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

The Four of Us

Itamar Moses

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUELFRENCH.COM
SAMUELFRENCH-LONDON.CO.UK

Copyright © 2008, 2009 by Itamar Moses
All Rights Reserved

THE FOUR OF US 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 978-0-573-69649-7

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 *THE FOUR OF US* may not be licensed by Samuel French in your territory. Professional and amateur producers should contact the nearest Samuel French office or licensing partner to verify availability.

CAUTION: Professional and amateur producers are hereby warned that *THE FOUR OF US* 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.

THE FOUR OF US received its initial workshop at American Conservatory Theater, San Francisco, California.

THE FOUR OF US had its world premiere at The Old Globe, San Diego, Cassius Carter Centre Stage on February 3, 2007.

DIRECTOR: Pam MacKinnon
SCENIC DESIGN: Kris Stone
COSTUME DESIGN: Markas Henry
LIGHTING DESIGN: Russell Champa
SOUND DESIGN: Paul Peterson
STAGE MANAGER: Tracy Skoczelas

CAST:

DAVID . . . . . Sean Dugan

BENJAMIN . . . . . Gideon Banner

THE FOUR OF US had its New York premiere at Manhattan Theatre Club on March 6th, 2008.

DIRECTOR: Pam MacKinnon
SCENIC AND COSTUME DESIGN: David Zinn
LIGHTING DESIGN: Russell H. Champa
SOUND DESIGN: Daniel Baker
PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER: Robyn Henry
STAGE MANAGER: Nicole Bouclier

CAST:

DAVID . . . . . Michael Esper

BENJAMIN . . . . . Gideon Banner

CHARACTERS

DAVID, friends with Benjamin.
BENJAMIN, friends with David.

They appear between the ages of seventeen and twenty-seven, though not in that order.

A NOTE ABOUT THE DOUBLES

The doubles referred to in the final stage direction of the play present a challenge that every production is probably going to have to solve in a slightly different way, due to realities of space, or of budget, or other factors. This is why my stage directions remain relatively vague on the subject: I don't want to impose something that turns out to be in some cases impossible or prevent imaginative solutions I haven't thought of. Generally speaking, though, the doubles should appear in some way as the lights fade in the play's final moments, as described, and they can potentially also be used as a part of the transition into the final scene, by, say, drawing the audience's attention by appearing, obscured by shadow, off to one side, after the real actors exit scene eight but before they return for scene nine, creating a nice suspended moment of confusion as the audience believes the actors have returned, only to see them truly enter, moments later, from a different direction. In the play's world premiere, at the Old Globe in San Diego, these effects were accomplished with a second pair of actors, who were present in a "moat" around the stage for the whole play, helping with scene and costume changes, wearing the costumes that the actors were to wear in the final scene. The doubles exited the space entirely only at the end of scene seven when David yells at everyone to get out and then reentered at the top of scene nine, in the actors' costumes from scene eight, in silhouette, in a doorway visible to the audience, so that they were not immediately identifiable as the doubles. (This also had the byproduct of buying extra time for the real actors to change costume.) Then the real actors entered for the final scene while the audience's attention was still drawn by the doubles in a neat bit of theatrical sleight of hand. The doubles were in darkness while the final scene played out on stage, becoming briefly visible again only during the play's final tableaux and fade to black. In the play's east coast premiere at 1812 Productions in Philadelphia, the doubles were video projections of shadows against the back wall of the stage. The shadows were actually a short film, not a still image, so they shifted and chuckled and, finally, closed the shadow-doors as the lights faded. These are only two possible approaches of, presumably, many. Overall, regardless of whether the doubles are real people or a theatrical effect, and regardless of whether they are in some way visible both during the transition into the final scene and at the end of the final scene or are visible at the end only, it's probably best if they are out of view during the final scene itself, so as not to draw attention.

A NOTE ABOUT BEAR FUCKING

It may seem odd to single out a particular set piece for comment, but the sequence in Prague during which Benjamin violates the giant stuffed bear is probably the funniest thing in the play and it is very very difficult to get it right. The actor playing Benjamin will be tempted to mime intercourse with the poor bear for basically the entire time that the actor playing David is telling his story about the British girl. Don't let him. This will make it impossible for the audience to hear David's story while also diminishing the impact of the moments when Benjamin should be fucking the bear. By which I mean actually moving. As opposed to sliding into different positions and remaining there comically posed. Which is different. So what I'm saying is Benjamin should only fuck the bear when he says, "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas" (which is what spurs David to tell him to stop) and then again on "really great angle for this kind of thrusting action" (after which David yells at him, again, to stop). The rhythm and build of scene, so to speak, work best this way. There. I'm embarrassed for us all, too, but it had to be said.

Scene One

(An Indian restaurant.)

*(***DAVID** *and* **BENJAMIN**, *both twenty-four, have just finished lunch. The bill is on the table.)*

BENJAMIN. What do you mean?

DAVID. I, uh, *have* something for you. Here, let me…

*(***DAVID** *begins to rummage in his bag.)*

BENJAMIN. What, like a present?

DAVID. Kind of.

BENJAMIN. Oh, oh, that's –

DAVID. In, uh, in honor of the occasion.

BENJAMIN. You're already taking me to *lunch*, you don't have to –

DAVID. No, no, don't worry. It was simple. And *free*. I'm resourceful like that.

*(***DAVID** *stands a photograph in a simple wooden frame on the table.)*

BENJAMIN. What's this? *(pause)* Is that me?

DAVID. Yeah that's you, uh…at work. On the book.

BENJAMIN. Right.

DAVID. So that's you…finishing it, I guess.

BENJAMIN. I didn't finish it until I got back to school, remember you came to visit.

DAVID. So: starting it. I forget which. Anyway, it seemed appropriate.

BENJAMIN. Where did you *find* this?

DAVID. What do you mean? I took it out of my photo album from, from Prague, from that summer.

BENJAMIN. Ah.

DAVID. That's the problem with spending a summer in a country where you don't know anybody? With just one friend? All my pictures are of you.

BENJAMIN. Well we can probably assume that all mine are of you.

DAVID. We probably can.

BENJAMIN. *(beat)* Though, actually, I never got mine together into an album.

DAVID. No?

BENJAMIN. No, they're all in some shoebox in my parent's house. *(beat)* What did you write that summer?

DAVID. I, uh…what do you…? A *play.*

BENJAMIN. No, I figured, but: which one?

DAVID. The one about the, uh…you know what? It was terrible.

BENJAMIN. I'm sure it wasn't.

DAVID. It was. I was an undergraduate. I had just read Ruskin for the first time and I for some reason thought that his ideas about Gothic architecture in *The Stones of Venice* might make a good subject for a play. It was terrible.

BENJAMIN. You don't know that it was terrible.

DAVID. I saw it. I put it up at school that Fall.

BENJAMIN. Maybe it was ruined by the director.

DAVID. I directed it myself. Because nobody else would. Because it was terrible. Like, two weeks ago? Becca saw it on my shelf, and asked to read it? And I let her read *everything.* And I was like, "No, please. It's *terrible.*"

BENJAMIN. Well, maybe it…paved the way for something good later on.

DAVID. We can only hope.

BENJAMIN. *(beat)* How *is* Rebecca?

DAVID. Good. Uh, really good.

BENJAMIN. Things are good?

DAVID. Things are really good. It's…getting kind of serious.

BENJAMIN. And you're good with that.

DAVID. I'm *great* with that. No feelings of emotional claustrophobia, no inexplicable depression, no anxiety attacks, it's a whole new…phase for me. Someone to share my popcorn at the movies.

BENJAMIN. You're very fortunate.

DAVID. Thanks. I know. Thank you. We should all get together.

BENJAMIN. Who?

DAVID. You, me, Bec, and Emily. For dinner, or something.

BENJAMIN. Oh. Uh…

DAVID. What.

BENJAMIN. We kind of broke up, actually.

DAVID. What?

BENJAMIN. Me and Emily.

DAVID. Are you *serious?*

BENJAMIN. Yeah.

DAVID. *When?*

BENJAMIN. I guess…a little over a month ago.

DAVID. *What?*

BENJAMIN. Yeah.

DAVID. *Really.*

BENJAMIN. Uh. Yeah.

DAVID. Ben!

BENJAMIN. What?

DAVID. Just…*Oh. (pause)* Uh. Why?

BENJAMIN. Um. What do you mean?

DAVID. For what reason?

BENJAMIN. It was…time. It was just time.

DAVID. How long had you guys been together?

BENJAMIN. Four years. Four years on and off.

DAVID. And it was just…*time.*

BENJAMIN. There were…Let's say it became clear that there were things that maybe each of us wasn't going

to be able to offer the other? That we maybe needed? Which has been fine in the past and was in fact still fine in the present but would pretty clearly *not* be fine at some point in the future? And so it was just…time. *(pause)* So.

DAVID. Do you want to talk about it?

BENJAMIN. What do you mean?

DAVID. I…don't actually know. Are you okay?

BENJAMIN. I think so. Yeah, I'm fine. *(pause)* I mean, I had a little bit of a hard time. When it first…Actually, I tried to call you. *(pause)* I left you a whole series of messages, actually.

DAVID. Right, yeah. I was, you know…I was out of town.

BENJAMIN. I know. It's fine. But, so, by now, I'm sort of…

*(***BENJAMIN** *shrugs. He is fine.)*

DAVID. Okay. Well so but if you…

BENJAMIN. What?

DAVID. I don't know. I guess…Okay.

BENJAMIN. Thanks though. *(Beat. The photo:)* I mean, *thank* you. This is…very nice.

DAVID. You're welcome.

BENJAMIN. I should probably put it away now, though.

DAVID. No, you should totally just leave it. And just be staring at this picture of yourself when the waiter comes over to get the money –

BENJAMIN. Right: "He brings it to every meal. It helps him to digest."

*(***BENJAMIN** *puts the photo away.* **DAVID** *picks up the bill, and looks it over.)*

BENJAMIN. You really don't have to do that.

DAVID. I said I would. That was the deal.

BENJAMIN. I…guess it was. *(pause)* So where were you?

DAVID. What?

BENJAMIN. When you were out of town.

DAVID. Oh. I…Didn't I tell you? I was a counselor.

BENJAMIN. Where?

DAVID. A, uh, a camp counselor. At…this is funny…at Young Musicians.

BENJAMIN. No kidding. What was that like?

DAVID. It was…trippy. I mean, the place hasn't changed at all, and the kids are exactly the same, I mean, kid for kid, you can sort of match people up, there's the younger version of each person *we* were there with. You remember.

BENJAMIN. Vividly.

DAVID. Right. *(old man wistful)* "The summer we met."

BENJAMIN. It was.

DAVID. And it was especially…I mean, I don't know about you, but I was always kind of wondering what the counselors were thinking? Of the kids. Like, what they thought of *us*, if they thought any of us were going to be great super-famous rock star musicians, like we all thought we were gonna be? And it was weird. To *know*. That, in fact, the counselors are thinking: wow, some of these girls are pretty cute.

BENJAMIN. Right.

DAVID. And also they were thinking: ninety-nine percent of you will give up music entirely some time in the next ten years.

BENJAMIN. Like we did.

DAVID. Like we did.

BENJAMIN. So…why did you work there?

DAVID. For fun. And, you know: grad school. Free summers. I needed the money. And: grad school for *playwriting*, you don't work as an investment banker.

BENJAMIN. Right.

(pause)

DAVID. So…what happens now?

BENJAMIN. What do you mean?

DAVID. To…I don't know. It's supposed to be this watershed thing, but what actually *happens*. To someone like *you*.

BENJAMIN. What do you mean "to someone like me"?

DAVID. I just mean: to someone specific who I know personally, I guess, as opposed to the abstract idea of a hypothetical first-time author who has sold a hypothetical first novel.

BENJAMIN. Well I think in this case it will be the whole… apparatus.

DAVID. The whole…?

BENJAMIN. Just…reviews. Public readings. A lot of those, probably.

DAVID. Okay.

BENJAMIN. Just because the publisher is sort of in a position where extensive promotion is probably smart.

DAVID. Oh.

BENJAMIN. And, you know, a book tour.

DAVID. Like an actual *tour*.

BENJAMIN. What do you mean?

DAVID. Of places all across the country.

BENJAMIN. Of, well, of several countries.

DAVID. Of *several* countries.

BENJAMIN. Well, of the countries in which the book is being published.

DAVID. How many is *that?*

BENJAMIN. I don't…you know, I don't know the exact number off hand.

DAVID. So…more than two?

BENJAMIN. Well…

DAVID. So you're leaving *town?*

BENJAMIN. Not for a while. I mean, you know, the wheels turn pretty slow. It'll be a year before the thing comes out, and *then* I'll go.

DAVID. How long are you going to be gone?

BENJAMIN. Well, intermittently. But for a year or so. And then the paperback comes out. So: two years.

DAVID. What about your *job?*

BENJAMIN. I quit my job.

DAVID. Oh. *(pause)* Okay. Um. *(pause)* Look, I've been refraining from asking. Out of…I don't know. *Decorum.* But.

BENJAMIN. *(He knows what's coming.)* Um…

DAVID. How much money are we talking about exactly?

BENJAMIN. I'd…rather not say.

DAVID. You don't have to be embarrassed.

BENJAMIN. Um. I'm not.

DAVID. So tell me.

BENJAMIN. I just, I think…No.

DAVID. Okay.

BENJAMIN. Is that okay?

DAVID. That is…just fine.

*(***DAVID** *takes a sip of water.)*

BENJAMIN. Two million dollars.

*(***DAVID** *spits a mouthful of water all over* **BENJAMIN**.*)*

BENJAMIN. Jesus.

DAVID. Are you fucking serious?

BENJAMIN. What hell is wrong with you?

DAVID. I'm sorry. Here, let…take my napkin.

BENJAMIN. I've got one, thanks.

DAVID. I'm so sorry.

BENJAMIN. It's okay.

DAVID. God, I spit *all over* you.

BENJAMIN. Well, that's…It's actually sort of the reaction I was expecting, only I imagined it as more figurative and less literal.

DAVID. I'm sorry. *(pause)* Are you fucking serious?

BENJAMIN. Yes. I figured you'd…read it in the paper, probably, soon, anyway.

DAVID. Uh. *Yeah.*

BENJAMIN. So I figured what the hell.

DAVID. How the fuck did that happen?

BENJAMIN. What do you mean?

DAVID. Uh. How on god's green earth did such a thing take place?

BENJAMIN. Well, the details of the business are pretty dull actually.

DAVID. I promise you they're not.

BENJAMIN. No, really, it's kind of depressing.

DAVID. What is?

BENJAMIN. The way that this works. It's *very* depressing.

DAVID. Um. How is that?

BENJAMIN. I don't…*(pause)* All right: you remember that agent I first had? Celeste's agent, who she set me up with?

DAVID. Okay, I know she was your teacher? But it's still so weird to me when you call her Celeste.

BENJAMIN. Why?

DAVID. Because she's sort of an august-famous-novelist personage, and I tend to think of her in terms of her full name and so it's weird.

BENJAMIN. Okay.

DAVID. That's all.

BENJAMIN. So, remember when I was working with her agent? How she'd kind of send the book to publishers one at a time, and as each one turned it down, she'd, you know, she'd move on to the next one?

DAVID. Yeah, you were kinda bummed about that, I…Actually, I thought *that's* what all your messages were about, you know, when I checked them from out of town? If I'd known it was about Emily –

BENJAMIN. It's fine.

DAVID. No, really, I'm really really sorry I've been so hard to reach lately, it's been…like I said, things with Becca have been getting serious, and *I* was really busy, I've been sending scripts out a lot, trying to, you know –

BENJAMIN. It's fine.

DAVID. No, I know, but –

BENJAMIN. Um. It's really. Really. Fine.

DAVID. *(pause)* Okay.

BENJAMIN. Okay. So. Yeah, right around while Emily and I were breaking up, I switched to a different agent who has this sort of different approach? Where the manuscript is submitted to maybe a dozen publishers simultaneously, and then, on some designated day, there's, basically, a…bidding war. And, I guess, the strength of this approach is that there's a psychology at work, where the very fact that other publishers are making offers creates a sense that it's okay to do so. That *you* don't want to be the one who let it go.

DAVID. And then you go with the one who offers the most money.

BENJAMIN. Um. It depends.

DAVID. In this case two million dollars.

BENJAMIN. Oh, no, no, that's everything together, that's with international rights from all the various –

DAVID. Okay. But, so –

BENJAMIN. Plus the film rights –

DAVID. So…*(beat)* I'm sorry, *film* rights?

BENJAMIN. Anyway, the *point* is, in *my* case, I went with the publisher that I had felt most…comfortable with, the, the strongest rapport with the editors. The most…at home.

DAVID. So somebody offered *more* than that?

BENJAMIN. Well, no, as it *happened*, it also turned out to be the place that offered the most money, yes.

DAVID. What a coincidence.

BENJAMIN. Well, it's not, not really, if you think about it, because, it does speak to a level of passion about the work, and also at that level it's really an investment in the future, because they're never ever going to earn back that advance from the sale of this book, and they know that.

DAVID. Uh-huh.

BENJAMIN. I mean, look, it's not as if doing it the other way doesn't have exactly the same problem.

DAVID. What problem? I didn't say anything.

BENJAMIN. I mean, either way, people will always do the safe thing. If everybody's making offers, the *safe* thing is to make an offer. If they know they're the only publisher looking at it, the safe thing is to reject it. So in *neither* case does it really have to do, really, with the, you know, the extant, objective quality of the book itself, it just has to do with…*hype*. And that's not because you're engaging with the business in one particular way, or in another particular way. It's just because you're engaging with the business…at *all*. Which is depressing.

DAVID. Right. I guess that's…true. *(pause)* So what were you doing while this was going on?

BENJAMIN. What.

DAVID. The bidding war.

BENJAMIN. Uh. Answering the phone. Taking notes. *(pause)* Feeling increasingly uncomfortable. I don't know.

DAVID. So…who bought the *film* rights?

BENJAMIN. Some…I don't know. This actor. Some actor. His name didn't mean anything to me.

DAVID. What was it?

BENJAMIN. I don't remember. I don't really follow those things very much.

DAVID. Uh, yes, I know you don't.

BENJAMIN. So, but, yeah, I'm supposed to meet with him about it sometime in the next few months. Which I'm sort of dreading.

DAVID. Why?

BENJAMIN. Because I don't really have any interest in being *involved*. I mean, it's not a medium I'm…It's a fun idea, but my work on this particular story is done, you know? So…

DAVID. So…*(pause)* I mean, is there a *role* in it he wants to play, or…?

BENJAMIN. I think he maybe wants to direct it? But I actually have no idea really.

DAVID. So…

BENJAMIN. What.

DAVID. Nothing. Never mind. *(beat)* I mean: congratulations!

BENJAMIN. Thanks.

DAVID. No, seriously, this is *great*. It is just great. *(pause)* It's, uh, it's *amazing*. It's incredibly cool.

BENJAMIN. Thank you.

DAVID. It *is* cool. You know what the coolest thing about it is?

BENJAMIN. Uh. What.

DAVID. That…Well, I sort of never had any doubt, you know, for either of us, that we could make lives out of this, doing our writing, and teaching writing, and basically just, you know –

BENJAMIN. Cobble it together.

DAVID. Exactly. Right. Cobble it together. But now you're…

BENJAMIN. Sure.

DAVID. *Solvent*. You know? Just from writing. Just…to write. Like…*forever*.

BENJAMIN. Not forever.

DAVID. Right, but for a *long*, long…I mean –

BENJAMIN. No, you're right. And, I think, ultimately, that's got to be the rationale.

DAVID. For what?

BENJAMIN. For…these kinds of *sums*.

DAVID. What do you mean?

BENJAMIN. Like, for example: I spoke to the woman who's publishing the book in Spain? And she said to me, she said: "Don't drink. Don't smoke. Exercise. Take care of yourself." And I just thought: what a wonderful thing to say to someone.

DAVID. *(pause)* Well, it's great. It's really really great.

BENJAMIN. Thank you.

DAVID. *I* just hope that, uh…That having that much money just kind of dropped in your lap, you know…that much *time*…doesn't turn out to be in some way, kind of…

BENJAMIN. What.

DAVID. Totally spiritually corrupting.

BENJAMIN. *(pause)* What are you talking about?

DAVID. You know, I think it probably, I think it's probably not the best thing in that regard.

BENJAMIN. For what?

DAVID. For…you know, it, it just…I think it must just *cheapen* it.

BENJAMIN. Cheapen what?

DAVID. Whatever. That's just what I think.

BENJAMIN. *(pause)* That's not what you think.

DAVID. What do you mean?

BENJAMIN. You have never in the past said anything that would lead me to believe that that is what you think.

DAVID. Well sometimes we don't *know* what we really think of something before we are faced with the, the stark reality of it. I'm not saying it's what I think *now.* I'm just…wondering. You are free not to wonder. It is probably in your interests not to do so.

BENJAMIN. Are you okay?

DAVID. Why? Yeah. I'm fine.

*(***DAVID** *takes out money, and puts it on the bill, signals for the waiter. During which:)*

BENJAMIN. You really don't have to –

DAVID. *(overlapping)* Yeah. Yeah I do. I said I would.

BENJAMIN. *(pause)* Hey.

DAVID. What.

BENJAMIN. Do something surprising.

DAVID. What do you mean?

*(***BENJAMIN** *picks up his glass of water and brings it close to his lips.)*

BENJAMIN. Say something really shocking.

DAVID. Oh. I get it. Haha.

BENJAMIN. Ready?

DAVID. You're not going to do it.

BENJAMIN. Not if you don't say something shocking enough. It's up to you. Ready?

DAVID. *(pause)* Okay, yeah.

BENJAMIN. Good. Make it good.

DAVID. I will.

BENJAMIN. Okay. *(pause)* Here we go.

*(***BENJAMIN** *takes a sip of water…the lights shift…***DAVID** *stands, puts on his coat, puts on his shoulder bag…the space changes around them…)*

Scene Two

(Six months after Scene One. The kitchen/living room of a large, expensive apartment. High ceilings, good sunlight, casting shadows of the very tall windows across the length of the floor. One wall is covered with index cards of various colors, filled with writing.)

*(***BENJAMIN** *is seated at a dining room table, drinking from a glass of water.* **DAVID** *has just arrived: his coat is still on and he carries a bag. He is looking around at the walls.)*

DAVID. I've never been in an apartment where the owner has so many enormous pictures of his own face on the walls.

BENJAMIN. They're movie posters. He just put up posters from movies he was in.

DAVID. Right, but you'd think he would have taken into account the sheer number of giant images of his own face that would be on his walls as a result. *(He points.)* You see that one?

BENJAMIN. Yes.

DAVID. Did you like it?

BENJAMIN. Oh, the *movie*. No, I didn't see it.

DAVID. Oh. I, uh…He was really good.

BENJAMIN. I've seen almost none of his work. We'll be talking about the book, and how to adapt it, and he'll be like, "It's like that scene in blah blah blah…You see that one?" And I'm like: no. Actually, when I was at his birthday party last weekend – ?

DAVID. You went to his *birthday party*?

BENJAMIN. Yeah.

DAVID. Was it, like, full of celebrities?

BENJAMIN. This is what I'm saying: I have no idea.

DAVID. What do you mean?

BENJAMIN. I mean, uh, there were all these people here who I kind of recognized but I had no idea who they were.

DAVID. Like who?

BENJAMIN. Um. I don't know.

DAVID. Well what were their names?

BENJAMIN. I don't know, nothing really stuck.

DAVID. That's very annoying to me.

BENJAMIN. This one guy, older guy, I ended up standing next to him in the corner at one point, I guess he was there with his wife, and he kind of looked out over the party, you know, people chatting each other up, and he said, sort of philosophically: "Oh, I'm so glad I'm not out there any more, going to three of these things a week. Sleeping with a different model every night. You can't live that way for long."

DAVID. Yes that sounds horrific.

BENJAMIN. I know, I was like: I'd nevertheless like the opportunity to try to live that way at least for a short while and see how well I manage.

DAVID. *(beat)* And how's that working out for you?

BENJAMIN. Well I'm not really one to kiss and tell.

DAVID. Certainly not.

BENJAMIN. So let's just say that it seems to involve an awful lot of blowjobs.

(pause)

DAVID. What's with all the weird shit on his shelves?

BENJAMIN. They're mostly souvenirs, I think, from movies and things he did. Most of the things on his shelves are souvenirs.

DAVID. *(He points to a photo.)* Is that who I think it is?

BENJAMIN. Yeah.

DAVID. He *knows* them?

BENJAMIN. Yeah, I guess.

DAVID. I just bought their new album. Like *just* now. I have it in my bag.

BENJAMIN. Oh.

DAVID. Have you heard it yet?

BENJAMIN. Not really interested.

DAVID. What? Why not?

BENJAMIN. I'm not really into them.

DAVID. *What?*

BENJAMIN. I just –

DAVID. You're the person who *told* me about them. You like *forced* me to listen to them for *hours*.

BENJAMIN. Really?

DAVID. Yes *really*. You thought they were *amazing*.

BENJAMIN. Well I guess I don't anymore.

DAVID. Why not?

BENJAMIN. I don't like the new stuff.

DAVID. You just said you haven't heard it.

BENJAMIN. Well then I don't like the old stuff anymore.

*(***DAVID** *points to the wall with the index cards.)*

DAVID. What's that?

BENJAMIN. That's, I guess, some screenplay he's working on. Kind of: laid out scene by scene? I guess so he can swap the order around easier if he – ?

DAVID. Right, no, I know, just: he writes?

BENJAMIN. I guess.

DAVID. Huh. *(pause)* Where is he?

BENJAMIN. He's in the other room. He got a phone call right after you buzzed.

DAVID. This is an *apartment*, right?

BENJAMIN. Yes.

DAVID. How *big* is this place?

BENJAMIN. I have no idea.

DAVID. When did you get here?

BENJAMIN. About an hour ago. We had some things to talk over before you got here.

DAVID. Who is he on the phone with?

BENJAMIN. I…don't know. *(beat)* What do you mean?

DAVID. I don't know, I just wondered if it was…somebody else…famous.

BENJAMIN. It's his girlfriend, I think.

DAVID. Dude. She's totally famous.

BENJAMIN. Okay.

DAVID. This is so unfair.

BENJAMIN. Why?

DAVID. Because! You have access to all of these people, but you're too pop-culturally ignorant to appreciate it!

BENJAMIN. He's breaking up with her.

DAVID. *What?*

BENJAMIN. Yeah.

DAVID. *Now?*

BENJAMIN. Yeah. I…think so.

DAVID. While we're here in his apartment?

BENJAMIN. Um. Yes.

DAVID. Isn't that a little…

BENJAMIN. What.

DAVID. Cavalier?

BENJAMIN. I have no idea.

DAVID. I thought they were really serious.

BENJAMIN. Why did you think that?

DAVID. Because I *read* about it. In a reliable entertainment magazine.

BENJAMIN. Oh. *(pause)* So it looks like we have a minute.

DAVID. Okay. *(pause)* So…

BENJAMIN. So. What's new?

DAVID. Uh. Well, okay: soon you may actually have to take me out to lunch at a, uh, at a Japanese-Caribbean fusion place. If you can find one.

BENJAMIN. What are you talking about? *(pause)* Oh! Hey!

DAVID. Yeah.

BENJAMIN. Good for you! What happened?

DAVID. This, uh…Small thing, really, small small thing.

BENJAMIN. Tell me.

DAVID. This little regional theatre…in, like, Indiana… has this playwriting prize. That I won. So. You know: they're going to do one of my plays.

BENJAMIN. That's great!

DAVID. I mean, the thing is, like, more than a *year* off, and the prize is like *five-hundred* dollars, I mean, literally, that's what it is but so –

BENJAMIN. Hey, hey: you know what this means.

DAVID. What.

BENJAMIN. That you are now already at a point that most people never, ever get to with this. That is great. Which play is this?

DAVID. Actually, it's the one I wrote that, that summer. In Prague.

BENJAMIN. Which one was that?

DAVID. *(beat)* The, uh, the architecture one. Ruskin.

BENJAMIN. Right.

DAVID. Yeah, I…I don't know, I took another look at it, thought, maybe, you know, hey, *I* don't know how to direct, maybe I *did* ruin it. Thought I'd give my younger self another chance.

BENJAMIN. Right. *(pause)* Hey! So: next week. I'll take you out next week.

DAVID. Great.

(pause)

BENJAMIN. Shit.

DAVID. What.

BENJAMIN. I…I can't, I'm –

DAVID. That's, that's right you're –

BENJAMIN. I'm leaving. The book is coming out and then I'm leaving on the tour.

DAVID. Right, well: you know –

BENJAMIN. Sure.

DAVID. When you get back.

BENJAMIN. When I get back. Definitely.

DAVID. Okay. *(pause)* So, uh…Do you want to tell me exactly what I'm doing here?

BENJAMIN. What do you think you're doing here?

DAVID. I don't want to make any assumptions.

BENJAMIN. Do you know what a treatment is?

DAVID. I…what, you mean like a screenplay treatment?

BENJAMIN. Yes.

DAVID. Uh. Yes. It's, uh, it's a description of everything that happens in a movie written out in sort of straightforward prose.

BENJAMIN. He wants me to write a treatment for my book. Which I don't have the first idea how to do, or, really, any interest in doing.

DAVID. Okay.

BENJAMIN. So, I was thinking, maybe you'd want to do it? And then, if he liked it, maybe he'd want you to write the whole thing, or at least to collaborate on it, which would be fun.

DAVID. Yeah. That would.

BENJAMIN. And, you know, might at least *pay* you more than whatever else it is you're working on now.

DAVID. I…I'm sure it would.

BENJAMIN. Or, I mean, that's something he would have to work out with your agent.

DAVID. I don't…have an agent –

BENJAMIN. *(overlapping)* Or, but, so he just wants to get a sense of who you are, and what your approach to adapting the book would be, and so that's really all this is.

DAVID. Okay. *(pause)* But, I mean, are you sure you want to…

BENJAMIN. What.

DAVID. I mean, I'm really…I've written, like, one and a half screenplays in my life. Which were terrible. You could…you could have access…through this guy, or just yourself, in your position, you could…

BENJAMIN. What.

*(***DAVID** *gestures to the wall of index cards.)*

DAVID. Why doesn't he do it himself?

BENJAMIN. I…don't know. What do you mean?

DAVID. I guess just: why me?

BENJAMIN. Um. I don't know. Why…*not* you?

(pause)

DAVID. Okay. Thanks. *(pause)* Is there anything in particular he wants?

BENJAMIN. If you could do it in ten pages or, he said, preferably eight, or six, that would be ideal.

DAVID. It's a three hundred page novel.

BENJAMIN. I'm just telling you what he said.

DAVID. Dude, a treatment –

BENJAMIN. I'm just…telling you what he said.

DAVID. Well, okay, a treatment, should really be as long and detailed as possible. In, in the, you know, the *golden* age of cinema, or whatever, people wrote treatments that were, like, two-hundred pages long.

BENJAMIN. I really don't know the first thing about it.

DAVID. Okay, well, it should really be more detailed than that.

BENJAMIN. Why?

DAVID. To be actually *useful* in the writing of the movie.

BENJAMIN. I don't know what to tell you.

DAVID. I…Okay. *(pause)* But…

BENJAMIN. What.

DAVID. What are we actually doing *here today*?

BENJAMIN. Just talking about it, I guess. About how you would adapt it.

DAVID. Like a pitch.

BENJAMIN. I guess so.

DAVID. Well, I'd really have liked some time to prepare. I mean: it's a totally different medium.

BENJAMIN. I think you're making this too complicated.

DAVID. I'm serious.

BENJAMIN. Um. That's what I'm talking about. Relax.

DAVID. No, listen: not that, as I explained, not that I've ever *done* an adaptation, *but*: storytelling doesn't actually *work* the same way in both. That's why it's always terrible when a movie is too faithful to a book.

BENJAMIN. Sure, but –

DAVID. Look, here's what I mean. Do you remember the last night of camp, the last night at Young Musicians, where we all had dinner in the woods?

BENJAMIN. Sure.

DAVID. And everybody built a bonfire, and the two of us went up to the hill above it, and looked down on it, and had a sort of maudlin farewell?

BENJAMIN. Sure.

DAVID. So if I, or if someone, were to write the *story* of that summer, or whatever, that's the obvious last scene, okay, that's a good *scene*, it has lots of interesting *scenic* elements, the woods and the night and the fire and the vantage of being up on a hill…And if you're putting it into a novel, it's going to be narrative, heavy on description, sensations, internal thoughts. And if it's in a play, it's going to be dialogic, it's going to be talkier, and if it's a *movie* there *won't* be a lot of talking, probably, and the visual elements will totally take over, it's visual storytelling, it'll all be about cutting from the fire, to someone's face, right as they start to say, you know, the *one line* of dialogue that's in the scene, and then panning up to the stars, or whatever, and in all three cases it's the *same scene* at the end of the *same story*. Only everything about it is different.

BENJAMIN. You probably shouldn't say any of that.

DAVID. Why not?

BENJAMIN. You don't want to give him the impression that your plan is to change everything. He likes the book. That's why he bought the rights.

DAVID. What I'm *saying* is that, sort of counterintuitively, a really good, faithful adaptation is one that actually changes the source material a lot.

BENJAMIN. I think you're just going to confuse him.

DAVID. I'm not saying this to *him* I'm saying this to *you.*

BENJAMIN. Um. Why?

DAVID. Because…you're the one in the room with me. *(pause)* So I should just tell him that I'm going to slavishly adhere to every last detail?

BENJAMIN. Oh, well, don't do that, there are certain things he *hates,* so –

DAVID. Like what?

BENJAMIN. The point is –

DAVID. Wait, no, don't you think it might be useful for me to know specifically what it is he *hates.*

BENJAMIN. Well, the ending, for example. He thinks the ending is a failure, too crowded, too much going on a once.

DAVID. Okay.

BENJAMIN. His actual words were: "Too much of a clusterfuck."

DAVID. Which is something he knows a lot about. What with all the models.

BENJAMIN. Oh, he's told me stories.

DAVID. Maybe you can act them out for me with a giant stuffed bear.

BENJAMIN. *(beat)* Look, I feel like you're getting upset.

DAVID. I…No. I just…This is maybe a cool opportunity, and I guess my preference would have been to have some…*time.*

BENJAMIN. You'll do great.

DAVID. If you say so.

BENJAMIN. Talk about that band you like.

DAVID. You liked them too!

BENJAMIN. He actually wants to use one of their songs over the end credits.

DAVID. So?

BENJAMIN. So: bond over that, or something.

DAVID. Great.

BENJAMIN. Oh, also, be funny.

DAVID. What?

BENJAMIN. Be funny. Show him that you're funny.

DAVID. You want me to…tell *jokes*, or –

BENJAMIN. Don't be ridiculous.

DAVID. I just don't really know –

BENJAMIN. I mean just as a general approach to the conversation. It might be good not to be super-serious about the book and the whole situation.

DAVID. Is this what you guys talked about for an hour before I got here?

BENJAMIN. Not really.

DAVID. He spent an hour just now explaining to you all the reasons he wants *you* to do it rather than your schmuck friend from when you were a teenager who's fresh out of grad school and has no credits.

BENJAMIN. Um. No.

DAVID. So what did you talk about?

BENJAMIN. Shh. Shh.

DAVID. What.

BENJAMIN. Just: here he comes.

*(***BENJAMIN** *points…the lights shift…***DAVID** *looks off in the direction he is pointing…there is the sound of sustained applause…)*

Scene Three

(Over the course of the next six months after Scene Two. A bookstore.)

*(***BENJAMIN** *sits on a tall stool, at a podium, with a small clip-on microphone. He sips from a glass of water on the podium. The applause dies down.)*

BENJAMIN. Thanks. Thank you. And since the whole purpose of this, from the very beginning, was really just to *connect* with people…to see you all here is really… very meaningful. And I'm pretty nervous. I'm at the beginning of a long stretch of these, but this is only the second public reading I've done, and the first in a bookstore, which has a certain…I mean, an enormous corporate bookstore, but it's still *kind of* a bookstore… So. Thanks. *(pause)* Oh, uh, questions, questions. *(pause)* Uh…Anybody?

(Lights up on **DAVID**. *He is dialing a phone.)*

BENJAMIN. *(Pointing into the audience.)* Yes. You.

DAVID. Hey, it's me. Um, congratulations on the *review*, that's…it's really exciting. I hope they're *all* that good. And, oh, oh, I saw the book! Like: the actual physical *object*, in a bookstore today which…I mean: there it *was*. On the *shelf*. Between, you know, other authors, with…a jacket, and an author photo, and everything, and seeing that was really…I felt something. It was… very cool. *(beat)* Oh, and, I know it's your birthday tomorrow so, hey: happy…that. Twenty-five. You've still got time. So. Uh…Talk to you soon. Bye.

BENJAMIN. Well, first of all, let me say that, um: you're not exactly Methuselah yourself, young lady. But look: to articulate something in writing is a particular skill, like any other skill, but, you know, to make an observation, that might be the kind of thing a writer would write down…that's…*universal*. And that has nothing to do with *age*. So, in a way, my putting it down on the page and you…your lifting it up *off* the page…is sort of the

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