

Hard Luck

By Craig Sodaro

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PUBLISHED BY
HEUER PUBLISHING LLC
P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406
TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Flexible cast of 7 men, 16 women, extras)

GLOWINDA

A young girl

MRS. GUNAPATHY

Her mother

CONDUCTOR

NORMAN CRANKFIELD

A theatrical supply salesman

MA JAMES

A notorious gangster

DILLI

Ma James's daughter

WILLI

Another

TILLI

Another

LOWEENA

A Philadelphia lawyer

MIMSY

Her maid

SLIMY SAM

A small-time crook

SLIMIER SLIM

Slimy's partner

OLGA BARRACK

Owner of Drop On Inn

JENNY BARRACK

Her daughter

EDDIE GREENVILLE

Richest kid in Hard Luck

EDWINA GREENVILLE

His mother

SHERIFF CULPEPPER

PATTY

Townsperson

GINNY

Townsperson

GRAVEN SLADE

A land developer

LOTTA LAMOUR

His secretary

MISS POTTS

A filmmaker

MISS PANS

Her associate

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE, SCENE 1:

A day car aboard the Lucky Lady Express, 1925; played before the curtain with several double rows of chairs set up perpendicular to the audience as if we're looking at one-half of a railroad car. Allow room between chairs.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2:

The Drop On Inn, a roadside cafe in the tiny western town of Hard Luck. An old bar dominates up center. We don't see any bottles rather coffee cups fill the shelves along with pies and cakes and signs advertising an array of sandwiches and dinners. Above the bar is a picture of "The Duchess," lying on a couch in a provocative attitude. However, she now sports a cut-out dress making her look very modest and silly. Two or three tables with mismatching chairs and stools dot the floor. Door to outside is up right. Through the swinging doors of what once was an old saloon, we see the remnants of Hard Luck. Entrance down left leads to other rooms . . . for the Drop On Inn also serves as the only hotel for three hundred miles around. A sign above the bar proclaims "**Cleen Rooms 50 cents.**"

ACT ONE, SCENE 3:

The Drop On Inn.

INTERMISSION

ACT TWO, SCENE 1:

Desert near Hard Luck; Played before the curtain, we see a sign that says "**Hard Luck, 6 Miles.**" A rock sits center stage, perhaps with a cactus/sagebrush here and there.

ACT TWO, SCENE 2:

The Drop On Inn.

ACT TWO, SCENE 3:

The Drop On Inn.

COSTUMES

The play is set in 1925 so try to duplicate the look of the roaring twenties. **SLIM** and **SAM** should wear wide-lapel suits, if possible, along with white shirts and ties. Fedoras would be a nice touch. When they appear as ghosts (Act Two, Scene 3) dust the suits or adorn with fake cobwebs and white makeup.

NORMAN would look perfect in an argyle sweater along with argyle socks and a sport coat. However, he needs several other “costumes.”

1) First appearance as **RUDOLF**: Slick-backed hair, mustache, blousy shirt, dark pants, and a sash.

2) A sheik costume: headdress and long robe.

LOWEENA is the most fashionable and should wear an above-the-knee fringed flapper dress. **JENNY** wears a very pretty, yet simple dress. **EDDIE** and **EDWINA** try to look fashionable, but are perhaps a bit overdone. **EDDIE** needs a tie. **EDWINA** would look good in mock-fur collared capes.

MA JAMES wears dark clothes, an old dress and sweater, almost hillbilly style. **DILLI**, **TILLI**, and **WILLI** should wear rough and tough oversized tomboy overalls. **MISS POTTS** and **MISS PANS** wear safari clothes: shorts, multi-pocketed khaki jackets and belts, and safari hats, if possible.

SOUND EFFECTS

Act One, Scene 1

Click-clack of train (not required)

Act Two, Scene 1

Sound of car pulling up, stopping, door slamming

Act Two, Scene 1

Sound of car door slamming, car driving away

Act Two, Scene 3

Silent movie music (melodrama music)

Phone ringing, as indicated in script

LIGHTING EFFECTS

Act Two, Scene 3

Strobe light, as indicated in script

PROPS

WILLI/TILLI/DILLI

SUITCASES OR BAGS

ROPES AND HANDKERCHIEF GAGS

WILLI

PAPER AND PEN

MA JAMES

KNIFE

COSTUME

NORMAN/SLIM

IDENTICAL SUITCASES: One is full of play money; one is full of makeup and theatrical supplies

CONDUCTOR

PAPER PUNCH

MA JAMES, DILLI, TILLI, AND SLIM

GUNS

JENNY

MOVIE MAGAZINE

SANDWICH

BROOM

TRAY OF SILVERWARE

OLGA

NEWSPAPER

REGISTRATION BOOK/PEN

BOTTLES

FRYING PAN

BUTTERFLY NET

EDWINA

BOTTLE OF CASTOR OIL

NORMAN

BRACELET

PAPER BAG

WORD

LOTTA

PURSE AND WAD OF BILLS

POSTER READING: "Grand Opening of Slade Seaside Resort . . . Coming Soon!"

NOTEBOOK

NAIL FILE

GLITTERY BRACELET

SLADE

CONTRACT
TELEPHONE
GUN

MIMSY

THREE SUITCASES

MISS POTTS

OLD FASHIONED MOTION PICTURE CAMERA: This can be easily made from a cardboard box with two cookie tins attached at the top. Spray all parts black and decorate. Attach a lens or two made from paper tubing and mount the entire apparatus on a black tripod. Be sure to add a crank handle made out of wood.

SHERIFF

WANTED POSTER WITH MA JAMES' PICTURE ON IT

SAM

OVERSIZED MALLET

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

At Rise:

MA sits left. WILLI and TILLI sit center, while DILLI sits right. They each have a small suitcase or bag under their seats. MRS. GUNAPATHY shares a seat with GLOWINDA. Business is typical of passengers on a train. Some read newspapers, some look out the window. This scene is played before the curtain.

GLOW: How much longer we gotta ride this stupid train, Ma?

GUNAPATHY: That isn't a stupid train. It's a very smart train.

GLOW: How can a train be smart?

GUNAPATHY: It hasn't jumped the tracks once!

CONDUCTOR: (*Yawns.*) Tickets! Tickets, please!

CONDUCTOR clips tickets.

DILLI: Hey, conductor! How much longer 'til we get to someplace where a girl can get some lipstick, new stockings, and moisturizer?

CONDUCTOR: Well, now, ma'am . . . it'll be tomorrow mornin' when we pull into Las Vegas, Nevada.

DILLI: Tomorrow?! By then I'll look old 'n wrinkled, just like her!

(DILLI points to MRS. GUNAPATHY.)

CONDUCTOR: Well, ma'am, the only town we pass through on our way to Las Vegas is a place called Hard Luck. 'N you sure won't have a bit of luck finding fancy things there.

CONDUCTOR moves to MRS. GUNAPATHY.

BY CRAIG SODARO

GLOW: Hey, mister, I want to wear your hat!

CONDUCTOR: Sorry, little girl, but the company says I've got to keep it on my head.

GLOW: I want to wear your hat!

GUNAPATHY: Now, Glowinda, darling. If the mean old man won't let you wear his hat, there's nothing we can do about it.

GLOW: Sure there is!

GLOWINDA stomps on the CONDUCTOR's foot. His hat falls off and she grabs it.

CONDUCTOR: Hey! Give me my hat!

GLOW: Gotta catch me first!

GUNAPATHY: Oh, Glowinda, she just loves to play games!

GLOWINDA races off left.

CONDUCTOR: Get back here! Get back here!

CONDUCTOR races off after her.

GUNAPATHY: *(Incensed.)* Just a second, you big brute! That's my baby you're chasing!

MRS. GUNAPATHY runs off left. NORMAN runs on right. He moves to center, looks around desperately.

NORMAN: *(To WILLI.)* Ma'am . . . mind if I hide in here?

WILLI: Why, no, stranger. You're kind of cute!

NORMAN hides behind her seat.

DILLI: Yeah! You got a name, dollface?

NORMAN: *(Weakly.)* N . . . N . . . Norman.

WILLI: N . . . N . . . Norman! Ain't that cute!

DILLI: How come your hidin', N . . . N . . . Norman?

LOWEENA enters right, tossing her fur about her shoulders.

MIMSY follows dutifully, but very bored.

LOWEENA: Maybe he's in here!

MIMSY: Miss Loweena, you're just barkin' up the wrong train car. If Mr. Norman doesn't want to marry you, there's nothing you can do about it!

LOWEENA: Mimsy! You're a wonderful maid, but a rotten psychologist. I am Loweena Nordstrom. Daddy owns department stores in three different states. When I want something, I get it!

MIMSY: But Mr. Crankfield isn't for sale.

LOWEENA: Nonsense! I'm sure a generous share in the Nordstrom fortune will be enough to turn his head. After all, every man has his price. *(Thinking.)* Oooo . . . I like the sound of that. Norman? Are you in here? Norman? *(LOWEENA moves left. NORMAN's hat rolls off into the aisle. MIMSY sees it and kicks it back just as LOWEENA turns around.)* I don't know where he could have gone. I mean how many cars does this train have?!

MIMSY: More'n you might think. Better hit the next one 'fore he jumps off! I just can't see what fun all this chasin' around the country is. You know you could have your pick of any eligible bachelor in Philadelphia.

LOWEENA: That's the problem. It's no fun when they just . . . knock at your door. It's the thrill of the chase!

NORMAN sneezes.

LOWEENA: What's that?

WILLI: Just me, ma'am. I got a powerful cold.

LOWEENA: It sounded like Norman's sneeze.

DILLI: I thought his name was N . . . N . . . Norman!

LOWEENA: So he IS in here!

WILLI: Short fat guy with a bald head? He ran off that way real fast.

WILLI points left.

DILLI: Willi! He wasn't short, fat, or bald. He was kinda cute!

MIMSY: *(Pointing left.)* Oh, Miss Loweena! I think I see him up there in the next car!

LOWEENA: Where?! Where?!

LOWEENA runs off left. MIMSY rolls her eyes.

MIMSY: Least I'm gettin' my exercise!

MIMSY exits left. NORMAN peeks up from behind the chairs

DILLI: Coast is clear, N . . . N . . . Norman.

NORMAN: You saved my life!

WILLI: First time THAT ever happened, sis!

DILLI: You can say THAT again.

WILLI: THAT!

NORMAN: It's not that I don't like Loweena. It's just that . . . that . . . *(Thinking.)* I don't like Loweena.

WILLI: She'd have you hog tied, butchered, & mounted on her wall ten minutes after you say "I do," she would.

DILLI: How'd you ever find her, anyway?

NORMAN: I was a salesman in her daddy's store; theatrical supplies, fourth floor. She stopped by one day looking for a Louis XVI wig for daddy for a masquerade ball. Then she decided to pick up a little something for herself. ME! At first I was, well . . . someone of her . . . I mean, I was . . . well -

WILLI: Gaga!

NORMAN: Completely. She gave me this aardvark bracelet that's welded together. I guess it's so I won't get away. At least I can hide it under my cuff. But when she started picking out my clothes and told me she wanted me to grow a mustache so I'd look like daddy, I decided a trip out West was just what I needed.

WILLI: But she followed you!

NORMAN: She doesn't give up easily. So somehow between here and California I've got to lose her. But you don't really want to hear any more about me. What are you two girls doing traveling alone?

WILLI/DILLI: Business.

NORMAN: What kind of business are you in?

SLIMY SAM and SLIMI ER SLIM enter right. SLIMI ER SLIM sits by WILLI and DILLI. SLIMY SAM sits by MA. SLIMI ER carries a black suitcase that looks like NORMAN'S.

SAM: Howdy, Ma.

MA: Bout time, Slimy. You got the dough.

SAM: Yeah, Ma. We got just what you've been askin' for.

MA: All I been askin' for is cash. Twenty-five g's. I got my suppliers to pay, you know, Slimy. Bootleg whiskey don't come cheap.

SAM: But you know, Ma, you got all my friends real excited. They thought you'd have some real fine stuff. But you can imagine their disappointment when they opened the first bottle 'n found out it was filled with creek water.

MA: That's a lie, Slimy. I'm a businesswoman. If I don't deliver, I won't stay flush for very long.

SAM: Speakin' of flush, Ma, that's just what we had to do with all that creek water. Flush it. 'N I don't take kindly to that.

MA: Slimy, we only got YOUR word for that. 'N your word isn't good enough to stick a stamp on a letter. You're up to somethin'. If I didn't know you two boys any better, I'd say you got other plans for that there dough.

SAM: Gosh, Slimy, she knows us better 'n we thought.

SAM reaches in his jacket. DILLI turns around, pulls gun, and shoots SAM, who slumps in chair. SLIM reaches in his pocket, but MA and TILLI both shoot from opposite ends of the train. SLIM slumps over the suitcase.

TILLI: Gosh, Ma, we got 'em both.

MA: Lousey way to make a livin'.

NORMAN: Y . . . y . . . you killed them!

MA: Who's that?

WILLI: Just a cute feller hidin' from some society dame.

NORMAN: Y . . . y . . . you killed them!

MA: Yeah! And you're gonna be next if you say that one more time!

NORMAN: Y . . . y . . . you killed them!

MA: Plug 'em, girls!

MA, DILLI, WILLI, and TILLI all aim at NORMAN. He dives to the floor and crawls off right, the women all start firing.

MA: C'mon! We gotta get him!

WILLI: Sounds good to me!

DILLI: He likes ME better.

WILLI: But I saw him first!

MA, DILLI, WILLI, and TILLI race off right. MRS. GUNAPATHY drags GLOWINDA on left.

GLOW: Maaa! How'd I know the hat would fly out the door 'n end up on a cow's head?

GUNAPATHY: Let's just hope that conductor is able to catch another train.

GLOW: You gotta admit, he sure looked funny when that cow chased him over the hill.

GUNAPATHY: *(To SLIM.)* Excuse me, sir, but you're in my seat.

No response.

GUNAPATHY: Sir that is my seat. There are plenty of others! If you don't move right now, I'll have to call the conductor.

GLOWINDA taps her mother's shoulder. GLOWINDA shakes her head.

GUNAPATHY: I'll call the engineer then. There IS still an engineer, isn't there, Glowinda?

SLIM falls into the aisle.

GUNAPATHY: Glowinda! What have you done now?

GLOW: Nothin', Ma. Cross my heart and hope to die,
GLOWINDA and MRS. GUNAPATHY look at each other for a second, then scream.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

At Rise:

Later that evening at The Drop On Inn roadside cafe in Hard Luck. OLGA enters through up right door. She looks off right, then down left.

OLGA: Jenny! Jenny Barrack! Where ARE you, girl?! You're in charge. What if a customer drops in?

JENNY: *(Pops up from behind the bar.)* We NEVER have any customers during the day, Ma.

OLGA looks back to see.

OLGA: Ah ha! Lyin' down on the job! And readin' one of those stupid fan magazines!

OLGA snatches magazine. JENNY stands up angrily.

JENNY: They're not stupid!

JENNY snatches magazine back.

JENNY: They keep me in touch with the real world.

OLGA: You sayin' Hard Luck isn't the real world?

JENNY: Oh, Mother! Hard Luck is as far from the real world as a place can get. It's just a burned out little mining town hangin' on because a few people on their way to California either run out of gas, get lost, or get thrown off the train.

OLGA: And I suppose Rudolf Falentino and Mary Thickford live in the real world.

JENNY: Of course they do! They make movies! And they live in mansions with servants and palm trees and caviar.

OLGA: Oh, Jenny. I'm sure they think their lives are just as dull as you think yours is.

JENNY: (*Opening magazine.*) Does THIS sound dull? (*Reads*) Our reporter found Rudolf Falentino parking his Cadillac roadster on Sunset Boulevard. She asked the star of "Shaking Sheik" and "Sheik for a Day" how he was enjoying himself in America. Falentino melted her with that warm, Italian smile. Then he said, "I love America! My life is so exciting! Every night a party . . . champagne . . . and a new girl on my . . . how do you say it? Arm!" (*JENNY sighs.*) What I wouldn't give to be the new girl on his arm for just one night. I wouldn't even have to be his arm. His little finger would be good enough!

OLGA: Poor kid. Here you are, twenty years old and you've never been any place but Las Vegas. And that whistle stop isn't anything to sneeze at. Why, you've never even SEEN a movie, have you?

JENNY: But the magazines tell ALL about them.

OLGA: Maybe it's time we got out of this place.

JENNY: Ma, we've already had this discussion a hundred times.

OLGA: I know, but maybe somebody'd buy the Drop On Inn.

There's got to be at least one other fool in the world.

JENNY: One other?

OLGA: Your pa was fool number one for buyin' this place.

JENNY: He couldn't help it if he was a dreamer.

OLGA: Always thought when the train came through, Hard Luck would boom like a cannon. After all, the silver at the Hard Luck Mine ran all the way back into Nightmare Mountain.

JENNY: How were they really supposed to know the silver stopped cold halfway through the mountain? And he never could've known the railroad wouldn't put in a station here.

OLGA: They should've read their horoscope. You got the paper around?

JENNY: Finally came in on the bus today. Only two days late.

OLGA grabs newspaper and thumbs through it.

OLGA: Don't make a difference. This horoscope'll count for today. Let's see . . . hmmm . . . (*Reads.*) Romance is in the air if you are willing to step out and smell the roses. (*To JENNY*) Obviously, Madame Crystal ain't never been to Hard Luck. There ain't a rose around here for five hundred miles.

JENNY: What does mine say?!

OLGA: Leo . . . hmmm . . . (*Reads.*) a special day because that special person will walk through the door. Don't hesitate. Run to him. Smother him with kisses. Don't take a breath before saying yes. (*To JENNY*) And I get wind you did ANY of what's suggested here 'n you'll be locked in your room 'til your golden jubilee!

JENNY: My special person's going to come through the door today?

OLGA: That's what it says.

JENNY: That door?

OLGA: I don't see any other.

JENNY practices being shocked, excited.

OLGA: What are you doin', child?

JENNY: Practicing.

JENNY runs up to the door, lips puckered, EDDIE enters.

EDDIE: (*Shocked at seeing JENNY.*) Gosh, Jenny! You DO love me!

JENNY: (*Angrily.*) Eddie?!

EDDIE: I LOVE the way you say my name, darling.

JENNY: Don't call me darling. It gives my goose bumps.

EDDIE: Like your heart skips a beat?

JENNY: No, like I'm up at Boot Hill on a stormy night with wolves howling.

EDDIE: That's not very romantic.

JENNY: (*Pouts.*) Good!

EDDIE: Then how come you were standin' there with your lips all puckered waitin' for somebody to plant a nice big kiss on 'em?

JENNY: My horoscope says that someone very special will walk through THAT door today.

EDWINA enters through up right door.

EDWINA: Eddie! I KNEW I'd find you in here. How is your little sweet pea?

EDDIE: The same, Mother.

EDWINA: Oh, she'll come around. Your father chased me for ten years before I finally let him catch me. And guess what happened when he did?

EDDIE: What?

EDWINA: You did! Now, Eddie, I've brought your castor oil.

EDDIE: Mother! I'm twenty years old.

EDWINA: You're still my baby. Open wide.

EDDIE opens mouth while EDWINA dumps castor oil down him.

EDWINA: There! Want some, Jenny?

JENNY: No, thanks.

EDWINA: From the frown on your face, it looks like you could use some.

EDDIE: She's just waiting for somebody special to come through the door.

EDWINA: Somebody more special than my Eddie? In HARD LUCK? Good luck. Come along, Eddie. The servants have prepared a feast. It was so good of your father to set up a trust fund for us. A trust fund your WIFE will share. Care to join us, Jenny?

JENNY: No, thanks, Mrs. Greenville. I think I'll have dinner with Ma.

EDWINA: Well, dear, you'll come around. Mark my words! By this time next year you'll be -

EDDIE: Mrs. Eddie Greenville.

JENNY: Could we shorten that a bit?

EDWINA: What should we cut off?

JENNY: The "Mrs."

EDWINA pushes EDDIE out up right door and follows. JENNY picks up magazine and reads.

JENNY: No matter where he goes, Rudolf Falentino always wears the gold bracelet bearing the head of an aardvark. "A gift from Mama," he says with a tear in his eye. "Al never take it off, for that would break Mama's heart, even in heaven."

JENNY faces downstage reading, standing behind one of the tables. NORMAN backs through up right door, watching so no one's following him. During next speech, he slowly moves down to JENNY.

JENNY: Despite the fact that fans chase Falentino everywhere and have at times ripped of his jacket and shirt, Falentino has never lost the precious bracelet that reminds him of his carefree childhood days in Italy.

NORMAN's left hand, on which he wears the bracelet, leans on the table. JENNY stops her reading and catches sight of it. After a moment, she screams and jumps away. NORMAN jumps and then turns to face her.

NORMAN: I'm sorry! Sorry! What am I sorry for?

JENNY terrified, bewildered, can't respond.

NORMAN: Are you all right?

NORMAN moves to her, tries to hold her hand. JENNY backs away. She now is having a hard time catching her breath.

NORMAN: You can't breathe. Oh, gosh! I'm sorry! I must have scared you something awful. (*NORMAN runs behind bar.*) Don't worry! I know what to do when you can't breathe. (*NORMAN grabs a paper bag.*) You're hyperventilating, that's all. You're not getting enough carbon dioxide. (*He puts bag over her head.*) Now just breathe into this bag for a minute and that will get you back to normal.

NORMAN checks his watch then takes the bag off JENNY's head. She sees him and immediately screams. She runs down right.

NORMAN: I'm NOT a robber, lady. I don't want to hurt you. You can check me out!

JENNY whimpers.

NORMAN: I don't have any knives or guns or anything like that. And the suitcase . . . well, look . . . I'll open it up and show you what's in it.

NORMAN opens suitcase revealing makeup and costumes. JENNY stares at it in awe.

NORMAN: Just costumes, makeup, the usual for someone in my line of business. (*After a moment*) Look, I can leave if you want.

NORMAN moves to door. JENNY grabs him and stops him.

JENNY: NO! I'm just surprised. You really came! And I'm so embarrassed! You put a paper bag on my head. I could die!

NORMAN: You would have died without the paper bag.

JENNY: You saved my life. I knew you'd be my hero!

NORMAN: What do you mean? How could you be expecting me? I wasn't even expecting myself.

JENNY: It's fate! It's all in the stars! It says someone special's going to walk through that door. You know something? Now that I look at you . . . you don't really look like yourself.

NORMAN: I don't?

JENNY: No. What happened to your jet black hair slicked back? And how about your thin mustache . . . and your sideburns?

NORMAN: I . . . I . . . I'm in disguise.

JENNY: How wonderful! In-cognito!

NORMAN: Is THAT where I am?

HARD LUCK

JENNY: Are some ravenous fans after you?

NORMAN: You might say that.

JENNY: Well, you're safe here. Nobody EVER comes to Hard Luck. How'd you get here?

NORMAN: Jumped. Off the train.

JENNY: (*Starry-eyed.*) They were chasing you?

NORMAN: You might say that.

JENNY: Horrible people! You probably can NEVER be yourself.

NORMAN: You might say that, too.

JENNY: But wait a minute! Hard Luck is so far from the real world . . . nobody who lives here would ever know who you are, Mr. Falentino.

NORMAN: Mr. Falentino?

JENNY: You sound like nobody's ever called you by your name before.

NORMAN: Do I have a first name, by chance?

JENNY: You ARE playing games. You were named after your Russian grandfather, Rudolf.

NORMAN: More like the red-nosed reindeer.

JENNY: And you know something else? Your English is impeccable.

NORMAN: Well, I get a lot of practice.

JENNY: On the radio you sound like you have such a sultry . . . Mediterranean accent.

NORMAN: Well, that's show biz. It's all an illusion.

JENNY: I have a wonderful idea, Mr. Falentino.

NORMAN: Please, call me, Rudolf?

JENNY: I have a wonderful idea, Mr. Rudolf.

NORMAN: I can't wait to hear it.

JENNY: We have a lot of rooms upstairs. Nobody EVER spends the night in Hard Luck. So if your fans track you this far, they'll NEVER think to look upstairs.

NORMAN: Neither would I.

JENNY: And just think, we could hang a sign that says "Rudolf Falentino slept here."

NORMAN: (*Looks around, nervously.*) Died here is more like it.

JENNY: Oh, you are so passionate. Just like I imagined.

NORMAN: You've seen all my pictures?

JENNY: Oh, no! I've never seen you on the screen. We don't have a movie house in Hard Luck. We don't have anything. But see? Once a month I get **Screen Date, Screen Romance, Love in Pictures**. I read them 'til their covers fall off.

BY CRAIG SODARO

NORMAN: Look, ah, you're a real nice, I mean . . . I just think
you've got to know the . . . well, the truth.

JENNY: The truth? What are you saying?

NORMAN: You've got things all wrong. You're living in a fantasy
world . . . and . . .

MA: *(From offstage.)* Maybe he's in the cafe!

WILLI: Yeah! He couldn't have gotten far.

*NORMAN exits left with suitcase while JENNY goes to look out
the door.*

DILLI: *(From offstage.)* When we catch 'em can I have him, Ma?

TILLI: No fair!

*MA JAMES, WILLIE, TILLI, and DILLI pour into the cafe up right.
MA enters, pushes JENNY aside looks around the room.*

MA: Ain't here.

WILLI: He's gotta be!

JENNY: Excuse me . . . are you looking for someone?

DILLI: Yeah . . . a guy . . . about this tall, blue eyes. Kinda cute.

TILLI: And runs REAL fast.

JENNY: Gee . . . I didn't see anybody like that. What do you
want him for?

MA: Business, kid. What's upstairs?

JENNY: Rooms. This used to be a saloon 'til prohibition shut us
down. Now we serve ham sandwiches and pickles. You
hungry?

WILLI: I sure am!

MA: We don't got time to fill that bottomless pit of yours, Willi.
We gotta –

SHERIFF enters up right.

SHERIFF: Evenin', Miss Jenny.

JENNY: Howdy, Sheriff.

SHERIFF: Ma in? Somethin's up.

MA: *(Tries to disguise her voice.)* On second thought, we would
like a table, my dear.

JENNY: Sure. Help yourself. You got your pick.

JENNY exits right.

SHERIFF: *(Fixes his hair.)* Say, ladies.

MA: Yes?

SHERIFF: You all look mighty familiar.

MA: We do?

SHERIFF: Yeah . . . I can't help thinkin' I've seen that charming face of yours someplace.

WILLI: Probably the society page, Mother.

DILLI: The New York News.

SHERIFF: Could be. You're society gals?

TILLI: Yeah . . . we're real social.

SHERIFF: I don't know. The gals I saw were dressed REAL purty.

MA: Oh, Sheriff! These are nothing but our slumming clothes. We rode here on horseback.

SHERIFF: From where?

Simultaneously.

TILLI: Pennsylvania.

WILLI: New York.

DILLI: Ohio.

MA: (*Shortly after the trio.*) Out east.

WILLI: Yeah . . . so you can imagine why we ain't sittin' down.

MA: AREN'T sitting down, Wilhemina.

DILLI and TILLI break out into laughter.

WILLI: What's wrong, Dilliphendra?

TILLI: (*Laughing.*) Dilliphendra?

DILLI: I wouldn't laugh, Tillisaurus.

SHERIFF: Well, you ladies must be mighty tired after your long trip! I know Mrs. Barrack's got all kinds of rooms upstairs.

You'll sure lend some class to our little town if'n you stay a while.

OLGA and JENNY enter right.

OLGA: Howdy, Sheriff. Evenin' ladies.

SHERIFF: These here are society ladies all the way from the East coast.

OLGA: (*Moves behind bar.*) Well, I'll be.

MA: Have you a room or two . . . I know we don't have reservations . . .

OLGA: And honey, I don't have no reservations about givin' you a couple of rooms. C'mon right over here and sign the register. (*OLGA places book and pen on bar.*) Now what's on your mind, Sheriff?

SHERIFF: Feller by the name of Graven Slade just stopped by the office. Says he's a developer from Denver. 'N you know what he's plannin' to develop? A lake.

OLGA: A lake?! Now where's he gonna put a lake around here, Sheriff?

SHERIFF: Right here.

OLGA: He's gonna sink Hark Luck.

SHERIFF: He's plannin' to damn up the river 'n that'll fill the valley with water 'n then he's gonna put a big fancy resort 'n a marina on the shores.

OLGA: And what are we supposed to do? Learn to swim?

MA: Excuse me, can we get some keys to our rooms, please?

OLGA: Jenny, go on 'n get them keys to numbers one and two.

JENNY: (*Quickly.*) Number one's taken.

OLGA: That's the presidential suite. It's got a sink.

JENNY: Well, Mr. . . . I mean our other guest requested the best.

MA: Somebody else up there?

JENNY: Well, somebody who wants lots of privacy.

WILLI: We'll give him lots of that.

JENNY leads MA, WILLI, TILLI, and DILLI off left as PATTY and GINNY enter right.

PATTY: I NEVER was so insulted in my whole born days!

GINNY: The NERVE of him!

OLGA: What's wrong, girls?

PATTY: (*Sits at table.*) I can't talk about it 'til I have a drink.

OLGA: The usual?

GINNY: (*Sits with PATTY.*) I wanna double!

OLGA grabs three bottles.

SHERIFF: Let me guess. You two just crossed paths with Graven Slade.

OLGA: One sarsaparilla and a double.

OLGA plops bottles on table. PATTY and GINNY each take a swig.

OLGA: Now what's this all about?

PATTY: Sheriff's right. Feller by the name of Slade drove up in his big black touring car steps out just as pleased with himself as a snake that just swallowed a whole squirrel.

SHERIFF: What'd he want?

GINNY: Our house! Our land! Everything our folks worked for.

OLGA: He was gonna pay, wasn't he?

PATTY: 'Course he was gonna pay. One ticket out of Hard Luck plus one hundred dollars a piece.

OLGA: What?!

GINNY: Said that was generous.

PATTY: He's floodin' the entire valley he says.

GINNY: And he says unless we're real good at buildin' arks, we'd better take his offer.

OLGA: He said that, did he?

SLADE enters up right, followed by LOTTA.

SLADE: I most certainly did! No point in not putting things in the proper perspective.

SHERIFF: Evenin', Slade.

SLADE: Evenin', Sheriff. They say this is the only hotel in town.

OLGA: We don't cater to your kind, Mr. Slade.

SLADE: That so? My money's good as anybody's. *(SLADE snaps his fingers. LOTTA pulls a wad of bills from her purse.)*
Lotta Lamour . . . my secretary.

LOTTA: Pleased to meet ya, I'm sure.

SLADE snaps his fingers. LOTTA puts the bills away.

SLADE: So, we got a deal for a couple of rooms tonight?

OLGA: What's your business in Hard Luck, Slade?

SLADE: I'm making the folks in town very generous offers for their property.

PATTY and GINNY choke and cough.

SLADE: Must be the dust that covers everything in this washed up old ghost town.

OLGA: Hard Luck's our home.

PATTY: And that's how it's gonna stay!

LOTTA: Don't be so sure, I'm sure.

SLADE snaps his fingers. LOTTA whips out poster and unfolds it, holding it so all can read. It says, "Grand Opening of Slade Seaside Resort Coming Soon!"

SLADE: Picture a vast blue lake . . . white sailboats dotting the water . . . a palacial resort at one end of the tree-lined shore. Cabins bordering the water. Happy, happy people relaxing, enjoying a stay at this beautiful getaway.

OLGA: That there's a real purty picture. Just one thing wrong with it.

LOTTA: Oh, yeah?! What's that, I'm sure.

OLGA: Nobody's GOT to sell their land to you.

LOTTA: Oh, Mr. Slade's got that all figured, I'm sure.

PATTY: This is a free country!

GINNY: You can't force anybody to do anything, ain't that right, Sheriff?

SHERIFF: Absolutely. As our great Constitution says, Four score and seven years ago we do and ordain this Constitution of the United States in order to form a more perfect union.

Hear, hear.

PATTY: So there!

SLADE slips paper from his pocket and places it on table.

OLGA: What's that there?

OLGA reaches out to pick up paper, SHERIFF grabs her hand.

SHERIFF: Hold on. Might be dangerous.

LOTTA: I'm sure.

SHERIFF gingerly picks up paper and opens it.

SLADE: I'm sure reading isn't your specialty, Sheriff, so let me explain. That is an order from the county condemning this property.

GINNY: Condemning it? What's that mean?

SLADE: As it stands it's worthless. The buildings are run down and in ill repair. The land has been laid waste by misuse. And the county feels it can use the land in a better way.

OLGA: They can't do that! *(After a moment)* Can they, Sheriff?

SHERIFF: Oh, my, I'm afraid so. Happened once in North Dakota. Old shack stood in the middle of town. Old geezer wouldn't sell. Town fathers wanted the land to put up a courthouse.

PATTY: What happened?

SHERIFF: Town tore that old shack right down 'n threw up their courthouse just like that.

SLADE: 'Course I have to pay you the market value of the land. And assessments on this cafe, for example . . . *(He snaps his fingers.)* Lotta?

LOTTA: *(Checks her notebook.)* Total value, \$22.23, I'm sure.

OLGA: What?!

SLADE: I can write you out a check, ma'am . . . or we can deal.

OLGA has moved behind the bar.

OLGA: I ain't dealin' with the likes of YOU.

SHERIFF: Now, Olga, my dear, the law's the law.

OLGA: Shut up, Sheriff!

SLADE: Really, Mrs. Barrack, this can be easy or as hard as you want to make it.

OLGA draws shotgun or blunderbuss from behind bar.

OLGA: Go on, Slade, 'n get off my property!

SLADE: Sheriff, this is a malicious threat.

OLGA: Yeah? Well, you're maliciously trespassin'.

SHERIFF: She's right, Mr. Slade.

SLADE: C'mon, Lotta. We'll find someplace else to stay!

LOTTA: I'm sure.

SLADE: But don't worry! I'll be back . . . with bulldozers.

SLADE grabs LOTTA and they exit through up right door.

PATTY: Oh, Olga, what are we gonna do?

SHERIFF: I don't think we can do anything! The law's the law.

OLGA: Stop sayin' that! It's nothin' more than a piece of paper.

EDWINA and EDDIE enter up right.

EDWINA: Oh, Olga! We received this notice!

EDDIE: Our mansion's been condemned.

EDWINA: Someone wants to tear it down.

GINNY: Along with the rest of Hard Luck.

PATTY: And they got a paper that'll let 'em do it.

PATTY waves the paper.

SHERIFF: Maybe you can find yourselves some kind of lawyer.
They usually got enough grease in their cans to stop a squeek.

OLGA: A lawyer! Say, how 'bout old Butterneck Bisbee?

PATTY: Didn't nobody tell you? Butterneck kicked the bucket last year.

GINNY: Why aren't they ever around when you need 'em.

LOWEENA enters up right, bedraggled and dirty. She is followed by MIMSY, who carries three suitcases tied with rope.

LOWEENA: Water! Water!

OLGA: Honey, what happened to YOU?

LOWEENA: I'll kill him if I ever find him.

JENNY enters left.

PATTY: Must have run into Slade.

GINNY: I'm sure!

MIMSY: She's talking about Norman Crankfield. A guy . . . about this tall, blue eyes. Kinda cute.

OLGA: Say, Jenny, ain't that -

JENNY: Oh, Ma, you gotta get your eyes checked! Why, if you knew who was upstairs you'd -

LOWEENA: Don't mess with me kid. If Norman's here, I want him. I jumped off a moving train and walked fifteen miles through the desert to find him so I can break his neck!

MIMSY: Miss Loweena, you talk like that 'n you don't sound anything like a lawyer.

PATTY: Lawyer!

GINNY: Lawyer!

SHERIFF: Lawyer!

EDWINA: Lawyer!

LOWEENA: I have a terrible headache all of a sudden.

KATIE: You're really a lawyer?

LOWEENA: I had to do something after high school. So I went to Harvard thinking I could get my M - R - S degree. But my score on the bar exam scared 'em all off.

MIMSY: You got a room?

OLGA: Certainly.

MIMSY signs the register. BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

At Rise:

Later that night. JENNY paces downstage. EDDIE enters up right and moves to her. He puts his hands on her shoulders. JENNY melts.

JENNY: Oh, darling! I've been waiting for your touch. And now you're here and I really can't believe it's you! (*JENNY turns around.*) Because it's not! (*She pushes EDDIE away.*)

Eddie, what are you doing sneaking up on people like that?!

EDDIE: There's a big, beautiful moon outside. Want to go look at it?

JENNY: I already saw it.

EDDIE: Not much fun looking at it alone.

JENNY: That all depends.

EDDIE: On what?

JENNY: On who you're dreaming about.

EDDIE: You're sure acting funny!

JENNY: Eddie, do you want a sandwich or a coke or something?

EDDIE: (*Moves closer and closer to JENNY.*) I want to take you outside so we can look at the moon together. You know? My grandma said that if you stare at a full moon long enough, you'll see your future in it.

JENNY: Your future's going to be two black eyes if you don't order something or git!

EDDIE: I want a ham and cheese sandwich.

EDDIE defiantly sits at a table. JENNY goes behind the counter to make him a sandwich.

EDDIE: With EXTRA cheese, Swiss. Before we get married, you'll need to know that I love Swiss cheese.

JENNY: You know something. I always think of you when I look at Swiss cheese.

EDDIE: Really?

JENNY: Yeah . . . it smells funny.

EDDIE: Go ahead and treat me like dirt. I'll always crawl back for more.

JENNY: Eddie, don't you know that's no way for a lady to treat her feller?

EDDIE: It isn't? That's how Ma treated Pa.

JENNY places plate on table. She turns and sees NORMAN, now with slicked-back hair, a thin mustache, and a dramatic costume.

JENNY: *(To NORMAN.)* If you really love somebody you don't say mean things to 'em. You tell 'em they're the best thing that ever happened to you. You tell 'em they make your heart skip a beat whenever you see 'em. And you tell 'em even when they're not around, you can't get 'em out of your mind.

NORMAN: *(Overacting.)* You must be a psychic for you have read my thoughts.

EDDIE laughs.

EDDIE: What in tarnation's THAT?!

JENNY: Oh, poor, sheltered, Eddie. This is the world's greatest motion picture star . . . Rudolf Falentino!

EDDIE: Motion picture star?! Ha! Why aren't you in Hollywood where you belong?

NORMAN: I'm getting away from it all.

NORMAN: *(Kissing her hand.)* My friends call me Rudolf. And I am only hungry for your lips.

EDDIE: You'd better watch out, Jenny. Rudolf here's a pretty fast mover.

NORMAN: *(To EDDIE.)* Mr. Falentino to you! *(To JENNY)* Now, where were we? Oh, yes, your lips.

NORMAN grabs JENNY and holds her close to him.

EDDIE: Hey, now! Jenny's my girl! And if you get any closer, I'll . . . I'll . . .

As NORMAN and JENNY are about to kiss, EDDIE slips his sandwich between them so they kiss the sandwich. EDDIE grabs NORMAN, but is quickly thrown to the ground.

EDDIE: Hey! That ain't fair! (NORMAN pulls sword from his belt. EDDIE backs up along the floor.) Okay, so I'm wrong! It's fair, okay?!

EDDIE races off up right, exiting.

EDDIE: Ma! Ma!

JENNY: Now, where were we?

NORMAN: That sandwich tasted magnifico! How about one for your little boobala?

JENNY: My little boobala! Oh, Rudolf!

JENNY moves behind counter to make a sandwich.

NORMAN: Any sign of the mother and her three daughters?

JENNY: Those society types? I suppose you want to put them in your next picture.

NORMAN: Actually, if I put anyone in my next picture . . . it would be you!

JENNY: Me? Really? (Slams knife down.) You shouldn't joke about stuff like that. It isn't nice. It's very mean because you don't mean it. I'm little Miss Nobody from Nowheresville. As soon as you're rested, you'll leave and forget about me and go back to Hollywood where you'll find some gorgeous starlett to slink around in your next picture.

NORMAN: But Jenny . . . listen to you. Look at you! You are so . . . so . . . passionate.

JENNY: Well, it's all true and you know it. I'm sure there's a Jenny in every town you travel to. They're probably dying right now . . . dying from broken hearts.

JENNY races off left.

NORMAN: (As himself.) Wow! What's wrong with me? What am I saying? What am I doing? It's gotta be this getup. It's crazy. I can't be somebody I'm not. It's not fair to Jenny. It's just a lie. A horrible, cruel lie!

MA, DILLI, TILLI, and WILLI enter left. They do not see NORMAN who tries to tiptoe off up right.

DILLI: He ain't here, Ma!

TILLI: We looked everywhere.

WILLI: My feet are killin' me.

MA: And they're gonna be killin' HIM when we get our hands on his skinny little carcass.

DILLI: We gonna stomp 'em to death?

MA: There won't be nothin' left but a puddle. (*MA sees NORMAN just about to leave.*) Hey, you! (*NORMAN freezes, but doesn't turn around.*)

TILLI: Say, Ma! That's quite a getup!

WILLI: You goin' to a costume party?

DILLI: Better be, wearin' somethin' like that.

TILLI: Yeah! Daddy'd shoot you on sight dressed like that.

NORMAN turns suddenly, dramatically. The women gasp and step back.

MA: Well, I'll be the blank durin' Russian roulette.

DILLI: Could it be?

WILLI: Way out here?

TILLI: The one and only?!

MA/DILLI/WILLI/TILLI: Rudolf Falentino!

They rush to him, but he holds up his hands and they fall to their knees.

NORMAN: Please, my little pets! We musn't ruffle the finery!
You may rise!

MA, TILLI, DILLI, and WILLI stand.

TILLI: Oh, Ma! Dressed like that, can't you tell?

DILLI: What ELSE would he be doin' here.

WILLI: He's makin' a picture

MA: Are you?! A real picture? Right here?

NORMAN: Sounds like a magnifico idea! And you beautiful ladies . . . what are you doing here?

MA: Snake huntin'.

NORMAN: Snake hunting? Is this an American pastime?

MA: It sure is when a feller sees more 'n he oughta see.

DILLI: And when we find him, we're gonna turn him into cat food.

NORMAN: Cat food?

WILLI: Yeah . . . and all that's left of him'll fit into one of them little tins.

NORMAN: Oh, you Americans . . . so prone to exaggerate. But then look at the size of your lakes . . . your mountains . . . (*MA takes out a big knife.*) that knife!

TILLI: Yeah, we find him 'n it's all over.

SHERIFF enters up right. MA quickly hides knife.

SHERIFF: Why, ma'am, I was hopin' to find you here!

MA: Sheriff, if this isn't a pleasure.

SHERIFF: It is? Really?

TILLI: Ma! That's the sheriff.

MA: And have you ever seen such a splendid figure of a man?

SHERIFF: Why, ma'am, I was wonderin' if you'd do me the honor of takin' a gander at the full moon tonight. It's just as purty as a baby's bottom.

MA: Does Mr. Falentino mind?

NORMAN: I had the same intention myself!

SHERIFF: Falentino, hmmm, that name sounds familiar. I'd better check the posters back at the office.

MA: We can do that after looking at the moon.

SHERIFF: Why, ma'am, if you ain't a dreamboat yourself.

SHERIFF and MA exit arm in arm.

WILLI: Well, now, Rudolf, now that Ma's gone

DILLI: We can have you all to ourselves.

TILLI: You sure are one hunka munka.

WILLI: Even if you do dress funny.

TILLI, WILLI, and DILLI slowly advance on NORMAN.

NORMAN: Ah, you American women are so . . . forceful.

WILLI: You ain't seen nothin' yet!

NORMAN: But, please, you make me blush!

DILLI: Get him, girls!

NORMAN races off right. DILLI, WILLI, and TILLI race off after him. A moment later, SLADE and LOTTA enter up right.

SLADE: All right, Lotta, you know what you're supposed to do?

LOTTA: I think so, I'm sure. But how come I gotta do it, Graven, baby?

SLADE: After this afternoon, I can tell these folks aren't going down easily. They're going to try something. It might even be legal!

LOTTA: Gosh, that'd be awful, I'm sure.

SLADE: So if you spy of 'em, you can let me know what they're planning and I can head them off at the pass.

LOTTA: Gosh! Sounds just like a movie, I'm sure. But what makes you think they're gonna go spillin' their guts to me?

SLADE: I already told you. You're sick of me. I'm evil! I scare you.

LOTTA: But I still love ya!

SLADE: Act like you don't, Lotta. They'll take you under their wings and pretty soon you'll find out everything.

LOTTA: I hope you know what I'm doin', I'm sure.

SLADE: All you've got to do is cry and they'll put the noose around their own necks.

LOTTA: You mean like this -

SLADE covers LOTTA's mouth

SLADE: Not yet! Give me ten seconds to get out of here.

Understand? (*LOTTA nods.*) One . . . two . . .

SLADE slips out up right door. LOTTA files her nails, tapping the floor until she reaches ten. Suddenly, she lets out a bloodcurdling scream and bursts into tears. JENNY and OLGA race on left.

OLGA: Why Miss Lamour!

JENNY: What happened?

OLGA: Are you hurt?

JENNY: There's only one thing that could have done this to her!

OLGA/JENNY/LOTTA: A man!

OLGA: Tell us about it right now!

LOTTA: Oh, gosh, it's too horrible, I'm sure!

JENNY: It's all right. We've all been through it.

LOTTA: It was this evening . . . after we left here . . . I asked Graven . . . I mean Mr. Slade . . . if what he was doin' to your valley was all legal and everything. And that's when he started yellin' and yellin'! He told me I was dumb and stupid and to keep my nose out of it and that they didn't want me going back to town with him ever again 'til it was underwater. And that made me real scared because I don't even know how to swim. So that's when I ran right here.

OLGA: Well, if you ain't a whole lot smarter 'n you look.

LOTTA: Hey!

JENNY: You're welcome to stay here, Miss Lamour. We've got plenty of room and Mr. Slade won't be able to bother you.

OLGA: We'll post a watch.

LOTTA: Oh, I feel ever so much better. Might you show me to my room now? I don't require much at all . . . for I can't pay except for this.

LOTTA takes off her glittering bracelet and gives it to OLGA.

OLGA: Save it, honey. You'll need it to buy a train ticket outta here.

LOTTA bursts into tears as LOWEENA, MIMSY, EDDIE, and EDWINA enter up right.

EDWINA: So, you see, you've GOT to help us, Miss Nordstrom!

LOWEENA: But, Mrs. Greenville, I've never practiced law in this state.

EDDIE: It's just like Pennsylvania 'cept there are a whole lot less people and more sagebrush.

LOWEENA: But you don't understand. I am looking for someone. And if I find a clue as to his whereabouts, I'm going to track that trail no matter what.

EDWINA: And we'll help you. But you're the only one we can turn to.

OLGA: It's true, Miss Nordstrom. We'll lose everything if you don't help.

LOWEENA: If this is everything, you're better off without it.

JENNY: But this was my father's dream.

MIMSY: He must have been an insomniac.

JENNY: No. He just didn't have a crystal ball that told him the mine would play out and the railroad wouldn't come to town.

LOTTA: Hey! Is she a lawyer or like something?

MIMSY: Or like something.

LOWEENA: I'm a member of Smirch and Smakk. And who are you?

OLGA: Miss Lamour is Mr. Slade's personal secretary.

LOWEENA: Is that so?

JENNY: She's had enough trouble with him and wants to help us.

EDWINA: Help us what?

OLGA: Keep Hard Luck right where it is.

LOWEENA: You haven't seen a guy about this tall, blue eyes, kinda cute, hidin' around here somewhere, have you?

LOTTA: Nope, but I'll keep my eyes peeled, I'm sure.

EDWINA: Miss Nordstrom, can the county just condemn our property just like that?

LOWEENA: If the price is right!

OLGA: What do you mean?

LOWEENA: The party requesting the condemnation must show to the county that the land will be better used through the new plan than the way it is currently being used. And that almost always involves how much will the county get back in taxes. Whichever plan provides the county with a bigger tax chunk. That side wins.

JENNY: So all we've got to do is show we'll be able to give more in taxes to the county.

EDDIE: (*Sarcastically.*) Gosh, Jenny, what a great idea!

JENNY: Oh, shut up.

MIMSY: Now, hold on. Isn't this Slade feller opening up a resort on a lake?

OLGA: That's his plan.

MIMSY: I hate to bring this up, but how many folks you have come through here in a regular month.

JENNY: I can check.

JENNY moves behind the counter and checks through the registration book.

LOWEENA: Mimsy, I'm supposed to be the attorney here. You stick to packing clothes, understand?

MIMSY: But Miss Loweena -

LOWEENA: Mimsy!

JENNY: We had four in March . . . three in April . . . I guess on account of all the rain . . . but we're way ahead now 'cause we got eight stayin' at the hotel tonight.

MIMSY: Now just what do you think Slade's resort's gonna have?

LOWEENA: I was just going to ask that very question.

MIMSY: Doesn't matter who asks it. The answer's pretty clear.

OLGA: His big resort is going to bring in a lot of tax money for the county and our four tourists won't bring in diddly-squat.

EDWINA: There has to be something we can do!

EDDIE: Advertise.

JENNY: Oh, Eddie . . . first you've got to have something to advertise.

MIMSY: You got lots of sage. Isn't that something you put inside a turkey?

LOWEENA: Good! You can bill this as "Turkey Town!"

JENNY: What ELSE do we have?

NORMAN backs on right, followed by DILLI, TILLI, and WILLI. They cross to left.

NORMAN: Oh, I love you aggressive American women! But can you be a little less aggressive?

DILLI: Oh, Rudy, Rudy, Rudy. I can play the damsel in distress.

NORMAN: True! You're very distressing.

WILLI: But I'm prettier! I'll look better on screen next to you.

NORMAN: Depends on which side is your good side.

WILLI: You gotta have a good side?

TILLI: Let ME star in your picture! I can bat my eyelashes faster than anybody this side of the Mississippi.

NORMAN: I knew you were batty the minute I met you!

NORMAN turns, runs off left. WILLI, TILLI, and DILLI run after him.

LOWEENA: Was that -

MIMSY: Couldn't be.

LOWEENA: Not here -

MIMSY: Was it -

LOWEENA: (*Pushes MIMSY aside.*) I'd better make sure.

MIMSY: I'm right behind you.

LOWEENA races off left, followed by MIMSY

EDDIE: All this stupid fuss over some guy coming here to make a motion picture.

JENNY: It's horrible the way he's being treated. Just like a prize pig at the county fair. Why don't they let him alone.

EDWINA: Personally, I can't see what they find in that jet black hair, blue eyes, sensuous mouth.

EDWINA screams and faints into a chair.

EDDIE: Ma? Ma? Ma, wake up!

EDDIE fans his mother.

OLGA: Jenny, listen to me. If this feller is big in pictures, and he's makin' a picture here in Hard Luck . . . well, now . . . we might just have something to advertise.

JENNY: Why, Ma, you might have something there!

EDDIE: How long does it take 'em to shoot a picture?

JENNY: Oh, months and months.

EDDIE: You mean he's stickin' around all that time?

JENNY: Gosh . . . he might have to.

EDDIE: Well, that's a fine howdeedo!

EDDIE exits up right angrily.

OLGA: Eddie! Eddie! You forgot your mama!

OLGA moves to EDWINA.

OLGA: C'mon, Edwina. You can't stay here.

EDWINA: (*Rising, dazed.*) Rudolf Falentino here . . . walking on this very floor . . .oh, oh . . .

OLGA: Don't you faint again, Edwina.

EDWINA: I can't help it! Just thinking of him sends me -

OLGA: Well, don't think about him. Think of your late husband.

EDWINA: (*Stiffens up.*) Killjoy!

EDWINA marches up right, OLGA follows, both exiting.

JENNY: (*Dreamily.*) Months and months!

NORMAN races on down left.

NORMAN: (*As himself.*) Oh, gosh!

JENNY: Mr. Falentino?

NORMAN: (*His alter-ego kicks in.*) Oh, by golly pizza spimoni!

JENNY: I'm sorry they're acting so childish. It must be horrible being around people like that all the time.

NORMAN: If I could just be myself. (*To himself*) Boy, if I could just be myself!

JENNY: Look . . . I know you're considering doing a picture here.

NORMAN: I am? Oh, yes. I am!

JENNY: And you need time to be alone so those creative juices can congeal.

NORMAN: Is that what happens?

JENNY: We've got a cabin. It's tiny . . . it's dirty . . . but nobody but me and Ma know where it is. You want me to hide you there?

NORMAN: Hide?! Boy do I.

JENNY: I'll get the horse saddled.

NORMAN: Horse?

JENNY: Oh, silly, I KNOW you know how to ride. All those scenes racing bareback across the desert.

NORMAN: That's . . . that's trick photography.

JENNY: You're too modest.

JENNY moves to right, stops, turns.

JENNY: Rudolf?

NORMAN: Yes, my boobala?

JENNY: I'm sorry for what I said earlier. I don't care if you DO have a girl in every town. It's okay. It's 1925. I'll be your girl in this town.

JENNY exits right. NORMAN rips off his sheik headress and mustache. He takes chair, moves it to center stage. EDDIE enters up right, unseen my NORMAN. EDDIE halts and hides behind swinging doors.

NORMAN: (*Pretends chair is JENNY, as himself.*) Jenny?

There's something you need to know. I'm not the big movie star you think I am. I'm not Rudolf Falentino. My name is Norman Crankfield. I'm a theatrical supply salesman. I just

happen to be running away from a very possessive fiancé and a family of bootleggers who killed a couple of guys on the train heading west. (*NORMAN tips chair and spins it. He then holds it in one leg for a moment.*) I'm sorry I disappointed you. But . . . I still think you're the most wonderful girl in the whole world. What do you think?
The chair falls flat on the floor.

JENNY: (*Off right.*) Rudolf! Come help me! We can get to the cabin faster!

NORMAN, terrified, looks back at the door. As he turns around, EDDIE slips behind the counter, so he remains unseen. NORMAN bolts off through the door up right. A moment later, JENNY enters right.

JENNY: Rudolf, I know you can saddle a horse . . . (*Looks around.*) as well as I can.

WILLI, TILLI, DILLI, LOWEENA, and MIMSY race on down left.

WILLI: Where'd he go?

JENNY: (*Sadly.*) I don't know.

LOWEENA: What happened?

JENNY: I must've said the wrong something.

DILLI: (*Pointing right.*) Let's go this way!

DILLI, TILLI, WILLI, LOWEENA, and MIMSY run off right. A moment later, SLADE enters up right. He grabs phone and dials.

SLADE: Lotta? Meet me in the cafe, pronto!

SLADE sits at table. He puts his feet up and relaxes. MA races on up right.

MA: Oh, gosh! What'll I do now?

*MA runs off up left, not noticing SLADE. SHERIFF runs on up right holding a **WANTED POSTER**.*

SHERIFF: Now, ma'am, this SURE does look A LOT like you. I think you got some explainin' to do.

SHERIFF notices SLADE.

SHERIFF: You see one gorgeous kewpie doll come in here?

SLADE: She went thataway. (*SLADE points right.*)

SHERIFF: Much obliged.

SHERIFF hurries off right. LOTTA enters left.

HARD LUCK

LOTTA: So, Graven, baby . . . I'm in like flint, I'm sure.

SLADE: They bought the act?

LOTTA: Hook, line, and stinker.

SLADE: Good! So, what're they plannin'?

LOTTA: Nothin' so far. But they sure better not see me talkin' to you. If you want to meet me, just toss two pebbles at my window. Second floor, corner window.

SLADE: Good girl, Lotta! I'm gonna make a rich woman out of you!

SLADE slips off up right. LOTTA sighs, then exits down left.

EDDIE stands up behind counter and smiles as the curtain falls.

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