



Eddie McPherson

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BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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*To Donna Weaver
and Kim Ward.
My partners in crime
in this crazy world
of theatre.*

My Darlin' Clementine was first produced at the CAC Dinner Theatre in Fort Payne, AL, in February 2008: Elizabeth Wheatly, director; Patricia Flory, set design; Brian Wheatly, sound; and Darrell Collins, lighting.

CLEMENTINE: Kim Collins
CHESTER AMES: Jeremy Taylor
MARSHALL BUFORD D. BUSBY: Eddie McPherson
FARMER O'GRADY: Brian Baine
FLORENCE: Stephanie McFall
HENRY: Matthew Taheri
MISS PJ SASSAFRASS: Sandy Lea
DOC: Brian Baine
MRS. DOOHICKIE: Matthew Taheri
JARVIS PLUME: Matthew Taheri
COLONEL BEAUREGARD DINWIDDIE: Tony Dobbs
DINA DINWIDDIE: Didi Greenwood
SISTER SARAH: Lori Lumsden
REVEREND BROWN: Matthew Taheri
MR. BIGGINS: Brian Baine

My Darlin' Clementine

FARCE. While searching for his runaway bride, Chester Ames stumbles upon the tiny desert town of Cactus Creek. In a town where marriage has been outlawed and even the mention of the "M-word" is punishable with five days in the county jail, Chester has his hands full avoiding the town's love-starved damsels long enough to find his one true love, Clementine. To make matters worse, the town's local outlaw, Jarvis Plume, has set his sights on taking over the town and forcing all the single ladies to take turns dating him. Chock full of puns, one-liners and hilarious characters, this play will have your audience laughing well after the show is over.

Performance Time: Approximately 60 minutes.

Characters

(9 M, 10 F, opt. extras)
(With doubling: 6 M, 7 F)

CLEMENTINE: A runaway bride.
CHESTER AMES: Clementine's jilted, naïve fiancé.
SHERIFF BUSBY: Dimwitted, cowardly town sheriff.
FARMER'S WIFE: Citizen of Cactus Creek; wears eyeglasses.
PATTY MAE: Town crier.
FLORENCE JOHNSON: Seeks the attention of every man.
ISABELLA: Serves food at the local saloon.
P.J. SASSAFRASS: Untalented showgirl.
J.P. SASSAFRASS: Untalented showgirl; P.J.'s sister.
DOC: Bumbling, incompetent town doctor.
MRS. DOOHICKIE: Sensitive, poor widow.
MR. STRONG: Seeks advice from Doc.
JARVIS PLUME: Big, bad and doggone mean outlaw who loves to shoot up the town; speaks as if there is gravel in his throat.
COLONEL DINWIDDIE: Owns Cactus Creek.
DINA DINWIDDIE: Colonel's spoiled daughter.
SISTER SARAH: Keeps Cactus Creek on the straight and narrow; sweet and level-headed.
REV. BROWN: Town preacher whose sermons have plenty of puns and one-liners; looks like Elvis.
MR. BIGGINS: Attorney who has eyes for Miss Florence.
TREVOR: Unfortunate victim of the Sheriff's love of guns.
EXTRAS (opt.): As townsfolk, dancers, and cloggers.

Suggestions for doubling:

Doc/Perfect Cowboy/Mr. Biggins (M)
Mr. Strong/Preacher Brown (M)
Farmer's wife/Patty Mae/Isabella/Mrs. Doohickie (F)

Setting

Cactus Creek, an old-fashioned western town.

Set

Downtown Cactus Creek: There is a backdrop with old-fashioned western storefronts painted on it, a large cactus, and a large rock.

Saloon: Saloon scenes may take place in front of a painted backdrop of a saloon. There can be a couple of tables placed in front of the backdrop to serve as an outdoor patio. Actors may enter the saloon and sit extreme SR or SL.

Church: A large, colorful cutout of a stained glass window sits upstage center as a backdrop in Act II. There are several backless benches. After the church scene, the benches and window are taken off.

NOTE: Cutouts are fun and easy to make. Simply make a copy of your picture (e.g. stained-glass window, Cannonball Express, etc.) onto a transparency, project it onto a large piece of foam or cardboard, paint it, and cut it out.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I: Cactus Creek, downtown and saloon.

ACT II: Cactus Creek downtown and saloon, the following morning.

Props

Suitcase	Dishcloth
Stool	White glove, for Colonel
Hat, for Clementine	Cutout of a large, colorful stained glass window
Lady's handkerchief	Several backless benches
Rolled up sleeping bag	Bible
Small knapsack tied with a string	Sign that reads, "Sunday Services Today"
Rock, large enough to sit on	Work gloves, for Doctor
Picture of Clementine	Large sledgehammer
Toy pistol and holster, for Sheriff	Small basket
Cactus, large enough to hide behind	2 Saloon tables
Stuffed pig	Small square mirror
Eyeglasses, for Farmer's Wife	Scroll
Pad of paper	Rolled up volleyball net
Pencil	Rubber chicken with feathers
Rubber chicken	Very small plant
Note	Kite
Man's handkerchief or bandana	Stuffed dummy
Hat, for Chester	Hand fan
Pebble	Pocket train schedule
Baby doll wrapped in a blanket	Old-fashioned hymn book
Old-fashioned stick phone	Disguise for Clementine
Hat, for Doctor	Cowbell (opt.)
Toy pistol, for Jarvis	Cutout of a buffalo (opt.)
Jug of moonshine	Cutout of an antelope (opt.)
Water bucket	Cutout of the sun on a stick (opt.)
Drinking glass	Cutout of a large log cabin (opt.)

Special Effects

Ding sound
Phone ringing
Gunshot
Coyote howling in the distance
Coyote or dog yelp
Coyotes howling from every direction
Video showing Chester and Clementine enjoying themselves
in happier times (optional)
Slow guitar music
Train whistle

**“It dawned on me
at that moment
that I had stumbled
into a town
full of idiots.”**

—Chester

Act I

(Cactus Creek, downtown and Big Old Saloon. In spotlight, Clementine enters, carrying a suitcase. She stands CS beside a stool, sets her suitcase down, and turns to the audience.)

CLEMENTINE: *(Aside.)* I know I've done the right thing. I just know it. You see, we were to marry but I ran away. I heard about this place. *(Looking around the street.)* A place a girl can come to hide and think things through. *(Drops her head.)* I just need to think things through. *(Clementine removes her hat, throws it down beside the stool, and cries into her handkerchief.)*

CHESTER: *(Offstage. Calls.)* Clementine? Hello? Clementine? *(Clementine jumps up, grabs her suitcase, and exits SL, leaving her hat behind. Chester runs on and stands CS, frantically looking around. He carries a rolled up sleeping bag and small knapsack tied together with a string.)* Hello? *(His excitement disappears.)* Hello? *(He kicks a rock, sits on the edge of the stool, and drops his supplies. Aside, to audience.)* Sorry, I don't have time to stop and talk right now. You see, my one true love has up and disappeared on me just two days before we're supposed to get hitched. Well, I've got to find her real quick-like. I don't know where she run off to or why she left, but I've got to discover the reason or die tryin'. So here I am traipsin' through the desert so I might find and ask her that one burnin' question...*Why?* My travels brought me to this tiny town that's not even marked nowhere on my map. The sheriff of Cactus Creek greeted me right away. I told him the whole sad story.

(Sheriff enters and approaches Chester and motions for him to sit down on the stool.)

SHERIFF: Well, don't fret none, boy. Just rest your weary bones, and look how I can shoot a wild mallard duck out of the sky with one blast from my trusty pistol. *(Removes pistol from holster.)* Cover your ears!

(Sheriff shoots into the air and holds out his hand. Clementine peeps out from behind a cactus.)

CHESTER: *(Looks up to sky.)* I think you missed.

SHERIFF: *(Offended.)* That was a practice shot, Mister I'm-a-stranger-in-town-so-I-know-ever'thing-there-is-to-know-about-shootin'-wild-mallard-ducks-out-of-the-sky. You keep that up, and you can kiss my hospitality and my assistance goodbye. *(He hitches his britches and starts to exit.)*

CHESTER: *(Going after him.)* I didn't mean... *(Sheriff exits.)* But... *(To himself.)* ...I need your help now. *(Farmer's Wife enters carrying a pig.)* Excuse me, ma'am.

FARMER'S WIFE: I can't stop, stranger. I'm taking my pig home from the market.

CHESTER: That's a pig?

FARMER'S WIFE: Yes, sir, I got it for my husband.

CHESTER: I'm sure it was a good swap. *(Shows her the picture.)* I was wondering if you've saw this girl right here.

FARMER'S WIFE: Looks like a wanted criminal.

CHESTER: No, ma'am, my Clementine is the maiden I had the mind to marry next Monday.

FARMER'S WIFE: *(Shocked.)* You can't say the "M-word" in these parts.

CHESTER: *(Thinking back on what he just said as he counts on his fingers the M-words.)* Let's see..."No, ma'am, my Clementine is the maiden I had the mind to marry next Monday." *(Farmer's Wife is trying to sneak away.)* Wait, can't you please help me? If I get to her quick enough, maybe I can win her back into my arms.

FARMER'S WIFE: Are you sure you're not a spy for Colonel Dinwiddie?

CHESTER: Who's—?

FARMER'S WIFE: Nah, you're not the spy type. Besides, you're not two-faced, or you wouldn't be wearin' that one.

CHESTER: Couldn't you look at the picture one more time?

(Farmer's Wife takes the picture from him.)

FARMER'S WIFE: Let's see here... *(Farmer's Wife looks at the picture and then glances over and sees Clementine emerging from behind the cactus. Clementine spies the hat she left behind and slowly moves toward it. As she does this, she pleads in pantomime with the Farmer's Wife not to give her away.)* Well...uh... *(Clementine grabs her hat and runs out.)* ...no...I ain't seen no lady like that wearin' a red dress and totin' a beat-up suitcase. Sorry.

CHESTER: *(Deflated.)* Thank you anyway.

FARMER'S WIFE: *(Curious.)* What in the Sam hill did you do to make her leave anyway?

CHESTER: *(Staring at the picture.)* I don't know what I did and it's killin' me inside.

FARMER'S WIFE: *(Sarcastic.)* One day I hope you have a perfect marriage like mine.

CHESTER: Really?

FARMER'S WIFE: Yes, sir. My Rosco only has two faults—everything he says and everything he does.

CHESTER: My Clementine ain't got a fault one.

FARMER'S WIFE: You say that now...listen, honey, marriage is like runnin' through a cactus patch naked. It looks easy until you try it.

CHESTER: We had decided that we was goin' to share everything.

FARMER'S WIFE: Me and Rosco used to share the chores in our home. He washed the dishes and I swept them up.

CHESTER: I bet you have a happy life together.

FARMER'S WIFE: Oh, yes. It was a good thing we was married before the new law took effect.

CHESTER: New law?

FARMER'S WIFE: Nothin'. I've said too much.

CHESTER: *(Aside.)* This conversation was goin' nowhere. I had my task laid out before me. *(To Farmer's Wife.)* Good luck with your pig.

(Sheriff enters and approaches Chester.)

SHERIFF: *(Pushing Chester down onto the stool.)* Stranger, sit down here, and you and me can shoot the bull. Shhhhhh, there he is now. *(He shoots offstage.)*

FARMER'S WIFE: *(Laughs.)* You miss that bull ever'time, Sheriff.

SHERIFF: Why don't you stop laughin' at the law, Miss Elverna, or I'll be eatin' little piggy there for breakfast tomorrow.

CHESTER: Thanks just the same, Sheriff, but there ain't time for bull shootin'. I gotta search night and day...under every rock, inside every tumbleweed.

(Sheriff moves the stool upstage.)

SHERIFF: Well, you can't do all that searchin' on an empty stomach, partner. What you say we mosey on over to the saloon and get Isabella to rustle us up some grub?

CHESTER: Now that you mention it, I am gettin' a might hungry.

SHERIFF: That a boy. Let me help you with your things.

(Sheriff grabs the photograph. Chester has to carry the rest of his things. They enter the saloon.)

PATTY MAE: *(Running through.)* She's a-comin'! Hide quick!

(Patty Mae exits. Farmer's Wife hides behind a cactus. Florence runs in and approaches the cactus.)

FLORENCE: I see you hidin' behind that cactus, Elverna
Tickertape! Come out and face me like a hussy should!
FARMER'S WIFE: There ain't nobody here but a pig.
FLORENCE: I know that, but I want to see you anyway!

(Farmer's Wife steps out from behind the cactus.)

FARMER'S WIFE: Wait a minute. *(She takes off her glasses and puts them in her pocket.)* There, that's better.
FLORENCE: You're so vain. You took your glasses off 'cause you think it makes you look better.
FARMER'S WIFE: I took off my glasses 'cause it makes *you* look better.
FLORENCE: Well, I never!
FARMER'S WIFE: That's what they say...
FLORENCE: I know you hate me, Elverna, but you can't keep me from courtin' your brother.
FARMER'S WIFE: My brother ain't interestin' in courtin' you, Florence Johnson. He's just too nice to say it.
FLORENCE: That ain't true. He said he was takin' me to the dogfights next week.
FARMER'S WIFE: He told me he can't take you to the dogfights 'cause you might win. Besides, you know good and well he's happily married to a beautiful woman. Well, he's happily married to a woman. Okay, so he's married to a moonshiner but he loves her still.
FLORENCE: I ain't as dumb as I look, Elverna. I know your brother ain't married and so does the whole town. So you tell him the next time we go through the tunnel of love, he'd better not wait outside.
FARMER'S WIFE: You leave my brother alone. He ain't your type.
FLORENCE: He's a man, ain't he?
FARMER'S WIFE: Of course.
FLORENCE: He's my type.

FARMER'S WIFE: You're impossible, Florence Johnson.
(Farmer's Wife turns and starts to exit.)

FLORENCE: *(Shouts after her.)* And make sure he knows I don't hold hands without my chaperone present! *(She looks around and sees a man offstage.)* Young man! You there! Stop right there! Are you good with a plow?

(Farmer's Wife and Florence exit. Chester and Sheriff enter the saloon.)

SHERIFF: *(To Chester.)* Here we are, stranger. You sit right there, and I'll get Isabella. *(Shouts.)* Isabella, you got a customer!

(Isabella enters, carrying a pad and pencil. She chews gum wildly.)

ISABELLA: What will you have, Sheriff?

SHERIFF: Your special.

ISABELLA: I appreciate that. Now, what will you have?

SHERIFF: *(Indicates Chester.)* This visitor here is hungry.

ISABELLA: Sorry, but we don't serve strangers here.

CHESTER: That's okay, I don't eat strangers. Bring me some fried chicken.

ISABELLA: Sheriff, you goin' to let him talk to me that way?

SHERIFF: He's just havin' a bad day, that's all.

ISABELLA: *(Gives Chester a hard stare.)* If you say so, Sheriff. One... *(Through her teeth.)* ...chicken comin' up. *(She turns and exits.)*

SHERIFF: *(To Chester.)* Why don't you take a load off and help me shoot the breeze. *(He points his gun into the air and shoots. He laughs.)* Get it? Shoot the breeze? *(A bird falls from the sky. Sheriff picks up the bird and looks it over real good. Shouts.)* Never mind the chicken, Isabella, just bring a match!

(Chester stands.)

CHESTER: I'd really like to sit and shoot the... *(Realizes.)*
...talk, Sheriff, but I've got to search for my Clementine and
find out why she left me.

(Sheriff pushes Chester back into his seat.)

SHERIFF: Now, that's just what I wanted to talk to you about,
son. Why exactly do you think your Clementine would
come here to Cactus Creek to hide away?

CHESTER: I ain't rightly sure. She could be anywhere, I
guess. All she left behind was this here note. *(Produces
note.)*

SHERIFF: *(Reads.)* "Dearest Chester, goodbye, my love.
Signed, your darlin' Clementine. P.M.S. I'm havin' a real
bad day."

CHESTER: *(Crying into a handkerchief.)* She's a woman of few
words.

SHERIFF: I can see you're a man who needs cheerin' up
somethin' terrible, and do I have a surprise for you! It's time
for our five o'clock floor show!

CHESTER: But it's only 4:30.

SHERIFF: *(Louder.)* I said, it's time for our 5 o'clock floor
show. P.J.! J.P.! Y'all got yourselves an audience out here!

(Chester stands.)

CHESTER: I really do need to be goin', Sheriff...

(Sheriff pushes Chester back down onto the stool.)

SHERIFF: *(Through his teeth.)* What part of "we have a 5
o'clock floor show" don't you understand, boy?

(P.J. quickly enters with J.P.)

P.J.: Look, J.P.! A real, live patron!

J.P.: Goodness gracious! I hope I remember my routine.

P.J.: Hit it!

(J.P. and P.J. sing "Red River Valley" a cappella and slightly off key as they dance about awkwardly. Note: Sheriff may accompany the ladies on a kazoo if desired.)

J.P. *(Sings fast.)*

From the valley they say you are going.
We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile.
For they say you are taking the sunshine
That has brightened our pathways awhile.

P.J.: *(Sings.)*

Then come sit here awhile ere you leave us.
Do not hasten to bid us adieu.
Come back soon to the Red River Valley,
And the cowgirl who loves you so true.

(Music stops abruptly.)

J.P.: P.J., did you know it's important to find a feller who rides
a horse?

P.J.: Sure.

J.P.: It's also important to find a feller who makes good
money.

P.J.: Right.

J.P.: It's important to find a feller who likes to kiss a lot.

P.J.: Okay.

J.P.: It's important that these three fellers never meet.

(Sings.) I've been thinking a long time, my darlin'
Of the sweet words you never would say.
Now, alas, must my fond hopes all vanish,
For they say you are going away. *(Music stops.)*

(Chester's head is on the table. Sheriff applauds, interrupting their singing, and looks over at Chester.)

SHERIFF: *(To Chester.)* How did you like the floor—? *(Sees Chester sleeping. To P.J. and J.P.)* Uh-oh, girls, take your places and do it again.

(Chester wakes up, stands, and applauds wildly.)

CHESTER: No! It was mighty fine! Mighty fine!

(P.J. crosses to Chester's left.)

P.J.: Sheriff, you didn't tell me the customer was so pretty.

(J.P. crosses to Chester's right.)

J.P.: *(To Sheriff.)* You think we might find a way for us to keep him?

SHERIFF: Hush up, girls. Y'all know the official motto of Cactus Creek.

CHESTER: What's the motto?

SHERIFF: Nothin', what's the motto with you?

P.J.: The official motto is stupid.

J.P.: And it don't make a lick of sense.

SHERIFF: Our motto is..."A man cannot be too careful in his choice of enemas."

CHESTER: You mean his choice of "enemies." Oscar Wilde said that.

P.J.: *(To Sheriff.)* Oh, I thought you meant the other motto the Colonel came up with—

SHERIFF: Don't say it out loud or you'll spill the beans.

P.J.: *(Crosses her arms.)* I don't care. *(Pulls herself away from the Sheriff.)* We're lonely. *(Grabs Chester.)* Please take me out on a date!

CHESTER: Ladies, please.

J.P.: We're beggin' you!

CHESTER: Get off me.

P.J.: I'll pay for supper!
(*All freeze.*)

CHESTER: (*Aside.*) More females clingin' to me like kudzu to barbed wire. But what could be the reason for all this desperation? What could it be? I turned kindly to the entertainers and spoke from the heart. (*To P.J.*) The answer's no!

J.P.: He says he wants another show. Hit it!

(*Again J.P. and P.J. sing a cappella off key and the Sheriff can accompany them on a kazoo.*)

P.J.: (*Sings.*) Oh, where have you been

P.J./J.P.: (*Sing.*) Billy Boy, Billy Boy.

P.J.: (*Sings.*) Oh, where have you been, charming Billy?

SHERIFF: (*Spoken.*) Ladies, please...

J.P.: (*Sings.*) I have been to seek a wife, she's the joy of my life.

J.P./P.J.: (*Sing.*) She's a young thing and cannot leave her mother.

SHERIFF: (*Shouts.*) Hush up! Your next floor show ain't for two more hours.

CHESTER: Look, Sheriff, I didn't come here to be—using the term loosely—entertained. (*Tips his hat.*) Thank you kindly for the floor show, ma'am, ma'am, Sheriff. (*Exits.*)

(*Clementine emerges from her hiding place.*)

CLEMENTINE: (*Aside.*) I don't want him to think I don't love him. He was always the man just for me. How could something so right turn out so wrong? Shhhh, you can't tell anybody I'm here.

(*When she hears Chester coming, Clementine runs out. Chester enters the street.*)

CHESTER: *(Calls out.)* Hello? *(Aside, a bit melodramatically.)*
Was it her voice...that familiar utterance that makes my
insides churn like homemade butter? *(Calls.)* Clementine?

(Patty Mae enters, running.)

PATTY MAE: *(As she runs through.)* She's a-comin'! She's a-
comin'! Hide, quick!

*(Patty Mae exits. Florence runs on and puts her hands over
Chester's eyes.)*

FLORENCE: Guess who?

CHESTER: Clementine, is it you?

FLORENCE: Guess again.

CHESTER: I thought I heard—

(Florence picks a pebble up off the ground.)

FLORENCE: We're going to play a game. If you guess what I
have in my hand, you'll get a kiss on the jaw.

CHESTER: An elephant?

FLORENCE: Close enough!

*(Florence closes her eyes for a kiss. Chester hides behind the cactus.
Doc runs on.)*

DOC: *(Shouts.)* Isabella, boil me some water on the stove!

(P.J. runs on.)

P.J.: Doc, what is it?

DOC: That big thing in the kitchen that lets off heat!

P.J.: I mean, why do you need water?

(Mrs. Doohickie enters, holding a baby wrapped in a blanket.)

MRS. DOOHICKIE: Never mind, Doc, it's too late. Little Junior has arrived.

DOC: Mrs. Doohickie, you had that baby all by yourself?

MRS. DOOHICKIE: I had to, Doc. You left two weeks ago to fetch some boilin' water and never came back.

DOC: Sorry 'bout that, but I got a little distracted.

P.J.: It must be really hard to be the only doctor in town.

MRS. DOOHICKIE: *(Looking at her baby.)* I named her Clementine.

(Chester peeps out from behind the cactus.)

CHESTER: *(Aside.)* Clementine? I knew this couldn't be a coincidence. *(He runs over to Mrs. Doohickie.)* Did you say Clementine? Where is she? Tell me 'cause I have a right to know!

MRS. DOOHICKIE: *(Begins to cry.)* Doctor, get this mad man away from my baby!

(Sheriff enters.)

DOC: *(To Chester.)* Stranger, calm yourself.

(Doc slaps Chester. Chester is shocked. Chester slaps the Doc. Sheriff approaches and stands between them to break it up.)

SHERIFF: Hold on one cotton-pickin' minute! That ain't no way to act in front of a lady! *(He spits and we hear a "ding." He crosses to Mrs. Doohickie.)* Howdy there, Mrs. Doohickie. You're one of the most beautiful ladies I have ever met, and that's not sayin' much for you.

MRS. DOOHICKIE: You cad!

(Mrs. Doohickie slaps the Sheriff.)

SHERIFF: That's police brutality! You don't think I give pretty women a ticket, do you? You're right, sign here.

MRS. DOOHICKIE: *(Turns away.)* I'll have you know I have the body of a god.

DOC: Yeah. Buddha.

(Mrs. Doohickie wraps her baby tightly and runs out crying.)

CHESTER: *(To Sheriff.)* What's her story?

SHERIFF: Bless her soul. *(Removes his hat.)* Mrs. Doohickie is a poor widow.

CHESTER: I'm sorry to hear that.

SHERIFF: Don't be. She's buried three husbands, and two of 'em was just nappin'.

CHESTER: Doc, why are all the women in Cactus Creek such desperate creatures?

DOC: Because of the town secret, of course.

(Florence rushes to Chester.)

FLORENCE: *(To Chester.)* It will *not* kill you to give me some sugar!

DOC: Ain't you heard, Ms. Florence? He's spoke for.

FLORENCE: Until there's a ring on his finger, he's fair game!

CHESTER: Doc, tell her I have a kissin' disease!

FLORENCE: *(To Doc.)* Tell him I've been vaccinated.

(The phone rings and Doc takes an old-fashioned stick phone off his belt.)

DOC: Excuse me...it's my cell phone. *(Everyone stares.)*
What? *(Into phone.)* Hello?

PATTY MAE: *(Offstage.)* Is this ol' Doc Rooney?

DOC: *(Into phone.)* That's right.

PATTY MAE: *(Offstage.)* Is an 8-year-old boy able to perform an appendix operation?

DOC: *(Into phone.)* Of course not.

PATTY MAE: *(Offstage, to boy.)* I told you so, didn't I? Now put it back!

(Doc hangs up.)

P.J.: Poor Doc, people is always askin' for free advice.

SHERIFF: Yeah, that ain't right.

CHESTER: *(Pulls out the photograph.)* Doc, have you saw this pretty girl in town?

(Sheriff pushes Chester back.)

SHERIFF: Wait your turn. Doc, I think I'm losin' my hearin' in my left ear. What should I do?

DOC: *(Looking into ear.)* You ain't goin' deaf. There's a suppository stuck in there.

SHERIFF: Well, at least I know what I did with my hearin' aid.

(Phone rings.)

DOC: Excuse me. *(Into phone.)* Hello?

(Mr. Strong steps out on the other side of the stage.)

MR. STRONG: Hello, Doc?

DOC: That's right.

MR. STRONG: My wife is havin' a baby and her contractions is only two minutes apart.

DOC: Is this her first child?

MR. STRONG: No, sir, this is her husband.

DOC: Boil some water, and I'll be there in two weeks.

(Doc puts his phone away. Mr. Strong exits.)

SHERIFF: Hey, Doc, I hear the Colonel's in town today.

FLORENCE: *(Crosses her arms.)* It just ain't fair!

CHESTER: Who's the Colonel?

DOC: Believe me, you don't need to know, stranger. Mark my words. Well, gentlemen, I must go forth and conduct a facelift.

(Doc starts to leave, but P.J. steps into his path.)

P.J.: You need to stop doin' them facelifts, Doc.

SHERIFF: I wouldn't knock it till you've tried it, Ms. Sassafrass. Maybe the Doc could fix up that mug of yours.

P.J.: *(Offended.)* I had one last week.

SHERIFF: Don't worry, I'm sure that once the swellin' goes down—

P.J.: Shut up!

DOC: I thought you was happy with your facelift, Ms. Sassafrass.

P.J.: Well, it's okay as long as I'm real still, but ever' time I cross my legs, my mouth pops open.

DOC: That's not my fault. *(To Chester.)* Well, stranger, it was nice talkin' to you...my mind needed a rest.

(Doc tips his hat and exits. Patty Mae runs in.)

PATTY MAE: He's a-comin'! He's a-comin'! Hide quick!

(Patty Mae runs out as J.P. runs on and crosses to P.J. Jarvis enters the opposite side of the stage.)

JARVIS: *(To Chester.)* You there! Stranger!

CHESTER: Now what?

JARVIS: You have to the count of three to get your no-good bum out of this town for good!

P.J.: It's Jarvis Plume. Ever'body duck!

(P.J., J.P., Sheriff, and Florence take cover.)

CHESTER: *(To Jarvis.)* Look, cowboy, I'm just lookin' for my Clementine!

JARVIS: What you mean is you're lookin' for trouble. Well, you found it, mister. Now I'm goin' to count to three. *(Pulls out his pistol.)* One...

CHESTER: All I want to do is—

JARVIS: Two!

CHESTER: You don't scare—

JARVIS: Three!

(Jarvis shoots and Chester goes down. Jarvis laughs and exits quickly.)

FLORENCE: Oh, my darlin'! *(Runs over to Chester and kneels down.)* Speak to me, stranger! Speak to me, my sweetness!

(Sheriff comes out of hiding.)

SHERIFF: Did anybody see which way that rascal went?

FLORENCE: *(Points SR.)* He ran that way, Sheriff!

SHERIFF: *(Points SR.)* He ran that way?

FLORENCE: That way! *(Pause. Sheriff runs out SL.)* Coward! *(Chester starts coming to.)* Are you all right, my sweetness?

CHESTER: Am I alive?

P.J.: It's okay. He didn't hit you. You can sit up.

CHESTER: What in tarnation was that all about?

J.P.: Jarvis Plume is Cactus Creek's very own outlaw. I think he's afraid you're tryin' to steal all the women away from him.

(Sheriff runs on carrying a bucket of water. He runs to Chester ready to drench him.)

SHERIFF: Stand back!

FLORENCE: (*Grabs Sheriff's arm.*) Sheriff, he's okay. He ain't dead!

SHERIFF: (*Shouts to where Jarvis exited.*) Jarvis Plume, what have I told you about shootin' people in cold blood? (*A shot is heard. Everybody ducks.*) You do that again, and I'm goin' to place you under arrest once and for all!

CHESTER: You mean that varmint has shot somebody before? Why ain't he been reprimanded?

SHERIFF: (*Begins scratching himself.*) Don't you worry none about that, stranger. Case closed.

CHESTER: Why are you so nervous?

SHERIFF: I ain't nervous.

CHESTER: Then why are you scratchin' yourself?

SHERIFF: (*Nose to nose with Chester.*) I'm the only one who knows where it itches. Now, leave me alone. I got news for the rest.

FLORENCE: What news is that?

SHERIFF: That outlaw's got me so frustrated, I done forgot.

P.J.: Bless your heart, Sheriff. If your brain was dynamite, you wouldn't have enough to blow your nose.

SHERIFF: Oh yeah? Well, if my nose was full of gold, I wouldn't blow any of it on you.

J.P.: You can't talk to my sister that way!

FLORENCE: Listen here, you coward of a sheriff...

(*Chester steps in to break it up.*)

CHESTER: All of you, stop it! I'm sure there ain't a kernel of truth in what any of you is sayin'. If you don't mind, I need some peace and quiet. (*Everyone chimes in arguing. Shouts.*) Quiet!

(*Everyone stops talking.*)

SHERIFF: And another thing, a zebra cannot change its spots!

P.J.: Let's go, J.P.!

(J.P. and P.J. storm out.)

SHERIFF: Wait a minute. What you said..."kernel." That's what I was tryin' to remember. *(To Florence.)* Did you know the Colonel's in town?

FLORENCE: I sure did, and am I ready to give him a piece of my mind!

SHERIFF: Don't give him a piece of your mind...you can't spare it.

(All freeze except Chester.)

CHESTER: *(Aside.)* It dawned on me at that moment that I had stumbled into a town full of idiots. A lawless town with a halfwit for a sheriff and a needy woman who was as easy as slidin' off a greasy log backward. But I knew that I must force myself to focus on the journey before me.

(Florence whispers to the Sheriff. Sheriff gives her a thumbs-up.)

SHERIFF: *(To Chester.)* Too bad you're spoke for, stranger. Miss Florence, here, would be quite a catch for some lucky man.

FLORENCE: *(Acting modest.)* Oh, Sheriff, go on... *(Silence. She slaps the Sheriff's shoulder.)* Go on!

SHERIFF: Uh, she's a good cook.

FLORENCE: *(Slaps his arm.)* Go on!

SHERIFF: Her tiny feet make it easy for her to stand close to the sink.

FLORENCE: *(Slaps his arm.)* Go on!

SHERIFF: *(Thinking.)* Ummmmmm. *(She whispers into his ear.)* And she's a mighty fine kicker.

(She kicks Sheriff.)

FLORENCE: Kisser!

(All freeze except Chester.)

CHESTER: *(Aside.)* I knew this was the moment I must make my exit and make it quick. *(To others.)* Bye, y'all.

(Chester starts to exit, but Florence steps in front of him.)

FLORENCE: Did he mention what a good seamstress I am? *(Chester tries to exit again but she cuts him off.)* I sewed this dress myself. *(He tries to exit.)* Out of pure silk. *(He tries to exit.)* My daddy owns a silk farm.

CHESTER: Like I said before, I've promised my love to another. I'm awful sorry.

(Chester stoops to retie his sleeping bag. Florence runs to the Sheriff and cries on his shoulder.)

FLORENCE: Oh, Sheriff, what am I to do?!

SHERIFF: *(Patting her on the back.)* Now, now. You know there's nothin' any of us can do about our unfortunate situation here in Cactus Creek.

FLORENCE: But you're the sheriff. Couldn't you talk to the Colonel?

SHERIFF: Talkin' to the Colonel is like sneakin' sunrise past a rooster.

CHESTER: *(Curious.)* What's this unfortunate situation you speak about?

SHERIFF: Sorry, stranger, but you're a foreigner, so I'm afraid it's just simply none of your bees wax.

(All freeze except Chester.)

CHESTER: *(Aside.)* The Sheriff was right. I had let myself become distracted. I must search for my Clementine until I found her...until I saw them blue eyes lookin' at me the way they used to. As far as searchin', there was no time like the

present. (*Sees someone offstage. Yells.*) Excuse me, have you seen this lady?!

(*Chester exits. Sheriff enters the saloon.*)

SHERIFF: Isabella, bring me some coffee! (*He spits and we hear a "ding."*)

ISABELLA: (*Offstage, shouts.*) Ah, get it yourself!

SHERIFF: (*To himself.*) This town is becoming downright hateful.

(*Chester enters the saloon carrying a jug of moonshine. He's looking a little tipsy. On the verge of tears, Chester stumbles to the table and has a seat.*)

CHESTER: I can't believe I've lost her.

SHERIFF: Hey there, stranger. I thought you was leavin'. (*Sits on a nearby chair.*)

CHESTER: (*Crying and slurring his words.*) Ain't nobody seen her. Nobody! Isabella, bring me another!

ISABELLA: (*Offstage, shouts.*) Get it yourself!

CHESTER: I got to face it, Shurf Busybee.

SHERIFF: Sheriff Busby.

CHESTER: Why would my little turpentine...

SHERIFF: Clementine.

CHESTER: ...want somebody like me? I'm about as sexy as sacks on a rooster.

SHERIFF: Socks.

CHESTER: Huh?

SHERIFF: You're about as sexy as socks on a rooster.

CHESTER: I'm at the end of my rope and you're worried about syntax.

SHERIFF: If you're tryin' to drown your troubles, you're going about it the wrong way, mister.

CHESTER: (*Slurred.*) Whadaya mean?

SHERIFF: You're drinkin' ginger ale.

(Chester sobers up quickly and sits up.)

CHESTER: What kind of saloon is this if a cowboy can't drown his sorrows?

SHERIFF: The Colonel don't allow drinkin' in his town! He says it's a bad influence on his daughter.

CHESTER: I hate to be rude, Sheriff, but I need to contemplate my plight, if you don't mind. If I don't find my Clementine soon, I'll be in real hot water.

(Sheriff stands.)

SHERIFF: I know what you mean, stranger. I was in hot water last night.

CHESTER: Why's that?

SHERIFF: I took a bath.

(Shots are heard offstage.)

CHESTER: Now what?

(P.J. and J.P. run in.)

P.J.: It's that stupid Jarvis.

J.P.: He's on another shootin' rampage!

SHERIFF: Dagnabbit! Don't that just fry your tater? *(Shouts through the door.)* Jarvis, you put that pistol down!

JARVIS: *(Offstage. Shouts.)* Why don't you come out here and make me?!

SHERIFF: *(Shouts.)* I ain't kiddin', Jarvis! Don't make me get rough! *(He spits and we hear "ding." Another gunshot is heard.)* Okay, you done got me riled now! *(He hitches his britches and exits.)*

P.J.: *(Referring to the Sheriff.)* He's a good man, but he'll never drown in his own sweat.

CHESTER: What is the matter with this dad-blasted town?
Ever'body is actin' downright loony.

J.P.: If I tell you, will you pucker up and give me some sugar
on the jaw?

CHESTER: What is it?

J.P.: This part of my face right here. *(Points.)*

CHESTER: I mean, what's strange about this town?

P.J.: There's a good chance your Clementine is here in Cactus
Creek.

CHESTER: My Clementine? Here? Where? Why?

(P.J. looks around to make sure no one is listening.)

P.J.: You see, stranger, our little town is harborin' a deep
secret.

CHESTER: A secret?

J.P.: A secret.

CHESTER: A secret?

P.J./J.P.: *(Shout.)* A secret! Shhhhhhhh!

CHESTER: *(Lowers voice.)* What kind of a secret? And what
does that have to do with my one and only love?

P.J.: Do you promise you won't tell Colonel Dinwiddie where
you got this information?

CHESTER: Cross my heart, hope to die...stick a cactus needle
in my eye.

J.P.: Well, you see—

(Shots are heard offstage. Sheriff runs in.)

SHERIFF: Dad gum it, Jarvis! That was my good hat! You
should be glad you was born 'cause nobody else is! Now,
you hightail it home! Go on! *(Turns to the others.)* Straighten
up, ever'body, it's the Colonel, and he's brought his spoiled
daughter Dina Dinwiddie with him!

CHESTER: *(To P.J.)* Wait a minute, what about—?

P.J.: (*Quickly.*) Shhhhh, we can't talk now! The Colonel's a-comin'!

(Isabella runs in holding a dishcloth. Everyone stands in a straight line. Sheriff removes his hat. P.J. removes Chester's hat for him. P.J. and Isabella salute. J.P. and Sheriff place their hands over their hearts. The Colonel enters with his daughter, Dina.)

ISABELLA/P.J./J.P.: (*Sings as Sheriff plays the kazoo.*)

Oh, I wish I was in the land of cotton.
Old times there are not forgotten,
Look away! Look away! Look away!
Dixie Land.

SHERIFF: (*Becoming a little carried away, marches in place. Sings.*)

Oh, I wish I was in Dixie! Hooray! Hooray!
In Dixie Land I'll take my stand
To live and die in Dixie.
Away, away, away down south in Dixie!
Away, away—

COLONEL: Shut up, nincompoop.

SHERIFF: Colonel Beauregard Dinwiddie, it's good to see you again, sir. (*Bows at his feet.*)

COLONEL: Don't touch the suit, I say, don't touch the suit, boy.

SHERIFF: Yes, sir. Is there anything I can do for you, Colonel?

COLONEL: Get away from me, boy. You bother me.

(Dina spots Chester.)

DINA: (*Gently fans her face.*) Daddy, look! A strange man in town.

COLONEL: There, there, my daughter, the poor man can't help the way he looks.

(All freeze except Chester.)

CHESTER: *(Aside.)* Another desperate damsel beggin' for my undivided attention. And her stereotypical southern gentleman of a father. By the looks of things, the people in Cactus Creek hold Colonel Beauregard Dinwiddie in high regard.

(P.J. and J.P. approach the Colonel and stand on either side of him.)

P.J.: *(Offering her hand.)* Howdy there, Colonel. Do you remember me?

J.P.: *(On his other side.)* And me?

COLONEL: Ah, why, of course. The sweet little Georgia peaches from Savannah.

(Colonel kisses their hands. Sheriff approaches Colonel.)

SHERIFF: What brings you into town, Colonel?

COLONEL: Back off, son, and give me some breathin' room. *(Sheriff backs away.)* I hear Jarvis Plume is back stirrin' up mischief.

DINA: Daddy, that Jarvis man sure is mean...goin' around shootin' ever'body the way he does.

COLONEL: Don't you worry your pretty little head none, my precious. Daddy has ever'thing in his town under control. Well, Sheriff... *(Sheriff approaches.)* ...what do you have to say for yourself, lettin' that scoundrel run wild in my little hamlet?

SHERIFF: I've been tryin' to reason with him, Colonel, but he's just so dadburn bored. He says that because of your law, there ain't nothin' left to do except go around stirrin' up mischief.

COLONEL: And I told you at our last town meetin' that if that good-for-nothin' varmint can't handle my laws, he needs to be shipped out of Cactus Creek once and for all.

P.J.: But Colonel, that Jarvis Plume is so big and bad—

J.P.: And doggone mean.

COLONEL: Put it this way, Sheriff Busby, either that bandit goes, or you go.

P.J.: How in Sam hill do we get rid of that scalawag?

COLONEL: There's only one surefire way. We set a trap, snatch him up, and ship him out of town on board the Cannonball Express.

ALL: Cannonball?

COLONEL: Cannonball.

ALL: Cannonball?

COLONEL: Cannonball! Shhhhhhhh!

DINA: Daddy, what a wonderful idea!

COLONEL: The Cannonball Express goes as far east as the great Mississippi River. *(Turns to Sheriff.)* And it's goin' to be up to you, you worthless excuse for a law man, to see to it that he gets on board that train.

SHERIFF: Yes sir, Colonel. It will be my great pleasure to be sure that filthy varmint gets aboard. He put a hole in my new hat!

(Until now Chester has been standing off by himself staring at Clementine's picture.)

CHESTER: Who cares about your hat? Who cares about some stupid Cannonball? Who cares about Jarvis Plume and his shootin' rampages?

(Dina rushes to Chester's side.)

DINA: Poor man, you're so distraught and troubled.

(P.J. runs over and stands on the other side of Chester.)

P.J.: *(To Colonel.)* He's carryin' a heavy burden...

(J.P. rushes over and pushes her way in closer to Chester.)

J.P.: *(To Colonel.)* ...that no man should have to bear in this cruel world.

COLONEL: And who, I say, who, pray tell, is this stranger here?

P.J.: He's just passin' through. Ain't he pretty?

DINA : Daddy, can I have him?

J.P.: Finders keepers, losers weepers.

COLONEL: Ladies! Remember yourselves as well as my personal creed: You can't tell much about a chicken pie until you cut into the crust. *(Confused, everyone just stares out at the audience. Turns back to Sheriff.)* Now, back to our problem at hand. Sheriff, as far as dealin' with Jarvis Plume you have done the job of three men...

SHERIFF: Thank you, Colonel.

COLONEL: ...The Three Stooges. When's the next time the Cannonball passes through Cactus Creek?

SHERIFF: This week the Tuesday Express will run on Sunday instead of Thursday.

COLONEL: That's tomorrow afternoon. The assignment is simple, constable. I'm makin' you personally responsible to see that Jarvis Plume is on that train, that's all.

CHESTER: *(From the opposite side of the stage.)* I wish you'd all climb aboard that dumb Gumball Express and just let me move on!

(At hearing such unkind words about the Cannonball, everyone is in shock and clings to each other. Staring Chester down, the Colonel slowly crosses to him, presents a white glove, and slaps Chester's face with it.)

COLONEL: Be glad I don't have you thrown under my jail.

Kind sir, the Cannonball Express is the pride of the West!

SHERIFF: The fastest locomotive this side of the Rockies.

P.J.: And it comes right through our little town ever' week.

J.P.: The hauntin' sound of the whistle echoin' against
Deadman's Ridge.

DINA : The rumblin' of the trestle as it crosses Cactus Creek.

CHESTER: Well, Colonel, it's your town, your laws, and that
Jarvis character is your problem. I'm a-might tuckered out.
(*Tips his hat.*) Night y'all. (*Exits.*)

COLONEL: (*To Sheriff.*) What purpose does that rough-
houser have in our town anyway?

SHERIFF: He's searchin' for his lost love, Colonel—the girl
who broke his heart by runnin' away two days before their
weddin'.

COLONEL: Daughter, I want you to listen to me good and
keep away from that stranger, you hear?

DINA : But, Daddy, all I want to do is look at him.

COLONEL: That's what you say now, but you'll wish later
you lived by another creed of mine: Don't blame the cow
when the milk gets sour.

DINA: It just ain't fair, Daddy. How can you be so mean?

(*Sheriff crosses to Dina and puts his arm around her shoulder.*)

SHERIFF: Now, now, you don't want to break your own
Daddy's laws, do you, little Dina?

COLONEL: You touch my daughter again, and you'll be
pullin' back a nub, boy.

DINA: I'm not sure I care anymore.

COLONEL: Dina, your mother would turn over in her grave
hearing you talk like that. Now, come along, and I'll buy
you that new girdle you've been beggin' for.

DINA: What good is a new girdle without a feller to
appreciate my figure? (*She runs out crying.*)

SHERIFF: She's got a point there, Colo—

COLONEL: Shut up, dip wad. And, Sheriff, you remember
that Jarvis Plume has a date with destiny on the next train
out of here. (*Exits.*)

SHERIFF: Night, Colonel. And don't you worry none. I'll have that outlaw runnin' around in circles. He knows better than mess with the likes of Sheriff Buford D. Busby! *(Aside.)* 'Cause like we say here in Cactus Creek: When you come to a fork in the road, take it.

(Sheriff hitches his britches and exits. Chester enters the street, lays out his sleeping bag, and sits on it. A coyote howls in the distance. A gunshot is heard and then a yelp from the coyote. Florence enters and sees Chester. She positions herself and then begins to sob loudly. Chester stands.)

CHESTER: I'm sorry, ma'am, but I couldn't help but hear you slobberin' all over yourself over there.

FLORENCE: Don't mind me. I'm just upset 'cause my best friend thinks I'm nosy.

CHESTER: How do you know she thinks that?

FLORENCE: I read it in her diary.

CHESTER: Well, I'll just leave you at your—

(Florence lets out another loud cry.)

FLORENCE: I lied, but you couldn't possibly understand my plight—the plight of a girl in her prime destined to be an old maid. I've chased ever' man in town and I'm still alone. Unless I find somebody who can take me away from this town and its crazy laws, I'll never get married and thus find true happiness. *(Cries.)*

CHESTER: *(Sympathetic.)* Don't cry. It'll be all right. *(He turns and suddenly realizes he's nose to nose with Florence.)* What are you lookin' at?

FLORENCE: When I look into your eyes, I see beauty. Then I realize, "Hey, that's my reflection, and I wish your eyes were bigger." Then I think, "If I'm so beautiful, why don't anybody want to settle down with me?" It's not like I'm a perfectionist. *(Pats her hair.)* My parents were, though.

CHESTER: Well...

FLORENCE: All I've ever dreamed of was a nice little homestead somewhere far, far away from a big city like Cactus Creek. A place of wide open spaces and big skies, where a woman is a woman and a man is proud of it. Just a simple little place me and him could call home.

CHESTER: *(Aside.)* I wanted so bad to say some things to her. Things like, "Here's a drum, now beat it." But how could I be rude to such a pitiful sight?

(Florence approaches Chester.)

FLORENCE: What are you thinkin' about?

CHESTER: Uh, just how happy I'm sure you'll make some man some day, you little heifer. *(Florence giggles. Aside.)* Where I come from, heifer is a compliment. *(To Florence.)* Now, you run along home, and I'll talk to you tomorrow.

FLORENCE: Run along...? What?

CHESTER: Run along, little heifer.

(Florence giggles and starts to run out but turns and makes horns with her fingers.)

FLORENCE: Moooooo. *(She giggles and exits.)*

CHESTER: *(Aside.)* I realized at this point there was no use searchin' in the dark of night. So as I settled in for a restless sleep, thoughts flooded my mind: What kind of crazy laws does this town follow? What secret are they hidin'? And more than anything else...where could my Clementine be?

(Clementine is watching him from a distance. Chester lies down on his sleeping bag as coyotes howl from every direction and lights fade to black.)

[END OF FREEVIEW]