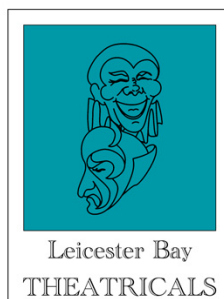




By

Jim Christian

A CHAMELEON'S MURDER MYSTERY



Salt Lake City

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SHOWDOWN AT GAMBLER'S GULCH

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CHARACTERS -- 6M 2W

EUSTACE BIDDLE – MAYOR – GOODY TWO-SHOES – HIS SELF-SERVING “GENEROSITY” IS RUNNING THE TOWN INTO THE GROUND – A REAL “YES” MAN – BY TRYING TO PLEASE EVERY PERSON IN THE COMMUNITY, HE ENDS UP PLEASING NO ONE

ZEDEKIAH COSGRAVE – UNDERTAKER – SHIFTY – HUMORLESS – AN INSOMNIAC – WRITES HEADSTONE JINGLES – A PENNY-PINCHING MISER WHO HOARDS A SIZEABLE INHERITANCE SOMEWHERE IN HIS FUNERAL PARLOR OR CEMETERY

MERCY TRUST – SELF-RIGHTEOUS SCHOOLMARM – RIGID AND OPINIONATED – DISTRUSTFUL AND SHARP-TONGUED – FOR ALL OF HER PIETY, SHE IS VIRTUALLY DEVOID OF COMPASSION AND CHRISTIAN LOVE – A TERRIBLE COOK

TOMBSTONE JACK – GUNSLINGER – A SELF-APPOINTED BULLY – WEARS BULKY BANDAGES ON HIS HANDS WHICH HE BURNED WHILE TRYING TO STEAL A BANK SAFE DURING A FIRE – HEARTLESS AND SHAMELESS – A COWARD UNDERNEATH

LULABELLE FREE – SALOON OWNER/MADAME – CARDSHARP – TELLS FORTUNES WITH FRIGHTENING ACCURACY AT TIMES – ENJOYS PLAYING WITH PEOPLE’S MINDS – CHARMING MANIPULATOR WHO KNOWS HOW TO GET WHAT SHE WANTS

OLD SCRAPPY – GRIZZLED PROSPECTOR – SLIGHTLY DEAF – CAN ONLY HANDLE ONE TRAIN OF THOUGHT AT A TIME – CARRIES A “STUFFED” PET AND TALKS TO IT – KNOWS THE TERRITORY WELL, BUT CAN’T ALWAYS BRING IT TO MIND

“SWAMPWATER” SAM LaRUE – PATENT MEDICINE SALESMAN – SWINDLER – ANYTHING FOR A BUCK – WEASEL – HYPERACTIVE AND BOISTEROUS – DEALS IN DOUBLESPEAK – AN OUTSIDER TO THE TOWN – SECRETIVE

EDGAR ALLEN POLECAT – FEROCIOUS INDIAN BRAVE – KEEN POLITICAL AND BUSINESS SENSES – MOTHER WAS A WHITE WOMAN – HE IS VERY WELL- EDUCATED – CYNICAL AND DISPASSIONATE TOWARD HIS FELLOW CITIZENS

SETTING: THE WEEKLY TOWN MEETING OF THE CITIZENS OF GAMBLER’S GULCH

THE YEAR: 1856

SHOWDOWN AT GAMBLERS' GULCH *A CHAMELEONS MURDER MYSTERY* by Jim Christian

Characters: 6m 2w Synopsis: A town meeting in the Old West provides the setting for this saga in which the mayor is murdered and a notorious slate of candidates vie to become his replacement. **(ORDER #3092)**

1 -- COCKTAILS / SOCIAL HOUR

(MAYOR BIDDLE ASSUMES THE PODIUM WITH THE COMMUNITY CASHBOX HANDCUFFED TO HIS WRIST. HE REPEATEDLY BANGS HIS GAVEL FOR SILENCE. FINALLY THE ROWDINESS DIMINISHES AND THE CROWD COMES TO ORDER.)

EUSTACE: THANK YOU. THANK YOU, VERY MUCH. I WANT TO WELCOME ALL OF YOU TO THE 187th WEEKLY TOWN MEETING OF THE CITIZENS OF GAMBLER'S GULCH. WE HAVE A RATHER LENGTHY AGENDA TODAY AND I'D LIKE TO GET THROUGH IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. AFTER ALL, WE WOULDN'T WANT OUR WEEKLY COMMUNITY SUPPER TO GET COLD.

ZEDEKIAH: *(RAISING HIS HAND)* MAYOR BIDDLE?

EUSTACE: THE CHAIR RECOGNIZES MR. ZEDEKIAH COSGRAVE.

ZEDEKIAH: *(STANDING)* MAYOR BIDDLE, WHAT EXACTLY IS THE ORDER OF TODAY'S AGENDA?

EUSTACE: *(FUMBLING THROUGH A SHEAF OF PAPER)* WELL, NOW, IT'LL TAKE ME JUST A MOMENT OR TWO TO UH...

ZEDEKIAH: YOU SEE, I'M IN A BIT OF A HURRY...

EUSTACE: ...I THINK I'VE GOT IT IN HERE SOMEWHERE...

ZEDEKIAH: THE WIDOW PERKINS IS ON ICE BACK AT THE FUNERAL PARLOR AND, QUITE FRANKLY, AT 300 POUNDS SHE'S GOING TO KEEP ME UP ALL NIGHT AS IT IS.

EUSTACE: *(PRODUCING THE AGENDA WHICH UNFURLS ABOUT SIX OR SEVEN FEET IN LENGTH)* AH, HERE WE ARE. NOW LET'S SEE...ITEM 1: APPROVAL OF LAST WEEK'S MINUTES...ITEM 2: NEXT WEEK'S COMMUNITY SUPPER MENU...ITEM 3: SELECTION OF NEW WALLPAPER PATTERN FOR THE MAYOR'S OFFICE...ITEM 4: FINALIZE PLANS FOR MAYOR'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION...ITEM 5...

MERCY: *(STANDING UP)* MAYOR BIDDLE?

EUSTACE: *(STAYING FOCUSED ON AGENDA)* ...JUST A MOMENT...

MERCY: MAYOR BIDDLE!

EUSTACE: WHAT?!!

(SEEING THAT IT'S MERCY, HE QUICKLY MAKES AMENDS)

THE CHAIR RECOGNIZES MISS MERCY TRUST.

MERCY: I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW EXACTLY WHEN ON THAT AGENDA OF YOURS WE ARE GOING TO DISCUSS THE ACQUISITION OF THE NEW STUDY MATERIALS FOR THE SCHOOLCHILDREN?

EUSTACE: *(SCANNING DOWN THE LIST)* NOW LET'S SEE...

MERCY: AFTER ALL, I HAVE BEEN REQUESTING NEW PRIMERS AND SPELLERS FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS AND YOU HAVE PROMISED ME TIME AND TIME AGAIN THAT YOU WOULD BRING IT UP IN OUR NEXT TOWN COUNCIL AND...

EUSTACE: AHA! HERE WE ARE...ITEM NUMBER 206: SCHOOLBOOKS FOR THE KIDDIES .

MERCY: NUMBER 206?!!!!

JACK: *(RAISING A BANDAGED HAND)* MAYOR BIDDLE?

EUSTACE: THE CHAIR RECOGNIZES TOMBSTONE JACK.

JACK: WHAT ABOUT MEDICAL CARE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED?

EUSTACE: *(CHECKING LIST)* THAT WOULD BE ITEM 207.

LULABELLE: *(WAVING HER HAND)* YOUR HONOR?

EUSTACE: THE CHAIR IS PLEASED TO RECOGNIZE MISS LULABELLE FREE.

LULABELLE: WHAT ABOUT THE PROPOSITION TO LOWER THE DRINKING AGE TO TWELVE YEARS?

MERCY: TWELVE? IT'S DOWN TO FOURTEEN ALREADY.

LULABELLE: WELL DEARIE, WE'VE JUST GOT TO KEEP UP WITH THE TIMES.

MERCY: *(DISGUSTED)* REALLY!

EUSTACE: MISS FREE – THAT WOULD APPEAR TO BE ITEM NUMBER 208.

SCRAPPY: *(STANDING UP)* MISTER MAYOR?

EUSTACE: THE CHAIR RECOGNIZES OLD SCRAPPY.

SCRAPPY: IS THERE ANYTHING ON THAT THERE AGENDA ABOUT STOPPING ALL THE CLAIM-JUMPERS WE BEEN HAVING?

EUSTACE: WHY, YES, THERE IS...IT'S RIGHT HERE...ITEM 209: STOP ALL THEM CLAIM-JUMPERS WE BEEN HAVING.

SAM: EXCUSE ME...YOUR MAYORSHIP?

EUSTACE: THE CHAIR RECOGNIZES...UM...PARDON ME, STRANGER, BUT I DON'T SEEM TO KNOW YOUR FACE.

SAM: THE NAME'S LaRUE. "SWAMPWATER" SAM LaRUE, DEALER IN PROPRIETARIES AND APOTHECARIES. I'M PASSING THROUGH THESE NETHER PARTS AND JUST THOUGHT I'D STOP BY YOUR LITTLE CONCLAVE TO BE ACQUAINTED WITH THE CITIZENRY.

EUSTACE: WELL, WE DON'T SEE MORE THAN ONE OR TWO OUTSIDERS IN A YEAR...

SAM: *(INTERRUPTING)* NOW, CURIOSITY WISE, I WAS JUST WONDERING PRECISELY HOW MANY ITEMS YOU'VE GOT ON THAT AGENDA?

EUSTACE: UHHHH...LET ME CHECK...206: SCHOOLBOOKS...207: MEDICAL CARE...208: LEGAL DRINKING AGE...209: CLAIM-JUMPERS...WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE WE GOT 210 ISSUES ON THE DOCKET.

SAM: UH-HUH. AND JUST FOR MY OWN PERSONAL EDIFICATION AS AN OFFICIOUS WAYFARER, WHAT PUBLIC CONCERN MIGHT BE OF SUCH LOW PRIORITY AS TO WARRANT THE DUBIOUS PLACEMENT AT NUMBER 210 ON YOUR AGENDA?

EUSTACE: WHAT?

EDGAR: HE MEANS WHICH ITEM IS LAST

EUSTACE: *(WITH AUTHORITY)* EXCUSE ME, BUT THE CHAIR HAS NOT RECOGNIZED YOU, MR. POLECAT. NOW, BACK TO YOUR QUESTION – ITEM NUMBER 210 IS THE KYPIPAWITZ INDIAN TRIBE'S CLAIM TO TERRITORIAL RIGHTS ON GAMBLER'S GULCH.

EDGAR: *(WITH A CHIP ON HIS SHOULDER)* OF COURSE.

EUSTACE: MR. POLECAT – I'M WARNING YOU. IF YOU CANNOT CONDUCT YOURSELF

ACCORDING TO THE RULES AND PROCEDURES OF THIS GATHERING, YOU WILL HAVE YOUR DESSERT PRIVILEGES REVOKED. IS THAT CLEAR?

(EDGAR RESPONDS WITH A GLARE)

NOW, BACK TO ITEM 1: APPROVAL OF LAST WEEK'S MINUTES. TO REVIEW, WE SPENT THE ENTIRE TIME DECIDING WHETHER THE NEW STATUE OF THE MAYOR SHOULD BE A STANDING POSE OR A SITTING POSE. AFTER, AGREEING THAT SITTING WAS MOST APPROPRIATE, WE ADJOURNED TO A DELECTABLE MEAL OF FRIED CHICKEN AND BISCUITS. ALL IN FAVOR OF APPROVAL, PLEASE SIGNIFY.

(THEY ALL RAISE THEIR HANDS AUTOMATICALLY. HE MAKES A NOTATION)

GOOD. ITEM NUMBER 2: NEXT WEEK'S MENU. I WAS THINKING...

(PREPARING THE CROWD FOR A WONDERFUL IDEA)

...TROUT...MESQUITE GRILLED WITH JUST A HINT OF LEMON BUTTER...

MERCY: MAYOR BIDDLE?

EUSTACE: *(HATING TO BE INTERRUPTED)* THE CHAIR RECOGNIZES, MERCY TRUST.

MERCY: I'M SORRY, BUT I FIND IT ABSOLUTELY INTOLERABLE TO THINK THAT THE CHILDREN OF THIS COMMUNITY ARE GOING WITHOUT PROPER EDUCATIONAL TOOLS WHILE YOU WASTE THE TOWN'S FINANCES INDULGING YOUR EXTRAVAGANT TASTES.

EUSTACE: NOW, MISS TRUST...

MERCY: SHAME ON YOU! THESE CHILDREN NEED OUR SUPPORT.

EUSTACE: THEY HAVE PLENTY OF SUPPORT.

ZEDEKIAH: AFTER ALL, MISS TRUST, YOU ONLY HAVE TWO STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL.

LULABELLE: AND YOU REALLY SHOULD GRADUATED THAT WILSON KID. WHAT IS HE NOW...
27?

MERCY: HE'S NOT READY YET. HE STILL DOESN'T KNOW HIS TIMES TABLES.

LULABELLE: *(WITH INNUENDO)* WELL, WITH ALL OF THAT PRIVATE TUTORING HE GETS AFTER SCHOOL, YOU'D THINK HE'D HAVE THEM DOWN BY NOW.

JACK: MAYBE SHE'S GOT HIM WORKING ON SOME "EXTRA CREDIT" PROJECTS.

MERCY: *(OUTRAGED AT THE SUGGESTION)* REALLY!

LULABELLE: *(TO JACK)* PROBABLY SOMETHING IN ZOOLOGY – LIKE THE BIRDS AND THE BEES.

MERCY: MISS FREE! NOT ALL WOMEN ARE STRUMPETS LIKE YOU!

SCRAPPY: TOO BAD.

ZEDEKIAH: *(WITH A HINT OF THREAT)* MAYOR BIDDLE, I REALLY HAVE TO BE GOING...

EUSTACE: WHAT? OH, OF COURSE...BACK TO THE TROUT.

EDGAR: FORGET THE FISH! GET TO THE REAL ISSUES.

EUSTACE: *(BECOMING INCREASINGLY MORE FLUSTERED)* CERTAINLY...NOW AS FAR AS THE WALLPAPER GOES

(PULLING OUT SWATCHES)

...I CAN'T DECIDE BETWEEN THE FLORAL OR THE STRIPED...

JACK: STICK YOUR WALLPAPER, YOU IDIOT! WHAT ABOUT MY HANDS...

MERCY: AND THE SCHOOLBOOKS...

SCRAPPY: AND THEM CLAIM-JUMPERS...

ZEDEKIAH: THE WEEKLY ENDOWMENT...

LULABELLE: AND THE TWELVE YEAR-OLDS...

MERCY: *(TO LULABELLE)* YOU DEMON!

LULABELLE: PRUDE!

MERCY: TROLLOP!!

LULABELLE: BIDDY!!

MERCY: ABOMINATION!!!

LULABELLE: WITCH!!!

MERCY: BIGGER WITCH!!!!!!

JACK: MAYOR – MY HANDS!

SCRAPPY: AND MY GOLD...

MERCY: MAYOR --

(INDICATING LULABELLE)

-- I WANT HER RUN OUT OF TOWN ON A RAIL!

LULABELLE: FAT CHANCE!

(JACK, SCRAPPY, ZEDEKIAH, MERCY, AND LULABELLE ALL RISE IN A CRESCENDO OF DEMANDS AND ARGUMENTS UNTIL THEY ARE FINALLY SILENCED BY EDGAR WHO JUMPED ONTO A BENCH OR CHAIR WITH A LONG, MIGHTY WAR WHOOP. SILENCE.)

EDGAR: THAT IS ENOUGH. WHAT A PATHETIC LOT YOU ARE. OF COURSE WE ALL HAVE NEEDS WHICH MUST BE ADDRESSED – OF COURSE WE EACH WANT OUR TO BE RESOLVED FIRST – BUT THERE ARE PROPER CHANNELS WHICH ARE ESTABLISHED AND SHOULD BE FOLLOWED. BESIDES, NO MATTER HOW INEFFECTUAL AND DYSFUNCTIONAL MAYOR BIDDLE MAY BE, HE IS STILL HEAD AND SHOULDERS ABOVE THE REST OF YOU WHEN IT COMES TO PROCEDURES.

EUSTACE: THANK YOU, MR. POLECAT. YOUR COMMENTS ARE MOST APPROPRIATE AND TIMELY. HOWEVER, I SHOULD LIKE TO REMIND YOU THAT YOU STILL HAVE NOT BEEN RECOGNIZED BY THE CHAIR AND ARE THEREFORE OUT OF ORDER. PLEASE TAKE YOUR SEAT.

(EDGAR SITS DOWN WITH A LOOK OF “WHY BOTHER”)

THANK YOU. NOW, IT SEEMS QUITE OBVIOUS THAT NONE OF THE REAL ISSUES ARE GOING TO GET A SECOND LOOK UNTIL YOU GREEDY LITTLE MONSTERS FIND OUT ABOUT THE WEEKLY ENDOWMENT.

ZEDEKIAH: HEAR, HEAR.

MERCY: EXACTLY.

SAM: EXCUSE ME AGAIN, YOUR MAYORSHIP, BUT COULD YOU ELABORATE JUST A TRIFLE AS TO THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF THE AFOREMENTIONED ENDOWMENT?

EUSTACE: *(AFTER A BEAT)* YES...I THINK I CAN. YOU SEE, EACH WEEK, THE MAYOR'S FINANCIAL COMMITTEE...

LULABELLE: *(INDICATING BIDDLE)* THAT MEANS HIM.

EUSTACE: ...DETERMINES WHICH OF THE CAUSES IN THIS TOWN IS MOST DESERVING OF THE MONETARY SUPPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY CHEST RIGHT HERE.

(HE PATS THE STRONGBOX)

SAM: *(IMPRESSED)* REALLY?

EDGAR: SO FAR, THE LARGEST DONATION HAS BEEN \$15 TO THE PETERSON FAMILY TO REPLACE THEIR ONLY MILKING COW WHICH DISAPPEARED MYSTERIOUSLY RIGHT BEFORE LAST MONTH'S COMMUNITY BARBECUE.

EUSTACE: MR. POLECAT – YOU ARE TRYING MY PATIENCE. I WILL NOT TELL YOU AGAIN.

EDGAR: DON'T WORRY. I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT YOU WON'T GET ANOTHER CHANCE.

(HE CLAMS UP)

EUSTACE: GOOD. NOW, BACK TO BUSINESS. THIS WEEK'S CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE GAMBLER'S GULCH ENDOWMENT INCLUDE, IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER: INCREASED SECURITY FOR THE COMMUNITY CEMETARY AND FUNERAL PARLOR; AN ALLOTMENT TO PURCHASE NEW SCHOOL SUPPLIES AND TEXTBOOKS; A FUND TO PROVIDE HEALTH BENEFITS TO THOSE WITHOUT GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT; AN ALLOWANCE TO BUY TALLER BAR STOOLS FOR SHORTER CUSTOMERS AT THE LOCAL ENTERTAINMENT ESTABLISHMENTS; AND MONEY TO SUPPORT A POSSE WHICH WOULD ROUND UP ALL THEM CLAIM-JUMPERS WE BEEN HAVING.

EDGAR: *(RAISING HIS HAND)* MAYOR BIDDLE?

EUSTACE: *(IGNORING HIM)* ANY QUESTIONS?

EDGAR: *(NOT GIVING UP THIS TIME)* MAYOR BIDDLE?

EUSTACE: IF NOT THEN...

EDGAR: MAYOR-CORRUPT-LITTLE-CARPETBAGGER-WHO-WILL-SOON-BE-JOINING-HIS-EQUALLY-CONTEMPTIBLE-ANCESTORS-MINUS-A-FEW-MAJOR-BODY-PARTS?

EUSTACE: *(WITH A TONE OF "THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME")* THE CHAIR HASTENS TO RECOGNIZE MR. EDGAR ALLAN POLECAT.

EDGAR: AREN'T YOU FORGETTING SOMETHING?

EUSTACE: AH, THAT WOULD BE THE LARGE CASH BEQUEST TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE KYPIPAWITZ INDIAN TRIBE AS RESTITUTION FOR LANDS PIRATED BY THE WHITE MAN'S BRUTAL MARCH WESTWARD.

EDGAR: SOUNDS RIGHT TO ME

EUSTACE: GOOD. THEN WITHOUT FURTHER ADO...

(HE BEGINS UNLOCKING THE CASHBOX ATTACHED TO HIS WRIST)

...THE WEEKLY ENDOWMENT FROM THE GAMBLER'S GULCH COMMUNITY CHEST GOES TO...

(HE THRUSTS HIS HAND INTO THE BOX AND IMMEDIATELY CRIES OUT IN PAIN)

...AIIIEE!

LULABELLE: **MAYOR BIDDLE?**

EUSTACE: *(PULLS HIS HAND OUT WHICH HOLDS A LONG [RUBBER] SNAKE)* HELP ME!
SOMEBODY!!!

JACK: SNAKE!

(HE IMMEDIATELY RUNS FOR COVER)

MERCY: SOMEBODY DO SOMETHING!

(SAM QUICKLY PRODUCES A REVOLVER AND SHOOTS THE SNAKE OUT OF BIDDLE'S HAND)

JACK: ARRGGGHHHH!

(SCRAPPY TROTS OVER AND PICKS UP THE DEAD SNAKE)

LULABELLE: *(TO SAM)* NICE SHOOTING, STRANGER.

SAM: *(POCKETING HIS GUN)* GOES WITH THE TERRITORY, MA'AM.

EUSTACE: *(APPROACHING SAM)* HOW CAN I EVER THANK YOU, MR...

(HE IMMEDIATELY DROPS DEAD)

JACK: YOUR HONOR!

MERCY: LAWSY!

LULABELLE: *(CHECKING FOR SIGNS OF LIFE)* HE'S GONE. THE SNAKE MUST'VE GOT HIM.

ZEDEKIAH: *(EXTEMPORIZING)* "EUSTACE BIDDLE'S GONE AND DIED -- AN EMPTY CASHBOX AT HIS SIDE."

MERCY: *(INDICATING THE BOX WHICH HANGS OPEN FROM BIDDLE'S WRIST)* LOOK --THE CASHBOX IS EMPTY.

EDGAR: SOMEBODY MUST HAVE STOLEN THE TOWN'S TREASURY AND PUT THE SNAKE IN ITS PLACE.

SAM: *(TO SCRAPPY)* LET'S SEE THAT VIPER, YOU OLD COOT.

SCRAPPY: *(PROTECTIVELY)* YOU GET AWAY FROM HIM. HE'S MINE NOW. CRITTER KILLER!

SAM: WHAT?

SCRAPPY: YOU HEARD ME. SHOOTING A POOR, DEFENSELESS LITTLE ANIMAL.

SAM: HE KILLED THIS MAN!

SCRAPPY: OH, AREN'T WE THE INNOCENT ONE?

ZEDEKIAH: *(TRYING ANOTHER)* "HERE LIES THE BODY OF EUSTACE BIDDLE -- DEAD ON THE OUTSIDE -- DEAD IN THE MIDDLE."

MERCY: THIS IS TERRIBLE...

EDGAR: A CATASTROPHE...

LULABELLE: A TRAGIC LOSS...

ALL: *(EXCEPT SAM)* THE MONEY'S GONE.

SAM: HOLD IT. DOESN'T IT BOTHER ANY OF YOU THAT THIS MAN IS DEAD?

(THEY EXCHANGE GLANCES)

LULABELLE: NOT REALLY.

EDGAR: THERE WASN'T MUCH TO RESPECT.

MERCY: HE WAS A MAN OF LITTLE VIRTUE.

JACK: I KIND OF LIKED HIM.

ZEDEKIAH: *(INSPIRED)* "HERE LIES A MAN OF LITTLE VIRTUE -- AND NOW THAT HE'S GONE -- HE CAN NO LONGER HURT YOU"

JACK: HEY, COSGRAVE, ENOUGH WITH THE POETRY. WHY DON'T YOU JUST GET YOUR JOB DONE AND TAKE HIM AWAY?

ZEDEKIAH: (*DISTANTLY*) FINE. DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. I'M USED TO IT. (HE PICKS UP BIDDLE'S BODY WITH PROFESSIONAL INDIFFERENCE) BUT I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT MY HAT WILL BE THE FIRST IN THE RING AS A CANDIDATE FOR THE MAYOR'S SEAT.

(HE GOES)

LULABELLE: SAY, THAT'S RIGHT...

MERCY: WELL, I THINK IT'S HIGH TIME WE HAD SOMEONE IN THAT POSITION WITH A LITTLE COMMON SENSE AND WOULD THEREFORE LIKE TO PUT MY NAME FORTH FOR THE OFFICE.

EDGAR: BUT THIS MUST BE HANDLED PROPERLY -- THROUGH A PUBLIC ELECTION.

MERCY: EXACTLY.

EDGAR: ...WHICH WILL GIVE ME AMPLE TIME TO PREPARE MY POLITICAL PLATFORM.

JACK: YOU?

EDGAR: WHY NOT?

JACK: I DON'T KNOW, BUT IF YOU'RE RUNNING, I'M RUNNING.

LULABELLE: NOT SO FAST. I UNDERSTAND THIS TOWN BETTER THAN ANY OF YOU, AND IF SOMEONE'S GOING TO BE THE NEW MAYOR, IT OUGHT TO BE ME.

EDGAR: THE PEOPLE SHOULD DECIDE.

MERCY: FINE. LET THE GAMES BEGIN.

(EDGAR, MERCY, JACK, AND LULABELLE DESCEND INTO THE LOW POLITICAL CHATTER AND BEGIN TO WORK THEMSELVES AWAY FROM THE CROWD)

SCRAPPY: (*TO SAM*) CAN I RUN TOO?

SAM: IT'S A FREE COUNTRY.

(SCRAPPY CACKLES HAPPILY AND TRUNDLES AWAY)

WELL, FOLKS, IT LOOKS LIKE GAMBLER'S GULCH IS IN FOR SOME HEAVY CAMPAIGNING SO YOU BETTER BRACE YOURSELVES. MATTER OF FACT, IT MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA TO BUILD UP YOUR STRENGTH WITH SOME OF THOSE VITTLES THE LATE GREAT EUSTACE BIDDLE LEFT BEHIND. AND WHILE YOU'RE DOING THAT, I MIGHT WANT TO TELL YOU ABOUT A FEW POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS OF MY OWN. FOLLOW ME.

(THEY ALL MOVE ON TO DINNER)

2 -- DINNER

(DINNER FILLED WITH EXTENSIVE CAMPAIGNING FOR THE MAYOR'S SEAT, THERE IS A GENERAL SENSE OF CONFUSION.)

3 -- AFTER DINNER

(SOMEONE TRIES TO TAKE CHARGE)

SAM: EXCUSE ME -- LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT...

MERCY: AND JUST WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?

SAM: WELL, I WAS MERELY GOING TO START A LITTLE DISCUSSION AS TO...

MERCY: IF ANYTHING IS GOING TO BE DISCUSSED, I SHOULD HANDLE IT. AS THE NEXT MAYOR OF GAMBLER'S GULCH, I FEEL THAT...

JACK: NOW, HOLD ON JUST ONE DAD-BLAMED MINUTE. I WAS THE CLOSEST TO MAYOR BIDDLE...

LULABELLE: OHHHH?

JACK: ...ER, UH...WHEN HE DIED...SO I SHOULD BE ORGANIZING WHATEVER IT IS WE'RE ORGANIZING...

EDGAR: YOU COULDN'T ORGANIZE A SANDWICH. THIS COMMUNITY NEEDS MY INTELLIGENCE AS A GUIDING STAR...

MERCY: MR. POLECAT, I THINK WE ARE ALL WILLING TO ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR KEEN MIND...

EDGAR: THANK YOU.

MERCY: ...BUT YOU NEED TO KNOW MORE THAN TRINKETS AND TOMAHAWKS TO RUN A CIVILIZED COMMUNITY.

EDGAR: MISS TRUST, MY MOTHER WAS A WHITE WOMAN AND ALTHOUGH I WAS RAISED AMONG THE KYPIPAWITZ, HER STRONG INFLUENCE HAS INSTILLED A LOVE OF LITERATURE AND THE CLASSICS DEEPLY WITHIN MY SOUL.

MERCY: YOU DON'T SAY.

EDGAR: IN FACT...

(WITH INNUENDO)

...I SWEAR THAT SOMEDAY I WILL FIND HER AND MAKE HER TELL ME JUST WHY I WAS ABANDONED AT SUCH A TENDER AGE.

9 MORE PAGES UNTIL THE **RAMBLES** SECTION

4 -- **RAMBLES**

5 -- **RESOLUTION**

4 MORE PAGES IN THE **RESOLUTION** SECTION

6 -- **BOWS**

7 -- **ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE MASTER SLEUTH**