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SF PERUSALS

# The Scandalous Affair of MR KETTLE AND MRS MOON

A Comedy in Three Acts

by

J. B. PRIESTLEY



LONDON

SAMUEL FRENCH LIMITED

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# MR KETTLE AND MRS MOON

Produced at the Duchess Theatre, London, on the 1st September 1955, with the following cast of characters—

(*in the order of their appearance*)

| | |
|---|---|
| George Kettle | *Clive Morton* |
| Mrs Twigg, the housekeeper | *Phyllis Morris* |
| Monica Twigg, Mrs Twigg's daughter | *Wendy Craig* |
| Alderman Hardacre | *Julian Somers* |
| Superintendent Street | *Richard Warner* |
| Delia Moon | *Frances Rowe* |
| Henry Moon, her husband | *Raymond Francis* |
| Mr Clinton | *Beckett Bould* |
| Dr Grenock | *John Moffatt* |

The Play directed by Tony Richardson

Setting by Paul Mayo

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

*The action of the Play passes in the living-room of George Kettle's flat in Brickmill, a town in the Midlands, on a wet Monday in November*

ACT I

Morning

ACT II

Afternoon

ACT III

Early evening

*Time—the present*

# MR KETTLE AND MRS MOON

## ACT I

SCENE—*The living-room of George Ketile's flat in Brickmill, a town in the Midlands. A wet Monday morning in November.*

*The flat consists of the ground floor of a solid Victorian villa. The living-room has a door* R *leading to the hall, a door down* L *to the kitchen and an arch in an alcove up* R *giving access to the bedroom. A large window in a deep bay up* L *overlooks the street. The fireplace is presumed to be in the "fourth wall". The room is furnished in a shabby-comfortable masculine style. There is a big sofa* RC *with a small table* L *of it; an easy chair* LC*; a dining-table with two chairs in the window bay; a cabinet for drinks down* L; *a powerful radiogram upstage of the door down* R, *and a business-like desk and telephone up* C. *At night the room is lit by a standard lamp* R *of the desk, and electric-candle wall-brackets* R *and* L. *The switch for the brackets is below the door* L.

(*See the Ground Plan and Photograph of the Scene*)

*When the* CURTAIN *rises* GEORGE KETTLE, *an attractive man in his forties, is discovered sitting on the sofa, at the* L *end, finishing his breakfast which is set on a small collapsible table. He is in dark formal clothes. The rain can be heard outside the window. There are some lights on. With a fixed resigned melancholy look, which never changes, Kettle takes a last sip of tea, wipes his mouth and then folds his napkin, rises and goes into the hall for his hat, coat, umbrella and scarf. He re-enters and places the umbrella on the dining-room table and his hat on the settee table, and throws his coat over the back of the sofa. He puts on his scarf and coat, picks up his hat and goes to the mirror and adjusts the hat—he brushes some specks off his coat, picks up the papers, switches off the lights, and goes out. We hear the slam of the outer door off. It is important that he should perform every action very smoothly and carefully, and without moving a muscle of his face.*

*Just after the slam,* MRS TWIGG, *a mournful-looking working woman in her fifties, enters* R *and immediately switches on the radio, from which there comes the sound of a very noisy cinema organ. She takes the breakfast tray and the small folding table on which it was placed into the kitchen, returning at once with a duster. She begins dusting in a sketchy routine fashion. The telephone rings. She tries to answer it but the radio organ is making too much noise. Putting down the receiver by the side of the telephone, she goes to switch off the radio. But when she picks up the receiver again, shouting "Hello—Hello!" clearly the caller has rung off. She now switches on the radio again, but*

*just as she has moved a step or two away from it, the telephone rings again. This time she switches off the radio first, then answers the telephone.*

MRS TWIGG (*into the telephone*) Yes it is—but he isn't here . . . I don't know . . . What name? . . . Hardacre? All right, Mr Hardacre. (*She puts down the receiver and continues with her work. After a few moments, the telephone rings again. She answers it*) Yes—this is Mr Kettle's flat . . . No, he isn't. He's at the bank, same as usual . . . (*Surprised*) You *are* the bank? Well then, I don't know where he is . . . All I can tell you is he had his breakfast same as usual and set off same as usual . . . No, he didn't seem any different . . . Well, I'll be going home soon—I don't give him his lunch on Mondays, 'cos I have my washing to do at home . . . Yes, I could leave him a note. (*She replaces the receiver and continues with her work. She moves to the window, closes it, then switches on the wall-brackets by the switch below the door* L)

(*The telephone rings*)

(*She moves to the telephone and lifts the receiver. Into the telephone*) Yes, it is—but he isn't here . . . I don't know. Bank's just rung up to ask where he was, and I told 'em I couldn't say . . . What name? . . . Hardacre? . . . All right, Mr Hardacre. (*She replaces the receiver, then moves to the sofa and dusts it*)

(*The sound of the front door closing and of cymbals being clashed is heard off* L.

GEORGE KETTLE *enters* L. *He carries a box containing a child's shooting game, and a drumstick. He moves to the easy chair* LC, *puts the box, his hat and the drumstick on it. He then removes his coat*)

(*Surprised*) Mr Kettle? What's the matter? Have you been taken bad?

KETTLE. No, I've been taken good. (*He hits his hat with the drumstick*)

MRS TWIGG (*puzzled*) How do you mean?

KETTLE. Never mind, Mrs Twigg.

(KETTLE *exits to the hall and hangs his coat on the hall-stand*)

MRS TWIGG. Bank's been asking for you. So has Mr Hardacre —Hardacre's Stores, I suppose?

KETTLE (*off*) That's the chap.

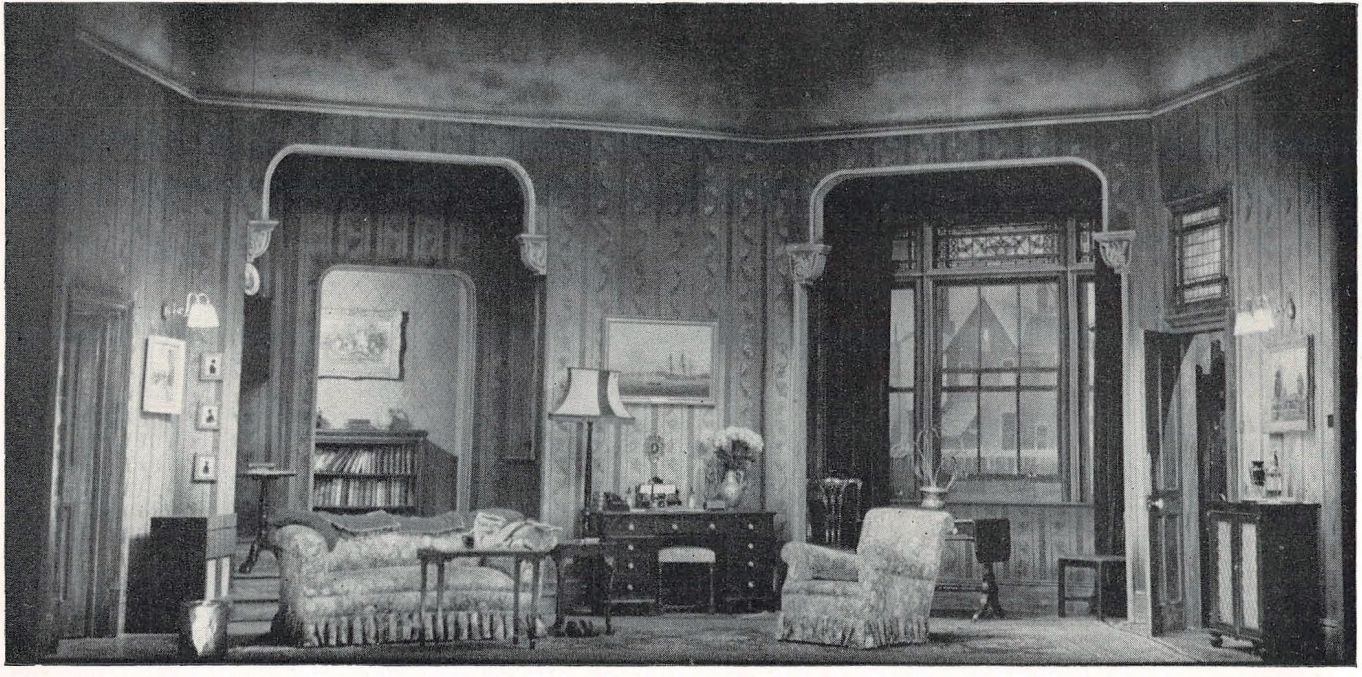
MRS TWIGG. But didn't you go to the bank the same as usual?

KETTLE (*off*) No.

MRS TWIGG. But you set off the same as usual.

(KETTLE *enters from the hall. He carries a pair of cymbals*)

KETTLE (*crossing to Mrs Twigg*) After that it stopped being the same as usual. (*He clashes the cymbals in her face, then puts them on the*



*To face page 2—Mr Kettle and Mrs Moon*

*Photograph by Wilfred Newton*

*table* L *of the sofa and crosses to the arch up* R) Now I'm going to change these clothes.

MRS TWIGG (*puzzled*) Why, Mr Kettle?

KETTLE (*stopping and speaking over his shoulder*) Because I don't like them, Mrs Twigg.

(KETTLE *exits to the bedroom.* MRS TWIGG *looks uncertainly after him*)

MRS TWIGG (*calling*) If you're not feeling well, Mr Kettle, I think you ought to say so.

KETTLE (*off*) I'm feeling fine.

MRS TWIGG. But you can't be—coming back like this . . .

KETTLE (*off*) Never felt better.

MRS TWIGG (*after a pause; worried*) But what about the bank?

KETTLE (*off*) What about it?

MRS TWIGG (*moving to the arch*) Well, they're asking for you.

(*There is no reply*)

(*After a pause*) They don't know where you are. You'll have to let 'em know, won't you?

KETTLE (*off*) No.

(*The telephone rings.* MRS TWIGG *moves to the telephone*)

(*Off. He shouts*) Don't answer it, Mrs Twigg. Just take the receiver off and put it down.

(MRS TWIGG, *bewildered, lifts the telephone receiver to stop it ringing, and lays the receiver on the desk*)

MRS TWIGG (*after a pause*) I suppose you know what you're doing, Mr Kettle?

KETTLE (*off*) Yes, I know what I'm doing. What are *you* doing?

MRS TWIGG. Just tidying up. I like to get back home soon on Mondays.

KETTLE (*off*) Off you go, then.

MRS TWIGG. There's no lunch here for you, y'know, Mr Kettle. Don't forget you always have it at the club on Mondays. (*She dusts the desk*) I suppose I could nip out an' get you something?

(KETTLE *enters from the bedroom. He is now loosely and comfortably dressed, in old corduroy trousers and a jersey, or whatever the actor prefers. He is in his socks. He looks quite different from the formal type who went into the bedroom: a relaxed, free-and-easy man*)

KETTLE. No, thank you, Mrs Twigg. (*He moves to the desk and picks up the receiver. Into the telephone*) Good-bye. (*He puts the receiver on the desk. To Mrs Twigg*) Now you go home. (*During the following dialogue he sits on the sofa, puts on a pair of casual shoes*

*which are on the floor in front of the sofa, then takes his pipe and tobacco from his pocket and fills and lights his pipe*)

(Mrs Twigg *watches anxiously, clearly baffled by Kettle's conduct*)

Mrs Twigg. What about the telephone?

Kettle. That's all right.

Mrs Twigg. But nobody can talk to you if it's like that. It's *engaged* all the time.

Kettle (*rising and crossing to the cabinet down* L) Probably it likes to be engaged. (*He pours a whisky and soda for himself*)

(Mrs Twigg, *puzzled, stares at Kettle, then notices the parcel*)

Mrs Twigg (*moving down* C) What is this, sir?

Kettle. A shooting game.

Mrs Twigg. A shooting game?

Kettle. I happened to see it in the toyshop window—so I bought it. You shoot at jungle animals and knock them over. I had one—oh—thirty-five years ago—and it seemed to me about time I had another one. (*He sips his drink*)

Mrs Twigg (*looking disapprovingly at the drink*) Mr Kettle, I don't want to say anything I oughtn't—but I must tell you straight I don't like to see you drinking like this in the morning.

Kettle. Jolly good health! (*He drinks and puts his glass on the table* L *of the sofa, then crosses to the easy chair*)

Mrs Twigg. It isn't right. You don't know what it'll lead to. You're known to be one of the steadiest and best-respected men in Brickmill . . .

Kettle (*picking up the bowler hat and drumstick and handing them to Mrs Twigg*) Mrs Twigg, never mind about that. Tell me something. Do you like Brickmill? (*He unties the string of the box*)

Mrs Twigg. Well, I've lived here all my life—and . . .

Kettle (*cutting in*) Now give me a plain answer. *Do you like it?*

Mrs Twigg. No, not much. But we have to put up with it.

Kettle. Have we?

Mrs Twigg (*surprised*) Well, haven't we?

Kettle. No. (*To avoid further argument. Gently but firmly*) Now, off you go, Mrs Twigg.

Mrs Twigg (*putting the drumstick on the table* L *of the sofa; a routine question*) Same time in the morning, I suppose, Mr Kettle?

Kettle (*considering this*) I don't know.

Mrs Twigg (*astonished*) You don't know?

Kettle. No. Perhaps I shan't be here.

Mrs Twigg. Why, where are you going?

Kettle (*without emphasis*) I don't know. I haven't any plans. I don't want to have any plans. I'm tired of plans.

Mrs Twigg. You're in a queer state of mind, aren't you, Mr Kettle?

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