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Dramatic Publishing



SLIGHT INDULGENCES

A One-act Comedy

by

VIN MORREALE, JR.

Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

Vin Morreale, Jr. is a playwright, novelist, screenwriter, documentary producer and radio comedy writer. He currently has 17 plays in print, with productions of his plays throughout the United States and Canada. Vin has won a number of national writing awards for both stage plays and short stories. He is a co-founder of the San Francisco Playwrights' Center, and a member of Louisville's Cherokee Roundtable. As writer/director/performer for The Senseless Bickering Comedy Theatre, his comedy material has appeared on more than 100 radio stations nationwide.

Vin has sold material to network television shows as diverse as *Remington Steele* and *The Smurfs*, and has had 11 film scripts placed under option contracts with Hollywood producers. He has also crafted numerous documentaries, educational videos and multimedia museum exhibits.

Vin has been published in magazines, such as *Satire* and *Leo*, and is the author of three books, including *Burning Up the Stage: Monologues, Audition Pieces & Short Scenes for Actors From Six to Seventy* (Dramatic Publishing).

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(SLIGHT INDULGENCES)

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SLIGHT INDULGENCES

A One-Act Comedy
For 3 Women and 3 Men

CHARACTERS

BURTON LEPARGE a James Bond-type hero

SERENA an exotic woman

ANTOINETTE Burton's girlfriend

BRADLEY a writer

ANNE MARIE his secretary

MAN

TIME: The present.

PLACE: The office of Bradley.

The set for this play is divided into two separately lit sections. The script is written with an upstage/downstage division in mind, although a set bisected laterally may be used, depending on stage size and lighting configuration.

SLIGHT INDULGENCES

AT RISE: *BURTON enters with SERENA, UL. They turn on the upstage lights. The upstage area holds a love seat, an end table and a coat rack to give the impression of a living room. DR. BRADLEY sits in semi-darkness, writing at his old-fashioned desk. He seems oblivious to the actions of BURTON and SERENA.*

SERENA. Well, here we are, Burton. It's not much but it's home.

BURTON. It's charming, Serena.

SERENA. Do you really think so?

BURTON. Truthfully ...no. However, I make it a habit never to insult someone's home, especially when I've only known her for a few hours.

SERENA. Uh, at least you're honest ...

BURTON. One of my more endearing qualities, so I'm told. But enough about me. Let's talk about you... (*He hangs both of their coats on a coat rack.*) What was it that attracted you to me in the first place?

SERENA. Hmmm. I think it was the way you stopped that tank filled with terrorists from blowing up the restaurant.

BURTON. Oh. Most people would have said it was my eyes.

SERENA. Don't get me wrong, Burton—you have wonderful eyes. I just never saw anyone destroy a tank with a cocktail fork before. I was impressed. How did you do it?

BURTON. Well, I happen to have a photographic memory and six years ago, while scanning some schematics, I noticed a flaw in the Canadian-built XM-12. There's a three-inch slit in the armor underneath the tank, 2.7 millimeters from the ventilating system. So, all I had to do was slip under the tracks, wedge my cocktail fork in the slit, turn it roughly thirty-seven degrees with a torque of 53-ppi, and force the exhaust fumes to reroute into the breach of the tank, suffocating the terrorist instantly.

SERENA. Amazing.

BURTON. That still left me my dinner fork to finish my escargot... though I hope no one was offended by my incorrect use of table utensils.

SERENA. I'm sure they understood.

BURTON. You never know. Some people can be real sticklers for proper table manners.

SERENA. So, is that what you would say a normal evening with the famed Burton LeParge is like?

BURTON. Not exactly. On a normal evening I would have stopped the tank *before* it blew up my dinner companion.

SERENA. That was rather sad.

BURTON. Very sad. (*Pause, then brightly.*) Fortunately, she hadn't ordered yet. But it did turn out to be a busy evening after all. You know, few people realize that heroism is a seasonal business.

SERENA. I'll have to remember that.

BURTON. It's true. April is the best time to invest in crime-related industries—armaments, security systems, advertising agencies. Why, I personally have made...

(SERENA and BURTON freeze in mid-sentence. Lights come up on BRADLEY at his desk, DR.)

BRADLEY. Damn! That's the second pen this novel! *(He tries to break pen, cannot.)* Why I buy nineteen-cent pens for a ninety-five thousand dollar writing career is beyond me... *(He searches wildly through the desk drawers.)* Pen... pen... pen... Ah! Pencil. You'll do. Let me see, where was I... uh, Burton was saying, "Why, I personally have made..."

(BURTON and SERENA break the freeze as if nothing had happened.)

BURTON *(finishing the sentence)*. ...a small fortune in the stock market owing to that simple observation.

SERENA. Fascinating. You seem to know something about everything.

BURTON. Hardly. For example, I have no idea what the cumulative weight of the population of Sri Lanka would be.

SERENA. I still find you fascinating.

BURTON. I'm also not sure what the cir... cumf... circumf... circumf... *(A beat. BURTON does not appear able to get the word out.)*

SERENA. Burton, what's wrong?

BURTON. He broke the tip off his...

BRADLEY. Damn [goddamn] pencil! *(He throws it down, picks it back up.)* And, of course, no sharpener to be found. Typical... *(He rummages through the desk drawers, throwing sundries on the desktop and pushing them back into the drawers: toys, fake nose, stuffed animals. From the bottom drawer he pulls out a two-foot rubber*

pig.) I wondered what happened to that... (He throws the pig over his shoulder, offstage. As he continues to search, BURTON and SERENA wait in a rather relaxed freeze.) This is so cliché, I can't believe it! A writer without a pen. Where's the originality in that? (He pulls out a small tape recorder.) Ah-ha! My Dictaphone. (A beat. Reverently:) Let us now pray for minor technology... (He closes his eyes and winces as he presses the "on" button. It works.)

BRADLEY'S RECORDED VOICE (*on Dictaphone*). She caressed his chest hairs with her toes. "Darling," she said, as she pulled out the electric eel, "Have you ever..."

BRADLEY (*shutting it off, looking up*). Thank you, Lord, for long-life batteries. (*He fast-forwards the tape.*) Okay, okay, Bradley. Focus. Concentration. Power on... (*Into tape recorder.*) Page 143 of *Burton LeParge and the Savage Swineherder*. Mid-scene. Burton with Serena. Serena says...

SERENA. I'm fascinated.

BURTON. There are many fascinating things in life, Serena, if people would only take the time and effort to notice them.

BRADLEY. God, what tripe.

SERENA. I must confess, I love a man who's profound.

BURTON. The easiest way to be profound is to simply avoid saying anything which would make a good quote in the *National Enquirer*.

SERENA. And I adore a sense of humor. (*Sitting on the sofa, BURTON slides close to SERENA, leading with his lips.*)

BURTON. Worship away, baby.

BRADLEY (*narrating their action*). Burton LeParge moves close to the infatuated woman, so close he can feel her soft warm breath on the tip of his nose. She is inexplicably drawn to the magnets of his lips, but suddenly she pulls away and stands nervously, a shy quiver in her voice.

SERENA (*with a shy quiver*). Can I...um...get you anything?

BURTON. Champagne would be nice.

SERENA. I think I'm out of champagne. Sorry.

BURTON. No problem. (*He pulls a split bottle out of his jacket.*) The restaurant owner gave me a bottle for saving his place from destruction.

SERENA. That was nice. Uh... I also seem to have nothing but water glasses. Hope you don't mind.

BURTON. You needn't worry. I carry my own champagne glasses.

SERENA. You do come prepared, don't you? (*BURTON pulls two champagne glasses from his jacket and makes as if he is assembling them.*)

BURTON. Collapsible. With telescoping stems. The latest in super-agent technology. I invented them myself. (*He pours the champagne.*)

SERENA. I suppose one never knows when they'll come in handy.

BURTON. One doesn't. (*He hands her a glass.*) For you.

SERENA. Thank you. What year is it?

BURTON. Still '98 [or whatever the current year is], I believe.

SERENA. No, I mean the champagne.

BURTON. Oh. LaFitte Rothschild '49. It's my trademark.

SERENA. You realize it's inevitable that I fall passionately in love with you, don't you?

BURTON. Nothing is inevitable, my dear. Remember Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle.

SERENA. That's right. I forgot. So there is a chance you may end this evening with nothing more than a good night kiss, isn't there?

BURTON. No way [in hell], sweetbread. *(They clink glasses.)*

SERENA *(laughing)*. What should we toast to, Mr. LeParge?

BRADLEY *(narrating the action)*. With a tilt of his head and cock of his eyebrow, Burton draws Serena, entranced, into his penetrating eyes. With a roguish smile, he lifts his glass.

BURTON *(toasting)*. To the elegant way your hair caresses your sensuous shoulders.

BRADLEY. That should get her.

SERENA *(smiling)*. And I thought romance was dead in the world.

BURTON. Romance isn't dead. It merely saves itself for those who would appreciate it.

SERENA *(sincerely)*. Oh, I would. I would.

BURTON. Is there anything else I can get you to appreciate, my dear?

SERENA. Um... what do you mean?

BURTON. Be brave, my lovely. Anything your little heart desires.

SERENA *(pulling away shyly)*. Well...uh... I hope you don't find this too silly, but...it has been an awfully long time since anyone... *(She turns to him.)* ...kissed my hand.

BURTON. Your wish is my command, dear lady.

BRADLEY (*narrating*). He walks firmly toward her and she hesitantly extends her hand. He softly and sensuously caresses it before bringing it to his lips... (*BRADLEY shoves the tape recorder aside.*) No dammit! Doesn't work. (*BURTON and SERENA turn and look at him.*) It's too common! Burton LeParge readers expect something... bigger... something different. Any male with a cultural level above puberty could suck on her knuckles... (*BURTON is sill holding SERENA's hand to his lips while watching BRADLEY. SERENA suddenly yanks her hand away and BURTON almost loses his balance. He gives her a dirty look.*) Let's see... something daring... (*He imagines the change by kissing his own hand in different ways.*) Brings her hand gently... to his lips... ah! Got it! He brings her hand gently to his lips... (*BRADLEY grabs the tape recorder and narrates BURTON's actions.*) But, at the last moment, flips her hand over and kisses her palm, running the tip of his tongue along her outstretched fingers, like some loving but savage animal. He calms her surprise by softly stroking his right cheek with her entrapped hand. A breathless beat and then...

SERENA. My, you are... unpredictable. Most men would have only kissed my knuckles.

BRADLEY (*pleased with himself*). Damn right.

BURTON. Burton LeParge isn't like most men.

SERENA. I enjoy a man who dares to be different.

BURTON. I enjoy a woman who perceives distinctions.

SERENA. I like being called a woman. You seem to caress the word as you speak it.

BURTON. I'd like to caress the woman as tenderly as the word.

SERENA. I'd like that.

BURTON. I like you liking that.

SERENA. I like you liking my liking that.

BURTON. I'd like to teach the world to sing.

BRADLEY (*exasperated*). Uh, I'd like to scratch those last eight lines, if you don't mind.

BURTON. Nine.

BRADLEY. Whatever. Okay. Back it up and let's get serious. Now. He kisses her palm lightly... (*BURTON does so.*) ...runs the tip of his tongue the length of her extended fingers...strokes it softly against his cheek. She says...

SERENA. You are unpredictable, aren't you? I enjoy that in a man.

BRADLEY (*pacing*). And he says...um...he says... (*Long pause.*)

BURTON. Ooook ook a chook?

BRADLEY. Must you?!

BURTON. Sorry. It must be late. You're tired.

BRADLEY. I want to finish this scene by tonight, okay? Okay! (*He narrates the action, annoyed. BURTON looks equally annoyed as he licks SERENA's hand.*) Grabs her hand...palm...licks the fingers, etcetera...

SERENA. You are a romantic, aren't you?

BURTON. True romance is simply taking the most insignificant detail and filling it with the greatest anticipation. (*Turning to BRADLEY.*) Hey! I like that.

SERENA. So do I.

BRADLEY. Thanks. Now we need a good follow-up. Some roguish repartee maybe. (*A beat.*) Let's see... How about...?

SERENA. Do you do everything as well as you kiss palms?

BURTON (*still kissing her hand*). Almost.

SERENA. Almost?

BURTON (*looking up at her*). I don't do windows.

SERENA. You needn't worry, lover. This is one woman who is definitely not made out of glass. (*She laughs.*)

BURTON. Do I detect a challenge? Does it then fall upon me to discover what, indeed, this woman is made of?

SERENA. If you wish.

BRADLEY (*narrating the action*). He kisses her passionately, his left hand snaking its way into the long hair flowing over the nape of her neck. He reaches out from their torrid embrace only long enough to flick off the light as he says... (*Upstage lights out. BURTON and SERENA exit in the darkness.*)

BURTON (*from offstage*). I do so enjoy a challenge.

BRADLEY. Darkness implies naughtiness. End of scene. End of Chapter Ten. End of working day. (*Sighs heavily.*) Author does brief but impromptu victory dance on desktop. (*He does so.*) Then begins daily exercises. (*He jumps off the desk and starts to do some half-hearted stretches and very quickly comes up puffing. He bends to touch his toes, finds it difficult, and slowly raises his foot to touch his outstretched hand. During the following lines he attempts a few feeble sit-ups.*) I don't understand why I can't lose weight through mental exercise. Writing dooms me to a bloated body with well-toned frontal lobes—Hey! I like that! Well-toned frontal lobes. Well-toned frontal lobes. I'd write it down... but I don't have a

pen... sigh... Luckily self-pity is habit-forming, so at least I don't have to work at it anymore... (*He begins weak pushups, counting them out as he goes along.*) One...two... three... (*He calls offstage, loudly.*) Anne Marie? Could you come in here a moment, please?

(*ANNE MARIE enters.*)

BRADLEY. ...Ninety-nine...one hundred...

ANNE MARIE. Yes, Bradley? All finished?

BRADLEY (*rising tiredly*). Yeah. Finally got through the seduction scene, or at least a rough draft.

ANNE MARIE (*dryly*). Occasionally roughness can enhance a seduction.

BRADLEY (*not hearing her*). Uh, what did you say?

ANNE MARIE. Nothing. You want me to look it over?

BRADLEY. If you wouldn't mind. I realize it's late, but it could use a quick transcribing and proofreading. That is, if you don't have to leave right at six?

ANNE MARIE. I can stay.

BRADLEY. You sure? It can wait till Monday if necessary.

ANNE MARIE. No problem. (*She takes the manuscript from him.*) Okay to punch it up if I can?

BRADLEY. If you see an opportunity for a good line, pencil it in and I'll check it out when you're finished.

ANNE MARIE. You're going to wait here for it?

BRADLEY. I'm in no rush. "Gilligan's Island" reruns don't start until ten.

ANNE MARIE (*not harshly*). If you don't mind my interjecting a personal opinion, Mr. Ames, you do seem to be turning this office into somewhat of a monastery as of late.