

SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

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

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

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

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

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

www.samuelfrench.com

www.samuelfrench.co.uk

Samuel French Acting Edition

The Desperate Hours

by Joseph Hayes

Adapted from his best-selling novel

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

SAMUELFRENCH.CO.UK

Copyright © 1955,1956,1983, 1984 by Joseph Hayes
All Rights Reserved

THE DESPERATE HOURS 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 978-0-573-60797-4

www.SamuelFrench.com

www.SamuelFrench.co.uk

FOR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Info@SamuelFrench.com

1-866-598-8449

UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE

Plays@SamuelFrench.co.uk

020-7255-4302

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

CAUTION: Professional and amateur producers are hereby warned that *THE DESPERATE HOURS* 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.

For Marrijane

THE DESPERATE HOURS was first presented by Howard Erskine and Joseph Hayes at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, New York City, on February 10, 1955, with the following cast:

(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

(11 males; 3 females)

TOM WINSTON	Judson Pratt
JESSE BARD	James Gregory
HARRY CARSON	Kendall Clark
ELEANOR HILLIARD	Nancy Coleman
RALPHIE HILLIARD	Malcolm Brodrick
DAN HILLIARD	Karl Malden
CINDY HILLIARD	Patricia Peardon
GLENN GRIFFIN	Paul Newman
HANK GRIFFIN	George Grizzard
ROBISH	George Mathews
CHUCK WRIGHT	Fred Easley
MR. PATTERSON	Wyrley Birch
LT. CARL FREDERICKS	Rusty Lane
MISS SWIFT	Mary Orr

Setting and lighting by Howard Bay

Staged by Robert Montgomery

Costumes by Robert Randolph

TIME: *The present.*

SCENE: *The City of Indianapolis.*

ACT ONE

A day in autumn.

ACT TWO

Later.

ACT THREE

Later.

NOTE ON THIS VERSION

For those who wish to reproduce the New York set, consisting of two levels, manuscripts of the play with floor-plans are available.

The version of the play in this book simplifies the entire production; certain small changes in dialog, although not in content or character, have been made to accommodate the play to an average stage.

Those producing groups which have them available might wish to elaborate somewhat on the setting suggested here by the use of overhead sliding black curtains instead of traveler curtains or by the use of wagon-stages or revolving stages. *The present version does not require any of this for an effective production.*

All of the space and props and furnishings described in the following pages can conveniently be accommodated on a stage measuring 30 by 16 feet, or less.

The lighting can be as simple or as complicated as an individual director wish to make it. In the New York production, all lighting was "realistic"—that is, whenever a light changed, it was because an actor on the stage turned a light on or off. However, this is not at all necessary. Certain scenes are, naturally, more effective if played in dimness, but the play can be done with full lighting at all times.

It is important that a director be aware—and that he make all actors aware at all times—that in those scenes in which a character is not involved in the action the actor should remain *absolutely motionless*. Because of the nature of the

staging, any action whatever by an actor not involved directly in a scene that is being played will detract from the effect of that scene. *This is vital.*

For purposes of defining separate areas, it would be advantageous for the floor of the Sheriff's office to be raised a few inches above floor of house, or vice-versa, although this is not necessary. Also, if the porch area could be a step higher or lower than the living room floor, it would be helpful. In any event, all that is necessary is that the hall and master bedroom be lifted some inches above living room floor-level, two or three feet if possible.

SCENE

Then action throughout alternates between two sets on stage. In the first two acts the Hilliard home is at stage-right and the Sheriff's office is at stage-left. In the final act, the Hilliard home remains at stage-right and a corner of an attic room is substituted for the Sheriff's office at stage-left. (See floor plan at back of book for exact simplified stage-setting.) The action shifts back and forth between the two sets by the use of blackouts and traveler curtains which mask the set that is not in focus. These operate simultaneously.

The portion of the Hilliard home that is in view consists of a section of front porch at extreme right, the living room, a hall and bedroom. The house is of the "split-level" type in design, and the hall and bedroom are lifted above the floor of the living room by one, two, or as many steps as the stage will accommodate. (It might be pointed out here that the higher above stage-level that the bedroom and hall are lifted, the better, as this section is upstage and the action should be visible at all times.) The downstage right wall of the living room is invisible, imaginary; for this reason, it is advisable, although not necessary, that either the porch or the living room floor be lifted above stage-level by a few inches. A low planter box along the porch side of this imaginary wall will help the illusion of separation between porch and living room, also. A door opens inward from the porch to living room. Downstage of this front door—in the imaginary wall at Right—is a window, perhaps only the frame of a big floor-to-ceiling window. Up of the front door is another door leading into the den. At extreme left a door leads from the living room into the dining room and the kitchen area of the house.

Upstage is a hall, reached from living room floor level by steps. The hall is separated from living room by a bannister running its length. At the extreme right end of this hall, a door leads into Cindy's bedroom. Another door, upstage, gives access to Ralphie's bedroom. The door at left end of hall leads into the master bedroom, which is a visible part of the set. A large portion of this room is out of view, but the acting area centers around one end of the bed. Because of sight lines created by the Sheriff's office set, the bed may occupy a large part of the available space. The director should establish the acting area—that is, the section of bedroom in which actors are plainly visible—and then move bed into position accordingly, staging all action on that end of the bed and in the area between bed and the right "wall" of bedroom. This right "wall" is also imaginary as is the downstage wall of bedroom proper, but the fact that the bedroom area is lifted above floor level of living room creates the illusion. (It is important that actors in the bedroom, when listening, or attempting to listen, to what transpires in the living room should go to the bedroom door and press against it, rather than attempt to listen through the imaginary "walls.")

In the Hilliard living-room—which is a pleasant and typical upper middle-class home—there is an easy-chair at right; a love seat upstage along the hall, facing down; a sofa, also facing down, at approximately center of living room, with a table at the left end of it; and another chair, facing down at an angle, up left, along the bedroom "wall." The house suggests neatness, pleasant living, and in the course of the play the havoc grows until at the end of the action it is a shambles. There are two telephones: one in living room on table left of left chair and one on hall table right of Ralphie's bedroom door.

Approximately four feet upstage and approximately one-third of the distance from stage left, there is a solid black

panel which will help to create the illusion of "distance" between the Hilliard home and the Sheriff's office sets. The traveler curtains run on a line from this panel to the downstage corners of the total stage, gathering behind the proscenium at each side. It is important that furniture and props be arranged so that these curtains entirely mask the set that is not in focus. (See floor-plan.)

In the first two acts, the Sheriff's office is at stage left: a bare sort of room with a wall clock, a swivel chair at a desk, another chair, metal files, radio and intercom apparatus and telephone on desk. In the last act, this set becomes the attic of the Wallings' house. The only set-change involves substituting an attic-type window upstage for the "police-station" window of the first two acts. The "attic" effect will be accomplished by substituting attic "junk" as props and background for the Sheriff's office furniture.

Although the traveler curtains designate the line for furniture and props, it should be remembered that much of the action of a scene can be staged downstage of this line and of all furniture; thus, the actual playing-area in each set is considerably enlarged by a free use of the downstage space in both sets.

THE DESPERATE HOURS

ACT ONE

ACT ONE

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

(Traveler curtain masks Hilliard home.)

The curtain rises; morning light fades in on the Sheriff's office. WINSTON, a deputy sheriff inclined to matter-of-fact laziness, sits at desk, speaking on the telephone. On the desk are an intercom, radio apparatus, sheafs of papers, and so forth. The wall-clock reads 8:10.

WINSTON *(plaintively)*

Baby . . . didn't I just tell you? I can't leave till Bard gets here. *(He listens.)* Listen, baby—this night shift gets my goat as much as it does yours. You think I wouldn't like to be in that nice warm bed?

(There is a buzz from the intercom on the desk.)

Hold it. *(He speaks into the intercom.)* Yeah, Dutch?

DUTCH'S VOICE

Winston . . . Bard's going to want those Terre Haute reports right away.

WINSTON *(irascibly, into intercom)*

What do you think I'm gonna do with 'em . . . eat 'em for breakfast? *(He flips off the intercom, returns to the phone.)* Hello, baby . . . *(Listens.)* Yeah, that's what I said, isn't it? In that nice warm bed with you. Who'd you think I . . . *(Listens.)* Okay, okay, baby . . . go back to sleep and wait for Papa. *(Hangs up, shakes head, pleased; speaks with gusto.)* Give me a jealous woman every time!

[BARD enters. WINSTON is sleepy and glad to be relieved.]

BARD *takes off jacket, removes gun from shoulder-holster through the following* All very casual and commonplace at first.

BARD (*as he enters*)
Morning, Tom.

WINSTON (*stretching*)
Well! About time.

BARD (*stows gun in drawer of file*)
Overslept. Sorry.

WINSTON (*rising slowly*)
You got a lovely excuse.

BARD
I'll tell her you think so. (*At desk, rifles reports.*) Quiet night?

WINSTON (*preparing to go, crosses to Left.*)
If kids'd stay out of cars and off motorcycles, we'd soon be out of jobs around here.

BARD (*studying a report*)
Not another burglary in Speedway City? (*Laughs.*) This guy's getting tiresome.

WINSTON
A real sex-nut, that one. Same old story . . . all he took was diamonds and women's panties. What the hell's the connection.

BARD
You figure it out, Tom. (*Then tensing . . . so that from now on the pace and tone change.*) What's this?

WINSTON (*yawns, looking over Bard's shoulder*)
Federal prison break . . . Terre Haute. None of our concern.

BARD

When'd it come in?

WINSTON (*ready to leave*)

Hours ago. The three of 'em busted out some time before dawn . . .

BARD (*sits at desk, snaps button on intercom*)

Why didn't you call me?

WINSTON

Call you? Why?

DUTCH'S VOICE

Yes, Jesse?

BARD (*into intercom*)

Dutch . . . get me Lieutenant Fredericks, State Police.

WINSTON

Jesse . . . remember what your Irish wife threatened last time I routed you out of the nest . . .

BARD

Terre Haute's only seventy miles away. They could've walked here by now!

FREDERICKS' VOICE (*on intercom—crisp, middle-aged, cynical*)

I wondered when you'd start yipping, Bard.

BARD (*quickly*)

Fredericks . . . anybody sitting on anything?

FREDERICKS' VOICE

I'm sitting on just what you're sitting on, Deputy. Only mine ain't sweatin'.

BARD

Griffin's woman . . . Helen Laski . . . any dope on her?

FREDERICKS' VOICE

Not a trace. Chicago . . . Cleveland . . . St. Louis. All we know is she was here in town three weeks ago.

BARD

Just don't let any cop touch her. She's the beacon'll lead us straight to . . .

FREDERICKS' VOICE

Bard . . . it's an FBI case anyway. The city police've ripped whole buildings apart. We got the highways blocked. We're working through all the dives . . .

BARD

If Glenn Griffin wants to come here, no roadblock's gonna stop him. And he's too sharp to hole up any place you'd think of looking.

FREDERICKS' VOICE

Look, lad . . . get that chip off your shoulder. (*Shortly.*) You want Griffin so bad, go get him!

[BARD *flips off the intercom.* WINSTON *reluctantly removes his coat.*

WINSTON

Glenn Griffin . . . **is** he the one you . . . ?

BARD (*thoughtfully*)

Yeah . . . he's the one. (*Studying reports.*) Glenn Griffin . . . his brother, Hank . . . and . . . who's this third one? Samuel Robish.

WINSTON

Life-termer. A three-time loser. And nasty. (*As BARD picks up the phone and dials, WINSTON returns his coat to the hanger.*) You're not going to get any sleep today, are you, Winston? No, I'm not going to get any sleep today. I'm going to sit on the teletype machine like a good little boy scout . . .

[BARD *smiles a bit as WINSTON exits. Then he speaks into the telephone in contrasting gentle tones.*

BARD

Hello, Katie. Did I wake you? . . . I've just had an idea . . . why don't you go over to my mother's for the day? (*Laughs—but the urgency comes through.*) Oh, stop groaning . . . how often do I ask you to let her talk your arm and leg off? . . . No, not this afternoon. Now! . . . And Katie . . . don't mention where you're going, huh? . . . To the neighbors, anyone . . . Good . . . Right away. Take a taxi . . . Sure, splurge.

[BARD *hangs up, sits thinking, with the smile fading. WINSTON enters, with CARSON, who is youthful, business-like, rather studious-looking. WINSTON places a teletype message on desk before Bard.*

WINSTON

It had to break, Jesse. (*Then with a touch of sarcasm as BARD reads.*) Oh—this is Mr. Carson, FBI.

BARD (*briskly*)

How are you? Look, it says they beat up a farmer south of the prison before daybreak. How come we're just getting it?

CARSON

They left him in his barn, out cold . . . ripped out his phone. He just staggered into a general store and reported his car stolen . . . (*With a touch of good-natured irony.*) How are you?

BARD

Have you put this on the air?

CARSON

Deputy, I've been in touch with Sheriff Masters by telephone.

BARD

I hope he's enjoying his extended vacation . . . he sure picked a fine time to leave me in charge here . . .

CARSON

The way I understand it, you know this Glenn Griffin fellow better than any police officer in the area. How about your taking over this section?

[*Pause. The whole weight falls on BARD. He accepts it . . . slowly. Then:*

BARD

Okay . . . Okay . . . Let's find that car! (*He goes into action—hands teletype to Winston.*) Tom, put this description on the air. Tell 'em to repeat it every half hour.

WINSTON (*protesting*)

We'll be flooded with calls. Every crackpot in five states . . .

BARD (*sitting at desk*)

We'll follow up every tip!

WINSTON (*to CARSON—groaning*)

I hope you know what you just did!

[WINSTON *exits*. CARSON *moves to desk and offers BARD a cigarette.*

CARSON

Any idea where they might dig in?

BARD (*shaking his head*)

All I know is . . . just as long's Glenn Griffin's running around free and safe—with that prison guard's .38 in his paw—well, it's not free or safe for anyone else. No decent people anywhere—whether they've ever . . . (*The lights begin to dim.*) heard of Glenn Griffin or not . . .

HILLIARD HOME

Lights rise slowly. We see a typical house in the suburbs: pleasant, comfortable, undistinguished. ELEANOR HILLIARD, an attractive woman in her early forties, enters from the dining room. She carries Dan's hat and topcoat, which she places on upstage sofa, then moves to front door, opens it and looks out. The morning light outside is bright and cheerful. Not finding the morning paper, she closes the door as RALPHIE enters from dining room. RALPHIE, aged ten, is dressed for school and carries a half-empty glass of milk which he stares at balefully as he sits in Left chair. ELEANOR, who is extremely neat, is arranging pillows on the downstage sofa.

ELEANOR (*gently*)

Ralphie, you left your bike outside all night again.

RALPHIE (*as though this answers her*)

It didn't rain.

ELEANOR

Well, it's not going to rain today, either. But you're going to put it in the garage before you go to school.

[DAN HILLIARD enters from dining room and crosses to front door to look out. He is a typical, undistinguished but immediately likable man in his forties.

DAN (*calling toward hall*)

Cindy! It's eight-thirty.

CINDY (*off, in her room*)

Can't a girl straighten her girdle in peace?

DAN (*surprised*)

Girdle? . . . Girdle! (*Goes to Eleanor at Right end of*

sofa.) Ellie, can a twenty-year-old child with a figure like Cindy's . . .

ELEANOR (*smiling*)
It's a joke, Dan.

DAN
Oh. Thank the Lord. She has to have a solid hour for primping and then she complains all the way downtown because we don't live in the city limits.

RALPHIE
Ain't love disgusting?

ELEANOR
Don't say "ain't."

DAN (*to Ralphie—firmly as he steps to Left*)
Don't say "love," either. (*There is a thud of a newspaper thrown against the front door. DAN whirls, steps swiftly to the door. He and ELEANOR have a slight collision. She moves downstage and he opens the door and goes off across the porch.*) Hey! Hey!

ELEANOR (*teasing—as she moves up Center*)
Try holding your nose and gulping it, Ralphie.

RALPHIE
It tastes sour.

ELEANOR (*picking up her small pad and pencil from end table*)
Yesterday it tasted like chalk.

[*She sits in Right chair and starts making her shopping list. DAN returns, picks up the "Indianapolis Star" from porch and enters the room, closing the door.*

DAN (*a suggestion of grouchiness*)
Some day I'm going to catch up with that paper boy and we're going to have a lawsuit on our hands.

ELEANOR

Dan, you have time for a second cup of coffee.

DAN (*glances at his watch and then up to hall as he crosses Left*)

In half a minute she'll come prancing down and start urging me to hurry.

[DAN exits into the dining room. RALPHIE takes a long drink of the milk but cannot finish it. CINDY emerges from her room, crosses to steps. She is dressed for work. CINDY is nineteen and attractive.]

RALPHIE

If cows only knew how I hated 'em!

ELEANOR

What would they do?

CINDY (*to Eleanor—from steps*)

Where's Dad? What was he shouting at me?

ELEANOR

What does he shout every morning at eight-thirty?

CINDY

He shouts it's eight-thirty.

ELEANOR

You win the kewpie-doll.

[CINDY moves swiftly toward the dining room as DAN appears in the door with a cup of coffee.]

CINDY (*to Dan as she swings past him*)

Say, you'd better hurry!

DAN (*looks after CINDY, then to ELEANOR as he sits on sofa*)

What'd I tell you?

[DAN sets his cup of coffee on the end table and picks up the newspaper and reads.]

RALPHIE

Dad . . . Why did the moron lock his father in the refrigerator?

DAN (*his attention on the newspaper*)

Ralphie, do I have to answer that one?

RALPHIE (*brightly*)

Because he liked cold pop! (*There is an escape of breath from DAN which might or might not pass for a laugh.*)
Well, why don't you laugh?

DAN

I laughed. What do you want me to do . . . roll on the floor?

RALPHIE

You almost rolled on the floor last night when I told you why the moron ate dynamite.

ELEANOR (*shakes her head warningly but continues writing*)

Ralphie . . .

RALPHIE

My name is Ralph. R-a-l-p-h. There's no Y on the end of it. I looked up my birth certificate.

ELEANOR

Sorry.

[*Through the following, RALPHIE rises and, with glass in hand, moves to the upstage sofa to pick up his jacket and football; he rather elaborately manages to conceal the half-glass of milk on the floor out of sight in the process.*]

RALPHIE

Big game after school today. Fourth grade versus fifth grade. (*Having achieved his purpose; with a sigh of relief.*) We'll slaughter 'em! (*Kisses Eleanor.*)

ELEANOR

'Bye, darling.

[DAN leans back to be kissed, but RALPHIE only glances at him and goes to front door, where DAN'S voice stops him.]

DAN

Hey! Aren't you forgetting something?

RALPHIE (*embarrassed and uncertain*)

Oh. (*He then returns to Dan, going downstage of sofa, and DAN leans for a kiss; instead, RALPHIE extends his hand and shakes Dan's hand with grave formality.*) So long, Dad. I hope you have a very pleasant day at the office. (*He turns and goes to the dining-room door, leaving DAN staring after him; calls into dining room.*) So long, dream-witch. I hope Chuck Wright doesn't even notice your new dress. (*Crosses toward front door at Right.*)

CINDY (*appears in dining room door, with glass of orange juice in her hand*)

'Bye. Flunk geography, will you, pest?

RALPHIE (*as he goes out the front door*)

Mister Pest to you.

[CINDY disappears again in dining room and RALPHIE exits Right.]

ELEANOR (*rises and calls after him—out front door*)

Raphiel! Your bicycle!

DAN

What do you suppose that was all about?

ELEANOR (*toying with her pad and pencil—as she closes front door*)

Our son Ralph . . . spelled R-a-l-p-h . . . considers

himself too old to kiss a man . . . that's you . . . good-bye or good-night.

DAN (*covering his hurt*)
Oh.

ELEANOR (*moves to upstage of sofa*)
He said last night he hoped you'd understand.

DAN (*with an empty smile*)
I was hoping maybe he just didn't like my shave-lotion.
(*As ELEANOR unconsciously touches his hair.*) Ellie, what's happening to both of them lately? This . . . this young lawyer Cindy works for . . . she can't be serious, can she?

ELEANOR
She hasn't confided in me, Dad . . . which could mean she is.

DAN
She's only twenty years old!

ELEANOR
I was nineteen.

DAN
You had some sense.

ELEANOR
Sure. I married you.

DAN (*as though he has proved a point*)
Well, I didn't drive a Jaguar!

[CINDY enters from the dining room, pulling on her coat.]

CINDY
Chuck and I find his Jaguar a very comfortable little surrey. (*Crosses to front door.*) Come climb into my Ford

coupé, Dad . . . and don't whisper when I'm in the next room. It's not polite.

DAN (*as he rises and moves to get his coat and hat from up-stage sofa*)
Now she'll speed.

ELEANOR (*automatically*)
Careful now, Dan.

CINDY (*satirically—chidingly*)
Mother . . . you say that every morning of the world. What could possibly happen to a man in the personnel office of a department store? (*She exits, closing the door; moves downstage on porch; exits Right.*)

DAN (*pointing at closed door*)
That's what I mean! That's not Cindy. Those are Chuck Wright's ideas. Last night on the way home, she asked me point-blank if I didn't think I led a pretty dull life.

ELEANOR
What'd you say?

DAN (*firmly*)
I said I didn't like Chuck Wright, either.

[DAN goes to the door, and ELEANOR follows him.]

ELEANOR
Dan . . . at Chuck's age . . . you were going to be another Richard Halliburton, remember? Climb the Matterhorn . . . swim at midnight in the Taj Mahal. My father threatened to throw you . . .
[*Outside, CINDY taps horn impatiently.*]

DAN (*embarrassed*)
I'm going to be late. (*They kiss: casual, without meaning, habit.*) If you're going to use the car today, buy some gas first. Before you have to walk a mile for it this time.

[DAN exits, follows Cindy. ELEANOR closes the door. ELEANOR leans against the door a second, utters an almost silent "Whew," crosses to table at Left end of sofa, places her shopping list on table and flips on a small portable—battery-type—radio which is on end table. Through the following action, a newscaster's voice fades in: ELEANOR moves to Right chair, fluffs cushions, then to sofa where she folds paper Dan has thrown there, straightens the cushions. At this point she starts up the stairs, but decides to change stations on radio, so steps to it, turns knob and music fades in.]

NEWSCASTER'S VOICE

. . . five-state alarm. Police authorities have requested all citizens to be on the lookout for a 1941 Dodge sedan . . . gray . . . mud-spattered . . . bearing Indiana license plates number HL6827 . . . that is HL6827. One of the convicts is wearing a pair of faded blue farmer's overalls which were . . .

[At this point ELEANOR changes stations; music fades in and she moves up the steps and into the master bedroom, leaving door open. The music plays, low, through the following. ELEANOR begins to make the bed. GLENN GRIFFIN appears on porch, rings door chimes. He is in his mid-twenties and wears faded blue farmer's overalls. He is tall with—at the moment—a rather appealing boyish expression on his handsome face. ELEANOR sighs.]

ELEANOR

Wouldn't you know it . . . (As she moves out of bedroom and down steps.) Every time . . .

[GLENN rings chimes again—insistently, glancing around behind once. ELEANOR quickens her steps and opens door. GLENN smiles.]

GLENN

Sorry to bother you, ma'am, but it looks like I lost my

way. Could you kindly direct me to the Bowden Dairy? I know it's somewhere in the neighborhood, but I must have the wrong . . .

[ROBISH appears in dining room door. He is large, bull-like, slow, with a huge head sunk between two upthrust shoulders. He wears prison garb. The following action has a cold, machinelike precision about it.

ELEANOR

Let me see. I've seen that sign . . . but there are no dairies very close. You see, this is a residential . . .

[ELEANOR becomes conscious of Robish's presence. She breaks off and turns. In that moment GLENN whips out the gun, forces his way into the room, pushing ELEANOR. He slams the door and locks it, then moves to ELEANOR, who backs to Right end of sofa, holding sofa arm with her hands behind her back.

GLENN

Take it easy, lady. (As her mouth trembles open.) Easy, I said. You scream, the kid owns that bike out there'll come home an' find you in a pool of blood. (GLENN only nods to ROBISH, who stumps up the steps and through the following looks into Cindy's room, Ralphie's room, then enters the master bedroom and searches the closet at extreme Left.) You there, Hank?

HANK (speaking as he moves into the living room from the dining room)

All clear out back. Lincoln in garage . . . almost new. Garage lock broken. (HANK GRIFFIN is younger than Glenn, shorter, not so handsome, with a confused, hard but somehow rather sensitive face.)

[ELEANOR looks at HANK, who returns her stare boldly. A shudder goes through her. Through the following, GLENN's swagger suggests a deep insecurity. ROBISH is

examining and discarding various of Dan's clothes in the bedroom . . . creating havoc. GLENN steps to Eleanor.

GLENN

I'll take the keys to the Lincoln now, lady . . .

ELEANOR

Keys . . . *(She is backed up, downstage of sofa. Conquering shudders as she moves toward downstage Center.)*
Keys? . . .

GLENN

Lady, when I talk, you snap. Snap fast!

ELEANOR

Top of . . . top of refrigerator . . . I think . . . I always misplace the . . . *(As GLENN nods to HANK, who goes into dining room.)* Take it . . . you only want the car . . . take it and go . . .

GLENN *(shouts)*

What're you doin' in there, Robish—takin' a bath?

ROBISH

Nobody home but the missus.

[He goes into hall, with Dan's clothes. SOUND of back door opening and closing.]

GLENN

I figured it. *(He examines the house . . . looks into the den.)* Good-lookin' family you got, lady. I seen 'em leavin'. *(As ROBISH descends.)* How many bedrooms up there, Robish?

ROBISH

Three. An' three complete cans, for Chrissake . . .

[The SOUND of a car door being slammed startles ELEANOR.]

GLENN

Don't be so jumpy, lady. Only the kid brother takin' care of the cars.

ROBISH (*holding up Dan's suit*)

Th' sonofabitch's got five suits up there. (*He tosses the suit over the back of Left chair and goes into the dining room.*)

GLENN

Class, all the way . . . (*To Eleanor.*) I guess you're tumbling to the idea, ain't you, lady?

ELEANOR (*picks up her purse from sofa*)

You want money . . . here . . . take it . . . anything . . .

GLENN (*takes purse and dumps contents on sofa*)

Pretty. (*Holds up a locket.*) Gold? (*As ELEANOR nods wordlessly, he slips it into his pocket.*) I got a gal with a yen for gold a mile wide. (*Picks up the money.*) This all the dough you got in the house?

ELEANOR (*with difficulty*)

Yes . . . yes . . . my husband always says . . . too much cash in . . .

GLENN (*grins*)

Old man's right. Ain't ever safe to have too much cash layin' around. (*He pockets the money.*) Gives people ideas.

[ROBISH returns, disgruntled.]

ROBISH (*to Glenn*)

My gut's growlin'.

GLENN

We heard it.

ROBISH (*to Eleanor*)

Missus, where you keep th' liquor?

ELEANOR (*backing away from him*)

We don't have . . . I don't think . . .

GLENN (*gesturing to den*)

Robish . . . park your butt'n there'n keep your eyes peeled that side-a th' house.

ROBISH (*aggressively; to Eleanor*)

I ain't had me a drink'n eighteen years.

GLENN

Robish, you don't hear so good. It's a kinda library. Improve your mind.

[HANK *enters from dining room, crosses up Left corner of sofa.*

HANK

Gray job's in the garage, outta sight. Lincoln's ready in the driveway . . . headin' out. But she's low on gas.

[*He hands the car keys to GLENN, who pockets them. ELEANOR moves uncertainly to Right chair, sinks into it.*

ROBISH (*stolidly*)

I need me a gun. (GLENN *nods to HANK, who turns and runs up steps. Through the following, he looks into Cindy's room, Ralphie's room, and enters the master bedroom, where he searches through the closet extreme Left.*)

I don't like none of it.

GLENN (*moves to steps, calls*)

Hey, Hank, Robish don't like it. After them hard bunks . . . them concrete floors!

HANK

Tell 'im to lump it.

GLENN

Lump it, Robish. (*Gestures to den.*) In there.

ROBISH

I don't feel right without a gun.

GLENN

Tell you what, Robish . . . let's you'n me go out an' stick up a hardware store!

ROBISH (*to up Center*)

Now you're talkin'!

GLENN (*sardonically*)

Sure . . . Come'n, Robish. Every copper'n the state's waitin' for us to pull a job like that! (*Moves to door.*) What're you stallin' for? (*HANK finds an automatic in the closet, pockets it and starts out of bedroom.*) Come on!

ROBISH (*turning away--growling, inwardly seething*)

Awwww . . . don't do me nò favors. (*For the first time, GLENN laughs. HANK, on steps, watching Robish, joins in. ELEANOR stares. ROBISH'S face hardens and, scowling, he makes a sudden movement toward Hank.*) What're yuh yakkin' at, yuh . . .

[*But GLENN moves. The laughter dies. He grabs ROBISH, whips him about.*

GLENN (*in low hard tones*)

Lissen! How many times I gotta tell you? Keep your mitts off the kid, you don't wanna get your skull laid open. (*Pause. ROBISH and GLENN face each other. Then ROBISH turns sullenly and grabs suit of clothes from Left chair, growling. GLENN, having asserted his total control, laughs, takes cigar from humidor on end table and tosses it to Robish.*) Here . . . make yourself sick on a good cigar. (*ROBISH, seething, doesn't attempt to catch it; it*

falls to the floor. Then, defiantly, ROBISH steps on it, grinding it into the carpet.) Robish, you gonna give the lady the idea we ain't neat.

ROBISH (*he picks up the humidor*)

Coupla brothers! Shoulda knowed better. Ain't neither one dry back-a the ears yet.

[ROBISH crosses down of sofa and exits into the den.]

ELEANOR (*who has been watching in horror*)

What . . . what do you . . . ?

GLENN (*ignoring her, crosses to Hank*)

What'd you find? (HANK, *keeping his eyes on Eleanor, takes the automatic out of his pocket and hands it to GLENN, who examines it. GLENN turns to Eleanor.*) Lady, now I ask you . . . is that a nice thing to keep aroun' the house? (*He hands the automatic to Hank, whispering.*) Put it in your pocket and keep it there. Family secret, huh? What Robish don't know, don't hurt nobody . . . okay? (GLENN *laughs, gives Hank a playful push and throws himself onto sofa—in high spirits.*) Let 'em comb the dives!

HANK (*sits in Left chair; jubilantly*)

You foxed 'em good, Glenn.

GLENN

Came aroun' their roadblocks like we was flyin' a airplane! Everythin's chimin'! (*He becomes conscious of the comfort. He raises himself by the arms and sinks again into the sofa, delighted.*) Foam rubber, I betcha. Foam rubber, lady? (ELEANOR *nods.*) I seen the ads. (*He squirms in the seat, enjoying it.*) Melts right into your tail!

HANK (*rises, takes a cigarette from the box on the coffee*

table, lights it with the table lighter and hands it to
GLENN)

Christ, what a place to take the stir-taste outta your mouth! Freezer full-a meat! Carpet makes you want to take your shoes off!

ELEANOR

How long do you intend to . . .

GLENN (*casually*)

Be outta here by midnight, lady.

HANK

Midnight? I thought you said Helen was waiting . . .

GLENN

Not in town, Hank. We don't make it so easy for 'em. She left three weeks ago.

HANK (*laughs, grabs a fistful of cigarettes from the box on the coffee table, picks up the lighter, shoves it into his pocket, picks up portable radio*)

I don't care if we never leave.

[*He exits into the dining room, carrying radio.*]

GLENN (*rises*)

Now, lady . . . you think you can talk on the phone without bustin' into tears?

ELEANOR (*rises with great difficulty, takes a feeble step, then gets control of herself, straightens, and walks with dignity and determination to the phone table at Left, turns to face Glenn*)

Whom do you want me to call?

[GLENN *laughs as he crosses close to Eleanor.*]

GLENN

I always go for a gal with guts! That's *whom* we're gonna call—a gal with real guts. Person to person . . . Mr.

James calling Mrs. James . . . Atlantic 6-3389 . . . in Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh, PA.

(BLACKOUT)

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Lights rise swiftly. CARSON sits in chair down Left, writing on small note-pad. The clock reads 5:32. BARD is finishing a telephone conversation, a note of exultation in his voice.

BARD (*into phone*)

Yeah . . . okay . . . good deal! (*He replaces phone.*)
Pittsburgh! They've located Helen Laski. Avalon Hotel, Pittsburgh. We'll have a record of any calls to or from . . . in a few minutes now.

CARSON

Bard . . . stop me if I'm out of line . . . but what's this thing to you? You, personally?

BARD (*slowly rubbing his chin*)

You've heard of that first law of the jungle . . . haven't you, Carson? (*The light on the radio flashes. BARD presses the button, snaps*) Deputy Bard!

WINSTON'S VOICE

Jess . . . this is Winston. Car three.

BARD

What've you got, Tom?

WINSTON'S VOICE

That hardware store holdup on the south side . . .

BARD (*eagerly*)

Yeah? Yeah?

WINSTON'S VOICE (*wearily*)

No guns stolen. All they took was fishing rods.

[BARD *presses the button and looks at Carson.*

CARSON

They'd be too shrewd to pull a stunt like that.

BARD (*steps toward Carson*)

Look, Carson . . . do me a favor. It's almost time for supper. All I've heard since morning is how damn wise those rats are. I'm up to here with it.

CARSON

Where're they getting their clothes?

BARD

My theory is they're running around naked so nobody'll notice 'em. (*The telephone rings. BARD picks it up.*) Deputy Bard . . . Yeah . . . (*Disappointment.*) Yeah. Okay. (*Hangs up.*) Helen Laski checked out of the Avalon Hotel last night. No phone calls, no messages of any kind received today . . . (*His eyes meet Carson's; CARSON shrugs. BARD bursts out.*) I know! I know! They'd be too smart to make a call to a hotel. They used somebody in between!

CARSON

I didn't say a word.

BARD (*moving downstage, grim*)

You know where that leaves us, don't you? Beating our tails ragged over nothing around here.

CARSON

Only you don't believe it.

BARD

Sure I believe it. I'm a trained police officer. I go by the facts, not crazy hunches. I reckon they're not here.

CARSON (*rises*)

Why don't you put some more patrol cars on the streets, anyway? Just in case?

BARD (*pacing*)

That damn jalopy's been reported in every state in the union . . . sixty times in Indiana alone! The earth won't open up and swallow it! Okay, let's try anything! (*He picks up phone, dials . . . as the LIGHTS DIM.*) *Where is that beat-up gray car?*

HILLIARD HOME

It is dark outside and dim throughout the house, except for the living room which is brilliantly lighted. ELEANOR sits on the sofa, staring ahead.

SOUND—music from radio in dining room: a loud jazzy tune—in contrast to the soft gentleness of the morning music.

The ravages of the afternoon are everywhere apparent; the atmosphere of invasion hangs over the entire house. There is an open box of cigars on the end table with some of the cigars scattered on the table. There is a carton of cigarettes, with the top ripped back, on the table. A coffee cup is also on the table and another is on the floor beside the armchair at Left. There are odds and ends of food. The ashtrays are filled to overflowing.

GLENN is in Right chair, looking out window; he is filled with a sense of triumph; he is almost gay, and his enjoyment of what follows is clear. GLENN wears a pair of Dan's slacks and a sport shirt. ELEANOR, alert in every fiber, is pale, haggard, stiff, sitting on chair at Left. ROBISH is entering from the den; he is wearing a full suit including shirt and tie—Dan's best, and it does not quite fit. A cigar is jammed in the corner of his mouth.

ROBISH

What if this joker gets suspicious . . . that gray car parked right in his own garage?

GLENN (*casually*)

Can it, Robish.

ROBISH (*to Eleanor—as he crosses to steps*)

Why ain't he here? You said quarter to six.

ELEANOR

The traffic may be heavy . . . or Cindy may have had to work late . . . or . . . anything . . . anything!

HANK'S VOICE (*from dining room*)

Glenn! Black coop just turned in the driveway.

GLENN

Turn off the clatter back there, Hank.

[*SOUND: Radio turned off.*]

HANK'S VOICE

You want me to grab 'em?

GLENN (*taking position facing front door—gun ready*)

Not with all them cars goin' by out there.

HANK'S VOICE

Woman comin' around to the front door, Glenn.

[*ELEANOR places her hand at her mouth. GLENN unlocks the door.*]

GLENN (*to Eleanor as he crosses to her*)

You don't have to do nothin' but keep your trap shut. (*He turns the gun to cover the front door. CINDY appears down Right and crosses porch to front door, enters, casually, swiftly, a trifle breathless. She stops dead when she sees Glenn.*) Come right in, redhead. (*CINDY backs away, pulling the door closed, but she suddenly stops,*

frozen in the door. The reason she stops is simply that GLENN has turned the gun toward Eleanor's head.) We still got the old lady, Sis. (ROBISH is standing on steps, dull, brutish . . . with his little eyes roving over Cindy. CINDY closes the door and stands in front of it. GLENN grins.) That's bein' real sensible.

CINDY (*planting her feet slightly*)

Mother . . . how long have these animals been here?

[ELEANOR starts, as though she would warn Cindy. GLENN's grin flickers, fades and a hardness comes into his face . . . but not into his tone.]

GLENN

Spitfire, too. You watch out, redhead.

HANK'S VOICE

Glenn! He's lookin' in the garage.

GLENN (*calling to Hank—confident, knowing*)

He'll come in. (*He grabs Cindy and pushes her toward Right chair.*) Sit down now, sweetie . . . and no talking. Not a goddam word.

HANK (*in pantry*)

He's coming around now—fast.

[GLENN moves into position near front door. Pause. Then the door opens, and DAN enters, evening paper in hand.]

DAN

Ellie, whose car is that in the . . .

[GLENN slams door shut behind Dan, and DAN breaks off, staring in bewilderment at Glenn, then at the gun.]

GLENN (*in flat cold tones*)

It's loaded. Now lock the door . . . (*Sardonically.*) Please.

[*Unable to speak yet, his eyes on Glenn, DAN turns and locks the door. Then:*

DAN (*baffled; softly*)

What're you . . . why . . . I don't . . .

GLENN

You never know what's comin', do you, Pop?

[*DAN then glances across to Eleanor.*

DAN

Ellie? . . .

ELEANOR

I'm all right, Dan.

DAN (*looking about the room, glances toward stairs*)

Where's Ralphie?

ELEANOR

Not home yet.

HANK'S VOICE

Driveway ain't blocked, Glenn.

CINDY

The house is crawling with them, Dad.

GLENN (*sizing her up*)

Don't get me jumpy, redhead, this thing's liable to explode.

DAN (*flatly, glancing at newspaper in his hand*)

Glenn Griffin.

GLENN (*laughs, takes paper*)

Lotsa people heard-a me, didn't they? (*In satisfaction.*)
Front page. (*Disgusted.*) They always gotta use the same
goddam picture. (*He tosses the paper to the floor.*)

DAN

Griffin . . . you fire that thing . . . and you'll have the whole neighborhood in here in two minutes.

GLENN

I don't want to take that chance, Hilliard . . . any more'n you want me to.

ROBISH

You dumb, mister?

GLENN (*Sizing up Dan*)

Naw, he ain't dumb, Robish. He's a smart-eyed bastard, this guy . . .

DAN

What're you . . . I don't understand . . . what do you want?

GLENN

Take it easy, Pop.

DAN (*controlling himself with effort*)

What do you want here?

GLENN (*takes a step toward Dan*)

I don't want nobody to get hurt . . . What do *you* want, Pop?

DAN

That's . . . what I want, too. (*Then, shrewdly.*) That's what you're depending on, isn't it?

GLENN

You got it, Buster. First try.

DAN

But . . . why here? Why my house?

GLENN

Your break, Pop. I like the location. Those empty lots'n

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.