

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

Chasing Manet

by Tina Howe

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

NEW YORK HOLLYWOOD LONDON TORONTO

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

Copyright © 2011 by Tina Howe

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Cover design by Gene Sweeney

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that *CHASING MANET* 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 and professional live stage performance rights to *CHASING MANET* 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.

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

For all other rights than those stipulated above, apply to: International Creative Management, 825 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10019; attn: Thomas Pearson.

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.

MUSIC USE NOTE

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

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of *CHASING MANET* *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.

CHASING MANET was first produced by Primary Stages (Casey Childs, executive producer) in New York City on May 24, 2009. The performance was directed by Michael Wilson, with sets by Tony Straiges, costumes by David C. Wollard, lighting by Howell Binkley, and sound by John Gromada. The production stage manager was Susie Cordon. The cast was as follows:

CATHERINEJane Alexander
RENNIE Lynn Cohen
HENRY, MAURICE, CAPTAIN David Margulies
CHARLES, GABE, STEWARDRobert Christopher Riley
ESPERANZA, ANGELICA, SAVIANA, MARIE CLAIRE Vanessa Aspillaga
RITA, IRISJulie Halston
ROYAL, MARVIN, SHERWOOD Jack Gilpin

CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

HENRY – A patient who cries for help

SAVIANA – A patient who makes strange noises

IRIS – A patient with Alzheimer's disease

CATHERINE SARGENT – A prominent painter from Boston who's legally blind and suffers from depression, among other ailments, 80s

CHARLES – Nurse and PT instructor, African American, a man with a past, 30s-40s

ESPERANZA – Catherine and Rennie's Hispanic nurse, 30s

ROYAL LOWELL – Catherine's son, a professor in the English Department at Columbia, 50s

RENNIE WALTZER – Catherine's new roommate, a lively Jewish woman in the early stages of dementia, wheelchair bound due to crippling arthritis, 80s

RITA – Rennie's daughter, 50s

GABE – Rita's husband, African American, 40s-50s

MAURICE – Rennie's brother, 70s

MARVIN – Rennie's son, 50s

ANGELICA – Marvin's Hispanic wife, 40s

SHERWOOD – A patient, the proverbial dirty old man

MARIE CLAIRE – The French arts and crafts instructor, 40s

STEWARD – From Trinidad, 30s

CAPTAIN OF THE QE2 – A charming Englishman, 60s

ACTOR BREAKDOWN

4 Actresses:

CATHERINE SARGENT, 60s-70s

RENNIE WALTZER, 60s-70s

ESPERANZA, ANGELICA, SAVIANA, MARIE CLAIRE (Hispanic) 30s-40s

IRIS, RITA, 50s

3 Actors:

CHARLES, GABE, STEWARD, (African American) 30s-40s

ROYAL, MARVIN, SHERWOOD, 50s

HENRY, MAURICE, CAPTAIN OF THE QE2, 60s

A NOTE ABOUT THE SET

There should be something dreamlike about Mount Airy, a transparency at the edges of the ceiling and walls so the rooms and hallways drift into each other. One should have the feeling it could float away at any moment.

for Quincy Howe, my remarkable brother

ACT I

Scene One

(The Mount Airy Nursing Home in Riverdale, New York. It's an overcast morning in March, mid-1980s. We see the main hall where HARRY and IRIS are lined up in their wheelchairs, as well as Catherine's drab room, which is furnished with two beds, two dressers, two closets, four uncomfortable chairs, a door leading to the bathroom, and a window overlooking the park. But like everything else in the place, nothing is quite moored to the ground. A large print of Manet's "Luncheon on the Grass" floats over CATHERINE's bed, where she lies with her face to the wall. Her roommate's dead body has just been removed. CHARLES is remaking the bed as ESPERANZA packs up her personal belongings.)

CHARLES. *(shaking out the top sheet)* Up, up and awaaaay...

ESPERANZA. She had a good life, that Miss Clara...Loving children, a pack of grandkids and what about that head of hair? I've never seen anything like it! *(indicating with her hands)* Out to here! Like a cloud of cotton candy! And *brave?* What that poor woman endured...

IRIS. LOOK OUT FOR THAT KILOMETER, IT'S COMING RIGHT AT US! UH OH, THERE GO THE SWIMMERS...

(ROYAL LOWELL, Catherine's professorial looking son, 50s, appears.)

(making a bee line for him with lurid kissing sounds) Arthur, finally! Where have you been, you naughty hootenanny, you! Get over here and give us a nice piss!

ROYAL. (*gingerly backing away*) Excuse me, but I believe you've mistaken me for someone else.

IRIS. (*lunging at him*) Puffin, Luffin, my Muffin man! Come whirl me into butter!

ESPERANZA. (*restraining her*) Iris, honey, this isn't your brother, it's Miss Catherine's son!

IRIS. (*suddenly vicious, trying to hit him*) WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO TO SPANKY PANTS, YOU BASTARD? Bastard, bastard...bastard.

ESPERANZA. Sweetheart, *please!* If you can't be nice to our visitors, I'll have to take you back to your room. Is that what you want on a lovely morning like this? Where's my sweet Iris-cita, hmm? Where did my little girl go?

(*IRIS abruptly wheels down the hall and out of sight. A slight silence as they watch her go.*)

ESPERANZA. Sorry about that.

ROYAL. No harm done.

ESPERANZA. Why Mr. Lowell, you shaved off your beard!

ROYAL. That was weeks ago.

ESPERANZA. Now I can see your face.

ROYAL. Which is why all my students are begging me to grow it back. So, how is she?

ESPERANZA. (*lowering her voice*) Clara Trigger died.

ROYAL. She *died*?

ESPERANZA. Early this morning.

ROYAL. Clara Trigger...

ESPERANZA. She's at peace now. God bless her soul.

ROYAL. Mother must be delirious, she hated Clara Trigger! The woman cried night and day through that creepy voice box of hers. OK, Esmeralda, I'd better get over there and face the music.

ESPERANZA. *Esperanza!* How many times do I have to tell you? My name is *Esperanza!*

ROYAL. Right, right, sorry.

(entering to see CATHERINE lying on her side facing the wall)

Well, you must be a happy camper! You've got the whole place to yourself again. What do you do to your roommates, anyway? None of them lasts more than a few months with you. It must be your ribald sense of humor that wears them down. *(giving her a chaste peck on top of her head)* Hi Mum, it's me Royal, your favorite son, your only son... How have you been?

CATHERINE. *(face still to the wall)* Out! Out! I want out.

ROYAL. So...you're queen of the roost again.

CATHERINE. *(in a whisper)* O.U.T.! Out!

ROYAL. *(waving towards the empty bed)* Did she, um...you know...die in the room?

(CATHERINE sits up, her great mane of white hair tumbling around her shoulders. She was clearly a beauty in her day, but goes out of her way to look as unkempt as possible.)

CATHERINE. *(squinting at him)* You're different. Come closer so I can see you.

(He does.)

CATHERINE. Your beard's gone!

ROYAL. Sabine insisted.

CATHERINE. Thank God! I hated that thing! It looked like a dying rodent clinging to your face.

ROYAL. Thanks, Mum. Thanks a lot.

CATHERINE. *(with a sigh)* Poor Royal...beauty was never your strong suit. How is Sabine? I haven't seen her in so long I've forgotten what she looks like.

ROYAL. Join the group. Ever since her mother moved to California, I'm lucky if I see her once a year.

CATHERINE. She must be a teenager by now.

ROYAL. She just turned 35!

CATHERINE. 35? Good God, how long have I been here?

ROYAL. Just over a year.

CATHERINE. You mean, *decade!* Look at me... I'm a ruin, a broken down old crone.

ROYAL. Sabine's mother is on her fourth husband, if you can believe it. Well, that's a novelist for you.

CATHERINE. Don't you ever think of remarrying?

ROYAL. Once was enough, thank you very much.

CATHERINE. (*with a sigh*) Poor Royal.

ROYAL. Why do you always call me "Poor Royal" and then sigh like that?

CATHERINE. Because you lack courage.

ROYAL. Thanks, Mum. Thanks a lot.

CATHERINE. Why dissemble? Honesty is the best policy.

ROYAL. But there's a difference between honesty and cruelty.

CATHERINE. That's a good one... *You* talking about cruelty!
(*She laughs bitterly.*)

ROYAL. Where were we? Ah yes...Clara Trigger! Did the poor thing die *here?* I mean, right under your nose?

CATHERINE. Of course she died here! Where else would she die? In the Grand Ballroom of the Plaza Hotel?

ROYAL. I just thought she might have been taken to the hospital.

CATHERINE. Taken to the *hospital?* Honestly Royal, for a college professor you can be awfully dumb sometimes!

ROYAL. Yeah, well, it's an occupational hazard.

CATHERINE. *Nursing homes* are where you're taken to die, in case you've forgotten!

ROYAL. Right, right.

CATHERINE. And by your own son, if you please.

ROYAL. Whatever you say.

CATHERINE. And not even in Boston, but whisked off to some hell hole in the *Bronx!*

ROYAL. Riverdale, *Riverdale!*

CATHERINE. Where they have that vulgar cheer. (*She emits a lurid Bronx cheer.*)

ROYAL. I wanted you nearby.

CATHERINE. Close enough to pop in on, *if* the spirit moves you. (*another cheer*) Which it never does! (*and two more*)

ROYAL. You know what my schedule is like!

CATHERINE. Out! Out! I want out!

ROYAL. Not that again.

CATHERINE. Yes, that again and I'm *getting* out, thank you very much!

ROYAL. And how do you think you'll make it out the door?

CATHERINE. *Vouloir c'est pouvoir!*

ROYAL. *But you're legally blind!*

CATHERINE. I can still distinguish between light and dark.

ROYAL. If someone's shining a flashlight in your eyes!

CATHERINE. And make out large shapes.

ROYAL. If you crash into them!

CATHERINE. My eyesight's fine! Just a bit blurry on some edges.

ROYAL. And what about your heart condition, migraines, and depression?

CATHERINE. Oh, stop being such a stick in the mud! I want out and I'm getting out, so there!

(*slight silence*)

ROYAL. Was it difficult?

CATHERINE. Was *what* difficult?

ROYAL. (*pointing at the empty bed*) Clara Trigger's death.

CATHERINE. How would I know?

ROYAL. I mean, was it difficult for *you*?

CATHERINE. What a silly question. *She* was the one who died, not me!

ROYAL. Was it difficult for you to...you know...*watch*?

CATHERINE. You mean did she come staggering towards me, sputtering in that fog horn voice of hers, “**BUT I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE EXCEPTION! I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE EXCEPTION!**”

ROYAL. (*laughing*) Mum!

CATHERINE. For once in her life, the old cry baby didn’t make a peep. She died in her sleep, clutching onto that ridiculous “Happy Hundredth Birthday” telegram President Reagan sent her – lucky stiff!

ROYAL. I’m really sorry. You weren’t supposed to end up like this.

CATHERINE. Then get me out of here!

ROYAL. How many times do I have to tell you? I wish I could, but my hands are tied.

CATHERINE. (*erupting out of bed and lurching towards the door*)
FUCK YOU! JUST...FUCK YOU!

ROYAL. Hey, where do you think you’re going?

CATHERINE. (*heading into the hall*) To find someone who *can!*

RENNIE. (*down the hall*) What’s the room number again?

RITA. Three twelve. It must be at the end of the hall.

MAURICE. Great! A mile from the nurse’s station!

RITA. If she needs a nurse, she’ll ring.

(CATHERINE crashes into RENNIE WALTZER, 80s, being wheeled down the hall by her daughter, RITA. Though suffering from early dementia, she looks great in a nice dress and matching hat. Her younger brother, MAURICE is at her side. CATHERINE and RENNIE scream as...)

RITA.

Look out! Look out!

MAURICE.

Jesus Christ! Watch
where you’re going!

ROYAL. (*running after CATHERINE*) I’m so sorry. Are you alright, Mum?

CATHERINE. NO, I’M NOT ALRIGHT, YOU BLITHERING
IDIOT!

ROYAL. Come on, let's get you back to bed.

(ROYAL leads her, limping, back to her room.)

CATHERINE. (whirling away from him) Hands off!

(ROYAL backs away as she struggles into bed, as RENNIE and her family proceed up the hall.)

RENNIE. What's the room number again?

RITA. Three twelve. I asked for a room overlooking the park!

MAURICE. So far, so good!

(RITA, RENNIE and MAURICE enter.)

RITA. Here we are!

MAURICE. This can't be right!

RENNIE. What a nice hotel!

ROYAL. Can I help you?

(An awkward silence. ESPERANZA suddenly appears.)

ESPERANZA. (to CATHERINE) Well, it looks like your new roommate has arrived.

RENNIE. (excited) Roommate? I didn't know we'd have roommates.

RITA. Excuse me, but is this room 312?

ROYAL & ESPERANZA. Yes!

RITA. But we asked for a single.

RENNIE. The more the merrier!

(CATHERINE emits a hollow laugh.)

ESPERANZA. I'm afraid there are no single rooms available at the moment.

RENNIE. (waving to CATHERINE) Hi, I'm Rennie! What's your name?

MAURICE. I'm going to the front desk.

RENNIE. I'm Rennie, short for Ramona.

RITA. No, Ma. Ramona was your mother!

MAURICE. (exiting) This is an outrage!

(A bell rings down the hall.)

RENNIE. Room service!

ESPERANZA. Excuse me, I've got to answer that call. *(She exits.)*

CATHERINE. *(gleefully)* Another inmate just kicked the bucket! Welcome to The Mount Airy Funeral Home!
(She hums the funeral march.)

ROYAL. Don't mind her, she's been going through a rough patch. Come on, Mum, behave yourself!

RENNIE. Push me closer to the window, Reets. I want to check out the...check out the...what's it called?

RITA. *(pushing her closer)* The *view!*

RENNIE. Right, the *view!* *(peering out the window)* I love it, I love it! We're right over the water!

ROYAL. Water? What water?

RITA. *(sotto voce to ROYAL)* The poor thing's in her own world. One minute she's at the beach with her dead husband and the next she's up in a tree house having a tea party with her dolls. That's why we had to bring her here. *(to RENNIE)* Look at that lovely park down there, Ma. It's perfect for picnics. Once it gets warm we'll bring wine and cheese and have a high old time. Speaking of which, I'm coming by tomorrow to take you to that lovely new Italian restaurant Gabe and I just discovered.

ROYAL. *(heading for the door)* Well, I've got to get going. I teach a class in an hour.

RITA. You're a *teacher?* I used to teach seventh grade! Where do you teach?

ROYAL. Columbia.

RENNIE.

Didn't Morty go to
Columbia?

RITA.

Our cousin Morty
went to Columbia!

ROYAL. Small world.

CATHERINE. Royal has an endowed chair in the English department.

RENNIE. Your name is *Royal*?

CATHERINE. Royal Sargent. Lang Professor of poetry.

RENNIE. *Royal Sargent*... I love that brand!

CATHERINE. The poor thing can't write it, so he teaches it. Which seems pointless to me, since poets are born, not made.

ROYAL. Nice, Mum...very nice!

(RENNIE *sings the old Royal pudding jingle.*)

(ALL *look at her in amazement.*)

CATHERINE. (*sitting up*) I remember that jingle! They used to play it on the radio a thousand years ago.

(CATHERINE AND RENNIE *sing it together.*)

RITA.

ROYAL.

(*applauding*) Bravo!

(*applauding*) Brava!

Bravo!

Brava!

RENNIE. (*bowing*) Thank you, thank you. Thank you very much. (*pause*) Where were we?

RITA. Talking about her son who teaches poetry at Columbia.

RENNIE. Poetry! Oh, I love poetry! Sing something for us!

RITA. He's not a performing seal, Ma!

ROYAL. Well, let's see... I'm working on a book about Yeats...

CATHERINE. *Still?* How long has it been now? Ten years? Fifteen?

RENNIE. (*clapping her hands*) Begin, begin! I love pottery!

ROYAL. "A mermaid found a swimming lad..."

(MAURICE *reenters the room.*)

RITA. Sssh, he's reciting Yeats. He teaches at Columbia.

MAURICE. What do you know, our cousin Morty went to Columbia!

ROYAL. “A mermaid found a swimming lad,
Picked him for her own,
Pressed her body to his body,
Laughed; and plunging down
Forgot in cruel happiness
That even lovers drown.”

(Pause, then RENNIE's family applauds as:)

CATHERINE. *(acidic)* Well, that was nice and gay!

MAURICE. I'm afraid that nurse was right. They don't have any singles at the moment, so this is it until something opens up.

RITA. I'm sorry, Ma.

RENNIE. What are you talking about? I couldn't be happier! I've got a lovely room, a lovely roommate and a lovely view of the...of the...you know... I'm going to take a little nap and then go for a swim. *(to CATHERINE)* I'm sorry, I'm afraid I forgot your name. I'm Rennie, short for Ramona. Maybe you'd like to join Herschel and me for a quick dip after lunch. *(trying to get out of her wheelchair)* “Last one in is a rotten egg!”

End of Scene

Scene Two

(April. Two weeks later, 10 a.m. Physical therapy class in the sun room. One by one, five patients enter in their wheelchairs and form a circle. They include: RENNIE, wearing a lovely antique shawl over a nice dress; HENRY, in a tattered bathrobe; SAVIANA, in a bizarre Victorian peignoir and wool hat; IRIS, dressed in a cacophony of mis-matched clothes; and SHERWOOD, the proverbial dirty old man, dressed accordingly. CHARLES, their instructor comes striding into their midst.)

CHARLES. Good morning, boys and girls. How are we doing today?

(They respond simultaneously as CHARLES tries to quiet them.)

RENNIE. I always loved camp when I was a girl. My poor sister Rachel was so homesick she never lasted more than a week. But not me! Everyone wanted me on their *tassel!* *(as...)*

SHERWOOD. I'm feeling particularly frisky today and was hoping one of you lovely young ladies might join me for a little roll in the hay...bang in the barn...delight in the dairy... *(as...)*

HENRY. Help! Help! Someone help me please! I need help! Help! Help! Please help me! Help! Help! Someone help me please. I need help! *(as...)*

(SAVIANA makes sounds like a car alarm as...)

IRIS. I don't like your face or your sparkle johns! Just look at those white snakes! They're pouring out of your thingamajig! Uuuuggh, I'm going to throw up! *(as...)*

CHARLES. *(waving his arms)* Alright...quiet down! One at a time... *One at a time!* I'm trying to run a class here. I said, QUIET! DOWN! Keep this up and I'm walking out of here. Did you hear me? I SAID: I AM LEAVING THE PREMISES! *(eventually overpowering them)* PEOPLE, PEOPLE...PLEASE!

(Dead silence. CATHERINE suddenly staggers into the room as Oedipus – hair flying, fists in her wildly rouged eyes. Everyone screams.)

CATHERINE. *(in a dramatic voice)* Enter blind Oedipus. “Where shall I find harbor in this world? My voice is hurled far on a dark wind.”

CHARLES. “O cloud of night, never to be turned away.”

CATHERINE. Good grief, you know the lines!

CHARLES. Of course I know the lines. I was a professional actor!

RENNIE. I thought I recognized you.

CATHERINE. *(feeling her way across the room to a chair)* Sorry, I’m late but I had important business to attend to – fathers to kill and mothers to marry! *(waving at RENNIE)* Hi there, Jocasta, miss me?

RENNIE. Rennie, Rennie...my name is *Rennie!*

HENRY. Help! Help! Someone help me please! I need help! Help! Help! Please help me!

CHARLES. HENRY, HENRY, TAKE IT EASY, MAN!

(HENRY starts to cry.)

(kneeling at his side) You’re in physical therapy class now. You’ve got the whole rest of the day to be crazy.

IRIS. I for one, prefer asparagus to playing the harmonica.

SHERWOOD. Whereas, I prefer playing with *myself*. Wanna join me? Do ya, huh? Do ya? Do ya?

CHARLES. OK, people, enough with the fun and games, let’s get started. How about we begin with our... “Morning Toss”?

(SAVIANA makes whomping noises like a big load of laundry in a spin cycle.)

RENNIE. *(clapping her hands)* Morning Toss! Morning Toss!

CHARLES. Let’s loosen up those stiff joints. *(producing a beach ball from behind his back)* You may think this is a beach ball, but it’s actually a piece of molten lava an enchanting young lady gave me in Hawaii back when

I was young and baaaad! (*wriggling his hips*) Oh yes! If you don't get rid of it fast, it'll burn clear through your hands, just like her sizzling cheating heart! (*tossing it to SAVIANA*) Heads up, baby, throw it to someone else!

RENNIE & ALL. (*waving her arms*) Here, here, throw it to me.

(*SAVIANA throws it to RENNIE who throws it to HENRY who throws it to SHERWOOD who throws it to IRIS who throws it back to SHERWOOD who throws it to RENNIE who throws it to SAVIANA who throws it to SHERWOOD who throws it to IRIS.*)

CHARLES. (*as they toss it around*) Nice work! Good job! Keep it up! Heads up, Oedipus. Catch!

(*IRIS throws it back to SHERWOOD who throws it to CHARLES who throws it to CATHERINE who holds onto it.*)

Throw the ball, baby!

RENNIE. (*waving her arms*) Here, here! Throw it to me!

(*CATHERINE doesn't move.*)

CHARLES. I SAID, "THROW IT!" THAT'S A PIECE OF RED HOT LAVA YOU'VE GOT IN YOUR HANDS!

CATHERINE. Excuse me, but I believe it's inflated *plastic!*

EVERYONE AT ONCE. Here, here, throw it to me! Throw it to me!

CHARLES. Your team mates are waiting!

CATHERINE. Let them wait, this is demeaning. I refuse to play.

CHARLES. My dear Catherine, if you don't use your muscles, they'll atrophy on you. As a licensed physical therapy instructor as well as a golden glove boxer, actor, singer, lifeguard and flight instructor...I am asking you to... Please. Throw. The ball!

RENNIE. (*waving her arms*) Rachel, Rachel, over here!

CATHERINE. How many times do I have to tell you, my name is *Catherine!* I'm *not* your sister Rachel! And how do you expect me to throw it to you if I'm legally blind!

CHARLES. But not deaf, so just aim it in her general direction.

RENNIE. (*chanting throughout*) Here, here... I'm right over here... Oooo hooo... Over here, over here... (*etc.*)

(**CATHERINE** runs her hands over the ball, feeling for the spout, finds it, pulls out the stopper and violently pushes all the air out. Everyone gasps.)

CHARLES. Hey, what do you think you're doing?

RENNIE. Where did the ball go?

CATHERINE. (*waving it at RENNIE, now flat as a pancake*) Head's up, Rache! (*throwing it and deliberately missing by a mile*) Catch!

End of Scene

Scene Three

(The end of April. Catherine and Rennie's room. Catherine's side is as spare as ever, but Rennie's explodes with furniture and personal effects – scatter rugs, a chaise longue, an antique chest of drawers, standing lamps, fabulous bedding, mirrors, a blizzard of framed family photographs and a fancy white telephone. It looks as if a boudoir out of House Beautiful has been airlifted into the room. It's Sunday afternoon around 3:00. CATHERINE's in bed with her face to the wall. RENNIE's all dolled up because she has company which includes MAURICE – who's in the middle of telling a funny story – her son MARVIN; ANGELICA, Maurice's Hispanic wife, RITA and her African-American husband, GABE.)

MAURICE. So, after fleeing the earthquakes in New Zealand, they sail to Hawaii, hoping for a better life. Our grandfather steps off the boat, finds an old Jewish tailor and asks, "How's business?" The tailor shrugs, saying...

ALL. *(joining in)* "Eh!"

RITA. Jewish market research!

MAURICE. ...Which is why he and the family turned around and sailed to San Francisco, arriving just in time for the earthquake of 1906!

(Everyone roars with laughter.)

RITA. Oh, Uncle Maurice, I must have heard that story a million times.

MARVIN. Make that two million, Sis!

MAURICE. *(passing around the platter)* Anyone care for another piece of apricot rugelah?

ANGELICA. No more for me, thanks.

RITA. Eat, eat!

MAURICE. *(taking one)* Melt in your mouth!

GABE. *(patting his stomach)* Keep this up and I'll have to be rushed to the nearest hospital.

RENNIE. *(yelling offstage)* Herschel! You'd better get in here while there's still something left!

RITA. (*sotto voce to the others*) She talks to him all the time now.

MAURICE. What's the harm? It comforts her.

RITA. But he passed away five years ago.

MAURICE. It has nothing to do with time.

MARVIN. Damn lung cancer!

RITA. What do you expect? He smoked two packs a day!

MAURICE. Can't we change the subject?

MARVIN. (*eyeing CATHERINE, whispering*) What *is* it with her? She's always in bed with her face to the wall.

GABE. (*also whispering*) Wait 'til we're her age, we'll probably be worse!

RITA. Speak for yourself.

MAURICE. (*gazing at CATHERINE's Manet print*) That painting looks so familiar.

MARVIN. It's a Renoir!

MAURICE. I'd recognize his work anywhere! Oh, I love Renoir!

CATHERINE. (*turning to face them*) Manet.

RITA. The fellow who did the water lilies!

RENNIE. Water lilies?

CATHERINE. That was Monet.

RENNIE. I don't see any water lilies.

RITA. No, Ma, we're talking about another painting.

ANGELICA. I *love* Manet's water lilies!

CATHERINE. Monet painted the water lilies, not *Manet!*

MAURICE. Monet, Manet...I always mix them up!

MARVIN. Manet, Monet, what's the difference?

CATHERINE. (*sitting up*) The difference, sir, is that Monet, like Rembrandt, came at the end of his age and summed it up. He took Impressionism as far as it could go. Manet, on the other hand, was Impressionism's bad boy. He was more interested in shocking the bourgeoisie than refining the form. When this painting appeared in the Salon de Refusés in 1863, it caused a riot.

(All gaze at it, transfixed.)

MARVIN. No wonder! That woman is buck naked!

CATHERINE. It wasn't the fact of her nakedness that was so shocking, but its implausibility. Women don't *do* that! Manet had no interest in depicting an actual event, but an imagined one. Placing a naked woman in a public place sounded the call for artistic freedom, telling the artist he could paint not only what he wanted, but *how*. That bemused woman tore down four centuries of classical tradition, paving the way for what we now refer to as modern art. Which is why it's never left my side, as a reminder of what a feisty young painter can do!

(A brief silence. One by one they all burst into applause and drift over to CATHERINE's side of the room.)

MAURICE. Whoa!

RITA. That was incredible!

MARVIN. You really know your art history!

MAURICE. Very impressive!

GABE. *Most* impressive!

ANGELICA. Thank you so much!

RENNIE. Wheel me closer, Reets.

(RITA wheels her closer until they're all gazing up at the painting.)

MAURICE. "It wasn't the fact of her nakedness that was so shocking, but its *implausibility*." Were you a professor like your son?

CATHERINE. No, a painter.

ALL. A *painter*?

RENNIE. *(yelling offstage)* Herschel, she's a painter!

MAURICE. Wait a minute, isn't your last name Sargent?

RITA. Oh. My. God!

GABE. *(grabbing RITA's arm)* My God, my God, my God...

ANGELICA. Catch me before I faint!

MAURICE. You wouldn't happen to be related to the great portrait painter, John Singer Sargent, would you?

CATHERINE. As a matter of fact, I am. He was a cousin.

MAURICE. Whoa!

GABE. Nice! Very nice!

MARVIN. Holy shit...

ANGELICA. You can say that again!

MARVIN. *Holy shit!*

RITA. Did you hear that, Ma?

RENNIE. What's his name again?

RITA & ANGELICA. John Singer Sargent.

MAURICE. Only the greatest American portrait painters who ever lived!

RENNIE. *I'm rooming with a celebrity! I'm rooming with a celebrity!*

RITA. Easy, Ma, easy!

RENNIE. *(to CATHERINE)* I met Milton Berle once.

MARVIN. You didn't meet him, you just saw him on the street.

(Silence as they all stare at CATHERINE with awe.)

RENNIE. Are you famous too?

CATHERINE. *Infamous* is more like it.

RENNIE. *(in a whisper)* Did you paint yourself in the nude?

RITA. Ma!

CATHERINE. Wouldn't you like to know.

RENNIE. I love it, I love it!

RITA. It's none of our business.

RENNIE. Did you paint *other* people in the nude?

RITA. Don't mind her.

RENNIE. Did you paint *men* in the nude?

RITA. Stop it!

RENNIE. Did you paint their... *(laughing raucously)* you know whats...

(RITA slaps her hand over RENNIE's mouth.)

CATHERINE. Their “you know whats” and their “Don’t look nows!” But my real focus was on the female body, mine included... I was a Modernist.

RITA & GABE. (*impressed*) A Modernist...

CATHERINE. Manet started the ball rolling by putting a female nude in a public place, the next step was to paint the woman *inside* the nude. And who better to do it than another woman?

MAURICE & ANGELICA. “The woman *inside* the nude...”

CATHERINE. Her *inner* wardrobe, so to speak...her terrors and desires.

RITA.

Whoaaaaa!

ANGELICA.

Yesssss!

RENNIE. (*starting to unbutton her dress*) Oh, paint me! Paint me!

CATHERINE. Dream on!

RITA. Ma!

ANGELICA. Is there some place we could see your work?

CATHERINE. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Clark, the Hirshhorn, the Phillips Collection and the Modern, plus a bunch of museums in Europe, South America and Asia.

GABE & MAURICE. (*gasping in awe*) Wow...

(*Silence as they gaze at her out of new eyes.*)

MARVIN. (*pulling a chair up to her bed*) My son Elliot is also an artist. Not a painter like you, but boy does he have an eye.

RITA. Ohhh, you should see his stuff!

MAURICE. He heads up the design team of one of Jersey’s top advertising firms!

RITA. The best! The best!

(*The others gather around her as well.*)

GABE. And not just his print ads, but his TV work as well!

RITA. You should see the commercial he did for one of our local furriers...

ANGELICA. Unbelievable!

RITA. He got access to these live minks, which he flew over to Venice.

CATHERINE. I've never worn fur in my life.

GABE. With an ace camera crew.

CATHERINE. It harkens back to the Stone Age, if you ask me!

RITA. Then he got these *comedia del arte* masks...

ANGELICA. Tied them to their faces...

RITA. Piled them into a gondola...

GABE. And got this incredible footage of them floating down the Grand Canal...at night!

RITA. With all the lights of the city shimmering in their fur.

MAURICE. As Vivaldi's "Gloria" played in the background.

(He hums the opening melody. They all join in in full-throated chorus.)

CATHERINE. Who on earth would want to watch rodents in a gondola?

ANGELICA. They looked like Renaissance princes...

(CATHERINE shudders.)

It was like something out of a dream. Marvin went out and bought me a chinchilla wrap the very next day!

CATHERINE. Good grief!

MAURICE. He won every award in the business! Including Best Commercial of 1979!

RENNIE. Who are you talking about? Who are you talking about?

MARVIN, RITA, & ANGELICA. Elliot!

RENNIE. Rachel's little boy!

MARVIN. No, *my* little boy! And he's not so little anymore! He's 32 years old!

MAURICE. Speaking of Rachel, she's flying over next month.

RENNIE. Rachel! Rachel!

MAURICE. (*to CATHERINE*) Rachel's our older sister. Her husband's an M.P. He was knighted two years ago! She's been living in London so long, she's more British than the Queen herself.

MARVIN. We call her Lady Rachel because she's become very grand. You should hear her accent. (*putting it on*) "I say! Can I interest anyone in a spot of tea?"

MAURICE. (*following suit:*) "It's frightfully bracing and excellent for the collywobbles!"

(*All laugh.*)

RENNIE. She's taking me out to lunch tomorrow.

RITA. No, *I'm* taking you out for lunch tomorrow. Rachel isn't flying over for a month or so.

MARVIN. (*to CATHERINE*) She's a champion gardener. You should see her roses...

ANGELICA. (*holding her hand three feet over the floor*) This high!

GABE. Incredible!

ANGELICA. In the most brilliant colors you've ever seen!

GABE. They look like tropical birds! You expect them to fly right off their stems. (*He makes tropical bird calls*)

RITA. (*to RENNIE*) And she's taking *you* to the New York Botanical Garden when she comes!

MARVIN. Did you hear that? When Rachel comes she's taking *you* to the New York Botanical Garden!

RENNIE. (*clapping her hands*) Goodie, goodie, I love binoculars!

(*slight silence*)

MARVIN. (*offering a platter of food to CATHERINE*) Where are my manners? Would you care for some rugelah or a prune danish? A new bakery just opened up down the street.

ANGELICA. Forget it! He's over there three times a day!

CATHERINE. (*softly*) Out! Out! I want out!

MAURICE. I can't imagine it's very pleasant here for someone as intelligent as you.

GABE. *(to RITA)* When I get to be that age, I'm going to off myself!

RITA. *(swatting him)* Gabe?!

GABE. And I'm taking you with me.

RITA. *Honey?!*

CATHERINE. *(grabbing his hand)* Out, out, I want out! Out, out, I want out!

(slight pause)

RENNIE. *(gleefully imitating her)* Out, out, I want out! Out, out, I want out!

RITA & MARVIN. *Ma?*

CATHERINE. Out!

(Rennie's family looks at them not knowing whether to laugh or not.)

End of Scene

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.