

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS

By Jacqueline T. Lynch

Copyright © 2009 by Jacqueline T. Lynch, All rights reserved.
ISBN: 1-60003-411-X

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

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

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

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

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

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this play is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice:

Produced by special arrangement with Brooklyn Publishers, LLC

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

CAST OF CHARACTERS

DIRK MCCOY/COWBOY CHUCK: The star of a children's radio show. His rugged, two-fisted radio persona is a contrast to his real-life childlike dimwittedness.

FRIEDA FREDETTE/YODLIN' SAL: COWBOY CHUCK's girlfriend. As sassy as her character, yet she is more poignant, and troubled.

HAMILTON BAXTER-JOHNSTON IV/GERONIMO JR.: An elderly Shakespearean actor now reduced to playing a stereotyped sidekick, which he does with great dignity.

CLINTON EVERETT: The smooth, self-important announcer with a fragile ego.

BIFF SLIGO/NASTY ROBERT: A sneering villain on and off the air, but secretly a good guy and secretly in love with FRIEDA.

MARTY & EDNA KOLCHAK: Husband and wife writing team, who are always bickering.

THE BERTUCCI SISTERS: Three studio singers. They perform the show's commercials and do background voices for the show, other than that they don't speak and always look bored.

JIMMY: The young gopher and sound effects man, who sometimes gets carried away by his work.

MRS. RAPPELLE: A rich society woman, the station's owner. She is revealed to be a villainous Nazi sympathizer.

MR. PRENTISS: The station manager who bullies his staff, and fawns over MRS. RAPELLE.

MISS KOWALSKI: The silent organist, who though very easily flustered, shows a lot of Moxie when she has to. Has only one line at the end of the play.

*There are 7 male, 7 female roles. Three of the female roles do not speak, but sing commercial jingles together. A fourth female has only one speaking line.

PROPS/COSTUMES/SET REQUIREMENTS

PROPS: Sound effects props such as a small hinged board to represent a closing door, a pair of shoes on a box of gravel, bells, horns and whistles (Note, these do not necessarily have to be used to create the sounds in the play, as those can be obtained on sound effects recordings. They need only be seen.) A handgun, a coil of rope, and two sheriff/FBI badges.

COSTUMES: All the men and women should be dressed in 1940's style dresses/skirts, suits or pants and shirts for the men. In the second act, a rather cartoonish cowboy outfit, a cowgirl's outfit, a black hat and pair of boots for the villain, an Indian's headband, feather and loin cloth, and a cactus costume.

SETS: The single set is a radio studio. It is a bare stage with only a table for the sound effects props, a table with a coffee percolator with coffee and cups, a coat rack, two standing mics, an organ, a clock on the wall, and a red light to indicate broadcasting is in progress.

“This is for my twin brother, John.”

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS

by
Jacqueline T. Lynch

ACT I

SCENE 1

TIME: December 1942.

SETTING: The studio of radio station WCFS, live from Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts. The stage is fairly open without much furniture. The walls suggest a sound-proof studio. Up Right there is a long table with sound effects props: creating door slams, shoes walking on gravel, horns and bells, etc. **NOTE:** A working mic can be used to amplify the sounds. Downstage Right there is a small table against the wall with a coffee percolator, cups and saucers. There is a clock on the wall Stage Right, and red light which goes on during a live performance, and is turned off when not. Up Right Center there is a sofa, perhaps an easy chair and a couple of stools for actors waiting for their cues. There is a door Upstage Left, a coat rack Downstage Left. Down Center and Left there are two standing microphones. The Center one is for the CAST, and the one far Left is for the ANNOUNCER. There is a mic on a boom set at the sound effects table. This need be the only mic that works: See above. Short news items are read over a speaker from other studio. These may be read by an offstage actor or recorded on tape and played.

AT RISE: *An episode of "Cowboy Chuck and the Happy Rangers" is being concluded. FRIEDA, BIFF, DIRK, and HAMILTON stand around the Center mic. CLINTON EVERETT stands at the mic far Left. THEY all carry pages, which THEY drop on the floor after they are read. JIMMY is behind the sound effects table. The BERTUCCI SISTERS alternately shift from the couch to the Center mic when THEY are required.*

THE BERTUCCI SISTERS: *(THEY constantly chew gum, which THEY take out of their mouths only to sing. In a very bored manner, THEY sing to the tune of "Blow the Man Down.")*

Blow the steam off, bullies

Blow the steam off.

Cap'n Hank's chadda is hot.

It's full of potatoes

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 5

And maybe some clams

Cap'n Hank's chadda's the best is the land!

CLINTON EVERETT: (*Breaks in with gusto*) Yes! That's right, rangers!

Cap'n Hank's Chadda is the best in the land, and even our hero, Cowboy Chuck, thinks so, too! Isn't that right, Cowboy Chuck?

(*JIMMY makes slurping and smacking noises. The OTHERS laconically look at him.*)

DIRK/COWBOY CHUCK: Mm-mmmm, yessir, pardners, this here chowder is mighty swell!

CLINTON EVERETT: (*Covering*) Only, we're in New England, right kids? So of course he means *chadda*, not *chowder*. Isn't that right, Cowboy Chuck?

DIRK/COWBOY CHUCK: (*Flustered*) Huh? Oh, yeah. Sure. Uh . . . how can we be at the ranch in the old west if we're still in New England?

(*The OTHERS groan. MISS KOWALSKI plays background organ to the following.*)

CLINTON EVERETT: (*Interrupts*) And NOW . . . back to our story. When we left Cowboy Chuck, his Indian friend Geronimo, Jr., and his best girl, Yodlin' Sal, the Sweetheart of Dry Gulch, things were looking mighty bad

. . .

BIFF/NASTY ROBERT: Take that . . .

CLINTON EVERETT: (*Not finished*) . . . yessir, mighty bad . . . They found the secret hideout of the meanest hombre in the west, Nasty Robert and his gang . . . when suddenly . . .

BIFF/NASTY ROBERT: (*Angrily*) You want to let us act some of it out before the show's over?

CLINTON EVERETT: When suddenly . . .

(*HE signals to JIMMY, who, startled, fires off unrealistic popgun sounds.*)

BIFF/NASTY ROBERT: (*Fed up, reads*) Take that, and that you rats!

FRIEDA/YODLIN' SAL: Cowboy Chuck, he's getting away! And he's tying me up . . . and taking me with him!

BIFF/NASTY ROBERT: Ah-HAAA! My lovely wench! Now I've got you, Sweetheart of Dry Gulch! How would you like to be Mrs. Nasty Robert?

FRIEDA/YODLIN' SAL: No! A fate worse than death! Help, Cowboy Chuck, help!

DIRK/COWBOY CHUCK: Don't be afraid, Yodlin' Sal, I'll help . . . (*turns page*) . . . you.

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 6

HAMILTON/GERONIMO, JR.: *(Speaks with Shakespearean flare and proper diction)* Me stop bad man, Cowboy Chuck!

BIFF/NASTY ROBERT: Oh, sending your Indian sidekick to do a man's job, eh? Take this, Indian, and that!

(JIMMY makes punching and slapping sounds. HAMILTON groans dramatically after each hit.)

BIFF/NASTY ROBERT: And this! And that! Now for the big finish!

(JIMMY lifts a box and slams it on the table repeatedly.)

FRIEDA/YODLIN' SAL: Cowboy Chuck, help! He's beating Geronimo, Jr. on the head with a box of dynamite!

DIRK/COWBOY CHUCK: Why, that means this whole shack could go sky-high any minute! If only I weren't tied to this chair, I . . . I'll . . .

(Clears his throat loudly and glares at JIMMY. JIMMY stops banging box.)

I sure wish I had my Cowboy Chuck and the Happy Rangers pocket knife that came absolutely free with 10 box tops from Sugar Coated Stuff Cereal, the treat that moms love to buy . . . I guess I'll have to bite through the rope with my teeth instead.

(JIMMY makes a sawing sound on wood. THEY all look at him. HE shrugs.)

Um . . . there, I'm free. I guess. Now for a little cowboy justice!

BIFF/NASTY ROBERT: Come here and say that to my face, Cowboy!

DIRK/COWBOY CHUCK: All right . . . *(turns page)* I will!

(JIMMY makes sound of boots walking across wooden floor, which lasts much longer than it should, until THEY all glare at him. HE looks up, embarrassed, stops.)

DIRK/COWBOY CHUCK: Um . . . this sure is a mighty long shack.

BIFF/NASTY ROBERT: Any talking you want to do with me, Cowboy Chuck, you can say it to my six shooter! It does all my talking for me. Oh, no! I'm out of bullets!

(JIMMY fires off a shot. THEY all look at him. Then at the mics.)

Uh . . . except that one. That was probably the last one, though.

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 7

HAMILTON/GERONIMO, JR.: *(Covering)* Ugh! He-um got-um me in the leg,
Cowboy Chuck.

FRIEDA/YODLIN' SAL: Poor Geronimo, Jr.! Cowboy Chuck, do something!
(Points to the script) Put your lasso of truth around him!

DIRK/COWBOY CHUCK: Will that stop the bleeding?

FRIEDA/YODLIN' SAL: *(Fed up)* Put it around Nasty Robert, you . . .
cowboy, you, to get Nasty Robert to confess about the train robbery and
the mine shaft disaster and the counterfeit money, and the, well you
know, everything we've been talking about for the last six weeks.

BIFF/NASTY ROBERT: Oh no! Not the Lasso of Truth!

FRIEDA/YODLIN' SAL, GERONIMO, JR. & BERTUCCI SISTERS: Yes!
The lasso of truth!

*(MISS KOWALSKI fires off an ominous chord. After a long pause of
shuffling pages; the OTHERS wait, anticipating.)*

DIRK/COWBOY CHUCK: Did we skip a page?

FRIEDA/YODLIN' SAL: *(Grits teeth)* Here. I'LL put the lasso on him. You
just stand there and . . . be heroic.

BIFF/NASTY ROBERT: *(As if straining)* The lasso of truth . . . Ye . . . sss . . .
it . . . was . . . me . . .

CLINTON EVERETT: *(Breaks in)* That's right, boys and girls! And now a
word from our . . .

BIFF/NASTY ROBERT: *(Not finished)* . . . all . . . the . . . time . . . it . . . was .
. . me . . .

(MISS KOWALSKI blasts the organ. THEY all jump.)

CLINTON EVERETT: Sweet Jehoshophat, woman! Oh, excuse me. And so
ends another action-packed half-hour of thrills and cowboy suspense
with Cowboy Chuck and the Happy Rangers! Brought to you Monday
through Friday by Magnifique Cigarettes.

BERTUCCI SISTERS: *(Singing to the tune of "Mademoiselle from
Armentieres")*

Magnifique cigarettes

Is the brand

Magnifique cigarettes

They're so grand.

Just try a puff and then you'll see

You'll be as popular as me,

Magnifique brand cigarettes!

CLINTON EVERETT: That's right! The really popular brand of cigarettes for
popular people! And don't forget, 9 out of 10 doctors report that

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 8

smoking Magnifique Cigarettes is better for you than eating carrots! So, take a tip from Cowboy Chuck . . . and try . . . Magnifique Cigarettes!

(JIMMY makes sounds of drawing on cigarette and blowing smoke.)

DIRK/COWBOY CHUCK: It makes me feel . . . magnifique!

CLINTON EVERETT: And tune in next time for the start of a brand-new Cowboy Chuck adventure with thrills galore . . . So long from Cowboy Chuck and the Happy Rangers, starring Dirk McCoy as Cowboy Chuck, Frieda Fredette as Yodlin' Sal the Sweetheart of Dry Gulch, Biff Sligo as Nasty Robert, Hamilton Baxter-Johnston IV as Geronimo, Jr., and I'm your announcer, Clinton Everett.

BERTUCCI SISTERS: *(Singing theme song to the tune of "Home on the Range")*

When you're out of luck,
And the posse is stuck,
And danger is coming your way,
Just call Cowboy Chuck
And the bad guys will duck
And virtue will triumph all day.

CILNTON EVERETT: This is WCFS, the Voice of Chicopee Falls and greater Chicopee Falls including Willimansett, Aldenville, Fairview, Cabotville, Sandy Hill, and Johnnycake Hollow . . . stay tuned for the news from studio B.

VOICE FROM BOOTH (MR. PRENTISS): We're clear.

(THEY all relax. The red light goes off. MR. PRENTISS enters.)

MR. PRENTISS: Okay, people okay. Good show. Good show. Stay here everyone for a brief production meeting.

(THEY groan.)

Hey, hey. I've got some very important things to tell you about, but only if you're still working here. Got it? Good. I'll be right back. Nobody leaves this studio. Um, except Jimmy. You come with me, kid.

JIMMY: *(Excited to be singled out)* Yes Sir!

MR. PRENTISS: I have some heavy boxes I want you to carry.

JIMMY: *(Disappointed)* Oh.

MR. PRENTISS: On second thought, you stay here. I'll take the singing Bertucci sisters instead. Every one of them is stronger than you. C'mon girls. Oh, and Miss Kowalski.

(MISS KOWALSKI shrieks.)

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 9

Sorry, didn't mean to startle you. You heft a pretty mean box, too, don't you Miss Kowalski?

(SHE nods obediently.)

That's fine, come with me, please. Jimmy?

JIMMY: *(Once again excited to be noticed)* Sir!

MR. PRENTISS: Turn up the news from Studio B.

(Exits with MISS KOWALSKI, BERTUCCI SISTERS.)

JIMMY: Yes, boss. *(Turns on receiver)*

(THEY all gradually turn to the source of the sound and listen.)

NEWS READER VOICE: *(From the receiver)* There's fighting tonight on land and in the air at Gaudalcanal as four more raids continue against the enemy. Meanwhile, the 8th US Army, along with British forces, are again at grips with the enemy forces under Rommel in North Africa. American losses since Pearl Harbor, one year ago, are estimated to be at about 50,000 . . .

(Slow blackout)

END OF SCENE

ACT I, SCENE 2

Moments later.

JIMMY stands near sound effects table. HAMILTON and FRIEDA are standing at Center mic. BIFF pours himself coffee. DIRK strolls to

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 10

area near Left mic. CLINTON EVERETT sits on one of the stools. The news continues.

NEWS READER: Local citizens are asked to obey the signals for tonight's scheduled blackout. The first horn signal is for mobilization of air wardens and support staff to go to their posts. At the second siren the street lights will go out, and after the third warning, all lights in the city must be out, traffic must be stopped.

FRIEDA: Could you please turn that off!

(BIFF, who is nearest the monitor, considers FRIEDA a moment, and turns off the news.)

DIRK: Everyone? How was I?

HAMILTON, FRIEDA, JIMMY, CLINTON EVERETT: Wonderful. Great. Really good. Fine.

FRIEDA: The same as always.

BIFF: You stink.

FRIEDA: Stop it, Biff. Why do you always have to start trouble?

BIFF: Because I'm the villain. That's what I do.

HAMILTON: That's only supposed to be on the air, Biff. We're only play-acting.

BIFF: *(Gestures to DIRK)* Tell that to him. He thinks it's real.

(JIMMY lies down on the couch. BIFF strolls to the area around the Center mic with his coffee. DIRK goes to the coat rack during the following conversation, gets a package of gum from his coat pocket, silently offers it around to shaking heads, except JIMMY, who accepts a piece, and then DIRK slumps into one of the chairs, looking at his script.)

FRIEDA: Hamilton, can I talk to you for a minute?

HAMILTON: Certainly, my dear.

FRIEDA: *(Who notices BIFF is eavesdropping)* Take a hike, Biff. When I want a creep's opinion, I'll call you.

BIFF: Harsh words from the Sweetheart of Dry Gulch. Tsk, tsk.

(HE goes to couch, slaps JIMMY's feet off, and sits down.)

HAMILTON: Never mind him. What is it, Frieda?

FRIEDA: I want your opinion on something. You've been around.

HAMILTON: That's putting it mildly. I just haven't been anywhere important, that's all.

FRIEDA: My gosh, Hamilton, you've traveled this whole country.

HAMILTON: That was in the old days, my dear, when St. Louis was the end of civilization and Los Angeles was a whistle stop on the way to

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 11

nowhere. I've played Shakespeare all over the United States, mostly to people who don't know if it's good or bad, but they seemed to like the sword fighting. I suppose that's something.

FRIEDA: I guess this performing on this kid's show is a real come-down for you, isn't it?

HAMILTON: Not at all. After the Great Depression and my WPA acting jobs for food, this is a step up. A paycheck with my name on it is a wonderful thing, let me tell you. Though I admit, none of the Indians I encountered on my travels out west ever spoke like Geronimo, Jr.

FRIEDA: You played Shakespeare for Indian audiences?

HAMILTON: Yes, I certainly did. I'll never forget one summer evening our traveling troupe performed "Hamlet" under torchlight before an audience from the Hopi nation.

FRIEDA: Wow! Did they like it?

HAMILTON: They loved it. Well, the tribal elders thought Ophelia was hamming it up too much, and a couple of them said our costumes were tacky, but the show went over pretty well, I'd say.

FRIEDA: There's always a few critics.

HAMILTON: I suppose. Now I play Geronimo, Jr., no tribute at all to them I'm embarrassed to say, but it's a living. I get the crap kicked out of me every episode. Strangely, the kids seem to like it.

FRIEDA: There's a lot about this show that should be fixed.

HAMILTON: But listen to me go on, I'm sorry, my dear, you wanted to talk about something?

FRIEDA: Well I . . . I broke up with my boyfriend, Walter, today.

HAMILTON: Oh, well, that's too bad. Still, I'm sure it's all for the . . . wait a minute, wasn't Walter supposed to leave for the Army today?

FRIEDA: Yeah, I broke up with him on the train platform. Just as the conductor yelled "All aboard" and the train started to pull out.

BIFF: Ouch! You ought to be the villain, you're better at it than me.

FRIEDA: I'm not talking to you, Biff! Just butt out!

HAMILTON: Are you sure that was the right thing to do? I mean, the train platform and all . . .

BIFF: Lovers kissing their last goodbyes.

JIMMY: People crying and waving handkerchiefs.

CLINTON EVERETT: Listening to track arrivals on the loudspeaker.

DIRK: Buying gum.

(THEY all look at him.)

FRIEDA: I'm sorry I brought it up! I didn't know my personal business was going to be a topic for open debate.

CLINTON EVERETT: It's a sound proof room, Frieda. The acoustics are perfect. We can hear everything. Every time Jimmy burps at his prop

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 12

table, I can hear it clear across the room to where I'm standing over there.

JIMMY: *(Nervous)* You can? What else have you heard?

FRIEDA: I mean it, fellas, butt out. *(Growing confidential again with HAMILTON)* I know it seems terrible. But I just couldn't have Walter leave thinking everything was solid between us. He's a nice fella, but I don't want to marry him or anything. I just think it would be even more cruel for him to be sent away and expect someone to be waiting for him. I hope someday someone is, but it's not going to be me.

BIFF: You could have given him one last night to remember.

HAMILTON: Watch it there, young man.

FRIEDA: Oh, dry up. *(Back to HAMILTON)* I just don't like being phony. I know that's not what I'm supposed to do *these* days. Thousands of girls right now are getting engaged to guys they think they really know, just because there's a war on. One last night to remember, my Aunt Fanny.

BIFF: *(Teasing)* It's patriotic.

FRIEDA: Yeah, well, maybe. Maybe not. So's saluting the flag, but I don't see you in uniform.

(BIFF is rebuffed, returns to the couch.)

(Sorry for what SHE has said. To HAMILTON) I guess that was not very nice of me.

HAMILTON: I dare say he had it coming.

FRIEDA: Well, I don't think that, not really. It's none of my business. I don't think every man has to be in the service. I don't like pointing fingers.

HAMILTON: I know, my dear. I only meant that Biff takes plenty of shots at you, I've noticed.

FRIEDA: I know, why doesn't he just leave? This isn't such a great job to hang onto, with his looks he could be in the movies. The handsome creep.

HAMILTON: Maybe he's just not ambitious like you. He's certainly not washed up like me. I don't know why he's here. But about Walter, I suppose in the end you'll find you've done the right thing.

FRIEDA: In the meantime, I broke a GI's heart and stepped all over mom and apple pie. I guess I just don't like herd mentality, you know. I don't like doing what everyone else does, or being told what to do or what to think. And to tell you the truth, I don't feel comfortable doing that to other people, either.

HAMILTON: I've never seen you tell others what to do, Frieda.

FRIEDA: That's where you're wrong. I do it every day. So do you, and all of us. Doing those stupid commercials for Zephyr Mouthwash and Magnifique Cigarettes. On a kid's show, yet. Frankly, I don't think smoking Magnifique Cigarettes is better for you than eating carrots at all.

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 13

In fact, I'm pretty suspicious about cigarettes in general. Someday, I think we're all going to be sorry.

HAMILTON: You have a lot of sense, and a lot of integrity. Someday they'll sell integrity, too, if they can only figure out a way to package it. In the meantime, I'm glad I can be here while you dole it out for free.

FRIEDA: You're sweet, Hamilton.

MR. PRENTISS: *(Enters)* Okay, okay, let's get the show on the road. Jimmy?

JIMMY: *(Jumps up)* Yes, sir!

MR. PRENTISS: Go get Marty and Edna. They're in their office throwing things at each other.

JIMMY: *(Dejected)* Oh. Do I have to?

MR. PRENTISS: Can't have a production meeting without our writers.

JIMMY: *(Exiting)* I hate getting Marty and Edna.

MR. PRENTISS: They're a little disagreeable to be around. I know kid. That's because they're writers. The only people who stink more are actors. Now, I have a big surprise for you all.

(The BERTUCCI SISTERS and MISS KOWALSKI enter, each struggling with a large cardboard box.)

BIFF: What's all this?

MR. PRENTISS: That's fine, girls, just fine. Miss Kowalski, I'm very impressed by how you handled those three flights of stairs. All right, ladies, just put them down anywhere.

(The BERTUCCI SISTERS collapse on the couch, one on top of CLINTON EVERETT. MISS KOWALSKI returns, fatigued, to her organ. CLINTON EVERETT struggles under the BERTUCCI SISTER, who does not notice him. HE pinches her and SHE jumps up. HE gets up indignantly, glaring at her as HE allows her to sit back down on the couch. ALL three BERTUCCI SISTERS glare at him momentarily, then pick up magazines and, as usual, remain utterly bored until there is a commercial for them to do.)

Are you through playing musical couch? I'll tell you in a minute what's all this, Mr. Nosey, but first I need my coffee . . . JIMMY!

(JIMMY is thrown into the room, followed quickly by MARTY & EDNA KOLCHAK.)

JIMMY: *(Pulling himself up off the floor)* You called, Boss?

MR. PRENTISS: Coffee. Marty and Edna Kolchack, our wonderful writers!

EDNA: We want more money.

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 14

MR. PRENTISS: Edna . . .

MARTY: We want our own offices. We can't stand to be near each other.

MR. PRENTISS: But you've been married for twenty years.

MARTY: Hey, just because I'm married to her, doesn't mean I have to listen to her jabber all day.

EDNA: You've been riding the coattails of my talent for too long, buddy! If it weren't for my brains, you'd be selling typewriter ribbons door to door.

MARTY: Oh yeah?! Maybe you want to take it outside!

EDNA: Yeah?! You and what army?!

MR. PRENTISS: Kids, kids! What a couple of wiseacres. Huh, am I right? You two crack me up. Now sit down and shut up.

JIMMY: *(Brings coffee to MR. PRENTISS)* Coffee, sir.

MR. PRENTISS: What? Oh yes, good lad. Have you finished my ironing?

JIMMY: Tonight.

MR. PRENTISS: All right, but I expect it by morning.

BIFF: Any time now, Prentiss.

MR. PRENTISS: Save your nasty attitude for the airwaves, Biff. Just because there's a shortage of men with the war on, doesn't mean I can't find another actor to tie up the Sweetheart of Dry Gulch. *(Strolls to the sound effects table, puts his coffee down. Notices something on the table.)* Huh, I don't think I've seen this before. What sort of noise does this make?

JIMMY: That's my retainer.

MR. PRENTISS: *(Tosses it away)* Yaggggh!

FRIEDA: Mr. Prentiss, we're all here, can we begin now?

MR. PRENTISS: Well, we're going to be joined a little later by our illustrious employer, Mrs. Rapelle.

CAST: *(Awed)* Mrs. Rapelle? I've never seen her. I saw her once. She drove her limo over my foot. Mrs. Rapelle? Why does she want to speak with us? Are we fired?

MR. PRENTISS: Settle down, settle down. Put your minds at ease, kids. There's nothing wrong. In fact, everything is wonderful. It couldn't be better. Well, I told you there would be a big surprise, and here it is. Are you ready? Cowboy Chuck and the Happy Rangers is going NATIONAL!

CAST: National? Our show is going national? I don't believe it. Everyone in the country will hear us? Do we still get to keep our jobs?

MR. PRENTISS: That's right. There's been a lot of interest among the network boys in our little show, and they've given us a prime slot, 6 p.m. Eastern War Time, 3 p.m. Pacific War time, and all points in between, some time or other. We've got a very important and influential new sponsor, too . . . *(Pulls papers out of his inner breast pocket)* Let's see here . . . it's . . . it's a product called Par Excellence!

(The CAST all look at each other.)

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 15

DIRK: What's that?

MR. PRENTISS: Dirk, you silly guy . . . it's . . . it's obviously . . . some sort of . . . well, I don't know.

BIFF: You don't know what we're selling?

MR. PRENTISS: Soap flakes, razor blades, gravy mix, who cares? It's all the same. They only mailed me the contract, I'm still waiting for the advertising copy. They'll probably send some free samples, too. We'll find out what Par Excellence is sooner or later. But there's more news!

DIRK: Maybe it's gum.

MR. PRENTISS: Dirk?

DIRK: Yes, Mr. Prentiss?

MR. PRENTISS: We've moved on. Edna and Marty, sharpen your pencils, because we're scrapping the new episodes you've written, and you're going to write a completely new adventure for Cowboy Chuck.

MARTY: WHAT?!!

EDNA: Scrap all our work! You've got to be kidding? Why that new stuff we came up with was brilliant! Nasty Robert ties Yodlin' Sal, The Sweetheart of Dry Gulch to a railroad track!

MARTY: I thought there was a stage coach robbery in there somewhere.

EDNA: Whatever. I forget. It was getting late.

MR. PRENTISS: Well now you're going to come up with some new material, instead of that lame old crap you've been pulling out of your typewriter carriage for the last I don't know how many years. Ready . . . here's your new assignment . . .

MARTY: The nerve! Who do you think you're talking to?!

EDNA: You can't bully us!

MR. PRENTISS: In fact, we're changing the whole title of the show!

CAST: Changing the title? Will it be the same show? Do we keep our same characters? Are we fired?

MR. PRENTISS: The new show will be called . . .

(MISS KOWALSKI lets a chord rip. The OTHERS jump.)

Miss Kowalski, would you mind please saving that racket for the show? Thank you. Our new show, going national coast-to-coast will be called "Cowboy Chuck and the Happy Rangers . . . And the Nazis!"

(There is stunned silence.)

FRIEDA: . . . and the . . .

MR. PRENTISS: Nazis. That's right.

HAMILTON: And the Nazis.

CLINTON EVERETT: Nazis?

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 16

DIRK: Real Nazis?

MR. PRENTISS: (*Trying to be patient*) No, Dirk, my boy, not real Nazis. It's all pretend, remember? The Nazis are going to be characters in the show, our new villains. Sorry, Biff, but Nasty Robert has had his day. All his schemes are tired out. How many times can you tie a girl to the railroad tracks and have it be fresh, hmm?

BIFF: So . . . I'm fired?

MR. PRENTISS: Nope. You're a Nazi. Isn't that wonderful?

FRIEDA: Talk about typecasting.

EDNA: But we start the new season on Monday. How are Marty and I going to come up with a bunch of new episodes in time?

MR. PRENTISS: You'll work all weekend. Take some vitamins.

FRIEDA: Mr. Prentiss . . . this is a kid's show about cowboys. What are Nazis doing in Dry Gulch? That doesn't make sense. How do we explain that?

MR. PRENTISS: Explain? Who's asking for explanations? We're not going to explain anything. We're just going to keep on plugging those products and entertaining those wonderful . . .

CLINTON EVERETT: Kids.

MR. PRENTISS: Yeah. Whatever. Look, we've got to strike while the iron is hot. That's what marketing is all about. Nazis are a very big topic right now. This war has pushed them right to the front page. We need to be up-market about this.

FRIEDA: It's a kid's show.

MR. PRENTISS: Oh, so what. You mean to tell me you don't think the other kids shows and the movies and cartoons aren't all climbing onto the bandwagon? They've all joined the war effort. Please. Why, on the other channel, I'll bet Little Orphan Annie is beating the crap out of some Nazi right now.

CLINTON EVERETT: Well, it is all you hear about.

MR. PRENTISS: Sure it is. (*To BIFF*) Can you do an accent?

BIFF: No.

MR. PRENTISS: Any accent? Look, I don't care if you sound Southern, or Hawaiian, you just can't sound like Nasty Robert.

EDNA: Never mind his accent, how do we write for Nazis? We have to get into the character, explore the psyche . . .

MARTY: Delve into their emotions . . .

MR. PRENTISS: Look, just get one of your old scripts. Everywhere it says "stage coach" or "abandoned silver mine" just scratch it out and write "Nazi" over it instead. Do I have to think of everything?

BIFF: You still haven't told us what are in those boxes, Prentiss.

MR. PRENTISS: You're very suspicious, Biff. I like that in a Nazi. These . . . (*Goes to a box, opens it, pulls out a couple of very colorful costumes, cowboy hats, etc.*) . . . are your new costumes!

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 17

(Brightly colored cowboy hats, chaps, holsters are passed around. A gray officer's cap is thrust onto BIFF's head. THEY all look at each other in bewilderment. DIRK holds up a fringed cowgirl skirt.)

DIRK: So . . . Biff is a Nazi now . . . and I'm a girl?

MR. PRENTISS: *(Trying to keep his temper)* No, Dirk, that costume is for Frieda. I think your cowboy shirt and pants are in the bottom of that box over there, underneath the buffalo costume.

CLINTON EVERETT: Buffalo costume?

MR. PRENTISS: Yes, what size are you, Miss Kowalski? I had to guess.

CLINTON EVERETT: Um, Mr. Prentiss, Miss Kowalski is not an actor, neither, I might add, are Jimmy or myself, or the Bertucci Sisters.

MR. PRENTISS: I know, which is why your costumes have to do with the background. Jimmy's prairie dog costume is on back order, and you're a cactus.

JIMMY: Prairie dog? I don't wanna be a prairie dog.

EDNA: It was probably the closest thing he could find to a weasel.

CLINTON EVERETT: Mr. Prentiss, I am an announcer. I attended broadcasting school. I have blue ribbons for diction. I am not going to stand behind that microphone with my trained voice going out to everyone in the country dressed as a cactus!

JIMMY: How come Marty and Edna aren't going to be in costume?

MR. PRENTISS: Because they're writers, my boy. Writers should never be seen. It's too upsetting.

EDNA: Hey!

FRIEDA: Mr. Prentiss . . .

MR. PRENTISS: Now, none of your complaints, little lady.

FRIEDA: I . . . I don't mean to complain, sir. But we're doing a radio show. Nobody sees us. Why do we have to be in costume when nobody ever sees us?

HAMILTON: At least he's giving you a skirt, Frieda. I'm pretty sure all I'm getting is a loin cloth and a headband with a feather in it.

MR. PRENTISS: Which is why you're going to have to start going to the gym, Hamilton.

BIFF: *(Takes off the officer's cap, turns it over in his hands, thoughtfully)* So . . . I'm this jackbooted Hawaiian who comes into Dry Gulch and . . . what? I'm after the silver mine? I'm after Yodlin' Sal? Or is it world conquest I'm supposed to be after?

MR. PRENTISS: World conquest. Hmm, yes, I like the sound of that. Marty and Edna, world conquest, that gives us much larger parameters. Work with that.

MARTY: If he gets his hands on the silver mine, he can rule the world, sort of thing?

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 18

MR. PRENTISS: Pretty much.

BIFF: And Cowboy Chuck, he's supposed to stop me, right? The good guy is still going to win, right?

MR. PRENTISS: Eventually, of course, but we could drag it out more.

EDNA: Make Dry Gulch suffer a little bit first, I see what you mean. It has possibilities.

BIFF: *(Grim)* And the war isn't going to end anytime soon, so you could drag this plot out for years.

MR. PRENTISS: As long as it takes.

BIFF: *(Accusingly)* As long as it takes for what?

MR. PRENTISS: *(Jovially)* To sell that warehouse of decoder rings for a start. Boy, I think I got taken for a ride on that deal. All right people, so, here's what we're . . . Oh, Mrs. Rapelle! Here's our dear Mrs. Rapelle!

(MRS. RAPELLE enters, dressed in fur, regal, snobbish. SHE glares at MISS KOWALSKI, who gasps, and quickly does a couple bars of "Land of Hope and Glory" on the organ. MRS. RAPELLE cuts her finger across her neck to silence MISS KOWALSKI after the appropriate interval.)

MRS. RAPELLE: Good evening, staff.

CAST: *(Robot-like unison)* Good evening, Mrs. Rapelle.

(SHE extends her hand, MR. PRENTISS grovels to her and kisses it, leading her Down Center.)

MR. PRENTISS: Dear, dear Mrs. Rapelle, how wonderful of you to visit us.

MRS. RAPELLE: Yes, it is.

MR. PRENTISS: And how lovely you look.

MRS. RAPELLE: Yes, I do.

MR. PRENTISS: Doesn't Mrs. Rapelle look lovely, people?

CAST: Huh? What? Yeah, sure. Lovely. I guess. For somebody who drives over your foot. Are we going to get fired?

BIFF: *(As part of the crowd)* You stink.

MRS. RAPELLE: What?!

MR. PRENTISS: The sink! The sink is clogged up in the green room.

Jimmy will take care of that right away.

JIMMY: Before I do your ironing?

MR. PRENTISS: Shut up! Now, then everyone, we have one more surprise for you, and it's in connection with those wonderful costumes. Ready?

LIFE Magazine is going to be doing a spread on us!

CAST: LIFE Magazine! Gosh! We'll be famous! My mother will be so proud! I'm buying fifty copies! We're in the big time now!

MR. PRENTISS: And you will, of course, be wearing your costumes for the photo shoot.

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 19

CAST: Oh no. We'll look like idiots. We can't wear those getups. My mother will be ashamed. I'll burn every copy I can get my hands on. Why doesn't he just fire us?

MR. PRENTISS: Publicity, people! Publicity! The life's blood of America! Now, stand at attention! Mrs. Rapelle, you have something to say to the staff?

MRS. RAPELLE: Yes. Staff, as you know, Christmas is coming, our second wartime Christmas. It is your job to make light the hearts of our young audience, to cheer them in these troubled times.

(MISS KOWALSKI plays hearts and flowers music on organ.)

(Looks around) Where in name of sweet jumpin' Jehosaphat did that come from?

JIMMY: It wasn't me.

MR. PRENTISS: Thank you, thank you, that's enough Miss Kowalski. *(To MRS. RAPELLE)* I'm sorry, she can't seem to help it. It's some sort of nervous spasm she has. Please continue, Mrs. Rapelle.

MRS. RAPELLE: Thank you. We must all be of good cheer this holiday season. Better days are coming. There will be no Christmas bonuses this year. Have a good evening.

CAST: *(Downtrodden)* Thank you, Mrs. Rapelle.

(MRS. RAPELLE exits as MISS KOWALSKI plays a bar of "Land of Hope and Glory" before launching into creepy villain music.)

MR. PRENTISS: That will do, Miss Kowalski.

CLINTON EVERETT: I am not going to be wearing a cactus costume in LIFE Magazine, Mr. Prentiss. I'm drawing the line.

CAST: Yeah! We'll look silly. Radio actors don't wear costumes anyway. If he's not going to wear his costume, then I'm not going to wear mine. Me neither.

MR. PRENTISS: People, people. You go ahead and draw the line, Clinton Everett, mister blue-ribbon winner for diction. How long have you been in broadcasting? Twenty, twenty-five years? What announcing jobs did you have before this show?

CLINTON EVERETT: Well . . . I . . . well . . .

MR. PRENTISS: Farm reports?! You read the 5 a.m. farm report in Willimansett for twenty years, Mister Clinton Everett, professional radio announcer, before I pulled you out of the pig trough and into a real studio. And where will your career take you after this show? Back to the hog pen, that's where. So don't get smart with me. And the rest of you? Dirk? You trade-school dropout. You can't find your way to the men's room. Hamilton? A washed-up Shakespearean spear-carrier and Greek

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 20

Chorus-boy, who used to act in “King Lear” in the finest theatres in East Cupcake and got paid in deli meat. Frieda? Star of your secretarial school spring pageant, where you played the ampersand?! And Biff? I don’t know what you’re doing here. All you’ve ever been able to do is look good. All Hollywood bound, are you? Don’t kid yourselves. You’d be there already if you actually had any talent. This, people, this is your big break. You’re going to be acting on the radio coast to coast for millions of people. You’re going to have your pictures and your story published in the most popular magazine in America! And this is the thanks I get.

CLINTON EVERETT: *(Chastised, clears his throat)* I’m . . . sorry, Mr. Prentiss.

CAST: Yes, Mr. Prentiss. Sorry, sir. Thanks for the opportunity, sir. Thank you for the lovely costumes. I always wanted to be a prairie dog. We’ll try to do a good job for you, sir.

MR. PRENTISS: All right, enough of this. Monday morning, you all report back here for your scripts. Which Edna and Marty will have finished by then and will, of course be brilliant.

EDNA: Yes, Mr. Prentiss.

MARTY: We get you.

MR. PRENTISS: Fine. We’ll do a rehearsal, break for lunch, then you’ll get into your costumes and the LIFE Magazine photographer and reporter will take about an hour to interview us all and take photographs. At 6 p.m., we go live with “Cowboy Chuck and the Happy Rangers and the Nazis.” Got it?

FRIEDA: Mr. Prentiss, do we keep our costumes on during the actual performance? Or can we take them off when the magazine people leave?

MR. PRENTISS: That depends on what kind of mood I’m in. Miss Kowalski!

(MISS KOWALSKI shrieks.)

I’m leaving now, and if I hear any mood music from you, I’ll cut off your fingers and sell them for the war effort. Got me?

(MISS KOWALSKI nods vigorously. MR. PRENTISS finishes everybody off with one last glare, and exits. The CAST exhales with relief.)

MARTY: Well, Edna, I guess we’d better go home and write ourselves into a coma.

EDNA: “Cowboy Chuck and the Happy Rangers and the Nazis.” This is going to take more than one pot of coffee.

HAMILTON: Be careful. Rationing.

EDNA: Yeah. I’ve been saving my points for this kind of emergency.

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 21

(MARTY and EDNA exit.)

HAMILTON: *(Goes to coat rack, retrieves his coat and hat)* Well, good night, Frieda. Try to have a good weekend. *(HE kisses her on the cheek.)*

FRIEDA: *(Buttoning his coat for him)* You, too, Hamilton. Are you going to go to the gym, like Mr. Prentiss said?

HAMILTON: On the contrary. I am going to eat like a pig all weekend. Just for spite.

FRIEDA: Be careful. Rationing.

HAMILTON: Touché. Ladies, after you. *(Exits)*

(The BERTUCCI SISTERS and MISS KOWALSKI exit with HAMILTON.)

DIRK: *(Goes to coat rack, puts on hat and coat)* What they said before about the blackout tonight . . . does that happen before or after the lights go off?

JIMMY: *(Goes to coat rack for his coat and hat)* Mr. McCoy, how about I take you home in my car?

DIRK: Oh, that'd be swell, Jimmy. Thanks. You know how confused I get in the dark.

JIMMY: Mr. Everett? You okay?

CLINTON EVERETT: *(HE has been standing grimly at his microphone Stage Right.)* Hmm?

JIMMY: *(Concerned, delicately)* Can I give you a lift, Mr. Everett?

CLINTON EVERETT: No, thanks, Jimmy. I think I'd rather walk. *(Rouses himself, goes to coat rack for his things)*

BIFF: *(Clearing his throat)* Look, what Prentiss said about everybody not being very good actors. Not having any talent . . . well I think he's wrong. I mean, I think you all are very good. I've learned a lot from you.

CLINTON EVERETT: *(Self depreciating)* Well, kind words of pity from the villain. Either it's Christmas or I must really be washed up.

BIFF: Yeah well, they may be the last kind words you hear, so make it last. Rationing.

(CLINTON EVERETT leaves, followed by DIRK. JIMMY casts a glance back at BIFF and FRIEDA.)

JIMMY: Anybody else?

FRIEDA: No thank you, Jimmy.

JIMMY: Sure?

FRIEDA: Of course, I'm sure. Good night. Have a good weekend.

JIMMY: Thanks, you too. *(Exits)*

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 22

FRIEDA: I have to say, that was nice of you, Biff. (*Goes to the coat rack for her hat, coat, purse. SHE puts them on and takes gloves out of her purse and puts them on.*)

BIFF: I think young Jimmy was attempting to defend your honor. He obviously didn't want to leave you alone with the villain of the piece. (*Goes to the speaker*)

FRIEDA: Well, he should know I can handle myself.

BIFF: 'Course you can. Any dame that can dump her boyfriend, while the train is pulling out, has my vote for Tough Gal of the Year.

FRIEDA: (*Angry*) I give up on you. Why do you always have to be such a viscous, despicable . . .

BIFF: (*At the speaker, turns on the news from Studio B*) I'll tell you why, tough gal. Because nice guys finish last.

NEWS READER: . . . saboteurs are suspected in several of the fires throughout the region, thought possibly to have connections to the six spies recently convicted for their plot to destroy certain industries along the eastern seaboard of the United States . . .

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE 1

AT RISE: It is Monday morning. The discarded script pages which had been left on the floor are now removed. The boxes are moved aside. BIFF is alone on stage. He is inspecting the microphone Stage Right, examining the mic, the shaft of the stand, the base. HE does the same to the Center mic, even removing the mic from the stand and checking inside it, if this is possible. HE does the same to the mic at the sound effects table. FRIEDA enters silently, startled, and watches him. Finally, HE notices her.

BIFF: (*Startled*) What are you doing here?

FRIEDA: (*Cautiously*) I guess I just climb stairs faster than everybody else. They're right behind me, you know. Everybody. What are you doing here?

(BIFF says nothing for a moment, just watches her, as if HE is weighing his answer. SHE becomes uncomfortable, and with forced nonchalance SHE proceeds to the coat rack.)

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 23

FRIEDA: (*Removes her gloves, puts them in purse, hangs purse, hat & coat*)
Fine. It's no skin off my nose.

BIFF: You know, what Hamilton said last Friday, about you having integrity . . . well, I was eavesdropping.

FRIEDA: You always do. I'd like to know why.

BIFF: I'll tell you why. But first, I just want to say that I agree with Hamilton. You have a lot of integrity. I've noticed that.

FRIEDA: Thank you. What's the punchline?

BIFF: I'm with the FBI.

(*At first this does not register with FRIEDA, then SHE slowly begins to laugh.*)

BIFF: (*Squirming*) Go ahead, yuck it up.

FRIEDA: (*Laughing*) Thanks, I will.

BIFF: Don't tell anybody.

FRIEDA: (*Laughing*) No, of course not. We wouldn't want them to know, would we? FBI!

BIFF: Just listen, we don't have much time . . .

FRIEDA: Is that how you get girls? That's pretty feeble, even for you, I mean.

BIFF: I had to tell you, Frieda, you're the only one I can trust. I don't know who else is involved. Even after months of being on this show, I'm still having trouble telling the good guys from the bad guys.

FRIEDA: Good guys and bad guys, listen to you.

BIFF: This isn't some kid's show, I'm talking about. This is real. There are such things as good guys and bad guys in this world.

FRIEDA: Do you have a badge?

BIFF: Yes, but I'm undercover.

FRIEDA: Of course. How about a decoder ring?

BIFF: Well . . . no, of course I don't have a decoder ring.

FRIEDA: Not to worry, I know where you can get a warehouse full of them.

BIFF: Frieda, this is serious.

FRIEDA: Biff, please. At least pay me the compliment of not thinking I could be that stupid. FBI.

BIFF: (*Losing patience*) Will you please just trust me?!

FRIEDA: Trust you?! You've never given me reason to trust you. You're nothing but a conceited wiseguy who thinks his good looks excuse a lack of good manners. They don't. Now, I'll say it again, Biff. Dry up.

BIFF: I don't have time to explain . . . Good looks? Really?

FRIEDA: (*Hears approaching voices*) Thank heavens, they're coming and we can start this fiasco.

BIFF: (*Grudgingly*) I'm sorry you don't think you can trust me, Frieda. I guess that's my fault. I've never been very good at . . .

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 24

FRIEDA: Being human? No, you're not.

(HAMILTON enters, followed by JIMMY, DIRK, CLINTON EVERETT. THEY hang up hats and coats, and take their usual places.)

JIMMY: *(Picking up a piece of paper from his prop table)* There's a note here from Mr. Prentiss.

HAMILTON: That's odd. I wonder why he isn't here already? What does it say?

JIMMY: "Dear Jimmy, Did you do my ironing yet? Tell the cast to get into their costumes immediately. The photographers are coming earlier than expected. I am bringing the scripts. With fondest regards, Mr. Prentiss."

FRIEDA: Fondest regards?

CLINTON EVERETT: How does he think we can just start rehearsing without any scripts? Where are Marty and Edna?

DIRK: Does he just fondly regard you, or did he mean everybody?

BIFF: Why isn't he here? Something's up.

JIMMY: "PS, stop asking so many stupid questions and get into your costumes."

CLINTON EVERETT: *(Pulls out green simulated cactus costume from box)* Well, it's best to face our demons. *(Near tears)* Oh dear. I'm so glad my mother isn't here to see this.

DIRK: Oh, I'm sorry. God rest her soul.

CLINTON EVERETT: She lives in Chicago.

DIRK: *(Embarrassed at his faux pas)* Oh. Yeah, um . . . that's what I meant. God rest her Chicago.

(CLINTON EVERETT sees another costume and gives HAMILTON a handful of crumpled material.)

HAMILTON: What's this?

CLINTON EVERETT: Your costume.

HAMILTON: *(With knowing dread)* This is all of it, isn't it?

CLINTON EVERETT: Not quite. *(Hands him a feather)*

HAMILTON: Thank you.

CLINTON EVERETT: We've worked as professional colleagues for many years, Hamilton. I'm sorry we have to see each other this way.

HAMILTON: Not half as sorry as me.

CLINTON EVERETT: I'm going to become a cactus now, if you'll please excuse me. *(Exits with costume)*

FRIEDA: Poor Clinton.

HAMILTON: At least he's not likely to catch pneumonia in *his* costume, or be arrested for indecent exposure.

FRIEDA: Poor Hamilton.

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 25

HAMILTON: Well, I'm off to men's room. Wish me luck. *(Exits)*

DIRK: *(Cheerfully)* Good luck!

FRIEDA: Aren't you going to get into your costume, Dirk?

DIRK: I think I'll wait until the line thins out and the crying dies down. What about you, Biff? Here's your costume.

(DIRK digs out a gray uniform with black boots and an officer's cap and hands them to BIFF, who takes them reluctantly.)

BIFF: What did Clinton say about facing your demons? This is gonna make me sick.

DIRK: Frieda, here's your costume.

(FRIEDA takes her costume from DIRK, beginning to consider BIFF in a curious new light.)

FRIEDA: Well, since Miss Kowalski's buffalo costume was not the right size and the Bertucci Sisters are all out of tumbleweed getups, I guess I've got the ladies' room all to myself. I'll be back as the Sweetheart of Dry Gulch, folks, in living Technicolor.

JIMMY: *(Snaps on speaker)* I'll put the news on while we're waiting.

NEWS ANNOUNCER: . . . and once again in regional news, the Rapelle Shipyards wins the coveted government "E for Excellence" award for its wartime service. The celebration today coincides with the launching of their newest merchant marine vessel, to be christened the *Par Excellence* by the governor's daughter. This is the news from Studio B. Please stay tuned for the farm report . . . "

BIFF: *(Quickly)* Turn that off!

JIMMY: Why? What's wrong with the farm report?

BIFF: Just turn it off!

JIMMY: Gee, they sure picked the right guy to play the Nazi.

(FRIEDA enters the room, her clothes still in her arms. SHE is alert, cautious and careful.)

BIFF: Frieda, can we talk privately?

FRIEDA: *(Almost zombie-like)* Uh . . . yes. Yes, we should.

BIFF: Really? Oh wow, I mean . . . yes. Jimmy, scram.

JIMMY: Hey, you can't boss me around and treat me like dirt. That's Mr. Prentiss' job.

FRIEDA: Jimmy . . . um . . . can't you see we want to be alone?

JIMMY: You do?

BIFF: We do? Oh, yeah. We sure do. Give us five minutes, will ya, kid?

JIMMY: Is that all it takes? Gee!

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 26

BIFF: Move it! Take Dirk with you.

JIMMY: All right, all right. Things are getting more and more weird around here every day.

DIRK: Just a minute, hombre. What do you think you're doing? That's MY gal.

FRIEDA: Your what?

BIFF: Dirk, we don't have time. Please go with Jimmy, and . . . and put your costume on. We have to do the show, remember?

JIMMY: C'mon, Mr. McCoy. They want to be alone.

DIRK: Like I said, hombre, that's MY gal. You keep your low-down, dirty mitts off her. C'mon, Frieda.

FRIEDA: Uh, Dirk, that's just in the show. You and I are not sweethearts. Remember? You're not the hero. And Biff . . . well . . . Biff's not the bad guy.

BIFF: (*Relieved and pleased*) I'm not?

DIRK: Are you sure? They gave me the white hat.

FRIEDA: I'll tell you what, if I need help, I'll call. Okay? Like I always do on the show.

DIRK: Well, all right. Jimmy, where's my lasso of truth?

JIMMY: All in your head, Mr. McCoy, all in your head.

(*THEY exit together.*)

FRIEDA: Okay, so *Par Excellence* is the name of a ship, so what? A little coincidental in a creepy way, but so what?

BIFF: Then you heard! Thank heavens, now do you believe me?

FRIEDA: Believe what? You haven't told me anything credible. Beyond the coincidence that the name of a merchant marine vessel and a new product on our show are the same, tell me what there is to believe?

BIFF: The ship was built at the Rapelle Shipyards, which is owned by Mrs. Rapelle.

FRIEDA: Right, the company was started by her grandfather. It made her family rich. So what?

BIFF: All right Frieda, here it is. I was sent here to investigate the possibility of Mrs. Rapelle being a Nazi sympathizer, and, shall we say, carrying those sympathies a little too far.

FRIEDA: Good grief. So, you've been here all these months, under cover, trying to get inside information on Mrs. Rapelle?

COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS – Page 27

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from COWBOY CHUCK AND THE HAPPY RANGERS by Jacqueline T. Lynch. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please contact us at:

**Brooklyn Publishers, LLC
P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406
Toll Free: 1-888-473-8521 • Fax (319) 368-8011
www.brookpub.com**

Do Not Copy