

THE DOWNFALL OF A TRUSTINGHEART

An Old Fashioned Melodrama
in
Two Acts

By
Walt and Jeff Ellis

Cast of Characters

Dexter Cadwallader..... A black-hearted gambler.
Vivian OrrA saloon owner with a heart for gold.
Charity Trustingheart.....The fair and pure maiden.
Arnold Dunstan A man with a heart as big as all outdoors.
Jake Trustingheart Charity's father - a victimized man.
Mrs. Dunstan A rather forceful mother.
Phineas KashpocketsA kind hearted but distracted banker.
Reginald Jarvis The man who starts and ends it all.

Act One **Charity Begins at Home**

Scene I	The Saloon on a winter afternoon
Scene II	The Cabin that evening
Scene III	The Saloon a week later
Scene IV	The Cabin
Scene V	The Saloon
Scene VI	The Saloon a few hours later
Scene VII	The Cabin
Scene VIII	The Cabin the next day

Act Two **How to Make the Best Of a Good Thing**

Scene I	The Saloon on a summer afternoon
Scene II	The Saloon that evening
Scene III	The Mine Office the next morning
Scene IV	The Saloon that evening
Scene V	The Mine Office later that evening

ACT I

SCENE I At the Saloon

(Dexter is sitting at the card table, alone, shuffling the cards.)

Dexter: Curses! What a miserable town to run out of money in. If only these clods had some money, I would relieve them of it and be on my way in short order.

MUSIC! Villainess

Vivian enters

Vivian: Back again, Big Boy?

Dexter: Yes my dear. Your establishment seems to be the only active place in town.

Vivian: I've noticed that you haven't seen much action. A year ago this place was crowded every night. These gamblin' tables were full and the action was hot and heavy. There were as many as five poker games going on at once. But the mines shut down and the town's gone dry. (Flirting) Those were the good old days. Too bad you weren't around then, Big Boy.

Dexter: (Aside) EeeGad, this dame has fallen for me. That could be fortunate. She may come in useful.

Reginald Jarvis enters.

Dexter: Ah-ah, a customer. Perhaps he plays cards.

Vivian: He's a stranger to me. (To newcomer) Hello Stranger. What can I provide you with?

Regi: Some liquid refreshment and some directions. I am trying to locate the

Trustingheart place.

Vivian: The Trustingheart place is about a mile west of town next to the old Golden Queen mine. What's your poison, Stranger?

Regi: Whiskey.

Vivian: You a friend of the Trustinghearts?

Regi: Not exactly. I knew Jason Trustingheart. As a matter of fact, we were partners in the Klondike, right up near Whitehorse Pass.

Vivian: That must have been a long time ago. Jake Trustingheart came here about five years ago during the boom. He said his dead brother had willed him some land so he built a house on it. He lives out there now with his daughter Charity.

Dexter: (Interrupting) You look like a man who enjoys a game of chance. Perhaps you'd like to play a little cards?

Regi Perhaps some other time. You say the Golden Queen is a mile west?

Vivian: Yes. You can't miss it.

Dexter: (looking around at the window and then to Vivian.) I see your wealthy banker friend is here again.

Vivian: Oh yes.... I'd better go see what Phineas wants.

MUSIC: Villainess

Vivian exits.

Dexter: She should know what Phineas always wants. I'm Dexter Cadwallader.

Regi: (Sitting down) I'm Reginald Jarvis. Happy to meet you.

Dexter: You plan to stay around here for long?

Regi: No, I'm just passing through and thought I'd say hello, to Jake Trustingheart and have a look at his mine.

Dexter: What's this about Jake's mine?

Regi: Jason Trustingheart had a rich claim here and we were always going to raise some money and come back to work it; but then Jason died and willed the land to his brother. Shortly after that, I struck it rich in the Klondike and forgot all about this claim old Jason had until I was passing through.

Dexter: (Aside) This could prove to be very profitable information. I must know more. (To Regi) How did Jason die?

Regi: He was caught in an avalanche between Skagway and Dawson. I warned him not to go horsing around up there. Too bad. He was a fine fellow.

MUSIC: Villainess

Vivian enters

Vivian: (To Regie) Our local banker says he can save you a trip out to the Trustinghearts' place. Trustingheart is gone and won't be back until tonight.

Regi: That's too bad because I'm in a hurry and can't wait around.(Rises) Well, I may be back through here and get to see Trustingheart some other time. Thanks for your help anyway.

Vivian: Anytime, Big Boy.

Regi exits

Dexter: Did Trustingheart's brother leave him some mine property?

Vivian: No. just the land the house is on. Trustingheart worked at the Golden Queen, though. Why do you ask?

Dexter: (Aside) Eureka ... my luck has changed and I suspect I will soon be rich again. (To Vivian) That fellow seemed to think Jake Trustingheart had a mine.

Vivian: Oh! What gave him that idea?

Dexter: (Absently) Jake Trustingheart has a young daughter doesn't he?

Vivian: Yes, but she's not your type.

Dexter: (Rising) Really? (To D.S.R.) (Aside) Nevertheless I think I'll pay the Trustinghearts a visit tonight. It would appear that Jake's brother never bothered to tell him of the discovery and it has been overlooked all this time. There's gold on that land and the old fool doesn't know it. (To Vivian) I shall see you later, my dear.

MUSIC: Villain

Dexter exits

Vivian: (To audience) That man is rotten to the core but he appeals to me. I must have him for my own.

LIGHTS DIM

SCENE II
Trustingheart Cabin
That evening

(Several knocks on door off stage)

Jake enters

Jake: (Crossing to the door) Hold your horses, I'm coming. (To himself) Who would be out this time of night? (Opens the door.)

MUSIC: Villain

Dexter enters

Dexter: Are you Jake Trustingheart?

Jake: Yes

Dexter: I'm Dexter Cadwallader. Your late brother, many years ago, told me to look you up if I ever got back to the states.

Jake: You knewd Jason?

Dexter: Indeed yes ... may he rest in peace. I didn't know him well, but his untimely death saddened me deeply. (Aside) EeGad, I hope I'm not laying it on too thick.

Jake: Come in by the fire. Any friend of my brother's is welcome here. Sit down ... sit down. How about something to take the chill off?

Dexter: An excellent idea. What did you have in mind?

Jake: I just ran off a new batch. Here ya go. (Pours a glass of "white lightening" out of a jug.)

Dexter: (In extreme pain.) That's quite good.

Jake: My steady customers think it's the best in three counties.

MUSIC: Heroine

Charity enters.

Jake: Come in, my dear, and meet Mr. Cadwallader. He knewd your Uncle Jason. Mr. Cadwallader, this is my daughter, Charity.

Dexter: (Rises, kisses her hand.) Miss Trustingheart, your presence brightens the room.

Charity: Why, I declare, if that ain't the purdiest thing I ever heerd, Mr. Cadwallader.

Dexter: (Aside) Ah-ha! I am indeed riding high. The prospects of this endeavor are improving every minute. I must include this fair beauty in my plans. (To Charity) Please, Miss Trustingheart, call me Dexter.

Jake: Mr. Cadwallader, do you plan to stay in town long?

Dexter: I have no definite plans. I struck it rich in the Klondike and I'm looking around for some investments, I have so much money I don't know what to do with it all. (Aside) EeGad, it's lucky for me they can't know I'm stone broke.

Jake: Well, you ain't likely to find no investments around here. The mines are all petered out and closed down. Fact is, I lost my job when the Golden Queen closed down last spring.

Dexter: I'm sorry to hear that. How have you managed since then?

Jake: Well, I manage to sell a little moonshine; and Arnold Dunstan, a local boy, found Charity a part-time job at the slaughter house. We get by all right.

(Knock on door off stage)

Charity: (Crosses to door) It's Arnold. Come to visit.

Jake: (Not pleased) Ain't nothin' new about that.

MUSIC: Hero

Arnold enters.

Charity: Arnold, this is a friend of Uncle Jason's, Mr. Cadwallader. He know'd Jason in the Klondike.

Arnold: Klondike?

Charity: You know ... Yu-kan.

Arnold: I can what?

Dexter: No! No! Yukon!

Arnold: I con what?

Dexter: Never mind, you probably can't anyway.

Charity: No. Arnold, the Klondike is in the Yukon... That's a place up north.,

Arnold: Oh!

Dexter: I had several mining ventures there, and I have just returned.

Arnold: You manage to stay mighty pretty looking for a miner.

Dexter: (Aside) Curses. . I must show this clod who he's dealing with! (To Arnold) I certainly didn't work in the mines ... I RAN them.

Arnold: Ran them right into the ground, I'll bet. HoHoHo! (Slaps Jake on the back; Jake is obviously disgusted)

Jake: How'd you come to know my brother.

Dexter: (Aside) EeGad! I must throw him off this track. (To Jake) We met several times in Dawson before I struck it rich. Soon after that poor Jason was on his way to Skagway when he was caught in an avalanche on Whitehorse Pass. Poor

fellow. . . They never found his body until the spring thaw.

Jake: (Blowing his nose) I never heard about that last part.

Dexter: Perhaps I've said too much.

Charity: Naw, that's all right. Pa and Uncle Jason never got on together anyway.

Jake: Now that ain't so, Charity. We was just like brothers.

Charity: Pa, you WAS brothers.

Jake: Maybe that was the problem.

Dexter: Well, it's getting late and I had best leave. (To Charity) I hope I shall see you again soon, my dear.

Jake: You come back just anytime, Mr. Cadwallader. You're always welcome here.

Dexter: Thank you, my good man. *Au revoir, Mon Cherie.* (Kisses Charity's hand)

MUSIC: Villain

Dexter bows and exits.

Arnold: Say, how come that stranger's kissin' your hand and a callin' you cherry? I don't like that varmint. He's up to no good, and I don't trust that man.

Jake: No good or not ... he struck it rich in the Klondike and I think he's a fine man. (Aside) This may be my chance to marry my daughter off to a rich man ... and then I can retire!

LIGHTS Dim

SCENE III
At The Saloon
One week later

(Dexter is sitting at the card table brooding and Vivian is standing beside him.)

Vivian: The story is around town that you knew Jason Trustingheart in the Klondike.

Dexter: So what's it to you?

Vivian: I don't know what you're up to ... but if you don't stop seeing that Charity I'll tell everybody in town that you're a dirty liar and cheat!

Dexter: Vivian ... how dare you! (Rises) I'm never dirty!! (Aside) Curse this untrusting wench.... She must reassured. Besides, her establishment may soon be value again as soon as MY mine opens. Heh..Heh.. Heh. (To Vivian) (Crosses and sits at L. side of table) Surely my dear, you don't think I'm interested in Charity Trustingheart, do you?

Vivian: Yes, I do.

Dexter: (Aside) She has such overwhelming faith in me! (To Vivian) Her father's property has a valuable mine located on it, but he doesn't know it. Jason Trustingheart discovered it but never informed his brother about it. I'm only trying to gain their trust so I can somehow acquire it.

Vivian: (To D.S.R.) And just how do you intend to acquire it;... by marrying Charity?

Dexter: (Aside) And now for a desperate chance! (To Vivian) Of course not. (Pause) I was hoping you could loan me enough money to purchase the land.

Vivian: And then we can be married? (Crosses to behind Dexter.)

Dexter: Yes, yes, Of course.

Vivian: Dexter, you are so clever.

Dexter: Yes, I know. ...Oh yes, one other thing. That Dunstan fellow is always hanging around. I haven't been able to get anywhere with Charity:

Vivian: You don't need to get anywhere with Charity. You should be working on her father.

Dexter: But, ahem ... Charity has a great deal of influence on her father. I must win her trust. Then I'm sure I could persuade the Trustinghearts to sell the property.

Vivian: Well see to it that her trust is all that you win from her.

Dexter: Of course. Of course. Now, about that loan.

Vivian: Dexter, I don't have much cash. (Cross and sit at R. end of table.) Most of my money is tied up in this place ... and I'll lose it if things don't improve soon.

Dexter: But I'm sure Trustingheart would sell for a pittance. Don't you have any money at all?

Vivian: Well, I have a little savings put away. (Removes a roll of bills from her cleavage.) I guess since we're going to be married and be partners in a gold mine I could let you have that.

Dexter: (Aside) I knew this woman would be unable to resist me. Soon I'll have her money AND the gold mine. Ha, ha, ha. (To Vivian) Fine, Vivian, but you've got to distract Dunstan so that I can ... er ... talk to the Trustinghearts without interruption.

Vivian: Well all right, Big Boy. I'll see what I can do. (To audience) Distract Arnold ... Ummm ... This could prove interesting.

LIGHTS DIM

SCENE IV
The Cabin

Jake: (Standing at the door.) Come on in Mr. Cadwallader. I have to go, but Charity will be home in a few minutes.

MUSIC: Villain

Dexter enters

Dexter: I'd been hoping to speak to you for a few minutes, sir.

Jake: Sure, sonny. Sit down. (Both sit on couch.)

Dexter: You've got to think of what's best for Charity. You can't go on living like this.

Jake: What's wrong with the way we're living?

Dexter: This town is crumbling away. You are barely able to eke out enough to even buy bread. And poor Charity forced to slave her life away at the slaughter house.

Jake: But what can I do?

Dexter: (Aside) A-ha, the game is nearly won. (To Jake) I might be able to locate someone who would take this property off your hands for a handsome sum. Then you could leave here.

Jake: (Stand) What! Give up the old homestead? I could never do that.

Dexter: (Stand) But it's worthless. The town is dying.

Jake: (To D.L.) If we can just last until the mortgage is paid off, then everything will be all right.

Dexter: But Mr. Trustingheart

Jake: NO! NO! A THOUSAND TIMES NO! I'm not giving up this place.

(Turns to Dexter.) No point in talking about it anymore. . . . I've gotta go now.

Dexter: (Aside) Curses, the stubborn old fool. Now I resort to Plan 2. (To Jake) Do you mind if I wait for Charity?

Jake: (Softening) No. no, of course not. You young folks must have a lot to talk about seein's as how you are just getting acquainted. I've really got to go now.

(Jake picks up a Sears Roebuck catalog and exits.)

(Dexter moves to the fireplace twirling his moustache)

MUSIC:Heroine

Charity: Why Mr. Cadwallader, what are you doing here?

Dexter: I have been anxiously awaiting you, my dear.

Charity: Oh my, Mr Cadwallader, whatever do you mean?

Dexter: Charity, Charity, I must have you. I can't live without you. (Advances.) Will you marry me?

Charity: Mr.Cadwallader, this is so sudden!

Dexter: During the past few, wonderful days while we've been seeing each other, I've been able to think of nothing but you. (Takes her arm.)

Charity: Please Mr. Cadwallader, un-hand me. (Breaks away and moves around the chair.)

Dexter: (Dexter and Charity circle around the furniture first one direction and then another.) Your beauty is overwhelming.

Charity: Mr. Cadwallader ! Your behavior is unseemly!

Dexter: Your eyes, your hair, your lips, your ... everything I've ever dreamed of.

Charity: (Still circling) You must desist from this madness,

Dexter: I must have just one little kiss from those ruby lips.

Charity: Stay away from me, you cad!

Dexter: You shall be mine!

Charity: (Still circling) What if my father comes home?

Dexter: He can get his own girl. You must realize by now that you can't resist me. (Still circling he catches her arm.)

Charity: You Brute,

Dexter: You're dying to kiss me. I can tell by the look in your eyes. (Begins kissing Charity)

MUSIC: Hero

Arnold enters.

Arnold: (He looks at the couple in a passionate embrace.) I guess your Pa ain't to home.

(Charity breaks away to D.L.)

Charity: (To Dexter) (Pointing at door.) You villain! Leave my home and I'll thank you to never darken my door again.

Arnold: But Charity, what did I do?

Dexter: Calm yourself, my dear. Have you no self-restraint?

Charity: Ohhh —

(Charity rushes out)

Arnold: (Rushing after her) Charity! Charity!

Dexter: Now I must devise another plan. Curses! Why does this always happen to me?

MUSIC: Villain

LIGHTS Dim

Scenes 5 – 8 available in full script

ACT TWO

SCENE I At the Saloon

(Vivian is standing by the bar.)

Regi enters

Vivian: Hello, big boy.

Regi: (Whimpering) Hello yourself, Vivian. (Crosses and sits at L. end of table.)
Gad! What a miserable day this has been.

Vivian: Why so glum? With your new mine operating you should soon be richer than King Midas.

Regi: Umph! This mine will put me in the poor house – or the mad house.

Vivian: Regi, I didn't think you were greedy. You have plenty of money without this mine. Why do you let it get you so upset?

Regi: I had plenty!(Rises and paces the room.) I've sunk most of it in this mine. And that stupid old man . . . I'm the one that knows how to manage a mining operation, but old Trustingheart won't let me spend a penny of the company's money. It has to come from my pocket.

Vivian: But I thought you were the President and Manager of the mining company.

Regi: Manager? That's a joke. (Pacing again.) We have to vote on everything and I only have a 25% interest.

Vivian: Doesn't Phineas side with you?

Regi: Phineas, (stops momentarily) that pompous banker. You think he's a smart business man? All he can do is spout platitudes and abstain from voting. (Pacing again.) Arnold Dunstan, of course, always votes with Trustingheart. Whatever Trustingheart says, Arnold just nods his head and says "that's right Jake; that's right." (Sits at table.)

Vivian: (To audience) Oh, too bad he doesn't nod his head at me.

Regi: (Looks sharply at Vivian.) What's that?

Vivian: I said too bad he's a knot head.

Regi: Ill say. And to think Phineas and I agreed that Arnold should have a 10% interest as mine foreman. For what, I ask you? A strong back and a weak mind - and it's his mother that contributes the strong back. (Drops his head onto his arm on the table, crying.)

Vivian: Well, Regi, you're so smart I'm sure you'll think of something.

Regi: Head up but still crying.) Yes. Of course you're quite right. I've just got to put my considerable mind to it.

MUSIC: Marine Corp Hymn

Ma Dunstan enters. (Crossing to L. of Regi.)

Ma: Umph! (Regi cringes.) (To Regi) I figured I'd find you here. (Glares at Vivian, then to Regi.) Another mule just cratered! What'a you doin' sittin' here on your behind? Why ain't you out gett'n new mules like you said you would?

Regi: The reason I'm

Ma: Shut-up! I'm talking to you! You're a lazy, no-account man just like my rotten husband and my dumb son.

Regi: (Stands up.) Now Mrs. Dunstan, that's not fair. I ...

Ma: (Grasps Regi's shirt front and advances while Regi retreats.) Not fair? Not fair? I'll tell you whats fair! If you don't get those new mules by tomorrow, I'm taking all the boys out on strike - and believe me they're all lazy no accounts that would strike in a minute if I'd let them.

Regi: But it's not as easy as that! Jake Trustingheart and your son won't let me spend any money for more mules.

Ma: Those shiftless retards. (Releases Regi and starts for the door.) It's your job to take care of them; and I'll take care of the mine operations. I can't be expected to take care of everything. (Pauses at the door.) Remember - more mules by tomorrow - or we're goin' out.

Ma Dunstan exits.

Regi: She is undoubtedly the most unreasonable person I've ever met. (Collapses into chair.)

Vivian: Why, honey, all she needs is a man to replace her dearly departed husband.

Regi: Small wonder he died.

Vivian: Died? He didn't die. ... Just departed. (Sits R. end of table.) Can she really get the miners to strike?

Regi: That's a silly question. It's hopeless. Arnold made her a shift boss and she's taken over running everything.

Vivian: Aren't you going to do something about it?

Regi: I don't know. Even if I had the money, I couldn't get new asses by tomorrow. The nearest ones available are clear up north at the Hog Ranch.

Vivian: Well, I've got an idea. To start with, you could talk to Phineas.

Regi: Eureka! I know what I'm going to do! I'm going to talk to Phineas. (Stands) He's got to side with me on this issue, or the mine will be shut down tomorrow night.

Vivian: Of course, even with his vote you'll still only have fifty percent.

Regi: (Begins pacing again.) Maybe you can persuade Arnold to vote with us against Trustingheart.

Vivian: Have you forgotten that Trustingheart will soon be Arnold's father-in-law?

Regi: (Stops pacing momentarily.) But this is a matter of money!

Vivian: Arnold doesn't care about money.

Regi: Maybe you could get him drunk and I could talk him into it.

Vivian: Arnold doesn't drink.

Regi: (Stops pacing.) Doesn't drink? Doesn't care about money? (Crossing and sits

at L. end of table.) Egad,, does he disdain all of man's gratifications?

Vivian: So far as I can tell. (Pause) Maybe you could get Jake into a poker game.

Regi: What good would that do?

Vivian: You could win his share of the mine from him.

Regi: That's pretty unlikely.

Vivian: I could help.

Regi: How could you help?

Vivian: (To audience.) He's a little slow; but ... he has such a big. . . heart. (To Regi.) I could stand behind him during the game.

Regi: (Stands up.) Vivian! What you suggest is unethical! I could never be a party to such conduct. (Faces audience.) No, I will just calmly and rationally explain what's at stake to Phineas and Arnold ... (crossing to door) in such a manner that even Arnold will understand.

Regi exits

Vivian: I must have that man. . .; and the gold mine. The times are changing, and so will he. He spurns my offer now, but he'll be back.

Regi and Phineas enter

Regi: (To Phineas as they enter) I was just going to see Arnold, but I'm glad I ran into you.

Phineas: (Ignoring Regi.) Vivian my dear, you look ravishing, as always.

Vivian: Why thank you, big boy. Why don't you sit down and enjoy yourself.

Regi: Listen, Phineas, we have a real problem about these mules.

Phineas: (Sits at R. end of table.) Ah yes, the little beasts are a burden.

Regi: Can I count on your vote?

Phineas: Of course, my good man, of course. Indeed at the behest of Mrs. Dunstan I was about to convey her glad tidings that Arnold has been induced to

endorse the expenditure.

Regi: Really? (Sits at L. end of table.) At last things are beginning to look up.

Phineas: It seems that Arnold's long awaited nuptials are about to be consummated and Trustingheart is conferring his proxies upon his son-in-law.

Regi: (Stands) Egad! That means it's the poor house for sure. It's only a matter of time now. Arnold will dig us all under. (Collapses back into the chair.)

Phineas: Ah, but surely you can deal with Arnold.

Regi: Perhaps, but I doubt if I can deal with his mother. She does not seem to appreciate my admirable quality.

Vivian: Your admirable quality doesn't always stand out.

Regi: (Looks at Vivian and then out the window.) Good grief! That woman has the entire mine crew out in the street.

MUSIC: Marine Corp Hymn

Ma Dunstan enters

(Sound of unruly crowd in the background.)

Ma: All right, you skalawag. Do you have my new mules?

Regi: No, of course not. How could I have?

Ma: Well then, we're going out.

(Backstage the crowd yells: "Yeah! Yeah!")

Regi: (Stands up, alarmed.) But you said tomorrow!

Ma: That was before.

Regi: Before what?

Ma: Before two more mules collapsed and fell down the shaft.

Regi: Be reasonable. A few more days can't matter. I'll get the mules as soon as possible. Just be patient.

Ma: Enough of this! We can't work without mules. Were going out.

(Backstage crowd yells: "Yeah! Yeah!")

Regi: (Approaches Ma.) I can't get them right now. Not tonight. Couldn't you wait just one more day?

Ma: No! (Turns her back on Regi.)

Regi: Just one more hour?

Ma: No

Regi: But if you go out the mine will flood. It'll take weeks, months, to start back up.

Ma: That's your problem.

Regi: (Drops to his knees behind Ma.) And all those miners will be out of work.

Ma: That's their problem.

Regi: And the miners will probably just sit around the saloon here . . . drinking and gambling and such.

(Backstage crowd yells: "Yeah! Yeah!")

Ma: (Turns to Regi looking first over his head and then down.) Well, on second thought, I guess one more day won't hurt. . . but only one day. You get those mules tomorrow or it's out on strike for sure.

(Grumbling is heard from backstage.)

MUSIC: Marine Corp Hymn

Ma Dunstan exits.

Ma: (Off stage) All right you lazy, good for nothin', no accounts, get back to work! Get those dead assess hoisted! The strike has been called off . . . for now.

Regi: Gad! That woman is incredible. I've got to think of something before tomorrow.

Phineas: Indeed yes, a most formidable creature.

Vivian: (Crossing to Regi.) Why don't you come up for a while and we'll ... talk about it.

Vivian leads Regi out as

LIGHTS DIM

SCENE II
At The Saloon

(Vivian is standing at the bar; Regi is sitting at the table.)

Vivian: What do you say, big boy. ... Then it's all settled?

Regi: I guess so. But I still feel ...

Vivian: Don't worry so much, handsome. I've made all the arrangements. Jake always comes in here about nine every night for drinks before he goes home; and Phineas will be here as usual. All you have to do is suggest a card game.

Regi: But it's not that easy. Jake probably doesn't even know how to play poker.

Vivian: (To audience) That's what I'm counting on. (To Regi) I'll take care of Jake. (Crosses and sits on edge of the table.) You just concentrate on the cards ... and me.

Regi: Well, all right but I'm not very good at this sort of thing.

Vivian: Well, I'm good enough for both of us.

Phineas enters

Vivian: Hello there, Phineas. You appear in robust spirits tonight.

Phineas: Ah yes. I am anticipating an evening of libations and convivial companionship.

(Vivian rises and nudges Regi.)

Regi: (To Vivian) Not now, Vivian.

Vivian: (With a disgusted look at Regi) (To Phineas:) Well, big boy, maybe

you would be interested in a friendly game of poker.

Phineas: Ah yes, indeed. Wagering. That most noble amusement of princes and kings.

Vivian: Regi here was just talking about starting up a game weren't you, Regi? (Nudges Regi again.)

Regi: Oh! Yes! Yes! That's right. I just said "how about starting up a game." I just said that to Vivian. Didn't I just say that, Vivian?

Phineas: (Looking around the stage) There must be others about with the cunning, acumen and dexterity to provide worthy participation in such a grand endeavor

Jake enters (and stumbles).

(Phineas sits at the table.)

Jake: (To Vivian) Set up my usual, Miss Orr.

Vivian: Of course, Jake. (Pours Jake a beer.) Regi and Phineas were just talking about you.

Jake: Talking about me! Don't you believe what they said! . . . What did they say?

Vivian: Why Jake, they were talking about poker and said "may be good old Jake would like to play poker too."

Jake: Poker? Yes I think I'd like that . . . but I'm not sure. It's been such a long time. (Takes a drink of the beer.)

(Regi begins dealing the cards.)

Vivian: (Crosses to the table.) Come over here and sit down, Jake.

Jake: Sit down? What for?

Vivian: Why, so you can get in on the next hand.

Jake: Oh! We're going to play cards first. Okay. That might be fun.

(Jake sits and Vivian stands behind him.)

Regi: How many chips do you want?

Jake: Chips?

Regi: Yes. It's \$25 each for the white chips.

Jake: I don't know. Give me a hand full.

Vivian: That'll be 500 dollars.

(Jake brings out a small purse and begins to count out the money.)

Regi: You have to ante, Jake.

Jake: Have an aunty? Naw. Use to have a brother though . . . but he died.

Vivian: No, Jake. That means you have to put a white chip in the center of the table.,

Jake: (Stops counting out his money.) What! You mean I gotta give the chips back? I just got em.

Regi: Yes. That's the general idea.

(Vivian leans over and antes from Jake's chips.)

Jake: I don't know if my old heart can take this.

Regi: Phineas, it's your bet.

(Vivian lifts her dress to adjust her garter. Jake looks at her leg and Vivian looks at his cards.)

Vivian: Why your still a young man, jack ... I mean, Jake, you handsome brute.

Jake: Oh yah. How would you like it if old age was creeping up on you.

Regi: Phineas, are you going to bet or not?

Phineas: The diminutive nature of these cardboard fragments does not warrant such temerarious rashness, but I shall wager two of the azure pieces of gold.

Jake: What the Hell does that mean?

Regi: It means you're going to have to buy some more chips, Jake.

(Jake lays down his cards, and brings out his purse again.)

Vivian: Here, let me help you. (Vi presses up against Jake.)

Jake: Oh yes! I need help.

(Vivian shows Jake's cards to Regi.)

Jake: I'm sure my old heart can't take this . . . But I sure hope it holds up a little while longer.

Vivian: Why, honey, we just knew you would like the good, clean fun we have here.

Jake: Oh yes, I like it. I like it.

Phineas: Vivian, my dear, we are in need of liquid lavation to enhance these festive premises.

Vivian: Coming right up, big boy. (Vivian walks to the bar swinging her hips.)

MUSIC: Villainess

Regi: How many, Phineas?

Phineas: How many what".."

Regi: (Disgusted) Cards. How many cards do you want?

Phineas: I will rely upon my present, portentous position.

Regi: What happened to the diminutive nature of your position? ... And how about you, Jake?

(Jake is still watching Vivian who is returning with two large drinks.)

Regi: Jake?

Jake: What?

Regi: How many?

Jake: How many? Oh! . . . Two ... two big ones.

(Regi deals Jake two cards, looking at each one in turn, and deals himself four cards.)

Vivian: (Leaning over with the drinks.) How are these, boys?

Phineas: Just great.

Jake: Just great.

Regi: (To himself) Well now, this is better. Much better. (For the first time Regi begins to twist his moustache.) Jake, it's five hundred more to you.

LIGHTS DIM

SCENE III
At The Mine Office
The next morning

MUSIC: Heroine

Charity: (Sweeping the office) I just know something awful's happened to my dear, dear father. I wish Arnold would come.

MUSIC: Hero.

Arnold enters

Arnold: Charity, I just had to see you before I go down into that dank mine this morning.

Charity: Oh Arnold! I'm so glad you're here. (Rushes to Arnold.) My dear father hasn't been home all night. I just know something terrible must have happened.

Arnold: Now Charity, don't you worry. I'll take care of everything.

Charity: You're so brave and strong, Arnold.

Arnold: Yes, I know.

Charity: But my poor father may be sick and wounded, lying some where along the road in the mud. It's just too terrible to think about.

Arnold: Road? Mud? It ain't rained for three months.

MUSIC: Marine Corp Hymn

Ma Dunstan enters.

Ma: Arnold, you no account. What are you doing here?

Arnold: Why Ma, I ...

Ma: Shut up, Arnold! I'm talking to you. And you (turns to Charity) get away from my son and get back to work.

Charity: (Moving away from Arnold.) But Mrs. Dunston, Arnold and I are going to be married.

Ma: You ain't married yet. And anyway, married or not there ain't no time for foolin' around. Too much work to do. You'll learn that soon enough.

Arnold: Now ma, you shouldn't go sayin' things like that to Charity.

Ma: Arnold, you still here? Why ain't you down in that miserable mine by now? Every time my back is turned you're foolin' around. You're just like your rotten father.

Charity: Mrs. Dunstan, Arnold was about to go look for my poor dear father, who hasn't been home all night, and is no doubt lying sick and wounded somewhere.

Ma: Hogwash! That old fool was over at that terrible Orr's place last night, and is no doubt lying somewhere in the mud - drunk.

Arnold: Ma, it ain't rained for months.

Ma: Shut-up, Arnold. I'm talkin' to Charity.

(Arnold looks very dejected.)

Ma: Charity, you stop your fretting. Your Pa will show up soon enough. (Turns to Arnold.) Come on we've got to get those miners to work. (Ma and Arnold exiting.) Those lazy miners probably aren't doing a lick.

Charity: Oh, oh! What has happened to my poor, dear father. I must find someone to help me look for him.

Jake enters (Drunk and his clothes are muddy.)

Jake: (Singing) "I'm old and gray and I've lost my way." (Jake crosses to the chair and sits.)

Charity: Oh Pa! Where have you been? Are you all right?

Jake: I'm old and gray and I lost my way ... and ... I feel very poorly, Charity.

Charity: Should I get you something? Something to eat, maybe?

Jake: (Rises, holding his stomach) No! No, not now. (Sits again.) Charity, I have some bad news. I lost my shares in a card game last night. We're poor as church mice again.

Charity: Don't worry, Pa. Have you forgotten that you gave me half your shares just yesterday?

Jake: No, I ain't forgot . . . but you see . . . I sort of promised I'd turn those over too.

Charity: Pa, how could you! Those shares was my wedding gift ... my dowdy.

Jake: Well now, you see, I only needed one more heart to win back everything. It was such a good hand. I was so sure ... I still don't know how it happened.

Charity: I'll go find Arnold. He'll take care of this.

Jake: (To audience) Gads, things are even worse than I thought. (To Charity) Now don't you go runnin' off looking for charity.

Charity: Pa! Have you forgot? I'm Charity. I'm going to look for Arnold.

Jake: (To audience) Sometimes I think those two are made for each other. (To Charity) That ain't what I mean. I don't want Arnold and his mother taking care of me.

Charity: Oh my. What are we to do then?

Jake: (Rising) Well, to start with I'm going to have a drink.

Jake exits

Charity: Oh woe, oh woe! What will become of us? Something must be done for my poor destitute father. (Brightening) I just know Arnold will think of something. I don't care what Pa says, I must find my brave husband to be.

Regi enters (wearing a top hat)

Regi: Charity, I'm looking for your father. Where is he?

Charity: He just went home. Oh Mr. Jarvis, you'll never guess the terrible thing that has happened.

Regi: You're right. I can't guess.

Charity: My Pa lost his shares in the mining company to some evil man in a card game last night. What will become of my poor, dear father."

Regi: Evil man!?! Miss Trustingheart, you do me a great. injustice!

Charity: You? What are you saying? You mean you're the ee.... the man who has stolen the very life's blood of my father?

Regi: (Aside) Egad, she talks as though I were a vampire. (To Charity) It was a fair and honest card game.

Charity: Mr. Jarvis, you surprise me! Gambling. I thought you were above such loathsome conduct.

Regi: Me? What about your father?

Charity: My father has always been loathsome. . . . But YOU have taken advantage of him.,

Regi: (Aside) I find this proud creature appealing. (To Charity) Come now, my dear, Im sure everything can be worked out for the best.

Charity: You mean you'll give the shares back? Oh Mr. Jarvis, I knew you were a good man at heart and this proves it!

Regi: Well ... I'd like to do that but I can't.

Charity: You can't? Why not?

Regi: Well, ah . . . Well you see ... your father wouldn't want that. It would seem like he had welched on a bet. An honorable man like your father wouldn't do that. (Regi is obviously pleased with his answer.)

Charity: I bet he would. (Starts for the door.) Ill go ask him.

Regi: (Restraining her.) And besides . . . he's ... he's getting too old for this kind of hard work. He should retire. (Pleased with that idea.) Yes! He definitely should retire.

Charity: But now he's too poor to retire.

Regi: Well . . . perhaps some arrangements could be made. (Aside) This could work to my advantage. I shall have this fair beauty for my own. (To Charity.) May I call on you this evening so that we may discuss this further?

Charity: (Breaks away.) I'll go ask Pa if he's busy tonight.

Regi: No! No! This is something you and I alone must discuss.

Charity: Why Mr. Jarvis, that wouldn't be proper; and besides, Arnold is coming to supper tonight.

Regi: Let Arnold have supper with your father. You shall dine with me this evening. I shall expect you here at eight o'clock.

Regi: (Aside) (Now fully the villain.) Good fortune is rising even more than I had hoped. Tonight my plot shall reach a climax. Ha, ha, ha, ha.

MUSIC: Villain

Regi exits

Charity: (facing audience.) Oh alas, alas! What am I to do? My poor, dear father will surely starve if I do not meet this most vile man tonight; but I fear his intentions are ignoble. I can only hope and trust that goodness and virtue will prevail.

MUSIC: Heroine

LIGHTS DIM

Scenes 4 and 5 available in full script

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This melodrama, set in a small western town, contains a great number of classic melodrama routines, lines and characters. Full effect can be obtained only by playing the characters very "straight", with a proper balance of exaggeration. The melodrama will encourage audience participation in the traditional form of booing and cheering (intro. music alerts the audience to the expected response); however ad libs with the audience must be avoided in order to maintain the proper pace, to avoid dropping character, and to discourage other types of audience participation.

A distinction is made between lines which are delivered to the audience, and "asides" which are delivered in the classical manner (usually by the villain only).

The melodrama is divided into two parts, either one of which can be used as a one act play running about 45 minutes. Alternatively, the two can be combined into a two act play running about 90 minutes (plus intermissions).

DESCRIPTION OF SET

The stage is divided by lighting to provide two scenes. The action alternates between the two with great rapidity providing a fast pace.

Along stage right, taking up no more than one third of the stage, is the saloon which contains a bar along the back wall, a small table and three small stools. A window is on the stage right wall upon which, painted backwards, are the words "ORR'S SALOON".

Lighting is used to separate the remainder of the stage which is the cabin scene. The cabin contains a fireplace, couch, chair and table.

Little change is necessary to convert the cabin to the mine office for the second act of the melodrama. The fireplace can be replaced with a pot belly stove, the couch removed, and the table converted to a desk. A wooden desk chair is required.