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THE MULE-BONE

A COMEDY OF NEGRO LIFE IN

THREE ACTS

BY

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ACT I

SETTING: The raised porch of JOE CLARK'S Store and the street in front. Porch stretches almost completely across the stage, with a plank bench at either end. At the center of the porch three steps leading from street. Rear of porch, center, door to the store. On either side are single windows on which signs, at left, "POST OFFICE", and at right, "GENERAL STORE" are painted. Soap boxes, axe handles, small kegs, etc., on porch on which townspeople sit and lounge during action. Above the roof of the porch the "false front", or imitation second story of the shop is seen with large sign painted across it "JOE CLARK'S GENERAL STORE". Large kerosine street lamp on post at right in front of porch.

Saturday afternoon and the villagers are gathered around the store. Several men sitting on boxes at edge of porch chewing sugar cane, spitting tobacco juice, arguing, some whittling, others eating peanuts. During the act the women all dressed up in starched dresses parade in and out of store. People buying groceries, kids playing in the street, etc. General noise of conversation, laughter and children shouting. But when the curtain rises there is a momentary lull for cane-chewing. At left of porch four men are playing cards on a soap box, and seated on the edge of the porch at extreme right two children are engaged in a checker game, with the board on the floor between them.

When the curtain goes up the following characters are discovered on the porch: MAYOR JOE CLARK, the storekeeper; DEACON HAMBO; DEACON GOODWIN; Old Man MATT BRAZZLE: WILL CODY; SYKES JONES: LUM BOGER, the young town marshall; LIGE MOSELY and WALTER THOMAS, two village wags; TOM NIXON

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and SAM MOSELY, and several others, seated on boxes, kegs, benches and floor of the porch. TONY TAYLOR is sitting on steps of porch with empty basket. MRS. TAYLOR comes out with her arms full of groceries, empties them into basket and goes back in store. All the men are chewing sugar cane earnestly with varying facial expressions. The noise of the breaking and sucking of cane can be clearly heard in the silence. Occasionally the laughter and shouting of children is heard nearby off stage.

HAMBO: (To BRAZZLE) Say, Matt, gimme a jint or two of dat green cane -- dis ribbon cane is hard.

LIGE: Yeah, and you ain't got de chears in yo' parlor you useter have.

HAMBO: Dat's all right, Lige, but I betcha right now wid dese few teeth I got I kin eat up more cane'n you kin grow.

LIGE: I know you kin and that's de reason I ain't going to tempt you. But youse gettin' old in lots of ways -- look at dat bald-head -- just as clean as my hand. (Exposes his palm).

HAMBO: Don't keer if it tis -- I don't want nothin' -- not even hair -- between me and God. (General laughter -- LIGE joins in as well. Cane chewing keeps up. Silence for a moment.)

(Off stage a high shrill voice can be heard calling:)

VOICE: Sister Mosely, Oh, Sister Mosely! (A pause) Miz Mosely! (Very irritated) Oh, Sister Mattie! You hear me out here -- you just won't answer!

VOICE OF MRS. MOSELY: Whoo-ee.....somebody calling me?

VOICE OF MRS. ROBERTS: (Angrily) Never mind now -- you couldn't come when I called you. I don't want yo' lil ole weazley turnip greens. (Silence)

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