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SF PERUSALS

LONDON SUITE

A Comedy by

Neil Simon

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830
New York Hollywood London Toronto
SAMUELFRENCH.COM

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UNION SQUARE

—

Emanuel Azenberg
and
Leonard Soloway
present

Carole Shelley **Paxton Whitehead**

Kate Burton **Jeffrey Jones**

in

Neil Simon's

LONDON SUITE

with
Brooks Ashmanskas

Scenic Design by	*Costume Design by*	*Lighting Design by*
John Lee Beatty	**Jane Greenwood**	**Ken Billington**
Sound Design by	*Wigs and Hair by*	*Casting by*
Tom Clark	**Paul Huntley**	**Jay Binder**
Associate Producer	*Production Stage Mgr.*	*Company Manager*
Ginger Montel	**John Vivian**	**Steven M. Levy**

Press Representative
Bill Evans & Associates
Directed by
Daniel Sullivan

LONDON SUITE was originally produced by the
SEATTLE REPERTORY THEATER, Seattle, Washington.

LONDON SUITE consists of four one-act plays that take place in an old but very fashionable hotel in London, much like the Connaught Hotel.

The suite consists of a living room, bedroom and bathroom. The entrance door at Stage Right leads into a small cubicle and then into the living room. Another door leads into the bedroom and bathroom. Both rooms look out on a street. A bar is at Stage Right in living room.

The Connaught Hotel, originally built in the 19th century, still stands today, a testament to the splendor of the period. Its decor, although remodeled many times, still has the charm and ambiance of the original.

It is far from one of the larger hotels in London, but its clientele look for atmosphere, comfort and privacy, standing out from its glitzy contemporaries.

ACT I

"Settling Accounts"

Brian ..... Jeffrey Jones
Billy ..... Paxton Whitehead

"Going Home"

Lauren ..... Kate Burton
Mrs. Semple ..... Carole Shelley

ACT II

"Diana & Sidney"

Diana ..... Carole Shelley
Grace ..... Kate Burton
Sidney ..... Paxton Whitehead

"The Man on the Floor"

Mark ..... Jeffrey Jones
Annie ..... Kate Burton
Mrs. Sitgood ..... Carole Shelley
Bellman ..... Brooks Ashmanskas
Dr. McMerlin ..... Paxton Whitehead

Place: A hotel in London
Time: The present

ACT I

Scene One
SETTLING ACCOUNTS

(In the dark, we hear the voice of an English airline employee over the public address system.)

WOMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, this is the first call for British Airways Flight 106 to Buenos Aires. All those holding boarding passes will proceed to Gate Number One Seven ... Thank you.

(WE hear the hubbub of noise in the terminal, then the voice of a MAN, Welsh accent.)

BRIAN: *(Cheery but eerie)* Hello, Billy, fancy meeting you here ...

BILLY: Brian? Is that you?

BRIAN: Off to Argentina, are you? Beautiful place, I hear. Mind if we have a little chat first, Bill? *(BILL starts to interrupt)* ... Plenty of time to catch your plane.

(The hubbub slowly diminishes as the lights come up in Suite 402.)
(About ten o'clock at night.)
(The lights go on.)
(BILLY FOX, about fifty, is wearing a dark overcoat over a

well tailored suit. HE is looking frightened. At the side of the sofa. BRIAN CRONIN, about fifty, in a leather half jacket stands holding a gun and a glass of Scotch. The gun is aimed at BILLY.)

BILLY: ... I've done nothing wrong, Brian, I swear to you. Whatever it is, we can straighten this out, I'm sure.

BRIAN: Oh, don't mind the gun, Billy. It's mostly for effect ... Bang bang bang! *(HE laughs)* No, no. I'm just holding it in the unlikely event that I may have to kill you. *(Pause)* Nice suite, isn't it? Hasn't changed much in what, twenty-two, twenty-three years? Couldn't believe it when you put me up here then ... Poshest thing I ever saw ... Who was I? A no one. A young Welsh writer, first time in London, my new book under my arm, wearing the only suit I had. You had a lot of faith in me, Billy, and I'll always be grateful for that.

BILLY: I feel dizzy. I think I'm going to pass out.

BRIAN: Don't try it, Bill. I'll shoot your pecker off, you'll be up in a flash, hoppin' about the room ...

BILLY: *(HE puts attaché case on his lap, protecting his vitals)* Do you really hate me that much?

BRIAN: *Hate* you? If anything, Billy, I've always worried about you, about your health and well being. All of us who depended on you were always concerned. Because if something happened to you, Bill, who would be there to manage our finances?

(HE drinks again.)

BILLY: Brian, this is not the first time I've seen you having delusions. How many other times have I seen you in

this state? How much more whiskey do you have to drink before you permanently damage what's left of your brains and your talent?

BRIAN: Seen me like what, Billy? Drunk, mad, whimsical, with a loaded gun in my hand preparing to blow an east to west tunnel through your fucking head? The answer to that is never, Billy ... How much more whiskey do I have to drink before I permanently damage what's left of my brains and talent? That's easy, Bill. My talent is beyond damage. I didn't destroy it. I used it up. It doesn't keep filling itself over and over again, flooding the banks of your mind like the river Nile every spring. It dries up, Billy. It cracks under the searing pressure of critics and readers who demand art, high standards and enormous popularity all at the same time. I did, however, write eight bloody wonderful books before the drought set in. But those eight books, those eight film sales, those television rights made a packet of money, didn't they, Bill? Prudently salted away to secure the future of myself, my two ex-wives, my children and my grandchildren ... Until yesterday about noon when I found out quite innocently and by chance, that there *is* no money. That there is nothing left of what I salted away, not even a pinch full of salt ... In other words, I am fucking *broke,* Billy ... And in some small measure, it pisses me off.

BILLY: Yes. Well, I can see why you would be ... But let's just talk some facts here for a moment.

BRIAN: That would be helpful. Shed some light on it, so to speak, eh, Bill? Perhaps you can explain to me how every penny I worked a lifetime for, saved and invested wisely and conservatively by my long time friend, Billy Fox, advisor and manager, have all suddenly gone. Vanished. Departed to

places and pockets unknown. What would cause a strange thing like that to happen, Bill?

BILLY: Well, you must understand, Brian, that these losses are only *paper* losses.

BRIAN: Paper losses, are they? Money is *printed* on paper, isn't it, Bill? And my bank accounts are printed on paper ... And on that paper, it's printed that my total worth is now eight zeros with no number in front of it ... Is that what you mean, Bill?

BILLY: May I suggest that if you put down the gun, I think this could be more of a conversation than a life threatening situation. Don't you think, Brian?

BRIAN: I agree. I see your point. *(HE doesn't put the gun down. BILLY stares at him. Then BRIAN realizes)* Oh, yes ... *(HE puts the gun down on the table)* There. The gun is down. Now it's a conversation. And if it doesn't go well, we can always go back to the life threatening situation ... Go on, Bill.

BILLY: Well, in the first place, what makes you think your money is gone?

BRIAN: Now you see, that's a life threatening question, Bill *(HE picks up gun again)* But I'll tell you anyway ... In my mail yesterday, I noticed a bill from the local butcher. Ordinarily, I send all bills to you and forget about them. But this had "Last Notice" stamped on the envelope. Surprised and curious, I opened it. It was cordial, friendly, said they always enjoyed my patronage and hoped I was satisfied with their service. However, they said you are four months behind in your payments and they were left with the reluctant choice of handing the collection of such debts over to their solicitors.

BILLY: Is that it? Ridiculous. How impertinent of them. All you had to do was ring me direct on my private number.

BRIAN: So I rang you direct on your private number ... There was no answer.

BILLY: Ahh. Well, then you could have paged me on my pager.

BRIAN: I *paged* you on your pager. But your pager never returned my page.

BILLY: Could be my beeper ... Did you try my car phone?

BRIAN: Eight times. You were never in your car.

BILLY: Right. Right. The car was in the shop. Repairs, you know.

BRIAN: I was going to send a carrier pigeon but I didn't know your PC number.

BILLY: Now I know. Yesterday I was at Citibank International. They had a proposal for my clients on behalf of a large East German Consortium. But you could have asked for Mr. Shepherd at the bank. He handles your daily cash accounts.

BRIAN: So I asked for Mr. Shepherd, who handles my daily cash accounts. "Your account?" said Mr. Shepherd. "That account was closed a week ago by Mr. Fox" ... "My entire account?" I asked tremulously. "Of course," replied Mr. Shepherd. "Signed by both you and Mr. Fox. That's what you wanted, wasn't it?" he asked. "Oh, yes," I said, with knees buckling and my blood pumping everywhere except to my heart.

BILLY: Yes. I put your money in a foreign investment fund. Explicitly for things like this East German Consortium ...

BRIAN: So you forged my name.

BILLY: I-have-power-of-attorney. I didn't want you losing out on this incredible opportunity.

BRIAN: So is my money invested with the East German Consortium, Bill?

BILLY: Yes ... It will be.

BRIAN: Will be?

BILLY: It will be as soon as I receive their letter of confirmation.

BRIAN: So is the money here, Bill, or is it there? Or is it, as we speak, flying First Class on Lufthansa Airlines, munching pretzels and nuts?

BILLY: Brian, I think there's a misunderstanding here. If you would just look through your portfolio ...

BRIAN: Last night, I looked for my portfolio. I never remember where I put it. There are two things in the world I never read, Bill. My old books and my portfolio. I don't read my books because I'm no longer emotionally attached to them. And I don't read my portfolio because I never *had* an emotional attachment to money. I just have no mind for business, you see.

BILLY: That's what you pay me for ... No one has a mind for business, Brian. It took the ancient Egyptians two hundred years to build the great pyramids but in five thousand years they *still* haven't paid them off.

BRIAN: You haven't put *me* in that one, have you, Bill?

BILLY: All I want is for you to be able to sleep well at night, Brian. That's why we have our quarterly meetings, right?

BRIAN: Four times a year we'd meet in your office, Bill. With charts, graphs, computers, balance sheets, partnership agreements, etc. And you would explain the meaning of all this to me, spewing out all this technical information to me in a fuzzy fucking flurry of financial terminology that not even

the bloody Exchequer of England could understand. When you said, "Do you understand what I'm saying?" I said, "Yes", because the only thing I understood was you saying, "Do you understand what I'm saying?" ... I *never* understand. I never *will* understand. I never *want* to understand. And even if I understood, I would *hate* myself for understanding ... It's not my bloody business. It's yours. My business is to write books. Your business is to take my business and turn it into things that profit both our businesses ... My liability is that I have to put all my trust in you. Your responsibility is to honor that trust ... Somewhere there's been a breach in that trust, Bill. Which is why I'm holding the breach of this gun, drawing closer and closer to the moment of your *DEMISE, EXTINCTION AND EXECUTION* ...

BILLY: *(HE shields head with attaché case)* Brian, we've been friends for more than twenty years. Doesn't that mean anything to you?

BRIAN: I cherish those twenty years, Bill. It's only the last day and a half you've turned into a major shit ... You stole my money, didn't you?

BILLY: No!

BRIAN: Swearzy?

BILLY: May God strike me dead.

BRIAN: That's why he sent me.

BILLY: Oh, Christ, you've taken leave of your senses.

BRIAN: No, *you've* taken leave of my senses, and my pounds sterling and my gold certificates. Tell me, Bill, it's a small point but am I still paying for an empty safety deposit box?

BILLY: What's the use? You haven't the slightest intention of letting me explain. Go ahead. Get it over with. Blow my brains out, if it'll make you happy.

BRIAN: I didn't say it would make me happy. It would just make me feel less pent up ... You did steal my money, didn't you, Billy?

BILLY: No. Absolutely not ... I borrowed it.

BRIAN: Oh, I *see!!* It's a *loan!* ... I *loaned* you my life savings. I can't pay my butcher bill because I *loaned* you every cent I have in the world. I didn't know I was that good a friend to you, Bill ... Well, now since you didn't tell me, technically that could be considered stealing, right?

BILLY: Well, in a semantic sort of way, I suppose yes.

BRIAN: Semantic bullshit!! ... You stole it!!! Why? ... I trusted you! Why did you do it?

BILLY: ... Envy, I suppose ... Actually, I'm very good at looking after other people's money ... but not mine, I'm afraid. I make a great deal of money for my clients, you see, but the truth is, it's not quite as difficult as you suppose. It's quite easy to increase the wealth of a man who's worth ten or twenty million pounds. Doors open for him that would otherwise be closed to your ordinary investor. It's a private club, you see. The wealthy, I mean. You don't have to join. You need no references. Your portfolio is your reference and your credit rating gets you into the inner sanctum, where billions of pounds are moved every day like pawns and knights and queens across a sterling silver chess board controlled and managed by the Grand Masters of Finance. And the Grand Masters rarely lose ... The power of wealth is very seductive. It's not about what you can buy. It's about what you don't *have* to buy. You have nothing to prove, you see. And I was seduced into thinking that some of the power belonged to me. That I'm above the pack by virtue of introducing the wealthy to the Grand Masters. After all, if I

increased their wealth, their sense of security, their well being, their style of living, did I not have a hand in it? And slowly I began to think I was one of them. I felt it was owed to me. I found myself dressing like them, frequenting the same restaurants, inviting them to lunch, picking out their wines, picking up their checks. I started living beyond my means. A house I can't really afford, a few good paintings to show off the house, a wedding for my daughter so costly, it looked like it was mounted by the man who put on *Miss Saigon* ... For my 25th anniversary, I took sixteen relatives and friends on a private chartered cruise through the Greek Islands. I'm still paying that one off. I started mounting debts and in desperation, I did for myself what I would never do for my clients. I made questionable investments. A play with a big name star that never made it out of Bristol. A film partly financed by two Iranian brothers who withdrew their support in mid-production, leaving myself and another dozen dupes to try to recoup our losses. Instead, they multiplied. If any of this became public, I would lose the faith and trust of my clients. I needed two and a half million pounds, and quickly, without jeopardizing the likely possibility of it becoming public ... So I borrowed it from my clients, without their knowledge of intention of replacing every pound of it. I will make good on everything, Brian. That I swear to you. It was an unforgivable deceit, I admit to you. But I ask you for only ten days time. If by then, I've not returned every pound you've entrusted to me, you can turn me over to the authorities. I can promise you that public shame will be harsher punishment than any bullet you fired into my head.

(There is a pause, then BILL looks up to BRIAN for his response.)

BRIAN: Well ... Talk about dilemmas ... But you know what hurts, Billy? ... Really hurts? ... That I wasn't invited on the Greek cruise.

BILLY: You would have been bored stiff. They really weren't your sort of people.

BRIAN: No. I was just the sort who would *pay* for their sort of bloody vacation, right, Bill? ... You know what? I take back cherishing those first twenty years ... I'm beginning to hate you retroactively, you shit.

BILLY: Brian, my dear friend, Brian. What can I say? I feel so ashamed.

BRIAN: Yes, I can see that. I have just one minor question for you. *(BILL looks up)* How many of us did you steal from? ... Half? ... Ten? ... Five? ... How many, Billy?

BILLY: ... Just you.

BRIAN: Just *me?* ... Just *me?* ... Not *them?* Not the *others?* ... None of your five and ten million pound members of your bloody bleeding Grand Masters sterling silver inner sanctum money movers? Just me! *(Right in BILL's face)* You whining, worthless piece of treacherous crud! I don't need a gun to kill you. I'll do it with a bloody *fruit fork,* you bastard! *(HE grabs fruit fork from bowl of fruit, grabs BILL by his collar and holds the fork above him)* Why *me?* ... Why was *I* the one you picked?

BILLY: Because you were the only one who didn't ask questions! *(BRIAN is stunned; HE releases BILL)* Do you know why all my other clients are so wealthy, Brian? They pay attention. They ask questions. They could look at their portfolios and know if a digit or a decimal point was in the wrong place. They watched their money like hawks. You never knew where the Goddamn *nest* was. For two months I

slipped one egg after another from under your wings. You were *begging* me to rob you, don't you see that? The great writer looking down his nose at the mere mention of money, blinding himself to his responsibility of watching over it ... It takes two to steal, Brian. One to take and one to give.

BRIAN: *(Looks at him)* Do I have *anything* left?

BILLY: ... No.

BRIAN: Not even a little account? One you might have forgotten about?

BILLY: ... No. I got it all.

BRIAN: All of it? All two million one hundred thousand pounds?

BILLY: Two million six hundred and twelve thousand pounds. You didn't even know what you had, did you? My four-year-old grandson could steal from you without your knowing.

BRIAN: Started training him already, have you? Well, it's getting past your dead time.

(HE takes out the gun, grabs BILL by the collar.)

BILLY: You think you'll get away with this? The bellman saw you. The assistant manager saw you standing behind me when I gave her my credit card.

BRIAN: I'm not trying to get away with anything, Bill. I have no money, no prospect, no talent. I'm as good as dead already.

BILLY: If you give me the chance, I can get your money back, I swear. At least hear me out.

BRIAN: And how would you do that, Bill?

BILLY: In Buenos Aires. That's where I was going. I had

a deal set up. An enormously wealthy businessman in Argentina wants to buy a fifty-one percent ownership belonging to one of my clients. But he doesn't want to sell. The members of his board *did* want to sell and asked my help to intercede. I did. I convinced him it was the right move. There are certain problems still to overcome. It would have to be done personally, you see. No conference calls, no faxes. It would have to be the face to face. That's why they're sending me to Buenos Aires. If I can swing this deal, Brian, my compensation would come to almost two million pounds. That's an enormous deal, Brian, the biggest of my life. I can repay a substantial part of my debt to you ... Give me that chance, Brian. For both of us.

BRIAN: *(Considers this)* You have this ticket with you?

BILLY: Yes.

BRIAN: Let me see it. *(BILL takes it out of his pocket, gives it to him. BRIAN looks at it)* This is a one-way ticket to Argentina.

BILLY: Yes. For me that's the most important part. Mr. DeGatto, that's the Argentinean, offered that if we successfully conclude the deal, he would like me to fly back with him to London on his private jet to meet with the board and finalize the agreement. I wasn't being frugal, Brian. I didn't want to buy the return ticket because I wanted to walk into Mr. DeGatto's office with complete confidence, knowing in my heart I was coming back with him. Without that confidence, I could ruin the day. And I refuse to let that happen.

BRIAN: I see ... Sounds very promising, doesn't it?

BILLY: More than promising, Brian. I know I can deliver.

BRIAN: Hmmm ... There's only one small point that still bothers me.

BILLY: What's that, Brian?

BRIAN: I don't believe a bloody word of it. Mr. DeGatto is the name of your barber. It was probably the first name you could think of. If they're giving you two million pounds, this deal must be worth hundreds of millions. Why would they send *you,* Billy? In Economy Class? They'd send an entire army of corporate lawyers ... I may not know a bloody thing about business, Bill, but I know a fucking bad story when I hear it.

(HE grabs BILLY by his collar.)

BILLY: *(Drops to knees)* I swear on the life of my family, the story is true!

BRIAN: I'll tell you why I think it isn't. When Mr. Shepherd told me my entire amount was withdrawn, a little bell went off in my head. So at seven A.M. this morning, I drove to within fifty yards of your elegant home and parked in the shadows. At nine fifteen you appeared carrying your attaché case. Your wife Margaret came to the door and called our something about not being late for dinner since the Fosters were coming over tonight. Unusual thing for a wife to say to a man who was on his way to Argentina that day ... unless, of course you never told Margaret ... I followed you into London. You went into the Bank of Canada coming out twenty minutes later with your attaché case looking a little heavier ... Then I followed your car out to Heathrow Airport. You checked in at British Airways, Economy Class, and had your bags ticketed, to where they are now probably halfway

across two oceans, headed for the Evita Peron Hotel, I imagine ... That's when I made my presence known to you with a slight prod in your back with the barrel of my gun ... So aside from "Don't Cry For Me, Argentina," what do you have to say for yourself, Bill?

(BILL sits there: HE is visibly shaken. HE's at the end of his wits.)

BILLY: Nothing ... I have nothing left to say ... I'm tired of all this ... of all the lies ... of everything ... I stole from you and that's that ... you're right about the story, of course. Pure poppycock ... That's the one area where you a*re* supreme, Brian ... Or were ... Do what you want, I really don't give a damn.

(BRIAN sits back and looks at him.)

BRIAN: What's in the attaché case, Bill?

BILLY: A little money, whatever I could scrape together ... Sixty-five thousand pounds ... I'll split it with you.

BRIAN: *(Smiles)* You are a delicious weasel, Billy ... Hand over the case.

(BRIAN takes case from BILL.)

BILLY: It won't open unless I tell you how. *(BRIAN clicks the little locks and they pop open)* ... Yes. That's how.

(BRIAN opens the case and starts to count the money.)

BRIAN: Seventy, eighty, ninety, a hundred, two hundred ... Billy you're not as good with figures as you used to be. There must be almost three hundred thousand pounds here.

BILLY: Closer to five hundred.

BRIAN: Five hundred thousand pounds? You keep sinking deeper and deeper into the slime as we go, don't you? ... An interesting thing just happened, Billy. As you were telling me your story about Mr. DeGatto, I was amazed to find how quickly I saw through it. That there is still a spark of the writer left in me. Faint embers glowing, I admit, but still a spark. That perhaps my talent isn't quite as dead as I thought. Perhaps it's living in England, writing so much about England, that's dulled the edges of my creative abilities. That perhaps a change of scenery is what I need ... Billy ... I'm going to Argentina! With my five hundred thousand pounds. Give me your passport.

BILLY: You can't use my passport.

BRIAN: No, you toad. I'm using my own. *(Takes his passport)* You're not going anywhere, Bill. You'll be busy here.

BILLY: Doing what?

BRIAN: Working you bloody ass off to return the rest of my money. To be sent in monthly checks to my children and grandchildren ... If you miss a single payment, a registered letter will be sent to the police and the Inland Revenue Service telling them to examine your books, especially mine. By God, I'm feeling ten years younger, Billy. About the same amount of time you'll be spending at Dartmoor Prison if you skip a single month's check. Actually, I've turned out to be a pretty fair business man, don't you think? ... Well, I'm off ... *(HE looks at his gun)* Oh, you can have this, Billy. *(HE hands*

him gun, starts away. BILLY points the gun at him) There's nothing in it but blanks. Pretty much like the expression on your face just now. *(HE crosses to the door)* ... You should have taken me on that Greek cruise, Bill.

(HE leaves quickly. BILLY looks down at the gun, bewildered.)
(BLACKOUT.)

Scene Two
GOING HOME

(In the dark we hear the sound of traffic in background.)

MOTHER: Oh, there it is ... Driver! We passed it back there. Could you please turn around?

LAUREN: Passed what, Mother?

MOTHER: That shoe store I was telling you about.

LAUREN: Mom, you've hit every shoe store in London.

MOTHER: No. This one just opened. I read about it in today's paper.

LAUREN: We're going to be over our baggage limit on the plane.

MOTHER: Right here, Driver ...

(The lights come up. The hotel suite. About five p.m. on a hot, sunny, summer afternoon.)
(LAUREN SEMPLE, thirty one, sits reading a paperback on Shakespeare. A plastic bag of other books just bought are on the table.)

(The telephone rings. SHE gets up and answers it.)

LAUREN: Hello? ... Yes ... My mother *is?* ... Oh. Okay. Thank you.

(SHE hangs up the phone, crosses to the front door and opens it.)
(Her mother, SHERYL, mid-fifties, comes in loaded with shopping bags in both hands, bought in Harrods and other department stores. SHE is exhausted and breathing hard.)

MOTHER: *(As SHE enters)* I told the concierge to wait three minutes and then call you. Otherwise I'd have to knock on the door with my head. *(SHE sits on the sofa, exhausted, still holding the bags)* I couldn't get a cab. I walked back fourteen blocks carrying these. Three blocks from the hotel I was going to stop on the street and sell everything I bought at half price. *(SHE is still out of breath)* Honey, could you do me a favor? *(Holds out one hand, holding some shopping bags)* Take this bag out of my hand. *(LAUREN helps her)* My knuckles have locked together. Easy, easy.

LAUREN: Relax, Mother.

(LAUREN puts the bags down.)

MOTHER: *(Indicating her moving fingers)* Oh, they're alive. That feels good. Thank you. I would have slept with them all night.

LAUREN: I looked all over Harrods for you. Weren't we going to meet upstairs in the restaurant at four?

MOTHER: Yes, but I had to go back to the shoe department. I was missing a pair of shoes. They never found them.

LAUREN: Did you have your receipt?

MOTHER: No. They were the shoes I was wearing when I came in.

LAUREN: You lost your own shoes? Aren't they responsible?

MOTHER: No. Only if they sold them.

LAUREN: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. *(Looks in one of the bags she just put down. Takes out a pair of shoes)* Aren't these the ones you were wearing?

MOTHER: Oh, my God. I think I bought my own shoes.

LAUREN: How is it I can't get you to work out in a gym for twenty minutes but you'll carry around fifty pounds of shoes all day?

MOTHER: I don't know. Maybe if there was a gym where I could lift shoes, I would go ... Well, at least we got *you* a beautiful skirt and blouse. Have you tried them on together yet?

LAUREN: No ... I went back and exchanged them. *(SHE feels guilty about that)* I'm sorry. I wanted to tell you not to buy them but I didn't want to hurt your feelings. Are your feelings hurt?

MOTHER: No, Honey, it's my fault. I always guess wrong with you. You were *always* so hard to shop for.

LAUREN: *(Crossing to bar)* Then why do you keep doing it? I'm thirty one years old and you're *still* trying to dress me.

MOTHER: I stopped trying to dress you in the third grade. You never wanted to look like a little girl.

LAUREN: You never dressed me like a little girl. You dressed me like a three year old married woman. *(Pours her coke)* I swear. One new kid in school thought I was a very short teacher ... You want something?

MOTHER: What time is it?

LAUREN: *(Looks at her watch)* Twenty to five.

MOTHER: No. I'll wait for my five o'clock scotch.

LAUREN: Why? It's only twenty more minutes. Is the scotch going to be any better twenty minutes later?

MOTHER: Yes. It'll *age* a little more ... I don't know. It's a habit. I have habits. Never mind. I'll have my scotch.

LAUREN: Thank you.

(SHE crosses to the bar, fixes scotch.)

MOTHER: You seem to have this sudden urge to change my life.

LAUREN: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to. *(Crosses to her)* Here's your scotch. *(MOTHER takes it)* You want to hold it for sixteen minutes?

MOTHER: God, you are just like your father was ... Why do I bother talking to you?

LAUREN: 'Cause you love it.

(SHE sits in chair opposite.)

MOTHER: Something's up with you. I can see that mischievous look in your eye.

LAUREN: What would I be up to?

MOTHER: I'm not sure. A surprise, maybe ... Are you and Andy having another baby?

LAUREN: I don't think so. He never tells me things like that.

MOTHER: Do you *want* another baby?

LAUREN: Yes.

MOTHER: Are you trying?

LAUREN: We talked about it on the phone yesterday. Yes. We will when I get home.

MOTHER: Why didn't you tell me? We could have taken an earlier plane.

LAUREN: Would that make you happy? Another grandchild?

MOTHER: Happy isn't the word. It would make my life complete.

LAUREN: Mother, you're forty years away from completion. There's no way my having another baby should make your life complete. What about your *own* life?

MOTHER: Are you suggesting that *I* should have another baby?

LAUREN: Are you sorry you never did?

MOTHER: Honey, bringing you up was like having triplets. No. I love my life the way it is. I don't miss what I don't have.

LAUREN: You miss Dad.

MOTHER: Yes. I miss Dad.

LAUREN: It's been six years since he died, Mom. You're too young and attractive to be alone.

MOTHER: I'm never alone. I have my friends. I have my job. I have you. I don't get enough of you. I have my grandson. I could never get enough of him. I have my son-in-law, the computer genius. I don't get to see him much but he faxes me every week.

LAUREN: They're stretching the life span every day, Mom. Do you want to be a hundred and ten years old and still be alone?

MOTHER: At a hundred and ten, I think I would prefer it.

LAUREN: I can't budge you a quarter of an inch, can I?

MOTHER: ... Don't rush me, Laurie. Old habits are hard to break. I'll always be a compulsive shopper, right? *(Reaches down into big bag)* Can you believe I came to London and bought something at the Gap? *(As SHE pulls Gap bag out of larger one)* Five thousand Gap stores in America and I come here and pay twice as much ... When your Dad and I first came here, you could buy things for nothing ... This suite. We paid one tenth of what I'm paying now for this suite.

LAUREN: Then why are we staying here?

MOTHER: *(Looks around)* I wanted to. It's important to me.

LAUREN: I know. But one day you're going to have to let go of the past, aren't you?

MOTHER: I'm working on it.

LAUREN: Good. *(Smiles)* I'm going to read for a while.

(SHE crosses into the bedroom.)

MOTHER: *(Sits on sofa)* What are you reading, hon?

LAUREN: *(From bedroom)* "Hathaway and Shakespeare."

MOTHER: Hathaway? ... Hathaway ... The Indian?

LAUREN: No. That's Hiawatha, Mom.

MOTHER: I *know* who Hiawatha is ... Oh, Anne ... Anne

Hathaway. His wife ... See what happens when I drink too early ... *(LAUREN is stretched out on the bed)* Oh god. Shakespeare. My favorite, you know. The plays, the sonnets, the soliloquies ... I never really understood them but oh, what language ... I think your father and I saw every Shakespeare play they ever did in London ... Well, eight or nine, anyway ... We saw Oliver, of course. Well, there was no one like him. Never will be again ... You never saw him, did you? On the stage I mean.

LAUREN: *(Lying on bed)* No. I didn't.

MOTHER: Well, you really missed something. It's a shame ... No. Wait a minute. You *were* with us. I was pregnant with you. I was in my fifth month the night we saw him in ... Iago's friend ...

LAUREN: ... Othello?

MOTHER: "Othello". And I said to Daddy, "I hope the baby's listening because she'll remember this her whole life" ... Well, your Dad just laughed and laughed. That's the night I found out I was funny ... Anyway, it wasn't just Oliver we saw ... We saw *all* the great actors then ... I remember we saw ... *(She thinks)* Oh, what's his name? ... Sounds like that beer.

LAUREN: ... Alec Guiness?

MOTHER: *(Nods)* Alec Guiness ... and we saw ... er ... Oh, what is it? ... Skinny ... Minny ... Whinney?

LAUREN: Albert Finney?

MOTHER: Albert Finney. Right ... and of course there was er ... oh ... *her husband.*

LAUREN: Richard Burton?

MOTHER: Richard Burton. Right ... I'm so bad with names ... but of course, the one I adored was the good one.

LAUREN: The good one?

MOTHER: Yes, you know him. Famous actor ... The good one, honey.

LAUREN: They're all good, Mother.

MOTHER: No, it's his name. Good something.

LAUREN: ... John Gielgud?

MOTHER: Right. John Gielgud. I knew it was good something. *(Looks at watch)* God, I hate the thought of packing again tonight.

LAUREN: Well, let's do it later. If this is going to be our last night in England, let's make it a good one. *(SHE's crossed into the living room)* Would you like to go out tonight? Someplace really special?

MOTHER: I wouldn't mind.

LAUREN: Just promise me one thing. Don't say no right away.

MOTHER: Alright. What is it?

LAUREN: There's a rock concert in Wembly Stadium.

MOTHER: *(Looks at her)* How long do I have to wait before I say no?

LAUREN: Not yet. I could call up the concierge. I bet he could dig up a couple of tickets. It'll be my treat. Think about it.

MOTHER: I thought about it while I was waiting to say no ... I would feel completely out of place. There's no one my age at rock concerts.

LAUREN: You're wrong. Most rock singers *are* your age.

MOTHER: Anyway, they have riots at those things. I'd be crushed to death. I don't want to die in Wembly Stadium ... Think of something else.

LAUREN: Okay. Second choice. What about the

theater? They have that new David Mamet play at the National.

MOTHER: The National? You think we could get tickets?

LAUREN: I don't think. I *know.* We've got 'em. No charge. They're free. We got an invitation.

MOTHER: From who?

LAUREN: Dennis.

MOTHER: Dennis? Who's Dennis?

LAUREN: Dennis Cummings. The Scotsman we met coming over on the plane. You talked to him for hours.

MOTHER: *(Shocked)* His name is *Dennis?* Oh, God. I kept calling him *Kenneth.* He must think I lisp or something ... How do you know he invited us?

LAUREN: He's staying here at the hotel. *(SHE takes note out of her pocket)* He sent a note. *(SHE reads it)* "Dear Mrs. Semple. I hope this isn't too sudden a notice for you but I just came upon two tickets for the David Mamet play at the National. He's American, you know. Perhaps I'm being too forward but if it interests you at all, please call me in room five sixteen. I'll be there until seven. Hopefully yours, Dennis Cummings."

(SHE looks hopefully at the MOTHER.)

MOTHER: How long have you had that note?

LAUREN: About an hour. Found it when I came in.

MOTHER: You mean you've been setting me up all this time just to get me a *date???*

LAUREN: It's not a date. It's a play.

MOTHER: He's got two tickets. I didn't hear *your* name in there. Or were you going to sit on my lap?

LAUREN: I was going to tell you. I just wanted to get you in the right mood first –

MOTHER: Well, you could have played bagpipes when I came in the door ... And what about the rock concert at Wembly? What if I had said yes to that?

LAUREN: You would *never* go to a rock concert. I was safe there.

MOTHER: Oh, but you think I'd go to the theater with a man named Dennis that I called *Kenneth* all night.

LAUREN: He probably never noticed ... or even cared ... He practically talked to you all night.

MOTHER: I couldn't sleep, he couldn't sleep. So we talked. He told me about Scotland, that he lives on an old estate that's been in his family for two centuries ... Well, you know me, I'm always interested in old houses. I told him so.

LAUREN: Are you going?

MOTHER: Where?

LAUREN: To see it. I overheard him say, if you're ever up in Scotland, you must drop in.

MOTHER: *When am I ever in Scotland?* ... I haven't even said yes to the play yet and you have me dropping in on Scotland?

LAUREN: How could you resist a chance to stay in a two hundred year old Scottish estate? As a guest? You could always go home a day later.

MOTHER: You know where it is? Sixteen kilometers from Loch Ness ... where the monster is ... I wouldn't even *fly* over that place ... I want to be back on 84th Street and Third Avenue, thank you very much.

LAUREN: Okay. Forget Scotland. Go to the National. It's only an hour and twenty minutes out of your life. David Mamet writes very short plays.

MOTHER: Why are you doing this?

LAUREN: You *know* why.

MOTHER: Because you think Andy and you and the baby are my whole life. Because you think I'm cheating myself by not looking out there for something else to fulfill me.

LAUREN: I couldn't have said it better.

MOTHER: And you think Mr. Cummings is going to fulfill me?

LAUREN: Not necessarily, but it's a start.

MOTHER: Look, he's a very nice man. A gentleman. But do you actually think I'm going to live out my life three thousand miles away from a good Chinese restaurant?

LAUREN: You didn't think he was attractive?

MOTHER: Very. And very polite. And very shy.

LAUREN: *Shy?* ... I saw the little Sean Connery move he made on you. *(SHE picks up small pillow from the sofa, holds it up, Scottish accent)* "Woud ya like a li-il pilla for yer head, Mrs. Sumple?"

MOTHER: You're not going to let up on this, are you?

LAUREN: Why should I? I still have until seven o'clock.

MOTHER: ... No. I can't do it.

LAUREN: All right ... I'll tell him.

(LAUREN crosses to the phone and starts to dial.)

MOTHER: Wait ... Let me think about it.

(LAUREN sits in chair next to phone. The MOTHER, on the sofa, turns her back to LAUREN as SHE thinks.)

LAUREN: ... Tick tock, tick tock, tick – *(The MOTHER turns and glares at her)* Sorry. *(The MOTHER turns away again)* ... you're going ... I can tell by the way your shoulder is looking at me. You're going, aren't you?

MOTHER: Yes ... But not for *your* sake. Not even mine ... *(SHE is up. Heading for bedroom)* I'm going because he seems like a decent man and he was nice enough to ask me.

LAUREN: *Great!* ... What are you going to wear?

MOTHER: What'd you expect? *Kilts?* ... I'm going casual. I don't want him getting the wrong idea about why I'm going.

(SHE starts for bathroom.)

LAUREN: Use your *good perfume.*

MOTHER: Why? I only need to smell good for ninety minutes.

(Starts to go again.)

LAUREN: Mother!! *(The MOTHER stops)* Are you nervous?

MOTHER: No. *You are.* Don't worry. I'll get his name right. Dennis. Dennis. It rhymes with tennis ... I'll be home about nine thirty. *(As SHE goes)* Dennis the menace plays tennis in Venice ...

(SHE is gone.)

LAUREN: *(Rushes to the phone and dials, then into the phone)* Hello? Mr. Kenneth Cummings in five sixteen, ple ...

Dennis! Thank you. *(SHE closes her eyes, to herself)* Please God, don't let him ask her who her favorite English actors are.

(We dim out.)

Scene Three

(In the dark, we see the glimmer from the TV set above the bar. We hear the voice of an English commentator giving latest football score and the weather.)
(LAUREN, still dressed, no shoes, is asleep on the sofa, an open book on the floor just beneath her.)
(We hear the key in the door, it opens and the MOTHER enters. SHE closes the door gently. SHE wears the same skirt as in the first scene, with a smart jacket and the shoes that LAUREN wore in the first act. The MOTHER carries a purse and the program from the National Theater.)
(SHE walks in on tip toes, sees that LAUREN is asleep, takes the clicker and turns off the TV.)

TV ANNOUNCER: *POP!* ... The sound of cook, tangy mint exploding in your mouth ... The *POP* that awakens and refreshes like an alpine morning ... for that extra *POP,* try Polar Mints ... the mint with that Popular *POP!*

(Music)

2ND ANNOUNCER: And now for the late night, Sports Wrap Up with Eric Bruxton ...

(Music)

ERIC BRUXTON: And here are yesterday's racing results ... On a good track at Doncaster, Achilles Heel left sturdier legs behind as it came in at twenty to one, with Don't Forget Mikie showing well but not well enough ... At Plumpton, Catcha Penny caught the pack, passing Sticky Money and Blushing Belle for a handsome eleven to three for its troubles ... At Wincanton, Ziggy's Dancer pranced four lengths ahead of Jigsaw Boy but fell behind Indian Rhapsody at the finish while Two Moves In Front came in six lengths behind the pack.

(SHE starts to cross to bedroom when LAUREN speaks without opening her eyes.)

LAUREN: Where do you think *you're* going?

MOTHER: Oh. You're up. I was going to get you a blanket.

LAUREN: *(Sits up)* What time is it?

MOTHER: Twenty to two.

LAUREN: Twenty to *TWO?* ... What happened to nine thirty?

MOTHER: Please! You sound just like my mother. *(SHE takes off jacket)* Can I get into my pajamas first? I'm exhausted and we have to get up at six thirty.

LAUREN: No, we don't. I packed everything. We can sleep till twenty to seven. What happened?

MOTHER: I'll tell you tomorrow. I'm cold, I'm exhausted and we have to get up at ... twenty to seven.

LAUREN: Mother! *Come in here and sit down!*

MOTHER: Now you sound like my father.

(SHE comes into the living room.)

LAUREN: I've been worried to death all night.

MOTHER: Don't you think I was too?

LAUREN: Please. Just sit there and talk to me ... Was it terrible?

MOTHER: No.

LAUREN: Was it wonderful?

MOTHER: No.

LAUREN: Then what was it?

MOTHER: Like a curse. You can't wait to go and you can't wait to get back.

LAUREN: All right, I have to hear everything. Where'd you go after the show?

MOTHER: To dinner. It was a Thai restaurant.

LAUREN: What do you mean a Thai restaurant? You *hate* Thai food.

MOTHER: I ordered a lamb chop and asked them to scrape off the Thai stuff.

LAUREN: Did that bother Mr. Cummings?

MOTHER: Why should it? He's not from Thailand.

LAUREN: Okay. So after the scraped off lamb chop, where did you go?

MOTHER: We drove around a bit. We stopped off at an all night drug store. He had to pick up something.

LAUREN: *(Looks at her)* ..... What?

MOTHER: I was looking at some magazines.

LAUREN: So was he buying ... you know?

MOTHER: Oh please, it was nose spray. He has bad allergies.

LAUREN: Is that what he told you?

MOTHER: I could see it in the theater. He had trouble breathing. He kept snorting all the time.

LAUREN: What do you mean, snorting?

MOTHER: Snorting. Snorting. *(SHE snorts a couple of times)* Only not that loud ... It stopped after a while.

LAUREN: Alright. From the beginning. Tell me everything from the minute the night started. *(SHE curls up on sofa, clutches a pillow to her chest)* No! Wait! *(SHE jumps up)* I want a drink to hear this. *(SHE crosses quickly to bar)* I'm having a brandy ... Would you like your twenty to two in the morning Scotch?

MOTHER: No. I already had a drink in the restaurant ... It was like Saki or something.

LAUREN: Saki is Japanese. It's a wine made out of rice.

MOTHER: Then that's it. I've been chewing it all night long.

LAUREN: Okay. Start over. We're not in the restaurant yet. We're in the lobby of the hotel. Start from – *(Scottish accent)* – "Hello, Mrs. Sumple."

MOTHER: Well, let's see ... He picked me up in his car.

LAUREN: Cool. Very cool. No taxi. I like that ... Chauffeur?

MOTHER: No, no. He drove himself.

LAUREN: Even cooler. What kind of car? Jaguar?

MOTHER: A silver gray Ferrari sports car.

LAUREN: No-wayy!

MOTHER: It was very low to the ground. We almost drove under a bus.

LAUREN: *I SAW IT!* I was looking out the window. It looked like you but I said, "In your dreams, Laurie" ... Go on.

MOTHER: Then we drove to the National Theater on the other side of the Thames. He said it was normally a fifteen to twenty minute drive. We made it in six minutes.

LAUREN: The man is definitely hot.

MOTHER: It was a convertible. He had the top down and asked if it was too much air. I wanted to be a good sport, so I said, "No, leave it down" ... When we got there, my hair looked like "The Bride of Frankenstein."

LAUREN: Perfect! That's how they're wearing it today. *(SHE crawls back on the sofa)* So you got to the National Theater.

MOTHER: Obviously we were very early so we stopped by a little pub he knew.

LAUREN: So you got out of the car.

MOTHER: Well, first he put the top up. Then when he pulled me out, I hit my head on the metal bar. I think he was apologizing but I couldn't hear it because of the ringing in my ears.

LAUREN: Oh, God. Did it hurt?

MOTHER: No. My hair was so stiff, it took most of the blow ... We got to the pub and ordered drinks. He had a martini ...

LAUREN: You had a Perrier with lime. So what'd you talk about?

MOTHER: Nice things. My family. His family.

LAUREN: I know about your family. Tell me about his.

MOTHER: He has a mother, a sister. The sister's name is Glynis. I thought he said Gwyneth. Then he said, "No, no, Glynis". Then I forgot if he was Kenneth or Dennis. Everything he has comes in lots ... Lots of land, lots of horses, lots of dogs, lots of guns.

LAUREN: Like real estate. That's not bad ... Does his house have a name? Like Tara. Or Manderly. Or Windsor Castle?

MOTHER: It was a Scottish name. You couldn't say it without hurting your tongue ... Something like Burn-glo-loch-mon-flay-firth-forth. *(Holds mouth)* See. It hurts.

LAUREN: Tell me about him. What was he like?

MOTHER: Very neat dresser. Tweedy. Very tweedy. And suedy. Tweedy and suedy.

LAUREN: ... Tweedy and Suedy? ... Weren't they in "Bambi"?

MOTHER: Oh, he has deer too ... *Lots* of deer.

LAUREN: Where? In Burn clog fling flong firth? *(The MOTHER laughs)* But what was he like as a person?

MOTHER: Considerate. Gentle. A little uncomfortable. Started that snorting thing again. Kept excusing himself and going to the men's room. You could hear him snorting in there ... I felt badly for him.

LAUREN: Well, you have allergies too.

MOTHER: Yes, but mine are the silent kind.

LAUREN: Okay. So is he divorced or a widower or what?

MOTHER: No. He's a bachelor. Never married. He looked to be in his early sixties ... Never had the time to marry, he said ... Anyway, we got up and went to the Mamet play.

LAUREN: How was it?

MOTHER: I couldn't hear the first fifteen minutes because the woman behind me was eating a two-pound bag of sour balls. Every time she took off the wrappers, it sounded like a forest fire. And she didn't suck on the sour balls, she

chewed on them, which made it sound like a chain gang breaking up rocks.

LAUREN: Oh, God. And what was the play like?

MOTHER: What I could hear of it, I loved. I think I will have that brandy. *(SHE crosses, gets brandy)* Dennis had trouble with it. He was embarrassed by the F words. Not at first, but then they started to come like machine gun bullets ... After the F words came the C words, the P words, the S words, the shove it up your A words.

LAUREN: Maybe he was embarrassed for you.

MOTHER: I thought they were important to the play. Dennis just had a hard time with it.

LAUREN: Dennis, huh?

MOTHER: So he started to cough ... And cough ... He coughed on every F word ... He politely turned away from me so the woman next to him got it ... So he apologized to her and the man behind him whispered to please be quiet ... which gave the woman behind me a chance to chew her sour balls again ... But Dennis couldn't stop coughing so he held his hand over his mouth but that made his face twitch.

LAUREN: What kind of twitch?

MOTHER: You know. Like a tic.

(SHE twitches her face twice.)

LAUREN: Did you say something to him?

MOTHER: Like what? "Don't do that"? ... Well, we got through the play ... We walked out, got into the car, he started to wheeze.

LAUREN: Wheeze?

MOTHER: *(SHE wheezes a couple of times)* He said his

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