SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

This sample is an excerpt - an appetiser, if you will - from a full Samuel French title.

This sample is just for you to try out, and it can't be used for performance, downloaded, printed or distributed in any way.

Take it for a whirl and see if it tickles your fancy!

For more information about licensing this or other shows, or to browse thousands more plays and theatre books to buy please visit our website.

www.samuelfrench.co.uk
or, in the US www.samuelfrench.com

SF PERUSALS

Wait Until Dark

A Play

Frederick Knott

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

SAMUELFRENCH-LONDON.CO.UK
SAMUELFRENCH.COM

Copyright © 1964, 1966 by Frederick Knott as an unpublished dramatic composition
Copyright © 1967 by Frederick Knott and Ann M Knott, as trustee
All Rights Reserved

WAIT UNTIL DARK is fully protected under the copyright laws of the British Commonwealth, including Canada, the United States of America, 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 978-0-573-01050-7

www.samuelfrench-london.co.uk

www.samuelfrench.com

FOR AMATEUR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

UNITED KINGDOM AND WORLD
EXCLUDING NORTH AMERICA
plays@SamuelFrench-London.co.uk
020 7255 4302/01

Each title is subject to availability from Samuel French, depending upon country of performance.

CAUTION: Professional and amateur producers are hereby warned that *WAIT UNTIL DARK* is subject to a licensing fee. Publication of this play does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised to apply to the appropriate agent before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre. A licensing fee must be paid whether the title is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

The professional rights in this play are controlled by International Creative Management, 52 Fitzroy Street, London, W1T 5JR.

No one shall make any changes in this title 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, or part of this title, to any social media websites.

The right of Frederick Knott to be identified as author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with Section 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

WAIT UNTIL DARK

First produced by Peter Bridge at the Strand Theatre, London, on the 27th July 1966, with the following cast of characters:

(*in order of their appearance*)

MIKE	Brian Murray
CROKER	Brian Phelan
ROAT	Peter Sallis
SUSY HENDERSON	Honor Blackman
SAM HENDERSON	Michael Griffiths
GLORIA	Sarah Long
FIRST POLICEMAN	Bernard High
SECOND POLICEMAN	Kenneth Hendel

The play directed by ANTHONY SHARP
Setting by GEORGE JENKINS

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action of the play takes place in a basement flat in Notting Hill Gate

ACT ONE

SCENE 1 A Friday evening in September
SCENE 2 Saturday afternoon

ACT TWO

SCENE 1 Twenty minutes later
SCENE 2 About an hour later

ACT THREE

SCENE 1 Immediately following
SCENE 2 A few minutes later
SCENE 3 A minute later

Time—the present

ACT I

SCENE 1

SCENE—*A basement flat in an old house in Notting Hill Gate. Friday evening.*

The general appearance of the room is masculine and practical. The furniture is mostly inexpensive second-hand stuff, bought and repainted by Sam. There are two windows in the L *wall. They are high up and have bars outside. Inside are Venetian blinds, and there is a complete blackout arrangement which can cover both windows, for instance when Sam wants to use this whole room as his darkroom. Underneath the windows are the sink, kitchen cabinets and cupboards. In the corner up* L *is an old refrigerator, down* L *an old washer-drier. Above the latter is an illuminated clock of a type which Susy can feel. Sam's photographer's bench is up* C, *with the usual equipment. A short flight of stairs up* R *leads to a landing in which is the hall door, the only entrance to the flat. This door leads to a street-level passage which in turn leads to the front door* L *and to the back door* R. *There is a cupboard under the stairs. A fuse-box unit, containing two separate boxes, is in the wall above the* R *end of the photographer's bench. down* R *a door leads to the bedroom and bathroom. Below this door is a steel safe which is camouflaged by a curtain or other façade so as to make it look more like a chest. Over the safe is a mirror. A sofa is* RC *with two small tables below it and one* L *of it. There is also a circular kitchen-type table with formica top, and two chairs* LC.

When the CURTAIN *rises, the room is dark except for a light coming through the Venetian blinds, which are open, and from the passage, under the hall door. The refrigerator is humming loudly. For several seconds there is complete silence otherwise, then the back door opens and closes quietly off* R. *A few moments later there are two soft knocks on the hall door.* MIKE *enters. He immediately closes the door and looks round the room, suspecting that someone may already be there.*

MIKE (*very quietly*) Hullo?

(*After listening a moment* MIKE *comes down the stairs. The refrigerator noise cuts out.* MIKE *turns abruptly, then he continues downstairs to the bedroom door and knocks quietly. No reply. He turns the handle cautiously and disappears into the bedroom. We hear him off, as he opens the bathroom door and switches light on and off and rattles a cupboard door. Then we hear him open and then close the bedroom curtains. At the same time, while* MIKE *is in the bedroom, we hear the back door open and close, but with more noise this time. Then the hall doorbell rings once. The bedroom door closes quickly and a key is turned in the lock. The hall door opens and* CROKER *enters. He stands for a moment framed in the open doorway and*

listens. Then he examines the spring lock, pushing the tongue in and out. He clips the catch to lock it and closes door. He comes down to the foot of the stairs. He switches on the light, by the bedroom door, and looks quickly around the room. Noticing the Venetian blinds are open, he switches off the light. He is about to try the bedroom door, but, on second thoughts, he takes out his "brass knuckles" from his right pocket and puts them on, then he turns the handle and rattles it. Finding it locked, he crosses L *and pulls the cords of the Venetian blinds so they are closed over both windows. While he is doing this* MIKE *unlocks the bedroom door and enters quietly.* CROKER *hears this and turns sharply. Then suddenly panicking, he rushes for the stairs, snatching up the chair above the table as he goes. He is about to throw it at* MIKE *as he passes.*)

(*sharply*) Hold it! (*Gently*) Hold it—hold it . . .

(CROKER *recognizes him and* MIKE *takes the chair out of his hands*)

CROKER. *You!*

(CROKER *switches on lights by bedroom door.* MIKE *looks him up and down and replaces the chair above the table*)

MIKE (*moving up* C) I've been looking for you everywhere. Been out three months. Well, you've put on a bit of weight inside.

CROKER. This your place?

MIKE. *My* place!

CROKER. When did you move in *here*?

(*As* CROKER *obviously believes it,* MIKE *decides to kid him along*)

MIKE. I—er—about a month ago.

CROKER (*moving up* C) Photography! Where did you learn all this?

MIKE. In the Scrubs.

CROKER. Turn it up.

MIKE. Rehabilitation—it's the new thing for first offenders.

CROKER (*examining the enlarger*) What do you do? Cheesecake? Pin-ups?

MIKE. And all that.

CROKER. And all that! I always wanted to be a photographer. How much do you make?

MIKE. I do all right.

CROKER (*moving down* L) You always had the luck.

MIKE. Didn't they teach you a trade inside?

CROKER. But of course. L and L four hours a day.

(CROKER *picks Susy's apron off the top of a basket on the washing machine and holds it out for inspection*)

MIKE. L and L . . .?

CROKER. Laundry and latrines . . . I'm the new Mr Clean. (*He drapes apron around his stomach*) Here, you haven't got yourself hitched, have you?

MIKE. No! She just comes in to—

CROKER. To what?

MIKE.—to oblige, as we used to say.

(CROKER *lifts Susy's nightgown out of the basket*)

CROKER. We still say! (*He drops nightgown back and looks straight at Mike as if there is some rivalry between them*) *Lisa?*

MIKE. Lisa! (*With a wry laugh*) In a dump like this?

CROKER. Seen her yet?

MIKE. Not a trace.

CROKER. But you *have* looked.

MIKE. You bet I've looked! She owes me seven hundred quid.

CROKER. She owes me seven-fifty. Promised she'd double it for me by the time I got out. Instead she disappears into the great blue yonder. *I'll kill her!*

MIKE. You couldn't kill anybody. Least of all Lisa.

CROKER (*looking around the room*) So, where's the action?

MIKE. What action?

CROKER (*impatiently*) Like you said in your message. "If you want a quick and easy two hundred and fifty . . ." So—that's what I want.

MIKE. "If you want a quick and easy two-fifty, come to twenty-seven, Tennyson Gardens, Notting Hill Gate, basement flat, at nine exactly—door's open . . ."

CROKER. Only next time phone me yourself. If you'd popped out of there a second sooner you'd have caught this in your teeth.

(CROKER *shows Mike his brass knuckles, but* MIKE *only looks back at him and waits for the penny to drop*)

You *did* send that message? No? *You* got the *same* message?

MIKE. Just like that. Then he hung up.

CROKER. Who hung up?

MIKE. Search me. Thought it must be from you.

CROKER (*moving up* C *and pointing angrily at Sam's equipment*) And all this? Go on then—say it! This isn't your place. And you're flat broke! You—you're not even a pornographer! You disgust me!

(CROKER *moves to the safe down* R *and opens the front of the façade*)

MIKE. I'm worse than broke. I owe a packet to a loan shark at sixty per cent and I'm a month behind with the payments. (*He moves* L *of the stairs*)

CROKER (*with some relish*) Oooo! That's bad!

MIKE. And if I don't come up with some "juice" by Monday they're taking me to the dentist.

CROKER (*moving up* C) No use looking at me. I haven't eaten since I came out. (*He picks up a camera from Sam's bench*) How much for this?

MIKE. Cameras! You can't give 'em away . . . So who lives here?

CROKER (*opening the refrigerator*) Give me a few minutes—I'll find something. (*He takes out some ham*) Now what have we here? Ham—cheese . . . (*He looks in the freezer*)

MIKE. Leave that alone.

(CROKER *discovers a five-pound note at the back of the freezer*)

CROKER. Ay-ay! This photographer's dead crafty! Keeps a fiver behind the fish fingers.

MIKE. Well, leave it there.

(CROKER *stuffs the note into his pocket, takes two slices of bread from the bin, and starts to search for the mustard, opening several cabinets*)

Then who does live here?

CROKER. Does whoever it is go in for mustard in those toothpaste tubes, that's what I want to know.

MIKE. And who did send that message?

CROKER. Strange how you degenerate as soon as you're free. In stir I can guzzle any slop they dish out. And now if I can't have mustard I get the shakes!

MIKE. What did he sound like?

(CROKER *finds the mustard and starts to spread it on his ham, taking a knife from the draining board*)

CROKER. I've got it. I've got it! (*Without a care*) What did who sound like?

MIKE. The joker who phoned.

CROKER. Some kind of foreigner. Five to one the accent was put on.

MIKE. Where were you when he phoned?

CROKER (*finishing making his sandwich*) My usual place—and you?

MIKE. My usual place.

CROKER. So?

MIKE. So?

CROKER (*suddenly serious*) Lisa?

MIKE. It's got to be Lisa. Who else knows where to find us?

(*They drop their voices instinctively and are suddenly alert and tense.* CROKER *points to the bedroom*)

CROKER (*moving quickly* R) What's through there? (*He runs into the bedroom and out again*)

MIKE. Bedroom and bathroom.

CROKER. Another entrance?

MIKE. No. Bars on all the windows just like these.

CROKER. I wonder if this place is bugged! (*Calling sharply*) *Lisa!*

MIKE. Sh-shut up!

CROKER (*calling*) Come out, come out wherever you are!

(*A long pause as though they really expected a reply.* CROKER *picks up*

his sandwich and starts to take an enormous bite when there are three knocks on the hall door. MIKE *and* CROKER *both freeze, turn to the door and then to each other*)

MIKE. Who is it?

(*No reply.* CROKER *suddenly panics.* MIKE *snaps his fingers and points to the door.* CROKER *tiptoes upstairs and gets behind the door, putting on his knuckle-duster. Two more knocks.* CROKER *unlocks door.* ROAT *opens door and peers in. He holds over one arm a dilapidated piece of carpet—about six feet long—and has an airline bag in one hand. His face is dirty*)

ROAT (*to Mike; politely*) Good evening, Mr Trenton.

MIKE. You've got the wrong place . . .

ROAT. Oh, have I? Then could I be interesting you in a rug for your study? I'd be giving this away at two pounds, but for you, sir . . .

MIKE. No rugs, thank you.

ROAT. Then if I may just deliver my message . . .

MIKE. Who from?

ROAT. From the party who phoned you not half an hour ago.

MIKE. Then why the hell didn't you say so?

ROAT. Thank you, Mr Trenton.

MIKE (*moving down* LC) That's not my name.

(*As* ROAT *enters he deliberately bangs the door back against Croker and then closes it.* CROKER'S *hand goes to his nose.* ROAT *speaks to Croker without looking at him, but as if he knew he was there all the time*)

ROAT (*moving downstairs to* C) Oh, I beg your pardon—I had no idea you were there.

(CROKER *follows Roat on his* R, *dabbing his nose with his handkerchief.* ROAT *spreads the piece of carpet down* C)

Now, I'll be candid and honest with you, gentlemen. Strictly speaking, this is not my carpet. I discovered it in a pile of junk on that demolition site at the back of here. And seeing as it's a little damp and a bit cheesy—five bob and I'll be on my way.

CROKER. Let's have the message—and then take that stinking thing out of here!

MIKE. Where's Lisa?

ROAT. I beg your pardon, Mr Trenton.

MIKE. Let's get this straight, Charlie. My name is not Trenton! And I've never heard of such a person.

ROAT. But it's a grand name, don't you think? *Good old Mike Trenton!* Don't you think it suits him fine—(*Turning*)—*Sergeant Croker?*

CROKER. Sergeant—who?

ROAT. And *you* will be Detective-Sergeant Croker.

CROKER (*after a pause*) Come on, who the hell are you?

ROAT. I am Harry Roat from St Albans.

(CROKER *and* MIKE *glance at each other, mystified*)

CROKER. Okay, Mister Roat from St Albans—the message and *out*!
MIKE. Who sent you here?

(*As* ROAT *talks on he wipes his face clean at the mirror down* R, *then lights a cigarette from a gold case and lets the ash grow long and later takes from his zip bag an empty baby-food jar with a screw top which he carefully uses as an ashtray, placing it on the coffee table.* MIKE *and* CROKER *stand listening, occasionally throwing each other a glance. Later, as they talk,* ROAT *paces up and down* C, *paying no attention to the other two, but taking in every detail of the room.* MIKE *and* CROKER *move around him like chessmen, always keeping him in between them and with one of them always blocking him from the stairs*)

ROAT. The message, children, is that once upon a time there were two *small* confidence men. I believe they've just come out of jail, poor fellows. (*Looking at Mike*) One of them was tall and rugged and he'd drop in on a housewife when she was alone and pretend to be an old friend of her husband's. The other—(*Turning to Croker*)—would turn up a little later as a C.I.D. man. But the real brains of the outfit was a beautiful and talented girl. She could be young or old, French, Italian, Stockton-on-Tees . . .
MIKE. Where is Lisa?
ROAT (*sitting on the sofa*) Both men fell for her and would make little passes when the other wasn't looking—(*Laughing*)—with a quite pathetic lack of success. Finally she got bored with them—made an anonymous phone call to the police and then disappeared, taking their loot with her. As they say, there's no one quite so gullible as a con man in love.
CROKER. Who sent you here? And who are you?

(*No reply. Amused and pleased by their curiosity,* ROAT *simply looks from one to the other*)

MIKE. If Lisa told you all that, why isn't she here?
CROKER. Where is she?

(*No reply*)

MIKE. Are you working for Lisa—or is she working for you?
ROAT (*after a pause*) We are now all working for Lisa.

(*A pause.* CROKER *turns to Mike, encouraged and hopeful*)

CROKER. You said on the phone—a quick and easy two-fifty.
ROAT. That is correct.
MIKE (*moving* L *of the table*) Plus what Lisa already owes us. Seven-fifty each.
ROAT. You shall have it.
CROKER. When?

ROAT. Tomorrow night. *If* we succeed. If we fail—nothing.

MIKE. Why didn't Lisa come here herself?

ROAT. Perhaps she was a little shy of meeting you again before she could give you your money.

MIKE. Then when *do* we see her?

ROAT. Tomorrow night—with the merchandise. Well?

CROKER. Look—we don't even talk till we get fifty each . . .

ROAT (*surprised*) Lisa told me to give you a hundred each and the balance on delivery. Any objections?

(CROKER *puts out his hand for the money*)

But first—may we have weapons on the table?

CROKER (*innocently*) Search me. I'm clean.

ROAT. Your brass knuckles?

CROKER. What brass knuckles?

ROAT. In your right pocket . . . I cannot negotiate in an atmosphere of mistrust . . .

(CROKER *moves* R *of the table and drops his brass knuckles on it*)

And your little razor-blade, Mr Trenton.

(MIKE *takes out a one-edged safety-razor blade—wrapped in cardboard—and drops it on the table*)

CROKER. And how do you protect yourself?

(ROAT *takes from his pocket a thin ivory statue of a girl. It is about five inches long and could be a small flashlight*)

ROAT. Geraldine protects me. (*Rising*) Isn't she beautiful?

CROKER. What does she do?

ROAT. This! (*He presses it and a thin switchblade springs out*)

(CROKER *moves upstage*)

MIKE (*calmly*) Then may we have Geraldine on the table, too?

ROAT (*moving above the table*) We may not. (*The blade disappears and he returns the knife to his pocket and also the razor blade and knuckle-duster*)

CROKER. Why the hell not?

ROAT. Because she is the referee.

(ROAT *hands them each a wad of money.* CROKER *counts his greedily and examines each note, but* MIKE, *playing hard to get, tosses his back on to the table*)

MIKE. Not yet, Mr Roat—what's the merchandise?

ROAT. A child's doll.

MIKE. A doll?

ROAT. A musical doll. It was in Lisa's possession a few days ago in Amsterdam. (*After a pause; slowly*) But she now believes it is somewhere in this flat.

MIKE (*sitting* L *of the table*) How did it get here?

(CROKER *sits on the* R *arm of the sofa*)

ROAT. Lisa got into conversation at Amsterdam Airport with a very nice photographer named Sam Henderson and she asked him if he would take this doll to her little girl who was in Great Ormond Street Hospital. (*He sits above the table*) And he was most sympathetic. But before he had time to deliver it Lisa arrived at this flat herself and asked for it. And then, much to her surprise—he just couldn't find it.

(MIKE *picks up his roll of notes from the table and pockets them*)

CROKER. What do you mean—he couldn't find it?

ROAT. He couldn't find it. Lisa watched him search both these rooms and finally—pretending it was of no importance—she left. That was last night.

MIKE. How big is this doll?

(ROAT *measures twenty inches*)

(*Impatiently*) How heavy?

ROAT. Just under two pounds.

MIKE (*to Croker*) Allow eight ounces for the music box . . .

CROKER. That's a lot of "horse"!

MIKE (*to Roat*) Is this the real stuff? *Pure* heroin?

ROAT. Nothing has ever been so pure.

CROKER. That'll be worth twenty thousand. Do you push it yourself?

ROAT. Now, children! Let's not get too greedy—let's find the doll first, shall we?

MIKE. So Lisa sent *you* here to find it. Why does she need us?

ROAT. This morning Lisa phoned this number—(*Pointing to the phone*)—and said she was an Italian actress named Liciana, and she made an appointment to have some portraits taken by Mr Henderson at his studio tonight. Mr and Mrs Henderson left this house just before seven. They walked to a cinema, where he left his wife and then he went on to his studio, where he is still waiting . . .

CROKER (*interrupting*) Now hold it! (*To Mike*) Are you getting any of this?

MIKE (*impatiently*) Of course. Just pay attention.

CROKER. Well, I'm lost.

MIKE. Then listen!

CROKER. Look—Mr Roat. Just give it to me like Listen with Mother. Lisa wants to get them out of here so that she can come in and really go through this place. Right?

ROAT (*picking up the phone and starting to dial*) That is correct.

CROKER. So we've got the wife at the flicks and the photographer at his studio waiting for some Italian bint who doesn't even exist. How long is he going to wait?

ROAT. Perhaps we had better reassure him—if you'll excuse me. (*Into the phone*) Hello? Mr Sam Henderson? . . . Ah, I am so glad! I am Giano of Giano's restaurant. I have a message from Miss Liciana. She is so very sorry to be late . . . No, wait, *please*. She is on her way to you now. I put her in a taxi two minutes ago . . . (*In Italian, very fast*) *Il taxi per la Signorina Liciana subito* . . . (*In English*) Ah, Mrs Fleming, welcome home! . . . Excuse me, Mr Henderson . . . (*Calling in Italian*) *Il tavalo numero sette per Signor e Signora Fleming!* (*In English*) Mr Henderson? . . . Any minute Miss Liciana will arrive. Be kind and wait for her . . . Thank you, sir. Good-bye. (*He rings off*) That should hold him there a bit longer.

MIKE. So Lisa has been in here already tonight?

ROAT. Yes. And she searched everywhere and still couldn't find it.

CROKER (*rising and moving up* C) So she searched everywhere? How did she open this?

(CROKER *hits the filing cabinet and rattles the handle*)

MIKE (*rising*) And there'a cupboard in the bedroom that's locked, too. I'll open that right away.

(MIKE *starts towards the bedroom*)

ROAT. It's not in the cupboard.

(CROKER *moves down* R)

MIKE. How do you know?

ROAT. Lisa looked. She found the key on the ledge just above it.

CROKER (*throwing back the façade to reveal the safe*) And this? (*He moves up* RC)

(MIKE *goes* R *to the safe and examines it*)

MIKE (*to Roat*) Well? Does Lisa know about this safe?

ROAT. She does—and that's why you're here.

(CROKER *and* MIKE *exchange looks*)

CROKER. Well—this is a bit out of our line, but—Okay, we'll make the photographer open it when he gets back here. But look—we aren't squeamish, Mr Roat—are you?

ROAT. I am. And that is *not* why you're here. Suppose—after some persuasion—he *did* unlock the safe and it *wasn't* there? Then what?

CROKER. He never lost it. It's in that safe—give you five to one.

ROAT. That's a chance Lisa won't take. (*Pointing at the safe*) It may be in there. Or he may have taken it somewhere else. He may *even* have given it to the police. We have to slide into this very gently. Believe me—Lisa didn't call you two in for nothing . . .

MIKE (*impatiently*) What did she say?

ROAT. She said: "Don't let them twist any arms and you're not to

steal anything—let the *wife* find it—and give it to *you*—(*Pointing at* MIKE)—of her own free will."

(CROKER *appears delighted and smacks Mike on the back*)

CROKER. Well—this is like old times. So we *con* 'em out of it! (*To Mike*) Jump to it—find out all you can about this character.

(*As if this is all a matter of fixed routine* MIKE *and* CROKER *go into action. While* CROKER *jumps on to the stool* L *and peeps through Venetian blinds,* MIKE *empties the whole of the waste-paper basket on to the sofa and goes through its contents—crumpled envelopes, Sam's used airline ticket, etc.* ROAT *moves up* RC, *stands quietly and watches them with interest*)

(*To Roat*) What's his name again?

MIKE (*reading off the airline ticket*) Henderson—Sam Henderson—flew to Amsterdam—last Monday. Returned London—yesterday—Thursday.

CROKER (*looking through blinds*) Hullo! Look what I can see—just at the end of the road!

MIKE. What?

CROKER. A phone box!

MIKE (*moving up* C) Might have been made for us! And *two* blinds. Which gives us *nine* signals. (*He puts the waste-paper basket under the table up* C)

(MIKE *and* CROKER *argue terribly fast. We do not need to follow them*)

CROKER. Six.

MIKE. Nine.

CROKER. Up—open and down. Three two's are six.

MIKE. It's three squared, you great clot! (*He moves* C)

ROAT. Now you've left me behind.

CROKER. Just a little system of ours. One of us goes zonk-zonk—(*He flips the blinds open and shut quickly and then jumps off the stool and picks up the phone*)—and then the phone rings. (*He hangs up the phone*) Just leave this to us, Mr Roat.

(MIKE *moves above the table*)

ROAT. Thank you. (*He takes out two small notebooks*) Oh by the way—the *number* of the telephone in that phone box is Park five-two-six-nine.

(MIKE *and* CROKER *glance at each other in amazement.* ROAT *copies the phone number—which is already in one of the notebooks—into the other one and hands them a notebook each*)

Here.

(*Still bewildered,* MIKE *and* CROKER *take them.* ROAT *then points to the phone on the table*)

Now make a note of the number of this telephone.

(MIKE *and* CROKER *write down the number*)

The call-box is of the fourpence-in-the-slot variety. I have ten shillings worth of copper, which should be more than enough for our purpose. And don't forget to press Button A *before* you dial. (*He points to an army photograph above Sam's bench*) And there's some information on that wall, Mike.

(MIKE *goes to the picture and makes notes*)

CROKER (*to Roat*) When do we start all this? Tonight?

ROAT. Tomorrow. A proud grandfather living in Brighton will phone Mr Henderson and ask him to come there and take some pictures of his family tomorrow afternoon—twenty pounds, train fare paid—and stay to dinner. Mr Henderson used to have a studio in Brighton. Most helpful of him.

(MIKE *goes quietly into the bedroom*)

So that gets him out of the way, and another little precaution ensures that he does not telephone his wife in the course of the evening. (*He realizes Mike has left the room*) There's a— Mike?

(MIKE *enters*)

Oh, there you are. There's a Volkswagen Dormobile parked at the end of the road. (*He points towards the windows*) I'll meet you there in ten minutes.

(CROKER *rises and starts to go upstairs.* ROAT *rises and packs his things into his zip bag*)

MIKE. You staying here—Mr Roat?

ROAT (*casually*) Just a quick look round—in case I've forgotten anything.

MIKE. We'll stay with you then.

ROAT. Better not all leave together.

MIKE (*moving to the stairs*) I dare say you're right. (*To Croker*) Come on, then, Detective-Sergeant Croker. (*He turns back to Roat*) Oh, by the way—the *key* of that bedroom cupboard . . . (*He pauses*)

ROAT. What about it?

MIKE. It's *not* on the ledge.

(CROKER *goes to the hall door*)

ROAT. Isn't it? Then Lisa must have taken it with her.

(MIKE *is now watching Roat very carefully.* CROKER *turns*)

MIKE. Won't they miss it? When they get back tonight?

ROAT (*with a shrug*) They'll each think the other one lost it.

MIKE. Then there's just one question—before we leave here.

ROAT. Yes? (*He moves up* C)

MIKE. She's been very helpful to you, hasn't she?

ROAT. Lisa?

MIKE. Lisa. (*Moving round above Roat to* C) All those little details about how she worked . . .

CROKER. And about us.

MIKE. You see, we know Lisa pretty well . . .

CROKER. *Very* well, and she would never give you anything . . .

MIKE. Unless she had to.

ROAT. So? What's your question?

MIKE. We'd just like to know where you've hidden the key of that locked cupboard in there.

(ROAT *whips out his zip knife and takes a step towards Croker*)

ROAT. All right, you—through that door backwards and turn *that* way.

(CROKER *backs up the stairs*)

MIKE. Catch!

(MIKE *picks up the spiked camera tripod and tosses it to* CROKER. *At the same time* MIKE *picks up the kitchen chair and holds it like a lion tamer. All this in a very few seconds. Then they all stand motionless,* ROAT'S *eyes moving from one to the other*)

Now, drop "Geraldine" on the floor—softly, softly.

ROAT. I'd rather not do that . . .

MIKE. Drop it!

(MIKE *and* CROKER *move in suddenly*)

ROAT. Children—children . . .

(MIKE *and* CROKER *stop*)

Will you settle for *this*?

(ROAT *pockets knife and holds up a key*)

MIKE. Throw it!

(ROAT *tosses key to Mike.* MIKE *catches it and puts down the chair—between the sofa and Sam's bench—and with a glance to Croker crosses to bedroom door. Just before exiting to bedroom, he says*)

Why don't you sit down, Mr Roat?

ROAT (*without moving*) Thank you.

(CROKER *holds out the tripod like a three-pronged bayonet and advances slowly on Roat*)

CROKER. Now.

(ROAT *moves to the settee and sits facing bedroom door.* MIKE *goes into the bedroom. We hear him unlock and open the cupboard door. A bed-lamp is switched on for five seconds and then off. After a pause,* MIKE *enters from bedroom. He is obviously shocked by what he has seen*)

MIKE (*quietly*) You dirty little creep! (*He takes out his wad of notes, drops them on the floor and starts to go. To Croker*) Come on.

(CROKER *is too curious, and he hands the tripod to* MIKE *and goes into the bedroom himself.* MIKE *moves* L *of the sofa*)

Don't!

(*While* CROKER *is in the bedroom* MIKE *looks at Roat.* ROAT *looks straight back at him like an innocent schoolboy wrongly accused of cheating at maths. The lamp goes on in the bedroom*)

Why?

ROAT (*sadly*) Lisa was too clever, Mike. I felt certain she *knew* where it was—and then—too late.

(CROKER *enters from bedroom, slamming the door. He is in a panic. He turns and wipes the door knob with his handkerchief, throws his money on to the floor and almost runs up the stairs.* MIKE *places the tripod back where he found it, and follows him to the landing*)

(*Very calmly*) You've—forgotten something . . .

(CROKER *turns*)

MIKE (*at the door*) Come on!

ROAT. You're already involved—aren't you?

(CROKER *takes step down*)

CROKER (*in a thick voice*) I can prove where I was when this happened.

ROAT. Oh? Exactly when did it happen? (*He pauses*) Just before you let me in? By the way I am not an ex-gaolbird and no policeman has ever heard of me.

CROKER. Someone must have seen you with her *somewhere* . . .

ROAT. Never. I've followed her several times, but we never actually met until she walked in here tonight.

CROKER. All that stuff about us—she told you all that tonight?

ROAT. That and a good deal more.

MIKE. All right, brother—you just *try* and get away with this. *But—we—are—out*! We don't want your money or any part of this. You're on your own now, Mr Roat! (*To Croker*) Come on.

ROAT. Sorry, Mike—but you were both so highly recommended. I need you.

CROKER. Well, that's just too bad! And now you've got a body in there and you are stuck with it. (*He opens the door and starts to exit. To Mike*) Let's go.

ROAT. Now just listen, children! Think, think, think. If you walk out on me now, I will simply walk out after you and leave Lisa in there. You've signed your names all over this apartment . . .

(CROKER *comes downstairs and starts to go around the room, almost pathetically rubbing his fingerprints off everything he can remember touching—his only problem: he cannot remember*)

And even if you could remember what you've touched it would take at least an hour to wipe off. (*He takes out a pair of loose plastic gloves and puts them on and then wipes the telephone*) Now, I have touched only one thing since you came in here, and on my previous visit I wore these. Highly recommended, by the way—and disposable—to be had at all good chemists—in packets of twenty-five, curiously enough. Don't forget the safe, Sergeant—and the refrigerator.

(CROKER *is frantic on his double-take from the safe to the fridge.* ROAT *watches him a moment with interest and amusement*)

Now just do exactly what I tell you and the police will never even come in here. (*To Croker; impatiently*) Will you stop acting like a housemaid and *listen*! You've got all tomorrow to do that. Now, *one*—get her out of here. Roll her up in this—(*He kicks the old carpet*)—and dump it where I found it, and then meet me in the car.

CROKER (*pleading*) Look—just let us out of this? (*He turns to Mike for help*)

ROAT. No. I need you.

MIKE (*desperately*) *For what?*

ROAT (*as though to calm them down*) Everything we just planned still holds good. We simply con the wife until she finds us that doll. A nice, gentle three-handed con: old friend, policeman, and—in a couple of artistic impersonations—my humble self. That's all there is to it. No one gets hurt—not even a scratch.

(MIKE *and* CROKER *are now standing still and listening to him like schoolboys*)

There is just one minor difference, perhaps. That instead of working for Lisa—you are now working for me.

MIKE (*coming down and picking up his money*) Then there's one other difference, Mr Roat. You promised us the money Lisa owes us plus two-fifty each?

ROAT. Less this hundred, of course.

MIKE (*pointing at the bedroom*) But things have changed since then.

CROKER (*picking up his money*) Yeah.

ROAT. All right. Twelve-fifty.

MIKE. We want our seven-fifty, plus another *thousand each*—tomorrow night.

(*The street door slams up* L)

ROAT. Quiet!

(*They listen. We can hear* SUSY'S *blind stick in the hall.* ROAT *gestures Mike and Croker to take up their positions.* MIKE *runs upstairs and stands behind door.* ROAT *points at the carpet.* CROKER *picks it up and goes down* R *and switches off the room lights—but has not time to switch off the bedroom light.* ROAT *moves up* LC. *The room is lit dimly by light from the open bedroom door*)

(*In a whisper*) She's alone . . .

MIKE (*in a whisper*) Where do we . . . ?

ROAT (*urgently*) *It's all right.* Stay exactly where you are and don't even breathe.

(*They all freeze.* SUSY *enters. She wears a raincoat. A handbag is slung from her shoulders. She moves quietly and easily as though she knows this apartment well. She hangs the stick and bag on the railing*)

SUSY. Sammy! (*As she goes into the bedroom she feels the position of the light switch—i.e. off*) Sam? (*She enters from the bedroom, takes a few steps into the room and then stops and listens*) Gloria? (*She crosses to the clock down* L, *feels it and then dials on the phone*) Sam—(*Quietly, almost in whisper*)—Well—what does she look like? . . . *The Liciana*! . . . (*loudly*) You mean she hasn't even arrived yet? . . . *Delayed*? For nearly two hours? Who does she think you are? . . . I'm home *now* . . . Oh—it was a beautiful picture—but you should have checked, my angel—it was in Swedish! (*She makes Swedish noises*) And not even a note of background music . . . Well—I *tried* to walk home, but I took a wrong turning somewhere, so I came by taxi . . . *Yes, a taxi*! . . . You mean—walk to your studio *now*? Oh no—I'm staying put. What time will you be home? . . . Eleven . . . Well, in *that* case I'd better trot over and keep the score . . . Oh you needn't worry, I won't cramp your style . . . Ciao! (*She rings off and goes to the stairs, but on her way she knocks into the small chair which Mike left below Sam's bench. Gently*) Ooo!—you little . . . (*She feels around for the table, lifts the chair and then plonks it down fiercely in its proper place*) *You*—are supposed to be—*there*! (*She starts towards the stairs and then stops suddenly*) Gloria! (*She pauses. Then she speaks exactly as though she was talking to the three men*) Oh come on—I *know* you're there. You can't fool me, you know. (*She listens for a moment, then realizing she must be wrong, she moves to the stairs*)

(MIKE *spreads himself out against the wall.* SUSY *goes upstairs, picks up her stick, and exits. Her stick can be heard tapping along the corridor wall, then the front door opens and slams*)

CROKER (*dropping the carpet*) Phew!

ROAT (*to Mike*) Well?

MIKE (*without moving*) Seventeen-fifty, Mr Roat?

ROAT (*with a polite little bow*) Seventeen-fifty, Mr Trenton.

(MIKE *comes downstairs, turns to Croker, and jerks his head towards the bedroom.* MIKE *and* CROKER *each pick up one end of the carpet and carry it into the bedroom.* ROAT *follows them out, as*—

the CURTAIN *falls*

SCENE 2

SCENE—*The same. Saturday afternoon, about 4.15 p.m.*

When the CURTAIN *rises,* SAM *is using the room as his photographic darkroom and the blackout arrangements are in use. Though it is still daylight outside, the room itself is completely dark. Both doors are closed, lights are out in the hall, bathroom and bedroom, and the curtains closed. Most of Sam's equipment is ready packed for him to go. For several seconds we hear* SAM *and* SUSY, *though we can see nothing.* SAM *is working at his bench.* SUSY *is moving easily between the table and the sink, clearing plates and cutlery from the table.*

SUSY. Hear about the murder?

SAM. Just two seconds—

(*There is a pause, then the light in Sam's enlarger goes on for exactly two seconds*)

—what murder?

SUSY. They found a body this morning—somewhere near *here.*

SAM. Who told you?

SUSY. On the radio. I only heard the end of it. A woman. Not a local, apparently.

SAM. You making this up?

SUSY. Why should I?

(SAM *switches on an amber safelight*)

SAM. It's a ploy to make me stay at home.

SUSY. It is not.

SAM. Okay windows.

(*As they talk* SAM *develops the enlargement and* SUSY *moves around the room undoing the blackout—it is dull and rainy outside—then crosses to bedroom door to switch on the room lights*)

You'd rather I didn't go?

SUSY. Serious?

(SUSY *switches on the brackets* R)

SAM. Of course.

SUSY. Well, no. I mean *yes* I always want you to stay at home. But not because somebody's been murdered. Because of me. Need the ceiling lights?

SAM. Yes, please, it's a bit gloomy.

(SUSY *switches on the ceiling lights*)

Now—in emergency you dial nine-nine-nine. Yes?

SUSY. Of course.

SAM (*hanging up his enlargement to dry*) But you'd better have the number of the local police station as well.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

Please visit our website to buy the full script, apply for a license to perform this show (if it's available), or to explore hundreds of similar titles.

www.samuelfrench.co.uk
or, in the US www.samuelfrench.com

To be the first to know about new books, licensing releases, and enjoy other theatre-related larks, do follow us on our spangley social media channels.



Samuel French London



SamuelFrenchLtd

SF **PERUSALS**