THE HARTBURN HOTEL

A Melodrama

By Whitney Ryan Garrity

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PUBLISHED BY

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STORY OF THE PLAY

The Calamity Gulch trilogy is completed with this melodrama-farce. Faced with losing the Last Chance Inn once again, Ma and Pa Culpepper turn to glamorous Sahara Hartburn. Sahara pays off their loan with money from a "well-heeled admirer" and promptly takes over the inn. Transformed into the Hartburn Hotel, the place becomes a residence for young ladies with a "no men allowed upstairs" policy.

Sahara schemes to find a scandal that will give her new venture some publicity, and finds it when the new schoolteacher, Polly Sincere, is paid a visit by her dapper and devoted boyfriend, Jasper Jones -- in her room!

To escape, Jasper dresses as a girl and poses as "Jasmine Sincere, " Polly's sister. Complications arise when a visiting sheriff falls for "Jasmine" and her sudden disappearance leads Sahara to accuse Polly of murder!

An attempt to clear Polly's name, an outrageous chase scene, and the search for a bank robber all conspire to bring the play to a surprising--and side-splitting--conclusion.

(The earlier plays in the series include *Last Chance Inn, Clamity Gulch*, and *Return to Calamity Gulch*.)

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(4 m, 6 w, plus extras)

IVORY KEYES: Resident piano player, an attractive lady.

MA CULPEPPER: The proprietress of the Last Chance Inn; vexed and perplexed.

PA CULPEPPER: The thorn in Ma's side.

SAHARA HARTBURN: A glamorous and scheming woman.

ROD: Sahara's assistant; muscular and dumb.

MRS. SPOTTINGFORD-SMYTHE: The very proper head of the Calamity Gulch School Board.

POLLY SINCERE: The pretty, new schoolteacher.

JASPER JONES: Polly's dapper and devoted boyfriend.

PRINCESS PRETTYFOOT: Calamity Gulch's trusty deputy.

SHERIFF ULYSSES S. GRAFT: From the neighboring town of Falling Rock.

EXTRAS: If desired.

TIME/PLACE: Late 1800s.The lobby of the Hartburn Hotel; A Residence for Young Ladies -- formerly the Last Chance Inn, Calamity Gulch, USA.

SYNOPSIS

Act I
Scene 1: Morning.
Scene 2: Moments later.
Scene 3: Later that afternoon.
Act II
Scene 1: Early evening.
Scene 2: Immediately following.
Scene 3: A little later.

SETTING

There are three main sets. Initially we see the interior of the Last Chance Inn. Louvered, swinging doors provide entrances both USL and USR. Several sets of tables and chairs are positioned around the playing area. A large bar is set USC with stools positioned in front of it. A sign proclaiming the name of the establishment hangs over the bar. A piano stands on or near the playing area.

Extreme DS or before the curtain is Polly's room. It consists of a charming loveseat, a bureau, and a functioning doorway.

In Scene 3, the Last Chance Inn is now the newly-decorated Hartburn Hotel. Some of the tables and chairs have been removed to make way for a sofa, flanked by two upholstered chairs CS. The stools have been removed from in front of the bar, which is now serving as the hotel's front desk. A guest book and handbell are set on the desk. A new sign identifies the establishment's new name. Another sign across the front desk reads: "No Men Upstairs."

PROPS

IVORY: Mug.

PA: Telegram, bellhop uniform.

MA: Apron, French maid's costume, plate of food, a dress like Jasmine's.

SAHARA: Feathered hat, several stacks of cash.

ROD: Heavy suitcase, shovel.

POLLY: Small suitcase with various articles of feminine clothing, a dress.

JASPER: Large decorated box of chocolates with card attached, frilly dress, wig, tissues, ladies gloves, a man's hat.

SHERIFF: Fake mustache, badge, bouquet of flowers, jewelry box with ring with huge diamond.

PRINCESS PRETTYFOOT: Rolled up "wanted poster."

MISCELLANEOUS: Guest book, handbell, sign reading "Hartburn Hotel," another sign reading "No Men Upstairs."

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: Last Chance Inn. Morning. The LIGHTS fade up to reveal IVORY KEYES, seated at the piano. She is an attractive woman of an indeterminate age who dresses like a former music hall entertainer, ever-ready for a comeback. She plays a melody suitable to set the tone for a melodrama. At the conclusion of the piece, Ivory stands to accept her applause.)

IVORY: Oh, thank you! Thank you! You're too kind, well, frankly, you're just kind enough! But, I'll take what I can get! Welcome to the Last Chance Inn -- located right here in lovely, downtown Calamity Gulch! So nice of y'all to come back and visit us again! And I dare say, I see some familiar faces out there tonight! My, yes...*(Pointing out members of the audience)* I remember you...and you...*(SHE turns to a member sitting nearby.)* And...well, I'm not so sure about you! *(An idea)* Wait! *(IVORY hands HIM a mug from a table.)* Now I remember you! How've you been? *(Before the member can respond)* Yeah? Well, too much sarsaparilla'll do that to you! *(SHE snatches the mug, replaces it on the table and turns her attention to the rest of the audience.)* I suppose y'all are wonderin' why I'm still here! I mean, it's amazing that I haven't received a better offer of employment, isn't it? *(Demanding)* Isn't it?! Well, like I always say: "C'est la vie!" If it's my lot to be trapped here with that lazy, cantankerous Pa Culpepper and that bitter, sour, ill-tempered...*(MA CULPEPPER appears SR. Dressed rather dowdily, she possesses a bright and cheery disposition. IVORY greets her guiltily.)* Why, Ma Culpepper! I was just thinkin' about you!

MA: *(Brightly)* Good morning, Ivory! I must say, you're lookin' mighty pretty today!

IVORY: Thank you, Ma. You seem...unusually cheerful this morning! *(Sits at the piano)*

MA: And why not? Everything's workin' out just beautifully! Our darlin' daughter, Chastity, married Happy Bender, our bartender...who sobered up in the nick of time! Thus providin' us with a much needed son-in-law...someone to sign the loan agreement and keep Horace Prickley's grimy little paws off the Last Chance Inn for another 30 years! And what's more, Chastity and Happy are headed home after an extended honeymoon! So...if I'm in a merry mood, my dear Ivory, it's for good reason! And nothing could possibly happen by to destroy it! *(PA enters hurriedly from SL--and he is a man unaccustomed to that speed. He dresses in shabby work clothes.)* 'Cept maybe him!

PA: Ma, there you are! We just got a telegram delivered!

MA: *(In a panic)* A telegram?! Landsakes, that's bad news, I'll just bet! Nobody sends a telegram 'cept it's bad news! Something's happened, I'm sure of it! Some terrible disaster! Some earth-shatterin' catastrophe! *(Hits PA)* Well, don't just stand there panickin'! Read it to me!

PA: *(Calmly)* Whatever you say, Ma! *(Reads)* Dear Ma and Pa...Stop. Happy and I are not happy...Stop. He's drinking sarsaparilla again and won't stop...Stop. Not coming home...Stop. Going to Whistle Stop...Stop. Divorce next stop...Stop. Don't try and stop me...Stop. Your darlin' daughter, Chastity.

MA: *(Snatching the telegram)* Stop!! Oh, I knew it would be bad news! Happy's drinking again?! What makes a man go out in search of sarsaparilla when he's got a good wife at home?

PA: What makes a man go out in search of a wife when he's got good sarsaparilla at home?!

MA: *(Hits PA)* Pa, this is serious! *(Placing the telegram in HER apron pocket)* A divorce...oh, the shame! The scandal! The returning of the wedding gifts! It won't be long before everyone in Calamity Gulch...oh, dear! We're in trouble, Pa! When that Horace Prickley--from the loan company...

MA and PA: ...The offices of Gimme, Gimme & Gimme...

MA: ...gets wind of this development, he'll declare our loan agreement null and void!

End of Freeview

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