Please Enjoy the Following Sample

- 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 purchasing a play or musical, please visit our websites

www.samuelfrench.com

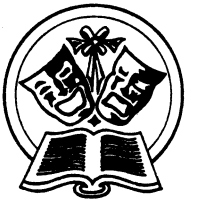
www.samuelfrench-london.co.uk

A SLIGHT ACHE

A Play in One Act

by

HAROLD PINTER

SAMUEL  FRENCH

LONDON

NEW YORK TORONTO SYDNEY HOLLYWOOD

© 1961 BY HAROLD PINTER

Rights of Performance by Amateurs are controlled by Samuel French Ltd, 52 Fitzroy Street, London W1T 5JR, and they, or their authorized agents, issue licences to amateurs on payment of a fee. **It is an infringement of the Copyright to give any performance or public reading of the play before the fee has been paid and the licence issued.**

The Royalty Fee indicated below is subject to contract and subject to variation at the sole discretion of Samuel French Ltd.

Basic fee for each and every performance by amateurs in the British Isles	Code E

The publication of this play does not imply that it is necessarily available for performance by amateurs or professionals, either in the British Isles or Overseas. Amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised in their own interests to apply to the appropriate agents for written consent before starting rehearsals or booking a theatre or hall.

ISBN 978 0 573 02249 4

Please see page iv for further copyright information

CHARACTERS

(*in the order of their appearance*)

FLORA

EDWARD, her husband

THE MATCHSELLER

The action of the Play passes in Flora's and Edward's home on a day in summer

Time—the present

COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

(See also page ii)

This play is fully protected under the Copyright Laws of the British Commonwealth of Nations, the United States of America and all countries of the Berne and Universal Copyright Conventions.

All rights including Stage, Motion Picture, Radio, Television, Public Reading, and Translation into Foreign Languages, are strictly reserved.

No part of this publication may lawfully be reproduced in ANY form or by any means — photocopying, typescript, recording (including video-recording), manuscript, electronic, mechanical, or otherwise—or be transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, without prior permission.

Licences for amateur performances are issued subject to the understanding that it shall be made clear in all advertising matter that the audience will witness an amateur performance; that the names of the authors of the plays shall be included on all programmes; and that the integrity of the authors' work will be preserved.

The Royalty Fee is subject to contract and subject to variation at the sole discretion of Samuel French Ltd.

In Theatres or Halls seating Four Hundred or more the fee will be subject to negotiation.

In Territories Overseas the fee quoted above may not apply. A fee will be quoted on application to our local authorized agent, or if there is no such agent, on application to Samuel French Ltd, London.

VIDEO-RECORDING OF AMATEUR PRODUCTIONS

Please note that the copyright laws governing video-recording are extremely complex and that it should not be assumed that any play may be video-recorded for whatever purpose without first obtaining the permission of the appropriate agents. The fact that a play is published by Samuel French Ltd does not indicate that video rights are available or that Samuel French Ltd controls such rights.

A SLIGHT ACHE

SCENE—*Flora's and Edward's home on a day in summer.*

A rostrum across the back has a wide opening leading to a terrace and the garden beyond. Various rooms of the house are indicated. The scullery or kitchen is represented by a folding flat R, *with a window in it, though which can be seen the back gate to the garden. The breakfast-room is* C, *with a table* C *that has upright chairs* R *and* L *of it, and a small table up* RC *with a bowl of flowers. The study is* L, *where there is a set of bookshelves. Each section is lit or blacked-out as the action moves from room to room.*

When the CURTAIN *rises, the* LIGHTS *come up on the breakfast-room* C *and the garden area up* C. *The table is set for breakfast.* FLORA *is seated* L *of the table.* EDWARD *is seated* R *of the table, reading the "Daily Telegraph".* FLORA *pours a cup of tea for herself.*

FLORA. Have you noticed the honeysuckle this morning?

EDWARD. The what?

FLORA. The honeysuckle.

EDWARD. Honeysuckle? Where?

FLORA. By the back gate, Edward.

EDWARD. Is that honeysuckle? (*He lowers his paper*) I thought it was—convolvulus, or something.

FLORA. But you know it's honeysuckle.

EDWARD. I tell you I thought it was convolvulus.

(*There is a pause*)

FLORA. It's in wonderful flower.

EDWARD. I must look.

FLORA. The whole garden's in flower this morning. The clematis. The convolvulus. Everything. I was out at seven. I stood by the pool.

EDWARD. Did you say—that the convolvulus was in flower?

FLORA. Yes.
EDWARD. But good God, you just denied there was any.
FLORA. I was talking about the honeysuckle.
EDWARD. About the what?
FLORE (*calmly*) Edward—you know that shrub outside the toolshed——
EDWARD. Yes, yes.
FLORA. —that's convolvulus.
EDWARD. That?
FLORA. Yes.
EDWARD. Oh.

(*There is a pause*)

EDWARD. I thought it was japonica.
FLORA. Oh, good Lord, no.
EDWARD. Pass the teapot, please.

(*There is a pause.* FLORA *pours a cup of tea for Edward and adds milk*)

I don't see why I should be expected to distinguish between these plants. It's not my job.
FLORA. You know perfectly well what grows in your garden.
EDWARD. Quite the contrary. It is clear that I don't.

(*There is a pause.* FLORA *looks at Edward, rises and moves up* LC *on to the rostrum*)

FLORA. I was up at seven. I stood by the pool. The peace. And everything in flower. The sun was up. You should work in the garden this morning. We could put up the canopy.
EDWARD. The canopy? What for?
FLORA. To shade you from the sun.
EDWARD. Is there a breeze?
FLORA. A slight one.
EDWARD. It's very treacherous weather, you know.

(*There is a pause.* FLORA *faces up stage*)

FLORA. Do you know what today is?
EDWARD (*consulting the date on the top of his paper*) Saturday.
FLORA. It's the longest day of the year.

EDWARD. Really?
FLORA. It's the height of summer today.

(*There is a pause.* EDWARD *apparently sees a wasp. He puts his paper on the table, rises and stands above his chair.* FLORA *turns and moves above her chair* L *of the table*)

EDWARD. Cover the marmalade.
FLORA. What?
EDWARD. Cover the pot. There's a wasp. Look. Don't move. Keep still.

(FLORA *picks up the lid of the marmalade pot*)

What are you doing?
FLORA. Covering the pot.
EDWARD. Don't move. Leave it. Keep still. Give me the *Telegraph.*

(FLORA *hands the paper to Edward*)

FLORA. Don't hit it. It'll bite.
EDWARD. Bite? What do you mean—bite? Keep still.

(*There is a pause*)

It's landing.
FLORA. It's going in the pot.
EDWARD (*putting the paper on the table*) Give me the lid.
FLORA. It's in.
EDWARD. Give me the lid.
FLORA. I'll do it.
EDWARD. Give it to me.

(FLORA *hands the lid to Edward*)

Now—slowly . . .
FLORA. What are you doing?
EDWARD. Sh, sh, sh! Slowly—carefully—on—the—pot. (*He puts the lid on the pot*) Very good. (*He resumes his seat*)
FLORA. Now he's in the marmalade.
EDWARD. Precisely.

(*There is a pause.* FLORA *picks up the newspaper then sits* L *of the table.* EDWARD *clenches his eyes, sips his tea*)

FLORA. Can you hear him?

EDWARD. Hear him?

FLORA. Buzzing.

EDWARD. Oh, nonsense! How can you hear him? It's an earthenware lid.

FLORA. He's becoming frantic.

EDWARD. Rubbish! (*He listens for a moment*) Take it away from the table.

FLORA. What shall I do with it?

EDWARD. Put it in the sink and drown it.

FLORA. It'll fly out and bite me.

EDWARD. It will not bite you! Wasps don't bite. (*He clenches his eyes*) Anyway, it won't fly out. It's stuck. It'll drown where it is, in the marmalade.

FLORA. What a horrible death.

EDWARD. On the contrary.

(*There is a pause.* EDWARD *clenches his eyes*)

FLORA. Have you got something in your eyes?

EDWARD. No. Why do you ask?

FLORA. You keep clenching them—blinking them.

EDWARD. I have a slight ache in them.

FLORA. Oh, dear! (*She faces* L *and reads the paper*)

EDWARD. Yes. A slight ache. As if I hadn't slept.

FLORA. Did you sleep, Edward?

EDWARD. Of course I slept. Uninterrupted. As always.

FLORA. And yet you feel tired.

EDWARD. I didn't say I felt tired. I merely said I had a slight ache in my eyes.

FLORA (*turning*) Why is that, then? (*She lowers the paper*)

EDWARD. I really don't know.

(*There is a pause*)

FLORA. Oh, goodness! (*She folds up the paper*)

EDWARD. What is it?

FLORA. I can see it. It's trying to come out.

EDWARD. How can it?

FLORA. Through the hole. It's trying to crawl out—through the spoon hole.

EDWARD. Mmm—yes. (*He half rises*) Can't do it, of

course. (*He pauses then resumes his seat*) Oh, let's kill it, for goodness' sake!

FLORA. Yes, let's. But how?

EDWARD (*after a pause*) Bring it out on the spoon and squash it on a plate.

FLORA. It'll fly away. It'll bite.

EDWARD. If you don't stop using that word I shall leave the table.

FLORA (*after a pause*) But wasps do bite.

EDWARD. They don't bite. They sting. It's snakes—that bite.

FLORA (*after a pause*) What about horseflies?

EDWARD (*after a pause*) Horseflies suck.

(*There is a pause*)

FLORA (*tentatively*) If we—if we wait long enough, I suppose it'll choke to death. It'll suffocate in the marmalade.

EDWARD (*briskly*) You do know I've got work to do this morning, don't you? I can't spend the whole day worrying about a wasp.

FLORA. Well—kill it.

EDWARD. You want to kill it?

FLORA. Yes.

EDWARD. Very well. Pass me the hot-water jug.

FLORA. What are you going to do?

EDWARD. Scald it. (*He rises*)

(*There is a pause*)

(*He picks up the hot-water jug*) Now . . .

FLORA (*whispering*) Do you want me to lift the lid?

EDWARD. No, no, no. I'll pour down the spoon hole. Right—down the spoon hole.

FLORA. Listen!

EDWARD. What?

FLORA. It's buzzing.

(EDWARD *bends over the pot and listens*)

EDWARD (*straightening up*) Vicious creatures. (*He pauses*)

Curious, but I don't remember seeing any wasps at all, all summer, until now. I'm sure I don't know why. I mean—there must have been wasps.

FLORA. Please.

EDWARD. This couldn't be the first wasp, could it?

FLORA. Please.

EDWARD. The first wasp of summer? No. It's not possible.

FLORA. Edward.

EDWARD. Mmmmm?

FLORA. Kill it.

EDWARD. Ah, yes. Tilt the pot. Tilt.

(FLORA *tilts the pot*)

Aah—down here—(*he pours*) right down—blinding him—(*he puts the jug on the table*) that's it. (*He rubs his hands together and resumes his seat*)

FLORA. Is it?

EDWARD. Lift the lid.

(FLORA *hesitates*)

All right, I will. (*He removes the lid from the pot and puts it on the table*) There he is. (*He takes the wasp from the pot with the spoon*) Dead. What a monster. (*He squashes the wasp on his plate, rises and moves up* RC *on to the rostrum*)

FLORA. What an awful experience. (*She reads the paper*)

EDWARD. What a beautiful day it is. Beautiful. (*He breathes deeply three times, then coughs*) I think I shall work in the garden this morning. Where's that canopy?

FLORA. It's in the shed.

EDWARD. Yes, we must get it out. My goodness, just look at that sky. Not a cloud. Did you say it was the longest day of the year today?

FLORA. Yes.

EDWARD. Ah, it's a good day. I feel it in my bones. In my muscles. I think I'll stretch my legs in a minute. Down to the pool. (*He exercises*) My God, look at that flowering shrub over there.

(FLORA *is pleased*)

Hungry for More?

This is a Sample of the Script

Buy the **full script** and explore other titles

www.samuelfrench.com

www.samuelfrench-london.co.uk



[Breaking Character]
An Online Resource for Theatre Makers

Follow Us On twitter

Find us on Facebook

Titles are subject to availability depending on your territory.