

# The Complaisant Lover: A Witty and Satirical Examination of Restoration Society

Sir John Vanbrugh's *The Complaisant Lover* is a witty and satirical comedy that exposes the hypocrisy and sexual promiscuity of Restoration society. First performed in 1700, the play follows the story of Sir Charles Freemantle, a wealthy man who allows his wife, Lady Freemantle, to have affairs with other men.



## The Complaisant Lover: A Play by Graham Greene

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 2845 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Print length : 94 pages  
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Sir Charles's complacency is born out of his belief that he is a modern man, above the petty jealousies and possessive instincts of his peers. He prides himself on his ability to control his emotions and to put on a show of indifference even when he is inwardly seething with anger or resentment. However, as the plot thickens, Sir Charles's complacency is put to the test, and he must confront the consequences of his actions.

The *Complaisant Lover* is a sharp and incisive satire of Restoration society. Vanbrugh skewers the hypocrisy of those who profess to be moral and

upstanding while engaging in all sorts of illicit activities behind closed doors. He also exposes the sexual double standard that allowed men to have multiple mistresses while women were expected to be chaste and virtuous.

The play is full of witty dialogue and memorable characters. Sir Charles is a complex and fascinating figure, a man who is both admirable and despicable. Lady Freemantle is a strong and independent woman who is willing to defy social conventions in order to pursue her own happiness. The supporting cast of characters is equally well-drawn, and each one contributes to the play's overall satirical effect.

## **The Plot**

The *Complaisant Lover* opens with Sir Charles Freemantle entertaining a group of friends at his home. Sir Charles is a wealthy and successful man, and he is known for his wit and his ability to put on a good show. However, beneath his charming exterior, Sir Charles is deeply unhappy. He is married to Lady Freemantle, a beautiful and virtuous woman, but he does not love her. He is also aware that Lady Freemantle is having an affair with another man.

Sir Charles's friends encourage him to confront Lady Freemantle about her infidelity, but he refuses. He believes that it is better to ignore the situation and to pretend that everything is fine. However, Sir Charles's complacency is soon put to the test when Lady Freemantle becomes pregnant with another man's child. Sir Charles is furious, and he finally confronts Lady Freemantle about her infidelity.

Lady Freemantle admits to her affair, but she refuses to give up her lover. Sir Charles is torn between his desire for revenge and his love for Lady Freemantle. In the end, he decides to forgive her and to allow her to continue her affair. However, Sir Charles's complacency has been shattered, and he is no longer the same man he once was.

## The Characters

- **Sir Charles Freemantle:** A wealthy and successful man who is married to Lady Freemantle. Sir Charles is a witty and charming man, but he is also deeply unhappy. He is aware that Lady Freemantle is having an affair with another man, but he refuses to confront her about it.
- **Lady Freemantle:** A beautiful and virtuous woman who is married to Sir Charles Freemantle. Lady Freemantle is having an affair with another man, but she refuses to give him up. She is a strong and independent woman who is willing to defy social conventions in order to pursue her own happiness.
- **Mr. Careless:** A friend of Sir Charles Freemantle who is in love with Lady Freemantle. Mr. Careless is a kind and compassionate man who is willing to do anything for Lady Freemantle. He is also a talented musician and singer.
- **Sir Paul Plyant:** A wealthy fool who is in love with Lady Freemantle. Sir Paul is a ridiculous figure who is constantly making a fool of himself. He is also a lecher who is always trying to get into Lady Freemantle's pants.
- **Corinna:** A witty and intelligent woman who is Lady Freemantle's confidante. Corinna is a sharp observer of human nature, and she is

always willing to give Lady Freemantle her honest opinion.

## The Themes

The Compliant Lover explores a number of themes, including:

- **The hypocrisy of Restoration society:** Vanbrugh skewers the hypocrisy of those who profess to be moral and upstanding while engaging in all sorts of illicit activities behind closed doors.
- **The sexual double standard:** The play exposes the sexual double standard that allowed men to have multiple mistresses while women were expected to be chaste and virtuous.
- **The power of love:** The play explores the power of love and its ability to overcome all obstacles.
- **The importance of forgiveness:** The play shows the importance of forgiveness and its ability to heal old wounds.

## The Legacy

The Compliant Lover is considered to be one of the greatest comedies of the Restoration period. It is a witty and satirical play that exposes the hypocrisy and sexual promiscuity of the time. The play has been performed countless times over the centuries, and it continues to be enjoyed by audiences today.

The Compliant Lover has also been adapted into a number of films and television shows. The most famous adaptation is the 1961 film starring Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr. The film is a faithful adaptation of the play, and it captures the wit and satire of the original.



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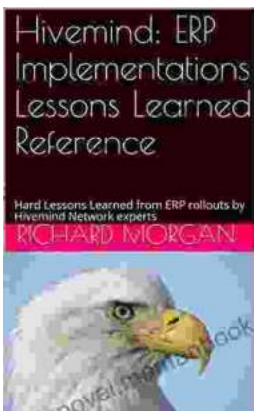
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