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Adapted from the plays "The Twelve Pound Look"
and "Half an Hour" by J.M. Barrie

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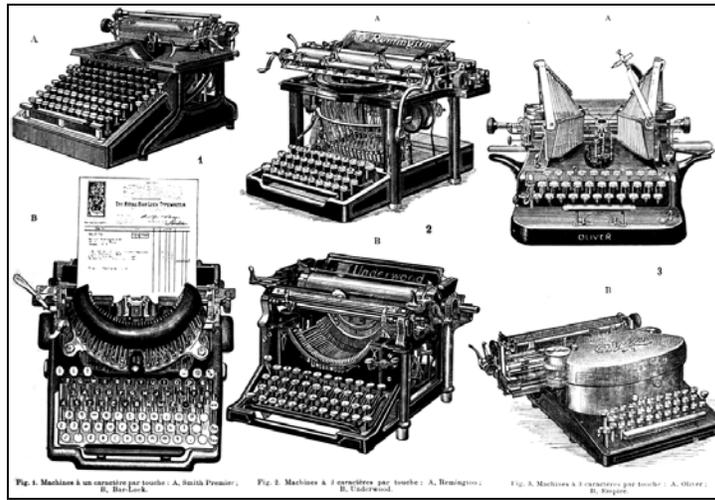
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*How to Get Rid of Your Husband,
Circa 1910*

COMEDY/DRAMA. Adapted from the plays “The Twelve Pound Look” and “Half an Hour” by J.M. Barrie. In “The Twelve Pound Look” the wealthy Harry Sims is to be knighted in a few days and is flooded with congratulatory letters. He hires a typist to reply to the letters but is horrified when the person who shows up turns out to be his ex-wife, Kate. A showdown between the independent Kate and the arrogant, egotistical Harry ensues, and when the dust settles, Harry’s second wife appears keenly interested in Kate’s typewriter. In “Half an Hour,” Lilian yearns to leave her abusive husband. After Hugh Paton proposes that she sail with him to Egypt, Lilian realizes this is her chance to escape her unhappy marriage. Due to sail within half an hour, Lilian joins Hugh at his flat. When Hugh leaves to hail a cab, he is struck by a car and killed. A friend of Lilian’s husband finds Hugh’s body in the street, notifies Lilian of his death, and then makes his way to Lilian’s home for a dinner party. Plays may be performed singly.

Performance Time: Approximately 45-60 minutes.



About the Story

Commercial typewriters were first introduced in 1874 but did not become common in the workplace until the mid-1880s. The first typewriters were marketed for transcribing dictation, which was considered women's work. The typewriter created new jobs for women outside of traditional jobs like charwomen, laundresses, domestic service, and factory work.

The Twelve Pound Look

(1 M, 2 F, 1 flexible)

HARRY SIMS: Wealthy businessman who is to be knighted; wears fine clothing suitable for a knighting; male.

KATE: Harry's self-reliant, independent ex-wife who left him several years ago and now works as a typist; wears modest clothing and a hat, coat, and soiled gloves; female.

LADY SIMS: Harry's submissive second wife; wears an elegant gown and jewels that she has picked out for Harry's knighting; female.

TOMBES: The Sims' butler/maid; flexible.

Half an Hour

(4 M, 3 F, 1 flexible)

MR. RICHARD GARSON: A wealthy, arrogant financier who is physically and emotionally abusive to his wife; male.

LADY LILIAN: Mr. Garson's wife; wears a green dress and a hat and coat; female.

HUGH PATON: Bachelor architect readying for a trip to Egypt; has invited Lilian to set sail with him; his clothing and hair is tousled and in disarray; male.

SUSIE: Landlady's teenage daughter at Hugh's rooming house; female.

DR. BRODIE: A Doctor who is a friend of Mr. Garson but has not yet been introduced to Lilian; discovers Hugh's body while on his way to a dinner party at the Garsons' home; wears evening clothes with an overcoat and muffler; male.

WITHERS: The Garsons' butler/maid; flexible.

MR. REDDING: Dinner guest; male.

MRS. REDDING: Dinner guest; female.

Options for Doubling

TOMBES/WITHERS (flexible)

SUSIE/MRS. REDDING (female)

Settings

The Twelve Pound Look: The Sims' home, mid-morning, 1910.

Half an Hour: The Garsons' mansion and Hugh Paton's flat, evening, 1910.

The Twelve Pound Look

Sims' mansion. The room is ostentatiously adorned. There is a settee with tasseled cushions and a writing desk with a locked drawer. A portrait of Lady Sims in her wedding gown is on the wall.

Half an Hour

Garsons' mansion. The room is ostentatiously adorned. There is a settee and a desk with a locked drawer. There is a mirror on the wall.

Hugh Paton's flat in a rooming house. The snug room is in disorder as Hugh hasn't finished packing for his trip. There are piles of paper on the floor and several travel trunks.

Props

The Twelve Pound Look: Typewriter, letter opener, business card, hand bell, key, old worn letter, soiled gloves (for Kate), decorative sword.

Half an Hour: Hat and coat (for Lilian), letter, envelope, wedding ring, assorted jewelry, hand bell.

*“I’ll tell you
what you are worth to me. . .”*

—Kate

The Twelve-Pound Look

(AT RISE: *The Sims' home, mid-morning. Harry is to be knighted in a few days, and Harry and his wife, Lady Sims, have been rehearsing the ceremony. They have been at it all the morning. Lady Sims claps her hands to signal Sir Harry. Sir Henry enters and bows with a graceful swerve of his leg. He is only partly in costume as his sword and the real stockings haven't arrived yet. With a gliding motion, he reaches Lady Sims, goes on one knee, and raises her hand to his lips. Lady Sims taps him on the shoulder with a letter opener.*)

LADY SIMS: *(In a husky male voice.)* Rise, Sir Harry. *(Sir Harry rises, bows, and glides about the room, going on his knees to various articles of furniture, and rising from each a knight.)*

SIR HARRY: *(Complacently.)* Did that seem all right?

LADY SIMS: *(Relieved.)* Perfect.

SIR HARRY: But was it dignified?

LADY SIMS: Oh, very. And it will be more so when you have the sword.

SIR HARRY: The sword will lend it an air. There are really the five moments... *(Demonstrating.)* ...the glide, the dip, the kiss, the tap, and I back out a knight. It's short, but it's a very beautiful ceremony. Any suggestions?

LADY SIMS: No. Oh, no. *(Sir Harry pauses to kiss the tassel of a cushion. Nervously.)* Do you think you have practiced what to do almost too well?

SIR HARRY: *(Annoyed.)* I do not. Don't talk nonsense. Wait until your opinion is asked for.

LADY SIMS: I'm sorry, Harry. *(Tombes, the butler, enters and presents a card. Announces.)* "The Flora Typewriting Agency."

SIR HARRY: Ah, yes. I telephoned them to send someone. A woman, I suppose, Tombes?

TOMBES: Yes, Sir Harry.

SIR HARRY: Show her in. And, Tombes, strictly speaking, you know, I am not "Sir Harry" till Thursday.

TOMBES: Beg pardon, sir, but it is such a satisfaction to us.

SIR HARRY: (*Proudly.*) Ah, they like it downstairs, do they?

TOMBES: Especially the females, Sir Harry.

SIR HARRY: (*Proudly.*) Exactly. You can show her in, Tombes. (*Tombes exits.*) You can tell the woman what she is wanted for, Emmy, while I change. I am too modest to boast about myself. You can tell her the sort of things about me that will come better from you. (*Smiling.*) You heard what Tombes said, "Especially the females." And he is right. Success! The women like it even better than the men...and rightly. Not a woman will see that gown without being sick with envy. I know them. Have all our lady friends in to see your gown. It will make them ill for a week!

(Sir Harry exits. Kate enters, carrying her typewriter.)

KATE: (*To Lady Sims, respectfully*) Good morning, madam.

LADY SIMS: (*Nervously.*) Good morning. (*Curious.*) Is that the typewriting machine?

(Kate is prepping the typewriter for use.)

KATE: Yes. I suppose if I am to work here, I may take this off. (*Referring to her hat.*) I get on better without it. (*Takes off her hat.*)

LADY SIMS: Certainly. I ought to apologize for my gown. I am to be presented this week, and I was trying it on.

KATE: (*Admiring gown.*) It is beautiful, if I may say so.

LADY SIMS: (*Proudly.*) Yes, it is very beautiful. Sit down, please.

KATE: I suppose it is some copying you want done? I got no particulars. I was told to come to this address, but that was all.

LADY SIMS: Oh, it is not work for me. It is for my husband, and what he needs is not exactly copying. (*Swelling with pride.*) He wants a number of letters answered...hundreds of letters and telegrams of congratulation.

KATE: (*Businesslike.*) Yes?

LADY SIMS: (*Remembers what Harry said.*) My husband is a remarkable man. He is about to be knighted. (*Pause. Kate doesn't fall to the floor impressed.*) He is to be knighted for his services to...for his services. (*Pause. Kate doesn't look overly impressed.*) He can explain it so much better than I can.

KATE: (*Businesslike.*) And I am to answer the congratulations?

LADY SIMS: (*Afraid it will be a difficult task.*) Yes...

KATE: (*Businesslike.*) It is work I have had some experience with. (*Begins to type.*)

LADY SIMS: But you can't begin till you know what he wants to say.

KATE: (*Businesslike.*) Only a form letter. Won't it be the usual thing?

LADY SIMS: Is there a usual thing?

KATE: Oh, yes.

(*Kate resumes typing. Half-mesmerized, Lady Sims watches Kate's nimble fingers as she types.*)

LADY SIMS: (*Sighs.*) How quickly you do it! It must be delightful to be able to do something, and to do it well.

KATE: Yes, it is delightful.

LADY SIMS: (*Remembering what Sir Harry said.*) But, excuse me, I don't think that will be any use. My husband wants me to explain to you that his is an *exceptional* case. He did not try to get this honor in any way. It was a complete surprise to him.

KATE: (*Businesslike.*) That is what I have written.

LADY SIMS: But how could you know?

KATE: I only guessed.

LADY SIMS: Is that the usual thing?

KATE: (*Businesslike.*) Oh, yes. That is what we are told to say in the letters.

LADY SIMS: I should explain that my husband is not a man who cares for honors...so long as he does his duty.

KATE: (*Businesslike.*) Yes, I have been putting that in.

LADY SIMS: (*Surprised.*) Have you? But he particularly wants it to be known that he would have declined a title were it not—

KATE: I have got it here.

LADY SIMS: What have you got?

KATE: (*Reads.*) “Indeed I would have asked to be allowed to decline had it not been that I want to please my wife.”

LADY SIMS: But how could you know it was that?

KATE: Is it?

LADY SIMS: Do they all accept it for that reason?

KATE: That is what we are told to say in the letters.

LADY SIMS: It is as if you knew my husband.

KATE: I assure you, I don’t even know his name.

LADY SIMS: Oh, he wouldn’t like that. (*Harry joyfully enters, wearing his usual clothing. Introducing.*) This is the lady, Harry.

SIR HARRY: Yes, yes. (*To Kate.*) Good morning, my dear.

(When Sir Harry and Kate see each other, their mouths open, as they are shocked to see each other. After the surprise, Kate finds some humor in the situation, but Sir Harry is visibly angry.)

LADY SIMS: I have been trying to explain to her—

SIR HARRY: (*Quickly.*) Leave it to me, Emmy, I’ll attend to her.

(Lady Sims exits.)

SIR HARRY: (*To Kate, with scorn.*) You!

[END OF FREEVIEW]

*“I assure you, I pitied her
when I thought she was his wife
and still more when I found she wasn’t.”*

—Dr. Brodie

Half an Hour

Scene 1

(AT RISE: *The Garsons' mansion, evening. Mr. Garson and his wife Lilian are in the midst of an argument.*)

LILIAN: (*Frozen.*) Why don't you strike me, Richard? I am a woman, and there is no one to hear.

GARSON: A woman?! You useless thing, that is just what you are not!

(*Garson pushes Lilian away from him so roughly that she falls on the settee. She just lies there in a heap.*)

LILIAN: (*Sarcastic.*) How strong you are, husband of mine! No wonder I love you! Now as I have told you why I love you, won't you tell me why you love me? (*Garson fumes inarticulately. She takes off her hat and coat.*) How you have ruffled me! (*Looking at her dress.*) You know, I can't make up my mind whether green is really my color. What do you think? Which color do you like best to hit me about in, Richard?

GARSON: (*With fists clenched.*) You take care! (*Stomps about the room.*)

LILIAN: Do you mind telling me what this scene has been about?

GARSON: You have me there. Why does it matter what sets a pair like you and me saying what we think of each other?

LILIAN: True. But we knew what we thought of each other before.

GARSON: We did. And I've said to that father of yours—

LILIAN: By the way, I never heard how much you paid Pops for me.

GARSON: One way or another, a good \$20,000.

LILIAN: I can't help feeling proud.

GARSON: If I could have gotten you for half, I wouldn't have had you.

LILIAN: How like you to say that, Richard! Still, there are other pretties for whom you could have had the satisfaction of paying more. There must have been some.

GARSON: Your rotten old families, all so poor and so well turned out. I suppose it went to my head. You were the worst, so I chose you.

LILIAN: (*Clapping.*) I won!

GARSON: Oh, you didn't need to come to me unless you wanted to.

LILIAN: (*Shivering.*) I admit that. It was your money that brought me.

GARSON: Quite so.

LILIAN: (*Sincere.*) I'm sorry, Richard, for both of us.

GARSON: Right!

LILIAN: You must at least acknowledge that I never pretended it was anything but your wealth that drew me.

GARSON: I never wanted it to be anything else.

LILIAN: How like you again! Perhaps that is even some little excuse—though not very much—for me.

GARSON: (*Sneering.*) Such compliments!

LILIAN: I daresay... (*Looking at him curiously.*) ...why don't we end it?

GARSON: (*Shouts.*) Do you know whom you are talking to?! With my name in the city—!

LILIAN: Of course. But if you won't, Richard, has it never struck you that someday I—

GARSON: (*Grinning.*) Never!

LILIAN: You have a mighty faith in me.

GARSON: Mighty.

LILIAN: May I ask why?

(*Garson approaches Lilian.*)

GARSON: It's in this expensive little pocket. (*Slaps his money pocket.*)

LILIAN: I see.

GARSON: Tragic lot yours, isn't it?

LILIAN: More tragic than you understand.

GARSON: Bought when you were too young to know what you were doing!

LILIAN: Not so young, but that I should have known.

GARSON: Such a rare exquisite creature, too, as you know yourself to be.

LILIAN: As I know I am not, but as I long to be. As I think I could be.

GARSON: As you think you could be, had you married a better man.

LILIAN: Mock me, you have some right, but it may be truer than you think.

GARSON: It is what they tell you, I don't doubt.

LILIAN: (*Shrugs.*) If I were to let them tell me what they would like to say—

GARSON: You do, my pet, and when they have finished, you tell them they mustn't say it. And your lip trembles, and one sad tear sits on your sweet eyes—the same little tear that comes when you have overdrawn your bank account.

LILIAN: How you read me!

GARSON: I think so. I think I know the stuff you are made of. I wouldn't try heroics, Lillian. You can't live up to them.

LILIAN: I haven't the courage, I suppose?

GARSON: When it comes to living, you've got to live on me, my girl.

(Lillian rises and faces him.)

LILIAN: Oh, if...if—

GARSON: If you were to show me! I am not nervous. In the end, you will always be true to... (*Indicating himself.*)
...Number One.

LILIAN: (*Enraged.*) And if I did?

GARSON: If you did...if you tried to play any game on me...

(*Grabs her by the wrist.*)

LILIAN: Would it be the knife, Richard, or Desdemona's pillow?

GARSON: If you brought any shame on me before I put you to the door, I would...I would break you!

LILIAN: If I did it, I wouldn't be here to break.

GARSON: By the powers, it would be as well for you.

LILIAN: Unless you wish to do the breaking now, please let go of my wrist.

(*Garson lets go of her wrist and tosses it away.*)

GARSON: Dinner at half-past, I suppose?

LILIAN: I suppose so.

[END OF FREEVIEW]