

PERUSAL SCRIPT

**Wild In The West:
The Epic Western Choose Your Own Path Adventure**

Conceived by Next Stage Productions
Written by Anthony Buck



Newport, Maine

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Wild In The West

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Cast of Characters: (3M 2F)

- **CLAY:** M. Josiah Clay, hero and prospective Sheriff. He is pragmatic, realistic, and slightly egotistical.
- **WESTON:** M. Dr. Weston, current mayor of Weston City. Also plays MRS. MAYNARD, a wealthy Bostonian philanthropist; CONDUCTOR, an unscrupulous gentleman; COACHMAN, a persnickety old coot; and BANDIT 1 (Eustace), a particularly uneducated thief.
- **PAXTON:** M Tobias Paxton, the local preacher. He is miserly and argumentative. Also plays the BANK TELLER.
- **SARAH:** F. Miss Sarah Groves, hopeful young school mistress. She is well-read and surprisingly resourceful.
- **VERA MAE:** F. Madam Vera Mae, owner and manager of the local Saloon. She gets the job done, rough and tumble if necessary. Also plays BANDIT 2 (Clarabelle), a less stupid thief.

The show is conceived as a staged reading with few costumes (except possibly Weston, who plays multiple roles.) Once entering, the actors should rarely if ever leave the stage. They might instead sit on stools upstage if they are not needed for the action.

Voting has been carried out through a wide variety of ways, including loudest cheer, by a single audience member poll, and a veritable slew of other methods. This script does not specify which voting method to use at any point, but leaves it to the discretion of the producer and/or director.

Prizes can be offered for correct predictions. Free tickets to upcoming performances are a favorite, but creativity will yield a plethora of options, many of which will add to the comedy of the performance.

Wild in the West - A Choose Your Own Path Adventure by Anthony Buck. 3M 2F. The audience chooses the way in this Western adventure. Rookie sheriff Josiah Clay must safely transport \$10,000 on a dangerous journey across the Wild West to Weston City in hopes that the mayor will give him the job of his dreams. Add in a fiery saloon owner, three identical suitcases, and the West's two stupidest bandits and your audience will cheer audience through every choice point to any of the many endings. **Order #3333**

Anthony Buck has over 100 productions to his credit as actor, singer, director, stage manager, music director, composer, librettist, and playwright. His writing credits include the libretto for an operatic setting of *A Christmas Carol*, a new English language version of *Die Fledermaus*, radio adaptations of *Arabian Nights*, the "choose your own path plays" *A Hero's Journey* and *Wild in the West*, and the trio of comedies based on *commedia dell'arte* themes and Italian art songs, *Pantalone and the 7 Lovers*, *Pantalone's Pockets*, and *Pantalone Plots Again*. He lives in Salt Lake City with his wife and three adorable children.

Intro

(CLAY enters and addresses the audience.)

CLAY: *(with great enthusiasm)* Good ev'nin' ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Epic: a Wild West Adventure! Tonight you'll see everything a great Western needs – a hero, a villain, trains, bandits, and if you play your cards right, a happy ending. The best thing is that you'll be part of the show! That's right – the show depends on your choices! When we come to a fork in the road, we'll take a quick poll of you good folks to send us down the best path, so keep your eyes open for clues so you don't lead us astray. Now we gotta set down some rules before we get started up proper. We gotta make sure you sound like real live Westerners when you vote for something. If you wanna vote "yes", holler out "Yee-ha!" If you wanna vote "no", holler out "Ah, shoot!" Let's try it right now. Who wants to see a happy ending tonight?

(after response)

You were supposed to say "Yee-ha!" Let's try it again. Who wants to see a happy ending tonight? That's better (or "We're in for some trouble.") Now let's swing it the other way. Who wants to see me dress up in a tutu and dance the can-can?

(after response)

You were supposed to say "Ah, shoot!" Let's try a different one. Who wants to come up here, dress in a tutu and dance the can-can themselves? Glad to see we've got all this under control.

The name's Josiah Clay. Good to meet'cha. The Wild West is a rough and tumble place and my game is keepin' law and order at the top of the totem pole. Not to toot my own horn, but I'm pretty well known out around these parts. I was a Deputy in Hooper, an Assistant Deputy in Richfield, Second Hand to the Deputy's Assistant in Parowan, and Third Assistant Helper to the Under Secretary for Law and Order at the Ladies' Society for Domestic Justice in East Wendover.

(beat)

Yep. It's actually not that impressive. But I'm fixin' to land a genuine Sherriff's position and today is my interview to be one in Weston City!

(WESTON and PAXTON enter.)

WESTON: Pleased to meet you, Clay! I'm Doctor Weston.

CLAY: *(shaking hands)* Howdy Doctor. Are you any relation to Mayor Weston?

WESTON: I guess you could say that. I'm Mayor Weston too.

CLAY: Well, I'll be.

WESTON: It's a big job, but somebody's gotta do it.

CLAY: Are you the preacher too?

WESTON: Nope. That's what my man Paxton is here for.

PAXTON: *(shaking hands)* Tobias Paxton. Pleased to meet'cha.

CLAY: I guess you didn't want *that* job for yourself.

WESTON: No way! Couldn't stand being a preacher! All that religion! No offense, Tobias.

PAXTON: None taken. Sometimes I can't stand religion myself.

WESTON: And I've never tried my hand at bein' the Sherriff either. That's why we're lookin' to you, Clay. We need someone to keep things in order here.

CLAY: Is there a lot of crime in Weston City?

WESTON: Not really. And we're lookin' to keep it that way. We're a tiny little town, Clay. What you see here is what you get. There's the City Hall, the bank, the church, we're building a school-house over there...

PAXTON: (*fiery*) And that den of iniquity on Main Street.

CLAY: A den of iniquity?

WESTON: Yes; The Fuchsia Garter.

CLAY: The Fuchsia Garter?

WESTON: It's a Saloon.

PAXTON: And a house of ill-repute!

CLAY: And who runs that establishment, Mayor?

WESTON: The owner's named Vera Mae.

PAXTON: (*fiery-er*) She's a devil, Clay. A devil, I tell ya! And she charges way too much for a shot of whiskey!

WESTON: Speaking of whiskey, let's go grab one.

CLAY: Where should we go?

PAXTON: (*pleasant*) The Fuchsia Garter, of course. It's the only place in town.

At the Fuchsia Garter

(While WESTON and PAXTON set up some chairs, CLAY talks to the audience again.)

CLAY: Mayor Weston was right. There literally were only four places in town besides the beginnings of a school: the City Hall, the bank, the church, and the Fuchsia Garter. The Garter was a typical saloon, but Vera Mae, was NOT a typical proprietor.

(He sits as VERA MAE enters.)

VERA MAE: That's for darn tootin'. There's no one like me anywhere.

(To the men who are sitting around an imaginary saloon table)

What'll it be, boys?

PAXTON: That depends. Have you lowered the price of your whiskey shots?

VERA MAE: No sir, pastor.

PAXTON: Shoot. I'll have an ice water then.

VERA MAE: Cheap *and* hypocritical. That must explain the attendance at your Sunday services, Pastor Paxton.

WESTON: I'll pay your shot, Paxton. One for me too, Vera Mae.

PAXTON: Could you clean up my tab while you're at it?

(WESTON glares at PAXTON.)

VERA MAE: (*to Clay*) And for you stranger?

CLAY: Nothin' for me. I like to keep my head clear.

VERA MAE: Suit yourself. But watch out for these boys, stranger. They haunt some of the roughest places around Weston City.

(She goes to get the drinks.)

WESTON: Clay, I like you so far. You've been around the block a couple times. You've got your head on straight. I'd like to offer you the Sherriff's position.

CLAY: Thank you, sir!

WESTON: I say I'd like to. But you gotta prove yourself first. There's one more place in Weston City I didn't mention to you. It's an orphanage way out on the outskirts of town. It's in pretty bad need of some extra funds.

CLAY: What seems to be the problem?

WESTON: *(uncomfortable)* Well, I can't rightly say.

CLAY: Whaddya mean?

WESTON: Well, I've never exactly been to the orphanage.

CLAY: *(dumbfounded)* What? Pastor, what's it like out there?

PAXTON: Oh, I hear it's awful.

CLAY: I guess you've never been there either?

PAXTON: It's full of orphans! So depressing!

CLAY: Who runs this orphanage?

WESTON: I bet the audience will end up asking that same question later in the play.

(for the audience's benefit)

But I'll tell you all right now, NO ONE KNOWS WHO RUNS THE ORPHANAGE! It's some out-of-towner who prefers to do all his business anonymously.

CLAY: Does that strike you as odd, Mayor?

WESTON: *(matter of fact)* Nope.

PAXTON: *(matter of fact)* Me either.

CLAY: *(plenty suspicious)* Okaaaaaay...

WESTON: *(moving on)* The Methodist Ladies' Aid Society of Boston has pledged ten thousand dollars to help them out, but we need to make sure that money gets here safely. That's where you come in.

CLAY: You need someone to guard that money on the trip from Boston.

WESTON: Exactly. I knew you were bright, son. We can't afford to lose that money. The town wouldn't stand for it.

PAXTON: Especially not in an election year, Mayor.

WESTON: *(embarrassed)* Well, I wasn't thinking of that specifically, Paxton.

PAXTON: Of course you were, Mayor. That's all you've been talking about for the last three months.

WESTON: Thanks, Paxton. Let's not talk about that –

PAXTON: That's why you were gonna finally hire a Sherriff.

WESTON: I never said that, Paxton.

PAXTON: Of course you did. You said it right before Clay rode up.

WESTON: Paxton!

(VERA MAE returns with the drinks.)

VERA MAE: Here's your whiskeys, boys. I threw in a sarsaparilla for you, stranger. See you around.

WESTON: Well, Clay. What do you say?

CLAY: I can see there's a bit of business that needs cleanin' up in Weston City, Mayor. And I think I'm the man to do it.

WESTON: *(shaking on the agreement)* Get that money safely from Boston and you've got the job!

(WESTON and PAXTON clean up the chairs and CLAY addresses the audience again.)

CLAY: Mayor Weston told me that Pastor Paxton would travel with me as part of the job. I almost quit right then. But we hopped the train for Boston and our journey was started.

VERA MAE: *(also to the audience)* They weren't the only two on their way to Boston. It's hard for me not to overhear the conversations that happen in the Fuchsia Garter and Mayor Weston isn't the only one with an interest in what happens to ten thousand dollars headed for Weston City. I caught the very next train to keep an eye on that money.

CLAY: Now it's your first chance to pipe up. We need two posses; one for me – the hero.

VERA MAE: And one for me –

CLAY: The villain.

VERA MAE: So quick to jump to conclusions!

CLAY: Oh, sure! Stealing from orphans is for saints in church!

VERA MAE: The point is that we need a posse for Clay and a posse for me. One lucky audience member will choose for all of you who gets the best and who has the rest.

(VERA MAE chooses an audience member from the center front of the house.)

Whose posse do you want to be in?

(after response)

Everyone from this person over to the right side *(or left side, which ever works best)* is in (AUDIENCE RESPONSE)'s posse! From here over to the other side is in (OTHER PERSON)'s posse.

CLAY: Now that you all are in posses, time to protect your leader, just in case we run into trouble later. We have four brilliant choices for self-defense:

(PAXTON and SARAH hold them up)

a horseshoe, a lace fan, a bullwhip, and a dozen hard-boiled egg. My posse, say "yee-hah" or "aw shoot," Horse shoe? Lace fan? Bullwhip? Hard-boiled eggs?

(after the audience choice, he takes his weapon.)

VERA MAE: Alright, my posse; of the three remaining objects, which do you choose? Say "yee-hah" or "aw shoot." *(leads choice and takes her weapon.)*

(A train-whistle blows.)

PAXTON: *(to audience)* The train ride to Boston was uneventful. So we're going to skip it entirely. You're welcome. Let's move on to the Methodist Ladies' Society and their chairwoman, Mrs. Maynard.

In Boston

(CLAY has picked up a suitcase. He and PAXTON [who carries a bible] meet MRS. MAYNARD, an elderly lady.)

MAYNARD: *(obviously enchanted with the men)* Good afternoon, gentlemen. I see Weston City sent its two handsomest men to receive our little donation.

PAXTON: Thank you Mrs. Maynard.

MAYNARD: No, thank you, you cute young thing.

PAXTON: I really don't know how to respond to that.

MAYNARD: You don't have to say anything, darling. Just stand there and look handsome.

PAXTON: *(really feeling the discomfort)* Clay, do you have anything to say? Anything at all? Please?

CLAY: Mrs. Maynard –

MAYNARD: *(eager)* Yes?

CLAY: Thank you so much for –

MAYNARD: *You* are certainly welcome, young man.

CLAY: That's right polite of you, Mrs. Maynard.

MAYNARD: *(pouring it on)* Please call me Sheila.

PAXTON: Not as easy as it looks, is it Clay?

CLAY: *(soldiering on)* Mrs. Maynard – Sheila – Weston City thanks you sincerely for your generous gift to the orphanage. Reverend Paxton and I are here to pick up the money and ensure its safe travel back to our town.

MAYNARD: It's our pleasure to assist a town with two such attractive representatives.

PAXTON: Can we just accept that compliment once and move on please?

CLAY: Where can we pick up the donation, Mrs. Maynard?

MAYNARD: Oh, I have it right here.

CLAY: Right here? A great big haul of cash at your own house?

MAYNARD: Don't be silly, you gorgeous young morsel.

PAXTON: *(retches)* Excuse me.

MAYNARD: I had a check drawn from our bank account to assure safe travel.

PAXTON: Excuse me, what?

MAYNARD: You didn't think we'd send ten thousand dollars in cash on a dangerous train ride across the bandit-filled open plains of the American West, did you?

CLAY: *(sheepish)* Actually, we thought that was the plan all along.

MAYNARD: Well, you can't have brains *and* looks.

CLAY: Why didn't you just send the check via post?

MAYNARD: That's a very good point.

(MAYNARD reaches into the bosom of her dress for the check.) Well, here it is, nonetheless.

PAXTON: *(ready to retch again)* You'll be in charge of carrying that piece of paper, Clay.

(MAYNARD hands it to CLAY.)

CLAY: I'll consider it an occupational hazard.

MAYNARD: It's been a pleasure to meet you boys. If you're ever in Boston again, look me up.

(She blows a kiss and exits.)

PAXTON: I feel like an idiot.

CLAY: Me too. But we'll escort this check like it was five hundred pounds of gold bullion.

(He opens his suitcase to put it away.)

PAXTON: What are you doing with the check, Clay?

CLAY: Stowin' it for safety.

PAXTON: We should put it in my bible.

CLAY: It'll be safer in here.

PAXTON: Where could be safer than inside a bible? Let's let the posse decide.

(to audience)

Clay's posse, should we let him put it in his suitcase where it can rattle around dangerously or enfold it carefully within the protective pages of the good book? Say "Yee-ha" for the suitcase. Say "Yee-ha" for the bible.

Check in the Suitcase

PAXTON: Well, you heathens, have it your way.

Clay, put it in your suitcase where any Tom, Dick, or Harry can lift it. I guess you don't want to land this Sherriff position after all.

Check in the Bible

PAXTON: Excellent choice, posse. A faithful lot like you will see this money safely to the orphanage. Clay, you'll get that Sherriff badge sure as shootin'.

CLAY: *(to Paxton)* Now that that's all cleared up, let's head to the train station and get this show on the road.

Train Station

(A train-whistle blows.)

(SARAH enters with a large stack of book in one hand and a suitcase identical to Clay's in the other. She and CLAY have a very near miss and she almost drops the stack.)

CLAY: Excuse me, miss.

SARAH: Of course.

(PAXTON runs into her and the books fly to the ground. PAXTON also drops his bible.)

CLAY: Paxton! Allow me to assist you, miss.

PAXTON: Yes, allow him. My back is killing me.

(CLAY and SARAH kneel down to collect her volumes. [If Check in Bible, CLAY picks up the bible.]

CLAY: *(friendly)* This is quite a load of books, Miss.

SARAH: *(curt)* Yes, it is.

CLAY: *(persevering)* By that I meant to start a conversation.

SARAH: That detail did not escape my awareness.

CLAY: Let me try another tack – Why do you have so many books, Miss?

SARAH: I'm a school teacher, Mr. –

CLAY: Clay. Josiah Clay. Can't say as I've ever spent much time in schools, Miss –

SARAH: I can see that right away, Mr. Clay. Good day.

(She starts out.)

CLAY: May I call on you?

SARAH: No. *(She's gone.)*

PAXTON: Very nice, Clay. Couldn't have done that better myself.

CLAY: I'll be right back, Paxton.

(If Check in Bible, he gives PAXTON a bible he picked up from SARAH's stack of books. He exits after her, taking his suitcase and Paxton's bible with him.)

(VERA MAE enters with a suitcase identical to Clay's and Sarah's.)

PAXTON: Vera Mae!

(VERA MAE turns around and starts to flee.)

PAXTON: Get back here, Vera Mae! What are you doing here?

VERA MAE: *(caught)* Having a nice time until just a minute ago.

PAXTON: Are you following us?

VERA MAE: I have much, much better things to do than follow a cranky old man like you, Tobias.

PAXTON: You eavesdropped on our meeting with the new sheriff, didn't you?

VERA MAE: A lady never tells.

PAXTON: That wouldn't have any effect on you, Vera Mae. Now tell me right now, what are you doing here in Boston?

VERA MAE: None of your business.

PAXTON: It wouldn't happen to involve stealing \$10,000 intended to help Weston City's orphans, would it? You fess up right now or turn you over to the police!

VERA MAE: *(to posse)* Alright posse, help me out. I need an excuse to get Penny-Pinchin' Paxton off my tail. What should I tell him? Shout out anything!

(VERA MAE gets an excuse from the crowd.)

VERA MAE: *(to Paxton)* Well, I'll tell you what Tobias, I'm in Boston because _____. Is that good enough for you?

PAXTON: I've never heard such a ridiculous excuse in my life! I'm calling the police.

VERA MAE: *(to posse)* Give me another!

(after responses, to Paxton)

I didn't want to tell you before, but _____.

(she gives Paxton the excuse.)

PAXTON: *(skeptical)* Well, I guess that's good enough. But I'd better not see you following us around again!

(MAYNARD enters.)

MAYNARD: *(to audience)* What's a Western without a romance?

VERA MAE: Better than a Western with a romance.

MAYNARD: Shame on you Vera Mae! Everybody loves a romance.

(CLAY and SARAH re-enter.)

MAYNARD: Here are four characters who might end up with a romantic partner before our play is finished.

The Sherriff, the Preacher, the Madam, and the Schoolteacher. Text what couple you think will end up together to _____.

(Texting is an effective method, but other methods are viable too, depending on your needs)

If you're right, you'll be entered to win a _____.

(VERA MAE, SARAH and MAYNARD exit.)

CLAY: *(coming back from trying to chase SARAH)* That young lady sure can walk fast. She lost me in the crowd.

PAXTON: Clay, you'll never believe who was just here – Vera Mae! From the Fuchsia Garter!

CLAY: *(distracted)* You don't say.

PAXTON: Yes, I do say. She's up to something, Clay. You guard that money. Are you listening to me?

CLAY: Yes. Schoolteacher.

PAXTON: Oh shoot! While you drool over a lady you just met one minute ago, I'll go over to Rio Grande Railroad and buy two tickets to Weston City.

CLAY: Rio Grande Railroad! Are you out of your mind, Paxton? Their line goes through bandit territory! We should go with Central Western. It's the safest.

PAXTON: But it's twice the price!

CLAY: And half the chance of bandits!

PAXTON: But it's TWICE THE PRICE!

CLAY: Let's put it to the posse.

PAXTON: *(to posse)* Do you want to save money on Rio Grande?

CLAY: *(to posse)* With the bandits? Or be safe on Central Western? "Yee-ha" for safe.

PAXTON: *(to posse)* "Yee-ha" for cheap.

*(For **Safe** turn to page 10.)*

*(For **Cheap** turn to page 11.)*

Safe

(CONDUCTOR enters.)

CONDUCTOR: All aboard!

(CONDUCTOR, SARAH, and VERA MAE set up chairs like a train car. VERA MAE sits far away from the group, hiding behind a newspaper. She and SARAH have their identical suitcases.)

PAXTON: *(to audience)* Well great thinkin', posse. Let's throw our money down the privy for a "sense of security," so-called.

CLAY: *(to audience)* Well done. Really.

CONDUCTOR: All aboard Central Western line to Middletown.

CLAY: To Middletown? We want to get to Weston City.

CONDUCTOR: Middletown is the end of the line. There's a stagecoach to Weston City.

CLAY: A stagecoach through bandit territory?

PAXTON: Now wait a minute! We paid twice the price for half the chance of bandits.

CONDUCTOR: Exactly. Look at your ticket.

(CLAY and PAXTON pull out their tickets.)

CONDUCTOR: On the back it says, "We'll take you half way, then you'll chance the bandits." That's our motto.

(PAXTON glares at Clay.)

*(Turn to **Train Ride** on page 15.)*

Cheap

(CONDUCTOR enters.)

CONDUCTOR: All aboard!

(CONDUCTOR, SARAH, and VERA MAE set up chairs like a train car. VERA MAE sits far away from the group, hiding behind a newspaper. She and SARAH have their identical suitcases.)

CLAY: *(to audience)* Well great thinkin', posse. Let's save a few bucks and see if we get there alive!

PAXTON: *(to audience)* Well done. Really.

CONDUCTOR: All aboard Rio Grande line to Middletown.

CLAY: To Middletown? We want to get to Weston City.

CONDUCTOR: Middletown is the end of the line. There's a stagecoach to Weston City.

CLAY: A stagecoach through bandit territory?

CONDUCTOR: Think of it as an adventure.

CLAY: I'm paying for safety, not adventure.

CONDUCTOR: Actually you're not. Look at your ticket.

(CLAY and PAXTON pull out their tickets.)

CONDUCTOR: On the back it says, "Why pay for safety when you can have an adventure?" That's our motto.

(CLAY glares at Paxton.)

*(Turn to **Train Ride** on page 15.)*

Train Ride

(CLAY and PAXTON board the train.)

PAXTON: Look, Clay. It's your schoolteacher friend.

CLAY: So it is.

PAXTON: Don't blow it this time.

CLAY: Easier said than done.

SARAH: I can hear you, Mr. Clay.

PAXTON: That was embarrassing.

(He sits.)

CLAY: Good day, Miss.

SARAH: *(who is struggling with her suitcase on her lap)* You could call it that.

CLAY: I see you're struggling with that suitcase, Miss.

SARAH: Yes.

CLAY: Can I help you with it?

(Sits by her and sets down his suitcase next to hers.)

SARAH: *(direct)* Why are you interested in helping me, Mr. Clay?

CLAY: I kinda thought the answer to that question would be pretty obvious.

SARAH: I am not interested in your kind of man, Mr. Clay.

CLAY: That's not fair, miss. You don't know what kind of man I am.

SARAH: *(indignant)* I think I do. You're the kind of man who thinks that just because I have a fair face and you are tall and handsome that I will show some sort of romantic inclination toward you, even before I know the first thing about who you are, where you come from, or what you think. And THAT, Mr. Clay, is what's not fair.

CLAY: *(sincere)* That was probably the most interesting thing I've heard in my life. Did you read that in one of your books?

SARAH: No. Nobody writes that kind of thing in books.

CLAY: Then you should, miss.

SARAH: You needn't mock me, Mr. Clay.

CLAY: No, I mean it. You know why I'm interested in you, miss? It's that stack of books you had. I guess they're in your suitcase now?

(SARAH nods.)

I've never seen a lady who wants to read books like that before – like she wants to drink water. I think that's real special, and I'd like to know a lady like that, Miss...

SARAH: *(conceding a point)* Groves. Miss Sarah Groves.

CLAY: *(offering his hand, which SARAH shakes)* Pleased to finally meet you Miss Groves.

(CONDUCTOR enters the train car.)

CONDUCTOR: Tickets, please!

(He checks Paxton's ticket.)

SARAH: Now tell me, Mr. Clay –

CLAY: Josiah.

SARAH: What's a Westerner like you doing in Boston?

CLAY: I'm supervising transportation of a financial asset for a charitable organization.

SARAH: That's high-falutin' talk for someone who hasn't spent much time in schools, Mr. Clay.

CLAY: You must be rubbing off on me.

(CONDUCTOR checks CLAY and SARAH's tickets.)

SARAH: Charity. Is that your line of work?

CLAY: Not really. But for now, I guess you could say so. I'm helping out an orphanage.

SARAH: Very Christian.

CLAY: It's not as Christian as it sounds.

SARAH: I guess this financial asset is in your suitcase there.

CLAY: I don't think I ought to say, Miss Sarah.

(CONDUCTOR gets to VERA MAE to check her ticket.)

VERA MAE: Can I ask you a little favor? *(She offers him a ten-dollar bill.)*

CONDUCTOR: *(taking the bill)* For that much you can ask me a big favor.

(VERA MAE whispers instructions in the Conductor's ear.)

CLAY: Miss Sarah, what's takin' a Boston schoolteacher like you out to the West?

SARAH: I'm starting a position in a new school.

CLAY: Oh really? What town?

(CONDUCTOR has crossed over with VERA MAE's suitcase and clumsily trips over the two other suitcases.)

CONDUCTOR: Oh, I am so sorry! What a clumsy oaf I am.

(He picks up SARAH's suitcase, leaving VERA MAE's behind.)

Don't mind me. Tickets please!

(HE crosses back to VERA MAE, gives her the suitcase. VERA MAE gives him another ten-dollar bill. HE leaves the train car.)

SARAH: What was that all about?

CLAY: I don't know, but it was terribly suspicious.

PAXTON: *(approaching CLAY)* Did that strike you as odd, Clay?

(VERA MAE, sensing danger, gets up and follows the CONDUCTOR out, taking the suitcase with her.)

PAXTON: *(seeing her go)* It's Vera Mae!

CLAY: Where?

PAXTON: She just left the train car!

CLAY: Are you sure it was Vera Mae?

PAXTON: Yes, I'm sure! Go get her, Sherriff!

SARAH: Sherriff?

CLAY: Almost. I'll explain later.

(Starts off where Vera Mae left.)

*(The train screeches to a halt, throwing **CLAY** and **PAXTON** off balance.)*

SARAH: What on earth is going on here?

*(The **BANDITS** enter, holding up their guns.)*

BANDIT 1: This here train's getting' robbed, that's what!

*(If you took **Cheap**,)*

CLAY: Paxton! I told you this would happen!

PAXTON: Let's just think of it as an adventure.

*(If you took **Safe**,)*

PAXTON: What?! We paid twice the price!

CLAY: Half the chance does mean 50/50.

BANDIT 2: *(to Paxton)* Hand over yer money!

PAXTON: But I'm a pastor.

BANDIT 2: Good. Then I know you came by it honest.

CLAY: You don't know this pastor.

SARAH: Mr. Clay, as a fellow Christian, I want to make sure you finish your journey.

CLAY: What do you mean?

SARAH: *(steps to the Bandits)* My father is Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts. Let everyone else on this train go and take me for ransom. You'll get more for me than all these people have put together.

CLAY: Miss Sarah!

BANDIT 1: Is this some kinda trick, little missy?

SARAH: A trick from little old me?

BANDIT 2: She doesn't look smart enough for tricks, boss.

BANDIT 1: Alright, you. Come with me.

SARAH: Just let me take my suitcase. It has my books. *(She picks up Clay's suitcase.)*

BANDIT 1: Come on, missy. Yer pappy had better pay up a pretty penny fer you!

*(The **BANDITS** whisk Sarah off the train.)*

CLAY: Miss Sarah!

PAXTON: *(sarcastic)* There, there, Clay. I know you knew that schoolteacher for a really long time, but you'll get over her someday. Now let's get that check to Weston City.

CLAY: We're going after her, Paxton.

PAXTON: I knew you'd say that. Clay, you can go after her if you want. I'm going to Weston City.

If Check in Suitcase

CLAY: Fine. Then take the check with you. It's still in my suitcase.

(PAXTON opens up the suitcase.)

CLAY: What are you doing?

PAXTON: Checking, Clay.

(He pulls out Vera Mae's underwear.)

So it's in your suitcase, huh? And where do you think that is?

CLAY: Miss Sarah!

PAXTON: Or Vera Mae.

CLAY/PAXTON: We'll split up!

(CLAY exits. PAXTON packs up the suitcase. As he starts to exit, VERA MAE enters with Sarah's suitcase, sees Paxton and starts to exit.)

If Check in Bible

CLAY: Fine. Then take the check with you. It's in your bible, which I put in my suitcase.

PAXTON: *(holding up the bible)* Then whose bible is this?

CLAY: It's Miss Sarah's. I swapped it when we first ran into her.

(PAXTON opens up the suitcase.)

CLAY: What are you doing?

PAXTON: Checking, Clay.

(He pulls out Vera Mae's underwear.)

So that bible is in your suitcase, huh? And where do you think that is?

CLAY: Miss Sarah!

PAXTON: Or Vera Mae.

CLAY/PAXTON: We'll split up!

(CLAY takes Sarah's bible and exits. PAXTON packs up the suitcase. As he starts to exit, VERA MAE enters with Sarah's suitcase, sees Paxton and starts to exit.)

PAXTON: Vera Mae!

VERA MAE: *(pretending nothing is wrong)* Well howdy, preacher.

PAXTON: Don't you "Well howdy" me, Vera Mae! I want that suitcase.

VERA MAE: Tobias, let me explain. That check –

PAXTON: You don't have to explain stealing from orphans, Vera Mae!

(PAXTON grabs the case and opens it. He pulls out a book.)

VERA MAE: That conductor!

PAXTON: Do you know what this means?

VERA MAE/PAXTON: The bandits!

(VERA MAE and PAXTON run offstage.)

Backstories

(BANDIT 1 enters.)

BANDIT 1 – *(to audience)* Ladies and Gents, you’ve been runnin’ with our heroes for a while. Now you can have a chance to learn a little bit more about one of ‘em.

(CLAY, SARAH, and PAXTON come out front.)

BANDIT 1: You get to choose. Both posses, do you wanna hear the backstory for Josiah Clay? For Sarah Groves? For Tobias Paxton? Or for Vera Mae?

(For CLAY, turn to page 17.)

(For SARAH, turn to page 18.)

(For PAXTON, turn to page 19.)

(For VERA MAE, turn to page 20.)

Clay

BANDIT 1: Well, Clay. Look's like yer up. What can you tell everyone out there?

CLAY: I like spaghetti and meatballs.

BANDIT 1: Come on now, Clay. Don't bore them good folks. Tell 'em something interesting.

CLAY: Don't you think spaghetti and meatballs are interesting?

BANDIT 1: There's gotta be some kind of secret you're keeping somewhere, Clay.

CLAY: I'm sorry to be a disappointment, but my life's an open book.

BANDIT 1: How about yer family Clay?

CLAY: (*non-chalant*) Oh, my family. There's that, I guess. Now that you mention it, I guess I could tell you that my family is a little peculiar. They're in a line of work I don't exactly think much of. In fact, my pappy is part of the Hole in the Wall Gang. That's all.

PAXTON: (*shocked*) The Hole in the Wall Gang!

CLAY: Yeah.

PAXTON: But they're some of the worst outlaws in the whole West!

BANDIT 1: I put my application in with them every spring. Never even got an interview! But I did get wait-listed once.

PAXTON: Good for you.

CLAY: (*emphatic*) I hate bandits! They're scoundrels who prey on the weak. As soon as I could get out of there, I left my pappy and never looked back. Now I'm a lawman. My whole life is about getting rid of people like my family. Is that a good enough secret for you?

BANDIT 1: Yessir. It is.

(*to the audience*)

Pretty dramatic, ain't it? Now let's get back to the story.

(*Turn to page 21 for **Bandits.***)

Sarah

BANDIT 1: Well, Miss Sarah. The audience picked you. What can you tell everyone out there?

SARAH: I don't really like to share personal matters.

CLAY: I noticed that.

SARAH: It's a matter of personal principle.

CLAY: Your personal principles are pretty personal things to share, Miss Groves.

BANDIT 1: That's real cute you two. But I happen to know exactly how we can get some personal matters from Miss Sarah Groves.

(He pulls out SARAH's diary.)

SARAH: My diary! Where did you get that?

BANDIT 1: The prop table.

SARAH: That's not fair!

BANDIT 1: Life's full of disappointments, Missy.

SARAH: Fine. I will tell you something. I lied.

PAXTON: What?

SARAH: Just now, when I said I my father is Senator Dawes of Massachusetts.

PAXTON: He's not your father?

SARAH: No. My father is Senator Dawes' gardener. I said he was my father because I want to see that money get where it's supposed to get. When those bandits find out who I really am, they'll probably kill me, but it doesn't matter. If I can do something to help out someone really, truly in need; that's more important than who my father is. It's more important than my own life.

(Wiping tears from her eyes.)

There. That's why I don't like to share personal matters. They hurt.

CLAY: *(grabs the diary from Bandit 1 and takes it to Sarah)* Here you are Miss Sarah.

BANDIT 1: Let's get back to the story. I'll pretend I didn't hear the part about you not bein' a Senator's daughter.

(Turn to page 21 for Bandits.)

Paxton

BANDIT 1: Well Paxton. This audience chose you.

PAXTON: Sure did.

BANDIT 1: No accountin' for taste, I guess. What can you tell 'em?

PAXTON: I can touch my nose with my tongue.

BANDIT 1: I was thinking somethin' more personal than that.

PAXTON: I get really bad eczema on my –

CLAY: Don't finish that sentence!

(to BANDIT 1)

Come on, man! Use your brain. Don't ask Tobias Paxton for personal information unless you're really prepared for an unpleasant surprise.

BANDIT 1: Alright, yer so smart? You try it!

CLAY: Tell these good folk why you joined the ministry.

PAXTON: Oh that's easy! When I was a kid, our family was dirt poor. Actually we couldn't even afford dirt. But the church in town always brought us something good to eat and clothes to wear.

CLAY: So you saw their kind works and wanted to pay them back with your service.

PAXTON: Heck no! I thought that if church people had enough to give away, they must be rich! So I became a church person to get rich. Hasn't really worked out yet, but I keep on hoping.

CLAY: *(to audience)* Well. You asked for it.

BANDIT 1: Let's get back to the story.

*(Turn to page 21 for **Bandits.**)*

Vera Mae

BANDIT 1: Well, Vera Mae. Looks like you're up. Vera? Where are you?

VERA: *(offstage)* I'm doing a costume change! I have to be a bandit in the next scene.

BANDIT 1: Well, what am I supposed to do? The audience voted for you!

PAXTON: I'll handle this. I know Vera longer than anyone, I guess.

BANDIT 1: Be my guest.

PAXTON: *(to audience)* I'll tell you the history of the Fuchsia Garter. When Vera Mae came to Weston City, there wasn't a saloon within a hundred miles, but she just couldn't leave well enough alone. She had to set up shop with her wicked ways instead of farming the dirt like a decent citizen.

BANDIT 1: You don't do no farming, Paxton.

PAXTON: That's different. I'm a preacher. I don't have to work like a decent citizen. Vera Mae built up a saloon straightway. And what do you think she called it?

BANDIT 1: *(leads the audience)* The Fuchsia Garter!

PAXTON: No! It was the Red Garter. But it burned down. So she built another. And what do you think she called that one?

BANDIT 1: *(leads the audience)* The Fuchsia Garter!

PAXTON: No! She called that one the Turquoise Garter. And then that one burned down too.

CLAY: What terrible luck!

PAXTON: Something like that. Then she finally built the Fuchsia Garter.

CLAY: You gotta give her points for persistence.

PAXTON: Yeah, I guess. I'd have given up after the first one.

BANDIT 1: Well that was really useful information. Let's get back to the story.

*(Turn to page 21 for **Bandits**.)*

Bandits

(The sound of horses approaches, then stop. The BANDITS bring SARAH onstage.)

BANDIT 1: Alright little missy. No funny business. Give us our ransom!

SARAH: *(cool)* You'll have to write to my father for it.

BANDIT 1: WHAT?! Don't you have a ransom with you?

SARAH: Of course I don't.

BANDIT 1: What's in that suitcase of your'n then?

SARAH: Only books.

BANDIT 1: No ransom!? Then you lied to us!

SARAH: I don't think you quite understand the concept of a ransom.

BANDIT 1: Of course I do! It's a lot of money!

(to Bandit 2)

I'm right, right? It's a lot of money, right?

BANDIT 2: *(to Sarah)* Excuse us for just a minute. We need a word alone.

(The BANDITS move to one side.)

SARAH: *(to audience)* I thought I might die out here. But I don't think it will be too hard to escape from these two.

BANDIT 1: What?! Why didn't you tell me?

BANDIT 2: Quiet down Eustace!

SARAH: *(to audience)* Yes. Not hard at all. But I need some help. I plan to get my hands on their guns and then make a break on one of their horses. But I need to distract them. Both posses, help me decide – should I distract them with riddles or should I bore them to sleep with a recitation of sonnets?

(after response)

Good thinking, posses. Let's get started.

(For Riddle, turn to page 22.)

(For Sonnet, turn to page 24.)

Riddle

(The BANDITS return.)

BANDIT 2 – We’ve had a little discussion and Eustace has something to say to you. Go ahead, Eustace.

BANDIT 1 – I don’t wanna.

SARAH – Go on, Eustace. Don’t be shy.

BANDIT 1 – Oh alright! I’m sorry I made a bargain with you when I didn’t understand the nature of the terms and agreements.

BANDIT 2 – What else, Eustace?

BANDIT 1 – It was very unprofessional of me.

BANDIT 2 – Very good. That was a real step forward fer you.

SARAH – I’m proud of you, Eustace.

BANDIT 1 – Thanks. I actually do feel better.

BANDIT 2 – I told you so.

BANDIT 1 – Now let’s get down to business. I want a ransom!

SARAH – I think that’s fair. But first a little intellectual stimulation.

BANDIT 2 – Stimulation? What in tarnation are you talkin’ about?

BANDIT 1 – Clarabelle, don’t be rude. After our little misunderstanding, it’s the least we can do fer her. She’s been so polite about it all.

BANDIT 2 – Well fine, but only a little. I hate stimulation.

SARAH – Thank you Clarabelle. I have a little riddle for you.

BANDIT 2 – Are you trying to pull something fancy, missy?

BANDIT 1 – Clarabelle! For Pete’s sake! How many times do I have to tell you not to be rude? *(to Sarah)*
Sorry miss. Please continue.

(SARAH sits gracefully. BANDIT 1 sits near her.)

SARAH: A riddle: What does a man do standing up, a woman do sitting down, and a dog do on three legs?

BANDIT 1: Shucks. I don’t know.

SARAH: Shake hands.

(Extends her hand.)

BANDIT 1: Ha, that’s a good one!

(Goes to shake her hand.)

SARAH: Ah-ah, Eustace. As a gentleman, you must stand to shake my hand.

BANDIT 1: Oh? Oh! Right y’are, miss! Gosh, she’s funny and proper all at the same!

(He stands as he speaks, giving SARAH the opportunity to lift the gun from his hip before they shake hands.)

SARAH: I have more, but why don’t we up the stakes? If you can’t answer a riddle, you have to set me free.

BANDIT 1: Oh, of course, that's a deal. What your next riddle, little lady?

SARAH: My riddle is, Eustace, where is your gun?

(BANDIT 1 fumbles, looking for the gun.)

BANDIT 1: Hey, what—

(SARAH stands and levels the gun at them.)

BANDIT 2: I knew you was pulling something fancy! *(Levels her own gun.)*

SARAH: You didn't have an answer to my riddle. By our agreement, you have to let me go.

BANDIT 1: Well, I mean, I s'pose *technically*—

BANDIT 2: Nothing doing, missy. Now drop the gun before somebody gets hurt.

BANDIT 1: Clarabelle, really, she did win the—

(CLAY rushes onstage loudly.)

CLAY: Miss Sarah! Miss Sarah! Are you alright?

SARAH: Josiah, what are you doing here?

CLAY: I came to rescue you!

BANDIT 2: You can rescue her by confiscating that gun and sliding it back over here.

CLAY: *(suspicious)* Wait a minute. A stand off? and the desperate criminal hasn't shot yet?

(A pause, then CLAY approaches Bandit 2.)

BANDIT 2: Stay back, mister . . . I'm warning you once, stay—!

(CLAY snatches the gun, points it upward, and pulls the trigger. It clicks.)

BANDIT 1: You didn't load it?

BANDIT 2: You took my last two rounds!

BANDIT 1: *(groaning)* I think we got stimulated, Clarabelle.

(Turn to page 26, "The Cavalry Arrives.")

Sonnet

(The BANDITS return.)

BANDIT 2: We've had a little discussion and Eustace has something to say to you. Go ahead, Eustace.

BANDIT 1: I don't wanna.

SARAH: Go on, Eustace. Don't be shy.

BANDIT 1: Oh alright! I'm sorry I made a bargain with you when I didn't understand the nature of the terms and agreements.

BANDIT 2: What else, Eustace?

BANDIT 1: It was very unprofessional of me.

BANDIT 2: Very good. That was a real step forward for you.

SARAH: I'm proud of you, Eustace.

BANDIT 1: Thanks. I actually do feel better.

BANDIT 2: I told you so.

BANDIT 1: Now let's get down to business. I want a ransom!

SARAH: I think that's fair. But first a little culture.

BANDIT 2: Culture? What in tarnation are you talkin' about?

BANDIT 1: Clarabelle, don't be rude. After our little misunderstanding, it's the least we can do for her. She's been so polite about it all.

BANDIT 2: Well fine, but only a little. I hate culture.

SARAH: Thank you Clarabelle. I have a few sonnets for you. I think you should get very comfortable.

(BANDIT 1 sits down.)

A relaxed mind and body is the best way to enjoy poetry. Maybe you should close your eyes as well.

BANDIT 2: Are you trying to pull something fancy, missy?

BANDIT 1: Clarabelle! For Pete's sake! How many times do I have to tell you not to be rude?

(BANDIT 2 reluctantly sits.)

Sorry miss. Please continue.

SARAH:

I met a man as handsome as the sun,
With golden chestnut locks and starry eyes.
His form was bettered by a sable gun,
Then strapped beside his thick and manly thighs.
His nose was long and aquiline as if
By stretching past his cream and cherry cheek
It gained the ripe ability to sniff
Debauchery and criminal deceit.

For gorgeous though he was to woman's sight,
His greatest trait as yet—he said to me—
Has been that keeping law is his delight,
And catching roguish crooks his jollity.
And yet for all his looks and claimed joy,
So far, I've seen an impish, wimp-ish boy.¹

*(During the recitation, the **BANDITS** fall fast asleep, snoring loudly. **SARAH** sneaks over to them and lifts their guns off them. **CLAY** rushes onstage loudly.)*

CLAY: Miss Sarah! Miss Sarah! Are you alright?

SARAH: Shh!

*(The **BANDITS** wake up.)*

BANDIT 2 – I'm awake! I'm awake!

SARAH: Josiah, what are you doing here?

CLAY: I came to rescue you!

BANDIT 1: Now you'll be the one in need of rescuing, Sherriff!

(reaches for his gun)

Wait a minute...

SARAH: *(with both guns on the **BANDITS**)* Looking for these?

BANDIT 1: I think we got cultured, Clarabelle.

*(Turn to page 26, "**The Cavalry Arrives.**")*

¹ This Sonnet was written by the actor who premiered the role of Sarah, Elinor Smith. Her other contributions to the development of this script were manifold.

“The Cavalry Arrives”

SARAH: Go on, you varmints! Get outta here before I lose my patience! And leave a horse!

*(The **BANDITS** leave and the sound of a galloping horse carries them away. **SARAH** puts the guns in her pockets.)*

SARAH: Why did you come after me?

CLAY: I think the answer to that question is pretty obvious. Did they hurt you?

SARAH: No. Eustace and Clarabelle are pretty harmless.

CLAY: Did they open the suitcase?

SARAH: The suitcase?

CLAY: It got switched. That’s my suitcase.

SARAH: Then you came for your suitcase?

CLAY: Yes. I mean –

SARAH: *(hurt)* Well, now I know.

CLAY: Miss Sarah, there’s more to it than that.

*(**VERA MAE** and **PAXTON** rush on with the other two suitcases and put down their suitcases right next to Clay’s.)*

PAXTON: Clay! You got the suitcase!

CLAY: I did.

PAXTON: Where are the bandits?

CLAY: Miss Sarah took care of them.

VERA MAE: Very impressive.

SARAH: Thank you. Now I’ll be going.

PAXTON: What do you mean?

SARAH: I have a teaching job to get to.

(She picks up Clays’s suitcase from the group of cases right at her feet. She starts off.)

PAXTON: Clay, aren’t you gonna say nothin’?

CLAY: Miss Sarah, do you really want to go?

SARAH: Yes, Mr. Clay.

CLAY: Then I won’t stand in your way.

*(**SARAH** goes and the sound of galloping hooves carries her far away.)*

CLAY: *(concealing his heartbreak)* Let’s move out.

VERA MAE: *(draws her weapon)* That’s where we’re gonna run into some trouble, Sheriff.

PAXTON: Aw shoot. I knew she was trouble.

CLAY: *(draws his weapon)* You won’t get it without a fight, Vera Mae.

*(**WESTON** enters.)*

PERUSAL SCRIPT • Wild In The West by Anthony Buck

WESTON: *(to audience)* Posse! Time to cheer on your leader. When I point to you, make noise for your side. Whoever gives the most support will win this “armed conflict.” Go ahead Clay’s posse! Let’s hear you, Vera Mae’s posse!

(CLAY and VERA MAE “battle” with their weapons until WESTON announces a victor.)

(For Vera Mae wins, turn to page 28.)

(For Clay wins, turn to page 29.)

21 more pages including three different versions of a multi-level ending and a TWIST!