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CHARACTERS

THE COMEDIAN
THE VILLAIN
THE TRAGEDIAN
THE OLD MAN
THE HEROINE
THE INGENUE
THE OLD WOMAN
THE STRANGER

[A cross-roads at the edge of a forest. One road extends from left to right; the other crosses the first diagonally, disappearing into the forest. The roadside is bordered with grass. On the right, at the crossing, stands a signpost, to which are nailed two boards giving directions and distances.]

[The afternoon of a summer day. A troupe of stranded strolling players enters from the left. They are ragged and weary. THE COMEDIAN walks first, holding a valise in each hand, followed by the VILLAIN carrying over his arms two huge bundles wrapped in bed sheets. Immediately behind these the TRAGEDIAN and the actor who plays the OLD MAN are carrying together a large heavy trunk.]

COMEDIAN: *(stepping toward the signpost, reading the directions on the boards, and explaining to the approaching fellow actors)* That way *(pointing to right and swinging the valise--to indicate the direction)* is thirty miles. This way *(pointing to left)* is forty-five -- and that way is thirty-six. Now choose for yourself the town that you'll never reach today. The nearest way for us is back to where we came from, whence we were escorted with the most splendid catcalls that ever crowned our histrionic successes.

VILLAIN: *(exhausted)* Who will lend me a hand to wipe off my perspiration? It has a nasty way of streaming into my mouth.

COMEDIAN: Stand on your head, then, and let your perspiration water a more fruitful soil.

VILLAIN: Oh!

[He drops his arms, the bundles fall down. He then sinks down onto one of them and wipes off the perspiration, moving his hand wearily over his face. The TRAGEDIAN and the OLD MAN approach the post and read the signs.]

TRAGEDIAN: *(in a dramatic voice)* It's hopeless! It's hopeless!

[He lets go his end of the trunk.]

OLD MAN: *(lets go his end of the trunk)* Mmmm. Another stop.

[TRAGEDIAN sits himself down on the trunk in a tragico-heroic pose, knees wide apart, right elbow on right knee, left hand on left leg, head slightly bent toward the right. COMEDIAN puts down the valises and rolls a cigarette. The OLD MAN also sits down upon the trunk, head sunk upon his breast.]

VILLAIN: Thirty miles to the nearest town! Thirty miles!

COMEDIAN: It's an outrage how far people move their towns away from us.

VILLAIN: We won't strike a town until the day after tomorrow.

COMEDIAN: Hurrah! That's luck for you! There's yet a day-after-tomorrow for us.

VILLAIN: And the old women are still far behind us. Crawling!

OLD MAN: They want the vote and they can't even walk.

COMEDIAN: We won't give them votes, that's settled. Down with votes for women!

VILLAIN: It seems the Devil himself can't take you! Neither your tongue nor your feet ever get tired. You get on my nerves. Sit down and shut up for a moment.

COMEDIAN: Me? Ha--ha! I'm going back there to the lady of my heart. I'll meet her and fetch her hither in my arms.

[He spits on his hands, turns up his sleeves, and strides rapidly off towards the left.]

VILLAIN: Clown!

OLD MAN: How can he laugh and play his pranks even now? We haven't a cent to our souls, our supply of food is running low and our shoes are dilapidated.

TRAGEDIAN: *(with an outburst)* Stop it! No reckoning! The number of our sins is great and the tale of our misfortunes is even greater. Holy Father! Our flasks are empty; I'd give what is left of our soles! *(displaying his ragged shoes)* for just a smell of whiskey.

[From the left is heard the laughter of a woman. Enter the COMEDIAN carrying in his arms the HEROINE, who has her hands around his neck and holds a satchel in both hands behind his back.]

COMEDIAN: *(letting his burden down upon the grass)* Sit down, my love, and rest up. We go no further today. Your feet, your tender little feet must ache you. How unhappy that makes me! At the first opportunity I shall buy you an automobile.

HEROINE: And in the meantime you may carry me oftener.

COMEDIAN: The beast of burden hears and obeys.

[Enter the INGENUE and the actress who plays the OLD WOMAN each carrying a small satchel.]

INGENUE: *(weary and pouting)* Ah! No one carried me.

[She sits on the grass to the right of the HEROINE.]

VILLAIN: We have only one ass with us.

[The COMEDIAN stretches himself out at the feet of the HEROINE and emits the bray of a donkey. The OLD WOMAN sits down on the grass to the left of the HEROINE.]

OLD WOMAN: And are we to pass the night here?

OLD MAN: No, we shall stop at "Hotel Neverwas."

COMEDIAN: Don't you like our night's lodgings? (*Turning over toward the OLD WOMAN*) See, the bed is broad and wide, and certainly without vermin. Just feel the high grass. Such a soft bed you never slept in. And you shall have a cover embroidered with the moon and stars, a cover such as no royal bride ever possessed.

OLD WOMAN: You're laughing, and I feel like crying.

COMEDIAN: Crying? You should be ashamed of the sun which favors you with its setting splendor. Look, and be inspired!

VILLAN: Yes, look and expire.

COMEDIAN: Look, and shout with ecstasy!

OLD MAN: Look, and burst!

[The INGENUE starts sobbing. The TRAGEDIAN laughs heavily.]

COMEDIAN: (*turning over to the INGENUE*) What. You are crying? Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

INGENUE: I'm sad.

OLD WOMAN: (*sniffing*) I can't stand it any longer.

HEROINE: Stop it! Or I'll start bawling, too.

[COMEDIAN springs to his knees and looks quickly from one woman to the other.]

VILLAIN: Ha--ha! Cheer them up, Clown!

COMEDIAN: (*jumps up abruptly without the aid of his hands*) Ladies and Gentlemen, I have it! (*in a measured singing voice*) Ladies and Gentlemen, I have it!

HEROINE: What have you?

COMEDIAN: Cheerfulness.

VILLAIN: Go bury yourself, Clown.

TRAGEDIAN: (*as before*) Ho-ho-ho.

OLD MAN: P-o-o-h!

[The women weep all the louder.]

COMEDIAN: I have----a bottle of whiskey!

[General commotion. The women stop crying and look up to the COMEDIAN in amazement; the TRAGEDIAN straightens himself out and casts a surprised look at the COMEDIAN; the OLD MAN, rubbing his hands, jumps to his feet; the VILLAIN looks suspiciously at the COMEDIAN.]

TRAGEDIAN: A bottle of whiskey?

OLD MAN: He--He--He--A bottle of whiskey.

VILLAIN: Hum--whiskey.

COMEDIAN: You bet! A bottle of whiskey, hidden and preserved for such moments as this, a moment of masculine depression and feminine tears. *(Taking the flask from his hip pocket. The expression on the faces of all changes from hope to disappointment.)*

VILLAIN: You call that a bottle. I call it a flask.

TRAGEDIAN: *(explosively)* A thimble!

OLD MAN: A dropper!

OLD WOMAN: For seven of us! Oh!

COMEDIAN: *(letting the flask sparkle in the sun)* But it's whiskey, my children. *(opening the flask and smelling it)* U-u-u-m! That's whiskey for you. The saloonkeeper from whom I hooked it will become a teetotaler from sheer despair.

[TRAGEDIAN rises heavily and slowly proceeds towards the flask. The VILLAIN, still skeptical, rises as if unwilling. The OLD MAN chuckles and rubs his hands. The OLD WOMAN gets up indifferently and moves apathetically toward the flask. The HEROINE and INGENUUE hold each other by the hand and take ballet steps in waltz time. All approach the COMEDIAN with necks eagerly stretched out and smell the flask, which the COMEDIAN holds firmly in both hands.]

TRAGEDIAN: Ho-ho-ho--Fine!

OLD MAN: He--He--Small quantity, but excellent quality!

VILLAIN: Seems to be good whiskey.

HEROINE: *(dancing and singing)* My Comedian, My Comedian. His head is in the right place. But why didn't you nab a larger bottle?

COMEDIAN: Oh Beloved One, I had to take in consideration both the quality of the whiskey and the size of my pocket.

OLD WOMAN: If only there's enough of it to go round.

INGENUUE: Oh, I'm feeling sad again.

COMEDIAN: Cheer up, there will be enough for us all. Cheer up. Here, smell it again.

[They smell again and cheerfulness reappears. They join hands and dance and sing, forming a circle, the COMEDIAN applauding.]

COMEDIAN: Good! If you are so cheered after a mere smell of it, what won't you feel like after a drink. Wait, I'll join you. *(He hides the whiskey flask in his pocket.)* I'll show you a new roundel which we will perform in our next presentation of Hamlet, to the great edification of our esteemed audience. *(Kicking the VILLAIN'S bundles out of the way.)* The place is clear, now for dance and play. Join hands and form a circle, but you, Villain, stay on the outside of it. You are to try to get in and we dance and are not to let you in, without getting out of step. Understand? Now then!

[The circle is formed in the following order, COMEDIAN, HEROINE, TRAGEDIAN, OLD WOMAN, OLD MAN, INGENUUE.]

COMEDIAN: *(singing)* To be or not to be, that is the question,
That is the question, that is the question.
He who would enter in,
Climb he must over us,
If over he cannot,
He must get under us.

ALL: Tra-la-la, tra-la-la,
Over us, under us.
Tra-la-la, tra-la-la,
Under us, over us.
Now we are jolly, jolly are we.

COMEDIAN: To be or not to be, that is the question,
That is the question, that is the question.
In life to win success,
Elbow your way through,
Jostle the next one,
Else *you* will be jostled.

ALL: Tra-la-la, tra-la-la,
Over us, under us.
Tra-la-la, tra-la-la,
Under us, over us.
Now we are jolly, jolly are we.

[On the last word of the refrain they stop as if dumbfounded, and stand transfixed, with eyes directed on one spot inside of the ring. The VILLAIN leans over the arms of the COMEDIAN and the HEROINE; gradually the circle draws closer till their heads almost touch. They attempt to free their hands but each holds on to the other and all seven whisper in great astonishment.]

ALL: A dollar!

[The circle opens up again, they look each at the other and shout in wonder.]

ALL: A dollar!

[Once more they close in and the struggle to free their hands grows wilder; the VILLAIN tries to climb over and then under the hands into the circle and stretches out his hand toward the dollar, but instinctively he is stopped by the couple he tries to pass between, even when he is not seen but only felt. Again all lean their heads over the dollar, quite lost in the contemplation of it, and whispering, enraptured.]

All: A dollar!

[Separating once again they look at each other with exultation and at the same time try to free their hands, once more exclaiming in ecstasy.]

ALL: A dollar!

[Then the struggle to get free grows wilder and wilder. The hand that is perchance freed is quickly grasped again by the one who held it.]

INGENUUE: *(in pain)* Oh, my hands, my hands! You'll break them. Let go of my hands!

OLD WOMAN: If you don't let go of my hands I'll bite. *(Attempting to bite the hands of the TRAGEDIAN and the OLD MAN, while they try to prevent it.)*

OLD MAN: *(trying to free his hands from the hold of the HEROINE and the OLD WOMAN)* Let go of me. *(Pulling at both his hands)* These women's hands that--seem so frail, just look at them now.

HEROINE: *(To COMEDIAN)* But you let go my hands.

COMEDIAN: I think it's you who are holding fast to mine.

HEROINE: Why should I be holding you? If you pick up the dollar, what is yours is mine, you know.

COMEDIAN: Then let go of my hand and I'll pick it up.

HEROINE: No, I'd rather pick it up myself.

COMEDIAN: I expected something like that from you.

HEROINE: *(angrily)* Let go of my hands, that's all.

COMEDIAN: Ha-Ha-Ha--It's a huge joke. *(In a tone of command.)* Be quiet. *(They become still.)* We must contemplate the dollar with religious reverence. *(Commotion.)* Keep quiet, I say! --A dollar is spread out before us. A real dollar in the midst of our circle, and everything within us draws us towards it, draws us on irresistibly. Be quiet! Remember you are before the Ruler, before the Almighty. On your knees before Him and pray. On your knees. *(Sinks down on his knees and drags with him the HEROINE and INGENUUE.)*

OLD MAN: *(Dropping on his knees and dragging the OLD WOMAN with him.)* He-He-He.

TRAGEDIAN: Ho-Ho-Ho, Clown!

COMEDIAN: *(to TRAGEDIAN)* You are not worthy of the serious mask you wear. You don't appreciate true Divine Majesty. On your knees, or you'll get no whiskey. *(TRAGEDIAN sinks heavily on his knees.)* Oh holy dollar, oh almighty ruler of the universe, before thee we kneel in the dust and send toward thee our most tearful and heartfelt prayers. Our hands are bound, but our hearts strive toward thee and our souls yearn for thee. Oh great king of kings, thou who bringest together those who are separated, and separatest those who are near, thou who--

[The VILLAIN, who is standing aside, takes a full jump, clears the INGENUUE and grasps the dollar. All let go of one another and fall upon him, shouting, screaming, pushing and fighting. Finally the VILLAIN manages to free himself, holding the dollar in his right fist. The others follow him with clenched fists, glaring eyes and foaming mouths, wildly shouting.]

ALL: The dollar! The dollar! The dollar! Return the dollar!

VILLAIN: (*retreating*) You can't take it away from me, it's mine. It was lying under my bundle.

ALL: Give up the dollar! Give up the dollar!

VILLAIN: (*in great rage*) No, no. (*A moment during which the opposing sides look at each other in hatred. Quietly but with malice.*) Moreover, whom should I give it to? To you--you--you--you?

COMEDIAN: Ha-ha-ha-ha. He is right, the dollar is his. He has it, therefore it is his. Ha-ha-ha-ha, and I wanted to crawl on my knees toward the dollar and pick it up with my teeth. Ha-ha-ha-ha, but he got ahead of me, Ha-ha-ha-ha.

HEROINE: (*whispering in rage*) That's because you would not let go of me.

COMEDIAN: Ha-ha-ha-ha.

TRAGEDIAN: (*shaking his fist in the face of the VILLAIN*) Heaven and hell, I feel like crushing you!

[*He steps aside toward the trunk and sits down in his former pose. INGENUE, lying down on the grass, starts to cry.*]

COMEDIAN: Ha-ha-ha. Now we will drink, and the first drink is the Villain's.

[*His proposition is accepted in gloom; the INGENUE, however, stops crying; the OLD MAN and the OLD WOMAN have been standing by the VILLAIN looking at the dollar in his hand as if waiting for the proper moment to snatch it from him. Finally the OLD WOMAN makes a contemptuous gesture and both turn aside from the VILLAIN. The latter, left in peace, smooths out the dollar, with a serious expression on his face. The COMEDIAN hands him a small glass of whiskey.*]

COMEDIAN: Drink, lucky one.

[*The VILLAIN, shutting the dollar in his fist, takes the whiskey glass gravely and quickly drinks the contents, returning the glass. He then starts to smooth and caress the dollar again. The COMEDIAN, still laughing, passes the whiskey glass from one to the other of the company, who drink sullenly. The whiskey fails to cheer them. After drinking, the INGENUE begins to sob again. The HEROINE who is served last throws the empty whiskey glass towards the COMEDIAN.*]

COMEDIAN: Good shot. Now I'll drink up all that's left in the bottle.

[*He puts the flask to his lips and drinks. The HEROINE tries to knock it away from him but he skilfully evades her. The VILLAIN continues to smooth and caress the dollar.*]

VILLAIN: HA-ha-ha ... (Singing and dancing)

He who would enter in,
Jum_ he must over us.

Ho-ho-ho. Oh Holy dollar! Oh almighty Ruler of the World!... Oh King of Kings! Ha-ha-ha.... Don't you all think if I have the dollar and you have it not that I partake a bit of its majesty? That means that I am now a part of its majesty. That means that I am the Almighty dollar's plenipotentiary and therefore I am the Almighty Ruler himself. On your knees before me!... He-he-he....

COMEDIAN: *(after throwing away the empty flask lies down on the grass)* Well roared, lion, but you forgot to hide your jackass's ears.

VILLAIN: It is one's consciousness of power. He-he-he. I know and you know that if I have the money, I have the say. Remember, none of you has a cent to his name. The whiskey is gone. *(Picking up the flask and examining it.)*

COMEDIAN: I did my job well, Drank it to the last drop.

VILLAIN: Yes, to the last drop. This evening you shall have bread and sausage. Very small portions too, for tomorrow is another day. *(INGENUUE sobbing mor frequently.)* Not till the day after tomorrow shall we reach town and that doesn't mean that you get anything to eat there either, but I--I--I--he-he-he. Oh holy dollar, almighty dollar. *(Gravely)* He who does my bidding shall not be without food.

COMEDIAN: *(with wide open eyes)* What? Ha-ha-ha.

[INGENUUE gets up and throws herself on the VILLAIN'S bosom.]

INGENUUE: Oh my dear beloved one.

VILLAIN: Ha-ha, my power already makes itself felt.

HEROINE: *(pushing the INGENUE away)* Let go of him, you. He sought my love for a long time and now he shall have it.

COMEDIAN: What? You!

HEROINE: *(To COMEDIAN)* I hate you, traitor. *(To the VILLAIN)* I have always loved--genius. You are now the wisest of the wise. I adore you.

VILLAIN: *(holding INGENUE in one arm)* Come into my other arm. *(HEROINE throwing herself into his arms, kissing and embracing him.)*

COMEDIAN: *(half rising on his knees)* Stop, I protest. *(Throwing himself on the grass.)* "O frailty, thy name is woman."

OLD WOMAN: *(approaching the VILLAIN from behind and embracing him)* Find a little spot on your bosom for me. I play the "Old Woman," but you know I'm not really old.

VILLAIN: Now I have all of power and all of love.

COMEDIAN: Don't call it love. Call it servility.

VILLAIN: *(freeing himself from the women)* But now I have something more important to carry out. My vassals--I mean you all--I have decided we will not stay here over night. We will proceed further.

WOMEN: How so?

VILLAIN: We go forward tonight.

COMEDIAN: You have so decided?

VILLAIN: I have so decided, and that in itself should be enough for you; but due to an old habit I shall explain to you why I have so decided.

COMEDIAN: Keep your explanation to yourself and better not disturb my contemplation of the sunset.

VILLAIN: I'll put you down on the blacklist. It will go ill with you for your speeches against me. Now then, *without* an explanation, we will go--and at once. (*Nobody stirs.*) Very well then, I go alone.

WOMEN: No, no.

VILLAIN: What do you mean?

INGENUUE: I go with you.

HEROINE: And I.

OLD WOMAN: And I.

VILLAIN: Your loyalty gratifies me very much.

OLD MAN: (*who is sitting apathetically upon the trunk*) What the deuce is urging you to go?

VILLAIN: I wanted to explain it to you, but now no more. I owe you no explanations. I have decided--I wish to go, and that is sufficient.

COMEDIAN: He plays his comedy wonderfully. Would you ever have suspected that there was so much wit in his cabbage head?

WOMEN: (*making love to the VILLAIN*) Oh you darling.

TRAGEDIAN: (*majestically*) I wouldn't give him even a single glance.

VILLAIN: Still another on the blacklist. I'll tell you this much--I have decided--

COMEDIAN: Ha-ha-ha. How long will you keep this up?

VILLAIN: We start at once, but if I am to pay for your food I will not carry any baggage. You shall divide my bundles among you and of course those who are on the blacklist will get the heaviest share. You heard me. Now move on. I'm going now. We will proceed to the nearest town which is thirty miles away. Now then, I am off.

COMEDIAN: Bon voyage.

VILLAIN: And with me fares His Majesty the Dollar and your meals for tomorrow.

WOMEN: We are coming, we are coming.

OLD MAN: I'll go along.

TRAGEDIAN: (*to the VILLAIN*) You're a scoundrel and a mean fellow.

VILLAIN: I am no fellow of yours. I am master and breadgiver.

TRAGEDIAN: I'll crush you in a moment.

VILLAIN: What? You threaten me! Let's go.

[He turns to right. The women take their satchels and follow him.]

OLD MAN: *(to the TRAGEDIAN)* Get up and take the trunk. We will settle the score with him some other time. It is he who has the dollar now.

TRAGEDIAN: *(rising and shaking his fist)* I'll get him yet. *(He takes his side of the trunk.)*

VILLAIN: *(to TRAGEDIAN)* First put one of my bundles on your back.

TRAGEDIAN: *(in rage)* One of your bundles on my back?

VILLAIN: Oh, for all I care you can put it on your head, or between your teeth.

OLD MAN: We will put the bundle on the trunk.

COMEDIAN: *(sitting up)* Look here, are you joking or are you in earnest?

VILLAIN: *(contemptuously)* I never joke.

COMEDIAN: Then you are in earnest?

VILLAIN: I'll make no explanations.

COMEDIAN: Do you really think that because you have the dollar--

VILLAIN: The holy dollar, the almighty dollar, the king of kings.

COMEDIAN: *(continuing)* That therefore you are the master--

VILLAIN: Bread-giver and provider.

COMEDIAN: And that we must--

VILLAIN: Do what I bid you to.

COMEDIAN: So you are in earnest?

VILLAIN: You just get up, take the baggage and follow me.

COMEDIAN: *(rising)* Then, I declare a revolution.

VILLAIN: What? A revolution!

COMEDIAN: A bloody one, if need be.

TRAGEDIAN: *(dropping his end of the trunk and advancing with a bellicose attitude toward the VILLAIN)*
And I shall be the first to let your blood, you scoundrel.

VILLAIN: If that's the case I have nothing to say to you. Those who wish, come along.

COMEDIAN: *(getting in his way)* No, you shall not go until you give up the dollar.

VILLAIN: Ha-ha. It is to laugh!

COMEDIAN: The dollar please, or--

VILLAIN: He-he-he.

COMEDIAN: Then let there be blood. *(Turns up his sleeves.)*

TRAGEDIAN: *(taking off his coat)* Ah! Blood, blood!

OLD MAN: *(dropping his end of the trunk)* I'm not going to keep out of a fight.

WOMEN: *(dropping their satchels)* Nor we. Nor we.

VILLAIN: *(shouting)* To whom shall I give up the dollar? You--you--you--you?

COMEDIAN: This argument will not work any more. You are to give the dollar up to all of us. At the first opportunity we'll get change and divide it into equal parts.

WOMEN: Hurrah, Hurrah! Divide it, Divide it.

COMEDIAN: *(to VILLAIN)* And I will even be so good as to give you a share.

TRAGEDIAN: I'd rather give him a sound thrashing.

COMEDIAN: It shall be as I say. Give up the dollar.

HEROINE: *(throwing herself on the COMEDIAN'S breast)* My comedian! My comedian!

INGENUER: *(to the VILLAIN)* I'm sick of you. Give up the dollar.

COMEDIAN: *(pushing the HEROINE aside)* You better step aside or else you may get the punch I aim at the master and breadgiver. *(To the VILLAIN.)* Come up with the dollar!

TRAGEDIAN: Give up the dollar to him, do you hear?

ALL: The dollar, the dollar!

VILLAIN: I'll tear it to pieces.

COMEDIAN: Then we shall tear out what little hair you have left on your head. The dollar, quick!

[They surround the VILLAIN; the women pull his hair; the TRAGEDIAN grabs him by the collar and shakes him; the OLD MAN strikes him on his bald pate; the COMEDIAN struggles with him and finally grasps the dollar.]

COMEDIAN: *(holding up the dollar)* I have it!

[The women dance and sing.]

VILLAIN: Bandits! Thieves!

TRAGEDIAN: Silence, or I'll shut your mouth. *(Goes back to the trunk and assumes his heroic pose.)*

COMEDIAN: *(putting the dollar into his pocket)* That what I call a successful and a bloodless revolution, except for a little fright and heart palpitation on the part of the late master and bread giver.-- Listen, someone is coming. Perhaps he'll be able to change the dollar and then we can divide it at once.

OLD MAN: I am puzzled how we can change it into equal parts. *(Starts to calculate with the INGENUE and the OLD WOMAN.)*

HEROINE: *(tenderly attentive to the COMEDIAN)* You are angry with me, but I was only playing with him so as to wheedle the dollar out of him.

COMEDIAN: And now you want to trick me out of my share of it.

OLD MAN: It is impossible to divide it into equal parts. It is absolutely impossible. If it were ninety-eight cents or one-hundred and five cents or--

[The STRANGER enters from the Right, perceives the company, greets it and continues his way to left. COMEDIAN stops him.]

COMEDIAN: I beg your pardon, sir; perhaps you have change of a dollar in dimes, nickles, and pennies. *(Showing the dollar. The OLD MAN and women step forward.)*

STRANGER: *(getting slightly nervous, starts somewhat, makes a quick movement for his pistol pocket, looks at the COMEDIAN and the others and says slowly)* Change of a dollar? *(Moving from the circle to left.)* I believe I have.

WOMEN: Hurrah!

STRANGER: *(turns so that no one is behind him and pulls his revolver)* Hands up!

COMEDIAN: *(in a gentle tone of voice)* My dear sir, we are altogether peaceful folk.

[The STRANGER takes the dollar from the Comedian's hand and walks backwards to left with the pistol pointed at the group.]

STRANGER: Good night, everybody.

[He disappears, the actors remain dumb with fear, with their hands up, mouths wide-open and staring into space.]

COMEDIAN: *(finally breaks out into thunderous laughter)* Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha.

CURTAIN