

LEMON SKY

by Lanford Wilson

Ronnie (mid-thirties) - Carol (18)

The Play: Based in part on the playwright's own life experiences, *Lemon Sky* is the story of Alan, a young man separated in early life from his father when his parents divorced. At age seventeen, Alan spent time with his father, attempting to repair the damage done to their relationship caused by the distance of years and miles. Dad remarried, had two children by the new wife, Ronnie, and two foster daughters, Carol and Penny. Alan felt that he was never there for him during all of those years he was being raised by his mother. The uniqueness of the this play is the manner in which Mr. Wilson presents the drama. We see the attempted reconciliation between Alan and Doug (his father)—not when it happened, but after a few years have passed. The device allows the characters to reconstruct the events, while at the same time commenting on how they felt at the time. In this way, Alan tells us at the beginning of the play, he hopes to finally recover from what became a devastating conclusion to the attempted reconciliation. Although the story begins from Alan's point of view, before the evening is over, all the characters have the opportunity to voice their view on how it happened. It is an insightful process, filled with much humor, pain as the style is not only unique but provocative. In the end, Alan has been able to see the events, hear it all again—with insight—and speak his mind once and for all. We aren't left with any assurances that all will be repaired, however. Alan has experienced a classic catharsis which changes his life. In the process, we have been urged to examine the very texture of our own familial relationships.

The Scene: Ronnie, Alan's stepmother, has greeted Alan on arrival. They've had a long talk and started to get to know each other. Doug, Alan's father, went to work before Alan arrived. It is very late. Although Alan has gone to bed, Ronnie stayed up to wait for Carol, one of the two foster children in her charge. Carol has a history of trouble, and Ronnie can't rest until she's home.

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CAROL: (*Entering. Carol is nearly 18, tall, very thin and smashingly attractive and quite a wreck.*) I know, it's late, I wasn't watching. Where's Alan, did he come?

RONNIE: Yes, he came.

CAROL: Doug here?

RONNIE: He went on to work.

CAROL: Went to *work*? Well, of course, he went to work, Carol, what'd you think, he stayed here with his son? How's Alan?

RONNIE; Very nice. But that isn't the subject.

CAROL: Oh, Christ, Ronnie, don't start!

RONNIE; It's two o'clock.

CAROL: (*Looks at her watch, puts it to her ear, shakes her arm during speech.*) It isn't any—well, my watch's stopped. Damn.

RONNIE: You know I don't care, but they ask.

CAROL: We've been sitting out in front for over an hour, didn't you hear us drive up, I thought I saw you at the window.

RONNIE: Carol, I don't care.

CAROL: Well, neither do I. He was so sweet.

RONNIE: I like Sonny.

CAROL: We talked— (*Partly to audience*) Sonny's dad has a ranch in Texas—over twenty thousand acres, which he says is small— That's probably larger than Rhode Island. And they raise Herefords and houses and oil and have about half the money in the country and investments everywhere. His mom and dad are paralyzed over what's going on in Cuba, apparently they own it.

RONNIE; Anyway, be that as it may, I've a vivid imagination but it fails me when I try to conjure up what you do until—

CAROL: (*Cutting in violently.*) Oh, Ronnie, would you stop it! Just stop it, already! No he doesn't lay me, no, never, not once, look at my hands for God's sake! You think I can stand it? (*Exposing her hands, which are bloody on the palms.*)

RONNIE: Good god, what's wrong with—

CAROL: —Well, it isn't stigmata, you can count on that. Sonny is Catholic with a vengeance and I've never thought I could be in love with anyone. There it is! (*Rather to the audience.*) Carol's problem,

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never thought she could cut it and I am—very much in love with a Rich Texan Catholic and he has land, lots of land and principles that I never even knew were principles. And I used to take "downs," but pills are wrong, of course, so I promised him I wouldn't take them any more. No, we no longer live in a yellow submarine, we live on a Red Perch. And he makes out so damn beautifully and I can't ask him and I can't be "bad," his word, not mine, and I can't calm down with the pills and I claw my hands, the palms of my hands apart. (*Totally breaking off—disgusted with herself.*) Well, shit, Carol, there's no sense in causing a war about it, I cut them down yesterday, I'll cut them off tonight. But that won't help, because I'll bite my lip or something else if I can't get a hold of something to take to calm my damned, frazzled—

RONNIE: Carol, I'm very lenient and I know you can wrap me around your little finger; I know you've had to do that in order to get anything—

CAROL: —Don't make excuses for me for God's—

RONNIE: —Carol, I want to say something. I know you want to stay here for the next eight or whatever months until you're eighteen, and I want you here, but if I see one pill, one of your tranquilizers, I'll report it. It's something I can't tolerate. I have two young sons here and I can't risk them taking something by mistake...

CAROL: (*Overlapping.*) You don't have to tell me that. Do you think Sonny would stand for it? He's a lot better police dog than—a LOT better police dog than you, believe me—

RONNIE: There've been two different cases in the last year of kids being poisoned by taking their mother's barbiturates or someone's who had left them around the house. If I know you're taking them I'll feel obliged to tell Sonny as well as the welfare...

CAROL: (*Screaming.*) You don't have to tell anybody any goddamned thing! Because I PROMISED him, you know what that MEANS? (*Regains her control, holding her hands.*) That I didn't need them.

RONNIE: Does your hand hurt?

CAROL: Yes, they hurt like fire.

RONNIE: Let me put something—

CAROL: Oh, I'll do it; you're supposed to be bawling me out. You

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can't Ronnie. I can get out of anything, I'm a master.

RONNIE: You're also a mess.

CAROL: You're telling me.

RONNIE: Let me put something on them.

CAROL: (*Hotly.*) No, dammit; you're not going to stain me up with iodine, thanks.

RONNIE: I'll put some salve on them, not iodine.

CAROL: They're not that bad, really. I'll do it. Are you waiting up for Doug?

RONNIE: No. He'll be in.

CAROL: Alan's in my room?

RONNIE; For tonight. We'll arrange something.

CAROL: Just let me flop somewhere.

RONNIE: Put something on your hands, that salve.

CAROL: Okay. Goodnight.

RONNIE: Carol. Don't. (*Pause.*) Don't stay out this late. They want you in by twelve.

CAROL: I won't, Ronnie. You're great. I'm sorry, I won't. (*Kisses her on the cheek.*)

RONNIE: (*To the audience.*) She will, and I can't blame her, of course. He's the only thing she's got—Sonny. She's on probation with the state and us and Sonny too.

CAROL: So, I'm used to it. Don't make me out a martyr. I hate it. Besides I can do better. I haven't even got started on my mom and dad and poor upbringing and what a rotten life I've had. Besides I'm a nymphomaniac—coupled with a for-all-practical-purposes—eunuch—in the shape of a Greek God.

RONNIE; Which isn't necessary with you but it doesn't hurt anything.

CAROL: It hurts. It hurts. Everything. All over. Goodnight.

(*She goes off to the girls' bedroom. Ronnie stands a moment, then goes off to the girls' bedroom.*)