



**Sample Pages from
No Horse Town**

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No HORSE TOWN

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Lindsay Price



No Horse Town

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Characters

3M/7W

Jimmy

Buddy

Eugene

Ma

Becca June

Melissa Marie

Ida Rose

Ivy Sue

Ireney

Stranger

Author's Note

No Horse Town is all about style—style in the language with the specific manner in which the characters speak, style in the action with the numerous character ‘poses’ and the very stylized telling of what happened in the town of Heywood.

It's very important that the characters treat their situation seriously. They don't know it's funny. Don't wink at the audience that you're in on the joke. The more serious and sincere you are, the better. That's where the humour lies.

First Production

Performed Feb. 13, 2008

District 9 Florida Thespian One Act Competition

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL

Directed by Ed Mason, Drama/Thespian Sponsor

Stage Managed by Samantha Inman and Meaghan Kidder

Jimmy: Michael Leal

Buddy: Austin Spradlin

Eugene: Ian Faurote

Ma: Sarah Hancock

Becca June: Rachael Sevier

Melissa Marie: Lindsey Mutert

Ida Rose: TyLynn Eben

Ivy Sue: Lauren Hershey

Ireney: Na'iyma Thompson

Stranger: Megan Stevenson

Lights up on an empty stage. The setting is a field. Offstage left, there is a street. Offstage right, the town of Heywood.

JIMMY and BUDDY stand centre stage. They pose dramatically. JIMMY stares intently off toward stage left, BUDDY stares stage right.

BUDDY: So.

JIMMY: Yeah.

BUDDY: Right.

JIMMY: Uh huh.

They both spit. They resume their pose.

BUDDY: When you gonna do it?

JIMMY: Don't know. *(pause)* Soon. *(pause)* Today.

BUDDY: You said that yesterday.

JIMMY: *(turning to BUDDY)* You tryin' to rush me?

BUDDY: Heck no. I don't want you to do it at all. *(pause)* Percy Williams lost his leg.

JIMMY: I ain't gonna lose my leg.

BUDDY: You sure? You're not that fast.

JIMMY: *(turning away)* Thanks.

BUDDY: I can't sugar coat this for you Jimmy. If you die –

JIMMY: I'm not gonna –

BUDDY: If you die, I'm gonna have to tell Melissa Marie.

JIMMY: I know.

BUDDY: She'll blame me if you die, Jimmy.

JIMMY: I won't die!

BUDDY: They all say that.

JIMMY: I can do this. I've been watchin'. I watched Percy Williams and Henry Johnson, and Jefferson Moss and –

BUDDY: Watching's not the same as doin'.

JIMMY: How would you know? You've never done it. (*BUDDY grabs JIMMY by the collar*) Hey man! What you doin'? Let me go!

BUDDY: In all your watching you didn't see my brother did ya Jimmy? You didn't see what happened to Bill Jr.

JIMMY: No.

BUDDY: Didn't see him splattered all over the road. Didn't see my ma crying. Didn't see what it did to my whole family.

JIMMY: Ok, ok! I'm sorry.

BUDDY: (*letting go*) Don't you say nothin' to me. You don't know nothin'. (*back to his pose*)

JIMMY: I'm sorry. I'm sorry 'bout your brother.

BUDDY: Everybody's sorry. It don't bring him back.

JIMMY: No it don't.

BUDDY: I hate people like him. Like you. You all think you're invincible. Think nothing can touch you.

JIMMY: Aw come on Buddy. Don't talk like that. You're my best friend. I've known you since I could spit.

BUDDY: Sure been a long time.

They both spit. Offstage a voice cries out.

BECCA JUNE: (*offstage*) Jimmy! Jimmy Clinton don't you dare!

JIMMY: Who's that?

BECCA JUNE: (*offstage*) Jimmy!

BUDDY: It's your sister ain't it?

JIMMY: Aw shoot.

BECCA JUNE runs in out of breath from stage right. She poses.

JIMMY: Becca June you go back home.

BECCA JUNE: Tell me it ain't true. Tell me you ain't gonna do it.

JIMMY: What if I am?

BECCA JUNE: Tell me you ain't gonna do this crazy thing.

JIMMY: It ain't crazy. It proves I'm a man.

BUDDY: How'd you find out Becca June?

BECCA JUNE: The Teeter triplets.

JIMMY: Aw shoot.

BECCA JUNE: Ida Rose Teeter saw you and Buddy coming out this way. Everyone knows what coming out here means.

BUDDY: *(to JIMMY)* Those Teeter girls have big mouths.

JIMMY: Did you tell Ma, Becca June?

BECCA JUNE: No. But she'll know soon enough. It's all over town.

JIMMY: Damn those Teeters.

BECCA JUNE: Melissa Marie's gonna find out for sure.

JIMMY: Buddy, you gotta head them off for me.

BUDDY: Maybe it's good they find out.

JIMMY: No! If they come out here – Melissa Marie'll cry. I can't stand it when she cries. Turns my insides into melted butter. How can I think properly if I got melted butter on my insides? Please Buddy, please.

BUDDY: All right. I'll see what I can do.

BUDDY saunters off. He spits just before he exits.

BECCA JUNE: Jimmy.

JIMMY: *(turning back to gaze stage right)* Go home Becca June.

BECCA JUNE: You're too young. No one under eighteen has even thought about –

JIMMY: I'm not too young. I'm ready.

BECCA JUNE: But why? Why Jimmy why?

JIMMY: Sometimes Becca June, you just gotta do things.

BECCA JUNE: This isn't 'bout the parade is it?

JIMMY: Course not.

BECCA JUNE: You sure?

JIMMY: Sure I'm sure.

BECCA JUNE: Really?

JIMMY: (*getting annoyed*) Wouldn't I know if I was sure or not?

BECCA JUNE: Waving to the crowd, everybody cheering, the high school marching band, the high school baton core, the high school cheerleaders...

JIMMY: I know what happens in a parade Becca June. I've seen one or two.

BECCA JUNE: Everyone who's ever done it got a parade.

JIMMY: Or a funeral.

BECCA JUNE: Or a funeral. (*pause*) This isn't 'bout William Heywood is it?

JIMMY: 'Course not.

BECCA JUNE: Many a generation in our family has tried to spit in the eye of William Heywood.

JIMMY: I don't need a history lesson Becca June.

BECCA JUNE: Ok. (*pause*) This isn't 'bout Pa is it?

JIMMY: 'Course not! (*he poses*) It's about me. Me taking a stand. Me turning a corner. Turning a leaf. Becoming a man. Me!

BECCA JUNE: You don't got to do this to become a man.

JIMMY: The hell I don't.

BECCA JUNE: If every boy in town did there'd be none left!

JIMMY: I don't care 'bout anyone else.

BECCA JUNE: This is about Pa.

JIMMY: It's not! I have to grow up. Face danger, not run and hide. I'm not a kid anymore.

BECCA JUNE: He was proud of you when he died, you know.

JIMMY: It's not about Pa!

BECCA JUNE: He didn't mean to call you a potato face.

JIMMY: (*losing all composure*) Then why did he do it huh? Why? Why did he say that, all lying there on his death bed, breathing his last breath. Why is that the thing he had to say to me? I'm not a potato face! I'm not! And I'm going to show him and you and Ma and this whole town I'm not a potato face. I'm nothing like a potato face and I never will be a potato face!

He poses but it doesn't have the same oomph. There is a pause.

BECCA JUNE: This is so about Pa.

JIMMY: (*a bit defeated*) Yeah. I guess.

BECCA JUNE: You'd have to be a simpleton not to realize what's going on here.

JIMMY: All right, all right.

BECCA JUNE: You're so focused on the potato face comment; it's consuming you.

JIMMY: I got it.

BECCA JUNE: Psychologically, the connection between the emotional impact of the comment and the physical act of standing here is so absolutely –

JIMMY: (*jumping up and down*) Ok, ok! Shut up! I got it! Loud and clear! No problem!

There is a pause. They both stare at each other.

BECCA JUNE: Gee. Touchy.

Offstage there is a cry.

MA: (offstage) Jimmy! Jimmy!

BECCA JUNE and JIMMY scramble to get into appropriate poses. They both look offstage right.

JIMMY: Aw shoot.

BUDDY comes running in from stage right.

BUDDY: Sorry Jimmy, I couldn't stop them.

A group runs on from stage right and forms a pose of despair. It is MA, MELISSA MARIE, IDA ROSE, IVY SUE and IRENEY.

MA: (with great sorrow) Jimmy.

JIMMY: Aw shoot.

BECCA JUNE: (running to MA's side) I've been trying to talk him out of it Ma.

MA: Jimmy. Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy. (pause) Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy. (pause) Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy. (Pause. Pause. She must be done) Jimmy, Jimmy –

JIMMY: For crying out loud Ma.

IDA ROSE: Why would you trouble your Ma so, Jimmy Clinton?

IVY SUE: Why Jimmy, why?

MELISSA MARIE bursts into tears.

JIMMY: For crying out loud.

IRENEY: I'm behind you Jimmy!

The rest react with surprise.

IVY SUE: Ireney Teeter!

IRENEY: You're my hero!

IDA ROSE: You hush your mouth.

IRENEY: I will not! (to JIMMY) Don't you listen to what anyone says. I think it's brave, and daring. I wanna do it to! I'm gonna do it!

Everyone laughs, very stylistically.

IRENEY: What you all laughing at?

IDA ROSE & IVY SUE: You?

MA: Don't be ridiculous child.

BUDDY: Girls can't do it!

MELISSA MARIE: I'd never dream of doing such a thing.

They laugh some more. IRENEY cuts them off.

IRENEY: Laugh if you want to. Scorn me, blacken my name if you gotta. But when I get old enough, ain't no one gonna stop me from –

An offstage voice cries out.

STRANGER: (offstage) Hey! Hey there!

Everyone in unison turns to look off to the right.

JIMMY: Who's that?

BECCA JUNE: Looks like a stranger.

Everyone forms pose of unfriendliness. The STRANGER, a loopy, bubbly girl, enters.

STRANGER: Hey! Hi! You guys saved my life! My car broke down and my cell died and I thought I was toast for sure. There's supposed to be this town called Heywood right around here but for the life of me I can't find it or any streets or roads that lead to it. But then I saw all of you standing out here, (as if seeing them for the first time) in that really odd pose, and I said I'm saved! I'm saved! I'm not toast and... um... what are you doing?

When the STRANGER mentions that Heywood has no streets or roads that lead to it the group begins to hum. They get into a formation.

MA: Stranger, you do not understand our ways. Our values. It's our duty to make you understand.

STRANGER: Actually, all I need is a phone...

Everyone points at the STRANGER.

For the rest of this section I've suggested movements and gestures, feel free to come up with your own. The moment should be very stylized and well-rehearsed by the characters. It's something they've done before.

MA: Every time a stranger wanders down our dirt roads, our laneways, our alleys, we must explain the ways and the history of our town. Our tiny little no horse town.

Everyone stomps their feet and reaches up.

ALL: Heywood.

Everyone kneels.

MA: As a direct descendant of William Heywood,

ALL: *(whispering)* Heywood.

MA: The responsibility of the past has always laid on the shoulders of my family. Without our voice the link between past and present becomes brittle and torn. The reasons for past actions float away.

ALL: 1921.

Everyone stands.

MA: The year was 1921. A time of prosperity. A time of joy. A time of advancement.

IDA ROSE: *(honking a car horn)* Beep beep!

IVY SUE: Look out!

IRENEY: (*imitating a swerving car*) Eerrrrrrrr!

ALL: Crash!

Everyone throws their arms up, then moves into a tableau: BECCA JUNE lies on the ground, JIMMY cradles her in his arms. Everyone else reacts with exaggerated horror.

MA: It was in the year 1921 the only child of our founding father William Heywood was struck down by an out of control Ford Model T. And when he cradled the child in his arms he declared that:

ALL: As long as he was a Heywood,

MA: And the town bore his name,

ALL: Not one car would travel the streets of Heywood.

MA: And not only that,

ALL: Not one street would exist in the streets of Heywood,

MA: To allow that one car to drive upon it.

Everyone stands and takes a proud, patriotic stance.

MA: And until this very day Heywood has remained a no horse town and forever will be a no horse town. A no car town, a no street town and that's just the way we like it.

There is a pause. The group poses. The STRANGER is puzzled.

STRANGER: You're kidding, right?

But the group isn't finished. Everyone turns slowly to gaze stage left.

IDA ROSE: But with each and every passing year,

IVY SUE: There is always a hunger,

IRENEY: A need,

BECCA JUNE: A rite of passage for the young men of Heywood.

ALL: (*whispering*) Heywood.

MELISSA MARIE: Young men travel with a need in their hearts,

BECCA JUNE: And an itching in their feet,

MELISSA MARIE: To the outskirts of town.

ALL THE GIRLS: Here.

IDA ROSE: Here where the sky meets the field.

IVY SUE: Where dirt becomes asphalt.

IRENE: And innocence becomes sharp and jagged.

BECCA JUNE: Here, where our young men, so cocky and bold on
the outside,

MELISSA MARIE: Become shadows in the face of fear.

IDA ROSE: Out here they come, to meet danger face to face.

IVY SUE: Here, to do something they've never done in their young
lives.

BECCA JUNE: Never in Heywood.

ALL: (*whispering*) Heywood.

IRENEY: Something that fills them with horror and dread.

BECCA JUNE: Out here they come.

MELISSA MARIE: They come out here... to cross the street.

STRANGER: What?

ALL: To cross the street.

STRANGER: Wait a minute...

ALL: To cross the street.

STRANGER: Wait a minute, wait a minute!

IRENEY: We're not finished.

STRANGER: You've got to be kidding!

IDA ROSE: You're interrupting our vignette.

STRANGER: Yes, it's all very nice and you have gestures – great. But you're not serious. You can't be serious!

MA: We're very serious.

STRANGER: About crossing the street?

IVY SUE points dramatically offstage.

IVY SUE: It's Eugene! Eugene Godwin!

Everyone, except for the STRANGER, is flustered and fluttery at the prospect of EUGENE actually entering their presence. The group rushes to fix themselves up and get into a pose of excited waiting. The STRANGER gets pushed off to the side.

STRANGER: Hey! Wait a minute! Wait!

Everyone drowns out the STRANGER as they whisper 'Eugene, Eugene, Eugene,' when EUGENE enters. EUGENE has a slight limp and perhaps an eye patch. He looks like he's seen tough times, but there is a sense of calm about him. Everyone treats him with awe and respect. The STRANGER stands off to the side with a mix of confusion and intense interest to watch the proceedings.

EUGENE stops in front of BUDDY and extends a hand.

EUGENE: Hey Buddy.

BUDDY: Hey Eugene.

EUGENE: Your brother, he was one of the good ones.

BUDDY: Thanks.

IDA ROSE, IVY SUE: Hi Eugene!

EUGENE: Ladies.

IRENEY: (*holding out some paper and a pen*) Can I have your autograph Eugene?

EUGENE: Sure kid. Irene right?

BECCA JUNE: What you doin' on this side of town Eugene?

EUGENE: It's my Pa's birthday.

IDA ROSE, IVY SUE: (*sighing*) His birthday...

EUGENE: (*to IRENEY*) There you go.

IRENEY: Thanks Eugene!

MELISSA MARIE: Me too Eugene?

JIMMY: Melissa Marie!

MELISSA MARIE: Sorry, Jimmy.

EUGENE: So. What do we have here?

The group parts and EUGENE saunters over to JIMMY, who is attempting to pose and failing.

EUGENE: Another street crosser.

JIMMY: That's right Eugene.

EUGENE: It's been a couple years since someone came out here.

BUDDY: My brother. He was the last one.

Everyone bows their head for a second.

EUGENE: Buddy's brother died, Jimmy.

JIMMY: I ain't gonna die.

MELISSA MARIE bursts into tears.

JIMMY: Dag-nab-it Melissa Marie! Do you have to cry at everything?

EUGENE: Hey! You watch what you say to your girl. Your girl's afraid for you. Your girl doesn't want to lose you. Your girl wants to stand by your side and get married and have a family and a little house with a garden that specializes in tomatoes and

cauliflowers. She wants to grow old and die with you, isn't that right Melissa Marie?

MELISSA MARIE: It sure is! Mostly. We haven't exactly talked about marriage. And I'm allergic to tomatoes.

IRENEY: (*moving forward*) I'll stand beside you Jimmy! I love tomatoes!

MELISSA MARIE: (*pushing her back*) I'm the girlfriend, I'll stand beside him! I don't have to eat tomatoes not to stand beside him! Maybe I'll learn to like tomatoes, even though they give me hives and make my throat close up. That's how much I love my Jimmy!

STRANGER: Can I say something here?

IDA ROSE & IVY SUE: (*hissing*) Quiet!

EUGENE: So Jimmy. Here you are. Think you can do it?

JIMMY: Yeah.

MA: Oh Eugene. Tell him not to! Tell him not to do it.

EUGENE: I can't do that ma'am.

MA: Why not?

EUGENE: He won't believe me. I can see it in his eyes.

Everyone gasps, clutches their chests and looks at JIMMY.

MELISSA MARIE: What do you see?

EUGENE: I see stubbornness. Ignorance. Vanity.

BECCA JUNE: He wants the parade.

JIMMY: I do not!

EUGENE: I see a child.

JIMMY: I am not! I'm a man!

EUGENE: Not yet, Jimmy. You don't know what's on... the other side.

Everyone onstage gasps, clutches their chests and looks offstage left.

BECCA JUNE: What's on the other side Eugene?

EUGENE poses and looks stage right.

EUGENE: Aw, you don't want to hear my woes.

IVY SUE & IDA ROSE: We do! We do!

MELISSA MARIE: Tell us.

IRENEY: Tell us about the cross.

EUGENE: All right. I will.

EUGENE moves centre and strikes a pose. All the other characters take up listening poses.

EUGENE: It was a day not unlike this one. Not a cloud in the sky. Not a ripple of wind. Some might think that's perfect street crossing conditions, but you'd be wrong.

BECCA JUNE: Why Eugene?

EUGENE: If you've got some wind or some rain, your senses are heightened. You're aware. On a beautiful day, you get full of yourself. You relax. You get lazy. You think you're faster than you are. You think the cars are slower than they are. That's deadly.

All the girls sigh as if in the presence of a rock star.

EUGENE: It was a day not unlike this one and I stood here alone. I thought I had to do it alone. I thought I didn't need anybody; I could face anything. I thought I had no fear. But I was wrong. You don't know fear until you prepare to cross the street. That cold stone in the pit of your stomach. That wash of sweat across your brow. The sound of oncoming traffic. The low rumbling of death on wheels. No mercy. No right of way. It's you and the asphalt and the asphalt always has the upper hand. But I didn't know that. Maybe I still don't. So. Here I am. I take



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