

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this play is subject to royalty. It is fully protected by Original Works Publishing, and the copyright laws of the United States. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion pictures, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

The performance rights to this play are controlled by Original Works Publishing and royalty arrangements and licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur royalty fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a royalty quotation and license please give us the number of performances intended, dates of production, your seating capacity and admission fee. Royalties are payable with negotiation from Original Works Publishing.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged. Particular emphasis is laid on the question of amateur or professional readings, permission and terms for which must be secured from Original Works Publishing through direct contact.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced the following notice must appear on all programs, printing, and advertising for the play:

**“Produced by special arrangement with
Original Works Publishing.”
www.originalworksonline.com**

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

Billy Hell

First Printing, 2009

Printed in U.S.A.

ISBN 978-1-934962-47-3

More Great Plays Available
From OWP

Man Measures Man
by David Robson

4 Males, 2 Females

Synopsis: In the waning days of the Kosovo conflict, two American doctors travel to Macedonia to offer their services to Albanian refugees. Into the chaos of the medical camp, a mysterious boy arrives, forcing the doctors to re-examine their actions and the personal ethics that guide them.

Terminus Americana
by Matt Pelfrey

5 Males, 3 Females with double casting

Synopsis: After barely surviving an office rampage, Mac Winchell is thrust into a nightmare landscape populated by lost Marlboro Men, psychotic vagabonds, sinister corporate thugs and a strange cult known as a “The Church of Christ, Office Shooter”. Mac attempts to escape this twisted reality by undertaking a quest that ultimately leads him into the darkest corners of the American Dream. Terminus Americana is a surreal, visceral and challenging examination of our violence-saturated culture.

Billy Hell
by
Steven Cole Hughes

Cast

BILLY	a gunfighter, 20s
BESSY	an exwhore, 20s
ZEEK	a bounty hunter, 20s
CUTBIRTH	a bounty hunter, 40s – 50s
BARKER	a vaudevillian, 30s – 50s
COCO	a French cancan girl, late teens – early 20s
FIFI	a French cancan girl, late teens – early 20s
THE MEXICAN	a guitar player

Setting

New Mexico Territory, 1878

Billy Hell was originally produced at Creede Repertory Theatre (Maurice LaMee, Artistic Director) in September 2008, under the direction of Maurice LaMee. Stage management by Jonathan D. Allsup, set/horse design by Jeff Carey and Ryan Prince, costume design by Linann Easley, lighting design by Ryan Wentworth, and original music composed and performed by Jessica Jackson, Ryan Prince and Kendra Kohrt. The cast included:

BILLY	Torsten Hillhouse*
BESSY	Kendra Kohrt*
ZEEK	Michael Bouchard
CUTBIRTH	Martin Buchanan
BARKER	Chad Afanador
COCO	Jessica Jackson
FIFI	Candice Bondank
THE MEXICAN	Ryan Prince
THE CRONES**	Renee Prince Stynchula, Hanna Waters, Ellen Kaye

* denotes member of Actors Equity Association

**in the Creede Rep production, THE CRONES were three young women dressed in black robes who would creep in and out of the action manipulating the stage horses, placing and removing props and scenery, and opening and closing curtains. They were awesome.

The songs “Two Steps From You” and “Sunny Delilah” were written by Kendra Kohrt, with minimal assistance from the author.

The Creede Rep production won the 2008 Denver Post Ovation Awards for Best New Work (Steven Cole Hughes), and Best Original Music (Jessica Jackson, Ryan Prince, Kendra Kohrt).

For my love.

BULLHORN

Prologue

(In the darkness slow Spanish guitar is heard. THE MEXICAN is barely visible, playing that guitar, before he fades into the black. BESSY, the exwhore, takes center stage. She plays a guitar and sings.

BESSY: Well there once was a saloon girl
Who weren't too proud
Of the life that she lived
Or the way it turned out

But one day in Springtime
She looked up and saw
A gunfighter handsome
And ugly and raw

He'd been in a fight
And he needed a drink
And she thought to herself
That's a good man, I think

Where in the Hell is this saddlebum from
Where in the Hell is this saddlebum from
Where in the Hell is this saddlebum from
And why do I give a goddamn

So she poured him a whiskey
And he took a sip
He said you got any more
She said don't give me no lip

Then he took her upstairs
And they did it all night
And instead of walkin' out
He held her real tight

In the mornin' he said to her
I got to go
Fer jest how long
I jest don't know

Where in the Hell is this sweet angel goin'
Where in the Hell is this sweet angel goin'

Where in the Hell is this sweet angel goin'
And when is he gonna come back

But he didn't come back fer nigh on two years
She filled up the ol' Arkansas with her tears

Damn you to Hell if you never come back
Damn you to Hell if you never come back
Damn you to Hell if you never come back
And damn you to Hell if you do

But he did, he came back
And she couldn't believe it
He said here's my heart
If you'd like to receive it

So they left that ol' saloon
Three bodies on the ground
Now they hunted by the law
Hopin' they don't get found

I been two steps from Hell ever since you come back
I been two steps from Hell ever since you come back
I been two steps from Hell ever since you come back
But I also been two steps from you

*(BESSY strolls off as the MEXICAN strikes up his Spanish guitar
again, and the sun comes up on the deepest desert of New Mexico
Territory.)*

SCENE 1

(The sun bloodies CUTBIRTH, belly to limestone slickrock, watching. He wears a black eye patch. Silence. ZEEK, dirty and mouthful of terrible teeth, crawls up from behind.)

ZEEK: I think I seen some movement down in yonder arroyo, Cutbirth. Ye seen it?

Keep ye eyes on that arroyo yonder.

(They watch.)

Dang. It's colder'n ol' Billy Hell out here. Are ye cold, Cutbirth? I'm jest colder'n a well digger's foot over here. I thought the dessert was supposed to be hot. Dang. I'm like to freeze my itty bitty little pecker off. And I'll be the first to allow to ye that they ain't much pecker down there to freeze off a'tall in the first dang place, but it's fixin' to dang freeze off none the dang less. Dang, it's cold.

Ye think he's gonna come up that arroyo yonder?

I reckon he will.

Governor's office told me he kilt two marshals up Leadville way. I ain't scart, though. Said he's got a whore ridin' along with him too so he cain't be too hard to hunt now. So.

Silly Billy's a queer name for a outlaw anyways.

Anyways. I sure would like to cook up some breakfast here. I got some ol' hardtack and beans that was give to me by the Governor's office. Do ye like to have hardtack and beans for ye breakfast, Cutbirth?

I'll tell ye, though, what I like to eat most of a mornin' is a big fat antelope steak and some buckwheat griddlecakes. Huh? Am I speakin' to ye now, Cutbirth? Huh? Cain't ye jest smell that? Dang. With some hot black coffee now? Huh?

Huh?

Cutbirth?

Ye probably don't want me to go makin' a fire on account of it would give away our position to this ol' outlaw we huntin', though, huh. Yeah, I know. My name is Zeek.

ZEEK (cont'd): Don't know if ye knowed that or not. I said it to ye last night when we partnered up here, but I don't know as if ye heard me or not. So. I'm Zeek. That's my name.

I was hired by the Governor hisself, ye know. Don't let that intimidate ye none, now, Cutbirth. It might sound special, but I'm jest a regular fella, even though I come from the Governor's office. Direct. From Denver. So.

I knowed ye was Cutbirth cause the Governor's office told me where to find ye last night and about the patch over ye eye, there. Course ye ain't said as much cause ye ain't actually said nothin', so mayhaps ye ain't even Cutbirth a'tall and ye... ye jest some saddle bum or... or...

Are ye Cutbirth, Cutbirth?

Hello?

I know it sounds funny now, but this is... dang. Now, this is...

Ye ain't gonna talk a'tall? Is that...

Mister, I'm gonna have to ask ye if ye Cutbirth or no and I'd like as to get a answer from ye. So. If ye don't want to talk to me then ye can jest raise ye hand there or nod to me or the like when I say to ye are ye Cutbirth. All right? All right.

Are ye Cutbirth now?

Now, mister, I see ye heeled there, and I'm heeled here my own self. So, I'd hate as to have to draw on ye, but mister, I'm to draw on ye if ye don't tell me right now if ye Cutbirth or no. I'm a proved mankiller my own dang self and I don't want to shoot the ass off ye, but mister, I'd shoot the ass off ol' Governor Pitkin hisself if we done met each other out in the middle of the dang dessert and he didn't say nothin' to me when I asked him who he dang was.

Dang!

(ZEEK takes a step back.)

Mister, I'm gonna count to ten here and if ye still ain't told me if ye Cutbirth or no then I'm to draw on ye. All right?

All right.

Ten. Ni – or, I guess I'm gonna count from ten, not to ten. Cause that was jest ten right there. So.

ZEEK (cont'd): All right.

Ten. Nine. Eight. Seven. Six. Five. Four. Three. Two. One.

I says, one!

(ZEEK draws his pistol.)

Dang it, mister, I jest got to know if ye Cutbirth or no! Cause if ye ain't then ye... then ye interferin' with government dang business and I got to... dang! It's a simple dang... I ain't out here for my own dang... mayhaps ye jest some dang...

I'm gonna count to ten again. I mean from ten again! Then I'm to shoot ye.

Ten. Nine. Eight. Seven. Six. Five. Four. Three. Two. One.

I says –

(CUTBIRTH gets up, snatches the pistol from ZEEK'S hand and slaps him hard across the face. They stare at each other for a moment. CUTBIRTH hands the pistol back to ZEEK and resumes his position watching. Silence.)

CUTBIRTH: I'm Cutbirth.

(THE MEXICAN plays his guitar as ZEEK stares at CUTBIRTH, who watches the arroyo.)

SCENE 2

(H. H. BARKER is nailed to a cross in the desert. He wears the tattered remnants of a Swallowtail coat, a top hat and ghostly white stage makeup. He screams out...)

BARKER: Friends!

Do you not know that entertainments and evil have always gone hand in hand?

And do you not know your laughter is not innocent?

And was it not our very own laudable St. Paul who warned those Galatians that revelings keep their company with envyings and murders and drunkenness?!

Read your Ephesians something-or-other if you doubt me, friends.

Friends!

BARKER (cont'd): Those "actors" of the traveling combinations and those variety theatres from which they're spawned would have you believe that theirs is a noble profession. Born of the church, no less. But was it not, in sooth, born of that ancient rite to honor the false Greek god Dionysus? The supposed god of sexual recklessness and intoxication? Friends?! Your poets and your dancers and your singers of songs have their roots in pagan antiquity, not in Our Savior.

Are not those variety theatres from back in the East little more than cozy dens for nymphomaniacs and dopers? For bad men and for low women?

Are not these intrepid theatrical combinations lit out from said East fated to roam this here wild, wild West, never to alight in one place for more than a single eve, because they know they must outrun their certain persecution by the Good People?!

These bad, bad performers for you can but hope to stay in a frontier town such as this for One Night Only!

So, my good people, I ask you, I ask you, my good people...

Are you ready to be bad?

(Silence. He looks over the lonely desert.)

I say again, are you ready to be bad?!

(Silence.)

I'll take that as a yes.

(The MEXICAN plays his guitar.)

SCENE 3

(BILLY and BESSY are riding through the desert.)

BILLY: I didn't mean to be cross at ye, Bessy. I'm sorry.

BESSY: Ye didn't have to snap at me like a rattlesnake, Billy. I was jest askin' if we was there yet or no.

BILLY: I didn't snap at ye like a rattlesnake.

BESSY: Ye snapped at me like a rattlesnake.

BILLY: Well. I'm sorry.

(They ride.)

BESSY: I think we lost.

BILLY: We ain't lost.

BESSY: How do ye know?

BILLY: We ain't lef' the Pecos river yet. We still headin' south.

BESSY: We ain't switchin' trails no more?

BILLY: No.

BESSY: Ye think we lost Cutbirth?

BILLY: No.

BESSY: Then how come we ain't switchin' trails no more?

BILLY: They ain't no more to switch on to. We got them Sacramentos to our right and the Llano Estacado to our lef'.

BESSY: How come ye to think we ain't lost Cutbirth?

BILLY: I thought we done lost him up in Sante Fe, but we ain't. I seen a glint from his spyglass the day afore yesterday.

BESSY: Ye did?

BILLY: Yeah.

BESSY: Christ, Billy.

BILLY: I think he got on up ahead of us, too.

BESSY: He did?

BILLY: Yeah.

BESSY: How in the hell'd he do that?

BILLY: Don't know.

BESSY: He's smart, ain't he.

BILLY: I reckon.

BESSY: Why don't we jest turn around and ride the other way.

BILLY: We almost to Old Mexico.

BESSY: Why don't we get off the Pecos then, Billy? Why don't we go up into them Sacramentos?

BILLY: Cain't.

BESSY: Why don't we go into the Llano Estacado?

BILLY: Cain't. That's Kiowa and Comanche land over yonder.

BESSY: What's so bad about Kiowas and Comanches?

BILLY: They Injuns.

BESSY: I know they Injuns.

BILLY: They livin' the old life over yonder.

BESSY: What's the old life?

BILLY: All them young Kiowa and Comanche dog soldiers is off the agency. They ain't like them Injuns we talked to up in Santa Fe. Them Kiowas and Comanches like to kill any white man what comes on in to the Llano Estacado.

BESSY: Ye'd as rather we take our chances with Cutbirth than them Kiowas and Comanches?

BILLY: Yeah.

BESSY: Ye would?

BILLY: I reckon.

BESSY: Christ.

BILLY: We'll be all right, Bessy.

BESSY: How do ye know?

(They ride.)

How do ye know, Billy?

(They come upon a flower.)

Billy, answer me when I'm talkin' to ye.

BILLY: Whoa.

(They rein up.)

Ye see that flower over yonder, Bessy?

BESSY: Don't go changin' the subject on us now, Billy.

BILLY: I ain't changin' the subject. Ye see that flower?

BESSY: Yes, I see the flower.

BILLY: Do ye know what it's called?

BESSY: No, I don't.

BILLY: Do ye want to?

BESSY: No, I don't.

BILLY: Mexicans call that the Spanish Bayonet.

(BESSY doesn't say anything.)

Do ye think it's pretty?

BESSY: Billy, I understand that ye tryin' to distract me from thinkin' 'bout Cutbirth, but I ain't in the right kind of mood to look at flowers now.

BILLY: They say that white flower in the middle is the prettiest thing out here in the desert. And all them prickly green stems ye see around it is there to protect it. That's how it survives in the desert. That's jest like us, Bessy.

BESSY: It is?

BILLY: Yeah.

BESSY: It takes somethin' prickly to protect somethin' pretty?

BILLY: Yeah. Except, one thing.

BESSY: What.

BILLY: Ye ain't that prickly, Bessy.

(They kick up their horses and ride.)

BESSY: Ye think ye pretty clever, don't ye?!

BILLY: Yeah!

(They ride for a while. They rein up when they come upon H. H. BARKER nailed to the cross.)

BARKER: How do!

(They stare.)

BARKER (cont'd): Did you hear the one about the vaudevillian nailed to the cross in the middle of the desert? Two travelers ride up on horseback and say, "Where does this road go?" The vaudevillian says, "It don't go anywhere. It stays right where it is."

(He laughs.)

Tough crowd.

(They stare.)

Do you have any whiskey?

BESSY: No.

BARKER: Agua?

BESSY: No.

BARKER: Tobaccy?

BESSY: No.

BARKER: Chokeberry pemmican?

BESSY: No.

BARKER: Any kind of pemmican?

BESSY: No.

BARKER: Hardtack?

BESSY: No.

BARKER: Salt pork?

BESSY: No.

(They stare.)

BARKER: Beans?

BESSY: No, Goddamnit.

BARKER: Did you hear the one about the –

BESSY: Who are ye?

BARKER: Did you hear the one about the vaudevillian who said what his name might be?

BESSY: Huh?

BARKER: I say, did you hear the one about the vaudevillian who said what his name might be?

BESSY: What might yer name be?

BARKER: It might be Grover Cleveland, but it ain't!

(He laughs. BESSY looks at BILLY.)

BILLY: He's a crazy person.

BESSY: I think he's tryin' to tell us jokes.

BARKER: I want to ask you both a very serious question now, and before you answer me I want you to consider carefully the – is that a guitar I see lashed to your back, Madam?

BESSY: Yeah.

BILLY: Bessy.

BARKER: Do you play?

BESSY: Who are ye?

BARKER: Back to business. Always business with you. All right. I want to ask you both if you are followers of the vaudeville now.

BESSY: The what?

BARKER: The vaudeville, Madam.

BILLY: Stop callin' her Madam.

BESSY: What's the vaudeville?

BARKER: It is a Gallacism.

BESSY: A what?

BARKER: A French word.

BESSY: What does it mean?

BARKER: I would have thought a traveling musician such as yourself would need no explanation of the vaudeville.

BESSY: I ain't a musician.

BARKER: No, of course not. No look of neurasthenia about either of these two hearty Western figures.

BILLY: Look of what?

BARKER: The Eastern dude has been diagnosed with neurasthenia, sir. Tis an affliction caused by labor of the brain over that of the muscles. Our Industrial Revolution has perverted and feminized modern American malehood. It is only out here in the Western frontier where one may still find specimens of pioneer perseverance that prove the problem's cure.

BESSY: We ain't specimens.

BARKER: Of course not. You ain't specimens and you ain't musicians. The guitar, Madam – I mean, miss – is merely for the last lullaby each night round that ol' campfire before head hits saddle under a cold blanket of stars. While I am busy trying to represent life, you two are most obviously too busy living it. But fear not. All is not lost for me. There is a newfound respectability for me and my kind. There's a brand new kind of business, friends, that is sweeping our land, that some are calling the Show Business.

BILLY: Who in the hell are ye?

BARKER: That is an interesting choice of words, sir. I had not considered, up until this very moment, the possibility that we may be in Hell.

BILLY: What?

BARKER: My name is H. H. Barker. Friends call me H. H. Barker. That's a joke.

BILLY: Are ye nailed up there to that cross?

BARKER: I am, yes. But you seem to have me at a disadvantage now, sir.

BILLY: How do ye mean?

BARKER: You both know my name now, but I don't know either of yours.

BILLY: All right.

BARKER: All right.

(Silence.)

So.

(Silence.)

BARKER (cont'd): Say, you wouldn't want to help me down from this cross now, would you?

BILLY: What are ye doin' out here so close to the Llano Estacado?

BARKER: Not much. As presently I am nailed to a cross.

BESSY: How long have ye been nailed up there?

BARKER: As our Indian friends say, I have seen the coming and going of two moons.

BILLY: Ye been up there fer two months?

BARKER: Oh, I beg your pardon, I thought moons meant days.

BILLY: No.

BESSY: Ye been nailed up there fer two days?

BARKER: I'm afraid I have.

BESSY: Does it hurt?

BARKER: I'm afraid it does.

BILLY: Have ye seen a man with one eye called Cutbirth come thew here?

BARKER: A man with one eye called Cutbirth?

BILLY: Yeah.

BARKER: What's his other eye called?

(He laughs. BILLY draws his pistol and levels it at BARKER.)

BARKER: I have seen Cutbirth, yes!

BILLY: When?

BARKER: The day before yesterday.

BESSY: The day before yesterday?

BILLY: Is Cutbirth the one who nailed ye up to that cross?

BARKER: Yes.

BILLY: Why?

BARKER: In all honesty, friend, I think I may have told Cutbirth one too many jokes.

(Spanish guitar. BILLY looks up and around the desert.)

BILLY: Get down off yer horse, Bessy.

BESSY: What?

BILLY: Do it now.

BESSY: All right.

(BESSY dismounts. BILLY levels his pistol at the high mesas all around.)

BILLY: Take Guera over to them rocks yonder.

BESSY: Where?

BILLY: Over there. Do it now, Bessy.

BESSY: All right.

(BESSY and BILLY make for the big rocks.)

BARKER: I assure you, he is long since gone, sir. He is hot on the trail of some notorious mankiller and his whore companion, who... oh. I see. Uh, before you leave –

BILLY: Shut up.

BARKER: If you wouldn't mind just –

BILLY: Shut up!

BARKER: I'm still nailed up here to this cross, sir, and –

(BILLY and BESSY are gone.)

Sir? Madam?

(Silence.)

Friends?

SCENE 4

(ZEEK and two cancan girls on the limestone slickrock. The cancan girls are bound with rope and gagged. Their dresses are torn and they wear the same white makeup that BARKER has on. ZEEK has a rifle in his lap.)

ZEEK: So, ye ladies is from France, huh?

(They look at each other.)

ZEEK (cont'd): I never been there.

Ye like it?

(They look at ZEEK.)

Sorry we had to nail ye friend to that cross back yonder. Cutbirth says he don't like mountebanks. Ye ladies ain't no mountebanks, is ye? I don't know as I'd know what a mountebank is, but ye ladies don't look like no mountebanks to me.

Mayhaps I should take out ye gags there so's we can talk to each other.

Ye wouldn't scream on me now, would ye?

(He sets the rifle down and takes out their gags.)

So, ye singin' and dancin' ladies, huh?

Ye want to do some of ye show fer me?

(They look at each other.)

It's all right. Cutbirth's up on the edge of them rocks watchin' fer that outlaw Silly Billy.

Ye want to show me some of ye show?

COCO: *(Speaks with a French accent.)* Ze show?

ZEEK: Yeah, ze show.

COCO: Orphee in ze Underworld?

ZEEK: Yeah, whatever, jest show me ye show.

(COCO looks at FIFI.)

Here, let me loosen ye ropes there.

(He loosens their ropes.)

All right. Ze show.

COCO: Ze story of Orphee in ze Underworld. Orphee was a musician wis ze power to charm ze trees and ze stones and ze birds.

(FIFI begins to slowly dance around ZEEK. ZEEK giggles.)

One day 'is beautiful bride, Eurydice, was killed by snakebite to ze ankle.

ZEEK: Oh.

COCO: Orphee mourned ze loss of 'is wife and decided to beg for 'er life in ze Underworld. When 'e came upon Hades 'e sang and played so beautifully zat it was ze first time ever ze King of ze Underworld was so moved and ze pale furies wept.

(FIFI continues to dance seductively. ZEEK giggles some more.)

Hades called upon Eurydice, limping from 'er snakebite, and Orphee received 'er and ze terms were set:

(As FIFI distracts ZEEK, COCO makes her way around to ZEEK'S rifle.)

Orphee could 'ave 'is wife back again, but 'e must not turn back 'is gaze, or 'is gift from Hell would be in vain. But on ze way up 'e looked back in love and she was gone. Farewell.

ZEEK: Oh.

COCO: Was it 'e or she? Trying to 'old, or trying to be 'eld?

(COCO picks up ZEEK'S rifle.)

Farewell. Ze boatman Charon drove 'im away.

(COCO points the rifle at ZEEK'S back.)

Farewell.

(FIFI'S dance climaxes and ZEEK applauds.)

ZEEK: That was real good. That was –

(COCO cocks the rifle and ZEEK freezes. Suddenly CUTBIRTH appears and cocks his rifle and COCO freezes. ZEEK turns around to see COCO. COCO turns around to see CUTBIRTH. She drops the rifle.)

What in the hell are ye doin' out of ye binds and ye gags? Ye dang mountebanks! Get back in ye ropes there, ye... ye dang mountebanks!

(ZEEK grabs his rifle back from COCO, and quickly rebinds and regags the girls as CUTBIRTH watches closely.)

I tell ye Cutbirth. These dang mountebanks.

(CUTBIRTH shakes his head and exits.)

What?

SCENE 5

(A campfire. BESSY plays guitar, and she and BARKER sing. BILLY sits and tends to the fire. BARKER'S hands are bandaged.)

BESSY: From this valley they say you are going
We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile
For they say you are taking the sunshine
That has brightened our path for a while

TOGETHER: Come and sit by my side if you love me
Do not hasten to bid me adieu
But remember the Red River Valley
And the cowboy who loved you so true

BARKER: Won't you think of the valley you're leaving
Oh how lonely, how sad it will be?
Oh think of the fond heart you're breaking
And the grief you are causing to me

BESSY: As you go to your home by the ocean
May you never forget those sweet hours
That we spent in the Red River Valley
And the love we exchanged mid the flowers

TOGETHER: Come and sit by my side if you love me
Do not hasten to bid me adieu
But remember the Red River Valley
And the cowboy who loved you so true

(The song finishes.)

BARKER: And now... the Drama of Civilization! As told through
the four epochs of our American history.

One: We have the Primeval Forest. Afore the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the New World, bear, deer and elk feed and frolic and fornicate. Well, maybe not fornicate, not in the afternoon show at least, maybe the evening show, when the price of admission is greater. Anyway, we see Sioux and Pawnee in their savage semi-nakedness hunting and gathering and fighting and it is good.

Two: The Prairie. The great Buffalo Bill hunts buffalo and guides a wagon train of emigrants west west west. Perhaps a cozy campfire on the trail the likes of the one we are enjoying at present.

BARKER (cont'd): Three: The Cattle Ranch. The cowboy in his element: Centaur-like atop his horse, roping and herding the steer. Suddenly, Indians make a surprise attack! (Mackaye said he wanted the attackers to be wild Mormons but I said, no, it must be Indians.) Indians! Buffalo Bill rides in, with a host of cowboy saviors, six guns a-blazin', and saves the day.

Four: The Mining Camp. We see the rise and the fall of the pony express.

BESSY: The what?

BARKER: Shhh. Bessy, please. Where was I now?

Oh! We have the robbery of the Deadwood Stage by a band of road agents. We have a duel the likes of the one Wild Bill Hickok had with ol' Dave Tutt. And finally we have the boom mining town itself destroyed by a giant cyclone! And... scene.

BESSY: That's all?

BARKER: That is all.

BESSY: Huh.

BARKER: By jehosephat! We would make one grand theatrical combination, wouldn't we now?! Billy, do you know how to play the tambourine?

BILLY: No.

BARKER: The spoons?

BILLY: No.

BARKER: No matter. You're a genuine authentic wild West man-killer. The audience will hang on every word you say. And we have your humble servant, the semi-famous vaudevillian. And we have the troubadour whore.

BESSY: No.

BARKER: The minstrel whore?

BESSY: No.

BARKER: We could have a minstrel show!

BESSY: No.

BARKER: Yes! It's perfect. We could black up by the coals of this fire. Billy here is our middle man, our straight man, and you and I shall be the end men, Bessy. You shall be Mr. Tambo and I shall be Mr. Bones. Tambo doesn't usually play the guitar, but no matter. Ah! We could make a fortune back in the East. I know a man at the Theatre Comique in New York City! Let us play another song, Bessy. Do you know Darlin' Clementine?

BESSY: Yeah.

(BESSY plays and sings.)

How I missed her
How I missed her
How I missed my Clementine

TOGETHER: Till I kissed her little sister
And forgot my Clementine

BARKER: I love this woman!

(BILLY looks sharply at BARKER.)

As a friend, or course.

BILLY: Ye say Cutbirth went on South followin' the Pecos?

BARKER: Were you even listening to my proposition? I am not a man without connections, sir. We could be rich together. Let me thank you for helping me down from that cross. Let me be a legend maker to you.

BILLY: I don't need no legend maker.

BESSY: Billy's already a legend.

BILLY: That ain't what I meant.

BARKER: How can I repay you for your kindness, sir?

BILLY: Ye say Cutbirth went South?

BARKER: Yes, South. Cutbirth went South.

BILLY: Two days ago?

BARKER: Two, yes, two! Are you not a little impressed, Billy, that a neurasthenic Easterner such as myself was once in the employ of the great Buffalo Bill Cody?

BESSY: He ain't impressed.