

# The Western Tale



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Inspired by *The Winter's Tale* by William Shakespeare

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**BIG DOG PUBLISHING**

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## The Western Tale

**TRAGI-COMEDY.** Loosely based on William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. Set in the Wild West, Big Leo, a wealthy rancher, has "gone madder than a dog" with jealousy. Big Leo thinks his best friend, Doc Xavier, has stolen his wife's heart. Not wanting to be the laughingstock of the county, Big Leo publically accuses his pregnant wife of adultery and takes her to court, where she collapses, apparently dead. Big Leo then orders his newborn baby girl to be abandoned in the Badlands, but his loyal ranch hand secretly saves the child, who is raised by some local squatters. Fast forward 16 years and Big Leo's deserted daughter and Doc Xavier's son meet and fall in love. Can what starts as a sad, gloomy winter's tale blossom into a happy one? With western flair, this adaptation includes Shakespeare's famous bear scene, and Father Time has been transformed into a traveling snake oil salesman, who functions as the narrator. Audiences will love this Wild West version of the Shakespeare classic complete with mistaken identities, a spring festival, comedic twists, and even a little romance.

**Performance Time:** Approximately 80 minutes.



An 1807 print of Antigonus chased by a bear, (Act III, Scene 3) of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*.

## About the Story

William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* was first published in 1623 in the *First Folio* and is considered by critics to be one of Shakespeare's later works, presumably written in 1610-1611. The first documented performance of *The Winter's Tale* was in 1611 at the Globe Theatre. The source for the play is thought to be Robert Greene's novel, *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time*, which was first published in 1588. However, the two most popular characters in the play, Autolycus and the shepherd's son, are fully Shakespeare's creations. First considered a comedy but later labeled a romance, *The Winter's Tale* has been grouped with Shakespeare's other "problem plays," which include *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Tempest*. *The Winter's Tale* contains Shakespeare's most famous stage direction, "Exit, pursued by a bear." It is unknown if Shakespeare used a real bear in his productions, but scholars posit that the bear was most likely portrayed by an actor wearing a bearskin costume.

## Characters

(6 M, 7 F, 5 flexible, extras)

(With doubling: 6 M, 5 F, 2 flexible)

**OTTO/OLGA:** Narrator and snake oil salesperson; wears a jacket lined with many pockets to display products; flexible.

**BIG LEO:** The richest, most powerful rancher for miles around; male.

**RAMONA:** Leo's faithful wife; female.

**PAULINA:** Ramona's loyal housekeeper; female.

**PEARL:** Big Leo and Ramona's daughter; abandoned as a baby and raised by squatters; falls in love with Doc Xavier's son, Felix; female.

**DOC XAVIER:** Big Leo's longtime friend, a doctor who lives in a neighboring state; male.

**FELIX:** Doc Xavier's son; falls in love with Pearl; male.

**HANK:** Big Leo's trusted foreman; male.

**GUS:** Big Leo's hired hand; male.

**BEAR:** Bear who chases Gus; wears a bear costume; flexible.

**SHERIFF ROSCO:** Sheriff known to sleep on the job; flexible.

**DEPUTY:** Sheriff Rosco's deputy; nonspeaking; flexible.

**ROY/REBA:** Cowboy/cowgirl; flexible.

**JUDGE COB:** Judge who presides at Ramona's trial; female.

**TOOTSIE:** Saloon dancehall girl; female.

**WOOTSIE:** Saloon dancehall girl; female.

**MRS. O'RILEY:** A squatter who finds the abandoned baby Pearl and raises her as her own; female.

**CLETUS:** Mrs. O'Riley's son, who is "dumber than a donkey's behind"; male.

**EXTRAS:** Bartender, Saloon Patrons, Dancehall Girls, Trial-goers, Festival-goers, Wedding Guests, etc.

**NOTE:** Characters wear typical western wear. For flexible roles, change the script accordingly.

## Options for Doubling

TOOTSIE/MRS. O'RILEY (female)

WOOTSIE/PEARL (female)

ROY/ CLETUS (flexible)

DEPUTY/FELIX (flexible)

JUDGE COB/BEAR (flexible)

## Setting

The Wild West.

## Set

A simple set may be adapted for all interior settings with simple props/set pieces. Scenes for the spring festival, wedding, trial, and outdoors may take place farther downstage. Lighting may be used to differentiate locations as well. If desired, stagehands dressed as cowboys can make simple scene changes in front of the audience to western music.

There is a simple interior set upstage with a SL, SR and CS entrance. Outdoor scenes, including the spring festival, can take place downstage. The saloon is DSL, while the train platform and jail are DSR. The bear attack takes place DCS.

**Saloon.** There is a bar and several small tables with chairs.

**Badlands.** There is a rock large enough to lay the baby doll on and a tree or bush large enough for Gus to hide behind.

**Festival.** There is a table for refreshments.

## Synopsis of Scenes

### ACT I

**Scene 1:** Saloon. (Or can be played in front of the curtain with a spotlight, opt.)

**Scene 2:** Big Leo's ranch house.

**Scene 3:** Big Leo's ranch house.

**Scene 4:** Saloon.

**Scene 5:** Big Leo's ranch house.

**Scene 6:** Jail.

**Scene 7:** Big Leo's ranch house.

**Scene 8:** Courthouse.

**Scene 9:** The Badlands.

**Intermission, opt.**

### ACT II

**Scene 1:** Saloon, 16 years later. (Or can be played in front of the curtain with a spotlight, opt.)

**Scene 2:** Doc's office.

**Scene 3:** Outdoors.

**Scene 4:** Festival.

**Scene 5:** Outdoors.

**Scene 6:** Doc's office.

**Scene 7:** Big Leo's ranch house.

**Scene 8:** Wedding.

**Scene 9:** Saloon.



## Props

Small bottle for hair tonic	Simple disguises (masks, glasses, wigs, etc.), for Doc and Hank
Bottle of antacids	
Pillow for Ramona's pregnancy	Assorted disguises for Otto to sell (masks, fake nose, hats, fake beard/mustache, etc.)
Pocket watch, for Big Leo	Pocket watch on a chain, for Otto
Baby doll in a blanket	Drinking glasses
Pistol (toy), for Big Leo	Pistol (toy), for Doc
Note	Bridal veil to disguise Ramona
Feather duster, for Paulina	Bag of gold
Treasure box full of money	Holsters, for male characters
Letter	Gavel
Guitar	Bottle/pitcher and cups for toast
Small bag of money	
\$2.29 in coins	
Cans of "tobacco"	
Bottle of "All-Purpose Snake Oil"	
Assorted refreshments (punch, snacks, etc.)	

## **Special Effects**

Bear growling  
Sound of someone approaching  
Music for festival  
Sound of gunshots  
Wagner's "Bridal Chorus" for wedding  
Western music for scene changes, opt.

**“Exit, pursued by a bear.”**

—Stage direction from *The Winter's Tale* (Act III, Scene 3)

## ACT I

### Scene 1

*(AT RISE: Saloon is empty. Otto enters.)*

OTTO: *(To audience.)* Good evening, folks. Otto's the name, purveyor of fine herbal remedies and other household necessities. Can I interest you in one of my many fine products? *(Opens jacket.)* Hair tonic? Antacid? Perhaps another time. Since you're not in the mood for a demonstration, I suppose I could tell you a story. *(Sits.)* It's about two friends. They were as thick as thieves. Grew up together, played together, got their schoolin' together. But when they got older, they went their separate ways. Now Leo—or "Big Leo" as he's known in these parts—became the richest, most powerful rancher for miles around. The other one became a doctor and set up shop in the next state. Doc Xavier's his name. They didn't see one another often, but when they did, well, it was just like old times! And that's where our story begins. Two good friends just shootin' the breeze 'cause nothing can separate true friends, or can it? *(Exits.)*

## Scene 2

*(AT RISE: Big Leo's ranch house. Big Leo and Doc Xavier enter.)*

DOC: Thanks again for your hospitality, Big Leo. I just love visitin' out here on your ranch. I do love the wide open spaces! Just hope I haven't out stayed my welcome.

LEO: Of course not! It's just too bad you have to go home to that stuffy doctor's office of yours.

DOC: I'm afraid that might be sooner than planned. I have to leave tomorrow.

LEO: Oh? But I thought you were staying until after the holidays. My wife'll be very disappointed to hear it. *(Calls.)* Ramona! Ramona?

*(Ramona enters. She is obviously pregnant.)*

RAMONA: Yes, Big Leo? What is it?

LEO: Doc Xavier says he's leaving us tomorrow!

RAMONA: Is this true? Xavier, can't we persuade you to stay at least another day or two?

DOC: If anyone could persuade me, it would be you, Ramona.

RAMONA: Well then, it's settled! You'll stay another week.

DOC: Oh, no! I couldn't! Remember, I've got lots of folks back home waiting for a doctor, and I do have my own boy Felix at home to think of.

RAMONA: That is true. I'm sure you don't want to be away from him too long.

DOC: Yup. He's growin' like a bad weed.

RAMONA: Xavier! He's sure to be a fine man one day, if he's anything like his father. *(Places her hand affectionately on Doc's arm. Leo notices and frowns.)* As I recall, he takes after you. You were quite the rascal in your younger years, I hear.

DOC: *(Laughs.)* No worse than your husband, I assure you.

LEO: Me? I'm as innocent as a daisy!

RAMONA: (*Lightheartedly.*) You forget who you're talking to, husband.

(*Gus enters.*)

GUS: Sorry to bother you when you got company, Big Leo, but we got a problem down at the corral. We need you right quick.

LEO: Now? Let Hank handle it. He's the foreman.

GUS: He's the one who sent me.

RAMONA: Go ahead, Leo. Hank needs you. I'll entertain our guest.

LEO: (*Frowns.*) All right. (*Starts to exit, followed by Gus. Stops. To Gus.*) I need you to stay here and keep an eye on things... (*Indicates Doc and Ramona.*)

GUS: But...

LEO: No "buts" about it, hear?

(*Leo exits. Awkwardly, Gus moves upstage to eavesdrop. He tries not to look like he's eavesdropping but it is obvious he is listening.*)

DOC: (*To Ramona, sighs.*) Big Leo is sure lucky to have a wife like you. I envy him.

RAMONA: Why, thanks, Doc. Your own dear wife was just as good to you while she was alive.

DOC: Yes. And now I am alone.

RAMONA: Poor Doc. You should marry again. You're too good lookin' to stay single for long.

DOC: Who would have a hound dog like me?

RAMONA: Silly! I bet there're plenty of eligible ladies just waiting in line!

DOC: None who take my fancy.

RAMONA: This is far too depressin'! Come along! Let's find something to cheer you up. (*Takes Doc's arm. Calls.*) Gus, tell Leo we've gone up to the house for a spell.

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*(Doc and Ramona exit.)*

GUS: *(To himself.)* Well, I'm not exactly sure what I was watching fer, but I guess I better go report back to Big Leo.  
*(Exits. Blackout.)*

### Scene 3

(AT RISE: Big Leo's ranch house. Hank and Big Leo are present.)

LEO: Hank, you been my foreman now for nigh on ten years.

You're a man I trust.

HANK: Why, thanks, Big Leo. I try my best.

LEO: That's why I wanted to ask you something. I trust your judgment. Have you ever noticed anything *suspicious* between my wife and the Doc?

HANK: You mean Doc Xavier?

LEO: Who else?! Course I mean Doc Xavier.

HANK: I ain't noticed anything in particular. I thought you and Doc were best friends.

LEO: So did I...

HANK: What are we talking about, exactly?

LEO: Do I have to spell it out for ya? You know, man and woman stuff. Like hanky-panky.

HANK: Oh, I don't think either one of them would do that.

Ramona loves you, and Doc is your best friend.

LEO: *Was* my best friend.

HANK: Well, what makes you think such a thing?

LEO: My wife used to be a dancehall girl, you know.

Sometimes them habits is hard to break.

HANK: Them days is gone. With all due respect, Boss, I think you're being paranoid.

LEO: Yeah? What about the way they been so friendly-like?

She's gushing all over him and telling him how good lookin' he is and how he needs to get himself a wife, and he's going on about how I'm so lucky to have a woman like her.

HANK: Maybe they're just bein' friendly.

LEO: Ah, you're no help.

HANK: I thought you said you trusted my judgment.

LEO: Gus said they headed back to the house once I went to help you out at the corral.

HANK: Gus?! I wouldn't put no stock in what Gus says.



LEO: They probably been carryin' on right under my nose all this time. Why, that baby is probably his!

HANK: Hold on, now. I wouldn't go that far.

LEO: I'm probably the laughingstock of the whole state! "Look at poor Big Leo! His wife and his best friend made a fool of him and he's none the wiser!" *(Pause.)* Hank, as my foreman and the only man I can trust around here, I got a job for you.

HANK: *(Hesitantly.)* What are you proposin'?

LEO: I need you to help me dispose of Doc Xavier.

HANK: Dispose of him? You mean, like, eliminate him for good?

LEO: That's the general idea.

HANK: I don't know, Boss. I've never been one to shoot a man in the back. It seems to me a fair fight might be the best way. That way, nobody'll be able to question you about it.

LEO: You mean like a duel?

HANK: Why, sure. You're the best shot in the whole county...maybe even the state!

LEO: Hmm...maybe you're right. That way, it'll look like I'm just defendin' my honor. You set it up, Hank. Tell that yellow doctor to meet me outside the saloon at high noon tomorrow.

HANK: Whatever you say, Big Leo. You're the boss, after all.

LEO: As for my wife, I haven't decided what I'll do with her yet. *(Exits.)*

HANK: *(To himself.)* Oh, no! What am I gonna do? To disobey Big Leo would be certain death for me. He's just too powerful in these parts. But to do as he asks is unthinkable! He's gone madder than a dog! I've gotta warn Doc Xavier! We'll leave tonight on the next train outta town. *(Rushes off. Blackout.)*

### Scene 4

(AT RISE: Saloon. Big Leo is waiting at a table with two dancehall girls, Tootsie and Wootsie. Otto, a Bartender, and other Saloon Patrons are present.)

LEO: (Looking at his pocket watch.) Two minutes to twelve. I guess I better wait until after the duel to have another whiskey. Then I'll buy a celebration round for the house!

(Everyone cheers.)

TOOTSIE: I can't believe it, Big Leo, Doc Xavier always seemed like such a nice fella to me.

WOOTSIE: (To Leo.) Yeah, I think he's kinda cute.

LEO: I know, ladies. I find it hard to believe myself, but the fact remains. He was dealin' dirty with my wife behind my back. The two of them were plannin' to kill me and take over the ranch. I have to defend my honor and teach that back-stabbin' physician a lesson.

(Roy rushes on.)

ROY: Doc Xavier done skipped town along with Hank! They left on the evenin' train!

(Roy rushes off. Leo stands.)

LEO: What?! Why that—! (Calls.) Sheriff! Sheriff Rosco!

(Sheriff rushes on.)

SHERIFF: What is it, Big Leo?

LEO: Go after that coward Doc Xavier and that turncoat former foreman of mine, Hank. I want them arrested on the double!

SHERIFF: But I can't do that, Big Leo. Once they're out of the county, they're plumb outta my jurisdiction.

LEO: What kind of a lawman are you, anyway?

SHERIFF: Sorry, Big Leo, but my hands are tied. You know that.

LEO: Hmmm. Well, you've gotta do something! At least get on over to the ranch and arrest that wife of mine.

SHERIFF: On what charges?

LEO: Quit yer gum flappin'! I'll meet you over at the jailhouse and tell you all about it.

*(Sheriff rushes off.)*

OTTO: Excuse me, sir, but I couldn't help but overhear your conversation. Quite an unfortunate predicament, if I do say so.

LEO: *(Suspiciously.)* Who are you?

OTTO: Otto's the name, a purveyor of rare medicinal remedies and fine oils from the East. Perhaps I could interest you one of my products?

LEO: I don't think so.

OTTO: But how do you know until you see my fine selection?  
*(Opens jacket to display goods.)*

LEO: Out of my way, you weasel! *(Exits angrily.)*

OTTO: *(Shrugs.)* Anyone else? *(To Tootsie and Wootsie.)*  
Ladies, can I interest you in my specially formulated anti-aging cream? Guaranteed to prevent wrinkles, age spots, and psoriasis!

*(Lights fade as Wootsie and Tootsie gather around.)*

## Scene 5

(AT RISE: Big Leo's ranch house. Paulina is busy dusting furniture with a feather duster. Gus enters.)

GUS: Howdy, Paulina.

PAULINA: Stop right there! Look at them boots on my nice clean floor! You'd think you came right in from the barn!

GUS: I did come right in from the barn.

PAULINA: Well, shoo with ya! Out you go! *(Tries to shoo Gus out.)*

GUS: But wait! Don't ya want to hear the latest gossip about Doc Xavier?

PAULINA: Doc Xavier? What gossip about Doc Xavier?

GUS: There's a rumor goin' round that he and the missus... *(Looks around to make sure no one is listening.)* ...was...you know. And Big Leo's boilin' mad about it, too. There was a duel scheduled outside the saloon at noon today, but Doc done skipped town...him and Hank, although I don't rightly know what Hank has to do with it. In any case, Leo's gonna make me the new foreman.

PAULINA: I can't believe it!

GUS: Why not? I think I'll make a good foreman.

PAULINA: Not that, silly. I mean about Doc and Miss Ramona. I won't believe a word until I hear it from Miss Ramona's own mouth.

*(Ramona enters.)*

RAMONA: *(Sighs.)* Oh, will I ever be comfortable again?

PAULINA: There, there, Missus. A woman in your condition mustn't overdo. *(Fusses over Ramona and helps her sit.)*

RAMONA: Thank you, Paulina. What would I do without you to look after me?

PAULINA: What, indeed! I wager we'll be having a strappin' young buck underfoot in a week or two.

RAMONA: The sooner the better!

PAULINA: Um...did you hear why Doc Xavier left so sudden? One of the hired girls said that when she went in with his breakfast tray, he was already packed and gone.

RAMONA: I have no clue. I thought he was staying a few extra days at least, but he did seem rather depressed yesterday. Thinkin' about his dear wife, I reckon.

PAULINA: Oh? And you didn't hear nothing else?

RAMONA: No. Should I have?

PAULINA: Course not. Probably best that he went home to his own son, anyway, that's what I say.

*(Leo enters.)*

LEO: I need a few minutes alone with my wife.

PAULINA: Course, Boss.

*(Paulina grabs Gus and they exit quickly.)*

LEO: *(To Ramona.)* You're looking satisfied...

RAMONA: Shouldn't I be? A loving husband and a child on the way...I think I might be the luckiest woman alive!

LEO: No doubt. Your plans seem to be working out rather well...

RAMONA: Excuse me?

LEO: Quit acting! Your wiles have been exposed!

RAMONA: Are you ill? Shall I call one of the men? Hank?

LEO: Hank is long gone, as I'm sure you know. Just proves my suspicions were right.

RAMONA: What on earth are you talking about?

LEO: Quite the elaborate plot, my dear. You were very patient in carrying it out. When were you and Doc going to murder me and take over, hmmm?

RAMONA: Have you gone mad?

LEO: I can't believe I've been so gullible all these years. And that brat... *(Points to Ramona's belly.)* ...belongs to that

backstabbing former friend of mine, doesn't it? We did visit him almost nine months ago...

RAMONA: How dare you?! I have never been unfaithful to you! And Doc Xavier has been nothing but your loyal and true friend all these years!

LEO: Save it. I have all the proof I need. It's a conspiracy, plain and simple. And in this state, you know what the punishment for treason is?

RAMONA: You don't mean...

LEO: That's right. Hanging. *(Calls.)* Come on in, Sheriff! Come and arrest this bed-swarver!

*(Sheriff and Deputy enter.)*

SHERIFF: *(To Ramona.)* I'm right sorry, ma'am. Just doin' my duty, you understand.

RAMONA: I am innocent, I tell you!

SHERIFF: That'll be for Judge Cob to decide. In the meantime, let's not have any fuss.

RAMONA: But I'm pregnant! I'm due any time now! You can't—

LEO: *(To Sheriff and Deputy.)* Take her away!

*(Ramona roughly shakes off the Deputy and Sheriff and straightens herself.)*

RAMONA: *(Regally.)* I won't be dragged away like a common criminal! I am innocent of all charges. Someday, when you've come to your senses, you'll see that. *(Turns to exit, head held high. Stops.)* And believe it or not, I still love you.

*(Ramona exits, followed by Sheriff and Deputy.)*

LEO: *(To himself.)* I wish I could believe you, wife, but the pain in my heart tells me otherwise. *(Exits. Blackout.)*

## Scene 6

(AT RISE: The jail. The Sheriff is sleeping in a chair. Paulina enters.)

PAULINA: *(Violently shaking the Sheriff.)* Wake up, ya lazy varmint!

SHERIFF: *(Startled.)* Wha—? What's going on? Have the prisoners escaped?

PAULINA: They could've, for all the good you're doing. Sleeping on the job!

SHERIFF: You won't tell, will you?

PAULINA: That depends. I do work for Big Leo, and I demand to see his wife this instant!

SHERIFF: Sorry, ma'am, but I can't do that.

PAULINA: *(Gasps.)* What? Why you—?! She's about to have a wee one any day! Who'll deliver it...you?

SHERIFF: I'm afraid the baby's already come. Doc Higgins just left.

PAULINA: Doc Higgins?! That quack?! Well, was it a boy or a girl?

SHERIFF: A girl, or so I'm told.

PAULINA: You must let me see! *(Shouts.)* Miss Ramona!

SHERIFF: Sorry, no can do.

PAULINA: No? Then I'm telling Judge Cob you were asleep on your watch! Ha!

*(Sheriff ponders this.)*

SHERIFF: Well...maybe just for a few minutes

PAULINA: Thank you. Now, which way?

SHERIFF: Right through there. I'll take you myself.

*(Sheriff and Paulina exit. Blackout.)*

## Scene 7

(AT RISE: Big Leo's ranch house.)

LEO: *(To himself, pacing.)* Why am I so weak? I will not give in to her pleas for mercy! If I could only get some sleep! But their faces haunt me in the night. *(Stands tall, determined.)* Doc Xavier is out of my reach, but once I deal with that woman, I'll get some peace.

*(Gus enters.)*

GUS: 'Scuse me, Boss.

LEO: What do you want now? I thought I told you I didn't want to be disturbed.

GUS: Well, you see, there's this little calf tryin' to be born and the mamma cow's havin' some trouble.

LEO: You're the new foreman...handle it! *(Aside.)* Hank never would a bothered me with such nonsense.

GUS: All right, Boss. *(Starts to exit. Paulina enters, carrying a baby. Gus stops Paulina. To Paulina.)* Not now! Boss is right depressed and doesn't want to be disturbed.

PAULINA: Depressed? I should hope he's ashamed is what. Now, outta my way! I'll do what I want. *(Pushes Gus out of the way. Loudly clears her throat to get Leo's attention.)* Ahem!

LEO: Now who goes there? I thought I said no visitors!

PAULINA: Well, that's just too darn bad, isn't it?

LEO: What do you want, woman? I already told ya, I'm not changing my mind, so you can go right back to my wife and tell her to quit tryin'.

PAULINA: Well, the least you can do is have a look at your own kin. See? I brought the baby over.

*(Leo sees the baby for the first time.)*

LEO: *(Surprised.)* She...she had the baby?



PAULINA: Course she had the baby. You didn't think jail would stop a baby from comin', did ya?

*(Tentative, Leo approaches to get a closer look at the baby.)*

LEO: What is it?

PAULINA: Why a sweet baby girl, that's what.

LEO: A girl?! I shoulda known she'd have a girl. *(Looks at the baby.)* She is kind of cute. And she's so small.

PAULINA: We knew the minute you laid eyes on her, you'd come to your senses.

*(Pause. Leo turns away.)*

LEO: Go away! I'll have nothing to do with her or her mother!

PAULINA: But she's your own flesh and blood!

LEO: Says who? You?

PAULINA: But she's the spittin' image of you! Look at her eyes, her nose, her little chin...an exact copy of your own!

LEO: No! This is a trick!

PAULINA: Shame on you! The good Lord sent you a beautiful baby girl and you say it's a trick! If I didn't know my place, I'd call you a tyrant.

LEO: If I were a tyrant, I'd kill you for saying so. *(Shouts.)* Gus! Get this woman out of my sight! Now! *(Turns away.)*

GUS: *(Trying to push Paulina away.)* I told you not to disturb him today.

PAULINA: You don't have to push me! I can see for myself there's no use pleading here. He's gone stark-raving mad, and that's for sure! *(To Leo.)* You'll be sorry one day, mark my words. *(Exits with the baby.)*

GUS: *(To himself.)* She is a cute, wee thing...

LEO: *(Threateningly.)* You think so? You in league with my wife and that brassy-tongued housekeeper? *(Draws his gun.)*

GUS: Oh no, Boss! No such thing!

LEO: No? Then prove it! I order you to take that baby and throw it into the creek right now, without delay! We'll see how soft you really are.

GUS: You're...you're jokin'. *(Slight pause.)* Ain't ya?

LEO: Do it within the hour and then report back to me. You're my new foreman now that Hank is gone, and I expect you to do as I say. If you don't, I'll kill you myself along with the child.

GUS: *(Kneels.)* No, sir! I'm beggin' ya...this is too horrible, too bloody –

LEO: Should I live to see that...that creature grow up and call me father? Never!

GUS: But, Boss, it just seems too cruel, don't ya think?

LEO: What would you have me do, Gus? I can't let that child stay here.

GUS: I don't know, sir. Just don't make me kill her.

LEO: Hmm...if I don't force you to kill her, will you promise to do whatever I ask?

GUS: Yes, Boss! Anything!

LEO: All right, then. Take the child far away, out to the Badlands, and leave her there. If the Fates see fit for her to live, then so be it. If not, then she dies!

GUS: Oh, Boss...

LEO: You promised! Now go!

*(Gus exits. Roy rushes on.)*

ROY: Judge Cob's back in town, Boss. She's at the saloon now. *(Rushes off.)*

LEO: *(To himself.)* Excellent! We'll hold a public trial as soon as possible. It's about time my most disloyal lady got what's coming to her!

*(Leo exits. Blackout.)*

## Scene 8

(AT RISE: Courthouse. Big Leo, Tootsie, Wootsie, and other Townspeople enter SR and SL.)

TOOTSIE: (To Wootsie.) I hear Judge Judy Cob is the one handlin' this case.

WOOTSIE: She's awfully tough. I feel sorry for poor Ramona.

TOOTSIE: Shhh! Not so loud!

(Roy rushes on.)

ROY: (Announcing.) Here comes Judge Judy now!

(Judge enters and takes a seat.)

JUDGE: (To Townspeople.) I'm Judge Judy Cob, and I'll be presidin' over these proceedings. As you know, we're gathered here today to hear the sentence against Ramona, wife of Big Leo. Bring her in, Sheriff.

(Sheriff and Deputy escort Ramona on.)

SHERIFF: Here she is, Judge Cob.

JUDGE: Thank you, Sheriff. Read the indictment, please.

SHERIFF: Sorry, Ramona, but I gots to do it. (Reads.)  
"Ramona, you are hereby charged with conspiracy against your own husband, Big Leo. If found guilty, the sentence is hanging."

(Crowd gasps.)

JUDGE: (To Ramona.) How do you plead?

RAMONA: Since I fear the verdict has already been reached, what use is there in pleading my case? Of course, I am innocent of all charges and would plead not guilty.

Everyone here who knows me and my true character would agree. I swear on my grave! But who will listen here in such a puppet's court?

JUDGE: Excuse me, ma'am, but nobody pulls Judge Judy Cob's strings, not even your husband Big Leo. I alone will be the judge of your guilt or innocence. Proceed, please.

RAMONA: I know of no conspiracy. In my opinion, our foreman, Hank, was always loyal and honest. And as for Doc Xavier, I loved him only as I would a brother. That I swear.

LEO: Ah! But you don't deny that you loved him?

RAMONA: As your best friend, it was my duty to treat him with kindness and respect!

LEO: But the child...you can't deny the child is his! Tell the truth, or your punishment will be severe!

RAMONA: Spare me your threats! You've already stolen my life from me, so why should I stoop to lying now? You've put me in jail, called me a harlot, and denied me justice. I have nothing left to live for now but my honor. And for that, with God as my witness, I will say again, I am innocent!

*(Paulina rushes on.)*

PAULINA: Hold off a minute and let me speak!

LEO: *(To Sheriff and Deputy.)* Stop her! She consorts with my wife!

JUDGE: I will hear her. Let her speak.

PAULINA: The babe! She's been taken...stolen away!

*(All gasp. Ramona staggers. Crowd reacts by breaking into groups, talking etc. Ramona faints. Pauline rushes to her side.)*

JUDGE: *(Shouts.)* Order! Order I say! *(Crowd quiets.)* I have heard enough. There is no evidence beyond the circumstantial. This poor woman is innocent, as she claims!

PAULINA: Much good it does her now! For this dear, sweet creature is dead! *(All gasp.)* Yes! *(Points at Leo.)* And all because of you! Your poisonous jealousy has led to this! Your baby gone, and now this innocent woman who did nothing wrong but love you is dead!

*(Crowd reacts. Ramona is carried off, attended by Paulina. Townspeople exit. Only Big Leo remains.)*

LEO: *(To himself, shocked.)* Can it be I am the cause of all this suffering? *(Lighting change.)* What a fool I am. It was momentary madness...brought on by the winter's darkness and the cold. My Ramona, my dear sweet wife, gone. And my daughter, too. I will pay for it now with weeping upon their graves until I die myself. Until that day, I will have no peace. *(Blackout.)*

## Scene 9

(AT RISE: *The Badlands. Gus enters, carrying the baby.*)

GUS: *(To himself.)* Here I am, far away in the Badlands, just like the boss ordered. Poor little baby. *(Sighs, looks around. To baby.)* I hate to do it...just leave you here to who knows what fate. You're awfully small to have to make your way in the world alone. I'll put you here on these rocks. *(Lays the baby down.)* And here I have a note and a box of money—my own savings—just in case someone should find you. Maybe I'll wait just over there and see. *(Hides behind a tree or bush. Waits a moment. Hears a growl.)* What the—?! *(Bear enters.)* A bear?! Yikes!

*(Gus runs off, screaming. The Bear chases after him and exits. Mrs. O'Riley and Cletus enter opposite.)*

MRS. O'RILEY: There you are, Cletus! I've been lookin' everywhere for you and the lost milk cow you was supposed to be lookin' after! Dumber than a donkey's behind, you are! Just like your father!

CLETUS: Ah, come on, Ma! I have a very good excuse. A bear came out of nowhere and chased me away!

MRS. O'RILEY: Now I've heard everything! There ain't no bears around these parts, you lazy, good-for-nothin'—  
*(About to smack him.)*

CLETUS: *(Cowering.)* But it's true, Ma! I swear!

MRS. O'RILEY: *(Skeptical.)* Oh, really? And that's why you left the cattle unattended?!

CLETUS: Better a couple of cows than my hide!

MRS. O'RILEY: *(Sighs.)* Well, let's just keep looking. I'd hate to see what your father says when we get home. *(Notices the baby.)* What have we here? A baby! *(Picks up the baby.)* And a pretty little thing, too! The product of somethin' shameful out behind the barn, no doubt! Tsk, tsk! Young people

these days! Oh, well, I guess I'll take pity on the wee thing and bring it home with me. Your pa'll never notice one more brat around the house. (*Sees the box.*) What's that there?

*(Cletus picks up the note and box.)*

CLETUS: Looks like money, Ma.

MRS. O'RILEY: Then today must be my lucky day! Forget about those lost cattle. This'll be more than enough to pay for them. But we better hurry before someone else comes along to claim the prize.

*(Cletus and Mrs. O'Riley exit. Blackout. Curtain. Intermission, opt.)*

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**