That'll Learn Ya!

A Two-Act Western Melodrama

By Eddie McPherson

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STORY OF THE PLAY

The quiet Western town of Possum Trot has been under a gypsy spell for two hundred years -- a spell that turned the whole village into clueless nincompoops who have never been smart enough to progress with the rest of the world. The guilty gypsy's great-grandson (seven generations later) Seymour Justice, began his quest looking for this town to break the spell once and for all.

His perseverance pays off when he and his best friend, Edmund, finally stumble upon the lost village. The secret to breaking the spell is buried in a metal box somewhere in Possum Trot. So the search is on and Seymour and his buddy seek the citizens' assistance, which turns out to be more of a hindrance than anything else. If the spell isn't broken by midnight, not only will the town remain in the dark cave of ignorance, but Seymour and Edmund will become nincompoops too and consigned to remain in Possum Trot for the rest of their lives. Silly situations, one-liners and sight gags galore are all rolled into one funny misadventure.

Running time: Approximately 60 minutes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 men, 2 women, 10 flexible, plus an optional washboard band and townspeople who tell corny jokes throughout.)

*SEYMOUR: Has come to rescue Possum Trot.

EDMUND: Seymour's best friend.

DEPUTY: Can't keep criminals in his jail.

SHERIFF: A little brighter than the Deputy but not much.

MAYOR: Alice's father.

*ALICE: Mayor's daughter. (Also plays her sister, Marsha.)

*ERSKIN: Alice's fiancé; but not for long.

ROSEMARY: Runs the general store.

VIVIAN: The town's not-so-smart teacher.

MEREDITH: One of Vivian's not-so-smart students.

LYDIA: Another dunce of a student.

ELLEN: A terrible crook with the brains of a squash.

LEON: Ellen's dunce of a partner in crime.

*MAGNOLIA: Alice's chaperone who marries Erskin.

CASTING: Almost all the characters *(except for the four marked above with an asterisk)* may be played by the opposite gender with an appropriate name change.

MUSIC & JOKES: Prior to the show and during intermission, it's fun to have music from a washboard band and "joke-tellers." A few songs are suggested under SFX and a few jokes are included at the end of this script. Remember, this is a farce. The momentum should be fast and the entrances and exits quick.

SETTING: Current day. The permanent set is an old-fashioned Western town. There is a jail stage right and a general store. You may add other store fronts as you desire. In act two a small area extreme stage left or right serves as a hideout. A small wooden table and a few wooden chairs are all you need for these scenes.

SOUND EFFECTS

harmonica music guitar music
clock bongs thunder
upbeat bluegrass music which turns sad
"countdown" theme music as from "Jeopardy"
Band can play "You Are My Sunshine" and "Red River Valley"

PROPS

suitcase	map
handkerchief	two bandannas
wheelbarrow	metal detector /headset*
backpack	open/closed sign
broom	old-style purses & parasols
hand fan	3 sticks of "dynamite"
magnifying glass	roll of masking tape
small tree limb	glass mug
shoulder pouch	homemade scarecrow
stuffed toy skunk	2 large cutouts of cacti
man's money bag	2 gypsy outfits & tambourines
pillow with fringe	large piece of cloth
small metal box	note
large pieces of rope	bandanna for a gag
old-fashioned pocket watch	tin plate
banana	books
2 small boxes	small bucket
2 hammers (1 a sledge)	blindfold
large lock	key to the city
"Just Married" sign	extra "bar" for jail window
old-looking piece of paper	pair of womens glasses
homemade bow and arrow	apple

cutout of a full moon attached to a stick or piece of string

**If you choose to make your own metal detector, follow these simple directions: Take a broom and remove the bristle part. Take the handle and attach a shoebox at one end. Attach a paper plate to the other end. Run a string from the paper plate up to the shoebox. Spray paint the entire thing black. Headphones finish the look.*

ACT I

(AT RISE: We see an old, Western town. The streets are void of people at the moment. SEYMOUR enters carrying a suitcase which he sets down and pulls a map from his pocket, unfolds and glances at it. He looks around, folds the map again, removes a handkerchief from his back pocket and wipes his forehead. LEON and ELLEN sneak in; their noses and mouths are covered with bandannas – his red and hers blue. Seymour isn't aware of their presence. As he wipes his forehead, Seymour moves downstage center. Leon motions Ellen to move to Seymour's right side as Leon moves to his left side. They stick their index fingers into his side.)

LEON: *(Shouting.)* Stick 'em up, mister! *(SEYMOUR'S hands immediately shoot up into the air.)* Turn around real slow-like. *(ELLEN slowly turns around in a complete circle.)* Not you, Ellen. I was talking to this filthy varmint here.

SEYMOUR: I'll do anything you ask; please don't shoot! *(HE slowly turns to LEON and notices Leon isn't holding a gun, but sticking out his finger.)*

LEON: No sudden moves and nobody will get hurt. Now, give me your … your ….

ELLEN: Money bag.

LEON: Give me your money bag!

SEYMOUR: *(Placing his hands on his hips.)* What if I told you I wasn't giving you my money bag?

LEON: I'd say it's your funeral. Ellen, on the count of forty-eight, we teach this stranger a lesson he won't forget. One, nine, four ….

ELLEN: Leon, you dummy! We don't have no pistols!

LEON: Dagnabit! How are we to be respectable robbers without the proper firearms?

SEYMOUR: You two aren't too smart, are you?

LEON: *(Pulling his mask down to his neck.)* Does it show?

SEYMOUR: A little.

ELLEN: The only reason we ain't been put in jail yet is because the Sheriff ain't too smart neither.

LEON: Neither is the Deputy or the Mayor or the school teacher.
SEYMOUR: Are you telling me this town is full of dunces?
ELLEN: Sure! We have dunces every Saturday night.
LEON: Barn dunces, street dunces, square dunces ....
SEYMOUR: Dunces not dances. What's two plus two?
ELLEN: Purple!
SEYMOUR: How many pints are in a quart?
LEON: False!
SEYMOUR: I've been looking for this town! Your village is under an ancient spell.
ELLEN: It is?

(ELLEN and LEON both look up into the sky.)

SEYMOUR: What I mean is, my great-great-great-great great-great-great grandmother placed this town under her gypsy spell two hundred years ago. I have come to break that spell and turn the town back to normal again. Do you understand?
ELLEN: Everything except the part of why you're here.
SEYMOUR: Never mind. Where's your Sheriff?
LEON: I knew it! He wants to get us thrown into the jail house!
ELLEN: We'd better hide! *(Heads for the jail.)* In here, QUICK!

(THEY enter the jail and slam the door. LEON appears at the jail window and speaks to SEYMOUR.)

LEON: Let's see you get us arrested now, sucker!

(LEON disappears. ERSKIN enters pushing DEPUTY in a wheelbarrow. Deputy appears to be dead. SEYMOUR quickly crosses to them.)

SEYMOUR: Excuse me, sir … can I see you?

End of Freeview

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