

**THE UNDOING OF
JOB: A COMEDY IN
THREE ACTS**

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The Undoing of Job: A Comedy in Three Acts by John Stone

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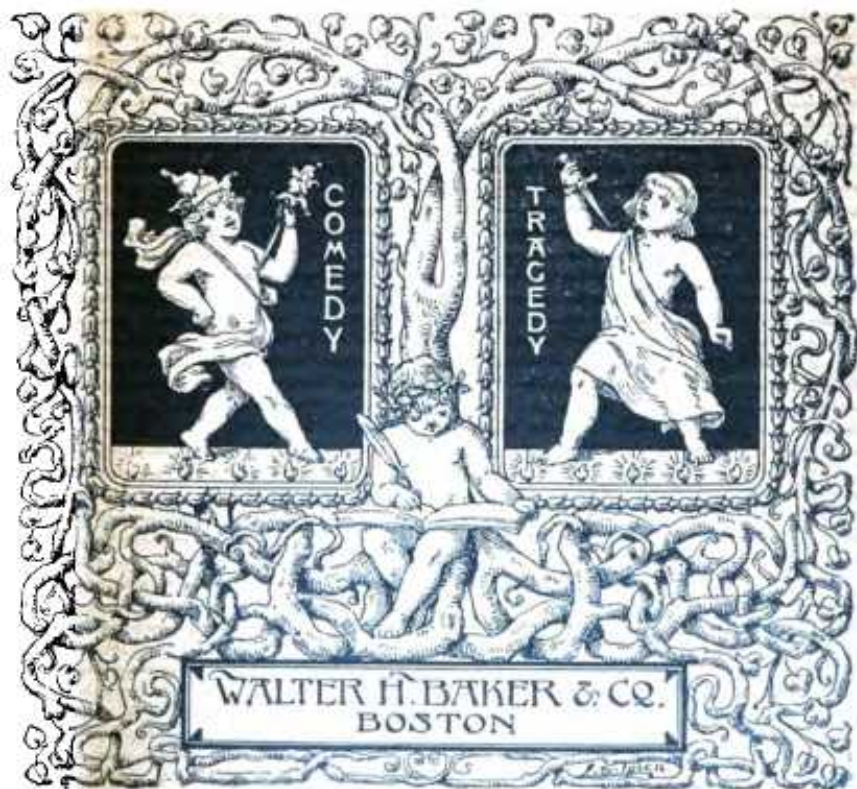
**THE UNDOING OF
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THREE ACTS**

NO PLAYS EXCHANGED.

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The Undoing of Job

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The Undoing of Job

A Comedy in Three Acts

By JOHN STONE

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The Undoing of Job

CHARACTERS

JOB, hotel proprietor and retired butler, aged sixty-three.

SEBASTIAN QUERY-BEACON, a New Englander of the bluest blood, aged fifty.

CHARLES PARKINS, his stepson, aged twenty-four.

LADY NORA BRADEFER, an up-to-date aristocrat, aged twenty-four.

MRS. QUERY-BEACON, a tyrannous mother, with strong social instincts, aged forty-eight.

MISS MERION, an ambitious young woman, aged twenty-six.

MAUD, an undeveloped housemaid, aged eighteen.

SCENE :—London. TIME :—The present.



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The Undoing of Job

ACT I

SCENE.—*The inner lobby of a small hotel in Half-Moon Street. It is somewhat plainly furnished and fitted up as a sitting-room. To the left is a writing-table and to the right a side door. At the back is a double door with draped curtains leading to the entrance hall of the hotel, beyond which may be seen a corner of the office desk over which MISS MERION presides. The inner lobby is semi-private; it could be made quite private by letting down the draped curtains. Voices may be heard in the outer lobby, as of guests arriving at the hotel; presently they cease. Trunks are brought through from the street.*

MISS MERION (*is heard in the outer lobby*). Mr. Job! Mr. Job! (*Coming in rather crossly.*) Where has he gone to now, I wonder? What a tiresome old man! Shan't I have to train him when — (*Crosses to door at R., which she opens.*) Mr. Job! Ah, there you are!

(*She smiles at him pleasantly.*)

JOB (*entering*). Well, what is it? What is it?—Here I am. Do you want me?

MISS M. (*simpering*). Oh, Mr. Job! Do I want you? You mustn't ask me that.

JOB. Mustn't ask you that, my little cat,—eh? why not,—eh? (*Edges up to her.*)

MISS M. Oh, I should hardly know how to answer.

JOB. You wouldn't, wouldn't you?—Here, here, here, this is going a bit too fast. Now just you tell me, what is it?

MISS M. The Query-Beacons have arrived.

JOB. *Mr.* and *Mrs.* Query-Beacon, if you please. Have they?—Who showed them up?

MISS M. Maud.

JOB (*shaking his head*). I hope that girl will do, but she lacks finish,—she lacks finish.

MISS M. I think she can be trained.

JOB. Did you tell her to take up hot water? Americans are terrible hard on the boilers. If more of them get to coming here I shall have to have a new one put in.

MISS M. Yes, Mr. Job, I told her. (*MAUD appears in the outer lobby.*) There's Maud now. I'll send her in. (*MISS M. goes out.*) Go in and see Mr. Job, Maud.

Enter MAUD.

JOB. Did you carry the bags up and show them their rooms?

MAUD. Yes, sir.

JOB. Did you take in the hot water?

MAUD. Yes, sir,—that is,—I handed it in at the door.

JOB. Well, my girl, you must unlearn that trick.

MAUD. What trick?

JOB. Never hand the hot water in at the door,—unless, of course, the—circumstances indicate very clearly that you are not to go in. It is a housemaid's privilege always to go into bedrooms, and her professional duty never to see what is going on in them. That is a perfectly well understood social convention.

MAUD. Yes, sir.

JOB. Did you unstrap the bags?

MAUD. Yes, sir.

JOB. And the shawl-strap?

MAUD. Yes, sir.

JOB. And did you hang up the coats?

MAUD. They said they preferred to do that themselves.

JOB. Well, that is because they are American, I suppose,—a little untutored, that's all. You should never encourage, even passively, people to do for themselves what servants can do for them. What are servants for?

MAUD. I'm sure I don't know, sir.

JOB. You don't know!—If people did things for themselves where would employment be?—Who would have any use for you, Maud, eh?

MAUD. Oh, really, sir, I'm very sorry. I won't do it again. I'm really very anxious to learn.

JOB. Well, well, some can learn, and some can't; it's in the blood or it isn't. Remember this, Maud, service is an art, and that art is the mainspring of civilization. Without service

men would be savages, humanity would be reduced to drudgery, every man a scavenger, every woman a cook. It is service ennobles life, raises man above the brute, gives civilization its impetus. And what does it matter to us if this is sometimes forgotten?—if we who perform this great work are looked down on? Ah! I have been through the heartburning, the introspection, the revolt of youth, but I now perceive the glorious truth that service is its own reward if once you can perceive that it is an art. An ART, mind you, Maud!

MAUD (*bewildered*). Yes, sir.

JOB. An Art,—something that you do because you love doing it, and that you do therefore with taste, with discrimination, and with thoroughness. That's what you want to think of, my girl.

MAUD. Yes, sir.

JOB. And don't take your standards and your ideas from the people you serve; they know little enough about it,—especially Americans.

MAUD. That's true.

JOB. You begin to see, I think?

MAUD. Yes, sir.

JOB. Well, you're a good girl; run along with you. (MAUD turns to go; just as she reaches the door—) Here, come here. Your cap isn't on straight. Heuh! a housemaid with a crooked cap,—it looks like Bayswater, or even Paddington. (*He fixes her cap.*) Now, stand up straight. (*Scrutinizes her.*) All right, now—and remember what I said about the shawl-strap—and—here—don't you forget about taking in the hot water next time. (*Exit MAUD.*) Dear, dear, these young women haven't got it in them like their grandmothers. Ah me!—I sometimes wish myself back in the old days at Powderham Place under the third Marquess,—that was living. Now, I am making money, but—and these Americans!

MISS M. (*entering*). Mrs. Query-Beacon wishes to speak to you,—she's in the hall; shall I show her in?

JOB. Yes, yes, show her in.

MISS M. (*impertinently, but in a low voice*). Can I trust you in a tête-à-tête?

JOB. You impertinent hussy, you, show her in at once.

(*Miss M. gives him her most brilliant smile, then turns back to the lobby and ushers in MRS. QUERY-BEACON. JOB holds back the curtains for her to enter.*)