

TWIN DESPERADOS

OR WHEN BULLETS KISS

By Christopher Villa and Greg Atkins

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE GOOD GUYS

- Masked Avenger** A Western hero (*131 lines*)
Masked Desperado A Western hero disguised as a bad guy (*118 lines*)
Howdy The Masked Avenger's loyal sidekick (*66 lines*)
Pardner The Masked Desperado's loyal sidekick (*64 lines*)

THE TOWNSFOLK

- Rebecca** A feisty schoolmarm (*67 lines*)
Lucy The 'sadder but wiser' saloon owner (*55 lines*)
Old Prospector A down-on-his-luck miner with a heart-rending secret (*16 lines*)
Mr. Mayor A fair-weathered mayor who does whatever the Baroness tells him (*14 lines*)
Doc Pinch A quack medicine man who doubles as the local barber, judge, and undertaker (*32 lines*)
Catastrophe Jane A rootin', tootin', quick-shootin', stage coach drivin' cousin to Calamity (*10 lines*)
Widow Jones The local husband-hunting laundress (*21 lines*)
Dance Hall Girls Hearts of gold, legs of fishnet
Dexter Townsperson (*2 lines*)
Child Boy or girl (*1 line*)
Joe The bartender (*2 lines*)
Catlin Saloon girl (*1 line*)
Harriet School girl (*1 line*)
Extras Townsfolk and children; Patrons and poker players for saloon scene; Patients/customers of Doc Pinch's; Mother and child; Western Union Messenger; Gunsmith (*14 lines*)

THE BAD GUYS

- The Baroness** The richest, most ruthless woman in the West (*51 lines*)
The Sheriff The nastiest, most treacherous rattlesnake to ever wear a badge (*39 lines*)
Kid Vicious The slimiest, most foul juvenile delinquent ever to escape hanging as a child (*29 lines*)

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Buster	The local henchman of the Baroness and the Sheriff and leader of the Thugs. (18 lines)
Rusty	The 'brains' of the gang (8 lines)
Dusty	Dense and covered in trail dust (12 lines)
Killer	A mute, brute force (<i>Non-Speaking</i>)
Extras	Outlaws

THE RADIO SHOW

Announcer	The velvet-voiced narrator (32 lines)
Mel	A rotund radio actor (9 lines)
Shirley	An actor with a beautiful voice (6 lines)
Radio Boy	(3 lines)
Cereal Girl and Mother	(<i>GIRL</i> : 4 lines; <i>MOM</i> : 2 lines)
Dad and two masked kids	(<i>JUNIOR</i> : 1 line; <i>JIMMIE</i> : 1 line; <i>DAD</i> : 2 lines)
Uncle Rudy's Rootin'-Tootin' Root Beer Singers (3)	
Sound Effects Person	

SUGGESTED CHARACTER DOUBLING

Announcer/Doc Pinch/Dad/Masked Desperado
Mel/Mr. Mayor/Shirley/Dance Hall Girl
Jones Kid/Child/Radio Boy/Kid Vicious/Junior
Harriet/Cereal Girl/Catlin/Cereal Mother
Gunsmith/Western Union Messenger

NOTE: THE GOOD GUYS are two sets of twins separated at birth. It is important that they dress alike; they do not need to "look" alike. Also, if you decide to double Announcer/Doc Pinch, the Announcer's address at the beginning of each scene could be pre-recorded.

TIME AND PLACE

The entire play takes place in a 24-hour period . . . high noon to high noon in the Old West town of Armadillo.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: RADIO SHOW

Area 1: Tent made with blankets; homemade radio set
Area 2: Old-time microphone
Area 3: Kitchen table with chairs
Area 4: Chair or recliner

NOTE: AREA 2 happens down right in front of the old-time microphone. AREA 1 is

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stage left and AREA 3 is stage right. AREA 4 is upstage center. The MASKED AVENGER (pretends) hanging on to the rope down left. The CARTWRIGHT GANG could be played by DUSTY, RUSTY, KILLER, and BUSTER or extras could be used.

SCENE 2: AVENGER'S ESCAPE

SCENE 3: THE CRIME SPREE

SCENE 4: THE HANGING TREE

SCENE 5: THE LAUNDRY

SCENE 6: DESPERADO'S ENTRANCE

SCENE 7: THE SALOON

SCENE 8: DESPERADO MEETS THE BARONESS

SCENE 9: AVENGER MEETS THE SCHOOL MARM

SCENE 10: DOC PINCH'S OFFICE

SCENE 11: DESPERADO SAVES MISS LUCY

SCENE 12: AVENGER AND MISS REBECCA

SCENE 13: WHAT HORSES?

SCENE 14: THE CHASE

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: THE ESCAPE

SCENE 2: THE BARONESS AND HER THUGS

SCENE 3: DEPUTY VICIOUS

SCENE 4: KID VICIOUS AND THE WIDOW JONES

SCENE 5: THE THREAT

SCENE 6: DESPERADO'S DILEMMA

SCENE 7: BULLETS AND THE MIRROR

SCENE 8: CAPTURED!

SCENE 9: THE DESPERADO VS. KID VICIOUS

SCENE 10: INCARCERATED

SCENE 11: I CAPTURED THE MASKED MAN

SCENE 12: THE JAILBREAK

SCENE 13: THE SHOWDOWN ♦ WHEN BULLETS KISS

STAGE PROPERTIES

(Note: All firearms are non-firing replicas or toy cap guns)

Stuffed dog; headphones

Non-working tabletop radio (1940's)

Microphone circa 1940's (if possible)

Cereal box tops tied with string

Cereal box and scissors

Captain Ken's Sugar Bullets cereal box

Script; Extra scripts (Announcer)

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Two childrens' Lone Ranger masks
Newspaper
Two sets of matching six guns and holsters
Breakaway rope (a rope cut and Velcroed together, separated by pulling a fishing line attached to the noose)
Bag of loot
Bundles of laundry
Teddy bear; Lollypop
Blankie (with writing/map on it) cut into three parts
Gag
Stick horses
Wanted poster
Tote bag with Masked Avenger costume and blankie
Saddlebags; 8 x 10 picture; Gold bullet;
Tote bag; Extra Masked Avenger mask; Dollar bills for bullets
Stack of books
Cards and poker chips
Miscellaneous bar glasses, bottles, etc.
Large, empty mirror frame
Book with "Dusty Trails" cover and pencil
Bag of gold
Lasso/rope
Miscellaneous six guns and holsters for cowboys
Towel
Rubber mallet
Satchel of gold
Rifle
Ledger book
Dainty hankie
Plastic/rubber fish
Comic face with eye glasses, big nose, mustache
Two boxes of bullets: written on one box is "Gold"
Bottle of "Snake Oil" medicine
Final fight props: brooms, buckets, umbrellas, long-handled spoons, frying pans, stuffed toys, etc.
Two bouquets of flowers; wedding veil

THE SET

Though daunting at first glance, *Twin Desperados* is actually a simple show to stage. When the horses in a show are stick ponies, no one expects a realistic set so let your imagination run wild. In the original production, the

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set pieces were painted cut-outs, easy to bring on and off stage and simple to construct. Here are some inventive ideas from the original production:

- The “flaming pit of pitch” was actually a red light and theatrical smoke behind a painted flame. Smoke is optional. It could just be a “fire” painted on a piece of cardboard.
- Representational set pieces (picket fences, jail cell flats, bars in cut-out windows, barn, saloon, train cut-out on wheels, the hanging tree, etc.) were all painted theatrical flats. These flats can be painted to look real or cartoonish. Most of these scenes can be realistic or suggestive. For example, the Hanging Tree scene could just be Old Prospector standing on a stump.
- When furniture is called for, actual furniture (i.e., tables, desks, chairs, piano, etc.) should be used.
- Ground rows (painted wood that is cut out to look like plants, fire, rocks, etc.) can be used to hide lighting instruments and actors (like when they jump into that flaming pit of pitch).
- Stage platforms of various heights and dimensions give the actors more playing areas and allow quick changes from scene to scene, but it is definitely not required. If your budget and technical support allows, you might want to include a raised platform for the saloon stage.
- Two rolling platforms (wagons) with jail bars attached could create the Jailbreak scene. The Jailbreak scene could also be created with two identical cots and the breaking of the bars could be easily pantomimed.
- The train can be an offstage spotlight with sound effects or a painted train flat on wheels.

COSTUME SUGGESTIONS

MASKED AVENGER/MASKED DESPERADO: Identically dressed with matching masks, black western shirts with fringe, black jeans, bolo ties and cowboy boots suggested. Both carry six shooters on each hip. The Masked Avenger and Howdy have cut-out train tracks attached to their shirts for the beginning of ACT TWO.

HOWDY/PARDNER: Identically dressed in blue jeans, suspenders, plaid shirts,

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neckerchief, cowboy boots and a six gun. If possible, the brims of their cowboy hats are bent in front. Howdy also has a lasso.

REBECCA: Dressed in a conservative “schoolmarm” dress. She wears a wristwatch.

LUCY: First appears in a sexy dance hall costume, then changes to a fancy cowgirl outfit.

OLD PROSPECTOR: Wears a union suit, coveralls and a beat-up hat. Took his last bath during the Civil War.

MR. MAYOR: Wears a “loud” western business suit. Tops it off with a bowler hat.

DOC PINCH: Formally dressed with a mourning coat.

CATASTROPHE JANE: Leather-fringed jacket and pants. She wears a Kepi cap (Civil War style) and carries a six shooter and a whip.

WIDOW JONES: Western housewife wear with apron.

DANCE HALL GIRLS: Assorted dance hall costumes with feathers, fishnets, and flashy chokers.

THE BARONESS: Well-dressed, conservative western business attire. Wears a jaunty bolero hat and has a shawl that looks like a child’s blankie.

THE SHERIFF: Long, black mourning coat, black hat, white shirt with a fancy vest. Think “Wyatt Earp.”

KID VICIOUS: Scroungy Western garb with vest, hat, and oversized pants. For the “tear away” costume, wires are attached to the hat and vest then Velcroed in place. When he is shot, the hat/vest are pulled off his body by a stage hand. His vest and hat go flying off, as his pants drop to his ankles. For ease of production, you could just have the pants drop to his ankles.

BUSTER/RUSTY/DUSTY/KILLER: They are a motley crew of dirty, mismatched hombres. An assortment of cowboy clothes that should have been washed a year ago.

ANNOUNCER/MEL: 1940’s business suit. The Announcer wears a wristwatch. Mel wears a hat, coat, and scarf in the opening scene.

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SHIRLEY: A pretty 1940's blouse, skirt and heels. She also wears a hat, coat, and scarf in the opening scene.

UNCLE RUDY'S ROOTIN' TOOTIN' ROOT BEER SINGERS: Dressed in matching Andrew Sisters' outfits.

SOUND EFFECTS PERSON: 1940's casual; rolled-up sleeves, suspenders and a bow tie.

CEREAL MOTHER: Cereal Mother is dressed in a conservative 1940's dress and wears a wristwatch.

TOWNSFOLK/EXTRAS: Miscellaneous cowboy/frontier wear.

MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS

Show music can be taken from the Greatest Hits Collection of Western Movies CD or use traditional cowboy music ("Home on The Range," "Streets of Larado," "Clementine," etc.). Gun shots can be live (cap guns or synthesizer) or recorded sound effects. Cattle stampede, saloon fighting, train whistle, radio static, glass breaking, gun shots, etc. can be found on a sound effects CD. The music to **BABY BLUES** and **UNCLE RUDY'S ROOT BEER** song can be created by the singers in the show and accompanied by a live pianist if desired. If you can do it, a live pianist really adds to the excitement of the show. If you are really adventurous you may want to add a cowboy band with guitar, harmonica, jug, and banjo for pre-show and between scene music and fun.

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ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

Radio Show

As the pre-show music fades out it is replaced by a soft static sound. The static gets louder as the lights come up on AREA 1 to reveal a BOY and his dog huddled under a tent made of blankets and fiddling with the knobs and dials on a homemade radio set. The boy adjusts his head phones and lifts one so the dog can hear. The static gives way to quick flashes of a variety of programs interspersed with more static.

BOY: Listen, Rex, I think this is Chicago. What do you think? I wish it wasn't raining, we usually don't have this much trouble finding the station . . .

The lights start to fade on AREA 1 and up on AREA 2, revealing a microphone and an ANNOUNCER standing behind one of them with a script in his hand. He's looking impatiently at his watch. Light classical music is playing. The lights come up on AREA 3 revealing a GIRL sitting at a table cutting up a cereal box. Beside the box is a stack of box tops tied with string. Her MOTHER enters.

GIRL: Look, Mother, this is the last box top, now I can send off for my Masked Avenger Secret Decoder Ring™!

MOM: That's wonderful, dear. Now we can stop eating cereal at every meal.

GIRL: Is it seven o'clock yet?

MOM: *(Looks at her watch.)* You've got about another minute.

GIRL: Yippee-yi-yay! *(SHE turns her radio up louder. MOTHER sits down at the table and ties up the last stack of box tops.)* This is the last episode, Mother. *(MOM smiles as the lights fade. Lights up on AREA 2 as MEL and SHIRLEY enter with coats and hats half off.)*

SHIRLEY: I've never seen anyone eat three lobsters in one sitting. No wonder you look like a bowling ball.

MEL: I can't help it, I've got a high metabolism.

ANNOUNCER: Hurry up and get your scripts, you're late! And I mean really late!

MEL: We ran all the way.

SHIRLEY: Three blocks, we walked three blocks.

MEL: But it was brisk walking.

ANNOUNCER: Take these, they're last minute changes in the script. *(MEL gives him a look.)*
Don't look at me, I didn't write it.

The lights come up on AREA 4 where we see a DAD sitting in his chair reading the paper while his KIDS, dressed in Masked Avenger look-alike costumes, run around shooting each other.

DAD: Hey there Desperado, put away those smokin' six shooters and come over here.

JUNIOR: Gee, Dad can't you tell us apart? I'm the Masked Avenger and Jimmie's the Desperado.

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DAD: Sorry, Masked Men, I just wanted to tell you that it's time for your program. (*Lights up in AREAS 1,2,3 and 4.*)

BOY: I found it, Rex.

GIRL: Just in time, Mother!

JUNIOR/JIMMIE: Yahoo!

The ANNOUNCER adjusts his script as the ACTORS jostle each other one last time. The classical music fades out and we hear the station identification chimes and (optional) TWIN DESPERADOS theme music begins.

ANNOUNCER: High above the stockyards in the beautiful Brisket Building of Chicago's legendary Tenderloin District, the Rough Riders Radio Theatre is proud to present . . . (*SFX of a bullet ricocheting.*) . . . The Masked Avenger and the Masked Desperado in the final exciting chapter of TWIN DESPERADOS! Tonight . . . Episode 20, When Bullets Kiss. Brought to you by Cowboy Ken's Sugar Bullets, the cereal with its own lasso in every box, and by Uncle Rudy's Rootin' Tootin' Root Beer. And now, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls . . . TWIN DESPERADOS' whirlwind conclusion, When Bullets Kiss!

The lights fade out on everyone but the ANNOUNCER and the MASKED AVENGER hanging onto a rope above a ring of flames and the MASKED DESPERADO locked in mortal combat on train tracks.

ANNOUNCER: When last we left our heroes, The Masked Desperado was locked in mortal combat with the Cartwright Gang on the railroad tracks. At that moment the 3:10 from Yuma was rolling right along those very same tracks.

MEL: (*As the MASKED DESPERADO mouths the words.*) I'm bringing you to justice if it's the last thing I do! (*The train whistles and the fighters freeze in horror.*)

ANNOUNCER: The Masked Avenger, lured into the old mine by a sinister, shadowy figure . . .

MEL: (*The MASKED AVENGER mouths the words.*) Is that a flaming pit of pitch I see?

ANNOUNCER: . . . is catapulted into a flaming pit of pitch by a mysterious explosion and barely manages to grab a dangling rope. (*The rope snaps and he plummets into the flames. The AVENGER yells as he falls.*) Let us rejoin our story of the thrilling days of yesteryear as the Masked Avenger rides again . . . (*Optional theme music stops.*) . . . after this important message . . .

Radio actors MEL, SHIRLEY, and ANNOUNCER play these commercial roles.

MEL: (*In a little kid's voice.*) Bye, Mom. Come on Spot.

ANNOUNCER: Woof.

SHIRLEY: Hold your horses, young man. You aren't leaving for school until you've had something to eat.

MEL: Ahhh, Mom. Boring old oatmeal?

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SHIRLEY: Sit down and stop complaining. I think you might even like this.

MEL: Oh, boy! Cowboy Ken's Sugar Bullets! With a free lasso in every box. This is great!

SHIRLEY: Eat your cereal.

MEL: You bet. I love Sugar Bullets. They're sweet and crunchy and give me the energy I need to get me through the day. Thanks Mom!

SHIRLEY: Thank you Cowboy Ken.

ANNOUNCER: Woof.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

Avenger's Escape

ANNOUNCER: And now, Act One of the final installment of the Masked Avenger's rip-snortinest adventure, *(SFX of gun shots and bullets kissing.)* When Bullets Kiss! *(Lights up on HOWDY, the Masked Avenger's sidekick as he stands before the flaming pit.)*

HOWDY: Oh, woe! The Masked Avenger has joined the choir invisible, he has entered the gates of the great unknown, his ribs have been bar-B-qed. *(During the above we hear the far off cries of help from the MASKED AVENGER.)* It's as if I can hear his voice even as I speak. Cries of "Howdy!" and "Ouch!" and "Help!" *(HE realizes.)* Help?!? *(HE spies something and uncoils his lasso, giving it a couple of overhead spins and tosses it offstage. He hauls in the MASKED AVENGER.)* Gee, Masked Avenger, I thought you were a goner, for sure. How did you manage to escape from that flaming pit?

MASKED AVENGER: It was relatively easy, Howdy. Only the top of the pit was flaming pitch, underneath was an underground stream which carried me out of the mine and into this river here. You saw me and fished me out. Rather simple really.

HOWDY: It sure was.

MASKED AVENGER: Just one thing, Howdy, next time try to fish me out before I go over the rapids.

HOWDY: You are amazing, Masked Avenger.

MASKED AVENGER: Well, Howdy, you know my motto, "Wherever there are people suffering . . . I'm there." No that's not quite right. "There I am and people are suffering." No, that's not it . . . let's see.

HOWDY: Don't you think you should get out of those wet clothes?

MASKED AVENGER: Good idea, Howdy, pull out my spare costume while I climb out of these . . .

HOWDY: *(Opening the Masked Avenger tote bag.)* Uh, remember when you cornered the Ringo Kid in the cactus patch and you said, "Come on out, you dirty skunk?"

MASKED AVENGER: Yes, I remember that.

HOWDY: Remember how there really was a skunk in the cactus patch?

MASKED AVENGER: Then what you're telling me is, this is my spare costume? *(HOWDY nods.)* Then we'll just have to find a laundry. I think there's a small town just over that ridge, if I remember correctly. We'll see if they have one.

HOWDY: Maybe they'll know something about your lost brother.

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MASKED AVENGER: I've just about given up hope of ever finding any of my family, Howdy. *(They sigh together.)* Whistle up our horses and let's get a move on. *(HOWDY and the MASKED AVENGER whistle for their horses. The horses are thrown in from off stage. THEY mount up and ride off.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

The Crime Spree

ANNOUNCER: Meanwhile, in the once happy little town of Armadillo, bullets are flying and the citizens are suffering in the grip of a crime spree of epic proportion. Chaos and lawlessness have swept over the happy valley in a wave of terror that spares no one, man, woman, or child. The Outlaws rob, pillage and plunder wherever and whenever they please . . .

We see quick vignettes of: Suddenly shots are heard and two OUTLAWS spill out of the bank shooting and hollering, their arms full of loot. They stop and rob a WOMAN of her purse and take the little GIRL's teddy bear. As they exit, two more OUTLAWS enter and rob the first pair of outlaws. The victims exit and the second pair cross over to the MOTHER and CHILD and rob them again, this time taking the lollypop from the little girl. As the outlaws exit, one of them drops a bag of loot which the little GIRL picks up. The SHERIFF immediately runs in and carries the little GIRL off to jail as the MOTHER follows, pleading with the SHERIFF.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

The Hanging Tree

ANNOUNCER: Out of desperation and fear the poor townfolk turn on each other and the specter of vigilanteism raises its ugly head . . .

We hear the sound of many voices raised in argument as a hoard of TOWNSPEOPLE enter including DEXTER, BUSTER, DUSTY, and RUSTY. The SHERIFF is dragging the OLD PROSPECTOR in behind him at the end of a rope. The BARONESS, MAYOR, and SCHOOLMARM follow at the head of the hoard.

BARONESS: Shootings too good for him, take him to the Hanging Tree!

MAYOR: Fellow citizens, we can't be taking the law into our own hands, it just ain't civilized.

MISS REBECCA: He hasn't even had a trial.

DEXTER: A trial's too good for him.

ALL: Yeah!

MISS REBECCA: Good people of Armadillo, aren't you ashamed of yourselves? Our forefathers fought for the right to a trial for every citizen of our great country. Will you deny that right to this poor old man?

ALL: Yeah!

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MISS REBECCA: I can't believe we have sunk so low as to lose all respect for the law.

BARONESS: Believe it, Miss White, this is the edge of civilization, where every man, woman, and child makes their own law, with this . . . *(SHE pulls out her six gun.)* Might makes right in the wild West, Miss White.

OLD PROSPECTOR: Ya know, that reminds me of when I was -

SHERIFF: Quiet! You're in enough trouble as it is.

DEXTER: To the Hangin' Tree!

MISS REBECCA: But what about his trial?

BARONESS: By all means . . . Oh, Doc? Doc Pinch? *(DOC comes running out of his office putting on a morticians coat.)*

DOC PINCH: Yes, Baroness, ma'am, what can I do for you?

BARONESS: Doc, you studied law, didn't you?

DOC PINCH: As a matter of fact, I did, Baroness, under the tutelage of Hiram Jacoby and Herbert Myers at Writs RUs.

BARONESS: That's all I wanted to know. Come over here. *(SHE drags him over by the OLD PROSPECTOR.)* Here's your Hanging Judge, Sheriff. The good people of Armadillo can be the jury.

MISS REBECCA: That's not fair!

BARONESS: That's as fair as it gets 'round these parts, Miss White. Get on with it, Doc . . . er, I mean, Judge Pinch. *(DOC takes someone's gun to use as a gavel and calls the court to session by rapping the gun butt on RUSTY's head. SFX of a "Bonk.")* I hereby call this court in session! Bring out the guilty party. *(HE looks around and is surprised by the OLD PROSPECTOR.)* Don't sneak up behind me like that. State your name.

OLD PROSPECTOR: I'm the Old Prospector and I'm innocent, Judge.

DOC PINCH: So much for the defense . . . Prosecution?

SHERIFF: The charges are robbin' the bank, robbin' the stagecoach, robbin' the train, and claim jumping . . . oh, and spittin'. *(ALL gasp in horror.)*

DOC PINCH: How do you plead, old timer? *(The OLD PROSPECTOR falls to his knees whining and pleading.)* Well, that's pretty good, but I'm afraid you're gonna hang, old man. What's the verdict of the jury?

ALL: Guilty!

DOC PINCH: Have any last words? *(The Townsfolk motion frantically to DOC not to let the Prospector speak.)*

OLD PROSPECTOR: As a matter of fact . . .

DOC PINCH: One more outburst like that and I'll find you in contempt. Sheriff, gag that man. *(HE does.)* Now, anything else to say? *(The PROSPECTOR strains to talk behind the gag.)* That's more like it. After due process of law I hereby find you guilty of all charges. I therefore sentence you to be hanged, shot, tarred and leathered and rode out of town on a rail. Court is adjourned. Okay, boys, string him up! *(DUSTY and RUSTY throw the rope over the Hanging Tree.)*

MISS REBECCA: I hope you're satisfied, Baroness. Sending an innocent man to his death.

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BARONESS: I am satisfied, Miss White, whenever I get my way.

MISS REBECCA: It isn't enough you have to steal the land out from under honest hard working people, now you're framing and executing every decent person who dares to stand up to you.

BARONESS: That's right, Miss White, and if you're not careful you might find yourself dancing on air one of these days. Come on, Buster, let's get out of here, you know how much I dislike violence. Good day, Miss White.

The BARONESS and BUSTER exit as DUSTY and RUSTY complete setting the noose around the PROSPECTOR's neck. The TOWNSFOLK ad lib: "We ain't had a hanging since yesterday." "Boy, he looks like a wiggler, don't he?" "Nice job with the knot, Homer", etc.

SHERIFF: Stand back, everybody, he's gonna kick some.

DOC PINCH: Let 'er rip, Sheriff. *(Just as they pull on the rope a shot rings out and the rope is cut in two. The PROSPECTOR drops to the ground.)* I thought we was going to hang him first. *(CATASTROPHE JANE strides in with her six gun in one hand and her whip in the other. SHE cracks the whip and half the town jumps into the arms of the other half. They get down during the next couple of lines.)*

CATASTROPHE JANE: Whoa there, Little Doggies, what do you think you're doing?

DUSTY: We're fixin' to hang this old sod.

CATASTROPHE JANE: Over your dead body.

DOC PINCH: Well, hello, Catastrophe Jane. Back from Dodge City already?

CATASTROPHE JANE: Just in time, from the looks of it. The Baronesses dogs up to their old tricks, eh?

DOC PINCH: Can't teach 'em new ones.

SHERIFF: Now hold on there, we had a trial and everything -

MISS REBECCA: You call that a trial? It was a travesty of justice . . . *(Immediately everyone starts arguing. CATASTROPHE JANE cracks her whip and the other half of the townsfolk jump into their partners' arms. A couple of the THUGS reach for their guns. SHE fires a warning shot.)*

CATASTROPHE JANE: Keep your hands off those six guns and untie that rope. Now the rest of you go about your business, there won't be any hanging today. *(No one moves, they just mill about, grumbling.)* And take the gag off that poor man. *(The TOWNSFOLK scatter.)*

OLD PROSPECTOR: Well, I'll be, that was the prettiest piece of shooting since Wild Bill Hickok took the nose off the Ringo Kid back in '69. I thank you, ma'am. That was a close call and I tell you I've had one or two of those in my day. Why, I remember back in '75 when I was prospectin' up in the Black Hills -

CATASTROPHE JANE: Listen here, I believe every man ought to get a fair hearing, Mister Jabber Jaws, but in your case I might have been a might quick on the trigger. See you around, folks. Yeeha! *(With a crack of her whip, SHE exits. The SHERIFF comes over to the PROSPECTOR as JANE leaves.)*

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SHERIFF: You may think you're off the hook, old man, but when the Baroness hears about this, she ain't gonna like it. I'll give you odds you'll be hangin' from that tree by high noon tomorrow. If I were you I'd make tracks for those hills and wouldn't stop till I was knee deep in the Gulf of Mexico. Just a friendly warning. Good day, folks.

MISS REBECCA: Good day, Sheriff. *(The PROSPECTOR starts off.)* Where are you going?

OLD PROSPECTOR: I'll show them. They can't do this to me. I'm onto something big and no ones getting rid of me.

MISS REBECCA: Something big? You mean like a gold strike?

OLD PROSPECTOR: Gold's not the only thing I've been searching for. You wouldn't know it to look at me now, but once I was a happy man with a beautiful wife and two baby boys. Twins, as alike as two peas in a pod. But tragedy struck our little family. I had sent for my wife and young 'uns to join me out here but as their wagon train was fording a river, a flash flood swept their wagon downstream and smashed it into pieces. My poor wife tried desperately to save the twins but they were swept away by the current, deep into hostile Indian country. She struck her head on a rock and disappeared under the raging waters, never to be seen again. Since that time I've wandered the west, prospecting and searching for any signs that they might still be alive. Over twenty years I've searched, high and low, in and out of every town west of the Mississippi. And no one, I mean no one is gonna stop me now. Sorry, I get to rambling sometimes.

MISS REBECCA: That's alright, sometimes a man has to say what a man has to say.

OLD PROSPECTOR: Thanks for sticking up for me, Missy. I hope I haven't caused you any trouble with the Baroness. I'd be careful if I was you.

MISS REBECCA: Don't you worry about me, I can handle myself. and good luck in your search. Take care. *(SHE exits.)*

OLD PROSPECTOR: Good luck to you, Missy. *(A COWBOY passes by and the PROSPECTOR latches on to him.)* Howdy, there, Pardner. Did I ever tell you about the time I was almost consumed by locusts? *(THEY exit as the BARONESS enters with her THUGS.)*

BARONESS: Now you get over to the saloon and give Miss Lucy my final offer. One thousand dollars, take it or leave it.

BUSTER: And what if she says, no?

BARONESS: Then tell her the next song she sings will be with the heavenly choir. *(A WESTERN UNION MESSENGER enters with a piece of paper in his hand.)*

MESSENGER: Telegram for the Baroness.

BARONESS: *(She takes it from him.)* Thanks.

MESSENGER: *(He waits)* What, no tip? *(The THUGS point their guns at him. HE eyeballs them and exits quickly.)* You have a nice day.

BARONESS: It's from the new gunslinger I hired. He says he'll be here on the 3:10 from Yuma.

BUSTER: What do you need another gun for?

DUSTY: Yeah, you got us, aint' ya?

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BARONESS: This man is a specialist, The Masked Desperado, and I have a feeling we're going to need a specialist before this is over. Keep a sharp lookout for him and send him over to my office.

RUSTY: How are we supposed to recognize him if he's wearing a mask?

BARONESS: Here's his picture. *(SHE pulls out a wanted poster and hands it to Buster.)* Can't be many who look like that.

RUSTY: Well, I'll be . . . ten thousand dollar reward!

DUSTY: Gee, Buster, you're only worth five hundred.

BUSTER: *(HE pulls his gun and puts it in DUSTY's face.)* Five hundred and fifty. I shot someone yesterday.

BARONESS: You boys get a move on, I don't want you gallavantin' around all day.

ALL: Yes, Ma'am. *(THEY run off as the BARONESS exits in the opposite direction.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

The Laundry

ANNOUNCER: Meanwhile the Masked Avenger and Howdy ride into town. *(The MASKED AVENGER and HOWDY enter and tie up their horses while they talk. The AVENGER throws his saddlebags to HOWDY.)*

MASKED AVENGER: So this is Armadillo, a quiet, peaceful, prairie paradise. *(Just then a couple of OUTLAWS run by in close pursuit of the MAYOR, shooting and yelling.)*

HOWDY: Yeah, real peaceful.

MASKED AVENGER: You better get those clothes over to the laundry before they get any ripper. I'll check out the town on my way over to the saloon.

HOWDY: See you over there. *(HE heads over to the laundry as the AVENGER exits. Lights up on the laundry revealing the WIDOW JONES, the proprietress. SHE is busy folding clothes as HE enters.)*

HOWDY: Excuse me, Ma'am.

WIDOW JONES: *(Liking what she sees.)* Howdy.

HOWDY: You know me?

WIDOW JONES: No, but I'd like to.

HOWDY: Uh, well, I came in here because . . .

WIDOW JONES: Because you saw me through the window and were overcome with desire.

HOWDY: Close . . . I came to have the skunk washed out of these clothes.

WIDOW JONES: *(With a wink.)* Ah, yes . . . business first. Let's see, *(Pulling the clothes out of the bag.)* one masked man costume, two shirts, one spare mask and . . . a blankie?

HOWDY: Don't make fun of the Masked Man's blankie. It's the only thing that he has left to remind him of the father, mother and brother he lost so many years ago.

WIDOW JONES: *(Holding up the blanket and showing the markings.)* Well, I know I can get the smell out, but I'm not so sure about the stains.

HOWDY: Well, do what you can.

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WIDOW JONES: For you I will do anything, you handsome hunk of sidekick.

HOWDY: What do I owe you?

WIDOW JONES: *(Grabbing him by his lapels and kissing him. THEY break apart.)* Whooooo! I think you got some change coming. *(SHE picks him up and carries him off as we FADE OUT.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 6
Desperado's Entrance

ANNOUNCER: *(We hear the whistle of the 3:10 from Yuma.)* As fate would have it, the Masked Desperado arrives on the 3:10 from Yuma.

The barn doors fly open and the train pulls into the stage area and stops in a cloud of steam. Standing on the cow catcher is the MASKED DESPERADO spinning his guns. HE jumps down from the train as his sidekick, PARDNER, runs up from behind the train.

PARDNER: You okay, Masked Desperado? That was a close call!

MASKED DESPERADO: It sure was, Pardner.

PARDNER: I thought you were a goner!

MASKED DESPERADO: Don't count out the Masked Desperado until you've used all your fingers.

PARDNER: How did you escape?

MASKED DESPERADO: Well, when the Cartwright Gang ran off like the cowardly weasels they are, I had to quickly formulate a plan. Yes, Pardner, when I saw the speeding train heading straight for us and all I could think of was...RUN!...so I ran down the tracks, faster and faster, the train mere inches behind me, when I thought I couldn't go another step, the train stopped here in the town of Armadillo.

PARDNER: That sure was quick thinking!

MASKED DESPERADO: Thank you Pardner. By the way, how did you escape?

PARDNER: I just jumped out of the way.

MASKED DESPERADO: *(This pulls him up short.)* Oh.

PARDNER: You got pretty dirty fighting those Cartwright boys.

MASKED DESPERADO: I can't drop in to see the Baroness looking like this. *(Suddenly, there is a yell from the laundry and HOWDY comes screaming out. HE is across the stage before the DESPERADO and PARDNER can get a good look at him. The WIDOW JONES sticks her head out of the door.)*

WIDOW JONES: Oh, lover!?! You forgot your ticket!

MASKED DESPERADO: Well, that looks like the laundry.

PARDNER: Sure does.

TOGETHER: Why don't you take these clothes over . . . to . . .

MASKED DESPERADO: Why don't you take these clothes over to the laundry?

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PARDNER: Why don't you go in and take them off? (*THEY begin to undress the DESPERADO.*

WIDOW JONES sees the DESPERADO and blows him a kiss. It hits him on the butt.)

MASKED DESPERADO: Yeow!

PARDNER: Err . . . maybe we'd better get a room.

MASKED DESPERADO: Right. (*THEY start to exit.*)

PARDNER: I was thinking, Captain -

MASKED DESPERADO: Don't call me Captain, Pardner. In this town I'm the Masked Desperado.

(HE strikes a manly pose.)

PARDNER: Yes, sir. (*HE salutes.*)

MASKED DESPERADO: (*The DESPERADO slaps his hand.*) And no saluting. (*PARDNER nods.*) Now, what were you thinking?

PARDNER: I was thinking after this assignment, maybe I could take some time off and look for my brother?

MASKED DESPERADO: Why bother, Pardner? Families bring nothing but heartache when they break-up. (*PARDNER and the DESPERADO cry for a moment. REBECCA enters with an armload of books which she drops near the DESPERADO. PARDNER makes a move to help, but the DESPERADO stops him.*) Remember who we are.

MISS REBECCA: Could one of you gentlemen give me a hand? My class is waiting for these new school books.

MASKED DESPERADO: Sorry, Ma'am, we're gunslingers, (*HE kicks one of the books and it goes sailing across the floor.*) not gentlemen.

MISS REBECCA: Well, I never! (*SHE scrambles around picking up the books. The DESPERADO is fighting the urge to help her. HE almost gives in when a CHILD enters.*)

CHILD: Wow, it's the Masked -

MISS REBECCA: (*Cutting him off.*) Help me pick up these books, please. (*The CHILD helps her all the while watching the DESPERADO.*) It's a shame what this town is coming to. (*SHE and the CHILD exit.*)

MASKED DESPERADO: (*Walking downstage and facing the audience.*) I hated to just stand by, but it wouldn't do for anyone to see the Masked Desperado doing a good deed.

PARDNER: (*Walks up beside him.*) Who are you talking to?

MASKED DESPERADO: (*Scanning the audience.*) I don't know. (*He turns to PARDNER.*) Let's find the Baroness! (*THEY exit.*)

ACT ONE, SCENE 7 The Saloon

ANNOUNCER: Meanwhile, as Masked Avenger heads toward the saloon to find relief for his parched throat . . .

Lights up on the saloon in full swing. Three girls are doing a wild Can-Can on the stage, cowboys are playing poker, drinking and generally enjoying themselves. The girls dance on tables and

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around the saloon. Just then the THREE THUGS barge into the saloon and stand in the doorway looking ominous. If a piano is playing, the piano stops. A hush falls over the crowd. The THUGS ooze on in and start pushing people out of their way and finally sit at a table. MISS LUCY starts to go over to them.

JOE THE BARTENDER: Be careful, Miss Lucy, they look like they're in an ugly mood.

MISS LUCY: They look that way all the time, Joe. Don't worry about me. (*SHE sashays on over to the THUGS.*) Did you boys want something or are you here just to ruin the decor?

BUSTER: We got an important message for you from the Baroness.

MISS LUCY: Another one? Tell her for the umpteenth time, NO!

RUSTY: Don't you even want to hear her new offer?

MISS LUCY: No. I wouldn't sell the Glass Slipper to her for all the money in the Armadillo Bank, that is, if the bank had any money.

BUSTER: Don't be so quick on the draw, Miss Lucy. She's offering a fair price.

MISS LUCY: You can't put a price on hopes and dreams, Buster. You've done your duty, now git!

BUSTER: There ain't no law that says we can't sit down and have a drink, is there?

MISS LUCY: If there was, you'd break it just for fun anyway. (*The THUGS laugh.*) I'll have Joe send over three shots of Root Beer. Anything else? I got a song to sing.

DUSTY: (*Leering at her*) Well, there is jus' one little thang.

MISS LUCY: (*Giving him a withering look.*) Yeah?

DUSTY: Nothin', I wuz jus' thinkin'.

MISS LUCY: Thinking? Imagine that. (*Passes JOE.*) Three shots of Root Beer . . . and give 'em Brand X. (*SHE goes backstage.*)

JOE THE BARTENDER: Yeah, that scum doesn't deserve our best . . . (*ALL freeze for this commercial plug.*) . . . Uncle Rudy's Rootin' Tootin' Root Beer . . . the Root Beer that Won the West . . . smooth creamy head atop a golden brown brew. Ask for it by name. (*The MASKED AVENGER enters and everything stops again. The crowd looks at him, HE tips his hat, and everything starts up again. HE makes his way over to the bar, pausing at a poker game.*)

MASKED AVENGER: (*Looking over a cowboys shoulder at his cards.*) Good looking full house you got there. (*The PLAYER reacts as the MASKED AVENGER walks on. The PLAYER stands up and draws his gun. Playing cards fall out of his shirt sleeve. The OTHER PLAYERS jump him. The MASKED AVENGER sidles up to the bar.*)

MISS LUCY: (*Walks onto the 'saloon stage.'*) How you all doing? (*The CROWD ignores her.*) I said, how y'all doing? (*Still no response, so SHE pulls a gun out of her garter and shoots into the air. The CROWD becomes silent.*) How you all doing? (*The CROWD ad libs: "Jes fine," "okay," etc.*) Good to hear it. Now, I'd like to sing a little song . . . maestro, please . . . (*SHE sings.*)

You gambled with my love
I knew I was gonna lose

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Your Ace of Spades beat my Queen of Hearts
now I'm left with nothing but these Baby Blues

Baby Blues
Baby Blues
I got tears in my eyes
and these Baby Blue

You crushed my little heart
I guess I've paid my dues
Now I'm left with nothin'
But these Baby Blues

Baby Blues
Baby Blues
I got tears in my eyes
and these Baby Blue

Between me 'n your horse
I knew Just who you'd choose
So I'm left all alone with your saddle
me 'n my Baby Blues

(ALL sing with her on final chorus.)

Baby Blues
Baby Blues
I got tears in my eyes
and these Baby Blue

(Applause along with major crying and wailing. MISS LUCY crosses behind the bar.)

MASKED AVENGER: *(Dabbing his eyes.)* That was right sad, Ma'am.

MISS LUCY: Yeah, well I'll cry tomorrow. What can I get you? A root beer?

MASKED AVENGER: No thanks, I never touch the stuff. Just a glass of milk, Guernsey if you got it.

MISS LUCY: What kind 'of bar do you think I run here . . . ? Of course I have Guernsey. *(JOE THE BARTENDER hands him a shot glass of milk. The AVENGER downs it and reacts at its potency.)*

MASKED AVENGER: Whoooooee! Low fat!

MAYOR: Pardon me for intruding, stranger, but I couldn't help noticing you're wearing a mask.

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MASKED AVENGER: You're very observant.

MAYOR: Well, it's my job to notice these things. I'm the Mayor of Armadillo and if you're looking for trouble, I suggest you keep on looking. This is a respectable town . . . *(There is a flurry of shots from outside with the accompanying yelling and screaming.)*

MASKED AVENGER: Mr. Mayor, I'm the Masked Avenger, and I may be able to help with your problem here.

MAYOR: Not THE Masked Avenger? The man who singlehandedly cleaned up Tombstone, Dodge City, and [put your town here]? Hey, Joe, another round for the Masked Man. We got a celebrity in town. *(The THUGS wave and nod at the MASKED AVENGER as the crowd slowly realizes something is going to happen.)*

MAYOR: Friends of yours?

MASKED AVENGER: I hope not. *(BUSTER decides this is the perfect opportunity to show off in front of the crowd and the man he thinks is the Masked Desperado. As one of the saloon girls, CATLIN, walks by, BUSTER pulls her onto his lap. SHE resists loudly.)*

CATLIN: Let go of me, you polecat.

MISS LUCY: Get your hands off my girls!

BUSTER: Whoa now Catlin, quit your buckin'! *(The THUGS laugh. The MASKED AVENGER adjusts his hat and gun belt and turns to face the THUGS.)*

MASKED AVENGER: It sounds to me like the lady doesn't want a riding lesson, cowboy. Maybe you should let her go, easy . . . *(BUSTER is a little thrown by this from the MASKED DESPERADO.)*

BUSTER: There's plenty of mares in the corral, Masked Man, this little filly's mine. *(The MASKED AVENGER strides over and spins CATLIN out of BUSTER's lap.)*

MASKED AVENGER: We're not talking about horses here, Buster. Now, I suggest you apologize to this lady.

BUSTER: What's your problem, mister? I thought you was one of us.

MASKED AVENGER: I'd rather be shot. *(BUSTER grins at his buddies.)*

BUSTER: Suit yourself. *(HE draws his gun, but the AVENGER takes it out of his hand and tosses it to JOE. This surprises the THUGS.)* Get him boys!

The THUGS jump the AVENGER and a fight ensues. During the entire fight the AVENGER doesn't throw any punches and his only kicks are to the posterior, while the THUGS do everything in their power to hurt him. He always ducks or moves in such a way that the THUGS end up hitting, kicking, strangling and tackling each other. HOWDY runs in and joins the donnybrook. The THUGS break chairs over each others' heads and at one point, one of them is thrown over the bar and into a mirror, which shatters. NOTE: The mirror is only simulated; it is actually only an empty frame. MISS LUCY knocks BUSTER out at the end. The AVENGER throws each THUG into a big pile and dusts himself off as HOWDY helps put the saloon back in order. The SHERIFF enters.

MASKED AVENGER: Here you are, Sheriff. They were disturbing the peace. It might be a good idea if you were to lock them up for a couple of days.

TWIN DESPERADOS OR WHEN BULLETS KISS

SHERIFF: Seems you're doing my job, mister. I'll make sure I'm around next time. Thanks for the help. *(The SHERIFF drags the THUGS off and releases them when HE's out of sight of the AVENGER.)* Why you no good mama's boys, if this don't beat all. The Baronesses best guns showed up by some dime novel cowboy in a nickel mask. She's gonna love this.

BUSTER: Please, Sheriff, don't tell the Baroness -

RUSTY: She'll skin us alive -

DUSTY: Or worse!

SHERIFF: I might be able to help you boys out, if you would care to make a small donation to the Sheriff's retirement fund. Plus do me a little favor . . .

BUSTER: Anything Sheriff.

RUSTY/DUSTY: Yeah, anything at all . . .

SHERIFF: Come with me, I'll tell you what I've got in mind.

THEY exit as MISS LUCY goes over to the AVENGER.

MISS LUCY: Those were some fancy moves, stranger.

MASKED AVENGER: It was my pleasure to be of assistance.

MISS LUCY: Well! A real gentleman. That's unusual for these parts. You're not from around here?

MASKED AVENGER: Just passing through, ma'am. I'm looking for somebody.

MISS LUCY: You're not a bounty hunter, are you?

MASKED AVENGER: No ma'am, the man I'm looking for is brother to a friend of mine.

MISS LUCY: That's mighty big of you, stranger. It's not often you find people helping each other out.

MASKED AVENGER: The way I look at it is, if people are suffering I can help that . . . no, I mean . . . I'm always there if there is suffering . . . no -

MISS LUCY: Well, you're in the right place. We've got plenty of suffering here.

MASKED AVENGER: So I noticed. You might tell me, ma'am, I didn't see a City Hall when I rode in . . .

MISS LUCY: It got stolen.

MASKED AVENGER: Ah. Where do you keep the town records, then?

MISS LUCY: The Schoolmarm has those over in the school library.

MASKED AVENGER: Well, Howdy, it sounds like back to school for us.

MISS LUCY: I was thinking maybe we could have a drink together.

MASKED AVENGER: Thanks anyway, ma'am, but I don't drink and ride. I better be moving along. It's been a real pleasure making your acquaintance, ma'am. Let's go, Howdy. *(The JONES KID runs up.)*

JONES KID: You're the Masked Avenger, aren't you? Can I have your autograph? Please? *(The MASKED AVENGER nods.)* Right here on my copy of Dusty Trails!

MASKED AVENGER: What's your name son?

JONES KID: They call me the Jones Kid.

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MASKED AVENGER: Here's your book, I signed it right underneath my picture.

JONES KID: Thanks.

MASKED AVENGER: Tell you what I'm going to do, son. (*HOWDY hands him each item.*) I'm going to give you one of my 8 x 10 glossies, an official Masked Avenger Mask, just like the one I wear, one of my Golden Bullets and this handy Masked Avenger tote bag to carry it all in.

JONES KID: Gee, thanks!

MASKED AVENGER: Now you get on back to school.

JONES KID: Yahoo! (*The MASKED AVENGER, HOWDY and the JONES KID exit.*)

MAYOR: Now there's an odd sort.

MISS LUCY: He's just how I like them, tall, masked, and mysterious. I just hope he doesn't go for the schoolmarm type. That would just break my heart . . . again. (*FADE OUT.*)

ACT ONE, SCENE 8
Desperado Meets the Baroness

ANNOUNCER: As the dust settled, the Desperado and his partner, Pardner, arrive at the Baronesses Ranch.

BARONESS: (*The BARONESS is sitting behind her desk. The door is kicked open and the MASKED DESPERADO strides in.*) You must be the famous Masked Desperado.

MASKED DESPERADO: And you must be the famous Baroness. Quite a spread you've got here . . . what do you call it?

BARONESS: Montana.

MASKED DESPERADO: Ah. Well, Baroness, why don't you tell me why I'm here.

BARONESS: I've been looking for a specialist, someone with a fist of iron and a will of steel to help me finish taking over the town of Armadillo.

MASKED DESPERADO: The way I heard it, you already own the town.

BARONESS: Everything but the saloon. I want that saloon! I have to have that saloon even if I have to . . . (*SHE starts to swoon and PARDNER catches her.*)

PARDNER: You alright, Baroness?

BARONESS: (*In a different voice.*) Oh, just a little spell from an accident a long time ago. I was . . . (*SHE swoons again. Back to her original voice.*) Get your hands off me! I'm fine! (*PARDNER is shoved away.*) My regular hired guns can't seem to get Miss Lucy to sign the saloon over to me; maybe you can change her mind.

MASKED DESPERADO: I'll take care of it. (*HE spins his six gun and shoots himself in the foot. HE tries to hide the pain and grabs PARDNER by the shoulder for support.*)

BARONESS: One other thing, I heard tell that there is an undercover federal agent in town. I think you ought to check out that new schoolmarm, Miss Rebecca. I get a bad feeling around her.

MASKED DESPERADO: (*Through gritted teeth.*) No problemo.

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BARONESS: Now if there's nothing else . . .

MASKED DESPERADO: Just one little thing. *(HE holds out his hand and the BARONESS tosses him a bag of gold.)* I look forward to seeing you again. *(HE hobbles stage right.)*

BARONESS: 'Till then.

MASKED DESPERADO: Baroness. *(HE tips his hat and whistles up his horse. PARDNER, from behind, pushes the stick horse against Desperado's legs. The DESPERADO reacts to the pain. THEY ride off.)*

BARONESS: There's something vaguely familiar about that masked man. *(FADE OUT.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 9 Avenger Meets the Schoolmarm

ANNOUNCER: Knowing that the town records might give him some clue to finding his family, the Masked Avenger heads over to the School House, where he meets the schoolmarm, Miss Rebecca White.

MISS REBECCA: Now, children, today we are going to study Shakespeare's play, A Comedy of Errors.

KIDS: *(Sadly.)* Ahhhhhh.

HARRIET: Oh, boy!

MISS REBECCA: Thank you, Harriet.

The MASKED AVENGER walks into the school room and removes his hat. The KIDS are awestruck.

MASKED AVENGER: Howdy, ma'am.

KIDS: It's the Masked Avenger!

MISS REBECCA: Children, sit down and be attentive.

MASKED AVENGER: Pardon the interruption, ma'am, I'm here -

MISS REBECCA: To clean up the town. The Jones Kid told the whole class. He used the merchandise you gave him for "show and tell."

MASKED AVENGER: Well, actually I just stopped by to look through . . .

MISS REBECCA: Personally, I find such displays of self-centeredness in very bad taste. I don't think it's right for children to idolize someone who's entire life is one of violence.

MASKED AVENGER: I don't like violence. My motto is, "When I'm here everyone suff . . ." no that's not . . .

MISS REBECCA: Your adventures are full of gunfights and fistcuffs, lynchings, cattle rustling, ambushes, robberies, and showdowns. Sounds rather violent to me.

MASKED AVENGER: Well, I . . .

MISS REBECCA: If you ask me, I think all such magazines as Dirty Trails . . .

JONES KID: Dusty Trails, Miss White.

BY CHRISTOPHER VILLA AND GREG ATKINS

MISS REBECCA: Whatever . . . should be banned. It is our civic responsibility to provide role models for children that represent positive social values.

MASKED AVENGER: Well, I -

MISS REBECCA: Don't you think it's time we started teaching our children that violence is unacceptable behavior and never really solves any problems?

MASKED AVENGER: Well, I -

MISS REBECCA: I'm glad you agree. I hope in the future you will refrain from such blatant exhibitions of macho behavior in front of my children.

MASKED AVENGER: Well, I -

MISS REBECCA: Fine. Now was there something else I can do for you?

MASKED AVENGER: Well, I . . . *(HE waits to see if SHE is going to interrupt him again.)*

Actually, I just stopped by to ask if I could see the town registry. I'm trying to trace a man that might have owned a mine in this area about twenty-five years ago. *(REBECCA gets a book down from a stack and hands it to the AVENGER. HE starts to leaf through it as she checks her watch.)*

MISS REBECCA: It's time for recess, children. *(The KIDS make a dash for the door.)*

MASKED AVENGER: Whoa, little doggies! Don't stampe! *(THEY slow down for a few steps, then continue running.)*

MISS REBECCA: *(As he leafs through the book.)* Find anything, Mr. Avenger?

MASKED AVENGER: I found something, ma'am, but I'm not sure just what it means yet. Where would I find the list of births and deaths?

MISS REBECCA: Those would be over at Doc Pinch's office. He's the coroner and of course he does all the delivering of babies.

MASKED AVENGER: Thank you, Ma'am, you've been . . . *(Suddenly, from outside we hear screams and shouts and KID VICIOUS, a smart-alecky young punk slimeball cowboy destined for an early grave, enters holding onto the end of a rope. At the other end of the rope is the entire CLASS lassoed and terrified.)*

MISS REBECCA: Oh no, it's Kid Vicious.

MASKED AVENGER: Now, we don't want any trouble, son. Why don't you just let those young'uns loose?

KID VICIOUS: You got just five minutes to bring me \$10,000 and a real horse, or I hang these little varmints from the Hanging Tree!

MISS REBECCA: Careful, he's slow of mind, but quick on the trigger.

MASKED AVENGER: Why don't you let the children go and we can settle this man to slime?

MISS REBECCA: *(To the MASKED AVENGER.)* You can't indulge in some grandstand macho theatrics which might result in somebody getting shot.

KID VICIOUS: Mebbe after I blow this "raccoon" into little pieces, you and I can go for a soda or something? *(HE blows a disgusting kiss to REBECCA.)*

MISS REBECCA: Ewwww! *(To the MASKED AVENGER.)* Just this once you have my permission to use any and all grandstand macho theatrics you wish.

MASKED AVENGER: That does it! Here's a lesson you won't soon forget!

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The MASKED AVENGER draws first and "fans" his gun as fast as he can. One by one, pieces of the KID's costume flies off, starting with his gun, then his hat, and so on, until he only has his pants on. Totally humiliated, HE turns to run, but his pants fall around his ankles, HE stops to pull them up and looks at REBECCA.

KID VICIOUS: What do you mean, "slow of mind?"

And HE begins to waddle off, his pants drop again and he falls on his face and crawls off. The MASKED AVENGER blows off his gun and twirls them back into his holster.

MASKED AVENGER: Miss Rebecca, please excuse this exhibition of machoism, but I am what I am and I have to do what I have to do to be who I am. I hope we meet again, under more pleasant circumstances, good day, ma'am. *(HE tips his hat, turns and strides off, every inch the hero. The KIDS cheer. REBECCA hides her smile. ALL exit. BLACKOUT.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 10 Doc Pinch's Office

ANNOUNCER: The Masked Avenger and Howdy ride into town and find Doc Pinch hard at work.

Lights up revealing DOC PINCH and TWO CUSTOMERS. One is in a barbers chair (The SHERIFF), while the other is on a table with several arrows sticking out of his back. The MASKED AVENGER and HOWDY enter.

DOC PINCH: Howdy, boys, be right with you. *(HE pulls out an arrow, none too gently. The PATIENT screams.)* Oops, the anaesthetic has worn off. *(HE takes a rubber mallet and hits the PATIENT, who is knocked out.)* What can I do for you?

MASKED AVENGER: We'd like to ask you a few questions, if you don't mind.

DOC PINCH: Fire away.

MASKED AVENGER: I've been looking at the town registry and it seems there was a man named Smith who owned a mine around here about twenty-five years ago. I was wondering if you could tell me anything about him?

DOC PINCH: Let me see, it should be in this book here . . . *(HE grabs a book from under his patient's head. The head drops to the table with a thud.)* Smith . . . Smith . . . you know I got a lot of Smiths in this book, can you be more specific?

MASKED AVENGER: The Smith I'm looking for had a wife and two sons.

DOC PINCH: Let's see . . . Smith, Black . . . Smith, Brothers . . . Smith, Corona . . . Smith, Wesson . . . Smith, Rufus . . . Yeah, this is the one I think, former mine owner, disappeared from these parts twenty-five years ago.

MASKED AVENGER: I'll bet he's the one, Howdy.

BY CHRISTOPHER VILLA AND GREG ATKINS

DOC PINCH: The one what?

MASKED AVENGER: *(Covering his trail.)* I . . . I'm trying to help a friend. He's looking for his lost family.

DOC PINCH: I suggest you can stop looking then, cause here are the Death Certificates for his wife and infant sons. Seems they drowned and were never found.

MASKED AVENGER: Just when I thought we were getting close, Howdy.

HOWDY: Too bad, Masked Avenger . . .

MASKED AVENGER: You say their bodies were never found?

DOC PINCH: Washed away in a flood, it says here.

HOWDY: So there is a chance one or more of them might still be alive?

DOC PINCH: Pretty unlikely if you ask me, but I suppose anything is possible.

MASKED AVENGER: I'm not a man who gives up easy Doc, I'm going to find this Rufus Smith if it's the last thing I do.

DOC PINCH: Good luck. You might talk to the Old Prospector, he's been all over the west looking for his lost mine. Maybe he's heard tell of something.

MASKED AVENGER: Thanks Doc, you've been a big help.

DOC PINCH: My pleasure, Masked Man. Sure you don't want a shave and a haircut? Two bits?

MASKED AVENGER: No thanks, Doc. Adios. *(THEY exit. A moment later, the SHERIFF, who has been in the barbers chair, removes the towel from his face and stands up.)*

SHERIFF: So they're heading out to the Old Mine to see the Old Prospector.

DOC PINCH: That's the way it looks.

SHERIFF: Thanks, Doc. There'll be something in this for you when the smoke finally clears around here.

DOC PINCH: Just trying to do my civic duty, Sheriff. *(The SHERIFF exits. DOC PINCH goes over and pulls another arrow out of his patient. The PATIENT screams. The DOC hits him with the mallet again.)* Oh, will you hush up!

ACT ONE, SCENE 11
Desperado Saves Miss Lucy

ANNOUNCER: Outside the saloon we hear four sinister characters are hatching a diabolical scheme . . .

BUSTER: *(BUSTER, DUSTY, RUSTY and KILLER sneak around one of the buildings in a conspiratorial manner.)* If we go back to the Baroness empty handed, she'll skin us alive.

RUSTY: What are we gonna do?

BUSTER: We'll wait here until Miss Lucy comes along then we'll jump her. After we get through with her she'll be begging the Baroness to take over the Glass Slipper.

DUSTY: Here she comes, hide!

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As *MISS LUCY* enters, the *MASKED DESPERADO* and *PARDNER* enter from the other side. The *THUGS* leap out and surround her. *SHE* fights them off as best she can and the *DESPERADO* watches. *HE* momentarily struggles within himself then makes up his mind.

MASKED DESPERADO: Mask or no mask, I just can't stand here and do nothing. (*HE leaps into the fray and flicks BUSTER's nose.*) Bad! (*HE then trashes the thugs in short order.*) Now you boys . . . Amscray! (*Helping MISS LUCY to her feet.*) Are you all right . . . (*The thunder bolt of love hits him.*) . . . little lady?

MISS LUCY: Oh, thank you, Masked Man, I'm fine, really. You always seem to be in the right place at the right time.

MASKED DESPERADO: Pardon?

MISS LUCY: You know, like at the saloon.

MASKED DESPERADO: (*Slightly confused.*) Begging your pardon little lady, have we met somewhere before?

MISS LUCY: Surely you haven't forgotten this afternoon, already? (*Feeling his muscles.*) You were absolutely wonderful, so strong, so manly, so virile.

MASKED DESPERADO: (*Looking at PARDNER.*) But I . . .

MISS LUCY: So humble too, down playing such a marvelous exhibition of physical prowess.

PARDNER: Don't fight it, boss, she's hooked on you.

MASKED DESPERADO: But I -

MISS LUCY: (*Grabbing him.*) You were so incredible, I knew you were the only man who could protect my . . . (*SHE pulls a satchel of gold out of her bodice.*) savings. Here, take this . . . (*SHE hands him the money.*) I can't stop to talk right now, I'm due back at the saloon for my next number. Oh you're so wonderful. (*SHE throws him into a Grand Dip and kisses him passionately.*) I'm sorry, I can't help myself, I'm so in love. I'll always remember what you've done for me. (*SHE releases him and he drops to the ground. SHE exits.*)

MASKED DESPERADO: I wish I could remember.

PARDNER: Friendly folks in these parts.

MASKED DESPERADO: Something strange is going on here, Pardner. (*HE sits up and we see that his mask is askew.*) I want you to scout around and stay alert to anything unusual. Report back to me when you come up with something.

PARDNER: Yes sir, Cap . . . I mean, Desperado. (*PARDNER exits as the DESPERADO looks at the bag of gold, shakes his head and stumbles off.*)

ACT ONE, SCENE 12 Avenger and Miss Rebecca

ANNOUNCER: Meanwhile, Miss Rebecca and the Masked Avenger happen to meet on the street . . . (*MISS REBECCA sees the MASKED AVENGER and accidentally drops her handkerchief. The MASKED AVENGER picks it up and hands it to her.*)

BY CHRISTOPHER VILLA AND GREG ATKINS

MISS REBECCA: *(Completely surprised.)* I declare Mr. Avenger, you constantly surprise me. I never know what you are going to do next.

MASKED AVENGER: I sometimes even surprise myself.

TOGETHER: I'd like to apologize . . . *(THEY laugh.)*

MISS REBECCA: I was harsh and rude and unthinking.

MASKED AVENGER: Ma'am, it was I that forgot my manners.

MISS REBECCA: No, it was wrong of me to embarrass you in front of your fans. I'm afraid they won't ever forgive me. *(THEY look deep into each other's eyes.)* Can you forgive me? *(THE MASKED AVENGER senses HOWDY watching them.)*

MASKED AVENGER: Howdy, why don't you go round up our horses.

HOWDY: You got it, Masked Avenger. *(HOWDY runs off as PARDNER runs in and sees the MASKED AVENGER with MISS REBECCA. To himself.)* Wasn't he just with Miss Lucy?

MISS REBECCA: Well, I'll let you get on with your work. I hope to see you soon.

MASKED AVENGER: I'll count the moments . . . one one thousand, two one thousand . . . *(MISS REBECCA exits as PARDNER goes up to the MASKED AVENGER. The AVENGER is in a bit of a love struck daze.)* That was quick. Where are the horses?

PARDNER: What horses?

MASKED AVENGER: You know, horses, little fuzzy things on sticks. *(Shaking himself out of the daze.)* Do you expect us to walk to the mine?

PARDNER: Mine? Horses? You didn't say anything about horses, you just told me to scout around.

MASKED AVENGER: I told you to get our horses, now git.

PARDNER: Whatever you say, Cap . . . er, oh heck. *(Runs offstage.)*

MASKED AVENGER: Three one thousand . . . four one thousand . . . *(The MASKED AVENGER walks off dreamily barely missing the MASKED DESPERADO as HE enters counting the money that MISS LUCY gave him.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 13
What Horses?

MASKED DESPERADO: . . . one thousand . . . two thousand . . . three thousand . . . *(HOWDY runs on with the horses.)*

HOWDY: I got the horses, let's go.

MASKED DESPERADO: What horses?

HOWDY: The horses you told me to get.

MASKED DESPERADO: I didn't tell you to get any horses, I told you to scout around. *(HOWDY starts to protest.)* As long as you're here, take this money and put it in a safe place. Now put the horses back where you found them.

HOWDY: *(Shrugs.)* You're the boss.

HOWDY exits. PARDNER runs in and stops in front of the DESPERADO.

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PARDNER: Here'er the horses.

MASKED DESPERADO: What horses?

PARDNER: The horses you told me to get.

MASKED DESPERADO: I didn't tell you to get any horses, I told you to put the horses back.

PARDNER: Make up your mind.

MASKED DESPERADO: What did you do with the money?

PARDNER: What money?

MASKED DESPERADO: The money Miss Lucy gave me and I just gave you.

PARDNER: You didn't give me any money.

MASKED DESPERADO: *(Grabbing his lapels.)* Look, Pardner, I'm getting a little tired of this run around. You put those horses back where you found them and find that money bag. Now git! *(Confused PARDNER runs off and the MASKED DESPERADO moves off to the edge of the stage as the MASKED AVENGER crosses up center. They sigh together, then begin to sing "Home on the Range" in unison. Both unaware that the other is there, yet mirroring each others moves. As the DESPERADO moves upstage and off, the AVENGER moves downstage as HOWDY enters, minus the horses, but with the money bag.)*

MASKED AVENGER: Where are the horses?

HOWDY: I put them back like you told me to.

MASKED AVENGER: I didn't tell you to put them back. I told you to get them, twice

HOWDY: But when you gave me the money -

MASKED AVENGER: I didn't give you any money -

HOWDY: *(HE holds up the money.)* Then what's this?

MASKED AVENGER: Give me that. *(HE grabs it.)* Hmmmm. I'll hold on to this, while you go get the horses. No, wait, we'll go together. *(THEY exit as PARDNER comes running in. The MASKED DESPERADO enters and crosses up to meet him.)*

PARDNER: Captain, I just heard the Sheriff tell some thugs that they're going to ambush the Masked Man and his sidekick!

MASKED DESPERADO: I heard the same thing! *(THEY think for a moment.)*

TOGETHER: That's us!

MASKED DESPERADO: Where are they now?

PARDNER: They're saddling up over at the Jail.

MASKED DESPERADO: Go round us up some horses. *(PARDNER begins to complain.)* Don't start! We'll tail them and ambush them while they're waiting to ambush us. *(PARDNER shakes his head and THEY run off to get the horses. The MASKED AVENGER and HOWDY ride in.)*

MASKED AVENGER: Hi Ho, Lucky, away! *(And off they go.)*

SHERIFF: *(The SHERIFF and the THUGS are hot on their trails.)* After 'em, boys, we'll head 'em off at the pass. *(The SHERIFF and the THUGS ride off after them.)*

MASKED DESPERADO: *(MASKED DESPERADO and PARDNER ride on.)* Hi Ho, Silverfish, away! *(And THEY follow the SHERIFF and the THUGS off.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 14
The Chase

ANNOUNCER: Little does the Masked Avenger and Howdy know, that the Sheriff is hot on their trail, but then, little does the Sheriff know, that the Masked Desperado and Pardner are closing in on him . . .

MASKED AVENGER: *(Crosses down center.)* Sure is a beautiful night. Look at all the stars.

HOWDY: Sure are a lot of them.

MASKED AVENGER: You know, Howdy, on a quiet peaceful night like this, I feel like singing a song. And it goes something like this . . . *(HE starts to sing but is interrupted by the sudden appearance of the SHERIFF and the THUGS. THEY ride out, whooping, hollering and shooting at our heroes.)*

HOWDY: It's an ambush!

MASKED AVENGER: Head for the hills, Howdy! Hi, Ho, Lucky away!

THEY take off and the CHASE begins. MUSIC. As the THUGS ride off after the MASKED AVENGER and HOWDY, the MASKED DESPERADO and PARDNER enter.

PARDNER: Gunshots!

MASKED DESPERADO: After them, Pardner, they're heading for the hills! *(THEY ride off after the THUGS. Total confusion soon reigns as the THUGS eventually end up chasing both sets of masked men and sidekicks who chase the THUGS and also chase each other. The varieties of confusion are almost endless. At the end of the chase.)*

MASKED AVENGER: Over here, Howdy. We'll be safe in this cave. That was almost too easy.

HOWDY: You're a genius, Masked Avenger. *(On the opposite side of the stage we see MASKED DESPERADO and PARDNER crawling in.)*

MASKED DESPERADO: Over here, Pardner. We'll be safe in this cave. What's that down there?

PARDNER: Looks like a pit of flaming pitch.

MASKED DESPERADO: I'm sure glad we're not dangling over that. *(The piercing sound of a train whistle breaks the silence, you can almost feel the rumbling of a train. Suddenly, the barn doors fly open revealing the train bearing down on the MASKED AVENGER and HOWDY.)*

HOWDY: *(The ground begins to shake.)* It's not a cave, it's a train tunnel!

PARDNER: The ground is giving away!

MASKED DESPERADO: Grab onto that rope! *(THEY grab onto the rope.)*

MASKED AVENGER: *(Looking from side to side.)* Jump!

HOWDY: There's no where to jump!

MASKED DESPERADO: Maybe there is an underground stream? Can you swim?

PARDNER: No!

MASKED DESPERADO: Neither can I!

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ALL: Ahhhhhhhhhhh!!! (*BLACKOUT as the train whistle blows louder, train sounds fill the night and the MUSIC swells.*)

ANNOUNCER: (*Spotlight on ANNOUNCER.*) Is this the end of our heros? Will the Masked Avenger be crushed under the wheels of the oncoming locomotive never to find his missing brother? Will the Masked Desperado be consumed by the blazing inferno without finishing his mission? Are Howdy and Pardner destined to go to their deaths not knowing they are long lost twins? Find out when we return for Act Two of our action packed western drama, Twin Desperados - When Bullets Kiss! (*SFX of ricocheting bullet. BLACKOUT on ANNOUNCER.*)

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