DONOVAN'S DAUGHTERS

By Shirley McNichols

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Seattle, Washington, the late 1800s. There are 10 men for every woman in the territory, excellent odds for Shamus Donovan, an Irish fisherman with five daughters to marry off. Several town council members immediately fall for the younger daughters, but unfortunately, a family tradition says the oldest must marry first. But the oldest daughter is Katherine, a wild cat! In a woman-starved town like Seattle there has to be someone desperate enough to take on Katherine, everyone reasons.

Using William Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew" as a guide, the men give Danny O'Brien, a federal marshal, advice on how to tame the wild Katherine. Add to the mix two feuding Indian tribes, three dim-witted lumberjacks, and a botched kidnap scheme, and you have all the elements for one of the most energetic romances the West has ever seen.

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

ACT I
Scene 1: The parlor of the Seattle Inn, a spring morning.
Scene 2: The next morning.

ACT II
Scene 1: Several days later.
Scene 2: About an hour later.
Scene 3: Later that day at the loggers' cabin.
Scene 4: Three days later, at the inn.

CAST OF CHARACTERS *(12 M, 15 W)*

THE DONOVANS
SHAMUS: Father, in his 40s.
ABIGAIL: Mother, in her 40s.
KATHERINE (KATIE): Wild cat daughter, 20.
BRIDGETTE (BRIDEY): Sweet-natured daughter, 19.
MAEVE: Twin who likes to sing, 18.
MOIRA: Twin who likes to write, 18.
ALANA: Youngest daughter, 17.

SEATTLITES
PATRICK: Hired hand, 17.
ASA MERCER: Mayor, in his 20s.
JUDD TERWILLIGER: Banker/councilman, in his 20s.
CLIVE GILES: Editor/councilman, 20s.
DANNY O'BRIEN: Federal marshal, 20s.

VILLAINS
DARIEN SPECTER: Unscrupulous man, in his 30s.
AGATHA SPECTER: Darien's sister, in her 40s.

SPECTER'S YOUNG LADIES
ELSA
CLAIR
LUCY
JULIA
MARIE
BETHANY

YOUNG LUMBERJACKS
LARRY
MOE
ALBERT

INDIANS
RUNNING BEAR: Suquamish brave, in his 20s.
LILLY BLOSSOM: Suquamish woman, in her 20s.
SKULKING FOX: Duwamish brave, in his 20s.
MORNING DOVE: Duwamish woman, in her 20s.

COSTUMES

All clothing is of the late 1800s. Girls should wear ankle-length dresses and skirts. Men's clothing often consisted of three-piece suits. Lumberjacks should wear jeans and flannel shirts. Danny should look more traditionally western with jeans, leather vest, gun and holster. Both men and women Indians can wear short-sleeved tunics made of muslin or any beige material. The women's should be longer and the men can wear brown or black jeans under theirs. Fringe at the hem of the body and sleeves gives the costume more of an "Indian look." Add some beads and headbands (with feathers for the men) and moccasins or canvas shoes to complete the looks.

SFX

Gunshot and avalanche sounds needed in Act II, Scene 3.

SETTING

The main set, the parlor of the Seattle Fisherman's Inn, consists of three exits at USR, leading upstairs; USL, leading outside; and DSR, leading to the kitchen and back exit. There is a counter at SR, a small sofa (or better yet, a wooden bench for ease of movement) at CSR, and a small round table with two chairs at SL, fireplace UCS (optional). Across the UPS wall hangs a banner with "Seattle Fisherman's Inn" painted crudely on it. The flats and set may be decorated in any manner you choose, but should reflect the "woodsiness" of Seattle and the era (pre-electric).

A second location, the lumberjacks' cabin, is created by removing the sofa, table and chairs and bringing to CS portable flats painted to represent a log cabin. Four 4x8 cardboard panels connected with reinforced packing tape and painted work well for this because they are light weight and can be folded at the tape joints for ease of movement and storage.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: SHAMUS DONOVAN enters SL and goes to SC.)

SHAMUS: Abby! Abigail! By heaven, woman, where is me banner?
ABBY: *(Entering USR.)* It's hangin' right behind you, foolish man!
SHAMUS: I told the boy to hang it outside!
ABBY: I told him to hang it inside! It's raining again. All the writing will wash away!
SHAMUS: Then how's anyone to know we're open for business?
ABBY: They'll read it in the paper, Shamus. I asked that nice, young newspaper man, Clive Giles, to run an advertisement.
SHAMUS: And what's that to cost me, woman?
ABBY: It'll be well worth it if the ad brings in a few boarders, my penny-pinching husband!
SHAMUS: And well it is I am, what with five offspring to care for! And none seem to be of a marrying mind.
ABBY: Ha! Many are of a marrying mind if it weren't for your silly traditions keeping them from it!
SHAMUS: Don't scoff at me family traditions, wife! You knew before you married me that the Donovans were a proud and traditional clan!
ABBY: And half lunatics! Remember your Uncle Timothy?
SHAMUS: Lots of folks have seen the little people, not just me Uncle Tim!
ABBY: Funny he only saw them late at night walking home from the pub!
SHAMUS: Well, at least he had respect for tradition! Unlike you!
ABBY: Shamus, don't start that again! It's sheer nonsense!
SHAMUS: Is it now? Then tell me, what's become of me family business?

ABBY: Ah, the Donovan Fishing Company! *(SHE pinches her nose with her fingers.)*

SHAMUS: *(Insulted.)* We aren't JUST fishermen!

ABBY: I know! You're the best fishermen in all of Ireland with a fine fleet of boats to prove it!

SHAMUS: That's right! And we've never lost one man or one boat to the sea in all our years as fishermen! And do you know why?

ABBY: Here we go again.

SHAMUS: Because no woman has ever set foot on the deck of a Donovan boat! That's why! It's tradition, and it's served us well!

ABBY: Shamus, you're impossible!

SHAMUS: A stubborn man I am, you're right. *(Softening.)* ''Cause when I saw you I was determined to marry you even though me own father warned me against American women.

ABBY: Oh, really?

SHAMUS: "They're too independent," he said. "And no heart for tradition!" And it is for that reason we are now living in this most uncivilized town, and I can't even get me banner hung where I want it! *(Calling.)* Patrick!

PATRICK: *(Entering USR.)* Yes, Mr. Donovan?

SHAMUS: Patrick, move that banner outside!

PATRICK: But Mrs. Donovan says the rain will wash away the writin'.

SHAMUS: Nonsense! Do as I say, lad!

PATRICK: Yes, sir. *(HE takes the banner down.)*

ABBY: I'm telling you, Shamus, the writing will wash away and you'll not draw a single fisherman to lodge here!

PATRICK: Why would you be wantin' fishermen to stay here, Mrs. Donovan?

ABBY: To me it makes no difference. It's part of Mr. Donovan's plan.

SHAMUS: Don't be mocking me, woman! You've done enough harm already!

ABBY: Oh, this is silly, Shamus! Do what you like with the banner. Just let me know when the children arrive. *(Exit USR.)*

End of Freeview

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