

THE DIRTY DREDGE OF CEDAR EDGE OR DO YOU THINK THAT VELVET WOOD WOULD?

By Vern Harden

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

4 women, 4 men

TOBY BUMBLEFORD: fifteen year old boy who has never been to town; wears a plaid suit or overalls and straw boater hat. *(108 lines)*

CLAUDIA BELL: fourteen year old girl, searching for her true love, or at least a husband - wears plain, loose dress, has rouged cheeks and a small amount of lipstick - she has ribbon in her hair. *(70 lines)*

VELVET WOOD: fem-fatale in a red dress, gaudy ring, lots of makeup, ostrich feather in her hair, skirt split to thigh. *(70 lines)*

SNYDLEY DREDGE: a nasty villain with a curly moustache who wears a black cape, top hat, dark pants, a white shirt and string tie - a really not-nice person. *(99 lines)*

PA BUMBLEFORD: honest, hard working rancher, wearing worn jeans, shirt and straw hat *(58 lines)*

MA BUMBLEFORD: supervisor of Pa and Toby, plain sack dress, hair in bun, - later she appears 'made-up' *(53 lines)*

MOMMA BELL: protective mother, fussbudget, dresses in good taste *(22 lines)*

SHERIFF DO-GOOD: brave, strong, loyal, trustworthy and just a bit simple *(20 lines)*

PRODUCTION NOTES

1. The sets consists of a backdrop of painted two-story wooden buildings. D.L. and D.R., free-standing wings painted to resemble rural settings allow the actors to enter around to the front of the side-wings. If the side wings are not possible, the actors play the opening scenes as far D.L. and D.R. as possible.
2. The “CHEER!”, “BOO!” and “AWWW!” signs are waved by the poster-girl who may be seated far D.R. at the corner of the stage.
3. Two of Claudia’s front teeth should be blacked out. A special black tooth-wax is available from theatre supply houses. If wax is not available, after drying the teeth thoroughly, a black eyebrow pencil may be used to black out the teeth.
4. The Sheriff’s gun may be either a plastic toy or a painted wooden cutout. It does not have to appear realistic.
5. The Sheriff’s badge may be aluminum foil pasted on a cardboard backing with a safety pin glued to the back to hold it to his shirt. It should be larger than a normal sized badge.
6. Velvet’s ring should be large enough to be seen from the audience. It may be made by gluing a large, clear plastic bead to a simple band.
7. Pa’s money pouch may be a sock with a heavy string threaded around the top.

Approximate running time: 45 minutes

SYNOPSIS

That dastardly villain, Snyderley Dredge, is on the loose again!

This time, Syndley is out to steal a silver mine from the unsuspecting Claudia Bell. But to become engaged and seal the steal, he must give her a diamond. "Curses! I'm going to have to ring this Bell!" And the only ring available belongs to his partner in crime, Velvet Wood. Will she loan it to him so he can give it to Claudia? Do you think that Velvet Wood would?

Toby, who's momma warned him of the evils of the big wicked city, comes to town (I'll bet there's near onto a hunnert people here!), and falls in love with Velvet. "You're so . . . smo - o - oth."

The ring is lost. Pa's money is stolen. And Ma has to defend her menfolk from all the huggin' that's going around. "It must be a epidemic!"

Finally, the Sheriff nails Snyderley, Toby gets Claudia (maybe), and Ma leads Pa away from temptation.

This excellent melodrama gives everyone a chance to shine! Simple to produce, the set consists of a backdrop and a bench.

Act 1

*TOBY enters D.L. in front of wing dressed to go to town.
CHEER! sign waved.*

TOBY: Hot diggity! I'm goin' to town!

PA: *(follows him on)* Now, Toby, you know how important it is that you go to town and get that new bob-wire. And I don't want you to get in no trouble.

TOBY: *(nods eagerly)* Yes, Pa. *(looks towards town)*

PA: *(snatches Toby's hat, slaps him on the forehead and returns hat to head)* Listen to me when I'm talkin' to you, boy!

TOBY: Yes, Pa. *(his eyes cross and he rubs his head)*

PA: *(looks around to make sure they are alone)* It's time we had a man to man talk, Son. I got to tell you, there's lots of sin and temptation waitin' for a man in the city.

TOBY: *(nods eagerly, grinning)* There is? What kind?

PA: *(counts them off on fingers)* There's whiskey and gamblin' and evil women . . .

TOBY: You don't say! Where do I find 'em? *(suddenly serious)* So's I can avoid 'em.

PA: You don't have to look for them. They'll find you. *(aside)* Though I ain't real sure you'd recognize 'em.

TOBY: Can you give me a hint?

PA: Well, first of all there's whiskey.

TOBY: Skip that. I ain't interested.

PA: Second, there's gamblin'

TOBY: Yeah. Yeah. Keep goin'.

PA: *(as he speaks, Ma enters behind him sweeping with her broom)* And third of all, there's wiiiiilld women.

TOBY: *(smiles broadly)* That's what I want to hear about.

(aside, rubbing hands together) Here comes the good part.

MA: Pa, what are you two talkin' about?

PA: *(over his shoulder to her)* Man talk. Leave us be, woman. *(to Toby)* I 'member one time I went to town and I met up

with this dance hall girl . . .

MA: I heard that! (*swats Pa with broom*)

PA: (*rubbing his behind*) Ma, what are you still doin' here?

MA: (*crossing between them*) I just come out to bid farewell to my little Toby. My baby boy! Off to the big wicked city! (*cries loudly on his shoulder*)

TOBY: Heck, Ma. I'm fourteen years old already.

MA: Fifteen. I remember. I was there when you were born.

TOBY: (*pats her on the shoulder*) And that were mighty nice of you, Ma. (*to Pa*) Tell me about the women, Pa.

MA: (*snatches his hat, slaps him on forehead, returns hat*) Your Pa don't know nothin' about women and we're goin' to keep it that way. Best thing for a handsome young man like you is to just . . . keep your hands in your pockets. Now you go on to town and get that bob-wire and you get back here just as fast as your feet can perambulate. You understand me? (*hat/slap routine again*)

TOBY: Yes, Ma. (*rubs his forehead*) Did you know from all your whockin' me, I got a soft spot in my head? (*leans over to show her*)

MA: (*raises broom*) Your whole head is a soft spot! Now go get that bob-wire and don't you fiddle-faddle around none! (*marches off, then shouts back*) And don't talk to no strange women!

TOBY: (*looks around to make sure Ma is gone*) Pa, if I wanted to fiddle-faddle around with a woman, how would I do it?

PA: First, you find a woman who smiles a lot. That's a sure sign she wants to fiddle around some.

TOBY: (*nodding vigorously*) How about the faddle part? Do I...ask her?

PA: (*throws up hands in disgust*) Could be your Ma is right. Maybe you best just ignore 'em.

MA: (*offstage*) Pa!

PA: Comin', Ma. (*to Toby*) Just remember, don't lose the money! (*starts to leave and turns back*) And don't fiddle-faddle (*starts to leave, turns back*) And don't forget the bob-

wire.

TOBY: (*counts on his fingers*) Got it! Don't! Don't! Don't! and (*confused*). . . Don't! That's a bunch of don'ts. (*calls after Pa*) Oh, Pa! Which 'Don't' do I don't Don't first? (*he continues to look at fingers and exits after Pa*)

CLAUDIA: (*enters D.R. in front of wing carrying a satchel, followed by her mother*) Momma, will you quit fussing! (*turns back to face Momma*)

MOMMA: (*straightens bow on Claudia's blouse*) I want everything to be perfect for you, Claudia. You're so pretty, I don't want anything to spoil it. (*fluffs Claudia's hair*)

CLAUDIA: (*setting down valise*) Momma, I'm just going to visit my cousin. Everything will be all right.

MOMMA: But this is your first trip to town! And if you should happen to meet any boys, any nice boys, remember to smile at them. You have a beautiful smile.

CLAUDIA: Yes, Momma. I'll smile at them.

MOMMA: Good. Now let me see you smile.

Claudia smiles at audience revealing every other front tooth is missing.

MOMMA: Perfect. My little girl is just perfect. (*straightens bow again*)

CLAUDIA: Momma, why should I smile at the boys?

MOMMA: Claudia...you aren't getting any younger. A woman has to look to the future.

CLAUDIA: Momma, I'm fourteen.

MOMMA: I know, dear. And I feel so sorry for you. But never you mind. You'll find a man. Eventually...Maybe.

CLAUDIA: Oh, I hope so. I don't want to be a burden to you any longer.

MOMMA: That's my girl. Now remember, when you meet a nice boy, smile.

CLAUDIA: I will, Momma...How do I know when I've met a nice boy?

MOMMA: Well, the best that I remember, nice boys are quiet and shy and dull and boring.

CLAUDIA: Like Poppa?

MOMMA: *(sadly)* Yes. Like Poppa.

CLAUDIA: But what if a girl wants to meet a man who...*(shudders)* isn't?

MOMMA: Claudia! Naughty boys laugh a lot. A girl's got to be cautious of them kind. Now you just run along to town to your cousin's place. And remember to smile! *(starts to leave)* And be careful. *(starts to leave)* And have fun. *(exits)* Oh, dear! Oh, dear! *(wringing her hands as she exits U.R.)*

CLAUDIA: Be careful and have fun? *(calls after Momma)* I don't know how to do both at once! *(sighs)* Oh, well. *(picks up valise and exits U.R.)*

TOBY: *(enters U.L., gawking at buildings)* Well, I'll be a curly tailed pig. Would you look at that. They done put their houses on top of each other. Ain't city folks somethin'? *(looks at fingers)* Don't. Don't. Don't. And...Don't. *(smiles)* Maybe.

CLAUDIA: *(enters D.R.)* Oh, my! There's one of them naughty city fellers already! So tall and handsome. I wonder if he's nice. I'll just go up and see if he smiles. *(crosses to Toby, sets down valise and smiles broadly)*

TOBY: *(looks from Claudia to audience)* Har! Har! Har! She's smilin'. I think I found me one of them city women. Har! Har! Har!

CLAUDIA: *(aside, giggling)* I knew it! He's one of them fancy city fellers. He's laughin' all ready. It won't hurt if I . . . *(hands behind back, she twists back and forth)*

TOBY: *(aside - snaps fingers)* I think she wants to fiddle with me. *(paws ground with foot)* Har! Har! Har! Now what was it Ma said? Oh, yeah. *(jams hands in pockets)*

CLAUDIA: *(giggles)* He! He! He!

TOBY: I'll bet I know what you want to do. Har! Har!

CLAUDIA: *(picks up her valise)* Betcha don't. *(crosses D.L., swiveling her hips)*

TOBY: (*follows her*) My daddy told me all about fancy women like you.

CLAUDIA: (shivers and grins - aside) He thinks I'm a fancy woman.

SHERIFF: (*enters DR, swaggering, and stops as CHEER! sign waves, crosses to them doing his best 'John Wayne' walk, thumbs hooked in belt, pushes back hat*) Howdy, folks. I'm Sheriff Do-good. (*stomps his feet three times and salutes once with each hand*) Here to protect and to serve.

TOBY: Howdy your own self, Sheriff. Caught any bad guys today? Har Har!

SHERIFF: Not yet, but I'm workin' on it. I heard that villain Snyderley Dredge is comin' to Cedaredge and I have to be ready. He's a baaaaaad man.

CLAUDIA: (*thrilled*) Are you going to shoot him?

SHERIFF: (*posturing*) Not unless absolutely necessary, little lady. No need to waste bullets. Maybe I'll just give him a little talking to (*shakes his fist*) and encourage him to go somewhere else. Like, send him to...Ekert (*or name nearby town*).

TOBY: (*nods and smiles*) Or your could stomp him into a mudhole. That works.

SHERIFF: No unnecessary violence, young man. Not in my town. Of course if it becomes necessary... (*smiles, pounds fist into hand, hurts his own hand*)

TOBY: (*pats Sheriff on shoulder*) Good man, Sheriff.

SHERIFF: (*jumps back, hand poised over six gun*) Ah! Never touch a lawman, young fella. I might just whip out my six gun and shoot you...accidental. Faster than a greased gopher, that's what I am... (*looks around*) By any chance, have you seen that Snyderley fella?

TOBY: (*looks around*) Nope.

CLAUDIA: But we'll be on the look-out for him.

TOBY: Absolutely. (hand and hat over heart) It always pays to help the law.

- SHERIFF:** That it does. Well I'd best be moseyin' on. If you see that Snyderley, you give out a holler and I'll come runnin'.
(*swaggers off L.*)
- CLAUDIA:** (*nearly swooning*) A real live lawman with a badge and a gun and everything.
- TOBY:** Yeah. And everything.
- SNYDLEY:** (*Snyderley and Velvet enter R. and stop as BOO! sign waved*) Curses, woman! I must get my hands on some money! How much do you have?
- VELVET:** Nothing. I'm flat busted.
- SNYDLEY:** (*looks at her then dead-pans to audience and back to her*) I am not interested in your shortcomings...I am down to my last twelve cents. I need cash!
- VELVET:** (*points to Toby*) There's a rube. Let's see you work your skills on him.
- SNYDLEY:** An excellent idea! (*rubs hands together and twirls his moustache*)
- TOBY:** (*begins to back R. away from Claudia*) Well, I gots to be goin'. Bye.
- CLAUDIA:** Wait! I don't know your name!
- TOBY:** I'm Toby. An' I got to be goin'. I got things to do.
- CLAUDIA:** A man about town! (*aside*) I think I'm in love. (*picks up valise and exits L.*)
- TOBY:** (*turns R.*) I guess I showed her. Them fancy women can't put nothin' over on me. (*crosses D.C.*)
- SNYDLEY:** (*steps up to Toby, twirling moustache*) A moment, my good man.
- TOBY:** (*grins*) That's me, all right.
- SNYDLEY:** You look like a man of the world. Could I interest you in a (*takes out pack of cards and fans them*)...a game of chance?
- TOBY:** You mean gamblin'?
- SNYDLEY:** Not the way I do it.
- TOBY:** Nope. Ain't got the time. (*moves past Snyderley to D.R. of him*)

- SNYDLEY:** *(pulls pint bottle from his pocket)* Perhaps a short snort...of soda pop?
- TOBY:** Nope. Ain't interested. *(turns D.R.)*
- SNYDLEY:** *(raises hand and snaps fingers)* Then perhaps...*(beckons Velvet forward)*
- VELVET:** *(slinks forwards, hands on hips to stop between them)* Hi there, Big Fella. *(Snydley slinks off U.R.)*
- TOBY:** *(looks her up and down, looks at audience and smiles, begins to pant. Aside)* She ain't smilin'. I guess than means she's a nice girl. At least, she looks nice. *(jams hands in pockets and smiles at Velvet)* Hi there, your own-self.
- VELVET:** Care to buy a lady a drink?
- TOBY:** Nope.
- VELVET:** Want to come up to my place and fool around?
- TOBY:** Nope. *(walks around her looks her up and down, ends up D.C.)* Tell me somethin'. Ain't you afraid your dress is gonna fall off?
- VELVET:** *(crosses to him and rubs his arm)* Would that bother you if it did?
- TOBY:** *(swallows hard, takes off hat and fans himself)* Nope. Only you might get chilly without no clothes on. Har! Har! Har!
- VELVET:** *(slinks around him)* I've never had that problem yet.
- TOBY:** Winters here get pretty cold. Without no clothes, you might get frost on your *(looks her up and down)*...nose! Har! Har! Har!
- VELVET:** I'm new in these parts. *(rubs his chest)* And I'm all alone. *(bats her eyes)* Do you suppose you could show a poor little girl like me the . . . sights? *(rubs against him batting her eyes furiously)*
- TOBY:** You got somethin' in your eye?
- VELVET:** *(turns away in disgust)* Dumb! Terminally dumb!
- TOBY:** Yep. *(smiling and hooks thumbs in his vest)* Pa says I ain't only dumb, I'm stupid, too. I reckon I can show you a good time, though. I got money in my pocket.
- VELVET:** *(starts, turns back to him, smiling)* Money!

TOBY: Yep. Got some important buyin' to do.

VELVET: *(drapes an arm around his neck and starts searching his jacket pockets)* You're a buyer? Wonderful. Buyers are very important people.

TOBY: Yep, that's me. Let me show you around. *(she takes his arm, they move U.C.)* Now this here is a...house. And it's got another house right there on top of it. Ain't that somethin'?

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