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

SF PERUSALS

100 Lunches

A Gourmet Comedy

by
Jack Sharkey
and Leo W. Sears

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

Copyright © 1989 by Jack Sharkey and Leo W. Sears

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that *100 LUNCHES* is subject to a Licensing Fee. It 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, amateur, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. In its present form the play is dedicated to the reading public only.

The amateur live stage performance rights to *100 LUNCHES* are controlled exclusively by Samuel French, Inc., and licensing arrangements and performance licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur Licensing Fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a licensing quotation and a performance license please give us the number of performances intended, dates of production, your seating capacity and admission fee. Licensing Fees are payable one week before the opening performance of the play to Samuel French, Inc., at 45 W. 25th Street, New York, NY 10010.

Licensing Fee of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

Stock licensing fees quoted upon application to Samuel French, Inc.

For all other rights than those stipulated above, apply to: Samuel French, Inc.

Particular emphasis is laid on the question of amateur or professional readings, permission and terms for which must be secured in writing from Samuel French, Inc.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced the following notice must appear on all programs, printing and advertising for the play: "Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc."

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

ISBN 978-0-573-69114-0 Printed in U.S.A. #16988

No one shall commit or authorize any act or omission by which the copyright of, or the right to copyright, this play may be impaired.

No one shall make any changes in this play for the purpose of production.

Publication of this play does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised in their own interests to apply to Samuel French, Inc., for written permission before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre.

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.

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 and their licensing agent, Samuel French, Inc., against any costs, expenses, losses and liabilities arising from the use of music by licensees.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of *100 LUNCHES must* give credit to the Authors of the Play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play, and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for the purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production. The names of the Authors *must* appear on a separate line on which no other name appears, immediately following the title and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent of the size of the title type.

100 LUNCHES

Cast of Characters

CHARLTON (CHUCK) REYNOLDS — successful writer of stage mysteries, 35

CHARITY STARR — the only theatre critic who doesn't like his worksmanship, 25 – 30

GLINDA BELLOWS — Chuck's housekeeper, named for the Good Witch of the North, 50ish

TERRY REYNOLDS — Chuck's son, a smart (but not smartaleck) matchmaker, 10 – 14

YOLANDA WEINTRAUB — sexy-but-predatory neighbor lady, aggressively attractive, 30 – 40

WAITER — a multiple role of many "brothers" in a large family of waiters, 25 – ?

BASIC SET: Livingroom of Reynolds home on Long Island, N.Y., a comfortable and homey milieu, furnished in expensive-but-not-gaudy good taste

MINI-SETS: A series of both classy and ghastly restaurants in Manhattan (this is actually just one set, but with decor-changes suitable to whichever restaurant Chuck and Charity are attending, with just space enough for table, chairs and the itinerary of the Waiter — and sometimes Yolanda)

100 Lunches by Jack Sharkey and Leo W. Sears, directed by Peter J. Hill, with set design by Peter J. Hill, was premiered by Leo W. Sears at METRO PLAYHOUSE DINNER THEATRE at THE CLUB-Belaire, in Phoenix, Arizona on Wednesday night, January 11, 1989 with the following cast:

Chuck ..... Leo W. Sears
Charity ..... Sheree Spargo
Glinda ..... Delorez West
Terry ..... Jeff Sears
Yolanda ..... Laura Sadowski
Waiter(s) ..... Jack Dwyer

Act One

Setting: Living room of the Reynolds home on Long Island, N.Y. The morning after the opening night party following the New York premiere of Charlton Reynolds' latest stage mystery *How to Murder a Millionaire.*

Act Two

Lunch #1 — Chateau Jasper
Home Interlude
Lunch #8 — Hymie's Hash House
Home Interlude
Lunch #27 — The Four Seasons
Home Interlude
Lunch #42 — Kali's Kosher Kitchen
Home Interlude
Lunch #50 — Wally's Wiener World
Home Interlude
Lunch #77 — Pierre's Palais de Pompe
Home Interlude
Lunch #99 — Jose Wong's
Home scene

Act Three

Scene 1 — The Reynolds home just prior to the opening of *Murder for Real*
Scene 2 — Immediately following the opening
Scene 3 — The next morning

ABOUT THIS PLAY

Lest you imagine the central nub of our show is far-fetched: Back in the early 1960's, when BYE BYE BIRDIE premiered on Broadway, the New York Times reviewer gave it a dreadful panning, ending the scathing review with the phrase ". . . neither fish nor fowl nor musical comedy." But every *other* newspaper in town gave the show total-rave notices. And about two days later, there showed up in the Times a review entitled "A SECOND LOOK AT *BYE BYE BIRDIE*"—and it, too, was an absolute rave. While we can only theorize about what went on at that reviewer's editorial offices in the interim, we suspect our own shows' plot-surprise is mighty close to the mark. Truth *is* a bit stranger than fiction.

"100 Lunches"

ACT ONE

The morning after opening-night party following NYC premiere of Chuck's latest stage mystery HOW TO MURDER A MILLIONAIRE. At curtain-rise, GLINDA Enters living room from kitchen. She pauses to survey pieces of tuxedo strewn about room. She then proceeds to pick up jacket, tie, pants, socks and shoes. One of shoes has liquid in it, which she pours into plant on desk top.

CHUCK. (*Off stage*) Did you check the porch roof?

GLINDA. (*with arms full of clothes*) At the risk of life and limb.

CHUCK. (O.S.) Of *all* days for the paper to be late—!

GLINDA. The world is full of newsstands, and you know how to drive. (*Places clothes over arm of sofa.*)

CHUCK. (O.S.) But I like to read the paper with my morning coffee!

GLINDA. I can always put a thermos in the car.

CHUCK. (O.S.) Why aren't you ever around when I *need* funny dialogue?! (*door-slam, off*)

GLINDA. (*belatedly*) Enjoy your shower! (*Starts for kitchen-exit, stops as TERRY, arms full of newspapers, Enters from front door.*) Aren't you a little *young* to be getting home at this hour?

TERRY. (*crosses to sofa and dumps papers on sofa*) I've been out stealing newspapers from the neighbors' driveways.

GLINDA. Going to be a lot of messy birdcages on our block.

TERRY. Did you *see* today's Manhattan Journal?

GLINDA. No, but if *you* did, tell your father before he boils over in the shower.

TERRY. I can't. It has the review of Pop's opening last night!

GLINDA. (*intuitively*) Charity Starr strikes again?

TERRY. With both fangs. She won't have any venom in her poison-sacs for a week!

GLINDA. That bad?

TERRY. (*after furtive look around*) See for yourself. (*Lifts sofa-cushion, produces own paper already folded open to theatre page.*) She's in *really* rare form.

GLINDA. (*takes paper, sits on arm of sofa, reads aloud slowly*) *"How to Murder a Millionaire*, the latest stage-play by perennial playwright Charlton Reynolds, is an amazingly successful mystery with almost countless victims . . ." (*pauses to observe*) Why, *that's* not bad at *all*!

TERRY. (*grimly*) Read on.

GLINDA. (*doing so*) "Unfortunately, the victims are the people who paid good money to attend the premiere"—Oh, dear!—"and the mystery is why this play was ever produced in the first place." Does—does it get any better, Terry?

TERRY. If you're a masochist, you'll adore every word.

GLINDA. (*with waning enthusiasm, reads a bit further*) "The problem with the play—for want of a better name—is that its central theme is murder—but how can one convincingly kill off characters who never were alive in the first place? Reynolds' lack of skill in creating recognizable human beings to people the stage makes murder almost redundant. If his unaccountable popularity with audiences is a case of the blind leading the blind, perhaps it's because his murder mysteries are a case of the dead killing the dead." (*hands newspaper to TERRY*) You shouldn't have stolen the neighbors' newspapers. You should have blown up the newspaper office.

TERRY. I didn't have trainfare to Manhattan. (*Starts to pick up papers.*)

GLINDA. I would've lent you my car.

TERRY. But where would I get a bomb?

GLINDA. (*indicates newspaper she holds*) You could have used your father's play. (*reacts*) I hear him coming! Quick, hide this! No—(*grabs it back*)—give it to me! Stall him in here for a minute! (*Exits to kitchen.*)

(*TERRY quickly hides papers: in desk drawer, under chair, in plant, under couch cushion, etc., then leans nonchalantly against wall; an instant later, CHUCK Enters from sleeping-area.*)

TERRY. (*all innocence*) Hi, Pop! Why don't you sit down and I'll bring your breakfast on a tray?

CHUCK. Terry, I'll admit I was partying to all hours, but I can still make it to the kitchen.

TERRY. But it's a sunny morning and the kitchen faces east.

CHUCK. (*Winces via eye-crinkling*) How sunny?

TERRY. How heavy were you partying? (*Waves sock at him from clothing pile*)

CHUCK. (*hesitates, then sits in armchair*) Only until the first reviews came out. They were nice. We should have a good run. But I gave up waiting for the *Manhattan Journal.* Must be a real doozy of a review for Queen Cobra to take so long writing it.

TERRY. (*inadvertently*) You can say *that* again!

CHUCK. What—?

TERRY. I mean—when she took so long—it—uh—*must* be a doozy.

CHUCK. (*stands*) You've seen it!

TERRY. (*valliantly*) Seen what?

CHUCK. Now, look, son—(*pauses as GLINDA re-*

enters with neatly folded newspaper!)

GLINDA. *Here* you are, Mr. Reynolds! I'll just go get your coffee! (*turns and starts for kitchen*)

CHUCK. (*unfolding paper*) Is Charity Starr's review in here, Glinda?

GLINDA. (*pauses short of Exit*) I'm sure I don't know, sir. I only glanced through it looking for shopping coupons. (*at this point, he opens paper and we see large cut-out area; when he reacts, she continues*) I found some. (*from behind CHUCK, TERRY gives her a thumb-and-forefinger-circle "okay" sign of approval*)

CHUCK. But where's the *theatre*-review section?

TERRY. Must've been on the back of those coupons.

GLINDA. Right!

CHUCK. So bring me the *coupons*, then!

GLINDA. Can't. I already used them.

CHUCK. Mrs. Bellows, *where* can you go shopping on Long Island for groceries at seven-thirty in the morning?!

GLINDA. Uh—*Seven-Eleven*?

CHUCK. What were we *out* of—*Slurpees*?

TERRY. They're awfully hard to keep refrigerated . . .

CHUCK. (*looks from one to the other; then, quietly*) Let's see the review.

GLINDA. How about some nice breakfast first!

CHUCK. I don't *feel* like a Slurpee right now. (*GLINDA winces, sighs, Exits to kitchen.*)

TERRY. Don't be too sure—they're great for cooling you off . . .

CHUCK. That bad?

TERRY. (*as GLINDA re-enters with neatly-cut-out review*) See for yourself.

CHUCK. (*takes review, looks from one to the other, moves to sofa & sits, then starts reading, to himself,*

mumbling a word here and there, and getting angrier with each mumble:) "never alive in the first place"! . . . ". . . unaccountable popularity . . ."! . . . ". . . *blind leading the blind*"! . . . "*dead killing the dead*"—?! (*abruptly crumbles review between his hands with a motion not unlike throttling*) Why that—no-good—vicious—heartless—insensitive —(*rises*)

GLINDA. Terry, if you won't leave the room, you'd better cover your ears.

CHUCK. This is a disaster! What am I going to do?! (*sits again*)

GLINDA. Well, you can always get a job at Long Island University *teaching* playwriting!

CHUCK. Are you crazy? I *can't* teach playwriting! I don't know how it's *done*!

TERRY. (*moves to sit on sofa arm*) Then how do you keep *doing* it, Dad?

CHUCK. It's like riding a bicycle—once you *learn*, you just keep *on* doing it. But I haven't the *vaguest* idea how to *teach* somebody to ride!

TERRY. So *that's* why I keep falling off!

GLINDA. But Mister Reynolds, there must be *something* you could tell a class . . . ?

CHUCK. Oh, sure: Dream up a plot, name your characters, give them something to say, and when they've said enough, drop the curtain!

GLINDA. You made it sound so *easy*!

CHUCK. It *is* easy. For *me*. But imagine how frustrated those *pupils* would get. You just heard my *entire* lecture for the whole semester!

GLINDA. Amazing! All that talent—and no way to *share* any of it!

TERRY. The *other* reviews were *great*, Dad.

CHUCK. Charity Starr has soured me on *all* critics! She's ruined my morning, upset my stomach, and probably destroyed my career!

GLINDA. Can't you *do* something about her?

CHUCK. Short of manually *strangling* her, (*rises*) I don't know what. (*Crumbles newspaper with a definite strangling—motion, drops it to floor.*) I'm going for a walk. (*goes as far as front door, turns to add*) I'll either come back calm and refreshed—or a wanted murderer! (*Starts to Exit.*)

(*Before he can Exit, YOLANDA WEINTRAUB Enters via front door; 30–40 years old, quite attractive visually, but on the aggressive side in personality, makeup and dress.*)

YOLANDA. Poor Chucky! Have you recovered from that nasty woman's vile review?

(*Though CHUCK obviously appreciates this balm on his wounds, we can see that GLINDA and TERRY are not exactly crazy about this newcomer, though they politely conceal it. TERRY moves to chair & sits.*)

CHUCK. Nice of you to be concerned, Yolanda. Yeah, I guess I'm okay. but I'd better not *see* her for at least twenty-four hours!

YOLANDA. I came over as soon as read that vicious attack. (*Drags him to and plumps him down onto sofa, starts massaging his neck from behind, which he obviously loves.*) I thought you might need someone to help you recover.

GLINDA. That *walk* would do you a *lot* more good, sir.

TERRY. Yeah, Dad, if you get *too* relaxed you can't create worth a darn.

YOLANDA. (*massaging away*) But you *should* learn to relax, Chucky! You work *much* too hard, and how you get any sleep with the late *hours* you keep—!

CHUCK. Can't help it. I write when inspiration strikes, and it tends to strike hardest about three o'clock in the morning!

YOLANDA. Is your bedroom soundproofed—?

TERRY. Why?

GLINDA. What do you have in mind?

YOLANDA. (*stops massaging, flustered*) I just meant that if Chucky finally decides to *remarry*, his early-morning typing might be a *disturbance* to his new bride—unless the room has soundproofing so she won't hear his typewriter, see?

GLINDA. (*with extra meaning*) I certainly *do* see!

TERRY. (*aside to GLINDA:*) I wish I *didn't*!

CHUCK. (*Attempts to stand but YOLANDA pushes back down.*) I've really got to take that walk. (*Tries again but YOLANDA pushes him down again.*) I'm too uptight to get *anything* done 'til I blow off some steam!

YOLANDA. Would you like *me* to walk along *with* you, Chucky?

GLINDA. You'd need track shoes!

TERRY. Dad moves *much* too fast for you to keep up!

CHUCK. (*escapes her grasp & stands*) They're right, Yolanda. (*Crosses around sofa to YOLANDA.*) Besides, I plan to do a lot of cussing under my breath, and you might get an education in vocabulary you'd rather avoid! Excuse me! (*Exits*)

YOLANDA. That poor dear tormented man! (*starts for front door, murmuring half to herself*) I'm *sure* I have a pair of track shoes *someplace* in the house . . . (*Exits*)

GLINDA. Your father doesn't need a housekeeper, he needs a *bouncer*! There goes an unhappy camper.

TERRY. Dad or Miss Weintraub?

GLINDA. Oh, *she's* happy enough. A praying mantis *enjoys* massaging the neck of its prey before devouring it! I meant your father. This newspaper review has hit him harder than usual.

TERRY. What was your first clue? Dad seems to be getting more and more upset with each review by that Charity Starr.

GLINDA. Maybe she's finally pushed him over the edge. He could decide to give up writing and take up acting. (*pause; GLINDA & TERRY react with distaste*) Is anyone holding auditions for *THE BOSTON STRANGLER*?

TERRY. (*moving toward the front door; picks up books from desk*) No, but dad's got a great candidate for the lead in the remake of *THE TOWERING INFERNO*. On top of that bonfire, her review could hardly say, "It wasn't so hot!"

GLINDA. Where are you going?

TERRY. (*stopping at front door*) It's a school day. Thought I might drop in on my class.

GLINDA. *Not* before you return *every one* of those stolen newspapers to the neighbors, young man!

TERRY. (*Puts down book and collects newspapers.*) Aw, with the state of World News today, I'm doing them a favor.

GLINDA. There's more than news in the paper. You know Mrs. Pomeroy—Nellie has to read today's horoscope before she'll go out of the house.

TERRY. Oh—okay. (*starts for door again*) I *wish* there were some way to get that Starr woman to see the light, though.

GLINDA. We could put her in *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA* and drop a chandelier on her.

TERRY. (*pauses at the door*) Even better—put her in *THE UNSKINKABLE MOLLY BROWN*!

GLINDA. As Molly?

TERRY. No. The iceberg.

GLINDA. Oh, get out of here and return those newspapers!

TERRY. Okay, okay, I'm going.

(*As TERRY Exits through front door, we hear BACK DOOR CLOSE off in kitchen, and even as GLINDA looks that way, CHUCK Enters, striding toward bedroom.*)

CHUCK. I just remembered: I *hate* taking long walks! (*starts out to bedroom*) Is there any poison in the medicine cabinet?

GLINDA. Classic or sugar-free?

CHUCK. (*pauses*) I'm in no mood to make decisions. (*Exits-reenters*) I can always use my razor—except I hate pain. (*Exits-reenters*) You know what I don't understand? *What* does that gal have *against* me? It's like trying to entertain a black widow spider! (*Exits-reenters*) It's not the bad reviews—I get them from *other* critics occasionally—it's the *consistent* bad reviews. (*Exits-reenters*) There must be something I've done, that I don't know about, to keep her in a constant state of revenge!

GLINDA. To get her *that* venomous, you'd have to have wiped out several generations of her family.

CHUCK. (*crosses to sofa and sits*) Unless she just *enjoys* injecting her poison?

GLINDA. I know what you mean. The *best* review she ever gave you was announcing she was taking her *vacation* rather than attend the opening of your mystery BLOOD ON HER HANDS. (*Exits to kitchen.*)

CHUCK. Yeah, but she sank her fangs in as soon as she got back. And I *quote*: "This play should have been called BLOOD ON *HIS* HANDS, because Mister Reyn-

olds is single-handedly killing off the murder-mystery genre with his mechanical plots and cardboard characters"! (*thoughtfully*) I wonder—do you know if a murderer can *really* get a jury of his *actual* peers?? With twelve *playwrights* on the panel, I could murder her in Times Square and still get off with a Not Guilty.

GLINDA. (*Reenters*) I wouldn't count on it. You may be a fellow-playwright, but you are also their *competition*!

CHUCK. (*stands*) Damn. Never thought of that. Hell, I'm going back to bed.

(*CHUCK Exits to bedroom and then TERRY re-enters at front door.*)

TERRY. Two of the neighbors caught me returning the paper. I had to say I was the new delivery boy!

GLINDA. Bad move. Now when they read that review, they're going to think you *had* to take the job since your father can no longer support the family!

TERRY. That darn Charity Starr! How can somebody who looks so great have such a vengeful heart?

GLINDA. How do you know she looks so great?

TERRY. Remember? I pointed her out to you last night. She was the one in the black dress. (*moves to sofa & sits*)

GLINDA. That's right. Black. What else would a black widow wear? I wonder if she has an orange hour-glass on her belly? So you thought she was attractive?

TERRY. Yeah, (*longingly*) she was dynamite. (*Back to reality*) That is . . . for a poisonous spider.

GLINDA. Hmmm.

TERRY. She sure is getting to Dad. He works so hard all the time. It's not fair.

GLINDA. Terry, it comes with the territory. It's like ants at a picnic. You try to enjoy yourself in spite of them. (*picks up clothes & takes them to kitchen*)

TERRY. But, it's getting to the point where he's not enjoying himself. I mean he never goes out; all he does is write. And it's been that way since Mom died two years ago. (*pause*) Glinda, I sure miss her. I know Dad does too.

GLINDA. (*Reenters and sits on sofa next to TERRY*) We all do.

TERRY. I think that's why he pushes himself so much. He doesn't deserve the aggravation.

GLINDA. Part of being a playwright is having to suffer the slings and arrows of the critics.

TERRY. But, he works so hard; he's successful. The audiences like his plays. The actors like his plays. And most critics like his plays . . . everyone except our resident grinch.

GLINDA. As long as the audiences and actors love his stuff what difference does it make what Ms. Charity Starr thinks?

TERRY. Other than ruining his mood, I guess it makes absolutely *no* difference.

GLINDA. Right! So, lighten up! (*stands and moves behind sofa*) You're starting to take this whole thing too seriously. It's more fun to conjure up images of how to get even.

TERRY. Yeah, like we could lure her into a room and force her to sit through fifty-three straight hours of *THE BRADY BUNCH* and *THE PARTRIDGE FAMILY.*

GLINDA. Not bad. Sort of sugar her to death. How about . . . we could glue popcorn all over her and drop her off at Central Park to feed the pigeons.

TERRY. Very creative. How about we kidnap her, give

her a Brian Bosworth haircut, a BORN TO KILL tattoo and drop her off at a Hell's Angels bar?

GLINDA. Too cruel. (*looks at watch*) I hate to stop all the fun, but don't you have to get to school?

TERRY. But, I was just getting started.

GLINDA. No buts. (*Points to door.*) School, buster. Besides I've got work to do.

TERRY. (*stands*) But, Dad's going to need my support!

GLINDA. (*Moves to TERRY and gently maneuvers him toward front door.*) Fine. You go to school. Learn. Graduate. Go to college. Become a lawyer. Get rich and support him in his old age.

TERRY. But I mean this morning.

GLINDA. I'll take care of him. You're going to miss your bus.

TERRY. (*Pauses at front door.*) That's okay. Didn't you read the report that just came out that said that busing has done nothing to improve education?

GLINDA. You are stalling. If you miss your bus and your Dad has to drive you, he is going to be even more upset. So . . . hit the door (*She opens the door*)

TERRY. Fine. I'm gone. I'm outa here. I'm . . .

GLINDA. Bye! (*She shoves him out, and closes the door. She starts to step away from the door. DOOR BELL rings repeatedly. She opens door.*)

TERRY. (*rushing in*) I think I could learn a lot more if I took my books. (*he picks up books from desk and runs back out. GLINDA starts to close the door. TERRY sticks head back in*) Isn't education a wonderful thing? Bye!

GLINDA. (*closes door*) That kid! (*GLINDA starts toward kitchen, but is interrupted by CHUCK's entry*) I thought you went back to bed.

CHUCK. I can't sleep when I'm hungry. And I completely missed my breakfast.

GLINDA. (*starts for kitchen*) I'll get right on it!

CHUCK. Won't that make it hard to eat?

GLINDA. Okay, I'll get *to* it! Better?

CHUCK. Much. (*sits as she starts to Exit again*) Did Terry get off to school okay?

GLINDA. Well, he left in time to catch the bus. My responsibility ends at the front door.

CHUCK. (*reading*) Oh, hell! (*Crosses to GLINDA and points to front page.*) He's *got* no school today!

GLINDA. (*Looks at paper.*) *Another* teachers' strike? This is becoming an annual event!

CHUCK. He's got a long bus ride for nothing, poor kid.

GLINDA. Unless the bus company *knows* about the strike—? (*starts for front door*) I'd better see if I can catch him.

CHUCK. (*Exits to kitchen*) If you can't, I'll drive over to the school and pick him up.

(*DOOR BELL*)

GLINDA. (*opens door*) Yes?

CHARITY. Hello. I'm Charity Starr. (*GLINDA slams door. DOOR BELL again. GLINDA reopens door reluctantly. CHARITY steps inside; she has a rolled-up and ribbon-bow-bound newspaper in one hand.*) I need to speak to Mr. Reynolds.

GLINDA. Are you sure it's safe?

CHARITY. I'm willing to chance it. Am I too early?

GLINDA. For what?

CHARITY. Well, I thought playwrights kept late hours at the theatre and usually slept in, mornings. I can come back later, if you like.

GLINDA. Mister Reynolds was up with the robins. He didn't want to miss your review.

CHARITY. Oh, dear. That must have really gotten his day off to a soggy start.

GLINDA. Why don't you ask him yourself? Have a seat while I get him.

CHARITY. Thank you. (*sits, looks around room*) You certainly have a lovely place here.

GLINDA. Enjoy it while it lasts. After Mister Reynolds finds you here, the place may be reduced to rubble! (*starts for kitchen*) I hope you know how to dodge.

CHARITY. (*stands up*) Maybe—I *should* come back later on. Or phone for an appointment. Or—

CHUCK. (*off*) Glinda, who was at the door?

GLINDA. Charity Starr!

CHUCK. (*sound of breaking glass than a bull roar*) *Aaaagh*?!

CHARITY. (*heading for front door*) You know, I think I *will* make an appointment first—!

(*Before CHARITY can reach the doorknob, door flies open and an ecstatic TERRY rushes in with his schoolbooks, blocking her retreat as he happily slams door.*)

TERRY. There's a teachers' strike!

GLINDA. Miss Starr, may I introduce the Town Crier?

TERRY. *Charity* Starr?! . . . Oh, sure, *now* I recognize you! You looked different in that slinky black dress last night.

CHARITY. You mean the *opening*?

CHUCK. (*Enters from kitchen wielding steak knife and bandaged finger*) *Where* is she?!

CHARITY. (*gets behind TERRY, using him like a shield*) Mister Reynolds, *control* yourself!

CHUCK. First you ravage my play, now you're trying to strangle my son!

TERRY. (*getting out of her frantic grasp*) *Dad*—aren't you being a bit *drastic*—?

CHUCK. (*looks at knife, reacts, hands it to GLINDA*) I couldn't tear the adhesive tape tape with my teeth. (*holds up gauzed-and-taped finger*) Those coffee cup splinters are *sharp*!

CHARITY. Then you *weren't* trying to *stab* me?

CHUCK. (*icily*) That would be *much* too quick!

GLINDA. (*taking knife, heads kitchenward*) I'll just tidy up the debris. (*Exits*)

TERRY. Dad, what's *Miss Starr* doing here? (*to CHARITY*) You got a *death wish* or something?

CHARITY. Well, I *did* want to *discuss* something with your father—uh—?

TERRY. Terry.

CHARITY. Terry. But if this is a bad time—?

CHUCK. (*Points at sofa*) Sit there! (*she sits instantly*) Terry, go someplace.

TERRY. (*gleefully*) No witnesses, right?

CHARITY. Listen, I can see you're very busy, so why don't I—(*starts to leave*)

CHUCK. *Sit*! (*she sits and puts newspaper that she was carrying on table; then to TERRY:*) *Go*! (*To GLINDA*) *Coffee*! (*GLINDA and TERRY Exit to kitchen*)

TERRY. (O.S.) Can I at least listen to her screams—?

CHARITY. He's kidding, isn't he?

CHUCK. We'll *see*. (*moves to sofa near her, sits facing her, his manner wary*) Now, exactly *what* possible reason could you have to expose yourself to mortal peril this way?

CHARITY. I gather you didn't like my review of your play. (*holds up newspaper*)

CHUCK. Did you *expect* me to?

CHARITY. Well, everyone can use a little constructive

criticism, now and then, so if you approached my review with an open mind—

CHUCK. (*calls off*) Terry, get ready to listen to her screams.

CHARITY. (*Stands*) *Let me re-phrase that*!

TERRY. (*off*) Aw, you can scream better than *that*!

CHARITY. (*screams off*) *I WAS NOT SCREAMING!*

TERRY. (*Reenters*) There, that's *much* better!

GLINDA. (*Comes after TERRY*) Terry, mind your manners. Miss Starr is a *guest*!

TERRY. You mean like a guest at a necktie party? (*Mimics hanging*)

CHUCK. (*Stands. To CHARITY*) Sit! (*She sits*) (*To TERRY*) Go! (*To GLINDA*) Coffee! (*GLINDA & TERRY Exit. CHUCK sits.*) Now, do you feel better, getting that out of your system?

CHARITY. No. I do not. You ought to be *ashamed*, making me lose control.

CHUCK. I ought to be ashamed?

TERRY. (*peeking in*) You're lucky you're not being ripped to shreds.

CHUCK. Terry!

CHARITY. I thought my coming over here was a good idea. I thought it would give us a chance to clear the air. But, I can leave if . . .

CHUCK. Since you've already entered the cave of the bear . . .

GLINDA. (*peeking in*) I tried to warn you.

CHUCK. Obviously, very good advice. (*to GLINDA*) Don't you have some breakfast to fix, Mrs. Bellows? (*GLINDA backs out*)

CHARITY. (*stands*) Oh . . . I didn't mean to disturb your breakfast.

CHUCK. (*stands so that he and CHARITY are nose to*

nose) Why should this morning be any different? You've disturbed my breakfast after every opening night review you've ever written. This time you just decided to do it in person.

CHARITY. Well?

CHUCK. Well, what?

CHARITY. Do we clear the air or not?

CHUCK. It's up to you.

CHARITY. Can we act civilized?

CHUCK. *I* am always civilized.

CHARITY. Fine. (*sits*)

CHUCK. Fine. (*sits*)

CHARITY. Now that we're all comfy and cozy—

CHUCK. Speak for yourself.

CHARITY. —I'd like to ask you a favor.

CHUCK. (*calls kitchenward*) Glinda, get the Guinness people on the phone—I think we've just had the new world's record for all-out high-faluting *gall*!

GLINDA. (*leans head in*) What was the *old* world's record?

TERRY. (*vaudeville entrance from kitchen*) When the executioner asked Joan of Arc if he could borrow a *match*!

CHARITY. (*stands*) Look, I *thought* we were going to be *civilized*, but if you—

CHUCK. (*to CHARITY:*) Sit! (*CHARITY sits; CHUCK stares at GLINDA & TERRY*)

TERRY. Go! (*Exits*)

GLINDA. Coffee! (*Exits*)

CHUCK. (*Sits. With icy politeness*) You were saying—?

CHARITY. I'm writing a play, and I need your help with it.

CHUCK. (*bounds to his feet and crosses to chair*) *That*

even beats Joan of Arc! This morning you ripped my new play to shreds with your poison pen, and now you expect *me* to help you run the *shredder*?!

CHARITY. I suppose it *does* sound a bit *audacious* of me—

CHUCK. (*plops into chair again, shaking his head in stunned wonderment*) "*Audacious*"?! I think "*deranged*" is closer to the mark! After you go and tell the entire civilized world—the members who can *read*, anyhow—that as a playwright I make a good *cardboard*-manufacturer, you're suddenly here to hitch a free ride on my *expertise* in the field?!

CHARITY. (*Crosses to chair*) I *never* said you were an incompetent. I just said your *characters* stunk!

CHUCK. (*Stands. Facetiously*) Oh, and here I was acting cross as a bear! What ever possessed me!

(*CHUCK backs CHARITY across stage, up onto and across coffee table to front of sofa during the following*)

CHARITY. Mister Reynolds, be fair. I never said you were a bad *play*-writer; I *like* your plays. And I especially marvel at your ability to construct *plots*, mechanical or not. The only thing I don't enjoy is the two-dimensional nature of your characters. The story-lines have always been nothing but brilliant.

CHUCK. (*confused*) Then why didn't you say as much to your *readers*?

CHARITY. I *did*, if you'd take the time to read my review in its *entirety*. (*sits on sofa*)

GLINDA. (*leans out of kitchen*) You know, she *did* say the *mystery*-part was perfectly swell, sir. Of course, that came about three paragraphs after your *characters* went into the *threshing*-machine.

TERRY. (*also leans out*) And she's got *great* legs!

CHUCK. (*stands*) *Terry*—!

TERRY. I'm going, I'm going! (*Exits into kitchen*)

GLINDA. I'm coffeeing, I'm coffeeing! (*Exits into kitchen*)

(*CHUCK stares at CHARITY.*)

CHARITY. (*comes to her feet*) Look, we'll never get *anywhere* with "Mr. and Mrs. Interlocutor" at the ready in the next room. Isn't there somewhere *else* we could have this discussion?

CHUCK. How about the prize ring in Madison Square Garden? We could sell tickets.

CHARITY. Seriously.

CHUCK. (*Crosses around back of sofa to CHARITY'S right shoulder.*) I must admit—I'm fascinated by your sheer *nerve*, Miss Starr. And—I also must admit—it's kind of a *nice* feeling to, as it were, have you "at my mercy" in this matter . . .

CHARITY. Which you do. My own playwriting is totally dependent upon your answer.

CHUCK. Let me get this straight—you've written a play, and—

CHARITY. (*stands*) Not quite. I'm *trying* to write a play, a play with well-rounded, believable characters, but my *story*-line just won't jell. I scribble out all sorts of scenes with marvelous depth and meaning and purpose—and they just *sit* there, with nowhere to go. (*crosses* C.) So—I thought I'd ask the help of an *expert*. When it comes to *plots*, no one in theatre can touch you!

CHUCK. (*Crosses* R. *around sofa and sits*) Damn, How can I maintain my loathing of you if you keep ladling *honey* all over me?

TERRY. (*off*) Careful she doesn't stake you to an *ant-hill*!

GLINDA. (*off*) Terry, *shush*!

CHARITY. (*Crosses to sofa and sits.*) See what I mean?

CHUCK. It *is* kind of like sharing a phonebooth with a built-in Greek Chorus. But—where *could* we meet? *My* office is out, what with Glinda and Terry likely to have their ears glued to the door—

GLINDA/TERRY. (*stage whispers-ad lib*) I told you we were too loud-Be quiet, etc.

CHARITY. And *my* office consists of a desk in the middle of twenty-three *identical* desks, all occupied by reporters typing or shouting on the telephone—

CHUCK. There's always the New York Public Library—except they'd keep *shushing* us.

CHARITY. There must be *some* place two people can converse in leisurely fashion without a lot of eavesdroppers or interruptions—

CHUCK. (*smacks one fist into palm of other hand*) A *restaurant*! It's perfect! We can go in, place our order—

CHARITY. (*similarly elated*)—and then have *hours* of time to talk before the order arrives!

CHARITY. I see *you* get the same kind of service *I* usually do!

CHARITY. You know, it'd be kind of *fun* doing it that way. There must be *thousands* of restaurants in Manhattan. We could "eat ethnic" and broaden our education at the same time!

CHUCK. How's that again?

CHARITY. You know, go Japanese one day, Armenian the next day, East Indian the third day—

CHUCK. You're starting to *get* to me. *I love* experimenting with new food-delights . . .

CHARITY. (*stands*) Then it's a deal—?

CHUCK. (*stands*) Under one condition.

CHARITY. What?

CHUCK. Since I'll be supplying some very expensive tutelage—you pick up all the checks!

CHARITY. You've got a deal! (*they handshake, briefly*) But before we do anything else, may I use your powder room? It's been a long drive out here . . .

CHUCK. (*pointing in whatever is the proper direction*) Oh, sure, it's right in there.

CHARITY. Thank you! (*Exits. CHUCK watches as CHARITY Exits and when she is off he does a celebration-revenge dance. This brings GLINDA and TERRY out of the kitchen. TERRY crosses to hallway to bedroom and stands guard.*)

GLINDA. Mister Reynolds, have you gone totally *bananas*? How can you *possibly* teach her playwriting? Not fifteen minutes ago, you were wailing that you don't have the vaguest idea *how* to teach it!

CHUCK. *She* won't know that! She couldn't learn anything even if I *could* teach! Did you *see* that neanderthal *brow* of hers?

TERRY. (*slightly defensive—after all, she* is *a knockout*) *I* think it's a very *pretty* brow.

CHUCK. (*crosses to TERRY*) (*pointedly*) Maybe to another *neanderthal* . . . ! (*TERRY reacts*)

GLINDA. But—if I'm not being snoopy—or even if I *am*—just what *do* you intend to do at all those *lunches*?

CHUCK. (*Crosses to desk chair & sits.*) I intend to buy the most expensive meals I've ever eaten in my life! And I'll feed her a line of gibberish that'll just plain *destroy* any play she *is* working on! (*rubs his hands together with fiendish glee*) No matter *what* she's written, I'll tell her it's *all wrong*!

TERRY. (*crosses to Dad*) (*admiringly*) Why, Dad! You

do have the heart of a *fiend*! And here I was thinking you were such an *average* kind of guy! (*TERRY & CHUCK execute "high five" hand slap. TERRY resumes guarding.*)

GLINDA. I don't like it. Getting so worked up with your plotting, you'll *curdle* anything you eat! She'll get a rotten play, and you'll get terminal heartburn!

TERRY. Jiggers, here she comes back!

(*CHARITY re-enters. The three stare at CHARITY. She checks to see if something is amiss in her clothing. Pause. Then:*)

CHUCK. Well, when shall we begin? I can't do it today, unfortunately. I'm right in the middle of a new mystery and have to figure out who-done-it before I stage the murder. But—(*gets book out of desk drawer*) there *is* something you can read in the meantime. (*Stands and crosses to CHARITY*) Are you familiar with Georges Polti? (*hands her the book*) His book on plotting is a *must* for neophyte writers . . . (*crosses toward bedroom Exit*)

CHARITY. (*turns toward CHUCK*) You mean this is sort of my *homework* assignment, and tomorrow we'll have a short *quiz*?

CHUCK. (*with devious smile*) Something like that! (*Exits*)

GLINDA. I must say, Miss Starr, this thing has worked out better than I imagined. It's so nice to know you have a heart!

TERRY. Don't forget those *legs*! (*BOTH give him a look; he subsides.*)

GLINDA. I had no *idea* you were an aspiring playwright!

TERRY. Though Dad always says he suspects *all* reviewers are would-be playwrights.

GLINDA. Now, Terry,—

TERRY. He thinks they take out their failure as playwrights on the people who *can* write plays.

GLINDA. Terry—!

CHARITY. Well, he's wrong. And so are you, Mrs. Bellows.

GLINDA. I don't follow you—?

CHARITY. (*after a glance to be certain CHUCK isn't within earshot*) I've never written a play in my life! Or even *wanted* to.

TERRY. Then how come—?

CHARITY. (*draws them* D.S. *a bit, says in confidential tones:*) When I saw how *down* Mister Reynolds was, I realized I might be depriving the world of some *excellent* stage mysteries—cardboard characters or not—I knew I had to do *something* to relieve the unfair *burden* I'd placed on him. The theatre *needs* him too much.

GLINDA. But if you're *not* really writing a play—

TERRY. —and you *don't* have all those in-depth characters to trot out for Dad—

GLINDA/TERRY. —what are you going to do at all those *lunches*?

CHARITY. (*after a pause, to TERRY:*) I plan to *eat* (*to GLINDA:*) a lot!

CURTAIN

–End of Act One–

ACT II

LUNCH #1 CHATEAU JASPER

SETTING: As the scene opens CHUCK and CHARITY are seated at a restaurant table. WAITER approaches and realizes that they're glaring at each other. They do not respond to his arrival with their menus, so he uses the menus to break their stare-down.

CHARITY. I hear that this restaurant is one of the most expensive in New York!

CHUCK. Obviously my time is valuable. Think of all the time you're taking me away from my writing. I have plays that I'm working on: plays that put food on my table. I'm sure you'll find that I'm worth every cent you're spending on lunch. Besides, your paper's paying, isn't it?

CHARITY. I guess so I haven't figured out exactly how yet. (*opens menu*) *I* certainly can't afford this place. Everything is so overpriced.

WAITER. (*very snooty*) There's a MacDonald's down the street. Perhaps it would be more to your liking. They've got a special meal. You can get a cheeseburger, fries and a medium soft drink and you get a cute little plastic toy free. And just think, it comes in a cute little container that has these neat little puzzles all over it.

CHUCK. Are you trying to be funny?

WAITER. Why? Are you missing Ronald MacDonald?

CHUCK. Listen, we're here for a business luncheon. If I want insults I'll read one of Miss Starr's reviews.

WAITER. So, you're Charity Starr?

CHARITY. May we just order? (*closes menu.*)

WAITER. While you two kids are deciding, can I bring

you something from the bar? . . . We make a nifty Shirley Temple, and I can bring you two straws.

CHUCK. Bring us a bottle of champagne. Do you have Dom Perignon?

WAITER. (*attitude changes*) Yes, sir!

CHARITY. Just two iced teas, please.

CHUCK. Bring us the champagne.

CHARITY. Ice tea will do.

CHUCK. Champagne, please.

CHARITY. Who's paying for this?

CHUCK. Your paper, I believe. (*to WAITER:*) CHAMPAGNE!

CHARITY. We are *not* having a party. It's the middle of the day. Let's concentrate on business. (*to WAITER:*) Two iced teas, please.

WAITER. Have you two considered auditioning for a Miller Lite commercial? When you make up your mind, please let me know. We've got plenty of time. I get off in three hours.

CHUCK. Iced tea. (*to CHARITY:*) *THIS* time.

WAITER. Oh, joy! (*WAITER Exits.*)

CHARITY. Are you ready to discuss the ground rules?

CHUCK. Why don't we decide what we're going to eat? (*opens menu*) I'm starving.

CHARITY. What's more important? . . . Eating or teaching play writing?

CHUCK. I didn't have any breakfast, and I can't eat with my stomach growling.

CHARITY. Fine. (*Looks at menu.*)

CHUCK. Everything looks so good. (*WAITER Enters with iced tea.*) I'm going to have a hard time making up my mind.

WAITER. Oh, great!

CHUCK. (*not really hearing*) What?

WAITER. Oh, I'm in no real hurry . . . , my other customers always like a long wait before they order. It helps them build up an appetite. They'll appreciate the food that much more.

CHARITY. I'll just have the house salad with the house dressing.

CHUCK. I'll start with the jumbo shrimp cocktail. Then I'll have the spinach salad with hot mustard dressing. Then I'll be ready for the butterfly pork chops with the rice pilaf.

CHARITY. Are you sure that's all?

CHUCK. That's all. I'm eating light today.

WAITER. That meal could feed a light *infantry!* (*WAITER Exits.*)

CHARITY. Why do these expensive restaurants always have the rude waiters?

CHUCK. It's just part of their charm, I guess.

WAITER. (O.S.) Witch! (*This comment should not be heard by Chuck or Charity.*)

CHARITY. I wonder if our food critic has reviewed this place.

CHUCK. If he did and that critique did for this place what your review did for me, we'd better sit at different tables. We could pass notes . . . just in case they put a bomb in your salad.

CHARITY. Why? I didn't see a Reynolds' murder mystery on the menu.

CHARITY. (*Tone changes from playful to serious.*) Do you want to discuss the service or do you want to discuss the ground rules?

CHARITY. I thought you couldn't think until you'd eaten.

CHUCK. I'll struggle through.

CHARITY. Very well . . . it's really quite simple. I

buy you a lunch or two and you give me lessons on playwriting.

CHUCK. Hold on a minute! It's not so simple. Teaching something like this is like teaching sculpture. You don't have a quick lesson or two, then "Here's a pile of clay. Now Sculpt!" It takes a slow deliberate approach. We're going to do this right and take our time. You can't rush something like this.

CHARITY. So what did you have in mind?

CHUCK. Two things: First of all, we take very small pieces so that they are absorbed slowly. Secondly, as we go along, you will write a play and, if it's good enough, (*chuckles*) we'll try to get it produced.

CHARITY. That could take a lot of time. That's a lot of lunches.

CHUCK. If you want to back out now, that's up to you.

CHARITY. But that could be as many as a *hundred* lunches!

CHUCK. But where are you going to get such personalized service?

CHARITY. How am I going to explain that many lunches on my expense account? The paper's accountant is like a bulldog. I thought a couple of lunches wouldn't be a problem. But that many?

CHUCK. There's always one of those writers' correspondence schools. I stopped by a newstand on my way over and picked up one of their ads for you. (*Brings out comic book from inside jacket and shows her the writer's ad on the back.*)

CHARITY. No . . . I want to do it this way. Shall we start now?

(*WAITER Enters with shrimp cocktail and serves it to CHUCK.*)

CHUCK. Sorry. Not while I'm eating. (*Offers CHARITY a shrimp.*) Are you sure you wouldn't like one of these? They're very good.

(*BLACKOUT. Change to living room scene while set is being changed for next lunch scene.*)

(*Living room, daytime. GLINDA's dusting. TERRY Enters from kitchen, eating an apple or sandwich, and sits on couch resting his feet on the coffee table. GLINDA dusts her way around TERRY and finally dusts his feet off the table. He rises and moves to the desk where he sits on the desk chair, opens the second drawer and uses it for a foot rest.*)

TERRY. Why are you dusting again?

GLINDA. A woman's work is never done.

TERRY. But you dusted yesterday.

GLINDA. Tell that to the *new* dust.

TERRY. But you hardly ever dust more than two-three times a week.

GLINDA. And don't think I haven't felt guilty about it!

TERRY. Guilt never bothered you before.

GLINDA. At my age, I prefer spending my hours with a clean conscience.

TERRY. Not to mention clean tables, clean lamps, clean walls . . .

GLINDA. Eat your apple (*sandwich*) it's getting dusty!

TERRY. You should get that spray stuff; it wouldn't throw up all those clouds.

GLINDA. (*pauses, extends duster*) Perhaps you'd like to show me the *proper* way?

TERRY. (*backs off*) No thanks. Don't want to lose my amateur standing.

GLINDA. That's what I figured. (*resumes dusting*)

TERRY. Seriously—why *are* you dusting again today?

GLINDA. (*pausing*) Too much time on my hands, all at once.

TERRY. You mean without *Dad* here to do for?

GLINDA. I *used* to spend this time of day fixing his *lunch.* But lately, well—

TERRY. He's home a *couple* of days a week.

GLINDA. It's not the same anymore. It's too random. I get out of phase.

TERRY. Why not use the extra time to make him an extra-special *dinner,* then?

GLINDA. I tried that. It doesn't work. When he shows up at dinnertime and I've just fixed lobster thermidor and asparagus with hollandaise, and he says, "That's what I had for lunch!", it kind of curdles my initiative.

TERRY. I *love* lobster thermidor! Does this mean I get nothing but drab dinners?

GLINDA. The trouble is, if I fix something fancy, and it's what he already had, then I have to fix him something *else,* and by the time that's finished, *my* dinner is *cold*!

TERRY. I see what you mean. How many lunches *is* it so far?

GLINDA. Today's Number Eight.

TERRY. Well, at least there's *one* nice benefit: Yolanda's *green* with envy of Miss Starr, spending so much time with Dad.

GLINDA. She won't be green *today.* It's *Miss Starr's* turn to pick the place. I just hope your father won't be *poisoned*!

TERRY. By Miss Starr?

GLINDA. By the *restaurant*! If *anyone* turns green today—

TERRY. —it'll be *Dad*!

(*BLACKOUT*)

Scene changes to HYMIE'S HASH HOUSE

LUNCH #8 – HYMIE'S HASH HOUSE

SETTING: *CHUCK and CHARITY are moving to a table in "HYMIE'S HASH HOUSE" and not too eagerly; they sit down, he picks up a menu very gingerly between tip of thumb-and-forefinger and then sets it flat on the table before him, and carefully brushes thumb-and-forefinger off on the tablecloth. Then:*

CHUCK. Nice place, if you're illiterate. You can tell what they have to offer by studying the stains on the menu.

CHARITY. Now, Mister Reynolds, at our last luncheon you *agreed* that *I* could select every-*other*-restaurant.

CHUCK. At the time, I thought you were sane.

CHARITY. Just because this room doesn't have fancy decor . . .

CHUCK. I didn't say that. I mean, that could be *imported* sawdust on the floor.

WAITER. (*arrives at tableside, a rumple-haired, tieless yahoo in a stained apron*) What'll it be?

CHARITY. What's today's special?

WAITER. Clean plates. (*laughs at his own joke*)

CHARITY. Besides that.

WAITER. (*shrugs*) *Hash*! (*points to sign*) What *else*?!

CHUCK. (*to CHARITY:*) Why don't *you* order for both of us? That way my death won't be a suicide.

CHARITY. (*to WAITER:*) What would *you* recommend?

WAITER. Another restaurant. (*laughs*)

CHUCK. Seriously.

WAITER. (*he leans down between them and, in a suddenly very solemn voice:*) Another restaurant. (*laughs again*)

CHARITY. You look familiar.

WAITER. I *could* be, if your boyfriend wasn't here.

CHUCK. I am *not* her boyfriend!

WAITER. (*cuddling up to CHARITY*) Well, lucky me!

CHARITY. (*pulling away*) This is a *business* luncheon.

WAITER. *Here*? Business must be *lousy*!

CHARITY. Look, let me put it this way: if you were eating here, what would you get?

WAITER. Ptomaine. (*laughs*)

CHUCK. You know, there *is* something familiar about you—do you have a *cousin* who waits tables at Chateau Jasper?

WAITER. Hey, that's my brother Larry! Our family comes from a long line of waiters.

CHUCK. I'm surprised it's not a long *unemployment* line!

WAITER. So are we! (*laughs*)

CHARITY. Listen, I don't have a very long lunch break. Let me try one last time: If somebody comes in here and doesn't want to try the hash, what do they get?

WAITER. The heave-ho.

CHUCK. I surrender. Two orders of hash.

WAITER. (*to CHARITY:*) And what'll *you* have? (*laughs at own joke*) Sorry. That's waiter humor. (*as he Exits*) I kill me!

CHARITY. (*after a pause*) I'm *sure* the food'll be just fine. I mean, they couldn't *operate* this place without a license from the Board of Health.

CHUCK. What makes you think the Board of Health would even set foot in this *neighborhood*?

CHARITY. I suppose it—it is just a bit more degener-

ate than I thought it'd be. But that accountant on our paper gets so *awfully* suspicious of everyone's expense accounts.

CHUCK. Well, don't worry about it. You probably won't live long enough to turn one in.

WAITER. (*arrives at tableside, sets two plates before them*) Two orders of Hymie's hash. Can I get you anything else?

CHUCK. (*after a look at his plate, raises a hopeful glance to the Waiter*) Two orders of the antidote?

WAITER. As soon as medical science discovers one. (*laughs, Exits*)

CHARITY. Well—*bon appetit*!

CHUCK. Don't you mean "*bon voyage*"?

CHARITY. We've got to at least try it. If we didn't, the chef would be offended.

CHUCK. And that bothers you? (*prods hash with tip of fork*) I wonder what kind of meat this is, anyway?

CHARITY. If you don't mind, I'd rather not think about it. (*nervously lifts fork to lips but doesn't taste*)

CHUCK. You're going to have to give the paramedics *some* kind of clue!

CHARITY. (*sets down forkful, speaks almost in tears*) But I'm *hungry*! And I have to get back to the office in another fifteen minutes, and I can't work on an empty stomach!

CHUCK. What makes you think if you eat this stuff that your stomach won't empty *itself*?

CHARITY. (*stands*) This is never going to work! We're spending much too much time talking about food, or the service, or—When do we get down to playwriting-lessons?

CHUCK. Right now. Sit.

CHARITY. What?

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.

SF PERUSALS