

BAKER GEORGE MELVILLE,
ROBERTS RANDELL

UNDER A VEIL

George Baker

Under a Veil

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Randell Roberts, George M. Baker

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CHARACTERS

Charles Devereaux.

Pritchard.

Elizabeth.

Waiter.

Costumes modern.

Scene I. —*Two rooms right and left, stage divided in the centre; a door of communication between rooms, fastened by a bolt on either side; small tables, sofas, and arm-chairs. Practicable doors, 1 E. L., 2 E. L., and 2 E. R. Window at back of R. room. Door at back of L. room.*

Pri. (*advancing towards table*). Beg pardon, sir.

Cha. (*lazily*). All right.

Pri. Beg pardon, sir, exceedingly sorry to disturb you; (*to Waiter*) he's asleep.

Cha. (*snores*).

Pri. (*loudly*). I'm really very sorry to wake you, sir.

Cha. (*still lying on sofa*). What! you don't mean to say it's twelve.

Pri. Twelve! ah, to be sure, the hour I was to wake him for the ball. No, sir, it's only ten o'clock; but (*looking at him*) he's asleep again – the devil! (*Calling loudly.*) I'm really pained to awake you, sir —

Cha. (*half rising and yawning*). What on earth's the matter? Oh, it's you, Mr. Red Lion, is it?

[Sinks back.

Pri. Beg pardon, sir, I am not Red Lion: it is my neighbor of the next hotel I suppose you allude to. Here, sir, you are in the first and best hotel in the town, – the White Horse.

Cha. (*stretching himself on sofa*). All right, with all my heart, then, Mr. White Horse. What is it?

Pri. Well, sir, the fact is, I'm in a dreadful fix – a most awkward predicament, out of which I cannot extricate myself without your assistance. You see, sir, if you will only pardon it, but my daughter was only married to-day. Yes, sir, married; in fact, sir, she was married to make her happy – you know, sir, – you understand! And, sir, just as we are having a little dance in honor of this marriage, which takes up all our spare accommodation, a lady and her maid arrive, asking for rooms; and, as they require two beds in one room, I dared to hope that perhaps, sir, you would oblige me by changing this room for the next one. You see, sir, that the bedroom belonging to this sitting-room has two beds, whilst in here (*throwing open door in centre partition*) there is only one bed, though in all respects furnished in the same manner. If you, sir, would oblige me by just looking in (*on turning to Charles, finds him asleep*) – Confound it, he's asleep again! (*To audience.*) An idea occurs to me; (*turning to Waiter*) here, George, catch hold of one end of this sofa. (*They take sofa, and carry it into next room with Charles asleep on it.*) There, I don't believe he'll find it out; here, George, his luggage. (*Brings baggage, but leaves letter.*) There, now, that's all right, and now (*entering next door, and closing with bolt*) I can fetch the ladies up.

[Exit.

Re-enter Prichard ushering in Lucy and Elizabeth. Prichard carrying candle.

Charles asleep in R. H. room.

Pri. These are the rooms, madam. This door leads into the bedroom.

[Shows door 1 E. L., and Elizabeth takes luggage in.

Luc. Many thanks. Don't forget the horses at six o'clock to-morrow morning.

Pri. To the moment, madam. (*Aside to Elizabeth, who has re-entered.*) If you can find time, join us downstairs. Don't forget; I shall expect you.

Eliz. All right; as soon as missus has done with me.

[Exit Pri.

Cha. (R. H., *waking up*). Hullo! there's somebody talking in the next room.

[Listens, sitting up.

Luc. You seem to know the landlord, Elizabeth?

Eliz. Oh, yes, ma'am, I've known him for some time: his wife was a friend of mine, and his daughter that married to-day is my godchild.

Luc. Indeed! Then I suppose you'd like to join them downstairs. You can go, and I'll open my things myself.

Eliz. Oh, thank you, mum!

[Exit L. 2 E.

Lucy unpacking her boxes, L. H

Cha. (*sitting on side of sofa, R. H.*). By Jove! one hears every thing that is going on next door. Seems to be a lady and her maid – not very gentlemanly to listen, Master Charley, but it's interesting. Ah, well! when I was young this might have led to an adventure. I should never have rested until I had made the acquaintance of my fair neighbor, – for I suppose she is fair, – whilst now there's not the slightest danger. Confound it! I must see this woman, though. (*Rising, and going towards door.*) Hullo! I could have sworn the lock of the door was on the other side just now. That's deuced funny. (*Looking round the room.*) Why, where the mischief am I? and how on earth did I get here?

Luc. (*looking at her watch*). Half-past ten.

Cha. Ah! I understand. I thought I had a terrible nightmare. A frightful monster held me by the feet, and another by the head; it appears, however, that these monsters must have been the Red Lion or the White Horse, and my room has been given to this lady, whoever she may be, to suit their convenience. Well, I don't care very much about seeing her. All women are alike – just as cats are all alike. (*Stoops down to examine the door.*) Why, there's no lock! only a bolt. Well, I can't help that; let's see if we can't get another nap until it's time to go to the ball.

[Returns to sofa.

Luc. (*book in hand, seated on sofa*). This "Voyage round the World" is always a charming book to read.

She puts her book upon the table, and leans her head upon her arm as if to read book; perceives letter.

Luc. Why, here's somebody's letter! (*Takes it up, coming down front.*) Not very ladylike to read it, I suppose; but all women are curious. Seems to be unfinished. Of course it's very wrong to read this letter (*reads*), —

"My dear George, – As I quite anticipated on my return from home, the Government appointment I expected has been given to another. Pardon me, if on receiving this intelligence, I quitted London without bidding you adieu – and as it seems" —

This is really too bad of me, —

“that I am too lazy to do any thing, as you all of you always said” —

[Pausing.

What on earth does that mean? I should much like to see the author (*reading again from letter*),

—
“I intend as soon as I have realized what property I have, to go to Baden, and once more try my luck at the tables. If I win, I shall found a hospital; and if I lose — well, in that case, the only thing I can see for me to do is to join my mother.”

[Finishing reading letter.

That’s all; this gentleman has got no further, or else he has taken away the end of it.

[Commences re-reading in a low tone.

Cha. (rousing himself). Oh! I can’t lay here any longer. Morpheus won’t come to my aid. What shall I do? Well, I might just as well finish my letter to George. Why! what the deuce have I done with it? (*Searches in his pockets.*) Why, it seems to me I left it on the table before I went to sleep.

[He looks upon the table.

Luc. (again reading letter). “In that case, the only thing I can see for me to do is to join my mother.”

Cha. (striking his forehead). Confound it! I’ve left it in the next room.

Luc. (putting down letter, and taking up book). After all, I’m not George, and I’ve no right to read that letter.

Cha. But then my letter must be in the power of this woman. It appears to me that I’ve a perfect right to —

[Knocks gently at door.

Luc. Good gracious! there’s some one knocking. Who is there? What do you want?

Cha. A thousand pardons, madam. I am the person who inhabited a few minutes ago the room you now occupy; and by accident in leaving the room I left an unfinished letter.

Luc. (aside). Dear me! This is the young gentleman that’s too lazy for any thing.

Cha. Would you be kind enough to return me my letter?

Luc. (embarrassed). Sir, I’ll ring in order that your letter may be brought to you.

Cha. A thousand pardons, madam; but pray don’t trouble to ring. Can’t you slip it under the door?

Luc. Oh, certainly! There it is.

[Passes letter.

Cha. Thanks. (*Aside.*) A charming voice, — soft as a bird’s; and, if the plumage only corresponds — (*He goes to examine fastening.*) Confound this bolt! Infamous hotel! (*He returns to table, and prepares to write.*) By the way, I should like to know if she’s read this (*looking at letter*). Well, there’s a very old method for ascertaining that: ask her. (*Goes to door, and knocks.*) Madam, pardon me —

Luc. What do you want, sir?

Cha. Madam, my letter was left open on the table; and in taking it up — without, of course, the slightest desire — your eye must naturally have fallen upon it, and —

Luc. (aside). I understand. (*Aloud.*) I don’t understand you, sir; and, inasmuch as I’ve done what you desire, I must beg that we have no further conversation, as I shall refuse to answer.

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