The Sneaky Citizens of Saddlesore City

by Jim Haun

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STORY OF THE PLAY

It’s the year 1890 in Saddlesore City. The Carson Hotel is a fun place to hang your hat and jist have a good ole time with friends and neighbors - playin' cards, dancin', laughin',singin', gossipin' and…drinkin' sassafras root beer by the gallons! Well, that's the way it used to be when Charles was alive but now it's just a sorry-eyed, sad-faced, ghost of a place where even the spiders are bored out of their minds!

Widow Henrietta has become overwhelmed with both the duties of hotelin' and tryin' to raise Liza and Skeeter. Her once happy attitude has now turned grumpy. But then, suddenly, her prayin' and hopin' have been answered! A rich, high-fallutin' Chicago socialite lady wants to buy the hotel as she’s looking to have a nice, quiet, peaceful hotel far away from the noise of the big city. Well, the town just can't let that happen! For sure that would end any chances for getting back to the socializin' and fun times that the hotel once offered! There's only one thing to do: get sneaky and stop that outta town, nose-in-the-air, fancy, rich lady from buying the place.

So, Miner Joe and Stinky Sal work up a plan, Liza and Skeeter work up a plan, Millie and the entire town work up a plan. Problem is they don't tell each other! It all turns farcical as each sneaky scheme slowly takes shape. Will their sneakiness succeed? Will Henrietta realize just how much the hotel means to the citizens of Saddlesore City? Well, as one townsperson so profoundly states, "Don't squat…with yer spurs on!" Wait, what? About 65 minutes.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

St. John's Elementary School, Excelsior, MN. Fall 2014.
Special thanks to Carol Ahlstrand, Lisa Brausen, Marge Osha and Alaina Graupman.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Cast of 21: 2 m, 9 f, 10 flex. Possible extras and doubling.)

MILLIE: Hard-working cook and housekeeper for the hotel.

MINER JOE: A high-spirited, old-timer who spends most of his time waaaay up in the hills mining for gold.

STINKY SAL: Innocent, unkempt resident.

DARLENE (flex): Serious postmistress.

HENRIETTA: Recently widowed and overwhelmed hotel owner. Liza and Skeeter's mother.

LIZA: Daughter, around 12-14. Mature yet imaginative.

SKEETER: Son, around 10. Carefree attitude and looks up to his older sister. He is determined to be a great yodeler someday.

MISS CECILIA WALKER: Aristocrat from Chicago.

OSWALD (flex)**:** Humorless assistant to Miss Walker.

AUNT MATILDA: Intimidating aunt of Henrietta.

TOWNSPERSON TOM / TILLIE (flex): Funeral director.

TOWNSPERSON GRETA / GUS (flex): Enthusiastic resident.

TOWNSPERSON MARY / JOE (flex): Schoolteacher.

TOWNSPERSON FRANK / FRANKIE (flex): Owner of the feed store.

TOWNSPERSON SADIE / SID (flex): Owner of the bakery.

TOWNSPERSON GEORGE / GEORGINA (flex): Barber.

TOWNSPERSON SAM (flex): Owner of the supply store.

TOWNSPERSON VERNON / VAL (flex): Local philosopher.

ABBY / ADDY / AGGY PARKER (f): Three backwoods sisters who enjoy having the reputation of bullies.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The last scene incorporates a hootenanny. Simple, short presentations such as a quick number on musical spoons, a character strumming a simple tune on the guitar, or a character dancing an Irish jig are recommended. You can end with a rousing sing-a-long of "She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain" with Skeeter belting out the final "Yeeeee-haaaah." If you are skipping the hootenanny, Henrietta starts at her line, “Well, I jist gotta say…”

SET PLAN

The play takes place inside the spacious lobby of the Carson Hotel in the western town of Saddlesore City. The time period is circa 1880s-1890s. There are three entrances to the hotel lobby: upstage-center is the main entrance that leads out onto the street, the SR entrance is the back door entrance, and the SL entrance leads off to other parts of the hotel. To the SR of the upstage main entrance is an optional fireplace or a pile of logs. Positioned SL of the main entrance is the front lobby desk with the standard room-key display against the wall directly behind it. On top of the front desk is the desk bell which is placed on the SR corner of the desk, the "check-in book" which is placed in the center of the desk, and a large jar filled with black licorice placed on the far SL corner of the desk. Against the SL wall (upstage of the SL entrance) is a comfy chair. Just downstage of the SL entrance (against the wall) is an upright closet filled with a variety of clothing, including a large fancy women's hat, feather boa, derby hat, full-length dress for Liza and black shirt, pants and vest for Miner Joe. There is a couch against the SR wall. Although the interior of the hotel has a rustic look, the furniture does present a somewhat elegant and refined design.

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ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: MILLIE lazily mops the DRS floor. An old rusty mop bucket is positioned a bit further downstage.)

MILLIE: *(Sings to herself as she mops.)* Ohhhh…the old gray mare she ain't what she used ta be - ain't what she used ta be - ain't what she used ta be. The old gray mare she ain't what she used ta be - many long years ago…

(MINER JOE bursts in from the main upstage entrance.)

MINER JOE: *(Extremely high-energy and shouts.)* Yeeeeeeeee-Haaaaaaaaw!!
MILLIE: *(Startled.)* Ahhhhh! *(Turns around, surprised.)* Ohhh! Miner Joe! You near scared the life right out of me!
MINER JOE: And it looks like that'd be the only life in here at the moment. Where is everyone?
MILLIE: *(Cynical.)* Not in here, that's fer sure.
MINER JOE: *(Starts to walk into the room, stops and looks at his boots.)* Oh! Sorry Millie Matillie. Got a hefty supply of mud and dirt on ma boots.
MILLIE: Oh, yer fine. Go ahead…have a seat. *(Gestures to the couch.)*
MINER JOE: Why, thankee. *(Sits down on the couch.)*
MILLIE: *(Crosses to CS and mops up the bit of dirt that MINER JOE brought in.)* It'll be nice to actually have somethin' to mop up. Heck, the only footprints this here floor sees on a regular basis are Henrietta's and the two young'uns. So, what brings you down from the hills? Haven't seen you in town fer well over a year.
MINER JOE: Oh, I need me some more supplies. So I said to maself, I said, "Miner Joe, I need me some more supplies."
MILLIE: Well, welcome back.

MINER JOE: And, since it's only a couple a days away from the towns big, once-a-year, hootenanny social night, I decided to hop on ole Bess, the most faithful mule a gold miner could ever ask fer and skedaddle on down from them there hills, so's I could jist sit back and watch the townsfolk havin' a good ole time a-dancin' and a-singin' and a-laughin' up a storm while I jist recline and drink me a whole acre of your deeeelicious sassafras root beer. Yeeeeee-haaaaaw!

(MILLIE stops mopping. She stares off into space, melancholy.)

MINER JOE: *(Cont'd. Still very upbeat.)* What's the matter there, ole Millie Matillie? A little dizzy from all that soap in your mop bucket, there?

MILLIE: I guess you wouldn't have heard the news since you were so far up in the hills there but—

MINER JOE: *(Serious tone.)* What? From the look on your face, somethin' mighty tragical happened.

MILLIE: I'm afraid so. Charles passed on a little over a year ago…influenza.

MINER JOE: *(Angry.)* Dang nab that life-stealin' influenzie. Charlie was a good man- loads of fun, always smilin' and laffin'. Took really good care of the hotel, enjoyed havin' the townsfolk gatherin' around. *(Concerned.)* So, how's Miss Henrietta dealin' with it?

MILLIE: *(Crosses over and sits down on the couch.)* Not so good. She stopped all socializin' and people-gatherin' here in the hotel.

MINER JOE: *(Shocked.)* Nooo! Really? Why, that's the last thing Charlie woulda wanted.

MILLIE: I know, I know. I keep tellin' her that but she won't listen to none of it. She's nothin' more than a walkin' piece of lumber. No spirit, no joy, angry at the whole world. She jist wakes up, sorts out whatever needs sortin' for the hotel, and then retires for the night. I tell you, this place is goin' downhill fast.

End of Freeview

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