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MR. PIM PASSES BY

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MR. PIM PASSES BY

inspired by
A.A. Milne

written by
Allison Kuznia

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Synopsis

This delightful comedy centers on the unexpected arrival of the absentminded Mr. Pim, as he disrupts the peaceful lives of the Mardens and sets off an absurd chain of events. A charming farce that examines love, marriage, and societal values. This is a shortened version based off of A.A. Milne's original script.

Cast of Characters

DINAH

MR. PIM

BRIAN STRANGE

OLIVIA MARDEN

GEORGE MARDEN

LADY MARDEN

Director Notes

CHARACTERS AND LINE COUNTS

Olivia Marden = 208 lines
George Marden = 157 lines
Dinah = 102 lines
Mr. Pim = 92 lines
Brian Strange = 67 lines
Lady Marden = 31 lines

Props

Settee
Chair
Hat Rack
2 Side Tables
Curtains, needle and thread
Oval Picture Frame
Other decorative items: pictures on wall, globe, etc.
Tea set and platter
Piano (option to leave out piano playing)

ACT I

Scene 1

Setting: The morning-room at Marden House (Buckinghamshire) decided more than a hundred years ago that it was all right, and has not bothered about itself since. Visitors to the house have called the result such different adjectives as "mellow," "oldfashioned," "charming"–even "baronial" and "antique;" but nobody ever said it was "exciting." Sometimes Olivia wants it to be more exciting, and last week she rather let herself go over some new curtains; she still has the rings to put on. It is obvious that the curtains alone will overdo the excitement; they will have to be harmonized with a new carpet and cushions. Olivia has her eye on just the things, but one has to go carefully with George. What was good enough for his great-great-grandfather is good enough for him. However, we can trust Olivia to see him through it, although it may take time.

At Rise: At curtain, DINAH enters dancing, and humming, she is very pretty, very happy, and full of boyish high spirits and conversation. She dance to piano, sits and plays a few bars and sings. While she is playing, we hear a knock at the door. After not getting an answer, PIM peeks his head in, and then slowly approaches DINAH at the piano. He startles her as he slowly makes his arrival known.

DINAH

Hullo!

PIM

You must forgive me, but... Good morning, Mrs. Marden.

DINAH

Oh, I say, I'm not Mrs. Marden. I'm Dinah.

PIM

(with a smile)

Then I will say, Good morning. Miss Diana.

DINAH *(reproachfully)*

Now, look here, if you and I are going to be friends, you mustn't do that. Dinah, not Diana. Do remember it, there's a good man, because I get so tired of correcting people. Have you come to stay with us?

(takes hat off PIM's head and puts on hat rack)

PIM

Well, no, Miss–er–Dinah.

DINAH *(nodding)*

That's right. I can see I shan't have to speak to you again. Now tell me your name, and I bet you I get it right first time.

(sits)

And do sit down.

(pats seat next to her on settee)

PIM

(sits down)

Thank you. My name is–er–Pim, Carraway Pim–

DINAH

Pim, that's easy.

PIM

And I have a letter of introduction to your father–

DINAH

Oh, no; now you're going wrong again, Mr. Pim. George isn't my father; he's my uncle. Uncle George. You see, he's been my guardian since I was about two, and then about five years ago he married a widow called Mrs. Telworthy.

PIM *(repeating)*

Mrs. Telworthy.

DINAH

That's Olivia–so she became my Aunt Olivia, only she lets me drop the Aunt.

(speaking very sharply)

Get that?

PIM

(a little alarmed)

I–I think so, Miss Marden.

DINAH *(admiringly)*

I say, you are quick, Mr. Pim. Well, if you take my advice, when you've finished your business with George-

(rising)

-you will hang about a bit and see if you can't see Olivia. She's simply...

(feeling for the word)

...devastating.

(moving to end table and taking up and looking at photo of Olivia)

I don't wonder George fell in love with her.

PIM

It's only the merest matter of business–just a few words with your uncle–Perhaps I'd better...

DINAH

(sits down again)

Well, you must please yourself, Mr. Pim. I'm just giving you a friendly word of advice. Naturally, I was awfully glad to get such a magnificent aunt. Because, after all, marriage is rather a toss up, isn't it?-

PIM

(taken aback)

Well, I don't, know, I haven't had any experience...

DINAH *(continuing)*

And George might have gone off with anybody, all the ladies were quite fond of him.

(moving to PIM)

PIM

But he married-er-Mrs. Telworthy.

DINAH

Yes, Mrs. Telworthy-my, you are getting good with names, Mr. Pim! You see, Olivia married the Telworthy man-

(standing)

-and they went to Australia with him, and he drank himself to death in the bush, or wherever you drink yourself to death out there, and Olivia came home to England, and met my uncle, and he fell in love with her and proposed to her-

(kneels on settee, pantomiming a proposal, which makes PIM immediately rise)

-Telworthy, isn't it a funny name?

(She hops off settee.)

PIM

Oh, a most curious name-Telworthy. From Australia, you say?

DINAH

Yes, I always say that he's probably still alive, and will turn up here one morning and annoy George.

PIM *(shocked)*

Oh!

DINAH

But I'm afraid there's not much chance.

PIM *(shocked)*

Miss Marden! Really!

DINAH

Well, of course, I don't really want it to happen, but it would be rather exciting. Wouldn't it, Mr Pim?

PIM

Exciting!

DINAH

However, things like that never seem to occur down here, somehow.

(running up to window; PIM watches her)

Of course, something very, very wonderful did happen last night.

(backing away)

No, no! I'm not sure if I know you well enough–

(She looks at him hesitatingly.)

PIM (uncomfortably)

Really, Miss Marden, you mustn't. I am only a–a passer-by, here today and gone tomorrow. You really mustn't–

DINAH

(looking round and down to PIM)

And yet there's something about you, Mr. Pim, which inspires confidence.

(bops PIM on nose)

PIM

Oh, no. Really, you mustn't tell me.

DINAH

(taking his arm, moving him upstage)

The fact is–

(in a stage whisper)

–I got engaged last night!

(She twirls around.)

PIM

Dear me, let me congratulate you. I wish somebody would come here.

DINAH

(looking out window)

I expect that's why George is keeping you such a long time.

(turning to PIM)

Brian, my young man, the well-known painter–only nobody has ever heard of him–he's smoking a pipe with George and asking for his niece's hand.

(Coming back to PIM, and taking his hands, she dances round with him in a circle. PIM falls exhausted onto floor.)

Isn't it exciting? You're really rather lucky, Mr. Pim–I mean being told so soon. Even Olivia doesn't know yet.

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ACT II

Scene 1

Setting: The living room

At Rise: An hour later. Lunch is over. Lady Marden and company are in living room.

LADY MARDEN

(to OLIVIA)

The lunch was acceptable, Olivia. Thank you.

OLIVIA

You're welcome.

DINAH

(to BRIAN)

I know Aunt Julia likes a little music.

(DINAH crosses to piano and begins to play. BRIAN crosses, laughing at her. GEORGE and LADY MARDEN are annoyed with DINAH's playing, and tell her to stop, and she does so. OLIVIA pours milk into DINAH's cup and BRIAN passes it to her; she drinks and then commences to play again and is stopped by looks from LADY MARDEN and GEORGE.)

LADY MARDEN

(to DINAH)

No! No! Don't do it!

OLIVIA

Your aunt does not like it, dear.

(DINAH stops playing.)

LADY MARDEN

No, I do not.

OLIVIA

Your Aunt Julia had wanted to see the pigs, dear. I wish you'd take her down. I'm rather tired, and your uncle has some business to attend to.

(GEORGE sits up straight in chair.)

LADY MARDEN

I've always said that you don't take enough exercise, Olivia.

BRIAN

May I come, too, Lady Marden?

LADY MARDEN

(coming down centre to BRIAN)

Well, a little exercise wouldn't do you any harm, Mr. Strange. You're an artist, ain't you?

BRIAN

Well, I try to paint.

DINAH *(rises)*

He sold a picture last March for—

GEORGE

Yes, yes, never mind that now.

LADY MARDEN

Yes, unhealthy life.

(going toward exit, turns to DINAH and BRIAN)

Well, come along.

(She strides out, followed by DINAH and BRIAN, who upset GEORGE's papers on the table as they go. OLIVIA takes the curtains and workbox from cabinet.)

GEORGE

(looking up and seeing OLIVIA)

Really, Olivia, we've got something more important, more vital to us than curtains, to discuss, now that we are alone at last.

OLIVIA

I wasn't going to discuss them, dear.

(She sits.)

GEORGE

Of course, I'm always glad to see Aunt Julia in my house, but I wish she hadn't chosen this day of all days to come to lunch.

OLIVIA

It wasn't Aunt Julia's fault. It was really Mr. Pim who chose the wrong day.

GEORGE

(fiercely and rising)

Good heavens, is it true?

OLIVIA

About Jacob Telworthy?

GEORGE

You told me he was dead. You always said that he was dead.

OLIVIA

Well, I always thought that he was dead. He was as dead as anybody could be. All the papers said he was dead.

GEORGE *(scornfully)*

The papers!

OLIVIA

(as if this would settle it for GEORGE)

The Times said he was dead. There was a paragraph about him. Apparently even his death was fraudulent.

GEORGE

Yes, yes, I'm not blaming you, Olivia, but what are we going to do, that's the question, what are we going to do? My God, it's horrible! You've never been married to me at all! You don't seem to understand.

OLIVIA

It is a little difficult to realize. You see, it doesn't seem to have made any difference to our happiness.

GEORGE

No, that's what's so terrible.

(OLIVIA looks up surprised.)

GEORGE

I mean–well, of course, we were quite innocent in the matter. But, at the same time, –we had no right to–to be happy.

OLIVIA

Would you rather we had been miserable?

GEORGE

You're Telworthy's wife, that's what you don't seem to understand. You're Telworthy's wife. You–er–forgive me, Olivia, but it's the horrible truth–you committed bigamy when you married me.

(in horror)

Bigamy!

OLIVIA

It is an ugly word, isn't it?

GEORGE

(rising with gesture of despair)

Well, what are we going to do?

OLIVIA

You sent Mr. Pim away so quickly. He might have told us things. Telworthy's plans. Where he is now. You hurried him away so quickly.

GEORGE

I've sent a note round to ask him to come back. My one idea at the moment was to get him out of the house—to hush things up.

OLIVIA

You can't hush up two husbands.

GEORGE

(in despair)

You can't.

(sits)

Everybody will know. Everybody!

OLIVIA

Jacob Telworthy may be alive, but I am not his wife. I ceased to be his wife when I became yours.

GEORGE

You never were my wife.

(annoyed)

Legally, we have been living in—living in—well, the point is, how does the Law stand? I imagine that Telworthy could get a—a divorce....

OLIVIA

A divorce?

GEORGE

I–I imagine so.

OLIVIA

But then we could really get married, and we shouldn't be living in–living in–whatever we were living in before.

GEORGE

I can't understand you, Olivia. You talk about it so calmly, as if there was nothing wrong in our having lived together for years without having been married.

OLIVIA

(placing her hands on table)

What seems wrong to me is that I lived for five years with a bad man whom I hated. What seems right to me is that I lived for five years with a good man whom I love.

GEORGE

(taking and patting her hands affectionately)

Yes, yes, my dear, I know.

(drops her hands)

But right and wrong don't settle themselves as easily as that. We've been living together when you were Telworthy's wife. That's wrong.

OLIVIA

So what you feel is that Telworthy has the greater claim? You are prepared to–make way for him?

GEORGE

Both the Church and the Law would say that I had no claim at all, I'm afraid. I–I suppose I haven't.

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(There is another silence. GEORGE is wondering whether to come to closer quarters with the great question.)

OLIVIA

Oh, by the way, George–

GEORGE

Yes?

OLIVIA *(innocently)*

I told Brian, and of course he'll tell Dinah, that Mr. Pim had made a mistake about the name.

GEORGE

(astonished, moving towards OLIVIA)

Mistake about the name?

OLIVIA

Yes–I told Brian that the whole thing was a mistake, I thought that was the simplest way.

GEORGE

Olivia–

(crossing)

–then you mean that Brian and Dinah think that–that we have been married all the time?

OLIVIA

Yes.

GEORGE

(coming closer to her)

Olivia, does that mean that you are thinking of marrying me?

OLIVIA

Do you want me to very much?

GEORGE

My darling, you know I do.

OLIVIA

We should have to keep it very quiet, George.

GEORGE

Well, of course–

(sitting next to her)

–nobody need know. And now that you've put Brian and Dinah off the scent, by telling them that–

(he breaks off and says admiringly)

–that was very clever of you, Olivia. I should never have thought of that.

OLIVIA *(innocently)*

George–you don't think it was wrong, do you?

GEORGE

(his verdict, taking her hands and patting them)

An innocent deception... perfectly harmless.

OLIVIA

Yes, dear, that was what I thought about–about–

(laughing to herself)

–what I was doing.

GEORGE

Then you will come up to London tomorrow?

(OLIVIA nods.)

GEORGE

And if we should see a carpet or anything else we want—

OLIVIA

Oh, George!

(They embrace. DINAH and BRIAN enter.)

DINAH

(seeing the embrace, surprised)

Oo–I say!

(GEORGE looks and feels rather a fool.)

GEORGE

Hallo!

(OLIVIA sits and resumes sewing.)

DINAH

Well, I'm so happy now that Pim has relented about your first husband–

(GEORGE catches OLIVIA's eye and smiles; she smiles back; but they are different smiles.)

GEORGE

(the actor)

Yes, yes, stupid fellow, Mr. Pim.

BRIAN

Yes. Absolute idiot, I think!

DINAH

And now that George has relented about–

(with a significant look at BRIAN)

–my first husband—

GEORGE

Here, you get on much too quickly.

(to BRIAN)

So you want to marry my Dinah, eh?

BRIAN

(with a smile)

Well, I do rather, sir.

GEORGE

(to BRIAN)

Well, you'd better have a talk with me about it–er–

(with a sly look at OLIVIA)

–Brian.

BRIAN

Thank you very much, sir.

(GEORGE gets up and BRIAN, imitating his walk, accompanies him.)

GEORGE

Well, come along then.

(BRIAN looks at his watch.)

GEORGE

I am going up to town after tea, so we'd better—

DINAH

I say, are you going to London?

GEORGE

(with a sly look at OLIVIA)

Yes, a little business.

DINAH *(cheekily)*

Eh?

GEORGE

Never you mind, young woman.

(to BRIAN)

Well, come along then. We'll stroll down and look at the pigs.

BRIAN

Right-o!

(They are going off when OLIVIA calls.)

OLIVIA

George, don't go too far away; I may want you.

GEORGE

All right! Give me a shout if you want me.

DINAH

(watching them exit)

Brian and George always discuss me in front of the pigs. So tactless of them. I say, are you going to London, too, darling?

OLIVIA

Tomorrow—

(rising and shaking out curtains)

DINAH

What are you going to do in London?

OLIVIA

Oh, shopping and-one or two little things.

DINAH

With George?

OLIVIA

Yes.

DINAH

I say, wasn't it lovely about Pim?

OLIVIA

Lovely?

DINAH

Yes, he told me all about it. Making such a hash of things, I mean.

OLIVIA *(innocently)*

Did he make a hash of things?

DINAH

Well, I mean keeping on coming like that. And if you look at it all round-well, for all he had to say, he needn't have come at all.

OLIVIA

Well, I don't think I should put it quite like that, Dinah.

DINAH

(referring to curtains)

I say, aren't they jolly?

OLIVIA

I'm so glad everybody likes them. Tell George I'm ready, dear.

DINAH

I say, is he going to put them up for you?

OLIVIA

Well, I thought perhaps he could reach better.

DINAH

All right, I'll tell him.

(calling off)

George!

GEORGE

(from off)

Coming!

DINAH

(playfully bouncing to piano, imitating a fairy's footsteps)

Slow music while the curtains go up.

(She sits at piano and plays. GEORGE enters, followed by BRIAN.)

GEORGE

(to OLIVIA)

What is it, darling?

OLIVIA

I wish you'd help me to put up these curtains?

GEORGE

Of course, dear. I'd better get the library steps.

(He exits.)

(BRIAN goes quickly to OLIVIA and gratefully kisses her hand, then comes down to DINAH and bows to her.)

BRIAN

Madam! I have the honour to inform you that hence-forward you are at liberty to regard me as your affianced husband.

DINAH

(rising quickly and advancing)

Darling!

BRIAN

(waving her back)

No! No! Stay there!

(She retreats and sits at piano.)

Brian

Go on playing.

(DINAH goes on playing and he takes out a sketch-book, sits on settee and sketches her.)

DINAH

What is it?

BRIAN

Portrait of Lady Strange.

(GEORGE enters with library steps, places them near window.)

OLIVIA

(She hands him the curtains and rounds back, watching GEORGE.)

Are you ready, dear?

GEORGE

(mounting the steps)

Yes, quite ready.

OLIVIA

There!

(The curtains become entangled and GEORGE nearly falls.)

OLIVIA

Oh, take care, dear!

GEORGE

(again mounting steps)

Oh, that's all right, dear. They're a little long.

(The curtains become entangled round his head.)

(MR. PIM enters mysteriously. OLIVIA is looking up at GEORGE. PIM touches her on the shoulder and with a start she turns to him. DINAH seeing him enter stops playing. OLIVIA, unwilling to attract GEORGE's attention, signals to DINAH to continue playing, and she does so.)

PIM

Mrs. Marden! I had to come back–I've just remembered his name was Ernest Polwittle–not Henry!

(Going off.)

Not Henry!

(DINAH plays forte.)

(Quick Curtain)



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