SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

This sample is an excerpt - an appetiser, if you will - from a full Samuel French title.

This sample is just for you to try out, and it can't be used for performance, downloaded, printed or distributed in any way.

Take it for a whirl and see if it tickles your fancy!

For more information about licensing this or other shows, or to browse thousands more plays and theatre books to buy please visit our website.

www.samuelfrench.co.uk
or, in the US www.samuelfrench.com

SF PERUSALS

Tons of Money

A farce

Will Evans and Valentine

Adapted by
Alan Ayckbourn

Samuel French - London

ISBN 0 573 01671 2

Please see page iv for further copyright information

Please note that the original, earlier, version of *Tons of Money* is still available from Samuel French Ltd

TONS OF MONEY

First presented in Alan Ayckbourn's revised version at the National Theatre, London on the 6th November, 1986, with the following cast of characters:

Sprules, a butler	Michael Gambon
Simpson, a parlourmaid	Diane Bull
Miss Benita Mullett	Barbara Hicks
Louise Allington	Polly Adams
Aubrey Henry Maitland Allington	Simon Cadell
Giles, a gardener	James Hayes
James Chesterman, a solicitor	Russell Dixon
Jean Everard	Marcia Warren
Henery	John Arthur
George Maitland	Michael Simkins

Directed by Alan Ayckbourn
Designed by Alan Tagg

The action of the play takes place in the library of Aubrey Henry Maitland Allington's house at Marlow

ACT I Morning
ACT II Three weeks later. Afternoon
ACT III The next day. Late afternoon

Time — 1922

ACT I

The library of Aubrey Henry Maitland Allington's house at Marlow. Morning

The room is handsomely furnished. At one side—double french windows, approached from the room by shallow steps, open to a terrace, commanding a view of the river and the landscape beyond. At the one side of the room is a low-backed armchair, and behind it, against the wall, a bronze statuette with an electrolier. A large settle couch with cushions is set at an angle, and at one end of it, a small square table on which is a telephone. In the wall of the window recess, facing the bookcase, is a low cabinet, and in the wall above it a speaking-tube. In the wall facing the audience, stands a grandfather clock

There are also large double doors which lead to a hall from which a stairway rises, and at the foot of the stairway a large leaded window. Also in the room a square, stone fireplace with irons in the hearth and a fender stool against the high curb. A gate-legged table, which at the rise of the curtain is laid for breakfast: two chairs are set at it. A winged armchair immediately below the fireplace and a smaller one facing it. The room has a high panelling, and the plain walls above this are decorated with tapestries

As the CURTAIN *rises the telephone bell rings; after a slight pause it rings again*

Sprules enters through the double doors; he is dressed in butler's morning clothes, is severe and precise in his manner, is slightly grey and wears side-whiskers. He carries a silver salver on which is the morning post. He puts this down as he takes up the telephone

Sprules Hello! Hello! . . . Yes, this is Mr Allington's house. . . . No, sir, the master isn't down yet. . . . I expect him any hour now, sir. . . . What name please, sir? . . . Mr Chest—Mr Chester—Mr Chesterman. . . . Very good, sir. I'll tell him you rang up. (*He replaces the receiver and picks up letters, writs, etc.*)

Simpson enters through the double doors carrying a tray with hot dishes, coffee and milk, which she places on the sideboard. She is a smart parlourmaid

Simpson Anything excitin', Mr Sprules?

Sprules Nothing much! (*He indicates that she should continue her duties. Studying the letters*) Hello, here we are again. Bill! Bill! Bill! (*He smells one*) Lady! And more bills!

Simpson Who's got most?

Sprules About fifty-fifty.

During the next Simpson lays out the breakfast

Simpson I never saw such a 'ouse.
Sprules And you never will again.
Simpson Do they ever pay anybody?
Sprules Not if they can help it.
Simpson I wonder the blooming creditors waste paper and ink sending the bills in.
Sprules Creditors, Miss Simpson, are like fishermen and lovers, they exist on hopes.

Miss Benita Mullett enters from the garden. She is an elderly lady, very brusque in manner and always speaks abruptly

Miss Mullett Simpson, have you seen my knitting?
Simpson (*finishing laying the table*) No, ma'am.
Miss Mullett One can't keep anything in this house. (*Seeing the breakfast table*) What! Breakfast not over yet!
Simpson (*on her way out*) Master and mistress just coming down, ma'am.
Miss Mullett What!
Sprules (*loudly*) Master and mistress are just coming down, ma'am.
Miss Mullett All right, don't shout, I'm not deaf. (*She takes the morning paper*) I never saw such a house! When I was a girl we always had breakfast at eight o'clock.

Louise Allington enters through the double doors. She is a young and pretty woman, very smartly dressed

Simpson steps aside to allow her to enter and then exits, closing the double doors

Louise Good-morning, Auntie Ben!
Miss Mullett (*severely*) Good-afternoon, my dear. (*She gives her cheek to be kissed*)

Louise kisses her cheek

D'you know it's eleven o'clock?
Louise Well, dear, what of it? (*She sits at the table and begins to look at her letters*)

Sprules, who has remained at the top of table, takes the covers off dishes

Miss Mullett Where's your husband?
Louise (*reading a letter*) Aubrey will be down soon—he's in his bath.
Miss Mullett The hours you and Aubrey keep, my dear, are a perfect disgrace.
Louise I loathe early rising.
Miss Mullett The early bird catches the worm, my dear.
Louise Well, if there's only one worm, Auntie, why should I spoil the market. (*She pours out coffee*)
Miss Mullett Your husband is worse than you are!
Louise Aubrey has the artistic temperament.
Miss Mullett What on earth does that mean?

Sprules has reached the double doors and prepares to leave

At that moment they burst open and Aubrey Henry Maitland Allington enters

Sprules recoils. Aubrey is a tall clean-shaven man of about thirty-five. He wears a smart lounge suit and monocle, and has a careless off-hand manner

Aubrey That's wonderful! Those bath salts have gone straight to my head. (*He goes up to the window, and inhales the air*)

Sprules exits through the double doors leaving them open

Good-morning, all! Good-morning, trees. Morning, birds. (*Noticing Miss Mullett*) Good-morning, Auntie Ben . . . (*He moves to her and, making a kissing noise with his lips, places his finger on her cheek. He moves to the table*)

During the next Miss Mullett wanders into the garden, momentarily, studying the newspaper

Good-morning, fish; good-afternoon, rolls. (*Picking up bills*) Good-night, bills. (*He sits at the breakfast table*)

Louise (*reading*) Here's a letter from my old friend Jean, Aubrey. She wants to come and stay some time.

Aubrey I've got bad news too.

Louise I haven't seen her for years and years.

Aubrey Yes, well, don't let's spoil it. (*He serves fish for Louise and himself*)

Louise (*reading another letter*) You know, Aubrey, I'm fed up with this dressmaker of mine.

Aubrey Wants money?

Louise Yes.

Aubrey I'll send her a cheque.

Louise Don't be silly, dear, it wouldn't be met.

Aubrey I beg your pardon, the day the bank refuses to meet my cheques, I shall take my overdraft elsewhere.

Miss Mullett (*returning from the garden, still reading*) An extensive V-shaped depression is rapidly approaching from the North Sea.

Aubrey That's her best friend Jean.

Miss Mullett (*reading*) Stormy weather may be expected. (*She puts down the newspaper*) Louise, you had better see about my galoshes.

During this Aubrey takes a writ out of an envelope. Miss Mullett moves into the garden but remains in view

Louise Yes, Auntie, I will. (*To Aubrey*) What's that funny paper you've got there?

Aubrey It's a writ.

Louise Really, what for?

Aubrey For those cigars I bought me to celebrate your last birthday.

Louise Well, Aubrey, you really mustn't be so generous in future.

Aubrey Sorry, darling, it's in the blood.

Miss Mullett (*from the garden*) Did you hear me, Louise? I said you'd better see about my galoshes.

Miss Mullett moves out of sight

Louise (*loudly*) Yes, Auntie, yes, yes! (*Softly*) Why doesn't she listen? If only she'd listen . . .
Miss Mullett (*now out of sight*) What's that?
Louise (*calling*) Nothing, Auntie. (*To herself*) Oh, dear.
Aubrey (*reading from another letter*) Now what the Dickens does this mean?
Louise Does what mean?
Aubrey (*reading*) Chesterman, Chesterman and Chesterman, Lincoln's Inn Fields . . .

Sprules enters from the double doors

Sprules Oh, I forgot to tell you, sir, a Mr Chesterman rang up this morning.
Aubrey I think he's written, too. Any message?
Sprules He asked if you were down, sir, and I said you weren't up.
Aubrey (*laughing*) You mean he asked if I was up, and you said I wasn't down. That's very good!
Sprules Er—yes, sir.
Aubrey All right, Sprules.
Sprules Very good, sir.

Sprules exits through the double doors, closing them

Aubrey (*reading*) Chesterman, Chesterman and Chesterman, Lincoln's Inn Fields.
Louise Why do West End solicitors always have three names in the firms?
Aubrey All the most dangerous things go in threes. Three-star brandy. Three-card trick. Three brass balls . . .
Louise What does it say?
Aubrey (*reading*) "Dear sir . . ."—he calls me dear—"Our Mr James Chesterman will call on you tomorrow morning at eleven o'clock to acquaint you with a matter of considerable importance to yourself. Faithfully yours, Chesterman, Chesterman (*turning over the letter*) and Chesterman." (*Thoughtfully*) Now is that a threat or a promise?
Louise He's either got some money to give us, or else wants some of ours.

Miss Mullett returns from the garden at this point. She moves across the room to the double doors during the next

Aubrey Darling, he's a solicitor.
Miss Mullett Who's a solicitor?
Louise Mr Chesterman, Auntie.
Miss Mullett Who's Mr Chesterman?
Aubrey The fellow we're talking about.
Miss Mullett Why?
Aubrey (*loudly and impatiently*) He's coming here.
Miss Mullett Don't shout, I'm not deaf. When's he coming?
Aubrey Any moment.

Miss Mullett What?

Aubrey
Louise } (*together*) Any moment!

Miss Mullett Then I'm going. (*Opening the double doors*) My father used to say lawyers were like leeches. Only leeches do let you go sometimes.

Miss Mullett exits

Aubrey (*resuming breakfast*) I love having Auntie Ben here, she worries me to death.

Louise Poor dear Auntie, she means well.

Aubrey (*reading a letter*) Does she? Then, of course, there's no hope for her.

Louise By the way, dear, Fred Drury——

Aubrey February?

Louise No, Fred Drury!—called yesterday to see you. He wondered if you've forgotten you owe him a hundred pounds.

Aubrey Tell him I have forgotten it. Completely.

Louise I've a letter here from Robinson too, so——

Aubrey Robinson Crusoe?

Louise (*holding the letter*)—saying that if his account isn't paid by Friday, he'll commence proceedings.

Aubrey Well, I'm not stopping the man.

Louise (*irritably*) No; but Aubrey, do be serious. One can't run bills for ever.

Aubrey (*equally so*) One can try.

A slight pause

Louise What about your new invention?

Aubrey Which one, the hair restorer, the blasting powder, or the rat remover?

Louise The blasting powder.

Aubrey Oh! Gadinite? That's going to make our fortune.

Louise Fortune! How?

Aubrey Why, it's the most wonderful explosive that's ever been dreamt of. Now, say you're making a railway.

Louise I'm making a railway.

Aubrey No, darling. I mean imagine you're making a railway, you come to a mountain, what do you do?

Louise Look at it.

Aubrey No, damn it, blast it . . . when you've done that the mountain's gone.

Louise Where's it gone to?

Aubrey Blown sky-high! (*Impressively*) D'you realize that one pinch of this powder, just as much as you could put on a . . . sixpence, is enough to blow up the whole of half London—er—er—the half of whole London.

Louise (*awestruck*) Aubrey, are you going to sell your blasting powder in sixpenny packets?

Aubrey (*laughing*) It's going to make our fortune, that's all.

Louise Why, it'll be worth . . . what will it be worth, Aubrey?

Aubrey One million and four pounds.
Louise Aubrey, but surely you can't be certain of the four.
Aubrey It's the four I'm certain of.

Giles appears at the french windows. He's a typical old gardener. He is carrying his hat, in which are three eggs. He comes into the room. Under the next he goes to the settle and very slowly takes the eggs one by one and places them on a cushion

Louise (*after a pause*) Then why not give a dinner-party to all the people we owe money to?
Aubrey We'd have to take the Albert Hall.
Louise And tell them about your new invention. It might keep them quiet. They'll have lots in common.
Aubrey You don't seem to realize that the people we've got to invite are the people we've got to . . . got to . . . go to . . . to go to . . . (*He trails off as they both see Giles*)
Louise Well, Giles?
Giles (*taking his time to answer*) Eggs!

He ambles slowly out of the french windows and exits

Aubrey and Louise both watch him intently until he disappears

Aubrey Little chatterbox! Why does he lay eggs in here—er—bring eggs in here?
Louise Poor old soul, he's proposed to Cook and she's refused him, so he won't go near the kitchen. (*Looking round the room*) Of course it's the expense of this big place that's doing all the mischief.
Aubrey Don't be silly, darling, there's only one way to get credit, that is make people believe you've got miles more money than you have.
Louise They can easily do that with us; look at this room for instance, anyone coming in here——
Aubrey Well, what's wrong with it? (*Taking up a letter*) That coat-of-arms isn't right, I admit, (*indicating the one over the fireplace*) it ought to be a couple of bailiffs rampant. (*Reading the letter*) Oh, Lord, that's done it . . .
Louise Done what?
Aubrey That account of Mannerings, they got judgement against us you know; this letter says that unless that five hundred pounds is paid within a week I'm bankrupt.

Louise groans in dismay

Don't worry, darling, you have to laugh. Well, you don't have to. But it's advisable.
Louise It's not much use giving that dinner then.

A gloomy pause. Louise is tearful

Sprules enters through the double doors

Sprules Mr Chesterman, sir.
Aubrey (*rising*) More trouble.

James Chesterman enters through the double doors. He is a clean-shaven man, very precise in manner, neatly dressed and carries an attaché case

Sprules exits through the double doors

Chesterman Mr Allington?

Aubrey rises, his plate of fish still in his hand

Aubrey Ah there you are, Mr Chesterman. (*He shakes hands*)
Louise (*rising*) I'd better go, Aubrey.
Aubrey No, no, no. Stay, dear. Mr Chesterman, my wife, my fish. Will you have some breakfast?
Chesterman No, thank you, I always breakfast at eight.
Aubrey We always dine at eight. Please sit down. (*Indicating the settle*) Oh, excuse me. (*He takes the eggs with the cushion and places them on another chair by table*) The gardener laid these—er—put them there.
Chesterman (*sitting*) I wrote to you last night, Mr Allington. My name is Chesterman, of the firm of Chesterman, Chesterman and Chesterman of Lincoln's Inn Fields.
Aubrey (*sitting*) Yes. I've just this moment opened your letter.
Chesterman You'll permit me to ask you a few questions?
Aubrey Certainly, certainly and certainly.
Chesterman I'm right, I think, in believing that you are Aubrey Henry Maitland Allington?
Aubrey Yes, all of them.
Chesterman Son of the late Charles Rodney Maitland Allington of Wintercroft in the county of Devon?
Aubrey I've always understood so.
Chesterman You have a brother, John Basil Whittingham Allington, sometime resident of Baffin Bay?
Aubrey (*tersely*) Yes, but that's not my fault.
Chesterman Please answer my question, Mr Allington. Is that so?
Aubrey I regret to say it is.
Chesterman That is an expression I can neither endorse nor contradict.
Aubrey You never knew my brother.
Chesterman I didn't.
Aubrey Obviously.
Chesterman Mr Allington, your brother I believe once did you some injury.
Aubrey You're right. (*Rising*) It was some injury. He married the only girl I ever loved!
Louise Aubrey!
Aubrey Oh, before I met you.
Louise Yes, but you never told me.
Aubrey I was too broke—broken-hearted. My brother's last action—Mr Chesterman, my brother's last action——
Chesterman Mr Allington, your brother's last action was to—die a week ago.
Aubrey I'm sorry!
Chesterman Your brother has left you——

Aubrey (*scornfully*) His kind wishes?
Chesterman A life interest in his entire fortune.
Louise (*standing, in surprise*) A life interest in his entire fortune?
Chesterman Yes, madam—expressing at the same time his sincere regrets for any injury he might have done you.
Louise (*thoughtfully, after a pause*) I wonder if it's too late to send the dear fellow a nice wreath?
Aubrey (*to Louise*) Allow me, dear, the head of the house. Mr Chesterman, what can I say?
Louise (*reprovingly*) Nothing, dear.
Aubrey Nothing, dear.
Chesterman The estate—I am quoting from figures sent me from Alaska——
Aubrey Bless you!
Chesterman —amounts roughly to four hundred and seventy thousand dollars.
Aubrey (*excitedly walking up and down*) Four—hundred and seventy thousand—dollars!!!
Chesterman Yes.

Aubrey gazes at him for a moment and then begins to laugh, Louise joining in

Aubrey I'll buy it.
Chesterman (*puzzled*) You'll buy what, Mr Allington?
Aubrey Yes—I mean, what am I expected to say?
Chesterman I'm afraid I don't understand you.
Aubrey Well, what's the joke?
Chesterman Mr Allington, I don't know what you're driving at. If you are casting aspersions on my—— (*He rises*)
Aubrey No, no, no! I beg your pardon! But is it really true?
Chesterman Here is the will. (*He takes a will from his briefcase*)

Aubrey takes the will from Chesterman; Louise in turn takes it from Aubrey

Aubrey And it amounts to what, you say?
Chesterman As far as can be at present ascertained, four hundred and seventy thousand dollars.
Louise I think he might have left it in pounds. (*She studies the will*)
Chesterman In Alaska they speak of everything in dollars, madam.
Louise Are there sixteen dollars to the pound, Aubrey, same as ounces?
Aubrey It depends on the height of the sea-level, darling.
Chesterman Your interest, Mr Allington, is only a life one.
Aubrey That won't worry me.
Chesterman In the event of your death, the money passes to your cousin, George Maitland of Mexico.
Aubrey He'll never get it.
Chesterman And why not, pray?
Aubrey He's gone to a place where they don't issue return tickets.
Chesterman I beg your pardon.
Aubrey Cousin George had a sticky end in a whisky saloon in Mexico.

Chesterman So I've heard, Mr Allington, but no-one seems to know positively what actually occurred.
Aubrey The only other party who could tell us, Mr Chesterman, was so full of George's bullets that he had no further interest in the proceedings.
Chesterman All the same we have no actual proof of death.
Aubrey No, George had the proof.
Chesterman All the same, we are advertising for him.
Aubrey Well, unless they issue asbestos editions I don't think it will reach him.
Chesterman Still, dead or alive, let's hope he won't be wanted for a long time.
Aubrey I entirely agree.
Chesterman And now I must leave you, merely congratulating you on your good fortune, and hoping you will both live long to enjoy it.
Aubrey (*shaking hands*) Spoken like a true friend and a Special Constable.
Chesterman (*crossing to Louise*) Goodbye, Mrs Allington. (*He shakes hands*) I will leave you that copy of the will. If there is any immediate advance——
Aubrey What's that?
Louise Immediate advance, dear.

Chesterman goes towards the double doors

Aubrey (*excitedly—crossing to Chesterman*) Oh, yes, yes, certainly, make it as immediate as possible. Goodbye, Mr Chesterman, goodbye. It can't be too immediate.

Chesterman exits through the double doors

Aubrey, standing at the double doors, shouts after him

Goodbye, Mr Chesterman! Take any hat you like!

Aubrey and Louise stand facing one another

Louise Aubrey, I think I want to scream or dance!
Aubrey Well, darling, scream and dance, we can afford it, now!

Both rush to one another, embrace, laughing loudly and excitedly

Sprules enters through the double doors; he stands amazed

They both stop guiltily

Sprules Did you call, sir?
Aubrey No, no, Sprules, we were merely screaming, that's all.
Sprules Very good, sir.

Sprules, looking puzzled, exits closing the doors

Louise and Aubrey resume their former excitement. Aubrey throws cushions about, takes a pile of letters, bills, etc. from the table

Aubrey Look, darling. (*He throws bills in the air*) There they go, full pack.

Louise, who is still clutching the will tosses it in the air for good measure

Louise (*falling into a chair*) I feel better now.

Aubrey (*about to sit on the eggs*) So do I. (*Rising before he does so*) Now where's that will? (*Not seeing it at first, perturbed*) Darling, it was here a minute ago. I haven't thrown it away, have I?

Louise (*helping him to find it, picking a writ up from the floor*) Here it is, darling.

Aubrey (*taking it from her, and throwing it back on the floor*) No, darling, that's a writ. (*Finding it*) Ah, there's the will. Now, let's have a look at it. (*He becomes very important*) Don't get excited, darling; have you never had money left you before? I have, all mine's left me. (*Reading*) "I, John Basil Whittingham Allington, being of sound mind——"

Louise What dear?

Aubrey Being of sound mind, dear. They have to put that in to account for his going to a solicitor.

Louise I see.

Aubrey "I give, bequeath and devise all my real and personal estate of which I may die possessed or to whom I may hereinafter become entitled together with all lands, estates, here—here—dit . . ."

Louise Here-dit-a-ments.

Aubrey "Here-dit-a-ments, tenements, massages . . ."

Louise Messuages.

Aubrey "Sewages or any other properties."

Louise I see now why they put that bit in about the sound mind.

Aubrey Never mind, we don't want to understand it. We'll take a month's holiday and study it. (*He folds it up and places it in the toast rack*) Four hundred and seventy thousand dollars.

Louise Four hundred and seventy thousand dollars.

Aubrey That's about one hundred and twenty thousand pounds, about six thousand a year. Why, it's a fortune! (*He picks up the receiver of the telephone*) Am I there? Yes. (*He replaces the receiver*)

Louise There's simply nothing we can't afford.

Aubrey One hundred and twenty thousand pounds! We can pay off every bill we owe.

Louise What's that?

Aubrey I say we can pay off every bill we owe.

Louise Yes, but——

Aubrey But what, we've got tons of money.

Louise (*deliberately*) But we owe tons of money, Aubrey, and by the time we've paid for the tons of money, there won't be any tons of money left.

Aubrey And we'll be bankrupt next week.

Louise It will all be taken by the official retriever.

Aubrey Oh, Lord, I'd forgotten that.

Louise But our creditors won't.

Aubrey They'll simply swarm round us now.

Louise Of course they will.

Aubrey Like a flock of wasps.

Louise Do wasps flock, Aubrey?

Aubrey Yes, if they want to.

Louise Oh, I never knew they did.
Aubrey Whom do we owe money to?
Louise Everyone we've ever dealt with.
Aubrey Shall I make a list? (*Picking up an envelope from the floor*)
Louise Of the people we owe money to?
Aubrey No, of the people we don't—it would be miles quicker.
Louise Aubrey, don't fool. It's too serious.
Aubrey It's perfectly disgusting, you know, the way people give credit.
Louise I think they ought to make it a criminal offence.
Aubrey They simply don't deserve to be paid!
Louise Besides, think how hurt your brother would be if he thought we'd used his money to give to people he didn't even know.
Aubrey Well, what are we to do?
Louise Is it necessary for our creditors to know we've come into money?
Aubrey My dear girl, how can we prevent it? They're bound to know.
Louise Yes, I suppose so.
Aubrey Of course they'd know if I had five shillings. They'd know like a shot.

Pause

Louise (*suddenly*) Aubrey, I've got an idea!
Aubrey What?
Louise What happens if you die?
Aubrey I shall probably be buried.
Louise Don't be absurd! I mean, who gets the money?
Aubrey George Maitland, my first cousin. Chesterman just told us so!
Louise But you say he's dead.
Aubrey So he is.
Louise Sure?
Aubrey Absolutely. Positive!
Louise Then why not—bring him—to life again.
Aubrey D'you think I'm a corpse reviver?
Louise You're very dense, dear! If once we can kill you——
Aubrey Eh?
Louise If once we can make people believe you're dead, you can come to life again as George Maitland, your cousin, and claim all the money.

Aubrey contemplates her slowly as her meaning dawns on him

Aubrey By Jove, what a brain wave.
Louise That's what I thought.
Aubrey You mean——? Let's figure this out!
Louise You've got to die! And there must be no mistake about it.
Aubrey But how am I going to die?
Louise Never mind that now. You're dead!
Aubrey Yes.
Louise Your will is read. You leave everything to me!
Aubrey But, darling, there's nothing to leave.
Louise Exactly, that's what I'm driving at!

Aubrey What's the good if there's——Oh, I see! And so the poor dog had none. (*He points to the bills on the table*) The Retriever!
Louise Quite so. Exit crowd of sorrowing creditors.
Aubrey (*laughing*) Can't you see them all coming to the funeral with eyes full of writs and pockets full of tears? Well, I'm dead—now what happens?
Louise Now George Maitland appears.
Aubrey I see—that's me.
Louise Exactly—what's George like?

Aubrey crosses to the sideboard and produces a photo album

Aubrey (*as he does so*) I've got a photo he sent after he'd been out in Mexico a few years. (*He turns over several pages until he locates the picture*) There.
Louise (*studying the album*) Oh, is that George? How tall is he?
Aubrey Oh, he's a fine-looking, big strapping chap—just about my build. (*Bracing himself as he says this*)
Louise Could you make yourself look like that, Aubrey?
Aubrey Oh, easily.
Louise But he's quite good looking.
Aubrey Exactly.
Louise Then that's settled. Chesterman has advertised for you, I mean for George.
Aubrey (*striving to follow her*) George . . .
Louise Well then, after you're dead, wait a few weeks, and then send a wire to Chesterman . . .
Aubrey Chesterman . . .
Louise "Just landed in England. Seen your advertisement."
Aubrey Advertisement . . .
Louise "I am on my way down. George Maitland."
Aubrey Down . . . Shall I be able to stay here?
Louise Of course! We're cousins!
Aubrey And after everything's fixed up, we can get married.
Louise How ripping! Fancy, having a second honeymoon with one's own husband.

The double doors have opened a fraction. Sprules is peering through the gap

Aubrey It's never done, darling, but we'll try it. Now, the next thing is—— (*He becomes aware that they are not alone*) What do you want, Sprules?
Sprules Miss Mullett wants to know if she left her wool here, sir?
Aubrey Tell Miss Mullett to go to the—the dining-room. It isn't here.
Sprules Very good, sir.

Sprules exits, closing the double doors

Louise Well . . .

Aubrey silences her and opens the double doors swiftly. Sprules has gone. He closes them and motions for her to continue

How are you going to die?

Aubrey I don't know, I've never done it before.
Louise We've got to bury you too.
Aubrey Well, don't harp on it.
Louise We mustn't forget to put it in all the papers.
Aubrey Have you made a hobby of this sort of thing?
Louise No, dear, but it's most essential that there shouldn't be any doubt whatsoever regarding your death.
Aubrey (*grimly*) There won't be any by the time you've finished with me.
Louise What's worrying me is how you're going to die. We must get the details right.
Aubrey Well, don't get them too right.

A slight pause, during which both think deeply

Louise What about a nice fit?
Aubrey No, thanks, the moment I start throwing fits, Sprules will come in and sit on my head.
Louise I thought it was rather a good idea.
Aubrey I'm sorry to differ from you, dear; I think it's a pretty bad idea. People get over fits.
Louise I'd take good care you didn't.

Aubrey looks at Louise suspiciously

Aubrey (*deliberately*) Well, anyhow—fits—are—off!

Another pause. Louise acts out one or two other ideas, silently. Aubrey watches her apprehensively

Louise (*thoughtfully*) You wouldn't like to hang yourself from the banisters, dear?
Aubrey No, I shouldn't.
Louise Or throw yourself slightly out of the window?
Aubrey Certainly not. You can't throw yourself slightly out of a window, you either do it all or none at all.
Louise I thought you might.
Aubrey Well, think again.
Louise Aubrey, if you could only cut your throat.
Aubrey What!
Louise (*hastily*) Oh, not much, darling, only a teeny little bit.
Aubrey Oh, I thought you meant cut it right off.
Louise It would be the making of us, Aubrey!
Aubrey (*irritably*) You've got a mind like a Newgate Calendar.
Louise (*crossly*) Well, you can't turn up as George Maitland until you are dead, so you may as well decide quickly how you are going to die.

Giles enters with flowers from the french windows

Aubrey No! If I'm going to die, what I really want is——
Giles Flowers. (*He places the flowers beside Aubrey*)

Giles exits through the french windows

Aubrey (*edging away from the flowers*) I've taken a sudden dislike to flowers. How can I be killed at once?

Sprules opens the double doors, speaks from there

Sprules Any orders for the butcher?
Aubrey (*starting*) No! Run away— we're busy.
Louise I'll see you later, Sprules.

Sprules exits, closing the double doors

Aubrey I never saw such a house. One can't even arrange to die quietly.
Louise We must find a way.
Aubrey Well, darling, I've thought over here, and I've thought over there . . .

A slight pause

Louise Aubrey! We could explode you!
Aubrey What?
Louise That's the idea! The blasting powder.
Aubrey Explode me!!
Louise Yes, we'll have a nice explosion and you can be blown to bits.
Aubrey Oh! Let me tell you, madam, we are not going to be exploded. I'm sorry—any other time I can do anything to oblige you——
Louise Listen! I want you to go down into your workshop at the bottom of the garden and make a heap of all the most explosive things you've got on one of the tables.
Aubrey (*sarcastically*) Then sit on it, and light a pipe.
Louise You know that speaking-tube in the workshop—the other end of that? (*She indicates the speaking-tube*)
Aubrey Yes—well?
Louise Draw the table close up to it and put a lighted candle on it so that it stands touching the end of the speaking-tube.
Aubrey Well?
Louise Round the candle you can pile gunpowder with a trail leading to all the new blasting powder.
Aubrey Yes?
Louise The moment I blow down the tube it will knock the candle over, which will fire the gunpowder, which will burn the trail which will light the blasting powder which will cause a terrible explosion which will blow the whole place sky-high. There you are!
Aubrey Pardon me! There I'm not.
Louise Of course you're not, you're miles away by then. You've told the servants you're not to be disturbed . . .
Aubrey Yes?
Louise But five minutes before the explosion you've locked the door, and got away unnoticed.
Aubrey Oh, and they still think I'm there.
Louise Exactly. At twelve o'clock—I'll come in and say "Where's the master?"

Aubrey And they'll say: "He's in his workshop, ma'am, and isn't to be disturbed till twelve o'clock."
Louise That's it. Then at twelve o'clock I'll blow down the tube and they'll spend the rest of the day hunting for pieces of you . . .
Aubrey Ripping!
Louise In the meantime, you will have crept up to the attic, packed a bag with all the things you will require for about three weeks, and take all the loose cash you can find about——
Aubrey I've done that.
Louise Then you can get away when the coast is clear.
Aubrey Ripping! When shall I turn up as Cousin George?
Louise Give it three weeks, it will look better.
Aubrey Yes, but in any case I'll ring up before I arrive. (*He kisses her*) Ha, ha! I'm glad I thought of that idea!
Louise Of course. Now I'll ring for Sprules. (*She goes and rings the bell*) Remember I shan't blow down the speaking-tube till twelve o'clock.
Aubrey Funny to think that when next we meet, I shall be dead.
Louise Darling! It will be the wisest thing you've ever done. Goodbye, darling. (*She kisses him*) See you in three weeks.

Sprules enters through the double doors

Yes, clear away, Sprules.

Louise exits through the double doors

Aubrey starts singing nervously—he catches sight of Sprules

Aubrey Oh, Sprules—what's the matter, man?
Sprules You're looking a little pale, sir.
Aubrey I'm feeling a little pale. I've got a wonderful idea, Sprules.
Sprules Yes, sir?

Simpson enters with a tray through the double doors and starts to clear the breakfast things from the table

Sprules starts picking up the strewn letters etc.

Aubrey And I'm going down to my workshop to experiment.
Sprules Yes, sir.
Aubrey I mustn't on any account be disturbed, Sprules.
Sprules I'll see that you're not, sir.
Aubrey You see, I'm working on some very high explosives, Sprules.
Sprules Yes, sir.
Aubrey Frightfully high explosives, Sprules. So high that if they exploded you'd never find a bit of me again.
Sprules Very good, sir.
Aubrey In fact, Sprules, they're so high that I'd rather nobody left the house till I've finished.
Sprules Yes, sir.
Aubrey That will be, say—approximately (*he looks at his watch*) say twelve o'clock precisely, Sprules.

Sprules Yes, sir.
Aubrey And if I am killed, don't bother to lay me out for lunch, Sprules . . . lay out . . . lunch for me . . .
Sprules No, sir.

Miss Mullett enters through the double doors

Miss Mullett Oh, I was looking for you, Aubrey.
Aubrey I'm just going down to my workshop, Auntie.
Miss Mullett I'll come with you. (*She moves after him*)
Aubrey (*quickly*) Oh, no, no, no!
Miss Mullett And why not, pray?
Aubrey You can come—er—after twelve o'clock precisely. Not a moment before. I've got some frightfully dangerous work on and I wouldn't have anyone near me.
Miss Mullett Very well, have it your own way. (*She sits down and begins knitting*)
Aubrey And, Sprules, if any of my creditors call, tell them to come round again—after twelve! After twelve, Sprules, don't forget. Precisely.
Sprules Precisely, sir.

Simpson has cleared the breakfast things, removing the will from the toast rack and leaving it on the table. She exits through the double doors

Aubrey exits into the garden through the french windows

Sprules goes to clear the tablecloth. He sees the will, and taking care he is not observed, examines the document, reacts and furtively slips it into his pocket

Miss Mullett Where's Giles, Sprules?
Sprules (*guiltily*) I don't know, ma'am; shall I find him for you?
Miss Mullett What?
Sprules (*loudly*) I say, shall I find him for you?
Miss Mullett Don't shout, man! I'm not deaf!
Sprules Can I give him a message for you, ma'am?
Miss Mullett No, it doesn't matter; I told him to bring me a cucumber so that I can make the salad for lunch. (*She looks at her watch*)

Simpson enters through the double doors with a telegram

Giles enters with a cucumber through the french windows

Yes, Simpson?
Simpson Telegram for the master, ma'am.

Sprules exits through the french windows with the tablecloth from which he intends to shake the crumbs

Miss Mullett Well, give it to me. He's in his workshop and doesn't want to be disturbed. I'll call and tell him.

Simpson comes to her and gives her the telegram

Giles (*on the steps of the window*) Cucumber!

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

Please visit our website to buy the full script, apply for a license to perform this show (if it's available), or to explore hundreds of similar titles.

www.samuelfrench.co.uk
or, in the US www.samuelfrench.com

To be the first to know about new books, licensing releases, and enjoy other theatre-related larks, do follow us on our spangley social media channels.

Samuel French London

SamuelFrenchLtd

SF **PERUSALS**