

QUEEN FOR A DAY
10-minute Play

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Synopsis of Queen for a Day

A young woman named Holly wins a butler for a day through a fundraiser. It all starts out with the very proper Jeeves serving her breakfast in bed, then veers off in an unexpected direction.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Holly, 30s

Jeeves, late 50s, butler, speaks in a British accent

Time: the present, weekday morning

Setting: Holly's bedroom

Queen for a Day

Holly is in bed. A table and chair are in one corner of the room; another chair is opposite the bed. A woman's bathrobe hangs from a clothes tree.

Jeeves, a butler, enters in full livery. He carries coffee on a tray and a napkin over his arm. He speaks with a British accent.

JEEVES

Good morning, Miss Holly, your coffee and today's paper.

HOLLY

Thank you, Jeeves. Is it decaf? I only drink decaf.

JEEVES

No, Miss, high octane. I'll brew a fresh pot.

HOLLY

I'll take it on the porch.

JEEVES

Will you want your dressing gown?

HOLLY

You mean my bathrobe?

JEEVES

Yes. Is it in the closet?

HOLLY

Probably on the clothes tree, buried under a pile of stuff that needs to go to the dry cleaners. Don't bother. I'll get it myself.

JEEVES

No, I insist. It's my job to make you comfortable.

HOLLY

A butler for a day. What a treat. I feel like a queen.

JEEVES

Which one? Elizabeth or Victoria?

HOLLY

Anne Boleyn.

JEEVES

Hmm. What an interesting choice. Do you prefer a two or three-minute egg?

HOLLY

I hate eggs. They make me break out in hives. How about feeding my fish instead?

JEEVES

I can do both. Would you prefer pecan pancakes with maple syrup or lox and bagels?

HOLLY

My refrigerator is bare except for a carton of baking soda. I'm surprised you found coffee.

JEEVES

I came with provisions.

HOLLY

Then I'll take the pancakes and read my book until the coffee is ready.

JEEVES

Right. Pardon me. What would you like me to do with the dead body in the living room?

HOLLY

It's trash day. If you step lively, you can dispose of it before the garbage truck arrives. Place the bag in the alley by the tree stump. You'll find a large plastic bag under the kitchen sink.

JEEVES

Strong enough for a?

HOLLY

Oh, yes. I'm sure of that.

JEEVES

Just one more thing. What would you like me to do about the blood that's on the floor?

HOLLY

Clean it up of course.

JEEVES

(Hesitating)

Ordinarily, the housekeeper or scullery maid takes care of those tasks.

HOLLY

Well, I do all of my own cleaning. Can you handle the mess just this once?

JEEVES

I don't handle bodily fluids, Miss.

HOLLY

Pretend I asked you for a cup of tea and it spilled.

JEEVES

Unfortunately, my rubber gloves are at home. Next time I shall come better prepared.

HOLLY

I doubt there'll be a next time. Today is a one shot--. (Pause) Um. Take mine. They're in the first drawer to the left of the sink. Never been worn.

JEEVES

Would I be considered an accessory?

HOLLY

As in scarf, gloves or handbag?

JEEVES

As in accomplice to foul play.

HOLLY

Not if you do your job properly. It will be our little secret.

JEEVES

About the party downstairs--

HOLLY

I'm not having a party with blood all over the floor.

JEEVES

The man downstairs. That party.

HOLLY

My lover. (Pause) You probably thought this would be an easy gig. A bleeding heart bids on your services at a fundraiser for abused and neglected horses.

JEEVES

I try not to have preconceptions about my engagements, Miss.

HOLLY

How can you get through the day without certain assumptions? Cars yield to pedestrians in a cross walk. The milk in your cereal is pure. My taking it for granted you'll keep my private business confidential.

JEEVES

My clients can make that assumption, Miss. But my being here today is a result of a donation to charity. You and I don't have a contract.

HOLLY

But I've paid for your services even though I didn't write YOU a check.

JEEVES

The butler's code of conduct only applies to business agreements.

HOLLY

What are you saying exactly?

JEEVES

Today, in this house, my lips are sealed. Tomorrow the lock comes off.

HOLLY

Can you hand me that napkin?

She removes a pistol from under her pillow.

He does and she starts cleaning the gun with the napkin.

JEEVES

Is it loaded?

HOLLY

Waving the gun

You never know about intruders in this neighborhood. Homeland security.

JEEVES

At home, most of our Bobbies are unarmed. We use firearms just for hunting. (Pause)
Would you mind pointing that gun in the other direction?

HOLLY

You're so polite. I think we should formalize our relationship even if it is for just one day. How about sitting down and writing a letter of agreement?

JEEVES

What happened to the chap downstairs?

HOLLY

We disagreed. He wanted it one way and I wanted it another.

JEEVES

If I may say so, Miss, you Americans are always causing trouble. In England we believe in compromise.

HOLLY

If the police come around, I'll say this stranger followed me home, forced his way in and started to rape me. A clear case of self-defense.

Waves the gun in the air

JEEVES

Implicating me in a crime is not cricket.

HOLLY

So noted.

JEEVES

You're making this assignment very difficult, Queen Anne. I'll comply with your request but only under protest.

He sits down at the table and starts writing. He signs the letter and hands it to her. She puts the letter and the gun under her pillow.

Your neighbors may contradict you. We've seen him before, they'll say. The police will investigate and you will go to ---

HOLLY

Hell. (Pause) In the meantime, how about those pancakes?

He exits. She gets out of bed, picks up a cane and limps to the clothes tree. She puts on the bathrobe, then limps back to the chair opposite the bed and sits down. She places the cane on the arm of her chair. Jeeves enters with a tray.

That was quick. You're very efficient.

JEEVES

Thank you, Miss. Your breakfast.

HOLLY

Hmm. Delicious. Maple syrup is excellent.

JEEVES

Will there be anything else?

HOLLY

Did you put the trash bag in the alley?

JEEVES

I couldn't lift it. He was too heavy.

Offstage there is the clatter of a large truck.

HOLLY

The garbage truck's coming. I'll help you, but we've got to move quickly.

She picks up the cane and limps toward him. He quickly retrieves the gun, then points it in her direction.

JEEVES

The gun is loaded. I can tell by the heft.

HOLLY

Good. Now your prints are all over it. The police will say "the butler did it."

JEEVES

You've thought of everything.

HOLLY

There's still time. If we run, we can drag the body into the alley. No one will know. All of my neighbors are at work.

JEEVES

I will know.

He wipes the gun on his clothes.

HOLLY

We still have an agreement.

He retrieves the letter and rips it up.

JEEVES

You've been deposed, Your Majesty.

HOLLY

I haven't abdicated.

JEEVES

Think of it as a bloodless coup. Very civilized. Very British. You gave it your best-shot, Queen Anne. (Pause) I'm calling the police.

He pulls out a cell phone.

HOLLY

Wait. They can't see me like this. I have to put on my face and comb my hair. Please give me my handbag. It's on the table.

JEEVES

Really, Miss, under the circumstances, I fail to see—

HOLLY

You're my butler for the day. The clock's still running.

JEEVES

The police don't give a rat's—

HOLLY

But I do. OK, call me vain. But they'll take mug shots that will follow me wherever I go.

JEEVES

I wouldn't worry. Your best is hardly regal.

HOLLY

My last request. Please. Help me out this once.

JEEVES

I'm in charge now and I say—

HOLLY

Satisfaction guaranteed. No request too small. That's what your ad said at the silent auction. It's what caught my eye.

JEEVES

Oh, all right. But make it quick.

HOLLY

Quick. Just like Henry with Queen Anne.

He hands her the bag. She removes a brush and starts combing her hair. Then she puts it back in her bag and pulls out a lipstick.

I feel so much better. Thank you, Jeeves. Nearly ready.

He starts dialing.

In a flash she pulls a small can of mace from her bag and sprays him with it. Then while he's fumbling, she retrieves the cane, raises it over her head and lunges at him. He falls to the floor. After a brief pause, she picks up the phone.

Police? Oh, I'm so sorry. My son was playing with my cell phone and dialed you by mistake.

Lights fade to dark.