

# Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

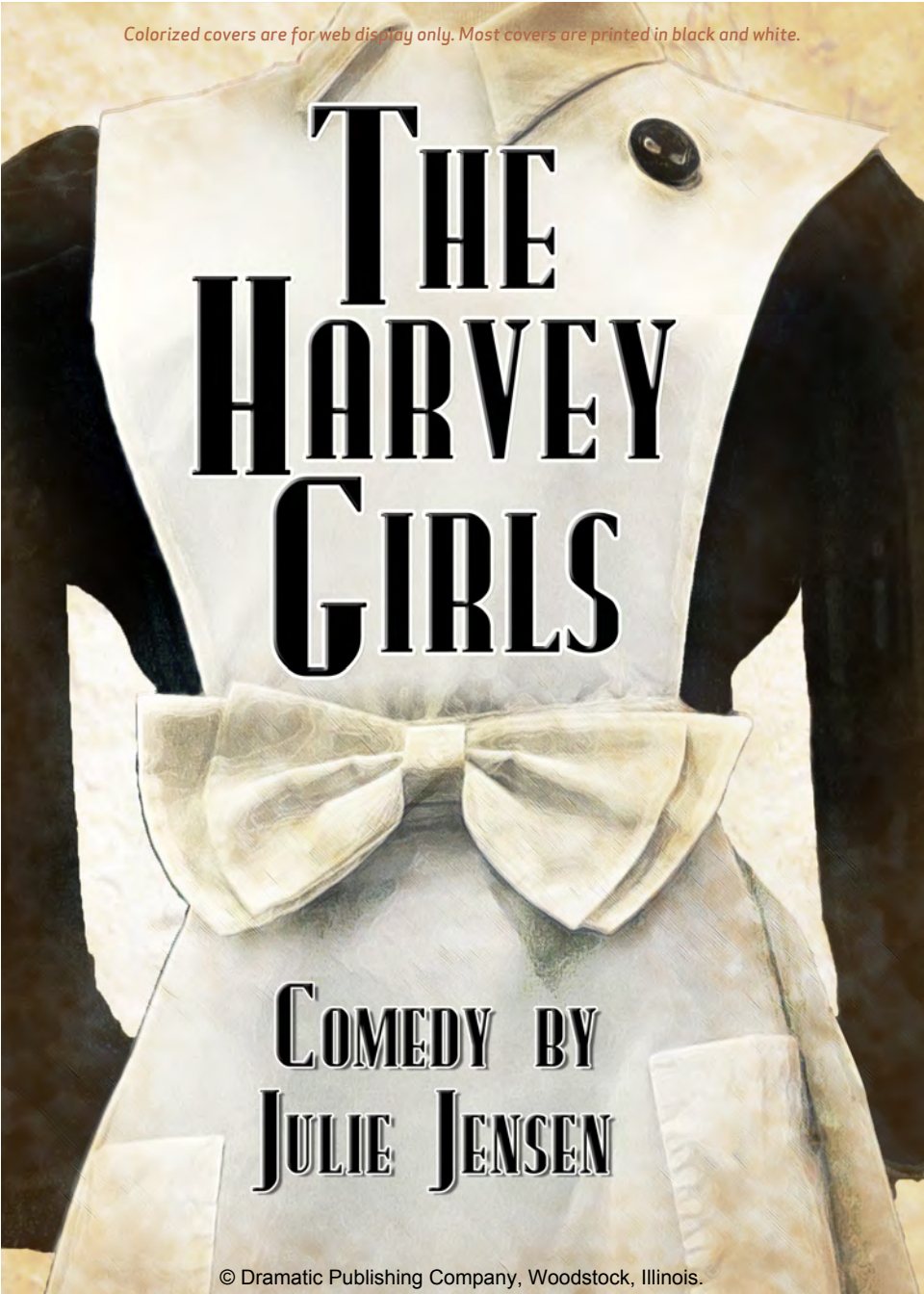
You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*Dramatic Publishing*

*Colorized covers are for web display only. Most covers are printed in black and white.*



# THE HARVEY GIRLS

COMEDY BY  
JULIE JENSEN

Colorized covers are for web display only. Most covers are printed in black and white.

# THE HARVEY GIRLS

## COMEDY BY JULIE JENSEN

*Comedy. By Julie Jensen. Cast: 6m., 8w.* It's an ordinary day at the Harvey House Restaurant along the Santa Fe Railroad in Las Vegas, New Mexico. The 20th century is just a couple of years away, and the six people on the staff of the restaurant are engaged in their usual struggles. Mary wants to run things because she's smarter than the others. Effie takes her on at every turn, in the meantime waiting impatiently for her boyfriend who hasn't showed up in three months. Whistle, a young native girl, thinks the white people talk too much and eat entirely too much. Miss Mecham wants them all to remember that women with jobs are much better off than women with children. Raul, the young Mexican kid, thinks the whites are loco, and Bachmann, the German chef, makes rules that few people follow. That's the ordinary part of the day. Then we get word that there's an armed woman roaming around, having been a part of a train holdup earlier that morning. Mary is terrified, Whistle oblivious, and Effie so curious that when she meets the armed woman, she invites her to apply for a job as a Harvey Girl. Mixed in with all this are the strange and wonderful people of the town: Swamp, a fast-talking shyster who makes money selling stuff he doesn't own; Glitterman, a studious miner, who knows he will hit pay dirt somewhere between the subcrustacean stratum of the Precambrian Era and the deposits of the wandering antediluvian bog waters; Stella who reads a lot of books, wants to be a Harvey Girl, and eats free at the restaurant because she has no parents; Shudder who runs a herd of sheep all by herself because she has a past that includes murder and she knows they're after her; Pillage, a Civil War vet, who needs a job and freedom from his nightmare of dying in a swamp with a hundred injured horses; Miss Longtree, a retired actress who speaks in verse; and, finally, Godlee, a preacher man, who believes the end of the world will come tonight, and he's right, it does. This satirical play is fast moving and magnified. Think Molière with a dose of the Coen brothers. *One int. set. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 20 minutes. Code HA1.*

Cover photo: Harvey Girl uniform on display at the Arizona Railroad Museum.

Photo: Jot Powers (May 2005). Cover design: Jeanette Alig-Sergel.

ISBN-10 1-58342-684-1

ISBN-13 978-1-58342-684-5



9 781583 426845



02010

[www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com)



*Dramatic Publishing*

311 Washington St.  
Woodstock, IL 60098  
ph: 800-448-7469



Printed on recycled paper

© Dramatic Publishing Company, Woodstock, Illinois.

# THE HARVEY GIRLS

A play

by

JULIE JENSEN

With the generous contributions from the graduate  
acting class of 2010, Penn State University.

Commissioned by the theatre department at Penn State  
University and Dramatic Publishing.



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

## \*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: [www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com), or we may be contacted by mail at: DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, 311 Washington St., Woodstock IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MMX by  
JULIE JENSEN

Printed in the United States of America  
*All Rights Reserved*  
(THE HARVEY GIRLS)

For inquiries concerning all other rights, contact:  
The Susan Gurman Agency, 245 W. 99th St., 24th Floor,  
New York NY 10025 • Phone: (212) 794-4618

ISBN: 978-1-58342-684-5

## **IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS**

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with  
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:**

This play was developed through improvisation with a gifted group of actors:

Amir Abdullah (who created Pillage and Godlee)

Joseph Barone (who created Longtree and Glitterman)

Nakeisha Daniel (who created Whistle and Armed  
Woman)

Robert Henry (who created Swamp and Mary)

Nathan James (who created Shudder and Bachmann)

Lara Knox (who created Mecham and Effie)

Nick Reynolds (who created Stella and Raul)

I am greatly indebted to them, as I am to their director, Susan Russell, and their program chair, Jane Ridley. All of them were generous and talented. I am gratified to have worked with them all.

— Julie Jensen, playwright  
March 2010

# THE HARVEY GIRLS

## CHARACTERS:

### The Restaurant Staff:

EFFIE . . . . . a young woman prone to giggling and our  
guide for the day  
WHISTLE . . . . . a young native woman  
MARY . . . . . a nervous and obedient woman  
who is bladder challenged, 20s  
MECHAM . . . . . the supervisor, an officious woman in her  
40s, prone to oratory  
RAUL . . . . . a young Mexican kid  
BACHMANN. . . . . a German chef in charge of,  
well, everything

### The Citizens of the Town:

STELLA . . . . . a young runaway with a book  
GLITTERMAN . . . . . a clean-faced miner, studious-looking,  
wears glasses  
GODLEE . . . . . a religious zealot, who loves to preach  
SWAMP . . . . . a Texan and a fast-talking shyster  
PILLAGE. . . . . a one-armed, black Civil War vet, quiet,  
deliberate and threatening, with a habit of fixing people  
with a stare





# THE HARVEY GIRLS

## Scene One:

*In the dark we hear the sound of a busy restaurant. People talking, dishes clattering. Then the sound of a whistle followed by the sound of the crowd dispersing.*

*When the noise dies out, the lights come up on an upscale restaurant of the late 1890s, specifically a Harvey House in Las Vegas, New Mexico. The place is in total disarray. A hundred people have just been fed here.*

*Three waitresses in uniforms: WHISTLE, MARY and EFFIE, are all cleaning up. MECHAM supervises.*

*Off in the corner is STELLA, a young runaway. When no one is looking, she darts to an empty table, takes food, then returns to her table, eating hungrily.*

*Also left after the exiting horde is GLITTERMAN, a miner, intently eating.*

*GODLEE, a religious zealot, is on his way in to the restaurant.*

*Note: Underlined dialogue indicates direct address to the audience.*

GODLEE. Hear me now. Hear, brothers and sisters. Repent before it is too late. The end of the world is nigh. It comes tonight.

MECHAM. Out of here, Mr. Godlee. We cannot have you preaching in the Harvey House.

GODLEE. Have you repented, dear sister?

MECHAM. I have not, Mr. Godlee. Now get on out of here.

GODLEE. The end of the world is nigh. It comes tonight.

MECHAM. We know that, Mr. Godlee. Now out.

GODLEE. Let me speak to your girls. They must be saved.

MECHAM (*overly articulated*). Ooouutt! Nnnnoowww!

GODLEE. That armed woman is out and about. Could spell the end of us all.

MECHAM. Hush now, Godlee, and go chase someone else.

*(GODLEE leaves, chasing someone else down the street.)*

GODLEE (*calling. Off*). Repent, dear sister. The end of the world is nigh, it comes tonight.

EFFIE. This here's what's left. We just fed a hundred people in less than thirty minutes. Which we do four times a day. Two trains eastbound. Two trains westbound. Everyday. It's like a wave comes in, washes over us all. Then the wave goes out and leaves what you see before you. The wretched refuge of the teeming shore. 'Course, we had Teddy Roosevelt in here last week. He's raising up a army to go to Cuba so's they can remember the *Maine* We get lots of famous people come in here off the trains. That's why we got these here jobs, take care of

the famous people with style. (Moving to the cash register.) But this here's just a ordinary day, nobody famous. I mean, I picked this day 'cuz it would be so ordinary. And then it turned out to be not ordinary a-tall. Because last night the westbound Eight-Thirty-Eight was robbed by a band of outlaws. And they was a woman with 'em got her horse shot out from under her. So she's left behind and she's lurking here in town. But we ain't s'posed to talk about her. Might alarm the customers.

MARY. I'll take care of the receipts today, Effie.

EFFIE. It's my turn, Mary. Check the duty roster.

MARY. But I thought I might help you out.

EFFIE. This here's Mary. She don't got no faults.

MARY. I am better with numbers, as you know. No fault of your own, but I have a better education.

EFFIE. I think I can manage, Mary. I can always count on my fingers and toes. And that adds up to twenty-five.

MARY. One of us should be assigned the permanent job of handling the receipts, that's what I think.

EFFIE. But Miss Mecham thinks it's important that each and every one of us in our turn deal with the receipts, ain't that right, Miss Mecham?

MECHAM. Knowing how to do sums and how to make change are most valuable assets for the modern young woman.

MARY. I take your point, Miss Mecham.

EFFIE. I tell you, if Miss Mary was any more perfect, she would ascend unaltered into heaven.

*(SWAMP, a fast-talking shyster, enters from the outside.)*

SWAMP. Sweet Effie from Kansas. How's the fellow? He get here yet?

EFFIE (*giggles*). Not yet, Mr. Swamp. But he will be coming. (*Giggles.*) He could be on the very next train.

SWAMP. Of course he could. Blind faith is the most important attribute of the human species.

EFFIE. Now, this here's Swamp. Mostly he likes to sell stuff to dudes off the trains, people with suits and shiny shoes.

*(SWAMP surveys the room and moves up to GLITTERMAN's table.)*

SWAMP. Would you mind a little company, Mr. Glitterman?

GLITTERMAN. The name is "Lukas," Wendell.

*(SWAMP sits. Watches GLITTERMAN eat.)*

SWAMP. What you make of the armed woman in town?

GLITTERMAN. Not a damn thing.

SWAMP. She's sighted this morning. Behind the Plaza Hotel. Had a rifle, two pistols, and a hat.

GLITTERMAN. A hat?

SWAMP. For purposes of disguise. I think it could be Big Nose Kate.

GLITTERMAN Who's Big Nose Kate?

SWAMP. Doc Holliday's woman.

GLITTERMAN. Doc Holliday's dead.

SWAMP. That don't mean his woman is. (*GLITTERMAN shrugs and continues to eat. SWAMP watches him.*)

*Pause.*) So what's new in the mining business, Mr. Glitterman?

GLITTERMAN. Identifying the major strata of the earth's crust, and then seeking that stratum which predictably contains valuable deposits.

SWAMP. And which stratum is that?

GLITTERMAN. The subcrustacean stratum, laid down in the Early Precambrian era.

SWAMP. You don't say...

GLITTERMAN. The organic material which was a part of the antediluvian fans at the edge of the ancient seas, deposited next to the volcanic igneous, those contain the primary elements.

SWAMP. Volcanic igneous?

GLITTERMAN. Slowly advancing and receding inland seas and shorelines, ancient meandering subterranean estuaries, huge forested river planes, and wandering antediluvian bog waters.

EFFIE (*to WHISTLE*). Don't you just love the way he talks? "Wandering antediluvian bog waters." That there is pure poetry with a capital P-P.

*(The ARMED WOMAN, a bandit, flits by.*

*MARY screams and clamps her legs together. Each time she is frightened or nervous, she has to pee.)*

MARY (*pointing*). I just saw her. The armed woman. I just saw her.

EFFIE. Quiet, Mary. You're supposed to set an example.

MARY. But I saw her. With a gun and a hat. Went right by that window.

(PILLAGE, a Civil War vet, slowly walks in.)

WHISTLE. Welcome to Harvey House. Would you like to see a menu?

PILLAGE. A menu...yes.

WHISTLE (*hands him a menu*). What could I bring you?

PILLAGE. What's your...favorite here?

WHISTLE (*turning his menu right-side up*). Number Six, that's my favorite.

PILLAGE. I'll have...Number Six. Does that come...with bacon?

WHISTLE. Anything comes with anything. You want bacon with ice chips, we give it to you.

PILLAGE. Number Six...and bacon.

WHISTLE. Yes, sir. (*Moving away.*)

EFFIE. This here's Whistle. She's a Indian, a real Indian. Used to work in the kitchen on the salad table. Now she's out here 'cuz we was short.

WHISTLE. That's how they like to introduce me. Indian, real Indian. That there's Effie, white, real white.

PILLAGE. Excuse me, Miss...I'll have something else.

WHISTLE. What's that?

PILLAGE. I'll have...your name.

WHISTLE. I can't give you that. It's against the rules.

PILLAGE. What...rules?

WHISTLE. Harvey House rules. (*She moves away.*)

MECHAM. The cleanup is slow today, girls. (*Clapping.*)  
Let's step it up!

MARY. You're so right, Miss Mecham. The staff has been gossiping about the armed woman.

MECHAM. There is to be no discussion of the armed woman. She will go about her business, and you will go about yours.

EFFIE. But her business is killing people.

MECHAM. Step up with courage, girls. You are Harvey Girls. You respond with composure and confidence. Think on Teddy Roosevelt when you're...challenged.

MARY. I couldn't agree with you more, Miss Mecham. I'll tell the others.

MECHAM. I want to see brisk work, and then you'll receive your reward this evening. The building of the lovely blossom bouquet.

MARY. Thank you, Miss Mecham, we appreciate all you do for us.

MECHAM. Now then, girls, there is a new woman in town—besides the armed woman—Miss Lydia Longtree. The actress from New York. She is to be an example unto you all. Unmarried, professional and passionate.

MARY. Just like you, Miss Mecham.

MECHAM. Yes, girls, I too am a passionate woman. Passionate about my work. That is why I am so good at it.

EFFIE. This here's our first lesson of the day, coming right up.

MECHAM. If we approach all we do with passion, we will look back at the end of our lives and say, "I accomplished something."

EFFIE. So, Miss Mecham, what if what we accomplish is getting married and having a pack of children?

MECHAM. Anyone can accomplish that, Miss Effington. It does not take brains to get married and have children. We are professionals, we are Harvey Girls, we have loftier goals.



MARY. I do so agree with you, Miss Mecham. But I have noticed that people resent you when you have lofty goals.

EFFIE. It ain't your lofty goals they resent you for, Miss Mary, it's your lofty attitude.

MECHAM. Remember this, girls: The woman who has children. She has nothing to call her own. She is down-trodden and bereft. The woman who does best in this world has no children. Remember that.

*(The ARMED WOMAN flits by again.*

*STELLA sees her, jumps up and watches, returns to her seat, says nothing.)*

SWAMP. Listen here, I got a proposition for you, Mr. Glitterman.

GLITTERMAN. Oh hell, Wendell.

SWAMP. No, now listen to me. You are a man of science.

A man who understands the properties of the earth. A man who believes in his power to determine his own future. I am also such a man.

GLITTERMAN Good for you.

SWAMP. And I believe in the future of this area. There will be towns dotting the whole length of the Santa Fe Railroad, like little stars in the night sky, like jewels on the crown of the Queen of England. It's going be a beautiful thing.

GLITTERMAN. I'm sure it is, Wendell.

SWAMP. Here's the idea, Mr. Glitterman. We buy up the land all along this rail line.

GLITTERMAN. We?

SWAMP. Yes, we! I'm inviting you in on this. We buy up the land along the rail line. And then when the towns sprout up, we agree, *reluctantly*, to sell the new people the land they need. A proposition as scientific as it is practical. What do you say, Mr. Glitterman?

GLITTERMAN. Why don't you get yourself a job, Wendell?

SWAMP. I have a job, Lukas.

GLITTERMAN. No you don't.

SWAMP. I am a salesman and a visionary.

GLITTERMAN. Selling stuff you don't own. And seeing things that ain't there.

SWAMP. I'm glimpsing the future. That's what I do.

GLITTERMAN. And that's another thing, Wendell. Don't talk like that. You sound like a laying hen.

SWAMP. I tell you what I'll do, Mr. Glitterman. I'll draw up the papers and then, when you make your strike, you and me will go into a joint partnership. The Swamp Glitterman Land Company. What do you say to that, Mr. Glitterman?

*(GLITTERMAN burps, rises, tosses a coin on the table, then moves to the cash register.)*

SWAMP *(calling after him)*. Pleasure talking to you, Mr. Glitterman. And I'll have my assistant draw up them papers.

*(GLITTERMAN is out the door.)*

*SWAMP looks around, slides the coin off the table, pockets it.*

*WHISTLE enters and sets the food down in front of PILLAGE.)*

PILLAGE Thank...you.

WHISTLE. Is there anything else?

PILLAGE (*stares at her. Pause*). Could you...butter my roll? (*She does. Pause.*) Wanna know...something? (*Pause.*) I am gonna...marry you.

*(WHISTLE moves to EFFIE at the cash register.)*

WHISTLE. You gotta take care of that table with the one-armed man. He's giving me trouble.

EFFIE. He could have something to do with the armed woman. Ever-thing comes out his mouth is scary.

WHISTLE. Just take care of him.

EFFIE. Whistle, she is a magnet for men. They all want to get theyself some piece of that girl. In the meantime, Swamp's trying to get a coin from the scary guy. And that's when the mud hits the window.

*(SWAMP rises and moves over to PILLAGE.)*

SWAMP. I do believe you're new around here.

PILLAGE (*jumping up*). Sir.

SWAMP. The name's Swamp. Mind if I join you? (*Taking a seat.*) And you are?

PILLAGE. Pillage. The name's...Pillage. (*Sitting back down tentatively.*)

SWAMP. And where did you come from, Mr. Pillage?

PILLAGE (*pause*). The...South. I come from...the South.

SWAMP. And you lost that arm in the war?