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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

A Night in Provence

A Comedy

by Robin Hawdon

SAMUEL FRENCH

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A NIGHT IN PROVENCE was first produced at the Mill at Sonning Dinner Theater in October 2007, directed by Ian Masters, with the following cast:

FRED.....Darren Machin
JUDY.....Lisa Hall
SHAUN.....Toby Dale
MOIRA.....Jemma Churchill
MAURICE.....Michael Frenner
YVETTE.....MaryConlon

CHARACTERS

FRED – a Londoner
JUDY – his wife
SHAUN – an Irishman
MOIRA – his wife
MAURICE – a Parisian
YVETTE – his wife

All are in their late thirties/early forties.

The author has no objection if American producers wish to make Shaun and Moira American or Irish-American, rather than Irish.

SETTING

The main living area of a traditional affluent holiday home in the south of France. Wide, open-plan space. Upstage center the front door with a small window to the side. Perhaps a raised entrance area. Upstage left an open plan kitchen area separated from the main room by tiled work units, and with an exit offstage left. Downstage left an arched door to the main bedroom suite. Stage right an arch to the guest bedrooms. Fireplace, large sofa centre stage, French rustic furniture.

On the forestage a terrace running the full width of the stage, accessed centre via imaginary French windows or sliding glass doors from the house. A patio couch with swing seat stands to one side, with folding patio table and chairs stacked nearby.

Light and shade and Provençal colors everywhere.

ACT ONE

(The afternoon sun is pouring in from the terrace. The sound of a car engine is heard, and doors slam. Voices are heard from outside.)

FRED. *(off)* All right, all right – I'll bring the cases, you unlock the door.

JUDY. Where's the key, Fred?

FRED. Well, I dunno! You had it.

JUDY. Here it is.

FRED. Get on with it then – we'll melt out here!

(A key rattles in the lock.)

JUDY. *(off)* It won't open.

FRED. *(off)* Turn it the other way, you silly woman.

(The front door opens. **JUDY** *enters with* **FRED** *behind dragging two large suitcases.)*

JUDY. Here we are then.

FRED. Thank Christ for that! Pfff – what the bloody hell you got in here – Marks and Sparks lingerie department?

JUDY. *(looking round)* Oo, look at this, Fred. This is nice!

FRED. *(as he dumps the cases)* Phew! *(looks round)* Yeh, not bad.

JUDY. This is classy! *(goes to the kitchen area)* En suite kitchen – very posh.

FRED. *(wiping his brow)* Gawd, it's warm.

(comes downstage to the imaginary terrace doors, opens them and gazes out front)

Oh, look at that view!

JUDY. They've got a dish-washer.

FRED. You can see the sea.

JUDY. They've got a lovely big fridge-freezer.

FRED. Never mind that – come and look at the view.

JUDY. *(looking in cupboards)* I wonder where they keep the pans and everything.

FRED. Never mind the bloody pans – come and look at the view!

(She comes down-stage and stares out front.)

JUDY. Oo, yes. You can see the sea.

FRED. That's what I said.

JUDY. Well, it said sea views – you jolly well ought to see it. Nice terrace. Pretty flowers.

FRED. Bogganvillyer, that is.

JUDY. Where's the pool?

FRED. Oh, yeh…*(peering off to the side)* There it is – down there.

JUDY. Oo, yes. Looks nice.

FRED. Bloody better be – the amount we're paying. You must get to it off the end of the terrace.

JUDY. Looks like one of those naked goddess statues at one end.

FRED. Oh good. Might encourage everyone else to strip off too.

JUDY. One track mind you've got, Fred. *(going back)* Nice tiles. Better than carpets – won't need to hoover.

FRED. Thank God for that.

JUDY. Let's have a look at the bathrooms.

FRED. Now one thing you're not bloody doing is spending the whole holiday in the bathroom.

JUDY. I'm just looking.

FRED. You're not doing your hair all day, you're not doing your make-up, you're not dressing up for a bloody Buckingham Palace garden party – all right?

JUDY. All right, all right, Fred. Don't go on. What's in here?

(opens the door to the main bedroom suite)

Looks like the main bedroom. Oo, it's very nice!

(goes through)

FRED. *(to himself)* Well thank God *she's* happy.

JUDY. *(off)* Oo, look at this, Fred.

FRED. *(collecting the suitcases)* Has it got an en suite bathroom? If it's en suite it's the main bedroom.

JUDY. *(off)* Oo, yes – look! Two basins, bidet and everything!

FRED. *(struggling to the bedroom with the suitcases)* Oh Lord! She'll be washing everything all day long.

JUDY. *(off)* It's got French windows onto the terrace too. Isn't that dangerous, Fred? Anyone could come in while you're asleep.

FRED. You should be so lucky. *(vanishing into the bedroom)* Oh yeh – quite nice this. We'll take this one as we're here first.

JUDY. *(off)* Put my case there. I'll start unpacking.

FRED. *(off)* Not yet, for Chrissake! We haven't seen the rest of it yet. Come and look at the rest.

JUDY. *(off)* I don't want my clothes to crease.

(He returns, and crosses to the other side.)

FRED. *(calling back)* Don't be stupid – they've already been packed two days! Now there should be two other bedrooms off here somewhere.

(goes off to the other bedroom wing)

JUDY. *(following)* Well, at least the bedrooms are separate. We won't all hear each other bonking and everything.

FRED. *(off)* Oh good. We're going to do some of that then, are we?

JUDY. *(going off)* Now, Fred…don't start.

FRED. *(off)* Oh, yes. These are all right. Nice place altogether really.

JUDY. *(off)* Don't like that colour. I couldn't sleep in there.

FRED. *(off)* What's the colour matter if you're asleep?

JUDY. *(off)* Moira wouldn't like it either. They'll want that room.

FRED. *(off)* Well, they can take their choice, can't they? They can bonk alternate nights in each one. *(reappears muttering)* Knowing them they will too. Lucky buggers!

JUDY. *(reappearing after him)* Now, Fred, don't start.

FRED. *(grabbing her round the waist)* Come on then – let's have a quick one before they arrive.

JUDY. *(pushing him away)* Get off Fred! We've only just got here!

FRED. Probably the only chance I'll get.

JUDY. Well I'm not getting all messed up for when they walk through the door.

FRED. You messed up. That'll be the day!

JUDY. Anyone'd think you were eighteen, not forty four.

FRED. Oh, sorry. No-one told me it all stopped when you reached forty.

JUDY. Fred! Come on – let's go and look at the pool.

(comes downstage, through the imaginary terrace doors)

Must be this way.

(goes offstage at the other end from the patio couch)

FRED. *(following)* 'Course we could always do it in the pool. Then you'd be bonking and washing all the same time.

(Closes the imaginary terrace doors behind him, and follows her off. Pause. The sound of another car arriving. Doors slam.)

MAURICE. *(voice off)* Qu'est ce que c'est – cette voiture?

YVETTE. *(off)* Je n'sais pas.

(A key rattles. **MAURICE** *and* **YVETTE** *enter with light luggage.)*

MAURICE. *(calling)* 'Allo? *(silence)* Personne.

YVETTE. *(coming down-stage and looking at the view)* Ahh! Voila.

MAURICE. *(looks around, tests a surface for dust)* Oui – ca va.

YVETTE. *(opens the terrace doors and sighs happily)* Chez moi!

MAURICE. *(long-suffering)* Oui, oui.

YVETTE. *(staring towards the pool)* Uh? Qui est'ce?

MAURICE. *(coming to look)* Quoi?

YVETTE. *(pointing)* Près de la piscine.

MAURICE. *(frowning)* Uh? Qui est'ce?

YVETTE. Je n'sais pas.

MAURICE. Shh! Ils reviennent.

YVETTE. *(whispering)* Qui est ce?

MAURICE. *(ditto)* Je n'sais pas.

(They retreat inside and wait in suspense. **FRED** *and* **JUDY** *return along the terrace.)*

FRED. Well, we'll get in that pool. First bloody thing!

JUDY. I want to unpack first.

FRED. What for? We can go in in the nude – before the others get here.

JUDY. Fred!

FRED. Why not? It's perfectly….

(He stops, as they enter and see the others. The two couples stare at each other.)

MAURICE. S'il vous plaît?

FRED. Who are you?

MAURICE. *(strong French accent)* Oo are *you*?

FRED. We're staying here. This is our place.

MAURICE. Non. Zis is *our* place.

JUDY. Your place?

YVETTE. Our place.

FRED. No, no. It's our place.

MAURICE. No, no. It's our place. It belongs with us.

FRED. Belongs to you?

MAURICE. Yes. Our house.

FRED. But we've rented it. For a holiday.

MAURICE. You rent it?

FRED. Yes.

YVETTE. You rent it?

JUDY. Yes.

MAURICE. Merde!

YVETTE. *(to* **MAURICE***)* L'agent ne te l'as pas dit?

MAURICE. *(to* **FRED***)* You arrange with the agent?

FRED. *(nodding)* Riviera Villas – for two weeks.

MAURICE. Merde!

YVETTE. Merde!

JUDY. Two merdes. That sounds bad, Fred.

FRED. Shh! Let's get this straight. You own this house, and you weren't expecting us to be here?

MAURICE. Yes. We come for our holiday. The house is free.

FRED. It's not free.

MAURICE. It should be free.

FRED. Shit.

MAURICE. Je suis desolé. I'm very sorry, but you must leave.

JUDY. Shit.

FRED. Oh, no. Now wait a minute. We booked this house. We've paid the rent.

MAURICE. When?

FRED. Last week. Last minute booking admittedly, but we paid everything up front. The agent should have told you.

MAURICE. When you pay?

FRED. I told you, last week. Bank transfer.

JUDY. We picked up the keys in the village. It was all arranged!

YVETTE. *(sotto voce)* Maurice – as tu renseigné l'agent que nous arrivions?

FRED. What? What she say?

YVETTE. Eh? Maurice?

MAURICE. Merde!

FRED. Stop saying merde. What is it?

JUDY. They never told the agent they were coming.

FRED. *(to* **MAURICE***)* That true?

(silence)

You didn't consult the agent?

(silence)

Ah, well…I'm very sorry, but that's not our fault. We made a *(French accent) – legitimate reservation.* It took us a hell of a time to find this place. I'm afraid there's nothing we can do about it now.

MAURICE. Ah, non. I'm desolated for the mistake, but… you will have to find somewhere else.

FRED. Are you kidding? It's high season, middle of August! Finding somewhere like this round here's impossible!

MAURICE. Yes, but er….

FRED. No way, chum! We booked and paid for this. We're staying. This is our summer holiday.

MAURICE. We too.

FRED. Well that's your problem. If this is your place, you can come any time.

MAURICE. No, no. My business, it's…impossible.

YVETTE. Impossible.

JUDY. Where are you from?

YVETTE. Paris.

FRED. Paris? Ah well, it's hardly Tooting High Street, is it? You can have a nice holiday at home anyway.

YVETTE. No, no.

MAURICE. No! Absolutely not! I'm extremely sorry for this mistake, but this is our house and we must stay here. I'm sure we can find you a nice hotel, and….

FRED. No, chum, no, sorry, but we're not going to any hotel. It's a villa we wanted – nice and private – swimming pool – near the sea. It took me bloody hours to track this down – on the internet, on the phone, trawling through the bloody adverts…There is no way we are leaving here. Got it?

YVETTE. Ah!

FRED. I'm very sorry, but if you and your agents have cocked it up between you, then it's your responsibility. You'll just have to work it out between you. We're staying. We're legally entitled.

MAURICE. Merde!

YVETTE. Je n'quitte pas, Maurice.

MAURICE. Shh!

YVETTE. Je n'quitte pas.

FRED. What she say?

JUDY. She's not going.

FRED. Now look here…I don't want to be nasty about this. I'm very sorry for the balls-up…I mean the mistake. But it's not our fault. We've driven all through France and half round bloody Provence trying to find the place – there is no way we are going to leave. D'you understand?

MAURICE. But, we…

FRED. You'll just have to tell your agents to find you somewhere else.

MAURICE. We can't go somewhere else! It's our home! We have everything here!

FRED. We've got everything here too. I had a job stopping her bringing the bloody washing machine!

YVETTE. *(fierce whisper)* Fais quelque chose, Maurice.

MAURICE. *(turning the charm onto* **JUDY***)* Madame – you can understand. The agents will find for you another place, I'm sure, but this is our home.

JUDY. Well…

FRED. No. No way. We're not leaving.

JUDY. It's very difficult.

MAURICE. Ah, mon dieu! *(to* **YVETTE***)* Qu'est ce qu'on va faire?

YVETTE. *(emphatic)* Je ne quitte pas.

FRED. She ne quittes pas, we ne quitte pas. What we going to do – fight the Battle of Waterloo?

MAURICE. You British are very…how you say? – stubborn.

FRED. Oh thanks. You make a cock-up, and we're the ones who are stubborn. You sound like Charles de Gaulle all over again.

MAURICE. I think I rather be Charles de Gaulle than Maggie Thatcher.

FRED. Oh really? And what about Jacques Chirac?

MAURICE. Nicolas Sarcozy.

FRED. Yeh – her too. I suppose. . .

JUDY. Fred! For God's sake, are we going to fight about the whole of French history?

FRED. Well…

JUDY. What are we going to *do*?

FRED. *(sitting determinedly on the sofa)* I know what I'm going to do. I'm sitting here until they take their stuff and move out, that's what I'm doing.

MAURICE. Ah, mon Dieu! *(gestures to* **YVETTE***)* Yvette.

(leads her upstage and they mutter fiercely together)

JUDY. This is just awful, Fred.

FRED. It's their problem.

JUDY. It's embarrassing! *(looking at them)* What they up to?

FRED. I dunno, but it won't work.

JUDY. He's rather dishy, isn't he?

FRED. You what?

JUDY. Well….

FRED. I don't believe this!

JUDY. I'm only saying, Fred. He's got that French charm.

FRED. I'll shove his French charm up his French arse if he doesn't get out of here.

JUDY. It is their house.

FRED. So what? They let it out, and we've rented it. We're paying them a lot of dosh for this, let me remind you.

JUDY. I know, but….

*(***MAURICE** *comes to them.)*

MAURICE. Please – I ask you one more time – let us try to find you a nice hotel. We pay the difference.

FRED. Sorry – we're not going to any hotel. It's a villa holiday we booked, and we're staying.

MAURICE. Then it seems there is only one thing to do.

FRED. What's that?

MAURICE. We have to share.

JUDY. Share?

FRED. Share?

MAURICE. We share the house. It's big. We can be separated. We can be private. We stay here together.

JUDY. But you don't understand. We're not the only….

FRED. *(stopping her)* Shush! *(to* **MAURICE***)* How long you here for?

MAURICE. Two weeks, like you.

FRED. You mean we spend the whole holiday here together?

MAURICE. What else can we do? Either we fight a duel with the pistols, or we have to share.

FRED. Well, I dunno….

JUDY. Could be quite fun, Fred.

FRED. What about cooking and everything?

MAURICE. *(shrugging)* Some nights you go to a restaurant, some nights we go. We take in turn.

FRED. What about the rent?

MAURICE. You pay half.

JUDY. That'd be fair.

FRED. I dunno.

MAURICE. Have you another idea?

FRED. Well…bit of a funny arrangement.

MAURICE. It's called the Common Market. I know you British don't like it, but maybe you can try.

FRED. What if we don't get on?

MAURICE. You are always free to leave.

FRED. Yeh, thanks.

JUDY. I think it's the best way, Fred.

MAURICE. It is the *only* way.

FRED. Well, all right, but…

JUDY. But Fred – you'll have to say to them…I mean, what about…? *(nods towards the second bedrooms)*

FRED. Yeh. Look, there's something we should, er….

MAURICE. I know, the bedrooms. This is easy. We take the first bedroom here. You have all the other rooms over there. You have two bedrooms, you have your own bathroom, you have…

FRED. Oh no, no, no…

MAURICE. What?

FRED. That bedroom's ours. We've already moved in.

YVETTE. *(jumping in)* Ah, non! Zis bedroom is ours!

JUDY. No – it's ours. Our cases are in there.

YVETTE. Non! Absolument non!

MAURICE. No, you see it's our own personal bedroom, this. We have our clothes in the cupboard, we have all our things in the bathroom….

JUDY. Oh, Fred!

FRED. Well I'm sorry about that, but we've already picked that room. My wife's set her heart on it, you see. I'm afraid that's part of the deal.

YVETTE. Non! I must have my bedroom. It's not fair!

MAURICE. Please. For the sake of the entente cordiale.

FRED. Listen, chum – you can stick the entente cordiale up your vive la France! We've given in on the bloody house – we at least get to choose bedrooms.

JUDY. Oh, but Fred, if they're in one of those bedrooms, what about, you know…?

FRED. What about you know if *we're* in one of those bedrooms? They'll all have to pig in together, won't they, and see how the entente cordiale works then.

MAURICE. Pig in? What is this?

FRED. Never mind. The point is, it's not negotiable. We have that room, or the deal's off. We'll let you choose when to use the kitchen first – how's that?

YVETTE. Non! Maurice!

MAURICE. *(hopelessly)* Qu'est ce que je peux faire?

YVETTE. *(losing her cool)* You are terrible, you English! You are selfish, you are bad! You have no morals. I despise you!

FRED. Oh well, that's a good start. I can see this is going to be a very friendly holiday.

YVETTE. Maurice! *(She bursts into tears on* **MAURICE***'s shoulder.)*

JUDY. Oh gawd, Fred. Now look what you've done.

FRED. It wasn't my fault. It wasn't me started hurling abuse.

JUDY. Well, we have sort of pinched their home, haven't we?

FRED. You wanted that room!

JUDY. Well, I know, but…

FRED. Are you going to take their side now? Whose fault is it this all happened in the first place?

JUDY. Well, I can understand how she feels. We could perhaps give them their bedroom…

FRED. No! That's not negotiable. I'm not listening to you-know-who at it all night long on the other side of the wall.

JUDY. *(indicating the others)* Well they'll have to, won't they?

FRED. They're used to it – they're French.

JUDY. Fred!

FRED. They'll be at it the same time themselves. They can all heave ho together.

MAURICE. What is this?

FRED. Never mind.

JUDY. *(whispering in his ear)* You'll have to tell them.

FRED. I will, I will. Let's all calm down first.

MAURICE. O.K. We make a deal. You have the bedroom first week – we have it second.

YVETTE. Oh, Maurice…

MAURICE. Shh.

JUDY. That's fair, Fred.

FRED. *(grudging)* Well, all right. We dunno who'll be in whose bedroom by then anyway – ha, ha?

JUDY. Fred!

FRED. Only joking.

YVETTE. This is affreux! The holiday is spoiled.

JUDY. *(consoling)* Don't worry, love. It'll work out. It'll be quite fun once we've all settled in.

YVETTE. Your husband is a pig!

FRED. Thanks.

JUDY. He's quite nice really – once you get to know him.

YVETTE. Thank you, I don't wish to know him. I don't wish to be near him!

FRED. Pity. Wouldn't mind being near myself.

JUDY. Fred! What's the matter with you?

FRED. Well I've got as much chance with her as with you, haven't I?

JUDY. *(hissing)* Bloody hell, Fred! Just because I won't strip off the moment we get in the door! Good job I didn't, isn't it? They'd have walked right in on us.

FRED. Yeh, well that would've started things off with a bang, wouldn't it – ha, ha? Might have been a lot more fun that way.

JUDY. You're impossible sometimes. *(turns to the others)* Perhaps we'd better introduce ourselves. I'm Judy, and he's Fred.

MAURICE. *(resigned)* Maurice and Yvette.

JUDY. How d'you do. *(shakes hands with him)* I'm ever so sorry about it all. It's just bad luck.

MAURICE. Yes.

JUDY. It's a lovely place you've got here though. Did you do it all up yourselves?

MAURICE. My wife did it, yes.

JUDY. Lovely. *(to* **YVETTE***)* You've got very good taste.

YVETTE. *(grudging)* Thank you.

MAURICE. *(gesturing to the guest wing)* We design it so friends can come, and two couples are private together. At least that is one good thing.

JUDY. Oh, yes…*(looks at* **FRED***)* Er…yes well, there is something else actually.

MAURICE. What?

JUDY. There's something we haven't told you. Fred?

FRED. What?

JUDY. Come on, Fred. You'll have to tell them.

MAURICE. What?

YVETTE. What?

FRED. Yes, well…um…it's a bit awkward actually.

MAURICE. What?

YVETTE. What?

FRED. The thing is, you see…. *(pause)*

MAURICE. *What?*

FRED. We've got some other friends coming.

(pause)

MAURICE. What?

YVETTE. What?

FRED. Yeh. They're sharing the house with us.

MAURICE. Sharing the house?

FRED. Yeh. Well it's a bit big for just two, isn't it – ha, ha?

YVETTE. They're coming here?

JUDY. Yes.

MAURICE. When?

FRED. *(looking at his watch)* Any moment actually. They're a bit late.

YVETTE. *(screaming)* Ahhhh!

MAURICE. *(going to her)* Yvette, non!

(She smacks him hard round the face. He staggers back.)

YVETTE. C'est de ta faut, tout ca!

JUDY. Oh, listen, love…

FRED. *(going to* **YVETTE***)* Look I'm sorry, but they're very nice. You'll love them…

(She smacks him too.)

Oof!

YVETTE. I will not love them! I will hate them! I hate you too! *(to* **MAURICE***)* I hate *you*! I hate everybody!

JUDY. Oh God, Fred – do something.

FRED. What? What can I do? She's insane!

JUDY. Christ! I wish we'd gone to Torquay.

YVETTE. Maurice, c'est impossible! Je retourne a Paris.

MAURICE. Non, chérie….

YVETTE. Je n'reste pas ici avec ces…ces….

FRED. Careful now. Remember the entente cordiale.

YVETTE. Ils sont affreux!

FRED. I bet that was rude.

MAURICE. Chérie, we must do the best. We can still have a nice time.

YVETTE. How? How a nice time with people like this?

JUDY. We're not so bad, love. Not when you get to know us.

YVETTE. I told you, I don't wish to know you! I don't wish to see you, or hear you, or…or smell you!

FRED. Charming!

JUDY. O.K. but you can't go back to Paris. Not now. It's all arranged.

YVETTE. *(shaking with frustration)* Urrr!

MAURICE. Chérie – s'il te plait. *(to* **FRED***)* Where are these friends? How they come?

FRED. They're flying to Nice, taking a taxi from there. We took the Channel Tunnel and drove down, you see.

MAURICE. Ah.

JUDY. We go on holiday every year together, you see.

FRED. They should be here by now. We planned to arrive together.

MAURICE. This is not a good arrangement. We are not happy.

FRED. No. Us neither.

YVETTE. You understand – we keep totalement apart. We don't speak together, we don't eat together, we don't go in the piscine together. Nothing!

FRED. Fair enough.

YVETTE. *(to* **MAURICE***)* The very first bad thing, I go back to Paris!

MAURICE. Oui, chérie.

YVETTE. C'est tout!

JUDY. Fred.

FRED. What?

JUDY. We must give them their room.

FRED. What?

JUDY. It's only fair.

FRED. No.

JUDY. *(determined)* Yes, Fred. We can't put them next door to Shaun and Moira. We can't have them sharing bathrooms. Can you imagine it?

FRED. Can you imagine *us* sharing? It'll be like a farmyard in there!

JUDY. Well that's why we can't put them there. It's their house, it's not fair.

FRED. Bloody hell! This is becoming a nightmare!

JUDY. *(to the others)* You have the main bedroom. We'll move our stuff out.

MAURICE. Thank you, madame. That's very kind of you. Say thank you, Yvette.

YVETTE. *(sulking)* Non.

MAURICE. Ah! *(to* **JUDY***)* Pardon.

JUDY. Don't worry. I know how she feels.

FRED. You'd better move in with them too – you'll all get on fine.

JUDY. Fred!

FRED. Well…

JUDY. Look, we've got to make the most of this situation. We're stuck with it.

FRED. Gawd knows what Shaun is going to say when he walks in. Let alone Moira.

JUDY. Oh, Moira'll quite enjoy it. Especially when she meets Gerard Dépardieu here.

FRED. You what?

JUDY. You know what a flirt she is.

FRED. Yes, I do.

MAURICE. Flirt? What is this?

JUDY. Oh, you'll see. You'll like Moira.

MAURICE. Ah.

JUDY. They're great fun, our friends. They're Irish.

YVETTE. Irelandais?

JUDY. Yes.

YVETTE. Mon dieu!

JUDY. Don't you like the Irish?

MAURICE. They can be very charming.

YVETTE. Ils sont impossible.

JUDY. Impossible, yes. But they're lovely too. Aren't they, Fred?

FRED. Lovely.

MAURICE. It's going to be quite a er…bouillabaisse, isn't it?

FRED. A what?

MAURICE. How you say – stew?

FRED. You could say that – yeh. European stew. Garlic and blarney all mixed together.

JUDY. Well at least that's more interesting than just Irish stew and Lancashire hotpot. A touch of French cuisine might spice it up a bit.

FRED. Oh, getting quite keen now, are you? Getting all enthusiastic now?

JUDY. Well, it's a chance to make friends, isn't it? I must say, Maurice, I do like your French cooking.

MAURICE. Thank you, madame. There are some very good restaurants around.

JUDY. Oh, you must tell us where to go.

YVETTE. Attention, Maurice. Pas celui que l'on préfère!

MAURICE. *(dismissive)* Ohh…Pourquoi pas?

YVETTE. Non. Il est pour nous.

JUDY. Don't worry, love. We won't intrude.

MAURICE. Maybe the last night – if we are all still friends, ha, ha – we all go together.

JUDY. That would be nice. Wouldn't it, Fred?

FRED. Lovely.

JUDY. Well now, that's all settled. Fred – bring our suitcases. We'll go and unpack through there.

*(***FRED** *doesn't move.)*

Now, Fred!

(He reluctantly goes to get the cases.)

I'm sure we'll all have a lovely time.

MAURICE. I hope so, madame.

JUDY. Judy, please.

MAURICE. *(nodding)* Judy.

JUDY. *(nodding after* **FRED***)* You can call him what you like. He gets called everything under the sun.

(She goes off towards the other bedrooms. **MAURICE** *turns to* **YVETTE** *and gestures hopelessly.)*

YVETTE. Je te déteste.

MAURICE. C'est pas d'ma faute.

YVETTE. Oui, c'est d'ta faute.

MAURICE. Non.

YVETTE. Oui! Je te déteste!

*(***FRED** *staggers out of the bedroom with the suitcases. Smiles awkwardly.)*

FRED. Sorry.

(heaves them across to the other side)

MAURICE. You bring enough clothes, eh?

FRED. They're mostly hers. Why do women always have to pack for a year, eh?

MAURICE. Ah, yes. My wife is the same.

YVETTE. Maurice!

MAURICE. C'est vrais. *(to* **FRED***)* She has clothes in there enough to start a shop, and all she wears is a bikini.

FRED. I look forward to seeing that.

YVETTE. What?

FRED. Nothing. I never said a thing.

(hurries off with the cases)

YVETTE. Ah, mon dieu!

MAURICE. It is a compliment.

YVETTE. I don't wish compliments from him.

MAURICE. It's the first time you complain.

YVETTE. What you mean?

MAURICE. Rien. Ne te fâche pas, Yvette. We have to make the best.

YVETTE. O.K. but I'm not happy.

MAURICE. It's your problem – you're never happy.

YVETTE. You want I punch your nose?

(He shrugs and goes to pick up their stuff.)

MAURICE. Viens.

YVETTE. Tu l'fais.

(He takes the stuff through to the bedroom. She comes and gazes out front at the view.)

YVETTE. *(to herself)* Chez moi. Hah!

*(***FRED** *returns. Sees her. Comes diffidently down-stage.)*

FRED. I've left her unpacking. She'll be a while. Like half a day.

YVETTE. *(curt)* Ah.

(pause)

FRED. I'm sorry we've spoilt your holiday.

YVETTE. *(shrugging)* Eh.

FRED. I can imagine how you were looking forward to it. Peace and quiet…

YVETTE. C'est la vie.

FRED. C'est la vie. Yes, I can understand quite a lot of French, you know. Funny that. I never learnt it.

YVETTE. We give many expressions to the world.

FRED. Yeh. Bon appetit…au revoir…toujours l'amour. That's all you need to get along really, isn't it?

YVETTE. Toujours l'amour? The English believe that?

FRED. Yeh – why not?

YVETTE. You are not so romantic.

FRED. Oh, don't you believe it, love. The English are as romantic as anybody. They just don't talk about it so much.

YVETTE. You? You are romantic?

FRED. Oh, yeh. Not half.

YVETTE. You don't look so.

FRED. Yeh, well…I've kind of lost the touch.

YVETTE. I'm sorry I hit you.

FRED. S'all right. I haven't been slapped by a woman for a long time. Quite exciting really.

YVETTE. Ha. I slap Maurice all the time. He doesn't find it exciting.

FRED. Does he smack you back?

YVETTE. He doesn't dare. Would you?

FRED. Oh yeh. And probably not on the cheek – ha, ha. *(a beat)* See, I told you we were romantic.

(She digests that. There is the sound of a car outside.)

Ah. Sounds like them.

YVETTE. Ah mon dieu.

FRED. Don't worry – you'll like them. The Irish are *very* romantic.

*(***MAURICE** *returns.)*

MAURICE. It's your friends?

FRED. *(going to the door)* I think so.

*(***JUDY** *returns.)*

JUDY. Is it them?

FRED. *(peering through the upstage window)* I think so. It's a taxi. *(returns)* Look, er…I think it might be better if we explain the situation before they meet you – know what I mean? It's a bit awkward.

MAURICE. Ah, yes. Yvette – we go in the bedroom.

YVETTE. When they know, perhaps they go away again.

FRED. I wouldn't count on it.

*(***MAURICE** *and* **YVETTE** *go off to the main bedroom.)*

JUDY. Oh lord, Fred, I wonder how they'll take it.

FRED. Probably a lot better than the Frenchies. Shaun doesn't mind who's around, as long as they laugh at his jokes.

JUDY. Well, open the door.

(He goes to the door as the sound of a car drawing away is heard from outside. He stops at the sound of angry voices.)

MOIRA. *(off)* That was embarrassing, Shaun. That was really embarrassing!

SHAUN. *(off)* For God's sake, woman – he didn't deserve a tip!

MOIRA. You always tip in France!

SHAUN. Not when they've ripped us off a bloody fortune to get here, and driven us half round Provence into the bargain, you don't!

MOIRA. It wasn't his fault it was hard to find.

SHAUN. He's a taxi driver, isn't he? He should bloody know where to go!

*(***FRED** *opens the door.)*

FRED. Voila, mes amis!

*(***SHAUN** *and* **MOIRA** *enter with suitcases. They both have gentle Irish lilts.)*

SHAUN. Aha! So you beat us to it.

MOIRA. Oh lord, Fred! Have we had a time getting here!

SHAUN. Delayed flight naturally.

MOIRA. Couldn't find a taxi driver who'd bring us here.

SHAUN. And when we finally did, he charged us a ruddy arm and a leg! The French are all crooks if you ask me.

FRED. Shh! Never mind – you've made it now. Give us your case, Moira.

JUDY. *(kissing them)* Hello, Fred, hello, Moira – welcome chez nous!

SHAUN. Hello, love. *(looking round)* Hey, this is nice!

MOIRA. This is beautiful! Better than last year, eh, Fred?

FRED. Don't talk about last year. Horrormolinos, that was.

JUDY. This is real class.

SHAUN. *(looking out front)* Would you look at that view!

(They all come down-stage.)

JUDY. The pool's down there.

MOIRA. Oh, look at the pool, Shaun! Can't wait to get in there.

SHAUN. Yes, sure. Tops off, tits out, and in the water, eh girls?

MOIRA. Now, Shaun – don't start all that the moment we get here.

SHAUN. Well, for God's sake, that's what France is all about, isn't it? *(husky)* Je t'aime…mon amour…

MOIRA. Oh, Shaun!

FRED. Same old Shaun.

JUDY. Yes. Well, er…we can't all go wild just yet. I'm afraid there's…. there's been a bit of a hitch.

SHAUN. Hitch?

JUDY. Tell them, Fred.

FRED. Yeh, er…the thing is, the agents have sort of cocked up.

MOIRA. What d'you mean?

FRED. Well, they didn't tell the owners of the house that they'd let it at the last minute.

JUDY. And the owners didn't tell the agents they wanted to use it themselves.

SHAUN. So what are you saying?

FRED. They're here too.

SHAUN. Who are?

JUDY. The owners.

MOIRA. The owners?

FRED. They're French. From Paris.

JUDY. They're in the bedroom.

SHAUN. Let me get this right. We're sharing the house with the froggy owners?

FRED. Shhh! They're just in there.

MOIRA. There's going to be six of us here?

JUDY. Yes. They're very nice. You'll like him, Moira. He's a dishy Frenchman.

FRED. And she's a bit of all right too – if you keep clear of her temper.

SHAUN. Temper?

JUDY. Well they weren't very happy when they found us here, and she threw a bit of a wobbly.

FRED. That's an understatement. She nearly knocked her husband's head off – followed by mine.

JUDY. We all had a bit of a show-down. They were demanding we left, and Fred was demanding they left, and she was threatening to go back to Paris on her own, and…. well I'm glad you weren't here, that's all.

SHAUN. Bloody hell! Bang goes our nice private holiday.

FRED. We had to give in in the end, and agree to share. We're only paying half price. It means a bit more for the old table d'hote.

MOIRA. Do we have to speak French to them?

JUDY. Don't worry – they speak good English.

FRED. With the odd pardon-my-French thrown in.

SHAUN. So what are they doing in there?

FRED. Waiting for us to explain it to you. We thought it best they weren't here in case you went doolally.

SHAUN. I might have done just that. Jesus Christ!

MOIRA. Oh well, Shaun, I suppose we'll have to make the best of it. But don't embarrass us, please.

SHAUN. Me, embarrassing – never!

JUDY. We've agreed to keep separate anyway. We're cooking separately, and we've let them have the master bedroom through there. We're all over there in that half.

SHAUN. Oh, right. That's the red light district then, is it?

MOIRA. Now, Shaun…

SHAUN. Well, I hope the French presence isn't going to mean we have to cut down on standard procedures, does it?

MOIRA. *(embarrassed)* For heaven's sake, Shaun!

FRED. Oh gawd. I hope you two aren't going to keep us awake half the night.

SHAUN. Of course not. We're the height of discretion.

FRED. Yes, I've heard your discretion. So can all the neighbours.

SHAUN. Well the Irish can't help being a lusty nation.

MOIRA. *(long-suffering)* Mother of God…

SHAUN. Sure, the French are supposed to be the same, aren't they? That's what we're always told.

FRED. I dunno, but we'd better get them in here. It's time you met them.

(goes to the main bedroom door and knocks)

Hello. Madame et monsieur. Are you there?

(The door opens and **MAURICE** *and* **YVETTE** *come out.)*

These are our friends from Ireland. Shaun and Moira. This is, er…

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