

SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

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Disassembly

Steve Yockey

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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DISASSEMBLY premiered at Impact Theatre (Melissa Hillman, Artistic Director; Cheshire Isaacs, Managing Director) at LaVal's Subterranean Theatre in Berkeley, California on May 6, 2011. The performance was directed by Desdemona Chiang, with sets by Anne Kendall, costumes by Ashley Rogers, properties by Tunuviel Luv-Gulamani, lights by Jax Steager, sound by Colin Trevor, and fight choreography by Desdemona Chiang. The cast was as follows:

ELLEN	Kathryn Zdan
EVAN / NARRATOR	Nick Trengrove
DIANE	Marissa Keltie
TESSA	Dina Percia
STANLEY	Seth Thygesen
JEROME / FOX	Timothy Redmond
MIRABELLE / CROW	Andrea Snow

DISASSEMBLY opened at Action/Adventure Theatre Company (Noah Dunham, Artistic Director) in Portland, Oregon on May 23, 2013. The performance was directed by Noah Dunham, with sets by Michael Miranda, costumes by Jade Harris, properties by Greta Pauley West, lights by Laura Fraley, sound by Devon Wade Granmo, and fight choreography by Kristen Mun. The cast was as follows:

ELLEN	Noelle Eaton
EVAN / NARRATOR	James Luster
DIANE	Jai Lavette
TESSA	Cecily Crow
STANLEY	Pat Moran
JEROME / FOX	Evan Ward
MIRABELLE / CROW	Greta Pauley West

CHARACTERS

ELLEN – A woman; deeply concerned for her brother, seemingly “normal” except for the inappropriate laughter, singing seizures, and lapses into extreme violence

EVAN / NARRATOR – A man; Ellen’s brother, with a good attitude, a generous smile and a lot of unexplained injuries, or at least very poorly explained injuries

DIANE – A woman; Evan’s fiancée, surface pretty, surface nice, making it through, but fed-up and breaking, trying her best to work it out

TESSA – A woman; all in black, very put together, overly polite, laughing at herself, past the point where death has any discernable impact

STANLEY – A man; sweet, caring, almost like a big teddy bear, with a healthy dose of psychotically jealous stalker underneath

JEROME / FOX – A man; Ellen’s sometime boyfriend, very quiet, very tense, not very nice, but very much in love with the idea of love

MIRABELLE / CROW – A woman; Ellen and Evan’s neighbor, she chews gum, she has cats, real and imagined, and a lot of attitude, somehow, oddly alluring

AUTHOR’S NOTES

[] indicate overlapping dialogue.

The Fox and Crow could be anything from small hand puppets to large marionettes operated by Jerome and Mirabelle or, more likely, they are represented simply and in an iconic fashion by the actors with a change in physicality and some ears, a tail, or a beak for good measure.

A Fox once saw a Crow fly off with a piece of cheese in its beak and settle on a branch of a tree. "That's for me, as I am a Fox," he thought and swiftly made his way to the foot of the tree. "Good day to you, Crow," he called up to her. "How very well you are looking today: how glossy your feathers; how bright your eyes. I feel certain your voice must surpass that of other birds, just as your fine figure does; let me hear but one song from you that I may greet you as the true Queen of Birds." The Crow, beguiled by the compliments, lifted up her head and began to caw her best. But the very moment she opened her mouth the piece of cheese fell to the ground, only to be snapped up by the Fox. "That will do," said the Fox. "That was all I wanted. In exchange for your cheese I will give you a piece of advice for the future: do not trust flatterers."

– an Aesop's Fable

(Afternoon. The dimly lit living room of a spacious but simply furnished apartment. ELLEN sits on the couch wringing her hands.)

(A small hallway is situated just outside the door to the apartment.)

(Off to the side in a small playing area that is much brighter, the NARRATOR, the FOX and the CROW stand on stage. As they begin, ELLEN's attention is drawn to their story. She watches and is captivated.)

(The NARRATOR tells his story. The FOX and the CROW act it all out very simply and cleanly.)

NARRATOR. Once there was a Fox.

(The FOX bows.)

And a Crow.

(The CROW curtsies.)

And one day, the Fox saw the Crow fly off with a piece of cheese in her beak and settle down nicely on the branch of a tree. The Crow was, of course, going to eat the cheese, as crows are wont to do. But the Fox had a different plan.

FOX. That's for me, as I am a Fox.

NARRATOR. Said the Fox as he swiftly made his way to the foot of the tree.

FOX. Good day to you, Crow.

NARRATOR. He called up to her.

CROW. Mm hm.

FOX. How very well you are looking today.

(The CROW giggles.)

NARRATOR. And the Crow giggled.

CROW. Mm hm.

FOX. How glossy your feathers; how bright your eyes.

(The CROW bashfully demurs a bit.)

NARRATOR. And the Crow blushed.

CROW. Mm hm.

FOX. I feel certain your voice must surpass that of other birds, just as your fine figure does; let me hear but one song, one joyous, clarion, brilliant, magical song from you that I may greet you as the true Queen of Birds.

NARRATOR. And the Crow, beguiled by the compliments of the Fox, lifted up her head and began to caw her best.

CROW. Caw!

(The CROW lets out a caw and drops the cheese. It falls into the waiting hands of the FOX.)

NARRATOR. But the very moment she opened her mouth the piece of cheese fell to the ground, only to be snapped up by the Fox.

FOX. That will do.

NARRATOR. Said the Fox.

CROW. That's not fair!

NARRATOR. Said the Crow.

FOX. No, it's not.

NARRATOR. Said the Fox.

CROW. What about all those nice things you said to me?

NARRATOR. Said the Crow.

FOX. This is all I wanted.

NARRATOR. Said the Fox.

FOX. But in exchange for your delicious cheese I will give you a piece of advice for the future: everyone lies and you'd better get used to it.

CROW. What?

NARRATOR. Said the Crow as she ruffled her feathers.

FOX. Mm hm, especially to get what they want. Everyone lies and you'd better get [used to it.]

CROW. [That's not the] moral; the moral is never trust flatterers.

FOX. Is it?

NARRATOR. Asked the fox, licking his chops.

CROW. Yes.

NARRATOR. Said the crow.

FOX. I guess we'll see about that.

(As the FOX eats the cheese with a smile and the CROW crosses her wings in a huff, TESSA and STANLEY appear in the small hallway just outside the door to the apartment. Notably, TESSA is in a black skirt, black turtleneck and carries a black purse. Nothing fancy, just all black.)

(As they reach the door, the NARRATOR, FOX and CROW disappear from the stage and their area dims as lights pulse up on the apartment and hallway. STANLEY is about to knock...)

TESSA. Stanley, wait.

STANLEY. Are you all right?

TESSA. Oh I'm fine, fine. Just let me get myself together for a minute.

STANLEY. Do you need anything?

TESSA. No, no. I'm fine. Just let me, I [mean...]

(MIRABELLE rounds the corner on the way to her apartment. She's carrying a stuffed cat. She's not carrying it like it's real; she just has a stuffed cat.)

MIRABELLE. [Huh.] Maybe you two don't need to be standing in the hall like that.

TESSA. Oh, no, we're going to see our friend Ellen, this [is her...]

MIRABELLE. [Maybe you] two don't need to be standing in the hall like that.

STANLEY. Excuse me?

MIRABELLE. You're not excused you pair of hall standers standing in the hallway so other people can't get down the hall because of all your standing, the two of you, and maybe you could think about that the next time you just wanna stand in somebody else's hallway, somebody else's narrow hallway, in somebody else's building like a bunch of hall standers standing around with all the time in the world because you don't have all the time, you take other people's time in someone else's building where other people need to get down the hall.

TESSA. I'm, I'm sorry.

MIRABELLE. But look...you're still standing here.

(Pause. There is an awkward silence. MIRABELLE stares at them. She exits.)

TESSA. Good grief.

(TESSA smoothes out her skirt, checks her sleeves, touches her hair as if making sure everything is where it's supposed to be. After a moment of this...)

STANLEY. You look beautiful Tessa.

(She laughs reflexively.)

You do.

TESSA. That's sweet honey, not right now okay.

STANLEY. I love [you.]

TESSA. [Shhh.]

STANLEY. But I've been trying to tell you...

(TESSA brushes past STANLEY and knocks on the door, interrupting him. ELLEN flies to answer it.)

ELLEN. Thank you so much for coming, Tessa! Come in,
[come in.]

TESSA. [Ellen] honey, you sounded [so...]

STANLEY. [Is he] okay?

(They enter. JEROME appears in the hallway as ELLEN closes the door. He stands looking at the door.)

ELLEN. I think so, thank you for coming too Stanley. I think he's fine, it was all just so jarring, he's the only family I've got now, you know? And we're twins, did you know that?

TESSA. I think maybe I did.

ELLEN. It's like I can feel it more when he's, it sounds stupid. I probably didn't need to call you but I didn't know who to call besides Jerome and he wasn't answering, which is so typical, and Evan's fiancée Diane is already here and she's so much better in a crisis but I had to call someone and I'm sorry if interrupted your day [but I didn't...]

TESSA. [Don't worry] about that, I'm glad you called.

ELLEN. I knew you'd come. Somebody had to come.

TESSA. Here we are honey.

STANLEY. So he was stabbed?

(DIANE enters from the bedroom carrying a small trash bag that's pretty clearly full of bloody handy wipes and paper towels, wiping the hair from her face. Her hands have dried blood on them.)

ELLEN. How is he?

DIANE. He's fine. He's sore, just let him rest. I tried to clean up the bathroom.

ELLEN. Oh my god Diane you probably saved his life.

DIANE. Let's not get all crazy about it, all right?

ELLEN. I'm not; it was terrifying.

DIANE. Yes it was.

ELLEN. Are you sure we shouldn't call the police?

DIANE. Evan says no police. I told him we should call. Trust me.

(She exits. JEROME exits back down the hall.)

TESSA. You didn't call the police?

ELLEN. No.

STANLEY. If my brother went out for a jog and got stabbed, I think I'd call [the police.]

TESSA. [Honey, are] you at least taking him to the hospital?

ELLEN. He says no. He never goes. No insurance.

STANLEY. [Now, that's just...]

TESSA. [Honey, doesn't] [he...?]

ELLEN. [I know, I know,] but he's so accident prone, ever since we were little. Always getting hurt, oddly hurt, freak things like this.

STANLEY. Really?

ELLEN. No insurance company will take a chance on him. He has the worst luck.

STANLEY. You make your own luck.

ELLEN. Excuse me?

STANLEY. It's not my place to, I mean, I just think for the most part that people control their own fate. So, you know, you make your own luck.

ELLEN. No, no people don't. If you make your own luck Evan wouldn't be bleeding from the shoulder. He has bad luck.

STANLEY. I didn't mean, that's not what [I meant.]

ELLEN. [He has] bad luck.

TESSA. I understand what you're saying Ellen. I certainly know a thing or two about bad luck.

ELLEN. Yes you do. Oh no, I didn't [mean to...]

TESSA. [I'm fine;] it's fine. Look at me; I'm not upset at all. You've been there for me when I needed you, right? So let me be here for you right now.

(DIANE enters again and sits down. She is putting her hair back into place, fixing herself up.)

STANLEY. I'm really surprised no one has called the police.

TESSA. Ellen explained that [Stanley.]

STANLEY. [Not really,] I mean she did, you did, but it [seems like...]

ELLEN. [Evan said] not to call. I don't know, [maybe we...]

DIANE. [Wow. I mean] really, wow, you practically have to scrub to the bone with that liquid soap to get all the

blood off your hands. I bandaged up his shoulder with stuff from the medical kit, I don't think it was very bad. I don't really know what bad is, but with Evan I've seen worse. Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't even...

(She stretches out her hand to STANLEY.)

TESSA. Oh.

DIANE. I'm Diane, Evan's fiancée. You're friends of Ellen's?

(STANLEY looks at her hand.)

I really did wash all of the blood off.

ELLEN. This is my best friend from the office Tessa and her friend Stanley.

STANLEY. Not exactly her ["friend"...]

(TESSA jumps in and shakes DIANE's hand.)

TESSA. [Nice to] meet you. Sounds like you saved the day.

DIANE. Or something like that.

ELLEN. It was crazy, Tessa. I was napping on the couch, I'm so worthless on the weekends, and all of the sudden I heard this commotion, shouting and knocking around, Diane was trying to help Evan into the bedroom and she was holding her sweater over the wound so that, that, that all of the blood wouldn't, so much blood from just a...

(She starts to rock and hum a little bit. DIANE freezes, then slowly, cool and direct...)

DIANE. Ellen? Ellen what about my sweater?

(Pause. ELLEN continues to rock and hum.)

Ellen. What about my sweater?

(ELLEN snaps back into focus.)

ELLEN. Oh Diane, your favorite sweater.

DIANE. I can get another sweater.

ELLEN. It was beautiful.

DIANE. I can get another one.

(EVAN enters. Shirtless, he has gauze over his shoulder held in place by thick, white medical tape. He has a very prominent scar on his abdomen and various marks and bruises; life hasn't been easy. But he's smiling.)

TESSA. Oh no...

EVAN. I'm, uh, I didn't realize there were [other people...]

(Before he can go, ELLEN is up and throwing a hug around him, seemingly oblivious to his injury.)

ELLEN. [I'm so] glad you're okay, I was so afraid that [you might...]

EVAN. [Ow, ow, Ellen,] ow, let go. I'm okay. Let me go get dressed.

ELLEN. This is Tessa and her friend Stanley.

STANLEY. I'm actually more [of her...]

TESSA. [Nice to] meet you. I'm glad you're okay.

EVAN. Thank you.

ELLEN. They came over because I didn't know who to call.

EVAN. Okay. Thanks.

STANLEY. You were jogging?

EVAN. Um, yes, yes I was, same route I always take. It was just bizarre, the guy came out of nowhere, I think, I don't really know because he was behind me obviously, and I guess he got scared because he didn't take anything. Almost seems like it didn't even happen, except for this of course. But Diane handled everything amazingly, like always. She's pretty fantastic putting up with me, always knows what to do.

DIANE. I do what I can.

EVAN. If she'd known when we met, I'm not sure she would've signed up for such a labor-intensive job.

(DIANE shrugs with an awkward laugh.)

DIANE. Too late now.

(He kisses DIANE. It is a truly felt kiss for both of them.)

EVAN. Everything's gonna be fine though. If I can survive this...

(He motions to the scar on his abdomen.)

Then I'm pretty much indestructible.

STANLEY. What happened [there?]

TESSA. [Stanley,] shhh.

ELLEN. He doesn't mind talking about it, do you?

EVAN. Well, actually if you guys don't [mind...]

DIANE. [No, no,] why don't you tell them Evan.

(EVAN smiles at her. She smiles back at him. The smiles aren't really smiles.)

EVAN. Okay, well, it's kind of embarrassing. Actually I was drunk one night when I was home from college and I fell out of second floor window. Onto a picket fence.

STANLEY. Oh my god!

EVAN. It sounds worse than it actually was. Or maybe not. It was pretty bad.

DIANE. Now Evan, I wouldn't think you could fall on just one point of a picket fence.

EVAN. You can.

DIANE. Seems almost impossible.

EVAN. Nope.

DIANE. Seems almost like something completely made up.

EVAN. And yet, Diane, you know that's what happened. I was climbing on the roof, trying to sneak in an upstairs window so my folks wouldn't know I was drunk. I got one leg in and then, just, leaned back. I kinda' torqued around in the air so I was facing the ground and then bam.

(ELLEN and EVAN both clap their hands together to punctuate the moment.)

It probably looked like something out of a horror movie, but mercifully I don't remember much after that.

ELLEN. Of course I don't remember any of this; I'm always amazed when he tells this story. I was asleep in my room; I sleep like the dead, and didn't wake up until the ambulance sirens were coming down the block. So useless.

EVAN. Naw, she came to the hospital every day after classes, didn't you? And you brought those little animal puppets from [home.]

ELLEN. [Oh!]

EVAN. All of these animal puppets and she'd put on little skits for me.

STANLEY. And you were in college?

TESSA. Stop it, Stanley; that sounds adorable.

ELLEN. They weren't skits; they were those short animal stories. Fables? Aesop's fables. Oh, I just loved Aesop's fables. You can't even imagine, Tessa. I loved them.

EVAN. She did.

ELLEN. My favorite was "The Fox and The Crow."

TESSA. Oh, now, I think I remember that one, something about cheese? They were fighting over cheese?

STANLEY. Sure, cheese.

EVAN. It's the one about flattery.

ELLEN. It's about lying.

EVAN. It's about flattery, beware of flattery.

ELLEN. Huh, I guess sometimes I got the endings wrong. It didn't matter, it's not a big deal, I mean morals are always changing anyway.

DIANE. The morals don't change, Ellen. That's the [whole point.]

EVAN. [Listen, I was] so drugged up, I couldn't tell. They were just little puppet shows to me. Oh, and sometimes we'd play chess.

ELLEN. You don't know how to play chess. We played checkers and I won every game.

(She repeatedly, teasingly, pokes EVAN in his injured shoulder.)

EVAN. Ow, ow, okay, well that's not how I remember it, but like I said, I was on a lot of drugs. Those visits were great, until something went wrong with my ventilator. After that, I wasn't allowed to have visitors in the Intensive Care Unit anymore.

ELLEN. That was sad.

TESSA. What's that other, oh, you don't mind my asking do you?

EVAN. Which one?

TESSA. Just, that mark there?

EVAN. This one? Scissor accident.

TESSA. And that one?

EVAN. Um, oh, I crashed a golf cart.

TESSA. Fascinating.

DIANE. It is fascinating.

EVAN. Diane.

ELLEN. Oh, you should be resting. Do you need anything?

STANLEY. The police maybe?

TESSA. Stanley, stop it.

DIANE. He needs to lie down; he lost blood. And some juice, he needs to drink some orange juice [or something.]

ELLEN. [I'll get it,] I'll bring it to you.

EVAN. These ladies take such great care of me, huh?

ELLEN. We do our best.

(ELLEN exits to the kitchen.)

DIANE. I do my best.

EVAN. You're the best thing that's ever happened to me, Diane. I know it. And I just, I hope this morning wasn't too scary for you.

DIANE. I'm okay.

EVAN. You sure?

DIANE. Yep, look at me. I'm fine.

EVAN. Love you.

(EVAN kisses DIANE's forehead and exits. She looks after him for a moment and then snaps back to TESSA and STANLEY.)

TESSA. Oh, you two are just adorable.

STANLEY. (*Under his breath...*) I don't know if [adorable is...]

TESSA. [Stanley,] please.

DIANE. So you work with Ellen?

TESSA. Yes. We're both tellers at the bank, the branch on Ponce, but I guess you [know that.]

DIANE. [And you're] friends?

TESSA. Yes.

DIANE. Close friends?

TESSA. Um, yes? I don't know, I think so.

DIANE. Huh. I think work and sleep must be the only times that Ellen and Evan are ever actually apart.

TESSA. Oh.

DIANE. And this is your boyfriend?

TESSA. (*With an involuntary laugh...*) Oh no, this is Stanley. He's one of my best friends. We've known each other since, well I don't even know.

STANLEY. Kindergarten.

TESSA. Such a long time, Stanley's my rock. But actually, I don't date men.

DIANE. Oh. I see.

(STANLEY and TESSA laugh.)

TESSA. Oh no, no, not like that, I don't mean I don't date men, I mean I don't date. At all. I've had a peculiar kind of, well not peculiar, that's not the word. I've had a surprising run of misfortune with men.

STANLEY. You don't have to get into this right now Tessa.

TESSA. I'm not getting into anything.

DIANE. What does that mean, misfortune?

TESSA. Well, maybe that's not the right word either.

DIANE. I mean, I can relate to misfortune I think. I'm exhausted all the time and, frankly, I'm half surprised that Evan isn't already dead at this point.

(TESSA laughs.)

TESSA. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to laugh. I'm not... I've been engaged four times.

DIANE. Whoa. No, not "whoa," I'm sorry. It's just surprising; you seem so young.

TESSA. I am.

STANLEY. She is.

DIANE. That's definitely misfortune.

(TESSA laughs again.)

TESSA. I keep laughing; it's not you. It's just how I've been able to keep moving, you know? Honey, I've been engaged four times and all of those men have died.

DIANE. Are you serious?

(ELLEN passes through with a glass.)

ELLEN. We didn't have orange juice so I had to make lemonade and I know it's not the same Diane but it's all we had.

(She is gone.)

STANLEY. That's probably enough Tessa, I don't want you to get upset.

TESSA. No, I'm not upset. You don't mind do you, Diane? Oh I hope not, it's just one of those things that's too insane to be true but it's had such a huge impact on how I meet, or how I interact with people that I've found it's easier to just get it out of the way right at the beginning.

DIANE. That's...okay.

TESSA. Once this is out of the way, there won't be any odd little secrets to stumble upon. Just me, what's left of me anyway, so silly.

(TESSA laughs.)

DIANE. Sure.

TESSA. And you know, Ellen has been there for me the last two times in such a caring and generous way.

DIANE. Ellen has?

TESSA. She's so attentive.

DIANE. Is she?

STANLEY. And I'm there, too.

TESSA. Stanley's always there. I don't know what I'd do without him.

STANLEY. I'm right here.

(TESSA smiles.)

DIANE. Four times, I can't begin to imagine what that must be like.

TESSA. Oh, it's like your life is a funeral.

DIANE. Oh.

TESSA. Mm hm, one long funeral march, with all of the trappings. I say life, but this has all happened in what? The last six years I suppose.

STANLEY. That's right.

TESSA. Seems like longer, but it's not. Time kind of slows down. And inside the never-ending funeral, once all of the crying is done, you start to notice things, like the time that must have gone into the woodwork on the mantle above the coffin, or the craftsmanship of a leather bound bible. Or how food always tastes better at a wake because it's comforting. And then your perspective starts to shift. Because it has to really. Things become funny, or maybe numb. But mostly just funny. And you see how ephemeral every moment can be. That's the only way I know how to explain it, which doesn't really explain it, but there it is. Oh just listen to me go on and on in the middle of somebody else's crisis.

(JEROME appears again and knocks on the door.)

DIANE. No, it's fine, really. Just, um, hold on a second.

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