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

Fen

A Drama

Caryl Churchill

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

SAMUELFRENCH.COM
SAMUELFRENCH-LONDON.CO.UK

Copyright © 1983, 1984 by Caryl Churchill
"Girl's Song" Copyright © 1983 by Illona Sekaez
All Rights Reserved

FEN 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 978-0-573-61915-1

www.SamuelFrench.com
www.SamuelFrench-London.co.uk

FOR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

UNITED STATES AND CANADA
Info@SamuelFrench.com
1-866-598-8449

UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE
Plays@SamuelFrench-London.co.uk
020-7255-4302

Each title is subject to availability from Samuel French, depending upon country of performance. Please be aware that *FEN* 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 *FEN* 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.

Fen was first performed by the Joint Stock Theatre Group at the University of Essex Theatre on 20 January 1983 and opened at the Almeida Theatre, London on 16 February 1983, with the following cast:

SHIRLEY SHONA MISS CADE MARGARET	Linda Bassett
BOY ANGELA DEB MRS FINCH	Amelda Brown
JAPANESE BUSINESSMAN NELL MAY MAVIS	Cecily Hobbs
MRS HASSETT BECKY ALICE IVY	Tricia Kelly
VAL GHOST	Jennie Stoller
WILSON FRANK MR TEWSON GEOFFREY	Bernard Strother

Directed by Les Waters
Designed by Annie Smart
Lighting by Tom Donnellan
Original music by Illona Sekacz

This play was written after a workshop in a village in the Fens.

Note on layout

A speech usually follows the one immediately before it BUT:
1 when one character starts speaking before the other has finished the point of interruption is marked /.

eg. DEB: You shut up, / none of your business.
MAY: Don't speak to your mum like that. etc

2 a character sometimes continues speaking right through another's speech.

eg. GEOFFREY: We had terrible times. If I had cracked tomatoes for my tea / I
SHIRLEY: It's easy living here like I do now.
GEOFFREY: thought I was lucky. etc

'It was work, work, work, it was all their lives.'
Retired School Teacher

'What's the point of working till you drop?'
Union Branch Secretary

'I'm the only Marxist in the Fens.'
Smallholder

'They must think I'm off the road.'
Smallholder

'If you don't believe, you don't see anything.'
Retired landworker

PUBLIC THEATER/LUESTHER HALL

A NEW YORK SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL PRODUCTION

JOSEPH PAPP

PRESENTS

LONDON'S JOINT STOCK THEATRE GROUP'S PRODUCTION OF

FEN

WRITTEN BY
Caryl Churchill

DIRECTED BY
Les Waters

DESIGNED BY
Annie Smart

LIGHTING BY
Tom Donnellan

WITH
Linda Bassett Amelda Brown Cecily Hobbs
Tricia Kelly Jennie Stoller Bernard Strother

Associate Producer
Jason Steven Cohen

CHARACTERS
(in order of appearance)

BOY SCARING CROWS ..... **AMELDA BROWN**

JAPANESE BUSINESSMAN ..... **CECILY HOBBS**

LANDWORKERS
- Wilson ..... **BERNARD STROTHER**
- Shirley ..... **LINDA BASSETT**
- Nell ..... **CECILY HOBBS**
- Val ..... **JENNIE STOLLER**
- Angela ..... **AMELDA BROWN**

MRS. HASSETT, A Ganger ..... **TRICIA KELLY**

FRANK, A Farm Labourer ..... **BERNARD STROTHER**

DEB, Val's daughter, age 9 ..... **AMELDA BROWN**

SHONA, Val's daughter, age 6 ..... **LINDA BASSETT**

BECKY, Angela's stepdaughter, age 15 ..... **TRICIA KELLY**

MAY, Val's mother ..... **CECILY HOBBS**

MISS CADE, A Businesswoman ..... **LINDA BASSETT**

MR. TEWSON, A Farmer ..... **BERNARD STROTHER**

WOMAN WORKING IN THE FIELDS ..... **JENNIE STOLLER**

ALICE, A Landworker ..... **TRICIA KELLY**

GEOFFREY, Shirley's husband ..... **BERNARD STROTHER**

BAPTISTS:
- Mavis ..... **CECILY HOBBS**
- Margaret ..... **LINDA BASSETT**
- Mrs. Finch ..... **AMELDA BROWN**

IVY, May's mother ..... **TRICIA KELLY**

Original Music by
ILONA SEKACZ

A New York Shakespeare Festival Production/Newman Theater

Joseph Papp

presents

FEN

by

Caryl Churchill

Directed by
Les Waters

Scenery and Costumes by
Annie Smart

Lighting by
Tom Donnellan

with

Robin Bartlett **Linda Griffiths** **Ellen Parker**
Pamela Reed **David Strathairn** **Concetta Tomei**

Associate Producer
Jason Steven Cohen

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

BOY SCARING CROWS ..... PAMELA REED
JAPANESE BUSINESSMAN ..... CONCETTA TOMEI
LANDWORKERS:
- Wilson ..... DAVID STRATHAIRN
- Shirley ..... LINDA GRIFFITHS
- Nell ..... CONCETTA TOMEI
- Val ..... ELLEN PARKER
- Angela ..... PAMELA REED

MRS. HASSETT, A Ganger ..... ROBIN BARTLETT
FRANK, A Farm Labourer ..... DAVID STRATHAIRN
DEB, Val's daughter, age 9 ..... PAMELA REED
SHONA, Val's daughter, age 6 ..... LINDA GRIFFITHS
BECKY, Angela's stepdaughter, age 15 ..... ROBIN BARTLETT
MAY, Val's mother ..... CONCETTA TOMEI
MISS CADE, A Businesswoman ..... LINDA GRIFFITHS
MR. TEWSON, A Farmer ..... DAVID STRATHAIRN
WOMAN WORKING IN THE FIELD ..... ELLEN PARKER
ALICE, A Landworker ..... ROBIN BARTLETT
GEOFFREY, Shirley's husband ..... DAVID STRATHAIRN
BAPTISTS:
- Mavis ..... CONCETTA TOMEI
- Margaret ..... LINDA GRIFFITHS
- Mrs. Finch ..... PAMELA REED

IVY, May's mother ..... ROBIN BARTLETT

The Fens are in the east of England, less than a hundred miles north of London. Originally under water, large areas of land were reclaimed for agricultural use from the seventeenth century onwards. It is now one of the richest farming areas in England

Original Music by
ILONA SEKACZ

The original Joint Stock Company production of Caryl Churchill's Fen had its American premiere at the Public Theater last spring as part of the "Britain Salutes New York" Festival.

Fen

As the audience comes in, a BOY, alone in a field, is scaring crows with a rattle. There is a thick fog. As time passes he gets weaker. It gets dark.

Scene One

A fen. A fog. JAPANESE BUSINESSMAN.

Japanese Businessman. Mr. Takai, Tokyo Company, welcomes you to the fen. Most expensive earth in England. Two thousand pounds acre. Long time ago, under water. Fishes and eels swimming here. Not true people had webbed feet but did walk on stilts. Wild people, fen tigers. In 1630 rich lords planned to drain fen, change swamp into grazing land, far thinking men, brave investors. Fen people wanted to keep fishes and eels to live on, no vision. Refuse work on drainage, smash dykes, broke sluices. Many problems. But in the end we have this beautiful earth. Very efficient, flat land, plough right up to edge, no waste. This farm, one of our twenty-five farms, very good investment. Belongs to Baxter Nolesford Ltd. which belongs to Reindorp Smith Farm Land trust, which belongs 65% to our company. We now among many illustrious landowners, Esso, Gallagher, Imperial Tobacco, Equitable Life, all love this excellent earth. How beautiful English countryside. Now I find teashop, warm fire, old countryman to tell old tales.

Scene Two

WOMEN and a BOY working in a row, potato picking down a field. VAL thirty, ANGELA twenty-eight, SHIRLEY fifty, NELL forty, WILSON sixteen. MRS. HASSET forty-five, gangmaster, stands at one end of the field watching them. SHIRLEY sings the fireman's song from children's TV programme Trumpton.

SHIRLEY. (*sings*):
Pugh, Pugh, Barney McGrew,
Cuthbert, Dibble, Grub.
Da da diddidi da
Diddidi diddidi diddidi da
Da da diddidi da
Diddidi diddidi da, pom.

(*ANGELA joins in and sings with her. NELL joins in. VAL stops and stands staring.*)

NELL. You all right, girl?

(*NELL doesn't stop working. VAL goes down the field to the end where MRS. HASSETT is.*)

MRS. HASSETT. What's the matter, Val? Took short?
VAL. I've got to leave now.
MRS. HASSETT. What do you mean, got to leave? It ent three o'clock.
VAL. I know, but I'm going.
MRS. HASSETT. Who's going to do your work then? Mr. Coleman wants this done today. How does it make me look?

VAL. Sorry, I can't help it.

MRS. HASSETT. You think twice before you ask me for work again because I'll think twice an' all. So where you off to so fast?

VAL. Just back home.

MRS. HASSETT. What's waiting there then?

VAL. I've got to. I've gone. Never mind.

MRS. HASSETT. Wait then, I'll give you a lift halfway.

VAL. I've got to go now.

MRS. HASSETT. You'll be quicker waiting. I don't owe you nothing for today.

VAL. You do.

MRS. HASSETT. Not with you messing me about like this, not if you want another chance.

VAL. I'll start walking and you pick me up.

(*VAL goes. The others arrive at the end of the field. WILSON is first.*)

MRS. HASSETT. What's your name? Wilson? The idea's to get the work done properly not win the Derby. Want to come again?

WILSON. Yes, Mrs. Hassett.

MRS. HASSETT. Because if you work regular with me it's done proper with stamps. I don't want you signing on at the same time because that makes trouble for me, never mind you. And if I catch you with them moonlighting gangs out of town you don't work for me again. Work for peanuts them buggers, spoil it for the rest of you, so keep well clear.

NELL. Spoil it for you, Mrs. Hassett.

MRS. HASSETT. Spoil it for all of us, Nell.

ANGELA. What's up with Val?

NELL. You've got two colour tellies to spoil.

MRS. HASSETT. Think you'd get a better deal by yourself? Think you'd get a job at all?

ANGELA. Where's she gone? Ent she well?

MRS. HASSETT. She don't say she's ill. She don't say what.

NELL. You paying her what she's done?

MRS. HASSETT. Will you mind your own business or she won't be the only one don't get picked up tomorrow morning.

NELL. It is my business. You'd treat me the same.

ANGELA. Nell, do give over.

SHIRLEY. Come on, Nell, let's get on with it.

NELL. She treat you the same.

WILSON. If I do hers, do I get her money?

MRS. HASSETT. You'll have enough to do to finish your own.

WILSON. Can I try?

MRS. HASSETT. If you do it careful.

NELL. Am I crazy? Am I crazy? Am I crazy?

MRS. HASSETT. I'm off now, ladies and gent. Can't stand about in this wind. I should get a move on, you've plenty to do.

ANGELA. Nell, you're just embarrassing.

(*MRS. HASSETT goes. SHIRLEY and WILSON have already started work. ANGELA starts. NELL starts.*)

SCENE THREE

FRANK thirty driving a tractor. Earphones. We can hear the music he's listening to. The music fades down, we hear him talking to himself.

FRANK. Mr. Tewson, can I have a word with you?

Yes, Frank, what can I do for you lad?

I'm finding things a bit difficult.

So am I, Frank. Hard times.

Fellow come round from the union last week.

Little fellow with a squint?

I don't hold with strikes myself, Mr. Tewson.

I'm not against the union, Frank. I can see the sense of it for your big newfangle farms. Not when people are friends.

Fact is, Mr. Tewson, living separate from the wife and kids I can't seem to manage.

It's lucky I'm able to let them stay on in the cottage. The council housing's not up to much eh?

I'm very grateful. But Mr. Tewson I can't live on the money.

You'd get half as much again in a factory, Frank. I wouldn't blame you. But I remember when your dad worked for my dad and you and your brother played about the yard. Your poor old brother, eh Frank? It was great we got him into that home when your mum died. We're like family. We'd both put up with a lot to go on living this good old life here.

I hate you, you old bugger.

(*FRANK hits MR. TEWSON, that is he hits himself across the face. VAL arrives with DEB nine and SHONA six. They have a suitcase. She leaves them at the side of the field with the suitcase and goes to speak to FRANK.*)

VAL. (*shouting*) Frank!

FRANK. (*stopping the tractor and taking off his earphones*) What happened?

VAL. Suddenly came to me.

FRANK. What's wrong?

VAL. I'm leaving him. I'm going to London on the train, I'm taking the girls, I've left him a note and that's it. You follow us soon as you can. It's the only thing. New life.

FRANK. Where are you going to live?

VAL. We'll find somewhere together.

FRANK. How much money you got?

VAL. Fifty-six pounds. I'll get a job. I just want to be with you.

FRANK. I want to be with you, Val.

VAL. All right then.

FRANK. What am I supposed to do in London?

VAL. Where do you want to go? You say. I don't mind. You don't like it here. You're always grumbling about Mr. Tewson.

FRANK. He's not a bad old boy.

VAL. He don't pay what he should.

FRANK. He was good to my brother.

VAL. I'm in a panic.

FRANK. Shall I see you tonight?

VAL. In London?

FRANK. Here.

VAL. How can I get out? I'm going crazy all this dodging about.

FRANK. Come and live with me. If you're ready to leave.

VAL. With the girls?

FRANK. With or without.

VAL. He'll never let me. He'll have them off me.

FRANK. Please do. (*FRANK kisses VAL.*)

VAL. I suppose I go home now. Unpack. (*She gets the CHILDREN and they go.*)

Scene Four

VAL and DEB.

VAL. You're to be a good girl, Deb, and look after Shona. Mummy will come and see you all the time. You can come and see Mummy and Frank. Mummy loves you very much. Daddy loves you very much. I'll only be down the road.

DEB. I want to go on the train.

VAL. We will go on the train sometime. We can't go now. Mummy's got to go and live with Frank because I love him. You be a good girl and look after Shona. Daddy's going to look after you. And Nan's going to look after you. Daddy loves you very much. I'll come and see you all the time.

DEB. I want new colours.

VAL. You've still got your old ones, haven't you. Lucky we didn't go away, you've still got all your things.

DEB. I want new colours.

VAL. I'll get you some new colours. Mummy's sorry. Love you very much. Look after Shona.

Scene Five

VAL and FRANK dance together. Old-fashioned, formal, romantic, happy.

Scene Six

ANGELA and BECKY, her stepdaughter, fifteen. BECKY is standing still. ANGELA has a cup of very hot water.

ANGELA. You shouldn't let me treat you like this, Becky.

BECKY. Can I sit down now, Angela?

ANGELA. No, because you asked. Drink it standing up. And you didn't call me mum.

BECKY. You're not, that's why.

ANGELA. Wouldn't want to be the mother of a filthy little cow like you. Pity you didn't die with her. Your dad wishes you'd died with her. Now drink it quick. (*BECKY takes the cup and drops it. She goes to pick it up.*) Now look. Don't you dare pick it up. That's your trick is it, so I'll let you move? I'll have to punish you for breaking a cup. Why do you push me?

BECKY. Too hot. (*ANGELA fills another cup from a kettle.*)

ANGELA. It's meant to be hot. What you made of, girl? Ice cream? Going to melt in a bit of hot? I'll tell your dad what a bad girl you are if he phones up tonight and then he won't love you. He'll go off in his lorry one day and not come back and he'll send for me and he won't send for you. Say sorry and you needn't drink it. (*BECKY starts to drink it.*) Faster than that. Crybaby. Hurts, does it? Say sorry now. Sorry mummy. (*BECKY stands in silence.*) I'm not bothered. No one's going to come you know. No chance of anyone dropping in. We've got all afternoon and all evening and all night. We can do what we like so long as we get your dad's tea tomorrow.

BECKY. I'm going to tell him.

ANGELA. You tell him what you like and what won't I tell him about you.

BECKY. I'll tell someone. You'll be put in prison, you'll be burnt.

ANGELA. You can't tell because I'd kill you. You know that. Do you know that?

BECKY. Yes.

ANGELA. Do you?

BECKY. Yes.

ANGELA. Now why not say sorry and we'll have a biscuit and see what's on telly. You needn't say mummy, you can say, 'Sorry, Angela, I'm bad all through.' I don't want you driving me into a mood.

BECKY. Sorry, Angela, bad all through. (*ANGELA strokes BECKY's hair then yanks it.*)

ANGELA. No stamina, have you? 'Sorry, Angela.' What you made of, girl?

SCENE SEVEN

NELL is hoeing her garden. BECKY, DEB, SHONA spying on her.

DEB. Is she a man?

BECKY. No, she's a morphrodite.

DEB. What's that?

BECKY. A man and a woman both at once.

DEB. Can it have babies by itself?

BECKY. It has them with another morphrodite. Like snails. But she's never met one yet.

SHONA. Is she a witch?

BECKY. She eats little children, so watch out.

DEB. She talks to herself. That's spells.

BECKY. Angela says she makes trouble.

DEB. She goes in the gang with my mum.

BECKY. She makes trouble.

DEB. Let's get her wild.

BECKY. I hate her, don't you?

DEB. She makes me feel sick.

BECKY. Let's make her shout.

SHONA. Poo bum! Poo bum!

DEB. Shut up, Shona.

NELL. What you doing there?

BECKY. Watching you, so what?

NELL. Come out and watch me close up then.

DEB. Can I ask you something?

NELL. What?

DEB. Have you got—have you got—?

NELL. What? (*They giggle.*) Well I don't know what you want. Want to help me with my garden? You can do some weeding.

BECKY. That's a funny hat.

NELL. That's a good old hat. It's a funny old hat.

SHONA. Poo bum.

NELL. You watch out, Shona, or you'll have a smack.

DEB. You hit my sister and I'll kill you.

BECKY. I'll kill you. Kill you with the hoe. You're horrible. (*BECKY takes the garden hoe and pokes it at NELL.*)

NELL. Watch what you're doing. Put it down.

DEB. Make her run. Give her a poke.

BECKY. Jump. Jump.

SHONA. Poo poo poo poo.

NELL. You stop that. (*NELL grabs SHONA, holds her in front of her, between herself and the hoe.*) Now you mind who you poke. (*SHONA screams and struggles.*) Give me my hoe and get on home.

DEB. You let her go.

BECKY. I'll have your foot. I'll have your eyes.

NELL. Right then, you stop in there like a little rabbit. (*NELL pushes SHONA into a rabbit hutch.*)

SHONA. Let me out.

DEB. Kill her.

BECKY. Let her out.

NELL. Give me that hoe first. Now shut up, Shona, or I'll have you for tea.

DEB. Kill her. (*BECKY screams and stabs at NELL, who ducks and gets her hat knocked off.*)

NELL. Now give me my hoe. (*BECKY gives her the hoe.*) Give me my hat. (*BECKY gives her the hat.*) And get out of my garden.

DEB. Shona.

NELL. What if I keep Shona an hour or two? Teach you a lesson.

DEB. Please let her go.

SHONA. Deb, get me out, I can't move, get me out.

NELL. Nasty, nasty children. What will you grow up like? Nasty. You should be entirely different. Everything. Everything. (*NELL lets SHONA out.*) You're the poo bum now, all rabbit business.

SHONA. Are you a witch?

NELL. No, I'm a princess. Now get out.

Girl's Song (*BECKY, DEB, SHONA*)

I want to be a nurse when I grow up
And I want to have children and get married.
But I don't think I'll leave the village when I grow up.

I'm never going to leave the village when I grow up even when I get married.
I think I'll stay in the village and be a nurse.

I want to be a hairdresser when I grow up or perhaps a teacher.
I don't really care if I get married or be a hairdresser.

I want to be a cook when I grow up.

If I couldn't be a cook I'd be a hairdresser.
But I don't really want to leave the village when I grow up.

I don't think much about what I want to be.
I don't mind housework.
I think I want to be a housewife until I think of another job.

When I grow up I'm going to be a nurse and if not a hairdresser.

I'm going to be a hairdresser when I grow up and if not a nurse.

Scene Eight

MAY, VAL's mother, sixty, filling in a pools coupon. DEB and SHONA colouring.

MAY. When the light comes down from behind the clouds it comes down like a ladder into the graveyards. And the dead people go up the light into heaven.

SHONA. Can you see them going up?

MAY. I never have. You look for them, my sugar. (*A long silence.*)

DEB. Sing something, nan.

MAY. I can't sing, my sugar. (*silence*)

SHONA. Go on, sing something.

MAY. I can't, I can't sing. (*silence*)

SHONA. Mum can sing.

MAY. Yes, she's got a nice voice, Val.

DEB. Sing something. (*Pause. MAY seems about to sing.*)

MAY. I can't sing, my sugar.

DEB. You're no good then, are you.

MAY. There's other things besides singing.

DEB. Like what?

(*Silence. VAL comes. They all go on with what they're doing.*)

VAL. Hello, mum. Hello, Deb. Oh Deb, hello. Shona, Shona. What are you drawing? Can't I look?

MAY. They're telling me off because I can't sing. You can sing them something since you're here.

VAL. You want me to sing you something, Deb?

DEB. No.

VAL. Shona? (*Pause. VAL starts to sing. She stops.*)

MAY. How long is this nonsense going to last?

VAL. Don't.

MAY. I'm ashamed of you.

VAL. Not in front.

MAY. What you after? Happiness? Got it have you? Bluebird of happiness? Got it have you? Bluebird? (*silence*) What you after?

DEB. Shut up.

VAL. Don't speak to your nan like that.

DEB. You shut up, / none of your business.

MAY. Don't speak to your mum like that. She's getting dreadful, Val. / You've only yourself to blame.

DEB. I'm not. You are. You're getting dreadful.

MAY. You see what I mean.

VAL. You're winding her up.

MAY. I'm winding her up? She was good as gold till you come in. / You better think what you're doing.

VAL. Don't start on me. Just because you had nothing.

MAY. Don't speak to me like that, / my girl, or it's out you go.

DEB. Don't speak to my mum.

VAL. I've not been here / five minutes.

DEB. Don't speak to my nan.

VAL. Shut up, Deb.

MAY. Don't speak to the child like that. (*SHONA screams and runs off. Silence.*) Don't go after her.

VAL. Don't you go after her.

MAY. Deb, you go and look after your sister.

DEB. No. (*pause*)

VAL. I'd better go after her.

DEB. Leave her alone.

MAY. Leave her alone a bit, best thing. (*silence*)

VAL. Never mind, Deb.

MAY. Get one thing straight. It's no trouble having them. They've always a place here.

VAL. I know that.

MAY. I'll stand by you. I stand by my children. (*silence*) I'd never have left you, Val.

VAL. Just don't.

MAY. I'd go through fire. What's stronger that that?

VAL. Just don't.

MAY. What's stronger? (*silence*)

DEB. I'll get Shona.

SCENE NINE

MR. TEWSON fifty-five and MISS CADE, thirty-five, from the City.

TEWSON. Suppose I was to die. I can claim fifty percent working farmer relief on my land value.

CADE. And thirty percent on the value of your working capital.

TEWSON. My son would still have a bill of—

CADE. Three hundred thousand pounds.

TEWSON. Which I don't have.

CADE. That's the position exactly.

TEWSON. It would mean selling a hundred and fifty acres.

CADE. That's what it would mean.

TEWSON. He could do that.

CADE. It's certainly an option.

TEWSON. Take a good few generations before the whole farm disappears. Eh?

CADE. Alternatively you can give land direct to the Inland Revenue. (*pause*) Alternatively.

TEWSON. I need to be bloody immortal. Then I'd never pay tax. You're bloody immortal, eh? City institutions are immortal.

CADE. The farmers who have sold to us are happy, Mr. Tewson.

TEWSON. Bloody driven to it. Don't have to like you as well. I've read about you, Miss Cade. Moguls.

CADE. The popular farming press unfortunately—

TEWSON. And tycoons. And barons.

CADE. The specialist journals take a longer view.

TEWSON. Who pushed the price of land up?

CADE. Not in fact the City.

TEWSON. I don't want these fields to be worth hundreds of thousands. More tax I have to pay.

CADE. We follow the market. The rise in prices is caused by government policies. Ever since the Health administration introduced rollover relief—

TEWSON. Same old fields. My great great grandfather, Miss Cade. (*pause*) I am a member of the Country Landowners Association. We have ears in the corridors of power. My family are landowners. If I sell to you I become a tenant on my grandfather's land. Our president appealed to us to keep our nerve.

CADE. With us, your grandson will farm his grandfather's acres. The same number of acres. More. You'll have the capital to reinvest. Land and machinery. (*pause*)

TEWSON. My family hold this land in trust for the nation.

CADE. We too have a sense of heritage. (*pause*)

TEWSON. Grandson, eh?

CADE. No reason why not.

TEWSON. When I say nation. You don't want to go too far in the public responsibility direction. You raise the spectre of nationalisation.

CADE. No danger of that. Think of us as yourself.

TEWSON. No problem getting a new tractor then.

CADE. I can leave the papers with you.

TEWSON. Cup of tea? Daresay Mrs. Tewson's made a cake. You want to watch the Transport and General Workers. The old agricultural union was no trouble. We'll have these buggers stopping the trains.

(*MISS CADE goes. TEWSON is following her. He is stopped by the sight of a woman working in the fields, a GHOST.*)

TEWSON. Good afternoon. Who's that? You're not one of Mrs. Hassett's girls.

GHOST. We are starving, we will not stand this no longer. Rather than starve we are torment to set you on

fire. You bloody farmers could not live if it was not for the poor, tis them that keep you bloody rascals alive, but there will be a slaughter made amongst you very soon. I should very well like to hang you the same as I hanged your beasts. You bloody rogue, I will light up a little fire for you the first opportunity I can make.

TEWSON. My father saw you. I didn't believe him.

GHOST. I been working in this field a hundred and fifty years. There ain't twenty in this parish but what hates you, bullhead.

TEWSON. Are you angry because I'm selling the farm?

GHOST. What difference will it make?

TEWSON. None, none, everything will go on the same.

GHOST. That's why I'm angry, bullhead.

TEWSON. I'm going.

GHOST. Get home then. I live in your house. I watch television with you. I stand beside your chair and watch the killings. I watch the food and I watch what makes people laugh. My baby died starving.

SCENE TEN

Women onion grading. SHIRLEY, NELL, ANGELA, ALICE.

SHIRLEY. No Val today?

ANGELA. No time for onions.

NELL. Need the money though, won't she?

ALICE. Not surprised she don't come. You shouldn't be surprised.

SHIRLEY. What's that mean?

ALICE. Way you treat her.

SHIRLEY. What's that mean?

ALICE. Everyone's acting funny with her.

ANGELA. She's the one acting funny. Leave her own kiddies. If I had my own kiddies I wouldn't leave them.

ALICE. I know she's wicked but she's still my friend.

SHIRLEY. What you talking about wicked?

ALICE. It was sinners Jesus Christ come for so don't you judge.

SHIRLEY. Who said anything?

ALICE. Outside school yesterday, collecting time, no one said hello except me.

SHIRLEY. I wasn't there, was I. Expect me to shout from the other end of the street. Hello Val! Say hello now, shall I? Hello, Val! That'll cheer her up wherever she is. Altogether now, Hello—

ALICE. Never mind. You're all so—never mind.

NELL. Did I ever tell you about my grandfather?

SHIRLEY. When he was a boy and run away, that one?

NELL. I know you know, you'll have to hear it again.

ALICE. People are all miserable sinners. Miserable.

SHIRLEY. You want to tell Val not us. Give her a fright.

ANGELA. This one of your dirty stories, Nell? Or one of your frightening ones?

SHIRLEY. It's funny.

NELL. He used to swear this really happened. When he was ten his mother died in childbirth, and his father soon got a woman in he said was a housekeeper, but she slept with him from the first night. My grandfather hated her and she hated him, and she'd send him to bed without any tea, and his father always took her side. So after a few months of this, early one morning when his father had gone to work but she wasn't up yet, he took some bread and some cold tea and he run off. He walked all day and it got real dark and he was frit as hell. There

was no houses on the road, just an old green drove sometimes going off towards the coast, so he thought he'd have to sleep by the road. Then he sees a little light shining so he set off down the drove that led to it and he comes to an old stone house. So he knocks on the door and the woman comes, and she'd a candlestick in one hand and a big old copper stick in the other. But when she sees it's only a boy she says come in and she makes him sit by the fire and gives him a bowl of hot milk with some fat bacon in it and a hunk of brown bread. Then she says, 'Me and my husband are going out but you can sleep by the fire. But you must stay here in the kitchen,' she says, 'whatever you do, you mustn't go through that door,' and she points to the door at the back of the kitchen. Then her husband came and said that the pony trap was ready and he didn't look too pleased to see the boy but he didn't say nothing and off they went for their night out. So he sat by the fire and sat by the fire, and he thought I'll just take a look through that door. So he turned the handle but it was locked. And he saw a key lay on the dresser and he tried it and slowly opened the door, and then he wished he hadn't. There was a candle in the window which was the light he'd seen, and a long table, and on the table was a coffin with the lid off, and inside the coffin there was a body. And he was just going to shut the door and hurry back by the fire when the body in the coffin sat up and opened its eyes, and said, 'Who are you boy?' Oh he were petrified. But the body said, 'Don't be afraid, I'm not dead.' He said, 'Where have they gone?' meaning the woman and the husband. When he heard they were out he got out of the coffin and come in the kitchen and made some cocoa. Then he told my grandfather his missus had been having an affair with the chap from the

next smallholding, and she was trying to get rid of him by putting rat poison in his food, and he'd fed it to some pigeons and they'd died. So what he'd done, he'd pretended to die, and she'd told the doctor he'd had a heart attack, and he'd been put in the coffin. And before that he'd sold the farm without telling the wife and had the money safe in the bank under another name. So he give my grandfather a screwdriver and said when the couple came home and screwed down the coffin, after they was in bed he was to unscrew it again. So he went back by the fire and pretended to be asleep, and he heard them screw up the coffin and laughing about how they'd got the old man's farm and kissing, and later he got the old fellow out and he were real glad because he said he wanted a pee so bad he could almost taste it. Then he got a large two tined pitchfork and a pickaxe handle and he said, 'Come on it's time to go.' My grandfather thought they were going to leave, but the old fellow crept upstairs, and gave the boy the candle and the pickaxe handle to carry, and he crept up and opened the door of the bedroom. There was the couple lying close together, completely naked and fast asleep. Then suddenly he raised the pitchfork and brung it down as hard as he could directly over their bare stomachs, so they were sort of stitched together. They screamed and screamed and he grabbed the pickaxe handle off of my grandfather and clubbed them on their heads till they lay still. Then he gets the man and takes him downstairs and puts him in the coffin and screws it up. He says, 'They'll bury him tomorrow and think it's me, and when they find her dead they'll know she was out drinking with her fellow and they'll think he killed her and done a bunk, so the police won't be looking for me,' he said, 'they'll be looking for him. And I'm going to start a new life in London or Australia, and if you talk about it I'll

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