

It's a Calamity, Jane!



Geff Moyer

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**Norman Maine Publishing
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It's a Calamity, Jane!

COMEDY/WESTERN. Wild Bill Hickok knows he's gotta cure his hiccups before the Doolin clan gits to town for a shootout. Knowin' Wild Bill won't be able to shoot straight with the hiccups, Calamity Jane, Doc Wall, Charlie Utter, and schoolmarm Betsy Begonia try to cure him by plugging his ears with corn silk and making him hop in a circle on one foot while shouting "Andy Jackson" five times. When that doesn't work, they force Wild Bill to hold one of Charlie's filthy socks to his mouth and inhale the fumes, which causes Bill to pass out. After hiding Wild Bill behind the bar, Doc Wall comes up with a scheme to solve things with the Doolins peaceful-like. Doc orders Betsy, Charlie, and Calamity Jane to sweet-talk the Doolins into courtin' 'em. But in this case, courtin' turns out to be worse than a shootout as they soon discover these slobbery Doolins—aka the "Droolin' Doolins"—definitely live up to their infamous nickname!

Performance Time: Approximately 45-60 minutes.

NOTE: For a full evening, combine this play with Geff Moyer's one-act western "Zombie Gunslingers." Both plays use the same set.



James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok ca. 1873-74 and Steve and Charlie Utter at Hickok's grave.

About the Story

Old West folk hero James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok was born in Homer, IL, on May 27, 1837. Hickok fought for the Union Army during the Civil War and worked as a scout, gambler, stagecoach driver, marksman, lawman, and actor in Buffalo Bill Cody's play, *Scouts of the Plains*. In 1876, Hickok left Wyoming with Charlie Utter's wagon train to seek his fortune in the South Dakota gold rush. Hickok arrived in Deadwood, SD, in July 1876. On August 2, 1876, buffalo hunter John McCall shot Hickok in the back of the head while he was playing poker at Nuttal and Mann's Saloon No. 10 in Deadwood. Charlie Utter had Hickok buried in Deadwood and marked his grave with the following: "Wild Bill, J. B. Hickock killed by the assassin Jack McCall in Deadwood, Black Hills, August 2d, 1876. Pard, we will meet again in the happy hunting ground to part no more. Good bye, Colorado Charlie, C. H. Utter."

Characters

(5 M, 3 F)

WILD BILL HICKOK: Legendary lawman, gambler, and gunfighter who suffers from the hiccups; wears a hat, gun belt, and pistols; male.

CALAMITY JANE: Bawdy, boisterous muleskinner and part-time bartender who has been married three times; “handsome” woman of sturdy stock with warts on her nose and uncombed, dirty hair; wears a cowboy hat, gun belt, and pistols; female.

CHARLIE UTTER: Muleskinner, freight hauler, and Wild Bill Hickok’s best friend; male.

BETSY BEGONIA: Old maid schoolmarm who is never without her classroom pointer; female.

DOC WALL: Town doctor, a crusty ol’ sawbones; male.

HECTOR DOOLIN: Widower patriarch of the Doolin clan who wants to court Calamity Jane; front of shirt and chin are wet with drool and it looks like he has been dragged through mud and dirt; wears a gun belt with two pistols; male.

HERMIONE DOOLIN: Hector’s daughter who is sweet on Charlie; front of shirt and chin are wet with drool and it looks like she has been dragged through mud and dirt; wears a gun belt with two pistols; female.

HARLEY DOOLIN: Hector’s illiterate eldest son who wants to woo Betsy; front of shirt and chin are wet with drool and it looks like he has been dragged through mud and dirt; wears a gun belt with two pistols; male.

Setting

August 2, 1876, a small saloon in Deadwood, SD.

Set

A small saloon. Features classic swinging saloon doors, a small bar, and a few tables and chairs. A back door leads to a storage room.

Props

A few bottles of Red Eye
Several shot glasses
Book
Wooden pointer or ruler
Doctor's medical bag
Mop
Corncob with corn silk

Filthy socks, for Charlie
Sand/dirt
Fake mouse
Fake ammunition
Cards
Clove

Note: All pistols and ammunition are fake.

Special Effect

Drooling effect for Doolins. Obtain a thin clean sponge about $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick. Cut three small sections from the sponge, each $\frac{1}{2}$ " x $1\frac{1}{2}$ ". Saturate each piece with warm water. Have the actors playing the Doolins place the pieces behind their lower lips in front of their bottom teeth.

**"Between the creek rising
with spring rains
and them droolin' Doolins,
this town'll be under water
in a month."**

—Doc

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(AT RISE: August 2, 1876, a small saloon in Deadwood, SD. Calamity Jane is polishing shot glasses behind the bar. Doc Wall is seated at a table playing solitaire. He has a bottle of Red Eye and a shot glass. Charlie Utter enters, crosses to the bar, and grabs a shot glass.)

JANE: (To Charlie.) Any change?

CHARLIE: Nope!

JANE: What was the last thing ya tried?

(Charlie crosses to Doc's table.)

CHARLIE: Had him eat a red hot chili pepper, but all it did was send him runnin' to the privy every five minutes for an hour. (Pours himself a shot from Doc's bottle.)

JANE: Did you try the spoonful of mustard?

CHARLIE: Gagged him like a cat with hairballs! Puked it up, and back came the hiccups.

JANE: Doc, what's the longest case of hiccups you done heard tell of?

DOC: Now, how the devil am I suppose to know that?

JANE: Yer a doctor! Or claim to be!

DOC: He got 'em 'cause he eats too fast. I been tellin' him that since he got to Deadwood. He says he can't sit in one place too long for fear of a back shooter.

JANE: (Defensive, shouts.) Why, you whiskey-soaked tongue-depressor...you saying Bill's a coward?!

DOC: Oh, don't git yer dander up, Jane! Bill Hickock ain't scared of nothin'. He's just... (Thinks.) ...just cautious.

CHARLIE: It's Deadwood, Doc! We all gotta be cautious!

DOC: But do you wolf down a half-pound T-bone steak and tater in three minutes? Eatin' like he does would give a pig the hiccups.

JANE: (*Shouts.*) Now yer callin' him a pig, you ol' –

DOC: (*Shouts.*) I ain't callin' him –

(Excited, Betsy Begonia runs on. She is carrying a small book and a wooden pointer or ruler.)

BETSY: I found it! It was buried at the bottom of my hope chest, but I found it!

DOC: Found what?

BETSY: Doctor Desmond's "Sure Cure for Hiccups."

DOC: What?! Hogwash, Betsy! That book's just full of old wives' tales.

CHARLIE: (*To Betsy.*) Any pictures?

BETSY: Pictures? Of what?

CHARLIE: (*Lasciviously.*) Them wife's tails!

DOC: Wrong kinda tales, Charlie!

JANE: Prevert!

CHARLIE: Just asking. Women is scarce here in Deadwood.

JANE: What are we...smashed horse apples?

CHARLIE: No, Jane! You ain't smashed.

(Charlie and Doc chuckle.)

JANE (*Shouts.*) Why, you smelly muleskinnin' son-of-a-maggot, I oughta –

BETSY: Hey, hey! (*Using her pointer.*) Here's one we can try! Listen to this! (*Reads from her book.*) "Plug the patient's ears with corn silk, then have him, or her, hop in a circle on one foot while shouting 'Andy Jackson' five times."

DOCTOR: Rubbish!

CHARLIE: (*To Betsy.*) Why "Andy Jackson"?

BETSY: It doesn't say.

JANE: Maybe 'cause he was called "Old Hickory." "Hickory"..."hiccup" ...they're close.

CHARLIE: Jane, ain't you got some corncobs out back by yer still?

JANE: I'll get one! (*Starts to exit.*)

BETSY: Make sure it has plenty of corn silk.

JANE: (*Shouts.*) Why, you tight-legged, eraser-clappin' spinster...you sayin' Bill's got big ears?!

BETSY: No! Calm down, Jane! We might have to do it more than once, that's all!

DOC: You can do it a hundred times and it still won't work. The best place for that book is in the outhouse. At least there it'd do some good.

JANE: Doc, I am tired of your negative-nancy attitude! You know we gotta cure them hiccups before the Doolin family gits to town.

CHARLIE: Bill's been called out, Doc! And he can't draw and shoot straight with them hiccups.

JANE: And Hector Doolin and his kin ain't gonna wait for Bill to get cure of 'em. (*Exits.*)

DOC: Fine, fine! Do yer worst! (*Pours himself another shot of Red Eye.*) "Andy Jackson!" Humph!

CHARLIE: Well, you ain't come up with nothin', Doc.

DOC: They'll go away on their own.

BETSY: He's had them for two days, Doc. That isn't natural.

(*A loud hiccup is heard outside.*)

DOC: (*Chuckles.*) I'm bettin' that's him.

CHARLIE: Ain't no laughin' matter, Doc! That Doolin family's out fer blood.

DOC: Sure it ain't spit? I've told 'em a hundred times to go see that dentist over in Spearfish and get their lower teeth fixed! It'd stop that slobberin'! The droolin' Doolins! No wonder that whole family's such a grizzly bunch, always having to change their soaked shirts and wipe their sloppy chins.

[END OF FREEVIEW]