

BUCKINGHAM'S PALACE

A One Act Comedy

by Jean Blasiar

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BUCKINGHAM'S PALACE

SETTING: Living room of Arnold Buckingham, elderly widower

Stage is black AT RISE

DOORBELL

ARNIE BUCKINGHAM (70's) ENTERS, stage right, answers the door.

Arnie's grandson, MITCHELL (age 28) is at the door with his wife, AMELIA (age 25).

MITCH

Granddad, it's Mitch.

ARNIE

I see you. Who's this?

MITCHELL

Amelia, my wife? You came to our wedding last year.

ARNIE

(looks over Amelia)

Didn't recognize her without the white dress. What's up?

MITCH

Can we come in?

Arnie reluctantly opens the door wider.

ARNIE

I was just going out.

MITCH

Oh. I thought you didn't... never mind.

Mitch and Amelia enter without really being invited.

AMELIA

Hello, Mister Buckingham.

ARNIE

Arnie.

AMELIA

Arnie.

ARNIE

What can I do for you?

MITCHELL

(nervously)

We think we can do something for you, grandad.

ARNIE

What's that?

MITCHELL

I thought you didn't go out any more.

ARNIE

Who told you that?

MITCHELL

It doesn't matter.

ARNIE

(mumbles)

Your mother.

Mitch and Amelia sit down on the sofa, next to each other.

Arnie remains standing. Checks his watch.

MITCHELL

This is a nice house, grandad. How many bedrooms do you have?

ARNIE

Three.

MITCHELL

Plus that one over the garage, correct? With the adjoining bathroom.

ARNIE

Correct.

MITCHELL is struggling to ask his grandfather a request.

AMELIA

Mister Buckingham... Arnie... Mitchell is too proud to tell you himself but he's been let go by his firm. They merged with another company and let fifty lawyers go. Mitchell was one of the last to be hired, and the first to let go. We have to pull in our belt, so to speak, until Mitch gets on his feet again. He's got his resume out to several head hunters. We're sure he'll get a job any day now.

Arnie remains quiet, stares at Amelia.

AMELIA (cont'd)

We wondered if we might move in for the time being? I can keep house for you, and drive you where you have to go.

No word from Arnie.

AMELIA (cont'd)

I'm a good cook. Ask Mitch.

Mitch nods that he agrees with that.

MITCHELL

Amelia's a very good cook granddad.

AMELIA

And I know how to take care of...

(was about to say the elderly)

the older generation. I nursed my grandmother for three years before she died. Kept her out of a home. Allowed her to stay in her own place until she... you know.

ARNIE

I know what?

AMELIA

Oh. Sorry. Until she died. That was before Mitch and I were married.

MITCHELL

Amelia's good with... the older generation, granddad.

ARNIE

Good for her. What's she wanna do now?

MITCHELL

Well, if you'd let us move in ... uh... rent free... Amelia will take care of you.

ARNIE

Don't need anybody taking care of me.

MITCHELL

I'm sorry, granddad, but I was told that you don't go out any more. You've been having everything delivered.

ARNIE

So?

MITCHELL

So how do you get to doctors' appointments?

ARNIE

Don't go.

AMELIA

You have to go, Mister... Arnie.

ARNIE

Why?

AMELIA

So they can prescribe for you?

ARNIE

Prescribe what?

AMELIA

Medication.

ARNIE

For what?

AMELIA

For what ails you.

ARNIE

Nothing ails me.

Amelia looks to Mitchell for help.

MITCHELL

Granddad, you're getting up there.

ARNIE

Cause I keep the hell away from doctors.

MITCHELL

Granddad!

Amelia stands.

AMELIA

Never mind, Arnie. I'll find someone else who likes grilled liver and onions and mashed potatoes and home made apple pie with ice cream. That's my specialty, my grandma's favorite, but I also make a wonderful stew with fork tender meat and potatoes and carrots and gravy and biscuits from scratch. Mitchell likes my southern fried chicken with cream gravy and...

ARNIE

Stop it! Where would you live?

MITCHELL

In that apartment over your garage.

ARNIE

I rent that.

MITCHELL

I understand that you lost your tenant recently. We can't pay any rent right now, but we come with a cook and a house-keeper...

AMELIA

And a driver. Those would be me, Arnie. I'm very capable and I don't talk much. I'm a good listener. And I like football. You like the Packers?

ARNIE

You know the Packers?

AMELIA

I grew up in Wisconsin. I wear a cheesehead when I watch the games.

ARNIE

They tell you I'm from Wisconsin?

AMELIA

They?

Arnie nods toward Mitchell.

ARNIE

Him and his tribe.

AMELIA

They may have mentioned it. I think that's how I knew we'd get along.

Arnie looks for a few seconds at both Mitch and Amelia.

AMELIA (cont'd)

(adds)

I love to read, out loud if you want.

ARNIE

I can't see so good any more. They make those books in extra fine print so's you have to buy the kind that talk.

AMELIA

(nods)

I read to the older generation at a nursing home on Thursdays.

You could go with me. The ladies would love to have you visit.

Arnie looks suspiciously at Amelia, like she's going too far.

MITCHELL

Will you try it, granddad? We promise we won't have loud

parties or late night guests with cars coming and going. I

know this is a very quiet neighborhood.

AMELIA

And as soon as Mitch gets a position, Arnie, we'll start paying

rent. I'm looking for something part time myself so I can still

paint in the mornings... my best time to be creative.

ARNIE

I don't know...

AMELIA

We won't be any bother to you. We won't be knocking on

your door for anything, unless it's to deliver a home cooked

dinner, and then I'll call first.

Arnie looks at her suspiciously, doubting she'd remember to do that.

MITCHELL

We don't have very much furniture right now, granddad.

Just a bed and a dresser and books and a small table where

we eat and some chairs, but we're going to pick up some

throw rugs at a yard sale if we can. Oh, and a stereo.

AMELIA

Which we'll play very softly, we promise.

MITCHELL

I have a couple of interviews for jobs coming up. We should be able to save enough to pay off our credit cards and pay you rent in about six months. Sure by December. Don't you think, honey?

AMELIA

Oh, absolutely. I'll be working myself by then, but still be able to make you three hearty meals a day, Arnie, unless you don't want me coming over with breakfast.

ARNIE

(thinks about that)

I can make my own cereal.

AMELIA

Oh, sure. That's fine. I'll bake cinnamon rolls every week so you'll have something sweet after your cereal.

MITCHELL

Is it okay, then, granddad that we move in.

AMELIA

I brought over some cleaning supplies so I can... you know... give it a good wash down before we move in.

ARNIE

(still thinking about it)

I like my privacy.

AMELIA

Absolutely. But if there's anything you need taken care of here, like light bulbs changed... I see you have recessed lighting. You don't want to be getting up and down a ladder. Or filters replaced. Mitch is very good at that sort of thing.

MITCHELL

Anything you need doing, granddad, I can handle. Or I can get somebody who can. I'll walk around and familiarize myself with the circuit breakers and the cut off valves to the water and gas, just in case.

ARNIE

In case of what?

MITCHELL

Uh... fire. Or earthquake.

AMELIA

We're overdue, Arnie.

Silence a few seconds.

MITCHELL

So, okay to check out the apartment over the garage, granddad?

Arnie walks to a dish on a table and picks up a key, which he hands to Mitchell.

ARNIE

I like it quiet after ten o'clock.

MITCHELL

Ten. Got it.

AMELIA

We go to bed early, too, Arnie.

She reaches over, hugs him and kisses him on the cheek.

AMELIA

Thank you. We'll be model tenants, I promise.

Amelia takes the key from Mitchell and heads for the door. She exits.

Mitchell hugs Arnie.

MITCHELL

Thanks, granddad. Anything you want, just call me. Oh, here.

(digs into his pocket and pulls out a card)

That's my cell phone and email address. Do you email?

ARNIE

A...r....n...i...e...@gmail.com.

MITCHELL

Good, I can remember that. This is perfect. Thank you so much. And we'll be next door over the garage. Is it OK if we start bring over our stuff tomorrow?

ARNIE

What day is tomorrow?

MITCHELL

Thursday.

ARNIE

OK. Friday's my poker night. It's here.

MITCHELL

Oh, good for you. I'm happy you have friends coming in. We'll be quiet as church mice. Call us if you need anything.

Mitchell exits.

Arnie takes out his cell phone. Hits the speed dial.

ARNIE

Myrna? My grandson and his wife are moving into the apartment over the garage. See you at seven.

Arnie hangs up. Exits to the back rooms.

BLACKOUT

ACT I, Scene Two

The blackout lasts two minutes. Suddenly, a knock at the door.

Another knock.

Mitchell tries the front door carrying a flashlight to see his way, enters the dark house.

MITCHELL

It's open.

Amelia is behind Mitchell with a flashlight also.

AMELIA

Arnie? Are you here?

MITCHELL

Isn't he supposed to be having a poker party here tonight?

AMELIA

Tomorrow. Today's Thursday.

MITCHELL

Oh, right. Granddad?

Suddenly, Mitchell's flashlight finds the face of his granddad in his flashlight.

MITCHELL

Granddad! You scared me.

ARNIE

Why didn't you knock?

MITCHELL

I did knock. Why didn't you answer?

ARNIE

I got company.

MITCHELL

There's a blackout.

Suddenly, Amelia screams. Her flashlight has found the face of A WOMAN about Arnie's age.

ARNIE

That's Myrna.

Amelia, recovering her composure, shines the light up and down Myrna in a flannel robe, fluffy slippers, hair curlers with cream on her face.

AMELIA

I'm so sorry. Did I waken you?

ARNIE

Myrna's house is being fumigated.

Myrna slaps Arnie's arm.

MYRNA

Arnie! Don't say it like that.

ARNIE

She's being debugged.

MYRNA

My house is in escrow. It's part of the instructions.

THE LIGHTS come back on.

Arnie is in shorts and a tee shirt.

Mitchell and Amelia look away, but Arnie is not the least embarrassed.

MITCHELL

(trying to cover *his* embarrassment)

Oh, good, power's back. OK, we'll say goodnight. Say goodnight, Amelia.

Sorry to bother you.

AMELIA

(as she is being nudged out the door by Mitchell)

Goodnight.

Mitchell and Amelia exit.

ARNIE

They probably blew the circuits with all of their gadgets.

Arnie locks the door, follows Myrna into the back rooms.

BLACKOUT

ACT I, Scene Three

In the blackout the set is converted to a game room with round table, four chairs, a large pile of poker chips in front of an empty chair, only a few in front of two other players (Arnie and JOE, 50's).

JERRY MEISNER (50's) is asleep on the sofa, stage right.

LIGHTS UP on...

ARNIE

Jerry, wake up. You gotta give us a chance to recover.

All three look over at Jerry asleep on the sofa.

BUDDY FARMER (50's) comes in from the kitchen (open doorway, stage right) with three beers in two hands.

BUDDY

He's bluffin'. Wants to leave here the big winner.

JOE

He's been bluffin' all night, except the one time I called him on it.
C'mon, hustler, another beer says you can't beat a pair of deuces.

BUDDY

Arn... I noticed a light on over your garage.

ARNIE

My grandson and his wife moved in yesterday.

BUDDY

For keeps? How's that work?

ARNIE

The wife's a great cook. Gonna make me three meals a day,
hand delivered.

BUDDY

What about Myrna?

ARNE

They already met.

(looks over at the sleeping Jerry on the sofa)

Arnie gets up, walks over and shakes Jerry.

ARNIE

Jer... get up.

Arnie shakes Jerry several times, bends over and checks his breathing.

BUDDY

He didn't have that much to drink.

ARNIE

I don't think he's breathing.

JOE

Stop playing games, Jer. Get your butt over here. I can't go home this much down.

BUDDY

(gets up and walks over to the sofa)

He blacks out sometimes. Dammit, Jer, stop playing games.

Breathe!

Arnie takes out his phone.

JOE

Watta you doin'?

ARNIE

Callin' the paramedics.

JOE

Are you nuts? We're gamblin' here.

ARNIE

I tell you, he ain't breathin'. Somebody run over to the apartment over the garage and see if my grandson's there. Mitchell. He'll know what to do.

BUDDY

I'll get some water.

ARNIE

Take that money with you. And the chips.

(on the phone)

Hello. Send the paramedics. Two eleven Crescent Court.

I'll open the gate.

(listens)

Arnie Buckingham. The sign out front says Buckingham's Palace.

JOE

I'll move my car. I'm blocking the driveway.

Arnie leaves by the front door with Joe.

Buddy grabs the chips and money and exits to the kitchen, open door stage right.

A few seconds when everyone but Jerry on the sofa leaves.

Suddenly, Jerry makes a loud noise, jumps up.

JERRY

Whatsup? Hey! Where is everybody?

Jerry, dazed, holding his head, walks into the other rooms, door stage right leading to the bathroom and the back of the house.

Sound of sirens as Mitchell, Arnie and Joe come rushing in, freeze in place as they see an empty sofa.

Buddy comes in from the kitchen, sees the empty sofa.

BUDDY

What the hell?

