SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

This sample is an *excerpt* from a Samuel French title.

This sample is for perusal only and may not be used for performance purposes.

You may not download, print, or distribute this excerpt.

We highly recommend purchasing a copy of the title before considering for performance.

For more information about licensing or about purchasing a play or musical, please visit our website.

www.samuelfrench.com
www.samuelfrench.co.uk

SF PERUSALS

Real Estate

by Louise Page

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUELFRENCH.COM

Copyright © 1985 by Louise Page

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that *REAL ESTATE* is subject to a Licensing Fee. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. In its present form the play is dedicated to the reading public only.

The amateur live stage performance rights to *REAL ESTATE* are controlled exclusively by Samuel French, Inc., and licensing arrangements and performance licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur Licensing Fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a licensing quotation and a performance license please give us the number of performances intended, dates of production, your seating capacity and admission fee. Licensing Fees are payable one week before the opening performance of the play to Samuel French, Inc., at 45 W. 25th Street, New York, NY 10010.

Licensing Fee of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

Stock licensing fees quoted upon application to Samuel French, Inc.

For all other rights than those stipulated above, apply to: Helen Merrill, LLC C/O ICM, ATTN: Patrick Herold, 825 Eighth Ave., 26th Floor, New York, NY.

Particular emphasis is laid on the question of amateur or professional readings, permission and terms for which must be secured in writing from Samuel French, Inc.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced the following notice must appear on all programs, printing and advertising for the play: "Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc."

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

No one shall commit or authorize any act or omission by which the copyright of, or the right to copyright, this play may be impaired.
No one shall make any changes in this play for the purpose of production.
Publication of this play does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised in their own interests to apply to Samuel French, Inc., for written permission before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre.
No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

ISBN 978-0-573-60009-8 Printed in U.S.A. #20097

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of REAL ESTATE *must* give credit to the Author of the Play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production. The name of the Author *must* also appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent the size of the title type.

REAL ESTATE was first performed at the Tricycle Theatre, London, on May 3, 1984. It was directed by Pip Broughton, designed by Ellen Cairns, and lit by Andy Phillips. The cast was as follows:

GWEN ..... Brenda Bruce
JENNY ..... Charlotte Cornwell
DICK ..... Glyn Owen
ERIC ..... Tony Guilfoyle

REAL ESTATE was presented by June Hunt Mayer, Lynne H. Lyons, Jessica Levy, Lee Minskoff, and Lawrence Goossen, at The Theatre at Saint Peter's Church, on December 1, 1987. It was directed by Brian Murray, with sets by Desmond Heeley, costumes by Muriel Stockdale, and lighting by John Michael Deegan. The cast was as follows:

JENNY ..... Roberta Maxwell
GWEN ..... Sada Thompson
DICK ..... Charles Cioffi
ERIC ..... Lewis Arlt

To Philip, Kate, Martha and Chloe

REAL ESTATE

ACT ONE
Scene 1

SCENE: The wood at the back of a house. It is autumn — late dusk. Dead leaves.

AT RISE: JENNY is walking tentatively, looking around the wood. She finds a ball, picks it up. Suddenly:

GWEN. *(off)* Cleo! *(JENNY begins to retreat, stops, turns toward the voice. GWEN Enters. SHE carries a dog lead. SHE calls off stage.)* Cleo! Cleo! You naughty girl! *(SHE sees the other person nearby.)* She usually goes back to the house when we get this far. *(SHE waits. SHE picks up an acorn. SHE sees that the other woman is holding the dog's ball.)* Thank you. I never seem to go home without something in my pocket. The next time I find them they're withered.

JENNY. You should empty your pocket.

GWEN. Jenny?

JENNY. Me; yes.

GWEN. Cleo! Cleo! Samba died. Well, put down. You don't expect dogs to last forever, do you? This one's called Cleo. Dick's choice. I couldn't do all the naming of them.

JENNY. No.

GWEN. Dick's dog more than mine really. Spends most of the day with him. It doesn't feel safe now to walk in these woods without some sort of companion.

JENNY. The same everywhere.

GWEN. Worse in towns, I expect.

JENNY. I have a car.

GWEN. Oh.

JENNY. And a flat. Two bedrooms. Second floor.

GWEN. Where?

JENNY. London. Hammersmith.

GWEN. Oh.

JENNY. There's a view of the river from the balcony.

GWEN. I see.

JENNY. *(Tries to get some leaves from her shoe.)* Silly shoes for here.

GWEN. At least it's not wet.

JENNY. No.

GWEN. Did you drive in them?

JENNY. Yes.

GWEN. How long did it take?

JENNY. An hour and a half. Longer than it should. The traffic was choc-a-bloc coming out of London.

GWEN. I always go by train.

JENNY. I assumed the station would be closed by now.

GWEN. It is. Dick drives me to Didcot. You could have been collected.

JENNY. I din't want to be a nuisance. *(SHE holds out the ball.)*

GWEN. You still bite your nails.

JENNY. Yes.

GWEN. Most people grow out of it.

JENNY. I have tried. It was either this or smoking.

GWEN. I smoke.

JENNY. You shouldn't.

GWEN. You tell me that?

JENNY. Anybody would.

GWEN. It's my own life! I throw it away as I please. *(Pause.)*

DICK. *(Calls from the house.)* Gwen. Gwenny?

GWEN. Dick's waiting for me. *(Pause.)* Am I supposed to say something? Well? What did you expect? *(JENNY shakes her head.)*

DICK. *(off)* Gwen!

GWEN. I'm here. *(To JENNY.)* I can't ask you to stay for supper because I don't know if there's enough. Are you expecting to be asked to stay? Dick's province not mine. He's the one who knows how long the mince has been in the freezer. How many sheets there are which haven't been turned edge to edge. Don't think we can't afford new sheets. We can, easily. It's just we prefer them to be linen and at our — that's what we prefer.

DICK. *(off)* Gwen?

GWEN. It's not fair to keep him waiting— *(GWEN starts to go.)*

JENNY. There are some questions—

GWEN. There had to be something.

JENNY. Why?

GWEN. Why else would you come? *(THEY are very still.)* It's not intuition. I'd assumed it would be money. It obviously isn't. I know how much Jaeger suits cost. This is my money. Not Dick's. Dick's as well as mine, of course. I'm the one that works now.

JENNY. It suits you.

GWEN. Thank you.

(Enter DICK.)

JENNY. Hello, Dick.

DICK. Jenny!

GWEN. It took her an hour and a half to drive from London.

JENNY. The traffic was bad.

GWEN. Did Cleo come in?

DICK. I thought she was with you.

GWEN. No. *(GWEN starts to move off stage.)* Cleo! You're a naughty girl. Cleo! Come back here this minute. *(SHE has gone.)*

DICK. How are you?

JENNY. Fine.

DICK. Good.

JENNY. And you?

DICK. Bearing up.

JENNY. I hear you do the cooking.

DICK. Gwen's at work all day. It's not how I thought my retirement would be. She's an estate agent, a good estate agent. The clients like her. She sells houses very successfully. She found it very exciting at first. I don't know now. It's her name you see on the boards. She earns more than I was earning. Perhaps you expected to find us struggling?

JENNY. I don't know.

DICK. On your way here you must have thought.

JENNY. I thought you'd be old. Older. You are, of course. And me? *(Pause. DICK watches her. JENNY bends down for an acorn. The gesture stops.)* Do I remind you of her?

DICK. Not particularly. No.

JENNY. Sometimes I think I am. It suddenly surprises me. Something I say. How I put clothes in order in the drawers. The way I boil eggs.

DICK. It would be hard to better. Her's is a very reliable method.

JENNY. I've never compared it. The egg's just an example. *(SHE throws the acorn away.)* I can't explain.

DICK. You live in London?

JENNY. Yes. I have a flat. Two bedrooms. Second floor. Hammersmith. There's a view of the river from the balcony.

DICK. I see. You aren't married?

JENNY. No and I haven't been. Did you think there'd be step-grandchildren somewhere?

DICK. We've thought a lot of things. You couldn't have expected us not to. How do you earn your living?

JENNY. I work in a shop. Not behind the counter at Woolworth's as you promised me I would. More upmarket than that. You made the threat of working at Woolworth's sound terribly glamorous. Rather risque. The sort of place it would be fun to work. I buy china. I've quite an eye for it. I can see if a teapot's likely to pour well. I've just got Wedgewood to reappraise their glaze. That's quite a major victory. And of course there have been other things on the way.

DICK. I look forward to hearing about them. Are you staying for supper?

JENNY. She said she didn't know if there'd be enough.

DICK. It'll stretch.

JENNY. If you're sure.

DICK. It's not the fatted calf.

JENNY. I didn't expect it to be. I should lock the car. *(Exit JENNY. DICK watches her.)*

GWEN. *(Enters. SHE wears an apron.)* I've turned the sprouts down.

DICK. Thank you.

GWEN. Do you think she's attractive? She is, isn't she? More than I thought she would be. I suppose I thought she'd come back in denim and with beads. It all looks as if it's real gold. She is attractive, isn't she?

DICK. Well—

GWEN. How did you think she'd be? Tell me. I've thought so many things I don't know.

DICK. Gwenny—

GWEN. I'm all right. You'd think Christmas or a birthday. Even over a weekend. But Thursday?

DICK. Perhaps she's on her way somewhere.

GWEN. Just dropping in. Is that all?

DICK. She's having supper with us.

GWEN. I wonder if she would like to stay the night.

DICK. She might want to drive back. It's only forty minutes.

GWEN. The spare bed isn't aired. I could put both hot water bottles in—

DICK. We might not want her to stay.

GWEN. Are sprouts a vegetable she liked? I don't remember. I know there's something she would never eat.

DICK. There are still some runner beans. I'll do those.

(Enter JENNY.)

GWEN. Do you like brussel sprouts?

JENNY. Fine.

GWEN. What's the vegetable that you don't like?

JENNY. There isn't one I don't think.

GWEN. There was. You swore it made you sick. I thought it was a fad. I made soup with it and told you it was something different. You were sick.

JENNY. I'm not fond of turnip.

GWEN. No—

DICK. There are some beans from the garden in the freezer. I'll do those.

JENNY. I don't want to be any trouble.

GWEN. It'll come back to me.

DICK. Ten minutes. *(Exit DICK.)*

JENNY. He looks very fit.

GWEN. He's not the sort of husband that has heart attacks. Not that you can ever say, of course. It'll probably be me.

JENNY. He says you're a success.

GWEN. Just started as a hobby. It rather grew. We're not the biggest, not by any means. One branch that's all. We're not tied up to a building society either. The press is never good on estate agents but I like to think that I try. That I do care. Houses are about families aren't they? Will you stay the night? *(JENNY shrugs.)* It's just that beds need airing. That sort of thing.

JENNY. We might not like each other.

GWEN. I didn't mean it like that.

JENNY. But we mightn't.

GWEN. We can just talk. I'd like to hear about your life. You don't look as if things have gone badly for you.

JENNY. I suppose they haven't. Not if you treat them as a whole.

GWEN. I'm glad.

JENNY. This is all my own. I'm not married for it.

GWEN. You'd have a ring.

JENNY. And a diamond.

GWEN. Yes. *(Pause.)*

JENNY. You've got a green house.

GWEN. Dick's domain, not mine. He finally got aubergines to grow this year.

JENNY. Oh.

GWEN. You don't know for how long. They'd become an obsession. There's always something he can't get to grow. Disaster with the celery this year. It was supposed to self-blanche — it was celery you didn't like. I said the soup was onion and I made croutons.

JENNY. I was sick?

GWEN. Yes.

JENNY. News to me.

GWEN. There are probably a lot of things.

JENNY. Yes, there are some questions.

GWEN. Are you pregnant?

JENNY. How?

GWEN. There are some questions and you bite your nails instead of smoking.

JENNY. Yes.

GWEN. And not married?

JENNY. Not living with anybody either.

GWEN. So it's help? *(JENNY nods.)* I'd have thought abortions were easier to get in London. But here? *(THEY look at each other.)* Oh. I'm surrposed to congratulate you?

JENNY. I think so.

GWEN. Jenny. How long?

JENNY. Only just. Six weeks.

GWEN. October, no September, October, November, December—

JENNY. May. Around the twelfth at a rough estimate.

GWEN. You're lucky. It's hell being pregnant in the summer. My own fault for putting on so much weight with you. Is it those sort of questions?

JENNY. Yes. I need to know if I've had German measles. My friend — he had his daughter with him last weekend—Lottie had a temperature and a rash and they called the doctor. There's an epidemic at the moment.

GWEN. Your friend is married?

JENNY. Divorced. Not me. A long time before me. And we are friends. We go to bed together. You'd probably call that lovers. We aren't.

GWEN. You don't have to tell me about that side of things.

JENNY. I wanted to explain.

GWEN. And if you haven't had German measles.

JENNY. Then it'll have to be abortion. I need to know.

GWEN. And then you'll disappear again?

JENNY. Please, mother.

GWEN. You have. And mumps and measles and chicken pox. All the usual vaccinations.

JENNY. Thank you.

GWEN. You see I thought I was probably a grandmother by now. A granny. In May.

JENNY. Probably. There are a lot of tests I have to have.

I'm old for a child. It's becoming a classic syndrome according to the doctor. A woman who's worked and got somewhere and then panicked because she's never used her womb. Wanting to see it's operational before the guarantee runs out. It wasn't consciously like that. I've never played Vatican Roulette. On the pill I never missed a pill. And I've never chanced it even when I thought it was safe without a diaphragm. It wasn't even anything special. Between the sheets with the lights off. Sleep afterwards and work in the morning. I suppose there are a lot of beginnings like that.

GWEN. Does he know?

JENNY. Not yet. When I went to the doctor's this morning he was still asleep. His arm was over the top of the duvet. He's got a ten year old daughter and I thought he didn't look old enough to be a father. He's younger than me. A couple of years that's all. You and Dick I suppose.

GWEN. Five between us. But I never say it. In the beginning it was a joke. But as you get older. You will tell your friend?

JENNY. Eric. Of course. I haven't been sick yet. Were you sick?

GWEN. Not as much as some people. I put on weight and my ankles swole. That was the worst—

DICK. *(off)* White or red?

JENNY. I'm not drinking.

GWEN. Not fussy.

DICK. *(off)* One minute and counting.

GWEN. On our way.

JENNY. Will you tell him?

GWEN. Not if you don't want me to. *(JENNY goes towards the house. GWEN follows her.)*

(The LIGHT goes.)

Scene 2

SCENE: In the house after supper.

AT RISE: JENNY enters carrying a framed photograph. DICK is doing a large tapestry.

JENNY. Where's this?

DICK. The first house she sold.

JENNY. Oh. There used to be one of me as a baby in this frame. Samba?

DICK. Yes. Already an old dog when that was taken.

JENNY. None of me?

DICK. No.

JENNY. Nowhere?

DICK. Not that I know of. I don't know what happened to them. There wasn't a great gesture of burning or tearing up. Nothing like that. One by one they just disappeared. You can't blame us. There have been a lot of tears. A lot of pain. *(HE sews.)*

JENNY. Forgiveness is rather over-rated as a quality.

DICK. You don't have to like me even now.

JENNY. I know that.

DICK. What else could I have done? You promised to be home at eleven. You weren't. Are you surprised we

were worried? Eleven o'clock you'd given your word. We didn't know what might have happened to you. It was nearly two. You could have telephoned. Asked if you could stay a little longer. If you'd asked us we would have come to some arrangement with you. I could have come and collected you.

JENNY. You didn't want me to go in the first place, did you?

DICK. No, we didn't.

JENNY. You didn't or she didn't?

DICK. Neither of us thought it was a very good idea.

JENNY. You were the one who came and got me. I've never been so embarrassed.

DICK. Because I cared?

JENNY. No one else's father stormed in and played the heavy.

DICK. I'm not your father.

JENNY. That made it worse.

DICK. Let's get this straight, I knocked at the door and asked for you and they let me in. There was no storming. You were the one who screamed and said that you weren't coming home. Do you know what it took me to walk into that party? In to the noise? A dark room filled with smoke and Beatles music? I was frightened. It wasn't my territory. I'd have left you to come home when you liked. But Gwen asked me to. A test. Bare feet on broken glass. The part of her that nothing else could convince.

JENNY. Don't!

DICK. Jenny — *(She struggles with the photo frame.)*

JENNY. Some people put the new ones in on top of the old. Eric does that with Lottie's. All her school photos, one on top of the other. *(This is not the case.)*

DICK. I had to encourage her to forget you. It would have torn us apart, Jenny. I couldn't have faced that. I could have gone so you'd come back, but if you went once you could go again. Then where would she have been? We had friends who wanted to move from a big house to a smaller one. And another set who wanted to do the opposite. I encouraged Gwen to introduce them to each other and to run around with tape measures. A deal was done. They insisted on giving her something for her trouble. I think it was twenty pounds. With that she went out and ordered headed notepaper and foolscap envelopes. She stopped being your mother and went into business. I pushed her at first and now I can't stop her.

JENNY. You don't like her working?

DICK. I took early retirement so we could spend some time together. I still want her, Jenny. I want her to look back when she goes out of the house in the morning. *(HE drops his needle. JENNY returns it to him.)* Thank you.

JENNY. It's very beautiful. I'm hopeless at anything like that. I can't even knit.

DICK. Perhaps you'd like it when it's finished.

JENNY. Me?

DICK. I could send it to you. It would mean leaving your address.

JENNY. I'd like that. Thank you. *(SHE watches DICK sew.)*

(GWEN enters.)

GWEN. I've taken the risk on two hot water bottles and the electric blanket. I know you shouldn't combine electricity and water but I've done the stoppers as tight as I could.

JENNY. Thank you.

GWEN. Cleo's scratching at the door to go out.

DICK. I forgot. She's a dog of very regular habits. How far did you take her this afternoon?

GWEN. Only to the stream and back. She ought to have a bit of a run.

DICK. Right. Into the night I go. *(HE whistles for the dog. The DOG BARKS.)* Walkies! *(Exit DICK. Mad BARKING from dog.)*

JENNY. Very much his dog.

GWEN. Yes. A drink?

JENNY. I'm not. The baby.

GWEN. Sorry. I forgot.

JENNY. If you want one.

GWEN. No. I just thought you might like one. *(JENNY yawns.)* Tired?

JENNY. I didn't sleep much. I knew it would be positive —but until—I saw the doctor.

GWEN. I know.

JENNY. I was trying to think things through. And the German measles. There was a moment when I wanted to ring you but it was the middle of the night.

GWEN. I wouldn't have minded.

JENNY. I thought you mightn't recognize my voice. That you'd think I was a hoax. Or that Dick would

answer. I thought you wouldn't know me.

GWEN. It took me a second.

JENNY. The light was going.

GWEN. Yes. The bed won't take long to air. Your old bed in your old room.

JENNY. It doesn't look like my room any more. I was expecting everything to be the same. Wallpaper, furniture, my teddy and bunnies on the bed. Where did they go?

GWEN. Do you want them?

JENNY. The baby might like them.

GWEN. You want new things for a baby.

JENNY. Sometimes I wished I'd taken them. My teddy, at least.

GWEN. Where did you got that first night?

JENNY. I went.

GWEN. Where?

JENNY. Oxford.

GWEN. I'm sorry. I said to myself that if you came back I wouldn't ask any questions. I wouldn't pry. I'd be pleased to see you and it wouldn't matter. I've worried about you for twenty years. And not one phone call or postcard. As if I'd never been, Jenny. Those phone calls when no one spoke when I answered. Was any of those you?

JENNY. No.

GWEN. I once phoned someone just to hear his voice.

JENNY. No!

GWEN. We thought you'd gone to London.

JENNY. That's why I went to Oxford.

GWEN. Did you know we were looking for you?

JENNY. I knew you would. I changed my name for a while.

GWEN. Dick said you must have done. I thought you might go to your father.

JENNY. You'd have found me.

GWEN. You can imagine what it was like with him. The accusations of being a bad mother. What he said about Dick. He's dead. Did you know that?

JENNY. No.

GWEN. He got drunk one night and drove into a canal.

JENNY. I'm sorry.

GWEN. I couldn't tell you how many years ago. Six, seven. A sad man. I should have let him go in the first place. Getting pregnant with you was a cheap trick to pull on him. I was desperate. I thought I'd die if he went back to the States. What time are you going in the morning?

JENNY. I'm not working. Whenever.

GWEN. I try to leave by eight thirty. Gives me an hour to see to the post. I like to start the morning with my desk clear. You don't have to go when I go. You could sleep in. Have breakfast in bed.

JENNY. I could see your office. We could have lunch.

GWEN. I never have lunch—no—that would be lovely. There's a Boots across the road. They do teddies and rattles and things.

JENNY. Not yet. Please not yet.

GWEN. No, of course. When you're sure you could let me know and I could send something.

JENNY. We could have a look tomorrow. I could choose what I wanted and then you'd know.

GWEN. Yes. You could stay the weekend if you wanted.

JENNY. There's someone I have to see.

GWEN. Eric?

JENNY. Yes. Usually he has his daughter but not this weekend.

GWEN. You could invite him down.

JENNY. He's always talking about weekends in the country. Rugged. Not my sort of thing at all.

GWEN. There'd be no problems. I wouldn't try and push you. *(GWEN gets briefcase from shelf, puts files on the table.)*

JENNY. Divorce must be a good money-spinner for estate agents.

GWEN. Yes. Hard, though, sometimes. There was a couple I showed round a house when they were engaged. I sold it them as a lovenest and no doubt he carried her over the doorstep.

(Enter DICK.)

GWEN. He went back there one night after it was put on the market. Chopped up the floors with an axe. I know it's not professional but my heart bled. Have you locked?

DICK. Yes.

JENNY. It's very quiet here after London.

GWEN. Yes.

JENNY. I've got double glazing but the noise still comes

in, and of course in the summer with the windows open — *(SHE yawns.)*

GWEN. You should go to bed.

JENNY. Um.

GWEN. I've put a towel on your bed and a nightie.

JENNY. Thank you.

DICK. Do you want to be woken in the morning? *(JENNY shakes her head.)* Anything special for breakfast?

JENNY. Just tea, not coffee. I'm not that fussy.

GWEN. I may not see you in the morning.

JENNY. Lunch?

GWEN. Yes.

JENNY. I'll find you. Goodnight.

GWEN. Sleep well.

JENNY. Thank you for the supper.

DICK. Goodnight, Jenny. *(JENNY goes.)*

GWEN. She went to Oxford.

DICK. When?

GWEN. The first night.

DICK. It's one of the places we thought.

GWEN. Was it?

DICK. Where didn't we think?

GWEN. You didn't go there.

DICK. I couldn't look everywhere. *(Pause.)* I spent a week at Paddington watching every train. Every person who got off. Every dubious man that approached girls who were uncertain where to go. If you wanted Oxford scouring you could have done it from here.

GWEN. What if I'd been out and she'd come home?

DICK. She had her own keys.

GWEN. I wanted to be here. *(Pause.)*

DICK. She asked if there were any photos left of her as a baby. I said I didn't know. Are there?

GWEN. Yes.

DICK. Oh.

GWEN. Did you think I'd thrown them away?

DICK. Yes.

GWEN. My own daughter?

DICK. I thought so.

GWEN. They're in the office. Photos, her baby teeth, cards she made me at school. Her teddy and the bunnies. She has a file. Locked. I didn't want to keep stumbling on them. Do you like her?

DICK. Difficult to say, so quickly. You?

GWEN. I'm her mother. It needs time.

DICK. She might go as suddenly as she came, Gwen.

GWEN. She's staying tomorrow. And perhaps the weekend. The longer she stays...

DICK. I have things to do tomorrow.

GWEN. She can look after herself. She's not a child.

DICK. Come to bed.

GWEN. I've got some work.

DICK. Please, Gwen.

GWEN. She and I are having lunch tomorrow. I have to. Or I'll never catch myself up.

DICK. You'll kill yourself.

GWEN. There's a contract I must push through tomorrow. Go to bed. I won't be long.

DICK. Wake me.

GWEN. Perhaps. *(Pause.)* Go to bed. *(SHE kisses him.)* Go. *(DICK goes. GWEN works with files.)*

(Enter JENNY carrying Gwen's nightdress.)

JENNY. You are sure about the German measles?
GWEN. Certain. *(JENNY goes.)*

Scene 3

SCENE: The wood.

AT RISE: Enter ERIC.

ERIC. Lottie would love it here. *(HE stamps on chestnuts to get them from their cases.)* These are empty as well. The woods are dying out. Any luck?
JENNY. *(off)* None.
ERIC. I promised Lottie we'd roast chestnuts together when I got back.
JENNY. *(off)* Buy some.
ERIC. Not the same.
JENNY. *(off)* She'll never know. *(HE hides.)*
ERIC. Chestnuts from the woods, Jen. It was a promise.

(JENNY enters.)

JENNY. Eric! Look, don't. Please don't. With Lottie. Not me. I hate it. Eric? *(HE jumps on her.)* Don't.
ERIC. Jen?

JENNY. You nearly scared the bloody life out of me.

ERIC. Nature red in tooth and claw.

JENNY. Don't!

ERIC. Sorry.

JENNY. They can see from the house.

ERIC. No one to see. Your mother's working, your father's shopping. He's hardly your description of him.

JENNY. People change. He's mellowed. And my mother?

ERIC. Mothers are mothers. *(HE tries to kiss her.)*

JENNY. Don't.

ERIC. Should I change my toothpaste or something?

JENNY. My mother's house.

ERIC. What do they think goes on between us?

JENNY. Not them. Me.

ERIC. Why?

JENNY. It doesn't feel — I can't. Could you at your parents?

ERIC. Depend on you, wouldn't it?

JENNY. Have you?

ERIC. With Linda, of course. Let's not discuss Linda.

JENNY. Sorry.

ERIC. If we'd spent the weekend in London?

JENNY. Yes, probably. A bottle of wine and we usually do.

ERIC. But you're not drinking at the moment.

JENNY. No.

ERIC. If you want me to go I'll go. I'll spend the weekend at Linda's playing snakes and ladders with Lottie.

JENNY. Don't go.

ERIC. What's happened?

JENNY. Nothing.

ERIC. There has to be something, Jenny. You come back here after how long? Demand I come too, then you treat me like a stranger.

JENNY. It's not to do with you.

ERIC. You were up and out like someone had shouted fire on Thursday morning. You didn't even say goodbye.

JENNY. I tried not to wake you.

ERIC. That's not what I'm complaining about. *(HE stamps on chestnuts. HE discovers a ball.)* Catch.

JENNY. *(SHE does.)* It must be Cleo's.

ERIC. Surely you should throw a dog sticks in a wood. *(JENNY throws the ball back.)* You don't think I could keep it. Something to take back for Lottie?

JENNY. I won't say anything. *(He throws the ball back to her.)*

ERIC. This time last year Lottie couldn't catch. This year she can. Linda's taught her I suppose.

JENNY. I've caught.

ERIC. What?

JENNY. Caught. It's the expression the little girls that come down from the North use. Pregnant.

ERIC. Fuck.

JENNY. Exactly.

ERIC. You can't be.

JENNY. But I am. *(Pause.)*

ERIC. I'll pay for the abortion, of course.

JENNY. I don't want you to.

ERIC. We'll go Dutch then.

JENNY. I don't want any money.

ERIC. You might let me play some part.

JENNY. You'll be a father.

ERIC. What?

JENNY. Its father. Is that so very difficult to understand?

ERIC. You're having it?

JENNY. Is that so very unusual?

ERIC. But when we talked about — accidents.

JENNY. We were talking.

ERIC. It is an accident?

JENNY. My mother had me to keep my father. You think I'd make the same mistake?

ERIC. You don't have to make a mistake. You know that.

JENNY. I didn't think that offer was open at the moment.

ERIC. It's always open.

JENNY. Sometimes more than others though?

ERIC. It's open. I've said I'll marry you. I won't unsay it because of this. Only this time you ask.

JENNY. I'm not asking.

ERIC. You never will.

JENNY. No, probably not.

ERIC. But us? Your job? Everything, your age. You're nearly forty.

JENNY. Thirty-eight. That's why.

ERIC. A baby's hard work, Jen. I've done it.

JENNY. I haven't.

ERIC. You haven't been to the moon.

JENNY. I haven't had the chance.

ERIC. It's not that I don't want you to have it.

JENNY. It's mine. In me. There. Mine.

ERIC. How long?

JENNY. About six weeks.

ERIC. This big Jen.

JENNY. Yes.

ERIC. Jenny it's nappies, broken nights, total responsibility.

JENNY. So?

ERIC. Nothing will be the same again. Never.

JENNY. It's hardly how I'd planned the rest of my life. It used to be that when I was a day late I assumed I was pregnant. This time I assumed it was the menopause come early. It's not. I am. The proper tests. The scrubbed out jar and urine sample at dawn. I have conceived.

ERIC. An egg and a sperm, Jen. Hardly a miracle.

JENNY. Better news than the chestnuts. *(Pause.)*

ERIC. Better news than the chestnuts. I can't wait to tell Lottie.

JENNY. Not yet.

ERIC. But you're certain.

JENNY. Not that there'll be a child at the end of it.

ERIC. That's what Linda — what every woman thinks when she first gets pregnant.

JENNY. Lottie's got rubella. Spotty Lottie. The list of what it can do to a fetus is pretty impressive, blind it, deafen it, maim it—

ERIC. Not Lottie's fault.

JENNY. I know.

ERIC. A child of ten to have that hung round her neck—

JENNY. A virus, not Lottie.

ERIC. Don't blame her.

JENNY. No—

ERIC. Any of those things she'd blame herself.

JENNY. What about me?

ERIC. You're a grown-up. You understand.

JENNY. That there are risks. Yes, yes I do. I got a full list of them on Thursday morning. No congratulations. No smiles and handshakes. When the doctor looked at her notes she was positively apologetic. The suit and the briefcase. I suppose I hardly looked the maternal role. She started on the fact that I was more likely to have twins and ended on the increased risks of mongolism. She asked me if I'd had German measles and I said I didn't know, but that I'd seen Lottie and she had it. The doctor told me to ask my mother.

ERIC. There had to be some reason—

JENNY. I don't like sleepless nights.

ERIC. You haven't started yet.

JENNY. My mother put me out of my misery. The list of my childhood ailments is quite comprehensive. It includes rubella. I'm in the clear.

ERIC. For certain?

JENNY. So far so good. More snakes than ladders at my age. I'll have to have an amniocentesis. That shows up mongolism and spina bifida and a host of other disasters and the baby's sex. But not until the sixteenth week. After that it's decision time. If I don't get rid of the child I have to get rid of the flat. My stairs would be impossible with a pram.

ERIC. Live with me.

JENNY. I don't love you.

ERIC. You don't have to.

JENNY. But I do.

ERIC. Then how can I be its father?

JENNY. You'll always be welcome.

ERIC. I already have a child for weekends.

JENNY. It doesn't have to be weekends.

ERIC. Two nights a week, like playing squash? Like Lottie? Never seeing her learn just the results of what Linda taught her. I can't bear that again, Jenny. I'd rather go now and know nothing more.

JENNY. Eric!

ERIC. I'd rather go now Jen. *(Pause.)* Please.

JENNY. I don't know.

ERIC. I'd rather be sent away, Jen. *(Pause.)*

JENNY. I need you.

ERIC. What for?

JENNY. I do.

(When ERIC turns to walk away HE meets DICK.)

DICK. Great thing about the autumn, makes it difficult for people to get lost here. I could see you from the bathroom. Not much luck?

ERIC. No.

DICK. A bit late perhaps.

JENNY. I don't think so. The cases are still green.

DICK. They're all about this size. Not worth the effort.

JENNY. The way you stamp on them anything decent would be smashed.

FINISH READING THIS SCRIPT

Visit our website to purchase the full script or to explore other titles.

www.samuelfrench.com
www.samuelfrench.co.uk

To stay up to date on all that we are doing, follow us on social media:



*Titles for licensing are subject to availability depending on your territory.

SF PERUSALS