

## THE GOOD-NATUR'D MAN

### ACT THE FIRST

SCENE: AN APARTMENT IN YOUNG  
 HONEYWOOD'S HOUSE

*Enter* SIR WILLIAM HONEYWOOD, JARVIS.

SIR WILL. Good Jarvis, make no apologies for this honest bluntness. Fidelity, like yours, is the best excuse for every freedom.

JARVIS. I can't help being blunt, and being very angry too, when I hear you talk of disinheriting so good, so worthy a young gentleman as your nephew, my master. All the world loves him.

SIR WILL. Say rather, that he loves all the world; that is his fault.

JARVIS. I'm sure there is no part of it more dear to him than you are, though he has not seen you since he was a child.

SIR WILL. What signifies his affection to me, or how can I be proud of a place in a heart where every sharper and coxcomb find an easy entrance?

JARVIS. I grant you that he's rather too good-natured; that he's too much every man's man; that he laughs this minute with one, and cries the next with another; but whose instructions may he thank for all this?

SIR WILL. Not mine, sure? My letters to him during my employment in Italy, taught him only that philosophy which might prevent, not defend his errors.

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JARVIS. Faith, begging your honour's pardon, I'm sorry they taught him any philosophy at all; it has only served to spoil him. This same philosophy is a good horse in the stable, but an arrant jade on a journey. For my own part, whenever I hear him mention the name on't, I'm always sure he's going to play the fool.

SIR WILL. Don't let us ascribe his faults to his philosophy, I entreat you. No, Jarvis, his good nature arises rather from his fears of offending the importunate, than his desire of making the deserving happy.

JARVIS. What it rises from, I don't know. But, to be sure, everybody has it, that asks it.

SIR WILL. Ay, or that does not ask it. I have been now for some time a concealed spectator of his follies, and find them as boundless as his dissipation.

JARVIS. And yet, faith, he has some fine name or other for them all. He calls his extravagance, generosity; and his trusting everybody, universal benevolence. It was but last week he went security for a fellow whose face he scarce knew, and that he called an act of exalted mu—mu—munificence; ay, that was the name he gave it.

SIR WILL. And upon that I proceed, as my last effort, though with very little hopes to reclaim him. That very fellow has just absconded, and I have taken up the security. Now, my intention is to involve him in fictitious distress, before he has plunged himself into real calamity. To arrest him for that very debt, to clap an officer upon him, and then let him see which of his friends will come to his relief.

JARVIS. Well, if I could but any way see him thoroughly vexed, every groan of his would be music to me; yet, faith, I believe it impossible. I have tried to fret him myself every morning these three years; but, instead of being angry, he sits as calmly to hear me scold, as he does to his hair-dresser.

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SIR WILL. We must try him once more, however, and I'll go this instant to put my scheme into execution; and I don't despair of succeeding, as, by your means, I can have frequent opportunities of being about him, without being known. What a pity it is, Jarvis, that any man's good-will to others should produce so much neglect of himself, as to require correction. Yet, we must touch his weaknesses with a delicate hand. There are some faults so nearly allied to excellence, that we can scarce weed out the vice without eradicating the virtue. *[Exit.]*

JARVIS. Well, go thy ways, Sir William Honeywood. It is not without reason that the world allows thee to be the best of men. But here comes his hopeful nephew; the strange good-natur'd, foolish, open-hearted—And yet, all his faults were such that one loves him still the better for them.

*Enter* HONEYWOOD.

HONEYW. Well, Jarvis, what messages from my friends this morning?

JARVIS. You have no friends.

HONEYW. Well; from my acquaintance then?

JARVIS (*pulling out bills*). A few of our usual cards of compliment, that's all. This bill from your tailor; this from your mercer; and this from the little broker in Crooked-lane. He says he has been at a great deal of trouble to get back the money you borrowed.

HONEYW. That I don't know; but I'm sure we were at a great deal of trouble in getting him to lend it.

JARVIS. He has lost all patience.

HONEYW. Then he has lost a very good thing.

JARVIS. There's that ten guineas you were sending to the poor gentleman and his children in the Fleet. I believe that would stop his mouth, for a while at least.

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HONEYW. Ay, Jarvis, but what will fill their mouths in the mean time? Must I be cruel because he happens to be importunate; and, to relieve his avarice, leave them to insupportable distress?

JARVIS. 'Sdeath! Sir, the question now is how to relieve yourself. Yourself—Haven't I reason to be out of my senses, when I see things going on at sixes and sevens?

HONEYW. Whatever reason you may have for being out of your senses, I hope you'll allow that I'm not quite unreasonable for continuing in mine.

JARVIS. You're the only man alive in your present situation that could do so—Everything upon the waste. There's Miss Richland and her fine fortune gone already, and upon the point of being given to your rival.

HONEYW. I'm no man's rival.

JARVIS. Your uncle in Italy preparing to disinherit you; your own fortune almost spent; and nothing but pressing creditors, false friends, and a pack of drunken servants that your kindness has made unfit for any other family.

HONEYW. Then they have the more occasion for being in mine.

JARVIS. Soh! What will you have done with him that I caught stealing your plate in the pantry? In the fact; I caught him in the fact.

HONEYW. In the fact! If so, I really think that we should pay him his wages, and turn him off.

JARVIS. He shall be turn'd off at Tyburn, the dog; we'll hang him, if it be only to frighten the rest of the family.

HONEYW. No, Jarvis: it's enough that we have lost what he has stolen, let us not add to it the loss of a fellow-creature!

JARVIS. Very fine; well, here was the footman just now, to complain of the butler; he says he does most work, and ought to have most wages.

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HONEYW. That's but just; though perhaps, here comes the butler to complain of the footman.

JARVIS. Ay, it's the way with them all, from the scullion to the privy-counsellor. If they have a bad master, they keep quarrelling with him; if they have a good master, they keep quarrelling with one another.

*Enter BUTLER, drunk.*

BUTLER. Sir, I'll not stay in the family with Jonathan; you must part with him, or part with me, that's the ex-exposition of the matter, sir.

HONEYW. Full and explicit enough. But what's his fault, good Philip?

BUTLER. Sir, he's given to drinking, sir, and I shall have my morals corrupted, by keeping such company.

HONEYW. Ha! Ha! He has such a diverting way—

JARVIS. O quite amusing!

BUTLER. I find my wines a-going, sir; and liquors don't go without mouths, sir; I hate a drunkard, sir!

HONEYW. Well, well, Philip, I'll hear you upon that another time, so go to bed now.

JARVIS. To bed! Let him go to the devil!

BUTLER. Begging your honour's pardon, and begging your pardon master Jarvis, I'll not go to bed, nor to the devil neither. I have enough to do to mind my cellar. I forgot, your honour, Mr Croaker is below. I came on purpose to tell you.

HONEYW. Why didn't you show him up, blockhead?

BUTLER. Show him up, sir? With all my heart, sir. Up or down, all's one to me. *[Exit.]*

JARVIS. Ay, we have one or other of that family in this house from morning till night. He comes on the old affair, I suppose. The match between his son, that's just returned from Paris, and Miss Richland, the young lady he's guardian to.

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HONEYW. Perhaps so. Mr Croaker, knowing my friendship for the young lady, has got it into his head that I can persuade her to what I please.

JARVIS. Ah! If you loved yourself but half as well as she loves you, we should soon see a marriage that would set all things to rights again.

HONEYW. Love me! Sure, Jarvis, you dream. No, no; her intimacy with me never amounted to more than friendship—mere friendship. That she is the most lovely woman that ever warmed the human heart with desire, I own. But never let me harbour a thought of making her unhappy, by a connection with one so unworthy her merits as I am. No, Jarvis, it shall be my study to serve her, even in spite of my wishes; and to secure her happiness, though it destroys my own.

JARVIS. Was ever the like! I want patience.

HONEYW. Besides, Jarvis, though I could obtain Miss Richland's consent, do you think I could succeed with her guardian, or Mrs Croaker his wife; who, though both very fine in their way, are yet a little opposite in their dispositions, you know.

JARVIS. Opposite enough, Heaven knows; the very reverse of each other; she all laugh and no joke; he always complaining, and never sorrowful; a fretful poor soul that has a new distress for every hour in the four-and-twenty—

HONEYW. Hush, hush, he's coming up, he'll hear you.

JARVIS. One whose voice is a passing bell—

HONEYW. Well, well, go, do.

JARVIS. A raven that bodes nothing but mischief; a coffin and cross bones; a bundle of rue; a sprig of deadly night shade; a— (*Honeywood stopping his mouth at last, pushes him off.*)

[*Exit* JARVIS.]

HONEYW. I must own my old monitor is not entirely wrong. There is something in my friend Croaker's conversa-

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tion that quite depresses me. His very mirth is an antidote to all gaiety, and his appearance has a stronger effect on my spirits than an undertaker's shop.—Mr Croaker, this is such a satisfaction—

*Enter CROAKER.*

CROAKER. A pleasant morning to Mr Honeywood, and many of them. How is this! You look most shockingly to-day, my dear friend. I hope this weather does not affect your spirits. To be sure, if this weather continues—I say nothing—But God send we be all better this day three months.

HONEYW. I heartily concur in the wish, though I own not in your apprehensions.

CROAKER. May be not! Indeed what signifies what weather we have in a country going to ruin like ours? Taxes rising and trade falling. Money flying out of the kingdom and Jesuits swarming into it. I know at this time no less than a hundred and twenty-seven Jesuits between Charing-cross and Temple-bar.

HONEYW. The Jesuits will scarce pervert you or me, I should hope.

CROAKER. May be not. Indeed what signifies whom they pervert in a country that has scarce any religion to lose? I'm only afraid for our wives and daughters.

HONEYW. I have no apprehensions for the ladies, I assure you.

CROAKER. May be not. Indeed what signifies whether they be perverted or no? The women in my time were good for something. I have seen a lady dressed from top to toe in her own manufactures formerly. But now-a-days, the devil a thing of their own manufactures about them, except their faces.

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HONEYW. But, however these faults may be practised abroad, you don't find them at home, either with Mrs Croaker, Olivia or Miss Richland.

CROAKER. The best of them will never be canoniz'd for a saint when she's dead. By the bye, my dear friend, I don't find this match between Miss Richland and my son much relish'd, either by one side or t'other.

HONEYW. I thought otherwise.

CROAKER. Ah, Mr Honeywood, a little of your fine serious advice to the young lady might go far: I know she has a very exalted opinion of your understanding.

HONEYW. But would not that be usurping an authority that more properly belongs to yourself?

CROAKER. My dear friend, you know but little of my authority at home. People think, indeed, because they see me come out in a morning thus, with a pleasant face, and to make my friends merry, that all's well within. But I have cares that would break a heart of stone. My wife has so encroach'd upon every one of my privileges, that I'm now no more than a mere lodger in my own house!

HONEYW. But a little spirit exerted on your side might perhaps restore your authority.

CROAKER. No, though I had the spirit of a lion! I do rouse sometimes. But what then! Always haggling and haggling. A man is tired of getting the better before his wife is tired of losing the victory.

HONEYW. It's a melancholy consideration indeed, that our chief comforts often produce our greatest anxieties, and that an increase of our possessions is but an inlet to new inquietudes.

CROAKER. Ah, my dear friend, these were the very words of poor Dick Doleful to me not a week before he made away with himself. Indeed, Mr Honeywood, I never see you but



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you put me in mind of poor—Dick. Ah, there was merit neglected for you! and so true a friend! we lov'd each other for thirty years, and yet he never asked me to lend him a single farthing!

HONEYW. Pray what could induce him to commit so rash an action at last?

CROAKER. I don't know, some people were malicious enough to say it was keeping company with me; because we used to meet now and then and open our hearts to each other. To be sure I lov'd to hear him talk, and he lov'd to hear me talk; poor dear Dick. He used to say that Croaker rhymed to joker; and so we used to laugh—Poor Dick. (*Going to cry.*)

HONEYW. His fate affects me.

CROAKER. Ay, he grew sick of this miserable life, where we do nothing but eat and grow hungry, dress and undress, get up and lie down; while reason, that should watch like a nurse by our side, falls as fast asleep as we do.

HONEYW. To say truth, if we compare that part of life which is to come, by that which we have past, the prospect is hideous.

CROAKER. Life at the greatest and best is but a froward child, that must be humour'd and coax'd a little till it falls asleep, and then all the care is over.

HONEYW. Very true, sir, nothing can exceed the vanity of our existence, but the folly of our pursuits. We wept when we came into the world, and every day tells us why.

CROAKER. Ah, my dear friend, it is a perfect satisfaction to be miserable with you. My son Leontine shan't lose the benefit of such fine conversation. I'll just step home for him. I am willing to shew him so much seriousness in one scarce older than himself—And what if I bring my last letter to the Gazetteer on the increase and progress of earthquakes?

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It will amuse us, I promise you. I there prove how the late earthquake is coming round to pay us another visit from London to Lisbon, from Lisbon to the Canary Islands, from the Canary Islands to Palmyra, from Palmyra to Constantinople, and so from Constantinople back to London again.

[*Exit.*

HONEYW. Poor Croaker! His situation deserves the utmost pity. I shall scarce recover my spirits these three days. Sure, to live upon such terms is worse than death itself. And yet, when I consider my own situation, a broken fortune, a hopeless passion, friends in distress; the wish but not the power to serve them— (*pausing and sighing*).

*Enter* BUTLER.

BUTLER. More company below, sir; Mrs Croaker and Miss Richland; shall I show them up? But they're showing up themselves. [*Exit.*

*Enter* MRS CROAKER and MISS RICHLAND.

MISS RICH. You're always in such spirits.

MRS CROAKER. We have just come, my dear Honeywood, from the auction. There was the old deaf dowager, as usual, bidding like a fury against herself. And then so curious in antiques! Herself the most genuine piece of antiquity in the whole collection!

HONEYW. Excuse me, ladies, if some uneasiness from friendship makes me unfit to share in this good humour: I know you'll pardon me.

MRS CROAKER. I vow he seems as melancholy as if he had taken a dose of my husband this morning. Well, if Richland here can pardon you, I must.

MISS RICH. You would seem to insinuate, madam, that I have particular reasons for being dispos'd to refuse it.