

**OUR ANCESTORS:
A COMEDY IN TWO
ACTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649301690

Our Ancestors: A Comedy in Two Acts by Jeanne Mairé

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JEANNE MAIRET

**OUR ANCESTORS:
A COMEDY IN TWO
ACTS**

Our Ancestors

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By JEANNE MAIRET

(MADAME CHARLES BIGOT)



THE SHAKESPEARE PRESS
114-116 EAST 28TH STREET
NEW YORK

DAL 979.2.15

Bigot, Mary

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
1918

*Copyright, 1911, by
Shakespeare Press.*

OUR ANCESTORS

ACT I

SCENE I

PERSONAGES

HUGH PRESTON	ARABELLA STEWART
SIR MERVYN WOODRUFF	RUTH CAMERON
MR. AMOS STEWART	PEGGIE STEWART
MRS. DUMPTON	

A much-encumbered and vast loft in the country house of Mr. Amos Stewart. Armor, costumes, draperies tumbled together. A lay figure, dressed in old-time clothes, stands in a corner. Hugh Preston discovered painting. He wears a hat and plume of the Charles I period, and looks in a mirror as he works. Whistles softly to himself: "Charlie is my darling . . ."

Hugh. It is an extraordinary fact, but all the ancestors of Mr. Amos Stewart bear an extraordinary like-

ness to . . . their painter. In these pictures, whether they are signed Holbein, Van-Dyck or Velasquez, the likeness will pop out, even when I change the shape of the nose or the color of the eyes. A real family likeness which begins at the Crusades and ends . . . well, I suppose it must end when I attack Amos Stewart, Esq., himself. Rather a pity, as I consider my present model far better looking than Amos. (Throws himself back in his chair.) Two months of solitary confinement up in this garret. Two months without speaking to any human being except my female jailor, when she brings me my prison food. No outsider is to guess that an ancestry-factory has been established in this modern castle, where the dungeons are at the top of the house, instead of being underground, and where everything seems somehow turned topsy-turvy. Lugubrious silence reigned supreme and I might have thought myself in another planet until yesterday, when I certainly heard some bustle, even the sound of female voices, by no means belonging to that developed charmer, the venerable Mrs. Dumpton. (He listens.) A laugh! . . . Somebody has laughed in this abode of misery—and it is a young laugh. (Puts down his palette, throws off his hat, draws a stool near the window, which is a high one, and cranes his neck so as to catch a glimpse of the outside world.)

SCENE II.

Enter Mrs. Dumpton, carrying a tray. Behind her, on tiptoe, comes Peggie. As the housekeeper turns to shut the door, Peggie slips in quickly and hides behind the lay figure.

Mrs. Dumpton. (Looks around for Hugh Preston, then spies him on the stool.) Lord'a'mercy, sir, what air you doin' up there? You'll surely topple over if you go on peering like that—and you're making signs, too! 'Pon my word! Them's pretty manners for a gentleman, who was to keep 'nony-mous, as people who write books and don't sign 'em is called.

Hugh. I have had enough of being anonymous, worthy Dame Dumpton. I'm going to strike, and you may tell your master so, if you like. I agreed to paint him a lot of ancestors at the lowest possible rates; but I did not agree to be driven into raving madness by solitary confinement. Two months without seeing a human countenance . . .

Mrs. D. And what do you call mine, if you please? You might keep a civil tongue in your head!

Hugh. I beg your pardon, worthy dowager.

Mrs. D. I'm Mrs. Dumpton, if you don't mind. I won't be called names, no, not by no means!

Hugh. If you only knew that, driven to desperation, I had once—only once—been on the verge of kissing you, revered dame!

Mrs. D. (Bridling up.) And you would not have

been so much to be pitied, neither, let me tell you, young man!

Hugh. I resisted the evil temptation . . . Let us see what you have brought me to-day. Something good, hey?

Mrs. D. You can't say that I starve you, anyhow. Master said you was to be fed up, so that you might work hard. (Puts the things down, placing the dessert on another table.)

Hugh. That looks rather appetizing. I have been expecting to turn from my food with disgust, because of my loneliness and misery. But, so far, I have not.

Mrs. D. As to that! . . . Now, what shall I give you for your dinner . . . But there'll be lots anyway, since the family . . . Drat my tongue . . . I was to say nothing about it!

Hugh. As though I had no ears and no eyes! Do you think that I took these voices—that laugh—those tripping steps for yours, worthy Dumpton? Has the great Amos come with his womenfolk?

Mrs. D. No, he hasn't. But he's expected. If I remain another moment I shall let it all out. You're to lock the door after me and let nobody else come in. Them's the orders.

Hugh (Beginning to eat with good appetite.) All right, mother.

Mrs. D. I shall be back for the tray in an hour. Now let me hear you lock the door. (Exit. *Hugh* follows her and locks the door, then returns to his place and falls to heartily. Meanwhile, *Peggie*, who has peeped out several times during the fore-

going scene, comes forward, half-shy, half-bold. She is biting a big red apple.)

Peggie. How are you, Mister Painter?

Hugh. (Letting his knife and fork fall in his amazement!) The Dickens! . . . How did you get here?

Peg. Through the window—flew in, you know, in the shape of a wee, sweet little bird. Only I left my wings in the cloak room. Have a bite? (Offers her apple.)

Hugh. Thanks! I have not yet got to the dessert. Are you a daughter of Mr. Amos Stewart?

Peg. You bet your little boots! The youngest. My name is Margaret, only they call me Peggie for short, and because it sounds infantile. Just as they make me wear my frocks up to the knee. You know, Mr. . . . Mr. . . . what's your name? I told you mine.

Hugh. Hugh Preston, at your service, Miss Peggie.

Peg. (Taking another bite.) I was going to say that, as long as Arabella isn't married, I shall be kept in very short skirts. Even if I were eighteen, they'd be cut off ever so high up and my hair dressed with pink or blue flyers. And I'm fourteen; in four years I shall really be eighteen.

Hugh. Go to the top of the class, Pupil Peggie.

Peg. You needn't poke fun at me! Don't you think it's wrong, almost wicked for elder sisters not to marry and . . . clear the decks for the others? Now, Arabella is twenty-two . . . Isn't that awfully old? When I am twenty-two I shall have been mar-