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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

Sorry!
Wrong Chimney!

by Jack Sharkey
and Leo W. Sears

SAMUEL FRENCH

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SORRY! WRONG CHIMNEY! had its World Premiere at the Metro Playhouse Dinner Theatre in Phoenix, Arizona, on November 1st, 1989, with the following players and personnel:

DAVID.....Thomas M. Dvorak
SAMANTHA.....Rachel Underwood
NATALIE.....Karen Lugosi
WILLIAM.....Gary W. Charlson
KRIS.....Ed Cole
SHEILA.....Robyn Allen
POLICEMAN.....Brad Garday

Director/Producer	Leo W. Sears
Ass't. Director/Lights/Sound	Larry Swanson
Business Manager	Jan Sears
Group Sales	Wes Norton

CHARACTERS

DAVID TUTTLE, a struggling young executive
SAMANTHA TUTTLE, his bride of 6 months
NATALIE WELDON, their neighbor across the hall
WILLIAM WELDON, Natalie's psychiatrist husband
KRIS KREIGLE, a man with a Holiday delusion
SHEILA, Kris's doggedly devoted fiancee
POLICEMAN, a determined disciple of Law and Order

The entire action of the play takes place in the Tuttles' metropolitan apartment

ACT I
Early evening, ten days before Christmas

ACT II
About 2 1/2 seconds later

ACT III
One hour later

ACT I

SCENE: The apartment of DAVID and SAMANTHA TUTTLE. It is modern, sparsely decorated, but comfortable. Stage Right has upstage exit to kitchen; Stage Left has door to apartment hallway upstage, door to bedroom downstage; against right wall below the doorway is a small table holding telephone and stereo; upstage wall has fireplace and small, partly decorated, Christmas tree. A sofa center stage has a long-and-narrow coffee table before it.

[NOTE: The foregoing is the ideal set, to be augmented with pictures on walls, perhaps a window in the upstage wall with snow packed against its lower corners, additional chairs as desired. However: The Metro Playhouse stage dimensions at the Phoenix premiere were such that a modified version of the setting was used (see Set Design) and it functioned admirably well; the Christmas tree, on this smaller stage, was a miniature one upon the desk downstage right, which also held the stereo. The downstage-facing fireplace was just big enough for KRIS to almost fit into during his vain escape try; the relative positions of the bedroom and hall doors in this smaller set made KRIS' s final exit somewhat extended—but it also extended the hilarity of the moment.]

AT RISE: SAMANTHA, an attractive woman in her early 20s, wearing red pajamas and a Santa hat, brings several boxes out of the bedroom and places them on sofa, then exits to kitchen and returns with a pair of wine glasses

which she places on coffee table; she then goes to light switch near hall door and DIMS ROOM LIGHTS, then turns on some Christmas MUSIC on stereo. DOORBELL RINGS. She goes to door, striking romantic pose as she flings it open on:

SAMANTHA. Ho-ho-ho, baby! (*NATALIE, a well-endowed woman in her 30s, enters in flamboyant dress*)

NATALIE. Ho-ho-ho, yourself, Sam! You been hitting the eggnog early?

SAMANTHA. (*rueful laugh*) Sorry, Natalie, I thought you were David. Come in, come in! (*will un-dim switch and LIGHTS COME UP FULL as she closes door*)

NATALIE. Maybe I shouldn't. I mean, if you're about to pounce on David in your pajamas—?

SAMANTHA. Believe me, anything that happened would still get a G-rating! (*waves her downstage a bit*)

NATALIE. (*moving down to sofa area.*) A G-rating, with the two of you practically still on your honeymoon?

SAMANTHA. (*turns music off*) Not practically. Theoretically.

NATALIE. So what's this pajama bit?

SAMANTHA. (*crosses to sofa, sits*) The honeymoon's kind of—worn off. David's been working nights *and* weekends, lately. A lot. He *does* come home for dinner, but then he pops right out again.

NATALIE. You think red pajamas might put a little glue under his shoes?

SAMANTHA. Well, that and—maybe—decorating the tree tonight—listening to Christmas carols while we worked—and doubling the rum in the eggnog!

NATALIE. (*sits beside her on sofa, on:*) Well, if nothing else, you'd send him back to work *jolly!*

SAMANTHA. What *happens* to men after you marry them?!

NATALIE. I'm not sure. If you ever find out, let *me* know, and I'll figure out what's wrong with me and Bill! How long *have* you been married, now—five months?

SAMANTHA. Six. And already he'd rather be at the office than here with me.

NATALIE. He's got to come home to bed sometime!

SAMANTHA. Yeah. To sleep!

NATALIE. Sam, honey, you're taking this too hard. Men are ambitious. In a big company like David's, putting in extra hours is the way to *advance* up the ranks. Once he's a top executive, he can let somebody *else* put in the overtime.

SAMANTHA. But can I *wait* that long?

NATALIE. (*shrugs*) What *else* have you got to do? Say, by the way—do you *have* any of that double-rum eggnog handy?

SAMANTHA. (*starts to get up*) I have all the *ingredients* ready—only take a minute to whip it up ...

NATALIE. (*stops her*) Ah, don't bother. Why should *I* get jolly when Bill is across the hall sound *asleep!*

SAMANTHA. Isn't it a little *early* for bedtime?

NATALIE. Oh, it's just a nap after work. He says listening to his patients drone on and on all day *almost* puts him to sleep, but he hangs on till he gets home. I'll wake him up for dinner.

SAMANTHA. And then, I'll bet, you get terribly romantic, don't you!

NATALIE. Well—*I* do, for all the good it does me.

SAMANTHA. Bill's not in the mood, either? Just like David?

NATALIE. Not while there's anything running in prime time. Oh, he *cuddles* nicely on the sofa, but I can't get it to go much farther than that—nothing that involves his taking his eyes off the TV screen, anyhow.

SAMANTHA. I'm *so* glad!

NATALIE. You're *what?*

SAMANTHA. Oh, I mean, so glad that David's not the *only* unromantic husband in the building. At least your Bill is *home* with you nights, and not out with—I mean—not *out* ...

NATALIE. Say, you *do* have a problem! You're not being silly enough to imagine David has—how can I put it?—something "on the side?"

SAMANTHA. Oh, if only I were sure I *was* imagining!

NATALIE. But honey—David is *bananas* about you! You're all he thinks about, all he talks about!

SAMANTHA. (*a little frown*) How do *you* know so much about what David thinks and talks about?

NATALIE. Sam, I meet your husband almost every day!

SAMANTHA. Natalie, what are you saying?!

NATALIE. Relax, Samantha, relax! I don't mean I *meet* David daily—I mean, almost every day, I meet *David.* There's a difference.

SAMANTHA. It—it does sound better with the different stress ...

NATALIE. Look, honey, this apartment building has hallways, and mailboxes in the lobby, and a pool and Jacuzzi out back, and a newsstand on the corner, and—it's not too unlikely for me and David to run into one another now and again, is it?

SAMANTHA. I—I guess not.

NATALIE. Good. And when we meet, as friendly neighbors, we talk. And when David talks, he talks about *you!* Oh, *I* talk, too, mostly about Bill—but all *my* comments are complaints. David's are nothing but compliments.

SAMANTHA. You're just saying that to make me feel better.

NATALIE. True. But also because it's a fact. (*stands*) There, now do you feel better?

SAMANTHA. You know—I *do*. Much better. (*stands*) Thanks, Natalie. (*starts with her, toward door*) Your visit has done me a world of good.

NATALIE. (*stops*) Oh! Silly me! I almost forgot the *reason* for the visit! The sight of you in those romantic pajamas must have startled it right out of my head.

SAMANTHA. This wasn't just a social call?

NATALIE. More a *duty* call, as friend and neighbor. Honey—now don't get upset or anything, but—have you heard about the Santa Claus burglar?

SAMANTHA. Of *course* I have. Nothing *else* in the news, lately!

NATALIE. But did you hear he's been seen not two blocks from here?

SAMANTHA. *No! That* I didn't know. Oh, dear, now I'm more worried than *ever* about David being out nights!

NATALIE. Now-now, it's perfectly safe if you keep your door locked—unless that fireplace has a *wide* chimney—?

SAMANTHA. (*looks that way*) Not—not *very* wide ... unless —just how *big* is this burglar, anyhow?

NATALIE. Hard to *tell* a guy's build in a Santa suit. Could be all fluff and padding around a body skinny as a snake. Maybe the best course is to keep a *fire* going all night long.

SAMANTHA. It's really a shame. Spoils the Christmas spirit, kind of, a guy dressed like Santa breaking into people's apartments. He must be sick.

NATALIE. I know. Just my luck, he'd pop into *our* place and my heroic Bill would lie him down and start *analyzing* him!

SAMANTHA. (*laughs*) That's what psychiatrists are for, Natalie.

NATALIE. Personally, I'd just as soon cure him of his criminal tendencies the speedier way—with a baseball bat!

SAMANTHA. Bill's way would be better—you could *charge* him for the cure!

NATALIE. Hmm, never thought of that! Well, either way, Bill and I are ready for him, and he'll get what he deserves.

SAMANTHA. What a person like that deserves is a lump of *coal* for Christmas!

NATALIE. In his stocking?

SAMANTHA. Upside of his head! (*BOTH laugh; then:*)

NATALIE. Well, honey, you just keep this door locked tight, and if you hear anything in the night when David's not here, just give a holler and I'll charge right over with that baseball bat—I can't really expect Bill to charge over toting the *couch!*

SAMANTHA. (*laughs, opening door*) Thanks, Natalie, I'll keep it in mind. And Natalie—thanks.

NATALIE. (*smiles*) What are friends for? (*exits; SAMANTHA closes door after her, SAMANTHA sits and starts going through boxes, looking at ornaments and decorations. One of the boxes she opens has Santa costume in it. She opens it just as DAVID enters. She just gets a quick glimpse of it, and its presence doesn't register. DAVID is a handsome young executive in his mid-twenties. He wears overcoat as he enters. He is wearing suit and tie under. SAMANTHA rushes to him, knocking over boxes as she does, and embraces him. In midst of embrace, DAVID spots Santa suit which was spilled with rest of decorations. He breaks free, almost knocking SAMANTHA over as he does. He rushes to Santa costume and quickly stuffs it back into box.*)

DAVID. (*almost breathless*) Well, Sam, what's going on? (*nonchalantly hiding box behind back)*

SAMANTHA. (*crossing to him*) I thought we could have a romantic evening. Just the two of us decorating the tree and the apartment.

DAVID. Oh, honey, that sounds—just wonderful! But—

SAMANTHA. David, *please* don't tell me you have to go back to the office tonight!

DAVID. Sam, if I *don't* tell you that—how *will* I explain when I go out?

SAMANTHA. Awww, David!

DAVID. (*backing toward door, box still hidden*) I know, I know, and I promise you, soon as Christmas is over, I'll be the most romantic husband in this apartment building!

SAMANTHA. From what I've heard, *that's* not saying much! (*starts to cry, rushes into bedroom, slams door*)

DAVID. (*lamely*) *Hon*–ee ...?! (*slumps*) Oh, hell. (*shakes head, swings box around to hold it in front of him, now, turns and opens front door, then steps back in panic as NATALIE steps in; he whips box behind his back from her, instantly, forces a smile, and:*) Why—Natalie! How nice!

NATALIE. If you *really* think it's nice, you should tell the sweat glands on your forehead.

DAVID. (*wipes cuff across brow*) Hot. Very hot in this apartment. Like an oven.

NATALIE. David, what are you being so *nervous* about?

DAVID. Wh–what m–makes you think I'm b–being nervous? (*croaks an unconvincing laugh*)

NATALIE. You don't *always* talk like Mel Tillis.

DAVID. Like M–m–m–m–m–m—?

NATALIE. You *said* it! Or *tried* to, anyhow.

DAVID. (*mastering himself*) Just the heat. Heat always makes me stutter.

NATALIE. You must have a hell of a time in Hawaii! ... Where the humahumanukanuka-apuahua goes swimming by?

DAVID. L–look, was there something you wanted? I'm in a kind of hurry ...

NATALIE. More overtime money for Christmas?

DAVID. Damn, I wish they *paid* executives overtime! That'd simplify *everything!*

NATALIE. You mean all these late hours of yours are for *nothing?*

DAVID. Look, only *clerical* people get overtime pay. Executives get the same money if they work fifteen hours a day or *none*. Sometimes I wish I *weren't* on the corporate ladder—!

NATALIE. Then why knock yourself out this way? You can't be an *inefficient* executive, can you?

DAVID. Of course not!

NATALIE. So how come you can't get your work done by quitting time?

DAVID. Natalie, is there some reason you're asking so many questions about my personal business?

NATALIE. (*looks around, sees they're alone, draws him a bit into the room, speaks conspiratorially:*) Darn right there is! David, as a friend, I should tell you something – something important.

DAVID. (*at sea*) This—this isn't about my *deodorant,* is it?

NATALIE. You smell just dandy. A little sweaty, but dandy. No, it's about Sam.

DAVID. (*glances toward bedroom*) She's—all right, isn't she?

NATALIE. Haven't you seen her tonight?

DAVID. Just briefly. She seemed—upset.

NATALIE. David, she *is* upset. Listen—(*lowers her voice even more:*) I'm only telling you this because I think

the two of you are such a swell couple, and I wouldn't want anything to change that.

DAVID. Telling me *what—? (has unconsciously lowered his own voice to her conspiratorial level)*

NATALIE. Samantha thinks—or is on the *brink* of thinking—that there's—well—maybe another woman!

DAVID. (*normal volume:*) *WHAT?!*

NATALIE. Ssssh! (*pulls him farther into center of room*) Keep your voice down! It's these late night *hours* of yours, and no romance on the home front. It's a bit extreme, but I can't exactly blame her. You *are* really working nights, aren't you—?

DAVID. Scout's honor, yes! (*glances at bedroom door; then:*) Except—

NATALIE. Except what?

DAVID. (*very low-voiced:*) I'm not working at my *office!*

NATALIE. (*normal volume:*) *WHAT?!*

DAVID. Ssssh! (*pulls her farther into room*) Keep your voice down!

NATALIE. Sorry.

DAVID. (*extends box*) *This* is what I've been doing nights! At Carmichael's Department Store!

NATALIE. (*peeks into box, reacts*) You've been playing Santa?!

DAVID. I want to get Sam a present—a terrific present—her very first Christmas present from me since our wedding! And—I can't *afford* it!

NATALIE. On an *executive's* salary?

DAVID. Don't let the title fool you. I'm still on the Entry Level. I make peanuts compared to the *big* bosses. And what with gas for the car, keeping my suits cleaned and pressed, the rent on this apartment, not to mention food bills, and—

NATALIE. (*impatiently*) I *get* it, I *get* it! And I must say, I'm impressed. Working all day at the office, then working all night with tiny little screaming demons on your knee—

DAVID. (*moving doorward*) And I'll lose *that* job if I don't get *out* of here—!

NATALIE. (*moving along with him*) Sam would be so proud of you if she knew—

DAVID. (*stops*) She *mustn't* know!

NATALIE. Why not?

DAVID. Because if she found out, she'd say she'd rather have *me* at *home* nights than *any* present, and I'd have to quit! And what a dreary Christmas morning there'd be, *then*, with nothing under the tree ...!

NATALIE. But if she'd rather have you home nights—

DAVID. Natalie, *you're* a woman—Christmas will be here *soon*—would *you* rather have *Bill* home every night, or a sable stole under your tree Christmas morning ...?

NATALIE. (*after a thoughtful pause*) You've made your point.

DAVID. So do you see why I've got to keep this a secret?

NATALIE. Yes, I do.

DAVID. And—you won't *tell* Sam about it, will you–?

NATALIE. After all the trouble you've gone to, I'd be a *louse* to spill the beans! My lips are sealed.

(*They are in doorway-to-hall area now; neither of them sees SAMANTHA open bedroom door at this point and peek slightly out, curiously, toward where they stand; SAMANTHA will, of course, react appropriately to everything they now say, without revealing her presence:*)

DAVID. I really appreciate those lips of yours! They've done me a big favor!

NATALIE. What are neighbors *for?!*

DAVID. And you'll say nothing to Samantha?

NATALIE. *This* is the kind of secret every husband *should* keep from his wife!

DAVID. Of course, on Christmas morning, I fully intend to tell her about *your* part in this affair! Sam ought to learn what kind of friend you really are!

NATALIE. I'd love to see the look on her face when you spring the surprise!

DAVID. Heck, why don't you come *over* Christmas morning?! And bring Bill along!

NATALIE. Oh, definitely! Maybe our little secret will start giving *him* ideas! (*BOTH laugh*)

DAVID. Well, better get a move on!

NATALIE. I'll bet your lap is longing for a tenant by now! With a lot of greedy requests!

DAVID. *Ssssh!* Sam might hear you! Come on, let's get out of here!

(*They exit; SAMANTHA now comes fully out of bedroom, her face puckered with dismay and unhappiness; she stands center, lower lip trembling, then jerks her head for one last look toward the front door, and this bobbles the tassel-pompon on her cap past her face, she reacts to it, yanks the cap from her head, slams it onto the floor, then does a little dance on it with both feet in frustrated fury; at this moment, front door opens slightly and DAVID leans his head in, frowning in uncertainty; then he loses uncertainty and:*)

DAVID. Hey! You *are* wearing pajamas! I only just realized.

SAMANTHA. How *sweet* of you to even *notice! (hastily grabs up cap and replaces it on her head, angrily, on:)*

DAVID. But it's not even past dinner time yet.

SAMANTHA. I got *sleepy! Okay?!*

DAVID. (*easing from view*) Okay-okay-okay. 'Night, honey. (*shuts door and is gone.*)

SAMANTHA. (*to closed door:*) "Honey?!" (*sights on ornament-etc. boxes*) And as for *you*–! (*Picks up nearest box, raises it overhead, almost dashes it to the floor, then stops*) No. Grandma's glass treetop ornament's in there. (*sighs, lowers box*) I'd better just put these things away. (*starts to stack boxes on sofa, looks around in puzzlement, then behind sofa, etc.*) That's funny—where in the world did—? ... It was here just a moment ago ...? (*looks toward front door again, frowns in puzzlement, thinks a moment; then, coming to a decision, she goes to phone and dials; waits; then gets her party, and:*) Bill? ... Samantha Tuttle ... I did? I'm sorry. But isn't it a bit *early* to be in bed? ... No-no, don't get Natalie, it's *you* I want to talk to! ... No, not on the phone. Over here ... Well, *get* dressed, then! ... She what? ... Well, of *course* she went out, you idiot, or why would I *bother* to call you! ... No, I am *not* proposing a *tryst*, you numbskull! ... Oh, look, just get over here, will you? ... Okay, get *dressed* and get over here! ... Fine ... See you then! (*hangs up phone; stands uncertainly; clasps and unclasps her hands; paces; after maybe thirty seconds, a KNOCK at door; she opens it and DR. WILLIAM WELDON, a tallish owlish man with slightly uncombed hair and heavy-rimmed eyeglasses, garbed in pajamas, slippers, and a bathrobe, steps into room slightly; she impatiently pushes him even farther into room, shuts door swiftly, leaning back against it as if to prevent further intrusion from outside; he looks her up and down, and then:*)

WILLIAM. Are you *sure* this isn't a tryst?

SAMANTHA. (*annoyed*) What do you take me for!

WILLIAM. A pretty woman in red pajamas.

SAMANTHA. Now, really, Bill—! (*takes step toward him*)

WILLIAM. (*takes backstep*) A pretty woman in red pajamas who just finished yelling at me that it was a bit *early* to be in bed!

SAMANTHA. Bill, we are *not* going to bed!

WILLIAM. Try telling that to the next person who walks *in* here!

SAMANTHA. Bill, I just want to *talk* to you. Professionally. Any harm in that?

WILLIAM. Depends what profession you have in mind.

SAMANTHA. *Yours*, of course!

WILLIAM. (*a bit coolly*) If you're waiting for me to ask you to lie on the couch, forget it!

SAMANTHA. I am *not* seeing you as a *patient!* (*shoves him so he sits abruptly on sofa*)

WILLIAM. Then—as *what?*

SAMANTHA. (*sits beside him*) A loving friend!

WILLIAM. (*stands up*) That's what I'm *afraid* of!

SAMANTHA. *Will* you sit *down?!*

WILLIAM. (*startled, sits beside her again*) All right. Let's *be* professional. How long have you felt these urges for me?

SAMANTHA. *What* urges?

WILLIAM. Well, you're *certainly* not dressed for a chummy *chat!*

SAMANTHA. Well, neither are *you!*

WILLIAM. That's only because you sounded so *urgent* on the phone! I didn't wait to dress. Maybe I should have. (*starts to stand again, but cannot because she grabs him with both arms*)

SAMANTHA. Will you *stop* imagining I have these mad *desires* about you?!

WILLIAM. (*looks at her arms embracing him; then:*) I'll try—but you're not *helping* much ...!

SAMANTHA. Oh, don't be ridiculous! (*releases him*) That was just to keep you from popping up and down!

WILLIAM. Oh. Then—this *is* just a friendly chat? Even if you're wearing red pajamas?

SAMANTHA. Yes! Now will you *forget* my pajamas?!

WILLIAM. I'll—I'll *try*. (*after a pause*) Are those silk or nylon?

SAMANTHA. (*shrugs*) Who cares! My pajamas are not the issue here.

WILLIAM. So *you* say! What do you *think* the issue is, Samantha ...?

SAMANTHA. Stop treating me like a *patient!*

WILLIAM. You *said* you wanted me to act *professional!*

SAMANTHA. Not *act* professional—*be* professional! I want to talk to you about David. And Natalie.

WILLIAM. Natalie's gone out.

SAMANTHA. Of *course* she has! That's just my *point! She's* gone—and *David's* gone! *Now* do you see why I asked you to come over?

WILLIAM. Absolutely! (*jumps to his feet, starts for door at a run*) I'll send you my bill!

SAMANTHA. I am *not* in love with you!

WILLIAM. (*stops with hand on doorknob, frowns; then:*) You're not?

SAMANTHA. Not even slightly.

WILLIAM. (*releases knob*) Why? What's *wrong* with me?

SAMANTHA. (*patiently*) Not a thing, Bill. You're handsome, you're charming, you're intelligent and you make lots and lots of money.

WILLIAM. But you don't love me.

SAMANTHA. But I don't love you.

WILLIAM. (*returns to where she still sits on sofa, looks down at her; then:*) Maybe you *do* need professional help!

SAMANTHA. Where should I start? This is all so difficult.

WILLIAM. Well, we've established, without a doubt, that you're not in love with me. (*sits beside her.*)

SAMANTHA. Right.—How's Natalie?

WILLIAM. Fine. (*stands*) That was easy.

SAMANTHA. (*grabs his arm and pulls him back onto sofa*) I mean *how* is Natalie?

WILLIAM. Are you trying to tell me something?

SAMANTHA. Where is Natalie right now?

WILLIAM. She said she was going shopping.

SAMANTHA. And you *believed* her?

WILLIAM. Maybe you're right. (*dryly*) Going shopping around Christmas is *very* suspicious!

SAMANTHA. Don't you think it's also very strange that *David* isn't here?

WILLIAM. (*putting her on*) Do you think that—maybe *he's* out shopping too? And at Christmas!

SAMANTHA. No, David says he's at work. But, you know what I found before David came home?

WILLIAM. What? A charge card? A Christmas list? Oh, what a tangled web!

SAMANTHA. Will you stop that? I'm serious. I found a—Santa outfit!

WILLIAM. (*holding back the laughter*) And, at Christmas time. Some people!

SAMANTHA. But it disappeared. Don't you think that's strange?

WILLIAM. (*finally laughing out loud*) Maybe David's the Santa burglar.

SAMANTHA. (*stands*) I thought you were my friend. You wouldn't be laughing if you heard the conversation *I* heard between David and Natalie. They were discussing their sordid little affair!

WILLIAM. David and Natalie? (*stands*) Wait a minute. You think—

SAMANTHA. If I hadn't heard it with my own ears I wouldn't have believed it myself. I heard them discussing how much she *wanted* to be sitting on his lap.

WILLIAM. Samantha, are you sure? Couldn't it just be your imagination?

SAMANTHA. Bill, I know what I heard. (*crosses to tree*) They're planning on telling us Christmas morning. I can hear them now! "Merry Christmas, Bill and Samantha! We're dumping you and running away to Bora Bora!"

WILLIAM. They *said* Bora Bora?

SAMANTHA. No, but that's where lovers run *off* to.

WILLIAM. Not in this case. (*is putting her on*) I would think they would choose a much colder place. (*crosses to her*) It adds up. A Santa Claus outfit. And a lap! This is terrible! If what you're telling me is the truth, they definitely need professional help. It's a sad, sad case. You'd better sit down.

SAMANTHA. (*sits at sofa, worriedly attentive*) Sounds like you're familiar with cases like these.

WILLIAM. (*still not taking SAMANTHA seriously; sits on arm of sofa next to her*) What we have here is what is known as the *North Pole Syndrome*. It's very rare but happens this time of year. Two friends, in this case David and Natalie, have a romantic fantasy. He dresses as Santa Claus, and she dresses as Santa's little helper.

SAMANTHA. I *knew* it! What can we do?

WILLIAM. (*stands and crosses to left behind sofa*) We've got to act fast before it's too late. We can only hope we've caught it in the early stages. In the final stages it's

not a pretty sight! The two of them will think it's Christmas year 'round. They'll be addicted to Bing Crosby movies and Christmas carols. They'll eat nothing but fruitcake and eggnog. They'll go through all their life savings buying presents and decorating any evergreen tree they see. In a worst-case scenario, they'll resort to stealing reindeer and trying to fly off of tall buildings.

SAMANTHA. (*with great concern*) And then—?

WILLIAM. (*with mock sincerity*) You'll see reindeer and the poor souls embedded in the sidewalk somewhere—still smiling. (*trying hard to keep back the laughter*) It's tragic!

SAMANTHA. (*stands*) Can anything be done? We've got to do something! (*crosses to him; then: suddenly realizes that WILLIAM has been joking with her*) Bill! So you think it's funny! There is no such thing as North Pole Syndrome, is there?

WILLIAM. Of course not, Samantha! (*puts arm around her*) Your accusations about Natalie and David are just as silly. Why would David *do* anything like *that* when he's got such a beautiful and loving wife? And, of course, Natalie's got *me!* You just have a very active imagination. I'm sure there's a very *logical* explanation for what you heard. I wouldn't worry about it.

SAMANTHA. I guess you're right. I think I'm going to call David at his office and apologize to him for even thinking him guilty.

WILLIAM. There you go! What a good idea. While you're doing that I'm going back over and wait for the damage report when Natalie gets back from shopping. Why does Neiman-Marcus have to have a charge card? I think we could wipe out the total indebtedness of Brazil with what Natalie charges on that card!

SAMANTHA. Well, why don't you just close the account?

WILLIAM. And miss out on the fun of the guilt trip I can put on her? That charge receipt is material for several weeks of good old-fashioned blackmail. She feels so guilty, I can get away with almost *anything* for at *least* two months!

SAMANTHA. That's dishonest—using her like that. You ought to be ashamed.

WILLIAM. Oh, I am—for about ten seconds. (*exits*)

SAMANTHA. (*closes door, chuckling to herself*) How could I ever suspect David? (*crosses to phone; then as she dials:*) David, you're not going to believe what I was thinking. I thought that you and Natalie were—Hello.—May I speak to David Tuttle, please?—He's not there? This is his desk, isn't it?—You don't know. Well, who is this?—You're Ralph, the maintenance engineer? Can you ask someone else if they know where Mr. Tuttle is?—You're the only one in that area. The office has been closed since five? (*suddenly concerned*) There must be some mistake.—The office *always* closes at five ... especially during the *holiday* season?—No. No message. (*hangs up; then to herself:*) I'm sure there's a logical explanation. (*there's a KNOCK at the door; crosses to door*) Who's there?

WILLIAM. (*offstage*) It's me, Bill. I locked myself out.

SAMANTHA. (*opens door*) I'm so glad you came back. It's awful. (*as he enters she runs to him and gives him a big embrace*)

WILLIAM. (*off-guard*) This isn't the first time I've locked myself out.

SAMANTHA. (*in tears*) Bill, you're such a good friend.

WILLIAM. You're a good friend, too, Samantha. (*they are standing in front of door when they hear offstage voice of NATALIE; BOTH react:*)

NATALIE. Samantha? (*KNOCK at door; WILLIAM, nearest door, instinctively gets behind SAMANTHA*)

WILLIAM. It's Natalie!

SAMANTHA. (*reaching for doorknob, angrily*) I want a *word* with her!

WILLIAM. (*spins her to face him*) *I* don't! Not in *this* outfit!

SAMANTHA. (*struggling to get out of his grasp*) But *we're* not having an affair!

WILLIAM. No, but we're sure *dressed* for it!

NATALIE. (*KNOCKS again*) Samantha, are you *in* there—?! (*she starts to open door; WILLIAM takes a terrified backstep, still clutching SAMANTHA, arm of sofa catches him at back of knees, and he topples over arm onto sofa, with SAMANTHA lying prone on top of him [their faces are cheek-to-cheek so that BOTH are facing out front, wide-eyed with fright]; NATALIE steps in, purse slung over one wrist, both arms holding small stack of gift-wrapped packages; from her viewpoint, she can see two pairs of feet over sofa-arm, no faces*) Samantha, I wonder if you could be a dear, and—(*reacts to feet*) *Oh!* I thought you said David *wasn't* home!

SAMANTHA. (*desperately*) He came back!

NATALIE. Do you know—*Bill* has pajamas just *like* those!

SAMANTHA. (*a hollow laugh*) Men! They're all alike!

NATALIE. (*starts around to front of sofa*) Did I come at a bad time? (*WILLIAM grabs Santa cap off SAMANTHA's head, dons it himself, pulling it down completely over his face*)

SAMANTHA. (*despite amorous tableau*) What makes you say *that?*

NATALIE. Well, it looks as if all your romantic problems have been *solved!*

SAMANTHA. That'd be *my* guess!

NATALIE. Do you know—Bill has a *robe* just like that, *too!*

SAMANTHA. *Does* he, now!

NATALIE. I feel so sorry for men! Women have a *much* larger selection when it comes to clothing!

SAMANTHA. Natalie, if it hasn't crossed your mind yet—we *are* just a bit—uh—busy ...!

NATALIE. (*reacts*) *Oh!* (*starts backing doorward*) Oh, dear, what was I *thinking* of! Of *course* you are! I was just so pleased to discover your troubles are *over* that I—!

SAMANTHA. We under*stand!* Nice seeing you! Happy holidays!

NATALIE. (*in doorway, pauses*) Oh, but I forgot to tell you *why* I stopped by!

SAMANTHA. I forgive you! 'Bye, now!

NATALIE. But you see—I just bought this present for Bill, and I wondered if I could hide it in *your* apartment till Christmas morning?

SAMANTHA. Just leave it by the door!

NATALIE. Can't I put it under the tree?

SAMANTHA. All right! Yes! Anything! But hurry!

NATALIE. (*starting toward tree*) I'm moving as fast as I can!

SAMANTHA. I'm sorry to rush you—but David's romantic moods don't last very long!

NATALIE. Of course! (*sets largest of wrapped packages under tree, heads doorward with rest*) I sure wish *Bill* would get amorous early in the evening!

SAMANTHA. (*with a glance at man beneath her*) *This* evening?

NATALIE. *Any* evening! Ah, well! I'm certainly *envious* of you two!

SAMANTHA. Good*bye*, Natalie!

NATALIE. (*missing urgency*) Ta-ta, Samantha. (*hand on knob, ready to exit*) 'Bye, David! ... David?

SAMANTHA. David *never* talks when he's feeling romantic!

NATALIE. Whyever not?

SAMANTHA. It breaks the mood! *Please* don't break David's mood!

NATALIE. Oh, of course not! Sorry! See you later! (*exits, shutting door*)

WILLIAM. (*as he and SAMANTHA scramble swiftly apart and lurch to their feet*) Is she gone?

SAMANTHA. (*pulls cap from his face*) Look for yourself! (*puts cap on own head again*)

WILLIAM. Wow, *that* was a close one!

SAMANTHA. You're telling *me!* You'd better get *out* of here, quick, before she comes back!

WILLIAM. (*takes step doorward, stops*) *I* can't go back to our apartment dressed like *this!*

SAMANTHA. Well, you certainly can't stay *here!*

WILLIAM. But how can I *explain* this outfit to Natalie?

SAMANTHA. Can't you listen at your apartment door till she's in the kitchen, or something, and then *sneak* in?

WILLIAM. I haven't got my *key*, remember?!

SAMANTHA. Oh, damn.

WILLIAM. What am I going to do?!

SAMANTHA. (*thinks a second; then:*) *I've* got it! Put on one of *David's* suits and go home in that!

WILLIAM. But Natalie *knows* all my suits!

SAMANTHA. Tell her you bought yourself a *new* one! (*starts pushing him toward bedroom door*)

WILLIAM. (*resisting*) But then I'll have to *keep* the suit!

SAMANTHA. You can pay me for it later! (*pushing again*)

WILLIAM. (*resisting again*) But what'll you tell *David* when he can't *find* his suit?

SAMANTHA. He'll never miss it! He's an executive. All his suits look alike.

WILLIAM. But, Samantha—!

SAMANTHA. Will you get *in* there?! (*shoves him through bedroom door, pulls it closed*)

WILLIAM. (*off*) Where's the light switch? I can't see a thing!

SAMANTHA. (*not seeing NATALIE once again peeking in at front door*) There's a lamp on my dressing table! Walk straight forward, *carefully*, and grope at about belt-height! (*listens; there is a pause—then a CRASH offstage*)

WILLIAM. *Aaaaah!* (*a cry of pain*)

NATALIE. (*steps into room, concerned*) What *happened?!* (*She still carries other packages*)

SAMANTHA. (*whirls, sees her*) *Natalie!*

NATALIE. Did David hurt himself? I heard a scream!

SAMANTHA. No-no! That was just a growl of—of *passion!* He gets like that.

NATALIE. Then what are *you* doing out *here?*

SAMANTHA. He *scares* me when he gets this passionate!

NATALIE. (*ruefully*) Some wives have all the luck!

SAMANTHA. Natalie, for heaven's sake, what are you *doing* here again?!

NATALIE. (*heads treeward*) I left the wrong package!

SAMANTHA. Well, *make* your swap, and then *please*—if you don't mind—get *out* of here!

NATALIE. (*switching one package for another*) I will, I will, I will! You don't have to get *growly!*

SAMANTHA. Every moment you're here, David's likely to *change* his *mood!* Wouldn't *you* get growly?

NATALIE. (*heading doorward with proper packages*) I'm going, I'm going! (*but, at door, stops*) Wait a minute—if you're *scared* of the way he's acting, don't you *want* his mood to change?

SAMANTHA. (*shrugs inanely*) Part of me says yes—part of me says no—you know how silly *love* gets!

NATALIE. Maybe I should stick around till you're *sure—?!*

SAMANTHA. Damn it, I'm *sure*, I'm *sure!*

NATALIE. So why aren't you going into the bedroom, then?

SAMANTHA. All right, I'll go! (*opens door [there is LIGHT from bedroom, now], looks inside, then gives a SCREAM at what she sees—and we hear WILLIAM give another SCREAM of his own—and then she quickly closes door and leans back against it*)

NATALIE. What's the matter?

SAMANTHA. He's—not quite *dressed* yet!

NATALIE. But—considering his *mood*—why do you *want* him dressed?!

SAMANTHA. (*has had it; starts for NATALIE, dangerously*) Listen, Nat, *you* do romance *your* way, and *we'll* do it *our* way! *Okay?!*

NATALIE. (*backing out door*) Okay-Okay! Sorry I asked!

SAMANTHA. (*shuts door, hard; leans back against it, gasping*) I'm too *old* for this kind of thing!

WILLIAM. (*entering from bedroom*) How do I look—? (*and he's wearing blue pants, a brown jacket, one black shoe and one brown shoe*)

SAMANTHA. *Fine*, if you're determined to *blow* your marriage! Bill, nothing on you *matches!*

WILLIAM. (*looks down*) Oh, damn! I got dressed so *fast* that— (*then BOTH react as front door starts to open; WILLIAM leaps for cover, ending up flat on floor in front of sofa, shielded from view of anyone at door, as DAVID comes in, with a large plastic [garbage-type] bag [in which his Santa suit is hidden]; he reacts to SAMANTHA, whips bag behind back, backsteps into hall door, which closes*)

DAVID. Sam! You're still up!

SAMANTHA. (*acutely aware of WILLIAM's presence*) David! You're home!

DAVID. I thought you'd be *glad—?*

SAMANTHA. Oh, I *am*, I *am!* Hey—let's go *out!*

DAVID. *Out?!* But—you're not *dressed!*

SAMANTHA. Let's go out anyway! (*KNOCK at front door*)

NATALIE. (*off*) Samantha—? Yoo-hoo—?!

SAMANTHA. Oh, *no!* (*springs into his arms*) Darling—quick—act like you're mad with desire!

DAVID. (*arms behind her back, flings bag from view in front of sofa [onto WILLIAM] Now?!*

SAMANTHA. No time like the present! (*kisses him fiercely; as he happily responds, NATALIE peeks in*)

NATALIE. Sorry, you guys, this *other* present is for Bill, too!

SAMANTHA. (*breaks kiss briefly*) Under the tree, then *out* of here!

NATALIE. Gotcha! (*dashes to put single present with other one, hurries back toward front door, on:*) My, David, but you're a quick dresser!

DAVID. (*breaks from kiss*) I'm a *what—?*

SAMANTHA. A mad, passionate beast! (*kisses him even more fiercely*)

NATALIE. (*pausing on threshold*) Sometime, Samantha, I wish you'd tell me what you *feed* this guy!

DAVID. (*breaks happily from kiss*) I wish I knew what *she's* been feeding on!

SAMANTHA. I live for love! (*kisses him again*)

NATALIE. I'd better go! (*exits during:*)

DAVID. (*breaking from kiss*) Yes, and hurry! (*as NATALIE closes door and is gone, he starts to zero in for another kiss, but now SAMANTHA pushes him angrily away*)

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