

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

Now Circa Then

by Carly Mensch

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



NEW YORK HOLLYWOOD LONDON TORONTO

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

Copyright © 2011 by Carly Mensch

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Cover design by Joe Potts/Glacier Erratica

Artwork by Tommy Cinquegrano

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that *NOW CIRCA THEN* 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 and professional live stage performance rights to *NOW CIRCA THEN* 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.

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

For all other rights than those stipulated above, apply to: William Morris Endeavor Entertainment, 1325 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019; attn: Derek Zasky.

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.

MUSIC USE NOTE

Licensees are solely responsible for obtaining formal written permission from copyright owners to use copyrighted music in the performance of this play and are strongly cautioned to do so. If no such permission is obtained by the licensee, then the licensee must use only original music that the licensee owns and controls. Licensees are solely responsible and liable for all music clearances and shall indemnify the copyright owners of the play and their licensing agent, Samuel French, Inc., against any costs, expenses, losses and liabilities arising from the use of music by licensees.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of *NOW CIRCA THEN* *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 the purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production. The name of the Author *must* appear on a separate line on which no other name appears, immediately following the title and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent of the size of the title type.

In addition the following credit *must* be given in all programs and publicity information distributed in association with this piece:

**Originally Commissioned and Developed by Ars Nova
Jason Eagan, Artistic Director; Jon Steingart & Jenny Wiener Steingart,
Executive Producers**

**World Premiere produced by Ars Nova
511 West 54th Street, New York, NY
www.arsnova.com**

NOW CIRCA THEN was originally produced by Ars Nova (Jason Eagan, Artistic Director) in New York City. It was directed by Jason Eagan, with set design was by Lauren Helpert, costume design was by Jenny Mannis; the lighting design was by Traci Klainer; the sound design was by Ryan Rumery; and the production stage manager was Damon W. Arrington. The original cast was as follows:

MARGIE Maureen Sebastian

GIDEON Stephen Plunkett

CHARACTERS

MARGIE, 26 – a shy and slightly awkward girl; more goose than swan, but with an unconventional beauty. Non-white.*

GIDEON, 27 – a hardcore history buff; passionate and youthful, with a hint of arrogance. White.

*Margie's character is scripted as Filipino-American, based on the actress who originated the role, but she can be of any race or ethnicity, really, so long as she's an unlikely casting choice for a 19th century Jewish immigrant. There are two scenes where her race is explicitly mentioned – scene 9 and scene 22. Adjust accordingly.

SETTING

A restored 19th century tenement on New York's Lower East Side, present.

The play is divided into three rooms: the **parlor** (beginnings), the **kitchen** (middles), and the **bedroom** (endings).

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This play is schizophrenically split between two worlds: the world of Gideon and Margie (naturalistic) and the world of Julian and Josephine (stylized, theatrical). Actors and designers should go to town distinguishing between these two modes. Make rules and break them as the play gets messier and the two worlds collide.

In terms of how to stylize the reenactments, the main question is how much to include the audience. Two possible broad approaches are: 1) treating these scenes like living dioramas (fourth wall; all questions to the audience are rhetorical) or 2) treating them like snippets of an actual live museum tour. In the *Ars Nova* production, we opted for the second. Finding moments to ad lib and engage the audience (baiting them to respond at times) without ever putting any specific audience member on the spot. If you go the participatory route, you might want to give the audience clues that they're part of the story (turning the house lights on, for example). Also, be prepared for audience members to chime in at weird times. We had one woman shout in response to Margie's question "Does anyone have any questions?" with "YEAH, WHAT'S GOING ON!?" (Good question.)

Either way, be bold. Aim high. Overshoot. Mess up. Try again.

- *Carly Mensch*

PROLOGUE

1.

(Pin-spot on two people in nineteenth century costume – MARGIE and GIDEON. They smile at the audience. GIDEON is pert and enthusiastic; MARGIE looks vaguely uncomfortable.)

GIDEON. If everyone could scooch a little closer. No strangers here. Only opportunities!

(They smile and wait.)

Hello. Guten Tag. How is everybody doing today? Yeah, okay. My name is Julian Glockner and over here is my wife, Josephine.

MARGIE. Hi. I'm Josephine.

GIDEON. We are so *psyched* to see you!

Do we have any immigrants with us today? Anyone? Maybe just someone from out of town?

(If people respond – go with it and skip the next line.)

No? That's okay, we don't like to single people out.

We're all fellow travelers. Josephine and I happen to be recent travelers ourselves. That's right. We traveled all the way from a little place called "West Prussia" circa 1890, just to be here with you today, here on the Lower East Side of New York.

MARGIE. *(wooden)* Yes. Between 1815 and 1915, more than thirty million immigrants came to America. They came from places like Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Italy and Romania. Oh. And Poland.

GIDEON. Our journey begins now. In this hallway.

(MARGIE and GIDEON motion to the door behind them.)

(slow, deliberate) Behind this door lies the tenement apartment Josephine and I will share for over thirty years together. Now. Let us turn the doorknob ourselves and enter into the rooms of the past...

(GIDEON does some big, sweeping gesture.)

(MARGIE smiles, sort of.)

(blackout)

PART ONE

2.

(The Parlor.)

(A room with a small fireplace, a dress form and a sewing table.)

(But also: an Exit sign, light switches and fire sprinklers.)

(MARGIE passes GIDEON items from a large suitcase.)

MARGIE. One pair ladies stockings.

One pair of shoes, leather.

Two candlesticks.

Three pairs of cotton underwear, men's.

GIDEON. I hope these are mine, eh Josephine?

MARGIE. One jar of pickled herring.

One photograph of our native village of Moloschnya.

(GIDEON takes out a laminated version of the same photograph and displays it to the audience.)

GIDEON. *(nostalgic)* Yes. *Moloschnya.*

It seems like only yesterday when we met at Jakkob the Elder's to sign our *arranged* marriage agreement, eh Josephine?

MARGIE. That's right, Julian.

GIDEON. *(re: the unpacking)* Is that it?

(MARGIE looks inside the suitcase – it's empty.)

MARGIE. Yup.

GIDEON. *(out to the audience)* What luck! You've caught us at a fortuitous time, travelers! Josephine and I have only just arrived in the New World.

MARGIE. America.

GIDEON. We left behind many friends and family. My mother, Irina, a dancer. My father Rudolph. The cabbage farmer.

MARGIE. We rode here on a very big boat.

GIDEON. In steerage.

MARGIE. When we arrived at New York harbor, a man loaded our mattress onto his wagon. He said he was going to give us a free ride into the city.

GIDEON. Unfortunately. That ride didn't include us.

MARGIE. Then we came here. To the Lower East Side.

GIDEON. To this apartment.

MARGIE. This room is called the "front room."

GIDEON. One day, when Josephine and I have children, they will sleep in this room.

MARGIE. Not that we have any children.

GIDEON. But we will. Some day.

MARGIE. In the future.

GIDEON. Well, near future.

MARGIE. Or distant.

(pause)

GIDEON. This might be a good time to mention that Josephine and I are *newlyweds*!

The boat-ride over was essentially our honeymoon.

(He smiles lovingly at MARGIE.)

MARGIE. *(forcing a smile back)* Yup.

I threw up six times.

And then I got lice.

GIDEON. We both got lice.

3.

(Lunch break.)

(GIDEON reads a biography of James Madison. MARGIE eats a Pop Tart.)

(After a while:)

MARGIE. Hi. Excuse me?

(GIDEON looks up.)

This is really embarrassing. I keep forgetting your name.

GIDEON. It's Gideon.

MARGIE. Hi Gideon, I'm –

GIDEON. Margie. I know.

MARGIE. Oh.

(GIDEON goes back to reading his book.)

MARGIE. So have you done this kind of thing before?

GIDEON. What kind of thing?

MARGIE. With the costume. And the tour groups.

GIDEON. You mean *reenactment*?

MARGIE. Sure.

GIDEON. Historical interpretation. Living history.

MARGIE. Either one.

GIDEON. Yeah, I've done a lot of reenactment.

MARGIE. You're really good at it.

GIDEON. It's kind of my thing.

MARGIE. So what other places have you done?

GIDEON. Uh, I've done Gettysburg.

MARGIE. Cool –

GIDEON. I've done Plymouth.

MARGIE. Okay –

GIDEON. I've done Salem. I've done Shaker Village. I've done Daniel Webster. I did a few Renaissance Fairs back in college. I've done two Air & Space museums. I've done five birthplaces, all politicians, all Republican. I've done the Boston Fire of 1872 and I just got back from doing this amazing hundred acre Living History Farm in Urbandale, Iowa.

MARGIE. Wow.

GIDEON. It's an addiction. My brain is like a twenty-four hour History Channel.

What's past is prologue, right? That's Shakespeare.

MARGIE. Right.

GIDEON. We all think we're like these orphans, but we're not really.

MARGIE. We...?

GIDEON. People our age. Like we're these invincible orphan children, running around big cities without any family or history of our own. But we're not, right? Orphans. We all come from somewhere. That's why I like this museum. Immigrants, man? That's like our prologue.

What about you. What's your story?

MARGIE. Well. I just moved here. To New York. I'm still a little...aggh!

Uh. I'm 26.

GIDEON. You a history major?

MARGIE. English.

GIDEON. And do you have a background in creative role play?

MARGIE. No.

GIDEON. Do you have any experience as a tour guide?

MARGIE. Nope.

GIDEON. No tour guide experience.

MARGIE. No.

GIDEON. None.

MARGIE. Nope.

GIDEON. So like...how did you get this job?

MARGIE. That woman. With the lipstick?

GIDEON. (*under his breath*) Way to go, Roberta.

MARGIE. Excuse me?

GIDEON. Nothing. She's just totally loosening her standards. Up on the third floor – you know, the 1920's apartment – she hired this Guatemalan guy who can barely even speak English.

MARGIE. Mario?

GIDEON. I think she's on some post-racial...liberal-guilt kick. No offense.

MARGIE. None...taken.

GIDEON. It's like – no one cares about *authenticity* anymore. I mean – you seem like a perfectly nice person and whatever, but Josephine – she was a 19th century Jewish immigrant. She was...

MARGIE. White?

(*beat*)

GIDEON. We're a *history* museum. That's our whole *raison-d'etre*: Making *history* come to life.

(*a short silence*)

MARGIE. I don't know. I think history is sort of bullshit.

GIDEON. Excuse me?

MARGIE. Like – slavery? People need to get over it already. It's not like I'm personally responsible for what a bunch of racist white guys did a hundred years ago. People should just move on already. Stop worshiping boring old facts.

GIDEON. Okay – I, um. Sorry.

I don't understand. Why would you take a job at a *museum* if you don't believe in history?

MARGIE. I told you. I just moved here. I needed a job.

GIDEON. You don't think that's...irresponsible?

MARGIE. Are you kidding? I'm eating my lunch out of a vending machine. I still don't have a place to live. So to answer your question. No. I don't think it's irresponsible. In fact – it's probably the most responsible thing I've ever done. Ever.

(pause)

GIDEON. This job. It's like super, super important to me.

MARGIE. I see that.

GIDEON. The last Josephine. She only lasted about a month. Just, FYI.

4.

(Later.)

(GIDEON sits at a foot-treadle sewing machine.)

(MARGIE enters carrying heavy buckets of water. She is now extremely pregnant. She takes a seat next to GIDEON.)

GIDEON. Josephine –

MARGIE. Yes, Julian.

GIDEON. Do you know the price of potatoes this month?

MARGIE. ...No.

GIDEON. Just take a guess.

MARGIE. Uh. A dollar?

(pause)

GIDEON. *(out to the audience)* Anyone else? Any guesses? Sack of potatoes. 1890. *(field some guesses)* It's ten cents.

MARGIE. Is that a lot?

GIDEON. Are you kidding? It's insanity! Prices go up and wages go down. Don't worry though – I'm a very resourceful man.

MARGIE. Oh, well that's good.

GIDEON. It's time to be frugal, Josephine. No more of those frilly dresses you like to buy from the pages of Sears & Roebuck. We need to start watching our spending. Especially now with the baby on the way. Everything costs money, in these post-industrial times. Any idea how much I spent on this sewing machine over here?

MARGIE. Uh...hold on.

(MARGIE picks up a laminated sheet of paper from the table. She quickly skims the document.)

(reading) Twenty-six dollars?

GIDEON. Yup. And that's only cause I got it second hand from a Lithuanian street peddler.

MARGIE. (*still reading*) “This model is significantly smaller than Singer’s original version. The aforementioned price includes a built-in table. For further reading, please see Singer and the Sewing Machine: A Capitalist Romance.”

(*looking up*)

Oh.

GIDEON. The point is, Josephine. It’s about *seizing* opportunities. It’s about seeing your dreams ahead of you and catching them with your own custom-made...dream-catching net.

(**MARGIE** *lets out a laugh.*)

(*forging ahead*) In our native village, I was a lowly shoe cobbler. Here in America – I am an entrepreneur. A man of boundless potential. A man of...

(**MARGIE** *sneezes loudly.*)

(**GIDEON** *looks at her, horrified.*)

5.

(After work.)

(GIDEON sits at the sewing machine, mending a pair of pants. Coincidentally, he's not wearing any himself.)

(MARGIE enters carrying a large three-ring binder.)

MARGIE. Don't say anything. I know I fucked up.

GIDEON. Didn't say anything.

MARGIE. I've read this stupid manual like five hundred times. You're not wearing any pants.

GIDEON. Got caught on a nail.

MARGIE. I'll just go somewhere else.

GIDEON. Hey. It's your living room too, right?

(MARGIE takes a seat, reluctantly.)

MARGIE. I didn't know you could sew. In real life.

GIDEON. Eagle Scouts.

I'm also just a really resourceful person. In general.

(MARGIE opens up the binder.)

(GIDEON sews.)

(Every once in a while he looks over at her, reading. After a while:)

Can I give you some advice?

MARGIE. Let me guess: Don't suck.

GIDEON. What you're looking for – it's not in the manual.

MARGIE. What are you talking about?

GIDEON. You can read that thing cover to cover. Memorize every single footnote. Still not gonna help.

MARGIE. Thanks. That's very constructive.

GIDEON. Just saying.

MARGIE. So. What would help?

GIDEON. You really want to know?

MARGIE. Yes.

GIDEON. Stand up.

MARGIE. What?

GIDEON. Stand up.

(*She does.*)

So. Have you ever done any kind of acting before?

MARGIE. Acting? No.

GIDEON. This museum – we get a lot of former actors. It's like where theater people come to die.

MARGIE. I'm not an actor.

GIDEON. That's okay, that's fine.

MARGIE. Sorry – I thought the point is to be educational.

GIDEON. Yeah...Not really. I mean, people can just pick up a textbook if all they want to do is obtain information, right? There's a certain artistry I like to think. Have you ever seen *Apocalypse Now* with Marlon Brando?

MARGIE. Sure.

GIDEON. You know that scene with all the severed heads?

MARGIE. I think so.

GIDEON. I love that scene! Brando wasn't in that one, but you should really watch him. Very *instinctual* –

MARGIE. I don't understand – what is it you want me to do?

GIDEON. It's not about *doing* anything. It's about how you hold yourself.

MARGIE. And how do I hold myself?

GIDEON. Just kind of, regular. Like yourself.

MARGIE. So?

GIDEON. So. Josephine should hold herself like Josephine. Not like Margie.

MARGIE. I hate improv if that's what this is going to be. *I am a plum tree. I am a tea pot.*

GIDEON. It's not improv.

Okay. I'm going to go exit the room and then come back. Just watch.

(*GIDEON exits the room and comes back.*)

Notice anything?

MARGIE. Not really.

GIDEON. Good.

Now I'm going to do it again.

(GIDEON exits the room once more. This time, when he re-enters, he walks with heightened energy and pep. The energized body. Yup. That's right. We all know this.)

See the difference?

MARGIE. You're more taut, I guess.

GIDEON. Right. The first time I entered as myself. The second time as Julian Glockner – dressmaker, husband, *persona*. It's like the difference between resting on your heels and leaning forward on your toes.

MARGIE. It matters how I'm *leaning*?

GIDEON. Yes! When you don't really *inhabit* your part. When you're not really *giving* me anything, then I can't do my job. It's like a push-pull.

Your turn now.

MARGIE. You want me to exit the room and come back?

GIDEON. Yeah.

(MARGIE walks listlessly out of the room.)

(She re-enters approximately the same.)

Okay...So maybe focus on how you're standing.

(MARGIE tries to stand up really tall.)

Great. That's...better.

Now, relax your shoulders a bit.

(She does.)

Your neck, too.

(She does.)

Yeah, that makes a huge difference.

MARGIE. Really?

GIDEON. Uh huh.

MARGIE. I just feel more self-conscious now.

GIDEON. That'll go away.

Now maybe try layering something in. Like – is she tired? From a long, hard day of work?

(**MARGIE** *hunches her shoulders.*)

And maybe her hands are clenched, from all that sewing.

(**MARGIE** *clenches her fists.*)

And maybe she has a sense of striving. Like, a woman who is just trying to get by. Survive.

(**MARGIE** *tries to think of something to do, but has no idea. She drops the pose altogether.*)

What? What happened?

MARGIE. I feel like an idiot.

GIDEON. We're all idiots.

MARGIE. It's a comfort thing. I need to get more comfortable with the material.

GIDEON. Forget about the lines.

MARGIE. Besides. I don't even know who this woman is!

GIDEON. She's...Josephine Glockner.

MARGIE. Yeah, but who *is* she?

GIDEON. She's a nineteenth century immigrant.

MARGIE. (*starting to freak out*) But why did she move here? What is she trying to prove?

GIDEON. I don't think she was trying to prove anything...

MARGIE. It's not like this city has magical transformative powers. It's not like you move here and *poof*, you're suddenly a whole different person.

GIDEON. Sure...

MARGIE. Besides – Julian isn't perfect either.

GIDEON. I never said he was.

MARGIE. Personally, I find him a little over the top sometimes. His whole persona.

GIDEON. Character –

MARGIE. That *voice* he does.

GIDEON. Hey!

(MARGIE starts taking off her costume.)

MARGIE. I'm sorry. I can't do this.

GIDEON. Do what?

(MARGIE heads to the door.)

What are you doing?

MARGIE. Just, tell Roberta I'm sorry.

(MARGIE rushes out.)

GIDEON. *(calling after her)* Margie? Hey, Margie!

6.

(**MARGIE** alone in the parlor.)

MARGIE. Hello, I'm Josephine.

Hi. I'm Josephine.

Guten Tag, my name is Josephine.

Hi. I'm Josephine.

Hello, I'm...

I'm...

What's my name? Oh my god how can I forget the name part?

Josephine! My name is Josephine. Duh.

My name is Josephine. Hello. Please to meet you.

Josephine. My name is Josephine.

I am a strong, self-actualized independent woman.

I am also a poor, marginalized Eastern European immigrant.

I am...

Damnit.

7.

(Next day.)

(GIDEON is about to start. MARGIE rushes in and joins him, out of breath. They share a quick glance before launching into the reenactment.)

GIDEON. This is a little segment we like to call: *Who Knew?*
Who knew, Josephine, that in 1890, many people didn't use toothbrushes?

MARGIE. Who knew?

GIDEON. Good thing those women at the Settlement House came up with a song to help us remember to use them. Remember?

(singing) "Here we are coming to clean our teeth, clean our teeth, clean our teeth,

Here we are coming to clean our teeth; and we do it night and morning."

How about another round.

(MARGIE joins in, reluctantly.)

GIDEON/MARGIE. "Here we are coming to clean our teeth, clean our teeth, clean our teeth,
Here we are coming to clean our teeth; and we do it night and morning."

MARGIE. *Who knew*, Julian. That Immigrants were often called by their derogatory name; "Greenhorns."

GIDEON. Who knew?

MARGIE. Greenhorn referring, obviously, to being green.
Clueless. Easily taken advantage of.

GIDEON. Who knew!

MARGIE. Who knew.

8.

(After work.)

(GIDEON sweeps the floor.)

(MARGIE paces the room on a cell phone.)

MARGIE. *(into the phone; deeply annoyed at whoever she's talking to)* I don't care. Why?...Because it's stupid...It is. It's a baby, not a Nobel Peace Prize...

Fine. I'll send her an email. I will. I will. Tell Dad I say hi. Okay. Bye. Bye.

(MARGIE hangs up.)

Am I supposed to be doing anything right now?

GIDEON. You're supposed to be cleaning up.

MARGIE. Oh. Duh.

(MARGIE retrieves a bucket and some gloves.)

(She picks up a candlestick and polishes it very gently.)

GIDEON. I thought you were quitting.

MARGIE. I changed my mind.

GIDEON. That was a pretty strong reaction, yesterday.

MARGIE. Yeah. I do that sometimes. Freak out.

GIDEON. Do you suffer from panic attacks?

MARGIE. No. I'm fine.

I guess. Sometimes I get overwhelmed.

GIDEON. That...

MARGIE. That, I don't know. That I'm living this tiny insignificant life? That I'm never going to achieve my full potential as a human being on this earth?

(pause)

GIDEON. Oh.

MARGIE. Back in Michigan. I was working for my uncle and dating this guy and living in my parents basement and I was like: really Margie? Is this really who you want to be?

(MARGIE catches GIDEON staring at her.)

MARGIE. What?

GIDEON. You look like someone. Remind me of them.

MARGIE. Who?

GIDEON. My mom.

MARGIE. Okay...

(MARGIE picks up an old clock.)

GIDEON. DON'T TOUCH THAT!

(She puts the clock down.)

That clock. It's from 1802. It was made by this really, really famous colonial clockmaker. It's super delicate.

(MARGIE slowly puts down the clock.)

MARGIE. Sorry.

GIDEON. It's okay. You didn't know.

(MARGIE picks up a ceramic tureen with extra caution.)

MARGIE. You're *really* intense about history.

GIDEON. It's...important to me.

MARGIE. I see that.

GIDEON. Modern times are boring. Besides, the way I see it, our generation is doomed.

MARGIE. Why?

GIDEON. Because we're all culturally bankrupt?

We have no tangible things to pass down to our children. No artifacts. No family heirlooms.

All we have is fleeting virtual moments.

MARGIE. Isn't that what people said with the telegraph? That we'd all turn into robots.

GIDEON. No. This is different. This is *epically* tragic.

Think about it: We keep all of our memories out in Data Storage Centers in the Midwest. In these massive cement buildings where Microsoft and Google and Facebook back up our identities. These are the temples we're constructing. Data Centers.

It's so sad.

That's why I don't have a cell phone.

MARGIE. How do you stay in touch with people?

GIDEON. I check email on my dad's computer about once a month. That's enough, trust me.

MARGIE. So your dad lives in New York?

GIDEON. Yeah. I'm sort of staying with him for a bit. Plus – Upper West – way nicer than whatever I could afford in Brooklyn.

(MARGIE's cell phone rings again. She picks it up and turns away from GIDEON. After a beat:)

MARGIE. NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!

(She hangs up the phone.)

(GIDEON stares at her for a moment.)

MARGIE. What?

GIDEON. Nothing.

9.

(Two weeks later.)

(MARGIE brushes her teeth, a sleeping bag on the floor beside her. After a bit, GIDEON enters.)

(He watches her for a moment in horrified silence.)

GIDEON. Hi.

MARGIE. *(turning around)* Hi! Gideon. You're...early.

GIDEON. Did you...sleep here last night?

MARGIE. No.

GIDEON. I can see your sleeping bag.

(beat)

MARGIE. Okay. Here's my reasoning. I don't have enough money for both food *and* shelter. And since food is more critical to survival than shelter, it makes more sense to spend my money on that. Also, there's no commute. It's 100% efficient. Think of Lighthouse keepers. They sleep in the same place they work, and they're some of the most dedicated and passionate members of the workforce.

GIDEON. In France.

MARGIE. And...Maine.

GIDEON. How long has this been going on?

MARGIE. A few days. A week. Two weeks. Two weeks. I swear, that's it.

GIDEON. I'm going to be fired. Shit. We're both going to be fired.

MARGIE. It's not that bad! And not the bed. I didn't touch the bed.

GIDEON. I have to report this, right?

MARGIE. What? No you don't.

GIDEON. I have a reputation to uphold. I can't be...
complicit...I can't –

MARGIE. Gideon.

GIDEON. You realize this violates like every rule of the museum.

MARGIE. No.

GIDEON. Uh, yeah. Pretty much.

MARGIE. Look at you – you break rules all the time!

GIDEON. Name one rule I've broken since you've been here.

(She thinks about it.)

MARGIE. Socks!

GIDEON. What?

MARGIE. Sometimes when I look down I notice you not wearing any socks.

GIDEON. Yeah, they make my ankles sweat.

MARGIE. In the Educator Manual, under the Health Code & Hygiene section, it says all Interpreters are required to wear both socks and underwear beneath their costumes at all times.

GIDEON. No one's going to care whether or not I wear socks, trust me. And I can just put talcum powder in my shoes. Problem solved.

MARGIE. Also – you go completely off-script!

GIDEON. It's a tour. It's supposed to be improvised.

MARGIE. But half the things you say aren't even in the outline.

GIDEON. That's because I have a very specific style of enactment that I have been developing for over five years now. And yeah, maybe it's a little more lax than, whatever, a Ken Burns PBS special, but that's why it's such an effective and ultimately engaging method.

Also, I've been nominated for the Society of Creative Anachronism's Founding Father Award three years in a row now, so I must be up to something.

MARGIE. Then you shouldn't be so nervous about me telling Roberta.

(pause)

GIDEON. Wow.

MARGIE. What?

GIDEON. You're a little scary when you're like this.

MARGIE. Like how?

GIDEON. Like, cornered.

MARGIE. (*softening*) Think about it. It's in the spirit of the museum. Helping people. Providing shelter to newcomers.

GIDEON. I know that... I'm not insensitive. You're just putting me in a really uncomfortable position.

MARGIE. I know that.

GIDEON. So. You're homeless?

MARGIE. No!

I've also had a shitty week. I got on the subway going in the wrong direction and I ended up at JFK airport. Which, sucked.

GIDEON. I thought you had a place in Queens?

MARGIE. I did.

GIDEON. What happened?

MARGIE. Nothing.

GIDEON. What?

MARGIE. It just didn't work out, okay?

GIDEON. Did something happen?

MARGIE. No. No.

GIDEON. (*sensing something*) What?

MARGIE. It's stupid.

Okay – so I don't really know how to say this. But. The landlady. She's this really old, senile Polish lady. She used to be a nun but now she just sits in a lawn chair outside our building. Anyhow. I think she thinks I'm Mexican.

GIDEON. What are you talking about?

MARGIE. She brings up Arizona in like every conversation. And Mexican drug cartels. And then this one time – she casually mentioned that her nephew happens to be a Minuteman.

I guess I've been confused with other Asian people. Vietnamese, usually. I'm Filipino. But never Mexican.

GIDEON. Wait. Are you saying you were...what, discriminated against? This woman kicked you out of your apartment.

MARGIE. No. She just raised the rent. Which, people do all the time in this economy.

GIDEON. How much did she raise it?

MARGIE. Two hundred percent.

GIDEON. That *fucking* woman.

MARGIE. No – she's really old. I'm probably projecting.

GIDEON. Fucking racist asshole.

You realize you can sue. You can file a formal complaint.

MARGIE. No – I don't even know if that's what happened.

GIDEON. This is New York City. This is supposed to be the most tolerant, diverse city on the planet.

MARGIE. It is.

GIDEON. My dad. He can help find you a really good discrimination lawyer.

MARGIE. No. Please. I don't want to make a big deal.

GIDEON. This is *exactly* why this museum exists. To combat things like this. To *educate* the unenlightened assholes of the world.

MARGIE. I don't want to be some *victim*. That is not who I want to be. Please. Just let it go.

(**GIDEON** *paces as he thinks about his options.*)

GIDEON. Okay. This is what I'm going to do.

I am going to slowly walk away and go hang out in the dressing room. Read a little James Madison, maybe eat a granola bar. And when I return, we'll just pretend that this never happened.

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.