

## LILY DALE

by Horton Foote

Lily (18) - Will (late teens/early 20's)

**The Play:** *Lily Dale* is the third of nine plays that comprise the Orphans' Home Cycle by one of America's most prolific playwrights, Horton Foote. Mr. Foote is the recipient of two Academy Awards, one for his film *Tender Mercies* and one for the screen adaptation of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Set in Texas, Foote's nine-play cycle deals with the life journey of Horace Robedaux beginning in 1902, when at the age of twelve his father dies, to 1928, when his twelve-year-old son (Horace, Jr.) must deal with the death of his maternal grandfather. The characters are rich and the language often poetic but always true to the heart. *Lily Dale* finds Horace in Houston, attempting to reconnect with his mother (now remarried) and his sister (the title character). When Horace arrives he discovers his mother hesitant, his stepfather insensitive and uninterested in including him in the family, and his sister selfish and spoiled. The stepfather in fact early on demands that Horace leave. Horace, however, becomes ill, which delays his departure. As Horace recovers he attempts to reconcile his father's death by learning about him from his mother and sharing with Lily Dale the early experiences of their lives together. These efforts meet with resistance from both mother and sister who prefer to move on with their lives and bury the past. Horace feels compelled to deal first with the unsettled past before he is able to finally become a man. After his recovery, and after forcing a reconciliation with his past and his family, Horace leaves Houston to return to his boyhood home of Harrison. The illness has left his body and his troubled soul.

**The Scene:** Will Kidder has asked Lily Dale to marry him. Lily has accepted but insists on waiting a year. Although Will has won Lily's hand and the approval of her mother and the strict and conservative stepfather, he is impatient. As the scene begins, Lily is at the piano playing (badly) while Will attempts to distract her with affectionate advances.

**Special Note:** The editors urge the actors to read the first two plays in Foote's nine-play cycle, *Roots in a Parched Ground* and *Convicts* (*Lily Dale* is number three). These plays provide wonderful background information on the character of Lily Dale and the Robedaux family.

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LILY DALE: Will, behave yourself. Mama and Brother may come in at any moment, not to mention Mr. Davenport. You know he's very old fashioned. He would be furious if he knew Mama had left us alone in the house unchaperoned. Now you go over there and sit down and behave yourself. *(He doesn't move. Lily Dale stands up.)* Will...

WILL: I'm not leaving your side until you promise to marry me.

LILY DALE: I promised to marry you, a year from now.

WILL: *(Stands and comes towards her. Lily Dale backs up.)* I don't want to wait a year.

LILY DALE: You told Mama you would. That was our agreement when we became engaged. *(A pause.)* Why are you going back on your word? Why are you doing that to me? And stop looking at me that way. You are making me very nervous. Now go sit down in that chair over there *(She points to the slipper chair D. of the piano.)* or I'm leaving here and I'm going to find Brother and Mother and tell them I won't stay here alone with you because you have not behaved like a gentleman.

WILL: *(Takes another step towards her, she stops him by pointing at the chair. Will stops, shrugs, laughs and goes to the chair and sits.)* Is this how a gentleman behaves?

LILY DALE: Yes. Thank you. *(She goes back to the piano and begins to play.)*

WILL: Lily Dale?

LILY DALE: *(Stops playing.)* What?

WILL: Something is wrong with you.

LILY DALE: Nothing is wrong with me. Now be quiet and let me practice. *(She plays again.)*

WILL: Lily Dale?

LILY DALE: What?!!!

WILL: Something is troubling you.

LILY DALE: Oh, I don't know, Will. I'm very nervous. I think it's Brother's being here. He's been so sensitive and touchy. And it's not easy, four of us living on this one floor. Mr. Davenport has been so silent and morose, too, not his usual jolly self, and poor Mama, she's just torn into little pieces trying to make peace between us all.

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WILL: It will soon be over. He's leaving tomorrow.

LILY DALE: I must say it will be a relief to have the house back to ourselves. Brother just doesn't fit in. We all try. I do, Mama does, Mr. Davenport and Brother, too, but he just doesn't fit in. Now you fit in. Isn't that funny? You're here five minutes and you cheer everybody up, and Mr. Davenport begins to talk like a normal human being, but once you leave we're silent and gloomy and unhappy. *(A pause.)* I had this dream about Brother again last night. I dreamt he was dead and this time I didn't cry. I said a terrible thing. I said, "It's about time." And Mama said, "We'll bury him in our family plot here in Houston." And I said, "No, we won't. I'll not have him buried with you and Mr. Davenport and me. I want him buried with his father where he belongs." Wasn't that terrible for a sister to have a dream like that about her brother?

WILL: You probably ate something that didn't agree with you for supper.

LILY DALE: No, I didn't. I'm always having terrible dreams. I dreamt once last week that I was a very old woman and I was a famous concert pianist and I had come to Houston to give a concert and before the concert, I looked out through the curtain into audience and I called and I said, "Is Will Kidder there?" "No," they said. "He is dead." "What did he die of?" I asked. "A broken heart," they said.

WILL: Shoot... don't worry about that dream. I'm not ever going to die of a broken heart.

LILY DALE: Will...

WILL: What?

LILY DALE: Look the other way. I want to tell you something.

WILL: Where shall I look?

LILY DALE: Anywhere away from me. *(He does so.)* I don't want to get married.

WILL: *(He looks at her, she turns away.)* Why?

LILY DALE: Don't look at me, please.

WILL: *(Turning away, again.)* Why?

LILY DALE: Because you're going to hurt me if we do.

WILL: How am I going to hurt you?

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LILY DALE: You know.

WILL: Oh. *(A pause.)* Why do you think I will hurt you? Who told you I would?

LILY DALE: Sissy Douglas.

WILL: She's a fool.

LILY DALE: I asked Mama about it, too.

WILL: What did she say?

LILY DALE: She didn't want to talk about it. *(A pause.)* She said Papa didn't hurt her, but some women told her they were hurt by their husbands.

WILL: *(He goes to her and touches her gently.)* I'm not going to hurt you.

LILY DALE: How do you know?

WILL: I just do. *(She cries. He holds her.)* Lily, what's the matter?

LILY DALE: I'm scared. I want to marry you, but I'm scared.

WILL: Now I told you...

LILY DALE: I'm scared that I'll have a baby. I know that hurts when you do and I'll die while I'm having the baby. Mama say it's the worst pain in the world. She said she prayed to die the whole time she was having her children.

WILL: Don't you want to have children?

LILY DALE: I do, but I'm scared to, Will. I'm scared of the terrible pain, and I might die and...

WILL: We don't have to have them then.

LILY DALE: You mean you can get married and not have children? *(She pulls away and looks at him.)*

WILL: Yes.

LILY DALE: How?

WILL: There are ways. Pete and your mama are married, have been for ten years now, and they have no children.

LILY DALE: Pete and Mama? Oh, my God, Will! What are you saying? Are you saying that Pete and Mama...!?

WILL: Honey, they're married.

LILY DALE: But they're too old, Will.

WILL: No, they're not. Your mama is only 38. She could still have

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a child, if she wanted to.

LILY DALE: My God Almighty, Will!! *(She goes to couch, begins to cry again.)* I wish you wouldn't tell me things like that. God knows what kind of terrible dreams I'll start having now.

WILL: Honey, I only told you so you could understand that married people don't always have to have children if they don't want to. *(He sits with her.)*

LILY DALE: I don't want to, I mean, I want to, but I'm scared to.

WILL: Then we'll never have them.

LILY DALE: Do you promise?

WILL: I promise. Does that make you happy?

LILY DALE: Yes, it does. It certainly does. *(She hugs him.)* You are so sweet. You are the sweetest person in this whole world.

WILL: *(Returning hug.)* You're mighty sweet yourself. *(They hug for a few moments. Lily giggles as Will puts his hand on her leg. She pushes it away. More hugs and giggles.)*

## LOVERS (WINNERS)

by Brian Friel

Joe (17) - Maggie (17)

**The Play:** *Lovers* consists of two one-act plays: *Winners* and *Losers*. *Winners* is about a young Irish couple on an afternoon just before final examinations. Joe is trying to study, but Maggie keeps distracting him, and their talk soon turns to the future and their imminent marriage. Maggie is pregnant, perhaps only a month. Two rather dispassionate narrators sit at the side of the stage and offer commentary on the lives of the lovers. Before long it becomes clear that the couple will be killed in an accident by the end of the day. Yet the couple are "winners," for we learn much about life and love through them. *Losers*, the companion piece, is about a pair of much older lovers.

**The Scene:** Joe has been studying for his final examinations while he waits for his girlfriend, Maggie. Joe is an excellent student although not brilliant; he is hard working and industrious. Maggie, while intelligent, is no scholar; she is scattered. They are in love and are to be married in two weeks' time.

**Special Note:** Focus attention on developing the character relationship rather than trying to master an Irish dialect, which is not necessary to the scene.