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BECKLEY-CARDY COMPANY, *Publishers*, CHICAGO

FUNNY PLAYS
FOR HAPPY DAYS

BY
HOBERT O. BOGGS
AUTHOR OF
COMIC PLAYS AND DIALOGUES

BECKLEY-CARDY COMPANY
CHICAGO

L. O.

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Funny Plays for Happy Days

JAY AND KAY

CHARACTERS

JAY, light-hearted and KAY, light-headed

Enter JAY and KAY simultaneously from opposite sides of the stage.

JAY. Boy, Howdy.

KAY. Howdy, boy.

JAY. How you percolatin' these days?

KAY. Best in th' world. How's yourself?

JAY. Not so well as I used to be.

KAY. No? Why don't you go to see a doc?

JAY. I been.

KAY. Perhaps you went to the wrong kind of doctor.

You see there are several different kinds. There's the homeopath and the osteopath and the—

JAY. And the path to the grave, if you fool with any of 'em much; but the doctor I went to was all wrong.

KAY. How so?

JAY. Why, he said that I was suffering from auto-intoxication.

KAY. Well, may be you are. The doctor is supposed to know his business, I guess.

JAY. Yes, but he don't know mine. I haven't been in an auto for two weeks.

KAY. Musta been some high-powered auto, then, to last you that long.

JAY. I'll say it was. I hadn't been in it two minutes until my head got dizzy.

KAY. Shouldn't think you would like such a ride. Why didn't you jump out of the car?

JAY. Didn't need to jump out.

KAY. No?

JAY. For a fact. You see the chiffonier—

KAY. You mean the *chauffeur*.

JAY. No, I mean what I said. The chiffonier—

KAY. A chiffonier is one of these swell little dressers.

JAY. I know what I'm talking about, I tell you. That's what our driver was.

KAY. Oh, I begin to understand now. But go on. You mentioned something about the chiffonier, as you called her. What was it about her?

JAY. Say look here, now. You're getting too personal.

KAY. No offense, I'm sure.

JAY. Humph.

KAY. Please don't take offense.

JAY. Well, I won't; but our chiffonier did.

KAY. Who offended her?

JAY. Why, nobody.

KAY. I fail to understand how she took offense, then, if no one offended her. Will you please explain?

JAY. Well, she was not offended, but she *took a fence* because the fool thing caught on one fender and she just kept on going, so she took it right along.

KAY. Oh, yes, I see; she took *a fence*, then, because she was going at such a rapid *gait* that she could not very well stop.

JAY. Yes, that's it. You see, she was a live wire.

KAY. I should imagine so. And unless I had been well charged with her magnetism, I'm thinking that I should rather have been out of the car than in it.

JAY. Well, that depends on where you lit when you went out. Now I was lucky enough to hit it soft.

KAY. I thought you said you didn't jump.

JAY. I didn't. You see we were headed due east and going about sixty miles per.

KAY. Well, then what?

JAY. Why, as I said, we were going due east, when all of a sudden our chiffohier changed her gear and her mind at the same time and headed due south.

KAY. Then what?

JAY. Well, I never could make up my mind in a hurry, so I just kept on going east.

KAY. It's a wonder your neck wasn't broken.

JAY. Yes, it is. But I was lucky.

KAY. You surely were.

JAY. Yes, when I landed I didn't land.

KAY. Now be careful. I believe your mind is still upset by the shock.

JAY. Wasn't any shock to it.

KAY. Poor fellow. Surely there was.

JAY. No, I told you that when I landed I didn't land. I hit water.

KAY. Oh, that was unfortunate, then. Being already dizzy with the high rate of speed, you were in danger of being drowned.

JAY. Wrong again. You see when I hit the water my head was already swimming, so I made it fine. But when I got ashore my troubles began.

KAY. Yes, you would be very cold in those wet clothes.

JAY. No, a cop came along and wanted to arrest me for parking wrong; so I soon got warmed up over that.

KAY. Then I suppose he took you to the cooler.

JAY. No, no. A man came by with a drum, so I beat it.

KAY. You did? I didn't know that you had the faintest notion of time.

JAY. Why, man, that's all I was thinking about.

KAY. Well, you've surprised me. What kind of time were you thinking of, then, as you beat it? Waltz? Jazz?

JAY. No, sir, I was thinking mostly of thirty days.

KAY. You're too funny. The way you beat it might have led one to believe you were training for a race.

JAY. Yes, or racing for a train. But I was not the only one running.

KAY. Why no, I suppose the cop was running after you.

JAY. The cop didn't count. The clocks were running and my watch was running, and my heart was running, and the river was running—

KAY. Never mind all of the details. Why not just say that there was quite an epidemic of running?

JAY. What's an epidemic?

KAY. Why, something that gets started and then spreads all over everywhere.

JAY. Oh yes, I know. Like molasses.

KAY. No, no. You don't seem to grasp the idea.

JAY. No and I don't want to, if it's as sticky as the last idea I got of molasses.

KAY. Who's talking about molasses? I said an epidemic was something which, after getting started, kept going and going.

JAY. Yeah, like our chiffonier.

KAY. That's right. I had forgotten about your chiffonier.

JAY. I hadn't and don't expect to, either.

KAY. Well, what became of her?

JAY. Didn't I tell you that she was headed south and I kept on going east?

KAY. Yes, I know; but where is she now?

JAY. You're as good at figures as I am. Figure it up yourself.

CURTAIN

WHEN POP WAS A BOY

When Pop was a boy, he went to school
An' tried t' foller th' Golden Rule.
When hit on one cheek, he turned th' other.
He never "sassed" his dear ol' mother.
That's how Pop did (I really know)
When he was a boy, for he told me so.

When Pop was a boy, he went to church
An' set up straight as a slim young birch.
He never once nodded or turned his head,
But listened closely to what th' preacher said.
That's how Pop did (I really know)
When he was a boy, for he told me so.

When Pop was a boy, he went to bed
Soon after supper, when his prayers were said.
He never "rassed" or threw the pillows,
Or rocked th' bed like ocean billows.
That's how Pop did (I really know)
When he was a boy, for he told me so.

When Pop was a boy, he went to work
An' never lagged or tried t' shirk,
But carefully finished each bidden task,
An' never a single question did ask.
That's how Pop did (I really know)
When he was a boy, for he told me so.

BIM AND BAM

CHARACTERS

BIM and BAM, two darkeys

Usual "nigger" make-up and shabby clothes.

Enter BIM and BAM from opposite sides of stage at same time, both with heads downcast. They collide at Center.

BIM. Hey, man! Watch whe' yo's goin'.

BAM. Yo' bettah mebbe watch whe' yo's comin'.

BIM. I had de right o' way. Yo's s'posed t' go 'round me.

BAM. I wuz? Say, looka heah, niggah, don' gib me none o' yo' sass. I'll go through yo' in a minit.

BIM. In a minit?

BAM. Yes, in a minit.

BIM. Say, niggah, yo' watch ain't runnin' fas' enuf, am it?

BAM. Ne' min' 'bout *my watch* now. Yo' bettah watch yo'se'f. Somethin' is apt t' gonna happen t' yo' purty soon.

BIM. Well, what yo' waitin on? I wish yo' would sta't somethin'. I don' lak yo' looks nohow.

BAM. Well, yo' don' gi'me no appetite yo'se'f.

BIM. Who don't?

BAM. Yo' don't.

BIM. Is yo' axually referrin' t' me?

BAM. I ain't skippin' yo'.

BIM. Man, yo' bettah save yo' breaif. Yo's apt t' need it fo' runnin' purty soon, ef I gits tu'ned loose on yo', I'm tellin' yo'.

BAM. Ef yo' gits *tu'ned loose*?

BIM. Yes, ef I gits tu'ned loose.

BAM. Who's hol'in yo'? Yo' means yo' wants ter know what's keepin' me offa yo'. Well, I axually don' know mahse'f what has kep' me off dis long.

BIM. I does.

BAM. What?

BIM. Yo' knows.

BAM. No, I don't. What is yo' think am kep' me off o' yo' dis long?

BIM. [*shows fist*]. Right heah am what done it.

BAM. What? Dat thing? Dat looks kinda lak a doodle bug t' me.

BIM. Ef yo' meets it comin' to'ards yo', yo'll think it wuz a billy goat butted yo'.

BAM. Well, why don't yo' sta't somthin' 'sides a breeze?

BIM. Yo' keep pesticatin' wid me an' I will. 'Bout one-two-three—an' I'll be right on yo'.

BAM. Yeah, an' bout four-five-six, an' yo'll be off, too.

BIM. Yo' don't know who it is yo's talkin' to, does yo'?

BAM. No, an' I don't keer fer no interduckshun, neither.

BIM. Well, yo's gonna git one t' dis heah Ahm an' Ham-mah Bran' Sody I'se got heah in mah sleeve toreckly.

BAM. Is dat so?

BIM. Yeah, dat's a facuality, an' any time I mixes some o' dis [*holds up fist before him*] in yo' dough, yo's gonna rise. [*Makes expansive gesture as of a bird flying.*]

BAM. Niggah, ef yo' gits connected onto de positive end o' dis heah pile drivah, yo' ain't gonna rise—yo's gonna fall.

BIM. Did yo' say "Nex' fall?"

BAM. I said, "Right now, dis instant, fo'thwith, im-
mejiately, at once, widout fu'thah delay."

BIM. Show yo' stuff, niggah, I craves t' be 'mused.

BAM. Big boy, yo's apt t' git mo' 'musement heah in
about a jiffy fo' nothin', than yo' evah paid fifty cents
fo' in yo' life.

BIM. Who's gonna show it to me?

BAM. I is, dat's who.

BIM. Yo' an' who?

BAM. Me only, alone, widout nobody else.

BIM. Yo' might gimme jest a li'l sample, bein' as yo' got
so much in stock.

BAM. Aw right, yo' see dese heah? [*Holds up fists.*]

BIM. Yeah. What about 'em?

BAM. Dem's medicine.

BIM. What kin' o' medicine? What's de name?

BAM. Dem is Doctah Smith's cough drops.

BIM. I don't see nothin' t' that.

BAM. I does. Take one an' go t' bed.

BIM. Humph.

BAM. Take two an' yo' *coffin*' will be fixed.

BIM. What kin' o' *coughin*' is yo' talkin' 'bout?

BAM. Eithah one. It's all th' same anyway.

BIM. Humph. Yo' don't look bad t' me in no respec'.

BAM. Well, I jest notices one thing 'bout yo' dat am
in any sense ob de wo'd bad at all.

BIM. Dat so?

BAM. Yeah, an' dat bad thing am yo' disposition an'
c'n be handled wid de Ahm an' Hammah Bran' Sody
I'se got heah in mah sleeve right now. [*Starts toward*
BIM.].

CURTAIN

LOU AND SUE

Enter LOU and SUE, simultaneously from opposite sides of the stage. LOU seems happy, while SUE appears to be downhearted.

LOU. Why hello, Sue.

SUE. Morning, Lou.

LOU. How are you this fine and beautiful morning?

SUE. Not much.

LOU. No? Why, what can be the matter with any one on a splendid day like this?

SUE. Well, if you must know, I have something that is preying on my mind to a dreadful extent.

LOU. Oh well, then, if that is all, it will soon die of starvation.

SUE. I suppose, then, you know about such things from actual experience.

LOU. Maybe so. Maybe so. But what, my dear, has been preying on your sweet young mind?

SUE. I have been thinking about men.

LOU. Oh, I thought maybe it was something important.

SUE. I keep thinking of how Jack proposed to me last night.

LOU. What? Has he just now got around to you?

SUE. Don't be funny. He said a strange thing, anyhow.

LOU. Really. I am dying of curiosity.

SUE. Well, he said that he wished he had enough money to get married on.

LOU. Then of course you told him that it wouldn't take such a great lot and that you would be satisfied with a rented house for a while.

SUE. No. I asked him what he would *do* if he had enough money to get married on.

LOU. And he said—

SUE. That he would finish his education.

LOU. Oh, that reminds me of when Jim proposed to me.

SUE. Really?

LOU. Yes. When he proposed to me he got on his knees and clasped his hands together, and he looked so silly.

SUE. Just think what a silly thing he was doing.

LOU. He clasped his hands together and plead his case.

SUE. He'd better have been saying his prayers.

LOU. Will you not interrupt me again? He looked up into my face and said, "Darling, I love you with a—"

SUE. "Love that is more than love."

LOU. No—"with a love that is wider than the sky and deeper than the sea."

SUE. That was more than you could swallow, wasn't it?

LOU. Oh no. I told him to go right on, as I was a good swimmer and also knew how to float.

SUE. Well, you *ought* to swim and float easily.

LOU. Why so?

SUE. Your head is a vacuum.

LOU. Don't get so cute. Just as he finished his—

SUE. Spasm.

LOU. No, speech, the lights went out.

SUE. Where'd they go?

LOU. Oh, silly, think of it, will you? There we were, in *utter* darkness.

SUE. And neither of you could *utter* another word.

LOU. You are determined not to be serious, I see.

SUE. Yes, yes, I'll be serious. You were in the darkness. Jim had just finished his proposal and you were naturally already nervous—you know—supposed to be, anyway—and—that's as far as you told me. What next?

LOU. Why, Jim took two pennies and fixed the light plugs so they would burn.

SUE. Aw, piffle!

LOU. You didn't know Jim was an electrician, did you?

SUE. He isn't. He's an idiot. But did neither of you say anything else?

LOU. I think we said *something*, but I don't remember what it was, though. You see, I was so excited, really I think I lost all six of my senses.

SUE. Six? Why, I have only five.

LOU. Yes, I know. *Common sense* is the *sixth* one, you see.

SUE. Well, I'll hand it to you you're some *Cutie*. You got it from some book, though.

LOU. Well, I'll hand it to you, you're some *Beauty*. You got it from some drug store, though.

SUE. Well, go ahead and tell the rest about Jim. That surely isn't all.

LOU. Oh no, I changed the subject, I think, and began telling ghost stories.

SUE. What a boner!

LOU. Oh, I just dearly love them myself, but Jim is scared to death at the mention of anything spooky.

SUE. What made you do him that way then?

LOU. I wanted to get him scared and I did, too.

SUE. You should have had more feeling for the poor boy.

LOU. I did. I did. The lights went out again, then I really felt for him.

SUE. What did you say to him when he kissed you?

LOU. I asked him if I were the onliest girl that he'd ever kissed.

SUE. Of course he said "Yes."

LOU. He said, "Yes, dear, you are the onliest one and the sweetest one."

SUE. So you are engaged to him, then?

LOU. Yes, by installments.

SUE. By installments? I never heard of that kind of an engagement.

LOU. Why, that's how he bought the ring, so that's how we're engaged.

SUE. I see. And if he misses a payment on the ring—

LOU. I lose *the ring* and he *loses me*.

SUE. Well, now I suppose you will not have anything more to do with Harry. He's sort of a bad egg, you know.

LOU. Yes, I know. That's the reason I must hang on to him, though. He might get hard boiled.

SUE. I see. I see.

LOU. Say, can you keep a secret?

SUE. I'm your refrigerator. What is it?

LOU. Jimmy told father about our engagement.

SUE. Naturally. How did the pater receive the news?

LOU. He was completely charmed.

SUE. Didn't he give any advice to the lovelorn pair?

LOU. Oh yes, he told Jimmy that it was now high time that he began thinking of something for a rainy day.

SUE. Of course Jimmy agreed with him and at once set about to follow his instructions.

LOU. I'll say he did. When he left he took dad's overshoes and rain coat.

SUE. Indeed he is a young man of taking ways.

LOU. Why, that's how he bought the ring, so that's how

SUE. What next?

LOU. He brought them back the next morning and exchanged with Bud, as dad's were too big for him.

SUE. I can see that you will always be well provided for, *provided* your dad keeps his position and stays in a good humor.

CURTAIN

THE PROFESSOR AND HIS PROJECT

CHARACTERS

THE PROFESSOR *and his colleague*, MOSE. *Both colored.*

SCENE

THE PROFESSOR'S *study. Desk or table littered with books, papers, test tubes, vials, bottles, etc.*

Discovered: PROFESSOR *seated at desk, intently regarding a small bottle of colorless liquid which he holds up to the light.*

PROFESSOR. Ise got it! Ise got it! Eureky! Eureky!
Oh Mose! Come heah quick!

Enter MOSE from Right.

MOSE. What is it, 'Fessah?

PROFESSOR *springs to his feet and capers about room excitedly.*

PROFESSOR. Ise got it, Mose! Ise got it!

MOSE. I sho b'lieves it. But what is yo' got?

PROFESSOR [*pointing to bottle in his hand*]. Eureky!
Eureky!

MOSE. No, I nevah.

PROFESSOR. Eureky! Eureky!

MOSE. I tole y' I nevah done it. Yo' wrecked it yo'se'f ef it's wrecked.

PROFESSOR. No, no! Ther' ain't nothin' wrecked, Mose.
Eureky! Eureky!

MOSE. You're another'n. I ain't no mo' Reeky dan yo' is.

PROFESSOR [*more calmly*]. Eureka, my dea'ly beloved coworker, is a word which hab come all de way from Greece.

MOSE. I notice yo' poured it out mighty slick an' greasy-like.

PROFESSOR. Yo' fails t' comprehen'.

MOSE. What's a hen got t' do wid it nohow?

PROFESSOR. Yo' fails t' un'erstan' de meanin' ob my wuds.

MOSE. I fails t' un'erstan' de meanin' ob yo' actions, too, less'n dat stuff in dat bottle am got somethin' t' do wid it.

PROFESSOR. When I said, "Eureka! Eureka!", I meant nothin' mo'—

MOSE [*interrupting*]. I don't ca' how much nor how little yo' meant, I don't wants yo' ter call me dat again.

PROFESSOR. I nevah called *yo'* nothin', Mose.

MOSE. Yo' did, too. Yo' said Ise *Reeky*, an' I ain't Reeky, Ise *Mose*.

PROFESSOR. Oh *no*, Mose. Eureka am a wud dat come from Greece.

MOSE. Well, yo' betteh sen' it back t' Greece, den, befo' it gits yo' in trouble, 'c'ase I ain't gonna stan' fer bein' called no kin' o' name 'cept my own.

PROFESSOR. But Eureka ain't no name, Mose. It am a sayin'.

MOSE. Well, I don' want no sich sayin's as dat said about me.

PROFESSOR. I nevah said it 'bout yo', Mose. Lissen an' I'll esplain.

MOSE. Yeah, yo'll 'bout fool 'roun an' esplain yo'self in trouble ag'in, lak yo' did 'bout us an' dem pullets.

PROFESSOR. See heah, now, Mose, I don' wants none o' *yo'* badinage, neithah.

MOSE. Yo' don' wants none o' my what?

PROFESSOR. None o' yo' *badinage*.

MOSE. I ain't tryin' t' gib yo' no bad aigs. I means jest what I sez an' some mo' on top uv it. Man, I'll go through yo' lak a pickpocket. [*Rolls up sleeves and gestures at PROFESSOR.*]

PROFESSOR. Now jest be mo' ca'm, Mose. [*Trys to lay his hand on MOSE'S shoulder.*]

MOSE. Don't yo' lay yo' paw on me. I'll ca'm yo'.

PROFESSOR. Now looka heah, Mose, I wants yo' t' be sensible. I ain't done nor said nothin' t' offen' yo' feelin's in de least shape, fo'm or fashion. I only jest repeated a simple quotation from th' Greek—

MOSE. Yo' bettah not repeat it no mo'.

PROFESSOR. It don' make no ref'rence t' yo', Mose. It am only a sayin' dat wuz made by a gran' ole disciple ob science, lak myse'f, named Hippocrates, or some sich name.

MOSE. He sholy musta been a hypocrite all right. Any man dat'd say any sich foolishment as dat am got *somethin'* wrong wid 'im.

PROFESSOR. But yo' see, dis heah ain't foolishment, Mose. Jest 'cause yo' cain't un'erstan' it ain't no sign dat it don't mean nothin'. Dis heah sayin' come from de lan' ob Greece, I tells yo'.

MOSE. Whar am dis heah Greece yo' keeps talkin' so much about?

PROFESSOR. Greece? Why Greece am nex' t' Tu'key.

MOSE. I knows dat, ef de tu'key's fat; but what am dis lan' yo's talkin' bout'?

PROFESSOR. I tole yo' de country ob Greece am nex' t' de country ob Tu'key.

MOSE. Man, dat's whar Ise gonna move.

PROFESSOR. No, you won't.

MOSE. Who won't?

PROFESSOR. You won't.

MOSE. Who said I won't? I guess I will ef I wants to.

PROFESSOR. No, dat lan' am too far away, Mose. It am now mos'ly a lan' ob story an' song.

MOSE. I orta knowed dat yo' wuz tellin' nothah one ob yo' stories.

PROFESSOR. I means de kin' o' story dat am writ in books an' so on.

MOSE. Oh, am dat whar yo' got dat "U-ricky! U-ricky!" bizness?

PROFESSOR. Yeah, yo' see, "Eureky! Eureky!" means, "I found it."

MOSE. Well, "Snake eyes! Snake eyes!" den.

PROFESSOR. What does yo' mean by dat?

MOSE. Dat means, "I lost it."

PROFESSOR. But Ise really *foun'* somethin', Mose, dat will make ouah fortunes.

MOSE. Well, I sholy am glad o' dat. Chickens what us eats won't haf t' be got at night, den.

PROFESSOR. Does yo' see dis heah small receptacle, Mose?

MOSE. Yeah, but I thought it wuz a bottle.

PROFESSOR. Well, in dis small receptacle I holds a 'lixir dat will change a black man to white.

MOSE. Dat's mighty strong licker, 'Fessah.

PROFESSOR. Nevahtheless it am a fac', Mose. I hab wuked long an' had lots o' setbacks—

MOSE. Once in a while I got holt uv a canvasback fo' yo', too.

PROFESSOR. I hab dug deep into de secrets ob ole Mothah Natuah an' partook well ob de facks foun' therein.

MOSE. Yeah, I knows yo's allays *partook* well ob evehthing yo' got a holt uv.

PROFESSOR. Mose, be serious.

MOSE. I is. Go on.

PROFESSOR. Dis am a gran' projec' dat Ise got, Mose, an' I wants yo' ter lissen while I expoun's it.

MOSE. Poun' away, den. Ise all yeahs.

PROFESSOR. Well, to begin at de beginnin' an' perceed in a systematic way—

MOSE [*interrupting*]. Now looka heah, 'Fessah, Ise 'greed t' lissen an' all dat, but I don' wanta heah no mo' 'bout yo' sistah Mattie.

PROFESSOR [*ignoring interruption*]. Lessee now, Mose. Man am made from de soil, ain't he?

MOSE. I s'pose so. Some ob 'em is mighty po' dirt, too.

PROFESSOR. Dat's de very thing dat I set t' wuk on. De dif'runt kin's o' soil wuz my study. I diskivered dat all soil itself wuz de same as any othah soil 'ceptin' dat dere wuz certain elements missin' in some ob it.

MOSE. Certain elefunts missin'? Well, yo' needn's be lookin' at me. I nevah got 'em.

PROFESSOR. Ise made it a study, I tells yo', t' fin' dem missin' elements an' also fin' deir defects on de human body. I fin's dat de body am defected in dif'runt ways by de presence or absence ob dese elements.

MOSE. Anybody orta know dat a body'd be defected ef a ellyfunt stepped on 'em.

PROFESSOR. I fin's dat in Africky, which is ouah original home—

MOSE. I nevah lived dere in my life.

PROFESSOR. I mean it is de home ob de black race. In Africky, dere am a lack ob certain elements in de watah dat am foun' in de watah ob othah countries.

MOSE. Uh-huh. What am it?

PROFESSOR. I ain't gib it no name yit, but it am de stuff dat makes white men's skins white.

MOSE [*bewildered*]. What's dat now? Yo' says de watah in Africky ain't got it, but de watah heah is?

PROFESSOR. Dat's what Ise diskivered.

MOSE. Well, looks lak us a-drinkin' dis watah 'd done made us white, lak de rest o' de fo'ks dat libs heah.

PROFESSOR. In two or three centuries it would, Mose.

MOSE. Whar kin I fin' myse'f two or three uv dem things yo' haid? I wants ter be white.

PROFESSOR. I said, "two or three centuries," Mose. Dat means two or three hunerd yeahs.

MOSE [*disappointed*]. Oh Lawd! I thought yo'd diskivered somethin' that'd do some good.

PROFESSOR. It will, Mose. Jest yo' wait, will yo'?

MOSE. Man, I cain't 'ford t' wait no two or three hunerd yeahs fo' it.

PROFESSOR. I means, wait till I finishes esplainin'.

MOSE. Well, toot yo' whistle an' plane away den.

PROFESSOR. Well, Ise foun' dat de elements I referred to am present in ouah watah only in small propo'tion. De white fo'ks hab been drinkin' de watah fo' ages, though, while us as a race uv peepul wuz drinkin' de watah dat had none o' dem elements.

MOSE. An' still some fo'ks says dat all men wuz created equal. Bettah change dat t' "All men wuz created wid or widout elemunts."

PROFESSOR. Now, my labohs all hab been t' distill, refine an' concentrate dese elements, which I hab at last dun.

MOSE. Whoopee! Gimme dat bottle, 'Fessah.

PROFESSOR. No, no. I must dose it to yo' wid ca' an' percussion.

MOSE. Dem's jest othah wuds fo' stinginess, ain't 'em?

PROFESSOR. Not in de least, Mose. Yo' knows dat I wants t' gib my bes' frien' an' livin' mate de fust chance t' become white.

MOSE. Well, gimme dat bottle, den. What yo' waitin' on?

PROFESSOR [*takes glass and spoon*]. Dere might be some dangah' ef yo' got too much. Us must be keerful.

MOSE. Ef dere's any danger to it, Ise gonna be more dan keerful. I ain't gonna hab nothin' t' do wid it a-tall.

PROFESSOR. Oh yes, Mose, yo'll agree t' stan' th' esperiment.

MOSE. Jest me 'greein' to it might not make me stan' it. No sah, yo' go git some othah niggah t' chew yo' spear-mint. I refers t' remain as I is.

PROFESSOR. But jest think what an' honah it'd be t' be th' fust colored man t' be tu'ned white.

MOSE. Yeah, it'd be a big honah, wouldn't it? Y' s'pose th' white fo'ks'd let me be buried in deir graveyard?

PROFESSOR. There ain't no dangah ob yo' losin' yo' life,
MOSE. [*Pours out a spoonful of liquid which he then puts into glass of water and stirs.*] Heah, Mose, take dis.

MOSE. Take it yo'se'f. Yo' colah ain't none too pale itse'f.

PROFESSOR. I couldn't observe de action on myse'f lak I could on yo'.

MOSE. Well, yo'll jest hab t' git action on somebody else 'sides me. I ain't los' my appytite fo' livin' yit.

PROFESSOR. I tells yo' it ain't no dangah ob killin yo'. De only thing us must be keerful 'bout is not t' gib yo' so much dat yo' won't hab no colah a-tall.

MOSE. Uh-huh. Dat's what I thought. In othah wuds, I might git so much dat I'd jest fade away. Am dat it?

PROFESSOR. No, no. Not dat. See heah, ef yo' thinks it'd kill yo', I'll prove dat it ain't nothin' lak dat. [*Drinks from glass.*]

MOSE. 'By, 'Fessah. What is yo' wants me t' tell yo' wife?

PROFESSOR. Ise not gone yit. Heah, yo' drink de rest ob dis so's I kin observe de action on yo'.

MOSE. Well, I guess ef it won't kill yo', it won't kill me. Gib it heah. [*Takes glass and empties it, smacks lips loudly.*]

PROFESSOR. Now go outside an' inhale fresh air fo' a minit an' a haf an' when yo' comes back, yo's s'posed t' be white.

MOSE. I hopes I ain't only s'posed t' be. [*Exit at Left.*]

PROFESSOR. Ef it jest only wuks, my futuah is taken care ob. I'll git a millium dollahs outa dis heah projec', 'c'ase evah cullad pusson in de United States 'll want some uv it. Dis'll be one time dat Ise gonna reap de ha'vest ob success.

[*MOSE outside removes his makeup, or, if burnt cork is used, "repaints" himself white with Spanish whiting or some other harmless material.*]

MOSE [*from outside*]. Golly, 'Fessah! I feels myse'f a-changin' in some way I cain't un'erstan'. O Fessah! I feels jest lak Ise gonna tu'n wrong side out.

PROFESSOR. Come on back in an' le's see, Mose.

Reënter MOSE from Left. He is white

PROFESSOR [*exclaims*]. My projec' am a success! Ise done it! Ise done it!

MOSE. Lemme to dat lookin' glass. I wants ter see what I look lak. [*Looks in mirror.*] Golly Jehoshaphat! It sholy am true. Ise white as anybody. Whoopee!

PROFESSOR. Now, bein's Ise foun' dat de projec' really will wuk, I'll try it on myse'f. I won't take but ha'f a po'tion, howevah, as my constitootion ain't so strong as it might be.

MOSE. Yo'd bettah take a double po'tion t' do y' any good. Yo's jest erbout twice as black as anybody I evah seen.

PROFESSOR *mixes some of his fluid in glass as before, then drinks it and sets bottle down on desk.*

PROFESSOR. Now, I'll go git myse'f some ai' an' see what it does t' me. [*Exit at Left.*]

MOSE. Dat sholy am fine stuff. [*Takes up bottle from desk.*] It am got a good taste, too. I nevah would a-thought dat de 'Fessah had brains enough in dat coconut o' his'n t' inscovah any sich a blessin' t' de cullad race. I laks dat stuff. [*Drinks from bottle and throws it away.*] Man alive, I sholy will cut a shine wid de gals now! I espec's dey'll might' nigh wo'ship me. I'll make de 'Fessah gib me some mo' o' dat stuff an' I'll fix up a few ob de ones I laks bes' myse'f. [*Sits at Right.*]

Reënter PROFESSOR. [*His face is half white and half black.*]

PROFESSOR [*looks in mirror*]. Great Jumpin' Jerusalem!

Mose, wheah is dat bottle o' 'lixir?

MOSE [*not looking at PROFESSOR*]. What yo' wants wid it?

PROFESSOR. I wants anothah po'tion out uv it, dat's what I wants.

MOSE. Go 'long, 'Fessah. Don' bothah me, Ise studyin' up a nice little speech what Ise gouna make to a lady frien' o' mine when I interdooces her to dat ma'velous licker dat makes black white.

PROFESSOR. But looka heah, Mose. I needs dat 'lixir myse'f right now. Gimme dat bottle.

MOSE [*looks around*]. Land o' Goshen, 'Fessah! I reckon's yo' does. But I done drunk all dat yo' had in dat bottle. Ain't yo' got some mo'?

PROFESSOR. No, I ain't got no mo'.

MOSE. Yo' kin make some mo', cain't y'?

PROFESSOR. No, I cain't make no mo', 'c'ase dat in de bottle wuz all I had t' go by. I wuz skeered t' write th'

process down, skeered somebody might steal it. An' now yo's drunk up all in de worl' I had t' go by t' make any mo'. Well, why don' yo' say somethin'?

MOSE. All right. At fust yo' said "Eureky! Eureky!", now yo'd bettah say what I tole y', "Snake eyes! Snake eyes!"

PROFESSOR. But holy hossbackahs! I cain't stan' t' be lef' ha'f black an' ha'f white. Does yo' think I can?

MOSE. Oh well, I dunno. 'Cordin' t' yo' own wuds, ef yo' jest keep drinkin' dis heah common United States watah, yo'll be white in 'bout two o' three hunerd yeahs.

CURTAIN

GEORGE WASHINGTON AND THE HATCHET

CHARACTERS

GEORGE WASHINGTON *as a lad of six or seven years of age*
CICERO, *his negro servant, who is slightly older than*
GEORGE
UNCLE EPH, *the negro gardener*

SCENE. *The Washington Garden. Potted and dummy plants and shrubs may be used to create a realistic appearance.*

Enter GEORGE from Right. He carries hatchet.

GEORGE. I see Cicero running across yonder like a scared rabbit. Wonder what can be his hurry. Believe I'll call him over and show him my new hatchet. O Cicero! Come here. Seems like I scared him more than ever.

Enter CICERO from Left with armful of wood.

CICERO. Yassah, Massa Gawge. What am it?

GEORGE. I wanted to show you my new hatchet. See! Don't you think it's a dandy?

CICERO. Yas sah, dat's a Jim-dandy-crackah Jack.

GEORGE. Wouldn't you like to have one like it?

CICERO. Will a duck swim? Sho, indeedly, I would. Am you got two lak dat, Massa Gawge?

GEORGE. Not two new ones, but you may have my old one, if you want it, and will go get it.

CICERO. I spec's I orter go on an' fotch dis heah wood t' Mammy—but—whah am dat ole hatchet?

GEORGE. It's still lying where we left it yesterday—out there by the well.

CICERO. I may not be well when I gits home, but I'll hab mahse'f a hatchet, anyhow. Dis ole wood won't rot, mebbe, till I gits back, an' yo' might change yo' min' 'bout gibbin' me dat hatchet. [*Throws wood down and goes out at Right.*]

GEORGE [*picks up a stick of wood in left hand and hacks at it with right*]. This hatchet was certainly well sharpened.

Enter UNCLE EPH from Left.

EPH. Golly, Moses, Massa Gawge! What on ea'th am yo' doin'? Is yo' done cut all dat wood by yo' lonesome wid dat li'l' ax?

GEORGE. No, no, Uncle Eph, Cicero cut it. I was just hacking with my new hatchet.

EPH. Oh! Yo' jest a hatchin' wid yo' new hackit. Dat am a purtiful li'l' ax, ain't it?

GEORGE. Yes, I think it's fine.

EPH. Yo' did? Wheah at did yo' fin' it?

GEORGE. I didn't find it. Father gave it to me for a present.

EPH. Oh, I see. Jes' for de present.

GEORGE. Yes, as a present.

EPH. An' ef yo' gits inter any meanness in de futuah, he'll take it 'way fum yo'.

Reënter CICERO with hatchet in his hand.

CICERO. Look heah, pappy, what Massa Gawge done gib me.

EPH. Boy, ef yo' mammy cotches yo' hackin' 'roun' de house, she sho gwine a gib yo' sumpin sha'pah dan dat.

GEORGE. We won't hack on the houses, Uncle Eph.

EPH. Bettah be sho yo' don't, young Massa. De ole Massa, he sho gwine git yo' boys, ef yo' all does.

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GEORGE. Never mind about us, Uncle Eph. We'll get along all right.

EPH. Yassah, I knows yo' all's a sight. Dat's jest what Ise talkin' 'bout. But Ise got ter move along now an' trim dat hedge. Spect dat yo' all'll 'bout be de nex' t' git trimmed.

Exit EPH at Left.

CICERO. Us hopes not, pappy, anyhow.

GEORGE. Uncle Eph is getting deafer every day.

CICERO. Yas, sah. Mammy, she said dat he wuz deefer'n a stump now.

GEORGE. Aunt Chloe gets pretty close onto Uncle Eph, doesn't she?

CICERO. Close onter 'im? She gits right onter 'im.

GEORGE [*clips at stick with his hatchet*]. Look how sharp my hatchet is, Cicero.

CICERO [*takes up a stick and tries his hatchet*]. Dis heah am duller'n a fro. But hit's a fine hatchet, anyhow.

GEORGE. You can sharpen it, Cicero.

CICERO. Yas sah, dat's what I aintends t' do fust time I gits a chanst t' sneak mammy's whet-rock outa de kitchen.

GEORGE. What's the use to sneak it out? Why don't you go ask her to let you use it?

CICERO. Who? Mammy? No sah, not dis chile. I jest as soon ask a wile cat fo' one ob huh kittens. Mammy thinks mo' ob dat rock dan she do ob me an' pappy bofe togeddah.

GEORGE [*feels edge of hatchet with thumb*]. I don't believe you ever can get your hatchet as sharp as mine.

CICERO. I dunno, sah, Ise a purty good whettah.

GEORGE. Yes, but just look how sharp this is. I believe I can cut this sprout at one blow. [*Indicates a dummy sprout near him.*]

CICERO [*laughs*]. No, Massa, I don' b'lieve yo' could blow it down all day.

GEORGE. I mean *cut* it.

CICERO. Le's *see* can yo', Massa Gawge.

GEORGE. All right. [*He strikes at the sprout, which he then lifts in his left hand.*] I did.

CICERO. Yo' sho did. Dat hatchet mus' be *awful* sha'p.

GEORGE. It is, I tell you. Why, I wouldn't be surprised if I couldn't cut your head off at one blow, too.

CICERO. No sah. [*Retreating.*] I knows yo' cain't do dat. I don' keer how sha'p yo' hatchet is, yo' jes natcherally cain't git close enough to me fo' dat.

GEORGE. Oh, well, no need to get frightened, Cicero, I wouldn't try anything like that.

CICERO. Anyhow, I feels bettah a few foots away fum you, Massa Gawge.

GEORGE. There is Uncle Eph again. He may not believe that I cut this at one stroke, but I can prove it by you, can't I, Cicero?

Reënter UNCLE EPH *from Left.*

EPH. Golly-ma-diddle, Massa Gawge, what's dat yo's cut down, now?

GEORGE. A sprout, and I cut it at one whack, too. Didn't I, Cicero?

CICERO. He sho did, pappy.

EPH takes sprout and looks at it carefully.

EPH. Good lan' o' livin', boy, dat ain't no kin' o' sprout fo' you t' be cuttin' down wid one lick or fo'ty. Dat's liable to git *you* a *lick*. Why, boy, dat's one ob yo' pappy's cherry trees what he done had fotched ovah heah fum Englum.

CICERO *throws his hatchet away.*

CICERO. Um Golly! Dat's wuss an' mo' ob it.

GEORGE. Are you in earnest, Uncle Eph?

EPH. No, I ain't in de furnice. I knows what Ise talkin' 'bout. Massa Washington thought mo' ob dat one measly sprout dan de did ob nary hoss or niggah on de place.

CICERO *takes sprout and tries to put it back in place.*

CICERO. Le's see can us stick it back an' mebbe it'll grow.

GEORGE. No, it won't grow now, Cicero.

CICERO. Well, mebbe Massa Washington wouldn't know de dif'runce till 'twuz too late t' fi' out how come it died.

GEORGE. That wouldn't be right.

CICERO. Hit'd be mo' right t' me dan ketchin' a whale ob a beatin', Massa Gawge.

EPH. Spec's yo' bettah let me tell 'im dat I cut it by mistook, Massa Gawge. He knows dat dese heah ole eyes o' mine ain't much punkins any mo' an' he won't 'buse me much.

GEORGE. No, I won't let you do that either, Uncle Eph. I did the mischief and I will take the blame. I'll go right now and tell father. [*Exit at Right.*]

EPH. Dat's a fine lad, Cicero. Is yo' heahed him say how he gonna take de blame? He ain' gonna hab ole Eph git no 'busement on his 'count. No sah, he takes de blame. [*Exit EPH at Right. CICERO picks up scattered pieces of wood.*]

CICERO. Yeah, I heahs mammy callin' me. Massa Gawge, he gonna take de blame an' tell de trufe, lak he ginrally do, an' git out o' trouble. But I knows what's a-comin' when I gits to de house. I'll let Massa Gawge take de blame an' I'll take de sprout. [*Picks up sprout and walks slowly off stage as curtain falls.*]

LOVIN' LEROY

CHARACTERS

LEROY, *who is badly smitten and* CAROLINE *the smiter*
Discovered CAROLINE, *before glass, primping.*

CAROLINE. Leroy will soon be here now, I guess. He is always on time a-gittin' here, if he *is* slow after he comes. But mebbe I c'n git a move on 'im purty soon. I know he likes me better'n any uv th' other gals, but he's so plagu-ed bashful that he cain't git his mouth open to pop th' question.

Enter LEROY. *He turns around and knocks on side of door after entering. He wears extremely tight-fitting trousers and coat, and large tie.*

CAROLINE [*without turning*]. Come in.

LEROY. I cain't.

CAROLINE. Cain't? What's th' matter uv y' now? Ye hain't fastened, are y'?

LEROY. Nope, but I cain't come in 'cause I'm done an' in. Te, he, he.

CAROLINE [*turns about*]. You Leroy. You are such a funny boy.

LEROY. Yeah, I know it. 'Tother day I's a-countin' my ribs an' I got tickled nearly to death at myse'f.

CAROLINE. Well, have off yer hat, an' set down a spell.

LEROY. Naou. I don't wanta do that.

CAROLINE. Well, what are y' gonna do, then? Stan' there in th' middle uv th' room like a gander on one leg?

LEROY. I ain't a-standin' on one laig. But say, do you know how long a goose c'n stan' on one foot?

CAROLINE. No. I don't know.

LEROY [*giggling*]. Try it and see.

CAROLINE. Aw, you set down an' shet up.

LEROY. Le's see, now. You want me to shet down an' set up. Is that it?

CAROLINE. Leroy, you've jest got one brain in your head an' it's mildewed.

LEROY. Well, ain't beauty better'n brains anyhow?

CAROLINE. Might be, ef a body had it.

LEROY. Well, you're shore outa luck then, ain't ye?

CAROLINE. I said while ago fer you to shet yer mouth.

[*LEROY claps hand to jaw and thus extravagantly closes mouth. Then begins to grimace and gesture frantically.*]

CAROLINE. Well, what on earth is it? Speak.

LEROY. I jest wanted to know ef I c'd open my mouth, ef I wouldn't say nothin'.

CAROLINE. Go ahead an' open it, then. You never do say anything that amounts to anything nohow.

LEROY. So I c'n open my mouth, then?

CAROLINE. Yes. An' I want y' to say sumpin that amounts to sumpin, too, but don't open yer mouth so wide. It scares me. Makes me think yer head's cavin' in.

LEROY. Well, Great Gee Whilikens! Ef my mouth wuz as big as yourn, I'd have sixteen stitches taken in each corner.

CAROLINE. Now Leroy, you ought to be ashamed.

LEROY. Me? Why, I never made yer mouth.

CAROLINE. You oughtn't to talk so—my mouth could have been bigger.

LEROY. I don't see how, less'n yer yeahs wuz set back further.

CAROLINE. Aw, Leroy, all you think about is a bag of foolishness.

LEROY. Yeah, that's partly right. I think uv you a whole lot.

CAROLINE. Shore nuff? But don't make no difference how much you think about me, when you git around me, you cain't git yer mouth open fer nothin'.

LEROY. Who? Me? Why, I betcha right now I c'd swaller that door knob. [*He drops his hat in chair behind himself and fidgets with coat.*]

CAROLINE. I don't mean op'nin' yer mouth *that way*, Leroy.

LEROY. Well, I c'n put a hen aig in it then.

CAROLINE. No. Not that, either. Set down [*pushes him back into chair on his hat*] an' I'll tell ye. I mean op'nin' yer mouth to *say* somethin'.

LEROY. Well, jest tell me somethin' an' see ef I cain't say it, then. [*Seems suddenly to realize that he is sitting on hat. Puts hand under himself and draws hat out to view.*] Now, dog take my cats ef that wuzn't a mean trick, Caroline. [*Views hat mournfully.*] Th' onliest an' bestes' Sunday-go-to-meetin' hat I got, too. Ef I knowed you done that a-purpose, I'd lose my temper right here. I'll be squizzelled ef that ain't a purty come off, shore nuff.

CAROLINE. Why, Leroy, don't git excited. Tain't nothin'.

LEROY. Ain't nothin'? It's s'posed to be a hat. I guess that's somethin'.

CAROLINE. Leroy, Leroy. Ca'm yerese'f.

LEROY. I'm a mind to *ca'm* you.

CAROLINE. How'd I know where yer hat wuz? Why didn't you use yer eyes?

LEROY. I wuz a-usin' 'em.

CAROLINE. Lemme see that hat. Why, it ain't hurt. [*Straightens it out.*] Needs to be rubbed off a little's all. Here. [*Hands hat back to him.*] I'll go git a soft rag an' rub it up a bit fer ye. [*Goes over to one side and*

takes up a large cloth which she tears. However, just as she tears the cloth LEROY, who has dropped his hat, stoops to recover same. LEROY hears cloth tear, thinks it is his coat that is torn. He jerks erect without picking up hat and backs into corner.]

CAROLINE. [*returning with cloth*]. Here now, lemme have that hat.

LEROY. There it is. Git it.

CAROLINE. Why, Leroy, I'm s'prised at you.

LEROY. Yeah, I'm kinda s'prised myse'f.

CAROLINE. What made you throw yer hat down that way?

LEROY. Oh, jest fer fun.

CAROLINE. Well, why don't you pick it up?

LEROY. You can. I don't want to.

CAROLINE. Have you got th' rheumatism?

LEROY. Yeah, I guess y' might call it that, ef y' want to.

CAROLINE. Oh well, ef you air jest a-tryin' me out to see ef I'd do anything fer ye, I'll pick it up. [*Takes up hat and rubs it off with cloth, then claps it on his head, pulling it well down over his ears.*] Now, there! You look like th' heir to a million.

LEROY. Yeah? I don't feel like it, though.

CAROLINE. I didn't ever notice before now how well yore clo'es become you. Why they look like they wuz jest made fer nobody else but you.

LEROY. I guess that's right, too. Nobody else wouldn't have 'em.

CAROLINE. Leroy, you'se *so* good lookin'.

LEROY. Aw, git out now, Car'line.

CAROLINE. I mean it. You're a dear, ef you wuzn't so back'ard.

LEROY. I guess you'd back up like this too—

CAROLINE. Now, Leroy, you don't need to be uneasy about me. I won't hurt you. I know you've got faults an'

failin's, but that don't make no difference. Come on an' be yourse'f. I c'n shet my eyes to lots a things.

LEROY. Yeah, but what about all these heah people? [*Indicates audience.*]

CAROLINE. Don't worry about them.

LEROY. Why, they c'n see.

CAROLINE. That don't make no difference. They wuz all young an' in love wunst too, I guess.

LEROY. Hot dawg! Are you in love, Car'line?

CAROLINE. Why shore. Ain't you?

LEROY. Yeah, but I been a-skeered to tell you.

CAROLINE. Why, Leroy! You didn't think that I'd bite you, did you?

LEROY. I didn't know what you might do an' I wouldn't be so bold now, mebbe, ef I c'd see good.

CAROLINE [*goes to him*]. Your hat *is* over your eyes, ain't it? [*Starts to raise his hat.*]

LEROY. Let it alone. Let it alone. I c'n talk better that way. You see, as long as I had my eyes open so I c'd see you, I couldn't see how easy it'd be to talk to you 'bout what I wanted to say. But now that my eyes is covered up I c'n see what a fine gal you are.

CAROLINE. What do you mean? When you eyes wuz open you *couldn't* see, but now when they're th' same as shut you *can* see?

LEROY. I mean, ef you'll come over here I'll kiss you.

CAROLINE. O Leroy! I'll call ma.

LEROY. I don't want to kiss her.

CAROLINE. Why don't you come away from that wall?

LEROY. Oh—a—er I need some backin', I guess.

CAROLINE. You needn't be a-skeered. I'll come over there.

LEROY. Hot dawg!

CURTAIN *as* CAROLINE *starts toward him.*

SALVATION AM FREE

CHARACTERS

DEACON HAMSTRUNG.....*an enemy of the parson*
ELDER KILLJOY.....*more tolerant*
SISTER BREEZY.....*an open admirer of the parson*
BROTHER THINKLITTLE.....*who belies his name*
BROTHER GOOSEBERRY.....*jealous of Sister Breezy*
THE PARSON.....*who gets in a hole but gets out*
Any number of nonspeaking players for the congregation.

SCENE: *A rude negro church*

Discovered: all of the characters save THE PARSON, seated near pulpit.

DEACON HAMSTRUNG. 'Peahs lak de Pa'son am somewhat indigent in makin' his 'rival dis mawnin'.

ELDER KILLJOY. Le's not be too seveah on de Pa'son. He's jes' human lak us is an' needs t' hab some 'lowances made fo' him de same as anybody. Yo' all knows he ain't nevah been late t' preachin' heah't'fo' less'n he had some good an' valued reason.

SISTER BREEZY. Amen, Bruddah Killjoy! I feels jes' lak yo' does dat dis am a time fo' us t' remonstrate ouah love devotion fo' ouah pastoh.

BROTHER THINKLITTLE. Boun' fo' Sistah Breezy t' hol' up fo' de Pa'son. Dat's wheah he am got his towah ob stren'th is in de wimmen.

BROTHER GOOSEBERRY. Dat makes me think, mebbe dat's de reason dat de Towah ob Babel diden do no bettah wuz cause de wimmen got mixed up in it.

SISTER BREEZY. Ef de wimmen'd hadn't nuthin t' do wid it, dat towah'd a-been a-standin' t'day, Bruddah Gooseberry. Yassah, hit'd a-been replenished, too.

Enter THE PARSON

PARSON. Well, Breddern an' Sistern, Ise heah at las'.

All rise and shake hands with THE PARSON but DEACON HAMSTRUNG.

SISTER BREEZY. Us is sho glad t' see yo' smilin' complexium once mo'.

BROTHER THINKLITTLE. Indeed us is, pastoh. Yo' presence wahms up ouah h'a'ts lak a hot rock wahms a sick kitten.

BROTHER GOOSEBERRY. Us had 'bout d'cided dat yo' wuzn't gonna git heah dis time, sho.

PARSON. Well, sah, hit did seem lak it, sho. But I had a misfo'tunate esperience at mah house dis mawnin'.

ELDER KILLJOY. Sho nuff?

PARSON. Uh huh, sho nuff. Yo' see, jest as I wuz about ready t' leave home, mah little boy Gawge—yo' all knows Gawge?

All nod in the affirmative.

PARSON. Well, Gawge opened mah chicken coop do' an' all de chickens tried t' go home.

SISTER BREEZY. Um-m-m! Dat wuz awful.

BROTHER THINKLITTLE. Did yo' evah git 'em back?

PARSON. Mos' all ob 'em. One or two got so near deir homes, wid me an' de old womern an' de chillern right atter 'em, dat us had t' stop an' come back.

Extras come in to fill up congregation.

DEACON HAMSTRUNG. Well, Pa'son, de mawnin' houahs will soon be disinterrogated an' as de congergation seems t' be 'bout all heah, I guess us had bettah open up de sarvices.

PARSON. Dat's a fac, Brudder Hamstrung, us had. Fust le's sing. Sistah Breezy, select sumpin an' lead it.

SISTER BREEZY. De o'gan am busted; I'll hab t' lead it by de yeah.

ELDER KILLJOY. Dat's as good a way t' lead anything as any.

SISTER BREEZY. Le's all stan' den an' sing [*names some old-time negro spiritual with which those taking part in the play are familiar.*]

All stand and sing.

PARSON [*at close of song*]. Now mah deahly belubbed—

DEACON HAMSTRUNG. See 'im lookin' right straight at Sistah Breezy?

PARSON. All ob yo' please be seated.

Congregation sits.

PARSON. Now, befo' makin' any mo' headway o' goin' fu'thah, I wishes t' denounce de title ob mah subjeck fo' de mawnin' disco'se. Ise gwinter lueydate t' yo' all dis beautiful an' blessed Sabbath on de subjeck ob "Salvation Am Free." Is yo' all heahed dat? I mean by dem wuds dat salvation don' cos' nothin'. Dat's a fac' too. Salvation Am Free.

Chorus of "Amen's" from congregation.

PARSON. But now, befo' I takes up mah subjeck and makes reco'se on it, dere am sumpin else dat am got t' be did. Brudder Gooseberry, will yo' take up de reg-lah mawnin' off'rin'?

BROTHER GOOSEBERRY *rises to do so.*

DEACON HAMSTRUNG. Hol' on a minit dar, Pa'son. Does yo' means t' say dat yo' am now gonna ax us t' gib yo' money?

PARSON. I mos' sholy does.

DEACON HAMSTRUNG. Diden yo' jest now tole us dat "*Salvation Am Free*"?

PARSON [*perplexed*]. Yassah, I—said—

DEACON HAMSTRUNG. Well, how come den, ef *Salvation Am Free*, dat yo's gonna cha'ge us fo' it ?

PARSON. Well, let me esplain.

DEACON HAMSTRUNG [*triumphantly*]. Esplain nothin', Pa'son, yo's done interdicted yo'se'f.

PARSON [*suddenly brightening*]. No, I ain't neithah. Yo' lissen t' me, Deacon Hamstrung, an' all de res' ob yo' niggahs, an' I'll esplain t' yo' all what I means an' what I does an' why I does it!

SISTER BREEZY. Amen!

PARSON. I said *Salvation Am Free* an' I repeats *Salvation Am Free*. It am. Bless de Lawd!

Chorus of "Amen's."

PARSON. So am watah free. God gib it to us outa his magnolius love.

Chorus of "Amen's."

PARSON. Yassah, de watah dat flows in de ribbahs, de watah dat flows in de cricks, de watah dat flows in de brooks, am all free. 'Cause hit don' cos' nothin'. Bless de Lawd, yo' kin go lay down on yo' stummick by de side o' one o' dem streams o' streamlets an' drink yo' thirsty fill an' it won't cost yo' one cent. It's *Free*.

DEACON HAMSTRUNG. Amen.

PARSON. But lissen heah t' me, Bruddah Hamstrung. S'posin' yo' wants dat same watah dat am so full an' so free in de streams pumped inter yo' house, does yo' git *dat* free? No, yo' don't. No sah, yo' pays fo' it. Not fo' de watah, 'cause de watah am free. But yo' has t' pay fo' gittin' it pumped to you. Yassah, *Salvation Am Free* too, but *I cha'ges fo' pumpin' it to yo' all*. Brothah Gooseberry, go on wid de c'lection.

CURTAIN

MARIE MISSES MARRIAGE

CHARACTERS

MARIE GRAY *the heroine*
HANK HEFLEY *the hero*
SILAS BARBERRY *Marie's uncle*
PHOEBE BARBERRY *Marie's aunt*

SCENE: *Living-room of BARBERRY'S farm home.*

Enter SILAS from Right, carrying a bundle of papers and packages. He piles them on table at Center.

SILAS. I guess Phoeby musta been orderin' some more from them mail order houses at She-caw-go. Wonder what it is she's sent for this time. I hope it ain't no more patent pertater peelers that'll leave 'bout ha'f th' peelin' on, like them did she ordered a spell back.

[During this time he has been inspecting the mail piece by piece. He picks up a letter.]

SILAS. Wo! Here's a letter. Phoeby! O Phoeby! Phoeby, here's a letter.

Enter PHOEBE from Left, wiping hands on apron.

PHOEBE [*hand to ear*]. Hey?

SILAS. Here's a letter.

PHOEBE. Yes, I feel some better.

SILAS. I said, "Here's a letter."

Enter HANK from Right.

PHOEBE. Hey?

HANK. What d'y want with it?

SILAS. Letter. Letter, I tell ye. *Letter.*

HANK. Letter? I ain't keepin' 'er from nothin'.

SILAS. Aw, thunderation! You all ain't nary one got th' brains it takes t' git in th' 'sylum.

HANK. Well, you wouldn't have no trouble, I c'n tell y' that. You've jest about got th' required amount.

SILAS. Don't git smart, young man. I won't stand fer it.

HANK. Well, set down when y' git ready.

SILAS. I mean that I won't endure yer smart Aleckin'.

HANK. I never heerd uv that bran' before. I got some Prince Albert, ef that'd do y' any good.

SILAS. That's enough nonsense fer a while now, Hank. You're on th' side nex' to Phoeby's good ear. Here, read this letter to 'er.

Hands letter to HANK, who looks at postmark.

HANK. "Cart o' hogs, Missouri—"

SILAS. That's Carthage, Hank.

HANK. Now who's gonna read this letter, me or you?

SILAS. You are, but I wanted to tell what that was, so Phoeby'd know who it wuz from soon as she heerd it.

HANK. All right then. [*Reads.*] "Carthage, Missouri, July the first."

PHOEBE. Aw, open th' letter an' read *it*. We don't keer 'bout what's on th' outside. It's th' inside that we want t' hear.

HANK tears envelope and produces letter, which he gazes at fixedly for a few moments.

SILAS. Well, why don't you read it, ef you're goin' to?

HANK. I cain't.

PHOEBE. Cain't? What's th' matter with you, Hank Hefley? Have you gone blin'?

HANK. No. This here fool letter's writ upside down. I ain't gonna stan' on my head t' read it, I know.

SILAS. Aw, turn th' letter over.

HANK *turns letter about and reads.*

HANK [*reads*]. "Cart o' hogs—" I mean "Carthage, Missouri, July the first. Mr. and Missus Silas Barberry, Dear Brother and Sister—"

PHOEBE. Mus' be from Sister Emmeline.

SILAS. Er maybe from *my* sister Vi'let.

PHOEBE. Vi'let never does write t' me an' you know it, Silas.

SILAS. Well, go on, then, Hank, an' we'll see.

HANK. I'm a-goin' on, ef y'all hush blabbin' long enough fer me t' git a chance.

HANK [*reads from letter again*]. "I am terribly upset about Marie. She has got her head set to marry a man that is not in her set—"

SILAS [*interrupting*]. Seems t' be a lot o' settin' goin' on.

HANK [*continuing*]. "An' I've set my foot down that she sha'n't marry him, so I'm sendin' her t' stay with you th' summer. Yours dis''—somethin' or other—I don' know what that is—"Emme-line Gray."

SILAS. Well, now, that shore does jest beat a hen a-peckin'. Did you hear all uv that, Phoeby?

PHOEBE. Part uv it. She said she'd had bad luck with 'er chickens, didn't she?

HANK. Jest only one uv 'em's all.

SILAS [*shouts in PHOEBE'S ear*]. No, she said Marie had hatched up a case with a bad egg an' so she's sendin' 'er out here t' stay under your wing t' keep that bird from featherin' his nest at Marie's expense.

PHOEBE. Marie? Marie Gray? Sister Emmeline's child? When's she comin'?

SILAS. When, Hank?

HANK. Good lands, I ain't no magicium. I dunno when she'll be here.

SILAS. Why, look at th' letter again.

HANK. Th' letter don't say. I looked t'see at first.

SILAS [*takes letter from HANK*]. Let me have it, simpleton. You're too thick-headed fer anything.

HANK. Well, the' shore ain't nobody c'n see through that punkin on yore shoulders.

PHOEBE. Does it say when she'll be here?

SILAS. Don't say.

HANK. Now, I tol' y' it didn't, didn't I? Now, whose head is th' thickest, Mr. Barberry?

SILAS. Aw, shut up, Hank. Looka here—this letter has been missent. It wuz mailed a week ago.

HANK. Th' gal might a-been missent, too.

SILAS. Do you mean t' insinuate that this wouldn't be a good place fer a young lady?

HANK. No! No, sir. I think this'd be th' very place fer any gal. Nice old folks—good lookin' hired han'—yeah, this'd be th' very place fer Ma-ree.

SILAS. Well, what d'y mean by sayin' that she wuz missent then?

HANK. Well, she might accidentally-a-purpose got on th' wrong train an' went t' meet this yere bird that 'er ma wuz cacklin' so about.

SILAS. There might be somethin' to that, but we'll hope not, anyway.

HANK [*fervently*]. A-men.

SILAS. Phoeby, reckon we'd hadn't orter kinda pearten things up a bit? Y' know Marie's been used t' town style.

HANK. Yeah, y'all slick up th' house. She's liable t' pop in most any minute now. Aunt Phoeby, you put clean scarfs an' tidies on ever'thing—Uncle Silas, you better draw some water an' bring in some wood, an' milk, an' feed, an' git all th' work done up early.

Exit PHOEBE Left.

SILAS. You onery pup! What you think I've got you hired fer? What are *you* gonna do?

HANK. Who? Me? Why, I'm gonna dress.

SILAS. You're gonna dress?

HANK. Yeah, I'm gonna show Ma-ree that though I'm a country boy, I got city ways.

SILAS [*regarding HANK dubiously*]. You've shore got some kinda ways that's gonna git you in bad—I know that.

HANK starts off at Left.

SILAS [*catches HANK*]. Hey, come back here! Now back up an' stan' still.

HANK. What's th' matter with you, you ole hypo-pot-a-mustard?

SILAS. Dog take my cats, ef you won't fin' out what's th' matter an' that purty soon, too, ef you don't git yourse'f out t' that barn an' do up yer work. [*Collars HANK.*] You're a fine specimen—*you* are. You look like settin' up to a gal, don't you? [*Kicks HANK.*]

HANK. Guess I'll hafta stand up to 'er now.

SILAS. Now, young man, you be shore t' remember who's th' boss aroun' here from now on.

HANK. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. I'll shore do it. Don't know what made me git sich notions in my head, anyway. Must a-seen a vision or somethin', I reckon.

SILAS [*kicks HANK again*]. Git outa here!

HANK. Oh golly! I seen stars then.

Exit HANK at Right.

SILAS. That boy is shore a tryin' case. He's another sample uv a strong back an' a weak mind. [*Turns toward Right.*] My goodness goshness! There's somebody a-drivin' up to th' front now. It must be Marie.

HANK [*outside*]. Howdy, Miss. Howdy. Git out an' come right in.

SILAS [*rushes to door at Left*]. Phoeby! O Phoeby! Marie's come.

Enter PHOEBE from Left and MARIE and HANK from Right at same time. HANK carries a load of suitcases and hat boxes.

MARIE [*rushes to PHOEBE and embraces her*]. O Aunt Phoebe! How are you by now?

PHOEBE *blubbers.*

HANK. She's still deaf.

MARIE [*goes to SILAS*]. And Uncle Silas! Why, you haven't changed a bit since I saw you three years ago.

HANK. He's a lot uglier an' crankier.

MARIE [*kisses SILAS*]. You're a dear anyway, Uncle Silas, and I love you as much as ever.

HANK. Well, ef that's th' way you treat all th' deers, I'll jest let y' know that I'm one, too. Ole Barberry there calls me a buck all th' time.

PHOEBE. Who's that out there in th' car, Marie?

MARIE. Oh, that is—why, that is a young man whom I met to-day. He was looking for a nice country home where he could spend the summer. I forget his name, but I thought there would be no harm in bringing him out to see if you could keep him.

HANK. Looks like he'd hafta be put on ice, ef y' keep 'im.

SILAS [*suspiciously*]. How come you to meet 'im, Marie?

MARIE. Why—I—didn't exactly meet him, Uncle Silas.

HANK. I guess maybe he met you.

MARIE. No, he overtook me.

PHOEBE. He done what?

MARIE. He overtook me. You see, when I got off the train, I found no one had come to meet me.

HANK. Yer ma's letter got misconstrued.

SILAS. Misdirected, Hank. We didn't get it until to-day, Marie.

MARIE. Well, I remembered the way perfectly, so I left my baggage and started out to walk, but I hadn't gone far when this young man overtook me and offered to bring me out here, if I'd help him to find a summer boarding place. I accepted his offer, so, as it was not far back to the station, I had him drive back for my baggage and here we are. Will you keep him, Aunt Phoebe?

PHOEBE. We'll keep him to-night, at least.

HANK. I'd a-met you at th' station myse'f ef I'd a-knowed it in time.

MARIE. I thank you ever so much, but—

HANK. My name ain't Bud. It's Hank.

SILAS. If you had thought to call us on the telephone, we could have made arrangements to git you.

HANK. I'm gonna try t' make them arrangements yit.

SILAS [*severely*]. You'd better make arrangements t' git yore night work done afore I make arrangements t' git me a new hired han'.

HANK. You bet I will. I forgot that, Mr. Barberry. G'-by Ma-ree, till I git back.

Exit HANK at Right.

MARIE. What is the matter with that boy?

PHOEBE. Who? Hank?

MARIE. Yes. He acts so very strangely.

PHOEBE. Aw, the' ain't nuthin' th' matter with 'im in partic'lar. He acts that way about ever' purty gal he sees.

MARIE. Then I don't suppose his heart is really affected.

SILAS. No, no. Just his head.

PHOEBE. Take off your hat an' set down, dear. I know you must be tired.

MARIE. Yes, thank you, aunt. [*Sits.*] But aren't you going to ask Fra—the young man out there, to come in?

SILAS. We'd orter ask 'im in, I guess. I plumb forgot about that. I'll go right now.

PHOEBE. Shore, we'll keep him to-night, if no more. I never turned a stranger from my door in my life.

SILAS. Is he a nice feller, Marie?

MARIE. Sure, he is—that is, from what I've seen of him, he is quite a gentleman.

SILAS. I'll fetch 'im in, then.

Exit SILAS at Right.

PHOEBE. Just sit where you are now, dear, an' rest yerse'f. I must go an' look at my bread that I left in th' oven.

Exit PHOEBE at Left.

MARIE. Oh, things are working out tip-top. I couldn't wish for anything better.

Enter HANK at Center.

HANK. Say, Ma-ree, is that feller a friend o' yours?

MARIE. What fellow?

HANK. That goggle-eyed feller that fetched you here in that gas wagon.

MARIE. Why—what makes you ask that?

HANK. 'Cause Ole Barberry's bulldog has got 'im treed out yonder in th' pasture an' it all depen's on what you say whether I call 'im off or not.

MARIE [*excitedly*]. Oh! Will he hurt him?

HANK. Not *that* dog.

MARIE. I'm glad of that, then.

HANK. No, sir, he won't hurt that dog. Nobody never has yit.

MARIE. I—don't quite understand.

HANK. Well, th' ain't nobody never hurt ole Tige yit 'thout *him* leavin' plenty o' signs on th' one that did it.

MARIE. Oh dear!

HANK. Don't call me them pet names yit fer a while.

MARIE. I hope Fra—I mean—I hope the driver doesn't get bitten by mistake.

HANK. Don't worry. Ef ole Tige bites 'im, it won't be by mistake. It'll be a-purpose.

MARIE. Is he really vicious?

HANK. No, ma'am, he's bulldog.

MARIE. I mean, is he terrible?

HANK. I told y' he wuz a bulldog, didn't I? The' ain't no terrier 'bout 'im.

MARIE. Oh goodness!

HANK. What I wanta know is this: Is that feller out there anything to you?

MARIE. Hank, you surely wouldn't see a savage dog tear a fellow human being into shreds, would you?

HANK. That ain't th' question. I said, is that feller out there anything to you, more or less?

MARIE. Well, I'll answer your question; then you must answer mine. I have the same interest in him just now that I might have in any man in the street.

HANK. Yeah, but he ain't in no street. He's up a tree.

MARIE. Well, you won't see him torn by that brute, will you?

HANK. I tell you ole Tige ain't nothin' but bulldog. But I won't see him et up. No, I won't see 'im.

MARIE. I knew you were brave and unselfish.

HANK. As I wuz sayin', I won't see 'im et up, fer I won't go out there t' look.

MARIE [*wrings hands*]. Oh! Mercy!

HANK. What's a matter? He ain't gonna bite *you*.

MARIE. Hank, for humanity's sake, go call that dog off!

HANK. Not fer Hugh Nobody's sake will *I* go call no dog offa that feller, 'less'n you say he ain't nothin' to y' nor won't ever be nothin'.

MARIE. Heavens! I'm afraid he'll be a corpse, if something isn't done.

HANK. Don't worry. There'll be somethin' done.

MARIE. Well, why don't you go on and do it, then?

HANK. I nevèr said *I'd* do nothin', did I? I said there'd be *somethin' done*. Ole Tige 'll take care o' that.

MARIE. Hank, *please* go call off your dog.

HANK. I ain't got no dog. Never had but one an' she wuz a Spitz.

MARIE. A Spitz?

HANK. Yeah. Jest a little squirt, y' know.

MARIE. What became of your little Spitz?

HANK. She died. I expectorate somethin' pison, mebbe.

MARIE. Shame on me to forget the awful predicament Frank is in.

HANK. He ain't in no per-dicky-ment. He's up in a per-simmon tree.

MARIE. Hank, go save him and I shall always be grateful to you.

HANK. All right, I'll do it, ef you'll always be faithful t' me.

MARIE. I said *grateful*.

HANK. I know y' said *faithful*.

MARIE. Go on and call the dog off, Hank.

HANK. We ain't got no dog. I cain't call 'im off.

MARIE. Whose dog is it, then? Go shoot him, if you can't do any better.

HANK [*grabs shotgun from corner*]. All right. I'll shore do that. Reekin y' c'n drive 'is car, or had I better make 'im show me how before I shoot 'im?

MARIE. What on earth are you talking about?

HANK. You said, "Shoot 'im," didn't y'?

MARIE. Shoot whom?

HANK. That feller that druv y' here.

MARIE [*rushes to HANK and grabs gun*]. Oh no! Don't do that! I'll go shoot the dog myself, if you'll show me where he is.

HANK. The' ain't no dog t' shoot.

MARIE. But you said there was.

HANK. I wuz jest a-foolin' 'bout that.

MARIE. But where is Fra—the young man, then? He isn't in his car.

HANK. Oh! Him? He's out behin' th' barn puttin' on some dry clo'es. [*Laughs*]

MARIE. Dry clothes? Hank, what did you do to him?

HANK [*laughs*]. Me? I never done nothin'.

MARIE. Well, what is so funny, then? How did he get wet?

HANK. Why, th' big boob jumped in th' pon'.

MARIE. In the pond? Now, Hank, you had something to do with this, I'm sure.

HANK. No, ma'am. I never done a thing to 'im.

MARIE. Then how did he come to jump in the pond?

HANK. *How did he come?* Purty fast. That's how.

MARIE. But what made him act in any such a way?

HANK. I dunno. He might a-been tryin' t' show off a little.

MARIE [*suspiciously*]. Are you *fooling* me *again*, Hank?

HANK. No, ma'am. Crisscross my heart an' point t' Heaven, I ain't. Ef y' don't b'lieve what I said, jest go look b'hin' th' barn.

MARIE. Tell me how it happened, then.

HANK [*laughs again*]. Well, y' see, this yere feller, he wuz out in th' pasture a-sa'nterin' aroun' like a blin' goose in a January snowstorm, when I went out to th' lot t' do my chores.

MARIE. He probably wanted to look around a bit.

HANK. Well, he did. [*Laughs.*]

MARIE. Did what?

HANK. He *looked aroun'* jest as I turned ole Pide's ca'f out t' go git water.

MARIE. I knew that you did something.

HANK [*in injured tone*]. Me? Why I never done no more'n I do ever' night.

MARIE. Then how did such an accident take place?

HANK. I started t' tell y' an' y' had t' butt in accusin' me o' somethin' I never done.

MARIE. Go on with your story, Hank. I'm very sorry that I interrupted you.

HANK. Oh, you're excused. Well, as I wuz sayin', th' dude looked aroun' an' there wuz that ca'f a-comin' right to'ards him with 'is head down an' a blowin' an' snortin' like he allays does when he's let out, so th' dude lets out a yell an' th' ca'f lets out a beller, an' down th' trail they both went, nippity-tuck.

MARIE. What did *you* do, then?

HANK. Why, I never done nothin' but hol' my sides an' laugh till I hurt.

MARIE. That was mean of you, to turn a fierce beast loose upon a defenseless man.

HANK. Fierce beast yer foot! I wouldn't call a suckin' ca'f no fierce beast.

MARIE. You knew before you turned him out, though, that he chased folks, didn't you?

HANK. No, I never knowed no such. He allays makes a rush down t' th' pon' fer a drink, soon 's he gits out.

MARIE. I still believe that you were responsible for what happened.

HANK. Well, b'lieve what y' please, then. But I couldn't he'p it ef this here dude ain't got no more sense than t' take out right down th' trail ahead o' that ca'f. He'd orter jest stepped aside an' let th' ca'f go by.

MARIE. But didn't the animal charge into his victim?

HANK. No, he never charged into no part uv 'im, at all.

MARIE. The calf knocked him into the water, didn't he?

HANK. No. The ca'f never touched 'im.

MARIE. Then how on earth did it all happen?

HANK. Why, th' punkin head jest kep' a-runnin' down th' trail, a-lookin' back an' squawkin' ever' jump, an' so he jest natcherly stumbled right into th' water all sprauled out like a bullfrog.

MARIE. Hank, I am beginning to believe you and place confidence in what you say.

HANK. Oh, you c'n trust me all right.

MARIE. Well, then, I'll tell you something, Hank, if you promise not to repeat it to anyone.

HANK. I wouldn't repeat it t' Saint Peter hisself.

MARIE. I *was* engaged to "that feller," as you call him, but if he doesn't know any more than to jump into a pond simply because he happens to be in the pathway of a little thirsty calf, I am liable to lose interest in him.

HANK. Hot ziggity!

Enter SILAS from Right.

SILAS. Say, Marie, that feller that brought you here has just whizzed off down th' road in 'is car. He wouldn't even speak to me when I asked 'im to come in an' stay all night with us.

HANK. Mebbe he got insulted some way.

MARIE. I strongly suspect that he was so much ashamed of himself that he couldn't bear to face us. I'm glad he's gone, speaking for number one.

Exit MARIE Left.

SILAS. What in tarnation d'ye spose that gal meant by th' feller bein' ashamed t' face all uv us?

HANK. Oh, he got mixed up with that four-year-ol' ca'f o' yourn.

SILAS. Ole Barney?

HANK [*laughs*]. Yeah, Ole Barney. But I tole Ma-ree that he wuz jest a ca'f. Don't never tell 'er no better.

SILAS. I don't quite understan' what it's all about, but I 'spect you've been up t' some more uv yer tricks, Hank.

HANK. Oh no. Ole Barney done th' trick. An' ef things keep on turnin' out in my favor like they have so far, I'm gonna buy "that ca'f" a brass ring fer 'is nose an' take 'im right along with me on my honeymoon.

CURTAIN

IS A PIG'S TAIL PORK?

CHARACTERS

CHAIRMAN ALONZO CHINWOBBLE

Affirmative

JULIUS CLYMER

GLORIA SWAMSOME

Negative

HIRAM HAMMERHEAD

EAZEY DEE LIGHTED

Curtain goes up to disclose: CHAIRMAN ALONZO CHINWOBBLE seated behind table or desk at rear of stage and facing audience; JULIUS CLYMER and GLORIA SWAMSOME seated obliquely at Right and HIRAM HAMMERHEAD and EAZEY DEE LIGHTED ditto at Left.

CHAIRMAN [*rising to face audience*]. Bruddahs, an' also dem dat patches deir pants—we ain met here upon a mos' solem' an' obstropalous occasion, as yo' all is not entiahly obliterate ob. We am heah, dear fellow chosen ones, to cuss, recuss and discuss our subject fo' dis meetin', which am none other dan nor nothin' else but: “Revolved dat a pig's tail am po'k”—a mos' consequential an' I might also add one ob de mo' burnin' questions ob de day.

GLORIA. Set de question off de fire den, fo' I allays hates to smell hog meat a-sco'chin'.

CHAIRMAN. I'll has to ax you, Miss Gloria Swamsome, to fust please allays undress the chair, befo' yo' makes talk again or says words wid yo mouf.

GLORIA. I sets keerected, Mistah Chairman.

CHAIRMAN. Now, den, as I denounced in de genesis ob my remarks, we is goin' to hab a rebate an' de speakahs already bein' selected an' primed ready to go off, all dat

remains left to be did is to appint de judges. Ise now gwine to exercute my omnipotence an' desecrate fo' judges Mr. [*names members of audience*] a highly per-spected an' influenza citizen, an' also likewise Mistah ——, another most promisin' an' unfulfillin' man an' furthermo' Mistah ——, de mos' fair-minded and light-fingahed man in de country. De speakahs ob de ev'nin' hereby take notice dat yo' am warned to repair to get ready to begince fo' de ev'nin' hours am fas' precedin' into night an' it am done past time to promulgate de con-sanctions. Once mo' again I will now denounce de ques-tion, at isthmus. In fo'mal words it am: "Revolved dat a pig's tail am po'k." De infirmative ob dis here highly immaterial isthmus will be defounded by Mistah Julius Clymer an' Miss Gloria Swamsome. While de neckatiff will be deported by Mistah Hiram Hammerhead and Miss Eazey Dee Lighted. De infirmative will install deir arguments fust, so I am now takin' a great amount ob discretion in extraducin' to yo' all Mistah Julius Cæsar Clymer. [*Applause from others.*] Mistah Clymer, yo' now has de floor.

JULIUS [*rising*]. Mistah Chairman, hono'ry exponents, friends, fellow sweaters an' othahs, it am with a vast amount ob tribulation an' indifference dat I advances my-se'f befo' yo' all dis bright an' beautiful ev'nin', plucked as it wuz from de shinin' partnership ob dem gran' an' magnolius heabenly cano—heabenly cano—

EAZEY DEE LIGHTED. Can o' beans.

JULIUS. No, from de gran' an' magnolius heabenly cano-peas. I comes to yo' all wid a vast amount ob trepida-tion, reparation, preparation an' perspiration fo' dis concussion. Understandin' fully an' realizin' to de ut-most content de vast exponsibility desplendent upon my weak an' coëfficient shoulders, I has made recourse to dat

vast storehouse ob human knowledge to fin' de *status quo*, and de *ratus pro*, ob de terms set fo'th in our question fo' discussion. By dat I means nothin' else but, nor besides, dat I been interviewing dat vast volume despiled out ob de wisdom an' works ob dat great man, Dan'el Webster. Him dat gib to de worl' dat burnin' piece ob ellykence—"E pleurisy jitney bus onion." Now, loan me yo' organs ob hearin' fo' jest a short while dat won't las' long fo' I wants to play a tune on 'em dat dey ain't nevah heahd befo' in all deir borned days. Ise a-gwine a-tell yo' all what is, an' also likewise refine de meanin' ob de mos' exportant word in de subjeck ob concussion. I makes ref'rence an' alludes to de word, term, nomen or expression *po'k*. What am *po'k*? My frien' Webster says dat *po'k* am de flesh or meat ob swine used for food. Now, de balance ob my exposition am simple an' plain. It am so simple dat mos' nearly any common skule teechar could un'erstan' what I is about to advance as argument. It am dis. Webster said *meet*, diden' he? He never said *neahly meet*, or *almos' meet*, did he? No, sah, he never. He said *meet*. Let me compress dat upon yo' min's again, dat he said *meet*. So heah, den—I can prove to you all dat a pig's tail allays *meets* de rest ob de hog. Ef de tail *meets* de rest ob de hog an' de rest ob de hog am *po'k*, den de tail is boun' an' compelled to be *po'k* too. So I axes yo' all dis: is yo' evah seen a hog dat had a tail dat diden' *meet* de rest ob his body? De anser am bound to be: "No." My hon'ry deponents knows dat dey ain't no sich hog in captivity or kingdom come. No sah, dey ain't no hog, pig, shote, or other kind o' swine dat's got a tail dat don' *meets* de rest an' remainder ob its body. So, fo' dat reason once mo' I deserts dat a *pig's tail am boun' to be po'k*. [Sits.]

CHAIRMAN. De nex' speakah am a member ob de necka-tiff. I now takes exeruciatin' pleasure in offerin' yo' all Mistah Hiram Hammerhead.

HIRAM [*rises*]. Mistah Chairman, honest deponents, ladies and dem what paid deir carfares, at de outset ob de beginnin' I feels myself obliged to say dat, unlike my unworthy disputant, Mr. Clymer, I is not gwine a-tire yo' patience an' pestify yo' feelin's wid a long speech beca'se I cain't do dat, but my collar-ad, Miss Eazey, will, so jest keep yo' seats an' don't git discouraged, fo' whatsoever a man sews dat also shall he rip. An' now to git to de pint, Ise come befo' yo' all to prove excusively dat a pig's tail ain't no mo' po'k dan a fairy tale am mutton. As it wuz in de beginnin', is now an' evah shall be, world without end, Amen. Is yo' grabbed dat idee like a drownin' man grabs at straws? What is it without no end? Nothin', I tells yo'. Dey ain't nothin' without no stoppin' place. Dey may be some things dat seem like dey ain't got no end, lak a woman's tongue-lashin', fo' instance, but ever'thing is got to have a finish: An' what is de end? De end is de place where ever'thing stops, ain't it? Yes, sah. De place where dere am nothin'. Well, den, so much fo' how much. It am agreed an' un'erstood den, dat de end ob anyt'ing am nex' t'ing to nuthin'. Dat's a fac' dat won't stan' no contribution, fo'ses. W'y, when yo' is readin' a book, fo' instance, an' yo' comes to de end ob it, yo' cain't read no mo' in dat book, can yo'? No, yo' cain't, fo' dat is all ob it an' besides dey ain't no mo'. But now, to git to mah reg'lah miscourse—I'se a-gwine a-prove to yo'all exclusively by Mistah Clymah's own statements dat a pig's tail ain't no mo' po'k dan a fairy tale am mutton. Now den, I ain't so well acquainted wid ole Dan'el myse'f as my exponent claims he am, but I knows one t'ing, dat yo' is apt not to paid no

dissension to while ago an' dat am dis: po'k am de meat or *flesh* ob swine. Did yo' all git dat? De *flesh* ob swine. I axes ebber one ob yo' now, single or mis'able, is dey any flesh about a pig's tail? De aus'er am mos' deplorably—"No!" I defies my exponents to bring in a pig's tail befo' dis highly intelligent body ob peepul an' show dem one bit ob flesh about it. It cain't be did. Evahbody dat knows anyt'ing knows dat a pig's tail am nuthin' in dis worl' nor de worl' to come but a bunch ob hair an' hide an' a wad ob bone an' gristle. Dat am a fack dat will remain indiscrutable until de sun quits settin' an' hatches off an' de membahs ob de infirmative hab got as thin as a gnat's bristle tryin' to lib on po'k chops made out ob pig's tails. I thanks yo'. [*Sits.*]

CHAIRMAN. De nex' speakah will be anuddah membah ob de infirmative. I now has de ambition ob traducin' to yo' all, Miss Gloria Swamsome.

GLORIA. Mistah Chai'man an' de rest ob yo' niggahs, I feels mahsef entiahly inetiquette to de great question befo' us, one an' all. Howsomevah, I is gwineter expectorate yo' all to gib me yo' moron intelligence fo' a mattah ob a few minutes while I 'lucidates 'pon de 'luminatin' issue befo' de meetin'. Now, fo'kses, I aims to prove dat a pig's tail *am* po'k by dat good ole reliarble method knowed to scholarsds as 'limination. Now 'limination am de process ob castin' away all dat save which an' besides dat dat ain't no good, an' dat ain't right an' propah. How does de cook keep fum cookin' aigs dat'd ra'r up on deir hin' laigs an' knock yo' fo' a row ob tom'stones? W'y, he 'liminates 'em, dat's how. How does de Holy 'Cordin' Angel keep de names ob de crap shootahs an' chicken stealahs fum among dem ob de blessed lam's? He 'liminates 'em, dat's how. I tells yo' dat ef anyting ain't nuthin' else but one certain somethin', den it's boun' an' compelled to be dat

somethin', by all de laws ob grav'ty, chemics an human natuah. So den, les' see 'bout de question. Yes, sah, I deserts ag'in—le's see 'bout de pig's tail. Am a pig's tail beef? No. It ain't nary bit beef. Am it mutton? Not on yo' life. Could it by any kin' o' perchance be classed as veal? Not a chance in de worl' to say so. Can us call it goat meat? Not wid any measuah ob acrobacy. Would it be venison? Evahbody knows bettah dan dat. Am it fish? Not enough dat yo' c'n tell it. Might it by any chance be classifried as chicken? Dey ain't no cullud pusson gonna make sich a ignomendous mistake as dat. In fac', is dey any class or fo'm ob meat or flesh dat yo' could even compare a pig's tail wid besides po'k? Dere posolutely am not. Yo' knows, an' I knows, dat dere ain't nuthin' else in dis whole Juniverse dat eben looks lak a pig's tail, ceptin' de way certain small gals fixes deir hair an' ob co'se yo' couldn't make nuthin' dere by way ob comparison. So, den, ef a pig's tail ain't beef nor veal nor mutton nor venison nor fish nor chicken nor any othah kin' or class ob meat, it mus' undutifully be [*pauses for emphasis*] heah me now, when I says, it mus' undutifully be—*po'k*. [*Sits.*]

CHAIRMAN. It now becomes mah fu'thah pleasuah to produce to yo' all de final an' las' speakah not only fo' de neckertiff but de las' one ob de debate. It am mos' fit-tin' an' ordinary dat a woman should hab de las' wud, ain't it? Well, den, I now produces to yo' all Miss Eazey Dee Lighted, ob de neckertiff. Miss Eazey Dee, yo' has de consanction ob de chaih to promulgate yo' hostilities.

EAZEY. Mistah Chaiahman, hon'able judges, wordy opponents, ladies an' night buhds, I feels it to be an unre-served honah dat am restowed upon me to be permitted as it were to be allowed to close dis concussion. Howsom-evah, on de contrary notwithstanding, I wishes to deplore

my omnipotence at de beginnin' an' ax yo' all to remembah dat ef I advances any points in mah argument dat it will be due to de ovahwhammin' evidence in favoh ob de neckertiff an' not to any undah-ord-nary accomplices ob mine. As a membah ob de denyin' side ob dis heah conflagration, I fi'mly an' fixedly believes dat a pig's tale *am not po'k*. As one ob de milliums ob intelligent votahs an' also, likewise an' accorjinly, as a private denizen, I feels de same way. An' ea'se fo' why? Mah reasons am ominently plain an' simple. Let me esplain. To divert once mo' to our ole frien' Webstah, fo' de meanin' ob de wuds used in our question, we finds de wud *tale* means *a story*, or l-e-g-e-n-d, leg-end. Dat am enuff, it seems to me, to demolish all doubts fum anybody's min', bout de properzition. Yo' sees dat de wud, lak many othahs in ouah lexington, has two meanin's. Take eithah one ob dem, howsomevah, an' yo' cain't git no po'k out uv it. To begince wid de fust, meanin' *story*. Dere am a *story* in de fust readah about a pig. Dat would be a *pig's tale*, wouldn't it? But Ise heah to espostulate to yo' dat yo' could read dat story till yo' got as gray as a rat, an' yo' lips nevah would git de least bit greasy wid po'k. Dat's a fack, too. Den take de meanin' last mentioned—leg-end, whereby *pig's tale* would be constrowed to read: *pig's leg-end*. What am dat? Why, dat am not no nuthin' mo' nor othahwise dan de end ob a hog's leg. An' goin' mo' distance into de case, what am de end ob a hog's leg? Why, de answer to dat am boun' to revolve down to de hog's hoof. Now den, it only remains to be said dat anybody wid a weak min' an' a strong digestive system c'n eat slices ob fried hog hoof an' call it po'k, ef dey chooses, but I says, "*No.*" I'd jest as soon eat tu'nip greens an' toothpicks an' swear it wuz 'possum.

No sah, I defirms to yo' one an' all, a pig's tale absotively an' posolutely *am not po'k*.

GLORIA [*rising*]. Mistah Chairman, I rises on de p'int ob common intelligence.

EAZEY. Well, you'd better set back down, den, ef that's all yo' got to go on.

CHAIRMAN. What you taken inter yo' haid to say, Miss Swamsome?

GLORIA. I wishes to say fo' de benefit ob de judges ob dis rebate dat my opponent Miss Lighted made a mistake when she looked in de dic'shunary an' got a-holt uv de wrong tail. De wud us is usin' is—

CHAIRMAN. I'll be dispelled to call yo' to ordah, Miss Swamsome. All arguments is s'posed to be closed.

HIRAM. Dat's right, too, Mistah Chairman. Us objects to any furdur interference wid de mental meanderin's ob de hon'able judges who is in all probability now neahly ready to gib us de incision in ouah favoh.

JULIUS. Yo's got one incision now dat needs to be closed up. Dat's yo' mouf.

CHAIRMAN. Comè to ordah, gem'mans. Come to ordah. I reman's dat yo' does. As wuz befo' stated, all arguments is ovah now escept bemong de jedges, who will now attire demse'ves to some seerut place an' prepare deir report on de arguments dey's heahed.

CURTAIN

NOTE. If so desired the judges' decisions may be called for and read to the audience.

THE SONS OF THE OLD GRAY MULE

CHARACTERS

HEAD KICKER	NEXT BEST KICKER
WORN OUT KICKER	DRIVER BOSS
INNER HALTER BOY	OUTER HALTER BOY
KEEPER OF THE HARNESS	KEEPER OF THE CURRYCOMB
CANDIDATE FOR MEMBERSHIP	STABLE BOSS
WIFE OF CANDIDATE	

SCENE. The stage is arranged to represent a shabby lodge room by placing an old table, desk, or large box at Rear-center facing audience, and two long benches, one extending along each side of stage, slightly widening at front. Appropriate effect may be secured by hanging a mule skull on the wall directly behind and above the HEAD KICKER'S desk. Additional "emblems" might be dried hoofs, etc. on side walls.

Curtain rises to disclose HEAD KICKER seated behind desk, others standing or sitting about.

HEAD KICKER [*raps desk; all sit. Then HEAD KICKER rises*]. De Mos' Ancient an' Hono'able Ordah of de Sons of de Old Gray Mule am about to open its rambunctions. All dat knows deirse'ves to be membahs stay right heah in de stall. All othahs please back out befo' yo' gits kicked out.

CANDIDATE. Guess heah's whah I bettah go in reverse. [*Rises, exit Right.*]

HEAD KICKER. Now, bruddahs, stan', while de Stable Boss takes up de password. Let ebry membah gib de word dat he tinks am mos' fittin' an' propah. Bruddah Stable Boss, yo' kin start wid me.

[STABLE BOSS rises and goes to HEAD KICKER, then to all others in succession. Each gives word in loud whisper.]

HEAD KICKER. Le's git in de collah.

NEXT BEST KICKER. Git ap, mule.

WORN OUT KICKER. Trabble on.

DRIVER BOSS. Pick 'em up fastah an' set 'em down fahthah apaht.

INNER HALTER BOY. Go 'long, sah.

OUTER HALTER BOY. Don' swaller dem bits.

KEEPER OF THE HARNESS. Hol' yo' haid up an' keep yo' hoofs down.

KEEPER OF THE CURRYCOMB. Lay yo' yeahs back an' kick up yo' heels.

[Stable Boss returns to position directly in front of Head Kicker. Places base of thumbs to sides of his head and wiggles hands back and forth in imitation of mule's ears, then kicks backward with both feet at same time.]

STABLE BOSS. Mos' wuthy an' Hon'able Head Kickah, I fin's all qualificated.

HEAD KICKER. Well dun, Bruddah Stable Boss. Now what am yo' passwud?

STABLE BOSS. Mine am, "Wo, mule, yo' shoes am kicked loose."

HEAD KICKER. Le's now sing ouah lodge hymn.

[ALL sing to tune of OLD GRAY MARE]

ALL [*sing*].

The Ole Gray Mule's gwine-a be what he used to be,
 Be what he used to be, be what he used to be,
 The Old Gray Mule's gonna be what he used to be,
 Many long years ago.

Chorus

Many long yeahs ago, many long yeahs ago,
 The Old Gray Mule's gonna be what he used to be,
 Be what he used to be, be what he used to be.
 The Old Gray Mule's gonna be what he used to be
 Many long yeahs ago.

[*ALL sit.*]

KEEPER OF THE HARNESS. Bruddah Head Kicker, befo' we goes mo' distance wid dis meetin', I wants to remark a few sayin's wid yo' kin' commission an' percent.

HEAD KICKER. Go ahead, Bruddah Keepah ob de Haltah. We all lubs to heah yo' fo' when yo' mouf opens, yo' brains shet up.

KEEPER OF THE HARNESS. Pausin' to gib thanks fo' de splendiferous complimication jest gib to me, I wants to observe on what Ise seen. I has ref'rence to de sad want an' cryin' need ob dis heah omnificent body ob de Mos' Ancient an' Hon'able Ordah ob de Sons ob de Old Gray Mule fo' an excessity dat we cain't git 'long widout much longah. To splanify mahse'f funder and come mo' neah makin' mahse'f cleah, exquisite an' undahstood, I begs to ask dat all de membahs present who indulges in de pastime of shootin' craps, please reah up on deir hin' laigs an' stan' till counted. [*Every one stands.*] Bruddah Head Kicker, yo' sees de situation ob de consekences. Now, in view ob all dese fac's, I moves dat we has some garboons in dis heah lodge.

KEEPER OF THE CURRYCOMB. Amen, Bruddah. I two times de motion.

HEAD KICKER. A motion am fully made an' backed up dat we hab some garboons in ouah lodge. Any yeahmahks to be made by anybody on de subjeck.

NEXT BEST KICKER. Bruddah Head Kickah.

HEAD KICKER. Bruddah Nex' Bes' Kickah.

NEXT BEST KICKER. I jest wants ter take dis heah opperchunity to express mahse'f to de effect dat Ise in hahty sympathy, agreement an' conjunctivity wid Bruddah Keepah ob de Haltah in dat us sholy do needs some garboons. Us needs two at least in dis ordah.

WORN OUT KICKER. Bruddah Head Kickah.

HEAD KICKER. Bruddah Wore Out Kickah.

WORN OUT KICKER. I guess I has a right to make talk heah wid my mouf ef I wants to. I pays my dues when Ise got de money aftah hittin' 'em natchel long enough at a time, an' I comes to meetin's as of'en as I c'n slip off fum de ole womern. An' heah's jest what I wants to say: Dis garboon bizness am all a pack o' foolishment, dat's what. It am nuthin' no mo' nor no less dan a big lot ob style dat has been got up heah in de last few yeahs an' I ain't got no use fo' sich doin's. De ole fashioned ways am de bes' an' mos' sensible, 'cordin to my ways o' seein'. De frills an' fancies ob modern life dat am seizin' onto de hearts an min's ob de peepul lak a good houn' seizes onto a 'possum am de ruination ob de oncoming generation. Yas, sah, bruddahs, I tells all ob yo' we has gotta git back to de ways ob God, ef we 'spects anyt'ing fum Him in de great heahaftah beyond de present. Us sholy is. An' whoevah heahed ob de Lawd gibbin' his percent to any sich new fangled convention as a garboon? No sah, I ain' gwine allow mah vote an' influence to be used to constall no sich thing.

[INNER HALTER BOY *and* OUTER HALTER BOY *rise at same time.*]

BOTH. Bruddah Head Kickah.

HEAD KICKER. Hol' on a minit dar, Bruddah Inner Haltah Boy an' Bruddah Outah Haltah Boy. One at a time, please. I cain't heah but one at a time.

INNER HALTER BOY. Peahs lak yo' orter heah bofe ob us. Yo's got two yeahs on yo' haid, ain't yo'? A yeah fo' me an' a yeah fo' him?

OUTER HALTER BOY. But I don' wants him to heah mah say dat a-way. What I said would go in on one side an' what yo' said would go in at the othah, but yo's would 'mount to sich a little dat mine'd go right on through.

INNER HALTER BOY. Looka heah, niggah! Does yo' mean to 'lude to me by *yo'*?

OUTER HALTER BOY. I don' hafta 'lude to yo'. Evahbody knows who Ise talkin 'bout widout it.

INNER HALTER BOY [*advances*]. See heah, black man, yo' jest come yo'se'f outside dis heah lodge room an' I'll knock yo' plum fum Amazin' Grace to a floatin' oppo'-chunity.

OUTER HALTER BOY [*pulls out razor*]. Heah we goes, den, ef yo' wants t' settle de ahgment dat a-way. Ise got de 'cision right heah wid me an' it's easy t' see dat yo' am dun lost yo' side ob de case. Open de do', somebody, an' let me make choc'late colohed shredded wheat outa dis coon.

KEEPER OF THE HARNESS. Say looka heah, Bruddah Outah Haltah Boy, what am yo' gwine ter do?

OUTER HALTER BOY. Ise gwine a cut dat black man plum in two.

KEEPER OF THE CURRYCOMB. Now, ef yo' wants t' do some cuttin', why don' yo' cuts dat foolishment out an' put up dat meat cleavah yo's got dere, so's we c'n go on wid ouah argification an' make a satsiment ob dis case to ouah settlefaction?

INNER HALTER BOY. Dat's de talk now, boys. Git dat broad swode away fum dat niggah, befo' he makes happiness to mah wife by causin' mah life inshuance to be payable.

HEAD KICKER. Ordah, bruddah's, ordah. Dat am Heaben's fust rule an' ef we's to measuah dis bunch by it right now, dey'd be sev'ral present a few inches sho't. Now I axes yo' all as gen'men an' frachernal bruddahs, t'les hab a little mo' quiet.

NEXT BEST KICKER. I removes dat we tables so much miscussion an' votes on de question befo' us.

WORN OUT KICKER. I secon's de commotion.

HEAD KICKER. It am moved an' two timed dat us tables de miscussion an' votes on de question as stated w'ile ago. All in favoh ob de commotion make it knowed by de usual sign.

[ALL *save* WORN OUT KICKER go "haw hee, haw hee," in imitation of a donkey's braying.]

HEAD KICKER. All exposed to de question make de same sign.

[WORN OUT KICKER *brays*.]

HEAD KICKER. Bruddahs, by yo' vote yo' has decided to hab garboons. Now, how many will yo' hab an' how will yo' git 'em?

KEEPER OF THE CURRYCOMB. Mistah Head Kickah.

HEAD KICKER. Mistah Keepah ob de Currycom'.

KEEPER OF THE CURRYCOMB. I makes a commotion dat we has two garboons, an' dat yo' exercises yo' obligatory omnipotence an' 'p'int's 'em yo'se'f.

KEEPER OF THE HARNESS. I secon's dat.

HEAD KICKER. All in favoh ob dat motion make it knowed by de usual mannah.

[ALL *bray.*]

HEAD KICKER. All right, now; by yo' votes once mo' yo' has laid upon my back de task ob selectin' dese highly ambiguous officers. So I now hereby exercises mah indiscretion an' 'p'int's fo' ouah garboons, Bruddah Keepah ob de Haltah an' Bruddah Keepah ob de Currycom', I b'lieves dat dey'll make good 'n's, ca'se dey's got de bigges' moufs an' c'n holler de loudest.

[*Knock is heard at door at Right. All look toward door, but no one moves. Knock is repeated louder.*]

DRIVER BOSS [*in loud whisper to STABLE BOSS*]. Somebody's outside. Go denounce him.

STABLE BOSS. I guess I don' hafta be able to look th'u wood to know dat mahse'f. Yo' go denounce 'im, ef yo' wants 'im denounced.

[*Knock is heard again, louder than before.*]

DRIVER BOSS. Bettah open dat do' befo' he t'ars it down. Whoevah dat is, sho am a knockah.

STABLE BOSS. I'll say he am. His knuckles mus' be coated wid i'on washahs. Bettah go on an' denounce dat man.

DRIVER BOSS. Ef I has to I can. [*Crosses to door.*] But I don' b'lieves dat am any man. Mus' be a billy goat.

[*Opens door and gets kicked on shins by CANDIDATE who has backed up to door and now enters, kicking backward as he comes.*]

DRIVER BOSS [*rubs shin*]. Um, golly! I said dat wuz a ole he-billy-goat, but it's wuss'n dat. Ain't nobody would do a fellah lak dat but a aig-suckin', sheep-stealin', one-eyed son of a stuffed monkey.

CANDIDATE. What's dat yo' speaks wid yo' mouf concernin' me?

DRIVER BOSS. I espressed mahse'f concernin' yo' pussonal habits, which shows a sad lack ob respeck fo' dis heah omnificent lodge.

[DRIVER BOSS *collars* CANDIDATE.]

CANDIDATE. Hol' on a minit, dar. Yo' am 'bout to squeeze cidah out uv mah Adam's apple. 'Sides dat, I nevah showed nuthin' lak what yo' said to nobody in mah life.

STABLE BOSS [*takes* CANDIDATE'S *arm*]. Now looka heah, niggah, is yo' knows who I is? Well, I'se de mos' holy, sacerd an' cantankerous Stable Boss ob dis heah chaptah ob de Mos' Ancient an Hon'able Ordah ob de Noble Sons ob de Ole Gray Mule, an' I wants yo' t' know dat Ise some tail twistah, too. Now, what bizness am yo' got, comin' to dis place an' pawin' an' kickin' lak a zeraffe, till yo' neahly knocks cuah do' down? Ansah me dat?

CANDIDATE. Yo' means, how come I come in heah, whe' all yo' Sons ob de Ole Gray Mule am hitched?

STABLE BOSS. Yassah. How come?

CANDIDATE. Oh, I jest dun dat fo' a stall.

DRIVER BOSS. Well, how come yo' wuz backed up to dat do' 'stead o' bein' head fust at it?

NEXT BEST KICKER. Dat am a fool question to ask. Anybody c'n take a look at dat niggah's feet an' see dat dey am so big he has to back up to a do' to knock on it.

WORN OUT KICKER. I s'pose, Bruddah Head Kicker, dat de po' misguided, undirected an' othahwise deluded man am desi'ous an' cravin' fo' membahship in ouah ordah. He's seekin' admittance.

CANDIDATE. Seekin' Ab who?

NEXT BEST KICKER. Ad-mittance.

CANDIDATE. *No sah.* I ain' seek Ab nobody. I jest wants ter jine dis lodge an' git pertection fum mah wife. Dat woman sholy am mean to me.

KEEPER OF THE CURRYCOMB. Po' man.

CANDIDATE. Yassah, she am de mos' crueles' thing I evah seen. W'y, dat woman am so bad dat she hab been knowed to *strike* matches, *whip* cream, an' one time she jes' simply *beat* some aigs to a foam.

KEEPER OF THE HARNESS. Well, dat ain' hu't yo' none, is it?

CANDIDATE. Jes' only dis mawnin' she hit me on de nose wid a white silk glove she's got.

HEAD KICKER. Git out, niggah. A li'l' ole silk glove orten to hu't nobody.

CANDIDATE. Yassah, but she had huh fist in dat one.

HEAD KICKER. Heah now, heah now, dat am enough foolishment outa yo'. Le's git down to bizness, bruddahs. Shall us take this man into ouah sassiety?

OUTER HALTER BOY. Peahs t' me lak he's already in.

INNER HALTER BOY. What fo' is yo' all time wanta show yo' ignorance? He means, is us gwine ter make a Son ob de Ole Gray Mule outa dis can-idade.

OUTAH HALTER BOY. Well, roun' de head an' yeahs, looks lak de Lawd am dun dat.

KEEPER OF THE HARNESS. I moves dat we ascepts him as a membah ob ouah lodge an' gibs him all de pertection us can fum his wife.

KEEPER OF THE CURRYCOMB. Well, I pussonally knows dat female battleship o' his'n an' ef us pertects him, us'll hafta fo'm a rifle squad. But I secon's de motion.

HEAD KICKER. How many is in favoh ob dat motion?

[ALL *bray*]

HEAD KICKER. Bruddah Stable Boss an' Bruddah Drivah Boss, us is about to ballast on de prospective can'date. Will yo' all please reprove him fum de august presence while us does so?

[*Bruddahs Stable Boss and Driver Boss wiggle hands at side of heads, kick backward with both feet at once and conduct CANDIDATE from the room.*]

CANDIDATE [*comes to sudden halt at door and faces HEAD KICKER*]. Now looka heah, peepul. Ise a free bo'n Ame'-ican sen sen an' Ise jest as black as anybody. Yo'all ain't got no right to insult me lak dis.

INNER HALTER BOY. Dat's all right, big boy. Dey ain't nobody gwine ter hahm yo'. Us jest craves de pleasuah ob yo' absence away fum us w'ile us ballasts on yo' reciprocation.

CANDIDATE. Aw right, den. Dat am a hoss ob a dif'rent colah, an' ef yo' all don' wants me in yo' lodge, yo' won't kick me roun' heah no mo' presently.

[*Exeunt DRIVER BOSS, STABLE BOSS and CANDIDATE*]

HEAD KICKER. Bruddahs, we am now about to entah upon de mos' solemn column an' sacred process ob votin' on a can'idate. Think well ob how yo' votes, not only fo' de sake ob ouah ordah, but also fo' sake ob dat po' man's back. Also remembah dat de votin' sign on can'idates am a dif'rent thing fum othah mattahs. Am yo' all ready?

WORN OUT KICKER. Reddy's ca'f.

HEAD KICKER. Now, all dat am in favoh ob asceptin' de can'idate will please come to de stan'in' persition an paw three times, as is de custom.

NEXT BEST KICKER. Who's gwine ter cuss some?

HEAD KICKER. Don' interrupture dis meetin' wid yo' ignorant bumbulations no mo'. Go ahead, bruddahs, an' vote.

[*ALL stand and paw three times.*]

HEAD KICKER. By yo' vote yo' hab decided t' ascept de can'idate an' offah him de pertection ob de ordah. Brud-dah Nex' Bes' Kickah, go an' so info'm dem on de outside an' tell dem t' come on in.

[*Exit* NEXT BEST KICKER.]

NEXT BEST KICKER [*in loud voice outside*]. Yo' all is desiahed to be no longah absent away fum de 'sembly hall, but to make yo' appea'ance fo'thwith immejiately.

[*Enter* DRIVER BOSS, STABLE BOSS, CANDIDATE, and NEXT BEST KICKER.]

CANDIDATE. How did de vote go?

OUTER HALTER BOY. Up an' down three times.

DRIVER BOSS. Yo' wuz admitted to membahship an' we is now ready to place upon yo' de 'nitiation.

CANDIDATE. No, sah. Yo' ain't gwine do no sich a come-off. Ain't gonna hab nobody's 'nitials on me. Ef I hab got to be branded to jine dis lodge, I renigs right now, an' don' wanta be no Sen Ob de Ole Gray Mule.

KEEPER OF THE CURRYCOMB. Us ain't gonna brand yo', niggah. Us hab jest got some ceremony to gib yo'.

CANDIDATE. Well, den, ef yo's gwineter gib me some ob Sarah's money, I'll take dat.

STABLE BOSS. As de mos' wo'thy an disinfected Stable Boss ob dis heah Chaptah ob De Mos' Ancient an' Hon'able Ordah ob de Son's ob de Ole Gray Mule, I now prefo'ms my 'ficial duty as de fust pa't ob de ceremony.

[*Blindfolds* CANDIDATE *with huge bandana.*]

CANDIDATE. Um-m-m, yo' han's sholy does smells fishy, whedder yo' duty do or not.

DRIVER BOSS. An' as fo' gibbin' yo' some o' Sarah's money, us'll gib yo' all ob ebirting we got.

WORN OUT KICKER. I say we will.

KEEPER OF THE HARNESS. An' I, as de mos' wo'thy an' inspected Keepah ob de Ha'nness, does mah pa't. [*Places halter around neck of CANDIDATE.*]

KEEPER OF THE CURRYCOMB. Now I, as de mos' wo'thy an' lugubrious Keepah ob de Currycom', does mah pa't, too. [*Rubs currycomb vigorously up and down the spine of CANDIDATE.*]

CANDIDATE [*jumps*]. Hey! Golly, Moses! Am yo' tryin' t' unravel mah backbones? Dat felt lak a section han' bein' drug ovah rocky new groun'.

OUTER HALTER BOY. Dat wuz jest ter loosen up yer disposition.

CANDIDATE. Man, it dun loosened up mah disposition an' ha'f mah appetite.

INNER HALTER BOY. Yo' am now about to go on a long jou'ney.

CANDIDATE. Looka heah, I ain't gonna git on no Jenny. I thought dis wuz de Ordah ob de Mule.

INNER HALTER BOY. Nobody said nuthin' 'bout no Jenny. Yo' is goin' on a *jou'ney*. Dat means yo' is gonna take a trip.

CANDIDATE. Man alive, I'll hafta ax mah wife 'bout dat.

NEXT BEST KICKER. Nevah min' yo' wife.

CANDIDATE. I don' *want to* but I *has to*, anyhow. Sho nuff, bruddahs, I'd jest love t' go on dat trip wid yo' all, but mah wife'd jest natcherally make mashed pertaters outa me ef I did.

WORN OUT KICKER. Jest disremembah dat yo' wife am in existence. Us'll take de 'sponsibility fo' yo' safety.

CANDIDATE. Bettah take sumpin' strongah dan dat, ef yo' spects t' do anyt'ing wid dat woman.

HEAD KICKER. Bring in de genoowine Ole Gray Mule.

[*Inner HALTER BOY and Outer HALTER BOY go out and return carrying a rail or pole. They snort and stamp in imitation of a mule.*]

HEAD KICKER. Prepare yose'f to mount yo' steed.

CANDIDATE. Wheah is no steed?

DRIVER BOY. Whoa, whoa, I say. Heah he am. [*Leads CANDIDATE up to rail.*] Whoa dere, now, mule. Let dis man on. He am weary an' faint, an' he wants to ride.

CANDIDATE. Ef I knowed mah wife wuz anywhe's close, I'd be faintah dan what I is now. I tell yo', bruddahs, I guess I bettah not go.

STABLE BOSS. Git on dat mule. 'Yo' wife ain't gwine ter hu't nobody.

CANDIDATE. Dat's jest a dream yo' had outa yo' big toe. When dat woman gits started, she's not only hostile—she's cannabalistic.

NEXT BEST KICKER. Am yo' gonna git on or is us gonna hafta put yo' on?

[*STABLE BOSS and DRIVER BOSS seize CANDIDATE and throw him astride pole.*]

WORN OUT KICKER. Yo' am mounted now. Hol' tight to what yo' got an' git some mo', ef yo' can.

[*INNER HALTER BOY and OUTER HALTER BOY jounce pole up and down with CANDIDATE. Others make great fuss.*]

INNER HALTER BOY. Whoa, mule! Is yo' los' yo' distempah completely?

OUTER HALTER BOY. Set tight, big boy, an' don't git oxcited.

KEEPER OF THE CURRYCOMB. Hook 'im, cow han'. Yo' wuz bo'n to be a bronc-bustah.

[CANDIDATE is finally thrown off pole onto floor. He falls on his hands and knees or gets to his hands and knees, feet toward audience. Before starting he was secretly equipped with a tin bucket lid in the seat of his trousers.]

HEAD KICKER. Look out, man, dat mule am comin' back. [Kicks CANDIDATE, making tin lid ring.]

CANDIDATE falls forward on his face. When he rises to original position, NEXT BEST KICKER kicks him. This is repeated until all have kicked him.

NEXT BEST KICKER. Somebody ketch dat mule. [Kicks CANDIDATE.]

WORN OUT KICKER. Don't let de man git hu't. [Kicks CANDIDATE.]

DRIVER BOSS. Come back heah, mule. [Kicks CANDIDATE.]

STABLE BOSS. Hab mah influences obah yo'. [Kicks CANDIDATE.]

INNER HALTER BOY. Ise s'prised at dat mule. [Kicks CANDIDATE.]

OUTER HALTER BOY. Ain't dat a shame? [Kicks CANDIDATE.]

KEEPER OF THE HARNESS. Behave yo'se'f, mule. [Kicks CANDIDATE.]

KEEPER OF THE CURRYCOMB. Yo' mannahs am a sight, mule. [Kicks CANDIDATE.]

[CANDIDATE springs to his feet and tears blindfold from his eyes.]

CANDIDATE. Hey! Youse guys, looka heah! Ise gonna hab eber one ob yo' all 'rested fo' salt an' buttah an' attemp' to smear.

INNER HALTER BOY. Yo's all right, now. Us hab got con-tral ob ouah mule ag'in.

CANDIDATE. Well, yo' all had sho bettah keep control uv 'im, too. I'll be Swannee Ribbah, ef dat mule cain't kick almost as ha'd as mah wife.

HEAD KICKER. Well, dat pa't ob de ceremony am ovah. All dat remains t' be did now is t' lead yo' up to de trough an' let yo' eat de sacerd food ob de Ole Gray Mule. Den yo' becomes a full-fledged membah.

CANDIDATE. Say, dat food sholy mus' hab dynamite in it, ain't it?

[Loud knock is heard at Right. All look toward door, but no one moves.]

NEXT BEST KEEPER. Somebody amat de do'.

CANDIDATE. Jerusalem artichokes! No! Dat ain't somebody, dat's mah wife.

WORN OUT KICKER. Open de do', befo' she tear it down.

HEAD KICKER. Evahbody stay in deir place an' remain quiet a while.

CANDIDATE. Not me. Ef Ise t' stay in heah, mah place would be in de graveyard an' I'd be quiet a mighty long time. *[Exit at opposite door from knock.]*

[Enter WIFE of CANDIDATE, just as her husband disappears.]

WIFE. Ise lookin' fo' mah man. Is none ob yo' all seed 'im? I wants him ter home, whe' evah one ob yo' all orter be.

HEAD KICKER. Dis heah am a secret sassiety, lady, dat yo' has included on. It am strickly an' posilutely agin de rules fo' a lady to entah dese sacerd presunks, so I will now hafta ax yo' to vacate immejiately.

WIFE. Say looka heah, don' yo' persume t' gib me none o' yo' sass. Ise walked right ovah lotsa mo' impo'tant peepul dan yo' is, huntin' somebody to cuah mah lonesomeness.

HEAD KICKER [*severely*]. Dis heah am a man's lodge. Will yo' please retiah?

WIFE. Say, man! Who at is yo' addressin' dem rema'ks? Ef it's me yo' is referrin' to, well, yo' c'n jest depen' on it dat I'll git out when I gits good an' ready an' not befo' eithah.

HEAD KICKER. It seems lak dat de peace an' dignity ob ouah magnolius ordah hab bofe been desecrated to de p'int dat somethin' orter be dun, an' I, fo' one, proposes dat somethin' do be done.

NEXT BEST KICKER. Le's not be rash, now bruddahs. Gib de woman a chance.

WIFE. Yo' am de one dat am *takin'* de chance yo'se'f, yo' dish-faced sa'dine, yo'.

NEXT BEST KICKER. Lady, us has tried to esplain to yo' in a reas'nable mannah dat yo' wuz not wanted heah. In fack, nuthin' cain't be made outa what yo' has done but tresspassin'.

WIFE. Who said dat, anyhow? Who wuz it gonna make a pass at me? I'll show yo' saddle-cullud coons who t' make passes at. I'll do wuss'n Samson dun de Phillistines.

[*She starts toward HEAD KICKER, who retreats. She snatches mule's skull from wall and chases everyone from room. Plenty of comic business can be introduced here, such as the members of the lodge falling over each other and over benches, getting their suspenders (purposely) fastened together and trying to run in opposite directions, pretending to be glued to the floor, etc., etc. During all of the melee the WIFE swings right and left with the mule's head. At the height of the confusion and excitement the curtain should fall.*]

NOTE: The "glued to the spot" trick can be accomplished by having one of the players nail or tack a small strip of sheet metal on the sole of each shoe, also a pair of hooks or tongues to fit same to the floor. Shortly before the riot begins the character so equipped manages to engage the hooks in the cleats on his shoes without attracting attention; then he can seemingly make strenuous efforts to lift his feet without result, or even lean far over without falling.

TEASING THE TEACHER

CHARACTERS

MORRIS, CHESTER, ALBERT, THE PROFESSOR

Scene: A Schoolroom.

Discovered: MORRIS, CHESTER, and ALBERT.

MORRIS. Le's put a pin on 'is chair.

CHESTER. All right, le's do. You gotta pin?

ALBERT. No, we'd better not do that.

MORRIS. Why not, sissy?

CHESTER. Are you skeered?

ALBERT. I'm not skeered of either one of you! But I am skeered to do that.

CHESTER. Well, why?

ALBERT. 'Cause th' P'fessor knows we always get here first, so he'd know it wuz us that done it; an' he'd thrash the sap out uf all three of us.

CHESTER. That is right.

MORRIS. Hadn't thought of that.

CHESTER. Well, le's play some kind of a stunt on him this morning.

MORRIS. What'll we pull?

ALBERT. I know—

MORRIS. }
CHESTER. } What?

ALBERT. Le's git off a gag on 'im.

CHESTER. A'right, le's do.

MORRIS. What gag would he bite at, though?

ALBERT. Well, you know he likes rabbits.

CHESTER. He sure does.

ALBERT. Well, tell him we know a good way to catch one.

MORRIS. Aw, everybody knows that.

CHESTER. Sure, by the tail.

ALBERT. No, that's not right either.

MORRIS }
CHESTER } [together]. Well, how then?

ALBERT. Why, hide behind the garden and make a noise like a turnip.

MORRIS. That's a good one.

CHESTER. You bet it is.

ALBERT. Yonder comes the P'fessor now.

MORRIS. You spring it on 'im, Albert.

CHESTER. We'll help you feed 'im up to it.

ALBERT. A'right.

Enter PROFESSOR.

PROFESSOR. Good morning, boys.

BOYS. Good mornin', P'fessor.

PROFESSOR. A beautiful morning, boys.

MORRIS [confused]. Yes, sir, it are—I mean *is*.

CHESTER [nudging ALBERT]. I never seen—I mean saw a more beautifuler one.

ALBERT. Ought to be fine for catchin' rabbits, sir.

PROFESSOR. Rabbits? Oh yes, I suppose so. But I never have much success in snaring them.

MORRIS and CHESTER nudge ALBERT.

ALBERT. Would you really like to have a rabbit, sir?

PROFESSOR. Indeed I would.

MORRIS. We catch one nearly ever' day.

CHESTER. I caught two yesterday.

PROFESSOR. But they don't seem to fancy my traps, so I rarely catch one.

ALBERT. Oh, we don't use traps, P'fessor.

PROFESSOR. Why how do you catch them, then?

ALBERT. Hide behind the garden and make a noise like a turnip.

PROFESSOR [*looks at boys steadily without cracking a smile*]. Oh, but I could tell you boys a better one than that.

BOYS. How?

PROFESSOR. Squat down in a cabbage patch and look natural.

CURTAIN

JOE GETS A JOB

(Lithuanian Dialect Monologue)

Sure, Mike, buddy. My name he's Joe: You can spell him that, Joe. Sure, I'm know you can. That's a' right, then. My ledy, she's sometime call me Joseph. That's a'right, too. I no keer por that, buddy, eef she no call me that too much close together wit' another sometime joosta same like. That's no goodt. I no like. Gosh Ann! She no call me that only sometime she been leetle bit madt to me. That's no goodt. Too much madt to me I no like.

Joosta you call me Joe, buddy. That's better. Eef you justa call me Joe, then I know you no madt to me. A'right, that's good. I like. Eef you say me Joseph—look oudt! mebbe you been madt to me too. No goodt, no goodt. I no like.

I nefer bother by nobody before he do me something. Eef he do me something I no like, I'm say first, "No, no, buddy! Don' do that. That's no goodt like frien', buddy." Eef he say, "A'right Joe, I'm no do that some more," I no keer. Still goodt frien's we keepit. A'right, that's goodt. I like.

Mebbe sometime, though, eef he's badt man, he say me, "You Joe, shut up. I'm do this *myself*," then I'm make me madt. I'm say, "A'right you, you no my boss tell me shut up. I'm no shut up. You no goodt. Better keepit my way oudt." Eef he then keepit my way oudt, a'right, I no bother; but I no like.

Eef he no keepit my way oudt an' comin' before me sometime again make smart—Look oudt! Look oudt! I'm

whole lots madt. Gosh Ann! I'm what you call 'im—crazy. I'm hurt. I ketch 'im. Mebbe, I dummo, kill 'im. I no like.

No, no, buddy, you no skeer me now. I no hurt you. I no kill. Joosta tellin' you, dis other fellows how I do him eef I madt. I no madt to you, buddy. Good frien', you. I like. Long time I live here this place, nefer hurt nobody when he's my frien'—good man like you. Joosta badt man I no like. You no badt man. I know. I can't much explain, buddy, but I'm see you joosta first time this to-day. Quick, like that, I'm like you. I'm see, I'm look, I'm like. Joosta same. I'm look to your face, I'm say me, "Goodt man, dis fellow's. I like. Sure Mike, buddy, I no lie to you. I'm like, all th' time this kinda man.

You what? You wantit fellows like me to work in coal mine? Sure, Mike, buddy, I been—what you say? understandin' that. Sure, Mike bu— What you say? No callin' me, you buddy? Callin' Meester Kirk? Sure, Mike, Meester Kirk. I'm lotsa times workit in coal mines. I no skeer por coal mines under ground. Sure, Mike, I'm like goodt job, make much moneys. I'm work hard, too Meester Kirk, loadit lotsa coal, me. Sure, Mike, bu—I mean, what you say? Meester Kirk, I'm got wan tools. I bring when I comin' this coal mine. To-morrow you say comin' dis place, start workin' dis coal mine, loadin' coal? Sure, Mike, you betcha, Meester Kirk, I no bringin' no open lights dis coal mine. I know him, this safety lamp. I see. I use before. A'right. Labonix, Meester Kirk, good-by. You goodt man. I like.

NERO AND NED

CHARACTERS

NERO *and* NED, gentlemen of color and choler.

As curtain rises NERO saunters onto stage.

NERO. Good ev'nin', fo'kses. How's yo' conduc'? Is yo' all seed (names director of program)? Yeah, I sees 'm now. How yo' percolatin', Mistah _____?

DIRECTOR. Well enough, Nero.

NERO. Dat's good, Mistah _____. Ise mighty awfull glad o' dat. But what does yo' wants me t' do up heah, now?

DIRECTOR. Just keep your patience, Nero. Ned will be here, too, pretty soon, and you boys can entertain the audience.

NERO. Now Mistah _____, yo' knows I ain't no doctah. I ain't got no patients.

DIRECTOR. Just wait for Ned, then, and entertain these people a little while.

NED is heard offstage in an attempted yodel, very muffled at first, as if far away, then becoming more distinct.

NERO. Land o' Goshen! Is somebody done went an' tied a mule in dis house?

Enter NED

NED. What's dat yo' said 'bout a mule?

NERO. Wuz dat yo' unkep' voice makin' all dat racket?

NED. What racket?

NERO. Dat gosh awfull noise dat jes' now penetrated de stillness.

NED. Is yo' 'ludin' t' mah yod'lin'?

NERO. Is dat what *yo'* calls it? Man, it sounded mo' lak a big ole papa mule in pain an' distress dan anything I knows of.

NED [offended]. Is yo' means t' git pussonal?

NERO. No, hones' Ned, I nevah would a-thought it wuz no pusson. I thought sho it wuz some animule.

NED. Niggah, yo' insinuations am obliterate an' b'sides dat dey am dis'gree'ble t' mah ap'tite. Does yo' un'erstan' dat, or is I gonna hafta emph'size it a size or two biggah?

NERO. Yo' bettah behave yo'se'f, Ned. Us is sposed t' entertain dis audience an' yo' sta'ts t' cuttin' yo'capahs de fust thing.

NED. Us is sposed t' enter train? What train? I don't see no train.

NERO. We's not gonna enter no train, niggah. What's de mattah wid yo' un'erstan'in' debility?

NED. Dat's what yo' said, wuzn't it? Said us had t' enter a train.

NERO. No, I said dat us had t' *entertain* dis intelligent lookin' audience—

NED. Yo' sholy ain't looken' at de ones I see.

NERO. Now, when I sez entertain, I means dat us has got t' do a sorta di'log fo' 'em.

NED. Who? Me? I ain't gonna die on no log fo' nobody.

NERO. Yo' still fails t' comprehen'.

NED. I don't care nothin' 'bout countin' no hens, I said dat I wuzn't gonna die on no log.

NERO. Well, den s'pose I puts it in a dif'runt way. Us is got t' 'muse dese peepul wid some kinda conversation.

NED. Conversation?

NERO. Yeah, conversation. Talk.

- NED. Oh well, den dat's a hoss ob a dif'runt colah. Talk am cheap; but what's us gonna talk about?
- NERO. Oh, mos' any ole thing, I guess. What's eatin' on yo' min' t'night?
- NED. Not a thing. Dey wuz a idee sta'ted eatin' on mah min' one time, though.
- NERO. Well, what happened to it?
- NED. Why man, it jest natcherally died of starvation.
- NERO. Now, is yo' shuah dat it wuzn't only jest pa'tial sta'vation?
- NED. Well, now, yo' am de mos' educated an' indelicate lookin' one on de stage up heah, yo' orta know.
- NERO. Let that pass then. Hab yo' s'lected any subjec' fo' us t' talk 'bout yit?
- NED. No, I ain't s'lected nothin' yit. I dunno what Ise s'posed t' s'lect.
- NERO. Well, now, dere am sebral ole stan'ard subjec's dat culled comedians am sposed t' use.
- NED. Wheah's any cullad cow-meetin's?
- NERO. Wait till I gits through, will yo'? Now, as I said, dere am certain subjec's dat cullad entatainahs gen'rally rely on—
- NED. What's de use t' *re* lie? If dey lies wunst, ain't dat enough?
- NERO. Lissen t' what I says. Dese subjec's am such as "Crap Shootin'", "Possums," "Sweet Tatahs," "Tunip Greens" an' so fo'th. Now take yo' pick.
- NED. Man, I don't want no pick fo' such as dat.
- NERO. Well, what does yo' want?
- NED. I'd ruthah hab a knife an' fo'k.
- NERO. Yeah, but I means t' choose one ob dem.
- NED. I chews all mah vittles.
- NERO. I means take one ob dem subjec's an' le's *talk* 'bout it.

NED. Oh, yo' means jes take one ob dem an' talk 'bout it. I don't gits t' eat none ob 'em?

NERO. Ob co'se not. Dis am neithah de time nor de place t' eat.

NED. Niggah, dere's wheah yo' education am a failuah. I kin eat twenty-fo' houahs outa de day an' any place dat yo' c'd think ob, in any kinda shape dat c'd be mentioned 'cept standin' on mah head wid mah mouf shet, an' somebody holdin' mah nose.

NERO. Man, am yo' gonna ramble on lak dis all night?

NED. I'd be willin' t' ramble all night an' all day too, ef I knowed I'd git all de possum an' sweet tatahs an' tu'nip greens I c'd eat.

NERO. I c'n see dat dey am no longah any use t' depen' on yo' t' s'lect a subjec' an' talk 'bout it wid any sense.

NED. I ain't claimin' t' hab no big surplus 'mount ob sense, so ef yo' am so sma't an' so dead bent on habin' a subjec' s'lected, mebbe yo' bettah s'lect it yo'se'f.

NERO. All right, den, s'posin' dat I s'lects "Possums" fo' a subjec', does yo' reckon yo' c'n converse on "Possums"?

NED. I dunno 'bout dat, but I sholy kin make a meal on a good fat possum an' a little bit o' co'n dodgah.

NERO. Well, can't you talk about "Possums"?

NED. I guess I could, but I don't lak to.

NERO. Why not?

NED. 'Cause evah time I sta'ts talkin' 'bout possum, it makes mah mouf watah till Ise skeered Ise gonna drown.

NERO. All dat watah prob'ly comes offa yo' brain.

NED. Ef yo's gonna hafta git so sourcastic, le's go ahead an' talk 'bout possums.

NERO. All right den, t' sta't de mattah off, what does yo' know 'bout 'em?

NED. Man, why don't yo' ax me what is it I don't know

'bout 'em? I knows all about possums from de tip o' deir nose t' de tip o' deir tail. What does yo' know 'bout 'em?

NERO. Well, does yo' know dat a possum am a omnivorous quadruped wid an abnormal elongation ob its rear external appendage?

NED. I nevah seen none o' that breed, I guess.

NERO. Oh yes, yo' has. Dat means no mo' nor less dan dat de possum am a four-footed animal dat eats anything an' hab got an uncommon long tail.

NED. Good goshness Agnes, education am a fine thing, but I bet yo' one thing 'bout it.

NERO. Yeah, what am dat?

NED. Wid all dem big wuds, possum don' taste no bettah t' yo' dan it does t' me.

NERO. Mebbe so; but still yo' has t' admit dat it am a fine thing t' know dat am really what a def'nition ob a possum'd be.

NED. Dat may be so too; but s'posin' a feller seen one in a tree, ef he had t' think ovah all dat mess befo' he knowed what it wuz, de possum'd git in a hole an' he couldn't git 'im.

NERO. Well, in dat event it would become imperative to ascend de tree an' extricate 'im.

NED. Yeah, but who'd want t' eat a ole extricated possum?

NERO. Yo' big simp, by yo' ignorance yo' hab run de possum subjec' t' a hole in de groun'.

NED. I thought dat de possum wuz s'posed t' be up a tree.

CURTAIN

OLD SCHOOLMATES

CHARACTERS

CHARLEY, *who married and settled down in the old district.*

SAM, *who wandered away and never married.*

Both are stooped and gray and both carry canes. When curtain rises CHARLEY is discovered sitting on a goods box in ruminative manner.

Enter SAM from Right.

SAM. Why, hello, Charley White!

CHARLEY [*springing to feet*]. Sam Ball, as sure as I'm alive! How in the world are you?

They shake hands warmly.

SAM. Finer'n frog hair. How's yerself, ole hoss?

CHARLEY. 'Bout right, I reckon, ole walrus.

SAM. You're shore lookin' good.

CHARLEY. Yeah. I feel good, too. You look all right yerself. Not a day older'n you looked th' last time I saw you.

SAM. You ain't changed none, either, as I c'n see. I'd a-knowed you in a field full of cabbage.

CHARLEY. Yeah? Well, I'd be willin' t' gamble I'd a-knowed that mug o' yourn in a lot full of donkeys.

Both laugh.

SAM. Well, I c'n say one thing—you're still th' same ole Charley that a race hoss couldn't git ahead of.

CHARLEY. I'm shore glad you're back. Gonna stay a while this time?

SAM. Yeah, think I'll spend th' rest of my days here in th' ole settlement, now.

CHARLEY. Well, that's good. You been gone a long time. How long has it been since th' las' time you wuz here?

SAM. Quite a spell, I reckon. I don't exactly remember.

CHARLEY. I c'n count it up. Le's set down, here, an' rest a spell, anyhow.

SAM. All right. I'm a little bit tired an' wore out.

Both sit.

CHARLEY. Oh, I ain't much tired. I c'n allays think better, though, settin', than I can standin'.

SAM. Well, I been on my feet quite a bit t'day, an' y' know that ain't very good on fallen arches.

CHARLEY. No, nor *rheumytism*. I got my feet wet four or five years ago, an' I ain't never got over it yit.

SAM. Too bad. Tch, tch. [*Makes clucking sound between teeth.*]

CHARLEY. I see you hafta have a stick, too.

SAM. Well, I guess I don't reelly hafta have it; but it's a big help. Y' see, I fell off'n a haystack three years ago, come this summer, an' busted up my feet purty bad.

CHARLEY. Well, I declare! Y' ever try these here arch supports?

SAM. Hafta have 'em all th' time.

CHARLEY. I've heared they's purty good.

SAM. They he'p some. Say, do you still live in th' same place?

CHARLEY. Yeah, same ole place. Been livin' right there goin' on twenty-six years. An' that makes *me* think, have you ever got married yit?

SAM [*grins*]. Nope. Still sane an' single.

CHARLEY. I started t' count while ago, how long it had been since you left for th' west.

SAM. We did start that an' then drop it, didn't we?

CHARLEY. Now le's see. You left th' fall my barn burnt down, right after I wuz married.

SAM. I c'n remember that burnin' barn as well as if it wuz yisterday.

CHARLEY. 'Twuz purty excitin', I reckon. Lots o' people come runnin' in, but nobody wuzn't able t' save nothin' but th' hosses an' a few plow tools.

SAM. Didn't ever'body eat roasted peanuts th' nex' day after things cooled off a bit?

CHARLEY. Yeah, but they all had t' hold their noses on account of a sack full of feathers that got burnt up an' still kep' a-smolderin' an' smokin'.

SAM. That must a' been thirty years ago.

CHARLEY. It'll be thirty years come next October.

SAM. I wuz back here, though, once after that.

CHARLEY. I know it. You come back when your Pa died. That wuz th' spring of th' high water, when all our fences washed away. Now wait a minute—that wuz th' secon' year after I moved where I am now. It's been twenty-four years since you made a track in this village.

SAM. I have stayed away quite a whet, I guess. But after Pa died there wuz nothin' much t' hold me here, so I jest stuck t' my work out west till I made a little speck. Then I bought a place of my own, an' seemed like I jest *couldn't* leave, then. But I've sold out all I had an' I'm back here t' stay.

CHARLEY. Well, that's good. I'm shore glad you're back.

Y' know we used t' have some awful good times t'gether.

SAM. You bet we did. An' I don't see nothin' t' keep us from havin' some more, too.

CHARLEY. They orten t' be.

SAM. Say, do you remember that time we poured soap suds in th' dinner horn at th' camp meetin'?' (*Laughs.*)

CHARLEY. Do I? (*Laughs.*) I c'n jest see ole Parson Blivens gittin' red in the face tryin' t' toot fer dinner.

Both laugh.

SAM. Yeah, when he fin'ly got up enough wind t' git th' suds started out, a bubble as big as a punkin' puffed right up in his face. Oh shuckins! (*Laughs.*)

CHARLEY. An' then it busted an' th' ole parson nearly fell offa th' stump he wuz a-standin' on.

Both laugh heartily.

SAM [*becoming calm*]. Say, what y' got on fer t'night? Anything special?

CHARLEY. Nothin' 't I know of.

SAM. How 'bout stirrin' up some kinda fun?

CHARLEY. O. K., ef I c'n git away from th' ole womern.

SAM [*gets to his feet*]. Say, feller! (*Looks interestedly off stage at Right.*) Who is that girl comin' out of th' store over there?

CHARLEY [*rises too*]. Lemme see.

SAM. Ain't that Nancy Simpkins? Looks like her.

CHARLEY. Why no, not ezackly, Samuel. That ain't Nancy Simpkins, it's Nancy Burnside—daughter of Nancy Simpkins that used t' be.

SAM. Nancy Burnside, eh? Purty, ain't she?

CHARLEY. Yeah, I reckon Nancy's a right good lookin' gal.

SAM. Y' reckon? Man, I know she is. That's a purty good load she's got, looks t' me like.

CHARLEY. She's a good, hefty, robust young womern, though, she'll make it.

SAM. Wonder if she's a good cook.

CHARLEY. She's hard t' beat.

SAM. Can she milk?

CHARLEY. She's learnt t' do nearly all kinds o' work since her Pa died.

SAM. That's th' kind of a girl I like to see. One that ain't afraid t' take th' ox by th' horns when he gits in th' ditch.

CHARLEY. Well, Nancy an' her ma, Nance, as ever'body calls her now, has had a purty hard row of stumps t' weed, but they've stuck t' their post an' pulled through purty good, I reckon.

SAM [*preening*]. Say, Charley, is it a fac' what you said while ago—'bout me still lookin' young?

CHARLEY [*puzzled*]. Why shore, you look all right.

SAM. Well, I'll see y' later, boy. I'm gonna spruce up t' that gal an' carry them bundles home fer 'er.

Goes out gaily, limping, at Right.

CHARLEY. Pore ole Sam. I reckon he's gonna be dis-ap'inted when he fin's out Nancy an' my boy Samuel, his own namesake, are engaged. But Nancy's a good girl. She'll be nice to 'im when he tells 'er who he is, an' I know her Ma'll be tickled t' death t' see 'im. Mighty fine woman, Nance is, too. Time Sam gits ever'thing explained to 'im an' talks to Nancy's Ma a while, I think he'll prob'ly re'lize his age an' things'll all come out right yit.

CURTAIN

THE FOOLS OF APRIL FOOL

CHARACTERS

TOM
TED

NAT
NED

TIM
MR. BROWN

All of the characters are regular save NED, who is black-face.

Discovered: TOM and TED tying a string to an old purse.

TOM. She's stuffed good and full, Ted. Somebody's gonna think they've found themselves rich.

TED. Won't they, though? Is our string long enough to reach around the corner?

TOM. I think so. Put the old purse down here, where anyone that passes will be sure to see it.

TED. And when they stoop to pick it up—jerk the string and holler, "April Fool!"

Boys put the purse down, extending the string along a crack in the floor so that they may hide behind such an obstruction as may be convenient to the stage in use.

TED. You c'n have the first jerk; but I'm gonna be next on it, Tom.

TOM. Sh-h! Here comes Tim McCoy, now.

Enter TIM from Right. He sees purse.

TIM. A purse! What luck!

TIM goes to purse and stoops to pick it up. TOM jerks it away.

TOM and TED [*together*]. April Fool! April Fool!

TIM [*embarrassed*]. Why, it's just a hoax.

TOM and TED *come out to replace the purse as before.*

TOM. Don't you think that it's a good one for April Fool day, Tim?

TIM. Not much.

TED. Oh, that's because you are the one that just got stung on it. Come hide with us and watch some one take a nibble, too; then you may change your mind about it.

TIM. No, I can't do that.

TOM. Why not?

TIM. Because I have to go to the Post Office and mail a letter for my uncle.

TED. Well, join us when you come back, then.

TIM. No thanks. I don't think I'd get any fun out of doing anything like that, which will only make some one feel badly.

Exit TIM at Left.

TOM. Aw, he's a goody-goody sissy cat, anyhow. Let him go on to the Post Office and buy an all-day sucker as he comes back.

TED. Why, sure. Let's hide again, before some one else comes along.

They hide as before.

TED. Remember, now, it's my time to jerk the string, if anybody else bites.

TOM. Nobody said that it wasn't. Better get ready, too. Here comes Ned, the nigger that works for Hamiltons.

TED. Oh boy! Will he miss making a grab? I'll say he will not, if I know anything about nigger nature.

TOM. Sh-h!

Enter NED from Left.

NED. Dis am a fine mawuin' fo' fishin' an' heah I has t' trot mah laigs off a-carryin' imitations fo' Miss Winferd's pahty.

NED passes the purse without taking any notice of it.

TOM and TED stick out their heads and makes gestures of exasperation and disappointment.

NED [*returning in great excitement*]. Lan' o' Goshen! A golly whollipin' big black cat, as sho' as mah toe nails tu'ns up! Ah ain't gonna cross wheh at *he* crossed at. No sah, I'll walk fo' miles outa de way, ef I has to, befo' I does that.

TOM and TED withdraw again. NED sees the purse.

NED. Hot ziggity! Look at that! (*Rubs his eyes.*) Am dat a pocket book a-lyin' dere, or am mah eyes a-lyin'? (*Looks all about cautiously.*) Hit sholy 'peahs t' be a pu'se, a'right. Looks as fat as a Chris'mas goose, too. I bet dey's mos' nigh a millium dollahs in it. (*Approaches purse stealthily.*) Ise a-comin', Ise a-comin', little pu'se. Money talks a langwidge that evahbody un'erstan's, an' it 'peahs t' me lak I c'n heah yo' callin' out loud. (*Pauses to take a rabbit's foot from his pocket and kiss it.*) Black cat or no black cat—I c'n gib dis ole rabbit's lef' hin' hoof credick fo' one piecē ob good luck. (*Replaces rabbit's foot in his pocket.*) Bein's dey ain't nobody heah but me, Ise gonna mesmerize yo', little pu'se, an' tu'n all de money on yo' insides t' hun'ed dollah Willyums.

NED marches round and round purse on tiptoe, making peculiar waving motions with his hands. Boys in hiding shift their positions slightly, as if cramped.

NED [*alarmed*]. What's dat? Does I heah feet tracks

comin'? I sho don't want 'em t' see me, fo' den I'd be diskivered. Guess I bettah no mess wid no mesmerizin'. Bettah jes take dis heah pu'se lak it am.

NED *stoops to pick up purse, which moves a few inches.*

NED. Hey! What's de mattah heah? Stop *yo' messin'*. Mebbe yo's a ha'nt! I axes yo' now, fair an' square, "Ain't yo' a ha'nt or ain't yo' a ha'nt?" (*Draws back a little.*) Now looka heah, I ain't gonna stan' fo' no mo' foolishment. (*Knees shake violently.*) 'Bout all I c'n do t' stan' a-tall. (*Reflects a moment.*) Lissen heah, now, pu'se, Ise gonna gib yo' fai' wa'nin' once mo'—Don' yo' sta't no capahs heah again. Yo's sho li'ble t', git run ober an' tromped on' ef yo' does. (*Scolds with his finger.*) Dat ain't no way fo' a nice, decent pu'se t' be actin' nohow—hoppin' 'roun' heah lak a frog. (*Becoming bolder.*) Now, lemme tell yo' sumpin, Mistah Pocket-Book, Ise gonna sta't to'ards yo' again, an' yo'd bettah stan' still, too. (*Advances a few inches.*) Yo' am still, ain't yo'? Mebbe dat wuzn't yo' a-movin' while ago. Mebbe hit wuz jes mah eyes got t' glimmerin' wid de excitement.

Gets on hands and knees and approaches purse very slowly.

NED. Ise gonna try ketchin' yo' dis time jes lak I'd ketch a nice, fat pullet. (*Purse moves slowly ahead of him.*) Oh, Ise done caught onter yo' tricks now. Ise gonna foller yo' right on till I hems yo' up in dat co'nah, den yo' might as well consider yo'se'f caught. Dey ain't nothin' evah slipped through dese heah fingahs o' mine but Steve's wool, an' I knows yo' ain't as sho't as it.

Note: Much comedy can be introduced while NED is following the purse across stage and discoursing as above. For instance, the boys pull on the string at

times in short nervous jerks, to which NED responds with spasmodic movements of his body. At length the purse halts near the hiding place of TOM and TED, leaving NED in an extremely ridiculous posture, one hand and one foot poised in air in imitation of a bird dog.

NED. Um, golly! Yo's de mos' obstinates' pu'se I evah saw, in all mah bo'n days.

Boys are discovered by NED.

NED. Hey!

TOM. April Fool! Ned! April Fool!

TED. April Fool! April Fool!

NED [*grabs purse breaks the string and jumps to his feet*].

April Fool, nothin'. Dis niggah ain't no fool. Ise done mesmerize mahse'f a pu'se full o' money while yo' all wuz settin' neahly on top ob it. Yo' all's de fools.

Exit NED at Right. TOM and TED come forward.

TOM. Well, well, what do you know about that?

TED. Poor old Ned doesn't know enough about April Fool to see the joke we played on him.

TOM. Well, it was funny as a Charlie Chaplin to see him crawling across there after the purse; but the joke is not altogether on Ned after all.

TED. Why, what do you mean?

TOM. I really had six pennies in that old purse.

TED. Do you mean that?

TOM. For a fact, I do. Ned will think he's rich after all.

TED. I suppose he will; but let him enjoy the six pennies.

I feel like we had a lot more than six cent's worth of fun out of it.

TOM. So do I, for that matter.

Exeunt TOM and TED at Right as MR. BROWN enters at Left.

MR. BROWN. Such a cold, such a cold as I do have! (*Pulls a handkerchief from his pocket, dropping a purse as he does so.*) I've really rubbed my poor old nose till it must be as red as a gobbler's snout.

Exit MR. BROWN at Right as NAT enters at Left.

NAT [*sees purse*]. Ho! Another April Fool trick! I just kicked an old hat, with a brick in it and nearly broke my toe. Guess I won't bite at this nice, fat-looking purse. (*Looks about.*) It's bound to be a wash-out of some kind; but I don't see anyone watching it. Maybe they got tired of waiting for a sucker and left it. Wonder what the gag is. I fixed one last year that would throw snuff in the face of whoever opened it. This one may do the same, or something like it. I believe I'll just watch it a while myself and see what happens to the one that picks it up. [*Hides in same place used by TOM and TED*].

NAT. I do believe I hear voices approaching already. I'm glad I didn't have to wait long. I am not very patient.

Reënter TOM and TED at Right.

TOM. Look, Ted, some one else has planted a trick pocket-book here.

TED. Don't even pretend to notice it. They won't get to laugh at us.

NAT emerges from hiding.

NAT. Oh, you wouldn't bite, would you?

TOM. Not us.

TED. We had one right in the same place not long ago, se we were on our guard for some kind of a hoax.

NAT. Did you catch any suckers?

TOM. Yes, two. But the last one ran off with the bait, so we had to quit.

NAT. Well, what do you say to staying here with me a while and watching this one?

TOM. I'd soon as not.

TED. Let's do. Tim McCoy will be back before long and he is almost sure to bite again. He is so absent-minded, he won't remember what happened to him a while ago.

TOM. You see, he bit at our gag, Nat.

NAT. And he's almost sure to bite again. I see him coming, too. Let's hide.

All three hide. Enter TIM at Right.

TIM [*sees purse*]. Another April Fool trick, I guess. Well, I won't be the fool again. (*Starts to pass.*) But I don't know that I care—let them laugh, if they want to and feel like that is any sport. (*Picks up purse.*) Why, it's mighty heavy! (*Opens it.*) My gosh! It's full of sure enough, honest-to-goodness, real money!

Boys in hiding exchange glances.

TIM. Gee, but I'm glad I picked it up now!

Enter MR. BROWN, hastily, from Right.

MR. BROWN [*excitedly*]. My God! That was all the money I had in this world, and to think that now I've lost it. Careless! Careless!

TOM, TED and NAT rise and stand unnoticed in the background.

TIM [*puts purse behind himself*]. Did you lose some money?

MR. BROWN. All I had. I don't know what made me so careless. I was never so unfortunate before.

TIM. Does this look like yours? (*Extends the purse.*)

MR. BROWN [*eagerly*]. That's mine! Where did you get it?

TIM [*hands over the purse*]. I just found it right where you are standing.

MR. BROWN. Thank you a thousand times, my lad.

TIM. Better count it to see if I took any out.

MR. BROWN [*looks in purse but does not take out its contents*]. Oh, I'm sure that nothing is missing from it.

TIM. At first I was going to pass it up, for I had been April-Fooled once this morning, but something seemed to draw me back.

MR. BROWN. I'm glad it did. The next to come along might not have been so honest as you. And to show my appreciation of your honesty and kindness, I shall give you this ten dollar bill.

MR. BROWN *gives* TIM *a bill*.

TIM. Thank you, sir.

Exeunt TIM and MR. BROWN *at Right and Left respectively*.

NAT, TOM, TED [*each striking his palm forcibly to his forehead*]. April Fool! April Fool!

CURTAIN

TOM TAYLOR'S TROUBLES

CHARACTERS

TOM TAYLOR, *whose troubles are not real.*

FLORA PETTY, *much interested in TOM.*

ELSIE CAMPBELL, *sharp-witted but sympathetic.*

JACK BINGHAM, *a tease and skeptic.*

FRANK CRANE, *bearer of the bad news.*

LOUISE PETERS, *interested in gossip.*

All are pupils of the intermediate grades.

SCENE: *A schoolroom before "books."*

Discovered: FLORA, ELSIE, LOUISE and JACK.

FLORA. Well, the first bell rang a good while ago and Tom Taylor isn't here yet.

JACK. You seem to be dreadfully interested in Tom Taylor of late, Flo.

FLORA. I don't see anything so dreadful about that.

JACK. Well, you must be getting sweet on him, though. You get uneasy if he is out of your sight.

LOUISE. Is that all you think of, Jack?

JACK [*mischievously*]. Oh no, not entirely. I find time to think of you, once in a while, Louise—and you too, occasionally, Elsie.

ELSIE. Don't put yourself to any trouble to think of *me*, Mr. Bingham. The effort might be too much of a strain on your mind.

JACK. Oh, no trouble at all, Miss Peters. I'm awfully big hearted, you know.

LOUISE. I didn't know that you thought of people with

your heart. I thought your head was supposed to do that.

JACK. Well, then, I'm big-hea— I mean I have lots of room in my head, too, then.

ELSIE. You ought to hang out a "For Rent" sign, then, for it's easy to see that the room is unoccupied.

JACK. Oh, that will do, Elsie. We all know you are smart at getting ahead of people.

FLORA. Why did you start anything with her, then?

JACK. Oh, I always liked to tease an old cranky dog just to hear him growl, and I suppose it is something of the same thing about Elsie that makes me like to tease her.

LOUISE. Let's change the subject before some one gets bitten.

FLORA. Yes, let's do. I see some one outside; but it isn't Tom. It's Frank. *He* must be sick.

ELSIE. Who? Frank? He would not likely be coming to school, then, would he, Flora?

FLORA. Elsie, you *are* too smart. You know whom I meant. I was thinking that *Tom* must be sick.

LOUISE. She only wanted to tease you, Flo. Don't mind it.

JACK. No, don't. Her bark is worse than her bite, for a fact, and we'll ask Frank about Tom for you.

Enter FRANK.

FRANK. Say, have you heard the news?

JACK. News?

ELSIE. What news?

LOUISE. Tell us about it.

FRANK. About Tom Taylor.

FLORA. Oh, I knew it! I told you! I just felt it.

LOUISE. Hush! Flo. It may not be anything bad.

FRANK. Yes, it's pretty bad, I guess.

FLORA. See there! I told you! Oh, I felt it coming!

JACK [*to FRANK*]. Well, what is it, goofy? Tell us and be done with it.

LOUISE. Yes, do.

ELSIE. Don't create suspense.

FRANK. I don't wear silk pants.

FLORA. Please, Frank, hurry and tell what has happened to Tom. I'm so nervous.

FRANK. Well [*draws long breath*] you all know Tom lives with his Aunt and Uncle—

JACK. Yes, we know that.

FRANK. Well, you know Tom's Aunt Minnie—

LOUISE. We know her, too. Go on.

FRANK. Well, you know she's always been nervous and high strung like—

No one answers.

FRANK. I say, "You all know she's nervous and high strung like—

ALL. Oh, sure!

FLORA. Oh, what did she do to Tom?

FRANK. She didn't do anything to him that I know about.

JACK. Well, for Cram's sake, go on with your story and stop so much stalling around with "Well, you know so-and-so."

FRANK. Who's telling this, anyway, Jack Bingham?

JACK. Oh, you are. But why don't you go on and finish?

FRANK [*sulking*]. Tell it yourself, you're so smart.

LOUISE. No, go ahead, Frank. He won't interrupt again

FRANK shakes his head.

ELSIE. Yes, do go on, Frank. I'm filled with curiosity myself.

FLORA. And I'm so n-nervous.

FRANK. Well, if you'll all keep still and let me tell it my way, I will finish what I started.

GIRLS. We will! We will!

FRANK. Well, as I said, you all know that Tom lives with his Uncle and Aunt—

JACK. Oh my goodness! There he goes all over again!

GIRLS. Hush! Jack, hush!

FRANK *stares fiercely at JACK.*

JACK. I've hushed. I won't say another word, if he "Well you knows" till midnight.

FRANK. You don't have to listen if you don't like it.

JACK. And I don't have to like it if I do listen.

FLORA. Please go on, Frank.

FRANK. Well, where was I? Oh yes, Tom's Aunt Minnie—

LOUISE. What about her?

FRANK. Well, you know she has spells?

FLORA. Not spells, Frank.

ELSIE. What kind of spells are you talking about?

LOUISE. You mean nervous breakdowns, maybe, Frank.

JACK. Aw, he has spells himself. I think he's having one now. I for one don't believe anything has happened.

FRANK [*offended*]. I know something has happened.

JACK. Why don't you tell it, then?

FRANK. Why don't you keep still, then, like you said you would?

JACK. Because you give me the Jimmies, that's why.

ELSIE. You keep still, Jack, before I start growling at you again, and maybe bite you.

JACK. Oh, sure. Glad to do it if you say so.

LOUISE. Go on, Frank.

FRANK. Well, as I said, then, you know Tom's Aunt Minnie has nervous breakdowns, as you call it—

FRANK *waits for a response which no one offers.*

FRANK. I said, "You all know Tom's Aunt Minnie has nervous breakdowns, as you call it"—

ALL. Oh, yes! We all know that!

FRANK. Well, don't act like a bunch of dummies, then.

ALL. Oh no! We won't!

FRANK. Well, you know I believe that Tom's Aunt Minnie has gone crazy!

FLORA. What?

FRANK. I said, "You know I believe that she's gone crazy."

LOUISE. Frank Crane! What are you saying?

ELSIE. That is a serious thing to say.

JACK. I don't believe it myself.

FRANK. I don't care whether *you* believe it or not.

FLORA. I can hardly believe it either, Frank.

FRANK. Well, they've sent her off, anyhow.

LOUISE. Sent her off?

JACK. Rats!

FLORA. Oh, Tom and his Uncle Ben wouldn't do that.

ELSIE [*puzzled*]. Sent her off?

FRANK [*triumphantly*]. Yes, I said "sent her off."

ELSIE. But where did they send her, Frank?

FRANK. To the asylum, of course.

LOUISE. Surely not.

FLORA. Poor woman! Tom thought so much of her, too.

JACK. Well, I still have my doubts about all this, I tell you. Things will have to be explained more than they are before I swallow such a story.

ELSIE. Who said that they sent her to the asylum?

FRANK. I did, that's who said it.

LOUISE. Did you see them take her to the train?

FRANK. No, I didn't see that.

FLORA. Who told you about it, then?

FRANK. I told you that no one told me about it.

JACK. Oh, he just made it all up.

FRANK. No, I didn't make it all up, either.

LOUISE. Well, for pity's sake, then, tell us how you know so much, or think you know so much.

FRANK. I'll do that, since you are all so hard to convince.

FLORA. Please do, Frank. That is something terrible—to be sent to an asylum.

FRANK. I know it is. And I'll tell you how it happened that I found out all about it. You all know that I usually come to school with Tom.

JACK. What has that to do with it?

FRANK. Wait and see, Mr. Smarty. Well, you all know I always come by for Tom at about the same time every morning.

No one replies.

FRANK. I said, "You know I always come by for Tom at about the same time every morning."

GIRLS. Oh yes, surely.

FRANK. Well, you know, he is usually waiting for me at his Uncle Ben's big gate.

JACK. I know that.

FRANK. Well, you know, this morning when I got to the big gate, Tom wasn't there.

FLORA. We knew that he didn't come to school with you.

FRANK. Well, I went on toward the house to see about Tom.

LOUISE. And every one was gone?

FRANK. No, every one was not gone. As I said, I went on toward the house and it is true that I didn't see any one; but I heard voices.

FLORA. Oh, I'm so n-nervous.

ELSIE. Go on, Frank.

FRANK. Well, I went on till I got to the door and was

ready to knock on it, when I couldn't help hearing Tom's Uncle Ben say "Tom," roughly, just like that; "Tom."

GIRLS [*starting*]. Tom.

FRANK. And then Tom answered, "Yes, sir," meekly, just like that. "Yes, sir."

GIRLS. Yes, sir.

FRANK. Then Tom's Uncle Ben went on, "Tom, you better go see if your Aunt's still alive in the asylum this morning."

JACK. Are you telling the truth?

FRANK. That's what he said.

LOUISE. What did you do, then?

FRANK. Why, I just turned round and walked off. I didn't want to intrude on their sorrow.

ELSIE. Neither would I, Frank. That's a pretty straight account, Jack. It must be true.

FRANK. Of course it's true. Why would Tom's Uncle Ben be telling Tom to see about his Aunt in the asylum, if she wasn't in one?

LOUISE. He wouldn't, of course.

FLORA. Why, Tom must not have gone to the asylum after all. I see him coming.

LOUISE. Now, let's don't any one mention the unhappy subject to him. It must be sad enough without having every one reminding him of it.

ELSIE. He will probably be very sensitive about it.

JACK. Any one would, in his place, if it were true.

FRANK. Why do you still keep saying, "If it were true?"

JACK. Because I still have my doubts about it.

FRANK. You give me a pain, Jack Bingham.

JACK. Tom Taylor may give you another, too.

FLORA. I'm simply going to ask Tom all about it.

ELSIE. Oh, I wouldn't, if I were you.

JACK. No, don't. If there is any truth in it, we can soon tell it by his manner.

Enter TOM.

TOM [*very cheerily*]. Hello, everybody.

ALL. Hello, Tom.

TOM [*to FRANK*]. Why didn't you wait for me, old side kick?

FRANK [*embarrassed*]. Why-er-a— I don't suppose you knew I went down to your house.

TOM. Sure. I know that you did. And when you got to the door you turned and bolted like a scared rabbit. I was just coming out when I saw you running as if the mischief were after you.

FRANK. Well, Tom—you see—I felt like—that is—I thought—well, to be blunt with you, I was sure you would not come to school to-day.

TOM. I fail to see why you thought any such thing as that. You know that I am trying for a perfect attendance record.

FRANK. Well, then, you see I heard what your uncle told you to do, so I didn't think you'd come, if you did that.

TOM. Oh that! Why, that was nothing to keep me from school. It took only a few minutes to do that. [*To others.*] You see, just as I was ready to leave, Uncle Ben asked me to see if the ants were still alive in the silo, or if the poison had killed them.

CURTAIN

THE TROUBLE-MAKERS

HAL and JOE, *the trouble-makers.*

TOM and TED, *their intended victims.*

SCENE: *Out-of-doors, on the way to school*

As curtain rises HAL and JOE enter carrying books and lunch baskets.

HAL. I think Tom and Ted will be along pretty soon. This is where their footpath comes into ours. Let's wait for them here.

JOE. They may not be together this morning. You talk as if it were impossible for one to be seen without the other.

HAL. Well, it is almost that way.

JOE. Oh no, once in a while they come to school separately. And I have seen one start home in the evening without the other.

HAL. It's a rare thing, though. They are so fond of each other and their own company that one will hardly be seen anywhere without the other.

JOE. Yes, and if you want to know something, I think that's all bunk, too.

HAL [*flaring up*]. What's all bunk? What I said?

JOE [*crossly too*]. No, the way Tom and Ted act. Not that you are never guilty of spilling any bunk, though.

HAL [*menacingly*]. Maybe you don't like it.

JOE. What I don't like I let go by.

HAL [*raising his fist*]. Maybe you can let this go by too, then, Mr Smarty.

JOE. Oh, I don't think that it's liable to explode and go anywhere, is it?

HAL. Don't get too fresh and smart, now. I might decide to park it on your cranium.

JOE [*unconcerned*]. No, no, maybe not so bad as all that, for you might get pinched for parking a nuisance in a reserved place.

HAL. Just keep on now with your insinuations, and I guess I'll have to show you.

JOE. Oh, you're not so bad. You're just big-mouthed and ugly. That's all.

HAL. Say, feller! Listen t' me!

JOE. I'm not deaf.

HAL. I just feel like it was time for us to have a quarrel this morning.

JOE. Really?

HAL. And I'm not so sure that it may not be time for something more serious.

JOE [*reflectively*]. Well, come to think of it, I guess it has been long enough since we had a battle for us to have another.

HAL. Now you're talking sense. We haven't fought in such a long time, that it is almost a honeymoon.

JOE. And above all things, we don't want to be accused of being two such goody-goody sissies as Tom and Ted.

HAL. Get set, then, and we'll have a little friendly mix-up just to improve our appetite and keep in trim.

Both assume fighting postures.

JOE. Ho! Wait! Just look what I see! [*Gazes beyond HAL*].

HAL [*without turning*]. None of your monkey business, now. If this is going to be a fight, let's make it a fight, and not have any shins or tricks to it.

JOE. Oh, we can have our little sociable battle later on. I want you to look at what you said wouldn't happen. Here comes Tom with Ted.

HAL. Mind you, now, if you try any monkey business, you'll be sorry. (*Turns his head to look too.*)

JOE [*triumphantly*]. What did I tell you?

HAL. It beats me.

JOE. I guess maybe they're busted up.

HAL. If they haven't, here's a good chance to bust 'em.

JOE. For a fact it is. We'll stuff old Tom up against Ted till he won't even look at him any more. (*Laughs.*)

HAL. Well, for the love of Mike, see if you can keep your face straight.

JOE. Aw, you go tell your Gran'ma how to milk ducks. I'll take care of my face.

Enter TOM from Right.

TOM. Good morning.

HAL. H'y', Tom.

JOE. Hullo. Where's the other Siamese twin?

TOM. What do you mean?

HAL. Where's your buddy—Ted?

TOM. I don't know.

JOE. Oh, have you really separated, then? When you gonna get a divorce?

TOM. What on earth are you talking about, anyway?

JOE. Why, from the way that you and Ted have been hanging together, I thought surely you must have been married.

TOM. We are good friends.

HAL [*winking at JOE*]. You mean that you *were* good friends.

JOE [*nodding to HAL*]. Why yes, there's quite a difference between *are* and *were*.

TOM. To be sure, I know that. But still, that doesn't keep Ted and me from remaining friends.

JOE. I suppose, then, you haven't seen him this morning, have you, Tom?

TOM. Why no, not this morning.

HAL. Well, you'd better not want to see him, either. At least I wouldn't, if I were you.

TOM [*wonderingly*]. Why?

HAL [*mysteriously*]. If you knew what we know, you'd never want to see him again.

TOM. I don't see why I wouldn't. What do you know?

JOE. Tell him, Hal.

HAL. No, I don't want to be a tattler.

TOM. Tell me, if you think you know something which I should know.

HAL. I guess you really ought to know it all right; but I'd hate to think I'd be meddling.

JOE. Oh, he won't think that. Tell him.

HAL [*reflectively*]. It might be best to tell him.

TOM. Why sure, if you know anything that will benefit me, I shall consider it a favor for you to tell it.

HAL. Well, last night Joe and I went over to Ted's. Didn't we, Joe?

JOE [*hesitatingly*]. Ye-es.

HAL. And he said a lot of things about you—

TOM. Who did? Joe?

JOE [*quickly*]. No, I didn't.

HAL. Ted did.

TOM [*confidently*]. Oh no, I hardly think so.

HAL. *Didn't he, Joe?*

JOE [*reluctantly*]. Ye-es.

HAL [*more boldly*]. He said that he was getting tired of you because you were such a coward.

TOM. When? Last night?

HAL. Yes, last night.

TOM [*seriously*]. Why are you telling me this, Hal?

JOE *becomes uneasy. He shifts from one foot to the other and looks off from time to time.*

HAL. Because I wanted you to know how he really felt toward you.

TOM. Really?

JOE is more uneasy.

HAL. Yes, I wanted you to be on your guard, so that when you saw Ted, you could give him the cold shoulder that he deserves.

JOE [*feeling in pockets*]. Say—I believe I left my knife back up the road a little piece. I'm going to look for it.

Exit JOE at Right.

TOM. And so you want me to fall out with Ted, do you?

HAL. Oh, so far as that goes, I don't care what you do about it myself. I know what I'd do, though.

TOM [*curiously*]. What would you do?

HAL. I'd punch his nose for him and let him see whether he could call me a coward and get by with it or not.

TOM. You would?

HAL. Yes, I would. And I wouldn't say a word to him till I did it, either.

TOM [*very solemnly*]. Perhaps I will do some nose punching.

HAL. Well, I really think you should.

TOM. I'm glad to hear you agree with me.

HAL. You'll be doing no more than you should.

TOM. That's what I have decided. I see Ted coming and as soon as he gets here I'll begin.

HAL. Attaboy! I wish Joe had stayed to see the fun.

TOM. Oh, never mind. Joe may get in on it yet.

Enter TED from Right.

TED. May get in on what?

TOM. On some nose punching.

HAL [*delighted*]. Don't weaken now, Tom. I'm with you.

TOM. Yes, I know. (*To TED.*) You see, Hal was just telling me that he and Joe went over to your house last night and that you said a lot of mean things about me.

TED [*surprised*]. He did?

HAL [*uneasily*]. Did I say *last night*?

TOM. He went his limit to turn me against you, so I think we might as well turn some of his own medicine against him. What do you think?

TED. I'm with you.

TOM and TED put down their books and lunch kits and pitch onto HAL, who is soon stretched out with TOM on his head and TED on his feet.

TOM. Do you still want me to do some nose punching?

HAL. No, no.

TOM. Oh yes, just to show that I'm no coward.

TED. Did he call you a coward?

TOM. He said you did.

HAL. I didn't mean it, though. Honest I didn't. I was just joking.

TED. You just wanted to cause ill feeling between us, because we get along better than you and Joe, didn't you?

HAL. Well, I did hate to see you go along forever without even a quarrel.

TOM. You believe in quarrels and fights, do you, Hal?

HAL. Not any more.

TED. Will you try to cause any more trouble between us?

HAL. No, if you'll let me up.

TED. You'll get up soon enough.

HAL. But I want to get up now. I'll tell you what—let me up and I'll help you give Joe a lesson on meddling with other folks' affairs, too.

TED. All right, that's a bargain.

TOM. He needs it as much as you did.

They let HAL get up; as he rises JOE reënters.

JOE. But Joe's already learned his lesson. Honest Injun, I have.

HAL. Let's impress it on his mind, though, so he won't forget.

JOE. No, no. Please don't, Hal. I knew you were starting off wrong with Tom. I could see that he didn't believe a word you told him. That's why I left.

TOM. Naturally, I didn't. In the first place, I knew you hadn't even seen Ted, for he stayed with me last night, but went home this morning to get his composition paper.

TED. Do you think we ought to give Joe a Dutch rub, or something, to remember, Tom?

JOE. No, no. I don't need any. Sure enough, I can tend to my own business from now on, without it.

HAL. Well, let him off, then, and let's all be friends.

TOM and TED [*together*]. All right.

All gather up their books, etc., and start off together as
CURTAIN falls.

A CAT AT SCHOOL

CHARACTERS

MISS JACKSON	CECIL
HELEN	LEON
EDITH	GORDON
SINA	JOHN
HOLLIE	ROY
LULA	THE JANITOR

SCENE: *Miss Jackson's classroom.*

MISS JACKSON'S desk at left of stage faces across stage to chairs or desks for the pupils.

Discovered: GORDON, CECIL, ROY, LEON and JOHN at teacher's desk. GORDON has a cat in his hands.

GORDON. Now, won't she throw a fit when she gets a scratch from Miss Puss here.

CECIL. Why, what are you going to do with it, Gordon?

GORDON. Do? I'm going to tie it under the desk here, so that when Miss Jackson comes in and sits down, the cat will give her a rake across the ankle.

ROY. Which the cat will naturally do, 'cause it'll be mad about being tied up so long.

LEON. What if it tears her stocking?

CECIL. She can buy some more, I guess.

LEON. But if she finds out who did this, we may wish we never had seen a cat.

JOHN. Cat scratches are sometimes dangerous, too. I heard of a man that got blood poison from a cat scratch.

LEON. That is right.

JOHN. We don't want really to hurt Miss Jackson, do we? I'd feel ashamed of that.

ROY. She never seems to feel ashamed of keeping us in at recess and noon, does she?

LEON. Well, she does keep us in a lot when I feel like it would be better for us to play; but then, she is always pleasant with us about it.

GORDON. Can't we be pleasant over this cat giving her a scratch or two?

CECIL. Let's try to think of some way to give her just a shock, without causing any real pain or damage.

ROY. I believe you guys are gettin' sissified.

JOHN. Well, for my part, I don't consider that I am. I wouldn't stand back a moment on something plenty rough for Professor Mitchell. He's a man and I don't like him anyway. But I don't want to do anything real mean to Miss Jackson, fellers.

CECIL. Neither do I. She never treats us so very mean and besides, I don't feel like we'd get enough kick out of the stunt to justify the risk we'd be running of getting into trouble over it.

GORDON. Well, let's fix the cat for the Prof, then. Let it tear the whole gable out of his pants.

LEON. Why, you know he wouldn't be afraid of a cat.

CECIL. Of course he wouldn't. He'd just give the poor cat a kick in the ribs and that would be all the kick there'd be to that.

GORDON. I guess that is about right.

CECIL. I know it's right. Say, though. I'll tell you what let's do—

JOHN. Tell it.

CECIL. I've just thought of something.

GORDON. Let's hear it, then.

CECIL. Well, you know, as soon as we all get seated after we pass into class, Miss Jackson always sits down too.

JOHN. What're you gonna do? Put the cat on her chair an' let her sit on it an' make it squall?

ROY. It wouldn't stay on the chair and even if it did, she'd be sure to see it before she sat down on it, wouldn't she?

CECIL. My idea is nothing like that.

ROY. Go ahead and explain your idea; then. What are you waiting so long about it for?

GORDON. Sure don't be all day about it. Miss Jackson is liable to come in any minute, now, and upset the whole works.

CECIL. How can I explain anything as long as you fellers all keep buttin' in with your own smart observations, till I can't get in a word sideways?

LEON. That's a fact, fellers. You have just kept your tongues clacking till Cecil hasn't had a chance to tell anything. Ever'body shut up now an' give him a chance to tell what he wants to tell.

CECIL. Well, what I had in mind is this: You know, as soon as everyone gets seated, Miss Jackson sits down too, calls the class to attention and opens the right hand top drawer of her desk to get her class register and pencil.

GORDON. What if she does?

JOHN. Why, put the cat in there, goofy, and let it jump out in her face when she opens the drawer. Is that it, Cecil?

CECIL. Well, just about. Of course it may jump in her face, may not jump at all; but I'm pretty sure she will be plenty surprised when she opens the drawer to get a class record and finds a cat.

ROY. Let's try it, then. We can't afford to waste all day arguing and trying to think of something better.

The boys open the drawer mentioned and put the cat inside, then close the drawer.

LEON. Now remember, if she asks any questions about this, of course none of us are supposed to know a thing about it.

ROY. Why, naturally not. We'll all be as ignorant as ignoramuses.

GORDON. I won't cheep a chirp myself.

CECIL. Well let's get out of here now.

Exeunt boys at left. They are scarcely out when the JANITOR enters at Right and tacks up a poster behind MISS JACKSON'S desk. As he starts out, he meets MISS JACKSON at the door.

THE JANITOR. Good morning, Miss Jackson.

MISS JACKSON. Good morning.

THE JANITOR. I just tacked a poster there, back of your desk. You might call the attention of the class to it. Perhaps it'll be worth somethin' to some of 'em. I'm puttin' one in ever' room, just like Professor Mitchell told me to.

Exit THE JANITOR at Right. MISS JACKSON goes to poster and takes it down.

MISS JACKSON [*reading poster*]. A valuable cat lost! Five dollars reward offered or its return. It is not very likely to be found in school. Wonder what made the owner of the cat get that idea. [*Tosses poster onto her desk.*] I shall mention the matter to the class, though, if I think of it. Some one of them may have seen it on their way this morning.

Enter SINA, EDITH, LULA, HOLLIE and HELEN at Right. All have pencils and paper. HELEN carries a book.

EDITH. Miss Jackson, will you help us with this sentence? We can't agree on how to parse it.

MISS JACKSON. Why yes. Let's see it.

HELEN [*gives the book*]. Number six, Miss Jackson.

MISS JACKSON [*reading from the book*]. "In the old colony days of Plymouth, to and fro in his room strode Miles Standish, the Puritan captain." Now, what do you wish to know about this sentence?

LULA. We are trying to parse it, Miss Jackson, and we want to know the parts of speech of *colony* and *Puritan*.

MISS JACKSON. Before I tell you, let me hear your own opinions, to see if you really need my help.

SINA. We thought that both of them were nouns.

MISS JACKSON. And why did you think so?

HOLLIE. They are both names of something.

EDITH. And a noun is the name of anything.

MISS JACKSON. You are right, but still you are wrong.

LULA. Why Miss Jackson!

HELEN. We couldn't be both right and wrong, could we, Miss Jackson? I don't understand that.

MISS JACKSON. Yes, you are right in thinking that, ordinarily, both *colony* and *Puritan* are names of something. You are wrong, however, to class them in this instance purely as nouns.

HOLLIE. Why, if they are names of something, they must be nouns. What else could they be?

MISS JACKSON. Did you never hear of one thing being used in the place of something else?

EDITH. Yes'm, I have. Mother uses Dad's razor to trim her corns, sometimes.

MISS JACKSON. Think, then, if these two words are not used to describe, rather than to name something in this sentence.

EDITH [*puzzled*]. To describe?

SINA. [*brightening*]. Why yes, I see it now. *Colony* describes *days*—

LULA. Sure, and *Puritan* points out *captain*.

MISS JACKSON. That is exactly correct. I wanted you to

do some of the thinking for yourselves. It is not good, even for cripples, to have too much support; and I know you girls are not cripples.

HOLLIE. Why, of course we are not cripples. What are you talking about, Miss Jackson?

HELEN. She means crippled in mind, Hollie.

HOLLIE. Oh, I see.

EDITH. Then *colony* and *Puritan* should both be listed as adjectives.

MISS JACKSON. To make it perfectly clear as to their construction and use, I should classify them as, "nouns used as adjectives."

LULA. There is not enough room for all that in the space allowed for each word.

MISS JACKSON. Can't you abbreviate?

SINA. Of course we can.

HOLLIE. Thank you, Miss Jackson.

Bell rings offstage. The boys reënter at Right.

MISS JACKSON. You may be seated.

Pupils find seats and produce their books, etc.

JOHN [*raises his hand. MISS JACKSON nods*]. My pencil is gone.

LEON. Here it is, I guess. [*Holds up a pencil.*]

JOHN [*looks at pencil*]. That isn't mine.

GORDON. That is mine. [*Takes pencil from LEON.*]

MISS JACKSON. Has anyone seen John's pencil?

Pupils all scramble and search for the pencil among their books and papers; no one reports a find.

MISS JACKSON. John, you will have to borrow a pencil somewhere, I think.

JOHN. I have a little short stub that I can use.

MISS JACKSON [*sits*]. Before we begin the lesson for the period, I want to ask if any of you have seen a stray cat this morning.

Boys exchange frightened glances.

LULA. I saw one yesterday morning.

MISS JACKSON. I am not interested in yesterday morning's cats. Has anyone seen a *cat this morning?*

[*Mentions color of the cat put in the desk.*]

Boys become more nervous.

GORDON. We— I mean, I haven't seen any, Miss Jackson.

ROY. I haven't even seen a kitten, much less a cat.

HELEN. I believe that I heard a cat in the basement before I came up to our room.

LEON. Well, I haven't seen or heard a cat in so long, I had almost forgotten there was such a thing.

MISS JACKSON. I hardly expected that any of you had seen it. I merely asked because the janitor left a poster in here this morning offering a reward of five dollars for the return of such a cat. Let the class come to attention now and we shall proceed with the lesson.

MISS JACKSON mechanically opens the desk drawer and pulls out the hidden cat.

HOLLIE. Oh, Miss Jackson, don't let it bite you!

GORDON. I bet that's the stray!

LULA. Yes, but who would give five dollars for a thing like that?

CECIL. Why, the owner of it, of course.

EDITH. Lots of people would give that much to get back a pet they were fond of.

SINA. Aren't you afraid of it, Miss Jackson?

MISS JACKSON. Why no. I was always rather fond of cats myself, and they seemed to like me pretty well, too. Perhaps that is the reason this one crawled into my desk and fastened itself in as it did.

HELEN. But, Miss Jackson, do you think a cat could do that?

MISS JACKSON. You may ask the boys to explain that to you while I am gone to take the cat to the janitor and claim the reward.

MISS JACKSON *starts out at Right, carrying the cat.*

CURTAIN

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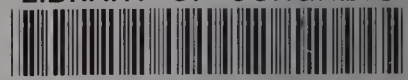
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