Last Gasp at the Last Gulp

A Wild West Whodunit

By Craig Sodaro

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Doc Robbins, a dentist with a heart of stone, rules the town of Last Gulp with an iron fist. Though folks treat Doc with due respect as their mayor and the only "medical" man in the territory, there's no shortage of suspects when he dies following a swig of rat-poisoned sarsaparilla. Everybody, it seems, had it in for Doc.

Bonnie Vivant wanted to turn her old saloon into a fancy restaurant, but Doc wouldn't let her. Three old prospectors Crusty, Dusty, and Musty, all resented the fact that Doc had jumped their claims and wondered if he ever struck it rich. After all, Doc always had a roll of bills on him.

And what about Minerva and Luella, two axe-carrying reformers out to demolish the Last Gulp Saloon? Why do they happen to show up the very day Doc meets his maker?

Then, out of the blue, who should drop by for a visit but Count Stroganoff, a Russian tourist who *has* to be hiding something. It's up to Sheriff Daisy Haynes and Deputy Pablo Schwartz to solve the crime using their step-by-step guide, *Sheriffing for Dummies*. Fortunately, they're assisted by old Mrs. Culpepper who knits up a storm and manages to tie all the loose ends together.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

<u>ACT I</u>
Scene 1: The Last Gulp Saloon, afternoon. (1892)
Scene 2: The same, late that night.
Scene 3: The same, the following morning.

<u>ACT II</u>
Scene 1: The same, later that day.
Scene 2: The same, a short time later.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 m, 11 w)

DOC ROBBINS: A painfully disdainful dentist.
PABLO SCHWARTZ: The town deputy.
DUSTY: A crusty, musty old prospector.
MUSTY: His dusty, crusty partner.
CRUSTY: His musty, dusty partner.
BONNIE VIVANT: Owner of the Last Gulp Saloon.
CHICKI DUMPLING: A saloon hall girl.
CASSIE ROLLE: Another.
SISSY KABOB: Another.
GRACIE SUZETTE: Another.
CHERRY JUBILEE: Another.
COCO SOUFFLE: Another.
MINERVA SWEETWATER: A righteous reformer.
LUELLA DAWSON: Another reformer.
DAISY HAYNES: Sheriff of Last Gulp.
EDNA CULPEPPER: An old lady who knits up a storm.
COUNT STROGANOFF: A mysterious Russian visitor.

SETTING

The Last Gulp Saloon features a bar upstage center. Behind it hangs a painting of a lady lounging on a couch. On a shelf behind the bar stand bottles of sarsaparilla. Several small tables sit here and there, left and right, with mismatched chairs. Wing entrance right leads to the main street of Last Gulp. Wing entrance left leads to back rooms and an outside entrance. The overall effect of the scene is that of a dry, dusty saloon that has seen better days.

In Act II, a landscape now hangs over the bar along with a sign that proclaims the establishment as “Chez Vivant.” The tables are covered with tablecloths now, each with a small menu lying on top and perhaps a small vase of flowers.

COSTUMES

Costuming the play is very easy. Although a group can spend a lot of money on saloon hall girl costumes, it isn't necessary. Brightly-colored blouses and full skirts or bright accents like ribbons and sashes can do the job well. The skirts should be mid-calf length and feather boas add a lot, along with feathers in the hair. There's no need for the girls to all look alike.

The older female characters (Edna, Minerva, Louella, and Bonnie) wear long dresses with Minerva and Louella in the darkest colors. These two can also wear very prim and proper little hats if desired.

The male members of the cast (except for Count) wear western clothes—flannel shirts, vests, jeans, boots, and hats (as desired). If possible, Doc should wear a dark jacket or coat that looks like he's visited a Big City at some time.

The Count should wear some kind of military coat, easily created by buttoning a sports coat up fully to the neck, adding a few bright buttons along with medals, a red sash, and perhaps some epaulets. His hat should be as "Russian" as possible, a big furry mound atop his head.

NOTE:
Please see end of script for a list of props and music suggestions.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: The Last Gulp Saloon, afternoon. PABLO sits in chair center, facing the audience. DOC leans over Pablo, obviously working on pulling one of the deputy's teeth. Pablo mumbles and flays his arms and feet about in pain. DUSTY, MUSTY, and CRUSTY cower at a table right, holding tightly onto their bottles of sarsaparilla. CHICKIE, CASSIE, and SISSY stand at right of bar watching in horror. Doc's dentist bag is at the end of the bar.)

DOC: What's a matter with you, Deputy Schwartz? Can't you take a little pain?

(PABLO moans loudly.)

CHICKI: Pablo, Doc's only trying to help you!
CASSIE: He's the greatest dentist in this whole territory!
MUSTY: He's the *only* dentist in this whole territory!
DUSTY: The boy sure needs somethin' to ease up his worries!
DOC: You're right, Dusty! Give me a bottle of sarsaparilla!
MUSTY: Way to go, Doc!
SISSY: *(Handing DOC bottle.)* Here you go, Pablo. This'll take the edge off!
DOC: Sure will!

(DOC pauses, guzzles contents of bottle, then licks his lips and hands bottle back to SISSY.)

CRUSTY: What in tarnation?!
DOC: Just one more li'l ole yank—

(DOC makes a mighty effort, yanks at a tooth as PABLO screams, then staggers back. In his hand we see a pliers, or similar tool, gripping a large tooth.)

DOC: *(Cont'd.)* There you go, Pablo!
PABLO: *(Sits up, gripping his jaw.)* Aye yai yai yai yai!
CASSIE: *(Putting her arm around PABLO.)* It'll be okay, Pablo.
CHICKI: Yeah … now that that tooth is out, you'll feel a whole lot better!
DOC: And it only cost you five bucks!
PABLO: Five bucks!
DOC: I'm a professional! I get professional wages!
SISSY: Just think how you'd be suffering if Doc hadn't pulled that nasty ole tooth!
PABLO: *(Jumps up from chair, angrily.)* Si! But he pulled the wrong tooth! *(PABLO races off right.)*
DOC: Get back here, Schwartz! I'll pull the right one for two-fifty!
CHICKI: *(Fawning.)* Gosh, Doc, that's mighty nice of you!
CASSIE: *(Sweetly.)* Anybody ever tell you how swell you are?
DOC: Sure, but go ahead and tell me again, Cassie!
CASSIE: Why, you're so accomplished, it makes a girl's heart go pitter pat!
DOC: I can hear your heart pittering and pattering across the room!
SISSY: Really, Doc! A dentist and the mayor of Last Gulp all in one! Why, I bet you can even read!
DOC: Only the Bible, of course, ladies!

(CASSIE, CHICKI, and SISSY sigh lovingly as DUSTY moves to DOC.)

DUSTY: You must be amazin', Doc!
DOC: Nice compliment comin' from a mangy dog like you, Dusty!
CRUSTY: Just because Dusty ain't struck it rich yet ain't no reason to go referring to him as a dog.
MUSTY: Mangy or otherwise!

End of Freeview

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