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Family Plays

SWEENEY TODD



(Demon Barber of the Barbary Coast)

Thriller adapted by
TIM KELLY

SWEENEY TODD

Thriller. Adapted by Tim Kelly. Cast: 8m., 12w., extras. This non-musical version of *Sweeney Todd*, the world's most heartless villain, is based on the same "penny dreadful" stories as the Sondheim musical (this script predates the musical). Sweeney Todd lures rich victims into his barber shop, puts them in a "special chair," and ... where do they go? Ask Mrs. Lovett, owner of a nearby pastry shop which specializes in meat pies. Tim Kelly's version is a delicious spoof of the Gay Nineties (1890s) melodrama, full of fun and suspense. Replete with the excitement, suspense and laughter that everybody hopes for in a melodrama—this play is of much higher quality than the burlesque, trite "mellerdrammers" that are found on second-rate stages. Directors will be proud to present this play—whether it's for an annual fun-melodrama or a major production. *Sweeney Todd* is fast-moving and side-splitting ... and easy to produce. Gad, what a plot! Sweeney Todd has a lucrative business shaving his customers too close. With the assistance of Mrs. Lovett, his partner in crime, he robs and erases. But Sweeney has other ambitions. He plans to marry the socially prominent and dainty Lily Fairoak and move into politics. Complications set in and the furious barber finds himself harassed by waifs from the orphanage, honest sailing lads, society matrons and the spirits of those he has done in. Comic chases, heart-rending moments in the depths of the city jail and joyous reunions are set against a background of the Barbary Coast, Chinatown, and Nob Hill. Songs can be added to the text, and olio or specialty numbers can be provided between acts. Many small character roles provide an opportunity to get a large cast on stage. Designed for easy rehearsals, *Sweeney Todd* is great fun for cast and audience—and suitable for all groups and all ages. It has been eminently successful for professional and community theatre, colleges and universities, high schools, and even a few middle schools. *Bare stage with some chairs, tables and a few props. Costumes: Gay Nineties. Approximate running time: 120 minutes. Code: S1E.*

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Sweeney Todd

SWEENEY TODD

DEMON BARBER OF THE BARBARY COAST

In Three Acts

**Freely Adapted from the Classic Stage Melodrama
Of George Pitt**

**And the Novel 'The String of Pearls'
By Thomas Prest**

By

TIM KELLY

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

Rose, a seller of newspapers
Sweeney Todd, a fiend in human form
Mrs. Lovett, Todd's partner in crime
Mr. Scruples, the betrothed of Mrs. Lovett; suspects nothing
Minnie, maid to Lily Fairoak, in love with Brooklyn Jake
Mrs. Meanly, underpaid employee of the city orphanage
*Billy, victim of the fiend's treachery
Mrs. Noble, a charity worker
Mrs. Worthy, another charity worker
Honorable Mr. Chang, a merchant, another victim
Belle, a matchgirl
Barnacle, a cutthroat on the Barbary Coast
Lily Fairoak, delicate, noble, gentle
Brooklyn Jake, a sailor
Policeman, upholder of the law and a billy club
Sailor Tom, Lily's heartthrob, a good lad
Widow Fairoak, her ship never comes in
Prisoner, life's victim (a female)
Matron, a jailer
Police Inspector, servant of justice
Citizens, as desired

*Role of Billy may be played by an actress

Setting: San Francisco in the 1890's

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

All scenes can be performed without a set change by using the floor plan illustrated in the Appendix.

- ACT I,** *Scene 1:* Sweeney Todd's Barbershop
Scene 2: Market Street
Scene 3: Home of Widow Fairoak, Nob Hill
- ACT II,** *Scene 1:* Market Street, three months later
Scene 2: Home of Widow Fairoak
Scene 3: Market Street and the Barbershop
Scene 4: The Street
Scene 5: Below the Barbershop
- ACT III,** *Scene 1:* City Jail, one week later
Scene 2: Market Street

STORY OF THE PLAY

TREACHERY! SKULDUGGERY! LAUGHTER! Sweeney Todd is the most infamous (and hilarious) villain in stage history (“I am one of those whom the law is always reaching at but never touches,” he brags). He has been delighting theatregoers for almost 150 years. Here he is in a new adaptation written with a modern beat by Tim Kelly, author of *DRACULA*, ‘The Vampire Play,’ considered by many to be the best of all the Dracula plays for amateur theatre.

SWEENEY TODD is fast-moving and side-splitting . . . and easy to produce. Some chairs, tables, and a few props are all that’s required.

Gad, what a plot! Sweeney has a lucrative business shaving his customers too close. With the assistance of Mrs. Lovett, his partner in crime, he robs and erases. But Sweeney has other ambitions. He plans to marry the socially prominent and dainty Lily Fairoak and move into politics. Complications set in and the furious barber finds himself harassed by waifs from the orphanage, honest sailing lads, society matrons, and the spirits of those he has done in.

Comic chases, heart-rending moments in the depths of the city jail, and joyous reunions are set against a background of the Barbary Coast, Chinatown, and Nob Hill. Songs can be added to the text, and olio or specialty numbers can be provided between acts.

In the spirit of the Gay Nineties melodrama, audiences will thrill to Lily’s sacrifice! weep as Widow Fairoak is brought to ruin! cheer Sailor Tom as he returns in the nick of time! cringe as Todd turns his hideous cackle on the audience! rejoice as justice triumphs! Above all, everybody will **LAUGH** with this outrageous parody of penny dreadful “mellerdrammers.”

Many small character roles provide an opportunity to get a large cast on stage. Designed for easy rehearsals, **SWEENEY TODD** is great fun for cast and audience—and suitable for all groups and all ages.

NOTE: Since the Broadway version of **SWEENEY TODD** has popularized Mrs. Lovett’s infamous “meat pies” (made from the victims that Todd sends her), you may want to substitute the term “meat pies” for “cupcakes,” “pastry,” etc., in the text of this play. For example, Todd’s third speech on page 10 may be changed to the following:

TODD. Always remember, nothing slips by me. I have a mechanical mind. It can close like a trap. However, when you’re good I’ll give you a penny for one of Mrs. Lovett’s meat pies.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Sweeney Todd, Demon Barber of the Barbary Coast is designed as an extremely simple show in terms of production. Some chairs, tables, a few props are really all that is required in the space staging as illustrated on p. 50.

The show should move along quickly, with no dead spots. The blackout between scenes should last no more than three seconds – just time enough for actors to hurry off and on stage. No set changes are required. Lighting may be used to focus on the area being used; however, all lighting effects may be omitted.

If "olio acts" are utilized – as they often are in producing a Gay Nineties melodrama – place them at the beginning of the second and/or third act. Songs that somehow suggest California are particularly apt; e.g., "California, Here I Come," "I Left My Heart in San Francisco," "San Francisco," etc.

Special attention should be given to the chase sequences and the "rag doll" fight between Todd and Mrs. Lovett since they are highlights that delight an audience. If the auditorium is small enough, the director may wish to chase Todd through the audience. Remember to play the "mellerdrammer" perfectly straight, as if it were a serious and thrilling work of high drama, tragedy, and ultimate victory – a sure way to secure laughter.

PROPERTIES

ACT I:

Newspapers (ROSE)	Walking stick (TODD)
Ruby ring (TODD)	Handkerchief (MINNIE)
Coin (TODD)	"Tooth" on a string (JAKE)
Small chest (CHANG)	Apple (JAKE)
Tray with matches (BELLE)	Ring (LILY)

ACT II:

Tray of matches (BELLE)	Frying pan (WIDOW FAIROAK)
Photo (POLICEMAN)	Sea bags (TOM and JAKE)
Report paper (SCRUPLES)	Ace of spades (TODD)
Walking stick (TODD)	Business card (TODD)
Coin (TODD)	String of pearls (SAILOR TOM)
Handkerchief (WIDOW FAIROAK)	Broom (BILLY)
Legal papers (TODD)	Cupcake (BILLY)
Broom (MINNIE)	Box of chocolates (MINNIE)
Mop (LILY)	

ACT III:

Chains (PRISONER)	Newspaper (TODD)
Shawl (WIDOW FAIROAK)	String of pearls (TODD)
Ring of keys (MATRON)	Large magnifying glass (INSPECTOR)
Newspapers (ROSE)	Handkerchief (INSPECTOR)
Photo (BROOKLYN JAKE)	Police whistle (POLICEMAN)
Baskets (NOBLE, WORTHY)	Chest of jewels (TODD)
Stuffed dummy or large rag doll costumed to resemble Mrs. Lovett (TODD)	

COSTUMES

The usual Gay Nineties melodrama costumes are appropriate: Long dresses or skirts and blouses (with puffed sleeves) for the women, tuxedos or business suits (the more old-fashioned looking the better) for the men. BILLY, ROSE,

and BELLE wear very ragged nondescript clothing. Sailor suits for JAKE and TOM (perhaps white trousers and horizontal-striped knit shirts); a policeman's uniform (with a Keystone Kops helmet if available) for the POLICEMAN; a Sherlock Holmes cape and hat (or a bowler hat) for the INSPECTOR; a long Oriental robe (a satin bathrobe, perhaps) for CHANG; black pants, rope belt, and dark knit shirt for BARNACLE (plus an eye patch). Many variations on these costumes are possible, of course.

★

PUBLICITY

For your advertising and program designs, remember that audiences greatly enjoy programs ("programmes") that stress the fun aspect of a melodrama, so don't be afraid to include such "programme" bits as:

ALL NEW SCENERY

In a style of splendor never before seen at a public presentation

* * * *

MANAGEMENT NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE JOKES

(they came into the kitchen with a batch of chestnuts)

* * * *

ON YOUR WAY OUT PLEASE DON'T STEP ON ANYONE'S FINGERS

* * * *

ANY PATRON OVERCOME BY EMOTION WILL KINDLY

RETIRE TO THE LOBBY

* * * *

THE GORGEOUS COSTUMES SEEN IN THIS IMAGINATIVE PRODUCTION
WERE SECURED AT HARDLY ANY EXPENSE
TO THE DRAMA DEPARTMENT

* * * *

APPLAUSE AT SUITABLE MOMENTS ENCOURAGED

* * * *

*PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR CHEWING GUM UNDER THE SEATS –
SWALLOW IT*

* * * *

ALL THE JOKES ARE ORIGINAL!

Unfortunately the people who originated them
died years ago

* * * *

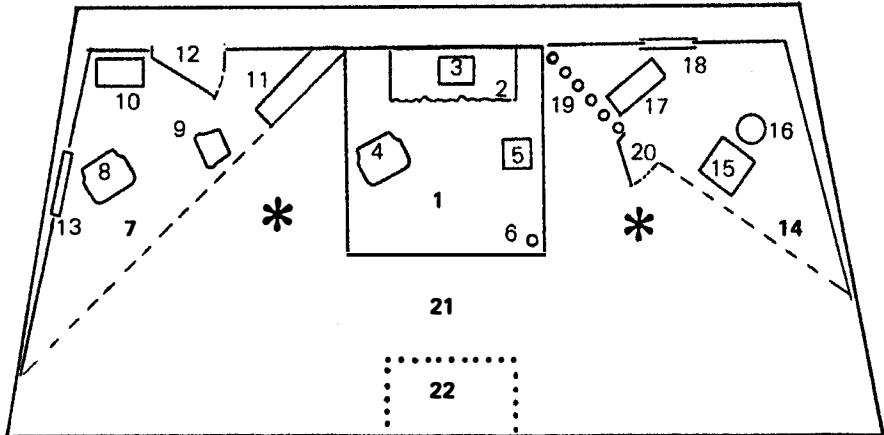
CRY BABIES NOT ADMITTED

* * * *

FEEL FREE TO APPRECIATE THE DIALOGUE

FLOOR PLAN

The multiple set pictured here will allow the play to proceed without the necessity of long blackouts or closed curtains for the purpose of changing sets.



Scale: 1/8"=1'

----broken lines indicate imaginary walls

* indicates neutral areas, which may be incorporated into the area in which the action is taking place

···dotted lines outline the area for Act II, Scene 5 — "Below the Barbershop"

It is recommended that a Prop Man place a sign in the area being used; e.g., "Nob Hill" when the Fair oak residence is the setting; "City Jail," "Barbershop," and "Market Street." The sign may be removed when action shifts elsewhere.

- 1—Sweeney Todd's barbershop. This area may be set on platforms.
- 2—The alcove, with the "special chair." A draw curtain or folding screen shuts this area off from the audience's view when Sweeney is "operating" there.
- 3—The "special chair"—perhaps an ornate throne type.
- 4—The regular barber chair—a plush-upholstered barber chair if available; however, any type of chair will do.
- 5—Small table with shaving mugs, bottles of hair tonic, etc.
- 6—A small red-and-white striped barber pole.
- 7—The Nob Hill home of Lady Fair oak.
- 8—Chair (the more ornate, the better)
- 9—Smaller chair (also ornate)
- 10—Small table with a vase of flowers.
- 11—A planter or some other type of low divider to symbolize the wall
- 12—Door
- 13—Window (with rich-looking drapes, if possible)
- 14—The City Jail
- 15—A small rustic table
- 16—A stool
- 17—A bench
- 18—A barred window (optional)
- 19—Bars marking the wall of the cell (optional)
- 20—Door to the cell, preferably barred (also optional; door can be mimed)
- 21—Market Street (runs the length of the stage)
- 22—Area for the "Below the Barbershop" scene (Act II, Scene 5). A barrel and a few dusty boxes may be used for atmosphere, but they are not essential. Except for Act II, Scene 5, this area is part of the street.

Other stage decorations and trim props may be added as desired.

SWEENEY TODD

Demon Barber of the Barbary Coast

ACT I

Scene 1

[The Barbershop of Sweeney Todd, placed in the Center area of the stage (see Floor Plan, p. 50). At Right of the area is a chair; at Left, a small table with some shaving mugs, bottles of hair tonic, etc. Up Center is an archway or alcove, closed from the audience's view by a curtain or screen. When the curtain is pulled aside, another chair is revealed within. (NOTE: For various suggestions on how to handle this "special chair," consult the Production Notes, p. 48)]

AT RISE: The voice of ROSE is heard offstage Right]

ROSE'S VOICE. Read all about it! In the San Francisco Bulletin! "Another Solid Citizen Disappears! No Trace Found! Police Baffled!" *[ROSE, a ragged vendor of newspapers, enters Right, copies of the Bulletin under her arm]* Read all about it! Another disappearance! *[Looks around]* Not a customer in the place. Not even that scary barber – Sweeney Todd. *[TODD sticks his head out from between the alcove curtains, gives Rose a vicious look. Quickly, he faces audience, grins. ROSE doesn't see him]* Best be on my way down Market Street.

TODD. *[Steps through curtains]* Wait!

ROSE. It's you, Mr. Todd. Thought your shop was deserted. Want to buy a Bulletin? *[She holds out a paper. TODD takes it, studies the front page]*

TODD. Dear me, what's our world coming to? Another solid citizen gone who-knows-where!

ROSE. That'll be a penny, Mr. Todd.

TODD. *[Reads]* "Mr. Wallace Swindle, well-known merchant on the Barbary Coast, has apparently vanished without so much as a trace. His associate, Mr. Gross, of the firm Swindle and Gross, stated that when last seen his business partner was carrying a large sum of money in addition to having on his person a valuable ruby ring." Tsk, tsk. *[Reads]* "Police are investigating."

ROSE. He was seen on this block right before he disappeared. That will be a penny.

TODD. For what?

ROSE. The paper.

TODD. Take it back.

ROSE. You read it!

TODD. Only a small portion of the front page.

ROSE. That don't make no difference.

TODD. It does to me.

ROSE. One penny. Or I ain't budging.

TODD. That's what you say. *[With that, he shoots out his hands and throttles the poor woman]*

ROSE. Ugh, ugh, ugh.

TODD. *[Shaking her violently]* Trying to rob me of a penny for your wretched rag of a scandal sheet! I'll show you Sweeney Todd is not to be trifled with! *[Releases her]* Out of my shop! Leech!

ROSE. *[Staggering Right]* You're a mean man, Sweeney Todd. Everyone knows you got into a terrible fight with the old flower woman on the corner.

TODD. I would have won that fight, too, if she hadn't struck me with her crutches. Out!

ROSE. I won't forget this.

TODD. I'm sure you won't. I have great faith in fools. Ha, ha, ha. *[TODD's laughter is quite mad, the epitome of evil. Alone on stage, we get a good look at him. What a villain! Bushy eyebrows, sneeringly curled moustache, cruel mouth, eyes that dart from place to place – always on the lookout for plunder or some attack. He can go from menacing evil to oily charm in a split second. He can terrify and he can disarm]* Another "solid" citizen – what's that to me? A man's got to make a living, don't he? *[Takes a "ruby" ring from some pocket]* I appreciate a ruby ring as well as the next. Ha, ha, ha. A lucrative business this barbershop. *[Points Right]* A customer comes in off the street. If he looks prosperous, I polish him off in my "special" chair. *[Points Up Center]* Ha, ha, ha. Ho, ho, ho.

[MRS. LOVETT, Todd's accomplice in crime, enters Left. She wears an apron]

MRS. LOVETT. Talking to yourself again, Todd?

TODD. Ah, Mrs. Lovett. Queen of the pastry shop. I trust you got the "package" I "sent down" this morning.

MRS. LOVETT. That's what I want to talk to you about.

TODD. He was "well off"?

MRS. LOVETT. A pocket watch, diamond stick pin –

TODD. *[Wringing his hands in pleasure]* Excellent!

MRS. LOVETT. –sapphire cufflinks.

TODD. A profitable beginning to the day. How convenient, my dear Mrs. Lovett, that the cellar to your pastry shop lies beneath this floor. *[Chuckles, stomps the floor with his foot]*

MRS. LOVETT. Police are getting suspicious. Sooner or later they're bound to connect us with all these "mysterious disappearances."

TODD. Nonsense. They'll never suspect that I polish them off and drop them below to you for proper burial. Police? Ha! I am one of those whom the law is always reaching at but never touches.

MRS. LOVETT. It isn't only the police. It's Mr. Scruples from the orphanage.

TODD. Scruples? The man's a dolt. What about him?

MRS. LOVETT. He is my intended.

TODD. You – a bride? [*An amused, derisive laugh*] Hee, hee, hee.

MRS. LOVETT. [*Striking what she thinks is a girlish, seductive pose – it's enough to make you nauseated*] Why not? I'm still young. A bit of powder, a dab of rouge and I could pass for sweet sixteen.

TODD. A word of advice, Mrs. Lovett. Many an old hen makes a goose of herself trying to look like a chicken.

MRS. LOVETT. I'm immune to your insults.

TODD. You and Scruples – altar bound?

MRS. LOVETT. I've been a widow too long. I'll have no time for our "business" when I'm wed. I'll be respectable.

TODD. [*A terrible sneer and a twitch of his moustache*] We shall see.

MRS. LOVETT. I'm not afraid of you.

TODD. I trust not. After all, are we not friends? [*Chucking her under the chin*] Hmmmmmm?

MRS. LOVETT. [*Knocking his hand away*] I'd sooner be friends with a crocodile.

TODD. [*Enraged*] Take care, female!

MRS. LOVETT. You'd steal a fly from a blind spider. [*Furious, TODD raises a fist to strike her down*] Be warned! I have the knowledge to speed you to the gallows!

TODD. [*Swallows hard, shifts his mood*] Why are we quarreling? I, myself, have marriage in mind.

MRS. LOVETT. [*Amazed*] You?

TODD. [*It's his turn to pose – an even more ridiculous figure than she was*] In my gentler moods, I am quite the Romeo, the Don Juan, the Casanova. I, too, long for the comforts of home and hearth.

MRS. LOVETT. Who is the object of your fancy?

TODD. Lily Fair oak.

MRS. LOVETT. Of the Nob Hill Fair oaks?

TODD. The same.

MRS. LOVETT. You aim high. However, the girl is quite sane. [*Looking him over*] You don't stand a chance.

TODD. [*With a sneer, twirling his moustache*] We shall see. I have my methods.

[*SCRUPLES enters Right, a dour-looking man, dressed in dark clothing*]

SCRUPLES. Good day to you, Mr. Todd, and to you, Mrs. Lovett.

MRS. LOVETT. [*The girlish pose*] Ah, Mr. Scruples. How good to see you again.

TODD. To what do we owe the honor?

SCRUPLES. Did you request a boy from the orphanage to apprentice as a barber?

TODD. I did. I can't shave and comb and lather and sweep up, too.

SCRUPLES. You are to be congratulated. Giving an orphan lad occupation and shelter is the mark of a kindly man.

TODD. Tut, tut, Mr. Scruples. In a moment I shall blush. I am a modest man, as well.

MRS. LOVETT. *[Aside]* Ha!

TODD. Where is the lad?

SCRUPLES. Mrs. Meanly is fetching him.

[MINNIE, the maid to Lily Fair oak, enters Right. She is a very pretty girl. TODD scrutinizes her with a leer]

MINNIE. Beg pardon. Is this the barbershop of Sweeney Todd?

TODD. It is.

MINNIE. The Widow Fair oak has sent me with a message for Mr. Todd. Which one of you gentlemen goes by that name?

TODD. I am Sweeney Todd.

MINNIE. *[Curtsying]* Widow Fair oak says she is free this afternoon at two if you wish to pursue the matter you discussed earlier in the week.

TODD. Inform your mistress I shall be at Fair oak House promptly at the designated hour.

MINNIE. Yes, sir. *[MINNIE curtsies, exits]*

MRS. LOVETT. It would seem your marriage prospects are looking up. I confess, I am amazed. Come along, Mr. Scruples. *[She exits Left. SCRUPLES follows. TODD growls after Mrs. Lovett]*

TODD. Mrs. Lovett is presenting a bit of a problem. I don't like problems. *[Rubbing his hands gleefully in anticipation of solving this problem]*. Hee, hee, hee.

BILLY'S VOICE. *[From off Right]* Ow! Ow! Ow! Let go of my ear!

MRS. MEANLY'S VOICE. *[From off Right]* Shut up, you wretched boy!

BILLY'S VOICE. Ow! Ow! Ow!

[MRS. MEANLY enters Right, pulling BILLY by the ear. NOTE: The role of BILLY is usually portrayed by a young actress]

MRS. MEANLY. Here he is, Mr. Todd. One foundling from the City Orphanage and Home for Incurables.

BILLY. Let go of my ear! *[MRS. MEANLY gives one final tug]* Ow! *[BILLY steps Down Right, rubs his ear. MRS. MEANLY steps to Todd]*

MRS. MEANLY. You'll have your hands full with this one. There's a streak of independence in him.

TODD. I specifically asked Mr. Scruples for a docile waif.

MRS. MEANLY. Mr. Scruples is the director of the orphanage. Hardly ever gets down to the nitty-gritty. It's me that has to deal with the boys every hour of the day and night.

TODD. You are a remarkable woman, Mrs. Meanly.

MRS. MEANLY. And so poorly paid. You understand that I'll be by weekly to see that he's fed proper, dressed warmly, and has no complaints.

TODD. Complaints?

MRS. MEANLY. It's a nuisance and me so poorly paid. We have to make certain you're not over-working the boy. Eight hours of sleep every night, three square meals a day, medical attention, trips to the dentist, two pairs of new sox every other month –

TODD. Outrageous! The boy will bankrupt me. *[TODD takes her by the elbow, moves Left. BILLY does his best to overhear]* It would be a nuisance to journey here to the Barbary Coast every week simply to make out a report on this unfortunate lad. I was thinking –

MRS. MEANLY. *[Interested]* –Yes?

TODD. Suppose you were to fill out the weekly report saying that everything was being handled to the letter of the law?

MRS. MEANLY. You're also supposed to pay him fifty cents a week.

TODD. Fifty cents!

MRS. MEANLY. Not a penny less. I know the value of a penny, being so *[looking at him meaningfully]* poorly paid, as I am.

TODD. I think we can come to some "arrangement." Suppose I pay you twenty cents a week and you fill out the required forms to our mutual satisfaction.

MRS. MEANLY. *[Shocked]* I don't see how I could do that –*[confidentially]* for less than twenty-five cents.

TODD. Twenty-five cents it is! You drive a hard bargain. *[They shake]*

MRS. MEANLY. I'll leave the lad in your hands. Be strict with him. He's an idler.

TODD. Good day to you, Mrs. Meanly. You're a credit to your calling.

MRS. MEANLY. *[Crossing Right]* Mind your manners, boy. *[She exits]*

TODD. *[To audience]* Two pairs of new sox every other month. Did you ever hear the like? *[To Billy]* Come here, boy. *[Guardedly, BILLY crosses to Todd]* You got a name?

BILLY. Billy.

TODD. Billy what? Billy Goat? *[TODD thinks his laugh shows humor, but it is fraught with evil]* Ha, ha, ha.

BILLY. Please, sir, don't laugh like that.

TODD. *[Grabs him by the throat]* We'd better get a few things straight, Billy Goat. You'll work eighteen hours a day. You'll sweep and clean and scrub and wash and lather and polish. There'll be no backtalk, understand?

BILLY. *[Shaking]* Yes, sir.

TODD. You'll keep your mouth shut about anything "unusual" that you see around here, understand?

BILLY. Whatever you say, sir.

TODD. If you give me any trouble, you'll get the back of my hand. Like this. *[TODD cuffs him]*

BILLY. Ow! *[BILLY retreats; TODD grabs him back]*

TODD. When you're good and you give me no trouble –

BILLY. You mean if I don't tell people you don't give me the new sox?

TODD. [*Cuffs him again*] Shut up!

BILLY. Ow!

TODD. Always remember, nothing slips by me. I have a mechanical mind. It can close like a trap. However, when you're good I'll give you a penny for one of Mrs. Lovett's cupcakes or a danish.

BILLY. I'd be pleased, Mr. Todd, to have one right now.

TODD. Greedy little boy, aren't you? Remember, too, if anyone gives you a tip for polishing his boots, you'll bring that tip straight to me. [*Tugs his ear*] Understand?

BILLY. [*Trembling*] Yes, sir.

[*MRS. NOBLE and MRS. WORTHY, charity workers, enter Right. Instantly, TODD releases BILLY, who slinks Down Left*]

MRS. WORTHY. Mr. Todd, isn't it?

TODD. Madam, you have the advantage.

MRS. WORTHY. I'm Mrs. Worthy and this is my friend, Mrs. Noble. We're collecting for the underprivileged of the Barbary Coast.

MRS. NOBLE. There are so many.

TODD. The underprivileged are always with us. [*Motions to Billy, all kindness and warmth*] I have this day given home and shelter and apprenticeship to this poor lad brought to me from the City Orphanage and Home for Incurables.

MRS. NOBLE. [*The picture of piety*] How wonderful!

MRS. WORTHY. [*Ditto*] You are an inspiration.

TODD. I feel we who have, must share with those who don't.

MRS. NOBLE. A fine sentiment.

TODD. Tell these good ladies what I'm doing for you, Billy.

BILLY. Huh?

TODD. [*Through his teeth*] Be quick about it.

BILLY. This fine gentleman is going to see that I get three squares a day, medical attention, work, salary, and two pairs of new sox every other month.

MRS. NOBLE. How kind!

TODD. [*Takes out a penny*] Here you go, Billy. Run along to Mrs. Lovett's. Out the front door and around the back. She'll give you a danish.

BILLY. [*Grabs coin, runs Right*] Thank you, sir. [*Exits*]

MRS. NOBLE. The lad has found a good home and position.

MRS. WORTHY. We had come to solicit a contribution, but I think you are suited to more than that, Mr. Todd.

TODD. I am? Bless me.

MRS. WORTHY. Would you not consider accepting an honorary post with our organization, the Barbary Coast Relief and Clam Chowder Marching Alliance?

MRS. NOBLE. As a businessman you owe it to your position in society.

MRS. WORTHY. Do not refuse us.

TODD. I should be delighted.

MRS. NOBLE. That is *good* news!

MRS. WORTHY. We shall announce it in the press!

TODD. A breath of wholesomeness after all these dreadful stories of solid citizens disappearing.

MRS. NOBLE. A fate we trust will never overtake you.

TODD. Ladies, you may count on it.

MRS. WORTHY. We shall be in touch.

MRS. NOBLE. Thank you again.

TODD. What man could do less? [*MRS. NOBLE and MRS. WORTHY exit Right. TODD grins, rubs his hands, moves downstage, addresses audience*] My name in the papers as a citizen of repute and worth. Excellent, excellent. It will fit in nicely with my schemes and future plans.

[*HONORABLE MR. CHANG, an Oriental gentleman dressed in a long robe, enters Right. He wears a wispy beard and thin moustache and carries a small chest*]

CHANG. Excuse, please. This is abode of illustrious Sweeney Todd, traitor of beard and moustache?

TODD. I am Sweeney Todd.

CHANG. I am the Honorable Mr. Chang, merchant. I am on my way to Sacramento. Wish to have my beard and moustache trimmed and scented.

TODD. Do be seated. [*CHANG sits in chair at Right. TODD crosses to him*] Let me take that chest. You'll be more comfortable. [*TODD goes to take chest, CHANG pulls it back*]

CHANG. No! Chest stay with me.

TODD. I didn't mean to upset you. It must be quite valuable, the chest. The way you hang onto it.

CHANG. Not chest. What's *in* chest.

TODD. Some rare tea or herbs?

CHANG. Not tea, not herbs. Jade.

TODD. [*On mention of "jade," TODD's expression immediately changes to one of horrible avarice*] Jade? Rare jade? How nice. What am I thinking of? This is not the right chair for so important a personage. [*TODD moves to alcove curtains, draws them apart, indicates chair within*] You'll be more comfortable in this chair, Honorable Mr. Chang. Do come along and bring your little chest.

CHANG. Will comply. [*CHANG gets up, enters alcove, sits in chair*]

TODD. Comfy?

CHANG. Please to begin. [*Slowly, TODD draws the curtain*]

TODD. All in good time, Honorable Mr. Chang. Hee, hee, hee. Ha, ha, ha.

CHANG. Why you laugh?

TODD. Just thinking – life is like your delicate jade. Difficult to create, easy to destroy. *[Grins wickedly at audience]* Hee, hee, hee. *[Curtains are closed. A red light floods the stage. From within the curtained alcove we hear TODD's fiendish, blood-chilling laugh]* Hee, hee, hee.

CHANG'S VOICE. *[Alarmed]* What you do!

TODD'S VOICE. *[Wildly]* Ha, ha, ha! *[Simultaneously with a terrible scream from HONORABLE MR. CHANG and more maniacal laughter from TODD – a quick BLACKOUT]*

[Immediately lights come up on:]

Scene 2

[Market Street. (See Floor Plan, p. 50. If the suggested floor plan is not feasible, the Market Street scenes may be played in front of a traveler, a drop, or on the apron in front of the act curtain.) BELLE stands Down Left holding a tray of matches for sale. She, like Rose, is dressed in rags and tatters]

BELLE. Matches, buy my matches. Who'll buy? Finest matches in all of San Francisco. Matches, buy my matches. Who'll buy?

ROSE. *[Entering Right, in an angry mood]* He won't get away with it. *[BELLE moves to her. They meet Center]*

BELLE. Rose, what are you grumbling about?

ROSE. Sweeney Todd. He threw me out of his shop.

BELLE. Why?

ROSE. He read one of my papers and then wouldn't pay.

BELLE. It's a hard life for a working girl. If only we had learned to operate a sewing machine.

ROSE. I'll tell you one thing, Belle – I don't forget an injury.

BELLE. You are in a state! Come along. We'll have some shrimp on Fisherman's Wharf. You'll feel better after you've et. *[They move Left]*

ROSE. Last time I met someone like Sweeney Todd I was having a nightmare.

[They're out. SCRUPLES and MRS. LOVETT enter Down Right, arm-in-arm]

SCRUPLES. Our coming nuptials approach, Mrs. Lovett.

MRS. LOVETT. *[The girlish pose]* I can hardly wait for the day, Mr. Scruples. I yearn for a cottage small by a waterfall, as they say. *[She tries a girlish giggle; it comes out more like a squawk]* I shall close the pastry shop and devote my life to your comfort.

SCRUPLES. A lovely prospect.

[TODD enters Right, carrying a walking stick]

TODD. Love birds at play. How enchanting.

SCRUPLES. Isn't Mrs. Lovett a treasure?

TODD. They do say love is blind.

MRS. LOVETT. [*Angered by the remark*] In that case, marriage will be the eye specialist. We'll expect a handsome wedding gift from you, Todd. [*They exit. TODD waves goodbye*]

TODD. Enjoy your stroll. [*Mimicks Mrs. Lovett*] "We'll expect a handsome wedding gift from you, Todd." Bah! The only wedding gift I'll buy for her is a jar of vanishing cream. [*Happy mood, to audience*] I plot in earnest. Soon I will bid farewell to my barbershop. The wealth I have gathered by "unusual" methods will advance my career. Already, citizens are marking me down as a man of substance. I will marry Lily Fair oak. My social standing will be secure. Hee, hee, hee. I may even run for mayor of San Francisco. Governor. Senator. *President!*!

[*MRS. LOVETT returns Left*]

MRS. LOVETT. Raving again, are you, Todd?

TODD. Back so soon?

MRS. LOVETT. I have a few things to settle. I have no wish for the simple Mr. Scruples to know the nature of our discussion, even though I can twist him around my little finger.

TODD. [*Softly, threateningly*] Ha, ha, ha.

MRS. LOVETT. [*Sneering at his laugh*] Mad as a March Hare. Only a matter of time before the strait jackets will be heading your way.

TODD. Grrr. Sometimes I wish Adam had died with all his ribs in his body. [*Cunningly*] I do wonder what Mr. Scruples would say if he knew the nature of our little "arrangement."

MRS. LOVETT. One word and it's the gallows for you.

TODD. If I embrace the gallows, you will be by my side. Enough of this banter. Did you get that bundle of Oriental goods I sent down?

MRS. LOVETT. I want the money that's owed me.

TODD. Do not deceive yourself. This rough exterior covers a heart of flint.

MRS. LOVETT. I want my share.

TODD. [*Taking out a long sheet of paper*] What must be must. I have made a tally. You owe me certain sums for wear and tear and whatnot. It adds up to a tidy sum. The truth of the matter is – you owe me six dollars and thirty cents.

MRS. LOVETT. I owe you nothing! You cheat . . . you fraud!

TODD. Flattery is wasted on me.

MRS. LOVETT. So it's to be a game of wits. I know how to survive. I know how to protect myself. Money isn't everything.

TODD. Sometimes it isn't even enough.

MRS. LOVETT. Next time the trump card will be in my hand. [*She exits Left*]

TODD. Ungrateful creature! [*Thinks*] Hmmmm. I'll have to deal with her sooner than I thought.

[*BARNACLE, a disreputable seaman with a patch over one eye, enters Right*]

BARNACLE. Psssst. *[TODD turns]* Might you be the gentleman what calls himself Sweeney Todd?

TODD. Gad, what a villainous-looking cutthroat.

BARNACLE. Friend of mine by the name of "Hit-'Em-Over-the-Head Mary" tells me this here Todd character might have work for the likes of me.

TODD. Your name?

BARNACLE. Barnacle.

TODD. That's all?

BARNACLE. It's enough. Now, sir, are you Sweeney Todd?

TODD. I am.

BARNACLE. Who do you want Shanghaied?

TODD. The matter is more delicate.

BARNACLE. Delicacy is me specialty. *[He is about as delicate as a bulldozer]*

TODD. *[Steps to Barnacle]* Listen carefully. I want you to take a fast packet boat to Honolulu.

BARNACLE. Honolulu?

TODD. In the harbor there'll be a ship loading pineapples. The name of the ship is "The Flying Mouse." Sign on as an ordinary seaman.

BARNACLE. There ain't nothing ordinary about me.

TODD. "The Flying Mouse" must never reach San Francisco.

BARNACLE. *[Happily]* You want me to sink her?

TODD. Quiet! We mustn't be overheard. The sordid details I leave to you.

BARNACLE. "The Flying Mouse" will go to the bottom.

TODD. Excellent.

BARNACLE. My lips is sealed.

TODD. They will be – permanently, if one word of this leaks out. *[Takes out bag of coins]* Gold. One bag now, one bag when you bring me news "The Flying Mouse" is done flying.

BARNACLE. Count on Barnacle. He always sticks to the job.

TODD. *[To audience]* Now to Fairoak House and my future bride – the delicate and lovely Lily. Hee, hee, hee. Ha, ha, ha. Ho, ho, ho. *[He exits Right]*

BARNACLE. Strange duck, that Sweeney Todd. *[Admiring the bag of coins]* A bag of gold coins. That's my kind of goody. I'll sink the "Mouse" so she'll stay sunk. *[Thinks]* Only one thing worries me. *[Laments]* I can't swim!

BLACKOUT

[Lights up immediately on:]