

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

American Hwangap

by Lloyd Suh

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



SAMUELFRENCH.COM

Copyright © 2009, 2010 by Lloyd Suh

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that *AMERICAN HWANGAP* 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 *AMERICAN HWANGAP* 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: Abrams Artists Agency, 275 Seventh Avenue, 26th Floor, New York, NY 10001 Attn: Beth Bickers.

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.

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.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of *AMERICAN HWANGAP* *must* give credit to the Author 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 name of the Author *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.

In addition the following credit *must* be given in all programs and publicity information distributed in association with this piece:

AMERICAN HWANGAP received its New York premiere on May 17, 2009 by Ma-Yi Theater Company, Ralph B. Peña, Artistic Director, Jorge Z. Ortoll, Executive Director; and The Play Company, Kate Loewald, Artistic Director, Lauren Weigel, Managing Director.

AMERICAN HWANGAP received its world premiere on April 4, 2009 at Magic Theatre, San Francisco, CA. Loretta Greco, Artistic Director.

The play was produced as part of the Lark Play Development Center's "Launching New Plays into the Repertoire Initiative" supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Partner organizations include The Play Company, Ma-Yi Theater Company, and The Magic Theatre.

Originally presented by New York Stage & Film Company and The Powerhouse Theater at Vassar from July 27th to 29th, 2007.

Developed at the Ojai Playwrights Conference. Robert Egan, Artistic Director.

AMERICAN HWANGAP was first produced by the The Magic Theatre (Loretta Greco, artistic director) in San Francisco, California on April 11, 2009. The performance was directed by Trip Cullman, with sets by Erik Flatmo, costumes by Brandin Barron, lighting design by York Kennedy, and sound design by Fitz Patton. The production stage manager was Briana Fahey. The cast was as follows:

CHUN Keone Young
MARY..... Jodi Long
DAVID Ryun Yu
ESTHER..... Angela Lin
RALPH..... Jon Norman Schneider

The New York premiere of *AMERICAN HWANGAP* was a co-production of Ma-Yi Theatre Company (Ralph B. Peña, artistic director; Jorge Z. Ortoll, executive director) and The Play Company (Kate Loewald, founding producer; Lauren Weigel, managing producer), at The Wild Project, opening night May 17, 2009. It was directed by Trip Cullman, set design by Erik Flatmo, costume design by Junghyun Georgia Lee, lighting design by Paul Whitaker, and sound design by Fitz Patton. The production stage manager was Jenn McNeil. The cast was as follows:

CHUN James Saito
MARY..... Mia Katigbak
DAVID Hoon Lee
ESTHER..... Michi Barall
RALPH..... Peter Kim

CHARACTERS

MIN SUK CHUN – 59, a Korean immigrant to the US, returned to Korea and now back again. Probably either tall, large, or otherwise imposing. His English is actually quite good though rusty, it comes and goes, but he speaks quickly, often and confidently even when he doesn't have the words.

MARY CHUN – 58, his ex-wife. Reinvented. A modern Asian-American woman. Speaks proficient English, though may be tinged with only a very slight accent.

RALPH CHUN – 29, their youngest son. Brilliant, damaged. Lives in his mother's basement.

ESTHER CHUN – 31, their daughter. Twice divorced, a perpetual student. Unsettled.

DAVID CHUN – 34, their eldest son. An investment banker. Away.

SETTING

Suburbs.
Texas.

TIME

2005

Scene One

(RALPH wears a traditional Korean hanbok. He holds a small cup.)

RALPH. I wrote a poem for you, Dad. It's called "American Hwangap."

I'd recite it for you but I put it in my pants pocket and when I changed into this thing I forgot to transfer it from the other pants and it was kind of long so I can't remember how it goes. But um.

I don't know you very well. But I mean I like you and stuff. When I picture you away from home, you're in the desert with a knapsack over your shoulder, you have a grizzled beard with the mud of the earth on it, you're alone and undaunted by the distances from you to everywhere else.

That bigtooth maple out in back of the yard, that's the one we planted, all those years ago. It's a climbing tree now. If you climb the tree, Pop, the leaves will spill and I'll rake them. You should climb it. It's roots are down.

I hope you stick around this time, Dad. That'd be pretty cool.

My prescription says that I'm not allowed to consume alcohol which sucks, so I guess I'm just gonna pretend I'm drinking it.

(He pretends to drink.)

Happy Birthday.

Scene Two

(Afternoon. DAVID at an office, suit and tie. RALPH in the basement of the Chun house, wearing pajama pants and a T-shirt. His arm is in a cast. They phone.)

RALPH. We went shopping and I got a birthday present, guess what I got.

DAVID. Birthday present for Dad?

RALPH. It's a book about birthdays. It has all famous people's birthdays and you can look up your birthday and find out what famous people were born on your same birthday as you.

DAVID. Oh yeah?

RALPH. I was born on the same day as Florence Nightingale and Katherine Hepburn and Yogi Berra and Emilio Estevez and Tom Snyder who I don't know who that is and skateboarding legend Tony Hawk and Kim Fields who was Tooti on *Facts of Life*.

DAVID. Great.

RALPH. Dad was born on the same day as Sean Diddy Combs Ralph Macchio Laura Bush Will Rogers Walter Cronkite and Matthew McConaughegehey or however you pronounce it.

DAVID. Okay.

RALPH. When's your birthday David and I'll look it up.

DAVID. You don't know when my birthday is, champ?

RALPH. If you tell me I'll remember because I just forgot for a second.

DAVID. September 14.

RALPH. Right September 14 just a sec I have the book here let me look.

(RALPH fumbles to read the book while still on the phone.)

September 14 is Sam Neill and Joey Heatherton and Harve Presnell and Clayton Moore.

(silence)

DAVID. That's everyone?

RALPH. Well and you too, David.

DAVID. Right.

RALPH. David I don't know who those people are.

DAVID. Clayton Moore, that sounds familiar, was he an astronaut or something?

RALPH. No it says he's the Lone Ranger.

DAVID. Oh the Lone Ranger.

RALPH. Yeah.

DAVID. I guess that means I gotta get to work getting famous, huh champ? Us September 14th-ers are slacking off some, I gotta carry the load and get real famous, right?

RALPH. Oh yeah David you can get famous and then you can be in the book. But then I have to get Dad another book because then this one will be old.

DAVID. Hey is Mom around?

RALPH. Mom yeah no, she's still at work and then she had to go to the grocery she said but she'll be back by six.

DAVID. Grocery, huh?

RALPH. Yeah she's gonna get a cake for the party and like some food and stuff. She's gonna make a big *dduk-gook* and some *gahl-bee*.

DAVID. So this is really happening.

RALPH. You're coming home, right, for Dad's birthday?

DAVID. We'll see, champ. How you doing anyway?

RALPH. How am I doing, I'm doing great.

DAVID. That's great, I heard you broke your arm though.

RALPH. Yeah I got it in a cast, what happened was I clumb a tree and I fell.

DAVID. Clumb?

RALPH. Yeah I saw a tree and I clumb it.

DAVID. I think you mean climbed there, champ.

RALPH. Right yeah climbed.

DAVID. Yeah it's climbed if you want to be correct about it.

RALPH. Oh well then I definitely clumb it then cause there was nothing correct in how I did it.

DAVID. I see.

RALPH. You wanna sign my cast?

DAVID. Sure thing.

RALPH. Okay so then come home for Dad's birthday and then you can sign it.

DAVID. How's your nerves?

RALPH. Oh they come and go.

DAVID. You taking your meds? Whadda they got you on?

RALPH. Something called Triloramine. You know something about pharmaceuticals, David?

DAVID. Yeah I know something about everything. You like that stuff?

RALPH. I guess so, I don't want to talk about it any more. Except don't worry about me, you should just come down home for the party.

DAVID. Yeah well I'm working on it, kid.

RALPH. It's actually kind of a sweet deal. I get to sit around with my butt hanging out of my pants all day, I don't have to have a job and people let me get away with stuff like at the hospital when my arm was broke the doctor was all hesitant to shoot me up with painkillers on account of my nervous situation and it sucked really so I called him a fucking cunt. And no one got mad. So it's like I'm a short bus kid only nobody thinks I'm stupid, they actually treat me like I'm supersmart or some kind of genius, which I guess is technically true if you want to break it down in terms of standardized psychoanalytic testing methods, but that's ultimately not very helpful on account of me most of the time feeling like I'm teetering toward a very nearby precipice beneath which is untold personal misery and psychological disaster.

(silence)

DAVID. We all of us live every day on that precipice, buddy.

RALPH. Cool.

DAVID. Just bear that in mind for comfort.

RALPH. I talked to Dad you know.

DAVID. No shit.

RALPH. No shit.

DAVID. What did you guys, I mean what did he say?

RALPH. Well the conversation was basically broken up into two main categories, the first being his plans for his visit and the second having more to do with like feelings.

DAVID. Ah.

RALPH. So he's here now, he's landing at the airport and then meeting up with Esther and she's going to drive him up here for tonight and then tomorrow we're gonna have a party.

DAVID. Did he say anything about me?

RALPH. Um. About you David?

DAVID. You know what, forget it. Just tell Ma I called, 'kay?

RALPH. I've been writing poetry David.

DAVID. Say again?

RALPH. The kids in the neighborhood they have a band called The Love Song of J. Alfred Punk Rock and they want me to be in it or something so I've been writing songs and occasionally lyrics which is like poetry, mostly it's blank verse except for some of them which rhyme only not in a corny way.

DAVID. Blank verse is great. So Mom'll be back by six, huh?

RALPH. You want me to read you a poem David?

DAVID. What's that?

RALPH. I said yeah Mom'll be back at five, in the meantime you want me to read you a poem?

DAVID. Okay sure, but wait five, or did you say six?

RALPH. This one's my best one it's called "Weazleton."

DAVID. That's an ace title, champ.

RALPH. Weazleton is my dog's name.

We live in my mother's basement
playing ping pong and the daily crosswords.
His nerves are a tatters from a fall
last fall or the fall before.

A dog never knows his father
because puppies are litter,
sold before they're old and gray,
some stray,
given away.
It's a dog's life.

If I could talk to Weazleton
I would ask if it bothers him
that a dog never knows his father.
In fact I can,
so I ask
and he licks my hand
and poops.
This must be an answer.

(silence)

That's the end.

DAVID. That's a tops poem there, champ.

RALPH. You like it David?

DAVID. I like it more than you can know, buddy. I like it a lot.

RALPH. It's autobiographical.

DAVID. Yeah, buddy. I know.

RALPH. Cool.

DAVID. I know.

Scene Three

*(Dusk. CHUN and ESTHER at a diner, window seat.
Beyond them, mountains and desert.)*

(CHUN eats, ESTHER drinks coffee.)

CHUN. I remember well this desert. So different so same is with Korea, mountain here like mountain there only so apart and lonely or things of this nature. In Korea see mountains, cannot help but dream of going to top of mountain but here is almost like hope for hop from one mountain to another, learn to fly or dream of wandering one to the next instead, strange how different mountains can be.

ESTHER. Um hey Dad?

CHUN. Mm.

ESTHER. Could we maybe just have some silence for like two seconds?

CHUN. Yeah okay.

(They sit in silence for like two seconds.)

You are have some boyfriend?

ESTHER. Dad.

CHUN. What?

ESTHER. No, I don't have a boyfriend.

CHUN. Oh. Because on purpose or because nobody wanting be boyfriend for you?

ESTHER. Heh. Uh, I you know, I really don't know.

CHUN. This something maybe you need to know.

ESTHER. I can handle it Dad, thanks.

CHUN. If you're in need of advice from Daddy, I have advice to give.

ESTHER. Yeah no I don't need any advice.

CHUN. Okay.

(ESTHER drinks her coffee.)

Thing about boys, Esther, is that sometimes man is need to feeling like he is so important or have so

CHUN. (*cont.*) much freedom or something, maybe boys certain age not good for appreciate things woman are having, type of nurture and good feeding and things of this nature.

ESTHER. Dad please.

CHUN. But after certain age man is begin to understanding need for good woman, *cham-han ah-gah-shee*, who can taking care of things for man, not just crazy wild hoochie time.

ESTHER. Okay.

CHUN. Maybe it's good thing you don't settle for man who cannot appreciating you.

ESTHER. That's really not the problem, Dad, thanks though.

CHUN. You know Kim Jong Il?

ESTHER. Do I uh, Kim Jong Il, well yeah.

CHUN. He has nuclear weapon now.

ESTHER. I know, I read the paper.

CHUN. Is unexpected situation.

ESTHER. Yeah I guess so.

CHUN. In Korea maybe you know maybe don't know, but Kim Jong Il he is kind of weird guy.

ESTHER. I understand that.

CHUN. Still so complicate you see, many people in Korea want reunification, but so divide so many years, hope for together but philosophy so different. Has been so long divided, so now they spend one whole lifetime apart.

ESTHER. Right.

CHUN. You date Korean man?

ESTHER. I said I'm not dating anyone Dad.

CHUN. Hypothetically. You are date somebody, is he Korean?

ESTHER. I don't know.

CHUN. Because I think is important for you to knowing, Korean people are kind of fucked up.

ESTHER. Yeah I already know that.

CHUN. So enough about me, tell me a story about you.

ESTHER. Uh...what?

CHUN. What is a day in the life of Esther?

ESTHER. I uh what?

CHUN. You are in school.

ESTHER. Yeah. I have classes.

CHUN. You're too old for school.

ESTHER. Thanks.

CHUN. How many school you've been to?

ESTHER. This is my uh, third, maybe fourth – depends on
how you look at it, fifth degree.

CHUN. Why? This is satisfy you?

ESTHER. Not really.

CHUN. Mm.

ESTHER. It fills the day.

CHUN. Mm, fills the day, okay. Can I just give you one little
advice? I am sixty soon, used to be for Korean people
this means entire life, somebody is become sixty years
old he better get ready for die soon. But now sixty of
course is not so old, after all Clint Eastwood he is prob-
ably like 80 years now, so this is okay. But how much
time left? Hm? Life is short time for to do something
filling days.

ESTHER. Um.

CHUN. When your turn at end of life, Esther, you should be
unencumbered of regret.

ESTHER. Okay.

CHUN. Regret, wasted time, when mountains surround us.

ESTHER. Look, Dad.

CHUN. Mountains I never clumb.

ESTHER. Never what?

CHUN. Clumb? Climbed?

ESTHER. Mountains you climb.

CHUN. In any case Esther, don't waste time.

ESTHER. Dad why are you here?

(silence)

CHUN. Well, reason I went to Korea, you know, is because when I lost my job I lost everything here, American new life was lost and I could only think this west was not for me. I lost my...I lost my ride. You know?

ESTHER. No.

CHUN. Okay.

ESTHER. Explain it.

CHUN. You know what is planned obsolescence?

ESTHER. What?

CHUN. Planned obsolescence, important concept. Engineer of products understand that part of job is to make sure one day it's gonna stop working, why? Because manufacturer want to make sure you buy another. This is American way, you buy say stereo system, sound good look sexy or whatever, then one day kerplooiie, stereo system breaks, Americans say oh well, this is the way of things, go buy new stereo. So engineer is create flaws, we plan demise of product to sell more stereos, and I think you know where I'm going with this.

ESTHER. Um.

CHUN. My American life had planned obsolescence. Company gets what it need from me, technology changes, young kids know new things, old guys go by the side, fall off, die or whatever, just die, I became obsolete.

ESTHER. So then what'll you do now?

CHUN. Relearn cowboy way.

ESTHER. You were never a cowboy.

CHUN. I was.

ESTHER. No dad.

CHUN. I was.

(silence)

But also in Korea, I was there one lifetime too late. Try to order banana from grocer, I say "banana" instead

of “bah-nah-nah,” and this Korean, to him I am not Korean. I turn TV and Smurfs you know Smurfs, they talking Korean!, and I say hey this is not Brainy Smurf voice, Brainy Smurf voice up high, not this crazy Korean Brainy Smurf voice. And then when *hwangap* is coming, they are make such big deal, my brother he says big party to have, remembering lifetime of Chun Min Suk, but Chun Min Suk life was not in Korea, was here, Mommy here, David, Esther and and and what is third one?

ESTHER. Ralph.

CHUN. Ralph yes. Thinking of you here, American *hwangap* maybe would be *hwangap* for me.

ESTHER. Oh.

CHUN. This is why I am here.

ESTHER. For your birthday party.

CHUN. For my life, Esther.

ESTHER. Right.

CHUN. For my life.

(*silence*)

ESTHER. I don't know what to say to you.

CHUN. Okay.

ESTHER. You left us.

CHUN. Okay.

ESTHER. You know what, let's just pay up and head out, they're waiting at home.

CHUN. Yes.

ESTHER. Can I just say, Dad, can I just say...?

CHUN. Anything you want.

(*silence.*)

ESTHER. We should pay now.

CHUN. How much is it?

ESTHER. Never mind, I got it.

(*She takes the check and her purse.*)

Scene Four

(Evening. **MARY** on the phone. Dining room. **RALPH** over a laid out newspaper, ripping the tails off of soy-bean sprouts and placing them in a bowl. **DAVID** in his office. They phone.)

DAVID. So I don't get how it works.

MARY. Well *hwangap* just means a sixtieth birthday. The ceremony is the *janche*, and the *hwangap janche* is a celebration of the life. A man turns sixty, his zodiac cycle is ended, so we celebrate the occasion. Of a lifetime lived.

DAVID. Yeah I still don't get how it works.

MARY. Well in the olden days you'd prepare a banquet, and there would be speeches and tributes from family and friends, usually formal but ours won't be.

DAVID. I hear you're making tons of food.

MARY. Ralph's helping.

RALPH. Tell him I'm here if he wants to talk to me.

MARY. He says he's here if you want to talk to him.

DAVID. So what do you want from me?

MARY. It's not a complicated thing, David, all you have to do is show up and see the man, I have a feeling it'll be good for you.

DAVID. Is there supposed to be a bunch of bowing?

MARY. Well that's how it usually works, but you don't have to do anything you don't want to.

DAVID. Oh alright, then I'm not coming.

MARY. David.

DAVID. You know what your problem is?

MARY. Oh do I have just one?

DAVID. You're a pushover.

MARY. Oh is that right.

DAVID. Looks that way from where I sit.

MARY. Well you can't see anything from that far away, kid, I'll have you know that I share a birthday with Rosa Parks, Oscar de la Hoya and Lawrence Taylor.

RALPH. And Charles Lindbergh and Alice Cooper.

MARY. Yeah.

RALPH. Did he hear me?

DAVID. So where's he gonna stay? At the house?

MARY. If he has to.

DAVID. Yeah, that doesn't sound like a good idea.

MARY. He'll sleep on the couch.

DAVID. And where am I supposed to sleep?

MARY. You can sleep in the basement maybe.

RALPH. Yeah he can sleep in the basement.

MARY. Ralph doesn't mind.

RALPH. Tell him it's gonna be awesome.

MARY. Esther in the other bedroom, you and Ralph in the basement, your father on the couch, sounds reasonable to me. Ralph says it's gonna be awesome.

DAVID. Just lemme understand what's expected here: are you planning on a series of weepy hugs? Is all forgotten? Or is there recrimination involved, a little weekend of apologies and fistfights?

MARY. Which would you prefer?

DAVID. Well obviously I'd most prefer not to drop everything and just rush down for some supplication congratulation situation.

MARY. Don't you have anything you want to say to him? To ask?

DAVID. Not so much, no.

MARY. Oh I don't believe you. I'm sorry David but I don't.

DAVID. Just don't go to bed with him.

MARY. Oh give me some credit.

DAVID. Just don't.

MARY. Come home, alright?

DAVID. We'll see.

MARY. We're all here, David. The whole family, together.
You shouldn't leave us waiting for you.

DAVID. Oh yeah why not? Isn't that what he did?

(silence)

MARY. I suppose it is, David, yes. In which case you can choose to do the same or else be quite unlike him in that.

(silence)

RALPH. Does he want to talk to me now?

DAVID. I gotta go.

(DAVID hangs up.)

RALPH. Can I talk to him real quick?

MARY. He had to go. We'll try him again later.

RALPH. Oh.

MARY. I think that's plenty of *kong-namul*.

RALPH. Can I keep shucking anyway, Ma?

MARY. Oh I think we have more than enough there Ralphie.

RALPH. But I like it and I wanna keep shucking.

MARY. Okay.

(They shuck together.)

Scene Five

(ESTHER holds a small cup.)

ESTHER. Funny thing about birthdays. You left just before I turned sixteen, I remember you sent a card. It says "Isn't It Great, You Just Turned Eight." I got nothing the year after, but you did send a Sweet Sixteen card when I turned eighteen. So I actually sent you a 60th birthday card about ten years ago, maybe you got it, I don't know, but I thought at the time you might find it funny. You weren't there for either one of my weddings, but I did get the toaster you sent after my first divorce.

And you know, I kind of loved that. I kind of loved wondering if and when something might randomly appear in the mail, even after anything had long since stopped arriving.

I guess that means a part of me has always wanted this. A second chance. But now that you're back, Dad, I'm not so sure I really want it anymore.

Maybe I should just get on a plane and head to Korea. Maybe that's the only thing that makes sense. The missing of you, the leaving of you, the back and forth away and away and away from you.

I don't know, Dad.

I didn't get you a card.

Maybe I'll send you one next year.

Wherever you are.

(She drinks, holding the cup with two hands.)

Happy Birthday.

Scene Six

(Night. RALPH in the basement. ESTHER enters from the stairs.)

ESTHER. So you still live down here.

RALPH. For now.

ESTHER. I could really use a drink.

RALPH. I have Juicy Juice juice boxes.

(silence)

ESTHER. What flavor?

RALPH. Grape.

ESTHER. Yeah I'll have one of those.

(RALPH gets juice boxes for the both of them.)

ESTHER. This is some serious work you've done down here.

RALPH. Yeah every month or so I try to do a significant upgrade and/or renovation.

How was the trip?

ESTHER. Dusty. Your fly is open.

RALPH. I don't mind.

You wanna sign my cast?

ESTHER. How long are you gonna live here?

RALPH. As long as I can I guess. Here's a pen.

ESTHER. Who are all these signatures from?

RALPH. Kids in the neighborhood.

ESTHER. Frank Paul Peter Hazel Jeff?

RALPH. Yeah they all signed it.

ESTHER. How old are these kids?

RALPH. Frank twelve Paul nine Peter eighteen Hazel seventeen Jeff I think he's eight.

ESTHER. Ralph you're thirty years old.

RALPH. Twenty-nine.

ESTHER. Is that your guitar?

RALPH. Yeah. You want me to play you a song?

ESTHER. No.

RALPH. Okay. Hey did you get Dad a birthday present?

ESTHER. No.

RALPH. When's your birthday?

ESTHER. January 24.

RALPH. I have a book!

ESTHER. Did you get Dad a birthday present?

RALPH. Just a second.

ESTHER. You seem excited about this thing, huh Ralphie?

RALPH. Ernest Borgnine, Aaron Neville, Neil Diamond,
Yakov Smirnoff and Mary Lou Retton.

ESTHER. That's a weird thing to say.

RALPH. Those are people whose birthday is the same as
yours.

ESTHER. Ah, yes, I knew about the Borgnine.

RALPH. Oh you knew?

ESTHER. Hard not to know about the Borgnine, it follows
you, a thing like that. Yakov Smirnoff, that's news to
me.

RALPH. I don't know who that is.

ESTHER. Sure you do, unfunny Russian cold war crossover
comedian.

RALPH. Nope.

ESTHER. "Wadda country"?! Really no? Dad was way into
that guy.

RALPH. Wait, he was, really?

ESTHER. Oh yeah, he would do impressions. "Ung. Wadda
country!"

(Smirnoff laugh)

RALPH. Wow.

ESTHER. Yeah.

RALPH. I wish I remembered that.

ESTHER. No. You don't.

But it is nice to know that I share a birthday with such
notaries of lame.

RALPH. Totally.

ESTHER. What's it mean, you think?

RALPH. Well there's evidence to support a truly scientific basis for astrology, keep in mind. That the phases of the moon, earth's rotation and the placement of the stars all correspond to tides and directly affect human and animal biorhythms, even weather, and have been known to wreak havoc with everything from natural disaster to the schedule of women's menstrual cycles, so the kind of thing has merit. Although in the east it's the year as much as the time of year, so maybe that's how Mary Lou broke out and won the gold.

(silence)

ESTHER. What's the secret, Ralphie?

RALPH. Secret to what Esther?

ESTHER. You got it all figured.

RALPH. No.

ESTHER. You got the bean bags, Ralphie, you got the bean bags and the basement, and I wanna live your life.

RALPH. Okay.

ESTHER. Not just the basement, I wanna live in your head; how did you get this way?

RALPH. What way?

ESTHER. You're faking. Tell me you're faking.

RALPH. Um faking what?

ESTHER. This really doesn't bother you? Dad back after years of nothing and Mom all of a sudden fixing *dduk-gook* and *gahl-bee*, trotting out the old wares like it's a hero's welcome?

RALPH. I'm confused here.

ESTHER. *(pokes him)* This doesn't bug you? What he did?

RALPH. *(forceful)* Hey cut it out, alright?

(ESTHER backs away.)

ESTHER. Sorry.

RALPH. I mean *fuck*.

ESTHER. Sorry, Ralph.

(silence)

RALPH. *(sunny)* It's cool.

(silence)

You want me to play you a song on the guitar?

ESTHER. No.

RALPH. Okay.

Scene Seven

(Night. CHUN and MARY in the dining room. He carries a small bag.)

CHUN. Your English so good.

MARY. Thanks. That's all you brought?

CHUN. Don't need much.

MARY. Okay.

CHUN. So how's David?

MARY. He's well.

CHUN. He's coming?

MARY. I think so.

CHUN. He's where?

MARY. New York.

CHUN. No shit.

MARY. No shit.

CHUN. What he is doing there?

MARY. He's an investment banker.

CHUN. Investment banker no shit.

MARY. No shit.

CHUN. What is investment banker?

MARY. I'm still not so sure myself.

CHUN. I like your hair.

MARY. I didn't fix it.

CHUN. Looks good the natural.

MARY. Well my friends told me to doll it up, but I didn't.

CHUN. Doll it up?

MARY. To look all desirable for your return, some sort of visual ex-wife tactic of trying to look dazzling, I don't know what purpose it'd serve.

CHUN. You always look dazzling.

MARY. Shut up.

CHUN. I should maybe have combing my hair.

MARY. We've seen each other at our worst. There's no need for that crap.

(silence)

CHUN. I'm off the sauce, by the way.

MARY. Oh.

CHUN. Four years.

MARY. That long.

CHUN. Okay three weeks. But I were quit for real for four years ago, just had a bad few weeks I'd rather not talk about that one, anyway wasn't my fault.

MARY. Sure.

CHUN. So what should I calling you?

MARY. Huh?

CHUN. *Yuh-boh* I can't anymore calling you, Myung-hee seeming so wrong so long time ago, Mrs. Chun you are not anymore, you are have new name?

MARY. My name is Mary.

CHUN. Okay then Mary.

MARY. Yes?

CHUN. I love you, Mary.

MARY. Shut up.

CHUN. Okay.

MARY. You have a place to stay after the party?

CHUN. Yeah no problem.

MARY. Okay.

CHUN. I'll go to hotel or something.

MARY. You have money for a hotel?

CHUN. No.

MARY. Well I guess you can stay here.

CHUN. Oh okay thanks. Such the unexpected. Where?

MARY. Couch.

CHUN. Oh.

MARY. When Esther goes you can take the other room.

CHUN. So then no man will coming middle of night,
nobody to worry about?

MARY. Huh?

CHUN. I don't know, maybe if you are have some man who
maybe is coming around sometime, maybe you do
maybe you don't. Just you know want to make check-
ing sure not have to worry about something like that.

MARY. What's the question?

CHUN. So no man I am have to worry about.

MARY. No, there won't be any men over.

CHUN. I see.

MARY. I stay at his place when I see him.

CHUN. Ah.

MARY. There's linens in the laundry room.

CHUN. 'Kay.

MARY. You wanna clean up a little first?

CHUN. No I like the dust. America soil on my hands, I like
the dust on me.

MARY. Yeah okay.

CHUN. Hey check out my pjs.

MARY. Yeah those are real sexy.

CHUN. Long shorts.

MARY. Okay goodnight!

(She starts to go.)

CHUN. Going to bed already?

MARY. Yeah well big day tomorrow, we should get some
rest. You need anything first?

CHUN. Um.

MARY. Toothbrush? Razor? Book to read?

(silence)

CHUN. Can I get a hug?

(silence)

MARY. Yeah okay.

(They hug. It lasts awhile. It's good.)

CHUN. Yeah okay.

MARY. Right.

CHUN. Is that bedroom?

MARY. No. I mean yeah, I think so.

CHUN. What?

MARY. I mean yeah. You uh wanna...

CHUN. Maybe okay.

MARY. Have a look at the place, I mean.

CHUN. Right no hanky panky.

MARY. Yeah.

CHUN. Because kids downstairs.

MARY. Just for a second.

CHUN. Right.

(They work their way to the bedroom.)

(They barely make it there. Clothes in the hallway.)

Scene Eight

(Early the next morning, same. MARY, fully dressed, stands in the doorway, talking into the bedroom.)

MARY. The kids are downstairs asleep. They wouldn't have seen anything. Come on, up up.

CHUN. Uh?

MARY. I don't need this kind of weird this weekend. You can't be in my bed.

CHUN. *Jahn-kah-mahn.*

(CHUN enters, wearing long pajama shorts.)

Good morning.

MARY. Nice pants.

Alright, I set up the couch so it looks like you were on it, mused up the sheets and threw around towels and stuff. Pop on the TV, I'll make some eggs.

CHUN. Was fun last night.

MARY. Shush.

CHUN. Sorry if I fall asleep too fast after.

MARY. Oh I was expecting that.

CHUN. Anyway yeah.

MARY. Now look, I'm not saying that what happened doesn't mean anything, but it also doesn't mean *everything*.

CHUN. Uh-huh.

MARY. Do you understand?

CHUN. No.

MARY. We're not gonna make a habit of this.

CHUN. Oh.

MARY. Maybe once or twice more, but that's it.

CHUN. Okay.

MARY. I mean from time to time, just not a regular thing.

CHUN. What is mean regular thing?

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.