

MURDER AT THE BROTHEL

AN OLD WEST MURDER MYSTERY MELODRAMA

BY

SUSAN O'CONNELL

MURDER AT THE BROTHEL

The Wild West has never been wilder than this. Set in the 1880's west at Miss Mattie's brothel we meet Colt Remington looking for comfort after being left at the altar, Black Jack Hart the evil villain forcing young, innocent Purity Peachblossom into service to pay off her father's debt, Ruby Rose the girl with a past, Dash Darling gallant hero searching for his one true love Purity to save her from Jack's clutches and Marshal John Marshall whose keen insight solves a ghastly murder. Secrets will be revealed and old acquaintances re-kindled.

Try to figure out "who dun it" and let your audience be a part of the fun. Running approximately an hour and a half the show can be extended by allowing your audience to come up with their own theories or by adding your own choice of songs, sketches, Olio's or poems during the break.

"Murder at the Brothel" is geared toward adults but it is fun, funny and a bit naughty with lots of innuendos, but a good time will be had by all.

Perfect for Community Theater, western entertainment, private parties and fund raisers

Runs approximately an hour and a half

Cast of 4 men and 3 women

Written by Susan O'Connell

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

COLT REMINTON	A typical saddle tramp of the day, not too bright. Drowning his sorrows at Miss Mattie's house after searching for the girl who jilted him at the altar. 20-30
MADAM MATTIE	Typical madam with the heart of gold, hiding a secret from her past. 30-50
BLACK JACK HART	Typical melodrama villain, hated by all, old friend of Miss Mattie's. 30-50
PURITY PEACHBLOSSOM	Innocent young girl who doesn't know the ways of the world, but that is about to change. 20-30
DASH DARLING	Dashing hero intent on rescuing Purity, but doesn't understand the ways of the world either. 20-30
RUBY ROSE	One of Mattie's girls, forced to work to pay off her family's mortgage. She's the one who jilted Colt. 20-30
MARSHAL JOHN MARSHALL	Town marshal, frequent visitor to Miss Mattie's. Happens to be on hand to solve the murder. 30-50

Susan O'Connell is an actress, director, poet and writer from San Jacinto California. She has performed in Community and College theaters since the early 70's but has recently started devoting more of her time to directing at the local community level.

Susan is the great-great granddaughter of Amelia Anne Earp; cousin of Wyatt and feels that the love of the old west is in her blood. She wrote and performs a one-woman play called "Memoirs of a Madam" which tells stories about the prostitutes of the west. She is a published poet whose poems also tell us about the lives of these "soiled doves." Her book "The Wild Side of the Old West" can be purchased on Amazon.

Four of her poems have been published in American Cowboy Magazine.

Other than performing her one-woman play "Murder at the Brothel" is Susan's first produced play with CAST Players in Beaumont California from June 1st through June 10th 2018.

MURDER AT THE BROTHEL

The scene opens on the parlor of a brothel in the 1880's west.

A cowboy enters and knocks on the door; it is answered by the madam.

Madam Mattie: Why Colt Remington. Nice to see you again. How long has it been? Six months, a year?

Colt: Just about a year Miss Mattie.

Mattie: Well welcome back. The girls miss you and that...big gun of yours.

Colt: My what? Oh yeah. (He pulls his upstage gun from its holster, it is exceptionally large)

Mattie: Come on in. (They enter, she pours him a drink) So tell me Colt, what have you been up to?

Colt: Well Miss Mattie, I've just been wandering, trying to make sense of this miserable world. I don't know how one man can suffer so much pain, degradation and rejection.

Mattie: (With sympathy) Oh that's right, I heard you got married.

Colt: No, I was going to, but my beautiful bride, the only gal I've ever loved, except my horse...

Mattie: ...That goes without saying

Colt: ...jilted me at the altar. She just disappeared and I've been searching for her ever since.

Mattie: You sure picked a strange place to look.

Colt: Oh I've finally given up my search. She is lost to me forever. I will never have the comfort that a good wife can provide. You ever been married Miss Mattie?

Mattie: No Colt. Oh I suppose I could have been a good wife and a loving mother, but I wouldn't have had nearly as much fun. You see I felt the same way about men as I felt about elephants; they're fine to look at, I just wouldn't want to own one.

Colt: I'll drink to that. Who needs a wife? Today I am looking for another kind of comfort.

Mattie: Well, that I can help you with. I'll send my best girl down to help ease the pain in your... heart.

Colt: Um, Miss Mattie, it ain't exactly my heart I'm thinking about right now.

Mattie: I know that Colt. You're no different than any other man, single or wed. You're all dirty boots on one end and dirty mind on the other.

Colt: I'll be damned, you're right Miss Mattie.

Mattie: (Aside) And brains somewhere right in the middle.(She exits)

(A man comes in dragging a frightened young woman with him)

Black Jack Hart: (Outside door) Well Miss Purity Peachblossom welcome to your new home.

Purity: Surely you cannot mean this...this...this...

Jack: This house of ill fame? Oh but I do. We have an agreement. I agreed not to foreclose on your father's farm and you agreed to work for me.

Purity: But when you said work, I thought you meant working in a refined little shop selling buttons and buckles and bows, oh my, not...not...not...

Jack: Selling yourself? (Laughs wickedly) That's exactly what I meant.

Purity: But I could never be a...a...a...

Jack: Yee gads woman, can't you finish a sentence?

Purity: But a pro..pro...pro...

Jack: A soiled dove?

Purity: (Sweetly) Oh what a charming way to put it. (Back to frightened) No I fear I could never be a... (He gives her a warning look) ...one of those.

Jack: Oh but you shall. I hold the mortgage on your father's farm and I know he cannot pay, so you shall pay for him or he will be ruined.

Purity: But I am innocent and pure.

Jack: That's true, you may be as white as snow but soon you'll be pure scarlet.

Purity: (Beating his chest) Oh darn you! (Shocked) You've made me swear. You are a wicked, wicked man Black Hart Jack.

Jack: That's Black Jack Hart.

Purity: If you say so.

Jack: Come along Purity. It's time to start earning your keep. (He pulls her inside, he enters and she waits back stage. Mattie enters)

Mattie: What's all the commotion about? Well if it isn't Black Hart Jack.

Jack: That's Black Jack Hart!

Mattie: If you say so. What do you want?

Jack: As gracious as always I see. I am here to take advantage of the titillating invitation you have placed in your front window.

Mattie: The what?

Jack: Your sign, "Men taken in and done for."

Mattie: Oh that, damn it. Well, all my girls are busy right now.

Jack: Don't get your bloomers in a bunch Mattie. I don't want any of the nags in your stable.

Mattie: Nags? I'll have you know, my girls are young, beautiful and smart.

Jack: Smart? How do you figure?

Mattie: (She struggles to find an example) They all know how to say "Pay First" in six different languages.

Jack: (Dismissing her) Oh Mattie, poor delusional Mattie. Allow me to show you young, allow me to show you beautiful, allow me to show you smart...allow me to show you beautiful.(Pulls Purity into room) This is Purity Peachblossom. Put her to work. She has a mortgage to pay off.

Mattie: But business is slow right now.

Jack: That doesn't matter. I shall be her first customer.

Mattie: You know I never take inexperienced girls.

Jack: Don't worry, after tonight, she'll qualify. (Pushes Purity into Mattie's arms)
Get her ready for me. I'll be having a drink. Soon my little flower you shall be mine.

Purity: I'd rather die!

Jack: (Draws his gun) That can be arranged. (Colt sees this and draws his gun)

Colt: Hold it mister. This is a respectable brothel. I mean...well this ain't no place for killing.

Jack: (Puts his gun away) Take it easy cowboy. I would never harm this innocent, delicate, pure, untouched, soft creature... (He is becoming aroused)... ahem (calming himself and thinking no one will notice he places his hat on his crotch)

Mattie: (Mattie points to her own mid-section and Soto voce to the audience) Brains!

Jack: I've got plans for her; I want her alive and kicking ... if you know what I mean?

Colt: (Defiantly) No I do not. (Jack and Mattie exchange a look)

Jack: Go on Mattie, get her ready. I don't like to be kept waiting.

Mattie: (To Purity) This is against my better judgement, but if I don't do what he says, there's no telling how many people will be out in the street. Colt Remington this is Black Hart Jack.

Jack: That's Black Jack Hart.

Mattie: If you say so. Come on Purity. We better do what he says. I think we'll have to find you a different name.(They exit, Jack sits, pours drink, Colt sits and puts his gun on the table))

Jack: You've got a mighty impressive rod there cowboy.

Colt: (Uncomfortably crossing his legs) I beg your pardon?

Jack: Your piece.

Colt: My what?

Jack: Persuader?

Colt: Well, really! Ain't that a bit personal?

Jack: Oh for Pete's sake, your hog leg, your gun man, your gun!

Colt: Oh my gun! Oh yeah, yeah, I'm a crack shot.

Jack: Yeah I can tell you're quite the bushwhacker.

Colt: (Taking offense again) Now see here mister!

Jack: (In frustration, gently as if to an idiot) A gunslinger. How many men have you killed?

Colt: Oh. (Counting on his fingers) None. But there ain't a rat left back home.

Jack: I see. (Awkward silence) So, you here for a little entertainment?

Colt: No, I'm here for a woman.

Jack: But...oh never mind. Don't you have a wife?

Colt: (With a moan) A wife. I'll never have a wife. The only gal I've ever loved, except my horse...

Jack: That goes without saying.

Colt: ...left me at the altar. I've been searching for her.

Jack: You sure picked a strange place to look.

Colt: I've stopped looking. I wouldn't take her back if she begged me, I wouldn't take her back if she was the last woman on earth, I wouldn't take her back if she had am...am...am...lost her memory. I wouldn't take her back...

Jack: Okay, okay, I get it.

Colt: You ever been married?

Jack: Nope, and I intend to keep it that way. Besides there ain't no filly who can tame this stallion. Wild and free that's me.

Colt: I'm sure all the fillies are grateful.

Jack: What'd you say?

Colt: Wild and free, that's me too. Let's drink on it. (They do) You ever kill anyone?

Jack: Yep.

Colt: Hot damn!

Jack: Easy cowboy, there ain't no glory in killing, no matter the reason.

Colt: I guess you're right. Every time I kill a rat I feel powerful sad.

Jack: Your conscience gets you?

Colt: No, I'm sad cause there ain't more rats. Who'd you kill?

Jack: I ain't proud of it, but it was self-defense. There was this woman I was seeing named Lily who was the possessive type, but being wild and free as I was...

Colt: Like a stallion! (He paws the ground and whinnies like a horse)

Jack: What? Oh yeah, yeah, like a stallion. (He half-heartedly does the same) Anyway as I was saying, at this same time I was seeing Joanne too but Lily assumed I was gonna marry her even though the subject had never come up and she said "you're marrying me so you might as well forget Joanne." I told her I had no intention of marrying her and she said "if you won't walk down the aisle with me you won't walk down the aisle with anyone." "I know how to turn a stallion into a gelding."

Colt: (Hands on crotch) What did you do?

Jack: I just turned and walked away.

Colt: What happened next?

Jack: I heard the click of a hammer being pulled back and a gunshot. Then everything seemed to slow down, like in a dream you know? And moving only on instinct, I drew, turned and fired.

Colt: Was it one of her kin trying to defend her honor?

Jack: No.

Colt: A jealous lover?

Jack: No.

Colt: The Sheriff?

Jack: No.

Colt: The bartender?

Jack: No.

Colt: WHO DID YOU SHOOT?

Jack: We stared at each other and time seemed to stop, but it was as quick as a last dying breath. No one moved. (Colt is banging his head on the table in frustration) We had both fired, I thought we had missed each other but suddenly the smoke cleared and...(Jack takes a drink, Colt puts his gun to his head and fakes blowing out his brains) Lily clutched her heart and slid silently to the floor.

Colt: It was Lily?

Jack: Yep, she had grabbed a gun out of some cowboy's belt and planned to make good on her threat. (Both put hands on their crotch) Thank goodness she was such a terrible shot.

Colt: You killed a woman? I don't think I've ever been that wild and free.

Jack: That's the only person I ever killed, but she fired first so no charges were brought.

Colt: Gee, that sure puts rats in perspective.

Mattie: (Enters) Black Hart Jack.

Jack: (Through clenched teeth) That's Black Jack Hart, Black Jack not Black Hart.

Mattie: If you say so. You might as well go upstairs and wait. It's the room at the end of the hall the one overlooking the alley. She'll be there in a few minutes.

Jack: Good, that will give me time to do a few deep knee bends and try out my new Pomade from Paris...(Takes it from his pocket)

Colt: What's pomade?

Jack: (He sniffs Colt as he hands him the container) Perhaps you should try some.

Colt: (Takes container;reads) Pomade for the dis...dis...

Mattie: Disgusting?

Colt: Dis...

Mattie: Disreputable?

Colt: Dis...

Mattie: Dishonest?

Jack: DISCERNING! Pomade for the DISCERNING gentleman.

Colt: (Reading) “Pomade for the DISCERNING Gentleman” made in Paris... Arkansas. Also good for muscle ache, bunions and male enhancement.

Jack: Give me that! The only thing I rub it on is my hair.

Mattie: Never made your hair grow either.

Jack: Now if this pointless discussion is finished, I shall go to my room and complete my toilette.

Colt: (Aside, snickering) Toilet.

Jack: Imbecile. Now, I must not keep my Purity waiting. I’m sure the little dear is eager to smother me with kisses?

Mattie: Well, I don’t know about kisses, but I’m sure she’s eager to smother you. (They leave)

(We see a young man coming out from behind a flat representing an alley or from back stage if possible, searching for something)

Dash Darling: I know I saw that scoundrel Black Hart Jack come this way. Purity’s poor, pitiful pa, Peter Peachblossom told me she went off with him. Why ever would she have done that? He must be mistaken because I swear I saw Jack go into this broth...broth...house of shame and Purity would never set even one dainty foot over this threshold. She must have escaped his filthy clutches and in his anger he sought solace in this broth...broth...palace of sin. By now she is probably back home in the loving embrace of her poor, penniless pa. But I Dash Darling shall seek out the evil Black Hart Jack and make him pay for laying his dirty hands on my beloved Purity Peachblossom. (He goes to the door but can’t bring himself to open it) I have never entered a...well you know, and I promised my dear sainted mother I never would. I also promised never to cuss, or drink until after I was married. She said I’d probably need to then. I’ve also never, you know...with a woman, and I fear the temptation would be far too great if I were to enter. So to hold true to my dear sainted mothers wishes I shall hide here in the alley behind this conveniently placed horse trough (He indicates an unseen trough in the alley behind the flat) and wait for Black Hart Jack to come out. He can’t stay in there forever, no man could. Then he will be sorry he ever trifled with Purity Peachblossom and her one true love Dash Darling.

(He goes back behind the flat. Mattie enters)

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Mattie: Oh Colt I haven't forgotten you and your -aching heart. Ruby should be right down. (She exits)

Colt: Ruby! No it can't be. It's too much to hope for. No I swore I'd never take her back. But if it is her, what's she doing here touching strange men's...hearts? It can't be her. There's lots of woman named Ruby, but there's only one named Ruby (Ruby enters, he sees her) ROSE!

Ruby Rose: (Shocked) Colt Remington. What are you doing here?

Colt: ME? What are you doing here?

Ruby: I asked you first.

Colt: I have spent the last year looking for you.

Ruby: You certainly picked a strange place to look.

Colt: I'm not looking here. I gave up my search. I came here for a bit of comfort and companionship.

Ruby: Colt how could you?

Colt: How could I? How could you?

Ruby: I...I...oh Colt it's too horrible to explain. Please leave and forget about me. I am not the innocent girl you once loved.

Colt: You can say that again.

Ruby: Oh Colt!

Colt: I'm sorry. (He hugs her, the hug becomes an embrace but he pushes her away) But Ruby I swore I would never forgive you or take you back.

Ruby: I don't blame you Colt. I broke your heart once. I don't deserve a second chance. I understand the ways of the world now.

Colt: (Realizing she may mean sexhe smiles)That's true.(Pulls her close again, looking at her bosom) Now that I see youI know I was wrong. (She lifts his chin) We can work something out.

Ruby: Oh Colt.

Colt: Oh Ruby. (They embrace)

Ruby: But can you forget the past?

Colt: Sure honey. Whatever you say.

Ruby: But I jilted you.

Colt: (Snapping out of it, he turns away their hands are clasped) I know.

Ruby: (She pulls him back) I left you standing alone at the altar.

Colt: I know. (Away)

Ruby: (Back) After you spent all that money for a big wedding, reception and honeymoon.

Colt: I know. (Away)

Ruby: (Back) I made you a laughing stock in front of the whole town.

Colt: I KNOW! I KNOW! (Finally breaking her grasp) But I've forgotten all that. At least I had.

Ruby: You must forget about me. Go. This is my life now.

Colt: But is this...life better than the one I promised you? (Ruby thinks as she looks at her jeweled rings and bracelets) Well?

Ruby: No Colt, of course not. I was forced to work here because my father couldn't pay his mortgage.

Colt: There's a lot of that going around.

Ruby: And that horrible man said I must do this or my family would be thrown out into the cold.

Colt: But Ruby, this is Arizona.... (Or use the name of a town that is usually hot throughout the year or your own town if it applies)

Ruby: I couldn't let them suffer. And I knew if I told you, you'd kill him.

Colt: I would.

Ruby: But Colt you'd be shooting a man not a rat. It's not the same thing.

Colt: It is in this case. It's just a bigger rat. Who is he Ruby?

Ruby: Promise you won't kill him.

Colt: I can't promise that Ruby. This is a matter of honor. (Taking it personally)

Ruby: Whose?

Colt: Uh... Yours of course. Give me his name and I'll search to the ends of the earth. Whatever filthy hole he may be hiding in I'll find him and give him what he deserves. It may take me years but I'll never stop searching for...

Ruby: Black Hart Jack.

Colt: You mean Black Jack Hart?

Ruby: If you say so.

Colt: But he's right here, in this filthy hole. (Very self-satisfied) See, I told you I'd find him. Let me at him.

Ruby: No Colt. Please don't do anything rash. It's too late for us.

Colt: It's never too late Ruby. You're the only gall've ever loved.

Ruby: Except your horse.

Colt: That goes without saying. I know you did what you had to do to save your family. If you're still willing, let me make an honest woman of you.

Ruby: Oh Colt. Do you mean it? I've always dreamed of being Ruby Rose Remington. (They embrace) But I can't leave. I still have to pay the mortgage.

Colt: Damn. There must be another way. Don't worry my darling, I'll think of something.

Ruby: (Aside) That's what I'm afraid of. (To him) Colt, you promised no killing. We'll get out of this somehow. Now go outside and cool off. I have some work to do.

Colt: You're not going to...you know?

Ruby: No, what I have to do isn't nearly as much fun. (He is unhappy)

Colt: Alright, I'll be back. (He exits out front door, draws his gun and circles around the house away from Dash)

Ruby: (Sits and pours a drink) Think Ruby. It's up to you. (Mattie enters)

Mattie: Ruby, aren't you supposed to be...you know,with Colt?

Ruby: Oh Miss Mattie you'll never guess.

Mattie: You're right, I won't.

Ruby: Alright I'll tell you. The man that you sent me down to...you know, is none other than Colt Remington.

Mattie: I know that dear.

Ruby: But he's the man I jilted at the altar. And he wants me back.

Mattie: And I thought this was a strange place to look. Well what do you know; you can find love in a brothel.

Ruby: If I can just figure out how to get out from under Black Jack...

Mattie: Don't worry dear he wants the new girltonight.

Ruby: I mean out from under his evil money grubbing scheme.

Mattie: Oh I see. But that could be difficult.

Ruby: I know. I wish he was dead.

Mattie: Well get in line. Oh and good luck to you and Colt. (Calls) Purity!(Purity enters carrying a hair brush, wearing a great deal of makeup and a limp feather boa or if one is available an old, dirty or raggedy very ill-fitting saloon girl dress which she must constantly tug to keep on her shoulders, everything else is the same)
Purity Peachblossom this is Ruby Rose,in debt to Jack, just like you. Well my dear it's almost time. I wish I could help you but I hardly have enough money to pay my own mortgage, let alone yours. (She begins to brush Purity's hair)

Purity: I understand Miss Mattie. If my poor, pitiful pa, Peter Peachblossom wasn't so pathetic with his pennies I wouldn't be in this predicament now. But what can I do? I love him and I must help him.

Mattie: Is there no one who can save you?

Purity: There is only my one true love, Dash Darling, but I fear he knows nothing of my perplexing plight. How I wish he was here now. I'm sure he'd find some way to save me.

Mattie: I'm sure he would. I can see him now rushing in and sweeping you into his strong arms and carrying you off to safety.

Purity: Oh no, he would never do that.

Mattie: Why ever not?

Purity: Dash swore to his dear sainted mother that he would never enter a...a...a

Mattie: I get it.

Purity: But if there is a way, he'll find it, for his love is true.

Mattie: Ah true love! But true love soon fades and you are left with...false love and a broken heart.

Purity: You speak as if you know.

Mattie: Oh I do. I was in love with none other than your cruel abductor, Black Jack Hart

Jack: FINALLY!

Mattie: (Stops brushing Purity's hair) Of course we were young and he was kind and I was just a working girl trying to make a living. Jack was one of my first customers...er... gentlemen callers. We fell in love and soon Jack was helping me run my business. We made a fortune, but the money corrupted him and soon that was all he cared about. He bought property and turned innocent people out of their homes. He holds the loan on this house too, and if I don't do as he wishes, I too will be cast out.

Ruby: Yes, it seems as if we are always destined to be the victims.

Mattie: But why?

Purity: You see, the way I understand it...(In a strong, loud, educated voice) I believe that in this male dominated hierarchy; society forces the female to assume the role of defenseless victim. So, for the male to maintain that image of masculine superiority and brute strength he chooses the female as his quarry forcing her to endure the indignities of subservience, injustice and dishonor. (Mattie and Ruby are dumbstruck) We must not allow this abuse to continue. We have the skill, we have the strength and we have the firepower. (Mattie and Ruby rise and applaud, then Purity is back to normal) Or something like that.

Ruby: (Sheepishly) Um, that's what I was going to say.

Purity: Oh well,poor Miss Mattie, and... you. We are all in the same pickle. Sometimes I wish I could kill that evil man. But I respect all living things. (She swats a mosquito on her neck, looks at it and wipes her hand on her dress) He just makes me so...darn mad. Oh will I ever stop swearing?

Mattie: (Resumes brushing) You are so sweet and innocent. You remind me of another girl I once...never mind, that was a long time ago. (She stops fussing with Purity's hair suddenly noticing something on her shoulder) What's this?

Purity: Oh just a simple, little birthmark.

Mattie: But it's shaped like Abraham Lincoln holding a frying pan, standing on a bear.

Purity: Yes, isn't that odd?

Mattie: (Aside, places her hands on Purity's ears) I cannot do it. I cannot allow Black HART Jack to have his way with this innocent child. I'll see him dead first, Purity, wait in my room until I call you. There are a few things I must attend to first.

Purity: But won't Mister Hart Black...Jack Hart...Black Jack...won't he be angry?

Mattie: You leave him to me my dear. I know how to handle Black Hart Jack.

Jack: (Off stage) That's Black Jack Hart. (Mattie pushes Purity off stage, he enters) Not Black Hart Jack. Why is that so difficult? (He is now in boots, black socks with garters, a knee length dressing gown and his hair is slicked back with his pomade. The smell is overwhelming and everyone reacts)

Mattie: Are you still here?

Jack: I'm still waiting. What is taking so long?

Mattie: Um, Purity didn't want to disappoint you, so she's (Thinking)...looking through some French postcardsto get some ideas.

Jack: Ooh la la! Well the anticipation is half the fun. (He gets a drink and sees Ruby) Why miss Ruby Rose, how are you?

Ruby: You should know.

Jack: I'm glad to see you are working hard to pay off your debt. Perhaps later tonight I can help you deduct two bits.

Ruby: Why you. (She lunges at Jack, Mattie stops her) You better watch your back Jack. One of these days someone you swindled will take the law into their own hands.

Jack: Is that a threat Ruby?

Ruby: Just a piece of advice.

Jack: I would never take advice from a member of the demi-monde.

Ruby: Why you. (Again going for him then stopping) Well I don't know what that is, but coming from you it can't be anything nice.

Jack: It isn't. (Ruby sticks her tongue out at him)

Mattie: She's right Black...(He starts to stop her from finishing her sentence) Jack. Not everyone is willing to lay down and play dead, which is exactly what I told Purity to do.

Jack: Don't worry; I know my way around a corpse.

Mattie and Ruby: Eeww!

Jack: (Not understanding why they are disgusted then figures it out) Oh ugh! I mean I've seen plenty of corpses in my day.

Mattie: Good. Then there won't be any surprises when you become one.

Ruby: Oh that's a good one.

Mattie: I thought so.

Jack: Oh Mattie, you try so hard to cover up your true feelings for me.

Mattie: I think I show my hatred quite well, thank you very much.

Jack: There's a fine line between love and hate.

Mattie: Yes and I have crossed that line.

Jack: Oh sweet Mattie, you used to love me.

Mattie: Love! How much of this did you drink?

Jack: Come on now admit it. Ruby did Mattie tell you we were once lovers?

Ruby: Yes she told me.

Mattie: We don't need to dredge up that old story again.

Jack: Oh, so she told you how she won me in a duel?

Ruby: A duel, no she neglected to mention that part of the story.

Mattie: That's enough Jack. Purity is waiting.

Jack: Oh she's already waited about eighteen years. A few more minutes won't matter. Sit down Mattie and have a drink. Don't you want to share our romantic love story with Ruby?

Mattie: Jack, I swear... (He pushes her down in a chair and begins the story)

Jack: It was in Denver. We were young, eager kids just starting out. We had dreams and hopes and plans for the future. I was working in the livery stable providing fine, strong, spirited horses to the good citizens of town. While Mattie was providing ...well,you know what she was providing.

Mattie: (Up) I think I hear Pure... (He pulls her down)

Jack: Now in my younger days I cut quite a dashing figure and there was another woman in town who took almost as much of a shine to me as Mattie here did. Her name was Kate and I had to share the wealth, you might say. But Mattie and Kate hated each other and didn't like having to share me, so Kate challenged Mattie to a duel. The winner got to keep me.

Ruby: Really?

Mattie: I was young and stupid. Besides I didn't know what he was really like then.

Ruby: So what happened?

Jack: Well, one morning at dawn the two ladies faced each other right out front on Holiday Street. On the count of three they both fired. They missed each other by a mile.

Ruby: Then how did you decide who won?

Mattie: Kate's shot went wild and actually hit Jack.

Jack: It was only a flesh wound, but I needed a woman's touch to bring me back to health and I couldn't choose Kate. She shot me. Come to think of it, why are women always shooting at me?

Ruby: I can't imagine.

Mattie: Be careful Jack, one of these days one of them might not miss.

Jack: Is that another threat Mattie?

Mattie: You never know.

Ruby: So that's how you won Jack, in the duel? Now I've heard everything. (She laughs)

Mattie: Some prize. He kept me running off my feet, spent my money and eventually took over my business. I wish Kate had been a better shot.

Jack: Oh Mattie, you wound me deeply.

Mattie: If only I had.

Ruby: What happened to Kate?

Mattie: She went out of business and left town, since no one wanted to socialize with a headstrong woman who couldn't shoot straight.

Jack: Come now Mattie, admit it. Before I came along you were barely scraping by. I made you a fortune.

Mattie: Yes, by cheating.

Jack: (Weighing) Cheating? Good business? I say good business.

Mattie: Marked cards?

Jack: Those men were too drunk to notice.

Mattie: Watered whiskey?

Jack: Saved us money didn't it?

Mattie: Sold claims to salted mines?

Jack: Buying any mine is chancy.

Mattie: Forcing my girls to make their customers buy them expensive bottles of champagne before each visit.

Jack: It was rot gut, but I got a deal buying it by the barrel.

Ruby: Champagne in a barrel?

Mattie: He just re-filled the old bottles.

Jack: Yes, it lost some of its fizz but most of them didn't know what champagne was supposed to taste like.

Mattie: And the ever popular, golden fleece.

Jack: Ah yes, my favorite.

Ruby: What's that?

Jack: It was inspired; those rubes never noticed a thing. Besides they could afford it.

Ruby: Afford what?

Jack: When a miner came in with a poke full of gold dust the first thing he wanted was a woman and a drink, but not necessarily in that order. So Mattie...

Mattie: He made me do it.

Jack: So Mattie here would give the poor sucker a drink, take a pinch out of his poke and carry it down to the other end of the bar to the scale and weigh out the right amount for his drink.

Ruby: What's dishonest about that?

Jack: As she worked her way down to the scale a small shower of gold dust would just happen to slip through her fingers (He demonstrates) and fall onto the bar. Then she would wipe it up with a damp cloth and wring it out in a bucket of water. By closing time we had a decent layer of gold in that bucket. The Golden Fleece, fitting name, my own little mother lode. Those were the days. (They all sit silently for a moment then Jack slams his hand on the table causing the girls to jump) Alright, enough of this walk down memory lane; go get Purity. You've wasted enough of my time.

Mattie: We've wasted it? (Thinking of Purity) What's your hurry Jack?

Jack: My pomade is losing its strength.(He's not referring to his hair)

Mattie: Oh quit being so vain, your hair is fine.

Jack: What? My hair? Oh of course, my hair. (Glad she doesn't know what he is really referring to)

Ruby: Look Jack, give the kid a break. Take me instead. I've always made you happy haven't I?

Jack: You? Sorry Ruby. You're past your prime.

Ruby: Past my prime! I'm only twenty.

Jack: I know. (He shutters)

Ruby: (Angry) I've got plenty of good years left.

Jack: (He looks at her closely) Well I suppose if you left the lights off you might get by for another six months. Now quit trying to delay the inevitable. I should have just enough time for one more coat. Get her now, my door will be unlocked. I'll be ready. (He exits, Ruby and Mattie react)

Mattie: So will I. (She exits)

Ruby: So will I. (She exits)

(Outside Colt comes around the house and comes face to face with Dash whose gun is drawn; it is a very small)

Colt: Hold it right there stranger. (Colt gives a sly smile and draws his long barreled gun and points it at Dash. Both men react to the difference in size but still keep their guns aimed) Who are you?

Dash: Who are you?

Colt: I asked you first.

Dash: I'm Dash - Darling.

Colt: Hey, watch it.

Dash: (Looks around frantically) Watch what?

Colt: Never mind. Why are you hanging around out here? (During this they circle one another suspiciously)

Dash: That's none of your business.

Colt: Oh I get it. You're one of them peeping Tom's I heard about, just look and never touch, right?

Dash: The name's Dash not Tom and you're right, I promised my dear sainted mother.

Colt: Your ma knows?

Dash: Oh course, it was her idea.

Colt: Now look here...

Dash: Darling.

Colt: I said watch it.

Dash: (Looks around again) What!

Colt: Look I got something important to do. If you want to stand out here all night that's fine with me, but it's a lot more interesting on the inside. (He continues around the building)

Dash: Maybe just one peek. No! I promised my dear sainted mother. Besides soon I will be wed to my one true love PurityPeachblossom and I'll never feel the desire to look at another woman again. (He exits around the building)

Jack: Oh Purity it's your big strong Jacky wacky. (Looking around) The time has come my little un-soiled dove. (Laughs wickedly exits right)

(This sequence can be changed depending on the stage set-up and the director's discretion.

PURITY enters from left looking frightened, hears noise, hides behind left chair.

RUBY comes in from right with her gun drawn.

PURITY creeps out left.

RUBY noticing some movement, with determination exits left.

JACK enters from right looks around for Purity and follows out left exit.

COLT is seen coming around the house from the left with gun drawn creeping slowly backward toward center.

DASH does same coming from right. They bump rear ends at center, react, turn, yell and run off in their original directions.

MATTIE comes in from left with gun, looks around, takes drink, exits right.

PURITY comes in from left, goes to table, decides to try a drink, makes horrible face.

MATTIE comes in from right sees her, Mattie, takes her drink away and both exit right.

JACK comes in from left out of breath, sits table, pours drink. Hears Purity, jumps up, catches his breath does a couple of deep knee bends and sprints out right.

COLT comes in from left gun drawn carrying a dead rat by the tail looks around, goes in Brothel door left.

RUBY comes in from left carrying the same rat, goes straight to bottle, sets down rat, looks around and takes bottle with her off right.

DASH comes to front door and tries several times to enter, can't do it, goes back into alley right.

COLT enters from left.

JACK enters from right back to Colt.

COLT and JACK sniff the air, turn, react and exit original directions.

MATTIE comes in from right, sees rat, reacts, exits left with rat.

After a few seconds we hear a (GUNSHOT).

MATTIE rushes in after a few more seconds, followed closely by Colt, Ruby and Purity.

Mattie: (Everyone is buzzing and chattering) Quiet everyone. Someone's been shot. Is anyone hurt? (They all check to see that everyone else is unhurt, then in unison they look up toward where Jack's room would be) It's my house. I suppose I should go and see.

Ruby: No Miss Mattie, I'll go.

Colt: This is a job for a man.

Ruby: Oh Colt are you sure? It might be gruesome.

Colt: Don't fear darling, I seen my share of dead...bodies. (He bravely strides off)

Purity: How horrible. The war?

Ruby: No, rats. (Purity looks confused, Colt returns almost immediately)

Colt: It's Black Jack Hart, he's dead.

(Colt sits and puts his head between his knees, obviously disturbed by what he saw. Everyone breathes a sigh of relief then there is general insincere concern)

All: (At once) Oh how horrible, who could have done such a terrible thing, poor man, he was so young, etc.)

Mattie: We better get the Marshal, right or wrong someone's been murdered.

Colt: Does this backwater even have a Marshal?

Mattie: Yes, we have to get him. (No one moves)

Colt: Or do we?

Mattie: I'm listening.

Colt: Who needs to know?

Mattie: We'll know. Can you accept that one of us is a killer?

All: (Pause, thinking) Yes, yep, of course, you bet etc.

Purity: But what would we do with him? (Pointing up)

Colt: We'll wait till dark and take him out to the desert and bury him. No one will ever find him.

Purity: Good.

Ruby: It's what he deserves.

Mattie: But what if someone saw him come in here?

Ruby: We'll say he left out the back way.

Mattie: And how do we explain her? (All stare at Purity) Someone may have seen her come in with Jack.

Colt: We'll just say she left with him.

Ruby: Yes, and at first light she can sneak out and go home.

Mattie: (Possessively) No she can't do that.

Ruby: Why not?

Mattie: She has to stay here.

Colt: Why?

Mattie: (Thinking fast) What if her one true love comes here looking for her?

Ruby: We'll just tell him she went home, untouched and pure.

Purity: He would never think to look here. Why would he? He is also untouched and pure. I'll just tell him the truth.

Mattie: No, the less he knows the better.

Purity: Then what shall I do?

Mattie: Don't worry. I'll protect you and when all this dies down I'll get you home.

Purity: Oh Miss Mattie, you're so good to me. (They embrace)

Ruby: I wonder who did kill him?

Colt: It could only have been one of us.

Purity: Mattie's right, one of us is a cold blooded killer? (Everyone looks guilty and looks suspiciously at each other)

Mattie: We'd better get the Marshal. Right or wrong Jack's been murdered.

All: Where's the Marshal, someone get the Marshal, I'll go, no I'll go, etc.

Suddenly out of the door to the girls' rooms steps the Marshal buttoning his pants or fastening his braces as if he just got out of bed)

John Marshall: Did someone call?

Mattie: Goodness sake John, I forgot you were here. How long have you been in there? I'm going to have to pay Susanna doubletime again.

John: Make that triple time. What's all the commotion about?

Mattie: Someone's dead.

John: Who?

Mattie: Black Jack Hart.

John: Oh good. (He heads back to his room pulling down his suspenders or whatever to resume his visit)

Mattie: But he's been murdered.

John: Who do I thank?

Mattie: John!

John: Oh alright. (Getting down to business) Now, I know I didn't do it and I'm sure Susanna didn't do it, both of us being somewhat occupied at the time. That must mean one of you did it. Anybody care to confess? (Silence) I didn't think so. (A female hand extends from the curtain holding a pair of boots, John takes them, the hand pulls back with a little wave, he looks longingly off stage. He sits and puts boots on during following) Well Mattie you might as well introduce me to these suspects so I'll know who I'm interrogating.

Mattie: Marshal, this is Miss Purity Peachblossom, newly arrived at my establishment. This is Colt Remington, jilted bridegroom looking for a bit of comfort. Everyone, this is John Marshall.

Colt: Marshal Marshall? Why that's the funniest thing I ever heard.

John: (Looming over Colt or grabs him by his shirt front) I haven't heard any good jokes lately. Care to share this one with the rest of us?

Colt: On second thought, it's not funny at all...sir.

John: I didn't think so. (Lets Colt go)

Mattie: And of course you know Ruby Rose.

John: I should say I do. Every curve and caress. How do you do Miss Rose? (Kisses her hand) You're looking as lovely as ever. (Colt is not happy)

Ruby: Why thank you Marshal. I look forward to your... in depth interrogation. (They are very familiar)

Colt: RUBY!

Ruby: Sorry Colt, old habit.

John: Everybody sit down. (They do) Now who discovered the body?

Colt: I did.

John: You didn't touch anything did you?

Colt: No sir Marshal. (Starts to giggle, John stops him with a look)

John: Well I'm going upstairs to look for clues. Nobody leaves this room, understand? (All agree) I'll be right back. (He leaves)

Purity: Well, I for one am glad he's dead. Now I can go home to my poor, perplexed papa and our farm will be saved. Then I can marry my one true love.

Mattie: But wouldn't you like to stay just a while longer?

Purity: No, I want my family.

Mattie: But I'm your...never mind. No of course you mustn't stay here. You're young; you have a chance to make something of your life. I won't stand in your way.

Purity: Oh Miss Mattie, you've been so kind. I know you tried to protect me from that evil man, and I'll never forget you.

Mattie: Purity. (They embrace)

Ruby: Colt, this means I'm free too. We can be married.

Colt: Ruby. (They embrace. The Marshal walks in)

John: Well isn't this cozy. (They all break apart)

Mattie: What did you find John?

John: Well Mattie I'll tell you. Other than some horrible smell it was the strangest murder scene I've ever seen. And I've seen a lot of scenes.

Mattie: Just tell us what you seen...uh, saw.

John: He was dead alright. Laying out as peaceful as you please on the bed, looking for all the world like he just fell asleep. But the strange thing was; he had been shot in the back.

Ruby: But's that's impossible.

John: Not if he was killed first and then put on the bed.

Purity: But I couldn't possibly lift him.

Ruby: Neither could I.

John: But you could have done it together.

Mattie: No, they couldn't have done that.

John: How do you know?

Mattie: I just do.

John: You trying to protect someone Mattie?

Mattie: Of course not.

John: Then tell me Purity, where were you when the shot was fired?

Purity: I was waiting in Miss Mattie's room.

John: What were you waiting for?

Mattie: She doesn't have to answer that.

John: Yes she does?

Purity: (With shame) I was waiting for that terrible man to ravish me.

John: Why would you want him to do that?

Purity: I didn't want it. He was forcing me.

John: Why?

Purity: He held the mortgage on our farm. It was either do this or see my poor, proud papa ruined.

John: That's a good reason to kill him.

Mattie: But she didn't. (She embraces Purity whose back is now to the Marshal. He sees her birthmark)

John: What's this?

Mattie: What?

John: That's a very distinctive birthmark. (Colt and Ruby glance at it)

Colt: Why hell, that's Abraham Lincoln, holding a frying pan....uh...

Ruby: Standing on a bear.

Purity: Yes, it's the only one of its kind.

John: No there's another.

Purity: Really?

Colt and Ruby: You've got to be kidding, that's impossible. Etc.

John: (Signals Colt and Ruby to sit) Mattie would you like to tell Purity who has the other identical birthmark?

Mattie: Oh John I can't.

John: This is important Mattie. I think you'd better.

Mattie: Purity, the only other person with the same, identical birthmark is...your mother.

Purity: But my mother is now an angel. She died when I was born and I was raised by my dear adopted papa, Peter Peachblossom. No one else has such a mark.

John: Yes they do. Mattie. (Mattie turns, lifts her hair and shows Purity)

Purity: (Not getting it) But you said only my mother had such a mark. (Everyone pauses waiting for her to figure it out) OH! Mother? (She swoons and John helps her to a chair)

John: So Black Jack Hart was going to ravish your only daughter. That's a pretty good motive for murder.

Mattie: Yes, I wanted to kill him but I couldn't do it. I was right outside his door, but my nerve failed me and I went back to my room.

Purity: If you're my mother, does that mean that...Black....Jack...Hart is my...my... (Everyone thinks for a moment wondering what she is trying to say, then realizes and reacts with disgust at the prospect)

Mattie: NO, no. Your daddy was none other than.....(Thinking desperately) Wild Bill Hickock. (The others know this isn't true and react) Hero of this great American West, shot down in the prime of life holding a hand of aces and eights.

All: (With reverence, heads bowed, hats over hearts etc.) The dead man's hand.

Mattie: He died before you were born. I had to give you up and find a way to make a living. I hope you can forgive me?

Purity: Of course mother. Because of you I had a wonderful life with my poor paternal papa and meet my one true love. Otherwise I would have grown up in a...a

Mattie: Never mind.

John: Ahem! May I? Even little Miss innocent here could have done it. All your problems solved with one shot. And how about you Ruby, where were you when our evil friend was so callously shot in the back?

Ruby: I was in my room.

John: Alone?

Colt: Of course she was alone.

John: Calm down cowboy. Why do you care?

Colt: I don't care.

Ruby: Colt!

Colt: Now darling, I'm just...

John: Darling? Romance in a brothel. I'll be damned. Well Ruby if you were alone you've got no alibi. Your room is right across the hall from Jack's. It would have been easy for you to slip over and kill him while his back was turned. But why?

Ruby: Why indeed. I have no reason to want him dead. And without a motive you can't accuse me.

John: Oh you have a motive alright. (He takes several deeds from his pocket)

Ruby: Damn it!

John: You might as well tell me the truth.

Ruby: Alright, Jack threatened to destroy my family too if I didn't work for him. I was forced to leave Colt at the altar. He was furious.

John: Furious enough to kill?

Ruby and Colt: No.

John: We'll see. So Jack sold you into this life for a few measly dollars. I can't abide a scoundrel who profits from the suffering of his fellow man.

Women: Ahem!

John: And fellow women. But I hate a murderer even more.

Colt: But she didn't do it.

John: How do you know?

Colt: I...I... just do.

John: Well Ruby?

Ruby: I didn't do it. I wanted to. I opened his door and held my gun on him and told him what I thought of him. He just laughed and said I didn't have what it took to pull the trigger. I tried. I took a deep breath, closed my eyes...and he was right. I couldn't do it. When I opened my eyes his gun was aimed right at me. I was so terrified I fainted. I came too when I heard the gunshot. At first I thought I had done it but I was lying on the floor in the hall and my gun hadn't been fired. I didn't look in his room, I just ran down here.

John: But he didn't have a gun.

Ruby: Yes he did. He aimed it at my heart. That's why I fainted.

John: Ruby, I searched that room from top to bottom, there was no gun. Whoever killed him shot an unarmed man in the back, in his drawers. What is this world coming to?

Ruby: Marshal, I saw it. He had a gun (The others agree) Maybe the killer took it.

John: Maybe, we'll see. How about you cowboy? Where were you?

Colt: I'd gone outside to take a walk.

John: And sneaked in the back way, and shot Jack while his back was turned. And you're the only one strong enough to lay him out on his bed. Thought you'd throw me off, cause a man laying down on his bed couldn't possibly get shot in the back.

Colt: No. That's how I found him. Maybe he fell that way.

John: It's okay cowboy. I understand how you could have done it. Knowing that another man had forced your lady love into this life of sin and depravity, knowing what she had to endure at his hands and at the hands of dozens and dozens and dozens of men.

Colt: (Angry) Alright! I was mad. Mad enough to kill. He had taken away the only gal I ever loved, except my horse...

John: ...That goes without saying.

Colt: ...You're right;I did go around to the back of the house with every intention of killing that bastard and setting my beautiful Ruby free. But as I creeped up the back stairs I heard the shot. I was afraid it had been Ruby trying to protect me.

Ruby: Colt!

Colt: But then I found her down here and I knew she couldn't possibly have done it.

John: Well how convenient. All of you have a motive and opportunity but no alibi. You all had a reason to want Jack dead. Come on, you want me to believe it was just some passing stranger?

Colt: Wait.

All: What?

Colt: There was a stranger lurking outside. I thought he was a peeping Tom, but he could have done it.

John: But why would he want to kill Jack?

All: Everybody wanted to kill Jack.

Colt: He could have gone in the back way, killed him and run out again without being seen.

John: That's true. Well I might as well see if he's still there. I'm not getting anywhere with all of you.

(John and Colt go outside to look for Dash; there is no sign of him)

Colt: He's not here.

John: Do you really think if he shot Jack he'd stick around and wait for a medal?

Colt: No. (Aside) But he'd deserve one. (Colt looks in the alley) Here he is. He's passed out behind the horse trough. (They help him out as he comes too) What happened Darling? (John reacts)

John: (With his hand on Dash's chest to steady him) He's all wet.

Dash: What's going on? (Rubbing his head)

John: Steady fellow. You must have fainted or something.

Dash: Fainted? Only girls faint.

Colt: And peeping Tom's.

Dash: Dash!

John: Never mind. So what happened?

Dash: I don't know, but my head is killing me and I'm all wet.

Colt: You must have heard or seen something?

Dash: What are you talking about? My head's kind of fuzzy.

John: Well come inside where you can sit down, I've got a few questions to ask you.

Dash: In there!

John: Yeah, why not?

Dash: Because there are things in there I don't want to see.

Colt: Like a dead body?

Dash: Dead body? I was under the impression they were all still breathing.

Colt: Who?

Dash: The um...ladies.

Colt: They are.

Dash: Then what are you talking about?

John: Never mind, come on.

Dash: Oh no please! What will mother say?

John: Your mother? Why would she care?

Dash: My dear sainted mother is the very model of innocence, gracious dignity and morality. She came to Denver as a young woman with little more than intelligence, a will to survive and a desire to make something of herself. And she did. In only a year she met my father who took her away from her job in a warehouse.

Colt: Warehouse? Really? (John nudges him) What did she do in this...warehouse?

Dash: You know; she never did give me a straight answer. But father said she had been one of their best workers and brought in more business than anyone else.

Colt: I'll bet she did!

Dash: Throughout my entire life she warned me to stay out of all dens of inequity, because she said I might see something that would scar me for life.

Colt: (Aside) Yeah, her.

Dash: She rose to the very top of Denver society. She has more real estate holdings than anyone else, mostly homes on Holiday Street. And she employs about a hundred lovely young girls to whom she personally teaches the art of charm and graciousness, preparing them to take their place in the finest houses in Denver. Her girls are very popular.

Colt: (Aside) And expensive.

John: So she warned you to stay out of places like this?

Dash: Yes. And I always do what she says.

John: Well sonny, I don't think your mother can protect you anymore, but something tells me even she would agree that it's high time you saw how the world really works.

Dash: Oh no! I feared this day would come. I won't peek mother.

John: (They drag him inside and he puts his hand over his eyes) Alright, I have a few questions. (John pulls his hand down and he immediately replaces it with the other. John pulls that one down but Dash keeps his eyes firmly shut)

Purity: Dash! Darling!

Dash: (Opening his eyes) Purity?

Purity: You've come. I knew you would. (She embraces him then pulls away) Oh you're all wet.

Dash: What are you doing...here...looking like...a...a... that?

John: It's a long story. She'll tell you later. Now, who are you?

Dash: I'm Dash – Darling.

John: Hey, watch it.

Dash: Why does everyone keep saying that?

Purity: He's Dash Darling my one true love and he's come to save me.

John: Save you? Another jealous lover intent on revenge?

Dash: Purity! I demand that you tell me what you are doing in a...a...a...

All: Brothel!

Dash: Dressed like a...a...a...

All: Soiled dove!

Purity: I can explain.

Dash: So your poor pitiful pa Peter Peachblossom was right. He said you'd run off with that scoundrel Black Hart Jack. I thought he was wrong, where is that rattlesnake? I'm going to kill him.

John: Too late. Someone beat you to it.

Dash: You mean he's already dead?

John: Yup.

Dash: That means...

John: That means you had just as much motive and opportunity as the rest of them.

Dash: But I...I...I

Purity: Oh Dash, no matter what happens I love you and I know you love me.

Dash: (Pushes her away) Well, sure I do, but can I still call you "Purity?" (All gasp)

Purity: How dare you!

Mattie: Do not fear; she is still as pure as the driven snow. I saw to that.

Dash: Whew! In that case I forgive you.

Purity: Forgive me?

Dash: Let's just keep all this from mother, she'd never understand.

Purity: (Angry) Why of all the...(Mattie pulls her away, they sit)

John: (Whistles) Could we please get back to the business at hand? Now, I'm going to ask one more time. Anybody care to confess? (Silence) When will I learn? Alright, let's review. Mattie here wanted Jack dead to save her business and her newly discovered long lost daughter.

Dash: Daughter? (He points to Ruby who shakes her head no, in shock he points to Purity who shakes her head yes) I think I need to sit down.

John: Also, hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. You and Jack were once lovers and he took all your money and left you to this life of sin and depravity. Three good reasons right there.

Mattie: The skunk. He deserved what he got. I didn't do it but whoever did has my undying gratitude.

John: Now we have these two fellows here. Both seeking revenge for the cruel treatment of their true loves. Few men could resist the desire to murder the louse who sold their womenfolk into this life of sin and depravity.

Colt: (To Dash) Well if you did it you should get a parade.

Dash: (To Colt) And if you did it you should get the key to the city.

John: And Purity and Ruby! You have the best motive of all. To save your families, your homes and your lovers.

Dash: Purity and I aren't lovers. I've never...you know, with a woman.

John: But the best reason of all for wanting Jack dead was to make him pay the ultimate price for forcing you into this life of sin and depravity.

Mattie: Will you quit saying that.

John: Sorry.

Mattie: Sin and depravity. It's only sin and depravity when you're trying to solve a murder. But is it sin and depravity when you pay a call? Nooooo! Then it's fun and games and slap and tickle and a good time was had by all...

John: I said I was sorry! Now may I continue?

Mattie: Fine.

John: So as I was saying, you all had motive, opportunity and no alibi. So which one of you is a cold blooded killer who shot an unarmed man in the back? Oh I know he was as mean as a sidewinder with a toothache, but he didn't have a chance to defend himself.

Ruby: He had a gun.

John: That's your story.

Ruby: Oh Marshal, Marshal, Marshal! (Ala Jan Brady)

Purity: He deserved it. He was just a darn mean man. (Covers her mouth)

Dash: Purity, your language. You've changed.

Purity: (In his face) Oh Dash, grow up. This is real life. Get used to it. (Pokes him in his chest and reacts to his wetness, which John watches with interest)

Dash: Oh my head. (He sits)

John: (Forming a theory) Oh I get it. I know who did it.

All: Who?

John: The killer is...

Dash: Oh no!

John: The murderer is...

Mattie: Oh John, are you sure?

John: Yes, it was...

Ruby: Oh, I can't listen.

John: It was...

Colt: I'll stand by you, Ruby...

John: It was...

Ruby: Colt! Alright, I broke your heart but I didn't kill anyone, will you let it go?

John: It was...

Purity: I hope it wasn't me!

John: IT WAS....

Dash: Not so fast.

John: Oh come on!

Dash: How do we know you didn't kill Jack?

All: Yes, I never thought of that, he could have done it, etc.

John: Me? I was extremely busy and I'd like to get this over with so I can get back to it. (He looks lovingly off toward Suzanna's room, or she waves provocatively from the curtain)

Mattie: Cool off John. Suzanna will still be there when we get this figured out. She's blocked off the whole day for you. (John smiles, Colt elbows Dash, Dash looks confused)

John: I couldn't have killed Jack. There are just some things a man can't stop in the middle of.

Dash: What could you have been doing that was so gall durned important? (All look at Dash incredulously)

John: Well if you must know I was...

Mattie: John.

John: ...polishing my gun.

Ruby: He's got the shiniest gun in town. (John is pleased, Colt isn't)

Dash: Oh, of course, makes perfect sense.

Mattie: He still could have done it.

John: Mattie!

Mattie: Sorry John. You told me several times how much you hated Jack.

Ruby: Me too.

John: I thought anything that was said in the privacy of the boudoir was confidential.

Mattie: This isn't a church John.

Ruby: Although Gods name is mentioned an awful lot.

Colt: Ruby!

Dash: Look, we only have your word that you didn't do it.

John: Alright, I hated him, but not enough to kill him.

Purity: If you hated him he must have done something to you.

Mattie: Come on John, you know all our reasons for hating Jack; you might as well tell us yours.

Ruby: I bet it was over a woman.

Mattie: No, I'd say it was money.

Purity: A piece of land.

Dash: He cheated at cards.

Mattie: He jumped your claim.

Colt: I bet it was over a horse. Never touch another man's horse.

All: A horse? No that's not it, that would be silly, John would never do that.

John: It was over a horse.

Colt: Goes without saying. (Dash agrees)

Purity: You killed him over a horse?

John: I didn't kill him!

Mattie: Just tell us what happened, John.

John: It was years ago when I had just come to town. I was working out at old Mr. Buchanan's ranch and my horse had just died. On payday I went to town to buy one, but I hadn't seen a woman in about six months so I went to the saloon to have a few drinks while I debated between buying a horse and buying the kind of comfort no horse could provide. You know?

Colt and Dash: We know.

John: Well it took a long time to make up my mind and I drank an awful lot. And when a man gets drunk in the parlor, he can't always accomplish what he needs to do in the bedroom. You know?

Mattie and Ruby: We know.

John: So I decided that I would buy a horse this time and visit a lady the next time I got paid. So I staggered to the stable and guess who owned it?

Purity: Who?

All: (Except Purity) Jack.

Purity: Oh I didn't see that coming.

John: Anyway, Jack knew a chump when he saw one and sold me a horse that didn't look too bad through my whiskey soaked haze. I must have passed out and when I came to my money was gone and I was face to face with what I assumed was a horse. He was old, gaunt, toothless, swayed back, moth eaten and looked like he had seen his last round-up about twenty years ago; in fact I was pretty sure he couldn't see, period.

Mattie: He couldn't have been that bad.

John: Mattie, the glue factory didn't even want him.

Colt: I would have killed him for that.

John: So I walked and dragged that flea bag back the six miles to Mr. Buchanan's and had to listen to the jokes from the other hands all night. When I went to the stable in the morning, he was laying on the floor as dead as a ...dead horse. That Black Hart Jack swindled me out of all my money and left me with nothing to show for it.

Mattie: Well the way I look at it John, you did do what you set out to do.

John: How do you figure Mattie?

Mattie: Well although it wasn't pretty, you had purchased a horse, and at the same time, got screwed after all.

John: I never thought of it that way. Look, we can settle this here and now. Suzanna will swear I never left her room once. Ask her. (Colt and Dash run toward her room and are stopped by Mattie)

Mattie: I'll go. (She exits)

Colt: (With a concealed chuckle) So, Marshal, did this horse have a name?

Dash: Yeah, I bet it was something like, Snowflake or Twinkle Toes.

John: He didn't have one. (Angry)

Colt: Oh come on, he must have. Jack must have told you his name. Was it Speedy, (They are both laughing now) or Beauty?

John: I don't remember. (Angrier)

Dash: Sure you do, I'd say it was Old Codger.....

Colt: Weak Willie.

Dash: I know, I know, Regret. (They are both hysterical)

John: (Really angry) His name was Hercules.....all right? Hercules! (They are in stitches now) Now will you let it go?

Ruby: All right you two, that's enough. We still have a murder to solve.

John: That's right and you two are my prime suspects. (This shuts them up)

Mattie: (Enters) Well Suzanna swears that John never left her room until a few minutes ago when we called him.

Purity: What if she's just covering for him? Or she did it and he's covering for her. Or they did it together. (She becomes dizzy from too much thinking and must sit down) Oh my head.

Mattie: I believe Suzanna, no man in his right mind would leave her in the middle of...you know.

Colt: He left her to investigate Jack's murder.

John: We were taking a break. Now if you're all satisfied, can I please get on with it? The murderer is.... (Waits for an interruption, gives them a "don't you dare look") The murderer is...(All but the Marshal point at someone else as if accusing each other and freeze)*Before I reveal my theory, why don't we let these folks see if they can figure it out.

(Now the audience is given a chance to solve the murder. Individuals, teams or full tables can present a theory. They must correctly write down the name of the killer and how it was done. Don't reveal the truth even if a team is right but wait till the show is over. If there is a correct theory a prize can be presented to the winner or table)

* If there is no audience participation just continue the play

If you wish to extend the play, you can use this time for an intermission, or have your cast perform a few period correct Olio's, skits, scenes, poems, songs or dances.

After intermission, the curtain opens revealing everyone in the exact same positions still pointing at each other. If there is no curtain they can run on with a lot of fuss and noise and take their positions.

John: Well now some of those were mighty interesting theories, and I'm not saying if any were right yet, so we're just going to reenact the crime to show you what actually happened. The killer is...PurityPeachblossom. (All are shocked)

Dash and Mattie: NO!

John: Did you say something?

Mattie: No.

Dash: I...I...I...

John: Alright. Come along Purity. I think maybe you should change your name.

Purity: But...but...but

John: Can't either of you finish a sentence?

Dash: I can. Unhand that innocent woman. She is no murderer.

John: How do you know?

Dash: Because, I think I am.

Purity: You think!

John: That's good enough for me. (To Purity) Thank you sweetheart for helping me get my confession.

Dash: You knew?

John: Of course, I'm Marshal Marshall. (Gives Colta look, as he tries to keep from laughing))

Purity: Oh Dash, not you. You who would never cuss or drink. You who have never...you know...with a woman. Why, how, when?

John: Allow me. Alright everyone, where were you when the shot was fired? Mattie?

Mattie: Just going back to my room after trying to kill Jack.

John: Purity?

Purity: In Miss Mattie's room waiting for Jack to ravish me and trying to think of a way to kill him.

John: Colt?

Colt: Going up the back stairs to kill Jack.

John: Ruby?

Ruby: Passed out in the hall in front of Jack's room after trying to kill him.

John: And Dash?

Dash: Waiting outside in the alley for Jack to come out so I could kill him. But I knew I couldn't do it. I've never...you know...killed anyone.

John: What changed your mind?

Dash: I didn't know I killed him until now. I don't remember much.

John: Just tell us what you do remember.

Dash: Well, I remember there was this terrible smell coming from an upstairs window, then I heard angry voices,so I drew my gun and looked up and I could see some man standing there in his, you know unmentionables. As I was trying to see who he was he moved out of my sight then I caught a glimpse of a beautiful lady... unadorned...and having never...you know...

All: We know, we know.

Dash: ...well...I shot my... gun accidently. The next thing I know, you were dragging me in here.

John: It makes perfect sense. Ruby, where was Jack standing when you opened the door?

Ruby: He waslooking out the window then he turned when he saw me and moved to the foot of the bed.

John: Where was the bed?

Ruby: Right behind him under the window.

John: Simple. You confronted Jack, but when he pulled his gun you fainted. Dash heard your argument down in the alley and accidently shot Jack in the back through the open window and he fell backward onto the bed. (He demonstrates)

Mattie: But you said there was no gun.

John: There wasn't, in the room.

Dash: Where was it?

John: Come with me and I'll show you. (He leads them all outside) Now if you remember, Dash was unconscious when we found him. When he came too, he had a terrible headache and he was all wet.

Dash: I don't see a gun.

John: Of course not.

Ruby: Well you've lost me.

John: It's simple. Jack was shot in the back from down here. On impact his gun flew out of his hand like this (Demonstrates gun flying backward out of Jack's hand and out the window) out the open window and hit Dash smack dab on the noggin, knocking him out cold.

Dash: I still don't see a gun.

John: That's because it's right here.

(John reaches behind the "alley" and pulls out Jack's gun which can be wet or dry whichever works best, but John holds it as if it is wet. He may also take a handkerchief from his pocket and wipe it off so it appears wet)

Purity: That's why Dash was all wet.

John: Right. When the gun hit the water it splashed all over him.

Ruby: I knew there was a gun. Wait! It was an accident. And because Dash prematurely shot off his... gun when he did, he saved my life. (General agreement)

John: Well I guess you could look at it like that.

Mattie: What other way is there?

Colt: I'm mighty beholden Darling – Dash. You saved my sweetheart.

Ruby: How can I ever thank you?

Purity: Dash, you're a hero.

Mattie: Come on in everyone, this calls for a drink.

All: (Random happiness, cheers, hugs etc.)

John: (Halting the celebration) Wait a minute. This isn't settled. You still have to stand trial. But with all the evidence I'm sure justice will be served.

Mattie: Oh John, if you take Dash to jail, think of all the extra work it will create. The paperwork, the cleaning, cooking him three meals a day, not a night to yourself until the trial because you'll have to stay in and make sure Dash doesn't escape.

John: Every night?

Mattie: Every night.

John: Then I won't be able to come over here and...

Mattie: That's right. And I don't deliver.

John: That's not good.

Mattie: And it could be months before the trial.

John: Months! No red blooded American man can go for months without...you know.

Dash: Do I ever!

Voice: (We hear a sultry woman's voice from backstage calling) Oh Marshal sugar, I'm getting cold.

John: (This helps him make up his mind) Well, I guess all of you are right. It was an accident! Dash here did a right fine service to this old world by removing that filthy varmint Black Hart Jack. Dash on behalf of the good people of our fair city, (Or the name of your city) I thank you. You're all free to go.

Dash: Thank you Marshal. Purity come on, we're getting married right now. I'm never letting you out of my sight again.

Purity: Oh Dash, I'm going to be Purity, Martha, (she looks lovingly at Mattie) Peachblossom, Darling, but are you sure your dear sainted mother will approve?

Mattie: Darling...Darling? Your mother wouldn't by any chance be Daphne Darling?

Dash: Why yes, how did you know?

Mattie: She was one of my best girls when I worked on Holiday Street in Denver.

Dash: Did you say Holiday Street?

Mattie: Yep, the wickedest thoroughfare in the west. Of course back then we called her dollar Daphne, cause she'd do anything for a dollar.

Dash: But...but...but.

Mattie: Those dollars added up and she made a fortune. I heard she did real good for herself, married some rich old slob who promptly up and died.

Dash: Daddy?

Mattie: To be honest, I'd say she killed him...in the bedroom, if you know what I mean?

Dash: (Thinks a moment then gets it) Oh. I always wondered why he died with such a big smile on his face.

Mattie: Yep, that was Daphne. Always left them smiling. (Dash is very puzzled and unhappy) I think of her often. I remember this one time one of my customers bet her a dollar that she couldn't swallow....

John: Mattie! (Gives her a "no" nod of the head)

Mattie: What, all I was going to say was swallow a dozen raw eggs. But I see what you mean. I must be thinking of a different Daphne Darling.

Dash: Oh my head. I need a damn drink. (He is shocked)

Purity: So do I

Dash: Purity!

Purity: Come on Dash, it's time you...you know...with a woman.

Dash: I think I'm going to like the new you.

Purity: Farewell mother, we'll visit often. (They exit)

Colt: Come on Ruby, we'll make it a double wedding.

Ruby: Oh Colt, are you sure?

Colt: You're the only gal I've ever loved.

Ruby: Except for your horse?

All: That goes without saying.

Ruby: But Colt won't you always be worrying about my wicked past and all the naughty things I had to learn and do over and over and over?

Colt: Worry? I'm looking forward to it!

Ruby: Oh Colt. (They exit)

Mattie: Ah, true love. You did a good thing John.

John: Yup. Now don't you think I deserve a little reward? (Indicates her house)

Mattie: Oh John, what about true love?

John: That's what I'm talking about Mattie.

Mattie: That's not true love. Places like this only offer a temporary delight, a moment of bliss, a fleeting glimpse of paradise, a twinkling of joy, a flash of pleasure. Is that enough John?

John: (Thinks) Yup. (He starts to go inside)

Mattie: Ahem! (Holds out her hand, he looks unsure, realizes what she wants)

Both: Pay first. (He takes a few bills from his pocket and hands her one, starts to go inside, stops, goes back and hands her another bill, thinks again and hands her a third)

Mattie: John, since you did such a good thing for Dash and Purity and Colt and Ruby, I'll let you have this one on the house. (Gives him back some money)

John: Are you sure Mattie?

Mattie: Why not?

John: I wouldn't want to take advantage of your generosity. I...

Mattie: Just go.

John: Are you sure?

Mattie: John remember, never look a gift horse in the mouth.

John: You're a good, good woman Mattie. (He kisses her and goes inside humming "Oh Susanna" pulling down his braces. She watches him go, counting her money)

Mattie: What the hell, with all the money I make off that man, I think true love can wait a little longer. (She goes inside)

BLACKOUT CURTAIN

