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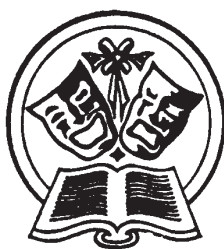
ROOKERY NOOK

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A Farce in Three Acts

BY
BEN TRAVERS

SAMUEL



FRENCH

LONDON

NEW YORK TORONTO SYDNEY HOLLYWOOD

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This play was produced on June 30, 1926, at the Aldwych Theatre, London, with the following cast :

GERTRUDE TWINE	.	.	Miss Ethel Coleridge.
MRS. LEVERETT	.	.	Miss Mary Brough.
HAROLD TWINE	.	.	Mr. J. Robertson Hare.
CLIVE POPKISS	.	.	Mr. Tom Walls.
GERALD POPKISS	.	.	Mr. Ralph Lynn.
RHODA MARLEY.	.	.	Miss Winifred Shotter.
PUTZ.	.	.	Mr. Griffith Humphreys.
ADMIRAL JUDDY	.	.	Mr. Gordon James.
POPPY DICKY	.	.	Miss Ena Mason.
CLARA POPKISS	.	.	Miss Stella Bonheur.
MRS. POSSETT	.	.	Miss Vera Gerald.

CHARACTERS

GERTRUDE TWINE.

MRS. LEVERETT.

HAROLD TWINE.

CLIVE POPKISS.

GERALD POPKISS.

RHODA MARLEY.

PÜTZ.

ADMIRAL JUDDY.

POPPY DICKEY.

CLARA POPKISS.

MRS. POSSETT.

The Action takes place in the lounge-hall of "Rookery Nook," Chumpton-on-Sea, Somerset. It begins on a night in Summer.

ROOKERY NOOK

ACT 1

SCENE: *The lounge-hall of "Rookery Nook" is in darkness as it is late on a summer night. There is a trace of daylight left, and as the front door stands open facing the audience R. O. of the back wall, the shrubbery across the drive can be faintly seen. As the Act progresses the moon rises. From the hall the staircase runs up L. and the balcony for landing in each case is seen. On this balcony is a door L. (and, if the balance and appearance of the set requires a second opening, that which leads to the back stairs which are not shown.) The balcony runs off the set R. and L. On the R. there are two doors which lead to other bedrooms. On the ground floor are two doors on each side of the hall. These, as explained later, lead R. to drawing-room and study, L. to kitchen quarters and dining-room. The electric light switches operating the hall lights are just inside the door, D. L. The hall is well furnished with a very fine hall table slightly R. of C., a Chesterfield sofa and hall chairs. A parquet floor with rugs: in the back wall are large windows.*

(GERTRUDE TWINE *discovered c. above table.*)

GERTRUDE. Mrs. Leverett! (*Raps on table.*) Mrs. Leverett! (*No answer. She is a woman in the thirties, a critical, suspicious type of seaside resident. She is in semi-evening dress with a wrap. Calls again.*) Mrs. Leverett!

MRS. LEVERETT. (*Heard off.*) Oh, is that Mrs. Twine? Very good; I'll come.

(GERTRUDE C. MRS. LEVERETT *enters from down left. She is a stout person wearing a striking tartan blouse, tweed skirt and no hat; leaves door open through which a strong light shows through.*)

GERTRUDE. Hasn't he arrived? (*Moves to MRS. LEVERETT.*)

MRS. LEVERETT. (*Querulously.*) No, he has not, Mrs. Twine, and look at the time. I may say I was engaged by the day and not by the night.

GERTRUDE. (*Freezingly.*) All right, all right. "Has he arrived?—No." That's all I wanted. No.

MRS. LEVERETT. (*Getting rattled.*) I suppose there is no question he is coming to-night?

GERTRUDE. Of course he is. That's why you're waiting here.

MRS. LEVERETT. Yes, but I should never have consented to wait had I known he was going to keep me here at improper hours. (*Cross L., switch on lights.*)

GERTRUDE. You must make allowances. In the ordinary way the whole party would have been here by this time.

MRS. LEVERETT. H'm. I prefer to work for parties of regular habits.

(Waves imaginary cat away into kitchen and closes door.)

(This fires GERTRUDE. A breeze springs up.)

GERTRUDE. My sister is a most considerate person. Was it *her* fault that my mother was taken ill at the last moment? *(Crosses L. of table to front.)*

MRS. LEVERETT. I'm not saying—*(Crosses to GERTRUDE L. C.)*

GERTRUDE. And couldn't be brought here?

MRS. LEVERETT. I know, madam, but—I can't worry about their troubles.

GERTRUDE. Don't talk like that of your betters, please.

MRS. LEVERETT. I'm not talking like that of my betters.

GERTRUDE. Yes, you are. *(Slight pause as they glare at each other.)* My sister did the only possible thing—stayed and looked after my mother. *(Crosses to front of table.)*

MRS. LEVERETT. Madam! I am not making any complaint about your sister. But her husband was coming here alone——

GERTRUDE. It isn't "he *was* coming." He *is* coming.

MRS. LEVERETT. When?

GERTRUDE. I only know he's coming to-night. *(This as if trying to drum home a thing for the twentieth time.)*

MRS. LEVERETT. Yes, but *when* to-night?

GERTRUDE. Oh, how can I tell? *(Breaking off)*

with a little "t'ck" of annoyance, cross R. in front of table.) When a man gets left alone with a car, there's always trouble. If the car doesn't go wrong, the man does.

MRS. LEVERETT. (*Much more patiently.*) Well, excuse me (*cross D. L. and come back*), but can't you wait here for him, madam? Or can't Mr. Twine?

TWINE. (*Appearing at front door.*) Yes. Hallo! What's that?

(*TWINE is a short, feeble man of about forty in a dinner suit and straw hat.*)

GERTRUDE. Oh, there you are, Harold.

TWINE. (*Coming down.*) Yes, dear.

GERTRUDE. Gerald hasn't arrived.

TWINE. No, dear.

GERTRUDE. How did you know?

TWINE. I didn't, dear.

GERTRUDE. Then why say "no" like that?

TWINE. Like what, dear?

GERTRUDE. Is Clive there?

TWINE. Yes, dear.

GERTRUDE. Call him in.

TWINE. Yes, dear. (*Crosses to door—at door R. c. calling.*) Clive! Clive!

GERTRUDE. Where is he?

TWINE. (*Calling.*) Clive! Clive!

GERTRUDE. Clive!

TWINE. Clive!

CLIVE. (*Appearing at front door.*) All right; don't make an anthem of it.

(*CLIVE is a sport in the thirties. He wears a dinner suit.*)

(TWINE crosses L. to MRS. LEVERETT, and she tells him her troubles as CLIVE comes down R. C. to GERTRUDE.)

GERTRUDE. Come in. Come in.

CLIVE. Oh, so this is the house you've got for them, is it? What a nice house! Nice, peaceful atmosphere for a change.

GERTRUDE. What do you mean—for a change?

CLIVE. For them. For Gerald and Clara. They're coming here, aren't they?

GERTRUDE. I don't see why you should say they want a peaceful atmosphere for a *change*. They've only been married six weeks.

CLIVE. I don't mean that.

GERTRUDE

CLIVE

C.

TWINE

R. C.

L. C.

MRS. LEVERETT

L.

GERTRUDE. Well, what *do* you mean?

CLIVE. (*Long-suffering, stifling his impatience.*) They're on a holiday, aren't they?

GERTRUDE. Well?

CLIVE. Just like I'm on a holiday—(*cross to GERTRUDE*)—staying with *you*.

GERTRUDE. Well?

CLIVE. Yes—well, I say—what a nice house they're coming to. Lucky people.

GERTRUDE. (*A little jealous.*) Haven't you come to a nice house? Isn't mine nice?

CLIVE. (*Getting past his patience.*) Oh, very. There can be two nice houses, can't there?

GERTRUDE. (*Who shines at female argument.*) You don't suppose I'd have got them a house that wasn't nice (*turning away L.*), do you?

CLIVE. (*Turning, cross D. R. desperately, speaking to himself.*) Oh, hell!

(*TWINE crosses to GERTRUDE.*)

TWINE. Dearest!

GERTRUDE. What do you want?

(*CLIVE watches them, listening.*)

TWINE. It isn't I that want anything.

GERTRUDE. Well, who is it that wants what?

TWINE. (*Apologetically.*) Mrs.—er—em——

GERTRUDE. Yes. I know what she wants. She wants to go home.

MRS. LEVERETT. Quite right.

(*CLIVE moves towards C.*)

TWINE. She was asking me what time I thought Gerald would arrive.

GERTRUDE. (*Very annoyed.*) Well, gracious me, how can I tell? I've been asked that twenty times. Don't ask me again.

TWINE. (*Very subdued.*) He only had to come on from your mother's at Bath. Bath isn't far—a matter of two hours. He ought to have started——

GERTRUDE. Started! He ought to have been here hours ago.

(*TWINE goes up L.*)

MRS. LEVERETT. Well, something's got to be done about it.

CLIVE. (*Sauntering back to GERTRUDE c. with malice aforethought.*) I say, Gertrude——

(*Table.*)

CLIVE

R. C.

GERTRUDE

C.

TWINE

L. C. (*Settee.*)

MRS. LEVERETT

L.

CLIVE. (*Airily, crosses to GERTRUDE.*) About what time do you suppose old Gerald will breeze along?

GERTRUDE. Clive, you're trying to annoy me.

CLIVE. (*With injured innocence.*) Annoy you, Gertrude? I like that. I wouldn't do such a thing. I was going to suggest something.

GERTRUDE. I shouldn't think *that* would be likely to help.

CLIVE. Oh, all right. I was only going to suggest a suggestion. (*He crosses L. C. to MRS. LEVERETT.*) P'r'aps *you* might like to hear it. It's really a good one.

MRS. LEVERETT. I have no time to listen, sir. I must be off.

CLIVE. Oh, don't be that.

MRS. LEVERETT. If you knew in what a hurry I was to get home, sir, you'd offer to wait here yourself for the coming gentleman.

CLIVE. You must be psychic.

MRS. LEVERETT. (*Obviously shocked.*) I beg your pardon—I'm nothing of the kind.

CLIVE. We've got the same idea. (*Turning to GERTRUDE.*) There you are. We've fixed it. I'll

stay here till Gerald comes, and Mrs. Flannelfoot will waddle off home.

GERTRUDE. (*Considering this.*) Oh—I see.

MRS. LEVERETT. (*Briskly.*) If the gentleman is willing, that settles it. I'll get me hat. (*Goes off D. L.*)

(TWINE comes down L. C.)

GERTRUDE. Oh, well, if you're going to be left here alone, I hope you're to be trusted. You'll be responsible for the house, not only to Gerald, but also to the Mantle Hams.

CLIVE. (*Cross to GERTRUDE.*) To the who?

GERTRUDE. The Mantle Hams. The people this house belongs to.

CLIVE. Oh, the Mantle Hams. That's a good one. But I fail to see what trouble I can get into here alone for a few minutes. (*Sits on table c.*) If you can think of any, I wish you'd let me know.

GERTRUDE. (*Decisively.*) Someone's got to hang about here, so I suppose you'd better.

CLIVE. Righto then. I'm very good at hanging about.

TWINE. (*Tentatively.*) Erm——

CLIVE. (*Looking at TWINE curiously.*) Yes?

TWINE. (*Looking at GERTRUDE.*) Erm——

GERTRUDE. (*Who has turned towards door, looking round again.*) Well, what's the matter?

CLIVE. Shh! Don't discourage him. I think Harold is going to lay an egg.

GERTRUDE. Clive, don't be coarse.

TWINE. No, I only thought——

GERTRUDE. You thought what?

TWINE. Wouldn't it be as well for me to stay as well ?

GERTRUDE. What ?

CLIVE. Now, old sportsman, sort yourself.
(*Patting him gently.*)

TWINE. (*Precisely.*) Shall I stay too ?

CLIVE. No.

GERTRUDE. No.

CLIVE. Carried.

GERTRUDE. Why do you want to stay ?

TWINE. I don't, dear.

GERTRUDE. Then why say you did ?

TWINE. I didn't mean I did. I meant if you'd rather I did, should I ?

CLIVE. The answer is a sponge cake.

GERTRUDE. Oh, come home. (*Cross U. R.*)

TWINE. Yes, dear.

(*CLIVE trips him playfully as he crosses.*)

(*Apologises.*) I'm sorry.

CLIVE. Oh, it's all right.

(*GERTRUDE turns back ; TWINE is following close on her heels : he drops down R. and starts to nibble his straw hat.*)

GERTRUDE. (*To CLIVE.*) Let me know directly Gerald arrives. I've got several things to see to at home, or I'd wait myself. Tell him I may be able to come over and see him later.

CLIVE. That'll amuse him.

GERTRUDE. What ?

CLIVE. Oh, nothing.

GERTRUDE. (*Is going.*) Harold ! Don't stand

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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