Lonnie.)* Good afternoon, sir.

Lonnie:       (*Doesn't look up.*) Hello.

Ethel:        Fine weather we're having, wouldn't you say?

Lonnie:       (*Glances toward the screen door.*) I guess so.

Ethel:        (*Puts a gentle hand on Lonnie's shoulder.*) Will you take a bit of advice from a creaky old woman like myself? (*Lonnie nods.*) Try to smile more. It's not as bad as it seems, I'm sure. Things will start looking up eventually.

Lonnie:       (*Unsure of how to take this.*) Thanks. I'll try.

Pauline:      (*Reenters from the kitchen and looks in Lonnie's direction with a concerned expression.*)

Winston:     (*Holding up an empty plate.*) Hello, Mrs. McMillan! I'm all finished with that piece of pie. It was scrumptious!

Pauline:      I'm glad you enjoyed it. (*Steps over to where Ethel is standing as Ernest finishes his last bite of pie.*) Well? How was it?

Ethel:        Delightful!

Ernest:      Yes it was. Quite satisfying. (*Stands and pulls some cash out of his pocket.*) How much do I owe you?

Pauline:      This one's on the house.

Ernest:      You don't have to do that. I'm entirely willing to pay for such wonderful food.

Pauline:      No, I insist. I dropped your first piece on the ground. That wasn't very polite of me.

Ernest:      (*Smiling wryly in the boys' direction.*) I suspect it wasn't entirely your fault, but I won't argue with you. Thank you for your kindness. It seems like this is a right friendly little town.

Pauline:      (*Glances at Lonnie who has resumed his slouched position.*) It can be. Thank you so much for coming in. We hope to see you again if you ever pass this way in the future.

Ernest: Yes ma'am. You can count on it. Bye now! (*Escorts his wife through the screen door.*)

Pauline: (*As they are leaving.*) Goodbye! Safe travels! (*The boys are still occupied at the counter. Pauline approaches Lonnie's table tentatively.*) Hello, Lonnie.

Lonnie: (*Without looking at her.*) Hello, Mrs. McMillan.

Pauline: I'm surprised to see you here. It's been...a long time.

Lonnie: Yes ma'am.

Pauline: (*Moves closer to the table so she can see him. She looks nervous.*) Can I get you anything? Water? Tea? Pie?

Lonnie: Um...no thanks.

Pauline: Surely you didn't come all this way just to sit alone at an empty table.

Lonnie: (*Looks up at her for the first time.*) No ma'am.

Pauline: Let me get you a sandwich. (*Moves toward the kitchen.*)

Lonnie: (*Stands abruptly.*) No! Please don't. (*Steps toward her.*) I really appreciate the offer, but I shouldn't have come here.

Pauline: To the diner?

Lonnie: To Mallard. I don't know what I was thinking. Of course people will notice. They already have. I saw those two women leave a minute ago. I know they left cause of me. I don't want to hurt your business. (*Grabs his luggage and walks toward the screen door intent on leaving.*)

Pauline: (*Looks hesitant and uncertain for a moment before calling out.*) Lonnie! (*Lonnie stops and turns. The uncertainty is gone from Pauline's face. She's made up her mind. She approaches him.*) That doesn't mean you have to leave too. You're welcome here.

Lonnie: That's kind of you. Your family has always been real nice to me and my parents even when they—(*Looks down in shame.*)—but I think I should just keep movin'.

Pauline: My husband is around here somewhere with a fellow from the telephone company. I know he will want to see you and say hello—my husband not the telephone worker! Can't I convince you to stay around just a bit?

Lonnie: I don't think so ma'am.

Pauline: (*Thinks of another approach.*) How about this? I've got a heap of dirty dishes out in the kitchen. Eddie was supposed to wash them later, but I'm sure he won't mind skipping a chore for tonight. (*Eddie sits up excitedly.*) He's got arithmetic homework to finish anyway. (*Eddie slouches in disappointment.*) How about you stay long enough to wash the dishes and let me pay you with a sandwich or something else to eat?

Lonnie: (*Considers for a moment before giving in.*) Ok. That sounds like it could be all right. Thanks.

Pauline: Just follow me this way. (*Ushers Lonnie into the kitchen.*)

Winston: (*Waits until the coast is clear.*) All right, McFluffy, I've got some unfinished business with you. (*Wields his fist threateningly.*)

Eddie: Wait! Wait! Aren't you the least bit curious about what just happened?

Winston: What do you mean?

Eddie: Lonnie Dawes shows up out of the blue; Mildred and Harriet get their feathers all ruffled; and my mom scoots him into the kitchen before anyone else shows up? It all looks suspicious to me.

Winston: Oh, that? That's easy.

Eddie: Why do you say that?

Winston: Everybody knows that Lonnie Dawes is a real bad seed.

Eddie: Really?

Winston: Oh, yes! I've heard my parents talking to the neighbors about it before.

Eddie: What did they say?

Winston: He did something real bad a long time ago.

Eddie: It couldn't be *that* long ago. He doesn't look very old. And my mom said no one knows for sure what happened.

Winston: Well that's not what *I've* heard. My parents said that he—wait a second! You're just trying to distract me! I'm supposed to ram my fist down your throat, remember?

Eddie: (*Weakly.*) Oh. Yeah. That.

Winston: Yeah. That! (*Stands and starts backing Eddie toward the kitchen door.*) That was a real lousy prank you pulled this morning, Eddie McMilker! You're a low-down, good-for-nothing, little—(*Rosie, Aaron, and Olive enter through the screen door, and Winston changes personas instantly.*)—piece of heaven! That's what your mother's pie is. A little slice of heaven! Wouldn't you say, Edward?

Eddie: Sure! That sounds about right.

Winston: (*Turning toward the newcomers.*) Hello Rosie! (*Walks toward her. He's head over heels in love with her and barely notices the other two standing by.*) How are you on this gorgeous afternoon?

Rosie: I'm fine, Winston. How are you?

Winston: Oh, I'm gorgeous—I mean, fine! I'm fine. It's such a gorgeous afternoon, wouldn't you say?

Rosie: Yes. I suppose.

Winston: (*He's starry-eyed.*) I think it is. It's...gorgeous. Just downright...gorgeous. (*He stares at her as she shifts uncomfortably on her feet.*)

Olive: (*She's bold, brash, and speaks with a stutter.*) Hey, W—w—Winston! You've got dr—dr—drool on your ch—chin!

Winston: (*Mortified, he wipes his chin off.*) I've got to go, Rosie. See you soon! (*He runs out the screen door.*)

Eddie:           *(Crossing to Olive and giving her a friendly slap on the back.)*  
          Good one, Olive! That was perfect. *(Looks at his homework with*  
          *disgust.)* I'm sure there's something better for me to do than arithmetic.  
          I'll see you later! *(He exits through the screen door.)*

*Over the course of the next five minutes or so, various townsfolk enter, order food (mostly pie), and enjoy friendly conversation as they eat. Pauline takes their orders and brings their food making numerous trips to and from the kitchen in the process. Rosie, Aaron, and Olive sit at a table near downstage center.*

Aaron:           You're a feisty one, aren't you, Olive?

Olive:           *(Maintains a consistent stutter throughout all of her lines.)* Yes  
          I am! You better watch out yourself!

Rosie:           Her sharp tongue is gonna get her in trouble one of these days!

Olive:           Sharp tongue? Have you heard me talk?

Rosie:           You know what I mean, Olive.

Olive:           Maybe. Maybe not.

Pauline:         *(Noticing the three newcomers for the first time.)* Oh, Olive!  
          You're here. I need you to help me serve the afternoon rush.

Olive:           It's Sam's turn!

Pauline:         He's not back from football practice yet.

Olive:           Why can't Rosie do it?

Pauline:         Because Rosie is spending some time with Aaron.

Olive:           Why can't Aaron help too?

Aaron:           *(Standing.)* I'd be glad to help you out, Mrs. McMillan.

Pauline:         Oh, Aaron, you're very sweet. No, thank you. Olive will help  
          me.

Olive:           It was worth a try. *(She crosses behind the counter and begins*  
          *assisting Pauline as customers come in.)*

Aaron:       *(Sits next to Rosie.)* So...

Rosie:        So...

Aaron:        Don't you think we should talk?

Rosie:        We are talking.

Aaron:        Yes, but don't you think we should talk about something specific?

Rosie:        What did you have in mind?

Aaron:        Come on, Rosie! Why are you beating around the bush like that? The letter?

Rosie:        Oh, that.

Aaron:        Yes, that! You picked it up at the post office earlier. Is it from them?

Rosie:        How do you know about that? I don't recall seeing you at the post office.

Aaron:        *(Blushes a little.)* Oh. Well, I happened to be walking down Main Street at that time and I saw you—

Rosie:        *Happened* to see me.

Aaron:        Yes. I happened to see you through the window. I happened to see Denny give you a letter. It looked like a fancy envelope. Is it from them?

Rosie:        That's a lot of happenings one after the other. You sure you weren't spying on me? *(She smiles to make it clear she's teasing.)*

Aaron:        *(Looks a little wounded.)* Ok. If you don't want to talk about it, then we don't have to. You win.

Rosie:        *(Realizes she's pushed it too far.)* The letter is from them.

Aaron:        Rosie, that's wonderful! What did they say?

Rosie:        I don't know.

Aaron: Why not? (*She holds up an unopened envelope.*) You haven't opened it yet? What are you waiting for? (*She shrugs.*) Oh, come now! Let's find out if you won. Fifteen dollars is a lot of money.

Rosie: It is, but I don't really care about the money.

Aaron: Then why enter the contest at all?

Rosie: You should know me better than that. (*Flirtatiously.*) You do, don't you?

Aaron: (*Exaggerates a face of concentration.*) Let's see...knowing you as well as I do...I'd say...what you really care about is...finding out if they think your writing is any good.

Rosie: Bravo! You're a smart fellow.

Aaron: Well, then...(*Points toward the envelope.*)...let's find out!

Rosie: (*Reluctantly.*) I suppose we'll have to sooner or later. (*She starts tearing back the fold.*) I'm nervous.

Aaron: (*Leaning forward in anticipation.*) Me too. (*Rosie pulls out the letter, unfolds it slowly, and begins reading. Aaron waits impatiently for her to say something.*) So? What does it say?

Rosie: Lots of things.

Aaron: Like...?

Rosie: Like "Dear Miss McMillan" and "Sincerely yours."

Aaron: (*Leans back with a defeated look on his face.*)

Rosie: I'm sorry. No more jokes, I promise. They said...(*She stands and paces slightly as she scans through the wording. Her expression changes into wide-eyed excitement.*) I won! I won the contest. They loved my essay!

Aaron: (*Stands and steps toward her.*) That's fantastic, Rosie! I knew you could do it!

Rosie:       *(Still reading.)* But that's not all. They...*(Her expression changes again. This time it's a look of uncertainty.)* They want me to come work at their magazine?

Aaron:       You're kidding! *(Rosie extends the letter to him. She's completely shocked. Aaron reads for himself.)* Rosie, that's...wow!

Rosie:       *(Still shocked.)* Yes, it's...

Aaron:       What's wrong?

Rosie:       Nothing! I'm just...

Aaron:       Just what?

Rosie:       I'm just...I don't even know what to think. Never in a million years did I think they'd offer me a job...on their writing staff! I'm... I'm...

Aaron:       *(Putting a hand on her shoulder.)* ...you're a wonderful writer. That's what you are. The folks at *National Weekly* see that and they want you working for them. The whole thing is just amazing!

Rosie:       *(Steps away from him.)* It is amazing—exciting, but I'm not sure I can take the job.

Aaron:       What! Why wouldn't you take it?

Rosie:       Well, for starters, it's in Washington, D.C.

Aaron:       *(He hadn't read that part of the letter. He has his own moment of shock and uncertainty.)* Oh. *(He looks concerned.)*

Rosie:       That's five hundred miles away from Mallard. It might as well be in a completely different country! *(She sits.)*

Aaron:       *(Recovering slightly.)* Don't you think you're exaggerating just a bit?

Rosie:       You're right. *(Wryly.)* It's only four hundred miles away.

Aaron:       *(Still looking and sounding uncertain.)* What will your parents say?

Rosie:       I don't know.

Aaron: Will they want you to take the job?

Rosie: Dad definitely will—I think. *(She picks the letter back up and reads it again—still in disbelief.)*

Aaron: *(He returns to his seat and watches her intently. The gravity of the offer she's received has settled in on both of them.)* What are you thinking?

Rosie: *(Looks around the room.)* It's hard to imagine leaving. I've lived in Mallard my entire life. Everything around me is so...familiar. So...comforting. My bedroom upstairs. The restaurant. Mom's pies. This table.

Aaron: This table?

Rosie: Sure! This is the table where I beat Dad at chess for the very first time.

Aaron: Really? *(Looking down at the table.)* When was that?

Rosie: I was 4 years old.

Aaron: Wow! That's amazing. Is there anything you're not good at?

Rosie: Making big decisions.

*They both stare at nothing in particular, occupied by their own thoughts of how the offer has suddenly changed things.*

Lester: *(Steps into the doorway and shouts offstage.)* Ok, Willard! I'm going to give it a try now. *(Sees Rosie and Aaron.)* Hello you two. This is perfect timing! I'm about to make the very first call on our telephone. This is a momentous occasion, and you both get to be a part of it! Isn't that thrilling?

Rosie: *(The mood of the previous moment is broken. She and Aaron stand and cross to Lester.)* Yes, Dad. It's thrilling.

Lester: *(Sees Pauline enter from the kitchen carrying several plates of food.)* Pauley! Perfect! You can witness this moment as well.

Pauline: What moment?

Lester: Our first telephone call!

Pauline: (*Trying to look enthused.*) Oh, that. Well, you know I'd love to, Les, but I'm busy serving customers.

Lester: They can be witnesses too. (*Shouts out so that everyone in the diner can hear.*) May I have your attention, please? Ladies and gentlemen, you are about to witness an historic occasion. I, Lester Magley McMillan, am about to place the first telephone call ever in our wonderful city of Mallard, Ohio! (*A few customers clap tentatively. Pauline sets the plates down and watches. Lester approaches the telephone on the wall and dramatically goes through the motions of picking up the receiver and placing the call.*) Hello? (*He's trying to speak to the operator.*) Hello? Is this the telephone exchange in Chillicothe? Hello? Hello? (*Stares at the receiver in frustration.*) There's no one there. (*A few snickers from the crowd. Willard appears behind the screen door and stands awkwardly as at the beginning.*) Willard, there's no one there. Shouldn't I be able to hear the operator on the other end?

Willard: Yes.

Lester: (*Mounting frustration.*) But I can't. That's a problem, don't you think?

Willard: Yes.

Lester: Can we do something about it?

Willard: Yes. (*Stands motionless as Lester stares impatiently.*) Did you mean right now?

Lester: (*Nearing exasperation.*) Yes. That would be ideal.

Willard: Okay. (*Exits.*)

Lester: (*Turning back to the diner crowd, all of whom have lost interest and resumed their activities.*) Ladies and Gentlemen! We've run into a small problem with the telephone call. Please stand by! (*No one pays much attention to him.*) Don't worry, Pauley. We'll get 'er fixed up real fast so you can see how amazing this telephone will be!

Pauline: (*Smiles lovingly.*) Okay, Les. I know you will.

Lester:       (*Gives her a quick peck on the cheek before exiting.*)

Pauline:      (*Watches him go then turns to Rosie and Aaron.*) That man!  
His enthusiasm seems boundless sometimes.

Rosie:        (*Nostalgically.*) Yeah. It's one of the things I love most about  
him.

Pauline:      (*Picks up the plates she placed on the counter earlier.*) I've got  
to take care of the rest of these folks quickly so I can get our own supper  
ready. You joining us tonight, Aaron?

Aaron:        No, ma'am. I promised my mother I would eat at home  
tonight. Says she doesn't see enough of me since I finished high school.

Pauline:      Well, I can certainly understand that. Sometimes I feel like we  
don't see nearly enough of Rosie.

Rosie:        Mom! I graduated three years ago, and you've seen me plenty  
since then.

Pauline:      Anyway, Aaron, please tell your mother I said "Hello." (*She  
moves off to serve customers.*)

Aaron:        (*As she's walking away.*) Will do! (*To Rosie.*) Are you going  
to talk to them?

Rosie:        You heard what she just said. She doesn't see enough of me as  
it is! What will she say if I tell her I'm moving to Washington, D.C.?

Aaron:        I guess you'll never know if you don't bring it up. Do you  
have to decide soon?

Rosie:        The letter said they'll contact me in a couple of weeks.

Aaron:        Well, at least you've got some time. Listen, I gotta scoot. See  
you tomorrow night?

Rosie:        (*Back to the flirting.*) I have a sneaky feeling you'll see me  
before then in town somewhere.

Aaron:        (*Feigning ignorance.*) I have no idea what you're talking  
about! (*He hugs her and exits.*)

Rosie:       *(Sits on one of the empty stools and waits until Pauline approaches.)* Hey, mom?

Pauline:     Yes?

Rosie:       Can I talk to you for a second?

Pauline:     *(Surveys the crowd.)* I suppose I can take a few minutes before starting on supper. *(She moves around behind the counter and begins folding napkins or some similar chore. For the first part of the conversation, she listens while working.)*

Rosie:       *(Nervously.)* So, I never told you or Dad this but...a couple of months ago I entered a writing contest for *National Weekly Magazine*.

Pauline:     You did? That's wonderful! I've heard of that magazine before.

Rosie:       Yes, it's popular all around the country. Anyway, I found out today that I won first prize in the contest.

Pauline:     Rosamund! That's so exciting!

Rosie:       There's more to it than just that. The editorial board liked my essay so much that...well, they've offered me a job...at their headquarters...in Washington, D.C.

Pauline:     *(Stops working and looks up at her daughter. Her next few lines are measured and cautious in tone.)* Oh...my. That...that is... quite the offer.

Rosie:       I know.

Pauline:     *(Connecting the dots.)* And...you'd have to move there to take the job?

Rosie:       Yes.

Pauline:     *(Deflated. She steps around the counter and sits on a stool.)* Oh. That's...I'm not sure what to say.

Rosie:       What do you mean?

Pauline: Well, Rosie, I'm very glad you won the contest and they like your writing...

Rosie: But?

Pauline: Sweetheart, Washington is a big city...far away! It's nothing like Mallard.

Rosie: I know. You don't think I should do it?

Pauline: I'm not saying that, I'm just...Where will you live? Who will watch out for you?

Rosie: I don't know.

Pauline: (*Grasping for whatever objections come to mind.*) How often will you come back to see us? And what about the flu?

Rosie: The flu?

Pauline: What if another wave of the flu comes around? Big cities get hit the hardest...What if you're taken ill?

Rosie: I don't know, Mom.

Pauline: And what about Mrs. Gillingham? She depends on you so much at the dress shop. (*Quieter.*) I depend on you here too.

Rosie: (*Sounding defeated.*) I...just don't know.

Pauline: (*Seeing how her reaction is affecting Rosie.*) Oh! Rose! I'm sorry! I'm not trying to be difficult. It's just...I...I don't...(*She doesn't know how to finish the sentence.*)

Lester: (*Calling behind him as enters.*) Just keep working on it, Willard! I'm sure you'll get it soon. (*To his wife and daughter.*) I'm usually an optimist as you know, but when I look at that young man I'm not very confident about the future of our country.

Pauline: Lester! That's an awful thing to say!

Lester: You know I'm joking...mostly joking. (*Senses the tense mood.*) What's the matter?

Pauline: Your oldest child has some...news.

Lester:       *(His face lights up.)* Did Aaron finally propose to you? That's wonderful! *(Rosie blushes brightly.)*

Pauline:      No, no! Les! You're not listening. It has nothing do with Aaron. *(It dawns on her.)* Well, I guess that's not entirely true, is it, Rosie?

Lester:       What are you talking about?

Pauline:      Rosie?

Rosie:         *(Even more timidly than before now that she's seen her mom's response.)* Dad, *National Weekly Magazine* likes my writing. I won a contest they put out, and now they want me to work for them as a full-time writer!

Lester:       *(Lights up once again.)* That's just as exciting as if Aaron *had* proposed! Wowza! *My* daughter working for *National Weekly*? This is...this is...tremendous!

Pauline:      You're thrilled.

Lester:       Thrilled? Of course, I'm thrilled. I've always known you were gonna do big things, Rosie. I've always known it. You've got that something special inside. It's been there since you were just a little girl. It's gonna take you places. I've always said that. Haven't I, Pauley? I've always said that!

Pauline:      Yes, you have.

Rosie:         There's something else, Dad. The job is at their headquarters... in Washington, D.C.

Lester:       Oh! *(It takes a moment for this to fully dawn on him.)* Oh. I see. *(A quick flash of uncertainty. His mind is whirring.)* So, you'd have to move. *(Pauline's face darkens a bit.)*

Rosie:         Yes.

Lester:       *(Contemplatively.)* Wow. *(Thinks it over a bit before recovering.)* Well...that will be a big moment for you—leaving home for the first time—but it's worth it, right? *(Neither woman looks at him.)* Right? What's wrong, Rose?

Rosie: Nothing. I'm just not sure—

Olive: (*Enters from the kitchen.*) Mom, why is there a strange man washing dishes in the kitchen?

Lester: Strange man? Pauley, I told you, he's not a strange man. He's Willard. (*Moves toward the kitchen.*) And why is he doing dishes when he's supposed to be—

Pauline: Les! Wait! It's not Willard.

Lester: (*Turning back.*) So it is a strange man?

Pauline: (*Walking over and taking him by the arm.*) No. It's—

Lester: Pauley, what's going on here?

Pauline: (*Looks around the room at the remaining customers. She ponders her next move for a moment before reaching a decision.*) Oh! What a day! Wait here a moment. (*She steps into the kitchen. While she's gone, Lester, Rosie, and Olive all look at each other in confusion. Pauline reenters a moment later with Lonnie following sheepishly behind.*) We have a visitor.

Lester: (*Peers at Lonnie a bit before the moment of recognition.*) Is that? Are you...Lonnie Dawes? (*Lonnie nods but doesn't look up.*) Lonnie Dawes! (*Without hesitation Lester steps toward him and extends his hand. The remaining customers heard him announce Lonnie and have begun looking and whispering. Lester shakes Lonnie's hand energetically.*) Good to see you, young man! It's been a long time! Why, it must have been at least...(He starts calculating mentally.)

Lonnie: It's been eight years.

Lester: Eight years? My, that's something! You've grown up quite a bit. You look just like your father!

Lonnie: (*Takes no pride in this comparison.*) Yes, sir.

Lester: What brings you back into town?

Pauline:     *(Cutting in quickly.)* Lonnie is helping us out for a few days. Doing dishes and other chores. I told him he could stay in our extra room, and we'll pay for his meals while he works for us! *(Lonnie looks at her in surprise, but Pauline just nods at him with a smile.)*

Willard:     *(Takes his usual place just outside the screen door.)*

Lester:     Sounds great! You picked a perfect time to show up, Lonnie! We're about to make history around here. That is, if I can get that Willard to—*(He turns and sees Willard just then.)*—Oh! Willard! Just the man I was looking for. Did you finish up on the line?

Willard:     Yes.

Lester:     Do you think the telephone will work this time?

Willard:     I hope so.

Lester:     Is there anything we can do to make sure it *will* work this time?

Willard:     I guess I could check the line one more time.

Lester:     Can you do that, please? And, Willard, I do mean right now. Just let me know when I can give it another go, okay?

Willard:     Okay. *(Exits.)*

*As they wait for word from Willard, several customers leave cash on their tables and walk past Lonnie and the family, looking awkwardly in Lonnie's direction. A moment later, Sam is seen through the large window. He catches a football pass from someone off stage left.*

Sam:         Nice pass! *(Robbie runs onto stage and catches up to Sam just outside the screen door. They both step through and find everyone standing around.)* What's going on here?

Lester:     We're just about to make our very first telephone call. That's what.

Sam:         Well, it's about—*(Sees Lonnie by the kitchen door.)*—time. *(Both boys' expressions darken. Robbie looks particularly sour-faced.)*

Pauline:     *(Trying to cover the obvious awkwardness.)* Sam, Rob, this is Lonnie...Dawes.

Sam: Yeah. I recognized him.

Lonnie: *(Timidly.)* Hello.

Sam: *(Speaks awkwardly.)* Um...hi. You've been gone a long time.  
*(Lonnie nods.)* Well, uh, welcome home.

Lonnie: Thanks.

Robbie: I gotta get home, Sam.

Sam: I thought you wanted to study for our history test?

Robbie: I'll do it on my own. See ya. *(Eyes Lonnie suspiciously as he exits through the screen door.)*

Sam: *(Turns back toward his father.)* Listen, Dad? I know you're real excited about this telephone call, but I think I'll pass on it.

Lester: What? How can you? We've been talking about this for weeks! You've been just as excited as I have.

Sam: I know, but I've got some homework to get done, and I'm kinda tired after practice.

Pauline: What about supper?

Sam: *(Begins moving toward the stairs.)* I'll grab a snack later, I promise. *(Pauses on the bottom stair and looks back at them.)* I'll be seeing you. *(Exits up the stairs.)*

Olive: Sam is strange sometimes.

Lester: *(Pops his head out the screen door.)* Willard? Are we ready?

Willard: *(From offstage.)* I hope so.

Lester: All right, folks. Let's give this another try. *(Picks up the receiver as everyone else gathers around.)* Hello? *(Waits for a response.)* Hello! Is this the exchange in Chillicothe? It is! Wonderful! *(Pulls the receiver away from his ear and turns away from the mouthpiece.)* It worked! It really worked!

Olive, Rosie, and Pauline: *(Various expressions of happiness and cheering.)*

Lester:       *(Poking his head out the screen door again.)* Willard? It worked! You did it, sir! Job well done! *(Steps back to continue the call.)* I apologize for that. We're just so excited around here to have our first working telephone!...Hello?...Hello?...Hello? *(Hangs up the receiver in defeat.)* We must have lost the connection.

Pauline:      Don't despair, sweetheart. I'm sure it's just temporary.

Lester:       *(Looking discouraged for just a moment before summoning his determination.)* Of course, it's temporary! *(Heads out the screen door.)* Willard? Willard?

Pauline:      He's definitely one of a kind! *(Turns toward Lonnie.)* Come, Lonnie, I'll help you finish those dishes.

Lonnie:       Maybe I should just go.

Pauline:      Nonsense. Come on, Olive. You can dry. *(Olive and Lonnie exit to the kitchen. Pauline catches Rosie's eye.)* Are you all right, sweetie? *(Rosie shrugs. Pauline exits.)*

Rosie:        *(Looks around the room with fear and uncertainty on her face. All customers have exited by this point. She recalls the many memories she's made here. She walks over to the table where she was speaking with Aaron earlier and picks up the letter to read it once again as the curtain closes.)*

## END OF ACT I

## *Finding Your Way with the McMillans*

### *A Word from the Author*

The idea for this play began with a single question:

*“What was it like, back in the day, to be the first family in town to get a telephone?”*

I’ve always been interested in technology, and this seemed like a good setup for a story. As I began to put together the basic plot, I realized that I could delve into an even better question:

*“How would an average American family living on the verge of the 1920’s respond to all of the developments of their day?”*

It wasn’t until I wrote out the first draft that I came to understand that this play could be about much more than just a family living a century ago. I became convinced that my story should attempt to answer a much deeper, broader question:

*“How do we as humans move into the future with all of its allure, promise, risk, uncertainty, and change?”*

This is a timeless dilemma to which there are many answers. Some are excited about the future. Others are afraid of it. Some resist change while others embrace it so eagerly that they leave the rest of us behind. There are as many approaches as there are people, but not all of these are created equal. I believe there is a better way—maybe even a *best* way—to face the future. In the play, I tried to reveal what it looks like.

My hope for anyone who reads, performs, or watches this story is that they will encounter something—a statement, a feeling, a moment—that resonates with them. As you meet the people of Mallard, I think you’ll find them to be much like you and me. They’ve got ups and downs, positives and negatives, hopes and fears. As the saying goes, “Times change, but people don’t.”

Beyond that, however, my desire is that you will see something special in the McMillan family specifically. It’s their way of responding to the future as it unfolds around them. Though it’s not always easy (at times it’s quite difficult), they tend to react with kindness, good humor, forgiveness, courage, and grace as they encounter various people and events. They live their lives in a way of hope. A way of community. A way that says, “No matter what happens, you can always come back.” It’s the McMillan Way, and I believe it’s also the way of our Creator and Savior. To write about it

has been a genuine joy for me. I hope it entertains you, but more importantly, I hope it helps you find your way in your own unfolding story.

Thanks for stopping by McMillan's. Enjoy the story and try some of their pie while you're at it. I hear it's delicious!

*Andrew D. Doan*

July 2019

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