

The Shagwood Secret

or... Double Deal at the Dirty Dog Saloon

By Teddy Keller

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- SNAKE DIAMOND an evil and scheming man.
 CYRIL C. SNERDLEY is not quite mean and nasty
 enough to be the number one
 villain.
 DELORES DIVINE is beautiful, shapely, greedy and
 mean clear through.
 CHLOE CLOD an unwitting heiress, is as pure-
 hearted as a daisy.
 ETHELBURT SHAGWOOD makes up in stupidity what he
 lacks in brains, but he is strong.

SETTING

The action takes place in the Dirty Dog Saloon. There is a small
 bar Up Right. A hatrack or halltree stands in a far corner up-stage.
 A poker table and three chairs are about at Center. There's a bird
 cage Up Center. It may be practical or painted on the backdrop.
 A wheeled couch and lariat are behind the bar.

TIME

It's a typical never-never day in the old Old West.

SCENE 1

At rise, SNAKE and DELORES, sitting on the poker table, are caught in a passionate embrace. They look guiltily to the audience, and go into a stilted kiss. Then DELORES pushes SNAKE away, moves off the table.

DELORES: I'm sick of this crummy town, Snake. And I'm even sicker of your lousy saloon. When're we getting out of here?

SNAKE: In good time, Delores. In good time.

DELORES: You've been telling me that for months, promising me fancy dresses and jewels, promising me trips to San Francisco and Denver and -----, *(Insert name of nearby small town)* What I want to know is, when do we scam outta this rat trap?

SNAKE: When you've finished your job.

DELORES: When I've finished my job? I've shilled every man in this valley to your crooked poker table so you could steal his money. Snake Diamond, if you're trying to pull a fast one on me . . .

SNAKE: Now, Delores, you know you can trust me.

DELORES: Trust you? Ha! It'd be just like you to . . . *(as a light dawns)* Do you have another woman hidden out somewhere? Why, you two-timing, four-flushing tinhorn, if you're planning to double-cross me, just remember what I can do to you.

SNAKE: You, Delores? *(laughs)* You can't touch me.

DELORES: Oh, no? I can tell that miserable servant girl that she's the rightful owner of your saloon.

SNAKE: *(aside)* How did the hussy learn that? *(to DELORES)* Who needs the saloon . . . when there's a mountain of gold for the taking?

DELORES: Gold? What mountain of gold?

SNAKE: Ah-ha! So you would turn on me, Delores. Now that you have shown your true colors, you will have to trust me. *(gives her a sneer)* Me, your loyal benefactor, your honest partner, your . . .

DELORES: Honest? *(spits on one of SNAKE'S shoes)* Loyal? *(spits on the other shoe)* Snake Diamond, you're as crooked as three eels in a cactus patch - and twice as slippery.

SNAKE: Don't crowd me too far, Delores. *(looks at shoes)*

(PIANO plays first two measures of 'CHLOE'.)

SNAKE: *(in time with music, yells)* Chloe!

(PIANO plays next two measures.)

SNAKE: *(as before, yells)* Chloe! *(speaking)* Where is that good-for-nothing wench?

(PIANO repeats first two bars. As SNAKE takes a huge breath for his next yell, CHLOE CLOD enters on hands and knees, a scrub brush in each hand. DELORES shrinks back as from an untouchable.)

SNAKE: *(condescendingly)* My dear Miss Clod. If its not asking too much, you are supposed to be working for your one meal a day and a place to sleep in the stable. Would you just touch up my shoes a bit?

(DELORES takes down whip from hatrack and hands it to SNAKE. He cracks it at CHLOE.)

SNAKE: And hurry it up or I'll peel the hide off your mangy back.

(CHLOE drops her brushes. She hurries on hands and knees to SNAKE. She uses her ragged skirt to buff up SNAKE'S shoes. SNAKE and DELORES ignore her.)

DELORES: I still want to know what's left to stay here for. I told you I've shilled every man in the valley.

SNAKE: Every man but one, Delores.

DELORES: You're kidding, Snake. You can't mean . . .

SNAKE: But I do.

SNAKE, DELORES & CHLOE: Ethelburt Shagwood?!?

DELORES: You mean he has the mountain of . . .

SNAKE: Shut up, Delores. *(looks to CHLOE)* At least till we're sure.

CHLOE: Oh, sir, I beg of you. Do not drag that pure young man into this den of iniquity.

SNAKE: *(cracks whip)* Silence!

DELORES: *(laughing)* Don't be so rough on her, Snake. Don't you recognize a woman in love?

SNAKE: This is a woman?

DELORES: I've seen her mooning after Mr. Shagwood when he rides into town.

SNAKE: Then she's done better than you have, Delores.

DELORES: The first time I spoke to him he ran away.

SNAKE: Is that all you've done?

DELORES: Delores Divine give up so easily? Ha. Yesterday I saw him on the street and I admired that old crowbait he rides. He'll see me today. We're going to talk about . . . horses. *(chuckling)* By tonight, Snake, he will be ruined.

CHLOE: *(Aside)* Oh, horrors.

SNAKE: *(Laughing nastily)* Good, Delores. And tomorrow you and I.....

(Sound of knocking OFF-STAGE.)

SNAKE: Yeah? Come on in. *(to DELORES)* Who knocks at a saloon?

(CYRIL enters and slinks to join SNAKE and DELORES.)

CYRIL: Cyril C. Snerdley, solicitor, at your service.

SNAKE: Cut it out, Cyril. We know who you are. What'd you find out?

(CYRIL takes folded paper from his coat pocket and a bag of gold dust from his top hat. He is about to speak when he notices CHLOE. He hesitates.)

CYRIL: *(indicating CHLOE)* Little pitchers have big rears.

DELORES: That's 'ears' knucklehead.

SNAKE: Never mind her. Speak up.

CYRIL: You hit the nail on the head, Snake. Here's the

geologist's report. There's gold in that thar hill.

DELORES: You mean Snake wasn't bluffing? There really is . . .

CYRIL: Gold! On that two-bit, moth-eaten, run-down ranch of Ethelburt Shagwood's.

SNAKE: And we shall have it, Delores.

CHLOE: *(aside)* Oh, these heartless fiends.

(CYRIL unfolds the paper and spreads it out on the poker table. SNAKE and DELORES crowd around. CHLOE huddles in front, listening, reacting, shuddering.)

SNAKE: Wait, Cyril. What about that geologist you hired? Will he talk? Will he spread the word of our discovery?

CYRIL: Not when he's dead as a doornail. Not when he's already cashed in his chips, he won't talk. *(posing)* Dead men tell no tales.

CHLOE: *(aside)* Horrors. They have killed an innocent man.

SNAKE: And tomorrow Shagwood's ranch will be mine. We're rich!

CYRIL & DELORES: Rich, rich, rich.

(As CYRIL goes to the table to retrieve his papers, and SNAKE and DELORES move to the bar, CHLOE scrubs her way DOWNSTAGE.)

CHLOE: *(aside)* Alas, poor Ethelburt. Is he doomed by these villains? Am I powerless to help him? Oh, my secret love, are you fore-ordained to share my life of misery and shame? *(beseechingly)* Is there none to save us? *(resolutely)* I must find a way to warn him.

(CHLOE scrubs her way OFF STAGE.)

SNAKE: *(waving a bottle)* I say we drink to Cyril C. Snerdley.

(DELORES finds glasses. SNAKE, CYRIL and DELORES get together. SNAKE pours)

DELORES: *(raising her glass)* To the sneakiest, scummiest villain in town, Cyril C. . . *(to him)* Say, Cyril, what does the C stand for?

SNAKE: For Cadwallader, what else?

CYRIL: You said a mouthful. Now, drink it down. Bottoms up. Here's mud in your eye.

(They drink.)

SNAKE: Do you think Shagwood'll show up here?

CYRIL: Sure thing. I saw him ride into town just before I came here. He was telling everybody that he was going to see Miss Delores.

SNAKE: Good, good. I'll make a small effort at taking his ranch legally.

CYRIL: And if you fail?

(CHLOE makes a scrubbing entrance.)

SNAKE: If I fail? *(laughs, pours drinks)* Let's drink to Delores. If I fail, Cyril, she will meet Ethelburt Shagwood. She will tempt him. . .

CHLOE: *(aside)* Oh, no. *(weeps, scrubs toward the others)*

SNAKE: She will lure him . . .

CHLOE: *(aside)* Oh, the conniving scoundrels. *(weeps, scrubs, moves)*

SNAKE: She will seduce him . . .

CHLOE: *(aside)* Oh, horrible horrors!

(CHLOE has reached the feet of SNAKE and she is weeping uncontrollably. SNAKE peers down at his shoes as PIANO plays CHLOE introduction.)

SNAKE: *(as before)* CHLOE! *(to her)* You're crying on my feet.

CYRIL: You're all wet. You'll catch your death. It is a foul plot to do you in.

CHLOE: *(aside)* The tears of a damsel pure will be ambrosia to the truehearted. But to a blackguard, this means instant pneumonia.

SNAKE: *(shoving CHLOE aside)* Out of my . . . *(sniffles)* . . . way. You have tried to . . . *(sniffles)* . . . trick me. I'll whip you within an . . . *(almost sneezes)* . . . within an inch . . . *(sneezes)* . . . of your worthless life. *(sneezes a biggie)*

CHLOE: *(heroically)* Oh, sir, though I have slaved for you these many years, I now find myself torn between loyalty to an employer who has not treated me too kindly and fidelity to my own untarnished principles.

CYRIL: Hey, she's got real high fidelity.

CHLOE: I must warn you, sir, that I shall make every effort to warn Mr. Shagwood of your nefarious knavery.

SNAKE: Get her, Cyril. Make it two for today.

(CYRIL circles toward CHLOE. He makes threatening gestures, stalking her, his hands posed to strangle her. But CHLOE does not flinch. She stands up to CYRIL, and he backs down, lamely.)

CYRIL: Killin's too good for her, Snake. Cut her to ribbons with your whip.

(SNAKE lunges after CHLOE, sneezing and cracking his whip. CHLOE screams, dodges and exits hastily. SNAKE flounders blindly, snapping the whip in every direction, hitting too close to CYRIL and DELORES. CYRIL and DELORES dive under the poker table.)

ETHELBURT: Well, now, a nice gal like Miss Delores wouldn't have corraled me to a place like this here temple of sin. Sure must be some mistake. I'm gonna high-tail it outta this den of antiquity.

SNAKE: Wait! *(blows nose, dries eyes)* You must be Ethelburt Shagwood. *(aside)* Who else could look so stupid?

ETHELBERT: You got me pegged, mister.

SNAKE: And I am Snake Diamond. (*indicates table*) Pray seat yourself, sir. There is a matter I would discuss with you. (*aside*) He is like a lamb led to the slaughter.

ETHELBERT: (*sitting*) Mister Diamond, do you know that lawyer feller, that Snerdley?

SNAKE: (*warily*) I know of him. (*sits*)

ETHELBERT: Would you tell him not to dig no more holes on my ranch?

SNAKE: Mr. Snerdley digging holes? I do not understand.

ETHELBERT: (*measuring with hands*) It was like a grave, kind of.

(*CYRIL pokes his head from under the table, mops sweat from his forehead. SNAKE kicks hard at CYRIL'S behind.*)

CYRIL: (*yelling*) Ouch!

ETHELBERT: What was that?

SNAKE: Oh . . .uh . . . that's my canary.

ETHELBERT: Canary?

SNAKE: (*gestures to bird cage painted on backdrop*) Haven't you ever heard of a Rocky Mountain Canary?

ETHELBERT: Gee, I always thought . . .

SNAKE: (*pointedly*) You say there was a grave. Was there a . . . uh . . .dead person thereabouts?

ETHELBERT: You mean that geologist feller who kept moanin' about gold on my ranch . . .Poor soul!

SNAKE: Gold? You didn't believe him, of course.

ETHELBERT: Why, shucks. My ol' pa told me 'bout the gold when I wasn't more'n knee-high to a wood tick. But gold don't mean nothin' to me. I just wanta ride Ol' Paint and herd them dogies and strum my gittar.

(*Others freeze as CYRIL leaps from under the table. This is his award winning speech, and he plays it to the fullest.*)

CYRIL: He knew about the gold. Shagwood knew it all the time, and I killed a man to keep him from knowing. Now there's blood on my hands, I'm a killer . . . a murderer. *(sobs heavily and dives back under the table. The others break their freeze.)*

SNAKE: Then let me buy your ranch.

ETHELBERT: Why?

SNAKE: Well, then you . . . *(laughs)* . . . you won't have to worry about the gold.

ETHELBERT: Oh, it don't worry me none. *(heroically)* Pa told me money's the root of all evil. So I'm leavin' that gold in the ground . . . even if me and Ol' Paint have to go hungry.

SNAKE: But if you'd sell to me, then you could buy another ranch--where I guarantee you won't have any gold.

ETHELBERT: Yeah, but why should I go to all that trouble just to get away from somethin' that I don't care about. Besides you ain't even a ranchin' man.

SNAKE: *(sputtering)* Why? Well, I . . . that is . . . I mean . . . well . . . Now don't be too hasty, Mr. Shagwood. Let me show you some of the ranches I could trade you.

(SNAKE takes out a map, spreads it on the table. He and ETHELBERT study it as other action continues.)

CYRIL: Delores, we're fools. We're the ones doing all the dirty work. Why should we split with Snake?

DELORES: You mean . . . a double-cross?

CYRIL: Sure. Why cut the pie three ways when we only need to cut it twice? I've got to have enough money to take me a long ways.

DELORES: So . . . ?

CYRIL: Play along. Let Snake get rid of Chloe and this dumb cowboy. Then . . . we get rid of Snake.

DELORES: Why, you sneaky little weasel. You really would double-cross Snake after all he's done for us. Just wait'll I tell . . .

ETHELBERT: My gracious, Mr. Snake, if you're not as persistent as that Delores Divine.

SNAKE: Delores Divine? What do you mean?

ETHELBURT: I mean the way she's always wantin' me to go for a walk in the woods. I been to the woods.

(SNAKE kicks DELORES in the behind, and she screams.)

DELORES: *(yelling)* Ow! and Ooh!

ETHELBURT: What was that?

(SNAKE pulls a gun-or his whip-and takes a shot at the bird cage. Somebody backstage throws out a handful of feathers. The shot-or-whipcrack-blows ETHELBURT out of his chair and he falls hard. SNAKE rushes around to help him up. Together they move down. Behind them, CYRIL and DELORES shake hands while she rubs her back side. Then they sneak off.)

ETHELBURT: I don't know why that Miss Delores keeps follerin' after me. Why, she's worse'n a stray hound dog.

SNAKE: How can she resist you?

ETHELBURT: Poor infatuated girl. But that reminds me. I gotta go meet her. Sorry I can't sell you my ranch, Mr. Snake. But you might be tempted to dig up that gold. Why, it could even turn you dishonest.

(ETHELBURT ambles toward the door. ETHELBURT gets all the way to the door, then halts, boggled. He begins a slow retreat as DELORES appears, pursuing in her best seductive manner. She twitches a low hung stole at him, and waggles a hip and bats her lashes. ETHELBURT, awestruck, backs slowly around the stage, then begins to circle around, with DELORES keeping only inches away. The PIANO eases into something slinky. SNAKE sees that DELORES has the situation under control. He gloats and slinks off. The hypnotized ETHELBURT continues his retreat and the hypnotic DELORES continues her pursuit. They circle the stage once, and then ETHELBURT backs to DOWN CENTER. He halts, and DELORES freezes.)

ETHELBURT: *(aside)* Don't worry none. I'm still as pure as the driven slush.

(The retreat and pursuit resume. Finally, ETHELBURT backs against the bar, and DELORES closes in on him.)

ETHELBURT: Ma'am, I thought we was gonna talk about horses.

DELORES: I thought maybe you'd rather just . . .horse around.

ETHELBERT: Why, Miss Delores.

(Abruptly, DELORES becomes all sweetness and innocence. She tries to throw herself into ETHELBURT'S arms, but he skips away with some fancy footwork. This action continues through several speeches, with ETHELBURT developing a neat step.)

DELORES: Oh, Mr. Shagwood. It's so good of you to talk to me like this.

ETHELBERT: Well, now, I reckon it ain't as bad as I figured.

DELORES: What do you mean?

ETHELBERT: Oh, I've heard tell about how the fellers like to go up to your place at night.

DELORES: *(aside)* What does this milk-sop know?

ETHELBERT: They say you make the best hot chocolate in town.

DELORES: Is that bad?

ETHELBERT: Hot chocolate makes me burp.

DELORES: *(sighs)* Yes, I'm friend to everyone, but . . . *(cries)*

(ETHELBERT is unnerved by the weeping. He moves close enough to give DELORES a brotherly pat on the shoulder.)

ETHELBERT: *(aside)* She must think she's a waterfall. *(To DELORES)* What in thunderation is ailin' you, Miss Delores, Ma'am? You're bellerin' like a stuck sow.

DELORES: Oh, Mr. Shagwood, you really do say the nicest things.

ETHELBERT: Aw, shucks, Ma'am. *(blushes, turns away)* I reckon it's plumb easy to say nice things about you.

DELORES: Why don't we sit down and talk this over?

ETHELBERT: Sit down? Where?

(DELORES reaches to a rope hanging near the bar. She yanks on it and pulls out a wheeled couch from behind the bar. She sits, pulling ETHELBURT down beside her.)

DELORES: Why Mr. Shagwood.

ETHELBERT: Aw, you can call me Ethelbert, Ma'am.

DELORES: Ethelbert? My, what a lovely name.

ETHELBERT: Well, I reckon it outta be, Ma'am, seein's how I was named for my ma and pa.

DELORES: Oh, how nice. Your mother's name was Ethel?

ETHELBERT: Nope. *(takes a long beat)* Her name was Burt.

DELORES: But if her . . . I mean, if your father's . . . that is . . .

ETHELBERT: What was your mommy's and daddy's names, Ma'am?

DELORES: I don't know. *(tragically)* The Indians scalped them when I was a baby

ETHELBERT: Why you poor little ol' maverick-type critter. Same thing happened to me. But somebody had their names wrote down. That's how come I know who I am.

DELORES: *(suddenly remembering, begins to cry)* Oh, Ethelbert. We're just two orphans, friendless in this cruel world . . . all alone and . . .

ETHELBERT: Oh, no, Ma'am. I ain't friendless. I always got . . . *(dramatically)* . . . Ol' Paint. My faithful hoss. We done rode off into a passel of sunsets together.

(DELORES has been crowding ETHELBERT, trying to pin him, and he has been sliding along the couch until he's at the end.)

DELORES: *(aside)* How can I cry right when he won't shut his big fat mouth? *(to ETHELBERT)* At least . . . you have . . . somebody. *(cries)*

ETHELBERT: *(patting her shoulder)* Ain't gonna do no good to go on bellerin', Ma'am. *(standing, posing)* You just tell ol' Ethelbert what it is that's got you cinched up so tight.

DELORES: Oh, Ethelbert, you're so kind.

ETHELBERT: Don't let your troubles get you down, Ma'am.

(The PIANO plays the CHLOE cue.)

SNAKE: *(OFFSTAGE, yells)* Chloe!

(CHLOE runs ON STAGE, in desperate flight, but halts to peer down at ETHELBURT and DELORES.)

CHLOE: Oh, good sir, do not lower yourself. Please, sir, I must warn you . . .

(PIANO plays second CHLOE cue. CHLOE looks OFF STAGE, looks to ETHELBURT, then flees off in the other direction. She has just exited when SNAKE charges ON STAGE in pursuit. He's still cracking the whip, still sneezing.)

SNAKE: *(with music)* Chloe!

(When SNAKE spies DELORES and ETHELBURT, he skids to a stop, trying to hide the whip behind him. He saunters casually to the couch.)

SNAKE: Can't keep a good man down, eh, Shagwood? *(to DELORES)* Throw yourself into your work, Delores.

(SNAKE strolls on past the couch. He glances back, then raises his whip and races after CHLOE.)

ETHELBURT: When does the next villain leave?

DELORES: Don't mind them. They're just playing crack-the-whip. *(cries)* Oh, Ethelburt, you're so compassionate, so benevolent, so commiserating, so . . .

ETHELBURT: *(shocked, leaps up)* I'll wash your motuh out with soap.

(As ETHELBURT moves away, DELORES grabs his hand, twirls him, and he spins onto the other end of the couch.)

DELORES: You are kind, sir. That's what I meant. Your heart's as big as . . .as . . .*(aside)* . . .as his big, fat head.

(ETHELBURT nods smugly, and DELORES sees that she has him again. She takes a deep breath, works herself up to it, and begins to cry again. ETHELBURT takes a long look at her.)

ETHELBURT: *(aside)* What does she use for eyes? Faucets? *(to DELORES)* We better have this here pow-wow about your troubles before we both drown.

DELORES: *(aside)* This milk-fed fool's got me so confused I've forgotten the lies I was going to tell him. *(brightens)* Now I remember. *(to ETHELBURT)* Who could I turn to if you hadn't offered to help me? *(stands, tragically)* Only you to

aid me in my dire distress. Only you, like a beacon in the storm tossed seas. Only you to guide my wayward steps. Only you . . .

ETHELBERT: *(aside)* She thinks she's foolin' me, but I figure she loves me.

DELORES: *(throws herself at his feet)* Oh, Ethelbert, if only you knew how madly I love you.

ETHELBERT: *(aside)* I told you so, I told you so.

DELORES: Oh, if you knew of my tragedy, my misfortune, my helplessness, my adversity.

ETHELBERT: Thunderation, woman, will you get to the point? You got more troubles than a one-spigot mamma cow with three calves.

DELORES: Troubles? Oh, sir, if you but knew. *(stands, faces straight out, speaks in sing-song)*

How I had to go to work
For that mean Snake Diamond jerk,
How he made me sign a vow
And he won't release me now;
How I cannot leave his bar
Till all my obligations are
Paid. Or till with him I wed--
Oh, sir, I'd rather much be dead--
Or till I find another suitor,
A real honest and straight shooter
Who is loaded to the gills
With gold and silver, coins and bills,
Who will buy me free from Snake
And will wed me for my sake.

(DELORES holds final, tragic pose. ETHELBERT moves beside her.)

ETHELBERT: Well, now, Ma'am. I reckon I might be able to help you out.

DELORES: Oh, sir, would you?

ETHELBERT: I just said I would. Bust my cinch, woman, can't you pay attention?

DELORES: But have you enough money to buy me away from Snake Diamond?

ETHELBERT: Why, sure, I've got money. *(takes out tiny money*

bag, counts) I've got three dollars and eighty-seven cents.

DELORES: Oh, woe is me. All is lost. He demands hundreds, sir.

ETHELBERT: Hundreds? *(shrugs)* Well, that's the way the milk sours. *(starts to exit)*

(DELORES makes another grab for ETHELBERT and again manages to fling him back onto the couch.)

DELORES: Oh, sir, I knew you would never desert me.

ETHELBERT: I keep tryin'. *(shrugs again)* Ma'am, where do I get these here hundreds?

DELORES: *(slyly)* There's only one sure way.

ETHELBERT: Yeah. Dig up my gold.

DELORES: Perish the thought! You must never touch that evil wealth. But right here you can make a fortune at Snake Diamond's poker table--if you're daring, if you're adventurous, if you have courage.

ETHELBERT: Ma'am, I'm a coward.

(Matter-of-factly, ETHELBERT has stated the facts, and now he rises to try again to depart. But once again DELORES grabs him and yanks him back onto the couch.)

DELORES: Dear Ethelbert. You'd do it for me, though.

ETHELBERT: You're purty cotton-pickin' sure of yourself. I still got my faithful hoss, you know.

DELORES: Can Ol' Varnish . . .

ETHELBERT: Ol' Paint, Ma'am.

DELORES: Can Ol' Paint offer you . . . *(snuggles up to him)* what I can offer you?

ETHELBERT: Can you swat flies with your tail?

DELORES: Can Ol' Shellack . . .

ETHELBERT: Ol' Paint, Ma'am.

DELORES: Can Ol' Paint . . .do this? *(kisses him)*

ETHELBURT: Holy-smoke-gee-whiz-jumpin'-jehosophat and for heavens-to-Betsy. You're a real gal-type critter.

DELORES: Well, Ethelburt. Can Ol' Paint do that?

ETHELBURT: He slobbers more. *(awed, staring, gives her cheek a peck)* When does this ding-dang, rootin'-tootin' poker game get goin'?

(PIANO plays CHLOE cue.)

SNAKE: *(OFFSTAGE, yelling)* Chloe!

(CHLOE dashes onstage. She's in full flight, looking behind her. Then she sees ETHELBURT and DELORES. She skids to a halt, wide-eyed and horrified. Finally she forces herself to approach the couch and bend over ETHELBURT for a close look.)

CHLOE: Oh, sweet, pure, unadulterated sir. Can you not see that this is but a thinly veiled and evil plot to rob you, to ruin you, to degrade you?

ETHELBURT: *(glassily)* Yeah. But what a way to go.

(ETHELBURT grabs DELORES into a clinch. SNAKE comes on, cracking his whip, sneezing, and pursues CHLOE around the couch several times, then offstage. now DELORES swings ETHELBURT around and pins him flat on his back, still clinching. His feet waggle in the air and his arms wave. DELORES pushes away, stands, dusting her hands, and moves downstage.)

DELORES: *(aside)* Why, that simpleton. One little kiss and he's knocked for a loop. If I had known it was going to be that easy, I wouldn't have worn my new shawl. *(glance to ETHELBURT)* Now he's ripe for Snake . . . except that Snake won't get him. He's all mine, this hick with the golden mountain.)

(PIANO plays another CHLOE cue.)

SNAKE: *(OFFSTAGE, wearily)* Chloe.

(CHLOE staggers onstage, sees DELORES and ETHELBURT, halts, puffing hard. She looks behind her, then all around in desperation. She darts to DELORES, snatches her shawl, whisks off her own apron. She tosses the apron around DELORES, throws the shawl over her own head and shoulders, then leaps onto the couch beside the still dazed ETHELBURT. SNAKE stumbles exhaustedly onstage. He is still waving the whip, but hasn't the strength to crack it.)

SNAKE: Chloe. *(peers groggily to DELORES)* Chloe? *(waves whip at DELORES, lunges at her)* Chloe!

(DELORES screeches, and runs off. SNAKE waves the whip and stumbles after her. ETHELBURT, still happily dazed, has taken in none of this action. Now he reaches for CHLOE.)

ETHELBURT: Hey, Ma'am, let's do some more of that before I lose my pucker.

CHLOE: Sir!

(CHLOE fends ETHELBURT off, but she pushes too hard and he topples off the couch. She jumps up. ETHELBURT sits up on the floor and licks his lips.)

ETHELBURT: Man, that was a kiss.

CHLOE: Oh, Mr. Shagwood.

(As CHLOE makes an entreating gesture, the shawl falls from around her head. ETHELBURT smiles at her, gives her a double take, shakes his head, rubs his eyes, looks again. When he recognizes CHLOE, he jumps up, looks wildly around, is ready to bolt. CHLOE moves to him.)

CHLOE: Poor Mr. Shagwood. Did that woman lead you astray?

ETHELBURT: Gee, is that what you call it?

CHLOE: Dear Mr. Shagwood. You know not the devious way of conniving women.

ETHELBURT: *(still glassy)* Yeah, she sure was devious.

CHLOE: But, sir, don't you know what she was doing?

ETHELBURT: *(drooling)* Yeah.

CHLOE: Oh, misery, misery. I fear, sir, that you do not understand at all. It is a foul plot to steal your ranch, so that Mr. Diamond can have your gold.

ETHELBURT: Gold? Mr. Diamond was waggin' his jaw 'bout that there gold.

CHLOE: Oh, sir, do you know that they have already killed one man for your gold?

ETHELBURT: They done done-in a jasper?

CHLOE: Yes. I overheard Mr. Diamond and Mr. Snerdley. The victim was a geologist sent to inspect your land.

ETHELBERT: Oh, the rock feller. He ain't . . .

CHLOE: You must be on your guard, Mr. Shagwood. Mr. Diamond will stoop to any foul means to seize your property. It was his plan to send Miss Delores after you.

ETHELBERT: Miss Delores plotting against me? Goodness gracious. *(aside, hurt)* And I figured she loved me for my wit and my good looks and my charm and my modesty. But I can see that money means more to her than the love of a pure, honest cowboy.

CHLOE: I know their plan, sir. You must stay away from the Dirty Dog Saloon.

ETHELBERT: Fear not, Miss Clod. Fore-warned is fore-armed. These baddies must be stopped. I reckon maybe I've got a trick or two up my sleeve.

CHLOE: Please, sir, I beg you. This is their crooked game they play. They are smart and crafty and smart and conniving and smart and tricky and smart. While you, sir, though I have long loved you, are a blockhead.

ETHELBERT: Ain't I though? *(takes her hand)* But we gotta have courage. The meek will inherit my ranch, and innocence will triumph.

(CHLOE and ETHELBERT move off. Then CYRIL appears at one side of the stage, DELORES at the other. They halt just in view. Both peer guiltily around. When convinced they're alone, they speak in big stage whispers across the stage.)

DELORES: Did you hear them?

CYRIL: I got an earfull. They're on to Snake's bag of tricks. But they won't be ready for us.

DELORES: We'll get the ranch and the saloon. And we'll be rich.

CYRIL AND DELORES: Rich, rich, rich.

(CYRIL holds out his hands to her, and DELORES runs across the stage to him. At the last moment, she halts, and CYRIL leaps into her arms.)

BLACKOUT
END OF SCENE ONE

PROPERTIES

SCENE 1

ONSTAGE

Hatrack with whip
Poker table
3 chairs
Birdcage
Bar with bottle and 3 glasses
Wheeled couch
Hanging rope

BROUGHT ON

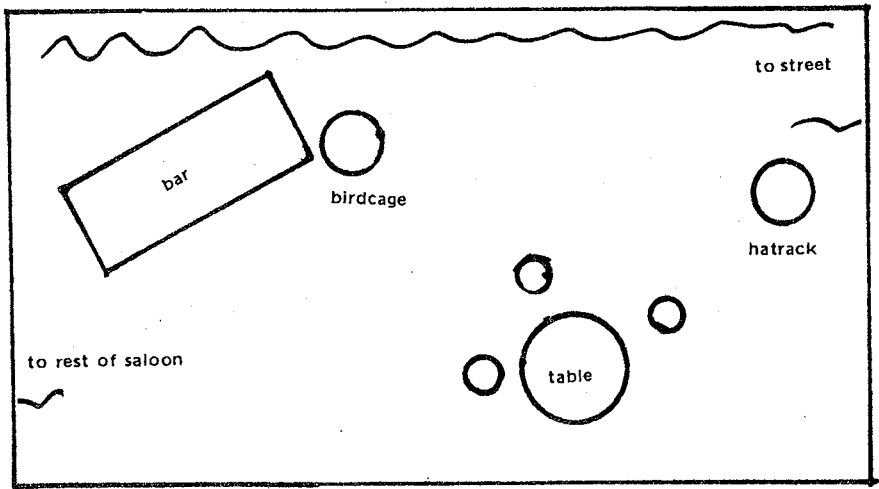
2 scrub brushes and bucket (Chloe)
Geologists report and gold dust (Cyril)
Map (Snake)
Gun (Snake)
Feathers (Stage hand off stage)
Tiny money bag and money (Ethelburt)
Handkerchief (Snake)

SCENE 2

Bucket
Money
Poker Chips
Cards
Whip
Gun
Tray
Glasses
Lariat

Deed to Dirty Dog (Snake)
Bucket (Chloe)

SUGGESTED GROUNDPLAN



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