

DELIA DANCER, DOUGHNUT GIRL

A MODERN MELODRAMA FOR RADIO THEATRE

By **Martin R. Collin**

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By Martin R. Collin

SYNOPSIS: *Good evening ladies and gentlemen, gentle listeners of all ages, shapes and sizes, and welcome to tonight's episode of that hometown, Hagerstown sweetheart, Delia Dancer, Doughnut Girl.*

Dainty Delia Dancer, deliverer of doughnuts delightful, deals in danger daily at the hands of her demented, domineering, demonic, and drooling doughnut director, Glen Burnie.

Who will defend an innocent young woman? Who could sit still, and listen, and let injustice thrive?

Who would like another cup of coffee and one more of those tasty glazed treats?

Delia Dancer, Doughnut Girl is a modern melodrama that chronicles a ridiculous day and the challenges and struggles of a young woman who makes a living manufacturing doughnuts and sweet pastries in a small town doughnut factory. Structured as a radio program complete with phony commercials, parody songs, audience participation, and listener call-in spots, *Delia Dancer, Doughnut Girl* stretches theatrical forms but is deeply rooted in awful puns and wrapped around an apple pie and a cup of coffee of small town life.

Radio play?

Readers' theatre?

Staged production?

Have fun with it!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(LARGE, FLEXIBLE CASTING WITH MANY SMALL PARTS:
APPROXIMATELY SIX MEN, SEVEN WOMEN, EIGHT EXTRAS)*

THE ANNOUNCER Fluid, rich radio voice. *(38 lines)*

THE NARRATOR Slow and folksy both in voice and
manner. *(33 lines)*

DELIA DANCER The doughnut girl. Your younger
sister. *(21 lines)*

MA DANCER Everyone's mom—perhaps a bit of
an Irish brogue. *(16 lines)*

GLEN BURNIE Oily and greasy. Shift manager at
Uncle Billy's Doughnut World. *(12
lines)*

**DOWNSVILLE PIKE
(DOWNEY)** The boyfriend. Wholesome. *(12
lines)*

THE PROFESSOR Blustery, boring academic. *(7 lines)*

ANOTHER DOUGHNUT GIRL *(13 lines)*

THE POLICE OFFICER *(4 lines)*

THE HUB CITY SINGERS Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. *(10
lines)*

ASSORTED RADIO CALLERS

AND STUDIO GUESTS Hoboken, Sharpsburg, Cleveland,
Frau Herman, Little Tony Avila,
Chicago, Upset in Duluth, and
Funkstown.

THE MUSICIANS

I recommend a pianist and a violinist to accompany The Hub City Singers, the commercials, radio spots, and sound cues to underscore, accent, and add variety to the scenes. However, any combination of instruments, or tapes and cds, could work equally as well. Thirty to ninety seconds of scene-changing music should be used to introduce/end each scene. Incidental music and musical sound effects can be played at the discretion of the director.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Although *Delia Dancer, Doughnut Girl* was originally envisioned as a radio play, or as a vehicle for readers' theatre, the more I worked with the script the more I could see the amazing possibilities of actually staging the ridiculousness and shenanigans of this modern melodrama as well.

Some suggestions for staging:

Create a radio booth on stage (table, microphone, ON AIR sign, telephone, headphones) on an elevated platform—down stage left or right—or perhaps set the radio booth in the orchestra pit for The Announcer, The Hub City Singers, the guests, and the musicians.

Use a series of blackouts and fades in your acting space to highlight the distinction between the representational scenes (see below) and the radio booth scenes. Light the radio booth during the on-air introductions, commercials and phone calls and blackout the acting space. Change representational scenes while the conversation in the radio booth, commercials, commentary, and phone calls are in progress. Fade down lighting to blackout on the radio booth when action resumes in the acting space.

Create three representational scenes on stage in the acting space:

1. MA DANCER'S KITCHEN
2. THE DOUGHNUT SHOP
3. WAREHOUSE AT MARTIN'S FINE FOODS

Let The Narrator and bit characters (like The Professor, The Police Officer, Another Doughnut Girl, etc.) walk through the scenes or stand off to the side of a scene and direct comments and story and onstage action to the audience.

Costume the cast in 1950's homespun, blue-collar style:

Dress The Hub City Singers in paper hats (or hair nets) and doughnut store aprons.

Costume, spotlight, and microphone the Radio Callers who should be secretly planted in the darkened theatre audience.



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SCENE ONE
THE RADIO BOOTH

HUB CITY TENOR: *(Welcoming, inviting, enthusiastic.)* Good evening ladies and gentlemen... *(Wait for audience response. Encourage them if you have to.)*

HUB CITY SOPRANO/HUB CITY ALTO/HUB CITY BASS: Howdy Folks! Hey! How are you tonight? *(Ad lib.)*

HUB CITY TENOR: Will you sing along with us? Come on!

THE HUB CITY SINGERS with THE MUSICIANS will lead a loud and lively audience sing-along/clap-along in "I've Been Working on the Railroad/Dinah Won't You Blow Your Horn" and then a faster "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain." THE ANNOUNCER enters at the end of this musical lead-in/introduction, singing and clapping along. At the conclusion of the sing-along, THE ANNOUNCER says:

THE ANNOUNCER: Good evening ladies and gentlemen, gentle listeners of all ages, shapes and sizes, and welcome to tonight's episode of that hometown, Hagerstown sweetheart, Delia Dancer, Doughnut Girl. *(HUB CITY SINGERS standing with THE ANNOUNCER lead the applause.)* This evening's cozy fire adventure is brought to you by: The Gastro-Intestinal Offices of Sphincter, Colon, and Associates. Remember if your intestines are not becoming to you, they should be coming to us. *(Pause.)* And now, sit back, take your shoes off, pull up that afghan, comforter, and warm cup of cocoa... *(Dramatic organ chord.)* and join us for *Chapter 12: He's My Hero, or Downey Delivers the Goods.*

SCENE TWO
MA DANCER'S KITCHEN

*SOUND CUE: Light piano-pastoral spring opening—birds chirping—
or instrumental, solo piano and or violin, “Wind Beneath My Wings.”*

THE NARRATOR: *(Slow and folksy.)* Let me say, *(Pause.)* life had never been easy for the Dancer family. After Pa had gone to that great homewood-in-the-sky and found a place to finally rest his aching feet, and Ma had been laid off from the ice cream sandwich press at the Gold Bond Ice Cream Factory and put on a pension...

MA DANCER: 36,738 chocolate sandwiches a day dear, for 27 years...

THE NARRATOR: Young Frederick Dancer had had to give up his scholarship at the Hood College and was selling used cars on the Dual Highway. He had been majoring in safe cracking, bunko, bilko, and car jacking, and one of his professors had told him that he would make a fine thug one day or perhaps even a member of an organized crime outfit...

THE PROFESSOR: *(Blustering.)* There is a future in crime my boy and you're just the young fellow to succeed. You're the reason why I got into teaching in the first place. One day, you'll do Hood College proud...

THE NARRATOR: And young Wilson Dancer had left Shepherd University, leaving behind his three years of ruminant study, pastoral poetry, and range management to seek his fame and fortune in the metropolitan District of Columbia. That was three years ago, and the Dancers hadn't heard from him since...

DELIA: I know he's just got to be a lawyer by now Ma...

THE NARRATOR: And Delia, dear Delia, stayed home. Always at her mother's side tending to her waning years: making meatloaf sandwiches (with brown gravy), mowing and tending to the Dancer lawn, re-wallpapering the downstairs bathroom (floral pink with white daisies), and bringing home ninety-seven dollars and twenty-six cents a week from her labors and sweet sweat at the small doughnut factory tucked around a back alley in the heart and bowels of her hometown, Hagerstown, Maryland. (*Long dramatic pause.*) It was a Thursday, much like any other Thursday.

SOUND CUE: End light piano-pastoral spring opening—birds chirping here.

THE POLICE OFFICER: (*Irish accent.*) A day before Friday. (*Pause.*)

ANOTHER DOUGHNUT GIRL: A day after Wednesday. (*Pause.*)

THE NARRATOR: It was morning. (*Pause.*) Newspaper coupons had been clipped from *The Herald-Mail* (Gibbles Potato Chips—Family Pack, 3-for-99 cents); laundry sat near the Sears Kenmore waiting for their weekly wash-and-suds and their trip to the backyard to be pinned and dried and blown by the gentle breezes coming off the Burhans Boulevard traffic heading south. Ma Dancer sat with her box of Twenty Mule Team Borax and a bottle of Shur-fine Fabric Softener preparing to do battle with the weekly soiled and sweaty whites and coloreds that she and Delia faced the world with day by day.

MA DANCER: Have you got your lunch, dear?

DELIA: (*Patient.*) Yes, Ma.

MA DANCER: Don't forget your glasses, dear...

DELIA: Yes, Ma.

MA DANCER: Are you making the French crullers today, dear, or the Toasted Honey Crunch, dear?

DELIA: Creme-filleds before lunch, Ma; blueberry cake after lunch. Crullers and THC's are Fridays, Ma.

ANOTHER DOUGHNUT GIRL: Delia sighed.

DELIA sighs.

THE NARRATOR: A weighty and pregnant billow of breath that hinted not only of her genuine patience and loving concern for Ma Dancer's morning ritual and litany in the smallest of breakfast repartee, but at the eight hours of sticky, sugary, frosting-hair-netted drudgery under the watchful and leering eye of Glen Burnie, the shift manager and quality control chief at the small doughnut factory.

MA DANCER: Now Delia, I don't want to be nosy or one of those pushy mothers you read about in the Dear Abby column, who are always making their children's lives miserable...

DELIA: Yes, Ma...

MA DANCER: You know she always recommends counseling? *(Pause.)* Those Dear Abby mothers are always making demands like how toilet paper should be hung in their daughter's homes (top of the roll, dear), and frequent and pointed suggestions about potential marriage prospects. But... *(Pause.)* Now Delia, when are you going to ask that nice Mr. Burnie to come to supper again? He loved those meatloaf sandwiches...

DELIA: Ma...

MA DANCER: —with brown gravy...

DELIA: *(Losing patience.)* Ma...

MA DANCER: —and he does have a fine job...

DELIA: Ma...

MA DANCER: —comes from a fine family...

DELIA: Ma, please. Glen Burnie is a fine jerk, and besides, Downey and I are going to the movies tonight after work at the Longmeadow Shopping Center...

MA DANCER: (*Upset.*) You aren't going out with that filthy Downsville Pike again, are you? Delia, I don't want to butt in here, but...

DELIA: Then, don't Ma. Downey has a good job. He is the Assistant Head of Lettuce at Martin's Fine Foods, and I like him.

MA DANCER: But Delia...

DELIA: Ma, let's not fight. I'll see you when I get home...

MA DANCER: (*Unhappily resigned.*) All right...

SCENE THREE
THE RADIO BOOTH

The HUB CITY SINGERS begin slowly humming, "The Water is Wide" underscoring THE ANNOUNCER.

THE ANNOUNCER: Have a nice day at work, Delia. (*Waves.*) Let's pause right here, friends, I know, I know, for a few words from our sponsor, The Gastro-Intestinal Offices of Sphincter, Colon, and Associates. And look who is here today—those sprightly west end troubadours, The Hub City Singers.

THE HUB CITY SINGERS: *(This song is sung soulfully, sincerely, and slowly to the tune of the English folk tune/spiritual, "The Water is Wide.")*

MY ULCER'S ON FIRE—
I'M DOUBLED OVER.
MY CRAMPS INTENSE,
IN PAIN I CRY.
WHERE WILL I TURN?
IS IT ALMOST OVER?
WHEN WILL I KNOW?
MY STOMACH...SIGH!

THE ANNOUNCER: Gentle listeners, friends, and fellow sufferers, have you been hunted, haunted, and hounded by the stomach flu your entire life?

HUB CITY TENOR: Honey! Honey? I don't feel so...

THE ANNOUNCER: Have you had to call in sick at work?

HUB CITY BASS: *(Excited.)* Wow, chili dogs! I love chili dogs.

HUB CITY TENOR: *(Excited.)* I haven't had a chili dog in years!

THE ANNOUNCER: Have you had to call the supervisor one too many mornings?

HUB CITY ALTO: *(Queasy.)* Hello, Madge? Is Sandy there? Yeah, I'm not feeling too well. I didn't get much sleep last night...I...

THE HUB CITY SINGERS begin again slowly humming, "The Water is Wide" underscoring THE ANNOUNCER.

THE ANNOUNCER: Then friends, isn't it time you talked to those special folks at The Gastro-Intestinal Offices of Sphincter, Colon,

and Associates? Remember, if your intestines aren't becoming to you, they should be coming to us.

THE HUB CITY SINGERS: (*Singing again—soulfully, sincerely, and slowly.*)

WHERE WILL I TURN?
IS IT ALMOST OVER?
WHEN WILL I KNOW?
MY STOMACH...SIGH!

THE ANNOUNCER: Why don't you give 'em a call today? Thanks, Hub City Singers. Will you stick around?

THE HUB CITY SINGERS: (*Ad lib.*) Sure! You betcha! Anything for you! We ain't goin' nowhere!

THE ANNOUNCER: (*Smiling.*) Gentle listeners, (*Chuckles.*) let's take 'em with us, back to the minimum wage, eggs-over-easy world of Delia Dancer, Doughnut Girl. Come on. Let's go!

SCENE FOUR THE DOUGHNUT SHOP

SOUND CUE: Shop bell tinkle.

THE NARRATOR: It's a simple pleasure: the doughnut. A small, succulent mound of dough fried in hot, buttery oil and smothered with a thick sugary sweetness. Perhaps frosting? Perhaps milky creme? Coconut or vanilla icing or a warm chocolate bath covering the round shoulders and perfect symmetry of a gastronomic delectable that vanishes before we know it into a finger-licking display of (*Pause.*) sugar lust.

SOUND CUE: Shop bell tinkle.

ANOTHER DOUGHNUT GIRL: (*Slow and easy.*) Two for the road?

SOUND CUE: Cash register ringing up a sale.

THE POLICE OFFICER: How about a dozen? *(Pause.)*

ANOTHER DOUGHNUT GIRL: Cup of coffee and a glazed?
(Pause.)

SOUND CUE: Cash register again ringing up a sale.

HUB CITY SOPRANO: *(Mousey.)* See ya tomorrow, Bernice.

SOUND CUE: Shop bell tinkle.

THE NARRATOR: Uncle Billy's Doughnut World, a small stop on the way to an angioplastic nightmare on the corner of High Cholesterol and a back alley near Coronary Thrombosis Senior High School in downtown Hagerstown, is a mecca for overweight aficionados seeking the fruits of humankind's finest hour. It is here that Delia Dancer toiled for weekly wages by manufacturing and supplying fresh, warm, and rich dietary supplements to local diabetics, pimply late-night teenagers on the town, and after-hours moviegoers. It is here that Glen Burnie, Uncle Billy's lummoX nephew, shift manager, and quality control chief, pursued his unrequited romance with Delia Dancer like a Weight Watchers sneak eating the paper that surrounds a low calorie cupcake adamantly arguing that the gross weight and calories of the cupcake includes its corrugated paper sleeve container.

GLEN: *(Greasy and oily.)* Good morning Delia, my don't you look delicious today.

THE NARRATOR: He was dressed in a tight-fitting polyester shirt that rose to meet his Branson, Missouri belt buckle—Glen stitched over the pocket in red lettering. Mr. Burnie's sartorial splendor advertised yesterday's cremes and spills and sugary fingerprints alongside the spaghetti and sausage submarine sandwich he had had for lunch on Tuesday. Shiny black pants and shoes; a carnival

nickel boy who had mugged a Montgomery Wards' mortician. There was a reason why each of Uncle Billy's fine baked goods had that faint aroma of Barbarosol, English Leather, and Lucky Strikes; Glen Burnie was the reason.

DELIA: Glen, please. Good morning.

THE POLICE OFFICER: (*Angry, frustrated. Accusatory testimony.*)

Glen Burnie eyed Delia up and down like a drying rack of freshly baked and iced cinnamon twists (\$2.38 a dozen).

GLEN: No, I mean it. You look great. I saw your brother Freddy last night out on the Dual Highway. I'm buying a new car. Ford Pinto. Classic car. He's got one over in a garage in Shepherdstown he wants to let me have for five bills. (*Sense of pride.*) Real Naugahyde interior. Want to come look at it tonight with me after work? Go for a spin?

DELIA: No. Thank you.

GLEN: (*Greasy disappointment.*) Aw come on, Delia. You had me over for dinner. I met your mother. We had a real swell time. What's the matter? I thought we had something going.

DELIA: (*Cautious, wary.*) I have a date with Downey Pike tonight.

GLEN: (*Growing resentment.*) Downey Pike. Lettuce-boy. All I ever hear is Downey Pike. When's it going to be (*Pause.*) just you and me?

THE PROFESSOR: (*Academically interjects.*) It was crude Cro-Magnon poetry, not heard since our prehistoric ancestors climbed out of the primordial ooze and soup of creation's predawn breakfast. And Delia, unmoved, continued to knead the dough before her on the sugary table.

DELIA: It's never going to be (*Pause.*) you and me...

THE PROFESSOR: Apparently, she had taken up the Cro-Magnon couplet.

DELIA: And besides, Downey has asked me to marry him. (*Dramatic organ chord.*)

THE NARRATOR: Oh, my heavens! And Aunt Kay's badly burned brown biscuits. Dear listeners, Delia had let the cat out of the bag, had dropped a juicy fly into the ointment, had watched the water go under the bridge. She had damned those torpedoes and sped ahead.

GLEN: (*Disappointed. Dejected. Smoldering.*) Ohhhh nooo...

THE NARRATOR: Not the most philosophical or magnanimous of responses; however, as lightning bolts of wounded pride bore into the skull and eyes of the rejected doughnut suitor and soon-to-be Ford Pinto owner, Delia watched his slow transformation from oily hope to fried rage manifest itself like a honey-glazed cruller left too long on the back burner.

GLEN: (*Angry. Filled with rage.*) Lettuce-boy! I'll show him...

THE NARRATOR: (*Ominously.*) Delia took a step back...

SOUND CUE: *Menacing piano interlude or dramatic series of organ chords.*

SCENE FIVE
THE RADIO BOOTH

THE ANNOUNCER: Our phone lines are all lit up ladies and gentleman, and we are just going to have to take a break. Hold back The Hub City Singers, Marty, I think they are going to riot back there. We'll take your calls. Hello Hoboken...

HOBOKEN: (*Outraged.*) Why the heck does that piece of trash Glen Burnie think for one minute that a good girl like Delia would be interested in him?

THE ANNOUNCER: Hoboken, I know what you mean, but Ma Dancer thinks he's a square shooter. Brown gravy, meatloaf, a local celebrity, if you will...

HOBOKEN: Listen, you don't need to consult the eleven idiot cousins of Moron Man to realize that Glen Burnie is a...

THE ANNOUNCER: Thank you, Hoboken. We'll take...

HOBOKEN: And Ma Dancer is just...

THE ANNOUNCER: We'll take a call from Sharpsburg, Maryland, now. Hello Sharpsburg?

SHARPSBURG: Listen, I went to school with Glen Burnie. The man ain't perfect, no men are, if you know what I mean, but give the guy a break.

THE ANNOUNCER: You went to school with Mr. Burnie? What was he like as a kid? How about a little background info?

SHARPSBURG: He was quiet, shy. Head of the AV Department up at the high school. His sister used to be a lifeguard up at the...

THE ANNOUNCER: Thank you, Sharpsburg. We have time for one more...

SHARPSBURG: Started off in the shipping department at Uncle Billy's Doughnut World...always had a job...usta mow lawns down at the...

THE ANNOUNCER: Hello Cleveland! How are you this fine evening?

CLEVELAND: (*Speedy excitable voice—rapid concern.*) Listen, I think Ma Dancer needs to be worried. And if Ma Dancer is worried, we all need to be worried. Her daughter is confused and seems to be leading men along. She invites Glen Burnie over to dinner but has Downey Pike asking her to get married? She's obviously keeping secrets from her mother...

THE ANNOUNCER: Thanks for your calls. That's all we have time for at the moment. The fever is running high. Somebody call a doctor! (*Chuckles.*) Gentle listeners, let's find that nice narrator and let him escort us back down that path to Delia Dancer, Doughnut Girl.

SCENE SIX THE WAREHOUSE AT MARTIN'S FINE FOODS

THE NARRATOR: While production at Uncle Billy's Doughnut World took a small hiatus as the quality control chief, Glen Burnie, had one untidy errand to dispatch, just a few blocks away, at Martin's Fine Foods, the Assistant Head of Lettuce felt the gnawing urge to slake his growing hunger and thirst with a mid-morning snack. Sometimes the stress and details of the job got to him: tracking zucchini and Romaine across country, dealing with local produce kings, keeping the salad bar filled and sanitary, reporting in person to the Head of Lettuce. But there was room for advancement, and Downey Pike was about to become a married man.

DOWNEY: If only I could get up the nerve to talk to Delia's mother...

THE NARRATOR: He said to himself. Ma Dancer was not the most welcoming of future mother-in-laws.

DOWNEY: Maybe she should get counseling? That's what Dear Abby would suggest.

THE NARRATOR: It would have been easy for Downey Pike to bust open a case of Twinkies and wolf down a dozen of those banana-flavored fingers, and perhaps wash them down with a Chocolate Yoo-Hoo or a Diet Dr. Pepper back in the warehouse, to try and smother and drown his growing apprehension about facing the music with Ma Dancer about the upcoming nuptials and plans.

DOWNEY: I have to speak to Delia, and I could kill two birds with one stone. She's making creme-filledes today. It's all I can stans; I can't stans no more.

THE PROFESSOR: Downey had been an admirable student, an apt pupil, at the local community college. He had been moved and impressed with his last night school course: Popeye and his Influence on 20th Century Thought.

DOWNEY: A real man of action. I need to be a man of action!

THE NARRATOR: Young Downey left without a moment's delay.

SOUND CUE: Running footsteps heard.

THE PROFESSOR: (*Chuckling with admiration.*) The old Sailorman would have been proud of him. (*Thoughtful pause.*) Mighty proud.

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