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## Little Lonesome Tree

Edith Lowell

*Composer*

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# LITTLE LONESOME TREE

By EDITH LOWELL

**Characters**—A woman, her child, a group of carol singers, Little Lonesome Tree, Jack Frost, Santa Claus, a storekeeper.

**First Scene**—A Room in a Poor Home.

**Time**—Christmas Eve.

As the scene opens the child is seated on a small stool at her mother's feet. She has on her night clothes. The mother is reading "The Night Before Christmas."

**Woman (reading aloud to child):**

"He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle  
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.  
And I heard him exclaim ere he drove out of sight,  
'Happy Christmas to all—and to all a goodnight!'"

**Child:** Happy Christmas tomorrow — tonight Santa Claus may come down our chimney. He will come, because I have been a good child—haven't I?

**Woman:** Yes, indeed!

Oh, I hope he will come, there is so much we need!  
You know, dear, how many poor children there are  
Even poorer than we—his toys may not go far.  
Perhaps he might bring you just one little doll;  
I am sure he won't come and leave nothing at all.  
I'd buy you a tree all sparkly and bright—  
But you know, I've been ill—I've no money tonight.

**Child:**

Never mind—why, today, as I walked through the store  
I just played I could have all I wanted—and more!  
Oh, mother, I had such a wonderful day!  
The trees smelled so good! Why, I wanted to stay  
When 'twas time to come home, but instead of one tree,  
Why, they trimmed every one in the stores just for me!

**Woman:**

I'm sure that they did! Now hop into bed,

(leads child to small cot)

I've read you a story—your prayers are all said;  
Then the first thing you know Christmas Day will be  
here,  
Let me turn down the light—close your eyes tight, my  
dear.

Hark! Isn't that music, so faint yet so sweet! (listens)  
'Tis the carollers passing the end of our street!  
Go to rest as they sing "Sleep in Heavenly Peace."  
(Hums very softly the music to last line as singers  
sing it.)

(The carol singers seem to come nearer and then to  
go further away. The Woman hums very softly little  
snatches of the song. She tiptoes away from the bed  
and goes to a cupboard from which she takes a small  
doll. She finds a piece of paper and a bit of ribbon and  
ties up the doll. Then she tiptoes over to the bed, looks  
at the child who has gone to sleep. She walks despond-  
ently to the front of stage saying):

**Woman:**

Oh, what shall I do? We have nothing; no tree,  
No presents—no fire—no food. I must see  
If the fruit man next door will not wait for his pay—  
For next week I'll be earning. There must be some way!  
There's the wee doll I dressed; 'tis a clothes-pin, 'tis true,  
But it's cunning—she'll like it—the best I could do.  
I ought not to go out, but it's such a short way,  
And I really am very much better today.  
An orange is pretty—perhaps he won't mind,  
The store-keeper's gruff, but I'm sure he is kind.

(Goes to look at child again.)

She's smiling—her dreams must be pleasant and sweet;  
I'll go out and find something to give her a treat.

(End of Scene One.)

If the carol singers are in costume they may march, singing, from behind the scenes on one side, crossing in front of audience and going behind again on the other side of the stage, as if they were singing carols through the town.

**Scene Two**—The Narrow Alley behind a Store.

There is one Christmas Tree and a litter of broken branches and perhaps a few wreaths. The tree is the Little Lonesome Tree. A small tree is sawed lengthwise through the center of the trunk, and is fastened on the child who is to be the tree, one half on the front and one on her back. She wears a dark green cambric costume and is almost completely obscured by the tree.

As the scene opens the Little Lonesome Tree is standing at one side of stage ready to sing her song, "Little Lonesome Tree," which is played through once as the curtain is being pulled.

## Little Lonesome Tree

The musical score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. It begins with the tempo marking 'Mourningly' and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is characterized by a slow, descending line with some chromaticism. The score is divided into several systems. The final system includes the instruction 'After last verse' and 'glissando' above the notes. The lyrics 'oh dear! oh dear! Oh! dear!' are written below the notes in this section.

**Tree:** (Song, "Little Lonesome Tree")

Oh dear, oh dear, I'm all alone,  
The other trees are sold and gone;  
And in this yard I'm tucked away  
To spend a lonesome Christmas Day.

Tonight I thought that I would be  
A center of festivity,—  
But no! Oh dear—oh dear—oh dear!  
Why did that store-man leave me here!  
Oh, dear! oh, dear! oh, dear! (wailing).

Vc McS  
Low 0580  
Xmas

Edith Lowell b. Portland

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(Enter Jack Frost.)

Jack: Hello!

Tree: Why, who are you?

Jack: Jack Frost!

And you? Why, little tree, you're lost!

Tree:

Not lost, just waiting to be bought;  
And once—a child—I really thought  
She wanted me—

Jack:

Perhaps she did,  
But you cost money; now I bid  
You smile at me, and let's have fun.

(He pauses, trying to think of something to do; an idea strikes him.)

I'll trim you up! And when the sun  
Comes up tomorrow you will be  
The very prettiest Christmas tree!

Tree: Oh, Jack!

Jack: Now watch!

Tree: What shall I do?

Jack:

Stand still and let me sprinkle you  
With sparkly dew-drops, crystals white—  
And icicles that shine so bright!  
Some feathery cobwebs frosted o'er  
With silver mist, now three or four  
Bright stars—

(He puts one star on the tip-top branch.)

(Santa Claus, who has entered unseen, speaks.)

Santa: What's going on, Jack Frost?

Jack:

Hey, Santa Claus! Are you, too, lost?

(Goes up to him, pinching him playfully.)

Santa:

Of course I'm not! Don't come near me!

(Jack tries to pinch Santa's nose.)

Now go away and let me be!

Jack:

Jack Frost! Jack Frost! He nips the nose!  
Beware! Jack Frost will numb your toes!

(Tries to step on Santa's toes.)

Santa (fretfully):

Go away! Go paint your window panes  
And make old people have chilblains!  
How can you like to bother so?  
What can I do to make you go?

Tree:

Don't send him off—just look at me!  
I'm now a lovely Christmas tree.  
I was so lonesome here and so  
He came to me a while ago  
And with his snow and frost and hail  
See what he's done,—

Santa:

To what avail?

For when the sun comes up tomorrow  
'Twill melt away and then you'll sorrow.

Jack:

It won't! I fixed it with a spell  
Of love—and Santa, you know well  
That once a year, on Christmas Eve,  
The magic works. Sun fairies leave  
My frost alone; now why don't you  
Get busy and do something, too?

(Santa slaps his knee and turns to look for pack which he dropped near the back as he came in.)

Santa:

All right—I will, now, where's my pack?  
Some things from me are all you lack.

Tree (jumping up and down):

Oh, goody—goody!

Santa: Here, stand still!

Tree:

Oh, I'm so happy! (squeals this)

Santa:

Oh, how shrill

Your voice is!

Jack: Put a lot on!

Santa:

All

That tree can hold. He's very small.

(Santa and Jack both hang presents on Tree.)

Jack: Are they too heavy?

Tree: Oh, don't stop!

(Santa holds up Santa Claus tree decoration.)

An image of myself on top!

Jack:

You vain old thing! Now don't you mar

A task already done, my star—

Shines down on all—

Tree:

As long ago

The star o'er Bethlehem, you know!

Santa:

I know! I know! Of course you're right.

Turn 'round. A very pretty sight!

(Tree turns and walks about.)

Oh, what a shame it is that you

Are in this yard and lost to view!

What was that funny noise?

Jack:

The store

Is lighted!

(Santa and Jack Frost vanish.)

Voice of Store-keeper:

I have just one more.

It's in the yard. It's rather small—

Woman:

It needn't be so very tall,

It's for a child—

Store-keeper:

If it will do,

Take it away, I give it you.

Go through the gate, and not the store—

You'd spill the needles on the floor.

(Carol singers at a distance singing "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing".)

The next two speeches should be so timed that the last words of the Tree's speech coincide with the same words as sung by the carollers.

Woman:

(Storeman shuts door with a bang.)

I thank you. Oh, you lovely tree!

Just what I wanted! Come with me!

Tree:

Oh, was it I? That lonesome tree—

It seems as if it could not be!

You wanted me—I wanted you;

Our dreams of Christmas will come true.

Hark! do you hear them down the street—

Those carol singers' voices sweet?

"Hark! the Herald Angels sing

Glory to the New Born King!"