

# ROMEO AND JULIET GO WEST

THE STORY OF RAMONA AND JOEL

By August Mergelman

Copyright © MMIX by August Mergelman, All Rights Reserved

ISBN: 978-1-61588-175-8

**CAUTION:** Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

**RIGHTS RESERVED:** All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

**PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS:** All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Heuer Publishing LLC. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Heuer Publishing LLC. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Heuer Publishing LLC. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Heuer Publishing LLC.

*Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.*

**AUTHOR CREDIT:** All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this Work must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this Work. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the Work. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

**PUBLISHER CREDIT:** Whenever this Work is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice: ***Produced by special arrangement with Heuer Publishing LLC.***

**COPYING:** Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Heuer Publishing LLC.

HEUER PUBLISHING LLC

P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406

TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011

# ROMEO AND JULIET GO WEST

THE STORY OF RAMONA AND JOEL

By August Mergelman

**SYNOPSIS:** Ramona Mae and Joel are in a disconcerting place. The feud between their papas is the obstacle they face. The local padre catches wise - - Ramona lets it slip - - and Tita wants to teach the boy the *in's* and *out's* of courtship. His mother, on the other hand, has someone else in mind; Miss Paris is a debutant, the highfalutin' kind. When crazy Herman steals a horse, Ramona gets the blame. It's up to Joel to save the day and clear his sweetheart's name. Some potent pollen conks him cold. Ramona is the cure. She almost wakes him up, but then the pollen gets to her. And so the tragic story ends, but don't you be misled. The way *this* version ends would turn the Bard a shade of red.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

(10 males, 11 females, 9 either, extras)

MR. CABOT (m) ..... The proprietor of a saloon. (42 lines)  
 MRS. CABOT (f) ..... His social-climbing wife. (35 lines)  
 JOEL CABOT (m) ..... Their son. (171 lines)  
 TITA (f) ..... Their housekeeper. (91 lines)  
 MR. MONTGOMERY (m) ..... A rancher. (23 lines)  
 MRS. MONTGOMERY (f) ..... His God-fearin' wife. (17 lines)  
 RAMONA MAE (f) ..... Their daughter. (118 lines)  
 BEN MONTGOMERY (m/f) ..... Ramona's cousin. (56 lines)  
 HERMAN (m) ..... A hired hand. (97 lines)  
 FATHER LAWRENCE (m) ..... The play's narrator. (91 lines)  
 SHERIFF (m/f) ..... A thick-headed law enforcer. (27 lines)  
 MISS PARIS (f) ..... A marriageable socialite. (36 lines)  
 RUSSELL LINDE (m) ..... A vaudeville sharpshooter. (1 line)  
 SUSANNA (f) ..... A young woman. (2 lines)  
 EARL (m) ..... A big fellow. (No lines)  
 MILLIE (f) ..... His best girl. (2 lines)  
 MRS. PEOPLES (f) ..... A ubiquitous eccentric. (2 lines)  
 MRS. BROWN (f) ..... A party guest. (4 lines)  
 UNDERTAKER (m/f) ..... A busy individual in Victor. (2 lines)

**TOWNSFOLK:** Citizens of Victor.

MAN 1 (m).....	(1 line)
WOMAN 1 (f).....	(1 line)
BOY 1 (m).....	(2 lines)
BOY 2 (m).....	(2 lines)
GIRL 1 (f).....	(1 line)
GUEST 1 (m/f).....	(2 lines)
GUEST 2 (m/f).....	(1 line)
GUEST 3 (m/f).....	(1 line)
VOICE 1 (m/f).....	(2 lines)
VOICE 2 (m/f).....	(2 lines)
VOICE 3 (m/f).....	(3 lines)

**SETTING:** Late September in Victor, Colorado.

**A NOTE ABOUT CASTING**

At the director's discretion, gender roles and like may be reassigned to fit the demographics of the company. As a young adolescent, Ben may be portrayed effectively by a female. Pronouns may be changed to portray the sheriff and the undertaker as women. Lines assigned to members of crowd may be changed in any number of ways to suit the cast size. If portraying Tita as Hispanic is not feasible, her name and her verbal idiosyncrasies may be changed at the director's discretion; for instance, she would work well as Maggie, spoken with an Irish brogue.

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

### ACT ONE

SCENE 1: The street.

SCENE 2: The Cabots' kitchen and the Montgomerys' porch.

SCENE 3: The saloon.

SCENE 4: The dark of night and the hayloft.

SCENE 5: The Cabots' kitchen and the church office.

SCENE 6: The street.

SCENE 7: The Cabots' kitchen and the courtship montage.

### ACT TWO

SCENE 1: The street.

SCENE 2: The dark of night.

SCENE 3: The saloon and the inside of a kaleidoscope.

### A NOTE ABOUT STAGING

Select set pieces suffice to establish most of the locales, but the crowd scenes - - taking place on the street and in the saloon - - need only a clear playing area. Vaudeville-style placards denoting location would certainly be stylistically appropriate. The narrative interludes allow one scene to segue into the next as seamlessly as possible, which is essential for effective staging. The short scene following the party, for instance, can be portrayed in front of the curtain while the hayloft is being set up. Building the hayloft will take some doing, but what's an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* without some sort of balcony scene?

## ABOUT THE PLAY

Set in Victor, Colorado, *Ramona and Joel* is a wild-west comedy adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. It is not a parody of Shakespeare's play; rather, it is an original drama in its own right, intended to be presented with sincerity. The narrative style and the cowboy poetry give the work an unmistakable storybook quality. The irreverent translation of names and events will delight the ardent *bardologist*, but the plot twists will keep the whole audience guessing what's going to happen next. Even the happy ending remains in peril until the final moments of the second act.

Though Shakespeare's original provides the framework, several other stylistic influences are present. Certainly, there is an air of nineteenth-century melodrama, crossed with 1950's black-and-white westerns. The pervasive poetry pays homage to the playwright/poets of old. Subtleties of humor and local color are manifest in the iambic heptameter, stichomythia, and rhyming couplets. The casual disregard of the fourth wall owes much to twentieth-century theatricalism.

The twenty to twenty-five roles are divided evenly among males and females, several roles being gender neutral. The broad range of ages makes the play ideal for community theatre groups as well as schools. Select set pieces suffice to establish most of the locales, but the crowd scenes need only a clear playing area. The narrative interludes allow one scene to flow into the next as seamlessly as possible. The running time is approximately eighty minutes.

---

***For Steve's Heroes.***

---

**ACT ONE, SCENE 1**

**AT RISE:** *Enter FATHER LAWRENCE, on a street in Victor, Colorado.*

**FATHER:** The gentlemen in fancy top hats gather 'round the tracks  
To watch the ponies promenade with jockeys on their backs.  
They sweat so much they start to stink, and that's just in the  
stands  
'Cause when the race is done, the legal tender changes hands.  
Now here in Victor, Colorado, we don't make a fuss  
To watch our boys run races. Workin' duds are fine with us.  
And what we lack in top hats we make up for in theatrics.  
A guy can't win unless he yells and waves and kicks.  
That's how it's done, I hear. I'm not a gamblin' man myself.  
A man who takes his orders leaves that practice on the shelf,  
And I encourage all my flock to heed my sound advice,  
That gamblin' - - though it's thrillin' - - is a base and wicked vice,  
Unfortun'ly, a vice we hold in reverent regard.  
If you got cash to burn in Victor, Brother, it ain't hard.

*Individual CABOTS and MONTGOMERYS appear as FATHER LAWRENCE describes them.*

**FATHER:** Why, twenty years or so ago, Montgomery and Cabot  
Made a friendly wager on the trail to hunt a rabbit.  
As they lay down their dollar bills, it caught 'em unawares,  
But which one really won that wager? Now we're splittin' hares,  
Or so to speak.

**MR. CABOT:** I know I fired first!

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** That may be true,  
But it was me who killed the rabbit!

**FATHER:** That's enough from both of you!

*Grumbling, MR. CABOT and MR. MONTGOMERY back away from each other.*

**FATHER:** When gold was struck not far from here, a minin' town was born,  
But that ol' grudge they bear shows ne'er a sign of bein' worn.  
Montgom'ry wed a pious member of our congregation.  
She takes great pains to keep her fam'ly headed for salvation.  
The couple had great plans for their anticipated son,  
But he came out a girl instead. Ramona - - she's the one.  
Her parents send her off to school. On this they do concur:

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** A town with more saloons than churches  
ain't no place for her.

*RAMONA hangs her head and exits.*

**FATHER:** Ol' Cabot made good use of his high-stakes proclivity.  
Why, his saloon provides finest gamblin' in our city.  
The Mrs. Cabot has designs on their beloved baby.

**MRS. CABOT:** I'll find a fittin' bride for Joel, a wealthy bride.

*JOEL wrinkles his nose.*

**FATHER:** Well, maybe.

*Enter TITA.*

**FATHER:** That's Tita. She's the cook, and Joel helps her with her chores.

**TITA:** He helps me? No. He helps himself, and then he asks for more.

**FATHER:** A proper feud encompasses a fair of amount of folks,  
And all you need to stoke it is a few untimely jokes.

**HERMAN:** That's my cue.

**FATHER:** Hold your horses, son.

*HERMAN freezes. FATHER LAWRENCE nods toward him.*

**FATHER:** Montgomery's hired hand.

A peaceful day is torture orn'ry Herman just can't stand.

*Enter BEN.*

**FATHER:** Today he's led astray a sheep, Ramona's cousin Ben.  
Them boys are where they oughtn't be. Our story now begins.

*Exit ALL but HERMAN and BEN.*

**HERMAN:** They say that Cabot's got a new roulette wheel made of  
gold,  
With ruby numbers.

**BEN:** I'd feel more at ease if it were old  
And made of pine if I laid my good money down.

**HERMAN:** How come?

**BEN:** 'Cause that means he's the losin' type. That's good for me.

**HERMAN:** That's dumb.

If I had me some cash, I'd buy a ruby-studded horse  
And git.

**BEN:** Git what?

**HERMAN:** Git outta here. And take my girl, of course.

**BEN:** Alright, but you ain't got no girl.

**HERMAN:** Says who?

**BEN:** Says me.

**HERMAN:** You are presumptuous to deny the things you fail to see.

*Enter JOEL.*

**HERMAN:** That fella there is Joel, I think. That's Old Man Cabot's  
son.

**BEN:** Don't you go startin' nothin', Herman.

**HERMAN:** Just a little fun?

**BEN:** A little fun for you is really trouble in the makin'.

**HERMAN:** Then you stay put and try not to distract me with your  
shakin'. (*Scratching his head.*)

I coulda sworn that . . .

**JOEL:** You lose somethin'?

**HERMAN:** Matter of fact, I did.

Well, I don't mean to bother you, but - - shoot - - that thing is hid.

**JOEL:** Have I seen you 'round town before? You seem . . .

**HERMAN:** Can't say's ya have.

I don't roam off too far unless I'm huntin' for a calf.

Now where'd the heck I . . . ?

**JOEL:** Not to pry, but you sure look confused.

**HERMAN:** I guess I must. I just misplaced a . . . Darn it!

**JOEL:** Wha'd ya lose?

**HERMAN:** Oh, it weren't nothin' much - - a little piece of paper's  
all - -

But what I wrote upon it . . .

**JOEL:** Which direction did it fall?

**HERMAN:** I think . . .

**JOEL:** If you look there, then I'll look here.

*HERMAN discreetly pulls a piece of paper from his breast pocket.*

**HERMAN:** Well, whatcha know!

If it had been a snake, it woulda bit me. Gotta go.

**JOEL:** Now, you got me as curious as a kid on Christmas Eve

'Bout what's so darned important 'bout that paper. You can't  
leave.

**HERMAN:** I s'pose I owe you somethin' for your time.

**JOEL:** Darn right you do!

**HERMAN:** But I warn you - - it sounds peculiar - - even though it's  
true.

It started when my buddy made a joke at my expense,  
When he says that I'm as ugly as a mile of crooked fence,  
And I says, "That the best that you can do?" and he says, "No."  
And pretty soon I made a bet with him that I could throw  
A more insultin' name at him than he could throw at me.  
So I wrote down these nasty hurtful comments.

**JOEL:** Let me see.

**HERMAN:** 'Fraid not, but you can help me out by sayin' what you  
think

When I try these remarks on you.

**JOEL:** Well, I dunno . . .

**HERMAN:** You stink . . .

Just like the carcass of a grizzly in the heat.

You smell like burnin' trash, fermented cheese, and rancid meat.

**JOEL:** Well, that caught me off guard alright, but I take a bath each week,

So you should get more personal than just to say I reek.

Suppose this fella walks bow-legged, or he drools a lot.

You gotta git 'im where he's tender.

**HERMAN:** Where's *your* tender spot?

**JOEL:** Well, that don't matter nothin'.

**HERMAN:** (*Noticing JOEL's spurs.*) Never mind. I think I know.

**JOEL:** Know what?

**HERMAN:** Your horse is your Achilles' ankle.

**JOEL:** Is that so?

**HERMAN:** Your spurs have felt around the edges.

**JOEL:** She's got tender skin.

**HERMAN:** If I insult my buddy's horse, I'm guaranteed to win.

A fella's soft about his horse. Excuse me -- I meant turtle.

A slug could out-run that old nag, and that counts jumpin' hurdles.

**JOEL:** I think you plum forgot who you're supposed to be offendin'.

**HERMAN:** Now don't get all bent outta shape. You know we're just pretendin'.

I reckon I'll just win that bet, and I'll have you to thank.

I think it's time that I got goin'.

**JOEL:** (*Snatching the paper.*) Hey! This paper's blank!

**HERMAN:** Well, so it is! Now, how'd that happen?

**JOEL:** (*Rolling up his sleeves.*) Never mind your list.

If you don't win that insult match, you'll have to use your fists,

And that's where I can really help. This lesson's compliment'ry.

**HERMAN:** Now, really, there's no cause for violent acts among the gentry.

**JOEL:** (*Swings, but misses.*) A shame it has to come to this between you and your friend.

But I just couldn't live with my own sorry self and send

You out so unprepared to meet your adversary.

(*Delivering left jab.*) Consider me your trainin' ground, your friendly sanctuary.

*JOEL and HERMAN fight. Several TOWNSFOLK watch, some placing bets on the winner. Enter the SHERIFF and FATHER LAWRENCE.*

**BEN:** So much for stayin' out of trouble.

**SHERIFF:** What the heck is this?

**FATHER:** It looks to me like Sunday school, but somethin' went amiss.

**JOEL:** Oh, I'm just teachin' this here boy a lesson.

**SHERIFF:** Lesson's finished.

I will not let civility in Victor be diminished.

*Enter MR. MONTGOMERY.*

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** This mess is Cabot's doin', Sheriff. I can swear to that!

*Enter MR. CABOT.*

**MR. CABOT:** Montgom'ry siced that kid on Joel. I can smell a rat!

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** Now, let's get one thing straight, you liar . . .

**MR. CABOT:** Don't you point at me!

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** You siced that boy of yours on Herman, near as I can see.

**SHERIFF:** It isn't clear to me just why these boys were throwin' punches.

But I ain't near as dumb as I appear, and my best hunch is

They were merely actin' out a battle of a war

That you two temperamental codgers started long before.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** I'll bet . . .

**FATHER:** You said the magic word. You bet your hat you did.

And I'll just bet my badge the altercation 'tween these of kids

Revolved around a harmless bet. That's how it always starts.

**SHERIFF:** Well, let's just ask the witness, Ben.

**BEN:** But . . .

**SHERIFF:** Ben, I know you're smart.

**FATHER:** Did gambling precipitate today's ungainly fight?

**BEN:** Well, that's not necessarily the way it came to light.

You see . . .

**SHERIFF:** Was there a bet involved? Just answer, *yes* or *no*.

**BEN:** Then I would have to answer *yes*, but Sheriff . . .

**SHERIFF:** There ya go!

**FATHER:** It's bad enough this town's got gamblin'. Pardon, Brother Cabot.

As long as I remember, gamblin's been our wicked habit.

*CABOT begins to protest.*

**FATHER:** Don't get me wrong. It has its place, accordin' to the law,  
But gamblin' in the streets can lead to brawls like we just saw.

A sim'lar skirmish, long ago - - no need to mention names - -  
Began a feud that makes the War of 1812 look tame.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** Is there a point to this?

**FATHER:** Alright. I'll terminate my sermon.

**HERMAN:** A sermon? That means I'm a week ahead of Sunday.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** Herman.

*The MEN chuckle.*

**SHERIFF:** It looks as though the storm has passed us.

**FATHER:** Ah, but in its wake,

We fortify the levee for the next, for prudence sake.

**SHERIFF:** I thought that you was done.

**FATHER:** I am, but you are just beginnin'.

It's you who must uphold the law. I just point out the sinnin',  
And you don't just uphold the law, you also lay it down.

So how do you propose to rid all gamblers from our town?

**SHERIFF:** I'll run out any gamblers in a blink, or even quicker.

They won't come back until the day the dead rise up in Victor.

**MAN:** Till when?

**MRS. PEOPLES:** (*Who has been lying in a nearby trough.*) He said,  
"Until the day the dead rise up in Victor."

**SHERIFF:** Yup.

**MR. CABOT:** That sounds to me like banishment.

**SHERIFF:** So call it what you will.

I've spoken my last word about it.

**MR. CABOT:** Words - - I've heard my fill.

*The crowd disperses. The feuding families divide the stage.*

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** (To BEN.) Your aunt needs you to try on shoes.

**BEN:** I got shoes.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** They annoy 'er.

And, Herman, it's your day off. Don't embarrass your employer.

*Exit MR. MONTGOMERY with BEN. HERMAN saunters off.*

**JOEL:** That lady looks like Ma.

**MR. CABOT:** It is, but who's that fancy filly?

**JOEL:** A candidate to be my bride, no doubt.

**MR. CABOT:** Oh, this is silly.

**JOEL:** You're tellin' me?

**MR. CABOT:** Hush up. They'll hear.

**JOEL:** Where *does* she dig them up?

Does she look like the kinda girl for me?

**MR. CABOT:** You're just a pup.

*Enter MRS. CABOT and MISS PARIS.*

**MRS. CABOT:** Why, Joel, dear, your lip is cut.

**MR. CABOT:** He had an accident.

**JOEL:** Involvin' someone else's fist.

**MR. CABOT:** And it was evident

That fist was workin' for that dirty crook, Montgomery.

**MRS. CABOT:** You boys and your commotion. You can save your tawdry summ'ry.

We are but ladies, after all; you know how violence scares us.

And I ain't even made an introduction for Miss Paris.

**MR. CABOT:** I'm pleased to meet ya.

**MISS PARIS:** Charmed, I'm sure.

**MRS. CABOT:** And Joel - - he's my son.

*JOEL bows grandly.*

**JOEL:** The honor, Miss, is mine alone.

**MRS. CABOT:** Oh, he's just havin' fun.

And speakin' of some fun, it's time we Cabots had a swa-rie

**JOEL:** What's that?

**MR. CABOT:** I hope it's not expensive.

**MRS. CABOT:** (*Sharply.*) Vernon!

**MR. CABOT:** Sorry.

**MRS. CABOT:** (*Sweetly.*) A swa-rie is a party.

**JOEL:** Where?

**MRS. CABOT:** At our saloon, of course.

Tomorrow.

**JOEL:** I got plans to see a guy about a horse.

**MISS PARIS:** Now, Mrs. Cabot, I would never want to be a bother.

**MRS. CABOT:** Oh, don't be silly, dear. I made a promise to your father.

I'd show you high society in Victor.

**MR. CABOT:** Victor?

**MRS. CABOT:** Vernon!

Our plans are waitin' to be made, and daylight is a burnin'.

*Exit MRS. CABOT and MISS PARIS.*

**MR. CABOT:** If daylight is a burnin', let's go fishin' by the creek.

A man's allowed to be himself in private once a week.

*Exit MR. CABOT and JOEL. Enter MR. and MRS. MONTGOMERY, followed by BEN.*

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** A teenage girl in Victor is a genuine abhorrence.

She's better off residin' with her Uncle Tom in Florence.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** You could be right.

**BEN:** But it's still summer! Please, don't send her back.

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** And where is she right now?

**BEN:** I reckon by the railroad tracks.

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** Whatever for?

**BEN:** She wants to catch a glimpse of Russell Linde.

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** Oh, not that vulgar mountebank. Is he in town again?

**BEN:** He's s'posed to come back through.

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** I don't approve of her fixation.

**BEN:** Don't fret, Aunt Mae. It's just my cousin's wild imagination.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** Ramona's just a girl, and girls get crushes every the day.

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** It's still disgraceful. Let's get home.

**BEN:** I guess I'd better stay - -

I mean - - to wait for Herman.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** Leave 'im here for all I care.

That hired hand's caused me more trouble than a man can spare.

*Exit MR. and MRS. MONTGOMERY.*

**BEN:** If I know that delinquent, he ain't nearly satisfied.

If I can't keep 'im out of trouble, least I know I tried.

You just can't help but like the guy. He talks just like a riddle,

But when he goes and picks a fight, I'm always in the middle.

*RAMONA and HERMAN enter. RAMONA chases HERMAN around BEN.*

**RAMONA:** You give that back!

**HERMAN:** I will in time. I want to read it first.

"My Dearest Russell, I'm so full of love that I could burst.

When you came into town, I watched your crew set up your tent.

I blew your face a kiss . . . "

**RAMONA:** I'm gonna blow your face a dent!

**HERMAN:** "With all my love, your truest fan, Ramona Mae Montgom'ry."

If he remembers you, he's got a superhuman mem'ry.

*RAMONA sits and cries.*

**HERMAN:** (*With tremendous chagrin.*) Now, Romie, I was only teasin'.

*Having fooled HERMAN, RAMONA snatches the note and hits him in the arm.*

**HERMAN:** Ouch! That really hurt!

**RAMONA:** (*Brightly.*) It serves you right for teasin' me, you scurvy bag of dirt!

**HERMAN:** For shame, you helpless dainty thing. If Russell heard you speak.

**BEN:** You know he's passin' through here on his way to Cripple Creek.

**RAMONA:** I know. I can't contain myself, but when?

**BEN:** They never said.

**RAMONA:** (*With great ceremony.*) But when he does, he'll shoot a golden apple off my head.

**HERMAN:** I wish I'd never read that note.

*Enter TITA.*

**TITA:** Did you say you could read?

**HERMAN:** Why, certainly I can.

**TITA:** Then you are just the man I need.

My mistress plans a big fiesta for tomorrow night,  
And I'm supposed to find the proper people to invite,  
But then she never tells me who is proper, who is not.  
A lot of folks in this town - - they don't even got a pot.  
So I decide if you can read, that's where I draw the line.

**BEN:** But what about the folks that can't?

**TITA:** That's your affair, not mine.

**HERMAN:** So tell us what the invite says.

**TITA:** If I could read I would.

*Mañana, at the Cabots' place.*

**HERMAN:** We wouldn't miss it.

**TITA:** Good.

**BEN:** Now, wait a minute, ma'am. Your invitation is considerate,  
But . . .

**TITA:** You are not invited. You just told me you're illiterate.

**HERMAN:** (*Dancing with TITA.*) Will there be dancin' at this party?

**TITA:** Don't get fresh with me,

You young impert'nent man, just 'cause you're . . . limber as a tree.

*TITA swings him around.*

**HERMAN:** Hey!

**TITA:** If you would like to dance with me, you must be in my reach.

And keep your shoulders straight.

**HERMAN:** She's got a grip just like a leech.

**TITA:** Oh, I give up. You're just a boy. Go home to *Mamacita*,  
But don't forget tomorrow. You might meet a *señorita*.

*Exit TITA.*

**HERMAN:** This party's gonna be more fun than hornets in your pants.

**RAMONA:** Do you suppose that Russell Linde could be there?

**HERMAN:** There's a chance.

**BEN:** Well, I don't care if Moses comes. You two can count me out.

**RAMONA:** I never met a wetter blanket.

**HERMAN:** Ah, just let 'im pout.

**RAMONA:** But Pa would kill me if he knew. We're enemies with Cabots.

**HERMAN:** And why should children always take their folks' unfriendly habits?

Just what did Cabots ever do to you?

**RAMONA:** You know, that's true.

**HERMAN:** And there's a chance the famous Russell Linde will be there too.

**FATHER:** Well, that concludes the op'nin' scene. I guess you see the tangles,

Even all you situated 'long the sharper angles.

**ACT ONE, SCENE 2**

*One side of the stage is the CABOTS' kitchen. The other is the MONTGOMERYS' porch. A MAID presents a platter of hors d'oeuvres, and MRS. CABOT dismisses her with a nod of approval.*

**FATHER:** Next ev'nin' all them invitees was busy gettin' ready.

The hostess person'lly scrutinized each parcel of confetti.

**MISS PARIS:** Why, Mrs. Cabot - - I must say - - you haven't spared expenses.

**MRS. CABOT:** My husband's sure to say the same once he collects his senses.

**MISS PARIS:** Then would you say he's quite well-off? Oh, I don't mean to pry.

**MRS. CABOT:** I do not take offence to such inquiries.

**MISS PARIS:** Nor do I.

**MRS. CABOT:** Then I would say he's quite well off, though clearly not by birth.

Did you not once allude to havin' in-laws of great worth?

**MISS PARIS:** Well, Father, as you know, is rich, but yes - - my sister Ann

Coincident'ly wed herself an enterprisin' man.

Why, just for fun, he used to dive for pearls. He had such stealth.

So often eccentricity accompanies great wealth.

**MRS. CABOT:** They must be very happy with each other.

**MISS PARIS:** Yes, they were,

But he expired suddenly and left his wealth to her.

**MRS. CABOT:** But how?

**MISS PARIS:** He drowned, in his own bathtub, on the fifth of May.

Ironic that he died the way he did.

**MRS. CABOT:** Well, I should say.

*On the porch, RAMONA, BEN, and HERMAN get into their disguises.*

**RAMONA:** But what if Russell likes the way I look in my disguise?

And when he sees normal . . .

**BEN:** He'll be in for some surprise.

*The BOYS snicker.*

**RAMONA:** Go 'head - - make jokes at my expense. I won't give up my dreams.

I'm serious about my quest, as silly as it seems.

**HERMAN:** Our dreams are just like rabies. It's all over once we're bitten.

**RAMONA:** But who the devil's bitin' us and makin' us so smitten?

**HERMAN:** The culprit is a girl, in fact, a queen - - the Queen of Hearts.

*(Presenting a playing card with some slight-of-hand.)*

She has a team of ladybugs to pull her tiny cart.

She knows just what you want, and what you think, and how you feel,

And when you sleep, she fills your head with dreams you'd swear are real.

**RAMONA:** Before she puts them in, how do they look - - those dreams and hopes?

*Faint specks of colored light appear.*

**HERMAN:** Like all them odds and ends they put inside kaleidoscopes.

Not much to see by day, but when reflected in the lens,

They are a dazzling sight.

**BEN:** What do they look like?

**HERMAN:** That depends.

The soldier - - he sees glory, and the cobbler - - he sees shoes,

And she makes Father Lawrence dream of over-flowin' pews.

She gives Ramona dreams of gettin' hitched with Russell Linde.

And Russell dreams of Lillian Russell. Sorry to offend.

The sheriff dreams of puttin' Jesse James behind them bars.

And Ben here dreams of catchin' real live fireflies in jars.

**BEN:** The hell I do! Well, just that once. What difference does it make?

**RAMONA:** And how 'bout you?

**HERMAN:** She never comes, so I just lie awake.

**RAMONA:** The Queen of Hearts has never called on you? I don't believe.

**HERMAN:** If we don't get, we'll be arrivin' when it's time to leave.

*TITA follows JOEL into the kitchen.*

**TITA:** Get over here, *Muchacho*. You aren't nearly finished yet. You got a crooked collar still.

**JOEL:** This get-up makes me sweat.

**TITA:** I tell you this since you were just a boy - - but you don't listen - -

That horses sweat, and men perspire; girls like me just glisten.

**JOEL:** You think that any other glist'nin' girls will come tonight?

**TITA:** Not counting me, I'd say . . .

**JOEL:** No chance in Hell?

**TITA:** You could be right.

**JOEL:** Not countin' you and Mama's friend, Miss Paris. You forgot.

**TITA:** She's very nice.

**JOEL:** But you forgot to count her.

**TITA:** Well, so what?

She slipped my mind.

**JOEL:** The words you say ain't all the words I hear.

You always go along with Ma until the coast is clear.

**TITA:** Perhaps that girl is not so bad as she appears at first.

**JOEL:** Conceited, spoiled, and social-climbin'?

**TITA:** You just think the worst.

**JOEL:** I'd like to skip this thing and spend the evenin' in the stable.

**TITA:** That's fine by me. What's stopping you?

**JOEL:** If only I were able,

But that would cause embarrassment for Mama.

**TITA:** I know better,

'Cause I've known you since you were just a squawking diaper-wetter.

"Do you suppose that any glist'ning girls will be attending?"

What kind of question's that to ask me?

**JOEL:** I was just pretendin'!

**TITA:** Mmm-hmm.

*MR. and MRS. MONTGOMERY stroll onto their porch.*

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** I'd like to fit Ramona for a different gingham dress.

The one she wears to church each Sunday mornin' is a mess.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** Ah, she don't care.

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** She will some day.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** I know, but what's the rush?

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** The way she runs around with Cousin Ben just makes me blush.

And don't you get me started on that hired hand.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** Not me.

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** The way she carries on with him, for everyone to see.

I think he's got his eye on her.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** He does.

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** And you don't care?

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** If he was gonna get somewhere with Romie, he'd be there,

But she don't know he's sweet on her. It's never crossed her mind.

She's waitin' for the special kind of boy.

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** I know the kind.

### ACT ONE, SCENE 3

*At the saloon, the soirée is in full swing. MRS. CABOT approaches MR. CABOT, who is engrossed in a card game.*

**MRS. CABOT:** My dear . . .

**MR. CABOT:** My dove.

**MRS. CABOT:** We're out of cheese, and someone spilt some wine.

**MR. CABOT:** That's nice.

**MRS. CABOT:** That's nice? You didn't hear me.

**MR. CABOT:** I can hear you fine.

**MRS. CABOT:** *(To MRS. BROWN.)* A man can only hear when he is list'nin' with his eyes.

**MRS. BROWN:** That so?

**MRS. CABOT:** My dear, the parlor caught on fire.

**MR. CABOT:** Oh? That's nice.

*The MEN chuckle, prompting MR. CABOT to look up.*

**MRS. CABOT:** He doesn't know his wife from Adam.

**MRS. BROWN:** Shameful.

**MR. CABOT:** That ain't true!

**MRS. CABOT:** Then prove it.

**MR. CABOT:** Prove it?

**MAN 1:** Prove it, Cabot.

**MR. CABOT:** Tell ya what I'll do.

*MR. CABOT clinks his glass to the attention of all the GUESTS.*

**MR. CABOT:** Attention, please, my honored guests, a challenge has been posed.

My wife insists that I neglect her when I'm predisposed.

**MRS. CABOT:** Oh, I could shave my noggin bald, and he'd not even blink,  
But he'd ask, "Where's my pipe?"

*The WOMEN laugh.*

**MR. CABOT:** I'm more perceptive than you think.

*(Blindfolding himself.)* A handkerchief will shield my eyes, if not suppress the jeers

Of all you very ladies who will serve as volunteers.

If three of you present your hands, alongside my dear wife,

I'll prove that my decrepit mind is sharper than a knife.

**MRS. CABOT:** All right.

**MISS PARIS:** I'm game.

**TITA:** But we need three.

**HERMAN:** I've got your third right here.

**RAMONA:** Oh, no you don't.

**TITA:** I guess she'll do.

**RAMONA:** But, ma'am, . . .

**TITA:** No need to fear.

**MR. CABOT:** Though I don't know my wife from Adam, I know her from the Eves.

**MRS. CABOT:** This sport should prove amusin'.

**MRS. BROWN:** We had best roll up our sleeves.

*The LADIES form a row: MRS. BROWN, RAMONA, MRS. CABOT, and MISS PARIS. MR. CABOT starts down the line.*

**MR. CABOT:** Ah, ha. Oh, yes. All right. Okay. It's harder than I thought.

**WOMAN 1:** I never knew a guy to find himself a tighter spot.

*The GUESTS laugh.*

**MR. CABOT:** The fourth is awf'ly soft, but then the second's rather nimble.

The first is fond of sewin' things, no stranger to a thimble.

*(Regarding MISS PARIS.)* I'll bet this hand has never worked a day of honest toil.

*(Regarding RAMONA.)* And this one's full of girlish glee, and summer sun, and soil.

*(Regarding MRS. CABOT.)* The third hand feels a feverish head and soothes an achin' joint,

But it's as hard as stone when it is formed into a point.

I'd know it by its temperament alone.

**JOEL:** Looks like Pa won.

*The MEN and the BOYS cheer.*

**MR. CABOT:** Perception is a family trait that passed from man to son.

**BOY 1:** Then Joel here should be the same, if that's the way it goes.

**JOEL:** Who me? Heck, I can hardly tell my fingers from my toes.

**BOY 2:** Let's line him up some girls.

**MRS. CABOT:** I haven't been a girl in years.

**MRS. BROWN:** That goes for me as well.

**TITA:** Then we need two more volunteers.

*The GIRLS form a line: SUSANA, MILLIE, MISS PARIS, and RAMONA.*

**JOEL:** But I don't know them all.

**TITA:** So you should make some introductions.

You first must grasp each lovely hand, and then you make deductions.

*JOEL starts down the line.*

**JOEL:** Good evenin', Miss.

**SUSANNA:** Good evenin'.

**JOEL:** Glad you made it.

**MILLIE:** Glad I came.

**JOEL:** Miss Paris.

**MISS PARIS:** Don't forget me, Joel.

**TITA:** Time to start the game.

**JOEL:** *(Not having met RAMONA.)* But . . .

**TITA:** *(Indicating each girl.)* The girl in white, the girl in green, the girl in blazing red.

The girl who wears the funny hat atop her lovely head.

**BOY 1:** The blindfold ready?

**BOY 2:** Yip.

**GIRL 1:** But he remembers where they stand?

**TITA:** Trade places, girls.

*The line changes: MILLIE, SUSANA, RAMONA, and MISS PARIS.*

**TITA:** Okay, that's good. The first contestant's hand.

*EARL, a big fellow, slips his hand in front of MILLIE'S. The GUESTS snicker.*

**JOEL:** Such monumental fingers. Awfully hairy for a girl,  
Unless that's Millie's jealous beau and my good buddy Earl.

*The GUESTS laugh.*

**JOEL:** So he must be the girl in green.

**MR. CABOT:** That's close enough, I guess.

**MILLIE:** And now it should be easy pickins, figurin' the rest.

**MR. CABOT:** Alright, my boy, which girl is that?

**JOEL:** The girl in white, Susanna.

Them long and lovely fingers were designed to play piana.

**SUSANNA:** And play they do.

**GUEST 1:** He's two for two.

**GUEST 2:** But he ain't done just yet.

**TITA:** The third contestant?

**GUEST 1:** Who is she?

**JOEL:** (*Taking RAMONA's hand.*) I don't believe we've met.

Your hand is warm, or else it's cold, and smooth as China silk.

But it's inclined to shuckin' corn and fillin' pails with milk.

This hand is used to work, and play, and lazy afternoons,

The kind that last all summer long, but still are gone too soon.

It has a way of calmin' me, and puttin' me on edge.

**HERMAN:** So make your guess already. Don't just hem and haw and hedge.

**MISS PARIS:** Could someone get some water? I'm afraid I'm feelin' faint.

**MRS. CABOT:** Your cheeks have lost their color.

**TITA:** You mean under all the paint?

*As MISS PARIS faints, several male guests make room for her to fall.*

**GUEST 3:** She never shouted, "Timber."

**MR. CABOT:** Hope she didn't scuff the floor.

**MRS. CABOT:** If I undid her corset, she could breathe a little more.

**TITA:** If you undid her corset, we would have a small explosion.

You don't tear down a beaver dam that's holding back the ocean.

*The GUESTS fade into a silent pantomime and then a freeze.*

**RAMONA:** Is she alright?

**JOEL:** I reckon so. I'm Joel.

**RAMONA:** Yes. I know.

**JOEL:** I don't know you.

**RAMONA:** You've heard my name - - my last name.

**JOEL:** Is that so?

**RAMONA:** We're s'pposed to hate each other, but it seems like such a bother.

**JOEL:** Don't tell me you're the kin of old Montgom'ry?

**RAMONA:** He's my father.

I s'pose that makes this awkward.

**JOEL:** S'pose it could, but I don't care.

To go 'round hatin' folks just 'cause their kin just don't seem fair.

What diff'rence does it make if we're Montgomery or Cabot?

Your hand is shakin'.

**RAMONA:** Goodness me. I plum forgot you had it.

**JOEL:** So what's your name, for real?

**RAMONA:** Ramona.

**JOEL:** Why you here tonight?

**RAMONA:** I . . . came in search of someone.

**JOEL:** Do I know this guy?

**RAMONA:** You might.

It seems so funny sayin' it, but Russell Linde's my idol.

**JOEL:** Who - - that old coot? He doesn't know his saddle from his bridle!

**RAMONA:** I beg your pardon . . .

**JOEL:** Not too bad a shot, but when he rides,

He holds on to his saddle horn and sways from side to side.

**RAMONA:** Now wait a minute . . .

*BEN drags RAMONA away.*

**BEN:** Let's get goin'.

**HERMAN:** We'll slip out the kitchen.

This get-up's hot as blazes.

**BEN:** So is mine and plus it's itchin'.

**JOEL:** I hear that show of Russell Linde's is rigged from start to end.

*RAMONA shrieks and charges JOEL, but HERMAN and BEN drag her out the door.*

**FATHER:** So petty for a party's host to quibble and offend.  
Or is there method to his madness, like the guy who tries  
To catch his flies with vinegar. You sure he's after flies?

#### ACT ONE, SCENE 4

*In the darkness, HERMAN, RAMONA, and BEN make their way home.*

**HERMAN:** Does someone have the matches?

**BEN:** I do . . . somewhere.

**HERMAN:** Hurry, Ben.

**BEN:** I thought I had 'em in my pocket.

**HERMAN:** Here we go again.

**RAMONA:** A guy who hosts a party should have manners like a prince,

And not insult his guests like that. He should have better sense.

**HERMAN:** That boy's been mollycoddled. Just forget 'im.

**RAMONA:** Wish I could.

I oughta tell 'im what I think.

**HERMAN:** It wouldn't do no good.

He'd only listen long enough to show you to the door,

And git you all riled up again. So why go back for more?

A guy like him ain't worth his salt. He's only talk and show.

And dressed up like a dude that way . . .

*BEN has finally succeeded in lighting the lantern.*

**BEN:** Hey, where'd Ramona go?

*JOEL lies in the hayloft with his chin in his hands, talking to his horse.*

**JOEL:** I wish I was a horse, like you. You've really got it good.

You never have to worry that you won't be understood.

The things you like are simple things, like apples, oats, and hay.

The barley never says to Tybalt, "Tybalt, stay away."

I wish that I could shuck my name and stuff it in a crate,

And send it off to Timbuktu for someone else to hate.

A flow'r don't hate its given name. No matter how it's spelled,  
It's still as sweet as any honeysuckle ever smelled.

*Enter RAMONA.*

**JOEL:** So much for courtin' her. I'm sure she'd never speak to me,  
Unless to say, "Get lost, you brute!" or, "Go climb up a tree."

**RAMONA:** I'd never say, "Get lost, you brute." A brute has broader  
shoulders.

Why, yours are barely broad enough to be suspender holders.

**JOEL:** How'd you get back?

**RAMONA:** The gate was open . . .

**JOEL:** Guess it doesn't matter.

Come set a spell.

**RAMONA:** A way up there? I don't care much for ladders.

**JOEL:** Then suit yourself. I'm glad you're back. I should apologize  
For speakin' out of turn. I'm much too quick to criticize.

**RAMONA:** Well, that's what I came back to hear.

**JOEL:** That's all?

**RAMONA:** I reckon so.

And now the proper thing for me to do is . . . well, . . . to go.

**JOEL:** Considerin' the feud between our kin, it don't make sense  
That you would even come at all this evenin' -- no offence.

**RAMONA:** I came in search of my true love, a man of wealth and  
fame.

The only man for me is . . . Funny, I forgot his name.

**JOEL:** It's Russell Linde.

**RAMONA:** Of course! (*Noticing a wiggle in the straw - - possibly  
imaginary.*)

Oh, my! I think there's mice out here.

**JOEL:** Well, actually . . .

**RAMONA:** A country girl has bigger things to fear.

**JOEL:** The snakes out here take care of most the mice we've ever  
had.

*RAMONA quickly scales the ladder.*

**JOEL:** I thought you didn't care for ladders.

**RAMONA:** Ladders ain't so bad,

But then again, I might pass out, like - - who was she?

**JOEL:** Miss Paris?

**RAMONA:** We girls are just so delicate. It don't take much to scare us.

Has she recovered, by the way?

**JOEL:** They gave 'er smellin' salts.

**RAMONA:** She has such worldly female ways.

**JOEL:** To cover up her faults.

**RAMONA:** A girl can't hardly help it if she faints. It's just our way.

**JOEL:** Do you pass out so easily?

**RAMONA:** (*Playfully.*) Why, nearly every day.

When I get scared or all worked up, and sometimes just for practice.

**JOEL:** Aren't you afraid you'll hurt yourself?

**RAMONA:** I do watch out for cactus.

In fact, my head is feelin' light. No need to be alarmed.

When you want me awake again, just hit me in the arm.

*RAMONA feigns fainting. JOEL kisses her.*

**RAMONA:** I do believe you missed my arm.

**JOEL:** I know. My aim is bad.

**RAMONA:** Your kissin' ain't too poor.

**JOEL:** If you want more, then I'd be glad.

*They kiss again. RAMONA breaks away and starts back down the ladder.*

**RAMONA:** I'm really not the kind of girl to bring my family shame.

No matter who's the boy, a girl should worry 'bout her name.

**JOEL:** I'm not the kind of guy who doesn't know it's time to stop.

The way my heart is poundin' I'm afraid it's gonna pop.

Will you come back to see me?

**RAMONA:** Never. I'd be mortified.

**JOEL:** Don't worry 'bout my heart then. It just shriveled up and died.

**RAMONA:** I mean - - this ain't a fittin' place for me and you to meet.

We'll have to find a meetin' place that's proper *and* discreet.

**JOEL:** If I can find a place, will you agree to meet me there?

**RAMONA:** Of course.

**JOEL:** Then you wait patiently for me to tell you where.

**RAMONA:** But how will you get word to me?

**JOEL:** Don't worry 'bout a word.

I'll write it on a note and tie it to a little bird,

And tell that bird my happiness is hingin' on its flight.

**RAMONA:** I'll leave a pile of bread crumbs on my windowsill at night.

### ACT ONE, SCENE 5

*One side of the stage is the office of the church. The other side is the CABOTS' kitchen. Enter FATHER LAWRENCE.*

**FATHER:** The three intruders to the party weren't - - thank goodness  
- - caught,

But when the sun rose, I became an agent to their plot.

Before it gets too hot, I like to tinker in the garden.

I'm almost done with morning's chores. I'll have to beg your  
pardon.

A clove of garlic wards off sickness - - any man can vouch.

It also keeps his sweetheart on the far side of the couch.

This seed preserves your memory; this root induces sleep,

And few folks know the secret that these dainty flowers keep.

When summer turns to autumn, and the daytime equals night,

They pollinate. Their blossoms burst in golden haze of twilight.

They're beautiful and deadly. They're both generous and cruel.

The man who eats their pollen is a lover and a fool.

**RAMONA:** Did someone call my name?

**FATHER:** Why, you're an early riser, friend.

**RAMONA:** I need some more elixir, with that coal dust thick again.

It's bad enough, a-way up here, I have to fight for air,

But I can't hardly speak when there's no oxygen to spare.

**FATHER:** You've been neglect to see me.

**RAMONA:** True. My mother's in a fuss.

She's got her watchful eye on me like Zeus on Mount Olympus.  
If she knew I was friends with you, her mind would run amuck,  
And suddenly I'm Victor's favorite pious daughter. Yuck.

**FATHER:** I'm flattered.

**RAMONA:** No offence.

**FATHER:** None taken. Somethin' on your mind?

**RAMONA:** Am I too young to have a beau . . . should there be one to find?

**FATHER:** I'm loathe to burst your bubble, dear. I'm no iconoclast,  
But Russell Linde is much too old.

**RAMONA:** Oh, Russell's in the past.

**FATHER:** If Russell's in the past, the present has me at a loss.  
You young hot-blooded creatures never gather any moss.

**RAMONA:** For one to love one's neighbor is a more important law  
Than all that talk of honorin' a person's ma and pa.

**FATHER:** You're much too far ahead of me. You never stopped to mention

The name of this mysterious boy, and what's this boy's intention?

**RAMONA:** His first name is a symphony. His last name is a curse.

**FATHER:** There ain't too many syllables to which I am adverse.

**RAMONA:** His kinfolk are the enemies of mine, exceptin' me.

**FATHER:** Then he must be a Cabot.

**RAMONA:** Sure as I'm Montgomery.

**FATHER:** Your heart has taken quite a risk.

**RAMONA:** My heart has me perplexed.

You've got to help me, Father Lawrence. What should I do next?

*FATHER LAWRENCE pauses to think.*

**FATHER:** Suppose you wrote a letter to that fellow Russell Linde.  
He earns an honest livin'.

**RAMONA:** Oh, they oughta have you skinned.

You won't tell Ma and Pa on me?

**FATHER:** Endure your mother's wrath?

Hot Hades hath not half the fire an angry woman hath.

*TITA chases JOEL into the kitchen.*

**TITA:** You've gone and lost your mind, *muchacho!* I should have your hide!

**JOEL:** You asked me why I'm all aglow. Would you prefer I lied?

**TITA:** No, I'd prefer you used your brain instead of just your heart.

**JOEL:** My heart dispenses orders 'fore my brain can even start.

**TITA:** (*Putting a quill pen in JOEL's hand.*) Then I command that hand of yours to grip the nearest pen

And scribble out a note to bring this romance to an end.

**JOEL:** I'd sooner plunge this pen into my chest.

**TITA:** Go right ahead,

And this poor girl can read the letter after you are dead.

**JOEL:** (*Thoughtfully.*) A letter read by someone who can read . . .

**TITA:** You watch your mouth,

Or I'll knock you down farther than the birdies flying south.

**JOEL:** So dutiful, the little birds, who know just where to fly.

They know what they're supposed to do, and - - darn it - - so do I. I guess I better get to writin'.

**TITA:** Do what must be done,

But let her down with gentleness. It's best for everyone.

**JOEL:** I'll have to send a messenger to comfort her.

**TITA:** Poor thing.

I'd better go myself, so's I can soothe your brutal sting.

**JOEL:** This brutal sting is your idea.

**TITA:** Hush. Don't make it worse.

I wonder what I'll say to her. I'd better go rehearse.

**FATHER:** While Tita's off rehearsin' what she thinks she's gonna say,

We'll catch up with the boys, a little later on that day.

## ACT ONE, SCENE 6

*Enter HERMAN and BEN on the street.*

**HERMAN:** Once I get me a horse, I'll never go a-foot again.

**BEN:** Aren't you exaggeratin'?

**HERMAN:** Sure, but I ain't kiddin', Ben.

A guy could sleep and take his meals and never touch the ground,  
And scoff at all them two-leg folks, so lowly and earth-bound.  
I'll ride from room to room.

**BEN:** You'd better have enormous doors.

And how you gonna keep the horse from gettin' saddle sores?

**HERMAN:** I'll ride to town each Saturday, and maybe ride to Europe.

A guy could see the Louvre Museum and never leave a stirrup.

**BEN:** You're talkin' like a fool this mornin'.

*Enter RAMONA.*

**RAMONA:** So? What's wrong with that?

If it weren't for the fools like us, the world would still be flat.

**HERMAN:** Why, Miss Columbus, you were out the door before your  
breakfast,

And I took you for coyote prey, last evenin' once you left us.

**RAMONA:** I had unfinished business.

**BEN:** Did you finish it?

**RAMONA:** Oh, no.

I mean - - I never found him.

**HERMAN:** Where'd ya look?

**BEN:** Heck, where'd ya go?

**RAMONA:** Now, boys, let's not be tedious.

**BEN:** Be what?

**HERMAN:** That's fair enough.

So go ahead - - play dumb, Columbus. I won't call your bluff.  
But she might.

*Enter TITA.*

**BEN:** There's your sweetheart, Herman. Think she wants to dance?

**HERMAN:** The woman of my dreams appears. This may be my last  
chance.

*HERMAN kneels grandly.*

**TITA:** Can I help you, *muchacho*?

**HERMAN:** If you can't, then no one can.

You're just in time to save the life of one disheartened man.

**TITA:** I don't have time for that. I just made up a batch of soap.

**HERMAN:** What for?

**TITA:** For cleaning dirty things. You've heard of it, I hope.

But I don't use it all myself. I trade with other folks.

**BEN:** For what?

**TITA:** For candy, lard, and . . .

**HERMAN:** Poems?

**TITA:** I don't have time for jokes.

*HERMAN clears his throat, produces a piece of paper and reads.*

**HERMAN:** Your beauty - - not the air I breathe - - is keepin' me alive.

To serve as your mere cushion is the end to which I strive.

If you deny this love I bear, I take a solemn vow

To turn my toes up to the sky and die right here and now.

*HERMAN plays dead. TITA snatches the paper and flips it over, proving that it's blank. The boys snicker. TITA sits on HERMAN.*

**HERMAN:** Hey!

**TITA:** You're lumpy for a cushion.

**HERMAN:** What?

**TITA:** But you'll just have to do.

**HERMAN:** I think I'm gonna suffocate.

**TITA:** *Muchacho*, that's not true.

My beauty's keeping you alive. Remember?

**HERMAN:** Slipped my mind.

**TITA:** I have a special treat for you, the sugar-coated kind.

*TITA feeds HERMAN one of her "sweets."*

**HERMAN:** Ee-yuck!

**TITA:** Oh dear, I mixed them up. They look so much the same,

The candies and the soaps I made. I'm overcome with shame.

**HERMAN:** My tongue is goin' numb.

**TITA:** Oh my, you must not like the taste.

Go rinse your mouth, and while you're gone, your friend can take your place.

**BEN:** I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I ain't built to be a chair.

*Exit HERMAN and BEN. RAMONA tries to follow.*

**TITA:** Don't you run off, *muchacha*. You and me have words to share.

*TITA gives RAMONA the letter. A spotlight reveals JOEL.*

**JOEL:** My dear Ramona, Joel here. If you are readin' this,  
Then Tita's standin' next to you and watchin'.

**RAMONA:** That she is.

**TITA:** Huh?

**JOEL:** Pretend to be surprised and count to four . . .

*RAMONA counts.*

**JOEL:** . . . But not out loud.

**RAMONA:** Oh.

**JOEL:** Now crease your eyebrows thoughtfully. You're heart-broken,  
but proud.

I won't be seein' you again.

**RAMONA:** You won't?

**JOEL:** But just pretend.

And you say . . .

**RAMONA:** "Love that's just begun, already at an end."

*TITA sniffles.*

**JOEL:** Now take the hanky from her hand and dab, but not too hard.

*RAMONA takes the hanky, but TITA takes in right back to dry her own eyes.*

**JOEL:** Tomorrow meet me in the woods, behind the lumberyard,  
At three o'clock. If that's alright, tell Tita to tell me,  
**RAMONA:** Tell Joel I understand. It simply wasn't meant to be.

*JOEL disappears.*

**TITA:** Well, now that boy has gone too far, to hurt a girl so sweet.  
A letter's so impersonal. You two should really meet,  
And he can end it properly.

**RAMONA:** Well, really there's no need.

**TITA:** Tomorrow, three o'clock or so, behind the Hay and Feed.

**RAMONA:** The lumberyard is closer.

*TITA, feeling suspicious, pauses to think.*

**TITA:** (*Brightly.*) Fine. I'll have him meet you there.

*Exit RAMONA. TITA starts for home.*

**TITA:** *Tendrá que comprender el corazón de la mujer.*  
And when he's finally learned a woman's heart is not a toy,  
He'll be a man, but not too much. He's still my little *hijo*.

## ACT ONE, SCENE 7

*TITA calls JOEL into the kitchen.*

**TITA:** ¡*Muchacho, Ven acá!*

**JOEL:** I'm here. Now tell me what she said.

**TITA:** What words are there to say when most the conversation's  
read?

**JOEL:** But once she read the note, what did she say?

**TITA:** I don't remember.

My feet are burning. Why does summer linger through  
September?

**JOEL:** I ain't concerned about your feet.

**TITA:** That comes as no surprise.

My feet are like the salty tears that fill a poor girl's eyes.

**JOEL:** But didn't she say anything?

**TITA:** You bother me to death.

She did say somethin'.

**JOEL:** What?

**TITA:** *Momento.* Let me catch my breath.

**JOEL:** You're wastin' breath on tellin' me you're out of breath.

**TITA:** Good point.

Why don't you rub my feet a spell? I ache at every joint.

*JOEL rubs TITA'S feet.*

**JOEL:** Tita?

**TITA:** Yes.

**JOEL:** What did she say?

**TITA:** It's coming back to me.

"Tell Joel I understand. It simply wasn't meant to be."

**JOEL:** She did?

**TITA:** (*Giving JOEL a sharp kick.*) Oh, you've gone loco now.

You're rubbing much too hard.

She waits for you at three o'clock behind the lumberyard,

Tomorrow. I've arranged it.

**JOEL:** But . . .

**TITA:** Don't give me any sass.

If it were not for me, you wouldn't have an ounce of class.

*The courtship montage takes place on a bare stage.*

**FATHER:** And so the youngsters met behind the lumberyard as planned.

When Tita wasn't lookin', he got bold and took her hand.

Of course, he never said what Tita brought him there to say.

In fact, the two conspired they'd meet up the followin' day.

Such honest children, normally, but love had them corrupted.

They hadn't settled time and place when Tita interrupted.

**TITA:** I trust my boy was gentle when he let you down.

**RAMONA:** Oh, yes.

**TITA:** I hope you two can still be friends despite it.

**RAMONA:** Well, I guess.

*Thank you for reading this free excerpt from  
ROMEO AND JULIET GO WEST by August Mergelman,  
Ph.D. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of  
the script, please contact us at:*

**Heuer Publishing LLC**

**P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406**

**Toll Free: 1-800-950-7529 • Fax (319) 368-8011**

**HEUERPUB.COM**

**DO NOT COPY**