

SHE WAS ONLY MARGINALLY MODEST

OR HAVE YOU NO SHAME?

By Vern Harden

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**SHE WAS ONLY marginally MODEST
OR HAVE YOU NO SHAME!**

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 MEN, 8 WOMEN, 1 EITHER)

- MARGINALLY MODEST (f)..... Young, innocent, sweet, and simple *(128 lines)*
- MONOPOLY BELLE (MA BELLE) (f)..... Ma Belle is middle-aged, determined, and hard-pressed for cash. She wears a long apron over her dress. *(188 lines)*
- BRAD APPLE (m)..... Mean and slimy. *(122 lines)*
- GLADIOLA (f)..... Shy, quiet, and shrill. *(2 lines)*
- HATTIE HOGGE (f) Loud, crude, and odiferous. *(25 lines)*
- GRANNY FANNY (f)..... Eighty-seven year old spitfire. *(25 lines)*
- PRUNEHILDA PINCHER (f)..... Prim, proper, and prune-faced. *(31 line)*
- JUDGE JURY McBRIBE (m) Determined to get the most out of life, preferably in cash. *(110 lines)*
- SEYMORE STOUTFELLOW (m) Colorado Mountry, loyal, honest, and simple. *(101 lines)*
- WILLIMENA WORM (f)..... Dumb, beautiful, lonesome.

(52 lines)

TURKEY O'TROT (m) Oversized, under-brained
woodchopper. (72 lines)

RUBEN Z. PATSY (f) Judge in disguise. (47 lines)

POSTER GIRL/BOY (m/f) Posts signs that show scene
location. (*Non-speaking role*)

PRODUCTION NOTES

She Was Only Marginally Modest is designed for a cast of thirteen, approximately five men and eight women. However, adjust the cast to suit your production needs. If you would like a larger cast, add extra guests at the lodge, etc.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE:

Dead Moose Lodge in the deep, dark woods of Colorado

ACT TWO:

A few seconds later, still in Colorado

SETTING

The combination set features the interior of Dead Moose Lodge (stage left) and the area just outside of the Lodge - the forest (stage right). The upstage left exit is inside the Lodge and leads to the interior. The upstage right exit leads off into the forest. If possible, on the upstage wall of the Lodge hangs a decrepit moose head, tongue hanging out. Table and chairs decorate the Lodge. The rear wall should be slanted downstage slightly so that actors can exit there to pick up props etc. A broom leans against the rear wall of the Lodge along with a bucket of water. ALL characters entering the Lodge from stage right (the forest) enter through an imaginary door with a simple “stomp/knock” action. The audience should accept this quite readily. A stump sits upstage right center.

PROPS

- Two buckets of water/broom
- Packet of money attached to a string
- Scissors
- Deed to Dead Moose Lodge
- Oversized axe for Turkey O' Trot
- Feather duster, loaded with dust
- Tray of Moose Muffins
- Bugle hanging on back wall
- Boxing Gloves
- Moose shoe
- Glass of water
- Eviction Notice
- Huge star for Ruben along with a pocketful of cash
- Deck of cards
- Gavel
- Large handkerchief

POSTER SIGNS

1. DEEP IN THE FOREST OF COLORADO
2. ACT TWO: JUST DESSERTS, A FEW MINUTES LATER

Originally produced at The Apple Shed in Cedaredge, Colorado by the Apple Valley Players Community Theater. Members of the original cast include Lora Kettlewell, Virginia Bernadou, D.L. Hall, Connie Swaro, Pattie Dunn, Joy Williams, Ann Ventrello, Chuck Minor, Randy Hall, Sue Janssen, Randy Cloper, Joe Plesuchenko, Verity Martin, and Gene Gray.

NOTE:

All “asides” are underlined; other lines are to be delivered in character. The water tossed on the actors should be thrown from above so it splashes down. No more than an inch of water in a glass should be used at any one time to avoid a slippery stage floor.

COSTUME SUGGESTIONS

MARGINALLY MODEST

Light colored, floor-length cotton dress with small print. Long sleeves, high neck, bowed sash at waist.

MONOPOLY BELLE

Long dark skirt with a light colored blouse and long apron over her dress.

BRAD APPLE

Black pants, white shirt, black cape with red lining, top hat, black string tie and black shoes.

GLADIOLA

Floor-length dress with long white apron, low heels.

HATTIE HOGGE

Tan work pants, lace-up boots, man’s plaid work shirt, rope belt, optional corn-cob pipe.

GRANNY FANNY

Long dark dress, cane, shawl, worn shoes.

PRUNEHILDA PINCHER

Long dress with long sleeves and high neck, ruffles, white handkerchief, low heels, casual hat, gloves.

JUDGE JURY McBRIBE

Brown suit, white shirt, brown tie.

SEYMORE STOUTFELLOW

Blue pants with red stripe down the leg, blue shirt with red stripe down arms, gold chevrons, wide-rimmed hat, black polished boots, shiny badge, vest.

WILLIMENA WORM

Simple peasant dress, puffy sleeves, scoop neck.

TURKEY O'TROT

Loose worn pants (either jeans or cotton), old plaid work shirt, lace-up boots, plaid cotton cap with floppy ear covers.

RUBEN Z. PATSY

Dark suit with string tie. Suit coat is lined black so it can be reversed as judge's cape.

DO NOT COPY

ACT ONE

AT RISE:

POSTER GIRL waltzes on stage and hangs a sign that reads **DEEP IN THE FOREST OF COLORADO**. Exits.

MARGE: (*Runs on from upstage right, trailing a long scarf behind her. She stops downstage center and looks back off upstage right. Turns to face the audience.*) Oh, woe is me! Alas! Alack! And, lack-a-day! I am ruined! Ruined! Do you hear me? (*Kneels.*) Done unto death! I shall never recover. (*Sobs violently, head to floor, then sits up quickly, completely recovered.*) Or at least not for a week. (*Climbs to her feet.*) Why? Why, I ask you, should the evils of the world fall upon my frail (but shapely) shoulders? (*Exits downstage left.*) Is there no justice in this world? (*Jerks her scarf so that it catches up with her.*) Why must I, a girl who is only Marginally Modest (my friends call me Marge) why must I suffer the slings and arrows of this cruel world? Driven from honest employment, my life's work, by that evil, so evil, that despoiler of virtue, so despoiled, (*Sees cabin.*) but wait! What's this? A simple cabin. (*Rushes to the imaginary door, looks in.*) The Dead Moose Lodge. (*I wonder if they're anything like the Elks, the Lions, or the Chamber of Commerce?*) Perhaps these kind, but simple folks will give me refuge. (*Pantomimes knocking on the door, stomps her foot for sound.*)

MA BELLE: (*Enters from upstage left into the Lodge carrying a mop and bucket of water. Crosses to imaginary door, sets bucket down just inside this door, then pantomimes opening the door.*) Hello there, young lady. Kin I do some'tin for you?

MARGE: (*Sweeps into Lodge dramatically.*) A boon! A refuge! A haven! This is what I seek.

MA BELLE: (*Crosses after her sweeping up trailing end of scarf.*) Then you got the wrong place, little sister. This here sure ain't no heaven. It's the Dead Moose Lodge. Ain't had more'n one customer in the past six months.

MARGE: (*Promenades downstage right.*) A nest. A hideaway. A respite from the world. Only you can save me.

MA BELLE: *(Follows MARGE, sweeps up her scarf.)* Well, I don't know about that. I ain't very good at savin' people. Never had much practice. Did save a chipmunk one time. Got his tail caught in a crack in a log. I whipped out my paring knife and lopped it off. After that I think he grew up to be a bobcat. Or maybe a bob-munk.

MARGE: *(Falls to her knees, pleading.)* Then you'll do the same for me?

MA BELLE: Why? You got your tail in a crack?

MARGE: *(How quaintly she puts things)* You might say that. *(Rises.)* Allow me to introduce myself. I am Marginally Modest. My friends call me Marge.

MA BELLE: *(Shakes her hand vigorously.)* How-de-do. My name's Monopoly Belle. My friends call me Ma. Now what's this here problem you got?

MARGE: Do I dare be frank with you?

MA BELLE: I thought your name was Marge. Make up your mind young lady. You can't be everything to everybody. And I ain't got all day.

MARGE: Very well. I shall be frank.

MA BELLE: All right, Frank. What's eatin' you?

MARGE: No, no, my name is Marge but I will be frank. Alas, even this simple peasant woman cannot understand the dire straights I am in.

MA BELLE: Dire straights? Is that anything like a corset?

MARGE: *(Crosses to MA.)* Oh, Ma, how can I make you understand? I am pursued, driven from my home, chased by a man most foul.

BRAD APPLE tiptoes in from upstage right, looks around, then tiptoes down to door and listens.

MA BELLE: Sort of a bird-brain?

MARGE: Worse.

MA BELLE: Hey, hey, hey! Seems to me like a purty young thing like you wouldn't mind a little chasin'. I 'member back to when I was just a young slip of a girl. I didn't mind the chasin' - didn't mind gettin' caught now and again neither.

MARGE: But you don't understand!

MA BELLE: Don't give me that! Times ain't changed that much! I don't care if this is 1883.

MARGE: 84.

MA BELLE: You don't say.

MARGE: But he is a villain, a hideous, cruel, beast of a man who would stop at nothing to have his way.

MA BELLE: He don't sound like much fun. *(Opens door and throws out bucket of water, drenching APPLE, closes door and continues without being aware of APPLE who tiptoes back off upstage right.)* All right, Miss Whoever you are -

MARGE: I'm Modest.

MA BELLE: I should hope so. If you're sure you ain't just plain' games, I'll protect you.

MARGE: Oh, would you?

MA BELLE: *(Thinks.)* Hmm. Protectin' people takes a lot of thinkin'. What we need is some advice. Just a minute. Let me bugle up my friends. *(Grabs bugle off rear wall, opens door, and blows a terrific blast then returns bugle to wall.)*

MARGE: Gracious! What was that?

MA BELLE: I just gave a little toot for my friends, Granny and Prunehilda. They live over the hill, down in the hollow. They'll be over directly when they hear that.

HATTIE: *(Stomps on upstage right.)* Soooooee! Dag-nab-it, pigs, where are you? Soooooee!

MA BELLE: *(Pokes her head out of Lodge door.)* Hattie, what in the world are you hollerin' about? Don't you know we gots problems in here?

HATTIE: Howdy, Ma. Have you seen any of my pigs around here? A whole bunch of them just plain disappeared into thin air and I'll be switched if I can find them. Soooee! Pigs come home!

MA BELLE: Will you stop your bellerin' for a minute? Your voice is enough to knock the fillin's out of my teeth.

HATTIE: What's your problem, Ma? *(Stomps into the cabin.)* And who's this skinny little thing? *(Stomps over to MARGE.)* You get some meat on your bones, you might be a purty kid someday. By the way, I'm Hattie. Hattie Hogge.

MARGE: How do you do? I'm Marge Modest. And thank you, I think.

HATTIE: Now tell me, Ma, what's your problem?

MA BELLE: It ain't mine. It's hers.

HATTIE: Hers? She ain't big enough to be no problem. You know, little sister, if you was to eat about two pounds of fat-back and hog jowls every day for a year, you might pick up a little lard.

GLADIOLA stomp-knocks on Lodge door, timidly.

MA BELLE: That must be Granny now. *(Opens door.)* Why, hello, Gladiola. What brings you to this neck of the woods?

GLADIOLA covers her mouth with her hand and giggles.

MA BELLE: As long as you're here, come on in. *(GLADIOLA enters shyly.)* Miss Marge, this here is Gladiola. She lives up the road a piece. She don't say much but she's right cheery company to be around. *(Starts to mop floor upstage center.)*

MARGE: *(Shakes hands with GLADIOLA.)* How do you do, Miss Gladiola?

GLADIOLA: *(Shakes hands timidly and then jumps back.)* He! He! He!

HATTIE: *(Drags chair from table to right center in Lodge, puts her foot on it and leans elbow on knee.)* Now what's this here problem that's got you all flustered?

MARGE: This man, an evil man, has driven me from my place of employment.

HATTIE: Could you be a little more exact? I never met a man that wasn't a no-account, lazy, shiftless, worthless bum.

MA BELLE: Now don't you say that about my late husband, Hattie. Pa was a saint in man's clothing.

HATTIE: Reckon so. But my husband was such a no-good, when he died, I took up raisin' hogs in memory of him. Now it looks like I can't keep them home nights either.

GRANNY: *(From offstage.)* Keep your hands off me, girl! I kin walk by myself! What do you think I am, *(She enters upstage right, a feeble old woman walking with a cane, followed by her fluttering-fussbudget daughter, PRUNEHILDA PINCHER.)* an old woman or something?

PRUNE: *(Speaks in a shrill, irritating voice.)* Now, mama, you know you shouldn't be out walking like this. It isn't good for your heart. Old Doc Liverstone says—

GRANNY: I don't care what Doc Liverstone says! I'm old enough to make my own decisions and when Ma calls for help, I answer! That's the code of this hills. Now leave me be! *(Crosses towards cabin.)*

PRUNE: If you'd just let me help you! *(Tries to take her arm.)*

GRANNY: Help me? *(Bats PRUNE's hand away.)* Help yourself, Prunehilda! What you should be doin' is helpin' a husband and tendin' babies!

PRUNE: Ma, I am waiting for the right man!

GRANNY: Well, right or wrong, you better find him purty quick. *(They cross to cabin with GRANNY muttering.)* Dried up skinny old maid.

MA BELLE: I think I hear Granny coming now.

PRUNE: Ma, don't talk like that. I am not an old maid.

GRANNY: Well, you ain't gettin' any younger.

MA BELLE: *(Opens door.)* Granny! I sure am glad you come a runnin'. We got a problem.

GRANNY: *(Enters cabin and starts to sit by the doorway where there is no chair. PRUNEHILDA pushes a chair under her at the last minute.)* I don't run as fast as I used to for some reason.

MA BELLE: *(Solicitously.)* Must be the weather.

GRANNY: Yep. Too many years of it. Say, who is this young child?

MA BELLE: Granny, this here is Miss Marge Modest. Marge, this is my oldest and dearest friend, Granny Fanny. And this here is her daughter, Prunehilda Pincher.

GRANNY: She's an old maid! An' I ain't got me no grandbabies.

MARGE: Oh, ladies, I'd be ever so grateful if you could help me. This vile man has driven me from my place of employment. I fear he means to ruin me.

GLADIOLA shrieks, giggles, and throws her apron over her head.

HATTIE: Bring him around to my place. I'll feed him to the hogs!

GLADIOLA shrieks again.

PRUNEHILDA: *(Moves far downstage right in Lodge.)* In my experience, men are all alike!

GRANNY: YOUR experience?! You ain't never been closer'n spittin' distance to a man under seventy. What could you possibly know about men?

PRUNE: They all want just one thing. *(There is a pause as they all lean forward to hear her statement.)* My money!

GLADIOLA shrieks again.

GRANNY: HA! What else would they want!

PRUNE: Mama, please.

GRANNY: Oh, hush up. You want advice on men, you come to the right place. I've buried four husbands. Other two got clean away. What do you want to know about men?

MARGE: How can I make him leave me alone?

GRANNY: Ask Prunehilda, she might have a few ideas.

MARGE: But he is a villain most vile.

GRANNY: Yep. So was a couple of mine. Numbers three and five. I think they was. Or maybe it was two and six. Never could keep all them fellas straight. Now, what's your problem?

MARGE: I just told you. This man means to destroy me!

MA BELLE: You'll have to excuse Granny. Her mind ain't what it used to be.

GRANNY: And my body ain't neither!

PRUNE: Please answer the question, Mama.

GRANNY: *(Gets up from chair and moves to table.)* What question?

MARGE: How do I get rid of this man?

GRANNY: I buried all of mine. *(Starts to sit, PRUNEHILDA rushes to her with a chair just in time to catch her.)*

MARGE: I fear I cannot bury Mr. Apple.

GRANNY: Then skin him! Tell him you got six kids and want to marry him so they'll have a daddy to pay the bills.

GLADIOLA laughs hysterically.

GRANNY: *(To MA.)* Would you tell that laughing hyena to hold it down?
She's makin' my bunions ache.

MARGE: But, six children? That would not be honest!

GRANNY: Then you ain't got but one choice. Get yourself a big frying pan and cave his head in the first time he gets outta line. As I recall, that's what happened to husband number two. Or was it number four? Tapped him a mite too hard and, poof, I'm single again.

MARGE: But I abhor violence.

GRANNY: Then marry him. Them's your choices. Well, I got to go now.
(Rises and moves slowly towards the door.) So long, Ma. You need any more help, give me a toot. Come on, Prunehilda. Let's go see if we can figure out a way to catch you a husband before you get any older.

PRUNE: *(Follows GRANNY across stage up right.)* Mama, I am not old. Forty-seven is not old. I am merely being particular. I want Mr. Right.

GRANNY: Right! Left! HA! I still ain't got me no grandbabies.

THEY exit upstage right.

HATTIE: I got to be goin', too. Got to find them hogs and get them home where I can tend to them proper. Ain't no hog nor man around that kin get along without a woman lookin' after 'em. *(Exits Lodge.)*
Come on, Gladiola, you can help me look. *(GLADIOLA follows her.)*
Hogs or men, don't matter which. They're all alike.

MARGE: Oh, Ma, what am I to do?

MA BELLE: I reckon you'd best stay here. Ain't nobody ever been attacked whilst bein' protected by a moose. *(Indicates moose on rear wall.)*

MARGE: (I can believe that) I'll be forever in your debt.

MA BELLE: You kin stay here long as you work and earn your keep.
(Moves chairs back to table.)

MARGE: Oh, I will. I will. I'll work and slave. But I don't do windows.

MA BELLE: You kin start by scrubbin' this here floor.

MARGE: *(Falls to her knees and begins scrubbing the floor with her scarf.)* Oh, I will. I will.

MA BELLE: *(Stares down at her.)* I ain't no expert on keepin' clean, but wouldn't it work better if you used some soap and water.

MARGE: Perhaps it would, kind Mistress. Forgive me while I run to yon stream and fetch a pail of water. *(Gathers up her scarf, grabs pail at rear wall, and, singing gaily, "Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water," skips out of Lodge and exits upstage left behind the wall of the Lodge.)*

MA BELLE: *(Takes feather duster from wall and begins to dust.)* At least that poor child seems happy. While I, - - - *(Sighs heavily as she moves to left of table.)*

JUDGE JURY McBRIE enters briskly from upstage right, crosses to imaginary door and stomps/knocks.

MA BELLE: Drat! Who's come pesterin' me now. *(Calls.)* Come in, whoever you are.

JUDGE: *(Steps in, all smiles.)* Howdy, Ma.

MA BELLE: *(Double drat! It's Judge Jury McBrie)* Mornin', Judge.

JUDGE: *(Struts to center of room.)* I suppose you know what day this is, Ma?

MA BELLE: Yes, I know. *(Continues to dust table.)*

JUDGE: It's the day the mortgage on Dead Moose Lodge falls due. You got the money?

MA BELLE: You know I ain't.

JUDGE: *(Starts following her around the table.)* Then you know what that means. If you want to keep your Lodge, you have to marry me!

MA BELLE: *(Backs away from him around the table.)* Keep away from me, you old coot!

JUDGE: Come on, Ma. Don't you feel the 'lectricity in the air?"

MA BELLE: Electricity? Ha! I don't get no charge out of you.

JUDGE: *(Continues after her, one step at a time.)* But I get a charge from Monopoly Belle!

MA BELLE: *(Everybody says that. Maybe I overcharge folks.)*

The JUDGE puckers up and leans towards her, making horrible kissing sounds.

MA BELLE: (*Dusts his face with the feather duster, showering dust.*)

Get back!

JUDGE: (*Kneels and grabs her hand.*) Marry me, Ma!

MA BELLE: (*Beats his hat with the feather duster.*) You want your head disconnected?

JUDGE: (*Scrambles to his feet.*) I'll take that as a "maybe."

MA BELLE: OUT! (*She pushes him out the door. He moves center, brushes off his hat and straightens himself.*)

APPLE: (*Slinks on upstage right.*) Curses! Where has that woman gone! There's never one around when you need them. She must be here someplace. (*Looks around.*)

JUDGE: Drat! Drat! Triple drat! Here I am, a model of a man, unable to win the woman I love. What is wrong with this world? I, a judge of impeccable reputation, unable to win the heart of Monopoly Belle. Unthinkable!

APPLE: (*Approaches JUDGE.*) Excuse me, sir.

JUDGE: You know me?

APPLE: Of course! Who does not know -

JUDGE: (*Thumbs in vest.*) McBribe. Judge Jury McBribe.

APPLE: Of course. I'd know you anywhere.

JUDGE: And you are -

APPLE: (*Bows.*) Mr. Bradley Apple, Esquire, at your service.

JUDGE: Yes. Yes. Don't I know you from someplace?

APPLE: (*I hope not*) No, I don't think so, Your Honor. I'm new in these parts. Only been doing business a short time here, so to speak.

JUDGE: Hmmm. And where were you before?

APPLE: Up the river.

JUDGE: What?

APPLE: The Moosepaw. Near the Moosepaw River. Doing time - er, business.

JUDGE: And how can I help you, young man.

APPLE: (*Puts an arm around the JUDGE's shoulders and they move downstage center.*) Do you ever give advice, Judge Jury?

JUDGE: Give? (*Shocked.*) Don't forget the "bribe!"

APPLE: Beg pardon?

JUDGE: McBribe, son. That's the most important part. Don't forget the bribe. *(Looks away and holds out hand behind his back.)*

APPLE: Of course, Your Honor. How foolish of me to forget. *(Pulls out a packet of money with string attached and hands it over.)* (This old coot is smarter than I thought)

JUDGE: *(Thumbs through money.)* We must never forget the important things in life. *(Tucks money in side coat pocket.)* Now, what were you saying about good advice?

APPLE: *(Pulls money out of JUDGE's pocket.)* I need some advice from an older, wiser head, like yours. How would a young man, like myself, get into business around here? I have a few small things going, but what I need is a base of operations.

JUDGE: You have money to invest?

APPLE: A modest amount.

JUDGE: Then perhaps I could be of service. Scout around. Sound out the locals for you. Handle the paperwork. Make sure everything is legal. You understand.

APPLE: I would be most appreciative.

JUDGE: How much?

APPLE: How much?

JUDGE: How much appreciation would you show? Er . . . how much do you have to invest?

APPLE: *(Still smiling.)* But, of course. *(Hands over the same packet of money from before.)* (If this were costing me money, I'd be furious)

JUDGE: *(Tucks money in pocket again.)* It just so happens that I know of a business which is for sale.

APPLE: You don't say. *(Takes money back.)*

JUDGE: *(Glances at Lodge.)* Quite.

APPLE: Profitable?

JUDGE: Relatively.

APPLE: How much?

JUDGE: What would you consider a fair price?

APPLE: *(Waves packet of money in front of JUDGE.)* Would this do?

JUDGE: (*Grabs money.*) The exact amount. (*Takes deed from inside pocket and hands it to APPLE.*) You are now the proud owner of the Dead Moose Lodge. (*Takes out scissors and cuts string attached to money about one foot from the packet. Stuffs cash back in his pocket.*) No strings attached. (*Chuckles and stands with thumbs hooked in vest.*)

APPLE: Eureka! I have it! The last link in the chain. My empire is complete! And now, I must away! (*Notices cut string - notices string hanging from JUDGE's pocket. Taps JUDGE on shoulder, who is facing downstage left.*) You're eyes may gleam and your teeth may glitter, but never try to out-slick a Brad Apple. (*Steals money back and tiptoes off upstage right.*)

JUDGE: At last the widow Belle is helpless. When she finds out I sold her lodge, she will have to come to me for help. I have her right where I want her.

STOUT: (*Strides on dramatically from upstage right.*) Halt!

JUDGE: (*So startled he loses his hat.*) What? How dare you accost a Judge! Who are you?

STOUT: (*Marches downstage center.*) I am Sergeant Seymore Stoutfellow of the Royal Colorado Mounted Police! Here to fight crime, skullduggery and evil-doing! And who, (*He faces JUDGE, hands on hips.*) are you?

JUDGE: I am the Honorable Judge Jury McBribe, upholder of law, defender of the helpless, and all-around good-guy! (Sometimes)

STOUT: (*Giving a complicated salute.*) I beg your pardon, Honorable sir, but we in law enforcement must be ever vigilant, suspecting everyone, always prepared . . . and all that.

JUDGE: Of course! But what are you doing here?

STOUT: (*Paces downstage right.*) Haven't you heard? Someone has been annoying the moose here in Colorado, the last preserve for our great horned friends. It is my job to apprehend this culprit and bring him or HER to justice.

JUDGE: Pestering our moose?

STOUT: Yes, a dastardly crime. Committed only by dastards.

JUDGE: And whom do you suspect?

MARGE enters from behind the wall upstage left carrying a bucket of water and begins to scrub floor.

STOUT: Everyone! Even now I am preparing to make an arrest.

JUDGE: I'm not guilty! On my honor!

STOUT: Not you, Judge. *(Crosses downstage left to JUDGE.)* In fact, I may have need of your services.

JUDGE: *(Beams and holds out hand.)* Really? I think that can be arranged. How soon would you like to hire me?

STOUT: *(Grabs JUDGE's hand and shakes it.)* How de do. *(Crosses downstage right.)* I'll be needing your Judgeship just as soon as I make an arrest. We must have a fair, but speedy, trial.

JUDGE: *(Crosses downstage right, following SEYMORE STOUTFELLOW.)* Yes! Yes! Of course. *(Rubs hands together gleefully.)* *(There's always a good profit to be turned at a trial)*

STOUT: *(Turns around suddenly and bumps into JUDGE, knocks off his hat.)* And now I must be about my duties. I shall begin by questioning the people in this cabin. *(Crosses to Lodge door and stomps/knocks.)*

JUDGE: And I shall get ready for the trial. We'll hang 'em all.

STOUT: But only after a fair -

JUDGE: - but speedy -

STOUT: - trial.

JUDGE: *(Exits upstage right singing and skipping.)* Hi, ho, hi, ho, it's off to judge I go -

MA BELLE: *(Enters Lodge from upstage left and answers door.)* Now, who in tarnation are you?

STOUT: *(Performs his salute.)* I, madame, am Sergeant Seymore Stoutfellow, here to investigate malicious moose pestering.

MA BELLE: Well, you're barkin' up the wrong stump here, bull-bellow!

STOUT: Stoutfellow!

MA BELLE: If you say so. But we ain't got no moose 'round here. Ain't seen one since Elroy, that's my late husband, found a dead moose right here on this spot and decided to build this here lodge.

STOUT: Madame, I am bound to investigate everyone. Have you been poaching.

MA BELLE: Only a couple of eggs for breakfast.

STOUT: Ah, ha! And were they moose eggs?

MA BELLE: *(Eyes him suspiciously.)* You ain't too bright are you, young fellow?

STOUT: Stoutfellow.

MA BELLE: I ain't cookin' moose eggs! *(Chuckling.)* Moose eggs?! Heavens no! They was chicken eggs.

STOUT: I, madame, am an officer of the law and with your kind permission, good lady, I must now examine these premises.

MA BELLE: You mean you want to search the house? Afraid I might have a moose in my bathtub?

STOUT: *(Smiles proudly.)* Exactly.

MA BELLE: Then why didn't you say so? Come on in.

MARGE is busy scrubbing the floor downstage left as STOUT enters.

STOUT: *(Points accusingly at MARGE.)* And who is this?

MA BELLE: That there is Marginally Modest. She's my new hiree.

STOUT: Then I must question her. She may be a desperate criminal in disguise.

MA BELLE: You can talk to her all you want, but don't go botherin' her work. I've got to go out back and chop some wood. Now you two behave yourselves.

MA exits upstage left.

STOUT: Miss Modest, I'd like to talk to you.

MARGE: *(Throws herself on his feet.)* Oh, please, good Sergeant, do not arrest me. I am but a poor working girl and if I were to be arrested, the shock would kill my poor old mother, if she were not already dead.

STOUT: I would never arrest a person for doing honest toil. I seek only those dangerous criminals who would despoil our environment and pester our moose.

MARGE: But I have done nothing other than try to survive this cold, cruel world and be of honorable service to my fellow citizens.

STOUT: Then I would NEVER arrest you. Come. Stand up and let me see your kindhearted face.

MARGE is helped to her feet by STOUT and looks at him, longingly.

MARGE: (Alas! Never have I seen such manly charm! I think my poor heart will break!)

MARGE faints, clasps her hands over her heart, remains rigid and falls into STOUT.

STOUT: *(Catches her and holds her at arm's length.)* (What's this? The most beautiful woman in the world and she cannot stand the sight of me. Alas! This is an unhappy day for Seymore Stoutfellow)

MA BELLE: *(Walks back in.)* What in thunderation is goin' on in here? I thought I told you NOT to interfere with her work. Now look what you gone and done. The girl's standin' around takin' a nap in the middle of the day.

STOUT: I'm afraid she's fainted.

MA BELLE: Then let's wake her up. *(Flicks water into MARGE's face.)*
Wake up girl! You ain't done workin' yet.

MARGE: *(Wakes.)* Oh, what happened?

STOUT: *(They hold hands.)* I'm afraid I did, ma'am. You took one look at my face and fainted plumb away.

MARGE: I'm sorry, sir. But seeing you so close was more than my poor heart could bare.

MA BELLE: Probably got a touch of the vapors.

STOUT: But now, it is my official duty to ask you questions. I must suspect everyone.

MA BELLE: Ain't you done enough already? Gettin' this poor child all flustered. Ought to be ashamed of yourself. *(Pries their hands apart and gets between them.)*

STOUT: Miss Modest, where did you come from?

MARGE: Why, sir, my mother lived at home. I was born there.

STOUT: No! No! Before you were here, where were you?

MARGE: I worked at the Lost Waif Orphanage, just over the hill.

STOUT: And what did you do there?

MARGE: I - I - I was but a working girl.

STOUT: But what did you do?

MARGE: Alas! I was the lowliest of all the workers. I - I milked the moose so the poor wee tots might have a drink.

STOUT: You were the moose-milker?

MA BELLE: The one I've heard about. The one who could milk two moose at the same time?

MARGE: Yes, it is so. It is I, the master multiple moose milker, Miss Marginally Modest.

STOUT: No!

MARGE: Yes!

STOUT: No!

MARGE: Yes!

MA BELLE: You're famous!

MARGE: No!

STOUT: Nonetheless, I shall have to arrest you. (Though it breaks my manly heart to do it)

MA BELLE: What's the charge?

STOUT: Miss Marginally Modest, the master multiple moose milker, is a moose pester.

MA BELLE: That's easy for you to say.

STOUT: Not really. Try saying it three times fast.

MA BELLE: How do you know she was pesterin' them? Who you gonna get to testify?

STOUT: Nevertheless, I must arrest her.

MA BELLE: And you're gonna make her stand trial before that old coot, Judge Jury?

JUDGE: (*Pokes his head in upstage right.*) Don't forget the bribe!

MA BELLE: - old coot.

JUDGE nods and withdraws.

STOUT: Alas! It is my duty. And a Colorado Mouny always does his duty!

WORM: *(Enters upstage right with her tray of goodies and crosses center.)* Moose muffins! Get your red-hot moose muffins!

STOUT: Hark! I hear a voice crying in the wilderness.

MARGE: Who can it be?

MA BELLE: There ain't but one way to find out. Let's go see.

The THREE of them stomp out into the yard and surround WILLIE.

STOUT: And who, young woman, are you?

WORM: My name is Willimena Worm. My friends call me "Worm."

Would you like to buy some moose muffins? They're very tasty!

STOUT: Why, yes, Willie Worm, I would. I haven't eaten for two days and I am beginning to feel the pangs of hunger. *(Pays her for a muffin and takes it off the tray.)*

MA BELLE: I know this here girl. She comes by here every day.

WORM: This is true, Madam. You are one of my best customers. In fact, you are my only customer.

MA BELLE: I wondered why you kept comin' back.

WORM: *(To MARGE.)* And how about you, fair one? I also have moose chips, moosed potatoes, and for a really fine treat, moose munchies.

MARGE: Do you have them in chocolate?

WORM: *(You knew this line was coming, didn't you?) (Faces downstage with a blank smile.)* Alas, I have no chocolate moose.

MARGE: That's all right. I fear I have no money.

STOUT: Allow me! *(Hands MARGE a dollar.)*

MARGE: *(Gazes fondly at him.)* I shall be forever in your debt. *(Pays WORM, takes a muffin and eats it.)*

STOUT: Not if you pay me back.

WORM: *(To MA.)* And would you like your usual order of two moose steaks? *(Hands over a package of meat.)*

MA BELLE: Yep. Reckon so. Nope, better make that three.

STOUT: Ah, ha! I have solved the crime! You, madam, are guilty of a fried felony!

MA BELLE: You mean no one is allowed a simple moose-steak?

STOUT: You, Woolie Worm, have made a mistake! You are under arrest.

WORM: *(Stomps on his foot.)* My name is Willimena Worm, now charge me correctly.

MA BELLE: What's the charge?

STOUT: No one is allowed to do what you are doing in this territory.

WORM: *(Snuggles up against him.)* Would you arrest a girl for working for a living? Perhaps this is a case of moose-steakin' identity.

STOUT: And you, Monopoly Belle, are under arrest for buying and possessing illegal moose meat.

MA BELLE: WHAT?!

MARGE: But, Seymore, if I may call you that, you too, are eating illegal moose muffins.

STOUT: *(Drops WOMEN's arms and throws his arms around himself.)* Then I arrest me, Seymore Stoutfellow, for illegal munching.

MARGE: *(Oh! How I'd love to have those arms around me!)*
(Approaches him closely.) Are you going to arrest me, too?

STOUT: *(Spreads his arms wide, as though to grab her, she flutters, then he stops and drops his arms.)* No, you're already under arrest for moose-pestering.

MARGE: *(Stomps her foot and turns away.)* Poo-poo!

MA BELLE: Then who's doing the arresting?

STOUT: Me, madam.

MA BELLE: You can't arrest nobody. You're a criminal. Crooks can't be cops.

WORM: Since when?

APPLE: *(Enters and pauses, upstage right.)* *(Drat! They have found her out!)*

WORM: *(Points to APPLE.)* There! He's the one who made me do it!

APPLE: *(Strides down and stops beside WORM.)* I never saw this young woman before in my life! *(Whispers to WORM.)* Be quiet, you idiot!

STOUT: *(Steps forward.)* Stand back, sir, this is a crime scene. Lest you become tainted by this bunch of vile criminals you see before you.

WORM: But Brad is the guilty one, I tell you. It was he who made me sell moose munchies. Mr. Apple makes them in his factory right over that hill. It's his faulty we're all criminals.

STOUT: You mean . . . ?

WORM: Yes! One Brad Apple spoiled the bunch.

STOUT: This presents a serious problem. (*Paces back and forth downstage.*) I have solved the crime but am powerless to arrest the criminal because I am one of them myself.

APPLE: And I, Brad Apple, honest, loyal, and upright citizen, am about to arrest you all for trespassing!

WORM/MA/MARGE/STOUT: What?

APPLE: (*Strides upstage center, turns and waves deed.*) I'm glad you asked that. I am the new owner of the Dead Moose Lodge. And you are all standing on my property! Now, away with the lot of you before I have you all thrown in jail for a hundred years! (Trespassing is a very serious crime when you own the Judge!)

MA BELLE: A hundred years?

APPLE: And a day!

WORM: But, I'll be middle aged by then.

TURKEY: (*Enters upstage left, singing loudly.*) Give me some men who are stout-hearted men - (*Carries an oversized axe over his shoulder. Stops upstage right.*) Ma! What's goin' on here? Are you okay?

MA BELLE: (*Rushes up to him.*) Turkey, I just got myself arrested. And we got dispossessed from the Dead Moose Lodge!

TURKEY: (*Assumes a fighting stance with his "cardboard" axe held in two hands.*) Ain't nobody bother Ma Belle! Not as long as Wild Turkey's available. Get behind me, Ma, I'll save you! (*She ducks behind him as he swings axe overhead in a wide circle. Everyone ducks.*)

WORM: Oh, look. A man with muscles!

APPLE: Ssshhisch! Can't you see he's armed and dangerous?

WORM: Yes! His arms is great and the rest of him ain't so bad neither! (*Approaches him.*) Who are you Mister Muscles?

TURKEY: (*Flexing his muscles.*) The name's Turkey O'Trot. And I'm beholdin' to Ma here. Ain't nobody messes with her whilst I'm around. I like her. (*Grins.*)

APPLE: (Gadzooks! Another defender of the downtrodden. Is there no end to them? I think I had best be elsewhere while this muscleheaded moose is about!) Miss Willimena Worm, a word with you, if I may?

THEY move downstage center.

APPLE: Now is the time for us to make ourselves scarce. Hie you hence, you toothsome wench. We'll meet anon. (*He turns to leave.*)

WORM: Huh?

APPLE: Vamoose! Begone! Away!

WORM: What does that mean?

APPLE: Get out of here, you wooly-headed worm! Move it!

WORM: I ain't no Wooly Worm! I'm Willimena Worm!

APPLE: There's a scarce difference. Now come on! (*He grabs her by the wrist and drags her off upstage right.*)

TURKEY: Now just what's goin' on around here?

STOUT: (*Steps up to center.*) I'm afraid, sir, it is I who am to blame.

TURKEY: Then I'll take care of that. (*He raises his axe high overhead.*)

MA BELLE: Wait!

TURKEY: (*Lowers his axe.*) Aw, Ma, I was only gonna lop off one ear.

MA BELLE: Do you always have to use brute force?

TURKEY: It's worked pretty good 'til now. Yuck!Yuck!Yuck!

STOUT: You won't have to worry about me, young man. I'm arresting myself and taking me off to the nearest sheriff's office. (*Grabs his own shirt and drags himself forward.*) Come on, you criminal! (*Exits upstage right.*)

TURKEY: In that case, if there ain't no more danger, I'll get back to work, there's wood that needs choppin' out there. A whole forest of it. (*Marches off singing loudly.*) Hi, ho, hi, ho, it's off to chop I go -

MARGE: Ma, may I speak frankly to you?

MA BELLE: You can call on Ma Belle anytime, day or night. (*Smiles at audience.*)

MARGE: I have a problem.

MA BELLE: You think you've got a problem. What about me? I'm all broke up.

MARGE: I fear I'm in love.

They BOTH start pacing back and forth in opposite directions.

MA BELLE: I'm loosing my home.

MARGE: I am only a working girl.

MA BELLE: This place Pa built with his own two hands is no longer mine.

MARGE: I have no prospects for the future. No dowry. Nothing to offer a man but my own sweet self.

MA BELLE: I have no money. No food in the house. If a guest came now I couldn't even give him a moose steak for supper.

THEY stop side by side and speak in unison.

MARGE/MA BELLE: What's a woman to do?!

THEY throw their arms around each other and cry. THEY enter the Lodge arm in arm, crying.

APPLE: *(Enters upstage right as THEY are entering the Lodge, pauses.)*

What's this? A damsel in distress? Two damsels? Luck is with me today. They are the kind most easily taken advantage of. *(Crosses to Lodge door, gives a stomp/knock and lets himself in.)* Madames! Could I, Bradley Apple, be of service?

Hearing his voice, MARGE bursts into tears.

MA BELLE: *(Recovers.)* Haven't you done enough already?

APPLE: *(Naaah)*

MARGE: He is the one who drove me from my former place of employment. I must flee! *(Looks around for a way to escape.)*

APPLE: Ah HA!

MA BELLE: *(APPLE turns towards MARGE.)* Hold it. You take one more step and I'll trot out Wild Turkey. He'll turn you into apple sauce.

APPLE: *(Freezes, gulps, and becomes all smiles.)* Never fear, Madame, I come only as a peace maker. *(As HE turns towards MA, MARGE scurries off upstage left.)*

MA BELLE: Oh, yeah? What do you want a piece of this time?

APPLE: What I have in mind is a business venture; a game of chance.

MA BELLE: *(Horrified.)* You mean gamblin'?

APPLE: Not the way I do it. What I need is a woman to run this pleasure palace. *(To MA.)* That's where you come in.

MA BELLE: Me? Run a den of iniquity. Never! Next you'll be askin' me to serve *(Shudders with disgust.)* Apple-jacks!

APPLE: That, too. And I shall pay you a handsome wage. *(Puts his hand on her shoulder.)*

MA BELLE: You would? *(She slaps his hand away.)*

APPLE: And you can sleep in the barn. For only half price.

MA BELLE: Well -

APPLE: There's just one condition.

MA BELLE: *(In disgust.)* There always is.

APPLE: The young maid Modest must be mine.

MA BELLE: *(Sinks to her knees.)* Say it isn't so, sour Apple. Don't make me do it. Pleeeeeaaasse!

APPLE: Brad Apple. Tell that woman she must be mine. And now, I must away! *(Exits Lodge. MA rises and sits dejectedly at table.)*

WORM: *(Tiptoes in upstage right. Whispers loudly.)* Mr. Apple! Mr. Apple!

APPLE: *(Hurries to her, frustrated.)* What do you want?

WORM: What am I to do with my moose munchies? I dare not sell them.

APPLE: Then eat them.

WORM: All of them? But, my diet.

APPLE: Dash your diet! Now eat! *(WORM sits on stump and begins to eat. APPLE glares at audience.)* *(Why are women always on a diet? Why aren't they perfect, like we men)* *(Heads for exit accompanied by "boo's" from the audience. Stops and sticks tongue out at audience just before exiting.)*

TURKEY: (*Immediately following APPLE's exit, TURKEY marches in, with axe, singing loudly.*) Over hill, over dale, I will chop dusty trail - (*Sees WORM and freezes.*) Hot dang! Look at there! (*He noisily sneaks up behind WORM.*) Can I nibble on one of your muffins?

WORM: (*Jumps up, screams, and runs in a circle.*) Ayieeee! Help! Ayieeee!

TURKEY: (*Looks around, swings axe.*) You are? Where? Who? I'll defend you!

WORM: (*Stops suddenly.*) You will?

TURKEY: Course! I always defend purty young women.

WORM: (*Coyly.*) Do you think I'm purty?

TURKEY: (*Blushes and kicks ground.*) Har!Har!Har!

WORM: (*Giggles.*) He! He! He!

TURKEY: You got somethin' even better than purty.

WORM: What's that?

TURKEY: Food!

WORM: Could you? Would you? Might you?

TURKEY: Just name it, little lady. I'd do anything for you.

WORM: Would you help me eat these moose muffins?

TURKEY: I could. I would. (*Grabs a handful and begins eating as fast as possible.*) I am.

MA BELLE: (*Raises her head then rises slowly.*) How in this whole wide world am I ever to survive? A poor old woman, alone on life's seas. Oh, woe is me!

MARGE: (*Sticks her head in from upstage left.*) Is he gone?

MA BELLE: (*Moves up center in Lodge.*) You mean that snake in the woods? Yes, he's gone. But he'll be back.

MARGE: (*Crosses to MA.*) What are we going to do, Ma? I'm weary from running. Where will I ever find rest?

MA BELLE: We've got to have a plan.

MARGE: But we have nothing to plan with.

MA BELLE: We've got our brains. Now what is it that women are better at than men?

MARGE: Having babies.

MA BELLE: No, no, that doesn't count.

MARGE: It does if you're a baby.

MA BELLE: We're better at finnegelin', that's what!

MARGE: You mean the tricky, sneaky, devious things we do to get our own way? *(Cheers from all females.)*

MA BELLE: Exactly. There ain't never been a man born that can out-think a woman. We're gonna beat 'em at their own game, by cracky.

MARGE: But how?

MA BELLE: First, you're gonna shine up to that rotten Apple.

MARGE: And second?

MA BELLE: *(Stumped for a minute, then finds her confidence)* We'll figure it out. Come on. *(They exit upstage left.)*

TURKEY: *(Out in the yard.)* Miss Worm, kin I ask you a personal question?

WORM: If it's not too personal, Mr. Trot.

TURKEY: How come is it you let this old Apple core peel you around?

WORM: *(Crosses downstage left.)* Alas, I owe him life itself.

TURKEY: You mean he's your Pa?

WORM: Only my adoptive Pa. He claimed me from the orphanage over the hill. Now I must do as he says or he will send me back. I couldn't bear that.

TURKEY: But you ain't no little kid. You're a grown people.

WORM: If that were only true. I have no way of knowing when I was born. If he says I am but a child, then I must take his word.

TURKEY: *(Crosses to her and puts his hands on her arms.)* I kin see you got a problem. I got one, too. I'm - I'm -

WORM: *(She turns to him and puts her hands on his chest.)* Yes? Yes?

TURKEY: I'm still hungry.

WORM: (I can see why people call you a Turkey) There's more food at Mr. Apple's house. We could eat there.

TURKEY: Let's do it! *(Grabs her hand and drags her off upstage right.)*

MA BELLE: *(Enters Lodge, followed by MARGE.)* Now you know what to do.

MARGE: But I am confused. I lead him on, then hold him off. Is that right?

MA BELLE: Kee-rect. Play him just like a fish on a line.

MARGE: I don't know for sure how to do that. I've never trifled with a man's affections before.

MA BELLE: Never trifled, gracious! Your education has been lacking. What you need is an example. Now wait right here. *(Grabs horn from upstage wall, crosses to doorway and blows a couple of toots.)*

MARGE: That sure gives off a frightful sound, Ma. Where'd you learn to play that thing?

MA BELLE: This here is a genuine moose-tooter. There ain't another one like it nowheres. Pa made it himself. Would you like me to snort out a tune for you whilst we're waitin'?

MARGE: No! No! I wouldn't want to strain your - lips.

MA BELLE: Right. Ain't no need to waste good music. I'll wait til I get a crowd collected.

GLADIOLA flutters onstage.

MA BELLE: *(Crosses out and meets her upstage center. MARGE follows.)* Gladiola, I'm glad you stopped by. We've got to give a lesson to this girl on how to treat a man.

GLADIOLA giggles shrilly.

MA BELLE: Now calm down, Gladee. We're just goin' to pretend. Now you stand here and be a woman. I'll be the man. Marge, you stand over there and watch. All right, Gladee. *(Walks up to GLADIOLA and sticks out her hand.)* Good afternoon, young woman.

GLADIOLA screams, throws her apron over her head, bounces up and down, peeks out from behind the apron, and goes into another giggling fit.

MA BELLE: Now cut that out! You know that ain't the proper way for a lady to behave. I'm sorry, Marge, I forgot that Gladee is a might shy around menfolk. Come to think of it, she's shy around womenfolk, too.

HATTIE: *(Stomps on, upstage right.)* What's all the ruckus about? I could hear her silly cackling all the way over to Bull Moose Holler.

MA BELLE: We were tryin' to give a lesson to Marge here on how to treat a man. Gladee sort of got carried away.

HATTIE: Heck, there ain't no secret on how to treat a man. Course, you got to use your head. You can't treat 'em like real people. They ain't got the sense for that.

MA BELLE: Too bad we ain't got a live one here to practice on.

HATTIE: Listen, Ma. You find a live one, it ain't goin' to be practice. Far as I'm concerned, I'm willin' to go for real.

JUDGE: *(Walks on, upstage right.)* Afternoon, ladies. Hello, Ma Belle dear.

MA BELLE: *(Whispers to HATTIE.)* How about him?

HATTIE: *(Looks him over first then turns to MA.)* Close enough. *(To JUDGE.)* Howdy, mister.

JUDGE: Er . . . howdy.

HATTIE: My name's Hattie. Hattie Hogge. I got a pig farm over in Bull Moose Holler.

JUDGE: *(Wrinkles his nose.)* Yes, I smelled that.

HATTIE: You got a name?

JUDGE: Yes. *(Backs away from her slightly.)* I am the Honorable Judge Jury McBride.

HATTIE: A judge? *(Turns to MA.)* Hot-diddy-dad-gum! I believe this here's a live one! *(Approaches JUDGE.)* Do you like pigs?

JUDGE: Not particularly.

HATTIE: You like women? *(Smiles seductively.)*

JUDGE: My heart belongs to another.

HATTIE: How about the rest of you?

MA BELLE: You watching, Marge? Listen and learn.

JUDGE: Madam, I do not like forward women!

HATTIE: You like the backward kind?

JUDGE: Madam, I am flabbergasted!

HATTIE: *(Pokes his stomach.)* Yep. But I am willing to overlook it.

PRUNE: *(From offstage.)* Mama! Where are you? *(Hurries on.)* Ma, have you seen my mama?

MA BELLE: Nope. Granny ain't been near this place. What happened?

PRUNE: A traveling salesman stopped by our place this morning. Tried to sweet talk me into buying some moose leftovers. Next thing I knew, he was gone and so was Mama.

MA BELLE: You figure he stole her?

PRUNE: I don't know what to think.

MA BELLE: She'll turn up. She's old enough to take care of herself.

PRUNE: Not when it comes to men.

MA BELLE: Listen, Prunehilda, would you do me a little favor?

PRUNE: Of course, Ma.

MA BELLE: This little girl don't have no sense when it comes to menfolk - just like your mama. Do you reckon you could do a little acting for me? Show this girl how to treat a man.

PRUNE: Well . . . I really don't have much experience . . . but we women have a duty to stick together. All right. I'll do it. Providing everything is proper.

MA BELLE: I wouldn't have it any other way. Wait here. (*Hurries over to the JUDGE.*) Judge, I've got me a problem. Will you help?

JUDGE: (*Blushing.*) I'd go to the ends of the earth for you, Ma.

MA BELLE: These here womenfolk all think they're in need of some lovin'. Would you kindly snuggle up to 'em?

JUDGE: ALL of 'em?

MA BELLE: Yep. I guess you're just about the most desirable man around these parts, at least for now.

JUDGE: (*Preening.*) Guess it wouldn't hurt to spread myself around a little. Providin' you don't get jealous. I wouldn't want to hurt you none.

MA BELLE: I'll try to contain myself. Now you wait here whilst I gets them ready.

MA crosses to the women and lines them up, upstage center.

JUDGE: Imagine! Judge Jury McBribe, about to make history. Takin' a shinin' to three women. I think I'll turn on the charm. But only a little. (*I wouldn't want them to get carried away*)

MA BELLE: (*To MARGE.*) Now watch close and see how they do it.

JUDGE: (*Approaches PRUNEHILDA.*) Good afternoon, Prunehilda. You're looking lovely today.

PRUNE: (*Folds her arms.*) Moose chips!

JUDGE: May I kiss your hand? (*Does so.*)

PRUNE: Stop slobbering on me! Do I look like licorice? Stop that, you old goat! (*Jerks her hand away.*)

JUDGE: I see you are a woman of refinement, taste, and discretion.

PRUNE: Agreed.

JUDGE: And you need a man of similar refinement.

PRUNE: Where would I find one?

JUDGE: (*Pulls in his stomach and poses.*) I myself am not without these traits.

PRUNE: But you're . . . old!

JUDGE: (*Drops his stomach.*) Mature!

PRUNE: Wrinkled!

JUDGE: Character!

PRUNE: I wouldn't have you for a . . . grandfather! (*Turns away from him.*)

JUDGE: (Curses! Strike one!) (*Crosses to GLADIOLA.*) Good afternoon, Miss Gladiola. You're looking radiant today.

GLADIOLA shrieks and throws her apron over her face.

JUDGE: (*Recoils.*) Contain yourself, woman. (*Approaches her again.*) What would you say if I were to suggest a little kiss?

GLADIOLA: (*Pulls her apron off her head, stares wide-eyed from JUDGE to audience to JUDGE to audience.*) GO FOR IT! (*She lunges for him and he runs and hides behind MA.*)

JUDGE: Save me, Ma! She's come unwound!

MA BELLE: I think you better cross her off your list, Judge. Try your charm on Hattie. Maybe you'll have better luck.

JUDGE: (Strike two!) (*Hesitantly approaches HATTIE.*) Hello.

HATTIE: I'm yours! (*Grabs him, bends him over, and kisses him.*) We'll move to my hog farm and live happily ever after!

JUDGE: Help! Save me! I give up! (*HATTIE drops him to the floor. He crawls to exit, upstage right.*) (Strike three!) (*Crawls offstage.*)

HATTIE: Maybe I came on to strong. Nahh! I got him right where I want him. Let's go catch him, girls! (*HATTIE, PRUNE, and GLADIOLA all exit.*)

MA BELLE: (*To MARGE.*) Got it?

MARGE: Like that?

MA BELLE: Not exactly. You better just follow your instincts.

MARGE: But he's a villain.

MA BELLE: Shine his apple, Marge. Make his head spin.

APPLE enters upstage right.

APPLE: There she is now! The moment is right! What woman can resist a Brad Apple? *(Struts down to them.)* Good afternoon, my sweet one! *(Grabs her hand and kisses it.)*

MARGE: *(Bleeeeeeah!)* Good afternoon, Mr. Apple.

APPLE: May I tell you how fond of you I have become. *(Oozes around her.)*

MARGE: You can tell me that.

APPLE: *(Falls to one knee, holding her hand.)* And may I say I love you, I want you, I need you! *(Begins to kiss his way up her arm, stands as he does so.)*

MARGE: What do I do now, Ma?

MA BELLE: Make his head spin!

APPLE: May I have just one little kiss? *(Puckers up and leans towards her.)*

MARGE: NO! *(Slaps him hard enough to spin him around.)*

APPLE: What's this? I thought you welcomed my attentions.

MARGE: A girl has to think about these things first.

APPLE: And have you thought about it?

MARGE: Yes.

APPLE: Then, give me a kiss.

MARGE: NO! *(Again, the slap/spin.)*

MARGE: *(To MA.)* This is fun! *(Back to APPLE.)* NO! *(Slap/spin.)* NO! *(Slap/spin.)*

APPLE: *(Grabs her and bends her over.)* Marry me or I shall ruin you forever!

MARGE: Help! Save me! Ayieeee! *(Faints in his arms.)*

APPLE: At last! Success is mine!

STOUT: *(Leaps on from upstage right, strikes a manly boxing pose.)* I have returned!

APPLE: Curses! Foiled again!

BLACKOUT. Curtain.

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