

BRET HARTE

TWO MEN OF
SANDY BAR

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Two Men of Sandy Bar: A Drama:

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Two Men of Sandy Bar: A Drama

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The Prodigals.

"SANDY".. Son of Alexander Morton, sen.

JOHN OAKHURST.. His former partner, personating the prodigal son, Sandy.

COL. STARBOTTLE.. Alexander Morton, sen.'s, legal adviser.

OLD MORTON.. Alexander Morton, sen.

DON JOSE.. Father of Jovita Castro.

CAPPER.. A detective.

CONCHO.. Major-domo of Don Jose's rancho.

YORK.. An old friend of Oakhurst.

PRITCHARD.. An Australian convict.

SOAPY & SILKY.. His pals.

JACKSON.. Confidential clerk of Alexander Morton, jun., and confederate of Pritchard.

HOP SING.. A Chinese laundryman.

SERVANT of Alexander Morton, sen.—POLICEMEN.

MISS MARY MORRIS.. The schoolmistress of Red Gulch, in love with Sandy, and cousin of Alexander Morton, sen.

DONA JOVITA CASTRO.. In love with John Oakhurst, and daughter of Don Jose.

THE DUCHESS.. Wife of Pritchard, illegally married to Sandy, and former "flame" of John Oakhurst.

MANUELA.. Servant of Castro, and maid to Dona Jovita.

ACT I

The Rancho of the Blessed Innocents, and House of Don Jose Castro.

ACT II

Red Gulch.

ACT III

The Banking-House of Morton & Son, San Francisco.

ACT IV

The Villa of Alexander Morton, sen., San Francisco.

COSTUMES

ALEXANDER MORTON ("SANDY").—First dress: Mexican vaquero; black velvet trousers open from knee, over white trousers; laced black velvet jacket, and broad white sombrero; large silver spurs. Second dress: miner's white duck jumper, and white duck trousers; (sailor's) straw hat. Third dress: fashionable morning costume. Fourth dress: full evening dress.

JOHN OAKHURST.—First dress: riding-dress, black, elegantly fitting. Second and third dress: fashionable. Fourth dress: full evening dress.

COL. STARBOTTLE.—First dress: blue double-breasted frock, and white "strapped" trousers; white hat. Second dress: same coat, blue trousers, and black broad-brimmed felt hat; cane, semper; ruffles, semper. Third dress: the same. Fourth dress: the same, with pumps.

YORK.—Fashionable morning dress.

JACKSON.—Business suit.

CONCHO.—First dress: vaquero's dress. Second dress: citizen's dress.

HOP SING.—Dress of Chinese coolie: dark-blue blouse, and dark-blue drawers gathered at ankles; straw conical hat, and wooden sabots.

DON JOSE.—First dress: serape, black, with gold embroidery. Second class: fashionable black suit, with broad-

brimmed black stiff sombrero.

OLD MORTON.—First, second, third, and fourth dress: black, stiff, with white cravat.

CAPPER.—Ordinary dress of period.

MISS MARY.—First dress: tasteful calico morning dress. Second and third dress: lady's walking costume—fashionable. Fourth dress: full dress.

DONA JOVITA.—First dress: handsome Spanish dress, with manta. Second dress: more elaborate, same quality.

THE DUCHESS.—First dress: elaborate but extravagant fashionable costume. Second dress: traveling dress.

MANUELA.—The saya y manta; white waist, and white or black skirt, with flowers.

ACT I

SCENE 1.—Courtyard and Corridors of the Rancho

MANUELA (arranging supper-table in corridor L., solus). There! Tortillas, chocolate, olives, and—the whiskey of the Americans! And supper's ready. But why Don Jose chooses to-night, of all nights, with this heretic fog lying over the Mission Hills like a wet serape, to take his supper out here, the saints only know. Perhaps it's some distrust of his madcap daughter, the Dona Jovita; perhaps to watch her—who knows? And now to find Diego. Ah, here he comes. So! The old story. He is getting Dona Jovita's horse ready for another madcap journey. Ah! (Retires to table.)

Enter cautiously from corridor, L., SANDY MORTON, carrying lady's saddle and blanket; starts on observing MANUELA, and hastily hides saddle and blanket in recess.

Sandy (aside). She's alone. I reckon the old man's at his siesta yet. Ef he'll only hang onto that snooze ten minutes longer, I'll manage to let that gal Jovita slip out to that yer fandango, and no questions asked.

Manuela (calling SANDY). Diego!

Sandy (aside, without heeding her). That's a sweet voice for a serenade. Round, full, high-shouldered, and calkilated to fetch a man every time. Only thar ain't, to my sartain knowledge, one o' them chaps within a mile of the rancho. (Laughs.)

Manuela. Diego!

Sandy (aside). Oh, go on! That's the style o' them Greasers. They'll stand rooted in their tracks, and yell for a chap without knowin' whether he's in sight or sound.

Manuela (approaching SANDY impatiently). Diego!

Sandy (starting, aside). The devil! Why, that's ME she's after. (Laughs.) I clean disremembered that when I kem yer I tole those chaps my name was James,—James Smith (laughs), and thet they might call me "Jim." And De-a-go's their lingo for Jim. (Aloud.) Well, my beauty, De-a-go it is. Now, wot's up?

Manuela. Eh? no sabe!

Sandy. Wot's your little game. (Embraces her.)

Manuela (aside, and recoiling coquettishly). Mother of God! He must be drunk again. These Americans have no time for love when they are sober. (Aloud and coquettishly.) Let me go, Diego. Don Jose is coming. He has sent for you. He takes his supper to-night on the corridor. Listen, Diego. He must not see you thus. You have been drinking again. I will keep you from him. I will say you are not well.

Sandy. Couldn't you, my darling, keep him from ME? Couldn't you make him think HE was sick? Couldn't you say he's exposin' his precious health by sittin' out thar to-night; thet ther's

chills and fever in every breath? (Aside.) Ef the old Don plants himself in that chair, that gal's chances for goin' out to-night is gone up.

Manuela. Never. He would suspect at once. Listen, Diego. If Don Jose does not know that his daughter steals away with you to meet some caballero, some LOVER,—you understand, Diego,—it is because he does not know, or would not SEEM to know, what every one else in the rancho knows. Have a care, foolish Diego! If Don Jose is old and blind, look you, friend, we are NOT. You understand?

Sandy (aside). What the devil does she expect?—money? No! (Aloud.) Look yer, Manuela, you ain't goin' to blow on that young gal! (Putting his arm around her waist.) Allowin' that she hez a lover, thar ain't nothin' onnateral in thet, bein' a purty sort o' gal. Why, suppose somebody should see you and me together like this, and should just let on to the old man.

Manuela. Hush! (Disengaging herself.) Hush! He is coming. Let me go, Diego. It is Don Jose!

Enter Don Jose, who walks gravely to the table, and seats himself. MANUELA retires to table.

Sandy (aside). I wonder if he saw us. I hope he did: it would shut that Manuela's mouth for a month of Sundays. (Laughs.) God forgive me for it! I've done a heap of things for that young gal Dona Jovita; but this yer gittin' soft on the Greaser maid-servant to help out the misses is a little more than Sandy Morton bargained fur.

Don Jose (to MANUELA). You can retire. Diego will attend me. (Looks at DIEGO attentively.) [Exit MANUELA.]

Sandy (aside). Diego will attend him! Why, blast his yeller skin, does he allow that Sandy Morton hired out as a purty waiter-gal? Because I calkilated to feed his horses, it ain't no reason thet my dooty to animals don't stop thar. Pass his hash! (Turns to follow MANUELA, but stops.) Hello, Sandy! wot are ye doin', eh? You ain't going back on Miss Jovita, and jest spile that gal's chances to git out to-night, on'y to teach that God-forsaken old gov'ment mule manners? No! I'll humor the old man, and keep one eye out for the gal. (Comes to table, and leans familiarly over the back of DON JOSE'S chair.)

Don Jose (aside). He seems insulted and annoyed. His manner strengthens my worst suspicions. He has not expected this. (Aloud.) Chocolate, Diego.

Sandy (leaning over table carelessly). Yes, I reckon it's somewhar thar.

Don Jose (aside). He is unused to menial labor. If I should be right in my suspicions! if he really were Dona Jovita's secret lover! This gallantry with the servants only a deceit! Bueno! I will watch him. (Aloud.) Chocolate, Diego!

Sandy (aside). I wonder if the old fool reckons I'll pour it out. Well, seein's he's the oldest. (Pours chocolate awkwardly, and spills it on the table and DON JOSE.)

Don Jose (aside). He IS embarrassed. I am right. (Aloud.) Diego!

Sandy (leaning confidentially over DON JOSE'S chair). Well, old man!

Don Jose. Three months ago my daughter the Dona Jovita picked you up, a wandering vagabond, in the streets of the Mission. (Aside.) He does not seem ashamed. (Aloud.) She—she—ahem! The aguardiente, Diego.

Sandy (aside). That means the whiskey. It's wonderful how quick a man learns Spanish. (Passes the bottle, fills DON JOSE'S glass, and then his own. DON JOSE recoils in astonishment.) I looks toward ye, ole man. (Tosses off liquor.)

Don Jose (aside). This familiarity! He IS a gentleman. Bueno! (Aloud.) She was thrown from her horse; her skirt caught in the stirrup; she was dragged; you saved her life. You—

Sandy (interrupting, confidentially drawing a chair to the table, and seating himself). Look yer! I'll tell you all about it. It wasn't that gal's fault, ole man. The hoss shied at me, lying drunk in a ditch, you see; the hoss backed, the surcle broke; it warn't in human natur for her to keep her seat, and that gal rides like an angel; but the mustang throwed her. Well, I sorter got in the way o' thet hoss, and it stopped. Hevin' bin the cause o' the hoss shyin', for I reckon I didn't look much like an angel lyin' in that ditch, it was about the only squar thing for me to waltz in and help the gal. Thar, thet's about the way the thing pints. Now, don't you go and hold that agin her!

Don Jose. Well, well! She was grateful. She has a strange fondness for you Americans; and at her solicitation I gave you

—YOU, an unknown vagrant—employment here as groom. You comprehend, Diego. I, Don Jose Castro, proprietor of this rancho, with an hundred idle vaqueros on my hands,—I made a place for you.

Sandy (meditatively). Umph.

Don Jose. You said you would reform. How have you kept your word? You were drunk last Wednesday.

Sandy. Thet's so.

Don Jose. And again last Saturday.

Sandy (slowly). Look yer, ole man, don't ye be too hard on me: that was the same old drunk.

Don Jose. I am in no mood for trifling. Hark ye, friend Diego. You have seen, perhaps,—who has not?—that I am a fond, an indulgent father. But even my consideration for my daughter's strange tastes and follies has its limit. Your conduct is a disgrace to the rancho. You must go.

Sandy (meditatively). Well, I reckon, perhaps I'd better.

Don Jose (aside). His coolness is suspicious. Can it be that he expects the girl will follow him? Mother of God! perhaps it has been already planned between them. Good! Thank Heaven I can end it here. (Aloud.) Diego!

Sandy. Old man.

Don Jose. For my daughter's sake, you understand,—for her sake,—I am willing to try you once more. Hark ye! My daughter is young, foolish, and romantic. I have reason to believe, from her conduct lately, that she has contracted an intimacy with some

Americano, and that in her ignorance, her foolishness, she has allowed that man to believe that he might aspire to her hand. Good! Now listen to me. You shall stay in her service. You shall find out,—you are in her confidence,—you shall find out this American, this adventurer, this lover if you please, of the Dona Jovita my daughter; and you will tell him this,—you will tell him that a union with him is impossible, forbidden; that the hour she attempts it, without my consent, she is PENNILESS; that this estate, this rancho, passes into the hands of the Holy Church, where even your laws cannot reach it.

Sandy (leaning familiarly over the table). But suppose that he sees that little bluff, and calls ye.

Don Jose. I do not comprehend you (coldly).

Sandy. Suppose he loves that gal, and will take her as she stands, without a cent, or hide or hair of yer old cattle.

Don Jose (scornfully). Suppose—a miracle! Hark ye, Diego! It is now five years since I have known your countrymen, these smart Americanos. I have yet to know when love, sentiment, friendship, was worth any more than a money value in your market.

Sandy (truculently and drunkenly). You hev, hev ye? Well, look yar, ole man. Suppose I REFUSE. Suppose I'd rather go than act as a spy on that young gal your darter! Suppose that—hic—allowin' she's my friend, I'd rather starve in the gutters of the Mission than stand between her and the man she fancies. Hey? Suppose I would—damn me! Suppose I'd see you and your

derned old rancho in—t'other place—hic—damn me. You hear me, ole man! That's the kind o' man I am—damn me.

Don Jose (aside, rising contemptuously). It is as I suspected. Traitor. Ingrate! Satisfied that his scheme has failed, he is ready to abandon her. And this—THIS is the man for whom she has been ready to sacrifice everything,—her home, her father! (Aloud, coldly.) Be it so, Diego: you shall go.

Sandy (soberly and seriously, after a pause.) Well, I reckon I had better. (Rising.) I've a few duds, old man, to put up. It won't take me long. (Goes to L., and pauses.)

Don Jose (aside). Ah! he hesitates! He is changing his mind. (SANDY returns slowly to table, pours out glass of liquor, nods to DON JOSE, and drinks.) I looks towards ye, ole man. Adios! [Exit SANDY.

Don Jose. His coolness is perfect. If these Americans are cayotes in their advances, they are lions in retreat! Bueno! I begin to respect him. But it will be just as well to set Concho to track him to the Mission; and I will see that he leaves the rancho alone.

[Exit Jose.

Enter hurriedly JOVITA CASTRO, in riding habit, with whip.

So! Chiquita not yet saddled, and that spy Concho haunting the plains for the last half-hour. What an air of mystery! Something awful, something deliciously dreadful, has happened! Either my amiable drunkard has forgotten to despatch Concho on his usual fool's errand, or he is himself lying helpless in some ditch. Was there ever a girl so persecuted? With a father wrapped

in mystery, a lover nameless and shrouded in the obscurity of some Olympian height, and her only confidant and messenger a Bacchus instead of a Mercury! Heigh ho! And in another hour Don Juan—he told me I might call him John—will be waiting for me outside the convent wall! What if Diego fails me? To go there alone would be madness! Who else would be as charmingly unconscious and inattentive as this American vagabond! (Goes to L.) Ah, my saddle and blanket hidden! He HAS been interrupted. Some one has been watching. This freak of my father's means something. And to-night, of all nights, the night that Oakhurst was to disclose himself, and tell me all! What is to be done? Hark! (DIEGO, without, singing.)

"Oh, here's your aguardiente,
Drink it down!"

Jovita. It is Diego; and, Mother of God! drunk again!

Enter SANDY, carrying pack, intoxicated; staggers to centre, and, observing JOVITA, takes off his hat respectfully.

Jovita (shaking him by the shoulders passionately). Diego! How dare you! And at such a time!

Sandy (with drunken solemnity). Miss Jovita, did ye ever know me to be drunk afore at such a time?

Jovita. No.

Sandy. Zachy so. It's abnormal. And it means—the game's up.

Jovita. I do not understand. For the love of God, Diego, be

plain!

Sandy (solemnly and drunkenly). When I say your game's up, I mean the old man knows it all. You're blowed upon. Hearken, miss. (Seriously and soberly.) Your father knows all that I know; but, as it wasn't my business to interfere with, I hev sorter helped along. He knows that you meet a stranger, an American, in these rides with me.

Jovita (passionately). Ingrate! You have not dared to tell him! (Seizing him by the collar, and threatening him with the horsewhip.)

Sandy (rising with half-drunken, half-sober solemnity). One minit, miss! one minit! Don't ye! don't ye do that! Ef ye forget (and I don't blame ye for it), ef ye forget that I'm a man, don't ye, don't ye forget that you're a woman! Sit ye down, sit ye down, so! Now, ef ye'll kindly remember, miss, I never saw this yer man, yer lover. Ef ye'll recollect, miss, whenever you met him, I allers hung back and waited round in the mission or in the fields beyond for ye, and allowed ye to hev your own way, it bein' no business o' mine. Thar isn't a man on the ranch, who, ef he'd had a mind to watch ye, wouldn't hev known more about yer lover than I do.

Jovita (aside). He speaks truly. He always kept in the background. Even Don Juan never knew that I had an attendant until I told him. (Aloud.) I made a mistake, Diego. I was hasty. What am I to do? He is waiting for me even now.

Sandy. Well (with drunken gravity), ef ye can't go to him, I reckon it's the squar thing for him to come to ye.

Jovita. Recollect yourself, Diego. Be a man!

Sandy. Fash jus war I say. Let him be a man, and come to ye here. Let him ride up to this ranch like a man, and call out to yer father that he'll take ye jist as ye are, without the land. And if the old man allows, rather than hev ye marry that stranger, he'll give this yer place to the church, why, let him do it, and be damned.

Jovita (recoiling, aside). So! That is their plan. Don Jose has worked on the fears or the cupidity of this drunken ingrate.

Sandy (with drunken submission). Ye was speaking to me, miss. Ef ye'll take my advice,—a drunken man's advice, miss,—ye'll say to that lover of yours, ef he's afeard to come for ye here, to take ye as ye stand, he ain't no man for ye. And, ontill he does, ye'll do as the ole man says. Fur ef I do say it, miss,—and thar ain't no love lost between us,—he's a good father to ye. It ain't every day that a gal kin afford to swap a father like that, as she DOES KNOW, fur the husband that she DON'T! He's a proud old fool, miss; but to ye, to ye, he's clar grit all through.

Jovita (passionately, aside). Tricked, fooled, like a child! and through the means of this treacherous, drunken tool. (Stamping her foot.) Ah! we shall see! You are wise, you are wise, Don Jose; but your daughter is not a novice, nor a helpless creature of the Holy Church. (Passionately.) I'll—I'll become a Protestant to-morrow!

Sandy (unheeding her passion, and becoming more earnest and self-possessed). Ef ye hed a father, miss, ez instead o' harkinin' to your slightest wish, and surroundin' ye with luxury,

hed made your infancy a struggle for life among strangers, and your childhood a disgrace and a temptation; ef he had left ye with no company but want, with no companions but guilt, with no mother but suffering; ef he had made your home, this home, so unhappy, so vile, so terrible, so awful, that the crowded streets and gutters of a great city was something to fly to for relief; ef he had made his presence, his very name,—your name, miss, allowin' it was your father,—ef he had made that presence so hateful, that name so infamous, that exile, that flyin' to furrin' parts, that wanderin' among strange folks ez didn't know ye, was the only way to make life endurable; and ef he'd given ye,—I mean this good old man Don Jose, miss,—ef he'd given ye as part of yer heritage a taint, a weakness in yer very blood, a fondness for a poison, a poison that soothed ye like a vampire bat and sucked yer life-blood (seizing her arm) ez it soothed ye; ef this curse that hung over ye dragged ye down day by day, till hating him, loathing him, ye saw yerself day by day becoming more and more like him, till ye knew that his fate was yours, and yours his,—why then, Miss Jovita (rising with an hysterical, drunken laugh), why then, I'd run away with ye myself,—I would, damn me!

Jovita (who has been withdrawing from him scornfully). Well acted, Diego. Don Jose should have seen his pupil. Trust me, my father will reward you. (Aside.) And yet there were tears in his drunken eyes. Bah! it is the liquor: he is no longer sane. And, either hypocrite or imbecile, he is to be trusted no longer. But

where and why is he going? (Aloud.) You are leaving us, Diego.

Sandy (quietly). Well, the old man and me don't get on together.

Jovita (scornfully). Bueno! I see. Then you abandon me.

Sandy (quickly). To the old man, miss,—not the young one. (Walks to the table, and begins to pour out liquor.)

Jovita (angrily). You would not dare to talk to me thus if John Oakhurst—ah! (Checking herself.)

Sandy (drops glass on table, hurries to centre, and seizes DONA JOVITA). Eh! Wot name did you say? (Looks at her amazed and bewildered.)

Jovita (terrified, aside). Mother of God! What have I done? Broken my sacred pledge to keep his name secret. No! No! Diego did not hear me! Surely this wretched drunkard does not know him. (Aloud.) Nothing. I said nothing: I mentioned no name.

Sandy (still amazed, frightened, and bewildered, passing his hand over his forehead slowly). Ye mentioned no name? Surely. I am wild, crazed. Tell me, miss—ye didn't,—I know ye didn't, but I thought it sounded like it,—ye didn't mention the name of —of—of—John Oakhurst?

Jovita (hurriedly). No, of course not! You terrify me, Diego. You are wild.

Sandy (dropping her hand with a sigh of relief). No, no! In course ye didn't. I was wild, miss, wild; this drink has confused me yer. (Pointing to his head.) There are times when I hear that name, miss,—times when I see his face. (Sadly.) But it's when

I've took too much—too much. I'll drink no more—no more!—to-night—to-night! (Drops his head slowly in his hands.)

Jovita (looking at DIEGO—aside). Really, I'm feeling very uncomfortable. I'd like to ask a question of this maniac. But nonsense! Don Juan gave me to understand Oakhurst wasn't his real name; that is, he intimated there was something dreadful and mysterious about it that mustn't be told,—something that would frighten people. HOLY VIRGIN! it has! Why, this reckless vagabond here is pale and agitated. Don Juan shall explain this mystery to-night. But then, how shall I see him? Ah, I have it. The night of the last festa, when I could not leave the rancho, he begged me to show a light from the flat roof of the upper corridor, that he might know I was thinking of him,—dear fellow! He will linger to-night at the Mission; he will see the light; he will know that I have not forgotten. He will approach the rancho; I shall manage to slip away at midnight to the ruined Mission. I shall—ah, it is my father! Holy Virgin, befriend me now with self-possession. (Stands quietly at L., looking toward SANDY, who still remains buried in thought, as)—

Enter DON JOSE; regards his daughter and DIEGO with a sarcastic smile.

Don Jose (aside). Bueno! It is as I expected,—an explanation, an explosion, a lover's quarrel, an end to romance. From his looks I should say she has been teaching the adventurer a lesson. Good! I could embrace her. (Crosses to SANDY—aloud.) You still here!

Sandy (rising with a start). Yes! I—a—I was only taking leave of Miss Jovita that hez bin kind to me. She's a good gal, ole man, and won't be any the worse when I'm gone.—Good-by, Miss Jovita (extending his hand): I wish ye luck.

Jovita (coldly). Adios, friend Diego. (Aside, hurriedly.) You will not expose my secret?

Sandy (aside). It ain't in me, miss. (To DON JOSE, going.) Adios, ole man. (Shouldering his pack.)

Don Jose. Adios, friend Diego. (Formally.) May good luck attend you! (Aside.) You understand, on your word as—as—as—A GENTLEMAN!—you have no further communication with this rancho, or aught that it contains.

Sandy (gravely). I hear ye, ole man. Adios. (Goes to gateway, but pauses at table, and begins to fill a glass of aguardiente.)

Don Jose (aside, looking at his daughter). I could embrace her now. She is truly a Castro. (Aloud to JOVITA.) Hark ye, little one! I have news that will please you, and—who knows? perhaps break up the monotony of the dull life of the rancho. To-night come to me two famous caballeros, Americanos, you understand: they will be here soon, even now. Retire, and make ready to receive them. [Exit JOVITA.]

Don Jose (aside, looking at SANDY). He lingers. I shall not be satisfied until Concho has seen him safely beyond the Mission wall.

Enter CONCHO.

Concho. Two caballeros have dismounted in the corral, and

seek the honor of Don Jose's presence.

Don Jose. Bueno! (Aside.) Follow that fellow beyond the Mission. (Aloud.) Admit the strangers. Did they give their names?

Concho. They did, Don Jose,—Col. Culpepper Starbottle and the Don Alexandro Morton.

Sandy (dropping glass of aguardiente, and staggering stupidly to the centre, confronting DON JOSE and CONCHO, still holding bottle). Eh! Wot? Wot name did you say? (Looks stupidly and amazedly at CONCHO and DON JOSE, and then slowly passes his hand over his forehead. Then slowly and apologetically.) I axes your pardon, Don Jose, and yours, sir (to CONCHO), but I thought ye called me. No!—that ez—I mean—I mean—I'm a little off color here (pointing to his head). I don't follow suit—I—eh—eh! Oh!—ye'll pardon me, sir, but thar's names—perhaps yer darter will remember that I was took a bit ago on a name—thar's names sorter hangin' round me yer (pointing to his head), that I thinks I hear—but bein' drunk—I hopes ye'll excoos me. Adios. (Staggers to gateway, CONCHO following.)

Concho (aside). There is something more in this than Don Jose would have known. I'll watch Diego, and keep an eye on Miss Jovita too.

Exit, following SANDY, who, in exit, jostles against COL. STARBOTTLE entering, who stops and leans exhaustedly at the wall to get his breath; following him closely, and oblivious

of SANDY MORTON, ALEXANDER MORTON, sen. Enter COL. STARBOTTLE and ALEXANDER MORTON, sen.

SCENE 2.—The Same.

Col. Starbottle (entering, to DON JOSE). Overlooking the insult of—er—inebriated individual, whose menial position in this—er—er—household precludes a demand for personal satisfaction, sir, I believe I have the honor of addressing Don Jose Castro. Very good, sir. Permit me, sir, to introduce myself as Col. Culpepper Starbottle—demn me! the legal adviser of Mr. Alexander Morton, sen., and I may add, sir, the friend of that gentleman, and as such, sir—er—er—personally—personally responsible.

Alexander Morton (puritanically and lugubriously). As a God-fearing man and forgiving Christian, Mr. Castro, I trust you will overlook the habitual profanity of the erring but well-meaning man, who, by the necessities of my situation, accompanies me. I am the person—a helpless sinner—mentioned in the letters which I believe have preceded me. As a professing member of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, I have ventured, in the interest of works rather than faith, to overlook the plain doctrines of the church in claiming sympathy of a superstitious Papist.

Starbottle (interrupting, aside to ALEXANDER MORTON). Ahem! ahem! (Aloud to DON JOSE.) My friend's manner, sir, reminds me of—er—er—Ram Bootgum Sing, first secretary of Turkish legation at Washington in '45; most remarkable man—demn me—most remarkable—and warm personal friend.

Challenged Tod Robinson for putting him next to Hebrew banker at dinner, with remark—demn me—that they were both believers in the profit! he, he! Amusing, perhaps; irreverent, certainly. Fought with cimeters. Second pass, Ram divided Tod in two pieces—fact, sir—just here (pointing) in—er—er—regions of moral emotions. Upper half called to me,—said to me warningly—last words—never forget it,—"Star,"—always called me Star,—"Respect man's religious convictions." Legs dead; emotion confined to upper part of body—pathetic picture. Ged, sir, something to be remembered!

Don Jose (with grave Spanish courtesy). You are welcome, gentlemen, to the rancho of the Blessed Fisherman. Your letters, with their honorable report, are here. Believe me, senores, in your modesty you have forgotten to mention your strongest claim to the hospitality of my house,—the royal right of strangers.

Morton. Angels before this have been entertained as strangers, says the Good Book; and that, I take it, is your authority for this ceremoniousness which else were but lip-service and Papist airs. But I am here in the performance of a duty, Mr. Castro,—the duty of a Christian father. I am seeking a prodigal son. I am seeking him in his wine-husks and among his harl—

Starbottle (interrupting). A single moment. (To DON JOSE.) Permit me to—er—er—explain. As my friend Mr. Morton states, we are, in fact, at present engaged in—er—er—quest—er—pilgrimage that possibly to some, unless deterred by considerations of responsibility—personal responsibility—sir—

Ged, sir, might be looked upon as visionary, enthusiastic, sentimental, fanatical. We are seeking a son, or, as my friend tersely and scripturally expresses it—er—er—prodigal son. I say scripturally, sir, and tersely, but not, you understand it, literally, nor I may add, sir, legally. Ged, sir, as a precedent, I admit we are wrong. To the best of my knowledge, sir, the—er—Prodigal Son sought his own father. To be frank, sir,—and Ged, sir, if Culpepper Starbottle has a fault, it is frankness, sir. As Nelse Buckthorne said to me in Nashville, in '47, "You would infer, Col. Starbottle, that I equivocate." I replied, "I do, sir; and permit me to add that equivocation has all the guilt of a lie, with cowardice superadded." The next morning at nine o'clock, Ged, sir, he gasped to me—he was lying on the ground, hole through his left lung just here (illustrating with DON JOSE'S coat),—he gasped, "If you have a merit, Star, above others, it is frankness!" his last words, sir,—demn me.... To be frank, sir, years ago, in the wild exuberance of youth, the son of this gentleman left his—er—er—er—boyhood's home, owing to an innocent but natural misunderstanding with the legal protector of his youth—

Morton (interrupting gravely and demurely). Driven from home by my own sinful and then unregenerate hand—

Starbottle (quickly). One moment, a simple moment. We will not weary you with—er—er—history, or the vagaries of youth. He—er—came to California in '49. A year ago, touched by—er—er—parental emotion and solicitude, my friend resolved to seek him here. Believing that the—er—

er—lawlessness of—er—er—untrammelled youth and boyish inexperience might have led him into some trifling indiscretion, we have sought him successively in hospitals, alms-houses, reformatories, State's prisons, lunatic and inebriate asylums, and—er—er—even on the monumental inscriptions of the—er—er—country churchyards. We have thus far, I grieve to say, although acquiring much and valuable information of a varied character and interest, as far as the direct matter of our search,—we have been, I think I may say, unsuccessful. Our search has been attended with the—er—disbursement of some capital under my—er—er—direction, which, though large, represents quite inadequately the—er—er—earnestness of our endeavors.

Enter MANUELA.

Manuela (to DON JOSE). The Dona Jovita is waiting to receive you.

Don Jose (to MORTON). You shall tell me further of your interesting pilgrimage hereafter. At present my daughter awaits us to place this humble roof at your disposal. I am a widower, Don Alexandro, like yourself. When I say that, like you, I have an only child, and that I love her, you will understand how earnest is my sympathy. This way, gentlemen. (Leading to door in corridor, and awaiting them.)

Starbottle (aside). Umph! an interview with lovely woman means—er—intoxication, but—er—er—no liquor. It's evident that the Don doesn't drink. Eh! (Catches sight of table in corridor, and bottle.) Oh, he does, but some absurd Spanish

formality prevents his doing the polite thing before dinner. (Aloud, to DON JOSE.) One moment, sir, one moment. If you will—er—er—pardon the—er—seeming discourtesy, for which I am, I admit—or—personally responsible, I will for a few moments enjoy the—er—er—delicious air of the courtyard, and the beauties of Nature as displayed in the—er—sunset. I will—er—rejoin you and the—er—er—ladies a moment later.

Don Jose. The house is your own, senor: do as you will. This way, Don Alexandro. [Exit, in door L., DON JOSE and MORTON, sen.]

Starbottle. "Do as you will." Well, I don't understand Spanish ceremony, but that's certainly good English. (Going to table.) Eh! (Smelling decanter.) Robinson County whiskey! Umph! I have observed that the spirit of American institutions, sir, are already penetrating the—er—er—superstitions of—er—foreign and effete civilizations. (Pours out glass of whiskey, and drinks; pours again, and observes MANUELA watching him respectfully.) What the Devil is that girl looking at? Eh! (Puts down glass.)

Manuela (aside). He is fierce and warlike. Mother of God! But he is not so awful as that gray-haired caballero, who looks like a fasting St. Anthony. And he loves aguardiente: he will pity poor Diego the more. (Aloud.) Ahem! Senor. (Courtesies coquettishly.)

Col. Starbottle (aside). Oh, I see. Ged! not a bad-looking girl,—a trifle dark, but Southern, and—er—tropical. Ged, Star, Star,

this won't do, sir; no, sir. The filial affections of Aeneas are not to be sacrificed through the blandishments of—er—Dodo—I mean a Dido.

Manuela. O senor, you are kind, you are good. You are an Americano, one of a great nation. You will feel sympathy for a poor young man,—a mere muchacho,—one of your own race, who was a vaquero here, senor. He has been sent away from us here disgraced, alone, hungry, perhaps penniless. (Wipes her eyes.)

Col. Starbottle. The Devil! Another prodigal. (Aloud.) My dear, the case you have just stated would appear to be the—er—er—normal condition of the—er—youth of America. But why was he discharged? (Pouring out liquor.)

Manuela (demurely glancing at the colonel). He was drunk, senor.

Starbottle (potently). Drunkenness, my child, which is—er—weakness in the—er—er—gentleman, in the subordinate is a crime. What—er—excites the social impulse and exhilarates the fancy of the—er—master of the house, in the performance of his duty, renders the servant unfit for his. Legally it is a breach of contract. I should give it as my opinion,—for which I am personally responsible,—that your friend Diego could not recover. Ged! (Aside.) I wonder if this scapegoat could be our black sheep.

Manuela. But that was not all, senor. It was an excuse only. He was sent away for helping our young lady to a cavalier. He was

discharged because he would not be a traitor to her. He was sent away because he was too good, too honorable,—too— (Bursts out crying.)

Starbottle (aside). Oh, the Devil! THIS is no Sandy Morton. (Coming forward gravely.) I have never yet analyzed the—er—er—character of the young gentleman I have the honor to assist in restoring to his family and society; but judging—er—calmly—er—dispassionately, my knowledge of his own father—from what the old gentleman must have been in his unregenerate state, and knowing what he is now in his present reformed Christian condition, I should say calmly and deliberately that the son must be the most infernal and accomplished villain unhung. Ged, I have a thought, an inspiration. (To MANUELA, tapping her under the chin.) I see, my dear; a lover, ha, ha! Ah, you rogue! Well, well, we will talk of this again. I will—er—er—interest myself in this Diego. [Exit MANUELA.]

Starbottle (solus). How would it do to get up a prodigal? Umph. Something must be done soon: the old man grows languid in his search. My position as a sinecure is—er—in peril. A prodigal ready made! But could I get a scoundrel bad enough to satisfy the old man? Ged, that's serious. Let me see: he admits that he is unable to recognize his own son in face, features, manner, or speech. Good! If I could pick up some rascal whose—er—irregularities didn't quite fill the bill, and could say—Ged!—that he was reforming. Reforming! Ged, Star! That very defect would show the hereditary taint, demn me! I must think of

this seriously. Ged, Star! the idea is—an inspiration of humanity and virtue. Who knows? it might be the saving of the vagabond,—a crown of glory to the old man's age. Inspiration, did I say? Ged, Star, it's a DUTY,—a sacred, solemn duty, for which you are responsible,—personally responsible.

Lights down half. Enter from corridor L., MORTON, DON JOSE, the DONA JOVITA, and MANUELA.

Dona Jovita (stepping forward with exaggerated Spanish courtesy). A thousand graces await your Excellency, Commander Don—Don—

Starbottle (bowing to the ground with equal delight and exaggerated courtesy). Er—Coolpepero!

Dona Jovita. Don Culpepero! If we throw ourselves unasked at your Excellency's feet (courtesy), if we appear unsought before the light of your Excellency's eyes (courtesy), if we err in maidenly decorum in thus seeking unbidden your Excellency's presence (courtesy), believe us, it is the fear of some greater, some graver indecorum in our conduct that has withdrawn your Excellency's person from us since you have graced our roof with your company. We know, Senor Commander, how superior are the charms of the American ladies. It is in no spirit of rivalry with them, but to show—Mother of God!—that we are not absolutely ugly, that we intrude upon your Excellency's solitude. (Aside.) I shall need the old fool, and shall use him.

Col. Starbottle (who has been bowing and saluting with equal extravagance, during this speech—aside). Ged! she IS beautiful!

(Aloud.) Permit me er—er—Dona Jovita, to correct—Ged, I must say it, correct erroneous statements. The man who should—er—utter in my presence remarks disparaging those—er—charms it is my privilege to behold, I should hold responsible,—Ged! personally responsible. You—er—remind me of er—incident, trifling perhaps, but pleasing, Charleston in '52,—a reception at John C. Calhoun's. A lady, one of the demnedest beautiful women you ever saw, said to me, "Star!"—she always called me Star,—"you've avoided me, you have, Star! I fear you are no longer my friend."—"Your friend, madam," I said. "No, I've avoided you because I am your lover." Ged, Miss Jovita, a fact—demn me. Sensation. Husband heard garbled report. He was old friend, but jealous, rash, indiscreet. Fell at first fire—umph—January 5th. Lady—beautiful woman—never forgave: went into convent. Sad affair. And all a mistake—demn me,—all a mistake, through perhaps extravagant gallantry and compliment. I lingered here, oblivious perhaps of—er—beauty, in the enjoyment of Nature.

Dona Jovita. Is there enough for your Excellency to share with me, since it must be my rival? See, the fog is clearing away: we shall have moonlight. (DON JOSE and MORTON seat themselves at table.) Shall we not let these venerable caballeros enjoy their confidences and experiences together? (Aside.) Don Jose watches me like a fox, does not intend to lose sight of me. How shall I show the light three times from the courtyard roof? I have it! (Takes STARBOTTLE'S arm.) It is too pleasant

to withdraw. There is a view from the courtyard wall your Excellency should see. Will you accompany me? The ascent is easy.

Starbottle (bowing). I will ascend, although, permit me to say, Dona Jovita, it would be—er—impossible for me to be nearer—er—heaven, than—er—at present.

Dona Jovita. FLATTERER! Come, you shall tell me about this sad lady who died. Ah, Don Culpepero, let me hope all your experiences will not be so fatal to us!

[Exeunt DONA JOVITA and STARBOTTLE.]

Morton (aside). A froward daughter of Baal, and, if I mistake not, even now concocting mischief for this foolish, indulgent, stiff-necked father. (Aloud.) Your only daughter, I presume.

Don Jose. My darling, Don Alexandro. Motherless from her infancy. A little wild, and inclined to gayety, but I hope not seeking for more than these walls afford. I have checked her but seldom, Don Alexandro, and then I did not let her see my hand on the rein that held her back. I do not ask her confidence always: I only want her to know that when the time comes it can be given to me without fear.

Morton. Umph!

Don Jose (leaning forward confidentially). To show that you have not intrusted your confidence regarding your wayward son—whom may the saints return to you!—to unsympathetic or inexperienced ears, I will impart a secret. A few weeks ago I detected an innocent intimacy between this foolish girl and a

vagabond vaquero in my employ. You understand, it was on her part romantic, visionary; on his, calculating, shrewd, self-interested, for he expected to become my heir. I did not lock her up. I did not tax her with it. I humored it. Today I satisfied the lover that his investment was not profitable, that a marriage without my consent entailed the loss of the property, and then left them together. They parted in tears, think you, Don Alexandro? No, but mutually hating each other. The romance was over. An American would have opposed the girl, have driven her to secrecy, to an elopement perhaps. Eh?

Morton (scornfully). And you believe that they have abandoned their plans?

Don Jose. I am sure—hush! she is here!

Enter, on roof of corridor, STARBOTTLE and JOVITA.

Col. Starbottle. Really, a superb landscape! An admirable view of the—er—fog—rolling over the Mission Hills, the plains below, and the—er—er—single figure of—er—motionless horseman—

Dona Jovita (quickly). Some belated vaquero. Do you smoke, Senor Commander?

Starbottle. At times.

Dona Jovita. With me. I will light a cigarette for you: it is the custom.

COL. STARBOTTLE draws match from his pocket, and is about to light, but is stopped by DONA JOVITA.

Dona Jovita. Pardon, your Excellency, but we cannot endure

your American matches. There is a taper in the passage.

COL. STARBOTTLE brings taper: DONA JOVITA turns to light cigarette, but manages to blow out candle.

Dona Jovita. I must try your gallantry again. That is once I have failed. (Significantly.)

COL. STARBOTTLE relights candle, business, same results.

Dona Jovita. I am stupid and nervous to-night. I have failed twice. (With emphasis.)

COL. STARBOTTLE repeats business with candle. DONA JOVITA lights cigarette, hands it to the colonel.

Dona Jovita. Thrice, and I have succeeded. (Blows out candle.)

Col. Starbottle. A thousand thanks! There is a—er—er—light on the plain.

Dona Jovita (hastily). It is the vaqueros returning. My father gives a festa to peons in honor of your arrival. There will be a dance. You have been patient, Senor Commander: you shall have my hand for a waltz.

Enter vaqueros, their wives and daughters. A dance, during which the "sembi canca" is danced by COL. STARBOTTLE and DONA JOVITA. Business, during which the bell of Mission Church, faintly illuminated beyond the wall, strikes twelve. Dancers withdraw hurriedly, leaving alone MANUELA, DONA JOVITA, COL. STARBOTTLE, DON JOSE, and CONCHO. CONCHO formally hands keys to Don Jose.

Don Jose (delivering keys to MORTON with stately

impressiveness). Take them, Don Alexandro Morton, and with them all that they unlock for bliss or bale. Take them, noble guest, and with them the homage of this family,—to-night, Don Alexandro, your humble servants. Good-night, gentlemen. May a thousand angels attend you, O Don Alexandro and Don Culpepero!

Dona Jovita. Good-night, Don Alexandro. May your dreams to-night see all your wishes fulfilled! Good-night, O Senor Commander. May she you dream of be as happy as you!

Manuela and Concho (together). Good-night, O senores and illustrious gentlemen! may the Blessed Fisherman watch over you! (Both parties retreat into opposite corridors, bowing.) MANUELA, CONCHO, MORTON, DON JOSE. JOVITA. STARBOTTLE.

SCENE 3.—The same. Stage darkened. Fog passing beyond wall outside, and occasionally obscuring moonlit landscape beyond. Enter JOVITA softly, from corridor L. Her face is partly hidden by Spanish mantilla.

Jovita. All quiet at last; and, thanks to much aguardiente, my warlike admirer snores peacefully above. Yet I could swear I heard the old Puritan's door creak as I descended! Pshaw! What matters! (Goes to gateway, and tries gate.) Locked! Carramba! I see it now. Under the pretext of reviving the old ceremony, Don Jose has locked the gates, and placed me in the custody of his guest. Stay! There is a door leading to the corral from the passage by Concho's room. Bueno! Don Jose shall see! [Exit R.

Enter cautiously R. OLD MORTON.

Old Morton. I was not mistaken! It was the skirt of that Jezebel daughter that whisked past my door a moment ago, and her figure that flitted down that corridor. So! The lover driven out of the house at four P. M., and at twelve o'clock at night the young lady trying the gate secretly. This may be Spanish resignation and filial submission, but it looks very like Yankee disobedience and forwardness. Perhaps it's well that the keys are in my pocket. This fond confiding Papist may find the heretic American father of some service. (Conceals himself behind pillar of corridor.)

After a pause the head of JOHN OAKHURST appears over the wall of corridor: he climbs up to roof of corridor, and descends very quietly and deliberately to stage.

Oakhurst (dusting his clothing with his handkerchief). I never knew before why these Spaniards covered their adobe walls with whitewash. (Leans against pillar in shadow.)

Re-enter JOVITA, hastily.

Jovita. All is lost; the corral door is locked; the key is outside, and Concho is gone,—gone where? Madre di Dios! to discover, perhaps to kill him.

Oakhurst (approaching her). No.

Jovita. Juan! (Embracing him.) But how did you get here? This is madness!

Oakhurst. As you did not come to the mission, I came to the rancho. I found the gate locked—by the way, is not that a novelty here?—I climbed the wall. But you, Miss Castro, you are

trembling! Your little hands are cold!

Jovita (glancing around). Nothing, nothing! But you are running a terrible risk. At any moment we may be discovered.

Oakhurst. I understand you: it would be bad for the discoverer. Never fear, I will be patient.

Jovita. But I feared that you might meet Concho.

Oakhurst. Concho—Concho—(meditatively). Let me see,—tall, dark, long in the arm, weighs about one hundred and eighty, and active.

Jovita. Yes; tell me! You have met him?

Oakhurst. Possibly, possibly. Was he a friend of yours?

Jovita. No!

Oakhurst. That's better. Are his pursuits here sedentary, or active?

Jovita. He is my father's major-domo.

Oakhurst. I see: a sinecure. (Aside.) Well, if he has to lay up for a week or two, the rancho won't suffer.

Jovita. Well?

Oakhurst. Well!

Jovita (passionately). There, having scaled the wall, at the risk of being discovered—this is all you have to say! (Turning away.)

Oakhurst (quietly). Perhaps, Jovita (taking her hand with grave earnestness), to a clandestine intimacy like ours there is but one end. It is not merely elopement, not merely marriage, it is exposure! Sooner or later you and I must face the eyes we now shun. What matters if tonight or later?

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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