

# "arms in the man"

Literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The character of Major Paul Petkoff played by Christopher McGovern was the comic relief in the play " Arms in the Man. " Hiding behind his extravagant fake mustache, he's dashingily silly as we follow him through his exploits from the missing coat to the electric bell installed by his wife. The character of Paul Petkoff stays relatively static throughout the play, staying the same humorous slightly confused old man. The only thing he did change on in fact was allowing his daughter Raina to be with her chocolate cream soldier, Captain Bluntschli.

My original impression of Mr. Petkoff was to characterize him as a hard ass, but I soon realized I was mistaken. He's better characterized as a slightly confused but fair older man who's happy to get the war over with and return to his family. Mr. Petkoff is involved in many humorous exploits throughout the play that better develop his character into the happy easygoing man you see at the end. In the beginning of Act II, we see Mr. Petkoff enjoying lunch with his wife.

Being the traditional man, he disapproves of the electric bell his wife installed to call for Nicola. Failing to see the need, he just raises his voice and hollers to his man servant, much to the dismay of his wife. He's a traditional man, and being so, doesn't need all these new fangled gadgets; Paul Petkoff would much rather stick to what he knows. I think this moment really worked because this is really the first time the true nature of Mr. Petkoff is revealed. One of the more humorous relationships in the play is between Mrs.

Petkoff and Mr. Petkoff, which leads us to Paul Petkoff's next amusing scene. Catherine Petkoff, the mother, knows about Raina's chocolate cream soldier, so when Paul comes home she needs to hide the fact that Raina not only had another man in her room, but that he was one of the enemy as well. All Mr. Petkoff wants though is his coat. Let the hilarious antics ensue. Catherine is trying her best to hide Raina's secret, but with Bluntschli right there with the missing coat in hand that task suddenly gets very complicated.

Paul Petkoff never really seems to know what's going on, and that is no exception in this scene. He doesn't seem to notice the hasty cover-ups told by his wife or the awkward moment when Raina meets Bluntschli again. In fact, it takes until the end of the play for Paul to catch on. That's what I love about Paul Petkoff, he's "dashing and brave" and quite clueless, letting everyone else do his work for him. I can also sympathize with him when the women are running circles around him setting him in a right state of confusion.

If only the retrieval of the coat was an end to Paul Petkoff's troubles, but of course, it's only the beginning. I had to laugh when Paul reached inside his coat pocket intending to pull out the picture and confront Raina, when he discovered to his amazement that the picture was gone. The actor portrayed Paul's confusion very well, you could almost see Paul thinking, am I going crazy? Where's that blasted picture? Again, the women are trying to deceive him.

Inside the coat pocket is a picture of Raina addressed to her Chocolate Cream Soldier. Now with hard evidence staring him straight in the face, Paul

realizes something isn't right. But instead of being upset, Mr. Petkoff is actually happy for his daughter. This is another reason why I like Paul Petkoff: his wife and daughter may have tricked him, but he takes it all in stride and even let Raina be with the man she loves instead of Sergio. This was not expected but came as a welcome surprise.

Underneath that tough exterior is really just a kind old man who loves his family. Again I can relate to that, maybe not the confused aspect of his personality, but more so the kind forgiving part. Paul Petkoff really is an admirable man, sure he may have his faults but don't we all? Through all the trickery and cover-ups, Paul manages to forgive and forget and be an understanding father to his daughter. I think we could all learn a little something from this humorous dashing character with his extravagant mustache.