

GOING GOING, GONE

A Short Comedy

by

JAN CAREW

SchoolPlay Productions Ltd

15 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU

THE ANGEL OF DEATH
GOING GOING, GONE
and
MEET THE FAMILY

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CAST

Lord Bragwell

Lady Bragwell

Dithers, *the butler*

Mrs. Simper

Auctioneer

Man at sale

Woman at sale.

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SCENE 1.

(Bragwell Hall. LADY BRAGWELL and her friend MRS. SIMPER, are having coffee in the sitting room. DITHERS, the butler, comes in).

Dithers: You rang, my lady?

Lady B: Yes, Dithers. Take the tray away and bring us some really hot coffee. This stuff was almost cold by the time you got it here. Can't you walk a bit faster?

Dithers: Sorry, my lady.

Lady B: And don't forget the brown sugar this time.

Dithers: No, my lady.

(He goes out with the tray).

Lady B: Really! The things I have to put up with! It's time we got rid of Dithers. He's always dropping things and getting mixed up.

Mrs. Simper: What does Lord Bragwell say?

Lady B: He says he wouldn't dream of parting with Dithers. He's been with the family all his life. But I'll get my own way in the end. I always do.

Mrs. S: Yes, you're so good at managing people, Lady Bragwell.

Lady B: Oh, it isn't difficult. Lord Bragwell's all right, really. Even if he is rather childish. He just needs a firm hand.

(DITHERS comes in with the tray).

Lady B: Put it there, Dithers. Oh, and Dithers....

Dithers: Yes, my lady?

Lady B: Don't forget the men are coming to collect our jumble for the church sale this afternoon. I've put it all over there.

Dithers: Yes, my lady.

(He goes out).

Mrs. S: Are you going to the auction sale, Lady Bragwell?

Lady B: No, I'm not. I've arranged to go riding today. I hope I won't miss too many bargains.

Mrs. S: But it's antiques you collect, isn't it? There won't be many of those at the church sale.

Lady B: That reminds me. I must show you my latest buy. What do you think of that? *(She points to a very large, ugly brown vase).*

Mrs.S: Er what is it exactly? An umbrella stand?

Lady B: No! It's a vase. It's very old and valuable. What do you think of it?

Mrs. S: Well it's very striking. I mean, you certainly notice it.

Lady B: Yes, It's the only one of its kind.

Mrs. S: *(Under her breath).* Just as well.

Lady B: What did you say?

Mrs. S: I said, was that the bell?

Lady B: I didn't hear anything.

Mrs. S: I must be going now, Lady Bragwell. I promised to help get things ready for the sale. Thanks for the coffee.

SCENE 2

(A little later. The sitting room is now empty. LORD BRAGWELL peeps round the door and then comes in).

LordB: Good! The sitting room is empty. Now I can read my newspaper in peace. My God, what's that? *(He looks at the vase).* What can it be? Some sort of vase, I suppose. It's the ugliest thing I've ever seen.

(DITHERS comes in).

Dithers: Excuse me, my lord.

Lord B: Yes? What is it, Dithers?

Dithers: Lady Bragwell has collected some jumble for the church auction sale. It's on that table over there.

Lord B: Yes, I can see it. What about it?

Dithers: I'm sorry to bother you, my lord, but I have to do the shopping now. The men may call for the jumble when I'm out. Will you be so good as to give it to them?

Lord B: Of course, Dithers. Leave it to me.

Dithers: Thank you, my lord.

(He goes out and LORD B. settles down to read his paper. The bell rings).

Lord B: That must be the men for the jumble. What a load of rubbish! Lady Bragwell must have found it all in the attic. Still, I suppose someone will buy it. Though God knows who would want a vase like this!

SCENE 3

(Later. LORD BRAGWELL is still reading his paper. DITHERS comes in).

Dithers: I've finished shopping for dinner, my lord. Have the men come yet?

Lord B: What men?

Dithers: The men to collect the jumble, my lord.

Lord B: Oh that! Yes, Dithers, don't worry. I told you I'd see to it. You can see it's all gone.

Dithers: Yes, my lord. Oh dear!

Lord B: What's wrong?

Dithers: Did your lordship see a large, brown vase of rather ugly appearance? It was on this little table.

Lord B: That thing like a big, brown toad-stool? Of course I saw it. I could hardly miss it. The most ghastly thing I ever saw. I was glad to see it go.

Dithers: Oh dear! Oh dear!

Lord B: Why are you wringing your hands, Dithers? I thought people only did that in books.

Dithers: My lord, this is terrible!

Lord B: What is? Speak up man. Don't be afraid, whatever you've done.

Dithers: It isn't what I'VE done. It's what YOU'VE done, my lord.

Lord B: What do you mean?

Dithers: That vase belonged to Lady Bragwell. She'd only just bought it at great expense.

Lord B: What? That brown horror?

Dithers: It may have looked ugly, my lord, but Lady Bragwell said it was a very valuable antique. She paid a lot of money for it.

Lord B: No wonder I'm always broke. Oh Lord, Dithers! What are we to do?

Dithers: Lady Bragwell will be very angry, my lord.

Lord B: And when she's angry, she makes life hell for us.

Dithers: As you say, my lord. Can you not go to the auction and get the vase back? Tell them it was a mistake.

Lord B: I can hardly do that, Dithers. It would seem very mean. To give it away and then ask for it back. No, there is only one answer,

Dithers: Yes, my lord?

Lord B: We must go to the sale and bid for the vase. Let's face it, it's pretty ugly. No one will want it unless they know its value. We ought to get it for a song.

Dithers: That seems a good idea, my lord. There's only one thing.

Lord B: What's that, Dithers?

Dithers: Some of Lady Bragwell's friends will be at the sale. They'll see us buying the vase, and may tell her. Then her ladyship will guess what happened.

Lord B: And she'll still be angry. I know, Dithers! We'll go to the sale in disguise. Then we can buy the vase.

Dithers: Oh my lord, do you think we dare? What if we are found out? How will we explain?

Lord B: Nonsense, Dithers. It'll be fun. Where's your sense of adventure? Or would you rather face Lady Bragwell in a temper?

Dithers: Say no more, my lord. I'll go and look for some disguises right away.

SCENE 4

(The auction sale in the church hall. There are a lot of people at the sale).

Auctioneer: What am I bid for this lovely old toasting fork? Come on, ladies and gentlemen. Don't forget the sale is all in a good cause. We want to raise money to repair the church roof. Who'll start the bidding?

Man: Fifty pence!

Woman: Seventy-five pence!

(LORD BRAGWELL and DITHERS come in at the back of the room. They are dressed up as women).

Lord B: Good heavens, Dithers! Did you have to get me a hat with a silly veil on it? It makes it very difficult to see where I'm going, you know.

Dithers: Sorry, my lord. I thought it would help to hide your face. And I didn't have much time to find these clothes, you know. I did the best I could.

Anyway, your hat can't be as bad as mine. This peacock's feather keeps tickling my nose and making me sneeze.

Lord B: Well, don't sneeze when we're bidding for the vase. It'll put the price up. You know what sales are like. You daren't move a muscle in case someone thinks you're bidding.

Dithers: Are we in time, do you think? Is the vase still there, my lord?

Lord B: Yes, I can see it. There it sits in all its ugly glory. God, isn't it awful? No - one could want it.

Dithers: May I make a suggestion, my lord? We ought to stand in different parts of the room. Then no-one is likely to see through our disguise. We'll become part of the crowd.

Lord B: Good idea, Dithers. See you later.

Dithers: Yes, my lord. Good luck. And don't forget to speak in a high voice when you bid. You don't want to be recognised.

SCENE 5

Auctioneer: And now, ladies and gentlemen, we come to a very interesting old vase. Not beautiful perhaps, but very old and er.... interesting.

Man: Look at it! He'll have to pay someone to take it away.

Woman: Yes, isn't it terrible? Fancy anyone putting that in the sale.

Man: Glad to get rid of it, I expect.

Auctioneer: Will someone start bidding? What about five pounds? Four? Three? Surely someone will pay three?

Lord B: *(In a high voice)*. I'll give three pounds for it.

Voice from the back: I'll give four pounds

Lord B: Five pounds.

Voice: Six!

Lord B: Seven!

Voice: Ten pounds!

Lord B; *(To himself)*. Blast! This would happen! Someone must know it's an antique. Never mind, I mustn't let them have it. I must get that vase or life won't be worth living. *(Loudly)*. I'll give fifteen pounds!

Auctioneer: That's more like it! Any advance on fifteen pounds for this beautiful, interesting, old vase?

Voice: Twenty pounds!

Lord B: Thirty pounds!

Voice: Forty.

Man: They must be crazy. What are they bidding like that for?

Woman: I don't know. That vase must be something special. Perhaps we ought to bid as well. Forty-five pounds!

Lord B: Fifty.

Voice: Sixty.

Lord B: Seventy.

Voice: I'll give a hundred pounds for the vase.

Auctioneer: I am bid one hundred pounds for this marvellous, beautiful vase. Any advance on one hundred pounds?

Lord B: *(To himself)*. It's no use. I can't go on bidding. A hundred pounds is all I can raise. I'll just have to face Lady Bragwell and tell her the truth. I'd rather face a firing squad.

Auctioneer: Any advance on one hundred pounds? No? Very well. This vase is now going at one hundred pounds.... going, going, gone! *(He knocks his hammer on the table)*. Sold to the lady with the peacock feather. Congratulations, madame. You have a fine vase there. And now, we will continue the sale.

Lord B: What! The lady with the peacock feather? Don't tell me it was Dithers I was bidding against all the time! The idiot! Didn't he know it was me? We could have got the vase much more cheaply. Oh, there you are, Dithers! What did you bid against me for?

Dithers: Sorry, my lord. I couldn't see you in the crowd. And what with that false voice you put on....

Lord B: Oh, never mind. We've got the beastly vase anyhow. Now let's pay and get it out of here.

SCENE 6

Lady Bragwell: Just a moment, my good woman. Yes, you with the peacock feather in your hat. I want a word with you.

Lord B: *(To himself)*. Oh Lord! It's my wife. She wasn't supposed to be here today.

Lady B: *(To DITHERS)*. I missed the start of the sale. In fact, I didn't intend to come at all. But it was too rainy to go riding. I arrived just as you were buying that vase. I was too late to bid myself. Now, how much do you want for it?

Dithers: (*In a high voice*). I don't understand.

Lady B: Come now. I want that vase. I've got one at home exactly like it. They would make a fine pair.

Dithers: But it's not for sale

Lady B: Nonsense! Of course it is. I'll give you what you paid for it.

Dithers: (*Gets excited and forgets to use his false voice*). Really Lady Bragwell, I can't let you have it. Oh dear!

Lady B: I know that voice! You're not a woman at all. I know you. Good heavens, it's Dithers, our butler! In women's clothes! Really, Dithers, I didn't know you went in for this sort of thing.

Dithers: What sort of thing?

Lady B: Dressing up and pretending to be a woman. Really! I don't know what his lordship will say.

Lord B: But he isn't I mean, he hasn't. Dithers was only trying to get me out of trouble.

Lady B: Good Lord! I know that voice too. It isn't it can't be take off that veil at once. Lord Bragwell!

Lord B: I can explain everything, my dear.

Lady B: You - you monster! Both of you, dressed up as women! Going around in drag! You ought to be locked up.

Lord B: But my dear

Lady B: Don't you dare call me your dear.

Lord B: No, my dear. I mean

Lady B: I'm going home to pack. We'll see about details later. I shall have to have a decent allowance, of course. You can't expect me to live on nothing.

Lord B: You don't mean you're leaving me?

Lady B: What do you expect? Of course I'm leaving you. Goodbye.

SCENE 7

Lord B: Well, Dithers, this is a fine state of affairs.

Dithers: It is indeed, my lord.

Lord B: I got the vase.

Dithers: Yes, my lord.

Lord B: But now I've lost Lady Bragwell.

Dithers: Yes, my lord. What are you going to do?

Lord B: Oh, I shall try to live without her, Dithers. We Bragwells never give way

to our feelings. I shall just be brave and try to carry on.

Dithers: That's the spirit, my lord.

Lord B: I suppose we'd better take this vase home. Do you think Lady Bragwell will have packed and cleared off by now?

Dithers: I think it likely, my lord. She looked as if she was in a hurry to leave.

Lord B: Good! I mean, how sad. But she just wouldn't listen to our excuses.

Dithers: No, my lord. I'll carry this vase home for you. It's a bit heavier than it looks. (*He lifts the vase*). It's a bit slippery as well. Not at all easy to get hold of Oh! Watch out my lord. I'm going to drop it. (*The vase smashes to bits*). Oh dear! I'm so sorry. A vase that cost you a hundred pounds. Why are you smiling, my lord?

Lord B: Never mind, Dithers. I'll get over it. I don't know where I'd have put it anyway. And when you think about it, that vase was just like my marriage to Lady Bragwell.

Dithers: How do you mean, my lord?

Lord B: You know Going, Going, and thank God, Gone!

THE END