

THE BELLE OF WEST TEXAS

By Carol M. Rice

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THE BELLE OF WEST TEXAS

All's Well With Oil Wells

A Full Length Melodrama

By Carol M. Rice

SYNOPSIS: Lizzie Holiday's hotel is not doing well, and she is nearly broke. She wants to retire but not until her daughter, Belle, is married. Enter Gerald Snively, our villain, who overhears Lawyer Otis Pitts telling Lizzie some news about her husband's will. Before Otis can reveal to Lizzie that she is actually a wealthy woman, he has a heart attack and dies. However, Snively manages to find out and decides to woo Belle to get his hands on the money. Belle is intrigued by him, but then she meets our hero, Eddie Allswell, who is drilling unsuccessfully for oil nearby. And it is love at first sight. Furious, the villain gets his sidekick Melinda to try to seduce the hero. It appears she was successful, and tearfully Belle agrees to marry Snively. They are in the middle of the ceremony when Eddie bursts in and tells all. There is a huge fight, and the hero wins! Snively goes to jail, Lizzie finds out she's a wealthy woman, and Eddie and Belle get married and live happily ever after.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 females, 5 males, 0-10 extras)

LIZZIE HOLIDAY (f)	35+; aging hotel/saloon owner. (83 lines)
FIFI SONGBIRD (f)	saloon entertainer. (50 lines)
RUFUS HANDS (m)	the piano player. (73 lines)
SHERIFF BOB WHITE (m)	30+; the sheriff. (32 lines)
GERALD SNIVELY (m)	30-50; our villain. (131 lines)
MELINDA MOOCH (f)	25-40; the villain's sexy sidekick. (89 lines)
BELLE HOLIDAY (f)	18; sweet and innocent daughter of hotel owner. (96 lines)
EDDIE ALLSWELL (m)	Early 20s; our hero. (59 lines)
LAWYER OTIS PITTS (m)	45+; a lawyer with a secret. (8 lines)

DURATION: 75 minutes.

SETTING

West Texas saloon/hotel lobby. Piano, a few tables and chairs, and a bar area which doubles as check out desk. Stairs leading up to rooms. Exits left from outside, right to the kitchen.

PROPS

- A Will
- Two Maps
- Wedding Decorations
- Belle's Wedding Bouquet
- Swords and other Fighting Implements (If Desired)
- Melinda's Wedding Bouquet

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Thank you for considering *The Belle of West Texas*! This is a very fun play to produce, with lots of silly humor and puns, and it's appropriate for all ages. It is also easy to produce, as it utilizes a single, uncomplicated set and few props.

Note that even though a piano is required onstage, the actor playing Rufus does not need to be able to play. The first time *The Belle of West Texas* was performed, they even used a fake piano, and the off-stage pianist did all of Rufus' playing. And while an off-stage pianist is great, even that isn't necessary to make your production a success.

Costuming is typical "melodrama in the wild west" with long dresses for the ladies and jeans with chaps if desired), cowboy boots and hats, and vests for the men. Snively is ideally dressed in all black with a top hat and cape. Melinda can be in something less "Little House on the Prairie" to match Snively.

The most difficult costume change, I am told, is the fast switch from Belle's everyday dress into her wedding dress, but it can be easily done by putting one dress over the other (which ever works best for your costumer). Pajamas for

some of the characters are mentioned in the script but aren't absolutely necessary.

Often melodramas have an olio before the play begins and sometimes at intermission. Having the actor who plays Lawyer Otis Pitts lead that was very successful in the first staging, as it gave him more to do. It also works to make that part of the act that Fifi and Rufus do, and then you can roll right into the show. It's up to you.

I am very flexible about my plays. I love to see what new directors and actors bring to each production, and I hope you have lots of fun with it. Be sure to invite me to come to your production, too! I do my best to see all my plays!

Do Not Copy

ACT ONE

AT RISE: RUFUS is playing a mournful tune on the old upright. FIFI enters.

FIFI: Rufus, are you still mopin' about that dog of yours?

RUFUS: (As he continues to play.) Yup.

FIFI: It's been two months now. Don't you think it's time to give up on him and find a new dog?

RUFUS: I'm waitin' for that tree out there to bloom.

FIFI: What kind of tree is that?

RUFUS: It's a dogwood tree.

FIFI: How can you tell it's a dogwood tree?

RUFUS: By it's bark.

FIFI: Golly, you're smart! But what does a dogwood tree have to do with you getting a new dog?

RUFUS: Well, ain't that where puppies come from?

FIFI: Forget I said you were smart. Have you seen Lizzie Holiday?

RUFUS: Of course I've seen her! I work in her saloon, don't I?

FIFI: I mean lately!

RUFUS: Oh. (He goes back to his piano playing.) Nope.

A loud crash is heard off right.

But I think I hear her comin'.

LIZZIE HOLIDAY enters from the kitchen. She is a sweet-faced, older woman.

FIFI: What was that loud crash, Lizzie? Was that you?

LIZZIE: Now you know I couldn't've made all that noise. My head ain't that hard.

FIFI: Then what was it?

LIZZIE: Some of my pots and pans fell over.

RUFUS: It's amazin' how gravity controls our lives.

LIZZIE: Since when are you grave about anything, Rufus?

RUFUS: I've been a'grievin' ever since my dog ran off. But I won't be a grave man 'til I die.

LIZZIE: Were you lookin' for me, Fifi?

FIFI: I sure was. I wanted to let you know that the stage is comin' in today.

LIZZIE: Why does this dusty old town need a theater?

FIFI: No, no. The stagecoach. And there's supposed to be some people stoppin' here. Rich people!

LIZZIE: Oh, what good news! We could sure use some customers. Fifi, go tell Belle to get the best rooms ready. And make sure she changes the sheets!

RUFUS: But it's only Tuesday!

FIFI: You don't change the sheets until Saturday, Lizzie.

LIZZIE: If they're rich, they deserve the very best.

Fifi exits.

It sure has been nice of you and Fifi Songbird to entertain here in my saloon. Especially since I haven't been able to pay you since last month.

RUFUS: Oh, now Lizzie, don't you worry about that. I reckon you'd have to put me behind bars before I'd quit playin' the piano.

LIZZIE: Ain't you already behind bars? You know, bars of music.

RUFUS: Well, yeah. But I meant you'd have to lock me up.

LIZZIE: And piano keys would get you out, right?

RUFUS: Lizzie, piano keys don't open locks! They're what I play to make music!

LIZZIE: I know that, Rufus. I was trying to make a joke. Thought maybe I could cheer myself up. I gotta do something. They may have to put me behind bars if business doesn't pick up. This hotel just isn't makin' any money. I'm broke!

RUFUS: You look like you're in one piece to me.

LIZZIE: No, I mean I've got no more money. Poor Belle! And I wanted so much to give her a big dowry when she gets married. But now it looks like her future husband will have to want to run a hotel. This broken down place is going to be the only thing I'm going to be able to give them

RUFUS: *(He plays the wedding march.)* Belle's gettin' married? When? To who?

LIZZIE: Calm down, Rufus. She ain't gettin' hitched yet. She hasn't found the right man.. I just hope when she finds him that he won't expect a a rich gal.

RUFUS: Don't you worry, Lizzie. Belle don't need money to attract men. She's rich enough in good qualities without alot of money.

At that moment BELLE HOLIDAY enters from center.

BELLE: Mother, is it true? Some wealthy foreigners are on their way here?

LIZZIE: Where'd you get the idea they're foreigners?

BELLE: Fifi told me that the stage is coming from Arkansas. That's a foreign country, isn't it?

RUFUS: Close enough.

LIZZIE: Oh, Lordy, would you look at the time?

BELLE: I never knew you could see time. I thought it was invisible.

RUFUS: Then how do people know when it flies?

LIZZIE: No, I mean it's gettin' late. Those oil well workers will be here soon, and I gotta get ready to open the saloon. Rufus, go find Fifi. Don't y'all have a new number for us tonight?

RUFUS: Yep. It's twelve.

LIZZIE: I knew I could count on you.

RUFUS exits.

Belle, honey, I'm gonna need your help when these rich folks get here. Since all the staff quit last week because I couldn't pay 'em, we've been real short-handed.

BELLE: Your hands don't look any shorter to me, Mother.

LIZZIE: No, I mean there aren't enough people around here to run this hotel since they're gone. Do you think you could help out?

BELLE: I'll be glad to, but don't you need help in?

LIZZIE: *(Aside.)* Now you see why Rufus thinks she's so rich in good qualities. They're both broke when it comes to brains. *(To Belle.)* Just help me while the rich folks are here, Belle.

BELLE: All right.

Sounds of a stagecoach pulling up.

Oh, I think the stagecoach is here.

LIZZIE: I'm going to make sure Fifi has finished straightening those rooms.

BELLE: I didn't know they were crooked.

LIZZIE: Just be a good girl and greet our wealthy guests, Belle. I'll be back in a few minutes. *(She exits.)*

BELLE: *(To the audience.)* Poor Mother. She works herself much too hard. Ever since Daddy died leaving us penniless, she's run this hotel, and I realize now that I've done virtually nothing to help. As of this minute, I vow to do all I can to assist her. The least I can do is welcome these affluent newcomers to our beautiful land.

MELINDA: *(Entering)* What a dump!

BELLE: No, the dump is outside of town. This is the Holiday Inn. Can I help you, miss?

MELINDA: Is this the only hotel in town?

BELLE: Yes.

MELINDA: I suppose this will have to do. Curse that Gerald Snively for roping me into this one!

BELLE: You were tied up? How awful!

MELINDA: Well, it's actually kind of fun, but I mean I didn't want to come here. I wanted to go to a huge, glamorous city, like...like Lubbock. And here I am in...where are we anyway?

BELLE: This is Oilwell, Texas!

MELINDA: *(Interested.)* Oilwell, huh? Is there really oil around here?

BELLE: Well, there sure are lots of people who think so. There's an oil rig outside of town. You'll be able to see it when you visit the dump.

MELINDA: So no one's actually struck oil yet?

BELLE: *(Dramatic.)* No, but every night when the workers come in here, tired and weary from their toils on the oil fields, they tell me they're close to finding it - OIL! That precious petroleum product which has been called black gold by many looking for wealth.

MELINDA: *(Aside.)* Oil! I'll have to tell Gerald Snively about that! If they strike oil while we're here, we'll be rich!

LIZZIE enters.

LIZZIE: Pardon me for making you wait. I'm sure you must be tired from your journey. I'm Lizzie Holiday, proprietor of the Holiday Inn.

MELINDA: My name is Melinda Mooch. I'm here on business. My associate, Mr. Snively is right behind me.

LIZZIE: (*Looking behind her.*) I don't see him.

MELINDA: No, I mean he'll be in in a moment.

LIZZIE: Oh, I see.

MELINDA: I figured that was why you were wearing those glasses.

LIZZIE: Would you like to go to your room and freshen up?

MELINDA: That will be lovely.

LIZZIE: Belle, could you please show Miss Mooch to her room?

BELLE: I'd rather show the room to Miss Mooch. I don't know that the room can tell who's in it anyway.

LIZZIE: (*Exasperated.*) Fine. Just go.

They exit.

(*Aside.*) That girl is going to be the death of me.

SNIVELY: (*Off stage*) Egad! What a dump! (*He enters.*)

LIZZIE: *Oh, no sir. The dump is outside of town.*

SNIVELY: (*Turning on the charm.*) Merely an expression of distaste regarding my surroundings madam. But I find that they are drastically improved in your presence! (*As he takes her hand.*) Whose lovely hand do I have the pleasure of kissing? (*He kisses her hand.*)

LIZZIE: (*Completely under his spell.*) Oh, good heavens!

SNIVELY: Yes, I can see that heaven is where you are from, dear lady, but I asked your name.

LIZZIE: Pardon me, sir. I was speechless there for a moment. I'm Lizzie Holiday, proprieter of this hotel.

SNIVELY: And what a lovely hotel it is. I can see my first impression of this dusty town has been altered completely by meeting you. Allow me introduce myself. I am Gerald Snively, Prospector. I also have a degree in law. *(Aside.)* How to get around the law, that is! *(To her.)* But enough about me. *(He leads LIZZIE to sit down with him.)* Tell me all about yourself.

LIZZIE: Oh, my! There's really not much to tell, Mr. Snively. I'm a penniless widow, and I work very hard to keep my only daughter happy.

SNIVELY: *(Aside.)* Penniless! Curses! Why can't I ever find the rich widows? All the other villains manage to find wealthy women they can swindle out of millions. But no! Not me! I have to take on the charity cases! *(To her, briskly closing their discussion.)* Well, Mrs. Holiday, I am rather tired from my journey. I believe I'd like to see my room now.

LIZZIE: Well, you won't be able to see it from here. We'll have to go upstairs.

SNIVELY: That will be fine.

Before they can leave, BELLE enters with MELINDA.

BELLE: Oh, Mother! Miss Mooch says our hotel is nicer than the one in Wheatfield, Kansas! Isn't that wonderful?

MELINDA: *(To Snively.)* I actually said "micier," but if that's what she wants to believe, fine.

LIZZIE: How sweet of you, Miss Mooch! Mr. Snively, this is my daughter Belle. And now, if you'll excuse me, I've got to see about dinner. *(She leaves.)*

SNIVELY: *(Aside.)* Egad! This Belle is a rare treasure! What beauty! What grace! What refinement! Money or no money, this girl shall be mine. *(To BELLE.)* What a pleasure it is to meet you, Belle. Your dear mother was just beginning to tell me about you when you came in. I can see now that mere words would not have done you justice.

BELLE: But why would I need justice?

SNIVELY: You have stolen my heart, dear girl.

MELINDA: *(To SNIVELY, aside.)* What are you doing, Gerald? She's already told me they're broke. I mean, they can't even afford to pay their staff! Everyone has quit except for the piano player and the chanteuse.

SNIVELY: Gesundheit.

MELINDA: My point is, she's worthless to us!

SNIVELY: To you, perhaps. To me...well, that's another story. *(To BELLE.)* I'm afraid that in exchange for my heart which you so adeptly stole, I must demand retribution.

BELLE: Gosh, you foreigners sure use alot of big words! What does retribution mean?

SNIVELY: It means you must give me something in return.

BELLE: But I'm penniless! What could I possibly have that you would want?

SNIVELY: One taste of your lips would put me in heaven. Allow me to kiss you, Belle.

BELLE: *(She moves away from SNIVELY.)* Oh, sir! I couldn't possibly! Perhaps after I get to know you better I could allow my virgin lips to touch yours, but I'm saving myself. Saving myself for that one special man, the only man to ever drink of the nectar of my ruby lips. The man I will someday marry.

SNIVELY: *(Aside.)* Curses! Why are the beautiful penniless ones always such prudes? *(To BELLE.)* My dear, sweet girl. How ashamed I am that I even suggested you debase yourself in any way. Please forgive me and say that you'll have dinner with me tonight.

BELLE: That would be lovely, Mr. Snively.

LIZZIE: *(Entering.)* Belle, honey, go keep an eye on the stew while I make sure Mr. Snively finds his room.

BELLE: All right, Mother. See you later, Mr. Snively.

LIZZIE: Follow me, Mr. Snively.

They start up the stairs but are interrupted by the frantic entrance of LAWYER OTIS PITTS. He doesn't see them at first.

LAWYER: Miss Lizzie! Miss Lizzie! *(He sees LIZZIE.)* Excuse me, Miss Lizzie. I need to have a word with you.

LIZZIE: My goodness! Just one?

LAWYER: No, I mean I need to talk to you. It's about your late husband's will.

LIZZIE: His will! Pardon me, Mr. Snively.

LIZZIE and LAWYER confer silently.

SNIVELY: A will? Egad! Did you hear that, Melinda?

MELINDA: Of course. And I plan to hear plenty more where that came from. Back in a minute!

SNIVELY: A minute! Shouldn't you stay until they're done talking?

MELINDA: Whatever you say, boss! *(She slithers over to LIZZIE and LAWYER, and eavesdrops.)*

SNIVELY: *(Aside.)* A widow. A will. *(Evil laugh.)* And where there's a will, there's a way! Perhaps my days of penniless old charity cases are over! Of course, Melinda Mooch will try to live up to her name and get a share of my earnings...but I know how to take care of her.

Suddenly from across the room, a loud wheezing sound is heard. LAWYER PITTS is having trouble breathing!

LIZZIE: Oh, my goodness! He can't breathe! *(She calls.)* Rufus! Fifi!

RUFUS and FIFI enter immediately.

Go get Dr. Druggie! Hurry!

RUFUS and FIFI exit.

SNIVELY: Melinda! What's happening? Did you find out anything?

MELINDA: The instant Lawyer Otis Pitts started to tell her about her husband's will, he started choking. I didn't find out anything.

SNIVELY: Curses! And now with this doctor coming, we may never find out. There will be too many people around.

FIFI: *(As she and Rufus enter breathlessly.)* Dr. Druggie has gone to the next town to deliver a baby! There's no telling when he'll be back.

LIZZIE: Oh, no! Whatever shall I do?

SNIVELY: Have no fear, dear lady! I am a doctor!

MELINDA: You are?

SNIVELY: *(To her, aside.)* Quiet, you! You'll spoil everything!

LIZZIE: But I thought you said you were a prospector with a degree in law.

SNIVELY: I practiced medicine before I went to law school.

MELINDA: *(Aside.)* That's right. I forgot about his Opium dealing days.

SNIVELY: I think he's having a heart attack. *(To Melinda.)* You're my nurse, I assume?

MELINDA: How could I have been your nurse? You're alot older than I am.

SNIVELY: I'm not talking about birthing babies, you nincompoop! If I'm a traveling doctor, then you're my nurse. Got it?

MELINDA: Whatever you say, boss!

SNIVELY: Bring the patient to me!

LIZZIE, RUFUS and FIFI cross to the sofa, supporting the LAWYER'S weight. He is still breathing heavily and sounds very unhealthy. They unceremoniously dump him on the couch. He rolls off onto the floor.

SNIVELY: All right! Give the man air!

ALL blow on him and wave the air toward LAWYER.

No, no! Clear the room! I'll handle this. I am a doctor, you know.

LIZZIE: But isn't there something we can do?

SNIVELY: You can help him best, dear lady, by shutting yourself in your room and praying to the dear God above to have pity on the poor man! But until the Lord decides to intervene, please let me take care of him!

EVERYONE exits except SNIVELY, MELINDA, and LAWYER.

MELINDA: Let's see if we can get him to talk! Then we'll know about the will and even if he dies we'll be able to get our hands on the money!

SNIVELY: An excellent idea, which I had already. First we'll have to revive the old goat.

MELINDA: He's a goat? I thought he was a lawyer.

SNIVELY: *(He leans down to the Lawyer and shakes him slightly.)*
Lawyer Pitts! Lawyer Pitts, are you all right?

LAWYER coughs loudly on him.

MELINDA: Apparently not.

SNIVELY: Quiet, guttersnipe! Let me handle this. Can you speak, Lawyer Pitts?

LAWYER: *(Weakly.)* Got to tell someone...will...Lizzie Holiday...not penniless....

MELINDA: Now we're getting somewhere!

LAWYER: Husband...had money she didn't know...wealthy...oil....

SNIVELY: Eureka! This could be my big break! *(To him.)* Where is the will now?

LAWYER: Here...in pocket...need to show...Lizzie...

SNIVELY: *(With a significant look to MELINDA.)* Do you mean to say she hasn't yet seen it? Knows virtually nothing about her newfound wealth?

LAWYER: Knows nothing...make sure she...gets will....

SNIVELY: Fear not, my good man. *(He takes will from LAWYER'S breast pocket.)* Of course Miss Mooch and I will see that Mrs. Holiday gets what's coming to her. The poor woman has suffered enough already. How is it that you're bringing this to her attention now? Why did you wait?

LAWYER: Provision in will...not until Belle...turns 18...be 18 tomorrow... *(He has a painful spasm.)*

SNIVELY: *(Aside.)* All the better! I can help the nymph celebrate her birthday by marrying me!

LAWYER: Dying...dying... *(He dies.)*

MELINDA: What a break! You couldn't have planned this better if you had shot him!

SNIVELY: Hold your tongue!

MELINDA does.

No, I mean we've got to be careful of what we say. We must appear to be upset that we couldn't save Lawyer Pitts. And you'll need to go along with what I say about the will.

MELINDA: Whatever you say, boss.

SNIVELY: Now, go and get the others. And don't say a word about the will.

MELINDA: My lips are sealed. *(She exits.)*

SNIVELY: If only that were truly the case. Now, what kind of money are we talking about for the dear widow? *(He opens the will and reads.)* Oh-ho! This is even better than I had hoped! He discovered oil, but he apparently died before he could drill. That means it's still there! And what's this? Oh-ho! A map! Leading me right to it! All that lovely oil! And it's all mine! Mine for the taking! *(He laughs gleefully.)*

MELINDA, LIZZIE, FIFI, RUFUS and BELLE enter. BELLE dramatically rushes to LAWYER'S side.

BELLE: Oh, Lawyer Pitts! You can't be dead! You can't!

SNIVELY: Alas, my dear child, he has indeed passed from this world. Life has left his cold body, but not without imparting some news which could change your life! You see, I have here in my hand, the will of your late father.

BELLE: Daddy wasn't ever late! He was the most punctual person I know!

SNIVELY: According to this will, there is oil nearby here in the West Texas desert, and your father found it. But he died before he could drill.

BELLE: I don't understand.

MELINDA: *(Aside.)* That doesn't surprise me. Belle is such a ding-a-ling!

LIZZIE: But how are we going to finance the drilling of an oil well? Until we get the oil, we have no money! But to get money, we have to drill for the oil! I think we'd have been better off not knowing about this.

SNIVELY: Fear not, ladies. That is where Gerald Snively can help you. I will explain how, but not in the presence of a dead body. Rufus, why don't you go get the mortician.

RUFUS: I don't know what a mortician is, but I'll go get the sheriff. (*He exits.*)

FIFI: This old town ain't got a mortician, Mr. Snively.

SNIVELY: That's all right. We'll just have to get Lawyer Pitts out of here soon, before the odor gets too strong.

FIFI: I didn't think his cologne was that bad!

SNIVELY: Let us retire into the other room.

EVERYONE exits, but MELINDA keeps SNIVELY behind.

MELINDA: Gerald! Have you lost your mind? How can you agree to help them get their hands on our oil! That map will lead them right to it.

SNIVELY: Fear not, my pretty! This is not the map Lizzie Holiday will receive. I plan to convince her to mortgage the Holiday Inn to the hilt. We'll then use that money to drill for the oil using the fake map, but we tell her it's not to be found, that the map was apparently incorrect. Then I'll not only get the oil, I'll get this hotel as well!

MELINDA: You're dispicable! I love it!

SNIVELY: (*Aside.*) And when I have control of Belle's fortune, I'm sure she will readily consent to be my wife.

MELINDA: What about my share?

SNIVELY: Your share? Who has won the trust of these wimpy Texans? Who thought up this brilliant plan?

MELINDA: Who will tell all about your Opium dealings if you don't treat her right? Who knows enough about Gerald P. Snively to put him behind bars for the rest of his life and then some? Who...

SNIVELY: All right! All right, you made your point. I'll see that you get 20%.

MELINDA: No way! I want a 50-50 split.

SNIVELY: 50-50? Are you mad?

MELINDA: No, but I will be if you try to cheat me out of this one.

SNIVELY: I must join the others. We'll discuss this later. *(He exits.)*

MELINDA: *(Aside.)* I have a feeling I'm about to be had in this deal.

MELINDA starts to exit, but is stopped by the entrance of EDDIE ALLSWELL. He is dirty from working on the oil rig, but he is still quite handsome and noble.

EDDIE: Hello! Are you the proprietor of this inn? *(He doesn't see LAWYER, still there dead.)*

MELINDA: Why, no, I'm a guest. Are you looking for a place to stay?

EDDIE: Yes, I am. I've just been hired on with the oil rig outside of town. I started work today.

MELINDA: *(Aside.)* An oil rig worker! *(To him, very flirtatious.)* I think men who work with their hands and get all dirty are so sexy!

EDDIE: *(Embarrassed.)* Oh, ma'am!

MELINDA: *(Very close to him.)* You know, I'm sure that if all the rooms are full, we could...

SNIVELY enters.

SNIVELY: Melinda! I need your help here!

MELINDA: *(Dragging EDDIE with her.)* Gerald, I'd like you to meet my new friend. *(Significant.)* He's an oil well worker!

SNIVELY: I see. I see! Well, Mr., uh...

EDDIE: Allswell. Eddie Allswell.

SNIVELY: Mr. Allswell...

EDDIE: Please call me Eddie.

SNIVELY: Sure! Eddie, I'm very interested in investing some money into oil, and I could use an expert like you on my payroll!

MELINDA: *(Aside.)* Even if he doubles my salary he'll be making nothing.

EDDIE: But I'm not an expert...

SNIVELY: You see, I know where the oil is, but I have no idea how to get it out of the ground!

EDDIE: Oh. Well, I have worked on a few rigs, mainly out in Indian Territory. I'm sure I could help you out.

SNIVELY: Excellent! (*Aside.*) Another part of my plan has fallen into my lap!

MELINDA: Eddie didn't fall into your lap. He walked through the door!

SNIVELY: I know that, you nincompoop!

MELINDA: (*Flirting madly.*) Perhaps we could discuss this alone later tonight, Eddie. I'm sure you'd love to buy me dinner.

EDDIE: Well, uh...

SNIVELY: (*To MELINDA.*) Let me handle this! (*To Eddie.*) Dinner! What an excellent idea, Eddie! But I'm sure you're tired right now, so let's see if we can find Mrs. Holiday, the innkeeper, and get you a room.

SNIVELY and EDDIE start off, but are interrupted by the entrance of RUFUS and SHERIFF BOB WHITE.

SHERIFF: All right, Rufus, where is he?

SNIVELY: (*Aside.*) Curses! I haven't even been here long enough to have committed any crimes, and they've already got me.

RUFUS: (*As he crosses toward Snively, who is between Sheriff Bob and the Lawyer.*) Right here, Sheriff Bob.

SNIVELY: I can assure you gentlemen that whatever you're here for is a huge misunderstanding.

SHERIFF: Rufus, what are you doin' telling' me Lawyer Pitts is dead if he ain't?

RUFUS: You mean the Lawyer's not really dead?

SNIVELY: (*Aside.*) Egad! They aren't here to arrest me! I nearly gave myself away. (*To them.*) Forgive me, Sheriff. I misunderstood. The poor man is over here. (*He leads them over to the dead LAWYER.*)

RUFUS: But I thought lawyers made a lot of money.

EDDIE: Whoa! Is that a dead body?

SNIVELY: Ah, yes, Eddie. The tragedy of Lawyer Pitts.

RUFUS: He had so many things to live for. (*Pause.*) But at the moment I can't think of a single one.

MELINDA: That's not surprising in this dump.

SHERIFF and RUFUS: (*Together.*) Oh, no. The dump is outside of town.

SNIVELY: I'd like to get back to the issue at hand, which is, of course, getting this dead body out of the lobby of the Holiday Inn!

SHERIFF: Rufus, can you give me a hand here?

RUFUS: Well, it's attached to my body, and I really need it for my piano playin'...

SHERIFF: No, I mean help me get the Lawyer out of here!

EDDIE: I'll help too.

SHERIFF: Why, thank you, stranger. That's mighty kind of you.

EDDIE, RUFUS, and SHERIFF drag the Lawyer out.

SNIVELY: Eureka! I am going to be so rich when I'm done with this! And it's so easy! Now I see how all those other villains manage if they have idiots like this to work with! *(Scornfully.)* Sheriff Bob White. Lizzie Holiday. Eddie Allswell! Hah!

MELINDA: Wait a minute, Gerald. Don't you talk about Eddie like that. He's mine.

SNIVELY: What do you mean, he's yours?

MELINDA: You're after that dippy broad Belle. I want Eddie.

SNIVELY: Agreed. After he helps us drill the oil, he's all yours. *(Aside.)* That will be all she gets out of this little scheme of mine.

LIZZIE and BELLE enter.

LIZZIE: Mr. Snively, aren't you coming? I'm anxious to hear how you're going to help us with the drilling of the oil.

SNIVELY: Of course you are, my good lady! Come along with me, and we'll discuss my ideas.

LIZZIE and SNIVELY exit, MELINDA following. BELLE is left alone on stage.

BELLE: How exciting this is! I've always wondered what it was like to have money, and now I'm going to find out! And Mr. Snively is such a nice man. So attractive. Such a gentleman. And he seems to like me! No man has ever asked to kiss me before. It makes my little heart go thumpity thump. *(Pause.)* But even with my newfound wealth and a handsome admirer to court me, I feel strangely empty.

At this moment, EDDIE enters again. He sees BELLE, and their eyes lock.

BELLE: (*Aside.*) Oh, be still my beating heart! I only thought it went thumpity thump before! Who is this handsome stranger who is causing me to become dizzy with high blood pressure?

EDDIE: Excuse me, ma'am. I'm looking to rent a room.

BELLE: I can help you with that.

EDDIE: (*Aside.*) Oh, no! This beautiful young lady must be the proprietor of the hotel, Mrs. Holiday! I'm too late. The lovely lady is already married. Oh, how sad that my destiny is only to admire from afar the girl of my dreams! How unfair fate is! (*To BELLE.*) Why, thank you, ma'am. I'm not lookin' for anything too fancy, you understand. I'm just a poor oil rig worker.

BELLE: You're into oil?

EDDIE: Well, I admit that I'm pretty messy right now, but I wouldn't say I've got that much on me.

BELLE: Oh, no. I was referring to your occupation. (*Aside.*) He's so virile, even covered with oil and dirt! It's just such a good, honest kind of dirty.

EDDIE: You know, you're the second person today who has been interested in the fact that I work with oil. A gentleman by the name of Gerald Snively has asked me to help him get some oil out of the ground, and now you're showing an inordinate interest. (*Aside.*) Unfortunately that interest is not in me, alas.

BELLE: My mother and I discovered only today that there is oil out there in the Texas desert which belongs to us. My father died before he could drill, but he left a map. Mr. Snively was kind enough to offer to help us.

EDDIE: (*Aside.*) Oh, faint glimmer of hope! (*To BELLE.*) Who is your mother?

BELLE: Lizzie Holiday, the proprietor of the Holiday Inn. I'm Belle, her daughter.

EDDIE: So you aren't Mrs. Holiday?

BELLE: Oh, no, no! I am as yet unwed.

EDDIE: *(Aside.)* Oh, joy! The fates are smiling on me! *(To BELLE.)*
Miss Belle, I'd be honored if you'd join me for dinner this evening. I
just need to clean up.

BELLE: I'd be honored, Mr. - I don't believe I know your name.

EDDIE: How inconsiderate of me! My name is Eddie Allswell, Belle.

BELLE: *(Aside.)* What a romantic name! *(To him.)* I think dinner
would be lovely, Eddie.

At this moment, SNIVELY enters.

SNIVELY: Ah, there you are, my princess. Are you ready to join me
for dinner?

BELLE: *(Aside.)* Oh, no! I forgot I promised Mr. Snively I'd eat dinner
with him! *(To Eddie.)* Eddie, I'm sorry, but I forgot about my
previous engagement with Mr. Snively. Perhaps we could do it
another time.

EDDIE: *(Aside.)* My heart is being twisted in two, thrown on the floor
and stomped on! How could I even hope to compete with Gerald
Snively? He's a man of the world, educated, debonair. *(To her.)*
That will be fine, Belle. Just let me know when you'll be available.
(Aside.) Oh, whoever said "It's better to have loved and lost than
never loved at all" was a fool!

SNIVELY: *(Aside.)* Oh-ho! It appears this young lout intends to give
me some competition!

BELLE: Oh, Eddie! If only I had met you first! I'd rather be with you
than anyone!

SNIVELY and EDDIE: *(Together.)* Am I hearing this right?!

EDDIE: Do you mean that, Belle?

BELLE: Of course I do, Eddie! Don't you believe in love at first sight?

BELLE and EDDIE gaze adoringly at each other.

SNIVELY: *(Aside.)* Curses! I finally find one who has money and is
beautiful and who shows an interest in me, and this jerk has to come
along! Well, this is one villain who's going to end up the winner! *(To
Eddie.)* Look, buddy, the lady said she was going out with me!

EDDIE: But now she's changed her mind!

BELLE: (*Aside.*) Oh, how romantically thrilling! They're fighting over me!

MELINDA enters during the following.

SNIVELY: Is that so? Well, I have a lovely candlelight dinner for two planned for this evening, and I don't intend to be alone.

BELLE: (*Wavering.*) Ooh! Candlelight!

EDDIE: You don't have to be alone, but Belle won't be the girl you're with. She'll be with me.

MELINDA: Eddie! How could you? You promised to have dinner with me!

BELLE: What?!

SNIVELY: Ah-ha! Trying to go behind another lady's back to woo another! Belle, Belle, how could you agree to spend time with this two-timer? (*To MELINDA.*) Good work! You came just in the nick of time.

MELINDA: (*To SNIVELY.*) This has nothing to do with you, Gerald. I have my own interests to think of. I'm not about to let this bubble-headed pea brain get her claws into Eddie! He's mine.

BELLE: Oh, Eddie! Is it true? You had a date with Melinda?

SNIVELY: And how do you know she's the only one? There are probably hundreds of broken hearted females in Oilwell, Texas tonight.

EDDIE: Untrue! Melinda's the only one, but Belle, that was before we met! Now I only have eyes for you.

BELLE: I don't want your eyes; I have two of my own. I want your love, Eddie. And your love is obviously as changeable as the weather in West Texas. I feel like such a fool. Come, Gerald. Let's go and leave Miss Mooch and Mr. Allswell alone. It's obviously what he wants.

SNIVELY: You see, Eddie? It looks like I'll be spending the evening with Belle. (*Aside.*) And there's nothing so easy as a woman scorned!

SHERIFF and RUFUS enter.

EDDIE: You dirty rotten scoundrel! Take that!

EDDIE hits SNIVELY in the face, sending SNIVELY sprawling.

BELLE: Eddie! What are you doing?

MELINDA: Shut up, you. My hero!

BELLE: Are you all right Mr. Snively?

Mr. SNIVELY: I'm fine, my dear. It will take more than this wimp of a grease monkey to get me down. Arrest him, Sheriff!

SHERIFF: You heard him, stranger. Hands up. You're goin' to jail.

EDDIE: Jail! What for?

SHERIFF: For fightin' in a public place.

RUFUS: Do you really have to do that, Sheriff Bob? He seemed so nice, helpin' us get the Lawyer out of here and all.

SHERIFF: Yes, Rufus. Appearances can be deceiving. And this guy is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

RUFUS: That he's wearin' shore don't look like wool to me. He'd be too hot to throw a punch like that. 'Sides, he's too dirty to look much like a sheep. And another thing....

SNIVELY: Could you gentlemen spare the conversation and get this rascal out of here?

SHERIFF: By all means, Mr. Snively. It's good that we have law-abiding visitors like yourself to come to our fair city and help keep riff-raff like Mr. Allswell off the streets.

BELLE: But Eddie wasn't on the streets. He was here in the hotel.

MELINDA: *(Aside.)* If that girl were any more air-headed she'd float.

SHERIFF: Come on, Allswell. I want to get you behind bars.

EDDIE: Wait just a moment. Belle, before I'm taken to my cell, I want you to know that I'm telling nothing but the truth when I say Melinda means nothing to me and never did. I love you and only you. I just hope I have a chance to prove it to you when I get out of jail.

BELLE is speechless.

SNIVELY: *(Aside.)* Fat chance! By the time he sees daylight again, Belle will be on her honeymoon with me! And I'll be rich!

MELINDA: Wait a minute, Gerald. You won't be rich if you can't get the oil drilled. Who do you have to help you now?

SNIVELY: Drat! You're right! Well, I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. For now, I want him out of my way!

SHERIFF: Mr. Snively. I'll need you to come down to the jail with us, too. Paperwork. You understand.

SNIVELY: Of course.

RUFUS: I need to find Fifi. We have a show to do tonight, and we have to practice! Fifi! *(He goes off calling for FIFI.)* Fifi! Fifi!

SHERIFF: *(To Eddie.)* Come on, you.

EDDIE: Wait for me, Belle! Wait for me!

MELINDA: Don't you worry about her, you handsome devil. She won't even miss you. But I'm coming with you, Eddie. I'll keep you company while you're in jail.

SHERIFF, EDDIE, SNIVELY, and MELINDA exit, leaving BELLE alone.

BELLE: How strange I feel. I know that Gerald Snively is true to me, yet my heart belongs to Eddie, who is a two-timing sneak. Oh, Eddie! Eddie, I do love you! Alas, how my heart is breaking! *(She collapses, sobbing onto the sofa.)*

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