

BONANZA - A Chink in the Armor

Written by
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FADE IN:

BEN CARTWRIGHT is a self-made man in his late sixties, rough, wise and compassionate when occasions arise. Through the years he has built his sprawling Nevada ranch, The Ponderosa, into a semi-political kingdom of sorts, as he wields implicit power throughout the area.

His three sons and heirs apparent to the kingdom, each from different, now-deceased wives, are ADAM, HOSS and JOSEPH, aka "Little Joe". Adam is the thoughtful, elder son, given to decorum and mature decisions. Hoss is an innocent child in the frame of a huge, wild, but sensitive, man. Little Joe, or just plain Joe, the youngest Cartwright, can be supercilious and self-serving and seeks the company of women and/or adventure at every turn.

HOP SING, the loyal Chinese houseboy and cook, is as much Ben's son as any of the boys. Or so it seemed.

INT. PONDEROSA DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

Ben Cartwright and his three sons, Adam, Hoss and Joe, are at the dinner table expecting a typical Ponderosa type meal.

Hop Sing lays out the evening's fare before the men.

BEN

Hop Sing, I'd like an explanation for the poor excuse of a supper!

Hoss has also studied the meager assortment of eats.

HOSS

Yeah, Hop Sing. What's the idea serving this thin tea and rolled up weeds and all? You know we want steak and potatoes.

HOP SING

So sorry, Mr. Hoss. Hop Sing think you want try Chinese food. Eat steak every meal. Hop Sing tired steak.

Hoss's mouth drops wide open.

BEN

Now listen to me, Hop Sing. I've always been very tolerant with you, right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOP SING

What is this, tolerant?

HOSS

It means that we don't pop you the first time you screw up!

BEN

Shut up, Hoss! I'm doing the explaining.

HOSS

(beaten down)

Yes sir, Pa.

BEN

(to Hop Sing)

Now, like I was saying, we pay you good dough here. And we expect you to do what we say. If we want steak, you cook steak. If we want ham, you cook ham. You see how it works? We Cartwrights want - no need - our normal stuff: steak and potatoes. That's it. Simple, right? Now! Chop, chop!

HOP SING

But, Mr. Ben, Hop Sing think --

BEN

'Sing, you aren't being paid to think! You just keep the steak coming and we'll just forget this little incident ever happened. Okay?

HOP SING

Old Chinese saying. Man with bread is man with power. You take two way.
(brightening)

Okay, Mr. Ben. Tomorrow, I fix big plate spring roll. You like?

BEN

I'm not sure I got the old Chinese saying part, but, ah, no, I not like!
(resolute)

Now listen, you're treading on thin ice here, partner. What's gotten into you? You used to be so obedient. Have you been talking to Big Bob Nelson's cook? What's his name?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOP SING

Won Hung Lo. Won cook and he Jewelry King now. Both.

Ben spies Hop Sing's heretofore unnoticed jewelry.

BEN

Ah, Hop Sing? What is that around your neck? Is that a necklace?!

HOP SING

Hop Sing buy new chain and stone from Jewelry King today. You like?

BEN

As a matter of fact, that is a hefty jewel hanging there. Is that an emerald?

HOP SING

Not know. Just know sparkle. Won have many shiny stone.

BEN

Well, I don't know how a mere houseboy like him can pass out stuff like that. Unless ...

Ben rubs his chin as he ponders things; becomes trance-like.

BEN (cont'd)

(shaking his head,
back to the present)

Well, chain or no chain, emerald or no emerald, --

HOP SING

Beside having many jewel, Won says that variety spice of life. He make egg roll, won ton soup, fried rice. All those Chinese dish. All. He say Mr. Nelson and his boys enjoy. Ask for more.

Ben rares back and proudly proclaims to his sons.

BEN

Did you hear that, boys? Nelson's eating this weak, sissy food now. Even feeding it to his boys!

All yuk it up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

(with verbal
swagger)

Hey, Pa. Why don't we start a range war long about now? They'd be so weak from the food they've been eating that we could take them out and gain control over that disputed land you seem to be fond of.

Ben rubs his chin again and ponders Joe's idea.

BEN

Not bad, Joseph. Not bad. I've always kind of wanted to get access to the river on that property. I have even heard tell that there may be some valuable stuff buried in that area. What do you think, Adam?

ADAM

I probably shouldn't render an opinion Pa. I mean, what with me really being a non-cowboy type, soon-to-be-famous actor and all.

BEN

Non-cowboy type?

(realizing)

Oh, yeah. I forgot.

(turning to Hoss)

How about you, Hoss? You think we ought to head over there and whip their food-weakened butts?

HOSS

Dadburnit, Pa, I don't know. Can we discuss this later? With all this talk about food, I'm getting kind of hungry.

BEN

Me too! Good idea!

Ben snaps his fingers.

BEN (cont'd)

Hop Sing! Steaks all around. Chop, chop!

HOP SING

You say steak, now you say chop. Hop Sing confused. No matter. Hop Sing

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOP SING (cont'd)
think you like egg roll with spice
tea.

BEN
Hoss, take Hop Sing out and show him
how much we appreciate his cooking!
And take those weed things with you.

HOSS
But, Pa ...

BEN
Hoss!

HOSS
(resolved)
Come on, Hop Sing.

Hoss leads Hop Sing out of the front door, like an animal
being led to slaughter.

EXT. PONDEROSA FRONT PORTICO - NIGHT

HOP SING
Mr. Hoss. You like try egg roll?

Hop Sing has no more finished his question than Hoss is
devouring the Chinese food as if he was starving.

HOSS
Now, eh heh heh, Hop Sing, we're not
going to tell Pa about this, right?

HOP SING
Right on!

HOSS
Right on? What's that supposed to
mean?

HOP SING
Hop Sing have no idea. Read in Mr.
Ben's urban slang dictionary.

INT. PONDEROSA DEN -- NIGHT

A somewhat hungry Ben has settled into his easy chair by the
fire and is getting drowsy.

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CONTINUED:

BEN
 (nods off to sleep,
 mumbles)
 "treasure", ... "leprechauns", ...
 "jewels" ...

EXT. PONDEROSA LOWER FORTY -- DAY -- DREAM

Ben Cartwright is hiding behind a brush pile as a group of diminutive oriental men with shovels are digging large holes.

As he is watching the proceedings, one of the men comes around from behind and confronts him.

LEPRECHAUN
 (in an IRISH LILT
 spoken by Chinese
 man)
 Ah, top of morning to ya. Name,
 Paddie O'Nelson. Are ya here to see
 treasure, laddie?

Ben is startled and whips around, drawing his pistol.

LEPRECHAUN (cont'd)
 Oh surely you not shoot magic
 LEPRECHAUN.

Ben is confounded.

BEN
 Who are you people and what are you
 doing on the Ponderosa property?

LEPRECHAUN
 Land sacred. Many semolian involved.

BEN
 Semolian? What? What does that
 mean?

LEPRECHAUN
 Many jewel, many wampum. All here.
 You keep secret, else ...

The leprechaun makes a throat slicing gesture to Ben.

LEPRECHAUN (cont'd)
 Do you now see rainbow leading to
 pot-o-gold? Or do I need get magic
 shillelagh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
 What do you want here? Who are you?
 Some of Nelson's little goons?

The conversation has attracted the rest of the small men and all of them menacingly surround the powerful Ben Cartwright.

BEN (cont'd)
 (somewhat fearful)
 How hold on, here. You little people
 are trespassing. I'll get the
 Sheriff after you, you just wait and
 see. You just wait and see. You
 just wait ...

INT. PONDEROSA DEN -- NIGHT -- BACK TO REALITY

Ben is tossing in his chair as he begins to exit his short dream.

BEN
 You just wait and see. YOU JUST WAIT
 AND SEE!

Hoss, having sated himself with egg rolls, comes back in the house and sees his father thrashing about and yelling.

HOSS
 (shaking his father)
 Pa! Pa, wake up!

Ben partially wakes and calms down.

BEN
 Hoss! Where am I?

HOSS
 You're right here.

BEN
 I know that! Where is here, though?

Hoss is thoroughly confused.

HOSS
 Huh?

BEN
 Where are the little people? The
 diggers? Where are the shovels?
 Where is the ...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben is coming all the way out of his dream.

HOSS

Huh?

(concerned)

Pa! It's me. Hoss. You must have been dreaming. Are you OK?

INT. PONDEROSA DINING ROOM -- DAY

Ben and Hoss meet in the dining room for breakfast.

BEN

Heavenly days, I'm hungry! Morning, Hoss. Oh, say, what's all this talk I hear out at the bunkhouse about you wanting to grow kumquats on our good bottom land? Or, did I just dream that up? And, speaking of dreams, I had a doosey last night!

Hop Sing cannot keep silent.

HOP SING

No dream about kumquat. Real. Hop Sing think Mr. Hoss undermining tradition of ranch. He want raise puny fruit, not fat animal, like Mr. Ben!

Ben turns quickly and flashes Hop Sing a cold stare.

HOP SING (cont'd)

Ah, so sorry. Not, Mr. Ben fat animal. Fat beef animal, fat animal.

Ben sits down, turning back on Hop Sing.

BEN

You know Hoss, I can't remember the last Cartwright who wanted to do something this stupid.

HOP SING

Hop Sing not remember either.

BEN

'SING!

Hop Sing quickly leaves the room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS

Your memory going, Pa?

(Hoss's face
brightens)Did you forget wife number one? I
hear tell she almost succeeded in
getting you to have your men dam up
the creek down the hill so you two
could have your own personal skinny-
dipping pond.(waiting for
reaction)

Just kidding.

(more seriously)

Well, let's see. Oh yeah. Now, Pa?
... I've got this farming urge. And
I have read that there are folks who
will pay top dollar for good `quats.

BEN

Oh, so now it's `quats?!

(dumbfounded)

Have you lost your mind?! You don't
know anything about farming. Nothing!
You don't even know that much about
keeping cattle. And I don't even
know if those, ah, 'quats, will grow
around here.

HOSS

Pa, gosh darn it, I'm going to do it,
and that's that! Now, you and Hop
Sing leave me alone.

Ben becomes red-faced at the disrespect.

Hop Sing re-enters with platters.

HOP SING

Mr. Hoss, you sit here, next to egg
roll platter. Mr. Ben, you sit here,
next to mandarin orange.Ben glances back and forth as he senses Hop Sing is in
cahoots with Hoss, playing a psychological mind game with
him with the orange/kumquat similarity.

BEN

Hop Sing! How many times do I have
to tell you we don't eat this Chink
junk here on the Ponderosa!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben has had enough and uses his arm to rake all of the egg rolls and oranges onto the floor.

BEN (cont'd)
(turning to the back door)
Here Luke! Here boy!

Luke, the Ponderosa hound, gamey and dusty, runs in and begins to lap up the egg rolls as Ben watches.

Horrorified, Hop Sing also watches Luke.

HOP SING
This dog have flea! That last straw!
Hop Sing quit!

Hop Sing takes off his apron and flings it to the floor and marches out of the back door.

HOSS
Pa, we have to hurry up and eat. I need to get the boys planting the 'quat seedlings.
(disgusted)
And, I hope you're happy about ticking off Hop Sing! Now what are we going to have to eat? You ruined the stuff he cooked. Luke's almost finished it all.

Ben is about to boil over.

BEN
Crap! Hoss, where are Adam and Joseph? Can one of them cook?

HOSS
Nope. Couldn't make pancakes. Either of them. Already found that out the hard way the other morning.

BEN
The hard way?

HOSS
The hard way!

Ben is puzzled but runs to the back door to see if he can see Hop Sing anywhere.

EXT. PONDEROSA BACK YARD -- SAME

BEN
 (hands to mouth,
 yelling)
 HOP SING? HOP SING? WHERE ARE YOU?
 (Ben cups left ear)

Ben hears a voice from out by the corral.

HOP SING (O.S.)
 (faintly)
 You call Hop Sing?

Ben hustles out in the direction of the voice, meets Hop Sing and, with his arm over Hop Sing's shoulder, ushers him back toward the house.

BEN
 (feigning concern)
 Hop Sing! You know you always have a home here. Don't you? Sure you do. Now, Hop Sing. What are the chances of getting some regular, Cartwright grub rustled up rather quickly? ... Good, I hope!

INT. PONDEROSA FRONT HALL -- SAME

As they reenter the house Hop Sing casts Ben a beaten-down look then turns, head down, to plod into the kitchen.

On the way out, Hop Sing is straightening his bolo tie ...

HOP SING
 Hop Sing get no respect, no respect at all!

Ben turns to Hop Sing, wondering about that last comment, and follows him into the kitchen, where he is met by Hoss.

INT. PONDEROSA KITCHEN -- SAME

BEN
 Hoss, I tell you what I'm going to do. You forget this kumquat stuff and I'll put you at the top of the list in my will. How about it?

HOSS
 Honest?
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS (cont'd)
 (becomes confused)
 But, what does that really mean?

BEN
 It means that when I buy the farm,
 instead of Adam being able to pick
 over my stuff first, since he is the
 oldest son, you would be the one to
 have the first dibs.

HOSS
 (rubbing chin,
 thinking)
 Well, the buying the farm part is a
 little confusing. I need to think
 some more... Hmm... Lemme see...
 Hmm...

BEN
 (frustrated)
 It means when I die, you boob!

HOSS
 Oh. Why didn't you say so?
 (resumes deep
 thought process)
 Well, then ... Hmmmm, let me see
 ... Hmmmm.

Ben paces the floor anxiously while Hoss mulls over the offer placed before him.

Hop Sing has noticed the action and has moved over to stand next to Hoss but finds it impossible to ignore Ben's performance.

HOP SING
 (quietly to Hoss)
 Look, Mr. Hoss. Mr. Ben put on show
 walking back and forth. Act like
 worry.

Hop Sing and Hoss laugh heartily.

Ben's hair trigger goes off.

BEN
 That's it! That's all! Hop Sing,
 cook or no cook, you're history!
 Out! OUT! SCRAM! This time don't
ever come back!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOP SING

Very well. Hop Sing leave you with old Chinese saying. Man who fire long-time cook for weak reason wake up next morning with several bed bug! Or other uninvited vermin! Or worse!

Hoss and Ben gaze at each other quizzically, then fearfully.

HOSS

Who said that, that Confucius guy?

INT. PONDEROSA KITCHEN -- DAY

The next morning Hop Sing is sweeping several dozen dead rodents out of the kitchen into the hallway.

Ben comes into the kitchen after a short trip to the bunkhouse.

BEN

Hop Sing? Why are you here? Didn't I fire you yesterday?

HOP SING

Oh, no. Hop Sing know Mr. Ben only pulling leg.

BEN

Well, it seems we do need a housekeeper, what with all of these mice. OK, you're back. For now. So, after you finish here, go out to the bunkhouse and clean that out too. They've got so many dead mice out there that the boys can't get any decent shuteye. Or bathe. They're getting a little gamey.

(pointedly)

What's going on with all these dead mice, anyway?

HOP SING

Hop Sing not sign on to animal control. Not like handling rodent. Anyway, Hop Sing warn you.

BEN

Warn me?

Ben ponders the last statement momentarily.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (cont'd)

I believe that if you check the fine print in your contract, 'Sing, you'll see that, indeed, you do have to do this sort of thing. I believe it says so in clause 4, paragraph 1.2.

Hop Sing mumbles something in Chinese.

BEN (cont'd)

What was that?

HOP SING

Mr. Ben always right. Maybe you want me cook egg roll now!

BEN

Sweep! Keep sweeping until all these mice are gone. Then and only then do you cook. And it's for sure you won't cook any of that godforsaken Chinese stuff.

(on a tangent)

But, Hop Sing, come here. Let me ask you something. Is it your belief that George Washington did actually have wooden teeth?

HOP SING

Who George Washington?

BEN

Never mind.

Hoss wanders into the kitchen. Ben turns to meet him.

Hop Sing aims an obscure gesture at Ben from behind his back then goes on sweeping.

HOSS

Pa, when do we eat? I'm starved!

BEN

Hoss, is food all you think about? Don't you ever think about, oh, say, women? Am I ever going to see grandkids?

Hoss gets a blank look on his face.

HOSS

Hop Sing, what are we having for lunch?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOP SING

So sorry, Mr. Hoss. Mr. Ben say Hop Sing no cook until rodent is gone.

HOSS

What?! Rodent?

Hop Sing points to floor.

HOP SING

You not notice?

HOSS

(smiling)

Say, those little critters look about bite sized, don't they?

HOP SING

Ah, yes, Mr. Hoss! Hop Sing think he get drift. I get fry pan.

BEN

The only drift you are going to get, Hop Sing, is the drift of the unemployment line if you're not careful. You get my drift?

HOSS

Leave him alone, Pa. He's just a poor servant. Let him do what he does best - cook!

BEN

Hoss, when you're the boss around here you can make Hop Sing do whatever you want him to do, assuming he lives that long.

Hop Sing expresses wide-eyed concern.

BEN (cont'd)

But as long as he's on my payroll he's going to sweep out mice!

Hoss gets a dejected expression on his face and begins to leave the kitchen.

BEN (cont'd)

And, Hoss, don't forget who pays your salary! It ain't all a cakewalk around here!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS
 (brightens)
 Cake? Where?

Ben's look is one of disgust.

BEN
 Anyway, never mind eating right now, son. I need you to take several of the boys and Joseph, if you can find him, and go out to the fence in the bottom pasture and find the hole where Nelson's goats are getting onto our land. There must be a couple hundred of them. They're eating all the good grass. I even saw a small group of them over in our tomato garden stripping the vines. Picked clean!

Hoss is unreactive.

HOP SING
 Tomato gone? There go Asian tomale for tomorrow.

BEN
 (impatiently)
 Hoss! ... Now! ... Go!

Hoss grabs his hat and heads out the front door, only to meet someone bringing a telegram to Ben.

INT. PONDEROSA FRONT HALL -- SAME

HOSS
 Ah, excuse me. Can I help you?

Hoss studies the uniformed telegram man's face more carefully, but it is partially hidden under his cap.

HOSS (cont'd)
 Say, don't I know you? Don't you work for Nelson?

TELEGRAM MAN
 I look for Mr. Ben Cartwright.

Ben overhears the talking and has come to the door also.

BEN
I'm Ben Cartwright.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TELEGRAM MAN

I have telegram. It from Denver
steer grower committee.

The delivery man hands the telegram to Ben.

Ben reads a little, then notices Hoss still standing there.

BEN

Hoss. Aren't you due on your horse
with the others? To get to work?
... The goats? ... Now?

HOSS

But, Pa. Don't this feller look a
lot like that cook from ...

BEN

Hoss! Enough! Git!

Hoss is unable to stay for Ben to read the telegram. He
leaves to mount his horse and head out.

Ben returns his attention to reading the telegram.

BEN (cont'd)

(mumbling)

"You may have already won a steer-
neutering jig. Stop. Just send ten-
dozen wrappers from any Rough-Rider
Saddle Soap product to ..."

(frustrated,
rhetorically)

What is this?

TELEGRAM MAN

I not know. I guess they just try to
pay bill.

Ben looks at the telegram man puzzlingly and then continues
to read the next paragraph.

BEN

(continuing to
mumble)

Dangerous flies found in Lake Tahoe
area. Stop. Flies most likely came
over on boats from Africa and
traveled west in the land rush.
Stop. Fly bite can cause sleeping
disease. Stop. Steers will decrease
in value if bitten. Stop. Land will
become worthless. Stop. Flies called

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (cont'd)
Tsetse flies. Stop. Good luck.
Stop.

Ben looks up in a blank stare, pondering the announcement.

BEN (cont'd)
This is awful... I think.

TELEGRAM MAN
So sorry deliver fly news.

The telegram delivery man remains, with his hand out.

BEN
Yes, well, thank you. Ah, tell me,
sir. Have you ever heard of George
Washington?

TELEGRAM MAN
Who?

BEN
Never mind.

Ben notices that the man is waiting for something.

BEN (cont'd)
(staring at the man)
Well, you can go now. Shoo! Or do I
have to sic Luke's harem on you?!

The telegram man walks off with no tip.

Ben turns, lost in thought, to go into the house.

EXT. PONDEROSA CORRAL -- SAME

The telegram delivery man passes Hoss and his brothers out near the corral and senses the opportunity to exact retribution for being stiffed.

TELEGRAM MAN
Mr. Cartwright told me tell you that
he change mind. You knock off rest
of day. Do anything want. Even
wager.

Hoss listens to the man's unexpected information.

HOSS
I swear that face and voice are
familiar. But, what the hey! If Pa
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS (cont'd)
wants us to take a break, we'll take
a break.

EXT. PONDEROSA FRONT YARD -- LATER

Ben Cartwright shades his eyes and pans the ranch landscape.
He finally spies Hoss loafing out by the corral.

BEN
(yelling)
HOSS! HOSS, GET JOES AND ADAM AND
COME IN HERE!

INT. PONDEROSA DEN -- LATER

JOE
(swaggering in)
What's up Pa?

BEN
Well, that took long enough! What's
up you ask?! What's UP? Big news!

JOE
About what?

BEN
About the tsetse flies! They're
coming! They're on the way! The
Denver people said they came over on
some boat from Africa. Or something
like that.

JOE
(tweaking his
father)
What the devil are tsetse flies?!
'Fraid they'll get in your manure
pile, or pester Ella?

BEN
That's enough, Joseph! Just listen!
You boys go round up them doggies
down by the river and bring them up
to the barn and shut the doors tight.
The telegram said we don't have much
time. Go on, scoot!

JOE
(smirkingly)
Doggies??! You mean our cattle?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Joe turns slowly, smugly around to his brothers.

BEN
Joseph! Shut up!

Hoss leans over and whispers to Joe.

HOSS
Joe, pipe down. I think Pa's gone
'round the bend. Let's humor him.
(directly to Ben)
Okay Pa, whatever you say. Dogies.
Flies. Boats from Africa. Whatever.
Go ahead and finish your little
story, Pa. Come on, Pa, let's hear
it. Are we all going to be eaten by
the flies and die or something like
that?

Hoss turns and winks at Adam.

BEN
I am finished, you stooge!
(frustrated)
Don't you idiots get it? The flies
could be the end of us!

With a sarcastic grin on his face, Hoss continues to deride the elder Cartwright.

HOSS
Oh yeah, Pa? Which end?

Ben has had enough idiocy. He reaches over and grabs a fireplace poker and begins to thrash Hoss.

HOSS (cont'd)
(dodging)
Ouch! Hey, Pa, cut it out! Ow!
What the ... ? Joe, help me! Joe!

Hoss and his brothers run out of the house.

EXT. PONDEROSA BACKYARD -- LATER

Joe and Hoss are slow to enter the ranch house.

JOE
You tell him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS

No, you tell him. He might whack me again.

JOE

Listen, you bet it, you lost it, you tell him!

(louder)

PA! PA! HOSS HAS SOMETHING TO TELL YOU! COME QUICK!

INT. BEN CARTWRIGHT'S BEDROOM -- SAME

Ben Cartwright is alone dividing his coin accumulation between his woman-friend fund and the Ponderosa charity kitty jar.

BEN

One for me, one for you. Two for me, one for you. Three for me, one for you.

Ben hears the summons and stops what he is doing, gets up and hustles down the stairs to the front room.

INT. PONDEROSA ENTRANCE HALL -- SAME

BEN

What is it Joseph? What's wrong? Is some other ranch scum encroaching on our territory? Is it Nelson and his crew? The flies? What?

JOE

No, Pa. Nothing like that. Although I did see a few of Nelson's men, earlier, scouting out our bottom land. One of them even had an old ragged piece of paper that he claimed was a treasure map! Anyway, I -

BEN

Wait! Did you say treasure map?!

HOSS

Of course he did, Pa. You gettin' deaf?

Hoss snickers about his comment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Quiet, Hoss!

(to Joe)

Now Joseph, did you get any kind of look at this map? Was it by any chance mostly green?

JOE

I don't know. So what if it was?!

BEN

Don't tell me you two never heard of the Treasure of the Leprechauns? It's supposedly buried somewhere very close to where the Ponderosa property is. Your mother always wished she could have found it before she checked out, I mean passed on, so her coffin could have been more jewel-encrusted. She was always one for a big show. But I digress.

JOE

Well, do you suppose this treasure has been discovered by Nelson to actually exist on our land or on our border?

BEN

Well now Joseph, doesn't it all figure? I mean, you see a couple of Nelson's boys on our land, they have what appears to be an authentic buried treasure map. Has to be!

Ben is getting excited and turns to his sons.

BEN (cont'd)

We better go get this straightened out. And we need to go to town and get some shovels! Hoss! Saddle up my horse. I'm going to town to buy all the shovels I can carry back.

HOSS

Ah, Pa. About the saddling part of your request. Would it matter which saddle I used? And what about the flies?! Aren't we still in a panic about them?

Ben rubs his chin, thinks hard, but comes up empty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
 (shaking his head
 back to the moment)
 My saddle. Use my good saddle.

HOSS
 (blurts out)
 Pa, Joe lost your saddle the other
 day in a poker game.

JOE
 Me?! You lost it! You lying son of
 a...

Hoss lunges at Joe, who dodges him. Joe quickly leaves the room.

Hop Sing has wandered into the room.

BEN
 (sternly)
 That's enough! Listen, with all this
 treasure talk I need to get something
 to eat. Anyone else care to join
 me? Hoss?

HOSS
 (to Ben)
 Just fix me a big plate of greens and
 bring it to me with a brew. Ok?
 I'll be out on the porch.

Hoss walks away slowly in the direction of the porch but with his head still turned back to the conversation.

Ben laughs to hear his son issuing such orders to him.

BEN
 (disrespected)
 Why you overgrown punk! ...

HOP SING
 Anyway, that my job!

Ben picks up a nearby stone book-end and hurls it at Hoss, who ducks allowing the projectile to, in stead, strike Hop Sing's Keye Luke bust on the porch, smashing it to pieces.

HOP SING (cont'd)
 (horrified)
 Keye! Keye! Oh no! Mr. Ben not
 need to go wild. Hop Sing's bust
 worth fortune!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
That thing didn't even look like you!

HOP SING
Keye Luke bust!

BEN
You said, "Hop Sing's" bust.

HOP SING
"Hop Sing" possessive, not
descriptive.

BEN
Hey! I guess I busted your bust!
(continues)
Well, Hoss ticked me off. Sorry, Hop
Sing. This whole treasure thing that
Nelson is up to is getting me
rattled. Let's talk about this
later. I've got some coins to finish
dividing up.

HOP SING
Mr. Ben hungry now?

INT. PONDEROSA FRONT YARD -- LATER

HOSS
So, Pa... since you're still worked
up about that treasure thing, why
don't you go into town and sniff
around. Ask Sheriff ROY what he
knows.

BEN
Not a bad idea, Hoss. But I have to
see Ella later. Where did Joseph go?
He usually has nothing to do. He can
ride to town to see Roy for me.

HOSS
I think I saw him taking a nap out in
the bunkhouse. He was out late last
night. Chasing foxes, I think, if
you know what I mean.

BEN
That so? Well, we'll just see about
this!

Ben leaves, to walk out to the bunkhouse.

EXT. PONDEROSA BUNKHOUSE -- SAME

BEN
 (entering the
 bunkhouse)
 Joseph? Where are you? Joseph?

TUBBY
 (coming from another
 room)
 Hey! Quiet, you idiot! Joe is --
 (sees the elder
 Cartwright)
 Oh! Sorry, sir. I didn't know it
 was you ... Kind of dark, you know.

BEN
 (ignoring insolence)
 Where is he? Where is my son? I was
 told he was out here.

TUBBY
 Ah, well, you see, ah, he said under
 no circumstances was he to be
 awakened.

BEN
 Oh yeah? Stand aside, fat man.

Ben brushes by TUBBY and opens the bunkroom door.

Ben sees Joe in a lower berth.

BEN (cont'd)
 (to self)
 Well, if it isn't Sleeping Beauty!

Ben aggressively taps Joe's head with his boot, waking Joe.

JOE
 (groggy)
 Hey! What the - Who is it? What?
 What's going on?

BEN
 Joseph, get up! I need to you to go
 to town for me. Now!

JOE
 Sure, Pa. Gimme a few more hours
 rest first. OK? The foxes were ...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben walks to the end of the bed, grabs Joe's feet and rolls him over out of bed, causing Joe's head to bang down on the floor.

JOE (cont'd)

OUCH! Hey! Pa? What do you want?!
Can't I get some sleep? Get Hop Sing
to do whatever it is you want.

BEN

I'm afraid Hop Sing cannot do this.
Only you. Now, ...
(yelling)
GET UP!

JOE

Ok! Ok. But, it's going to be dark
pretty soon. I wouldn't be able to
get to town at night. Let's do it
tomorrow. Alright?

BEN

Ever heard of a lantern? The ones
out back are the ones I got running
on that combination of coal oil and
goat urine. Heard about that trick
from one of Hop Sing's buddies the
other week. Ella seems to get turned
on by the potent mixture of
fragrances, just like they said she
would. It's wonderful, if you get my
drift. Plus, they give off a fair
amount of light. Now here's what I
want you to do.

(calculating)

I need to know what Nelson has up his
sleeve. I want you to ask Roy if he
knows anything about the treasure or
the disputed land that is out there.
Got that?

JOE

(squinting, half
asleep)

Sure. Ask Roy. Got it.

BEN

Joseph! GET UP! The future of the
Ponderosa may depend on what you can
find out. Nelson may get our
treasure and then buy us out!
Remember, no Ponderosa one day means
no inheritance for you and your

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (cont'd)
 brothers. You deadbeats may actually have to go to work! And, meanwhile, I'm still here and still going through a fair share of the family funds. Ella is quite needy, in case you haven't noticed. I'd hate to use it all up on her before I die. Yeah, that'd be a real shame, alright.

JOE
 (quickly awakening)
 Why didn't you say that in the first place!? We've got to save the Ponderosa, Pa! Where are the lanterns!

BEN
 Now you're cooking. Mount up and get going.

EXT. VIRGINIA CITY -- DAY

As he enters town and rides toward the Sheriff's office, Joe surveys the morning activities on Main St. He spies a large, colorfully painted tent set up behind the livery stable.

Joe arrives at the Sheriff's office, dismounts, ties up his horse and walks up to the door and enters the office without knocking.

INT. VIRGINIA CITY JAIL -- SAME

Sheriff ROY SUGAR is asleep at his desk.

JOE
 Sheriff? ... Roy?
 (much louder, in
 Roy's face)
 ROY!

Roy rousts and sees Joe.

ROY
 (startled)
 Uh, oh, hi, Joe. What brings you into town?

JOE
 Well, if you must know, my horse brought me into town! Butta bing!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROY

Huh?

JOE

Never mind. Roy, I've been riding 'bout all night to talk to you and I'm in no mood for nonsense. My father suspects that the Nelson is talking about some buried treasure in the ground out near the Ponderosa. He wanted me to ask you about it to see what you know.

ROY

How come Ben didn't come, himself?

JOE

Said he had to spend some time with Ella.

ROY

I'll just bet he did!

JOE

You got that right. Anyway, know anything about any of that treasure stuff?

ROY

I can't say as I do.

(thinking)

Hey, wait a second. Is this a joke? Your father can be a funny guy, you know.

JOE

Pa's a little off the reservation sometimes, for sure.

(chuckles to himself)

No, ... this stems partially from something I heard myself. Some of Nelson's men were talking about a buried treasure. Pa seems to recall talk of such, way back when. Something about Leprechauns. I don't know. Anyway, we want to know if this alleged buried treasure is on our land or on Nelson's land or that chunk in the middle that we still don't know who owns. That's where you come in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROY

Joe, I'm afraid I cannot say, one, if there is a treasure, or two, where said treasure is, exactly. Lots of rumors about the "where" part.

JOE

So, ... you believe there really is a treasure! Is it the Treasure of the Leprechauns?

ROY

So I've heard. And, well, I may or may not believe it myself. I may have the land plat and digging rights papers here in my possession or I may not. All depends on, seeing as I do have sister-in-law needs to also tend to these days, how much such information is worth to you.

JOE

Extortion?! Roy, I can't believe it. My father is one of your oldest friends. How can you treat him this way?

(but)

Me? I don't care. But him? ...

(disgusted)

I guess I will just have to go back and inform him of the situation. How 'bout that?!

ROY

(grinning)

OK, you do that. And while you're at it, tell him that the next time he is seen driving that Miss Ella around after dark without a proper lantern on his wagon, acting the fool that he was the other evening, I will have to run him in. And those lanterns stink now, by the way. There might be another infraction for them too.

JOE

Tell me about it. More odor than light. They do stink! Last night I must have had a dozen or so female goats following me. Now, if they had been sheep, well ...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROY

Huh?

JOE

(back to the subject
at hand)

Roy, this is certainly an unexpected development. I am sure that my father will be very interested to know that he is being forced into paying you just to find out whether the supposed treasure is already on his own land or not. Dispicable!

(almost forgetting)

Oh, yeah, Roy. What's that big tent on the other end of town behind the stable?

ROY

Some kind of traveling show - the Orient Circus, or something like that. It's a half a dozen zeroes claiming they are supernatural and such. There's one guy who's especially spooky. He's a dark, foreign guy with some fancy snakes, a woven pot and some flutes. Mahatma something or other, I think. I gave that bunch a couple of weeks to stay. Then they're all outta here. Might give the town a bad name. You know.

(proudly)

But, hey, I rented the space to them for a bag of their gold dust and a couple of jewels!

Roy opens his little purse to show Joe the stones.

ROY (cont'd)

Looka here.

JOE

Well, you don't say! I never heard of such! And, gold dust? I wonder where that came from? Nobody has dug gold around these parts since that mine of Pa's went belly up in '53. And I wonder where they get off using jewels for money.

ROY

Well, I don't know about that, but it's the durndest thing. There's even

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROY (cont'd)

a lady who claims she can tell a man's future by just reading his palm. Before my brother left to go get dried out he actually went to her and she told him some stuff he didn't know before.

JOE

Reading his palm? What's that?

ROY

I don't know.

JOE

And, what stuff didn't he know?

ROY

Well, like he was going to find out, before the end of the year, that he was kin to a rich person back East and he will inherit a large amount of money one day.

JOE

And how much did it cost for the reading?

ROY

Only five cents, I believe.

JOE

Worth every penny of it, I'm sure.

(disappointed)

Roy, how can anyone fall for that hooey? I thought your brother had a little sense! I mean, drunk that he is, he did figure out how to marry a real fox, right?

ROY

Amen!

Joe and Roy both wolf-howl.

ROY (cont'd)

Well, Joe, who knows? It may be true. Oh, and, hey, they've even got what you call an Al Chemist.

JOE

Well, I don't know who Al Chemist is, but I'll bet he's as on the level as

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE (cont'd)
 those other jokers. Sounds like one
 of them Arabs!

(leaving)

Later Roy. And you can be sure that
 I will pass on your extortion plans
 to Pa.

(finished)

I b'lieve I will walk down to the
 saloon to see if Bonnie made it in
 today.

ROY

Say, did your father ever get to the
 bottom of whether George Washington
 actually had wooden teeth or not?

JOE

Who?

EXT. PONDEROSA FRONT YARD -- DAY

Joe arrives late in the afternoon back at the Ponderosa.
 Hoss greets Joe as his horse walks up to the hitching post.

HOSS

Well, Joe, you certainly have managed
 to cause a stir around here. And
 what took you so long? I had to do
 some of your chores to keep Pa from
 coming after me!

JOE

Huh?

HOSS

Yeah, Pa has been running around like
 a chicken with hi--

JOE

His head cut off?

HOSS

How'd you know?

JOE

Get real, brother. That's such an
 old idiom, even for the 1880's. So,
 what's Pa spun up about?

HOSS

He has misplaced his best hat. The
 one Miss Ella likes. He has

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS (cont'd)
concluded you have borrowed it. He's
mad and if I were you I'd steer
clear.

Hoss notices the baggage Joe has strapped behind his saddle.

HOSS (cont'd)
Hey, what's that behind you?

Joe ignores Hoss and gets down from his horse.

HOSS (cont'd)
Dadburnit, Joe. I asked you a
question!

JOE
Hoss, calm down. Pa must have you
worked up too.

HOSS
(points to Joe's
basket)
What is that stuff?

JOE
Well, before I left town I ran into
this very strange, dark man who was
walking barefooted and blowing a
flute. He must have been a part of
that Orient Circus show that Roy
allowed to camp in town. Anyway, as
I watched him, he sat down on the
ground, blew the flute, swayed and,
presently, a serpent of some type
rose out of his basket and also
swayed. The crowd that not ten
minutes before had seen the same act
in the tent, was amazed, again,
nonetheless and tossed their pocket
change to him into the basket. This
continued a right long while.

HOSS
Nonetheless? Not quite a cowboy
word, Joe. What's next, full
inkhorn?

JOE
Nevertheless, my somewhat illiterate
brother, when the show was over I
followed this man to the hotel where
he took a seat on the porch, placing
his basket and flute beside him in a
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE (cont'd)
chair. When I later came up to him and asked him who he was and what the idea was with the snake and such and what his name was, he ignored me as if he was in a trance. He looked for all the world like a lifeless lump of tar.

Ben hustles up and interrupts this tale. Hoss senses the impending conflict.

HOSS
Uh oh!

BEN
Joseph! Joseph, do you have my brown Stetson? The one with the tilted brim? Hoss said it was you who was rummaging through my stuff the other day.

HOSS
Oh, I did not!

JOE
Hoss, I may be much smaller than you but I have connections with numerous big guys who could hurt you. Why are you lying to Pa?

HOSS
(easily rolling over)
Well, heh heh, it's like this, Joe, Pa. I'm sorry. I was stuck. As you know, I usually wear a ten gallon hat like this one but -

JOE
On that two-gallon head?

Hoss turns abruptly to Joe.

HOSS
Why you! ... I oughtta ...

Hoss draws back his fist.

Ben intervenes.

BEN
Hoss! ... Don't do it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hoss stops cold. Calmer heads prevail.

HOSS

As I was saying, I accidentally sat on my best hat and I needed to repair it before I saw Miss Betty. I couldn't bear for her to see my balding pate uncovered by my traditional chapeau.

JOE

"Chapeau"?!

HOSS

Hat, Joe. Anyway, Pa, I had to cut up your hat, and ...

Ben looks terrified.

HOSS (cont'd)

... patch in parts of your hat to fix mine.

(points to his
repaired hat)

See?

JOE

Can we get back to my story? Please?

Ben calms down temporarily. Hoss becomes more attentive.

JOE (cont'd)

As I was saying, this strange man seemed to be in a trance or asleep or unconscious --

HOSS

Joe! We get it! He was out. Continue, please.

JOE

I reached over to poke him and wake him up. He was dead! I figured he was one of those odd guys from the Orient tent circus that Roy was talking about.

HOSS

What?! You poked a dead guy? Yuuuuk!

BEN

Pipe down, Hoss!
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (cont'd)

(back to Joe)

Joseph, are you serious? What did you do then?

HOSS

Yeah, Joe. What did you do then?

BEN

Hoss, didn't I just ask that myself?

Hoss becomes annoyed.

JOE

I decided that before I got the sheriff or doctor I better make sure the man's flute and basket, which I presumed contained his valuable, center-of-attention serpent, were secure.

HOSS

You poked a dead guy and then stole his flute, basket, and snake?!

BEN

Joseph, say it ain't so!

JOE

Are ya'll finished? Can I get on with it?

(continuing)

As I took hold of the basket I could hear some noise and feel some wiggling inside. I don't know one type of snake from another, except I do know what a rattler sounds like, and this was no rattler!

HOSS

Was she a sidewinder?

JOE

Sidewinder?! No! I don't know. All I know is that the snake - whatever species it was - seemed to know that I was taking possession of the stuff because it pushed the top of the basket away and sprang up and tried to bite me as the whole package fell to the ground. I was left with no other recourse than to shoot it before it inflicted bodily harm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS
On passers by?

JOE
No. On me!
(in disbelief of
Hoss)
Passers by!? I shot it a couple of
times and then kicked it under the
porch where the dogs could have at
it.

Ben is just looking on and picking his nose.

HOSS
So the pot you have here is nothing
but an empty one? That isn't too
interesting, Joe. Or valuable.

JOE
Well, not so fast, my quarter-
brained, half-brother.

Hoss is puzzled by the math.

JOE (cont'd)
I deduced that whatever it was that
the strange man was doing was only
working because he had a snake as
part of his act, or show or whatever
it was. So, although I had no
interest at the time in taking up
where he left off --

BEN
Well, that goes without saying. You
have no time to do anything except to
help mend our fences down by the
river these days. Near that buried
treasure, probably. And where those
goats get through. The snake
foolishness is ridiculous!

(recalling the
trip's original
intent)
Oh yes. Joseph, did you collect any
treasure details in town? From Roy?

JOE
Pa, suffice it to say that for you to
get any information or help from Roy,
our illustrious, honest sheriff, it
will cost you a bundle! Roy's fees

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE (cont'd)
 must have gone up. And, he seems,
 these days, to have an abundance of
 gold dust and jewels -

BEN
 Jewels? Did you say, jewels?

JOE
 Jewels.

BEN
 Jewels! ... Why that no good ... He's
 found it!

JOE
 As I was saying ... although I had no
 interest in doing what that dark man
 did, I knew that if I was going to be
 able to sell his belongings and
 pocket some sweet hogs -

BEN
 And start paying rent?

JOE
 Moving on, pocket some sweet hogs ...
 I had to have the whole setup. I
 needed a member of a respected snake
 species.

HOP SING (O.S.)
 Dinner served!

JOE
 So, on my way home, while I was
 pondering my dilemma, what did I come
 upon in the rocks over by the
 orchard, but a small nest of
 rattlers.

HOP SING (O.S.)
 (louder)
 Dinner served!

JOE
 (in loud voice)
 HOP SING, WE HEAR YOU. GIVE US A FEW
 MINUTES.

(continuing)
 Anyway, I got off my trusty horse and
 -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS

Trusty horse? Joe, one minute you are tossing around five-dollar words and the next minute you are a cliché machine!

Joe throws Hoss a look of scorn.

HOP SING (O.S.)

(in very loud voice)

DINNER SERVED!

JOE

Pa, can you get our Chinaman to put a sock in it?

BEN

He sometimes fancies himself as Don Wong, you know.

JOE

But I thought Wong was supposed to be a great Chinese lover, or some such, not a cook.

BEN

Joseph, just continue with your story, please.

HOSS

But, Pa. I'm getting hungry! The chow might be getting cold!

BEN

I'm getting hungry too.

(to Joe)

Son, can we continue the snake story at the dinner table?

All adjourn to the dining room for supper.

INT. PONDEROSA DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

Hop Sing's previously prepared food is not as hot as it once was.

Cartwrights are seated at the dinner table.

HOSS

Pass the taters, Pa!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
Please? Can you say the magic word,
Hoss?

HOSS
(humbled)
Please.

BEN
So, Joseph. You dismounted near the
den of snakes. Then what?

JOE
What?

BEN
Yes.

JOE
Huh?

BEN
You were telling us that you were
wondering where and how you were
going to get an intimidating snake
for your basket and you came upon
some rattlers. What happened next?

JOE
About what?

BEN
JOSEPH!

JOE
OK. Well, I got off the horse and
walked up behind the daddy snake and
-

HOP SING
(eavesdropping)
How you know daddy snake?

JOE
Because it was the biggest one ...
Happy?!

HOP SING
Size not everything.

JOE
So I've been told.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Hop Sing, let Joseph continue, please. And what are you doing in here with us? You are supposed to eat in the kitchen. Suppose our guests saw this. We'd be mortified! Back to the kitchen with you! Shoo!

HOP SING

But Mr. Ben have no guest.

BEN

'Sing, let me tell you something ... I once tied a Chink like you up in a knot so tight he could inspect his own coccyx. Get my drift?

Hop Sing trudges back to the kitchen.

JOE

I pounced on the daddy snake, caught him by the neck, like you're 'sposed to do, and put it in the pot and tied the top on.

BEN

So now you have a complete set of dark-man, snake-related stuff to try to sell, right?

JOE

(feeling patronized)

Yes, Pa. That's right.

HOSS

(childlike)

Hey Joe, can I see the daddy snake you caught?

BEN

Never mind that, Joe, can you blow the flute? You know ... I once had a flute. I was not half bad, if I say so myself.

JOE

Do I need to be able to blow the flute? Hello! I'm selling the whole deal, remember? Duh!

HOSS

I still want a peep at the snake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

I don't even know if the one I caught is the type of snake that the original owner had, but that's the only type of snake I could find.

ADAM

Can you pass the taters, Joe? ... Please.

BEN

Good boy, Adam.

HOSS

(getting up)

Come on, let's go see the big, daddy snake.

All get up from table.

EXT. PONDEROSA FRONT YARD -- NIGHT

JOE

Now, let me untie the stuff. I put a real tight knot in it so the snake couldn't get out.

BEN

Hey! Another tight knot.

Ben looks around.

BEN (cont'd)

Where's Hop Sing?

Joe struggles with the knot and finally gets it untied. He carefully takes the basket off the horse. It's very dark outside.

JOE

OK, Hoss. So, do you really want to see the snake?

HOSS

Ah, duh! That's why we came out! Now, open the basket.

JOE

You open the basket!

Hoss walks over to the basket Joe is holding and takes it from him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS

Let's just see what kind of mammoth snake you got here.

(glancing about)

It's so dark out here. I don't know if I can get a good look at it or not.

Hop Sing has wandered out and has picked up a flute off the ground near Joe's horse and has begun to examine it.

Hoss opens the basket.

HOSS (cont'd)

There ain't no snake here, Joe! Is this some type of joke? I don't see anything!

Hoss closes the top of the basket.

JOE

Lemme see that!

Joe snatches the basket and quickly opens it.

At the same time, Hop Sing inhales and blows a potent high B-flat based trill on the flute.

Responding to the flute sound, a snake pops out of the basket and strikes at Joe.

JOE (cont'd)

OW! It bit me! Oowww! Son of a b-
!

Joe throws the basket and snake down. The snake slithers off into the night.

HOSS

Hey, I bet Hop Sing's playing made that snake get aroused.

Joe is holding his arm where he got bit.

JOE

Can someone help me?! This bite is killing me!

HOSS

(lamenting)

Joe, Joe, Joe. A rugged Cartwright cowboy like you is letting a little
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS (cont'd)
critter bite make him whine like a
baby. Pitiful!

Hop Sing is playing the flute more vigorously and in a very bluesy/avant garde key.

BEN
(to Hop Sing)
Stop playing that flute! Can't you
see Joe's been bit? But, what was
that fat tone sequence, a minor sixth
run?

HOP SING
(to Ben)
C-tonic, diminished fourth. You
like?
(to Joe)
Hop Sing hope Mr. Joe not give him
blame for serpent incident.

JOE
Incident? ... I got bit, Hop Sing.
It's called a snake bite! The last
time I noticed, a rattler bite is
deadly. Get it? As in, I'm buying
the farm.

BEN
Speaking of buying the farm, that
reminds me, Joseph. What did you
find out about that treasure thing?
Did Roy know if it was supposed to be
on the Ponderosa land?

JOE
Pa! I already told you. He's not
playing without the cake. Can we talk
about this later?

HOSS
Cake?

BEN
But there may not be a later, for
you, I mean.

JOE
(moaning)
I'll pretend I didn't hear that!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS

Ok, Joe. Enough drama. We all know that Hop Sing has an amazing ability to apply mashes of secret oriental herbs and poultices to neutralize the snake poison ...

(turning to Hop Sing)

... don't you Hop Sing?

HOP SING

Maybe I do and maybe I don't. Hop Sing find it very coincidental that contract is about ready for renegotiation at same time that serpent bite may cause Mr. Joe to meet repo man, early!

Hoss absorbs the information and senses there is a huge Hop-Sing-salary bargaining chip that has just been thrown on the table.

HOSS

So, ah, Pa ... do you think you will treat Hop Sing right this go'round?

BEN

(sneering at Hoss)

Sure. Sure, Hop Sing. I don't see any reason in the world why we couldn't up your wages a few percent.

HOP SING

Confucius say, a few hundred percent!

BEN

Why you little ...

(thinking more)

Very well. A bigger raise.

JOE

Ah, me? Dying? Can I get some of that secret remedy now?

HOSS

Pa, I believe Hop Sing needs a little more specificity on the amount of the raise. Is that right, Hop?

HOP SING

Mr. Hoss clairvoyant, at minimum.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Hoss, if I didn't know better, I would swear you are acting as Hop Sing's agent and it's all aimed at lining lining your own pockets! And right when we might need a boat-load of funds to bribe the Sheriff and/or buy out Nelson!

HOSS

Agent? Au contraire. Only a good friend.

BEN

Friend? ... OK, one hundred percent.

HOSS

One hundred percent of what?

BEN

(nasty look to Hoss)

A one hundred percent raise over what Hop Sing was getting.

HOSS

(winking at Hop Sing)

Was getting when?

BEN

Was getting last week.

HOSS

Done! You'll, of course, have a contract for Mr. Sing to sign in twenty-four hours?

BEN

Yes, Hoss. OK? We finished? Can we turn our attention to Joseph now?

Joe has passed out on the ground.

HOSS

Hop Sing, hit it!

Hop Sing runs off to the house and comes back in a flash with a small cloth bag.

HOSS (cont'd)

Is that the potion?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOP SING
Secret leaf mixture. Only Chinese
know how make.

HOSS
Yeah, yeah... big secret.
(machine-like)
Apply it, please.

BEN
Well, go on, Hop Sing, apply the
potion. If this doesn't work, the
new contract is - guess what? Null
and void! Got that?

HOP SING
Hop Sing need all to stand back!

BEN
What? This is ridiculous!

HOP SING
I say stand back! Hop Sing not
responsible for ancillary effects.

HOSS
"Ancillary"? ... Nice.

Hop Sing begins to stomp about, waving his hands and
speaking some Oriental gibberish.

BEN
Aren't you going to revive him?

HOP SING
Hop Sing need time to get warmed up!

HOSS
(whispering to Hop
Sing)
Don't push it. Get on with the
revival.
(stalling)
Hey, Pa, did you stop worrying about
your hat?

BEN
I did not!

HOSS
How 'bout the flies?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
 The tsetses? No. Still worrying!
 (turning to Hop
 Sing, anxious)
 Hop Sing! Get going! It looks like
 Joe's stiffening up on us.

Hop Sing flings a handful of crushed herbs onto Joe's face.

Almost immediately Joe starts to roust.

BEN (cont'd)
 Thank goodness! It's a miracle!
 (thinking)
 You know, I could use some of that
 stuff on Ella. Without some
 assistance that chick is hard to
 start, if you know what I mean. I
 only wish I could find that shirt I
 used to use. Wearing that was sure-
 fire.

INT. PONDEROSA BACK YARD -- SAME

HOSS
 (whispering)
 Now, Hop Sing, I, as your agent - and
 friend - get a full ten percent of
 the new contract. And we don't say
 anything about this to anyone, right?

HOP SING
 Mr. Hoss. So sorry! As long as Hop
 Sing have serpent ranch and herb
 garden, no need agent. Best both
 world: cause and cure in Hop Sing
 pocket. Very sweet!

INT. PONDEROSA DINING ROOM -- DAY

Hop Sing is busy bringing various dishes out of the kitchen
 and placing them on the table. Ben is looking over the
 spread and licking his chops.

BEN
 Oh boy, Hop Sing, this looks good!
 What is it, some sort of steak? You
 trying to earn your new salary?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOP SING

Hop Sing serve deluxe cabbage roll
with shrimp.

BEN

Shrimp?! What is shrimp?

HOP SING

Shrimp plural. Shrimp little fish.
Fish plural too. But not matter.
Hop Sing serve mock shrimp. Old
Chinese delicacy. Made from cabbage,
beans, and more cabbage.

JOE

This meal's a little heavy on the
cabbage isn't it? Wasn't that
cabbage we had yesterday? And the
day before? What gives, Hop Sing?

HOP SING

Don't know. Hop Sing must have what
cowboy call, "wild hair".

The Cartwrights all guffaw at the Chinaman's use of such an
expression.

Hop Sing laughs along with them.

Hoss is squirming in his seat, being made uncomfortable by
his continuing stomach troubles.

BEN

What say we all dig in!

The only sounds heard are the clinking of utensils hitting
the glass plates and a faint hissing and sometimes thumping
sound.

Presently, Ben, while chewing his cabbage, wrinkles his nose
as if he has caught a whiff of something a tad foul.

Ben looks around suspiciously but continues his meal.

BEN (cont'd)

So, Little Joseph, did you get those
bulls moved to the lower pasture?

JOE

That's Little Joe, or just Joe, if
you please.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
Very well. How 'bout, Joseph?

Joe looks at Ben as if he has had a mental lapse.

JOE
Anyway, yeah, Pa. And I must have stepped in something out there in the field. Something's a little gamey. Joe leans back and checks his boot soles.

ADAM
Ah, Pa. What ever did you decide to do about that fence row over on the North side? The one near Nelson's place. Near where the treasure you talk about is supposed to be buried.

A muffled thumping sound is heard by Ben, seemingly from under the table.

Ben moves the tablecloth aside to peep under the table.

BEN
(somewhat confused)
Did you say something, Hop Sing?

Hoss is remaining silent, yet continues to shift in his seat.

Hop Sing has obviously caught the odor of something ungodly and musters his best manners to remain courteous.

HOP SING
Hop Sing say nothing. Hop Sing think goat in room somewhere.

BEN
Adam, to answer your question, the fences on the North --

Ben notices Adam struggling.

BEN (cont'd)
Adam? Adam? ADAM! What's wrong, son?

Adam's eyes are watering profusely and he is trying to subsist on as few breaths as possible until the air clears. He is oblivious to Ben's rhetoric.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE
Pa, something stinks!

BEN
(ignoring Joe)
Well, Hoss, you're awful quiet today.

It's as if Hoss doesn't even hear his father.

Another short sequence of muffled thumping is heard, this time by Joe.

BEN (cont'd)
Hoss? ... HOSS!?

Hoss is startled into full consciousness.

HOSS
I didn't do it! Honest!

BEN
Do what?!

HOSS
Ah, I meant I didn't do the job you told me to do the other day out by the goat pen.

HOP SING
What?! More goat?

BEN
Never mind that, Hoss. Why are you so quiet?

Just then, Ben catches a nose-full of the concentrated, deadly cloud of natural gas drifting over the table.

BEN (cont'd)
(Ben glares at Adam)
Whew! What the? ...

ADAM
Hey, don't look at me!

BEN
(refocusing on Joe)
Joeseeph, are you sick?

JOE
Pa, I didn't do it, I swear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Oh no? It certainly seems to be coming from your direction.

JOE

Pa! I swear!

BEN

Joseph! Stop lying! This is your flatulence, I know it!

Hoss can subdue Mother Nature no longer. He produces a very loud crackling noise.

Adam can't get up from the table fast enough.

BEN (cont'd)

Hoss! So it was you! I demand you cease at once!

Hop Sing rushes out of the room with a serving napkin held to his nose.

JOE

Hoss, the least you could have done was warn us!

HOSS

(temporarily, much relieved)

HEY, HOP SING. COME BACK! HOW ABOUT SOME MORE OF THESE CABBAGE DEALS?

EXT. PONDEROSA FRONT YARD -- DAY

Ben is mounting up.

Joe and Hoss stand near him.

BEN

So, you say Roy was, ah, shall we just say, uncooperative on the issue of coming forth with the information about the land boundaries and the hypothetical treasure?

JOE

Huh? Oh, right, Pa. Like I told you, he says he ain't giving any info to us for free.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Well, we'll just see about that. No two-bit lawman is going to shake down the Cartwrights for what's probably ours anyway.

HOSS

Be careful, Pa. You know the story floating around lately. Those Injuns between here and town have been bought and paid for by the Sheriff, or Nelson, or somebody. They seem extra cantankerous lately. Might be out to do you in.

BEN

(laughing)

Son, that will be the day, when an uncivilized, uneducated old Indian or two can stand in my way.

Ben turns his horse around and starts to ride off.

Hop Sing comes running out of the house with a bag.

HOP SING

(loudly)

MR. BEN, MR. BEN. YOU FORGOT BIG LUNCH.

Ben stops his horse and turns his head as Hop Sing catches up to him.

BEN

Oh, thanks, Hop Sing. Good ole beef jerky you made?

HOP SING

No. Good ole spinach roll. Very good. Won says best ever.

BEN

It better be more tasty than those egg rolls!

HOP SING

But, you not try egg roll!

BEN

Huh? Oh yeah.

HOP SING

Spinach roll, extra good. You see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Thanks, but I ain't counting on it!

Ben turns to ride away. A quarter mile out, he tosses the lunch into the brush and laughs to himself.

EXT. TRAIL TO VIRGINIA CITY -- DAY

Ben has been pushing his horse hard and it hasn't much left to give.

BEN

Come on, you old flea-bag. Get going. I got important business in town.

The horse comes to a complete stop, in a rocky landscape, refusing to budge.

BEN (cont'd)

Giddy-up! ... Move! ... COME ON!

Ben gouges the horse with both of his dull spurs.

The horse turns around to look at Ben then rares up and throws him off. Ben lands on his bottom on the ground, then manages to get up and dust himself off.

BEN (cont'd)

(to horse)

Why you ...

Then, an arrow whizzes by Ben's head, narrowly missing his right ear. He gives the perfunctory look around before he scurries behind a nearby rock for cover.

BEN (cont'd)

What the ... ?

Ben is suddenly surrounded by many Indians. Seeing his predicament, he rises to converse with his visitors.

BEN (cont'd)

Ug... Kimosabe! How! You hold-um up. Wait-um a minute.

INDIAN

Ug. Wannahannahanna. Nee no watika.

BEN

Say, what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

An Indian approaches Ben, raises his bow and sets an arrow aimed right at him.

Ben senses his communication is ineffective but is left with little else.

BEN (cont'd)

Me like-um papoose.
 (gestures to his own
 mid-section)
 We trade-um wampum for shiny belt
 buckle?

INDIAN

Fanna wanna.

BEN

Yes! Wanna trade with you. That's
 right! Fanna wanna trade.
 (points to belt
 buckle)
 New belt! Buckle shiny! Make-um
 good wampum for you.

The drawn arrow's aim is lowered and is shot through Ben's right boot, narrowly missing his big toe.

During the immediate confusing aftermath, Ben demonstrates his quick draw and gets the drop on the whole bunch of Indians.

BEN (cont'd)

Ah ha! How who's boss? It seems I
 have gained the upper hand. Maybe
 you like-um talk with white man NOW,
 huh?

Just as he finishes getting his threatening words out, another tribesman, previously hidden behind a boulder, shoots an arrow through Ben's hat, skimming it and his toupee from his head and carrying them out thirty feet, tacking both to a tree trunk.

BEN (cont'd)

HEY, MY HAT! MY PIECE!

Recognizing the English homonym to "peace", the tribe members suddenly seem to calm down and be more willing to do business with Ben. Ben picks up on the sea change as well.

BEN (cont'd)

Maybe we smoke-um piece pipe. Huh?
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (cont'd)
 (laughing)
 No pun intended.

Looking directly at Ben, all the Indians have deadpan expressions.

Ben motions to the Indians come to him so he can trade with them for items in his saddle bag. Since he is still using his alternate saddle, after his sons lost his good one, he quickly realizes the trinket compartment is way too small to contain a wide enough variety of doodads.

BEN (cont'd)
 (to the nearest
 Indian)
 Say, aren't you the one known around here as Wild Beaver?

INDIAN
 No, that my sister. Heap big fox.
 You like-um meet?

BEN
 (thinks hard)
 Heap Big Fox is her name? I thought you just said her name was Wild Beaver.

INDIAN
 Ug. White man use-um double talk!

BEN
 My mistake. Well, let's get-um on with this.

Ben opens up the trinket compartment in his saddle and pulls out the only item stored within: a replica Santa Fe Railroad china tea cup. Ben is as surprised as anyone over the weak trading item he has produced.

BEN (cont'd)
 Me want-um safe passage to and from town. Me have-um valuable tea cup to trade-um for trip. You like-um?

Just then several of the tribe members drop to the ground and press their ears to the dirt.

BEN (cont'd)
 What? Huh? What's going on? Does that mean you accept my trade?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INDIAN

Wampum papoose!

BEN

OK? Deal?

(pointing to Indians
with ears to the
ground)

What-um are they doing?

INDIAN

Elehgumoqik!

BEN

Oh, I see. They're listening for the
vibrations of distant buffalo? For
food?

(educating the
Indians)

You see, in my life there is this
place called the Ponderosa and we
have a cook. His name is Hop Sing.
And --

At the mention of Hop Sing's name, all of the Indians on the
ground arise and start to whoop it up.

BEN (cont'd)

-- he's the one who prepares our
food. Mostly beef. You know. Oh,
sorry. I guess you didn't get that.
I mean, you-um know.

Indians quiet down and then bow to Ben. They offer multiple
lit peace pipes, which he accepts and, unsure of the Indian
customs, feels obligated to smoke simultaneously.

BEN (cont'd)

(coughing)

Thank you gentlemen. I will be on my
way.

(coughing)

Don't take-um any wooden nickels.
And speaking of wooden things ...

(coughing)

... I don't suppose any of you would
know anything about wooden teeth worn
by George Washington.

INDIAN

You correct, Kimosabe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben walks over to the tree and retrieves his hat and rug then mounts up to continue his journey, still hacking.

BEN

(quips)

Those smoke signals... plenty potent.

(coughing)

But, me like-um. And how!

INDIAN

Make-um big wampum. The great leader speak. We see you, few moon. Spirit Wong proclaim.

BEN

Now you chose to speak English?! ...
Spirit Wong?!

EXT. VIRGINIA CITY -- SAME

Ben arrives at Sheriff Roy Sugar's office on Main St. He dismounts, ties up his horse and walks into the office.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- SAME

The Sheriff is sleeping.

BEN

Roy! ROY!!

Roy wakes up and sees his old friend, Ben.

ROY

Ben Cartwright, you crusty old buckeroo, you. How you been?

BEN

Roy, let's cut the small talk. We both know why I am here. You conveyed to me via Joseph the fact that you were going to be completely uncooperative with regard to information concerning the treasure and its whereabouts.

ROY

Now, hold on, Ben. I was joking with Joe. Didn't he get it? All that extortion stuff: a joke! I just

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROY (cont'd)
wanted to see if I could get him to
have you ride to town for a visit.

BEN
What the ... ?

ROY
Yeah. Just wanted to see my old
friend again.

BEN
And, who's that?

ROY
You, you old buzzard!

BEN
You're a buzzard! You had me ride
all night to get here to learn that
this was just a joke? Why, I oughtta
--

(heating up)
I 'bout got my big toe skewered by an
Injun, and, they scored a trinket
from me! Almost lost my piece too.

ROY
(smiling)
Was Wild Beaver in on that?

BEN
Unfortunately, no.
(annoyed)
Hold on a second, Roy. We're still
discussing this useless trip.

ROY
Now calm down Ben. The other reason
I got you here is to discuss a
financial deal. This crazy bunch of
circus people I got working down the
street for a couple of weeks is a
real boost to the economy. At least
to mine. I collect rent - in gold
dust - and they, in turn attract
large audiences that pay admission,
on which I levy a 40 percent tax.
It's beautiful, I tell ya.

BEN
I don't see how that can help me,
though.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROY

Here's how you can benefit. Did Joe tell you about the experience my brother had with their fortune teller?

BEN

Yeah, I think he did. Maybe. I don't know. He coulda said something and I didn't hear him or pay any attention. Joe says a lot of things. Mostly about foxes. To be honest, I couldn't swear he did or didn't.

ROY

Are you through?

BEN

What's your problem?

ROY

Listen. I told Joe that my brother went to see her and she told him that he was going to inherit a large sum of money from a distant relative back East. How 'bout that?

BEN

It don't mean squat! And you know it. Anybody can make up stuff like that.

ROY

Yeah, you're right. But how about this?! She told me, yours truly, that I was going to have a house guest move in unexpectedly and that this person was going to be a female who was a real looker.

BEN

So?

ROY

So this. It happened yesterday! My brother took off to go take the cure so my sister-in-law moved in with us for a while. I figure I'll spend a little time trying to cure her, if you know what I mean!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Shame on you, Roy. Your sister-in-law? Your brother's wife? Shame on you.

ROY

Well, maybe, but you're missing the point. The fortune teller nailed it. So, I figure, why don't you pay her a visit and see if she can help in your treasure hunt?

BEN

Aw, Roy, that's a bunch of crap! Nobody can predict the future.

ROY

Did I mention that she is a real knockout? And, she smells good too.

BEN

Smells good?

ROY

Real good. Ooh la la! And, I mean that in the good way.

BEN

(smiling)

So, how do I get an, "appointment", with this fortune teller babe, if you know what I mean?

ROY

Oh, so two-timing Ella is OK, but me chasing my brother's current wife is not?

BEN

Enough of the circular logic, Roy. Who is this fortune teller?

ROY

Madam Simpkins. Go to the big tent and ask for Sister Flora.

BEN

Sister Flora? But, I would want Simpkins.

ROY

(smiling)

They'll know what you're after.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

This better be good, Roy. I will have ridden a long way to come up empty if it ain't. Say Roy. Let me ask you something. Ever heard George Washington had wooden teeth?

ROY

Seems like I did hear that once. They must have been a bear to keep going, what with the sure rot and all. And, it's beyond me how he was able to eat goobers and such.

BEN

Never considered that.

ROY

Well, think about it.

BEN

So, you believe it's true? He had wooden teeth?

ROY

I guess. I don't know. Why do you care about this?

BEN

I get the drift that Hop Sing is considering getting some.

ROY

Wooden teeth?

BEN

Yep. And, if he does, he'll try to switch to a softer cuisine filled with who knows what types of Chinese chemicals to postpone his own tooth rot and splintered molars. Now, I don't know about you, but I've never eaten a soft steak. And I never want to eat one. I have got to think of a way to dissuade him.

ROY

Want me to arrest him and keep him here a while and make him have larger concerns than swapping his teeth for wooden ones? Or, you could just fire him or, better yet, trade him to the railroad for some of their lanterns.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROY (cont'd)
Aren't you into doctoring them up
these days?

BEN
Thanks. I'll figure out something.
Let me go on down to the circus tent
to find Simpkins. I hope she's
having a good day.

ROY
Better call her, Madam Simpkins, Ben.

EXT. VIRGINIA CITY -- SAME

Ben walks his horse down Main St. to the large tent, whose
exterior is illuminated by the afternoon sun.

He sees signs for Stella the Bearded Lady, Mahatma Gupta and
Madam Simpkins so he enters the tent's main door.

INT. CIRCUS TENT -- SAME

TICKET TAKER
Yes sir ... what show did you want to
see? I must tell you, however, that
Mr. Gupta has seen fit to leave the
Circus.

BEN
I don't give a rat's rear end about
Gupta. Where's Sister Flora?

TICKET TAKER
Oh. Did Roy send you?

BEN
Yeah.

TICKET TAKER
Ah, well, Sister Flora is off today.
What do you want?

BEN
I am trying to find Madam Simpkins.

TICKET TAKER
You need to have a ticket.

BEN
A ticket? Where do I get that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TICKET TAKER

(points to tent
door)

Over there. In the next tent.

BEN

Oh.

Ben walks through the tent door.

TICKET SELLER

What can I do for you, sir? Which show did you want to see? I must tell you, however, that Mr. Gupta has seen fit to leave the Circus.

BEN

I know that! Listen, don't try jacking me, man. I want to talk to Madam Simpkins. I heard Sister Flora is off today.

TICKET SELLER

Oh, did Roy send you?

BEN

Yes. What's going on? Why does that matter to everyone?

TICKET SELLER

(dismissive)

OK, that will be ten dollars.

BEN

What? ... That's higher than a cat's back! She must be plenty good, for that price.

TICKET SELLER

What are we talking about here? Madam Simpkins reads palms and tells the future. Sister Flora is off today.

BEN

Right. I know.

TICKET SELLER

Oh, OK. I thought you may be thinking that Madam performed some other service.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
I wish! ... Here's the money. Can we
just get on with it?

Ben hands him the ten dollars.

BEN (cont'd)
OK. Where is she?

TICKET SELLER
Who?

BEN
Madam Simpkins!

TICKET SELLER
(points to door Ben
came through already)
Oh. You'll have to go back in there
in the other tent to talk to the
ticket taker.

Ben walks back through the door.

TICKET TAKER
What can I do for you, sir? Which
show did you want to see? I must tell
you, however, that Mr. Gupta has seen
fit to leave the Circus.

BEN
I WAS JUST HERE!

TICKET TAKER
Well, I see a lot of people, mister.
Please get in line. And, calm down.

BEN
There is no line!

TICKET TAKER
Ticket please.

BEN
What the ... ?
(thrusts his ticket
out)
Here!

TICKET TAKER
Thank you. Please go right in the
door around the corner labeled,
"MADAM". And, have fun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

We're talking fortune telling still,
right?

Ben walks cautiously around the corner, still in the dim interior of the tent, and sees three doors, one marked "MEN", one marked "WOMEN" and one marked "MADAM". Not being able to see that well, he confuses "WOMEN" and "MADAM" and walks into the ladies room, spartan as it is, whereupon he sees, sitting in front of a mirror, an overweight, half-dressed woman trimming her nose hairs while a drunk cowboy pulls his shirt off.

BEN (cont'd)

Are you Simpkins?

WOMAN

No! The name is Candy Samples. This is a private room, Mr.! Get out!

Ben backs out quickly and then luckily chooses the "MADAM" door next. Upon entering, he sees a veiled person seated at a table. The room is only dimly lit. Several lanterns sit off to the side.

MADAM SIMPKINS

Hello, sir. Please sit down. And please take off your hat.

Ben takes a seat, as requested.

MADAM SIMPKINS (cont'd)

Your hat, sir?

Ben removes his hat but in doing so leaves his toupee askew.

MADAM SIMPKINS (cont'd)

What do you request of the great Madam Simpkins today? To talk to a dead relative? Get resolution on some of those pesky bills or just peer into the future?

BEN

The last one. I need to see the future. And, by the way, I could get those weak lanterns over there working better for you if you like.

MADAM SIMPKINS

(all business)

What aspect of the future interests you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Madam Simpkins notices the toupee misalignment and reaches out to straighten it for him. Ben jerks back a little.

BEN

Hey! Let's not get so personal.
Least ways, not yet.

(smiling)

I want to see the part of the future
that gives me, shall we say, more
financial clarity.

MADAM SIMPKINS

I see. Well, let's see what we can
do.

Madam Simpkins uncovers a round, clear glass orb with gold accoutrements, and begins to wave her hands over the sphere.

MADAM SIMPKINS (cont'd)

(after a few
seconds)

I see a nasty divorce in your future.
Too bad. You will lose most of your
property.

BEN

I'm not even married!

MADAM SIMPKINS

Huh? Oh, no. Wait. I see. I see,
I had the orb backwards.

Madam Simpkins giggles nervously and reorients the orb, then proceeds.

MADAM SIMPKINS (cont'd)

OK, now. Oh yes, I see, that was a
previous time in your life. And
there were three women.

BEN

Old news. Tell me something I don't
know.

MADAM SIMPKINS

I see three boys. No, three men.
And an oriental man: a cunning man,
who possesses high-end jewelry.

BEN

Yes. It must be my three sons. And
our houseboy, Hop Sing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (cont'd)
 (thinking)
 High-end? Jewelry?

MADAM SIMPKINS
 Is the name of one of your three sons, MacMurray? No, Bub. No, I see now. Adam. And he has a horse. No, that's Hoss. And a little brother. A half brother. In fact, all brothers are half brothers.

(acknowledging
 potency)
 My, you were a busy man!
 (grins at Ben)
 And what is the familial relationship between the brothers? Is one like a third step-cousin, once removed from the other?

BEN
 Can we confine this to a professional level and get to the point? I don't want to be here all day.

MADAM SIMPKINS
 Calm down, sir. The real fun now begins.

BEN
 I thought you were only a fortune teller. Is this why this thing cost me ten dollars? I thought the naughty stuff was --

MADAM SIMPKINS
 The palm reading, you dope!

BEN
 I see.

MADAM SIMPKINS
 Now, lemme see your palm. Right palm.

Ben puts his hat on again and presents his left hand.

MADAM SIMPKINS (cont'd)
Right hand! And please remove your hat.

BEN
 Sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben retracts his left hand, but then pushes it out again.

MADAM SIMPKINS

Listen. Either cooperate or this is over. And, by the way, there would be no refund!

BEN

(points to his left hand with his right hand)

But I consider this my right hand. My right hand is the wrong hand. Southpaw. You know.

(chuckling, relenting)

Oh, very well.

Ben finally gives Madam Simpkins his right hand.

MADAM SIMPKINS

Please take off your hat.

(pausing until ...)

Well, this is surely a large hand. But a hard working hand, so to speak. I've got to say, I have -

Madam Simpkins suddenly feels the urge to sneeze and instinctively raises her hand, which is holding Ben's hand, to cover her mouth.

MADAM SIMPKINS (cont'd)

AHHHHHH CHOOOOOOOO!

Mucous is all over Ben's hand.

MADAM SIMPKINS (cont'd)

Oh, I am sorry, sir. Please forgive me.

Ben is just looking at goo dripping off of his hand.

Madam Simpkins grabs a cloth and cleans things up.

MADAM SIMPKINS (cont'd)

Please forgive me. I am truly sorry. Here. Here's a coupon for a discount on your next visit.

(continuing)

Now, where were we? Oh, yes ... I see you have a very interesting life line.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

A what?

MADAM SIMPKINS

Life line. This line that runs from the left bottom to the right top.

(points it out to

Ben)

Here. See?

BEN

No, I think that's where one of Joseph's minks tore into me that time. He had this crazy notion to raise those mean little critters to make his own fur coats for his gals. It was my job to catch'em and skin'em.

MADAM SIMPKINS

Whatever. Anyway, this means that there is trouble lying ahead for you. Big trouble.

Madam Simpkins returns to the orb.

MADAM SIMPKINS (cont'd)

(waving hands over
the orb)

I see a man known to his admirers as just D.W. Ever heard of such a man? Wait. I see this D.W. pulling strings, so to speak, and a shower of gold dust coming down on him in a freshly-dug hole. Wait. Yes, it is gold dust. There are other diminutive accomplices there too. Wait. Hold it. Yes, and I see an arbitrary land boundary.

BEN

(intrigued)

Are there any leprechauns involved? Is D.W. a leprechaun? Is Nelson there? Nelson's men? Is there a treasure?

MADAM SIMPKINS

Treasure? No, no ... It's a little hazy, but now it is clearing up. Yes. I see a couple of Chinamen. Short men. They are all laughing. Adorned with what appear to be top-

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADAM SIMPKINS (cont'd)
shelf jewels. Say, I wonder where
they shop.

BEN
I knew it!

MADAM SIMPKINS
Knew what?

BEN
I had had a dream about this. There
were short "Irish" people digging a
hole. They threatened me. But I got
the impression that they were really
only Chinks speaking Irish and that
there was vast wealth involved too.

(exclaiming)
I think they may have gotten my
treasure!

MADAM SIMPKINS
I don't know anything about that, but
you must believe me now. This D.W.
fellow is your nemesis.

BEN
Who?

MADAM SIMPKINS
No, D.W.

BEN
What?

MADAM SIMPKINS
Nemesis. Arch-enemy. He thwarts you
forever.

BEN
Who is my nemesis?

MADAM SIMPKINS
No. D.W. is your nemesis.

BEN
Whatever. Ah, and, thwarts? What's
that?

MADAM SIMPKINS
He gets in your way. He fights you.
He prevents you from reaching your
goals.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

I say the second choice. Right?

MADAM SIMPKINS

It's all of those, you clown!

Madam Simpkins is looking at Ben like he is mentally unbalanced.

BEN

I see. But, let's get back to the riches part of the vision of the future. What is the origin of the jewels?

MADAM SIMPKINS

Good question. I wish I knew. But now I see something else that may interest you. I see a "For Sale" sign on a ranch and it's in this area of Nevada. Exactly where is not clear. The sign will be posted very soon. But, alas, I sense you have insufficient funds to attempt to buy it yourself.

(glances at the
clock)

That's it. Time's up.

BEN

Hey! That's not ten dollar's worth! What is this? You better reconsider and keep the seer business going or I'll have my legal team all over you and this so-called circus like a cheap suit. Ever heard of Abraham Katz? ... Katz? And, I know Roy, the Sheriff. I'll get him to revoke your permit! I swear I will!

Madam Simpkins has essentially dismissed Ben and is not intimidated in the least.

MADAM SIMPKINS

(remembering her
full schedule)

Next!

A large man with a sharp metal rod enters the EXIT door to escort Ben out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
 (Ben's departure is
 forced)
 Get your hands off me! Do you know
 who I am? You'll pay for this!
 (to circus as a
 whole)
 YOU WILL ALL PAY FOR THIS!

EXT. VIRGINIA CITY -- LATER

Feeling humiliated, cheated and almost violated, Ben walks
 back down the street to Roy's office.

BEN
 ROY! ROY, COME OUT! ROY!

Roy opens the door, wiping the sleep from his eyes and
 yawning.

ROY
 Ben. I thought you were long gone.
 Did you visit Madam Simpkins?

BEN
 (condescendingly)
 Why, yes. Yes I did. It seems,
 according to the prophetic Madam
 that, let's see, I have a phantom
 nemesis known as D.W., jewels and
 gold dust are involved - somehow -
 and a ranch near here may be for
 sale.
 (feeling cheated)
 How's that for prognostication? A
 little vague, don't you think? But,
 I do wish I could believe that last
 part. Could net me a load if that
 treasure is there and I can get hold
 of that land.

ROY
 Did you say, gold dust? The whole
 Circus must be in on this! Lot's of
 gold dust activity going around. You
 know they paid me in gold dust - the
 rent for the Circus tent action. Now
 I'm thinking it may have been a
 deluxe ream job!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Hmmm. They use it for legal tender, it seems. Could be that that Al Chemist guy is the one making the stuff. Isn't he the one who gave it to you?

ROY

Yes. Yes, he is.
(pondering)
Say. This gives me an idea, Ben. Do you still have that stash of gold dust from your old mine?

BEN

Yeah. And, I do have a fair number of bags hidden away. I'm not going to tell you where though. They're somewhere in my big barn. I'm not saying where in the barn, though. I mean, even if you go up to the hay loft, you'd still have to be told under which pile of hay they are. So, don't you get any big ideas.

ROY

(Roy considering
Ben's mental state)

Never mind where they are, here's what I was thinking. You take your real gold dust and purchase more bags of that fake gold dust that Al Chemist can make.

BEN

But Roy, hold it. If its fake gold dust, why did you accept it as payment for their rent?

ROY

Well, I didn't know it was fake then.

BEN

Well?

ROY

Well, what?

BEN

Are you going back now and make them pay real money?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROY

I don't know. Didn't I tell you, or was it Joe, that I was also skimming forty percent of the ticket proceeds? And, that's in good old cash. What do I care if one or two bags of the gold dust is fake? But let me finish what I was suggesting to you.

(focusing the idea)

Like I started to say, you use some of your real gold dust to pay Al Chemist to make bags of fake gold dust. One of your bags to pay for maybe nine or ten bags of the fake stuff. You accumulate enough fake dust to cover what you think Nelson might be willing to take for his land, if it's his place that's even going to be for sale. Nelson never comes to town; he ain't gonna suspect anything.

BEN

Nice plan, Roy. You forgot one thing.

ROY

Oh yeah? What?

BEN

How am I going to do that transaction fast enough to be the first in line when the land goes up for sale. The Madam said the "For Sale" sign was imminent.

ROY

Well, I could go talk to Al and see if he could get started producing the fake gold dust on my word that the payment for it will arrive within twenty four hours. I know he works fast and kind of out the back door, shall we say, so in one day he might be able to make a couple hundred bags.

BEN

That quickly?!

(completing the
plan)

And I could rush back home and send Hoss on our wagon back to pay for the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (cont'd)
fake dust: trading gold for gold, or
should I say, gold faux gold.

Ben is laughing heartily at his weak pun.

ROY
(enjoying the
merriment)
You took the words right out of my
mouth. Like an eye for an eye?

BEN
Aye!

Ben laughs even more. Roy becomes confused.

BEN (cont'd)
I guess, to be on the safe side, I'll
send a few dozen of the real bags
back with Hoss. That ought to be
enough to do that one-to-ten bag
exchange.

ROY
I think so, too. I'm hungry. You
too?

BEN
What did you have in mind?

ROY
I thought we could wander over early
to that rabbit supper they're having
and see what's cooking. Maybe pick
up some groundhog.

BEN
Well, I reckon I'll have to take a
rain check. I've got to get going so
I can get Hoss back here right away.

Ben mounts up to start his ride back.

BEN (cont'd)
OK, Roy. You go talk to Mr. Chemist
and I'll get Hoss back with the
payment.

EXT. PONDEROSA FRONT YARD -- DAY

Ben rides up, after traveling all night. He gets off his
horse and enters the house.

EXT. PONDEROSA FRONT PORTICO -- SAME

BEN
Hoss? HOSS?

Hop Sing comes running from the kitchen

BEN (cont'd)
Where's Hoss? I need him to do something for me. I'm pooped.

HOP SING
Mr. Hoss take break in bunkhouse. Say tired.

Ben runs out to the bunkhouse to find Hoss.

INT. PONDEROSA BUNKHOUSE -- SAME

Ben enters the bunkhouse and sees Hoss sawing logs. He goes over to him.

BEN
Hoss!
(shaking Hoss)
Hoss! Wake up!

HOSS
(coming to life)
Pa? Pa? What is it?

BEN
I need you to go get three dozen bags of my old, but real, gold dust from where I had hidden it in the barn. You remember where that place is, right?

HOSS
You mean upstairs over near the post where you hang the goat harnesses?

BEN
Shhhh! You want everyone to know that location!
(looks around)
Yes. Get those bags. Take them as fast as you can to Sheriff Roy, in town. He'll take it from there. Hang around for a day or so. He'll give you more bags to bring back. Got it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS
Get more to bring back. Got it.
Eight bags.

BEN
Eight? I said three dozen.

HOSS
Right. Eight.

BEN
A dozen is twelve! Can't you count?
Multiply?

HOSS
Thirty six bags. Take them them to
Roy. But, won't I need to be riding
at night? It would be dark. I could
drive it into a crevasse or
something. And I can't go but so
fast. That wagon is a real piece of
junk.

BEN
Grab a few of those lanterns I rigged
up for my Ella rides. Those things
do the trick. Light them up if it
gets too dark.

EXT. PONDEROSA FRONT YARD -- SAME

Hoss gets things together and heads out to Virginia City to
meet Roy with three dozen bags of real gold dust.

EXT. TRAIL TO VIRGINIA CITY -- LATER

Still in the daylight, Hoss is driving the wagon lickety
split on the trail to Virginia City to keep the date with
Roy and do the gold exchange. Around a bend, however, he
hits a snag in the form of an Indian roadblock.

Hoss slows the wagon and raises one hand, palm forward, as
he approaches the gatekeeper.

HOSS
How! Me need-um get through.
Pronto.

INDIAN
Ug. What-um hurry? Need-um pay tax
to Wild Beaver.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS

Who? I mean, who-um?

INDIAN

No need-um try speak-um our language.

HOSS

Very well. What will it take-um, I mean, take, to let me go on my way?

(Indian frowns at
continued
patronization)

I'm kind of in a hurry.

INDIAN

It take-um many semolian, or equivalent. What you got in wagon under cover? Many trinket? No need-um more tea cup.

HOSS

Ah, oh, that stuff? Heh, heh, heh. It's only bags of fools gold, I mean, raw ore we are taking to town to give to the poor kids. You know, like toys. Kids like that stuff. Really.

INDIAN

Ug. Sound-um bogus. You pull-um cover off.

Hoss is faced with arriving in town with nothing or being dealt with by the Indians. He chooses the latter.

Abruptly, Hoss commands his horses to get going and they break through the weak gate set up by the Indians. He shifts into high gear and doesn't look back.

INDIAN (cont'd)

(to associate)

White man fall-um for this every time. Our man, Selling New Trousers, should get-um a new customer soon. We make-um sweet commission.

Indians yuk it yup as they set their roadblock back up and return to wait for the next traveler.

EXT. PONDEROSA BUNKHOUSE -- DAY

After having ridden all night to get back with the bags of gold, Hoss, woozy and tired, but with new pants, returns to

CONTINUED:

the Ponderosa. He quickly provides HAROLD with instructions and then immediately heads to the bunkhouse but crashes into a deep, fume-induced sleep, before he can even get in the door.

EXT. PONDEROSA FRONT YARD -- LATER

BEN
(hands to mouth,
screaming)
HOSS!? YOU HERE, BOY? IF YOU'RE
HERE, YOU BETTER COME RIGHT NOW!
THIS IS YOUR PA SPEASING!

Hop Sing arrives in a run.

HOP SING
You call, Mr. Ben?

BEN
Yeah, Hop Sing, I call. But not you.
I'm trying to see if Hoss has gotten
back yet. You seen him yet?

HOP SING
No, Mr. Ben. Hop Sing cooking new
Chinese dish for supper. Called
matzah ball.

BEN
(looking worried)
Chinese? It sounds Mexican to me.
Anyway, I don't know if we're up to
eating anything right now. When you
see Hoss you tell him to get his
tokus out to the barn. You hear?
And tell him to bring the "stuff".
He'll know what that means.

HOP SING
Yes, Mr. Ben. I just go back to
cooking matzah ball. When see Mr.
Hoss, I send tokus to barn.

INT. BARN HAY LOFT -- SAME

BEN
 (to bunch of his
 hands)
 Now boys, here's where we'll hide the
 remainder of the real, gold dust,
 assuming Hoss has some left.

Ben walks over to the other side of the hay loft.

BEN (cont'd)
 And, here is where we'll hide the
phony gold dust that Hoss is bringing
 back as we speak. Got it? We can't
 afford to lose track of which sack
 collection is which. The Circus
 people in town who I have gotten to
 make up this fake gold dust will have
 done such a good job that even a
 trained eye like mine can't tell the
 difference sometimes. To give you a
 little extra incentive, anyone who
 does swap the gold sacks, accident or
 not, will be hung. By me.
 Personally.

HAROLD
 But, Mr. Cartwright, how would you
 even know one of us had even swapped
 them bags, if'n you can't tell the
 difference?

BEN
 (disbelieving)
 Well, I'll tell you, Harold, it's
 like this. I lied. I can tell the
 difference. How's that?!

Hop Sing enters barn in a run, yelling.

HOP SING
 Mr. Ben! Mr. Ben! Find Mr. Hoss out
 near bunkhouse on ground spinning
 around like one of the Three Stooges.

BEN
 Who?

HOP SING
 Mr. Hoss.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
No. Spinning like who?

HOP SING
Stooge. Just come down, see him.

BEN
(to Hop Sing)
Did he eat some of that matzah crap
you were cooking?

Ben looks to his hands to see if they appreciate his jab at Hop Sing.

BEN (cont'd)
(to hands)
That boy of mine will eat anything.
I once watched him gobble down a 15-
pound bag of stone-hard corn seed
like he had some sort of super
gizzard that needed filling up. Now,
you know, that ain't right!

EXT. PONDEROSA BUNKHOUSE -- SAME

Hoss is on the ground twitching wildly.

BEN
Hop Sing, I thought you said he was
going around in circles. He's doing
no such thing. His movements are
more rectilinear. But I'll grant
you, something does appear to be
ailing him.

Ben bends down to Hoss's face and grabs him by the neck.

BEN (cont'd)
Hoss! Hoss! What's the matter?
Speak to me, son! You choking?

HAROLD
Maybe he did eat some bad food. Like
Hop Sing said. I mean, you never
know.

BEN
Hop Sing's concoctions are bad
sometimes, but not that bad!

All men yuk it up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOP SING

(to Ben)

You no like Hop Sing food? Maybe you want cook for self. Maybe you really want woman housekeeper. Maybe pretty woman with store-bought dress and big won-tons and fancy jewel.

BEN

(momentary trance,
then back)

What? Again with the jewels?! We'll talk about later, 'Sing. Ah, hem ... Now, let's tend to Hoss. Someone go get a pale of cold water.

HAROLD

Cold water? Wouldn't that require refrigeration? I'd say you're out of luck in that department, podna.

BEN

Re- ... what? And since when do you address your employer as "podna"?

HAROLD

(backing off)

I mean, cold water could be found if there was a nearby mountain stream or some such. Is there?

BEN

In the semi-desert?! What does this area look like, Pea Patch, West Virginia?

(disgusted)

Just go get a bucket of any temperature water so I can try to revive my poor son.

Harold runs off with the bucket. Hoss is still thrashing about on the ground.

BEN (cont'd)

Hoss! Son! Did you bring home the bags of ...

(cautiously)

... phony gold dust from town?

(shaking him)

Hoss! Wake up!

Harold returns with a bucket of water.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (cont'd)
Well? ... Throw the water on him!

Harold tosses the tepid water on Hoss' legs.

BEN (cont'd)
Not there, you idiot! On his head!

HAROLD
Oh. I thought you would not want to mess up his big ole, pieced-together hat. It's a nice ole big 'un.

BEN
Go get some more water, you fool.

Harold runs off again. Hoss begins to come to.

BEN (cont'd)
Hoss! What happened? Why were you having fits?

HOSS
(groggy)
Pa? Is that you, Pa?

BEN
It ain't Aunt Jemima!

Ben looks around for approval of his humor.

BEN (cont'd)
(turning back to
Hoss)
Tell me, son. Did you get the other bags of gold dust from those Circus losers?

HOP SING
Circus losers!? No need generalize.
Not all loser. Alchemist very professional.

BEN
You know him?

HOP SING
Might be former cook Smith place.
Sum Ting Wong. Wong very good.

BEN
'Sing, before you get too heated up about my circus generalization, you
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (cont'd)

better worry more about how much the next railroad gang offers to trade in Chinese help, if you get my drift.

HOP SING

Hop Sing get drift. Like cloud of smoke from scalded bird nest soup.

BEN

What?! Please tell me you just made that up.

Harold gets back with the second water bucket and tosses its contents at Hoss's face, splashing both Hoss and Ben.

BEN (cont'd)

You fool! You know this is a virgin suede vest I am wearing! You ain't supposed to get this wet! Do you have any idea how many weeks you'll have to work to pay for this?

HOSS

(still groggy)

Pa? Is that you? The lantern fumes did me in, I b'lieve. What did you do, fill that thing with pure goat urine this time?

(recalling mission)

Did you get the dust bags?

BEN

What? I haven't seen any bags of gold dust? Where are they?

HOSS

Sure. I told someone to hide them in the hay loft alongside the other bags.

BEN

(realizing the dilemma)

No! No! You didn't mix up the bags! Who did you tell to hide the new bags?

HOSS

Harold.

Ben gets in Harold's face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

(found out)

But you can tell the difference,
right? Right, Mr. Cartwright? Gold
dust expert?

BEN

Harold, you know what I am going to
do to you now?

HAROLD

Hang me?

BEN

You got it, my friend.

HOSS

(becoming more
coherent)

Hanging? Pa, ain't that a little
severe?

BEN

Let's go find a rope and a tree.

EXT. LARGE TREE DOWN NEAR THE CREEK -- SAME

BEN

Now men, ... you too, Hoss!

Hired hands laugh.

BEN (cont'd)

This is what happens to those who go
against the Ponderosa Big Cheese.
The head man. The Big Kahuna. The
Chief.

HAROLD

Whew! I insulted all them people?

Other hired hands laugh.

BEN

That's OK. Go ahead and enjoy your
last bits of humor. Everybody's a
comedian. In just a few minutes
you'll be mending fences - or telling
jokes - in that great bottom forty in
the sky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS

But, Pa. I really think we can use Harold. You know...

(winking at Ben)

... the goat job? If you gotta have that special urine for the Ella "wagon rides", then we better take care of those goats.

BEN

Ah, yes! The goat job.

(thinking)

Maybe you're on to something Hoss. I knew there was a reason I haven't cut you loose yet.

(to hands)

Boys, escort Harold back to the barn. Only this time, take the back entrance.

HAROLD

Oh no! Not that!

BEN

'Fraid so. Them goats need a good cleaning and need to be taught proper hygiene, 'specially them stinking, big, bearded ones. We can't take a chance on anything getting those valuable creatures down. Hop Sing's new contract does not allow me to have him do it.

(glancing at Hoss)

Right, Hoss?

(back to Harold)

So I'll give you three guesses who will be the new Ponderosa Goat Attendant. And the first two don't count!

Ben leaves Harold to his new duties and turns for the house, with Hoss and his employees in tow.

BEN (cont'd)

Fellas, did I ever tell y'all about the time I met this cute little lady on a trip to Abilene? She couldn't have been more than thirteen...

EXT. PONDEROSA FRONT PORTICO -- DAY

The following day, Government officials approach the Ponderosa ranch house with land maps and orders from the President.

One of the G-men knocks at the door.

INT. PONDEROSA DEN -- SAME

BEN

Hey Hop Sing, get that will you? And if it's that bunch from the church trying to convert us again tell them the next time they come around we're going to sick ole Luke on them. And maybe Luke's harem too. They may or may not go for the harem part.

HOP SING

Yes, Mr. Ben.

EXT. PONDEROSA FRONT HALL -- DAY

Hop Sing opens the door.

G-MAN

Hello. We're from the United States Government and --

HOP SING

(in a panic)

Hop Sing legal! Come here to work on railroad but found better gig here. I not want trouble. I --

G-MAN

Hey, hold it. Hold it. We're not after you, my good Chinaman. We're looking for the owner of this ranch. Do you know where he is?

HOP SING

Oh yes. Mr. Ben owner.

(to Ben)

Hey Ben, you've got a visitor.

INT. PONDEROSA DEN -- SAME

BEN

(Ben, to himself)

Ben? Since when did that little turkey get so familiar? We'll just see about this!

Ben walks to the front door.

INT. PONDEROSA FRONT HALL -- SAME

BEN

Why you little oriental... What's the idea of addressing me as -

Ben stops short when he notices the visitors.

BEN (cont'd)

Oh. Hello gentlemen. Can I help you?

G-MAN

Yes. Mr. Cartwright, I am a representative of the Government. We're here checking out the Ponderosa as a possible site for a new Indian reservation. Orders from the President himself.

Ben laughs a little.

BEN

Well, I'm sorry gentlemen. The Ponderosa is not for sale. Now, if you will jus-

G-MAN

Ah, excuse me, Mr. Cartwright. We're not here to buy the Ponderosa.

BEN

Oh. Well, I thought I heard you say you were interested in the Ponderosa as an Indian reservation.

G-MAN

We are. But, if we decide we like it, we can just take it. We don't need to buy anything! President says so. Do you understand?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Did you say, "President"?

G-MAN

Yes, the President of the country.

BEN

Well then, you may know the answer to a question I have. Did George Washington have wooden teeth or not?

G-MAN

Who?

(impatiently)

Do you understand us?

Ben is visibly mad.

BEN

Yes. I understand. Now see if you understand this! I'll give you just one hour to get off my land. And anyway, isn't there a site where Indians live between here and Virginia City? I just rode through a nest of them the other day.

G-MAN

(arrogantly)

And, what if we don't leave?

BEN

Hop Sing, go get Hoss.

Hop Sing is showing some degree of panic and scurries into the house.

G-MAN

What's a hoss?

The government men all laugh.

A few minutes later Hoss ambles from the kitchen to the ranch house front door area, still toothpicking his jaw teeth.

BEN

(proudly)

Gentlemen, Hoss. Hoss, government land thieves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

G-MAN

"Thieves"? Mr. Cartwright, are we supposed to be intimidated by the sheer mass of this man? I mean, are we supposed to be, afraid of this man?

BEN

OK, who sent you? Nelson? Is Nelson or his men behind this? Wild Beaver? The leprechauns? D.W., himself?

G-MAN

(looking at Ben like he has a screw loose)

What?

BEN

Never mind.

G-MAN

I said are we supposed to be afraid of this man here? Horse, I believe it was?

BEN

It's Hoss. And, not necessarily. But you are supposed to be intimidated by this!

(to Hoss)

Hoss, please demonstrate your ability to form a snap judgment.

EXT. PONDEROSA FRONT PORTICO -- DAY

Hoss walks out onto the porch among the visitors, picks up a short piece of sawn lumber and snaps it in two.

The officials look at each other and burst out laughing.

G-MAN

So! So what?

Hoss looks insulted.

BEN

OK. Any of you guys want to try that feat?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

G-MAN

Yeah, I believe Oscar would like to try it. Oscar?

All eyes turn to Oscar.

Oscar steps forward, removes his shirt revealing his Herculean build, picks up a piece of the same wood that Hoss handled and snaps it into eight pieces.

Ben and Hoss look at each other, fearing that their visitors may be more formidable foes than had been first imagined.

BEN

(taking best shot)

Big deal! Hoss is just warming up. Right, Hoss?

HOSS

(caught off guard)

Ah, yeah. Right, Pa.

BEN

How, gentlemen, Hoss will demonstrate a feat so powerful that it has never been used on humans here on the Ponderosa. However, once three horses had to be dealt with this way, rest their souls.

Ben cuts his eyes to the G-men to see if he can tell whether any of them are buying this scare tactic.

BEN (cont'd)

Gentlemen, please step back!

Even Hop Sing is looking like he has absolutely no idea of what is to come.

HOP SING

(to Ben, quietly)

What Mr. Hoss going to do?

BEN

(quietly answering)

Shut up, 'Sing. Just watch.

(to visitors)

Hoss will now do the Nevada Explosion!

(brushing G-men back)

Please! Gentlemen! Please stand back, I beg you!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS

(to Ben, quietly)

Let's not overdo this. How am I supposed to do this Nevada Explosion anyway?

BEN

(back to Hoss)

I don't know. Stall them while I send Hop Sing around back to get Joseph and the boys to lay a trap for these guys. Go on. Get going!

(back to visitors)

Gentlemen, I give you Hoss and the Nevada explosion! Hoss... ?

Hoss takes a few steps forward and begins to slowly twirl and walk about, speaking some unintelligible gibberish.

The G-men look on with amusement not noticing Hop Sing leaving.

INT. PONDEROSA BUNKHOUSE -- SAME

Hop Sing enters the bunkhouse where several men are sound asleep.

HOP SING

Mr. Joe! Mr. Joe! Come quickly! Mr. Ben and Mr. Hoss in deep this time!

BUBBA

Quiet, Chinaman! Little Joe is sleeping.

HOP SING

Mr. Joe not sleep. He need get up and come to house, help!

BUBBA

Now listen, Mr. Woo, or whatever your name is.

HOP SING

Name Sing.

BUBBA

What, that's better? Little Joe was tired. He was up half the night chasing young foxes, ah, I mean, rabid foxes, out of the pasture land.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUBBA (cont'd)
 Yeah, that's right. Pasture. He
 said under no circumstances must he
 be awakened. None! Now, BEAT IT!

HOP SING
 Hop Sing not responsible for what
 happen.

BUBBA
 Huh?!

Hop Sing leaves the bunkhouse.

EXT. PONDEROSA FRONT PORTICO -- SAME

Hoss is tiring of stalling the G-men. The G-men are also
 bored.

G-MAN
 Hey, Goof. Get on with it already!

HOSS
 That's, Hoss.

G-MAN
 Goof, Hoss, whatever! Finish this
 thing! We need to conduct some
 bid'ness.

BEN
 (sensing unease)
 Gentlemen, had enough? Scary, right?

Ben is wondering what is taking Hop Sing so long enlisting
 the help of Joe and some of the boys.

Hop Sing finally returns.

BEN (cont'd)
 (quietly to Hop
 Sing)
 Well, where are they? What happened?

HOP SING
 So sorry, Mr. Ben. Mr. Bubba say Mr.
 Joe sleeping and not want to be
 disturb. Hop Sing disrespected.

BEN
 Is that so?! Well, you go back out
 there and tell Bubba that either he
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (cont'd)
wakes Joseph or I'll personally come
out there and whip his butt!
(urgently)
Go!

INT. PONDEROSA BUNKHOUSE -- SAME

Hop Sing has returned with the fresh order from Ben.

Hop Sing comes face to face with Bubba.

HOP SING
Mr. Ben say that if you don't wake
Mr. Joe he will come out here and
wipe your butt.

BUBBA
Wipe? Are you sure he didn't say,
whip?

HOP SING
You right. He say, whip. He whip
your butt.

BUBBA
(yanking Hop Sing's
chain)
Well, you go back and tell old man
Cartwright that if he wants to me to
wake Little Joe he'll have to tell me
how to wake him. Gently, rudely, ...
how?

Hop Sing hustles out of the bunkhouse with the new reply.

EXT. PONDEROSA FRONT PORTICO -- SAME

All of the G-men are asleep on the porch.

Hoss has stopped his act and has gone to the kitchen to
snatch a morsel of food to sustain his bulk.

Hop Sing arrives with the latest bunkhouse message.

HOP SING
Mr. Ben, Mr. Bubba say he need to
know how to wake Mr. Joe. Gentle or
rude.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Oh, for the love of -- Hey, Hop Sing,
I have an idea. Help me move the
somnolent Oscar out to the bunkhouse.
Be careful not to wake him up.

Using a nearby wheelbarrow, Hop Sing and Ben move Oscar to
the bunkhouse as he continues to saw logs.

Hop Sing and Ben return to the porch where the G-men are
still sleeping.

BEN (cont'd)

Now, Hop Sing, go into the kitchen
and give a yank on the lever labeled
"bunkhouse". Go!

Hop Sing follows directions and soon thereafter there is a
tremendous EXPLOSION out back. Hop Sing runs outside to see
only splinters left where the bunkhouse once stood.

BEN (cont'd)

(yelling, feigning
ignorance)

HOP SING!?! WHAT WAS THAT?

All of the G-men are startled to consciousness.

BEN (cont'd)

And there you have it, gentlemen.
Hoss doing the Nevada Explosion!

The officials realize that their muscle-bound representative
has disappeared.

G-MAN

Hey! We're missing Oscar!

BEN

So you are. Well, like I was saying
gentlemen. The Ponderosa is not for
sale. No matter how much gold dust
Nelson may have offered. You tell
him I said that!

(quietly to Hop
Sing)

Go over and see if Joseph made it out
in time.

HOP SING

Only Don Wong make it out of that
scene.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Huh? ... Who? ... Wong?

EXT. PONDEROSA BACK PORCH -- DAY

Several days have passed since the Nevada Explosion almost took Joe out.

Joe, whose arm is in a sling, is sitting with Hoss on the back porch mulling over the states of their lives.

HOSS

You know, Joe, when all of this ranch nonsense fades out, what are we going to be left with?

Joe has been queried while in a semi-sleep.

JOE

Huh? ... What?

HOSS

When we are too old to work or even watch our hired help work, what will we be doing?

JOE

Same thing as now, I guess. Mostly goofing off. I thought that kind of went with having the Cartwright name! Butta bing!

Both brothers yuk it up.

HOSS

Hey, but didn't you ever want to maybe do something more with your life? I've thought about that for a while now.

JOE

Oh yeah? So, what else would you have wanted to do? Be a food taster?

Joe yuks it up. Hoss is not amused.

HOSS

Dadburnit, I mean it, Joe. I think I'm going to try to be a fiction book writer. They got a lot of them back East. Out here, not so much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

I knew you could read, a little, but I didn't know you could write too.

Joe yuks it up more. Hoss is getting upset.

HOSS

Dadgummit, Joe. I'll have you know that I've been reading this new book about talking animals written by some fella in the South named Harris. And, I believe I could write as good as he does.

JOE

Talking animals?! Hoss, have you ever heard a talking animal?

HOSS

Joe, the work is fiction. Entertainment. He has this fox and a bear, but the fox mainly, always trying to outwit this little rabbit. They are always doing something crazy.

JOE

Foxes? I know a little something about foxes that talk. They can do more than talk, you know.

HOSS

(Hoss chuckles)

Not that kind of fox, Joe. The fox in these tales doesn't need dosed weekly. Anyway, the story goes like this...

Hoss picks up a book and begins to read.

HOSS (cont'd)

"One day atter Brer Rabbit fool 'im wid dat calamus root, Brer Fox went ter wuk en got 'im some tar, en mix it wid some turkentime, en fix up a contrapshun w'at he call a Tar-Baby."

(enthused)

After that, the best I can determine, the tale went on to say that the Fox was trying to get the rabbit stuck to the tar man so he could catch him and make a meal of him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

What the ...? I didn't understand a word of that!

HOSS

Me neither. There were so many "dis's" and "dat's" and "Brer's" thrown in I got confused and had to stop reading. But you get the idea.

JOE

Hoss, I know you said fiction, but that stuff's kind of out there. Who would believe that could happen?

HOSS

Well, I think it could happen. Yeah, making a tar man and fooling someone, I can see that it could happen. Yeah.

JOE

Really!?

HOSS

Sure.

JOE

Well, Mr. big time writer, care to place a wager on whether something like that can work here in Nevada?

HOSS

Well, ... why not? Shall we bet, oh, say, about a hundred dollars?

JOE

That's nowhere, fat man! How about betting our respective inheritances?

Hoss does not want to be perceived as weak so he agrees.

HOSS

You're on! What do we do now?

JOE

You go build one of those tar things and dress it up and we'll see if it fools anybody.

HOSS

Ah, now, fools anybody... Yeah. Now, what exactly will that mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

Well, let's say whoever stops to talk to it first also has to get so mired in its goo that they start crying.

HOSS

Joe. You're my half-brother and I therefore half-way love you. But I can't see any of these grizzled old ranchers out here doing a lot of crying. No. We can't have crying in the bet. Crying?! Where did that come from? We're not some kind of prairie pansies, you know.

JOE

Ok, what do you suggest?

HOSS

How about the person has to get so stuck that they begin calling for help? You know, or yelling.

JOE

So, one step short of crying?

HOSS

Whatever.
 (to Joe,
 disappointed)
Crying?

Hoss shakes his head in disbelief.

JOE

Deal! This, I might say, is going to be the easiest four thousand acres I ever won.

The two men shake hands.

Hoss trots off to begin making his tar man.

INT. PONDEROSA BLACKSMITH SHOP -- SAME

Hoss begins to look around at the tools and supplies that would be at his disposal. TUBBY, the resident blacksmith, is inquisitive.

TUBBY

What are you up to Hoss? About five hundred pounds?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS

(glaring at Tubby)

I'll pretend I didn't hear that...
I'm figuring out how to make a tar
man, Tubby. Now hush while I think.

TUBBY

What's a tar man?

HOSS

It's a few lumps of tar stuff dressed
up like a man. Now Tubby, please. I
need quiet.

TUBBY

What do you need to make such a thing
fer?

HOSS

It's a long story, Tubby. Please
just leave me alone and get back to
your work.

TUBBY

Huh?

HOSS

Tubby! One more word out of you now
and you will be doing nasty goat work
like your buddy, Harold.

Tubby heads off.

Hoss just sits and cogitates, his inheritance wager looming
large.

INT. PONDEROSA KITCHEN -- LATER

HOP SING

Mr. Joe, where is Mr. Hoss?

JOE

Out in one of the sheds I guess.
He's trying to make a tar man.

HOP SING

So sorry, must have wax in ear.

Hop Sing sticks his little fingers in his ears and wiggles
them around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOP SING (cont'd)

Please repeat.

JOE

No, you heard right. I bet him that he couldn't make a tar man so life-like that a passer-by would get stuck up in it and begin to yell. He took the bet!

HOP SING

What dope!

JOE

Yeah, it's almost too easy.

HOP SING

No, not Mr. Hoss. You are dope!

JOE

(laughing)

Hop Sing, have you gone nuts?

HOP SING

In Chinese film I see same thing, many time. Work all time for Don Wong when he lure many chick. All Hoss need to do is sprinkle many spice on tar man, create aroma, then anyone will sniff, come close and touch.

JOE

What?! Then it is possible that I could lose if Hoss finds out about the spice trick?

HOP SING

Not just possible. Certain! Don Wong prove in movie many time.

JOE

(curious)

Don Wong?? Hop Sing, let's be sure that you are not the one providing this information to Hoss. What will it take to keep you quiet, fifty dollars? Here. Here's a fifty-dollar gold piece. Now, no talking about this to anyone.

HOP SING

Mr. Joe generous.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOP SING (cont'd)
 (to self)
 Hop Sing seen better than this!

INT. PONDEROSA BLACKSMITH SHOP -- SAME

HOSS
 Ok, Tubby. What do you think of it?

TUBBY
 It looks pretty good. 'Specially the skeleton.

HOSS
 OK, you're right. I think it did help when you added the iron skeleton to kind of stiffen him up. Now we can bend him and pose him any which way we want.

(acknowledging)
 Heck, the rest of the work was easy, just slapping on heaps of gooey tar and sticking a pipe in his mouth. Now I have to put some clothes on him and figure out where to set him up. Maybe Pa's got some old clothes I could use.

TUBBY
 Where did the tar come from anyway, since there are no known sources for hundreds of miles?

HOSS
 I'll pretend I didn't hear that.

INT. PONDEROSA KITCHEN -- SAME

JOE
 I guess I ought to go see how Hoss is doing. Hey, Hop Sing, remember, no advice about the attractive spices or the bribe dough comes back. Got it?

HOP SING
 Hop Sing remember.
 (to self)
 Fifty dollar coin not even close to worth of four thousand acres, though.

JOE
 What was that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOP SING

Hop Sing not say anything. When Mr. Ben coming home?

JOE

Who knows. He went up to see that lady friend of his, Miss Ella. I sure hope that woman moves in here with us. That's some fine viewing. Oh, mama! 'Top shelf' stuff there! Pa must have dropped a wod on her.

HOP SING

Mr. Joe not just whistling Dixie!
(extending Joe's sentiment)
Not seen big time operator like Mr. Ben since Don Wong.

JOE

Yeah, she's a fox alright!
(Joe wolf-howls, then wonders)
Don Wong? But speaking of Dixie, let me go on out and check on that stupid oaf of a brother, building his Southern tar man.

Joe can visualize the bet making him filthy rich.

JOE (cont'd)

Too easy. Too easy.

HOP SING

(bluntly)

Why Mr. Joe never have lady friend? You not man?

JOE

'Sing, I don't like your innuendo. The right woman ain't come along yet. That's all. Maybe Pa will strike out with Ella and I can swoop in for the leftovers!

(Joe wolf-howls again)

Ummm. She's the mama fox! Yes sir!

HOP SING

Seems Don Wong right: hot female turn whole family on head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE
Who is this Don Wong guy again?

HOP SING
Don Wong great Chinese lover. Have many chick. Very smooth. Know all moves. Many semolians too.

JOE
Isn't he just an actor? Why do you keep talking about him so much? You fancy yourself like him or something?

HOP SING
Oh no. Hop Sing just cook and former railroad worker. Never be like Don Wong. Even if find treasure in deep hole near property line and draw many women with many jewel. No. Never.

JOE
Huh?

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM -- SAME

Hoss is rifling through his father's wardrobe.

HOSS
(to himself)
Ok, here's a shirt I ain't seen Pa wear in years. Here's some pants too. I already got the shoes. Ready! Hot dog! Get ready to bend over brother Joe!

INT. PONDEROSA BLACKSMITH SHOP -- SAME

JOE
Hey, Tubby. You seen Hoss?

TUBBY
(points to house)
He went that-a-way.

JOE
Hmmm. Odd. I was just there and I didn't see him.

Hoss comes walking from behind the house and meets Joe exiting the blacksmith shop.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS
Hey, Joe. I'm almost ready. Want to see my tar man?

JOE
Yeah, let's see this tar man. This ought to be rich.

Hoss leads Joe to the back of the blacksmith shop.

HOSS
Lemme put his clothes on him first.

Hoss proceeds to dress the tar man, experiencing its extreme stickiness.

Joe looks over the blob of dressed up tar.

HOSS (cont'd)
Well?

JOE
Well, it's tarry and it has clothes. That's about all I can say. Where's the head?

Hoss points out his head.

JOE (cont'd)
But, where's the body?

Hoss points out his body.

JOE (cont'd)
Hey, doesn't the tar man have on Pa's good-luck shirt? Boy, you've done it now!

HOSS
(Hoss thinks hard)
That's right! Pa usually only wore this shirt when he was trolling. He always thought the pattern drove the ladies mad.
(studying the shirt)
That's a horrible plaid! I can't see it, myself. No.

JOE
And now you're got tar all over it! Hoss, if you weren't going to lose your inheritance on this stupid bet, you'd lose it when Pa sees this

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE (cont'd)
ruined babe-magnet shirt. And there's no telling what Ella will do when she realizes what could have been. She's got such a hair trigger. I wouldn't know whether to steer clear of her or hang around for the unbridled emotions she might show. Maybe some of the latter would flow in my direction.

HOSS
Hey. Calm down, Joe. Let's let Pa have first dibs.

JOE
Right you are.
(daydreaming)
However ...

HOSS
Never mind that. Where are going to put this tar man? What about on the side of the old dry stream road up by the orchard?

JOE
Not much traffic there. You sure you want to choose that spot? May have to wait a while in the weeds until one of us loses.

HOSS
We got nothing but time. Let's go get this done.

JOE
I'll go get the wagon so we can haul that filthy lump of goo out there. By the way, where did you find the tar? I thought that the closest tar source was hundreds of miles away.

HOSS
You and that dope, Tubby.

JOE
What?

HOSS
Nothing. Get the wagon and I'll load up the tar man.

Joe brings the wagon around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hoss plops the dressed-up tar man on the wagon.

The three ride off slowly.

EXT. DIRT ROAD NEAR ORCHARD -- LATER

JOE

This OK? We can park the wagon over there and hide in the weeds.

HOSS

But where will we put the tar man?

JOE

(Joe motions to a nearby log by the road)

How about right there? On that log.

HOSS

Well, people going the other way might not even see him.

JOE

Well, we can move the log closer to the road.

HOSS

OK.

Hoss and Joe move the log and place the tar man so that he appears to be seated on the log, facing away from the road.

HOSS (cont'd)

(grinning with pride)

Looks pretty real, don't he?

JOE

Easiest bet I even won.

HOSS

We'll see. Hey, I think I see someone coming. Quick! Get the wagon hidden over there.

The boys move the wagon into the tall weeds.

Another wagon slowly approaches and, as it gets closer, the boys recognize their father and his lady friend, Ella.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

Oh, no. You better go out there and distract Pa so he don't see his shirt.

HOSS

No way. He just might be the one to win me this bet.

JOE

Are you kidding? Pa's not going to be sucked in by this type of asinine gag. Give the man a little credit!

EXT. BEN IN THE WAGON -- SAME

BEN

And you know, Ella, I once killed three mountain lions with one shot. One shot, I tell you! How about that!?

ELLA

That's pretty good shootin', Ben.
(coily)
You think you could shoot some little old wild animal specially for me sometime soon?

BEN

(grinning at the innuendo)
I wouldn't be a bit surprised! No sir, not a bit.

Ben's wagon comes up on the plateau and he spots the back of the dressed-up tar man.

BEN (cont'd)

You there! Hey!

No reply at all from the tar man.

BEN (cont'd)

(turns to Ella)
What the ... ? Is this guy rude or what?!

ELLA

Ben, maybe we ought to just move on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

On Ponderosa land?! No, mam. Unh,
uh. This guy is not going to ignore
me! He must know who I am!

EXT. JOE AND HOSS HIDING IN WEEDS -- SAME

JOE

What's he doing?

HOSS

(excited, grinning)
I think he's getting off the wagon.
Oh boy!

EXT. BEN NEAR THE WAGON -- SAME

Ben approaches the tar man from the rear.

BEN

Sir? Are you lost?

The tar man says nothing. He stays perfectly still.

BEN (cont'd)

Sir, do you know you are trespassing
on the Ponderosa?

The tar man says nothing.

ELLA (O.S.)

Ben, I'm getting kind of hot sitting
here.

BEN

(back to Ella)
You mean hot as in the sun is cooking
you?

ELLA (O.S.)

No. The other kind!

BEN

(to himself)
Oh, mama!

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

HOSS

Boy, Pa is really stuck on that chick, ain't he? And she might not be the only one he's stuck on here shortly.

JOE

Have you seen a full body view of that chick? She is plum foxy! And no more than about thirty. Like a gal one of us might date. Well, maybe not you.

HOSS

Oh, you date a lot I guess, Mr. Don Wong!

JOE

Don Wong?!?
 (realizing)
 Hop Sing!! Oh oh! Hey, is that cinnamon I smell?

HOSS

Yep!

Joe senses a snafu is headed his way.

JOE

(to himself)
 Hop Sing! Wait till I get my hands on that little Chink!

HOSS

Shhhh, Joe! Quiet!

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

Ben leans over to make sure the man hears him.

BEN

(loudly)
 SIR! YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO MOVE ALONG! COME ON, GET MOVING!

(noticing the clothes)
 Hey, what the ... ? What are you doing with my shirt on? And, I believe those are my pants also. Did
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (cont'd)
 you steal them from the Ponderosa?
 ... Sir!?

The tar man says nothing.

ELLA (O.S.)
 Ben? Ben, come on back. Leave that
 man alone. He may try to beat you
 up. Get back over here.

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

HOSS
 Thank you, Ella.

Joe is getting very worried.

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN
 (back to Ella)
 Hang on a minute.
 (to tar man)
 Sir, I wonder if I might borrow back
 my shirt for about, oh, say twenty
 minutes?

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

JOE
 Oh no.

HOSS
 (smiling)
 Alright, Pa! Get the shirt, Pa. Get
 the shirt, if you can.

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN
 Are you going to be agreeable or do I
 have to get rough?

The tar man says nothing.

Ben draws back his left leg and swings it into the tar man's
 buttocks, staying clear of the shirt.

Ben quickly realizes that his foot is stuck in the tar man.

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

Hoss and Joe watch the proceedings.

HOSS
 (can't help himself)
 Strike one! And baseball hasn't even
 been invented yet!

JOE
 Any chance the bet can be changed
 real quick?

HOSS
 Nope. I can see my new writer's
 office now smack dab in the middle of
 the whole ten thousand-acre
 Ponderosa! It will be sweet! By the
 way, where will you live?

EXT. ELLA IN THE WAGON -- SAME

ELLA
 Ben? Ben what are you doing? I want
 you over here, now! I'm so hot! But
 it won't last forever, if you get my
 drift.

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN
 Turn me a'loose! Let go of my leg.
 And, give me my shirt back right now!

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

Hoss and Joe watch the proceedings.

HOSS
 Pa's losing it!
 (to Joe)
 and so are you, brother.

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN
 Don't make me strike you with my
 famous Ponderosa sucker punch!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The tar man says nothing.

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

JOE

How about we just make the wager for a famous Hop Sing spicy dessert?

HOSS

Spicy. I like that. How about we keep the bet as we made it?

(Hoss sniffs the air)

Ummmmm, umm! What is that, cloves?

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN

Ok, you asked for it.

Ben draws back his right arm and delivers a blow to the back of the tar man's neck, having his hand penetrate to Tubby's iron spine.

BEN (cont'd)

OWWWWW! OW! I think I broke my hand! Ella, HELP!

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

HOSS

That's hollering, right Joe? Hollering for help?

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN

Why you little trouble maker, I'm gonna show you who's boss in this neck of the woods. Nobody, but nobody makes a fool of Ben Cartwright, especially in front of his woman.

Still perched on the wagon, Ella gives a becoming-disgusted look.

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

HOSS
No, Pa, not the head butt!

JOE
Where is the Ponderosa deed and Pa's
will? Let's just get this over with.
(to self)
I'm going to get that Hop Sing if
it's the last thing I do.

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

ELLA (O.S.)
Ben? Ben, come on over here right
now, you tar-man fighter, you!

BEN
Take this!

Ben butts the tar man in the ribs and rips the shirt. His
hair is now filled with tar. He pulls back but his rug is
stuck to the tar man and it comes off.

BEN (cont'd)
(becoming
boisterous)
HEY! MY PIECE! GIMME THAT BACK!

ELLA (O.S.)
Ben, what are you doing? Come over
here and let me run my fingers
through your manly grey hair.

Ben solemnly and despondently looks straight into the
camera, saying nothing.

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

HOSS
Man, this is great, but I've got to
take a leak.

JOE
Nice! Go on over there and do it.

BEN (O.S.)
Ok, Ella. Be right there, darling-
baby-cakes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE
Darling-baby-cakes??

As Hoss is otherwise occupied, Joe stays crouched down to observe his father pulling his rug from the tar. It's a total loss.

JOE (cont'd)
(to Hoss)
Hey, get over here. I hear somebody else coming. It's a wagon, I believe. Hoss??

Hoss scrambles back and strains to see and hear.

HOSS
Yeah. Yeah, it's a wagon, alright.

The second wagon draws nearer.

HOSS (cont'd)
Look! It's a covered wagon. Hey, what's that sound? And are those lanterns lit on each side? In the daylight? What's the idea?

EXT. ELLA IN THE WAGON -- SAME

Ella has also seen the approaching wagon.

ELLA
Hey, Ben. Somebody's coming. In a covered wagon.

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

Ben tries to extricate his extremities from the tar man and restore his appearance, but without success.

As the covered wagon moves up on the plateau, flute music is heard emanating from within the wagon.

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

JOE
Hey, that looks a lot like Harold driving that wagon.
(studying more)
It is Harold!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS
(wondering)
Harold?! ... What's going on?

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN
(surprised)
Harold?

EXT. THE WAGONS -- SAME

The covered wagon draws alongside Ella's wagon. On the side of the covered wagon is painted, "Confucius Express, featuring Don Wong".

Harold gets an up-close eyeful of Ella and takes a chance.

HAROLD
How's it hanging, Sweetie?

ELLA
Are you Confucius?

HAROLD
Are you serious, lady?

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN
Why you ... Get off that wagon and come down here, Harold. I'll beat you to a pulp.

EXT. ELLA IN THE WAGON -- SAME

ELLA
(to Ben)
So he's not Confucius?

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

HOSS
Uh oh.

JOE
Should we go help Pa?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOSS

How are we going to do that? If we just pop up out of these weeds here, he'll know we were hiding while he got all tarred up.

JOE

But we can't just sit here and let Harold lick our Pa.

EXT. THE CONFUCIUS EXPRESS WAGON -- SAME

Just then the front curtain covering the interior of the wagon opens and the flute music stops. Emerging from the wagon is a short man with a coat with many affixed jewels.

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

HOSS

Hey! That's Hop Sing! What the ...?!

JOE

Why, that no good little ...
 (Joe begins to get
 up)
 I'll rip his head off.

HOSS

(pulling Joe down)
 Joe! Wait! Let's see how this all plays out before we give ourselves up.

EXT. THE CONFUCIUS EXPRESS WAGON -- SAME

The man appearing to be Hop Sing steps up onto the wagon seat beside Harold.

HOP SING

LADY AND GENTLEMAN! Please give it up for the man, the greatest lover the Chinese entertainment industry ever produce. You may know as Sum Ting Wong.

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

JOE
Something's wrong, alright!

HOSS
(to Joe)
Shhhhhh!

EXT. THE CONFUCIUS EXPRESS WAGON -- SAME

HOP SING
We know him as THE ONE, THE ONLY, THE
SPIRIT, THE MAN: DON WONG!

A pungent but intoxicating odor wafts from the lanterns on the Confucius Express wagon and begins to affect Ella. Don Wong, himself, comes out of the back of the wagon and steps up behind Hop Sing.

EXT. ELLA IN THE WAGON -- SAME

ELLA
Don? Is that you? I've smelled this
wonderful odor before.

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN
(being trumped)
Of course you have.

EXT. THE CONFUCIUS EXPRESS WAGON -- SAME

Harold sees his would-be romance evaporating quickly as Don Wong steps forward to stand alongside Hop Sing.

DON WONG
Yes, I am Don Wong, a.k.a Al Chemist,
a.k.a Lover Boy, a.k.a. Sum Ting
Wong, a.k.a. The Chink Pink. I here
one reason. Accumulate more chick.
Jewel and semolian icing on cake.
(turning to Ella)
This fox ready to roll. Ready join
Express.

EXT. ELLA IN THE WAGON -- SAME

Ella is already overcome with the awe of Wong and is succumbing completely to the potent lantern fumes.

ELLA

Oh, Don! Whatever you say.

BEN

(having seen enough)

Now you listen to me, Wong. I've used better midget Chinks than you for mountain lion bait! That Chinese houseboy cover you worked for years at the Smith place might have allowed you to do your thing, but when you come around to try to steal Ben Cartwright's lady, that's where you have stepped over the line.

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

JOE

(to Hoss)

Let's slide back down the hill and go home. This stuff is nowhere.

HOSS

Remember, you have a home only until Pa croaks.

Joe, thinking more and figuring he has nothing to lose, abruptly jumps up out of the weeds to make his presence known.

JOE

Pa, are you in trouble? Can I help you?

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

Ben whips around to see his youngest son standing no more than twenty feet from where he had gotten mired so deep with the tar man.

BEN

Joseph! You were there the whole time?

EXT. THE CONFUCIUS EXPRESS WAGON -- SAME

HAROLD
 (opportunistically,
 to Ella)
 Care to, ah, "handle my reins",
 Honey?

Ella is in a fragrance-induced trance and is swaying lasciviously as she sinks deeper into the Wong funk, completely ignoring Harold's sophomoric come-on.

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

JOE
 Well, Hoss was here too.

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN
 (looking around)
 Hoss? I don't see Hoss.

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

Joe points down to Hoss, still hiding in the weeds. Hoss stands up, sheepishly.

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN
 Hoss!? You too?

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

HOSS
 Well, you see, it was a waging thing, Pa.

EXT. THE CONFUCIUS EXPRESS WAGON -- SAME

HOP SING
 Gentlemen, you cut chatter now. The great WONG need to speak.
 (pausing)
 Please have quiet!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DON WONG

When I came your country I was poor.
 Much poor. "How poor was I, you
 ask?"

(waits for response)

So poor didn't even have Keye Luke
picture!

(waits for response)

Ah, tough crowd.

Joe and Hoss turn to each other with a puzzled look.

HOP SING

(quietly to Wong)

Maybe switch to "A" material good
 idea.

DON WONG

Anyway, I work hard for little pay.
 One day in big work gang. We each
 dig hole for Mr. Nelson. He hunt
 treasure. Others find no treasure.
 I find chest of many jewel and many
 gold item. Mr. Nelson blink, I gone
 - with treasure. Hide everywhere.
 Nobody find.

BEN

(aloud)

I knew it! The leprechaun treasure!

DON WONG

No leprechaun involve. Only Don
 Wong. Anyway, I dig up. I hide all.
 Later, I buy many ranch using other
 name. Main name: Rex Brazil.
 Sometime: Harry Wong, Choppy O'Toole,
 Keith Love. Maybe you heard? No
 matter. Even own two Indian
 reservation.

HOP SING

(interrupting)

Four reservation.

DON WONG

So sorry. Four reservation. Many
 brave, couple chief, copious squaw.
 Much copious.

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

JOE
 (to Hoss)
 "Copious"?

HOSS
 I think it means willing to do light
 housework.

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN
 (to Wong)
 So, it was one of your boys who 'bout
 shot my big toe off the other day
 with that arrow!

EXT. THE CONFUCIUS EXPRESS WAGON -- SAME

DON WONG
 (ignoring Ben)
 We prepare to go to railroad to join
 Chinese brothers. Take over whole
 West soon. Gain many simoleon. Lure
 many chick.

HOP SING
 Mr. Wong even have eye on being
 President. Right, Don?

DON WONG
 (whispering)
 Before onlooker, please address as
Mr. Wong.
 (back to crowd)
 That right, faithful assistant.

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN
 Hey Wong, I thought a person had to
 be born in this country to be
 President.

EXT. THE CONFUCIUS EXPRESS WAGON -- SAME

DON WONG

Many fact you not know. All office
for sale. Many bags of gold buy much
power.

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN

Yeah, but not with fake gold! That's
what you got there. The joke's on
you, Wong!

EXT. THE CONFUCIUS EXPRESS WAGON -- SAME

HOP SING

Please, you underestimate the
Supreme, Hallowed Highupness of Don
Wong.

DON WONG

I am wizard with female and finance.
Many knowledge. Many.

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN

OK, Mr. big shot future President,
tell me this: Did George Washington
have wooden teeth or not?

EXT. THE CONFUCIUS EXPRESS WAGON -- SAME

DON WONG

Who?

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

BEN

Ah ha! See! You don't know anything
about politics!

EXT. THE CONFUCIUS EXPRESS WAGON -- SAME

Don Wong disappears back into the wagon followed quickly by
Hop Sing and Ella, who has jumped wagons to join The

CONTINUED:

Express. The flute music restarts. Harold shakes the reins and the wagon begins to move forward.

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

JOE

Does anybody know what just happened here?

HOSS

Well, among other things, it seems like Wong just cemented his title as fox chaser, numero uno, around here.

(consoling Joe)

Titles of conquest seem to be might fleeting around these parts, I reckon. Sorry Joe.

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

With a mighty last effort, Ben yanks his arm and leg out of the tar man and he steps out onto the path left behind the departing Confucius Express.

Ben is helplessly watching the wagon rumble slowly away. He makes one last bid.

BEN

(desperately)

ELLA! I HAVE POWER TOO! HONEST!

(spreads arms out)

BEHOLD: THE PONDEROSA!

EXT. THE DEPARTING CONFUCIUS EXPRESS WAGON -- SAME

Ella parts the rear curtain and pokes her head out and looks about as the wagon moves off.

ELLA

(very mellow, airy)

Did someone call me?

The humiliated Cartwrights begin to fade into the background as the Confucius Express heads to the next stop.

EXT. BEN AT THE TAR MAN -- SAME

Ben lowers his pants and removes his shirt to shed the tar-fouled clothing. His toupee is beyond repair and laying off to the side.

A large fly buzzes Ben then lands on his neck and digs in.

BEN
OUCH!! Tsetses!

Ben jumps about, nearly naked, swatting flies.

EXT. JOE AND HOSS IN THE WEEDS -- SAME

Hoss and Joe look at each other, shaking their heads at the state of affairs.

JOE
You think there's any chance at all
Pa might restore his dignity one day?

HOSS
I don't see how. I'm hungry. How
'bout you?

Joe starts running after the departed Express.

JOE
DON! ELLA! WAIT FOR ME!

FADE OUT.