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Bugbee's Popular Plays

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Betsey's
Boarders

By

O. E. Young

Price 25 Cents



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SYRACUSE, N. Y.

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THE WILLIS N. BUGBEE CO., SYRACUSE, N. Y.

Bugbee's Popular Plays

BETSEY'S
BOARDS

A Farce in One Act

By

O. E. Young

Author of "Unacquainted With Work" and Forty Other Plays

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THE WILLIS N. BUGBEE CO.
SYRACUSE, N. Y.

BETSEY'S BOARDERS

CHARACTERS

PS 635
Z 9 Y 7413

BETSEY BOGGSof Boggs' Boarding House for Single People

EBEN EASTMAN
MARTHA MUGGINS
ARTHUR BROWN }Boarders

MARY BROWNArthur's Bride

May be played all male, if desired.

SCENE: *Third floor corridor in Boggs' boarding house.*

TIME: *The present, 12 o'clock at night.*

TIME OF PLAYING: *Thirty-five minutes.*

COSTUMES

BETSEY: Age 50, big, raw-boned and resolute, gray hair plainly parted in middle, plain dark house dress. Later, nightgown and cap.

EBEN: Age 30, tall and spare, sunburned, with long, stringy, tow-colored hair and drooping moustache, nearly white; wears ordinary gray suit, much too small for him, cheap striped shirt, blue tie and black slouch hat. Later, nightshirt and night cap.

MARTH(: Age 40 and uncalled for, short and fat; wears girlish street costume, very youthful, with bright colors, ribbons and much jewelry; has on glasses and wears huge shoes. Nightgown and night cap later. Should be played by a man.

ARTHUR: Age 25, medium size, smooth-faced and good looking and has well groomed appearance; has on black evening suit and dark felt hat.

MARY: Age 20, small, pretty and petite; neat and becoming street costume.

SCENE: Third floor corridor of Mrs. Boggs' Boarding House for Single People; doors to three rooms, Nos. 31, 32 and 33, in flat, with transoms over each; stairway R. leading to attic, with half length door to closet beneath; door to staircase from below, L., with a pile of trunks in corner in rear.

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BETSEY'S BOARDERS

Enter MARTHA MUGGINS, L.. *in street costume, on tiptoe, wringing hands.*)

MARTHA (*in low voice*). Oh, if Mrs. Boggs ketches me comin' in at twelve o'clock at night! She'd turn me out on the instant and nobody else in the village would take me in for love or money, even in the daytime. (*Stops at No. 33.*) There! I'm safe now; here's my room. (*Feels in pocket.*) Where's my key? (*Excitedly.*) I never can have lost it! (*Turning pocket inside out and letting a letter fall unnoticed; wildly.*) I sartin have. Oh heavens! I shall git ketcht 'n fired 'n my reppatation will be spilet forever. (*Wringing hands.*)

(*Enter* EBEN EASTMAN, L.)

EBEN (*tiptoeing on, in low voice.*) Thank heaven Marm Boggs didn't ketch me comin' in at this ongodly hour! She'd a bounced me on the spot 'n where could I hev gone? (*Stops at No. 31 and takes key from pocket.*)

MARTHA (*faintly*). M-M-Mr. Eastman.

EBEN (*starting guiltily and looking round*). Oh, it's *you* is it, Miss Muggins?

MARTHA (*rushing to him*). Oh, Mr. Eastman! Eben! I'm ondone.

EBEN (*wonderingly*). Be ye? I hadn't noticed. (*Looks her over.*)

MARTHA (*wringing hands*). Oh, *what* shall I dew! *What* shall I dew!

EBEN. Pears like ye better go inter yer room 'n dew yerself up agin.

MARTHA (*despairingly*). If I only could!

EBEN. Wall, I can't, that's sure. I'm 'fraid Marm Boggs 'd ketch me at it. (*Starts to put key in lock.*)

MARTHA (*flings herself upon his breast and throws arms around his neck.*) Stop! You shall not go! Wait! 'n' be my blessed aid.

EBEN (*staggering back aghast*). Yer-*yer what?*

MARTHA. My blessed aid.

EBEN (*drawing long breath*). Oh! I thought ye said yer lady's maid.

MARTHA. No! no! (*Impatiently.*) Come! come quick! (*Tries to drag him R.*)

EBEN (*amazed*). Come! come where?

MARTHA. Ter my room.

EBEN. 'Scuse me; I can't. I got a reppytation ter sustain (*tries to push her off*) 'n' I daresn't sustain you no longer. Marm Boggs might—

MARTHA (*clinging to him*). Ye kin; ye *must*. I jes' got ter hev my door onlocked. Come on. (*Pulls him R.*)

EBEN (*resisting*). I-I daresn't—not now. Remember Marm Boggs. 'Sides I hain't got no skillyton key.

MARTHA. Take that one; mebbe it'll fit my lock. Try it, quick! (*Drags him R.*)

BETSEY'S BOARDERS

EBEN (*struggling*). Here! Hold on! I mean leggo! Ye'll be ondewin' me next. What if Marm Boggs should come?

MARTHA (*distractedly*). She won't, she mustn't. Try yer key, quick—afore she does.

EBEN (*grumblingly*). Wall, if nothin' else won't satisfy ye—but it won't fit. (*Tries key in No. 33.*)

MARTHA (*eagerly*). Does it? Does it?

EBEN (*disgustedly*). Naw; in course it don't. (*Turning key.*) Jehosaphat! It does, tew. (*Unlocks door.*)

BETSEY (*outside*). What's goin' on up there?

MARTHA (*alarmed*). There's Mrs. Boggs! Quick! Git inter yer room or you're the one that's ondene now. (*Gives him violent push and sends him staggering across stage L., rushes into No. 33 and slams door behind her.*)

EBEN. Gosh! Ef my feet hadn't been oncommon long they'd never kept up with my head. (*Rushes to door of No. 31.*)

BETSEY (*outside*). Who's prowlin' 'round up there this time o' night?

EBEN (*alarmed*). Ef I hain't abed in half a jiffy my character won't be wuth a chaw o' terbarker—'n' I'll git turned out o' doors ter boot. (*Tries to unlock No. 31 and drops key in his haste.*)

(*Enter BETSEY BOGGS L.*)

BETSEY. I suttinly heard suthin' bangin'. (*Comes on.*)

EBEN (*aside*). Ef she mistrusts I've jes' come in I am done for. (*Snatches off hat and hastily hides it under his coat.*)

BETSEY (*catching sight of EBEN*). Hullo, Mr. Eastman; what ye doin' up this time o' night? I don't 'low my boarders runnin' 'round nights.

EBEN (*hastily*). I hain't been runnin' 'round nights.

BETSEY. Don't ye lie ter me; I know better. Come, own up, now. Where ye been?

EBEN. Nowhere. I-I was jest a-goin'.

BETSEY. Wuss yit! I don't 'low my young men out gaddin' at this time o' night. It's flyin' right straight inter the face 'n' eyes o' providence 'n' the arms o' the street beauties.

EBEN. I wa'n't goin' ter facin' 'n' eyin' no providence nor armin' no street beauties. I never'd darester.

BETSEY. Then what ye out o' yer room for?

EBEN. Why, I come out— I come out— (*stops bewildered*).

BETSEY (*dryly*). Yis; I see ye did. What for?

EBEN. Ter— Ter— (*with sudden inspiration*) ter see a noise I jest heard.

BETSEY. So you heard it tew? What did it sound like?

EBEN (*peeping at No. 33*). Like— like (*peeps again*). Like somebody fallin' out o' bed. (*Peeps.*)

BETSEY. Land sakes! Who was it? (*Eyes following his glance.*) Miss Muggins?

EBEN (*hastily*). Heavens! no. 'Twa'n't in No. 33.

BETSEY. Where was it then?

EBEN. In— in Coachin' Chiny.

BETSEY. Oh shucks! Ye couldn't 'a' heard the circus fat woman fallin' out o' bed 'way out there—'thout yer ears are longer'n yer nose, 'n' that's onpossible.

EBEN (*obstinately*). Wall, 'twa'n't on this floor, nohow. Must 'a' been 'way off som'ers.

BETSEY (*dissatisfied, shaking head*). It didn't sound that way but mebbe ye're right. (*Glancing round*.) I can't see nothin' wrong nor nobody 'tain't here. Go in 'n' go ter bed, Mr. Eastman; I'll wait till I see yer light go out.

EBEN (*aside*). Oh Lord! What shall I dew? Ef she sees me pick up that key she'll find out I'm locked out 'n' 'll know I been lyin'. (*Puts foot on key. To Mrs. Boggs.*) What! 'n' let you go down them long, steep stairs erlone? I guess not much! (*Resolutely, folding arms, back to door.*) No, sir! here I stan' 'n' here I'm goin' ter stan' till I see ye safe down 'em.

BETSEY (*pleased*). Wall, ye're a gentleman, Mr. Eastman, that's sartin. Betsey Boggs is not so ongrtefaul as ter refuse that leetle attention, so I'll get ter goin'. Goodnight. (*Exit L.*)

EBEN. Goodnight, Mrs. Boggs. (*Watches her disappear.*) There! She's gone; I'm safe. (*Picks up key and unlocks No. 31.*) Now I'll git ter bed, 'fore she's back again. (*Goes in and shuts door.*)

MARTHA (*Opening door of No. 33 and peeping out cautiously, in nightgown and nightcap, excitedly*). I must find that loveletter I lost or I shall be the laughin' stock o' the hull boardin' house. It can't be fur off. (*Catches sight of it.*) There it is; I see it. (*Looks cautiously around, then darts out and picks up letter; door slams behind her as she does so.*) Goodness! The wind has shet the door. What ef that snap lock has ketched. (*Darts back and tries door.*) It has! I'm locked out agin—'n' jes' see what I've got on! (*Holds out hands and looks at herself.*) I'm ruined ef Mrs. Boggs ketches me out o' my room in this rig. I've got ter git back. (*Shakes door.*) It's no use. (*Clasps hands and makes emphatic gesture.*) I must hev help. I'll hev ter call Mr. Brown in No. 32 'n' see 'f he can't onlock that dratted door. (*Goes to No. 32 and starts to knock, then pauses abruptly.*) Oh, I jes' can't—not in this rig. (*Looks at herself.*) I've got ter dew suthin' but I b'lieve I ruther face Mr. Eastman than Mr. Brown, lookin' like this—'n' I know his key'll fit. (*Goes to No. 31 and raps.*)

EBEN (*inside*). Who's there?

MARTHA (*aside*). I can't tell him; he wouldn't come ter the door ef he knew. (*To EBEN, in a low voice.*) It's Mr. Brown.

EBEN (*inside*). Oh, hello, Brown. What d'ye want?

MARTHA. Sh! Mrs. Boggs'll hear. Come ter the door a minute.

EBEN (*inside, grumbling*). Oh, darn it! What'n thunder's the matter now? I hadn't more'n got inter bed. (*Unfastens door.*)

MARTHA. He's comin'. Oh, I can't face him, after all. (*Runs L. and hides behind trunks.*)

EBEN (*in nightshirt and nightcap, looking out in surprise*). Why, there hain't nobody here. Where be ye Brown?

MARTHA (*faintly*). Here I be.

EBEN. Oh, so ye be, ain't ye? Where?

MARTHA (*faintly*). Ahind the trunks.

EBEN (*surprised*). What'n tarnation ye in there for?

MARTHA. I want ter borry yer key. I'm locked out.

EBEN (*surprised*). 'Nother one! Now don't that beat thunder? All right; come out'n git it. (*Turns to get key.*)

MARTHA (*squealing*). Oo-oo! I can't come out. I-I daresn't.

EBEN (*comes back and looks L. in surprise*). Daresn't! Why not?

MARTHA. Cause I've taken off my— my— you know, 'n' put on my— oh, you know.

EBEN. No, blamed if I dew— only ef ye've taken off yer uno 'n' put it on agin ye must look like the— you know.

MARTHA (*excitedly*). I dew; I dew. For heaven's sake throw out yer key'n go back ter bed, so I kin. My— my toes is cold.

EBEN (*suspiciously*). What's the matter with ye, Brown? Yer voice don't sound nat'ral.

MARTHA. 'Course it don't; neither'd yourn ef some onfeelin' man'd kep' ye out in this cold passage for half an hour, with nothin' on but a— a— you know.

EBEN. I told ye once I *didn't* know, but I'm goin' ter find out. I don't b'lieve ye're Arthur Brown at all. (*Walks L., determinedly.*)

MARTHA (*wildly*). Go back! Don't ye come near these 'ere trunks. Don't ye know no better'n ter intrude on the privacy of a lady?

EBEN (*astonished, recoiling*). A lady! Who for heaven's sake be ye?

MARTHA (*stammering*). M-M-Miss Muggins.

EBEN (*dumbfounded*). Miss Muggins! Good Lord! What ye out o' yer room this time o' night for?—with nothin' on but yer— you know. (*Wind slams door of No. 31 behind him.*) Thunderation! Devil take the wind! I forgot the winder was up. (*Rushes back to door.*)

MARTHA (*faintly*). I— I'm locked out agin.

EBEN (*shaking door savagely*). Cuss the luck! So'm I.

BETSEY (*outside*). What's that noise I hear?

EBEN (*horrified*). Marm Boggs agin!— 'n' me in my nightshirt! Where kin I hide? (*Looks around hastily. There hain't nowhere but ahind them trunks. Runs L.*)

MARTHA (*squealing*). Oo-och! (*Seizing EBEN as he begins to crowd in behind trunks.*) Keep out o' here, Eben Eastman! Consider the time o' night. Where's your modesty?

EBEN. I hain't got any on. Lemme in! (*Pushes.*)

MARTHA. Hain't ye ashamed jammin' inter a lady's bower this way?

EBEN. Bower be dummed! Ye look a blamed sight more like the white keard. (*Struggles.*) Lemme in! There comes Marm Boggs 'n' I jes got ter hide. (*They struggle and fall behind trunks with a crash.*)

BETSEY (*outside*). Heavens! I bet the ruff's blowed in. (*Enters L.*) Is anybody smashed?

EBEN (*aside, peeping over trunks*). Yes; I be. (*Ducks.*)

BETSEY (*going to No. 31*). Mr. Eastman! (*Shakes door.*) He's in here 'cause the door's locked. Mr. Eastman! Gracious! He must be sound asleep.

EBEN (*peeping, aside*). Yes; I be. (*Snores.*)

MARTHA (*aside, to EBEN*). Here! Wake up! (*Struggle behind trunks.*)

BETSEY. There! I heard suthin' then. Reckon 'twas in No. 32. (*Goes to door.*) Mr. Brown! Be you 'wake? (*Shakes door.*)

MARTHA (*aside to EBEN*). Git out o' here, Eben Eastman! Ef

ye don't I— I'll kick ye. There! Take that! (*Squabble behind trunks.*)

EBEN (*in smothered voice*). Ow!

MARTHA. Sh! Don't ye know nothin'? She'll hear ye.

EBEN (*grumbling*). Can't help it. Let me alone, then.

BETSEY. There it is agin. (*Listens.*) Must be in Miss Muggins' room. (*Goes to No. 33.*) Miss Muggins! Miss Muggins! (*Raps on door.*) Keep still 'n' go ter sleep.

MARTHA (*aside*). I can't—Eben's havin' a nightmare.

EBEN (*aside*). 'Tain't a nightmare that's botherin' me, it's a nightshirt.

BETSEY (*shaking door*). D' ye hear me? She don't answer. She must 'a' been sleepin' right out loud.

MARTHA (*aside*). Who wouldn't—under these 'ere sarcumstances!

EBEN (*aside, grumbling*). 'Tain't no wuss fer you than 'tis fer me, is it?

BETSEY. Ev'rything seems quiet agin now; I might as well go down stairs 'n' go ter bed myself.

EBEN (*peeping*). That's so—'n' a dum sight better! (*Ducks.*)

BETSEY (*going L., grumbling*). One thing's sartin, though, ef I hev ter come up here agin ternight on account o' noise, somebody's goin' ter git fired. They kin jes' make up their minds ter that. (*Exit L.*)

EBEN (*tiptoeing cautiously from behind trunks, looking cautiously down stairs, L.*). I'm darn glad she's gone; that was a pooty tight squeeze.

MARTHA (*angrily*). Eben Eastman! I didn't no sech thing.

EBEN. Oh, keep still! I wa'n't tellin' no tales. I meant 'bout us not gittin' ketcht.

MARTHA. This is outrageous! Oh, I can't stand it ter be so insulted, 'speshily in my— you know.

EBEN. Well, there's jest one way ter hender it— 'n' only one, fur's I kin see.

MARTHA. What's that?

EBEN. Take the darn thing off.

MARTHA. Eben Eastman! I'm shocked. This is a serious thing.

EBEN. Gosh dum it! don't ye s'pose I know it?—speshily in a—you know. What kin we dew 'bout it?

MARTHA. You kin unlock my door 'n' I kin go in 'n' go ter bed agin. I don't keer what ye dew then.

EBEN (*angrily*). How'n thunder 'm I goin' ter onlock yer door?—with my finger?

MARTHA. Take yer doorkey, the way ye did afore.

EBEN. D'ye s'pose I take the darn thing ter bed with me or dew ye calkilate I've got pants pockets in my— you know? That key's in my room now— 'n' I'm locked out same's you are.

MARTHA (*desperately*). Oh! oh! I shall be ketcht locked out, (*holding out hands and inspecting herself*) lookin' like this—'n' with a man (*with gesture toward EBEN*) lookin' like that!

EBEN (*angrily*). Ye don't seem ter keer a darn 'bout me. 'Tain't no wuss for you ter be locked out with me than 'tis for me ter be locked out with you—'n' I'll be blamed if I look any wuss'n you dew!

MARTHA. I've got ter git inter that room somehow afore Mrs. Boggs comes sailin' up agin. Now how kin I dew it?

EBEN (*after thinking*). I can't see no way—'thout ye skin up over the transom.

MARTHA (*indignantly*). Me? With you here? Oh, my! I'm shocked.

EBEN. Mebbe ye ruther spend the night ahind them trunks—with me here—'n' then git ketcht in the mornin' jest the same.

MARTHA (*wildly*). No! no! Anything but that! (*Approaches No. 33 and reaches up toward transom.*) Oh, I can't! I never kin dew it in this world.

EBEN. Wall, ye sartinly can't skin no transoms in the next world ef ye happen ter find the door shot. D'ye want me ter boost ye? Reckon I kin boost a paound.

MARTHA. Oh, Mr. Eastman! Eben! Air you ter be trusted?

EBEN. With oncounted millions—or yer best spare—you know.

MARTHA (*reaching for transom again*). It's no use—I can't reach it. I reckon ye'll hev ter boost me—but remember I'm a modest gal. What shall I dew fust?

EBEN. Step right in my hand. (*Holding it out.*)

MARTHA (*drawing back*). Oh, I can't.

EBEN. Yis, ye kin. I got a pooty big hand Ef one hain't enuff I kin take 'em both.

MARTHA (*hesitating*). Now remember ye're a gentleman—'n' I'm a lady.

EBEN. Oh, that's all right. Put 'er there, Miss Muggins. (*Holds out other hand.*)

MARTHA. Now be keerful. (*Taking hold of one hand and stepping in the other, shuddering.*) Oh, this is awful for Martha Muggins!

EBEN. 'N' gosh-awful fer Eben Eastman. Scrabble, Miss Muggins, quick! ye're heavier'n I thought ye was.

MARTHA (*frightened*). Oh! oh! ketch me! I'm tumblin'. (*Flings both arms round his neck.*)

EBEN (*in strangled voice*). Here! hold on! For the Lord's sake.

MARTHA. Ain't I holdin' on for the Lord's sake? Ef I didn't I'd fall kerslap!

EBEN. I mean leggo! Ye're squashin' my goozle.

MARTHA. I can't help it; it's all new ter me 'cause I'm a modest gal. I never hugged a man afore 'n' don't know how very well.

EBEN. Thank heaven for that! Ef ye did know how ye'd break my neck. Climb, Miss Muggins, or I shall hev ter drap ye, as sure as shewtin'.

MARTHA (*scrambling*). Hang on, Eben, I'm scrabblin'. (*Catches hold of woodwork over door.*) Boost! boost! I'm holt o' the wood-work.

EBEN (*gasping*). Hurry! Marthy; I got ter leggo in a secont. I'm all in.

MARTHA (*desperately*). I hain't but I'm most in. 'Nother secont's enough. (*Scrambles and then falls to floor.*) Oh! oh!

(*Noise off L.*)

EBEN. Hark! (*Listens.*) Git up quick! I hear somebody.

MARTHA (*scrambling to feet*). Comin' agin? Oh, what shall I dew!

EBEN. Hide ahind them trunks, consarn ye! There hain't nothin' else ye kin dew. (*Hurries L. and hides.*)

MARTHA. I hate tew dref'ly but there don' seem ter be no refuge

but the Grand Trunk Station. (*Squeezes in behind trunks after EBEN.*)

(*Enter ARTHUR and MARY BROWN, L., on tiptoe.*)

ARTHUR. Courage, Mary, the worst is over. Here's my room, No. 32. It is a poor home to which I am bringing my runaway bride, but it is the best I could do. If I could only have known that your stepfather was going to turn you out of doors and that I should marry you this evening I could have made different arrangements.

EBEN (*aside*). So could I.

MARY. It is all right, Arthur. I am indeed fortunate to have any refuge at all—to say nothing of a dear, noble husband like Arthur Brown. I only hope that giving me shelter will not cause you any trouble with your landlady.

ARTHUR. Don't worry over that. It will be only a day or two before I can find a better place for you. Mrs. Boggs certainly would turn us out on the street upon the instant if she once discovered you, even in the night, as it is an ironclad rule with her to have no married people as boarders. In the meantime I shall have to keep you close in hiding in order to avoid complications.

MARY. Hurry and unlock the door, then, before the ogress sees us. It would be awful to get turned out of doors on our wedding night.

ARTHUR (*searching pockets*). In just a minute, Mary. I can't seem to find my key.

MARY (*alarmed*). You haven't lost it have you, Arthur?

ARTHUR. Of course not; I've simply overlooked the thing. I'll find it in a minute. (*Goes through pockets again.*)

MARY (*clasping hands anxiously*). Oh, I hope so!

ARTHUR (*stopping suddenly with a low whistle*). Whew!

MARY. What's the matter?

ARTHUR. I know where that key is.

MARY. Where?

ARTHUR. In my other pocket. I was so excited over our sudden marriage that I never thought to change it when I changed my suit.

MARY (*in alarm*). It's not locked in your room?

ARTHUR. It surely is.

MARY. And we're locked out!

ARTHUR. I'm sorry to say we are.

MARTHA (*peeping, aside*). So're we.

MARY (*despairingly*). Oh, what shall we do?

EBEN (*aside, peeping*). Jest what I'd like ter know.

ARTHUR. We can't spend the night in the streets and not a soul in town will take us in. The landlady will certainly drive us out if she finds us and she goes prowling around at all hours.

MARTHA (*aside*). That's so—'n' 'bout ev'ry hour.

MARY. Oh, Arthur! And you are put to all this trouble just because of poor little me!

ARTHUR. By no means. I might have perpetrated the same foolishness any way, and Mrs. Boggs would fire me just the same if she found me locked out alone.

MARY. It's a sorry home-coming on our wedding night, isn't it dear? (*Snuggles up to his side.*)

ARTHUR (*putting arm around her*). It certainly is a scrape.

EBEN (*aside, peeping*). That's so—a devil of a scrape.

BETSEY'S BOARDERS

ARTHUR. Well, there's one thing we can do—and only one.

MARTHA (*aside, peeping*). Good! Ef it works for you I'll dew it.

EBEN (*aside, peeping*). Yes; we'll all dew it. (*Both listen with hands to ears.*)

MARY. What is it we can do?

ARTHUR. Hide somewhere for the rest of the night and trust to luck in the morning.

EBEN (*aside, disgusted*). Oh, shucks! We're trying that ourselves.

MARY. But where can we hide?

ARTHUR. There isn't much place, that's a fact, but there isn't likely to be any search made. The only chance I can think of is behind that pile of trunks.

MARTHA. Oh heavens! (*Drops out of sight.*)

EBEN (*aside*). The devil! This 'ere's mighty small sleepin' quarters for two, not ter mention four. We'll be thicker'n nine rats in a stockin'.

ARTHUR. I hate to suggest such a plan but I can not think of any other.

MARY. Never mind, Arthur; I would willingly endure more than that for your sake. Say no more. Come, let us hide. (*They go L.*)

MARTHA (*to EBEN*). We're lost. We'll be diskivered.

EBEN. That won't be hard work; we're not kivered very much.

ARTHUR (*stopping and kissing MARY*). You angel! What would I not endure for your sake! (*Kisses her again.*)

EBEN (*aside*). Mebbe you kin endure it but I'll be dummed ef I kin. Spendin' the night in a baggage pile with an old maid is bad 'nuff, but when ye throw in a married shemale 'n' her husband it gits my goat.

MARTHA (*aside to EBEN*). What kin ye dew 'bout it?

EBEN (*to MARTHA*). We'll skear 'em. When they git close tew us stan' up, stick yer fists out at 'em 'n' say "Boo!"

ARTHUR (*as they near trunks*). You won't be afraid in there among the trunks, will you, Mary?

MARY. Nothing in the world could ever make me afraid as long as I am with you, Arthur. (*EBEN and MARTHA suddenly rise up and extend hands toward them.*)

EBEN }
MARTHA } Boo!

MARY (*screaming*). Oo-oo-oo! Ghosts! Run! Arthur, run! (*Darts R. in terror, ARTHUR at her heels. EBEN and MARTHA drop behind trunks again.*)

ARTHUR. Stop! Mary: don't be frightened. There aren't any such things as ghosts.

EBEN (*aside*). Yis, there air, tew. We're 'um.

MARY (*flinging herself into ARTHUR's arms*). Then what were those two awful white things that rose up there and threatened us? See! They are gone now. What could they have been but ghosts?

ARTHUR. I don't know, dear, but I am sure there must have been some very human agency responsible for their appearance. Hark! What was that? (*They listen.*)

MARY (*alarmed, clutching his arm*). Oh, Arthur! Somebody is up in the house besides us. I hear them creeping up the stairs.

ARTHUR. It must be Mrs. Boggs. She undoubtedly heard you scream and is coming up to investigate. Heaven help us if she finds us! We must hide, ghosts or no ghosts.

MARY (*terrified*). Oh, I *can't!* Those awful white things may still be in behind those terrible trunks, lying for us.

EBEN (*aside, peeping*). Course they air—'n' ef Marm Boggs reely ketches us we'll hev ter dew some tall lyin' for her.

MARY. Nobody knows what they will do to us if we beard them in their lair again.

ARTHUR. There's no other place to hide— (*struck with an idea*) yes there is, too. I forgot the little closet under the attic stairs. (*Hastily opens door.*)

EBEN (*aside*). So'd I, by thunder!

ARTHUR. Quick! Mary; she's halfway up the stairs.

MARY (*terrified*). Oh, Arthur! I'm afraid. There might be ghosts in there, too.

ARTHUR (*hurriedly*). Of course there aren't! If there are I'll strangle them. In with you! (*Hastily pushes her into closet, follows her and shuts door behind him.*)

(*Enter BETSEY L. cautiously, dressed in nightcap and nightgown, candle in one hand and an old revolver in the other.*)

BETSEY. There's sut'nly suthin' or somebody up here ternight, or else this third floor's ha'nted.

MARTHA (*aside*). It sure is—'n' you're dewin' it.

BETSEY (*peering about*). There hain't nobody in sight—but there wa'n't t'other times. Ef there's anything here besides ghosts I'll find 'em this trip 'n' blow a hole through 'em that'll take their breath away.

MARTHA (*terrified, aside*). Massy sakes! It would be a shockin' thing ter have holes blowed in my—you know. Git behind another trunk, Eben. (*Commotion behind trunks.*)

EBEN (*in smothered voice*). Ow! There goes another eye! (*Banging behind trunk-pile.*)

BETSEY. There! there is suthin' here. I heard it agin. It's in behind them trunks. (*Resolutely, aiming revolver.*) What's in behind there?

MARTHA (*in faint voice*). Boo!

BETSEY (*surprised*). Lordy! Who're you?

MARTHA (*in faint voice, frightened*). Please, Marm, we're ghosts.

BETSEY. *Ghosts!* I never see one o' them critters yit. Come out 'n' le's hav a look at ye.

MARTHA. I daresn't; I-I'm 'shamed.

BETSEY (*astonished*). 'Shamed! What'n tunket has a ghost got ter be 'shamed on?

MARTHA (*faintly*). Wha—what I got on— I mean what I *ain't* got on.

BETSEY. What is it ye got on?

MARTHA. N-nothin' but my— my— you know.

BETSEY. No, I'll be snummed ef I know but I'm goin' ter find out. I want ter see what a ghost looks like with nothin' on but a uno. Come out here quicker'n scat 'n' lightnin'; ef ye don't I'll make a ghost o' ye if ye hain't one now— purvided this 'ere gunlock holds on.

BETSEY'S BOARDERS

EBEN (*alarmed, scrambling around behind trunks*). Here! don't shewt. I hain't in here now; I've gone.

BETSEY (*dumbfounded*). Gone! Where?

EBEN. A-a-a— under the attic stairs.

BETSEY. Under the attic stairs! (*Turns and looks R.*)

MARY (*squealing with alarm*). Whee-ee-ee! A mouse! (*Uproar under stairs.*)

BETSEY. Great Lord 'n' leetle fishes! What does that mean? (*Goes R.*) I better find out. (*Pounding on closet door with revolver.*) What's goin' on?

ARTHUR. Mee-yow!

BETSEY (*jumping*). Gracious! (*Opens closet door and sticks head in.*) Who's in here?

MARY (*faintly*). It's the cat.

BETSEY (*amazed*). Massy sakes! Scat!

ARTHUR (*squalling*). Mee-YOW! Spt!

BETSEY (*recoiling in alarm*). Good Lord! The critter's runnin' mad. I better shewt it. (*Holds revolver inside door and blazes away.*)

MARY. Help!

ARTHUR. Murder!

MARTHA. Fire!

EBEN. Thieves!

(*ARTHUR rushes out of closet on his hands and knees with MARY after him. He bumps into BETSEY nearly knocking her over.*)

BETSEY (*rushing from stage screaming*). Lordy sakes! 'Tain't a cat—it's a tiger! Help! help!

(*MARTHA and EBEN upon hearing the racket stand to view in their night clothes showing weirdly in the dim light.*)

MARY. Oh mercy! See, Arthur, there are those dreadful ghosts again! Let's run!

ARTHUR. Great Jupiter! There is something wrong.

MARY. Come quick! We'll get the police.

(*Both run off stage. As they do so a trunk falls.*)

EBEN. Oh, Gosh-a-Mighty! There goes my toe smashed to smithereens. (*Hops around on one foot holding the other.*)

MARTHA. Oh Mr. Eastman! I'm gettin' scared. There's sperrits here—I know it—an'—an' the police'll be here soon too an'—

EBEN. That's so. We've got to get out of this purty durned lively. Come on. (*Both start to go.*)

MARTHA (*stopping suddenly*). Oh, but how can we—dressed like this.

EBEN. Undressed, you mean. Here, put this around ye an' come along. (*Hands shawl which she wraps about waist like a skirt.*)

MARTHA. What about you?

EBEN. Here's a bed quilt. I can use this. (*Wraps it about himself.*) Now let's hurry up 'fore the police get here 'n' nab us.

MARTHA. Oh dear! What a fix we're in! But we've got to do it. We can hide in the coal bin.

EBEN (*pointing to floor*). Look out, Miss Muggins! A mouse just ran across the room.

MARTHA. A mouse? Oh dear! That's the worst yet. (*They run off stage.*) Murder! Fire! Help! O-o-oh!

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