

PUBLIC RELATIONS .

BY

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CHARACTERS

JACK BENTLEY

MABEL.

FACES AT PARTIES. ETC.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

OPEN ON THE DRESSING ROOM OF JACK BENTLEY'S HOUSE. JACK IS FIXING HIS TIE AND MABEL IS ABOUT TO ZIP UP HER DRESS.

JACK: 'Relax everybody! Remember we're just one big unhappy family!' Why does he always say that? Of course nobody does relax. After all we only go there for self-advancement.

CUT TO THE PARTY WITH JACK WELCOMING GUESTS AT THE DOOR OF THE SITTING ROOM.

JACK: Relax everybody! Remember we're just one big unhappy family!

POLITE LAUGHTER ON A CLOSE UP OF JACK LOOKING PERPLEXED.

CUT TO JACK'S DARK-TROUSERED LEGS OVER POLISHED SHOES MOVING ALONG AN OFFICE CORRIDOR. PAN UP TO SHOW HIS BRIEFCASE. PULL BACK TO SHOW A CLERK PEEPING OUT OF HIS ROOM INTO THE CORRIDOR. THIS CLERK IS JACK.

CLERK: Half past ten! Why bother at all?

HE GAZES SPITEFULLY UP THE CORRIDOR. CUT TO A REAR VIEW OF THE DARK TROUSERS. PAN UP TO JACK'S HEAD AS HE STOPS GRADUALLY AND TURNS ROUND. HIS EYES WIDEN IN ASTONISHMENT. HE HAS SEEN HIMSELF. HE GOES ON WALKING. WAIT FOR HIM TO SLIP SLIGHTLY AND THEN RIGHT HIMSELF.

CUT TO JACK'S SITTING ROOM. PAN ACROSS MIDDLING PROSPEROUS FURNITURE TO MABEL SITTING IN AN ARMCHAIR.

READING THE PAPER. TAKE IN JACK WHO IS STANDING IN FRONT OF THE HEARTH LOOKING WORRIED AND TALKING TO HER..

JACK: I get so confused sometimes. I mean I did say 'Relax everybody, remember we're just one big unhappy family' last night didn't I?

MABEL (BEHIND PAPER) I don't remember..

JACK: You see, I feel like other people. It's more than that. I feel I am them. And it's even more than that. They've started looking like me.. Are you listening?

MABEL (BEHIND PAPER) Yes.

JACK: I feel I'm that clerk when I pass him in the morning. It feels like me sneering at myself.

CUT TO JACK'S OFFICE.. HE IS AT HIS DESK JUST PUTTING THE PHONE DOWN AS HIS SECRETARY ENTERS. THIS IS MABEL. HE LOOKS UP TO BEGIN DICTATING AND STARES AT HER IN ASTONISHMENT.

JACK: Hullo Mab---! Oh you're Joyce aren't you? Are you?

SECRETARY: Well I haven't changed my name.

CUT TO A CLOSE UP OF THE PHONE IN JACK'S SITTING ROOM. IT IS RINGING.

JACK (FROM ACROSS THE ROOM) Dman! You have an evening to yourself!

HE AMBLES ACROSS TO THE PHONE. FOLLOWING HIM, WE TAKE IN MABEL IN AN ARMCHAIR BEHIND ANOTHER NEWSPAPER.

JACK (AT THE PHONE) Hullo, yes? Well can't it do tomorrow? All right. (TAKING A NOTE) London airport two-fifty p.m. I'll send somebody though it might have to be my secretary. Who is he by the way? A partner, from Bremen? Blimey!

HE SLAMS DOWN THE RECEIVER.

MABEL: Did you see this?

JACK PASSES BY HER CHAIR AND SHE SHOWS HIM THE NEWSPAPER. HE PEERS. PUSH IN TO A PHOTOGRAPH CAPTIONED 'SIR GEORGE ARMSTRONG'. IT IS A PHOTOGRAPH OF JACK.

JACK (HANDING BACK THE PAPER) Sir George Armstrong? Why the hell should I want to see him? I've just talked to him.

MABEL: Well he's your boss.

JACK: Oh no he isn't. Not from next week. The Germans'll see to that. He sold out to them. And they're coming over to get the firm on its feet. Thank God. Here--- (GRABBING THE NEWSPAPER VIOLENTLY) wait a minute!

MABEL: Look out!

JACK: It's him again! I mean me again! That photograph is me! Look! It is, isn't it?

MABEL: Of course it isn't!

JACK: Well it looks like me to me. (SLUMPING BACK IN HIS CHAIR) I suppose I'm overtired. Doing my work and his too. Work all day, public relations all night. No wonder the firm went down, with me shouldering the entire burden. Sir George Armstrong! Sir! Can you imagine anything so ridiculous? It's a veneer, that's all. You get a 'sir' when the veneer's successful. It means you're a nobody. Take Winston Churchill. People said he should never have taken that title after the war because he was already a somebody. He didn't need it. He wasn't just a veneer. But this bloke is. Sir George Armstrong! Sir!

CUT TO JACK'S DARK-TROUSERED LEGS HURRYING ALONG THE OFFICE CORRIDOR. CUT TO THE CLERK (AGAIN IT IS JACK) PEEPING OUT OF HIS ROOM.

CLERK: A quarter to nine! What the hell's up with you this morning!

CUT TO A PLANE TOUCHING DOWN ON A RUNWAY. CUT TO THE ARRIVALS BOARD SHOWING 'FROM BREMEN 2. 50 p.m.'

CUT TO A CHAUFFEUR-DRIVEN CAR DRAWING UP OUTSIDE AN OFFICE BLOCK. THE SECRETARY (IT IS MABEL) GETS OUT AND HOLDS THE DOOR OPEN FOR A MAN IN A HOMBURG. THE TOP OF HIS HAT IS ALL WE SEE OF HIM AT FIRST, CLIMBING OUT OF THE CAR, WITH A BRIEFCASE. IT IS JACK. HE HAS TWO DUEL WOUNDS ACROSS HIS CHEEK.

SCHUTZ: Bitte halten-Sie---

HE HOLDS OUT HIS BRIEFCASE FOR HER TO HOLD AS HE WISHES TO SNEEZE. SHE TAKES IT AND HE SNEEZES INTO A HANDKERCHIEF.

SCHUTZ (TO HIMSELF) : Schon wieder ein schnupfen!

BACKTRACK AS THEY ADVANCE UP THE OFFICE BLOCK STEPS.

CUT TO JACK AT HIS OFFICE DESK SNEEZING INTO A HANDKERCHIEF. HIS SECRETARY---STILL MABEL---COMES IN.

SECRETARY: He's arrived. He's got two sword-wounds across his cheek.

JACK: That'll show Sir George!

SECRETARY: He's waiting to see you.

JACK: Me? I've got a cold!

SECRETARY (LEAVING) So has he.

CUT TO ANOTHER OFFICE IN THE BUILDING WITH SCHUTZ BEHIND THE DESK AND A SECRETARY---AGAIN IT IS MABEL---TAKING NOTES AT HIS SIDE.

SCHUTZ: My name is Schütz.

SECRETARY: Yes Mr Shoots.

SCHUTZ: Not Shoots, Schütz.

SECRETARY: Shits.

SCHUTZ (WITH A QUAKET GLARE) OK just call me Shoots. Take a note for George Armstrong. 'Dear Armstrong, I look forward to seeing you this evening for dinner. My wife too. I'd telephone you at your home but I know you hate phones.' (TO SECRETARY) A business man hates phones! Can you beat that? And get it round

to his home right away, since he don't ever come to the office afternoons. By the way what kind of a man is this?

SECRETARY: Sir George? Oh he's very nice!

SCHUTZ: You said 'sir'?

SECRETARY: That's right. That letter ought to read 'Dear Sir George' I think.

SCHUTZ: You said it with a light in your eye. That 'sir'. It impresses people. Like these duel wounds you keep looking at. It's a message from the hot-blooded past. And the foreigners love it! Like Sir Winston Churchill! Yes, I think Sir George Armstrong may still be of use to me!

CUT TO JACK BENTLEY'S DRESSING ROOM WITH HIM FIXING HIS TIE AND MABEL GETTING INTO A DRESS.

JACK (WITH A CERTAIN ANGUISH)
Mabel. He looks like me too.

MABEL: Who does?

JACK: Shoots. The partner from Bremen. Like me with a couple of sword-cuts across here.

SHE WALKS OUT WITH PURSED LIPS.

JACK (TO THE MIRROR) And guess what? He's asking George Armstrong to stay on. As a figurehead. Which is all he ever was. No, titles are out! And people like me are in! Old Shoots'll wake up to it in time!

CUT TO A PARTY DOWNSTAIRS. PUSH IN TO SIR GEORGE ARMSTRONG IN A SMOKING JACKET: IT IS JACK. HE IS TALKING TO MABEL.

JACK'S VOICE OVER? Relax everybody! Remember we're just one big unhappy family!

ARMSTRONG (AFTER A SOUR GLANCE TOWARDS THE DOOR) Nice chap old Shoots. Our man from Bremen you know.. Handsome wife too. He

said to me, come back as our figurehead. (LAUGHING) Not on your aunt Nelly I said! I'm retiring!

CUT TO SCHUTZ'S OFFICE WITH SCHUTZ AGAIN GIVING NOTES TO THE SECRETARY.

SCHUTZ: Who's the chap with the cold?

SECRETARY: That's Mr Bentley.

SCHUTZ: Invite him to my place for a tête-à-tête. All he does is give parties. Public relations is more than private relations. You have to do some work as well.

SECRETARY: Shall I tell him that?

SCHUTZ: No I will. At the tête-à-tête.

CUT TO JACK BENTLEY'S DRESSING ROOM WITH HIM FIXING HIS TIE AND MABEL GETTING INTO A DRESS.

JACK: It's all very well for you. It's not happening to you. But she's just like you!

MABEL: Who is?

JACK: My secretary! So is Shoots's secretary. So is Armstrong's! They're all like you! And if Mrs Shoots is I give up!

SHE HUMS.

JACK: I don't seem to know who I am any more. I mean I did have a past. My father was real, wasn't he? He worked on the railways. He used to see first-class passengers to their compartments and lock the door against strangers and get a nice tip for it at the end of the week. All that's real. He wasn't a public relation! He knew who he was! Oh well, I suppose he was only playing a part. Like Sir George is playing a part. But I've got no parts to play. They've all run out now! There are just relations---public relations! Mabel.

MABEL: Yes.

JACK: Who are you?

MABEL: The same as everybody else of course!

CUT TO ANOTHER PARTY AND PUSH IN TO SIR GEORGE ARMSTRONG TALKING TO BENTLEY'S SECRETARY (MABEL).

JACK'S VOICE OVER: Remember we're just one big unhappy family!

ARMSTRONG (TO THE SECRETARY) Rarely, why does he go on saying that?

SECRETARY: Nerves I expect.

ARMSTRONG: Yes, times have changed, haven't they? People's nerves were sounder you know. I remember before the war I used to catch the six-seventeen to Woking and the same chap was there every night, we called him Fred, he opened the compartment door for us and locked us in and collected his tip at the end of the week and got soused on it!

CUT TO SCHÜTZ'S OFFICE. HE IS AGAIN AT HIS DESK GIVING NOTES TO HIS SECRETARY (MABEL).

SCHUTZ: Take down this memorandum for the man who gives too many parties. His name again?

SECRETARY: Jack Bentley.

SCHUTZ: Right tell Jack Bentley to move into Sir George Armstrong's office when Sir George Armstrong moves out. I reckon if you can make one figurehead you can make two. And get me my buddy in the German embassy.

CUT TO JACK'S DARK-TROUSERED LEGS HURRYING ALONG THE CORRIDOR. PAN UP TO A VERY HEAVY BRIEFCASE. CUT TO THE CLERK---IT IS JACK---PEEPING OUT OF HIS ROOM.

CLERK: Ay ay, early again. You'll be in with the milk next.

CUT TO JACK ENTERING ARMSTRONG'S GRAND OFFICE WITH ASTONISHMENT.

CUT TO JACK BENTLEY'S SITTING ROOM WITH MABEL BEHIND A NEWSPAPER AND JACK IN HIS WORRIED POSITION AT THE HEARTH.

JACK: Guess what? This'll make you look up. Money always does. I've moved into Sir George Armstrong's office. Sir George Armstrong has left.

MABEL (SLAMMING DOWN HER PAPER)
What?

JACK: I'm sitting there like a cardboard king all day and the phone never rings. I almost went down on my knees this afternoon asking for some work to do. But the old kraut keeps telling me to relax. He doesn't realise I'm suffering from delusions, that I see myself everywhere, even in him! (MABEL RETURNS QUIETLY TO HER PAPER)
I wish to God I could discover just one characteristic really and truly my own. Even Mabel---I mean Joyce--- doesn't come to see me any more. I sent him up a memorandum today and he sent it back with a note, 'Give too many parties.' First I mustn't give parties and now I must. No wonder the Germans are a war-like people, if they get mucked about like that.

CUT TO ANOTHER PARTY AND PUSH IN TO JACK AND MABEL.

MABEL: Shouldn't you be over there? They're looking rather dry.

JACK: What do you mean? It's Shoots's party, not mine! In fact everything's his nowadays. He's even started taking out my secretary. I've half a mind----

MABEL: What?

JACK: To take out his wife!

CUT TO A COSY CORNER OF A RESTAURANT WHERE JACK AND MRS SCHUTZ ARE DINING TOGETHER. MRS SCHUTZ IS MABEL. SHE IS LAUGHING HELPLESSLY.

JACK: No honestly, Mabel---I mean Mrs Shoots---

MRS SCHUTZ: Ich lache mich tod!

JACK: But it's true! You're so like her---I mean everything--- your hair (TOUCHING HER HAIR LIGHTLY, WHICH BRINGS A SCREAM OF LAUGHTER FROM HER), your teeth, even your teeth!

MRS SCHUTZ: Please, oh, please!

CUT TO SCHUTZ'S OFFICE WITH HIM AT THE PHONE AND THE SECRETARY AT HER PLACE BY THE DESK.

SCHUTZ: Ya ya. Also danke vielmals Herr Doktor! Ya ya alles klar!

HE SLAMS DOWN THE RECEIVER.

SCHUTZ (TO MABEL) Right you can tell our resident funny man upstairs to dine with me this evening, alone. I've just pulled a string harder than I've ever pulled anything. And the string leads to Buckingham Palace.

SECRETARY: You do mean Mr Bentley sir don't you?

SCHUTZ: I do not mean Mr Bentley sir, I mean Sir Bentley.

CUT TO JACK BENTLEY'S SITTING ROOM WITH MABEL TAKING IT EASY BEHIND A NEWSPAPER. THE CLOCK CHIMES TEN PEACEFULLY. ALL OF A SUDDEN THERE IS THE CRASH OF THE FRONT DOOR OPENING AND SLAMMING CLOSED, THEN RUSHING STEPS ACROSS THE HALL. THE SITTING-ROOM DOOR IS THROWN OPEN AND JACK HURLS HIMSELF IN TOGETHER WITH HAT AND OVERCOAT AND BRIEFCASE.

JACK: Guess what? Here, do you know what he's done? He's---he's--- put my name up for---! He says if I don't he'll fire me---he's--- he's---!

MABEL: Who?

JACK: Shoots. He's getting me knighted.

MABEL: Knighted?

JACK: 'Sir Jack Bentley!' 'Sir Jack', of all damnfool titles! And if I don't accept he'll hound me out

of the trade! He says he'll see I get no private let alone public relations for the rest of my life! Do you realise what's happening to me? He's putting a veneer on me! He's making me a figurehead! He says foreigners fall for sirs and even Englishmen don't mind it! Well I won't stand for it! I won't be blackmailed into a fake aristocracy!

MABEL: Is it worth more money?

JACK: Three times as much.

MABEL:

and Then we can move to Henley!

JACK:

JACK: You see? I know everybody's thoughts. Except apparently my own. Can't you help? Can't you think of other things than Henley and riches? I am your husband after all. And I don't feel real!

MABEL (DIALLING) I must ring round to all our friends!

CUT TO JACK'S DARK-TROUSERED LEGS RUSHING ALONG THE OFFICE CORRIDOR. HE TURNS INTO HIS ROOM. CUT TO HIM SHOUTING INTO THE DESK RELAY SYSTEM, HIS OVERCOAT STILL ON.

JACK: Get me Mr Shoots!

GIRL'S VOICE ON DESK RELAY: He isn't available sir!

JACK: Well make him available.

HE SWITCHES OFF BUT SUDDENLY SWITCHES ON AGAIN TO ADD SOMETHING.

JACK: And don't call me sir!

HE SWITCHES OFF AGAIN.

JACK (CALLING) Joyce! Joyce!

HE GOES TO THE CORRIDOR BUT FINDS NO ONE. HE RETURNS TO THE DESK AND PICKS UP THE PHONE.

JACK: Hullo, hullo, get me my wife. Bentley of course!... Hullo is that Joyce I mean Mabel? Look don't phone round to any more friends, I'm---! What? What?

Well I won't move to Bentley! I won't! And I won't be called Sir Jack!

CUT TO SCHUTZ'S OFFICE. HE IS AT HIS DESK WITH THE SECRETARY.

SCHUTZ: Just take down this letter. Dear Hans, This is in English as the secretaries here speak it. Since Sir George Armstrong retired we've made a two-percent increase in home sales, a point-five percent increase in foreign sales. Now my justification for putting Bentley in Armstrong's place and trebling his salary is that he has a gift, which in fact my wife was the first to recognise. He can make people laugh without having anything funny to say. People begin to feel a certain recklessness in his presence. Now before I came over here he was just a routine kind of worker. In fact I was going to troubleshoot the bastard out of our lives, but one day he asked my wife to dinner and I said to her OK go Trudi. She comes back screaming with laughter. It seems he don't know who he is. He sees himself and his wife everywhere. In other words he is creckers. Now that's ideal for a figurehead. If he don't know who he is, we can tell him! Anyway, I purchased a couple of hundred thousand marksworth of premium bonds and donated twenty thousand to various charities, and put Jack Bentley's name to the whole damn lot, so he'll get a knighthood, after much sweat and toil on my part and the help of Kurt Haffner at the German embassy. Now he can be a figurehead like Sir George Armstrong, only a good one. Hans old cuss, how do you like my English? Dein freund, Helmut.

SECRETARY: Dine---?

SCHUTZ: Dein--- (TAKING HER PENCIL). Allow me. You know, God scattered the peoples across the face of the earth and divided their language into many tongues, and a hell of a long time ago. Never hear about it? Genesis eleven, seven. Now send this memorandum up to Sir Jack Bentley.

He talks your language.

SECRETARY: Sir Jack Bentley!

SCHUTZ: He's being knighted. I said so in my letter! Don't you understand English either? Well let the rest of the staff know too. In fact from now on you can call him Sir Bentley, not Bentley sir. Ah! (RELAXING AND TAKING OUT A CIGAR) I've certainly shot a load of trouble away from this firm!

DISSOLVE TO ANOTHER PARTY AND PUSH IN TO SIR GEORGE ARMSTRONG TALKING TO BENTLEY'S SECRETARY.

ARMSTRONG: Have you seen the Honours List?

SECRETARY: Oh we knew all about that months ago.

ARMSTRONG: But (TAKING OUT A FOLDED NEWSPAPER, AFTER A QUICK GLANCE ROUND)---did you know about this? This?

HE POINTS TO THE PHOTOGRAPH.

SECRETARY (LOOKING) Oh yes months ago!

CUT TO JACK'S DRESSING ROOM WITH HIM REMOVING HIS TIE. MABEL COMES IN WITH SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS TUCKED UNDER HER ARM.

JACK: Look you can keep those papers away from me because I'm not interested. And look, look. (GRABBING A NEWSPAPER FROM HER) That photograph is me isn't it?

CLOSE UP OF PHOTOGRAPH OF JACK CAPTIONED 'SIR JACK BENTLEY'.

MABEL: Yes.

JACK: Well it's the same photograph as that one of Sir George Armstrong a few months ago. Yes it is. At least it is for me. Life's stranger than you think! Never work against anybody, Mabel. It means you want to be like him. Well I'm certainly like him now. Even the clerk down the corridor

doesn't scowl at me any more.
I've lost all my friends. At
least all my London School of
Economics friends.

SHE SLIPS OUT.

JACK (TO THE MIRROR). How how how
can I get back to myself? Because
I must have lost me somewhere. If
I was myself I'd just stand up and
say go to hell! But instead I just
go on doing the routine things.
My legs walk me to bed. They walk
me to the office in the morning.
I don't seem to have much to do
with it!

CUT TO JACK'S OFFICE. HE IS BEHIND
THE DESK, IDLE. MR SCHUTZ'S SECRET-
ARY ENTERS.

SECRETARY: Mr. Shoots is leaving
for Bremen. He would like to say
good bye.

JACK (RISING WITH A QUIET BEAM)
That will be more than a pleasure.

CUT TO JACK'S SITTING ROOM. MABEL
IS SITTING BY THE FIRE BEHIND A
NEWSPAPER. JACK COMES IN FROM
WORK IN HIS OVERCOAT.

JACK: Well I won't have him
breathing down my neck any more.
Shoots I mean. He's gone. I'm
alone now! I'm top of the heap!
I've been sat on, turned into a
figgurehead, but now we'll see who's
boss!

MABEL: There's a photograph of
them here.

JACK (UNCOMFORTABLE) Who?

MABEL: Shoots and Armstrong.
They're saying good bye at the
airport.

JACK: Let me see it. (TAKING
THE PAPER) Are they still---?

AFTER A GLANCE AT THE PAPER HE
LETS IT FALL SADLY BACK INTO HER
LAP.

JACK: I'll never be myself!
It seems everybody else is busy

being that. But I won't stand for it any more! I won't!

CUT TO HIS OFFICE NEXT MORNING WITH HIM JUST ARRIVING, RUBBING HIS HANDS.

JACK: Right I'm cock of the walk now! I'm the groubleshooter, and by God the trouble I'm going to shoot is me! (STOPPING) Why did I say that? (SUBSIDING INTO HIS CHAIR) Funny. Indon't feel like coming into the office afternoons any more. Just like Sir George. I'm not getting like him am I? Because I'm not him! But wait a minute. Why shouldn't I be like Sir George? I mean just for argument's sake. Well I hate him. But why do you hate him? Because he's a sir. But you're a sir now too! Then I hate myself! Well I do! Now suppose he hates himself in me as much as I hate me in him? Suppose we all hate ourselves? Then we're all the same! We are the same person! Now suppose I start liking him? And liking Shoots? And even Mabel? Yes, I hate Mabel too! That's why I see her everywhere! But if I love 'em all, I'm free! Don't you see? That means I can love myself! And then I don't care who I am! I don't give a damn about public relations, I----

THE DESK RELAY SYSTEM SWITCHES ON.

GIRLS'S VOICE: Are you there Sir Jack?

JACK: No I'm not. I disappeared miraculously thirty seconds ago.

GIRL'S VOICE: Disapp---?

A GASP ANDGIGGLE ARE CUT OFF BY THE FLICK OF A SWITCH. JACK SWITCHES ON HIS RELAY.

JACK: And don't call me sir.

HE SWITCHES ON AGAIN, HAVING JUST SWITCHED OFF.

JACK: And send Joyce in here.

HE SWITCHES OFF..

JACK: That's right. I'm free---
I'm----!

JOYCE COMES IN. SHE IS NOT MABEL.
HE STARES AT HER.

JACK: Joyce! Joyce! You aren't
my wife any more!

SHE GAPES TOO.

JACK: You've come back. Joyce!
Isn't it marvellous? I'm not Sir
Jack, or even Bentley! I'm not
any name at all! I'm ME!

SHE TRIES TO MAKE AN ALARMED GETAWAY
BUT HE GRABS HER AND DANCES HER ROUND
THE ROOM AS THE TITLES COME UP.

THE END.