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# A Paper Match

A Farce in One Act

By  
E. W. BURT, M. D.



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1910

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# A Paper Match

## CHARACTERS

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(As originally produced in Alumni Hall, Westport, Mass.,  
Nov. 11, 1908.)

AUNT SOPHRONY, a maiden lady . . . Miss Susie Lawton.  
ROSE, her niece . . . Mrs. Albert Kirby.  
SAM HUNT, in love with Rose . . . Mr. David Morrison.  
HEZIKIAH JEHOSEPHAT BROWN, a soldier . Dr. E. W. Burt.

Plays thirty-five minutes.

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# A Paper Match

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SCENE.—AUNT SOPHRONY'S *sitting-room*. Door R., into kitchen. Door C., to outdoors. Costumes modern, except BROWN, whose clothes are those of a very far-in-the-back-woods farmer; long comforter around the neck, cowhide boots, carpetbag, cloth cap and red mittens. In the bag are a small paper-covered book, stockings, a paper bag supposed to contain catnip, etc.

*Enter SAM HUNT, C., looking as if he were ashamed to have come. Seeing no one he shifts first on one foot and then on the other and finally coughs. Enter AUNT SOPHRONY, L., sleeves rolled up and hands covered with flour. Starts as she sees SAM, who looks more sheepish than ever.*

AUNT S. Well, Sam Hunt, you nearly scared me to death. How long have you been here?

SAM. Oh, I just came in. Nice day, ain't it?

AUNT S. (*snappingly*). Yes.

SAM (*still smiling*). Cold, ain't it?

AUNT S. (*as before*). Yes.

SAM (*twisting his hat*). Think it's going to snow?

AUNT S. I don't know whether it's going to snow or not. Sam Hunt, you didn't come here to ask about the weather. Now hurry up and ask what you want to, for I have got to cook some biscuit for supper.

SAM. Where's Rose?

AUNT S. Well, that's more like it. Why didn't you say so in the first place? She's gone down to the library, and if you hurry you may get there before she leaves.

SAM. Yes'm.

[*Exit, hurriedly, C.*]

AUNT S. (*looking after him*). Crazy.

(*Goes to china closet, R. C. back, and gets some dishes and goes off R.*)

*Enter ROSE, C.*

ROSE (*taking off her coat and hat*). My, but it's cold. I wonder where auntie is. (*Calls.*) Auntie.

AUNT S. (*off R.*). What do you want?

ROSE. Where are you?

AUNT S. Out in the kitchen. Where did you suppose I was?

ROSE. I didn't know.

AUNT S. (*coming on L.*). Have you seen that Sam Hunt?

ROSE. No; has he been here?

AUNT S. Yes, he's been here, looking for all the world like a dying calf. I sent him down to the library.

ROSE. I didn't see him.

AUNT S. Well, if you ain't got anything to do, suppose you come out in the kitchen and help me get supper.

ROSE. I can't, auntie; I've got to fix up this room.

AUNT S. What's the matter with the room? It looks all right to me.

ROSE. I expect company this evening.

AUNT S. I suppose that Sam Jones is coming again, to inquire about the weather.

ROSE. No, it isn't Sam Jones.

AUNT S. Well, you needn't be so private about it; who is it?

ROSE (*rather stubbornly*). Oh, somebody.

AUNT S. Look here, is that the way you have been taught to talk to your aunt?

ROSE (*penitently*). No, aunt, I'll tell you.

AUNT S. Well, I don't know as I want to know, anyway. It's some love-sick critter.

(AUNT S. goes off R. into kitchen. ROSE fixes up the room, dusts, etc. After she is sure that AUNT S. is out of sight, she stops dusting and pulls a letter out of her dress and reads a little in it. Then lets the hand drop to the side and begins to talk.)

ROSE (*back to R.*). Oh, I know he must be fine; tall, dark, with gray eyes and lovely wavy hair. I have to imagine his looks, though, for he never speaks of his looks in his letters. I'll read this again. (*Reads aloud.*) "Light of my life——" Isn't that fine? (*Reads.*) "Light of my life, far away amid the lonely wastes, my heart ever turns to thee, idol of my life, queen of my heart." (*Enter AUNT S., R., in time to hear the*



*following.*) Yes, my brave soldier boy, I *will* be the queen of your heart.

AUNT S. (*disgusted*). More foolishness. Silly fool. Queen of his heart! I guess so! Queen of the wash-tub or the nursing bottle or some such thing. Now you take my advice and let the men alone. They're low-down critters, and they never'll do you anything but harm.

ROSE (*laughing*). Why, auntie, just think now how nice it would be if you only had a husband.

AUNT S. (*snappingly*). Shut your noise. I *ain't*, and I ain't *going* to be. Look at your poor mother; married and a widow in less than a year, and left without a cent and a baby to take care of. Don't tell *me*. I know all *about* it.

ROSE (*earnestly*). Oh, auntie, didn't any one ever ask you to marry him?

AUNT S. Well, if he *did*, I had sense enough to send him about his business. He didn't come whining around here like that love-sick Sam Hunt.

ROSE. Oh, poor Sam! I used to think that I loved him, but since I have found Mr. Brown I don't love him at all. Just think of it, auntie, to have for a lover a noble soldier who is fighting the battles of his country among the swamps of Cuba.

AUNT S. Never heard such rotten foolishness in my life. If you *had* to have a fellow why didn't you take Sam? He was a good, likely boy if you've just *got* to have one.

ROSE. But Sam's not one of the glorious defenders of his country.

AUNT S. Glorious fiddlesticks! He wanted to go bad enough, but his eyes wa'n't good enough; but I ain't got no time to waste talking this kind of soft-soap.

[*Exit* AUNT S., R.]

(*A whistle is heard outside.*)

ROSE (*rushing to the closet*), Here's the mail. (*Fishes around inside the china closet.*) Oh, auntie, I can't find the key.

AUNT S. (*from R., sternly*). It's where it always is.

ROSE. Oh, auntie, please hurry.

AUNT S. Look in the butter-dish.

ROSE. She always has a place for everything. (*Takes key and goes off C.; reënters C. with a letter; sits in chair R. C., at table, and opening letter reads aloud sentimentally.*) "Sweet

one, your dear note accepting my humble offer of marriage was received to-day. No one can realize the delicious thrill of perfect love which coursed through my veins as I tried to realize that the most beautiful creature in the world has consented to be my dear bride." (*With the last words enter SAM, C. ROSE turns and sees him and hides the letter.*) Sam Hunt, you ought to be ashamed of yourself to listen.

SAM. I didn't hear anything; I just this minute came in.

ROSE (*relieved*). Well, I am glad you didn't, for it was very private.

SAM. Rose, I came in to see if you would go to the dance with me to-night.

ROSE. No, Sam, I can't.

SAM. Why can't you?

ROSE. To be frank with you, I don't want to.

SAM. What is the matter with you, Rose, nowadays? We used to be the best of friends. I hoped to marry you, too, some day. But now you have changed. What have I done?

(*As last question is asked enter AUNT S., R., in time to hear it.*)

AUNT S. I'll tell you what the matter is, Sam Hunt. A few weeks ago the Willing Workers were sewing down at the church for the soldiers. She wrote her name on a piece of paper and put it into a pair of stockings, and in a little while she got a letter from the soldier who got them, and they have written and written and written for all the world like two rotten fools. Rotten fools, I say.

SAM. But, Rose, you don't know who he is or what he is. Suppose he should turn out to be a black?

ROSE. Oh, but he isn't.

AUNT S. Some ignorant fool, I know.

ROSE. No, he isn't that. He isn't ignorant, of all things; for if he were, he could never write such beautiful language in his letters. And you will soon have a chance to see for yourself, for he sent me a telegram saying that his regiment had been discharged, and that he would be here to-night. He may be here now any minute.

AUNT S. (*resigned*). Well, I promised my sister, your mother, that I would never stand in the way of your marrying the man you loved, but I will say it is all rotten foolishness.

[*Exit R., indignantly.*]



SAM (*soberly*). Then there's no hope for me, is there, Rose?

ROSE. Not a bit, Sam. I like you, have always liked you, but (*earnestly*) I *love* the soldier and am engaged to marry him, and that is why I cannot go to the dance with you. It wouldn't be proper, seeing that I am engaged to Mr. Brown.

SAM. Brown?

ROSE. Yes, Brown; Corporal H. J. Brown.

SAM. Indeed! And what do you know about him?

ROSE. I gather from his letters that his family is one of the most aristocratic in the town in which he lives. I am sure that he could have been a captain, but he couldn't wait, so enlisted as a private. 'Brave boy! I wish he would write his whole name instead of his initials, H. J. H. must stand for Herbert. I hope so, for I do think that Herbert is such a nice name.

SAM. Well, how you do go on. But where is his home?

ROSE. The paper he sent me with the names and addresses of all his regiment gave his address as Skowhegan, Maine.

SAM. Why, my Uncle Jim lives there, and I have spent weeks there.

ROSE. Oh, have you? Then you must have seen his home.

SAM (*very slowly and thoughtfully*). Pretty small place, and I came to know most everybody there, but I don't remember any Brown family. Wait a minute. What did you say his initials were?

ROSE. H. J.—H. J. Brown.

SAM (*thinking hard*). H. J. Brown—H. J. Brown.

(*Gives one look at ROSE and gives one unearthly yell, and goes out c., laughing at the top of his voice and crying, "H. J. Brown," "H. J. Brown," while ROSE stands looking after him in amazement.*)

ROSE. Well, what ails Sam Hunt, I'd like to know? Is he crazy? The idea of his acting like that. He is a very ill-mannered young man. I don't ever want to see or hear of him again. Now I'll read the rest of my letter, and I'll read it to myself. There's too many listeners around here.

*Enter* AUNT S., R.

AUNT S. What's the matter with Sam Hunt? He's just gone out of the yard laughing fit to kill.

ROSE. I am sure I don't know, and I am also sure I don't

care. He's a very shallow young man. (*Knock.*) Oh! it's he. (*Rises.*)

AUNT S. (*looking around*). For the Lord's sake, who?

ROSE. Corporal Brown, my soldier lover, is coming to-day to claim me as his bride.

AUNT S. Well, I don't want to see the fool.

[*Exit* AUNT S., R.]

(*ROSE goes to the door and opens it, and in comes CORPORAL BROWN, C. He is a queer-looking specimen of a backwoodsman. As ROSE sees him she screams and takes refuge on the opposite side of the table.*)

ROSE. Well, who are you and what do you want?

BROWN. Waal, I'm goin' to ask ye who be you?

ROSE. I'm Miss Rose White, and unless you have some business here I advise you to get out of here before my aunt sees you.

BROWN. Business here? Waal, I reckon I have, Miss Rosey. I'm Corporal Brown, to hum you are engaged (*ROSE recoils*), and I've come 'round to go to the parson's with ye. Git your bunnit on.

ROSE (*horrified*). You are not Corporal Brown. Never.

BROWN (*indignantly*). Ain't I? Want to know. I'm just that—Hezekiah Jehoshaphat Brown, and (*getting down on his knees and laboriously opening his carpetbag and taking out a bundle of letters*) if I ain't, how did I come to hev all these here love letters writ by you to me? I'll read one to you. Now listen. (*Reads in a slow singsong voice with an awful twang.*) “My - Darlin' - Sojer - Boy - not-a-night-has-gone-by-since - I - last-wrote-but-what-I-have-thought-of-you-so-far-away-and-I-have-sent-you-kisses-by-the-thousand ——”

ROSE (*with hands over her ears*). Oh, stop! that's enough! But if you are Corporal Brown, how does it happen that you write such beautiful letters?

BROWN (*with a grin*). Gosh! you didn't think I writ them all out of my own head, did ye? (*Dives into bag and pulls out stockings, nightgown, nightcap, red bandanas and a paper bag, all of which in his eagerness he leaves on the floor.*) Ye see that book. (*Holds up a small paper-covered book which he has taken from the bag.*) That is (*reading laboriously*) “How to Courtship and Write Love Letters.” I bought it off of a peddler in camp. Cost me nine cents. The first letter is on

acquaintance and the next is "on better acquaintance," and so they go. Number fifty-seven is the one I writ asking ye to marry me, and when you writ and sez "yes I will," then I sent fifty-eight, and the next one is fifty-nine—shall I read it to ye? It's real lovin', I tell you. (*Starts to read.*)

ROSE. No—no—no! I don't want to hear any more. I've heard enough. What are you going to do now?

BROWN. Why! you and me is goin' to the preacher's, ain't we? That's as I read the letter.

ROSE (*with spirit*). I won't go a step with you! I won't marry you! Never—never!

BROWN (*indignantly*). Ye won't? Then I'll sue ye for breach of promises. By goll, I will. 'Tain't right to use an honest fellar so. (*In his excitement he goes in front of table to right of table, and as he advances, ROSE goes from right of table to left.*) I'm some older than ye are, but I'm honest and I've got some money, too, and by goll I'm goin' to get married, and I've got your letters promising to marry me, and you're goin' to, so help me Betsy.

ROSE. No, I can't. (*As she says this enter SAM, C. ROSE sees him, and as she sees him turns.*) Oh, Sam!

SAM. Hullo, Hez, how are you? (*BROWN sees SAM, and rushing up to him shakes his hand pump-handle style. ROSE is behind SAM. As BROWN lets go of SAM's hand, she goes to left of SAM, and BROWN to his right, all being then in rear, L. C. SAM turns to ROSE.*) Well! Rose, what about all this?

ROSE (*throwing herself into SAM's arms*). Oh, Sam! don't let him have me.

SAM. But I have no right to protect you. If you will promise to marry me, I will do it. Will you marry me?

ROSE. Oh, Sam! I will do anything, but don't let him take me away.

BROWN (*very impressively*). Young man, that there young lady as you hev enfolded in your arms is my engag-ed wife, and I'll thank ye to unfasten them mud-hooks of yours off on her. She an' me is goin' to be married accordin' to agreement.

*Enter AUNT S., R. Sees ROSE in SAM's arms.*

AUNT S. What's going on here? Sam Hunt, take your arms from around my niece. (*Turns to BROWN, who has tried in vain to collect his belongings and escape as soon as he saw AUNT S. appear.*) Who is that?

SAM. That's Corporal Brown, who wishes to marry your niece.

AUNT S. (*with arms akimbo, facing BROWN, who stands in agony at L. C.*). Oh! Is it? Well, 'tain't. That man's Hez Brown. He courted me ten years ago, and never dared to pop the question. One night he skipped out and went to his aunt's somewhere in Maine, and left me to be an old maid. Hez, you are going to get married and soon, too, but you're going to marry *me*, and *now*. I ain't going to lose you again. Come along now before those two spoons begin again.

(*Exit AUNT S., R., leading BROWN by the arm while he drags along with the other hand the carpetbag. He is very dejected and goes out shaking his head dolefully.*)

SAM. Rose, shall we go to that dance to-night?

ROSE. Yes, Sam, or anywhere else you ask me to go. Oh, Sam! I have been so foolish, but I have learned a lesson. Come, let's set the table for auntie and Uncle Hezekiah.

SAM. He came near being husband Hezekiah.

ROSE. Not a word more.

(*SAM and ROSE exeunt, R., ROSE holding her hand over SAM'S mouth.*)

CURTAIN

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