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MARCH'S FAMOUS FUNNY FARCES

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A Proposal in Grandma's Day

BY JEANNETTE JOYCE

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CHARACTERS

CHARITY—*A prim maiden, very proper.*

DAVID—*A bashful youth.*

MA ALLEN—*A buxom matron.*

PA ALLEN—*A serious man of middle age.*

SCENE: *Costumes and furnishings as old-fashioned as can be obtained.*

(Curtain raises on kitchen in Allen home with Charity seated peeling apples. She looks up excitedly as a rather timid knock is heard, then as the knock is repeated she forces herself to be calm and opens door.)

DAVID *(entering with much embarrassment)*: How do you do, Charity?
(Standing stiffly.)

CHARITY: I do well. *(Long pause.)* How do you do, David?

DAVID: I do well. *(Long pause.)* How does your father and mother?

CHARITY: They do well, too, David. *(Very long pause; much shuffling of feet on David's part and twisting of apron strings on Charity's.)*

DAVID: You was peelin' apples, Charity?

CHARITY: Yes, David.

DAVID *(seeing a chance)*: May I help you, Charity? I'm a first rate peeler so mother says.

CHARITY: I don't care if you do, David. You can sit over here. *(Places him at opposite side of table where he sits down and looks hoplessly at his hat still in his hand.)*

DAVID: What shall I do with this, Charity? *(Charity takes it and hangs it up with great care—silence, during which both work steadily. After clearing his throat several times, David resumes.)* I didn't come to peel apples tonight, Charity.

CHARITY (*demurely surprised*): Didn't you?

DAVID: No, I came to ask a question—a question (*hesitating*).

CHARITY (*demurely trying to help him*): Was it a riddle, David, or a conundrum you're going to ask?

DAVID: No, not just exactly that, but something like it. My, these apples are knotty.

CHARITY: Yes, Pa says they are considerably wormy this year.

DAVID (*after more silence*): Do you like peelin' apples, Charity?

CHARITY: I like it right smart.

DAVID: We got a whole orchard full of apples that goes to waste every year for want of peelin', and I came over tonight to say something to you.

CHARITY: About the apples, David?

DAVID: Well, yes; 'twas about apples and 'twasn't. (*Cries out as he cuts his finger.*)

CHARITY (*going around table to him*): Oh! David, you've cut your finger. Let me wrap it up for you. (*Proceeds to do so.*)

DAVID (*encouraged by her nearness*): I remember now what I came for, Charity; I came to ask you to—to marry me.

CHARITY (*starting back*): Oh! David, you oughtn't—really you oughtn't.

DAVID: Why we've been keepin' company two years come next month, and I've never gone to see another girl in all that time. Won't you marry me, Charity?

CHARITY: I don't know, David, that must be as Pa and Ma decides. Ask them. (*Pa and Ma enter on last words and all David's embarrassment returns.*)

PA ALLEN: Good evenin', David; was you speakin' of something we could do for you?

DAVID: Well, no—yes—not exactly.

PA ALLEN: Like to borrow something, would you?

DAVID: No, I don't want to borrow anything.

PA ALLEN: Buy then? Your father was considerin' a couple of calves I—

MA ALLEN (*putting hand on Pa's arm*): Pa, let David talk.

PA ALLEN (*not grasping situation as he looks around*): Oh! Well, talk, young man.

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DAVID (*forcing speech*): How—how's the corn comin' on for you, Mr. Allen?

PA ALLEN: Why first rate, David. Would you like to engage some seed of me this fall?

DAVID: No, I don't want to engage no seed corn—I—I—

MA ALLEN (*in Pa's ear*): Pa, ask him if he wants you to give him something.

PA ALLEN (*mystified*): David, is there anything I can give you?

DAVID (*jumping at this suggestion*): Your daughter—I want to marry her.

PA ALLEN: Well, now that is something. We'll have to ask the boss. What do you say, mother?

MA ALLEN: I say it is no more than I've expected—girls go ahead and get engaged so easy these days. It's not like it was when I was young.

PA ALLEN: Now mother, you forget. Don't you remember—

MA ALLEN (*breaking in*): There's one thing I do remember (*moving over to table*), and that's these apples. Come on, Pa, and help peel. For if ever they're tended to I'll have it to do.

DAVID (*taking Charity's hand, but glancing over at Ma and Pa*): I've a notion, a great notion, to—

CHARITY: To what, David?

DAVID: To kiss you, Charity.

(*Curtain*)



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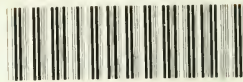
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