

THE HOPELESS PASSION
OF MR. BUNYON



From
SEVEN MODERN COMEDIES

by
LORD DUNSANY

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Drawn from:

Seven Modern Comedies

By

Lord Dunsany

G. P. Putnam's Sons
London & New York

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MR. MUFFEN.

MR. BUNYON.

MISS SLEGGIT.

THE HOPELESS PASSION OF MR. BUNYON

SCENE: The interior of a shop. Mr. Bunyon seated at a table gazing out at the ridiculous wax figure in the shop-window. A brass curtain-rail is between him and the figure, but the curtains are both drawn back.

Enter the shopkeeper, Mr. Muffen.

MUFFEN. Mr. Bunyon. (*Bunyon continues his gazing.*) Mr. Bunyon. (*Bunyon still gazing.*) Mr. Bunyon.

BUNYON. Oh, I beg your pardon, sir.

MUFFEN. Oh, it's nothing of any importance.

BUNYON. But I'm listening, sir.

MUFFEN. Oh, please go on gazing out of the window.

BUNYON (*hastily closes window curtains*). But what was it, sir?

MUFFEN. Nothing of any importance.

BUNYON. Yes, sir?

MUFFEN. Only you're sacked.

BUNYON. Sacked, sir? Oh no, sir.

MUFFEN. Oh yes, sir.

BUNYON. But why, sir?

MUFFEN. Always gazing out of the window.

BUNYON (*who has been sitting neglecting an account book*). I'll finish this off in a moment, sir. I really will.

MUFFEN. 'Tisn't only that. Always drawing the curtains back the way you do, people can see inside.

BUNYON. But there's, there's not any harm in that. Is there?

MUFFEN. We do business in here. That's not a thing to be looked at.

BUNYON. I won't never do it any more, sir.

MUFFEN. You won't!

BUNYON. I won't really, sir.

MUFFEN. No, you're sacked.

BUNYON. I came for a very low wage. I took a very low wage indeed.

MUFFEN. I don't care.

BUNYON. You'll never get anyone to do the work for so little, sir.

MUFFEN. Daresay not, but I'm tired of it. Always looking out of the window.

BUNYON. Well, I'll tell you what, sir.

MUFFEN. You're sacked. See?

BUNYON. I'll tell you what, sir. I'll work with you for nothing.

MUFFEN. What do you mean?

BUNYON. For no wages at all.

MUFFEN. For nothing at all?

BUNYON. Yes, nothing, if you'll only keep me.

MUFFEN. Well, I'll think over it.

BUNYON. You'll do it, sir?

MUFFEN. I didn't say I'd do it. I must know what you're getting at.

BUNYON. What I'm getting at, sir?

MUFFEN. Yes, what you're getting at.

BUNYON. I'm getting at nothing.

MUFFEN. You aren't going to stop here and work for no wages.

BUNYON. Yes I am, sir.

MUFFEN. Why?

BUNYON. Oh, I don't know, sir.

MUFFEN. Then I don't accept your terms.

BUNYON. You don't accept them, sir?

MUFFEN. No.

BUNYON. Not when I do all your work for nothing?

MUFFEN. No. What's your game?

BUNYON. Oh, I—I couldn't tell you, sir.

MUFFEN. Then you're sacked.

BUNYON. Even if I work for nothing?

MUFFEN. Yes. I want to know why.

BUNYON. But, but what does it matter to you, sir?

MUFFEN. Never you mind. Well, if you must know; in business knowing the other man's game, its worth, well, it's everything, there's nothing more *in* business besides that. If you don't tell me, you go.

BUNYON. Oh, do keep me, sir. Keep me for nothing.

MUFFEN. No.

BUNYON. Well, it's like this, sir.

MUFFEN. Well?

BUNYON. It's like this, sir. Oh, it will seem very silly to you.

But, well you know, sir, every man has his fancy. They go about and they meet them in one place or another. But I'm always here in the shop so much and hardly ever go out, so that one way and another I haven't had other people's opportunities, not so that I could make comparisons, and....

MUFFEN. Well?

BUNYON. Well, sir, the fact is, you see, the one in the window is the only one I really know, and——

MUFFEN. Well?

BUNYON. And so she's come to mean as much to me, much more really, as all the other young things that go about outside seem to be to other young men.

MUFFEN. You mean? What? That!

BUNYON. She is to me, sir.

MUFFEN. That?

BUNYON. She is to me, sir.

MUFFEN. But. What on earth can you find in a wax figure?

BUNYON. Oh, a lot, sir.

MUFFEN. But what?

BUNYON. Oh, I'm afraid you'd laugh at me, sir. But I see such a lot in her, sir.

MUFFEN. It.

BUNYON. I beg your pardon, sir. I meant It.

MUFFEN. Well, what can you see in it. That's what I want to know.

BUNYON. Well, sir. There's her colour, you know. Its colour, I should say. I do admire colour. And she's more colour, *it* I should say, than any of them. Her cheeks, *its* cheeks, I should say. And then the lips. They paint their lips a bit, sir, all of them, but they're none of them like hers. *Its*, sir, I mean to say. None of them.

MUFFEN. Well, I thought it was pretty natural. I don't know what fault you have to find with its lips.

BUNYON. Fault, sir. Oh no, sir. I shouldn't presume to find a fault. There's no fault to be found, sir. They're lovely, those lips. There's none like them, none in all London.

MUFFEN. There you go again. I tell you they're quite natural. They're just the colour that's worn now.

BUNYON. Oh yes, sir. I know, sir. They're unique.

MUFFEN. Yes, that's what I've been telling you. But that's not enough to make you like this about her, *it*, I mean. I want to know what you see in it.

BUNYON. That wonderful colour, sir. (*Muffen opens his mouth. Bunyon continues hastily.*) But that's not all. No, sir, there's something far more than that. Oh, I could hardly tell you, sir.

MUFFEN. Go on. I want to know what on earth you think you can see in a wax figure, if you're speaking the truth.

BUNYON. The truth, sir. Oh, it's the truth. It's no fancy, sir, no young dream; it's the romance of my life, sir.

MUFFEN. Well, I want to know what on earth you think you can see in it.

BUNYON. Well, it's like this, sir: I haven't had much opportunities of seeing the real smart ones, working in here as I do, and all that: and then when you brought her here, *it* I should say, I recognized all at once what it was about her that's so perfectly wonderful, sir. Why, you must see it yourself.

MUFFEN. I? I'm blowed if I do. I'm asking you.

BUNYON. Fashionableness, sir. That's what's the matter with her, *it* I should say. Fashionableness. She's got more fashionableness than anyone in the world. There isn't a queen so fashionable. Look at that sort of affected way she stands, and that simper, sir, if I may call it so; all pure fashionableness. I've never seen anyone like her.

MUFFEN. It.

BUNYON. It, I should say, sir.

MUFFEN. But look here, you know, it's all silly nonsense. I grant you it's fashionable, rather uniquely perhaps, and of course highly artistic.

BUNYON. Oh very, sir.

MUFFEN. But you can't marry it. The idea's absurd.

BUNYON. I know I can't. Oh, I know I can't, sir. But not absurd, sir, on that account. I've done a bit of reading, sir: I have really. And, if you'll believe it, sir, there've been scores of cases of what's called hopeless passions. There have really, sir. Men have loved queens, sir; they really have. Just ordinary men, sir. And did they think anything could come of it? Well, I ask you. But they didn't give up their love, sir, not on that account.

MUFFEN. I don't say they did. I don't say they did. But what's all that got to do with it.

BUNYON. Well, sir, I won't give up, not when they wouldn't.

MUFFEN. You must be mad.

BUNYON. Ah yes, sir. But how sweet it is, that madness. You'd never know.

MUFFEN. If you loved anything that could love you in return, why, that I admit would be another matter. But this——

BUNYON. Ah, that's where all the romance is, sir; that she can never love me in return. It's all the sweeter for that, sir. It's like the queens in those books. They admitted they were mad, the men I was telling you of; but they wouldn't give it up, they weren't crazy enough for that. It's the light of one's life, sir.

MUFFEN. Well, you'll have to get out of this. I can't have a madman here.

BUNYON. No, sir! No! I'll work for you for nothing. You said if I told you why I wanted to stay you'd keep me. You said you would, sir: you said it. And I've told you the story of my life. Let me stay and look at her, sir, working for nothing. That fashionableness! Those brilliant lips!

MUFFEN. No, I can't keep a crazy fellow like you about the place. Why, it wouldn't be safe.

BUNYON. Oh, it would, sir.

MUFFEN. Not half it wouldn't. I've got the respectability of the firm to consider. Out you get.

BUNYON. Then let me see her once before I go.

MUFFEN. To say good-bye, do you mean?

BUNYON. To say farewell.

MUFFEN. You can do that from outside.

BUNYON. No, thousands see her from there. I have loved her at
this angle.

MUFFEN. Oh, all right then, so long as you hop it.

[He jerks curtain aside.]

BUNYON. Star of my dream.

THE WAX FIGURE. Ow reely, Mr. Bunyon.

MUFFEN. Miss Sleggit, I told you never to move. How often
have I told you?

THE WAX FIGURE. Ow. I'm sorry, Mr. Muffen.

MUFFEN. Don't I pay you to stand in that window?

THE WAX FIGURE. Ow, yes, Mr. Muffen.

BUNYON. Alive!

THE WAX FIGURE. Ow, quite, Mr. Bunyon.

MUFFEN. Well, you're both sacked.

BUNYON. Shall we come along?

THE WAX FIGURE. Yes, let's, Mr. Bunyon.

MUFFEN. And I'll tell you one thing, Miss Sleggit. Yes, both of you. I'm going to buy a real one this time, whatever it costs.

THE WAX FIGURE. Good-bye, Mr. Muffen.

[Strikes the absurd attitude of her work in the window.]

BUNYON (*almost kneeling, stretching out adoring arms*). Ah, what adorable fashionableness.

[The end of *The Hopeless Passion of Mr. Bunyon* by Lord Dunsany]