

SAN JUAN GHOSTS AND GOLD

**A HISTORICAL POP UP
ONE ACT PLAY**

**By
Gary McCarver**

(Revision 2)

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

3 M & 3 F

WARREN PEECE – The local storyteller and gruff town sheriff.

JUSTIN TOWNE – A over friendly visitor to town arriving on the train.

JENNA ROSSITY – The local “school marm”.

REED WRIGHT – The local “know it all” newspaper reporter.

MADAM M – The irrepressible Polish international actress.

DEE ZASTER – The “on-the-run” outlaw ... also new to town.

(This Pop-Up Play can be situated somewhere tourists and visitors to town are gathering such as Los Rios Street, Verdugo Street, Zoomar’s Farm, the Hotel, any historical building, or even the new River Street section of town when finished.)

Approximate Length: Less than 15 Minutes

The Place: Somewhere in San Juan Capistrano
The Time: The year is 1898

(WARREN PEECE ENTERS gathering together an audience.)

WARREN PEECE

San Juan Capistrano has always been a town of heroes and villains and of course the swallows. Since Capistrano is one of the oldest towns in California - naturally it has more than its share of tales to be told. And as the local sheriff ... and resident storyteller ... I welcome you to San Juan Capistrano ... if you forgot your calendars at home ... the year is 1898.

(Holding up a Cue-Card sign.)

CUE-CARD – SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO 1898
GHOSTS & GOLD

(JUSTIN TOWNE ENTERS – with a bag he comes barging around the corner and accidentally almost runs into the Sheriff. He stops at the last moment.)

JUSTIN TOWNE

Excuse me ... I'm sorry for almost knocking you over.

WARREN PEECE

No harm done ... son. Well ... whomever you are ... welcome to San Juan Capistrano sir!

JUSTIN TOWNE

My name is Justin ... Justin Towne.

WARREN PEECE

Just in town?

JUSTIN TOWNE

Yep ... seems that's both my name ... and my situation at the moment.

WARREN PEECE

Well ... I'm the local storyteller ... and sheriff here in town ... as you can tell from the star on my chest.

JUSTIN TOWNE

I did notice the star. ... Sheriff.

WARREN PEECE

Well ... we can dispense with the formality son. My name is Warren ... Warren Peece.

(The men shake hands) (JUSTIN TOWNE drops his bag to greet the Sheriff)

JUSTIN TOWNE

Good to meet you sir. You wouldn't happen to know a place to get a good cup of coffee here in ... what town is this again?

(The Local Report REED WRIGHT barges in with several newspapers under one arm and a reporter's pad and pencil in hand.)

REED WRITE

San Juan Capistrano. The mission was founded in 1776 and fresh coffee can be found all over town and some of the best eats north of the Rio Grande. As the local expert and reporter for the Los Angeles Daily Globe and Santa Ana Standard ... I should know.

WARREN PEECE

Winchester, Colt, Levi, and Stetson all did their parts ... but good coffee was what really won the west.

REED WRITE

Not intending to offend Sheriff ... but I think it was the railroad that actually opened up the west.

(JENNA ENTERS and holds up a Cue-Card Sign.)

CUE-CARD – APPLAUSE HOORAY

WARREN PEECE

(ignoring the reporter) Well ... look there ... it is our local school Marm. (to the audience) ... in case you didn't know ... her name is Jenna Rossity.
(to JENNA) What brings you to town miss Jenna?

JENNA ROSSITY

I am just back from looking at a small parcel of land down in San Diego. Real Estate in 1898 is just so expensive you know ... can't hardly get an acre of land for under three hundred dollars.

WARREN PEECE

Three hundred dollars! Too rich for me. I'm still recovering from when they raised the price of coffee from a nickel to ten cents.

REED WRIGHT

As you might remember ... I am writing a series of articles for my main newspaper ... the Santa Ana Standard ... all about the GHOSTS here in and around town.

JUSTIN TOWNE

Did you say GHOSTS? Real ghosts?

WARREN PEECE

(dismissive) Here we go again.

JENNA ROSSITY

When the railroad tracks were extended to San Juan and San Diego ... I had hoped it would bring much needed visitors here to town. But ...

WARREN PEECE

(interrupting) But ... it won't do us a lick of good with all those GHOST stories this reporter here keeps writing about in the newspaper.

REED WRIGHT

At first ... I tried to ignore the stories ... but a newspaper's job is to report the news ... and if GHOST stories are being told ... it is my job to report them.

JUSTIN TOWNE

I couldn't help but overhearing ... what "GHOST stories" are you talking about?

WARREN PEECE

Don't believe any of this malarkey. As a lawman ... I deal only with the facts.

REED WRIGHT

As a reporter ... that is my job as well.

WARREN PEECE

What is it that Will Rogers said ... oooh yes ... only believe HALF of what you see and NONE of what you read in the newspapers?

JENNA ROSSITY

Now ... no fighting between you two.

(WARREN PEECE turns away from the reporter)

WARREN PEECE

All these so called "ghost" stories are nothing more than balderdash.
Never believe in what you see in mirrors ... or in newspapers.

(SOUND EFFECT: The sound of a train whistle.)

(MADAM M ENTERS handing the sheriff her bags)

MADAM M

Oh ... just put those bags anywhere.

(THE SHERIFF does what she asked and tosses the bags anywhere)

JUSTIN TOWNE

Who is that?

JENNA ROSSITY

Oh don't you know? Well ... of course you don't ... you're Just in town. ... in her day she was internationally famous ... a wonderful actress named Madam Helena Modjeska. Her home is up in a canyon just north east of here.

JUSTIN TOWNE

"In her day"?

JENNA ROSSITY

I am sorry ... "In her day" simply means that it has been over 20 years since she was the toast of San Francisco and New York City. Since then ... she has been a benefactor and friend of San Juan Capistrano AND A GOOD friend of our local Judge Egan. Judge Egan has that handsome home up across from the old livery stable and jail house.

MADAM M

(Over the top with slight Polish accent)

Hello darlings! Yes ... it is I ... Madam Modjeska ... returning after my travels to spend more time here in beautiful San Juan Capistrano. I know you are all probably too overwhelmed to ask for my autograph ... so I will save you the time. Here you go.

(MADAM M hands out autographs to the audience)

JUSTIN TOWNE

Thank you so much.

MADAM M

I just love this little town of San Juan. "A peaceful retreat, far far from the turmoils of the real world" ... it sooo reminds me of Shakespeare's forest of Arden in "As You Like It." (talking to JUSTIN TOWNE) Yooooo do know the play?

JUSTIN TOWNE

Well... actually I can't actually say that I've ... ahh ... actually read ...

REED WRIGHT

(interrupting) Read at all ... or just read Shakespeare?

(The two men face each other as JUSTIN realizes he had been insulted.)
(Jenna steps between the two men that are facing each other off.)

JENNA ROSSITY

(holding up a school ruler) Now ... do I have to separate you two as well?

MADAM M

(ignoring and moving on) Rosalind ... yes Rosalind ... the comedy's lead ... if I must remind you all... is a role that I have played many many times ... in the finest of theatres. Not unlike that quaint little Camino Real Playhouse right here in town.

(WARREN PEECE holds up a cue card sign)

CUE-CARD – SHAMELESS PLUG

(JENNA approaches MADAM M and taking her hands)

JENNA ROSSITY

A good friend is hard to find ... and almost impossible to forget. (pause)
Hello ... Helena.

MADAM M

Jenna!

(JENNA and MADAM M embrace then Laugh out loud)

JUSTIN TOWNE

Jenna? ... You know Madam Modjeska?

JENNA ROSSITY

Of course I do. We are old friends. Helena ... let me introduce my ... new friend ... Justin Towne.

MADAM M

(to *JUSTIN*) Charmed ... I'm sure. (he kisses her hand which was extended)

(to *JENNA*) Do tell? Darling ... is he? ... are you two ...? Well ...?

JENNA ROSSITY

(embarrassed) No ... by all means ... no ... ahh we just met ...

MADAM M

Well ... (beat) when did that ever stop you?

JENNA ROSSITY

Don't be silly.

*(MADAM M unfolds a newspaper with the headlines "GHOSTS IN SAN JUAN"
– "The Lady in White is seen again!")*

MADAM M

These ghost stories are simply delicious but mister reporter man ... you are sullyng the good name of San Juan with all of those stories you are printing.

REED WRIGHT

Like my story of ... the headless soldier.

MADAM M

Yes. Oh my ... how disturbing,

JENNA ROSSITY

Or that story of the little ghost girl and her mother known as "The Lady in White".

REED WRIGHT

Well people have reported seeing that (looking in his notes) "Lady in White" over on Los Rios street ... or near that old pepper tree ... and even up the long road heading to the old hot springs.

WARREN PEECE

Best I can figure out ... these ghost stories are nothing more than superstitious imagination gone wild and those stories are keeping people away from visiting town. You are only telling those stories to sell your newspapers.

REED WRIGHT

Ghosts are found throughout the old west but especially in San Juan. As a reporter it is my job to report the news ... and I just report what the people tell me.

JENNA ROSSITY

Well ... I'm sure that the Sheriff is not saying to be less than honest ...

WARREN PEECE

(interrupting) ... What I'm just saying is you can write about other things ... and be a little more vague about those so called "GHOSTS".

JENNA ROSSITY

Yes ... we have to do something to help bring more people to San Juan.

MADAME M

Maybe ... you could have a small troupe of actors go around town telling stories to the visitors.

JENNA ROSSITY

Sheriff ... you could greet people as they arrive in town ... maybe that would work?

EVERYONE IN UNISON

(after long pause)

Naaaaah.

WARREN PEECE

I just have to believe that a solution will come to us.

JENNA ROSSITY

Solutions ... are not the answer.

MADAM M

Remember when we used to have those big fandangos at the dance hall up at the hot springs ... people came from miles around. There was music and fun ...

JUSTIN TOWNE

Trust me. It will all work out. Everyone's path has got some puddles. But ... life ain't so much about how high you climb, but how well you bounce back.

JENNA ROSSITY

Whatever does that mean?

JUSTIN TOWNE

Honestly ... I'm not quite sure myself.

(OLIVER AND JENNA laugh and gaze in each other eyes)

JENNA ROSSITY

You have a charm in your simple way ... and you have the most beautiful eyes.

JUSTIN TOWNE

I was just about to say that to you.

(JENNA and OLIVER join hands longingly)

MADAM M

Now break that up you two.

(SOUND EFFECT: sound horse arriving)

JENNA ROSSITY

Whom ever could that be arriving?

(DEE ZASTER ENTERS with a bag in one hand and a Cue-Card Sign)

DEE ZASTER

(Loudly) Yeeeeee Haw Ya'all!

(DEE ZASTER ENTERS holding up a Cue-Card sign.)

CUE-CARD – YEEEE HAW

DEE ZASTER

I SAID ... Yeeeeee Haaaaaaw Ya'all!

(Wait for the actors and audience to repeat the sign)

DEE ZASTER

Now ... I recon'd that's much better!

REED WRIGHT

(to all) I recognize that lady from her picture in the newspaper ... her name is DEE ZASTER. Word is ... she's a modern robin hood handing out silver dollars to the poor.

(to Sheriff) I'm told that she is fairly notorious. Sheriff.

DEE ZASTER

Barring that natural expression of villainy which we all have ... I am honest as the day is long. The name is Dee Zaster ... that 's true. *(shaking cast member hands)* But ... don't be believing everything you read in them newspapers. Reports about me aren't worth the paper they're written on.

WARREN PEECE

(to DEE) As sheriff my job is to keep things safe here in town ... and ... I ... don't want any trouble maam.

DEE ZASTER

(An awkward pause then DEE laugh)

No need to worry sheriff ... I ... have just come to town looking for gold ... not trouble.

EVERYONE

"Gold" you say?

REED WRIGHT

By "Gold" You probably mean metaphorical gold ... such as the good food, good times and golden entertainment here in San Juan Capistrano?

DEE ZASTER

Nope ... I mean real gold. No metaphysicalness there at all.

JUSTIN TOWNE

I think you got off the train a bit too early. The gold rush is off to the Yukon and the Alaska territory. I was planning on "moseying" off to Alaska myself.

DEE ZASTER

(to JUSTIN) Friend ... prospecting is a very slow way of getting rich. What I am talking about is a report of gold found RIGHT CHEER in the hills of San Juan Capistrano.

WARREN PEECE

Maam ... the closest we've had to that ... was a small strike of silver way up in Silverado Canyon.

JUSTIN TOWNE

I would have figured that ... from the name.

WARREN PEECE

They renamed that canyon "Silver-ado" ... AFTER they found the silver.

JUSTIN TOWNE

Oh ... Well ... I guess that makes sense.

MADAM M

Silverado is just one canyon over from my home in the hills. I have a beautiful ranch up there ... with groves of trees ... you must come visit before you ... "mosey".

DEE ZASTER

(interrupting) Let me explain. Some months ago, while playing a few hands of cards ... I met a man who told me the story of the "Lost Gold of San Juan".

JENNA ROSSITY

"Lost Gold"!?! Tell us more.

(The actors gather around DEE as she tells the tale)

DEE ZASTER

The story is told ... of the Deadwood to California stage that was held-up... not very far from here ... back in 1877.

JENNA ROSSITY

Oh my!

DEE ZASTER

It was 'supposed to meet a ship at Capistrano Bay and transfer over \$200 thousand in gold bullion.

JENNA ROSSITY

Gold!? HERE in the hills of San Juan ... And no one has seen the gold since?

MADAM M

Why is it that I haven't heard this "story" before?

WARREN PEECE

Oh ... the story of the lost gold shipment is true enough ... Madam Modjeska. The tale is told that bandits buried the stolen gold out the hills, but as many times as treasure hunters have looked for that stash ... nothing has turned up.

JENNA ROSSITY

So ... Sheriff ... you knew about this? That news would have brought people to our little town. The least you could have done was to ... (interrupted)

DEE ZASTER

(DEE ZASTER pulls a small pouch of gold from her pocket)

(interrupting) This GOLD is part of that lost shipment ... look here ... this pouch has the Deadwood lead-seal. And where this one comes from ... there must be a slew waiting to be discovered.

JUSTIN TOWNE

A tale of Lost gold ... that no one has found? How stupid do you think I am?

DEE ZASTER

I can't rightfully say ... Having just met you a few minutes ago.

REED WRIGHT

The trick, my friend, is to keep an open mind, but not so open that your brains fall out.

JUSTIN TOWNE

(Indignantly) Ooooooh!

DEE ZASTER

Yep ... there is gold to be found here ... somewhere near San Juan and I intend on being the one that finds it.

WARREN PEECE

Well before you head up in the hills you might want to stop in town for provisions. They'll probably have everything you need up over at Denault's Hardware.

(JENNA ROSSITY holds up a cue-card sign)

CUE-CARD – SHAMELESS PLUG

DEE ZASTER

Lead on gentlemen. (arms on men's shoulders) I am right behind you.

JUSTIN TOWNE

(Said to the audience) As we all depart to find the lost gold of San Juan ... I suppose these fine folks could use some advice on finding some good San Juan coffee.

DEE ZASTER

(loudly) Or ... something stronger?

WARREN PEECE

As I was saying ... consider "moseying" off to Hidden House or one of the other fine constabularies in town for a cup of coffee and some San Juan hospitality.

(WARREN PEECE holds up a cue card sign)

CUE-CARD – SHAMELESS PLUG

JENNA ROSSITY

But before we go ... here's a song about our little town right here.

(Cast/Players gather to perform this song before the play is over)

(Sheet music is available for this San Juan song at the end of this play. A MP3 piano track is also available if you are going to have the ability to play the track rather than have a live performer play a guitar or banjo. Any instrument or even the midi MP3 track is usually better than an a cappella rendition.)

SONG – SAN JUAN

Public Domain Music and Lyrics by Edwin Weber
Lyrics by Gary McCarver

VERSE (Sung by a strong lead or whole cast)

They have writ-ten songs of every ci-ty and of every state
From Mo-bile Bay to Iowa, to 'Frisco's Golden Gate
But there is one the best of all that so far, they have missed
They've got them all except the one that head-lines on my list.

CHORUS (repeat twice)

San Juan the pride and envy of them all
San Juan as staunch and solid as a wall
San Juan where men get out and dare and do
San Juan the home of every-thing that's true
San Juan my heart and soul will always stay (in)
San Juan I am so sad when I'm away
San Juan there is no place I would rather go
San Juan Capistrano.

MADAM M

And Mister reporter-man ... if you don't mind me saying ... I think the two of you make a fine couple ... why don't you court my good friend Jenna.

JUSTIN TOWNE

(to MADAM M) I'm busy right now ... can I ignore you some other time?
(to JENNA) I suppose could use some fresh coffee myself.

JENNA ROSSITY

(sultry voice) Are you sure it's only coffee you want?

DEE ZASTER

Tarnation! He's may be a few swallows shy of a full flock ... but I do like his style.
(to Audience) It is time for us to all skedaddle Folks. Yeeeeee Haaaaw Ya'all.

(DEE ZASTER or other cast member holds up a cue-card sign)

CUE-CARD – ROUNDABOUTPLAYERS.COM

(Everyone disappears into the crowd and the pop-up play is over)

END OF THE PLAY

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