

SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

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The Radiant

Shirley Lauro

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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ISBN 978-0-573-70291-4

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THE RADIANT had its world premiere at The New Theatre in Miami, Florida, with Artistic Director, R.J. Martinez, and Managing Director, Eileen Suarez, on May 25, 2011. The production was directed by R.J. Martinez, with scenic design by Rob Eastman-Mullins, costumes by K. Blair Brown, sound by Ozzie Quintana, and lights by R.J. Martinez. The cast was as follows:

MARIE CURIE Angelica Page
KATARINA Hana Kalinski
PAUL Richard-John Seikaly, II
PAYMASTER, PROFESSOR WILBOIS, LORD KELVIN Stephen S. Neal

THE RADIANT had its New York premiere at The Red Fern Theatre, with Artistic Director, Melanie Moyer Williams, on February 21, 2013. The production was directed by Melanie Moyer Williams, with scenic design by Rowan Doyle, costumes by T. Michael Hall, and lights by Sam Gordon. The cast was as follows:

MARIE CURIE Diana LaMar
KATARINA Rachel Berger
PAUL A.J. Cedano
PAYMASTER, PROFESSOR WILBOIS, LORD KELVIN Timothy Doyle

CHARACTERS

MARIE SKLODOWSKA CURIE – Polish, but in France many years. Late 30s-to-mid-40s. Ethereal beauty – ash blond, small, graceful, piercing eyes, intense manner reveals brilliance of a genius. A unique, complex woman of great strength, drive. Can be severe, steely. “Suffers no fools gladly”. Hides extreme shyness, high emotionality behind exterior demeanor. Dresses in black clothes of period. Straw summer hat, light colored blouse in country and light colored blouse through Act II. Has cough, possibly some nervous mannerisms.

KATARINA – 17. Marie’s niece from Warsaw. Pretty, funny, strong spirited but not contemporary teen – rather of era when young people ruled by adults. Loveable, impulsive, dramatic, but tries to contain herself. Clothing: blouse with possible touch of Polish style embroidery, dark longish skirt of period. In Normandy, light summery blouse, straw hat with flowers.

PAUL LANGEVIN – early 30’s. Handsome, youthful, French. Brilliant but naïve, sensual man. Repressed, yearns to break out. White shirt, vest, student type jacket. Later in dark suit/trousers.

***CHIEF PAYMASTER OF THE SORBONNE** – Middle-age. Epitome of bureaucrat, a lecher. Possible pince-nez, vest, time-piece in vest. French accent.

***PROFESSOR WILBOIS** – Late middle-age. Physics professor at Sorbonne. Kindly, loveable. Somewhat absent minded—maybe a stain or two on clothing, missing button on vest, etc. From Alsace-Lorraine, possibly has slight French/German accent.

***LORD KELVIN** – Middle-aged. Physics Professor, University of Edinburgh. A Scotsman (either Scottish or English accent.). Possibly reddish hair. Pompous, blustery, condescending. Possibly smokes pipe; possibly in clothing with Scotch plaid/argyle design touches. Elegant in appearance.

* (Characters designed to be portrayed by one actor. Concept: for Marie they are the outside world: men of power surrounding her, with whom she must relate and/or struggle. Chief Paymaster and Kelvin are in opposition to her. Wilbois, sympathetic, but forced to bear bad news.)

PLACE

Paris, Normandy, Provence, France; and Stockholm, Sweden
The play is performed without Intermission.

TIME

Over a hundred years ago.

PLAYWRIGHT'S SUGGESTIONS FOR PRODUCTION VALUES

The Radiant has been inspired by the life of Marie Curie. The events told of her life in the play are true. To help tell her story, I have enhanced and/or created some characters .

The play is the psychological journey of Marie Curie from penniless widow with two children to her final victory in isolating radium and the consequences of that. It is Marie's singular journey, and all directorial and design elements should be guided by that.

SET

The play is driven by the complex, unique character of Marie. So – ideally, set not realistic but a cinematic space or landscape which is fluid and can easily become several different locations for her as she psychologically moves through time and place in her journey in the play. A unit set. No lumbering scenery, metal tracks, welding, turntables, or other devices. Few pieces of furniture moved around for various scenes, minimal props. Unit set used denoting parts of each room – such as, for Parlor on unit: section of room with two small chairs, and between chairs, small table (that could hold tea service, possible teacart) – all of the period. A samovar. No doors, actors step from space to space on unit set which should have steps, levels, etc. Full descriptions are given for each change of scene. These are to help designers find essence of the scene – the part to show audience. Not meant to be realistically manifest on stage. The full description is also for cast and other designers to get the feel of exactly where the characters are.

LIGHTS

Heavy emphasis on lighting. Beautiful and strategic in creating shifting scenes of time and place – and the moods of Marie as she moves through play. The CROSS FADES of the lights carry the continuous shifting of places and times. Blackouts used sparingly if at all.

COSTUMES

Apt, striking clothing of era. Costumes both signaling and emblematic of time and characters. But play not overburdened with costumes.

Designer(s) who can design poetically.

To: Lou, Andrea, Joshua, and Melanie

(Paris, 1906)

(Lights up: The Sorbonne, Paris. Accounting Office)

(CHIEF PAYMASTER on high stool, writing. MARIE, in black cape, enters, waiting for him to look up. He does not.)

MARIE. I am Madame Curie. I believe we had an appointment, monsieur?

PAYMASTER. *Oui...*?

(looks at her bewildered)

An appointment?

(looks through some scattered, messy schedule books, finding it)

Ah – so we do! But as you can understand – I have so many appointments? You of course must be Professor Pierre Curie’s widow?

(Smiles artificially, subtly looking her over in a sexual way. She shifts stance away from him.)

How sorry I am, personally, Madame – since I’ve heard – here at our Sorbonne – Pierre Curie’s Nobel Prize brought honor to *all of France!*

MARIE. I’ve come to discuss receiving my husband’s salary for the term.

PAYMASTER. But of course –

(Goes back to stool, sits, searching for other papers which He can’t find. MARIE watches, impatient.)

MARIE. Perhaps I should come another time?

PAYMASTER. Uh – No – Ah! “Pierre Curie” – but *so long ago* – there may be a Statute of Limitations – no – *however* – his sudden and untimely death occurred before

the seminars ended. What a pity it happened *before* – rather than *after*.

MARIE. There were only three sessions left to teach, Monsieur.

PAYMASTER. Nonetheless: “Deceased employee shall have completed *entire* work period for survivor to receive deceased’s salary.” But his seminars ended abruptly, unfortunately. – no faculty member capable of completing the course? Sessions abandoned – Students required to take deferments. Impossible to request *any* kind of salary, Madame. Which – of course – I would very much like to do –

(She glares at him, steps back. He busies himself, thumbing through folder, stops, pulls out envelope, rips open, to read.)

MARIE. *(Interrupting)* Please! Let me not detain you any longer, Monsieur – ?

(She starts out.)

PAYMASTER. Ah hah! Here’s something *very* much in your favor! What luck we are in!

(She stops.)

MARIE. We are in luck?

PAYMASTER. You are entitled to: “The Widow’s Pension”!
Ah, la, la!

MARIE. *(shocked)* “Pension”?

PAYMASTER. “To continue until: 1.) widow’s demise – 2.) remarriage – 3.) through all lingering illnesses. But – should widow obtain work of any nature? All benefits cease!”

MARIE. I can’t *work*? I am educated –

(He pulls check from envelope.)

PAYMASTER. Your initial check! 54% of husband’s salary. Every month! Now – we’ll add your name – “Marie” – your full name, please?

MARIE. Marie Salomea Sklodowska Curie –

(He shoots her a suspicious but subtle look.)

PAYMASTER. Salomea – Old Testament name, yes?

MARIE. Yes –

PAYMASTER. And Sklowdowska – Southern Russia?

MARIE. *(annoyed)* Polish!

PAYMASTER. But of course. So – what a happy ending we have here. And – should there be any problems – contact me? Once you are on the books, make another appointment? For a larger pension – perhaps? *Under certain privileged circumstances* – I may devise a way!

(Puts check in her hand, sliding other hand slowly up her arm while holding her hand with check. MARIE breaks away abruptly; disgusted, afraid.)

MARIE. Monsieur! Please!

PAYMASTER. Only the best intentions, Madame – the very best –

(She looks at check.)

MARIE. You have misspelled “Skłodowska”, Monsieur Paymaster! And your arithmetic as to what my “Widow’s Pension” was to be? Incorrect!

(She rips check, throws on floor, storms from room.)

(Cross fade as we follow MARIE down hallway to enter PIERRE’s office. Desk, papers still there. 2 chairs, some books, diplomas on wall.)

(PAUL sits on floor stacking books in box. MARIE is surprised to see him.)

MARIE. Paul!

PAUL. Madame! I’m packing up the rest of Pierre’s things – I’ll send them to you –

MARIE. I – I wanted to see the office one more time, Paul.
I – I had other business here besides – “The – the – Chief Paymaster” –

PAUL. “Paymaster”?

MARIE. Trivial...except I learned from him Pierre's seminar in "Radioactivity" is being abandoned!

PAUL. No!

MARIE. God knows the ramifications of that.

(She looks around.)

All the same still –

(awkward pause)

(He is taken aback at her thin appearance, hides this, goes to her quickly, kissing her hand.)

PAUL. Your cape, Madame?

(He makes gesture to help her but she keeps it protectively wraps it around herself, looking around Pierre's office.)

(an awkward pause)

MARIE. It's been a long time, yes?

(She's very affected by this, turns away from him.)

(another awkward pause)

PAUL. Pierre's funeral? Not so long, is it?

MARIE. Time is relative, Paul –

(She smiles. He smiles back.)

(another awkward silence)

PAUL. You – you're looking well, Madame. Fashionably thin

–

MARIE. *(sardonically, laughing a little)* Madame Curie? *Haute couture? Oo, la, la!*

(She chuckles.)

(pause)

I don't look well at all.

(They are connecting. He smiles gently at her as she admires him.)

But – you? The very picture of youth – health!

(beat)

PAUL. Truthfully –

(He turns away.)

I'm exhausted, Madame. Teaching general science – three lower girls' schools –

MARIE. *(shocked)* Not working on your doctorate, or even –

PAUL. *(cutting in)* I – I dropped out.

(awkward silence)

(He moves away, guilty, aware of her eyes on him.)

Clotilde's had our third child – her mother's with us – I *have* to earn a good salary, Madame –

MARIE. Three children? A wife? A mother-in-law? Six mouths to feed on part-time salaries from lower schools? *Your wife's* willing to live on that?

(He turns to her.)

PAUL. No, she wants me rich in her family publishing business.

(silence)

MARIE. *(Upset, searching his eyes)* You were Pierre's protégé! My prize lab student! In our home – dinner – wine by the fire discussing science – I was so invested in you – Paul – still –

(silence)

PAUL. A long time ago, Madame –

(He starts packing books from open box on floor.)

MARIE. Yes –

(moments pass)

But – as we said – time is relative –

(pause)

There's no work at the lab, you know.

PAUL. Weren't you doing an important experiment with Pierre?

MARIE. I couldn't bear going there alone! I ran out terrified!

PAUL. (*surprised*) But Marcel was –

MARIE. I can afford him only a few hours –

(She lowers her head.)

We were living on Pierre's salary.

(long silence)

(near tears)

Paul – I – I – need a job – I'd be willing to travel to the suburbs...you...you know of anything?

PAUL. A *general school science teacher*? You just berated *me* for that.

(She turns away. He gives her his hanky. She clutches hanky, looks at him.)

MARIE. There's nothing else I'm trained to do –

(Several beats, then she absently picks up notebook from PIERRE's desk.)

Pierre's last notes?

(She scans through notebook.)

He – he forgot something here –

(She takes pen from PIERRE's desk, starts making notations in the notebook.)

And this is not correct!

(She scratches something out.)

(beat)

(PAUL moves away, then turns, scrutinizing her.)

PAUL. Madame? Pierre's Chair at the Sorbonne is empty –

MARIE. *(a little laugh)*

Of course it's empty: he's dead!

PAUL. That's not what I meant.

MARIE. What then?

PAUL. When a head faculty member dies – his closest colleague inherits his Chair – that's the tradition...

(She stops writing abruptly looking at him, rising.)

MARIE. What are you getting at?

(beat)

PAUL. That you could be appointed to Pierre's Chair –

(beat)

MARIE. I never want to set foot in here after today!

PAUL. No one will ever teach "Radioactivity" then. You're the only one equipped – the discovery will slide to someone else's hands –

(She looks back at him.)

MARIE. They would never let me teach here!

PAUL. But you got the first doctorate a woman's ever been given and you *discovered the field!*

MARIE. Me? His "Little Assistant Wife"? I wasn't *mentioned* at the Nobel! My name wasn't even on our Prize until Pierre insisted.

PAUL. I didn't know that.

MARIE. You're a Frenchman. You don't know that French men see women only "on the street" or "in their husbands' beds"?

(She turns away.)

(silence)

(She begins thumbing through books.)

Pierre *always* honored that it was my discovery.
But he's gone –

PAUL. You've got to go on alone Madame! Go on! Sit! It's yours!

(He holds out chair for her. she looks at him quickly then turns away, pacing, thinking. Moments pass. She stops.)

(She looks around room once more, then sits in PIERRE's chair.)

(Silence. Then she picks up pen, takes out paper.)

MARIE. Oscar Wilbois – he heads the Committee on Faculty Appointments – yes?

PAUL. I – I think so –

(Beat. MARIE begins writing.)

MARIE. I'm writing him to put me forward –

(She keeps writing, then looks up at him a moment.)

If I were to be appointed – would – would there be any chance *you* – *you* possibly could help me –

PAUL. *Me?*

MARIE. You were his protégé, after all –

PAUL. I – I don't –

MARIE. *(interrupting)* I'll be earning a good salary. I could give you a stipend. Large grants – research fellowships are emerging all over in science, Paul – maybe I could get you one –

PAUL. “I have six mouths to feed” – as you put it.

(silence)

(She gets up, walks around.)

MARIE. You know – Pierre and I were hoping to start a co-operative school – professors teaching each other's children in each other's homes. *Maybe* – besides a Fellowship I could get you a *special honorarium* to help me with a school like that. Certainly you could drop teaching those lower girls' schools then?

(silence)

(PAUL thinks this over.)

PAUL. The whole thing is quite a gamble!

(They look at each other, smile. A moment of deep connection passing between them.)

(beat)

MARIE. If I weren't a gambler, Paul – I'd still be a tutor in the Polish countryside!

(She shakes his hand.)

For gambler's luck, stack all those books back as they were, please?

(They both smile.)

Oh – first – put this in Wilbois' box for me?

(She hands him note)

PAUL. Of course.

MARIE. I think I'll stay here awhile...alone...

(He starts out. She pulls something from pocket.)

Your hanky.

(He turns back. She offers it.)

PAUL. Keep it – for gambler's luck – “Marie” –

(She connects with him as he calls her “MARIE.” He exits. She looks after him, holding hanky to her cheek a moment.)

(Cross fade to parlor in MARIE's home. Later. Period chairs, small table between them, teacart or side board.)

(KATARINA enters with tea tray. Pours tea from shiny Polish samovar on sideboard. PAUL enters.)

PAUL. *Bonjour*, Mademoiselle – I'm Paul Langevin.

KATARINA. *Bonjour*, Monsieur.

PAUL. But – didn't we meet at your uncle's funeral? – part of Madame's family? From Warsaw?

KATARINA. Her niece – Katarina.

PAUL. You stayed on?

KATARINA. *(strikes a slightly dramatic pose)* No, the family decided I was the one to come back – help Aunt Marie get back on her feet – she's been in such deep mourning – and, of course – what could I do but volunteer myself?

(He gives her bouquet of roses.)

Oh – she dearly loves roses! I'll arrange them – in a crystal vase on the tea tray. Here, monsieur – the parlor? I'll tell Aunt Marie you're here –

(She exits. Moment as PAUL looks around. MARIE enters.)

MARIE. Paul!

PAUL. Soon as I heard, I came.

MARIE. *(imitating, with German accent)* “We invite you to join the faculty!”

(She laughs.)

Wilbois came personally last night.

PAUL. I'm thrilled, Marie!

(KATARINA stops at doorway, a moment, listening. Hearing PAUL say “Marie”, she bumps against door.)

MARIE. Katarina?

KATARINA. I was arranging the roses.

(KATARINA enters, setting down vase of flowers, arranging dishes, etc.)

They're from Monsieur.

(She covertly looks from one to the other.)

MARIE. Roses!

PAUL. I – I remembered you used to always have them –

(He smiles at MARIE. KATARINA serves them.)

KATARINA. Maybe you can persuade Aunt Marie to try a pastry today?

PAUL. Persuade?

KATARINA. Well –

(She glances at MARIE, then bursts into story with a theatrical flair.)

She's not eating! Can't hold anything down! – and she has a cough! It all just simply scares me to DEATH! What she needs is a new doctor and –

MARIE. *(interrupting)* Katarina? Maybe you'd enjoy taking the children to the park?

KATARINA. *(deflated)* What? Oh – of course –

(PAUL drinks, eats, notices MARIE doesn't.)

PAUL. That's why you're so thin?

(KATARINA exits, stays outside listening.)

MARIE. Katarina is just turning seventeen. And is very dramatic.

(PAUL chuckles. KATARINA, hearing her name, stops, moves closer again to listen at door.)

PAUL. You won't take a bite of the pastry?

MARIE. I barely eat. Mourning Pierre is taking its toll. But Katarina wants me fat and jolly now – so she can go home to Warsaw.

PAUL. Misses her family?

MARIE. Her beau, Stefan! They plan to start at the conservatory this fall together – become “concert pianists”! She tells me they will play on the same stage at the same time – on twin pianos! God help us!

(She chuckles as does PAUL. KATARINA, listening, bumps against door again.)

Katarina? I thought you were taking the children to the park?

KATARINA. Uh – they’re playing with the cat, upstairs. Would you like more tea?

MARIE. No thank you, Katarina.

(KATARINA exits.)

PAUL. Well – only stopped by to congratulate you – I’ll be leaving – I think there’s some sort of protocol book about inaugural lectures for new professors. I’ll make inquiries to the department. Good-night – Madame – Mademoiselle –

(He exits. KATARINA enters.)

MARIE. Katya? Don’t develop the miserable habit of listening in doorways or overdramatize to Paul – about me or my affairs or –

KATARINA. *(bewildered)* “Overdramatize”?

MARIE. Saying I won’t eat – can’t hold down food! Nothing of my personal life is to be revealed to anyone! Please!

(silence)

KATARINA. But Paul’s an old friend – coming back to the lab –

MARIE. He’ll be teaching at the Sorbonne only. I’ve suspended operations in the lab.

(pause)

KATARINA. Well – I’m glad!

MARIE. Why on earth would –

KATARINA. *(cutting in, mysteriously)* Something is very wrong in there!

MARIE. Wrong?

KATARINA. That day you sent me for your notebooks?
Marcel said – the very minute I came in –

(impulsively and very dramatically, as Marcel:)

“Katarina, look! All nine guinea pigs died! Overnight!”
And there they all were in the cage, Aunt Manya.

(She starts seeing them now, imitating their pose with her hands up.)

Stiff! Legs up! Oh my God!

MARIE. *(nonplussed)* Guinea pigs die in labs every day,
Katya. Shall we end this ridiculous discussion now?
And please don't swear in my presence?

(KATARINA picks up tray to exit.)

Oh – don't go – there's something I do want to discuss
with you.

KATARINA. Yes?

MARIE. I've just been appointed to your Uncle Pierre's
position at the Sorbonne for fall.

KATARINA. *(ecstatic)* But that's wonderful for you!

(She runs and embraces her.)

MARIE. It will mean a good salary, Katya –

(MARIE leads KATARINA to sit, as does MARIE.)

But I need to start preparing now! Quite hard!
Lectures to organize – papers to read – articles –
faculty meetings – and an Inaugural Lecture to give
–

(beat)

(She takes both KATARINA's hands.)

I – I know this will be hard for you – and a surprise –
but the children love you so – and I love and trust you
so with them – I – I need you to stay on – help me?
You can go home January – February – you can leave
then –

(silence)

KATARINA. August is what we agreed on, Aunt Manya – so I could find a tutoring job...

MARIE. It's a critical step for me...I'll make it up to you – a salary by fall you can save for school – and I – I'll try very hard to arrange a holiday for you to see Stefan –

KATARINA. Stefan and I are entering the conservatory *together* September first!

MARIE. The conservatory won't run away!

KATARINA. But we're taking a duet piano practicum! What – what if he takes it with someone else?

(She starts imagining this horror.)

Like *Raissa*?

MARIE. Will you grow up? Don't you see how little anyone's life turns out the way they planned – or hoped – or dreamed?

KATARINA. You promised!!

MARIE. Write your mother at once! Tell her I'm taking your Uncle Pierre's Chair at the Sorbonne and must ask that you stay until after the New Year!

(MARIE exits.)

(Cross fade to same Parlor; two weeks later.)

(PAUL enters from outside, MARIE from house.)

PAUL. Madame? Madame? I found the protocol book.

(He pulls book from briefcase.)

"Introduction for Acceptance of Professorship".

(He thumbs through book.)

Here: "At inaugural lecture, incoming professor commences with 1.) a salute of gratitude to Ministers of Education, University Officers, and Council of the Faculty of Science, designating all."

(He looks at her.)

MARIE. But – “The Ministers of Education”? They’re the ones that offered me that cursed pension, aren’t they? And nearly half the science faculty council were against me in the end! Now I’m supposed to give them a “salute of gratitude”? Besides – I’m paralyzed at *the thought* of Public Speaking!

PAUL. You have to play the game, Marie.

(She glares at him.)

MARIE. You still have no idea how impossible this is for me?

PAUL. *(reading)*

“I wish to express my deep gratitude to The Ministers of Education”

(He is writing words on piece of paper.)

– Then we name them – they’ll be front row.

(writing)

Secondly, you will give – Here –

(Holds out paper to her. She only looks at him.)

Marie? You said you needed help!

(She takes paper, stumbling.)

MARIE. “And – I wish to express my – deep – grat – gratitude – to the – Council of the Faculty – of Science – for granting me the – the – priv – priv –

(She crumples paper, glaring at him.)

PAUL. You’ve got the position – this is all just *pro forma*.

MARIE. I *can’t* do it!

(She turns away. He consults book again.)

PAUL. We’ll work on that later then. “2.) Eulogy to your predecessor”. Let me –

MARIE. *(interrupting)* Are you insane? You imagine I can stand up in public and provide an afternoon’s entertainment for the faculty, press, and Parisian Society by speaking about my extraordinary husband who died a monstrous death?

(She's close to tears.)

PAUL. But the tradition is –

MARIE. *(interrupting)* “Tradition?” You think that has anything to do with me? You understand nothing about me! NOTHING!

(She grabs Protocol Book from him and throws it to floor. Silence.)

PAUL. *(softly)* How *can* I help you then?

(silence)

MARIE. It has to be my way. There can be no other way.

(Beat. Then starting out.)

God! I've gotten a miserable headache, Paul...another time...?

(Scene shifts: two months later. Same Parlor. KATARINA, entering Parlor with brooch, calling:)

KATARINA. Auntie Manya? Auntie Manya?

(MARIE enters.)

Wear Grandmother's brooch? I brought it just for you.

(MARIE looks, gives it back.)

MARIE. I'll wear it Christmas.

KATARINA. But the Fall Inaugural Lecture at the Sorbonne is a *very* special occasion!

(She stops short. MARIE looking at her, frightened.)

MARIE. Please! Don't dress me up! Help me pretend it's just an ordinary day of teaching! It's the only way I have a hope of getting through this.

(Lights up on Sorbonne Auditorium. Later.)

(MARIE comes to podium to address audience. KATARINA and PAUL stand in wings.)

I wish to express my – dee – deep –

(She begins to cough, clears throat, grasps podium, breathes with difficulty.)

I – I wish to express –

(She glances at PAUL, crumples first page of lecture, goes to her own notes.)

Let me begin – begin today by say – saying this seminar will continue in the exact place where Professor Pierre Curie left off. But – for this inaugural session? A short review!

(She glances at PAUL again, gaining confidence, then looking at audience, directly.)

At first, Professor Curie and I believed the rays' energy from the uranium atoms was coming from the sun. Scientist Lord Kelvin, University of Glasgow, was the prime proponent of the "sun theory".

But then? We discovered the uranium atom, left in the dark in a drawer with no sun at all was still emitting high energy rays!

(She steps closer and closer to audience, more informal, intimate, speaking directly to them.)

Next, we found that the energy rays from the uranium atom were coming, not from the sun, but from inside the uranium atom's nucleus itself. These energy rays didn't depend on any external factors at all – light of the sun, temperature, rain, snow – nothing!

Instead, we found that energy rays were always found in association with the uranium atom!

(Still closer, beginning to talk to audience individually.)

Therefore, smaller components inside the uranium atom *could* exist. And the components could be active – emitting rays. In actuality one of these components was capable of emitting intense energy rays. I named the component "radium". And I called the process "radioactivity."

(She moves back behind science table, puts notes away, takes off glasses.)

MARIE. *(cont.)* That ends today's lecture. Next week, I will speak on radioactive substances.

(She bows slightly to applause. PAUL and KATARINA rush to her. She is suddenly pale, trembling, close to fainting. She recuperates a bit.)

PAUL. You were extraordinary!

KATARINA. I was so proud!

(MARIE turns to PAUL.)

MARIE. My *throat* was in spasm – my *hands* trembling! Paul, you should have made me practice more.

PAUL. *(chuckling)* Me? I could barely get in the room with you! Besides – no one noticed anything except your triumph! All of Paris! And they were enthralled – and still as mice.

MARIE. *(laughing lightly)* With the mentality of mice, most of them –

(He gives her flowers.)

Thank you, Paul – they're lovely –

KATARINA. *(excited)* We've planned a champagne toast for you now, in the lab garden – with a coconut almond cake!

(She exits.)

MARIE. I couldn't begin to swallow rich cake – or drink champagne –

PAUL. At least come to the lab garden with us?

(MARIE looks at PAUL quickly.)

MARIE. The lab is closed!

(beat)

(MARIE breaks away, starting off.)

PAUL. Where are you going?

MARIE. To Pierre!

PAUL. What?

KATARINA. Aunt Marie?

(Silence. MARIE is gone.)

PAUL. *(calling after her)* Wait – wait –

(Cross fade: PIERRE's gravestone, cemetery. Later.)

(MARIE enters, crosses to grave, carrying bouquet. She kneels, putting flowers on grave one at a time, then, listening, senses another presence. Looking around.)

MARIE. *(whispering)* Pierre? You're here! I – I just did the inaugural lecture for your class – stumbled – coughed – but I did it! Are you proud of me?

(She adds a flower.)

They've given me your office. And I'll hate being there – but I know I must accept that. And everything else. Remember how we promised each other we'd go on with the work if the other were gone? I took that first step! God, it's so impossibly hard! Do you know what I really want? To run away to the country with the girls – be a real mother – ride bicycles with them – chase fireflies – make gooseberry jam and bread together – then sit alone by the fire at night and rest – but I can't!

(beat)

Stay close? Watch over the children – me? My birthday's tomorrow! Help me through –

(PAUL enters quietly, behind her. She senses him.)

(beat)

PAUL. Come to Pierre's office with me? Science department's deserted – they just put your name on the door.

(She looks away.)

Start making it yours – walk around – look at the view – plan what you want on the walls –

MARIE. *Somewhere* there must be another empty office!

PAUL. It's an honor, Marie –

MARIE. It's cruel! *He's not there!*

(She turns from him to grave, laying more flowers.)

(A long silence. She's beginning to cry. then, whispering:)

When I put my head on his coffin lid before they lowered him...his energy came right through to me. And now before you came? I felt it again. We were agnostics...but we believed there was only a thin veil between the living and the dead – their energy flows back and forth to us...you see, we believed in that kind of energy too. My big sister died when I was eight – my mother – when I was ten –

PAUL. *(whispering)* Yes?

MARIE. The only comfort I found? Not God – but pretending I was a doctor – who went to the moon and discovered the magic cure to bring them back to life – I felt my sister and mother's energy around me then – and I promised them over and over that's what I would do – when I grew up I would find the magic cure –

(Silence. Then whispering, sobbing, fighting hysteria.)

His head was crushed by horses' hooves...he'd slipped on the street – horses pulling a wagon – loaded with military uniforms – my great pacifist husband –

PAUL. Shh! I know –

MARIE. *(more hysterical)* His magnificent brain – splattered all over the Paris Boulevard –

(He pulls her up, as she cries, embraces her tightly. She buries her head in his chest blurting out in a daze of pain.)

Junks of it stuck on his overcoat – I tore it – burned it in the fireplace...shred by shred by shred –

(He kisses her and they stay in embrace. Finally she quietens.)

PAUL. It's starting to rain.

(He puts his jacket around her.)

It's macabre here! Let's go –

(He puts arm around her. She puts her head on his shoulder. They exit.)

(Cross fade. Two months later. MARIE's office.)

(She's on a chair, stacking books on a shelf, doesn't see LORD KELVIN enters.)

KELVIN. Well – Madame Curie...

(She whirls around.)

MARIE. Yes?

KELVIN. Lord Kelvin, Madame!

MARIE. *(surprised, then smiling)* Lord Kelvin? We've met – but years ago, wasn't it?

(He kisses her hand.)

KELVIN. Only now – your name's on the door, Madame! Something of a shock – but very impressive indeed!

MARIE. Thank you, Lord Kelvin –

(He walks around.)

KELVIN. Well – all of his books still intact on the shelves – far as I can tell – you've left all the ones of significance, I dare say?

MARIE. All of them are there.

(He looks around walls.)

KELVIN. But his diplomas – citations? Plaques?

MARIE. My daughter, Irène, has put them up in her room –

KELVIN. Appropriate, appropriate to be sure!

(He's reading MARIE's diplomas on wall.)

Then too – it lets us all enjoy yours here, Madame.

(She looks at him.)

KELVIN. *(cont.)* His name's on your diploma, here – you were Pierre's student straight the way through I imagine – many, many years his junior – 10 – 15 years?

(She nods.)

What a fine teacher he must have been...along with his magnificent research on rad –

MARIE. *(interrupting)* I began the research on radium. He followed my lead.

(He looks at children's photos on desk.)

KELVIN. Even added the children's photos?

(He smiles at her.)

What shall I say – such a motherly touch – ?

MARIE. I am their mother, Lord Kelvin.

KELVIN. The wee one?

MARIE. Èvette?

KELVIN. Favors Pierre – either of them inherit his genius?

(beat)

MARIE. Mostly they play with the cat –

(He keeps looking around, MARIE growing very wary.)

And you, sir? What brings you to Paris? And to me?

(He sits, having not been invited to.)

KELVIN. First off, to extend condolences, Madame, on Pierre's untimely death.

MARIE. But such a long trip from the University of Glasgow to pay a condolence call? Especially since it's been so long since Pierre –

KELVIN. *(interrupting)* Other reasons, of course, bring me to Paris, Madame. I've been interviewing for a "guest lectureship" here – at a stupendous University, to say the least – St. Mary's Catholic Institute! You've heard of it, of course?

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