

Business Is War

By: Deepak Morris

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Deepak Morris
#1, Varsha,
689, New Nana Peth,
Pune 411 002, India
Phone: +91-20-26333519
Mobile: +91-98231-21336
Email: deepakmorris@rhapsodytheatre.org

ACT I
SCENE 1

(The office of Innovative Advertising, a small advertising firm in Pune, India. GEORGE, proprietor, copywriter, account executive, all rolled in one, is with his secretary, PRIYA.)

GEORGE Priya, take a letter

PRIYA Okay, which letter, and where do you want me to take it?

GEORGE *(pause)* Are you trying to be funny?

PRIYA No, are you?

GEORGE Why are you asking me that?

PRIYA Well, you asked me first

GEORGE Oh, never mind... just take a letter, will you?

PRIYA Where?

GEORGE *(slowly)* Take – down – the – letter – I’m – about – to – dictate.

PRIYA Oh – why didn’t you say so in the first place?

GEORGE Never mind. Now take this down... *(dictating)* To M/s Ghatpande and Pimple *(pronounced Pimplay)*

PRIYA *(starts writing, then stops abruptly)* My God, they’re really bold aren’t they?

GEORGE *(lost in thought as he is trying to compose the letter in his mind)* Uh? Who?

PRIYA These guys? Won’t they be caught by the police?

GEORGE Which guys? What are you talking about?

PRIYA *(reading)* Ghatpande and Pimps Lay....

GEORGE Pimple – Pimple..... P-I-M-P-

PRIYA *(interrupting)* I know how to spell that....

GEORGE Will you please let me finish? P-I-M-P-L-E

PRIYA Oh

GEORGE (*continuing*) Dear Sirs, reference your recent correspondence vis-à-vis your forthcoming clearance sale of “Huggable” Lingerie stop. Line – With reference to the above, we have noted that you are holding a large number of brassieres and – (*PRIYA starts giggling*) What is it?

PRIYA (*giggling uncontrollably*) I’m sorry... I’m sorry... I keep thinking of Ghatpande and his Pimps holding brassieres.....

(*GEORGE looks heavenwards*)

GEORGE (*very patiently*) Priya.... (*PRIYA continues to giggle*) Priya..... (*getting louder*) Priya..... PRIYA!!

PRIYA (*startled*) Uh.... What?

GEORGE Have you been sent to earth just to torment me? (*Sees PRIYA’s face fall and is immediately contrite*) never mind, just continue.... (*PRIYA starts giggling again*) Now what happened?

PRIYA Nothing.... You told me to continue

GEORGE (*Suffering*) I meant continue the letter

PRIYA Oh....

GEORGE (*continuing*) ...and would like to liquidate your stock as soon as possible. We require a brief from you....

PRIYA But I thought they had too many brassieres.... Why are you asking them for briefs?

GEORGE (*glaring*) a brief from you outlining the salient features of your product...

PRIYA Oh.... Sorry....

GEORGE (*continuing*) so that we can formulate a proper advertising campaign. We need to know why women should wear your brassieres....

PRIYA I can help you with that, I’m a woman you know.... Women should wear brassieres because –

GEORGE (*Cutting in*) My – Dear – Woman, I know why women wear brassieres. Will you please take it down as I say without interrupting?

PRIYA Okay, no need to bite my head off

GEORGE *(to heaven)* If only I could.... Now I've lost the thread.... Can you read the last part back to me please? *(PRIYA continues writing.... GEORGE waits.... PRIYA finishes writing and looks up at GEORGE, still not responding to his request. GEORGE waits. After a pause)* Can you read the last part back to me please?

PRIYA Oh sorry, I thought you were still dictating. *(Reads)* We need to know why women should wear your brassieres. If only I could, now I've lost the thread.... *(notices GEORGE getting increasingly agitated and stops)*

GEORGE What the heck was that?

PRIYA That's what you said. *(Reading again)* We need to know why women should wear your brassieres. If only I could, now I've lost the thread. *(to GEORGE)* Though I just can't see why you want to wear...

GEORGE I do NOT want to wear anything – oh, never mind. Just delete the last part and continue, please... *(dictating again)* Any product leaflets or brochures would be help our creative team in formulating the ideal advertising campaign to push your products. Thank you, etc. etc. Now have that typed out and keep it ready for my signature.

PRIYA Yes General

GEORGE General?

PRIYA Yes.... That's what we call you because you're always saying "Business is War". I hope you don't mind

GEORGE No, I don't mind. *(His mind is on other things already)* Oh, and call me a taxi will you?

PRIYA Okay, you're a taxi

GEORGE No, I meant get me a taxi.

PRIYA Oh, when do you want it?

GEORGE Half an hour from now is fine. And oh yes, call that model coordinator – what's his name – Shailesh – and tell him we need a lingerie model immediately. And please tell him she must have a chaperone this time. We had enough trouble with the last one and that client.

PRIYA Ok, General *(GEORGE glares. PRIYA exits, then comes right back in.)* Er, did you say she had to have a chap of her own?

GEORGE Who?

PRIYA The model.

GEORGE (*Confused*) Chap of her own? (*Suddenly understanding*) No no, a chaperone. A person who – never mind, just give me the number and I'll call him myself. And while you're out there, just check up on those painters and see if they need anything.

PRIYA Which painters?

GEORGE Those guys who are painting the outer office.

PRIYA Shailesh's number is 98230 66666. I remember it because when you say 66666 fast it sounds like –

GEORGE Never mind what it sounds like, just go and help those painters (*as she exits*) Drive someone else crazy for a change. (*GEORGE crosses to his desk and picks up the telephone, dials. As he waits for the connection, he keeps mouthing 66666 to himself, puzzled about what it sounds like*) Ha Shailesh, George here. Kya Haal Hai? ... Good good.... Really? Bollywood eh? Good break for her, man..... now why did I call you?..... there were a couple of things..... hold on....

(*PRIYA enters*)

PRIYA They need a stripper

GEORGE (*into phone*) They need a stripper.... (*turning to PRIYA*) WHAT?

PRIYA They need a paint stripper to get the old paint off

(*GEORGE glares. PRIYA backs off*)

GEORGE (*Into phone*) Listen, Shailesh.... I need a lingerie model. Yes, female of course. Not too pricey.... Client is a bit stingy... .. yes, yes I know they all are.... Half an hour? Okay. And hey, make sure she has a chaperone this time. Last time the client pinched her and I got slapped..... No I don't think it'll work if I pinch her and the client gets slapped.... Either way I lose..... Half an hour? Okay. (*Puts the receiver down. To PRIYA*) What's all this about a stripper?

PRIYA The painters. They need a paint stripper to get the old paint off and then they can put on the new coat. (*Earnestly*) You see, until they get the old paint off completely –

(*GEORGE cuts in*)

GEORGE Okay, okay. Take the money from petty cash and tell them to get what they need. (*PRIYA turns to go*) And listen. Shailesh said he'll send the model over in half-an-hour. So cancel that taxi and send her straight in when she comes.

PRIYA

Okay, General.

(Lights fade to black)