

**A DOLLAR by David Pinski**  
**Omitted Stage Directions**

The following one-act play is reprinted from *Ten Plays*. Trans. Isaac Goldberg. New York: B.W. Heusch, 1920. It is now believed to be in the public domain and may therefore be performed without royalties.

CHARACTERS

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

COMEDIAN: That way is thirty miles. This way 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: 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!

TRAGEDIAN: It's hopeless! It's hopeless!

OLD MAN: Mmmm. Another stop.

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.

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: 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 for just a smell of whiskey.

*[Enter the COMEDIAN and HEROINE]*

COMEDIAN: 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: Ah! No one carried *me*.

VILLAIN: We have only one ass with us.

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? *(To 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!

VILLAIN: Yes, look and expire.

COMEDIAN: Look, and shout with ecstasy!

OLD MAN: Look, and burst!

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

INGENUE: I'm sad.

OLD WOMAN: I can't stand it any longer.

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

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

COMEDIAN: Ladies and Gentlemen, I have it! Ladies and Gentlemen, I have it!

HEROINE: What have you?

COMEDIAN: Cheerfulness.

VILLAIN: Go bury yourself, Clown.

TRAGEDIAN: Ho-ho-ho.

OLD MAN: P-o-o-h!

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

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.

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

TRAGEDIAN: A thimble!

OLD MAN: A dropper!

OLD WOMAN: For seven of us! Oh!

COMEDIAN: But it's whiskey, my children. U-u-u-m! That's whiskey for you. The saloonkeeper from whom I hooked it will become a teetotaler from sheer despair.

TRAGEDIAN: Ho-ho-ho--Fine!

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

VILLAIN: Seems to be good whiskey.

HEROINE: 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.

INGENUE: Oh, I'm feeling sad again.

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

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. 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. 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!

COMEDIAN: 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.

ALL: A dollar!

ALL: A dollar!

All: A dollar!

ALL: A dollar!

INGENUE: 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.

OLD MAN: Let go of me. 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: Let go of my hands, that's all.

COMEDIAN: Ha-Ha-Ha--It's a huge joke. Be quiet. We must contemplate the dollar with religious reverence. 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.

OLD MAN: 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. 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— (*VILLAIN takes the dollar.*)

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

VILLAIN: 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: No, no. 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: That's because you would not let go of me.

COMEDIAN: Ha-ha-ha-ha.

TRAGEDIAN: Heaven and hell, I feel like crushing you!

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

COMEDIAN: Drink, lucky one.

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

VILLAIN: HA-ha-ha ... He who would enter in, *Jump* 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: 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.

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. 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. He who does my bidding shall not be without food.

COMEDIAN: What? Ha-ha-ha.

INGENUE: (To VILLAIN) Oh my dear beloved one.

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

HEROINE: 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: Come into my other arm.

COMEDIAN: Stop, I protest. "O frailty, thy name is woman."

OLD WOMAN: 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: 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. Very well then, I go alone.

WOMEN: No, no.

VILLAIN: What do you mean?

INGENUE: I go with you.

HEROINE: And I.

OLD WOMAN: And I.

VILLAIN: Your loyalty gratifies me very much.

OLD MAN: 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: *(to the VILLAIN)* Oh you darling.

TRAGEDIAN: 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.

*[The women 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: I'll get him yet.

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

TRAGEDIAN: 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: Look here, are you joking or are you in earnest?

VILLAIN: 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: Then, I declare a revolution.

VILLAIN: What? A revolution!

COMEDIAN: A bloody one, if need be.

TRAGEDIAN: 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: 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.

TRAGEDIAN:) Ah! Blood, blood!

OLD MAN: I'm not going to keep out of a fight.

WOMEN: Nor we. Nor we.

VILLAIN: 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: My comedian! My comedian!

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

COMEDIAN: (*To the HEROINE*) 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!

COMEDIAN: I have it!

VILLAIN: Bandits! Thieves!

TRAGEDIAN: Silence, or I'll shut your mouth.

COMEDIAN: 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.

HEROINE: (*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.*]

COMEDIAN: I beg your pardon, sir; perhaps you have change of a dollar in dimes, nickles, and pennies.

STRANGER: Change of a dollar? I believe I have.

WOMEN: Hurrah!

STRANGER: (*Pulls out a revolver*) Hands up!

COMEDIAN: My dear sir, we are altogether peaceful folk.

[*The STRANGER takes the dollar from the Comedian's hand.*]

STRANGER: Good night, everybody.

*[He disappears, the actors remain.]*

COMEDIAN: Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha.

**Now we are alone.**

**Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!  
Is it not monstrous that this player here,  
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,  
Could force his soul so to his own conceit  
That from her working all his visage waned,  
Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,  
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting  
With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing—**

CURTAIN