

# ***THE HOUSE that SARAH BUILT***

*By  
Christina Hamlett*

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### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(6 M, 7 W. Extras as Indians.)*

**SARAH WINCHESTER:** Eccentric and wealthy widow.

**MADAME LAMOOSE:** Sarah's spiritual advisor.

**CARLOTTA:** Sarah's maid.

**HENRY:** Sarah's butler.

**LUCAS:** Sarah's foreman.

**CHORUS:** Comprised of 4 maids, and 4 workmen.

**INDIANS:** 4-6 in feathers and war paint.

**CIRCA** - The turn of the century.

### **SETTING**

All action takes place in Sarah's house, which was under construction in San Jose, California, between 1884 and 1922. The set is comprised of the following sections which are lit during individual scenes: DSR is a seance table and two chairs; UPS are three identical doors, behind which are a brick wall, a window and total blackness; DSL is a freestanding staircase that goes to a flat platform. Note: as accompaniment to the rhymed meter of the play, a director may choose to incorporate the beat of sticks, drums, or simple piano to simulate the sound of constant hammering.

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**COSTUMES**

Sarah is elderly and wears expensive, Victorian dresses. Madam Lamoose is a flamboyant, heavily made-up gypsy with lots of scarves and jangling jewelry. Carlotta and the four Maids wear gray and white uniforms and starched hats. Henry wears a butler suit. Lucas and the Workmen wear overalls. The Indians wear buckskin, feathers and war paint.

**PROPS**

Crystal ball and business card for Lamoose; blueprints for Sarah; (optional) feather dusters for maids and hammers, saws, etc. for workmen.

**LIGHTING**

Each of the three areas on stage is individually highlighted.

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**SCENE 1**

*(AT RISE: LIGHTS come up DSL on the CHORUS of MAIDS, CARLOTTA and HENRY on the stairs and platform.)*

ALL: Rap, tap, rap, tap - will it never cease?  
Rap, tap, rap, tap - not a moment's peace!  
Rap, tap, rap, tap - always something new,  
Rap, tap, rap, tap - but it's never through!

MAID 1: She treats us all so kindly,

MAID 2: It's foolish to complain,

MAID 3: Yet all this constant pounding will drive us quite  
insane!

HENRY: Our lady's name is Sarah, a widow all alone.

CARLOTTA: She came into the valley to build herself a  
home.

MAID 4: Some say that she's eccentric,

MAID 1: Some say she's really sweet.

MAID 2: And all of them are wondering when this house will  
be complete!

ALL: Rap, tap, rap, tap - hammers day and night!  
Rap, tap, rap, tap - how it grows in height!

HENRY: They say that Sarah's haunted by the ghosts of  
spirits past,

CARLOTTA: And her only chance of living is to build a  
house to last.

MAID 3: A house of such proportion that folks will stop and  
stare.

MAID 4: And as they watch, they'll ask themselves,

ALL: What's going on in there???

MAID 1: Rap, tap, rap, tap

MAID 2: Stop her if you can.

MAID 3: Rap, tap, rap, tap

MAID 4: Here's how it all began -

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*(LIGHTS go down on CHORUS and come up DSR where SARAH is consulting with MADAME LAMOOSE.)*

SARAH: *(Anxiously.)* Do you see them, Madame LaMoose? Do you see my beloved husband and little Annie?

LAMOOSE: *(Clucking HER tongue as she gazes into crystal ball.)* Tsk, tsk. My vision into the spirit realm is clouded today.

SARAH: Can't you do something?

LAMOOSE: *(Mysteriously.)* Perhaps. *(Spits on one of HER scarves and rubs the ball.)* Ah, much better! *(Peers intently.)* Hmmm ... hmmm ...

SARAH: What is it?

LAMOOSE: *(Shaking HER head.)* It is not a lucky sign, Mrs. Winchester. I see danger. Much, much danger.

SARAH: Danger? From whom?

LAMOOSE: Indians.

SARAH: Indians? But there aren't any Indians in New Haven, Connecticut!

LAMOOSE: Shhh! Listen! *(The faint sound of TOM-TOMS starts and will grow louder.)* They are the spirits of those killed by your husband's rifle. The Winchester Rifle.

SARAH: But what does that have to do with me?

LAMOOSE: The spirits are angry with you for the fortune you came to possess. *(Peers closely at ball.)* A very large fortune, I see. Very large indeed.

*(The TOM-TOMS have grown louder. Stealthily, the INDIANS creep on stage to sneak up on SARAH.)*

SARAH: But I'm just an old lady. What would the Indians want with me?

LAMOOSE: Hmmm ... hmmm. This does not look good, Mrs. Winchester. The spirits demand a high price to leave you alone.

SARAH: But that's ridiculous! *(Turns to get out of chair and screams when SHE sees the INDIANS; she immediately addresses MADAM LAMOOSE.)*

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SARAH: *(Cont'd.)* How high a price would make them happy?

LAMOOSE: *(Consulting crystal ball.)* I see a house in the West. A small house at the start. Eight rooms, perhaps. And then it begins to grow. Larger and larger every day until it exceeds your wildest imagination.

SARAH: A house that grows? I don't understand.

LAMOOSE: You will build this house, Mrs. Winchester. And you will not stop building this house until the day you draw your last breath.

SARAH: And if I do everything you say, the Indian spirits will leave me alone?

LAMOOSE: They'll be gone like that! *(Snaps HER fingers and the INDIANS all exit.)*

SARAH: Thank you, Madam LaMoose! Is there anything else I should know?

LAMOOSE: *(Withdraws a business card from the sleeve of HER blouse.)* I have a brother in San Jose who's an architect. Look him up.

*(LIGHTS go down on seance corner and up DSL. Again, we see the chorus of MAIDS and BUTLER.)*

ALL: Rap, tap, rap, tap - so it did commence.

Rap, tap, rap, tap - sparing no expense!

MAID 1: She bought a crew of workmen and years' worth of supplies.

CARLOTTA: And every day of carpentry contained a new surprise.

MAID 2: She had a special purpose for every board and nail. A house of maze and tunnels to confuse the spirit trail.

HENRY: She kept the blueprints secret, which add to suspense.

CARLOTTA: Except each new addition made very little sense!

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