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SF PERUSALS

Painting Churches

by Tina Howe

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUELFRENCH.COM

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THE SECOND STAGE

A Non-Profit Theatre Organization

Robyn Goodman and Carole Rothman
Artistic Directors

Presents

PAINTING CHURCHES

by
TINA HOWE

Directed by
CAROLE ROTHMAN

Starring

FRANCES CONROY **DONALD MOFFAT** **MARIAN SELDES**

Set Design
HEIDI LANDESMAN

Lighting Design
FRANCES ARONSON

Costume Design
NAN CIBULA

Sound Design
GARY HARRIS

Hair Design
ANTONIO SODDU

Production Stage Manager
LORETTA ROBERTSON

Stage Manager
NANCY KOHLBECK

Production Supervisor for The Second Stage: KIM NOVICK

CASTING BY SIMON AND KUMIN
MEG SIMON AND FRAN KUMIN

This production is made possible in part with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

CAST
(in order of appearance)

Fanny Church . . . . . MARIAN SELDES
Gardner Church . . . . . DONALD MOFFAT
Margaret Church . . . . . FRANCES CONROY

PLACE: Beacon Hill—Boston, Mass.

TIME: A few years ago.

ACT I Scene 1: A bright spring morning
Scene 2: 2 days later
Scene 3: 24 hours later

ACT II Scene 1: 3 days later
Scene 2: The last day

There will be one intermission

The Second Stage is a member of the Alliance of Resident Theatres—NY

LAMB'S THEATRE

ELIZABETH I. McCANN NELLE NUGENT RAY LARSEN
LEE GUBER SHELLY GROSS
present
THE SECOND STAGE PRODUCTION
of

PAINTING CHURCHES

by
TINA HOWE

starring

GEORGE N. MARTIN
ELIZABETH McGOVERN
MARIAN SELDES

Setting by HEIDI LANDESMAN
Costumes by LINDA FISHER
Lighting by FRANCES ARONSON

Directed by
CAROLE ROTHMAN

PAINTING CHURCHES opened at the Lamb's Theatre on November 22, 1983.

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(in order of appearance)

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Gardner Church ..... GEORGE N. MARTIN

Margaret Church ..... ELIZABETH McGOVERN

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ACT I

Scene 1: A bright spring morning

Scene 2: 2 days later

Scene 3: 24 hours later

ACT II

Scene 1: 3 days later

Scene 2: The last day

THERE WILL BE ONE INTERMISSION.

STANDBYS

Standbys never substitute for listed players unless a specific announcement for the appearance is made at the time of the performance.

Standbys for Fanny Church—Lily Lodge; Standby for Gardner Church—Wyman Pendleton; Standby for Margaret Church—Frances McDormand.

CHARACTERS

FANNY SEDGWICK CHURCH—A Bostonian from a fine old family, in her 60's.

GARDNER CHURCH—Her husband, an eminent New England poet from a finer family, in his 70's.

MARGARET CHURCH (MAGS)—Their daughter, a painter, in her early 30's.

Painting Churches

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

The living room of the Church's townhouse on Beacon Hill one week before everything will be moved to Cape Cod. Empty packing cartons line the room and all the furniture has been tagged with brightly colored markers. At first glance it looks like any discreet Boston interior, but on closer scrutiny one notices a certain flamboyance. Oddities from second hand stores are mixed in with the fine old furniture and exotic hand made curios vie with tasteful family objets d'art. What makes the room remarkable though, is the play of light that pours through three soaring arched windows. At one hour it's hard-edged and brilliant, the next, it's dappled and yielding. It transforms whatever it touches giving the room a distinct feeling of unreality. It's several years ago, a bright spring morning.

FANNY is sitting on the sofa wrapping a valuable old silver coffee service. She's wearing a worn bathrobe and fashionable hat. As she works, she makes a list of everything on a yellow legal pad. GARDNER can be heard typing in his study down the hall.

FANNY. (*She picks up a coffee pot.*) God, this is good looking! I'd forgotten how handsome Mama's old silver was! It's probably worth a fortune. It certainly weighs enough! (*calling out*) GARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRD-NERRRRRRRRRRR . . . ? Well, it should bring us a

pretty penny, that's for sure. (*Wraps it, places it in a carton and then picks up the tray that goes with it. She holds it up like a mirror and adjusts her hat; louder in another register.*) OH GARRRRRRRRRRRRRRD-NERRRRR . . . ? (*He continues typing. She then reaches for a small box and opens it with reverence.*) Grandma's Paul Revere tea spoons . . . ! (*She takes several out and fondles them.*) I don't care how desperate things get, these will never go! One has to maintain some standards! (*She writes on her list.*) "Grandma's Paul Revere tea spoons, Cotuit!" . . . WASN'T IT THE AMERICAN WING OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART THAT WANTED GRANDMA'S PAUL REVERE TEA SPOONS SO BADLY . . . ? (*She looks at her reflection in the tray again.*) This is a very good looking hat, if I do say so. I was awfully smart to grab it up. (*silence*) DON'T YOU REMEMBER A DISTINGUISHED LOOKING MAN COMING TO THE HOUSE AND OFFERING US $50,000 FOR GRANDMA'S PAUL REVERE TEA SPOONS . . . ? HE HAD ON THESE MARVELOUS SHOES! THEY WERE SO POINTED AT THE ENDS WE COULDN'T IMAGINE HOW HE EVER GOT THEM ON AND THEY WERE SHINED TO WITHIN AN INCH OF THEIR LIVES AND I REMEMBER HIM SAYING HE CAME FROM THE . . . AMERICAN WING OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART! . . . HELLO? . . . GARDNER . . . ? ARE YOU THERE! (*The typing stops.*) YOO HOOOOOOO . . . (*like a fog horn*) GARRRRRRRRRRD-NERRRRRRR . . . ?

GARDNER. (*offstage; from his study*) YES DEAR . . . IS THAT YOU . . . ?

FANNY. OF COURSE IT'S ME! WHO ELSE COULD IT POSSIBLY BE . . . ? DARLING, PLEASE COME HERE FOR A MINUTE. (*The typing resumes.*) FOR GOD'S SAKE, WILL YOU STOP THAT DREADFUL TYPING BEFORE YOU SEND ME STRAIGHT TO THE NUT HOUSE . . . ? (*in a new register*) GARRR-RRRRRRRRRDNERRRRRR . . . ? (*He stops.*)

GARDNER. (*offstage)*
WHAT'S THAT?
MAGS IS BACK
FROM THE NUT
HOUSE . . . ? (*brief silence*) I'LL BE
WITH YOU IN
A MOMENT, I
DIDN'T HEAR HER
RING. (*He starts singing the refrain of "Nothing Could be Finer."**)

FANNY. I SAID . . .
Lord, I hate this yelling
. . . PLEASE . . .
COME . . . HERE!
It's a wonder I'm not in a straight jacket already.
Actually, it might be
rather nice for a
change . . . Peaceful.
DARLING . . . I
WANT TO SHOW
YOU MY NEW HAT!

(*Silence, GARDNER enters, still singing. He's wearing mis-matched tweeds and is holding a stack of papers which keep drifting to the floor.*)

GARDNER. Oh, don't you look nice! Very attractive, very attractive!

FANNY. But I'm still in my bathrobe.

GARDNER. (*looking around the room, leaking more papers*) Well, where's Mags?

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*Note: Permission to produce *Painting Churches* does not include permission to use this song, which ought to be procured from the copyright owner.

FANNY. Darling, you're dropping your papers all over the floor.

GARDNER. (*spies the silver tray*) I remember this! Aunt Alice gave it to us, didn't she? (*He picks it up.*) Good Lord, it's heavy. What's it made of? Lead?!

FANNY. No, Aunt Alice did *not* give it to us. It was Mama's.

GARDNER. Oh yes . . . (*He starts to exit with it.*)

FANNY. Could I have it back, please?

GARDNER. (*hands it to her, dropping more papers*) Oh, sure thing . . . Where's Mags? I thought you said she was here.

FANNY. I didn't say Mags was here, I asked *you* to come here.

GARDNER. (*papers spilling*) Damned papers keep falling . . .

FANNY. I wanted to show you my new hat. I bought it in honor of Mags' visit. Isn't it marvelous?

GARDNER. (*picking up the papers as more drop*) Yes, yes, very nice . . .

FANNY. Gardner, you're not even looking at it!

GARDNER. Very becoming . . .

FANNY. You don't think it's too bright, do you? I don't want to look like a traffic light. Guess how much it cost?

GARDNER. (*A whole sheaf of papers slides to the floor, he dives for them.*) OH SHIT!

FANNY. (*gets to them first*) It's alright, I've got them, I've got them. (*She hands them to him.*)

GARDNER. You'd think they had wings on them . . .

FANNY. Here you go . . .

GARDNER. . . . damned things won't hold still!

FANNY. Gar . . . ?

GARDNER. (*has become engrossed in one of the pages and is lost reading it*) Mmmmm?

FANNY. HELLO?

GARDNER. (*startled*) What's that?

FANNY. (*in a whisper*) My hat. Guess how much it cost.

GARDNER. Oh yes. Let's see . . . $10?

FANNY. $10? . . . IS THAT ALL . . . ?

GARDNER. 20?

FANNY. GARDNER, THIS HAPPENS TO BE A DESIGNER HAT! DESIGNER HATS START AT $50 . . . 75!

GARDNER. (*jumps*) Was that the door bell?

FANNY. No, it wasn't the door bell. Though it's high time Mags were here. She was probably in a train wreck!

GARDNER. (*looking through his papers*) I'm beginning to get fond of Wallace Stevens again.

FANNY. This damned move is going to kill me! Send me straight to my grave!

GARDNER. (*reading from a page*)
"The mules that angels ride come slowly down
The blazing passes, from beyond the sun.
Descensions of their tinkling bells arrive.
These muleteers are dainty of their way . . ."
(*pause*) Don't you love that! "These muleteers are *dainty* of their way . . . !?"

FANNY. Gar, the hat. How much? (*GARDNER sighs.*)

FANNY. Darling . . . ?

GARDNER. Oh yes. Let's see . . . $50? 75?

FANNY. It's French.

GARDNER. 300!

FANNY. (*triumphant*) No, 85¢

GARDNER. 85¢! . . . I thought you said . . .

FANNY. That's right . . . eighty . . . five . . . *cents!*

GARDNER. Well, you sure had me fooled!

FANNY. I found it at the Thrift Shop.

GARDNER. I thought it cost at least $50 or 75. You know, designer hats are very expensive!

FANNY. It was on the mark-down table. (*She takes it off and shows him the label.*) See that? Lily Daché! When I saw that label, I nearly keeled over right into the fur coats!

GARDNER. (*handling it*) Well, what do you know, that's the same label that's in my bathrobe.

FANNY. Darling, Lily Daché designed hats, not men's bathrobes!

GARDNER. Yup . . . "Lily Daché" . . . same name . . .

FANNY. If you look again, I'm sure you'll see . . .

GARDNER. . . . same script, same color, same size. I'll show you. (*He exits.*)

FANNY. Poor lamb can't keep anything straight anymore. (*looks at herself in the tray again*) God, this is a good looking hat!

GARDNER. (*returns with a nondescript plaid bathrobe; he points to the label.*) See that . . . ? What does it say?

FANNY. (*refusing to look at it*) Lily Daché was a *hat* designer! She designed ladies' *hats!*

GARDNER. What . . . does . . . it . . . say?

FANNY. Gardner, you're being ridiculous.

GARDNER. (*forcing it on her*) Read . . . the label!

FANNY. Lily Daché did *not* design this bathrobe, I don't care what the label says!

GARDNER. READ! (*FANNY reads it.*) ALL RIGHT, NOW WHAT DOES IT SAY . . . ?

FANNY. (*chagrined*) Lily Daché.

GARDNER. I told you!

FANNY. Wait a minute, let me look at that again. (*She does, then throws the robe at him in disgust.*) Gar, Lily Daché never designed a bathrobe in her life! Someone obviously ripped the label off one of her hats and then sewed it into the robe.

GARDNER. (*puts it on over his jacket*) It's damned good looking. I've always loved this robe. I think you gave it to me . . . Well, I've got to get back to work. (*He abruptly exits.*)

FANNY. Where did you get that robe anyway? . . . I didn't give it to you, did I . . . ? (*Silence; he resumes typing. Holding the tray up again and admiring herself.*) You know, I think I *did* give it to him. I remember how excited I was when I found it at the Thrift Shop . . . 50¢ and never worn! *I* couldn't have sewn that label in to impress him, could I? . . . I can't be that far gone! . . . The poor lamb wouldn't even notice it, let alone understand its cachet . . . Uuuuuh, this damned tray is even heavier than the coffee pot. They must have been amazons in the old days! (*writes on her pad*) "Empire tray, Parke Bernet Galleries," and good riddance! (*She wraps it and drops it into the carton with the coffee pot.*) Where *is* that wretched Mags? It would be just like her to get into a train wreck! She was supposed to be here hours ago. Well, if she doesn't show up soon, I'm going to drop dead of exhaustion. God, wouldn't that be wonderful? . . . Then they could just cart me off into storage with all the old chandeliers and china . . . (*The door bell rings.*)

FANNY. IT'S MAGS, IT'S MAGS!

GARDNER. (*offstage*) COMING, COMING

(*a pause; dashing out of the room, colliding into GARDNER*) GOOD GOD, LOOK AT ME! I'M STILL IN MY BATHROBE!

. . . I'VE GOT IT . . . . . COMING! (*dashinto the room, colliding into FANNY*) I'VE GOT IT . . . HOLD ON . . . COMING . . . COMING . . .

FANNY. (*offstage*) MAGS IS HERE! IT'S MAGS . . . SHE'S FINALLY HERE!

(*GARDNER exits to open the front door. MAGS comes staggering in carrying a suitcase and enormous duffle bag. She wears wonderfully distinctive clothes and has very much her own look. She's extremely out of breath and too wrought up to drop her heavy bags.*)

MAGS. I'm sorry . . . I'm sorry I'm so late . . . Everything went wrong! A passenger had a heart attack outside of New London and we had to stop . . . It was terrifying! All these medics and policemen came swarming onto the train and the conductor kept running up and down the aisles telling everyone not to leave their seats under any circumstances . . . Then the New London fire department came screeching down to the tracks, sirens blaring, lights whirling, and all these men in black rubber suits started pouring through the doors . . . *That* took two hours . . .

FANNY. (*offstage*) DARLING . . . DARLING . . . WHERE ARE YOU . . . ?

MAGS. *Then,* I couldn't get a cab at the station. There just weren't any! I must have circled the block 15 times. Finally I just stepped out into the traffic with my thumb

out, but no one would pick me up . . . so I walked . . .

FANNY. (*offstage*) Damned zipper's stuck . . .

GARDNER. You walked all the way from the South Station?

MAGS. Well actually, I ran . . .

GARDNER. You had poor Mum scared to death.

MAGS. (*finally puts the bags down with a deep sigh*) I'm sorry . . . I'm really sorry. It was a nightmare.

FANNY. (*Re-enters the room, her dress over her head. The zipper's stuck, she staggers around blindly.*) Damned zipper! Gar, will you please help me with this?

MAGS. (*squeezing him tight*) Oh Daddy . . . Daddy!

GARDNER. My Mags!

MAGS. I never thought I'd get here! . . . Oh, you look wonderful!

GARDNER. Well, you don't look so bad yourself!

MAGS. I love your hair. It's gotten so . . . white!

FANNY. (*still lost in her dress, struggling with the zipper*) This is *so* typical . . . just as Mags arrives, my zipper has to break! (*FANNY grunts and struggles.*)

MAGS. (*waves at her*) Hi, Mum . . .

FANNY. Just a minute, dear, my zipper's . . .

GARDNER. (*picks up MAGS' bags*) Well, sit down and take a load off your feet . . .

MAGS. I was so afraid I'd never make it . . .

GARDNER. (*staggering under the weight of her bags*) What have you got in here? Lead weights?

MAGS. I can't believe you're finally letting me do you.

FANNY. (*flings her arms around MAGS, practically knocking her over*)
OH, DARLING . . .
MY PRECIOUS MAGS,
YOU'RE HERE

GARDNER. (*lurching around in circles*) Now let's see . . . where should I put these. . . ?

AT LAST

FANNY. I was sure your train had derailed and you were lying dead in some ditch!

MAGS. (*pulls away from FANNY to come to GARDNER's rescue*) Daddy, please, let me . . . these are much too heavy.

FANNY. (*finally noticing MAGS*) GOOD LORD, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO YOUR HAIR?!

MAGS. (*struggling to take the bags from GARDNER*) Come on, give them to me . . . please? (*She sets them down by the sofa.*)

FANNY. (*as her dress starts to slide off one shoulder*) Oh, not again! . . . Gar, would you give me a hand and see what's wrong with this zipper. One minute it's stuck, the next it's falling to pieces. (*GARDNER goes to her and starts fussing with it.*)

MAGS. (*pacing*) I don't know, it's been crazy all week. Monday, I forgot to keep an appointment I'd made with a new model . . . Tuesday, I overslept and stood up my advanced painting students . . . Wednesday, the day of my meeting with Max Zoll, I forgot to put on my underpants . . .

FANNY. GODDAMNIT, GAR, CAN'T YOU DO ANYTHING ABOUT THIS ZIPPER?!

MAGS. I mean, there I was, racing down Broome Street in this gauzy Tibetan skirt when I tripped and fell right at his feet . . . SPLATT! My skirt goes flying over my head and there I am . . . everything staring him in the face . . .

FANNY. COME ON, GAR, USE A LITTLE MUSCLE!

MAGS. (*laughing*) Oh well, all that matters is that I finally got here . . . I mean . . . there you are . . .

GARDNER. (*struggling with the zipper*) I can't see it, it's too small!

FANNY. (*whirls away from GARDNER, pulling her dress off altogether*) OH FORGET IT! JUST FORGET IT! . . . The trolly's probably missing half its teeth, just like someone else I know. (*to MAGS*) I grind my teeth in my sleep now, I've worn them all down to stubs. Look at that! (*She flings open her mouth and points.*) Nothing left but the gums!

GARDNER. I never hear you grind your teeth . . .

FANNY. That's because I'm snoring so loud. How could you hear anything through all that racket? It even wakes me up. It's no wonder poor Daddy has to sleep downstairs.

MAGS. (*looking around*) Jeez, look at the place! So, you're finally doing it . . . selling the house and moving to Cotuit year round. I don't believe it. I just don't believe it!

GARDNER. Well, how about a drink to celebrate Mags' arrival?

MAGS. You've been here so long. Why move now?

FANNY. Gardner, what are you wearing that bathrobe for . . . ?

MAGS. You can't move. I won't let you!

FANNY. (*softly to GARDNER*) Really darling, you ought to pay more attention to your appearance.

MAGS. You love this house. *I* love this house . . . This room . . . the light.

GARDNER. So, Mags, how about a little . . . (*He drinks from an imaginary glass.*) to wet your whistle?

FANNY. We can't start drinking now, it isn't even noon yet!

MAGS. I'm starving. I've got to get something to eat

before I collapse! (*She exits towards the kitchen.*)

FANNY. What *have* you done to your hair, dear? The color's so queer and all your nice curl is gone.

GARDNER. It looks to me as if she dyed it.

FANNY. Yes, that's it. You're absolutely right! It's a completely different color. She dyed it bright red! (*MAGS can be heard thumping and thudding through the ice box.*) NOW MAGS, I DON'T WANT YOU FILLING UP ON SNACKS . . . I'VE MADE A PERFECTLY BEAUTIFUL LEG OF LAMB FOR LUNCH! . . . HELLO? . . . DO YOU HEAR ME . . . ? (*to GARDNER*) No one in our family has *ever* had red hair, it's so common looking.

GARDNER. I like it. It brings out her eyes.

FANNY. WHY ON EARTH DID YOU DYE YOUR HAIR *RED,* OF ALL COLORS . . . ?!

MAGS. (*returns, eating saltines out of the box*) I didn't dye my hair, I just added some highlight.

FANNY. I suppose that's what your arty friends in New York do . . . dye their hair all the colors of the rainbow!

GARDNER. Well, it's damned attractive if you ask me . . . damned attractive! (*MAGS unzips her duffle bag and rummages around in it while eating the saltines.*)

FANNY. Darling, I told you not to bring a lot of stuff with you. We're trying to get rid of things.

MAGS. (*pulls out a folding easel and starts setting it up*) AAAAAHHHHHH, here it is. Isn't it a beauty? I bought it just for you!

FANNY. Please don't get crumbs all over the floor. Crystal was just here yesterday. It was her last time before we move.

MAGS. (*at her easel*) God, I can hardly wait! I can't believe you're finally letting me do you.

FANNY. "*Do*" us? . . . What *are* you talking about?

GARDNER. (*reaching for the saltines*) Hey, Mags, could I have a couple of those?

MAGS. (*tosses him the box*) Sure! (*to FANNY*) Your portrait.

GARDNER. Thanks. (*He starts munching on a handful.*)

FANNY. You're planning to paint our portrait now? While we're trying to move . . . ?

GARDNER. (*mouth full*) Mmmmm, I'd forgotten just how delicious saltines are!

MAGS. It's a perfect opportunity. There'll be no distractions, you'll be completely at my mercy. Also, you promised.

FANNY. I did?

MAGS. Yes, you did.

FANNY. Well, I must have been off my rocker.

MAGS. No, you said, "You can paint us, you can dip us in concrete, you can do anything you want with us, just so long as you help us get out of here!"

GARDNER. (*offering the box of saltines to FANNY*) You really ought to try some of these, Fan, they're absolutely delicious!

FANNY. (*taking a few*) Why, thank you.

MAGS. I figure we'll pack in the morning and you'll pose in the afternoons. It'll be a nice diversion.

FANNY. These *are* good!

GARDNER. Here, dig in . . . take some more.

MAGS. I have some wonderful news . . . amazing news! I wanted to wait til I got here to tell you. (*They eat their saltines, passing the box back and forth as*

MAGS speaks.) You'll die! Just fall over into the packing cartons and die! Are you ready . . . ? BRACE YOURSELVES . . . OK, HERE GOES . . . I'm being given a one woman show at one of the most important galleries in New York this fall. Me, Margaret Church, exhibited at Castelli's, 420 West Broadway . . . Can you believe it?! . . . MY PORTRAITS HANGING IN THE SAME ROOMS THAT HAVE SHOWN RAUSCHENBURG, JOHNS, WARHOL, KELLY, LICHTENSTEIN, STELLA, SERRA, ALL THE HEAVIES . . . It's incredible, beyond belief . . . I mean, at my age . . . Do you know how good you have to be to get in there? It's a miracle . . . an honest-to-God, star spangled miracle! (*pause*)

FANNY. (*mouth full*) Oh, darling, that's wonderful. We're so happy for you!

GARDNER. (*likewise*) No one deserves it more, no one deserves it more!

MAGS. Through some fluke, some of Castelli's people showed up at our last faculty show at Pratt and were knocked out . . .

FANNY. (*reaching for the box of saltines*) More, more . . .

MAGS. They said they hadn't seen anyone handle light like me since the French Impressionists. They said I was this weird blend of Pierre Bonnard, Mary Cassat and David Hockney . . .

GARDNER. (*swallowing his own mouthful*) I told you they were good.

MAGS. Also, no one's doing portraits these days. They're considered passé. I'm so out of it, I'm in.

GARDNER. Well, you're loaded with talent and always have been.

FANNY. She gets it all from Mama, you know. Her miniature of Henry James is still one of the main attractions at the Atheneum. Of course no woman of breeding could be a professional artist in her day. It simply wasn't done. But talk about talent . . . that woman had talent to burn!

MAGS. I want to do one of you for the show.

FANNY. Oh, do Daddy, he's the famous one.

MAGS. No, I want to do you both. I've always wanted to do you and now I've finally got a good excuse.

FANNY. It's high time somebody painted Daddy again! I'm sick to death of that dreadful portrait of him in the National Gallery they keep reproducing. He looks like an undertaker!

GARDNER. Well, I think you should just do Mum. She's never looked handsomer.

FANNY. Oh, come on, I'm a perfect fright and you know it.

MAGS. I want to do you both. Side by side. In this room. Something really classy. You look so great. Mum with her crazy hats and everything and you with that face. If I could just get you to hold still long enough and actually pose.

GARDNER. (*walking around, distracted*) Where are those papers I just had? God damnit, Fanny . . .

MAGS. I have the feeling it's either now or never.

GARDNER. I can't hold on to anything around here. (*He exits to his study.*)

MAGS. I've always wanted to do you. It would be such a challenge.

FANNY. (*pulling MAGS next to her onto the sofa*) I'm so glad you're finally here, Mags. I'm very worried about Daddy.

MAGS. Mummy, please. I just got here.

FANNY. He's getting quite gaga.

MAGS. Mummy . . . !

FANNY. You haven't seen him in almost a year. Two weeks ago he walked through the front door of the Codman's house, kissed Emily on the cheek and settled down in the maid's room, thinking he was home!

MAGS. Oh come on, you're exaggerating.

FANNY. He's as mad as a hatter and getting worse every day! It's this damned new book of his. He works on it around the clock. I've read some of it, and it doesn't make one word of sense, it's all at 6s and 7s . . .

GARDNER. (*poking his head back in the room, spies some of his papers on a table and grabs them*) Ahhh, here they are. (*and exits*)

FANNY. (*voice lowered*) Ever since this dry spell with his poetry, he's been frantic, absolutely . . . frantic!

MAGS. I hate it when you do this.

FANNY. I'm just trying to get you to face the facts around here.

MAGS. There's nothing wrong with him! He's just as sane as the next man. Even saner, if you ask me.

FANNY. You know what he's doing now? You couldn't guess in a million years! . . . He's writing criticism! Daddy! (*She laughs.*) Can you believe it? The man doesn't have one analytic bone in his body. His mind is a complete jumble and always has been! (*There's a loud crash from GARDNER's study.*)

GARDNER. (*offstage*) SHIT!

MAGS. He's abstracted . . . That's the way he is.

FANNY. He doesn't spend any time with me anymore. He just holes up in that filthy study with Toots. God, I hate that bird! Though actually they're quite cunning together. Daddy's teaching him Grey's Elegy. You ought

to see them in there, Toots perched on top of Daddy's head, spouting out verse after verse . . . Daddy, tap tap tapping away on his typewriter. They're quite a pair.

GARDNER. (*pokes his head back in*) Have you seen that Stevens' poem I was reading before?

FANNY. (*long suffering*) NO, I HAVEN'T SEEN THAT STEVENS' POEM YOU WERE READING BEFORE . . . ! Things are getting very tight around here, in case you haven't noticed. Daddy's last Pulitzer didn't even cover our real estate tax, and now that he's too doddery to give readings anymore, that income is gone . . . (*suddenly handing MAGS the sugarbowl she'd been wrapping*) Mags, *do* take this sugarbowl. You can use it to serve tea to your students at that wretched art school of yours . . .

MAGS. It's called Pratt! The Pratt Institute.

FANNY. Pratt, Platt, whatever . . .

MAGS. And I don't serve tea to my students, I teach them how to paint.

FANNY. Well, I'm sure none of them has ever seen a sugarbowl as handsome as this before.

GARDNER. (*reappearing again*) You're sure you haven't seen it . . . ?

FANNY. (*loud and angry*) YES, I'M SURE I HAVEN'T SEEN IT! I JUST TOLD YOU I HAVEN'T SEEN IT!

GARDNER. (*retreating*) Right you are, right you are. (*He exits.*)

FANNY. God! (*silence*)

MAGS. What do you have to yell at him like that for?

FANNY. Because the poor thing's as deaf as an adder! (*MAGS sighs deeply; silence.*)

FANNY. (*suddenly exuberant, leads her over to a lamp*) Come, I want to show you something?

MAGS. (*looking at it*) What is it?

FANNY. Something I made. (*MAGS is about to turn it on.*) WAIT, DON'T TURN IT ON YET! It's got to be dark to get the full effect. (*She rushes to the windows and pulls down the shades.*)

MAGS. What *are* you doing . . . ?

FANNY. Hold your horses a minute. You'll see . . . (*as the room gets darker and darker*) Poor me, you wouldn't believe the lengths I go to to amuse myself these days . . .

MAGS. (*touching the lamp shade*) What is this? It looks like a scene of some sort.

FANNY. It's an invention I made . . . a kind of magic lantern.

MAGS. Gee . . . it's amazing . . .

FANNY. What I did was buy an old engraving of the Grand Canal . . .

MAGS. You *made* this?

FANNY. . . . and then color it in with crayons. Next, I got out my sewing scissors and cut out all the street lamps and windows . . . anything that light would shine through. Then I pasted it over a plain lampshade, put the shade on this old horror of a lamp, turned on the switch and . . . (*She turns it on.*) . . . VOILA . . . VENICE TWINKLING AT DUSK! It's quite effective, don't you think . . . ?

MAGS. (*walking around it*) Jeeez . . .

FANNY. And see, I poked out all the little lights on the gondolas with a straight pin.

MAGS. Where on earth did you get the idea?

FANNY. Well you know, idle minds . . . (*FANNY spins the shade, making the lights whirl.*)

MAGS. It's really amazing. I mean, you

GARDNER. (*enters*) HERE IT IS. IT WAS

you could sell this in a store!

RIGHT ON TOP OF MY DESK THE WHOLE TIME. (*He crashes into a table.*) OOOOOWWWWW!

FANNY. LOOK OUT, LOOK OUT!

MAGS. (*rushes over to him*) Oh, Daddy, are you all right!

FANNY. WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING, WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!

GARDNER. (*hopping up and down on one leg*) GOD-DAMNIT! . . . I HIT MY SHIN!

FANNY. I was just showing Mags my lamp . . .

GARDNER. (*limping over to it*) Oh yes, isn't that something? Mum is awfully clever with that kind of thing . . . It was all her idea, the whole thing. Buying the engraving, coloring it in, cutting out all those little dots.

FANNY. Not "dots" . . . lights and windows, lights and windows!

GARDNER. Right, right . . . lights and windows.

FANNY. Well, we'd better get some light back in here before someone breaks their neck. (*She zaps the shades back up.*)

GARDNER. (*puts his arm around MAGS*) Gee, it's good to have you back.

MAGS. It's good to be back.

GARDNER. And I like that new red hair of yours. It's very becoming.

MAGS. But I told you, I hardly touched it . . .

GARDNER. Well, something's different. You've got a glow. So . . . how do you want us to pose for this grand

portrait of yours . . . ? (*He poses self-consciously.*)

MAGS. Oh Daddy, setting up a portrait takes alot of time and thought. You've got to figure out the background, the lighting, what to wear, the sort of mood you want to . . .

FANNY. OOOOH, LET'S DRESS UP, LET'S DRESS UP! (*She grabs a packing blanket, drapes it around herself and links arms with GARDNER, striking an elegant pose.*) This *is* going to be fun. She was absolutely right! Come on, Gar, look distinguished!

MAGS. Mummy please, it's not a game!

FANNY. (*more and more excited*) You still have your tuxedo, don't you? And I'll wear my marvelous long black dress that makes me look like that fascinating woman in the Sargeant painting! (*She strikes the famous profile pose.*)

MAGS. MUMMY . . . ?!

FANNY. I'm sorry, we'll behave, just tell us what to do. (*They settle down next to each other.*)

GARDNER. That's right, you're the boss.

FANNY. Yes, you're the boss.

MAGS. But I'm not ready yet, I haven't set anything up.

FANNY. Relax, darling, we just want to get the hang of it . . .

(*They stare straight ahead, trying to look like suitable subjects, but they can't hold still. They keep making faces; lifting an eyebrow, wriggling a nose, twitching a lip, nothing grotesque, just flickering little changes; a half smile here, a self-important frown there. They steal glances at each other every so often.*)

GARDNER. How am I doing, Fan?

FANNY. Brilliantly, absolutely brilliantly!

MAGS. But you're making faces.

FANNY. *I'm* not making faces, (*turning to GARDNER and making a face*) are *you* making faces, Gar?

GARDNER. (*instantly making one*) Certainly not! I'm the picture of restraint!

(*Without meaning to, they get sillier and sillier. They start giggling, then laughing.*)

MAGS. (*can't help but join in*) You two are impossible . . . completely impossible! I was crazy to think I could ever pull this off! (*laughing away*) Look at you . . . just . . . look at you!

BLACKOUT

SCENE 2

Two days later, around five in the afternoon. Half of the Church's household has been dragged into the living room for packing. Overflowing cartons are everywhere. They're filled with pots and pans, dishes and glasses, and the entire contents of two linen closets. MAGS has placed a stepladder under one of the windows. A pile of table cloths and curtains is flung beneath it. Two side chairs are in readiness for the eventual pose.

MAGS. (*Has just pulled a large crimson table cloth out of a carton. She unfurls it with one shimmering toss*) PERFECT . . . PERFECT . . . !

FANNY. (*seated on the sofa, clutches an old pair of galoshes to her chest*) Look at these old horrors, half the rubber is rotted away and the fasteners are falling to pieces . . . GARDNER . . . ? OH GARRRRRRRRRD-NERRRR . . . ?

MAGS. (*rippling out the table cloth with shorter snapping motions*) Have you ever seen such a color . . . ?

FANNY. I'VE FOUND YOUR OLD SLEDDING GALOSHES IN WITH THE POTS AND PANS. DO YOU STILL WANT THEM?

MAGS. It's like something out of a Rubens . . . ! (*She slings it over a chair and then sits on a foot stool to finish the Sara Lee banana cake she started. As she eats, she looks at the table cloth making happy grunting sounds.*)

FANNY. (*lovingly puts the galoshes on over her shoes and wiggles her feet*) God, these bring back memories! There were real snow storms in the old days. Not these pathetic little two inch droppings we have now. After a particularly heavy one, Daddy and I used to go sledding on the Common. This was way before you were born . . . God, it was a hundred years ago . . . ! Daddy would stop writing early, put on these galoshes and come looking for me, jingling the fasteners like castanets. It was a kind of mating call, almost . . . (*She jingles them.*) The Common was always deserted after a storm, we had the whole place to ourselves. It was so romantic . . . We'd haul the sled up Beacon Street, stop under the State House, and aim it straight down to the Park Street Church, which was much further away in those days . . . Then Daddy would lie down on the sled, I'd lower myself on top of him, we'd rock back and forth a few times to gain momentum and then . . . WHOOOOO OOOSSSSSSSHHHHH . . . down we'd

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