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George Bernard Shaw's
Candida

Adapted and Abridged by
Aurand Harris

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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CAST

REVEREND JAMES MORELL

MISS PROSERPINE GARNETT (Prossy)

REVEREND ALEXANDER MILL (Lexy)

MRS. JAMES MORELL (Candida)

EUGENE MARCHBANKS

TIME: A day in October, 1894.

SCENE: The drawing room, St. Dominic's Parsonage,
London.

Candida

SCENE: *The drawing room of St. Dominic's Parsonage, London, 1894. There is a large window at back, in front of which is a long table, littered with pamphlets, letters, and the like. A chair is at the end of the table. This is where REVEREND MORELL does his work. On a smaller table is a typewriter. This is where his typist does her work. On the right wall is a fireplace with a chair and sofa near it. A door leading to the dining area is by the fireplace. A larger doorway is on the opposite side, leading to the front hall and stairs. There are bookshelves, bric-a-brac, but nothing useless or pretentious in the room, money being too scarce in the house of an east end parson to be wasted on snobbish trimmings.*

The REVEREND JAMES MORELL sits in his chair at the end of the table. He is a vigorous, genial, popular man of forty, robust and goodlooking, full of energy, with pleasant, hearty, considerate manners, and a sound unaffected voice, which he uses with the clear athletic articulation of a practised orator, and with a wide range and perfect command of expression.

The typist, MISS PROSERPINE GARNETT, is a brisk little woman about thirty, neatly but cheaply dressed, notably pert and quick of speech and not very civil in her manner. She is clattering away busily at her machine whilst MORELL opens the last of his morning's letters. He reads its content with a comic groan of despair.

PROSERPINE. Another lecture?

MORELL. Yes. The Hoxton Freedom Group wants me to address them on SUNDAY morning. (*Hands her letter*) Tell them to come to church if they want to hear me on Sunday.

PROSERPINE. Oh, they are only half a dozen ignorant costermongers without five shillings between them.

MORELL. (*Amused*) Ah, but you see they're near relatives of mine.

PROSERPINE. Relatives of yours!

MORELL. Yes. We have the same father—in Heaven.

PROSERPINE. (*Relieved*) Oh, is that all?

(*As they continue to work, their proceedings are enlivened by the entrance of the REVEREND ALEXANDER MILL, a young graduate of Oxford who is giving the east end of London the benefit of his University training. He is a conceitedly well intentioned, enthusiastic immature novice. MORELL looks up indulgently*)

MORELL. Well, Lexy? Late again, as usual.

LEXY. I'm afraid so.

PROSERPINE. You have all the work to do this afternoon.

LEXY. Is she in earnest, Morell?

MORELL. Yes. My wife's coming up for two days.

LEXY. But if the children had scarlatina, do you think it wise—

MORELL. Scarlatina! Rubbish! It was German measles. I brought it into the house myself from the Pycroft Street School. A parson is like a doctor, my boy; he must face infection as a soldier must face bullets. Catch the measles if you can, Lexy: my wife will nurse you; and what a piece of luck that will be for you! Eh?

LEXY. (*Smiles uneasily*) It's so hard to understand you about Mrs. Morell—

MORELL. Ah, my boy, get married to a good woman; and then you'll understand. That's a foretaste of what will be best in the Kingdom of Heaven. And it will cure you of being late. An honest man feels that he must pay Heaven for every hour of happiness with a good spell of

hard work to make others happy. Get a wife like my Candida! (*Exits R, with some papers*)

LEXY. What a good man! What a thorough loving soul he is!

PROSERPINE. Oh, a man ought to be able to be fond of his wife without making a fool of himself about her. Candida here, and Candida there, and Candida everywhere! It's enough to drive anyone out of their senses to hear a woman raved about in that absurd manner merely because she's got good hair and a tolerable figure.

LEXY. I had no idea you had any feeling against Mrs. Morell.

PROSERPINE. I have no feeling against her. She's very nice, very good-hearted. I'm very fond of her. Now, about your work. Here's a list for the afternoon. (*LEXY starts to leave at L*)

MORELL. (*Rushes in from R*) Is that a carriage I hear?

LEXY. (*Exiting at L*) It's a cab stopping in front. It's Mrs. Morell.

MORELL. Candida here already! (*Crosses to doorway*)

CANDIDA. (*Enters L*) Yes, James. I'm here. I'm home.

(She is a woman of thirty-three, with the double charm of youth and motherhood. Her ways are those of a woman who has found that she can always manage people by engaging their affection, and who does so frankly and instinctively without the smallest scruple; but her courage, largeness of mind and dignity of character ennoble her cunningness)

MORELL. Candida! My—my darling! I intended to meet you at the train. I was so engrossed— I forgot— Oh! (*He embraces her with penitent emotion*) My poor love. How did you manage about the luggage? How—

CANDIDA. There! There! There! I wasn't alone. Eugene has been down with us; and we traveled together.

MORELL. (*Pleased*) Eugene!

CANDIDA. Yes. He's struggling with my luggage, poor boy. Go out, dear, at once, or he'll pay for the cab, and I don't want that. (*MORELL rushes out at L*)

PROSERPINE. Welcome home, Mrs. Morell.

CANDIDA. I didn't see you, Miss Garnett. It's good to be back, even for just a few days.

PROSERPINE. I'll tell Maria you have arrived.

CANDIDA. (*Looking out window*) Poor Eugene. He's so shy.

PROSERPINE. He can't be too poor. His uncle is an earl.

CANDIDA. Oh, he's a dear boy. We are very fond of him.

(PROSERPINE *nods and exits R*) Come in, Eugene.

(MARCHBANKS *enters at L. He is a strange, shy youth of eighteen, with a shrinking manner that shows the painful sensitiveness of very swift and acute apprehensiveness in youth, before the character has grown to its full strength*) Why so sad? And why were you so melancholy in the cab?

MARCHBANKS. I was wondering how much I ought to give the cabman. But it's all right. He beamed all over when Morell gave him two shillings. I was on the point of offering him ten.

(MORELL *enters L*)

CANDIDA. Oh, James, dear, he was going to give the cabman ten shillings! Ten shillings for a three minute drive! Oh, dear!

MORELL. Never mind, Marchbanks. The overpaying instinct is a generous one.

MARCHBANKS. No: cowardice, incompetence. Mrs. Morell's quite right.

CANDIDA. Of course she is. (*Takes up handbag*) And now I must leave you to James for the present. I suppose you are too much of a poet to know the state a woman finds her house in when she's been away for three weeks. Give me my rug. (EUGENE *does*) Now hang my cloak across my arm. (*He does*) Now my hat. Now open the door for me. (*He does*) Thank you.

(*She exits L*)

MORELL. You'll stay to dinner, Marchbanks, of course.

MARCHBANKS. I mustn't. I mean I can't.

MORELL. You mean you won't.

MARCHBANKS. No: I should like to, indeed. Thank you very much. But—but—

MORELL. But—but—Bosh! If you'd like to stay, stay.

MARCHBANKS. The truth is, Mrs. Morell told me not to. She said she didn't think you'd ask me to stay, but that I was to remember, if you did, that you didn't really want me to. She said I'd understand; but I don't. Please don't tell her I told you.

MORELL. (*With affectionate seriousness*) My dear lad, in a happy marriage like ours, there is something very sacred in the return of the wife to her home. (*EUGENE reacts with a horror-stricken expression*) Candida thought I would rather not have you here; but she was wrong. I'm very fond of you, my boy, and I should like you to see for yourself what a happy thing it is to be married as I am.

MARCHBANKS. Happy! Your marriage! You think that! You believe that!

MORELL. (*Buoyantly*) I know it, my lad.

MARCHBANKS. (*Wildly*) No: it isn't true. I'll force it into the light.

MORELL. Force what?

MARCHBANKS. There is something that must be settled between us. You think yourself stronger than I am; but I shall stagger you if you have a heart in your breast.

MORELL. (*Powerfully confident*) Stagger me, my boy. Out with it.

MARCHBANKS. First—

MORELL. First?

MARCHBANKS. I love your wife.

MORELL. (*Amazed, then bursts into laughter*) Why, my dear child, of course you do. Everybody loves her: they can't help it. I like it. But—Eugene, you're under twenty: she's over thirty. Doesn't it look rather like a case of calf love?

MARCHBANKS. You dare say that of her! You think that way of the love she inspires! It is an insult to her.

MORELL. (*Also angry*) To her! Take care. I am being patient. I hope to remain patient. Don't force me to show you the indulgence I should show to a child. Be a man.

MARCHBANKS. Oh, let us put aside all that cant. It horrifies me when I think of the doses, the sermons, she has had to endure all these years with you. You! You, who

have not one thought—one sense—in common with her.

MORELL. (*Philosophically*) She seems to bear it pretty well. (*Seriously*) My boy, you are making a fool of yourself. It is easy to shake a man's faith in himself. To take advantage of that, to break a man's spirit is devil's work.

MARCHBANKS. I told you I should stagger you.

MORELL. (*They confront one another threateningly for a moment. Then MORELL recovers his dignity*) Eugene, listen to me. Some day I hope and trust you will be a happy man, a happy married man like me. (*MORELL controls himself at EUGENE's reaction, and continues with great artistic beauty of delivery*) You can be one of the makers of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth; and—who knows?—you may be a master builder where I am only a humble journey-man. It should make you tremble to think that the heavy burden and great gift of a poet may be laid upon you.

MARCHBANKS. It does not make me tremble. It is the want of it in others that makes me tremble.

MORELL. (*Redoubling his force of style*) Then help to kindle it in them—in me—not to extinguish it. In the future, when you are as happy as I am, I will be your true brother in the faith.

MARCHBANKS. Is it always like this for her? Preach! Preach! Preach! Do you think a woman's soul can live on your talent for preaching?

MORELL. (*Stung*) Marchbanks: you make it hard for me to control myself. My talent is like yours, the gift of finding words for divine truth.

MARCHBANKS. It's the gift of gab, nothing more and nothing less. I've been to your political meetings; when you rouse the men to behave exactly as if they were drunk. And their wives looked on and saw what fools they were. Oh, it's an old story: you'll find it in the Bible. I imagine King David, in his fits of enthusiasm, was very like you. "But his wife despised him in her heart."

MORELL. Leave my house. Do you hear? (*Advances on him threateningly*)

MARCHBANKS. (*Shrinks back*) Let me alone. Don't touch me. (*MORELL grabs him powerfully by the lapel of his coat*) Stop, Morell. Let me go!

MORELL. (*With slow emphatic scorn*) You little sniveling cowardly whelp. (*Releases him*) Go, before you frighten yourself into a fit.

MARCHBANKS. (*Relieved by the withdrawal of MORELL's hand*) I'm not afraid of you. It's you who are afraid of me.

MORELL. (*Quietly, as he stands over him*) It looks like it, doesn't it?

MARCHBANKS. You think because I can't lift a heavy trunk down from the top of a cab like you—because I can't fight you for your wife as a drunken navvy would: all that makes you think I'm afraid of you! But you're wrong. I'll fight your ideas. I'll rescue her from her slavery to them. You are driving me out of the house because you daren't let her choose between your ideas and mine. Send me away. Tell her how you were strong and manly, and shook me as a terrier shakes a rat.

MORELL. (*Puzzled*) Why do you want her to know this?

MARCHBANKS. (*With lyric rapture*) Because she will understand me, and know that I understand her. If you keep back one word of truth from her, then you will know to the end of your days that she really belongs to me and not to you. Goodbye, Mr. Clergyman. (*As he turns to door, CANDIDA enters at L*)

CANDIDA. Are you going, Eugene? (*Looks observantly at him*) Well, dear me, just look at you. You are a poet, certainly. Look at him, James! Look at his collar! Look at his tie! Look at his hair! One would think somebody had been throttling you. Here! Stand still! (*She tidies him up*) There! Now you look so nice that I think you'd better stay for dinner after all, though I told you you mustn't. (*She puts a final touch to the bow tie. He kisses her hand*) Don't be silly.

MARCHBANKS. I want to stay, of course; unless the reverend gentleman, your husband, has anything to advance to the contrary.

CANDIDA. Shall he stay, James, if he promises to be a good boy and help me to lay the table?

MORELL. (*Shortly*) Oh yes, certainly: he had better stay. (*Starts off L*)

CANDIDA. I'll call you when it's time to help me.
(*Holds out her hands to MARCHBANKS. He holds them. She exits at R*)

MARCHBANKS. (*Holds his hands which have touched hers to his heart*) I am the happiest of mortals.

MORELL. So was I—an hour ago.

(*He exits L*)

MARCHBANKS. (*Alone, repeats her name*) Candida . . .
Candida . . . (*Sees typewriter, pecks out her name with one finger*) C--a--n--d-- (*Hits wrong key and suddenly the carriage shoots across with a bang. Worried, he starts turning knobs and wheels*)

PROSERPINE. (*Enters R*) What are you doing with my typewriter, Mr. Marchbanks?

MARCHBANKS. I'm very sorry, Miss Garnett. I only tried to make it write.

PROSERPINE. You have altered the spacing.

MARCHBANKS. I only turned a little wheel. It gave a sort of click.

PROSERPINE. (*Fixes typewriter*) I suppose you thought it was a sort of barrel-organ. Nothing to do but turn the handle, and it would write a poem for you straight off, eh?

MARCHBANKS. (*Seriously*) I suppose a machine could be made to write a poem—a love letter.

PROSERPINE. How would I know?

MARCHBANKS. I thought clever people, like you, who can do business and type letters—always had to have love affairs to keep them from going mad.

PROSERPINE. (*Outraged*) Mr. Marchbanks!

MARCHBANKS. Perhaps I shouldn't have alluded to your love affairs.

PROSERPINE. I haven't any love affairs.

MARCHBANKS. Really! Then you are shy, like me.

PROSERPINE. Certainly I am not shy.

MARCHBANKS. (*Secretly*) You must be: that is the reason there are so few love affairs in the world. We all go about longing for love: it is our first need, the first prayer of our hearts; but we dare not utter our longing; we are too shy. (*Very earnestly*) Oh, Miss Garnett, what

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