

BELLE OF THE BALL

or

Mother Claims the Lode

A Melodrama in Four Scenes

By Craig Sodaro

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STORY OF THE PLAY

The fairy tales of Cinderella and Snow White are lassoed together in this high-kicking western melodrama! Goldie Miner had to give up her infant daughter, Ashabelle, 18 years ago to eke out a living panning for gold, but she thought she left her with a good family. Now she's returned with plenty of gold for her daughter but finds Ashabelle wears patched clothes and does all the stepfamily's chores. When Ashabelle isn't allowed to go to the ball, her mother fixes her right up including a pair of new boots. The next morning Earnest Lee Feelgoode finds the belle of the ball he fell in love with, but before they can wed, Black Jack Ketchum gives Ashabelle a poisoned apple so he can get her gold. But as in all melodramas, good wins out over evil and after a romp through the audience, there's a happy, fairy-tale ending.

SETTING

The play takes place in and around the "fort" which is named after the town in which the play is being performed. This is why throughout the script a blank will follow "Fort." No setting is required for the play other than a bench URC and a cardboard (or wooden) bush and rain barrel, as indicated in the text. For decoration, a general Western backdrop can be used to add color.

Playing Time: About an hour.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(3 m, 7 w)

GOLDIE MINER: A prospector from the hills.

SLUICE FOOT SUE: An ex-dance hall queen and present villainess.

BLACK JACK KETCHUM: The notorious highwayman.

AUNTIE LOPE: A prim and proper wife.

JACKIE LOPE: Her young son, the hunter.

CANDY LOPE: Her elder daughter.

ELLIE LOPE: Her younger daughter.

ASHABELLE PITTS: Their poor servant girl.

CPL. EARNEST LEE FEELGOODE: A part-time hero.

SIGN GIRL: Announces scene changes and carries out all sound effects.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1 - Along the trail in the old West, one afternoon.

Scene 2 - The Lope quarters at the fort, the next day.

Scene 3 - The Lope backyard, several hours later.

Scene 4 - The Lope quarters, the next morning.

PROPS

Scene 1 - Sign: "On the Trail Somewhere, 1875." Wedding license and knife for Jack; chunk of gold for Goldie.

Scene 2 - Sign: "Next Day at Fort_____." Mirror for Candy; rifle for Jackie; doll for Ellie; broom and 6-foot list for Ashabelle; wood blocks for Sign Girl; beef jerky for Goldie; pieces of rope for kids.

Scene 3 - Sign: "Lope Backyard, That Night." Change of clothes for kids and Auntie; bead necklace, sash, bandanna for Ashabelle; tied bundle (sash, shawl, hat, and boots) for Goldie; oversized rubber hammer for Jack.

Scene 4 - Sign: "Lope Quarters, the Following Day." Broom for Ashabelle; handkerchief with hole in it for Auntie; small pair of pants for Jackie; hat with a hole in it for Candy; headless doll for Ellie; boot and watch for Corporal; beard, cane, gun, red apple for Jack; coin for Ashabelle; claim and pencil for Jack; horse syringe for Corporal.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: The SIGN GIRL enters SR carrying a sign reading "On the Trail Somewhere, 1875." She crosses to SL. A moment later, JACK sneaks on SL looking SR excitedly. SLUICE angrily follows.)

SLUICE: Where is it, Black Jack?! Where IS it?!

JACK: Now, Sluicy, patience, my dear! It'll be here. Patience!

SLUICE: Patients is fer doctors, toots, and I ain't no sawbones! You said our ship's comin' in on the next stage, but all I'm getting so far is barnacles on my hull! Now, where IS it?

JACK: Just over the horizon, sugar plum.

SLUICE: Don't sugar plum me, you pit! There ain't no stage on the horizon.

JACK: It's due here by four o'clock. And it'll be laden with gobs of glittering gold!

SLUICE: *(Disgusted.)* Promises, promises! I had to have rocks in my head to listen to a two-bit stage thief like you, Jack Ketchum! To think I gave up a promisin' career at my very own Prickly Porcupine Saloon to hitch up with the likes of YOU!

JACK: *(To AUDIENCE.)* Ha! She lost her Prickly Porcupine in a poker game! *(To SLUICE.)* My dear, the Prickly Porcupine was no place for a lady. *(Excitedly, pointing off SR.)* But wait!

SLUICE: What is it?

JACK: I told you the stage would be comin'!

SLUICE: *(With growing terror.)* That ain't no stage, sugar lips. It's ... a ... a ... what IS it? *(JACK hides behind SLUICE.)*

JACK: *(Horried.)* It can't be! *(SLUICE hides behind HIM.)*

SLUICE: It IS! One of them woolly mammoths! *(JACK hides behind SLUICE.)*

JACK: Shucks, they been distinct for years! *(SLUICE hides behind JACK.)*

GOLDIE: *(Screaming, off SR.)* Say there!

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JACK: It talks!

GOLDIE: *(Calling off SR.)* Hold on there, strangers!

SLUICE: *(Slyly.)* Maybe it's easy prey.

JACK: *(Moving to CS.)* Amen!

(GOLDIE enters SR, dusting the prairie from her filthy trousers. She's a stomping, grinning, growling mother bear protecting her cubs.)

GOLDIE: *(Congenially.)* Howdy, strangers! Goldie Miner's the name, prospectin's my game. Who might you two be?

JACK: Ketchum, ma'am. Jack Ketchum, and this is my ... ah ... my wife, Sluice Foot Sue. Recently wed! *(JACK grandly displays a wedding license which is quickly snatched from GOLDIE'S view.)* Our license.

GOLDIE: *(Impressed.)* Official looking document if I ever seen one!

SLUICE: *(To audience.)* Let's hope she hasn't! Fer a counterfeiter, Jack's one fine blacksmith.

GOLDIE: Well, where are you two newly-hitched headed?

JACK: Anywhere the wind blows. How 'bout yourself?

GOLDIE: My wind's blowin' south ... to Fort____. *(Name of town.)*

SLUICE: Fort____? What fer?

GOLDIE: *(Proudly.)* Got me a little girl to claim down there.

JACK: *(Sarcastically.)* Her mine didn't pan out, so she's off to be a mama, eh, Sluice?

SLUICE: A mother lode!

GOLDIE: *(Angered.)* I'm a ma, sure as you two's standin' there with yer yaps open catchin' flies!

SLUICE: *(Sarcastically.)* 'Spose yer a widder.

GOLDIE: *(Dramatically.)* Grievin' and weepin' goin' on eighteen years now!

SLUICE: Yer hubby was a saint?

GOLDIE: You knew Claude?

SLUICE: *(Sarcastically.)* Good guess!

GOLDIE: He were the finest man you ever done met. Upright, clean, thrifty, respectful, good-lookin' and honest as the day t'were long.

End of Freeview

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