

THE FIELD OF A LARK
Benjamin Villanueva
Glendale Community College
Honorable Mention, One-Act Play

- CHARACTERS: JOSEPH P. ADKINSON, falls in love with Aderyn Lyn.
Joins 30th division.
TYLER ADKINSON: JOSEPH'S youngest son.
MR. THOMAS ADKINSON, local lawyer
WALTER ADKINSON: Joseph's oldest son
ROBERT L. BLACKWELL, JOE'S friend who also joins the 30th Division
DOCTOR, administers physicals to new recruits
JAMES C. DOZIER, joins 30th Division
GARY EVANS FOSTER, joins 30th Division
THOMAS LEE HALL, joins 30th Division
HARVEY M. LAFOLLETTE, business man from Indiana who established
the town of Lafollette. He owns Lafollette Coal, Iron and Railroad
Company since 1897. He lives with his family in the Victorian Era
"Glen Oaks" mansion
MRS. LAFOLLETTE, Harvey's wife
ADERYN LYN, Harvey's beautiful daughter. Joseph's beautiful lark
NARRATOR, Southern gentleman who helps the audience envision
NEWSY, boy
RADIO HOST
SOLDIER
WOODROW WILSON, United States president during this time
- SCENE: City of Lafollette, Tennessee. Near Bellicourt France.
- TIME: During America's entry into the Great War.
- Scene 1: *The Song of the Lark is a Stare*
- SETTING: We are in Lafollette, Tennessee during the 1900s. Evidence of
Woodrow Wilson's re-election campaign consists of posters on the
buildings located up stage. These posters read: Vote Wilson...
"He Kept Us Out of War"
- AT RISE: A party of three enter (stage left) and stroll to (center stage).
These three men are MR. THOMAS ADKINSON, JOSEPH ADKINSON,
and ROBERT L. BLACKWELL. They are heading to the polls in
order to vote in the presidential election. Simultaneously MR.
FOSTER and GARY EVANS FOSTER enter (stage right). They have just
voted and they are pleasantly surprised with this unexpected
rendezvous with the ADKINSONS and with ROBERT L. BLACKWELL.
THOMAS bellows affably.

THOMAS ADKINSON: Mr. Foster! Gary! How are you this morning? *(The entire group exchanges nods and handshakes)*

MR. FOSTER: *(excited for democracy)* We're doing quite well Thomas. Our vote is in—

GARY EVANS FOSTER: *(interrupting his father)* Our voice is heard!

MR. FOSTER: Yes, it is. *(gaining a somber tone he changes the subject)* Now that we seem to have run in too each other...*(trails off and hesitates in order to show his reluctance to the idea of discussing business at this point in time)*...we might, if you don't mind, address last week's order of business.

THOMAS ADKINSON: *(with an agreeable attitude he holds up his attaché)* Of course, I have those papers right here. Let us...*(he trails off while indicating with a nod that they should move away from the crowd.)*

(During all of this a newsy has entered stage left and has made his way past down stage to the floor of the audience using a flight of stairs located down stage, stage left. Also the LAFOLLETTE family is making their way past the audience towards the stage. They have entered from behind the audience. The NEWSY advertises.)

NEWSY: Huns invade France! The country side is ravished by war! Only a penny to read the details! The Huns attack!

(MRS. LAFOLLETTE beckons the NEWSY to her side. She pulls out a change purse and buys a newspaper. At this time GARY notices the commotion and yells)

GARY: Over here boy! Quickly, make haste!

ROBERT: *(beckons with hand)* Come!

(As the NEWSY is summoned a southern gentleman enters stage left and heads towards down stage. He allows the NEWSY to go up the stairs before he goes down them. As this happens the audience becomes aware that JOSEPH is enamored with the beautiful ADERYN LYN. ADERYN LYN is unaware and she is completely interested in her conversation with her parents.)

MR. LAFOLLETTE: As long as we have no involvement in this 'Great War' America is sure to flourish throughout the next ten wars.

MRS. LAFOLLETTE: I'm sure that is corre—*(interrupted by MR. LAFOLLETTE)*

MR. LAFOLLETTE: The railroads we have built in this area will be able to ship out three times as much coal as before.

MRS. LAFOLLETTE: Yes dear.

(As JOSEPH gazes upon ADERYN the others peruse the newspaper. GARY cries out. Gary is holding the newspaper in such a way that allows the audience to see the headline: Germany Invades France!)

GARY: The death toll surpasses 90,000!

ROBERT: The world is going crazy. Hopefully Wilson won't let us down.
GARY: Oh, I don't think this war can last that much longer. Eventually there won't be people to fight it. Right Joe?

(at this point both JOE and ADERYN are looking at each other)

NARRATOR: *(addressing the audience)* "The power of a glance has been so much abused in love stories, that it has come to be disbelieved in. Few people dare now to say that two beings have fallen in love because they have looked at each other. Yet it is in this way that love begins and in this way only."¹ This look may have only lasted a few minutes, but that's as long as any lover dares to wish for.

(MR. FOSTER and GARY exit stage left after MR. THOMAS and MR. FOSTER shake hands. The newspaper boy exits stage right)

NARRATOR: It seems as if from the very beginning they were struck by each others glance.

(The LAFOLLETTE family climbs the steps and exits stage left. The 'stare' continues until the family is completely out of view. MR. THOMAS and ROBERT are heading stage right when this happens. They notice that JOSEPH is not following them.)

ROBERT: Joe! Come on.

(they exit stage right. JOSEPH continually looks back as they exit)

(NARRATOR climbs the stairs in front of the apron and stands down stage looking towards the audience. He begins to speak in the manner common to most gentle orators in the south.)

NARRATOR: There is nothing more lovely than the euphonious concerto of a small bird. Larks are especially known for their beautiful singing. At the very moment when a lover can take it no more, the soft song from sky assails this lover and renders him defenseless. The song of Joe's Lark was a simple stare, and before he even knew her name he was in love.

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Scene 2: *Wilson Win's*

SETTING: We are in the Lafollette's 'Glen Oaks' mansion the morning of the presidential results.

AT RISE: We are in the Lafollette's kitchen during MR. LAFOLLETTE'S morning ritual of coffee, eggs and papers. MR. LAFOLLETTE is sitting down at a breakfast table facing the audience. MRS. LAFOLLETTE is sitting across from her husband and ADERYN LYN is sitting to his right. Immediately as the curtain opens MRS. LAFOLLETTE stands up and moves stage right so that the audience may notice that he is holding a newspaper which covers his face. The audience notices that the headline reads: Wilson Win's.

MRS. LAFOLLETTE: *(addresses her husband)* Please excuse me from the table dear. I feel I must take few rounds about the garden before the morning expires.

MR. LAFOLLETTE: *(puts down the paper and looks at his wife)* Oh yes, of course.

MRS. LAFOLLETTE: 'Ady' darling, would you like to come?

ADERYN LYN: *(stands up, kisses her fathers forehead as she responds)*
Actually, I would enjoy that.

(She heads with her mother stage right and they both exit the stage. As they walk towards the exit MRS. LAFOLLETTE reminds her husband of his meeting.)

MRS. LAFOLLETTE: Don't forget about your meeting with MR. ADKINSON.

(MR. LAFOLLETTE acknowledges her with a nod while reading the newspaper in front of him. MR. ADKINSON enters stage right and greets MR. LAFOLLETTE.)

MR. ADKINSON: Hello my friendly coal baron!

MR. LAFOLLETTE: Thomas! Did you hear? Woodrow has won again!

MR. ADKINSON: Yes I know. I can't help but feel in high spirits!

MR. LAFOLLETTE: Listen, this weekend I'm going to throw a celebration ball in President Wilson's honor. *(he reaches down and grabs an envelope from the table)* Here, this is your family's invite.

(MR. ADKINSON grabs the envelope and places his attaché upon the table. Both men begin to discuss business while hovering over MR. ADKINSON'S paperwork.)

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Scene 3: *The Belle of the Ball is a Bird*

SETTING: We are in the Lafollette's 'Glen Oaks' mansion the night of MR. LAFOLLETTE'S celebration ball.

AT RISE: There is a crowd of people dressed in evening wear. They are laughing and talking with each other as waiters hand them drinks. There are tables scattered here and there according to the Lafollette's taste. On one of the tables there is a pyramid of champagne glasses with a collection of champagne bottles near at hand. MR LAFOLLETTE speaks to his guests.

MR. LAFOLLETTE: Welcome everyone! Everyone if I could...*(taps on his glass)* Thank you. Listen up. The festivities will begin in a bit but first a word, if you please. *(prepares himself for a short speech)* Wilson's victory in this election is great cause for celebration. We must remember to embrace this new era. Together as a city we must strive for economic stability. *(the party members cheer and applaud)* Now let's dance!

(A sprightly waltz picks up in the background and the dance floor is filled with couples. Joseph is seen on stage with his champagne flute. A waiter approaches him and fills his flute. Joseph is busy staring at Ady. Aderyn is standing alone in the front of the stages apron. Her demure figure possesses an enviable elegance. Determined Joseph makes his way towards her, his progress is deterred by the dancing crowd. At one point a pretty girl playfully grabs his hand and attempts to dance with him. Joe dances for a short while eventually leaving the girl and heading towards Ady. Unfortunately other girls continue to steal Ady's dance. By the time he reaches Aderyn the waltz is winding down.)

JOSEPH: *(uncharacteristically timid)* Hello.

(Ady smiles)

ADERYN: *(sweetly)* Hello.

(During their brief conversation the waltz ended. After standing in silence for a few seconds they are relieved when another waltz begins. JOSEPH holds his hand up in the style of a waltz dance frame. ADERYN accepts his hand. They begin to dance.)

(BLACKOUT)

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Scene 4: *The Call for Courage*

SETTING: We are in a Tennessee recruiting station shortly after America decides to enter World War I.

AT RISE: The stage is completely black, but it is still possible to discern the silhouettes of six men on the stage. Five men are standing in a line facing the audience. A doctor is holding a clipboard, and begins a roll call.

DOCTOR: Adkinson B. Joseph...

JOSEPH B. ADKINSON: Here!

DOCTOR: Blackwell L. Robert...

ROBERT L. BLACKWELL: Here!

DOCTOR: Dozier C. James...

JAMES C. DOZIER: Here!

DOCTOR: Foster Evans Gary...

GARY EVANS FOSTER: Present!

DOCTOR: Hall Lee Thomas...

THOMAS LEE HALL: Here!

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Scene 5: *An Illustration of Valor*

SETTING: We are in Bellicourt, France and it is the 28th of September during the final year of the war. Joseph is with two other soldiers.

AT RISE: The stage is completely dark and covered with fog. The sounds that are particular to war can be heard by the audience. Occasional flashes of light accompany artillery blasts. Joseph and his two men are peering over the apron of the stage. This apron has been made to resemble the inner wall of a trench, complete with sand bags and earth. Another soldier rushes from stage apron right and addresses Joe.

SOLDIER: Go get some rest Joe.

SERGEANT ADKINSON: *(Crouches down and acknowledges with a quick nod. Then he walks toward the audience, flinching at he explosions. He grabs a small stool and pulls out some stationary and a pen. He begins to write)* My dearest Ady, I try to remember how beautiful you looked at your father's ball. It does not matter how much energy I use trying to remember... because every second of this war erases more of your beauty.

(A large artillery blast illuminates the stage. Aderyn is seen past the trench wall, above the soldiers. It is apparent that this apparition can only be seen by the audience.)

ADERYN: Joe, please do not talk in this sorrowful way. It only makes me feel farther away from you. You must not rely on only past memories for happiness, instead reflect on what will happen when you return. We must view these conversations as opportunities to get to know each other
(a large artillery blast illuminates the stage)

JOSEPH: Ady I yearn for another dance with you. When I sleep I dream of our first waltz. Sometimes I can drown out all the noise and imagine that song.

(The audience notices that there is a record player next to Ady. She is holding a record in both hands. She lays it on the player and adjusts the needle. Slowly the waltz they danced to crescendos. At the same time the sounds of war decrescendo. Joseph stands up, dropping his letter. Both begin to dance with an imaginary partner.)

(BLACKOUT)

(all actors exit the stage as the Narrator enters. A spotlight shines on the narrator and the sounds of war resume.)

NARRATOR: The next day Company C decided to charge the German enemy. Several units were ordered to assault the enemy

fortifications; Joseph's was one of them. As they made their way towards the enemy a machine gun nest 50 yards away stopped Sgt. Adkinson's platoon. Joe ordered his men to stay covered while he rushed the enemy trench. He was able to kick the machine gun off of its stand and capture the three Germans manning it. Because of this, his platoon was able to advance through the Hindenburg line. Joseph will always be remembered as the hero he was.

(BLACKOUT)

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Scene 6: *Wilson's Final Campaign*

SETTING: We are in the Adkinson household five years after the end of the Great War. The date is November 10, 1923.

AT RISE: The stage is completely dark at the immediate opening of scene 6. A beam of light slowly focuses on a folded American flag in a wood and glass case which rests on a small end table. We can here somebody searching a radio for a particular station. Lights begin to illuminate the entire stage so that the Adkinson's living room can be seen. As we pan the room Stage left to stage right we notice an empty armchair beside the end table. If we continue we also notice a large radio and a sofa. Standing stage right of the radio is Walker Adkinson. He is holding a knob on the radio as if he is searching for a station. His younger brother Tyler is lying on the floor in front of the radio, reading a large picture book with his feet in the air. Ady is sitting cross legged on the arm of the sofa which is nearest the radio. She is staring at the radio while holding yarn and knitting needles. All three characters hold their positions as if they were statues. This creates a very surreal tone. The folded American flag and the empty armchair suggest that Joseph has died in the war. At this point Walker has stopped on a radio station where the radio host can be heard.

RADIO HOST: ...is the first president to give a speech over the radio. Ladies and gentlemen, Woodrow Wilson is on the air.

WOODROW WILSON: The anniversary of Armistice Day should stir us to great exaltation of spirit because of the proud recollection that it was our day, a day above those early days of that never-to-be forgotten November which lifted the world to the high levels of vision and achievement upon which the great war for democracy and right was fought and won; although the stimulating memories of that happy time of triumph are forever marred and embittered for us by the shameful fact that when the victory was won, be it remembered—chiefly by the

WOODROW WILSON: indomitable spirit and ungrudging sacrifices of our incomparable soldiers—we turned our backs on upon our associates and refused to bear any responsible part in the administration of peace, or the firm and permanent establishment of the results of the war—won at so terrible a cost of life and treasure—and withdrew into a sullen and selfish isolation which is deeply ignoble because manifestly cowardly and dishonorable. This must always be a source of deep mortification to us and we shall inevitably be forced by the moral obligations of freedom and honor to retrieve that fatal error and assume once more the role of courage, self-respect and helpfulness which every true American must wish to regard as our natural part in the affairs of the world.

That we should have thus done a great wrong to civilization at one of the most critical turning points in the history of the world is the more to be deplored because every anxious year that has followed has made the exceeding need for such services as we might have rendered more and more evident and more and more pressing, as demoralizing circumstances which we might have controlled have gone from bad to worse.

And now, as if to furnish as sort of sinister climax, France and Italy between them have made waste paper of the Treaty of Versailles and the whole field of international relationship is in perilous confusion.

The affairs of the world can be set straight only by the firmest and most determined exhibition of the will to lead and make the right prevail.

Happily, the present situation in the world of affairs affords us the opportunity to retrieve the past and to render mankind the inestimable service of proving that there is at least one great and powerful nation which can turn away from programs of self-interest and devote itself to practicing and establishing the highest ideals of disinterested service and the consistent maintenance of exalted standards of conscience and of right. The only way in which we can worthily give proof of our appreciation of the high significance of Armistice Day is by resolving to put self-interest away and once more formulate and act on the highest ideals and purposes of international policy.

Thus, and only thus, can we return to the true traditions of America.²

(Joseph enters from stage left and walks towards the armchair. He is dressed in a suit and an overcoat. As he takes his overcoat off he addresses his family.)

JOSEPH: I'm home!

(all three snap out of their inanimate state and turn to Joe with smiles)

(BLACKOUT)

END

¹Hugo, V. (1961). *Les Miserables* (p.253). New York: Fawcett Premier.

²Link, Arthur S. (Ed.). (1993). *The papers of Woodrow Wilson* (vol. 68, pp.466-467). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

