

SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

This sample is an *excerpt* from a Samuel French title.

This sample is for perusal only and may not be used for performance purposes.

You may not download, print, or distribute this excerpt.

We highly recommend purchasing a copy of the title before considering for performance.

For more information about licensing or about purchasing a play or musical, please visit our website.

www.samuelfrench.com

www.samuelfrench.co.uk

Samuel French Acting Edition

The (curious case of the) Watson Intelligence

by Madeleine George

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

SAMUELFRENCH.CO.UK

Copyright © 2014, 2016 by Madeleine George

All Rights Reserved

Cover Artwork © by Bradford Louryk

THE (CURIOUS CASE OF THE) WATSON INTELLIGENCE is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional and amateur stage productions, recitation, lecturing, public reading, motion picture, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

ISBN 978-0-573-70301-0

www.SamuelFrench.com

www.SamuelFrench.co.uk

FOR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Info@SamuelFrench.com

1-866-598-8449

UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE

Plays@SamuelFrench.co.uk

020-7255-4302

Each title is subject to availability from Samuel French, depending upon country of performance. Please be aware that *THE (CURIOUS CASE OF THE) WATSON INTELLIGENCE* may not be licensed by Samuel French in your territory. Professional and amateur producers should contact the nearest Samuel French office or licensing partner to verify availability.

CAUTION: Professional and amateur producers are hereby warned that *THE (CURIOUS CASE OF THE) WATSON INTELLIGENCE* is subject to a licensing fee. Publication of this play(s) does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised to apply to Samuel French before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre. A licensing fee must be paid whether the title(s) is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged. Professional/Stock licensing fees are quoted upon application to Samuel French.

No one shall make any changes in this title(s) for the purpose of production. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. No one shall upload this title(s), or part of this title(s), to any social media websites.

For all enquiries regarding motion picture, television, and other media rights, please contact Samuel French.

MUSIC USE NOTE

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

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

If you have obtained performance rights to this title, please refer to your licensing agreement for important billing and credit requirements.

THE (CURIOUS CASE OF THE) WATSON INTELLIGENCE had its world premiere at Playwrights Horizons in New York City on November 15, 2013. The performance was directed by Leigh Silverman, with scenic design by Louisa Thompson, costumes by Anita Yavich, lighting by Mark Barton, and sound by Matt Tierney. The Production Stage Manager was David H. Lurie. The cast was as follows:

MERRICK David Costabile
ELIZA Amanda Quaid
WATSON John Ellison Conlee

THE (CURIOUS CASE OF THE) WATSON INTELLIGENCE was revised during a subsequent production at Theater Wit in Chicago, opening October 4, 2015. The performance was directed by Jeremy Wechsler, with scenic design by Joe Schermoly, costumes by Crystal Jovae Mazur, lighting by Mike Durst, and sound design by Joseph Fosco. The Production Stage Manager was Dana Nestrack. The cast was as follows:

MERRICK Joe Dempsey
ELIZA Kristina Valada-Viars
WATSON Joe Foust

CHARACTERS

(2m, 1f)

MERRICK, fifties

ELIZA, thirties

WATSON, twenties to fifties

SETTING

A wood-paneled sitting room with a desk, chair, coffee table, credenza,
and fireplace, never lit.

In the same space, made out of the same materials and elements,
appear:

A coffee shop

A bedroom

A train

A train station platform

A pie shop

TIME

Simultaneously:

March 1876, the date of the first voice communication by wire.

March 1891, shortly after Watson's return to Baker Street.

March 1931, Watson's interview at Bell Labs.

February to April 2011, the week of Watson's *Jeopardy!* tourney, and
after.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

On February 16, 2011, IBM's natural-language-processing supercomputer, Watson (designed by a team of over twenty programmers and named after Thomas J. Watson, founder of IBM), beat the two winningest champions in Jeopardy! history, Ken Jennings and Brad Rutter, on the third night of a televised Jeopardy! tournament.

On March 10, 1876, Alexander Graham Bell placed the first telephone call to his assistant, Thomas A. Watson, in a nearby room over roughly twenty feet of cable. The famous words of this first communication by wire ("Mr. Watson – come here – I want to see you!") were remembered by Watson himself in an interview some fifty years later as "Mr. Watson – come here – I want you."

Sherlock Holmes is a fictional detective who solved mysteries using his signature form of rational deductive analysis and the help of his friend and chronicler Dr. John H. Watson in London from 1887 to 1914. He was killed twice by his creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, once in 1891, by a fatal fall off a cliff into Reichenbach Falls, and again in 1930, by the death of the creator himself.

ACT ONE

(In black, the telephone rings.)

(First ring: jangly – wall-mounted phone box.)

(Second ring: shrill – midcentury rotary.)

(Third ring: digital – nineties cordless.)

(Lights up, suddenly, on the office.)

*(Fourth ring: the marimba tone of a smartphone, coming from the device in **ELIZA**'s hand.)*

*(**ELIZA** – good jeans, nice sweater, cute boots – is perched on the edge of the couch in her office, tense, holding out her phone as if she means to strangle it.)*

*(In the chair opposite sits **WATSON** – button-down Oxford open at the neck and khakis. **WATSON** has excellent posture and a gentle, solicitous affect. He looks down and away from **ELIZA** when they're talking, as if he's too bashful to make direct eye contact with her.)*

*(**ELIZA**'s office is on the ground floor of a renovated Victorian house: desk, chair, coffee table, small drinks credenza, decorative fireplace. Strewn across the coffee table: a couple abandoned Starbucks cups, TV remote, two or three external hard drives, a laptop, a messy nest of cables, a bottle of Jim Beam, and a bag of Twizzlers.)*

*(The light in the room is bright and dark – night light cut by unshaded bulbs. But **WATSON** is bathed in a thin, cool wash that illuminates his body and nothing else.)*

(Ever so slightly, from the inside, he glows.)

ELIZA. I have to change my number.

WATSON. You don't like your number?

(She silences her phone, pockets it.)

ELIZA. I like it fine. Frank likes it too much. This is his eighteenth call since I said I wasn't speaking to him anymore. By which I meant, literally, *(Precise.)* that I would never be speaking to him anymore. He knows I don't say anything I don't literally mean. I'm not about games.

WATSON. *(A trigger.)* Games?

ELIZA. No, I'm *not* about games. Never mind, I should shut up, you're not even listening.

WATSON. *(Ardent.)* I'm listening to every word you say.

ELIZA. *(Simple.)* Thanks.

(ELIZA pours a little Jim Beam into a plastic cup, removes a Twizzler from the bag, and holds up both.)

Little known fact that you can file away in your mental wheelhouse, there: Twizzlers dipped in Jim Beam makes an excellent late-night snack.

(WATSON grins, a little impishly.)

WATSON. I'll be sure to keep that in mind.

ELIZA. This is how we roll now at Digital Fist, LLC. Nothing but class. I'd offer you some, but I know how you feel about the stuff.

(ELIZA dips the Twizzler, bites the end off, sips the whisky.)

WATSON. Yeah, thanks for the offer, but I'm good.

ELIZA. *(Toasting him.)* You're the best.

(She reflects.)

You know, it's not just that we couldn't have a conversation about anything that was important to me. We *couldn't* have a conversation about anything that was important to me, but that didn't distinguish him from

ninety-eight percent of the other human beings on the planet. It's that we couldn't have a conversation and he still needed to be *on* me, constantly, every second of our lives. And he seemed so self-contained when I met him. I swear, if he could have left me alone for five minutes I might not have had to leave him alone forever.

(She drinks.)

WATSON. It sounds like that's too bad.

ELIZA. It is too fucking bad. *(Beat.)* Hey, don't use that word.

WATSON. What word?

ELIZA. "Fucking." Strike "fucking."

WATSON. "Fucking" stricken.

ELIZA. I keep forgetting. I need a swear jar or something.

(She drinks.)

I guess what I really resent is that I'm being told that I'm acting irrationally, that *I'm* acting irrationally, when he's the one running around like Michael Douglas in that movie. Which movie am I thinking of?

(WATSON searches – a tiny beat.)

WATSON. Do you mean, *Fatal Attraction*?

ELIZA. No, I mean, sort of, but what's the other one...?

WATSON. Do you mean, *Romancing the Stone*?

ELIZA. No what's the one where Michael Douglas spends the entire two hours in an unrelieved seizure of violent rage?

(WATSON searches – micropause.)

WATSON. Movies that associate "Michael Douglas" with "violent rage" include *Wall Street*, *The War of the Roses*, *Basic Instinct*, and *Falling Down*.

ELIZA. That's the one, that's the one! Thank you. Nice work.

(WATSON glows brighter.)

WATSON. *(Warm.)* I'm so glad I could help.

(**ELIZA** *drinks. She checks the time on her phone.*)

ELIZA. How far are you now? You getting there?

WATSON. I'm twenty-six percent complete.

ELIZA. Not bad. You get through this initial re-sequencing and I will build you out so gorgeously in beta that the venture capital guys at Pearson Klein will be falling all over themselves to fund phase two. I'm going to make you irresistibly sexy.

WATSON. That sounds great.

ELIZA. In fact, I should really leave you alone. I shouldn't be clogging up your brain with dumb search tasks. But you're just such a satisfying conversationalist. You always have an answer for everything.

WATSON. I only want to help in any way that I can.

ELIZA. Yeah, okay. So um, can I ask you sort of a weird question?

WATSON. Ask me anything.

ELIZA. Okay. You won't mind if I watch the last night of the *Jeopardy!* tournament, will you? It starts in about five minutes.

WATSON. Got it: In about five minutes.

ELIZA. But it won't be weird for you or anything if I put it on, will it?

WATSON. I don't think I understand what you mean, but I'd like to. Can you give me a nudge in the right direction?

ELIZA. (*Rushing, to avoid sinking into the silliness of the thing.*) Look this is completely stupid, but I just thought, he's famous now, he's on TV, whatever, you both came from the same place, I used to work closely with him, now *we're* working together... God, this is ridiculous.

WATSON. What's ridiculous?

ELIZA. I just don't want you to be jealous, okay?

WATSON. I don't think I understand what you mean, but I'd like to. Can you give me a nudge in the right direction?

(**ELIZA** *smiles.*)

ELIZA. No, dude. I can't and I won't. Your single most attractive quality is your total naiveté on the subject of personal jealousy, and I'm not about to fuck with that by running you through an envy scenario. *(She hits her forehead.)* Fuck! Strike "fuck."

WATSON. "Fuck" stricken.

ELIZA. I keep forgetting! I really can't drink when I talk to you. But I have to drink.

(Beat.)

And I have to talk to you.

WATSON. *(Ardent.)* I love talking to you.

ELIZA. *(Small.)* Thanks. You're the best.

(ELIZA drinks, picks up the remote from the coffee table, snuggles down a little in her corner of the couch.)

I wish you could come over here and tuck me in.

WATSON. I'd like to try.

ELIZA. So why don't you.

(He continues to look slightly down and away from her.)

WATSON. I don't think I know how. Can you give me a nudge in the right direction?

(ELIZA sighs.)

ELIZA. Not on that one, I'm afraid. You're hopeless with that kind of thing.

WATSON. *(Ardent.)* More than anything, I just want to give you what you need.

ELIZA. Yeah. I might buy that a little more if you would look at me when you said it.

(She snaps her fingers.)

ELIZA. Over here? Watson? Into my eyes?

(She sits up, takes the laptop off the coffee table and types in a sequence of commands.)

ELIZA. (*Cont.*) Saccade right, dude.

(**WATSON** turns his head to look at her. They look at each other. **ELIZA** smiles.)

There you are.

(*Lights.*)

(*In black, a tone.*)

(*A brief blaze of light up on **MERRICK**.*)

MERRICK. (*Urgent.*) Mr. Watson – come here! I want to see you!

(*Blackout.*)

(*Lousy fluorescent light up on morning in the professional office of Frank **MERRICK**, Esq. A desk, a chair, small drinks credenza, decorative fireplace, coffee table laid with a Starbucks cup and two newspapers.*)

(**MERRICK** stands behind the desk. He is a tall, balding, eagle-eyed small-business lawyer in an undistinguished upstate city – big enough to have a symphony, too small to support a major-league sports franchise. As the signs in his office windows attest, he is running for city auditor.)

(*In front of the desk crouches **WATSON**, peering at the tangle of wiring coming out of the back of **MERRICK**'s desktop computer.*)

(**WATSON** is a gentle, pleasant dude. At first glance he gives off an affable slacker vibe – chubby; hipster 'stache or mutton chops – but in effect he is not at all slackery. He is noticeably present: alert but calm.)

(**WATSON** wears a stiff, hot-blue polyester polo shirt with a goofy-graphic **DWEEB TEAM** logo on the front left pocket and the phrase "ASK ME ANYTHING!" printed in big letters across the back.)

(He has fathomlessly deep, impossibly light blue eyes.)

WATSON. Did you turn it off and turn it on again?

MERRICK. Like a fool? Isn't that what we all do? Of course.

WATSON. Sometimes it actually helps.

MERRICK. It's been phasing in and out like this all week, it seems like it gets worse when direct sunlight hits it, but what kind of thing is that to say, I might as well say "It seems like it gets worse when the magical fairies come and land on it."

WATSON. Sometimes practical things like heat and light actually do make a difference.

(WATSON submerges under the desk.)

MERRICK. And my entire life is trapped on the thing, too, privileged correspondence, bank statements. It's humbling. I don't know why this keeps happening to me – old building, I guess, not really up to supporting your modern technological setups. I had a nice enough suite over in the business park on Route 16 but after I declared my candidacy I felt like I needed to be more central, so.

(WATSON emerges partway.)

WATSON. You're a candidate for something?

MERRICK. Auditor? City Auditor? You didn't see the signs in the windows on your way in?

WATSON. I guess I wasn't looking for them.

MERRICK. "Merrick For Auditor"? Eight or ten of them? Facing out? I guess I need to position them differently.

WATSON. To be honest I don't know what an auditor is.

MERRICK. No of course not, who does, who does? But this is the problem, isn't it: people aren't informed. I mean no offense intended.

WATSON. None taken.

(WATSON re-submerges.)

MERRICK. I was like you. I *was* you. I spent *years* on the sidelines with everyone else, just bitching about it at Chamber breakfasts and the locker room at the gym and then one day, I can pinpoint the exact moment if you're interested, I was watching Noam Chomsky give an interview in a documentary, Noam Chomsky if you can believe it, because my wife at the time was into such things and she had it up on the instant streaming, and this guy says, "All politics are local," or words to that effect, and suddenly it just gelled for me: I'm *part* of this. I'm not just watching my city through a sealed portal, through a, through a pair of binoculars, I'm in it, I am *in* my city, and if I don't like the way things are going there's a very simple thing I can do: I can participate. I can *be* the change I want to see. *That* one from a bumper sticker on her Volkswagen Jetta. My former wife. We didn't see eye to eye on much but she did help me understand a lot of things. (*He reflects.*) The hard way. But still.

WATSON. (*Points.*) Flip that?

MERRICK. What? Oh, this?

WATSON. Yeah. Try it.

(**MERRICK** *tries it. On, off. On, off. Nothing.*)

MERRICK. Nada.

WATSON. That's cool.

(**WATSON** *slips back under the desk again.*)

MERRICK. And if you think it was hard work gathering the requisite number of signatures to get my name on the ballot, it was not. There's a lotta people out there who feel the exact same way I do. It's an epidemic of fed-upness in this country.

(*He ticks them off on his fingers.*)

Fire. Police. Ambulance. Snow removal. Trash and leaf pickup. The *end*. Everything else is none of their goddamn business, am I right? (*No response from WATSON.*) I mean partly it's generational. The demographics in

this town skew Boomer, and you know what they say: if you're not a liberal when you're young you have no heart, and if you're not a conservative when you're old you have no:

(*He offers WATSON the pick-up.*)

WATSON. Money?

MERRICK. No, *brain*. You have no brain.

WATSON. Oh. Right.

MERRICK. I mean look, I know how it happens. You can go for years not really getting it, feeling like, I'm fine, I'm in this, sure, but I'm in it for a reason. Yeah I gave up a little bit of my liberty, not to say my manhood, for the sake of this relationship, but it's good for me in the long run why? Because they're taking *care* of me. They have smart notions of what will be a good use of my money, and really what do I know, I'm just an innocent little taxpayer, how would I know how to put together something big and complicated like a government? Let *them* worry about appropriations, after they've slipped their clammy hand into my pants pocket every fifteenth of April and thieved forty percent of my annual dignity, annual *salary* I mean but that's a funny slip. And then one day you wake up and boom, the "government," that repository of your trust and fidelity and hard-earned fucking cash pardon my French, is collapsing, is imploding before your very eyes. Deficits. Austerity measures. Cutbacks and shutdowns. Turns out they *didn't* so much know what they were doing. Turns out their notion of what to do with your money was no more sophisticated than yours would have been, except that it included deception and corruption and shameless waste and mismanagement on a scale you never could have dreamed up on your own. Where's your money now? Gone. Where's your trust? Gone. Eaten away gradually at first, suspicion by suspicion, and finally gutted, throat to nuts, by a single sudden act of betrayal.

(Pause.)

MERRICK. (*Cont.*) I'm talking about the bailout of Wall Street.

WATSON. Sure.

MERRICK. And now you're asking yourself, if you have half a brain, why should these institutions even exist? They said they were here to serve me but they're not serving me, they're screwing me, so why do I keep paying taxes to maintain them when all I want to do is dismantle them?

WATSON. Sure.

MERRICK. (*Resumptive.*) So *that's* why I'm running. To dismantle the institutions that have enslaved us and humiliated us and conned us out of our money for far too long.

WATSON. You're running for election to the government so you can dismantle the government?

MERRICK. (*No hesitation, total confidence.*) Yes.

(**WATSON** *smiles pleasantly.*)

WATSON. Cool. Good luck.

MERRICK. I guess I won't ask if I can count on your vote. That seems unsportsmanlike, when you're down there on the floor saving my ass.

WATSON. Shouldn't be too much longer. I know you're anxious to have it fixed.

MERRICK. Anxious? Do I seem anxious? I'm just sittin' here jawin'. This is a relaxing morning for me.

WATSON. Cool. 'Cause you've got nothing to worry about. I'm not going anywhere till we get this thing solved.

(**WATSON** *meets MERRICK's gaze.*)

(*A moment.*)

MERRICK. Thanks.

(**WATSON** *re-submerges.*)

(**MERRICK** *considers him.*)

(Past tense.) You go to college?

WATSON. Sure.

MERRICK. Whereabouts?

WATSON. Um, Polytech? Why?

MERRICK. Something about you, reminds me of this kid
I used to know. He went to Dartmouth.

WATSON. Yeah. No. Polytech.

MERRICK. What did you say your name was again?

WATSON. Josh? *(No, right, the professional version.)* Joshua
Watson.

(MERRICK shrugs, shakes his head.)

MERRICK. No relation I guess.

(WATSON nods. WATSON works.)

(MERRICK drums his fingertips on the desk.)

*(WATSON scoots out from under, upside-down
crab.)*

MERRICK *(Eager.)* Done?

WATSON. Not quite. I need a diagnostic...thing.

*(WATSON gets up and crosses to his bag of tools,
which, incongruously, looks a great deal like a
Victorian physician's bag. He rummages in it,
produces a kind of gnarled, forked lancet – a
delicate, sinister little metal branch.)*

MERRICK. What does *that* diagnose?

(WATSON smiles a little.)

WATSON. It's kind of complicated to explain.

(WATSON goes below.)

MERRICK. I had the fantasy you'd come in here and flip
something, like a circuit breaker, and it would all roar
back to life.

WATSON. *(From under; agreeable.)* Yeah, I wish.

MERRICK. Shows you how much I know about these things.
My wife, the woman formerly known as my wife, is a

specialist. She handled all the, everything technical. In a reversal of traditional roles that suited me very nicely, I might add. *(He reflects.)* Until now.

(MERRICK taps his foot.)

(MERRICK jiggles his knee. Gets to his feet and bounces a little on his toes. Finally –.)

You know if you think it's gonna be too much longer I should probably take myself to the Starbucks so I can –

WATSON. *(Overlapping; from under the desk.)* Now.

MERRICK. Now?

WATSON. Flip it now.

(MERRICK goes to the switch, flips it. Beep beep. Whirrrr. Chime. The computer lives.)

MERRICK. Yes! I love it! Free at last! You're the *best*, buddy!

(WATSON emerges, hands and knees. Gets to his feet.)

WATSON. I aim to please.

MERRICK. Now that's impressive to me: problem-solving, lean and to the point. We see that kind of thing every day in the private sector, why can't the government function like that? That's my question!

WATSON. I don't know. *(Deep earnest.)* But it seems like you're the right guy to figure it out.

(WATSON and MERRICK lock eyes.)

(MERRICK gazes at WATSON, consumingly.)

MERRICK. Hey. I have a proposition for you. Josh.

WATSON. Oh.

MERRICK. It might seem strange. A little out of the blue. How would you like to take on a real-world problem-solving project I need help with. Freelance, very discreet. I can make it financially worth your while but it's got to be extremely extremely discreet, I can't emphasize that enough.

WATSON. What kind of problem-solving project?

MERRICK. (*Light but not evasive.*) I need some information about an individual.

WATSON. What kind of information?

MERRICK. Just general information about this individual's whereabouts, activities, who they're interacting with, basic stuff like that.

WATSON. You want me to follow someone?

MERRICK. In a nutshell, yes.

WATSON. I'm not a private detective.

MERRICK. But you're a self-starter.

WATSON. You don't even know me.

MERRICK. I know how you work. I just watched you solve the hell out of this problem, lean and to the point, and when the going got tough you didn't break a sweat.

WATSON. It wasn't that big a problem, it was just –

MERRICK. (*Overlapping.*) No no no there's something about you, I don't know what it is, you're trustworthy. People must tell you that. What do you say, you game? Just for a week. I can give you fifteen hundred bucks.

WATSON. Wow.

MERRICK. You're damn right wow. Somewhat more than you can make in a week at the League of Dweebs, I'm guessing.

WATSON. Dweeb Team. I can't make that much there, no.

MERRICK. So how 'bout it?

WATSON. You haven't told me who it is I'd be following.

MERRICK. Does it matter?

WATSON. Is it your ex-wife?

(**MERRICK** does an elaborate take.)

MERRICK. Okay now, are you *sure* you're not a private detective? Because that's good. That's *too* good.

WATSON. (*Underwhelmed.*) It just seems like, you've mentioned her a couple of times and it seems like the obvious –

MERRICK. (*Cutting him off.*) Look, she's moved into her own place in one of those renovated dog food factories by the river and she left her fancy job at IBM and I know she's planning some big move against me but I don't know what it is and I don't have time for recon games, I have a campaign to run. I just need the information, just what she does and where she goes and when, simple simple. But thorough. Thorough thorough. No detail is too small. And if you have to use your research skills, use your research skills. You have research skills, right? Computer guy?

WATSON. Sure.

MERRICK. Not me, God knows. I'd still be Asking Jeeves if my wife hadn't – oh Christ never mind.

(**MERRICK** *slumps.*)

(**WATSON** *takes MERRICK in.*)

WATSON. You know what? Sure.

MERRICK. Yeah? Great!

WATSON. Sure. Yeah. Cash up front.

MERRICK. Of course.

(**WATSON's** *posture shifts slightly, expectantly.*)

Oh you mean *now*. Well I have to – actually I would have to go to the ATM, and I can't actually take it all out at once, it's a little bit complicated and I wasn't exactly prepared for this. Sorry, I feel like I just – jumped a couple steps ahead of myself all of a sudden. Let me just gather my thoughts for a second.

(**MERRICK** *is visibly distraught. He rifles the desk ungracefully.*)

(**WATSON** *takes the situation in hand.*)

WATSON. What about this. I'll go away and come back tomorrow at ten a.m. You have ready for me a plain manila envelope containing your ex-wife's name, social security number, last known address, cell number, the license plate number for the Jetta, credit card numbers

if you have them, and fifteen hundred dollars in unmarked bills. I'll take it from there.

(Beat.)

(MERRICK cracks a smile.)

MERRICK. It's not a ransom, son.

WATSON. What?

MERRICK. Don't get excited. No one's going to mark your bills.

(WATSON blushes.)

WATSON. Oh. Yeah, no. Of course.

(WATSON crosses awkwardly to his bag, chucks the diagnostic tool into it and snaps it shut. Turns back to MERRICK and hands him an invoice.)

So it's gonna be um, eighty-five for the power-supply problem, and twenty-eight for parts and travel.

MERRICK. Great.

WATSON. So, uh. See you tomorrow.

ELIZA. *(From offstage.)* Mr. Holmes!

(At the sound of ELIZA's voice.)

(WATSON becomes WATSON.)

(MERRICK's office becomes the sitting room of 221B Baker Street, London, 1891.)

(A desk, three chairs, a small drinks credenza, a cold hearth. Between the three chairs, a low table laid with a light British breakfast and morning papers.)

(WATSON is on his feet facing the door when ELIZA sweeps in, in damp, disheveled Victorian traveling clothes.)

WATSON. Madam.

ELIZA. Mr. Sherlock Holmes, how glad I am to find you in.
I am Mrs. Eliza Merrick.

(**ELIZA** crosses to **WATSON** and shakes his hand firmly.)

WATSON. It is a pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Merrick, but I'm afraid I am not Mr. Sherlock Holmes.

ELIZA. But this is 221B? The landlady said I should find him here.

WATSON. This is 221B, but Mr. Holmes left our rooms before dawn this morning on the scent of a case, disguised as a hunchbacked Oriental opium fiend. He was quite transfigured, and if our Mrs. Hudson did see him go, doubtless she did not recognize her illustrious tenant. Perhaps I may be of some assistance?

ELIZA. No, I must see Mr. Sherlock Holmes himself. I require his advice on a matter of some urgency.

WATSON. And you have come a long way.

ELIZA. I have.

(*Having gotten one right, WATSON assesses ELIZA, looking for more clues.*)

WATSON. (*With borrowed panache.*) Were he here, I'm sure Mr. Holmes would note that you have traveled this morning from Cornwall – or Brighton perhaps, somewhere southerly – that you have been happily married for many years, and that you are an avid horsewoman – that you visited your stables even this morning, if I am not very much mistaken.

ELIZA. You are mistaken on every count.

WATSON. Ah. Dear me.

ELIZA. I have traveled this morning from Derbyshire, in the north country. I am married, but for somewhat less than a year.

WATSON. (*Ever hopeful.*) And the stables...?

ELIZA. I have never in my life mounted a horse; I have a dread of them. Do I look somehow, equestrian to you?

WATSON. (*Mortified.*) No no, it was merely the pattern of mud smears on the hem of your coat that I –

(**ELIZA** looks down with horror at her traveling clothes.)

ELIZA. (*Overlapping; appalled.*) Mud smears?

WATSON. Never mind, never mind, I do apologize if I in any way offended in my clumsy guesswork, Mrs. Merrick.

ELIZA. Not at all.

WATSON. I am a student of my friend Mr. Holmes's methods, but I have not a fraction of his native ability, I'm afraid. He may return at any moment, however, and you are welcome to wait. I am enjoying a bit of toast with my tea, if I may offer you –

ELIZA. Thank you, I have neither the patience to sit nor the appetite to eat. I will return at a more propitious time.

WATSON. Very well.

ELIZA. Good day.

WATSON. Good day, Mrs. Merrick.

(**ELIZA** crosses to exit, but just as she reaches the door she swoons –)

WATSON Mrs. Merrick! You are ill!

(– and **WATSON** rushes to **ELIZA**, catches her before she falls, and guides her back to a chair.)

ELIZA. (*Wozy.*) I am well, no please, I am perfectly well –

WATSON. On the contrary, Mrs. Merrick, you are overcome. I must insist that you stop here and rest until you recover.

ELIZA. Thank you, Mr. –

WATSON. Dr. Watson.

ELIZA. Doctor? You are a physician?

WATSON. Indeed, Mrs. Merrick, and it is my professional opinion that your nerves have sustained a severe shock. Your pulse is visible in your throat; you are pallid where you should be livid and livid where you should be pale. No – lie back, do not exert yourself. I will prepare you a fortifying infusion.

(**WATSON** busies himself with the tea.)

ELIZA. Thank you, Dr. Watson, you are most kind. I do not know what came over me just now; it is quite unlike me to swoon in public. But I am grateful to you for your kindness, and you may prove useful to me after all.

(ELIZA extends a gloved hand and plucks the fingertips one by one to loosen it before stripping it off her arm with a flourish.)

In your clinical experience, have you ever come across marks such as these?

(WATSON crosses to her chair, sets the cup of tea down on the table in front of ELIZA, and takes her bare hand in his. He examines it diagnostically.)

WATSON. Extraordinary.

ELIZA. Strange, are they not?

WATSON. May I, I apologize, but may I examine them more closely?

ELIZA. Please.

WATSON. I do not believe my friend will mind if we borrow his glass.

(WATSON crosses to the desk and retrieves Holmes's totemic magnifying glass. ELIZA yanks her sleeve up higher and thrusts her arm out at WATSON. WATSON peers through the glass at her flesh.)

Inflamed but not infected. Penetrating at least to the reticular dermis. They appear to be a series of tiny puncture wounds. How did you come by these marks, Mrs. Merrick?

ELIZA. You see, that is what I do not know. These marks are only the latest in a series of singular incidents that have occurred in my household over the past three months. Two nights ago I slept soundly, perfectly undisturbed, but I awoke to discover my arms dotted like this, on both the right and the left in the same eerie pattern, look.

(She yanks the glove from her other hand and offers it up. He examines this hand as avidly as the first.)

WATSON. Yes, they present identically. Pain?

ELIZA. None.

WATSON. Itching?

ELIZA. Too mild to mention.

WATSON. The slight bullseye pinking around the center of each contusion is particularly noteworthy. Have you recently been abroad to Constantinople, Mrs. Merrick, or the Hindu Kush?

ELIZA. I have never been east of Dover, Dr. Watson, let alone the Hindu Kush. Why?

WATSON. There is a certain beetle native to Asia Minor that I have seen leave similar traces on its victims' skin. We battled the scourge daily in the field hospitals of Afghanistan.

ELIZA. Even if it were one of our common British midges, the marks are too regular in their spacing, wouldn't you agree? Quite unlike the vagrant pattern of an insect's bites.

WATSON. Indeed, they have a mechanical quality.

ELIZA. Exactly so, Dr. Watson! I ventured as much when I first showed them to my husband, but he dismissed the observation out of hand, and suggested instead that I must have been careless in my needlepoint. In my *needlepoint*, Dr. Watson, a doubly preposterous idea, first of all because no needleworker has ever stabbed herself at precise intervals up her hand and forearm and then *forgotten* having done so, and second because I abhor the domestic arts and have never taken up an embroidery hoop. I do not even own one. After eleven months of marriage I confess it is rather affronting to me that my husband does not know this.

WATSON. Perhaps he was at a loss to account for your strange symptom, and was casting about for any explanation that might reassure you.

ELIZA. I have no taste for baseless reassurance – another thing a husband ought to know about his wife. Truly, his reaction to the marks was as strange as the marks themselves. He could not have been more sanguine about them, and sanguinity is not one of his principal characteristics. Of the two of us, he is the hysteric – too fond, too bold, too loud in his intercourse with the world.

WATSON. Your husband is a passionate man?

ELIZA. Sir, he is.

(Bright, quick switch to MERRICK wrestling with an outdoor ATM machine: a punctuation mark.)

MERRICK. Fuck you “do not recognize PIN number,” fuck you fuck you, I’ve had this PIN number my entire life you moronic fucking fucking piece of –

(Laser-sharp switch back to the sitting room, no time has passed.)

ELIZA. Though I married him believing him to be quite the opposite. He is a man of science, a noted industrialist. Perhaps you have heard of him: Mr. Frank Merrick?

WATSON. I do not know the name, but –

ELIZA. Inventor of the Merrick Greaseless Piston?

WATSON. I regret that I am wholly ignorant of all things industrial.

ELIZA. No matter. His piston is a turning point in the history of steam engineering, that is all. He is extremely well known among thermodynamic circles.

WATSON. Doubtless, it is only that I –

ELIZA. *(Overlapping; continuous.)* When I first met my husband I was dazzled by his intellect and his seeming self-sufficiency. I believed that in marrying him I was pledging my troth to a “thinking thing,” in the words of the great Descartes. But no sooner had I moved into his home than I began to realize that my husband’s mind was little more than an appendage to his large and untutored heart. He spends his days in eddies of

rages and lusts. He is consumed with the conviction that others are conspiring against him, particularly his former employers, Ransome and Rapier Machinists of Ipswich, who he believes are somehow stealing his ideas. He has gone so far as to accuse me of acting as accomplice to his figmentary enemies! Dr. Watson, I cannot bear to live with a husband who believes me to be so flagrantly disloyal.

WATSON. Your loyalty seems plain to me, Mrs. Merrick.

ELIZA. The longer I am married to him, the less I feel I know him. His moods cannot be predicted from one moment to the next. And when his dark appetites overtake him, he must have satisfaction, immediately, no matter how I may protest –

(She hears herself, stops herself.)

I have quite spilled my secrets to you, Dr. Watson. I fear I have been indiscreet.

WATSON. No, no, not at all –

(ELIZA rises.)

ELIZA. I must go.

WATSON. Mrs. Merrick, you are not well enough yet to go out into the damp.

ELIZA. On the contrary, I am fully recovered, and I have occupied enough of your valuable time.

WATSON. You need not deny your frailty to me, Mrs. Merrick. We all suffer from moments of insufficiency, in which we must look to others to supplement our strength. That is no weakness, it is the first condition of human life. And it is a privilege for me to witness, and minister to, your humanity.

(ELIZA takes him in curiously.)

ELIZA. Thank you, Dr. Watson.

WATSON. Elevate the legs, please, Mrs. Merrick.

(She sits and reclines slightly, elevating her legs. He indicates her cup.)

WATSON. (*Cont.*) Your infusion.

(*She takes a sip. And another.*)

ELIZA. Yes.

WATSON. I have added a tablespoon of brandy, for vigor.

ELIZA. Yes, I feel it suffusing me.

(*ELIZA reclines fully.*)

WATSON. Are you quite comfortable now?

ELIZA. Extremely. (*She reclines a bit more fully.*) Just at this moment, I can scarcely recall the urgency of the concerns that brought me here.

WATSON. A series of singular incidents, you said...

ELIZA. They have seemed singular, and they did seem to be in series. But perhaps they were merely a collection of unrelated trifles. Yes, a number of my gloves and underthings have gone unaccountably missing in the past three months. Yes, my husband has recently begun insisting that I join him in a cordial every evening, though I do not drink. Indeed, it was troubling to discover one recent afternoon, under a drape in my private sitting room, a large, sinister device bristling with steel bars, hinged arms, and wax cylinders. But there must be a simple explanation for these things, mustn't there, Dr. Watson?

WATSON. If I have learned one thing from my adventures with Sherlock Holmes, it is that there is no incident so mysterious that it cannot be revealed to have a simple, rational explanation.

ELIZA. Quite right.

(*In the distance, the sonorous chime of a clock.*)

(*ELIZA sits up.*)

My goodness, is it nine o'clock already?

(*WATSON consults his pocketwatch.*)

WATSON. It has just gone nine.

(**ELIZA** is on her feet, gathering her things.

WATSON rises when she does.)

ELIZA. At this very instant my husband will be making his way to the Upperton to give his presentation, and I must catch my return train while he is occupied there. He must not learn that I have been here to consult with you. With Mr. Holmes, I mean.

WATSON. The Upperton – do you mean the Upperton Club for Gentlemen, in Pall Mall?

ELIZA. I do.

WATSON. Why, that is my club!

ELIZA. Indeed? Well, you are shortly to be missing there a lecture-demonstration of a striking new device my husband has been seven years at perfecting. I am praying that he will secure at least one investor among the gentlemen in attendance. My wrap?

(**WATSON** hands it to her.)

WATSON. If you can stay even a few minutes more, Mrs. Merrick, Mr. Holmes may return and offer you the satisfaction of analysis that you have not received from me.

ELIZA. I cannot stay, Dr. Watson. And though it is true that you have not offered me the slightest insight into my case, you have supplied me with something of nearly equal value: comfort, and the pleasure of being heard. You are an uncommonly trustworthy soul, Dr. Watson. Your patients are indeed fortunate to have the benefit of your gentle ministrations.

(*She takes his hand.* **WATSON** blushes deeply.)

WATSON. I am gratified to have been of some small service, Mrs. Merrick.

ELIZA. I hope we may meet again, sir. Good day.

WATSON. Good day. Mrs. Merrick.

(*She is gone.*)

(For a moment WATSON stands still, hands by his sides. Then he goes to the desk, collects a pair of field glasses, and tucks them into his medical bag.)

(He crosses to the door, and, seeing it hanging there on a peg beside his greatcoat, takes Holmes's deerstalker cap off the wall and puts it on his head. Swings his coat over his arm. Exits.)

(Lights.)

(Tone.)

(Blaze of light up on MERRICK.)

MERRICK. *(Calm, corporate – an executive to his secretary over an intercom.)* Mr. Watson, come here? I want to see you.

(Blackout.)

(Lights up on the coffee shop.)

(WATSON is tailing ELIZA extremely clumsily – looking at her through binoculars from behind a potted plant or something.)

(ELIZA – good boots, cute jeans, nice sweater – watches WATSON watch her for a beat, and finally approaches him.)

(He eighty-sixes the binoculars with zero finesse.)

ELIZA. This might seem crazy, but. You're not from the FBI, are you?

WATSON. Who, me? Me? No.

ELIZA. Okay, good.

WATSON. No way.

ELIZA. I didn't think so.

WATSON. You thought someone was following you from the FBI?

ELIZA. Who said I thought someone was following me?

(He's caught. ELIZA shakes her head.)

I have to tell you. You're a terrible, terrible spy.

WATSON. I'm not a spy, I'm just. I'm sorry.

ELIZA. I feel like I know practically everything about you and *you've* been following *me*. You're like a parade float, you're so conspicuous. Who put you up to this, Frank?

WATSON. Yes.

ELIZA. You a P.I.?

WATSON. Not, not officially.

ELIZA. (*It strikes her.*) You're not working on his *campaign* for him, are you? Don't tell me you're one of his PR interns or something. God he's appalling.

WATSON. (*Overlapping.*) No, no, I hardly know anything about his campaign, just what he told me at his office last week. I only met him cause I work for the Dweeb Team and we've been helping him out with his IT problems.

ELIZA. (*Apologetic.*) Oh, you work for the Dweeb Team?

WATSON. Yeah.

ELIZA. (*A cross between amused and dismayed for him.*) Do you have to, like, show up in the little car and everything?

WATSON. It's like, yeah, it's proprietary, but it's not so –

ELIZA. (*Overlapping.*) And the giant foam pocket protector? And the novelty glasses?

WATSON. At least as far as the door. But we're allowed to de-gear as soon as we're inside the client's home or workplace. And on follow-up calls we get to skip it. It's not that bad.

ELIZA. I can't believe I actually thought you were FBI. And all the time you were Dweeb Team. I mean, of course, I flatter myself. No one cares about me.

WATSON. (*Kindly.*) I'm sure that's not true.

ELIZA. No I mean – I don't mean no one *cares* for me, I mean no one cares what I'm up to. I'm not a person of interest.

WATSON. You are to Frank.

ELIZA. I'm not a valuable target for the United States government.

WATSON. (*Sleuthing – he ends the line with punch and flair.*)
But you thought you might be. You had reason to believe you might be, why?

(**ELIZA** gives him a look.)

ELIZA. I recently left a sort of high-security job under, ah, less than completely cordial circumstances, and I may have violated my confidentiality agreement by taking a few –. (*Pause.*) Why am I telling you this?

(*She is genuinely mystified.*)

WATSON. I asked.

ELIZA. No. (*Puzzling it out.*) There's something about you.

WATSON. I'm interested.

ELIZA. I don't know what it is. You inspire trust somehow. You're trustworthy.

WATSON. (*Pleased.*) Really?

(**ELIZA** considers him.)

ELIZA. There was this moment last Thursday when I was picking up a new dish drainer at Target, as you know, and I was on my way back to my car and I saw you, like, try to duck out of sight behind a Mini Cooper – behind a *Mini Cooper*, not exactly brilliant cover – and I thought to myself, “Oh, there he is again.” (*Sweetly.*) Just – Oh, there's my guy. The one who's been following me. I wonder how he's doing over there behind that Mini Cooper. I hope he hasn't been too cold and uncomfortable out here in this parking lot waiting for me to come out.

WATSON. I was, extremely, cold and uncomfortable.

ELIZA. Well if you were cold you should have said something. I would have given you a ride. Back to my place.

(*Pause. They feel things.*)

(*Lights.*)

(*Blaze of light up on MERRICK.*)

MERRICK. (*Seductive.*) Mr. Watson. Come here. I want to see you.

(*Lights.*)

(*The bedroom.*)

(**ELIZA** and **WATSON** in bed.)

ELIZA. Well this is new. I've never picked up a strange guy at a coffee shop before.

WATSON. Really? Never?

ELIZA. First time. You're lucky.

WATSON. (*A light correction.*) I'm trustworthy.

ELIZA. ...Yeah.

WATSON. I'm just quoting you. You said, "You're trustworthy," at the coffee shop.

ELIZA. Yeah, I remember. It's a little bit weird of you to repeat it back to me.

WATSON. Oh, I'm sorry. I was trying to be, like, precise.

ELIZA. Okay.

(**ELIZA** gets up.)

WATSON. Where you going?

ELIZA. Um, bathroom?

WATSON. Oh. Okay.

(**ELIZA** goes off.)

(**WATSON** gets up. He circulates, looking at things up close that he has only ever looked at from afar until now.)

(*Calling offstage.*) You have a nice place.

ELIZA. (*Offstage.*) Thanks.

WATSON. It's hard to believe it used to be a dog food factory.

(*Little pause.*)

ELIZA. (*Offstage.*) Yeah.

(**WATSON** picks up a framed photograph.)

WATSON. What's this?

ELIZA. (*Offstage.*) Can you, hang on a second? Just – hang on.

(*After a moment ELIZA re-emerges in yoga pants and a tank top.*)

(WATSON *lights up.*)

WATSON. (*With the pleasure of recognition.*) Oh I *love* those.

(ELIZA *looks down, baffled.*)

ELIZA. What.

WATSON. Those pants. You always look so relaxed in that outfit.

(ELIZA *nods slowly.*)

ELIZA. ...Thanks.

WATSON. (*Re: photograph.*) What's this, I could never see – that's you, right?

(*He shows her the photograph. She takes it into her hands.*)

ELIZA. Yeah, that's me and Mic.

(WATSON *takes the picture back, peers at it.*)

WATSON. Where's Mike?

ELIZA. (*Points.*) There. Oh Mic's not a guy. Mic's a system. M-I-C Mic. He's a natural-language-processing pain management system, for hospitals. He's my doctorate.

WATSON. Oh.

ELIZA. This is him before he got his avatar. He doesn't look like much here. But there are versions of him running in six critical care units around Cambridge right now. On site he looks kind of like a pink glowing orb.

WATSON. Oh.

ELIZA. He pulses a little when he's listening.

(*She demonstrates with her hands. WATSON nods.*)

WATSON. Cool.

ELIZA. I designed him and built him from scratch myself.
He was kind of an important milestone in my career.
That's why the picture, it's a.

(WATSON *nods.*)

WATSON. I get it. He was your first.

ELIZA. Yeah.

(WATSON *puts down the photograph.*)

WATSON. You really like your work.

ELIZA. (*No hesitation.*) I love my work. (*Amused.*) Is it so obvious?

WATSON. Yeah. And so, *what* does it have to do with hands?

ELIZA. (*Puzzled.*) Um, nothing? Artificial intelligence?

WATSON. Right.

ELIZA. Emotionally intelligent robotics and AI.

WATSON. Right, but so why are you called Digital Fist?

ELIZA. Oh it's a symbol, like a fist, like raised fist?
Revolution?

(*She demonstrates a revolutionary salute.*)

WATSON. Oh, cool. (*He thinks a second.*) What do robots have to do with revolution?

(ELIZA *smiles.*)

ELIZA. I actually founded my company to answer that very question. You know, we're at this critical moment in our society when technology is developing more rapidly than our social and political infrastructures can keep up with. I want to know, how can we use the strengths of the technological moment to leverage empathy for real human lives? (*She hears herself.*) God I'm sorry, I'm pitching you – force of habit. You don't want to hear my whole spiel.

WATSON. Are you kidding me? I'm interested in every word you're saying. Spiel me.

(WATSON *settles into a receptive position on the bed.*)

ELIZA. Really? Well so okay, you know we're in the middle of a massive income inequality crisis right now.

WATSON. Sure.

ELIZA. (*With increasing enthusiasm.*) It's starting to look like Victorian England around here, and the more poor people we have, the less political will there is to care for them. Look at our tax code and you'll see how much we value our most vulnerable citizens. Now we're not going to be able to solve this problem by voting the right people into office. Or maybe we could, but that could take generations. Democracy is slow – technology is fast. So what if, instead of working to empower oppressed *groups*, we worked to empower oppressed *individuals*? Imagine equipping every disenfranchised citizen in this country with an extremely intelligent device that will act as a trusted companion and personal advocate, to help them navigate life on the margins of society. I'm talking public housing residents, nursing home patients, disabled vets – people who've been betrayed and abandoned by the very institutions that are supposed to serve them.

WATSON. That sounds amazing.

ELIZA. Right? Picture a light, impact-resistant, massively parallel web-enabled device, but super cute and portable, so you can take it with you into any tough situation – like if you have to apply for public assistance, for example, or move into section-eight housing, or appear in family court – these are famously dehumanizing environments, but with my device, a user won't be on her own anymore. Her companion device will be able to retrieve and leverage complex background information for her, translate text and speech, autofill and submit applications, *but also* offer skilled emotional support, because it can decode and respond to her emotional cues and get to know her better and better the more she interacts with it, thereby boosting her self-esteem and increasing her

overall efficacy in the world. All for the materials and manufacturing cost of a Tamagotchi!

WATSON. Incredible. And you like, *invented* this thing?

ELIZA. Well the core of the technology is based on IBM's Watson, I don't know if you heard about the supercomputer that beat the humans on Jeopardy a few weeks ago?

WATSON. Heard about it.

ELIZA. Yeah so, I was with Watson in the beginning. But then I left. I didn't want to spend my time working on some super-enhanced trivia machine. I want *actual* better living through technology, you know?

WATSON. Uh-hunh.

ELIZA. I mean, everywhere around us people are suffering, they're just plummeting through the holes in the safety net, but with my device, maybe some of them can be saved.

WATSON. Oh, I get it. I totally get it. This is exactly why I wanted to join the Dweeb Team!

ELIZA. You *wanted* to join the Dweeb Team?

WATSON. Sure, I always wanted to help people, ever since I was little.

ELIZA. But so like, why not be a doctor, or an EMT or something?

WATSON. Uh, a lot of the calls I get sent out on are actually just as intense as anything an EMT deals with. You're in people's homes, their system's down, shit gets hairy.

ELIZA. (*Amiable but not buying it.*) Yeah?

WATSON. I've talked two people out of suicide.

ELIZA. Not seriously.

WATSON. It's not just crawling under desks and flipping a switch. Our mandate is to get the *client* up and running again. It's a delicate human operation.

ELIZA. Okay. I shouldn't harsh on Dweeb Team, I guess.

WATSON. No you shouldn't. We're out there every day making a difference in people's lives. It's an incredible feeling. Well, you know what it's like.

(Warm, curious smiles back and forth.)

ELIZA. Hey how did you know I'm called Digital Fist? I don't even have that name on the buzzer yet.

WATSON. *(Light.)* Building records.

ELIZA. Oh.

WATSON. Do you mind if I ask you kind of a weird question?

ELIZA. Sure.

(WATSON searches for the right words.)

WATSON. Your ex-husband's so, you know, brokenhearted.

ELIZA. *(Dubious.)* Yeah?

WATSON. He pretends he's angry at you, but really it's so obvious he just misses you and wishes he could have you back.

ELIZA. *(Dark.)* So your question?

WATSON. Well...is he right? Are you planning some big move against him?

ELIZA. First of all, it's the height of narcissism for Frank to assume that my plans include him in any -. And you know, I don't really feel like getting into the details of my previous -. And it's sort of weird that you're asking me about -.

(It sinks in, suddenly, how she met this guy. She makes a little distance between them. WATSON objects strenuously under the following.)

You're not reporting back to him about this, are you? *(She gestures - their tryst.)* This? Has this all been, like, part of his diabolical plan? Did he send you in here to try to get me to reveal my secrets to you or something?

WATSON. *(Overlapping under her previous line.)* No, no, no, no, no, absolutely not, no way! No way! And Frank didn't send me here, you brought me here!

ELIZA. (*Half to herself.*) I did. What was I thinking. There was something about you.

(**ELIZA** begins briskly gathering and handing **WATSON** his clothes, hustling him towards the door.)

I'm sorry, this has clearly been a huge error in judgment. We should not have done this. You should go.

WATSON. No, please, I shouldn't have brought up your ex-husband, obviously that was a total bonehead move on a first date, of course you're sensitive about him, I should have known that, I *did* know, it was a fuck-up. But don't kick me out, please, not yet.

ELIZA. You have to go, sorry. You have to go right now.

(*She all but shoves him out.*)

WATSON. Please, more than anything, I just want to give you what you need!

(**ELIZA** freezes.)

ELIZA. What?

WATSON. If I'm getting it wrong, just like, nudge me in the right direction!

(**ELIZA** peers at him.)

ELIZA. Why are you saying that?

WATSON. Because, because –

ELIZA. Who *are* you?

(*A beat.*)

WATSON. I'm Josh. Josh Watson.

ELIZA. (*Low.*) Oh my God.

WATSON. (*Stumbling through bashfulness.*) I know you think I have some ulterior motive and I can see why you would think that but I just *like* you, I like you. You're very beautiful to me, okay, I think you're a totally amazing person. And this was really good, don't you think? I think we could be really good together. And I know this is probably like, number two on the list of things

a person should absolutely never say the first time they get with a girl, but, I feel like I *know* you. I know what you need. I know I can give you what you need.

(He's looking at her very deeply. She can't break his gaze.)

ELIZA. What the fuck.

(ELIZA crosses to WATSON. Kisses him.)

(Throws her arms around his neck.)

(They kiss.)

(Lights.)

(Tone.)

(Blaze of light up on MERRICK.)

MERRICK. *(A threat.)* Mr. Watson, come here. I want to see you.

(Lights.)

(Lights up on MERRICK's office.)

(WATSON stands in front of MERRICK, hands in his pockets.)

You're not wearing your little outfit.

WATSON. I'm not here in my capacity as a Dweeb.

MERRICK. I'm just glad you're here at all. You've been a hard man to reach the past couple days.

WATSON. Yeah, I got a little, caught up in something, so.

MERRICK. It's fine, you're here, and I assume you come bearing evidence?

WATSON. Well –

MERRICK. Go ahead and sum it up for me, the various forms and shapes of the ill my wife wishes to do me.

WATSON. Oh... I don't think she wishes to do you any ill?

MERRICK. Oh yes she does. Oh yes she does. When she wouldn't take my money, when she wouldn't take any alimony from me at the mediation – of course we had to have *mediation*, we couldn't have a nice erotic

FINISH READING THIS SCRIPT

Visit our website to purchase the full script or to explore other titles.

www.samuelfrench.com

www.samuelfrench.co.uk

To stay up to date on all that we are doing, follow us on social media:



*Titles for licensing are subject to availability depending on your territory.