

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Simple Spymán

by Patricia Harris

EXTRACT

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This script is distributed by The Australian Script Centre
77 Salamanca Place Hobart 7004 Tasmania Australia
email admin@ozscript.org
www.ozscript.org
ph +61 3 6223 4675
fax +61 3 6223 4678

SIMPLE SPYMAN:

CAST: In order of appearance.

LETTICE: Slightly spoiled daughter of Sir George Gatehouse. LETTICE is celebrating her twenty-first birthday.

HUGO: Sir George's son. Pleasant, but not very bright.

BLUDGEON: Perfect butler, hired for the day. In reality a Master Spy.

MADAM: (MA) Head of a gang of Cat Burglars.

MARINOVA: (GIRLY) Ma's daughter: Posing as ballet dancer.

ALEXI: (SONNY) Ma's son: Posing as ballet dancer.

LAURA LARK: Apprentice Secret Agent.

SIMON SIMPLE: Secret Agent who tends to live up to his name.

GEMIMA FRIMPLE: Sir George's sister-in-law. Eccentric, and short sighted.

SIR GEORGE: Owner of Gatehouse Lodge. Fond of hunting and fishing.

COLONEL BRADBURY: Chief of Spy Agency. Friend to Sir George.

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SETTING: ALL ACTION TAKES PLACE IN THE DRAWING-ROOM AT GATEHOUSE LODGE DURING A GATHERING TO CELEBRATE THE TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY OF LETTICE GATEHOUSE. DRAWING-ROOM IS FURNISHED WITH A SOFA, TWO ARMCHAIRS, A SMALL TABLE, A DRINKS TROLLY, ONE OR TWO OCCASSIONAL CHAIRS, AND ANYTHING ELSE THAT WILL SUIT. A FEW ORNAMENTS SCATTERED ABOUT. CARD TABLE.

TIME: PLAY CAN BE SET IN ANY PERIOD FROM LATE FORTIES TO PRESENT TIME.

SCENE ONE: LETTICE IS SITTING ON THE SOFA LOOKING AT A EARLY BIRTHDAY CARD. HUGO ENTERS CARRYING A POORLY AFTERNOON: WRAPPED GIFT, AND A FISHING ROD. HE IS SINGING, "FOR SHE'S A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW".

HUGO: (GIVING LETTICE THE PACKAGE AND A BROTHERLY KISS ON THE CHEEK) Happy birthday, old thing.

LETTICE: How sweet of you to spend the last of your allowance on a present for me, Hugo.

HUGO: It's the least I could do, Lettice. It isn't every day that a girl is twenty-one.

LETTICE: Well I think it's very good of you. (SHAKES GIFT) Is it that dear little bracelet that we saw in Crabshaw's window?

HUGO: (LOOKING UNCOMFORTABLE) Not exactly.

LETTICE: I know,..it's that charming necklace with the silver bell.

WHISTLING TUNELESSLY HUGO EXAMINES HIS FISHING ROD WHILE LETTICE UNWRAPS THE GIFT. SHE TAKES OUT A FISHING REEL AND A BOX OF HOOKS.

LETTICE: (LOOKING MYSTIFIED) What is this meant to be, Hugo?

HUGO: (ENTHUSIASTICALLY) Don't you recognise it, Letty? It's a Morgan Miniature Super Reel.

LETTICE: (HOLDING UP BOX OF HOOKS) And these?

HUGO: Those are double-barbed trout hooks. The man at the shop was giving away a free box of hooks with every reel purchased. Jolly decent of him I thought.

LETTICE: Double-barbed trout hooks, Hugo! How horrid! Is it a joke?

HUGO SHAKES HIS HEAD EMPHATICALLY.

LETTICE: Then why buy them for me? It can't have escaped your notice that I never fish.

HUGO: Don't you, old thing? I must have forgot. Never mind...as luck would have it the Morgan Miniature fits my rod, and an extra box of hooks is always handy. (AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT) I could teach you to fish if you like.

LETTICE: No thank you, Hugo, I think I'll pass. (SIGHS) I expect it's the thought that counts.

HUGO: In that case, Letty, would you mind if I borrowed the reel? It seems a pity to let it go to waste.

LETTICE: (HANDING HIM THE REEL AND HOOKS) Be my guest, brother dear.

HUGO: (HOLDING THE REEL AGAINST THE ROD HE LEANS BACK TO SEE HOW IT LOOKS) Speaking of guests, is there any sign of your Russian dancer?

LETTICE: Not yet...and he isn't my dancer. He's just somebody that father and aunty have asked to join us for dinner. (GIVES UP TRYING TO APPEAR COOL) But can you imagine it? Alexi Brosnov, the famous ballet dancer, actually coming here!

HUGO: I expect he will be a change from Pa's ex army friends, and Aunt Gemima's good cause cronies.

LETTICE: (NOT LISTENING) Alexi! Even his name gives me goose bumps.

HUGO: (THOUGHTFULLY) His partner might be interesting. The ravishing Marinova looks a bit of all right in the posters I've seen.

LETTICE: You can't tell from posters. She may be cross-eyed for all you know.

HUGO: So might Alexi.

LETTICE: I've heard that Marinova is terribly conceited, and always likes to be the centre of attention.

HUGO: In which case, Letty, you should have something in common.

THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR AND BLUDGEON ENTERS. (R)

BLUDGEON: (POMPOUSLY) An assortment of foriegn persons has arrived, Miss Lettice. Shall I show them in here?

LETTICE: (PATS HER HAIR AND STRAIGHTENS HER SKIRT) Oh... yes please, Bludgeon. Then try to find my father. He will want to know that our guests have arrived.

HUGO LEANS HIS FISHING ROD AGAINT AN ARMCHAIR, (L), AS BLUDGEON EXITS.