

DOUBLE TROUBLE ON THE PRAIRIE

By Sean Abley

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CHARACTERS

6 Male, 5 Female (8-11 possible, 4-6 male, 4-5 female)

TIMOTHY SCRUB	The “smart” one because he didn’t drink paint... twice.
JIMOTHY SCRUB	Timothy’s twin brother, the dumb one.
MARY SARAH SUE LAURA O’HALLORAN	The owner of the Virginia City Opera House.
VICTOR HORRIBLE	Pronounced Horr-EE-blay. The Villain.
MR. FESTER	Local taxidermist
OLD MAN GRAVEL	Why isn’t he dead?
MARY’S FATHER’S GHOST	AKA Callahan O’Halloran
MISS MELODY NIGHTINGALE	A terrible, and dangerous, theatrical performer.
MAYOR / SHERIFF / DOCTOR / JUDGE ALICE JOHNSON	The first woman mayor, sheriff and doctor in the Montana Territories.
WIDOW PRUNE	
MRS. CARBUNCLE	

*The central joke of DOUBLE TROUBLE ON THE PRAIRIE is that the actors playing the twins, Timothy and Jimothy, look **nothing** alike.*

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Different hair color, height, weight, race – the more different, the better. However, their clothes should be almost identical.

PROPERTIES

Whip	Gum
Bucket	Sheriff's badge
Tea Service-2 cups, tray, teapot	Gun and holster
Stuffed dog (Pierre)	Spoon
Will (multiple)	Medicine bottle
Quill	Nerve tonic bottle
Box Labeled "Rattlesnakes"	Stethoscope
Bow and arrow	Sheets
Money	Dynamite bundle dressed like ham
Receipts	Dish of Cranberry sauce
Ledger	Lantern
Sarsparilla in glass	Gavel
Candy bag	Handcuffs

SETTING

TIME: 1850's

PLACE: The Montana Territory (pre-statehood)

Although *DOUBLE TROUBLE ON THE PRAIRIE* is set in Virginia City, MT (*a real place*), feel free to change the name of the city, and the name of the other cities referenced (*Nevada City and Anaconda*) to more familiar, local names. For reference, Nevada City is actually less than a mile from Virginia City (*thus the crosstown rivalry context*), and Anaconda is a mining town known for a very tough, working class population.

THE SET AND LIGHTING

A unit set with multiple platforms and entrances works best, with each location created by minimal pieces of furniture and lighting changes.

When staging *DOUBLE TROUBLE ON THE PRAIRIE*, try to transition from one scene to the next rather than using blackouts, which tend to kill the pace of the show.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Double Trouble on the Prairie was first performed on May 27, 2011 by the Virginia City Players, Virginia City, MT. Directed by Gerry Roe. Musical accompaniment by Marilyn Rice. Costumes by Angel Beneventi. The cast was as follows: DeLaney Kay Hardy, Janie Evelyn Rife, Kelley Pierre, Shelby Kristina Rassley, Heidi Cheyenne Lindholm, Shane Patrick McClurg, Jayme Green, Travis Kuehn, and Judah Benjamin LoVato.

DOUBLE TROUBLE ON THE PRAIRIE

by
Sean Abley

SCENE ONE

LIGHTS UP; VIRGINIA CITY OPERA HOUSE STAGE. MARY SARAH addresses the audience before the show.

MARY SARAH: Hello everyone! Welcome to the Virginia City Opera House, home of the finest entertainment in the Western Territories! My name is Mary Sarah Sue Laura O'Halloran, and this opera house has been in my family for three generations! You're here on a special night – Miss Melody Nightingale has returned for a limited engagement to thrill and entertain! *(Reacts to the audience.)* No, no! No need to panic! Miss Nightingale has retired the hatchet-throwing act! *(To specific audience member.)* And let me say yet again, I'm very sorry about that. But thankfully, you got hit with the handle and not the blade. *(To audience.)* Please, give a very warm welcome to Miss Melody Nightingale!

(MARY SARAH exits as MISS NIGHTINGALE enters the stage with a whip.)

MISS NIGHTINGALE: *(To audience.)* Who will volunteer to have an apple whipped off their head? *(Cracks whip.)*

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO –)

SCENE TWO

LIGHTS UP on OPERA HOUSE BACKSTAGE. MARY SARAH watches the show from the wings. VICTOR HORRIBLE enters unseen by MARY SARAH and approaches her.

VICTOR: *(Monster noise intended to scare MARY SARAH.)*

RRRAAAHAHH –

MARY SARAH: *(Startled.)* Aaahhh!

VICTOR: *(Transitioning his horrifying scream into words as SHE turns around, as if nothing had happened.)* -- RAAHHHH that is an interesting talent she has there.

MARY SARAH: Oh, my spurs! You startled me!

VICTOR: I'm terribly sorry. I didn't mean to.

MARY SARAH: I heard no footsteps as you approached. And you're all dressed in black. Oh, my, are you Death? Have you come to reunite me with my father after his mysterious passing? Oh, Father,

although my time on this earthly plane has been cut short, and I have been conversing with your ghost on a daily basis, I rest easy knowing I will see you again! Goodbye, theater! Goodbye, Virginia City! Goodbye horses and... dirt and... other things...

VICTOR: Pardon the interruption of your dying soliloquy, but I am not Death.

MARY SARAH: You aren't?

VICTOR: No. I'm but a mere mortal. My name is Victor Horrible, and I'm new to town and your theater. And you are?

MARY SARAH: Mary Sarah Sue Laura O'Halloran. I came into partial ownership of the Virginia City Opera House after the mysterious death of my father a year ago today. I apologize, that is quite a bit of information to divulge when first meeting a stranger to town.

VICTOR: A pleasure to meet you, Miss O'Halloran. *(Takes her hand and kisses it.)*

MARY SARAH: *(Pulls her hand back.)* Mr. Horrible, your lips are as cold as a horse's bit in winter.

VICTOR: It's Horr-EE-blai. But you can call me Victor. And my low body temperature is part of my charm.

MARY SARAH: I see. Well, consider me charmed, Mr. Horrible. I mean, Victor. What brings you to the backstage of the Virginia City Opera House?

VICTOR: I'm a patron of the arts! And I have big plans for Virginia City, Miss O'Halloran. I first became acquainted with the town when I passed by a year ago --

MARY SARAH: A year ago? That's right when my father died mysteriously.

VICTOR: Three hundred and sixty four days ago. Exactly. I became acquainted with the town and saw great possibilities for me... er, the citizens of Virginia City.

MARY SARAH: That sounds wonderful! I hope the Opera House can be of service in some way.

VICTOR: I have no doubt it will be. You mentioned being a partial owner of the Opera House. Who, may I ask, are the other owners of this fine enterprise?

MARY SARAH: The town's citizens. My father wanted the Opera House to benefit Virginia City, financially, and, in turn, polish the reputation of live theater, which some find tawdry. I own forty-nine shares of the Opera House, and certain citizens of Virginia City own the other fifty-one percent.

VICTOR: How complicated, er, generous of your father. For you to have complete control of the Opera House, you would have to wrest the other shares out of the steely grips of the townspeople. What a perfectly aggravating, er, wonderful plan your father had.

MARY SARAH: Yes, completely. Oh, how I miss him. Sometimes he comes to me in ghostly form and we speak, which warms my heart so.

VICTOR: (*Not paying attention.*) Mmm hmmm, fascinating. Miss O'Halloran, it has been a pleasure, but now I must bid you adieu.

MARY SARAH: I hope I'll see you again, Mr. Horrible.

VICTOR: Horr-EE-blay. And you will. (*Kisses her hand.*)

MARY SARAH: (*Charmed.*) Brrrr...

VICTOR: Adieu! (*Exits.*)

MARY SARAH: What a nice, cold man!

(*MARY SARAH freezes in place. VICTOR speaks to the audience.*)

VICTOR: This will be easier than I suspected! This town is ripe for the picking! I will beguile my way into the hearts of all the owners of the Virginia City Opera House, and once there, I will stop those same hearts – dead in their tracks! Bit by bit, this ramshackle shack will be mine! And when it is, I will tear it down and replace it with dry goods stores and low cost food establishments all in a row. In a strip, one might say. A strip boardwalk! Ah, ha ha ha ha! (*Exits.*)

(*MARY SARAH unfreezes. TIMOTHY enters, sneaks up behind MARY SARAH, grabs her by the waist.*)

TIMOTHY: Howdy, Miss Mary Sarah!

MARY SARAH: Oh! You startled me! And shhh! There's an act on stage!

TIMOTHY: Sorry about that. How's the purtiest fiancé in the Montana Territories? Can I get myself a kiss from her? (*Moves in for the kiss.*)

MARY SARAH: She's busy running the show, so no kiss at the moment. (*Sees something happening onstage.*) Oh, Timothy! Miss Nightingale is starting her fire-throwing act! Go fetch me a bucket of water!

TIMOTHY: Yes, ma'am! (*Exits.*)

MARY SARAH: (*To MISS NIGHTINGALE on stage.*) Ooooh, back away! (*Gestures toward the stage.*) No, back to the middle of the stage! Back!

(*JIMOTHY dashes in with a bucket of water.*)

JIMOTHY: Here you go, Miss Mary Sarah!

MARY SARAH: Thank you kindly, Timothy. You may have that kiss now.

JIMOTHY: My pleasure!

(JIMOTHY leans in for a kiss. TIMOTHY enters just before JIMOTHY and MARY SARAH's lips meet.)

TIMOTHY: Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura O'Halloran, are you about to kiss my brother Jimothy?

MARY SARAH: *(Pulls back from JIMOTHY.)* What?!

JIMOTHY: Hello, Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura O'Halloran.

MARY SARAH: Oh, you!

TIMOTHY / JIMOTHY: *(Crack up.)* Fooled and tricked!

MARY SARAH: You boys are awful!

JIMOTHY: I never said my name was Timothy. Your eyeballs used my face to fool you!

MARY SARAH: I must have the shortest memory on the planet not to remember your prior deceitful tricks! And I must have the shortest memory on the planet not to remember your prior deceitful tricks!

TIMOTHY: *(Moves to hold MARY SARAH.)* Now, don't be getting all riled up...

MARY SARAH: *(Moves away from TIMOTHY.)* I don't think so, Mr. Timothy Scrub. Apparently my eyes can't be trusted when it comes to you twins. Or maybe you're another Scrub brother? The heretofore unknown Zimothy, here to fool my eyeballs once again with your triplet antics?

TIMOTHY: *(Moving to MARY SARAH.)* You know as well as I do that Jimothy and I don't have any kin left. It's just the two of us, and the one of me is in love with the one of you.

MARY SARAH: Well...

TIMOTHY: Might I have just one kiss?

MARY SARAH: I shouldn't. I should punish you. But the one of me is in love with you, too. *(To JIMOTHY.)* You turn your head, Jimothy Scrub. I can't have you watching us. It's like kissing in a carnival house of mirrors.

JIMOTHY: Yes, ma'am.

(HE turns his head, but secretly watches as TIMOTHY and MARY SARAH kiss.)

TIMOTHY: Now Miss Mary Sarah, when am I going to convince you to end this engagement and marry me proper? It's been six whole months since I stated my intentions, and you still hold me at arms length like a mad porcupine.

MARY SARAH: My requirements have not changed, Mr. Scrub. Until I can make the Virginia City Opera House a success, I can't have my head turned by a man. I need to put all of my attention into my father's legacy to honor his memory.

JIMOTHY: I like fire.

MARY SARAH: Now why in the world would you say that?

JIMOTHY: Because there's a lady on fire on the stage of the Opera House.

MARY SARAH: Oh! Miss Nightingale! Grab the buckets, boys!

(They ALL exit. LIGHTS SHIFT TO –)

SCENE THREE

LIGHTS UP on WIDOW PRUNE'S DRAWING ROOM. WIDOW PRUNE enters with a tea tray, which SHE serves to VICTOR. SHE sits across from him, petting a stuffed dog as if it were alive.

WIDOW PRUNE: Here we are, tea for our visitor! *(Barking for the stuffed dog.)* Arf! Arf! *(Sets the tea tray down and picks up the dog and pets it as if it were still alive.)* There, there Pierre! Mr. Horrible is our guest!

VICTOR: That's "Hor-EE-blay," Mrs. Prune.

WIDOW PRUNE: Pierre is a poodle. They come from Paris, France. Pierre is such a comfort now that Mr. Prune has passed on. I don't know what I'd do without him. Just last month I found Pierre lying lifeless on the parlor floor. My goodness, I was absolutely panicked until Mr. Fester rushed to Pierre's aid. He took Pierre to his shop and a day later, he was back, good as new!

VICTOR: And Mr. Fester is...?

WIDOW PRUNE: The local taxidermist. *(Covers Pierre's ears.)* That's a fancy word for "animal doctor." *(Barks for Pierre.)* Arf! Arf! *(To VICTOR.)* Good as new!

VICTOR: *(To audience.)* My evil plan will require less effort than originally anticipated.

WIDOW PRUNE: But back to business. Please take some tea –

VICTOR: Allow me to serve. *(Serves tea.)*

WIDOW PRUNE: -- and explain to me once again why I should rewrite my will in a manner that you would be the sole beneficiary of my estate, which includes my home and one percent ownership of the Virginia City Opera House.

VICTOR: One percent?

WIDOW PRUNE: Why yes. Callahan O'Halloran bequeathed one percent ownership each to fifty-one citizens of Virginia City.

VICTOR: Mrs. Prune, my intentions for Virginia City are vast. For instance, I wish to transform your beautiful mansion into a home for wayward ladies.

WIDOW PRUNE: Wayward ladies? In my home?!

VICTOR: Shocking, yes. But with the care and guidance of the staff I would install here, these wayward ladies would leave the path of the wicked, and, rehabilitated, stroll down the road to righteousness.

WIDOW PRUNE: That sounds lovely!

VICTOR: Likewise, the Virginia City Opera House would become, um...

WIDOW PRUNE: *(Barks for Pierre, a warning.)* Arf! Arf! Arf! *(Normal.)*
Quiet, Pierre!

VICTOR: ...a center for taxidermy! Imagine, after you've passed, all dogs will be treated like Pierre!

WIDOW PRUNE: That sounds lovely!

VICTOR: *(Whips out a copy of her will and a quill.)* I've taken the liberty of revising your will. All you need to do is sign on this line at the bottom.

WIDOW PRUNE: *(Takes quill.)* Of course! Do point me toward the line upon which to sign. I'm dreadfully nearsighted. Oh, Mr. Horrible, this is exciting! What wonderful plans! I almost can't wait for my own death!

VICTOR: *(To audience.)* That makes two of us! *(Points to the signing line.)* Right here, Mrs. Prune. And while you sign, may I sweeten your tea? *(Takes out a box labeled "Rattlesnakes.")*

WIDOW PRUNE: Please do, Mr. Horrible.

VICTOR: That's "Hor-EE-blay"...

(BLACKOUT.)

SCENE FOUR

LIGHTS UP on VIRGINIA CITY OPERA HOUSE STAGE. MARY SARAH enters and addresses the audience.

MARY SARAH: Hello, everyone! Welcome back to the Virginia City Opera House! We have a wonderful show for you tonight.

Thankfully, it was only Miss Nightingale's costume that caught fire, not her hair. I would hate to rob our audience of her charms. And one of those charms is her, er, questionable aim. Please give a big Virginia City welcome back to Miss Nightingale! *(Exits.)*

(MISS NIGHTINGALE enters with a bow and arrow.)

MISS NIGHTINGALE: Who will volunteer to catch an arrow?

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO --)

SCENE FIVE

LIGHTS UP on THEATER OFFICE. MARY SARAH is counting money and totaling receipts. TIMOTHY enters.

TIMOTHY: Howdy, Miss Mary Sarah!

MARY SARAH: Oh, Timothy, do me a kindness and retrieve Miss Nightingale's arrow from the audience.

TIMOTHY: Yes, ma'am. *(Exits.)*

MARY SARAH: *(Holding the accounting ledger.)* Oh, Father! I wish you were here! I'm so worried about the Opera House! I don't want to let the town down. What can I do to help bring in more audience members? *(Waits a moment.)* Are you there, Father? No? *(Moves to leave.)*

(MARY SARAH's FATHER'S GHOST enters.)

FATHER'S GHOST: Refreshments!

MARY SARAH: Father! I was about to leave!

FATHER'S GHOST: I apologize my dear. I'm on ghost time. Popcorn! Sarsaparilla! Refresh the audience!

MARY SARAH: But how?

FATHER'S GHOST: You must include an intermission between acts. That will allow the audience to purchase refreshments!

MARY SARAH: But if I have an intermission, the audience, those that have not been injured by Miss Nightingale, will flee!

FATHER'S GHOST: As you must flee! Evil returns to Virginia City! There is danger afoot!

MARY SARAH: Miss Nightingale isn't evil, Father! Just... poorly trained.

FATHER'S GHOST: Danger! Evil! I cannot be more specific as I am a ghost! Goodbye, my daughter! *(Exits.)*

MARY SARAH: Father, come back! I need your help! Oh, fence post! He always leaves before I get helpful information.

(JIMOTHY enters. HE has an arrow.)

JIMOTHY: I'm back!

MARY SARAH: Well, that was quick!

JIMOTHY: He didn't make it very far down the street. He was mighty grateful for me to take this back.

MARY SARAH: Miss Nightingale needs to work on her aim. Timothy, be a dear and get me a sarsaparilla from the bar next door?

JIMOTHY: Of course! *(Exits.)*

(TIMOTHY enters almost immediately with a sarsaparilla.)

TIMOTHY: Here you go, Mary Sarah. With ice and everything.

MARY SARAH: My, that was quick! Oh, one more thing. Can you scrape the gum off the bottoms of the seats in the theater? I swear, theater audiences can't be trusted to chew within traditional gum parameters.

TIMOTHY: Mary Sarah, I would scrape just about anything for you!

MARY SARAH: Thank you. I think.

TIMOTHY: Those seat backs and bottoms will be clean before you know it! *(Exits.)*

(JIMOTHY enters almost immediately.)

JIMOTHY: Done and done! All the bottoms in the audience are clean!

MARY SARAH: Timothy, you are a wonder! You're the best fiancé a theater owner and operator could ever have! You're not on the payroll, so I'm not sure how I can repay you for all your hard work.

JIMOTHY: How about a kiss?

MARY SARAH: Well, of course, Timothy.

(TIMOTHY, holding a small paper bag with a candy store logo enters from the other side of the stage, unseen by MARY SARAH.)

TIMOTHY: It's a fine thing to find your lady kissin' on your brother behind the front of his back.

MARY SARAH: Oh! Oh, you! *(Pushes JIMOTHY away.)*

TIMOTHY / JIMOTHY: *(Crack up. Unison.)* Fooled again!

MARY SARAH: You boys are incorrigible! I swear it should be illegal to be twins! It's not gentlemanly to trick a lady like that!

JIMOTHY: We don't mean nothing by it, Miss Mary Sarah. I wouldn't have really stolen that kiss.

MARY SARAH: Honestly, I can't tell you apart, even when you're standing next to each other.

TIMOTHY: I'm the one who's courting you!

JIMOTHY: And I'm the one who looks like him!

MARY SARAH: *(Takes bag out of TIMOTHY's hand.)* I see you've brought a bag of sugar confections from the candy store as an apology for your antics. You can't buy off a lady that cheaply.

TIMOTHY: No, I didn't.

MARY SARAH: I can see right through you, Timothy Scrub. *(Puts a piece of the candy in her mouth.)*

TIMOTHY: I used a bag left in the audience for the gum I scraped off the seats.

MARY SARAH: *(Spits out the prechewed gum.)* Give me that sarsaparilla! *(Takes a sip of sarsaparilla.)* You're both lucky I'm soft of heart, or I'd have the Sheriff tan both your hides! You will be punished by a withheld kiss. However, you may offer me your arm as we walk down Main Street. Shall we walk?

TIMOTHY: Yes, ma'am!

(LIGHT SHIFT TO -)

SCENE SIX

LIGHTS UP on MAIN STREET. MARY SARAH, TIMOTHY and JIMOTHY walk down the street. MRS. CARBUNCLE approaches.

MRS. CARBUNCLE: Well, if it ain't Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura O'Halloran with Timothy and Jimothy Scrub. Now, which one a you is Timothy, and which one a you is Jimothy?

TIMOTHY: I'm Timothy, Mrs. Carbuncle.

JIMOTHY: And I'm Jimothy.

MRS. CARBUNCLE: Now how's a body supposed to tell you two apart?

TIMOTHY: Well, I'm romancing Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura, so you'll frequently see her on my arm.

MRS. CARBUNCLE: And if'n you two aren't in Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura's vicinity?

JIMOTHY: My overalls are one shade darker than Timothy's.

TIMOTHY: And I'm the smart one!

MRS. CARBUNCLE: And how is that?

TIMOTHY: Because I've never drank paint... after that first time.

JIMOTHY: I can't help it if that paint looked delicious more than once...

MARY SARAH: Mrs. Carbuncle, did you enjoy the show? Miss Nightingale sure knows how to get an audience on their feet, doesn't she?

MRS. CARBUNCLE: I guess running away is a form of being on one's feet. Who you got coming in next week?

MARY SARAH: We have a double bill. We have a snake charmer with over 25 snakes...

MRS. CARBUNCLE: Ooohh!

MARY SARAH: And a fellow who has a whole circus of mice!

MRS. CARBUNCLE: Snakes and mice sharing the stage. Can't see how that could go wrong!

MARY SARAH: It's a double bill, but we're only charging one admission.

MRS. CARBUNCLE: That will be one well-spent nickel! I'll see you at the show! *(Exits.)*

(MR. FESTER enters.)

MR. FESTER: Howdy Mary Sarah Sue Laura, Timothy, Jimothy.

MARY SARAH: Good evening, Mr. Fester. Were you happy with your seats for the show tonight?

MR. FESTER: I was in the very back row. Which, for a performance by Miss Nightingale, is the perfect seat. *(To JIMOTHY.)* Timothy, I got some piece work if you're lookin' for extra money.

JIMOTHY: I'm Jimothy, Mr. Fester.

MR. FESTER: Dang it! For the life of me I can't tell you two apart. It's uncanny how much you look alike.

TIMOTHY: *(Points.)* What's that over there?

(As MR. FESTER looks the other way, TIMOTHY and JIMOTHY snicker and change places.)

MR. FESTER: *(Looks away.)* What's what where? That there? There ain't nothin' there but there, and that ain't nothin'. *(Turns back, speaks to JIMOTHY.)* Well, Timothy, there's work to be had if either of you want it.

JIMOTHY: Fooled again!

(EVERYONE laughs.)

MR. FESTER: *(Laughs.)* You boys is so funny, I could just hit ya with a rake! Anyway, if either of you can handle a hammer and wants some work, come on over to my taxidermery tomorrow morning. I got a room full of animals and a bucket full of tails that need to be attached. Now if you'll excuse me, I need to get over to the Widow Prune's place. Pierre needs some freshening up. Good evening gentlemen, ma'am.

MARY SARAH: Good evening, Mr. Fester.

TIMOTHY: Hammer work! Well, that rules you out, Jimothy.

JIMOTHY: I told you, I'm working on my hammer skills. Why don't those things come with instructions? A man can't just pick up a hammer and know how to use it without guidance.

MARY SARAH: You'll get it, Jimothy. I have faith in you. And when you do, I'll hire you to pound all the nails in the theater.

JIMOTHY: You got yourself a deal, Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura!

TIMOTHY: I have chores to do back at the ranch, and Jimothy's got to go over to Old Man Gravel's place and make sure he ain't dead yet. I'll come callin' tomorrow after the show.

MARY SARAH: You do that, Timothy. And bring me something nice to surprise me.

TIMOTHY: Of course! *(Leans in for a kiss.)*

MARY SARAH: *(Pulls back.)* Let me make sure it's you. *(Sniffs.)* You breath is paint free, so I'll take my chances on it being you, Timothy Scrub.

(THEY kiss.)

JIMOTHY: Are you sure it ain't me? Maybe I'm kissin' you right now.

MARY SARAH: I doubt that's the case.

TIMOTHY: We'll see you tomorrow evenin', Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura!

JIMOTHY: Both of us will! With our eyes!

(MAYOR JOHNSON enters.)

MAYOR: Hello, Mr. Scrub, Mr. Scrub, Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura.

MARY SARAH: Hello Mayor Johnson, the first woman mayor in the Montana territory.

JIMOTHY: Hello, Mayor!

TIMOTHY: Goodbye, Mayor!

(TIMOTHY and JIMOTHY exit.)

MAYOR: There go the dumbest twins in Montana.

MARY SARAH: Oh, Mayor Johnson, don't say that about Timothy and Jimothy. They're not the dumbest twins in Montana.

MAYOR: Oh, yes they are. They won that contest, "The Dumbest Twins in Montana."

MARY SARAH: I thought the Williams boys won that.

MAYOR: Technically, yes, the Williams boys took first place. But in trying to eat a wasp's nest, they lost their lives, which meant they were unable and / or unfit to carry out their duties as the Dumbest Twins in Montana.

MARY SARAH: Just goes to show you – if you're going to eat a wasp's nest, make sure to chew every bite twenty-seven times.

MAYOR: So the Scrub Brothers took home a blue ribbon for using sticks of dynamite as kindling.

MARY SARAH: Well, Timothy's eyebrows have grown back in a rather dashing fashion. You know we're engaged to be married?

MAYOR: That I do. How are things going with the theater? I hear that Nightingale woman is keeping them away in droves.

MARY SARAH: Miss Nightingale fills our theater every time we bring her in. She's not keeping them away, Mayor... she driving them away. Very different.

MAYOR: Well, be that as it may, I'd hate to see your father's theater bite the proverbial dust. When your father willed you forty-nine percent of the theater and the town the other fifty-one percent, he did so because he wanted to make sure the town benefited from the success of the business. After all, the town council allowed him to open a theater, a tawdry enterprise that draws the most decadent and degenerate practitioners of all the arts to its employ, in the center of Virginia City's business district rather than on the outskirts of town where theater belongs. No offense to present company.

MARY SARAH: None taken.

MAYOR: The town *should* benefit from its profits.

MARY SARAH: Of course, Mayor.

MAYOR: In the last year since your father's death, the profits from the theater have been... meager.

MARY SARAH: Until I can find a way to keep the audience in their seats, I have to keep Miss Nightingale, and refuse Mr. Scrub. Two situations I'm less than enthusiastic about. Good acts are hard to

find. If they aren't scooped up by Nevada City first, they're seduced by the bright lights of Anaconda.

MAYOR: Anaconda. I've never seen a city more full of riffraff than Anaconda, MT.

MARY SARAH: It has its charms, I guess.

MAYOR: Well, despite my personal opinion of such a vulgar vocation, I wish you well. For the town's sake.

MARY SARAH: Thank you, Mayor.

(MR. FESTER rushes in. HE calls out as if the SHERIFF isn't nearby.)

MR. FESTER: Sheriff! Sheriff! Has anyone seen the Sheriff?! Where's the Sheriff! Something horrible has happened!

(MAYOR JOHNSON takes out a badge, pins it to her chest, then reveals a holster with a gun. SHE is now the SHERIFF. MR. FESTER instantly recognizes her as the SHERIFF.)

Sheriff Johnson, the first female sheriff of the Montana territory!
Thank goodness you're here!

SHERIFF: What seems to be the problem, Mr. Fester?

MR. FESTER: The Widow Prune has been found dead, and foul play is suspected!

MARY SARAH: How horrible!

MR. FESTER: I went over there to replace Pierre's eyes – those marbles get dusty out here on the prairie – and I found her lying on the floor.

SHERIFF: What makes you think there has been foul play?

MR. FESTER: Upon first discovering Widow Prune, it appeared someone had put rattlesnakes in her cup of tea.

SHERIFF: She died from drinking rattlesnakes?

MARY SARAH: How horrible... er! Who would do such a thing?

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO –)

SCENE SEVEN

LIGHTS UP on OLD MAN GRAVEL'S HOUSE. OLD MAN GRAVEL is on his bed. VICTOR enters and says his first line as if answering MARY SARAH's question from the scene before.

VICTOR: I would... *(Attention to Old Man Gravel.)* like to see how you're doing today.

OLD MAN GRAVEL: Still dying.

VICTOR: *(Sincerely)* Please believe me when I say that's wonderful. I have some papers for you to sign.

OLD MAN GRAVEL: Papers? What kind of papers? And who are you?

VICTOR: I am Victor Horrible, and these papers are just a simple document that signs over your share of the Virginia City Opera House to me forever. Sign on the "X" please.

OLD MAN GRAVEL: Now hold on a gosh darned minute.

VICTOR: Are you sure you have that long?

OLD MAN GRAVEL: Why would I sign over my share of the Opera House? Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura O'Halloran is doing a fine job with that theater, and I want my share to go to her when I pass. I'm alone, you see. My wife died and I have no one...

VICTOR: Oh, stop trying to cheer me up. You're the sick one! Let me tell you a story of a poor orphan, left alone on the prairie, practically starving to death. Some nights he is so hungry, he eats prairie dirt just to fill his stomach. In the winter his predicament gets even worse – he eats cold dirt.

OLD MAN GRAVEL: You're a real ray of sunshine, Mr. Horrible.

VICTOR: Horr-EE-blay. And thank you. But let me finish. Now imagine that young, dirt-filled orphan with a hot meal, warm clothes and a soft bed upon which to lay his young head at night. Now imagine a home filled with orphans just like him, working, er, creating low-cost garments in mass quantities. That's why I need you to sign over your portion of the Opera House, Mr. Gravel. I want to fill a home with orphans.

OLD MAN GRAVEL: That sounds wonderful, Mr. Horrible.

VICTOR: I'm going to transform that theater into the most wonderful house filled with children there ever was.

OLD MAN GRAVEL: And what about Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura?

VICTOR: Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura will be the... uh... headmistress of the school that will also operate on the property.

OLD MAN GRAVEL: She's agreed to this plan?

VICTOR: She has indeed. So, sign? *(HE holds out the paper and the pen.)*

(OLD MAN GRAVEL signs the paper.)

Perfect! Now, your doctor asked me to make sure you took your medicine before I left.

OLD MAN GRAVEL: But I don't have a doctor, and I ain't been taking no medicine.

VICTOR: *(Takes out a spoon, and a bottle with a skull and crossbones label.)* Open wide.

OLD MAN GRAVEL: What is that?

VICTOR: Medicine.

OLD MAN GRAVEL: Why does it have that there skull and crossbones on the label? That means death!

VICTOR: Nonsense! He's smiling!

OLD MAN GRAVEL: He's happy to be dead!

VICTOR: Enough of this!

(HE holds OLD MAN GRAVEL's nose with one hand, which causes his mouth to open. VICTOR pops in a spoonful of poison into OLD MAN GRAVEL's mouth.)

OLD MAN GRAVEL: *(Dying.)* You made up the story about eatin' dirt...
(Dies.)

VICTOR: You found me out.

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO –)

SCENE EIGHT

SPLIT SCENE - LIGHTS UP on THEATER OFFICE and OLD MAN GRAVEL's home. MARY SARAH is totaling the receipts in the office, VICTOR is celebrating in OLD MAN GRAVEL's home.

MARY SARAH: Oh, this is terrible!

VICTOR: Oh, this is wonderful!

(OLD MAN GRAVEL'S HOME – JIMOTHY steps in, unseen by VICTOR, just in time to hear his evil plan. THEATER OFFICE - TIMOTHY tiptoes in, meaning to surprise MARY SARAH, but HE stops when HE hears her speaking to herself.)

MARY SARAH: No matter what I do, ticket sales just will not increase! If I can't keep this theater in business, I can't pay out the percentages to the citizens of Virginia City, and I'll let the whole town down! I wish I knew what to do!

VICTOR: Two shares of that theatrical disaster in my hands, only forty-nine more to go! Soon I'll have fifty-one percent ownership of the Opera House, and I'll be free to do with it what I please! And what I please is – tear it down! Ah ha ha ha ha ha!

(TIMOTHY and JIMOTHY each sneak back out. LIGHTS OUT on OLD MAN GRAVEL'S HOUSE.)

MARY SARAH: Oh, Father, I wish you were here to tell me what to do!
(A beat.) I truly do! *(A beat.)* Oh, I'm just a girl who needs her father's knowledge in a difficult time! *(A beat.)* Alone again...

(MARY SARAH'S FATHER'S GHOST enters.)

FATHER'S GHOST: I'm here, my darling daughter!

MARY SARAH: Father! Again, your timing is...

FATHER'S GHOST: I told you, ghost time... Beware, my daughter!
There is danger afoot! Something horrible is trying to take your theater and destroy the town!

MARY SARAH: Oh, father, I promise never to book Miss Nightingale again!

FATHER'S GHOST: No, my dear, not Miss Nightingale. Something (*Air quotes.*) "horrible."

MARY SARAH: Something (*Air quotes.*) "horrible?" What, father? What is it?

FATHER'S GHOST: The same horrible thing or *person* that killed me.

MARY SARAH: Father, please, tell me what it is! What is the cause of your mysterious death?!

FATHER'S GHOST: Or *who*.

MARY SARAH: Please father, stop speaking in riddles! I feel you're trying to tell me something.

FATHER'S GHOST: Something or *someone* that is (*Air quotes.*) "horrible." I've told you everything I can! I'm a ghost! Don't fail me, or the town! (*Exits.*)

MARY SARAH: Father, come back! Please, tell me more! Oh, tumbleweeds! I wish ghosts were more specific!

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO –)

SCENE NINE

LIGHTS UP on MAIN STREET. TIMOTHY and JIMOTHY rush up to each other.

TIMOTHY / JIMOTHY: (*Simultaneous.*) I just heard something awful!
You did? What was it? No, you go first!

TIMOTHY: (*Simultaneous.*) Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura is in financial straits! The theater isn't making enough money, and if things don't turn around right quick, it'll go under and she'll be out of business!

JIMOTHY: (*Simultaneous.*) There's a man in a black hat with a black mustache and a black cape and he killed Old Man Gravel and he's planning on taking over the Opera House so he can tear it down!

TIMOTHY / JIMOTHY: We have to stop it! Let's go tell the Sheriff!
(*THEY exit.*)

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO –)

SCENE TEN

LIGHTS UP on VIRGINIA CITY OPERA HOUSE STAGE. MARY SARAH introduces MISS NIGHTINGALE.

MARY SARAH: Ladies and gentlemen, we have something very special tonight! Miss Nightingale! *(Reacts to audience.)* And she has absolutely no props, weapons or sharp objects! The Virginia City Opera House is proud to present Miss Nightingale – Human Boomerang!

(MARY SARAH exits as MISS NIGHTINGALE runs onto the stage. SHE positions herself to be thrown over the heads of the audience.)

MISS NIGHTINGALE: Who wants to throw me? Gentlemen with tall hats and ladies with high hairdos, please do me the favor of ducking....

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO –)

SCENE ELEVEN

LIGHTS UP on MAIN STREET. TIMOTHY races up to the SHERIFF.

TIMOTHY: Sheriff! Jimothy saw a crime being committed!

SHERIFF: Hold on a minute – aren't you Jimothy?

TIMOTHY: No, I... *(Sighs, steps one step to the right, into JIMOTHY's "space.")*

SHERIFF: Oh, hello, Timothy! What can I do for you?

TIMOTHY: Something terrible's happened! Jimothy saw a murder!

SHERIFF: A murder! Where is Jimothy? I need to get all the details.

(JIMOTHY enters, out of breath.)

JIMOTHY: Here I am.

TIMOTHY: Where did you go? You were right behind me!

JIMOTHY: I saw something shiny and I had to pick it up and put it in my pocket.

TIMOTHY: What was it?

JIMOTHY: A chandelier. I was unsuccessful in my attempt to put it in my pocket.

SHERIFF: What did you see, Jimothy?

JIMOTHY: It's more what I heard. A man with a black mustache and black cape and black clothes was in Old Man Gravel's house –

SHERIFF: You heard the color of his mustache, cape and clothes?

JIMOTHY: No, I heard that with my eyes. With my ears I heard him spoutin' a story about taking over the Opera House from Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura. And Old Man Gravel was looking awful dead beside him.

SHERIFF: Well, to be fair, Old Man Gravel always looks awful dead.

JIMOTHY: You have to investigate, Sheriff! The Opera House could be in danger!

SHERIFF: Alright, I'll go over to Old Man Gravel's house to see if there's any clue to what happened. One of you go over to the Opera House and make sure Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura is protected. The other one come with me.

TIMOTHY / JIMOTHY: Yes, sir!

(SHERIFF and JIMOTHY exit one way, TIMOTHY the other.)

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO –)

SCENE TWELVE

LIGHTS UP on OLD MAN GRAVEL'S HOUSE. SHERIFF and JIMOTHY enter.

JIMOTHY: There he is, Sheriff! All dead!

SHERIFF: *(Looks around the room.)* Let's not jump to conclusions, Timothy.

JIMOTHY: Jimothy, Sheriff.

SHERIFF: Jimothy. I swear, you boys should have signs on your front.

Now, I see Old Man Gravel looking like he looks pretty much every day of the year. *(Holds her hand near OLD MAN GRAVEL's nose.)*

Except he isn't breathing, which would lead one to believe he's dead.

JIMOTHY: The victim of murderous intent!

SHERIFF: Calm down, young man. I see no evidence of any murder here. *(Picks up bottle of poison.)* Just this bottle of happy skull tonic and a dead body. Considering Old Man Gravel was, by my estimation, over one hundred and fifty years old, maybe he's just slowed down a bit. Let's look close – maybe he's just moving slower than usual.

(THEY both stare at OLD MAN GRAVEL's body for a bit.)

Nope, he's dead. But without some actual proof of foul play, there's not much I can do about it.

JIMOTHY: But what about my eyewitness testimony?

SHERIFF: No offense, Jimothy, but if your eyeballs are anywhere near as accurate as your brain, I'd trust a kaleidoscope for a clearer picture of a crime scene.

JIMOTHY: Stupid eyes!

SHERIFF: You run on back to the Opera House and help your brother see after Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura. On your way send Mr. Fester over to help take care of Old Man Gravel here. He could use a little sprucing up.

JIMOTHY: Will do!

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO--)

SCENE THIRTEEN

LIGHTS UP on OUTSIDE VIRGINIA CITY OPERA HOUSE. MRS. CARBUNCLE exits the theater followed closely by VICTOR.

VICTOR: A concession for the lady?

MRS. CARBUNCLE: Yes, please. I do need something to drink after seeing that grotesque display of human... well, I don't know what to call it. But it was alarming... and a bit... compelling.

VICTOR: May I suggest a tonic to settle your nerves? *(Hands her a bottle full of black liquid labeled "Victor Horrible's Nerve Calming Tonic".)*

MRS. CARBUNCLE: "Victor Horrible's Nerve Calming Tonic?" What in the world is that?

VICTOR: Hor-EE-blai. Only the finest restorative tonic as prescribed by barbers to their most discriminating customers.

MRS. CARBUNCLE: Is it smoking? Why is the bottle hot to the touch?

VICTOR: There is so much flavor, it must escape. Drink it quickly before the vapor loses its potency!

MRS. CARBUNCLE: I must say, despite the tawdry display in the theater, you've been quite the gentleman. Offering to help a total stranger rewrite her will, then accompanying her to the theater?

Such chivalrousness! *(Takes a sip.)* This tastes horrible.

(Immediately drops to the floor, seemingly dead.)

VICTOR: Hor-EE-blai!

(TIMOTHY and JIMOTHY enter. THEY don't see VICTOR.)

TIMOTHY: Hurry up, Jimothy! We'll miss the second half!

JIMOTHY: Aren't we supposed to be guarding Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura?

TIMOTHY: We're guarding and watching!

VICTOR: Curses! Mortis interruptus! *(Exits.)*

TIMOTHY: *(Catching a glimpse of VICTOR as HE exits.)* Hey, wasn't that the black mustached villain over there?

(HE and JIMOTHY walk over to where MRS. CARBUNCLE is lying on the ground. Although THEY stand over her, THEY do not see her immediately.)

JIMOTHY: I believe it was! He must be up to no good if he's hanging around the Opera House.

TIMOTHY: If only we could catch him red-handed! Then we could tell the Sheriff and stop his evil plan!

JIMOTHY: I got it! We'll dip his hands in red paint! Then we'll catch him, and he'll be red-handed!

TIMOTHY: Not only is that plan a thinly disguised excuse to bring red paint and your lips together, it's impractical.

JIMOTHY: How is that plan not practical?

TIMOTHY: He'd never dip his hands in red paint. It would get all over his black clothes.

JIMOTHY: Oh.

MRS. CARBUNCLE: *(Weakly.)* Help...

TIMOTHY: He'll slip up one day. I guarantee it.

MRS. CARBUNCLE: *(Weakly.)* Murder...

JIMOTHY: And when he does, we'll be there to nab him!

MRS. CARBUNCLE: *(Weakly.)* Malfeasance....

TIMOTHY: And Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura will be so grateful...

MRS. CARBUNCLE: I'm down here, you idiots!

TIMOTHY: Mrs. Carbuncle!

JIMOTHY: Help! We need a doctor!

(SHERIFF JOHNSON rushes in with MARY SARAH and MISS NIGHTINGALE.)

SHERIFF: *(To JIMOTHY.)* What's the problem here. Timothy?

(TIMOTHY and JIMOTHY switch places so the SHERIFF is talking to the correct person.)

TIMOTHY: We need a doctor, Sheriff!

(SHERIFF JOHNSON takes off her badge and replaces it with a stethoscope, becoming DOCTOR JOHNSON.)

JIMOTHY: Doctor, Mrs. Carbuncle has taken ill!

DOCTOR: Make way for the first woman doctor in the Montana Territory!

(Kneels to MRS. CARBUNCLE.) Can you speak, Mrs. Carbuncle? What happened?

MRS. CARBUNCLE: *(Weakly.)* I was... in the theater... I came out... It... was... horrible... *(Dies.)*

MISS NIGHTINGALE: Everyone's a critic.

DOCTOR: It's my expert opinion this woman died of bad theater.

MARY SARAH: Doctor!

DOCTOR: Don't worry, Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura, no jury in the world would convict you. Theater is a matter of taste. It just so happens this woman had very, very good taste and had the misfortune to enter your theater.

MARY SARAH: Thank goodness. *(A beat.)* Wait...

MISS NIGHTINGALE: Harrumph! I'll be in my dressing room! *(Exits.)*

DOCTOR: Come on, boys. Help me remove the body.

(DOCTOR JOHNSON, TIMOTHY and JIMOTHY carry MRS. CARBUNCLE off.)

MARY SARAH: Oh, this is horrible. How can I fill our seats when the acts are killing people – literally! I wish Father was here! I said, I wish Father was here to tell me what to do! *(A beat. Dramatically.)* Oh, how I wish my Father was still alive so he could guide me in my time of need! *(A beat. "Acting.")* Okay, I'm leaving now... *(Pretends to exit.)*

(MARY SARAH'S FATHER'S GHOST pops in.)

FATHER'S GHOST: Beware, my daughter!

MARY SARAH: You said that before.

FATHER'S GHOST: There is evil afoot!

MARY SARAH: Yes, Father, we established that the last time you appeared to me.

FATHER'S GHOST: Something, or someone, "horrible" will happen... or make something happen.

MARY SARAH: I remember, Father! Please, tell me what to do! My acts are killing my audience!

FATHER'S GHOST: Horrible! Horrible! There is a person whose name is "Horrible!"

MARY SARAH: Someone with a horrible name? What could that possibly be? A name that is horrible? Wait, I understand! You're trying to tell me Anita De Outhouse is trying to destroy the theater!

FATHER'S GHOST: No!

MARY SARAH: Hu Flung Poo! The Chinese merchant! He's trying to destroy the theater!

FATHER'S GHOST: I must leave you now...

MARY SARAH: Phil McCracken? The Scottish mason?

FATHER'S GHOST: Goodbye! *(Exits.)*

MARY SARAH: *(Calling after him.)* Honestly, if you're not going to help, what's the point? Miss Nightingale has a parrot that talks more than you do! *(Exits.)*

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO—)

SCENE FOURTEEN

LIGHTS UP on MAIN STREET. SHERIFF enters followed closely by TIMOTHY and JIMOTHY.

TIMOTHY: Sheriff, you have to believe us!

JIMOTHY: The man in black is killin' townspeople to get control of the Opera House!

SHERIFF: Boys, I know that someone drinking rattlesnakes, or smiling skull tonic, or being dead from someone killing them might seem like murder. But sometimes what's right in front of your nose isn't what it smells like. Just this week we had ten different deaths that, to the amateur nose, would smell like murder. Mrs. Dust, for instance. She passed away just this past Sunday. To the untrained eye, it would appear foul play was to blame. But using my expert investigative eye I came to the conclusion she had mistaken a pitchfork for a church bonnet. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to go investigate an incident over at the Half Horseshoe Ranch. It appears Mr. Spurs was juggling bales of hay when one fell on him in the outhouse.
(Exits.)

JIMOTHY: How are we gonna get that Sheriff to believe us?

TIMOTHY: I got an idea on how to reveal that Mr. Horrible as the horrible person he really is!

JIMOTHY: What is it?

TIMOTHY: That varmit's dirty deeds are only for folks in this town that own a share of Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura's theater. Which means we have to trick him into trying to kill us to get our share!

JIMOTHY: And then the other one can witness and tell Sheriff Johnson he killed us!

TIMOTHY: Better yet, we get that prairie gator to confess himself!

JIMOTHY: How do we do that if we're dead?

TIMOTHY: We won't be dead. At least, both of us won't be. Come on!

JIMOTHY: Where are we going?

TIMOTHY: We need to lay out the hook!

JIMOTHY: The hook?

TIMOTHY: For the bait! You can't catch a fish without bait!

JIMOTHY: Where do you think we'll find a fish at this time of day?

TIMOTHY: Where all the fish stay when they come into town to do evil fish things – the boarding house! (Exits.)

JIMOTHY: I thought we were looking for the man in black... (Exit.)

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO –)

SCENE FIFTEEN

LIGHTS UP in the BOARDING HOUSE. VICTOR enters.

VICTOR: I have only one more share of the Opera House to... acquire... and the building will be mine! Now if only I could find out which of these simpletons owns that last share.

(TIMOTHY and JIMOTHY appear outside the window of VICTOR's room.)

TIMOTHY: *("Acting.")* Here I am, walking around, with my will and my one percent share of the Virginia City Opera House. I guess I'll go to my house, the Scrub Ranch, and sit and think about what I could do with this one percent share of the Opera House. But I know that I absolutely won't give it up to anyone without a fight!

(VICTOR perks up and eavesdrops on the conversation outside.)

JIMOTHY: What are you talking about? Who are you talking to?

TIMOTHY: I'm talking to the air. So people who are supposed to hear it will hear me.

JIMOTHY: Why is the air supposed to hear you?

TIMOTHY: So it will know what I have.

JIMOTHY: I can't follow you sometimes.

VICTOR: It appears a person of schizophrenic nature owns the last percentage of the theater! How else to explain the odd nature of the single voice that I heard outside my window? *(Calls out window.)* Hello! Fair citizen of Virginia City! I'm a visitor here and wonder if you might join me for dinner and conversation about your bustling metropolis.

TIMOTHY: I could certainly do that sir, if you'll be so kind as to tell me what a metropolis is.

VICTOR: I'll explain over dinner. Please, come in!

TIMOTHY: *(To JIMOTHY.)* Stay here! *(HE enters VICTOR's room.)*

Thank you for the invitation. Here I was, walking around with nothing to do except think about my one percent share of the Virginia City Opera House.

VICTOR: Please, be my guest!

TIMOTHY: Well, thank you kindly! I'd love to.

VICTOR: Have a seat. You look hungry.

TIMOTHY: I sure am! I've worked up an appetite walking around town thinking about my one percent share in the Virginia City Opera House!

VICTOR: I have just the thing! *(Exits. Off.)* I've had a meal prepared by the good woman who runs the boarding house, and I'm afraid I have

more than I can finish. *(HE reenters with several sticks of dynamite garnished like a ham.)*

TIMOTHY: My goodness, that's the strangest looking ham I've ever seen.

VICTOR: You have a good eye! She was out of ham. This is a wild turkey.

TIMOTHY: Wait a minute... I can't eat this...

VICTOR: Why not?

TIMOTHY: Because there isn't any cranberry sauce! How can I eat a wild turkey if there isn't any cranberry sauce?

VICTOR: Oh, silly me! Let me go get that for you! *(Exits.)*

(TIMOTHY throws the turkey out the window. VICTOR enters with cranberry sauce.)

Here we are...

(TIMOTHY drops to the floor, "dying.")

TIMOTHY: My stomach! That weren't no turkey! You have killeded me! *(Fake dies.)*

VICTOR: Success! My evil plan has worked. Or, as I like to call it, my plan. I now own fifty-one percent of the Virginia City Opera House! Ah, ha ha ha ha ha ha! Goodbye theater, hello Virginia City's new strip boardwalk!

(JIMOTHY enters wearing a sheet a la a ghost.)

JIMOTHY: Boooo!

VICTOR: *(Screams in horror.)* Aaaaah! What foul celestial creature is this?!

JIMOTHY: I'm not a celestial creature, I'm a ghost! *(Takes off the sheet.)*

VICTOR: What spirit is this? Why do you haunt me?

JIMOTHY: I told you, I'm a ghost.

VICTOR: *(Gasps.)* But... you are there on the floor! I see your earthly form there beneath the table!

JIMOTHY: Why did you kill me? What did I ever do to you? I'm here to haunt you! Boo! *(Exits in a ghostly fashion.)*

VICTOR: My crimes haunt me, but I must not be deterred! The Virginia City Opera House will be mine! *(Exits.)*

(TIMOTHY gets up from the floor as JIMOTHY enters.)

TIMOTHY: I knew he'd fall for it! He must have known I was allergic to ham, that's why he tried to trick me into thinking it was turkey! Come

on, we need to get to the Opera House before he does something dastardly to Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura!

(TIMOTHY and JIMOTHY exit. LIGHTS SHIFT TO –)

SCENE SIXTEEN

LIGHTS UP on OPERA HOUSE BACKSTAGE. MARY SARAH and MISS NIGHTINGALE talk backstage.

MARY SARAH: I understand what you're saying, but a buzz saw just isn't in the budget for the Opera House.

MISS NIGHTINGALE: But I am your headline attraction! Without a buzz saw, I cannot perform my act to my acceptable standards! This is art, Miss O'Halloran! And art will not be determined by dollars and cents, but by the heart and soul of the artist! Without that buzz saw, you have no art! I will be in my dressing room until you come to your senses! *(Exits.)*

MARY SARAH: Some may say I've done just that.

(VICTOR enters.)

VICTOR: Well, well, well. If it isn't the soon-to-be former manager and partial owner of the Virginia City Opera House.

MARY SARAH: What are you talking about? The town owns this theater with me.

VICTOR: On the contrary, just one other person in this town owns the theater with you now that certain parties have moved on to... other planes.

MARY SARAH: What are you talking about?!

VICTOR: I'm going to have to do quite a bit of remodeling in here. *(Points to piece of furniture.)* That will have to go. And that awful wallpaper will have to go. *(Points to MARY SARAH.)* And that... thing will definitely have to go.

MARY SARAH: You're pointing at me, Mr. Horrible.

VICTOR: I know where I pointed. By my calculations, I now own fifty-one percent of the Opera House through some very generous post-mortem gifts.

MARY SARAH: Post-mortem? You mean you killed fifty-one people?

VICTOR: Hardly. It appears there's a nasty case of natural causes going around.

MARY SARAH: Oh, you're a menace!

(TIMOTHY enters.)

VICTOR: *(Terror stricken.)* No!

MARY SARAH: Yes, you are! You're a menace and a vulture and...
and another thing that's evil. A rat! Yes, a rat!

VICTOR: Get away from me! Begone! This theater is mine, and there's
nothing you can do about it! *(Exits.)*

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO –)

SCENE SEVENTEEN

LIGHTS UP on MAIN STREET. VICTOR runs into JIMOTHY.

JIMOTHY: Boo!

VICTOR: Begone, phantom tormentor!

JIMOTHY: I told you, I'm a ghost!

VICTOR: The deed is done! The theater is mine!

JIMOTHY: *(Holds a lantern, making it "float.")* Does this lantern floating
in mid air scare you? It should, because it's being held by a ghost!
A ghost you can't see because he's a ghost!

VICTOR: Away with you! I will take control of the theater and you will be
banished to the miasma! *(Exits.)*

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO –)

SCENE EIGHTEEN

**LIGHTS UP on OPERA HOUSE BACKSTAGE. TIMOTHY consoles
MARY SARAH.**

MARY SARAH: Oh, Timothy, what am I going to do? *(Suddenly
composed, pulls back.)* You are Timothy, right?

TIMOTHY: Yes, ma'am.

MARY SARAH: *(Back to sad.)* Oh, Timothy, how will I protect the Opera
House from that terrible man?

TIMOTHY: Don't you worry, Miss Mary Sarah Sue Laura. My brother,
Jimothy, and I have a plan to protect the Opera House and get that
varmint to confess to his misdeeds.

MARY SARAH: *(Not quite convinced.)* You do?

TIMOTHY: We do.

MARY SARAH: Really?

TIMOTHY: Yup.

MARY SARAH: You and your brother, you've come up with a plan.

TIMOTHY: That we have.

MARY SARAH: To save the Opera House.

TIMOTHY: Sure as shootin'.

MARY SARAH: The two of you, with no help from anyone else?

TIMOTHY: Just us two.

MARY SARAH: No other input whatsoever.

TIMOTHY: No, ma'am.

MARY SARAH: *(A beat.)* Just the two of you.

TIMOTHY: Now don't you fret, Miss Mary Sarah. We have it all figured out! *(Exits.)*

MARY SARAH: *(A beat.)* Goodbye, Opera House. It's been nice knowing you.

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO –)

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