



PLUCKER

BY **ALENA SMITH**



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
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PLUCKER
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PLUCKER was first produced at Southwark Playhouse, London, England, in 2010. It was directed by Anna G. Jones, the set design was by vPPR, and the original composition was by Elspeth Brooke. The cast was as follows:

ALEXIS	Emily Bevan
LOUIS	Jamel Rodriguez
LEE	Claire Cordier
JULIAN	Paul Westwood
THOMASINA	Juliet Crawford

CHARACTERS

ALEXIS, a composer.

LOUIS, her boyfriend, a math teacher.

LEE, her friend, a dancer.

JULIAN, another friend, a graphic designer.

THOMASINA, Julian's girlfriend, a philanthropist.

PLACE

New York City; way, way uptown.

The living room of a one-bedroom apartment.

TIME

End of summer.

Act One: Before dinner; then after dinner.

Act Two: After dinner; later that night; the next morning.

PLUCKER

ACT ONE

Scene 1

End of summer. New York City—way, way uptown. In the living room of a smallish, rather bare, slightly faded one-bedroom apartment.

In one corner of the room, a large birdcage is covered by a cloth.

In another corner sits Alexis, in a party dress, kneeling at a little toy piano.

Offstage, from the kitchen, we hear the sound of Louis, her boyfriend, singing a cheesy, high-pitched pop song.

Alexis bangs her fist down on the keys.

ALEXIS. Oh! Life is torture!

Louis comes out from the kitchen, wearing an apron, and holding a wooden spoon.

LOUIS. Something wrong?

ALEXIS. Could you keep it down in there? I'm trying to get some work done.

LOUIS. Alexis, it's Friday night. T.G.I.F. Relax.

ALEXIS. I can't—I need to focus on this—

LOUIS. Focus on me for a change! You've been focused on that all day.

ALEXIS. I got nothing done today. I can't work in this apartment!

LOUIS. Here we go.

ALEXIS. I'm telling you—it's the *noise*. We must have moved into the noisiest apartment in New York.

LOUIS. That's absurd. It's quiet in here. You're just over-sensitive.

ALEXIS. Of *course* I'm sensitive to noise, Louis. I'm a *composer*! And I'm not one of those John Cage Zen Buddhist composers who gets off on the accidental drip of the faucet, the car alarm, the clanging pipes, the wayward blast of booty bass from a neighbor's stereo! I don't find that kind of thing amusing in the least. I want to hear no sounds but my own. I'd like to be sealed off from the audible world in a private, soundless egg. I hate footsteps. I hate dogs. I want to erase everything!

LOUIS. Will you do me a favor?

ALEXIS. What?

LOUIS. Put away your piano.

ALEXIS. Put it away—you mean, right now?

LOUIS. Right now.

ALEXIS. But I'm right in the middle of—okay. I will. I will.

She picks up her toy piano, then hesitates.

I don't know where to put it.

LOUIS. Just put it away.

ALEXIS. But it doesn't have a place.

LOUIS. So make a place for it.

ALEXIS. Oh, this apartment! It never feels like *anything's* in the right place!

LOUIS. What are you talking about?

ALEXIS. I feel like I'm getting waterboarded in here.

LOUIS. This is our *home*, Alexis. Stop acting like it's a torture chamber!

ALEXIS. I'm sorry. But that's what it feels like! Honestly, sometimes I don't know what attracted me to this apartment. The feng shui is all fucked up. The walls don't seem to line up straight—and something about the way the furniture's set up makes me sick! I feel like I'm undergoing some depraved psychological experiment—the kind where they wrap your extremities in cardboard and feed

you meals at odd hours so your biorhythms go batshit and you never know if you're eating breakfast or dinner.

LOUIS. Really. Well—it's dinner. We're having dinner. And our friends are coming over, and when they get here, they're gonna find me in a pretty bad mood. Because you know what? You're hurting my feelings.

ALEXIS. Your—feelings?

LOUIS. Yeah. Remember how I have those?

ALEXIS. Oh, shit.

LOUIS. Yeah. I'm a big feeler.

ALEXIS. I know. You are a big feeler. And I'm being a dick.

LOUIS. Big time.

ALEXIS. Oh, man. What's wrong with me? Ever since we moved in here, I've just been—freaking out. And I don't even know why! I love you, Louis. You know that? I love you so profoundly.

LOUIS. I love you too, Alexis. I love you too.

They kiss.

From the birdcage, a voice. The voice is quite loud, and quite agonized. It is the voice of Pom-Pom, a parrot.

POM-POM. Ack! Life is torture!

ALEXIS. Uh-oh. She woke up.

POM-POM. Ack! Ack! Ack!

Alexis goes over to the cage and peeks underneath the cover.

No! She's doing it again!

POM-POM. Life! Is! Torture!

ALEXIS. Hey, now! You stop that! Stop that, you hear me? That is unacceptable parrot behavior!

POM-POM. Ack! Ack!

ALEXIS. God, why won't she stop!

LOUIS. I thought if you put the cover on, she stops.

ALEXIS. Yeah, not anymore! Now she goes on doing it in the dark.

LOUIS. Well, pretty soon she'll *have* to stop. 'Cause she won't have any feathers left.

ALEXIS. Louis! Don't even say that! Do you understand? If Pom-Pom plucks out all her feathers, she'll die!

POM-POM. Die! Ack!

A green feather falls from the bottom of the cage. Alexis picks it up.

ALEXIS. Please, Pom-Pom. Stop hurting yourself! Don't you know I love you?

POM-POM. I love you! Life is torture!

Another feather falls.

ALEXIS. Oh, this is bad. This is so bad! Her poor little tummy is almost bare—and now she's moved on to her wings!

LOUIS. She's making progress.

ALEXIS. Louis! This is not a *joke*! I've had Pom-Pom since I was six. She's always been a bit—anxious. But since we moved here? I mean—look at her!

LOUIS. I'd rather not.

ALEXIS. You don't even care, do you.

LOUIS. It's kinda hard to care about an animal who flashes her eyes red and squawks at me every time I come within a foot of her.

ALEXIS. She's just nervous! You haven't gained her trust.

LOUIS. *Her* trust? Fuck that! She's the one who practically bit off my earlobe!

ALEXIS. I wish you were more committed to developing a healthy relationship with my bird.

From the futon, a cell phone rings.

Shit—is that Julian? How'd they get here so fast? It's over an hour on the train from Park Slope—god, I wish they weren't coming tonight!

LOUIS. You were the one who made plans!

ALEXIS. Well, I felt like I had to. They've had us over so many times, and they still haven't seen our apartment.

LOUIS. So, now they'll see it.

ALEXIS. Exactly. They'll see it. And they'll judge.

LOUIS. What are you talking about?

ALEXIS. Thomasina. She won't *say* anything besides "I love your place!"—but really, that's not what she's thinking. She would never *say* what she's thinking.

Alexis picks up the phone, still ringing. She looks at the number.

Oh—it's not Julian. It's Lee.

LOUIS. Who's Lee?

ALEXIS. (*Picking up.*) Hey, Lee! How's it going—huh? Oh, no. Oh, that *sucks*.

LOUIS. What's happening? Who is that?

ALEXIS. (*Shushing him.*) Wait, so—what? You're right down the *street*?

LOUIS. What's going on? Who are you talking to?

ALEXIS. Well—you should come over here! No—I can't go out. Because, we're having a dinner thing. But—you should come! We have plenty of—totally. No, seriously. (*Slightly hushed.*) No—really, I can't go out. But—come. You know where we—? Yeah, that's right. So just come! Okay, see you in a few!

She hangs up.

That was Lee.

Beat. Louis glares at her.

Lee. The girl I've been—*Lee*. My new *collaborator*. The dancer? I was rehearsing with her last night, Louis. And the night before.

LOUIS. Oh, right—the one you "rehearse" with till three A.M., then come home stoned out of your mind. Lee. Good old Lee.

ALEXIS. That's right. Lee.

LOUIS. She's coming over?

ALEXIS. She has to come over. It's an emergency.

LOUIS. What's the emergency?

ALEXIS. She needs a place to crash.

LOUIS. What's wrong with her place?

ALEXIS. She had to evacuate.

LOUIS. What—she got a bomb threat?

ALEXIS. No. She got bedbugs.

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2M, 3W

Ever since Alexis moved in with her boyfriend, her pet parrot has developed a problem. What's worse, the girl she's been illicitly flirting with just showed up uninvited to their dinner party. And she might have bedbugs. And a secret past. **PLUCKER** is an old-school farce about a new generation dealing with the anxieties of commitment and co-habitation.

"[PLUCKER] has an element of farce... but this is also a very serious look at contemporary attitudes to relationships through a group of thirty-year-olds who are beginning to feel it is time to settle down."
—**British Theatre Guide**

"Smith's script manages to balance the more outright comedic moments of the night... with the serious reflection."
—**ViewsFromTheCheapSeats.com**

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