



Arthur Reel

Adapted from the short story by Stephen Crane

Norman Maine Publishing

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Lot the eye can't always see.

—Easterner

The Blue Hotel

Winner of the National Endowment for the Arts Award

DRAMA: Three strangers arrive at the railroad town of Romper, Nebraska, and seek out a room at a local hotel. Upon their arrival at the hotel, one of the strangers, a Swedish tailor from New York, begins to act strangely. He becomes extremely frightened, so much so, that he fears for his life. The hotel proprietor, Pat Scully, tries to calm him down, but the Swede's paranoia only increases, making the others feel more and more uneasy. As the play progresses, the Swede becomes increasingly alienated and estranged from the group, and his outlandish behavior only creates further hostility that threatens to erupt into violence at any moment.

Performance Time: Approximately 70-90 minutes.

About the Story

As a free-lance reporter, Stephen Crane was sent out West by the *Philadelphia Press* in 1895. Based on his experiences in the West, Crane wrote "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" and "The Blue Hotel." Crane died of tuberculosis in 1900 at age 28.

Characters

(9 m, 2 w)

PAT SCULLY: Hotel proprietor.

DAUGHTER: 20, Scully's daughter; plays guitar.

WIFE: 40, Scully's wife.

JOHNNY SCULLY: Scully's son.

EASTERNER: Visitor to the hotel.

SWEDE: Tailor, visitor to the hotel.

COWBOY: Visitor to the hotel.

FARMER: Local, likes to gamble.

MR. TRECK: Gambler.

MR. KARP: Businessman.

GAMBLER: Local.

Setting

Palace Hotel, Romper, Nebraska, 1895. The action takes place over a span of 90 minutes. The hotel is entirely blue. The downstairs tavern has a bar, tables, chairs, and a chalk board hanging on the wall behind the bar. There is a main door, a door to the kitchen, and a stairway leading upstairs to the guest rooms. The upstairs hallway is visible.

Synopsis of Scenes

Scene 1: Palace Hotel tavern. A terrible blizzard is howling outside.

Scene 2: Upstairs hallway of Palace Hotel. The time in this scene is simultaneous with that of the previous scene.

Scene 3: Palace Hotel tavern, moments later.

Scene 4: Palace Hotel tavern, a bit later.

Props

Guitar
Bar glasses
Deck of cards
2 Valises
Plates of food
Silverware
Napkins
Serving tray
Men's coin purse

Picture
Flask
Pipe
Matches
Whiskey bottles
Bar rag
Newspaper
Knife

Special Effects

Fake blood
Howling winds

Fake snow (optional)

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Palace Hotel, 1895. A terrible blizzard is howling outside and is contrasted with Scully's hospitality and warmth as he greets the Cowboy, Easterner, and Swede, who have just arrived at the hotel. Johnny Scully is seated at a table with the Farmer.)

SCULLY: It's my pleasure an' habit, gentlemen...to meet the train every morning 'n evening.

COWBOY: Pleasure's the same here comin' off a long trip.

SCULLY: Like to give the personal touch, become acquainted, so to speak, with them that's stoppin' off here at Romper.

COWBOY: Stoppin' off an movin' on. *(Laughs.)*

(Scully assists each with his coat as he moves about. He gestures. Wife and Daughter enter. The Daughter begins to strum a guitar. The Wife moves behind the bar and begins to set drinks.)

SCULLY: *(To Easterner.)* So you're Mr. Blanc...come all the way from the East? *(The Easterner nods, crosses to bar. To the Swede.)* An' you're Mr. Pedersen. Swedish, I guess.

(Swede looks around.)

SWEDE: Swedish. That's right.

SCULLY: Pat Scully's the name.

(Scully extends his hand to the Swede. Swede ignores it and stares at the Wife behind the bar. Cowboy looks around.)

COWBOY: M'gosh looka them colors!

SWEDE: Blue an' blue...

COWBOY: An' more blue still.

EASTERNER: *(From bar.)* How did you get it so blue, Mr. Scully?

SCULLY: Painted it by my own two hands. This here's the Palace Hotel. Prize o' the prairie.

COWBOY: (*Walking in circles.*) Sure is blue 'n blue n' blue.

EASTERNER: How come so much blue, Mr. Scully?

SCULLY: Well, I figured it this way: what's in store for all your passangers comin' through on the long lines o' swayin' Pullmans?

EASTERNER: What's in store for us, Mr. Scully?

SCULLY: Nothin' but the brown an' red o' the rugged West.

COWBOY: Well, that's sure better'n the hot yellers where I come from.

SCULLY: Or the dark greens o' the East...

EASTERNER: What's wrong with the dark greens of the East, Mr. Scully?

SCULLY: Why nothin' ...'cept that it 'spresses shame an' pity. Not to mention horror.

EASTERNER: And you figured blue—

SCULLY: I figured blue'd do it all in. (*Moves freely.*) Chose my color like a general on a battlefield. The right kind strad'gy. With opulence an' splendor. I lay siege to the fort an' broke down the enemy!

COWBOY: (*Dully.*) What enemy?

SCULLY: Disaster. Drudge. Dullness o' the 'braska landscape.

(*Swede crosses to the bar.*)

SWEDE: Dullness? (*He stares strangely at Wife, who is standing behind the bar.*)

SCULLY: That's my trademark!

SWEDE: (*Turns sharply.*) What trademark?

SCULLY: Color is interest!

EASTERNER: Interest come by way of thought. (*Drinks.*) Each man has his own.

SWEDE: (*Drinks down.*) What thought?

SCULLY: (*To Easterner.*) It's my way o' life—be nimble, be bright—

SWEDE: Bright! *(Laughs.)*

SCULLY: Be merry, be kind.

(Easterner raises his glass for a toast.)

EASTERNER: Here's to that, Mr. Scully.

COWBOY: How's about some food?

SCULLY: Food it be. *(Claps hands. The Daughter puts her guitar aside.)* My daughter, gentlemen. *(Goes to bar.)* An' this here's my wife.

WIFE: *(To men.)* What'll it be? Step up and order.

(Cowboy steps up to order. Easterner turns and does same. Scully crosses to the Card Players.)

SCULLY: An' this there's my son, Johnnie. Always an' forever playin' his game o' High-Five. *(To Johnnie.)* Make yourself useful. Take their baggage to the proper rooms.

(Johnnie rises, takes two valises.)

SWEDE: *(To Johnnie.)* Hold on...just hold on!

EASTERNER: We didn't come to stay, Mr. Scully.

SWEDE: *(To Johnnie.)* Just you hold on now. *(Grabs hold of his valise.)*

SCULLY: Finest rooms in the whole town o' Romper. Why, there ain't but two other places an' none near the sight 'n comfort we got here.

(Pause. Swede stands apart with his valise. Easterner nods, turns back to give his order. Scully takes the Swede's valise, hands it back to Johnnie who begins to exit. Wife makes rattling sound at the bar to get their attention.)

WIFE: What'll it be now! What'll it be!

(They order. Daughter hurries to kitchen.)

SCULLY: *(To men.)* After dinner you can have your pick o' cards or dance.

(Cowboy sits at table.)

COWBOY: Game o' High-Five be nice.

FARMER: How's 'bout a game o' High-Five?

COWBOY: That's what I says.

FARMER: Right now. *(Spits.)*

SCULLY: That's fine. Play now. Game of High-Five.

(Scully motions to the Easterner to join in on the game.)

EASTERNER: Don't do much playing, Mr. Scully.

SCULLY: Food'll be awhile...long enough for a game.

FARMER: *(To Swede.)* Me 'n Johnnie take on you two fellers.

(Swede jumps back.)

SWEDE: Take us on?

FARMER: Take you clear on.

COWBOY: How 'bout it? Le's go! Game o' High-Five!

(Cowboy sits down at the table with the Farmer, rubbing his hands. Johnnie enters.)

SCULLY: Game o' High-Five, Johnnie. Make yourself useful. Till their food is brought.

(Johnnie grunts. He sits down at the table. Now there are three at the table: Johnnie, the Cowboy, and the Farmer.)

COWBOY: We need another hand. *(To Swede.)* How 'bout it?

SWEDE: What kind of game is this game?

FARMER: It's High-Five, mister. *(Spits.)*

(Scully takes Swede's arm and indicates empty chair at the table where the Cowboy, Johnnie, and Farmer are seated.)

SCULLY: Just sit here, Mr. Pedersen. Johnnie'll show you. He's expert enough. *(Musses his hair.)* Ain't that right?

JOHNNIE: That's right.

COWBOY: Right! Le's play. I'm eager for a game.

SWEDE: *(Suddenly.)* Yeah, let's play! High-five! I know this game!

COWBOY: We all know this game! Le's play!

(Johnnie begins to deal.)

SWEDE: Let's play, that's what I say!

FARMER: Let's play! *(Spits.)*

(The hands are dealt. The players are enthusiastic. Scully crosses to the back room.)

SCULLY: Get it on. Get it on. They're playin. Strum a little music, daughter. Bring on the midday meal, wife.

WIFE: Coming.

SCULLY: Coming ain't quick enough.

WIFE: Coming quick as we can.

(At the table, the Cowboy rises from the table and slaps down a card.)

JOHNNIE: Board-whacker.

COWBOY: I whangs 'em an' I bangs 'em.

JOHNNIE: 'At's if you wins 'em.

COWBOY: If I lose 'em I thunders down just the same.

(He thunders down. Scully approaches table.)

SCULLY: That's a fine game. That's a good player. Keep 'em coming'. Keep 'em movin'. That's the way o' life. This here's the cleanest, warmest place in the whole city o' Romper.

COWBOY: I whangs 'em down!

JOHNNIE: If you wins 'em!

COWBOY: Bangs 'em, whangs 'em!

(Scully pats Cowboy's back.)

SCULLY: Hits 'em hard...

COWBOY: I plays 'em to the hilt!

(Johnnie rises and joins the Cowboy, who is standing. Scully crosses to Easterner.)

SCULLY: *(To Easterner.)* That's the way o' life. Cleanest, warmest place. Fine colors. Fine rooms. None any better in the whole land o' Braska. None warmer. Listen to that wind a-howlin', a-screamin'—

EASTERNER: I hear it, Mr. Scully.

SCULLY: There's nothin' but the warm snugness here. This here's the Palace, Mr. Blanc, where a man has put his stake down, painted 'er with his own two hands...

EASTERNER: You've done a fine job, Mr. Scully.

SCULLY: None finer. No man in this sun-dazzlin' snowy-white landscape has broke the dull swampish hush o' 'Braska better 'n ol' pat Scully.

COWBOY: I thunders down!

JOHNNIE: He plays 'em!

COWBOY: I whangs 'em!

EASTERNER: Best see where that food is, Mr. Scully. I'm one hungry man.

(Scully crosses to back room.)

SCULLY: How's that meal comin', wife?

WIFE: Sure can't make it in five minutes.

SCULLY: These men are hungry.

(Scully exits to backroom offstage. Scully's very officious clamor is heard. The card game settles down again as the men take up their places at the table. Johnnie deals a new hand to the Cowboy, Farmer, and Swede. Pause.)

SWEDE: I suppose there have been a good many men killed in this room.

(The Swede's statement causes the others to turn and stare at him.)

JOHNNIE: What in hell 'd you say?

SWEDE: Oh, you know damn well what I said.

JOHNNIE: Hell, if I know what you said.

SWEDE: You know all right. *(Looks at the others.)* You know damn well what I mean.

JOHNNIE: I'll be a damn liar if I know what you mean.

SWEDE: Yeah, maybe you think I been nowheres. Maybe you think I'm a tenderfoot.

JOHNNIE: I don't know nothin' about you—

COWBOY: None of us know nothin' about you—

(Johnnie rises from the table.)

JOHNNIE: Nobody knows nothin' about nobody—

SWEDE: Maybe you think I'm a fresh kid right out from some big city, right out from—

JOHNNIE: I just don't give no damn where you out from—

COWBOY: What's wrong with you, mister?

JOHNNIE: All I got to say is I don't know what you're driven' at.

SWEDE: You know sure's you're sitting there what I'm driving at.

JOHNNIE: There ain't never been nobody killed in this room.

COWBOY: *(To Swede.)* Why ask about a thing like that anyway?

SWEDE: *(To Easterner.)* You understand? You know what I'm saying? *(Easterner shrugs. The Swede rises.)* Oh, I see it. I see it now.

COWBOY: *(To Swede.)* Sit down, mister—

JOHNNIE: *(To Swede.)* Sit down an' behave, mister.

SWEDE: *(To Easterner.)* You understand, don't you? *(Easterner shrugs. To others.)* I see, you're all against me!

COWBOY: Against you? Say—

JOHNNIE: *(To Swede.)* What're you gettin' at? What's all this for?

(Swede backs away from them.)

SWEDE: I don't want to fight! I don't want to fight!

COWBOY: *(To Easterner.)* He's crazy, I swear it.

SWEDE: *(Terrified.)* I'm not lookin' for no fight!

COWBOY: *(To Easterner.)* He's really crazy.

(Swede backs away to bar.)

SWEDE: I suppose I'm going to be killed! I suppose I'm going to be killed before I leave this house!

(Scully enters.)

SCULLY: What's the matter? What's going on here?

SWEDE: These men are about to kill me.

JOHNNIE: Kill you! What are you talkin'—?

(The Swede huddles in a corner, terrified.)

SCULLY: What is this, Johnnie?

(Johnnie stares at the Swede but does not answer.)

COWBOY: Say, what's all this? I'm damn confused.

JOHNNIE: We're all confused, mister.

SCULLY: I'm confused. What in hell's all this, Johnnie?

SWEDE: These men are gonna kill me.

JOHNNIE: Kill you? *(To the others.)* Kill 'im?

SWEDE: *(To Scully.)* They damn well are gonna kill me!

(Scully steps toward table.)

SCULLY: What's all this about, Johnnie?

JOHNNIE: Sure's hell don't know, Pop.

COWBOY: Search me what he means.

SCULLY: Anybody here know what this gentleman is talkin' about?

(The Easterner rises and moves farther away from the table.)

JOHNNIE: Damned if I know. I can't make no sense of it. He jumps up, out of nowhere...says that a good many men have been killed right here in this room. An' he says he's going to be killed here, too.

SWEDE: Oh, I know—I know what will happen. Yes, I'm crazy. You say I'm crazy—yes, but I know one sure thing.

SCULLY: Whataya know, mister?

SWEDE: I know I won't get out of this room alive.

COWBOY: I'm doggoned.

JOHNNIE: We're all doggoned.

SCULLY: You been troublin' this man? Tell truth, Johnnie.

JOHNNIE: Oh, good gawd, I ain't done nothin to 'im.

SCULLY: *(Furiously.)* This man's scared out of his wits. *(Grabs Johnnie's arm.)* Now you tell me! You tell me!

JOHNNIE: Blame it!

SCULLY: Tell me, hear!

JOHNNIE: Blame it. Hell, I don't know!

SWEDE: Never mind, Mr. Scully, I'm going. I'm leaving this house because I'm looking to be killed.

SCULLY: You will not leave. Not now. Not until I hear the reason for this—this business. If anybody's gone an' troubled

you, I'll handle him. This is my house. I built 'er, right here, out in the wilderness. I went an' painted 'er, had 'er trim an' ready so's the trains passin' right by, so's the people sittin' high on them tracks, lookin' out across the white blindin' snow...I will not allow any man to come here to eat 'n rest 'n play a game of High-Five...I will not allow—*(Furiously, to Johnnie.)* Now, you devil, you speak out! You speak out, hear!

JOHNNIE: Oh, gawd! Oh, gawd-o-gawd!

(Scully spins Johnnie around.)

SCULLY: Speak out!

JOHNNIE: Oh, gawd! This is the wildest loon I ever seen. We didn't do nothin', I swear it. Just playin'...justin' sittin' here 'n playin'. Just sittin' here an—

SCULLY: Mr. Blanc, what've these boys been doin'?

EASTERNER: I didn't see anything wrong at all, Mr. Scully.

SCULLY: You been standin' here, lookin' ...

EASTERNER: 'Lot the eye can't always see, Mr. Scully.

SCULLY: But you heard 'em now...

EASTERNER: Now that, too, is in great question.

SCULLY: *(Confused.)* I don't—I don't quite unnerstand all this. *(Wife enters with plates. To Swede.)* I don't... *(Whirls around sharply. To Easterner.)* Nothin? Not one thing, Mr. Blanc?

EASTERNER: Not one thing, Mr. Scully...

SCULLY: But you look at him now—you look at him.

JOHNNIE: I tell you, he's wild as a loon—

SCULLY: *(To Johnnie.)* You shut, hear. You shut!

WIFE: *(To Scully.)* Shall I set?

SCULLY: Set. No, don't set...Mr. Blanc?

EASTERNER: I'm quite hungry, Mr. Scully. *(Crosses to table.)*

SCULLY: *(To Wife.)* Set. *(To Swede.)* Mr. Pedersen, let's you 'n me go on up to my room.

(Swede terrified, holds chair before him.)

SWEDE: Up...to your room?!

(Scully approaches him.)

SCULLY: We can talk—

(Swede pulls back away from Scully.)

SWEDE: Talk...you say?

SCULLY: Yes, talk—

SWEDE: *(Sharply.)* Don't come near me! Don't come near me!

(Johnnie crosses to Scully.)

JOHNNIE: I tell you, he's wild...he's really wild.

SWEDE: Don't come near me—none-a-you! *(Holds chair close to his chest.)*

COWBOY: *(To others.)* Looka him, will you?

JOHNNIE: Just looka that loon.

WIFE: *(To Scully.)* Which un shall I set?

(Scully shakes Johnnie.)

SCULLY: *(To Johnnie.)* What've you said—just what've you said to this man?

JOHNNIE: Nothing. God, nothin'.

SCULLY: What've you—

WIFE: *(To Scully.)* Which un—

JOHNNIE: Oh, gawd—

COWBOY: *(To others, indicating Swede.)* Look now, he's goin'—

(Swede cautiously makes his way to stairwell.)

WIFE: *(To Scully.)* Which un—

SCULLY: *(To Swede.)* Wait on—now, just wait on—

JOHNNIE: Gawd, what've I—

SCULLY: *(To Swede.)* Just wait on, Mr. Peder—

COWBOY: He's goin—

(Swede is heading up the stairs.)

SCULLY: Wait on, I say!

COWBOY: He's really goin'—

SCULLY: Wait on!

(Scully runs off after the Swede. Scully's wife begins to set food on a table. Easterner moves toward table. Cowboy moves toward bar. The Farmer spits on the floor and crosses to the stove. Lights start to fade amidst disorder. Scully's Daughter enters with tray, places it on another table and then picks up the guitar. She plays. Johnnie pounds on the wall behind bar.)

JOHNNIE: Oh, gawd, what in hell've I done! What in hell've I done!

(Fast fade on lights. And then fade in on hallway upstairs. Scully has made his way up the stairs and is approaching the Swede.)

SCULLY: Now, just wait up. Wait up!

SWEDE: Wait nothing, mister!

(Scully catches up.)

SCULLY: Now you wait up, Mr. Pedersen.

SWEDE: Where's my valise?!

SCULLY: You're daffy. You've really gone daffy.

SWEDE: Now you tell me where that valise is!

SCULLY: Man, man! You've really gone—

SWEDE: There are people in the world who know what you do!

SCULLY: Now, man—

(Scully tries to touch him.)

SWEDE: Stay away!

(Scully opens his hands.)

SCULLY: Man—

SWEDE: There are some in this world who know pretty near as much, see? Pretty near as much.

(Pause. Both men stare at one another.)

SCULLY: Now did you think—did you think they were really going to kill you?

SWEDE: Pretty much as you do, Mr. Scully.

SCULLY: Really *really* going to kill you?

(Pause.)

SWEDE: I did.

SCULLY: Mr. Pedersen...you know that we're goin' to have a line of ilictric streetcars in this town next spring.

SWEDE: A line of—

SCULLY: That's right, man. Ilictric streetcars.

SWEDE: *(Dumbly.)* Electric...streetcars...?

SCULLY: An' what else? What else, man?

SWEDE: *(Dumbly.)* What...else...?

SCULLY: There's a new railroad bein' built ...

SWEDE: New...railroad...?

SCULLY: From this here town right on out to Broken Arm.

SWEDE: Broken...Arm...?

SCULLY: Not to mention the four churches.

SWEDE: Four...?

SCULLY: An' the big brick schoolhouse.

SWEDE: School...house...?

SCULLY: Then there's the big factory.

SWEDE: Factory...?

SCULLY: Why, in two years, Romper'll be a met-tro-pol-is.
SWEDE: (*Suddenly.*) How much do I owe you, Mr. Scully.
SCULLY: Nothin'. Not a thing.
SWEDE: Yes, I do. (*Takes out his coin purse.*)
SCULLY: You et nothin'. You done nothin'.
SWEDE: I come in here an' took your likker.
SCULLY: I'll not take your money. Not after what you been through.
SWEDE: I wish to pay for my drink, Mr. Scully.
SCULLY: Man, man, you are daffy.
SWEDE: (*With resolve.*) I wish to pay—
SCULLY: (*With force.*) I will not take your money.
SWEDE: Then let me have my valise.
SCULLY: Where'll you go? Where'll you go in this weather?
SWEDE: I'll—I'll go into Romper.
SCULLY: You are in Romper, man. This is Romper.
SWEDE: There must be other hotels...?
SCULLY: Now look, Mr. Pedersen. Come here. (*Takes picture from his pocket.*) Looka this here. (*Slowly, the Swede draws closer to look at the picture.*) Just look at this here picter. (*Swede looks.*) That's the picter of my little girl that died. Her name was Carrie.
SWEDE: My mother's name was Carrie.
SCULLY: That a fact? Where is she now?
SWEDE: Buried.
SCULLY: Back in the old country? (*Swede nods.*) That where you come from?
SWEDE: I was born right here in this country, Mr. Scully.
SCULLY: I was born across...Ireland.
SWEDE: Lived in New York all my life.
SCULLY: That's a fine big town.
SWEDE: Hard as a nail town.
SCULLY: What did you used to do there?
SWEDE: Worked as a tailor 15 years.
SCULLY: Tailor? Hmmm.
SWEDE: What about it?
SCULLY: Fine work. Clean too.

SWEDE: Excepting for my hands.

(Swede extends his hands to show Scully. Scully looks at them.)

SCULLY: What's that from?

SWEDE: *(Suddenly.)* Mr. Scully, I better be going. *(Starts.)* Where 'd you put my valise?

SCULLY: Now, Mr. Pedersen, come here. Looka this picter. Look! *(Holds picture before Swede's eyes.)* That's my oldest boy, Michael. Lawyer in Lincoln an' doin' well. Proud o' him, I am. Gave that boy a grand ed-dication. Lotta schoolin'. Ain't he bold as blazes out there in Lincoln! Just look—him an honered an' respicted gintleman.

SWEDE: I don't doubt that, Mr. Scully—

SCULLY: Honored and respicted—bold as blazes. What a fine boy. Just look now.

SWEDE: I don't disagree...

SCULLY: Well, man, what're you thinkin'? I do run a decent place here. Fine daughters helpin'. One's out, gone to do an errand for me. An' the wife now...

SWEDE: *(Smiling faintly.)* It's a fair place you run, Mr. Scully.

SCULLY: Fair's not the half of it. That's surely not the half. There's fine food. There's drink. There's all a man can ask. All a man can ask.

SWEDE: *(Weakening.)* Well, maybe some drink...

SCULLY: Yes, drink! *(Pulls a flask from his pocket.)* Here now. I keep this hid. It's special.

SWEDE: Special..?

SCULLY: Kick of a mule an' olt of a mine-blowin' powder stick.

(Swede pulls back away from Scully.)

SWEDE: You—you drink it first.

SCULLY: Surely, I'll drink it first. *(Takes a swig.)*

SWEDE: Drink it hard.

(Scully takes a big pull from the flask. Offers the flask to Swede.)

SCULLY: Now, drink! Go on an drink!

(Swede takes flask, hesitates.)

SWEDE: Again! Drink it again.

SCULLY: Surely, I'll drink it again.

(Scully takes another swig. Swede grabs the flask.)

SWEDE: Drink! Yes, I'll drink! I'll damn drink!

(The Swede puts the flask to his lips and drinks. He withdraws flask, laughs wildly, then drinks again. Lights crossfade to main room. Blackout.)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: The time in this scene is simultaneous with that of the previous scene. Lights fade in downstairs as Scully and the Swede freeze in the upstairs hallway.)

JOHNNIE: That's the doggondest Swede I ever saw.

COWBOY: He ain't no Swede.

JOHNNIE: What's he then? What the damn hell is he?

COWBOY: It's my opinion, he's some kind a Dutchman.

EASTERNER: No, he's no Dutchman. *(Lights a pipe.)*

COWBOY: That feller's some kind of Dutchman, sure.

EASTERNER: He's no Dutchman. I'm positive.

JOHNNIE: Well, what a you think make 'im act that way? Huh, what?

EASTERNER: He's frightened...just clear frightened out of his boots.

COWBOY: What at? That's what I'd like to know.

EASTERNER: Maybe he's been reading dime novels, like the kind we have back East.

JOHNNIE: But what's he think's goin' happen here anyways?

EASTERNER: Maybe he thinks he's right in the middle of one of those dime stories.

COWBOY: But this ain't Wyoming nor none of them places. This is Nebrasker.

JOHNNIE: That's right, Nebrasker.

COWBOY: Wait till he gets out West—the real West.

EASTERNER: It isn't much different out there, not these days. I've done a lot of traveling.

COWBOY: Well...I sure hope we don't get snowed in, then we'd have to take all that blood 'n hell he's been readin' on.

(Wife brings more food. Daughter stops playing her guitar and assists.)

EASTERNER: But I've never seen anybody as bad as that Swede.

JOHNNIE: Aw forgit him...forgit that damn Dutchman.

COWBOY: That's my 'pinion...he's a Dutchman awright.

(Farmer spits.)

FARMER: Let's play some High-Five. Let's play now!

COWBOY: Once a Dutchman, always a Dutchman. *(Eats.)*

FARMER: *(To Cowboy.)* Me' n Johnnie take on you 'n that feller...

EASTERNER: It's those dime stories... *(Eats, drinks.)*

FARMER: You 'n that feller against me 'n Johnnie...

COWBOY: That's right, let's forget that Dutchman. *(He gets up, wipes his mouth, and crosses to the Farmer's table.)* Let's play High-Five.

(Easterner rises.)

EASTERNER: Those damned dime-novel stories.

(Easterner crosses to the bar. Scully and the Swede enter. There is a pause.)

SCULLY: Why, it's all right—all right, boys! This fine gentleman is goin' to join us. *(To Swede.)* Draw up a chair.

(Scully assists the Swede to a table. The Swede looks around warily.)

SWEDE: Where is the music? Why has the music stopped?

SCULLY: *(To Daughter.)* Play! That what you supposed to be doin', ain't it?

(Daughter strums on guitar. Johnnie crosses to Easterner.)

JOHNNIE: Oh, gawd. Oh, gawd.

SCULLY: How you feelin', Mr. Pedersen?

SWEDE: Fine! Just fine. I'm feelin' just damn loose and fine, Mr. Scully.

COWBOY: *(To Easterner.)* Just damn loose an' fine.

JOHNNIE: *(To Farmer.)* Boy, I sure wish Pop'd throw him out.

SWEDE: *(Loudly.)* Just dandy! Sonovabitch if I ain't! *(He looks around.)* Damn sonovabitch!!

SCULLY: That's just fine—surely fine. *(Broad grin.)* Fine.

(Swede looks at Daughter.)

SWEDE: Ain't she the damn squirrel though. The damn prettiest.

SCULLY: The prettiest o' my daughters, Mr. Pedersen.

SWEDE: You have a fine establishment, Mr. Scully.

SCULLY: I try. Gawd, I try.

SWEDE: You sure have the prettiest daughter.

SCULLY: An' my wife, too. An' Johnnie, he's a handsome lad.

(Scully crosses to Johnnie and ruffles his hair.)

JOHNNIE: I sure wish you'd throw 'im out, Pop.

SCULLY: He's surely a handsome lad. *(Grins at the Swede.)* I keep a fine hotel. Finest hotel in the whole fair city o' Romper.

SWEDE: And the others here...all those other people?

SCULLY: Which uns?

SWEDE: *(Loudly.)* All those farmers?

SCULLY: Finest farmers in the whole state o' 'Braska.

SWEDE: And the crops? What kind of crops?

SCULLY: Best. Latta corn. Lotta 'falfa.

SWEDE: What's the labor like? What sort of wages do they pay?

SCULLY: Now the labor's good, damn good. An' the wages—

SWEDE: And what sort of houses do they live in?

SCULLY: The houses now—

SWEDE: *(Suddenly.)* Where's the drink?! Where's the food?! Why ain't I being served?!

(Scully crosses to the door.)

SCULLY: Now wife, where's this fine gintleman's meal? *(To Johnnie.)* You go on...git at that bar.

SWEDE: *(Laughing loudly.)* These western communities have got a way of their own.

(Scully hurries to table with a drink.)

SCULLY: They surely are, Mr. Pedersen. Clean, healthy...

SWEDE: And damn dangerous... *(Looks around quickly, winks.)* ...goddamn dangerous!

(At this comment, the Daughter stops playing the guitar. The Cowboy turns away. Johnnie rams his fist into bar.)

SCULLY: There's surely nothin' dangerous here, Mr., Pederson. Why, we're a peaceful community.

SWEDE: Peaceful! *(Roaring.)* Peaceful, you say! *(Pause. Swede drinks. He rises.)* I need to go you-know-where, Mr. Scully.

(The Swede goes up stairs quickly. Pause.)

SCULLY: *(To all.)* Upstairs, that loon thought I was tryin' to poison him.

JOHNNIE: Oh, for gawd's sake, this makes me sick.

COWBOY: He's a damn Dutchman awright.

JOHNNIE: *(Pleading.)* Why in hell don't you throw 'im out in the snow?

SCULLY: Well, at first, I thought of it. I surely thought it. But then...

JOHNNIE: You're too kind, Pop.

COWBOY: I'd throw 'im out an' not think two shakes on it.

SCULLY: Well, he's all right now.

JOHNNIE: You're just too kind, Pop. *(Comes out from behind the bar.)* Throw 'im right out. We'll do it for you.

SCULLY: I said, he's all right now. The man was scared, that's all.

JOHNNIE: Scared?

COWBOY: Scared?

JOHNNIE: Of what? That's what I'd like to know.

(Scully suddenly rises.)

SCULLY: What do I keep? *(To Johnnie.)* What do I keep, huh?

(Scully begins to shake him.)

JOHNNIE: Gawd-o-gawd!

SCULLY: What, huh? *(Veers to others.)* I'll tell ya what! I keep a hotel. A guest under my roof has sacred privileges! Not one word is he to hear that will send 'im packin'. *(To Johnnie, furiously.)* That clear?

JOHNNIE: What've I done! What've I done!

(Scully swats him.)

SCULLY: That's what you've done!

JOHNNIE: *(To others.)* What've I done!

(The Easterner turns away. Cowboy grabs a hold of a bottle at the bar and pours himself a drink.)

SCULLY: I think you are tongue-tied!

COWBOY: He's done nothin', Mr. Scully...

SCULLY: I'll not have it! Not have anything of the kind! *(Johnnie attempts to speak.)* You are tongue-tied! You are not goin' to say...you are not goin' to speak! *(They all stare at him now. He slaps his knee. His Wife enters, stops to listen.)* Heed it! All! Do you know what I kape! A hotel, that's what! A hotel I kape! Do you mind now? A hotel! A guest under my roof has his sacred way. He is not to be intimidated—by no one! Not one word shall he hear that will prijudice 'im in favor of goin' awee! There's no place in this town where they kin say they iver took in a guest of mine because he was afraid to stay here! *(Wheels to*

Cowboy.) Am I right now, do you think? *(To Easterner.)* Am I right?

COWBOY: You're right...I suppose...

SCULLY: Right! Right! I'm right as I'm standin' among them walls. Them blue walls I painted with me own two hands!

(Swede enters.)

EASTERNER: Yes, Mr. Scully, I think you're right.

SCULLY: Yes, I'm right.

SWEDE: *(Boisterously.)* What's that! What's right! *(He laughs loudly, crosses to bar. Cowboy moves away from bar.)* Drink! *(Pounds on bar.)* Everybody drink!

(Scully hurries behind bar.)

SCULLY: Sure, drink! Everybody— *(He pours.)* How about you, Mr. Blanc?

SWEDE: Well, have another. Everybody have another!

(The Cowboy and Johnnie move farther away from Swede.)

JOHNNIE: *(To Cowboy.)* I sure wish Pop would throw 'im out.

COWBOY: Loco. That Dutchman is really loco.

JOHNNIE: Gone clear off his track.

COWBOY: Why don't your pop license somebody to kick 'im right out in the cold?

JOHNNIE: I'd do it fer a handshake.

COWBOY: Less'n that.

SWEDE: *(Suddenly.)* How about a game of High-Five!

SCULLY: That'd bay a good idea...sure. Good idea.

(Scully crosses quickly to Johnnie.)

JOHNNIE: Not right now, Pop.

SWEDE: A game of High-Five!

COWBOY: Not right now, Mr. Scully.

SCULLY: Surely, a game. To pass the late afternoon. Then you'll have your supper.

(He begins to move the chairs into place around the table where the Farmer has been sitting.)

FARMER: I'll play 'im. *(Spits.)* Me'n Johnnie take on that feller.

SWEDE: Play now!

FARMER: Me 'n Johnnie—

SWEDE: Play, I say!

SCULLY: *(To Johnnie.)* Play, Johnnie!

JOHNNIE: Now, Pop, that loon—

SCULLY: You play—you play wi' that man—

JOHNNIE: Gawd-o-gawd—

SWEDE: *(At table.)* Play! Where's the game! High-Five!

(Johnnie moves reluctantly to table.)

SCULLY: *(To Cowboy.)* Play—

COWBOY: I'd sure—

SWEDE: Play! Where is the other man! *(Cowboy moves reluctantly to table. Scully signals his Daughter to play guitar.)* That is right...that is right, Mr. Scully. Music! Merry! Nimble! That is the way of life! Would you say that? Would you say that?

(He glares at each player, almost threateningly. Farmer spits.)

FARMER: Why, sure, I'd say that.

(Swede slaps Farmer on the back.)

SWEDE: *(Indicating Farmer.)* There is a man! There is a man! *(To Cowboy.)* Would you say that?

COWBOY: *(Coldly.)* Me...I just whangs 'em on the board.

SWEDE: I'm not ready to play yet...not ready to play! *(He gets up, crosses to bar.)* More drink! Drinks for everybody!

SCULLY: Drinks for everybody!

SWEDE: Drinks for everybody! *(Pounds on bar.)*

COWBOY: *(To Johnnie.)* That Dutchman's the nastiest—

JOHNNIE: He's a loon...he's a crazy loon—

COWBOY: I'd throw 'im right out in that blizzard—

SWEDE: High-Five! High-Five! That's what we are playing here!
(The Swede returns to the table and raps on it. But before he can play cards, he is up again. He crosses to Daughter.) Play something out of New York.

DAUGHTER: *(Dumbly.)* New Yark?

SWEDE: That's right. New York!

SCULLY: New York, surely! Right 'n fine—

SWEDE: New York! A song from New York! *(Swede stares menacingly at Daughter. Johnnie begins to cross to Swede. To Daughter.)* That's where I'm from.

SCULLY: The fair city of New Yark. The biggest 'n finest 'n fairest—

(Swede returns to the bar and drinks.)

SWEDE: To the biggest and finest! *(Drinks again. Only Scully drinks with him.)* I was a tailor! Fifteen years. Started when I was a boy.

SCULLY: Just a boy?

SWEDE: *(To Scully.)* What were you when you were a boy, old man?

SCULLY: Why, I was warkin'...with my hands.

SWEDE: *(Quickly, to Easterner.)* And you, mister? *(Easterner shrugs.)* That is no answer. *(Confronts him.)* What do you do, mister?

COWBOY: *(Aside to Johnnie.)* I think that Easterner is a Dutchman, too.

SWEDE: *(To Easterner, quickly.)* Where are you headed? What's your business? Why did you come to this part of the country?

EASTERNER: I travel around.

SWEDE: What for?

EASTERNER: I'm a writer.

SWEDE: *(Laughs.)* Then write about me. Write about us all. Yes, write about everyone of us, mister— What's the name?

EASTERNER: Blanc.

SWEDE: *(Suddenly.)* Where's the drink! Where are the women!

(Swede pounds on the bar. Scully rushes to accommodate him.)

COWBOY: *(To Johnnie.)* If your pop would only license me—

JOHNNIE: That Dutchman's fizzin' like a fire-wheel.

(Swede starts toward Daughter.)

SWEDE: That's a might fair-looking one you have there, Mr. Scully. Mighty fair!

(Johnnie starts toward Swede. Scully interferes.)

JOHNNIE: Me 'n this man'll do it, Pop.

SCULLY: I'll have none o' that.

(Swede circles Daughter.)

SWEDE: Mighty fair. Look at those.

(Swede pats his own buttocks. Scully pushes him away from Daughter.)

SCULLY: *(To Swede.)* None ' that.

JOHNNIE: Jus let me at 'im, Pop!

SWEDE: *(Indicating Daughter's buttocks.)* Some pair! Some pair!
Good for you-know-what!

JOHNNIE: Jus' one, Pop!

SCULLY: None o' that, you hear! *(To Swede.)* If you be tawkin' o' my Daughter—?

SWEDE: You sure know how to make 'em, Mr. Scully. *(To Easterner.)* Come on now, let's have this game of High-Five!

SCULLY: Yes, that's what I say. A game o' High-Five! *(He begins to move quickly from man to man.)* High-Five everybody! Y'oughta play a little, Mr. Blanc.

EASTERNER: I...don't play much, Mr. Scully.

SCULLY: Play anyway! That's life! Be nimble!

SWEDE: Be nimble! That's what the man says! Play!

SCULLY: Play! *(To Cowboy.)* That's what ye do in them prairies, don't ye?

COWBOY: We whangs 'em down—

SCULLY: Ye bangs 'em—

COWBOY: We hangs 'em too—

SCULLY: Sssh! There'll be none o' that. No violence!

JOHNNIE: Pop, that man's loco—

COWBOY: Off his track—

JOHNNIE: A loon—

SCULLY: I know...I know. But ye can't—

(Swede is seated at the table.)

SWEDE: Play! Everybody play!

SCULLY: Everybody play! *(Pushes Johnnie.)* Go on over there! Till he quiets a bit, ye hear.

(Johnnie crosses to table, scowling at his father. The Cowboy follows. They both sit, trying not to look at the Swede.)

SWEDE: *(To Farmer.)* Well, old boy, why don't you join us?

FARMER: I'm-a-settin' an' waitin'. *(Spits.)*

SCULLY: *(Patting farmer.)* He plays night an' day.

FARMER: Me'n Johnnie take on anybody.

SWEDE: Take us on! Take us on! Deal 'em!

FARMER: Deal 'em, Johnnie!

(Johnnie begins to shuffle cards.)

SWEDE: Deal 'em! Play! *(Stares at each man.)* Let's get this game on! Let's play 'em! *(To Cowboy, cruelly.)* Let's whang 'em! Let's bang 'em! *(With fingers.)* Bang! Bang! Bang!

FARMER: Less tawkin', more playin'. *(Spits.)*

SWEDE: *(Laughs.)* More playing, less talking!

FARMER: You tawkin'.

SWEDE: *(Laughing.)* You squawking.

FARMER: Foul runt! *(Spits.)*

SWEDE: *(Laughing.)* Dumb old man!

FARMER: Dumb foul-smellin—!

SWEDE: Dumb squirrel-tasting—!

(Farmer rises from his chair, threatening.)

FARMER: Play wid yeself!

(Scully pushes Farmer back down into the chair. Swede continues to dominate the game.)

SWEDE: *(To Daughter.)* Where's the music?! Play!

SCULLY: *(To Daughter.)* Play! Where's that music, Daughter?

DAUGHTER: I been playin'. I'm tired—

SCULLY: *(Sarcastic.)* You sure been doin' a lot around here.

DAUGHTER: I been doin' more 'n you think.

SCULLY: You been good 'n lazy, that's what.

DAUGHTER: How I been lazy? I been playin'. I been...you know what I been!

SCULLY: Make yeself useful! Make yeself useful!

(She angrily strums on the guitar.)

SWEDE: *(To Farmer.)* Dumb old fool! I will beat you just fine! June fine! I will whang them and bang them! *(Does so, cruelly, winning.)* Deal! Let's hear the music! *(To Scully.)* Bring on the drink! Play up the melody!

SCULLY: *(To Daughter.)* Play up the melody now.

SWEDE: I will thunder down! I will just thunder right down!

(Swede whacks his card on table, as Cowboy had done before.)

FARMER: He wins 'em awright. *(Spits.)*

SWEDE: I will take it all. Play! Let's play!

(Swede shoves the cards at Johnnie.)

EASTERNER: *(To Scully.)* It seems he's grown taller.

SCULLY: *(Dumbly.)* Taller?

EASTERNER: Much bigger than before. The man was frightened.

Now he dominates the feast, as if...as if..

SCULLY: Ay, 'tis a hard guess what's happenin'.

EASTERNER: Possibly...

(Scully draws closer to Easterner.)

SCULLY: What now? D'ye suppose—?

EASTERNER: I suppose very little, Mr. Scully.

SCULLY: *(Clutching his sleeve.)* But ye must understand it?

EASTERNER: I have stopped trying to understand.

SCULLY: *(Confused.)* Then what is one to do?

EASTERNER: Observe.

SCULLY: Oh, I've tried...to keep a clean place...to keep—

(Swede rises and slams down cards.)

SWEDE: Bastards! Bastards!

FARMER: *(Spits.)* He win 'em agin!

(Swede turns to Daughter.)

SWEDE: *(Brutally.)* That's a squirrel! That's a squirrel, Mr. Scully!

(The Swede crosses to Daughter and yanks up her skirt, exposing her

thigh. Johnnie rises. Scully hurries over to settle him down.) That's the prettiest squirrel in the whole West, Mr. Scully! (The Swede returns to table, picks up several cards, and thrusts them at Johnnie. Johnnie deals.) Sonovabitch!

FARMER: Play now!

SWEDE: Bastards!

(They play silently for awhile. Scully crosses to Easterner.)

SCULLY: It's brutal, Mr. Blanc. Surely, I've never seen the lakes
[likes] of it.

EASTERNER: It's become a very small room, Mr. Scully.

SCULLY: I've sure tried to kape everythin' decent...

EASTERNER: It's smaller than the very train compartment ...

SWEDE: *(Suddenly, precisely to Johnnie.)* You...are...cheating!

(Silence.)

COWBOY: Them's three very terrible words, mister.

(Johnnie rises.)

JOHNNIE: What?

(Swede rises to look Johnnie in the eye.)

SWEDE: Cheating. Do you understand the word?

JOHNNIE: What?

COWBOY: That's the most terrible word I can think of.

(Swede waves his fist at Johnnie.)

SWEDE: Cheating! Cheating!

(Johnnie lunges at the Swede. Scully rushes forward and grabs Johnnie. The Cowboy and the Farmer grab the Swede.)

JOHNNIE: He says I cheated!

SCULLY: Stop it now!

JOHNNIE: No man's goin' say I cheated!

SWEDE: You cheated! Cheat! Cheat!

JOHNNIE: You goddamn sonovabitch!

EASTERNER: What's the good of a fight over a game of cards?

(Nobody has heard. Swede tries to break free.)

SWEDE: You are a cheat! You have cheated!

JOHNNIE: No man says I cheated!

SCULLY: Stop it now! I says stop it!

SWEDE: You have cheated!

JOHNNIE: Let me at 'im! Let me go!

SWEDE: Let me at the cheat!

JOHNNIE: I'll fight any man who says I cheated!

SWEDE: I saw you with both my eyes! You goddamn well cheated!

EASTERNER: *(Unheard by the men.)* What's the good...

JOHNNIE: I'll fight 'im! I'll fight 'im!

EASTERNER: ...of a fight...

SWEDE: Yes, fight! Fight!

EASTERNER: ...over a game...

SWEDE: I'll show you what kind of man I am! Maybe you think I can't, heh! I'll show you! You skin! You bastard! You cheat! You bastard! Cheat! Cheat!

SCULLY: All right, let 'em go! Let 'em fight it out! I can't put up with it any longer! I stood this man—I stood this man—till I'm sick. *(He releases Johnnie. The Swede is released too.)* All right, put yer coats on! Let's go at it. Put yer coats on! *(The men move to get their coats. To Easterner and Cowboy.)* I've stood this damned Swede till I'm sick.

JOHNNIE: *(Coat on.)* Well, let's go at it, mister.

SWEDE: *(Coat on.)* I'll show you, you skin! Card-shark!

JOHNNIE: I'll fight you till yer down, mister!

SWEDE: I'll beat you good, you bastard!

(Both are heading toward door.)

JOHNNIE: *(At door.)* I'll shove yer face into some—

SWEDE: *(At door.)* I'll swat your nose—

JOHNNIE: I'll beat yer head—

SWEDE: I'll knock your eye—

(Johnnie and Swede exit. Cowboy and Scully follow.)

SCULLY: *(At door.)* I cannot stand it anither minute. Not anither minute.

EASTERNER: What's the fight for, but a game of cards?

SCULLY: Not one inither minute.

EASTERNER: I cannot understand...

SCULLY: He'll whip 'im, me boy will. He'll whip 'im good.

(Scully exits. Easterner stands still for a moment, then glances at the Daughter.)

DAUGHTER: He'll whip 'im good now. Don't you worry.

EASTERNER: Over a game of cards...

(Lights fade to black as she strums one final note. Optional intermission.)

[End of Freeview]