

SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

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Samuel French Acting Edition

John

by Annie Baker

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JOHN was first produced by Signature Theatre in New York City on August 12, 2015. The performance was directed by Sam Gold, with sets by Mimi Lien, costumes by Ásta Bennie Hostetter, lights by Mark Barton, and sound by Bray Poor. The Production Stage Manager was Ed Herman. The cast was as follows:

ELIAS SCHREIBER-HOFFMAN	Christopher Abbott
JENNY CHUNG	Hong Chau
MERTIS KATHERINE GRAVEN	Georgia Engel
GENEVIEVE MARDUK	Lois Smith

CHARACTERS

ELIAS SCHREIBER-HOFFMAN – 29, glasses

JENNY CHUNG – 31, no glasses

MERTIS KATHERINE GRAVEN – 72, no glasses

GENEVIEVE MARDUK – 85, blind

SETTING

The first floor of a Bed & Breakfast in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

The very end of November.

There is a day porch and a little nook right off the day porch with a non-working gas fireplace and leather armchair and a bookshelf, and then a much bigger room that is divided into two areas: a parlor area with a flowered couch and big stuffed armchairs and a magazine stand and lamps and a little tea rack and candy cupboard, and then a dining area with 5 or 6 round tables. The dining area has a Parisian theme, a.k.a. pictures of the Eiffel Tower and Eiffel Tower lamps and tablecloths with little berets or mimes on them.

The parlor area is full of small objects. There are gnomes and trolls on the shelves and glass menageries everywhere and tiny little porcelain angels playing the harp and tiny hand-sewn sayings in frames. There is an entire miniature wintertime railway and village. Maybe a birdcage with a little fake bird in it. There is a very large Christmas tree, probably not real, covered in white lights. There is a player piano and a ticking grandfather clock. Somewhere, hidden, there is a set of Swedish angel chimes. There is a CD player that is designed to look like a little jukebox from the '50s. It is always on and it is always playing Bach, softly.

There are two French doors upstage and their windows are covered by curtains. These doors lead to Mertis's wing of the house.

Then there's a big staircase leading from the parlor to the second floor and there's a landing and on the landing rests a terrifying American Girl doll in a doll-sized rocking chair.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

- Mertis opens and closes an old-school red velvet curtain between every act.
- During every scene transition Mertis sets the hands of the grandfather clock to the time of the following scene and changes the music on the jukebox. If she isn't the last person onstage, she stealthily creeps onstage between scenes to move time forward.
- “/” indicates where the next line of dialogue begins.

ACT ONE

Scene One

(The house is empty. Nighttime. The little jukebox radio is on. It is softly playing Bach's St. Matthew Passion, Aria No. 20.)

(Car lights swing across the room. The sound of an engine turning off. Car doors slam in the driveway. The doorbell rings. 10 seconds later, MERTIS shuffles down the steps onto the landing, then shuffles down the second flight of steps into the parlor. She opens the door and goes out onto the day porch. We hear this:)

MERTIS. *(opening the door to the porch)* Hello!

ELIAS.

Hi! Hello!

JENNY.

Hi!

So nice to...

(She fades out. The sound of bags thumping up steps and across a threshold, knocking something aside.)

MERTIS.

ELIAS.

(re: something we don't see)

Oh my.

It's fine.

Come on in!

Get warm!

Whoops, sorry.

(MERTIS holds the door open. ELIAS and JENNY enter, in big winter coats and maybe hats, dragging duffel bags. They look around.)

JENNY.

ELIAS.

Wow.

This is great.

Yeah.

MERTIS. Your home away from home.

JENNY. ...So lovely!

MERTIS. Thank you.

(She smiles at them and they wait for her to show them to their room.)

MERTIS. Oh! I almost forgot!

(She exits behind the French doors. ELIAS and JENNY look at each other. They smile.)

(ELIAS mouths: "She's a trip.")

JENNY. What?

(He mouths "She's a trip" again.)

JENNY. What?

(MERTIS re-enters with a plate.)

MERTIS. Peanut butter fudge.

JENNY.

ELIAS.

Oh wow.

That's so nice of you.

(MERTIS holds out the plate. They are still wearing coats and gloves and ELIAS is holding on to his duffel bag. JENNY takes off her gloves. ELIAS puts down his bag. He takes off his gloves. They both reach out and take a piece. They stand there awkwardly and take a bite while MERTIS watches them.)

ELIAS. That. Is. Good.

JENNY. Delicious.

(MERTIS watches them, beaming.)

ELIAS. *(his mouth full)* I'm Elias, by the way.

MERTIS. You were the one I spoke to on the phone!

ELIAS. Yup. And this is Jenny.

MERTIS. Hello Jenny.

JENNY. Hi.

ELIAS. And should we call /you –

MERTIS. Well I know it says Mertis on the website and
Mertis Katherine is my proper name but most people
just call me Kitty.

*(ELIAS swallows the last of his fudge. JENNY lowers
the rest of her piece of fudge discreetly to her side.*

ELIAS picks up his bag.)

MERTIS. I bet you'd like to see your room and get settled
in.

JENNY.

ELIAS.

Great.

Yeah.

(MERTIS starts walking, then stops.)

MERTIS. You'll have to excuse my slippers.

JENNY.

ELIAS.

Of course!

You're excused!

MERTIS. I have a blister and it's very late /so I was—

ELIAS. I'm sorry. I know we said 9. But there was crazy
/traffic and—

MERTIS. It's fine, you're just not seeing me at my most
glamorous.

*(They all walk towards the stairs. MERTIS gestures
towards the dining area.)*

MERTIS. Breakfast is from 7 to 9.

We call this "Paris."

(They gaze at Paris.)

See. It's /got—

JENNY. Oh yeah!

MERTIS. You can come here for tea or hot cocoa. Any time
of the day or night. Like a Paris café.

JENNY. Awesome.

ELIAS. *(re: a picture on the wall)* Who's that?

MERTIS. That's Eugenia.

(MERTIS continues towards a little nook with a mini-fridge and shelf full of snacks in the dining area.)

MERTIS. There's Pepsi and seltzer water.

Please help yourself to whatever you like.

(She opens the mini-fridge door, closes it, then points to the shelf.)

And candy and cookies up there.

JENNY. Dangerous.

MERTIS. Well.

It can be, yes.

It can be very dangerous. But I think of it for guests only.

I'm on a very strict diet.

(stage whisper)

67 pounds in four months.

JENNY.

ELIAS.

That's amazing.

Wow. /Wait—

MERTIS. It's the HCG diet...have you heard of HCG?

(They shake their heads "no.")

MERTIS. You give yourself these special injections and you cut out all refined sugar.

(They don't know what to say to this.)

MERTIS. There's a wonderful doctor who wrote a book about it. I'll show you tomorrow.

(MERTIS finally heads up the stairs. They follow.

JENNY stops on the landing to stare at the doll, then follows MERTIS and ELIAS.)

(On the second set of stairs:)

MERTIS. *(pointing up to an object we can't see)* Now that is genuine Civil War era!

ELIAS. Cool.

MERTIS. (*out of sight now, in the upstairs hallway*) ...And... let's see...you're in the Chamberlain room...

ELIAS. (*hesitating on the stairs*) I thought we were in the Jackson.

MERTIS. Oh—really? Because the Jackson—I think the Chamberlain is much nicer.

ELIAS. I think we asked for the Jackson though.

(*Pause.*)

MERTIS. Yes well I'm going to be honest with you the Jackson has a leak. A leak in the ceiling.

JENNY. Oh.

MERTIS. You probably asked for the Jackson because it's the least expensive but I'm going to give you the Chamberlain for the price of the Jackson and I hope you'll forgive me for not giving you ample warning.

JENNY.

ELIAS.

Well thanks for the deal! No, it's okay.

(*They head up the stairs and disappear into the upstairs hallway. Footsteps. The sound of a door unlocking. This next section is heard faintly. We shouldn't catch all of it.*)

MERTIS. Who's tall enough to reach the dolphin? That string with the dolphin.

(*More footsteps.*)

MERTIS. Well. All right. This is my favorite room in the house.

JENNY. I really like the ceiling.

MERTIS. That's what they call a memory wheel!

(*Pause. Sound of bags being set down on the floor.*)

MERTIS. Let's see. We have oil heat and the upstairs gets terribly hot if it stays on at night so I turn it off at 9 p.m. But some guests like to be toasty while they're sleeping so there's a little space heater in the closet if you need it.

(*More footsteps.*)

JENNY. Thank you, Mertis.

Kitty.

MERTIS. I—what time do you think you'll be coming down for breakfast? Closer to 7 or closer to 9?

JENNY.

ELIAS.

Uh –

Hmm—

MERTIS. I just like to have some sense.

ELIAS. ...Probably closer to 9.

MERTIS. Mhm. All right. Young people usually come down closer to 9.

(exiting the room)

I hope you have a nice sleep and that you...that you enjoy yourselves.

JENNY.

ELIAS.

Good night.

Thanks! Good night!

(Sound of the bedroom door shutting. Sound of MERTIS walking down the hallway and down the second flight of stairs. She steps carefully down to the landing. She continues down the stairs. She walks slowly across the room, switching off all the lamps except one. She does this methodically, with care. As she switches off the last one, she hears some of the following faintly from upstairs and pauses:)

ELIAS.

JENNY.

(offstage)

(offstage)

No. No. You have no idea how –

I should have the right to say whatever I –

Because that's how I feel.

Yes but –

But you said it in this way that—

Isn't that what you want?

I'M TELLING YOU HOW I FEEL.

Okay, okay. Stop yelling.

I'm not yelling.

(MERTIS waits, her hand on the lamp switch, and then turns it off. She makes her way across the room. She stops at the little jukebox radio CD player. She changes the music to Bach's Passacaglia for Organ in C Minor. She changes the hands on the clock to 2:04. The moon rises. She walks to her little curtained set of French doors. She disappears behind them.)

Scene Two

(It is 2:04 a.m. The jukebox radio is still playing the Passacaglia for Organ in C Minor.)

(JENNY walks down the stairs, sock-footed, wrapped in a quilt covered in pictures of little girls in bonnets.)

(She thinks for a moment, then walks back up the stairs.)

(Faint sounds of a door creaking open, then a door closing a few seconds later.)

(JENNY comes back down the stairs, lugging a space heater.)

(She lugs it down to the parlor and starts looking around for outlets. She finds an outlet not that near the couch. She looks for another one for a while, in vain. Then she settles on the one that's not that near the couch. She plugs it in, then drags the space heater as close as she can to the couch.)

(It starts humming and blowing. She presses a button and puts it on the setting that makes it turn its little head in circles around the room.)

(She lies down on the couch and tries to get as much of her body as possible under the quilt.)

(She changes her mind about the space heater, gets up, and changes the setting so it just blows air towards the couch.)

(She turns down the music.)

(She notices an object that is out of place or toppled over. She rights it.)

(She sits back down and stares at the doll sitting on the landing in the rocking chair.)

(A door creaks open upstairs. Footsteps.)

(**ELIAS** appears on the landing in his boxers and a T-shirt.)

(They regard each other.)

ELIAS. What is happening.

JENNY. I'm so cold and I also feel like I'm about to get my period.

(A long pause.)

JENNY. See that doll?

ELIAS. What doll?

JENNY. There.

(**ELIAS** turns and looks at the American Girl doll in the rocking chair.)

JENNY. That's Samantha.

(He doesn't get it.)

JENNY. She's the one I had when I was a kid.

ELIAS. The scary one?

(**JENNY** nods.)

ELIAS. It's the same doll?

JENNY. Yup.

(They both look at Samantha.)

JENNY. Doesn't she look mad?

(**ELIAS** leans down and peers at her face.)

ELIAS. Not really.

(He picks up Samantha and turns her upside down to inspect her crotch.)

JENNY. What are you doing?

Stop it!

ELIAS. She's wearing white cotton underwear.

(He starts to touch the underwear.)

JENNY. Don't look underneath it!

She'll never forgive you!

ELIAS. Are you serious?

JENNY. Please don't.

ELIAS. Okay, okay.

(He puts Samantha back in her rocking chair and smooths her hair down.)

JENNY. It's really freaking me out.

It's the same outfit and everything.

I feel like she found me.

ELIAS. Where is your Samantha?

JENNY. In Columbus.

In the basement.

ELIAS. Do you think she's pissed that you put her in a basement?

JENNY. I can't even—I can't even think about it.

(Pause.)

ELIAS. I gotta go back to sleep.

(ELIAS walks back upstairs. The door to the Chamberlain room creaks shut.)

(JENNY sits there. Then she stands up, still wrapped in the quilt, and starts to walk towards the staircase. Then she changes her mind.)

(She walks over to the piano. She puts a finger on it. The piano starts playing "Yes Sir, That's My Baby." JENNY jumps back in terror.)

(The piano keeps playing itself. It looks like a ghost is playing it.)

(Eventually ELIAS comes back down the stairs onto the landing.)

(They silently watch the ghost play the piano.)

(The song ends.)

(The space heater is still blowing.)

(JENNY looks up at ELIAS. ELIAS looks down at JENNY from the landing.)

JENNY. I didn't do that on purpose.

(Pause.)

JENNY. Come sit next to me.
Just for a minute.

(Pause.)

JENNY. I'll rub your neck.

(A pause. Then he slowly walks down the stairs and joins her on the couch. A negotiation involving the blanket. Then she starts giving him a neck rub with one hand. He gazes around the room.)

ELIAS. There's so much miniature shit.
Are you super into it?

JENNY. It's actually too much.
I can't look at it.

ELIAS. It's like a Jenny Chung wet dream.

JENNY. I start grinding my teeth.
When there's too much small stuff I get so excited that
I grind my teeth.

(She takes her hand off his neck for a second to touch her jawbone.)

JENNY. And I left my stupid mouthguard in Columbus.

ELIAS. Tell them to mail it.

JENNY. I did.

(Pause.)

ELIAS. Is it the railroad? Did that make you grind your teeth?

JENNY. No.

It's the Town Hall and the tiny people having like a tiny mayoral meeting around a tiny table if you peep through the window.

ELIAS. Where.

(She points without looking. He looks.)

ELIAS. Oh.

Yeah.

(Pause. They sit there. She rubs his neck.)

JENNY. Tell me a story.

ELIAS. Happy or sad?

JENNY. Scary.

Tell me a scary story.

ELIAS. I don't know if I can like make up a scary story on the spot.

JENNY. Try.

(Pause.)

ELIAS. Do you think it's scary here?

JENNY. A little.

ELIAS. Yeah.

But more tragic than scary.

JENNY. Why tragic?

ELIAS. You know. The tchotchkes.

"Paris."

The like Tragedy of Bed and Breakfasts.

The like desperate attempts to be homey and special and cheerful and warm and cute.

I don't know.

Isn't it obvious?

JENNY. Do you think my parents' house is tragic?

ELIAS. Jenny.

JENNY. Because my mother has a lot of cheerful tchotchkes.

ELIAS. Your parents' house is...

(A pause.)

ELIAS. I feel trapped.

JENNY. I'm just asking.

ELIAS. But I'm actually getting really anxious because I feel you trapping me.

JENNY. There's not like a wrong answer to my question. So I don't /see—

ELIAS. PLEASE STOP TRAPPING /ME.

JENNY. Okay please don't yell.

(They sit in silence. Her hand is frozen still on the back of his neck.)

ELIAS. Can you take your hand off my neck?

(She slowly removes her hand from his neck.)

JENNY. I don't know why that turned into a fight.

ELIAS. That wasn't a fight.

(He collapses back onto the couch and closes his eyes. He breathes. After a while:)

ELIAS. It was a

Cold

Dark

Rainy Night.

A man and a woman were driving down a highway.

A highway in the American Midwest.

And then they realized...

They realized they were low on gas.

And they...

And they looked for a gas station but there weren't any and it was pouring rain and they could barely see through the windshield so they pulled into this uh, creepy motel by the side of the highway.

And they walked into the motel and there was an old man with one eye.

Sitting at the, uh, front desk.

(Pause.)

ELIAS. And the old man with one eye had them...he told them...he had them sign their names in the...log book...and uh...he told them they could have any room they wanted in the motel. Because it was totally empty. And so the man and the woman picked a room and they uh...they brought their bags up to the room and they got into bed and then...

And then they realized...
That there was a face at the window.
Watching them.
And it was the face of...

(Pause.)

ELIAS. I'm stuck.

JENNY. It's so good!

ELIAS. I can only do build-up to scary.

Not scary itself.

JENNY. That's okay.

ELIAS. You wanted scary.

JENNY. I just want you to keep going.

(Pause.)

ELIAS. And the face in the window was...

(Pause.)

ELIAS. I'm done.

(He stands up.)

JENNY. I'm still cold.

ELIAS. Goodnight Jenny.

*(ELIAS gets up and starts walking up the stairs.
He stops on the landing.)*

ELIAS. I should have made it Gettysburg-specific.

Like "Ghosts of Gettysburg." All the dead soldiers and
shit.

Spirits haunting the Devil's Den.

JENNY. I liked the face.

(He shakes his head and heads upstairs.)

Scene Three

(Morning.)

(9:17 on the grandfather clock.)

(The first movement of the Brandenburg Concerto is playing on the jukebox.)

(ELIAS is sitting at a table in Paris pouring cereal from a little cereal box and then pouring milk from a little silver pitcher.)

(JENNY is standing nearby looking at the newspaper selection on a coffee table. She picks through it. She picks the front section and the Arts and Leisure section.)

(She walks back to the table and hands ELIAS the Arts and Leisure section. She sits at the table.)

(ELIAS starts looking at the front page of the folded Arts and Leisure section on the tabletop and eating his cereal.)

(His eating is too loud for her.)

(It is annoying her.)

(Eventually JENNY takes one hand off the front section of the newspaper and tries to very, very subtly put a finger in her ear while still trying to prop the front section up. She turns a page. He looks up and notices.)

ELIAS. What.

JENNY. What.

ELIAS. What's that?

JENNY. What.

ELIAS. That.

JENNY. Oh. Nothing.

(She takes her finger out of her ear and turns another page of the newspaper.)

ELIAS. Are /you like—

JENNY. It's nothing.

(He goes back to eating. She goes back to reading. As he's eating it occurs to him what was happening.)

ELIAS. Were you doing that because I was eating too loudly?

JENNY. No.

ELIAS. Because you can just tell me that I'm eating too loudly.

(Pause.)

ELIAS. You don't have to like passive-aggressively notify me through physical behavior. You can be honest with me. Remember?

(Pause.)

JENNY. Okay.

(ELIAS gazes at her. Then he picks up his spoon and starts eating again. JENNY tries to bear it, but then can't help herself.)

JENNY. Yes okay fine.

ELIAS. What.

JENNY. Sorry.

I guess it was a tiny bit too loud.

ELIAS. And that bothers you /because—

JENNY. It's just a little gross.

ELIAS. *(calmly)* What's gross about it.

JENNY. It's like...

Whatever.

Sorry.

ELIAS. No tell me.

JENNY. It's just kind of a gross sound.

I can like hear you like breathing and smacking your tongue /against the—

ELIAS. Sounds very Jewish.

JENNY. Wait, what?

ELIAS. Like, oh Jesus, the big loud hairy Jew is like smacking his lips again and chewing with his mouth open and it's totally repulsive.

JENNY. It has nothing to do with you being Jewish.

ELIAS. That's what you think.

JENNY. Oh my god.

(MERTIS wanders in through the French doors with a tray of food.)

MERTIS. Here are the eggs...

(She puts the eggs down.)

MERTIS. And then I have a little –

(She wanders off.)

(ELIAS and JENNY stare at the eggs.)

ELIAS. These are not real eggs.

JENNY. Yes they are.

ELIAS. They're like fake...they're like mix.

JENNY. No I know what the mix ones look like.

ELIAS. They don't look like real eggs.

JENNY. That's because she used a—

(MERTIS wanders back in with a plate with two lumpen brown cakey things on it. She proudly places it on the table between them.)

MERTIS. And this is homemade.

Homemade duff.

JENNY. Wow! Wait, what's it called?

MERTIS. Sailor's duff.

(She wanders off again.)

(They look at the Sailor's duff.)

(They don't speak.)

(MERTIS wanders on again.)

MERTIS. It's a family recipe.

There's a very funny...

We would always make it on New Year's Day.
And the joke was...
You eat the duff,
And then ten minutes later you have thud.

(MERTIS is amused.)

JENNY. I don't get it.

MERTIS. Oh no. I'm not explaining it properly.

You eat the duff, and the feeling...the feeling you get
after eating the duff...that's called thud.

(She wanders off again.)

(They pick up their forks.)

JENNY. Look, I know it's not mix because my mom would
use a mix.

The reason this looks weird is because she has a little
egg frying machine.

This is how they look when you pour them into a little
egg frying machine and don't just use a normal pan.

ELIAS. It looks fake.

JENNY. It's not.

They're eggs.

*(JENNY begins to eat. She is angry and doesn't
want to be.)*

(After a while:)

JENNY. I just want to say that what I was—that the chewing
loudly has nothing to do with you being Jewish and
that you /always—

ELIAS. But how would you know?

JENNY. How would I know?

ELIAS. How would you know if it was a Jewish thing?

JENNY. Because that's like a stereotype.

ELIAS. That might be based in a reality of a /cultural—

JENNY. So what are you saying? That Jews are like
disgusting—

ELIAS. No I'm saying that there are certain cultural—I mean you of all people should /understand—

JENNY. What is that supposed /to—

ELIAS. You of all people should understand that there are weird cultural things and certain things are like—like the way you hate—how you hate when I point? When I'm making a—the way I point my finger at you?

JENNY. I don't like the way you get amped up and start pointing and waving your arms around.

ELIAS. Yeah but see that's a Jewish thing.

JENNY. No.

No.

I don't accept that.

ELIAS. You don't get to not accept it, you /can—

JENNY. It's not a Jewish thing, it's you being loud or domineering or you being gross, and you're making it a Jewish thing so I sound like I'm anti-Semitic or something.

ELIAS. I never said you were anti-Semitic.

I was trying to *let you in on my experience*.

I'm trying to tell you *that my whole family eats like this*.

JENNY. Um, okay Eli, but believe or not I have spent time with other Jews besides you, and and and Deena, and Lexie, and Adam, and it's not a—they don't like slurp their cereal like you do. They eat like normal people.

(Pause.)

ELIAS. Wow.

Normal people.

(Another pause.)

ELIAS. Well then you're just dating a particularly repulsive person.

A like abnormally disgusting guy.

I mean, what a terrible thing to be in.

To be with someone you find repulsive.

I can see how that would make you —

(MERTIS wanders in again.)

JENNY. (*quietly*) You know that's not the issue.

(MERTIS sits at the table next to them.)

(*They smile at her. She smiles back.*)

MERTIS. I don't know why it's called Sailor's duff but that's what we always called it.

(*Pause.*)

MERTIS. How are the eggs?

ELIAS.

JENNY.

Great.

Really great.

MERTIS. What are your plans for today?

(*They look at each other.*)

JENNY.

ELIAS.

Elias wants to –

We were just gonna do
the auto tour.

With the CD from the
visitor's center.

MERTIS. Oh the one with Percy Nesbitt!

ELIAS. Is that the one they sell at the visitor's center?

MERTIS. That's the official—everyone loves that one.

JENNY. Oh good.

MERTIS. Where are you having dinner?

ELIAS. We were just gonna drive around and look /for a—

MERTIS. Have you heard about the Dobbin House?

(*They shake their heads no.*)

MERTIS. It's the oldest house in town and there's a very good historical-type dinner and they're in the old-fashioned-get-up and the menu has the strangest things on it...like a peanut soup! Apparently everyone ate peanut soup back then—and you sit in this very old room and there are these very strange paintings on the wall and then UPSTAIRS there's a sort of...a diorama

and you stand in this room and you look up...and in the floorboards there's a sort of slave diorama!

(Pause.)

ELIAS. What's a slave diorama?

MERTIS. There are these life-sized uh...slaves and they're hiding in the floorboards and it's a very realistic reenactment of the Underground Railroad.

ELIAS. Wait, they're real people? Real people are playing the slaves?

MERTIS. No. No. They're mummies.

(They look at her.)

MERTIS. Not mummies. Manni—mun—

JENNY. Mannequins?

MERTIS. Yes. These very realistic mannequins and you can see how the slaves hid in the floorboards before they headed north to freedom!

(Her phone rings. It's attached to a little fanny pack she wears around her waist. She looks at it.)

MERTIS. I'm so sorry. I don't usually...but it's my friend Genevieve and she's a bit older and she's also blind and I /make a point of—

JENNY. Please get it!

Please don't worry about it!

(MERTIS answers the phone.)

MERTIS. Genevieve?

Yes.

I can't understand you.

I'm with some guests.

(JENNY gestures "no-no-please!")

MERTIS. *(into the phone)* It was John Henry Newman!

(She moves slowly towards the French doors.)

MERTIS. *(into the phone)* "Numquam minus solus quam cum solus."

(She disappears behind the doors.)

(A pause.)

JENNY. Do you think anyone else is staying here?

(ELIAS doesn't respond.)

JENNY. You know I don't think you're repulsive.

(Pause.)

JENNY. I think you're so beautiful.

I think you're the most beautiful person I've ever met.

(A painful pause while she waits for him to say that she's beautiful too. He takes a bite of eggs, then:)

ELIAS. *(mouth full)* See, now I'm self-conscious /about how I—

JENNY. Do you think I'm beautiful?

ELIAS. Sure.

(She reaches out and touches his wrist. They look at each other sadly.)

JENNY. Hold on.

(JENNY gets up and hurries upstairs. Her iPhone is sitting on the breakfast table, face down. ELIAS is alone. He eats cereal. He eats enthusiastically, then decides to try eating quietly. It's hard. How do people do it? JENNY's phone dings. She has received a text. ELIAS stares at her phone. Then he glances up at the staircase. He is about to reach forward to pick up the phone when MERTIS opens the French doors and pokes her head out. He withdraws his hand.)

MERTIS. I forgot to ask.

Was everything all right in the Chamberlain room last night?

ELIAS. Uh. Yeah. Great.

MERTIS. Because I thought I heard /someone—

ELIAS. Well, Jenny was a little cold so she ended up sleeping down here until the heat came back on upstairs.

MERTIS. Oh dear.

ELIAS. She's always cold, though.

Her fingers and toes are like these ice blocks.

MERTIS. Did she try using the space heater?

ELIAS. It wasn't enough.

MERTIS. I apologize. I'll turn it up tonight.

ELIAS. That would be great.

MERTIS. I have to warn you. It gets pretty steamy.

ELIAS. She'll love that.

(She smiles at him and ducks back into her quarters. The door shuts behind her. JENNY slides on her butt down a couple of the top flight of steps towards the landing. ELIAS is in the middle of gazing at her phone again when JENNY hisses:)

JENNY. Pssst.

ELIAS. Whoa. What?

Why are you sitting?

JENNY. I just got my period.

ELIAS. Fuck.

JENNY. It's bad.

It's gonna be really really bad.

ELIAS. Did you take ibuprofen?

JENNY. Five.

ELIAS. You took five?!

JENNY. Just now.

ELIAS. That's too much.

(Pause.)

JENNY. I'm not sure I can go out today.

ELIAS. Jenny.

JENNY. I'm dying.

I feel like I'm giving birth.

ELIAS. We'll just do the auto tour. You can stay in the car the whole time.

JENNY. I actually feel like I'm giving birth to my own uterus.

ELIAS. Let's wait for the ibuprofen to kick in and then we'll see how you feel.

(Pause.)

This is really important to me.

JENNY. Okay.

(She starts to crawl back upstairs.)

ELIAS. Where are you going?

JENNY. To lie down until the ibuprofen kicks in.

Is that my phone?

ELIAS. What?

JENNY. Is that my phone on the table?

ELIAS. Oh. I guess so.

JENNY. Will you bring it to me?

(He brings the phone to her. She takes it and crawls back upstairs out of view. ELIAS is alone for a while. He walks over to the small oil painting of Eugenia on the wall and peers closely at it. There is something about it that's troubling him. MERTIS re-enters. She stands there. Then:)

MERTIS. There was a reason I came out again.

I wanted to tell you something.

(Pause.)

I'll be dipped.

ELIAS. That's okay.

You can /just—

MERTIS. Oh yes!

You wanted to know about HCG.

(She leaves and then re-enters again carrying a book and a jar of black liquid.)

(She hands the book to ELIAS.)

(He holds it, puzzled.)

MERTIS. It's a pregnancy hormone.

You give yourself daily injections and you don't eat more than 700 calories a day.

ELIAS. That sounds really intense.

MERTIS. Read the back!

He's a doctor.

(ELIAS turns the book over and reads the back.)

ELIAS. Huh.

MERTIS. Two meals a day.

I skip breakfast.

Every meal has to include one protein one vegetable one bread and one fruit.

No butters or oils.

And you drink this every morning.

(She holds up the jar, which is pitch black and maybe flecked with tiny pieces of gold or silver.)

ELIAS. What is that?

MERTIS. It's this special potion.

It's 12 on the pH scale so it's very alka—alkalinizing and apparently it has lots of Vitamin K and B and a very powerful live probiotic.

They send you the packets in the mail.

ELIAS. Why is it black?

MERTIS. *(gazing at it)* I don't know.

ELIAS. *(flipping through the book)* Are you supposed to lose that much weight that fast?

Isn't that supposed /to be—

MERTIS. I've never felt better in my life.

No alcohol.

No refined sugar.

(He hands the book back to her. He looks at the potion.)

ELIAS. What does it taste like?

(MERTIS holds out the jar. ELIAS hesitates, then takes a sip.)

ELIAS. ...Huh.

Weird.

What's that flavor?

It's kind of familiar but I can't place it.

MERTIS. Not bad, right?

ELIAS. Rain on concrete?

Bananas?

(Pause.)

MERTIS. Have a wonderful day, Elias.

ELIAS. Yeah.

Thanks, Mertis. You too.

MERTIS. You can also call me Kitty.

ELIAS. Right.

Kitty.

(MERTIS turns around and walks back through the French doors.)

Scene Four

(Late afternoon. 4:48 on the clock. The sun is starting to set. No music.)

(MERTIS is sitting in the window seat or a chair by the window in the parlor area, scribbling in a dusty notebook.)

(The sound of a car door slamming, then driving away.)

(JENNY enters, bundled up. She walks into the parlor, hoping no one is there. Her face falls when she sees MERTIS.)

MERTIS. How was the tour?!

JENNY. It was okay. I didn't finish it. I'm not feeling so good.

MERTIS. Can I get you some /tea or some—

JENNY. I'm just gonna go upstairs and lie down.

MERTIS. All right.

(JENNY trudges up the first flight of stairs. She stops and looks at Samantha. Then she turns around.)

JENNY. Sorry, how was your day?

MERTIS. It was lovely! I bought some groceries and ran into a couple of friends and then George and I ate lunch together.

JENNY. Who's George?

MERTIS. My husband.

JENNY. Oh!

Okay.

(Pause.)

JENNY. ...Does George live here?

MERTIS. Of course!

JENNY. Just...um...

(JENNY gestures towards the French doors.)

MERTIS. Yes, yes, of course!

JENNY. Oh wow.

I didn't realize that.

MERTIS. Are you sure I can't make you some tea?

JENNY. I'm fine. Thank you.

(JENNY exits upstairs.)

(MERTIS goes over to the jukebox radio and turns it on. Bach's Cantata No. 82 comes piping in. She goes back to scribbling by the window.)

(JENNY reappears at the top of the stairs.)

JENNY. Sorry.

Um. Sorry.

But um...

The Chamberlain room is still really cold.

MERTIS. It is?!

JENNY. Yes.

MERTIS. Wait one minute.

Let me go turn on the heat.

(MERTIS walks across the room and through the French doors.)

(A few seconds later, she walks back in.)

JENNY. I'm sorry. Um. Wait. So, the heat wasn't on at all upstairs?

MERTIS. Well it gets really steamy up there.

JENNY. Uh-huh.

MERTIS. So when the guests are gone during the day I turn it off.

(Pause.)

MERTIS. I didn't think you'd be coming back till later.

JENNY. But didn't you say that you also turn it off at night?

(Pause.)

MERTIS. I'll leave it on.

I apologize.

(Pause.)

MERTIS. It's nice and toasty down here.
Why don't you join me?

(Pause.)

JENNY. Let me just take some ibuprofen.

(JENNY leaves. A few seconds later she reappears, sweated and sock-footed, and schlumps down the staircase and onto the couch. She takes out her iPhone and rests it on her chest. She lies there.)

MERTIS. Where's Elias?

JENNY. He's finishing the battlefield tour. And then going to dinner.

(Pause.)

JENNY. I have really bad cramps. I just couldn't do it anymore. I sat in that car for five hours.
And the painkillers make me feel like I'm gonna throw up.
Sorry if I'm being rude.

MERTIS. No, no. It's a terrible thing.

(Pause.)

MERTIS. Did you learn anything exciting today?

JENNY. Well. I mean. I don't really know anything about Gettysburg. So we did...uh...Seminary Ridge...and Devil's Den...and the Peach Orchard...that was kind of creepy...

MERTIS. Mmhm...

JENNY. And then I pooped out and made him drive me home.

Oh, and we did the uh... Little Round Top. Where Chamberlain saved the day. And I was like: oh yeah: our room was named after him!

MERTIS. What brought you to Gettysburg?

JENNY. Well, when Elias was a kid he was totally obsessed with the Civil War. It's funny, cuz he was raised by

hippies in California but like...yeah. When he was nine he wanted to be a Civil War historian. Not a musician.

MERTIS. He's a musician?

JENNY. Yeah. He's a drummer.

Slash computer programmer.

Anyway, when we knew we were gonna be driving back from Ohio he got really excited about taking a detour and spending a couple of nights here. He's been rereading all his old books.

(After a short pause:)

JENNY. You must be like a Gettysburg expert.

MERTIS. Oh no. I've never even been on a tour!

JENNY. Really?

MERTIS. Once I drove through part of the battlefield on my way to Wegman's. But I didn't know what anything was or what anything meant. I just liked looking at those old fences.

JENNY. Huh.

I guess that's like...

I live in Brooklyn and I've never been to Ellis Island.

(Pause. JENNY writes a text. While typing, absentmindedly:)

Did you grow up around here?

MERTIS. No, I grew up all over.

My sister used to work at Hanover Hospital and when I was going through a difficult time about 15 years ago she encouraged me to move here and take a job at the hospital with her. So I did.

JENNY. Were you a nurse?

MERTIS. Oh no. My sister was a nurse. I just cleaned bedpans.

JENNY. Oh. Okay.

MERTIS. A year or two ago I ran into one of the doctors. And he wasn't always the nicest man when I worked there. I'm sure he was very busy and had a lot on his

mind, but I think he wasn't as kind to me as he could have been. Anyway, he recognized me and he said: "What are you up to now, Mertis?" And I said: "Well, sir, I'm running a B&B with my husband and I'm doing quite well."

And that was a nice little moment in my life.

JENNY. Yeah! Screw that guy.

(A weird pause. MERTIS contemplates saying something, but then goes back to her notepad.)

JENNY. Is that a journal?

MERTIS. Sort of.

I just use it to describe things.

Nothing too personal.

Right now I'm trying to describe the sunset.

(JENNY cranes her neck to gaze out the window.)

JENNY. What are you saying about it?

(MERTIS reads from her journal:)

MERTIS. "The white November sky morphed into an exquisite robin's egg blue by 4 p.m., and its welcome presence lasted but a short while. By 4:45, phosphorescent oranges, grotesque reds, and blasphemous purples slashed open the sky, followed by a slow and oozing transformation into a brooding, subfuscous indigo, which now, as I write this, leads us inexorably down the ever-darkening path from the gloaming into night."

JENNY. ...Wow.

MERTIS. I try to document it every day if I can.

(A comfortable silence while JENNY plays with her iPhone and MERTIS writes. JENNY's phone dings once or twice as she receives texts. Then:)

MERTIS. What are you doing on that thing?

JENNY. Oh. Well. I'm actually working, if you can believe it. I'm researching something. And I'm also texting my sister.

MERTIS. What are you researching?

JENNY. I write questions for a game show.

(short pause)

Have you heard of Cash Cow?

MERTIS. Oh my goodness. Genevieve loves Cash Cow! I've never seen it but she talks about it constantly!

JENNY. I write their questions. I mean, me and six other people.

MERTIS. What a fascinating job!

JENNY. It's okay.

MERTIS. You must be very smart!

JENNY. I mean, I don't have any kind of comprehensive knowledge. I just have a lot of weird random factoids at my fingertips.

MERTIS. Ooh, tell me one.

JENNY. Well, I'm like contractually... I can't talk about any questions that haven't aired on the show yet. Because then you could like...you could like remember what I told you and then go on the show and win like two million dollars and even if that wasn't intentional cheating it actually would be like...

Um...

Hmmm.

I'm trying to think of one that already aired.

Mmm...

Oh!

What nation's flag has a white dragon in its center that is said to symbolize purity?

You get 100,000 dollars if you guess this one right.

A) Brunei, B) Bhutan, C) Burkina Faso, or D) Burundi.

MERTIS. ...A white dragon?

JENNY. Said to symbolize purity.

Brunei, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, or Burundi.

(Pause.)

MERTIS. ...Bhutan.

JENNY. Yes!

MERTIS. I'll be dipped.

JENNY. Wait, did you already know that?!

MERTIS. I just guessed.

JENNY. That's awesome.

MERTIS. I'm also a tiny bit of a mind reader.

(She goes back to her notebook. JENNY is slightly weirded out.)

JENNY. I just thought of another one that already aired.

MERTIS. Shoot.

JENNY. The eye of an ostrich is A) Half the size of its brain,
B) The same size as its brain...um... C) Twice as large
as its brain, or D) Three times as large as its brain?

MERTIS. C. Twice as large.

JENNY. That's right!

That's crazy!

Did you just guess that one again?

MERTIS. No, no, I knew that answer.

I'm very fond of birds and I try to learn as much about
them as possible.

JENNY. Don't tell Elias that. He has bird-phobia.

(JENNY's phone rings.)

MERTIS. Bird-phobia?

(MERTIS glances worriedly at a bird on the wall.

*JENNY answers the phone and wanders into Paris
while she talks to ELIAS.)*

JENNY. Hi.

Yeah.

No I'm in uh...

I'm in Paris.

Yeah. Talking to Mertis.

(pause)

Yes I'm still in pain.

What does that mean?

(pause)

That's totally fine.

(pause)

Yeah.

No it's fine.

Aren't those like huge...

Aren't they like scams?

(pause)

Whatever. It's totally fine.

I'll text you if I'm feeling better.

Yup.

I'll order in or whatever.

I love –

(He hangs up. JENNY looks at her phone despondently.)

MERTIS. Was that Elias?

JENNY. He wants to go on one of those graveyard ghost tours.

(Pause.)

JENNY. With the like...with the night vision goggles.

Uch.

So dumb.

MERTIS. What are you going to do?

JENNY. I don't know. He has the car.

I guess I'll just stay here and fact-check and text my sister.

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