

SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

This sample is an *excerpt* from a Samuel French title.

This sample is for perusal only and may not be used for performance purposes.

You may not download, print, or distribute this excerpt.

We highly recommend purchasing a copy of the title before considering for performance.

For more information about licensing or about purchasing a play or musical, please visit our website.

www.samuelfrench.com

www.samuelfrench.co.uk

Samuel French Acting Edition

Ken Ludwig's Moon Over Buffalo

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

SAMUELFRENCH.CO.UK

Copyright © 2016 by Ken Ludwig
All Rights Reserved

Cover artwork © Moon Over Buffalo Company, L.P.

KEN LUDWIG'S MOON OVER BUFFALO is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional and amateur stage productions, recitation, lecturing, public reading, motion picture, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

ISBN 978-0-573-62651-7

www.SamuelFrench.com

www.SamuelFrench-London.co.uk

FOR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Info@SamuelFrench.com

1-866-598-8449

UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE

Plays@SamuelFrench-London.co.uk

020-7255-4302

Each title is subject to availability from Samuel French, depending upon country of performance. Please be aware that *KEN LUDWIG'S MOON OVER BUFFALO* may not be licensed by Samuel French in your territory. Professional and amateur producers should contact the nearest Samuel French office or licensing partner to verify availability.

CAUTION: Professional and amateur producers are hereby warned that *KEN LUDWIG'S MOON OVER BUFFALO* is subject to a licensing fee. Publication of this play(s) does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised to apply to Samuel French before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre. A licensing fee must be paid whether the title(s) is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged. Professional/Stock licensing fees are quoted upon application to Samuel French.

No one shall make any changes in this title(s) for the purpose of production. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. No one shall upload this title(s), or part of this title(s), to any social media websites.

For all enquiries regarding motion picture, television, and other media rights, please contact Samuel French.

MUSIC USE NOTE

Licensees are solely responsible for obtaining formal written permission from copyright owners to use copyrighted music in the performance of this play and are strongly cautioned to do so. If no such permission is obtained by the licensee, then the licensee must use only original music that the licensee owns and controls. Licensees are solely responsible and liable for all music clearances and shall indemnify the copyright owners of the play(s) and their licensing agent, Samuel French, against any costs, expenses, losses and liabilities arising from the use of music by licensees. Please contact the appropriate music licensing authority in your territory for the rights to any incidental music.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

If you have obtained performance rights to this title, please refer to your licensing agreement for important billing and credit requirements.

MOON OVER BUFFALO premiered on Broadway at the Martin Beck Theatre on October 1, 1995. It was produced by Elizabeth Williams, Heidi Landesman, DLT Entertainment Ltd., Hal Luftig, and Jujamcyn Theatres. It was directed by Tom Moore. The set was designed by Heidi Landesman, the costumes by Bob Mackie, the lighting by Ken Billington and the sound by Tony Meola. The fights were staged by B.H. Barry. The General Manager was 101 Productions Ltd., the Production Supervisor was Steven Beckler, and the Stage Manager was Tom Capps. The cast was as follows:

GEORGE HAY	Philip Bosco
CHARLOTTE HAY	Carol Burnett
ETHEL	Jane Connell
ROSALIND	Randy Graff
HOWARD	Andy Taylor
EILEEN	Kate Miller
PAUL	Dennis Ryan
RICHARD	James Valentine

The understudies were Richard Poe, Jane Sell Trese, Lanny Stephens and David Beach.

CHARACTERS

GEORGE HAY

CHARLOTTE HAY

ETHEL

ROSALIND

HOWARD

EILEEN

PAUL

RICHARD

SETTING

On stage and backstage at the Erlanger Theatre.

TIME

Buffalo, New York, 1953.

ACT I

A mid-morning in June

ACT II

Scene One: Two hours later

Scene Two: Immediately following

Scene Three: Two hours later

*In loving memory of my father,
Jacob S. Ludwig, 1913–1990,
who would have loved this play.*

ACT I

(A fusillade of musket and cannon, the bloody cries of a pitched battle—and as the lights come up, we're at the Siege of Arras in 1640, at the outpost of the Company of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. But we're not, really. We're on the stage of the Erlanger Theater in Buffalo, New York, during a rehearsal of Act IV of Cyrano de Bergerac. The stage is full of smoke, noise and tattered flags, and the actors are in silhouette.)

*(GEORGE and CHARLOTTE HAY, in their 50s, are playing CYRANO and ROXANE.)**

CONFUSED VOICES. “Retreat! For God’s sake retreat!”

FIRST SOLDIER. “Sound the alarm!”

SECOND SOLDIER. “We are all dead!”

DE GUICHE (RICHARD). “Retreat!”

THIRD SOLDIER. “Retreat!”

CYRANO (GEORGE). “No! Never! Not in this life!”

DE GUICHE. “You fool, we shall all die! It is ten to one against us!”

CYRANO (GEORGE). “Be damned your numbers! And damn you! I am Cyrano de Bergerac!”

THREE SOLDIERS. *(Weakly.)* “Yay.”

GEORGE. Stop! Stop!

(The music stops and we go to work lights.)

*In reality, the rest of the parts can be played by the actors playing Richard, Howard, Paul and Eileen—all of them unrecognizable because of their costumes and the lighting.

GEORGE. For the hundredth time, I want the cheer louder!
The audience won't hear you! Let's try it again. "I am
Cyrano de Bergerac!"

THREE SOLDIERS. (*Weakly.*) "Yay!"

GEORGE. (*Disgusted, turning away.*) I don't know why we
even bother rehearsing... Louder!

THREE SOLDIERS. "Yay!"

GEORGE. That's better. All right, let's run it.

(*The music and lights restore to performance level.*)

DE GUICHE. "You fool, we shall all die! It is ten to one
against us!"

CYRANO (GEORGE). "Be damned your numbers! And damn
you! I am Cyrano de Bergerac!"

THREE SOLDIERS. (*Weakly.*) "Yay."

DE GUICHE. "Popinjay!"

(**DE GUICHE** walks off in a huff. We hear the
sound of a horse and carriage approaching.)

SECOND SOLDIER. "Halt, who goes there?!"

FIRST SOLDIER. "It's a coach!"

THIRD SOLDIER. "What?!"

FIRST SOLDIER. "In the camp?!"

(*Off, the horse whinnies.*)

SECOND SOLDIER. "Look! 'Tis Roxane!"

(**ROXANE** enters with a basket of fruit, and the
SOLDIERS cheer.)

THREE SOLDIERS. (*Weakly.*) "Yay!"

(**GEORGE** gives them a look.)

SECOND SOLDIER. "She brings supplies!"

FIRST SOLDIER. "Bread!"

SECOND SOLDIER. "And wine!"

THIRD SOLDIER. "And chicken!"

(**ROXANE** exits.)

LE BRET (PAUL). “Cyrano! That was the Comte de Guiche you insulted! Stop trying to be the Three Musketeers in one!”

*(During the following oration, **ETHEL**, an actress in her 70s, enters from the wings. She’s dressed in her everyday 1950s clothes, and therefore looks incongruous.)*

CYRANO (GEORGE). “What would you have me do? Hanh?!
Seek for the patronage of some great man,
And like a creeping vine on a tall tree
Crawl upward, where I cannot stand alone?
No thank you!”

ETHEL. Oh my God, I’ve seen more talent at a dog show.

*(**ETHEL** joins in the speech with **GEORGE**. After a line or two, we hear only **ETHEL**, and the “onstage” action fades away. Simultaneously, **ETHEL** makes her way to the green room of the Erlanger Theater.)***

(The room is large, comfortable and a bit shabby. It contains a chaise, a large pouffe and one or two easy chairs. It’s decorated with theater posters and other theatrical bric-a-brac. Stage right is a door to the street; stage left, two doors to the backstage area, one of them up a short flight of steps. Up center is another door to the backstage area and also a door to a utility closet. The time is a mid-morning in June, 1953.)

*(When **ETHEL** enters the room, she continues playing **CYRANO**, even as she potters around straightening things up.)*

GEORGE & ETHEL. (**GEORGE** fading away.) “Dedicate, as others do,
Poems to pawnbrokers? Be a buffoon
In the vile hope of teasing out a smile
On some cold face?”

**See Appendix A with regard to staging.

ETHEL. "Eat a toad

For breakfast every morning?

Wear out my belly grovelling in the dust?

No, I thank you, and again I thank you no!

But..."

(ROSALIND enters from the street door, carrying a suitcase. She's bright and attractive, in her 20s or 30s. She sees ETHEL and smiles with affection. ETHEL is facing the other way and can't see ROSALIND. Also, as we'll soon realize, ETHEL is quite deaf and is never aware of very much unless it's in front of her and shouting.)

"To sing, to laugh, to dream,

To walk in my own way and be alone,

Free, with an eye to see things as they are."

ROZ. Grandma.

ETHEL. "To travel any road under the sun,"

ROZ. *Grandma!*

ETHEL. "Nor doubt if fame or fortune—"

ROZ. *GRANDMA!!*

ETHEL. *(Startled, then overjoyed.)* Oh! ...Rosalind! Dearest girl! What a surprise! You're getting more beautiful every day. *(A big hug.)* You look adorable!

ROZ. So do you.

ETHEL. What?

ROZ. *(Louder.)* So do you! You look great!

ETHEL. I'm afraid you'll have to speak up, dear.

ROZ. *Grandma, can I get you your hearing aid?!*

ETHEL. *(Fondly.)* No thank you, dear, I'm not in the mood for lemonade. Oh, I miss you terribly. It isn't the same here without you.

ROZ. *I miss you too, Grandma. Hey! How is the tour going? Do you like Buffalo?*

ETHEL. No. I don't. It stinks. If it wasn't named for an animal, it would have nothing going for it. I don't

mind so much for myself, really, but it's quite a come-down for your mother. She played Broadway, you know, in the forties. Then your father dragged her down to his level.

ROZ. Grandma—!

ETHEL. Revivals of tired old plays. B-movies. You should have heard him doing Cyrano just now at the dress rehearsal. The man is a walking ham. They should stick cloves in him and serve him with pineapple.

ROZ. *Grandma, listen! I have a surprise. I'm getting married.*

(It takes a moment to sink in...then ROZ and ETHEL squeal with delight, like schoolgirls, jump up and down and hug each other.)

ETHEL. Oh, Rosalind, how wonderful! I've always said that you and Paul were made for each other.

ROZ. It isn't Paul.

ETHEL. The boy has spunk—

ROZ. *Grandma, it's not Paul! Paul and I broke up!*

ETHEL. ...It isn't Paul?

ROZ. *NO!*

ETHEL. Well that's a mistake.

(ROZ sighs; here it comes.)

You look ravishing on the stage together. You could do all the great couples—

ROZ. *Grandma, I'm not an actress anymore! I'm in advertising.*

ETHEL. Yes, I know, and it's revolting.

ROZ. *Don't you remember the talk we had at Christmas?!*

ETHEL. ...No.

ROZ. *(Holding ETHEL's hand and really pouring her heart out.)*

Grandma, this is your life. And Mother and Dad's. And that's fine. I'm very proud of you. But I grew up with it. I want something different. Something that doesn't drive me crazy all the time. Does that make any sense?

ETHEL. *(Fondly.)* Rosalind, dearest, can I tell you something?

ROZ. Sure.

ETHEL. I haven't heard a single word you've said.

ROZ. ...*Grandma, can I please get you your hearing aid!!!*

ETHEL. All right. Fine. One glass. ...Now listen to me, young lady. The theatre may be dying. The glamorous invalid may be crawling through the desert with but a single lung in its feeble chest, but it is still breathing and it is all we've got. It is our lifeline to humanity. Without it, we would all be Republicans. I'm very tired now, dear, and I'm going to lie down. *(At the door.)* It's wonderful having you back.

(ETHEL exits. ROZ runs to the door and shouts:)

ROZ. *GRANDMA! I LOVE YOU!*

(At which moment, we hear a knock at the street door.)

Come in. (...*Knock knock knock.*) Come in! (...*Knock knock knock; angry:*) Would you come in, please, the door's open!!

(HOWARD enters. He's in his late 20's, very good-natured and quite good-looking. At the moment, he's rather frightened.)

HOWARD. ...Sweetheart?

ROZ. Hi, honey. Come on in.

(They kiss.)

HOWARD. Are your parents here?

ROZ. I don't think so.

HOWARD. *(Relieved.)* Oh, good.

ROZ. Howard...

HOWARD. Well I'm sorry. You know how I feel about this. "Meeting the in-laws." It makes me nervous.

ROZ. You have nothing to worry about.

HOWARD. I'd be all right if they weren't such...big stars. The glamorous life...

ROZ. Howard, does this look glamorous?

(ROZ indicates the room.)

HOWARD. (*Looking around.*) ...Well, yeah. It does.

ROZ. This is Buffalo, New York. It's like... Scranton without the charm.

HOWARD. I was born here, actually.

ROZ. Oh.

HOWARD. I like Scranton, too.

ROZ. Howard, the point is, it's not Broadway. And they're doing rep!

HOWARD. Right... What's "rep" again?

ROZ. More than one play. In repertory. They alternate. Right now it's *Private Lives*, by Noel Coward, and *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Only they've cut down *Cyrano* for a small company. They do it with five actors.

HOWARD. Aha. The sort of...one-nostril version.

(*He laughs; then sighs with anxiety.*)

ROZ. It's sort of sweet that you're nervous about meeting them.

HOWARD. Nervous? Look at me, I'm a wreck! Do they know that I'm in show business, too?

ROZ. Howard, you're not exactly in show business. I mean, they wouldn't think of it as show business.

HOWARD. Oh. (*Beat.*) I am on television.

ROZ. You're a weatherman.

HOWARD. Right I mean, it's kind of acting, like your parents.

ROZ. Howard, they do Shakespeare. And Chekhov. You do precipitation.

HOWARD. (*Glum.*) Yeah, I know...

ROZ. Howard, I'm very proud of you. It's a wonderful job. We can settle down and have children—

HOWARD. I love children. I want to have six, at least.

ROZ. Let's start with one.

HOWARD. Okay.

ROZ. Now listen to me. I want you to be very, very nice to them. Tell them how much you admire their work.

HOWARD. Well I *do*! I mean, my God, when I was a kid, they were on the cover of *Life* magazine. "Shakespeare on Broadway—"

ROZ. "Look Out Barrymores, Here Come the Hays." They had it reproduced on their china.

HOWARD. Wow.

ROZ. Then they had two big flops in a row and went to Hollywood.

HOWARD. Yeah, I know. I saw every movie they ever made!

ROZ. Good—

HOWARD. "Sergeant Yukon," "Apache Woman—" (*Suddenly.*) Oh my God! I forgot the bag!

ROZ. What bag?

HOWARD. I have a surprise for your father. When I was in New York last week, I read in the paper about an auction. They were selling off props and stuff from one of the big studios and...well, I bought one of your father's old costumes. I thought he'd like it.

ROZ. That is so sweet! Which one did you get?

HOWARD. General George S. Patton! Wait'll you see it! The trouble is, I don't have anything for your mother yet. I guess she wouldn't take cash...?

ROZ. Howard. They will love you for who you are.

HOWARD. What if I freeze up?! I-I-I do that sometimes, when I'm nervous! I can't even remember my own... *name.*

ROZ. You'll be fine! I promise! (*A kiss.*) All right?

HOWARD. ...All right.

ROZ. I'll see if they're in their dressing rooms.

HOWARD. I'll go with you.

ROZ. You stay here, in case they show up.

HOWARD. I'd rather go with you—

ROZ. Howard, stay! Nothing's going to happen in two minutes.

(ROZ exits. Pause. HOWARD looks around the room. He spies a CYRANO hat on the table. He picks it up and puts it on. He preens. When he takes off the hat, a CYRANO nose drops out onto the floor. He picks it up and looks at it with curiosity—then suspicion. He moves it down towards his crotch... Is that what it is?! At this moment, GEORGE HAY bursts through the center door, still wearing his CYRANO costume, nose and makeup, brandishing a sword.)

GEORGE. CHYAA!

(Just as suddenly, CHARLOTTE HAY bursts through the door at the top of the stairs. She's still dressed as ROXANE, and she also has a sword.)

CHARLOTTE. CHYAA!

*(GEORGE and CHARLOTTE face off—then start fencing in the best Errol Flynn tradition. This is their daily exercise, as well as their fun.)****

GOERGE. Aroint thee, villain!

CHARLOTTE. Stay back, thou knave and cutpurse!

GEORGE. Stand thy ground, I say, or thou shalt bleed from ear to ear like the vomiting stream at flood tide!

(More swordplay. HOWARD watches with his mouth hanging open.)

CHARLOTTE. Dungheap!

GEORGE. Witch!

CHARLOTTE. Bull's pizzle!

(The next exchange brings the combatants nose to nose, their swords crossed—then suddenly CHARLOTTE stamps on GEORGE's foot to get the advantage.)

*** See Appendix B for alternative dialogue.

GEORGE. Ow!

CHARLOTTE. Ha!

GEORGE. Villain!

(GEORGE and CHARLOTTE are at it again. Then they both notice HOWARD for the first time and stop fighting.)

CHARLOTTE. What is this?

GEORGE. I know not, but 'tis passing strange.

HOWARD. *(Waves.)* ...Hi.

(CHARLOTTE lunges at GEORGE, GEORGE counters, then grabs HOWARD around the neck in a hammerlock, with his sword at HOWARD's throat.)

CHARLOTTE. Ha!

GEORGE. Ha!

HOWARD. Argh!

GEORGE. Stay back, I say, or the lad shall die!

CHARLOTTE. Coward!

GEORGE. If thou dost move *one inch*, the lad shall spout blood like a fountain.

(HOWARD is terrified. He tries to chuckle, to be a good sport.)

HOWARD. *(To CHARLOTTE.)* ...Don't move.

(CHARLOTTE lunges—.)

CHARLOTTE. Ha!

GEORGE. Ha!

(—And GEORGE discards HOWARD like a sack of potatoes. HOWARD careens off a chair. Then GEORGE and CHARLOTTE go at it again, and exit fighting.)

CHARLOTTE. Hold up thy head, vile Scot!

GEORGE. I'll make a ghost of him that lets me! And away!

(And they're gone. HOWARD gets to his feet, panting. After a beat, ROZ enters at the top of the stairs.)

ROZ. They're not in their dressing rooms.

HOWARD. I-I-I-I-

ROZ. Howard?

HOWARD. I have to go now.

(HOWARD heads for the street door.)

ROZ. Where are you going?

HOWARD. I need a few minutes. I'll be back.

ROZ. Howard, what's wrong?

HOWARD. I have to think about this! You don't just-just-rush into a relationship! It takes some thinking!!

(HOWARD exits.)

ROZ. Howard! Are you crazy?! *(Exiting.)* Get back here!!

(ROZ runs out. A moment later, GEORGE and CHARLOTTE reenter in high spirits.)

GEORGE. Do you know what I like most about the author of *Cyrano*? He's dead, so he can't argue with me.

(CHARLOTTE laughs.)

Now listen, I have a new idea for tomorrow. When the carriage arrives, during the battle, and you step out, I want you to pause, curtsy to the soldiers—and I'm going to put a spotlight on your face to suggest that you have descended like an angel from heaven.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, George, let's try it! Now!

GEORGE. All right.

CHARLOTTE. Clip clop clip clop clip clop. Na-a-a-y. *(A whinny.)*

GEORGE. "Halt, who goes there?!"

CHARLOTTE. "It's a coach!"

GEORGE. "What? In the camp?!"

CHARLOTTE. "Look! 'Tis Roxane!"

GEORGE. "Thank God."

CHARLOTTE. (*Weakly.*) "Yay." (*Stepping elegantly down the last two steps of the stairway.*) And I float down, out of the carriage, like an angel from heaven..."

GEORGE. Spotlight!

CHARLOTTE. (*As ROXANE.*) "Good morning, gentlemen."

GEORGE. "Roxane, on the King's service?!"

CHARLOTTE. "Yes. In the service of my own king: Love."

GEORGE. That's it! It'll make the scene!

CHARLOTTE. "Cyrano. My best friend. I need your help."

GEORGE. (*As CYRANO, kneeling, taking her hand.*) "I am at your disposal, madam, now and forever."

(**GEORGE** kisses her hand and lays his cheek upon it.)

CHARLOTTE. (*Moved.*) When you do that, George, center stage, in front of a thousand people holding their breath, I wet myself, I can't help it.

GEORGE. Thank you, my darling.

CHARLOTTE. Kiss me. Now. Before the moment passes.

(**CHARLOTTE** lifts his nose and kisses him on the lips. They start necking on the chaise—when **ETHEL** enters from backstage.)

ETHEL. Don't mind me, I'm just the hired help.

GEORGE. Well, well, if it isn't the Hound of the Baskervilles.

(*During the following, GEORGE and CHARLOTTE remove their CYRANO clothes and put on their relaxing clothes. CHARLOTTE, of course, looks stunning. ETHEL gathers up their costumes to take them away.*)

CHARLOTTE. (*To GEORGE.*) Don't start.

GEORGE. Oh, she can't hear a thing I'm saying. She hasn't heard a word in twenty years. (*To ETHEL.*) Have you, Quasimodo?

CHARLOTTE. George, stop it.

GEORGE. Tell me, Ethel, have you frightened any little children lately? Offered them a ride on your broomstick?

CHARLOTTE. George—

GEORGE. I cannot believe, to this day, that *that* is your mother. Here you are, the greatest stage actress in a generation, and you were spawned by a troll?

CHARLOTTE. George, cut it out.

GEORGE. You must have been switched at birth. Somewhere out there is Ethel's real daughter, traveling with Ringling Brothers as the Wolf Woman of Borneo.

CHARLOTTE. (*As ETHEL starts to exit heaped with the bundle of clothes.*) Thank you, Mother!

GEORGE. *Thank you, Mother!*

ETHEL. (*As she goes out the door.*) George, my hearing aid is in, now grow up!

(*ETHEL exits, and GEORGE slams the door, hurting his back.*)

GEORGE. *Ow!* God, my neck! Am I getting old, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE. No, dear, you're just falling apart.

GEORGE. (*Bitterly.*) No wonder they didn't want me for the *Pimpernel* movie.

CHARLOTTE. Us, dear, they didn't want us.

GEORGE. It would have put us right back on top. George and Charlotte Hay in the new Frank Capra production, *The Twilight of The Scarlet Pimpernel*.

CHARLOTTE. There will be other movies.

GEORGE. We were this close, Charlotte. I could taste it! (*Beat.*) No wonder Hollywood is such a cesspool. I mean, please. *Frank Capra* directs *The Twilight of The Scarlet Pimpernel*??

CHARLOTTE. I didn't even get to meet him.

GEORGE. Nor did I. Nor do I care to, may he rot in hell.

CHARLOTTE. I can see it now. "Mr. Pimpernel Goes to Washington."

GEORGE. Exactly! Ow! My neck...!

CHARLOTTE. Get down, George. I'll work on it.

(During the following, GEORGE sits next to the chaise and CHARLOTTE massages his neck and shoulders.)

GEORGE. You do realize they started filming yesterday. At this very moment, the cameras are rolling and Ronald Colman is wearing *my tights*.

CHARLOTTE. *(Calmly, as the massage continues.)* Oh, George, let them have their Ronald Colman and their Greer Garson. Who gives a damn.

GEORGE. You're right.

CHARLOTTE. I'm sure that Miss Garson will do a perfectly adequate job.

GEORGE. You're right.

CHARLOTTE. If that's what they want.

GEORGE. I agree entirely.

CHARLOTTE. ...Stupid little bitch.

(GEORGE laughs.)

I met her once. Did you know that? She was filming *Pride and Prejudice* and I was next door filming *Apache Woman*. *(With increasing bitterness.)* She was cutting the crusts off little tea sandwiches, and I was boiling a pig in a teepee.

GEORGE. Charlotte—

CHARLOTTE. She was making love to Laurence Olivier, and I was sacrificing a chicken with Chief Chunkachook. *(She starts chanting an Indian war chant, beating on his shoulders with the edges of her hands:)* Hiya hiya hiya hiya...

GEORGE. *(Overlapping.)* Charlotte... Charlotte!

(CHARLOTTE stops.)

CHARLOTTE. How's your neck?

GEORGE. Better. But don't stop.

(The massage continues. GEORGE is relaxing. He's almost asleep.)

CHARLOTTE. George?

GEORGE. Hm?

CHARLOTTE. Can I ask you a question?

GEORGE. Mm.

CHARLOTTE. Did you sleep with Eileen?

GEORGE. *(Sitting up with a start.)* Charlotte! How can you say such a thing?!

CHARLOTTE. I've seen how you look at her.

GEORGE. She's a pretty girl. I'm not dead.

CHARLOTTE. Not yet. I know exactly when it happened, George. We were in the middle of that terrible fight.

GEORGE. And whose fault was that?

CHARLOTTE. It was your fault, dear. You called me the world's oldest living ingenue.

GEORGE. I merely mentioned that a woman in her fifties should not try to play Saint Joan. It's like watching Eleanor Roosevelt play Peter Pan.

CHARLOTTE. I happen to admire Eleanor Roosevelt.

GEORGE. So do I, but I don't want to watch her fly out the window.

CHARLOTTE. You're changing the subject.

GEORGE. For heaven's sake, Eileen barely knows I exist.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, please. When you walk into the room she starts to glow. I could use her for a reading lamp.

GEORGE. You are off your rocker. It's extraordinary. It is unkind.

CHARLOTTE. George, I don't mind as long as you tell me the truth! Did you sleep with her or didn't you? Yes or no?!

GEORGE. ...*No!!!* All right?! The answer is no!!

CHARLOTTE. *(Skeptically.)* Really?

GEORGE. Oh, it's killing you about the film, isn't it.

CHARLOTTE. Don't be silly, that has nothing to do with it.

GEORGE. Scarlet Pimpernel, Scarlet Pimpernel.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, stop it.

GEORGE. *Greer Garson!*

CHARLOTTE. Don't be an idiot!

GEORGE. I'm sure it's slaying you to be stuck out here in Siberia while Miss Garson swans around the set in Hollywood like the Queen of Sheba.

CHARLOTTE. George—

GEORGE. I'm sure you had fantastical visions of being slobbered over by a legion of toadies, having your ears powdered.

CHARLOTTE. All right, George, I'm sorry!

GEORGE. (*The injured husband.*) *Well it's too late now, isn't it?! You have hurt my feelings!*

(GEORGE turns away and sits down, rolling his eyes, thinking that she can't see him.)

CHARLOTTE. ...I saw that.

GEORGE. Saw what?

CHARLOTTE. You big faker.

GEORGE. I don't know what you're talking about.

(CHARLOTTE sits on GEORGE's lap and starts to tickle him.)

CHARLOTTE. Faker, faker, faker, faker...

GEORGE. (*Laughing, overlapping.*) Stop it! Charlotte! I'm warning you—!

(And EILEEN walks in from the street. She's young and very beautiful. They see her and stop cold.)

Eileen!

CHARLOTTE. Good morning.

(Beat. EILEEN bursts into tears and runs across the room and out the door to the dressing rooms.)

GEORGE. Eileen! Wait! Eileen!

(GEORGE stands up and hurries to the door—and CHARLOTTE rolls off his lap and lands on the floor with a thud. Then she stands up and looks at him with blood in her eye.)

Don't look at me like that.

CHARLOTTE. Fine. I'll go talk to her.

GEORGE. I'll do it! You have caused enough trouble for one morning. *(Exiting.)* Eileen!

(The moment GEORGE is gone, PAUL enters from the street. He's in his 30s, good-looking in a rough-and-ready sort of way, and very likeable.)

CHARLOTTE. Hello, Paul.

PAUL. What's with Eileen? She walked right past me. I think she was crying.

CHARLOTTE. Well, she was born in Buffalo. Maybe she suddenly realized she's still here.

PAUL. Actually, she loves it here. She started out here in the theatre, but what she really wants to do is television.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, please.

PAUL. She could do all right on TV. She's pretty. Wholesome.

CHARLOTTE. Wholesome isn't the word. She could give milk.

PAUL. ...Charlotte. Have you talked to Roz lately?

CHARLOTTE. Last Sunday. I brought up your name and she started screaming.

PAUL. Oh great.

CHARLOTTE. I never understood why you two broke up.

PAUL. Oh, she wanted me to give up the theatre so she could lead a "normal life." *(He shakes his head and laughs.)* Can you imagine anyone in your family being normal?!

(CHARLOTTE starts to laugh...then stops and gives him a look. At which moment, ROZ enters from the street.)

ROZ. Hi, Mother.

CHARLOTTE. Pumpkin! Sweetie! *(They hug.)* When did you get here?!

ROZ. A few minutes ago.

CHARLOTTE. We were just talking about you. This second!

(The following exchange is rapid and monotone, anger overlaid with social intercourse:)

ROZ. Hello Paul.

PAUL. Hi Roz.

ROZ. How's show biz?

PAUL. Great I've never been happier.

ROZ. Well good for you I'm thrilled.

PAUL. Thanks.

ROZ. You're welcome.

(Pause.)

CHARLOTTE. ...This is going well.

ROZ. I thought you were in New York.

PAUL. I came back to work for your parents.

ROZ. How nice.

PAUL. I'll check on Eileen.

(PAUL exits.)

CHARLOTTE. Rosalind, why don't you two just get married and get it over with.

ROZ. I wish you would stop trying to run my life. It's my life, not your life!

CHARLOTTE. You're right. I'm sorry. You're right. *(Pause. The wounded mother:)* I'm only the one who gave birth to you.

ROZ. Mother...

CHARLOTTE. Twelve pounds, fourteen ounces. ...They needed a forklift.

ROZ. Mother—!

(GEORGE enters.)

GEORGE. She locked herself in, she— ...Rosalind! My baby!

ROZ. Daddy!

(ROZ runs to GEORGE and they hug.)

GEORGE. How's my little girl? ...Charlotte, how is it possible that two such plain people as ourselves could produce an offspring as beautiful as this one?

CHARLOTTE. ...She's not yours. I slept around.

GEORGE. Roz, have you come to your senses? You could step right back into the company.

ROZ. No thank you. That's not why I'm here. I have a surprise for everybody, but I lost it.

GEORGE. *(Calling through the door.)* Paul, get in here! Look who's arrived!

ROZ. Daddy! God. Don't you two ever stop? ...Look, I'll see you later, I've got to go.

GEORGE. Roz—

(ROZ exits and PAUL enters.)

PAUL. ...She's gone?

GEORGE. She heard your name and fled into the Forest of Arden. You do have a way with women, Paul.

PAUL. Thanks.

CHARLOTTE. And how is Little Miss Eileen?

PAUL. She wouldn't open the door for me either. I wonder what happened.

CHARLOTTE. She's in love with George.

GEORGE. Charlotte, would you keep your menopausal hallucinations to yourself. The girl is obviously in some distress.

PAUL. I'll go try again.

GEORGE. Yes, do. You are the Company Manager.

PAUL. I'm also your second lead this week.

GEORGE. I beg your pardon?

PAUL. Webster quit this morning. He packed his bags and left.

GEORGE. He can't do that! I'll sue the untalented little weasel!

CHARLOTTE. Why on earth would he just leave?

PAUL. Because he wasn't paid for two weeks.

GEORGE. Well none of us has been paid for two weeks! What kind of feeble excuse is that?!

CHARLOTTE. Nobody told me about this.

GEORGE. Well Paul just told you, didn't he, the big blabbermouth.

PAUL. Sorry. By the way, have you talked to your agent this morning? He called twice.

GEORGE. I have an agent? Surely you jest. Didn't you read about it in *Scientific American*? The day my checks went down to four digits, he vanished from the face of the earth.

(PAUL exits.)

CHARLOTTE. (*Gently.*) George... Talk to me. Are we in trouble?

GEORGE. Oh, we'll make it. We'll survive. We always do. It's television that's killing us. Entertainment by the yard. It's putting us out of business.

CHARLOTTE. George—

GEORGE. What's the matter with these people? Don't they care anymore? Don't they know the difference?

(*There's a knock on the street door.*)

I'm not here. You haven't seen me.

CHARLOTTE. George—!

GEORGE. If it's a native Buffalonian, offer it water and some long grass, maybe it'll go away.

(GEORGE exits. *Knock knock knock.*)

CHARLOTTE. I'm coming!

(**CHARLOTTE** opens the door and **HOWARD** is there.)

Yes?

HOWARD. Hi.

CHARLOTTE. (*Annoyed.*) What do you want?

HOWARD. I-I-I just want to tell you before you say anything else, that I think you're the most wonderful actress that ever lived!

CHARLOTTE. (*Suddenly the soul of graciousness.*) ...Please, come in. I'm Charlotte Hay.

HOWARD. (*Extending his hand.*) Hi. I'm... I'm uh... I'm uh... (*He turns white; his worst nightmare is happening; he's forgotten his name.*) Oh my God!

(**HOWARD** buries his face in his hands—as **RICHARD MAYNARD** enters through the open street door. Good looking, quite lovable, fifties, in a conservative suit and tie.)

RICHARD. Knock knock.

CHARLOTTE. Richard!

(**CHARLOTTE** runs to **RICHARD** and embraces him.)

RICHARD. Hello, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE. What a wonderful surprise!

RICHARD. (*To HOWARD, who has looked up.*) How do you do. Richard Maynard. You are...?

CHARLOTTE. I wouldn't ask him that. Apparently it's a trick question.

HOWARD. Are you famous, too?!

RICHARD. No, but apparently I remind some people of Loretta Young.

CHARLOTTE. Mr. Maynard is our lawyer and represents every major star in Hollywood.

HOWARD. Wow.

RICHARD. Who's your favorite? Besides Charlotte, of course?

HOWARD. Esther Williams. Do you know her?

RICHARD. (*Nods.*) I taught her to swim.

HOWARD. Wow!

CHARLOTTE. I'm awfully sorry, but do you think you could possibly come back another time?

HOWARD. Oh. Sure...

CHARLOTTE. (*Helping him out the door.*) It was stunning meeting you. Whoever you are.

HOWARD. (*As the door closes in his face.*) Wait! I remember! It's How—

(*The door is closed.*)

CHARLOTTE. Richard, what are you doing here?

RICHARD. Well, I was sitting in my office this morning, making a great deal of money, and I suddenly realized that I was terribly bored. So I thought, what can I do to cheer myself up. Well, I considered raising my billing rate, that usually works, but then I thought no, I would much rather take Charlotte to lunch.

CHARLOTTE. So you flew here all the way from New York City?

RICHARD. (*Nods.*) I was in a plane, of course.

CHARLOTTE. (*Hugging him.*) Oh, Richard, you're such a darling. I accept. In fact, I could use some cheering up myself.

RICHARD. What has the brute done this time?

CHARLOTTE. I'm not sure. Maybe it's nothing. Maybe I'm just tired.

RICHARD. Well of course you're tired! It's inhuman the way he drags you around from one city to another.

CHARLOTTE. On top of everything else, I just found out that we're not meeting our payroll.

RICHARD. Oh, I know that.

CHARLOTTE. You do?

RICHARD. It's quite serious. I've told George for months to start cutting down expenses.

CHARLOTTE. Is there anything *I* can do?

RICHARD. Well, you could do a movie. Or better yet, some television.

CHARLOTTE. We could try a different play. *Pygmalion* always makes money...

RICHARD. Charlotte. Halloo in there. It's 1953. The road is dead. The only stars left touring anymore, besides you two, are Cornell and the Lunts, and they have a combined age of one thousand four hundred and sixty-two.

CHARLOTTE. Well what am I supposed to do?!

RICHARD. Well, for starters, you can marry me. I've got tons of money and no one to spend it on. Except a cat with a thyroid problem. He's getting very large. I had some friends in last night, they thought I'd bought a new sofa.

CHARLOTTE. Would you be serious.

RICHARD. I'm being serious. I'll have to move out soon.

CHARLOTTE. Richard—!

RICHARD. (*Suddenly very serious.*) Charlotte, listen to me. I'm not very good at this. I cannot lie the way most men do and tell you that your cheeks remind me of damask. I don't know what the hell damask is. But you really do deserve better than this. Let me pamper you a little. We can take a cruise together. Anywhere you want in the entire world. Rochester. Schenectady...

(CHARLOTTE *laughs.*)

CHARLOTTE. Oh, Richard, you make me very happy.

RICHARD. Good. You deserve it. And frankly, so do I. I'm tired of living alone.

CHARLOTTE. What about George?

RICHARD. No, I don't want to live with him.

CHARLOTTE. (*Laughing.*) Richard—

RICHARD. Oh I do love you so much. You're all I think about anymore.

CHARLOTTE. Richard...

RICHARD. Charlotte...

(RICHARD is about to kiss CHARLOTTE, when we hear PAUL's urgent voice.)

PAUL. *(Off.)* George!! George!!

(RICHARD and CHARLOTTE move guiltily apart, as PAUL hurries in.)

PAUL. Oh, hi. Hi.

RICHARD. How do you do. Richard Maynard, lawyer to the stars.

PAUL. Paul Singer, schlepper for two stars. Where's George?

CHARLOTTE. In his dressing room, I think.

PAUL. *(Worried.)* He's not there.

CHARLOTTE. Is something the matter?

PAUL. No! No...

CHARLOTTE. Paul...

PAUL. There's nothing the matter! I... I have a question.
For George.

(CHARLOTTE stares right through him, but decides to leave it.)

CHARLOTTE. When you find him, tell him I'll be out for the morning. Richard is taking me to lunch.

PAUL. Right. Have a nice time.

RICHARD. We intend to. Thank you.

(CHARLOTTE and RICHARD exit to the street. PAUL breathes a sigh of relief. At this moment, ETHEL enters from above carrying a pair of trousers and hurries down the stairs.)

PAUL. Ethel, have you seen George? *(She doesn't hear him.)*

ETHEL!

ETHEL. WHAT?!

PAUL. WHERE'S GEORGE?

ETHEL. He's right behind me!

(**ETHEL** hurries across the room—as **GEORGE** enters from above in hot pursuit.)

GEORGE. Stop! Give me those Cyrano pants!

ETHEL. No. I have to let them out!

PAUL. George—

ETHEL. They are far too snug, you look ridiculous!

GEORGE. They're my pants!

ETHEL. Your backside looks like a watermelon!

GEORGE. Nobody asked you!

(**GEORGE** grabs the pants and they struggle over them.)

PAUL. George—!

ETHEL. They need fixing!

GEORGE. Your ears need fixing!

(*RRRRRIP! They rip down the middle, at the crotch. **GEORGE** and **ETHEL** are each left with a leg.*)

ETHEL. Now look what you've done. (*She takes **GEORGE**'s leg and heads for the door.*) No wonder this company is going down the toilet.

(**ETHEL** exits. **GEORGE** screams with frustration.)

PAUL. George, I have some bad news.

GEORGE. What? Bad news in this company? The House of Usher Repertory Theatre?

PAUL. I think you better sit down.

GEORGE. "Sit down?" Because I'll tremble? My knees will wobble uncontrollably? That is a stage convention, you idiot, out of the cheapest melodrama!

PAUL. George, Eileen is pregnant.

(*Beat. **GEORGE**'s knees start to wobble, and he sits down.*)

GEORGE. Oh my God.

PAUL. She says you slept together in Detroit and now she's pregnant.

GEORGE. That's a lie!

PAUL. You didn't sleep with her?

GEORGE. ...It was Cincinnati.

PAUL. I think that's irrelevant.

GEORGE. Holy Mother of God. Charlotte will kill me.

PAUL. I know.

GEORGE. She'll make my life a living hell! *More than usual!*
(*He holds his head and groans.*) What can I do?

PAUL. ...Run?

GEORGE. Think of something, you idiot! That's what you're paid for!

PAUL. All right, all right. Let me think... (*He makes it up as he goes along:*) Okay. Now listen. ...Eileen could have the baby...in the country. With a relative, like an aunt or something. And we won't tell Charlotte, ever! And... you could take trips every few months and...and visit them in the country, and have picnics! And *then*, when the baby is like...ten years old, you could cast her as the Page in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and you could put on shows together!

GEORGE. ...*I need help, not Mickey Rooney!*

PAUL. Sorry. Look maybe you should talk to Eileen.

GEORGE. Eileen. Oh my God. The poor kid. I'd better go see her.

PAUL. You'll have to hurry. She has a doctor's appointment at noon.

GEORGE. Already?

PAUL. They have to do a test or something.

GEORGE. ...What test?

(*The following section goes rapidly.*)

PAUL. I don't know.

GEORGE. A pregnancy test?

PAUL. I have no idea.

GEORGE. So she might not be pregnant?

PAUL. She says she's positive.

GEORGE. But she only *thinks* she's pregnant?

PAUL. She's positive. She thinks.

GEORGE. (*Shaking PAUL.*) *Christ Almighty, is she pregnant or isn't she?*

PAUL. *I don't know, George, I didn't examine her!*

(*CHARLOTTE suddenly enters from the street—
and the two men instantly assume a pose of studied
nonchalance and freeze.*)

CHARLOTTE. It's chilly out there. I'm getting a wrap and then I'll be back around one.

GEORGE. Good. Great.

CHARLOTTE. By the way. Richard is here. He's taking me to lunch.

GEORGE. Bon appetit.

(*CHARLOTTE exits to the dressing rooms,
slamming the door behind her.*)

Oh my God. What if Eileen talks to her?

PAUL. I doubt that.

GEORGE. Go in there and keep them separated. I have to think.

PAUL. She's going to find out sooner or later—

GEORGE. *WOULD YOU DO WHAT I'M TELLING YOU!*

(*PAUL exits. GEORGE is alone.*)

Damn damn damn. Piss piss piss. Balls balls balls.

(*EILEEN enters down the stairs. She's clearly been
crying and is still on the verge of tears, but she tries
very hard to smile through it.*)

EILEEN. Hi, George.

GEORGE. Eileen!

EILEEN. I guess Paul told you.

GEORGE. He did. Yes. Eileen. What can I say? What can I do?

EILEEN. I think you did it already, George.

GEORGE. Eileen, I'm so sorry. We got carried away.

EILEEN. I was such a fool!

GEORGE. We were both fools.

EILEEN. (*Breaking down.*) And now we're having a little fool! Oh, George...

GEORGE. (*Comforting her—but also afraid of discovery.*) Eileen... Shh...

EILEEN. I hope he looks just like you!

GEORGE. Oh, my God!

EILEEN. I can't do the matinee today. I'm sorry.

GEORGE. But you don't have an understudy.

EILEEN. Well I can't do it! I'd still be at the doctor's anyway.

GEORGE. The doctor's. For a test... (*She nods.*) To confirm that you are...

EILEEN. That's right.

GEORGE. So then you might not actually be...

EILEEN. I'm pregnant, George. Believe me. I'm two weeks late, and I've been tossing my guts up every morning for three days. What do you think it is?

GEORGE. ...Bad oyster?

EILEEN. I'll see you later.

(*EILEEN starts to leave.*)

GEORGE. Eileen. You, uh, didn't tell Charlotte, did you?

EILEEN. I haven't seen her—

GEORGE. Good!

(*GEORGE walks away...*)

EILEEN. So I left her a note.

(*And GEORGE trips.*)

GEORGE. ...What?!

EILEEN. Well she has to know some time! I mean, she's gonna figure it out when I start waddling around here like a duck! "Romeo, Romeo, Quack, quack, quack, quack." Anyway, I scribbled it down on something. I think it was her copy of *Variety*.

GEORGE. *Variety*?

EILEEN. I've got to go now, George.

(EILEEN exits.)

GEORGE. Holy Mother of God.

(PAUL enters.)

PAUL. George, I couldn't find Eileen anywhere—

GEORGE. Paul! Go to Charlotte's room quick, and bring me her copy of *Variety*!

PAUL. George, there's a copy of *Variety* right here.

GEORGE. I don't want to read it, you idiot!!

(CHARLOTTE enters with a copy of *Variety*.)

CHARLOTTE. (All smiles.) Hello, George. Hello, Paul.

PAUL/GEORGE. Hi.

CHARLOTTE. Paul, would you excuse us for a few minutes?

PAUL. Sure.

GEORGE. (To PAUL.) Stay where you are!

CHARLOTTE. Leave the room, Paul.

PAUL. Yes, ma'am.

(PAUL exits at a run.)

CHARLOTTE. (Still smiling.) George, the strangest item has appeared in this week's *Variety*.

GEORGE. Charlotte—

CHARLOTTE. I think you should read it, George. Out loud. You see, I might just be having a menopausal hallucination.

GEORGE. Charlotte—

CHARLOTTE. Read it, dear. Near the top. I'm waiting.

GEORGE. *(Takes the paper; reads.)* ... "Box Office Biggie Boffo in Burbs."

CHARLOTTE. Below that.

GEORGE. "Dear Charlotte. I'm carrying your husband's... piles. Files?"

CHARLOTTE. "Child!" "I'm carrying your husband's CHILD!"

GEORGE. Right. "I thought you should know. Eileen."

(CHARLOTTE takes back the paper.)

CHARLOTTE. Well?

(GEORGE drops to his knees and begs. Meanwhile, CHARLOTTE is rolling up the Variety behind her back.)

GEORGE. Charlotte, I am profoundly sorry! I made a grievous mistake. Can you forgive me?

(GEORGE bows his head.)

CHARLOTTE. No, George! *(She whacks him with the paper.)* I cannot forgive you! *(Whack!)* You betrayed me! *(Whack!)* After thirty-five years!

(Whack whack whack whack!)

GEORGE. Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow!

(At this moment, EILEEN enters from the street and hurries across the room.)

EILEEN. Sorry. I left something upstairs.

(As EILEEN passes, CHARLOTTE whacks her on the rear end, then resumes whacking GEORGE. EILEEN turns back.)

Charlotte, I'm sorry. But you shouldn't blame George. It was all my fault. I guess I shouldn't have believed him when he said that next season *I* could play Roxane.

(Pause. CHARLOTTE turns and looks at GEORGE.)

CHARLOTTE. ...Roxane! ...ROXANE?!!

(And EILEEN exits to the dressing rooms.)

GEORGE. Charlotte, listen. Please. It was right after a performance and I was filled with all that passion for Cyrano. I lost my head.

CHARLOTTE. You lied to me.

GEORGE. I didn't want to! You cornered me!

CHARLOTTE. Don't touch me.

GEORGE. Charlotte, I'm flesh and blood! Did you expect me to be celibate all my life?

CHARLOTTE. Three days! You couldn't be celibate for *three days*?!

(CHARLOTTE starts hitting GEORGE again, and he wrestles her down onto the chaise.)

GEORGE. Stop it...stop it...would you please... *(She's down on her back and he's standing over her.)* All right?! Now will you stop it?!

(Beat. Then she kicks him hard in the groin. He gasps with pain. Then she stands up, straightens her dress and heads for the door to her dressing room.)

CHARLOTTE. I'm leaving with Richard on the next plane.

GEORGE. Wait! *(She pauses.)* We have a matinee.

CHARLOTTE. *(The last straw.)* ...Good-bye, George. I have to pack.

GEORGE. Charlotte!...

(CHARLOTTE exits, slamming the door, and PAUL enters from backstage.)

PAUL. Well? How'd it go?

(GEORGE looks at him.)

Not well.

(GEORGE sits.)

George? *(No response.)* George, would you say something?

GEORGE. (*With great bitterness.*) I'm a hack. I was always a hack and now I'm a bigger hack. I have sunk to new depths of hackdom.

PAUL. George, come on. You can't give up. What about all your fans?

GEORGE. My fans? (*He laughs.*) Fine. I'll call one, you call the other.

PAUL. George, you made a mistake. Everybody makes mistakes. Let me talk to her. She'll listen to me.

GEORGE. It's too late, Horatio. Just cancel the performance for this afternoon. In fact, cancel the whole tour.

PAUL. You can't do that. You'll get sued.

GEORGE. Let the bastards sue me! Let them nail me to a cross! God knows I've suffered enough.

(The phone rings, and PAUL grabs it.)

PAUL. Hello?! (*Covering the receiver, to GEORGE.*) It's your agent, from New York.

GEORGE. I'm not here.

PAUL. (*Into the phone.*) He's right here. (*To GEORGE.*) Would you talk to him!

(GEORGE snatches the phone.)

GEORGE. Hello, Henry. How's the blood-sucking business? ...Well it must be important. It's almost noon and you're up for the day... All right, I'm listening! ...Well of course I know they started filming yesterday. I have a little Ronald Colman doll that I'm sticking pins into... What? ...You're joking.

(The tone of the conversation changes completely now; something incredibly wonderful has happened and GEORGE becomes increasingly euphoric.)

...What? ...Henry, if this is a joke, I'll kill you. ...Oh, my God! *I don't believe it!*

PAUL. What happened?

GEORGE. (*To PAUL.*) Shh. (*Into the phone.*) ...Oh, my God, that's wonderful! Henry, I love you!

PAUL. George, what happened—?

GEORGE. Would you shut up! (*Into the phone.*) ...Today?
...Yes, of course I'll be here... Right. I'll call you.

(GEORGE hangs up.)

PAUL. Well?

GEORGE. (*Beside himself with excitement.*) We're back in business. (*Calling through the door.*) Charlotte, get in here!

PAUL. What did he say?

GEORGE. You are looking at a star, my boy. Gaze your fill and disregard the radiance. Squint if necessary. Charlotte!

PAUL. What happened?!!

GEORGE. Yesterday, on the set of *The Twilight of The Scarlet Pimpernel* Ronald Colman made his first entrance...and fell down a flight of stairs and broke his legs.

PAUL. Oh my God...

GEORGE. As a consequence, the director of the film, Frank Capra, winner of two thousand Academy Awards, Mr. Hollywood himself, is flying here to watch the matinee.

PAUL. Frank Capra...?

GEORGE. Ha haaaa!

(CHARLOTTE enters, carrying a suitcase, and heads straight for the street door.)

CHARLOTTE. Good-bye, George.

GEORGE. (*Intercepting her.*) Yes yes yes. I'm sorry.

CHARLOTTE. George—!

GEORGE. Now listen. The most wonderful thing in the world has happened: Ronald Colman is crippled!

CHARLOTTE. What?

GEORGE. Henry just called. It seems that Mister Colman made a most dramatic entrance yesterday on the set of *The Scarlet Pimpernel* by careening head first down a flight of steps. (*With great relish.*) I'll bet it was the tights that got him...

CHARLOTTE. George—

GEORGE. There are fractures, apparently, in both of his legs. Not one. *Both!*

CHARLOTTE. Henry told you this.

GEORGE. The studio is desperate! Every minute they delay is costing a fortune. So: what director do you think is on a plane this very second heading for Buffalo, New York? I'll give you a hint. (*Cheerleading.*) Give me a C. C! Give me an A. A! Give me a P. P!

CHARLOTTE. George—

GEORGE. I know what you're thinking, Charlotte. Where do you fit into all this. Well, if I do get the role, and it's beginning to look extremely likely, I will insist that you play Marguerite.

CHARLOTTE. I don't know what to say, George.

GEORGE. (*Bows his head.*) I know. I'm a saint.

CHARLOTTE. Except this is easily the most ridiculous lie you have ever told me.

GEORGE. ...What?

CHARLOTTE. Good-bye, George. Take care of yourself.

(**CHARLOTTE** picks up her suitcase and starts to exit.)

GEORGE & PAUL. STOP!/ WAIT!

GEORGE. (*Incredulous.*) You don't believe me?

CHARLOTTE. Oh, George, please—

GEORGE. Wait! Charlotte, believe me. You *must* believe me. Have I ever lied to you before?

(**CHARLOTTE** staggers—then exits.)

CHARLOTTE. Good-bye, George.

(**GEORGE** runs after her.)

GEORGE. (*Off.*) Charlotte! Charlotte, please!

CHARLOTTE. (*Off.*) I said good-bye!!!

(*We hear a crash, off. CHARLOTTE has hit GEORGE with the suitcase.*)

GEORGE. (*Off.*) OOOWWW!!!

FINISH READING THIS SCRIPT

Visit our website to purchase the full script or to explore other titles.

www.samuelfrench.com

www.samuelfrench.co.uk

To stay up to date on all that we are doing, follow us on social media:



*Titles for licensing are subject to availability depending on your territory.