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

Allocating Annie

A Comedy in Two Acts

Rick Abbot

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

SAMUELFRENCH.COM
SAMUELFRENCH-LONDON.CO.UK

Copyright © 1989 by Rick Abbot
All Rights Reserved

ALLOCATING ANNIE 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 978-0-573-69103-4

www.SamuelFrench.com
www.SamuelFrench-London.co.uk

FOR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

UNITED STATES AND CANADA
Info@SamuelFrench.com
1-866-598-8449

UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE
Theatre@SamuelFrench-London.co.uk
020-7255-4302

Each title is subject to availability from Samuel French, depending upon country of performance. Please be aware that *ALLOCATING ANNIE* 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 *ALLOCATING ANNIE* 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.

"ALLOCATING ANNIE"

—Cast of Characters—

CLIFFORD TUCKER, an eminent plastic surgeon
TRACY TUCKER, his sister and housekeeper
JAKE PUTNAM, his lawyer and best friend
LANGDON BARNETT, an aspiring actor
ANNABEL FESCO, an unexpected visitor
BOBBI RALSTON, a sexy lady anthropologist
REBECCA RALSTON, Bobbi's wealthy mother

Setting: Clifford's luxurious Manhattan condominium

Time: about mid-January at its snowy worst

ACT ONE: a momentous morning in mid-week

ACT TWO: that evening about 6 o'clock

Allocating Annie

ACT ONE

Curtain rises on the posh Manhattan apartment of DR. CLIFFORD TUCKER. [see Stage Setting] The facades of tall and elegant buildings can be seen through the floor-to-ceiling picture window in the foyer—mostly the tops *of these buildings, so we know this apartment is on a highly wealthy level. Though it is mid-January, the day outside is, for the moment, bright and sunny with that extra-keen winter brightness. There is a place-setting for one at* L. *side of dining table, minus only the plate itself. A moment after curtain-rise, TRACY TUCKER Enters from kitchen [for convenience, let's call the* D.S. *kitchen doorway* K.D. *and the kitchen doorway in the* R.C. *wall* K.R.] *via* K.D., *bearing a plate with a hot breakfast—bacon, eggs, hash-browns, whatever —and a small tray holding a coffeepot. She sets these on table, then moves to foot of stairs and calls upstairs:*

TRACY. Is there a doctor in the house—?

CLIFF. (*off*) Who wants to know?!

TRACY. The doctor's chief cook-and-bottle-washer! Your breakfast is on the table! Get down here and eat it! You've got a big day ahead of you!

CLIFF. (*off*) You don't have to be so bossy!

TRACY. Today's my last chance! (*turns, moves toward front door*) May as well make the most of it! (*opens door, bends out of view slightly, straightens holding morning paper, and will cross room, glancing idly at front page,*

and lay the paper on the table handy to the place-setting; just as she arrives at table, CLIFF descends stairs into view, in elegant robe, slippers and pajamas; he looks slightly just-out-of-bed rumpled of hair, but is otherwise a reasonably attractive man in his mid-30s)

CLIFF. (*en route to table, where he will sit in* L. *chair*) What *time* is it, anyhow?

TRACY. I gather you didn't do much drinking at your bachelor party.

CLIFF. Why do you gather *that*?

TRACY. 'Cause you didn't ask me what *day* it was.

CLIFF. (*seated by now, buttering toast*) Doctors are health-conscious. I'm not sure there *was* any liquor at that party.

TRACY. Then where's your wristwatch?

CLIFF. (*stares blankly at bare wrist, gives a de-fuzzing shake of his head*) It'll come to me, it'll come to me. Meanwhile, what *time* is it?

TRACY. (*filling his coffeecup*) About eight-forty-five.

CLIFF. Oh. (*takes cup, starts to drink*)

TRACY. *Ay*-em.

CLIFF. (*scowls, sets down cup, starts eating*) I *knew* that, I *knew* that. Didn't have *that* much to drink last night . . . (*she stares at him, he gets slightly uneasy*) It *was*—uh—*last* night, right?

TRACY. Brother dearest, if you're hoping you've overslept right into your wedding day, no such luck. It's still twenty-four hours in the offing.

CLIFF. Twenty-seven. The wedding's not till noon.

TRACY. It's *still* coming up mighty quick, Cliff. Why couldn't Miss Ralston do the *traditional* thing and get married in *June*!

CLIFF. She's in love. She couldn't *wait* another six months. So why delay it?

TRACY. It'd give you a chance to meet somebody even *more* attractive, maybe.

CLIFF. (*sets down fork*) Trace . . . you—you don't *like* Bobbi very much, do you!

TRACY. (*abruptly contrite*) Oh . . . honestly, I don't actively *dis*like her . . . it's just—oh, never mind. (*turns, starts for* K.D.) None of my business, anyhow—!

CLIFF. Tracy. (*she stops, but doesn't turn around*) Come on, sis. Level with me. I'm getting *married* to a wonderful woman. You should be *happy* about it.

TRACY. (*still not turned*) Who says I'm *not*?

CLIFF. You always *hum* when you're happy.

TRACY. (*turns to face him*) I figured your hangover would appreciate the silence.

CLIFF. I don't *have* a hangover! (*his own shout makes him wince and finger his temples*) Much.

TRACY. Aw, Cliff, I'm sorry. It's just—well—you know—up until today, I've cooked your meals, cleaned your apartment, sent your suits to the cleaners—I guess I haven't quite adjusted to the notion of some *other* woman taking over my chores.

CLIFF. Tracy, are you nuts? Bobbi couldn't pick a cookbook out of a police lineup! And I don't think she's ever *seen* a dust rag—*or* the inside of a dry cleaner's shop.

TRACY. (*abruptly impassioned*) Then *why* are you—?! (*regains control*) You'd better eat your breakfast before it gets cold. (*turns toward* K.D. *again, but pauses on:*)

CLIFF. Trace. Sit down. Please. I want to talk to you.

TRACY. (*takes coffeecup from apron pocket, sits in* R. *chair, pours herself a cup of coffee, and is just bringing it to her lips when she sees his look*) I believe in being prepared. (*takes sip of coffee*)

CLIFF. I thought *I* planned this little discussion.

TRACY. Eat your breakfast.

CLIFF. (*obediently resumes doing so, almost like a guilty schoolboy*) All right, all right, I'm eating! (*stops piece of toast just short of mouth*) But *why* are you so gloomy about my upcoming marriage? Tell me. It's important to me. *You're* important to me.

TRACY. It's just—well—honestly, Cliff, what do you *see* in Bobbi Ralston?

CLIFF. (*sets toast on plate, ponders a moment; then:*) Well . . . first off, you've got to admit she's beautiful.

TRACY. Like an Estee Lauder spokeswoman.

CLIFF. And intelligent?

TRACY. Phi Beta Kappa from top to toe.

CLIFF. Good manners?

TRACY. She could oversee a foreign embassy.

CLIFF. Nice figure?

TRACY. She'd make your average centerfold look like Raggedy Ann.

CLIFF. Then *what*—?

TRACY. Flat out?

CLIFF. Flat out.

TRACY. (*takes a breath; then:*) I just don't think *she* is particularly crazy about *you*!

CLIFF. *What*?!

TRACY. You have a hearing problem?

CLIFF. I hear quite clearly, thank you; I just can't believe what I heard. Tracy, if Bobbi didn't *love* me, why would she be *marrying* me tomorrow?

TRACY. (*drains cup, stands*) You're young, good-looking, very well off financially, *and* the most renowned plastic surgeon in the history of tummy-tucks and face-lifts, and could easily keep any wife of yours looking young and radiant into her sixties! That makes you the

catch of the century, darling brother. No woman with half a brain would *dare* turn you down!

CLIFF. Are you saying Bobbi Ralston is marrying me because she likes *her* looks?!

TRACY. Are *you* imagining she's *not*? (*Exits with coffeecup via* K.D.)

CLIFF. (*pushes chair back, stands*) Tracy, are you nuts?! Bobbi and I are about the same age, have the same circle of friends, enjoy the same amusements, even drink the same brands of liquor! If that isn't bride-material, what *is* it?!

TRACY. (*steps back via* K.D. *minus coffeecup, stops; then:*) A fraternity brother.

CLIFF. A husband and wife *should* be friends!

TRACY. Look, if *friendship's* all you want, buy a *dachshund*!

CLIFF. (*blurts*) A *dachshund* can't endow a *clinic*! (*has said too much, instantly tries to cool down*) I—I didn't mean that the way it sounded.

TRACY. (*very gently*) A dachshund *can* endow a clinic—?

CLIFF. (*slumps wearily*) Tracy. Do you know how many *millions* of dollars it takes to build a children's clinic? Bobbi serves on a dozen committees, knows all the "right people" to put the arm on for donations, is a whiz at masterminding charity drives—

TRACY. For the price of a small band of gold . . . ?

CLIFF. It's *not* small, and it happens to be *platinum*!

TRACY. (*uncontrite*) Forgive me.

CLIFF. Aw . . . aw, damn it! (*moves listlessly to sofa, sits on* D.S. *end, facing out front*) Trace . . . do you have any *idea* how cruel children can be? Think of a little kid, a kid with an oversized nose—or big ears—or a bad harelip—do you know how *nasty* his unfeeling young

peers can be to him? He gets taunted, teased, mercilessly badgered — he ends up a real hate-case — not wanting to go to school, wishing he could *kill* his tormentors — and — worst of all — when he's alone — he *cries* a lot. (*looks over at her*) Kids have *enough* to cry about in life, even the good-looking ones. So what's so wrong about trying to *do* something for them, at a price even *poor* kids can afford?

TRACY. (*quietly*) I never said you shouldn't. I just think — hope — pray — that there's got to be a better way of *getting* that endowment.

CLIFF. Aw, hell, Trace . . . (*stands, shrugs lamely*) Bobbi's not so *bad*, really. We get along. She's pleasant company. And very easy on the eyes.

TRACY. But would you share her *toothbrush*?

CLIFF. Would I *what* — ?

TRACY. I read someplace that's the Test Of True Love.

CLIFF. Well, you're wrong. True Love is not caring if she *owns* a toothbrush! (*starts for stairs*) I've gotta get dressed. Bobbi's gonna *be* here at any moment! (*just as he reaches foot of stairs, door buzzer sounds*) Oh damn.

TRACY. (*crosses toward him*) Say, *I've* got a plan: Why not let her see you as you *normally* look in the morning: slightly unshaven, hair not quite combed, egg on your chin — (*he wipes hastily at chin as she reaches him and continues*) — and maybe she'll be so shocked she'll give you an endowment *not* to marry her! (*buzzer sounds again; she steps to door, turns head toward him*) Shall we let her in and find out?

CLIFF. Don't you *dare* open that door! (*starts up stairs*)

TRACY. You'd rather disillusion her *after* the wedding night — ?

CLIFF. (*stops, then starts downstairs again, slowly*)

Tracy, I'm gonna call your bluff! Go ahead, let her in! My appearance won't make the slightest bit of difference to her!

TRACY. (*hand goes to doorknob*) You're probably right. She'll be so busy giving you your living-instructions for the day that she won't even *notice* your decrepitude! (*BUZZER SOUNDS AGAIN, HOLDING A BIT LONGER; she starts to turn knob*)

CLIFF. Hold it! What was that crack about her giving me *instructions*?

TRACY. Are you saying Bobbi *doesn't* treat you like an errand-boy?

CLIFF. (*miffed*) Listen, kiddo, if she *did* try the strong-arm approach, I'd tell *her* a thing or two! I'm as non-chauvinistic as the next man, but I do *not* think a woman should push a man around!

TRACY. (*mock-soothing*) Now-now, it's not her fault. She's a dedicated anthropologist; she's used to giving orders to the digging-crew.

CLIFF. Well, she's *not* giving 'em to *me*!

TRACY. Not until I open the *door*, at least.

CLIFF. Okay, Miss Smartypants! *Open* the door! And just *one* push from Bobbi, and you'll see some fireworks! *I* know how to handle the situation!

(*BUZZER STARTS LONG AND UNINTERRUPTED BUZZING*)

TRACY. Fair enough. (*opens door immediately; buzzer stops, and BOBBI RALSTON surges into foyer; she is totally attractive, well-dressed in a fur coat and very stylish boots, carrying a large modish purse; she sights CLIFF and as if TRACY weren't even present she addresses him peremptorily:*)

BOBBI. Clifford, I nearly wore my *thumb* out pressing that button! Oh! You're not even dressed yet! You have to pick up your tuxedo at the rental place in fifteen minutes, and *then* I want you to see the florist about the bridal bouquet—it *froze* or something and has to be thawed, or maybe vice-versa—and you've got to get to the airport and pick up my mother at twelve-oh-five, and the moment you drop her at her hotel, get right over to the caterer's and make *sure* they're using *fresh* shrimp on the canapes—then *do* hurry over to Muffy Armbruster's prenuptial cocktail party, or whatever she's calling it, and I'll meet you there at three-thirty *sharp* as soon as I finish my last fitting, and don't forget to wear that dark maroon tie I picked out for you—oh, *and* those cufflinks Aunt Penny gave you at Christmas, because if she pops in at Muffy's she'll *expect* you to be wearing them, even if you *do* hate imitation emeralds, and then we can *dash* to Elmer and Faleen's for a quick dinner, and maybe manage to get there before all the *hors d'oeuvre* are gone! Ta-ta! (*Exits to hall, closing door behind her; there is an eloquent silence between TRACY and CLIFF for about three beats; then:*)

TRACY. I thought you handled that splendidly.

CLIFF. (*avoids her gaze, gallops upstairs on:*) Excuse me, I've got to dress!

TRACY. Don't forget to wear your track shoes!

CLIFF. (*off*) I can't. They clash with my stopwatch!

TRACY. (*laughs, starts down into living room, but stops as buzzer sounds*) That's strange. She can't *possibly* have left anything *out* . . . ?! (*returns to foyer and opens door; JAKE PUTNAM Enters, casual in slacks and windbreaker, carrying a briefcase*) Why, if it isn't Lawyer Putnam! Time to foreclose our mortgage?

JAKE. What mortgage? Cliff paid *cash* for this condo.

TRACY. (*will close door and follow him down into livingroom, where he's just tossing his briefcase onto lower end of sofa*) Well, you *are* dressed for a *casual* call, but when I saw your official briefcase—

JAKE. (*fingers briefly to temples*) There's no need to *shout*!

TRACY. Oh, that's right, *you* were at last night's bachelor bash, too! Can I get you something . . . aspirin . . . Alka-Seltzer—cyanide?

JAKE. It's all your *brother's* fault. He was having such a lousy time I had to drink for *two*!

TRACY. Well, the best man *is* supposed to keep things chugging along.

JAKE. Is the groom out from under the icebag yet?

TRACY. Actually, he's in better shape than I'd have expected. He's up, he's getting dressed, and if his eyes are bloodshot I must be getting colorblind.

JAKE. Are you saying Cliff came home *sober*?

TRACY. *Somber* is more like it. But Cliff only drinks when he's having a good time.

JAKE. Then he can save big on today's liquor bill: I have news.

TRACY. (*has passed him and is just starting to clear breakfast things, but pauses and turns to face him on:*) *Bad* news, Jake?

JAKE. Mmm, probably not really—*ill-timed* is more like it.

TRACY. Oh, good. I thought it might be a malpractice suit. (*will now clear breakfast things, piling cutlery onto plate, hefting coffeepot tray in one hand and plate in the other, etc., so she can clear and exit with things in one trip, during:*) I could just picture some high-society matron awakening to find her nose was where her *ear* used to be!

JAKE. Actually, my tidings might be *pleasant* if Cliff weren't about to plunge into holy matrimony tomorrow.

TRACY. (*off*) Don't tell me you've arrived with a stay of execution?

JAKE. You make it sound as if Cliff were standing on a banana peel before the jaws of doom! Why be so negative about it?

TRACY. (*off*) I was just taking my cue from Cliff. I've seen happier smiles on people heading for a root-canal! (*re-enters via* K.D.) Say, would you like a cup of coffee? That's no way to be dressed in New York City in January! [*NOTE: Lighting outside window will start to change at this point, almost imperceptibly, from bright and cheery to gloomy and gray, with an every-so-often light sprinkling of snowflakes outside the pane; the entire transition should take about five minutes.*]

JAKE. (*has picked up paper from table, is glancing idly at front page*) I parked in the basement garage. I hate driving in an overcoat.

TRACY. Try to get a simple answer from a lawyer! Do you want coffee or don't you?

JAKE. (*looks up from paper*) Maybe I could use a cup at that. (*will sit at* L. *end of table during:*) Your elevator sits in the basement so long, it was like riding up in a refrigerator. (*will page idly through paper as TRACY Exits to kitchen*)

TRACY. (*off*) So look, if you're *not* here with a stay of execution, what *are* you here with?

JAKE. (*still reading*) A bequest. Or, to be accurate, *news* of a bequest. The bequest itself should be here at any moment.

TRACY. (*will re-enter with cup of coffee, during:*) Oh, *now* I see what you meant, before. Poor Cliff. He'll be terribly upset.

JAKE. (*drops paper, takes cup, starts sipping*) Upset about what, getting a bequest?

TRACY. No-no, I just meant that a bequest always means somebody has *died*, and that's awfully upsetting news just before his wedding—it's upsetting news *any* time. Who died?

JAKE. James Lomax Fesco of Cleveland, Ohio.

TRACY. *I* don't know any James Lomax Fesco.

JAKE. No reason you *should.* Cliff didn't know him, either.

TRACY. How's that again—?

JAKE. Under the law, Tracy, a person making out his will can leave any*thing* they want to any*body* they want, whether they know the lucky winner or not.

TRACY. (*will take cup as JAKE rises from chair*) But why leave something to somebody you don't even know? (*Exits via* K.D.)

JAKE. People leave things to *institutions*—churches, museums, like that—(*shrugs*) Why not to other *people*?

TRACY. (*re-entering minus cup*) But—to a total *stranger*?

JAKE. (*will stroll up behind bar, pour himself a brandy, during:*) Ah, but the illustrious Doctor Clifford Tucker is *not* a stranger. He's world-famous, Tracy, like a politician or a gangster or a movie star. Cliff may not have known Mister Fesco, but Mister Fesco couldn't *help* but know *him*! (*abruptly, sets brandy down on end of bar, moves* U.R.) Excuse me a minute—the cold weather and that coffee are *getting* to me. Be right back. Unless your personal bathroom isn't fit to be seen at the moment—?

TRACY. It's just fine. But please don't look at the *bed*!

JAKE. Why, who's in it?

TRACY. Listen, when *I* finally land Prince Charming, I'll send out formal announcements!

JAKE. (*nods, almost completes exit, then stops and turns to her*) Seriously—how do you ever hope to *meet* Prince Charming cooped up in your brother's condominium? When was the last time you went out on the town and made whoopee?

TRACY. None of your damn business. Now *scoot*, before you have an accident! (*JAKE shrugs, but Exits* U.R.; *ever the domestic, TRACY moves behind bar, recaps the brandy bottle JAKE had left open there, and places it back on the liquor shelf where it belongs, then takes a cocktail napkin from behind bar someplace, lifts his brandy glass, and puts napkin under it, calling after him —whether he can hear her or not:*) A girl gets awfully tired of going out *scouting* for a man. I figure if I wait long enough, some day my prince will simply show up at our front door, suitcase in hand, and carry me off to happyland—if I'm not wearing curlers at the time!

JAKE. (far *off*) *What*—?

TRACY. (*calls*) Nothing important! . . . Oh, by the way, just how much *is* this bequest? I don't suppose it's enough to endow a *clinic* . . . ? If it *is*, I might just exhume James Lomax Fesco and kiss his icy little forehead!

JAKE. (*off, but louder*) Kiss his *what*? I can't hear you with the bathroom door closed!

TRACY. Then leave it open another second and tell me how much *cash* Lomax left us!

JAKE. (*still off*) Oh, he didn't leave *money*!

TRACY. Then what *did* he leave?

JAKE. (*off*) *His only child*! (*as TRACY gapes, we hear JAKE shut the bathroom door, simultaneous with:*)

TRACY. His *WHAT*?! (*she moves as if to exit after JAKE, but stops as CLIFF—now dressed in suit and tie—trots downstairs, mumbling to himself en route:*)

CLIFF. Tuxedo, bouquet, airport, hotel, caterer—(*stops, frowns, turns toward TRACY*) *Why* am I going to the caterer's—?

TRACY. *Fresh* shrimp on the canapes.

CLIFF. (*relieved*) Ah, right! (*moves past her toward* K.R., *via which he will exit while continuing:*) Let's see now . . . caterer, then Muffy's cocktail party, and—

TRACY. (*will move* D.S. *slightly to see out via* K.R. *into kitchen*) You're not wearing that maroon tie. *Or* Aunt Penny's cufflinks!

CLIFF. (*off*) The maroon tie is spotted with sushi, and those cufflinks look like something Aunt Penny carved out of an old *Coke* bottle!

TRACY. She *said* those imitation emeralds were *imported*!

CLIFF. (*off*) Okay, then, an old *Beck's* bottle! (*will re-enter via* K.R., *sipping a glass of milk, during:*) How much time do I have left?

TRACY. (*amused*) *Still* haven't found your wristwatch, have you!

CLIFF. Please. How . . . much . . . time?!

TRACY. As a carefree bachelor?

CLIFF. To get to the *tux*-rental shop! (*takes a long drink of milk*)

TRACY. Shall I order some more cases of Maalox?

CLIFF. What for?

TRACY. You hate milk. The only time you drink it is when your ulcer starts kicking up.

CLIFF. It was only a twinge. I'll be fine, just fine. (*sets emptied glass on end of bar, suddenly spots briefcase on sofa*) Whose briefcase is that?

TRACY. Your loyal little lawyer's. (*reacts to own alliteration*) *Boy*, that's hard to say!

CLIFF. Jake? Here? Today?

TRACY. Yes. Yes. Yes.

CLIFF. But what for? I mean, Bobbi and I already *signed* that prenuptial thing.

TRACY. I hate prenuptial agreements. They're like planning the divorce in advance.

CLIFF. A couple should be *prudent.* (*JAKE will re-enter* U.R. *during:*) What happens if all that hot blood cools down?

JAKE. Especially at the South Pole.

CLIFF. Oh, hi, Jake.

TRACY. What's all this about the South Pole?

JAKE. That's where Cliff and Bobbi are honeymooning. You didn't *know*?

TRACY. Who'd even *suspect*?! Cliff, tell me he's kidding.

CLIFF. Now-now, sis, it'll be perfectly fine. It's mid-*summer* down there now.

TRACY. Then why haven't you packed your suntan oil?

CLIFF. Okay, so it's a bit on the chilly side. We're taking plenty of warm clothing.

TRACY. I can't be hearing right. You really *are* honeymooning at the South Pole? *Why*?

CLIFF. Well, for one thing, we know we won't be *disturbed* . . . besides, it'll give my anthropologist bride the chance to test some of her theories.

TRACY. "Two can freeze as cheaply as one"?

JAKE. It's Bobbi's golden opportunity to disprove Darwin's theory about the origins of mankind. *She* thinks the human race descended from *penguins.*

CLIFF. (*starts toward foyer*) Can we discuss this some other time? I've got to go get a *tux*!

TRACY. Gee, maybe Bobbi's theory is *right*!

CLIFF. (*stops*) Look, *anyone* can honeymoon at Niagara Falls or Acapulco or Tahiti—!

JAKE. Anyone but Clifford Tucker.

CLIFF. Listen, *I* can honeymoon anywhere I want to!

TRACY. The South Pole was *your* idea?

CLIFF. (*fumes, but starts toward foyer again, where he will get his overcoat off the rack there, during:*) I *don't* see why a loving couple can't conduct a little *research* just because they happen to be newlyweds!

TRACY. *I* see—*she* can go poking among the penguins while *you* check out plastic surgery for chilblains!

CLIFF. (*donning overcoat*) I don't have time to discuss it now!

JAKE. Do you have half a moment for a little *legal* matter?

CLIFF. Is *that* why you're here?

JAKE. I didn't come to measure you for *snowshoes.*

CLIFF. (*buttoning coat, steps down into room again, curious*) Then why *are* you here, Jake?

TRACY. You have a surprise wedding present from Cleveland.

CLIFF. That it takes a *lawyer* to deliver? What *kind* of present?

TRACY. (*takes his milk glass, will exit* K.R. *with it during:*) Jake will fill you in. Just promise me *I* can be in the room when you tell your *bride*!

CLIFF. Jake, what is she talking about? And *hurry,* I have a million things to do.

JAKE. James Lomax Fesco of Cleveland, Ohio, has died and left you his only child.

CLIFF. His *what*?! I didn't even *know* the man!

JAKE. Her name is Annabel. She'll be arriving here at any moment.

CLIFF. But how *can* she? I mean, people can't leave their kids to *strangers*?!

JAKE. Oh, yes they can.

TRACY. (*re-entering via K.R. minus milk glass*) I wish *our* parents knew about laws like that! I might've talked them into leaving *me* to *Robert Redford*!

CLIFF. Look, this is all some silly mistake. *You* handle it for me, Jake. You know every legal loophole in the history of jurisprudence. Now, if you'll excuse me—(*looks at bare wrist, makes annoyed face*) What *time* is it, anyhow?!

JAKE. *Oh*! That reminds me—(*takes wristwatch from pocket, hands it to CLIFF*) You forgot this last night.

CLIFF. (*slipping it onto wrist*) Thank heaven! This Rolex is a gift from Bobbi! Where did I leave it?

JAKE. Snugly looped around Miss Vavoom's left ankle!

TRACY. What was this *Miss Vavoom* doing at your bachelor party? Or shouldn't I pry?

CLIFF. (*brushing at watchband*) What's this sticky white stuff?

JAKE. Cake frosting.

TRACY. I think *that* answers my question.

CLIFF. Look, I've really got to run. Jake, when they trot the tiny tot around, simply explain to them that I don't *want* the kid, and have them take it to somebody else.

TRACY. Shouldn't you talk it over with *Bobbi* first? Or don't you *want* that clinic?

CLIFF. What's Annabel Fesco got to do with the *clinic*?

TRACY. Doesn't it depend on Bobbi getting donations from all those "right people," pleading your noble cause, and assuring them you're *worthy* of all that cash?

CLIFF. Well, sure, of course it does, but what's that got to do with Annabel Fesco?

TRACY. (*to JAKE*) Shall *I* tell him, or will *you*?

JAKE. Allow *me*! Cliff, I'm your attorney, not your publicist, but won't your public image turn just a *teensy* bit sour if the world learns you ignore the wishes of the dying and throw orphans out in the snow?

CLIFF. (*absorbs this for one wide-eyed moment; then:*) Yipe.

TRACY. (*after a short pause*) Look, why don't *I* go pick up that tux, and do the bit with the caterer and all? You two have things to talk about.

CLIFF. But you don't drive, Trace.

TRACY. There's always the subway.

CLIFF. It doesn't stop at Kennedy Airport. Bobbi's *mother* is arriving, and—Look, Jake, work *something* out, please, will you? I've really got to get *out* of here!

JAKE. But Cliff, there's only so *much* a lawyer can do—!

CLIFF. (*moves to foyer and opens door*) I can poke a *few* holes in my itinerary—after I stash Mrs. Ralston at her hotel, I can *stiff* Muffy's cocktail party and rush right back, okay? I just can't tackle the Cleveland Orphan situation *now*! (*Exits, shutting door after him*)

JAKE. *That* was kind of callous, even for a nervous groom . . .

TRACY. He'll be back. It just hasn't had a chance to sink in yet. With that list of things *Bobbi* laid on him, it's a wonder he remembered to put on his *overcoat*!

JAKE. (*moves to bar and retrieves his brandy glass*) She *is* a bossy little thing, isn't she! Go here, go there, do this, do that! (*takes stiff swallow of brandy*) How could a normal sane human male fall in love with a woman like *that*?!

TRACY. (*after a pause*) How *did* you?

JAKE. (*about to drink again, stops, lowers glass*) I didn't know it showed. (*moves slowly toward sofa*)

Tracy — what am I going to do? It's going to put a hell of a strain on the lawyer-client relationship. (*sits on* D. *end of sofa, nursing drink*) I'll be in agony, probably irritable, or at least stand-offish, and the poor guy won't even know *why*! Maybe I should tender my resignation right now.

TRACY. *That'd* be a lovely wedding present!

JAKE. (*comes to his feet*) Damn! Do you know — I haven't even *gotten* her a present yet!

TRACY. (*gently*) Gotten *them* a present yet.

JAKE. (*laughs ruefully*) Maybe *that's* why I haven't. No matter what I get her, it'll be shared with *Cliff*, instead of with *me*, and I'm — I'm just not up to it, Tracy. Feeling the way I do, what kind of wedding gift could I *get* for the two of them, anyhow?!

TRACY. How about twin beds?

JAKE. (*this unexpected reply shatters his gloom, and he bursts into laughter — slightly rueful laughter — almost tearful; then he manages to gasp:*) Oh, Tracy! . . . Oh, that's marvelous! . . . Thank you. I really needed that.

TRACY. Had to say *something* — (*gestures toward window, where the view is now grim and snowy*) — your mood was grayer than today's *weather*! Jake, why don't you *tell* her?

JAKE. What would it accomplish? She'd *still* go ahead and marry Cliff, and things would be so awkward afterward that he'd just about *have* to ask me to resign!

TRACY. But what if she *didn't* go ahead and marry Cliff? She might just *like* you, you know.

JAKE. With all the wedding arrangements made, and her mother arriving, and the invitations out, and the church booked — that's too much social pressure. The wedding's a shoo-in. At *this* stage, it's too hard *not* to go

through with things, *whatever* second thoughts Bobbi might have. And then *she'd* be miserable, and *I'd* be miserable, and—hell, I can't do that to her!

TRACY. You'd rather remain undeclared, and spend the rest of your life *wondering* what might have happened if you spoke up?

JAKE. If I thought for one single moment that I had the slightest *chance* of—Aw, hell, why kid myself! (*drains glass, starts for bar*) I need another brandy!

TRACY. (*moves behind bar as he arrives, gets brandy bottle*) Let me do the honors. You men always make such a mess! (*as she pours him a fresh brandy, puts the bottle back, etc.:*)

JAKE. I sure hope Bobbi can keep house half as well as you do, for Cliff's sake. Come to think of it, what *is* the upcoming arrangement? Do you stay on to take care of *both* of them, now—or do you tend to Cliff and let Bobbi fend for herself?

TRACY. (*hesitates, then says without emotion:*) They won't be living here. He'll be moving into Bobbi's apartment after their return.

JAKE. You'll be living here all by yourself? *There's* a gloomy prospect! (*takes brandy from her, starts to sip at it*)

TRACY. (*avoiding his gaze*) I'll be just fine. I don't need a place this big. I'll find one of my own. I can't spend *all* my life living on my brother's charity. (*heads for* K.R.) Excuse me, I have dishes to do.

JAKE. But how will you *support* yourself? You've devoted so much of your life to taking care of your brother—do you *have* any job-skills other than domestic ones?

TRACY. (*stops short of* K.R. *exit*) I'm not sure. I can type a little—filing's not so hard. I just hope I don't have

to have any *computer*-skills; I can't even program our new *answering*-machine! (*points toward phone-table*) I get nervous around machinery that thinks for itself.

JAKE. You know, *you* sound about as happy over the upcoming nuptials as *I* do!

TRACY. That's nonsense. I hope Cliff and Bobbi will be *very* happy.

JAKE. Then why aren't you *humming*?

TRACY. I'm saving my vocal cords for whenever Prince Charming decides to show up. Now, let's *drop* the topic, okay? I have work to do.

JAKE. That reminds me—where are you going to stash Orphan Annie when she arrives?

TRACY. *Who*? . . . Oh, you mean little Annabel? Actually, I haven't given it much thought. I suppose the kid can share *my* room for awhile—kids don't take up much space.

JAKE. But will *Bobbi* cotton to the notion of having a child on the premises? I mean, after the honeymoon, Annabel belongs wherever *Cliff* will be residing.

TRACY. Damn. That *is* a problem. But it's not *my* problem. I'll lay it on Cliff.

JAKE. *If* he ever comes *back*! He was starting to turn *green* at the Cleveland-bequest situation. No *wonder* he skedaddled out of here.

TRACY. I have a feeling his conscience will bring him back, soon as matters really sink in. He just has a lot on his mind today, what with the wedding and all. (*then both look* U.L. *as CLIFF storms into foyer*) There, what'd I tell you! Cliff always was a softy where *kids* are concerned.

CLIFF. This has nothing to do with Ohio orphans! The stupid *car* won't start! Frozen fuel line!

JAKE. I'm not surprised. You'd think a building this expensive could afford a *heated* garage.

TRACY. I've been after him for years to relocate in southern California.

CLIFF. For what? I hate to drive, I can't swim, and I sunburn!

TRACY. Hire a chauffeur, get fitted for waterwings, and buy a beach umbrella.

CLIFF. You just want to meet movie stars.

TRACY. Is that a crime?

CLIFF. Look, I laid out almost half a million bucks for this condo, the least I can do is *live* in it!

JAKE. Would you like to borrow *my* car, Cliff? I only just parked it—the fuel line can't have frozen *yet.*

CLIFF. Hey, that would be great! . . . Oh, wait, I can't drive a stick-shift. But if I don't pick up that tux and get Bobbi's mother at the airport—!

JAKE. (*drains brandy glass, leaves it on bar, heads for sofa*) Help is on the way, *mon capitan*! (*grabs up briefcase, starts for door*) I'll *drive* you!

CLIFF. It's a hell of an imposition, Jake—

JAKE. What are best friends for? Get moving, will you?!

CLIFF. (*heads for door*) Right! And thanks! (*as he Exits to hall, with JAKE just a pace behind him:*)

TRACY. If you run out of gas in a lonely spot—I'll understand.

JAKE. I just filled the tank this morning, damn it. But thanks for the thought! (*grins at her, then Exits, shutting door after him; TRACY picks up his empty glass, starts with it for* K.R., *stops as phone rings, wavers, then sets glass back onto bar and answers phone*)

TRACY. Hello? . . . *What* advertisement? . . . No, it must be a misprint . . . Look, I'm sorry, but take my word for it, Doctor Tucker does *not* need a roommate to share the rent! (*hangs up, barely turns for glass on bar when phone rings again; gets it*) Hello? . . . No, I'm

sorry, that's a printing error or something . . . I don't *care* what the Village Voice says, they've listed the wrong telephone number! . . . No. Scout's honor, we do not *need* a roommate, do not *want* a roommate, or have any *use* for a roommate! (*hangs up; door buzzer sounds; she grimaces but stolidly answers it; LANGDON BARNETT, about 30, eager-looking and pleasant of aspect, pops in; he wears boots, jeans, flannel shirt, open canvas jacket, and carries a hefty suitcase in his right hand, a copy of the* Village Voice *in his left; TRACY takes a slight backstep, staring at him, on:*)

LANGDON. Is this the place that advertised for a roommate?

TRACY. (*looks him up and down; then:*) Yes it is! (*gestures into living room*) Come right in! (*as he Enters, phone rings again; she frowns, shuts door, starts for phone, then stops and queries hopefully:*) Do you know how to program an answering machine?

LANGDON. (*sets suitcase* R. *of sofa, drops newspaper on top of it*) Why, sure, ma'am. (*starts for phone* [*which will ring at normal intervals during dialogue*]) Can't you?

TRACY. (*following him across room*) I could the *old* one, but Doctor Tucker got this fancy new all-in-one microchip edition, and it's got so many buttons I'm afraid to touch it.

LANGDON. (*picks up phone* [*ringing stops*]; speaks into phone) Just a moment, please. (*presses button, turns to TRACY*) I have them on "Hold"; now what?

TRACY. Put a message on there that'll make them stop calling about sharing the rent.

LANGDON. Easy as pie. (*pushes button, then another, then speaks into phone*) Hi, there! I'm sorry to tell you

that Doctor Tucker already *has* a new roommate! Better luck next time! (*pushes another button, hangs up*) There. That should hold them off for awhile, Miss—uh—?

TRACY. "Tracy."

LANGDON. Miss Tracy.

TRACY. No-no, it's Miss *Tucker.* My *first* name is "Tracy." What's *your* name?

LANGDON. Uh. Let me think . . . "Barnett . . . Langdon Barnett!"

TRACY. You don't sound very *sure* about it.

LANGDON. I'm not used to it yet. It's my stage name.

TRACY. Oh, you're an actor?

LANGDON. Trying to be. I'm studying at the American Theatre Wing.

TRACY. And they won't take you without a stage name?

LANGDON. No, the stage name was my *own* idea. Couldn't have my *right* name on a marquee.

TRACY. Now, that's just plain silly. *Everybody* uses real names in theatre nowadays—Jo Ann Pflug—Carrie Snodgress—Meryl Streep. Why go for an alias?

LANGDON. If I used my *real* name, people would laugh at me.

TRACY. Nonsense. It can't possibly be that bad. What *is* it?

LANGDON. (*hesitates: then:*) Lionel Barrymore.

TRACY. (*after a pause*) I see what you mean. Well, now, Langdon—or do you prefer "Lionel"—?

LANGDON. "Langdon," please. It'll help me get used to it.

TRACY. Would you like a brandy?

LANGDON. *Would* I! . . . I mean, yes, thanks, I really would. It's *cold* out there!

TRACY. (*gestures him toward sofa as she heads behind bar to pour him a drink*) That's what I figured. Sit down and relax while I get it. (*hums happily*)

LANGDON. (*sits a bit hesitantly*) Don't you want to discuss my financial condition? . . . references? . . . character?

TRACY. Later, later. First thing, we've got to heat you up—*warm* you up. (*will take glass of brandy and start toward sofa with it*) Then we can discuss your qualifications.

LANGDON. This—uh—Doctor Tucker—he's your father—? (*she arrives with brandy; he takes it gratefully*) Thank you! (*sips at it eagerly as she responds:*)

TRACY. My brother. I keep house for him.

LANGDON. (*looks about, admiringly*) You do a nice job of it, Miss Tucker.

TRACY. "Tracy," please. I mean, if we're going to be *living* together—

LANGDON. (*comes to his feet, wide-eyed*) You mean —I've *got* it?! The room, the rent-sharing? Just like that?

TRACY. Why are you so surprised?

LANGDON. Well, for one thing, that message you had me put on your machine! Naturally, I figured it meant you'd *found* a roommate . . .

TRACY. And I have. You're it.

LANGDON. But you don't know anything *about* me—you don't even know if I can *afford* to share the rent on this place . . . and, by the looks of this place, I probably *can't*!

TRACY. Did I so much as *mention* money?

LANGDON. No. You didn't. That's what scares me.

TRACY. *Scares* you?

LANGDON. You know—the guy meets a girl, she offers him a drink, the scene fades out, and when it fades

back in, he's in an alley with all his money gone, or his ship has sailed without him, or he's got amnesia and can't remember why he's holding a gory dagger over the body of a man he doesn't even know, or—

TRACY. (*gently presses him back onto sofa*) *Whoa,* boy! You see too many movies! Come to think of it, how does an aspiring actor *manage* to get to the movies? They're not cheap, these days.

LANGDON. I have a late-night job after classes as a short-order cook. It's not a real classy place, but I can make a hell of a cheeseburger.

TRACY. Well, that puts you one-up on my *brother*! I don't think he can boil water! Which reminds me—he's leaving for the South Pole tomorrow, and you're *just* what I need to fill the gap.

LANGDON. (*uneasy, starts to get up*) You mean, I'd be sharing this apartment with *you*? . . . *Alone* with you?

TRACY. (*this time* shoves *him back down*) Don't be so *jumpy*! I thought struggling actors shared with *anybody*!

LANGDON. Well, maybe if—Look, how soon will your brother be coming back?

TRACY. He won't be *coming* back.

LANGDON. (*pops to his feet*) You know, maybe I *will* be going, now—!

TRACY. Will you get your mind off *murder*-plots?! He's going to the South Pole to *honeymoon*!

LANGDON. Who's he marrying, an *eskimo*?

TRACY. You're thinking of the *other* pole. Nothing where he's going but penguins.

LANGDON. He's marrying a *penguin*?

TRACY. (*pushes him down onto sofa again*) He's marrying a lady anthropologist. Penguins are her life.

LANGDON. Then what does she want with your *brother*?

TRACY. Actually, that's what we're *all* puzzled about. But the point is, after seventeen years, I won't have anybody to *do* for, do you see? And it's gotten to be a kind of habit, tending to a man's needs, and when you showed up at the door, all at once I realized I wouldn't *have* to move out of this big apartment, and—

LANGDON. But *I* just wanted a place to *sleep* nights. I wasn't figuring on having a built-in *housekeeper*!

TRACY. So count your blessings!

(*Then both look doorward as CLIFF and JAKE re-enter, CLIFF moving to hang his outerwear on rack while JAKE shuts door and heads to bar to refill his abandoned brandy glass, during:*)

CLIFF. Now *his* car won't start!

JAKE. That garage is colder than I thought!

CLIFF. (*moving from coat rack toward phone*) Maybe that tux rental place *delivers*!

JAKE. You may have to get married in your workclothes if it doesn't!

TRACY. That'd be real togetherness—Bobbi in her veil, Cliff in his surgical mask . . .

CLIFF. (*putting phone to ear before dialing*) Don't forget Orphan Annie in her stroller!

TRACY. Ah! Then you've come around?

CLIFF. Hell, why not! It's no fun being an orphan. I oughta know! (*scowls, jiggles phone-receiver*)

TRACY. (*to LANGDON:*) My brother was adopted.

LANGDON. Oh.

JAKE. I sure hope that *social worker's* gas-line doesn't freeze up!

TRACY. *What* social worker?

CLIFF. You can't expect Annabel to find the way here

by *herself*! (*taps cradle-button again, rapidly, scowls, hangs up*) Damn! I think the *phone*-lines are frozen, too! (*moves toward stairs*) I'll try the upstairs extension.

TRACY. You may as well call the caterer and the florist, too, while you're at it. Time is starting to run out fast!

CLIFF. (*en route upstairs*) But what about Bobbi's *mother*? I can't pick *her* up by telephone!

TRACY. (*to LANGDON:*) Bobbi is Cliff's fiancee.

LANGDON. Oh.

JAKE. (*comes from behind bar with glass of brandy, stops CLIFF's ascent with:*) I'm sure Bobbi will be understanding once you explain.

TRACY. If he can get a *word* in!

CLIFF. She's *got* to pause for breath *sometime*! Hey, speaking of my Daily Chores, there's a *gap* in my mental list. I mean, there's Muffy's, the tux, the caterer, the florist, Bobbi's mother—and *what*?

TRACY. Your track shoes?

CLIFF. Seriously.

TRACY. Ah! Elmer and Faleen's for dinner! Though how you think you're driving all the way up to Scarsdale in this blizzard with a frozen fuel-line—!

JAKE. —*and* getting *back* here in time for that meet-Mrs.-Ralston party so Bobbi's mother can give you the onceover—!

TRACY. Listen, why don't you phone the airport and ask Mrs. Ralston to take a *cab* to her hotel or Bobbi's place?

CLIFF. At New York City cab-rates—?!

JAKE. Rebecca Ralston is loaded. She can afford it.

CLIFF. But she's not going to *like* it! Damn! (*starts upstairs again*) The way things are going, I may have to telephone my *wedding*-responses tomorrow! (*ascends from view*)

TRACY. Jake, is that legal?

JAKE. Sometimes under very special circumstances.

TRACY. Well, you ought to know!

LANGDON. Why?

TRACY. Jake is Cliff's lawyer.

LANGDON. Oh.

JAKE. Hope he doesn't take too long. I've got to phone the motor club about my car.

TRACY. You mean you *really* couldn't get it started?

JAKE. Tracy, I may be a member of the bar, but I still have *some* integrity.

CLIFF. (*appears at top of stairs*) Tracy, may I ask you something?

TRACY. Of course. What would you like to know?

CLIFF. (*points at LANGDON*) Who the hell is *that*?

TRACY. Would you believe Lionel Barrymore?

LANGDON. Of course, I don't use my real name.

JAKE. (*fascinated*) What *is* your real name?

LANGDON. Lionel Barrymore.

JAKE. (*looks at brandy glass*) I think I've had enough of these.

CLIFF. Tracy, will you stop playing games and tell me who this guy is?

TRACY. My new roommate.

CLIFF. Since *when*?!

TRACY. Since you decided to move in with Bobbi.

CLIFF. You didn't consult *me* about him!

TRACY. You didn't consult *me* about *Bobbi*!

CLIFF. (*will descend stairs now, and Enter living room, during:*) Don't get cute! This is serious! As your brother, I demand an explanation!

TRACY. Fair enough. I figured it's going to be mighty *lonely* around here when you go off romping with the penguins, and it's a shame to let such a nice big bedroom go to waste, and it's kind of *nice* to have a man to take care of—

CLIFF. But who *is* he? Where did he *come* from? Why is he here *today*?

TRACY. His name is Lionel Barrymore, but he's an actor, so he changed it to Langdon Barnett—

LANGDON. I didn't want to change the initials. I have a monogrammed hairbrush.

CLIFF. Get it. I may want to use it on my sister!

TRACY. Cliff, be reasonable. He needs a place to stay, we *have* a place for him to stay—

LANGDON. Though you didn't mention how much my share is.

JAKE. Share of what?

LANGDON. The rent.

CLIFF. What are you talking about? There's no rent to *share*!

LANGDON. Gee, that's mighty generous of you, Doctor Tucker—

TRACY. He means he doesn't *pay* rent, Langdon. This is a condo.

LANGDON. How much is *that* likely to cost me?

TRACY. Nothing. Be my guest.

CLIFF. Tracy—!

TRACY. So sue me.

CLIFF. Jake—?

JAKE. Tracy, consider yourself sued.

LANGDON. I didn't mean to cause any trouble—

TRACY. And you didn't. Sit down and relax. When Cliff leaves, this place is mine to do with as I see fit.

CLIFF. But *until* I leave, this is *my* place, and I will *not* allow my sister to cohabitate with Lionel Barrymore!

TRACY. Clifford, dear, you're not *going* to leave if you don't make those *phone* calls!

CLIFF. Damn! I *forgot* about them! (*heads for stairs again*) We will *continue* this discussion the moment I return! (*as he races upstairs and vanishes:*)

JAKE. (*drains glass, sets it on bar*) I think the *brandy* is getting to me, now! Can I use your bathroom?

TRACY. Again?

JAKE. (*heading* U.R.) If the *pipes* haven't frozen! (*Exits*)

LANGDON. Listen, Miss Tucker—

TRACY. "Tracy."

LANGDON. Tracy. If my being here is going to get you into some kind of *trouble*—

TRACY. (*laughs*) Don't worry about it! Cliff's really very nice when he's not up to his ears in premarital jitters. (*door buzzer sounds*) Oh, maybe that's the social worker with Cliff's new daughter.

LANGDON. (*as she heads for door:*) Your brother's getting married tomorrow and he already has a daughter? Or mustn't I pry?

TRACY. (*pauses*) I mean she's new to *us*, I didn't mean he already has *another* daughter. Actually, she's an inheritance, but I figured "daughter" was the likeliest thing to call her. I mean—(*starts for door again*)—he already *has* a *sister*!

LANGDON. I don't quite understand *any* of this.

TRACY. (*at door*) Have another brandy. That should help.

LANGDON. (*sincerely*) Thanks!

(*As he heads for bar, where he'll replenish his glass, TRACY opens front door to admit ANNABEL FESCO, a ravishing young woman in her late 20s, wearing an overcoat and carrying a baby wrapped in a blanket.*)

TRACY. Ah! We were *expecting* you! Come in, come in! (*points at baby*) Annabel Fesco, right?

ANNABEL. Well, yes, but you see—

TRACY. Oh, what am I doing standing here! You must be absolutely *frozen*! Come in! (*business of shutting door, ushering ANNABEL into living room, during:*) Did you just come from the airport?

ANNABEL. From my hotel, actually. I wanted to freshen up before—

TRACY. How in the world did you find a *cab* in this weather?

ANNABEL. Oh, I walked. It's only five or six blocks—

TRACY. *Walked*?! You really *must* be frozen! And the *baby*, besides! I can offer *you* a brandy—(*to LANGDON, who's just finished pouring his fresh drink*) Langdon, will you get her a glass, please?

LANGDON. Sure thing! (*but his line practically overlaps hers as she continues her own earlier interrupted line:*)

TRACY. —but what in the world does one offer to a freezing *baby*?

ANNABEL. Oh, but you really needn't bother, because—

TRACY. Hot milk! Just the ticket! I'll get it right away! (*starts for* K.D.) Did you bring a bottle someplace? She looks too small to drink from a cup!

ANNABEL. (*forced to drop propriety:*) *Wait*! (*when a startled TRACY turns her way:*) There's no need! This *isn't* a baby!

TRACY. (*blankly*) Annabel isn't a baby? What *is* she —a *midget*?

ANNABEL. (*laughs*) No-no, *please* let me explain. You've been so kind and solicitous I haven't been able to get a *word* in! For starters, *I* am Annabel Fesco!

TRACY. My brother inherited *you*?!

LANGDON. (*coming from bar with ANNABEL's drink and his own*) Talk about *lucky*!

ANNABEL. Listen, it's very simple, if you'll let me go uninterrupted for a moment—(*pauses as LANGDON extends glass, takes it on:*) Thank you! (*takes sip, shivers slightly, then smiles*) Wow, that's really good stuff! I was chillier than I thought.

TRACY. Oh, my goodness, I never even took your coat. Here, let me—! (*will remove ANNABEL's overcoat and take it to coat rack, during:*) But I thought you *said* that baby-or-whatever-it-is *was* Annabel Fesco?

ANNABEL. That's because that's what my late father *named* it! It's a doll. His own very special invention. Looks like a real baby, feels like a real baby, even moves and makes noises like a real baby, and it doesn't take any batteries to function.

LANGDON. No kidding! But what powers it?

ANNABEL. A kind of one-way flywheel inside—you know, the same thing that powers a self-winding wristwatch. As long as the child keeps playing with her, she stores up enough energy to keep acting like a baby for hours and hours. (*"baby" suddenly starts to cry*) There, see what I mean!

TRACY. (*returning from rack*) What made her start doing that?

ANNABEL. A kind of *timer* inside. My father was quite ingenious. (*starts rocking "baby" in her arms*) There-there, Annabel, there-there . . . (*"baby" falls silent*) A couple of slow rocks and the mechanism turns right off again, see?

TRACY. But that's marvelous! A doll like that would be worth—probably *millions*!

ANNABEL. By any *other* name it would. The trouble is, the toy companies didn't think the name "Annabel Fesco" had enough class, and Dad kept insisting on it,

because it was named after *me*, and—well—he still hadn't sold it when he died.

LANGDON. Those stinkers!

ANNABEL. My opinion exactly! But that's why Dad left it to Doctor Tucker, do you see?

TRACY. No, but let's sit *down* while you explain, I've been on my feet all day! (*to LANGDON:*) Put that *suitcase* somewhere, will you, before someone trips over it? (*LANGDON will stash suitcase and newspaper against wall* U.S. *of fireplace, while TRACY and ANNABEL sit on sofa together*) Now, what's this incredible invention got to do with my brother?

ANNABEL. Your brother is Doctor Tucker, right?

TRACY. Yes. Oh, and I'm being stupid—my name is Tracy, and this is Langdon Barnett—unless he changes his mind.

ANNABEL. How's that again?

LANGDON. I'm an actor. It's my stage name. See, my *real* name is—(*by now, he's sort of lounging back against* U. *end of fireplace*)

TRACY. Not *now*, Langdon. First I want to hear about this *inheritance* of Cliff's.

ANNABEL. Well, Dad had read about your brother in the papers for years, learned all about his wonderful devotion to children, and he told me he couldn't think of a *better* person to demonstrate "Annabel, Junior" to the world. With *his* endorsement, no one would *mind* what the doll was called, and he'd be able to make *so* many children happier all over the world with this new doll, and—

TRACY. And so he left it to my brother! What a *nice* nice person he must have been!

ANNABEL. He really was. And downright *obsessed*

with making *children* happy! That's why he decided your brother was the ideal person to leave the doll to. Dad practically had a *shrine* erected to Doctor Tucker. I think he has every newspaper clipping, every magazine article, *anything* about him in existence. The past ten or more years of my life I've been *steeped* in the life and career of your brother. I feel I know him almost better than I know myself. What a marvelous person he is!

TRACY. Well, maybe career-wise. In person, he's more of an anxiety case.

LANGDON. Not to mention *dangerous.*

TRACY. Now-now, Langdon, Cliff wouldn't actually *carry out* any threats he might have made. He's just being big-brotherly about me.

ANNABEL. (*stands*) Do you know—all at once, I'm very nervous. It feels almost like stage-fright. Maybe I should have just *mailed* the doll, with an explanatory letter.

TRACY. (*stands, takes ANNABEL's hand*) You'll do just fine, trust me.

ANNABEL. But I feel like such an *intruder.* If I weren't so awed by your brother's reputation, I wouldn't have come at all. But I just *had* to meet this paragon of all the nicer virtues.

TRACY. *Cliff*?

ANNABEL. Dad always thought *so* highly of him. Your brother's become a kind of epitome of all that's wonderful in this world—a knight in shining armor—a holy grail—

LANGDON. Holy *terror* is more like it! The way he *looked* at me—!

TRACY. Langdon, that was brotherly love!

LANGDON. Then I'd dread to see brotherly *hate*!

ANNABEL. If only—if only *Dad* could have been here

to meet him, too . . . ! (*abruptly starts to cry, knuckling vainly under her eyes*) Excuse me. Have you got a Kleenex?

TRACY. (*takes ANNABEL's brandy glass, points* U.R.) Through that archway, past the unmade bed, and into my bathroom. Maybe you'd like to freshen up after your long trudge through the snowdrifts, anyhow.

ANNABEL. Yes. Yes, thanks, I would! (*heads that way*)

LANGDON. (sotto voce *to TRACY:*) I'm no psychologist, but it almost sounds as if Annabel's in *love* with your brother!

TRACY. (*similarly*) Well, that wouldn't be the *worst* thing that could happen to him!

ANNABEL. (*stops short of exit as JAKE emerges; asks hopefully:*) Doctor Tucker—?

JAKE. Sorry, no. But from that *look* in your eyes, I sure *wish* I was! I'm just his amiable attorney, Jake Putnam.

TRACY. (*now cradling blanket-wrapped doll on one arm*) Jake, save the chitchat for later, she has to go to the bathroom!

JAKE. (*steps aside*) Oh, sorry. (*points* U.R.) It's right through there.

ANNABEL. Thank you. (*to others:*) Be right back. (*Exits* U.R.*; JAKE starts across room toward TRACY, sees bundle, reacts*)

JAKE. Aha! So little Annabel's arrived at last! Which means—(*thumb-jerks toward* U.R.)—*that* must have been the social worker, right? What an absolute *dish*! (*will proceed to TRACY during:*) I thought all social workers wore thick glasses, no makeup, and their hair in a bun!

TRACY. Spoken like a true chauvinist! You ought to be ashamed! (*CLIFF appears on stairs, descending to foyer, during:*)

JAKE. (*reaches and gently takes doll from TRACY on:*) May *I* hold her? (*rocks it in his arms, peering at face*) What a doll! What an absolute *doll*!

LANGDON. You can say *that* again!

CLIFF. (*en route toward group, belatedly reacts to tableau*) Hey, is that *her*? My little foundling? Wow! (*hastens down and takes doll from JAKE during:*) She's so *tiny*! How in the world did she *get* here?

JAKE. With the social worker, of course!

CLIFF. (*rocking doll in his arms, peering adoringly at its face*) Oh, hell, I hope you didn't let her *leave*? I'd like to *tip* her or something—(*to JAKE:*) Or is that legal?

JAKE. Clifford my boy, social workers may find fault with *many* things in today's society, but being handed *money* isn't one of them!

CLIFF. Well, did *somebody* tip her, I hope?

TRACY. Cliff, there's something I have to tell you about this little Annabel in your arms—

CLIFF. She's so tiny—so helpless—so cute—and now, holding her, it's the strangest sort of feeling, but—I think—I think I feel—almost *fatherly*!

TRACY. (*sincerely*) Why, Cliff, I'm impressed! But I'm afraid I should tell you that—

(*door buzzer sounds; immediately, CLIFF reacts*)

CLIFF. Oh, damn, if that's *Bobbi*, I'm a dead man! (*is stepping left, right, back, etc., cradling doll*) No tux, no unfrosted bouquet, no fresh shrimp on the *hors d'oeuvre*—!

TRACY. I thought you *phoned* all those places?!

CLIFF. I've been upstairs *trying* to phone, but there's something wrong with the line! I keep getting a strange *man's* voice telling me I have a *roommate*!

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