

The Belle of Cozen Creek

An Old Fashioned Melodrama

by John Donald O'Shea



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John Donald O'Shea

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The Belle of Cozen Creek

Synopsis

Prudence Pureheart is the Proprietress of the Cozen Creek Dude Ranch. Agnes and Gertrude are two perennial guests at the Ranch. Prudence's aunt, Fanny, assists Prudence in the running of the ranch.

Now for the first time ever, Prudence is facing financial difficulties owing to the fact that two large parties of guests, booked by their corporate employers who had promised to pay the bills, have not paid their bills, and have instead taken bankruptcy.

Prudence could easily solve her financial problems by marrying Orville Overdraft, a rich, but nerdy, local banker who has loved her since their high school days.

She could also yield to the importunings of Euchre Dodge II, the son of one of the corporate owners whose bankruptcy has put Prudence in her precarious position.

But the resourceful Prudence, instead proves that she's her father's daughter, and worthy to be known as the Belle of Cozen Creek.

The Belle of Cozen Creek

CAST LIST

(2 males and 2 or 4 females)

Gertrude Gronk	Agnes' younger frumpy sister She is Prudence's age.
Agnes Gronk	Gertrude's older dumpy sister. She is a year older than Gertrude.
Aunt Fanny Pureheart-Forthright	Prudence's canny older aunt
Prudence Pureheart	Proprietor of Cozen Creek Dude Ranch
Orville Overdraft	Young local banker. His love for Prudence is unrequited.
Euchre Dodge II	An erstwhile vacationer at the Ranch. Son of Euchre Dodge I.

PROPS LIST

Bouquet of flowers for Pru

Peanut Butter cookies for Orville

Paper and pen for “contracts” written by Orville at Pru’s request

Two bankruptcy notices for Fanny and Orville

Handkerchief for Fanny

Box with 10 gold nuggets for Fanny and Pru

.45 cal. pistol and holster for Pru

5 iron for Pru

Wallet and \$6000 for Euchre

Check book and check for Euchre

Dictionary for Euchre

Feather duster for Fanny

COSTUME PLOT

Pru: Jeans or skirt. Western blouse. Boots. She should look business-like and pretty. Cowgirl hat and scarf.

Fanny: Jeans or skirt. Western blouse. Boots. A more mature version of Pru

The Gronk Sisters: Similar to Pru, but perhaps a tad overdone and less tasteful

Orville:

Costume #1. Blue pin-stripped suit, yellow bow tie, white socks, and 1950's style place plastic eye glasses.

#2. Cowboy outfit. Stetson hat, jeans, western shirt, vest, and boots

Euchre:

Costume #1. Slacks, sport coat, ascot, sport shirt.

Costume #2. Miner's outfit. Boots, jeans, checkered shirt, scarf and hat

Cotumes #3. Similar to #2, with perhaps a different shirt.

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SCENE I

(At rise, we discover the lobby of the Cozen Creek Dude Ranch. It is morning, about 9 am. There is a front desk, and appropriate furniture. The decor immediately suggests that we are in the old West. There is a door to other parts of the lodge SR. The front door to the outside front porch is DSL. The front desk is above the front door SL. There is a sofa or fireplace USC. A stuffed deer or moosehead would be above the sofa or fireplace USC. A juke box may be USL. A game table and chairs are center SR, above

the line from door to door. A chess set is on the game table, and the pieces indicate that game is in progress. Prudence Pureheart enters from SR door. She carries a bouquet of flowers. She crosses to place them in a vase on the front desk)

Aunt Fanny. *(Entering from SR door)* Good morning, Pru, dear.

Prudence. *(Turning to Fanny)* Good morning, Aunt Fanny. Did you sleep well?

Aunt Fanny. Couldn't have slept better if I had been listening to one of the Pastor Morpheus's forty-minute sermons.

Prudence. Well, I'm glad somebody did.

Aunt Fanny. *(A step toward Pru)* Didn't you?

Prudence. Heavens, no. I spent the entire night worrying where I'm going to find the money to make our next mortgage payment.

Aunt Fanny. I know what your poor deceased father would have done.

Prudence. Auntie, if I miss this payment, I'll be two months behind!

Aunt Fanny. *(Crosses to Pru)* Prudence, darling, don't be so conscientious!

Prudence. What do you mean?

Aunt Fanny. Half the people in the U. S. A. are behind in their mortgage payments. It's the modern "American way."

Prudence. *(She crosses R past Fanny to the game table to put away the chess set)*

Well, it's never been my way! And with the economy the way it is, people are not taking vacations - especially at Dude Ranches.

Aunt Fanny. And it certainly doesn't help that the Environmental Protection Agency has proposed new rules capping Equine Flatulence emissions!

Prudence. (*Boxing up the chess pieces, UR of table*) Whatever can we do?

Aunt Fanny. (*A step to Pru*) Don't you have any reservations?

Prudence. Nary a one for the next three weeks. Thank goodness the Gronk sisters have decided to extend their stay here an extra week. Thank Heavens for dear old Agnes and Gerty.

Aunt Fanny. Well, that's a blessing -- I guess. How many years does it make that they've been coming here in search of husbands?

Prudence. (*She crosses L to put the chess set away behind the front desk*) Ever since I was a little girl.

Aunt Fanny. And ever since they were little girls! Agnes is your age.

Prudence. (*Turning back to Fanny*) I thought they looked old then.

Aunt Fanny. Watch it, dear. They are paying customers. You know, ... It might be easier to help them, if they were just looking for horses!

Prudence. Don't be too sure. Last year, they scared the heck out of the horses!

Aunt Fanny. (*A step to Pru*) How?

Prudence. I was told that they looked at them.

Aunt Fanny. (*She crosses L to Pru*) Have you considered discussing your problem with Orville?

Prudence. (*She breaks R past Fanny to tidy up table and chairs*) Orville Overdraft? No, and I don't intend to. Every time he gets within 300 yards of me, he proposes marriage.

Aunt Fanny. (*Following Pru a step*) Pru, darling. You're a business woman. You're

going to have to speak to him sooner rather than later. He's your banker. He holds your mortgage.

Prudence. I'm afraid he'll suddenly turn into "Wiley Whiplash" and carry me off to the saw mill down by the old mill stream to force me to marry him.

Aunt Fanny. So what if he did? He is not entirely unattractive. And he's rich.

Prudence. *(Pulls out a dust rag to dust table and chairs)* Dear Auntie. I have no desire to be tied to the railroad tracks, or married to a nerd. The minute your banker knows your broke, he has you in his power!

Aunt Fanny. Oh, quit being so melodramatic. He's a fine man, and he adores you. Has he ever even looked at another woman?

Prudence. *(A step to Fanny)* He'll come in any minute now wearing his 1950's glasses, a yellow bow tie, a blue pinstriped suit, white socks and his Old Musk aftershave! Just watch!

(Orville Overdraft enters. Orville is the epitome of a nerd. He wears glasses with black rims right out of the 1950's, a yellow bow tie, a blue pinstriped suit, white socks and a "signature" after shave)

Orville. Dear Pru, and dear Aunt Fanny, I bid you good morning! *(He crosses below Pru to table she has just straightened up and puts a bag on the table and then fades R of table)* I brought you some freshly baked peanut butter cookies for breakfast!

(As this point Orville is DR of table, Pru is UC and Fanny is near front desk SL)

Aunt Fanny. (*Fanny crosses to L of table*) Why, Orville, how thoughtful of you! I love peanut butter cookies!

Prudence. (*Pru counters CSL*) I'm allergic to peanuts!

Aunt Fanny. (*Turning to Pru*) Oh, fiddle-faddle. Since when?

Prudence. Since right now. It came on suddenly.

Aunt Fanny. You've always loved peanut butter!

Prudence. Then maybe it's Orville that I'm allergic, too. (*She crosses to Orville as Fanny courts L to front desk*) Isn't it unethical for a banker to use peanut butter cookies to initiate a conversation about mortgage foreclosure.

Orville. (*Dumbfounded*) Mortgage foreclosure? I'm sorry, Pru, but I fear I do not understand.

Aunt Fanny. (*Amused at Pru's discomfort*) She is a month behind on her mortgage payments. Pru's afraid you're here to commence foreclosure proceedings.

Orville. (*A step to Pru*) Pru, darling! How you wrong me! Nothing could be further from my mind. (*He crosses to front door*) It's a beautiful day. The birds are singing. The ground hogs are digging holes in your lawn and the white-tail deer are chomping your hosta. I came to invite you to have a picnic lunch with me and the ants under the great oak tree down by the old mill stream.

Prudence. (*A step L to Fanny*) Did you hear that? "Mill" -- as in saw mill!

Aunt Fanny. (*To Pru*) Oh, don't be silly! (*To Orville*) Of course she'll go. Just promise her you won't propose to her!

Orville. Huh? I don't understand.

Aunt Fanny. If you want her to have lunch with you, you have to promise not to propose

to her.

Orville. Why?

Prudence. *(She crosses L to Orville as Fanny counters R just to L of table)* Because I don't love you, I don't want to marry you, and I don't want to be proposed to. Furthermore, you're a banker who wears a bow tie. I don't like bow ties! In fact, I hate bow ties!

Orville. *(To Fanny)* Is it that time of month? *(To Pru)* I can be flexible. I can get rid of the bow tie, and I promise I won't broach the subject of marriage.

Prudence. Will you put that last part in writing?

Orville. Okay. *(He finds paper on front desk and a pen and writes, and reads out loud as he does)* I, Orville Overdraft, party of the first part, hereby promise Prudence Pureheart, party of the second part, that I will not propose marriage to said Prudence Pureheart -- or to any other female -- during our lunch today.

Aunt Fanny. You probably could have left out the part about "any other female."

Prudence. *(Just being ornery)* Good. Now add, "and I will not pick my nose."

Orville. *(Mystified)* What? Why?

Prudence. I don't like men who pick their noses.

Orville. I've never pick my nose. I gave it up when I was in second grade. *(To Aunt Fanny)* I was about to make my first communion, and I was afraid it might break the required fast.

Prudence. Then you'll have nothing to lose by putting it in writing.

Orville. *(Capitulating, and reading as he writes)* And I further promise not to pick my

nose during lunch -- *(as if being compelled)* even though I never pick my nose. I write this only under compulsion to induce the charming and beautiful Prudence Pureheart to lunch with me today. Is that acceptable?

Prudence. I'll see you at noon. Now, I've got work to do. *(She exits SR)*

Orville. *(He crosses to Aunt Fanny)* What was that all about?

Aunt Fanny. I am afraid poor Pru did not sleep well last night. She's embarrassed to have missed her last month's mortgage payment, and she worries that she will not be able to make this month's.

Orville. Well, she needn't be. She owes a crummy \$10,000, and the bank is secure up to its eyeballs.

Aunt Fanny. *(Patting his hand)* That's very good of you, Orville.

Orville. Dear Aunt Fanny, I'm really a very nice banker.

Aunt Fanny. *(To herself)* That seems to be a "contradiction in terms." *(To him)* Can I give you some advice?

Orville. *(Puzzled)* Advice? Do you think I need advice?

Aunt Fanny. Only if you want Prudence. Sit down.

Orville. *(He sits on the L game table chair)* Ah! In that case, shoot! The more the better!

Aunt Fanny. *(She sits on the R game table chair)* Get rid of your bow tie?

Orville. Huh?

Aunt Fanny. And throw away those glasses. Get lasik!

Orville. Are you serious?

Aunt Fanny. Then buy yourself a new suit.

Orville. Suits cost money!

Aunt Fanny. And change your after shave.

Orville. “Antique Musk” is my “personal fragrance.” Nobody will recognize me.

Aunt Fanny. That, my dear Mr. Overdraft, is precisely the point. Prudence thinks you
look like a nerd, and smell like a musk ox?

Orville. *(Rising in place, shocked)* Are you serious?

Aunt Fanny. She’s not the only one. Everybody thinks you look like a nerd.

Orville. Including you?

Aunt Fanny. *(Rising)* Bingo!

Orville. So, Is this remake Prudence’s idea?

Aunt Fanny. No it’s my idea. I’m on your side. If you really want to marry the girl, do
what I tell you!

Orville. Do you think it will help?

Aunt Fanny. *(Finger to his eye)* That, Sir, is up to you! But it sure as the dickens won’t
hurt.

Orville. I’m sorry to change the subject, but I’ve got a question. Prudence has always
made her mortgage payments before. What’s wrong, if I may inquire?

Aunt Fanny *(She crosses to desk and gets two bankruptcy notices)* These!

Orville *(Follows her and examines the documents)* Bankruptcy notices!

Aunt Fanny. Two big parties. They each stayed here a week.

Orville. But both these bankruptcies involve corporations.????

Aunt Fanny. The people who made the reservations said they were company-
sponsored vacations and that the companies -- the corporations -- would pick up

the tab.

Orville. *(Crosses to C and then turns to her)* And instead, they filed bankruptcy.

Aunt Fanny. Bingo!

Orville. Now I see why Pru is so overwrought.

Aunt Fanny. So, for heaven's sakes, don't wear white socks!

Orville. But I like white socks!

Aunt Fanny. Prudence doesn't!

Orville. I'm glad it's only a matter of money, and *(checking his socks)* ... white socks. I was afraid it might be hormonal!

(Lights Down)

Scene 2

(It is about 2 p.m. the same day. Fanny is using a push vacuum in the lobby USR.)

Prudence enters and sees Fanny)

Prudence. *(Entering via front door)* Well, I'm home!

Aunt Fanny. *(Stopping and turning to Pru)* And how was lunch?

Prudence. Once I saw he wasn't wearing white socks, it was fine. The feeling of nausea passed.

Aunt Fanny. *(Feigning surprise)* What have you got against white socks?

Prudence. They didn't go with his bow tie, ... or his after shave! And they certainly don't go with a blue pin-stripe suit and black wing-tip shoes!

Aunt Fanny. Pru, darling. You've got to get past those little things. Orville's a very nice

man.

Prudence. Orville's a nerd. He has the sex-appeal of a six-ounce portion of frozen salmon!

Aunt Fanny. (*Laying the sweeper aside R of table, and crossing to Pru*) Maybe you should thaw him in your microwaive.

Prudence. (*Tongue in cheek*) I'm not that kind of girl.

Aunt Fanny. Why not? I'd be if he was after me. (*There is no answer*) How was lunch?

Prudence. (*She sits unenthusiastically L of table*) Fine.

Aunt Fanny. (*From USR*) What did you have?

Prudence. I don't remember.

Aunt Fanny. (*She sits R of table*) Why not?

Prudence. All I could think of was the irreparable damage being done to my reputation in being seen in public with a man known to wear a bow tie, and white socks.

Aunt Fanny. This isn't like you. I've never seen you this way before.

Prudence. I've never been this way before. It's not Orville.

Aunt Fanny. Then don't take your mortgage problems out on him. The man has adored you since you were in second grade together. Did you even discuss the mortgage?

Prudence. (*Rising and crossing to front desk*) No.

Aunt Fanny. Why not?

Prudence. (*Turning to Fanny*) I'm not accustomed to being a dead-beat.

Aunt Fanny. Too bad your father didn't leave you a little to fall back on. Something for

a rainy day.

Prudence. He left me plenty!

Aunt Fanny. What?

Prudence. The job of overcoming his reputation. It's not easy being the daughter of the most notorious scam artist in the west.

Aunt Fanny. (*Rising in place*) You probably don't know it, but at one time, he had wads of money.

Prudence. Which he no doubt spent paying attorneys in an effort to keep himself out of jail!

Aunt Fanny. (*A step to Pru*) Exactly. But he didn't see that as a negative.

Prudence. Why not? Did he see grasping lawyers as "birds of a feather?"

Aunt Fanny. He simply considered attorneys' fees to be a necessary "cost of doing business."

Prudence. (*Crossing behind front desk to look at mail*) They wouldn't have been, if he had ever done an honest day's work?

Aunt Fanny. (*Crossing back to chair R of table*) But he didn't like to work. It held no interest for him. (*She sits R of table*)

Prudence. Why?

Aunt Fanny. Because he preferred being a con man. ... Or maybe I should say, he "loved" being a con man.

Prudence. (*Crosses to CL from behind front desk*) Why, for heaven's sake?

Aunt Fanny. I don't know exactly. All I know is that he fell in love with the "pigeon

drop” when he was a little boy, and spent the rest of his life trying to perfect it.

Prudence. Why couldn't he have decided to build a better mouse trap? *(A pause)*

(She sits L of table) What exactly is a “pigeon drop?”

Aunt Fanny. A “con game.” A scam.

Prudence. Why do they call it a “pigeon drop?”

Aunt Fanny. It's slang. A “pigeon” is the sucker who gets fleeced. The “drop” is the “bait” used to get the job done.

Prudence. So, how did it work?

Aunt Fanny. Well, Your dad always said the first step was “picking” a proper “pigeon.”

Prudence. Does that imply there are also “improper pigeons?”

Aunt Fanny. *(Ignoring her attempt at humor)* Although he never actually used that word. He considered the term “undignified.” Crude.

Prudence. *(Underwhelmed)* Yes. I suppose there is some satisfaction in being bamboozled by a gentleman.

Aunt Fanny. Your father thought so. He, therefore, preferred to refer to his intended victim as his “mark.”

Prudence. *(Rising and crossing DLC, and turning back to Fanny)* Because he “marked” him to be fleeced? But how did he know who to pick?

Aunt Fanny. He always insisted that no one could be a “first-rate mark” unless they were imbued with what he called “the virtue of avarice.”

Prudence. “The virtue of avarice?” *(She crosses and again sits L of table)* Since when has “avarice” become a “virtue?”

Aunt Fanny. For you it isn't. But does the greedy man see his avarice as a virtue or a

vice?

Prudence. Probably as a virtue. I see his point. But how could he be sure the person he chose to mark was in fact greedy?

Aunt Fanny. I'm not sure.

Prudence. Do they come with signs on their backs?

Aunt Fanny. He simply claimed he could smell them a mile away. He always said, "They positively reeked of greed!"

Prudence. Once he singled out his "pigeon," then what?

Aunt Fanny. Then he worked the "drop."

Prudence. How'?

Aunt Fanny. *(Rises and crosses DSR)* Well, the details varied, *(Turning to Pru)* but the "payoff" always involved a promise to divvy up a large sum of money - if the "mark" would just show his good faith by putting up a small sum of - as they say - "earnest money."

Prudence. So ... that's where the greed came in!

Aunt Fanny. I can still remember his first "drop." He was so excited that it worked, that he couldn't wait to give me a blow-by-blow description!

Prudence. I wonder if the guy was wearing a "scarlet P?" -- for "pigeon," that is!

Aunt Fanny. I doubt it. He just said that he picked out a guy who was sitting on the right end of a park bench.

Prudence. Do pigeons have "bulging eyes?"

Aunt Fanny. *(Giving an exasperated look)* Actually, the best ones have bulging wallets!

Prudence. So exactly what happened?

Aunt Fanny. Well, your dad said, "he nonchalantly sat down next to the guy

(re-enacting how Pru's dad sat on the bench to the left of the "mark")

and dropped a wallet full of \$20 bills. *(She re-enacts how Pru's dad indicated*

that he dropped the wallet to his own left side -- out of the "mark's" reach and

view. She does so by dropping her handkerchief to her left to simulate the drop of

the wallet to Pru's dad's left. Pru's dad's body prevents the "mark" from seeing

the wallet being dropped just left Pru's dad's left foot, but as he pulls his foot

back toward the bench, the "mark" will be able to see the wallet on the ground).

Prudence. I wonder where Dad got the \$20 bills? Was he also a counterfeiter?

Aunt Fanny. *(Ignoring her, and pulling her foot back to demonstrate)* Then, feigning

surprise, your dad blurted out "Somebody dropped his wallet," let the "mark"

see the wallet on the ground for a split, and reached down and grabbed it.

Prudence. What would have happened had the pigeon grabbed it first?

Aunt Fanny. I suspect your father would have bitten his hand.

Prudence. Really?

Aunt Fanny. Not really. Your dad foresaw that possibility. That's why he had

positioned himself between the "mark" and the wallet.

Prudence. So, dad "boxed him out!" Like getting a basketball rebound! Pretty clever.

Aunt Fanny. Once your dad snapped it up, he asked his "pigeon, "Is this wallet

yours?"

Prudence. Did the guy say, "Yes?"

Aunt Fanny. The guy actually answered, "No." Your dad next opened the wallet

(*She does so*) so the “pigeon” could see the \$20 bills inside -- your dad, being a nice guy, ...

Prudence. (*A sudden recollection*) You know, he *was* a nice guy ... when he wasn’t stealing money.

Aunt Fanny. offered to split the money with the “pigeon,” *if* the pigeon would just put up a hundred dollars to pay an attorney.

Prudence. Pay an attorney for what?

Fanny. To get the attorney’s legal opinion as to whether they had a lawful right to keep the money found in the wallet!

Prudence. (*Rising and crossing L, thinking*) If dad found it, why would he offer to split it?

Aunt Fanny. He didn’t *find* it. He *planted* it! He *put* the money in the wallet himself. That was the “bait.”

Prudence. Oh! Who was holding the “bait” at this time? Dad or the “pigeon?”

Aunt Fanny. Your dad, of course. After he “showed the wad of twenties,” he immediately slipped the wallet back into his own pocket. (*She rises*)

Prudence. But the guy had never seen dad before? Why would anybody in their right mind trust somebody with \$100 to go and get advice from an attorney?

Aunt Fanny. Because ... (*A step toward Pru*) ... If you’ll just “hesh up” for a minute, I’ll explain.

Prudence. You’re not normally this grumpy.

Aunt Fanny. And you’re not normally this much of a pain.

Prudence. I’ve never considered myself a pain.

Aunt Fanny. *(Ignoring her last interruption, and starting from where the interruption came)* ... Because your dad offered -- as a show of good faith -- to leave the wallet with the money in the “pigeon’s” hands, if the guy would just put up the \$100.

Prudence. But what would stop the “pigeon” from taking off with the wallet full of \$20 bills, once dad turned his back?

Aunt Fanny. *(Another exasperated look)* That, my girl, is precisely what your dad wanted him to do! *(A slight pause)* He calculated that pigeon would be willing to let *him* run off with the \$100, *if* the pigeon could in turn run off with the wallet your dad had found and the wad of \$20 bills!

Prudence. *(A step or two left thinking)* Oh! So, that’s where the pigeon’s greed comes in!

Aunt Fanny. But when the “pigeon” put up the \$100 for the attorney, your dad pulled the “old switcheroo.” *(Puts the handkerchief in her pocket)* He pulled out an identical second wallet *(She pulls out a 2nd handkerchief)* that he had in his pocket, and gave it to the “mark.”

Prudence. And there were no \$20 bills in the second wallet!

Aunt Fanny. Bingo! Just play money. Then your dad took off - never to be seen again -- with the “\$100 for the attorney” - as well as with the first wallet and the \$20 bills.

Prudence. You’ve got to be kidding! Are you telling me that there are people who are actually stupid enough to fall for something like that?

Aunt Fanny. You're darn right there are! Your dad used to say "there was a sucker born every minute!"

Prudence. *(She crosses to front desk)* He probably stole it from P. T. Barnum.

Aunt Fanny. *(Cannily)* It's just as likely that Barnum stole it from him.

Prudence. *(Turns back to Fanny)* How come the word didn't get around about the con?

Aunt Fanny. It did. But your dad simply changed things up.

Prudence. How?

Aunt Fanny. Well, with business men, it got pretty complicated.

Prudence. How can people be so dumb?

Aunt Fanny. Greed. They all wanted something for nothing.

Prudence. *(Catching on)* So, he changed the con so people wouldn't catch on?

Aunt Fanny. *(She crosses away DSR)* Exactly. Each con was tailored to it's victim.

(She turns back to Pru) Instead of a wallet full of money, he'd promise a banker stocks, or bonds, or dividends, or interest. Something that would appeal to a greedy banker.

Prudence. No wonder he was good!

Aunt Fanny. But the basic principles always remained the same. He'd make the "pigeon" a big pile of money *if* the "pigeon" would just put up a little pile to prove his good faith, or to prove he had the "financial worth to perform his part of the bargain," or something of the sort

Prudence. Wow! What a way to make a living!

Aunt Fanny. But I don't think your dad ever did it for the money. I think, he lived for the

satisfaction he derived from dreaming up the con and making it work. For your dad, gulling the gullible was an “art form.” The highest “art form.”

Prudence. So, just how good was he at it?

Aunt Fanny. I once had a detective tell me he was “the best.” Once, he took a bank in Chicago for \$300,000!

Prudence. *(A step toward Fanny)* How?

Aunt Fanny. All I know is that he somehow convinced the bank to loan him money so he could set up an engineering business.

Prudence. I never knew he was an engineer!

Aunt Fanny. He wasn't! He couldn't even spell “engineer!” He just convinced the bank that he was. *(She crosses to the table. There is a small box on the table)* By the way, I've got something for you.

Prudence. What?

Aunt Fanny. A little box your dad gave me. He told me to hang onto it, but to give it to you if you were ever really strapped for money.

Prudence. What's in it?

Aunt Fanny. He didn't say. *(She hands box to Pru)* He merely said to tell you *(Melodramatically)* that “when the darkness lowered, you should cast your bread upon the water, and sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle...”

Prudence. That's from the Bible, I think.

Aunt Fanny. As they say: “Even the Devil can quote scriptures.” And your dad could be a real devil.

Prudence. *(A pause)* I still don't understand. Did he say anything else?

Aunt Fanny. He just said that if you really were his daughter, "You'd figure it out."

Prudence. It's heavy. Do you think I should open it?

Aunt Fanny. You're strapped for money, aren't you?

Prudence. Yes.

Aunt Fanny. Then open it!

Prudence. *(She sits and opens it)* Auntie, I think it's gold!

Aunt Fanny. *(Fanny sits in R chair and takes one nugget and tests it with her teeth)* It is gold! Gold nuggets!

Prudence. *(Counting nuggets)* There are ten of them!

Aunt Fanny. Only your father would leave you gold nuggets instead of cash!

Prudence. What am I supposed to do with ten gold nuggets?

(The phone rings)

Prudence. *(Rises, leaves the box on the table with Fanny and crosses to front desk, and answers phone)* Hello. *(A pause)* Yes, it is. *(A pause)*. Oh, hello, Mr. Dodge. *(A pause)*. No, I don't think so. *(A pause)*. Of course. Just stop by the desk when you arrive.

Aunt Fanny. What was that all about?

Prudence. That was Euchre Dodge II. He claims he left a pair of cowboy boots here at the end of his vacation. He wants to stop by tomorrow morning to see if he can find them. *(She sits L of table)*

Aunt Fanny. Talk about gall! His dad's secretary makes reservations for a party of

twelve on Dodge Senior's corporate account, he runs up a bill of \$7500, and then he takes his company into bankruptcy, and leaves you holding the bag, and now Junior has the nerve to "stop by" to see if you can help him find a pair of misplaced cowboy boots. If I were you, if you find them, I would fill them with horse droppings!

Prudence. Cowboy boots, "my Aunt Fanny" - if you'll pardon the expression! It's me he wants! During the week he was here, he couldn't keep his hands off me! I thought I was going to have to beat him off with a stick.

Aunt Fanny. Why didn't you say something?

Prudence. I found a stick.

Aunt Fanny. Huh?

Prudence. You'd have been proud of me. The first time, I asked him in a very lady-like fashion to keep his hands to himself.

Aunt Fanny. And the second time.

Prudence. I bit his hand!

Aunt Fanny. (*Rises and crosses DSR, considering*) That wasn't very lady-like. Did he get the message? Or just rabies?

Prudence. Not exactly.

Aunt Fanny. I'm almost afraid to ask what you did to him the third time he got you alone?

Prudence. Nothing. (*She rises and crosses behind front desk*) Nothing at all. When he came around the counter, he merely found me cleaning (*she displays her .45*) my .45 behind the front desk.

Aunt Fanny. *(Two steps above table toward Pru)* So, I presume he got the message?

Prudence. I think so. *(Puts the gun away)* At least that's what I inferred from the presence of the wet spot on the floor. *(Indicating where the wet spot was)*

Aunt Fanny. Would you really have shot him?

Prudence. *(Sardonically)* Only if I had known then that his dad was going to stick me with that \$7500 bill. *(She starts to leave)* Excuse me, Auntie. I going to take a quick look for those stupid boots.

Aunt Fanny. If you find them, put them at the front desk. That way the minute he walks through the door you can throw them at him, and then boot his fanny out the door.

Prudence. I like the way you think. *(She starts to leave again. Stops, and turns back to Fanny)* Will you lock up? I've got something I want to do.

Aunt Fanny. What that?

Prudence. I want to go "on-line" to see how famous dad really was. To see if there are any references to dad's sundry "pigeon drops." *(She exits with a glint in her eye via R door)*

Aunt Fanny. Good night, dear.

(Lights down)

SCENE 2.5

(Again in the lobby. It is the following morning, about 8:30 am)

Gertrude Gronk. *(Entering from the front door, and crossing to center. She is followed by Agnes. One look at the pair tells you that they are young “old maids” and that they are in all probability doomed to remain such.)* Agnes, *(As she looks about)* do you suppose that we’re the only guests still here?

Agnes Gronk. I’m beginning to think so.

Gertrude. *(She stops R of game table, looking at the chess pieces as she talks)* But the joint was “jumping” just last week.

Agnes. *(Turning back to Gertrude)* Prudence’s aunt, Ms. Pureheart-Forthright, told me that Miss Prudence told her that Euchre Dodge told him *(tangling her words)* - I mean, her - that they were all employees of the Euchre Dodge Corporation. She said that Mr. Dodge said that he was giving all his employees a week’s paid vacation, at the company’s expense.

Gertrude. *(Moving one of the chess pieces)* If I could work for a boss like that, I’d be willing to get to work at 6 a. m. seven days a week! Indeed, eight!

Agnes. Me, too! Even if I’d have to get up before seven once in a while! Too bad that Euchre Dodge was married. *(She giggles a giggle that suggests she has a dirty mind inside her prosaic body)*

Gertrude. He had some years on him, but wasn’t he a hunk? *(When she laughs, she tends to snort)*

Agnes. That’s the kind of man I dream about. *(Crossing above game table to Gertrude to impart her secret knowledge)* And do you know what? I heard one of

his employees say that his supervisor told him that a Vice-President told him that Euchre Dodge is to business what Norman Einstein was to science!

Gertrude. (*Touching Agnes's upper arm*) That's the kind of man any woman wants!

(*Pauses, wondering who Norman Einstein is*) Who's Norman Einstein?

Agnes. Gertrude, you can't be serious! He's the scientific genius who figured out with the "theory of relaplicity." (*She means, "relativity."*)

Gertrude. (*Even more confused*) The theory of relaplicity?

Agnes. (*Blithely*) You know, " $v = \pi r^2$ "! More importantly, he's handsome, suave ...

Gertrude. (*Utterly confused*) Norman Einstein?

Agnes. No, Euchre Dodge, you ninny.

Gertrude. (*Crossing DSR, hopefully*) But is he rich?

Agnes. Filthy rich! (*She crosses DSC*) You don't suppose he's planning to divorce his wife?

Gertrude. (*Crossing to Agnes*) Well, if he is, I saw him first. Agnes, I'd run over my best friend to get at him.

Agnes. I'd run over your best friend, too, Gerty. Remember, "all's fair in love and war."

Gertrude. Just once, I wish you'd let me have first shot. Every time I let you go first, the men just seem to disappear before I ever get my chance.

Agnes. (*Putting her arm around Gertrude*) Gertrude, darling, if they aren't worthy of me, they certainly would be unworthy of my darling younger sister!

Gertrude. Do you really think he might be planning to divorce his wife?

Agnes. (*Getting catty*) Well, his wife was certainly nothing to look at.

Gertrude. Exactly! *(Crossing perhaps 3 steps L of Agnes to DLC, wondering)* Why do you suppose he was even attracted to her?

Agnes. Probably the long blond hair. Rich men are suckers for long blond hair.

Gertrude. *(Turns back to Agnes)* You mean suckers for peroxide! Did you notice her dark roots? *(A short pause)* Do you think we should go blond?

Agnes. It couldn't hurt?

Gertrude. It might help you. I suspect it would distract from my natural beauty.

(She strikes a pin-up-girl pose)

Agnes. Of course, she did have a decent figure....

Gertrude. If you like skinny women. To be honest, I thought she was a bit top-heavy!

Agnes. She had pretty white teeth!

Gertrude. As do horses!

Agnes. That reminds me! We're due at the stable in 5 minutes.

Gertrude. Let's get going.

(Both exit front door to go to stable)

(Lights Down)

Scene 3

(Later that morning, about 9 a.m. Pru is behind the front desk, shuffling papers.)

Euchre Dodge II enters, and crosses up to her outside the front desk)

Euchre Dodge II. Good morning, Prudence. How's the belle of Cozen Creek?

Prudence. *(From behind desk)* Good morning, Mr. Dodge. I am sorry

to say that I searched for a half hour last evening right after your call, but was unable to find your boots.

Euchre. Forget the boots. That was merely a ploy to see you again.

Prudence. *(Somewhat irate)* I suspected as much! And I'll be glad to see you again -- as soon as either you or your father pays that \$7500 you owe me.

Euchre. Have you ever heard the old saw, darling, that "you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar?" *(He crosses to her and takes her in his arms)*

Prudence. Mr. Dodge *(trying to push him off)*, I have no interest in catching flies. Let go of me!

Euchre. *(Refusing to release her)* That bill was not mine, my dear. It was a corporate obligation, since discharged in bankruptcy. Of course, I might undertake to pay it personally for certain considerations.

Prudence. *(Striking him in the stomach with her fist)* Let go of me, you *(As she pushes him away and crosses to C, the three gold nuggets concealed in her fist pop out and hit the floor. He immediately recognizes that they are gold)*

Euchre. *(Trying to recover his wits, as he gathers up the three nuggets)* *(From his knees)* Holy cow! They're gold! Where did you get them?

Prudence. *(She crosses two steps away DSR)* What business is that of yours? *(Turns to him, and sharply says)* Give them back!

Euchre. *(He rises in place)* Now hold on, beautiful. Don't get excited.

Prudence. *(She crosses behind the front desk, and grabs a five-iron. She menaces him)*
Did you hear me? Or do I have to use this to unplug your ears.

Euchre. (*Backing off SR*) I hear you! Here! (*He puts them on the card table*)

Prudence. Now, get out!

Euchre. But where did you get them?

Prudence. That's none of your business. You already stiffed me once ...

Euchre. I didn't stiff you; my dad did!

Prudence. ... for \$7500. I don't need an encore!

Euchre. Calm down. Do I look like a claim jumper. Working a claim takes big bucks. I thought perhaps you could use a ... well, a partner.

Prudence. Why would I want a partner who sees nothing wrong with his father -- or his father's business, to be more precise -- shafting me? And why would I want a partner who feels he can manhandle me at will?

Euchre. I apologize. That was sport. This is business!

Prudence. I don't like people who give me "the business!"

Euchre. (*A cautious step toward Pru*) I'm trying to make you a legitimate business proposition.

Prudence. (*Still holding the golf club*) I would prefer to be "propositioned" by someone I respect.

Euchre. I am trying to make you a good faith offer, you little wildcat. Will you please listen.

Prudence. Out here, good faith means putting your money where your mouth is.

We have no use here in Texas for dudes who are "all hat and no cattle." Put up, or shut up.

Euchre. I am willing to put up cash!

Prudence. (*Lowering the club*) Are you serious? How much?

Euchre. That depends.

Prudence. (*Raising the club again*) On what?

Euchre. On where you got those nuggets.

Prudence. Oh! (*She thinks as she pauses*) It will cost you \$5000 to find out!

Euchre. What?

Prudence. When I see \$5000 in cash on this table [desk], I'll tell you where I found the nuggets.

Euchre. So, for \$5000, we're partners? 50-50?

Prudence. No, for \$5000, I'll show you where I found the nuggets.

Euchre. What good does that do me?

Prudence. You can check out the site. Then, if you want in, it will cost you an additional \$10,000.

Euchre. So, it will cost me 15K for a 50-50 interest.

Prudence. I'll make you an even better deal. I run a dude ranch. I don't have time to run around prospecting for gold. If you like the site, for the additional 10 grand, I'll give you the exclusive right to prospect for gold there.

Euchre. So, I'd get 100% of all the gold I find?

Prudence. Right. Is that fair?

Euchre. I'll draw up a contract.

Prudence. (*Lowering the club and extending her hand*) This is the old West. My hand shake's my contract.

Euchre. That's not the way we do it in Philadelphia.

Prudence. This here is Texas. Or don't you trust me?

Euchre. I've always used prenuptials before I

Prudence. I'm not agreeing to marry you. Take it or leave it!

Euchre. Shake! *(They do. He then pulls out an envelope from his suit pocket and slaps down sixty \$100 bills. He counts off ten from the pile and keeps them)*

Prudence *(Shocked)* Do you always carry that much cash?

Euchre. After I left here, I was going to see a man about a \$6000 horse. This is more important.

(She scoops up the money)

Prudence. Do you mind if I count it? *(She does, quickly)*

Euchre. Don't you trust me?

Prudence. *(Having finished counting)* I'm beginning to. In fact, to borrow a phrase, "this could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship, Louis"

(Aunt Fanny enters from R door)

Euchre. *(He turns to Fanny)* Good morning, Madam.

Prudence. *(Pru crosses to Fanny; Euchre counters to CL)* Auntie, would you take this into town *right now* and give it to Orville to pay down the mortgage?

Aunt Fanny. What did you do? Rob a bank?

Prudence. *(Hushing her)* No questions. Euchre and I are discussing business. Just do it. I'll fill you in, as soon as you get back.

Aunt Fanny. Oh! *Good day, Mr. Dodge. (She exits)*

Euchre. *(A step to Pru)* Who's this Orville? Is he your significant other?

Prudence. He runs the bank. Do you have time to take a peek at the site?

Euchre. I'll make time. *(So she doesn't mistake his intentions)* For looking at the site,
that is. Shall I drive?

Prudence. No need. It's within easy walking distance.

Euchre. Okay, then, let's go. *(They exit via front door)*

(Agnes and Gertrude enter)

Gertrude. *(Entering from R door to C)* Did you see that young man with Prudence?

Agnes. *(Following her)* Yes.

Gertrude. Don't you remember? He was here last week!

Agnes. Yes. He followed her everywhere - like a puppy dog! *(She crosses to front door
to spy on Pru and Euchre)*

Gertrude. It was disgusting. And she, no doubt, encouraged him!

Agnes. *(Turning to Gertrude)* Why would a handsome young man like that would be
interested in a scrawny little thing like that is simply beyond my comprehension.

Gertrude. *(A step to Agnes)* Indeed. Why would he waste his time?

Agnes. Men are so shallow!

Gertrude. Maybe he thinks she has money?

Agnes. Well, this *is* her ranch, you know.

Gertrude. Then, maybe she does?

Agnes. *(A step to Gertrude)* I think it more likely that he was the one with the money,
and that she was just leading him on.

Gertrude. If he was after money, he was probably looking in the wrong place.

Agnes. Exactly, he should have been following us!

Gertrude. Have you ever noticed that we seem to be the only attractive single women
who patronize this place.

Agnes. No, but I have noticed that there are very few single men.

Gertrude. Maybe we should find a better place to vacation next summer.

Agnes. Yes, a place with scads of attractive single men.

Gertrude. Yes. Otherwise I could end up an old maid like you!

Agnes. Like me? If anybody's an old maid, it's you!

Gertrude. I am not an old maid.

Agnes. Neither am I.

Gertrude. But we might be, next year at this time. Where do you think we should go
next summer?

Agnes. How about the Y. M. C. A?

(They both exit via front door)

(Lights Down)

Scene 4

*(About 10 am that morning Prudence is at the front desk. Aunt Fanny enters from
R door and takes a spot SR)*

Aunt Fanny. Okay, Sweetie pie, so where'd you get that money?

Prudence. (*Crossing to C*) Am I now current on my mortgage?

Aunt Fanny. I gave the money to Orville personally. (*Crossing to Pru*) Here's the receipt. Now where did you get the money?

Prudence. (*She cross back to front desk to file the receipt*) Would you believe it was a benefaction from the "Bluebird of Happiness?"

Aunt Fanny. (*Getting annoyed with Pru's evasions*) No, I wouldn't. Around here, there are only vultures. I want a straight answer!

Prudence. (*Crosses to R of front desk, and nonchalantly says*) Euchre gave it to me.

Aunt Fanny. Guilty conscience?

Prudence. Greed!

Aunt Fanny. (*She sits in chair L of table*) Explain!

Prudence. Gold fever.

Aunt Fanny. How did he get gold fever?

Prudence. The gentleman's actually love sick. Gold fever was the secondary complication.

Aunt Fanny. (*Rising in place*) Prudence Pureheart, knock off the gibberish. Give me a straight answer!

Prudence. He can't keep his hands off me. When he grabbed me, I dropped three nuggets. He saw them.

Aunt Fanny. Three of the one's your dad left you?

Prudence. The very same.

Aunt Fanny. And just what were they doing in your hand?

Prudence. I put them there, (*crossing to front door to indicate*) - when I saw him drive

up.

Aunt Fanny. Why?

Prudence. So that when Euchre started to manhandle me, I could drop them.

Aunt Fanny. (*A step to Pru*) I still don't understand. Why?

Prudence. I wanted to see if he'd give me \$5000 and he did!

Aunt Fanny. (*Shocked*) Are you telling me you're working a pigeon drop?

Prudence. (*Coyly indignant*) Certainly not. I merely sold Euchre some information that he dearly wanted.

Aunt Fanny. (*She crosses to Pru*) What information?

Prudence. (*Pru crosses R past Fanny to DR*) He wanted to know where I got them.

Aunt Fanny. (*A step to Pru*) You got them from your dad!

Prudence. True. But, not most recently.

Aunt Fanny. (*Put hands on back of L chair*) I've never seen you this way! What are you talking about?

Prudence. (*Nonchalantly*) Last night I just *happened* to drop them in Cozen Creek, where the big tree comes down to the bank.

Aunt Fanny. Just how did you *happen* to drop them there?

Prudence. I would say I dropped them accidentally -- on purpose.

Aunt Fanny. (*A step to Pru*) But why?

Prudence. So I could pick them up, of course. But I only found three of them. It was kinda dark.

Aunt Fanny. How many did you drop?

Prudence. All ten, of course.

Aunt Fanny. (*Crossing L to front door, indicating*) Then why aren't you out looking for them?

Prudence. I was rather hoping Euchre would find the others for me.

Aunt Fanny. (*Crosses to C*) Now I'm really confused!

Prudence. Euchre paid me \$5000 to get me to show him where I found the three nuggets I dropped. So I took him down by the big tree, and showed him where I found the nuggets.

Aunt Fanny. (*A step L to Pru*) And you expect him to find the other seven for you?

Prudence. Yup. (*Pru crosses to Fanny at C*) We weren't there a minute when he saw the first one glistening in the sun.

Aunt Fanny. (*Crossing to Front Door*) So he's down there looking for the rest?

Prudence. (*She crosses R*) U-huh. And when he does, (*she sits R chair*) I expect him to give me a check for \$10,000.

Aunt Fanny. (*A step to Fanny*) So, you are working a pigeon drop!

Prudence. Auntie, dear, I am shocked at your base insinuations!

Aunt Fanny. (*Crossing to Center*) I'm not insinuating anything. I'm coming right out and saying it!

Prudence. Then, I'm even more shocked!

Aunt Fanny. (*She sits in L chair*) Then why is he going to give you a check for \$10,000?

Prudence. We have an agreement. If he likes the site, I'll lease him the rights to search for gold, and he'll pay me \$10,000 for the mineral rights.

Aunt Fanny. *It is a pigeon drop. (Rises and accuses)* You've "salted" the site?

Prudence. I would prefer to think of it as a “*retaliatory* pigeon drop.” His father “pigeoned” me for \$7500. I am merely returning the favor. Of course, I am also seeking a modicum of damages for the inconvenience and mental anguish.

Euchre. (*Entering in haste below front desk*) Miss Prudence, will you take a check?

Prudence. (*Rising in place*) I may be unduly cynical, but your father was once going to give me a check.

Aunt Fanny. (*Rising in place and fading US a tad*) Will this one be honored? Or are you your father’s son?

Euchre. I assure you, it’s good. (*He writes his check, crosses to Pru and gives it to her. Fanny fades L*)

Prudence. Good. By the way, did you have any luck?

Euchre. Yup. (*He produces and shows four nuggets*) What do you think?

Prudence. (*Seizing them from him*) Thank you,

Euchre. But I found them!

Prudence. Yes, but you leased the mineral rights! I’m afraid these four and the three I showed you last night are mine.

Aunt Fanny. (*A step to Euchre*) I’m afraid she’s right, Euchre.

Euchre. (*Yielding*) Okay. Then, when can I start?

Prudence. As soon as your check clears. I’ll drive to town and deposit it right away.

Euchre. How about if I come along? Perhaps I can do something to expedite things.

Prudence. Okay, be my guest!. (*Pru crosses to front door; Euchre follows. At door, she stops and turns back to him*) But keep your hands to yourself while I’m

driving.

(Lights Down)

Scene 5

(Later the same morning, about 11 am. Orville enters. He is now wearing a western shirt, string tie, cowboy boots, a wash-and- wear suit and a Stetson hat)

Orville. *(Enters from front door, crosses to C, and calls)* Prudence! Aunt Fanny!

Aunt Fanny. *(Enters carrying cut flowers, from behind Orville)* Morning, Orville.

Orville. *(Turns and models his new outfit. Then in a cowboy voice)* Well, Ma'am? How do I look?

Aunt Fanny. Like Hopalong Cassidy.

Orville. Hoopalong Cassidy, Ma'am? Who's Hoopalong Cassidy?

Aunt Fanny. *(She puts the flowers at upper end of front desk)* You're too young to know!

Orville. Was he handsome, Ma'am?

Aunt Fanny. His horse was. And knock off the "Ma'am" stuff.

Orville. Yes, Ma'am.

Aunt Fanny. *(She crosses DS to his L)* So, what's with the cowboy get-up?

Orville. You said I needed to "spiff up a bit" -- so "no one would recognize me!"

(Suddenly becoming a cowpoke, and stepping back to show off his outfit) Well, Ma'am, Is this spiffy enough?

Aunt Fanny. Well, I certainly would not have recognized you.

Orville. Will Pru like it?

Aunt Fanny. Well, she should like the hat. It's a Stetson, isn't it?

Orville. Yes, Ma'am. I just hope she doesn't think that I'm "all hat and no beef." Will she?

Aunt Fanny. I suppose that depends.

Orville. On what?

Aunt Fanny. On whether you're all hat and no beef, I guess.

Orville. Where do you suppose she might be?

Aunt Fanny. Well, she's around here somewhere.

Prudence. *(Entering from R door)* Afternoon, Auntie. *(She sees Orville)* Orville. *(Does a double take)* Orville?

Orville. *(Turning to Pru, broadly)* Howdy, Ma'am.

Prudence. Why are you wearing a Stetson hat? Why are you wearing cowboy boots? It's not Halloween!

Orville. 'Cause you said you didn't cotton to my white socks and bow ties.

Prudence. And why are you talking that way?

Aunt Fanny. *(She crosses to Pru, as Orville counters L)* I think he's suffering from a severe case of "clothes make the man?"

Prudence. Now, I get it. He's now a cowboy, so he's talking like a cowboy.

Aunt Fanny. Something like that.

Prudence *(A tad flattered. Two steps to Orville; Fanny counters DSR)* Are you doing this for me?

Orville. *(Broadly)* Yes, Ma'am. I want to put my rope around you, and mark you

with my Bar-\$-Banker brand.

Prudence. *(To Aunt Fanny)* I think I liked him better as a nerdy banker.

Aunt Fanny. At least he was sincere!

Orville. I'm still sincere, Ma'am. As sincere as a little dogie singing a lonesome
cattle call!

Prudence. *(To Orville)* Orville, dogies don't sing cattle calls. They're motherless calves.

Orville. Well, I'll be horse-tied and tumbleweeded.

Aunt Fanny. *(Tapping Pru on her shoulder)* He means "hog-tied," I think.

Prudence. *(Turns to Fanny)* That would be my guess, too. But what's this about being
"tumbleweeded?"

Aunt Fanny. Probably has something to do with a hog-tied hog singing, *"Drifting Along
Like a Tumbling Tumbleweed."*

Prudence. *(Turning to Orville)* Nice try, Orv. You get two gold stars for getting rid of the
white socks and bow tie. But I'm still not buying.

(Euchre rushes in front door and stops two steps in)

Euchre. I found more gold. *(Shows two nuggets)* I think I'm near a glory hole.

Orville. *(Suddenly jealous, to Pru)* Who's this varmint? He better not be jumping my
claim, or I'll plug him with my trusty .45. *(He pats his hip)*

Prudence. Relax, Orville. You aren't a-packing a .45.

Orville. Oh, good point!

Aunt Fanny. *(Crossing between Orville and Euchre, as Pru fades DSR)* Orville
Overdraft, this is Euchre Dodge II.

Prudence. *(Crossing to R of Orville)* He's my lessee. I granted him the right to prospect for gold in the stream that runs through my property.

Aunt Fanny. That's where she got the money to cure her default and pay off the mortgage.

Prudence. Euchre's paid me \$15,000.

Aunt Fanny. I'll get some ice tea, and you two can get acquainted out on the front porch.

(Fanny goes to the kitchen. Prudence, Euchre and Orville exit to the porch)

(Lights Down)

Scene 5.5

(Agnes and Gertrude enter from front door. Agnes crosses to C; Gertrude follows.

Afternoon, the same day)

Agnes. *(Over her shoulder to Gertrude)* Well, how do you like that?

Gertrude. I don't like it at all. It's not fair that that scrawny thing has two men chasing her, and we've got none.

Agnes. *(She checks what's going on on the porch)* A good hostess would share. I've got a notion to give her a piece of my mind and go to the Y. M. C. A. here and now!

Gertrude. *(Moving L to take a peek at those on porch)* Me, too! Imagine! Stringing two men along.

Agnes. That Orville Overdraft's been chasing her for years.

Gertrude. And he's rich.

Agnes. He's handsome!

Gertrude. And, he's a banker!

Agnes. But why is he wearing that silly cowboy paraphernalia?

Gertrude. He certainly looks much better in a blue suit ...

Agnes. And his bow tie.

Gertrude. It was the tie that made him irresistible!

Agnes. Every man looks better in a bow tie.

Gertrude. (*Crosses to C*) Bow ties and Retro Black-Plastic Horn-Rim glasses, when worn together cry out, "Panache!"

Agnes. (*Follows a step or 2 to C*) Not to mention quality, urbanity, sophistication ...

Gertrude. ... poise, polish, and style.

Agnes. When I see a man wearing a bow tie something whispers to me diplomacy, discretion, sensitivity, and hunk.

Gertrude. Yes! And all the more so, when they wear white socks.

Agnes. Yes, father always wore white socks!

Gertrude. (*Crosses back to front door to sneak a further peek*) When I see a man wearing white socks, I can barely control my libido.

Agnes. (*A step to Gertrude*) Add musk aftershave, and I reach a state of frenzy.

Gertrude. (*Turns to Agnes*) Why would a man of urbanity trade it all for a Stetson?

Agnes. And why does he throw himself at her feet?

Gertrude. While all the while never noticing a truer heart (*caressing herself*) who yearns to be his soul mate.

Agnes. *(Caressing herself)* Truer hearts. Plural!

Gertrude. Let's walk past him again.

Agnes. Yes, maybe he'll notice. *(They exit front door)*

Lights Down

Scene 6

(Two weeks later. About 10 a.m. Euchre is alone in the lobby, taking a break from prospecting. He is seated on the sofa, drinking a pop)

Orville *(Entering front door to below front desk)* Good morning, Euchre. Have you seen Prudence?

Euchre. Not recently. She may have driven into town.

Orville. *(A step to Euchre)* How are things going? Have you struck the "mother-lode," or is that a secret?

Euchre. *(Rising and crossing DC to Orville's level)* How much are you willing to pay to find out?

Orville. Why, are you looking for a partner.

Euchre. A partner. Investor. Whatever.

Orville. Perhaps, I know someone. What sort of return might be expected?

Euchre. I suppose that that would depend on the extent of the investment.

Orville. Are you looking for an infusion of labor or money?

Euchre. Well. I'm supplying the labor. I think, therefore, I would prefer cash. I, of course,

need to eat while I'm working and Ms. Pureheart is charging me \$35 a night for lodging in the barn. *(Crosses to R chair and sits)*

Orville. *(Crosses to L chair and sits)* So, what return might I expect for providing your "grub stake?"

Euchre. A percentage of what I find. 10%. 25%. 50%. It would depend upon the extent of your investment.

Orville. But if you find nothing, 50% of nothing is nothing. I prefer to base my earnings not on what you find, but on what I invest.

Euchre. And what return would you expect on your investment.

Orville. Given the risk, I should say no less than 100%.

Euchre. So if you invest \$5000, you expect a return of your \$5000 plus \$5000 to boot.

Orville. At least.

Euchre. In that case put in \$15,000.

Orville. I would have to know the history of the success of your venture to date? How much gold have you found so far?

Euchre. *(Rising in place)* That, my friend, is privileged information.

Orville. *(Rises and crosses to front door)* Then you shall have the additional privilege of finding another source of funds.

Euchre. Hold on. *(Orville stops at front door and turns back; Euchre crosses to him)*

Here! *(He pulls a pouch from his pocket with 3 gold nuggets)*

Orville. You've panned for gold for two weeks in 90 plus degree heat, and all you have to show for it are three lousy nuggets?

Euchre. But look at the size of them!

Orville. At \$1500 an ounce, you hold \$4500 in your hand. Do you really expect me to advance \$15,000 on that sort of security?

Euchre. *(Crosses to C away from Orville)* Who said anything about security? *(Turns back to Orville)* What are you? Some sort of banker?

Orville. Bingo!

Euchre. Bingo, what?

Orville. Bingo, I'm a banker. Ta-da!

Euchre. *(A step to Orville)* But bankers only loan money to people who don't really need it?

Orville. Boy! You sure got that right!

Euchre. *(Getting a bright idea)* Okay, I don't really need it. It would just be helpful.

Orville. Bankers have no interest in being helpful. What does interest us, is being rapacious.

Euchre. Rapacious?

Orville. Think raptor.

Euchre. Like flesh-eating?

Orville. Bingo. Now substitute "interest" for "flesh" and you've got it. Now what security can you provide? The more, the better. *(A step to Euchre)* Do you own your own home?

Euchre. Yes, but...

Orville. Is it mortgaged?

Euchre. Big time.

Orville. What else have you got?

Euchre. Only my trust fund. But dad set it up as a “spendthrift trust.”

Orville. Not interested. What else?

Euchre. Only those gold nuggets I just showed you.

Orville. Not interested. You could have put them there yourself. “Salted the creek.”

Euchre. (*A step to Orville*) What?

Orville. You could have “salted the creek.” It’s the oldest con game known to man!

Euchre. I still don’t understand.

Orville. First, you get hold of a few gold nuggets. Next, you secretly scatter them in
that part of the creek where you’ve been ostensibly prospecting for gold.

Euchre. Ostensively?

Orville. Then you carefully choose a pigeon.

Euchre. “A pigeon?”

Orville. (*Orville sits R of table*) Your “mark.” A sucker. Someone who, at the same time,
is both gullible and greedy.

Euchre. There are such people?

Orville. Certainly. You next announce that you have discovered gold. To enhance your
credibility, you might even display samples of the gold you claim to have found.

Euchre. You “claim to have found?”

Orville. Finally, you offer to cut your “pigeon” in to the “big enchilada” if your “pigeon”
will put up a substantial, but “smaller enchilada.”

Euchre. “Smaller enchilada?”

Orville. Yes. A sum of cash, perhaps in the nature of a “grubstake.” All the while, of

course, knowing that there's no gold to be found at the site. It's the oldest scam in the books! Pru's dad perfected it!

Euchre. (*Sits L of table. The light is starting to dawn. He pops up again*) What sort of grubstake?

Orville. The variations are limited only by the extent of the nefarious imagination of the skilled practitioner.

Euchre. Practitioner?

Orville. (*Defining his term*) The scammer. The con artist.... The grifter.

Euchre. But, exactly how....

Orville. (*Indicates Euchre should sit R of table. Orville sits L*) The prototype had the con man offering to sell his interest in the strike, claiming he was suffering from a mortal malady, such as consumption, and that he needed to fire-sale his claim and retire to a dryer climate, even if it involved selling the claim at a price, substantially below its fair market value.

Euchre. But it wouldn't necessarily involve a sale, would it?

Orville. Of course not. The "practitioner" might offer his pigeon an opportunity to acquire a partnership-interest in the venture. For a modest infusion of operating capital, the pigeon would be afforded the right to share in the anticipated bonanza -- perhaps on a 50/50 basis, or even disproportionately. (*He pauses, thinking... Pops up*) Good heavens!

Euchre. (*Rises in place*) What's the matter?

Orville. (*Crosses a couple steps L*) I've just had an ominous thought! (*A pause*) (*Turns*

back to Euchre sharply) No! It couldn't be! *(Another pause)* Or could it?

Euchre. What?

Orville. *(A step to Euchre)* Assure me, my friend, that you have not salted the creek.

Swear that you haven't selected me to be your "pigeon?"

Euchre. That's absurd. I didn't salt the creek. I'm an honest man. I paid \$10,000 to lease the site. And I've worked for two solid weeks to find these nuggets. In ninety degree heat! *(The light dawning)* Could the scam artist, in lieu of offering a partnership interest, instead, perhaps, tender a lease?

Orville. Certainly. Why not?

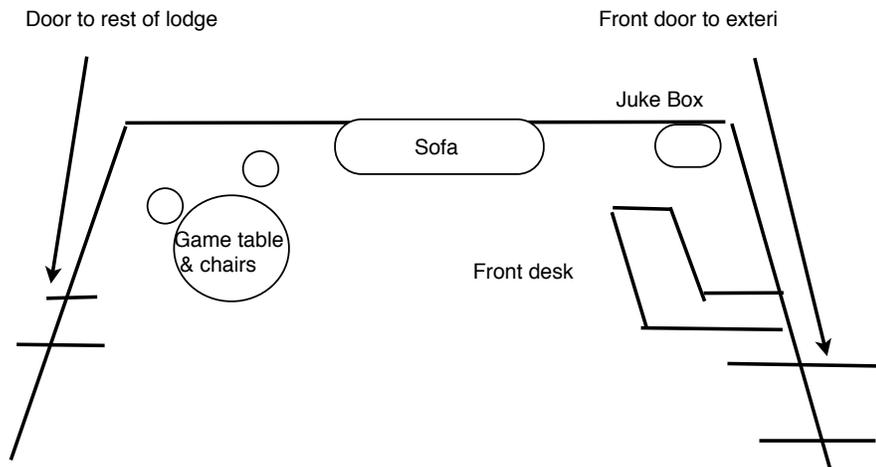
Euchre. Oh, no! I I think I've just fallen victim to the oldest scam in the books.

Orville. Well, cheer up! You have plenty of company. Why else do you think that little stream is called "Cozen Creek?" *(Orville exits)*

(Lights Down)

END OFFREE PREVIEW

BELLE OF COZEN CREEK SET



The set shown is minimal.

An imaginative director, realizing that this is a western dude ranch, might wish to add a moose head or an old rifle to the walls.

He can let his imagination run wild. E.g. a fireplace can be added.

