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# The Prim Miss Perkins

A Sketch in One Act

As produced by  
HARRY LA MARR

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BOSTON  
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# The Prim Miss Perkins

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## CHARACTERS

HULDAH PERKINS, *who advertises for a husband.*  
MARTIN MULDOON, *who answers, but does not answer.*



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# The Prim Miss Perkins

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SCENE.—*Sitting-room in the farmhouse of HULDAH PERKINS, a New England spinster of uncertain age. There is an old-fashioned couch at L. One or two easy chairs and one hard-bottomed chair. Old-fashioned rocking-chair up stage at R. Door L. B. and window R. B. The rope of a dinner bell (outside) comes in from above and is fastened on nail by window.*

*(As curtain ascends there is a knock at the door; no one answers; another knock, and in a moment MARTIN MULDON, a trampish looking fellow, sticks his head in the door; seeing nobody, he enters and looks about him.)*

MART. *(looking at paper in his hand)*. This must be the domicile. I slumbered in the feathers at a neighboring house last night and me optics discerned this advertisement in the weekly paper which is published every month. *(Reads.)* "Wanted, a man to help on a farm. Bachelor or widower preferred. Might consider matrimony with the proper party; Huldah Perkins." *(Looks up.)* I'm neither married nor a widower,—I'm a democrat, but democrats sometimes get into trouble. I'll take a look over the farm and see if it's got any stumps or mortgages on it. *[Exits softly.]*

*Enter HULD. with two or three letters in her hand.*

HULD. It beats all how we country people is favored. The Congressman what invented Free Rural Delivery oughter have a bigger headstun than the doctor what got up pink pills for pale people. I advertised in the weekly *Whangdoodle* only las' month, and here's three answers fetched right at my door. *(Sits down in rocker and wipes her specs.)* Martin Witherspoon was over last night an' proposed to me again. That man has popped to me thirty-eight times and I've set down on

him thirty-nine. I told him "No" twict last night, an' he left in a high dungeon. He's been sparkin' me over thirty years and says he's gettin' discouraged. (*Rises and goes over to L.*) I told him faint heart never won a cook-stove, but the last thing he said as he started away,—after givin' my dainty hand a good squeeze,—was, "You may change yer mind, Huldah Perkins,"—he allus calls me Huldah Perkins when he's miffled,—"an' if ye dew, ring the dinner-bell an' I'll come a-flukin'." The very idee of ringin' a dinner-bell to call a man over to marry ye! Marriage bells is all right in their place, but I hain't quite ready tew plunge inter matrimony that bad. (*Walks back to rocker and sits down; picks up one of the letters from table, opens it and reads.*) "My dear Miss Perkins: I notice ye want a husband; do you keep a hired man, an' is yer house lit by gas and het by hot water?" (*Drops letter.*) Well, of all things. He must take me for one of them multiplication millionairesses! If I could afford all them flamdoodles, I wouldn't think of gettin' married. I might settle on Martin Witherspoon if he wa'n't poorer'n Job's turkey, but Martin never was forehanded. (*There is a knock at the door; she starts and rises.*) I wonder if that's Martin with another pop? (*She runs over to the glass and commences smoothing back her hair; reties her apron.*) I shall never marry Mr. Witherspoon as long as I'm single. (*Another knock; she grabs her knitting work and runs over and sits down in rocking-chair; calls out.*) Come in! (*Enter MART.*) Sakes alive! Who be ye?

MART. I hope you'll pardon this intrusion —

HULD. Be you a book agent, er some human bein' in disguise?

MART. Me family name is Muldoon, and a fond parent christened me Martin, consequently I always register at me hotel as Mr. Martin Muldoon, Esq.

HULD. You talk like a booktionary. If you'd wash yer face an' hands I might recognize ye as some friend of the family.

MART. (*with dignity*). Madam, I started out in life without a dollar in my pocket —

HULD. Well, I started out in life without even a pocket.

MART. This is a cruel world. At the first place I stopped at last night and asked for a lodging, they said everything was full except the hen-house. I told them it was rather a foul place to put a man whose ancestors came over in the *May-*



*flower.* They told me I would feel right at home then (*blub-bering*), as the chicken coop was full of Plymouth Rocks.

(*Weeps.*)

HULD. An' did you tackle the hen-house?

MART. Yes, I boldly entered. I drove an old hen off a nest and laid where she'd been setting, then I went over and set where a hen had been laying. But everything was too hard and I left.

HULD. (*laughing*). Excuse my cackling. But ye oughter hev looked fer a nest of soft-boiled eggs. Mercy! I see some mud on yer feet,—did ye use the door mat?

MART. I introduced myself as I came in —

HULD. I allus like to have everybody scrape acquaintance with the door mat. Martin Witherspoon allus wipes his feet.

MART. Pardon my verbosity, but are you the prim Miss Perkins who advertised with a view to matrimony?

HULD. (*suddenly sitting up in her chair*). An' be you the ninny-hammer who wanted a steam-heated hired man an' a house het by gas and lighted by hot water?

MART. I'm a gentleman if my clothes are made by a tailor.

HULD. Well, take a cheer. I allus want a man tew set down when he's standin' in my presence.

MART. I obey with alacrity and much condescension.

HULD. Say, if Martin Witherspoon had ten thousand dollars an' your gift of gab, I'd marry him ter-morrer. (*As MART. is about to sit down in one of the best chairs she yells.*) Sakes alive! Not that one. (*MART. springs up.*) Well, of all things. That's my bran' spankin' new one that I jest got with seven dollars wuth of Larkin soap. (*He starts for the couch.*) Nor the sofy either. I've jest had that covered with six cent caliker, an' I'm expecting Mehitable Skinner over this afternoon, an' I want it to look its best. Ye don't know Mehit, do you? (*MART. shakes his head.*) Well, Mehit an' Dan Ludlin is own cousins on her father's side. Mehit's mother's name was Carncross afore she married Skinner,—and the Carncrosses was poor sticks.

MART. I came here in answer to your advertisement.

HULD. Be you an Irishman or a hobo?

MART. My father was Irish and me mother was French.

HULD. I didn't know but what you was one of them Scandulivians. I hain't very partial to furriners.

MART. I was born in America, the land of the free and the home of the Trusts.

HULD. Well, I was born and brung up right here on this farm. I want a man that don't chew, smoke, drink, swear, find fault with his meals, who goes to church and wipes off his feet when he comes into the house.

MART. You'll have to rob the cradle to find such a person.

HULD. Martin Witherspoon has all them qualities, an' a lot more I know nothin' about.

MART. I stopped at his house last night and he sent me into the wood-shed to smoke.

HULD. If you come here you'd have to give up smoking.

MART. If I don't come, I may have to give up eating.

HULD. Do you know anything about farm work?

MART. I had the hay fever once.

HULD. Do you know anything about cooking?

MART. Me sister graduated from a cooking school.

HULD. I've heerd tell of them fancy Noo York Cheefs who git ten thousand dollars a year an' don't haf ter wash dishes er sweep an' dust. I et dinner at Sime Henderson's tavern onct, an' I never et sech vittles. We had scolloped lobsters à la limburg. Paddy de Photygrafts, hickory nuts on the half shell, roast pork garnished by apple sass, roast duck with brown gravy, an' wound up with a kind of licker. I didn't care so much fer the puddin', but I et that juice till I could see two puddin's stid of one. I never cut up so much in my life as I did that day down at Sime Henderson's after eatin' that puddin' dressin'. (*Laughs.*) I tried to jump over the table.

MART. It was such food as that which ruined me digestion.

HULD. You'll have no trouble of that kind here. Be you a man of means?

MART. I carry me capital in me hat.

HULD. You must be an organ grinder.

MART. I have a splendid appetite and two strong arms, and am a willing worker.

HULD. (*rising*). Well, you may go out and swill the hogs, then you may water the geese, milk the cows, bed down the cattle, salt the sheep, grain the horses, feed the calves, strain the milk, gather the eggs, shut up the hens and put a new hinge on the barn-yard gate. After you get that done, come in and I'll find you something to dew.

(MART. *looks at her in wonderment.*)

MART. Find something to do?

HULD. To be sure. If I have a man, he must spend all his idle time workin'.

MART. When do I eat and sleep?

HULD. Well, if you hurry you kin git the chores done by eleven P. M., an' you kin sleep 'til four A. M.

MART. I'll need an alarm clock under my pillow.

HULD. Then you'll be sleeping overtime. (*Goes over to table at upper R., where she busies herself while talking.*) I allus was a nervous, timid little thing, an' I think I would feel safer with a man in the house, even if he was an apology. I'm dreadfully skeered of these burgular fellows, an' I dassent shoot a pistol.

MART. If a burglar enters, look daggers at him.

(*She looks at him.*)

HULD. You'd better hussle your boots, fer I'm expectin' cump'ny, an' I've got tew sweep an' dust, do up the ironin', make a batch of biscuits, tie off a comfortable, beat up a sponge-cake, and set a hen. Your bill of fare fer breakfast will be dried apples, johnny cake and marmalade. On Sunday mornin's you'll have a dish of stewed prunes extry.

MART. I hope you'll forget to call me on Sundays.

HULD. I'll not forgit to call ye up, an' I may call ye down.

MART. Excuse my seeming impertinence, Miss Perkins, but your advertisement said something about matrimony?

HULD. Massy sakes alive! Do ye think fer a minit that I would consider matrimony with—with — Why, I come of one of the best families in Vermont. When I marry, it will be tew somebody in equally socialistic circumstances. (*He turns to go.*) I see there's a hole in your coat. Let me have it an' I'll darn it fer you while you're out doin' the chores.

MART. (*taking off coat*). Thank you, Miss Perkins—'tis an honor to have you curse me—er—I mean "darn" me. (*Hands her his coat.*) I beg pardon, my meerchaum,—it might be lacerated.

(*Reaches in his pocket and takes out a short, black clay pipe and places it in his vest pocket.*)

HULD. Land of Goshen! An' dew you put that in yer mouth? You'll haf ter go down in the back forty when you smoke that old settler.

(*She takes his coat and he starts away.*)

MART. If you want me, ring the dinner-bell—I just love the sound of the dinner-bell. [Exit.

HULD. I wouldn't dast ring that bell fer fear that Martin Witherspoon would think I had decided to take him fer better er wuss. (*Goes to work basket for needle and thread; looks out of the window.*) As I live, there he goes on old Dobbin this minit. I jest wonder if he's goin' down to Mehit Skinner's? He said as much last night when I refused him. Well of all things! What he kin see in her is more'n I kin tell. Why, she wears a number seven shoe an' eats pie with her fork. (*Sits down and commences sewing on MART.'S coat.*) If I was such an uneducated ignoramus as Mehit I'd steer clear of the matrimonial market, an' if Martin Witherspoon marries that toothless old maid, he needn't never propose to me agin. (*Stops and holds up coat.*) That's a pretty good coat fer a tramp. There's a hair on it, tew. (*Looks at hair.*) It looks like one of mine, but I hain't been nigh him. I wonder what's inside that pocket? If I was curious like some people, I presume I'd look into it. (*As she says this she deliberately takes a letter from pocket and takes it from envelope.*) Some folks is allus pryin' into other people's bizness, an' some isn't. I'm glad I'm an isn'ter. (*Reads.*) "My dear Martin: I have some good news for you." (*Looks up.*) Now I wonder what them good news is? I don't feel 'tall curious, but I might as well look. (*Reads.*) "You will recollect a few years ago you bought one thousand shares of Arizona Copper stock for two hundred dollars. It is now worth one hundred dollars a share, and you kin sell your stock any day fer a hundred thousand dollars. Yer luvn' cousin, Jim Britt." (*She thrusts letter in pocket and springs up in her excitement.*) Massy sakes alive! an' that hobo is wuth one hundred thousand dollars? What did I say to him when he spoke of matrimony? Did I refuse him pint blank? He hain't bad lookin', when ye come tew think about it. Sech deep blue eyes, jest the color of a robing's egg, an' he has sech an extinguished way with him, an' his conversation is so restless an' elevatored. I could have a hired girl, a steam-heated pianner an' a refrigerator. Why, he's a regular John D. Carnegy. (*Again sits down.*) How modest he carries himself fer a millionaire. Why, it's jest like one of them ten cent dime novels by Laura Jean Libby. (*Sighs.*) I'll win that man if I have tew give him ham an' eggs twict a week. What name did he give? Martin Muldoon! Huldah Muldoon wouldn't sound so bad. We could have an autobiograph tew

ride around in an' a cheffyneer to steer us. (*Looks around.*) I wish he'd happen in. (*Gets up.*) I believe I'll ring the bell—he'd git here before Martin Witherspoon could make it with old Dobbin. How cheap Mister Witherspoon looked on that old pelter of his. (*Enter MART. in his shirt-sleeves; she has laid coat on table and rushes up to him; he starts back in surprise.*) Oh, Martin!—er—I mean Mister Muldoon,—I hope you did not find the work fatiguin'?

MART. I have exhausted my knowledge of agricultural pursuits, and would like to inquire casually upon which side of a cow you sit whilst you extract the lacteal fluid?

HULD. Never mind the milking—sit down, Martin—I really feel as though I should call you Martin,—may I?

MART. Call me anything you wish.

(*He sits down in one of the best chairs but immediately springs up.*)

HULD. Take the sofy, Martie,—I'm goin' to call you Martie. I feel jest so as you're wuth it. You'll be more comfortable on the sofy, an' I presume Mehitable Skinner won't be over, anyway. (*He looks at her in surprise.*) Lay yer hat on the table. I want ye to feel perfectly at hum. (*He drops on the sofa; she shrieks a little from force of habit; he springs up; she pushes him back.*) Stay where you are, Martie; it was only a little spasm. It does seem good tew have a man settin' round the house. If there's anything I love better'n havin' a man settin' round the house, it's a hen settin' round the barn.

MART. Am I dreaming or have you had a change of heart?

HULD. That's jest it—it's my heart. (*Sighs.*) Why don't you call me Huldy?

MART. I don't want to appear too fresh.

HULD. Do you know what I was thinkin' about when I heard yer light footstep on the back porch?

MART. If I had wiped my feet?

HULD. I was thinkin' if I could get an honest, good-lookin' man, I wouldn't care if he smoked—a little,—er swore—just a trifle. I think you understand me, Martie?

MART. I understand ye, but don't quite grasp your meaning.

HULD. I was thinkin' of gettin' married. There, I've up an' told ye! We poor weak wimmin kin never keep a secret.

MART. Who is the lucky fellow?

HULD. (*giggling*). I know I'm too young to think of sech fol-de-rol, but, Martin, what would you say if I said that the man I had in mind wa'n't a thousand miles from here?

MART. I suppose it's Martin Witherspoon, where I stayed last night.

HULD. It's not Mister Witherspoon. (*Blurts out.*) It's you, Martie.

(*Starts toward him; he falls back on sofa and puts his feet up in the air toward her to ward her off.*)

MART. Me?

HULD. Yes, you, Martie. I've a nice farm well stocked, an' about four thousand dollars in the bank.

(*He sits up suddenly.*)

MART. Of course, four thousand is a small sum —

(*Hesitates.*)

HULD. (*aside*). It seems small to him.

MART. But if you have carefully considered me an' think you can care for me in the same manner I've always been cared for, I might —

HULD. (*flopping down on sofa by his side*). Oh, Martin!

(*He springs over to the other end of sofa; she follows him.*)

MART. Steady there! I have not fully decided yet; you know one must make haste slow in matrimonial ventures. Remember, you know nothing of my antecedents.

HULD. I'm not afraid of them, an' I've been vaccinated anyhow. Oh, Martie, I feel you have come into my timid little life as the humble bee enters the hollyhock. My heart flutters whenever you speak, an' you have sech speakin' eyes. (*As she rises.*) I think we'll have ham and eggs fer breakfast, an' maybe a leetle pork cake an' apple sass. Don't ye think a cool glass of milk would rest ye up?

(*She bustles about the table.*)

MART. If you have no objections—Huldah—I think I'll indulge in a short smoke.

(*Takes pipe from his vest pocket.*)

HULD. By all means, dearie. I allus did love the smell of a pipe. (*Runs over and adjusts pillow.*) Can't ye lay down an' smoke jest as well? (*Pats the pillow; he stretches out.*) What a lovely head of hair you have.

MART. Is this a pipe dream, or am I still in the hay-stack?

HULD. I'll get you a match! (*She runs and gets a match and lights it.*) Do you like wine?

MART. You may serve the wine presently. (*As he stretches out on sofa and puts his feet over the end.*) The pipe will do for now.

(*He lights the pipe and she coughs and strangles.*)

HULD. (*turning her head and coughing*). I never knew tobacco smoke smelled so sweet.

MART. While I am indulging in me afternoon siesta you might go out and salt the hens, shear the ducks and make up the beds for the calves, and when you get through with that I'll set you to work, Huldah. You don't object to my calling you Huldah?

HULD. (*sighing*). I never knew Huldah was sech a sweet name. (*Draws up a chair by him.*) But you haven't made love to me, Martie. I don't fancy long courtships, do you? Martin Witherspoon was a stiddy kind of a lover, but one gits tired of the same old sweetheart after twenty-five or thirty years.

MART. I'm a frost when it comes to making love.

HULD. But you might call me your ducky.

MART. I don't believe in calling foul names.

HULD. I feel I couldn't live without you.

MART. You can marry me and see.

HULD. How romantic it would be if you got down on yer knees an' popped the question. Martin Witherspoon never got down on his knees to me in his hull life.

MART. The course of true love never bags at the knees.

HULD. 'Twould be jest like a story book, Martie—you on your knees askin' fer my heart an' hand. Excuse my girlishness, but I do love romance.

MART. I never read a story book in my life—I don't like to read.

HULD. (*giving him a poke*). Who reads your letters, Martie?

MART. I don't remember of ever getting a letter.

HULD. Oh, you sly fox! Would you scold real hard if your little wife went through your pockets?

MART. It's very little she'd find in my pockets. (*Sits up.*) By the way, Huldah, where is my coat? I think I had a small bottle concealed in the side pocket.

HULD. I didn't notice any bottle in the pocket when I mended it, but I hain't one of them pryin' kind.

MART. Hand me my coat and I'll see for myself. (*She gets up and gets coat.*) It's delicious to have some one wait on you.

HULD. (*as she brings it to him*). I can sew with the best of them, if I dew say it. I kin sew with Mehitable Skinner any day,—I do hope she an' Martin Witherspoon will be happy,—maybe we'll give 'em our washing an' ironin' to dew. (*As she hands him his coat, she pokes him slyly.*) Don't lose any letters out of the pocket, you sly rascal.

MART. (*taking coat*). What letters? Where did you get this coat?

(*He holds it up and looks it over.*)

HULD. (*gasping*). It's the one you wore in here, Marty!

MART. (*laughing loudly*). That is certainly a good joke. 'Tain't my coat at all. (*Laughs.*)

HULD. (*shrilly*). Not your coat?

MART. Don't get nervous, Huldah, I didn't steal it. But you've mended another man's coat. My coat is blue, this coat is brown. (*Laughs.*) A good joke.

HULD. (*shrieking and shaking coat in front of him*). Whose coat is this?

MART. (*laughing louder than ever*). It must belong to the man where I stayed last night.

HULD. (*hysterically*). Martin Witherspoon?

MART. Yes, I've got his coat and he's got mine.

HULD. (*yanking letter from pocket and looking at envelope*). "Martin Witherspoon." It's his coat and his letter, an' him that's wuth a hundred thousand dollars. (*Shakes coat.*) I thought I recognized that hair on the coat collar. (*She rushes over to the window and looks out.*) An' I refused him last night.

(*MART. again lays back on the sofa puffing at his pipe.*)

MART. You've got me, Huldah dear.



HULD. Shet up! (*She rushes over and throws his feet off on the floor.*) Git off'n that sofy with yer dirty feet.

(MART. *sits up suddenly and stares at her.*)

MART. (*sadly*). My pipe's out.

HULD. Take it out of your mouth and git.

(*He springs up and runs over and lays his pipe on the table ; grabs his coat and stands looking at her.*)

MART. My dear Miss Perkins——

HULD. Don't speak to me,—you've ruined my young life.

(*She bursts into tears ; he goes up to her.*)

MART. Huldah!

(*She turns on him fiercely ; he falls back.*)

HULD. Bah! Take yerself away,—keep goin' till ye git out of sight an' then don't stop.

MART. (*as he goes out*). Stung! [ *Exits.*

HULD. What a numskull I've been. Mehit Skinner'll git that hundred thousand dollars, an' she never et in a tavern in her hull life. She'll go ridin' by in her biograph with blue goggles on. If Martin Witherspoon would only drop in again. Why didn't he tell me of this money? He had a new necktie on last night; I oughter smelled a rat. What shall I do, what shall I do? (*Hesitates a moment.*) I'll ring the dinner-bell. (*She rushes over to the rope and commences madly ringing the bell ; she drops cord and looks out of the window.*) I wonder if he heard it? He's nowhere in sight. I hope Mehitable will have sense enough to refuse him. (*Rushes around.*) Will he never come? One hundred thousand dollars gone to the dogs. I must look like a fright. (*Runs over to glass and smooths back her hair.*) Phew! how that pipe smells. If Martin comes in he'll think I've been smoking, an' he hates tobacco as bad as I do. (*She takes off her apron and commences wiping off sofa ; rushes over to table and in her excitement picks up MART.'s pipe and places it in her mouth.*) Phew! (*Comes to herself, yanks pipe from her mouth and smashes it on the floor.*) Hark! Do I hear horse's hoofs? Meybe it's Martin. I'll ring the bell again. (*Rushes over and rings bell.*) Curfew must ring this afternoon. (*There is a sound of horse's hoofs ; they grow louder.*) It is hoof beats. They come nigher and

nigher. (*Sounds grow louder.*) It's old Dobbin's footprint.  
(*Rushes over to the window.*) It's Martin Witherspoon.  
(*Voice outside cries, "Whoa, Dobbin!"*) He's heard the  
dinner-bell!

(*Door is suddenly opened and MART. enters disguised in linen  
duster, chin whiskers, cowhide boots, and covered with  
dust which flies about when he grabs HULD. in his arms.*)

MART. (*as he opens his arms*). Huldy!

HULD. Oh, Martin! This is so sudden!

(*Falls into his arms as curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN





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