

GEORGE BAKER

NEVADA

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Nevada / or, The Lost Mine, A Drama in Three Acts:*

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A Drama in Three Acts

CHARACTERS

NEVADA, the Wanderer.

VERMONT, an Old Miner.

TOM CAREW, }

DANDY DICK, } Young Miners.

SILAS STEELE, Missionary of Health.

JERDEN, a Detective.

JUBE, a Black Miner.

WIN-KYE, a Chinaman.

MOTHER MERTON.

AGNES FAIRLEE.

MOSELLE, a Waif.

COSTUMES

Nevada. Long white hair and beard, gray shirt, dark pants, both ragged; boots and belt; one leg of pants in boot, the other hanging in ribbons.

Vermont. Iron-gray bald wig and beard, gray shirt, overalls tucked in boots, belt, pistol in hip-pocket, short coat, slouch hat.

Tom. Full black beard, blue shirt, dark pants tucked in long boots, black necktie, short coat, pistol in hip-pocket, slouch hat worn jauntily, red handkerchief worn for belt.

Dandy Dick. Light hair and beard, trimmed; blue shirt with red necktie, dark pants tucked in long boots, dark coat, Derby hat; dressed neatly as possible.

Jerden. Full beard, mixed suit, pistol in hip-pocket, Derby hat.

Jube. Woolly wig, black face, throat, and arms, red shirt thrown back from throat, with sleeves rolled up to elbow, overalls in boots.

Win-Kye. White pants, blue blouse, cue.

Silas. Red wig, mustache, and goatee, tourist blouse, long boots, slouch hat.

Mother. Gray wig, calico dress.

Agnes. Travelling-dress and hat.

Moselle. *First Dress*. Travelling-dress, hat and feather, neat and tasty. *Second Dress*. Short red dress, blue kerchief knotted loosely on breast, light stockings, boots, broad-brimmed straw

hat, arms bare, hair free.

Act I. — *Wooded and rocky flat; inclined run R., masked by rocks, leading up from a rocky platform C.; door and part of a log cabin, L., creepers and vines running over it, rocks and foliage; L. mask the remainder; R. rocks and foliage, rock for a seat R., near 2 entrance. Stump for a seat L., between platform and door; on rock masking run R. in large white letters, "Busted's Balm" to which with paint-pail in left hand, and brush in right, Silas Steele is discovered giving a finishing touch. Silas sings, —*

Oh! here's to good old Busted,
Write him down;
Oh! here's to good old Busted,

Write him down;

Oh! here's to good old Busted,

For his balm is always trusted:

Write him down, write him down, write him down.

(Stands off, and looks at his work.) Again the missionary of health plants his victorious banner on a giant boulder, that shall forever point the westward hoers to the fountain of health. *(Sets down pail, and looks at his hands.)* A fountain of water would be more to my taste just now: the handle of that pail is in a bad condition, but I'll fix it. *(Takes a newspaper from his pocket, and wraps it round handle while speaking.)* Big scheme of Busted to spread his balm all over the continent, from Switcham, Vt., to the top of the Sierra Nevadas. Such outward applications of the infallible awaken curiosity, curiosity stirs the sluggish brain to action, the active brain arouses the torpid system, and health re-animates the sinking frame. For further particulars see small bills. That M's a little shaky; I'll touch it up a little, or some of these hardy miners will take it for a bad spell: and, being so choice in their language, that would never do. *(Works with brush. Sings), —*

Oh! here's to good old Busted.

(Enter from cabin Mother Merton, with broom.)

Mother. Who on earth is that howling?

Silas (*sings*), —

Write him down,

Mother. A stranger! What's he doing to that rock?

Silas (*sings*), —

Oh! here's to good old Busted.

Mother. Busted! I do believe he's trying to blast it right before my door — blow us all up. (*Brings broom down on his back smartly.*) Here, stop that!

Silas (*turning, and presenting brush like a pistol*). Look out for paint. (*Mother steps back.*) I beg your pardon; but, if there is any thing in my personal appearance that leads you to suspect my jacket needs dusting, a gentler application of the duster might save the dustor some strength, and the dusteed much wind. Hang it! you nearly took away my breath.

Mother. Served you right. Who are you? Where did you come from? What's that daub?

Silas (*aside*). Daub! shade of Michael Angelo! (*Aloud.*) Madam, I am a missionary.

Mother. Good gracious! A parson. Why didn't you say so before? Settled?

Silas. No. (*Rubs shoulders.*) I thought I was just now.

Mother. Where do you hail from, parson?

Silas. Switcham, Vt. That answers your second interrogatory. The third I will save you the trouble of repeating by announcing the fact that the daub, as you are pleased to call my etching, is the good tidings I am ordained to proclaim. That's one of my sermons; and sermons in stones, though not original with me, have at least the merit of brevity to recommend them.

Mother. "Busted's Balm." Are you Busted?

Silas. No; but I shall be if you ask any more questions.

Mother. Oh, come, be sociable! I came from Vermont myself.

Silas. Possible?

Mother. Yes: twelve years ago, with my husband, expecting to return in two years with a fortune; but in two years husband died.

Silas. Ah! A *misfortune*.

Mother. And here I've been ever since, the mother of this camp; and my boys – white, black, and yellow – take good care that I have my share of the dust.

Silas (*shrugs shoulders*). I understand – with a broom.

Mother. La, parson! don't bear malice: do you suppose I'd have struck you, if I'd an idea of your cloth?

Silas. Thank you. My coat *is* rather thin.

Mother. Expect to locate here? The boys would be mighty glad to have you; and they'd see that you had a peaceful hearing,

if they had to shoot the whole congregation.

Silas. Would they? Very kind of the boys, but I hope they'd leave somebody to pass the contribution-box.

Mother. Vermont would see to the dust.

Silas. Who's Vermont?

Mother. The best of the lot, steady as a clock, but a powerful wrestler; that's his weakness.

Silas. Is it? I've a strong weakness in that line too.

Mother. You'd have no show with him. Now, parson —

Silas. Oh, drop that! This person is no parson, but, if the old saying is true, just the opposite; for I am a deacon's son.

Mother. The deuce you are!

Silas. No: the Deuce's grandson.

Mother. What's your name?

Silas. Silas Steele, jun. I'm the little one, and dad's the big Steele. I'm travelling for Busted's Balm.

Mother. Where do you expect to find it?

Silas. 'Tis found already. And, to spread abroad the glorious fact, I've taken a large contract; and it's the biggest undertaking any undertaker ever undertook. I never realized before that there was such a strong objection to clean white paint; but I've found it out now, for I've been peppered by indignant shot-guns, pounded by angry broomsticks, booted by revengeful brogans, and bulldozed by man's faithful friends, the puppies.

Mother. Then, you're only a pill-pedler, after all.

Silas. A pill-pedler! great Busted!

Mother. You said you were a missionary.

Silas. So I am. What nobler mission than mine, to proclaim to a suffering world, sunk in misery by aches and torments, the advent of the wonderful cure-all that will eradicate the ills with which the body groans, from bald head to bunions? For further particulars see small bills. (*Looks off R.*) Ah! there's a boulder I missed; must secure that before Foggarty's Liniment, or some other quack nostrum, defaces the fair face of nature with a lie. (*Goes up run, turns.*) Good-by, widow. Give the parson's benediction to the boys. (*Exit.*)

Mother. Well, of all harum-scarum chaps, he's the tongueyist; I couldn't get a word in edgeways.

(Enter Vermont, R. 2 E.)

Vermont. Little one come, widder?

Mother. No: supper's all ready for her.

Vermont. Stage's about due. Widder, I've a little matter on my mind I'd like to pan out afore the little one gets here.

Mother. About her?

Vermont (*sits on rock R.*). Yes, about her. It's ten years, widder, since your old man passed in his checks, and had a hole scooped for him out there under the hill.

Mother (*sighs*). Ah, yes!

Vermont. It was jest about that time that I dropped into your ranch one dark night, with a little girl in my arms. She might have

been a five-year old —

Mother. Or six: we never could make out. She was burning with fever. You found her in a basket, floating in the creek.

Vermont. Exactly. That's what I told you, and I brought her to you because you was the only female woman in the camp.

Mother. Yes: bless her! she brought luck with her.

Vermont. You bet she did. Those little ones always do. Well, I read a long while ago, while prospecting in the big book, — that's pay-dirt way down to bed-rock, — about that king pin what struck the little game "Faro," and named it arter hisself, how he had a darter what found a baby floating in a creek, and called it "Moses;" and, as I warnt goin' back on scripeter, I named our little one Moses too.

Mother. And, as that was not a girl's name, I changed it to Moselle.

Vermont. That was too Frenchy for the boys; so they split the dif, and called her Mosey.

Mother. And Mosey is just worshipped by the boys. I believe, if you would let them, they would cover her with gold.

Vermont (*rising*). Likely. But, when I washed that nugget outer the creek, I staked a claim in which I wanted no partners. Says I, "Vermont, here's a chance for you to use your dust, and don't you forget it." I believe the angels dropped one of their little sisters into the creek, to make an ugly old sinner ashamed of his wickedness. (*Passes his arm across his eyes.*) Widder, you've been a mother to her, and a good one.

Mother. And you, the best of fathers. Every year you've sent her off to school, and to-day she comes back to us —

Vermont. With Tom Carew, our Tom, the handsomest and squarest miner in the diggin's. I wouldn't trust the bringin' of her home to any other of the boys.

Mother. Except Dick: she's very fond of Dick.

Vermont. Dandy Dick, as the boys call him. Oh, he's well enough for a short acquaintance. He's only been here six months, and there's something about him — Well, if Mosey likes him, it's all right.

Jube (*outside R.*). Hi, hi! Mudder Merton, de stage am come, Mosey's to hum.

(Enter Jube, down run, with a hat-box under one arm, a valise in hand, followed by Win-Kye with a valise in left hand, an umbrella spread over his head. Jube comes down L., Win-Kye drops valise on platform, tumbles over it, and mixes himself up with the umbrella.)

Jube. Golly, see dat ar mongo! hist yerself, hist yerself. Want to broke ebery bone in dat ar ambril?

Win-Kye (*jumping up and closing umbrella*). Umblillee spilllee all ligh'.

Jube. Dar's a surprise party comin', Mudder Merton. Golly! such a bobbycue. Smoove yer har, Vermont, smoove yer har, take yer boots outer yer pants; dust de cheers, mudder, dust all de cheers; dar hasn't been sich an arribal since — since the Queen ob Shebang went wisiting ole King Soloman Isaacs, nebber.

Win-Kye (*puffing*). Jube walkee fast, talkee fast, me no catchee bleath, me puffee.

Vermont. What's the matter, Jube? it's only our Mosey.

Win-Kye. Mosey nice gally, velly nice gally; me chin chin Mosey, Mosey chin chin me; all ligh'.

Jube. Mosey. Yah, yah, she's come, bress her! Jes' as lobely and libely as eber. Why, de boys jes' crowd roun' dat ar stage, and shook her han's, and she shook back, an' laff; golly, how she laff! might heard her a mile off. But dar's anuder.

Mother. Another, Jube?

Jube. Yas indeed, a rale lady; no riff-raff, but de real ting, de dust in de pan, jes a seraphine, hansom', oh, my! an' sweet, sweet – golly! when I seed that lilly foot ob hers creepin' out ob der stage, it jest smashed *me*.

Win-Kye. She Snapee eyes, she smilee so (*grins*), she smashee me.

Moselle (*outside*). Never mind me, Tom, help Agnes; my foot is on my native heath, my name's (*appears on run*) —

All. Mosey?

Moselle. Yes, Mosey, Moses, Moselle, – we three. Ha, ha, ha! that's me. (*Runs down into Mother Merton's arms.*) O you dear old soul, ain't I glad I'm home!

Mother. 'Tis a happy day for us, darling.

Moselle (*breaking away*). Where's daddy?

Vermont. Right here, little one.

Moselle (*throws her arms about his neck*). Here's your nugget,

daddy. Ain't you glad to get it back?

Vermont. Glad? that's no name for it (*holds her off*). Let's have a look at you, – sunshine all over, and as fine as a fiddle in your store-clothes.

Moselle. I'll not be in them long, daddy, so take a good look at them; for I'm just dying to get into my old climbing-suit, and away for a scamper over the rocks. Ah, Jube! there's lots of fun ahead.

Jube. Yas, indeed, honey! jes' waitin' fer yer to touch it off.

Moselle. Ha, ha, ha! I'm a match for it. Ain't I, Win?

Win-Kye. You sclatchee match, blow high-sky, fitt!

Moselle (*in front of Win-Kye*). Oh, you queer bit of broken China! I'd like to set you on a shelf at school, and set your head a-going to please the boys. (*Points forefingers up, and nods head à la Chinese.*)

Win-Kye (*imitating her*). No settee up fol the boys.

Moselle. Ha, ha, ha! but you must go. Ah, daddy! I'm as full of mischief as I was the day I threw the powder-flask into your frying-pan. (*All laugh.*)

Jube. Dat was rough on de ole man.

Moselle. Jube remembers it; for, while he was helping daddy put a new roof on and patch up the rent, I hid his shovel and pick; and he couldn't find it for a week. (*All but Jube laugh.*)

Win-Kye (*points to Jube*). That blakee him all uppee.

Moselle. So look out for yourselves, old folks, young folks: I give you fair warning. Mind that pigtail, Win: I want it for my

back hair.

Win-Kye. All ligh'! you catchee, you clippee, you Mosee, me mosee too.

Tom (*outside*). Be careful of that rock, Miss. Give me your hand. Now you're all right.

Moselle. Oh! what am I thinking of? Mother, I've brought you a visitor, – Miss Fairlee, one of our teachers, and a very dear friend of mine.

Jube. Dat's what I tole yer, de Queen ob Shebang.

(Tom and Agnes appear on run descending.)

Mother. She is heartily welcome.

Tom (*on platform*). You hear that, Miss, – she speaks for us all. A rough set we miners, rough and rugged as the soil in which we search for gold; but there are many among us who remember homes far off, made happy by mothers, wives, and sisters. So have no fears. To the rude cabins that shelter us, to the homely fare that sustains us, and to the protection of strong arms, you are heartily welcome. (*Leads her down to Mother Merton.*)

Mother (*takes her hand*). Indeed you are!

Agnes. Thank you. I fear I shall trespass on your kindness. But the hope of finding some trace of a very dear friend has induced me to accept Moselle's invitation.

Moselle. Agnes, you must know my daddy. (*Brings Vermont up C. from L.*) Miss Fairlee, daddy; daddy, Miss Fairlee.

Vermont (*bowing*). Very glad to meet you.

Agnes (*offering her hand*). And I am proud to know you. Moselle is a bright scholar: she has made many friends at school, but I know the warmest corner in her heart is kept for you.

Vermont. Thank you, marm: if I can serve you, call on Vermont every time.

Jube. An' when de ole man ain't roun', jes' look dis way. I's spry, and dreffel willin'.

Win-Kye. Alle same so lookee me.

Agnes. Thank you all.

Mother. You must be hungry after your long ride. Supper's all ready.

Moselle. Supper! Where is it? I never was so hungry but once: that's now.

Mother. This way, Miss Fairlee. (*Exeunt Mother and Agnes into cabin.*)

Jube. Come on, Win. Tote de luggage in. (*Exit into cabin.*)

Win-Kye. All ligh'! Schoolee-marm some punkee. (*Exit to cabin.*)

Moselle. Ain't she lovely, daddy? (*Goes to door, turns, and looks at Tom, who stands L. C. looking at door.*) Tom (*puts her hand on heart, and sighs*), I'd pity you, but I'm so hungry. Ha, ha, ha! (*Exit.*)

(Vermont crosses, and sits on rock R., watching Tom, who stands with his eyes on door.)

Tom. Lovely? Never was a more tempting bait set before the eyes of a hungry miner to lure him back to civilization. Out of a world from which we have banished ourselves for greed of gold, she comes, gentle and refined, to show us the lost state of peace and happiness to which, though the earth unbosom its richest treasures, we hardened wretches can never return.

Vermont. Tom, what yer starin' at that door for? Ain't in love, air yer?

Tom (*comes down*). In love? I never yet saw a woman that could bring a blush to my face. That's one of the indications, isn't it?

Vermont. Exactly.

Mother (*sticking her head out of door*). Tom, come and have some supper. (*Disappears.*)

Tom. No, thank yer: I'm not hungry.

Vermont. That's another indication.

Tom. Vermont, isn't she lovely?

Vermont. The widder?

Tom. The widow! No: the other.

Vermont. Mosey?

Tom. Miss Fairlee, – Agnes Fairlee, – Agnes, – what a name! So poetical! Agnes, – so sweet!

Vermont. Spell it, Tom: there's nothing like lengthened sweetness long drawn out.

Tom. Old man, you're laughing at me. You needn't: I'm all right.

Vermont. Not in love?

Tom. Not a bit of it.

Vermont. Ain't goin' back on the comforts of life?

Tom. No, old man; but when that —

Vermont. Agnes (*smacks his lips*) does taste kinder sweet.

Tom. When Miss Fairlee placed her little hand in my arm, and looked up into my face, I felt as though I would like to die for her.

Vermont. Must have been a killing look.

Tom. And when she spoke, the queerest feeling — There it is again. Old man, I feel sick.

(Enter Jube and Win-Kye from cabin.)

Jube. Sick? Don't you do it. Dar ain't a fusycian widdin fourteen miles.

Win-Kye. Me bling pillee man velly quick.

Vermont. All the doctor he wants is in the cabin. Tom, you're talking like a blamed fool; but it's jest nater: when a woman touches the fancy of a man, it's like the wind among the timber. The little ones sway and rustle, and seem mighty tickled; but the big brawny trees groan and tremble as though their last day had come. Shake yourself together, boy, jump into your hole, a good

steady diet of pick and shovel is a sure cure for love or bile.

(Jerden *appears on run.*)

Jerden (*speaking as he comes down to stage*). Morning, mates: where can I find one Tom Carew?

Tom. I answer to that name, stranger.

Jerden. Ah! I'm in luck. They say you're the best informed miner in these parts. I'm looking for a man who came from the East, – Richard Fairlee.

Tom. Don't know him, stranger.

Vermont. Names don't count here. Most of us is baptized and rechristened when we arrive. What does he look like?

Jube. Has he got all his arms and legs, years and eyes?

Win-Kye. Any strawbelly marks, John?

Jerden. I have traced him by many *aliases*. How he looks now, I cannot say; but when he left the East he looked like this.

(Takes photograph from pocket-book, and hands it to Tom, who looks at it, Vermont, Jube, and Win-Kye crowd round him.)

Tom. A good-looking fellow. I don't know him.

Jerden. Don't belong in this camp.

Jube. No, sir: dat air feller ain't got no beard, an' has light complex, jes' like Win-Kye.

Win-Kye. No Chinaman; 'Melican man plaps, Ilishman plaps;

no Chinaman.

Jerden. Well, there he is; and he's wanted by a bank.

Tom. Robbery?

Jerden (C.). Forgery, twenty thousand dollars.

(Vermont and Jube R., Tom and Win-Kye L.)

Tom. You're a detective?

Jerden. Yes. Shall I have your help in securing this fugitive from justice?

Tom (*coldly*). We're not man-hunters. Many a poor fellow, made criminal by passion or misfortune, has drifted among us to be made better by a life of hardship and privation. We ask no man's past history. If he be knave or fool, he shows his hand, and he is lost. Miner law is swift and sure.

Vermont. You've your answer, stranger.

Jerden. All right: I'll find my man without your help; but, if you should change your minds, there's a thousand dollars for the man who gives information.

Tom and Vermont (*draw revolvers, cover Jerden, and speak together*). You get!

**(Jerden *turns, and runs up run,*
against Silas, who is descending.)**

Silas. Look out for paint. (*Exit Jerden.*) Seems to be in a hurry. (*Comes down to stage.*) How are you, boys? White, black, and yellow. The widow said she had an assortment of colors, and here they are. Put up your shooting-irons, gentlemen: I'm a friend of the widow's. I left my card here an hour ago. (*Points to rock.*)

Tom. Any friend of the widow's is heartily welcome.

Vermont. From the east, stranger?

Silas (*sets paint-pail down near rock*). Switcham, Vt. Name, Silas Steele. Occupation, painter and decorator. For further particulars seek any prominent boulder, and look out for paint.

Jube. Golly! dar's a heap er talent in dat ar brush, I know; fur I used to whitewash myself.

(*Win-Kye edges up to paint, examines it, takes brush, and daubs a little on rock during the following scene, dropping it, and taking it up as Silas turns and watches him.*)

Silas. Whitewash yourself? You took a big contract.

Tom. Stopping with the widow?

Silas. No: only a chance acquaintance. She came from Vermont.

Vermont. So did I.

Silas. Did you? Then, you're the man I've been looking for.

Vermont (*starts*). Eh?

Silas. My old man took it into his head about twelve years ago to start west, minin'; and we've never seen him from that day to this. Nice old fellow, the deacon, but queer. Started off without so much as a good-by, Hannah, and has been lost to his family, the church, and Switcham, ever since. But we heard from him occasionally in the shape of gold-dust to mother, but no word or clew to his whereabouts. Mother's worried so, I've come out here to look him up if he's alive. Any of you know Deacon Steele?

Jube. Deacon who? Golly! we's all out ob deacons: dey fall from grace when dey git out here.

Vermont. You're wasting time, youngster: the deacon's dead and buried.

Silas. You knew him?

Vermont. No: but deacons die young here.

Tom. Perhaps 'tis Nevada.

Vermont and Jube. Nevada!

Silas. Who's Nevada?

Tom. The mystery of the mines: you may meet him here to-day, to-morrow in some gloomy gulch, – a ragged, crazy miner, seeking, as he has sought for ten years, a lost mine.

Silas. A lost mine?

Tom (C.) This was his story as I have heard it from old miners. He was known among them a dozen years ago, as a quiet, reserved man, working by himself, wandering off prospecting alone. At times they missed him. He had been off for a week,

when, one night, he came in staggering, faint from the loss of blood, with a deep wound in his head, and the wild air of a maniac. From his broken speech, they gathered this: He had found indications of gold, had opened a tunnel, and worked far in, all by himself, mind, following some theory of his own, when suddenly, with his pick, he loosened a stone above his head, which fell and crushed him; not, however, until he had caught one glimpse of a rich vein of gold. Poor fellow, he could never find his way back, and none of his mates could help him. They would have believed his story to be but the wild speech of his wandering mind, had they not found in his tangled hair, mingled with dirt and blood, flakes of gold.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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