Synopsis (Plot summary)

**Act I**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Oklahoma!&action=edit&section=5)]

In Oklahoma Territory, in 1906, cowboy Curly McLain looks forward to a beautiful day as he visits farm girl Laurey Williams's yard ("[Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oh%2C_What_a_Beautiful_Mornin%27)"). He and Laurey tease each other, while her Aunt Eller looks on. There will be a [box social](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Box_social) dance that night, which includes an auction of lunch baskets prepared by the local women to raise funds for a schoolhouse. Each man who wins a basket will eat lunch with the lady who prepared it. Curly asks Laurey to go with him, but she refuses, feeling that he has waited too long. To persuade her, he says he will take her in the finest carriage money can buy ("[The Surrey with the Fringe on Top](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Surrey_with_the_Fringe_on_Top)"), but she teases him about it until he says he made it up to get back at her. She flounces off, not realizing that he really has rented such a [surrey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surrey_%28carriage%29).

The lonely, disturbed farmhand Jud Fry has become obsessed with Laurey and asks her to the dance. She accepts to spite Curly, although she is afraid of Jud. Meanwhile, cowboy Will Parker returns from a trip to modern [Kansas City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kansas_City%2C_Missouri), and shows off his souvenirs ("[Kansas City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kansas_City_%28Oklahoma%21%29)"). He won $50 ($1,400 today) at the fair, which, according to his girlfriend Ado Annie's father, Andrew Carnes, is the amount he needs to marry Ado Annie. Unfortunately, he spent all the money on gifts for her and one for her father: a Little Wonder (a metal tube used for looking at pictures, but with a hidden blade inside). He is unaware of its deadly secret. Later, Ado Annie confesses to Laurey that while Will was away, she has spent a lot of time with Ali Hakim, a Persian peddler. Laurey says she'll have to choose between them, but Ado Annie insists she loves them both ("[I Cain't Say No](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Cain%27t_Say_No)"). Laurey and her friends prepare for the social, while Gertie Cummings flirts with Curly. Laurey notices and tells her friends that she doesn't really care about Curly ("[Many a New Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Many_a_New_Day)").

Andrew Carnes sees Annie with Ali Hakim; he forces Hakim at gunpoint to agree to marry her. Hakim and the other men lament the unfairness of the situation ("[It's a Scandal! It's a Outrage!](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/It%27s_a_Scandal%21_It%27s_a_Outrage%21)"). Curly discovers that Laurey is going to the box social with Jud and tries to convince her to go with him instead. Afraid to tell Jud she won't go with him, Laurey protests that she does not love Curly ("[People Will Say We're in Love](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People_Will_Say_We%27re_in_Love)"). Hurt by her refusal, Curly goes to the smokehouse where Jud lives to talk with him. Curly jokingly suggests that since Jud does not feel appreciated, he could hang himself, and everyone would realize how much they care about him ("Pore Jud Is Daid"). Their talk turns into an ominous confrontation about Laurey. After Curly leaves, Jud's resolve to win Laurey becomes even stronger, and he vows to make her his bride ("[Lonely Room](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lonely_Room)").

Confused by her feelings for Curly and her fear of Jud, Laurey purchases a "magic potion" ([laudanum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laudanum)) from Ali Hakim, which the unscrupulous peddler guarantees will reveal her true love. She muses on leaving her dreams of love behind and joining the man she loves ("Out of My Dreams"). Soon asleep under the influence of the opiate, in an extended ballet sequence, Laurey first dreams of marriage with Curly. Her dream takes a nightmarish turn when Jud appears and kills Curly; she cannot escape him, confused by her desires. Awakening, she realizes that Curly is the right man for her, but it is too late to change her mind about going to the dance with Jud, who arrives, and they leave for the box social ("[Dream Ballet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dream_Ballet)").

**Act II**

At the social, during a [square dance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Square_dance) ("[The Farmer and the Cowman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Farmer_and_the_Cowman)"), the [rivalry between the local farmers and cowboys](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Range_war) over fences and water rights leads to fighting, which Aunt Eller ends by firing a gun to silence everyone.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oklahoma%21#cite_note-16) Laurey is upset when she sees Curly at the dance with Gertie. To rid himself of Ado Annie, Ali Hakim buys Will's souvenirs from Kansas City for $50. Jud also contributes to this by purchasing Will's Little Wonder, knowing of the blade concealed within it. The auction starts and Will bids $50 on Ado Annie's basket, not realizing that without the $50, he would not have the money to pay her father. Desperate to be rid of Ado Annie, the peddler bids $51 to get the basket so that Will can approach Andrew Carnes with the $50 and claim Ado Annie as his bride. The auction becomes much more serious when Laurey's basket comes up for auction. Jud has saved all his money so he can win Laurey's basket. Various men bid, trying to protect Laurey, but Jud outbids them all. Curly and Jud engage in a ferocious bidding war, and Curly sells his saddle, his horse, and even his gun to raise money. Curly outbids Jud and wins the basket. Jud discreetly tries to kill Curly with the Little Wonder, but his plan is foiled when Aunt Eller (knowing what is happening) loudly asks Curly for a dance. Later that night, Will and Annie work out their differences, as she reluctantly agrees not to flirt with other men ("[All Er Nuthin'](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Er_Nuthin%27)").

Jud confronts Laurey about his feelings for her. When she admits that she does not return them, he threatens her. She then fires him as her farmhand, demanding that he get off her property. Jud furiously threatens Laurey before he departs; she bursts into tears and calls for Curly. She tells him that she has fired Jud and is frightened by what Jud might do now. Curly reassures her and proposes to her, and she accepts ("People Will Say We're In Love" (reprise)). He realizes that he must now become a farmer. Ali Hakim decides to leave the territory and bids Ado Annie goodbye, telling her Will is the man she should marry.

Three weeks later, Laurey and Curly are married as everyone celebrates the territory's impending statehood ("[Oklahoma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oklahoma_%28Rodgers_and_Hammerstein_song%29)"). Ali Hakim returns with Gertie, whom he has recently married after being [threatened by her father](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forced_marriage#Shotgun_wedding) with a shotgun. A drunken Jud reappears, kisses Laurey and punches Curly, and they begin a fistfight. Jud attacks Curly with a knife, and Curly dodges, causing Jud to fall on his own knife. Jud soon dies. The wedding guests hold a makeshift trial for Curly, at Aunt Eller's urging. The judge, Andrew Carnes, declares the verdict: "not guilty!" Curly and Laurey depart on their honeymoon in the surrey with the fringe on top ("Finale Ultimo").