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T. S. DENISON & COMPANY, Publishers
623 South Wabash Avenue CHICAGO

AN AWFUL APPETITE

A BLACKFACE SKIT

BY

WADE STRATTON

AUTHOR OF

"Almost An Actor," "A Burnt Cork Barrage," "Cash Money,"
"Darktown Minstrel First-Part," "Fu'st Aid to Cupid,"
"A Good Day's Work," "Hitting the African
Harp," "Kiss Me, Camille," "When
Cork Is King," etc.



CHICAGO

T. S. DENISON & COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

AN AWFUL APPETITE

CHARACTERS.

GUS.....*A Very Hungry Coon*
EUSTACE.....*Also Undernourished*

TIME—*When Hunger Gnaws.*

PLACE—*Outside the Grub Zone.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Fifteen Minutes.*

TYPES AND COSTUMES.

GUS—Slow in speech and movement; shambling and awkward. Clothing old and dilapidated. Made up with minstrel black and negro wig.

EUSTACE—Lively and dapper. Clothing can be loud and rather sporty, to contrast with Gus. Made up with minstrel black or mulatto grease paint, and negro wig.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

Up stage means away from footlights; *down stage*, near footlights. In the use of *right* and *left*, the actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

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AN AWFUL APPETITE

SCENE: *A country road, or wood drop in one, if available. But scenery is not necessary, as this sketch can be presented anywhere.*

AT RISE, EUSTACE *enters briskly from the right. He turns and calls back impatiently.*

EUSTACE. Well, come on; come on. Is yo' feet growed fast to the ground? You got to step along if you travels with me.

GUS *enters wearily from the right. He walks slowly and has a forlorn manner.*

GUS. Says which?

EUSTACE. Shake them dogs, black boy. Shake them dogs.

GUS. I been a-shakin' 'em. I shook 'em so continuous that they's growlin' at me. (*Looks at his feet in tired manner.*)

EUSTACE. You ain't gettin' tired, is you?

GUS. I ain't *gettin'* tired. I's done *got*.

EUSTACE. What you crabbin' about?

GUS. This Marathon race ain't givin' me no renewed vitality.

EUSTACE. Well, look at me.

GUS. I don't want to look at you.

EUSTACE. Well, then, listen to me.

GUS. I'd rather look at you than listen to you. If I hadn't listened to you I'd be gettin' my meals regular, an' my belt buckle wouldn't be stickin' to my backbone.

EUSTACE. You don't mean to say you want to eat again?

GUS. Again? Say, man, where you git that "again" stuff? You know dog-gone well I ain't had a square meal since you inveigled me into leavin' my happy home by promisin' me adventure.

EUSTACE. Ain't I kept my promise? Ain't you had plenty of adventure?

GUS. I ain't sure. I should a looked up that word in the dictionary.

EUSTACE. What did you think "adventure" meant?

GUS. I thought it was somethin' to eat.

EUSTACE. You're always thinkin' about somethin' to eat.

GUS. All I get a chance to do is *think* about it.

EUSTACE. A little appetite is good for anybody. It makes you enjoy your food.

GUS. I ain't cravin' to *enjoy* it. What I want is to *get* it.

EUSTACE. Food don't do you no good, anyhow.

GUS. Listen here, niggeh. A little food wouldn't do me no *harm*.

EUSTACE. It would be a shame to waste a good meal on you.

GUS. How come?

EUSTACE. You'd jes' nachally gobble it down.

GUS. You're dog-gone tootin' I'd gobble it down.

EUSTACE. The trouble with you is, you ain't got no epicurean taste.

GUS. I bet you don't know what they taste like yourself.

EUSTACE. You don't follow me.

GUS. You're right I don't follow you; not another step.

EUSTACE. Then why don't you leave?

GUS. I'm too weak to leave.

EUSTACE. If you had seen as much food as I have you wouldn't think about eatin'.

GUS. Yes, and if you had seen as little food as I have you wouldn't think about nothin' else.

EUSTACE. I've seen the time when I was surrounded by food of all kinds. All I had to do was reach out for whatever I wanted. And it meant nothing to me.

GUS. Who poisoned it?

EUSTACE. Nobody poisoned it. It was perfectly good food.

GUS. And you didn't eat it?

EUSTACE. I didn't touch it.

GUS. Not even a bite?

EUSTACE. Not even a bite.

GUS. How come?

EUSTACE. It was when I was in the navy.

GUS. Oh; you was surrounded by navy beans.

EUSTACE (*absently*). Yes, I was— (*Corrects himself.*)

Nothing of the sort. I was on a long cruise—

GUS. Befo' the days of prohibition?

EUSTACE. Yes, but what's that got to do with it?

GUS. I knew it must have been befo' prohibition.

EUSTACE. How do you know so much, Mr. Wise Guy?

GUS. You jes' said you was on a long booze.

EUSTACE. I said I was on a long cruise.

GUS. Oh.

EUSTACE. We was in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Suddenly a terrible storm came up. The waves rolled high.

GUS. The waves rolled high.

EUSTACE. That's what I said. The waves rolled high.

GUS. They couldn't a rolled higher than sixes.

EUSTACE. This wasn't a crap game. It was a hurricane. The wind howled in fury. Away went the sails. Away went the masts. Away went the rudder. Suddenly the pilot gave a wild cry. Out on the horizon he saw a black spot.

GUS. A black spot.

EUSTACE. You heard me. A black spot.

GUS. The ace of spades.

EUSTACE. The ace of— Say, what are you talking about? That black spot was a waterspout.

GUS. A water spot.

EUSTACE. No; a waterspout. Don't you know what a waterspout is?

GUS. Sure. That's how the rain gets off o' the roof into the sewer.

EUSTACE. Swiftly it rushed upon us. It lifted our boat on her beam ends. There was a roar—a mighty crash—

GUS. The house was pinched.

EUSTACE. The house was— Keep quiet, will you? We were shipwrecked; cast into the sea. All the other sailors were drowned. For four days and four nights I swam—

GUS. Four days and nights?

EUSTACE. Four days and nights.

GUS. My! You must a-got yo' feet wet.

EUSTACE. I thought all was lost. But at length I reached the shore. I had just strength enough to drag myself up on the beach—and what do you think I saw?

GUS. The rest of the sailors havin' a clam bake.

EUSTACE. Not at all. I was the sole survivor, landed on a tropical island. My first thought was of lions and tigers—or cannibals.

GUS. You sure did look on the bright side of things.

EUSTACE. Then I looked about me. As my strength returned I explored the island, though I expected nothin' better than to starve to death.

GUS. You expected nothin' *better*?

EUSTACE. That's what I said.

GUS. Man, you couldn't expect nothin' *worse*.

EUSTACE. My head whirled, my throat burned, until I thought I was losing my mind. The first thing I wanted was a drink.

GUS. You wasn't losin' yo' mind.

EUSTACE. Suddenly, in the midst of a sylvan glade, I came upon a clear, sparkling pool.

GUS. My goodness! Who was runnin' the pool room?

EUSTACE. Not a pool room; a pool. I threw myself upon the ground, plunged my face in, opened my mouth, drank deep, and—what do you think that pool was?

GUS. A baseball pool.

EUSTACE. It was a pool of pure apple-sauce.

GUS. Apple-sauce is right.

EUSTACE. Then I looked overhead, an' found that the trees on that island were mostly breadfruit trees. Some had rye breadfruit, an' some had graham breadfruit, an' some had whole wheat breadfruit, an' on some of the trees the branches was hangin' heavy with nut an' raisin breadfruit.

GUS. Oh, mother, burn my clothes!

EUSTACE. So I picked a loaf of nut and raisin bread off the nearest breadfruit tree, an' cut it up in nice, thick slices. Then I sat down on a rock beside the clear, sparkling spring, an' spread some apple-sauce thickly upon it, and all day long I ate nut an' raisin bread an' apple-sauce.

GUS. All day long?

EUSTACE. Well, 'long in the afternoon I kind o' done lost my appetite. The next day I went a little farther an' I found a hot, bubbling spring, an' scooped in my hat an' got me a nice hatful of delicious vegetable soup, an' fo' dessert I had apple-sauce.

GUS. Oh, Mr. Undertaker, come an' git me now!

EUSTACE. Each day I found a different kind o' grub, un-til finally I got so fed up on it that I didn't never want to eat no more. I went back to the beach an' found a big table covered with a big eighteen-course dinner. There was roast turkey, an' cranberry sauce, an' mashed potatoes, an' celery, an' po'k chops, an' mince pie, an' candied yams, an' beef-steak smothered in mushrooms, an'—an'—

GUS. Apple-sauce.

EUSTACE. Boy, I was so sick an' tired of food that I jes' took off my hat an' coat an' jumped in the ocean an' kept a-swimmin' till I got back to the United States. An' now I don't care whether I ever eat or not.

GUS (*after thinking deeply for a moment*). Say, Eustace.

EUSTACE. Huh?

GUS. You know what you jes' done tol' me 'bout all them delectable viands?

EUSTACE. What about it?

GUS. It ain't done a bit o' harm to my appetite. Where is the place you was speakin' about here in the woods where we was goin' to git a swell meal?

EUSTACE. It's jes' on ahead a little piece.

GUS. I'll give my dogs one mo' chance. Let's go.

EUSTACE. Hol' on. We got to figger out jes' what we'll say.

GUS. I know dog-gone well what I'll say.

EUSTACE. That's jes' the trouble. You'll make 'em think we's a couple o' no-'count tramps. As soon as you opens yo' mouth, does you put yo' foot in it.

GUS. Well, let's hear what *you'd* say.

EUSTACE. All right. Here's the door of the house. (*Indicates with hand.*)

GUS. Right here?

EUSTACE. Right here in front of us.

GUS. Kin you see it?

EUSTACE. In course I kin see it. Can't you see it?

GUS (*rubs his eyes*). I can't see it very good.

EUSTACE. This is an imaginary house.

GUS. A menagery house? Say, is you expectin' some more lions an' tigers an' cannon-balls?

EUSTACE. I said an imaginary house. It ain't here, only you think it is.

GUS. I think it is? Man, you is got me an' you mixed.

EUSTACE. I'm jes' illustratin'.

GUS. Yeah; an' I'm jes' suffocatin'. When does we eat?

EUSTACE. I goes up to the door like this, and I knocks (*pantomimes knocking at imaginary door*), an' a lady comes to the door, an' this is what I says: How do do, lady. I hates to intrude upon the sanctity of yo' domicile in this unseemly manner, but the fact is that me an' my acquaintance here (*indicating Gus*) has been on a long an' fatiguin' journey, an' as we passed yo' well kept an' most attractive residence it occurred to us that we might jes' stop in an' inquire whether we might inconvenience you-all to the extent of politely solicitin' a bit of sustenance. (*Turns proudly to Gus.*) See?

GUS (*doubtfully*). Sounds mighty fine. Only you ain't said nothin' yet.

EUSTACE. That's the genteel way of askin' fo' a hand-out. Now I've gave you a lesson in polite panhandlin', show me how you kin do it.

GUS. Me?

EUSTACE. Sure. You go talk to the lady.

GUS. I'm too weak.

EUSTACE. Go ahead. Go right up to the door.

GUS. Is the lady still at the door?

EUSTACE. In course she is.

GUS (*looks closely*). Looks to me mo' like the bulldog. What will I say first?

EUSTACE. Anything a-tall. Jes' start conversation.

GUS (*makes absurdly elaborate approach and bow*). How do do, lady. (*Turns to EUSTACE.*) How's that?

EUSTACE. Hot dog! Now go ahead. Ask her.

GUS (*to imaginary person*). Lady, how about some lunch?

EUSTACE (*angrily*). That ain't the way.

GUS (*offended*). You said to ask her.

EUSTACE. I didn't said to ask her fo' somethin' to eat. Ask her somethin' else.

GUS. What else?

EUSTACE. Anything you can think of.

GUS. Somethin' to eat is all I kin think of.

EUSTACE. You got to talk about somethin' else first. Go ahead.

GUS (*scratches his head in deep thought, then gets a bright idea*). Lady, would you-all like to have yo' sidewalk shovelled?

EUSTACE (*angrily*). That ain't it. "Sidewalk shovelled." The idea! Don't ask that kind of a question.

GUS (*trying again*). Lady, would you like to buy a dog?

EUSTACE (*out of all patience*). 'Tain't no use. I'll have to do it myself. (*Goes to imaginary door and lifts his hat as though spoken to.*) Beg pawdon? Did you call me? Yes, indeed, lady, I'd be delighted. Step in the house? Well, I don't mind stoppin' an' restin' a bit. Ma'am? Stay to dinner. Well, lady, I couldn't think of puttin' you to all that inconvenience. (*Gus is greatly distressed*). No, thanks, I jes' had a large an' mos' satisfyin' meal down at the ——— (*mention local hotel or restaurant*). I posolutely couldn't eat another bite. Well, if you insists, I might have jes' a bite. (*Gus, listening and watching intently, is relieved.*)

What? You got the table all set with a place fo' me. Lady, you sure is the thoughtfulest person. I hope you ain't puttin' yo'self out on my account. (*Gus is meanwhile pulling at EUSTACE'S coattail, and pointing to himself, showing that he wishes to be included.*) Who? That man over there? No, he don't want nothin' to eat. He wouldn't know how to behave in nobody's dinin' room. (*Gus shows dismay.*) What's that? You could set out a chunk o' cold meat an' a cup of coffee on the back stoop? (*Gus brightens up.*) Now, lady, that's real kind of you, but you must'nt let yo' tender heart get the best of yo' good judgment. If I was you I wouldn't have that man hangin' around the place. He looks to me like a desprit character. He might be fixin' to burn yo' barn down, or somethin'. No indeedy, lady, he ain't no friend of mine. Never seen him befo' in all my life. What? Set the dogs on him? Is these yo' dogs? All four of 'em? My, my, what ferocious beasts they is. I bet they got a awful appetite. (*Gus starts edging away, right, and exits during the following lines.*) Is you goin' to sic 'em all on that one po' niggeh? Too bad; too bad! He won't have a chance in the world. When they starts a-eatin' him up I reckon they'll make a awful fuss. Maybe they'll git to fightin' over which one gits the dark meat, an'— (*Discovers Gus is gone.*) Here, Gus. Where is you at?

GUS re-enters, right, with a chicken drumstick in one hand and a wedge of pie in the other. (Or other edibles may be used.) He is eating as fast as he can shove the food into his mouth, and is perfectly happy.

GUS (after chewing until he has swallowed enough to enable him to speak). Huh? (*Takes another bite.*)

EUSTACE. How come you git this grub?

GUS (still eating). That lady's husband got tired o' waitin' fo' you-all, so him an' me done cleaned the table.

EUSTACE. Didn't you leave me nothin' a-tall?

GUS. Sure 'nough. We lef' you a big dish full.

EUSTACE. Big dish full o' what?

GUS. Apple-sauce!

(EUSTACE tries to snatch food from GUS, who resists and runs out, right, followed by EUSTACE; or they may both get into a scuffle for possession of the food while GUS continues to eat, for—)

QUICK CURTAIN.

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