

THE VAIN AND THE HEARTLESS: THE SOAP OPERA PLAY

A Comedy in Two Acts

by
David J. LeMaster



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ACT ONE

MANDY: Good morning, Daddy.

MORGAN: Good morning, my daughter. You're up early today.

MANDY: Why wouldn't I be? Knowing today you plan to blackmail my boyfriend, Jack Phillips, and run his multi-million dollar business into the ground.

MORGAN: Amanda. Your pretentious boyfriend, Jack Phillips, would destroy me if he had the chance. He's trying to drive a wedge into this family.

MANDY: You're just jealous of him.

MORGAN: Preposterous. I could never be jealous of that maladroit little philanderer. I simply wish to prevent you from consorting with the enemy.

MANDY: Mal and droid philosopher? Whatever.

MORGAN: Very well. I'll put this in terms you can understand. I forbid you to see Jack Phillips anymore. Do you hear me? Forbid!

MANDY: You can forbid our love, Father dear, but you'll never stop us from loving each other. Never. Never. Never!
(SHE rushes off in tears. MORGAN takes a sip of coffee. Enter RACHAEL NEWBURY, MORGAN's wife. SHE poses in the doorway.)

RACHAEL: Good morning, Tiger.

MORGAN: Mmm.

RACHAEL: Why did Mandy rush crying down the hall?

MORGAN: The girl is lovesick for Jack Phillips.

RACHAEL: Jack Phillips? The man you plan to stab in the back this afternoon?

MORGAN: Indubitably. Of all the things Jack Phillips has done to me over the years, he deserves what's coming to him. Do you hear me, Rachael? That little mollycoddle has cost me millions. And this is a business venture. I must protect myself from that gold-digging sycophant.

RACHEL: But Morgan -

MORGAN: **(rises and straightens tie)** I'm going to work. Jack Phillips will be broken by the end of the day, and that will be that. **(pause)** What do you plan to do today, my dear?

RACHAEL: Oh, the usual. Sit around. Sip Mai Tais by the pool. Have a manicure and pedicure. Very exhausting.

MORGAN: You don't plan to warn Jack Phillips of my plans, do you?

RACHAEL: Whatever gave you that idea?

MORGAN: Very well. **(kisses her cheek)** Have a good day, my dear.

Tell Amanda and Aminda I love them.

RACHAEL: Morgan. The girls don't like to be called Amanda and Aminda. They prefer Mandy and Mindy.

MORGAN: Those girls belong to the richest and most successful family in this city. I will not have them bandy themselves about with teenage names.

RACHEAL: But darling. They *are* teenagers.

MORGAN: They are heirs to the vast Newbury fortune. And they will be the only heirs...since you've been unable to give me the son I desire.

RACHAEL: **(reacts dramatically)** How dare you bring that up this morning!

MORGAN: I will bring up whatever I feel like bringing up, and whenever I feel like doing it. And you will sit back and let me lavish you with millions, and you won't say anything about it, because you're a covetous, money-grubbing old windbag.

RACHAEL: **(sarcastic)** Have a nice day at the office, dear.

MORGAN: Indeed, I will.

(MORGAN exits. RACHAEL poses, thinking, then crosses to the telephone and dials. The music swells as lights go up on JACK PHILLIPS' office, a plush area with desks and chairs, etc. JACK PHILLIPS embracing LAUREN MOORE, a lawyer.)

LAUREN: Oh, Jack, darling. You're such a genius.

JACK: Why am I a genius, Lauren? Just because I'm stealing Morgan

Newbury's idea for a foolproof operation to remove all trans-fatty acids from the human body and thus reduce cholesterol and allow people to eat anything they want without ever thinking of obesity or heart disease, so I can use the operation for my own evil deeds and become unspeakably rich and powerful? Oh, that's nothing.

LAUREN: Jack. Are you certain the operation will work?

JACK: Dr. Major says it will. But if it doesn't -

LAUREN: Yes?

JACK: Then I've got the best lawyer in town to protect me from any lawsuits. Haven't I, darling?

LAUREN: Oh, Jack! You think I'm that good?

JACK: But of course. Now, kiss me. *(They embrace. There is a knock on the door. LAUREN jumps away from JACK.)*

JACK: *(furious)* What?

(Enter JACK's SECRETARY.)

JACK: I thought I told you not to interrupt us.

SECRETARY: I'm sorry, Mr. Phillips, but Dr. Major is here.

LAUREN: Ah! Dr. Major.

SECRETARY: Should I send him in?

JACK: Of course, you nincompoop. Send him in. And don't bother us again.

SECRETARY: Yes, sir.

JACK: This man's a genius.

LAUREN: We just need him to sign the papers and commit the operation patent to the Jack Phillips Company. Then plan belongs to us. Er. You.

JACK: Let me do the talking, darling.

LAUREN: All right. But as your legal council, if I hear anything that could be used in court, I'll have to stop you from incriminating yourself -

JACK: Of course.

(The door opens and DR. MAJOR walks inside. HE looks glum.)

JACK: Doctor Major.

MAJOR: I have news for you, Jack.

JACK: Oh?

MAJOR: Yes, Jack. Big news. And it isn't good.

(The music swells. Cross-fade from JACK's office to the Newbury house, where RACHAEL is on the phone.)

RACHAEL: Jack Phillips, please. *(pause)* I'll wait. *(Enter MINDY, who looks at her mother. RACHAEL, caught, slams down the phone.)* Mindy, darling. I didn't hear you come in.

MINDY: What are you doing, Mother?

RACHAEL: Oh. Nothing.

MINDY: Yes you were. You were on the phone.

RACHAEL: Telemarketer.

MINDY: I don't believe you.

RACHAEL: Don't believe me, then. You never believe a word I say anyway, you ungrateful, good-for-nothing kid. *(pause)* By the way, why were you out until two this morning?

MINDY: What? How do you know that?

RACHAEL: I have my spies.

MINDY: Mandy?

RACHAEL: Maybe.

MINDY: Mandy!

MANDY: *(enters)* Mindy?

MINDY: Mandy!

MANDY: Stepmother?

RACHAEL: Mandy.

MANDY: Stepmother!

RACHAEL: Mandy...

MANDY: Mindy -

MINDY: Mandy.

RACHAEL: Enough! Look. I know you were out until two in the morning, Mindy. And I know you're seeing Jack Phillips, Mandy.

MANDY: Who told you?

RACHAEL: Mindy.

MANDY: Mindy!?

MINDY: Mandy -

RACHAEL: Cut it out! Look. Mindy, I don't know who you were gallivanting about with last night, but I won't have it. You are grounded.

MINDY: But mother!

RACHAEL: And Mandy. You are forbidden to see Jack Phillips anymore.

MANDY: You can't keep me from the man I love!

RACHAEL: Don't you see you're being used? He only wants to hurt your father.

MANDY: You'll never stop me, Stepmother! Never! Never! Never!

(Music swells. Cross-fade from the Newbury home to MORGAN's office. It is even more plush and better decorated than JACK's. MORGAN looks bored, listening to BROOKS, a PR person, give a presentation.)

BROOKS: So the new campaign will attempt to reach people of all age groups and ethnicities. We'll be able to show a net profit in the first quarter.

MORGAN: Indubitably. I like it, Brooks, old boy *(or girl)*.

BROOKS: Now. According to my charts -

MORGAN: I said I liked it. Thank you very much.

BROOKS: Good. Now, if you look at this pie graph, you'll see that -

MORGAN: For goodness sake, you've sold me on the deal. What more do you want?

BROOKS: Well. I worked really hard on all these charts and graphs, and I'd like to show them to someone.

MORGAN: Put them in the corner and I'll look at them later.

BROOKS: I'd much rather show them to you myself.

MORGAN: I appreciate your obsequiousness -

BROOKS: Gesundheit.

MORGAN: But I'm an exceedingly busy man -

BROOKS: Oh, please! Please, please let me show you the charts. I never get to show anything to anybody - please let me show you the charts!

MORGAN: *(annoyed)* Very well.

BROOKS: Okay. So. Here's a pie chart. Look at this pretty blue.

MORGAN: What does it mean?

BROOKS: Um. I'm not really sure. I just like the pretty blue. *(switches chart)* And I worked really hard on this one - I combined blue with a little white and silver and mixed them together -

(Enter LYNN LONDON, MORGAN's personal assistant.)

MORGAN: Ah, Lynn! Just in time.

BROOKS: Yes. Look at the pretty blue. Isn't it fabulous?

LYNN: I'm sorry?

MORGAN: Brooks here was just leaving. Weren't you, Brooks?

BROOKS: But I still have five more charts.

MORGAN: Show them to someone else.

BROOKS: But what about the -

MORGAN: I'll buy it.

BROOKS: Or the -

MORGAN: I'll buy that, too.

BROOKS: And the -

MORGAN: For goodness sake, I'll buy it all. Just get out of here, okay?

(BROOKS, heartbroken, leaves. Pause. MORGAN swoops LYNN into his arms.) Lynn, my beloved. How lost I've been without you.

LYNN: When are you going to leave Rachael and be with me for good?

MORGAN: Soon, my darling. Soon.

LYNN: I can't stand it, Morgan. Not another night without you. Not another day. Another minute. Another second.

MORGAN: Oh, my darling. *(The telephone rings. MORGAN and LYNN stare at each other. MORGAN breaks the embrace and answers the phone.)* Yes? Yes. Send her in. *(hangs up)* It's Johnson.

LYNN: Johnson? You mean Melissa Johnson, the top personal assistant to -

MORGAN: Jack Phillips.

LYNN: Why are you talking to her?

MORGAN: I have a plan, my darling. And it will render Jack Phillips to pauperism.

LYNN: Huh?

MORGAN: I'm going to bankrupt the little sucker.

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