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FOILED, BY HECK!

A TRULY RURAL DRAMA
IN ONE SCENE AND SEVERAL DASTARDLY ACTS

BY

FREDERICK G. JOHNSON

AUTHOR OF

"The Press Agent's Handbook," "At Harmony Junction."
Composer of "Laughing Water," etc.



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CHARACTERS.

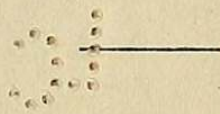
REUBEN HANKS.....*A Nearly Self-made Man*
MRS. MATILDA HANKS.....*Who Did the Rest*
IRENE HANKS.....*Their Perfectly Lovely Daughter*
CLARENCE CODD.....*A Hero in Homespun*
OLIVIA DE LA VERE.....*The Plaything of Fate, Poor Girl*
SYLVESTER BREWSTER.....*With a Viper's Heart*

TIME—*Between Sunup and Sundown.*

PLACE—*The Mortgaged Home of the Homespun Drama.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Thirty-five Minutes.*

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DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS.

IRENE—"Perfectly lovely"; coy, dainty and petite; everything that an ingénue ought to be; wears her hair down her back in a braid; short gingham dress; pinafore; sunbonnet.

CLARENCE—Rawboned and gawky, except at dramatic moments, when he can be as mock-heroic as he wishes; soft negligee shirt, collar opened at the neck, sleeves rolled back; overalls or homespun trousers, well patched, tucked in cowhide boots; may either wear red crop wig, or have hair slicked down and parted in the middle; sunburned.

OLIVIA—The more "vampirish" she is, the better; handsome evening gown and opera cloak; plenty of jewelry; talks slowly and tragically.

SYLVESTER—Pale, thin-lipped; short cropped black moustache, or with the ends waxed and turned up; wears either full-dress with silk hat, or riding clothes with derby hat (can change from one costume to the other between scenes, if desired); a typical villain of melodrama.

REUBEN—Past middle age, slightly stout, hale and hearty; sunburned make-up; half-bald or "Uncle Josh" wig; costume similar to Clarence's, with linen duster over it; smokes a corn-cob pipe.

MRS. HANKS—Typical farmer's wife, may be stout or thin; hair done up in a tight knot on the back of her head; plain dress, soiled, torn and patched; apron; her manner is somewhat shrewish.

NOTE—All the characters in this play may be slightly overdrawn in make-up as well as in word and action, but exaggeration should not be carried so far as to make them appear grotesque. This play should be done as high travesty, not as slapstick burlesque.

NOTE TO THE STAGE DIRECTOR.

To get all the fun out of this play that there is in it, it must be rehearsed and staged with all the care, thoroughness and attention to detail that you would devote to a legitimate

dramatic production. There is nothing more deadly than a humorous sketch indifferently presented. Dramatic travesty calls for the highest type of ability and serious preparation, if it is to be effective.

The secret of putting a travesty across is to play it in absolute seriousness. The characters must not seem to be aware that they are doing or saying anything funny. No matter how absurd or incongruous the player's lines or stage business may be, he must, for the time being, lose his sense of humor, and play his part as though it were intensely dramatic.

The parts are to be over-played, of course. Irene must be sweeter than any ingenue ever was; Clarence, an ultra-manly hero; Sylvester, a devil who would rather say "Curses!" than eat; and so on. But the over-emphasis must always remain true to character.

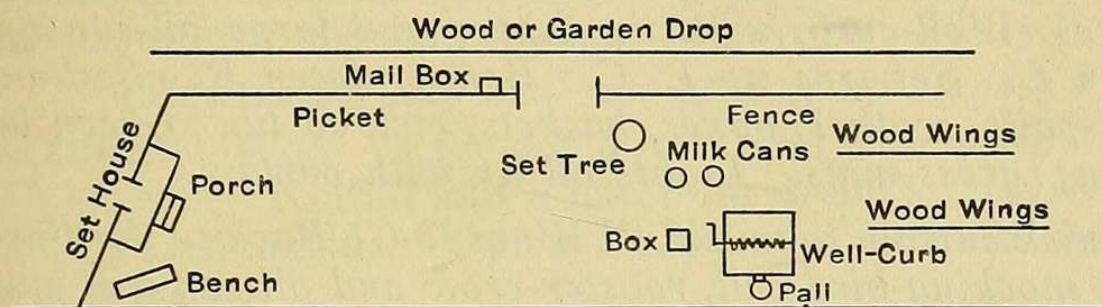
All players must become absolutely letter perfect in their parts, so that the dialogue will run along briskly without a break and the fun will be constantly sustained, and stage business must be rehearsed until it goes without a hitch. Once the fun lags, or the audience loses interest in what is going on, it will be very hard to pull the show out of the fire. Keep it going forward all the time. Rehearse until each player can pick up all his cues without a second's hesitation. Then slow it down where the stage business demands, and introduce all the original by-play you can think of, so long as it does not descend to the level of cheap burlesque. Get the play to running like clockwork, and there is no reason why "Foiled, By Heck!" should not be one continuous laugh.

PROPERTIES.

Corncob pipe for Reuben; dish or pie-tin for Mrs. Hanks; powder puff for Irene; lorgnette for Olivia; wisp of rye straw, gaudy silk handkerchief, big cigar, matches, pitchfork and pail of milk for Clarence; cigarettes, matches, handkerchief and razor for Sylvester; two long envelopes, each containing legal document, and copy of Police Gazette,

in mail box; oil-can on well-curb; checker board and checkers on box; pail of water in well; one or more milk cans; two or more soap boxes; glass crash box off-stage.

STAGE SETTING.



STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of the stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *1 E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance; *R. 3 E.*, right entrance up stage, etc.; *R. D.*, right door; *L. D.*, left door, etc.; *D. F.*, door in flat or scene running across the back of the stage; up stage, away from footlights, down stage, near footlights; *1 G.*, first groove, etc. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

FOILED, BY HECK!

SCENE—*Exterior of the Hanks farmhouse. Wood or garden drop. Set cottage, with porch, R. Wood wings L. Picket-fence across stage in 3, with gate C. Mail box on fence. Well-curb, with tin dipper and large oil-can on it, down L. Set tree up L. C. Bench, down R. Saw-buck, milk-pails, scythes, boxes, baskets, etc., ad lib. Green baize down; grass-mats. Lights all up with curtain.*

Quick curtain to music, "I Want to Go Back to the Farm," with mocking-bird call, rooster-crow and other farm animal effects.

REUBEN and CLARENCE *discovered, seated on boxes down C, playing checkers. Music pp.*

REUBEN. (*making a play*). Wal naow, by cracky, see if ye kin keep me from jumpin' ye.

CLARENCE. By jiminy, ye got me in a pretty dosh-burned all-fired tight place, all right, by thunder! (*Scratches his head.*)

Enter MRS. HANKS from house on to porch. She is drying a dish on her apron. Music stops.

MRS. H. Clarence, Clarence! Now where is that pesky, good for nothin' hired hand?

CLARENCE (*plays*). Thar, by ginger! Now jump me if ye kin!

MRS. H. Reuben!

REUBEN. Yes, my love.

MRS. H. Where is that lazy lout of a Clarence Codd?

REUBEN (*plays*). I dunno. I see him goin' daown to th' medder a while ago to milk th' brindle caow.

CLARENCE *rises and exit up L.*

REUBEN (*calls to L.*). Hey, Clarence!

CLARENCE *enters down L., with pitch-fork and milk-pail.*

CLARENCE. Yes, sir.

REUBEN. Miz' Hanks hez ben lookin' fer ye, Clarence. Where ye ben?

CLARENCE. Out in th' flower garden, gettin' a sack o' flour. Say, Miz' Hanks, one o' the bees hez got th' hives.

MRS. H. Hez th' mail man gone by yit, Clarence?

CLARENCE. No, ma'am.

MRS. H. Then see if he left any mail in th' box, and don't be all day about it, neither. (*Exit into house.*)

(CLARENCE gets mail out of box up stage.)

REUBEN. What ye git out o' the box, Clarence?

CLARENCE. Nothin' but a letter for Irene an' this week's Country Gentleman. (*Opens a copy of Police Gazette and starts to read.*)

REUBEN (*tragically*). Bills, bills, bills! Shall I never pay off the mortgage on the old farm?

CLARENCE (*looks romantically at envelope*). Irene! Irene Hanks! What a beautiful name! To kiss your lips as I kiss this paper (*kisses envelope rapturously*) and to press you close to my heart! (*Puts envelope in hip pocket.*) But what chance have I, Clarence Codd, a poor working boy? Ah well, such is life. (*Tears wrapper off a stick of chewing gum and chews vigorously.*)

REUBEN. Clarence, how much did the brindle caow give today?

CLARENCE. Two quarts, Mr. Hanks.

REUBEN. Two quart? You mean two gallon.

CLARENCE. I said two quarts.

REUBEN. And I said two gallon. And never yit in nigh on to fifty year hez th' tongue of Reuben Hanks uttered a falsehood. (*Points sternly to well-curb.*) Clarence, do your duty! (*Exit.*)

CLARENCE sets pail under spout and turns crank; reads Police Gazette while turning. Music, "Sunbonnet Sue." IRENE enters blythely.

IRENE. What a perfectly lovely day! (*at top of steps*). How beautifully the flowers bloom (*coming down steps*) and how sweetly the little birds are singing! (*Rooster crows.*) This is simply perfect weather for hay fever.

(*Daintily powders her nose. Sees long envelope protruding from CLARENCE'S pocket.*) Oh! (*in dainty surprise*). A letter for me? How perfectly lovely! (*Takes envelope from CLARENCE'S pocket and reads letter.*) "Dear Miss Hanks: Your Uncle Ludwig Fineheimer has died, and his will leaves all to you. Come to Milwaukee at once and take possession of the brewery. Jiggs and Biggs, attorneys. P. S.—Guard this letter as you would your life. There is a dark plot afoot to rob you of your inheritance!" How perfectly lovely! Now I can go to Milwaukee and live in a nice cool brewery. (*Sees picture on cover of Police Gazette.*) Oh, how perfectly lovely! (*Takes magazine away from CLARENCE and reads it.*)

(*Ignoring her entirely, CLARENCE finally pours the pail of milk into the well and takes out a pail of water. Music stops.*)

CLARENCE. Thar! Thank goodness, th' milkin' chores is over! (*Pours water from bucket into milk-pail.*) Oh, hello, Irene. I got a letter for ye.

IRENE. Yes, I got it by special delivery. And Clarence, what do you think?

CLARENCE. I never think.

IRENE. Uncle Ludwig is dead.

CLARENCE. Dear me, how annoying.

IRENE. Yes, and he has left all his property to me. (*Enraptured.*) Clarence, I am an heiress!

CLARENCE (*imitates her manner*). How perfectly lovely!

IRENE (*pouting*). That's just what I was going to say.

(*Music—"Hearts and Flowers."*)

CLARENCE (*taking IRENE'S hand tenderly*). Irene, there is something that I have long wanted to say to you.

IRENE (*softly*). Yes, Clarence? Something to say to me?

CLARENCE. Yes, something to say to you. For years my lips have been sealed, for what had I, a poor working boy, to offer you? But now that you have a million dollars, I can speak freely. Irene—sweetheart—I love you! Will you marry me? (*Music stops.*)

IRENE. Why, Clarence, you surprise me. How could I, an heiress, with a brewery in Milwaukee, marry a poor farm hand?

CLARENCE (*with pathos*). Then you don't—you don't care—

IRENE. Oh, Clarence, how can you doubt my love for you? But don't you see how impossible it would be? No, you must rise in the world—

CLARENCE. I'll get a job running an elevator.

IRENE. No, Clarence, I shall wed none other than a moving picture hero. When you have finished your correspondence course, and get a job as leading man in the movies—then, but not till then—

CLARENCE. Irene, my darling! I shall live—and hope. (*Thunder.*) How sinister the weather sounds this morning! I fear a storm is coming up. Let us seek shelter in yonder cottage.

IRENE. Oh, how perfectly lovely! (*Exeunt into house.*)

Lights all down. Music misterioso. Enter SYLVESTER up L. in spotlight, back of fence. Crosses to C., comes through gate, dodges back of tree for a moment, peering around it, strides to house, peeks in window, comes C. stealthily, whistles fiercely through his fingers. OLIVIA enters.

SYLVESTER. Hist!

OLIVIA. Can't you see, I'm histing all over!

SYLVESTER. What a wild night this is!

OLIVIA. What are you up to now, Sylvester? What deed of evil causes you to stir abroad in all this nasty weather?

SYLVESTER. Taunt me not, woman, but do as you are bid. Go, fetch me the document that lies in yonder mail box.

OLIVIA. Is there a letter in the box?

SYLVESTER. There is if the property man didn't forget to put it there. Make haste, delays are dangerous. (*OLIVIA gets letter from box and gives it to him. He opens it, tries to read it, turning it upside down two or three times, etc.,*

and then hands it to her.) You read the letter, Olivia. I have forgotten my spectacles.

(Music stops.)

OLIVIA *(reading)*. "Mr. Clarence Codd, Dear Sir."

SYLVESTER. Curse him! Yes, yes; go on!

OLIVIA *(reading)*. "We are glad to report that you have graduated from the Correspondence School of Moving Picture Acting with high honors, and enclose herewith your diploma. If at any time—"

SYLVESTER. Cease! I have heard enough! Once that paper falls into the rightful hands of Clarence Codd, Irene will be beyond me power! For she will marry none other than a motion picture hero. *(Snatches letter from OLIVIA.)* Curse him!

CLARENCE *enters on to porch, from house.*

SYLVESTER. I shall win the gyurl by fair means or foul, or my name is not Sylvester Brewster!

CLARENCE *(coming down steps)*. Then, Sylvester Brewster, your name is mud!

SYLVESTER. What, you here?

CLARENCE. Yes, I would parley a few words with your lady friend, so you'd better beat it. And tell the electrician that the storm is over.

SYLVESTER. Foiled, and by a mere strip of a boy! Curses! *(Exit L.)*

(All lights up full.)

OLIVIA. Oh, sir, you are just in time. That black-hearted rascal plots your downfall.

CLARENCE. Did he put some axle grease on the front steps?

OLIVIA. He has taken the paper.

CLARENCE. Oh, then you are a subscription agent?

OLIVIA. Oh, my young friend, do you not realize that your whole future is at stake?

CLARENCE. Steak? That reminds me. I ain't finished supper yet. And say, lady, don't slam the gate on the way out. *(Exit into house.)*

OLIVIA (*enraptured*). He has feet just like Charlie Chaplin's! Ah, if it had been he, and not another, those ten long years ago, I would not stand here today—betrayed, abandoned, broken!

Enter SYLVESTER.

SYLVESTER. So am I, broke, as usual. Woman, what are you doing here?

OLIVIA. Standing here.

SYLVESTER. All right. Only don't stand so close to the ground.

OLIVIA. Oh, you are so cruel to me—cruel! Surely, Sylvester, surely you don't begrudge my coming back once a year, just to see the old farm, and to visit the graveyard on the hill?

SYLVESTER. Sh! Not so loud! Tell me, Olivia—what do you know of the graveyard on the hill?

OLIVIA. I know enough of your dark past, Sylvester Brewster, so that one word from me would send you to—

SYLVESTER. To the penitentiary?

OLIVIA. Worse than that. To——— (*near-by town*).

SYLVESTER. Curse you, Olivia de la Vere! I rue the day you ever crossed me footpath!

OLIVIA. Silence, you worm! You miserable, pie-faced, sun-scalded cauliflower!

SYLVESTER. Olivia, my darling! Then you love me, in spite of all?

OLIVIA. Yes, in spite of everything, even your face.

SYLVESTER. Never mind my face.

OLIVIA. I never did.

SYLVESTER. Hist!

OLIVIA. I've done all the histing I intend to.

SYLVESTER. Zounds, woman, you are driving me to desperation.

OLIVIA. He's getting peevisher and peevisher every day. Well, all husbands are just alike—at least, all of mine were. (*Exit.*)

SYLVESTER. I must have a care. If the woman thinks my love for her is waning, she's likely to kick up an awful

mess. Curse her, she knows too much! Why, oh why, did I marry a woman with a college education? I must find a way to Maxim silence 'er. Then (*clenches first*), when I get the other girl in me power—(*glass crash off stage*). But hark! Do I hear something, or anything? I will hide myself behind yon sturdy oak. (*Goes L. of tree, kicking over milk-can.*)

Enter IRENE on porch from house.

IRENE. I thought I heard a noise. Who's there?

SYLVESTER. Nobody.

IRENE. Come, Clarence, there is no one here. (*Comes down steps.*)

Enter CLARENCE from house.

CLARENCE. Then we are alone.

IRENE. How perfectly lovely!

(*SYLVESTER strikes match on shoe and lights cigarette.*)

IRENE. Hark! What was that?

CLARENCE. Gosh, that wasn't nothin' but the crocuses a-croakin' in your ma's flower garden. (*They sit on bench.*)

IRENE. Oh, Clarence, I feel as though something was hanging over me!

CLARENCE (*looking up*). Oh, the scenery is tied up, safe enough. (*They look bashfully at each other.*)

IRENE (*nudging him with elbow*). Well, start something, start something.

CLARENCE. Gosh all hemlocks, Irene, that ain't no way to give a feller a chance to propose to you.

IRENE. I don't have to *give* you a chance. Why don't you *take* a chance?

CLARENCE (*kneels*). Irene, Irene, my darling queen—

IRENE. Don't do it in poetry. It makes it so much verse.

CLARENCE (*angrily*). By heck, will you shut up? (*Softly.*) It is at a moment such as this, Irene—

IRENE. Why are you in such a hurry to propose to me?

CLARENCE. I want to get it out of my system before the villain starts pursuing you.

SYLVESTER. Curse him! He suspects my whereabouts! And these are the only clothes I have to wear about. (*Exit.*)

CLARENCE. Irene, maybe I hain't got no right to talk of loving you, but there's something here (*puts hand over his heart*)—

IRENE. Why don't you scratch it?

CLARENCE. Something that is hammering so fiercely that I have to carry my cigars in the other pocket. (*Takes big cigar out of right vest pocket, lights it, blows smoke toward her.*)

IRENE. Good night! And they said the cabbage crop was a failure!

CLARENCE. I love you, Irene, and you alone. I know your father is the worst drunkard in Squedunk, and they hung your brother for a hoss thief, but maybe you ain't as bad as your face is painted.

IRENE. The best girl in the world would be proud to cherish such a love as yours. If you will only keep sober, Clarence, you can make me so happy!

CLARENCE. Ah, but there can be no happiness for me, with the shadow of my future hanging over me!

IRENE. You mean—?

CLARENCE. Of course I do. I have never received my moving picture diploma.

IRENE. You should worry.

CLARENCE. Let's stand over here (*crossing to L. with IRENE*) by the old broken bucket, and give somebody else a chance to say something.

Plaintive music. Enter OLIVIA.

OLIVIA. I thought I saw the shadow of a man coming through the gate ahead of me. Is this haunting dread of being followed never to cease? Eighteen wretched, tedious months since last I visited a beauty parlor! Tomorrow seems no nearer than it did the day before yesterday! Ah, woe is me, I might as well be dead! But stop! If I were dead, who would send for ——? (*Name of local undertaker.*) No, hope is not quite dead. Hope, blessed hope, is lifting me up out of my grief, up to the gilded summit of my childhood dreams, like an elevator to a roof garden. Oh, I feel so weak! And yet I only walked twenty-seven

miles and a half since breakfast. Why, oh why, didn't I take a jitney?

CLARENCE. Tell me, why are you here?

OLIVIA. 'Twas a cruel fate that drove me here. They were moving some scenery over there (*points off*) and I had to go somewhere! But even though I am here, my thoughts are away back, eighteen years ago, to the happiest days of my life. All was brightness and sunshine, but the time drew on, and at last we were plunged into misery and despair, when —— (*mention local politician*) announced himself a candidate again!

IRENE. The poor woman. She has lost her mind.

OLIVIA. No, I haven't lost it. I have merely changed it. But I have only myself to blame. I was attracted by the glitter of the social world! I wanted life!—excitement!—the glamour of the city!—the glitter and sparkle of high society! So I got a job as cashier at a quick lunch restaurant! Oh, it is almost more than I can bear!

CLARENCE (*snaps fingers and sings*). She's a bear, she's a bear!

IRENE. How perfectly lovely!

OLIVIA (*to Clarence*). Something tells me you are my friend. Come, let me tell you a secret. (*Kisses him.*)

CLARENCE (*bashfully*). Gosh all pumpkins, that ain't no secret to me.

OLIVIA. You spurn me! Like all men, you lead a trusting woman on—

CLARENCE (*gazing at OLIVIA*). Where have I seen that face before? Oh, yes, now I remember. It was on a magazine cover.

OLIVIA. And tell me, kind sir, who is this simple little country maiden?

IRENE. I may be a country maiden, but I'm not as simple as I look.

OLIVIA. Is she not the picture of innocence? (*Holds out both arms to CLARENCE.*) Come, my hero!

IRENE. Nix on the hero stuff. That (*points at CLARENCE*) belongs to me!

OLIVIA. Ah, little girl, to gaze upon my raven locks, would you believe that I once had hair like yours?

IRENE (*angrily*). 'Tis false!

OLIVIA. So was mine! But come (*gaily*) there is no reason why we should not be friends. Isn't there some place around here where we can buy a drink?

IRENE. Oh, how perfectly lovely!

CLARENCE (*to OLIVIA*). Woman, I fear your presence here is fraught with some terrible calamity.

OLIVIA. You said a mouthful! Sylvester Brewster plots to step between you and your affianced bride!

CLARENCE. That's just what I suspected. Quick, Watson, the needle. (*Takes oil-can from well-curb and presses it against his wrist, a la hypodermic injection.*) And prithee, tell me, who is this Brewster person?

Enter SYLVESTER up stage, unseen; he is smoking a cigarette.

OLIVIA. He is a tall, dark man—

CLARENCE. Not the guy with the open-faced suit?

OLIVIA. Then you know him?

CLARENCE. I have never seen him. But I will recognize him when I see him again.

OLIVIA. Be on your guard. Already he has the papers—

CLARENCE. I beg your pardon?

OLIVIA. I say, already he has the papers—

CLARENCE. Are you sure?

OLIVIA. Posolutely!

CLARENCE. Well, that's different.

SYLVESTER (*aside*). Curses! Foiled again! (*Dashes cigarette to ground.*)

CLARENCE. And now let us go and see what we can find in the ice-box. And you can tell us the sad, sad story of your misspent life.

IRENE. How perfectly lovely!

(*Exeunt OLIVIA, IRENE and CLARENCE down L. SYLVESTER comes through gate and down stage, looking off L.*)

SYLVESTER. So, me proud beauty, you defy me hasty tempah and tip the game off to that rustic simpleton. I shall make you pay dearly for this. But the little country

girl—what a beauty she is. What a beauty! I wonder what kind of massage cream she uses. (*Lights cigarette.*) Now I must see her father, and ask for her hand in marriage. Little does he dream that I already have a wife or two in Jersey City. (*Turns toward house and whistles through teeth.*)

REUBEN *enters from house.*

REUBEN. Gosh all fish-hooks, look who's here! (*Calls to house.*) Hey, Matildy, come on out. Here's a lightnin' rod agent.

MRS. HANKS *enters from house.*

MRS. H. Lightnin' rod nothin'. Do yew mean to say, Reuben Hanks, that yew don't know a villain when yew see one?

SYLVESTER. My good woman, them is crool words. Why should you suspect that I am a villain?

MRS. H. I can tell by your coat an' pants.

SYLVESTER (*aside*). Curses! Foiled again! (*Dashes cigarette to ground.*)

REUBEN. Ain't yew ashamed, Matildy. Jest look how yew've made him feel.

SYLVESTER. Mr. Hanks, I am a man of few words. I love your daughter!

MRS. H. Dew tell! Ain't he simply romantic?

REUBEN. Are ye sure ye love her for herself alone?

SYLVESTER. Well, I wouldn't let a little thing like a brew-ery stand in the way.

REUBEN. No, young feller, I reckon it ain't no use.

MRS. H. She has sworn to marry none other than a moving picture hero.

SYLVESTER (*reaching into inside coat pocket*). Ah! Then it is fate that has brought me to you at this moment. I am a moving picture hero.

REUBEN. Dew tell! Kin ye prove it?

Enter CLARENCE L.

SYLVESTER. I can, and here are the papers! (*Showing paper.*)

MRS. H. Sakes alive, will wonders never cease! (*Reads over REUBEN'S shoulder.*) "Correspondence School of Moving Picture Acting"—

CLARENCE (*aside*). My diploma! He has stolen it! (*Aloud.*) Stop! (*comes forward*) Mr. Hanks, this man is not the rightful owner of that paper!

SYLVESTER (*aside*). Curses! He is trying to gum my game! I must strike while the flat-iron is hot! (*Aloud.*) Stand aside, clown! (*To REUBEN.*) Now, Mr. Hanks—

CLARENCE (*clutches at paper*). He has stolen the paper—

SYLVESTER (*furiously*). You will, will you? Then take that (*slaps CLARENCE'S cheek*) and that! (*same business other cheek*).

CLARENCE (*mildly*). I got it the first time.

SYLVESTER (*deliberately dusting himself with handkerchief*). Take care how you attack me in the future. And remembah, I have a hasty tempah! (*Exit.*)

REUBEN. Clarence, did ye hear what thet man said?

CLARENCE. Yes, and I believe he meant it.

MRS. H. Say what ye will, Reuben Hanks, thet thar city feller don't mean no good by our Irene!

REUBEN. Oh, shucks!

MRS. H. Come, Clarence. I wanter borryer yer safety razor to open a can o' sardines. (*Exeunt MRS. HANKS and CLARENCE into house.*)

REUBEN. Well, by the great jumpin' Jehosephat, if this ain't dramatical! I mustn't let Matildy know thet Irene is heiress to a brewery, or she wouldn't never hear the last of it from the W. C. T. U. (*Exit.*)

Enter IRENE.

IRENE. How perfectly annoying! That rascal Sylvester Brewster insists that I must become his bride, and scorn the honest love of Clarence Codd. And he tried by brute force to take from me the papers that give me the title to Uncle Ludwig's brewery. (*Thinks deeply.*) There is something about Sylvester Brewster that I don't quite trust!

Enter SYLVESTER stealthily, smoking a cigarette. He follows close on her footsteps.

IRENE. I think the papers will be safer if I hide them in the old sycamore tree. No one would ever think of looking there. (*Puts paper in tree.*) Now, Sylvester Brewster, do your worst! The papers are beyond your reach! (*With a wicked grin, SYLVESTER takes the paper from the tree. Exit IRENE.*)

SYLVESTER (*laughs maliciously*). Aha! Little did she know that the eagle eye of Sylvester Brewster was upon her when she secreted the precious paper in the old crab-apple tree!

CLARENCE *enters unseen, and watches SYLVESTER.*

SYLVESTER. Now I will go to the hotel and pack my toothbrush and my silk pajamas, and then for Milwaukee and untold millions! (*Starts to exit.*)

CLARENCE (*calmly, with arms folded, blocks SYLVESTER'S path*). Scoundrel!

SYLVESTER (*cringing*). Curses! Foiled again!

CLARENCE. I saw you swipe the paper from yonder eucalyptus tree.

SYLVESTER. What paper?

CLARENCE. Sand paper!—Come now, there's a good fellow, slip me the paper and I will not press my charge against you.

SYLVESTER (*defiant for a moment; then, desperately*). Very well, then.

OLIVIA *enters unseen.*

SYLVESTER. You have the whip handle over me. But the time is coming when I shall have me revenge. Here is your mean old paper. (*Hands him paper from pocket.*)

CLARENCE (*looks at paper*). My moving picture diploma! So this, Sylvester Brewster, explains your mysterious presence here. You would rob me of my career, as well as of my affianced bride!

SYLVESTER (*aside*). Jiminy Christmas! I have gave him the wrong paper! (*Aside to Olivia.*) All is not yet lost.

I still hold the deed to the brewery! (*Aside.*) Aha, Clarence Codd, I have outwitted you in a masterly manner! (*To CLARENCE.*) Will you lend me a match? (*Takes match from CLARENCE and lights cigarette.*) Thanks awfully, old top. I'm jolly well obliged to you, don't y' know. (*Exit jauntily.*)

CLARENCE (*flirtatiously*). Well, if it isn't little Hazel Kirke! How d'you do, kiddo? (*Approaches as though to embrace her.*)

OLIVIA. Stand back, villain!

CLARENCE. I ain't no villyun, gosh darn it! I'm the hero.

OLIVIA (*cooly*). Well, that's different.

CLARENCE. Woman, you are too beautiful to be good.

OLIVIA. No one knows how I have suffered!

CLARENCE. Why don't you read the patent medicine ads? While there's life (*points finger upward*) there's dope!

OLIVIA. I believe you are a man to be trusted.

CLARENCE. Everybody else makes me pay cash. Do you feel like telling me your guilty secret?

OLIVIA. Oh, if I only dared! But someone might see us together!

CLARENCE. I'll fix that. (*Blows; all lights out, spot on OLIVIA.*) Now we can keep it dark.

OLIVIA. You are so thoughtful! Well, then, three years ago—

CLARENCE (*holds up one hand*). One moment, one moment! (*To orchestra leader.*) A little chills and fever, please, professor. (*Plaintive Music.*)

OLIVIA. Three years ago I lived in Hoboken (*or near-by town*), with my step-mother and her husband and my little brother Joe.

CLARENCE (*snaps fingers as though rolling dice*). Little Joe! Little Joe!

OLIVIA. Father was assistant cashier in a livery stable, and he fell in love with his stenographer—she took down the hay for the horses.

CLARENCE. Nay, nay, Pauline! But go on. The spot light is getting thin around the edges.

OLIVIA. One dark and stormy night the old man was coming home, down an alley—clutching his revolver tightly—the revolver wasn't loaded, but he was. Suddenly—a man jumped out—and fanned him on the bean—

CLARENCE. Strike tuh, the umpire said!

OLIVIA. They brought him home. They called a doctor in. The old man was dying, but the doctor saved his life. Some day, when I find that doctor—I am going to put paris green in his vegetable soup!

(Cymbal and bass drum crash. Music stops.)

Spotlight jumps to wings, where SYLVESTER appears, unseen by the others. He strikes attitude of listening. Spotlight now jumps to CLARENCE.

CLARENCE. But how does Sylvester Brewster come in?

(Spotlight jumps to OLIVIA.)

OLIVIA *(looks into audience)*. If he's here tonight, he came in on a pass.

(Spotlight jumps to CLARENCE, who stands by well-curb.)

CLARENCE *(applying oil-can to wrist)*. Quick, Watson, the hat-pin.

(Spotlight jumps to SYLVESTER.)

SYLVESTER. Curses! Oiled again! *(Exit.)*

(Spotlight goes out. OLIVIA exit while stage is dark.)

CLARENCE. Gosh darn that spotlight!

(Lights all up.)

CLARENCE. She has vanished into thin air. I will vanish into the alley! *(Exit.)*

Enter REUBEN from house, and SYLVESTER up L, coming down through gate.

REUBEN. By the gosh all hemlock gee whilliken, if that ain't the lightnin'-rod agent ag'in! Jiminy Christmas, young feller, it do beat all git out how yew hang ara und here.

SYLVESTER. Mr. Hanks, at last I have you in my power. Will you or will you not?

REUBEN. Will I or won't I what?

SYLVESTER. Never mind what.

REUBEN. I will not!

SYLVESTER (*takes paper from pocket*). Then you shall know how it feels to be ground beneath the heel of a remorseless foe!

Enter IRENE and MRS. HANKS on porch from house.

SYLVESTER. Here I hold the mortgage on your farm. I am going to foreclose!

MRS. H. Reuben, do you hear what this man says?

IRENE. He said something about going for clothes.

REUBEN. The savings of a lifetime swept away!

SYLVESTER. I will tear up the papers and the farm will be yours—on one condition.

REUBEN. And that is—

Enter, unseen, OLIVIA, who listens attentively.

SYLVESTER. The hand of your daughter in marriage.

IRENE. Oh, what have I done to merit a fate far worse than death itself?

MRS. H. Irene, you ungrateful child! Don't you want to live in the city and be a fine lady, and have four servants besides a dumb-waiter?

SYLVESTER. And wear diamonds and rubies?

REUBEN. That's right, b'gosh! An' go to the movies every Saturday night?

IRENE. Oh, how perfectly lovely!

SYLVESTER. Then come to my arms, and seal your promise with a —

(*IRENE is about to go to him, when OLIVIA jumps up and down excitedly, swinging her arms and making a great noise with her feet. This is a sudden transition from "emotional" character to "tough" character, and to be effective, OLIVIA'S change in manner must be clear-cut and complete.*)

OLIVIA. Hey, Clarence! Look what Irene's doing!

CLARENCE *enters*. IRENE and SYLVESTER hold their pose.

OLIVIA. Clarence, are we going to stand for that?

CLARENCE (*reaching to hip pocket*). Villain!

SYLVESTER. Ouch!

CLARENCE. Were you going to make so bold as to kiss that girl?

SYLVESTER (*shaking his head half-wittedly*). Mpm!
(*Meaning "no."*)

CLARENCE. Then get out of the way and let me do it.
(*Withdraws hand from pocket, bringing out handkerchief, which he daintily touches to his lips. He then makes ridiculous preparations to kiss IRENE, placing her in various poses, stepping back to view the effect, etc., during the ensuing dialogue.*)

OLIVIA. And this is all the thanks I get for putting him wise to the big boob!

SYLVESTER. Woman, you here again! I shall make you pay dearly for this day's work! Are you prepared to die?
(*Draws big razor and opens it.*)

OLIVIA. Drop that, you pickled pig's-foot! That razor will get you into trouble, the first thing you know.

SYLVESTER. What do you mean, you shameless huzzy?
(*Gestures threateningly.*)

OLIVIA. I saw you steal it out of a non-union barber-shop!

SYLVESTER. Curses! Foiled again! (*Throws razor down and lights cigarette.*)

IRENE. Oh, how perfectly lovely!

MRS. H. (*looking intently at SYLVESTER*). Reuben! At last I have perpetrated this man's disguise! Do you know who he is?

REUBEN. Sure. Who is he?

MRS. H. Why, he's the feller that sold us the shock absorbers for the flivver!

REUBEN. Bless you, my children.

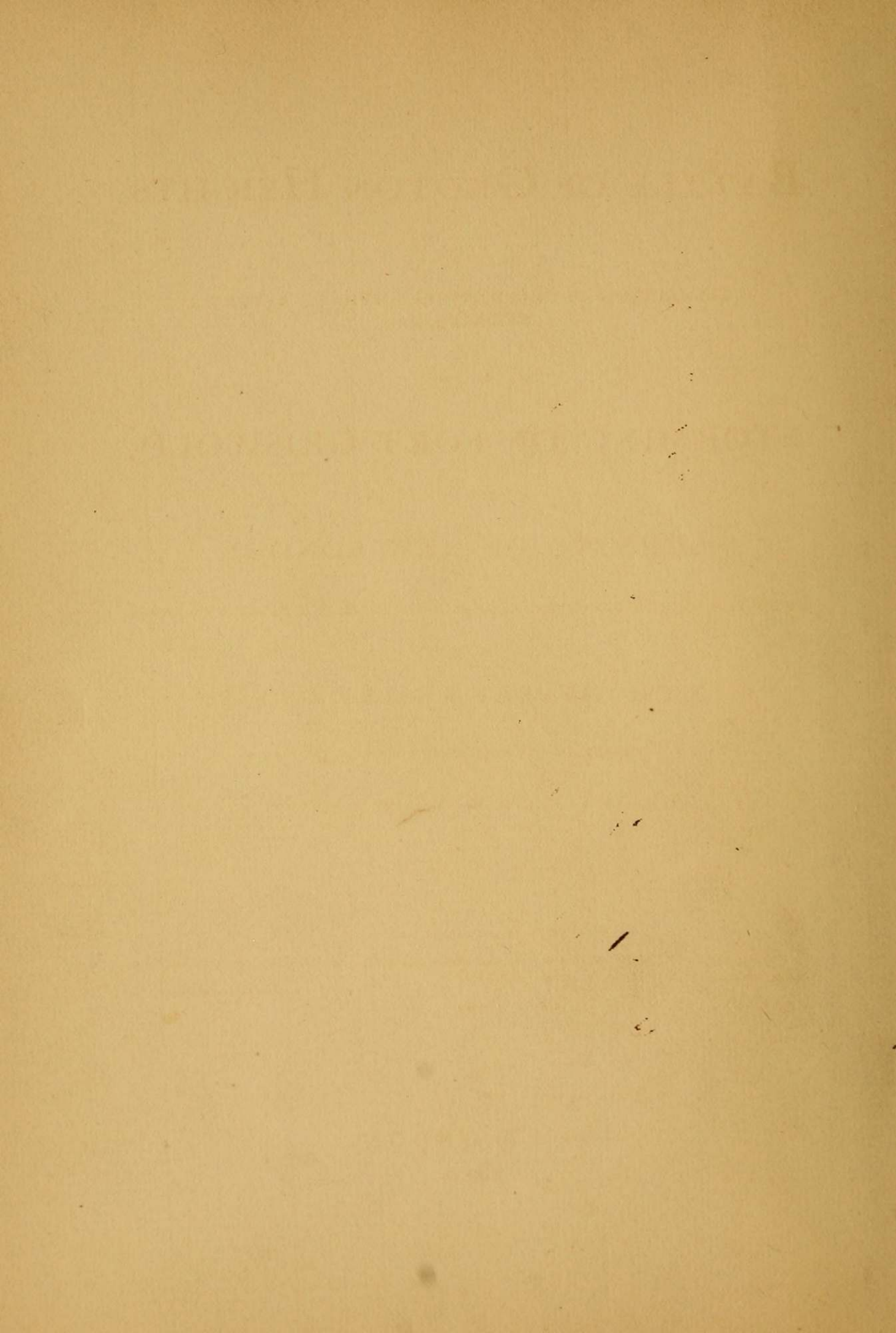
OLIVIA (*again dramatically, going back to the "sob" character*). Oh, I am fainting! (*Faints into SYLVESTER'S arms.*)

SYLVESTER. Curses! Curses!

CLARENCE (*who has just succeeded in kissing IRENE as preceding dialogue finishes; waves clenched fist victoriously at SYLVESTER*). Foiled, by Heck!

Music: Wedding March.

SLOW CURTAIN.





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