

AUNT AGATHA'S ANNIVERSARY

A full-length comedy

by

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CHARACTERS:

Oliver Plimp Army Major.
Lady: His wife.
Giles:..... Their son.
Agatha:The aunt.
Reginald:A piano tuner.
Thunderaj:A doctor.
Polly:Servant.
Caroline:A stripper.
Sebastian:A ghost.

TIME: The present

PLACE: Newnham in Cambridge.

SET: A drawing room in a large house, with a door at stage left, leading to music room, also a door at stage right, leading to kitchen and bedrooms. The front door is situated at back stage centre and there is also a door to cupboard in most appropriate place.

FURNITURE:A drinks' cabinet, bookcases, a wall mirror, telephone, three seated couch with two matching armchairs, and a coffee table.

ACT 1:

Scene 1: Morning.

Scene 2: Mid-morning.

Scene 3: Mid-day.

ACT 2:

Scene 1: Afternoon.

Scene 2: Mid-evening.

Scene 3: Late-evening.

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ACT 1 SCENE 1 - MORNING

(This scene takes place in the drawing room).

ENTER LADY and OLIVER

- LADY: (She opens the curtains) Oh what a beautiful morning Oliver!
- OLIVER: But everything's not going my way Lady.
- LADY: My word you do look down, your chin's almost touching the floor.
- OLIVER: As long as it isn't my behind, there's not a lot to worry about.
- LADY: I sincerely hope not, I only shampooed the carpet yesterday – you certainly got out of the wrong side of the bed this morning.
- OLIVER: Ar... straight onto your hair curlers, absolutely excruciating!
- LADY: Oliver, you need to pull yourself together, your pen pushing at Basingbourn Barracks is making you soft. A spell in Afghanistan would do you the world of good; now pull yourself together, it's Aunt Agatha's anniversary today.
- OLIVER: (Sighs) Oh that bear's breath, I'd rather face a blast from a Taliban bazooka.
- LADY: Really, butter wouldn't melt in your mouth, while you're talking to her.
- OLIVER: That's when I'm thinking about all her lovely lolly. (Rubs his hand together) Besides look how she left you and your mother virtually penniless on the Arbury estate, absolutely unforgivable.
- LADY: If...if...you mention... and what about your gambling?-
- OLIVER: (Cutting in) Or we'll end up the same way, God forbid, that's why we need her lolly. I never quite understood why she left us this house, and after ten years decides to hold her anniversary where her husband actually died unless...
- LADY: Unless what...? You don't honestly think she... what on second thoughts, what a wonderful idea.

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- OLIVER: Darling what are?
- LADY: You want to be more careful, perhaps it runs in the family.
- OLIVER: Don't be so absurd, I could murder a whisky.
- LADY: Certainly not! You still haven't got over your hangover from last night... hmm...you must admit there are similarities.
- OLIVER: Sorry I don't quite follow... there's not the slightest resemblance between me and Agatha's husband.
- LADY: Really, a heavy drinker, gambler, both military men, handlebar moustaches, except he was...
- OLIVER: A colonel... so we're back to that again.
- LADY: I fancy another cup of coffee, would you like one? (She walks towards the door)
- OLIVER: I suppose so.
- LADY: (Stops and turns) I almost forgot, we need to ring that blind piano tuner.
- OLIVER: Good as done.

EXIT LADY

(Picks up the phone) Hello Major Plimp here, we need our pianos tuning. (Pause) Major Plimp not pimp, you need to wash your ears out. (Pause) Sorry, I should think so; we live at Maytrees, Barton road. I wonder if you could come as soon as possible. (Pause) Within the next ten minutes, excellent, see you soon. (Slams the phone down) Insolent fellow, pimp, I ask you.

(The doorbell is heard ringing).

My word that was quick. (Opens back stage centre door and he receives a parcel) Thank you Sid, have a good day. (He opens the parcel) I say my wife's new lingerie. (He puts on the bra and holds the bra cups in his hands) I say how about that for size what!

ENTER LADY

- LADY: Darling, I think we need to talk, what's got into you lately?

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- OLIVER: There's no need to get excited.
- LADY: Excited.... what do you take me for?
- OLIVER: Sorry, I need to take things more in hand.
- LADY: It seems you've already done that. (Removes his hands from the bra) Good, I think you've got some explaining to do.
- OLIVER: (Takes off the bra and puts it back in the box) Sorry darling, I can assure you that I'm not a budding transvestite!
- LADY: That's a relief.
- OLIVER: We could put the issue beyond any doubt.
- LADY: How do you propose to do that?
- OLIVER: My darling! (Throws her the box)
- LADY: What now?
- OLIVER: There's nothing like the present.
- LADY: (Pause) Hmm...you could do with something to give you a lift, never mind. (Takes the bra out of the box and swings it round, and sways her body) See you in a moo...
- OLIVER: I say darling, I must say I like your preliminaries. (Rubs his hands together)

EXIT LADY

(The phone is heard ringing).

Blast! (Picks up the phone and pause) Hello, it's you again, what is it this time? (Pause) For the last time I'm not a pimp or a transvestite, thank you very much. (Pause) What did you say? You're not interested in my personal life. I...do hope you make a better job of tuning the pianos. Goodbye! (Slams the phone down)

ENTER LADY

- LADY: There's no need to be so touchy darling.
- OLIVER: It's that wretched piano tuner again, he will insist on referring to me as Major Pimp.
- LADY: My poor darling, there's no need to think about that now.

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OLIVER: Exactly, (Rubs his hands together) I've got more important things on my mind at this moment and you said I was touchy. (He goes towards her)

(A loud noise is heard coming from the kitchen).

What the bloody hell's that?

LADY: They said something about terrorists on the television this morning; you'd better go and investigate.

OLIVER: Something tells me that things are not going my way today.

LADY: Well go on then!

OLIVER: Quick as a flash.

LADY: I sincerely hope there's nothing else you need to tell me Oliver.

EXIT OLIVER

(The doorbell is heard ringing).

I wonder who... it must be the piano tuner... I need to get dressed. (Walks a few steps) Hmm... he's blind; it won't make a blind bit of difference. (She opens the door)

REGINALD: (Off stage) Er... I'm Reginald Perrin the piano tuner.

LADY: Come in Mr. Perrin, we've been expecting you, come let me take your hand. (He comes in with his case and she closes the door) Come this way the pianos are in the music room. (She takes his hand again)

REGINALD: Are you really quite sure this is the correct address?

LADY: (Stops at music room door) Of course, why do you ask?

REGINALD: This doesn't seem to be quite the normal procedure... except...

LADY: Except what?

REGINALD: Sorry, I'm dying for the loo. (Puts his work case down)

LADY: What... you're supposed to.... (Points to the other door) You... go straight through that door and first turning on the right. (She's shocked and covers her body with her hands)

EXIT REGINALD

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(REGINALD rushes towards the door)

ENTER OLIVER

OLIVER: (OLIVER and REGINALD meet and engage in a ritual dance) Stop! You go that way, and who the Devil are you?

REGINALD: The piano tuner!

OLIVER: You've already led me a song and dance, once this morning old boy.

REGINALD: Mr. Perrin if you don't mind, now I'm desperate and will you please excuse me?

OLIVER: (Goes past OLIVER) What the blazes. (He turns his head)

EXIT REGINALD

(Turns his head back) So that's the so called piano tuner, I'm even less impressed.

LADY: In spite of there being some kind of bond.

OLIVER: Sorry darling, I'm not quite with you.

LADY: Well, according to Freud.

OLIVER: I'm more worried about your bond. (Pause)

LADY: Oliver, what ever is the matter? Your face has gone as white as a cold lump of lard.

OLIVER: When did you realize?

LADY: When his eyes came out on stalks.

OLIVER: Eye, eye!

LADY: There's... no need to look at me like that!

OLIVER: I haven't got the faintest... where's he off to now?

LADY: To relieve himself, why?

OLIVER: Has he now.

LADY: I thought that was what one normally does on a visit to the toilet.

OLIVER: Hmm... not on this occasion.

LADY: I see. I've never looked on it in that fashion, he must have thought he'd come to some kind of brothel.

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OLIVER: First he accused me of being a pimp and a transvestite, I ask you.

LADY: How on earth did that come about?

OLIVER: Oh... I had some kind of Freudian slip on the telephone.

LADY: Darling we need-

OLIVER: (Cutting in) Not now, we've got more important issues to deal with at this moment. I think you need to slip some clothes on before he decides to have another peep the pimp!

LADY: Well, I suppose it could have been you.

EXIT LADY

OLIVER: (Looks around) Ar... I need a drop of whisky to calm my nerves. (He pours his drink) Peace at last. (He puts the glass to his mouth)

ENTER REGINALD

REGINALD: Major Plimp! (OLIVER is surprised and spills the drink on himself)

OLIVER: Cor blast! (He turns) What's the idea of sneaking up on me like that?

REGINALD: You are jumpy sir, having a crafty one?

OLIVER: What the bloody hell is... (Puts his glass back on the drinks' cabinet and dries himself with his handkerchief) And what have you been up to in there Mr. Perrin?

REGINALD: I think I'd rather not go into detail on this particular occasion.

OLIVER: I've got a pretty good idea.

REGINALD: Then you won't be disappointed in your expectations Sir.

OLIVER: Now you look here Mr. Perrin.

REGINALD: Major Plimp, I can assure you that all that has happened is purely circumstantial. I'm under no illusions; a brothel is not exactly a soup kitchen, if you catch my drift.

OLIVER: Point taken Mr. Perrin.

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REGINALD: I'm so glad about that, we piano tuners sometimes find ourselves in the most bizarre situations, only last week I came across two lesbians sleeping together in the vicarage.

OLIVER: How on earth did they finish up there?

REGINALD: Apparently the vicar invited her there for counseling.

OLIVER: Typical, although they finished up in some kind of union.

REGINALD: Exactly, I'm sorry that our acquaintance got off to such a bad start, it could have been worse.

OLIVER: Sorry I'm not quite with you?

REGINALD: Say if it was you who came to the door.

OLIVER: (Points his finger) Now you look here... oh I see what you mean.

REGINALD: Furthermore, I'm not a pervert or peeping tom, but I'm a high class piano tuner, my company is the agent for you know who.

OLIVER: I'm so pleased to hear you're not name dropping Mr. Perrin.

REGINALD: Just as long as we know who's who.

OLIVER: Indubitably! In other words you work for the aristocrats of the piano world, used by all the famous concert pianists.

REGINALD: I couldn't have put it better myself Major Pimp... er...sorry I've got a slight speech impediment.

OLIVER: You sound perfectly coherent to me old chap and if you should ever speak to me like that again I'll...-

REGINALD: Perhaps I'd better stick with Sir; I think that a good stiff whisky would salvage the situation.

OLIVER: That's the best suggestion you've made so far

REGINALD: Thank you, I do like to please.

OLIVER: (He pours the drinks) Would you care for a glass Mr. Perrin?

REGINALD: (He gives REGINALD his drink) Why thank you Sir.

OLIVER: Ar... peace at last what.

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ENTER LADY

- LADY: (Shouts) Oliver Plimp! (OLIVER spills the whisky over himself)
- OLIVER: Blast! I say Lady, that's a bit unfair sneaking up on me like that; can't you see I'm having withdrawal symptoms?
- LADY: I'm absolutely determined to have you dried out, even if I have to hang you out on the line, on second thoughts a spell in the spin drier might prove more effective.
- OLIVER: I say Lady; I'm churned up enough as it is.
- LADY: (Sniffs) Is that so, you smell more like some whisky distillery at the moment, that would certainly put Aunt Agatha in the wrong spirit.
(A sudden explosion is heard).
- OLIVER: Talk of the Devil.
- LADY: Nonsense, that's a terrorist attack.
- OLIVER: The same thing.
- LADY: Oliver how could you? Would you like to make a start Mr. Perrin?
- REGINALD: Most certainly Mrs. Plimp, under all circumstances. (Puts his glass on the drinks cabinet)
- LADY: You may call me Lady.
- REGINALD: As you wish Lady Plimp!
- LADY: I'm so glad that we understand one another Mr. Perrin; I'd appreciate it if you could keep our informal meeting to ourselves.
- REGINALD: I can assure you, I have a strong ethical code, as far as my work is concerned.
- LADY: I'm sure you do, but our meeting is pretty mild compared to today's world.
- REGINALD: My thoughts entirely. (Picks his case up on his way to the music room)
- LADY: There will be some refreshments later Mr. Perrin.
- EXIT REGINALD**

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- OLIVER: (Looks at his watch) It's almost time for the news. (LADY switches on the radio)
- (Voice on radio) This is radio Cambridgeshire, reports are just coming in of a further bomb explosion in Selwyn College, fortunately there doesn't seem to be any casualties. The police are advising everybody in the Newnham area to remain indoors as the perpetrators are still on the loose. (She switches the radio off)
- LADY: This is worrying.
- OLIVER: Well at least the may ball went out with a bang what!
- LADY: Giles went to the may ball last night.
- OLIVER: Oh so he did, I suppose our son's tucked up nicely in bed in the land of nod.
- LADY: But I didn't hear him come in last night, did you?
- OLIVER: No come to think of it, I shouldn't think there's anything to worry about, he's not exactly a social bird.
- LADY: Go on say it... he's a mummy's boy.
- OLIVER: Er... I wasn't going to say that.
- LADY: But you thought it, I know he's not the run of the mill, but he's got a concert career at his fingertips.
- OLIVER: As I've said before, you can't take the piano to bed.
- LADY: You've got one track mind Oliver Plimp.
- OLIVER: So has Giles, his electric trains keep going round it.
- LADY: That's unfair; there are quite a few men who are enthusiasts.
- OLIVER: I prefer flesh and blood. (Slaps her behind)
- LADY: Don't even think about it!
- OLIVER: Darling, I thought you liked surprises.
- LADY: It's been more like shocks recently and you haven't been much of a father.
- OLIVER: Sorry, I'm not into trains or Tupperware parties. I think you ought to check his bedroom, before you jump to anymore conclusions.

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LADY: Good idea, we'll discuss this later.

EXIT LADY

(The police car sirens are heard).

OLIVER: (Slumps in the armchair) Blast! When am I going to get any peace around here? (He shuts his eyes and long pause)

ENTER REGINALD

REGINALD: (He looks in the bookcase takes a book out and drops it, that startles OLIVER who rises) Blast!

OLIVER: What the blazes do you think you're doing Mr. Perrin?

REGINALD: (Startled) You... you frightened the life out of me Sir.

OLIVER: (Pause) Well.... I'm waiting.

REGINALD: Stretching my legs.

OLIVER: Do you usually wander around in people's houses?

REGINALD: This is most embarrassing Sir.

OLIVER: (He picks up the book) And poke your nose around people's personal belongings. (Looks at the book's title) Sherlock Holmes, so you're playing the detective?

REGINALD: In a way, the bookcase is a good guide to the occupant's character.

OLIVER: Is it now, why don't you go and have a peep in the fridge.

REGINALD: A bit early in the day for that Sir.

OLIVER: Now you look here Mr. Perrin... (Holds his thumb and fore finger apart) I'm just that close to throwing you out on your bloody arse!

REGINALD: I was only trying to humour the situation Sir.

OLIVER: So you think it's funny do you?

REGINALD: No... as a matter of fact, I'm rather hurt.

OLIVER: (Shouts) Hurt...?

REGINALD: There's no need to shout Sir, you sound like a sergeant major.

OLIVER: Major if you don't mind.

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REGINALD: Exactly Sir! (Stands to attention)

OLIVER: A spell in the army would do you the world of good Mr. Perrin.

REGINALD: And what would I exactly do Sir?

OLIVER: I think that's something we can agree on.

REGINALD: If you don't mind me saying, I'm normally treated like one of the family.

OLIVER: Is that so?

REGINALD: Only last week, I helped Mrs. Rogers to search for her dog.

OLIVER: Followed by a salad and a little bit of sex no doubt, then hit around the bum with a wet lettuce?

REGINALD: I prefer a cold cucumber.

OLIVER: Over familiar hey! (Moves towards REGINALD)

REGINALD: (Recoils) Sorry... I'm not like that Sir.

OLIVER: How dare you!

REGINALD: Sorry Sir, you'll appreciate I have to be cautious; I had a bad experience with a sexy Spaniard a fortnight ago.

OLIVER: How could you stoop so low?

REGINALD: Things didn't go that far.

OLIVER: That's not my concern.

REGINALD: No, but surely you can appreciate I need to be on my guard.

OLIVER: No harm done I suppose.

REGINALD: My piano tuning and customers are my very existence.

OLIVER: Alright.... Alright... how's the tuning going?

REGINALD: Fine, I've just finished the scale and base and I'm about to tackle the treble.

OLIVER: Well, don't let me detain you any further Mr. Perrin.

REGINALD: Alright... I'm going...

EXIT REGINALD

OLIVER: (Punches his hand) How I kept my hands off him, I'll never know.