

Showdown at the Hoedown

- Or -

Somethin' to Crow About!

By Geff Moyer

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STORY OF THE PLAY

It's the late 1890s, and the little town of Astaire, Wyoming, ready to enter the new century as the "Paris of the Plains," has just elected the first female sheriff west of the Mississippi! Daisy Dandelion vows to bring about law and order with just a law book and "good ol' female common sense." The mayor, who's always looking at the "big picture," and his town council are holding a hoedown in honor of Daisy, who loves to dance.

But this celebration is tap-dancing with trouble! One young woman, in a burst of defiance against husbands ruling the roost, encourages the ladies to march around the barn crowing like roosters, even though they don't have a parade permit! Next it's revealed that Daisy is a notorious outlaw, and there's no way to put a good spin on that! Then suddenly the infamous Bullmoose Brothers arrive on the scene.

Will these yahoos looking for a showdown be out-danced by Daisy? Can the mysterious Widow Astaire shed any light on the situation? And finally, who will win the pie bakin' contest? Because if it's not the mayor's wife, he may be sleeping in the barn!

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CAST OF CHARACTERS
(8 m, 7 w, flexible extras)

- MAYOR PALIN:** A plump but dapper politician in his forties.
- CALVIN STEIN:** A nervous fellow in his forties, and head of the town council.
- WIDOW ASTAIRE:** Widow of the man for whom the town is named.
- ROSE PICKERING:** A cynical woman who has outlived four husbands.
- PETUNIA MEADOWS:** Rose's best friend and knitting cohort.
- BETTY STEIN:** The lovely and sweet daughter of Calvin Stein.
- SARAH:** The Mayor's wife, and quite pleased that she IS the Mayor's wife.
- EDITH STEIN:** Calvin's wife and Betty's stepmother.
- DAISY DANDELION:** The first lady sheriff west of the Mississippi.
- LUMPY DAVENPORT:** A crusty and weathered stage coach driver.
- STEPHEN CROCKER:** A handsome young man, and owner of the dry goods store.
- BULLMOOSE BROTHERS:** BULL, BILL, BART, and CARL. Four of the foulest fellows in the fair town of Astaire, Wyoming.
- VARIOUS TOWNS FOLK & MUSICIANS:** Some have a few lines including Women #1-#4 and Men #1-#4. (Bullmoose Brothers can double as Men.) Musicans can play real instruments or mime playing to canned music.

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SETTING

Interior of a barn, circa 1890s. USL is a small bandstand for the musicians. A banner hangs over the bandstand, reading *Congratulations, Sheriff Daisy*. DL is an L-shaped table with punch bowl, glasses and a variety of pies. UC are double barn doors to exterior. All round the interior walls of the barn are a variety of chairs and hay bales. The barn is decorated for a hoedown.

COSTUMES

All costumes should reflect clothing of the 1890s. The only character-specific costuming would be that of MAYOR PALIN, who should be a rather dapper dresser (as dapper as the stores in Astaire, Wyoming could provide.); the BULLMOOSE BROTHERS, all of whom should be grubby and trail worn; and WIDOW ASTAIRE, who should be dressed in black, including a veil.

PROPERTIES

ROSE PICKERING: Knitting needles, yarn.
PETUNIA MEADOWS: Knitting needles, yarn
LUMPY DAVENPORT: Satchel; several letters; several packages, including one that rattles as if broken and two others with large stacks of papers (wanted posters); big, old-fashioned jail key.
WIDOW ASTAIRE: Cane.
MAYOR: Big jug, fifty-dollar bill.
BETTY STEIN: A large sign that reads "I will not cluck!"
BULL BULLMOOSE: A bullwhip, pistol and holster.
BART, BILL & CARL BULLMOOSE: Holstered pistols.
MUSICIANS: Instruments, jug of corn whiskey
TABLE: Punch bowl and several glasses, five pies initially; one more added later. Two pies have entry cards by them.

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Scene 1

(AT RISE: WIDOW ASTAIRE, dressed in black and wearing a veil, is asleep in a chair in a dark UR corner, barely visible. ROSE and PETUNIA are seated nearby, towards URC. Both are busy knitting. SARAH and EDITH are seated DSL of the bandstand. On the dance floor are MAYOR PALIN with DAISY DANDELION, BETTY STEIN with STEPHEN CROCKER, CALVIN STEIN and a TOWN WOMAN, and other TOWN COUPLES. The BAND should consist of two or three musicians: maybe one or two fiddles and one or two guitars, or maybe a washboard and/or piano. The musicians can play the music, or it can be "canned" and they can pantomime. Music should be standard hoedown tunes. When music stops, crowd claps and disperses. Mayor, Calvin and Daisy go to punch table. Betty and Stephen sit together.)

MUSICIAN: Thank you, folks. We're gonna take us a short pause for the cause. But don't y'all go nowhere now, ya hear? Mayor Palin is gonna say a few words.

(The CROWD groans and grumbles and starts heading for the double doors.)

MAYOR: Whoa, whoa now, folks! Hold yer horses now! *(Panting and wiping sweat from his brow.)* I ain't gonna make no speech.

MAN #1: Ya promise?

MAYOR: I promise. Besides, I'm still catchin' my breath from that dance. Our new sheriff is quite the hooper! *(TOWNSFOLK decide they will stay and head back into center of barn.)* I just wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate her. *(CROWD applauds, whistles, cheers.)* I would like to say, though, how proud I am of you citizens of Astaire, Wyoming.

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MAYOR: *(Cont'd.)* You've elected the first lady sheriff west of the Mississippi. *(CROWD whistles.)* Yes siree, you folks should be proud of yerselves. You saw the "Big Picture." You took a giant step into the future. Progress, folks! That's what this is! Progress. Astaire, Wyoming is already looking at the twentieth century and sayin', Come on! We're ready fer ya! Folks, I see Astaire as the Paris of the Plains. Trolley cars, five-story buildings, two-story school houses, flushing privies, them new-fangled autimobills...

ROSE: *(Aside to PETUNIA, without looking up from her knitting.)* Glad he ain't gonna make a speech.

PETUNIA: *(Without looking up from her knitting.)* Me, too, Rose.

MAYOR: The Big Picture, folks. Electin' a female sheriff will show them railroad folks and other biz'nesses that we're a progressive town with our eyes on the Big Picture.

MAN #2: What picture is that, Mayor Palin?

MAYOR: The Big One!

MAN #1: You mean that big picture in the saloon of that naked lady layin'--

MAYOR: No, no, no! The future, man! That's what we're all about here in Astaire. Yessiree, folks! I'm proud of you. I'm proud of this town. I'm proud to be yer Mayor. And I'm 'specially proud to present Astaire's new sheriff, Miss Daisy Dandelion.

(CROWD cheers, claps, etc.)

CALVIN: *(Aside to MAYOR.)* "Paris of the plains!" I like that, Mayor. Are we gonna have one of them Awful Towers, too?

MAYOR: Eyeful, Calvin. Eyeful Tower.

DAISY: Thank you all. Thank you, Mayor Palin. Although I only settled here in Astaire just a year ago, you folks have made me feel like a lifelong resident. You've made this stranger feel welcomed.

ROSE: *(Aside to PETUNIA, but still knitting.)* No self-respectin' woman should ever be a sheriff.

PETUNIA: *(Also knitting.)* I agree, Rose.

End of Freeview

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