

The Copper Town Ruse

★ Characters:

- ☞ *Rusty Rolluns* *The Hero of the Story, and the Sheriff's Foreman*
- ☞ *Sheriff Jim Lance* *Sheriff of Copper Town, Wyoming*
- ☞ *Miss Amy Lance* *Daughter of Sheriff Lance, and Rolluns' Sweetheart*
- ☞ *"Shorty" Slicker (really Jack Marven)* *Outlaw in the Infamous Bullet Canyon Gang*
- ☞ *"Bronco" Darnel (really Pete Marven)* *Brother and Fellow Outlaw to Jack Marven*
- ☞ *Dan Muckman* *Ranch Hand on the Sheriff's Ranch*

★ Scenes:

- ☞ 1. *The Lazy Creek Ranch Bunkhouse*
- ☞ 2. *The Lazy Creek Corral and Barn*
- ☞ 3. *A Road on the Edge of the Ranch*
- ☞ 4. *The Lazy Creek Ranch Bunkhouse, again*
- ☞ 5. *The Lazy Creek Corral and Barn, again*

★ **Note on Costumes:** This play is set in the gun-slingin', outlaw chasin' time period known as the Wild West. All costumes must fit the period. Slicker and Darnel are pictured in the Wanted posters as being unkempt and scruffy, but when they come on stage they should be clean shaven. All male actors wear six-guns at their sides—whether one or two, it doesn't really matter, and Muckman carries a rifle as well. The Sheriff wears a star on his vest, and Miss Lance wears a sun bonnet, etc...

★ *One other important note, all actors should speak with a slight western drawl, to enhance the Western characters.*

★ **Scene 1: The Lazy Creek Ranch Bunkhouse.** The Scenery includes a desk, table, and chairs, as well as several bunks. A wall partition with a door in it is set up across the stage slightly to stage right. The effect this makes is a cut-away view inside the bunkhouse. A guitar or banjo leaning against a lower bunk, a stack of papers on the desk and a deck of cards on the table completes the Western setting. The stage on the right side of the wall partition should be decorated to look like it's outside.

At Rise: *Muckman and Rolluns are sitting at the table playing Gin Rummy. Sheriff Lance is sitting at the desk, filing through the papers.*

Muckman: *(groaning)* Dang, Rusty, I ain't got a clue what yer doin'. Every time you pick up a card from the discard pile you put down the only things you could use with it. I've given up tryin' to figure out what yer doin'. *(Plays a card)*

Rolluns: *(calmly, grinning at Muckman)* Good for you. I'll take that ace. *(Picks up the card Muckman placed on the discard pile)*

Muckman: *(as Rolluns discards)* Well, that's three aces you've got— what in tarnation are you discarding an ace fer?! Aw, shucks, I don't get it! *(Muckman picks up a card from the deck and groans)* I sure wish I had somethin' useful! *(Rusty chuckles. Muckman looks at him)* Ok, I've got everything useful, forget what I just said. *(Muckman discards)* Hey now, here's a five o' spades. How do you like that?

Rolluns: It's just what I was thinkin' you'd do.

Muckman: Oh yeah? Was it now?

Rolluns: Fer sure. I'll take it. *(Picks up the card)*

Muckman: What the blazes did you need a five for?

Rolluns: *(calmly)* You'll find out when I win.

Muckman: Oh yeah? Guess I won't ever find out.

Rolluns: What if I were to go out right now?

Muckman: Heck, we just started; I'd be surprised if you went out now.

Rolluns: All right. *(Discards a card face down)* Gin.

Muckman: *(in disbelief)* Holy Mackerel! No way!

Rolluns: (*sets down cards*) Five, Six, Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten, Jack, Queen, King, and Ace o' spades. Bulls-eye!

Muckman: Why you son of a gun! I can't believe it! (*Rolluns chuckles*) Wait a minute—you've been cheatin'! You picked up that ace o' diamonds I put down, so where is that?

Rolluns: It's right here. (*Flips over card he placed face down on the discard pile*)

Muckman: Well, I'm truly beat. (*both Rolluns and Muckman laugh*)

Sheriff: (*looking up from his papers*) Could you guys settle down a little? I'm trying to work here.

Rolluns: Yes sir, Dan and I can make racket elsewhere. C'mon Pal, let's see after our tack. We might as well get it ready for the cattle drive next week.

Muckman: Yeah, sounds like a right good idea, Rusty.

Rolluns and Muckman Exit Stage Left

(*Sheriff groans and continues with his work. Slicker and Darnel enter stage right*)

Darnel: Alright, Shorty, We've made it to Lazy Creek Ranch at last.

Slicker: I sure am glad we don't have further to go; I'm plum tuckered out.

Darnel: So am I. Just remember to keep your head on and not give us away. You're Shorty as long as we're here in Copper Town, and I'm Bronco. This Sheriff will fall for our scheme unless you ruin it.

Slicker: Alright, I know. Let's go in.

Darnel: Come on then. (*They walk up to the bunkhouse door and knock. Sheriff Lance looks up*)

Sheriff: Come in. (*Slicker and Darnel enter; gruffly*) What do you fellas want?

Darnel: I'm Bronco Darnel, and here's my good friend Shorty Slicker. We've come here lookin' for jobs, and we heard you were hiring.

Sheriff: Where are you boys from?

Slicker: Southern Idaho. We worked on a ranch there for about six months.

Sheriff: I pay two bits per month, as well as bed and board.

Darnel: We're fine with that.

Sheriff: Can you pitch hay, brand a cow, and handle a horse like you know what you're doin'?

Darnel: Yep, and we're both darn good with a rope and a gun.

Sheriff: All right, you guys are hired. I've got a little business to attend to. I'll be right back, and then I'll show you around the place.

Darnel: Thanks, Sheriff.

Slicker: Yeah, thanks.

Sheriff Exits Stage Right

(Darnel sits down in a chair to wait, while Slicker leans against the desk and looks at a few papers, suddenly he picks up two Wanted posters with pictures of Darnel and Slicker with full beards, mustaches, and long, ragged hair)

Slicker: Hey Bronco, take a look at this! *(Darnel walks over and looks over his shoulder; Slicker reads)* Wanted, Dead or Alive: Jack Marven, member of the infamous Bullet Canyon Gang, Reward: \$500... *(Looking at the poster with Darnel on it)* Yours reads pretty much the same. It's a good thing we got cleaned up!

Darnel: You better believe it. Let me see mine. *(Slicker hands him the other poster)* Peter Marvin...member of the blah, blah, blah...Reward—Hey look, Shorty, I'm worth \$750! I'm more Expensive! *(laughs)* That's just 'cause I'm pure quality.

Slicker: No you ain't. I wonder, am I recognizable? *(Holds poster up beside his head and looks at Darnel)*

Darnel: Nope, not a bit. How 'bout me? *(Holds poster up beside his head like Slicker did)*

Slicker: I'd hardly recognize you as the same person in the picture if I didn't know you when you looked like that. *(They both laugh, but Slicker looks off stage right as Sheriff enters, and gasps)* Hey, quick, here comes the Sheriff! *(Slicker and Darnel scramble to get the posters back where they were, and then they both quickly reassume their nonchalant poses as the Sheriff walks in the door, completely oblivious of their panicky rush seconds before.)*

Sheriff: Alright, I'll show you around the place, unless—well here comes Rolluns, I'll introduce you to him. *(Noise of laughing and talking comes from stage left and Rolluns and Muckman enter, laughing)*

Rolluns: Man, did ever you see a cat run faster; ha, ha, one big—Hullo, who are these boys?

Sheriff: New ranch hands, Rolluns.

Darnel: Howdy; name's Bronco Darnel. This is my friend, Shorty Slicker.

Slicker: Howdy.

Rolluns: *(shaking their hands)* Nice to meet you boys. I'm Rusty Rolluns. I'm the Sheriff's foreman here at Lazy Creek.

Muckman: Yup, and the best bloomin' Gin player in the world too, I'll tell ya that. I'm Dan Muckman. Nice to meet you fellas. *(Shakes their hands)*

Rolluns: Welcome to Lazy Creek. We can always use a few extra hands. *(They all take seats at the table, while the Sheriff sits down behind desk and continues to look through his papers.)*

Darnel: Say, do you fellas play Blackjack?

Muckman: Yep, but we don't bid.

Slicker: Aw, Shucks! The biddin' is the best part.

Rolluns: Well you better lose that notion, because we don't gamble here. We're honest men, and we're in the Sheriff's employ, so we don't gamble.

Muckman: Yeah, he's right. We play fer fun, and not fer money.

Darnel: Ok, then if you guys insist. I'll deal. *(Darnel starts to deal out the cards as Amy Lance enters stage right with a tray of cookies. She enters the bunkhouse and walks over to the Sheriff, who looks up warmly)*

Sheriff: Good afternoon, darling.

Slicker: *(nudging Rusty)* Who's that?

Rolluns: That's Amy, the Sheriff's daughter. *(Muckman looks over and sees Amy)*

Sheriff: How did you do in the quilting bee?

Amy: I had a wonderful time. Heather and Abigail won first place, and Jamie and I took second.

Sheriff: Ah, that's just splendid. I'm surprised that your quilt didn't win. It was so pretty and colorful...

Amy: Oh yes, but Heather's quilt was better than ours. It was all different shades of brown and green in the log cabin pattern, and it was definitely better than mine. We made cookies after the bee, and Mrs. Caroline said I should take some home to share with you and the boys.

Sheriff: (*grinning*) Well, that's very thoughtful of her. I bet you suggested it to her; she'd never think of that on her own.

Amy: Oh Father, you know I wouldn't—well would you like one?

Sheriff: (*laughing*) Why sure, sure. I'd love to. (*Sheriff takes a bite out of one of the cookies*) M,m,m,m. Mind if I have two?

Amy: Not a bit. (*Sheriff takes another cookie*) You can have three if you want.

Sheriff: No, I better not. I'll explode. Take them over to the boys.

(*The four men at the table stand and tip their hats*)

Muckman: 'Mornin' Miss Amy?

Amy: Good morning, Dan. Would you like a cookie?

Muckman: Yes, thank ya. They sure look good. (*He takes a cookie*) Jiminy! They taste good too!

Rolluns: How'd you do in the bee, Miss Amy?

Amy: We won second.

Rolluns: (*laughing; and feigning to be indignant*) Second! Who was the judge, so I can string him up for not givin' you first place! By what I've heard it must've been a work of art!

Amy: (*laughing*) The judge was Mrs. Caroline.

Rolluns: Well I'll—

Amy: (*holds the tray of cookies out*) You'll have a cookie, and thank Mrs. Caroline for sending them.

Rolluns: Oh, she sent them did she? Well maybe, if the cookies are good, I'll let her off the hook. (*laughs and takes a cookie*) Thank you. Thunder, what's in these? They're delicious.

Amy: I'm glad you like them. Who are these gentlemen, Rusty?

Rolluns: New ranch hands your father hired today.

Amy: Oh.

Darnel: (*And tipping his hat*) It's nice to meet you Ma'am. I'm Bronco Darnel, and this is Shorty Slicker, my friend. (*Shorty grins and tips his hat*)

Slicker: Howdy, Ma'am. Nice to make your acquaintance.

Amy: Oh, thank you. I'm the Sheriff's daughter, Amy Lance. Would either of you like a cookie?

Darnel: I'd love to have one. Thank you, Ma'am. *(Takes a cookie)*

Slicker: Sure, I'll have one, thank ya. *(Takes a cookie)*

Amy: *(holding the tray out toward Muckman)* Danny, would you take these to the other boys upstairs. I know I can trust you not to eat them on the way up.

Muckman: With pleasure, Ma'am. *(Takes the tray from Amy and exits left)*

Amy: *(Turning to Sheriff)* Well, I'm going back to the house, Father. Mother wants my help in the kitchen.

Sheriff: All right dear, get along then. Thank you for the cookies.

Amy: You're welcome. Good-bye.

Exits stage right

Darnel: *(Looking after her)* She sure is a bright angel of a thing, ain't she?

Muckman: *(looking sharply at Darnel and grinning)* Forget it, Bronco, forget it. There are plenty of people on this ranch who are in love with her. Ain't that right, Rusty? *(chuckles)*

Rolluns: *(grinning at Muckman)* Aw, shut up, Danny. *(They all laugh)*

Curtain



Scene 2: The Lazy Creek Corral and Barn. There is a wall partition with a large barn door in it crossing the stage directly opposite of where the partition in scene one was. A corral fence runs from the edge of stage left to the barn door, with bushes along it. The barn needs to be littered with hay, with tools, plows, and other farm equipment stored neatly along the walls, to give it the right appearance.

At Rise: *Slicker and Darnel enter stage left carrying tools. They walk into the barn and begin to put the tools where they belong.*

Darnel: You know, Slicker, we've been doing pretty darn well. We've been working for Sheriff Lance now for five months, and goodness knows how much information we've passed on to the gang without the Sheriff's suspicion getting roused a bit. But I'm wondering...

Slicker: (*Closing the barn door*) What's on your mind Bronco?

Darnel: I'm worried about that Rolluns feller.

Slicker: Who, Rusty?

Darnel: Yeah, him. He's makin' me nervous. It's no wonder he's the sheriff's foreman. He rides like greased lightning, and he's a crack shot—with both pistol and rifle, and the sharpest feller I've ever known.

Slicker: Dang, you never said a thing truer. Remember how he stuck the bronc at the rodeo last month, when no one else could? Heavens! That was somethin' to see. He's also a bit better with a rope than anyone else on this ranch, even—

Darnel: Yeah, but it's not his rope I'm fearin'. It's the *end of the rope*. It's his observance which will snap on to us if we make one tiny slip! It's his blasted good aim with a gun. There ain't no way we'll be safe if he once figures out we're crooks, and then the gallows won't be far away.

Slicker: Maybe we should hit the road before he figures out who we are.

Darnel: Not a chance! We've got jobs here where we can keep an eye on the Sheriff, and what we're doing is too profitable for our gang for us to leave. We'll just have to get rid of him plain and simple.

Slicker: That ain't hard to do. Wait for him in the bushes when he's riding his shift, and "ker-Powie!" plug him 'fore he knows what's up.

Darnel: That would sure be the easiest way to take care of him—Hey, wait a minute. You know how the Sheriff has that gold mine north of town? He keeps the gold that he gets there somewhere on this ranch, and Rusty's the only person other than the Sheriff who knows where!

Slicker: So you're saying we get Rusty to lead us to the gold before we shoot him?

Darnel: That's just what I'm saying. We'll ambush him and force him to lead us to the gold, and then we'll plug him. And we've got a little something we can do to motivate

him if he refuses to help us... haven't you noticed the respect he has for Miss Amy Lance?

Slicker: (*grinning*) You think he's sweet on her?

Darnel: I think he is, and she sure seems to like him too... (*Laughs malignantly*) I'm sure we can force him to help us out if the girl's life is on the line!

Curtain

Scene 3: A Road on the Edge of the Ranch Scenery is simple, merely bushes along the road, with lighting to make it appear at night.

At Rise: *Rusty Rolluns is walking across the stage. As he reaches the center, he stops suddenly at a voice which comes from the undergrowth)*

Darnel: (*Sharply*) We've got you covered, Mister! Reach for the sky! We'll plug you if you touch those guns! (*Darnel enters stage right and Slicker enters stage left; both are wearing coats and bandanas. Rusty puts up his hands. Slicker takes Rusty's pistols out of his holsters and kicks them to the side.*) Alright you can put your hands down now.

Rolluns: (*looking surprised and confused*) What do you want?

Slicker: You're the foreman on the Lazy Creek Ranch so we're told.

Rolluns: (*even more surprised*) Yes, I'm the foreman, but what of it?

Darnel: You're coming with us!

Rolluns: (*Startled by a thought which occurs to him, and grinning; calmly*) I—I don't know what you want, but it ain't gonna work out.

Slicker: Oh, is that so, now? You're gonna help us out, whether you like it or not. You've got no choice. (*Slicker pauses, and laughs in a sinister manner, as Dan Muckman enters stage right behind Darnel, and stops. He assesses the situation quickly and sneaks quietly into the bushes. Rolluns sees Muckman, but outlaws don't.*)

Rolluns: (*Loudly so that Muckman can hear*) Well, if you are gonna shoot me anyway, you probably don't mind my asking you two what you want, who you really are, why you posed as Shorty Slicker and Bronco Darnel (*At this Muckman gasps, Slicker aims his gun at Rusty, and Darnel starts to laugh*)

Darnel: So you know who we are, despite our disguises. It's too bad you won't live long enough to tell anyone of your discovery. We've had a scheme going that's duped the entire ranch, and tomorrow we'll be back on the ranch, unsuspected and unharmed, while the Sheriff searches the whole countryside for our hides. We'll be right under his nose, and he won't suspect, and you won't be able to tell any tales when you've been silenced for good. But now, to business. We know that you're the only person other than the Sheriff who knows where the gold from the north mine is kept, and you're gonna take us there. If you don't tell us what we want, we'll kill you and a certain person you care a lot about. *(very maliciously and sinisterly)* Miss Amy Lance *(Rusty's hands whip to his empty holsters)* disappeared ten minutes ago... the buggy she was riding in is empty save the dead cow-puncher who was driving her. If you refuse to comply with our wishes, your very own eyes will watch us load her full of lead!

(Darnel and Slicker march Rusty off stage left. As soon as they are out of sight, Muckman leaps cautiously out of the bushes races off stage right)

Quick Curtain

★ **Scene 4:** The Lazy Creek Bunkhouse, again. Scenery is same as in Scene 1.

At Rise: *Sheriff is sitting at his desk. Dan Muckman enters stage right.*

Muckman: *(in a panic)* Sheriff! Get your guns! Rusty and Amy are in trouble!

Sheriff: *(leaping up)* What!?

Muckman: Rusty is being held up by two killers, who are Darnel and Slicker! They know he knows where the gold is kept, and they are trying to force him to take them to it! They said that they ambushed the buggy Amy was riding in and killed the feller who was driving her, and she's their prisoner right now. They threatened to kill her if Rusty doesn't do as they say!

Sheriff: *(seizing his pistol)* Rusty will take them to the barn, where the gold is kept in a hiding place! We'll beat them there and give Rusty a hand. *(tosses an extra pistol to Muckman)* We'll slip this to Rusty! C'mon! *(They dash out the door as the curtain falls)*

Curtain

★ **Scene 5.** The Lazy Creek Corral and Barn again. The Set is dark, and only lit slightly with blue lights. There is a hook in the wall of the barn for a lantern. The scene is set up just as it was in Scene 2, but among the junk are several boards and large potato sacks near a corner.

At Rise: *Sheriff Lance and Dan Muckman enter stage left.*

Sheriff: They aren't here yet.

Muckman: Should we wait for them in the barn, and surprise them when they come in?

Sheriff: No, that would be a bad idea. There's nothing to hide behind in there. We'll wait in these bushes, and when they go into the barn, we'll pounce. Just make sure Rusty gets the pistol.

Muckman: Alright Sheriff. Here they come.

Sheriff: C'mon!

(Sheriff Lance and Dan Muckman jump into the bushes with pistols drawn, in a way that they can be seen by the audience, but Rusty, Darnel, and Slicker don't appear to see them. Rusty enters with Darnel, who holds an unlit lantern, followed by Slicker with Amy, who is gagged with a bandana and has her hands bound behind her back.)

Darnel: Jack, you make sure everything's clear in there, and I'll stay here with our prisoners, until you signal. *(Slicker sneaks gun in hand into the barn and Darnel waits with Rusty and Amy.)*

Muckman: *(to Rolluns)* Psst! *(Rolluns sees Muckman, and walks in front of the bush where the Sheriff and Muckman are hiding, and Muckman slips the pistol into his pocket.)*

Slicker: *(coming out of barn)* All clear. *(All four of them enter the barn and Slicker lights the lantern and hangs it on the hook in the wall. Once he does this, the interior of the barn should be well lit by other lights, in a way that it appears that the room is lit by only the lantern, but it should still be dark outside. Darnel drags Amy into a corner and, sitting her down there, covers her with several large potato sacks. Rusty opens up a large hatch in the floor beside the door.)* Here's where the gold is.

(Darnel and Slicker and begin heaving up several small but heavy bags. The Sheriff and Dan Muckman jump out of the bushes and slam the barn door shut. The

outlaws jump to their feet as Muckman places his rifle barrel through a crack in the door and fires. Darnel and Slicker turn angrily toward Rusty as he draws the pistol out of his pocket. Rusty fires at Slicker but misses. Darnel fires at Rusty, wounding his shoulder and forcing him to drop the pistol as Slicker cracks him on the head with the butt of his six-gun. Rusty falls unconscious while the outlaws take cover. The Sheriff and Muckman shoot through the cracks in the door, then bust the door open, and enter. Both sides exchange shots, and Muckman, who is shot, cries out, gripping his bleeding leg. The Sheriff shoots Darnel in his shooting-arm. Darnel leaps behind a box)

Darnel: Jack! Quick! The girl! *(Slicker dashes into the corner, drags Amy to her feet, and places his pistol against her temples.)*

Slicker: Drop your guns! Drop them, or the girl dies!

Sheriff: *(dropping his gun)* No! Don't shoot! Dan, drop it! *(Muckman drops his rifle and pistol)*

Slicker: Get their guns and get out Pete. Don't either of you move, Sheriff. *(Darnel gets up and takes the Sheriff's and Muckman's guns.)* Pete, load the gold up on the horses. *(Pete takes the bags of gold and exits stage left, and returns empty handed. Darnel and Slicker walk slowly toward the door (Slicker has his gun at Amy's back) and stop when they are almost to Rusty.)* This gal is mighty fetching. *(laughs wickedly)*

Sheriff: Don't hurt my girl!

Slicker: *(Rusty gets slowly up, with his shirt covered with blood, and unseen by outlaws because he's behind them)* You don't need to worry about that yet. We'll keep her as a hostage for a while first. Let's go. *(Rusty springs. He seizes Slicker by the neck and gun and jerks the gun away from Amy, and it shoots Darnel in the arm. He drops the gun he's holding. Muckman leaps at Darnel, knocks him down, and holds Darnel's gun at his head. The Sheriff grabs Amy and pulls her quickly out of the barn, unbinds her, and removes the gag. Rusty wrestles Slicker's gun out of his hand, and lands a punch in his jaw that sends him sprawling. He picks up Slicker's pistol and aims it at him.)*

Rolluns: The game's up. You've been out-played. Justice has finally prevailed over your cunning schemes! Stand up and reach!

Muckman: *(to Darnel)* You too! *(Darnel and Slicker get up with their hands up. Muckman handcuffs them, and sits them down on the floor. The Sheriff and Amy enter the barn again.)*

Rolluns: God be praised, Dan! If you hadn't seen me being held up, and gotten help, both Amy and I would be dead by now.

Muckman: If Slicker and Darnel, aren't their real names, then who are these fellas?

Rolluns: Jack and Peter Marven of the Bullet Canyon gang. Apparently they've been eavesdropping on you for their gang. That explains their being so elusive and bold.

Amy: Rusty, you've been wounded.

Rolluns: It's nothing.

Sheriff: Rolluns, you've saved my daughter's life, even though you were so badly hurt. It makes me happy that you consider my daughter precious enough to risk your life for.

Rolluns: Well, I've grown mighty fond of your daughter. I've known her for a good deal of time, and when those sidewinders said they'd shoot her, I knew there had to be a way to stop them, and then I saw Muckman, and everything fell into place.

Sheriff: Is there anything I can do to show my gratitude for your courage?

Rolluns: If it's not too much to ask, yes—you see—I've come to admire your daughter so much that I—well I—I would like to—

Muckman: *(laughing)* Aw Shucks.

Sheriff: *(laughing)* You don't even need to finish, Rolluns. You've always been an excellent employee, and you've proved your love for her in this ordeal. If she gives you her consent, I give you mine. *(Everyone except Muckman looks at Amy)*

Muckman: Heck! What do we need *her* consent for? When's the date, Amy?

Amy: Any time Rusty wants it to be. *(Smiles at Rusty)*

Rolluns: *(stammering)* What did you just say?! You—you—you mean—you...

Amy: Yes.

Rolluns: *(jumping enthusiastically with a whoop)* Alleluia, praise the Lord! He got me out of the biggest fix I ever was in, and not only that but he gave me my heart's desire too! Praise the Lord!

The End

