

DUMAS ALEXANDRE

THE PRINCESS OF
BAGDAD: A PLAY IN
THREE ACTS

Александр Дюма

**The Princess of Bagdad:
A Play In Three Acts**

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Дюма А.

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Alexandre Dumas

The Princess of Bagdad: A Play In Three Acts

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

JOHN DE HUN.

NOURVADY.

GODLER.

RICHARD.

TRÉVELÉ.

A Commissary of Police.

LIONNETTE.

RAOUL DE HUN (six years).

A Lady's-Maid.

A Nurse.

ANTHONY.

A Footman.

A Secretary of the Commissary of Police.

Two Agents.

ACT I

A large and very elegant drawing-room, looking out on a garden. French window with balcony at the lower extremity to the right. To the left a conservatory. To the right a door opening into the apartment of Lionnette. To the left a door opening into the apartment of John.

Scene I

RICHARD, The Footman; afterwards JOHN and LIONNETTE

The Footman (*to Richard, who waits sitting near a table, turning over some papers.*)

The Count de Hun is here.

John enters; the Footman goes out

John

I am quite at your service, Master Richard, but I regret that you have inconvenienced yourself to come.

Richard

Not at all; I live about two steps from here, and every evening, after my dinner, I take a short walk. Only, I am in a frock-coat, and you have friends.

John

Men only, some club friends. Lionnette is with them in the conservatory.

Richard

Muster all the courage of which you are master.

John

We are ruined?

Richard

Yes.

John

Poor Lionnette!

Richard

Alas! It is a little her fault.

John

It is the fault of her mother, who reared her in luxury and without order. It is my fault, too, who was not as rich as my love; who not only never knew how to refuse her anything, but who did not even allow her time to wish for it; who told her to buy whatever she might wish for.

Richard

And who also gave her by power of attorney – serious imprudence! – the right of buying, selling, of disposing of her property, and, in consequence, of yours, as it seemed fit to her. You owe one million, a hundred and seven thousand, one hundred and twenty-seven francs, fifty-two centimes. When I say, you owe, that is a figure of speech; your wife owes. In that amount there are only thirty-eight thousand francs of your own personal debts, and for which personally you have to be responsible, as you were married under the system of "separation of property."

John

I authorised my wife to make debts, these debts then are mine. In other words, as she has no money, it is I who have to pay. What are my assets?

Richard

There is this house in which we are, which is worth eight hundred thousand francs when one does not want to sell it, but which would be worth from five hundred and fifty to five hundred and eighty thousand, the moment one is obliged to part with it; it is mortgaged for four hundred and fifty thousand francs... Then there are the horses, the furniture, the laces, the jewels...

John

Very few jewels. A year ago Lionnette sold every jewel she had, with that heedlessness, that lightness of disposition, and that want of consideration, which are the basis of her character, and which you so well know.

Richard

Ah! well, when you have sold all that you can possibly sell, there will remain about four hundred thousand francs.

John

Of capital?

Richard

Of debts.

John

And the entail of my property?

Richard

Ten thousand pounds income, inalienable, and all in your own power, fortunately.

John

Is it impossible to realize the capital?

Richard

Utterly impossible. Your uncle foresaw what has happened, and, with the knowledge of your habits and the wishes of your mother, he was anxious to preserve to you always a crust of bread. There remains your sister.

John (*with a doubtful tone*)

Yes, my sister!

Richard

When you were married seven years ago, you know under what conditions, you had nothing more than what remained to you of the fortune of your father, about eight or nine hundred thousand francs. You made some legal interpellations against your mother in order to marry Lionnette – I call your wife Lionnette quite unceremoniously, as I knew her from her birth, – and your mother, even in her dying hour, did not pardon you. She has looked well after your sister's interest, and out of the 6,000,000 that she had she has left you only two, of which half went to pay the debts that you had already incurred. Your mother was a woman of clear perception...

John

Yes; but she ought to have understood...

Richard

It is not easy to understand or to excuse that which wounds us in our tenderest feelings and in our most sacred traditions. The Countess of Hun, your mother, was entirely against the marriage you made. She knew you to be a man led by a first impression, incapable of resisting the first impulse.

These tendencies are dangerous, not only for him who has them, but also for those who surround him. My age authorizes me to speak in this way to you. Your mother has only done, then, what every prudent judicious mother, loving her son, would have done in her place. In spite of everything, you married Mademoiselle de Quansas. I do not say that you were wrong; I simply make, as a lawyer and friend, the summary of a moral and legal position, and, in face of the present difficulties, I try to find out what we can obtain from it. Your sister is married, and to a husband who is head of the community. She has five children; an inheritance invested at interest, the portion which ought to come back to you having been left and allotted by your mother to the minor children; your mother made your sister swear never to alter her disposition of the property. These are all excellent reasons for keeping her brother's money. I am a lawyer; I understand these legitimate scruples of conscience!

John

I start to-morrow for Rennes. I shall go to see my sister; she will yield, perhaps, for the honour of our name.

Richard

That name is no longer her's.

John

Nevertheless, I will try.

Richard

Let us hope, but do not rely upon it. Your wife also had hope to the last, and has made a last effort among the family of ... her father: she has failed.

John

Yes.

Richard

There is still another plan.

John

And that is?

Richard

Call your creditors together, and offer them so much per cent.

John

Never.

Lionnette (*who enters during these last words*)

Never! If we have a sum larger than or equal to our debts, we must pay them fully; if we have only a smaller amount, we must give it to them on account, and look for means to procure the remainder; if we are not able to do it, then we have robbed all these confiding tradesmen, and there is but one thing left for my husband and me to do, that is, to shut ourselves up in a room hermetically sealed, set light to a pan of charcoal, and die together.

John (*kissing her hands*)

I adore you.

Richard

Yes, it is very fine, but like a drama or a romance, it is not reality.

Lionnette

On the contrary, it is the most simple thing in the world – for me, at least. Either life, with all it is able to bestow, or death, with all it can promise; I understand nothing else. Do you think that after living as I have done, at my age I am going to allow myself to live in a garret, to go to market, and to reckon accounts with the laundress and general servant? It is unnecessary to try, I could never do it. Hunting-hound, shepherd-dog, if you like; blind-beggar's dog, never!

Richard

And your son?

Lionnette

My son, I would not have him die with us, it is very evident. But my son is six years old; he could still be brought up otherwise than I was. One could instil in him habits of work, and ordinary tastes, that I never had. There are 10,000 francs income from his father and the heirship inalienable; it would be misery for us, but independence for him. Men have no want of money, they only want it for their wives. It will be his duty not to love a prodigal like myself, and perhaps our example will be a warning for him.

Richard

Very well. Now that we have well talked over, or rather you have well talked over, the useless and senseless, let us speak about the possible. Is it long since you have seen the Baroness de Spadetta?

Lionnette

I see women as little as possible, my dear Richard, as you know well. Those who would come to me, I do not wish to see; others have had an air of making me feel their visits too great an honour. Let them stay at home; every one is free. Women, besides, are for other women nothing but enemies or accomplices. As to enemies, I have enough of them out-of-doors, without attracting them to my house; as to accomplices, I have not yet required any, and I hope to continue so. I content myself with the society of men; at least with them one knows what to adhere to, one knows quite well what they desire. But as to Madame Spadetta, that speaks for itself: she robbed me, and I turned her out, or nearly so. In any case, I want to see her no more.

Richard

She robbed you! In what way?

Lionnette

She knew my mother from my infancy: she was sometimes the mediator of my mother and myself with my father on matters of business, as she occupied an important place about him. A short time before his death my father said to me, "If I should die, Madame de Spadetta will remit you 1,500,000 francs." My father could leave me nothing in an official and public will, but he was incapable of telling me a thing like that if it were not true. There was left to Madame de Spadetta 2,000,000, with this note: "I am sure that Madame de Spadetta will make good use of that sum." It is clear. She kept the whole; it was easy to do.

John

You have never spoken to me of that.

Lionnette

What good would it have done?

John

Have you claimed that amount from her?

Lionnette

Certainly. She denied it.

John (to Richard)

You might follow it up.

Richard

No; it is trust-money. The law does not recognize it, and besides...

Lionnette

I have only my word to support what I say. Madame de Spadetta replied to me that what my father had left her was in remuneration for services that her husband and she had rendered my father for thirty years. The truth is, that out of these two millions there were five hundred thousand francs for what she calls her services, and fifteen hundred thousand francs for me. It is for that that I turned her out of doors.

Richard

Knowing that I have the care of your affairs, she came to find me out...

Lionnette

To...

Richard

To offer you five hundred thousand francs.

Lionnette

On the part of whom? for she is a person equal to any kind of embassy.

Richard

On the part of your father's family.

Lionnette

What does she demand in return?..

Richard

The giving up...

Lionnette

Of all my father's letters.

Richard

Yes; you knew it?

Lionnette

I suspected it, from a few words she said to me. I refuse to do so.

Richard

Your mother, before she died, handed over, for a much less important amount, all the letters that she also possessed from your father.

Lionnette

My mother did as she pleased; I, too, shall do as I please; and, as my mother is dead, I refrain from saying all I think.

Richard

Why do you care so much about those letters?

Lionnette

You ask me that, Mr. Richard? Why do I care so much for the letters of a father whom I loved, who loved me, the man who was my father, and who is dead?

Richard

What do you intend to do with them?

Lionnette

To keep them, to read them over again, as I do now from time to time, when the living trouble or disgust me; and when I die, carry them with me and give them back to him – to him – if it be true that one meets again in death those one has loved in life. Who knows? Perhaps, after being so powerful on earth, he will have no one but me in heaven. So I must keep something by which he may know me – up there – since he was not able to recognize me here below.

John (to Richard)

How can one help worshipping that woman? (*He takes her head between his hands and kisses her hair.*) There.

Richard (*taking the hand of Lionnette*)

The fact is that she has the blood of a good race in her, and that they named you very appropriately, calling you Lionnette – little lioness; but unfortunately it is not with that that creditors are paid, and I offer you the only way which is open to you.

Lionnette

God has hitherto given, God will give again; if He forget us, then chance must take us.

Scene II

GODLER, NOURVADY, TRÉVELÉ

Trévelé (*going towards Lionnette.*)

Tell me, Countess, are we, yes or no, Godler the ever youthful, Nourvady the ever grave, and I, Trévelé, the ever jesting – are we, yes or no, invited by you, Countess, the ever beautiful, and by your husband, the ever blissful (it would be difficult for him to be otherwise) – are we, yes or no, invited to dine at your table and to spend the evening with you afterwards?

Lionnette

Yes.

Trévelé

Then, lovely countess, permit me to observe that you are never where we are. Kindly give us information. When one sees you one loves you; but when one loves you where does one see you?

Lionnette (*smiling*)

Here.

Trévelé

We supposed so, but it is now two hours since...

Lionnette

Oh! not two hours!

Trévelé

Three hours ago you forsook us in the middle of the conservatory. First, a domestic came to look for the count; we accepted that affliction: but, in your turn, you disappeared without even troubling any one to come and look for you. Well, we are all three charming – Godler, Nourvady, and I; it is difficult to find three more delightful and witty men, but we have such a habit of seeing each other that we do not enjoy ourselves at all when we are by ourselves. So if, after having us for seven hours, you discover you have had enough of us, tell us so without ceremony. We are going to drive back to the club, where we shall have a good game of baccarat; we will try, Godler and I, to win a hundred thousand francs from that millionaire Nourvady; – that will make him cheerful, perhaps.

Lionnette

Gentlemen, I offer you every excuse. It was on account of a most important and unforeseen affair. (*She presents Richard.*) Master Richard, solicitor, an old friend of mine. (*She introduces the gentlemen.*) Mr. de Trévelé, Mr. Godler, Mr. Nourvady. (*The gentlemen bow.*) And now, to strengthen you after all your fatigue and trouble, I am going to offer you a cup of tea, iced coffee, or chocolate.

(*She approaches the table, upon which, during this discourse, the servants have put the articles mentioned.*)

Raoul (*entering with his nurse, who remains near the door, and going to his mother*)

Mamma!

Lionnette

Gentlemen, here is my son, whom I beg to present to you. Bow, Raoul.

(*Raoul bows already like a man of the world, putting his heels together and bending his head; Trévelé and Godler kiss him; Nourvady kisses his hand, after hesitating a moment; Raoul goes back to his mother, who kisses him, putting her arm round his neck.*)

Raoul

Take care, you will crumple my collar.

Lionnette

I beg your pardon, I wanted to kiss you. You don't love me, then?

Raoul

Oh, yes, I love you very much.

Lionnette

Then you are going to help me pour out the tea?

Raoul

No; I came to ask not to go to bed yet. I should prefer to play with Jane's little nephew, who has come with his mother to see her, but she will not let me without your permission.

Lionnette

Very well, I give you leave. Run away now, my child.

Raoul

Good bye. (*He goes away running.*)

Lionnette

And you go away like that? (*Raoul bows again, and wants to go away. Lionnette shows him Richard.*) And Mr. Richard? And your father, too?

(*At each name mentioned Raoul passes to the person, who kisses him. One can see he is in a great hurry to run away. When he gets to John, the latter takes him in his arms and kisses him very warmly.*)

John

Don't be afraid, I am not going to crumple your collar. (*He puts the child on the ground again, who tries afresh to escape.*)

Lionnette (*who during this time is serving the tea*)

And me, Raoul.
(*Raoul runs back again and kisses his mother.*)

Lionnette (*with a sigh*)

Go and play, my child, go; and amuse yourself well.
(*Lionnette, a cup in each hand, presents one to Godler, the other to Trévelé.*)

Godler (*touching Lionnette's hand with his lips*)

Dare I be so bold?

Lionnette

If you wish it.

Trévelé

And I?

Lionnette

And you, too. Only, take the cups, or you will burn my hands with the tea.

Godler

And you, Nourvady?

Nourvady

Thank you, I ask for nothing, not even a cup of tea.
(John *chats with Richard in a corner.*)

Trévelé

And the Countess will be right never to give you anything. People who ask nothing are often those who wish too much. Under cover of forty millions...

Nourvady

My money has nothing to do with this.

Trévelé

Certainly not; but all the same, when one has forty millions one finds a great many things easier than when one has, like me, only one. Ah, well, I must say, to the credit of Nourvady, it is in vain that he has two millions income at least – because he is a man who makes the best of his capital. He is, after all, the most sentimental of us three, and who takes love most seriously. He is a millionaire Anthony, and in our time it is remarkable.

Godler

And useful.
(Richard *and John, who have chatted in a corner of the drawing-room, make their way to the terrace, where they chat in sight of the public.*)

Nourvady

I do not know why Trévelé always assails me on the score of my fortune, of which I talk as little as possible. I am rich, but it is through no fault of mine. If that had depended on me alone, it certainly would never have happened. I am not clever enough to make forty millions. Fortunately, I had a father who was very intelligent, and, at the same time, very honourable. This father had a large bank at Vienna, which was very prosperous. He died, leaving me forty millions. It was, therefore, necessary to resign myself to accept them.

Lionnette

Easy resignation, I think, and that I should have had like you.

Nourvady

Ah! Madam, a fortune is a burden like anything else, at least for a man, for women have more grace and intelligence in spending money than we. But with much simplicity, a few efforts of the

intellect, a little ingenuity in the way of rendering services – there is sometimes a way to get out of the difficulty – for a man.

Trévelé

And you get out of it remarkably well, my dear fellow! If we tease you about your millions, it is because it is the only subject we can joke you upon.

Nourvady (*holding out his hand to him*)

Rest assured, my dear Trévelé, that I am never offended at your jokes.

Godler (*to Trévelé*)

It is very fortunate for you, for if Nourvady were at all susceptible you would have a nice time.

Trévelé

Why?

Godler

Because he kills a bird at every shot.

Trévelé

But I am not a bird.

Godler

And he hits the mark eleven times out of twelve, and barely escapes the twelfth.

Nourvady

Fortunately I have an easy temper, which I have acquired by self-control, for I was naturally violent and irritable.

Godler

That poor Marnepont discovered something of that.

Nourvady

Don't let us speak of that.

Lionnette

Oh, yes, please let us speak of it. I knew Mr. de Marnepont very well, and I have heard in fact that he was killed. By you, then?

Nourvady

Alas! yes, madam.

Lionnette

In a duel?

Nourvady

Certainly. I did not assassinate him.

Lionnette

He was very annoying.

Nourvady

That was not the only reason of his death. He had other defects. He was insolent, and, above all, a liar.

Lionnette

What insolence was he guilty of? What lie did he tell? I will wager there was a woman in the case.

(Richard is gone. John hears all that is said, leaning upon the back of the couch where his wife is sitting.)

Nourvady

No, madam, it concerned me pitifully. Mr. de Marnepont calumniated me. He said I was hump-backed, which is not true. I have only the left shoulder a little higher than the right.

Lionnette

That is not seen at all.

Nourvady

It is not seen any longer, especially since that duel. In any case, no one says any more about it. My father, it is true, had a round back – at the close of his life principally. He had worked hard, stooping over a desk. That makes one round-shouldered in the end. Poor father! he said to me: "You have one shoulder higher than the other, the left; you get that from me; I ask your pardon for it, and I will endeavour to leave you what will make you forget it. But there are some people who will mock much more willingly at you as you will be very rich. Be strong in all sword-play, then; that will equalize everything." I followed the advice of my father, and I am astonished at the result. Then, as Mr. de Marnepont was a very good shot, I chose the pistol as our weapon. I was affronted, so wished to show him what good play was. We were allowed to fire at will; he fired first, and lodged a ball in my right shoulder, which naturally made me make this movement (*he raises his right shoulder a little*), for it was very painful, and I suffer from it often still. There are some days when my right arm is as if paralyzed. Whoever would get the better of me if I affronted him, has only to choose the sword; I should probably be killed at the second thrust.

Trévelé

And Marnepont?

Nourvady

Ah, well! In making the movement occasioned by the pain, this shoulder was for the moment higher than that. (*He raises the right arm a little.*) "Ah, said my opponent, laughing, I made a mistake, it is the right which is highest." It was not bad – for him, but it was bad taste. Then I fired. It was the first time that poor fellow showed any wit; he wasn't used to it; it killed him.

Godler (*quite low to Trévelé*)

He wants to rise in the estimation of our hostess; he is a clever fellow.

Lionnette (*looking at Nourvady, who is going towards Godler and Trévelé, one sitting and the other standing at the other side of the room*)

He is peculiar, that man.

John

Do you find him odd?

Lionnette

Yes, he is so unlike any one else.

John

Indeed?

Lionnette

What is the matter with you? What are you thinking about?

John

I am thinking that that odd man is very happy.

Lionnette

In having the left shoulder higher than the right, and a ball in the latter?

John

In having what I have not, in having forty millions.

Lionnette

Ah, yes, that would help us out of our difficulties.

John

My poor Lionnette, I am very unhappy.

Lionnette

Why?

John

Because I am not able to give you any longer what I formerly gave you.

Lionnette

I shall do very well without it.

John

You are incapable of it; you said it yourself just now.

Lionnette

There are moments when I no longer know what I say; you must not pay attention to it. Chance has done much for me in my life; it may still find a way.

John

And if chance gets tired, and if you also get as tired? I shall never say – "if you love me no more;" in your heart you have never loved me.

Lionnette

Why did I marry you, then?

John

Because your mother advised you to do it.

Lionnette

It is perhaps the only good advice she ever gave me, and I assure you I have been very grateful for what you have done for me.

John

Gratitude is not love.

Lionnette

Love comes afterwards.

John

A long time afterwards, for it has not come yet.

Lionnette

The most beautiful creature in the world could not give more than she has. I have given all I had to give. Is it love? Is it not love? I know not. I have no line of comparison, never having given to any one but you.

(She hesitates a moment before continuing.)

John

You were going to say something else.

Lionnette

No.

John

Yes. Say it, whatever it was.
(*He draws Lionnette by the hand, close to him.*)

Godler

There are the plots beginning again. An odd kind of a house this.
(*The three persons go out on the terrace, and from there into the garden, where one sees no more of them.*)

Lionnette

I was going to say that perhaps you find that I do not love you enough, because you love me too much. Then you have been much too good to me; you have done whatever I wished; you did wrong. You should have been more my master, in order to counterbalance the bad influence of my mother, to change my habits, to offer more resistance, and to save me from myself.

John

To save you? What have you done then?

Lionnette

I have ruined you.

John

That is all.

Lionnette

It is quite enough.

John

You have never thought of...

Lionnette

Of what?

John

Of another?

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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