

Rascals Under the Big Top

or... The Ring's Around Miss Rosie

By Robert Swift

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RASCALS UNDER THE BIG TOP
or
THE RING'S AROUND MISS ROSIE

**An Incredible Exhibition Of Circus Life
In The Wild West!**

Featuring A Noisy Serenade Of Talking Performers!

Please Don't Feed The Monkey -- The Actors Get Jealous!

Absolutely No Refunds -- So Don't Ask!

By ROBERT SWIFT

SYNOPSIS

The action takes place on the grounds of The Pampermouse Circus -- somewhere in the wild west.

The time is the 1880s. It's a sunny day.

COSTUME NOTE

The usual "mellerdrammer" wardrobe. That is, long dresses and/or skirts for the females. Jeans, boots and western shirts for the males. For optional "circus" atmosphere in costuming, CONSULT PRODUCTION NOTES.

RASCALS UNDER THE BIG TOP
or
THE RING'S AROUND MISS ROSIE

CHARACTERS
(in Order of Showing Up)

THE GREAT FLAMO	circus clown
JIM NASIUM	our hero, a circus roustabout
BILLY	school truant
PHYLLIS	another
CLAIRE	another
MISS STEPS	schoolmarm
MISS ROSIE	our lovely heroine, a bareback rider
CONRAD MOOCH	scoundrel and ringmaster
PATTY LARCENY	knife thrower; beautiful but bad
CORA PAMPERMOUSE	owns the circus; Miss Rosie's granny
COWBOY JOE	rope twirler
REPTILLA	snake charmer
NEDDA PHELPS	does circus publicity
PRINCESS WANDA	lion tamer
HELEN HIGHWIRE	trapeze artist
MARY	half of a Siamese twin act
JANE	the other half
WIDOW GRUNDY	hates the circus
HANS UPP	sheriff
HEY YOU	victim of magnesia
MISS CAROLINE	works for a bank
MAUD LYNN	owns a zoo in Kalamazoo
EXTRAS as/if desired:	pupils, circus performers townspeople

NOTE: For suggestions on how to make the scene look like a circus, CONSULT PRODUCTION NOTES.

RASCALS UNDER THE BIG TOP

SETTING: An open field adjacent to a circus tent. The unseen tent is located OFFSTAGE RIGHT. There's a table UP CENTER. On the table are several wooden daggers, painted gold or silver. A wooden barrel is DOWN LEFT, a bench DOWN RIGHT. Seated on the bench are three kids from town -- BILLY, PHYLLIS, CLAIRE.

PRIOR TO LIGHTS UP: SOUND -- CIRCUS MUSIC (possibly calliope, organ or merry-go round music).

A clown, THE GREAT FLAMO, COMES DOWN the aisle and passes out a few balloons to members of the audience. Eventually, he EXITS via a STAGE DOOR. Or walks up onto the STAGE and OFF. The stage and auditorium LIGHTS GO TO BLACK. The CIRCUS MUSIC FADES.

LIGHTS UP: As the LIGHTS COME UP, we hear the VOICE of our hero, JIM NASIUM, practicing a ringmaster's spiel. JIM is young, handsome, manly. He's anxious to succeed in circus life. He holds a top hat in one hand and a long stick, to which has been attached a length of rope, in the other. He's dressed in rough work clothes.

JIM: *(Out to audience and to KIDS on bench.)* Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls; children of all ages, from two to a hundred-two, let me welcome you to The Pampermouse Circus -- the greatest little show in the wild wild west!

KIDS: Hooray! *(They applaud.)*

JIM: *(Bows. With great enthusiasm.)* Join me in a jubilant journey of wonder and hilarity! The Pampermouse Circus has a thrilling sawdust ring of athletes and acrobats, knife throwers and bareback riders! Amazing! Amusing! Astonishing! *(To KIDS.)* How'm I doing?

KIDS: *(Ad lib.)* Great!
Wonderful, mister!
Keep going!

JIM: You'll see that incredible clown, The Great Flamol! You'll witness a tidal wave of tomfoolery! You'll gasp at the dexterity of the beautiful Miss Rosie as she dances on the back of a prancing pony! Your heart will beat faster as that darling of the trapeze, Helen Highwire, delivers a dazzling display of aerial

artistry!

MISS STEPS' VOICE: (*From OFFSTAGE LEFT.*) Billy! Phyllis!
Claire!

JIM: (*Ignores voice.*) See it to believe it! Jumbo, the elephant who
never forgets!

MISS STEPS' VOICE: (*OFF LEFT.*) Billy! Phyllis! Claire! I know
you're here somewhere!

JIM: (*Continues.*) Don't forget our cheerfully crazy chimpanzee,
Jo-Jo!

BILLY: (*Stands.*) Wait a minute, mister. I think I hear someone
calling. (*ALL tense, listen.*)

MISS STEPS' VOICE: Billy! Phyllis! Claire!

PHYLLIS: (*Jumps up.*) Golly. It's Miss Steps!

JIM: Miss Steps?

CLAIRE: (*Jumps up.*) The schoolteacher. We're playing hooky.

JIM: I reckon she won't cause you any trouble for coming to the
circus.

BILLY: That's what you think, mister.

PHYLLIS: You don't know Miss Steps. (*BILLY, PHYLLIS and
CLAIRE hurry OFF, RIGHT.*)

JIM: (*Calls after them.*) See you kids later. (*Back to his ringmaster
practicing.*) Don't forget Cowboy Joe and his spinning rope of
tricks! Those unbelievable Siamese twins, Mary and Jane!

MISS STEPS: (*ENTERS LEFT. No-nonsense type.*) You there.

JIM: Me, ma'am?

MISS STEPS: I'm looking for some children who should be
studying in the Little Red Schoolhouse down the road.

JIM: I reckon young'uns can be excused from school when the
circus comes to town.

MISS STEPS: I'll be the judge of that. (*Scoffs.*) Circus, indeed.
You call this pitiful collection of smelly animals and canvas
tents a circus?

JIM: I do.

MISS STEPS: It's nothing but a mud show.

JIM: Now, hold on, ma'am.

MISS STEPS: Where are those pesty pupils? Watering the
elephant, I imagine.

JIM: We ain't got an elephant anymore.

MISS STEPS: A circus without an elephant? What did I just say –
a mud show. I'll find those truants, and when I do – (*Shakes
fist. EXITS RIGHT.*) Billy! Phyllis! Claire!

JIM: (*Calls after her.*) Always nice to meet the local schoolmarm.
(*JIM lifts his hat high and cracks the homemade whip.*) Don't

fail to witness the fascinating and death-defying gyrations of Princess Wanda! Lion tamer beyond comparison!

MISS ROSIE: (*Our lovely heroine, ENTERS RIGHT. OPTIONAL ballerina costume.*) Jim, don't let Conrad Mooch hear you practicing a ringmaster's pitch. You know it makes him angry.

JIM: (*Takes a step DOWNSTAGE, aside.*) Conrad Mooch. I don't trust him. Never have. Not since he gave me a dollar bill that was blank on one side. He may be a good ringmaster, but there's something about him that don't ring true. (*Takes a step toward MISS ROSIE.*) I won't always be a circus roustabout, Miss Rosie. Putting up and taking down canvas is only temporary.

MOOCH: (*Our villain, ENTERS from LEFT.*) I heard that. And I have only one answer for you, Jim Nasium. Ha. (*Pause.*) Ha. (*Pause.*) Ha.

JIM: That ain't one answer. It's three.

MISS ROSIE: (*Crosses to MOOCH.*) You mustn't belittle Jim Nasium, Conrad. He aims to better himself.

MOOCH: (*To audience.*) Don't we all. In one way or another. Hee, hee, hee. (*To MISS ROSIE.*) Behold. I now pay homage to the loveliest bareback rider in the wild west. Truly a rose in this parched desert. (*He takes her hand and kisses it with a loud smack.*)

MISS ROSIE/JIM: Yuck.

MOOCH: (*Aside.*) You gotta admit, Mooch sure can smooch.

MISS ROSIE: (*Wiping her hand with a hanky, steps DOWNSTAGE, aside.*) I have never encouraged Conrad Mooch in his romantic ways. He always looks at me as if I were a roadrunner and he were a coyote. My heart belongs to Jim Nasium. But I know he will never propose as long as he is a roustabout and I am the granddaughter of the circus owner, Cora Pampermouse.

MOOCH: (*Slinks to MISS ROSIE'S side and takes her hand again.*) Dear, dear, Miss Rosie. How enchanting you are. When I look at you, a beautiful rose garden is blooming. (*Kisses her hand again.*) Never forget -- you get more smooch with mooch.

MISS ROSIE/JIM: Yuck.

MISS ROSIE: (*Wipes her hand with the hanky.*) Sir, you take advantage of a girl's generous heart.

MOOCH: Do tell.

JIM: That's one hand kiss too many, Mooch.

PATTY: (*MOOCH'S partner in dirty tricks, ENTERS LEFT. Beautiful*

but bad.) I saw that smooch, Mooch. I thought you only had eyes for me.

MOOCH: (*Steps DOWNSTAGE, aside.*) Curses. Patty Larceny. She's got some act. She not only throws daggers, she throws her weight around. I don't like working with her, but what can I do? If I turned my back on her, she might use me for a pincushion. (*To PATTY.*) Patty, my dear--

CORA: (*ENTERS RIGHT. Elderly. Uses a walking stick or cane. Shawl over her shoulders. She dabs away a tear with a hanky.*) Oh, dear, oh, dear.

MISS ROSIE: Nana! (*Goes to her grandmother's side.*)

MOOCH: What's with the waterworks?

JIM: Anything I can do, Mrs. Pampermouse?

MOOCH: (*To JIM.*) You can do something for me. Stop trying to be a ringmaster. That takes talent.

JIM: I've got talent.

MOOCH: When it comes to being a ringmaster, you've got as much talent as a baby pig.

PATTY: That reminds me of what I came to tell everyone. Someone walked off with the baby pigs. By now the baby pig race is probably bacon.

CORA: Bacon! (*Sobs.*) Oh! Oh! Oh!

MISS ROSIE: Don't sob, Nana. Dry your tears. (*Gestures into audience.*) Somewhere, out there, is good fortune.

CORA: (*Squints.*) Where? I want to see it.

MOOCH: (*Grabs JIM'S homemade whip.*) Look at this. You call this a ringmaster's whip?

JIM: It's only for practice.

MOOCH: Why, it's nothing but a stick with a piece of rope dangling from it. Kid stuff.

PATTY: You couldn't tame a kitten with that thing. Ha, ha, ha.

MOOCH: Ha, ha, ha. And that hat is only good for begging. (*He grabs the hat from JIM'S hand and shakes it gleefully at the audience.*) Spare change, spare change. Ha, ha, ha.

PATTY: Ha, ha, ha.

MOOCH: (*Drops the hat and kicks it OFFSTAGE.*) Adios, sombrero.

JIM: (*Assumes a boxing stance, fists up.*) Prepare to defend yourself, Mooch. Jim Nasium has drawn a line in the sand.

MOOCH: (*Pretends to search for the line.*) I don't see any line in the sand.

JIM: Mooch, I do believe you're kin to a viper.

MOOCH: I'll thank you to leave my relatives out of this.

CORA: Boys, boys. Behave.

PATTY: What's the matter with you, Mooch? Are you going to let a common roustabout speak to you any way he wants?

JIM: I may be a roustabout, but I ain't common.

MISS ROSIE: Don't say "ain't," Jim.

JIM: Why not?

MISS ROSIE: It sounds common.

CORA: *(More tears.)* Oh. Oh. Oh.

MISS ROSIE: You'd better sit down, Nana. You're upset about something. *(Guides her grandmother onto the bench.)*

CORA: Who wouldn't be upset? All the calamities that have beset my circus. One bad thing after another.

PATTY: Like Jumbo, the elephant, running away.

MOOCH: And Jo-Jo, the chimpanzee, escaping. *(He winks at the audience to suggest he is somehow the cause of the disappearance.)* What will the audience say when they find out The Pampermouse Circus has no chimpanzee?

CORA: I can't bear it.

MOOCH: That's another thing. We have no dancing bear. It ran off.

CORA: Oh. Oh. Oh. *(More sobs.)*

MISS ROSIE: *(Sits beside CORA, puts her arms across her grandmother's shoulders.)* There, there, Nana.

CORA: *(Toughening up, no more tears.)* I'm all right, Rosie. There's no need to worry about your poor old granny. I'm circus born and circus bred. I've got guts in my bones.

PATTY: Guts in your bones. Ugh. That's disgusting.

MOOCH: A figure of speech, Patty. Mrs. Pampermouse means she has plenty of iron in her blood.

PATTY: She has been walking rather heavily these last few days, but I didn't know she was weighted down with iron. That explains it.

MOOCH: *(Aside.)* She might be sharp with daggers, but she's dull otherwise.

CORA: I have an important announcement to make. *(Stands, crosses CENTER. She produces a whistle and gives it a long, loud blast. OTHERS cover their ears.)* Everyone, out here, please. *(OTHERS uncover their ears. CORA gives another long, loud blast on the whistle. OTHERS cover their ears again. Uncover. Positions at this point: ROSIE on the bench. CORA in front of the table. JIM close by. MOOCH and PATTY are by the barrel. CIRCUS PERFORMERS ENTER RIGHT and LEFT and take positions to the RIGHT and LEFT of CORA. They are: COWBOY JOE, twirling a rope or lariat;*

THE GREAT FLAMO; REPTILLA, the snake charmer, who has a snake [fake] draped around her shoulders; NEDDA PHELPS, who works publicity; PRINCESS WANDA, the lion tamer; HELEN HIGHWIRE, the trapeze artist; and MARY/JANE, Siamese twins joined at the hip [SEE PRODUCTION NOTES]. Dialogue OVERLAPS as CIRCUS PERFORMERS ENTER.)

COWBOY JOE: What's up, Mrs. Pampermouse --

FLAMO: Haven't heard that whistle in a long time --

REPTILLA: Must be something important --

NEDDA: We'll know soon enough --

PRINCESS WANDA: It woke up my lion --

HELEN: I was getting ready to test the trapeze --

MARY: Maybe Jumbo has been found --

JANE: And Jo-Jo. I miss Jo-Jo --

CORA: Please, please, your attention, everyone. *(ALL settle down.)* I'm afraid I have some bad news. *(Reaction.)* You all know I'm trying to hold on as best I can. But I'd be falling in my duty as your employer if I didn't tell it like it is. We may have to shut down. Business has been so poor.

COWBOY JOE: On account of we ain't played no big city yet.

CORA: That's only part of it, Cowboy Joe. Each day seems to bring a new misfortune.

FLAMO: I reckon you're talking about the elephant.

REPTILLA: And the chimpanzee.

MOOCH: Don't forget the dancing bear.

PATTY: And the baby pig race.

CORA: I won't be able to pay wages this week.

HELEN: What about our back wages?

JIM: What about 'em? We're circus! We stay together through thick and thin.

MARY/JANE: Mostly thin.

CORA: I felt it was only right to let you know how things are. *(Sorrowfully.)* If anyone wants to leave and find a job someplace else, there'll be no hard feelings.

MISS ROSIE: *(Stands.)* Things will get better, Nana. *(WIDOW GRUNDY, a grumpy woman from the town, pushes her way IN from LEFT. Behind her walks the local SHERIFF, HANS UPP. He wears holster and gun, tin star on his vest.)*

SHERIFF: Now, now, Widow Grundy. No sense in stirring up trouble.

WIDOW GRUNDY: No sense you trying to dissuade me, Sheriff. I know my rights. *(No one has any idea who WIDOW GRUNDY*

is. She moves CENTER, looking about with an expression of disapproval.) Just look at them.

JIM: The show ain't today, ma'am.

COWBOY JOE: We're just setting up. Come back tomorrow.

WIDOW GRUNDY: Come back tomorrow? I'm a respectable citizen. I have nothing to do with riffraff.

PERFORMERS: Riffraff?!

WIDOW GRUNDY: Vagabonds.

PERFORMERS: Vagabonds?!

WIDOW GRUNDY: Gypsies.

PERFORMERS: Gypsies?!

NEDDA: *(Steps to WIDOW GRUNDY.)* One moment, lady.

WIDOW GRUNDY: Who are you?

NEDDA: I'm Nedda Phelps. I handle publicity and advertising for The Pampermouse Circus.

WIDOW GRUNDY: I've seen your posters all over town. Pictures of vicious jungle beasts and unwholesome-looking entertainers. Disgraceful.

REPTILLA: *(Steps to WIDOW GRUNDY.)* Who you calling unwholesome?

WIDOW GRUNDY: *(Notices snake.)* What's that draped over your shoulders?

REPTILLA: What's it look like?

MARYJANE: It's a snake.

REPTILLA: Wanna pet it?

WIDOW GRUNDY: *(Recoils.)* Snake! Ugh! Take it away! *(REPTILLA steps back. WIDOW GRUNDY crosses to SHERIFF, takes him by the hand and pulls him CENTER.)* What are you waiting for, Sheriff? Arrest the lot of them.

PERFORMERS: *(Ad lib.)* Arrest?

What!

We ain't done nothing!

What's she trying to do?

CORA: *(Steps to WIDOW GRUNDY.)* I don't know your name, but my name is Pampermouse. Cora Pampermouse. I own this circus.

WIDOW GRUNDY: I am the Widow Grundy, and I don't approve of circus people. Never have. Never will.

SHERIFF: *(Steps forward.)* Hans Upp. *(ALL put up their hands.)* No, no. You don't understand. That's my name. Hans. *(Spells it out.)* "H" -- "A" -- "N" -- "S." UPP. "U" -- "P" -- "P." Hans Upp. Widow Grundy here has the idea circus folk are always up to no good. Hands down. *(Hands come down.)*

MISS ROSIE: Up to no good? That's not true.

WIDOW GRUNDY: Naturally, you'd say that. You work for the circus. What do you do?

MARY/JANE: Miss Rosie rides bareback on the ponies.

WIDOW GRUNDY: Good gracious. Siamese twins.

MARY/JANE: But not from Siam.

MISS ROSIE: Won't you stay for lunch, Widow Grundy, and learn a little bit more about us?

WIDOW GRUNDY: Don't patronize me. This is no life for a young lady. I've said it before and I'll say it again. The circus is a bad influence on youth.

HELEN: Nonsense.

CORA: Nonsense.

PERFORMERS: Nonsense, nonsense, nonsense.

FLAMO: I say double-nonsense.

WIDOW GRUNDY: Who are you?

FLAMO: The Great Flamo.

HELEN: He's a clown.

WIDOW GRUNDY: I don't doubt that. What a ridiculous name. The Great Flamo.

PRINCESS WANDA: He's not only a clown, he's a fire-eater.

HELEN: He can swallow flame.

WIDOW GRUNDY: Did you hear that, Sheriff? He swallows flame. The man's a menace. He could set the whole town on fire with one burp. (*Running IN from RIGHT are BILLY, CLAIRE and PHYLLIS. MISS STEPS is chasing them. The PUPILS run in and out of the crowd attempting to avoid her.*)

BILLY: Don't let her catch us!

PHYLLIS: Hide!

CLAIRE: Run!

MISS STEPS: You children come back here! Stop running away from me. Billy! Phyllis! Claire! (*PUPILS run OUT, LEFT.*)

WIDOW GRUNDY: What's the trouble, Miss Steps?

MISS STEPS: My pupils cut school today because they all want to be here. With the circus.

WIDOW GRUNDY: Aha! What did I say, Sheriff? The circus is a bad influence.

SHERIFF: I can't arrest folks just because they're in the circus, Widow Grundy.

CORA: We have a permit.

WIDOW GRUNDY: I'll speak to the mayor about that. I expect you to keep an eye on this place, Sheriff. At the first sign of any mischief, I want this circus shut down and kicked out of town.

PERFORMERS: *(Ad lib.)* Hey!

Shut down?!

Kicked out of town?!

MOOCH: Cease! *(Silence. Speaks to audience as CAST*

FREEZES in position.) You've all heard the old expression -- more flies with sugar than vinegar. Watch Mooch in action. He can charm cobras out of baskets. *(He crosses to WIDOW GRUNDY, oozing oily charm.)* My dear, dear lady. Surely you misjudge us.

WIDOW GRUNDY: My name's not Shirley. Who are you?

MOOCH: Everybody knows me.

WIDOW GRUNDY: I don't.

MOOCH: I am the best ringmaster in the business. Conrad Mooch. Rhymes with smooch. Always the gentleman. May I kiss your hand?

WIDOW GRUNDY: Certainly not. *(With that, she swings back her hand and slaps MOOCH'S face.)*

MOOCH: Auuuuugh! *(OTHERS gasp. He can't believe what has just happened. He staggers about in exaggerated fashion, as if hit by a runaway bull.)* Oh! Owl! Auuuuuuugh! I'm injured! I'm incapacitated! I'm ineligible!

FLAMO: It was only a little slap.

PRINCESS WANDA: Don't be a baby.

CORA: Don't say baby. It reminds me of the baby pig race.

WIDOW GRUNDY: The mayor will listen to me. I've helped him along. *(Scoffs.)* The circus, bah.

MISS STEPS: *(Scoffs.)* The circus, bah. *(WIDOW GRUNDY and MISS STEPS, noses in the air, EXIT LEFT. FLAMO follows after them for a few steps, imitating their walk.)*

FLAMO: *(Mimicking.)* "The mayor will listen to me. I've helped him along. The circus, bah. Bah, bah, bah." *(ONLOOKERS laugh.)*

SHERIFF: Sorry about that, folks.

MISS ROSIE: The mayor won't listen to her, will he?

SHERIFF: If I was you, I'd make sure there ain't no trouble of any kind. Otherwise, Widow Grundy won't be easy to handle. I hate to say it, but I'll be around, keeping my eyes on things. *(EXITS LEFT.)*

CORA: Thanks anyway, Sheriff.

SHERIFF: *(Calling back.)* Hans Upp. *(Without thinking, ALL lift their hands over their head. They chuckle, realizing their mistake. Hands down.)*

MISS ROSIE: I think we've all had enough excitement for one day.

JIM: Miss Rosie's right, gang. Let's finish setting up. *(CIRCUS*

PERFORMERS EXIT RIGHT and LEFT, leaving ON STAGE: CORA, NEDDA, MISS ROSIE, PRINCESS WANDA, JIM. MOOCH and PATTY EXIT DOWN LEFT.)

PRINCESS WANDA: If things don't pick up, Mrs. Pampermouse, I'm afraid I will have to leave. I'm sorry, I really don't want to, but you know how it goes. I'll miss the lion.

CORA: I understand, and I'm sure the lion will miss you too, Princess Wanda. (*PRINCESS WANDA EXITS RIGHT.*) What bad luck will strike us next? I suppose the lion will run off or the bank will show up.

MISS CAROLINE: (*A bank representative, ENTERS LEFT. She carries a briefcase.*) Ah, there you are, Mrs. Pampermouse.

CORA: Hello, Miss Caroline.

JIM: Who's Miss Caroline?

MISS ROSIE: She's from the bank. (*CORA crosses for MISS CAROLINE. JIM and MISS ROSIE stand together, NEDDA by the table.*)

MISS CAROLINE: You know why I'm here.

CORA: I've been expecting you. Wish I had good news.

JIM: I better see to the canvas.

CORA: No, you stay, Jim. I want you to hear this. (*Unobserved, MOOCH slinks back IN from DOWN LEFT and ducks behind the barrel. He puts his finger to his lips, cautioning the audience not to glve him away.*)

MISS CAROLINE: I take it, from the tone of your voice, you don't have the money to repay your loan.

CORA: Alas.

HEY YOU: (*A pretty young girl, ENTERS RIGHT. She wears an apron and chef's hat.*) We're mighty low on victuals, Mrs. Pampermouse. It'll have to be beans again with biscuits.

CORA: Do the best you can, Hey You.

HEY YOU: I always do.

CORA: Pour some more water in the lemonade.

HEY YOU: I always do.

CORA: When you serve the beans and biscuits and watered lemonade, smile.

HEY YOU: I always do.

CORA: Thank you, Hey You. (*HEY YOU EXITS RIGHT.*)

MISS CAROLINE: Hey You? What an unusual name.

JIM: Hey You has charge of the grub tent. We found her wandering in the desert, so we took her in.

MISS ROSIE: She must've fallen and banged her head on a rock. She can't remember a thing. She can't even remember her

real name.

NEDDA: She's a victim of magnaesia. So everyone just calls her Hey You, and she always answers to it.

JIM: I swear I've seen Hey You someplace before. *(To audience.)* But where? Where? *(PATTY slinks IN beside MOOCH from DOWN LEFT.)*

MISS CAROLINE: I'm sorry it's come to this. But the bank cannot extend the loan without assurance of repayment.

MISS ROSIE: Oh, Jim. That means Nana loses the circus.

JIM: I'll find some way to help her. *(MOOCH doesn't like the sound of that, frowns.)*

CORA: Might as well accept what has to be accepted. I reckon the bank will soon own The Pampermouse Circus.

MISS ROSIE: Oh, Jim. *(JIM comforts her.)*

MISS CAROLINE: Fortunately, I have found someone willing to purchase the animals. She runs a zoo in Kalamazoo. *(Calls LEFT.)* Won't you come in? *(MAUD LYNN ENTERS, a type similar to CORA. Carries large handbag.)* This is Maud Lynn.

CORA: I know her. Haven't seen her in years, though. Howdy, Maud.

MAUD: Howdy, Cora. Sorry you've fallen on hard times.

JIM: If only I could find out why we keep losing our animals.

MAUD: Losing them? How many have you lost?

NEDDA: The elephant, the dancing bear, the chimpanzee and the baby pigs.

MAUD: There won't be much left for me to buy.

NEDDA: We still have the trained parrots and the monkeys and the giraffe and the lion.

JIM: *(Excited, steps forward.)* Miss Caroline, what if The Pampermouse Circus had a great new act? A great new act guaranteed to bring in the crowds. Would the bank extend the loan?

MISS CAROLINE: I suppose so. The bank really doesn't want to own a circus. Do you have such an act? *(ALL look to JIM, hopeful.)*

JIM: *(Quickly deflates.)* It was just a thought.

CORA: I appreciate the thought, Jim. You're a good lad, always trying to help.

JIM: Don't give up yet.

MISS CAROLINE: I'll give you twenty-four hours to come up with a great new act, or the bank will have no choice but to foreclose. I wish it could be otherwise. *(EXITS LEFT.)*

MISS ROSIE: Tomorrow might be the last time I dance on the

back of a pony. *(Runs OFF, RIGHT.)*

JIM: *(Calling OFF, RIGHT.)* Let's get that canvas up! *(EXITS RIGHT.)*

CORA: Come along, Nedda, Maud. I'll have Hey You fix us a nice cup of weak hot tea. *(CORA MOVES RIGHT, NEDDA FOLLOWS.)*

NEDDA: I think Hey You said we're out of tea. *(As CORA and NEDDA EXIT, MAUD starts to follow.)*

MOOCH: Psssst. Psssst. *(MAUD stops on the sound. She turns around wondering where it's coming from.)* Psssst. Over here. Behind the barrel.

MAUD: Who are you?

MOOCH: *(Stands.)* Conrad Mooch. Ringmaster extraordinary.

PATTY: *(Stands.)* Patty Larceny. Knife thrower extraordinary.

MOOCH: *(Steps to MAUD.)* Did I overhear correctly? You're planning to purchase the animal stock?

MAUD: Once Cora Pampermouse defaults on the bank loan. The bank will let me have them cheap. No bank wants a bunch of circus animals. I'm only sorry so many of the creatures have disappeared. Do you think there might be a thief on the premises?

MOOCH: *(Goes into pretended shock.)* Patty, Patty, did you hear that? It's not possible, is it? A thief on the premises.

PATTY: Anything's possible, Conrad.

MOOCH: You're a big help. *(To MAUD.)* Undoubtedly, the animals heard the call of the wild and ran off to answer it.

MAUD: *(Slaps handbag.)* I've brought a lot of money with me. *(Both MOOCH and PATTY react.)* I expected to buy an elephant. Elephants cost.

MOOCH: If you buy them by the pound. *(Aside, to PATTY.)* Did you hear what she said? "A lot of money."

PATTY: *(Aside, to MOOCH.)* I heard. It's in the handbag.

MOOCH: *(Aloud.)* Patty, my dear, why don't you show Maud Lynn your colorful collection of daggers?

PATTY: What for?

MOOCH: Because I said so. *(Snarls under his breath.)* Don't argue! Do it! *(False smile to MAUD.)* Patty Larceny is so protective of her daggers.

MAUD: A good circus performer has to be protective of her props.

PATTY: *(Gestures to table.)* Over here.

MAUD: I used to be in the circus, you know.

MOOCH: We didn't know.

MAUD: That's where I first met Cora Pampermouse.

MOOCH: It's a small world.

PATTY: What was your act?

MAUD: They shot me out of a cannon, and I landed on a wet sponge.

PATTY/MOOCH: A wet sponge?

MAUD: I had to give it up. One time some idiot squeezed the sponge dry. I had a terrible landing.

MOOCH: Must have been awful. *(Aside, to PATTY.)* The daggers, the daggers. Show her the daggers. Distract her.

PATTY: I had my daggers made special. *(PATTY moves to table. MAUD moves to follow.)*

MOOCH: *(Steps beside MAUD and takes the handbag.)* That handbag looks so heavy. Here. Let me hold it for you. *(He attempts to pull it from MAUD'S grip.)*

MAUD: *(Pulls back.)* That won't be necessary.

PATTY: *(At the table, holds up a dagger.)* They're perfectly balanced.

MOOCH: Please, I'll be more than happy to keep an eye on your handbag. *(Winks to audience.)*

MAUD: Oh, very well. You gentleman are so persistent. *(Lets MOOCH take the handbag.)* But don't let it out of your sight.

MOOCH: You can trust Mooch. *(Aside.)* That is, you can trust Mooch to do what Mooch does best. Hee, hee, hee. *(MAUD walks to the table. Fast, with his back to MAUD and PATTY, MOOCH puts the handbag on the barrel, opens it and takes out an envelope. He opens the envelope and takes out a fistful of money bills. Reacts. While this is going on --)*

MAUD: You must have a steady hand, Miss Larceny.

PATTY: *(Hands MAUD a dagger for examination.)* I'd better have a steady hand. Otherwise, I'd run out of targets.

MAUD: I'd like to see your act sometime.

PATTY: How about right now?

MAUD: What will you use for a target?

PATTY: Mooch. *(On hearing his name, MOOCH practically falls apart. He quickly stuffs the envelope back into the handbag and snaps it shut. Forces a smile, turns UPSTAGE.)*

MOOCH: Present.

PATTY: Maud Lynn wants to see my act. I need a target.

MOOCH: What about Helen Highwire or Princess Wanda?

PATTY: They're busy.

MOOCH: I'm no target.

MAUD: If I'm not going to see the act, I'll take my handbag and be on my way.

MOOCH: *(Panicked, grabs the handbag and holds it close to his chest.)* No! I mean yes!

MAUD: No? Yes?

MOOCH: I mean no -- don't go. I mean yes -- I'll be the target.

PATTY: *(Calls RIGHT.)* Flamol *(Points OFFSTAGE LEFT.)* Stand over there, Mooch. By that cottonwood tree.

MOOCH: *(Crosses for STAGE LEFT. Softly, to PATTY.)* I'll get you for this. *(He EXITS. FLAMO ENTERS, stands RIGHT. He has a drum on a rope around his neck, or he might use a horn. [COWBOY JOE can be used instead of FLAMO, if desired.] PATTY takes the dagger from MAUD.)*

MAUD: Ready, Mooch?

MOOCH'S VOICE: *(OFF LEFT.)* I guess. But don't sneeze. *(PATTY prepares to toss a dagger [SEE PRODUCTION NOTES]. She nods to FLAMO, and he gives a drumroll or toots the horn. As soon as the drumroll or horn toot stops, PATTY tosses the dagger OFFSTAGE.)* Ouch! *(Drawn by the "excitement," BILLY, CLAIRE and PHYLLIS RETURN STAGE RIGHT and watch. Or some CIRCUS PERFORMERS might be utilized. MAUD picks up another dagger from the table and hands it to PATTY.)*

PATTY: Are you ready, Mooch?

MOOCH'S VOICE: *(OFF LEFT. Resigned.)* Ready. *(PATTY prepares to toss. She nods to FLAMO. Drumroll or horn toot. It stops and PATTY tosses.)* Auuuuugh! *(ONLOOKERS applaud. MAUD takes another dagger from the table and hands it to PATTY.)*

PATTY: Are you ready?

MOOCH'S VOICE: *(OFF LEFT. Woeful.)* As ready as I'll ever be. *(PATTY prepares to toss, nods to FLAMO. Drumroll or horn toot. When it stops, PATTY tosses the dagger.)* Owl Owl Owl! *(ONLOOKERS applaud. MAUD picks up another dagger, hands it to PATTY.)*

PATTY: Ready?

MOOCH'S VOICE: *(OFF LEFT. Weak.)* I don't feel so good.

PATTY: Last throw.

MOOCH'S VOICE: For you or for me? *(She prepares to toss. Nods to FLAMO. One more drumroll or horn toot. When it stops, PATTY tosses.)*

MOOCH'S VOICE: *(Loudest yet.)* Oooooooooooooooooooooouuch!!! *(ONLOOKERS applaud. Pause. With a sour look on his face, MOOCH limps back IN. ONLOOKERS stop the applause, EXIT RIGHT. MOOCH holds the handbag in front of his face.)*

One of the daggers is stuck in it.)

MAUD: My handbag! Look at my handbag!

MOOCH: *(Lowers handbag.)* Better your handbag than my face.

MAUD: The very idea. *(Angry, she crosses to MOOCH and grabs the handbag. She pulls out the dagger and hands it to MOOCH.)* A perfectly good handbag. Ruined. *(She stomps OFF, LEFT. MOOCH limps to table and puts down the dagger.)*

PATTY: You're limping.

MOOCH: *(Snidely.)* Gee, I wonder why.

PATTY: She took the handbag with her.

MOOCH: Forget about the handbag. *(Reaches into some pocket and comes out with the envelope of money.)* I took out the money when you were busy with the cutlery. Here's the plan. Listen carefully.

PATTY: I'm all ears. *(MOOCH pockets envelope. Takes PATTY by the elbow and guides her DOWNSTAGE. As he speaks, he keeps looking over his shoulder to make certain no one is listening.)*

MOOCH: You heard Miss Caroline. The bank's not interested in owning a circus. It will sell out for a song. Once Cora Pampermouse is out of the picture, I will step forward and, thanks to Maud Lynn's handbag, make an offer the bank won't be able to refuse. Hee, hee, hee.

PATTY: Ha, ha, ha. But what will happen when Maud Lynn realizes her money's gone?

MOOCH: That's no concern of mine. I'll deny everything. She has no proof I took the money. Cash is cash. Hee, hee, hee. *(To audience, enthusiastic.)* My dream of owning my own circus is coming true! I can see the circus banners now -- "The Mooch Circus -- Greatest Little Show In The Wild West."

PATTY: You mean -- "The Mooch and Larceny Circus." After all, I helped you steal and hide the animals, thank you very much!

MOOCH: Shhhhhh. What's the matter with you? Do you want to be overheard?

PATTY: What if someone comes up with that spectacular act? Miss Caroline said the bank might extend the loan.

MOOCH: I've already thought of that. I'll get everyone's hopes high. I'll tell them I have that spectacular act, and when I'm through presenting it, no one will have the spirit or the will to struggle any longer. Hee, hee, hee. *(To audience.)* Being bad feels sooo good.

PATTY: What is this spectacular act?

MOOCH: All in good time. Find Cora Pampermouse. Tell her I

have the act that will save the circus. Move! Go!

PATTY: What a grouch. *(EXITS RIGHT.)*

MOOCH: *(Picks up one foot and rubs his ankle.)* Owl! Those daggers sting.

MISS ROSIE: *(ENTERS DOWN RIGHT.)* Is something wrong, Conrad?

MOOCH: Patty Larceny was using me for target practice. *(To audience.)* She needs a lot of practice.

MISS ROSIE: Jim Nasium is stretching his brain trying to think up some act to save the circus.

MOOCH: Stretching his brain, you say? That shouldn't take long. *(Crosses to MISS ROSIE.)* It's always been a mystery to me why you waste your affections on such a nobody.

MISS ROSIE: I love him.

MOOCH: Love isn't everything. I could make you a star. A real star. How would you like to be in my circus?

MISS ROSIE: But you don't have a circus, Conrad.

MOOCH: *(Aside.)* Little does she know. *(He smiles in villainous fashion.)*

MISS ROSIE: Why are you looking at me like that?

MOOCH: It's the only way I know how to look at you. How about a smooch for Mooch? *(Grabs her hand and plants a noisy kiss on her knuckle.)*

MISS ROSIE: *(Turns aside in revulsion.)* Yuck.

JIM: *(ENTERS DOWN RIGHT, chest out.)* Unhand Miss Rosie -- unless you want trouble. *(Assumes a boxing stance, fists up.)*

MOOCH: Ah, the would-be ringmaster. I thought you were busy stretching your brain. What there is of it. *(CORA ENTERS, FOLLOWED by PATTY.)*

CORA: Conrad, what's this I hear from Patty Larceny? She says you have a spectacular new act that will solve all our problems.

JIM: *(Relaxes, fists down.)* Huh?

MOOCH: It's sensationall! Run and tell everyone. The greatest act the circus world has ever seen will be in the ring in less than five minutes.

MISS ROSIE: That's wonderful news!

JIM: I don't believe it.

MOOCH: And you call yourself circus.

JIM: I am circus!

CORA: Miss Rosie, quick! Find Miss Caroline. She must see this new act.

MISS ROSIE: *(Quickly crosses STAGE LEFT.)* Yes! Yes! *(EXITS)*

LEFT.)

CORA: Hurry, Patty. Spread the word.

PATTY: *(With evil grin.)* Happy to. *(EXITS RIGHT.)*

CORA: Oh, Conrad! Bless you! Everyone will be so happy. *(EXITS RIGHT.)*

JIM: I still don't believe it.

MOOCH: You're jealous, that's your problem.

JIM: Jealous of you?

MOOCH: Because Miss Rosie likes me more than she likes you.
Try that on for size.

JIM: You've got a mighty fine opinion of yourself. Try this on for size. *(He makes a fist and MOOCH runs OUT, RIGHT. PHYLLIS and CLAIRE ENTER.)*

PHYLLIS: Hey, mister.

JIM: I can't stop and chatter. Work to do.

CLAIRE: We heard you lost your chimpanzee.

JIM: *(Looking RIGHT after MOOCH.)* I have a suspicion it was stolen. If only I had some proof.

PHYLLIS: Billy can impersonate a chimpanzee real good.

CLAIRE: Maybe you could use him.

BILLY: *(ENTERS, chattering wildly as a monkey might. He walks low to the ground, his hands practically dragging on the earth.) Chimpanzee sounds.)* Wo-wo-wo-wo-wo. *(Makes a circle, doing his best to look like a chimp. He continues with the monkey sounds. GIRLS laugh.)*

PHYLLIS: Maybe he could ride a bicycle.

CLAIRE: Do you have a monkey costume he could wear?

MISS STEPS' VOICE: *(From OFF, LEFT.)* Billy! Phyllis! Claire!

PHYLLIS: Oh, no!

CLAIRE: Not again!

PHYLLIS: Miss Steps! *(GIRLS hurry OFF, RIGHT.)*

MISS STEPS: *(ENTERS LEFT, sees BILLY doing his chimp act.)*

Billy Claggett, is that you? *(BILLY jumps up and down, like a chimp gone mad. He moves toward MISS STEPS.)* What's the matter with you? What's wrong? Get back, get back, I say! *(BILLY advances in threatening fashion. MISS STEPS screams, runs OFF. BILLY FOLLOWS.)*
Heeeeeeeellllllpppppppp!!!

BILLY: Wo-wo-wo-wo-wo... *(EXITS.)*

JIM: *(Calls after MISS STEPS.)* Toss him some peanuts. He'll calm down. *(Now comes a LOUD HUBBUB OF EXCITED VOICES as CAST, with the exception of WIDOW GRUNDY, MAUD LYNN, PATTY and MOOCH, crowds IN from LEFT and*

RIGHT and forms a semicircle on stage from DOWN RIGHT to DOWN LEFT. PUPILS and MISS STEPS will RETURN as scene plays. Dialogue OVERLAPS.)

COWBOY JOE: This I got to see --

FLAMO: Trust Mooch to have something up his sleeve --

REPTILLA: Hope it won't upset my snakes --

PRINCESS WANDA: Better not be another lion act --

HELEN: Who can say? With Mooch you never know --

MARY: Where is he --

JANE: Where's Mooch --

MISS CAROLINE: There isn't much time to save the circus.

CORA: (*Hopeful.*) I know the ringmaster will have something truly amazing.

MISS CAROLINE: I hope so, Mrs. Pampermouse. For your sake.

JIM: How long are we supposed to wait for this truly amazing something?

MOOCH: (*In an even more flamboyant manner than usual, moves IN from RIGHT, carrying a buggy whip and a light wooden chair.*) Wait no longer. Mooch is here!

MISS CAROLINE: Am I to understand you have a new act that will attract a sizeable paying audience?

MOOCH: Indeed, indeed I do. You did say the bank might extend the loan if The Pampermouse Circus obtained a spectacular new attraction.

COWBOY JOE: Never mind all that!

HELEN: Show us the act that's going to save the circus!

MARY: Show us the act!

JANE: The act!

OTHERS: Show us the act! The act!

MOOCH: (*Gestures to bench.*) Mrs. Pampermouse, Miss Caroline. If you please. (*CORA and MISS CAROLINE sit on bench.*)

PRINCESS WANDA: If this doesn't work, the circus is finished.

HELEN: We're counting on you, Mooch.

MOOCH: (*Goes into his ringmaster's spiel. Enthusiastic, loud, exaggerated.*) Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, children of all ages, from two to a hundred-two, The Pampermouse Circus offers, for your entertainment, the greatest circus act ever presented. I give you Conrad Mooch and his unique --

ONLOOKERS: Unique!

MOOCH: High-spirited --

ONLOOKERS: High-spirited!

MOOCH: Magically entertaining --

ONLOOKERS: Magically entertaining!

MOOCH: Invisible Russian Wolfhounds!

ONLOOKERS: Huh?

MISS CAROLINE: Invisible Russian Wolfhounds? (OPTIONAL MUSICAL FANFARE. ONLOOKERS are dubious as MOOCH cracks the whip to STAGE RIGHT and, supposedly, the "invisible" canines gambol onto the stage. Of course, MOOCH pretends the dogs actually exist. ONLOOKERS are confused.)

MOOCH: On Boris! On Yasha! On Anya! On Sonia! On Blitzen!

ONLOOKERS: Blitzen? (With the whip, MOOCH pretends to guide the hounds, in a circle, as if they were trotting show ponies.)

COWBOY JOE: I don't see any hound dogs from Russia.

MARY/JANE: You're not supposed to see them. They're invisible.

FLAMO: Don't sound right to me.

PRINCESS WANDA: Don't look right.

MOOCH: Sit up, Boris! Sit up, Yasha! Sit up, Anya! Sit up, Sonia! Sit up, Blitzen!

MISS STEPS: It's a lot of rubbish.

MOOCH: (Supposedly has the hounds in a straight line. Cracks whip.) Up! Up! (Steps aside.) How about a round of applause for Conrad Moch and his unique, high-spirited, magically entertaining, invisible Russian Wolfhounds! (Very feeble, scattered applause. MOOCH puts down the chair. PATTY ENTERS LEFT holding a large hoop [hula hoop will do] in the air. She stands LEFT.) One by one, these amazing creatures will now leap from a sitting position and jump through the hoop my assistant is holding. Are you ready, Miss Larceny?

PATTY: Ready, Mr. Moch.

MOOCH: (Scurries to the hoop. Addresses the "hounds.") In one leap. Through the hoop, Boris! (MOOCH and PATTY speak for the dogs. "Woof! Woof!" MOOCH cracks the whip and, supposedly, the dog leaps through the hoop.)

PATTY: Amazing!

MOOCH: In one leap. Through the hoop, Yasha! ("Woof! Woof!" Cracks the whip and, once again, a dog supposedly leaps through.)

PATTY: Astonishing!

MOOCH: Anya! Through the hoop! (He cracks the whip. "Woof! Woof!")

MISS CAROLINE: (Can take no more. Indignant, she stands.) Stop! This is absurd. Fraudulent!

SHERIFF: Fraud is against the law.

MOOCH: (Meekly.) I was only trying to save the circus.

MISS CAROLINE: (To CORA.) Why, the public would never stand

for such a ridiculous rip-off.

MOOCH: (*Thumb in his mouth, like a child caught in some mischief.*) I was only trying to help.

PATTY: How about invisible polar bears?

COWBOY JOE: I reckon we can't blame Mooch for trying.

HELEN: It's no use.

PRINCESS WANDA: We're finished.

REPTILLA: Might as well shut down for good.

MISS ROSIE: Thank you for trying to help, Conrad.

MOOCH: (*Points to JIM.*) Which is more than he ever did for you.

MAUD'S VOICE: (*From OFFSTAGE LEFT.*) Help! Help! I've been robbed. (*She runs IN, LEFT. Reaction.*)

MISS ROSIE: It's Maud Lynn.

MAUD: (*Moves CENTER.*) Every dollar! Gone!

SHERIFF: Where did you have the money last? (*NOTE: It's important the ACTORS "stay in the scene," reacting to the action and dialogue with great interest.*)

MAUD: (*Holds up handbag.*) In my handbag.

SHERIFF: Did you put it down somewhere?

MAUD: It never leaves my hand. (*Thinks.*) Wait a minute. (*Points to MOOCH.*) He had it when -- (*Points to PATTY.*) when she performed her knife-throwing act for me.

MOOCH: (*Checks his manicure, very cool.*) You only imagined that.

PATTY: (*To MAUD.*) No you had the handbag with you when I tossed the daggers.

MAUD: Not so!

JIM: Let's see if Mooch has any money on him. (*Before MOOCH or SHERIFF can protest, JIM is at him, patting him down.*)

MAUD: The money's in an envelope.

MOOCH: Stop, stop. Hee, hee, hee. Ha, ha, ha.

NEDDA: What's the matter with you?

MOOCH: I'm ticklish. (*JIM reaches into MOOCH'S inside pocket and takes out the envelope. He checks.*)

JIM: It's money, all right. Look at this, Sheriff. (*Displays money bills.*)

ONLOOKERS: Ooooooooh.

MOOCH: It's mine. That's money I've been saving up. Penny by penny, buffalo nickel by buffalo nickel.

PATTY: No crime against having money in an envelope on you, is there?

SHERIFF: You say this is your envelope, Mooch?

MOOCH: It is. Personal property of Conrad Mooch.

JIM: (*Checks printing.*) Then how come the printing on this

envelope says "Property of the Kalamazoo Zoo"?

ONLOOKERS: Kalamazoo Zoo!

SHERIFF: That's evidence enough for me. (*MOOCH seems to shrink in front of our eyes.*)

MOOCH: Curses.

PATTY: (*Innocent.*) I had no idea he was a thief.

MOOCH: (*Frantic.*) Don't listen to her. She planted the envelope on me. She wanted me to look bad in front of Miss Rosie. It's all her doing.

SHERIFF: We'll sort this out down at the jail.

MISS CAROLINE: Shoot, you folks are sharp to catch this creep, but I'm afraid this circus still closes after tomorrow's performance. (*JIM looks up with a look of great revelation on his face.*)

ONLOOKERS: Ooooooooooh.

JIM: (*Takes CENTER.*) Wait! Hey You! (*HEY YOU steps forward.*)

HEY YOU: I'm here, Jim.

JIM: Listen, everyone! I remember who this is! What Miss Caroline just said jarred my memory. Hey You's the best little sharpshooter in the Territory. I saw her do her stuff in Tucson.

ONLOOKERS: Huh? Hey You? Sharpshooter?

JIM: I saw her perform with her sister.

MISS ROSIE: Who's her sister, Jim?

JIM: Not Jim -- Annie! Annie Oakley!

ONLOOKERS: Annie Oakley! (*HEY YOU puts her hands to her head and shakes it back and forth, suddenly remembering.*)

CLAIRE/PHYLLIS: Who's Annie Oakley?

BILLY: Annie Oakley is the greatest shot with a rifle in the whole wide world!

MARY: Ask Buffalo Bill.

JANE: Annie works for him.

HELEN: In his Wild West Show.

HEY YOU: Wait! It's all coming back to me. That name -- Annie Oakley. She is my big sister. Yes, yes.

JIM: You hear that, Miss Caroline? Hey You is Annie Oakley's baby sister. We could hire some cowboys and Indians and stage a wild west show as an added attraction.

NEDDA: (*Steps forward, excited.*) I can see the banners now -- "PAMPERMOUSE CIRCUS AND WILD WEST SHOW -- FEATURING ANNIE OAKLEY'S SISTER -- LITTLE LADY WING-SHOT!"

ONLOOKERS: Little Lady Wing-Shot?

MISS ROSIE: How do you like that?

HEY YOU: I like it better than Hey You.

JIM: What do you say, Miss Caroline? A circus combined with a wild west show. *(Long pause.)*

MISS CAROLINE: *(Thinks it over.)* With Annie Oakley's sister in the show, I'm certain I can convince the bank officers the loan should be extended.

ONLOOKERS: Hooray! The circus is saved! *(GENERAL PANDEMONIUM as ALL jump up and down, gleeful. Congratulating one another.)* Saved! Saved! The circus is saved! *(WIDOW GRUNDY pushes IN from LEFT. She is waving some document.)*

WIDOW GRUNDY: This circus is closing down -- now! *(Celebration ceases abruptly.)*

SHERIFF: What are you talking about, Widow Grundy? The circus is staying open -- *(Nods to JIM.)* thanks to this young fellow.

WIDOW GRUNDY: I've spoken to the mayor. He owes me more than one favor. This paper is an order to close the circus down.

SHERIFF: *(Takes WIDOW GRUNDY by the elbow and moves DOWNSTAGE a few steps. ONLOOKERS strain to hear, watch carefully.)* Now, now, Widow Grundy. You don't want to cause these folks more trouble than they've already had.

WIDOW GRUNDY: *(Waving paper.)* The law's on my side. Close it down! Close it down!

SHERIFF: If I do that, I'll tell everyone in town why you hate circuses.

WIDOW GRUNDY: *(Gasps.)* You know?

SHERIFF: Everyone in town thinks you're a widow lady, but I know your husband ran off with the circus years ago.

WIDOW GRUNDY: *(Mortified.)* You wouldn't tell on me?

SHERIFF: It's up to you. *(WIDOW GRUNDY thinks for a moment, then rips the paper in two.)*

ONLOOKERS: Hooray!

MISS ROSIE: Looks like we'll need a new ringmaster.

JIM: If I could have the job, I'd be a mighty happy man.

MOOCH: I'll soon fix that! *(Leaps to the table and picks up a prop dagger. ONLOOKERS SCREAM.)*

COWBOY JOE: Watch out, Jim!

MARY/JANE: He's got a knifel *(Clutching the dagger, MOOCH slinks toward JIM, snarling and growling. OTHERS are too surprised to do anything. Fast, MOOCH leaps up, ready to strike. JIM is like granite. He grabs MOOCH'S wrist. MOOCH tries to plunge, but JIM holds tight. MOOCH grunts and*

groans. *It looks like arm wrestling. Slowly, each man drops to one knee. JIM attempts to force the hand with the dagger to the ground. MOOCH continues to resist until his strength is gone. The dagger drops from his hand and he falls on his side. ONLOOKERS cheer. MOOCH bawls.*)

PATTY: What a baby! Go easy on me, Sheriff, and I'll tell you where Mooch hid the missing animals. They're not far from here.

PERFORMERS: *(Ad lib.)* What?!

So you're the one!

You tried to bankrupt us!

I knew it all along!

You scoundrell!

CORA: You'll pay for this, Conrad. *(To SHERIFF.)* No jail for this pathetic cad. Once we get our animals back, I want him cleaning the elephant's cage from now on.

SHERIFF: He's all yours, ma'am, if that's what you'd like.

(MOOCH bawls even louder.)

JIM: *(Turns to ROSIE.)* I wish I had an engagement ring for you, Miss Rosie. I'd ask you to marry me.

MISS ROSIE: Oh, Jim. The only ring I need is the one in the circus. *(ONLOOKERS sigh with hands over their hearts.)*

CORA: Well, Jim, you can give that to her because you're our new ringmaster! The circus is all yours.

JIM: Not just mine... *(Looking at ROSIE.)* ...ours. *(To ROSIE.)* It's a dream come true -- a ring around my Rosie. *(They embrace. ONLOOKERS cheer. CIRCUS MUSIC UP.)*

End Of Play

PRODUCTION NOTES

STAGE PROPERTIES: Bench, barrel, table with wooden daggers, painted silver or gold.

BROUGHT ON: Balloons, drum with drumsticks or horn (FLAMO); top hat, stick with length of rope attached (JIM); hanky (MISS ROSIE); hanky, shawl, cane, whistle (CORA); rope or lariat, (COWBOY JOE); fake snake (REPTILLA); holster and gun, tin star (SHERIFF); briefcase (MISS CAROLINE); handbag containing envelope of money bills (MAUD); apron, chef's hat (HEY YOU); dagger stuck in handbag, buggy whip and light chair (MOOCH); large [hula] hoop (PATTY); legal paper (WIDOW GRUNDY).

SOUND: Circus music, optional fanfare. It would be ideal if the closing circus music could be playing the tune "Ring Around the Rosie." Otherwise, same circus music as at opening is fine.

COSTUMES: The usual old-tyme "mellerdrammer" odds-and-ends. However, if you have the resources, some circus touches will prove effective. For example, a ballerina costume for MISS ROSIE, a flashy cape for HELEN, an Indian costume for PRINCESS WANDA. Tights and spangles, etc. Ideally, MOOCH should wear a ringmaster's frock coat and have a top hat. If not, he wears traditional villain's garb -- black cape and dark clothing. If FLAMO doesn't wear a full clown costume, he can have his face painted.

MARY/JANE: They walk side by side, one arm over the other's shoulder, to give the impression they're attached by the hip. If the actresses are small enough, they can "share" one large dress.

DRESSING UP THE SET: Simply add some flashy circus props -- a large beach ball (suggestive of performing seals or dogs), teeterboard, balloons, a stepladder, some brightly colored wooden boxes. Maybe a large circus poster. Even a string a Christmas lights will add a festive touch.

KNIFE-THROWING ACT and INVISIBLE RUSSIAN WOLFHOOUNDS -- Don't rush either of these sequences. They'll prove big laugh-getters. You might consider having a

SOUND OF IMPACT just before MOOCH cries out "OW!" To create this effect, someone OFFSTAGE slaps two pieces of wood together when PATTY tosses a dagger.

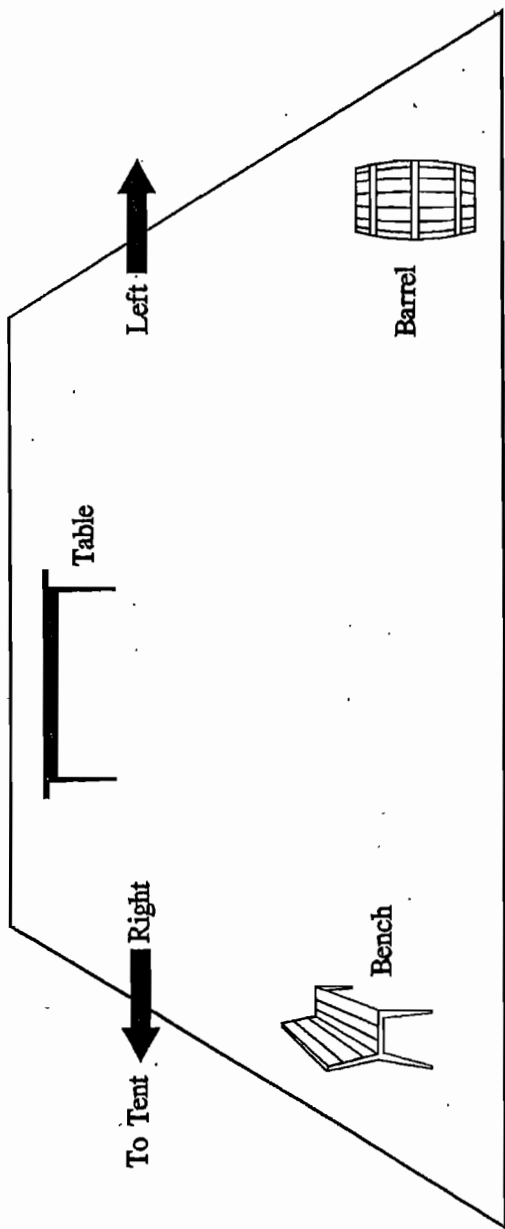
If a wooden dagger doesn't land OFFSTAGE, as intended, the actress portraying PATTY will simply pick it up and toss again.

EXTRAS: Add a few PUPILS, some additional CIRCUS PERFORMERS, like ACROBATS. TOWNSPEOPLE to witness MOOCH'S dog act.

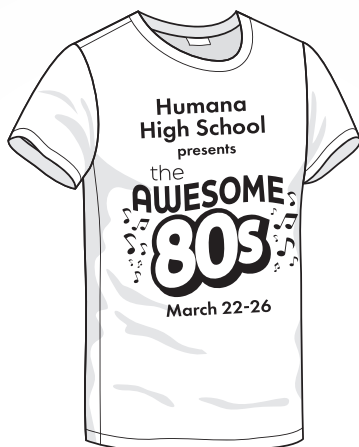
FLEXIBLE CASTING: Adjust to fit your requirements. For example, if you need more males, the schoolmarm could become the schoolmaster, MR. STEPS, HELEN could become HANK. MISS CAROLINE might become MR. CARROLL, and so on. If you need more speaking females, COWBOY JOE could become COWGIRL JANE, THE GREAT FLAMO could become THE GREAT FLO, etc. If you have a cast member with a great "circus talent," use it.

MELODRAMA TIPS: For more information regarding melodrama techniques, consult BETWEEN HISSES, by James Burke and Paul T. Nolan, published by Pioneer Drama Service, Inc.

Stage Design
"Rascals Under The Big Top"



SHOW SHIRTS!



CELEBRATE AND PROMOTE YOUR SHOW WITH GRAPHIC TEES!

Your group gets to choose the ink and shirt color and select between t-shirts, long-sleeve t-shirts, or crew neck sweatshirts!

Shirts are personalized with your performing group's name, the title art for your show, and your production dates.

Cast and crew lists can be added to the back too!

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SHOW BUTTONS!

**"SHOW" OFF YOUR PRODUCTION
WITH FUN, AFFORDABLE BUTTONS!**

Printed with black ink on a variety of brightly colored backgrounds, these 2¼" pins are a great way to celebrate and promote your show!

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