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SF PERUSALS

DON'T DRESS FOR DINNER

A Comedy

by Marc Camoletti

Adapted by

Robin Hawdon

SAMUEL FRENCH

samuelfrench.co.uk

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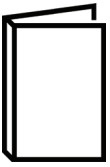
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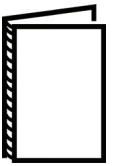
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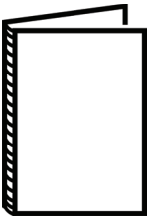
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marc Camoletti was a man of many and varied talents, from architect to acclaimed artist to global success as a playwright with over 40 produced plays to his credit. He was also a highly respected theatre director in Paris, responsible for a host of hit productions.

A French citizen, born in Geneva in 1923 with Italian family origins, Marc Camoletti initially trained as an architect. He continued to develop his early talent as an artist which led to five major exhibitions of his paintings in Paris and the provinces, many of his works selling to important private collectors.

Playwriting took over when in 1958 his theatre career got off to a flying start with three plays being presented simultaneously in Paris, the first *La Bonne Anna* running for 1300 performances and going on to play throughout the world.

Marc Camoletti's first great British success was *Boeing Boeing* which, following its West End triumph, also enjoyed a smash hit revival on Broadway. The original 1962 London production ran for seven years at the Apollo and Duchess Theatres, notching up over 2000 performances. The Paramount film version starred Jerry Lewis, Tony Curtis and Thelma Ritter. In 1991, it was listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the most performed French play throughout the world. The Paris revival enjoyed a five year success at the Theatre Michel.

Don't Dress for Dinner, the English language version of the established Paris hit *Pyjamas Pour Six*, also enjoyed a seven year run in the West End opening at the Apollo Theatre and transferring to the Duchess. It was recently revived at the Roundabout Theatre on Broadway. The play has also been performed throughout the United States, as well as in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and in different languages throughout the world, always to great acclaim.

His last play, *Sexe et Jalousie*, now titled *Ding Dong* in its English version had a successful Paris production and was the tenth Camoletti play to be shown on television.

In a long theatrical career, Marc Camoletti gained worldwide acclaim through the multitude of productions of his plays in numerous languages in fifty-five countries. In Paris alone 18 of his plays have enjoyed more than 20,000 performances in all.

An Associate of the Societe Nationale des Beaux Arts, Marc Camoletti became a Chevalier de la Legion d'Honeur – one of France's highest honours. He died in 2003.

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DON'T DRESS FOR DINNER

By Marc Camoletti

Adapted by Robin Hawdon

The Adaptor's name to be no greater than 75% of the size afforded to the author.

DON'T DRESS FOR DINNER

First presented in London by Mark Furness, in association with Full Circle Productions, at the Apollo Theatre on 20th March 1991 with the following cast of characters:

BERNARD	John Quayle
JACQUELINE	Jane How
ROBERT	Simon Cadell
SUZETTE	Su Pollard
SUZANNE	Briony Glassco
GEORGE	Dougal Lee

Directed by Peter Farago
Designed by Peter Rice

CHARACTERS

BERNARD
JACQUELINE, his wife
ROBERT, his friend
SUZANNE, his mistress
SUZETTE, the cook
GEORGE, her husband

The action takes place in the main living-room of a country house some distance from Paris

Time—the present

ACT I

The main living-room of a country house some distance from Paris. Early evening.

The place is an old farm building converted with style and taste. Upstage is the front door, left is a door off to the kitchen and dining-room. Right is a winding staircase to the upper floor, only the bottom few stairs of which can be seen, downstage left and downstage right are doors to two spare bedrooms. There is a drinks bar, a low sofa, easy chairs, a mirror, and a telephone. Old stone and timber abound. The whole has an atmosphere of affluent rural charm.

When the curtain rises the room is empty.

BERNARD *enters from the kitchen with an ice-bucket and tongs. He is in some haste. He hums to himself as he puts the ice-bucket on the bar, hesitates, then hides it under the bar. He stands back, checking round the room to see if there is anything else needed. He looks at his watch, hurries to the foot of the stairs and calls up.*

BERNARD Hurry up, darling—you're going to be very late.

JACQUELINE *(offstage)* Coming.

He goes to the mirror, smooths his hair and straightens his tie, smiling to himself.

JACQUELINE *comes down the stairs.*

BERNARD *hurriedly turns away from the mirror.*

Darling, I'm so worried about leaving you on your own all weekend.

BERNARD Don't worry, I'll be fine—I've told you.

JACQUELINE You're hopeless at looking after yourself.

BERNARD You've left enough food in the fridge to feed the Foreign Legion.

JACQUELINE It's only frozen canelloni and things.

BERNARD I love canelloni!

JACQUELINE I know, but—

BERNARD Now, do hurry up. You've over an hour's drive and you know how your mother panics if anyone's a minute late.

JACQUELINE Are you sure you can't come with me?

BERNARD She's much happier seeing you on your own. And I can get some work done this weekend. *(Looking at his watch again)* Now get a move on.

JACQUELINE Well, will you bring my case down for me, while I check that you've got everything you need.

BERNARD *(heading for the stairs)* I'm quite capable of defrosting canelloni, you know.

The phone rings. He hesitates on the stairs.

JACQUELINE I'll get it. *(She is nearer and answers the phone before he can do anything)* Go on.

BERNARD *(apprehensively)* Er...right.

BERNARD *vanishes up the stairs.*

JACQUELINE Hallo? ...The what agency? ...Bon Appetit—who are you? ...Tonight? I don't know anything about... Yes, that's me. *(She looks towards the stairs, frowning)* Oh, I see—my husband. Did he, indeed? ...She's leaving now... Suzette. Fine—I'll tell him. Thank you so much. *(She puts the phone down thoughtfully)*

BERNARD *hurries down the stairs with her suitcase.*

BERNARD *(apprehensively)* Who was that?

JACQUELINE The Bon Appetit catering agency.

BERNARD Ah. *(Playing innocent)* Fine.

JACQUELINE Just ringing to say that their girl is on her way.

BERNARD *(heading for the door)* I see.

JACQUELINE Her name is Suzette.

BERNARD *(pausing at the door)* Suzette.

JACQUELINE And everything's arranged for this evening.

BERNARD *(putting down the suitcase)* Perhaps I'd better explain...

JACQUELINE Perhaps you had.

BERNARD I'm not entirely going to totally be absolutely on my own after all.

JACQUELINE Really?

BERNARD No.

JACQUELINE And who is she?

BERNARD *(laughing)* No, no, my sweet—don't get the wrong idea. Robert rang yesterday...

JACQUELINE *(stunned)* Robert?

BERNARD He's just back from Hong Kong. He was at a loose end, and wondered what we were doing this weekend, and—

JACQUELINE Which Robert?

BERNARD *The* Robert. My oldest friend Robert. Our best man Robert.

JACQUELINE Robert is coming here?

BERNARD Yes. Tonight. I didn't mention it because I knew you'd worry about leaving us on our own, and—

JACQUELINE Robert is coming here, and you didn't tell me?

BERNARD He only phoned yesterday, sweetheart, and I didn't want you to start changing plans for our sake. We'll be fine on our own. I'm quite looking forward to it actually.

JACQUELINE He's staying the weekend?

BERNARD Well, tonight and tomorrow. That's why I hired the agency. Bit extravagant, I know, but I wanted to be free over dinner tonight—get a bit pissed, talk over old times, and—

JACQUELINE When's he arriving?

BERNARD *(looking at his watch)* Soon. He's coming down from Paris by train. Going to call me from the station.

JACQUELINE *(dazed)* I see.

BERNARD So you musn't change your plans, darling. You give your mother a nice weekend to keep her going for a while and Robert and I can have a good old-fashioned bachelor time together. It's all organized.

JACQUELINE So it appears.

BERNARD *(looking at his watch again)* You must hurry. She's going to start worrying what's happened to you.

BERNARD *tries to give her the car keys and urge her towards the door. She shows no sign of moving.*

I'll, er... I'll get the car out for you.

BERNARD *gives her a worried look and hurries off out of the front door.*

JACQUELINE *stands in a daze. The phone rings. She answers it.*

JACQUELINE Robert! Robert, where are you—at the station? *(She looks towards the front door to check that* **BERNARD** *has gone)* Robert, he's just told me you were coming! I'm just about to leave for mother's! ...Yes! I've arranged to go

to her for the weekend! But I didn't know you were coming, my darling—I've only just found out! Why didn't you call me? ...Well they do have phones in Hong Kong... Oh lord, my angel, I don't know what I can do. How long will you be? It's a two minute taxi ride... Yes, yes... Well leave it with me, I'll try and think of something... I love you too, my precious. Don't worry—I'm not going to miss the chance of a whole weekend with you. Get here as soon as you can. *(She puts the receiver down. She paces frantically. She taps a number on the phone)* Mother? It's me... No, I know I haven't left yet, Mother, but you see I'm—I'm not feeling very well... No, I think it's a touch of flu... Well, I was so looking forward to coming, my dear, but I really don't think I'm up to it. Why don't we make it next weekend? ...Yes, I'm sure I'll be better by then. I'm so sorry to disappoint you, but I promise I'll get over next weekend. 'Bye, Mother. *(She replaces the phone)*

BERNARD *enters.*

BERNARD *(picking up her case)* The car's outside, darling. I'll—

JACQUELINE That was Mother on the phone.

BERNARD Your mother?

JACQUELINE She's got the flu.

BERNARD What?

JACQUELINE She's not well. So I've put it off till next week.

BERNARD *(stunned)* Next week?

JACQUELINE Yes. Isn't that nice? So I can see Robert after all.

BERNARD B-b-but you can't...! You... I...we...

JACQUELINE It's all right, darling, I won't get in the way of your bachelor reminiscences.

BERNARD You must go and look after her! An old lady with the flu like that.

JACQUELINE Oh, she's got Sophie next door looking after her. She practically ordered me not to come.

BERNARD But—but...

JACQUELINE It's fine—I can look after *you* both now. We'll have a lovely time. *(She picks up the phone)* I'll just ring that agency to tell them we'll be one more.

BERNARD No, no—don't call them!

JACQUELINE But they'll want to know we're three now.

BERNARD They know already. I mean, I—I told them we would supply the food, so it doesn't matter how many there are.

JACQUELINE You were going to give Robert frozen canelloni?

BERNARD No, I was going to nip into the village and get something special, but—

JACQUELINE Fine—we can do that now. No problem.

BERNARD No...yes... Oh dear, I... *(He wanders about distraught)*

JACQUELINE What's the matter?

BERNARD Nothing, nothing. I'm delighted. It's—it's just...

JACQUELINE Is there something you haven't told me?

BERNARD No, of course not. I've just got to get used to the different plan, that's all.

JACQUELINE Well, why don't you take my case back upstairs for me, while I get things ready in the kitchen for the girl?

BERNARD *(dazed)* Yes...right... *(He picks up the suitcase, and goes to the stairs. He stops at the bottom)* Are you sure your mother doesn't need you?

JACQUELINE Quite sure.

BERNARD Oh God...

JACQUELINE What?

BERNARD Oh good. *(He turns back to the stairs)*

JACQUELINE *(in the kitchen doorway)* By the way, Robert just phoned too. He's on his way.

BERNARD *stumbles on the bottom stair.*

BERNARD *(grinning at her feebly)* Oh, good. *(He turns away)* Oh, God.

BERNARD *goes on up the stairs.*

JACQUELINE *watches him until he is out of sight, then goes to the mirror and preens herself. The doorbell rings. She hurries to the front door and opens it.*

ROBERT *enters with a suitcase, wearing a hat.*

ROBERT Darling!

JACQUELINE Darling!

He takes off his hat and puts down his case.

ROBERT Thank God, you're still here.

JACQUELINE Wild horses wouldn't move me. *(She goes to kiss him)*

ROBERT *(stopping her with his hat between them)* Where's Bernard?

JACQUELINE Upstairs.

ROBERT Where's your mother?

JACQUELINE In bed with flu.

ROBERT Where are you tonight?

JACQUELINE In bed with you.

ROBERT My angel!

They go to kiss again. He stops.

This is crazy, you know.

JACQUELINE He invited you, not me.

ROBERT We'll have to be so careful.

JACQUELINE I'll find a way. Oh, I'm so glad I found out you were coming.

ROBERT You were the only reason I did!

Finally he embraces her, the hat between them. A door closes upstairs.

JACQUELINE He's coming!

He picks up his suitcase again. She puts his slightly battered hat on his head and pushes him back out of the front door. He appears to be just entering.

BERNARD *comes down the stairs.*

ROBERT Hallo!

BERNARD You're here!

JACQUELINE Just.

ROBERT Only just. *(He takes his hat off. He shakes hands)* How are you?

BERNARD Terrific! How was Hong Kong?

ROBERT Terrific! It's er...it's so good to see you both. Thank you for having me...inviting me at such short notice.

BERNARD Oh, we see so little of you.

JACQUELINE Far too little.

ROBERT Well, that's nice. *(He looks round)* Lovely house.

BERNARD Of course, you haven't seen it yet.

ROBERT No.

BERNARD Quite small, but ideal for weekends. Less than two hours from Paris. Jacqueline did it all.

ROBERT *(to her)* So attractive.

BERNARD She has such an eye.

ROBERT A beautiful eye.

BERNARD Have you decided where he's sleeping, darling?

JACQUELINE Um…more or less.

BERNARD *(indicating guest bedroom 1)* You see you could either have that room… *(More enthusiastically indicating bedroom 2)* or this room.

ROBERT Er…

ROBERT *sees* **JACQUELINE** *signalling behind* **BERNARD***'s back at bedroom 1.*

Well then, that room.

BERNARD *(dismayed)* Oh, are you sure? This room's—

ROBERT *(taking his case)* Yes, that'll be fine.

BERNARD Right. It's the cow-shed!

ROBERT What?

BERNARD This was an old farm building once, you see, before we converted it. This was the main barn. We're upstairs in the loft—where the haymaking goes on—ha, ha. The kitchen's the old dairy, with the dining-room next door in the hen-house—and the other spare bedroom is the piggery.

ROBERT I'm glad I didn't choose that.

JACQUELINE *(opening the door to bedroom 1)* No, this is nicer. Lovely big bed.

ROBERT *(peering in)* Lovely.

ROBERT *carries his case into the room.*

JACQUELINE *provocatively presses against him as he squeezes past her.* **BERNARD** *glances at his watch while* **JACQUELINE** *is not looking, and peers out of the window.*

JACQUELINE *(murmuring)* And don't lock your door tonight.

BERNARD *(turning)* What?

JACQUELINE *(turning to him)* Er...we've got to shop for more tonight.

BERNARD Ah—yes.

JACQUELINE I'd better make a list. What were you planning for dinner?

BERNARD I, er...hadn't really thought.

JACQUELINE You hadn't thought? Oh we must plan a nice meal. Is this Suzette girl a good cook?

BERNARD Cordon bleu, they said. And she serves it all, and washes up afterwards.

JACQUELINE You *were* going to do yourselves proud!

BERNARD Well, you know how Robert likes the little extras in life.

JACQUELINE Yes. Well then, you can come with me.

BERNARD Me? You don't need me.

JACQUELINE Yes, I do.

BERNARD What for?

JACQUELINE To pay the bill.

BERNARD But...

JACQUELINE And carry the bags.

BERNARD Ah.

JACQUELINE And we must hurry—it's getting late.

JACQUELINE *goes into the kitchen.*

BERNARD *(frantically)* Oh, God! Oh, hell!

ROBERT *appears from bedroom 1.*

ROBERT Very nice for a cow-shed, I must say.

BERNARD *(grabbing him urgently)* Quickly, Robert. We've got to think fast here.

ROBERT Eh?

BERNARD I need your help, old son.

ROBERT What's wrong?

BERNARD *(going to the bar)* Have a drink.

ROBERT *(sitting)* Already?

BERNARD You're going to need it. Usual vodka and tonic?

ROBERT Plenty of tonic, please.

BERNARD Same old Robert. *(Pouring two vodkas)* How long have we known each other, Robert? Fifteen years?

ROBERT Must be.

BERNARD Don't see enough of each other.

ROBERT No.

BERNARD But that doesn't stop us remaining good friends, does it?

ROBERT No, indeed.

BERNARD *(bringing the drinks)* That's why we know we can rely on each other in a crisis.

ROBERT Certainly. What crisis?

BERNARD Hold on to your hat, Robert.

ROBERT My hat?

BERNARD *(sitting beside him on the sofa)* There's something you didn't know about this weekend.

ROBERT What?

BERNARD Jacqueline wasn't supposed to be here.

ROBERT I know, she…no, I didn't know that, no.

BERNARD She was going to go and stay with her mother. Much against her wishes.

ROBERT Her mother's?

BERNARD No, Jacqueline's.

ROBERT Why?

BERNARD She doesn't like leaving me on my own.

ROBERT Ah.

BERNARD But there was something *she* didn't know.

ROBERT What?

BERNARD I wasn't.

ROBERT You weren't what?

BERNARD Going to be on my own. Know why?

ROBERT I was coming.

BERNARD No, not...well yes, but that came later. And that didn't matter, because you'd provide a good alibi anyway.

ROBERT Alibi?

BERNARD Yes.

ROBERT What for?

BERNARD The reason I wasn't going to be on my own.

ROBERT *(puzzled)* Do you think you could elucidate a little?

BERNARD You see, Robert, some time ago I met this girl.

ROBERT Really?

BERNARD Superb. A model. Knock-out!

ROBERT Really?

BERNARD Don't sound so surprised.

ROBERT No, no—it's just...

BERNARD I fell for her—hook, line and sinker.

ROBERT Really?

BERNARD And she fell for me.

ROBERT *Really?*

BERNARD Please don't keep saying really like that!

ROBERT Sorry.

BERNARD The point is, Jacqueline was supposed to be away for the weekend while Suzanne—that's the girl—was here.

ROBERT *(looking round)* Here?

BERNARD It's her birthday. It was all organized, you see, for a nice little celebration. And then the old buzzard got the flu.

ROBERT The girl?

BERNARD Jacqueline's mother!

ROBERT Ah.

BERNARD That's why Jacqueline's still here. She couldn't go. And it's landed me right in it.

ROBERT In what?

BERNARD Use your brains, Robert!

ROBERT Yes, right.

BERNARD She's coming here! She's going to be here any moment.

ROBERT I thought she had the flu.

BERNARD The girl! The girl!

ROBERT Oh, the girl.

BERNARD She's on her way! She was supposed to be on the same train you were on.

JACQUELINE *(the light finally dawning) Really!*

BERNARD Yes, really.

ROBERT I see!

BERNARD You didn't, did you?

ROBERT What?

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