

HARD LUCK

by Craig Sodaro



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SLIMY SAM (m).....	A small-time crook (35 lines)
SLIMIER SLIM (m)	Slimy's partner (28 lines)
OLGA BARRACK (f).....	Owner of Drop On Inn (102 lines)
JENNY BARRACK (f).....	Her daughter (146 lines)
EDDIE GREENVILLE (m).....	Richest kid in Hard Luck (87 lines)
EDWINA GREENVILLE (f).....	His mother (37 lines)
SHERIFF CULPEPPER (m).....	(47 lines)
PATTY (f).....	Townsperson (38 lines)
GINNY (f).....	Townsperson (28 lines)
GRAVEN SLADE (m)	A land developer (57 lines)
LOTTA LAMOUR (f)	His secretary (69 lines)
MISS POTTS (f).....	A filmmaker (12 lines)
MISS PANS (f).....	Her associate (11 lines)

DURATION: 90 minutes

SETTING: A dried up watering hole called Hard Luck.

TIME: 1925

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: A day car aboard the Lucky Lady Express.

SCENE 2: The Drop On Inn.

SCENE 3: The Drop On Inn.

INTERMISSION

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: Desert.

SCENE 2: The Drop On Inn.

SCENE 3: The Drop On Inn.

SET

DAY CAR: Played before the curtain with several double rows of chairs set up perpendicular to the audience as if we're looking at one-half of a railroad car. Allow room between chairs.

THE DROP ON INN: A roadside cafe in the tiny western town of Hard Luck. An old bar dominates up center. We don't see any bottles rather coffee cups fill the shelves along with pies and cakes and signs advertising an array of sandwiches and dinners. Above the bar is a picture of "The Duchess," lying on a couch in a provocative attitude. However, she now sports a cut-out dress making her look very modest and silly. Two or three tables with mismatching chairs and stools dot the floor. Door to outside is up right. Through the swinging doors of what once was an old saloon, we see the remnants of Hard Luck. Entrance down left leads to other rooms ... for the Drop On Inn also serves as the only hotel for three hundred miles around. A sign above the bar proclaims "**Clean Rooms 50 cents.**"

DESERT: Played before the curtain, we see a sign that says "**Hard Luck, 6 Miles.**" A rock sits center stage, perhaps with a cactus/sagebrush here and there.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

- Click-clack of train (not required)
- Sound of car pulling up, stopping, door slamming
- Sound of car door slamming, car driving away
- Silent movie music (melodrama music)
- Phone ringing, as indicated in script
- Strobe light, as indicated in script

COSTUMES

The play is set in 1925 so try to duplicate the look of the roaring twenties. SLIM and SAM should wear wide-lapel suits, if possible, along with white shirts and ties. Fedoras would be a nice touch. When they appear as ghosts (Act Two, Scene 3) dust the suits or adorn with fake cobwebs and white makeup.

NORMAN would look perfect in an argyle sweater along with argyle socks and a sport coat. However, he needs several other “costumes.”

- 1) First appearance as RUDOLF: Slick-backed hair, mustache, blousy shirt, dark pants, and a sash.
- 2) A sheik costume: headdress and long robe.

LOWEENA is the most fashionable and should wear an above-the-knee fringed flapper dress. JENNY wears a very pretty, yet simple dress. EDDIE and EDWINA try to look fashionable, but are perhaps a bit overdone. EDDIE needs a tie. EDWINA would look good in mock-fur collared capes.

MA JAMES wears dark clothes, an old dress and sweater, almost hillbilly style. DILLI, TILLI, and WILLI should wear rough and tough oversized tomboy overalls. MISS POTTS and MISS PANS wear safari clothes: shorts, multi-pocketed khaki jackets and belts, and safari hats, if possible.

PROPS

- SUITCASES OR BAGS (Willi/Tilli/Dilli)
- ROPES AND HANDKERCHIEF GAGS (Willi/Tilli/Dilli)
- PAPER AND PEN (Willi)
- KNIFE (Ma James)
- COSTUME (Ma James)
- IDENTICAL SUITCASES: One is full of play money; one is full of makeup and theatrical supplies (Norman/Slim)
- PAPER PUNCH (Conductor)
- GUNS (Ma James, Dilli, Tilli, Slim)
- MOVIE MAGAZINE (Jenny)
- SANDWICH (Jenny)

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- BROOM (Jenny)
- TRAY OF SILVERWARE (Jenny)
- NEWSPAPER (Olga)
- REGISTRATION BOOK/PEN (Olga)
- BOTTLES (Olga)
- FRYING PAN (Olga)
- BUTTERFLY NET (Olga)
- BOTTLE OF CASTOR OIL (Edwina)
- BRACELET (Norman)
- PAPER BAG (Norman)
- SWORD (Norman)
- PURSE, WAD OF BILLS AND GLITTERY BRACELET (Lotta)
- POSTER READING: “Grand Opening of Slade Seaside Resort . . . Coming Soon!” (Lotta)
- NOTEBOOK (Lotta)
- NAIL FILE (Lotta)
- CONTRACT (Slade)
- TELEPHONE (Slade)
- GUN (Slade)
- THREE SUITCASES (Mimsy)
- OLD FASHIONED MOTION PICTURE CAMERA: This can be easily made from a cardboard box with two cookie tins attached at the top. Spray all parts black and decorate. Attach a lens or two made from paper tubing and mount the entire apparatus on a black tripod. Be sure to add a crank handle made out of wood. (Miss Potts)
- WANTED POSTER WITH MA JAMES’ PICTURE ON IT (Sheriff)
- OVERSIZED MALLET (Sam)

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE: *MA sits left. WILLI and TILLI sit center, while DILLI sits right. They each have a small suitcase or bag under their seats. MRS. GUNAPATHY shares a seat with GLOWINDA. Business is typical of passengers on a train. Some read newspapers, some look out the window. This scene is played before the curtain.*

GLOW: How much longer we gotta ride this stupid train, Ma?

GUNAPATHY: That isn't a stupid train. It's a very smart train.

GLOW: How can a train be smart?

GUNAPATHY: It hasn't jumped the tracks once!

CONDUCTOR: *(Yawns.)* Tickets! Tickets, please!

CONDUCTOR clips tickets.

DILLI: Hey, conductor! How much longer 'til we get to someplace where a girl can get some lipstick, new stockings, and moisturizer?

CONDUCTOR: Well, now, ma'am ... it'll be tomorrow mornin' when we pull into Las Vegas, Nevada.

DILLI: Tomorrow?! By then I'll look old 'n wrinkled, just like her!

DILLI points to MRS. GUNAPATHY.

CONDUCTOR: Well, ma'am, the only town we pass through on our way to Las Vegas is a place called Hard Luck. 'N you sure won't have a bit of luck finding fancy things there.

CONDUCTOR moves to MRS. GUNAPATHY.

GLOW: Hey, mister, I want to wear your hat!

CONDUCTOR: Sorry, little girl, but the company says I've got to keep it on my head.

GLOW: I want to wear your hat!

GUNAPATHY: Now, Glowinda, darling. If the mean old man won't let you wear his hat, there's nothing we can do about it.

GLOW: Sure there is!

GLOWINDA stomps on the CONDUCTOR's foot. His hat falls off and she grabs it.

CONDUCTOR: Hey! Give me my hat!

GLOW: Gotta catch me first!

GUNAPATHY: Oh, Glowinda, she just loves to play games!

GLOWINDA races off left.

CONDUCTOR: Get back here! Get back here!

CONDUCTOR races off after her.

GUNAPATHY: *(Incensed.)* Just a second, you big brute! That's my baby you're chasing!

MRS. GUNAPATHY runs off left. NORMAN runs on right. He moves to center, looks around desperately.

NORMAN: *(To WILLI.)* Ma'am ... mind if I hide in here?

WILLI: Why, no, stranger. You're kind of cute!

NORMAN hides behind her seat.

DILLI: Yeah! You got a name, dollface?

NORMAN: *(Weakly.)* N ... N ... Norman.

WILLI: N ... N ... Norman! Ain't that cute!

DILLI: How come your hidin', N . . .N ... Norman?

LOWEENA enters right, tossing her fur about her shoulders. MIMSY follows dutifully, but very bored.

LOWEENA: Maybe he's in here!

MIMSY: Miss Loweena, you're just barkin' up the wrong train car. If Mr. Norman doesn't want to marry you, there's nothing you can do about it!

LOWEENA: Mimsy! You're a wonderful maid, but a rotten psychologist. I am Loweena Nordstrom. Daddy owns department stores in three different states. When I want something, I get it!

MIMSY: But Mr. Crankfield isn't for sale.

LOWEENA: Nonsense! I'm sure a generous share in the Nordstrom fortune will be enough to turn his head. After all, every man has his price. (*Thinking.*) Oooo ... I like the sound of that. Norman? Are you in here? Norman? (*LOWEENA moves left. NORMAN's hat rolls off into the aisle. MIMSY sees it and kicks it back just as LOWEENA turns around.*) I don't know where he could have gone. I mean how many cars does this train have?!

MIMSY: More'n you might think. Better hit the next one 'fore he jumps off! I just can't see what fun all this chasin' around the country is. You know you could have your pick of any eligible bachelor in Philadelphia.

LOWEENA: That's the problem. It's no fun when they just ... knock at your door. It's the thrill of the chase!

NORMAN sneezes.

LOWEENA: What's that?

WILLI: Just me, ma'am. I got a powerful cold.

LOWEENA: It sounded like Norman's sneeze.

DILLI: I thought his name was N ... N ... Norman!

LOWEENA: So he IS in here!

WILLI: Short fat guy with a bald head? He ran off that way real fast.

WILLI points left.

DILLI: Willi! He wasn't short, fat, or bald. He was kinda cute!

MIMSY: (*Pointing left.*) Oh, Miss Loweena! I think I see him up there in the next car!

LOWEENA: Where?! Where?!

LOWEENA runs off left. MIMSY rolls her eyes.

MIMSY: Least I'm gettin' my exercise!

MIMSY exits left. NORMAN peeks up from behind the chairs

DILLI: Coast is clear, N ... N ... Norman.

NORMAN: You saved my life!

WILLI: First time THAT ever happened, sis!

DILLI: You can say THAT again.

WILLI: THAT!

NORMAN: It's not that I don't like Loweena. It's just that ... that . . .
(Thinking.) I don't like Loweena.

WILLI: She'd have you hog tied, butchered, >n mounted on her wall ten minutes after you say "I do," she would.

DILLI: How'd you ever find her, anyway?

NORMAN: I was a salesman in her daddy's store; theatrical supplies, fourth floor. She stopped by one day looking for a Louis XVI wig for daddy for a masquerade ball. Then she decided to pick up a little something for herself. ME! At first I was, well ... someone of her ... I mean, I was ... well -

WILLI: Gaga!

NORMAN: Completely. She gave me this aardvark bracelet that's welded together. I guess it's so I won't get away. At least I can hide it under my cuff. But when she started picking out my clothes and told me she wanted me to grow a mustache so I'd look like daddy, I decided a trip out West was just what I needed.

WILLI: But she followed you!

NORMAN: She doesn't give up easily. So somehow between here and California I've got to lose her. But you don't really want to hear any more about me. What are you two girls doing traveling alone?

WILLI/DILLI: Business.

NORMAN: What kind of business are you in?

SLIMY SAM and SLIMIER SLIM enter right. SLIMIER SLIM sits by WILLI and DILLI. SLIMY SAM sits by MA. SLIMIER carries a black suitcase that looks like NORMAN's.

SAM: Howdy, Ma.

MA: Bout time, Slimy. You got the dough.

SAM: Yeah, Ma. We got just what you've been askin' for.

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MA: All I been askin' for is cash. Twenty-five g's. I got my suppliers to pay, you know, Slimy. Bootleg whiskey don't come cheap.

SAM: But you know, Ma, you got all my friends real excited. They thought you'd have some real fine stuff. But you can imagine their disappointment when they opened the first bottle 'n found out it was filled with creek water.

MA: That's a lie, Slimy. I'm a businesswoman. If I don't deliver, I won't stay flush for very long.

SAM: Speakin' of flush, Ma, that's just what we had to do with all that creek water. Flush it. 'N I don't take kindly to that.

MA: Slimy, we only got YOUR word for that. 'N your word isn't good enough to stick a stamp on a letter. You're up to somethin'. If I didn't know you two boys any better, I'd say you got other plans for that there dough.

SAM: Gosh, Slimy, she knows us better 'n we thought.

SAM reaches in his jacket. DILLI turns around, pulls gun, and shoots SAM, who slumps in chair. SLIM reaches in his pocket, but MA and TILLI both shoot from opposite ends of the train. SLIM slumps over the suitcase.

TILLI: Gosh, Ma, we got 'em both.

MA: Lousey way to make a livin'.

NORMAN: Y ... y ... you killed them!

MA: Who's that?

WILLI: Just a cute feller hidin' from some society dame.

NORMAN: Y ... y ... you killed them!

MA: Yeah! And you're gonna be next if you say that one more time!

NORMAN: Y ... y ... you killed them!

MA: Plug 'em, girls!

MA, DILLI, WILLI, and TILLI all aim at NORMAN. He dives to the floor and crawls off right, the women all start firing.

MA: C'mon! We gotta get him!

WILLI: Sounds good to me!

DILLI: He likes ME better.

WILLI: But I saw him first!

MA, DILLI, WILLI, and TILLI race off right. MRS. GUNAPATHY drags GLOWINDA on left.

GLOW: Maaa! How'd I know the hat would fly out the door 'n end up on a cow's head?

GUNAPATHY: Let's just hope that conductor is able to catch another train.

GLOW: You gotta admit, he sure looked funny when that cow chased him over the hill.

GUNAPATHY: *(To SLIM.)* Excuse me, sir, but you're in my seat.

No response.

GUNAPATHY: Sir that is my seat. There are plenty of others! If you don't move right now, I'll have to call the conductor.

GLOWINDA taps her mother's shoulder. GLOWINDA shakes her head.

GUNAPATHY: I'll call the engineer then. There IS still an engineer, isn't there, Glowinda?

SLIM falls into the aisle.

GUNAPATHY: Glowinda! What have you done now?

GLOW: Nothin', Ma. Cross my heart and hope to die,

GLOWINDA and MRS. GUNAPATHY look at each other for a second, then scream.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT RISE: *Later that evening at The Drop On Inn roadside cafe in Hard Luck. OLGA enters through up right door. She looks off right, then down left.*

OLGA: Jenny! Jenny Barrack! Where ARE you, girl?! You're in charge. What if a customer drops in?

JENNY: *(Pops up from behind the bar.)* We NEVER have any customers during the day, Ma.

OLGA looks back to see.

OLGA: Ah ha! Lyin' down on the job! And readin' one of those stupid fan magazines!

OLGA snatches magazine. JENNY stands up angrily.

JENNY: They're not stupid!

JENNY snatches magazine back.

JENNY: They keep me in touch with the real world.

OLGA: You sayin' Hard Luck isn't the real world?

JENNY: Oh, Mother! Hard Luck is as far from the real world as a place can get. It's just a burned out little mining town hangin' on because a few people on their way to California either run out of gas, get lost, or get thrown off the train.

OLGA: And I suppose Rudolf Falentino and Mary Thickford live in the real world.

JENNY: Of course they do! They make movies! And they live in mansions with servants and palm trees and caviar.

OLGA: Oh, Jenny. I'm sure they think their lives are just as dull as you think yours is.

JENNY: (*Opening magazine.*) Does THIS sound dull? (*Reads*) Our reporter found Rudolf Falentino parking his Cadillac roadster on Sunset Boulevard. She asked the star of “Shaking Sheik” and “Sheik for a Day” how he was enjoying himself in America. Falentino melted her with that warm, Italian smile. Then he said, “I love America! My life is so exciting! Every night a party ... champagne ... and a new girl on my ... how do you say it? Arm!” (*JENNY sighs.*) What I wouldn’t give to be the new girl on his arm for just one night. I wouldn’t even have to be his arm. His little finger would be good enough!

OLGA: Poor kid. Here you are, twenty years old and you’ve never been any place but Las Vegas. And that whistle stop isn’t anything to sneeze at. Why, you’ve never even SEEN a movie, have you?

JENNY: But the magazines tell ALL about them.

OLGA: Maybe it’s time we got out of this place.

JENNY: Ma, we’ve already had this discussion a hundred times.

OLGA: I know, but maybe somebody’d buy the Drop On Inn. There’s got to be at least one other fool in the world.

JENNY: One other?

OLGA: Your pa was fool number one for buyin’ this place.

JENNY: He couldn’t help it if he was a dreamer.

OLGA: Always thought when the train came through, Hard Luck would boom like a cannon. After all, the silver at the Hard Luck Mine ran all the way back into Nightmare Mountain.

JENNY: How were they really supposed to know the silver stopped cold halfway through the mountain? And he never could’ve known the railroad wouldn’t put in a station here.

OLGA: They should’ve read their horoscope. You got the paper around?

JENNY: Finally came in on the bus today. Only two days late.

OLGA grabs newspaper and thumbs through it.

OLGA: Don't make a difference. This horoscope'll count for today.

Let's see ... hmmm ... (*Reads.*) Romance is in the air if you are willing to step out and smell the roses. (*To JENNY*) Obviously, Madame Crystal ain't never been to Hard Luck. There ain't a rose around here for five hundred miles.

JENNY: What does mine say?!

OLGA: Leo ... hmmm ... (*Reads.*) a special day because that special person will walk through the door. Don't hesitate. Run to him. Smother him with kisses. Don't take a breath before saying yes. (*To JENNY*) And I get wind you did ANY of what's suggested here 'n you'll be locked in your room 'til your golden jubilee!

JENNY: My special person's going to come through the door today?

OLGA: That's what it says.

JENNY: That door?

OLGA: I don't see any other.

JENNY practices being shocked, excited.

OLGA: What are you doin', child?

JENNY: Practicing.

JENNY runs up to the door, lips puckered, EDDIE enters.

EDDIE: (*Shocked at seeing JENNY.*) Gosh, Jenny! You DO love me!

JENNY: (*Angrily.*) Eddie?!

EDDIE: I LOVE the way you say my name, darling.

JENNY: Don't call me darling. It gives my goose bumps.

EDDIE: Like your heart skips a beat?

JENNY: No, like I'm up at Boot Hill on a stormy night with wolves howling.

EDDIE: That's not very romantic.

JENNY: (*Pouts.*) Good!

EDDIE: Then how come you were standin' there with your lips all puckered waitin' for somebody to plant a nice big kiss on 'em?

JENNY: My horoscope says that someone very special will walk through THAT door today.

EDWINA enters through up right door.

EDWINA: Eddie! I KNEW I'd find you in here. How is your little sweet pea?

EDDIE: The same, Mother.

EDWINA: Oh, she'll come around. Your father chased me for ten years before I finally let him catch me. And guess what happened when he did?

EDDIE: What?

EDWINA: You did! Now, Eddie, I've brought your castor oil.

EDDIE: Mother! I'm twenty years old.

EDWINA: You're still my baby. Open wide.

EDDIE opens mouth while EDWINA dumps castor oil down him.

EDWINA: There! Want some, Jenny?

JENNY: No, thanks.

EDWINA: From the frown on your face, it looks like you could use some.

EDDIE: She's just waiting for somebody special to come through the door.

EDWINA: Somebody more special than my Eddie? In HARD LUCK? Good luck. Come along, Eddie. The servants have prepared a feast. It was so good of your father to set up a trust fund for us. A trust fund your WIFE will share. Care to join us, Jenny?

JENNY: No, thanks, Mrs. Greenville. I think I'll have dinner with Ma.

EDWINA: Well, dear, you'll come around. Mark my words! By this time next year you'll be -

EDDIE: Mrs. Eddie Greenville.

JENNY: Could we shorten that a bit?

EDWINA: What should we cut off?

JENNY: The "Mrs."

EDWINA pushes EDDIE out up right door and follows. JENNY picks up magazine and reads.

JENNY: No matter where he goes, Rudolf Falentino always wears the gold bracelet bearing the head of an aardvark. "A gift from

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Mama,” he says with a tear in his eye. Al never take it off, for that would break Mama’s heart, even in heaven.”

JENNY faces downstage reading, standing behind one of the tables. NORMAN backs through up right door, watching so no one’s following him. During next speech, he slowly moves down to JENNY.

JENNY: Despite the fact that fans chase Falentino everywhere and have at times ripped of his jacket and shirt, Falentino has never lost the precious bracelet that reminds him of his carefree childhood days in Italy.

NORMAN’s left hand, on which he wears the bracelet, leans on the table. JENNY stops her reading and catches sight of it. After a moment, she screams and jumps away. NORMAN jumps and then turns to face her.

NORMAN: I’m sorry! Sorry! What am I sorry for?

JENNY terrified, bewildered, can’t respond.

NORMAN: Are you all right?

NORMAN moves to her, tries to hold her hand. JENNY backs away. She now is having a hard time catching her breath.

NORMAN: You can’t breathe. Oh, gosh! I’m sorry! I must have scared you something awful. (*NORMAN runs behind bar.*) Don’t worry! I know what to do when you can’t breathe. (*NORMAN grabs a paper bag.*) You’re hyperventilating, that’s all. You’re not getting enough carbon dioxide. (*He puts bag over her head.*) Now just breathe into this bag for a minute and that will get you back to normal.

NORMAN checks his watch then takes the bag off JENNY’s head. She sees him and immediately screams. She runs down right.

NORMAN: I'm NOT a robber, lady. I don't want to hurt you. You can check me out!

JENNY whimpers.

NORMAN: I don't have any knives or guns or anything like that. And the suitcase ... well, look ... I'll open it up and show you what's in it.

NORMAN opens suitcase revealing makeup and costumes. JENNY stares at it in awe.

NORMAN: Just costumes, makeup, the usual for someone in my line of business. *(After a moment)* Look, I can leave if you want.

NORMAN moves to door. JENNY grabs him and stops him.

JENNY: NO! I'm just surprised. You really came! And I'm so embarrassed! You put a paper bag on my head. I could die!

NORMAN: You would have died without the paper bag.

JENNY: You saved my life. I knew you'd be my hero!

NORMAN: What do you mean? How could you be expecting me? I wasn't even expecting myself.

JENNY: It's fate! It's all in the stars! It says someone special's going to walk through that door. You know something? Now that I look at you ... you don't really look like yourself.

NORMAN: I don't?

JENNY: No. What happened to your jet black hair slicked back? And how about your thin mustache ... and your sideburns?

NORMAN: I ... I ... I'm in disguise.

JENNY: How wonderful! In-cognito!

NORMAN: Is THAT where I am?

JENNY: Are some ravenous fans after you?

NORMAN: You might say that.

JENNY: Well, you're safe here. Nobody EVER comes to Hard Luck. How'd you get here?

NORMAN: Jumped. Off the train.

JENNY: *(Starry-eyed.)* They were chasing you?

NORMAN: You might say that.

JENNY: Horrible people! You probably can NEVER be yourself.

NORMAN: You might say that, too.

JENNY: But wait a minute! Hard Luck is so far from the real world...
nobody who lives here would ever know who you are,
Mr. Falentino.

NORMAN: Mr. Falentino?

JENNY: You sound like nobody's ever called you by your name
before.

NORMAN: Do I have a first name, by chance?

JENNY: You ARE playing games. You were named after your
Russian grandfather, Rudolf.

NORMAN: More like the red-nosed reindeer.

JENNY: And you know something else? Your English is impeccable.

NORMAN: Well, I get a lot of practice.

JENNY: On the radio you sound like you have such a sultry...
Mediterranean accent.

NORMAN: Well, that's show biz. It's all an illusion.

JENNY: I have a wonderful idea, Mr. Falentino.

NORMAN: Please, call me, Rudolf?

JENNY: I have a wonderful idea, Mr. Rudolf.

NORMAN: I can't wait to hear it.

JENNY: We have a lot of rooms upstairs. Nobody EVER spends the
night in Hard Luck. So if your fans track you this far, they'll
NEVER think to look upstairs.

NORMAN: Neither would I.

JENNY: And just think, we could hang a sign that says "Rudolf
Falentino slept here."

NORMAN: (*Looks around, nervously.*) Died here is more like it.

JENNY: Oh, you are so passionate. Just like I imagined.

NORMAN: You've seen all my pictures?

JENNY: Oh, no! I've never seen you on the screen. We don't have a
movie house in Hard Luck. We don't have anything. But see?
Once a month I get **Screen Date, Screen Romance, Love in
Pictures**. I read them 'til their covers fall off.

NORMAN: Look, ah, you're a real nice, I mean ... I just think you've
got to know the ... well, the truth.

JENNY: The truth? What are you saying?

NORMAN: You've got things all wrong. You're living in a fantasy world ... and . . .

MA: *(From offstage.)* Maybe he's in the cafe!

WILLI: Yeah! He couldn't have gotten far.

NORMAN exits left with suitcase while JENNY goes to look out the door.

DILLI: *(From offstage.)* When we catch 'em can I have him, Ma?

TILLI: No fair!

MA JAMES, WILLIE, TILLI, and DILLI pour into the cafe up right. MA enters, pushes JENNY aside looks around the room.

MA: Ain't here.

WILLI: He's gotta be!

JENNY: Excuse me ... are you looking for someone?

DILLI: Yeah ... a guy ... about this tall, blue eyes. Kinda cute.

TILLI: And runs REAL fast.

JENNY: Gee ... I didn't see anybody like that. What do you want him for?

MA: Business, kid. What's upstairs?

JENNY: Rooms. This used to be a saloon 'til prohibition shut us down. Now we serve ham sandwiches and pickles. You hungry?

WILLI: I sure am!

MA: We don't got time to fill that bottomless pit of yours, Willi. We gotta –

SHERIFF enters up right.

SHERIFF: Evenin', Miss Jenny.

JENNY: Howdy, Sheriff.

SHERIFF: Ma in? Somethin's up.

MA: *(Tries to disguise her voice.)* On second thought, we would like a table, my dear.

JENNY: Sure. Help yourself. You got your pick.

JENNY exits right.

SHERIFF: (*Fixes his hair.*) Say, ladies.

MA: Yes?

SHERIFF: You all look mighty familiar.

MA: We do?

SHERIFF: Yeah ... I can't help thinkin' I've seen that charming face of yours someplace.

WILLI: Probably the society page, Mother.

DILLI: The New York News.

SHERIFF: Could be. You're society gals?

TILLI: Yeah ... we're real social.

SHERIFF: I don't know. The gals I saw were dressed REAL purty.

MA: Oh, Sheriff! These are nothing but our slumming clothes. We rode here on horseback.

SHERIFF: From where?

Simultaneously.

TILLI: Pennsylvania.

WILLI: New York.

DILLI: Ohio.

MA: (*Shortly after the trio.*) Out east.

WILLI: Yeah ... so you can imagine why we ain't sittin' down.

MA: AREN'T sitting down, Wilhemina.

DILLI and TILLI break out into laughter.

WILLI: What's wrong, Dilliphendra?

TILLI: (*Laughing.*) Dilliphendra?

DILLI: I wouldn't laugh, Tillisaurus.

SHERIFF: Well, you ladies must be mighty tired after your long trip! I know Mrs. Barrack's got all kinds of rooms upstairs. You'll sure lend some class to our little town if'n you stay a while.

OLGA and JENNY enter right.

OLGA: Howdy, Sheriff. Evenin' ladies.

SHERIFF: These here are society ladies all the way from the East coast.

OLGA: (*Moves behind bar.*) Well, I'll be.

MA: Have you a room or two ... I know we don't have reservations ...

OLGA: And honey, I don't have no reservations about givin' you a couple of rooms. C'mon right over here and sign the register. (*OLGA places book and pen on bar.*) Now what's on your mind, Sheriff?

SHERIFF: Feller by the name of Graven Slade just stopped by the office. Says he's a developer from Denver. 'N you know what he's plannin' to develop? A lake.

OLGA: A lake?! Now where's he gonna put a lake around here, Sheriff?

SHERIFF: Right here.

OLGA: He's gonna sink Hark Luck.

SHERIFF: He's plannin' to damn up the river 'n that'll fill the valley with water 'n then he's gonna put a big fancy resort 'n a marina on the shores.

OLGA: And what are we supposed to do? Learn to swim?

MA: Excuse me, can we get some keys to our rooms, please?

OLGA: Jenny, go on 'n get them keys to numbers one and two.

JENNY: (*Quickly.*) Number one's taken.

OLGA: That's the presidential suite. It's got a sink.

JENNY: Well, Mr. ... I mean our other guest requested the best.

MA: Somebody else up there?

JENNY: Well, somebody who wants lots of privacy.

WILLI: We'll give him lots of that.

JENNY leads MA, WILLI, TILLI, and DILLI off left as PATTY and GINNY enter right.

PATTY: I NEVER was so insulted in my whole born days!

GINNY: The NERVE of him!

OLGA: What's wrong, girls?

PATTY: (*Sits at table.*) I can't talk about it 'til I have a drink.

OLGA: The usual?

GINNY: (*Sits with PATTY.*) I wanna double!

OLGA grabs three bottles.

SHERIFF: Let me guess. You two just crossed paths with Graven Slade.

OLGA: One sarsaparilla and a double.

OLGA plops bottles on table. PATTY and GINNY each take a swig.

OLGA: Now what's this all about?

PATTY: Sheriff's right. Feller by the name of Slade drove up in his big black touring car steps out just as pleased with himself as a snake that just swallowed a whole squirrel.

SHERIFF: What'd he want?

GINNY: Our house! Our land! Everything our folks worked for.

OLGA: He was gonna pay, wasn't he?

PATTY: 'Course he was gonna pay. One ticket out of Hard Luck plus one hundred dollars a piece.

OLGA: What?!

GINNY: Said that was generous.

PATTY: He's floodin' the entire valley he says.

GINNY: And he says unless we're real good at buildin' arks, we'd better take his offer.

OLGA: He said that, did he?

SLADE enters up right, followed by LOTTA.

SLADE: I most certainly did! No point in not putting things in the proper perspective.

SHERIFF: Evenin', Slade.

SLADE: Evenin', Sheriff. They say this is the only hotel in town.

OLGA: We don't cater to your kind, Mr. Slade.

SLADE: That so? My money's good as anybody's. *(SLADE snaps his fingers. LOTTA pulls a wad of bills from her purse.)* Lotta Lamour ... my secretary.

LOTTA: Pleased to meet ya, I'm sure.

SLADE snaps his fingers. LOTTA puts the bills away.

SLADE: So, we got a deal for a couple of rooms tonight?

OLGA: What's your business in Hard Luck, Slade?

SLADE: I'm making the folks in town very generous offers for their property.

PATTY and GINNY choke and cough.

SLADE: Must be the dust that covers everything in this washed up old ghost town.

OLGA: Hard Luck's our home.

PATTY: And that's how it's gonna stay!

LOTTA: Don't be so sure, I'm sure.

SLADE snaps his fingers. LOTTA whips out poster and unfolds it, holding it so all can read. It says, "Grand Opening of Slade Seaside Resort Coming Soon!"

SLADE: Picture a vast blue lake ... white sailboats dotting the water ... a palacial resort at one end of the tree-lined shore. Cabins bordering the water. Happy, happy people relaxing, enjoying a stay at this beautiful getaway.

OLGA: That there's a real purty picture. Just one thing wrong with it.

LOTTA: Oh, yeah?! What's that, I'm sure.

OLGA: Nobody's GOT to sell their land to you.

LOTTA: Oh, Mr. Slade's got that all figured, I'm sure.

PATTY: This is a free country!

GINNY: You can't force anybody to do anything, ain't that right, Sheriff?

SHERIFF: Absolutely. As our great Constitution says, Four score and seven years ago we do and ordain this Constitution of the United States in order to form a more perfect union. Hear, hear.

PATTY: So there!

SLADE slips paper from his pocket and places it on table.

OLGA: What's that there?

OLGA reaches out to pick up paper, SHERIFF grabs her hand.

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SHERIFF: Hold on. Might be dangerous.

LOTTA: I'm sure.

SHERIFF gingerly picks up paper and opens it.

SLADE: I'm sure reading isn't your specialty, Sheriff, so let me explain. That is an order from the county condemning this property.

GINNY: Condemning it? What's that mean?

SLADE: As it stands it's worthless. The buildings are run down and in ill repair. The land has been laid waste by misuse. And the county feels it can use the land in a better way.

OLGA: They can't do that! *(After a moment)* Can they, Sheriff?

SHERIFF: Oh, my, I'm afraid so. Happened once in North Dakota.

Old shack stood in the middle of town. Old geezer wouldn't sell.

Town fathers wanted the land to put up a courthouse.

PATTY: What happened?

SHERIFF: Town tore that old shack right down 'n threw up their courthouse just like that.

SLADE: 'Course I have to pay you the market value of the land. And assessments on this cafe, for example ... *(He snaps his fingers.)* Lotta?

LOTTA: *(Checks her notebook.)* Total value, \$22.23, I'm sure.

OLGA: What?!

SLADE: I can write you out a check, ma'am ... or we can deal.

OLGA has moved behind the bar.

OLGA: I ain't dealin' with the likes of YOU.

SHERIFF: Now, Olga, my dear, the law's the law.

OLGA: Shut up, Sheriff!

SLADE: Really, Mrs. Barrack, this can be easy or as hard as you want to make it.

OLGA draws shotgun or blunderbuss from behind bar.

OLGA: Go on, Slade, 'n get off my property!

SLADE: Sheriff, this is a malicious threat.

OLGA: Yeah? Well, you're maliciously trespassin'.

SHERIFF: She's right, Mr. Slade.

SLADE: C'mon, Lotta. We'll find someplace else to stay!

LOTTA: I'm sure.

SLADE: But don't worry! I'll be back ... with bulldozers.

SLADE grabs LOTTA and they exit through up right door.

PATTY: Oh, Olga, what are we gonna do?

SHERIFF: I don't think we can do anything! The law's the law.

OLGA: Stop sayin' that! It's nothin' more than a piece of paper.

EDWINA and EDDIE enter up right.

EDWINA: Oh, Olga! We received this notice!

EDDIE: Our mansion's been condemned.

EDWINA: Someone wants to tear it down.

GINNY: Along with the rest of Hard Luck.

PATTY: And they got a paper that'll let 'em do it.

PATTY waves the paper.

SHERIFF: Maybe you can find yourselves some kind of lawyer. They usually got enough grease in their cans to stop a squeek.

OLGA: A lawyer! Say, how 'bout old Butterneck Bisbee?

PATTY: Didn't nobody tell you? Butterneck kicked the bucket last year.

GINNY: Why aren't they ever around when you need 'em.

LOWEENA enters up right, bedraggled and dirty. She is followed by MIMSY, who carries three suitcases tied with rope.

LOWEENA: Water! Water!

OLGA: Honey, what happened to YOU?

LOWEENA: I'll kill him if I ever find him.

JENNY enters left.

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PATTY: Must have run into Slade.

GINNY: I'm sure!

MIMSY: She's talking about Norman Crankfield. A guy ... about this tall, blue eyes. Kinda cute.

OLGA: Say, Jenny, ain't that -

JENNY: Oh, Ma, you gotta get your eyes checked! Why, if you knew who was upstairs you'd -

LOWEENA: Don't mess with me kid. If Norman's here, I want him. I jumped off a moving train and walked fifteen miles through the desert to find him so I can break his neck!

MIMSY: Miss Loweena, you talk like that 'n you don't sound anything like a lawyer.

PATTY: Lawyer!

GINNY: Lawyer!

SHERIFF: Lawyer!

EDWINA: Lawyer!

LOWEENA: I have a terrible headache all of a sudden.

OLGA: You're really a lawyer?

LOWEENA: I had to do something after high school. So I went to Harvard thinking I could get my M - R - S degree. But my score on the bar exam scared 'em all off.

MIMSY: You got a room?

OLGA: Certainly.

MIMSY signs the register.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT RISE: *Later that night. JENNY paces downstage. EDDIE enters up right and moves to her. He puts his hands on her shoulders. JENNY melts.*

JENNY: Oh, darling! I've been waiting for your touch. And now you're here and I really can't believe it's you! (*JENNY turns around.*) Because it's not! (*She pushes EDDIE away.*) Eddie, what are you doing sneaking up on people like that?!

EDDIE: There's a big, beautiful moon outside. Want to go look at it?

JENNY: I already saw it.

EDDIE: Not much fun looking at it alone.

JENNY: That all depends.

EDDIE: On what?

JENNY: On who you're dreaming about.

EDDIE: You're sure acting funny!

JENNY: Eddie, do you want a sandwich or a coke or something?

EDDIE: (*Moves closer and closer to JENNY.*) I want to take you outside so we can look at the moon together. You know? My grandma said that if you stare at a full moon long enough, you'll see your future in it.

JENNY: Your future's going to be two black eyes if you don't order something or git!

EDDIE: I want a ham and cheese sandwich.

EDDIE defiantly sits at a table. JENNY goes behind the counter to make him a sandwich.

EDDIE: With EXTRA cheese, Swiss. Before we get married, you'll need to know that I love Swiss cheese.

JENNY: You know something. I always think of you when I look at Swiss cheese.

EDDIE: Really?

JENNY: Yeah ... it smells funny.

EDDIE: Go ahead and treat me like dirt. I'll always crawl back for more.

JENNY: Eddie, don't you know that's no way for a lady to treat her feller?

EDDIE: It isn't? That's how Ma treated Pa.

JENNY places plate on table. She turns and sees NORMAN, now with slicked-back hair, a thin mustache, and a dramatic costume.

JENNY: (To NORMAN.) If you really love somebody you don't say mean things to 'em. You tell 'em they're the best thing that ever happened to you. You tell 'em they make your heart skip a beat whenever you see 'em. And you tell 'em even when they're not around, you can't get 'em out of your mind.

NORMAN: (Overacting.) You must be a psychic for you have read my thoughts.

EDDIE laughs.

EDDIE: What in tarnation's THAT?!

JENNY: Oh, poor, sheltered, Eddie. This is the world's greatest motion picture star ... Rudolf Falentino!

EDDIE: Motion picture star?! Ha! Why aren't you in Hollywood where you belong?

NORMAN: I'm getting away from it all.

NORMAN: (Kissing her hand.) My friends call me Rudolf. And I am only hungry for your lips.

EDDIE: You'd better watch out, Jenny. Rudolf here's a pretty fast mover.

NORMAN: (To EDDIE.) Mr. Falentino to you! (To JENNY) Now, where were we? Oh, yes, your lips.

NORMAN grabs JENNY and holds her close to him.

EDDIE: Hey, now! Jenny's my girl! And if you get any closer, I'll . . . I'll ...

As NORMAN and JENNY are about to kiss, EDDIE slips his sandwich between them so they kiss the sandwich. EDDIE grabs NORMAN, but is quickly thrown to the ground.

EDDIE: Hey! That ain't fair! (*NORMAN pulls sword from his belt. EDDIE backs up along the floor.*) Okay, so I'm wrong! It's fair, okay?!

EDDIE races off up right, exiting.

EDDIE: Ma! Ma!

JENNY: Now, where were we?

NORMAN: That sandwich tasted magnifico! How about one for your little boobala?

JENNY: My little boobala! Oh, Rudolf!

JENNY moves behind counter to make a sandwich.

NORMAN: Any sign of the mother and her three daughters?

JENNY: Those society types? I suppose you want to put them in your next picture.

NORMAN: Actually, if I put anyone in my next picture ... it would be you!

JENNY: Me? Really? (*Slams knife down.*) You shouldn't joke about stuff like that. It isn't nice. It's very mean because you don't mean it. I'm little Miss Nobody from Nowheresville. As soon as you're rested, you'll leave and forget about me and go back to Hollywood where you'll find some gorgeous starlett to slink around in your next picture.

NORMAN: But Jenny ... listen to you. Look at you! You are so . . . so ... passionate.

JENNY: Well, it's all true and you know it. I'm sure there's a Jenny in every town you travel to. They're probably dying right now ... dying from broken hearts.

JENNY races off left.

NORMAN: (*As himself.*) Wow! What's wrong with me? What am I saying? What am I doing? It's gotta be this getup. It's crazy. I can't be somebody I'm not. It's not fair to Jenny. It's just a lie. A horrible, cruel lie!

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MA, DILLI, TILLI, and WILLI enter left. They do not see NORMAN who tries to tiptoe off up right.

DILLI: He ain't here, Ma!

TILLI: We looked everywhere.

WILLI: My feet are killin' me.

MA: And they're gonna be killin' HIM when we get our hands on his skinny little carcass.

DILLI: We gonna stomp 'em to death?

MA: There won't be nothin' left but a puddle. (*MA sees NORMAN just about to leave.*) Hey, you! (*NORMAN freezes, but doesn't turn around.*)

TILLI: Say, Ma! That's quite a getup!

WILLI: You goin' to a costume party?

DILLI: Better be, wearin' somethin' like that.

TILLI: Yeah! Daddy'd shoot you on sight dressed like that.

NORMAN turns suddenly, dramatically. The women gasp and step back.

MA: Well, I'll be the blank durin' Russian roulette.

DILLI: Could it be?

WILLI: Way out here?

TILLI: The one and only?!

MA/DILLI/WILLI/TILLI: Rudolf Falentino!

They rush to him, but he holds up his hands and they fall to their knees.

NORMAN: Please, my little pets! We musn't ruffle the finery! You may rise!

MA, TILLI, DILLI, and WILLI stand.

TILLI: Oh, Ma! Dressed like that, can't you tell?

DILLI: What ELSE would he be doin' here.

WILLI: He's makin' a picture

MA: Are you?! A real picture? Right here?

NORMAN: Sounds like a magnifico idea! And you beautiful ladies ...
what are you doing here?

MA: Snake huntin'.

NORMAN: Snake hunting? Is this an American pastime?

MA: It sure is when a feller sees more 'n he oughta see.

DILLI: And when we find him, we're gonna turn him into cat food.

NORMAN: Cat food?

WILLI: Yeah ... and all that's left of him'll fit into one of them little tins.

NORMAN: Oh, you Americans ... so prone to exaggerate. But then
look at the size of your lakes ... your mountains ... (*MA takes out a
big knife.*) that knife!

TILLI: Yeah, we find him 'n it's all over.

SHERIFF enters up right. MA quickly hides knife.

SHERIFF: Why, ma'am, I was hopin' to find you here!

MA: Sheriff, if this isn't a pleasure.

SHERIFF: It is? Really?

TILLI: Ma! That's the sheriff.

MA: And have you ever seen such a splendid figure of a man?

SHERIFF: Why, ma'am, I was wonderin' if you'd do me the honor of
takin' a gander at the full moon tonight. It's just as purty as a
baby's bottom.

MA: Does Mr. Falentino mind?

NORMAN: I had the same intention myself!

SHERIFF: Falentino, hmmm, that name sounds familiar. I'd better
check the posters back at the office.

MA: We can do that after looking at the moon.

SHERIFF: Why, ma'am, if you ain't a dreamboat yourself.

SHERIFF and MA exit arm in arm.

WILLI: Well, now, Rudolf, now that Ma's gone

DILLI: We can have you all to ourselves.

TILLI: You sure are one hunka munka.

WILLI: Even if you do dress funny.

TILLI, WILLI, and DILLI slowly advance on NORMAN.

NORMAN: Ah, you American women are so ... forceful.

WILLI: You ain't seen nothin' yet!

NORMAN: But, please, you make me blush!

DILLI: Get him, girls!

NORMAN races off right. DILLI, WILLI, and TILLI race off after him. A moment later, SLADE and LOTTA enter up right.

SLADE: All right, Lotta, you know what you're supposed to do?

LOTTA: I think so, I'm sure. But how come I gotta do it, Graven, baby?

SLADE: After this afternoon, I can tell these folks aren't going down easily. They're going to try something. It might even be legal!

LOTTA: Gosh, that'd be awful, I'm sure.

SLADE: So if you spy of 'em, you can let me know what they're planning and I can head them off at the pass.

LOTTA: Gosh! Sounds just like a movie, I'm sure. But what makes you think they're gonna go spillin' their guts to me?

SLADE: I already told you. You're sick of me. I'm evil! I scare you.

LOTTA: But I still love ya!

SLADE: Act like you don't, Lotta. They'll take you under their wings and pretty soon you'll find out everything.

LOTTA: I hope you know what I'm doin', I'm sure.

SLADE: All you've got to do is cry and they'll put the noose around their own necks.

LOTTA: You mean like this -

SLADE covers LOTTA's mouth

SLADE: Not yet! Give me ten seconds to get out of here. Understand? (*LOTTA nods.*) One ... two ...

SLADE slips out up right door. LOTTA files her nails, tapping the floor until she reaches ten. Suddenly, she lets out a bloodcurdling scream and bursts into tears. JENNY and OLGA race on left.

OLGA: Why Miss Lamour!

JENNY: What happened?

OLGA: Are you hurt?

JENNY: There's only one thing that could have done this to her!

OLGA/JENNY/LOTTA: A man!

OLGA: Tell us about it right now!

LOTTA: Oh, gosh, it's too horrible, I'm sure!

JENNY: It's all right. We've all been through it.

LOTTA: It was this evening ... after we left here ... I asked Graven ... I mean Mr. Slade ... if what he was doin' to your valley was all legal and everything. And that's when he started yellin' and yellin'! He told me I was dumb and stupid and to keep my nose out of it and that they didn't want me going back to town with him ever again 'til it was underwater. And that made me real scared because I don't even know how to swim. So that's when I ran right here.

OLGA: Well, if you ain't a whole lot smarter 'n you look.

LOTTA: Hey!

JENNY: You're welcome to stay here, Miss Lamour. We've got plenty of room and Mr. Slade won't be able to bother you.

OLGA: We'll post a watch.

LOTTA: Oh, I feel ever so much better. Might you show me to my room now? I don't require much at all ... for I can't pay except for this.

LOTTA takes off her glittering bracelet and gives it to OLGA.

OLGA: Save it, honey. You'll need it to buy a train ticket outta here.

LOTTA bursts into tears as LOWEENA, MIMSY, EDDIE, and EDWINA enter up right.

EDWINA: So, you see, you've GOT to help us, Miss Nordstrom!

LOWEENA: But, Mrs. Greenville, I've never practiced law in this state.

EDDIE: It's just like Pennsylvania 'cept there are a whole lot less people and more sagebrush.

LOWEENA: But you don't understand. I am looking for someone.

And if I find a clue as to his whereabouts, I'm going to track that trail no matter what.

EDWINA: And we'll help you. But you're the only one we can turn to.

OLGA: It's true, Miss Nordstrom. We'll lose everything if you don't help.

LOWEENA: If this is everything, you're better off without it.

JENNY: But this was my father's dream.

MIMSY: He must have been an insomniac.

JENNY: No. He just didn't have a crystal ball that told him the mine would play out and the railroad wouldn't come to town.

LOTTA: Hey! Is she a lawyer or like something?

MIMSY: Or like something.

LOWEENA: I'm a member of Smirch and Smakk. And who are you?

OLGA: Miss Lamour is Mr. Slade's personal secretary.

LOWEENA: Is that so?

JENNY: She's had enough trouble with him and wants to help us.

EDWINA: Help us what?

OLGA: Keep Hard Luck right where it is.

LOWEENA: You haven't seen a guy about this tall, blue eyes, kinda cute, hidin' around here somewhere, have you?

LOTTA: Nope, but I'll keep my eyes peeled, I'm sure.

EDWINA: Miss Nordstrom, can the county just condemn our property just like that?

LOWEENA: If the price is right!

OLGA: What do you mean?

LOWEENA: The party requesting the condemnation must show to the county that the land will be better used through the new plan than the way it is currently being used. And that almost always involves how much will the county get back in taxes. Whichever plan provides the county with a bigger tax chunk. That side wins.

JENNY: So all we've got to do is show we'll be able to give more in taxes to the county.

EDDIE: *(Sarcastically.)* Gosh, Jenny, what a great idea!

JENNY: Oh, shut up.

MIMSY: Now, hold on. Isn't this Slade feller opening up a resort on a lake?

OLGA: That's his plan.

MIMSY: I hate to bring this up, but how many folks you have come through here in a regular month.

JENNY: I can check.

JENNY moves behind the counter and checks through the registration book.

LOWEENA: Mimsy, I'm supposed to be the attorney here. You stick to packing clothes, understand?

MIMSY: But Miss Loweena -

LOWEENA: Mimsy!

JENNY: We had four in March ... three in April ... I guess on account of all the rain ... but we're way ahead now 'cause we got eight stayin' at the hotel tonight.

MIMSY: Now just what do you think Slade's resort's gonna have?

LOWEENA: I was just going to ask that very question.

MIMSY: Doesn't matter who asks it. The answer's pretty clear.

OLGA: His big resort is going to bring in a lot of tax money for the county and our four tourists won't bring in diddly-squat.

EDWINA: There has to be something we can do!

EDDIE: Advertise.

JENNY: Oh, Eddie ... first you've got to have something to advertise.

MIMSY: You got lots of sage. Isn't that something you put inside a turkey?

LOWEENA: Good! You can bill this as "Turkey Town!"

JENNY: What ELSE do we have?

NORMAN backs on right, followed by DILLI, TILLI, and WILLI. They cross to left.

NORMAN: Oh, I love you aggressive American women! But can you be a little less aggressive?

DILLI: Oh, Rudy, Rudy, Rudy. I can play the damsel in distress.

NORMAN: True! You're very distressing.

WILLI: But I'm prettier! I'll look better on screen next to you.

NORMAN: Depends on which side is your good side.

WILLI: You gotta have a good side?

TILLI: Let ME star in your picture! I can bat my eyelashes faster than anybody this side of the Mississippi.

NORMAN: I knew you were batty the minute I met you!

NORMAN turns, runs off left. WILLI, TILLI, and DILLI run after him.

LOWEENA: Was that -

MIMSY: Couldn't be.

LOWEENA: Not here -

MIMSY: Was it -

LOWEENA: (*Pushes MIMSY aside.*) I'd better make sure.

MIMSY: I'm right behind you.

LOWEENA races off left, followed by MIMSY

EDDIE: All this stupid fuss over some guy coming here to make a motion picture.

JENNY: It's horrible the way he's being treated. Just like a prize pig at the county fair. Why don't they let him alone.

EDWINA: Personally, I can't see what they find in that jet black hair, blue eyes, sensuous mouth.

EDWINA screams and faints into a chair.

EDDIE: Ma? Ma? Ma, wake up!

EDDIE fans his mother.

OLGA: Jenny, listen to me. If this feller is big in pictures, and he's makin' a picture here in Hard Luck ... well, now ... we might just have something to advertise.

JENNY: Why, Ma, you might have something there!

EDDIE: How long does it take 'em to shoot a picture?

JENNY: Oh, months and months.

EDDIE: You mean he's stickin' around all that time?

JENNY: Gosh ... he might have to.

EDDIE: Well, that's a fine howdeedo!

EDDIE exits up right angrily.

OLGA: Eddie! Eddie! You forgot your mama!

OLGA moves to EDWINA.

OLGA: C'mon, Edwina. You can't stay here.

EDWINA: (*Rising, dazed.*) Rudolf Falentino here ... walking on this very floor . . .oh, oh ...

OLGA: Don't you faint again, Edwina.

EDWINA: I can't help it! Just thinking of him sends me -

OLGA: Well, don't think about him. Think of your late husband.

EDWINA: (*Stiffens up.*) Killjoy!

EDWINA marches up right, OLGA follows, both exiting.

JENNY: (*Dreamily.*) Months and months!

NORMAN races on down left.

NORMAN: (*As himself.*) Oh, gosh!

JENNY: Mr. Falentino?

NORMAN: (*His alter-ego kicks in.*) Oh, by golly pizza spimoni!

JENNY: I'm sorry they're acting so childish. It must be horrible being around people like that all the time.

NORMAN: If I could just be myself. (*To himself*) Boy, if I could just be myself!

JENNY: Look ... I know you're considering doing a picture here.

NORMAN: I am? Oh, yes. I am!

JENNY: And you need time to be alone so those creative juices can congeal.

NORMAN: Is that what happens?

JENNY: We've got a cabin. It's tiny ... it's dirty ... but nobody but me and Ma know where it is. You want me to hide you there?

NORMAN: Hide?! Boy do I.

JENNY: I'll get the horse saddled.

NORMAN: Horse?

JENNY: Oh, silly, I KNOW you know how to ride. All those scenes racing bareback across the desert.

NORMAN: That's ... that's trick photography.

JENNY: You're too modest.

JENNY moves to right, stops, turns.

JENNY: Rudolf?

NORMAN: Yes, my boobala?

JENNY: I'm sorry for what I said earlier. I don't care if you DO have a girl in every town. It's okay. It's 1925. I'll be your girl in this town.

JENNY exits right. NORMAN rips off his sheik headdress and mustache. He takes chair, moves it to center stage. EDDIE enters up right, unseen by NORMAN. EDDIE halts and hides behind swinging doors.

NORMAN: *(Pretends chair is JENNY, as himself.)* Jenny? There's something you need to know. I'm not the big movie star you think I am. I'm not Rudolf Falentino. My name is Norman Crankfield. I'm a theatrical supply salesman. I just happen to be running away from a very possessive fiancé and a family of bootleggers who killed a couple of guys on the train heading west. *(NORMAN tips chair and spins it. He then holds it in one leg for a moment.)* I'm sorry I disappointed you. But ... I still think you're the most wonderful girl in the whole world. What do you think?

The chair falls flat on the floor.

JENNY: *(Off right.)* Rudolf! Come help me! We can get to the cabin faster!

NORMAN, terrified, looks back at the door. As he turns around, EDDIE slips behind the counter, so he remains unseen. NORMAN bolts off through the door up right. A moment later, JENNY enters right.

JENNY: Rudolf, I know you can saddle a horse ... (*Looks around.*)
as well as I can.

WILLI, TILLI, DILLI, LOWEENA, and MIMSY race on down left.

WILLI: Where'd he go?

JENNY: (*Sadly.*) I don't know.

LOWEENA: What happened?

JENNY: I must've said the wrong something.

DILLI: (*Pointing right.*) Let's go this way!

DILLI, TILLI, WILLI, LOWEENA, and MIMSY run off right. A moment later, SLADE enters up right. He grabs phone and dials.

SLADE: Lotta? Meet me in the cafe, pronto!

SLADE sits at table. He puts his feet up and relaxes. MA races on up right.

MA: Oh, gosh! What'll I do now?

*MA runs off up left, not noticing SLADE. SHERIFF runs on up right holding a **WANTED POSTER**.*

SHERIFF: Now, ma'am, this SURE does look A LOT like you. I think you got some explainin' to do.

SHERIFF notices SLADE.

SHERIFF: You see one gorgeous kewpie doll come in here?

SLADE: She went thataway. (*SLADE points right.*)

SHERIFF: Much obliged.

SHERIFF hurries off right. LOTTA enters left.

LOTTA: So, Graven, baby ... I'm in like flint, I'm sure.

SLADE: They bought the act?

LOTTA: Hook, line, and stinker.

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SLADE: Good! So, what're they plannin'?

LOTTA: Nothin' so far. But they sure better not see me talkin' to you.

If you want to meet me, just toss two pebbles at my window.

Second floor, corner window.

SLADE: Good girl, Lotta! I'm gonna make a rich woman out of you!

SLADE slips off up right. LOTTA sighs, then exits down left. EDDIE stands up behind counter and smiles as the curtain falls.

ACT TWO, SCENE 1

AT RISE: *That night, very late, in the desert near Hard Luck. Played before the curtain, we see a sign that says “Hard Luck, 6 Miles.” A rock sits center stage, with perhaps a cactus. NORMAN enters left carrying a suitcase. He moves center and sets the suitcase on the ground.*

NORMAN: *(Shivering.)* I don't know how these sheiks do it. I feel like a log on a fire during the day and an ice cube at night. Wow! This rock is warm, maybe if I curl up behind it I won't freeze to death.

NORMAN moves behind rock. He screams and jumps back. SAM and SLIM jump up from other side.

SAM: Watch it, kid!

SLIM: Didn't your mother ever tell you?

NORMAN: Tell me what?

SLIM: NEVER wake a sleeping bootlegger.

SAM: Especially dressed like that!

NORMAN: You mean you don't recognize me?

SLIM: Hey, Slimy!

SAM: Yeah, Slimier?

SLIM: Ain't that the guy on the train?

NORMAN: Holly train ride, I've seen you two before.

SAM: That's right.

NORMAN: And you were ... dead.

SLIM: Amazin' what modern medicine can do!

NORMAN: But ... that ... that ... lady shot you.

SAM: That weren't no lady. That were Ma.

SLIM: Ma James!

NORMAN: THE Ma James?

SAM: Yep, two hundred ten bank hits up'n down the Mississippi.

NORMAN: And she's back.

SLIMY: Yeah? Go on!

NORMAN: She's in town. Staying with Jenny.

SAM: Who's Jenny?

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NORMAN: The most wonderful girl in the world.

SLIM: I think this guy's in love!

SAM: Crazy enough to be.

NORMAN: I'm not crazy enough to be sitting here talking to ghosts.

SLIM: We ain't ghosts!

NORMAN: But I saw her SHOOT you!

SAM: Ain't you ever heard of bullet proof vests?

SLIM: Every well-dressed criminal has one.

NORMAN: What are you doin' here? I thought you were trying to get away from her.

Sound of a car pulling up and stopping. We hear a door slam.

SAM: Shhhh! Get out of sight!

SLIM: If you value your life.

NORMAN ducks behind rock as SLADE enters left.

SLADE: Slimy? Slimier?

SAM: You're Slade?

SLADE: That's right.

SLIM: You come to deal?

SLADE: We already got a deal, remember?

SAM: Things got a little hot for us, Slade.

SLIM: We had to put in a little overtime.

SAM: So the price just went up.

SLADE: How much?

SLIM: Another ten grand. That still leaves you with sixty grand.

SLADE: Ten grand?! Are you crazy?!

SAM: We got expenses, Slade.

SLIM: Yeah ... you ain't the only one with overhead.

SAM: And the price of everything's goin' up.

SLADE: I want the cash NOW!

SLIM: It's Ma James cash.

SLADE: She'll never know.

SAM: Not what I heard. They say she marks every dollar with her own little mark. A smiley face right on Lincoln's shoulder.

SLADE: I don't care if she draws mackerels on the great seal, give me the money!

SLIM: Our share first!

SLADE: I'll give you your share all right! (*SLADE pulls gun and fires at SAM and SLIM, who fall over.*) The price did just go up, fellas. Cost you your lives!

SLADE laughs as he grabs NORMAN's suitcase and exits. We hear car door slam and car drive away. NORMAN peeks up from behind the rock.

NORMAN: Oh, gosh, deja vu!

SAM: (*Sits up.*) Happens all the time!

SLIM: That guy's packin' a twenty-two caliber brain inside a fifty caliber head.

NORMAN: What are you talking about?

SLIM: He took YOUR suitcase.

NORMAN: What?!

SAM: Sure did!

SAM pulls identical suitcase from behind the rock.

SAM: Here's the one packed with cash.

SLIM: Looks like his deal is gonna fall flat.

NORMAN: Good news for Hard Luck.

SAM: But rotten luck for you, kid.

SAM and SLIM lie down behind rock

NORMAN: What are you doing?

SLIM: Got at least a few more hours 'til dawn.

NORMAN: But he'll come back here!

SAM: Why? He thinks we're dead. So does Ma James.

SLIM: 'Course they don't think YOU'RE dead, so they'll all come lookin' for you.

NORMAN: How comforting.

SLIM: Night, Slimey.

SAM: Night, Slimier.

NORMAN: Wait a cotton-pickin' minute! What am I going to do about all this?

SLIM: You're the one in the funny outfit!

SAM: You figure it out!

Before NORMAN can respond, we hear loud snoring. NORMAN snaps his fingers and runs off left as the lights dim to darkness.

ACT TWO, SCENE 2

AT RISE: *Late the next morning, back at the Drop On Inn cafe. Everything is the same as before. OLGA is on the phone while JENNY sweeps the floor listlessly.*

OLGA: I tell you, Rudolf Falentino is right here in Hard Luck. That's right, H - A - R - D - L - U - C - K. He's here to make a motion picture.

JENNY: *(Cries.)* He's not here. He ran away!

OLGA: *(Covers the phone.)* Stop that blubbering, you hear?! I got Walter Pinchel on the other line - top gossip columnist in the whole United States. *(Back into phone.)* Sorry, Mr. Pinchel. A technical problem on the set. Talk to Mr. Falentino. Well, that's not possible. *(Covers phone.)* Why ain't it possible?

JENNY: *(Cries.)* 'Cause he's g-g-gone!

OLGA: *(Into phone.)* He stepped out. He's checking on the horses. Who's his co-star? *(Covers phone.)* Give me a co-star's name.

JENNY: I-don't-know.

OLGA: Ida Noe. Yes ... a very unknown known. You ARE? You WILL? Of course, we can get you reservations. Yes ... yes, well, thank YOU, Mr. Pinchel.

OLGA hangs up.

OLGA: He's taking the next plane here and bringing a party of four. Do we have room? Ha! Now, there are a million things to do! Jenny, you've got to help. Jenny?! JENNY!

JENNY: Oh, Ma!

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OLGA: I don't have time for these lovesick shenanigans! Go find Mr. Falentino. I have a message for him from Mr. Pinchel. Jenny?

JENNY: Ma, you've got to listen.

OLGA: Honey, we don't got time to chit-chat. We've gotta get this town in shape.

PATTY and GINNY enter up right.

PATTY: Here's the mail, Olga.

GINNY: Nothin' but the usual Sears circular.

PATTY: Too bad we don't have 'nough money to buy nothin'.

OLGA: Girls, we play our cards right, we're gonna have enough bread to open a bakery!

GINNY: You got a fever, Olga?

OLGA: I've never felt better.

PATTY: Now, prohibition's still the law, you know. No nippin' allowed!

OLGA: I ain't been nippin'! Guess who I just got off the phone to.

GINNY: There's a hundred eighty million people in this country, Olga. How you expect us to know which one you were talking to?

OLGA: His initials are W.P.

PATTY: W.P.? Walter Puckett? Only I guess you don't know him 'cause we grew up with him back in Syracuse.

GINNY: Wanda Pickles.

PATTY: Which Wanda Pickles are you talkin' about?

OLGA: Girls, I just talked to Walter Pinchel!

GINNY: THE Walter Pinchel?

PATTY: The one on the radio? "And that's the way it is tonight, America."

OLGA: Uh ha! And guess what? He's comin' to Hard Luck 'n bringin' four people with him. (*Phone rings.*) Drop On Inn. Yes! Yes, it is. I think we can accomodate you. That's right. Get off at Golpher Hole and take Route 6 'til it ends. Turn left at the broken fencepost. Drive a mile 'til you come to a barn that's falling down, take a right. Ride over the first bluff 'n you'll see a rock, turn left and go six miles. You can't miss Hard Luck. Okay, see you then. (*She hangs up.*) JENNY, go get that movie star now if you gotta hog tie him.

JENNY: Ma, I've been tryin' to tell you he's gone!

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OLGA: Gone? What do you mean gone? Gone fishin'? Gone over the hill? Gone to make a phone call?

JENNY: Gone, I scared him off gone.

OLGA: WHAT?! What'd you do?

JENNY: I was gonna take him to the cabin so he'd get away from everybody chasing him 'n fore I could get old Buzzard's Breath saddled, he was gone.

OLGA: He couldn't have gone very far. Not dressed the way he was.

PATTY: We gotta find him!

OLGA: I'll head up to the cabin.

GINNY: We'll look along the creek beds.

OLGA, GINNY, and PATTY exit up right. EDDIE enters down right. JENNY is facing left, sweeping and crying. EDDIE sneaks up and jabs her in the back. JENNY screams and begins to attack him with the broom.

JENNY: Eddie! Cut it out, hear?!

EDDIE: I love it when you're mad, Jenny. Your mouth turns up in the cutest little way.

JENNY: I'm gonna turn YOU up in the cutest little way.

EDDIE: Not before you listen to what I have to tell you.

JENNY: I don't want to listen to anything you have to say, Eddie Greenville.

EDDIE: It's all about your big, brave macho movie hero.

JENNY: I especially don't want to hear what you have to say about him.

EDDIE: I think you oughta.

JENNY: Why?

EDDIE: So you don't make a fool of yourself.

JENNY: What would YOU know about it?

EDDIE: I know why he ran away.

JENNY: He didn't "run away." Little kids "run away." Rudolf Falentino "flees."

EDDIE: He wouldn't if he was Rudolf Falentino.

JENNY: You're telling me THAT'S not Rudolf Falentino.

EDDIE: Any more than I'm Santa Claus.

JENNY: You think I wouldn't know Rudolf Falentino when I saw him?
He looks exactly like his pictures.

JENNY grabs magazine from counter and sticks page under EDDIE's nose.

JENNY: You can't deny that!

EDDIE: Oh, there's a resemblance, all right.

JENNY: And he's wearing the solid gold bracelet Rudolf Falentino is never without. See it right there. It's got an aardvark on it?

EDDIE: Maybe so -

JENNY: (*Dreamily.*) And the way he talks ... the way he moves . . . the things he says ... oh, it's Rudolf Falentino all right. Besides, the entire world know now that Rudolf Falentino is here making a movie. Even Walter Pinchel is coming for an interview and so are lots of other people. Hard Luck's going to become so famous Graven Slade can take a hike!

EDDIE: Think you're so smart? Well, Miss Know-It-All, your movie hero's name is Norman Crankfield.

JENNY: Nope!

EDDIE: And he's a theatrical supply salesman.

JENNY: Wrong again.

EDDIE: And he's running away from some bootleggers trying to kill him and -

JENNY: Stop it, Eddie!

EDDIE: (*The crowning touch.*) And a fiancé whose heart he broke!

JENNY freezes.

EDDIE: So what do you think of him now?

JENNY swats EDDIE with the broom.

EDDIE: What do you think of HIM, not me! Help! Help!

JENNY races off right, crying. EDDIE folds his arms contentedly as LOTTA enters left.

LOTTA: Say, big boy.

EDDIE looks around, notices he's the only man in the room. Points to himself.

LOTTA: Yes, you, I'm sure.

LOTTA approaches EDDIE, who is suddenly terrified.

LOTTA: My, oh my, it certainly is hot in here.

LOTTA begins to fan herself.

LOTTA: You must be radiatin' a lot of heat.

EDDIE: Oh, gosh!

LOTTA: You're practically meltin' a delicate thing like me.

EDDIE: I'm sorry

LOTTA: I'm not.

EDDIE: Well, I ... I gotta get home.

LOTTA grabs EDDIE's tie and pulls him close to her.

LOTTA: Let's have a talk first.

EDDIE: Yes, ma'am.

LOTTA: My name's Lotta.

EDDIE: Lotta What?

LOTTA: You name it.

EDDIE whines and fans himself rapidly.

LOTTA: See what I mean about that heat.

EDDIE: I guess.

LOTTA: Now 'fore you pass out, I must say I couldn't help but overhearin' somethin' about this movie star?

EDDIE: (*Coolly.*) Oh, him again.

LOTTA: You don't like him?

EDDIE: He's a liar.

LOTTA: But he's going to make a movie here, ain't he?

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EDDIE: Ha! That's what THEY think.

LOTTA: What do you mean, I'm sure.

EDDIE: He's not Rudolf Falentino! His name's Norman Crankfield and he's running away from bootleggers and his fiancé.

LOTTA: You're sure.

EDDIE: Heard him say so himself!

LOTTA: Oh, gosh! Well, I'm sure.

EDDIE: And Jenny still thinks he's the cat's pajamas.

LOTTA: You know, big boy, there's one way that's sure to win her back. All you gotta do is make her jealous.

EDDIE: You think so?

LOTTA: I know so! The oldest trick in the book. Soon as she sees you with somebody else, why, she'll come running back into your arms and she'll forget ole Rudolf.

EDDIE: Gosh, maybe you're right

EDDIE grabs LOTTA.

EDDIE: You're the bees knees, Ma'am.

LOTTA: What are you doing, I'm sure?

EDDIE: I've gotta have somebody to make Jenny jealous over.

LOTTA: Not me!

EDDIE: How come?

LOTTA: I'm a city girl through and through.

EDDIE: You are?

LOTTA: Too city for a country boy like you.

LOWEENA and MIMSY enter left.

LOTTA: She's more your type.

EDDIE: You think so.

LOTTA: I know so, I'm sure.

LOTTA exits up right. EDDIE moves to LOWEENA.

LOWEENA: Mimsy, you MUST do something about my clothes. They smell like dust.

MIMSY: So does everybody's. And you know why? Dust! That's all there is around here.

EDDIE: Ma'am? I don't know if you remember me, but my name's Eddie Greenville.

LOWEENA walks around him, looks him up and down.

EDDIE: I live on the north end of town.

LOWEENA: So?

EDDIE: Ma'am ... I think you're prettier 'n a crocus stickin' its head up in a mud flat.

LOWEENA: Get lost.

EDWINA enters up right

EDWINA: I might have known you were here, Eddie!

EDDIE: Mother!

EDWINA: Where's your little girlfriend?

EDDIE: Mother?!

EDWINA: Well, no mind. I've got these papers for the trust fund that need signing.

EDDIE: Do I have to?

EDWINA: If you want control over yours, you'd better sign.

LOWEENA: Oh, you're THAT Eddie!

EDDIE: I'm the only Eddie.

LOWEENA: You sure are. Need a pen?

EDDIE: Thanks.

LOWEENA: Need a lawyer? I mean, somebody ought to look over those papers properly! (*LOWEENA slips the papers from EDDIE.*) Now, Eddie, how about showing me all around this cute little town of yours.

EDDIE: Really? You want me to ... wow! When?

LOWEENA slips her arm in his.

LOWEENA: Let's make hay while the sun's a shinin'. (*LOWEENA drags EDDIE off up right.*)

EDWINA: Am I mistaken or is it unusually hot in here today?

PATTY enters up right.

PATTY: Oh, Edwina! You've got to help us. We can't find Rudolf Falentino anywhere.

EDWINA: He's gone?

PATTY: With the wind!

EDWINA: Maybe he's hidin' someplace in our mansion. How thrilling.

EDWINA races out up right with PATTY

MIMSY: They're all crazy in this town.

MIMSY exits down left. WILLI, DILLI, and TILLI enter right carrying ropes, a gag, and a gun.

WILLI: I'm tired of his runnin' away all the time.

DILLI: What're we gonna do with this stuff?

TILLI: We need this stuff at a rodeo.

WILLI: It's a rodeo all right ... and the prize is Rudolf Falentino.

DILLI: We're gonna rope'em?

TILLI: Tie'em up?

WILLI: 'N then he's ours.

DILLI: But how're we gonna get him?

WILLI: Same way we'd take down a calf. Chase'em, lasso'em, jump'em, and roll'em on his back.

TILLI: But we don't know where he's hidin'.

DILLI: Maybe we could flush'em out.

WILLI: Yeah ... but he's gotta have a real good reason for gettin' flushed out, you know?

TILLI: Somethin' he's really got a hankerin' fer.

JENNY enters right carrying a tray of silverware. WILLI, TILLI, and DILLI freeze.

WILLI: Why, Miss Jenny, if it don't look like you been cryin'.

JENNY: I got a lot on my mind just now.

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DILLI: Yeah ... we're all in love with him, too.

TILLI: Oh, Rudy! Rudy! Rudy!

JENNY bursts into tears. WILLI, DILLI, and TILLI move in to surround her.

WILLI: I do believe he truly loves this little filly.

DILLI: 'N he'd do anything so she wouldn't get hurt.

TILLI: Even turn himself over as ransom.

JENNY screams, drops tray of silverware, but her scream is cut off by a gag over her mouth. The rope is quickly wound around her and they haul her off down right. Moments later, WILLI drags her on, followed by DILLI and TILLI.

WILLI: How come I gotta think of everything?

DILLI: 'Cause you're the brains!

TILLI: 'N you're the only one of us that can write.

WILLI: Here! Hold her!

WILLI gives DILLI the rope "leash" tied to JENNY, who struggles weakly. WILLI grabs pen from behind the desk along with paper.

WILLI: So what do I say?

TILLI: Dear Mr. Falentino.

WILLI: *(Writing.)* Dear Mr. *(She stops.)* Ain't that a bit cordial?

DILLI: I think it's real purty.

WILLI: Shut up! I'll write it myself.

WILLI writes.

TILLI: Done! You want Miss Jenny back, Rudolf must come alone.

Midnight. Here.

DILLI: Oh, that's good!

TILLI: Real professional.

DILLI: Let's just hope he's not back in Hollywood already.

JENNY moans.

WILLI: Now let's beat it!

WILLI sticks note amid the silverware, grabs rope and pulls JENNY down right. DILLI and TILLI follow.

WILLI: Holy tommygun! Somebody's comin'!

WILLI pulls JENNY behind counter. DILLI and TILLI follow, all hide. WILLI has to keep pushing JENNY down as OLGA, GINNY, EDWINA, and PATTY enter down right.

OLGA: I can't imagine where he might be. The cabin was empty.

GINNY: Nothin' along with the creek beds.

PATTY: Our place was clean.

EDWINA: So was our mansion.

OLGA: What're we gonna do?

JENNY moans loudly.

GINNY: You hear that?

PATTY: What was it?

OLGA: Sounded like someone moanin'.

EDWINA: Maybe it's him.

GINNY: But where is he?!

PATTY: Maybe he's back upstairs ... lyin' in his bed ... ravaged by the sun ... the wind ... wild animals.

EDWINA: He needs us! He needs us!

OLGA, PATTY, GINNY, EDWINA race off left. WILLI drags JENNY from behind the bar to exit right. DILLI and TILLI follow them off. NORMAN enters up right, nervously. He hides behind the counter. A moment later, MISS POTTS and MISS PANS enter up right with old-fashioned motion picture camera.

POTTS: I TOLD you so!

PANS: I read the wire itself.

POTTS: Then where is he?

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HARD LUCK

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