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SF PERUSALS

BOEING-BOEING

A Comedy
by Marc Camoletti

Translated by
Beverley Cross and Francis Evans

SAMUEL FRENCH

samuelfrench.co.uk

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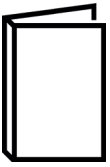
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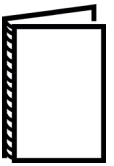
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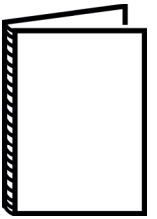
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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 recent 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 latest 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 *Pyjama 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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BOEING-BOEING

By Marc Camoletti

Translated by Beverley Cross and Francis Evans

The translators' names to be no greater than 75% of the size afforded the author.

BOEING-BOEING

Original version presented at the Apollo Theatre, London, on February 20th, 1962, by John Gale in association with Jack Minister, with the following cast:

JANET	Carole Shelley
BERNARD	Patrick Cargill
BERTHA	Carmel McSharry
ROBERT	David Tomlinson
JACQUELINE	Andrée Melly
JUDITH	Jane Downs

Directed by Jack Minster
Designed by Hutchinson Scott
Costumes by Joan Littlewood
Production Stage Manager: Grimmond Henderson

This version presented at the Comedy Theatre on February 15th, 2007, by Sonia Friedman Productions, ACT Productions, Matthew Byam Shaw, Robert G. Bartner, and Bob Boyett, with the following cast:

GLORIA	Tamzin Outhwaite
BERNARD	Roger Allam
BERTHA	Frances de la Tour
ROBERT	Mark Rylance
GABRIELLA	Daisy Beaumont
GRETCHEN	Michelle Gomez

Directed by Matthew Warchus
Designed by Rob Howell
Lighting designed by Hugh Vanstone
Sound designed by Simon Baker
Original music by Claire van Kampen
Production Stage Manager: Patrick Molony

CHARACTERS

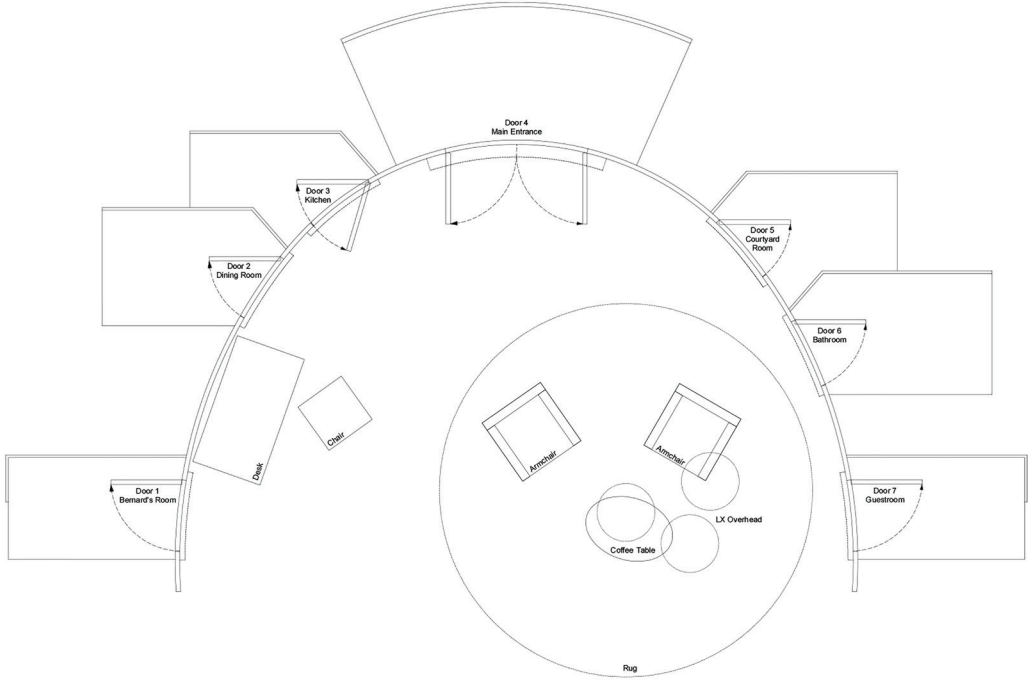
GLORIA, an American air hostess
BERNARD, a Parisian bachelor
BERTHA, Bernard's housekeeper
ROBERT, a friend of Bernard's
GABRIELLA, an Italian air hostess
GRETCHEN, a German air hostess

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action of the play takes place in Bernard's flat, near Orly Airport, in Paris.

ACT I Morning
ACT II Afternoon
ACT III Evening

Time—1960s



Ground plan from the 2007 West End production © Rob Howell

ACT I

BERNARD*'s flat, morning.*

There are two armchairs, a coffee table, a desk with a globe on it and a chair at the desk.

BERNARD *and* **GLORIA** *are breakfasting.* **GLORIA** *has an American accent.*

GLORIA Bernard, darling, do you think I've time to eat another pancake?

BERNARD *(looking at his watch)* I should think so – if you hurry. *(He goes to door 3 and calls)* Bertha!

GLORIA I adore pancakes for breakfast, don't you?

BERNARD Not especially.

GLORIA But back home, all our dieticians agree that a big breakfast prevents day-long neurosis.

BERTHA *enters from door 3.*

BERTHA Did you call, monsieur?

BERNARD Another pancake, Bertha.

BERTHA For mademoiselle?

GLORIA Please, Bertie.

BERTHA And more of that "black stuff" to pour over it?

GLORIA Yes, please. But it's not "black stuff," it's molasses – very good for the complexion.

BERTHA Well, I don't know what it's for, but I suppose it's all right. I don't like the look of it myself, but then I'm not here to reform the world.

BERNARD Well, that's a relief. So, just get busy on the pancake.

BERTHA Right. But don't blame me if it makes her ill.

BERNARD Are you going to eat it?

BERTHA No.

BERNARD So, there's no need to argue about it. Just hurry up– Mademoiselle Gloria hasn't got much time.

GLORIA Please, Bertie, do hurry. I shall miss my plane.

BERTHA All right. I'm going. But it isn't easy, you know.

BERNARD What? What? What is it now?

BERTHA Nothing...nothing...

BERTHA *exits, door 3.*

GLORIA That woman's always in such a bad mood.

BERNARD Is she?

GLORIA It's getting annoying.

BERNARD No. It's just her way. Don't worry about it.

GLORIA I *do* worry. If it goes on like this we'll just have to get rid of her, honey.

BERNARD Whatever for?

GLORIA I don't think she likes me.

BERNARD Now, darling, of course she likes you. It's just all this food you eat. It seems to upset her. It gives her a kind of indirect indigestion.

GLORIA What time is it, darling?

BERNARD Between twenty and a quarter to ten.

GLORIA I don't know – when I'm with you it just whistles by.

BERNARD It's sweet of you to say so.

GLORIA It's true. Is it the same for you?

BERNARD Of course.

GLORIA And does it drag when I'm away?

BERNARD Terribly. Never-ending.

BERTHA *enters with a pancake and molasses.*

BERTHA Mademoiselle's pancake and black stuff.

GLORIA How marvellous. Thank you, Bertie.

BERTHA And is that the lot?

BERNARD No. Some more coffee for me, please, Bertha, and another orange juice for you, darling?

GLORIA No, darling. Truly. I've had enough.

BERTHA Well, thank the Lord for that!

BERTHA *exits, door 3.*

GLORIA You see – she doesn't like me.

BERNARD Darling!

GLORIA She doesn't. Whenever I get home she's always on edge. While I'm here, she's kind of OK. But when it's time to go, she's downright hostile.

BERNARD Well, she's sad you're going.

GLORIA Because I'm your fiancée?

BERNARD Of course.

GLORIA Oh. And if I was here all the time, she'd be all right?

BERNARD Absolutely! Then we'd all be happy.

GLORIA I'd better get dressed quickly, or I'll miss the plane.

BERNARD That would never do.

GLORIA No, it would be terrible.

BERNARD Terrible. Tell me, darling, when do you get back?

GLORIA Well – it's Saturday today. I'll be in New York at 17:08, then San Francisco – but straight there and straight back.

BERNARD And when will you be back here in Paris?

GLORIA We arrive back in Paris Monday evening. And off again on Wednesday.

BERNARD Monday. Monday. Monday. *(Taking out a notebook and pen)* What time on Monday, darling?

GLORIA 18:30 local time.

BERNARD Excellent. So whatever happens in San Francisco, you'll be back in Paris on Monday?

GLORIA That's right.

BERNARD Good. Good. Good. Good. Good.

GLORIA It's so sweet how you always have to write it down.

BERNARD So I don't get it mixed up.

GLORIA Get what mixed up?

BERNARD My arrangements. My business arrangements. I'm a busy man. I've got work to do. I want to make sure that it's all done by the time you get back here so I can spend Monday to Wednesday with you.

GLORIA You're a genius.

BERNARD I know – it's lovely, isn't it? Now hadn't you better rush?

GLORIA You want to get rid of me?

BERNARD Darling, of course I hate to see you go. But time passes. Planes take off.

BERTHA *enters with coffee.*

BERTHA Here's your coffee.

BERNARD Thank you, Bertha.

GLORIA Bertie, dear? Will you do me a favour?

BERTHA Depends.

GLORIA It's Mr Bernard. Will you take good care of him till I get back on Monday?

BERTHA I'll do my best. But he's a big boy now, you know.

GLORIA Yes, but they're all just kids at heart.

BERTHA I don't know about that. There aren't too many like monsieur. He's in a class of his own.

BERNARD Yes. Yes. Very good. That'll do, Bertha.

GLORIA See how much she appreciates you, darling?

BERTHA Oh, I spend my life appreciating monsieur.

BERNARD Well, could you appreciate me somewhere else?

BERTHA She asked me a question and I answered it.

BERNARD And we're all very grateful.

GLORIA Well, don't appreciate him too much. You could end up falling in love with him, and I'll be very jealous.

BERTHA I doubt it'll come to that.

BERNARD Mercifully. And you'd better hurry, darling.

GLORIA I'll go and get dressed.

GLORIA *exits, door 1.*

BERNARD What's for lunch?

BERTHA The American's flying out?

BERNARD Yes. Well?

BERTHA I'm waiting for my orders. Monsieur has his timetables. And the menus change according to the timetables. All the time! They change. They change round all the time.

BERNARD All right. Take it easy. Now then, Mademoiselle Gabriella will be here for lunch.

BERTHA Ah! Well, that's all right then. Think I can cope with that one. But it isn't easy you know. I find it very difficult to keep track of them all. I don't know how you manage it. It isn't easy.

BERNARD I know it isn't easy. You don't have to keep reminding me.

BERTHA Well, as long as you appreciate me. That's all I ask, just a little appreciation. So what do you want for lunch?

BERNARD You're the cook. You please yourself.

BERTHA Mademoiselle Gabriella? What about saltimbocca alla romana?

BERNARD We had a saltimbocca last Saturday.

BERTHA Of course we did. Mademoiselle Gabriella was here last Saturday. She liked it. She told me so.

BERNARD All right, you win. Saltimbocca alla romana.

BERTHA And what about dinner? A nice roast? Lamb, perhaps?

BERNARD Roast lamb? Yes, excellent.

BERTHA With olives?

BERNARD *(getting his notebook out)* Yes – er, no, no, wait a minute. Can't be done.

BERTHA No olives?

BERNARD No. No roast lamb either. Near thing that, Bertha. You see it's Mademoiselle Gabriella for lunch, but it's Mademoiselle Gretchen for dinner. She arrives at 19.06.

BERTHA I see. No need to say any more. No roast lamb. Back to sauerkraut and frankfurters.

BERNARD I'm afraid so. Sorry about that.

BERTHA Just one thing after another. I don't know.

BERTHA *exits, door 3.*

GLORIA *enters in her TWA uniform.*

GLORIA Darling, is the clock in our room right?

BERNARD I don't know, darling – but it's almost ten o'clock.

GLORIA Then I've just time to do my nails.

BERNARD Do your nails! But you have to be at the airport by eleven, darling.

GLORIA I can spare two minutes.

BERNARD Don't blame me if the traffic's thick and the lift gets stuck. I really think you ought to hurry.

GLORIA *takes out a nail file from her shoulder bag.*

GLORIA Oh, stop fussing. Darling, I can't tell you how happy I am right now.

BERNARD Why, because you're going?

GLORIA No. Don't be silly. No, I'm happy because they're going to transfer me to a new aircraft.

BERNARD Really?

GLORIA Brand new. The Super-Boeing. It's just fantastic. Delta wings and four Rolls-Royce turbo-jets. And do you know, darling, each jet has a thrust of nineteen thousand pounds.

BERNARD Oh, that's interesting.

GLORIA You bet it's interesting, and especially for us.

BERNARD Darling, I know you take your work seriously, but I can't see what a thrust of nineteen thousand pounds has to do with me.

GLORIA But it'll make the journey so much faster, darling. So, I'll be here more often and we can spend more time together.

BERNARD I see.

GLORIA You don't seem very pleased.

BERNARD Oh! But of course I'm pleased, darling. Very pleased. No point in getting too excited. I mean, you're not transferring tomorrow, are you?

GLORIA Not tomorrow. But soon, very soon.

BERNARD Good.

There's a ring at the front door, door 4.

BERTHA *enters, door 3.*

Good. Excellent, and if I wanted to be sure of that transfer, I'd make certain of catching this plane. And if you want to get to Orly by eleven, you'll have to go now.

BERTHA He's quite right, you know. Better safe than sorry, eh, monsieur?

BERNARD Absolutely.

GLORIA I'm off across the world. Leaving my little French home behind me. All ready to welcome me when I come back.

BERNARD You'll find nothing changed, darling.

GLORIA I hope not.

BERTHA There's a Monsieur Castin to see you, monsieur.

BERNARD Castin? Castin? I don't know anyone called Castin. Oh! Robert. But of course! Robert Castin. Show him in!

BERTHA *exits, door 4.*

Why, we are old friends! We were at school together. Dear old Robert. Haven't seen him for ages.

BERTHA *enters with* **ROBERT**.

Robert, my dear fellow!

ROBERT *laughs.*

You! Here in Paris. I can hardly believe it. How are you?

ROBERT I'm fine, how are you?

BERNARD I'm fine. How are you?

ROBERT I'm fine. How are you?

BERNARD Bloody Robert!

ROBERT Bloody Bernard!

BERTHA Bloody marvellous!

BERTHA *exits, door 3.*

ROBERT I say, I'm not interrupting anything, am I?

BERNARD Of course not. An old friend like you. And it must be ten years or more since we met.

ROBERT Eleven years, eight months.

BERNARD Whatever it was, it was much too long. It's good to see you.

ROBERT Me too. Much too long.

GLORIA Bernard!

BERNARD Oh, sorry. An old friend of mine. Robert Castin.

GLORIA How do you do?

ROBERT Delighted.

BERNARD Gloria Hawkins. American by birth, and air hostess by profession.

ROBERT My congratulations, Miss Hawkins.

BERNARD TWA, as you can see.

ROBERT And to TWA.

GLORIA But Bernard, darling, you've forgotten the most important bit.

BERNARD Oh really? What bit?

GLORIA That we're engaged, honey.

BERNARD Of course. Robert – this is my fiancée.

ROBERT Congratulations all round then. Especially you, Bernard. You're a lucky fellow.

BERNARD Isn't she gorgeous?

ROBERT Gorgeous.

GLORIA And your friend, Bernard, is sweet. So we're all lovely. Are you engaged, Robert?

ROBERT No. No, not yet. I come from Aix, you see, and in the provinces things are much quieter, much quieter.

BERNARD Much.

GLORIA But there are a lot of pretty girls in the South.

ROBERT Oh yes. Of course. But I haven't found one yet. So I will have to fall back on a Parisian. But, anyway, you can't be interested in the story of my life. I'm in the way. I'll come back another time.

GLORIA Not at all. Besides, I'm just off.

BERNARD And about time too, darling.

ROBERT Are you sure? You're not going just because of me?

GLORIA Of course not. But it's such a pity. You're the first friend of Bernard's I've ever met. He's such a secretive man. He hides them all away somewhere.

BERNARD Not at all. The fellow lives in Aix. It's not next door, you know.

GLORIA Are you going to stay in Paris?

ROBERT I have to. I'm up here on business, you see.

GLORIA Wonderful! Then we're bound to meet again.

ROBERT I shall look forward to that.

GLORIA And you can look after Bernard for me while I'm away.

ROBERT If you say so.

BERNARD Darling, if you don't go soon you won't get back anywhere!

GLORIA Don't rush me. Besides, I've got to give you just one more kiss.

BERNARD *(to* **ROBERT***)* Excuse us.

ROBERT Please. Go ahead. Don't mind me. *(He turns to the mirror)*

GLORIA *and* **BERNARD** *embrace.*

GLORIA I adore you.

BERNARD Me too.

GLORIA Goodbye, Mr Castin.

ROBERT Goodbye.

GLORIA You're a darling. An absolute darling.

BERNARD You too.

GLORIA See you Monday.

BERNARD 18:30 – local time.

GLORIA 'Bye now.

GLORIA *blows* **BERNARD** *a kiss and exits, door 4.*

ROBERT You rascal! I must say you've done yourself very well. That's a marvellous girl – lovely!

BERNARD Yes. She's pretty good, isn't she?

ROBERT Much better than that. If I can find myself something half as good I'll be a happy man.

BERNARD Well, let's have a quick drink shall we? Whisky?

ROBERT Anything you like. What a lovely girl. And what a fantastic view you've got from up here, Bernard. You can see all Paris. *(He approaches the forestage and surveys the auditorium)*

BERNARD It's all right.

ROBERT Are you still in the architect business?

BERNARD Still at it – you know. It's good to see you again, Robert, it really is. So, what brings you to Paris?

ROBERT Well, you always said, "Come and see me when I'm fixed up in Paris," and here you are, all fixed up. And here am I.

BERNARD Dear old Robert.

ROBERT And if you give me the address of your estate agent, I'm going to fix myself up too, Bernard – I want a flat just like this. Same layout, same wonderful view. I need a flat because I'm going to get married.

BERNARD You're not!

ROBERT I am.

BERNARD Who are you engaged to?

ROBERT No one, not yet. But I know a girl, well, we're vaguely acquainted, you see. A charming girl. I haven't actually asked her yet, but I should think it'll be all right. I'd like to get married; I can't go on living alone much longer.

BERNARD You look perfectly all right to me.

ROBERT Of course I'm all right. So are you for that matter.

BERNARD You're still young.

ROBERT Well, so are you. You're in good shape, you're young, and you're going to get married.

BERNARD I certainly am not.

ROBERT Not? But I thought – well, this charming American girl, just now – she said you were engaged. Wait a minute, you agreed with her. I heard you.

BERNARD Well, if you want to be technical I suppose you could say we were engaged. Yes.

ROBERT Then you're going to get married.

BERNARD No.

ROBERT Bernard, you're always doing this to me. Look. If you're engaged, you're going to get married. It's not only technical, it's logical! Isn't it?

BERNARD It is not. And anyway, why do you want to get married? Do you love this girl?

ROBERT I don't know. I'm not raving mad about her. I don't write poems or refuse to eat or any of that sort of thing. But it would be nice. I mean, think of the social advantages. They're not to be sneezed at, are they?

BERNARD I can't think of *one*. Still if you must get married, get married my way.

ROBERT Your way?

BERNARD Polygamy.

ROBERT Polygamy?

BERNARD It's the ideal life – pleasure, variety...it's fabulous. You ought to try it!

ROBERT Polygamy? You mean lots of wives?

BERNARD Not wives, fiancées. You have all the advantages of married life with none of the drawbacks. Fiancées are much more friendly than wives. And you don't need all that many. I do very well with three.

ROBERT Three?

BERNARD Three is the ideal number. Less than three would be monotonous. More than three would be terribly tiring. Three is the dream.

ROBERT But it's immoral.

BERNARD Immoral? But my dear Robert, they all think they're the only one. *They* don't think it's immoral, so why should I? You've all the pleasures of the harem, but right here in the middle of Paris.

ROBERT They say you have your hands full with one woman, but three!

BERNARD Not me.

ROBERT Three fiancées?

BERNARD The whole secret is order. I am organized – beautifully organized.

ROBERT But, Bernard – isn't it incredibly complicated?

BERNARD Not in the least. All you need is a timetable.

ROBERT A timetable?

BERNARD A special kind of timetable. An airline timetable.

ROBERT What, to get out in a hurry?

BERNARD Not at all. Look – here it is. *(He produces a book of timetables)* The timetables of all the major routes – all in one volume.

ROBERT One volume.

BERNARD You understand?

ROBERT Yes.

BERNARD You don't really, do you?

ROBERT No.

BERNARD But it's so simple, a child could see it. Someone just had to think of it. My three fiancées are all air hostesses.

ROBERT All three?

BERNARD Yes.

ROBERT Air hostesses?

BERNARD All three.

ROBERT Don't be barmy! Three air hostesses?

BERNARD That's the trick. And they're all fantastic girls.

ROBERT Fantastic? If TWA was anything to go by, they're devastating.

BERNARD And the other two are just as good. Of course they are. You see, they're all tried and tested.

ROBERT They've been what?

BERNARD They're hand-picked through the admissions procedures of the different companies. In every respect! Physical, moral, intellectual. So, all the work's done for me. I'm choosing from a pool which has already been super-sifted. Not bad, is it?

ROBERT Yes. Yes. Not bad.

BERNARD The only thing is that I have to pick them from different airlines and with different routes – so they don't meet, you see.

ROBERT Ah, yes. All right. It all seems very well in theory, but I'd be curious to see how it works out in practice.

BERNARD And you will, couldn't be simpler. Gloria, my American, the one you've seen... Well, she takes off in ten minutes...and in a quarter of an hour Gabriella lands.

ROBERT Gabriella?

BERNARD My Italian. A beautiful kitten – she'll be here for lunch.

ROBERT Lunch? That's cutting it a bit close, isn't it? I mean the other one was only just here for breakfast.

BERNARD Yes, it is a bit touch and go today. But today's an exception. Gabriella is in transit. Normally it's perfectly straightforward. Two days Gloria, two days Gabriella, and two days Gretchen.

ROBERT Gretchen?

BERNARD That's my German.

ROBERT That's your German. It's an international harem.

BERNARD Exactly. Look. *(Indicating the globe)* Gretchen gets in from Stuttgart this evening; at the same time, Gabriella will be on her way to Caracas, and Gloria will be in San Francisco – you see the beauty of it?

ROBERT Perpetual motion.

BERNARD Pure mathematics. Everything designed, organized, regulated and working to the precise second. The earth revolves on its axis and my fiancées wheel above the earth. One this way. One that. One towards the sun. One towards the moon. And eventually they all, in turn, come home to me. It's geometrical, my dear Robert. So precise as to be almost poetic. And here I live in the middle of a perfect example of polygamous family life. I don't just change women, I change my diet as well. It's like living in a restaurant. So there's no chance of ever getting bored. Either in the dining room or the bedroom. It's perfect.

ROBERT Remarkable! Quite remarkable.

BERNARD Things are going a bit awry with Gloria. She does eat the most extraordinary things. Apart from that, though, flawless. I tell you, it's a dream.

ROBERT But Bernard, how do you find them?

BERNARD I've a friend who works in the travel agency at Orly Airport and he knows all the air hostesses. They talk to him. They tell him their secrets – and if he thinks they might be lonely, well, he introduces them to me.

ROBERT Does he really?

BERNARD He might help you. After all he's a friend of mine, I'm a friend of yours. I'll give him a ring.

ROBERT Oh no! This sort of thing's not for me. No. I'm not the type. It's all right for you. You've got the talent, the flair.

BERNARD That's got nothing to do with it. The timetables are the timetables. You just have to follow them.

ROBERT No! No! Not now – I'll have to think about it for a couple of years. But what happens if they get switched to a different route?

BERNARD Impossible. It's all been worked out. It's all on a schedule. Mathematical – marvellous!

BERTHA *enters, door 3.*

BERTHA *(indicating* **ROBERT***)* Will your friend be here for lunch?

ROBERT No. No.

BERNARD Yes.

ROBERT I don't want to upset your arrangements.

BERNARD You're going to eat with us, and you are going to stay – till you've found yourself a flat in Paris.

BERTHA He's going to stay?

ROBERT I'm going to stay.

BERNARD He is.

BERTHA And where?

BERNARD Where do you think? Here of course.

BERTHA Which room?

BERNARD Whichever he likes.

BERTHA Oh, great, whichever he likes.

BERTHA *exits, door 3.*

BERNARD Where's your luggage?

ROBERT I left it at the station.

BERNARD Well, you can trot along and fetch it later.

BERTHA *enters.*

BERTHA What time do you want to eat?

BERNARD As soon as Gabriella gets here.

BERTHA That's a lot of help!

BERNARD What difference does it make to you?

BERTHA You don't just rub two sticks together, you know.

BERNARD I'll let you know.

BERTHA Mind you do. We can't all make it up as we go along.

BERNARD All right, Bertha. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

BERTHA *goes to the door and turns.*

BERTHA *(taking a letter from her pocket)* Yes. And there's a letter for the American. From America.

BERNARD Oh really? Give it to me.

BERTHA *gives him the letter.*

BERTHA She won't be able to read it till she gets back, obviously.

BERNARD Obviously.

BERTHA So you'll let me know.

BERNARD What?

BERTHA What time you want to eat?

BERNARD Yes of course I'll tell you, but I'm sure Gabriella won't be long. She must be touching down about now, especially if she had the wind behind her.

BERTHA Right, let's hope Mademoiselle Gabriella has the wind behind her, then. Lunch is on its way.

BERTHA *exits, door 3.*

BERNARD That woman!

ROBERT Is she always like this?

BERNARD Yes, she is, yes, to be honest, when I took the flat she was already here so I kept her on, she's fine. It's all this coming and going. She has to keep changing her style of cooking, and I think it upsets her.

ROBERT Well, I can understand that. It's enough to rattle anybody. All this traffic. One taking off, one landing, one already airborne. Isn't it at all possible that two of your fiancées might find themselves wanting to spend the night in Paris at the same time?

BERNARD No, impossible – because of the timetables. And even if it did happen that one girl landed when another who was supposed to be taking off didn't take off, well I'd stay with the one who wasn't taking off and spend the night in Saint-Germain-en-Laye or somewhere like that.

ROBERT Yes, right, but meanwhile, what would be happening with the one who'd landed?

BERNARD She'd come here.

ROBERT She'd come back here.

BERNARD Yes, even if Bertha is out, she has her own key.

ROBERT She has her own key?

BERNARD Yes. They all have their own keys.

ROBERT They all have their own keys.

BERNARD Oh yes, and Bertha would tell her I've had to go out of town on business. Next morning, I take Saint-Germain to the airport, see her aboard a plane, wave my handkerchief, and hurry back here into the arms of the other. No panic. No problem.

ROBERT No panic, no problem. But the whole thing's a bit – well. Don't you love any of them?

BERNARD But I adore them. I can't be without any of them! I love them so much that if one asks me for something – a tiny present, say – well, I go out and buy three tiny presents! I can't bear to spoil one without spoiling the other two!

ROBERT Yes, that's very kind of you but I'm not convinced. I'll settle for a quiet little marriage with just one woman.

Everything ordinary but everything calm, with all the social advantages.

BERNARD You're wrong, you know. It's the perfect life. Oh! Just one detail – my three fiancées have the same initial for their Christian names. "G" for Gabriella, Gretchen, Gloria. It's not essential, but it does help. Initials on presents, slips of the tongue – all that sort of thing.

BERTHA *enters.*

What do you want now?

BERTHA I don't want anything. I'm just doing my job, that's all. But now America's gone, I've got to change the room for Italy.

ROBERT She thinks of everything!

BERTHA That's why I'm here, monsieur. That's my function, you see. Without me, I don't know what would happen to Monsieur Bernard – with all his complications. If Mademoiselle Gabriella is only in transit, monsieur; I mean, perhaps I needn't clear up too thoroughly.

BERNARD No. Just tidy up and change the photographs.

BERTHA And I'll make up the room properly after she's gone, before Germany gets here.

BERNARD Fine, thank you, Bertha. Perfect.

BERTHA If you say so. It's just one chore after another, if you ask me.

BERTHA *exits, door 1.*

ROBERT Change the photographs. She must be invaluable.

BERNARD Yes she's always complaining but she does know the routine.

BERTHA *enters.*

BERTHA Done.

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