

**THE CHAMELEON: A  
COMEDY IN  
THREE ACTS**

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The Chameleon: A Comedy in Three Acts by Josephine Preston Peabody

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**JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY**

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# THE CHAMELEON

*A Comedy in Three Acts*

BY  
JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY  
(MRS. LIONEL MARKS)

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## THE CHAMELEON.

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### CHARACTERS.

JUSTIN AURELIUS HOPEFAR *Philosopher; young, unwed*  
RUFUS HOPEFAR } *Unphilosophic; but wed*  
                          } *His brothers.*  
WALTER HOPEFAR } *Unphilosophic; Unwed*  
REV. INGRAHAM SYLVESTER. *Reverend, but not so very*  
QUENTIN CARRICK.....*A Man of Letters*  
JAMES ROBERTS THOMAS, Ph. D.  
MAJOR KILMAYNE  
THOMAS.....*The Hopefars' butler*  
HONORA THORPE.....*A New Woman and Young*  
ROSE HOPEFAR.....*Young; not New*  
MRS. RANDAL VAN WYCK.....*Never New*  
MRS. HOPEFAR-SHUTTLEWORTH.....*Never Old*

## THE CHAMELEON

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PLACE:—*Out of town.*

TIME:—*The present.*

*Three months elapse between ACTS I and II. ACTS II and III are concerned with the events of thirty-six hours.*

ACT I. *Morning. How truth is green and lovely.*

ACT II. *Afternoon. How truth is gray and dismal.*

ACT III. SCENE I. *Night. How truth is rainbow, truth is piebald.*

SCENE II. *Morning. How you may catch a Chameleon, if you get up early.*

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SCENE throughout:—*The HOPEFAR Library.*



# THE CHAMELEON

## ACT I.

SCENE:—*The HOPEFARS' Library. A large, old-fashioned place, evidently built out in a separate wing, from the house, into which it opens, left at back, with a few steps, and a doorway. The only other entrance is the centre-door, at back, (of glass, with straight hangings) which gives upon the garden. R. and L. of this door, French windows opening on a terrace walk with a high hedge. Book-lined walls.*

RIGHT, *an open fireplace; and R. and L. of the fireplace, two Chinese cabinets, with drawers and pigeon-holes. Near by, but up stage at present, a long, high-backed sofa, the end near the windows concealed by a screen folded across, R. C. Down, some half-unpacked book-boxes, covered with foreign labels.*

LEFT, *below the house-steps, a large bust of Hermes on a pedestal. Towards the front, a writing-table strewn with work.*

*As the curtain rises, the garden-door stands open, and one window, R. It is a bright June morning.*

(*Enter L. from the house, ROSE HOPEFAR; and the REVEREND SYLVESTER with his hat and stick.*)

*He beams with all the satisfaction of forty-five and well-to-do. ROSE is young and discontented.)*

REVEREND. —Not at all,—not at all! Really a pleasure, I assure you. If only you had told me all about it much earlier you know, I could, perhaps—ah—have set the matter before her in its—ah—true light. She has such a singularly fresh and candid—ah—nature; it is sure to—ah—respond to the candid word in time.

ROSE. (*With a sigh of darkest prophecy*) Ah!

REVEREND. And it is with words as with stitches, dear Lady. (L.) A word in time—saves Nine!

ROSE. (*Earnestly*) But what would be the use—Oh! Nine swear-words, you mean.

REVEREND. (*Hastily*) Not at all,—not at—

ROSE. Do tell her that. I felt sure your sense of humor would appeal to her. She used to have so much. (*Looking towards the terrace*) She ought to be here by this. It's growing late.—Ah, you will persuade her! It's a terrible thing to all of us, that she should have thrown him over. (*Looking out*)

REVEREND. (*Crosses R.*) Of course, of course. Poor Walter.

ROSE. (*Comes down*) And aside from all graver considerations, you know, a June wedding would have been so lovely! I must say, (*Sits L*) it was a curious time to jilt him.—I had talked about her as my sister-in-law for months. And the bridesmaids' gowns were entirely planned.

REVEREND. Not really!

ROSE. Their hats, too. I designed them. And Justin came back from Egypt for the wedding.

REVEREND. Justin home? And with a new book ready?

ROSE. Oh, that book!—Yes, almost ready. He came early, to be here well before. And while he

was sailing home, for his own brother's wedding, Honora changed her mind. Think of it:—their Hats!—

REVEREND. It sounds alarmingly unfeminine. What does Justin think of her?

ROSE. He hasn't seen her. He came only yesterday, you see; and he's deep in that Book. It's all very nice—rather piquant, indeed, to have a well-known man of letters for a brother-in-law. People want to meet him and all that. But you can't expect him to be useful in other ways. What do you think his new book is called?—"Aspects of Truth."

REVEREND. Him.—"Aspects"—Essentially modern.

ROSE. As if we should ever know what Truth was, if we stopped to consider its "aspects". Surely (*Earnestly*) it's the aspects of things that obscure the truth. I mean to say, you can only be sure of the Truth, when you speak on impulse. For if you stop to think it out at all, you're so apt to say something else. Do you see what I mean?

REVEREND. Quite so,—quite so. (*He inspects & some of the unpacked books, title by title, with disapproval*)

ROSE. Oh, these writers of books, what do they know about Life? And the serious side of the matter is:—do you know what explains the whole thing?

REVEREND. (*Turns and sits on step-ladder*) Dear lady, which? Life or Honora?

ROSE. Honora, jilting my own brother-in-law!

REVEREND. Give me a clue.

ROSE. Honora is writing a book.

REVEREND. Honora!

ROSE. I knew you'd think just that. And so do I. Of course I always knew she was fearfully clever. But I was too fond of her ever to believe it would take that shape. I thought she would marry.