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Dramatic Publishing



HORSE-SCENTS

or

**A Tale of Chip and Patty's Perfume Emporium,
Rooming House, and Manure Museum**

**The Dashing Western Romance of a Cowgal
—and her Cowguy (sort-of)
—and his Mammal**

A Play-Within-A-Movie-Within-A-Play

**Concept, Dialogue, Attitude,
and Every Other Dang Thing**

by

J MICK DUNNA



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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(HORSE-SCENTS)

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To Allen Shankles, Jim Kemp,
and the Amarillo Little Theatre Board of Directors;
to Bobby and Mary Ann Lee,
and, most especially, to the original cast and company:

Cindi Bradley, Michael Bradley, Christi Campbell,
Shad Campbell, Sam H. Childers, Marnie Dodson,
Brent McFarland, David McGinnis, Don Shipman,
Amy Sloger, Christy Smith, Amy Gililland,
Patrick Lippincott, Amber Palmer, J Mick Dunna,
Loren Strickland, and Production Director Carl Cox

HORSE-SCENTS was first produced by Amarillo Little
Theatre in The Playhouse at The Big Texan Steak Ranch,
Amarillo, Texas.

A Note From The Author

HORSE-SCENTS, as does any melodrama, depends upon the unkindness of strangers. (Sorry, Mr. Williams.) Villainesses, villains, bad jokes, stupid stunts, idiotic behavior, and anything else that strikes the audience as moronic is equally booed, hissed, and made into a popcorn target. All attempts at keeping order during *HORSE-SCENTS* are doomed to failure—and will probably yield perpetrator-specific booing, hissing, and popcorn targeting.

Here are a few well-thought-out hints, drawn from experience:

1. Always use dry, unsalted popcorn—NEVER BUTTERED!
2. Remove the popcorn from the can or box BEFORE distributing (or SELLING) it to the audience.
3. Sweep up the corn immediately after the show and DO NOT RE-USE IT!—some people actually eat this stuff! (And spare me your snotty letters about the values of recycling—where do you think most melodrama jokes come from?)

There is only one rule in the production of *HORSE-SCENTS*—If you're not having fun, re-examine what you have been doing. The play is nothing. I mean, the play is nothing if it is not fun—fun for the audience AND for the cast.

May you be perpetually in the chips.

Fragrantly,
J Mick Dunna

HORSE-SCENTS

A Comic Melodrama in Two Acts

For 6 men, 4 women, 4 double-able minor roles, extras

RIDICULIS PERSONAE

Featured Roles

C.B.* pushy Director of HORSE-SCENTS—The Movie
TOAD**assistant to C.B. (Universal Double)
CHIPchef and internationally recognized manure fancier
PATTYperfume designer and mystic groupie
SWEET ROADYtheir sweet, innocent,
but determinedly self-sufficient daughter
VANCE LANCELOTour mysterious hero
SPUD Vance's devoted, mysterious sidekick
ARNOLD . . . Manure Museum curator, accomplice of Avaricia,
secret admirer of Roady
AVARICIA SLIME President and sensuous C.E.O.
(Congenitally Evil Officer) of Vendetta Savings and Loan
DEBIT . . Avaricia's clueless, yet undeniably sexy henchwoman

Ensemble Roles

PARVO** a dog—really a person—
how can you depend on a dog? (usually played by TOAD)
FLIGGER offstage “voice” of the Dolphin
WOMAN-WHO-FIXES-OW-OWS** healer, one with
nature, lost with almost everything else
(usually played by TOAD)
PLUGHORSE STRAINS** sensational(izing) lawyer
(usually played by TOAD)

Cheap Labor Roles

*EXTRAS, BIT PLAYERS, LOW-IMPACT STUNT PERSONS,
BANK DRUDGES, DOG INTERPRETERS, SHARK CHOIR,
FILM DIRECTOR IMPERSONATORS, SEA CREATURES
AND WHO KNOWS WHAT ELSE—Played by Audience
Members

- * Roles which may be double- or multiple-cast
- **Roles which are non-gender-specific, which can be done
in drag, or which just don't care one way or the other

LOCALE

Chip and Patty's Perfume Emporium,
Rooming House, and Manure Museum
in Plop, Texas,
just off the trail.

SCENE

Mostly in Chip and Patty's lobby,
but at a couple of other nifty places, too.

TIME

Before anything really handy had been invented.
1893, say.
There may be a FEW anachronisms.

PRODUCTION NOTES

SET

A sign on the U wall of the lobby reads, "CHIP AND PATTY'S ROOMING HOUSE—Plop's Prime Place to Plop." There is an entrance U and R of the front desk, U. There are two other entrances—diagonal at DL and diagonal at DR. A sign above the DR door reads, "POOPERA HOUSE this way." The DL door leads "outside." Not obvious to the audience is a "trapdoor" in the top of the front desk which also serves as an Entrance/Exit and for other stage devices. (Hidden behind the desk is an "escape" opening in the U wall through which characters may exit or enter, unseen by the audience.) There are a few crummy furniture items—in the approximate nature of any combination of chairs, couches, love seats, and/or benches. On a side stage or at the very DR edge of the set, C.B. SEVILLE's tall Director's Chair awaits his presence.

MUSIC

HORSE-SCENTS is published without music or music cues and it certainly may be presented that way. The addition of a pianist or keyboard player, however, magnifies the fun. An empathetic musician can provide evil chords for the villains, heroic chords for the, uh, hero, and dumb chords for practically everybody else. Little "quotes" from old and new tunes may bring special meaning to local audiences. The variations are limited only by the inventiveness of the keyboardist and most of the ones I've run across are inventiveness poster children. Such musical support also helps the cast and, indeed, the audience, jump into the rhythm of the piece.

COSTUMES

Cliches and stereotypes rule the day here. Virtually all costumes are Western or Melodrama “types.” Here are a few suggestions:

- › C.B.: Beret, silk scarf, silk shirt, puttees, riding boots
- › TOAD: Whatever the actor feels “right” wearing. Requires either quick changeability or an ease of “overdressing” for several double castings. (PARVO, WOMAN-WHO-FIXES-OW-OWS.)
- › CHIP: Old-time “hick.” The guy’s big passion is manure—what did you think he would wear?
- › PATTY: Homespun or gingham dress and apron.
- › ROADY: A “pretty” dress, a “pretty” hair bow, other stuff—all “pretty.”
- › VANCE: White cowboy hat, white cowboy shirt, white pants, white boots. Optional—white accessories.
- › SPUD: The dirtiest rags anybody can find. A contest should probably be held.
- › ARNOLD: Villain suit. Black coat and pants, white shirt, string tie. Spats would be nice, but they’re kind of pricey. Slouch hat, cape, and mottled brown “Phantom” half-mask.
- › AVARICIA: Sensuous villain look. Black outfit, boots or heels, jaunty Western hat, bright red wig, etc. Exaggerated cleavage, no matter how you come up with it, is a plus.
- › DEBIT: Cute, sexy, dumb—in some order. Perhaps short-shorts, bare midriff, boots, silly cowboy hat pinned up in the front.
- › PARVO: Cheap, probably ratty, full body dog costume. The actor’s face must be visible. Facial expressions and reactions are crucial. A “full head” costume of the sports mascot type does not work, seriously impedes the under-

standing of PARVO's spoken lines, and is an unforgivable esthetic *faux pas*.

- › WOMAN-WHO-FIXES-OW-OWS: Perhaps a sack-cloth or burlap or buckskin-look dress, headband, obviously cheap wig.
- › PLUGHORSE: Lawyer outfit, whatever that is. Maybe a swallow-tail coat. No attempt is made to disguise TOAD.

PROPS

- › C.B.: Riding crop or swagger stick, various sets of script pages ("sides"), tall Director's chair. (Optional: large audience cue cards.)
- › TOAD: Clipboard with notes, clipboard slate, small megaphone, rolled newspaper, audience sign.
- › CHIP: Large pot and wooden spoon, Easter basket, prop cow chips, swim mask, snorkel, kids' arm flotation things.
- › PATTY: Perfume atomizer, Easter basket, prop cow chips, white "Phantom" half-mask, a trophy (or two), swim mask, flippers.
- › ROADY: Writing paper and pen, box of letters, swim mask, snorkel.
- › VANCE: None. Perfection abhors being gilded.
- › SPUD: Saddlebags or ruck sack, large water pistol, small bright-colored hoop, service-station type window squeegee, swim mask, canoe paddle, LOUD battery-powered cassette tape recorder and tape, wedding veil.
- › ARNOLD: Plate of prop cow chips, two "confirmation letters," mottled brown "Phantom" mask, boat-pole, two ducky swimming pool ring floats and rope tether.
- › AVARICIA: Eviction notice, small "derringer" pistol (hidden in her bos...uh, shirt), swim mask, snorkel.
- › DEBIT: Swim mask, snorkel, flippers (all worn incorrectly).

- › FLIGGER: Fin (on a stick), deflated tire tube and large wooden plank or other FLIGGER-gallop simulator. All props are controlled by the offstage person who portrays FLIGGER.
- › PLUGHORSE: Briefcase.
- › AUDIENCE: Popcorn. Bad taste shields. (That's a joke.)

HORSE-SCENTS

AT RISE: *The lobby of Chip and Patty's Perfume Emporium, Rooming House, and Manure Museum. Before the play begins, a few announcements are made by C.B. Seville's assistant and power yes-man, TOAD.*

TOAD (*stepping onto the stage*). Ladies and Gentlemen, the making of photos or videos is prohibited during HORSE-SCENTS. The cast insists that there be no physical evidence of their—uh—performance. Now (*Gesturing grandly toward the door.*)...your director, Mr. C.B. SeVille.

(*From an outside entrance, perhaps at the back of the house, C.B. SEVILLE enters. He is the classic film director—beret, scarf, silk shirt, puttees, riding boots, and riding crop or swagger stick.*)

C.B. (*flamboyantly—a rather pushy person*). Coming through, people! Com-ing through! Make way for your fabulously gifted film-maker! (*Proceeds to the stage. Looks over the crowd.*) Splendid extras, eh, Toad?

TOAD. Splendid.

C.B. (*aside, stage whisper to TOAD, while still smiling at the crowd*). What whacko bin did they dig this mob out of?

TOAD. Splendid, B.O.

C.B. (*correcting*). C.B.!

TOAD (*memorizing by rote*). C.B., C.B., C.B...

C.B. (*to audience*). In my film, you play the audience at a western melodrama, among other things. Our location is Chip and Patty's Perfume Emporium, Rooming House, and Manure Museum—also known as "The Poopera House."

TOAD (*coaching audience*). Picture it in your minds. Or—just look at the stage.

C.B. Now, for your acting (*Speaking that most powerful of words.*) "motivation." You will "Boo" and "Hiss" the villainess, Avaricia Slime, C.E.O. of Vendetta Savings and Loan, and her assistant, Debit.

TOAD (*calling through megaphone, uncomfortably near C.B.'s ear*). Slime and Debit to the set!

(*AVARICIA enters from her "office" as C.B. continues. DEBIT trails behind her.*)

C.B. Booring rehearsal! And hissing. And popcorn throwing.

AVARICIA (*with incredibly forced malice*). You'll be booring out of the other side of your pocketbooks when I foreclose on Chip and Patty—when the Perfume Emporium, the Rooming House, AND, unfortunately, the Manure Museum, become mine!

DEBIT (*stupidly—always*). Hers!

AVARICIA (*to audience in general*). Every one of you will be—unemployed! (*Hideous laughter.*)

DEBIT (*stupidly—see above*). Unemployed! Tee-hee!

C.B. Maxi-booring, people! Mega-hissing! A panorama of popcorn!

AVARICIA (*among enormous boos, hisses, and popcorn*).

You'll regret this, my pretties. And your little dog, too!

DEBIT. They got a dog named "Too"?

AVARICIA (*dragging DEBIT out*). Let's get out of here.

DEBIT. Can I see the doggy first?

AVARICIA. Out! *(They exit, DEBIT pausing briefly to wave to C.B. and blow him a kiss. [He obviously wishes this kept quiet and gestures her out.] During lulls in her role, DEBIT flirts with audience members indiscriminately—without stealing focus, naturally.)*

C.B. *(back on track)*. You should also save some boos for...

TOAD. Who's the drunk?

C.B. Drunk?

TOAD. The one you're saving booze for.

C.B. *(explaining as if to a very slow child)*. I mean that there is ANOTHER villain—the Manure Museum Curator, Arnold Benedict.

TOAD *(impressed)*. Whoa—high budget.

(ARNOLD appears in the museum door, carrying a tray of cow chips—props only, please! Major booing and hissing.)

ARNOLD. Let Avaricia have the real estate. My lust is for—the livestock! Particularly that most precious petal in the population of Plop—Sweet Roady! *(Audience boos him unmercifully. Dropping character and holding up a cow chip, directly to audience.)* Hey, if you had my working conditions, you'd turn out bad, too. *(He exits, to a crush of verbal derision and popped disapproval.)*

C.B. On to more pleasant vistas. *(To audience.)* Our hero is the valiant Vance Lancelot. Vance should be cheered with shameless abandon.

(VANCE steps boldly onto the set through the DL doorway, smiling nobly.)

VANCE. Howdy, buckaroos. *(Audience, abandoning shame, cheers.)*

C.B. Less abandon! More shame! (*Audience does so.*) Thank you, Vance. (*VANCE is still standing nobly.*) That's it, boy. (*No VANCE response.*) Scram, moron! (*VANCE, never losing his smile, touches the brim of his hat in farewell, and exits.*)

TOAD. Superb directing, B.M.

C.B. (*hits TOAD, then continues*). Finally—we heave a collective sigh for the beauty, the innocence, the pure Western moxie of—sweet Roady.

(Sweet ROADY enters, nay, floats onto the stage, from the U doorway, accompanied by collective sighing-like-crazy from the audience.)

C.B. Big sigh!

ROADY. Good morrow, fair friends. (*As she exits, she kind of shudders, as if to say, "Geesh, what a wuss of a character."*)

TOAD (*to audience*). Sigh like that every time she comes on. Or until you get sick of it.

C.B. All is prepared, Toad—you may intone the sacred phrase.

TOAD (*to audience*). I have ALWAYS wanted to say this—(*With attitude, megaphone.*) Ready when you are, C.B. (*C.B. starts to hit him, then realizes he finally got it right.*)

C.B. (*moving to a position from which he can observe the play*). ACTION!

(CHIP rushes on from U, carrying a large pot of something which he places on the front desk as he speaks.)

CHIP. Patty! I nearly have it perfected.

(PATTY enters and crosses to him, speaking.)

PATTY. You think so, Chip?

CHIP *(pointing into the pot)*. Finally, the right combination of spaghetti, rigatoni, macaroni, linguini, and apples.

PATTY. Mackintosh apples or golden delicious?

CHIP. No, my favorite kind—road apples.

PATTY. Yum. My new perfume's about ripe, too. *(Sprays an atomizer into the air.)* It just needs a few more road apples, if you can spare them.

CHIP. We'll have to gather a new batch.

(Their lovely daughter, ROADY, has entered, looking quite disconsolate.)

CHIP. 'Morning, Roady.

ROADY *(distractedly)*. ...Pa.

PATTY. You look poorly, girl.

ROADY. Oh, it's nothing. I just wanted to think...and to write. *(Stands behind the front desk and opens a notebook. Writing.)* "Dear Dairy..."

CHIP *(to PATTY)*. Doesn't she mean, "Diary"?

PATTY. No, it's a letter to those cows she met at the Cottage Cheese Extravaganza and Barn Dance last year. What an animal lover.

CHIP. That's for sure. Who else would let that mangy dog of hers live?

PATTY. Parvo is not mangy.

CHIP. He needs a new groomer, then, 'cause somethin's makin' him butt-ugly.

ROADY *(writing)*. Things get worse and worse here at home...

CHIP. If she's just thinking and writing, how can we hear her?

PATTY. It's a stage device.

CHIP. Great! There hasn't been a stage through here since forever.

PATTY. Not that kind of stage, you ignoramus.

CHIP. Don't make fun of a man's religion, Patty. *(Both turn back to their work.)*

C.B. *(to TOAD)*. Prepare Parvo for his entrance.

TOAD. Uh, he didn't show up yet.

C.B. Then you know what to do.

TOAD. No!

C.B. It keeps costs down.

TOAD *(kneeling, begging)*. Don't make me play the dog again, please!

C.B. *(pointing his finger)*. Report to costuming. *(TOAD exits, noisily grumbling something deeply obscene which cannot be understood—thank heavens.)*

CHIP. Time to prove the pudding. *(Dips his finger into the pot, then licks the finger.)* Definitely needs more apples.

PATTY *(sprays the atomizer into the air, then walks through the mist. Inhales deeply)*. Mine needs them, too.

CHIP. To the foo-foo fields! *(He takes a highly-decorated, Easter-style basket from the front desk and heads for the front door.)*

PATTY. Can't we just grab some out of the Poopera House?

CHIP *(stops, turns, aghast)*. And destroy my perfect collection?! Every trail-twinky has a personality of its own, Patty!

PATTY. They are cow chips, Chip.

CHIP. And horse-chips! And pig-chips! And don't forget my luscious little lamb-chips. Each pasture-pumpkin is like my own child.

PATTY. I CAN see the resemblance.

CHIP. Let's go—the bovine-biscuits await. It's too noisy in here, anyway.

PATTY (*grabbing her own decorated basket*). Yeah, those stage devices make an awful racket.

CHIP (*calling to their sole employee*). Arnold, you keep an eye on things in the museum.

(*They exit to outside, L, as ARNOLD enters from R, speaking in his faux-subservient mode.*)

ARNOLD. Certainly, Mr. Chip. (*Aside to audience, dropping subservience.*) Like we're gonna have shoplifters. (*Notices ROADY. Nearly swoons.*) Ah! It is she! Sweet Roady, apple of my eye. She must be mine! Arrangements—hee, hee—WILL be made!

ROADY. Arnold—I didn't hear you come in.

ARNOLD (*subservient attitude again*). Forgive me for disturbing you, Miss Roady. I shall return to my rightful place among the cattle-cakes.

ROADY. You shouldn't put yourself down that way, Arnold.

ARNOLD. You mean—you actually think well of me?

ROADY. Certainly not. But put yourself down a different way. I'm sick of that one.

ARNOLD. How about, "I go—to submerge my wretched self in bull-binkies."

ROADY (*critiquing*). Fresh, AND aromatic.

ARNOLD. Oh, thank you. (*To audience, a pathetic attempt at macho.*) She wants me. (*He exits.*)

(*TOAD re-enters in a cheap, cheap, cheap dog costume.*)

ROADY. Parvo! Jump up here, boy. *(TOAD, humiliated and still mumble-cursing, climbs grudgingly onto the desk near her and adopts a semi-doggy pose. ROADY resumes her writing. PARVO serves as a kind of silent commentator—reacting to the stupidity of her letter as she writes.)* Where was I? “Dear Dairy. I don’t know what we are to do, my four-stomached friends. There have been no customers for the rooming house or MaMAH’s Perfume Emporium in many moons. Maybe if we could get all the mooning stopped...*(Sighs.)* Daddy’s Manure Museum is—oh, he said to thank you for remembering him at Christmas—the museum is doing the same as ever. But our first visitor should arrive any year now. Ma hopes to land a contract with the Phoenix Fragrance Foundation and Daddy applied for a National Endowment for the Fertilization Arts grant, but so far no word from either place. We aren’t starving, but I can’t remember the last time we had a nice steak or a meatloaf or even a lousy hamburger and...” *(PARVO has snapped his head up and grabbed ROADY’s pen. He looks at ROADY disapprovingly, shakes his head, takes the pen and scratches out the last paragraph. He returns the pen to her. ROADY, realizing, pats PARVO’s funky head.)* Good thinking, boy. *(She recommences writing.)* “Did I tell you we have become vegetarians? We’re just waiting to get a minister so we can begin holding services. Have to close now. Warm-handedly, Roady.” *(She folds the letter carefully, then pulls a large box full of papers from beneath the desk and throws the freshly-written page in.)* If we ever get mail service, I’m gonna have SOME postage bill, huh, Parvo?

(PARVO rolls his eyes, disgusted. ROADY sighs very loudly and exits, U. The sigh has rolled PARVO off the

counter and he disappears behind it. AVARICIA's evil, wicked, heart-stopping, hammy laugh is heard. She enters, through the audience, shadowed by DEBIT.)

C.B. Boos! Hisses! Exploded kernels!

AVARICIA (*after menacing the audience, laughing evilly. To DEBIT*). No mail service, eh? Ha, ha! Ha, ha!

DEBIT (*laughing very stupidly, actually pronouncing the word "ha"*). Ha ha. Ha ha. No mail service. Ha ha. Ha ha. Uh, boss?

AVARICIA. What?

DEBIT. What's so funny about not having mail service?

AVARICIA. Because, Debit, we know WHY they don't have mail service.

DEBIT. Oh. (*Nodding.*) Ha ha. Ha ha. (*Stopping.*) Why?

AVARICIA. Because we are intercepting their mail service, idiot!

DEBIT (*thinks briefly, how else, then:*). What's the mail service idiot's name?

AVARICIA (*wearily, sarcastically*). Debit.

DEBIT. Hey! Same as mine! I wonder if we're twins.

AVARICIA. Come on. We have to meet my secret accomplice.

DEBIT. He's ashamed of his piano playing?

AVARICIA. Not accompanist, ACCOMPLICE!

DEBIT. Oh. (*She opens her mouth to say something else, then realizes that she doesn't know anything else. During this, AVARICIA has moved onto the set. She hisses in the direction of the museum.*)

AVARICIA. Hsssst! Hsssst!

DEBIT. *who has not been paying very close attention—she*
SNAKE! (*She slams AVARICIA with her hat, re-*

peatedly. Slows down the hitting when AVARICIA looks up at her. She has nearly stopped when AVARICIA speaks.)

AVARICIA. Debit. Come closer.

DEBIT (*holding her hat in front of her*). Not that, boss.

AVARICIA. Closer.

DEBIT. I'll shut up. I'll be good.

AVARICIA. Closer. (*DEBIT resigns herself and puts her face close to AVARICIA's. AVARICIA, very deliberately and fully open to the audience, reaches into DEBIT's nostril and yanks out a hair. DEBIT reacts extremely visibly.*)

DEBIT. Oooh, I hate that.

AVARICIA (*to audience*). It's called aversion therapy.

DEBIT. I thought it was called a nose hair.

AVARICIA. Shut up! (*She turns back toward the museum.*)
Hsssst!

(DEBIT pulls off her hat and yells "SNA..." but AVARICIA has whipped around and is holding her nose-hair-pulling fingernails toward DEBIT. DEBIT replaces her hat as ARNOLD enters, skulkily.)

ARNOLD. I told you never to come here.

AVARICIA. Are you kidding? It's the only set this show has.

ARNOLD. Never mind. What do you want?

AVARICIA. Have you intercepted all of their mail?

ARNOLD. Yes. And you've got to act fast, Avaricia. The perfume deal AND the fertilizer grant both came through. (*Showing two letters.*) These are the confirmation letters.

AVARICIA (*taking the letters*). I'll foreclose on Chip and Patty immediately.

DEBIT (*reflecting*). Immediately. I never knew their last name before.