SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

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

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

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

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

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

www.samuelfrench.com
www.samuelfrench.co.uk

SF PERUSALS

Fallen Angels

A Comedy in Three Acts

by Noël Coward

A Samuel French Acting Edition



New York Hollywood London Toronto

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

Copyright © 1925 by Noël Coward
Copyright © 1953 (Renewal) by Noël Coward
Copyright © 1958 by Noël Coward

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that *FALLEN ANGELS* is subject to a Licensing Fee. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. In its present form the play is dedicated to the reading public only.

The amateur live stage performance rights to *FALLEN ANGELS* are controlled exclusively by Samuel French, Inc., and licensing arrangements and performance licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur Licensing Fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a licensing quotation and a performance license please give us the number of performances intended, dates of production, your seating capacity and admission fee. Licensing Fees are payable one week before the opening performance of the play to Samuel French, Inc., at 45 W. 25th Street, New York, NY 10010.

Licensing Fee of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

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

For all other rights than those stipulated above, apply to: Alan Brodie Rep. LTD., Paddock Suite, The Courtyard, 55 Charterhouse St., London EC1M 6HA England.

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."

ISBN 978-0-573-60880-3 Printed in U.S.A. #431

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 *FALLEN ANGELS* *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.

FALLEN ANGELS

CHARACTERS

JULIA STERROLL

FRED STERROLL

SAUNDERS

WILLY BANBURY

JANE BANBURY

MAURICE DUCLOS

SCENES

The action of the play takes place in the dining-drawing room of the Sterrolls flat in London.

ACT ONE

Morning.

ACT TWO

Evening.

ACT THREE

The next morning.

Fallen Angels

SCENE: *The dining-room/drawing-room of the Sterrolls' flat in London. Morning. From the audience's point of view there is a large window with a window-seat Up Left, with a baby grand piano below it. Right of the window is the door to the kitchen. Right of this, Up Center, is the inner hall with a writing desk and two chairs. The front door is off Right, out of sight. There is a fireplace on the Right, with the door to* JULIA'S *bedroom below it. Between the fireplace and the hall is a large drinks table or chest for serving drinks from. Right Center is a dining table with two chairs. Left Center is a comfortable couch with a telephone on a table behind it. Over the fireplace there is a mirror. There is another mirror Down Left.*

AT RISE: *When the CURTAIN rises* FRED *is having his breakfast and* JULIA *is sitting in an armchair reading a newspaper and dangling her legs over the arm. She is plainly and appropriately dressed for an ordinary London day in which nothing in particular may be expected to happen. There must not be the faintest suggestion of the usual elegant silks and satins so beloved by the theatrical dressmaker.* FRED *is in golfing clothes.*

JULIA. You'll only get hiccups if you gobble like that.
FRED. I'm not gobbling.
JULIA. What time's Willy coming?
FRED. He ought to be here now.

(*There is a slight pause.*)

JULIA. (*Rustling the newspaper.*) I say—Muriel Fenchurch is divorcing her husband.

FRED. That's uncommonly generous of him.

JULIA. Do you want any more coffee?

FRED. No thanks, dear.

(*There is another pause.* JULIA *goes on reading.*)

JULIA. (*Reading.*) A girl scout was molested in Grosvenor Square last night.

FRED. Another!

JULIA. Don't be silly, Fred, last time it was a *boy* scout.

FRED. Oh!

JULIA. I think you'd better have some more coffee.

FRED. Why?

JULIA. Because I want you to see our new treasure.

FRED. Oh, all right. I didn't know we had one.

JULIA. She seems a nice girl, but rather grand. (*She rings.*)

FRED. The main thing is that the other one's gone—I couldn't bear her, and I never could remember her name. What was it?

JULIA. Myfanwy.

FRED. Oh. (*He gulps his coffee. Enter* SAUNDERS.) Good morning.

SAUNDERS. Good morning, sir.

FRED. What's your name?

SAUNDERS. Jasmin, sir.

FRED. Oh.

JULIA. We have arranged that she shall be called Saunders.

SAUNDERS. Yes, sir—madam has explained your case to me.

FRED. My case? What case?

SAUNDERS. Your lapses of memory, sir.

FRED. My lapses of memory . . . ? Ah! Oh yes, yes—well, I shan't want any more coffee, Saunders—er—Myfanwy.

SAUNDERS. You're quite right, sir. I was in the employ of His Grace the Duke of Cidarington for three years. His Grace, one of our foremost golfers, as you well know, sir, never took coffee before a day on the course. His Grace always said that it made his hand unsteady.

FRED. Oh! Really?

SAUNDERS. Yes, sir. And since we're on the subject of golf, allow me to congratulate you. I noticed your bag in the hall, and was delighted to see a complete set of Bobby Jones Steel Shafters. I knew at once that you were a connoisseur.

FRED. Thank you very much, Myfanwy—Saunders.

SAUNDERS. May I ask, sir, what balls you use?

FRED. Well—just ordinary balls.

SAUNDERS. His Grace never used anything except Spaldings. And personally I recommend them myself whenever possible. Do you need me for anything else, sir?

FRED. No. Do you want to say anything more?

SAUNDERS. No, I don't think there is anything. Ah, perhaps there is one thing. Which course are you playing on?

FRED. Chichester.

SAUNDERS. Are you taking all your clubs, sir?

FRED. Yes.

SAUNDERS. Oh dear! Surely you must know, sir, your irons are all you need at Chichester. (*Laughing.*) Oh dear! Your irons! Quite sufficient. (*Goes out.*)

JULIA. She seems all right, doesn't she?

FRED. Quite. (*He rises from the table.*) I wish Willy'd learn to be punctual.

JULIA. Shall I ring him up?

FRED. What for?

JULIA. To bring him down.

FRED. It wouldn't do any good. He's most likely in the bath. For him, that's a big job. He does all his thinking in the bath.

JULIA. He should have been down some time ago, then.

FRED. Don't be bitter, dear.

JULIA. Never mind, you've got the whole week-end before you. Two days on Chichester golf course where, according to Saunders, you can only use your irons, should be more than enough.

FRED. Irons, indeed. I'll take the lot.

JULIA. Sit down quietly and smoke.

(FRED *sits in arm-chair.* JULIA *sits on the edge and lights his cigarette.*)

FRED. What are you going to do?

JULIA. Nothing in particular. I shall do my ballet practice . . . (*She does a couple of exercises.*) and tidy up and dust a bit, to set Saunders a good example. I'm lunching with Jane, and we shall probably go to a matinee.

FRED. There now, didn't I tell you your day would pan out normally?

JULIA. Yes, but I did have a presentiment when I first woke up.

FRED. But it was nothing definite, you said so.

JULIA. Of course it wasn't: you can't define a presentiment, that's what's so horrid, the feeling of being unsettled.

FRED. I expect it's indigestion.

JULIA. No, I really felt quite odd, as though something damnable were going to happen.

FRED. If you go on thinking in that vein, something damnable *will* happen.

JULIA. You're being rather taciturn and important this morning.

FRED. I don't like to see you worrying yourself over nothing.

JULIA. (*Laughing.*) I'm not really—I'm very happy.

FRED. Are you—honestly?

JULIA. Of course.

FRED. Sure?

JULIA. Positive!

FRED. Good. I think it's awfully silly of people to lead unhappy lives, don't you?

JULIA. Yes, I suppose so. We shall both know the first minute we go off one another.

FRED. We've been married five years.

JULIA. A divine five years.

FRED. Yes—wonderful!

JULIA. We're not in love a bit now, you know.

FRED. I don't know anything of the sort.

JULIA. It's true.

FRED. The first violent passion is naturally over—

JULIA. Thank God!

FRED. Why?

JULIA. It's so uncomfortable—passion.

FRED. Yes, but it's a thoroughly fundamental thing; one couldn't do without it.

JULIA. You mean we couldn't.

FRED. No, I don't—we could and are doing without it.

JULIA. One can't be really in love without passion, that's why I said we weren't any more.

FRED. Don't be annoying, Julia, you know perfectly well we've reached a remarkable sublime plane of affection and good comradeship, far above—

JULIA. Just ordinary "being in love." I quite agree.

FRED. We *are* in love.

JULIA. Hypocrite—we're not.

FRED. We are—in a different way.

JULIA. There is no different way. It's exactly the same with everybody. I've discussed it with Jane.

FRED. Damn Jane.

JULIA. By all means—but she knows—just as I do.

FRED. You're psycho-analytical neurotics, both of you.

JULIA. That sounds lovely, Fred!

FRED. Do you always discuss everything with Jane?

JULIA. Yes, everything.

FRED. Even the most intimate relationships—us?

JULIA. Yes, you know I do, I always have.

FRED. I think that's dreadful—

JULIA. Nonsense, you discuss everything with Willy.

FRED. Yes, but differently.

JULIA. Less accurately, I expect, that's the only difference.

FRED. I'm sure married life was much easier in Victorian days.

JULIA. If you think women didn't discuss everything minutely in the Victorian days just as much as they do now, you're very much mistaken.

FRED. But it was all so much simpler.

JULIA. For the men.

FRED. For the women, too; they didn't know so much.

JULIA. They didn't give themselves away so much, poor dears, they were too frightened.

FRED. Anyhow, on the whole I'd rather be as we are.

JULIA. That's right, dear.

FRED. But you're wrong when you say I don't love you any more.

JULIA. I didn't say that at all. I know you love me very much and I love you too—you're a darling. But we're not "in love." Can't you see the difference?

FRED. I suppose so, but I don't want to.

JULIA. Well, we won't go on about it any more—you shall go and play golf and quarrel with Willy, and I'll stay at home and quarrel with Jane, and we'll all be awfully happy. Are you coming home tomorrow?

FRED. Perhaps tonight, if the weather's bad.

JULIA. Well, you might telephone me and let me know.

FRED. All right.

(*There is the sound of the FRONT DOOR BELL.*)

JULIA. There's Willy.

FRED. I'll let him in and save Jasmin the trouble.

JULIA. Saunders.

FRED. Saunders, then. (*Goes out into the hall, and after a moment ushers in* WILLY, *who is also in golfing clothes and looking very nice in them.*)

WILLY. Good morning, Julia—how are you?

JULIA. I'm feeling grand. Fred and I have just had a psychological romp—it was very stimulating.

FRED. It's depressed me for the day.

WILLY. Jane's been a trifle difficult this morning.

FRED. In what way?

WILLY. She woke up with a presentiment.

FRED. Good Lord!

WILLY. She went on about it all through breakfast.

JULIA. How tactless of her! I at least waited until after breakfast.

WILLY. Have you had one too?

JULIA. Yes, a beast! But don't ask me to explain it, it's quite intangible at present.

FRED. We'd better go, Willy, and leave them to their dreary forebodings. We'll be very hearty and jolly all day, and drink a lot of beer at lunch.

WILLY. The car's downstairs.

FRED. How thoughtful of you not to bring it up!

WILLY. Have you got your clubs?

FRED. They're in the hall. I'm only taking my irons.

WILLY. Why?

FRED. Because Saunders said so.

WILLY. Who on earth is Saunders?

FRED. Never mind.

WILLY. Goodbye, Julia—don't encourage Jane too much, for heaven's sake.

JULIA. Whatever encouragement there is will be mutual—I feel in a particularly heart-to-heart mood today.

FRED. Good bye, darling. (*He kisses her.*)

JULIA. Good bye, love—don't forget to telephone. (FRED *and* WILLY *go out amicably.* JULIA *rings the bell on wall and then begins her ballet practice. She hums a little tune, presently crosses to the piano and begins to play the tune.* SAUNDERS *comes in with a tray to clear the breakfast things away.*) Does it feel awful to be in a new place, Saunders?

SAUNDERS. No, ma'am—not particularly.

JULIA. I'm so glad—I'm sure I should be terrified and break everything.

SAUNDERS. It's just getting used to things, ma'am.

JULIA. I hope you're not secretly hurt at our refusing to call you Jasmin?

SAUNDERS. Oh, no, ma'am—I don't mind.

JULIA. It's a sticky name, isn't it—for the house?

SAUNDERS. I've never thought about it much, madam.

JULIA. That's good—then you won't miss it, will you?

SAUNDERS. No, madam.

JULIA. If rather a strange-looking man calls during the morning, will you take him straight to the bathroom?

SAUNDERS. Yes, madam. Shall I run a bath for him?

JULIA. No. He'll be the plumber.

SAUNDERS. Oh! Excuse me, madam. (JULIA *begins to play.* SAUNDERS *continues to clear away. Her attention, however, is not all taken up by her work. She is obviously listening to the tune* JULIA *is playing. Suddenly.*) B flat!

JULIA. (*Surprised.*) What?

SAUNDERS. (*Slightly embarrassed.*) Excuse me, madam. You played B natural. It should be B flat.

JULIA. Oh, you're musical then, Saunders?

SAUNDERS. I was brought up in a convent, madam.

JULIA. Then you're sure it's B flat?

SAUNDERS. Absolutely.

JULIA. (*Goes over the interrupted musical passage.*) You are right, Saunders. It was B flat.

SAUNDERS. Of course. I have an infallible ear. And it's had plenty of practice. For four years I was with Madame Carmen Granado, the celebrated concert pianist. You can't get by me with a wrong note.

JULIA. I realize that.

SAUNDERS. Madame Granado was very sweet to me. She insisted that I used her own piano for practising.

JULIA. Really?

SAUNDERS. She had a Bechstein grand—

JULIA. I'm afraid mine is only a baby grand.

SAUNDERS. Don't let that bother you, madam. Madame Granado was a celebrity, world-famous—I'm used to

making the best of things. Your little instrument'll make a nice change.

JULIA. I'm so pleased—

SAUNDERS. Don't give it another thought, madam. (*Sitting at the piano.*) You'll find that it goes like this . . . (*She begins to play and sing lightly.*)

Meme les Anges succombent a l'amour,
C'est pourquoi done je vous en prie—

(*The DOOR BELL rings.*)

Dieu qui arrange les jours et les sejours,
Laisse moi encore une heure de paradis.

(SAUNDERS *takes no notice of the bell and goes on singing. After a little hesitation,* JULIA *goes to answer the door.* SAUNDERS *goes on with the song.*)

Tous mes amours me semblent comme les fleurs,
Leurs parfume restant douces quand meme—

(*The DOOR BELL rings again.*)

Donne moi tes lévres, ton ame, et ton coeur,
Parce que follement je t'aime—je t'aime—
je t'aime!

(JANE *enters in travelling clothes, carrying a suitcase. She looks extremely startled.* SAUNDERS *continues to sing, without noticing her.*)

Je t'aime—je t'aime—je t'aime! . . .

JANE. (*In a stifled voice.*) Stop singing that song!

SAUNDERS. Oh, ma'am, what a fright you gave me.

JULIA. (*Comes back. To* SAUNDERS.) That'll be all, Saunders. (*To* JANE.) Saunders was just practicing. (SAUNDERS *collects her tray and goes out. The* GIRLS *watch her off.*) I say—why on earth are you all dressed up like that?

JANE. (*Back in the mood in which she entered.*) You don't know—that's all—you just don't know.

JULIA. Why, what on earth's the matter?

JANE. And then to come in and find your maid singing *that* song. I should like a glass of water.

JULIA. What nonsense—you've only just finished breakfast.

JANE. We must both go away at once.

JULIA. (*Amiably.*) All right, where shall we go?

JANE. Don't be maddening, Julia, I'm serious.

JULIA. If you'd stop trying to get dramatic effects and tell me what it's all about—

JANE. (*Handing her a postcard.*) Read that.

JULIA. It's the Blue Grotto at Capri.

JANE. (*Impatiently.*) Yes, I know it is, but read it.

JULIA. (*Turning it over.*) Oh, my God! (*She reads it carefully.*)

JANE. There now!

JULIA. This is frightful. (*She rings bell.*)

JANE. What are you ringing for?

JULIA. I want a glass of water.

JANE. What are we going to do?

JULIA. Think—we must think! (*Enter* SAUNDERS.) Two glasses of water, please, Saunders.

SAUNDERS. Yes, ma'am. (*She goes out.*)

JULIA. When is he coming?

JANE. Now, I suppose—today—any moment!

JULIA. Oh, Jane, I wonder if he's changed?

JANE. No, I shouldn't think so—that type never does.

JULIA. Don't say "that type" like that—it's most irreverent.

(*Re-enter* SAUNDERS *with two glasses of water on a salver.*)

JANE. (*Taking one.*) Thank you very much.

JULIA. (*Also taking one.*) Thank you, Saunders.

(*Exit* SAUNDERS.)

JANE. I packed just a few things very hurriedly—I thought perhaps Brighton for a few days until our passports were properly viséd.

JULIA. Passports?

JANE. Yes, for America.

JULIA. Don't be ridiculous.

JANE. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm all worked up—it was

a most frightful shock, and the funny thing is that I had a presentiment when I woke this morning.

JULIA. So did I.

JANE. There, now!

JULIA. We must keep calm and talk it over quietly, it's the only way. Have a cigarette. (*She hands* JANE *box.*)

JANE. (*Taking one.*) Oh, thank you.

JULIA. (*Also taking one and lighting both.*) Now then, we've got the whole day before us.

JANE. (*Fervently.*) I only hope we have.

JULIA. You don't think he'll arrive before lunch?

JANE. He might. He might. He never had the slightest restraint. Oh, after five years, I do think it's cruel! (*She takes off her hat.*)

JULIA. It might have happened before; that would have been much, much worse.

JANE. I don't know. I wonder. We might have had more strength to resist.

JULIA. Oh no, dear, we've never been exactly bursting with that kind of strength.

JANE. (*Intensely.*) You know what we are, don't you? We're the slaves of coincidence, and we always have been, it does make life so dreadfully difficult!

JULIA. Yes, but easier at moments; we can at least face it together.

JANE. It's going to be agony—facing *him* together.

JULIA. We must be firm; after all, we're not in love with him any more.

JANE. Not at the moment—but suppose when he arrives he's just as attractive and glamorous as ever. Oh, we shall both go down like ninepins.

JULIA. I shan't. I know, Jane, I shan't. I've changed in seven years. I'm too fond of Fred.

JANE. Yes? I've been bolstering myself up like that all the morning, arguing that I'm too fond of Willy. Everything's quite different now. . . . But I don't know—I'm afraid—terribly afraid. You see, Julia, we have got to face facts—we're not really *in love* with our husbands any more. I had a scene with Willy about it only last

night. We're awfully happy, and there's a lovely firm basis of comradeship and affection and all that, but the real "being in love" part is dead! Well, you couldn't expect anything else after all this time.

JULIA. Yes, I told Fred all that this morning.

JANE. Oh, Julia, I do wish we hadn't—when we did!

JULIA. It's a fat lot of use wishing that now.

JANE. Hey, you, give me back the Blue Grotto.

JULIA. (*Handing it to her.*) It's typical of him to send that, anyhow. Typical.

JANE. (*Looking at it.*) Maurice! Maurice! It gives me a fearful sort of illegitimate thrill even to look at his name.

JULIA. (*Warningly.*) Now then, Jane!

JANE. I wonder if he realizes he's been the one grand passion in both our lives?

JULIA. Of course he does; it's almost his profession.

JANE. Our love for our husbands—that's been on an entirely different plane all along—nicer, worthier, and all that sort of thing, but not half so soul-shattering.

JULIA. I wonder if he can speak English now?

JANE. I hope not, he was so lovely in French.

JULIA. What would Willy and Fred say if they knew?

JANE. (*Shuddering.*) Oh, don't!

JULIA. Fred, I think, would be sensible, after the first shock had worn off.

JANE. Willy wouldn't.

JULIA. It isn't as if we'd been unfaithful *since* marriage—after all, it all happened before.

JANE. Yes, but men never forgive that sort of thing, no matter when it happened.

JULIA. It seems so unfair that men should have the monopoly of wild oats.

JANE. They haven't—but it's our duty to make them think they have.

JULIA. When I think of Italy, and the cypresses and the moonlight and the glorious romance of it all—

JANE. Don't, dear, you'll only upset yourself.

JULIA. Do you remember how I wrote to you in Scot-

land and told you all about it? (*Far away.*) Oh, how I adored him! And nobody knew—nobody knew a thing. I left Aunt Mary a week earlier than I said—and got out of the train at Pisa—he was waiting for me—we used to do and look at the Leaning Tower night after night—

JANE. Yes, and I was so worried because I guessed—

JULIA. And then that lovely song he used to sing all the time—sometimes on the terribly cracked piano at the hotel, and sometimes just walking along the street. (*Begins to sing.*) "Un peu d'amour . . ."

JANE. Julia, please, don't—don't! Because he used to sing that song to *me,* afterwards—

(JULIA *keeps singing, and* JANE *joins in. They are singing together when* SAUNDERS *crosses from the kitchen to answer the front door. She sings a couple of bars with them. They are rather annoyed.* SAUNDERS *enters with a postcard on a salver. She takes it to* JULIA.)

SAUNDERS. The post, madam.

JULIA. (*Jumps slightly—in stifled tones.*) That will do, Saunders.

(*Exit* SAUNDERS.)

JANE. (*With her eyes tight shut.*) Don't tell me, I know—it's the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

JULIA. Of course.

JANE. Oh, what a devil!

JULIA. (*Reading.*) "J'arriverai a Londres cette semaine —j'espere avec tout mon coeur que vous me n'oubliez pas. Maurice." Cette semaine!

JANE. And today's Saturday! What are we going to do?

JULIA. Listen, Jane, we're in for a bitter time. We must summon up all our courage and face it properly. Have another cigarette. (*Handing her box.*) We must get

the whole situation laid out quite clearly, like Patience, then we shall know where we are. (*Sitting back on sofa.*) Now then—

JANE. Well, now then what?

JULIA. (*In businesslike tones.*) Two wretchedly happy married women—

JANE. Yes.

JULIA. Both during the first two years of their married lives having treated their exceedingly nice husbands to the requisite amount of passion and adoration—

JANE. Yes—yes!

JULIA. —after a certain time the first ecstasies of passion and adoration subside, leaving in some instances an arid waste of discontent—

JANE. Yes—lovely, darling. Yes?

JULIA. In some instances rank boredom and rampant adultery on both sides.

JANE. Don't be gross, Julia.

JULIA. And in other rare instances, such as ours—complete happiness and tranquillity devoid of violent emotions of any kind with the possible exception of golf.

JANE. Quite.

JULIA. Quite. And there lies the trouble—the lack of violent emotion, fireworks, etc.

JANE. I don't want fireworks.

JULIA. Neither do I—not the nice part of me, but there's a beastly, unworthy thing in both of us waiting to spring—it sprang before our marriage, and it's waiting to spring again—it hasn't been fed for a long time—

JANE. (*Shocked.*) Julia!

JULIA. To put it mildly, dear, we're both ripe for a lapse.

JANE. (*Going into peals of laughter.*) No, it's a relapse! Oh, dear!

JULIA. (*Also collapsing.*) It's perfectly appalling, and we're laughing on the very edge of an abyss!

JANE. I can't help it, it's sheer hysteria.

JULIA. We both happened to throw our respective bonnets over the same windmill—

JANE. (*Giggling weakly.*) Oh, do stop!

JULIA. (*Relentlessly.*) And in a critical moment in our matrimonial careers, that windmill is coming to wreck us.

JANE. (*Wailing.*) Yes, but I don't want to be wrecked! I don't want to be wrecked!

JULIA. Ssshh! Saunders will hear you.

JANE. (*Panic-stricken.*) Julia, don't you see? What I suggested in the first place, it's our only way—we must go—at once—anywhere out of London!

JULIA. I shall do no such thing—it would be most cowardly.

JANE. A blind goat could see through that, dear.

JULIA. All the same, I shall stay and face it.

JANE. If you do, I shall.

JULIA. There is not the least necessity for us both to suffer.

JANE. If you imagine I should enjoy being by myself in Brighton while you were gallivanting about London with Maurice, you're very much mistaken.

JULIA. I should be too much upset to gallivant.

JANE. No, dear, it won't do.

JULIA. What do you mean, "it won't do"?

JANE. We stand or fall together.

JULIA. I don't mind standing together, but I won't fall together—it would be most embarrassing.

JANE. Anyway, I am not going to be left out of anything.

JULIA. Very well then, I'll go away and you can stay.

JANE. (*Eagerly.*) Yes. Yes. That's all right!

JULIA. What about standing or falling together?

JANE. (*Nobly.*) Well, you see, I'm willing to sacrifice myself for *you.*

JULIA. Liar!

JANE. Julia, how can you?

JULIA. I thought so.

JANE. (*Airily.*) I don't know what you mean!

JULIA. Oh yes, you do.

JANE. If you're going to be cross, I shall go.

JULIA. I'm not in the least bit cross. I'm just seeing through you, that's all.

JANE. Seeing through me! But who was it who wouldn't leave London today because it would be cowardly? Huh!

JULIA. (*Sweetly.*) Are you insinuating, dear, that I *want* to stay?

JANE. Not insinuating, dear, I'm dead certain of it.

JULIA. (*Laughing forcedly.*) Ha, ha! Really, Jane!

JANE. You're simply longing for him.

JULIA. Jane!

JANE. You are, you know you are!

JULIA. So are you!

JANE. Certainly I am.

JULIA. Oh, Jane, we must be very careful.

JANE. I'm always careful.

JULIA. I don't mean about him, I mean about us.

JANE. Oh!

JULIA. Don't you see what's going to happen?

JANE. Yes—yes, I do!

JULIA. It's always the way, when sex comes up it wrecks everything. It's a beastly, rotten thing—

JANE. It didn't wreck us before.

JULIA. We weren't together before. If we had been, we should have been the blackest enemies in five minutes.

JANE. Yes—as it was you were a bit upset when I met him afterwards.

JULIA. I was awfully sweet about it.

JANE. It was too late for you to be anything else. I took jolly good care not to let you know until it was all over.

JULIA. Yes, that's true.

JANE. We've been friends, great friends, ever since we were eight and nine respectively—

JULIA. And in all probability this will break all that up.

JANE. Certainly—unless we are cunning.

JULIA. (*Firmly.*) Well, I won't go away.

JANE. Neither will I—we're both firmly agreed on *that* point.

JULIA. It's only natural, after all, that we should want to see him again.

JANE. And it's also only natural that when we do see him again, we shall fight like tigers.

JULIA. Oh, Jane darling, do you think we will really?

JANE. It's unavoidable. We almost started just now out of sheer anticipation.

JULIA. Oh, Jane darling, how miserable I am!

JANE. Nonsense, you're thoroughly thrilled and excited.

JULIA. Not altogether; I'm torn between my better self and my worse self. I never realized there were two of me until this moment so clearly defined. I want terribly badly to be a true, faithful wife, and look after Fred and live in peace, and I want terribly to have violent and illicit love made to me and be frenziedly happy and supremely miserable.

JANE. We're both in the same boat. But the most awful contingency is that one of us may give in utterly, leaving the other shrouded forever in unrewarded virtue.

JULIA. Meaning the one he fancies most?

JANE. Exactly.

JULIA. Well, there won't be any virtue at all—just biting jealousy.

JANE. We must make a vow that however badly one or both of us behaves during the black and scarlet period before us—when it's all over and died down, we can reinstate ourselves on the same concrete basis of friendship and intimacy without the slightest sacrificing of pride on either side.

JULIA. Oh yes, yes, Jane darling, I vow it now!

JANE. (*Kissing her.*) Darling! So do I—whatever we do—

JULIA. —and whatever we say—

JANE. —when temporarily unhinged by sex—

JULIA. —afterwards—perfect friendship—

JANE. —and *no* apologies!

JULIA. Not one. (*Suddenly.*) Jane, I can't go through with it after all.

JANE. Now, Julia—you made a vow—

JULIA. I'm sorry, I can't. It would be too frightful.

JANE. Agony.

JULIA. Let's do your plan, and fly.

JANE. Together?

JULIA. (*Impatiently.*) Yes, oh yes—together!

JANE. He'll think it so rude.

JULIA. Don't weaken, Jane.

JANE. Frenchmen are so particular about that sort of thing.

JULIA. It can't be helped, one can carry good manners too far.

JANE. We ought to be hospitable.

JULIA. Well, as neither of us can be hospitable without giving him the run of the house, we might as well leave him to freeze on the doorstep.

JANE. I know—we can leave him a letter.

JULIA. Of course, saying we've been called away.

JANE. Yes—that would ease my conscience.

JULIA. Now you write it while I pack a few things. Saunders! Saunders!

JANE. Your French is much better than mine.

JULIA. Never mind—I'll help. (*Enter* SAUNDERS.) Saunders, I want you to pack a small suitcase—I've been called away . . .

SAUNDERS. Yes, ma'am. (*They* BOTH *go off into bedroom, leaving door open.*)

JANE. (*On sofa.*) Shall I start "Mon cher Maurice"?

JULIA. (*Off.*) No, "Notre cher"—it's less compromising.

JANE. (*After writing for a moment.*) All right. Listen. "Notre cher Maurice, Nous sommes desolees, ce n'est pas possible pour nois de vous voir cette fois. . . ."

JULIA. (*Off.*) Not "cette fois," it sounds so sly.

JANE. What shall I put?

JULIA. While you are in London— No, Saunders, I shan't need these sort of things at all—

JANE. What's while?

JULIA. I haven't the faintest idea.

SAUNDERS. "Pendant," Madam.

JANE. Oh, you speak French, Saunders?

SAUNDERS. Yes, ma'am.

JULIA. Good gracious!

JANE. Good gracious nothing. It's wonderful. Saunders, how would you say, "We are very happily married?"

SAUNDERS. "Nous sommes mariees maintenant tres hereusement"—

JANE. Thank you. You really are a treasure, Saunders!

SAUNDERS. Thank you, ma'am.

JULIA. Do you think this is quite the moment to announce that we're happily married?

JANE. Now or never.

JULIA. Well, put "isn't it fun" after it.

JANE. I don't know how to.

JULIA. Saunders will.

SAUNDERS. "C'est amusant, n'est ce pas?"

JANE. C'est amusant, n'est-ce pas! Yes, but it isn't particularly. Besides he'll think it so facetious.

JULIA. It probably will be to him, he'll roar with laughter.

JANE. Oh, very well. (*She writes.*)

JULIA. Put "have you got a beard yet?"

JANE. (*Laughing, she writes.*) Oh! Wouldn't it be awful if he had!

JULIA. Yes, but much less dangerous.

JANE. Saunders, is beard masculine or feminine?

JULIA. Make it feminine, he'll appreciate it more. That's right, Saunders, in the top drawer, with my stockings.

JANE. (*Writing hard.*) I think that's all that's necessary now.

JULIA. Tidy up, Saunders. (*She enters in travelling things carrying a small suit case.*) Yes, dear, finish it off gracefully.

JANE. "Nous esperons pour vous voir quelquefois bientot." We must put that, it's mere politeness.

JULIA. Yes. Now we'll both sign our names. (*They sign their names. They then notice that they are both wearing hats trimmed with almost identical birds. With a little cry* JULIA *runs back into her room to change hers.*)

JANE. I'll get an envelope.

JULIA. (*Off.*) I think perhaps we ought to explain to Fred and Willy, don't you?

JANE. We haven't time to leave any more notes, we'll telephone.

JULIA. Where from?

JANE. Aberdeen! Come on!

JULIA. Saunders, we're leaving a note for a foreign gentleman when he calls. (*As she comes out of her bedroom having changed her hat.*)

SAUNDERS. (*Off.*) Very good, ma'am.

JANE. All right, I'm ready.

JULIA. I'm glad! I'm tremendously glad—we're doing the right thing—don't you feel marvellous?

JANE. No—awful!

JULIA. Never mind—our better selves have won, in spite of everything.

JANE. Yes.

(*They go towards the door with their bags. They almost reach it, when there comes a LOUD RING and KNOCK at the front door. They both stand still as though they had been struck—looking at one another. Then with one accord they plank down their bags.*)

JULIA. It's Maurice!

JANE. You're right.

JULIA. We're sunk.

JANE. I suppose so.

JULIA. (*With determination.*) Anyhow, it will be good for our French.

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE: *The same. Evening.*

AT RISE: *When the CURTAIN rises* JULIA *is looking out of the window.* JANE *is seated on the chair Right of table. They are both elaborately dressed. The dinner table is laid for two and there are some lovely flowers in the room.*

JANE. I'm extremely hungry, Julia.

JULIA. So am I—ravenous.

JANE. It's getting on for nine.

JULIA. I know.

JANE. There's not the least likelihood of him arriving at this time.

JULIA. He might, especially if the Paris train were late.

JANE. We don't know whether he was coming from Paris.

JULIA. Where else could he be coming from?

JANE. Don't snap at me, Julia—he might be coming from the Channel Islands, or Brussels—he's frightfully cosmopolitan.

JULIA. I'm quite certain that he's coming from Paris.

JANE. Well, anyway, the idea was for him to arrive unexpectedly, discover us dining together in charming domestic surroundings, not sitting twiddling our thumbs with eager strained expressions, with the room decorated like a Bridal Suite.

JULIA. That, dear, was not in the best of taste. (SAUNDERS *enters.*) What have you got there, Saunders?

SAUNDERS. Salted almonds, madam.

JULIA. Oh, good.

JANE. Are you hungry, Saunders?

SAUNDERS. No, madam. I've already eaten.

JANE. Oh, you have.

JULIA. Will you have an almond?

JANE. Well—it may assuage the pangs a little.

JULIA. (*Takes plate to* JANE.) The table looks pretty, doesn't it?

JANE. (*Weakly.*) Lovely, darling.

JULIA. I'm sorry I haven't got a pebble for you to suck to take away your hunger. (SAUNDERS *giggles, back to audience at serving table.*) What are you smiling at, Saunders?

SAUNDERS. I'm so sorry, ma'am—

JULIA. You were going to say something?

SAUNDERS. If you'll allow me to, ma'am. Pebbles are not sucked to take away hunger, but thirst.

JULIA. Oh yes, I know that, all right.

SAUNDERS. In hot climates pebbles are sucked a great deal—they're sucked by the nomads in the desert.

JULIA. Oh, really now! I suppose you were in the desert yourself?

SAUNDERS. That's right. I was in the desert with the Red Cross. I also visited several desert stations when I was with Ensa. Pebbles are also wonderful for stammerers. Demosthenes said—

JULIA. Oh, yes, yes—very fine philosopher, wasn't he, a man with a great beard—

SAUNDERS. They are also very helpful with articulation, are a great help for elocution, and quite remarkable for developing the muscles of the tongue, and certainly—

JULIA. Thank you, Saunders. Curtain!

SAUNDERS. Very good, madam. (*Goes out.*)

JULIA. She makes me thirsty, with her talk of pebbles. It's been the most shattering day.

JANE. I shall never forget your face when, after all that suspense, the plumber arrived.

JULIA. I'm thankful he did, all the same.

JANE. Why?

JULIA. Domestic reasons.

JANE. And why do you suppose that Violet Coswick chose today of all days to come to tea?

JULIA. And talk exclusively of Paris and Frenchmen—

JANE. She has a very unpleasant mind, poor Violet, I suppose it must be the result of so much repression.

JULIA. Repression of what, dear?

JANE. Everything.

JULIA. She lacks opportunities—it's her clothes, I think.

JANE. They don't lack opportunities—they grab them wholeheartedly.

JULIA. I've never seen so many things on one woman.

JANE. And what was the meaning of that hat?

JULIA. It appeared to be kept on by suction. Shall we have a drink?

JANE. Oh no, not on empty tummies.

JULIA. (*Ringing bell.*) I shall get deep depression if we don't.

JANE. (*Resigned.*) We shall lapse into complete silliness and when Maurice does come we shall giggle helplessly at him and our heads will wobble.

JULIA. (*As* SAUNDERS *enters.*) Martinis, please, Saunders. Strong ones.

JANE. Oh, Julia!

JULIA. (*Firmly.*) Very strong ones.

SAUNDERS. Yes, ma'am.

JULIA. And if one isn't enough, we shall have two.

JANE. Not on your life!

SAUNDERS. If you will allow me to say so, ma'am, several drinks never do any harm. It is only the first which is dangerous, after that the damage is done.

JANE. Obviously you speak from experience.

SAUNDERS. I used to be a barmaid, madam. (*She goes out.*)

JULIA. Well, all I ask is that she was never an item in the News of the World!

JANE. (*Plaintively.*) Julia . . . Julia—I don't believe he ever will come.

JULIA. Neither do I. It's probably all an elfin joke—he was always being elfin.

JANE. And so terribly unreliable.

JULIA. I wouldn't trust him an inch.

JANE. *I* never did.

JULIA. All the same, he was a darling.

JANE. Adorable, damn him!

JULIA. And he doesn't know many people in England.

JANE. I think he *will* come.

JULIA. So do I.

JANE. And he'll kiss our hands and look up at us while he does it—you remember?

JULIA. I remember all right.

JANE. And then he'll laugh and show all his teeth.

JULIA. Many more than are usual.

JANE. I say, you know what we're doing, don't you?

JULIA. What?

JANE. Working ourselves up.

JULIA. We have been all day.

JANE. I should like to scream—scream and scream—and roll around on the floor—

JULIA. So should I—but we must restrain ourselves.

JANE. It's want of food.

JULIA. That's what it is.

(SAUNDERS *comes in with cocktails.*)

JANE. Oh, don't let's wait any longer.

JULIA. All right. (*She takes cocktail and takes glass to* JANE.) Dinner, please, Saunders.

JANE. And quickly.

SAUNDERS. Very good, ma'am. Shall I open the champagne?

JANE. (*Imploringly.*) Not yet.

JULIA. Yes, yes. Open it. Champagne is a great strengthener.

SAUNDERS. Very great, ma'am. The patients where I used to work—

JULIA. (*Exasperated.*) Oh, yes. Of course, she worked in a hospital.

SAUNDERS. How ever did you guess, ma'am?

JULIA. I think perhaps it's something about the way you walk.

SAUNDERS. My walk? I don't understand what you mean.

JULIA. No, neither do I, Saunders. You may serve dinner now.

SAUNDERS. Very good, madam. (*Goes out.*)

JULIA. If she goes on I shall throw her through the door.

JANE. Listen! There's a taxi, it's stopping outside.

JULIA. Quick! (*They* BOTH *rush to the window and peer out.*)

JANE. It's too dark—I can't see.

JULIA. He's got a black hat.

JANE. It must be—it must be.

JULIA. Oh no, it's the beastly woman from upstairs—how dare she drive about in taxis.

JANE. Oh, look, there's another coming round the corner. (*They* BOTH *crane to see.*)

SAUNDERS. (*Re-enters with oysters.*) Dinner is served, ma'am.

JANE. (*As they return to the table with great dignity.*) It was lovely of you to think of oysters, dear.

JULIA. They do give one a "grand" feeling. It's awfully necessary for us to feel "grand" tonight.

JANE. Wouldn't it be awful if Fred and Willy came home!

JULIA. (*With a warning look towards* SAUNDERS.) Shhh!

JANE. Drunk.

JULIA. What do you mean?

JANE. I said wouldn't it be dreadful if Fred and Willy came home drunk?

JULIA. Why should they?

JANE. (*Grimacing towards* SAUNDERS.) Don't be silly, Julia.

JULIA. Oh—yes, of course, frightful. I'd forgotten it was Saturday.

JANE. Saturday?

JULIA. Yes, naturally depressing in November because of the fog.

JANE. Yes, of course, but only if you pay your subscription in advance—

(SAUNDERS, *having served champagne and oysters, goes out.*)

JULIA. Poor Saunders.

JANE. She looked extremely startled.

JULIA. You really must be more careful, Jane.

JANE. I'm sorry, but I quite forgot she was there.

JULIA. I say, wouldn't it be too wonderful if he arrived suddenly now?

JANE. I should choke.

JULIA. You're sure you left a thoroughly clear message at your flat in case he went there first?

JANE. Of course.

JULIA. We're bound to get the most frightful shock when we do see him.

JANE. Well, I don't really see why.

JULIA. He's bound to have got fat, or something.

JANE. No, no, he won't have changed; he wouldn't come at all if he had because he's far too conceited.

JULIA. Oh no, not conceited, a little vain perhaps, naturally.

JANE. With those eyes who can blame him?

JULIA. And those hands—

JANE. And teeth—

JULIA. And legs! Oh, Jane!

JANE. Oh, Julia!

(*Re-enter* SAUNDERS *with "Oeufs au plat Bercy" on separate dishes.*)

JULIA. The cushions of the carriages are always so dusty, I find.

JANE. She ought never to have been burnt at the stake because she was such a very nice girl.

JULIA. I can hardly wait for strawberries to come in again.

FINISH READING THIS SCRIPT

Visit our website to purchase the full script or to explore other titles.

www.samuelfrench.com
www.samuelfrench.co.uk

To stay up to date on all that we are doing, follow us on social media:



*Titles for licensing are subject to availability depending on your territory.

SF PERUSALS