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SF PERUSALS

“Master Harold” ...and the Boys

A Drama

by Athol Fugard

A Samuel French Acting Edition



New York Hollywood London Toronto
SAMUELFRENCH.COM

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for Sam and H.D.F.

"MASTER HAROLD" . . . and the boys

. . . opened on Broadway May 4, 1982, at the Lyceum Theatre. The cast was as follows:

SAM . . . . . Zakes Mokae
WILLIE . . . . . Danny Glover
HALLY . . . . . Lonny Price

The production was directed by the author. Costumes were by Sheila McLamb; scenery by Jane Clark; lighting by David Noling; stage movement by Wesley Fata.

The original Yale Repertory Theatre production was produced on Broadway by the Shubert Organization, Freydburg-Bloch Productions, Dasha Epstein, Emanuel Azenberg and David Geffen.

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"MASTER HAROLD"
. . . and the boys

by
Athol Fugard

The St. Georges Park Tea Room on a wet and windy Port Elizabeth afternoon.

Tables and chairs have been cleared and are stacked on one side except for one which stands apart with a single chair. On this table a knife, fork, spoon and side-plate in anticipation of a simple meal together with a pile of comic books. Other elements: a serving counter with a few stale cakes under glass and a not-very-impressive display of sweets, cigarettes and cool-drinks etc.; a few cardboard advertising handouts — Cadbury's Chocolate, Coca-cola — and a blackboard on which an untrained hand has chalked up the prices of Tea, Coffee, Scones, Milkshakes — all flavours — and Cool-drinks; a few sad ferns in pots; a telephone; an old-style jukebox. There is an entrance on one side and an exit into a kitchen on the other.

Leaning on the solitary table, his head cupped in one hand as he pages through one of the comic books, is SAM. A black man in his late thirties. He wears the white coat of a waiter. Behind him on his knees, mopping down the floor with a bucket of water and a rag, is WILLIE. Also black and about the same age as SAM. He has his sleeves and trousers rolled up.

The year: 1950.

WILLIE. *(singing as he works)*
SHE WAS SCANDALISIN MY NAME
CALLED IT LOVE BUT WAS PLAYIN' A GAME
SHE CALLED ME HONEY; SHE TOOK MY MONEY–
(He gets up and moves the bucket; stands and sings.)
SHE WAS SCANDALIZIN MY NAME...
(Thinking for a moment, then raising his arms to hold an imaginary partner, he launches into an intricate ballroom dance step. Although a mildly comic figure he reveals a reasonable degree of accomplishment.) Hey Sam.

(SAM, absorbed in the comic book does not respond.)

WILLIE. Hey Boet Sam!

(SAM looks up.)

WILLIE. I'm getting it. The Quickstep. Look now and tell me. *(He repeats the step.)* Well?

SAM. *(He wasn't concentrating.)* Show me again.

WILLIE. Okay, count for me.

SAM. Ready?

WILLIE. Ready.

SAM. A-n-d one two three four ... and one two three four ... Relax, Willie!

WILLIE. *(desperate but still dancing)* I am relax.

SAM. No you're not.

WILLIE. *(He falters.)* Ag no man, Sam! Mustn't talk. You make me make mistakes.

SAM. But you're too stiff.

WILLIE. Yesterday I'm not straight .... today I'm too stiff!

SAM. Well you are. You asked me and I'm telling you.

WILLIE. Where?

SAM. Everywhere. Try to glide through it.

WILLIE. What's this — glide?

SAM. Ja, make it smooth. And give it more style. It must look like you're enjoying yourself.

WILLIE. *(emphatically)* I wasn't.

SAM. Exactly.

WILLIE. How can I enjoy myself? Not straight, too stiff and now it's also glide, give it more style, make it smooth .... Haai! Is hard to remember all those things Boet Sam.

SAM. That's your trouble. You're trying too hard.

WILLIE. I try hard because it *is* hard.

SAM. But don't let me see it. The secret is to make it look easy. Ball room must look happy Willie, not like hard work. It must .... Ja! ... it must look like romance.

WILLIE. Now another one! What's this romance?

SAM. Love story with happy ending. A handsome man

in tails, and in his arms, smiling at him, a beautiful lady in evening dress!

WILLIE. Fred Astaire Ginger Rogers.

SAM. You got it. Tapdance or Ballroom, it's the same. Romance. In two weeks' time when the judges look at you and Hilda they must see a man and woman *who are* dancing their way to a happy ending. What I saw was you holding her like you were frightened she was going to run away.

WILLIE. Ja! Because that is what she wants to do! I got no romance left for Hilda anymore, Boet Sam.

SAM. Then pretend. When you put your arms around Hilda, imagine she is Ginger Rogers.

WILLIE. With no teeth? You try.

SAM. Well just remember, there's only two weeks left.

WILLIE. I know, I know! *(to the jukebox)* I do it better with music. You got sixpence for Sarah Vaughan?

SAM. That's a slow foxtrot. You're practising the quickstep.

WILLIE. I'll practise slow foxtrot.

SAM. *(shaking his head)* It's your turn to put money in the jukebox.

WILLIE. I only got busfare to go home. *(He returns disconsolately to his work.)* Ginger Rogers! Love story and happy ending! She's doing it alright, Boet Sam, but is not me she's giving happy endings. Fokin Hoar! Three nights now she doesn't come practise. I wind-up gramaphone, I get record ready and I sit and wait. What happens? Nothing. Ten o'clock I start dancing with my pillow. You try and practise this romance by yourself, Boet Sam. Strues-

god, she doesn't come tonight, I take back my dress and ballroom shoes and I find me new partner. Size twenty-six. Shoes size seven. ... And now she's also making trouble for me with the baby again. Reports me to child Wellfed, that I'm not giving her money. She lies! Every week I am giving her money for milk. And how do I know is my baby? Only his hair looks like me. She's fucking around all the time I turn my back. Hilda Samuels is a bitch! *(pause)* Hey Sam!

SAM. Ja.

WILLIE. You listening?

SAM. Ja.

WILLIE. So what you say?

SAM. About Hilda?

WILLIE. Ja.

SAM. When did you last give her a hiding?

WILLIE. *(reluctantly)* Sunday night.

SAM. And today is Thursday.

WILLIE. *(He knows what's coming.)* Okay.

SAM. Hiding on Sunday night, than Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday she doesn't come to practise ... and you are asking me why?

WILLIE. I said okay, Boet Sam!

SAM. You hit her too much. One day she's going to leave you for good.

WILLIE. So? She makes me the hell-in too much.

SAM. *(emphasizing his point) Too* much and *too* hard. You had the same trouble with Eunice.

WILLIE. Because she also make the hell-in, Boet Sam. She never got the steps right. Even the waltz.

SAM. Beating her up every time you make a mistake in

the waltz? *(shaking his head)* No, Willie! That takes the pleasure out of ballroom dancing.

WILLIE. Hilda is not too bad with the waltz, Boet Sam. Is the quickstep where the trouble starts.

SAM. *(teasing him gently)* How's your pillow with the quickstep?

WILLIE. *(ignoring the tease)* Good! And why? Because it got no legs. That's her trouble. She can't move them quick enough, Boet Sam. I start the record and before halfway Count Basie is already winning. Only time we catch-up with him is when gramaphone runs down. *(SAM laughs.)* Haaikona Boet Sam, is not funny.

SAM. *(snapping his fingers)* I got it! Give her a handicap.

WILLIE. What's that?

SAM. Give her a ten-second start and then let Count Basie go. Then I put my money on her. Hot favourite in the Ballroom Stakes: Hilda Samuels ridden by Willie Malopo.

WILLIE. *(turning away)* I'm not talking to you no more.

SAM. *(relenting)* Sorry, Willie...

WILLIE. It's finish between us.

SAM. Okay okay ... I'll stop.

WILLIE. You can also fok-off.

SAM. Willie, listen! I want to help *you*!

WILLIE. No more jokes?

SAM. I promise.

WILLIE. Okay. Help me.

SAM. *(his turn to hold an imaginary partner)* Look and learn. Feet together. Back straight. Body relaxed. Right hand placed gently in the small of her back and wait for the music. Don't start worrying about making mistakes or

about the judges or the other competitors. It's just you, Hilda and the music and you're going to have a good time. What Count Basie do you play?

WILLIE. You're the cream in my coffee; you're the salt in my stew.

SAM. Right. Give it to me in strict tempo.

WILLIE. Ready?

SAM. Ready.

WILLIE. A-n-d ... *(singing)*

YOU'RE THE CREAM IN MY COFFEE;
YOU'RE THE SALT IN MY STEW.
YOU WILL ALWAYS BE MY NECESSITY;
I'D BE LOST WITHOUT YOU;
YOU'RE THE STARCH IN MY COLLAR;
YOU'RE THE LACE IN MY SHOE.
YOU WILL ALWAYS BE MY NECESSITY;
I'D BE LOST WITHOUT YOU.

(While WILLY sings, SAM launches into the quickstep. He is obviously a much more accomplished dancer than WILLY. HALLY enters. He is a 17-year old white boy, wearing a wet raincoat and carrying a school case. He stops and watches SAM. The demonstration comes to an end with a flourish of applause from HALLY and WILLY.)

HALLY. Bravo! No question about it. First place goes to Mr. Sam Semela.

WILLIE. *(in total agreement)* You was gliding with style, Baet Sam.

HALLY. *(cheerfully)* How's it chaps?

SAM. Okay Hally.

WILLIE. *(springing to attention like a soldier and saluting)* At your service, Master Harold!

SAM. Not long to the big event, hey!

SAM. Two weeks.

HALLY. You nervous?

SAM. No.

HALLY. Think you stand a chance?

SAM. Let's just say I'm ready to go out there and dance.

HALLY. It looked like it. What about you, Willie? *(WILLIE groans.)* What's the matter?

SAM. He's got leg trouble.

HALLY. *(innocently)* Oh, sorry to hear that, Willie.

WILLIE. Boet Sam! You promised. *(He returns to his work.)*

SAM. Okay, okay! Sorry, Willie.

(HALLY deposites his school case and takes off his raincoat. His clothes are a little neglected and untidy: black blazer with school badge, grey flannel trousers in need of ironing, khaki shirt and tie, black shoes. SAM has fetched a towel for HALLY to dry his hair.)

HALLY. God, what a lousy day. It's coming down cats and dogs out there. Bad for business, chaps ... *(conspiratorial whisper)* ... but it also means we're in for a nice quiet afternoon.

SAM. You can speak loud. Your mom's not here.

HALLY. Out shopping?

SAM. No. The hospital.

HALLY. But it's Thursday. There's no visiting on Thursday afternoons. Is my Dad okay?

SAM. Sounds like it. In fact I think he's going home.

HALLY. *(Stopped short by SAM'S remark.)* What do you mean?

SAM. The hospital phoned.

HALLY. To say what?

SAM. I don't know. I just heard your mom talking.

HALLY. So what makes you say he's going home?

SAM. It sounded as if they were telling her to come and fetch him.

HALLY. *(Thinks about what SAM has said for a few seconds.)* When did she leave?

SAM. About an hour ago. She said she would phone you. Want to eat?

(HALLY doesn't respond.)

SAM. Hally, want your lunch?

HALLY. I suppose so. *(His mood has changed.)* What's on the menu ... as if I don't know.

SAM. Soup, followed by meat pie and gravy.

HALLY. Today's?

SAM. No.

HALLY. And the soup?

SAM. Nourishing pea soup.

HALLY. Just the soup. *(indicating the pile of comic books on the table)* And these?

SAM. For your dad. Mr. Kempston brought them.

HALLY. You haven't been reading them, have you?

SAM. Just looking.

HALLY. *(Leafs through comic books.)* God *what rubbish*! Mental pollution. Take them away.

(SAM exits, waltzing into the kitchen.)

HALLY. *(Turns to WILLIE.)* Did you hear my mom talking on the telephone, Willie?

WILLIE. No, Master Hally. I was at the back.

HALLY. And she didn't say anything to you before she left?

WILLIE. She said I must clean the floors.

HALLY. I mean about Dad.

WILLIE. She don't talk to me about him, Master Hally.

HALLY. *(with conviction)* No! It can't be. They said he needed at least another three weeks of treatment. Sam's definitely made a mistake. *(Rummages through his school case, finds a book and settles down at the table to read.)* So, Willie!

WILLIE. Yes, Master Hally!

HALLY. Grow up, Willie.

WILLIE. Schooling okay today?

HALLY. Yes, okay..... *(He thinks about it.)* ... no, not really. Ah, what's the difference? I don't care. And Sam says you've got problems.

WILLIE. Big problems.

HALLY. Which leg is sore?

(WILLIE groans.)

HALLY. Both legs?

WILLIE. There is nothing wrong with my legs. Sam is just making jokes.

HALLY. So then you *will* be in the competition.

WILLIE. Only if I can find me a partner.

HALLY. But what about Hilda?

SAM. *(returning with a bowl of soup)* She's the one who's got trouble with her legs.

HALLY. What sort of trouble, Willie?

SAM. From the way he describes it, I think the lady has gone a bit lame.

HALLY. Good God! Have you taken her to see a doctor?

SAM. I think a vet would be better.

HALLY. What do you mean?

SAM. What do you call it again, when a racehorse goes very fast?

HALLY. Gallop?

SAM. That's it!

WILLIE. Boet Sam!

HALLY. "A gallop down the home-stretch to the winning post." But what's that got to do with Hilda?

SAM. Count Basie always gets there first.

(WILLIE lets fly with his slop-rag. It misses SAM and hits HALLY.)

HALLY. *(furious)* For Christ's sake, Willie! What the hell do you think you're doing!

WILLIE. Sorry Master Hally, but it's him....

HALLY. Act your bloody age! *(Hurls the rag back at WILLIE.)* Cut out the nonsense now and get on with your work. And you too, Sam. Stop fooling around.

(SAM moves away.)

HALLY. No, hang on — I haven't finished! Tell me exactly what my mom said.

SAM. I have. "When Hally comes, tell him I've gone to the hospital and I'll phone him."

HALLY. She didn't say anything about taking my dad home?

SAM. No. It's just that, when she was talking on the phone...

HALLY. *(interrupting him)* No, Sam. They can't be discharging him. She would have said so if they were. In any case, we saw him last night and he wasn't in good shape at all. Staff-nurse even said there was talk about taking x-rays. And now suddenly today he's better? If anything, it sounds more like a bad turn to me ... which I sincerely hope it isn't. Hang on ... how long ago did you say she left?

SAM. Just before two ... *(Checks his wristwatch.)* ... hour and a half.

HALLY. I know how to settle it. *(Goes behind the counter to the telephone, talking as he dials.)* Let's give her ten minutes to get to the hospital, ten minutes to load him up, another ten, at the most, to get home and another ten to get him inside. Forty minutes. They should have been home for at least half an hour already. *(Pause. He waits with the receiver to his ear.)* No reply. And you know why? Because she's at his bedside in the hospital, helping him pull through a bad turn. You definitely heard wrong.

SAM. Okay.

(As far as HALLY is concerned, the matter is settled. He returns to his table, sits down and divides his attention between the book and his soup.)

SAM. *(He is at the school case and picks up a text-book.)* "Modern Graded Mathematics for Standards Nine and Ten." *(Opens it at random and laughs at something he sees.)* Who is this supposed to be?

HALLY. Old fart-face Prentice.

SAM. Teacher?

HALLY. Thinks he is. And believe me, that is not a bad likeness.

SAM. Has he seen it?

HALLY. Yes.

SAM. What did he say?

HALLY. Tried to be clever as usual. Said I was no Leonardo Da Vinci and that bad art had to be punished. So, six of the best, and his are bloody good.

SAM. On the bum?

HALLY. Where else? The days when I got them on my hands are gone forever, Sam.

SAM. With your trousers down?

HALLY. No. He's not quite that barbaric.

SAM. That's the way they do it in gaol.

HALLY. *(flicker of morbid interest)* Really?

SAM. Ja. When the magistrate sentences "strokes with a light cane".

HALLY. Go on.

SAM. They make you lie down on a bench. One policeman pulls your shirt over your head and holds your arms, another one pulls down your trousers and holds your ankles...

HALLY. Thank you! That's enough.

SAM. ... and the one that gives you the strokes talks to you gently and for a long time between each one. *(He laughs.)*

HALLY. I've heard enough *Sam*! Jesus! It's a bloody awful world when you come to think of it. People can be real bastards.

SAM. That's the way it is, Hally.

HALLY. It doesn't *have* to be that way. There is something called progress, you know. We don't exactly burn people at the stake anymore.

SAM. Like Joan of Arc.

HALLY. Correct. If she was captured today she'd be given a fair trial.

SAM. And then the death sentence.

HALLY. *(a world-weary sigh)* I know, I know! I oskillate *(mispronunces)* between hope and despair for this world as well, Sam. But things will change, you wait and see. One day somebody is going to get up and give history a kick up the backside and get it going again.

SAM. Like who?

HALLY. *(after thought)* They're called Social Reformers. Every age, Sam, has got its Social Reformer. My history book is full of them.

SAM. So where's ours?

HALLY. Good question. And I hate to say it but the answer is: I don't know. Maybe he hasn't even been born yet. Or is still only a babe in arms at his mother's breast. God, what a thought.

SAM. So we just go on waiting.

HALLY. Ja, looks like it. *(back to his soup and book)*

SAM. *(reading from the textbook)* "Introduction: In some mathematical problems only the magnitude...." (He mispronounces the word, "magnitude.")

HALLY. *(correcting him without looking up)* Magnitude.

SAM. What's it mean?

HALLY. How big it is. The size of the thing.

SAM. *(reading)* "... magnitude of the quantities is of importance. In other problems we need to know whether these quantities are negative or positive. For example, whether there is a debit or credit bank balance...."

HALLY. Whether you're broke or not.

SAM. "... whether the temperature is above or below zero ...."

HALLY. Nought degrees. Cheerful state of affairs! No cash and you're freezing to death. Mathematics won't get you out of that one.

SAM. "All these quantities are called...." *(spelling the word)* "... s - c - a - l ..."

HALLY. Scalers.

SAM. Scalers! *(shaking his head with a laugh)* You understand all that?

HALLY. *(turning a page)* No. And I don't intend to try.

SAM. So what happens when the exams come?

HALLY. Failing a maths exam isn't the end of the world, Sam. How many times have I told you that examination results don't measure intelligence?

SAM. I would say about as many times as you've failed one of them.

HALLY. *(mirthlessly)* Ha, ha, ha. Just remember, Winston Churchill didn't do particularly well at school.

SAM. You've also told me that one many times.

HALLY. Well it just so happens to be the truth.

SAM. Mag-ni-tude, show me how to use it.

HALLY. *(after thought)* An intrepid social reformer will not be daunted by the magnitude of the task he has undertaken.

SAM. *(impressed)* Couple of jaw-breakers in there!

HALLY. I gave you three for the price of one. Intrepid, daunted and magnitude. I did that once in an exam. Put five of the words I had to explain in one sentence. It was half a page long.

SAM. Well, I'll put my money on you in the English exam.

HALLY. Piece of cake. Eighty percent without even trying.

SAM. *(another textbook from HALLY'S case)* And history?

HALLY. So so. I'll scrape through. In the fifties, if I'm lucky.

SAM. You didn't do *too* badly last year.

HALLY. Because we had World War One. That at least had some action. You try to find that in the South African Parliamentary system.

SAM. *(reading from the history textbook)* "Napoleon and the principle of equality." Hey! This sounds interesting. "After concluding peace with Britain in 1802, Napoleon used a brief period of calm to in-sti-tute..."

HALLY. Introduce.

SAM. "... many reforms. Napoleon regarded all people as equal before the law and wanted them to have equal opportunities for advancement. All ves-ti-ges of the feudal system with its oppression of the poor were abolished." Vestiges, feudal system and abolished. I'm alright

on oppression.

HALLY. I'm thinking. He swept away — abolished — the last remains — vestiges — of the bad old days — feudal system.

SAM. Ha! There's the social reformer we're waiting for. He sounds like a man of some magnitude.

HALLY. I'm not so sure about that. It's a damn good title for a book though. A man of magnitude!

SAM. He sounds pretty big to me, Hally.

HALLY. Don't confuse historical significance with greatness. But maybe I'm being a bit prejudiced. Have a look in there and you'll see he's two chapters long. And hell! ... has he only got dates, Sam, all of which you've got to remember! This campaign and that campaign, and then because of all the fighting the next thing is we get peace treaties all over the place. And what's the end of the story? Battle of Waterloo, which he looses. Wasn't worth it. No, I don't know about him as a man of magnitude.

SAM. Then who would you say was?

HALLY. To answer that we need a definition of greatness, and I suppose that would be somebody who .... somebody who benefited all mankind.

SAM. Right. But like who?

HALLY. *(He speaks with total conviction.)* Charles Darwin. Remember *him*? That big book from the library. *The Origin of the Species.*

SAM. Him?

HALLY. Yes. For his Theory of Evolution.

SAM. *You* didn't finish it.

HALLY. I ran out of time. I didn't finish it because my two weeks was up. But I'm going to take it out again after

I've digested what I read. It's safe. I've hidden it away in the theology section. Nobody ever goes in there. And anyway, who are you to talk? You hardly even looked at it.

SAM. I tried. I looked at the chapters in the beginning and I saw one called "The struggle for an existence." Ah ha, I thought. At last! But what did I get? Something called the mistiltoe which needs the apple tree and there's too many seeds and all are going to die except for one.....! No, Hally.

HALLY. *(intellectually outraged)* What do you mean, *no*! The poor man had to start somewhere. For God's sake, Sam, he revolutionised science. Now we know.

SAM. What? *(He picks up soup bowl.)*

HALLY. Where we came from and what it all means.

SAM. And that's a benefit to mankind? *Anyway*, I still don't believe it. *(He goes behind bar.)*

HALLY. God, you're impossible. I showed it to you in black and white.

SAM. Doesn't mean I got to believe it.

HALLY. It's the likes of you that kept the inquisition in business. It's called bigotry. Anyway, that's my man of magnitude. Mr. Charles Darwin! Who's yours?

SAM. *(without hesitation)* Mr. Abraham Lincoln.

HALLY. I might have guessed as much. Don't get sentimental, Sam. You've never been a slave, you know. And anyway, we freed your ancestors here in South Africa long before the Americans. But if you want to thank somebody on their behalf, do it to Mr. William Wilberforce. Come on. Try again. I want a real genius. *(Now enjoying himself, he goes behind the counter and helps himself to a chocolate.)*

SAM. *(also enjoying himself)* Mr. William Shakespeare.

HALLY. *(no enthusiasm)* Oh. So you're also one of them, are you. You're basing that opinion on only one play, you know. You've only read my *Julius Caesar* and even I don't understand half of what they're talking about. They should do what they did with the old Bible: bring the language up to date.

SAM. That's all you've got. It's also the only one *you've* read.

HALLY. I know. I admit it. That's why I suggest we reserve our judgement until we've checked up on a few others. I've got a feeling, though, that by the end of this year, one is going to be enough for me, and I can give you the names of twenty-nine other chaps in the standard nine class of the Port Elizabeth Technical College who feel the same. But if you want him you can have him. My turn now. *(pacing)* This is a damned good exercise, you know! It started off looking like a simple question and here it's got us really probing into the intellectual heritage of our civilization.

SAM. So who is it going to be?

HALLY. My next man ... and he gets the title on two scores: social reform and literary genius ... is Leo Nikolaevich *(mispronounces)* Tolstoy.

SAM. That Russian.

HALLY. Correct. Remember the picture of him I showed you?

SAM. With the long beard.

HALLY. *(trying to look like Tolstoy)* And those burning, visionary eyes. My God, the face of a social prophet if ever I saw one! And remember my words when I showed it to you? Here's a *man*, Sam!

SAM. Those were words, Hally.

HALLY. Not many intellectuals are prepared to shovel manure with the peasants and then go home and write a "little book" called *War and Peace.* Incidentally, Sam, he was somebody else who, to quote ... "did not distinguish himself, scholastically."

SAM. Meaning?

HALLY. He was also no good at school.

SAM. Like you and Winston Churchill. Ha, ha, ha.

HALLY. Don't get clever, Sam. That man freed his serfs of his own free will.

SAM. No argument. He was a somebody alright. I accept him.

HALLY. I'm sure Count Tolstoy will be very pleased to hear that. Your turn. Shoot. *(Has another chocolate from behind the counter.)* I'm waiting, Sam.

SAM. I've got him.

HALLY. Good. Submit your candidate for examination.

SAM. Jesus.

HALLY. *(stopped dead in his tracks)* Who?

SAM. Jesus Christ.

HALLY. Oh come on, Sam!

SAM. The messiah.

HALLY. Ja, but still.... No, Sam. Don't let's get started on religion. We'll just spend the whole afternoon arguing again. Suppose I turn around and say Mohammed?

SAM. Alright.

HALLY. You can't have them both on the same list!

SAM. Why not? You like Mohammed, I like Jesus.

HALLY. I *don't* like Mohammed. I never have. I was

merely being hypothetical. As far as I'm concerned, the Koran is as bad as the Bible. No. Religion is out! I'm not going to waste my time again, arguing with you about the existence of God. You know perfectly well I'm an athiest and I've got homework to do.

SAM. Okay, I take him back.

HALLY. You've got time for one more name.

SAM. I've got one I know we'll agree on. A simple straight-forward great Man of Magnitude .... and no arguments. And *he* really *did* benefit all mankind.

HALLY. I wonder. After your last contribution, I'm beginning to doubt whether anything in the way of an intellectual agreement is possible between the two of us. Who is he?

SAM. Guess.

HALLY. Socrates?

SAM. No. *(Shakes his head.)*

HALLY. Alexandre Dumas?

SAM. No. *(Shakes his head.)*

HALLY. Karl Marx?

SAM. No. *(Shakes his head.)*

HALLY. Dostoevsky?

SAM. No. *(Shakes his head.)*

HALLY. Nietzsche?

SAM. No. *(Shakes his head.)*

HALLY. Give me a clue.

SAM. The letter "P" is important...

HALLY. Plato!

SAM. ...and his name begins with an "F."

HALLY. I got it. Freud and psychology.

SAM. No. I didn't understand him.

HALLY. That makes two of us.

SAM. Think of mouldy apricot jam.

HALLY. *(after a delighted laugh)* Penicillim and Sir Alexander Flemming! And the title of the book: *The Microbe Hunters. (delighted)* Splendid, Sam! Splendid. For once we are in total agreement. The major breakthrough in medical science in the 20th century. If it wasn't for him, we might have lost the Second World War. It's deeply gratifying, Sam, to know that I haven't been wasting my time in talking to you. *(strutting around proudly)* Tolstoy may have educated his peasants, but I've educated you.

SAM. Standard four to standard nine.

HALLY. Have we been at it as long as that?

SAM. Yep. And my first lesson was geography.

HALLY. *(intrigued)* Really? I don't remember.

SAM. My room there at the back of the old Jubilee Boarding House. I had just started working for your Mom. Little boy in short trousers walks in one afternoon and asks me, seriously: Sam, do you want to see South Africa? Hey man! Sure I wanted to see South Africa!

HALLY. Was that me?

SAM. So the next thing I'm looking at a map you had just done for homework. It was your first one and you were very proud of yourself.

HALLY. Go on.

SAM. Then came my first lesson. "Repeat after me, Sam: gold in the Transvaal, mealies in the Free State, sugar in Natal and grapes in the Cape." I still know it!

HALLY. Well I'll be buggered. So that's how it all started.

SAM. And your next map was one with all the rivers and

the mountains they came from. The Orange, the Vaal, the Limpopo, the Zambesi...

HALLY. You've got a phenomenal memory.

SAM. You should be grateful. That is why you started passing your exams. You tried to be better than me.

(They laugh together. WILLIE is attracted by the laughter and joins them.)

HALLY. The old Jubilee Boarding House. Sixteen rooms with board and lodging, rent in advance and one week's notice. I haven't thought about it for donkey's years ... and I don't think that's an accident. God, was I glad when we sold it and moved out. Those years are not remembered as the happiest ones of an unhappy childhood.

WILLIE. *(knocking on the table and trying to imitate a woman's voice)* "Hally, are you there?"

HALLY. Who's that supposed to be?

WILLIE. "What you doing in there, Hally? Come out at once!"

HALLY. *(to SAM)* What's he talking about?

SAM. Don't you remember?

WILLIE. "Sam, Willie ... is he in there with you boys?"

SAM. Hiding away in our room when your mother was looking for you.

HALLY. *(another good laugh)* Of course! I use to crawl and hide under your bed! But finish the story, Willie. Then what used to happen? You chaps would give the game away by telling her I was in there with you. So much for friendship.

SAM. We couldn't lie to her. She knew.

HALLY. Which meant I got another rowing for hanging around the "servant's quarters". I think I spent more time in there with you chaps than anywhere else in that dump. And do you blame me? Nothing but bloody misery wherever you went. Somebody was always complaining about the food or my mother was having a fight with Micky Nash because she'd caught her with a petty officer in her room. Maud Meiring was another one. Remember those two? They were prostitutes, you know. Soldiers and sailors from the troopships. Bottom fell out of the business when the war ended. God, the flotsam and jetsam that life washed up on our shores! No joking, if it wasn't for your room I would have been the first certified ten-year-old in medical history. Ja, the memories are coming back now. Walking home from school and thinking: What can I do this afternoon? Try out a few ideas but sooner or later I'd end up in there with you fellows. I bet you I could still find my way to your room with my eyes closed. *(He does exactly that.)* Down the corridor ... telephone on the right which my mom keeps locked because somebody is using it on the sly and not paying ... past the kitchen and unappetising cooking smells ... around the corner into the backyard, hold my breath again because there are more smells coming when I pass your lavatory, then into that little passageway, first door on the right and into your room. How's that?

SAM. Good. But as usual, you forgot to knock.

HALLY. Like that time I barged in and caught you and ... Cynthia at it — remember? God, was I embarassed! I didn't know what was going on at first.

SAM. Ja, that taught you a lesson.

HALLY. And about a lot more than knocking on doors, I'll have you know, and I don't mean geography either. Hell Sam, couldn't you have waited until it was dark?

SAM. No.

HALLY. Was it that urgent?

SAM. Yes, and if you don't believe me, wait until your time comes.

HALLY. No thank you. I am not interested in girls. *(Back to his memories ... he stands in the middle of the same room, pointing as he lists the items.)* A cold little room with a grey cement floor. Your bed against that wall ... and I now know why the mattress sags so much! ... Willie's bed ... it's propped up on bricks because one leg is broken ... that wobbly little table with the wash-basin and jug of water ... Yes! ... Stuck to the wall above it are some pin-up pictures from magazines. Joe Louis ...

WILLIE. Brown Bomber. World Title. *(boxing pose)* Three rounds and knock-out.

HALLY. Against who?

SAM. Max Schmelling.

HALLY. Correct. I can also remember Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and Rita Hayworth in a bathing costume which always made me hot and bothered when I looked at it. Under Willie's bed is an old suitcase with all his clothes in a mess which is why I never hide there. Your things are neat and tidy in a trunk next to your bed, and on it there is a picture of you and Cynthia in your ballroom clothes, your first silver cup for third-place in a competition and an old radio which doesn't work anymore. Have I left out anything?

SAM. No.

HALLY. Right, so much for stage-directions. Now the characters. Willie is in bed, under his blankets with his clothes on, complaining non-stop about something, but we can't make out a word of what he's saying because he's got his head under the blankets, as well. You're on your bed trimming your toenails with a knife — not a very edifying sight — and as for me.... What am I doing?

SAM. You're sitting on the floor, giving Willie a lecture about being a good loser while you get the checker board and pieces ready for a game. Then you go to Willie's bed, pull off the blankets and make him play with you first because you know you're going to win, and that gives you the second game with me.

HALLY. And you certainly were a bad loser, Willie!

WILLIE. Haai!

HALLY. Wasn't he, Sam? And so slow! A game with you almost took the whole afternoon. Thank God I gave up trying to teach you how to play chess.

WILLIE. You and Sam cheated.

HALLY. I never saw Sam cheat, and mine were mostly the mistakes of youth.

WILLIE. Then how is it you two was always winning?

HALLY. Have you ever considered the possibility, Willie, that it is because we were better than you?

WILLIE. Everytime better?

HALLY. Not every time. There were occasions when we deliberately let you win a game so that you would stop sulking and go on playing with us. Sam used to wink at me when you weren't looking to show me it was time to let you win.

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