

Please Enjoy the Following Sample

- This sample is an *excerpt* from a Samuel French title.
- This sample is for **perusal only** and may not be used for performance purposes.
- You may not download, print, or distribute this excerpt.
- We highly recommend purchasing a copy of the title before considering for performance.

For more information about
licensing or purchasing a play or
musical, please visit our websites

www.samuelfrench.com

www.samuelfrench.co.uk



Once in a Blue Moon

A Comedy by

John Dole



WWW.SAMUELFRENCH.CO.UK
WWW.SAMUELFRENCH.COM

Copyright © 1972 John Dole
All Rights Reserved

ONCE IN A BLUE MOON is fully protected under the copyright laws of the British Commonwealth, including Canada, the United States of America, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional and amateur stage productions, recitation, lecturing, public reading, motion picture, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

ISBN 978-0-573-11324-6

www.samuelfrench.co.uk

www.samuelfrench.com

FOR AMATEUR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

UNITED KINGDOM AND WORLD

EXCLUDING NORTH AMERICA

plays@SamuelFrench-London.co.uk

020 7255 4302/01

Each title is subject to availability from Samuel French,
depending upon country of performance.

CAUTION: Professional and amateur producers are hereby warned that *ONCE IN A BLUE MOON* is subject to a licensing fee. Publication of this play does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised to apply to the appropriate agent before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre. A licensing fee must be paid whether the title is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

The professional rights in this play are controlled by Samuel French Ltd, 52 Fitzroy Street, London, W1T 5JR

No one shall make any changes in this title for the purpose of production. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. No one shall upload this title, or part of this title, to any social media websites.

The right of John Dole to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with Section 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

CHARACTERS

GREGORY GREEN

LIONEL COOPER

SELENA

LYRA

VERONICA

ROSIE

MRS. GREEN

GANYMEDE PROUT

HARRIET

YOUNG MAN

SCENE: The living room of a first floor flat in
 London

TIME The present

ACT ONE An evening in Spring

ACT TWO A few moments later

ACT THREE Half an hour later

PRODUCTION NOTES

Oh no! Not another play about visitors from outer space! Relax. You don't have to find a cast of little green men or an unspeakable, screaming, red-eyed monster (apart from the producer). This is definitely not science fiction. And don't start looking for hidden messages and symbolism either. There aren't any. It's a straightforward frolic and needs to be produced with the lightest of touches. Above all, play down the 'supernatural' element in the plot. Just accept, as a fact of life, that Lyra is a goddess - sorry, I mean a sylph - popped in to lend a helping hand, and let the rest develop naturally, almost inevitably.

The key to the atmosphere of the play is Lyra herself. In appearance she should be as near as possible to every man's dream of a young goddess (oh yes, we all dream about them even if we don't believe in them) lithe, serene and lovely with long, flowing hair, preferably blonde of course. But none of your cold, ethereal, untouchable deities please. She's warm, vibrant and full of mischief. In short she's down to earth and fun to be with even though Gregory doesn't seem to think so. But he's rather an old-fashioned lad. A bit of a square. He probably makes an excellent astronomer but he's simply not equipped to deal with astral bodies of the more delectable kind. In fact he might be able to cope with the situation better if Lyra wasn't so luscious. Young women always make him fall over his feet at the best of times and the more enchanting they are the more spellbound he gets.

Lionel, on the other hand, is much more suave and self-possessed. Handsome in a rather flashy and obvious way, he never has any trouble attracting young women. But he'll probably still be chasing around on the loose when Gregory, for all his faults, is a respectable married man. Lionel is basically a selfish sort of character and we shouldn't feel too sorry for him when he's left hanging around on the balcony.

Selena, the latest in Lionel's procession of girlfriends, is fairly typical of the breed. She's quite a dish but her glaze is a bit hard and brittle. It doesn't take much to bring out the bossy side of her character and she changes from sexpot to despot at the buttoning of a tunic.

Mrs. Green should appear a tower of common-sense when all about her are losing theirs and blaming it on everybody else. Nothing surprises her - not even callgirls in the bath-room or over-heated electricians. A gentle lady, she is the

PRODUCTION NOTES

only one basically unaffected by Lyra's visitation. But then she is nearly as unworldly as Lyra herself. Perhaps that's why she even manages to mother her a bit.

As for Veronica, she doesn't so much mother Gregory as smother him. A hearty, overpowering lass, she dominates him physically and mentally until the last few minutes of the play. But don't overdo it. Under that robust exterior she's all woman. The final transformation into someone soft and cuddly must be credible. Fortunately she plays this last scene sitting (and lying) on the bed so it won't be so obvious that she is probably taller than Gregory. And she can work wonders by unpinning her hair while tucked away behind the bed curtains during the latter part of Act Three.

Ganymede is a fall guy. From the moment he appears it should be pretty obvious that everything is going to happen to him. Those bottle shoulders and gormless expression under the perpetual flat cap are simply asking for trouble. But even he has his moment of lusty glory when he comes under the influence in Act Two and this should contrast vividly with his customary diffidence.

Harriet needs care and attention if she is to come across convincingly. Even though she makes a better vicar than a lady we don't want a sort of female impersonator. Picture her, perhaps, as a street market stallholder who has taken to crime. Forceful, rumbustious but still rather likeable at a distance. You can just imagine her, leather apron and all, selling spuds at the top of her voice. On the whole she is not a pretty sight but full of life and character.

Of the other two characters Rosie is Aussie and awful but she makes a good, cheerful drunk, and the young man at the end is quite clearly a Greek god dropped in for a social halfhour. Small parts but important ones.

The staging and lighting are pretty straightforward. There is scope for an attractive set with the dais, the skylight, the cutaway view of the hallway D.L., the trellis and the curtained bed (and do make sure the curtains run smoothly and can be pulled right across to conceal or reveal the bed completely). A good view of the night sky with stars will help the atmosphere tremendously but although the action all takes place after dark, the stage should be generously lit except for the mysterious bits. The raising and lowering of the lights in obedience to

PRODUCTION NOTES

Lyra's commands needs careful rehearsing if it is to be convincing and, needless to say, the moonlight streaming in from outside must be blue.

The moving picture can be manipulated from behind the set by attaching a piece of cord to each upper corner and passing both cords over a hook and through a hole in the scenery. The assistant who is 'pulling the strings' must have a clear view of the actors to get the timing right and it will help if the cords are marked with knots to ensure the right amount of movement up and down.

The scene with the two men tied to chairs in Act Three also needs careful rehearsal. Use light chairs and don't tie them in too tightly or they may turn as blue as the moon. And make sure they master the trick of scuttling about like hermit crabs with their chairs sticking out behind. It should be good for a laugh at rehearsals. The best method is probably to tie them up with their arms at the side and free to move from the elbows down. This will enable them to grip the seat of the chair and lift it up with them when they need to. And do make sure there are enough people to manhandle Ganymede safely in Act Three. If Gregory and Lionel can't manage it alone, get Harriet to lend a hand.

One or two other suggestions. The telescope needs to look authentic but it comes in for some fairly hard treatment so don't borrow anything too precious from the local observatory. The basket on wheels will almost certainly need a bit of attention to make it strong enough to carry Ganymede. A good sturdy model with doctored axle and wheels is essential. Never mind if it looks a little odd; Mrs. Green won't notice a thing like that. For Lyra's bath towel in Act Two you either need a towel that won't slip or an actress who won't blush. And finally the feather pillow. It's best to have two pillows on the bed; one for normal use and the other with a good hole in it ready for Act Three. Don't be afraid to let the feathers fly and have fun! Never mind if they get into the front row. It'll give the audience something to remember you by.

JOHN DOLE

ONCE IN A BLUE MOON

ACT ONE

The action takes place in the main living room of a first floor flat in the seedier part of London. The general air is one of untidy comfort.

The main entrance is at a slight angle D.L. Thanks to a thoughtfully placed cutaway wall we can see a small section of the landing beyond. It's not much to write home about – rather dingy and papered with that dreadful brown Anaglypta which lasts for ever. L. a door leads to the bathroom and there are three other doors to ensure a good through draught. One R. leads to a small kitchen; another D.R. to a bedroom; the third and smaller, to the left of the window and at an angle, opens on to a small broom cupboard.

The back of the room is on a slightly higher level and on it, with the head against the R. wall, is a divan bed. It is the type with a drawer underneath for storing bedclothes. More unusually, it has a curtain which draws across the side concealing the bed completely. When the play begins this is closed. At the foot of the bed is a trellis about four feet high decorated with various indoor ivies and other climbing plants. This provides a pleasing effect and the occasional small spider on to the occupant of the bed. On a small shelf at the foot of the trellis is a telephone and a small transistor radio. There is a small bedside table by the bedhead just above the kitchen door. On it, a couple of medicine bottles and a paperback.

U.C. of the room is dominated by a wide window and a large sky-light over it giving an excellent view of the roof-tops and the night sky beyond well sprinkled with stars. Outside there

is a general impression of height and spaciousness. In front of the window and slightly L. of C. is a medium-sized telescope on a tripod and a chair to go with it. On the chair a clip-board and pencil. Three other dining chairs cluster gregariously round a small dining table which stands against the wall D.R. between the doors. L. a comfortable but well-worn sofa with a car rug and several clashing cushions (although we can't see them because the sofa faces upstage). To the R. of it a small coffee table with a half empty bottle of cheap sherry and an empty glass. Behind the sofa a standard lamp.

U.L. above the bathroom door is a well-stocked bookcase with a clock, an electric razor, a box of cigarettes, ornaments etc. on top. A mirror hangs over the bookcase and a picture hangs crookedly on the wall between the bathroom and the main entrance. Another picture, less inebricated, is on the wall over the dining table. Just above the main entrance stands an old-fashioned round umbrella stand.

There are newspapers, magazines and several articles of men's clothing littered around and no respectable housewife would be in the room for two minutes without setting to work with a duster.

The introductory music, before the curtain rises, is odd and unworldly but not altogether unpleasant. After a few bars the curtain rises on a room in darkness apart from a pool of blue moonlight shining in through the window at the back of the stage. This illuminates the telescope and a small area in front of the window.

After a moment the music fades out and there is a scrabbling noise D.L. The landing light comes on (clearly a 40 watt bulb) and discloses, somewhat indistinctly, GREGORY GREEN with his arms full trying to get his key into the lock outside. (It's an old style key, by the way, partly because the flat hasn't been modernised but mainly because it matters to the plot.)

GREGORY enters and with some difficulty turns on the light from the door. He reveals himself as a rather solemn young man in his late twenties. Rather nervous in his movements, he becomes positively clumsy when in company - particularly female company. An intelligent chap, he conceals his reasonable looks behind large, heavily rimmed spectacles which give him a rather owlsh air. He is wearing an old fawn raincoat buttoned on the wrong buttons. Generally speaking the kind of fellow to awaken the maternal instinct in the gentler members of the

opposite sex but too shy and retiring to take advantage of it.

He is holding a briefcase, an umbrella, a cucumber and a carrier bag containing various tins of food, an Instant Fruit Pie, a loaf of bread and an evening paper. He puts his umbrella, brief-case and cucumber down on the umbrella stand, transfers the key to the inside, pulls the door closed and scuttles across to the kitchen R. and exits.

As he disappears a man's head appears over the back of the sofa followed by a somewhat tousled girl's head. The man is LIONEL COOPER, GREGORY's flat-mate. He is about the same age as GREGORY but much more the self-assured man-about-town. Usually well, if flamboyantly, dressed he is, just at the moment, in his shirt sleeves and looking a bit cross and crumpled. His girl friend, SELENA, is a dishy brunette of about twenty, dressed in a fairly brief skirt and blouse and somewhat disconcerted at being interrupted in full spate.

SELENA (pulling herself together) What was that?

LIONEL Gregory.

SELENA Who's Gregory, for goodness sake?

LIONEL Gregory Green. He's a chemist.

SELENA Splendid! What's he doing here - collecting the empties?

LIONEL He - er - he lives here.

SELENA (crossly) I thought you said this was your flat.

LIONEL It is. We share.

SELENA (jumping up) Well you're not sharing me.

LIONEL (trying to pull her back again) Oh don't worry about him, love. Relax. It's his evening out.

SELENA So I see. Out in the kitchen apparently.

LIONEL No. He always goes to evening classes on Fridays. I expect he's forgotten something.

(GREGORY reappears from the kitchen with the newspaper and a kettle. LIONEL goes to him.)

GREGORY Oh hallo, Lionel. I forgot to tell you I was coming home early.

LIONEL (to SELENA) There, you see? (To GREGORY.) What?

(GREGORY starts to water the plants on the trellis with water from the kettle. He scans the folded newspaper at the same time.)

GREGORY Well, I didn't want to miss it. Has it started yet? (He consults his watch and pours water over his foot and on to the floor.) Oh dash! (He stands on one leg and tries to dry the other by rubbing it on his trousers.)

LIONEL Has what started?

GREGORY The eclipse, of course. Here, hang on to this a minute. (He hands LIONEL the kettle and starts to take off his coat. He is wearing sports jacket and trousers. His tie is predictably awry.)

LIONEL What are you on about?

GREGORY Partial eclipse of the moon. Look. (He hands the newspaper to LIONEL and taps on the important paragraph.)

LIONEL So what?

GREGORY I nearly missed it. Started at ten past nine. (He hands his raincoat to LIONEL, rubs his hands together excitedly and goes to peer through the telescope.)
(LIONEL shrugs his shoulders at SELENA, who lights herself a cigarette from her handbag.)
Maximum coverage 9.48.

LIONEL I was hoping for maximum uncoverage about then. (He grins at SELENA who raises her eyebrows.)

SELENA Don't count your chickens.

LIONEL Oh by the way, this is Selena. She lives in the flat downstairs.

SELENA (indicating the wet patch) The one with the wet ceiling.

GREGORY (looking through telescope) Yes, there it is. Just starting. You can see the penumbra.

LIONEL What about your evening class?

- GREGORY Marvellous. (Looking up.) What evening class?
- LIONEL You always go to Old Time Dancing on Fridays, remember?
- GREGORY Oh, is it Friday? Well I can't possibly go tonight. I wouldn't miss this for the world. Look, I'll tell you what, I'll put the kettle on and we'll all have a cup of tea. (He takes the kettle from LIONEL and makes for the kitchen.) You can have a look at the eclipse if you like. (He exits to kitchen.)
- LIONEL Thanks very much. (He puts GREGORY's coat down on the table D.R.)
- GREGORY (singing off, more or less to the tune of 'A Pair of Sparkling Eyes')
Take the moon up in the sky
Hidden ever and anon
By a partial eclipse.
Take the consequential gloom
That will spread across the room -
Dum - te - dum - te - diddle - te - tish.
- (Above the noise of his singing we hear the sound of a kettle being filled with water and put on the gas. LIONEL and SELENA continue their conversation ignoring the happy sounds from the kitchen.)
- SELENA (moving to LIONEL) 'Come up to my place,' he says. 'We shan't be disturbed there.' Then in walks Galileo. I thought you said he was a chemist? (She goes to the telescope and peers through it.)
- LIONEL The other's his hobby. He spends half the night at it.
- SELENA So do you.
- LIONEL Don't be cross, old girl. (He embraces her from behind.)
- SELENA (pushing him off) I am not your old girl. And don't do that in front of Galileo.
- LIONEL He won't mind.
- SELENA No. But I shall. (She turns the telescope

towards the sofa.) I can just imagine him peering at us through this thing. It gives me goose pimples.

LIONEL You don't know Gregory. He won't even notice we're here. Anyway, we can nip into my room. It's more comfortable in there. (He walks to the door D.R. and opens it invitingly.)

SELENA No thanks. Either he goes or I do.

LIONEL Blast! (He slams the door shut and sits at the table D.R.) He would choose tonight to have an eclipse. I know! Let's go to your place.

SELENA We can't. Rosie's washing her smalls.

LIONEL Rosie?

SELENA My flat-mate, remember?

LIONEL Oh yes. (An idea strikes him.) Hey! Why don't we get Rosie up here to keep him company? Clear the lower decks for action.

SELENA (doubtfully) I don't think she would. She's very shy.

LIONEL He's a bit of a coconut himself. They'd get on well together.

(GREGORY re-enters.)

GREGORY Who would?

LIONEL Oh there you are, old lad. We thought perhaps you might like a bit of company this evening.

GREGORY (pulling the sofa round so that it faces D.S.) Stay if you like. I shall have the lights out anyway.

LIONEL No, not us. It's Selena's flat-mate, Rosie. She's simply crazy about eclipses, isn't she?

SELENA (raising her eyebrows) Crazy, man. She can't get enough of them.

GREGORY (alarmed) Oh no! I'm not having any girls up here. I haven't forgotten the time you left me alone with that hairdresser. She kept trying to give me a body-wave.

LIONEL He'd locked himself in the loo when I came back.

- GREGORY Well, I don't like that sort of thing.
- LIONEL You spend too much time shut in here peering through your periscope.
- GREGORY I'm having a spot of trouble with my focal length. (He demonstrates with the telescope.)
- LIONEL You're telling me.
- GREGORY Never mind me. You just go out and enjoy yourselves. (He peers through the telescope which happens to be pointing towards SELENA, who is at that moment picking up her handbag from the floor and showing a good deal of bottom.) I say, what a perfect penumbra!
- SELENA You keep that gadget to yourself. (To LIONEL.) Come on, I'm hungry. Get yourself decent and you can take me out for supper.
- LIONEL Oh, all right. But I still think it's about time I told him about the birds and the bees.
- SELENA I shouldn't. He'll only start collecting birds' eggs. (She gives LIONEL a quick peck on the cheek.) And have a shave, darling. It's like kissing a wire brush. (She exits D.L.)
- LIONEL (rubbing his chin) Fine pal, you are. I was all set for the evening when you walked in.
- GREGORY (glued to the telescope now pointed skyward) Lovely!
- (LIONEL walks behind him and shouts.)
- LIONEL It is not lovely. It's damned frustrating.
- GREGORY (looking up) Eh? I don't know why you don't take up a hobby of some kind. Sublimate your animal passions. (He makes a note on a clipboard.)
- LIONEL You mind I don't sublimate my animal passions on your nose! (He takes off his tie and unbuttons his shirt.) I sometimes worry about you. You're not normal.
- GREGORY (back at the telescope) Good.
- LIONEL Just think. There are thousands of swinging dolly girls all over London with their tongues hanging out for a bit of slap and tickle and all you can do is tinker with your telescope. It's such a terrible

waste of talent. (He leaves his tie over the back of the sofa and exits to bedroom D.R., leaving the door open. He shouts off.) What about Veronica?

GREGORY What about her?

LIONEL (off) She's been chasing you for months and you don't take a blind bit of notice. (He re-enters in vest and trousers with a towel round his neck.) I know she's not everybody's cup of tea but the least you could do is make a dishonest woman of her. It'd restore her self-respect.

GREGORY (straightening up) And the least you could do is belt up and go and have a shave.

(LIONEL goes to the bathroom L.)

LIONEL All right. Have it your own way. But don't blame me if your focal length drops off.

(GREGORY takes a cushion off the sofa and flings it at LIONEL who dodges, exits to the bathroom and shuts the door.)

GREGORY Now then! Perhaps I can get on. (He takes a peek through the telescope, whips off his glasses to take another look, goes to the front door and switches off the light and picks his way back into the pool of moonlight. He takes another look through the telescope.) That's better. Lovely! Lovely! (With his eye glued to the instrument he fishes round behind him for the chair and sits down.) Here she comes!

(From the shadows U.R. comes an unexpected interruption. The voice is quiet and conversational but unmistakeably feminine and young.)

VOICE Can you see Venus?

GREGORY (busy with the telescope) No, not at this time of night. It sets by - (He swings round, knocking the telescope askew.) Who's that?

VOICE Guess who.

GREGORY Lionel? No, it can't be. Don't move! Stay where you are! (He falls over a chair.) Damn!

(The room is suddenly flooded with light disclosing GREGORY by the door D.L., one hand on the light switch, the other holding the cucumber like a gun. He peers round short-sightedly, puts on his glasses and sees the owner of the voice. She is sitting on the bed holding back the curtain with one hand.)

Good lord!

(A very shapely young woman emerges from the bed and takes a step or two towards him as he stands transfixed, his mouth open. She is lovely to look at and dressed in a flowing white grecian style gown which leaves one shoulder bare. Her golden hair is tied in a ribbon and flows down over the front of one shoulder.)

Who? - Who? - I - Oh Good Lord!

GIRL (pointing to the cucumber) Is it loaded?

GREGORY What? Oh! Oh no, no. (He puts the cucumber behind his back.) The - er - Laundromatt is next door.

GIRL I don't want to launder a mat. I want you.

GREGORY Me?

GIRL Yes. Don't be shy.

GREGORY Are you Rosie?

GIRL Yes, all over. Want to have a look?

GREGORY Good lord, no! We haven't been introduced or anything.

GIRL I'm Lyra.

GREGORY What?

GIRL Lyra.

GREGORY Oh! How do you do? I'm Green. (He gives a little bow.)

LYRA Never mind. It doesn't notice.

GREGORY (severely) Gregory Green.

LYRA (stepping up to him) Do we kiss, shake hands or rub noses? I can't remember.

(She gets very close, shuts her eyes and pouts

her lips prettily. GREGORY puts out his hand with the cucumber in it, does a hasty swap, takes her hand and shakes it.)

What a pity. The others would have been much more fun.

(She moves round the room inspecting it with interest. GREGORY follows like a well-behaved gun-dog, leaving the cucumber on the umbrella stand.)

It's a nice place. A bit untidy but it's bigger than I expected. It's difficult to judge from a distance.

GREGORY I'd have tidied up if I'd known you were coming, Miss - er - um -

LYRA You can call me Lyra.

GREGORY Thanks very much. The fact is I didn't - I wasn't - well to tell you the truth, it's a bit inconvenient just at the moment. I'm missing a most important eclipse.

LYRA Do you star-gaze all the time?

GREGORY Only after dark. But what I want to know is how - ?

(LYRA lies back on the sofa and puts her feet up.)

LYRA Why have you been staring at me through that thing? (She points to the telescope.)

GREGORY (astounded) What? I've done no such thing.

LYRA Yes you have. For weeks and weeks.

GREGORY But I've never seen you before in my life. I'm sure I would have recognised you if -

LYRA Oh! So you do peep at girls.

GREGORY (pacing up and down in agitation) Certainly not! My interests are purely astronomical.

LYRA / There you are. You admit it.

GREGORY No I don't. As a matter of fact I've spent every evening for the last three weeks studying a particularly bright star in the constellation - (He stops short.)

LYRA Well? Go on.

GREGORY In the constellation Lyra! But -

LYRA There. You see?

GREGORY But - but - I -

LYRA It's very flattering to be stared at night after night but it does have its disadvantages. I haven't been able to take a bath before dawn for ages - except last Friday when it was cloudy.

GREGORY (R. of sofa) Yes, it was. Look, this is absolutely ridiculous! Are you seriously sitting - lying - there expecting me to believe that you are some kind of - of -

LYRA Heavenly body?

GREGORY Yes - no. You know what I mean.

LYRA The Greeks were far better at this sort of thing. Nowadays nobody calls on us for help more than once in a blue moon.

GREGORY I expect it's all this television.

LYRA (rather sadly) Not that I was ever in very great demand even in the old days. Just the odd shepherd lad gazing at the sky. Mind you, that could be quite fun. By the way, your steam thing is about to boil.

GREGORY I've never heard such a load of rubbish in my life. Are you trying to tell me -
(The kettle starts to whistle in the kitchen.)

LYRA There you are.

GREGORY Bother! Hang on a minute. (He exits to the kitchen.)

(LYRA goes to peep through the telescope.)

LYRA Just as I thought. No privacy at all.

(GREGORY's head re-appears. He looks round for her.)

GREGORY Oh, there you are. I hoped you'd gone for a moment.

LYRA You're not very hospitable. Aren't you going to offer me a drink or anything? (She opens the

cupboard door R. of the window, pulls out a broom and inspects it.)

GREGORY A drink?

LYRA Thanks. I'll have a glass of nectar, please.
(She puts the broom back and shuts the door.)

GREGORY (entering into the spirit of the thing) Clean out of nectar I'm afraid. There's a bottle of cooking sherry. (He points to the bottle on the coffee table.) Or I was just going to make a pot of tea.

LYRA I'll try tea.

GREGORY Good show. Shan't be a jiff. (He returns to the kitchen.)

(LYRA picks up his pyjama jacket from the bed and holds it against herself.)

LYRA I like your tunic. But isn't it a bit draughty round the furbelows?

(Suddenly the telephone rings. LYRA takes the pyjama jacket and exits into the bedroom D.R. As she disappears LIONEL enters from the bathroom still in his vest, with lather on his face and a towel in his hand. He goes to the telephone and answers it.)

LIONEL Hallo? - No, it's Lionel. - I don't know. He's about somewhere. I'll give him a shout - What? - Oh, all right. I'll tell him.

(He replaces the receiver just as GREGORY comes dashing in from the kitchen carrying a tray with teapot, milk, lump sugar and two cups.)

GREGORY Oh, it's you. (He looks round the room anxiously and puts the tray down on the coffee table.)

(LIONEL slings his towel towards the sofa but misses and it falls down behind. He takes a cigarette from the box on the bookcase and lights it.)

LIONEL Who did you expect? Raquel Welch?

(GREGORY opens the hall door D.L. and looks out.)

GREGORY You never know, these days. Did you see any-

body when you came in?

(LIONEL stoops down behind the sofa to retrieve his towel and is out of sight when GREGORY turns back into the room.)

(said did you - ? Oh my God, he's gone too!

(LIONEL bobs up with his towel.)

Oh, there you are. I thought we'd had a subsidence.

LIONEL What's up with you tonight?

GREGORY I'm a bit jumpy. You didn't find anyone behind there, I suppose?

LIONEL Why, have you lost somebody?

(GREGORY goes to look behind the bed curtains.)

Not getting enough of the other. That's your trouble. Plays hell with the adrenalin.

GREGORY Yes, I dare say. Did anyone call round earlier this evening? (He gets down on hands and knees and looks under the table.)

LIONEL Only Selena! No, hang on a minute, there was someone else.

(GREGORY tries to stand up under the table.)

GREGORY There was? Ow!

LIONEL Yes. Chap came round to read the meter. (He picks up the sherry bottle.)

GREGORY She didn't look much like a gas man.

LIONEL Who didn't?

GREGORY Never mind.

LIONEL How about a quick one?

GREGORY (absently) No. I only drink nectar.

LIONEL (pouring himself a drink) Proper little bee, aren't you? Of course you can't always go by appearances. Take Selena for instance.

GREGORY Must I?

LIONEL You'd never guess she was a policewoman, would you?

- GREGORY Oh, I don't know. She's very arresting. Inspector?
- LIONEL Not half. All over. She's got legs up to her armpits. Cor!
- GREGORY Now then. Don't get in a lather. (He takes a casual peep into the bedroom D.R., recoils in horror, slams the door and stands with his back to it, arms outstretched.)
- LIONEL Oh well. Better get on I suppose. (He moves D.R. and faces GREGORY.) Do you mind?
- GREGORY You haven't finished shaving.
- LIONEL No wonder this sherry tastes funny. I say, old lad, you couldn't lend me a clean shirt, could you? Mine are all at the laundry.
- GREGORY Yes. Here! (He dashes to the bed, pulls a white shirt from the drawer underneath and thrusts it at LIONEL.)
- LIONEL Thanks.
(GREGORY propels him towards the bathroom.)
Hey! What's the rush?
- GREGORY You mustn't keep the lady waiting.
- LIONEL All right, all right. I can take a hint. Get back to your spy-glass. (He turns at the bathroom door.) Oh by the way, that was Veronica on the blower just now. She said she'd ring back later. (He goes into the bathroom.)
(GREGORY dashes across to the door D.R.)
- GREGORY That's all I needed! (He opens the door and calls.) All right. Out you come.
(LYRA emerges. She is wearing the pyjama jacket over her gown.)
- LYRA You might have introduced me. What's his name?
- GREGORY Lionel. And that's his bedroom. Now will you please take that thing off and go away and leave me alone?
- LYRA No! Not until I've tried that tea you promised

me. (She sits on the sofa and folds her arms.)

GREGORY Oh, all right. (He goes to the coffee table.)
Then you really must go. Will you be mother?

LYRA Not if I can help it. (She takes off the
pyjama jacket and puts it on the sofa.)

GREGORY It's just an expression. It means who's going
to pour the tea.

LYRA That's not what it used to mean.

GREGORY (pouring one cup of tea) For a goddess you
seem to be a bit out of touch. Milk?

LYRA Yes, I suppose so. I'm only a minor goddess,
you know. I'm what's known as a sylph. I
mean you don't have to kneel or cover your
eyes or anything.

GREGORY That's a comfort. Sugar?

LYRA No mead?

GREGORY Sorry, only sugar. Like it or lump it. (He
offers the bowl and she tries a lump.)

LYRA Mmm! That's nice. I'll have four please.
(GREGORY puts four lumps into her cup.)

GREGORY I should have brought out my bigger cups. (He
goes to the telescope and peers through it while
adjusting the focus.) By the by, I don't
remember reading about a goddess called Lyra.

LYRA No, I don't suppose you would. I'm usually
only mentioned in the small print. (She kneels
on the sofa and watches as he fiddles with the
telescope.) Who are you prying on now?

GREGORY I am not prying. I'm watching an eclipse of the
moon. Extraordinary thing. It looks quite blue.
(He rubs the lens with his hanky.)

(LYRA puts her cup of tea on the coffee table
and moves to him.)

LYRA You mean Diana. I'm not surprised she's
trying to hide. People keep throwing things
at her and taking pictures of her backside. I
shouldn't be surprised if she disappeared
altogether.

GREGORY (looking round) You're not likely to disappear, I suppose?

LYRA Oh no.

GREGORY Pity.

LYRA I can't go back until I've helped you.

GREGORY It sounds like Bob-a-Job week.

LYRA Daddy would be terribly upset.

GREGORY Daddy?

LYRA Yes, you know. (She points up and out.)
(GREGORY looks puzzled, then gulps.)

GREGORY You mean - ? (He points towards the ceiling.)
(LYRA nods.)
Oh by Jove!

LYRA Yes, that's him.
(GREGORY pulls himself together.)

GREGORY Look, will you please stop this nonsense. You'll have me at it soon.

LYRA (straightening his tie) Poor boy! He's all mixed up. Now let's sit down and find out why you sent for me.

GREGORY I did no such thing.

LYRA Yes you did. You invoked me. You gazed on me and murmured my name for three times seven, just like it says in the manual. Andromeda was green with envy.

GREGORY I didn't mean to.

LYRA Oh, how disappointing. Never mind. There's sure to be something I can do for you now I'm here. (She draws him D.L., pushes him down on the sofa and sits beside him.) I used to be pretty good at remedies in the old days. Of course, it was usually something easy like curing toothache or warts.

GREGORY I haven't got toothache or warts or ingrowing toe nails. (He looks anxiously at the bathroom door.) Look, you really must go. Lionel will be out in a minute.

LYRA Let's see now. (She ticks off on her fingers.)
Are you having trouble with demons or djinns?

GREGORY (pointing at the bottle) No, I only drink
sherry.

LYRA Knocking in the night?

GREGORY The cistern makes a bit of a row.

LYRA The cistern?

GREGORY Yes, through there. (He points to the bath-
room.)

LYRA In the Laundromatt?

GREGORY No, in the bath-o-room.

LYRA So that's what's in there?

GREGORY Think you could fix it?

LYRA It sounds more of a job for Aquarius than me.
You don't want help in battle, I suppose? A
shield of Invincibility or a sword of fire?

GREGORY Might come in useful in the rush hour.

LYRA (clapping her hands) I've got it. Why ever
didn't I think of it before? You've got heart
trouble.

GREGORY There is nothing - absolutely nothing - wrong
with my heart. Feel that. (He holds out his
wrist.)
(LYRA takes his hand.)

LYRA Mmm! Nice.

GREGORY No. There. (He puts her fingers on his wrist.)
Regular as a clock.

LYRA (snatching her hand away) Oo! I've never felt
one of those before. Does it hurt?

GREGORY Of course it doesn't.

LYRA (gingerly feeling again) It's bumping up and
down.

GREGORY Good heavens! It's only my pulse. Everybody's
got one.

LYRA (feeling her own wrist) I haven't.

GREGORY (taking her wrist) Of course you have. It's

just that it's - difficult to find - in some people.
(He tries her other wrist.) That's funny!
Have you ever tried to take out an insurance?

LYRA (snuggling up) Your hands are nice and warm.
Do you have much trouble with women?

(GREGORY snatches his hand away and stands.)

GREGORY Certainly not.

LYRA What never?

GREGORY Well, Veronica is a bit of a nuisance at times.
She comes round and stops me working.

LYRA Veronica? Who's she?

GREGORY I suppose you'd call her a friend of the family
really. She lives a few doors away. Mother
keeps wanting us to get engaged, but I'm not
very keen.

LYRA Why not?

GREGORY Well, she plays a lot of hockey for one thing.
And she's so blessed enthusiastic about every-
thing. She tires me out.

LYRA You poor boy. You do need help. (She jumps
up and heads for the kitchen.) I'll mix you up
a love philtre straight away. Restores lost
energy. Let's see now. (She counts on her
fingers.) I shall need sliced mango, juniper
juice and - oh yes - powdered horn of woolly
rhinoceros.

GREGORY You'll be lucky. They've been extinct for
years.

LYRA What, woolly rhinos?

GREGORY Yes. All we've got now are woolly sheepos.
I've got an old sweater you could have.

LYRA Never mind. We'll just have to make do.
Don't go away. (She goes into the kitchen.)

GREGORY Love philtres! That's all I needed! Now look
here!

(He storms towards the kitchen but is
interrupted by LIONEL who enters from the
bathroom wearing the shirt.)

- LIONEL I say, old boy, have you seen my tie anywhere?
- GREGORY (shutting the kitchen door) What? Oh my goodness! Yes, it's here somewhere. Here you are. (He picks the tie up from the back of the sofa and thrusts it at LIONEL.)
- LIONEL Thanks. (He starts to put it on in front of the mirror.) You don't think this shirt is a bit square, do you?
- GREGORY (hovering between the kitchen and LIONEL) Yes. I mean no. You look lovely.
- LIONEL (shaking his head and taking the tie off again) No. I don't think it's quite me, somehow.
(GREGORY pulls a bright orange shirt out of his drawer under the bed and hands it to LIONEL.)
- GREGORY Well try this one. I've never dared wear it.
- LIONEL (holding it up) Smashing! It looks like a wind sock.
(GREGORY pushes him to the bedroom D.R.)
- GREGORY Take your time.
(As LIONEL exits to bedroom LYRA comes back from the kitchen with an empty glass in her hand. GREGORY dashes back to her.)
Now look! Please!
- LYRA Excuse me! (She pushes him aside and starts to rummage around in a raffia bag which is lying on the bed.)
- GREGORY You cannot come bursting in here disrupting my whole life without a word of explanation. I insist on knowing - what's that?
(LYRA has extracted a small round bottle containing an evil-looking green liquid. She shakes it well and holds it up to the light.)
- LYRA Secret ingredient. Excuse me. (She pushes him aside again and exits to the kitchen.)
- GREGORY (calling after her) I'm putting my foot down, do you hear?
(LIONEL enters from the bedroom holding both

shirts.)

LIONEL Yes I can hear. What are you shouting for?

GREGORY Eh? Oh, nothing.

LIONEL I can't make my mind up which one to wear.
What do you think, old lad?

GREGORY I don't care what you do. I just wish you'd get
ready and go.

LIONEL Don't get them in a twist. Everything's under
control.

GREGORY That's what you think.

(LIONEL exits to the bedroom and GREGORY
closes the door after him. LYRA enters from
the kitchen stirring a glass of something which
looks for all the world like Andrews Liver
Salts. She pops the green bottle into her raffia
bag and takes out an old silver sugar shaker.
GREGORY retreats D.L.)

LYRA (pursuing him) Here we are. Inner manliness
comes first. Drink it while it's still fizzing.

GREGORY No!

LYRA Come on now. It will do you the world of good.

GREGORY I don't want to be done good to.

LYRA Of course you do. Now then, stand still a
minute. (She holds up the sugar shaker and
distributes powder liberally over him as though
dusting with derris.)

GREGORY What the - ! Atishoo! What the devil's that
for? Bean weevil?

LYRA It's to make you irresistible to young women.

GREGORY Oh my goodness! She's out of her wits.
Atishoo! Now see what you've done. You've
brought on my hay fever.

LYRA Now you must drink this.

(SELENA appears in the hall.)

GREGORY What for?

LYRA To put you in the mood.

(The door bell rings. GREGORY moves to

Hungry for More?

THIS IS A SAMPLE OF THE SCRIPT

Buy the **full script** and explore other titles

www.samuelfrench.com

www.samuelfrench.co.uk



[Breaking Character]

An Online Resource for Theatre Makers



Find us on
Facebook

Titles are subject to availability depending on your territory.