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AT HARMONY JUNCTION

A COMEDY CHARACTER SKETCH

FOR A SINGING QUARTETTE

BY

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*"Foiled, By Heck!" "The Press-Agent's Handbook," composer of
"Laughing Water," etc.*



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AT HARMONY JUNCTION

CAST OF HARMONIZERS.

- THE STATION AGENT.....*Rube Character.*
 THE HOTEL PORTER.....*Blackface Character.*
 THE TRAMP.....*Hobo Character.*
 THE STRANGER.....*Straight Juvenile.*

NOTE—This playlet, especially designed for a singing quartette, is arranged for the introduction of solo and quartette numbers, and will easily admit any special “stunts” which it may be desired to introduce.

PROPERTIES.

Wheelbarrow, trunk, suitcase; badge and bandana handkerchief for Agent; cigars for Stranger.

PLACE—*A Country Station.*

TIME—*Sometime Before the Five-Fifteen.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Twenty Minutes.*

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of stage; C., center; R. C., right center; L., left; 1 E., first entrance; R. D., right door; L. D., left door, etc.; 1 G., first groove, etc. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

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SEP 12 1917

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AT HARMONY JUNCTION

SCENE: *Exterior of a country railroad station, in 1 or 2. (Wood landscape drop may be used if necessary, or the act may be put on with no scenery at all.) Large sign, crudely painted, hanging on drop R, "Beware of the Cars." (On the other side of the card is painted "Safety First" and it hangs by a string so that it can be turned around.)*

Music: "Turkey in the Straw," lively, to raise curtain.

As curtain rises, loud locomotive effect is heard, gradually dying down with music. A few seconds after rise of curtain, AGENT enters R., pushing a hand-truck or wheelbarrow, on which is a big trunk. At the same time, STRANGER enters in haste, L. AGENT dumps truck R. C. so that trunk falls to stage at moment when orchestra finishes music with a "break." Locomotive effect dies away. AGENT and STRANGER meet at C:

STRANGER. Say, my friend, what train was that?

AGENT. Thet was th' four o'clock express.

STRANGER. Why, that was my train!

AGENT. You're wrong, young feller. Thet train belongs t' th' railroad company.

STRANGER (*looking at his watch*). It's only three o'clock. That train is an hour fast!

AGENT. Wrong again. It's twenty-three hours slow. (*STRANGER looks at him questioningly.*) Thet was yistid-dy's train.

STRANGER. When does the next one go out?

AGENT. Tomorrer, I reckon.—If some pesky train robber don't go an' steal the ingine.

STRANGER. Then I can't keep my contract. And that means I lose five hundred dollars!

AGENT (*whistles*). Whew! Five hundred dollars! Why, ye kin git a special train f'r three dollars an' a half—only we ain't got no special trains.

STRANGER. I am in a terrible predicament!

AGENT. Don't yew say nothin' about this here town! I'm the station agent an' the sheriff, too (*Shows badge*), an' I'll run ye in, by thunder! Who be ye, anyhaow?

STRANGER. I am an operatic tenor, and a distinguished soloist.

AGENT. Ye can't kid me, ye slick city feller. Who be ye?

STRANGER. I am a singer.

AGENT. Ye're a suspicious character, thet's what ye be. I like a little singin', naow an' then. If ye're a singer, prove it. (*STRANGER hesitates, AGENT reaches to his hip pocket.*) Sing, gosh darn ye! Sing, 'r I'll pinch ye, in th' name o' th' law!

(*As STRANGER steps down to footlights, AGENT withdraws hand from pocket, bringing out big red bandana handkerchief, with which he dusts off trunk and sits down on it. Solo by STRANGER.*)

AGENT (*after song*). Thet's pretty slick, all right, by ginger. Is thet all ye dew f'r a livin'?

STRANGER. Well, I have considerable versatility.

AGENT (*jumping back threateningly*). No ye don't, young feller! This here's a dry taown, so keep y'r bottle in y'r pocket!

STRANGER. I mean my talents are diversified.

AGENT. Ye can't borry a gosh darn cent off o' me.

STRANGER. You don't comprehend. I am a vaudeville entertainer. For instance, I am a ventriloquist.

AGENT. I ain't interested in them new fangled religions.

STRANGER. I will give you a little demonstration. (*Looks off stage R., and calls*): Hello there, Bill! (*Holds lips almost motionless, and muffles his voice a trifle, as he says*): Hello, Jack. (*This is not supposed to be good ventriloquism. Anybody can do it well enough to get the comedy effect desired.*)

AGENT (*turning around suddenly and looking off R.*). Gosh all punkins, who was thet? I don't see nobody.

STRANGER (*laughing*). Of course you don't. Now, listen. (*Calls off, as before.*) Where did you come from,

Bill? (*Imitating other voice, as before.*) Oh, look at the hayseed!

AGENT (*whirling around, hops on one foot and kicks other heel to the floor*). Called me a hayseed, did he? Durn his hide! I'll hayseed him, in th' name o' th' law! (*Starts R.*)

STRANGER. Wait a minute, Uncle. Where are you going?

AGENT. It's thet tramp thet's been hangin' araound here, an' I'm goin' to pinch him, by hick'ry! (*Exits R.*)

STRANGER (*laughing*). Ha, ha! I fooled the old buck-wheater that time. By the way, I wonder where that bell-boy is with my suitcase. (*Looks L.*) Oh, here he comes now, the lazy good-for-nothing.

Enter PORTER, very tired, with suitcase.

STRANGER. Well, there you are, at last.

PORTER (*looking at him sleepily*). Huh?

STRANGER. I say, there you are.

PORTER. Yassir. Here I are.

STRANGER. What kind of language is that? Don't say "Here I are."

PORTER. Yassir.

STRANGER. "Here I is!" Where is your intelligence?

PORTER. I nebber wear 'em 'cept on Sundays.

STRANGER. You blundering fool! Here I is.

PORTER. Yassir.

STRANGER. Don't say "Yassir."

PORTER. No, sir.

STRANGER. That's better.

PORTER. Yassir.

STRANGER (*threatening him*). Don't say that! Why didn't you hurry with that bag?

PORTER. Hurry, Boss? Hurry? Why, Boss, I done come in a most pusilanimous hurry.

STRANGER (*sarcastically*). Oh, you did, did you?

PORTER. Yassir. Don't you see de Presbyterian runnin' off o' me?

STRANGER. You are a worthless loafer.

PORTER. Yassir.

STRANGER (*angrily*). Don't say that!

PORTER. Ya—No, sir.

STRANGER. Now you stay here and watch my suitcase. I'm going to look for the station agent.

PORTER. Yassir.

STRANGER *turns threateningly toward him, then strides off R.* PORTER *sits down on suitcase and immediately falls asleep. Mysterioso music, very soft, by orchestra. Lights may be turned down and spot lights used, if available, but this is not necessary. Enter TRAMP, L.* TRAMP *trips over PORTER'S feet, turns around and sees him for the first time, and tries unsuccessfully to awaken him. Then takes match from vest pocket and lights toe of PORTER'S shoe. This can be worked by having attached to tip of shoe a small piece of asbestos wool, on which has been poured a few drops of alcohol. Bell rings loud off stage, and toy fire-engine, carrying seltzer bottle, is pulled across stage by a string, from R. entrance to where PORTER is asleep, L. C. Music agitato. PORTER rouses himself a little, sleepily takes bottle, squirts water on shoe, extinguishes flame, and replaces bottle on fire-engine. Fire bell rings the local "fire-out" signal, engine is drawn off L., and PORTER goes sound asleep. Music stops. Lights up.*

(*Character song by TRAMP. TRAMP starts to exit R., after song.*)

AGENT (*off stage*). Gosh darn the pesky cuss! If I ever ketch hold o' thet tramp—

TRAMP (*stopping short*). Something tells me that the climate isn't healthy over there. (*Starts to exit L. PORTER snores very loud.*) And yonder Ethiopian beauty is sleeping sound. (*PORTER snores.*) I never heard such a sound. (*Creeping stealthily to PORTER, he leans over, snaps his fingers and shouts in PORTER'S ear:*) Seven come eleven!

PORTER (*tumbling off of suitcase, now wide awake*). Little Joe, Little Joe! O-o-h, Baby! (*Looks on floor for dice.*)

AGENT (*off stage*). Hey! Stop thet noise, in th' name

o' th' law! (TRAMP looks off R., runs to sign and turns it around to read "Safety First," and jumps inside trunk.)

Enter AGENT and STRANGER.

PORTER (*rubbing his head*). I done thought I heard the Heabenly sound ob angel voices. Who said seben come eleben? Guess I done been dreamin'.

STRANGER. I left you here to watch my suitcase.

AGENT. By ginger, he was asleep at th' switch.

PORTER. I wa'n't, neither. They ain't no switches on a single-track railroad.

STRANGER. You be quiet!

PORTER. Yassir. (*Falls asleep on suitcase.*)

STRANGER. Now see here, Silas—

AGENT (*kicking heel to floor*). My name ain't Silas, gosh durn it—

STRANGER. Have a cigar, then, Reuben. (*Hands him cigar.*)

AGENT. Don't mind if I—(*Business with heel.*)—gosh durn it, my name ain't Reuben!

STRANGER. Now that I've told you how I did that little trick, you can do it just as well as I can. Suppose you try it on that colored boy.

AGENT. Jumpin' firecrackers! Yew reckon I kin dew it?

STRANGER. Of course you can. (*Calls to PORTER.*) Here, you—Hey, Rastus!—Sam!—George Washington!—Abraham Lincoln!—Whitewash!—Dingey!—Smoke!—(*Meanwhile he shakes PORTER'S shoulder, calling louder and louder, but PORTER sleeps on.*)

AGENT. Wait a minute, stranger. I reckon as haow I kin learn ye a trick 'r tew. (*Flaps his coat-tails, hops about and crows like a rooster.*)

PORTER (*waking up, smacks his lips and rolls his eyes*). Oh, my! M-m! Chicken pie fo' dinnah! (*Looks around.*) Say, Boss, where's dat chicken?

STRANGER. There's no chicken here. It's only imaginary.

PORTER. I don't want no menagerie. All I want is a chicken.

STRANGER. Now you be quiet, and watch your Uncle Jasper—

AGENT. Gosh durn it, my name ain't Jasper!

STRANGER. All right, Uncle.

AGENT. I ain't your uncle, by hick'ry!

STRANGER (*to AGENT*). Well, hurry up and do your trick before the audience goes to sleep.

AGENT. Well now, jest watch me, young feller. (*Makes elaborate preparations and imitates STRANGER'S manner in an absurd way. Calls toward R.*) Hello, over there!

STRANGER. That's fine! Now make him answer.

AGENT (*after making ridiculous facial movements, trying to "throw his voice."*) Jumpin' grasshoppers! I can't dew it!

STRANGER. Try again.

AGENT (*same business as before*). Hello, over there?

TRAMP (*from trunk*). Hello, Sheriff, how are you?

AGENT (*surprised but delighted*). Great Hubbard squash, I done it! (*With much satisfaction, lights cigar which STRANGER gave him.*)

PORTER (*frightened*). Say, Boss. Dere's somebody in dat trunk.

STRANGER. Nonsense. He threw his voice into the trunk.

PORTER. He threw a scare into dis here niggah, dat's what he done.

AGENT (*to trunk*). Well, Bill, how's all th' folks at home?

TRAMP (*from trunk*). Ain't nobody home. They've all gone to the ——. (*Mentions local moving picture theatre.*)

AGENT (*well pleased with himself*). Well, I guess thet's pretty durn slick, by juniper!

PORTER. Say, Boss. Dey's ghosts in dat trunk. Dis place is ha'nted, sure's yo' born! Dis ain't no place fo' a good Mefodist niggah. (*Starts off L.*)

STRANGER. Here, you. I told you to watch my suitcase, didn't I?

PORTER. Yassir.

STRANGER. Don't say that!

PORTER. I tell you, Boss, I jest can't. Dat ghost done scared de libin' syncopation right out o' me.

STRANGER. Why, it's no ghost. It's only a hallucination.

PORTER. 'Scuse me, Boss, it ain't neither. It's a ghost, dat's what it is!

STRANGER. Well, if it's a ghost, we can drive it away.

PORTER. No, sah, Boss, we can't. I ain't fotch mah rabbit's foot.

STRANGER. Well, how about a little church music? You sing, and Uncle Ezra and I will join in the chorus.

AGENT (*who has been puffing at his cigar, throws it down*). Gosh durn it, my name ain't Ezra!

PORTER (*picking up cigar and smoking it*). Yassir.

STRANGER. Don't say that!

PORTER. A good old camp-meetin' tune.

(*Coon song by PORTER.*)

(*Just before the chorus he stands with the trunk at his right hand, STRANGER and AGENT standing to his left. As the chorus starts, trunk opens, and TRAMP stands up, unnoticed by the others. They all sing the chorus. At close of song, TRAMP holds his last note after the others have stopped. The three are puzzled. TRAMP snatches cigar from PORTER'S hand, crouches down into the trunk, and lid falls with a crash.*)

AGENT. Thunderin' fishhooks! What was thet?

PORTER. Dis here station-house sure am ha'nted.

STRANGER. Have a cigar, Ebenezer. (*Gives AGENT a cigar.*)

AGENT (*lighting cigar, then throwing match down angrily*). Gosh durn it—

STRANGER (*interrupting and imitating him*). My name ain't Ebenezer.

PORTER. 'Tain't no use a-talkin', they's spooks around here. I jest nachally feel mahself turnin' pale as a sheet.

STRANGER (*laughing*). Why, that was only a joke.

AGENT. Thet's right, by heck! I was jest doin' a little ma-what-cha-ma-quism.

STRANGER. Ventriloquism. Show him how you do it, Uncle.

AGENT (*to trunk*). Well, Bill, be ye here yit?

TRAMP (*from trunk*). Shut up, you chin-whiskered old buckwheater. (AGENT *puffs furiously at cigar*. TRAMP *blows cloud of smoke through hole in trunk*.)

AGENT. It's only a trick, but dog my cats if I know haow I do it!

STRANGER. Why, it's just ventriloquism.

PORTER. No, Boss. I reckon anybody got de rheumatism can't do dis. (*Dances "break" step*. TRAMP *raps loud on trunk for last two taps*.)

STRANGER. There's somebody in that trunk.

PORTER. Yassir. Dey surely am somebody in dat trunk. Dey's a ghost in dat trunk, dat's what dey is! A great, big, white skelliken ghost come clean from de grabe-yard. I reckon maybe dey's two-three dozen ghosts in dat trunk, Boss!

AGENT (*stuttering, very much frightened*). Say, Stranger, yew—yew don't figgur maybe they's something wrong with thet thar trunk, dew ye?

STRANGER. Of course not. (*To PORTER*.) Open it up, Sam.

PORTER (*on his knees*). Oh, no, Boss. I can't do dat. Dat trunk is ha'nted, dat's what it am! I reckon dey's a corpse in dat trunk! We's all done gone and went and got voodoo!

STRANGER (*sternly*). Open that trunk! (TRAMP *makes terrific noise inside trunk*.)

PORTER (*on his knees, clasping hands toward trunk*). Oh, please, Mr. Ghost, we ain't a-pickin' on you! Stay in yo' nice little trunk, dat's a good ghost! (*More noise from trunk*.) Mr. Ghost, you leave dis niggah alone, an' dis niggah won't touch a hair o' yo' head. (*Trunk lid starts to rise*.) Oh, Mr. Ghost! Please, *please* lay down! (TRAMP *opens trunk and stands up*.) Oh, Hebben, have mercy on a good Mefodist niggah!

STRANGER (*laughing*). Why, it's only a poor tramp that hid in the trunk.

AGENT (*to TRAMP*). Hey, who be yew?

TRAMP. Listen, Bo, is dis Kansas City?

AGENT. No, by Heck! This is Harmony Junction.

TRAMP. Then, Porter, you can make up my berth again.

(*Starts to get back into trunk.*)

AGENT. Hey, who be yew, in th' name o' th' law?

TRAMP (*loftily*). I? I am a grand opera tenor in disguise.

AGENT. Oh, be yew another one o' them singers.

TRAMP. Well, I guess. I'm the guy they named the Singer sewing machine after. But I'm kind o' husky in de pipes. Dese Pullman sleepers (*Points to trunk.*) is so drafty.

STRANGER. Well, let's hear what you can do.

TRAMP. All right. Will youse guys back me up?

(*Quartette number. Here may be introduced any other musical numbers or stunts not provided for elsewhere in the sketch. At the conclusion of the last number, train whistle is heard in the distance, then locomotive effect, growing louder until next number begins.*)

STRANGER (*to AGENT*). Say, I thought you told me there were no more trains today.

AGENT (*scratching his head*). Well, by heck, thet must be th' train thet was due th' day before yistiddy!

(*Final quartette number, preferably a "good-bye," "rail-road," "traveling," or "back-home" song.*)

CURTAIN.



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