



Imperfectly Serious

A short one act slightly absurd play

by

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Imperfectly Serious

Characters

Clodhopper

Miss Roach

Cassidy

The action takes place in the 1980's in an office.

Production Notes:

There are a number of brief excerpts from popular songs It is entirely a matter for the director as to whether music should accompany the renditions.

In the 'Western' mimicry scenes sound effects could be used as indeed they were in earlier performances.

The songs consist of 'Home on the Range' (trad.), 'I Want to Break Free' (Queen), 'You Sexy Thing!' (Hot Chocolate), 'I Can't Get No Satisfaction' and 'Honky Tonk Woman' (Rolling Stones).

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Scene: Clodhopper's Office

A simple set. A desk and two chairs C. There is a door R.

Clodhopper, an executive in his late fifties, is smartly dressed. He is sitting at the desk with Miss Roach, a young leggy secretary in her late twenties, on his lap. They are engaged in a passionate embrace, which lasts several seconds.

Suddenly Clodhopper stands, Miss Roach moves away and they each tidy their own attire.

Clodhopper: *(formally)* I think that's all for now,

Miss Roach removes a file from the desk.

Miss Roach: Very well Mr. Clodhopper.

She approaches door, but stops and turns to him; she removes a large paper dart from the file

Miss Roach: By the way do you still want to test this before passing it to Mr. Gubright?

Clodhopper motions her to hand him the dart, which she does.

Clodhopper: I'm not sure whether it's ready yet. I may need to study its performance more thoroughly.

Miss Roach: It seemed to perform quite well yesterday, if I may say so. The wings could be more swept back, but apart from that...

Clodhopper: *(irritably interrupting her)* What difference would that make?

Miss Roach: Well, It may increase its speed Mr. Clodhopper and perhaps allow it spin foolishly and nose dive sharply.

Clodhopper: *(studying the dart carefully)* I'll give it another test flight. Thank you Miss Roach.

She crosses to door and is about to exit when again she turns to Clodhopper.

Miss Roach: Will you want anything before lunch, Mr. Clodhopper?

Clodhopper: I don't think so Miss Roach.

Miss Roach: Same time this afternoon?

Clodhopper: Yes, be on my lap at three.

Miss Roach: As you wish Mr. Clodhopper.

She exits

Clodhopper continues to study the dart

Clodhopper: Sweep back the wings eh?

He propels the dart across the room, watches its flight and rubs his chin as the dart lands. He crosses slowly and retrieves the dart.

Suddenly, he pilots it, moving around the office making jet plane noises. He goes through a charade imitating the landing of the jet at an airport, including commentary between the pilot and conning tower and brings the jet in to land on the desk top, sound effects and all.

He stands back with arms folded and studies the dart from different angles.

There is a knock at the door.

Clodhopper: *(continuing to study the dart)* Yes?

Another knock

Clodhopper: Come in!

Another knock

Clodhopper: Enter!

Yet another knock

Clodhopper: For God's sake, ouvrez la porte!

Cassidy, a young man in his thirties, shorter than Clodhopper and wearing a light coloured suit, slowly enters. Clodhopper is still studying the dart but more closely, his back to Cassidy. Clodhopper turns slowly and looks Cassidy up and down, sniffs and crosses to desk chair.

Clodhopper: French, are you?

Cassidy: *(moving a little closer)* My name's Cassidy, sir.

Clodhopper: *(sitting at desk)* Hopalong?

Cassidy: Oh, very well sir.

He turns to leave the room

Clodhopper: Where are you going?

Cassidy: *(turning to him)* I thought you told me to leave sir.

Clodhopper: Stay here man! Acting the fool are you?

Cassidy: *(moving closer)* Certainly not sir.

Clodhopper: Good.

Clodhopper picks up the dart

Clodhopper: Never heard of him eh?

Cassidy: I beg your pardon sir?

Clodhopper: *(tossing aside the dart across the table)* Hopalong Cassidy man. Never heard of him?

Cassidy: I don't recall the name, no.

Clodhopper: Enjoy westerns do you? Wyatt Earp, Billy the Kid, Doc Holliday.

Cassidy: Some sir. The Magnificent Seven springs to mind.

Clodhopper: *(smiling and enjoying the moment)* Yes indeed, The Magnificent Seven. What a film, eh?

Cassidy: My favourite though was The Gunfight at the OK Corral.

Clodhopper: *(eagerly engaged in reminiscence)* Yes, yes, Burt Lancaster as Wyatt Earp.

Cassidy: *(equally as eagerly)* Kirk Douglas as Doc Holliday.

Clodhopper: Kirk Douglas? Are you sure?

Cassidy: Definitely sir, I have the tape at home.

Clodhopper: Do you really? I must borrow it sometime.

Cassidy: *(quickly)* When I was a kid there was a re-run of The Lone Ranger! I used to watch it after school on a Friday afternoon.

Clodhopper springs to his feet. Cassidy, alarmed, steps back. Clodhopper suddenly mimics the Lone Ranger, slapping his hip as he imitates riding a horse. He pulls on the imaginary reins causing it to rear and extends his arm in a salute.

In the meantime, Cassidy has become caught up in the excitement and watches Clodhopper in boyish admiration.

Clodhopper: Hi Yo Silver - away!

Cassidy goes through a similar mime and brings his horse up next to Clodhopper.

Cassidy: Hi Yo Ke-mo Sah-bee!

Both are caught up in the excitement. Clodhopper removes imaginary pistols from holsters and moves DL firing out front, sound effects and all, like a boy at play. He spins round on Cassidy who immediately raises his arms in surrender. Clodhopper motions him to far R. He then quickly crosses to desk and suddenly ducks behind it using it as a barricade, guns blazing out front! Cassidy is out of firing range and remains stationary, arms still aloft and visually excited by the charade.

Clodhopper: (*peering over upstage top of desk*) Oh yes, the scream of silver bullets ricocheting in the hills (*Drumming the desktop*) The thunder of hooves! Bodies tumbling out of rocky hideouts and the whooping of Indian braves!

Cassidy: Whoop!

Clodhopper points imaginary pistols at Cassidy.

Cassidy: Don't shoot!

Clodhopper cuts off and smiling and reflecting he sits on the DL edge of the desk and gazes out front, entranced.

Cassidy lowers his arms

Clodhopper: My word, yes!

Cassidy: And what about the songs of the prairie?

Clodhopper: Oh yes!

He crosses to DC strumming an imaginary guitar and sings 'Home, Home on the Range!'

Cassidy crosses L to stand next to him, also strumming an imaginary guitar.

Cassidy: 'Where the deer and the antelope play!'

Clodhopper: (*sharply and without looking at him*) Buffalo!

Cassidy: Pardon, sir?

Clodhopper: (*taking up the song*) Where the deer and the buffalo play!

Cassidy: (*carefully*) Antelope, I think you'll find sir.

Clodhopper: (*suddenly switching off and returning to desk*) Buffalo, antelope, makes no difference

He turns on Cassidy who has crossed to R of the chair in front of desk.

Clodhopper: You are being serious aren't you er, Cassidy?

Cassidy: Oh yes sir.

Clodhopper: I detected something foolish about the way you responded to er...

Cassidy: (*quickly interrupting*) Oh no sir!

Clodhopper: Are you sure you weren't fooling with me just now?

Cassidy: Absolutely. I wouldn't dream of it sir.

Clodhopper: (*sitting at desk*) You're really clever aren't you Cassidy?

Cassidy: I believe so sir.

Clodhopper: I'm glad to hear it. (*sitting back in his chair*) Well?

Cassidy: I'm sorry sir?

Clodhopper: What do you want? Why are you here? What is it? Come on I haven't got all day!

Cassidy: (*after briefly scratching his head*) You wanted to see me sir

Clodhopper: (*sitting up*) Did I, for what reason?

Cassidy: (*uncomfortably*) I was caught, fooling about.

Clodhopper: (*rising from his chair*) Oh, so you're the one! Fooling about in the general office I believe!

He mimics the 'Queen' song, 'I Want to Break Free' and moves about the stage

I want to break free
I want to break free
I want to break free from your lies
You're so self-satisfied I don't need you
I got to break free
God knows, God knows I want to break free!

He cuts off and wheels round at Cassidy

Clodhopper: Thought you were a fool, eh?

Cassidy: Not exactly sir

...

Clodhopper: Disturbing loyal employees, encouraging them to join in I'm told! (*wagging a finger at him*) D'you realise you could have disrupted the whole disorganization?

He crosses DC. Cassidy looks down at the floor.

Clodhopper: If you had been allowed to carry on, have you any idea what would have happened? (*Crossing L and swinging round on him after no response*) Well, I'll tell you – more chiefs than Indians that's what! Too many chefs! More officers than men! Your actions amounted to er.....

Lost for words he heads to desk and yells at Cassidy

Clodhopper: Intimidation! Yes, (*thumping out each syllable on the desk*) in- ti- mi -da -tion!

Cassidy: I think that's a bit strong sir, if you don't mind me saying.

Clodhopper: Strong! I should say it is and I mean to be strong! I will not have the general office staff acting the fool! (*He pauses briefly and becomes a little calmer*) It's an insult, to me and the rest of the management team. (*He sits, sighs and is in control of himself*) You must remember that to become a fool you must run before you can walk. It's difficult, foolishly difficult. I don't care what you do outside the office. That's entirely your own business. (*Suddenly thumping desk which startles Cassidy a little*) When you are here, leave the fooling to the management!

Cassidy: Yes sir, I am beginning to see the problems I've caused.

Clodhopper: Yes, well, this is not the first time is it? If I'm correct, only two weeks ago you were seen running through the corridors shouting at the top of your voice (*mimics the 'Hot Chocolate' song*), 'You Sexy Thing!'

(*He moves about the stage with Cassidy accompanying him*)

I believe in miracles
Where you from
You sexy thing
You sexy thing
I believe in miracles
Since you came along
You sexy thing

The door bursts open and Miss Roach enters swiftly.

Miss Roach: Did you call sir?