

THE DAMON RUNYON THEATRE:

“SENSE OF HUMOR”

Originally broadcast March 6, 1949 by Damon Runyon.

Adapted by Russell Hughes

Transcribed by The Indefensible Craig Gustafson for “Those Thrilling Days of Yesteryear” old time radio recreations.

www.ttdyradio.com

CAST

BROADWAY:

JOE THE JOKER:

FRANKIE FEROCIOUS:

ROSA:

ROPES MCGONNIGLE:

ANNOUNCER:

SOUND EFFECTS:

SFX:

Electric Buzzer

Chair scraping floor

Knocking

Door open & close

Chain removed from door

Shop door with bell open & Close

Pistol hammer cocked

Gunshots

Footsteps on cement

Sack being closed

MUSIC: **FANFARE.**

ANNOUNCER: The Damon Runyon Theatre.

MUSIC: **THEME MUSIC IN AND UNDER.**

ANNOUNCER: Once again, the Damon Runyon Theatre brings you another story by the master story-teller, Damon Runyofaan. And this one: “Sense of Humor.” And to tell it to you, here’s Broadway.

BROADWAY: Thanks. It is of an afternoon one day in September that I am sitting in Mindy’s, enjoying myself with some potato pancakes, when I am joined by a citizen who is called Joe the Joker. Now, why he is called that is because he is very fond of jokes – on somebody else. So when I see him, I push back the plate, because Joe the Joker is liable to sprinkle something in the food just for a laugh.

JOE THE JOKER: (OVERLAPS LAST LINE – LAUGHING) Do not worry, Broadway; I do not play any jokes on you.

BROADWAY: No? You are sick or something?

JOE THE JOKER: (LAUGHS) Listen. In a minute you will hear quite a loud yell which will come from that direction, right over there by the door.

BROADWAY: What do you do, plant a mine there?

JOE THE JOKER: Heeyyyy! That is something I never think of. Broadway, that is a wonderful idea!

BROADWAY: I open my big mouth.

JOE THE JOKER: I will think of it later. Right now, keep your eye on Frankie Ferocious.

BROADWAY: Wha... Fra... Goodbye, Joe. Anytime anybody plays jokes on Frankie, I leave.

JOE THE JOKER: (QUIETLY) Sit still, sit still, this is going to be good!

BROADWAY: I hope you will have a nice funeral.

JOE THE JOKER: (WHISPERING LIKE A GRAVEL-VOICED LITTLE KID) Oo! Oo! Look! It is going to happen. Boy oh boy, this time I outdo myself!

BROADWAY: (NERVOUSLY) You certainly do!

FRANKIE: (OVERLAPS "DO!" – OFF-MIKE: A YELL OF PAIN)

JOE THE JOKER: (ROARS WITH LAUGHTER) It works, it works! Boy oh boy, what a hotfoot he gets! I use six matches in his shoe! (LAUGHS)

BROADWAY: (OVER LAUGHTER) Joe, I am leaving you! Frankie sees you and is coming over!

JOE THE JOKER: Ah, let him, let him; it is only a joke.

BROADWAY: A joke like this could lead to lots of flowers.

JOE THE JOKER: (WHISPERS) Sh sh sh sh sh. Shut up. Look at his face!

FRANKIE: Well, well, well. What a sense of humor you have got, Joe.

JOE THE JOKER: (MR. INNOCENT) Me? Are you talking to me, Frankie?

FRANKIE: To you. (OFF-MIKE) It is all right, boys. I will take care] of this.

BROADWAY: I think I will leave now. Anybody who is hungry can help himself to my potato pancakes. My appetite is very gone.

FRANKIE: Take it easy, Broadway. I know you have nothing to do with this.

JOE THE JOKER: "This?" Broadway, what is he talking about?

FRANKIE: I am talking about you, big man. You give me a hotfoot.

JOE THE JOKER: Me? Why, Frankie, never in my life do I stoop to such a crude prank. I am refined.

FRANKIE: Sure. Okay, Joe. It is a big laugh. Ha ha.

JOE THE JOKER: You know... you know, the trouble with some guys is they have no sense of humor.

FRANKIE: Maybe you are right. But like I say, okay. But do not laugh to long. Or too loud.

MUSIC: **BRIDGE IN AND UNDER.**

BROADWAY: With that, Frankie Ferocious leaves – and I do not like the look on his face. In fact, the two guys look at each other like they are going to start fire- works. Now why this is and what happens later is quite a story.

MUSIC: **“GROWLING TRUMPET” BRIDGE IN AND UNDER.**

BROADWAY: Now, “Ferocious” is not Frankie’s real handle, but everybody calls him that because uh... it fits him. They tell me he is a big man in a Brooklyn syndicate which deals in various enterprises, most of them more than slightly illegal. Likewise, Joe the Joker has quite a few hands in similar occupations, only in Harlem. And it is rumored hereabouts that sooner or later Joe and Frankie will tangle. Now, it is some time later, and who do I run into at Mindy’s but Rosa, Joe the Joker’s ever-loving wife.

MUSIC: **OUT.**

ROSA: Do you see Joe, Broadway?

BROADWAY: Uh... uh... not since the other day, when he gives Frankie Ferocious the hotfoot.

ROSA: (DEADPAN) Great joker, that boy. Great.

BROADWAY: Yes, he is. He, uh... he has a fine sense of humor.

ROSA: I am laughing. Ha ha.

BROADWAY: I take it you do not appreciate his jokes?

ROSA: Oh, SURE! And he is the biggest. Life is one big circus with that character around, one laugh after another! – All on me.

BROADWAY: Oh?

ROSA: Chances are, he is out somewhere right now smearing limburger cheese on the steering wheels of cars. That always gets a laugh.

BROADWAY: Yes, it does. And here he comes now, Rosa.

JOE THE JOKER: (OFF-MIKE; LAUGHING)

ROSA: (OVER LAUGHTER) I can hardly wait.

BROADWAY: He is laughing about something.

ROSA: Always.

JOE THE JOKER: Well, well, well, here we are, huh?

ROSA: You are late.

JOE THE JOKER: I cannot help it, baby, I have a few things to do. Broadway, old pal, how are you, I am glad to see you. Shake, old man.

BROADWAY: Huh?

JOE THE JOKER: I wish to shake hands with you. I do not see you around for a long time.

BROADWAY: Well...

JOE THE JOKER: You are my pal...

SFX: ELECTRIC BUZZER.

(BROADWAY YELLS, JOE LAUGHS)

JOE THE JOKER: Great gimmick, great gimmick! (CONCERNED) What is the matter? Do you get an electric shock?

BROADWAY: I should know better; I should know better!

ROSA: Never a dull moment.

JOE THE JOKER: Well, what is life without gags?

ROSA: That is something you will never have to worry about.

JOE THE JOKER: What is the matter with you? You have a face like nine days rain.

ROSA: I am hysterically happy. You always give me a lift.

JOE THE JOKER: You have got beefs, huh?

ROSA: None at all.

JOE THE JOKER: Broadway, I wish to ask you something.

BROADWAY: I have to go...

JOE THE JOKER: Stay, stay, stay; look – look, right now I run into a little trouble – financial, that is. So she takes it personally.

ROSA: I suppose it is a great joke to tell everybody our troubles, huh?

JOE THE JOKER: Broadway is a pal.

BROADWAY: Look, Joe, if you do not mind, I would rather not get in between you. I see many citizens get hurt just by standing in the wrong place at the right time.

FRANKIE: Broadway, that makes very good sense.

JOE THE JOKER: Well! Frankie, my old pal, Frankie! Shake!

FRANKIE: Huh?

JOE THE JOKER: No hard feelings about the other day.

FRANKIE: Sure not. Okay, shake.

SFX: **ELECTRIC BUZZER.**

(FRANKIE YELLS, JOE LAUGHS)

FRANKIE: (DEADLY) It is a great joke. You sure are a card, Joe. (TURNS TO ROSA) It must give you plenty of laughs, Rosa.

ROSA: Yes, I am all choked up half the time.

FRANKIE: I imagine.

JOE THE JOKER: You, uh... you wish to see me about something, Frankie?

FRANKIE: As a matter of fact, I do. I come here to find you.

JOE THE JOKER: Oh? Well, go ahead.

FRANKIE: Do you mind if I sit?

JOE THE JOKER: Not too long.

FRANKIE: Not long at all.

SFX: **CHAIR SCRAPING FLOOR.**

BROADWAY: Well, like I say before, I think I will be going...

JOE THE JOKER: No no no no no. Broadway, stay. This is very interesting.

BROADWAY: Not to me.

JOE THE JOKER: (HARD) Stick around. (PLEASANT) You do not mind, do you, Frankie?

FRANKIE: Not at all.

JOE THE JOKER: Well. Okay. Shoot, what is on your mind, Frankie?

FRANKIE: Joe, you are a great guy, a great joker. But sometimes I do not laugh. And one of the times I do not laugh when

some of your boys take it into their noggins to scratch around my territory.

JOE THE JOKER: Ohhh? You buy the United States? You own it?

FRANKIE: I do business in certain parts of it. Namely, Brooklyn.

JOE THE JOKER: Oh; what you are saying is, you do not wish infringement.

FRANKIE: You are right.

JOE THE JOKER: (LAUGHS LOUDLY) Frankie, you have a bigger sense of humor than me.

FRANKIE: Much bigger, yes. Well, that is all I have to talk about.

SFX: CHAIR SCRAPES.

FRANKIE: Now, Rosa, it is a long time since I see you.

ROSA: A couple of years, I guess.

FRANKIE: A couple of years. I do not see you since you sing at the Hot Box.

ROSA: Those are the good old days.

FRANKIE: Yes; they are. (BEAT) You know, I always like you, Rosa.

ROSA: (INTERESTED) Oh?

FRANKIE: Sure. But in those days I am little fish. Joe here – he is right on top. But things change. A lot.

JOE THE JOKER: Not too much, Frankie.

FRANKIE: Yes, they do! (BACK TO ROSA) You know, Rosa, if you are not married to Joe here, I could feel about you the way I do a couple of years ago.

ROSA: (LAUGHS DERISIVELY) So you are a great kidder, too.

FRANKIE: On the level. Why, if anything ever Happens to Good Old Joe here, consider me your friend in need.

ROSA: (SHALL I TAKE OFF MY DRESS NOW?) Maybe I will...

JOE THE JOKER: Look, what is the idea, Frankie?

FRANKIE: Why, Joe... where is your sense of humor? You cannot take a joke?

JOE THE JOKER: It does not sound like a joke to me.

FRANKIE: Think of it. Well, I have to be going now. Maybe I will give you a ring on the phone sometime, Rosa. Just for old times' sake.

ROSA: Okay, Frankie. For old times' sake.

FRANKIE: Sure. I will see all of you later.

ROSA: (PAUSE) Frankie has come up in The world.

JOE THE JOKER: A guy like that could take a quick dive, too.

BROADWAY: From what I hear, he is very solid in Brooklyn.

JOE THE JOKER: So he wishes me to keep out of Brooklyn.

ROSA: That is what the man said.

JOE THE JOKER: (LAUGHS SOFTLY) You know, I never think he has a sense of humor.

BROADWAY: You think he is joking, Joe?

JOE THE JOKER: (SNAPPING) What else? (SOFTENS) Why, he even kids about Rosa, here.

ROSA: That is what I like about you, Joe; life is just one big rib. I wonder what happens when you find out different.

JOE THE JOKER: I wonder if you will be around to find out.

MUSIC: BRIDGE IN AND UNDER.

BROADWAY: Well, during that little scene, I am more than somewhat uncomfortable. It is like trying the electric chair on for size to do the warden a favor; you never know when some joker will pull the switch. Furthermore, I know that Frankie Ferocious is not joking. And I know Joe knows it. Also, the way Rosa looks at Frankie, and the way he looks at her means that somebody is going to have trouble. Trouble does come, in very large portions. It starts just a couple of days later. I am walking along when somebody grabs my arm and says:

JOE THE JOKER: Hello, Broadway.

BROADWAY: Joe! What is the idea of grabbing me like that?

JOE THE JOKER: Why, I just see you and figure I will walk apiece with you.

BROADWAY: Oh? Which way are you going?

JOE THE JOKER: It makes no difference.

BROADWAY: Oh; well, I... I... I... must keep an appointment way over on the other side of town. I was thinking of taking a cab, since—

JOE THE JOKER: All right, so we will take a cab.

BROADWAY: (RESIGNED) Let us walk.

JOE THE JOKER: (LAUGHS) Sure. Well, I guess you hear about one of my boys being found in a sack in Prospect Park.

BROADWAY: No, I do not hear of this. What is he doing in a sack?

JOE THE JOKER: Well, I do not think he crawls in of his own accord. Something tells me he is put there.

BROADWAY: He is dead?

JOE THE JOKER: He is dead. It is a very expert job of sacking.

BROADWAY: There are experts at that sort of work?

JOE THE JOKER: (BREEZY) Oh, sure! It takes a great deal of skill. You see, when the guy is put in the sack, he is tied with a wire in back of his knees and around his neck...

BROADWAY: Joe, if you do not mind, let us talk of tomorrow at Belmont, or other subjects...

JOE THE JOKER: Now, when the guy wakes up from the tap on the noggin, he naturally stretches out his legs. This tightens the wire around his neck; he is very shortly all out of breath.

BROADWAY: Joe, please, not just before I eat!

JOE THE JOKER: Oh, it is a very clean way, because who puts the finger on you for knocking over somebody? Nobody. It is the guy's own fault for stretching his legs, always remember that.

BROADWAY: Thank you. The next time I find myself in a sack, I will be very careful not to stretch my legs.

JOE THE JOKER: (LAUGHS LOUDLY) It is a good gag. In fact, it is so good that I think maybe it is Ropes McGonnigle who pulls it.

BROADWAY: Ropes McGonnigle? This is a citizen I never hear of.

JOE THE JOKER: He is a St. Louis boy. He is very expert at tying knots. (BEAT) You know... you know, Broadway, I think Frankie Ferocious brings in Ropes just to do this job?

BROADWAY: Frankie? You think Frankie has something to do with your boy who is in the sack?

JOE THE JOKER: (REASONABLY) Nobody else is mad at me and my boys. (BEAT) You know, Broadway... this can lead to some Very Funny Doings. Starting as of now.

MUSIC: **BRIDGE IN AND UNDER.**

BROADWAY: And at that, two days later one of Frankie's boys is found very deceased from machine gun signals. Then one more of Joe's torpedoes ends up in a sack. Frankie and Joe trade punches like this until it seems like very soon they will be all out of boys. I do my best to stay on the outskirts of all this, and I succeed very well until one day I am in my hotel room, and I hear a knock on the door.

SFX: **INSISTENT KNOCKING.**

BROADWAY: Okay, okay, it is not locked!

SFX: **DOOR OPENS.**

JOE THE JOKER: Hello, Broadway!

BROADWAY: Joe!

JOE THE JOKER: Are you surprised?

BROADWAY: Are you alone? I mean, you are like smallpox. Please, go away.

JOE THE JOKER: Wait, take it easy. Do not worry. I just came to tell you my troubles.

BROADWAY: You have got plenty.

JOE THE JOKER: (RUEFUL) Yes. (HALF-HEARTED LAUGH) You know, I never give Frankie much credit for having a sense of humor. But I must admit now that he pulls a pretty good gag.

BROADWAY: Like what?

JOE THE JOKER: (VERY DOWN) It seems that Rosa leaves me.

BROADWAY: (BEAT) Oh?

JOE THE JOKER: She leaves a note for me – she wishes a divorce. Then I learn that Rosa and Frankie are seen together over in Brooklyn.

BROADWAY: She... she goes to him?

JOE THE JOKER: She wishes to marry him as soon as I give her a divorce.

BROADWAY: (TREADING THIS MINEFIELD CAREFULLY) Well, okaaay, okaaay... you will not be happy with her anymore. Look, Joe, why do you not forget the whole thing? Give her the divorce.

JOE THE JOKER: You mean, why do I not admit I am all washed up?

BROADWAY: I do not say that.

JOE THE JOKER: (DOWN AGAIN) Ah, everybody does. However... a guy with a sense of humor like mine is never washed up. There is always a laugh left someplace. Everybody laughs what a wonderful gag Frankie pulls on me – taking my wife away from me.

BROADWAY: Well, what will you do, Joe?

JOE THE JOKER: Do? I do not know yet, Broadway. But I am never licked when it comes to a gag. I will just have to think of one to play on Frankie and Rosa. (BEAT) I think it will be the best one I ever pull.

MUSIC: “GROWLING TRUMPET” BRIDGE IN AND UNDER.

BROADWAY: I feel a little sorry for Joe the Joker. I know that behind the laughs, he is a very sad citizen. But I wonder what he can do to a guy like Frankie. Huh. I find out. And so does everybody else.

MUSIC: OUT.

BROADWAY: So like I tell you, Joe the Joker tells me that his ever loving wife Rosa leaves him. Citizens around the stem say she cannot stand anymore laughs. Although personally, I believe it is because Joe is no longer the big wheel he once is and begins to economize on Rosa in spots. If there is one thing Rosa cannot stand, it is to be economized on. Everybody also says what a Great Guy Joe is, because he just laughs and says, “It is a great gag!” Then I hear something else: that Joe’s brother Freddy is also found in a sack. I wonder how Joe will take this. I find out one night, again in my hotel room, when...

SFX: DOOR OPENS.

JOE THE JOKER: Hello, Broadway.

BROADWAY: Joe! You are back here again?

JOE THE JOKER: Ohhh, I need to talk to somebody. Everybody along the stem seems to think I have got the measles.

BROADWAY: Well, I can understand that, what with people being found in sacks right and left.

JOE THE JOKER: Anybody who even talks to me is in trouble, huh?

BROADWAY: Something like that, Joe.

JOE THE JOKER: You do not have to worry, Broadway. Everybody knows you are just a good listener. You have nothing to do with this disagreement between Frankie and I.

BROADWAY: “Disagreement?” It has gotten beyond that, Joe. I... I... uh... I hear about Freddy.

JOE THE JOKER: Umm. (UNCOMFORTABLE PAUSE) Well... I guess Frankie figures I will give up after this, huh?

BROADWAY: Will you?

JOE THE JOKER: Me? (BEAT) Uh uh.

BROADWAY: Sooner or later they will get you.

JOE THE JOKER: You think so?

BROADWAY: They are coming very close.

JOE THE JOKER: (LOST IN THOUGHT) Sure. Sure. Freddy is a good kid. I do not know he is going over to Brooklyn.

BROADWAY: What? He goes to Brooklyn? He knows that is Frankie’s home ground.

JOE THE JOKER: Sure, sure, he knows that. But he goes for a special reason.

BROADWAY: Like what?

JOE THE JOKER: Rosa.

BROADWAY: Rosa? What does she have to do with this?

JOE THE JOKER: I find out later that Freddy gets a call from Rosa. “Come to Brooklyn.” You see, Freddy knows how much I think of Rosa and he thinks he will be able to fix it up for us. In fact, I hear this is what Rosa makes him think. But when Freddy gets to Brooklyn, Rosa is not waiting for him, some of Frankie’s boys are.

BROADWAY: Joe, you are telling me that Rosa sets up Freddy for Frankie Ferocious?

JOE THE JOKER: (SMOULDERING) I never think she has that much sense of humor.

BROADWAY: How funny can you get?

JOE THE JOKER: Very. Very funny. (BEAT) Now, Broadway, do you ever know anybody to top me with a gag?

BROADWAY: No, never. Everyone says you are number one in line at thinking up ribs and funny things.

JOE THE JOKER: Yes. I certainly do have a lot of thinking to do now. After all, I have got my reputation to think of. What will people think when they hear Joe the Joker lets somebody beat him to a punch?

BROADWAY: Well, what are you going to do?

JOE THE JOKER: You remember I was telling you about a St. Louis boy named Ropes McGonnigle?

BROADWAY: Yes, I remember. He is the citizen who is doing all the sacking for Frankie Ferocious.

JOE THE JOKER: Well, I get in touch with some of the boys in St. Louis. I them a lot of favors some years ago and they remember. Also, they tell me Ropes McGonnigle is ready to get in touch with me.

BROADWAY: Why? He is working for Frankie!

JOE THE JOKER: (A QUIET LAUGH) That is right. He is working for Frankie. That is what is going to make my gag all the funnier. I tell you, Broadway, everybody will get a big laugh out of this. Everybody. Everybody but Frankie.

MUSIC: **BRIDGE.**

BROADWAY: I do not know what Joe the Joker has in mind, but I wonder how he is going to get to Frankie Ferocious. By now, Joe has got no more boys; and it is very peculiar how many friends he loses, also. But he still goes around playing jokes, like giving people exploding cigarettes, or matches that go off like firecrackers when they are lit. Oh, he is very funny indeed. Then, just a few nights later, I get quite a surprise. I am home. In fact, I take to staying home quite a bit. I wish I do not, because on this night somebody raps at my door.

SFX: **INSISTENT KNOCKING.**

BROADWAY: Who is it?

ROPES: (OFF-MIKE) Telegram.

BROADWAY: I do not know anybody at Western Union.

ROPES: (OFF-MIKE) Telegram!

BROADWAY: I – Ok, Ok...

SFX: **CHAIN REMOVED FROM DOOR. DOOR OPENS.**

ROPES: Thanks, bud.

SFX: **DOOR SHUTS.**

BROADWAY: Look, you are not a messenger boy. In the first place, you have no uniform. In the second place, you are too old, which I do not think I will ever get.

ROPES: Take it easy. You are Broadway, huh?

BROADWAY: I answer no questions!

ROPES: (SMILES) That is good. But you are Broadway?

BROADWAY: What do you want and who are you?

ROPES: I am Ropes McGonnigle.

BROADWAY: Ropes... Goodbye. You will find this room very nice. Use it in good health.

ROPES: Sit down, bud...

BROADWAY: Oh no, I cannot...

ROPES: ... you are not going to get hurt.

BROADWAY: Short of being put in a sack, I guess I will continue living. But life in a sack can be very restrictive.

ROPES: (LAUGHS SHORTLY) Cool off, Broadway. Joe asks me to meet him here.

BROADWAY: Here, in my room!? WHY?

ROPES: Search me.

BROADWAY: For what? Empty sacks?!

ROPES: My, you are a nervous guy, are you not?

BROADWAY: No, not at all. This shaking is just caused by my laughing inside. I...

SFX: **DOOR OPENS AND SHUTS.**

JOE THE JOKER: Ok, ok. Everybody take it easy.

ROPES: You are Joe, huh?

BROADWAY: Joe, what is the idea of making my room a meeting place?

JOE THE JOKER: It was the only place I could think of that nobody would see me and Ropes.

BROADWAY: Then you do not need me.

JOE THE JOKER: Oh, yes, yes, sure I do. I am going to let you in on a good gag. Ropes?

ROPES: Yes?

JOE THE JOKER: I tell you on the phone what I wish you to do?

ROPES: Sure. All you leave out is where I am to pick you up in Brooklyn.

BROADWAY: Brooklyn? You are going to Brooklyn?!

JOE THE JOKER: Yes! Yes, to see Frankie Ferocious.

BROADWAY: How can you see him when you are dead? Because that is what you will be the minute you get off the subway.

JOE THE JOKER: (LAUGHS; THEN:) Ropes, give me the layout. I wish to see if you have got it straight.

ROPES: Sure. I put you in a sack and deliver you to Frankie as he wishes me to do, only...

JOE THE JOKER: Only what, Ropes?

ROPES: Only you are not tied up and you are not conked on the head. You are ready, willing and able.

JOE THE JOKER: (LAUGHS LIKE A HAPPY CHILD)

BROADWAY: This is the first time I ever see anybody laugh at his own funeral.

JOE THE JOKER: You do not understand, Broadway. This is a very funny gag. You see, Frankie is very careful. When Ropes does a job for him, Frankie always checks. Is that right, Ropes?

ROPES: Sure. He is a careful character. He believes nobody. He looks in the sack for himself.

JOE THE JOKER: (LAUGHS) And when he opens the sack, I am in. Now when I stand up with a John Roscoe in each hand and start blasting away, can you not imagine his astonishment? (ROARS WITH LAUGHTER)

- BROADWAY:** Joe, why do you tell me? If anybody asks, I am a dead duck.
- JOE THE JOKER:** Wait a minute – who asks you? What is the matter? Do you not appreciate being let in on a good joke? Where is your sense of humor?
- BROADWAY:** It is in a sack, all tied up. Joe, when does all this happen?
- JOE THE JOKER:** Tonight! Hey, Ropes. You had better get going.
- ROPES:** Yes, I had better.
- JOE THE JOKER:** You are sure that Frankie expects you to deliver me?
- ROPES:** Sure, I am sure. He will be waiting at the Old Joint near Prospect.
- JOE THE JOKER:** All alone?
- ROPES:** All alone.
- JOE THE JOKER:** (LAUGHS QUIETLY)
- ROPES:** I will see you later.
- SFX:** **DOOR OPENS AND SHUTS.**
- BROADWAY:** Joe, you are crazy. What if something goes wrong?
- JOE THE JOKER:** Like what?
- BROADWAY:** Listen, after tonight, please do not come here anymore. Please leave me out of all jokes and ribs. Please!
- JOE THE JOKER:** Sure, sure. After tonight. I am going to leave town.
- BROADWAY:** Joe, do you trust this guy Ropes McGonnigle?
- JOE THE JOKER:** Trust him? If I do not, will I let him in on a very funny gag?
- BROADWAY:** Suppose it does not turn out to be so funny. For you.
- JOE THE JOKER:** It cannot miss. I never pull a gag that yet misses. Do not worry, Broadway, this is sure fire. (BUT HE STARTS TO THINK ...) Yes, yes, absolutely... sure fire.
- MUSIC:** **BRIDGE.**
- BROADWAY:** So Joe the Joker leaves. And I am very happy to see him go. I wait and I wait. And then it comes on about three in the morning, and I figure something goes wrong, because Joe should be back by this time. I go down to

Mindy's to sit for some coffee, and I am no more than just tasting it when...

SFX: SHOP DOOR WITH BELL OPENS AND SHUTS.

JOE THE JOKER: Hello, Broadway! (SLAPS HIS BACK HEARTILY)

BROADWAY: (SPIT TAKE) Joe the Joker!

JOE THE JOKER: Yes, it is me! Hey, that looks fine.

BROADWAY: To tell the truth, I never expect to see you alive.

JOE THE JOKER: To tell the truth, it is only because of you that I am alive.

BROADWAY: Me? But, Joe, I...

JOE THE JOKER: You are a very smart citizen, Broadway, and I take your advice.

BROADWAY: Advice? Listen, Joe, I never give anybody advice.

JOE THE JOKER: Oh yes, you do! Look, Broadway, tonight I pull the funniest gag I ever work on anybody. In fact, it is the work of a genius.

BROADWAY: Joe, what happens?

JOE THE JOKER: I will tell you, because you save my life. I follow your advice, Broadway. And here I am, alive and kicking.

BROADWAY: Joe, will you please tell me what happens?!

JOE THE JOKER: Sure, sure. Well. You ask me if I trust Ropes McGonnigle, remember?

BROADWAY: I remember.

JOE THE JOKER: All right. So you say this and it puts a bug in my ear and I wonder: should I trust him? So I go over to Brooklyn a couple of hours early. To the Old Joint near Prospect Park.

BROADWAY: Where Frankie is supposed to be waiting for you...

JOE THE JOKER: Me. In the sack...

BROADWAY: That is right; ok, so you get there...

JOE THE JOKER: ... and I hide in the closet. So pretty soon, here comes Ropes McGonnigle and Frankie Ferocious. They start talking, but I am not able to hear what they are saying. However, I do not like the way they are having their heads very close together. So when they leave, I leave after them.

- BROADWAY:** And you come back over here without playing the gag you tell me about.
- JOE THE JOKER:** What, what, what... Broadway. Do you ever know me to pull up short on a rib?
- BROADWAY:** Ok, so then what?
- JOE THE JOKER:** I am coming to that. I think to myself, "What if Ropes tips Frankie off?"
- BROADWAY:** That you will be in the sack.
- JOE THE JOKER:** Sure. Now, in that case, Frankie will not take a chance on opening the sack because, naturally, he does not wish to be blasted.
- BROADWAY:** There is a certain amount of good sense in that.
- JOE THE JOKER:** (REASONABLY) Certainly there is! Now, I figure this way: if Ropes does not tip Frankie, Frankie will open the sack. But, if Ropes does tip Frankie, Frankie will not open the sack, but may fire a few shots through it.
- BROADWAY:** Without waiting to see who is in it.
- JOE THE JOKER:** Sure, sure, sure. Now, in that way, I would not be able to enjoy the joke.
- BROADWAY:** Or anything else.
- JOE THE JOKER:** Sure, so what do I do, I will tell you. I tap Ropes McGonnigle on the head when I meet him.
- BROADWAY:** Wait a minute... you put Ropes in the sack that he has got for you!
- JOE THE JOKER:** Wait, you are getting ahead of my story.
- BROADWAY:** I wish to know the end. Tell me!
- JOE THE JOKER:** So... so... so... look. I take the sack and I deliver it to the Old Joint near Prospect. I put it in the middle of the room, then I hide in the closet again. I do not wait too long before I hear:
- SFX:** DOOR OPENS AND SHUTS.
- FRANKIE:** (ON A SLIGHT ECHO THROUGHOUT) Ropes? (TO SACK) So. Here you are, Joe. You are too trusting of Ropes McGonnigle. Never trust anybody, Joe... except maybe your ever-loving wife. I trust your ever-loving

wife, Joe. I trust Rosa. And I love her. And no one else. Rosa tells me you do not believe in divorce, Joe.

SFX: **A PISTOL HAMMER IS COCKED.**

FRANKIE: I have Rosa, Joe. And I now have your territory – because I have you. I have topped you, Joe the Joker. What? Do you not find this funny?

SFX: **FIVE GUNSHOTS.**

FRANKIE: (BEAT) I do not hear you laughing, Joe. Maybe it is because your sense of humor is all gone, huh?

SFX: **FOOTSTEPS ON CEMENT.**

FRANKIE: Ok. Now I will let you out. Come on, Joe. The bag is open.

SFX: **SACK BEING OPENED.**

FRANKIE: Come on out. (LAUGHS LOUDLY AS HE OPENS SACK, THEN A SCREAM, WHICH DISSOLVES INTO THE LAUGHTER OF THE INSANE, MUCH LIKE BRAMWELL FLETCHER AFTER SEEING BORIS KARLOFF IN “THE MUMMY”)

(FRANKIE’S INSANE LAUGHTER CROSS-FADES WITH JOE’S HEARTY LAUGH. JOE IS HAVING THE TIME OF HIS LIFE)

JOE THE JOKER: So that is what happens in the Old Joint, Broadway. I hear Frankie Ferocious is still laughing when the gendarmes escort him away. I wish to see the look on Frankie’s face when he opens the sack, and it serves him right for trying to play such a joke on me.

BROADWAY: And I guess you figure it serves Ropes McGonnigle right for double-crossing you.

JOE THE JOKER: Ropes? Who says anything about Ropes? When Frankie opens the sack, he sees... Rosa.

MUSIC: **“END OF STORY” BRIDGE.**

ANNOUNCER: And so ends the famous Damon Runyon story, “Sense of Humor”. Listen in again next week for:

MUSIC: **FANFARE.**

ANNOUNCER: The Damon Runyon Theatre.

MUSIC: **THEME MUSIC IN AND UNDER.**

ANNOUNCER: The Damon Runyon Theatre, with John Brown as Broadway, is directed by Richard Sanville, and the stories adapted for radio by Russell Hughes. Vern Carstensen is in charge of production. This is a Mayfair Production.

MUSIC: **BIG FANFARE ENDING.**

THE END