

# UNSOOUND EFFECTS

By Christy Fredrickson

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ISBN: 978-1-61588-323-3

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**SYNOPSIS:** It's 1938, the Golden Age of Radio, but things are not so golden at radio station KTSK. Their best show, "Polly in Peril" is plummeting in the ratings. This is mainly due to Benny, their disastrous sound man who always manages to play the wrong sound at the wrong time. Everyone tries their best to turn things around: the voice actors, the director, even the handyman, but nothing seems to help. However, things change when a pair of bank robbers hole up in the station one night. Using their sound effects, complete with thunder, lightning and an intimidating voice, Benny and company save the day by impersonating God!

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(7-8 females, 6-7 males, 5-8 either; gender flexible, doubling possible)*

LANA (f) ..... Famous voice actress. *(64 lines)*  
 JUDY (f) ..... Voice actress – does young kid voices.  
*(42 lines)*  
 LOIS (f) ..... Long-suffering secretary. *(20 lines)*  
 HELEN (f) ..... Sound effects girl. *(23 lines)*  
 MAVIS (f) ..... Sings commercials plus six short songs.  
*(15 lines)*  
 MARTHA (f) ..... Sings commercials plus six short songs.  
*(17 lines)*  
 VERA (f) ..... Criminal, robbed a bank. *(20 lines)*  
 MRS. WELLES (f) ..... Sponsor, feisty old lady, owns laxative  
 company. *(6 lines)*  
 HAL (m) ..... Voice actor, does many voices. *(64 lines)*  
 BENNY (m) ..... Disastrous sound effects man. *(67 lines)*  
 GERALD (m) ..... Stressed out director, yells a lot.  
*(52 lines)*  
 LEON (m) ..... Handyman who likes Lana. *(38 lines)*  
 EDDIE (m) ..... Criminal, robbed a bank. *(29 lines)*  
 MR. MCCONKEY (m) ..... Owner of radio station KTSK. *(20 lines)*  
 MR. NELSON (m) ..... Sponsor, sells oatmeal. *(5 lines)*  
 DORIS/DONALD (f/m) ..... Script writer. *(30 lines)*

MR./MRS. NICHOLS (f/m) ..... Sponsor, owner of Scrubby Tub.  
(11 lines)

AMATEUR 1 (f/m)..... Juggler. May or may not be able to juggle,  
according to available talent.  
(3 lines)

AMATEUR 2 (f/m)..... Snooty musician. Actor does not need to  
know how to play an instrument. (4 lines)

AMATEUR 3 (f/m)..... Does animal sounds. (4 lines)

POLICE OFFICER (f/m) .....(2 lines)

REPORTER 1 (f/m) .....(2 lines)

REPORTER 2 (f/m) .....(2 lines)

### EXTRAS:

ADDITIONAL AMATEURS

POLICE

REPORTERS

### DOUBLING

MRS. WELLES may double as VERA

MR. NELSON may double as EDDIE

Smaller parts may double as AMATEURS, POLICE, or REPORTERS

**TIME:** 1938

**PLACE:** The studio of radio station KTSK

**DURATION:** Approximately 60 minutes

### SET DESIGN

There are two platforms: one up left and one up right. Each should have a microphone, if possible. On the stage left platform is a shelf or table for sound effects. In front of the stage right platform is a small table and chairs, perhaps a small booth. A sign which says "ON AIR" is lighted or held by GERALD. A set of steps may go to either platform or may simply sit alone. Up center is a freestanding prop door. Down center is a microphone, marked "KTSK."

## PRODUCTION NOTES

Sound effects made by “sound effects” actors on stage are denoted by the following in the script: SFX colon, then the sound effect (i.e. **SFX: THUNDER**). Regular sound/light and stage directions are indicated by italics.

When HAL, BENNY and LANA hide to thwart the thieves, they may put SFX microphone down near them so that their voices and other sound effects may be heard. This is especially effective for HAL’s “godlike” voice.

At the director’s discretion, the songs “Happy Days are Here Again” (by Jack Yellen and Milton Ager) and “God Bless America” (by Irving Berlin) may be sung fully or partially.

**HELEN and THE ONE ORGAN NOTE:** It is important that Helen’s voice gets higher pitched with each phrase, which builds drama. In contrast, the organ has only one note, which deflates drama.

**AMATEUR HOUR AUDITIONS:** During Amateur Hour auditions, the director may have other talents that he/she would like to showcase. This may be done simply by adding a few lines, as long as it does not detract from the main plot of the play. Smaller parts may also, in disguise, double as amateurs.

**“JAMES” GANG:** Director may choose to change “James” to any name that may mean something to audience, for instance his/her own name, the school principal, mayor, etc.

**MICROPHONES:** Ideally, there should be three microphones: center stage, stage left (SFX) platform, and stage right platform. If less than three microphones are available, stage left (SFX platform) microphone is the most important, followed by the center stage microphone, and then stage right platform. This is so the various sound effects can be heard.

**SHELVES ON STAGE LEFT (SFX) PLATFORM:** If shelves are open, so audience can see through them, steps should be taken to provide a place for LANA, BENNY and HAL to hide from the criminals. Lots of items, even if not used, can be piled on the shelves, or a curtain hung on the back.

**HAL'S TWO VOICES:** At the beginning, when Hal performs two different voices, he may want to move his head back and forth, doing one voice on one side of the mic, the other voice on the other side.

### SOUND EFFECTS

- SFX 1:** CREAKY DOOR (*May be made by actor's voice.*)
- SFX 2:** DOORKNOB (*Opening.*)
- SFX 3:** DOOR CLOSING
- SFX 4:** FOOTSTEPS (*Going away.*)
- SFX 5:** NEWSPAPER (*Rustling.*)
- SFX 6:** FOOTSTEPS (*Slow.*)
- SFX 7:** DOORKNOB
- SFX 8:** CREAKY DOOR
- SFX 9:** WHOOPEE CUSHION (*Loud. May be made by actor's voice.*)
- SFX 10:** FOOTSTEPS (*Two sets, running away.*)
- SFX 11:** ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord.*)
- SFX 12:** (*HELEN.*) FIRE (*Crackling cellophane.*)
- SFX 13:** (*BENNY.*) RIVER (*Splashing water.*)
- SFX 14:** (*HELEN.*) TRAIN WHISTLE
- SFX 15:** (*BENNY.*) CAR HORN (*Bike horn.*)
- SFX 16:** ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord.*)
- SFX 17:** ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord.*)
- SFX 18:** RIVER
- SFX 19:** CREAKY DOOR
- SFX 20:** FOOTSTEPS (*Two sets, slow.*)
- SFX 21:** FIRE
- SFX 22:** (*BENNY.*) DUCK CALL
- SFX 23:** (*BENNY.*) TRAIN WHISTLE
- SFX 24:** FOOTSTEPS (*Two sets, running.*)
- SFX 25:** (*HELEN.*) RATTLESNAKE (*Plastic egg filled with rice.*)
- SFX 26:** (*HELEN.*) RATTLESNAKE and HISSING
- SFX 27:** ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord.*)
- SFX 28A-G:** (*BENNY.*) ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord.*)
- SFX 29:** HARMONICA
- SFX 30:** "DING"
- SFX 31:** HORSE HOOVES (*Using two sets of coconuts.*), and HARMONICA

**SFX 32:** GUNSHOTS

**SFX 33:** FOOTSTEPS (*Running.*)

**SFX 34:** FOOTSTEPS (*Running.*)

**SFX 35:** GUNSHOTS

**SFX 36:** RUNNING HORSES (*Using two sets of coconuts.*)

**SFX 37:** KAZOO (*Funeral march.*)

**SFX 38:** KAZOO STOPS

**SFX 39:** THUNDER

**SFX 40:** THUNDER (*Louder and longer.*)

**SFX 41:** THUNDER

**SFX 42:** THUNDER (*Loud and long.*)

**SFX 43:** THUNDER

**SFX 44:** AS IF TURNING A DIAL (*Radio static, woman singing, etc.*)

**SFX 45:** FOOTSTEPS (*From behind shelves.*)

**SFX 46:** THUNDER (*Loud and long.*)

**SFX 47:** THUNDER

**SFX 48:** ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord.*)

**SFX 49:** ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord.*)

**SFX 50:** ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord.*)

### PROPS NEEDED FOR SFX

**FOOTSTEPS:** Two sets of hard-soled shoes (or footsteps may be done by actors in their own shoes.)

**NEWSPAPER:** Newspaper

**DOOR:** Prop door. A door in a frame with knob or handle which opens and closes. (*If the prop door is creaky, it may be used. If needed, however, BENNY or HELEN may simply voice the sound of a creaky door.*)

**WHOOPEE CUSION:** An actor (Perhaps MAVIS or MARTHA) may use her voice to make “whoopee cushion” sound. This method is often louder and more reliable than an actual whoopee cushion.

**ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord.*):** Real or toy keyboard

**“DING”:** Oven timer or Triangle

**HORSES HOOVES:** Two coconuts, cut exactly in half

**BOILING OIL:** Small jar of water and drinking straw

**RIVER:** Small bucket of water for splashing

**THUNDER:** Thunder sheet\*, Drum (optional), Crash box\*\*

**CAR HORN:** Bike horn

HARMONICA: Harmonica. (*It is best if someone on stage can actually play the harmonica, but if this is impossible, digital music may be played while BENNY or HELEN pretend to play a harmonica.*)

KAZOO: Kazoo

GUNS: Two short boards (1x4 or 2x4)

RATTLESNAKE: Plastic Easter egg with rice inside

FIRE: Crackled cellophane

DUCK CALL: Duck call

COOKIE SHEET: Cookie sheet

TRAIN WHISTLE: Train whistle

COMICAL NOISE set to HAL'S FOOTSTEPS: Leon may use any sound effect, or HAL may keep a small noise maker in his pocket so he can match the noise to his own footsteps. This will appear as if LEON is making the noise.

\*Thunder sheet is a piece of metal or plastic sheeting, at least 2' x 3'. If metal is used, sides should be taped with duct tape to prevent injuries. A framework may be easily built to hang sheeting if desired. Framework may be made of PVC (plastic pipe), metal or wood.

\*\*Crash box is a metal popcorn container with rocks, bolts, broken dishes, etc. inside. The lid is duct-taped down.

**PROPS CARRIED ON**

- Folder full of papers (Lois)
- Tray with coffee cups (Lois)
- Scripts [folders, etc.] (Doris)
- Pen (Doris)
- Bag of “money” (Vera)
- Cane (Mrs. Welles)
- Keys (Gerald)
- Clarinet (Amateur 2)
- Tool belt with tools (Leon)
- Short board, about 2-3 ft. (Leon)
- Thunder sheet (Leon)
- Pistol (Eddie)

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**PRODUCTION HISTORY**

*Unsound Effects* had its world premiere at Kiowa High School, Kiowa, Colorado in April 2015 with the following cast:

HAL..... Andrew Ban  
 BENNY ..... Luke Paglinawan  
 LANA..... Tabitha Miner  
 GERALD..... Austin McElroy  
 JUDY ..... Audrey Malerich  
 LEON ..... Caleb Campbell  
 EDDIE..... Tylar Zielinski  
 DORIS..... Kinsee Dodge  
 LOIS ..... Dana Howerton  
 VERA..... Jasmine Wilson  
 HELEN..... Whitney Alberti  
 MR. MCCONKEY..... Dain Grimes  
 MAVIS..... Amelia Campbell  
 MARTHA..... Linn Campbell  
 MR. NICHOLS ..... Maddy Martell  
 MRS. WELLES..... Andrea Miller  
 MR. NELSON..... Tylar Zielinski  
 REPORTER #1..... Sunni Armijo  
 REPORTER #2..... Ceanna Paglinawan  
 POLICE OFFICER..... Tyler Webb

STAGE CREW/TECH CREW: Ceanna Paglinawan, Beth Ann McElroy, Chelcie Wehril, Tyler Webb, Jessi Dodge

DIRECTORS: Polly Ehlers and Karen Carnahan

**ACT ONE**

**AT START:** *Stage is dark. Curtain is closed. Behind curtain: LANA, JUDY, and HAL are gathered around microphone, center stage, holding scripts. BENNY and HELEN are on the SFX (sound effects) platform – stage left. GERALD and DORIS are at a table or booth, stage right, GERALD wears headphones. MAVIS and MARTHA are on another platform, stage right. “ON AIR” light is on, or GERALD may hold up a sign that says, “ON AIR.”*

**JUDY:** *(Child’s voice, fearful.)* Polly?

**LANA:** Shhhhh... We have to be very quiet, little one.

**JUDY:** *(Quiet.)* Did the bad men go away?

**LANA:** I don’t know. We have to hide here a little longer.

**JUDY:** I don’t like the dark...

**SFX 1:** CREAKY DOOR

**LANA:** Shhhhhh!

**HAL:** *(Voice #1.)* You checked this room? *(Voice #2.)* I checked everywhere. *(Voice #1.)* What about the closet? *(Voice #2.)* I checked the closet! They ain’t here, I tell ya! *(Voice #1.)* I’m goin’ outside. You stay here and keep watch.

**SFX 2:** DOORKNOB *(Opening.)*

**HAL:** *(Voice #1.)* And stay outta the booze! *(Voice #2.)* Yeah, yeah.

**SFX 3:** DOOR CLOSING.

**SFX 4:** FOOTSTEPS *(Going away.)*

**AT RISE:** *Curtain opens, lights up. BENNY is making footsteps sounds with shoes. HELEN is holding a glass and bottle, clinking them and pouring.*

**HAL:** *(Holding script, Voice #2.)* Stay outta the booze...that’ll be the day. *(Slurps, swallows, ahhh.)* ...Don’t know what I’m hangin’ around for anyway, they ain’t here! We looked a hundred times! *(Slurps, swallows.)* Say...a newspaper. Don’t mind if I do.

**SFX 5:** NEWSPAPER *(Rustling.)*

**JUDY:** *(Sneezes.)*

**HAL:** *(Voice #2.)* Hey, what gives? Who’s in the closet?

**SFX 6:** FOOTSTEPS *(Slow.)*

**SFX 7:** DOORKNOB

**SFX 8:** CREAKY DOOR

**SFX 9:** WHOOPEE CUSHION (*Loud.*)

*Whoopee cushion sound throws everyone into despair - throw hands up, cover eyes, shake heads, etc.*

**LANA:** (*Obviously rattled.*) Oh... uh... it's a uh... flat tire! The kidnappers must have a flat tire!

**HAL:** (*Voice #2.*) Uh... yeah! Dang! I could hear that flat tire clear in here!

**JUDY:** We can run for it while they fix the tire!

**LANA:** Yes! Run, your highness, run!

**SFX 10:** FOOTSTEPS (*Two sets, running away.*)

**SFX 11:** ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord.*)

**HAL:** (*Dramatic voice.*) Will Polly save the little princess, or will the kidnappers find them? Find out on tomorrow's episode of 'Polly in Peril'! And remember, when your stomach is in peril, use Soothum antacid.

**MAVIS and MARTHA:** (*Sing.*)

SOOTHUM...SOOTHUM

CALMS A SOUR STOMACH

SOOTHUM, SOOTHUM

QUICK HEARTBURN RELIEF!

(*SPOKEN.*) AAAHHH!

"ON AIR" light goes out.

**GERALD:** And cut! All right, people, that's...

**LANA:** (*Interrupts, furious.*) Benny, I'm going to kill you!

**BENNY:** It wasn't me! I didn't do it!

**LANA:** Who was it then? (*To HELEN.*) Was it you?

*HELEN shakes her head madly.*

(*To BENNY.*) You're a disgrace! (*Throws a shoe.*) You should be fired! (*Throws another shoe.*) You ruin every show!

*HAL picks up LANA from behind and takes her away from BENNY.*

**GERALD:** Lana, I've told you, you can't kill our sound man until we get a new one! Benny! What was the trouble this time?

**BENNY:** Someone left a Whoopee cushion on the floor! I didn't do it, I just stepped on it!

**GERALD:** (*Furious.*) This is live radio, Benny, L-I-V-E! There is no room for mistakes! (*Messes up hair and growls.*) All right, everybody take ten, then get back here for rehearsal.

*BENNY, HELEN, MARTHA, and MAVIS exit right. HELEN exits left. HAL stands behind LANA and imitates her as she yells at GERALD.*

**LANA:** (*Furious.*) Gerald, I swear if anybody messes up tomorrow, I'm leaving! You hear me? I shouldn't have to put up with this!

*HAL flips his hair and exits.*

**GERALD:** Sure, Lana. It won't happen again.

**LANA:** That's what you said yesterday! (*Flips her hair and exits right.*)

**JUDY:** And the day before.

**GERALD:** Take a break, will you? Get out of here!

*JUDY exits right.*

**GERALD:** Doris, you got tomorrow's script ready?

**DORIS:** Got it right here.

**GERALD:** You have a lot of sound effects in it?

**DORIS:** Let's see... car, rain, fire, creaky door...

**GERALD:** Take out half of them, will you?

**DORIS:** What? It'll ruin the story!

**GERALD:** Yeah. But until I get a new sound man, we have to use Benny, and I want to give him as few chances as possible to screw up.

**DORIS:** Well, okay...but it'll take me a bit.

**GERALD:** All right, we'll have a staff meeting. That should buy you 20 minutes, and it'll give me a chance to yell at everyone. (*Rolls his shoulders.*) I need to let off some steam.

**DORIS:** (*Scribbling on script.*) Whatever you say, boss.

*DORIS and GERALD exit right, HAL enters left.*

**HAL:** Leon? Leon, where are you?

*HAL begins to walk across stage right to stage left. A comical sound; duck call, hammering, etc., accompanies each step. He stops, it stops. He walks again, it starts again.*

LEON!

**LEON:** (*Enters from behind prop door or SFX platform.*) Yeah?

**HAL:** Knock it off!

**LEON:** Ah, you're no fun.

**HAL:** Did you fix that microphone yet?

**LEON:** Yeah, it's fixed.

**HAL:** Good. Now, could you fix the speaker?

**LEON:** Again? (*Walks to speaker, kneels down and begins to mess with wires.*) What a piece of junk.

**HAL:** I know. The whole place is falling down.

**LEON:** I can't fix this anymore, it's shot! The only way for it to work is to hold these wires together.

**HAL:** Then hold the wires together!

*Very reluctantly, LEON holds wires together, and gets shocked by wires. HAL does not notice.*

I can't even hear the sound effects... except the whoopee cushion. I heard that.

**LEON:** (*Gets shocked.*) Everybody heard that. (*Gets shocked.*) Everybody in America.

**HAL:** Yeah. One of our finer moments. Thanks, Leon. (*Exits right.*)

**LEON:** (*Shakes himself, then mutters.*) Fix the speaker... fix the roof... fix the light... fix the faucet...

*Begins to work on speaker. LANA and JUDY enter right.*

**LANA:** Leon? (*LEON holds the wires together for a long, comical "shock."*) Leon, what's wrong with you?

**LEON:** (*Trying to be tough.*) Nothing! Nothing at all! (*Throws down wires and stands. Walks forward, shudders a few times.*) What can I do for you?

**LANA:** We need more sound effects.

**LEON:** More?

**JUDY:** Yeah, something that Benny can't mess up.

**LEON:** Benny can mess up anything.

**LANA:** I know. It has to be something big...and amazing.

**JUDY:** Something that will help "Polly in Peril" get out of last place.

**LEON:** (*Disbelieving.*) You think a sound effect can do that?

**LANA:** We have to do something! (*Puts her hand on his arm.*) Can you do it, Leon?

**LEON:** (*Smiles goofily.*) I can do anything for you, Lana.

**JUDY:** (*Rolls her eyes.*) Oh, brother.

**LANA:** (*Sweetly.*) You're the best. (*Smiles at LEON a moment, then remembers JUDY and backs off.*) Uh, thanks, Leon!

*LANA and JUDY exit RIGHT. Leon looks longingly after LANA, then goes back to work when others enter. BENNY, MAVIS and MARTHA enter right. HELEN enters left, on to SFX platform.*

**BENNY:** Come on, Mavis, just give it a try.

**MAVIS:** What do you mean, do a horse?

**BENNY:** Like this... (*Neighs like a horse.*) ...only better. Nobody around here can do a good horse.

**HELEN:** You might as well do it, he'll pester you until you do.

**MAVIS:** Oh well... um... (*Neighs.*)

**BENNY:** Ah, that's no good. How about you, Martha?

**MARTHA:** Don't even ask! I'm a singer, not an animal!

*MARTHA moves away. LOIS enters left, writing on clipboard or pad.*

**BENNY:** (*Imitating MARTHA.*) I'm a singer, not an animal... Hey Lois, can you do a horse?

**LOIS:** I tried it last week. You said my horse sounded like a duck.

**HELEN:** Come on, Ben, we have to get ready for rehearsal.

**LOIS:** Gerald wants a staff meeting before rehearsal.

**HELEN:** Not another one!

*LOIS shrugs and exits left.*

**BENNY:** He's going to spend 20 minutes yelling at us! That's not a meeting, it's a beating! Hey Mavis, how about a rooster?

*LANA, JUDY, and HAL enter right.*

Ah... never mind. *(Goes to SFX platform.)*

*GERALD enters right.*

**GERALD:** All right, people, staff meeting! Now!

*Grumbling and reluctant, everyone gathers around stage center.*

*(Calmly.)* Now some of you think that a staff meeting is just a time for me to spout off. Well, people... *(Slaps table, shouts and paces, ranting.)* YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT! What do you think this is, kindergarten? This is a LIVE radio show! We got national coverage! You mess up, they hear it in every living room in America! *(Even more upset.)* "Polly in Peril" is in last place in the ratings. How are we supposed to get new sponsors...

**LOIS:** *(Enters left, interrupts.)* Gerald, there's someone here to see you.

*MR. MCCONKEY and MR. NELSON enter left.*

**GERALD:** *(Facing stage right.)* No! No! No! I don't want to see anybody! Get rid of them! Throw them out!

**LOIS:** It's Mr. McConkey. *(Exits left.)*

**GERALD:** *(Freezes, turns, changes demeanor completely, is genial.)*

Mr. McConkey! What a great surprise! What can we do for you?

**MR. MCCONKEY:** This is Mr. Nelson of Grand Oatmeal. He wants to sponsor "Polly in Peril."

*Everyone reacts happily.*

**MR. NELSON:** Maybe! Maybe I'll sponsor and maybe I won't!  
(*Belligerent.*) What's in it for me?

**MR. MCCONKEY:** (*Looks around.*) Well... er... Mavis and Martha are great singers! Sing something for us, girls!

**MAVIS and MARTHA:** (*Singing.*)

SOOTHUM... SOOTHUM

CALMS A SOUR STOMACH

SOOTHUM, SOOTHUM...

**MR. NELSON:** Stop! I don't want to hear about antacid, sing a real song!

*As MAVIS and MARTHA sing, several people put their hands over their hearts or salute.*

**MAVIS and MARTHA:** (*Singing.*)

GOD BLESS AMERICA,

LAND THAT I LOVE

STAND BESIDE HER, AND GUIDE HER...

**MR. NELSON:** (*Interrupts.*) Hold it, hold it! That's very patriotic...But I ain't selling flags! What else you got?

**MAVIS and MARTHA:** (*Discuss a moment, then sing.*)

HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN

THE SKIES ABOVE ARE CLEAR AGAIN

LET US SING A SONG OF CHEER AGAIN

HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN!

*Everyone applauds.*

**MR. NELSON:** Okay, but can they sell oatmeal?

**MR. MCCONKEY:** Sure they can! Go ahead, girls! Sing about Grand Oatmeal!

**MAVIS:** What, right now?

**MARTHA:** With no rehearsal?

**MAVIS:** We don't even know the Grand Oatmeal jingle!

**MR. MCCONKEY:** So make one up! You can do it! (*Serious.*) So do it.

**MAVIS:** Well, uh... okay (*Sings to tune of "Happy Days are Here Again."*) GRAND OATMEAL IS IN YOUR BOWL,

**MARTHA:** (*Sings.*)

IT WARMS YOU UP... UH...

**MAVIS:** (*Sings.*)

BOTH HEART AND SOUL!

**MARTHA:** (*Sings.*)

EAT IT EVEN IF YOU'RE... UH...

**MAVIS:** (*Speaks loudly.*) Big, fat troll!

**MAVIS and MARTHA:** (*Sing.*)

GRAND OATMEAL IS IN YOUR BOWL!

*Everyone applauds except MR. NELSON.*

**MR. NELSON:** (*Outraged.*) Big, fat troll?! How is that going to sell oatmeal? This is outrageous! Good day! (*Exits left.*)

**MR. MCCONKEY:** Mr. Nelson, wait! (*Exits left.*)

**GERALD:** (*Shakes his head sadly.*) All right, let's rehearse tomorrow's episode. Doris, scripts.

*DORIS hands out scripts to everyone as they take their places.*

Benny, you've managed to wreck the last three episodes, so we're going to run through the sound effects first. Doris?

**DORIS:** (*Carrying script, crosses left to SFX platform.*) All right, Benny... fire!

**BENNY:** (*Points his finger at DORIS like a gun.*) Bang!

*Everyone reacts, disgusted.*

**GERALD:** BENNY!

**BENNY:** I'm just kidding! Gee whiz! No sense of humor.

**DORIS:** Can we PLEASE do the sound effects now?

**HELEN:** Fire!

**SFX 12:** (*HELEN crackles cellophane.*)

**DORIS:** Thank you. River!

**BENNY:** River!

**SFX 13:** (*BENNY swishes water in a small bucket*)

**DORIS:** Train!

**HELEN:** Train!

**SFX 14:** (*HELEN blows train whistle.*)

**DORIS:** Car horn!

**BENNY:** Car horn!

**SFX 15:** (*BENNY squeezes bike horn.*)

**DORIS:** All right, that's all. Can you possibly get through ONE WHOLE SHOW without messing up?

**BENNY:** (*Insulted.*) Of course I can! I'm a professional!

**HAL:** Professional idiot...

*LOIS enters left.*

**BENNY:** (*To HAL.*) Hey!

**LOIS:** Gerald, you have a phone call. It's Mr. McConkey. (*Exits left.*)

**GERALD:** Oh for Pete's sake! I'm never going to get this done! All right, people, rehearse and don't stop, you hear me? If Benny messes up, you go with it, got it? Get this done or else! (*Begins to exit, then turns back.*) Three, two, one, go! (*Exits Left.*)

**SFX 16:** ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord.*)

**HAL:** (*Very dramatically.*) When you're lost, she will find you. When you're hurt, she will help, when you need her, she is there. It's Polly...

**MAVIS and MARTHA:** (*Sing.*)

Ah....

**HAL:** In Peril!

**SFX 17:** ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord.*)

**HAL:** In our last episode, Polly and the princess were running for their lives after the kidnappers had a flat tire.

**LANA:** I know a place we can hide, your highness. We just have to cross this little stream.

**SFX 18:** RIVER

**JUDY:** (*As child.*) Polly, the water's cold! I'm all wet now!

**LANA:** I know, little one. Here, we can hide in this old shack.

**SFX 19:** CREAKY DOOR

**SFX 20:** FOOTSTEPS (*Two sets, slow.*)

**JUDY:** It's dark in here!

**LANA:** I'll start a fire.

**SFX 21:** FIRE

**HAL:** (*Gruff voice.*) Hey, what gives? What are you doing here?

**LANA:** I've got to get this child to safety. Is there anywhere we can hide and rest?

**HAL:** (*Gruff voice.*) Sure, sure. There's a freight train that comes right by here. I'm getting on it myself.

**LANA:** Did you hear that, your highness? We'll get on the train and then we can get help! Listen! I think I hear it coming now!

**SFX 22:** (*BENNY.*) DUCK CALL

*EVERYONE reacts in disgust.*

**LANA:** Benny! (*Starts to go after BENNY. HAL grabs her arm.*)

**HAL:** Keep going, Lana! Gerald said keep going no matter what, remember? You can kill him later.

**LANA:** (*Still glaring at BENNY.*) All right. Oh... I... uh... guess it wasn't a train after all. Look your highness, a duck!

**JUDY:** Oh! A duckie! I want to pet it! Here duckie...

**SFX 23:** (*BENNY.*) TRAIN WHISTLE

*EVERYONE reacts in anger but keep going.*

**LANA:** Uh...you have to get off the train tracks, your highness. Hurry!

**SFX 24:** FOOTSTEPS (*Two sets, running.*)

**HAL:** We can rest in this cave!

**SFX 25:** (*HELEN.*) RATTLESNAKE

**LANA:** Look out! It's a rattlesnake!

**JUDY:** (*Screams.*) Help me, Polly!

*BENNY knocks cookie sheet off platform.*

**LANA:** (*Furious.*) I'll uh... kill it with this... uh... cookie sheet!

*LANA grabs cookie sheet and runs on to SFX platform. BENNY looks frightened.*

**SFX 26:** *(HELEN.)* RATTLESNAKE and HISSING

**JUDY:** Wow! You're amazing, Polly, you can kill a rattlesnake with a cookie sheet?

**LANA:** *(Grabs SFX microphone, or shouts.)* I can do anything if I'm mad enough! Take that you snake!

*Hits BENNY with cookie sheet. BENNY runs around set, LANA chases him, hitting him with cookie sheet. Everyone cheers. GERALD enters left.*

**GERALD:** Cut! Cut! Cut! I knew it! I knew you couldn't do it! BENNY, you're fired!

**BENNY:** Fired? It wasn't my fault! Come on, Gerald, you can't fire me, I got a wife and kids!

*LOIS enters left.*

**GERALD:** That's their problem. I warned you a thousand times. You're fired!

*BENNY crosses sadly to SFX platform and sits dejectedly.*

**LOIS:** *(Loudly.)* Gerald, the amateurs are here!

**GERALD:** WHAT?

**LOIS:** Remember? You scheduled today for Amateur Hour auditions.

**GERALD:** Oh for crying out loud!

**HELEN:** What do you mean, Amateur Hour? We don't do Amateur Hour.

**LOIS:** We do now. Mr. McConkey wants to do it to try to get new sponsors.

**LANA:** Gerald, we don't have time for this, we need to rehearse! We can't have anything bad happen AGAIN tomorrow!

**GERALD:** I know that! *(Holds head in hands.)* Aauugh! As if I didn't have enough to do... Say... *(Looks up slowly at BENNY, smiles craftily.)* ...Benny, you're unfired.

**BENNY:** I'm what?

**GERALD:** You're unfired - on one condition - you have to do Amateur Hour auditions.

**BENNY:** (*Horried.*) What?! Why me? I don't even work here!

**GERALD:** (*As if to a child.*) You are being punished. Let's go everybody, rehearsal in the conference room.

*Everybody except BENNY and LOIS exit right.*

**BENNY:** Wait! I don't know how to do auditions! Lois, please...I'll pay you ten million dollars if you stay!

**LOIS:** (*Shakes her head, smiling.*) All right. But it's going to cost you more than ten million dollars!

**BENNY:** Name your price!

**LOIS:** A good cup of coffee.

**BENNY:** You drive a hard bargain.

*AMATEURS enter left, talking loudly.*

**AMATEUR 1:** Wow, a real radio station!

**AMATEUR 2:** (*Sings in opera voice.*) La la la la la la la la.

**AMATEUR 3:** Hey, are we on the air?

**BENNY:** All right, everyone, have a seat. Let's see what you've got. (*Points at AMATEUR 1.*) You. You go first. What's your talent?

**AMATEUR 1:** (*Jumps up excitedly and dumps out of sack or basket.*) Oh, drat! (*Balls go flying and must be rounded up.*) I... am a juggler! (*Begins to juggle.*)

**BENNY:** (*Jumps up.*) Wow, that's great! How do you do that?

*BENNY glances at LOIS, who is shaking her head.*

Uh...that's not great?

**LOIS:** This is radio, Benny.

**BENNY:** Oh yeah... (*To AMATEUR 1, indignant.*) What are you, nuts? This is radio!

**AMATEUR 1:** Oh... I need something quieterer right?

**BENNY:** Next!

*AMATEUR 1 exits left.*

**AMATEUR 2:** I'm next.

**BENNY:** What's your talent?

**AMATEUR 2:** *(Holds up an instrument, like a clarinet. Snooty.)* I play the oboe.

**LOIS:** *(Suspicious.)* Isn't that a clarinet?

**AMATEUR 2:** Only to the unschooled. I shall now play an original piece. By me. *(Begins to play clarinet, maybe even tries to play it upside down at first, any tune, but the piece is full of squeaks and wrong notes.)*

**BENNY:** Um... okay... hold it...STOP! *(AMATEUR 2 stops.)* That's uh... that's really... NEXT!

*AMATEUR 2 exits left.*

**BENNY:** Okay, your turn. What's your talent?

**AMATEUR 3:** I do animal sound effects.

**BENNY:** Really? What can you do?

**AMATEUR 3:** Owl! *(Hoots, flaps arms.)* Sheep! *(Baas on all fours.)* Dog! *(Yips and yaps like a small dog.)*

**BENNY:** Huh! You call that a dog? This is a dog! *(Barks deeply like a big dog.)*

*AMATEUR 3, scared, runs off LEFT. BENNY chases him/her, barking madly.*

**LOIS:** *(Shouts.)* Benny! Benny, heel! *(BENNY returns to LOIS.)* Good boy.

**AMATEUR 3:** *(Enters left.)* Hey! I can also do a monkey!

**BENNY:** A monkey?

*AMATEUR 3 imitates a monkey.*

**BENNY:** *(Turns his back on AMATEUR 3, speaks to LOIS.)* Can you believe this?

*Still making monkey noises, AMATEUR 3 jumps on BENNY'S back. BENNY yells and runs around, LOIS tries to help. Finally, AMATEUR 3 falls off on floor.*

**BENNY:** You're crazy! Now get out of here!

*AMATEUR 3 exits left.*

**BENNY:** Sheesh! What else do we have?

**LOIS:** That's all there is today.

**BENNY:** That's all? We can't do a show with these guys, they're awful!

What are we going to do?

**LOIS:** *(Shrugs.)* Pray for a miracle.

*BENNY and LOIS exit LEFT. LEON enters right, whistling and carrying thunder sheet, opens prop door, takes thunder sheet through and closes prop door. LANA and JUDY enter right.*

**LANA:** Leon?

*LEON rattles thunder sheet.*

**JUDY:** What was that?

*LEON rattles thunder sheet.*

**LANA:** Leon, is that you?

**LEON:** *(Opens prop door.)* It's me!

**JUDY:** What was that noise?

**LEON:** I made you a new sound effect. *(Brings thunder sheet out in front of LANA.)*

**LANA:** Oh... er... what is it?

**LEON:** It's thunder *(Rattles thunder sheet.)*...and lightning! *(Pretends to flick light switch.)*

*LIGHT CUE: Lights flicker.*

**JUDY:** Wow! That's great, Leon! *(Rattles thunder sheet.)*

**LANA:** How do you think of these things?

**LEON:** *(Shrugs.)* Guess I'm just a bloomin' genius!

**LANA:** *(Sweetly, moves closer.)* Leon...

**LEON:** Yeah? *(Moves closer.)*

**JUDY:** Ahem!

*LEON and LANA jump apart.*

**LANA:** I have to er... read tomorrow's script! I'll see you later! *(Exits right.)*

**JUDY:** So, Romeo, when are you going to make your move?

**LEON:** I don't know what you're talking about. *(Takes out hammer and begins banging on thunder sheet.)*

**JUDY:** *(Takes hammer away.)* You and Lana. When are you going to tell her you're crazy about her?

**LEON:** Never! *(Grabs hammer back.)* She's a big star! A famous radio actress! I'm a handyman!

**JUDY:** She likes you, you know.

**LEON:** *(Turns away.)* She wouldn't be caught dead with someone like... *(Turns back quickly.)* ...what did you say?

*MR. MCCONKEY and MRS. WELLES enter left. LEON picks up thunder sheet and takes it through prop door, closes door. JUDY steps onto SFX platform.*

**MR. MCCONKEY:** *(Proudly.)* ...And here is where all the magic happens, the studio!

**MRS. WELLES:** So this is it, eh? Where is everybody? Where's Polly... you know, the one that's always in peril?

**MR. MCCONKEY:** Why, here's one of our actresses right now. Judy, this is Mrs. Welles, owner of Lilly's Laxatives, our newest sponsor!

**MRS. WELLES:** Hold on, sonny, I haven't said yes yet! You run along, now. I want to see more of this studio. Go on!

*Whacks MR. MCCONKEY with her cane. MR. MCCONKEY shrugs and exits left.*

Now then, where do they keep the horses?

**JUDY:** Horses?

**MRS. WELLES:** *(Looking around.)* Yes, horses! Where do you keep them? They're the strangest sounding horses I ever heard!

**JUDY:** Well, when the horse whinnies, it's done by actors. (*Neighs like a horse, then shrugs, goes onto platform and holds up coconuts.*) But coconuts make the sound of the horses walking. (*Clops coconuts.*)

**MRS. WELLES:** Coconuts! Land sakes! I never would've guessed! What else do you have? (*LEON rattles thunder sheet.*) What was that?

**JUDY:** That was thunder!

**MRS. WELLES:** (*Looks around.*) Where?

**JUDY:** Just through that door. (*Knocks on prop door.*) Leon! (*LEON opens prop door.*) Will you show Mrs. Welles your new invention?

**LEON:** Sure! Right this way, ma'am.

*MRS. WELLES and LEON go through prop door and close it. LEON rattles thunder sheet. BENNY, HELEN, MAVIS, MARTHA, LANA, and HAL enter right. GERALD and DORIS enter left.*

**GERALD:** All right, people, let's get started! McConkey's got a new sponsor coming in and I want to get something done before they get here. It's not enough we're in last place, we have to keep stopping to babysit sponsors!

**JUDY:** Shhh! Gerald! (*Points to prop door. Nobody notices.*)

**HELEN:** Who's the new sponsor?

**GERALD:** Lilly's Laxatives.

**BENNY:** Oh that's great, now we're moving laxatives! Get it? Moving laxatives?

**MARTHA:** Lilly's Laxative tastes like sandpaper!

**MAVIS:** Sandpaper dipped in gasoline.

*JUDY panicks, jumps up, points to prop door and makes "cut" gestures. Some look at her curiously. HAL does not notice.*

**HAL:** How am I supposed to make laxatives sound good? (*Serious voice.*) 'When you're really stopped up...'

**MRS. WELLES:** (*Opening prop door quickly.*) Hold it right there!

*LEON is standing behind her with his face in his hands. When MRS. WELLES steps out, LEON closes door and hides.*

**GERALD:** Who are you?

**MRS. WELLES:** I am Mrs. Welles, owner of Lilly's Laxatives...

*EVERYONE reacts, MRS. WELLES walks around, pounding her cane or whacking people with it.*

Babysitting sponsors, eh? Sandpaper dipped in gasoline eh? Can't make laxatives sound good?

*MR. MCCONKEY enters left.*

Well, let me tell you something, kids. It may not be fancy, but laxatives make me a lot of money, and YOU'RE NOT GETTING ANY OF IT! (*Crosses left, whacks MR. MCCONKEY on shins, exits left.*)

**MR. MCCONKEY:** (*Spreads hands in despair.*) What happened? Mrs. Welles, wait! (*Exits left.*)

**DORIS:** Well, we blew it again.

**JUDY:** (*Furious.*) What's the matter with you people? (*To MAVIS.*) Sandpaper dipped in gasoline?

**MAVIS:** How did I know she was hiding back there?

**JUDY:** She was looking at the sound effects! She's a sponsor! She has MONEY!

**GERALD:** Settle down, Judy.

**JUDY:** Settle down? Why should I?

**GERALD:** Because we're rehearsing. Places, everyone! Polly in Peril rehearsal! Five...four...three...two...one...

*EVERYONE moves quickly to their broadcast places.*

**SFX 27:** ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord.*)

**HAL:** When you're lost, she will find you. When you're hurt, she will help. When you need her, she is there.

*MR. MCCONKEY enters left.*

It's Polly...

**MAVIS and MARTHA:** *(Singing.)*

AH...

**MR. MCCONKEY:** *(Waving arms.)* Stop! Stop! Listen, everyone!

**GERALD:** What NOW?

**MR. MCCONKEY:** I have big news! I finally got a sponsor! A famous one! It's Scrubby Tub scouring powder!

*EVERYONE is impressed and ad-lib: "Wow! "Scrubby Tub!"*

Scrubby Tub is ready to pay us huge bucks! It will save the station!

*EVERYONE cheers loudly.*

But... there's a catch. They hate "Polly in Peril"!

*EVERYONE reacts, insulted.*

They want us to come up with a brand new show. A GOOD show, like "The Shadow" or "The Lone Ranger" or "Fibber McGee and Molly." Comedy... mystery... soap opera... whatever. They want something really high quality! *(Points at BENNY.)* With great sound effects!

*EVERYONE groans.*

**BENNY:** Hey!

**MR. MCCONKEY:** *(Angry.)* Listen, people, this is our last chance! It's do or die, here. If we don't get this account, we'll have to sell the station.

**LANA:** Mr. McConkey, this is so sudden! How much time do we have?

**MR. MCCONKEY:** We need it tomorrow.

**EVERYONE:** *(Astounded.)* Tomorrow?!

**MR. MCCONKEY:** I just found out about it myself.

**GERALD:** Sir, that's impossible! We have to rehearse "Polly in Peril," and Doris has to write it up...

**MR. MCCONKEY:** *(Angry.)* I don't care what you have to do! Stay all night if you have to, but get us a great new show or you'll all be out of a job! Goodbye! *(Exits left.)*

**MAVIS:** Tomorrow! He doesn't want much, does he?

**MARTHA:** He might as well have said five seconds from now!

**BENNY:** It's over! We're sunk! We're fried! We're toast!

**HELEN:** Ah, Benny, don't give up so easy. Maybe we can do it if we all work together.

**JUDY:** Doris, how long does it take you to write a completely new show?

**DORIS:** (*Thinking.*) Well, if I work really hard, no breaks, no distractions (*Points at GERALD.*)...and no rewrites... two weeks.

**BENNY:** It's over! We're sunk! We're fried! We're toast!

*EVERYONE gathers hats, coats, purses, etc., begin to exit left.*

**GERALD:** Where do you think you're going?

**HELEN:** You heard the man, he wants the impossible. We're leaving.

**DORIS:** He probably just wants an excuse to fire us anyway. He WANTS to sell out.

*People continue to exit left.*

**GERALD:** Hold it right there!

*EVERYONE stops.*

Get back in here right now.

**MAVIS:** Why should we?

**GERALD:** Because as of this minute, you're all still under contract. Anyone who walks out that door is fired.

**DORIS:** So what? We'll be fired anyway in two days.

*People continue to exit left.*

**GERALD:** Probably, but right now you're still mine. (*Shouts after them.*) And if you're not afraid of being fired, try this – anyone who leaves today will forfeit their whole paycheck for the past month!

*EVERYONE wails and comes back in.*

**JUDY:** What's the point? We can't do a whole new show by tomorrow!

**GERALD:** No, we probably can't. But people, we're going to try.

We're going to give it all we got. We have one chance, just ONE STINKING LOUSY CHANCE to keep our jobs. We'll work on it as long as it takes.

**DORIS:** But it's almost lunch time!

**GERALD:** No lunch. Lois!

*LOIS enters left.*

Send out for sandwiches!

*EVERYONE begins to shout orders. 'Roast Beef! 'Turkey! 'Ham!' etc.*

Stop! Liverwurst for everyone!

*EVERYONE groans. Lois exits left.*

**GERALD:** Now then, sit down and start thinking!

*EVERYONE sits down around set.*

What kind of show do we want to do?

**DORIS:** *(Jumps up as if roping a cow.)* I want to do a western!

**BENNY:** No westerns. Nobody can do a horse.

**MARTHA:** I know! A great soap opera, with lots of romance and intrigue!

**HELEN:** Can't do it. We don't have an organ. You can't have a soap opera without organ music.

**DORIS:** You have organ music, you use it every day!

**HELEN:** We have one chord. You can't do a soap opera with one chord.

**DORIS:** Why not?

*HELEN and BENNY perform the following sequence. HELEN is very dramatic, her voice is higher pitched with each phrase.*

**HELEN:** Benny? (*BENNY SFX 28A: ORGAN MUSIC (One chord.)*) John... (*SFX 28B: One chord.*) Oh, John, my love! (*SFX 28C: One chord.*) Please, don't leave me! (*SFX 28D: One chord.*) I'll have to kill myself! (*SFX 28E: One chord.*) No! John, no! (*SFX 28F: One chord.*) Help! (*SFX 28G: One chord.*) (*HELEN slumps over shelves as if dead, then raises her head.*) See what I mean?

*EVERYBODY reluctantly agrees.*

**HAL:** (*Snaps his fingers.*) I've got it! A great crime show, using real crime stories! You know, like Gangbusters!

**BENNY and HELEN:** NO!

**HAL:** Why not?

**BENNY:** Gangbusters has eight different sound effects in their opening sequence. Gunshots, sirens, marching feet, police whistles... They have about 40 effects in every show.

**HELEN:** We don't have 40 sound effects in this whole studio!

**DORIS:** Besides, Gangbusters is already a show about real crime stories. We can't just copy them.

**MAVIS:** What about something in the future, you know, like "Buck Rogers"?

*EVERYONE agrees enthusiastically, "Hey, that's a great idea," "I like it" etc., except BENNY and HELEN who are shaking their heads.*

**HAL:** (*Noticing them.*) What now?

*BENNY and HELEN look at each other and shrug.*

**HELEN:** We can't do a space ship.

**HAL:** Oh, come on! How tough can it be?

**BENNY:** Fine. What does a space ship sound like?

**HAL:** It's big...and powerful...and sort of...

*HAL flies around making noises like a big motor, continues through JUDY'S and DORIS'S next lines.*

**JUDY:** No, that sounds like a truck! A space ship is more like... *(Flies around making weird, eerie noises, continues through DORIS'S next line.)*

**DORIS:** No way! A space ship should sound like the wind. *(Flies around making a sound like wind, but runs into HAL and JUDY. They all fall down.)*

**GERALD:** Cut! Cut! Cut! Come on, people, we're not making progress here!

**JUDY:** *(Brushing herself off.)* It's Benny's fault, he doesn't have sound effects for ANYTHING!

**BENNY:** It's not my fault! It's the budget! They don't give us anything!

**HELEN:** It's true! We got some of this stuff out of a junkyard! Look at this, *(Holds up two short wooden boards.)* This is a gun. *(Claps wood together.)*

**BENNY:** *(Holds up plastic Easter egg.)* And this is a rattlesnake.

**DORIS:** An egg?

**BENNY:** We put rice *(Shakes egg.)* in the egg. *(Shakes egg and hisses at DORIS.)*

**HELEN:** Right. And remember last week when Polly was about to get boiled in oil? The boiling went on for four and a half minutes!

**DORIS:** So?

**HELEN:** So here's the boiling oil. *(Puts straw into jar of water and blows.)* You try blowing through a straw, non-stop, for four and a half minutes.

**BENNY:** We almost passed out.

**DORIS:** So that's why you threw that shoe at me.

**HELEN:** No, that was for the steps.

**DORIS:** Steps?

**BENNY:** You had the bad guys running up three flights of steps... *(Races up and down steps several times.)* ...up, down, up, down... when I got home that night I wanted to boil you in oil!

*LOIS enters with tray and coffee cups.*

**DORIS:** Well, excuse me for writing an action-packed show!

**LOIS:** May I make a suggestion?

**GERALD:** Shoot.

**LOIS:** We have guns and walking horses. Why can't we do a western after all?

**BENNY:** As long as the horses don't say anything! All they can do is walk... (*Clops coconut shells slowly.*) ...or run! (*Clops coconut shells quickly.*)

**GERALD:** All right, then, let's do it!

**DORIS:** Yee-haw! We're gonna write us a western!

*Close curtain.*

**END OF ACT ONE**

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