

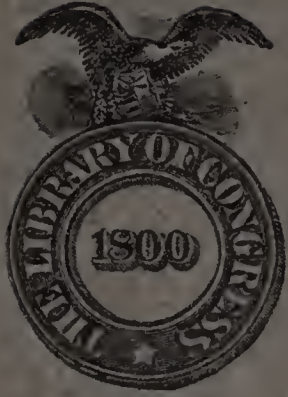
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THE STAGE GUILD PLAYS



THE WONDER HAT

By KENNETH SAWYER GOODMAN and BEN HECHT



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THE STAGE GUILD PLAYS NO. 3 ✓

✓ THE WONDER HAT

A HARLEQUINADE IN ONE ACT BY
KENNETH SAWYER GOODMAN
AND BEN HECHT ✓



FRANK SHAY . . . NEW YORK

PS634
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2d set

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THE WONDER HAT was originally produced at the Arts and Crafts Theatre, Detroit, Michigan, in 1916, with the following cast:

HARLEQUIN.....Sam Hume
PIERROTCharles E. Hilton
PUNCHINELLO.....A. L. Weeks
COLUMBINE.....Lento Fulwell
MARGOT.....Betty Brooks

Set designed by Sam Hume

NOTE: READ CAREFULLY

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The scene is a park by moonlight. The stage setting is shallow. At the back centre is a formal fountain, backed by a short wall about seven feet high with urns at its two ends. At each side of the fountain, low groups of shrubbery. There is a clear space between the fountain and the back drop so that the characters may pass around the shrubbery and the fountain. The back drop represents a night sky with an abnormally large and yellow moon. A path crosses the stage parallel to the foot lights.

As the curtain rises, HARLEQUIN and PIERROT saunter in from the left, arm in arm. They both have on long cloaks, and are swinging light canes with an air of elegant ennui. They pause in the centre of the stage.

HARLEQUIN.—(indicating with a wave of his cane)—Dear fellow, this is a circular path. It runs quite around the outer edge of the park. It delights me. I always spend my evenings here. One can walk for hours with the absolute certainty of never getting anywhere.

PIERROT.—(removing his eyeglass)—Dear chap, in these days of suburban progress, I had not supposed such a place possible.

HARLEQUIN. Also as you may have noticed, all the promenaders move continuously in the same direction. It is, therefore, only necessary to maintain an even pace in order to avoid making acquaintances.

PIERROT.—(with a slight yawn)—One might retrace one's steps?

HARLEQUIN. It has been tried by certain elderly roués and ladies from the opera, but always with disastrous results. Our best people no longer attempt it.

PIERROT. Tell me, does Columbine ever come here?

HARLEQUIN.—(becoming serious)—That is the one drawback. She comes here very often.

PIERROT.—(snappishly)—Hmph! That really is annoying, deucedly, devilishly, foolishly annoying!

HARLEQUIN. You're very emphatic.

PIERROT.—(still more snappishly)—I have never liked that woman, in spite of what the poets say about us.

HARLEQUIN.—(looking about cautiously)—By keeping a sharp lookout, I have thus far managed to avoid her myself.

PIERROT.—(pleased)—I see that we are both confirmed bachelors. We agree perfectly.

HARLEQUIN. On the contrary, we don't agree at all! Because you dislike Columbine, you're too confounded polite to others. You make cynical love to all sorts of women and nobody likes you for it. On the other hand, I adore her and make love to nobody at all. For that reason I am simply overwhelmed with dinner invitations.

PIERROT. Then why don't you catch up with her some evening and tell her so.

HARLEQUIN.—(*preening himself*)—Gross materialist! She would certainly fall in love with me.

PIERROT.—(*with equal self-satisfaction*)—At least I should be spared the possibility of her falling in love with me.

HARLEQUIN. How selfish of you! But, come, if you are quite rested, let us continue our walk.

PIERROT. To be perfectly frank, dear chap, I find myself extremely sleepy.

HARLEQUIN.—(*haughtily*)—There is a beautiful stone bench just beyond that clump of lilacs.

PIERROT.—(*with a yawn*)—Thanks. When we reach it, I shall sit down.

HARLEQUIN. By all means, dear fellow. I can then resume my stroll without the effort of conversation. (*They saunter off, arm in arm, toward the right. PUNCHINELLO enters, dressed in a long ragged green coat and carrying a large sack and little bell. He wears long whiskers and a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles. He advances, tapping before him with a staff and ringing his little bell.*)

PUNCHINELLO.—(*in a whining sing-song*)—New loves for old! New loves for old! I will buy broken ambitions, wasted lives, cork-legs, rejected poems, unfinished plays, bottles, bootjacks and worn out religions! (*He drops his pack.*) Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! New loves for old! New loves for old! (*He wags his head, listening.*) Nobody here! I've walked three times 'round this accursed park. I've seen moon-faced boys asleep on stone benches, stone tritons blowing water into the air, and a rabble of sick-looking poets and silly looking girls all walking in the same direction. But not one bonafide customer! I'll sit down. Yes, yes, I'll sit down, curse them, and ease this infernal crick in my back. (*He unfolds a little camp-stool which he carries, slung by a strap, and sits down. COLUMBINE and MARGOT enter from the left and advance timidly to the centre of the stage without noticing PUNCHINELLO.*)

COLUMBINE.—(*very much excited*)—I'm sure, Margot, that I saw him here only a moment ago.

MARGOT. Do you want my honest opinion, Mistress Columbine?

COLUMBINE.—(*stamping her foot*)—How can an opinion be anything but honest? An opinion is naturally and automatically honest.

MARGOT. Mine ain't, ma'm. I always formulates my opinions to conform.

COLUMBINE. I don't want them. I'm miserable. I'm wretched.

MARGOT.—(*severely*)—Then I won't give them to you. But if you'd act more like a lady and stop trapesing around in the damp of the night trying to scrape an acquaintance with—with this Harlequin, who, God knows, may have six or seven wives already—

COLUMBINE. I'm not trapesing after him!

PUNCHINELLO.—(*in his sing-song voice*)—New loves for old! New loves for old!

COLUMBINE.—(*frightened*)—Oh, how you startled me!

PUNCHINELLO.—(*rubbing his hands*)—Bargains, cheap, wonderful bargains. What will the lady buy? Something for her parlor? Something for her bed-room? Something for herself? Wall-paper, eggbeaters, canary birds, salt shakers, oriental rugs, corset covers, diamonds, waterbags, churns, potato peelers, hats, shoes, gas fixtures, new—old—bargains, lady, bargains?

COLUMBIN. No, no, no! I don't want to buy anything.

PUNCHINELLO.—(*kneeling and spreading out his wares*)—I have cures to sell, and charms.

COLUMBINE.—(*fascinated in spite of herself*)—What—what charms have you?

PUNCHINELLO. Ho, ho! I have a charm to ward off evil spirits.

MARGOT.—(*in disgust*)—Get along with you!

PUNCHINELLO. Ha, ha! Against nightmares, then; against mice, toothaches, bunions, burglars, and broken legs.

COLUMBINE. I don't want them—any of them.

PUNCHINELLO.—(*wagging his head*)—Ho, ho! Ha, ha! Then you're in love. You want a love charm.

COLUMBINE.—(*stamping her foot*)—You're impudent! I tell you I'm not in love.

MARGOT.—(*beginning to be interested*)—What makes you pipe her off as being in love?

PUNCHINELLO. A lady who isn't interested in mice, bunions or burglars, must be in love. There's no two ways about it.

MARGOT. What about the broken legs and toothaches?

PUNCHINELLO.—(*spreading his hands*)—I just put that in for good measure.

COLUMBINE. Enough! I won't listen to you! I—I'm not in love!

PUNCHINELLO. I can remedy that with a charm.

COLUMBINE.—(*almost in tears*)—I don't want your charms. I don't want to be in love. I hate him. I hate him. I hate him. So there!

PUNCHINELLO. Yes, yes, pretty lady. I know that sort of talk very well. But I have also a charm to attract love.

COLUMBINE.—(*brightening immediately*)—You have a charm to attract love?

PUNCHINELLO. It will bring all men to you; little men, big men, pretty men, noble men, fat men—

COLUMBINE.—(*clasping her hands*)—I want only one man—only Harlequin.

MARGOT.—(*interrupting*)—If you want my opinion, ma'm—

COLUMBINE. But I don't. I want the charm.

MARGOT. I'd leave this fellow's stuff alone, if I was you.

COLUMBINE. But you're not me. I want the charm.

PUNCHINELLO.—(*searching through his wares*)—It will bring Harlequin to you with the rest.

COLUMBINE.—(*on tiptoe with eagerness*)—Quick! Give it to me.

PUNCHINELLO.—(*taking an old slipper from his pocket*)—Ho, ho! Here it is. An old slipper! Each stitch of it more effective than Sapho's complete works. Each thread more potent than the burning caresses of Dido. They say Cinderella wore a crystal slipper. It's a lie. This—this, is what she wore. Ah, ha! look at it!

COLUMBINE.—(*taken aback*)—Do I have to wear *that*?

MARGOT.—(*scornfully*)—Land's sake, it's all run down at the heel.

PUNCHINELLO. That's because it has been worn so often. Semiramis of Babylon, Lais of Corinth, and Thais of Alexandria, all wore this boot.

MARGOT.—(*with a sniff*)—Them names don't sound like respectable ladies, to my way of thinking.

COLUMBINE.—(*dubiously*)—It looks very old. Are you sure it has been fumigated.

PUNCHINELLO. It's no older than the light it has kindled in a thousand eyes. Cleopatra of Egypt abetted the lures of her person with this same ragged boot. Mary of Scotland, and a hundred other beauties of history have inspired the enraptured supplications of their adorers with no more tangible asset than this homely boot. Put it on, pretty lady, and all men will flock to your feet, especially to the foot that wears the slipper. (*He hands Columbine the slipper.*)

COLUMBINE. Ooh, ooh! How wonderful!

MARGOT.—(*with a superior air*)—Take my word, miss, it'll be a nuisance to you.

COLUMBINE. I don't care. I'm going to teach Harlequin a lesson he won't forget. (*She takes off her own shoe, hopping on one foot and holding to Margot's arm. She then puts on the magic slipper.*)

MARGOT. Mind, I warned you now.

COLUMBINE.—(*stamping her foot down*)—There! It doesn't look so badly once you get it on.

PUNCHINELLO.—(*groveling on his knees, his hands clasped*)—Oh, most wonderful lady! Oh, most beautiful, most gracious, most divine lady!

MARGOT.—(*amazed at Punchinello's sudden fervor*)—Lord love us! What's got into the old bag of bones?

PUNCHINELLO.—(*to Columbine*)—You have melted the lump of ice in my old breast. I am young again. I can hear birds singing, and sweet waters falling.

MARGOT.—(*to Punchinello*)—Get up this minute before I burst a lung bawling for help.

COLUMBINE.—(*dancing up and down with delight*)—Oh, oh, oh! Now I know it works!

MARGOT. Just the same, he ought to know better, the old grampus.

PUNCHINELLO.—I love you.

COLUMBINE.—(*demurely*)—That's very nice in you, of course, but please get up—tell me how much I owe you.

PUNCHINELLO.—(*still on his knees*)—With all my heart, with all my soul!

MARGOT. Don't you hear her. How much does she owe you for the magic slipper?

PUNCHINELLO.—(*still grovelling*)—Nothing! Nothing! You owe me nothing at all! I will give you everything in my pack, all my bargains, all my spells, all my charms. I will make you a witch.

MARGOT. She don't want to be a witch! She wouldn't touch them with the tip of a barge pole.

COLUMBINE.—(*to Margot*)—I really think I ought to pay him.

MARGOT. If he won't take anything, he won't. That's all there is to it.

PUNCHINELLO. Speak to me! My heart is bursting.

MARGOT. Let it burst, then. Come, ma'm.

COLUMBINE. Yes, yes. Let's run. (*Columbine takes Margot by the hand and they run off to the right, laughing.*)

PUNCHINELLO.—(*attempting to rise*)—Wait! Wait! I—I—Oh, confound this stitch in my side! (*As the girls' voices die away, he struggles to his feet and rubs his head in a dazed sort of way.*) Gone! What have I done? By the seven witches of Beelzebub, by the long fanged mother of the great green spider, I've been tricked, cheated. (*He shakes his staff*) Curses on her golden head! May she have nightmares and toothache. May—Old fool! A blight on my whiskers! Woe! Woe! I've given my darling slipper away for nothing. (*He sits down again on his campstool and rocks to and fro, muttering.* HARLEQUIN, *having completed his circle of the park, enters from the left. He is smoking a cigarette and strolls along wearing a gloomy and troubled expression.* PUNCHINELLO *sees him and resumes his whining chant.*)

PUNCHINELLO. New loves for old! New loves for old! Bargains in cast-off sweethearts, old coats, umbrellas, glove buttoners, and household pets. Bargains, sir, bargains! Cheap, wonderful bargains. (*HARLEQUIN passes and regards PUNCHINELLO with absolute indifference.*) I have pipes, swords, hosiery, snuff-boxes, underwear, wines, trinkets for beautiful ladies, furniture, spy-glasses, goldfish, motor cars and bottle-openers..

HARLEQUIN.—(*impatiently*)—I want none of your bargains.

PUNCHINELLO. I have magic bargains, sir. Spells and charms.

HARLEQUIN. Ah! more like it! You have charms, eh? What kind of charms?

PUNCHINELLO. I have charms against bunions, burglars, broken legs, nightmares, stomachaches and hang-nails.

HARLEQUIN. Ordinary trash! I don't want them.

PUNCHINELLO.—(*looking furtively about*)—I have a love charm.

HARLEQUIN.—(*in alarm*)—God forbid!

PUNCHINELLO.—(*rubbing his hands*)—Ho ho! He, he!

HARLEQUIN. Have you by any chance a charm against love? Aye, more, have you some efficacious armour against womankind in general?

PUNCHINELLO. Ho, ho! A man after my own heart, a cautious man. A sensible man.

HARLEQUIN.—(*loftily*)—Know you, antiquated pander, that, everywhere I go, women follow me. They stalk me. They covet me. They make my days miserable. They haunt my sleep. They simper about me, wink at me; rub against me like silken cats. (*with vexation*) Ah, I would almost end my life from very irritation. And the damnable part of it is that I know myself to be susceptible.

PUNCHINELLO.—(*slyly*)—There is no charm in the world against falling in love, but I can sell you a powder, which tossed into the air, will bring destruction to women alone.

HARLEQUIN.—(*rubbing his chin doubtfully*)—No—That's too brutal. I couldn't kill them all even if I wanted to. And what use then to destroy a hundred, a thousand, even a million women, and have one sneak up behind you and get you after all. It would be an effort wasted. Love is inevitable.

PUNCHINELLO. Wait! Ho, ho! I have it, the very thing! If one cannot remove the inevitable, at any rate one may hide from it. What doesn't see you, can't get you. Ha, ha! I can sell you a hat.

HARLEQUIN. I am not in the market for a hat.

PUNCHINELLO.—(*triumphantly*)—But a magic hat! Ho, such a hat! A wonder hat! It will make you invisible.

HARLEQUIN.—(*incredulously*)—Invisible?

PUNCHINELLO.—(*fishing in his bag*)—When you put it on, you will exist only in your own mind. You will escape the pernicious sentimentality, the never-ending blandishments, the strategic coquetry—

HARLEQUIN.—(*eagerly*)—Quick, you millinery sorcerer! You have convinced me. Invisibility is the one thing I crave to make me sublimely happy. Splendid! They shall never simper at me again, never rub against me again, never undulate before my tormented eyes. I will buy it.

PUNCHINELLO.—(*holding up the hat*)—Is it not a creation?

HARLEQUIN.—(*looking at the hat with distaste*)—God, what a thing to wear! I would not wear it, you may be sure, were it not invisible. Any man would prefer not to be seen in such a hat.

PUNCHINELLO. It may be unlovely in outline, coarse in texture, unrefined in color, but there is only one other such hat in the world. It belongs to the grand Llamah of Thibet. Ha, ha! This one will cost you gold.

HARLEQUIN.—(*cautiously*)—But first I must see if it is really a Wonder Hat.

PUNCHINELLO. I will put it on. (*He does so.*)

HARLEQUIN.—(*delighted*)—A miracle! Where are you?

PUNCHINELLO.—(*removing the hat with a flourish*)—Now, behold me! Here I am.

HARLEQUIN. Bravo! What wonders I will do with that hat! But stay! What if the hat is only charmed for you? What if the charm does not apply to me?

PUNCHINELLO. You shall try it yourself. Put it on. (*Harlequin takes the hat and puts it on.*)

HARLEQUIN. Can you see me?

PUNCHINELLO. By St. Peter of Padua, not a speck of you! (*He gropes with his hands, then strikes out with his staff and strikes Harlequin in the shins.*)

HARLEQUIN.—(*hopping up and down*)—Ooh! Ouch!

PUNCHINELLO. Ho, ho! Pardon me. You see you are quite invisible.

HARLEQUIN. But not invulnerable! (*He rubs his shins.*)

PUNCHINELLO. How much will you give me for this Wonder Hat?

HARLEQUIN. Are you sure you can't see me?

PUNCHINELLO.—(*rubbing his hands*)—You are one with the thin air and the fairies that inhabit it.

HARLEQUIN. There's no uncanny trick by which Columbine can discover me?

PUNCHINELLO. None. None. I swear it. It's only by your voice that I know where you are.

PUNCHINELLO.—(*He swings out with his staff. Harlequin leaps nimbly aside.*) For years I have treasured this wonder hat. A blind woman with seven teeth and one eye, made it in a haunted hut. It was cooked over a fire of serpent skins. (*As Punchinello speaks, Harlequin tiptoes away to the right around the central group of shrubbery.*) Ho, ho! There's no charm like it to be had from one peak of the world to the other. (*He swings out again with his staff. Harlequin, who has been peeping at him over the shrubbery, disappears behind the fountain.*) Five bags of gold, sir. Cheap—a bargain! Hey! (*He swings his staff.*) Hey! Hey! Where are you? Take off my hat. Give me back my hat! (*He stands still and listens.*) Thief! Thief! He's gone—vanished. Oh, what a fool! First my magic slipper, worth fifty pots of gold. What a doddering idiot! I've been cheated again, robbed, plundered! Oh, what a stitch in my side! Oh, oh! (*He gathers up his pack hurriedly then stops and taps the side of his nose with his finger.*) Ho, ho! A thought! What a pair of lovers they will make. She with her slipper. He with his hat. She said Harlequin. He said Columbine. Yes, yes! I shall have my reward. They are the fools, not I. As if love were not enough magic of itself. Ho, ho, ho! I must follow her. Ho, ho! She went this way. (*He moves off the right leaving his camp-stool. Harlequin appears again around the left end of the shrubbery and advances cautiously to the center of the stage.*)

HARLEQUIN.—(*looking after Punchinello*)—I detest the idea of cheating anybody. But of course, one can't be running after tradespeople, pressing money on them. It simply isn't done. (*He looks in the other direction.*) Columbine should have made the round of the park by this time. What's keeping her? Confound it, here I am waiting for her as safe and invisible as the angels themselves. (*He sits down on the campstool and holds his hand before his face.*) No, I can't see it. I wonder if I have a hand, or a leg, or a stomach, or a heart? If I don't take off my hat and look at myself, I shall soon become a total stranger to myself. What a wonder hat! (*There is a sound of women's voices in the distance. He pricks up his ears.*) Ah, her voice! Like the tinkling of silver bells in a shrine of ivory. Like the patter of crystal rain in a pool of scarlet lilies. (*He slaps his leg.*) Ah, ha! I'm in love! In love, by gad! to the tips

of where my fingers ought to be. (*He becomes serious.*) If I take off my hat, I'd be lost. She would pounce on me, and, being in love, I should pounce back. My hat must stay on. I will tie it on. I will nail it on. Curse me if I take off my hat. (*He pulls the hat down to the tops of his ears, then clasps his hands.*) Ah, to sit by her, safe and unseen! To bask in the splendour of her presence! To love and be loved only as a dream! To be free from all material entanglements and responsibilities! To touch her with invisible fingers and permit the stolen thrills to course up and down my invisible spine! (*He sings, "A Wandering Minstrel" air.*)

A love-sick atom I,
A thing unseen and seeing,
For in my hat am I
A hypothetical being.

(*He suddenly has a new thought.*) But what if, being unable to see me, she should fall in love with somebody else? That vapid ass, Pierrot, for instance? Oh, God, what if he should strike fire in her heart? But I will not take off my hat! Kind Heaven, give me strength to keep my hat on. (*He pulls the hat still further down over his ears, just as Columbine and Margot enter from the left.*)

COLUMBINE.—(*to Margot*)—This is too much! Did you ever see such a rabble?

MARGOT. I shouldn't be so particular, miss, seeing as how you brought it on yourself.

COLUMBINE. They've risen from every bench to follow me. They've come from every corner of the park; burglars, doctors, poets, whiskered Don Juans, rumbling Romeos. Great Heavens, the idiots! If they hadn't fallen to fighting among themselves, we'd been trampled to death. I—I hope they exterminate each other. (*Harlequin, seeing Columbine in such an angry mood, rises cautiously, and in so doing, upsets the campstool. He stands trembling and holding on to his hat.*)

MARGOT.—(*starting*)—Bless me, what's that? (*Columbine and Margot both look around. Their eyes pass over Harlequin without seeing him.*)

COLUMBINE. Nothing! There's nobody here. (*Evidently much relieved, Harlequin tiptoes to the right end of the fountain.*)

MARGOT. If you want my honest opinion, miss—

COLUMBINE.—(*stamping her foot*)—How many times must I tell you—

MARGOT.. Be careful with that magic boot, miss.

COLUMBINE. Drat the magic boot! What's the good of it? It's brought me nothing but trouble.

MARGOT. Well, what did you expect?

COLUMBINE.—(*almost weeping*)—It hasn't brought him. It hasn't brought Harlequin.

MARGOT. If you want my opinion, miss, honest or otherwise—

COLUMBINE.—(*stamping her foot again*)—I don't!

MARGOT. Then I won't give it to you.

COLUMBINE. Oh, Margot, be gentle with me. I love him, and—and I'm dreadfully uncomfortable about it.

MARGOT. Well, there's worse discomfort. There's clergyman's sore throat, for instance, and house-maid's knee.

COLUMBINE.—(*clutching her hands*)—Oh, if I could only see him now, the cold hearted fish! I'd fix him. I'd melt his icy blood for him! (*Harlequin holds tight to his hat.*)

MARGOT.—(*soothingly*)—Of course, of course, you would.

COLUMBINE. But he can't escape. I will marry him. I'll marry him. I'll have him for my own, locked under key in a house; a beautiful little house, all new and spick and span, with white trimmings and green shutters.

MARGOT. If I may put in a word for myself, miss, I hope you won't have a basement kitchen.

COLUMBINE.—(*spitefully*)—But I'll make him suffer first. I'll—I'll— (*Harlequin jams his hat down tighter and disappears behind the fountain.*)

MARGOT. If you must get het up and stamp, miss, I'd advise you to confine your stamping to the foot which ain't got the magic boot on.

COLUMBINE. Margot, were you ever in love?

MARGOT. There are opinions concerning that question, miss, honest and otherwise.

COLUMBINE. Hush! Someone's coming. (*Pierrot enters disheveled and breathless. He advances and flings himself on one knee before Columbine.*)

PIERROT. At last! Exquisite Columbine, ravishing vision, I have overcome my rivals. I have vanquished a legion of your adorers. (*Harlequin peeps around the left side of the fountain.*)

MARGOT.—(*to Pierrot*)—Lord love us! You look as though you'd been run through a threshing machine.

PIERROT. I have. I kicked Scaramouche in the stomach and pushed the Doctor of Bologna into a lily pond. Divine Circe, I have come to claim my reward. (*He clutches the edge of Columbine's dress.*)

COLUMBINE. Get up this instant! You're tearing the trimming off my petticoat.

PIERROT. Columbine, Columbine. I love you!

MARGOT.—(*taking Pierrot's arm and pulling him to his feet*)—Get up, you great baby! (*Harlequin tiptoes across the stage and stands behind Margot and Pierrot.*)

PIERROT.—(*clasping his hands*)—I love you, Columbine! Listen to me!

COLUMBINE.—(*haughtily*)—This is a very sudden change on your part, Mr. Pierrot. Yesterday you snubbed me quite openly.

PIERROT. Forgive me. I was blind. I was a dolt. I have only just now come to my senses.

MARGOT.—(*turning her shoulder to him and folding her arms*)—You'll come to something worse presently.

PIERROT.—(*to Columbine*)—I love you—I love you—(*Harlequin reaches out and deftly extracts a long hat pin from the back of Margot's cap. Margot puts her hands to her head and turns fiercely on Pierrot.*)

MARGOT. How dast you grab my hat?

PIERROT.—(*in astonishment*)—I never touched your hat.

MARGOT. You did.

PIERROT.—(*turning on her*)—I—I did nothing of the sort.

MARGOT. There's laws to cover this kind of thing—annoying women in a public park.

PIERROT. You're an impudent hussy.

MARGOT. You're nothing but a common, ordinary home wrecker. (*Harlequin approaches Columbine and gently touches her hair. Pierrot and Margot glare at each other.*)

COLUMBINE.—(*clasping her hands*)—Margot, Margot, it's wonderful! It's divine! I feel as if the air were suddenly full of kisses. (*Harlequin strikes an attitude of complete satisfaction.*)

MARGOT. It's full of dampness and nasty language, that's what it is. (*She gives Pierrot a venomous look.*)

PIERROT.—(*again falling on his knees and addressing Columbine*)—It's full of the unspeakable ecstasy of my admiration.

COLUMBINE.—(*paying no attention to Pierrot*)—It's full of marvelously shy caresses! They are like the wings of happy butterflies, brushing white lilac blooms!

PIERROT. Ah, what did I tell you? The love I offer you is a gift, a treasure.

COLUMBINE.—(*her hands still clasped*)—I can almost feel invisible lips sighing my name—his lips—Harlequin's lips.

PIERROT.—(*straightening up on his knees*)—What's that you say about Harlequin?

MARGOT. It's none of your business.

PIERROT.—(*spitefully*)—Good God! To think of intruding that fellow's name at a time like this. Why, the chap's a positive bounder. He has no taste, no education, no refinement. And his face—ugh! He'd frighten himself to death if he looked in a mirror before his barber got to him in the morning. (*Harlequin steps behind Pierrot and prods him in the back with the hat pin.*) Ooh, Ouch! (*He springs to his feet and turns on Margot.*)

PIERROT.—(*to Margot, shaking his finger in her face*)—You—You did that. You—you know you did.

MARGOT.—(*taken aback*)—Did what?

PIERROT.—(*in a rage*)—You—you stabbed me in the back and don't you deny it.

MARGOT. The man's stark, staring mad!

COLUMBINE.—(*to Pierrot in any icy voice*)—Will you be good enough to explain what's the matter with you?

PIERROT.—(*his eye still on Margot*)—I've been attacked, lacerated.

MARGOT. If you don't behave yourself, I'll give you something to howl about.

PIERROT.—(*again falling at Columbine's feet*)—But it's nothing—nothing to the torments I suffer from your heartlessness. Nothing to the—(*Harlequin stabs him again with the hat pin.*)

PIERROT. Ouch! Wow! Hell's fire! Animals! (*He claps his hand to the spot*) I'm being bitten to death!

MARGOT. And a good riddance, too!

COLUMBINE. Come, Margot! I won't stay here! I won't be insulted!

PIERROT.—(*again grasping the hem of her dress*)—No, no! I'll suffer everything. I'll suffer in silence. Only don't leave me. Speak to me. I love you. I—

COLUMBINE. I'll scream for help.

MARGOT. If you really want help, miss, it's my advice, take off the slipper. (*Harlequin, who has been about to attack Pierrot, hesitates and looks puzzled.*)

COLUMBINE. Yes, yes. Why didn't I think of it. (*She whips off the magic slipper and holds it in her hand. The moment the slipper leaves her foot Pierrot sits back on his haunches and lets go the edge of Columbine's dress.*)

PIERROT.—(*in a feeble voice*)—I love you. I—(*He rubs his head*) By jove, this is most extraordinary!

MARGOT.—(*clapping her hands*)—Toss it to me, miss. (*Columbine tosses the slipper to Margot.*)

MARGOT.—(*examining the slipper*)—What a rummy slipper! (*She takes off her shoe*) I wonder what's inside of it? Love? (*She puts the magic slipper on her own foot.*) Ooh! How it tickles! (*Pierrot rises from his knees and looks helplessly from Columbine to Margot.*)

COLUMBINE.—(*to Pierrot*)—Well, Mr. Pierrot?

PIERROT.—(*completely puzzled*)—I am quite at a loss to explain my feelings. (*He hesitates, then turns and kneels before Margot. Harlequin appears even more puzzled. He is also drawn toward Margot by the spell of the slipper, but his natural infatuation for Columbine seems to neutralize the effect of the charm. He is visibly perplexed.*)

PIERROT. Incomparable Margot! Queen among housemaids! Divine custodian of my deepest affection.

MARGOT.—(*to Columbine*)—You see, miss, the gentleman is now in love with me.

COLUMBINE. Disgusting!

PIERROT. I am drawn by some irresistible power of fascination. I—I belong to you utterly.

MARGOT. You belong in jail. You're nothing but a—a shameless affinity.

PIERROT.—(*clinging to the hem of Margot's skirt*)—I love you! I swear it!

MARGOT.—(*weakening*)—Oh, la, la! Listen to the man talk!

COLUMBINE.—(*to Margot*)—You're a brazen hussy to take advantage of your social superior.

MARGOT.—(*haughtily*)—My superior? Him?

COLUMBINE.—(*stamping her foot*)—You're forgetting your place!

PIERROT. I love you—I love you—

MARGOT.—(*slyly*)—Suppose, miss, I was to say I believed every word he says to me.

COLUMBINE. I'd say you were an artful designing minx. I'd discharge you without a shred of character.

MARGOT. Well, you won't have to—because, I ain't going to say it.

PIERROT.—(*making another grab at her skirts*)—You must listen to me! You must! (*Harlequin stabs him once more with the hat pin.*) Ouch! Wow! This is terrible. I love you!

MARGOT.—(*to Pierrot*)—Hey! Get up! A woman what works for a living can't afford to have her good nerves shattered for her! (*She tries to shake off Pierrot.*)

COLUMBINE. Give me back the slipper, this instant.

MARGOT. You're welcome to it, I'm sure. (*She snatches off the slipper and tosses it away from her. Columbine picks it up, but does not put it on.*) Now will you leave go of me? (*He releases her in a dazed way.*)

PIERROT.—(*weakly*)—I—I love you. I. (*He rises and again looks from one to the other. Columbine holds the slipper in her hand.*)

COLUMBINE.—(*to Pierrot*)—Well, sir?

MARGOT. Well?

PIERROT.—(*adjusting his collar and speaking quite calmly*) I consider myself fortunate in having escaped you both. I see now that there is something deadly about that slipper. To think that a man of my intellectual and artistic attainments should have been affected by such a trick. In love with a boot! How very trivial!

MARGOT. Well, what are you going to do now?

PIERROT. I don't know exactly. Perhaps I shall drown myself in the fountain. (*He turns his back on Margot and Columbine and assumes a pose of thoughtful indifference. Harlequin again approaches Columbine.*)

COLUMBINE. Oh, Margot! What shall I do? I'm faint. I'm intoxicated. He hasn't come and yet I feel as if he were near me, almost touching me. I feel all the exquisite certainty of love. Yes, yes, I love him! I love Harlequin, and I know that he loves me in return. I know it, and yet, and yet—

MARGOT. Yes, miss, and yet?

COLUMBINE.—(*wringing her hands*)—And yet I don't know what under heavens to do about it. (*Harlequin clasps his hands in an ecstasy of complete satisfaction.*)

MARGOT.—(*speaking apart to Columbine*)—It's my advice, miss, put on the slipper again. What if it don't attract this

here Harlequin? There's just as big perch in the puddle as ever came out of it. That's my motto. Besides, there is such a thing as making the right man jealous.

COLUMBINE.—(*brightening immediately*)—I believe you're right. I'll put on the slipper. I'll have a desperate flirtation with Pierrot. I'll take him everywhere with me. I'll dangle him before Harlequin's nose. (*She puts on the slipper and speaks archly*)—Mr. Pierrot.

PIERROT.—(*turning*)—Eh? I beg pardon.

COLUMBINE. I—I don't want you to be angry with me. (*Pierrot looks somewhat puzzled for a moment, then succumbs again to the spell of the slipper and rushes toward her.*)

PIERROT. I—I don't—I—(*He throws himself on his knees*) Columbine! My angel!

COLUMBINE.—(*shaking her finger at him*)—You were very rude to me a few moments ago. (*Harlequin watches with puzzled interest.*) You accused me of having ensnared your affections by means of a charm.

PIERROT. I don't know anything about a charm. I am charmed only by your eyes, your lips, the flow of your voice.

COLUMBINE. Do you know, I think it's very sweet of you to say that.

PIERROT. I can say more, a thousand times more.

HARLEQUIN.—(*overcome by jealousy*)—I shall put a stop to this. (*He seems to come to a tremendous resolve.*) I—I shall take off my hat.

MARGOT. Lord have mercy! What is that?

PIERROT. My adored Columbine! You love me after ail?

COLUMBINE.—(*archly*)—I haven't said so.

HARLEQUIN.—(*tugging frantically at his hat*)—My hat! A thousand devils! I can't get it off!

PIERROT.—(*rising*)—I'm your worshipper, your slave.

COLUMBINE. You may see me to my door. (*She takes Pierrot's arm.*)

HARLEQUIN.—(*frantically*)—Wait! Stop! Confound it, if I could only get my hat off!

MARGOT.—(*alarmed*)—I want to get away from here.

COLUMBINE.—(*listening*)—It's Harlequin's voice!

PIERROT. I don't see anybody. (*They all look about them. Punchinello enters from the left with his pack on his back.*)

PUNCHINELLO. Ho, ho, ha, ha! There you are, eh? There

you are. I've been looking for you. (*Columbine hastily snatches off her slipper and hides it behind her back. They all face Punchinello. Harlequin tiptoes to one side and watches curiously.*)

COLUMBINE.—(*to Punchinello*)—What do you want?

PUNCHINELLO. What do I want, eh? You know very well what I want. I want my magic slipper, my magic slipper that you stole from me.

COLUMBINE. I didn't steal it. You gave it to me!

PUNCHINELLO. Ho, ho! That's a pretty story! Hee, hee! I gave it to you, eh? Well, I changed my mind.

COLUMBINE. I—I'm perfectly willing to pay you for it.

MARGOT. Don't you give him a cent, the miserable oyster.

COLUMBINE. How much do you want for it?

PUNCHINELLO.—(*rubbing his hands*)—I should think about ten bags of gold.

COLUMBINE. Ridiculous! There isn't so much money in the whole world.

PUNCHINELLO.—(*pointing to Pierrot*)—Perhaps this nice gentleman would like to buy it for you?

PIERROT. I—(*He looks at Columbine.*) I have only the most casual acquaintance with this lady.

HARLEQUIN.—(*in a rage to Pierrot*)—You infernal little cad! You—you (*He makes a move toward Pierrot. All back away from his voice except Punchinello.*)

PUNCHINELLO. Ho, ho! So you're there, too. Two birds with one stone. (*He rubs his hands*)—My magic slipper and my beloved wonder hat. Well, well, well! (*Harlequin, seeing that he has betrayed his presence, stands as if undecided what to do next. Punchinello strikes about him with his staff.*) Hey! Where are you? Take off my hat.

MARGOT. For the love of heaven, what is he raving about now?

PUNCHINELLO. My hat, my Wonder Hat! I sold it to Harlequin for five bags of gold—six bags of gold—

COLUMBINE. You sold it to Harlequin?

PUNCHINELLO. Aye, the ruffian, the highwayman. I sold it to him for only seven bags of gold. He clapped it on his head and now he's invisible.

COLUMBINE.—(*in delighted wonder*)—You really mean that Harlequin is here, near us? Oh, I knew it! I felt it!

PUNCHINELLO. Of course, he's here. Hey, you, take off

my hat! (*He swings his staff and Harlequin again dances out of his way.*) Take off my hat or give me my eight bags of gold. Hey, thief! (*He swings his staff again.*)

HARLEQUIN. I'm not a thief. I'd have paid you for your hat if you hadn't run away in such a huff. Now, after the way you've acted, I shall take my own time about it.

COLUMBINE.—(*stamping her foot*)—Harlequin!

HARLEQUIN.—(*in a dubious voice*)—Ye—yes?

COLUMBINE. Take off that silly hat this minute.

HARLEQUIN. I—well—to tell you the truth, I—

COLUMBINE. Don't you hear what I'm saying? Give it back this second.

HARLEQUIN. I would first like some sort of assurance, some guarantee of good faith—some—

COLUMBINE. I'm not making any promises this evening.

HARLEQUIN.—(*plaintively*)—My dear Columbine, I have learned a good deal about my own feelings in the last half hour. I am perfectly willing to return this man's property and to submit to the ordinary and normal risks of your society. But I positively insist that, before I reveal myself, you must also return to him all and sundry charms, spells, et cetera, which might, if used either by accident or with malice aforethought, effect my own future course of action.

COLUMBINE.—(*remaining absolutely firm*)—I've told you once that I won't make any promises.

HARLEQUIN. Then, I remain invisible.

PUNCHINELLO. I tell you once more, give me back my hat.

HARLEQUIN.—(*folding his arms*)—No.

PUNCHINELLO. Ah, ha! Then I shall have my revenge! Know, miserable butterfly, that you are trifling with magic beyond your own powers of control. There is a terrible clause in the incorporation of this hat. Ho, ho! Listen! He who steals this wonder hat and places it upon his own head, cannot remove it again except in the presence and with the consent of its rightful owner. When I have left you, you will become for all time one with the interstellar atoms. You will never resume your mortal shape. You will haunt the cafes. You will moon about the boxes at the opera. You will sigh and pine in the wake of beautiful women, as futile and impalpable as a gust of summer wind. (*He picks up his pack.*) Ho, ho! Now will you give me back my hat?

HARLEQUIN.—(*with an evident effort at firmness*)—No! Not unless Columbine first returns the slipper.

PUNCHINELLO.—(*turning to Columbine.*)—Madam, I make my last appeal to you.

COLUMBINE.—(*folding her arms*)—Not unless Harlequin first returns the hat! (*Punchinello looks from one to the other.*)

PUNCHINELLO. Come, ladies and gentlemen, I have urgent business elsewhere.

PIERROT. Might I suggest that the simplest way out of the dilemma would be for each of the principal parties to return the pilfered articles at the same exact moment?

PUNCHINELLO. Quite so! An excellent idea!

PIERROT. I shall count and at the word three—Is that satisfactory to everybody?

HARLEQUIN.—(*doubtfully*)—Ye—yes.

COLUMBINE.—(*also doubtfully*)—Ye—yes.

PIERROT. Very well, then. One! (*Harlequin begins to loosen the hat from his head.*) Two!

MARGOT.—(*stepping forward*)—Stop, everybody! You, Mistress Columbine, and you, invisible Mr. Harlequin. Because no matter what you do, somebody's bound to regret it. Don't interrupt me, ma'm, and you, wherever you are, keep your lid on and your mouth shut. I want to put it up to the kind ladies and gentlemen that have been studying this performance, and I asks them openly, what should be done at this point? Should Columbine give back the slipper or should she hang on to what she's got? Should Harlequin take off his hat? Personally, my honest opinion is that the question can't be answered to suit everybody, so it's my advice that we ring down right here, and allow everybody to go home and fix up an ending to conform to the state of his own digestion.

PIERROT. But, you know, we're being paid to finish this thing.

HARLEQUIN. Paid? We're not working for money. We're working for love.

COLUMBINE. Love!

MARGOT. Aw, hell!

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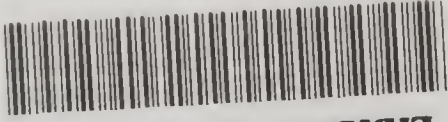
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